



EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

The case of a sustainable development
citizens' initiative in the Ooijpolder

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ABSTRACT

Societies are changing. A shift from government to governance is seen, where citizens are becoming more and more involved in decision-making processes. Citizens have increasingly been organizing themselves in the form of citizens' initiatives, in order to solve complex societal issues such as the sustainable development (SD) of their living environments. However, citizens initiatives face a lot of challenges in doing so. Complete self-organization is rather complicated, since tackling societal issues asks for an interdependency of multiple actors. Meaning, mechanisms of deliberation and negotiation between multiple societal actors need to come into play in order to reach a common perspective. However, these mechanisms are complicated, and rely a great deal on storytelling. Therefore, this qualitative research study was conducted to explore how the storytelling practices of a citizens' initiative focused on the SD of their living environment, influences the level of support gained for their SD goals and desired future. Understanding how a citizens' initiative gains support, starts with understanding the importance of storytelling and how this leads to creating a common perspective for the desired future. Perceptions of people on the SD issue faced, and their view on the citizens' initiative's stories are therefore the base of this research.

This research has studied the SD citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder' (NedO; Off towards a sustainable Ooijpolder), through a case-study. Two sub-questions were devised to collect data in order to understand: 1) to what extent the stories of NedO's members on their SD goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder align internally and with those of potential supporters, and 2) to what extent NedO incorporates succesful storytelling practices in their process of gaining support. The empirical data for this research was obtained through observations of NedO's internal meetings, interviews with NedO's members and a selection of their potential supporters and the collection of literature. This research shows that, amongst other findings, it is not an easy process to come to a common understanding of SD and co-create a desired change for the future by storytelling, internally and externally. The difficulty of the process of gaining support by storytelling has led to some struggles in finding strong connections. Drawing on this analysis, suggestions are made for possible storytelling practices, to take into consideration stories of others and that way create a story that is meaningful to potential supporters. Suggestions are also made about the exploration of the concept of SD, which considers a holistic approach to achieving SD, as a strategy to potentially find better connection.

Key words: Citizens' initiative, sustainable development, storytelling, self-organization, co-creation

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INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Sustainable development (SD)

Over the past decades the concern about environmental issues has increased within societies. During these years the term 'sustainable development (SD)' has grown as an important concept. SD stands for a future that is inclusive, resilient and sustainable (Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, n.d.). This means it is important that societies and their surroundings develop, while taking into consideration its environmental, societal and economical functions (Baker, 2006). Nowadays, the impact of climate change is increasingly seen as a threat to the SD of people's living environments (Wamsler, 2016; Brink & Wamsler, 2018; Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, n.d.). It is becoming increasingly evident how much of the damage inflicted on the environment is caused by humans (Hall, 2017; Rosa et al., 2015; Allen et al., 2015).

Environmental challenges such as greenhouse gas emission, degrading local environmental quality and loss of biodiversity are hot topics of debate in tackling the climate change issue (Allen et al., 2015). SD seeks to find solutions to these issues by trying to incorporate the need for livable environments of current generations while making sure the needs for future generations are not compromised (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012). According to the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (n.d.) of the United Nations, climate change is already impacting societies all over the world tremendously and tackling climate change is an important aspect of SD: "climate change, left unchecked, will roll back the development gains we have made over the last decades and will make further gains impossible". Therefore, the United Nations have come up with a range of SD goals, which are a call to action to improve our own and our environment's wellbeing (Figure 1).

Citizens taking action

In order to enable the implementation of the SD goals of the United Nations in the period up to 2030, action across many different actors within societies needs to be encouraged. A very important place for people to strive for the implementation of these goals is their own living environments. Local action, therefore, is seen as essential within this transformation process (Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017). According to Fenton & Gustafsson (2017) coordination of local action regarding SD could be an important role for municipal organizations. Co-management between governments, civic organizations and local communities could potentially be important for the successfulness of the implementation of the global SD goals (Leach, et al., 1997).



Figure 1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). Reprinted from Sustainable Development Goals, by United Nations, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>. Copyright 2019 by United Nations.

Even-though citizens are seen as one of the main causers of environmental, i.e. climate change, issues, they are often left out when it comes to decision-making and knowledge production (Atkinson et al., 2017). But, slowly but steadily, societies seem to have come to the realization that citizen involvement regarding SD is needed to tackle current environmental challenges (Brink & Wamsler, 2018).

According to the Eurobarometer on climate change of the European Commission (2017) the concern about climate change amongst European Citizens has increased in the past years. This trend is becoming increasingly visible within societies. Nowadays citizens are getting more and more active themselves in tackling climate change issues locally. Creating new, bottom-up, citizens' initiatives where citizens come together to set SD goals to improve their living environments. Collectively they work towards common economic, societal or ecological goals. This coming together of citizens, e.g. collective action, is changing from temporary short-term initiatives to long-term commitments to resolving a local issue (De Moor, 2013). In order for citizens' initiatives towards local SD to be successful, it is of importance to create partnerships and dialogue with multiple different stakeholders, e.g. government bodies, institutions and civil society.

The Dutch government increasingly realizes the importance and the benefits of citizens' initiatives. According to the social participation code of the Municipality of General Affairs (2014), civic participation is necessary to share information, knowledge and interests in order to improve policies and decision-making processes. A shift is therefore seen in who is taking the lead in local issues, from government to governance, i.e. the citizen taking action. Even though citizens often take the lead these days, the government is increasingly willing to cooperate. They are slowly perceiving a change from a do-it-yourself society to a do-it-together society. A trend that the government is keen to proceed (Ministerie van BIZA & VNG, 2011).

Especially in the SD domain a major increase in initiatives is observed. During Sustainable Tuesday (Duurzame Dinsdag) in the Netherlands in 2018, for example, the organization counted 359 submitted citizens' initiatives where winning initiators get government support to give their initiative an impulse. A growth was noticed in the amount of initiatives contributing to tackling the climate change issue. The top 5 of subjects were as follows: 1) circular economy, 2) energy, 3) food, 4) biodiversity, and 5) social sustainability (Duurzame Dinsdag, 2018).

SD stories

It is becoming very clear that citizens' initiatives are seen as the future by many people and organizations. But, with all the different actors that come into play in such SD citizens' initiatives, it becomes increasingly difficult to jointly set achievable goals towards a shared vision of the future. It is often a great challenge, since cooperation can be hard to achieve when stakeholders have differing levels of influence and power in the matter, or conflicting interests (Bowen et al., 2017; Berger, 2003). And even though SD has grown as an important concept in societies, people attach many different meanings to it (Warburton, 2013). There is a lack of collective understanding of the aims of SD and the meanings attached to it (Sobol, 2008; Hak et al., 2018; Arnall & Kothari, 2015). Policy makers, businesses, environmentalists and citizens all have their own view on SD. To be able to influence governments, institutions and other members of society towards more substantive responses, it is important to understand all their different values, beliefs and environmental worldviews regarding SD (Harrison, 2000; Byrch et al., 2007). For them to collaborate successfully, shared ambitions need to be developed and mutual interests need to be explored (Mattijssen et al., 2015).

Since the concept of SD is a hard one to define objectively, there are many subjective understandings within society (Harrison, 2000). Differing meanings and interests can make it quite a challenge for involved stakeholders to find consensus on the problem of what exactly needs to be sustained locally and makes it difficult to find solutions to existing problems. As Atkinson (2000) says for something "to be defined as a 'problem' it needs first of all to be constructed and articulated as an object amenable to diagnosis and treatment in and through a narrative discourse which carries with it an 'authority'" (p.13). We learn a lot of what we know from the world through stories. So, in order to get a clear image of a 'problem' it is important to develop a story portraying the way the problem has evolved through time and what the causes were. The different stories within society reflect people's different ideologies. Making it very important to observe the different meanings behind them to unmask people's own reality or strategies within their stories (Atkinson, 2000). As Atkinson (2000) says: "what is absent from a narrative may be as important as what is present" (p.12).

The different beliefs, worldviews and values of people guide how people uptake knowledge and interpret information. When handed new information, people tend to pick out only the parts that fit with their pre-existing frames regarding the issue. People's understanding of certain information is strongly influenced by their cultural background and social connections. We tend to filter information because we want it to fit with

our peers' beliefs, worldviews and values, in order to stay connected (Sheppard, 2012). According to Bushell et al. (2017) there is a clear gap within the knowledge, on for example climate change, between the government, businesses and citizens. They argue that, in order for people to make progress towards SD goals, it is important to develop a strategic story. Telling stories is a practice in which we discursively change our values into motivation to act upon an issue. Through shared values, beliefs and worldviews we engage with others, explore problems, and motivate each other to solve these problems. When stories come together, they can arouse a sense of urgency that makes people believe that acting upon a problem collectively can make a difference (Ganz, 2011).

1.2 Problem statement

As explained in the previous sub-chapter: the division of roles are changing when it comes to achieving sustainable development (SD) goals within societies. Citizens are beginning to rely more on self-organization within SD issues and governments are increasingly becoming aware of the fact they need to collaborate with citizens when it comes to environmental decision-making (van Dam et al., 2016). As the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (2011) states in their report on citizens' initiatives: "active citizenship is a movement we can no longer deny anymore" (p.11).

The collaboration between all the different actors within self-organizing citizens' initiatives is a factor that makes implementing these initiatives quite a difficult task. Because of the limited scale of this study, it is not possible to explore the full scope of citizens' initiatives, and how certain barriers can be overcome. Therefore, I will dive into a specific area that can use more clarity. A factor that might influence the successfulness of a citizens' initiative, is the creation of a shared vision of the desired future and the means necessary to get there. As explained in the introduction, differing meanings and interests can make it difficult to get a clear image of a problem, and thus make it difficult to make progress towards SD goals. For people to believe that acting collectively can make a difference, their stories need to come together. To solve local SD issues, it is important to understand people's different perceptions. This study therefore focusses on the concept of stories regarding self-organizing citizens' initiatives. The role of stories within citizens' initiatives could be a factor that increases or decreases the level of support gained. Even though SD is currently a much-debated topic, the complexity of the subject makes it an interesting one to explore.

There seems to be a knowledge gap existent when it comes the usage of storytelling practices in order for citizens' initiatives to gain support for their SD ambitions. This leads to the question in what way storytelling practices of citizens' initiatives lead to creating a common understanding of SD goals and desired change for the future, internally and externally, and to what extent it influences the level of support gained. This study therefore extends existing knowledge on citizens' initiative's practices by exploring the effectiveness of storytelling in gaining support from external actors. This study differentiates itself from other studies by focusing on SD initiatives in particular. To explore this question, a case study will be analyzed, which will be introduced in Chapter 3. In this research an interpretive view on citizens' initiatives' stories will be developed

with an emphasis on meaning-making within interactive social processes. This study will hopefully help different actors, and in particular citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder' (NedO), to navigate challenges and opportunities that come with SD citizens' initiatives and using the term SD.

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THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter theories on self-organization regarding the achievement of sustainable development (SD) will be explored. We will delve into theories related to the different perspectives on SD and storytelling practices. First, an understanding of the term SD will be sought-after. Then, the act of self-governance within citizens' initiatives will be explored. Lastly, the importance of storytelling practices will be debated.

2.1 Definitional divergence of sustainable development

The holistic approach

SD is a concept that has quite the history when it comes to discourses on policy agreements (Bruyninckx, 2007). The origin of the concept comes from an ecology perspective, where people's use of natural resources was seen as harmful for the environment (Meadows et al., 1972). SD used to be seen as 'not taking more of nature than will be added by natural growth' in terms of sustainable use of fisheries and forests. Consideration of this ecological view on SD meant making sure future generations would still be able to enjoy nature in the future (Natuurplanbureau, 2004). This view was broadened, from pure ecological considerations to a more social-economical view by the Brundtland Report in 1987. Their definition of SD is still one of the most used definitions to date: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland et al., 1987, p. 37). Within the report three fundamental components are described in order to reach SD: social equity, economic growth and environmental protection.

Ever since the Brundtland Report, the concept of SD has gained popularity within many different societal movements (Boutilier, 2005). Nowadays, when discussing sustainability challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, we increasingly come across the concept of SD (Colby, 1991; Allen et al., 2015; Fenton & Gustafsson, 2017; Haward, 2018; Hossain, 2018). It seems as if the concept of SD is broadly accepted and pursued (Seyfang & Smith, 2007; Byrch et al., 2007). Themes like sustainable energy, sustainable landscapes, sustainable travel and sustainable produce are widely covered in the news and more and more government bodies and businesses are striving to tackle the sustainability challenge (Byrch et al., 2007). When googling SD, it does not seem to be questioned whether SD should be pursued, but rather why and how it should be approached. However, when digging deeper into the concept, many argue how the ambiguity of the concept of SD makes it a rather difficult one to pursue (Redclift, 1992; Leal Filho, 2000; Bruyninckx, 2007). One widely used explanation of the concept of SD, which is in line with Brundlandt's definition, is that it covers three important dimensions, i.e. a balance between economic, social and environmental factors (Giddings et al., 2002; Circular Ecology, 2015). But SD is not always approached in such a holistic way (Sinakou et al., 2018) and interpretations of the concept vary (Byrch et al., 2007; Bruyninckx, 2007). For many years already, SD seems to be a fashionable concept that everyone applauds, but nobody can clearly define (Lele, 1991).

The holistic approach to SD contains the following three elements (Harris & Goodwin, 2001; Robinson & Tinker, 1997):

- ◇ Social approach

When people pursue a social approach to SD they are concerned with health and education, participation and sufficient provision of social services, this way making sure the values they want to live by are met

- ◇ Economic approach

With the economic approach people strive for a continuous production of goods and services and making sure agricultural or industrial production is not damaged by sectoral imbalances, in order to keep a certain material standard of living

- ◇ Environmental approach

To make sure the system is environmentally sustainable, people are concerned with maintaining biodiversity and avoiding overexploitation

While some are opposed to viewing SD as a holistic approach, disregarding the idea of reaching complete consensus on future goals (Stables & Scott, 2002), others believe all three approaches to SD should be considered when pursuing it (Harris & Goodwin, 2001; Robinson & Tinker, 1997). According to Kaiser et al. (1995) the balance between social, economic and environmental values is important when planning for SD. They argue that when social values are disregarded, SD plans might not meet the needs of the people concerned. When economic values aren't met, the source of community improvement gets denied. And when environmental values are not considered, the environment on which a community depends won't be sustained. But, as Campbell (1996) argues: people often prioritize a single perspective on SD. Making them solely strive for their own goals. SD is therefore viewed as too holistic and thus hard to operationalize and break-down into manageable steps. So, even though many of us embrace the concept, the operationalization is still lacking. As Campbell (1996) says "In the battle of big public ideas, sustainability has won: the task of the coming years is simply to work out the details and to narrow the gap between theory and practice" (p. 304). But, next to the difficulties to approach SD holistically, also the ambiguity of the concept makes it rather a complex one to operationalize.

An ambiguous nature

The ambiguous nature of SD is clearly shown by Lele (1991), who explains SD as a "metafix that will unite everybody from the profit-minded industrialist and risk-minimizing subsistence farmer to the equity-seeking social worker, the pollution concerned or wildlife-loving First Worlder, the growth-maximizing policy maker, the goal-oriented bureaucrat, and therefore, the vote-counting politician" (p. 613). These controversies show the complexity of the concept of SD and the difficulties within the pursuit of sustainability. SD is often seen as a fix to many different societal issues, but, whether an issue is considered as non-sustainable and whether it needs to develop sustainably is dependent on one's interpretation of SD. Within multi-stakeholder processes regarding SD, where stakeholders have diverse interests and advocate

different goals, it can be challenging to agree on the meaning of SD and which sustainability goals are deemed most important to pursue (Boutilier, 2005).

The concept of SD can be explained as normative, subjective, and complex (Martens, 2006). Normative, because SD goals contain norms based on social values or culture, that are not always shared by all members of society. Nor, does everyone regard SD as important (Open Universiteit, 2006). The way people view SD is dependent on several factors that can cause tensions in whether people do or do not pursue it. On the one hand we have the solidary citizen, who is concerned about others and the earth. And on the other hand, we have the selfish consumer, who is mainly concerned about their own well-being. But, also, the differences between local action and striving towards globalization can create tensions when trying to realize SD goals. Whether a person is more social or individualistic, active locally or more globally focused influences someone's personal vision on SD (ibid.). Also, what is considered to be a preferred society is a normative vision which can range from economically prosperous, socially inclusive and/or environmentally sustainable (Sachs, 2015). SD is also subjective, because the concept is interpreted differently by different people and, which goal ought to be achieved is dependent on time, place and the people involved. Some interpretations of SD seem to have nothing else in common than the concept itself. Some argue SD can mean anything, making it meaningless. Reaching SD therefore should involve creating a common philosophy (Giddings et al., 2002). Lastly, the concept is also complex, because achieving SD is dependent on the collaboration between different disciplines, differences in knowledge and communication between many different societal actors. As Kemp & Martens (2007) say "such a challenge calls for mutual learning, integrated assessment and conflict resolution" (p. 8). Martens (2006) advises to escape from the SD dilemma by looking at it from the contrary: non-sustainable development. He argues that non-sustainable problems show which issues are so-called systemic faults within society. Only fundamental changes can help transform these non-sustainable issues into more sustainable alternatives. Achieving SD could therefore lie in finding consensus on what is considered non-sustainable (Kemp & Martens, 2007).

