



ONE PLACE, THREE STORIES: HOW RESTORING WETLANDS CHALLENGES THE PRESERVATION OF A LOCAL PLACE NARRATIVE

Discourse analysis of place meanings in implementing an ecological restoration project in Zeeland, the Netherlands

Author: Antonia P Purrmann

Reg. number: 1029761

Supervisor: Dr. Arjen E Buijs

Chair group: Forest and Nature Conservation Policy (FNP)

Date: 26-02-2021

– Wageningen University & Research –

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the participants of my research for their effort and contribution. Especially in times of social distancing, as a researcher you are dependent on motivated and committed participants. I am grateful to my participants for taking the time and effort to participate in online interviews and for helping me in finding other participants for my interviews.

Furthermore, I am grateful to my supervisor Dr. Arjen E Buijs for giving me the time and space to develop my own ideas in this project.

Lastly, I want to thank my housemates for creating such a good and relaxed working environment which has motivated me to keep working on my thesis even under the special circumstances of a global pandemic.

Content

1 Introduction.....	4
2 Theoretical framework.....	8
2.1 Discourse Theory.....	8
2.1.1 Policy-making and Policy change.....	9
2.2 Sense of Place.....	10
2.2.1 Place Meanings and Discourse Theory.....	11
2.3 Sensitizing concepts.....	12
2.3.1 Research questions.....	13
3 Material and Methods.....	13
3.1 Study area.....	14
3.1.1 Stakeholders.....	14
3.2 Internet-based research.....	15
3.2.1 Ethical considerations.....	16
3.3 Operationalization.....	16
3.3.1 Data sources and sampling.....	16
3.3.2 Data analysis.....	18
3.3.3 Informed consent and confidentiality.....	18
4 Results.....	18
4.1 Discourse 1: Polders – Valuable agricultural land.....	18
4.1.1 Place meanings.....	19
4.1.2 Actors.....	20
4.1.3 Policy-making.....	20
4.2 Discourse 2: Zeeland – A place between land and sea.....	21
4.2.1 Place meanings.....	21
4.2.2 Actors.....	22
4.2.3 Policy-making.....	23
4.3 Discourse 3: Waterdunen – A place to experience land, sea and birds.....	24
4.3.1 Place meanings.....	24
4.3.2 Actors.....	26
4.3.3 Policy-Making.....	26
5 Discussion.....	27
5.1 Theoretical discussion.....	28
5.1.1 Discourse theory.....	28
5.1.2 Sense of Place.....	30
5.2 Methodological discussion.....	33

5.2.1 Qualitative approach	33
5.2.2 Internet-based data collection	34
5.2.3 Personal reflection	34
6 Conclusion	35
7 Recommendation	39
Sources of photos and figures	40
References.....	40
Appendix I: Detailed description of the study area.....	44
The conflict	44
Stakeholders.....	45
Appendix II Example coding scheme	49
Appendix III Example report atlas.ti	50
Appendix IV Interview guide	56

Summary

This research presents a case study that investigates the conflict about implementing the ecological restoration project Waterdunen in order to understand the societal challenges that ecological restoration faces in its implementation. A discursive approach to sense of place, specifically place meanings, has been chosen to answer the leading research question: *How do different social actors frame place meanings in order to influence decision-making in the conflict around implementing ecological restoration policy?*

This approach has provided insights to the source and development of the conflict, however, could not explain why the arguments to restore the wetland were translated into policy measures. From analysing newspaper articles, web sources and semi-structured interviews, three distinctive ways of framing place meanings have been identified. This means that in the conflict about Waterdunen there are three discourses, that compete to decide how the study area should be managed. One discourse focuses on the fields of Zeelandic-Flanders and their meaning as *a historical, valuable place for agriculture* that should be preserved as it is and is enacted by a local protest group that was formed to protest against Waterdunen. With their protest actions the group was able to postpone the implementation of Waterdunen for several years. The second discourse emphasizes the place meaning of Zeeland as a whole province that is *a unique place between land and sea* and is enacted by the government and a nature conservation foundation. They argue in line with their place narrative that the dynamics between land and sea should be restored for nature conservation and to resemble Zeeland's originality. In the focus of the third discourse is the place meaning of Zeelandic-Flanders as a region within Zeeland that *is a special place because it combines the functions of agriculture, nature and recreation*. This place meaning is used to argue that Zeelandic-Flanders is a suitable place for tourism development. This discourse is reinforced by two recreation entrepreneurs who collaborated with the government and the foundation to realize Waterdunen in combination with the construction of new holiday accommodations in the region.

The three discourses show that in the conflict about Waterdunen three different visions of the place existed and that the vision created by the first discourse is not compatible with the policy measures suggested by the second and third discourse. As Waterdunen has been realized and the holiday accommodations are also under construction, it becomes clear that the vision of the place to maintain the polder landscape, reproduced by the protest group, was not integrated into the project. However, the government has used a dispossession procedure to obtain the land. In this case it seems that rhetoric instruments were sufficient to convince the local population but that legal instruments had been more powerful. During the interviews, the members of the protest group were still showing a repellent attitude towards Waterdunen and the government, thus this case study supports the findings of other studies that the societal acceptance of ecological restoration is problematic, and that ecological restoration does not sufficiently integrate the different perceptions of a place.

As a way of addressing the different place narratives in ecological restoration this study suggests using communication to conserve the meanings that are neglected by transforming the polder into a wetland. The members of the protest group had asked the government to develop an exhibition about how they perceived the polder and its history as they are worried that people will forget about its original meaning. Moreover, this study suggests to improve the communication between citizens and the government by paying more attention to the use of metaphors. As also in the three discourses a variety of metaphors have been identified, investigating their meaning and implications for people's actions may help to create mutual understanding between the different actors involved in the Waterdunen project.

1 Introduction

In the context of a growing world population two global challenges become increasingly pressing: Global warming and habitat/species loss. These problems are interlinked because human activities drive both and global warming additionally contributes to the instability of habitats. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in Europe 31% of the habitats are categorized as either *Critically Endangered*, *Endangered*, or *Vulnerable* (Janssen et al., 2016). With a growing human population to approximately 8.5 billion people world-wide by 2030 (United Nations, 2019) the pressure on these ecosystems increases constantly (Vasseur et al., 2017). This directly threatens the persistence of vulnerable habitats, which for Europe means that about one third of the habitats are very likely to be disturbed in the future. However, the effect of global warming threatens humans as well. Around 40% of the EU population lives in coastal regions (Colett & Engelbert, 2013) for which rising sea levels represent a major threat. Therefore, flood protection is a highly relevant policy objective and will increasingly gain importance in the future.

Habitat loss and flood risk are both environmental problems. Tackling them poses a challenge because environmental problems are complex, meaning that they involve many stakeholders and uncertainties (Moser, Jeffress Williams, & Boesch, 2012). For instance, the protection of habitats is challenging because the boundaries of habitats are often not clear due to migrating species, and even national borders have to be crossed for nature protection. Therefore, international collaboration within a network approach is deemed most effective to address this issue (Rodrigues et al., 2004). For Europe such an approach is already implemented, namely the EU Natura 2000 framework, which sets directives for a network of protected nature areas. However, the policy is facing challenges as protection measures require collaboration between countries and cause various uncertainties in estimating the group of people that is affected by the policy (Kati et al., 2015). Often the social impact of conservation policy is even overlooked (Palomo et al., 2014). Here, another challenge to deal with environmental problems is demonstrated, namely the often one-sided perspective for observing them which in turn restricts the effectiveness of the proposed solutions (Termeer, Dewulf, Breeman, & Stiller, 2015). The one-sided perspective in habitat protection is for instance an ecosystem-based approach, which has shown to be less effective if societal support for the policy is lacking (Palomo et al., 2014).

Moreover, environmental problems are not only complex but also considered to be wicked problems (Termeer et al., 2015). Characteristic for wicked problems is the involvement of various different stakeholders that have diverging interests and values, which applies to the protection of habitats as well (Termeer et al., 2015). It is challenging, often impossible, to combine these different interests in one overarching policy objective (Head, 2008). Therefore, there is no universal solution to address environmental problems, but rather various different approaches have emerged (Termeer et al., 2015). For habitat loss approaches vary from an ecosystem-based approach, as the protected area approach (Chape, Harrison, Spalding, & Lysenko, 2005), to more participatory approaches such as community-based natural resource management (CBNRM)(Dressler et al., 2010). This shows how different values are integrated into conservation policy: The latter approach emphasizes the engagement of local communities in habitat protection, and thereby gives social development and nature conservation equal importance, while the protected area approach prioritizes the protection of ecosystems over the well-being of local communities by excluding them from the natural resource.

Approaches that only address the ecological part of nature conservation have received a lot of criticism from scientists and are also less effective in counteracting habitat loss (Dressler et al., 2010; Palomo et al., 2014). Instead, it is necessary to recognize that many ecosystems are embedded in a social context, which makes them a social-ecological system (SES). Approaching nature conservation

from an SES perspective emphasizes not only the social context but additionally highlights the interconnectedness and mutual dependencies between human and ecological components. This illustration shows that a holistic approach is needed to tackle environmental problems. Therefore, this research takes an SES perspective on environmental policy. For habitat protection this means engaging the local human population in decision-making about the ecological system (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2008). However, the involvement of the local population is not always successful (Dressler et al., 2010; Leenhardt et al., 2015).

This has become evident in the Netherlands, where the government developed a new approach to habitat protection that integrates societal issues, however, is facing problems with being implemented: A first challenge for this country is, that the Netherlands are small and densely populated, so there is not a lot of space for nature conservation. However, the government seeks to address this challenge by emphasizing that nature is right in the middle of society, in other words, it is necessary to simultaneously develop nature and realize societal goals (Rijksoverheid, 2014). Following that approach Dutch scientists developed an innovative policy that combines nature conservation with flood protection. Flood protection is a highly relevant societal objective for the Netherlands because half of the country's area falls below sea level, so rising sea levels represent a major threat to the national population (Acardis, 2019). The recent approach to flood management takes ecosystems as inspiration for water protection (Van den Hoek, Brugnach, & Hoekstra, 2012). In this way flood protection becomes an opportunity for nature conservation as well. As a result, one line of action for the Dutch environmental policy is the improvement of flood safety combined with the development of new nature areas (Rijksoverheid, 2014; Van den Hoek et al., 2012).

The so-called *New Nature* policy emerged around the end of the 20th century and involves ecological restoration, referring to the active adjustment or creation of habitats (Choi, 2007). The Dutch policy takes ecological restoration a step further by not only intervening in ecosystems but creating whole new ecosystems: Combined with flood protection measures agricultural land is converted into wetland nature in order to create new habitats and space for the uptake of flooding water (van Der Heijden, 2005). The objective for these areas is the restoration of natural processes so that on the long-term no management is needed. One policy programme resulting from this approach is "*Ruimte voor de Rivier*" (engl. Room for the River) in which floodplains are enlarged, so there is first more space that can take up flood water and second wetland nature can develop along those rivers (Rijkswaterstaat, n.d.). Striking about this policy is that it approaches nature conservation in an innovative way. These new nature areas have namely not been natural before, but they were in agricultural use. It is thus not a disturbed ecosystem that is restored or pristine nature that is conserved but unnatural areas are transformed into new ecosystems. They therefore have a new, different value than areas that correspond to the usual conservation approaches (Gremmen, 2014).

Even though this policy represents an opportunity to nature conservation and flood protection, the complexity of environmental problems poses another challenge to the Dutch policy. Its shortcoming is the one-sided perspective: New nature namely focuses on the ecological system. Van den Hoek et al (2012) highlight that the social implications for this flood management approach need more attention (Van den Hoek et al., 2012). This is challenging as many different stakeholders are involved in and affected by the policy. Leenhardt et al. emphasize that it is for instance cultural perceptions of an SES that are not sufficiently taken into account for its management (Leenhardt et al., 2015). This can result in a conflict if the different perceptions of an SES clash: For example if the scientific approach to a landscape, e.g. for nature conservation, is not in line with the local identity (Bennett, 2017; Vanessa Anne Masterson, 2016). Also new nature has been criticized for prioritizing a management-focused approach rather than a place-based approach. This means that the cultural and emotional meaning of the landscape were not sufficiently taken into account for the sake of

nature development and flood protection (Buijs, 2009). This one-sided approach results in challenges for the implementation of the policy; for instance farmers, who lose a part of their livelihood, stage protests against new nature developments (Buijs, 2009). Local inhabitants claim that the land declamation in order to create wetland habitats neglects their identity and is in conflict with heritage protection (Drenthen, 2013).

Drenthen (2018) argues that for understanding the conflict it is necessary to take a look at the narrative aspect of landscape (Drenthen, 2018): The different values involved in the debate around the implementation of the new nature policy need to be understood in a particular social context; people partly identify themselves in relation to their environment i.e. their identity is constituted by a feeling of belonging to a particular place and people make sense of their life by placing themselves in a broader narrative context. This context is embodied by the environment. Losing this environment therefore represents the loss of an essential part of the local identity (O'Neill, Holland, & Light, 2008) and results in the resistance of the local residents to policies that change this environment. However, from a narrative approach the environment does not represent one context, but various interpretations do exist as different stakeholders frame the issue differently depending on their objective. Thus, from a narrative perspective the conflict between policy-makers and local residents is grounded in a clash of meanings (Drenthen, 2018).

As the policy finally has been implemented not only the legitimacy of nature conservation is weakened, also the effectiveness of nature protection measures might be restricted when societal support is lacking (Palomo et al., 2014). However, habitat loss and flood risks are increasingly pressing issues, especially in the Netherlands, so from a long-term perspective it is highly relevant to ensure a smooth implementation of the new nature policy as it provides a feasible option to mitigate both problems. A clear difficulty involved in new nature policy is the integration of different perspectives on the environment, for instance that of the local population, into decision-making. Therefore, with this research I would like to assist with understanding the multiplicity of perspectives involved in implementing the new nature policy. Leenhardt et al. highlight that it is for instance cultural perceptions of an SES that are not sufficiently addressed in SES management (Leenhardt et al., 2015). Thus, exploring different meanings a landscape has to people will help to understand the conflict around the implementation of the new nature policy.

A theoretical framework that grasps the meaning of the environment is the concept of *Sense of Place*. It describes the bond between people and places including the meaning and intangible values of the environment and place attachment, a feeling of belonging (Cresswell, 2014; Farnum, 2005; R. C. Stedman, 2003a). For new nature development it is important to investigate what the landscape means to different stakeholders, however, to fully understand the conflict at place it is also necessary to reveal power dynamics behind these meanings as social actors actively frame a particular vision on the landscape in order to reach a certain (policy) objective (Drenthen, 2018). This is not only insightful for our society in improving a policy to cope with flood risk and habitat loss but also academically these questions need further investigation. The review of Masterson et al. on sense of place in SES research shows that sense of place is a promising concept to provide insights into underlying societal processes of change within an SES. However, research needs to be continued on power dynamics behind place meanings that determine which vision of an SES becomes dominant and translated into policy measures (Vanessa A Masterson et al., 2017). This research thus contributes to the operationalisation of the sense of place framework and the assessment of its potential for understanding changes in an SES.

The leading question for this research is:

How do different social actors frame place meanings in order to influence decision-making in the conflict about implementing ecological restoration policy?

In order to create a deeper understanding of the debate around the new nature policy this research focuses on the narrative aspect of landscape (Drenthen, 2018) by taking a discursive approach to place meanings. This perspective implies a focus on the way different actors rhetorically frame the meaning of the landscape. As place meanings do not only represent descriptive attributes but also expressions of power (Buizer & Turnhout, 2011) a discursive approach can reveal hidden power dynamics behind such meanings. Furthermore, it implies a highly situated perspective as meanings are understood to be dependent on the social context (Manzo, 2003).

Consequently, this research takes a case study approach. The study investigates the ecological restoration project Waterdunen which resulted in a new nature wetland (Provincie Zeeland, 2010). The project Waterdunen is a suitable case because the study area underwent a clear transformation in function and appearance i.e., from agricultural land into a wetland nature area, which was performed during the last couple of years. Also, in the case of Waterdunen, the new nature policy faced implementation problems. The decision to transform the land into wetland nature has met a lot of resistance from the local population (Frel, 2006), which slowed down the implementation process. Therefore, it can be explored how different actors with diverging opinions experienced that transformation and how they placed themselves in relation to the landscape in a broader narrative context.

2 Theoretical framework

In the introduction it is laid out that the implementation of the new nature policy involves various stakeholders that value the environment differently and that have diverging visions for the landscape, resulting in a conflict over the management of the study area. To conceptualize these different visions the sense of place framework is chosen, as it grasps the bond between people and the environment. In order to further understand how the stakeholders articulate their understanding of the landscape and how this results in struggles over power in decision-making this research takes a discursive approach. This implies that the focus is on the role of language for exploring the local sense of place.

In the following paragraph first, basic assumptions and ontological underpinnings resulting from a discursive research approach will be introduced. Second, it will be shown what that implies for the conceptualization of sense of place. Lastly, this chapter concludes with deriving sensitizing concepts that highlight points of attention for identifying argumentative structures to frame place meanings in the conflict around implementing the new nature policy.

2.1 Discourse Theory

Discourse theory developed around the end of the 1970s as a new analytical perspective to understand policy-making and social change. The lens through which discourse theory looks at the world is that we know the world through language. Language namely has the capacity to create signs and symbols from the world out there, it thus produces meaning. These meanings are contextualized in a narrative or discourse, which sets a frame for communication and discursively determines the possibilities for action (M. A. Hajer, Van Den Brink, & Metze, 2006). This means that language does not merely describe the world around us but one's view on the world is shaped by language and therefore also ones interactions with the social and physical environment are mediated by the way it is talked about that environment (M. A. Hajer et al., 2006).

However, discourse is not the same as discussion: It rather provides a structure in which discussions take place and equips the participants of a discussion with the rhetoric tools to articulate meaning (M. Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). Discourse is defined as “an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena”(M. Hajer, 1995, p. 44). In short, discourse describes the way one makes sense of the world. Consequently, in discourse theory knowledge and truth are seen as a feature of language and action: There is not one objective conceptualization of the world around us but the way people construct explanations for phenomena is rather a result of a specific social and historical context as well as of rhetoric tools provided by a discourse (Sharp & Richardson, 2001).

The definition given by Hajer (1995) is based on a Foucauldian approach to discourse. It is chosen for a Foucauldian approach to discourse theory, because it implies a particular perspective on policy-making as societal processes are seen as a result of language and practices (Torfing, 2005b). This has several implications for the analysis of policy-making: First, discourse is not only expressed in textual form but also in a person’s actions, which is why Foucault also includes practice in the definition of discourse. This is important for understanding policy-making as the inclusion of practices provides an analytical perspective that explores decision-making processes that go beyond the creation of text which represents a more holistic view on policy (Sharp & Richardson, 2001). The second implication of the definition of discourse is that a discourse is not static but rather fluid and changing indicated by the expression that meanings are produced and reproduced. Consequently, discourse theory adopts a highly situated perspective on policy-making. Lastly, discourse theory represents a critical view on taken for granted knowledge because it refuses the positivistic assumption that there is an objective way to assess the world (Sharp & Richardson, 2001).

2.1.1 Policy-making and Policy change

Central in discourse theory is the role of language in shaping people’s actions and interactions; consequently, language cannot be separated from action. Based on this assumption, Foucault presents a new conceptualisation of power: In contrast to a traditional approach that defines power as an act of domination, in discourse theory power is seen as an actor’s or group of people’s ability to shape others people’s actions and identities as well as setting a discursive frame for the production of meaning (Torfing, 2005b). Different social actors constantly compete in society for this discursive power, as they try to shape people’s actions in order to reach a certain objective. Power is thus expressed by a discourse and also the other way around a discourse is the result of underlying power dynamics (Torfing, 2005b).

Following this approach to power, a change in policy is conceptualized as a shift in influence of competing discourses: Various discourses exist, that are reinforced by social actors and driven by policy objective and that constantly compete for their influence on society. In order to sustain in this competition a discourse continuously needs to be reproduced, it is thus in constant development or change (Torfing, 2005b). Finally, it is often one discourse that becomes dominant, called hegemonic discourse. This happens because one discourse suppresses the influential strength of other discourses by framing meanings that differ from the dominant discourse as being invalid (Salskov-Iversen, Hansen, & Bislev, 2000). A discourse thus, reinforces and reproduces its system of meanings by excluding meanings that are not in line with its interpretation (Salskov-Iversen et al., 2000). Therefore, to fully understand policy-making processes it is necessary to not only identify what is highlighted by the discourse but also to recognize what meanings are excluded from the discourse.

