

'The energy transition is seen too much as a landscape planning issue'

The government advisory body on spatial quality, the Board of Government Advisors, issued new recommendations last week on the interaction between energy infrastructure and space. Associate professor of Landscape Architecture Sven Stremke has been studying this topic for years. 'It is time to think bigger.'

Don't these recommendations come a bit late?

'The way The Hague looks at time, the document has come at exactly the right time. But on the ground, it is true that many important decisions on energy infrastructure are already well underway. In that respect, we could have done with these recommendations a few years ago. Although the Board did point out earlier that the energy infrastructure is a key factor in landscape planning in the Netherlands, for example in the 2019 exploratory paper *Via Paris*.'

Was there little response then?

'It took a while in The Hague, yes. The Netherlands has only recently drawn up an Energy Network Programme. These recommendations by the Board were written at the behest of the programme managers.'

What do you think of the report?

'I am somewhat surprised by how technical it is. The Board puts forward some recommendations, all of which are valid: 'take the rising sea levels into account'; 'formulate a standpoint on the principal economic structure'; 'focus on a more European and regional energy system'. At the same time, these

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recommendations are rather self-evident and not what you would expect from the Board of Government Advisors. I don't see any linkages with our future living environment: our landscapes, towns and villages. I don't see much imagination.'



Imagination? There's plenty of it in this submission to a design competition for the energy landscape of the future. ♦ Illustration Braining the Future Baumeister

What do you mean?

'This piece seems to aim at putting the spatial dimension of the energy transition on the agenda, whereas we've been aware of that for a long time. Now is the time for bigger ideas, to have the courage to dream and to come up with new perspectives. Having said that: I do believe that the Energy Network Programme will benefit from this piece. We are not the target group, of course.'

What should the Board be dreaming about?

'About how the energy transition can be used repeatedly as leverage to address other societal issues such as the nitrogen crisis, sustainability in agriculture and the need for more ecological links between nature reserves. Given that the report is entitled *A lever for a clean future*, the Board does seem to see this potential, but fails to go into substantial detail.'

A nice source of inspiration for your new book?

'At the beginning of October, Landscape Architecture lecturer Dirk Oudes, Paolo Picchi (Amsterdam University of the Arts) and I will publish the book *Power of Landscape*. This book highlights many examples of how the energy transition can contribute to solutions to other societal issues. If we succeed in making the right combinations, the energy transition brings tremendous opportunities with it.' ME