With the concept of SD, Martens (2006) believes it is similar to what famous physicist Richard Feynman once said about quantum theory: "whoever says that he understands quantum theory, in all probability does not" (p. 40). According to Robinson (2004) SD is not about teaching people the true meaning of the concept, but about collectively reaching an agreement on the desired future. Therefore, the most important part of a SD process is understanding all the different perspectives of stakeholders and combining their values and beliefs to co-produce a collectively preferred outcome.

2.2 Citizens' initiatives

From government to governance

Where it used to be solely governments making decisions and enforcing them on society by coercing power, people have been looking for new methods for society to be governed (Kemp et al., 2005). An increase in complex policy problems, sometimes called 'wicked problems', led to reconsidering the sufficiency of

traditional top-down government structures. It was questioned whether more societal actors should be included in policy making (Berger, 2003). In the 1980s the concept of governance was explored in line with this thinking. Where governance contested the formal structures of governments by including informal structures that foster collective decision making (Kemp et al., 2005; Driessen et al., 2012). According to Rhodes (1996) governance "signifies a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed" (p. 652). The shift from government to governance, where more societal actors are included in decision-making processes, is believed to make these processes more fair, participatory and accountable, and can thus increase societal acceptance and support for policies (Fung & Wright, 2003).

Even though governance might indicate a collaborative process that is all about collective decision-making, it can also be negatively influenced by for example cultural differences and social and economic disparity (Fung & Wright, 2003). The shift from government to governance introduced the quest for changes in power distributions (Berger, 2003). Collaboration between different stakeholders, such as public and private actors, non-profit organizations and citizens, therefore require new forms of coordination (Rhodes, 1996; Bevir, 2010). When it comes to the coordination of governance processes it is important to take into consideration the different governing structures. Identifying these different structures can be helpful in understanding how the different types of governance function (Kooiman, 2003). One speaks of self-organization (Rhodes, 1996), others of social-political governance (Kooiman, 2003), multi-level governance (van der Zouwen, 2006), and transition management (Loorbach, 2010). Each governing style works under different conditions, and the degree of government influence differs, but one commonality is that all approaches strive towards including non-governmental actors in decision-making processes.

Self-organization and citizens' initiatives

This study focusses on the governance approach of self-organization. One type of self-organization is the citizens' initiative (van Dam et al., 2014; Igalla & van Meerkerk, 2015). Within the current society, self-organization and one's own responsibility in societal issues are becoming more and more important. It is clear that governing styles are shifting from a more top-down approach to bottom-up approaches in taking action towards societal problems. Next to governments starting to see the importance of active citizenship and participation, citizens themselves are also more willing to take initiative when it comes to public issues (van de Wijdeven, 2012). Citizens no longer adopt a wait-and-see attitude, but increasingly take initiative themselves (van Dam et al., 2008). This new way of interacting between the government and other societal actors can be seen in many different aspects of society, such as education, social welfare and environmental protection (Kooiman, 1993).

The way in which self-organization works, and how people become motivated to organize themselves, relates to an important concept from the 90s: 'life politics' from Anthony Giddens (1991). Life Politics is defined as the intertwining of individual political and social views with personal lifestyle objectives. When

people with similar mindsets find each other, it is more likely they will act towards reaching a collective societal goal. This means people collectively find issues they'd like to solve with which they can relate. One such a collective issue that is increasingly gaining attention is SD. According to Driessen et al. (2012), when we are committed to achieving SD, new governing styles seem to be the answer to our pursuit. Governance is therefore an important concept when it comes to SD policy making (Berger, 2003). Citizens are increasingly becoming aware that if they want change in their own living environment, they should act upon it instead of waiting for the government to implement improvements. Currently there are numerous initiatives where citizens have initiated projects regarding SD of their own living environment (Arnouts et al., 2012).

According to van Dam et al. (2014) citizens' initiatives are most likely to make a good start when certain social, cultural and human capital such as trust, involvement, enthusiasm, identity, ideas, contacts and perseverance are shared. But even though a good start is made, according to Igalla & van Meerkerk (2015) it is still quite unclear which factors are important to effectively structure self-organization within citizens initiatives. There are a lot of questions about the relationship between citizens and society (Hurenkamp et al., 2006). One thing we do know, is that complete self-organization is rather difficult because of the interdependency of different actors when it comes to societal issues (Torfinn & Sørensen, 2008). Since citizens' initiatives have to collaborate with other citizens and institutions, they need to engage in both informal and formal organizational practices (van Dam et al., 2014). And while citizens might believe they know best when it comes to organizing their own living environment, governments can be unsure whether the citizens' initiative's goals are feasible within the current policy (Flevopower, n.d.). And even though governments encourage the citizen initiative trend, this new way of coordination makes it difficult for governments to respond in an adequate way (van Dam et al., 2014). Both initiators and governments are therefore still trying to find ways to coordinate self-organized local governance initiatives (van Dam et al., 2008). But, one thing is sure, there are high expectations from both governments and citizens when it comes to self-organization of citizens (WRR, 2012).

When acting as a citizens' initiative it is important to involve all important stakeholders early on, to make it a transparent process (Dreijerink, Kruize & Van Kamp, 2009). But with these new forms of governance where citizens become more active in decision making processes, citizens' initiatives also have to deal with a so-called 'participation paradox', where often higher-educated, male citizens, with a job or on retirement participate, while others, often lower-educated or verbally weaker citizens are left out of the process. This can lead to a certain feeling of injustice amongst external actors (Hartman, 2000). Citizens' initiatives are usually not a random group of participants, which makes it questionable whether they represent the full target audience.

Citizens' initiatives, a multi-stakeholder partnership

The way in which citizen initiatives and governments communicate with each other can lead to wrongful interpretations of issues and strategies and can therefore lead to difficulties in managing the process. This relates to the concept of social learning, wherein deliberation and negotiation influence the successfulness of a citizens' initiative strategy (van Dam et al., 2010). Implementing SD goals relies on these mechanisms of deliberation and negotiation between diverse actors in order to create a shared objective (Fowler & Biekart, 2017). In order to tackle a complex issue like SD, collaboration between civil society, businesses and governments is of importance. In order for citizens' initiatives to create change they therefore need to rely on Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSP). For MSP processes to work towards a common goal, a shared perspective on the issue at hand and what is needed to make a difference (Brouwer et al., 2016). As Brouwer et al. (2016) states "each person has a set of beliefs, worldviews and paradigms about the world he or she lives in. Paradigms are essential for making sense of the world, but they are often so internalized that we aren't aware of them; we then experience misunderstandings when we assume that other people see things in the same way as us" (p.95).

2.3 Storytelling

Developing a shared perspective

As mentioned in the previous chapters, complete self-organization within citizens' initiatives is often not possible because of the interdependency of different actors when it comes to solving societal issues. The collaboration with multiple stakeholders can make it difficult to create a shared perspective. One way to study different perspectives is by exploring stories. As McAlpine (2016) says "the 'story' is one, if not the fundamental, unit that accounts for human experience" (p. 34). Constructing stories are useful for developing a shared meaning (Boyce, 1996; Yanow, 2000). By constructing stories, people construct their identity by forming and re-forming who they were, currently are and hope to be in the future (McAlpine, 2016). But, as Ricoeur (1984) questions "what, then, is a story?" (p.150). Even though there are many explanations, these seem to be nicely summarized in the following quote: "A story describes a sequence of actions and experiences done or undergone by a certain number of people, whether real or imaginary. These people are presented either in situations that change or as reacting to such change. In turn, these changes reveal hidden aspects of the situation and the people involved, and engender a new predicament, which calls for thought, action or both. This response to the new situation leads the story towards its conclusion" (p. 150).

In order for citizens' initiatives to gain support of government actors, Van der Stoep (2014) argues they need to develop stories that these government actors can relate to. Stories are used amongst stakeholders to make sense of an event. Since stories are formed between the teller(s) and the listener(s), co-production and meaning-making are often influenced by over-looked statements within these stories (Boje, 1991). Storytellers often pursue a certain desired change, and thus their stories encompass their feelings, values and beliefs (Yanow, 2000). If one would compare the different stories amongst stakeholders, they would find many differences in meanings and interpretations of the desired change. A meta-narrative can unfold when

an issue is narrated from a different point of view, these different stories amongst different stakeholders, can make it difficult to focus on a single resolution (ibid.). Thus, stories are important to coordinate the different interpretations and to unify different perspectives, in order to build common-ground for decision-making (Van Dijk, 2011). Within discursive activities, stories can unite the different perspectives of the different parties involved. Providing a narrative can help construct a problem and the influence people have on it (Hajer, 1995). As Hajer (1995) says: stories “are a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena. The key function of storylines is that they suggest unity in the bewildering variety of separate discursive component parts of the problem” (p.56). By coordinating the different interpretations and perspectives through storytelling, one can find which issues are of importance and motivate people to take action (Forester, 1999; Sandercock, 2003). Thus, stories can help to create an overall frame that connects the variety of discourses.

Storytelling in planning practices

Through storytelling and also through listening to people’s stories, stakeholders are able to make sense of past events and prepare for events in the future. When in a planning process, imagining the future through storytelling is very important. But competing visions and disagreements can make the planning process a difficult task (Van Hulst, 2012). As Throgmorton (1996) says “storytelling deserves attention as an important part of planning” (p.46). Planning can be seen as a future-oriented narrative where all the stakeholders together jointly create the storyline (Throgmorton, 1996). Sharing stories within planning processes can change the frames people use. Van Dijk (2011), therefore sees storytelling as reframing reality. So, in order to effectively advocate change, people need to become good storytellers (Sandercock, 2003). To make sure one’s story is worthier of telling, he needs to pay attention to the craft of storytelling. Shaping an imaginative future state by the use of stories, can work as a catalyst for change (ibid). But even though storytelling can influence change, it is never certain whether the outcome is as expected, because the web of different stories is often quite complex (Van Dijk, 2011).

Though Stories have a beginning, an end, a plot and main characters, according to Van der Stoep (2014) the story itself is not what is most important when trying to connect with potential supporters. How the story is told and whether it aligns with the frames of the supporters is what matters. Storytelling and frame alignment are therefore important processes to make sure that a citizens’ initiative’s planning practices are seen as relevant and meaningful to other actors involved (ibid.). According to Van der Stoep (2014) there are a couple of factors of importance in order to create story which all relevant actors can relate to:

1. it is important the ambitions (i.e. the plot of the story), of the initiative are clear
2. the proposed frames within stories should be seen as relevant, credible and meaningful by potential supporters
3. the citizens’ initiative should try to connect to the beliefs, concerns and ambitions of the relevant actors, which means listening well to the concerns of others and trying to relate to the ideas of others

In Figure 2 the adapted model of Van der Stoep (2014) is found, which will provide a base for this research. Usually this figure is used solely to see whether citizens' initiatives' storytelling practices lead to gaining support from government bodies by conversations and connectors. In this case the model will be used as a base for the storytelling practices of citizens' initiatives towards all different actors involved in their planning practices, such as civil society, businesses and government bodies. This model helps understanding whether a citizens' initiative is successful in sharing their ambitions and whether they are able to find support by connecting, i.e. being empathic, well-connected, credible, knowledgeable, etcetera, and by conversating, i.e. sharing, listening, and exploring.

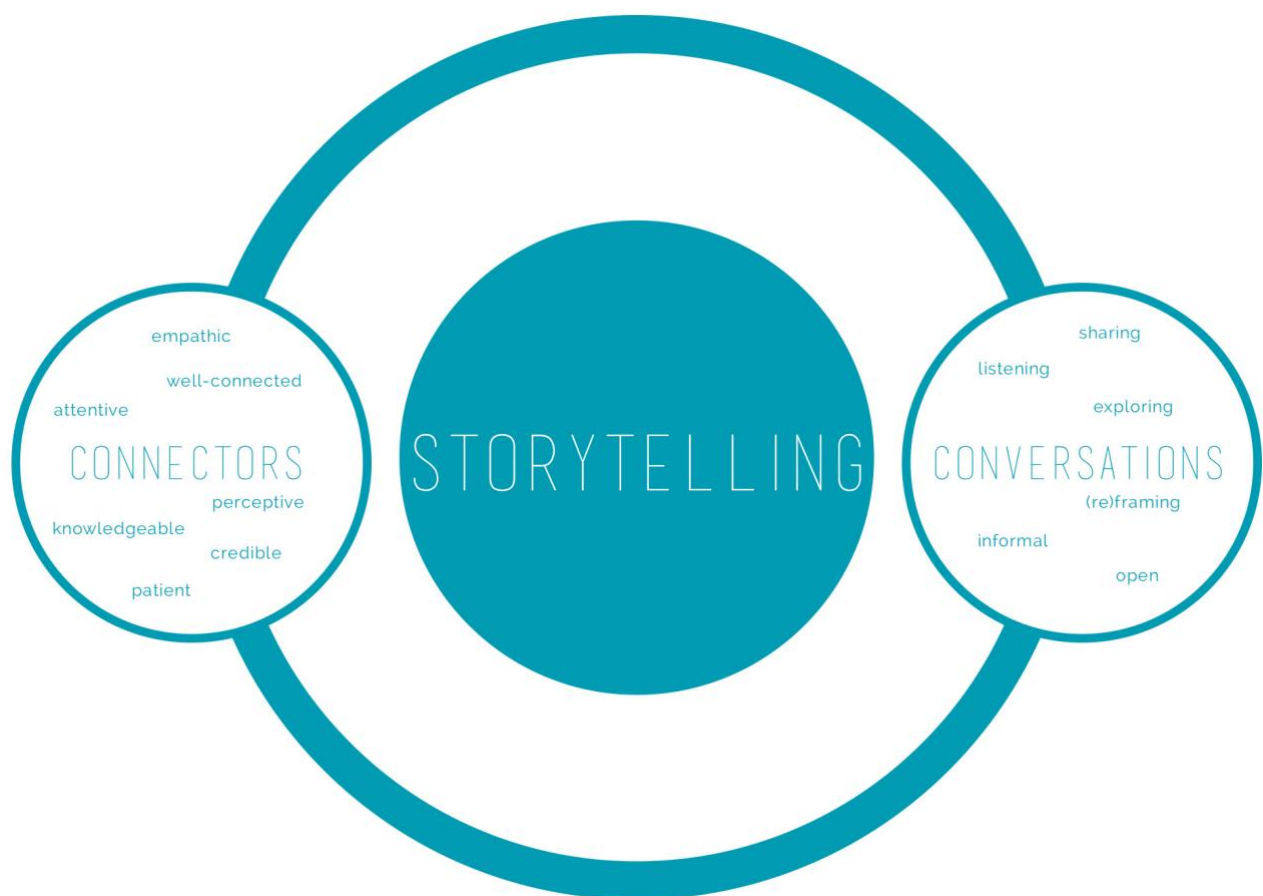


Figure 2. Stories becoming sticky: a model. (Adapted from Van der Stoep, 2014, p.208)

03

RESEARCH FOCUS

3. RESEARCH FOCUS

In this chapter the research approach and research questions will be described. This chapter will also explain the choice for a case study design and how this particular case was chosen. Next to that, the specific case for this study will be shortly introduced.

3.1 Research approach

The purpose of this study is to investigate a recently established citizens' initiative regarding sustainable development (SD) to explore whether they efficiently use storytelling to gain support for their goals and how these stories align with the stories of potential supporters. There are two important elements within this study, which are the concept of SD and the meanings attached to it by different actors, and storytelling. The research is conducted by a qualitative method. With qualitative research, the researcher explores and tries to understand the meaning people or groups of people give to a social problem, and that way trying to make interpretations of these found meanings. It explores the narration of feelings, experiences and perceptions and communicates these findings in a descriptive manner without much emphasis on generalizations. This kind of research uses an inductive style, which means a theory can be built by exploring the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2014; Kumar, 2019). Qualitative research gives us an understanding of the different perspectives on an issue experienced by different members of a community (Kumar, 2019), which is important in this study since it explores the development and practices of a citizens' initiative. The nature of the questions that guided the researchers' thinking drew her to undertake an interpretive study. Interpretive studies focus on the subjective and intersubjective meanings people produce and reproduce while interacting with each other and the world around them. Through understanding the different meanings people assign to phenomena, we can attempt to understand them (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991).

In order to understand the storytelling process of a SD citizens' initiative, this research examines the case of citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder' (NedO). For this research a single case has been chosen to be explored. This study thereby aims to offer the readers valuable insights into recently established citizens' initiatives regarding SD how they establish themselves, their interactional dynamics, but also, how they approach issues and develop. Below, a description of the case is offered.

3.2 The case

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2011) a researcher should pick a case that offers the opportunity to learn a lot about an issue. Therefore, they advise to select a case that is most accessible and thus offers the researcher the opportunity to spend a lot of time with it. During the search for a suitable case I got informed about the citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder' (NedO). This case corresponded perfectly with the phenomenon under study: SD citizens' initiatives and their storytelling practices. The members of the initiative reside in the Ooijpolder area, near the city of Nijmegen, where the researcher resides. This made

the case very accessible and thus improved the possibility for the researcher to spend enough time with them to learn about the case and access important data.