Also, the way a problem is described and what is seen as solution depends on the narrative perspective and thus, on the social actors behind those discourses. However, it is one, often the

dominant discourse, that is translated into rules and regulations (M. Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). A change in policy can therefore be understood as a shift in influence of a certain discourse i.e. that one gained more support than other discourses (Sharp & Richardson, 2001). A shift of influence of a discourse affects not only policy-making but also the society. A new hegemonic discourse namely changes the vocabulary and rhetoric tools for creating and recreating meaning which effects the way people talk and behave (Torfing, 2005a).

However, discourse theory is not only used to explain policy changes but also provides a framework for understanding conflicts around policy implementation. As discussed in the previous paragraph a policy is based on the dominant way in which meaning is created and recreated. Behind those meanings are power dynamics as social actors strategically use language to frame their interests and construct arguments to reach their goal and to achieve hegemony for their discourse. As language is used to produce and reproduce meaning it has the ability to create a particular frame through which it is looked at the world. Actors can use this to construct a particular perspective in which certain assumptions appear natural and which provides a particular construction of a policy problem and its solution. Consequently, from a discursive perspective political conflicts exceed a sole conflict of interests but also represent a clash of meanings (M. Hajer & Versteeg, 2005).

A clash of meanings is thus the subject of this research, however, in the context of environmental management. The way in which policy-makers discursively construct a natural resource and its users is very influential in the choice for a management approach, which is why environmental management can be seen as a discursive process (Peluso, 1996). In order to understand the conflict around implementing a new environmental policy the aim is thus, to show how different actors use language to frame a problem and achieve an objective (van den Brink & Meijerink, 2006). However, this must be seen in the context of a particular natural environment. Therefore, it is important to understand how people create meaning related to that environment and how they situate themselves in relation to the environment. In the following paragraph a framework will be introduced that further conceptualizes this relationship between people and the environment.

2.2 Sense of Place

The sense of place theory has a roughly 40 years old history in the academic literature and generally refers to the bond between people and the environment (Vanessa A Masterson et al., 2017). The basic assumption of the sense of place theory is that a place does not solely represent a physical environment but there is also meaning attached to it. Therefore, place is defined as a meaningful site (Agnew, 1987). Grounded in those *place meanings* people develop an emotional bond to their environment, referred to as *place attachment*. The concepts both together form the sense of place (Cresswell, 2014). Consequently, the sense of place theory adopts a perspective that views the human and ecological environment as tightly connected (Vanessa A Masterson et al., 2017). This makes sense of place a suitable concept to integrate the interests and needs of the local population in environmental planning (Tadaki, Sinner, & Chan, 2017; Thompson & Prokopy, 2016; Verbrugge et al., 2019). However, in the academic literature two diverging approaches to sense of place exist, that have different implications for integrating a social perspective into environmental management (Vanessa A Masterson et al., 2017).

First, there is a rather positivistic approach to sense of place that focuses on place attachment. For instance, quantitative methods are used to investigate the strength of attachment and the reasons behind that bond whereby the individual is the unit of analysis (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001; R. C. Stedman, 2003b). Place attachment can be either a result of an instrumental dependency on the environment, called *place dependence* (Stokols, 1981), or the environment has a symbolic meaning to people, that is part of the local culture and the way people identify themselves, known as *place*

identity (Proshansky, 1978). Those rather sharply demarcated concepts are employed in order to make predictions about people's attitudes towards an area and the behaviour resulting from such attitudes (C. M. Raymond, Brown, & Robinson, 2011). For example, a strong place attachment is often associated with protective attitudes towards an area, thus these people are likely to resist to changes in their environment or they support environmental conservation (Gifford, 2014; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Consequently, for environmental management results from such studies are insightful for assessing people's capacity to deal with changes in the environment, for example as a result of a new environmental policy (Vanessa Anne Masterson, 2016) and to predict their behavioural response to management measures (Vanessa A Masterson et al., 2017).

However, this positivistic approach has received criticism for overlooking the role of place meanings for investigating the sense of place. This poses challenges for analysing conflicts about places as those are mostly not grounded in different strengths of attachment but are rather about diverging visions on the same setting, thus place meanings (R. Stedman, 2008). A discursive approach to sense of place is focused on exploring such place meanings for instance beyond their descriptive value. In order to investigate these meanings often qualitative methods and an inductive research approach are employed (Vanessa A Masterson et al., 2017). Thereby, place meanings are understood as shared ideas that are reproduced by social interactions and communication (Manzo, 2003). Language plays here a central role as it is strategically used by actors to shape place meanings (Tuan, 1991). This can be seen as an expression of power because first, the meaning of a place can tell which actors have the power to shape a particular vision of a place (Stokowski, 2002) and second the way a place is framed has a strong influence on the choice of a management strategy (Peluso, 1996). Therefore, a discursive approach to sense of place provides insights for environmental management for understanding power dynamics behind place meanings and the resulting choice of management measures.

As the subject of this research is the understanding of a conflict about the implementation of an environmental policy a discursive approach to sense of place is chosen. In the following paragraph it will be explained what this approach implies for the conceptualization of place meanings and how it can be used to reveal power dynamics behind place meanings.

2.2.1 Place Meanings and Discourse Theory

In discourse theory, meaning is seen as an expression of power because the creation of meaning involves a constant competition between actors that actively use language in order to frame a problem and reach a (policy) objective. As place is a meaningful site a discursive approach implies that in the creation of such meanings also struggles over power are involved. To reveal these power dynamics discourse theory focuses on the role of language in distributing power, creating meaning and defining actor identities. Thereby, place becomes a relational concept implying that a place emerges through the interactions between people: By talking about a place, but also by acting in a place people conjointly articulate meaning (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). By acting in a place it is implied that place meaning exceeds the linguistic articulation of meaning and includes material practices as well (Buizer & Turnhout, 2011) which resonates with the Foucauldian approach to discourse emphasizing the role of practices in the creation of meaning (Sharp & Richardson, 2001).

Besides language and action, also processes of inclusion and exclusion are important aspects of place meanings. Place meanings are namely contextualized in a *place narrative*, that defines what belongs to a place and which meanings are excluded (Paasi, 2003). This is not a random process but rather happens intentionally as social actors actively shape the meaning of a place in order to reach a desired outcome (Stokowski, 2002). The place narrative is thus again an expression of power. As a multiplicity of perspectives is involved in such processes, it is implicated that while some interests are

emphasized in the narrative others are suppressed or excluded (Buizer & Turnhout, 2011). To holistically understand local place meanings, it is thus essential to also recognize which meanings are excluded by a place narrative. However, whose interests are reinforced depends not only on one's discursive skills for convincing people but also on their access to public debates (Stokowski, 2002).

By including and excluding particular meanings a place narrative discursively sets a frame for action and defines actor identities: Dixon & Durrheim argue that a particular construction of place imposes an ideology that determines which meanings are accepted and which are refused leading to the exclusion of certain groups of people and behaviours that are not in accordance with such meanings (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). This in turn affects how people define themselves in relation to a place. Feelings of belonging or alienation become a reflection of wider ideologies framed by the language of place (Di Masso, Dixon, & Hernández, 2017). *Place identity* i.e. the aspect of self-identification that is related to place, therefore, has to be understood as a discursive construction reinforcing particular place meanings (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000).

However, as laid out in discourse theory, these shared meanings are not fixed but they are constantly produced and reproduced which sustains them in society. With a changing social context also the set of discourses changes, for example a competing discourse gains more attention, even domination over other discourses, resulting in changed people-place relations as well (Di Masso, Dixon, & Durrheim, 2013). For instance, place identity can therefore be seen as contextual, shaped by the interactions between people that jointly create and recreate meaning (Di Masso et al., 2017).

In conclusion, taking a discursive approach to place meanings focuses on the role of language in determining people-place relationships that is reinforced by a particular set of practices. In this process aspects of inclusion and exclusion are important expressions of power as social actors actively shape a particular vision of a place in order to achieve their interests (Buizer & Turnhout, 2011). Thereby, the framework of discourse theory imposes a highly situated view that seeks to understand place meanings in a particular context of interactions between people (Manzo, 2003). This enables a dynamic approach as place meanings are not seen as fixed but rather flexible depending on the social context (Di Masso et al., 2017). In this way discourse theory can create a deeper understanding of place meanings that reaches beyond descriptive attributes of places and that rather reveals the social dynamics behind them.

2.3 Sensitizing concepts

In order to reveal the power dynamics behind place meanings it is important to show how different actors use language to frame a particular image of a place and the management strategies that are seen as possible for this vision of a place (M. Hajer, 1995). Thereby, actors use rhetoric devices to shape a problem and a policy objective that appear desirable in the context of a particular place narrative (M. Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). From discourse theory several sensitizing concepts are employed to reveal such argumentative structures in textual statements. In this way different discourses, or specific for this case, the different rhetoric constructions of place, can be identified in the local debate. The focus will be on three concepts for first finding the basis of a discourse, second exploring how this basis is reinforced and third identifying how the discourse is rhetorically demarcated from other discourses.

The first, central sensitizing concept in discourse theory is the *storyline*. It provides the basis for a discourse as it contextualizes and connects phenomena of the world out there in one narrative and therefore, represents a symbolic reference for the actors of a discourse (M. Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). Hajer (2005) describes a storyline as a condensed statement that summarizes the problem, thus presents the essence of the discourse. This concept is helpful for identifying place narratives,

because in a place narrative, place meanings are connected by a particular storyline. The actors that articulate the same storylines are called *discourse-coalition*. Identifying discourse coalitions reveals which actors impose which place narrative, providing insights into power dynamics behind the place narratives. However, the storyline is not exactly reproduced by people but continuously adapted during conversations (M. Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). So, for identifying different discourses different statements are compared and finally summarized in a particular storyline.

The second rhetoric tool that grants argumentative strength to a discourse are *metaphors*. A storyline alone is not sufficient to reproduce and maintain a discourse. It needs to be evoked through metaphors (van den Brink & Meijerink, 2006). A metaphor is a rhetoric description of a phenomenon lending attributes of another phenomenon (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Thereby, metaphors function as illustrations and abstractions of complex issues, which makes them useful in gaining societal support for a discourse because they make a problem more understandable. This makes metaphors a powerful rhetoric device for framing place meanings, which is why the investigation of metaphors provides valuable insights into the discursive construction of place. However, when performing discourse analysis it is not only important to understand what the metaphors emphasize but also to become aware of the details that are simplified or hidden (M. Hajer & Versteeg, 2005).

Third, a discourse does not only gain argumentative power from emphasizing meanings that are included but also by highlighting meanings that are excluded or what the discourse is opposed to. Thus, in order to identify a discourse, it is necessary to explore what is presented to be *the other*. In conceptual terms, presenting meanings to be invalid, for example wrong or stupid, is called *othering*. An extreme form of *othering* is an *antagonism* (Laclau & Mouffe, 2014). Rhetorically, actors of a discourse construct a (*social*) *antagonism* referring to the meaning and identities that are excluded from the discourse however reduced to their sameness for being different. With the sameness of being different it is meant that, for instance in policy-making processes, a social antagonism represents a stereotype that is opposed to the discourse, an enemy (Torfing, 2005a). Identifying ways of othering and social antagonism therefore provides insights into meanings that are excluded by a place narrative and helps to demarcate different discourses from each other.

2.3.1 Research questions

With help of the theories and sensitizing concepts elaborated above several sub-questions will be explored in order to answer the leading question of this study: *How do different social actors frame place meanings in order to influence decision-making in the conflict around implementing ecological restoration policy?*

- How do the discourses construct the place?
- Which place meanings are excluded from the discourses?
- What are the discourse coalitions?
- How do the discourses construct actor identities?
- How do the discourse coalitions influence decision-making processes?
- What do the discourses present as desirable management measures?

In the following chapter it will be elaborated on the methods applied to investigate these questions and the case that is in the focus of this research will be introduced.

3 Material and Methods

This research explored how place meanings are framed in the context of a case study on the conflict about implementing the ecological restoration policy of the Waterdunen area in the Dutch province of Zeeland. Doing a case study implies that the aim of this research is creating in-depth

understanding of a local conflict instead of generating results that are generalizable. For developing such in-depth insights qualitative methods are suitable as they provide an open, flexible set of research instruments that allows for adaptation to new circumstances and the inclusion of unexpected topics during data collection and analysis. This is for instance important in an exploratory phase of the research as it is the case for the conflict about realizing the Waterdunen project, that has not been investigated yet by other social scientists.

However, possibilities for fieldwork were restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic that requires social distancing to prevent spreading the virus. In order to adapt to this situation internet-based research has been chosen for exploring place meanings in the context of creating the new nature area Waterdunen. After introducing the study area and key stakeholders further opportunities and restrictions of online research will be discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Study area

This chapter introduces the study area and the most important details about the conflict; however, a more detailed overview can be found in appendix I. The study area is the wetland nature reserve Waterdunen in the Dutch province of Zeeland. The first plans to establish this reserve developed in 2004, initiated by the Dutch government in the context of the policy programme “Zwakke Schakels” which has the objective of improving flood protection in combination with nature conservation and increased possibilities for recreation (Provincie Zeeland, 2007). Moreover, Waterdunen is part of the policy programme “Natuurpakket Westerschelde”, agreed in 2005, that determines the ecological restoration of the river Westerschelde. With the establishment of Waterdunen it is aimed for the restoration of an estuary wetland area (Provincie Zeeland, n.d.-c). An estuary is valuable for nature conservation as it represents a dynamic ecosystem that constantly changes under the influence of the tides. The fluctuating water levels create gradients in humidity, salinity, and a diverse substrate. Therefore, an estuary is comprised of various habitats that for instance provide nesting and feeding areas for coastal and migrating birds and where a diverse plant community can develop (Provincie Zeeland, n.d.-b).

While the governmental plans provide opportunities for nature conservation and recreation, they met a lot of resistance from the residents. This is related to the location of the project: The area is a 350ha big polder in agricultural use. The government thus needs to financially compensate the farmers for transforming their land into a wetland nature reserve. However, the local farmers staged protests against these plans and resisted to sell their land to the government (Frel, 2006), which postponed the implementation of the policies for several years. Moreover, in 2010 the government had to enforce a dispossession procedure to obtain the land of the remaining farmers.

In 2012, the project was finally decided and first interventions on the landscape were performed. Major changes of the landscape comprise of preparation of the soil, digging for water streams that are filled with water from the tides that enters the area through a newly established water gate, support of the dike, construction of a bridge over the new water stream and other infrastructure such as paths and roads (Provincie Zeeland, 2010). Interventions that are still under implementation and preparation are: the construction of a camping park, hiking paths and a parking lot (Langerak, n.d.). It is planned to finalize the project in 2021 (Provincie Zeeland, 2010).

3.1.1 Stakeholders

The actors involved in the planning and realisation of the Waterdunen project comprise of governmental and private actors. In 2004 the Dutch government, represented by local authorities the Province of Zeeland, the Waterschap Scheldestroom and the municipality of Sluis. initiated the project and partly financed it as well. Also, the private actor camping Molecaten invested in the

establishment of Waterdunen in order to increase their opportunities for recreation and accommodation. Another private actor involved in the realisation of the project is the nature protection organisation Het Zeeuwse Landschap, that is responsible for the execution of the ecological management in the Waterdunen area (Provincie Zeeland, 2010).

However, also citizens are affected by the implementation of the new policy. For instance farmers experienced major changes due to the Waterdunen project as they had to sell their land to the government (Frel, 2006). Together with other opponents of the Waterdunen project they formed a protest group, called WaterdunenNEE with which they organised demonstrations (Vrienden van Waterdunen NEE, n.d.). For other citizens the area provides new opportunities for recreation and environmental education. Around the area new hiking and cycle paths have been constructed, however due to ongoing construction works the Waterdunen area itself is still closed for the public. Access is only granted for the frequently organized excursions in which the area is shown to a group of visitors (Provincie Zeeland, n.d.-a).

3.2 Internet-based research

At the beginning of the fieldwork of this project Wageningen University asked their researchers to work from home as much as possible (Wageningen University, 2020) due to the COVID-19 pandemic that requires social distancing to prevent the spreading of the virus. Consequently, for this research an internet-based approach was chosen in order to adapt to the current situation and for being able to continue research under changing restrictions in the context of COVID-19.

Social media and online communication play an increasingly important role in the nowadays daily life because more and more people actively engage in and use online sources for gathering information, communication, and consumption. The internet has thus become an integral part of our everyday lives that mediates our offline life as well. Therefore, conducting internet-based research can provide valuable insights into social interactions.

In the range of methods for internet-based research, approaches can be distinguished between a passive, observational position of the researcher and more interactive research methods. Passive methods represent the observation and analysis of websites, blogs, documents and archival data. A major restriction of analysing archival data is that it misses the co-creative aspect of interactive data collection, because the researcher takes a rather passive position in which (s)he only observes online communities without actively engaging with them (Costello, McDermott, & Wallace, 2017). However, other social scientists argue that it is exactly that passive position that improves the quality of data collection as it provides a more naturalistic insight to the online community without a researcher bias (Di Guardo & Castriotta, 2014).

In order to address the restrictions of archival data analysis this study follows the suggestion of Costello et al. (2017) to combine passive research methods with participatory methods (Costello et al., 2017). Engagement with the community is deemed important for obtaining rich data (Phillips, 2011) and involvement of community members improves the trustworthiness of the study as key actors can provide valuable feedback on research results (Cherif & Miled, 2013). In this way an interactive research approach can guide the cocreation of data between researchers and the communities. Such data is deemed to provide a more meaningful account of the community compared to data generated through passive research only (Costello et al., 2017). For example, Gurrieri and Cherrier (2013) sought assistance from key stakeholders for sampling data sources, obtaining informed consent and to analyse their data (Gurrieri & Cherrier, 2013). Brodie et al. (2013) used data triangulation to improve the reliability of their archival data analysis. Therefore, they conducted semi-structured interviews via skype or telephone with active participants of the online

community to which results from archival data analysis could be compared (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013).

These suggestions were applied in order to increase the validity of data collection and analysis in this study. Therefore, archival data analysis was used for first, identifying relevant topics that were explored in-depth during the semi-structured interviews and second to triangulate insights from archival data analysis with the experiences of key stakeholders.

3.2.1 Ethical considerations

Conducting internet-based research involves several ethical considerations. Kozinets (2002) developed ethical guidelines for internet-based research that will be applied to this study as well. The two major topics in ethical discussions of online research are if online fora can be considered private or public space and how it can be adhered to the principle of informed consent. Definite answers are not yet established, however, Kozinets provides four guiding principles to ensure an ethical research process: First, the researcher should openly communicate his/her presence. Second, anonymity and confidentiality of the participants should be ensured. Third, feedback from community members should be incorporated in the research process and fourth, before using archival data the copyright holders should be contacted in order to obtain their permission to use the data, for instance if it is directly quoted in the research report (Kozinets, 2002).

3.3 Operationalization

The conflict about the implementation of the ecological restoration policy of the Waterdunen project mainly took place from the first release of the plans in 2004 until the first interventions in 2012 and in a few following years. For this research this means that in order to explore how the actors framed the meaning of the landscape in order to reach policy objectives the focus will be on archival data derived from online sources. However, a focus on archival data involves restrictions for the validity of research results, therefore, in a second stage of research semi-structured interviews will be conducted in order to gain in-depth insights into relevant topics and to triangulate results from secondary data analysis.

3.3.1 Data sources and sampling

As this research took a discursive approach the focus is on *shared* meanings. Those shared meanings were identified using different public data sources. Information was retrieved from textual data sources, which in the first stage of research consisted of secondary data provided by the key stakeholders, like their websites, and newspaper articles. As this research focused on the framing of place meanings in the conflict around the implementation of the ecological restoration policy of Waterdunen, as a first criterion the online sources must discuss this project.