As mentioned above, the case study of NedO is situated in the Ooijpolder (see figure 3), which is part of nature reserve Gelderse Poort and where all of its members, who will stay anonymous throughout this study, reside and have organized themselves to collectively pursue their sustainable development (SD) ambitions of the area. The Ooijpolder, is a landscape with 500 ha of farmland and nature. Over the years the Ooijpolder has transformed from a wetland to an agrarian cultural landscape. Situated along the river Waal, within the municipality of Berg and Dal, in the Province of Gelderland and right next to the city of Nijmegen. The Ooijpolder is an important landscape for living, working and recreation. In co-operation with organisations like Wereld Natuurfonds, Staatsbosbeheer and Via Natura, the area has developed into a landscape where space has been created in the past years that has increased the variation in nature, insects and animals (Bouma, 2019; MaakGelderlandMooier, 2016; VirtualClassroomBiology, 2013).

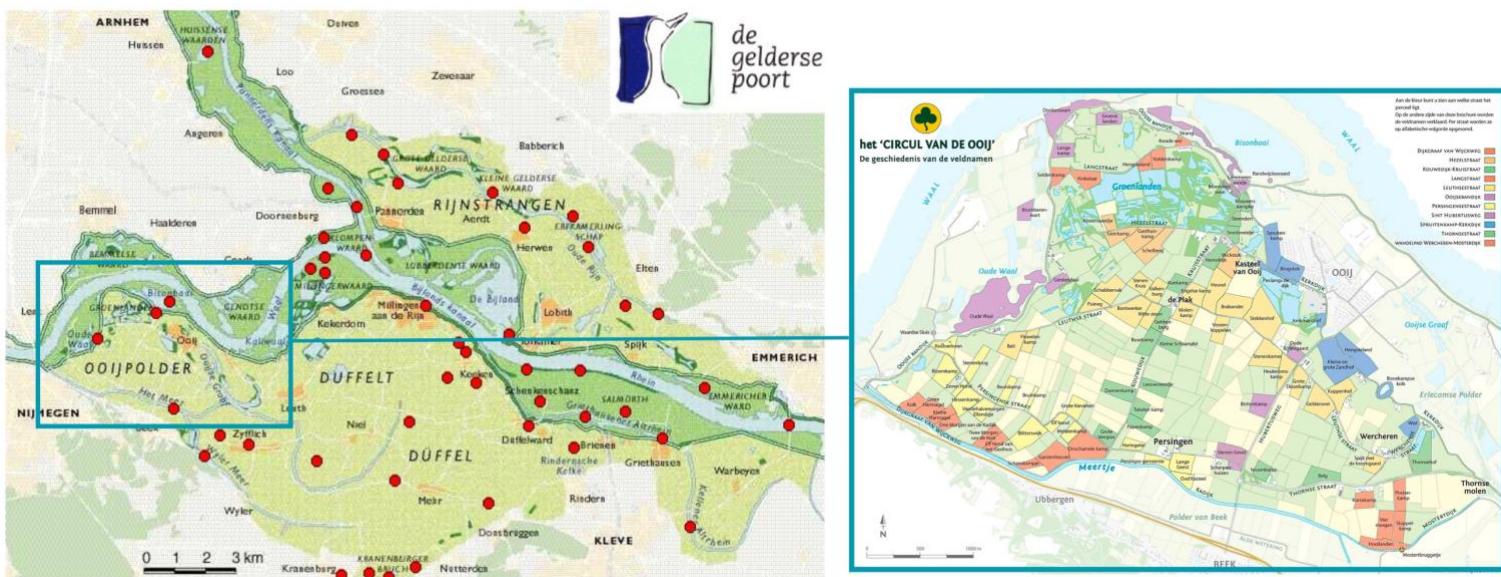


Figure 3 : Map of the Gelderse Poort & the Ooijpolder (Meister, 2014; Info-Zentrum de Gelderse Poort, n.d.)

Even though space had been created for nature to flourish and biodiversity to increase, it only seemed to apply to green areas, not to the agricultural areas. A concern about the intensive agriculture, pesticide use and decrease in biodiversity grew. According to a study of Radboud University in small-scale nature reserves in Germany the insect population of these areas has decreased with 75% in 27 years. These small-scale nature reserves are very similar to the Dutch landscape, which causes great concern amongst nature conservationists in the Netherlands. These findings are an important trigger for people's concern about the well-being of areas like the Ooijpolder. Even though several actors have already been active in the Ooijpolder area when it comes to landscape development and biodiversity recovery, they realize the ideal situation has not yet been achieved (Bouma, 2019).

So, despite the efforts made to increase the variation in nature, insects and animals, a group of community members of the Ooijpolder area spotted a predominantly monotonous agrarian landscape and the deterioration of nature and biodiversity in the Ooijpolder. They started wondering whether they might be able to help farmers make the transition to sustainable farming practices. Their worries about the area and whether it was developing sustainably resulted in a citizens' initiative of six community members, to protect the landscape values of the Ooijpolder. Ever since, they are presenting their own plans regarding SD to local organizations, farmers and governmental organization to help the Ooijpolder develop sustainably.

3.3 Research questions

The theoretical framework and the choice of this case study has led to the following research questions:

Main question

In what way do the storytelling practices of citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder'(NedO) lead to creating a common understanding of the sustainable development goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder, internally and externally, and to what extent does it influence the level of support gained?

Sub-questions

SQ1: To what extent do NedO's members' stories regarding their sustainable development goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder align internally and with those of potential supporters?

SQ2: To what extent does NedO incorporate Van der Stoep's (2014) factors that create a relevant story, in their process of gaining support, and are they used successfully?

04

METHODOLOGY

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will elaborate further on the methods chosen to collect and analyze the data needed to answer the research questions.

4.1 Research framework

This research investigates the following main research question:

In what way do the storytelling practices of citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder'(NedO) lead to creating a common understanding of the sustainable development goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder, internally and externally, and to what extent does it influence the level of support gained?

This research question is supported by two sub questions, namely: 1) *To what extent do NedO's members' stories regarding their sustainable development goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder align internally and with those of potential supporters?* And 2) *To what extent does NedO incorporate Van der Stoep's (2014) factors that create a relevant story, in their process of gaining support, and are they used successfully?* To provide the answers for these research questions, and to gain insights in the meanings citizens' initiatives and their stakeholders ascribe to SD and gaining a deeper understanding of how storytelling is used in their collaboration towards the desired change of the Ooijpolder, an explorative qualitative research has been performed in order to provide an overview (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Creswell, 2014).

For this qualitative research, a case study design was chosen. Case studies provide an in-depth analysis of a process (Creswell, 2014). Case studies are an approach "in which a particular instance or a few carefully selected cases are studied intensively" (Gilbert, 2001, p.25). Within a case study design the chosen case should be representative for typical cases of a certain type. The two aspects important in this research are SD and storytelling. In order to explore citizens' initiative's storytelling practices and give a good overview of the challenges SD citizens' initiatives face when trying to gain support for their plans, it has been chosen to perform a single case study. This study focusses on the case of citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder' (NedO) (see Chapter 3), to explore the complexity of a sustainable development (SD) citizens' initiative when it comes to finding supporters through storytelling. The outcome of this study can be informative for typical cases of this certain type. In order to give an in-depth overview of the complexity of such an SD citizens' initiative, this single case is explored holistically and in-depth, to gain insights in the day-to-day actions of such a typical case (Kumar, 2019). As Gilbert (2001) states "The advantage of the case study design is that the research can be much more detailed than would be possible if one were studying a large sample, but corresponding disadvantage is that it is much more difficult and often impossible to generalize the findings" (p.26).

This study relies on the information gathered from primary and secondary sources (See Figure 4). According to Creswell (2014) to perform an in-depth analysis of a certain phenomenon, case studies are based on the triangulation of sources: interviews, observations and the collection of documents. Therefore, to gain insights in the two important aspects of this research, SD and storytelling, these three sources have been used for the data collection process. The main sources of data for this study are the interviews and non-participant observations. Furthermore, an analysis of secondary material such as personal records, scientific articles and media publications was conducted. How the sources are used, will be explained in the next part of this chapter

Before starting with the collection of data, the single case of NedO has been selected for this study (Chapter 3). Since NedO is in the process of formulating plans and gaining support for their ambitions, it can hopefully give a good overview on how this process is put into practice. Gaining insights in this process, with a focus on meaning-making regarding SD and whether or not the storytelling aspects of Van der Stoep (2014) are apparent and used effectively, can serve as a learning experience for NedO itself and other recently established SD citizens' initiatives. Since this case is in the process of setting up, trying to get support, it is interesting for analysis.

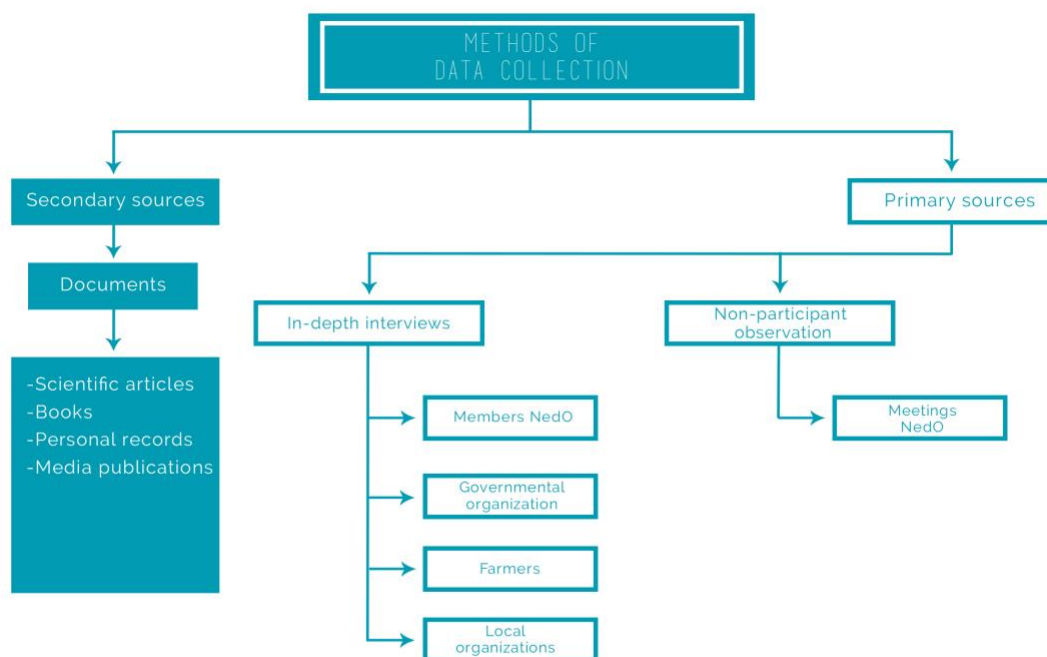


Figure 4. Methods of data collection. (Adapted from Kumar, 2011, p.208)

4.2 Data collection

At the start of this research a conceptual foundation has been built by performing a literature review on the concepts of SD, citizens' initiatives and storytelling. This information found guided the analysis of the data collected. The data was collected by the use of three methods: interviews, observations and document analyses, in order to ensure triangulation of sources. In Table 1 an overview is given of the operationalization of the sub questions.

Table 1

Research question	Data-collection method	Participants	Key results
S1: <i>To what extent do NedO's members' stories regarding their sustainable development goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder align internally and with those of potential supporters?</i>	Interviews Observations Document analysis	Members NedO Governmental organization Farmers Local organizations	Personal interests Values, beliefs, goals Shared meanings Relevance story Alignment story Shared identities Shared goals
S2: <i>To what extent does NedO incorporate Van der Stoep's (2014) factors that create a relevant story, in their process of gaining support, and are they used successfully?</i>	Interviews Observations	Members NedO Governmental organization Farmers Local organizations	Clarity ambitions Relevance initiative Credibility initiative Level of connection Listening skills

Operationalization of the research

The process of data collection, by using these three methods, was conducted as follows: First, over the whole course of this research, the researcher attended five meetings of NedO. These meetings were held once a month, from March 2019 until August 2019. Second, the researcher held interviews with NedO's members and its potential supporters. All of these meetings and interviews were recorded and transcribed. Lastly, the interviewer looked into documents such as personal records of the initiative and media publications.

Observing 5 meetings of NedO

One part of the data collection phase existed of observing 5 private meetings of NedO. In these meetings the researcher observed the way the members communicated their SD goals and ambitions internally; their personal interests, shared meanings and whether they were able to build a relevant story. It was also observed how the members experienced their contact with a potential supporter, who joined the meetings in order to explore if he wanted to join NedO. The researcher recorded the meetings and transcribed them literally. NedO's meetings were organized once every month from March 2019 to August 2019. Before this period, the initiative has had monthly meetings for about 1 year, and after this period the meetings continued. The researcher was only able to be present for these 5 months, because of the duration of her research period. Almost all of the meetings were organized at the homes of NedO's members. During these meetings the members discussed agenda items and the progress of the initiative.

In total there were 7 participants that participated in the NedO's meetings, of which 5 official members, 1 PhD student and 1 potential member. From these 7 participants, 3 were interviewed. The choice to interview these three participants will be explained in the next part of this chapter. Table 2 illustrates the different members who participate in the citizens' initiative, table 3 shows which member participated in which meeting.

Table 2

Codename participant	Gender	Type of participant
P1	Male	Member
P2	Male	Member
P3	Male	Member
P4	Male	Member
P5	Male	Member
P6	Male	PhD student
P7	Male	Potential Member

Note: Members NedO

Table 3

Meetings	Participants involved	Location
Meeting 1: 18 April 2019	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6,	Home P1
Meeting 2: 9 mei 2019	P1, P3, P4, P6, P7	Home P3
Meeting 3: 28 mei 2019	P1, P2, P4, P6, P7	Home P2
Meeting 4: 12 juni	P1, P2, P6, P7	University Nijmegen
Meeting 5: 25 juni 2019	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7	Home P4

Note: Participants meetings

Interviews with NedO's members and its potential supporters

After the 5 meetings, the researcher conducted 9 in-depth semi-structured interviews. These interviews were performed to give insight into the progress of the initiative, their internal and external communication, and the interviewee's perspective on SD, storytelling, the collaboration and NedO itself.

In order to find the right participants for the interviews, the researcher decided to firstly pick 3 members of NedO, based on observations made during the meetings, and secondly, ask the members of the initiative which potential supporters they have had contact with during the full process of the initiative. Since members P3 and P4 have been members from the beginning and thus experienced the full process from until the present day, it seemed the most logical choice to interview them about the process of the citizens' initiative's quest for potential supporters. During these interviews it was discussed how the members view the SD ambitions of the initiative and external actors, and how they experienced their conversations about

their ambitions internally and externally. Also, potential member P7 was interviewed, who is still in the process of deciding whether to be part of the initiative or not. Since he has been present at a couple of meetings and thus had multiple conversations with the initiative to explore whether or not he wants to support the initiative, it was interesting to interview him about his experiences. This interview gave clarity on whether NedO is able to make a connection with a potential member, on important matters regarding SD. Lastly 6 other external actors have been interviewed, from a previous potential member who has chosen not to join NedO, to a founder of a nature organization active in the Ooijpolder, to farmers, a dairy factory consultant and an employee of the municipality. These external actors have all been in contact with NedO before and/or during this research period, to explore whether they would like to collaborate. This made it interesting to explore their visions. In Table 4 you will find a full list of the participants interviewed. In Appendix 1 the interview blueprints can be found.

Table 4

Codename participant	Gender	Type of participant
P3	Male	Member NedO
P4	Male	Member NedO
P7	Male	Potential Member (external actor)
P8	Female	Potential Member (external actor)
P9	Female	Nature organization (external actor)
P10	Male	Farmer (external actor)
P11	Male	Farmer / Member farmers association (external actor)
P12	Female	Dairy factory consultant (external actor)
P13	Male	Municipality (external actor)

Participants interviewed

Document analysis

Lastly, the researcher had access to documents made by NedO's members, via Trello. Here documents were found such as the formulated objectives, the initiative's newsletter, meeting minutes and action plans. These documents were analyzed synonymously with writing the results, to see if important information was missing and should be added.

Coding and interrelating the data

After the process of data collection, the data found was then analyzed, coded and interrelated by the use of ATLAS.ti. Figure 5 shows the data analysis process.



Figure 5. Data analysis in qualitative research. (Adapted from Creswell, 2014, p.197)

After transcribing the meetings and interviews, a code tree was made by the following process: the researcher started out with open coding, where all the imported data were given random codes that came into mind; then, after the open coding process, the axial coding process was started, where all the different codes made were compared with each other and sorted within overarching codes. The axial coding process led to the creation of a set of main categories with accompanying codes. After defining the categories, the categories were interrelated with the concepts from the theoretical framework, SD and storytelling. In Figure 6 you can find the code tree created by the researcher. This code tree was used as a guiding principle for the results chapter (Chapter 5).

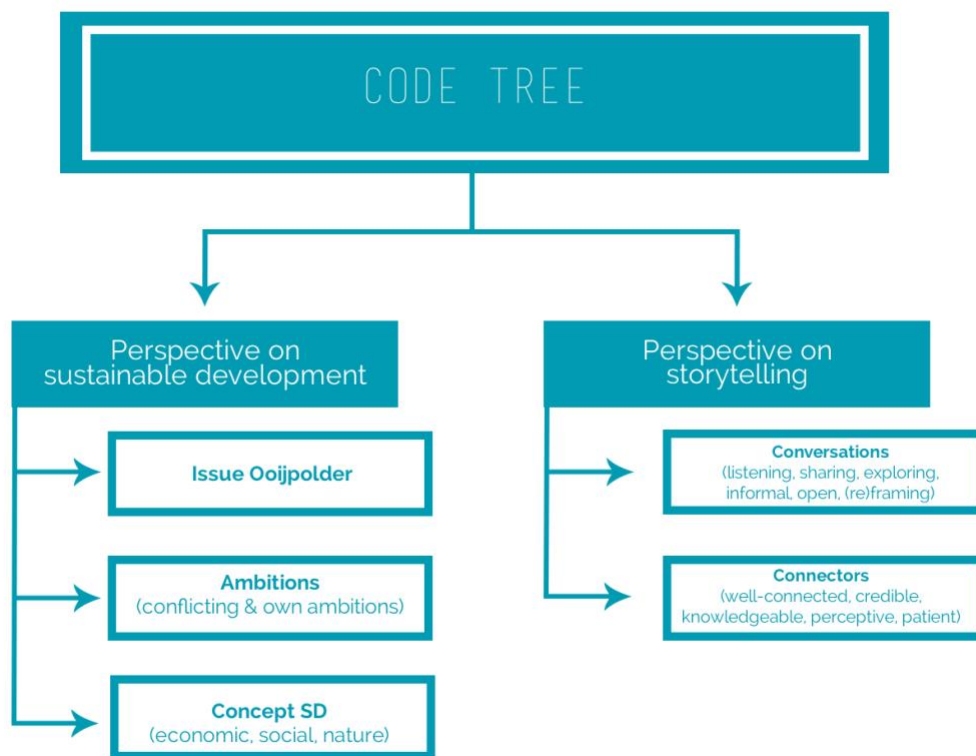


Figure 6. Code Tree

4.3 Validity and reliability

To increase the validity of this research, the researcher has used triangulation of methods (observation, interviews and document analysis). But since this qualitative research is interpretative and thus the data is measured by the researcher herself, it is difficult to ensure validity and reliability. This because there are certain threats like for example the Elite Bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994), this means the researcher might pay more attention to participants with a more outspoken opinion. This could have been avoided by for example finding another student to jointly interpret the data found.

05

RESULTS

5. RESULTS

This chapter elaborates on the results found through the collection of data. This research is based on one main question and two sub questions (which can be found in Chapter 3). These questions were explored through interviews, observations and the analysis of documents. This chapter presents the information found in the data collection process. The following chapter (Chapter 6), will discuss the results found by its practical applicability, generalizability and the strengths and limitations of the research. Whether and how the research questions are answered, will be concluded in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 will give recommendations for future practices. In order to get a clear overview of the participants described in this chapter, go to Table 4 of Chapter 4.

5.1 Perspective on sustainable development (SD) Concept SD

When it comes to the concept of sustainable development (SD) one overarching comment is that the concept can be seen as an all-purpose concept that is hard to grasp.

"It is a very broad concept. In that way it can be seen as an all-purpose concept [...] it is a concept that exceeds many other concepts. So not only nature, not only environment, not only energy, it is the whole pallet." (P₃ – member NedO)

"SD is, well I am telling nothing new now, but in my opinion, it is an all-purpose concept. Therefore, it is important to explore the concept together. There are so many aspects important: social aspects, nature aspects, economical aspects... such a broad concept is important to explore together, otherwise you might talk past each other." (P₁₃ – employee municipality)

There can be differences found though, in which aspects are deemed most important to the different actors. Table 5 shows an overview of these different views on the concept. As can be seen, there are some differences in what SD encompasses. During the meetings the members have sometimes questioned out loud whether certain important actors have the same view as them, when it comes to SD. But, the interviews with citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder' (NedO)'s members P₃ and P₄ show there have not been thorough discussions about the concept.

"well we did talk about SD, formally and informally, but not really in depth. We just started out with the story I wrote (Figure 8) in the local magazine, and that story was already quite clear. So we just assumed that people who joined the initiative had the same view. But I think there are differences in opinion about it... [...] maybe we should have discussed it... on hind sight. (P₄ – member NedO)

Also, when potential member P₇ was initiated in the project, it was observed that the clarification of the concept was no point of discussion during the meeting. Potential member P₇ was not questioned on his SD view for the Ooijpolder or what it meant to him, nor did NedO's members give a clear explanation themselves. The meetings mainly focus on ideas to achieve SD and how to get there, instead of what it

actually means or why it is important. But the opinions on whether it is important to come to a clear understanding of the concept of SD, when starting a project, differ.

"Well no we did not speak about SD and how we see it. But I think that concept is not really important to discuss... It should be more about what are we going to do, what is our role and in what way can we achieve SD, what can we add? That is missing." (P7 – potential member)

"You should clearly frame what SD means to you, also to keep it manageable, it can mean so much...[...] You should be discussing what is not sustainable, what is the issue... first mention the issue... and well their issue is that there is a decrease in insects and thus a decrease in birds. But if that is your sole issue, you should be very clear about that... that means their name (Off to a sustainable Ooijpolder) is too big of a label." (P8 – potential member)

"Such a broad concept is important to explore together, otherwise you might talk past each other." (P13 – employee municipality)

Table 5.

Participant	Focus SD	What it means
NedO (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing biodiversity - increasing farmland birds - increasing insect populations - reducing decline of landscape
P3	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sustainable farming for nature conservation
P4	Nature, Social, Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - considering future generations - energy - agriculture - food
P7	Nature, Social, Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - politically determined - power differences - socially determined - climate
P8	Nature, Social, Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - system thinking
P9	Nature, Social, Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - system thinking - important to keep in mind the 'people'-side of it all
P10	Nature, Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing biodiversity - soil management
P11	Social, Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being able to maintain your Family
P12	Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - energy - business
P13	Economic, Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employment opportunities - energy

Sustainable development focus

As explained, the interviews and observations show there haven't really been thorough discussions about the concept of SD. Therefore, many of the external actors express they aren't fully sure which side(s) of SD the initiative is planning to focus on. But, their conversations with NedO gave them the impression that

NedO is solely focused on the nature side of SD, with a main focus on biodiversity. Also, during the meetings there seems to be a main focus on nature.

"We do not focus on the grey side of it, the energy side for example. We are mainly focused on biodiversity". (P4 - member NedO)

"They are looking at the issue from the side of the birds... so, that is quite important because that is not all it is." (P8 – potential member)

"I see a focus on biodiversity and a better soil life." (P12 – dairy factory consultant)

"I did get the impression that they mainly link the concept of SD to biodiversity and eco chains in the Ooijpolder." (P13 – employee municipality)

Since most of the external actors have the impression that NedO is striving for SD of the Ooijpolder with a focus on nature, many of them express a concern for the lack of interest in social and economic sustainability. Even though most of them state it is fine to have a specific nature SD goal, they mention the group should not forget to include the other aspects of SD as well.

"I feel like they should really consider the social aspect of it...[...] the way towards your goal is also SD, that is the people-side. You should really take people along in your decision-making process." (P9 – nature organization)

"With these men ecology plays a bigger role than economy. [...] If you solely look at ecology without considering the economy side... than it will just fail [...] they should make plans economically attractive." (P11 – member farmers' association)

According to potential members P7 & P8, such a holistic view on SD means including the farmers in your decision-making process, make sure all the important actors in the area have a voice and thus, the whole system is taken into consideration. The meetings and interviews with the NedO's members do show they are aware of the possible need for a holistic approach, but they seem to struggle with finding the right balance because the members' main shared ambition and focus is improving biodiversity.

As this chapter shows, the concept of SD is often seen as an all-purpose concept. The results show there are many differences in opinions on what SD encompasses. Ranging from economic, social and environmental SD. It is clear that all the different stories regarding SD, internally and externally do not align well. The main issue is that many of the external actors believe SD should be approached holistically and they doubt whether NedO is aiming for a holistic approach. As the literature found in the theoretical framework shows, coming to a collective meaning of the concept of SD can improve collaborations and discussing the concept collectively can lead to clarification of collective goals and ambitions.

Issue Ooijpolder

All the participants involved in this research tended to describe the issues in the Ooijpolder in a similar way. The main overarching issue is the intensification of agriculture and its effect on the nature in the area. The interviews and the meetings clearly show concerns about the deterioration of the landscape, the decrease in biodiversity and the water level in the Ooijpolder.

"12 years ago I moved to the Ooijpolder, I could see it is a beautiful place but the agricultural areas seemed as dead as can be [...] I also noticed less insects when cycling through the area. So, two years ago when I read a story about plummeting insect populations, I was sure this was also happening in the Ooijpolder. [...] Because of knowledge gained during my previous job, I also knew the amount of farmland birds was decreasing rapidly." (P4 – member NedO)

"Off course the farm management in the Ooijpolder is an issue, the soil gets depleted and it is drying out. The water level is very important for the farmland birds, and it is just way to dry currently. [...] I agree with the citizens' initiative; the intensification is an issue." (P9 – nature organization)

Even though some of the external actors also argue that the Ooijpolder shouldn't be an area of too much concern when comparing it to other agricultural areas in the Netherlands (potential members P7 & P8), all of the participants think there are enough areas of improvement and spaces for opportunity.

"Off course you can see issues in the Ooijpolder, but in comparison with other areas it is not as bad. I would like to see things from an opportunities-side; take opportunities, use the Ooijpolder as a testing ground and use it as an example." (P7 – potential member)

"We can see that there is an ever-increasing drop-out in the agricultural area, there is a clear momentum imminent. There seems to be an absence of successors and money in the agricultural businesses in the Ooijpolder, which leads to the need to make a decision on what to do next. This can be seen at the side of nature, agriculture and water management, so we can state that the system is ready to be radically devised. Who is going to take the initiative to do something about this?" (P3 – member NedO)

Thus, there are no important differences found when it comes to describing the main issues in the Ooijpolder. Although the different participants do value different aspects when it comes to improving the Ooijpolder, such as the importance of recreation (potential member P8), addressing the missing link between customer and farmer (potential members P7 & P8, and P9 (nature organization)), improving the livelihood of the farmers (P7, P8, P9, and member farmers' association P11) and decreasing the land lease to mono-culture farmers (farmer P10). Even though all the interviewees express the same concerns when it comes to SD issues in the Ooijpolder, the interviews and observations have shown there is little deliberation between NedO and their external actors (P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, dairy factory consultant P12 and municipality P13) on what the exact issue is and how it should be tackled.

Ambitions

The interviews and observations show there are many visions on ways to go about improving the Ooijpolder's nature and decreasing the impact of intensive agriculture, and thus achieving SD. The main difference between NedO and the external actors is the size of the steps willing to take, and the degree of caution. While NedO is striving to make big changes, others seem to wish for more caution.

"I am not at all cautious, and P₃ has worked in this area of interest for many years, he feels something needs to happen, so he is not cautious either. [...] I am prepared to take a risk, because then we might actually achieve something. If we do nothing, we will achieve nothing." (P₄ – member NedO)

"In my experience, change takes about 15 years...when you really fundamentally want to change things, you just cannot take quick, big steps." (P₈ – potential member)

NedO's members themselves, on the other hand, believe other actors in the Ooijpolder are being too cautious by only taking little measures.

"a lot of the stories here, are about the edges of the agriculture, so literally the field margins and conservation strips. They are not talking about agriculture as a system. I think the citizens' initiative is looking much wider." (P₃ – member NedO)

"Maybe we won't achieve anything, and maybe the others will... but it is not much, not enough. So, I doubt whether their approach will actually yield something." (P₄ – member NedO)

So, even though all the participants' views on the issue in the Ooijpolder seem to align, the ambitions on how to get to the preferred future differ. Internally the main issue seems to be on keeping structure in all the different ideas and prioritizing which measures are most important. Externally there are more critical differences in ambitions.

Internal alignment of ambitions

When observing the meetings and interviewing the members of NedO, a couple of things become apparent about their ambitions regarding SD of the Ooijpolder. The main observations are as follows

1. There is unclarity between the members on which ideas are most important, and whether to pursue small or larger ideas
2. The members are shifting from focusing solely on the Ooijpolder to other surrounding areas
3. The initiative is focused on doing something new instead of adding to existing projects

During the course of the initiative's existence, the members have come across many different ideas (see Table 6). It is clear that, from time to time, NedO's members get overwhelmed by the amount of ideas they have.

"yes, we did make an inventory on what the problems are in the Ooijpolder, what we can do about them and where the opportunities lie. But, one thing we weren't able to avoid is that our plans go in all sorts of directions, we can do this, we can do that. Still, three months ago I have made a 3-point plan to get a better focus, but again our ideas go in all different directions." (P4 – member NedO)

The members of NedO started out by focusing on plans that were doable on their own and where the results could be seen quite rapidly. The 'satellites' idea (table 6) is an example of such a plan.

"Lets stay energetic... this plan is one we can just grab... and the other bigger plans, where we don't directly see change... I don't know. But this! This we can just do ourselves." (P1 – member NedO)

But it can be noticed that the initiative members sometimes get distracted from their collectively deliberated ideas, by opportunities that come along.

" [...] we were a bit like... going from chances that came along, to another chance that appeared." (P3 – member NedO)

"maybe we won't achieve anything [...] we might be opportunistic, but we go for chances that appear... and whether it ever works out..." (P4 – member NedO)

Table 6

Plans of the initiative	Description of idea
Connecting	The main ambition of the NedO is to serve as 'connector' by connecting important parties to create change in the Ooijpolder. They hope to give others direction and let them take responsibility.
Satellites	Buying or renting land in the Ooijpolder to create landscapes that improve biodiversity, or for example, create a food forest. But, first find a student to do research on promising areas (satellites) in the Ooijpolder.
Dynamic water level	Helping the water authority to make a plan for biodiversity
Collaboration GNMF	They would like to collaborate with GNMF on three ideas: -getting the Ooijpolder on GNMF's shortlist of their action plan 'nature inclusive agriculture' -the organization of a symposium -gain help with the satellite idea
Dairy Factory	Connecting local dairy farmers with the dairy factory in Groesbeek to produce local, sustainable milk, that must comply with specific bird directives.
Symposium	Organizing a symposium to get an overview of all the different ideas on sustainable development for the Ooijpolder and connecting important actors

Plans of the initiative

During the meetings it became apparent that the members find it difficult to decide on which track to follow and whether to take big measures or take smaller steps into developing the Ooijpolder sustainably. One thing that is clear, is that the members believe that what is being done in the Ooijpolder currently, is not enough to solve the SD issues.

"I hope that at least we get something done, and hopefully we don't collapse beforehand, because that is possible [...] It could be a big step, in terms of the dairy factory, or small steps, where we add a bit more green to an area" (P4 – member NedO)

It is clear that some of the members are wishing for big changes, of which, according to their own saying, the outcome is quite uncertain, but could mean a big change for the intensive agriculture issue in the Ooijpolder. But others still doubt whether starting out with smaller steps is the way to go about it. One member (P3) clearly states in the interview he had rather started out smaller, by for example realizing natural stepping stones in the area. But after following the initiative's meetings for a while, a clear shift can be noticed from taking small and slower steps towards SD, like other actors in the area are also doing, to taking bigger steps, where they hope to achieve a big change. Even though serious doubts are expressed amongst the members, the focus of the meetings started to revolve more and more around one big idea: the dairy factory (see Figure 7). But, this plan caused discussions to arise on whether or not to trust the founder of the dairy factory and whether farmers will be inclined to make the shift to producing sustainable milk.

"When the story of the dairy factory came along [...] I thought hey, this could be an opportunity to make a really big step in one go [...] such a big step that some people dropped out, because they think it is risky and because they do not trust the owner of the dairy factory [...] I hope the dairy factory will work out and farmers don't become deceived when they decide to make the transition to Koolen, if he decides to shut down the dairy factory after 2 years."
(P4 – member NedO)

Overview dairy factory

DDP (Dutch Dairy Products), owner of a former chicken farm in Groesbeek, decided after deliberation with the municipality of Berg & Dal to turn the farm into a dairy factory for shelf-stable milk. After hearing about another successful sustainable dairy project called Amstelland near Amsterdam, and after hearing about the dairy factory of DDP, NedO decided to see whether it was possible to use the dairy factory in Groesbeek to process sustainable, local milk from the surrounding areas of Nijmegen, including the Ooijpolder. While the municipality and DDP were dealing with many opponents of the dairy factory, the idea of NedO was welcomed happily. With this idea NedO hopes that farmers in the Ooijpolder can farm in a more sustainable way, in order to increase the biodiversity in the area.