Local and national newspaper articles are suitable sources as they give a broad impression of the conflict and its socio-political context. Also, they seek to address a wider public which is why they provide a good impression of different shared meanings in the context of the Waterdunen project. These articles were retrieved from Nexis Uni. As a book titled "Het verraad van Waterdunen" by Rob Ruggenberg does exist, that is not related to the establishment of the Waterdunen area, the following search query was used: *Waterdunen and not "Het verraad van Waterdunen" and not "boek" and not Ruggenberg*. Furthermore, search results were narrowed down to Dutch articles from the regional newspapers from Zeeland, including Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant, BN/De Stem and the national newspapers De Telegraaf, Volkskrant, Trouw, and Nederlands Dagblad. To further sample sources that are related to the research question only articles themed by Nexis Uni as either Environment & Natural Resource, Government & Public Administration, Society, Social Assistance & Lifestyle or Sports & Recreation were selected. Applying these search terms Nexis Uni showed 1,238

newspaper articles in a time range of 2007 to June 2020. From these articles, an a-select sample was taken because some articles are listed twice if they have been published by another newspaper as well and some articles were manually filtered out when the content was similar to other articles or when they did not discuss the Waterdunen project as key topic. This resulted in a collection of about 600 articles.

Additionally, to newspaper articles, for gaining in-depth insights into how key stakeholders frame place meanings as the second criterion for secondary sources is that they are created by key stakeholders. The key stakeholders based on first insights are: The Dutch government represented by Provincie Zeeland, Waterschap Scheldestroom, Municipality Sluis, Het Zeeuwse Landschap, camping Molecaten and the protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen-Nee. All these actors have websites on which they present the project, whereby the protest group has a blog. Those are:

- Waterdunen.com (by Provincie Zeeland)
- Scheldestromen.nl/waterdunen
- Gemeentesluis.nl/Bestuur_en_Organisatie/Projecten/Waterdunen
- Molecaten.nl/waterdunen
- Hetzeeuwselandschap.nl/Waterdunen
- Vriendenvanwaterdunennee.blogspot.com/?view=classic

However, the most detailed information about Waterdunen could be found on the governmental website Waterdunen.nl, the website of Het Zeeuwse Landschap and Moecaten, so therefore the analytical focus was on these websites and the blog of Waterdunen-Nee. Moreover, if these websites contained flyers, as it was the case for Molecaten and the provincial government, these flyers were downloaded and analysed as well.

In the second stage of research primary data was generated by conducting semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in order to triangulate insights obtained from analysing secondary data and to generate in-depth insights into important topics identified during the first stage of research. Semi-structured interviews are suitable for exploring relevant topics in-depth because the researcher is flexible during the interview in adapting to new, participant-specific circumstances which allows for the inclusion of unexpected topics and consequently the obtainment of unexpected result (Bernard, 2011b). Based on the contact information given on the websites of key stakeholders, respondents for the semi-structured interviews were approached with an introductory e-mail about this research project. As the Waterdunen project is located in the Netherlands the stakeholders were contacted and interviewed in Dutch.

As the Waterdunen project is a cooperation of several stakeholders it is likely that they are in contact with each other and therefore snowball sampling was deemed a suitable sampling strategy to identify key stakeholders (Bernard, 2011a). By snowball sampling starting with the contact person of the website, participants recommended by this person i.e., that are expected to be interested in participating and that can provide information about the Waterdunen project, were contacted. If these participants also mentioned people that they think can provide important information those people were approached for an interview as well. In this way nine participants have been interviewed in the period of July to August 2020.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed intelligent verbatim in order to make the data more readable (Bernard, 2011c). As the focus is on patterns in language and word use, the non-verbal communication is deemed to be less important, which is why for transcripts only verbal communication was noted. However, during the interviews the researcher took notes in which striking aspects of non-verbal communication could be included.

3.3.2 Data analysis

This research takes a discursive approach in order to understand the different meanings of the landscape to different actors and how this results in diverging views on a suitable environmental policy. Discourse analysis implies a focus on the role of language in creating meaning (Bernard, 2011c). The aim of the analysis is thus the identification of patterns in the use of language in order to identify the different discourses constructing place meanings in the context of the Waterdunen project. Therefore, data analysis started with deductive coding, using the software atlas.ti, based on a coding scheme employing concepts from discourse theory and the sense of place framework to explore the people-place relationship.

A central concept in discourse analysis is the storyline. However, this was not included in the initial coding scheme (example see appendix II), because it rather represents an outcome of the analysis. A storyline is namely not exactly reproduced by the respondents, but different statements can be summarized and assigned to a particular storyline, which helped to identify different place narratives that employ these storylines. In order to stay flexible and for being able to include unexpected topics and new concepts data analysis was continued with inductive coding by adding subthemes and broadening concepts on basis of what was found during data collection and analysis (Bernard, 2011c). In this way the case of implementing Waterdunen was investigated in-depth.

After investigating secondary data, in the second stage of research semi-structured interviews were conducted. Based on the outcomes of the first research stage an interview guide (Appendix) was developed that helped the researcher to structure the interview around relevant topics identified during the first stage of research. The transcripts of these interviews were analysed using the same coding scheme as for secondary data. Adaptations from the first stage of research were adopted and the scheme was further developed during coding, following the combined deductive and inductive approach for data analysis, that was employed for the first stage of research as well. The coded data was then analysed using the query tool of atlas.ti (example see appendix III).

3.3.3 Informed consent and confidentiality

In order to adhere to Kozinets principles for ethically conducting internet-based research, before analysing the online sources the website holders were contacted in order to inform them about the research and to ask for an interview. By conducting semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders insights from archival data analysis was triangulated with the experiences of those stakeholders in order to increase the validity of the research results. In this way, it was adhered to the third principle for ethical online research as during the semi-structured interviews feedback on first insights could be obtained. In order to employ the first principle of disclosing the presence of the researcher, the researcher introduced herself and her project at the start of the interview and in an e-mail. Finally, during the writing of the research report the participants' identity was disclosed. As one interview per day was carried out the participants identity was reduced to mentioning the date on which the interview was taken as a reference. In this way anonymity could have been ensured.

4 Results

In the conflict about the implementation of the ecological restoration project Waterdunen various place meanings have been described. These place meanings can be divided into the following three discourses.

4.1 Discourse 1: Polders – Valuable agricultural land

Discourse 1 represents the opposing position against the implementation of Waterdunen. It is mainly enacted by the local protest group "Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!!" who reproduce the leading

storyline of *“Polders are valuable agricultural land”* in order to argue against the implementation of Waterdunen.

4.1.1 Place meanings

The place meaning, which is strongly emphasized in discourse 1, is in general the meaning of polders. A polder is land that has been drained from the sea to create space for agriculture, the project Waterdunen was developed in such a polder. As a result, also the area of Waterdunen is described as precious agricultural land with important historical value: *“With immense effort we have re-conquered something through impoldering. The current polder landscape of West Zeeuws-Vlaanderen is a wonderful example of this. It has rightly been classified as a National Landscape. Basically, it is cultural heritage”* (Blogpost on 18th of October 2011).

This quote shows two important aspects of the way place meanings are framed in discourse 1. First, it was most often referred to Zeelandic-Flanders when it was talked about the polder landscape and second, metaphors from different contexts are used. In this quote the metaphors are lend from describing a fight/war and metaphors for describing the beauty of the landscape have been used. The following quote gives another example of how a participant described the beauty of the polder landscape: *“The beautiful spacious, wide landscape [...]. The farmer sows, the farmer plows, the farmer reaps. That is actually every year, you see the cycle of life there. Look and if you see such a farmer in the morning or in the beginning of spring, who has plowed beautiful, shiny clay and it is still damp and the sun is shining on it, yes, that is a beautiful sight, I think”* (Interview on the 7th of July). While emphasizing on the place meaning of agriculture using the storyline of *“polders are valuable agricultural land”*, in discourse 1 the place meaning of wetland nature is explicitly excluded: *“It is a shame that there is even thought about a totally silly thing like Waterdunen. To sacrifice a beautiful agricultural area for a few birds. A tourist does not come to the land of cadzand to come and see a large mud poo”* (Blogpost on the 20th of May 2010).

Based on characterizing the area as a polder and by explicitly excluding wetland nature, the nature that is framed to be suitable for the area is also often called *“polder nature”* which according to most participants refers to flora and fauna that can be found in the polder and on the fields. One participant explained in detail: *“Well by polder nature I mean the plants and animals that live in the polder in terms of nature. [...] Pheasants, for example, that have been chased away. Well, those are animals that people hunt but that people also enjoy living in the polder”* (Interview on 7th of July 2020). As a consequence, flora and fauna that does not fit with this definition of nature is framed as being not suitable for this place: *“Look, wheat is more part of a field acquired from the sea, heavy fertile clay soil. And oysters that you grow in the sea. And I think that is the pinnacle of fake nature that people say that an oyster farm is being set up in Waterdunen. [...] Well then you are not concerned with nature but with culture in my opinion”* (Interview on 7th of July, 2020).

As discourse 1 emphasizes the meaning of polders and excludes the meanings of wetland nature the Waterdunen project is framed to be *ontpolderen*. *Ontpolderen* can generally be described as reversing the drainage of the land, however the definition varies among the discourses. In this discourse the term *ontpolderen* is used to argue that the plans of transforming the fields into an estuary are *“sacrificing valuable agricultural land”* (Interview on 7th of July 2020) which is framed to not fit in the area. This argument has several implications: *Ontpolderen* as it is framed in discourse 1, exceeds the meaning of reversing the drainage of the area but it is presented to be a form of injustice and a form of bad governing. In line with this, *“ontpolderen is a form of injustice”* is the central storyline of discourse 1 that is used to prevent the implementation of Waterdunen.

4.1.2 Actors

Discourse 1 is enacted by the local protest group “Vrienden van Waterdunen-Nee !!!”. Most members of the protest group are long-term residents from Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. Some have a background in agriculture: One member of the group is a farmer’s daughter who grew up on a farm in the middle of the Waterdunen project area and two other members had spent their youth in the area and still live in the area. However, some members of the protest group are also tourists who frequently visited the area and who stayed many years on the camping that had to close due to the realization of Waterdunen. To these members Waterdunen did not represent a home but they rather felt attached to the area through their recreational experiences.

One interviewee summarized these different characteristics within the protest group as the following actor identity: *“I use the expression ‘people of the polders’ on purpose. A lot of people only use farmers, agrarians, but a polder that for many people also means a beautiful area to walk, to enjoy. [...] So by polder people I mean all people who have a connection with a polder”* (Interview on 7th of July 2020). Thus, according to this participant the protest group consists of *people of the polders*, which does not only refer to farmers who work in the polder but also recreationists and inhabitants of the polder. These people explicitly demarcate themselves from policymakers and other organizations who are in favour of nature conservation. These actors were namely described as *“nature freak organizations”* (Blogpost on 24th of January 2013) or with the metaphor *“Nature wins again from agricultural land. Nature: The very hungry caterpillar”* (Blogpost on 21st of October 2010). This shows that nature conservation is the antagonism of discourse 1. Moreover, the latter quote shows that for describing nature conservation metaphors from fighting/war are used.

4.1.3 Policy-making

In order to reproduce this discourse with the two core storylines *“ontpolderen is a form of injustice”*, and *“polders are valuable agricultural land”*, the protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!!, wrote letters to local newspapers and the group created a weblog where their actions were presented and updates about the development of the Waterdunen project have been uploaded. Frequently, new members joined this blog, which was a way for the protest group, to gain social support from the local population and from some tourists. These new members did not only post on the blog, but some of them also actively contributed to the protest actions.

These protest actions were organized in order to prevent the implementation of Waterdunen and additionally, the protest group engaged in legal decision-making processes to show their resistance. The most direct way to engage in decision-making was for the group when they held speeches in front of the provincial council. One participant described how he held such a speech: *“I had brought a large transparent bowl of water from the Western Scheldt and I had printed some fake euros and then I threw those fake euros into the water for my speech [...] and that was my theme of my speech: it is throw money into the water. Well I have spoken there a number of times and [...] I have always tried to remain dignified and understand that policy - yes, it is not always easy”* (Interview 7th of July 2020).

Additional to speeches, the group organized peaceful protests at public events, such as the opening of the main water gate at Waterdunen, and they initiated the collection of information flyers about Waterdunen that had been sent out by the government. These flyers have been sent to the residents to inform them about the project. However, the protest group asked the residents to collect the flyers so they could have been sent back to the provincial council as a sign of resistance (Webblog Vrienden Van Waterdunen-Nee !!!).

For their protest actions, the protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen-Nee !!! collaborated with the protest group “Red onze Polders”. However, the two groups have slightly different goals. While

Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!! focused on protesting against Waterdunen, “Red onze Polders” aims to protect polders in whole Zeelandic-Flanders. The groups collaborated by organizing protest actions together and by advising each other about protest actions. With these actions the protest groups did not only aim to prevent Waterdunen but they also proposed policy interventions that they saw as more suitable for the area: Instead of creating a wetland, as the government proposed, they suggested to protect the flora and fauna of the polders. However, these suggestions were not implemented but the Waterdunen project was in the end realized. As a last way of engaging in decision-making, the group asked the government to allow them to develop an exhibition in which they could show the history of the polder in which Waterdunen is developed. The motivation for such an exhibition was to prevent: *“Then people forget which sacrifices have been made [...]. And whether that icon [Waterdunen] will ever shine - that is part of an icon anyway - I do not know, so I think this is clever from the province, but people forget the sacrifices that have been made a lot of effort will still have to be made to make that icon shine”* (Interview on the 7th of July 2020).

However, the provincial government rejected this request, and this could be a reason why most of the actors of discourse 1 still show a critical, rejective attitude towards the project: *“That, of course, feeds our view that it is actually a project that shouldn't have happened. And which was actually irresponsible. That is still the case if it were ever proven to be a blessing for the region, well then, but so far we think it is not a blessing for the region. So we just have to wait and see”* (Interview on the 7th of July 2020).

In conclusion, the results show that the discourse coalitions of discourse 1 are still not satisfied with the situation, which means that even though the project is almost finished, in the local population there is still an emotional reluctance towards the Waterdunen project.

4.2 Discourse 2: Zeeland – A place between land and sea

Discourse 2 represents power dynamics that act in favour of implementing Waterdunen. Thereby the argumentative focus is on restoring *“Zeelands natural dynamics of land and sea”*. This core storyline is reproduced by actors who are involved in nature conservation, including governmental and private parties.

4.2.1 Place meanings

The place meaning that is predominantly reproduced in discourse 2 is the place meaning *Zeeland is a place between land and sea*. One participant explained this expression as following: *“The delta creates dynamics between land and water that cannot be found in other parts of the Netherlands. The borders between land and sea become blurry under the influence of the tides and through the interplay of rivers and sea, Zeeland has developed a special long coastline”* (Interview 13th of July 2020). Most of the participants perceived these dynamics as making Zeeland unique and as being beautiful. On the one hand it is thus these scenic characteristics of Zeeland that are framed as important and that the participants care about. On the other hand, the participants were also aware of the dangers of these dynamics: *“So then people already saw water coming over the land here. In 1953, this happened again with a storm surge, where in large parts of Zeeland, the coast, the water entered and that life in the delta actually shaped us”* (Interview on the 13th of July 2020). These two quotes show the ambiguity when place meanings of Zeeland are described. Metaphors for emphasizing the beauty and uniqueness are used, that reinforce the peculiarity of the sea, however at the same time the sea is described as threat or enemy that is part of the local identity. In other words, the residents admire the sea while they also have respect and even fear the sea, to such an extent that they adapted their everyday life to the dynamics of the sea.

When emphasizing the role of the sea and its dynamics in framing place meanings, in discourse 2 implicitly the meaning of Zeeland/Zeelandic-Flanders being an agricultural area is excluded. This becomes clear when looking at the booklet that the provincial government created to advertise the Waterdunen project. The two storylines of this booklet, that are also the core storylines of discourse 2, are namely: *“Zeeland is a place between land and sea”* (Booklet Waterdunen, 2019) and *“Waterdunen is all about the encounter between people and birds”* (Booklet Waterdunen, 2019). This shows that the sea and birds are core elements for framing place meanings in discourse 2 and that agriculture is simply not mentioned in these documents. Excluding agriculture or polders as place meaning implies that in contrast to discourse 1, in discourse 2 Waterdunen is not seen as *ontpolderen*. One participant explained why Waterdunen is to him not *ontpolderen*: *“Well, ontpolderen is a direct connection from the sea to the land. There the water can go in and out as freely as possible. We actually do not dare to do that on the coast in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, we also have storm situations there and if the water levels are too high, too turbulent, storm situation, we can close that tidal culvert.”* (Interview on 12th of July 2020).

However, when the participants were explicitly asked about the role of agriculture in Zeeland, they placed agriculture in the context of Zeelandic-Flanders being a *krimpgebied*. According to a local newspaper this means *“Zeelandic-Flanders is a krimpgebied and could use a helping hand. The number of inhabitants (now 23,760) is steadily declining. Tourism is the mainstay of the economy, with more than two million overnight tourists (at least one overnight stay) and three million day trippers”* (Newspaper article 9th of June 2015). Most of the participants added to that definition that agriculture causes an economic backlog: *“What I find frustrating or frumpy is always putting the agricultural sector in a nostalgic light. So with farm days and so on, it always ends up going back to the situation of more than 60 years ago. Well that's nice, but that's what I call frumpiness”* (Interview on the 8th of July 2020). This quote shows that in discourse 2, agriculture as it is currently performed, is seen to be an obstacle for the economic development of Zeelandic-Flanders. In summary, characterizing Zeelandic-Flanders as *krimpgebied* is thus used to argue that the region needs an economic push that creates jobs, attracts visitors and increases the liveability of the area.

4.2.2 Actors

Discourse 2 is mostly enacted by people and organizations which work in or are interested in nature conservation. The involved organizations are the provincial government, the nature protection foundation “Het Zeeuwse Landschap” and the citizen work group “Werkgroep Waterdunen-Groede”. This means that the discourse coalition consists of policy officers, biologists/ecologists from the foundation and residents from neighbouring villages.

Most of the actors that have been interviewed and who enact discourse 2, do not originate from Zeelandic-Flanders and they rather identify themselves with Zeeland in general. From interviewing these actors, there seems to be a cultural and spatial gap between people who identify themselves with Zeeland as a whole province and people who identify themselves as people from Zeelandic-Flanders. As the provincial council is also not located in Zeelandic-Flanders but in Middelburg, there is a spatial distance between these actors. However, most of the participants also described a cultural gap between people from Middelburg and people from Zeelandic-Flanders. One participant described the people from Zeelandic-Flanders as following: *“They didn't want to be Belgians. They are Zeelandic. But they don't really feel like being from Zeeland, in the sense of [being like] the people who live on the islands. [...] Yes, they are kind of in between, they really are borderline. [...] There is always something of a “yes what should we” outside mentality. “What should we do with Middelburg and the provincial administration”. Something of a kind of independence thinking”* (Interview on the 13th of July 2020). This shows that not only people from Zeelandic-Flanders see themselves as a

culturally distinctive population but that they are also perceived as being different from the rest of Zeeland and the Netherlands.

However, it is not only a tension between Zeelandic-Flanders and the rest of Zeeland but most of the participants explained that it is the island structure of Zeeland that has led to a culturally diverse population. Among others, one participant explained that this could reinforce conflicts in decision-making: *“Zeeland [...] has different cultures, sub-cultures. Because of this island formation you have that [...] those islands were of course a kind of their own, independent units, where people [...] lived and worked. And that is of course stamped in your culture. Every village had its own character [...] Yes, that is really thinking from an island [perspective]. That differentiation and that tension and perhaps the variation between them does cause some discussions”* (Interview on the 13th of July 2020). This quote shows that in the case of Zeeland it seems as if conflicts in decision-making are not only rooted in different place meanings but also in cultural differences among the population.

4.2.3 Policy-making

The discourse coalitions of discourse 2 reproduce the two core storylines of *“Zeeland is a place between land and sea”* and *“Waterdunen is all about the encounter between people and birds”* in official public sources, such as the websites of the organizations and in booklets and information events and excursions in the project area, at which presentations about the project have been held. Reproducing these two storylines is used to inform the population and to argue in favour of the implementation of Waterdunen. In this way, the storylines helped the actors to create social support for the project.