Figure 7. Overview dairy factory

Other ideas, as mentioned in Table 6 are also still mentioned during the meetings. But the dairy factory idea is taking up most of the space. NedO's shifting focus on the dairy factory has also led to a shift in focus area. In order to pursue the idea of the dairy factory, the initiative needs to broaden its scope from solely the Ooijpolder to the surrounding areas of Nijmegen. It became clear from the interviews with the current

members of NedO and from observing the meetings, that NedO is very focused on doing something new and different, and setting an example for other areas. They are not deliberating to join existing projects.

"Well see, this is how I see it, if someone else is doing something similar to us already [...] then I feel like ok, they are doing fine, let us pursue different routes. [...] I am not going to compete with clubs that are actually striving towards the same goal." (P3 – member NedO)

"So we have been having some contact with different organizations in the area... there is a lot happening already, so I am starting to lose the overview. Like yes, if some initiatives are already running... where can we add something? Let's not do anything twice, where can we add something new?" (P1 – member NedO)

One thing that keeps on reappearing is their uncertainty about the dairy factory and whether they should be striving for more short-term goals.

"But what I was thinking... it would be a shame if all that milk comes from Groesbeek... and that the Ooijpolder is out of the picture." (P2 – member NedO)

"We want to do something! That's the difference in my opinion. We are not able to get to the doing-part... maybe we should just get some satellites and DO SOMETHING! How long will the research of the dairy factory take? Two years, and then there will be follow-up investigations, and in all that time, not much has changed." (P4 – member NedO)

The members are very clear about the fact that if they keep on working on the dairy factory plan, they will purely try to connect parties who can then start investigating its feasibility. They want to inform and help where needed but do not want to take responsibility for the outcome

External alignment of ambitions

When it comes to inviting new potential members (P7 & P8) to the group, the members of NedO find it difficult to align their ambitions with the potential members and give space for input or new directions. Within the 1,5 years the initiative exists, several potential members have entered the group and left in quite a short amount of time. It is also noticed by the members themselves that it is difficult to keep potential members as official members of the initiative.

"Then you can see how difficult it is, with the core of the group we are quite unanimous, but the people that are potentially added think we go too far, or too quick, also organizational." (P4 – member NedO)

The interviews with the potential members made it clear that ambition-wise everyone is quite similar-minded. The main issue they all wish to address is the effect of intensive farming on the biodiversity in the area. But, the exact goals and ways to get there differ and cause tension.

"They actually lack a clear view on the agriculture in the Ooijpolder [...] but I was interested in the beginning, because well we all have the rightful wish to increase the biodiversity."
(P7 – potential member)

When it comes to the collaboration with the nature organization, the municipality and farmers, there are many similarities in ambitions but again big differences in how to achieve the SD goals. Regarding the municipality (P13) and the consultant of the dairy factory (P12) there are no shared ambitions on the SD of the Ooijpolder. The ambitions that are shared, are focused on making the dairy factory a success. NedO sees the dairy factory as a success when dairy from surrounding farmers can be processed and sold as local sustainable milk through nature-inclusive farming. The municipality and the consultants of the dairy factory see the dairy factory as a success when opposition from surrounding citizens and organizations decreases. Together they were able to create a shared ambition because there is a relationship between the two ambitions.

"Uhm well... the municipality mainly looks at the economy, employment and actually not really at nature." (P3 – member NedO)

"Well you can easily align our goals. The municipality was trying to find a way to positively enhance the plan of the dairy factory, turning a need into a virtue. The original plan of the dairy factory was to heat the milk enormously and put it on a train to China, so nothing local. So, our goal was: how can we make this better? The goal of the citizens' initiative was clearly to increase the biodiversity of the Ooijpolder through changing farming practices, by also offering them an economical perspective. And the goal of DDP is to increase the support for his plans and letting consumers pay more money by delivering local milk with a certain quality mark. So it was a win-win-win. [...] We were very happy there was a club that came with the initiative, and it appeared to be a club with expertise, who have spotted similar projects succeed, such as Amstelland, where dairy farms have made the transition to sustainable farming. That is what they also want in the Ooijpolder. [...] And this suits perfectly with the municipality's goals of short food chains." (P13 – employee municipality)

Others (P7, P8, nature organization P9 and member farmers' association P11) have serious doubts about the dairy factory and seem to opt for NedO to follow different tracks when it comes to achieving their SD goals in the Ooijpolder. P9 (nature organization) has been improving the Ooijpolder for about 15 years already by making small adjustments to the landscapes in collaboration with farmers. She believes the dairy factory project is bound to fail. She, but also P11, does not think farmers will leave their contract with Friesland Campina. They are concerned that there won't be enough dairy farmers in the surrounding area of Nijmegen to make the plan a success. Next to that, P11 believes consumers of Nijmegen are not willing to pay extra for local, sustainable milk.

"The initiative refers to a project in Amsterdam, Amstelland, but we have looked into that and came to the conclusion that Nijmegen is very different from Amsterdam in whether they are willing to pay, or can pay, extra for the milk. Of course, when we look at the canal belt of Amsterdam... they can pay the extra amount, but Nijmegen? So, to actually sell the amounts of milk the initiative is thinking of... I think it is almost impossible." (P11 - member farmers' organization)

"They need to do a market research, but well.. I already spoke with some experts who say it is very unlikely to succeed in Nijmegen." (P11 - member farmers' organization)

The interviews with external actors showed they have expressed ideas on different tracks to the initiative to achieve their SD goals. These tracks are as follows:

1. Connecting farmers in the Ooijpolder with consumers from the surrounding areas, such as Nijmegen. For example, by finding consumers who would like to manage specific pieces of land of the farmer and buying products from that specific farmer. This way the consumer gets local produce and the farmer has a secure income (potential member P7 & founder of the nature organization P9)
2. Working together with Campina to find better solutions. This because farmers probably won't make the transition anyways and Campina is also becoming more sustainable and interested in local milk (member farmers' association P11)

Also, P10 (farmer) expressed his ideas of achieving SD in the Ooijpolder, but has not yet had the chance to speak with the initiative thoroughly. His vision on tackling the SD issue in the Ooijpolder is by creating changes in the current land-lease system. Instead of letting big mono-culture farmers lease the land of farmers in the Ooijpolder and that way ruin the land, find ways to attract more sustainable farmers to lease the land or even help them lease the land with subsidies.

The results clearly show it is quite difficult to align the SD ambitions for the Ooijpolder internally and externally. Internally it is mostly difficult to stay focused on a single solution because of opportunities crossing their paths and the enthusiasm for all the different ideas they have come across. Externally it is clear that, since NedO is very adamant on realizing change in the Ooijpolder the way they intend to, there is little room for ambitions and concerns of others.

5.2 Perspective on storytelling

Conversations

Sharing and aligning

As explained before, there are quite some different views when it comes to achieving SD goals in the Ooijpolder. But how clear are the citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurame Ooijpolder (NedO)'s ambitions told internally and externally, and is their story seen as relevant and meaningful to potential supporters? What is the plot of the story?

When this research started, the researcher was handed NedO's newsletter of January 2019 (Figure 8). This newsletter starts out with the question: "How do we make the Ooijpolder an organic mecca?". Within this newsletter NedO's members explain their goals for the Ooijpolder. It stands out that NedO is striving for sustainable agriculture, making the Ooijpolder economically interesting, also for tourism, connect the inhabitants of Nijmegen and its surrounding areas to farmers in the area, and thus organizing large-scale sustainability initiatives. Also, this newsletter presents some of their specific plans. But the initiative decided not to widespread the newsletter nor openly share their ambitions and plans. So far, they have only done so in personal contact with potential supporters, by sending the newsletter beforehand and arranging meetings.

"We very consciously did not spread any information yet, because we do not have anything to gain with it yet. To spread it widely...these is nothing to gain. We also do not want to be on the foreground, we just want to be a party that connects people. That is a very conscious choice. I can tell the initiative's story very well, about what we do, but we consciously decided not to. [...] Why would we communicate everything to the general public, if we get everything done? [...] if we need to convince more people, find people to join us, do some crowdfunding, then you should communicate externally." (P4 – member NedO)

"Well, I am just careful. I feel like if you bring out your story, then you need to have a solid story. One where you can show how things work, show some results like see we have done this and see this beautiful result. [...] otherwise you might get accused of well 'what you are doing, we have been doing that for 10 years already, why do we need another club?'" (P3 – member NedO)

When asked in the interviews, P3 & P4 (members NedO) are not sure whether the stories of all the members align.

"Well the basics are fine but I notice that, and then I am talking about our amateurism, we never all have the exact same story, that is true... because... well we are not organized tight enough. But I don't think it matters, the basics are the same." (p4 – member NedO)

"We don't really have a collective vision, we did not make a policy plan. I think we are all a little bit too stubborn for that." (P3 – member NedO)

During the course of the meetings NedO's members started to develop more of a storyline (Figure 9) in order to make sure all the members have the same vision and create clarity within the group. They also (re)framed the story after conversations with the municipality (P13) and the dairy factory consultant (P12). This happened because it became clear that their story, which solely focusses on the Ooijpolder, would not suffice for the scope of the dairy factory project. But even though NedO is still adamant on not publicly sharing their story, the other actors interviewed doubt whether this is the right way to go about it. The interviews with external actors also show that there is a lot of uncertainty around what the initiative's exact ambitions are and whether it is something they support.

"That's why I struggle with the concept 'thé citizens' initiative'. Do you get that? Aren't I a citizen? I just do not think it is right. They are not telling a story from the whole width of the Ooijpolder. It is a couple of people who have a certain vision, which they keep to themselves, it is not really clear yet, actually really vague, I just really do not get it." (P9 – nature organization)

Just like the P9 (nature organization), others (farmer P10, member farmers' association P11 and dairy factory consultant P12) are expressing in the interviews that they are not sure where the initiative is heading, what their ambitions are exactly and which steps they are planning to take in the area. P9 (nature organization) also tells that after a meeting organized by Healthy Landscapes of Radboud University, where one of the members of the initiative spoke about the Ooijpolder, she and other attendees, she mentions, hoped to get a better view on the initiative's plans. But other than seeing the member of the initiative's passion about nature, they were all wondering afterwards what the initiative stands for. But also the potential members (P7 & P8) mention they are missing a clear story. P8 (potential member) mentions she experienced the introduction of the initiative, when she joined a meeting, as abstract and vague. Also, the P7 (potential member) expresses he is missing a clear vision. He explains that during the meetings there is no constructive building of a good story apparent.

"A compelling story... a story or a question you know? Shouldn't there be a question like 'how do we see the Ooijpolder in 30 years?'. Talk about that together... you know... what is going on? Where are the opportunities?" (P7 – potential member)

One thing that some of the interviewed mention (P7, P8, P9, P11) is that the story needs to be built collaboratively with all important actors within the Ooijpolder. Now external actors mention they experience that the initiative has a set story of what they wish to achieve and they are pressuring this story on actors to make it happen. The potential members (P7 & P8) and P9 (nature organization) explain the importance of creating a story collaboratively. Not only within the initiative but also with external actors.

"What are you coming to do here? You are going to tell me what I need to do? Thanks but no thanks.' You know, that is what I am noticing. We as an initiative are coming with good ideas, and you need to carry it out. Well.. that should be different... you need a good story! First really connect and then build a story." (P7 – potential member)

"This is what I experience more often with small initiatives. Those initiatives can be like okay we think this is going wrong, it is really bad, and WE are going to change this! And then I feel like, well, have you actually explored what is already being done? And then they will say 'Well why? Nothing is happening right?'. And then I think well... wait a minute..." (P9 – nature organization)

After three meetings the researcher also notices that the story is not yet clear for the potential member (P7). When asked by the PhD student (P6), if the potential member (P7) is able to explain what NedO is about, the potential member (P7) answers he finds it difficult to explain. One thing that kept on popping up during the interviews is that the initiative seems to stick to their own story of what should change in the Ooijpolder and how. And the interviewee's (potential members P7 & P8, and the founder of the nature organization P9) explain they would advise to collaboratively create a story with other nature organizations in the area, farmers and citizens. Instead of sticking to their own story and keeping it hidden for the bigger public. Another advice is to listen to already existing stories of actors present in the area to see where the initiative can help or work together.

"Where can we help, and what is your own perspective? If you want to make sure the birds stay in the area, well then what is already being done? If someone has a good project, like P9, then connect to that. If you think she is falling short, then help her..." (P7 – potential member)

But even though other actors experience little openness from the initiative and little ambition to work collaboratively with other actors in the area. This is also experienced the other way around.

"You know what irritates me, it is not that I think we should not work together... but we are trying to approach others and they keep us at arm's length and are not keeping us updated... just tell us what you are doing.. as if we are a threat..." (P4 – member NedO)

When it comes to the dairy factory project, NedO is able to align their story to that of the municipality (P13) and the dairy factory consultant (P12) quite easily. Although the dairy factory consultant (P12) is not quite sure what the story of the initiative is exactly, she is very positive about the collaboration with NedO, and how they are able to create a storyline together, with a sole focus on the dairy factory.

"They are definitely people with knowledge and enthusiasm, but maybe because they are not really formally organized...it is hard to give a clear explanation of what they stand for. That they wish to develop the Ooijpolder sustainably, well I believe that, but there are so many different ways to get there, and that is not really clear to me, if all the members are having the same idea of how to get there." (P12 – dairy factory consultant)

Also, the employee of the municipality (P13) explains it is clear to him what the initiative is wishing to achieve and explains NedO appeared to have expertise when it comes to the subject of SD and biodiversity. He experienced the alignment of his story, that of the dairy factory and that of NedO as an easy process. But when looking at the different interviews, it can be seen that P13 and NedO do not have the same view on the roles that will be taken during the project. P13 clearly states he, and DDP (Dutch Dairy Products) see NedO as the driving force who will take the leading role in the project. NedO on the other hand sees itself as the

connector who connects important organizations to get the project going, and having a facilitating role, so they can move on to a new project once it has started.

It is clear that, at the end of this research, the initiative is starting to become more aware of the fact they should be more transparent with their plans.

"What we should be doing, and we have said that before, is everyone has a right to get informed, to know what we are doing, you have to be transparent, as a group. Let's start doing that and take control of the communication ourselves, actively." (P1 – member NedO)

Passages story newsletter january 2019

"How do we make the Ooijpolder an organic mecca? Was the title of an article in De Mourik, the magazine of bird group Nijmegen, in the fall of 2017. Writer Chris van der Heijden saw a pale looking agrarian landscape next to beautiful nature reserves along the flowery dikes, who are often enjoyed by bikers and hikers. Many bird species have left the Ooijpolder, while the insect population is noticeably reduced. Next to the intensive agriculture with its green billiard sheets, the lifeless cornfields, artificial manure and pesticides, does climate change add to the decrease in biodiversity"

"A flourishing polder is important for the economy and tourism in the area, also for the residents of Rijk van Nijmegen. The call from the municipality of Berg & Dal, for shorter food chains, is an opportunity for farmers to make the transition. While simultaneously climate change is asking for a redesign of the water management system."

"Our main goal is to get large-scale initiatives going, focused on the sustainable development of the area and high nature values. This so the Ooijpolder gets sustained for next generations. Next to that, we hope to create a win-win situation for farmers and nature lovers."

Figure 8 Passage newsletter January 2019

Passages story initiative june 2019

"The citizens' initiative Berg & Dal biodiverse & Sustainable would like to increase the biodiversity of the municipality of Berg & Dal. With this initiative we are striving to develop the agrarian land use and management, sustainably. "

"The area of Berg & Dal is rich in nature and beautiful landscapes. The rural environment of Berg & Dal has great value for the residents of the municipality, as well as the surrounding municipality. And for the thousands of holidaymakers that visit Berg & Dal and its surrounding areas. But for many plant and animal species the environment of the rural area is developing increasingly to an ecological desert. For years already, biodiversity is decreasing. Especially birds and insects are harmed."

"The citizens' initiative wants to connect all involved parties (agrarian entrepreneurs, citizens, government bodies and others). Based on initiatives elsewhere, that have showed their worth, we want to help launch specific initiatives with which agrarian organisations can make a transition to nature inclusive farming. This way we would like to restore the biodiversity in the polders. The initiative does not want to stand in the way of already existing initiatives and organizations already active in the municipality of Berg & Dal and wants to support as much as possible but has a clear goal to significantly enlarge the impact of nature measures. With a couple of blossoming field edges, we are not going to stop the decrease in biodiversity. We are going for bigger measures, because it is 5 to 12 and substantial measures are needed to balance out nature, animal and its environment."

To get these substantial measures going, the citizens' initiative will act on different tracks. From landscape design, new water level to citizen participation and food forests. One of the first tracks where the citizens' initiative is active, is in connecting important actors to develop the current dairy production system to a sustainable one, from nature-inclusive soil management to delivering locally produced dairy products to the consumer.

Figure 9 Passage plan van aanpak Berg & Dal

Careful listening & empathizing

When it comes to careful listening and empathizing with the nature organization, farmers, the municipality and potential members of the initiative, a couple of things stand out, which will be summarized in this chapter. The interviews show that everyone is certain that the motives of the initiative come from a good place: an actual concern for the wellbeing of the Ooijpolder. But they do not always feel heard or feel like there is empathy for important matters. Especially when it comes to the concerns from farmers, other nature organizations and potential members, about the dairy factory, people do not feel heard. The potential members (P7 & P8), the founder of the nature organization (P9) and the member of the farmers' association (P11) express they do not feel the initiative is very open to listening to concerns regarding the dairy factory.