This strategy was successful, because after an information evening in 2009, a group of citizens decided to do voluntary work to support the implementation of Waterdunen. The group calls themselves *“Werkgroep Waterdunen-Groede”* and they aim to support the other actors by advising them about recreational opportunities i.e., improving the accessibility of the nature area, for Waterdunen (Newspaper article on 22nd of April 2009). Since then, the foundation, the government and the citizen group collaborate and together reinforce discourse 2. An example of this collaboration is an information evening, that the citizen group organized and where the government and the foundation have held speeches: *“The Werkgroep Waterdunen-Groede celebrates the club's one-year anniversary on Friday 28 May with a 'party evening with salty delights'. The leitmotiv is an extensive dinner with salt and sea products. [...] The members see Waterdunen as a welcome addition to what the region already has to offer. "That is why we spend part of the evening in the recently restored church and part in café-restaurant De Drie Koningen," says Jeanine Klaaijsen [member] of the working group. "This is how enjoying culture, nature, recreation and catering come together”* (Newspaper article on 15th of May 2010).

However, in discourse 2 not only the storyline of *“Zeeland – a place between land and sea”* is used to argue in favour of the project but also the storyline *“Zeelandic-Flanders is a krimpgebied”* is often mentioned. The latter storyline is used to emphasize that Zeelandic-Flanders faces an economic backlog and that it is necessary to address this problem by investing in the region. Waterdunen is then presented as the solution for this economic backlog. One participant explained the motivation to develop Waterdunen as following: *“This was because it fitted seamlessly into the area plan of West Zeelandic-Flanders. [...] That area plan was called 'Natural Vital' and that was an area plan for ten years [...] in which the aim was to strengthen the economic vitality of Zeelandic-Flanders and to let that go hand in hand with landscape reinforcement, so that so you kept a nice area. A rich area held, which also had its own power to attract tourism, strengthen the tourism, leisure sector. Well, the Waterdunen plan fitted into that”* (Interview on 17th of August 2020).

Additional to presenting that Zeelandic-Flanders has economic problems, in discourse 2, it is also emphasized that the coast needs extra flood protection. Improving flood protection in an innovative way is used as another argument for developing Waterdunen and wetland nature: *“Parallel to this, there was the need to strengthen the coast of West Zeelandic-Flanders. And that [was the national plan] ‘Zwakke Schakels’ [places with weak flood defense], which were a number on the Dutch coast. And one of those weak flood defences, so weaker places in the coast, was in Zeelandic-Flanders, so it was decided there to widen the dunes, the dune area to protect the coast, but onshore”* (Interview on 17th of August 2020). Enlarging the dune area is an innovative way of protecting the coast, which is argued to be necessary to support natural dynamics and thereby restore nature: *“The hard separation between the sea and the land with high dikes and dunes and barriers has also led to all negative consequences for nature. And in recent times, the province has made a policy statement to once again allow more dynamism in a controlled manner. And Waterdunen is an example of more dynamism”* (Interview on 13th of July 2020).

In summary, in discourse 2, Waterdunen is thus presented to be the solution for the following (policy) problems: It is a way to restore Zeelands natural dynamics between land and sea, to stimulate economic development in Zeelandic-Flanders and it represents an innovative way of flood protection. These arguments come together in the following slogan presenting Waterdunen as the suitable management measure: *“Waterdunen is a unique combination of onshore nature, a protected coast and special (accommodations and) recreation with nature and landscape”* (Website Foundation “Het Zeeuwse Landschap”).

4.3 Discourse 3: Waterdunen – A place to experience land, sea and birds

Discourse 3 combines meanings of discourse 1 and 2 in the leading storyline that describes Waterdunen as *“Place to experience land, sea and birds”*. This is a combination of meanings because it entails both, the natural dynamics between land and sea that are in the focus of discourse 2, and the place meanings of *“polders are valuable agricultural land”* from discourse 1. The term *“land”* in the core storyline in discourse 3 namely also refers to the *“unique combination of farming, recreation and nature”* which is the dominant way to describe Zeelandic-Flanders in discourse 3. However, in contrast to the other two discourse coalitions, the actors of discourse 3, who are for instance recreation entrepreneurs, use this storyline not only to argue in favour of the implementation of Waterdunen but also to advertise their accommodations.

4.3.1 Place meanings

The way place meanings are framed in discourse 3 is very similar to the slogan: *“Waterdunen is a unique combination of onshore nature, a protected coast and special (accommodations and) recreation with nature and landscape”* (Website Foundation “Het Zeeuwse Landschap”), however in discourse 3 the focus is on the recreational aspect of the Waterdunen project. A central term for framing place meanings is namely the *experience* of Waterdunen. While also in this discourse, Waterdunen is seen to be a special place between land and sea, *“The interaction of land and water is unique”* (Website Molecaten) the focus is on emphasizing that it is rather the experience of a place that this discourse is focused around: *“Experience the feeling of freedom. Experience Waterdunen”* (Booklet Molecaten Waterdunen).

Additional to emphasizing the uniqueness of the interplay between land and sea, in discourse 3, also birds are seen to be an important aspect of the experience of Waterdunen. Another way of framing the place meanings of Waterdunen is namely: *“It is at the crossroads of one of the most important bird migration routes. The bird migration from North to South and from South to North, it flies over Waterdunen. [...] And there are the people standing early in the morning when that bird migration starts they are counting the birds. And that's 1000 or 10,000 birds [that have passed there]. Then that*

is unique. [...] You see those migratory birds foraging, you see Waterdunen." (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). This quote shows that Waterdunen provides the opportunity to observe birds, which is a central place meaning in discourse 3.

However, when emphasizing the specialty of observing birds in Waterdunen, also the term *nature* is often mentioned: *"You become one with nature. [...] You see those migratory birds foraging, you see Waterdunen. [...] it is nature that you stay in"* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). This quote shows that the uniqueness of Waterdunen is not only created by sea, land, water and birds, but that this comes together when experiencing *nature*. The corresponding storyline to describe Waterdunen is *"Molecaten Park Waterdunen stands for peace and space in the middle of nature"* (Booklet Molecaten Waterdunen).

This quote shows that Waterdunen and experiencing the place, is described in a way that emphasizes the speciality and the well-being that people can experience when they visit Waterdunen. This is reinforced by using metaphors such as freedom, space and peace, that are framed to become experienceable in Waterdunen. These meanings are summarized in the following, leading storyline for framing place meanings in discourse 3: *"High quality of life. Making memories in a unique location, in the middle of the dunes"* (Booklet Molecaten Waterdunen). From these quotes it can be concluded that when emphasizing that Waterdunen is a place for unique experiences, in discourse 3, place meanings regarding agriculture are implicitly excluded. However, when the participants were explicitly asked about agriculture, they explained that they see it as part of the unique combination that is characteristic for Zeelandic-Flanders: *"So the combination of the sea, the beach, dunes and agriculture. That is Zeelandic-Flanders. You can farm here; the farmer can plow up to the dike. And that combination of agriculture, natural aspects and recreation are so close to each other. That makes it a whole"* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). Describing Zeelandic-Flanders in such a way, presents the region as special. In this discourse place meanings are thus not solely used to present Waterdunen in a positive way, but also that Waterdunen resembles the original uniqueness of Zeelandic-Flanders: *"The possibility of Zeelandic-Flanders, the products are already widely available here. That is what it's about. And you can see what we are currently doing at Waterdunen, where we are [located] between a lot of products"* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020).

However, it is not only the combination of functions that is presented to make Zeelandic-Flanders special but also the geographic history of the region. With this the participant meant: *"Then you see the development that Zeelandic-Flanders originated from salt marshes and mud flats. Hundreds of years ago there was still water there. And the mud flats with salt marshes have become dry and they have been impoldered and therefore [now they get] returned to the sea. Those impoldered places that form the basis for the Zeelandic landscape. And if you look at Waterdunen you would see that we have tried to restore the developments over the centuries back there"* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). These quotes show that in discourse 3, place meanings of discourse 1 and 2 are combined because in this discourse both storylines – *Zeelandic-Flanders (or polders) being valuable agricultural land* and *Zeeland being a place between land and sea* – are reproduced. Moreover, in this discourse, in contrast to discourse 2, Waterdunen is seen as form of *ontpolderen*: *"It has been ontpoldered. Ontpoldered, so it was a polder, and a dike has been pierced there and now twice a day at low tide and high tide, saltwater flows into that freshwater polder. So that is what will change the landscape. So nothing grows anymore, only salt related [plants]. It's unique too, huh. There is also nothing comparable. We don't have many of these areas in the Netherlands"* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). However, in contrast to discourse 1, here *ontpolderen* is not seen as injustice but as making the place special and unique, which is why discourse 3 can be demarcated from the other two discourses, even though it reproduces dominant place meanings from both other discourses.

4.3.2 Actors

This discourse is mainly enacted by recreation entrepreneurs. Before Waterdunen was implemented there was a camping owned by a local resident. This resident sold his property and started to collaborate with the international recreation entrepreneur Molecaten in order to continue with providing accommodations and recreation opportunities in Waterdunen.

The resident strongly identifies himself as person living in Zeelandic-Flanders: *“I live in Zeeland, in Zeelandic-Flanders. If you live there once, you will also love it [...] My work was there, my house was there and my life was there too. That was my affinity”* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). And in line with the place identity described in discourse 2, he sees people from Zeelandic-Flanders as different from the rest of the Netherlands: *“The Flemish of Zeelandic-Flanders. The Burgundian, the rural. I have been in the city a lot. Everything must be done there, nothing must be done here [...]. In Zeelandic-Flanders we are Flemish and that is what distinguishes the Burgundian, Flemish character of Zeelandic-Flanders [from the rest of Zeeland]. And my friends who live in Middelburg for example, you don't have that there”* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). However, this quote shows that this actor identity is framed differently than in discourse 2, because here it is presented to be something special and positive, of which the participant seemed to be proud.

Additionally, these two quotes show that it is not only his living environment that he is proud of but also his job in the recreation sector. That the resident identifies himself with his job is in line with the actor identity that the international recreation entrepreneur describes on his website: *“We have been developing recreational parks on beaches, in forests and on lakes for generations. Everywhere we show respect for people and the environment in word and deed: after all, nature is inextricably linked to the experiential value of our guests”* (Website Molecaten). The way Molecaten describe themselves shows that also for Molecaten *making natural landscapes experienceable* is not only a core storyline of framing place meanings but it is also part of their actor identity. The quote shows that thereby, nature and recreation are framed to be intertwined.

4.3.3 Policy-Making

The actors of discourse 3 reinforce their discourse via the website of Molecaten and in a brochure. However, for creating social support for Waterdunen they rather rely on the actors of discourse 2. For example, the recreation entrepreneurs have been invited to and held speeches at the information evening organized by the citizen group “Werkgroep Waterdunen-Groede”.

That in discourse 3 nature and recreation are seen to be intertwined, forms the basis for collaboration with actors from discourse 2, because in the leading storyline *“Waterdunen is a unique combination of onshore nature, a protected coast and special [accommodations and] recreation with nature and landscape”* (Website Foundation “Het Zeeuwse Landschap) of discourse 2, these two goals come together. However, from the way place meanings and actor identities are framed in discourse 3, it becomes clear that here the recreational experience is more important than nature conservation and flood protection.

As a result of such similar ways of framing place meanings and policy objectives, the discourse coalitions of discourse 2 and the discourse coalitions of discourse 3 together initiated Waterdunen. The motivation of the recreation entrepreneurs to realize Waterdunen was the following: *“I had two ideas: One idea was the added value for the recreational product, it is just not the camping bungalow park anymore, you would have to think of something more to find the guests with you. And two if you want to create nature, you will also be able to finance it. And the first idea was that the exportant owners would pay for maintenance and management of nature [...]. The added value of tourism capitalizes on the landscape. That is also the idea of Waterdunen”* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). The overall goal to develop the region (economically) is in line with the problem definition of

discourse 2, that frames Zeelandic-Flanders to be a *krimpgebied* i.e., to face an economic backlog. This contributes to the discursive basis for collaboration between the two discourse coalitions.

Moreover, also the recreation entrepreneurs see the need for flood protection. However, in contrast to discourse 2, in discourse 3, flood protection is mostly framed to be an opportunity to innovate the recreation sector in the region: *“Camping Napoleon-Hoeve has disappeared from the globe in the context of dyke reinforcement, in the context of the Weak Links and I have sold [the] company to Molecaten. [...] Well Waterdunen is an idea of mine. Yes, I just had the idea of creating a 300 hectare park, of which 200 hectares of nature and 100 hectares of recreational recreation. [...] [The recreational product] is shifting. We are now going back to basics. Those safari tents. A village. That is interesting. That is the purpose of your product. And you have to do something with that”* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). This quote shows that the actors of discourse 3, focus on making nature accessible and improving the recreational experience. In line with this policy objective, they propose the following policy measure that they want to add to the Waterdunen project: *“Waterdunen where you say, soon we will have 200 bungalows, it was supposed to be 200 but now there are 400, 400 owners [...] The accommodations are going to be built, the hotel is going to be built, but the nature [reserve] is there already”* (Interview on the 12th of August 2020). While this quote shows how the actors of discourse 3, turn their discourse into policy measures it also shows the current state of the project Waterdunen. The nature area and the flood protection measures are namely already established and in a last step, the actors of discourse 3, will build the accommodations to finalize the project.

In conclusion, the results show that discourse 1 and 2 can be clearly demarcated, because the way place meanings are framed implies opposite policy objectives. While the discourse coalitions of discourse 2 aim to restore the natural dynamics between land and sea, the actors of discourse 1, focus on preserving polders and flora and fauna that can be found in fields. The actors of discourse 3 do support that polders are an important, valuable landscape; however, they chose to collaborate with the actors of discourse 2, in order to innovate the recreation sector. This shows that discourse 3 is situated between discourse 1 and 2, because it reproduces storylines from both discourses. However, as the focus of discourse 3 is on economic development that combines nature conservation, recreation and flood protection, in the end, the discourse coalition supported the actors of discourse 2 with implementing Waterdunen.

5 Discussion

This research was guided by the question: *How do different social actors frame place meanings in order to influence decision-making in the conflict around implementing ecological restoration policy?* To investigate this question the project Waterdunen that aims to restore wetlands in farmland has been chosen. The implementation of Waterdunen namely resulted in a conflict which was driven by three different place narratives that employ three ways of framing place meanings. First, there is the citizen protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!! which aimed to preserve the polder in which Waterdunen was supposed to be realized. These actors presented the polder as special, valuable land, that is a great place for recreation and agriculture which was their way of arguing in favour of protecting the polders. Second, the Dutch government and the nature conservation foundation Het Zeeuwse Landschap aimed to restore a wetland in this polder. They argue that Zeeland is a special place between land and sea and that restoring wetlands reinforces the speciality of Zeeland as a whole province. Lastly, two recreation entrepreneurs presented Waterdunen as a place to make special memories and to experience land, sea and birds. In this way they promoted the accommodations which they want to construct close to the wetland nature reserve. However, in the last place narrative also agriculture as a place meaning is integrated because the stakeholders argued

that Waterdunen resembles the uniqueness of West-Zeelandic-Flanders of combining agriculture, recreation, and nature conservation. It became clear that by implementing Waterdunen the first place narrative was neglected as the farmland was transformed into a wetland nature reserve. The actors emphasizing on the specialty of polders therefore staged protests and in the end, they were still showing a repellent attitude towards the project and the government.

This shows that ecological restoration also in this case study has faced challenges because the different perceptions of the place were not sufficiently integrated in the policy. By analysing this conflict in-depth it was aimed to identify how ecological restoration can be improved from a societal perspective.

5.1 Theoretical discussion

An analytical lens that combines discourse theory and the sense of place framework has been chosen. Discourse theory provided the theoretical concepts to identify the different narratives about the study area whereby the sense of place framework was used to grasp the stakeholders' different perceptions of, and emotional attachment to the study area. Combining discourse theory and sense of place has proven to be a suitable theory to identify different opinions and beliefs that influenced the implementation process of Waterdunen. However, while the two theories led to insightful results about the implementation process, it was not possible to explain why one way of framing place meanings has been translated into a policy measure i.e., the restoration of wetlands. Why this was the case and how further research could address this knowledge gap will be discussed in the following chapter.

5.1.1 Discourse theory

In this research a discursive approach has been used in order to understand the conflict about the implementation of the Dutch ecological restoration project Waterdunen. Taking a discursive approach means that it is focused on how stakeholders use language to frame a policy problem and the solution. This rhetoric lens has been applied to analyse place meanings, i.e., the meaning of a specific site (Agnew, 1987), thus how actors rhetorically construct a place. Initially, a Foucauldian approach to discourse has been chosen, because it offers insights that reach beyond the analysis of texts as Foucault conceptualizes power as the ability to influence people's actions by means of rhetorically constructing space for actions (M. Hajer, 1995). However, in times of social distancing in this study it was methodologically not possible to observe people's actions and therefore most of the results are based on the analysis of textual sources, such as websites, newspaper articles and interview transcripts. While the focus was therefore laid on rhetoric instruments, the findings from this analysis do have implications for power and decision-making, which will be discussed in the following sections.

In this analysis three dominant storylines to describe place meanings have been identified that were used to argue for three distinctive, partly incompatible, policy measures. The first storyline is *"Polders are valuable agricultural land"*. This storyline is reproduced to emphasize on the specialty of the polder landscape in order to argue against the implementation of Waterdunen. Specialty here refers to the historical value of the fields for being created by impoldering, to agriculture as an economically and culturally important practice and to the recreational opportunities in this landscape. Showing the importance of the polder is the core objective of discourse 1. Second, the province of Zeeland has been often described as *"Zeeland is a place between land and sea"* which represents the key storyline of discourse 2. This storyline has been reproduced by almost all participants, however, in discourse 2 it is the central storyline to argue that Waterdunen, i.e., the restoration of wetlands, is a measure that reinforces Zeeland's originality. The third storyline *"Waterdunen is a place to experience land, sea and birds"* is employed by local recreation

entrepreneurs to attract visitors and to sell their accommodations. Their central argument in favour of realizing Waterdunen is that it is a place that not only offers extraordinary experiences but at the same time it is a way to show the specialty of the region as it is framed with the following storyline: “*Zeelandic-Flanders shows a unique combination of farming, recreation and nature*” which is framed to be resembled in Waterdunen.

These three storylines have been conceptualized into three discourses because they first describe the place differently and second, they are used to argue for different policy measures by the different discourse coalitions. At first sight it seems as if the actors of discourse 2 and 3 reproduce very similar place meanings, however a deeper insight through the semi-structured interviews has shown that the recreation entrepreneurs have a different understanding of Waterdunen than the Dutch government. The government namely sees Waterdunen as a replication of Zeelands natural dynamics but in discourse 3, Waterdunen is rather framed to resemble the uniqueness of (West-)Zeelandic-Flanders. It appears that the actors are proud of this feature and want to show that to their clients. This then seems to be their motivation to realize Waterdunen in collaboration with the actors of discourse 2, even though they show different understandings of the place. While the government and the recreation entrepreneurs collaborated, the actors of discourse 1 tried to prevent Waterdunen by reproducing their storyline during public events, protest actions and via the newspaper. However, these actors have not been successful in protecting the polder because the government used a dispossession procedure to gain the land and in the end the polder has been transformed into a wetland. As the government had to employ a dispossession procedure it is not clear yet how powerful this actor was because discursive measures seemed to be insufficient to convince the residents. This unclarity is reinforced by the observation that the actors of discourse 1 were still not satisfied with the outcome of the project.

To understand why the second discourse became translated into policy measures, it is necessary to investigate power dynamics more in depth. While Waterdunen has been implemented, from a discursive perspective, this would mean that either discourse 2 or 3 have gained most power, or in other words have become the hegemonic discourse, thus resonate most with the way the society understands the place meanings of Waterdunen. However, from this research it is not yet clear if this is indeed the case, as discourse 1 appeared to resonate with the public opinion as well, even though these actors argue for policy measures that are incompatible with the measures suggested by discourse 2 and 3. A discourse analysis has therefore in this case not offered enough insights into power dynamics and it is therefore necessary to add a perspective that analyses power beyond rhetoric instruments. From the results it seems as if legislations have been more powerful than strategically using language because the government used dispossession, thus a legal instrument, to obtain the fields in which Waterdunen is now realized. An approach that captures such power dynamics is the institutional analysis (March & Olsen, 2006). *Institutions* refers to the formal and informal rules that guide the interactions of individuals and groups. As the dispossession procedure represents a legal institution, it might be insightful to analyse how such legal instruments have been employed and how this affected the interaction of the government with the citizens. In this way an institutional analysis can provide insights that explain why in the end Waterdunen has been implemented.

However, not only a change in perspective but also a changing focus in the discourse analysis can provide more insights into power dynamics. While in this research the sensitizing concepts of *storyline*, *metaphors* and *othering* have been used, focussing on the way metaphors are used for problem framing can provide meaningful results for understanding power dynamics. Hajer (1995) suggests that metaphors are a way to simplify complex issues while at the same time they exclude meanings (M. Hajer, 1995). He illustrates this with the example of the *acid rain* metaphor that was

used in Dutch and British environmental policies to describe the problem of pollution with chemicals that damages plants through the rain. Hajer has shown that simplifying a complex issue such as pollution can lead to the wrongful use of a metaphor, resulting in overlooking the real problem at stake (M. Hajer, 1995).

Similar to the metaphor of *acid rain*, also in the conflict about the Waterdunen project several ways of problem and solution framing have been found. First, there are the different ways the wetland ecosystem has been described in metaphors. While the government and the recreation entrepreneurs present this ecosystem in a beautiful, special light by using metaphors such as *the interplay between land and sea* and *blurry borders between land and sea*, the protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!! describes the wetlands as *mud pool*. *Mud pool* is here not only a metaphor but also a way of *othering* because it reduces the meaning of the wetland, for example of being a restored habitat, and presents it in an ironic, even silly way. The two examples show how actors use language strategically; the government employs metaphors to gain support by emphasizing the specialty and of the ecosystem while the protest group makes the ecosystem appear to be nothing more than mud and therefore argues that this is not worth to be restored, and that this degrades the scenic image of the landscape.

Second, not only the outcome of the project, i.e., the wetland ecosystems, but also the meaning of the intervention into the landscape has been framed differently in each discourse. In discourse 1 Waterdunen is described with the metaphor of *ontpolderen*. This term has a different definition in each discourse and according to the actors of discourse 1 every intervention that changes the original function of a polder, i.e., agriculture, means to them *ontpolderen*. In contrast to that, the actors of discourse 2 argue that Waterdunen is not *ontpolderen* because it is not a direct connection to the sea as water in- and outflow are controlled by a gate. In this discourse *ontpolderen* is namely defined as creating a direct, uncontrolled connection to the sea. Interestingly, the third discourse also frames Waterdunen as a form of *ontpolderen*, however, while these actors appear to use the same definition as in discourse 1, to them this is not a form of injustice but rather an opportunity to improve their supply of accommodations. Focussing on the use of metaphors can contribute to understanding power dynamics. This is confirmed by the study of Keularz (2007) who found that metaphors do not only frame the way one thinks but also their actions (Keulartz, 2007). Therefore, conducting a discourse analysis focussed on the meaning and implications of the metaphor of *ontpolderen* can contribute to understanding not only the conflict of Waterdunen but possibly also other ecological restoration projects in farmland. For instance, focussing on the implications of the metaphor of *ontpolderen* for decision-making and how this affects people's actions could provide deeper insights into the power dynamics behind the restoration of wetlands in polders.

5.1.2 Sense of Place

Ecological restoration has been criticised for overlooking the cultural perception of a social-ecological system (SES). To address this criticism this study used the sense of place framework, specifically place meanings, as a way of understanding such cultural perceptions. Sense of place is namely suggested to be a promising theory to understand changes in an SES (Vanessa A Masterson et al., 2017).

Also, in this case study, investigating place meanings could explain the process of implementing Waterdunen. The transformation of the landscape was postponed for several years because a citizen protest group tried to prevent the implementation of Waterdunen by protest actions, speeches and letters to the government. Looking at the different place narratives in this conflict, it becomes clear that the stakeholders show different understandings of the place that resulted in incompatible suggestions for policy measures and these different understandings have postponed the implementation of Waterdunen. Specifically, three distinctive ways of framing place meanings have

been identified. First, there are the actors, mainly citizens, who aim to preserve agriculture, consequently they seek to prevent the implementation of ecological restoration in farmland. Discursively, these actors reproduce the place meaning of "*Polders are valuable agricultural land*" in order to emphasize on the value of the original fields in West-Zeelandic-Flanders. Main actors are part of the citizen protest group "Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee!!!" who engaged in decision-making by means of speeches, letters and protest actions. These people identify themselves relation to the dominant place meaning, they namely describe themselves as "*people of the polders*", thus people who have a connection to the polder.

In this place narrative, predominantly metaphors from describing a war have been used to describe how the group tried to prevent Waterdunen. Using such metaphors might indicate a repellent attitude towards measures that threaten the persistence of polders. In line with this, the Waterdunen project is described with the metaphor of *ontpolderen*, implying that creating wetland nature in fields undermines the value of polders and that this intervention is therefore a form of injustice. As an alternative to this intervention, policy measures that protect the value of the fields have been proposed. This finding supports the suggestions of Gifford et al. that a strong place attachment, as in this case indicated by the expression "*people of the polders*", results in a protective attitude towards that place (Gifford, 2014; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). However, in this case study the actors even showed this protective attitude towards these place meanings after the landscape has been physically changed; despite their effort, in the end Waterdunen was namely implemented. As a way to conserve the place meaning of the polder, the protest group namely asked the government if they could develop an exhibition about the original polder in order to remind visitors about the original place and its history. This shows that even though the landscape was physically changed, the citizens aimed to preserve the place meaning, which might be another indication of a strong place attachment.

The second way of framing place meanings is focused on presenting that "*Zeeland is a place between land and sea*". This way of framing place meanings is used to argue in favour of restoring wetlands as they are seen to reinforce Zeelands original dynamics between land and sea and the habitats and species that these dynamics create. Another part of this place narrative is that these actors emphasize on Zeelandic-Flanders to be a "*krimpgebied*" which is used to argue that Waterdunen represents an opportunity for the region in terms of nature conservation, recreation and flood protection that will give the region an economic push. In line with this policy objective this place narrative is reproduced by actors who are involved in nature conservation, such as the Dutch government, a conservation foundation, and a local group of volunteers.

Compatible with the place narrative above, the third way of framing place meanings describes that "*Waterdunen is a place to experience land, sea and birds*". At first sight it seems as if this place meaning is very similar to the place meaning described in the previous paragraph, yet the focus of this narrative is different: Here, namely the *experience* that is possible in Waterdunen is in the focus, which makes sense as this place meaning is reproduced by recreation entrepreneurs who discursively create an image of Waterdunen that attracts visitors and that they use to promote their accommodations. Moreover, a deeper insight through the semi-structured interviews has shown that the recreation entrepreneurs have a different understanding of Waterdunen than the Dutch government. The government namely sees Waterdunen as a replication of Zeelands natural dynamics but for the recreation entrepreneurs Waterdunen is a place to resemble the uniqueness of (West-) Zeelandic-Flanders. These actors namely describe as unique that in Zeelandic-Flanders sea, agriculture, nature and recreation are combined. It appears that the actors are proud of this feature and want to show this to their clients. Moreover, the initiating recreation entrepreneur identifies himself as person from Zeelandic-Flanders which together with his proud attitude might indicate that

he feels attached to that place. This then seems to be his motivation to realize Waterdunen in collaboration with the government and the nature conservation foundation, even though they show different understandings of the place.

Several observations are striking when looking at the three ways of framing place meanings. First, a diversity of place meanings has been identified; valuable agricultural land, *krimpgebied*, Zeelands dynamics between land and sea and Zeelandic-Flanders uniquely combining nature, agriculture and recreation. This is in line with the findings of Drenthen (2013) who argues that a landscape has to be understood as having different layers of meanings that need to be understood for restoring ecosystems in a socially accepted way (Drenthen, 2013). With the case of the Hedwigepolder that was also transformed into a wetland, Drenthen illustrates how insufficiently addressing the diversity of place meanings and identities can result in decreasing support for nature conservation (Drenthen, 2013). The same can be recognized in the case of Waterdunen: The actors who identify themselves as “*people of the polders*” resisted the implementation of ecological restoration and were still showing a repellent attitude towards the project and the government. This might indicate that it is their place narrative that has not been sufficiently integrated into decision-making about implementing Waterdunen.

Second, when looking at the diversity of place meaning it becomes clear that these layers of a landscape are not only implicitly expressed, like Drenthen suggests through everyday practices (Drenthen, 2013) but in this case the different actors also explicitly refer to different geographical layers or scales. One narrative focuses namely on the fields of Zeelandic-Flanders, the second emphasizes the place meaning of Zeeland as a whole province and in the focus of the third is the place meaning of Zeelandic-Flanders as a region within Zeeland. In other words, there is not only a difference in the way meaning is constructed but also in the way the place meanings are connected to a geographical delineation.

Taking a closer look at the different scales that are described within the conflict about Waterdunen, the results show that also place meanings differ between such scales. While Zeeland as a whole province is framed to be a place between land and sea, Zeelandic-Flanders is described as a place that combines nature, recreation and agriculture and lastly the fields or polder in which Waterdunen is developed has been framed as valuable land for agriculture. In these different descriptions it can be recognized that place meanings vary from large- to small scale. This is in line with the findings of Papanastasiou (2017) who recognized that actors assign meanings to scales differently and therefore using a perspective engaging with scales is suggested to enhance the understanding of policy struggles. Moreover, she found that actors strategically refer to scales in order to shape their political actions (Papanastasiou, 2017). Following this suggestion and focussing on the way actors construct place narratives in relation to scales might reveal power dynamics behind these narratives. However, based on the findings of the case Waterdunen, it should also be recognized what the implications of using different scales in place narratives are for place identity. For example, the actors of discourse 1, who mainly reproduced the place meaning of the fields, still recognized that Zeeland is a place between land and sea. However, they seemed to identify themselves rather with the small-scale place meanings because they described themselves as *people of the polders*.

From this observation the question arises in how far the concept of scale as part of place meanings, plays a role for place identity formation and place attachment. While all participants recognize that Zeeland is a place between land and sea, not all of them identified with this place meaning as shown in the expression *people of the polders*. Here namely people said that they had a bond with the polder and for instance the people saying that they are people from Zeelandic-Flanders explicitly said that they do not feel belonging to the rest of Zeeland. Most of the participants recognized that

Zeelands history of being a region with many islands has led to very diverse cultures and consequently diverging (place) identities which might have led to more isolated communities that culturally have less in common than a geographically more connected area. This might have contributed to the development of the conflict, for instance because the government views Zeeland as a whole province, even though it consists of diverse sub-cultures. Thus, with reproducing this place meaning the Dutch government created probably a more abstract and conform place meaning with which the citizens did not sufficiently identify to support a project that resembles the place meanings as framed by the government.

Conceptualizing the conflict from this perspective then means that the small-scale place meanings, such as of the fields with which the actors of discourse 1 identify, became overlooked, even neglected by implementing a project that restores the dynamics between land and sea. If the meaning and delineation of a place varies extremely among the local population it might be difficult to create a policy measure that changes the landscape in a way that satisfies most of the stakeholders. Therefore, this research suggests that addressing diverse place meanings and identities can be a crucial part for enhancing the societal acceptance of ecological restoration.

5.2 Methodological discussion

5.2.1 Qualitative approach

For this study, a qualitative case study approach has been chosen, which means that it was aimed for gaining in-depth insights into one case. Therefore, various textual sources, such as newspaper articles, websites and a weblog have been analysed and enriched with semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Combining different data sources was a way to increase the validity of the results of this research because the public discourses, as presented in the textual sources could be compared to what key stakeholders said during the interviews. Moreover, the interviews provided deeper insights as with follow-up questions topic could have been discussed that were not mentioned in public sources. Reading the public sources first was a preparatory step for conducting the interviews as important topics could have been identified beforehand. While the newspapers provided an overview of important events in the conflict, the websites and the weblog provided more insights into the place meanings that each stakeholder reproduced separately. Therefore, the number of researched articles was with about 600 too high and it should have been better aimed for interviewing more people because the interviews provided deeper insights. For example, on their website about Waterdunen the government did not include a section about the role of agriculture for the region, which however seemed to be an important topic in the weblog *Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!!* and in the newspapers. Therefore, the key informant from the government was asked about the economic impact of Waterdunen and then he did elaborate on the role of agriculture for Zeelandic-Flanders.

While this approach provides in-depth insights into the case of Waterdunen, the generalizability of the results is restricted. The researcher namely takes a more active role, for example the interview questions were adapted to what the participants told, and the analysis shows an interpretation of the researcher. This interpretation involves the assigning of codes, deductive and inductive coding has been used, but also the researcher decided which stakeholders are key stakeholders and which newspaper articles were relevant to understand the conflict. While these decisions were based on the sources used in the introduction and description of the study site, this interpretative aspect of the research decreases the generalizability and replicability of the results. To increase the validity of this results it is therefore suggested to do a follow-up quantitative study, for example a survey, to test if similar linguistic patterns in the way stakeholders frame place meanings can be recognized in a larger target group. A suitable guideline for such a study seems to be the article of Raymond et al.

(2020) who suggested that a combination of surveys and open methods such as participatory mapping, interviews and navigational methods can provide insights into the relationship of place meanings and attachment and geographical scales, also in the context of place changes (C. Raymond & Gottwald, 2020).

5.2.2 Internet-based data collection

A limitation of this research was that the data collection had to be conducted fully online. This had several implications; First it was difficult to find participants, therefore the number of interviews was restricted to 9 participants and about half of the participants had been contacted via one key stakeholder (snowball sampling). While this was very helpful in finding participants, it might have biased the results towards people that are in the key stakeholder's network who might share similar opinions and beliefs. Second, the data collection was therefore restricted to interviews and web sources, however observing participants in their everyday life, for example with go-alongs (Kusenbach, 2003), would have provided more insights also into the practices of these people. Especially go-alongs provide deeper insights because they connect biographies of the participants to a spatial context. In this way the meaning of everyday practices can be researched not only in relation to their personal background but also to the way they perceive and give meaning to an environment (Kusenbach, 2003). As this project is missing the experience of the practical context and only listening and reading about the project the results are restricted to rhetoric instruments of framing place meanings. Therefore, it is suggested to enrich the results of this study by conducting go-alongs in order to gain insights into place meanings beyond a focus on rhetoric tools.

5.2.3 Personal reflection

The first step of conducting a discourse analysis is a reflection on your own discourse. Being a researching student, educated in nature conservation, my discourse is stamped by constructing nature conservation measures, such as ecological restoration, as an opportunity to combat habitat and biodiversity loss. Protecting nature and improving the implementation of conservation projects therefore was my motivation to analyse the conflict about Waterdunen. However, for creating meaningful research results, it is important to stay open-minded and to engage with perspectives that enact different points of view than your own. In order to scratch a holistic picture of the way place meanings have been framed I did not only talk to the parties who developed the project, but I specifically looked for stakeholders who did not support Waterdunen and I conducted semi-structured interviews in order to understand their arguments.

Moreover, I carefully created an interview guide with special attention to not pushing participants towards positive statements about Waterdunen but rather asking open questions (see Appendix). While as a researcher I tried to be as neutral as possible, for evaluating the results it is important to realize that the participants might have used the interviews as a way of convincing me, the researcher, of their point of view. By explain what they found important about the study area they probably emphasized on the place meaning and identity that was mostly in line with their policy objective, for example that the actors of discourse 1 identified themselves as *people of the polders* can also be used to show how important it is to maintain the polder. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate if the diversity of place meanings and identities can also be recognized in a neutral situation.

After engaging with the different stakeholders through the semi-structured interviews I reflected on my own discourse and realized that practically, ecological restoration is not only an opportunity for nature conservation but that it can impact the well-being of the local population quite heavily. Thus, in order to continue habitat restoration while also maintaining the well-being of the residents, the societal acceptability of ecological restoration measures needs to be improved. However, to do so I

realized that engaging with the residents of restoration areas is crucial as they, at least in this case study, show a quite different understanding of the place than the government. The challenge then is to integrate their perspective while physically transforming the landscape with measures that are incompatible with the place meanings reproduced by the residents. Information events and communication strategies might be opportunities to at least discursively maintain the place meanings that the residents enact.

6 Conclusion

Ecological restoration has been criticised to overlook the societal implications of the transformation of the landscape, for instance the cultural aspect (Leenhardt et al., 2015) such as challenging the inhabitants place identity which affects the well-being of the citizens (Drenthen, 2018). To help improving the societal acceptability of ecological restoration this case study aimed to understand the conflict about implementing the ecological restoration project Waterdunen. A discursive approach to sense of place has been chosen to grasp the different meanings that the study area represents to the stakeholders. This resulted in the following, leading research question: *How do different social actors frame place meanings in order to influence decision-making in the conflict around implementing ecological restoration policy?*

The main result of this case study is that three distinctive ways of framing place meanings have been identified. This explains why the implementation of Waterdunen was postponed for many years. The three place narratives or discourses namely show three different visions of the study area which are used to argue for different policy measures that are not compatible with each other. Discourse 1 is enacted by the protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!! who argue that the polder in which Waterdunen is realized is valuable agricultural land that needs to be protected. Restoring wetlands in this polder, as proposed by the government, is described to be *ontpolderen* which implies that this intervention diminishes the value of the polder. To prevent this the group set up protest actions and wrote letters to the government. However, in the end Waterdunen had been realized and now the members of the protest group are worried that people will forget about the polder and its history.

Discourse 2 is reproduced by the government, Provincie Zeeland, the nature conservation foundation Het Zeeuwse Landschap and a group of volunteers. These stakeholders argue that Waterdunen, the restoration of a wetland, is an opportunity for nature conservation, as wetlands are threatened ecosystems. Moreover, their restoration it is framed to be an innovative way of flood protection and an attraction for visitors which can improve the economic situation of the region. Moreover, the restoration of wetlands is argued to reinforce Zeelands specialty of being a place between land and sea and therefore it is seen to be a suitable policy measure for this landscape. This vision of the place is reproduced by the stakeholders during information events and through flyers and on the stakeholders' websites. However, due to the protest actions of the actors of discourse 1, including local farmers, the realization of Waterdunen has been postponed for several years and in the end the government had to enforce a dispossession procedure to obtain parts of the polder for realizing the project.

Lastly, discourse 3 emphasizes that Waterdunen is a place to make special memories as a unique combination of land, sea and birds can be experienced in this area. This vision of the place combines the dynamics between sea and land, as emphasized in discourse 2, but also refers to agriculture because Waterdunen is framed to resemble the unique combination of Zeelandic-Flanders where nature, agriculture and recreation can be found altogether. These place meanings are reproduced by recreation entrepreneurs who aim to construct new holiday accommodations in the study area and who use this way of framing place meanings to advertise their accommodations. Together with the government and the nature conservation foundation the recreation entrepreneurs organized

information evenings to inform and convince the local population of the project Waterdunen. In the end Waterdunen was realized, thus the polders have been transformed into a wetland, however the holiday accommodations are currently still under construction.

With transforming the polders into a wetland, the place meanings that discourse 1 reproduces became neglected as the polder landscape was not preserved, like they suggested. This explains the repellent and distrustful attitude of the members of the protest group towards the government and Waterdunen; their place narrative has not been integrated into the policy. Thus, also in this case study ecological restoration faced the problem of overlooking the cultural perception of the landscape.

In order to help improving the societal acceptance of ecological restoration these three discourses have been analysed in-depth in order to understand the conflict and the stakeholders' different arguments. Thereby analytical concepts based on discourse theory have been used. The analysis was guided by the following sub-questions:

- How do the discourses construct the place?
- Which place meanings are excluded from the discourses?
- What are the discourse coalitions?
- How do the discourses construct actor identities?
- How do the discourse coalitions influence decision-making processes?
- What do the discourses present as desirable management measures?

Looking at the three discourses it became clear that each of the discourse constructs the place differently. The first discourse reproduces the core storyline: *Polders are valuable agricultural land*. This storyline is used to show how special the polder landscape is and to show their historical value, emphasized by calling the landscape "*cultural heritage*". The second discourse focuses on the dynamics between land and water that are described to be characteristic for the province Zeeland. The core storyline to describe the place is "*Zeeland is a place between land and sea*". Metaphors such as "*the border between land and sea become blurry*" or "*the dynamics between land and sea*" are employed which presents Zeeland, as delta region, as special and mysterious. Restoring wetlands in the context of project Waterdunen is then framed to reinforce the specialty of Zeeland. The third discourse presents Waterdunen to be a place to make unique experiences. The core storyline is "*Waterdunen is a place to experience sea, land and birds*". To emphasize the speciality of these experiences metaphors such as "*experience freedom*" or "*become one with nature*" are used.