"I told the initiative that there used to be more dairy factories, but those are cooperations of which two are already bankrupt... [...] too many insecurities for the farmers... they are not going to do that. [...] I told them 'start with the Ploegdriever, have exploratory conversations together with the farmers', that's what I would have done. [...] I feel personally involved in the matter, but they just put aside all the things I have said." (P8 – potential member)

Also, during the interview with the farmer (P10) he expressed that if he would have started such an initiative, he would have started out by contacting the Ploegdriever (an association that supports farmers in the area) and collectively would have explored the subject of biodiversity and how to tackle the issue together. Potential members (P7 & P8), P9 (nature organization) and P11 (member of the farmers' association) all state they have expressed similar concerns, of not empathizing with farmers and not collaboratively coming up with solutions. They all feel like these concerns are put aside by the initiative because they have their focus set on a particular outcome: the dairy factory.

During the interview, P4 (member NedO) explains he believes most of the group members do listen well to others, but they are very adamant to keep the positive energy flowing to stay active. Internally there is a huge drive to realize a successful project that creates substantial changes regarding the intensive agriculture in the Ooijpolder. The members of the initiative are clear about their willingness to take risks that might harm their image as a citizens' initiative, as long as the outcome is substantial. But it does seem to lead to a certain set focus where there is little room for discussion.

"Well see, you do not want to lose your enthusiasm by people who slow you down [...] we have put in many hours already and then someone just swoops in and tells us 'no you should do that differently'." (P4 – member NedO)

But others clearly believe NedO is not really listening to the concerns raised and are not open to discussions to find a collectively agreed path to follow. P7 (potential member) expresses in the interview that he is not sure the chosen approach, to focus on making the dairy factory a success, is the right one. He and others that were interviewed (potential member P8, founder nature organization P9 and member farmers' association P11) believe the owner of the dairy factory is untrustworthy and if the farmers make the transition, which means leaving Friesland Campina, they might face the risk of going bankrupt if the dairy factory of DDP turns out not to be successful.

"Yes you might be right as a citizens' initiative but if everyone around it is expressing their concerns... then the question is 'should you push through your idea'. When I listen to people around me who know a lot about the farmers in the area, they say 'the farmers are not going to that dairy factory. And why? Because farmers have a good deal with Friesland Campina, and Friesland Campina is also becoming more sustainable'. [...] If you leave Friesland Campina you will not be able to return." (P7 – potential member)

NedO seems to be well aware of the problems that farmers might face when making the transition to DDP. And according to the interviews, they have been warned a lot. They are currently making a business plan to make the transition attractive for farmers and explore the feasibility of the project. But the concerns still remain: what if the dairy factory of DDP doesn't turn out to be a success after a couple of years? This leads to the concern of different actors that sometimes they experience little empathy from the initiative when it comes to the livelihood of farmers or activities initiated by other organizations. P9 (nature organization) clearly stated that when she got first addressed by the initiative, they were very negative about what was already done in the area. To her, this felt like a slap in the face, because she has been trying to improve the Ooijpolder for many years already.

"And then they came to talk like 'yeah the Ooijpolder needs to be more sustainable, organic, etcetera' a whole story and then they asked me what I thought...well I have been working in this area since 2002 [...] so I have been working really hard on that already and then it is just quite hard to hear like yeah as if it was not important. [...] And I don't think they are very respectful towards farmers, like yeah, the farmers need to change, I know they do but it is the way it is being said where I have problems with." (P9 – nature organization)

Also, during the meetings and interviews with NedO's members it becomes very clear that the way the group communicates towards farmers might cause farmers to feel attacked and that way create resistance. When the members of the initiative started to set up a new story (figure 9) in order to give a clear view on their ambitions, potential member P7 expressed his concern for the defensiveness he felt in the text and the way farmers were sketched as causers of desert lands. In his opinion the farmers should be addressed with more empathy and in a way that initiates collaboration instead of resistance.

"I find the text very defensive...[...] But if you will say, dear people we would like to work together with you in the coming 50 years, what do we need to do to help you transition to sustainable farming." (P7 – potential member)

When you look at the end result of the new story, that has been set up near the end of this research, these two issues still appear. The sentence: 'But for many plant and animal species the environment of the rural area is developing increasingly to an ecological dessert.' is still present in the text. And the sentence: 'With a couple of blossoming field edges, we are not going to stop the decrease in biodiversity. We are going for bigger measures, because it is 5 to 12 and substantial measures are needed to balance out nature, animal and its environment.' shows the same stance towards P9 (nature organization) as she has expressed in the interview.

P9 (nature organization) is afraid that the carelessness of NedO might also harm her work. She expresses if farmers turn out to be duped by project groups willing to increase biodiversity, they might become less and less open to such projects. Which eventually might lead to a lack of trust from farmers towards her projects as well.

"Just telling the farmers what to do [...] We are not going to do that, you will have them against you if you do. We just go to them and say ok this is your ground? What is going well, how are things going? What could you connect to? What would fit in your business operations? [...] So with respect, not "what you are doing here is wrong... yeah that won't work out well, if you contact them as if you know what is best." (P9 – nature organization)

Another causer of tension appears to be the openness to criticism. Potential members (P7 & P8) feel they have a lot to offer knowledge- and network-wise, but do not feel heard when expressing their concern. Both potential members advise the group to join current movements and projects in the Ooijpolder area, instead of creating something new and potentially throw a spanner in the works.

"I am really against not joining current projects. I think, if you want to achieve something in an area, you need to join existing projects and not just do whatever you want. In my perception they are just doing whatever they want [...] looking at what other people are already doing and seeing if you can join them... to me that seems way more effective than again starting something new [...] P9 is working on sustainable development with Radboud University, and that is another thing, they ignore this completely, even though she is working on this in a scientifically responsible manner, when it comes to increasing insect biodiversity." (P8 – potential member)

"The great thing about a citizens' initiative is that they find new ways of doing things, that is great. But when you surpass all the different parties already active in the area, who are also looking to improve the area, or who maybe already booked some results, or who have an enormous network... if you just surpass them and take big measures, well that is just odd." (P9 – nature organization)

But the main cause for concern is the dairy factory. The following issues arise:

- Is the owner trustworthy?
- Should and will farmers take the risk of switching from Campina to the yet to establish dairy factory of DDP?
- Might farmers be duped if the dairy factory turns out to be unsuccessful?
- How secure is the project?
- Are farmers able to make the transition, financially?
- Is the dairy factory project beneficial to the Ooijpolder?

P8 (potential member) advised NedO to make a business model in order to make the transition more lucrative. But she still questioned whether there would be enough farmers in the Ooijpolder that would make the transition. At the moment, the initiative is working on providing this business model, but the same questions arise with P7 (potential member), who is currently part of the process.

"You said that all involved parties are unanimous, aren't we aware that we haven't had any farmer sitting at this table?" (P7 – potential member)

He (P7) also raises questions on whether the ambitions of creating sustainable milk in the dairy factory is beneficial to the SD ambitions in the Ooijpolder, since he questions if there are enough dairy farmers in the area.

"[...] finding farmers in the surrounding area of Nijmegen... I think well I want to work in the Ooijpolder... what's the use of this? I feel like we should focus more on the Ooijpolder, that area, and make an action plan based on the Ooijpolder." (P7 – potential member)

"Well and P7 said he joined NeDo to do something for the Ooijpolder... well we all did, but I don't care if we also focus on areas outside of the Ooijpolder. Gain is gain. Preferably in the ooijpolder, because that is where I live, but well..." (P4 – member NedO)

It can be noticed that NedO's members are very positive about achieving their SD ambitions by collaborating with the dairy factory of DDP and are trying to keep a positive attitude about the outcome. They do not seem to be able to get their way of achieving their ambitions aligned with those of potential supporters. During the meetings it is apparent that there is little room for discussion about whether or not to pursue the dairy factory track.

"we agreed with each other and maybe we should state it more clearly, if some of us say we do not want to join the dairy factory track, I do not trust Koolen, I do not like milk, I am lactose intolerant, whatever, you do not want to talk about it... then I will say fine, you don't have to talk about it, maybe we can find you another project, instead of trying to convince each other all the time... that is not going to work. Then we are discussing all the time while we could actually make a really big step in the right direction [...] We have been having this discussion for a while. We've had new people at this table before who have a certain opinion about the dairy factory and I notice that we are less opposed to the idea, more pragmatic." (P1 – member NedO)

"See, P7 said 'I do not want to attach my name to such a project', well then.. he should leave. Because I do want to attach my name to it and I don't care if it fails, I just want to try." (P4 – member NedO)

But the potential members (P7 & P8) have expressed serious doubts about the dairy factory in terms of feasibility and sustainability.

"That is the Nimby side of a citizens' initiative 'Not in my backyard'. They want to have a beautiful Ooijpolder but they dump all the misery in Groesbeek. [...] they did not want to talk about that [...] that is why I left." (P8 – potential member)

"Well I feel like working with DDP... I think well... I spoke to a couple of people and everybody is confused about it. And you know, even though you feel like you are doing the right thing as an initiative, if everyone is raising serious doubts then I question if you should push through your goals [...] Next to that, farmers are not going to make the transition to the dairy factory

of DDP. Why not? They are getting a good price at Friesland Campina. And you know what, Friesland Campina is also making its practices more sustainable. [...] If they leave Campina, they can't get back." (P7 – potential member)

The results show that when it comes to conversations, there is still a lot to learn. Even though NedO is successful when it comes collaborations regarding the dairy factory, it is doubted by many of the interviewees whether this is a collaboration the initiative should aim for. External actors do not feel heard when it comes to their concerns about the dairy factory plan, nor do they feel the initiative is very open about what their exact ambitions are for the Ooijpolder, causing a lack of trust from external actors towards NedO.

Connectors

Credible & knowledgeable

One thing that became clear from the interviews and the meetings is that everyone agrees the motivations of NedO come from a good place, an actual concern for the well-being of nature reserve the Ooijpolder. Within the group there is grounded knowledge about nature and biodiversity. But some of the interviewees do express their concern about the professionalism of NedO. Some of these concerns are as follows: they doubt whether NedO is organized professionally (P7, P8, P9, P12), whether the group has historical knowledge about the area (P8, P9), whether they are aware of what is currently going on in the Ooijpolder (P7, P8, P9), and whether they have enough knowledge about farmers and agriculture (P7, P8, P9, P11).

The employee of the municipality (P13) and the consultant of the dairy factory (P12) express they are very pleased with the enthusiasm of NedO and their knowledge on nature and biodiversity. They see NedO as a credible and knowledgeable partner. Dairy factory consultant (P12) does express the initiative could organize themselves a bit better professionally, to take a leading role in the dairy factory project. But as can be noticed during the interviews with NedO's members and the meetings, NedO is happy in their role as facilitator instead of driving forces of the project. Both P12 (dairy factory consultant) and P13 (municipality) have noticed that other parties, mostly nature organizations, are less positive about NedO. Both have heard other actors say NedO's members are solely birdwatchers, not professionals that should be taken seriously.

On the other hand, the potential members (P7 & P8), but also P9 (nature organization) are not so sure about the credibility and knowledgeability of NedO. They believe NedO's members are too focused on the end goal of their plans and not enough on creating a solid base to build projects on. They mainly believe NedO should take more time to explore the history, current projects and opinions and ideas of other nature organizations, citizens and farmers.

"They do not know the history of the area well enough, what has happened. And they do not use the knowledge there is on what has happened, from networks that exist already. It seems like they are blindly following a certain model of the Dutch Society for the Protection of Birds, when it comes to the dairy factory." (P8 – potential member)

Well-connected & patient

The interviews show that NedO is not always seen as a party that is well-connected with actors that are seen as important for the Ooijpolder. Everyone sees there is a clear connecting between NedO, the municipality and the dairy factory, but most of them (potential members P7 & P8, founder of the nature organization P9 and the member of the farmers' P11) don't see this as a connection they should strive for. P11 (member farmers' association) argues a connection should be made between the initiative and Friesland Campina, because farmers will most likely not make the uncertain transition to the dairy factory of DDP, and Friesland Campina is the place where, if changes are made, the most influence will be exercised in the area. P7, P8 & P9 argue NedO should focus on connecting with nature organizations in the area and farmers. This because nature organizations active in the Ooijpolder are seen as similar-minded people and farmers are the once that can eventually realize actual change.

"Natural partners... they should find natural partners... not the people from the dairy factory of DDP, not those slick smooth talkers." (P8 – potential member)

One of the things that keeps popping up during the interviews is the idea that NedO lacks a real connection with the farmers in the Ooijpolder. P7, P8 and P9 fear NedO is lacking collaboration and are too concerned about getting what they need to succeed as an initiative, instead of bringing in what farmers might need.

Remarkable is the fact that the initiative solely consists of male members and potential female members have all left the initiative.

"How can there not be any women in the group? Women are connectors, they keep a family together." (P8 – potential member)

But this is something the initiative itself is also aware of. NedO's member P3 mentions in his interview that diversity within the group would give them a stronger position as a citizens' initiative and thus they would love to include females, younger people and farmers in the group. Also, since the issue is all about improving the outlook for next generations. But they find it difficult to make these connections.

The meetings and some of the interviews (P7, P8, P9, P11) do show there is a certain stance from NedO towards farmers that might make it difficult to connect with them. In these interviews the actors show their concern for the way NedO approaches the issue, which is in their opinion very oriented towards farm birds and less oriented towards the livelihood of farmers.

"Well... and those farmers then are like... why? We have already done so many things? But then we have to explain well everything on your land is dying...if you tell a farmer 80% of their farm birds are gone..." (P4 – member NedO)

Also, one of the members (P4) expresses he is not always sure they connect well with other actors. In his interview he mentions he wasn't sure if P8 (potential member) was really getting the point of what the initiative was aiming for during their meetings. He says he wonders if they, as a group, were too prepossessed even though he believes they are very open to input.

One of the things P9 (nature organization) is worried about is that there are too many people working on their own projects in the Ooijpolder. In her interview she told she once had a conversation with the previous mayor of the municipality of Berg & Dal and he said: 'with every square meter in the Ooijpolder I can put at least 30 flags in the ground from people who think the Ooijpolder is theirs'. She feels NedO leaves a similar impression, where instead of connecting with other actors they leave the impression they believe they know what is best for the Ooijpolder.

Also, P7 (potential member) tells a specific story during the meeting and during his interview about the time he helped organize a symposium in Bemmeler, a town near Nijmegen. They were planning to keep a panel discussion about sustainability, but P7 advised to keep an open meeting where citizens, farmers and youngsters were posed the question: what would you like us to do the coming 50 years for SD? This way he believed people would feel like they have a say in the matter, are taken seriously and a connection would get formed between the organizers and the invitees. And, P7 expresses, that way you might learn something new, a new way to solve sustainability issues.

When it comes to patience, the meetings and the interviews with P3 and P4 (NedO's members) show NedO finds it difficult to see that projects in the Ooijpolder have only led to small results. They are very motivated to bring about bigger changes in the Ooijpolder. As P3 (member NedO) says: *"I am quite an impatient person [...] If I start something, I would like to finish it in a short time span, I want to see results."* P8 (potential member) also mentions in her interview that the initiative should be careful not to want to go too quick, not to take too big steps. She, and P7 (potential member), advises to take time to explore the issue fully, know the history, get to know all important actors and collaborate with farmers, citizens and existing projects.

According to the interviews many external actors fear there is a lack of connection with important actors in the Ooijpolder. It is believed NedO should strive for a connection with natural partners in the area that are actually aiming for the same goals, or with farmers who are the ones able to create change, instead of connecting with actors like the municipality and the consultants of the dairy factory, who have little to no concern about the SD of the Ooijpolder.

06

DISCUSSION

6. DISCUSSION

Governing styles in the current Dutch society are transitioning from more top-down approaches to bottom-up approaches, where one's own responsibility is becoming more and more important (Van de Wijdeven, 2012; Van Dam et al., 2014; Igalla & van Meerkerk, 2015). Citizens are getting more responsibilities, which leads to new forms of collaboration between the citizens, organizations and government bodies. This research has focused on a citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder (NedO), who focusses on sustainable development (SD) of their living environment: the Ooijpolder. Implementing certain SD goals relies on deliberation and negotiation between diverse actors in order to create a shared objective (Fowler & Biekart, 2017). But also, when it comes to finding support for your goals and ambitions, as a citizen's initiative, storytelling is important. So, in order to find out to what extent SD citizens' initiatives are able to find support through storytelling practices, this research has explored in what way such a citizens' initiative is able to align its SD goals internally and externally (sub-question 1) and whether storytelling influences the willingness of potential supporters to collaborate (sub-question 2). In this chapter the results of this research will be discussed and evaluated according to existing theories. Also, the practical applicability and limitations will be described in this chapter.

6.1 Perspective on sustainable development

To what extent do NedO's members' stories regarding their sustainable development goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder align internally and with those of potential supporters?