As part of the place narrative, for instance in discourse 1 and 2, ways of excluding place meanings have been recognized. In discourse 1 agriculture is in the focus, while wetland ecosystems and their restoration are explicitly excluded. Forms of othering such as calling Waterdunen a "*totally silly thing*" or describing wetlands with the metaphor "*mud pool*" show that restoration of wetlands is framed to not fit in the place that the first discourse constructs. In the second discourse the focus is on the dynamics between land and sea which implicitly excludes the place meaning of polders and agriculture. In public sources these topics were simply not mentioned, however when participants were asked about the role of agriculture, they often said that agriculture as it can be found in Zeelandic-Flanders is presented in a too romantic way and that this is an obstacle for the economic development of the region. Moreover, in this place narrative the traditional way of flood protection by constructing a solid barrier between land and sea is explicitly excluded as it is argued to be a threat to the natural ecosystems of Zeeland. Lastly, in the third discourse place meanings of both other discourses are combined. While in public sources agriculture is implicitly excluded, as the emphasis is on experiencing land and sea in Waterdunen, during the semi-structured interviews it

became clear that also the experience of the combination of agriculture, nature protection and recreation makes Waterdunen a special place. In this discourse no ways of othering have been identified.

The discourse coalitions of the three discourses are the protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!!, the Dutch government, the nature conservation foundation “Het Zeeuwse Landschap” and two recreation entrepreneurs, one local camping owner and the international recreation entrepreneur Molecaten. Discourse 1 is enacted by the protest group. This group consists of inhabitants, farmers and tourists who formed the group to prevent Waterdunen. The discourse coalition of discourse 2 is formed by the provincial government, the nature conservation foundation, and a group of volunteers. While the nature conservation foundation and the government developed the idea to create Waterdunen, the group of volunteers joined the discourse coalition during an information evening to support the implementation of Waterdunen. The third discourse is enacted by the recreation entrepreneurs. The local camping owner had to close his camping because it was located in the area where the wetland is restored. He saw this as an opportunity to develop the recreation sector and therefore he collaborated with the discourse coalition of discourse 2 and the international recreation entrepreneur to offer the, to him, unique opportunity to experience a wetland nature reserve through his accommodations.

In the three discourses several actor identities have been identified which provided deeper insights into the development of the conflict. The protest group described themselves as “*people of the polders*” which also represents a way to emphasize the importance of the polder to them. In line with the place meanings that are excluded in this discourse they present the government and the nature conservation foundation as antagonism by calling them “*nature freak organisations*” or “*the very hungry caterpillar*”. This shows that the emphasis on polders as valuable place and the exclusion of nature conservation is mirrored in the way actor identities are constructed in discourse 1. The actors of discourse 2 identified themselves with Zeeland as a whole province, as people living between land and sea. However, they also recognized that people from Zeelandic-Flanders represent an isolated culture that is different from the rest of Zeeland as they live so close to the Belgian border. This is supported in the way the recreation entrepreneur describes that he is proud to live in Zeelandic-Flanders and that being partly Flemish makes him and other residents different from the rest of the Zeelandic population. That people from Zeelandic-Flanders feel isolated and different from the rest of Zeeland might have reinforced their critical attitude towards Waterdunen, a project that has been initiated by the government that is not based in their region. However, also for the provincial government it might be more challenging to create social support in a population that does not identify with the province Zeeland.

All discourse coalitions influenced decision-making by speeches, information events and web sources to argue for their vision of how the polders should be managed. Most of these actions addressed the local population to inform them and to create support for their vision of the place and the policy measures they suggested to create or maintain that vision. When the first plans to realize Waterdunen were published the actors of discourse 2 and 3 together organized information events to convince the population about their plans to create a wetland nature reserve. The actors of discourse 2 thereby focused on the development and importance of the wetland nature reserve for nature conservation and flood protection, while the recreation entrepreneurs emphasized on the economic opportunities that their accommodations would bring to Zeelandic-Flanders. However, the speeches and information events organized by the actors of discourse 2 and 3 were not sufficient to convince the people living in the polder about realizing Waterdunen and therefore the government used a dispossession procedure to obtain the land for their project. At the same time, the protest group aimed to create support for their vision of the polders. For instance, the founder of the protest

group held speeches in front of the government to convince them to keep the polder and to explain and show why the group wants to protect the polder. Another protest action was the collection of flyers that the government distributed to inform the inhabitants about Waterdunen. The protest group collected these flyers and sent them back to the government as a sign of resistance. With these actions the protest group was able to postpone the realization of Waterdunen for several years, however in the end legal instrument of dispossession was applied to realize Waterdunen which the actors of discourse 1 were not able to prevent.

Each discourse presents another policy measure as desirable. In line with emphasizing on the specialty of polders, the discourse coalition of discourse 1 argued that Waterdunen must be prevented and rather the species living in the polders should be protected. Thus, the protection of polders and nature conservation in terms of measures to protect the plants and animals of the fields are presented to be suitable for the polders. In discourse 2 the restoration of wetlands is the policy measure that is presented to be suitable for the region. The government and the nature conservation foundation argued that Zeeland originally consisted of wetland ecosystems that have been disturbed by humans. As these ecosystems can provide valuable habitat it is necessary to restore them. Moreover, creating a wetland nature reserve is argued to attract visitors which can improve Zeelandic-Flanders economically. In line with the last argument the recreation entrepreneurs frame that building a hotel and a bungalow park close to the nature reserve is a suitable policy measure to make the specialty of Waterdunen experienceable for tourists. The policy measures that discourse 2 and 3 suggest can be combined as the wetland nature reserve is a key place meaning in both discourses. In the end, these two measures were also translated into the project Waterdunen. However, by creating the wetland it is not possible to physically conserve the polder landscape and thus, the vision that is emphasized in discourse 1 has not been realized. These stakeholders heavily protested against Waterdunen and framed it as unsuitable for the region. During the semi-structured interviews they stated that they are still not convinced and that they did not yet experience the economic improvement that was promised by the government and the recreation entrepreneurs.

From analysing the different discourses, it became clear that the project is lacking societal support because it neglects the small-scale place meanings. This means that while restoring a wetland is in line with the core storyline of discourse 1 that *“Zeeland is a place between land and sea”*, the policy measure does not consider that the residents appreciated the fields as a historical place regarding Zeeland's history of impoldering, and as valuable for agriculture and recreation. This case study has thus shown that the failure of integrating these small-scale place meanings into their ecological restoration policy might have reinforced a critical, non-supportive attitude of the residents towards the project and the government which is an obstacle that also other studies investigating the societal implications of ecological restoration have identified (Drenthen, 2018; Leenhardt et al., 2015).

To address such issues, it is necessary to investigate the power dynamics behind ecological restoration more in-depth. While a discursive approach to sense of place could explain the source and development of the conflict, insights into the power dynamics behind the realization of Waterdunen were restricted. In other words, the question remains why were the second and third discourses translated into policy measures? Focussing on rhetoric instruments and the identification of the three place narratives is a way to grasp the different understandings of the study area, however power dynamics exceed the way people talk and think but it needs to be observed how people *act* (Sharp & Richardson, 2001). Methodologically, it was not possible to observe people's practices as due to the COVID-19 measures the study has been conducted fully online. Using participatory methods such as go-alongs as an addition to archival data provides the opportunity to observe the participants everyday practices while including the possibility to ask how such practices

are connected to their understanding of the place. This would add more depth to the analysis by revealing how each vision of the place is mirrored in people's everyday practices.

However, when analysing rhetoric instruments to reinforce the discourses also more attention could have been paid to metaphors. Metaphors have shown to have influential implications for people's actions in natural resource management (Keulartz, 2007) and therefore investigating the implications of metaphors, for instance the ones to describe the restoration of wetlands, such as *ontpolderen* as the protest group called Waterdunen, can provide insights into power dynamics behind the implementation of the project. Additionally, the rules that guide people's actions could be investigated as in this case study the legal instrument of dispossession has been used to obtain the area for Waterdunen.

In conclusion, this case study has shown that improving the societal acceptance of ecological restoration is especially of high importance in Zeeland as Zeeland's island history has led to the development of isolated sub-culture which reinforces conflicts between the government and the citizens. However, Zeeland is a delta region and therefore it provides optimal opportunities to restore wetlands. The final suggestion of this research is therefore to embrace the diversity of cultures by engaging with inhabitants of the polders and letting them conserve and present their vision of the place through communication measures. In this way the different layers of a landscape (Drenthen, 2018) can be conserved while physically transforming the landscape.

7 Recommendations

Analysing the conflict about the implementation of Waterdunen has shown that while the ecological restoration measures have been implemented, the societal acceptance of the project is still problematic. For instance, participants who were members of the protest group against Waterdunen have expressed their doubts about the success of the project. Overall, the protest group showed a critical attitude towards the project and in some cases even distrust towards the government.

In order to improve the relationship between the citizens and the government this study suggests that the government should approach the members of the protest group to engage them in the project. As a way of presenting and conserving their vision of the polder the protest group asked the government if they could develop an exhibition about the original polder to remind visitors about the original place and its history. This shows that conserving the place meanings of the polder is very important to the inhabitants because even though the landscape was physically changed, these actors tried to preserve their vision of the place through communication. This is then not only a way of conserving the history of the place but also an opportunity to educate visitors about the history of the landscape. As Zeelandic-Flanders is currently facing an economic backlog, developing an exhibition about the polder landscape could also be an opportunity to attract new visitors. Several participants mentioned poems, books and songs about the history of polders that could serve as material for the exhibition. One participant also owned an old map of Zeelandic-Flanders and together with photos and archival data such sources could be used to illustrate the development of the polder landscape. Engaging the citizens by letting them create such an exhibition is for the government not only a way to integrate different perspectives into the Waterdunen project but also it might increase societal support and improve the attitude of the citizens towards the project and the government.

Moreover, the communication between the government and the citizens could be improved by paying special attention to the use of metaphors and their implications for people's practices. A striking result in this report is that the intervention of restoring a wetland in a polder was described differently among the stakeholders. The protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!! framed

Waterdunen to be *ontpolderen* because according to these actors every intervention that changes the original function of a polder, i.e., agriculture, means to them *ontpolderen*. In contrast to that, the government argued that Waterdunen is not *ontpolderen* because it is not a direct connection to the sea as water in- and outflow are controlled by a gate. Here, *ontpolderen* is thus defined as creating a direct, uncontrolled connection to the sea. The members of the protest group stated that they did not feel understood by the government as to them Waterdunen is *ontpolderen* and therefore, investigating the meaning of *ontpolderen* and/or making it a topic in the exhibition about the history of polders could improve the communication between the government and the citizens. Interestingly, the recreation entrepreneurs also framed Waterdunen as a form of *ontpolderen*, however, while these actors appear to use the same definition as the protest group, to them this intervention represents an opportunity for the region and to improve their supply of accommodations. It could be investigated why and under which conditions *ontpolderen* is understood to be an opportunity. These insights could then be used by the government to explain the importance and opportunities of restoring wetlands to the citizens.

Waterdunen faced similar challenges in its implementation like other ecological restoration projects which is why it can serve as an example from which other projects can learn. Letting the government cooperate with citizens to together develop ways to conserve place meanings through communication, here an exhibition is suggested but it could also be in form of a book, video s, lectures or excursions, could be a way to investigate if such participatory measures improve the societal acceptability of ecological restoration.

Sources of photos

- Title page; photos retrieved from www.molecaten.nl on 12-06-2020 and from [Archieven.nl](http://archieven.nl) - [317 1675. Blad \[28\]. <i>Baarsande Dykagie. Eerste Boven Stuk. No. 1... \(Zeeuws Archief\)](https://archieven.nl/Blad/28/Baarsande%20Dykagie%20Eerste%20Boven%20Stuk%20No%201...) on 22-02-2021

References

- Acardis. (2019). *De échte kracht van de Noordzee*. Retrieved from <https://www.arcadis.com/media/4/A/4/%7B4A4E694B-5160-4D8E-9817-3B66434DEEA0%7DARC190029%20ASSEY%20DE%20OMGEKEERRDENOORDZEE%20v3.pdf>
- Agnew, J. A. (1987). *Place and politics: The geographical mediation of state and society*: Routledge.
- Bennett, J. (2017). Whose Place Is This Anyway? An Actor-Network Theory Exploration of a Conservation Conflict. *Space and Culture*, 21(2), 159-169. doi:10.1177/1206331217734182
- Berkes, F., Colding, J., & Folke, C. (2008). *Navigating Social-Ecological Systems: Building Resilience for Complexity and Change*: Cambridge University Press.
- Bernard, H. R. (2011a). Chapter 7: Sampling III: Nonprobability samples and Choosing Informants. In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Fifth ed., pp. 143-155): Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bernard, H. R. (2011b). Chapter 8: Interviewing I: Unstructured and Semistructured. In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative approaches* (Fifth ed., pp. 156-186): Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bernard, H. R. (2011c). Chapter 18: Text Analysis I: Interpretive Analysis, Narrative Analysis, Performance Analysis and Conversation Analysis. In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Fifth ed., pp. 407-428): Rowan & Littlefield.
- Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeek, L. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(1), 105-114. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.07.029>

- Buijs, A. E. (2009). Public support for river restoration. A mixed-method study into local residents' support for and framing of river management and ecological restoration in the Dutch floodplains. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 90(8), 2680-2689.
- Buizer, M., & Turnhout, E. (2011). Text, talk, things, and the subpolitics of performing place. *Geoforum*, 42(5), 530-538. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2011.05.004>
- Chape, S., Harrison, J., Spalding, M., & Lysenko, I. (2005). Measuring the extent and effectiveness of protected areas as an indicator for meeting global biodiversity targets. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 360(1454), 443-455.
- Cherif, H., & Miled, B. (2013). Are brand communities influencing brands through co-creation? A cross-national example of the brand AXE: In France and in Tunisia. *International Business Research*, 6(9), 14.
- Choi, Y. D. (2007). Restoration Ecology to the Future: A Call for New Paradigm. *Restoration Ecology*, 15(2), 351-353. doi:10.1111/j.1526-100X.2007.00224.x
- Colett, I., & Engelbert, A. (2013). Coastal regions: people living along the coastline, integration of NUTS 2010 and latest population grid. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Archive:Coastal_regions_-_population_statistics
- Costello, L., McDermott, M.-L., & Wallace, R. (2017). Netnography: range of practices, misperceptions, and missed opportunities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1609406917700647.
- Cresswell, T. (2014). *Place: an introduction*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Di Guardo, M. C., & Castriotta, M. (2014). The challenge and opportunities of crowdsourcing web communities: An Italian case study. " *International Journal of Electronic Commerce Studies*", 4(1), 79-92.
- Di Masso, A., Dixon, J., & Durrheim, K. (2013). Place attachment as discursive practice. In *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications* (pp. 75-86).
- Di Masso, A., Dixon, J., & Hernández, B. (2017). Place Attachment, Sense of Belonging and the Micro-Politics of Place Satisfaction. In G. Fleury-Bahi, E. Pol, & O. Navarro (Eds.), *Handbook of Environmental Psychology and Quality of Life Research* (pp. 85-104). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Dixon, J., & Durrheim, K. (2000). Displacing place-identity: a discursive approach to locating self and other. *British journal of social psychology*, 39(1), 27-44.
- Drenthen, M. (2013). New nature narratives.
- Drenthen, M. (2018). Rewilding in layered landscapes as a challenge to place identity. *Environmental Values*, 27(4), 405-425.
- Dressler, W., BÜScher, B., Schoon, M., Brockington, D. A. N., Hayes, T., Kull, C. A., . . . Shrestha, K. (2010). From hope to crisis and back again? A critical history of the global CBNRM narrative. *Environmental Conservation*, 37(1), 5-15. doi:10.1017/S0376892910000044
- Farnum, J. (2005). *Sense of place in natural resource recreation and tourism: An evaluation and assessment of research findings* (Vol. 660): US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station.
- Frel, R. d. (2006, 26th of September 2006). Landbouw ziet plan niet zitten; Verzet Waterdunen groeit. *BN/DeStem*. Retrieved from <https://advance-lexis-com.ezproxy.library.wur.nl/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4M04-9J30-01HD-V08C-00000-00&context=1516831>.
- Gifford, R. (2014). Environmental Psychology Matters. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65(1), 541-579. doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115048
- Gremmen, B. (2014). Just fake it! Public understanding of ecological restoration. In *The Ethics of animal re-creation and modification* (pp. 134-149): Springer.
- Gurrieri, L., & Cherrier, H. (2013). Queering beauty: Fatshionistas in the fatosphere. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 16(3), 276-295.

- Hajer, M. (1995). *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hajer, M., & Versteeg, W. (2005). A decade of discourse analysis of environmental politics: Achievements, challenges, perspectives. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 7(3), 175-184. doi:10.1080/15239080500339646
- Hajer, M. A., Van Den Brink, M., & Metzke, T. (2006). Doing discourse analysis: coalitions, practices, meaning. *Netherlands geographical studies (ISSN 0169-4839)*(344).
- Head, B. W. (2008). Wicked problems in public policy. *Public policy*, 3(2), 101.
- Janssen, J., Rodwell, J., Criado, M. G., Arts, G., Bijlsma, R., & Schaminee, J. (2016). *European red list of habitats: Part 2. Terrestrial and freshwater habitats*: European Union.
- Jorgensen, B. S., & Stedman, R. C. (2001). SENSE OF PLACE AS AN ATTITUDE: LAKESHORE OWNERS ATTITUDES TOWARD THEIR PROPERTIES. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21(3), 233-248. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.2001.0226>
- Kati, V., Hovardas, T., Dieterich, M., Ibisch, P. L., Mihok, B., & Selva, N. (2015). The challenge of implementing the European network of protected areas Natura 2000. *Conservation Biology*, 29(1), 260-270.
- Keulartz, J. (2007). Using Metaphors in Restoring Nature. *Nature and Culture*, 2(1), 27-48. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.wur.nl/stable/43304093>
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39(1), 61-72. doi:10.1509/jmkr.39.1.61.18935
- Kusenbach, M. (2003). Street phenomenology: The go-along as ethnographic research tool. *Ethnography*, 4(3), 455-485.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (2014). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*: Verso Trade.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Langerak, A. (n.d.). Waterdunen. Retrieved from <http://www.waterdunen.com/>
- Leenhardt, P., Teneva, L., Kininmonth, S., Darling, E., Cooley, S., & Claudet, J. (2015). Challenges, insights and perspectives associated with using social-ecological science for marine conservation. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 115, 49-60. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2015.04.018>
- Manzo, L. C. (2003). Beyond house and haven: toward a revisioning of emotional relationships with places. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23(1), 47-61. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944\(02\)00074-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-4944(02)00074-9)
- March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (2006). Elaborating the "new institutionalism". *The Oxford handbook of political institutions*, 5, 3-20.
- Masterson, V. A. (2016). *Sense of place and culture in the landscape of home: understanding social-ecological dynamics on the Wild Coast, South Africa*. Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University,
- Masterson, V. A., Stedman, R. C., Enqvist, J., Tengö, M., Giusti, M., Wahl, D., & Svedin, U. (2017). The contribution of sense of place to social-ecological systems research: a review and research agenda. *Ecology and Society*, 22(1).
- Moser, S. C., Jeffress Williams, S., & Boesch, D. F. (2012). Wicked challenges at land's end: Managing coastal vulnerability under climate change. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 37, 51-78.
- O'Neill, J., Holland, A., & Light, A. (2008). *Environmental values*: Routledge.
- Paasi, A. (2003). Region and place: regional identity in question. *Progress in human geography*, 27(4), 475-485.
- Palomo, I., Montes, C., Martin-Lopez, B., González, J. A., Garcia-Llorente, M., Alcorlo, P., & Mora, M. R. G. (2014). Incorporating the social-ecological approach in protected areas in the Anthropocene. *BioScience*, 64(3), 181-191.

- Papanastasiou, N. (2017). How does scale mean? A critical approach to scale in the study of policy. *Critical Policy Studies*, 11(1), 39-56. doi:10.1080/19460171.2015.1119052
- Peluso, N. L. (1996). Reserving value: conservation ideology and state protection of resources. *Creating the countryside: The politics of rural and environmental discourse*, 135-165.
- Phillips, T. (2011). When film fans become fan family: Kevin Smith fandom and communal experience. *Participations*, 8(2), 478-496.
- Proshansky, H. M. (1978). The city and self-identity. *Environment and behavior*, 10(2), 147-169.
- Provincie Zeeland. (2007). *Ontwerp-kustversterkingsplan Waterdunen*.
- Provincie Zeeland. (2010). Provinciaal Inpassingsplan Waterdunen. Via http://www.waterdunen.com/sites/zt-waterdunen/files/provinciaal_inpassingsplan.pdf.
- Provincie Zeeland. (n.d.-a). Activiteiten. Retrieved from <http://www.waterdunen.com/activiteiten>
- Provincie Zeeland. (n.d.-b). Innovatieve waterbeheersing. Retrieved from <http://www.waterdunen.com/waterdunen/innovatieve-waterbeheersing>
- Provincie Zeeland. (n.d.-c). Waterdunen. Retrieved from <https://www.zeeland.nl/ruimte/waterdunen>
- Raymond, C., & Gottwald, S. (2020). Beyond the "local": Methods for examining place attachment across geographic scales. *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications*, 143.
- Raymond, C. M., Brown, G., & Robinson, G. M. (2011). The influence of place attachment, and moral and normative concerns on the conservation of native vegetation: A test of two behavioural models. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 31(4), 323-335.
- Rijksoverheid. (2014). *Natuurlijk verder - Rijksnatuurvisie 2014*. Den Haag: Rijksoverheid Retrieved from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/beleidsnota-s/2014/04/11/natuurlijk-verder>
- Rijkswaterstaat. (n.d.). Ruimte voor de Rivieren. Retrieved from <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/water/waterbeheer/bescherming-tegen-het-water/maatregelen-om-overstromingen-te-voorkomen/ruimte-voor-de-rivieren/index.aspx#239202>
- Rodrigues, A. S., Andelman, S. J., Bakarr, M. I., Boitani, L., Brooks, T. M., Cowling, R. M., . . . Hoffmann, M. (2004). Effectiveness of the global protected area network in representing species diversity. *Nature*, 428(6983), 640-643.
- Salskov-Iversen, D., Hansen, H. K., & Bislev, S. (2000). Governmentality, globalization, and local practice: transformations of a hegemonic discourse. *Alternatives*, 25(2), 183-222.
- Scannell, L., & Gifford, R. (2010). The relations between natural and civic place attachment and pro-environmental behavior. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 30(3), 289-297.
- Sharp, L., & Richardson, T. (2001). Reflections on Foucauldian discourse analysis in planning and environmental policy research. *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 3(3), 193-209. doi:10.1002/jep.88
- Stedman, R. (2008). What do we "mean" by place meanings? Implications of place meanings for managers and practitioners. Vols. In *General Technical Report PNW-GTR-744*. In LE Kruger, TE Hall, & MC Stiefel (Eds.), *Understanding concepts of place in recreation research and management*. Portland, OR: US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station.
- Stedman, R. C. (2003a). Is it really just a social construction?: The contribution of the physical environment to sense of place. *Society & Natural Resources*, 16(8), 671-685.
- Stedman, R. C. (2003b). Sense of place and forest science: Toward a program of quantitative research. *Forest Science*, 49(6), 822-829.
- Stokols, D. (1981). People in places: A transactional view of settings. *Cognition, social behavior, and the environment*, 441-488.
- Stokowski, P. A. (2002). Languages of Place and Discourses of Power: Constructing New Senses of Place. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(4), 368-382. doi:10.1080/00222216.2002.11949977
- Tadaki, M., Sinner, J., & Chan, K. M. A. (2017). Making sense of environmental values: a typology of concepts. *Ecology and Society*, 22(1). doi:10.5751/ES-08999-220107

- Termeer, C. J. A. M., Dewulf, A., Breeman, G., & Stiller, S. J. (2015). Governance Capabilities for Dealing Wisely With Wicked Problems. *Administration & Society*, 47(6), 680-710. doi:10.1177/0095399712469195
- Thompson, A. W., & Prokopy, L. S. (2016). The role of sense of place in collaborative planning. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, 11, 1-19.
- Torfinn, J. (2005a). Discourse Theory: Achievements, Arguments, and Challenges. In D. Howarth & J. Torfinn (Eds.), *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance* (pp. 1-32). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Torfinn, J. (2005b). Poststructuralist discourse theory: Foucault, Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek. *The Handbook of Political Sociology*.
- Tuan, Y. F. (1991). Language and the making of place: A narrative-descriptive approach. *Annals of the Association of American geographers*, 81(4), 684-696.
- United Nations. (2019). World population prospects 2019.
- van den Brink, M., & Meijerink, S. V. (2006). Implementing policy innovations: resource dependence, struggle for discursive hegemony and institutional inertia in the Dutch river policy domain.
- Van den Hoek, R., Brugnach, M., & Hoekstra, A. Y. (2012). Shifting to ecological engineering in flood management: Introducing new uncertainties in the development of a building with nature pilot project. *Environmental science & policy*, 22, 85-99.
- van Der Heijden, H.-A. (2005). Ecological restoration, environmentalism and the Dutch politics of 'new nature'. *Environmental Values*, 427-446.
- Vasseur, L., Horning, D., Thornbush, M., Cohen-Shacham, E., Andrade, A., Barrow, E., . . . Jones, M. (2017). Complex problems and unchallenged solutions: Bringing ecosystem governance to the forefront of the UN sustainable development goals. *Ambio*, 46(7), 731-742.
- Verbrugge, L., Buchecker, M., Garcia, X., Gottwald, S., Müller, S., Præstholm, S., & Stahl Olafsson, A. (2019). Integrating sense of place in planning and management of multifunctional river landscapes: experiences from five European case studies. *Sustainability Science*, 14(3), 669-680. doi:10.1007/s11625-019-00686-9
- Vrienden van Waterdunen NEE. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://vriendenvanwaterdunennee.blogspot.com/?view=classic>
- Wageningen University. (2020). Corona guidelines and updates. Retrieved from <https://www.wur.nl/en/article/Corona-guidelines-and-updates.htm>

Appendix I: Detailed description of the study area

This appendix gives an overview of the conflict about the implementation of the ecological restoration and recreation project Waterdunen. First the process of the conflict is summarized by roughly showing the sequence of events from the beginning in 2004 until today. This is followed by a detailed description of the most important stakeholders and their position towards Waterdunen.

The conflict

The first idea of Waterdunen developed in 2004 as initiative of the Dutch government, the recreation entrepreneur Molecaten and the nature conservation organization Het Zeeuwse Landschap. The establishment of the recreative estuary area is supposed to stimulate the local economy, compensate for habitat loss from deepening the Westerschelde and to improve flood protection. For the establishment of Waterdunen it was necessary to remove a local camping and agricultural land had to be transformed into wetland. After the first publication of these plans some local residents, including farmers formed a protest group against Waterdunen. And also tourists who for instance visited the camping, joined the group. In the first few years the group protested in order to stop the plans of Waterdunen by showing the local resistance.

At roughly the same time another citizen initiative got involved in the conflict. After an information evening held by the province of Zeeland about Waterdunen ten citizens, mostly from the local town Groede, formed the workgroup Waterdunen-Groede. This is a citizen initiative that aims to prepare the town Groede for the project and helps with developing recreational facilities in the area. They represented the first dissent against the protest group. Their actions are focused on organizing information events to increase local support for Waterdunen because they see the project as an opportunity for the local economy.

In contrast, the protest group was afraid of the plan Waterdunen and wanted to call the governments attention to the effects of letting marine water in the polder; such as silting of agricultural land and health risks. And moreover, they see Waterdunen as a violation of their identity and history. However, after a few years it became clear that not all the farmers would voluntarily sell their land. Therefore, in 2010 the government had to enforce an expropriation procedure which became an important topic in the conflict; The protest group started questioning if the expropriation has been legitimately enforced.

In the same year the government and the recreation entrepreneur Molecaten signed the contract for the construction of the new recreation park (Provinciaal Zeeuwse Courant, 2010 (Bron Krantartikelen 2)). However, the protest and the expropriation procedure postponed the implementation of Waterdunen. So only in 2012 the first work in the area started. At that time the protest group kept monitoring and questioning the interventions in the area and requested an exhibition space in the visitor centre in order to be able to show the visitors the conflict and their perspective on the project. This request was however declined by the government.

In august 2012 the camping was officially closed and from September onwards the physical transformation of the area started (Provinciaal Zeeuwse Courant, 2012, Krantartikelen 3). In the beginning the soil got removed in order to prepare nature restoration and flood protection measures. The reinforcement of the coast was combined with the construction of a water gate that is supposed to let marine water in the area in order to create estuary nature. The construction of the water gate was finished in 2019 and in September 2019 the gate was officially opened with a ceremony. At that ceremony also the protest group was present to show that their opinion had not changed and that they are still not supporting the project.

However, as the project had been implemented and most of the measures had been realised the group officially put down their protest. In an interview one member explained that to him the conflict is over but that if he is asked about his opinion on the project, there had been interviews after the opening of the water gate, this did not change (interview on 8th of July 2020). He and the rest of the group still want to show their antipathy against Waterdunen.

Stakeholders

Waterdunen is a collaborative project of five parties including governmental and private actors. The province of Zeeland and the municipality are the governmental actors. The province is the leader of the project. The work of implementing flood protection measures was carried out by the Waterschap Scheldestroom. Moreover, the private recreation entrepreneur Molecaten invested in the project and establishes a new camping and hotel in the project area. After the transformation of the area the nature protection organization Het Zeeuwse Landschap is in charge of managing nature protection and aquaculture in Waterdunen.

However, additional to the five parties that established Waterdunen also civil actors were involved in the implementation of Waterdunen. Two citizen initiatives have attracted special attention: The

protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!!, who opposed plan Waterdunen and the citizen initiative Werkgroep Waterdunen-Groede that aimed to support the implementation of Waterdunen.

The following paragraphs will give an overview of the position of the different actors towards Waterdunen, how they define the policy problem and which policy interventions resulted from that problem definition.

Protest group: Vrienden van Waterdunen Nee !!!

The people that actively resisted and protested against the implementation of Waterdunen identify themselves with the “anti-ontpolder beweging”. A polder is land that has been drained from the sea, so “ontpolderen” is the reversal of these processes. Waterdunen is located in such a polder and the “anti-ontpolderbeweging” is a civil movement that aims to protect polders. The local protest group Vrienden van Waterdunen-Nee !!! is part of that movement. Most members of the protest group are long-term residents from Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, some have a background in agriculture but one interviewee also defined them as “poldermensen” (people of the polders) whereby he means people who have a relation, who are attached to a polder (Interview on 7th of July, 2020). So this does not only refer to farmers who work in the polder but also recreationists and inhabitants of the polder. Some members are also tourists who frequently visited the study area and who stayed on a camping that had to close due to the establishment of Waterdunen.

According to the protest group Waterdunen represents a threat to the polder. To them transforming the polder means “sacrificing valuable agricultural land” (Interview on 7th of July 2020). This is framed as ontpolderen and they felt responsible to protect “their land”. However, the meaning of ontpolderen ranges among participants between generally a change in function of agricultural land, no matter into what different function it is changed, letting marine water flow into agricultural land, breaking a dike and to chase farmers from their land.

According to members of the protest group this is injustice for several reasons: First agriculture is an important industry to ensure food security, second farmers are forced to leave their land and third their ancestors have worked hard to drain this land so establishing a wetland in this area is injustice to their effort.

Moreover, they do not see Waterdunen as the appropriate measure to compensate for habitat loss in the Westerschelde. One participant questioned how establishing an estuary with creeks could compensate for habitat that is lost in 3 to 4 meters depth due to deepening of the Westerschelde (Interview on 7th of July 2020). However, other participants have emphasized that the area created by Waterdunen does not fit in the landscape and is not the type of landscape that belongs there. One participant pointed out, that aquaculture, like it is developed in Waterdunen, does not belong on land but has to be realized in the sea, behind the dyke (Interview on 7th of July 2020). Instead, they see the species and habitats that can be found in agricultural land as the nature that should be protected and appreciated (Interview on the 20th of July 2020). Additionally, the protest group criticises nature management for making nature areas not sufficiently accessible, not caring well for areas and to develop too many new nature areas (Interview on the 23rd of July 2020).

In order to prevent the implementation of Waterdunen the protest group held speeches in front of the provincial council whereby they expressed their resistance against Waterdunen. One participant described how he spoke to the council and how he made clear that to him (and the group) Waterdunen is a waste of money (Interview 7th of July 2020). Additional to speeches, the group organized peaceful protests and actions to show their resistance. For example: They initiated collection of information flyers about Waterdunen, that had been sent by the government, and sent them back to the government as a sign of resistance. They wrote letters to the local newspapers,

there was a protest action of two German girls, who had been tourists in the area, and who had set up a stand at the local market to collect signatures against Waterdunen. To communicate and publish these actions in 2010 the group started a blog where the latest developments of Waterdunen and protest actions were uploaded.

Recreation entrepreneur Molecaten

As one of the private actors Molecaten invested in the establishment of Waterdunen in order to expand their supply of holiday accommodations. The initial idea to establish holiday accommodations originated from the owner of the camping that had to close. In the context of flood protection measures the owner was forced to close so he came up with the idea to establish holiday accommodations in the area of Waterdunen. Therefore, he and Molecaten collaborate as they see Waterdunen as an opportunity to develop recreational facilities in a natural environment.

According to one participant establishing holiday accommodations in Waterdunen is an opportunity to keep up with changes of the recreation market. He explained that an accommodation solely or a swimming pool is not sufficient anymore to satisfy visitors, recreation has to create an experience in the sense that people want to get back to basics. Such an experience is added by establishing accommodations in nature, it is thus nature that adds value to the accommodations. The participant pointed out that accessibility is therefore an important part of nature conservation in order to ensure that the nature can be used for recreation as well (Interview on 12th of August 2020).

While Molecaten is being focused on expanding their supply of accommodations and revolutionizing recreation, their ambitions fitted with the governments vision of stimulating the economy of West-Zeeuws-Vlaanderen and their goal of establishing new nature. Therefore, they see Waterdunen as an enrichment of the area and as an opportunity for the region.

This is why Molecaten already in the beginning of the project collaborated with the province. Together they set the plan for establishing the combination of nature and recreation. Thereby, Molecaten is in charge of the holiday accommodations. While Molecaten invested in and were involved in planning Waterdunen they also participated in information events where the initiators presented their plans to the local residents. The plan for the holiday accommodation is to construct 400 bungalows that have been sold to private owners and a hotel. These accommodations are located in the project area, close to the creek so the visitors can directly experience the nature and for instance also the birds in the area (Website Molecaten).

Dutch Government: Provincie Zeeland (and municipality Sluis)

The province of Zeeland represents the Dutch government and is in charge of nature and landscape management and of flood protection. Therefore, it has the authority to deploy governmental financial resources (Natuurvisie 2016-2022). The province initiated Waterdunen and it is the head of the planning and realization of the project.

The first reason for the government to initiate the project was the protection of the coast. At the location of the project the coast needed support as the risk for flooding was high. However, due to the current that erodes the coast it was not possible to support the coast towards the sea. Therefore, the province raised the coast on land. However, this caused the closing of a local camping as it was located in the area where the coast was raised. Combined with the need for compensating habitat loss in the Westerschelde this led to the idea of creating an estuary area with the purpose of nature conservation and recreation. The new recreation opportunities are supposed to give the area an economic plus by creating new jobs and attracting visitors. This is necessary as the local economy is declining due to an aging population and a decrease in residents.

Thereby the province also aims to embrace the specific character of Zeeland, which is according to them the delta. The interaction between land and sea makes Zeeland unique and it is literally “Land in Sea” (Interview on 13th of July 2020). The participant explained that by poldering and constructing dykes nature has been dominated. The delta was given solid borders between land and sea while naturally there would have been a lot of dynamic. To restore this dynamic they established Waterdunen. However, the sea is seen as powerful and therefore also dangerous for the people living between land and sea. This is why the province invested in flood protection and the sea water that fills the creek in the area can be controlled by a gate (Interview on 13th of July 2020).

Being able to control the sea water inflow is the reason why the province clearly demarcates the measures taken for Waterdunen from “ontpolderen”. To them ontpolderen means creating an open connection to the sea which is not the case for Waterdunen. Instead they see Waterdunen as an enrichment for the region that brings back the uniqueness of Zeeland, namely the dynamics of a tidal area and the estuary nature (Interview 13th of July 2020).

Nature protection organization Het Zeeuwse Landschap

Het Zeeuwse Landschap (HZL) is a foundation that is supported by the Dutch lottery. Together with the government and Molecaten they initiated Waterdunen. HZL is the managing party for the nature areas in the project. Moreover, with financial support from the Dutch lottery they transformed a farm into a visitor centre and office and there they also coordinate aquaculture that is tested in Waterdunen.

One participant explained that with a growing tourism sector, the increasing number of high-rise buildings at the coast the specific, unique character of Zeeland is threatened. Thereby, he means the small-scale landscape with small forests and alleys and where people can peacefully recreate.

HZL aims to reinforce the typical character of Zeeland by restoring and protecting the delta. As HZL is a nature conservation organization its focus is on the natural values of Zeeland. Zeeland being a delta these values are connected to water. They do have agricultural areas, however these have been wetlands as well, so the important natural values, that distinguishes Zeeland from the rest of the Netherlands are the values of the delta. One important value are migratory birds. Zeeland is seen as a hotspot for migratory birds, ten thousands of birds, that is what the participant described as making Zeeland unique. In order to maintain such values HZL aims to provide and improve the habitat for these birds.

Therefore, they constructed Waterdunen to provide optimal conditions for migratory birds: Even though the creek is directly connected to the sea the tides are damped due to the water gate. In this way during breeding season they can regulate the tides in order to prevent that the nests get damaged by storms or flooding. The participant explained that this year the breeding success was already high and they had a lot of birds staying in the area. Therefore, from an ecological perspective he already declares Waterdunen a success (Interview on the 17th of August 2020).

Additional to the protecting ecological values of the area HZL makes the nature areas accessible for visitors: They had constructed paths and birding hides so that visitors can experience and watch the birds. The area thus contains on the one hand protected nature areas and on the other hand recreational areas with less ecological value but that are accessible for visitors.

Another project that HZL is responsible for is the “kustlaboratorium”. With rising sea levels the influence of the sea on agriculture located at the coast increases. As a result the soil becomes salty which restricts the cultivation of crops. In order to develop a more sustainable yield under such circumstances HZL started the project “Kustlaboratorium” where they experiment with onshore aquaculture, which however does not disturb the landscape but fits with the rest of the area.

Together with two entrepreneurs, one oyster and one seaweed farmer, a part of the area of Waterdunen is used to start aquaculture. This is on the one hand a project to diversify the local crops cultivation but on the other hand it is also an attraction for visitors (Interview 17th of August 2020).

Citizen initiative: Werkgroep Waterdunen-Groede (and other citizens supporting Waterdunen)

In 2009 after an information evening for citizens about the plan Waterdunen 10 citizens, mostly from the local town Groede, formed the workgroup Waterdunen-Groede. This is a citizen initiative that aims to prepare the town Groede for the project and helps with developing recreational facilities and accessibility of Waterdunen. As birdwatching is an important part of the project their vision is to make Groede a hotspot for birders (Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant, 2009).

One participant explained that the landscape of West-Zeeland-Flanders changed during the last 15 to 20 years due to first the upscaling of agriculture and second the expansion of the tourism sector and an increase in holiday accommodations. With the cultivation of bulk products small farms disappeared and large-scale cultivation developed. However, also the expansion of touristic activities are seen as problematic and threatening the typical characteristics of the coast . According to the participant the typical Zeelandic and West-Zeeland-Flanders landscape are: Small farms with mixed crops and cattle, small paths and winding creeks but also the delta and its dynamics, the change between land and sea and the influence of the tides on the landscape. However, scaling up agriculture and domesticating the delta by establishing hard borders as dykes do not only replace the typical Zeelandic landscape but both is also disadvantageous for nature: The small-scale farms fostered biodiversity while with large-scale farms this diversity declines and also the restricted dynamics of the delta caused the loss of valuable habitats (Interview on the 8th of July 2020).