Citizens' initiatives rely on internal and external collaboration in order to achieve their goals. When establishing a SD citizens' initiative, such as 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder' (NedO), the shared vision of the future and the means necessary to get there should be explored collaboratively. To make progress towards their SD goals and create multi-stakeholder partnerships, it is important for the citizens' initiative to get a clear image of the problem and the ambitions of all the different actors involved. Striving for SD can mean many different things for different actors. As stated before, SD is not about teaching people the true meaning of the concept, but about collectively reaching an agreement on the desired future (Robinson, 2004). Sub-question 1 therefore explored the citizens' initiative's process of understanding the different perspectives of the different actors involved to see whether they are able to co-produce a collectively preferred outcome.

The results show that there are different opinions on whether the concept of SD has been explored thoroughly enough, internally and externally, and whether it is important to do so. As Martens (2006) explains: the concept of SD is normative, subjective and complex, and partnerships should therefore rely on mutual learning (Kemp & Martens, 2009). NedO's members explain they have not always taken time to explore the concept of SD internally or externally. As the members have expressed: they were often more focused on how to achieve SD, instead of exploring the concept first, because of their enthusiasm. NedO's

members are not quite sure whether the concept should have been explored more thoroughly, but they are aware that the views on it differ quite a lot between them and the external actors (i.e. the nature organization, potential members, farmers, municipality and the consultants of the dairy factory). According to theory found, it is important to understand all the different interpretations of stakeholders involved, in order to co-produce a collectively preferred outcome. This way a sense of urgency, to solve the issue at hand, might arise (Robinson, 2004; Giddings et al., 2002; Ganz, 2011). While there is a lot of previous research done on the complexity of the concept of SD and the importance of finding a common understanding, there are no theories present that focus on whether collaboratively exploring the concept of SD increases the chances of finding support as a citizens' initiative. The data found in this research reveals that, in the case of citizens' initiative NeDo (Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder), there is an external request to jointly clarify the concept to create a joint perspective on the specific SD issue and a belief that it will positively affect collaborations. The data shows that some of the external actors feel a collaborative exploration of the concept of SD might decrease turmoil and could keep everyone involved on the right track. Results that can be taken into consideration by citizens' initiatives when trying to find support for SD plans.

This research has also mapped out the different views on SD from the members of NedO and a selection of their potential supporters, to see whether the views match or clash. According to theory found, SD can be seen with a focus on economy, social aspects and nature. In order to reach SD, it is advised to strive for a holistic approach where all the different aspects are balanced (Kaiser et al., 1995; Harris & Goodwin, 2001; Robinson & Tinker, 1997). The results of this research contribute to a clearer understanding of how deciding on which SD aspects are deemed important influences the level of support gained. The data found by the interviews held show there is a belief amongst the external actors that NedO is solely focusing on the nature aspect of SD and thus not approaching the SD issue in the Ooijpolder holistically. The external actors are therefore concerned that important social and economic SD aspects are not taken into consideration whilst NedO is making plans. This concern seems to stand in the way of certain collaborations with potential supporters who believe SD should be approached more holistically. A lot of members of the academic community, but also organizations and civil society believe integrating a holistic approach to SD is essential in order to achieve real progress towards SD goals and in order to make sure the plans made meet the needs of people concerned and make sure the community improves (Griggs, et al., 2013; UNEP, 2013; Harris & Goodwin, 2001; Robinson & Tinkel 1997; Kaiser et al., 1995). Although, It is not specifically proven that a more one-aspect-focused approach will surely lead to an inability to reach SD. Nevertheless, seen from the results of this research it could strategically be interesting to explore the wants and needs of external actors and thus create a more holistic approach of SD collaboratively, in order to gain support for SD plans.

The data found shows that internally it seems to be difficult to coordinate which SD plans should be pursued. Pursuing smaller or larger projects? Is a question often addressed during the meetings and the interviews with the NedO's members. This uncoordinated approach seems to be a bottleneck to creating a clear SD plan, thus far. Also, it has caused NedO to redirect focus on opportunities that arose, such as the dairy

factory. Which seems to stand in the way of creating collaborations. Because, even though NedO is still deliberating on which plan to follow for certain, to the outside world they appear to be set on one specific goal: doing something new in the area by establishing a collaboration with the dairy factory. This seems to be a point of concern for their potential supporters. The results show that some of the external actors believe there is no room for input of others, nor a willingness to cooperate with existing projects in the Ooijpolder, since the dairy factory plan arose. The consequence of this is that potential supporters interviewed, hesitate to enter into collaboration. These results fit with theories found on how deliberation and negotiation is of importance for a citizens' initiative to find support, by informing others of your exact plans and leave room for the interpretations of others (Van Dam et al., 2010) Complete self-organization does not seem advisable because there is an interdependency of different actors when it comes to SD issues like NedO is wishing to tackle (Torfing & Sørensen, 2008; Fowler & Biekart, 2017; Brouwer et al., 2016; Dreijerink, Kruize & Van Kamo, 2009).

6.2 Perspective on storytelling

To what extent does NedO incorporate Van der Stoep's (2014) factors that create a relevant story, in their process of gaining support, and are they used successfully?

When it comes to finding support for your goals and ambitions, as a citizen's initiative, storytelling is important (Van der Stoep, 2014). As Van der Stoep (2014) explains: in order to get support you should make stories stick. To do this, she advises citizens' initiatives to focus on conversating well (listening, empathizing, sharing and aligning) and on connecting (being credible, knowledgeable, well-connected and patient) (ibid.). Sub-question 2 therefore explored which of these factors were incorporated in NedO's stories while trying to find support, and whether they were used successfully.

As Van der Stoep (2014) says: "to successfully mobilize attention and support [...] promoters of proposals need to listen attentively, and emphasize with, what is said and the issues raised by potential supporters, i.e. attentive navigation of their self-referential frames. Thus, storytelling is not about transmitting stories, but involves careful listening, empathizing, sharing and aligning." (p. 209). As the previous chapter showed, many of the external actors interviewed feel NedO does not always come across as being interested in the input of others. External actors express they are concerned that NedO is solely trying to get what they need, i.e. improving nature and biodiversity in the surrounding areas of Nijmegen by producing local sustainable dairy produce in collaboration with the municipality of Berg & Dal and the dairy factory, instead of bringing in what others might need, i.e. how can we help farmers and other nature organizations in the area to collectively achieve SD in the Ooijpolder? The results of this study show that, because of this, external actors believe NedO is not fully connecting with other actors involved in the area and thus not including them in the development of their story.

The data found by the interviews taken show that many of the external actors are unable to retell NedO's story. Most of the external actors interviewed express they are not sure what the plot of the story of NedO is and what their ambitions are for SD in the Ooijpolder. As is in line with the theories found, the external actors express that creating a clear story could be advisable in order to gain support. The interviews showed that there is an external perception that NedO's story solely revolves around the collaboration with the dairy factory. It became apparent that this is the story that stuck. Even though previous research explains that it is important to make a story stick (Van der Stoep, 2014), the data found during the course of this research shows the sticking of this exact story might not actually be NedO's wanted effect of their storytelling practices. But, even though the dairy factory plan is not the sole goal of the citizens' initiative, their focus did shift more and more towards the dairy factory plan, and the story of the dairy factory therefore seemed to become all-determining. According to the data found, the externally perceived narrowing of the story has made it very difficult to connect with potential supporters, since it is a plan that worries many of them. This perceived narrowing of the story is very unfortunate since it seemed to create a rather negative stance towards the citizens' initiative from potential supporters. This negative stance has arisen because of the fear that external actors have about the potential failing of the dairy factory plan. The nature organization in the area for example, has been trying to create a good bond with farmers in the area for many years, and is afraid that the potential failing of NedO's dairy factory project might negatively influence farmers' bond with nature organizations in general and influence their willingness to collaborate with them in the future. According to the theories found, this outcome could have been expected when the plot of the story, i.e. the desired future, is not developed interactively. It could therefore be important to deal with all the different realities stakeholders have by collaboratively creating a clear story (Throgmorton 1996; Forester, 1999; Van Dijk, 2011).

The results of this research show that many of the external actors advise NedO to approach others differently: what do you need? What can we bring to you? Which means: listening to the stories of others, to their worries and criticism, and being open to their ideas, to find a common ground. These results confirm the theory that imagining a future collaboratively and coordinating all the different perspectives on an issue facilitates planning practices and motivates people to take action (Forester, 1999; Sandercock, 2003; Van Hulst, 2012). Storytelling is seen as an important means to enable change and can assist in dealing with conflicting goals and interests by finding what should be seen as most important and relevant, but also what is worth time and attention (Forester, 1991; Bate, 2004; Gabriel & Connell, 2010; Boje, 1991). Stories should therefore leave room for interpretations and criticism of others, and receivers of the story need to feel invited to incorporate the story with their own experiences to make it meaningful to them (Baker, 2010; Van Dijk, 2011; Bednar, 2013; Gelauff-Hanzon et al., 2016; Van Dam et al. 2010). So, to achieve a positive connection, one should realize it is crucial to listen and empathize with potential supporters (Van Hulst 2012; Van der Stoep, 2014).

When exploring the internal story amongst NedO's members, it was found that there are actually many different stories apparent, i.e. a lot of different ideas to achieve SD in the Ooijpolder. NedO's members have expressed that this plurality of ideas, and the lack of any results to show, have made them collectively decide not to wide-spread a story yet. This thinking seems logical because the 'showing' of visible successes is often a better motivator for potential supporters to join a project, than solely 'telling' is (Gelauff-Hanzon et al., 2016). But the interviews with external actors show this decision stands in the way of collaborating. Not creating a clear story on how to achieve SD in the Ooijpolder, could be why it seems to be difficult to find support and build a common ground for decision-making (Van Dijk, 2011; Van der Stoep, 2014). Theories found explain that the level of exposure of a citizens' initiative is a factor that often influences whether or not it is possible to achieve a common perspective with potential supporters (Van Meerkerk et al., 2013).

According to this research the professional organization of NedO also seems to be a bit of an obstacle to gaining the wanted support. The results show that all the external actors believe NedO's members have grounded knowledge about nature and biodiversity. But, some of the external actors worry that NedO has not tried to achieve a broader understanding of the issue at hand, i.e. investigating the history of the Ooijpolder, exploring current projects in the Ooijpolder and collecting opinions and ideas of others. In order for storytellers to learn, and get positive responses to plans, knowledge on a certain situation, i.e. the possibilities apparent and the needs of others, need to be acquired (Benford & Snow, 2000; Benford, 1986). According to Van Hulst (2012) it is important to listen well to past events in order to prepare for events in the future. This is something the NedO's members themselves are fully aware of. They are currently exploring how to become professionally organized. But, to what extent NedO should focus on this formalization is debatable, since the act of formalization can lead to abstract ongoing discussions and thus can cause them to drift away from concrete action (Van Dam et al. 2010). As can be seen from this research, finding support as a citizens' initiative can be a messy process where time-investment, deciding on goals or which roles to take on, and the level of professionalism are all factors of influence that citizens' initiatives have to learn to deal with.

This research shows it is not an easy process to connect with potential supporters by storytelling. Even though NedO was very successful in connecting with the dairy factory and the municipality, most of the external actors believe NedO should strive to connect with different actors: natural partners. According to Van Dam et al. (2010), connecting is one of the most important aspects of gaining support. Gaining sympathy for plans by connecting with the desires of others seems to be important in order to get an overview of the issue at hand. Focusing on connecting can result into widely supported plans. How to effectively connect with potential supporters is always a quest for citizens' initiatives, since they usually start from enthusiasm and thus are often not instantly organized professionally. Initial strategies are mostly not very consciously and timely planned (ibid.) Even though much of the literature found focusses on the importance of connecting (Forester, 1999; Sandercock, 2003; Van Hulst, 2012; Baker, 2010; Van Dijk, 2011; Bednar, 2013), a certain level of autonomy is also important, i.e. having knowledge and experience, to create

a positive external image (Van Dam et al., 2010). According to Van Dam et al. (2010) the most important qualities a citizens' initiative should have, are enthusiasm, perseverance and endurance. This is also very apparent within NedO. Even though the process of finding support and finding the right direction is not a piece of cake, their enthusiasm keeps them adamant to learn and adapt.

At last, the results show that internally and externally there is doubt whether NedO represents the entire target audience, since there are no females, younger people or farmers part of the initiative. This issue links to a concept found in the literature: the participation paradox (Hartman, 2000). Where a non-random selected similar-minded group of citizens might not represent the full target audience. According to the Hartman (2000) this last issue is one that should definitely be taken into consideration when starting a citizens' initiative. Paying attention to the group composition is an important step for connecting with the area, i.e. creating a group of both men and women, farmers and non-farmers, local people and people who are not from the area (Van Dam et al., 2010). This is an aspect that is not yet fully addressed within NedO, since previous attempts of diversifying the group have not succeeded.

Limitations and follow-up research

This study extends existing knowledge on citizens' initiative's practices by exploring the effectiveness of storytelling in gaining support from external actors. This study differentiates itself from other studies by focusing on SD initiatives in particular. Although this research has provided interesting results, they must be interpreted in light of some limitations. First of all, a single case study is not always successful in capturing a clear picture since the researcher is reliant on his or her own abilities and instincts during the study (Reis, 2009). Since this research was conducted by one researcher, the presence of researcher bias should be considered. In addition, opinions of participants were measured subjectively and can therefore be influenced by socially desirable answers or memory impairments (Mulder et al. 2011).

When it comes to the theories used there are also some limitations found. Quite an extensive list of studies can be found on the concepts of SD, storytelling and citizens' initiatives. But, findings on the practical implications of storytelling practices within an SD citizens' initiatives were limited. It was interesting for my own learning and for the members of the citizens' initiative NedO, to gain a deeper understanding of the interactions between these concepts. It should be noted though, that sustainable development (SD) is a rather complex and ambiguous concept, as explained in the theoretical framework. A lot of research has been done on the concept of SD over the years, however, barely any of the research done captured the full complexity of the concept: a clear unanimous definition of the concept, or how certain barriers to using the concept of SD can be overcome. Also, with this research, it was not possible to do so. SD is interpreted in many different ways by the actors involved in this study, and which aspects of SD are deemed most important (nature, social, economic) also differs between them. Due to these differences in perception, and the fact that many actors did not consider discussing the meaning of the concept or were able to give an

explanation of the meaning, it was difficult to analyze the effect it had on gaining support. Also, the fact that this was a single case study, made it difficult to draw conclusions on the effect of using the term SD. It can therefore be advised to investigate multiple SD citizens' initiatives to explore the differences of how the term SD is addressed internally and externally and whether this leads to differences in support gained.

Citizens' initiatives themselves are also quite complex. Conflicting interests can make it difficult to jointly set achievable SD goals. During this research, for example, the citizens' initiative was currently very focused on one specific goal: collaborating with the dairy factory. This specific plan was subject to a lot of negative views from external actors. Since mainly this plan, and not the other plans of the citizens' initiative, was on top of mind for many external actors, the data gained from interviews with them might be influenced by this. During a different timeframe, where other plans were more apparent, external actors could have viewed the citizens' initiative's storytelling practices more positively, and thus would have felt a better connection. Also, the number of participants interviewed in this research is limited. The results therefore give a slightly distorted image of the level of support the citizens' initiative has managed to get. For example, during this study one nature organization has been approached, even though the citizens' initiative has been in contact with several more. It was therefore difficult to get a realistic perspective on what was going on and to what degree the initiative was connecting with natural partners. Within the time-span of this research it was not feasible to expand the amount interviewees. Next to that, the initiative has been very active in planning meetings with nature organizations, farmers and government bodies during the whole process of this research. It turned out to be difficult to get a clear overview of all the progress that was made in between the interviews and the writing of the end chapters of this research. Therefore, it is possible that the citizens' initiative has been able to find a better connection with actors in the area of the Ooijpolder in the meantime. To get a clear overview on if and how a SD citizens' initiative is able to find a common perspective with potential supports, it can be advised to follow such an initiative for a longer period of time.

Because of the small sample size, it was also difficult to ensure actual anonymity. All the participants can easily trace back information to conversations held and thus anonymity is easily lost. Would you then, as a respondent feel completely comfortable in giving your opinion on certain matters? Maybe not. But even though it was expected that the data collected in the interviews would be influenced by socially acceptable answers, the openness of the interviews seemed to make it possible for the interviewees to feel at ease and thus an atmosphere was created where they felt free to share their visions in all honesty.

Furthermore, many questions remain or have originated from this research. Questions such as: Is it easier to find support when the concept of SD is explored more thoroughly internally and externally? What are the effects of a holistic SD approach? What are the effects of interactively developed plots? And so on. A perspective for further research is therefore to broaden this study to multiple cases in order to make a comparison and see whether generalizable conclusions can be drawn that can be used as a guiding principle for future SD citizens' initiatives looking to find support.

07

CONCLUSION

7. CONCLUSION

In this research, on the basis of the literature found, the claim was made that it is important for sustainable development (SD) citizens' initiatives to collectively come to an understanding of the concept of SD and desired change for the future through storytelling, in order to connect successfully with potential supporters. To examine this claim, the case of 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder' (Off to a sustainable Ooijpolder) was analyzed. This has led to the following main research question:

In what way do the storytelling practices of citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder'(NedO) lead to creating a common understanding of the sustainable development goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder, internally and externally, and to what extent does it influence the level of support gained?