Waterdunen is framed as opportunity to bring back the dynamics and natural values of the delta and to provide more valuable activities than how the land was used before. For instance the aquaculture in the area is described as an enrichment and improvement in comparison to the agriculture before Waterdunen. This is why the group clearly demarcates their point of view from praising agriculture in West-Zeeland-Flanders. One participant explained that he does not see the point of emphasizing on the nostalgia of agriculture and that this way of reasoning does not fit in nowadays society and to him people are too protective about agriculture (Interview on 8th of July 2020).

Another participant clearly demarcates Waterdunen from the arguments of ontpolderen. He explained that when looking at the history of the landscape of 500 years ago also fields that did not bring enough yield had been flooded. Therefore, flooding is not a new intervention, it is rather a part of the history of the landscape and can therefore be considered as nature restoration. Framing Waterdunen as ontpolderen and as not fitting into the landscape is therefore not a valid argument to him (Interview on the 14th of July 2020).

In order to support the initiators of Waterdunen the werkgroep focused on organizing information events. A special event was the celebration of their first anniversary, where they organized speeches, music and where they also presented a booklet in which they had collected ideas and suggestions about Waterdunen that are based on their own research. The evening was a public event showing with a dinner with marine products how well enjoying nature, culture, recreation and catering industry can match (Provinciale Zeeuwse Courant, 2010).

Appendix II Example coding scheme

Theory	Code	Definition	Sub-theme
Discourse theory	Antagonism	Description of a simplified,	

		stereotyped opponent	
	Metaphor	Description of a phenomenon by attributes of another phenomenon	
Sense of Place	Place meaning	Attribute or description of the environment	
	Place attachment	Statement showing the emotional bond people have to the environment	Feeling of belonging Feeling of alienation
	Place identity	Self-identification in relation to place	

Appendix III Example report atlas.ti

Project: MSc Thesis FNP

Report created by anton on 15.10.2020

Report for Query: Sense of place

Scope: Molecaten
(24) quotations

1:1 Ontdek het land van eb en vloed (566:596) - D 1: Molecaten Park Waterdunen _ Molecaten

Ontdek het land van eb en vloed

2 Codes:

Metaphor / Place meaning: Water/Sea

1:2 Tussen Groede en Breskens wordt gewerkt aan een uniek natuur-en recrea..... (600:690) - D 1: Molecaten Park Waterdunen _ Molecaten

Tussen Groede en Breskens wordt gewerkt aan een uniek natuur-en recreatiegebied:
Waterdunen

2 Codes:

Place meaning: Nature / Place meaning: Recreation

1:3 Zeeland is met haar kustlijn van 650 kilometer letterlijk land in zee..... (693:879) - D 1: Molecaten Park Waterdunen _ Molecaten

Zeeland is met haar kustlijn van 650 kilometer letterlijk land in zee. Waterdunen is het bewijs dat Zeeland anders met water omgaat. Kustversterking, natuur en recreatie komen hier samen.

1 Codes:

- Place meaning: Water/Sea
-

1:7 Uniek is het samenspel tussen land en water. (2097:2140) - D 1: Molecaten Park Waterdunen _ Molecaten

Uniek is het samenspel tussen land en water.

1 Codes:

- Place meaning: Water/Sea
-

29:2 Molecaten Park Waterdunen staat voor rust en ruimte midden in de natu..... (3:965 [3:1129]) - D 29: Brochure-Molecaten-Park-Waterdunen-NL

Molecaten Park Waterdunen staat voor rust en ruimte midden in de natuur, met duurzaamheid als uitgangspunt. ~ Ervaar het gevoel van vrijheid. Ervaar Waterdunen. ~

4 Codes:

- Place meaning: Nature / ○ Place meaning: Recreation / ○ Place meaning: Sustainability / ○ Policy intervention: Success definition
-

29:3 Waterdunen is het bewijs dat Zeeland anders met water omgaat. Behalve..... (3:18 [3:409]) - D 29: Brochure-Molecaten-Park-Waterdunen-NL

Waterdunen is het bewijs dat Zeeland anders met water omgaat. Behalve een mooi en bijzonder natuur-en recreatiegebied is Waterdunen een groot deltawerk. Maar wel anders dan de deltawerken die we kennen als de grote werken die Zeeland beschermen tegen het water. Natuur, recreatie en getijdenwerking gecombineerd in een innovatieve kustversterking, met veiligheid als randvoorwaarde.

5 Codes:

- Place meaning: Different/Unique / ○ Place meaning: Flood protection / ○ Place meaning: Nature / ○ Place meaning: Recreation / ○ Policy intervention: Success definition

29:6 Hoge kwaliteit van leven Herinneringen maken op een unieke locatie,..... (4:139 [4:228]) - D 29: Brochure-Molecaten-Park-Waterdunen-NL

Hoge kwaliteit van leven Herinneringen maken op een unieke locatie, midden in de duinen.

2 Codes:

Place meaning: Different/Unique / Place meaning: Recreation

34:2 Heb ja gewoon heel het idee gehad om een 300 hectare groot park aan te..... (915:1495) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Heb ja gewoon heel het idee gehad om een 300 hectare groot park aan te leggen en waarvan 200 hectare natuur en 100 hectare verblijfsrecreatie aan zit. Twee ideeën had ik erbij: Een idee was de toegevoegde waarde voor het recreatieve product, is alleen de camping bungalowpark is het niet meer, je zou iets meer moeten bedenken om de gasten bij je te vinden. En twee als je natuur aan wilt leggen zal je ook de boel kunnen financieren. En de eerste idee was dus dat de exportant eigenaren, dat die onderhoud en beheer van de natuur zouden betalen. Inmiddels zijn we 20 jaar verder.

5 Codes:

Place meaning: Economic benefit / Place meaning: Nature / Place meaning: Recreation / Storyline: Actor / Storyline: Event

34:3 Ik ben woonachtig in Zeeland, in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. Als je daar een ma..... (1785:2038) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Ik ben woonachtig in Zeeland, in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. Als je daar een maal woont ga je er ook van houden en als je van een gebied houdt kan je daar ook leuke dingen mee gaan doen en gaan bedenken. En dat is de groei geweest. Ben hier nooit meer weggegaan.

2 Codes:

Place attachment: Feeling of belonging / Place meaning: Home

34:5 Ja, dat is het gene wat mij meest (..) komt. Mijn werk lag daar, mijn..... (2242:2380) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Ja, dat is het gene wat mij meest (..) komt. Mijn werk lag daar, mijn woning lag daar en ook mijn leven lag daar. Dat was mijn affiniteit.

2 Codes:

Place meaning: Home / Place meaning: Work

34:6 Het Vlaamse van Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. Het bourgondische, het landelijke..... (2808:3146) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Het Vlaamse van Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. Het bourgondische, het landelijke. Ik ben heel veel in de stad geweest. Daar moet alles, hier moet niets. Dat verschil. Het begint dan met humor. Als je in de randstad humor maakt gaat het altijd ten kosten van iemand anders. Hier doe je dat niet. Je zoekt altijd een slachtoffer. In ZV gebeurt dat niet.

2 Codes:

Place meaning: Bougondische / Place meaning: Countryside (Platteland)

34:7 In Zeeuws-Vlaanderen zijn we Vlaams en dat is het onderscheidt, het bo..... (3290:3474) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

In Zeeuws-Vlaanderen zijn we Vlaams en dat is het onderscheidt, het bourgondische, Vlaamse karakter van ZV. En mijn vrienden die wonen in Middelburg bijvoorbeeld, daar heb je dat niet.

1 Codes:

Place identity: Vlaams

34:8 Ik ben nou betrokken geweest bij het toerisme en de omgeving daarvan..... (3715:4196) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Ik ben nou betrokken geweest bij het toerisme en de omgeving daarvan. De meerwaarde van toerisme kapitaliseert naar het landschap. Dat is ook het idee van Waterdunen. Waterdunen, waar je zegt van nou, we hebben straks 200 bungalows, er was sprake van 200 maar inmiddels zijn het 400, 400 eigenaren. En die 400 eigenaren moeten trots zijn op het landschap. Hun bezitting in het landschap is toegevoegde waarde. En dat is de waarde van ja eigenlijk de recreatieve beleving. Het trots

5 Codes:

Nature (Natuurbeeld): New nature as oppurtunity / Nature (Natuurbeeld): Recreational nature / Place attachment: Proudness / Place meaning: Nature / Place meaning: Recreation

34:10 De mogelijkheid van ZV, de producten zijn hier al ruim aanwezig. Daar..... (5139:5358) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

De mogelijkheid van ZV, de producten zijn hier al ruim aanwezig. Daar gaat het om. En je ziet waar wij met Waterdunen nu mee bezig zijn, waar we tussen heel veel producten zitten. Midden in de natuur. Dat soort dingen.

2 Codes:

34:12 Verblijfsrecreatie zat op slot, de hele provincie Zeeland zat op slot..... (5819:6190) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Verblijfsrecreatie zat op slot, de hele provincie Zeeland zat op slot. Dat weet je nog steeds. En ZV gaat vooruit. En die ruimte hebben we zelf gecreëerd door afspraken te maken met de overheid. Nou,, kijk, daar kunnen we mooi uitbreiden met ook 200 hectare natuur. En dus de natuur gaat de meerwaarde voor de verblijfsrecreatie. En dat kan je ook zien in de ontwikkeling.

3 Codes:

○ Place meaning: Krimpgebied / ○ Place meaning: Recreation / ○ Problem definition: The region needs an economic push

34:14 Dus de combinatie van de zee, de strand, duinen en de landbouw. Dat is..... (7415:7702) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Dus de combinatie van de zee, de strand, duinen en de landbouw. Dat is het Zeeuws-Vlaamse land. Je kan hier boeren, de boer kan ploegen tot aan de zeedijk. En die combinatie zowel de landbouw als natuurlijk aspect en de recreatie zo dicht tegen elkaar aan liggen. Dat maakt een geheel uit

5 Codes:

○ Place meaning: Agriculture / ○ Place meaning: Beach / ○ Place meaning: Diverse area / ○ Place meaning: Recreation / ○ Place meaning: Water/Sea

34:15 het natuurbeheer dat is in principe de agrariër die daar de hele dag i..... (8647:9008) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

het natuurbeheer dat is in principe de agrariër die daar de hele dag in zijn landschap bezig is. Ploegen, saaien, oogsten. Dat is het gene wat de landbouw weer doet. En daarnaast hebben we het Zeeuws Landschap. Die beheert de natuurgebieden. En dat heeft allemaal te maken met financiering. En ik heb geen verstand van natuur. Ik vind het zelf mooi, het gebied.

4 Codes:

○ Nature (Natuurbeeld): Nature as/in agriculture / ○ Place meaning: Agriculture / ○ Place meaning: Beauty / ○ Storyline: Actor

34:18 Het Zeeuws-Vlaamse landschap is ontstaan uit kreken en dijken. En nou..... (9752:10349) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Het Zeeuws-Vlaamse landschap is ontstaan uit kreken en dijken. En nou die kreken en dijken die komen, als we strak op bezoek gaan in het gebied, zou ik ze je aanwijzen. Dan zie je dus de ontwikkeling dat ZV is ontstaan uit schorren en slikken. Honderden jaren geleden was daar nog water. En het zijn droog geworden slikken met schorren en die zijn ingepolderd en daardoor ook aan de zee terug gegeven. Die inpolderingen die staan als basis voor het Zeeuwse landschap. En als je naar Waterdunen kijkt dan zou je zien dat we geprobeerd hebben de ontwikkelingen door de eeuwen heen daar terug te maken

3 Codes:

Nature (Natuurbeeld): New nature as opportunity / Place meaning: Polder / Place meaning: Water/Sea

34:19 Waterdunen ligt op de scheiding van land en zee. (12329:12376) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Waterdunen ligt op de scheiding van land en zee.

1 Codes:

Place meaning: Between land and sea

34:20 Het ligt op het kruispunt van een van de meest belangrijke vogeltrekro..... (12378:12644) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Het ligt op het kruispunt van een van de meest belangrijke vogeltrekroutes. De vogeltrek van Noord naar Zuid en van Zuid naar Noord, die vliegt over Waterdunen heen. Er is een stuwende kracht van de trekvogels die ter hoogte van Waterdunen de Westerschelde oversteken

1 Codes:

Place meaning: Birds

34:21 En die worden geteld. Bij de vogeltelpost. En daar staan de mensen van..... (13243:13724) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

En die worden geteld. Bij de vogeltelpost. En daar staan de mensen van s 'ochtends vroeg als die vogeltrek op gang komt staan ze de vogels te tellen. En dat zijn dan 1000 of 10000 vogels voorbij gekomen zijn. Dan is dat uniek. Dus de locatie in de monding van de Westerschelde van Waterdunen die is ook uniek te noemen. Dus het heeft voor de recreanten aantrekkingskracht. Het heeft voor de vogel aantrekkingskracht als foerageergebied, als rustgebied. De mens kan meerdere kanten.

2 Codes:

Place meaning: Birds / Place meaning: Different/Unique

34:22 Het is ontpoldert. Ontpoldert, dus het was een polder en daar is een d..... (13855:14238) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Het is ontpoldert. Ontpoldert, dus het was een polder en daar is een dijk doorgestoken en nu stroomt er twee keer per dag bij eb en vloed zoutwater in die zoete polder. Dus daar gaat het landschap van veranderen. Er groeit dus niets meer, alleen dan maar zout gerelateerde. Het is ook uniek, hé. Er is ook niks vergelijkbaars. In Nederland hebben we niet veel van dit soort gebieden.

2 Codes:

Ontpolderen / Place meaning: Different/Unique

34:23 Waar kan je in Nederland of in Europa recreëren in een natuurgebied? D..... (15881:15978) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

Waar kan je in Nederland of in Europa recreëren in een natuurgebied? Dat kan straks in Waterdunen.

4 Codes:

Nature (Natuurbeeld): Recreational nature / Place meaning: Different/Unique / Place meaning: Nature / Place meaning: Recreation

34:24 a. Je bent eens met de natuur. Als je de gordijnen open doet dan kijk..... (16945:17192) - D 34: Transcript Interview 12-08-2020

a. Je bent eens met de natuur. Als je de gordijnen open doet dan kijk je dus uit op Waterdunen. Je ziet die trekvogels foerageren, je ziet Waterdunen. Het is geen recreatiepark met glijbanen en dergelijks. Nee, het is natuur waar je in verblijft.

4 Codes:

Nature (Natuurbeeld): Recreational nature / Place meaning: Different/Unique / Place meaning: Nature / Place meaning: Recreation

Appendix IV Interview guide

Introductie: Ik ben Antonia Purrmann, MSc student aan de Wageningen Universiteit. Ik studeer Maatschappij en Beleid van Bos- en Natuurbeheer. Ik ben graag buiten en hou van wandelen met mijn twee honden. Dit heb ik bijvoorbeeld ook altijd graag op vakantie gedaan aan de Zeeuwse kust. Daarom heb ik voor mijn afstudeerscriptie ook een onderwerp in Zeeland gekozen, de ontwikkeling van het project Waterdunen. Ik ben niet alleen geïnteresseerd in het behouden van natuur maar ook in maatschappelijke processen achter ontwikkelingen en veranderingen van het landschap, vooral in het kader van natuurprojecten. Dit interview is een belangrijk onderdeel van mijn afstudeer scriptie en geeft mij waardevolle inzichten in de implementatieprocessen van Waterdunen. Het interview zal ongeveer 30 minuten duren en de data zal geanonimiseerd (bv. lid van actiegroep Waterdunen-Nee,

medewerker provincie Zeeland, lokale boer) geëvalueerd en publiceert worden. (De universiteit maakt afstudeerscripties openbaar toegankelijk.) Graag wil ik dit interview ook opnemen, dat maakt de analyse voor mij achteraf makkelijker. Hiermee wil ik om uw toestemming voor het opnemen en gebruiken van de inhoud van het interview vragen.

Het gaat me vooral om uw meningen, er zijn dus geen foute of juiste antwoorden. Hebt u vragen of opmerkingen voordat we gaan beginnen?

- 1) We beginnen eerst algemeen en spreken later nog over het project Waterdunen.
 - Stelt u zich alstublieft voor. (Wie bent u? Welk beroep,..)
 - Wat is uw verbinding met Zeeland? (Hoe lang leeft/werkt u al in Zeeland?)
 - Waarom bent u (voor werk/wonen) naar Zeeland gekomen? Waarom Zeeland?
 - Wat vindt u van Zeeland?
 - Wat vindt u van West-Zeeuws-Vlaanderen?
 - Verschilt West-Zeeuws-Vlaanderen van de rest van Zeeland? Zo ja, hoe/waarom?
 - Als ja, in hoeverre? Wat maakt West-Zeeuws-Vlaanderen anders?/Als nee, welke aspecten van Zeeland komen in West-Zeeuws-Vlaanderen terug?
- 2) Hier spreken wij over het Zeeuwse landschap in het algemeen, uw mening over Zeeland, wat Zeeland voor uw betekent. (→ doorvragen naar West-Zeeuws-Vlaanderen als die persoon verschillen noemt)
 - Wat is er voor u bijzonder/uniek aan Zeeland?
 - Welke plekken in Zeeland bezoekt u graag? Waarom?
 - Wat vindt u in Zeeland minder leuk? Waarom?
 - Wat is voor u een typisch Zeeuws landschap? Wat zijn karakteristieke landschapselementen van Zeeland? (Waarom?)
 - Als u over de historie van Zeeland nadenkt.. Wat zijn voor u belangrijke en karakteristieke veranderingen (ontwikkelingen) van het landschap? (Waarom?/Kunt u dit nader toelichten.)
 - Wat denkt u over natuur in Zeeland?
 - Wat soort natuur vindt u het aantrekkelijkst? Het belangrijkste? (Waarom?) (Eventueel doorvragen: Veel/weinig, toegankelijkheid, hoe wordt het beheerd en wat vindt u daarvan?)
 - Wat is voor u typisch Zeeuwse natuur?
- 3) Hier spreken wij over het project Waterdunen in detail, hoe u het project en de ontwikkeling hebt ervaren, wat het project voor Zeeland en de streek betekent:
 - Wat vindt u van Waterdunen?
 - (Hoe) bent u betrokken geweest bij Waterdunen? (Wat was de aanleiding voor Waterdunen? Welke belangrijke interventies werden uitgevoerd? Welke gevolgen hebben deze interventies gehad? Wat waren de doelen?)
 - Hoe verandert het project het landschap?
 - Wat vindt u van deze verandering?
 - Denkt u even terug aan de historie van Zeeland en een typisch Zeeuws landschap. Wat vindt u van de veranderingen in deze context?
 - Wat betekent deze interventie voor de streek? Wat zijn volgens u de gevolgen van Waterdunen?
 - ➔ Wat betekent Waterdunen voor de streekbewoners? Zoals, boeren, inwoners?
 - ➔ Wat betekent Waterdunen voor de lokale economie? Toerisme? Landbouw?
 - ➔ Hoe verandert Waterdunen de functie van het landschap?
 - ➔ Wat vindt u van natuurherstel in het kader van Waterdunen?
 - ➔ Waterdunen wordt ook beschreven als “nieuwe natuur”. Wat is uw mening over nieuwe natuur in het algemeen en in de context van Waterdunen?

- (Hoe) Hebt uzelf deze gevolgen ervaren?
- Ten slotte heb ik twee stellingen over het project Waterdunen. Wat is uw mening over:
 - ➔ Waterdunen wordt als “nieuw icoon van Zeeland” beschreven. Wat denkt u daarover? (Waarom kan Waterdunen als karakteristiek Zeeuws landschap worden gezien (of niet)?)
 - ➔ Het project Waterdunen heeft geleid tot “vertrutting van karakteristieke Zeeuwse leefomgeving” (Krantartikel in PZC 2010).

Afronding: Kent u nog anderen die ik zou kunnen interviewen? Mensen met die u samen gewerkt hebt of die u tijdens het project ontmoet hebt, waar u denkt die kunnen nog interessante informatie geven of hebben net een iets andere inkijk dan u?

Als u wilt zal ik u een samenvatting van mijn resultaten van mijn onderzoek toesturen, waarop u nog feedback kunt geven. Bv. of u zich in de resultaten herkent en of het een goede representatie van uw mening geeft.

Hartelijke dank voor het gesprek en de interessante inzichten! Hebt u nog vragen of opmerkingen?