In order to formulate an answer on the main research question, two sub-questions are proposed and will be briefly reflected upon in this chapter.

7.1 Sub-question 1

To what extent do NedO's members' stories regarding their sustainable development goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder align internally and with those of potential supporters?

During the course of this research it was found that the members of the initiative are quite similar-minded when it comes to their SD goals. Although the members do question whether the concept of SD should have been addressed more clearly. Their main struggle during the process internally, is finding focus and deciding on which track to follow towards their desired change. The initiative is sometimes overwhelmed by all their different ideas to achieve SD in the Ooijpolder and seem quite easily persuaded to follow a new track when an opportunity arrives. These shifts in focus sometimes made it more difficult to align the members' stories, because every new plan provokes new explorations of views and perceptions and thus often lead to differences in opinion. But, they often seem to find internal consensus quite quickly again.

Externally more difficulties are found when it comes to aligning their SD goals and desired change. As explained, the citizens' initiative was doubting whether or not they should have explored the concept of SD more thoroughly internally and externally. External actors on the other hand are clearly wishing to explore the concept collaboratively in order to keep everyone on the same track. Next to that, external actors are afraid the citizens' initiative is too focused on the nature side of SD, and thus are concerned that social and economic aspects are not taken into consideration. In addition, many of the external actors believe the citizens' initiative is solely focused on the dairy factory project, leaving them worried their SD goals are not aligning. The external actors that are active in the Ooijpolder (farmers, citizens and nature organizations) and thus seem important partners in collectively achieving SD in the Ooijpolder, do not feel included in the story and the decision-making process of the initiative. Since there are very different opinions on the way

the initiative should operate, which projects would be most beneficial to SD of the Ooijpolder, which actors to include in the decision-making process and how openly one should distribute their story, it is difficult to align their SD goals and desired change stories with those of potential supporters who are active in the area. The citizens' initiative is successful in finding support from the municipality of Berg & Dal and the dairy factory of DDP, but it is questioned by other external actors whether the citizens' initiative should be pursuing such a project. It can therefore be concluded that to a certain degree the initiative is successful in aligning their stories with potential supporters, but which external actor they should be approaching is still up for debate. It is doubted amongst certain external actors whether the citizens' initiative's current practices will lead to accomplishing their initial goal: SD in the Ooijpolder. This leads to a hesitation to collaborate amongst potential supporters

7.2 Sub-question 2

To what extent does NedO incorporate Van der Stoep's (2014) factors that create a relevant story, in their process of gaining support, and are they used successfully?

It is clear from the findings that external actors are afraid that the citizens' initiative is mainly focused on getting what they need instead of bringing in what others might need. A different approach is therefore requested: 'what do others need?'. Also concerns about the lack of connection that is being made by the initiative with farmers, citizens and nature organizations, seem to be a barrier to gaining support. This is mainly because external actors perceive the citizens' story as one that is solely focused on the dairy factory plan. This perceived narrowing of the story creates a negative stance towards the initiative, amongst external actors, and thus makes it more difficult to find a connection. This issue shows that it seems difficult for external actors to retell the story of the initiative and thus the exact ambitions are not known. The main criticism that has been expressed was whether the dairy factory project is worth putting so much time and effort in, because the dairy factory plan is not one that is supported by many actors who are active in the area. When other ideas were opted to strive for SD of the Ooijpolder, the external actors did not feel heard. It is clear that there is an external wish to interactively develop the plot of the story.

Most of the external actors do not seem able to retell the story of the citizens' initiative. Even though not presenting a clear story as a citizens' initiative can be a logical strategy, external actors express it stands in the way of forming collaborations, since they do not feel included in the story. So when it comes to the factors of Van der Stoep, conservations and connectors, there is still some learning that can be done.

7.3 Main question

In what way do the storytelling practices of citizens' initiative 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder'(NedO) lead to creating a common understanding of the sustainable development goals and desired change for the Ooijpolder, internally and externally, and to what extent does it influence the level of support gained?

As one could expect when starting up a citizens' initiative, storytelling appeared to be quite challenging in order to come to a common understanding of the SD goals and desired change in the Ooijpolder. One of the main factors standing in the way seems to be the perceived narrowing of NedO's story towards the dairy factory plan. Even though NedO's members believe working on the dairy factory project in collaboration with the municipality of Berg & Dal and the dairy factory might be a big step towards SD of the Ooijpolder, it seems to stand in the way of finding connections with other potential supporters. This research shows that external actors interviewed are not fully sure what the exact vision of NedO is, but are afraid NedO is too focused on the dairy factory plan, and thus hesitate to collaborate. In order to find support through storytelling, it is important to collaboratively, internally and externally, create a clear story and to be transparent about your vision. Which means listening to concerns and ideas of others and incorporating their views and opinions. It can be concluded from this research that, thus far, it has not been an easy process to try to come to a common understanding of SD and the desired change for the Ooijpolder, internally and externally, and therefore there have been some struggles in finding strong connections. But, it is clear from this research that the citizens' initiative's members are a very enthusiastic group of people, with great ideals and perseverance, who are adamant to learn and adapt. Therefore, it is likely they can become more professionally organized and better connected internally and externally by incorporating social learning practices and keeping in mind some of the recommendations below.

08

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Although this research was not aimed at giving recommendations, since it was mostly explorative and descriptive, the results did lead to some recommendations that can be implemented in practice. This chapter will give some recommendations that might help the citizens' initiative 'Naar een Duurzame Ooijpolder' (NedO), but that could also guide other SD citizens' initiatives who are in the process of gaining support.

8.1 Recommendations sustainable development

Recommendation 1: Exploration of SD

A lot of previous studies on multi-stakeholder partnerships emphasize the importance of exploring an issue collectively. Understanding the different perspectives of other actors is seen as an important factor for co-producing a collective preferred outcome. This research had a main focus on collaboratively exploring the concept of SD when trying to improve a living environment, to see whether this increases the chances of collaborating with potential supporters. Even though the concept of SD is seen as an all-purpose concept by most of the participants, and thus difficult to define, many of the external actors believe exploring the concept collaboratively can prevent confusion about what is deemed important when trying to achieve SD, but they also believe it might improve the chances of a successful collaboration. It can therefore be advised to firstly explore the concept internally to come to a common understanding, and then explore the concept with external actors in the pursuit of finding partnerships. The exploration of why and how SD should be approached could lead to more clarity amongst all the stakeholder involved on what is seen as the desired future for their living environment.

Recommendation 2: Holistic approach to SD

It became clear from this research that, according to the interviews held, there is a belief amongst the external actors that the citizens' initiative is solely focusing on the nature aspect of SD and thus not approaching the SD issue in the Ooijpolder holistically. Even though it is not proven that prioritizing one single aspect of SD will lead to a lesser outcome when putting plans into practice, it is quite widely believed a holistic approach to SD is beneficial to making real progress. Also, the external actors interviewed express this, in their view, one-sided focus stands in the way of building steady collaborations. It could therefore strategically be interesting to explore, next to what is important for the improvement of the environment, the economic and social wants and needs of external actors and thus create a more holistic approach of SD collaboratively, in order to gain support for certain plans. Striving to incorporate a more holistic approach to achieving SD, means including all the different stakeholders involved in your decision-making process, make sure all the important actors in the area have a voice and thus, the whole system is taken into consideration.

8.2 Recommendations storytelling

Recommendation 1: Creating a clear and attractive story

During the interviews it became apparent that the external actors are not able to retell NedO's story. They express it is not clear to them what the exact ambitions of NedO are. As this research showed, it has been a strategical move of NedO to not widespread any information before being able to show some positive results from their practices. But, this has led to the external perception that NedO is solely focusing on the dairy factory plan, which has led to NedO being perceived quite negatively by external actors. When dealing with a collective issue such as SD in the Ooijpolder, it is important to listen to concerns and ideas of others and incorporate their views and opinions. This research has shown that there is a perception amongst the external actors that they are not being included in the story about SD in the Ooijpolder. Thus, it can be advised to be open and transparent in communicating your plans as a citizens' initiative, but also take into consideration stories of others, in order to find a common ground and create a story that is meaningful to potential supporters.

Recommendation 2: Participation-paradox

According to the interviews with NedO's members and the external actors, there is a lack of representation of the 'citizen' when it comes to the composition of the initiative. NedO consists of solely similar-minded people of a similar age and of the same gender. This is linked to a concept called: the participation paradox. Which means NedO does not represent the full target audience of the area. According to theories found younger people, females, and farmers should be part of such an initiative in order for it to represent the 'citizen'. It can therefore be advised to inform oneself about the participation paradox when starting up a citizens' initiative, to avoid stepping into often made mistakes that lead to a lack of connection with important actors and a lack of representation of what you stand for as a citizens' initiative: the citizen.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Interview guide

Er zijn drie verschillende groepen belangrijk voor de interviews over burgerinitiatief 'Naar een duurzame Ooijpolder' (NEDO):

1. Initiatiefnemers
2. Organisaties en overheidsinstellingen
3. Boeren

De interviews zijn vormgegeven aan de hand van onderwerpen uit het theoretische kader. Het gaat hier om de ambiguïteit van het concept sustainable development (SD), Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSP) (Brouwer et al., 2016), en de belangrijke aspecten van storytelling van Van der Stoep (2014).

Initiatiefnemers

Algemene vragen

- Wil je jezelf even kort introduceren?
- Waarom ben jij actief binnen NedO? Waarom vind je dit belangrijk? Persoonlijke doelen?
- Nedo focust zich op de Ooijpolder, wat zijn volgens jou de belangrijkste problemen in de Ooijpolder?

Een duurzame Ooijpolder

- Wat versta jij onder duurzaamheid?
- Is jouw visie op duurzaamheid door de jaren heen veranderd? Zo ja, hoe en waardoor/door wie? (bijv. duurzaamheid belangrijker geworden? / meer verhalen over duurzaamheid?)
- Denk je dat duurzaamheid een begrip is met toekomst? Zou het een andere invulling kunnen krijgen? (bijv. eerst economisch, toen meer sociaal, later natuur belangrijk, wat nog meer?)
- Spreken jullie binnen NedO weleens over wat je onder duurzaamheid verstaat? Bestaan daar verschillende inzichten over?
- Heeft jullie plan rondom duurzaamheid zich gedurende de tijd anders ontwikkeld, zo ja hoe?

Storytelling

- Kan jij NEDO voor mij omschrijven?
- Ontstaan
- Waar staan jullie voorn? Doelen / toekomstperspectief / Kernwaarden
- Zijn er in de tussentijd dingen veranderd in het verhaal van NEDO?
- Hoe vind je dat het initiatief verloopt?
- Hebben jullie bij de start van het initiatief intern elkaars visies besproken en op elkaar afgestemd

Contacten met partners en belanghebbenden (MSP)

- Wie zijn jullie belangrijkste partners en belanghebbenden?
- Zijn jullie naar jouw idee nog belangrijke belanghebbenden vergeten?
- Welk verhaal vertellen jullie aan partners en belanghebbenden over wat jullie willen bereiken?
- Op welke manieren hebben jullie geprobeerd jullie doelen duidelijk te maken naar belangrijke partners en belanghebbenden? Hoe belangrijk was duurzaamheid hierin?
- Hebben jullie expliciet nagedacht over hoe je jullie verhaal het beste aan de buitenwereld kan vertellen? Zo ja, hoe dan en wanneer?
- Hoe reageert de buitenwereld op jullie verhaal/initiatief?
- Bemerk je veel verschillen tussen NedO's verhaal/ambities rondom de Ooijpolder en dat van belangrijke partners en belanghebbenden? Zo ja, wat zijn de verschillen?
- Bemerk je ook verschillen of juist overeenkomsten wat betreft de definitie van duurzaamheid en dus de duurzaamheidsplannen? Waarom en wanneer?
- Bij verschil: werkt dit belemmerend? Waarom?
- Bij overeenkomsten: werkt dit stimulerend? Waarom?
- Hoe gaan jullie om met verschillen/overeenkomsten?

- Kan je een voorbeeld geven van een verschil / overeenkomst, met wie was dat?
- Zijn jullie naar jouw idee goed op de hoogte van ambities van andere partijen omtrent de Ooijpolder? (boeren/organisaties/inwoners)
- Proberen jullie gezamenlijk met andere partijen ambities te formuleren?
- Heb je het gevoel dat jullie je belangrijkste partners en belanghebbenden goed hebben kunnen overtuigen om samen te werken met NedO of blijkt dit soms lastig?
- Zijn jullie plannen gedurende het proces veranderd door contact met andere partijen?

Organisaties en overheidsinstellingen

Algemene vragen

- Wil je jezelf even kort introduceren?
- Op welke manier is jouw organisatie betrokken bij NedO?
- Wat is jouw rol hierbinnen?
- Nedo focust zich op de Ooijpolder, wat zijn volgens jou de belangrijkste problemen in de Ooijpolder?

Een duurzame Ooijpolder

- Wat versta jij onder duurzaamheid?
- Is jouw visie op duurzaamheid door de jaren heen veranderd? Zo ja, hoe en waardoor/door wie? (bijv. duurzaamheid belangrijker geworden? / meer verhalen over duurzaamheid?)
- Denk je dat duurzaamheid een begrip is met toekomst? Zou het een andere invulling kunnen krijgen? (bijv. eerst economisch, toen meer sociaal, later natuur belangrijk, wat nog meer?)
- Heb je weleens met NedO besproken wat je beiden onder duurzaamheid verstaat? Bestaan daar verschillende inzichten over?
- Vind je dat de Ooijpolder moet verduurzamen? Zo ja, hoe en waarom?

Storytelling

- Kan jij NedO voor mij omschrijven?
- Waar staan ze voor? Doelen / toekomstperspectief / Kernwaarden
- Hoe raakte je op de hoogte van NedO?
- Heeft NedO duidelijk zijn (duurzaamheids) doelen/zorgen overgebracht?
- Vind jij het initiatief van NedO relevant en belangrijk?
- Komt NedO op jou over als een geloofwaardige en betrouwbare partner in het oplossen van de duurzaamheidsproblematiek in de Ooijpolder?

Contact (MSP)

- Is het voor jou duidelijk waarom NedO jou specifiek heeft benaderd?
- Bemerkt je veel verschillen tussen NedO's verhaal/ambities rondom de Ooijpolder en dat van jullie? Zo ja, wat zijn de verschillen?
- Bemerkt je ook verschillen of juist overeenkomsten wat betreft de definitie van duurzaamheid en dus de duurzaamheidsplannen? Waarom en wanneer met je dit?
- Kan je een voorbeeld geven van een verschil / overeenkomst?
- Voel je je betrokken bij NedO?
- Is NedO naar jouw idee goed op de hoogte van ambities van andere partijen omtrent de Ooijpolder? (boeren/organisaties/inwoners)
- Heeft NedO geprobeerd gezamenlijk met jou/jullie jullie de ambities voor de Ooijpolder te formuleren?
- Ben je van plan samen te gaan werken met NedO?

Boeren

Algemene vragen

- Wil je jezelf even kort introduceren?
- Op welke manier ben je betrokken bij NedO?
- Wat is jouw rol hierbinnen?
- NedO focust zich op de Ooijpolder, wat zijn volgens jou de belangrijkste problemen in de Ooijpolder?

Een duurzame Ooijpolder

- Wat versta jij onder duurzaamheid?
- Is jouw visie op duurzaamheid door de jaren heen veranderd? Zo ja, hoe en waardoor/door wie? (bijv. duurzaamheid belangrijker geworden? / meer verhalen over duurzaamheid?)
- Denk je dat duurzaamheid een begrip is met toekomst? Zou het een andere invulling kunnen krijgen? (bijv. eerst economisch, toen meer sociaal, later natuur belangrijk, wat nog meer?)
- Heb je weleens met NedO besproken wat je beiden onder duurzaamheid verstaat? Bestaan daar verschillende inzichten over?
- Speelt duurzaamheid een rol in keuzes die je maakt voor het bedrijf?
- Wat vind je van natuur inclusieve landbouw?
- Wat is volgens jou de toekomst voor boeren in de regio?
- Vind je dat de Ooijpolder moet verduurzamen? Zo ja, hoe en waarom?

Storytelling

- Kan jij NedO voor mij omschrijven?
- Waar staan ze voor? Doelen / toekomstperspectief / Kernwaarden
- Hoe raakte je op de hoogte van NedO?
- Heeft NedO duidelijk zijn (duurzaamheids) doelen/zorgen overgebracht?
- Bemerk je veel verschillen tussen NedO's verhaal/ambities rondom de Ooijpolder en dat van jullie? Zo ja, wat zijn de verschillen?
- Bemerk je ook verschillen of juist overeenkomsten wat betreft de definitie van duurzaamheid en dus de duurzaamheidsplannen? Waarom en wanneer met je dit?
- Kan je een voorbeeld geven van een verschil / overeenkomst?

Contact (MSP)

- Is er naar jouw mening/visie gevraagd wat betreft de duurzaamheidsplannen van NedO?
- Wat vind je van dit soort initiatieven?
- Voel je je betrokken bij NedO?
- Heeft NedO geprobeerd gezamenlijk met jou/jullie jullie de ambities voor de Ooijpolder te formuleren?
- Ben je van plan samen te gaan werken met NedO?