

Stability and change; Analysing the institutions of the Dutch State Forestry throughout forest sector reforms.

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Abstract

Forest policy in The Netherlands falls under the responsibility of (at the time of writing) the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fishery and Nature, while the Dutch State Forestry (SBB) is responsible for managing all national forested areas. Forest policy has undergone a lot of changes, mainly between 2010 and 2014. While SBB is evaluated by the ministry on their achievement of the goals of the reform, not much is known about their perspective and course of action throughout the reforms. This study aims to fill this knowledge gap by analysing the institutional developments of SBB throughout this period. A literature study was carried out to research institutions common in forest and nature policy in the EU. Besides, 5 semi-structured interviews with SBB employees and other terrain managing organisations were carried out to analyse the institutional development and present implications. It was found that core values around nature have remained consistent with SBB and the general public. However, the social side has undergone changes to make the organisation more embedded in society. The decentralisation and the introduction of the Nature and Landscape Subsidy scheme (SNL) has weakened relations with the ministry while making provinces more important. Lastly, to generate more income to cover their management expenses, more business partnerships were sought out. All mechanisms of stability and change except intended inaction were identified by the researcher in this case. It can be concluded that SBB remains committed to its core values about nature while embracing changes on the social and entrepreneurial side, also in part because some changes were already in line with the organisation's long term goal of becoming more independent. However, concerns about nature remain as nature has become a lower priority on the political agenda and relations between SBB and the ministry have become more distant.

1 Introduction

Policy making is a long and complicated process with many different steps and actors involved. Taking the policy cycle as an example, policy goes from the agenda setting to formulation and adoption, to implementation and evaluation, with the cycle starting again when a new issue arises on the agenda (or if the issue at hand has not been resolved). At each of these stages there is an attempt from actors to influence the process. Interest groups, media or bureaucracies try to influence the agenda setting or have to translate policy goals during the implementation phase for example (Knill & Tosun, 2012). These actors always have their own goals in mind as due to their own knowledge and experiences they hold a vision of what is the best thing to do. This ‘Street Level Bureaucracy’ is quite an old concept (Lipsky, 1980) but it still has relevance as it gets incorporated in other newer theories (Bannink & Bosselaar, 2020). These political games between actors make policy an always interesting field to study.

In the case of forest (and nature) policy in The Netherlands, it falls under the responsibility of the ministry of agriculture, fishery, food security and nature (as of the time of writing with the cabinet Schoof I). A ministry is led by a minister, in this case Femke Wiersma, who is chosen for that position by the coalition currently in charge. If a new cabinet comes into power, they are responsible for appointing ministers for each department. The minister leads the employees who are part of the ministry, who are in office usually for a longer period of time as only the minister position gets changed every election.

However, while this actor is very important, they are of course not the only stakeholder involved in policy making. The Dutch State Forestry (SBB) is the main institute responsible for managing the national forested areas. As a ‘juridical person with lawful duty’ (RWT), SBB is not an official government body, but is tasked with carrying out governmental tasks. In their case they are obligated to manage the forests and other nature areas that are the property of the national government as well as other tasks that are instructed by the minister (Koninkrijksrelaties, n.d.). SBB is under the leadership of Sylvo Thijsen (Staatsbosbeheer, 2024) and is the main accountable person for the actions of SBB. As such any appointments or terminations of the directorial function need to be approved by the minister (Koninkrijksrelaties, n.d.). Other stakeholders include environmental NGOs, timber cooperations (Sotirov & Storch, 2018), other ministries, provinces, municipalities and water boards (Ministerie van Economische Zaken & Staatsbosbeheer, 2014).

Forest policy and the actors involved have not been static over time in The Netherlands however. In the period of 1990 until 2010, forest policy was quite stable. The importance of nature conservation was embedded in policy and societal support was high (Buijs et al., 2014). There were criticisms of course, but they did not get mainstream attention until the installation of the first Rutte cabinet in 2010. In this cabinet Henk Bleker became part of the ministry of economic affairs, agriculture and innovation and used these already existing critical discourses to push for drastic forest policy reforms. He pushed for large budget cuts to nature conservation, new prioritisations of policies and decentralization. Protected species and areas also decreased and nature restoration projects were put on hold (Buijs et al., 2014).

This coalition did not last long however, and with Rutte II in 2012 a new nature vision document was drafted by the ministry of economic affairs (who was now responsible for nature). Nature conservation did receive more importance again compared to Rutte I, but had to be realised through public participation, and nature itself needed to be more incorporated in social and economic developments (Ministerie van Economische Zaken, 2014). These reforms also meant a

new position and task for SBB. Alongside the continued call for nature protection, they were now also instructed to distance themselves from the government and become more embedded into society, and to increase their own funding through private means now that all their government funding could only come from provincial subsidies (Briene et al., 2018). This was all written down in a covenant between the ministry of economic affairs and SBB under the slogan ‘beschermen, beleven, benutten’ (protect, experience, use) (Ministerie van Economische Zaken & Staatsbosbeheer, 2014). While since cabinet Rutte III in 2017, nature policy and the activities of SBB fall under the authority of the ministry of agriculture, nature and food quality, this covenant from 2014 is still the leading vision document on SBBs governance.

A lot has thus changed in forest policy as well as for the Dutch State Forestry, but the forestry sector is often described as being very risk-averse in their attitudes (Sauter et al., 2018), which leads them to be very reluctant to change their routines or ‘business-as-usual’. On top of that, fundamental beliefs, described as deep cores, are also hard to change (Sotirov & Winkel, 2016). This conservatism is for example seen as a hinder in their lack of adaptability towards climate change impacts (Brunette et al., 2020). SBB as well is over a hundred years old, and over 60% of their employees are above the age of 45 (Staatsbosbeheer, 2023). Thus it is not a very far reaching assumption that a large part of the work force has a lot of experience in the (policy) field and have experienced the reforms firsthand. As the policy field is not only shaped by political actors, it becomes important to also consider the role of SBB in the reforms. Specifically it is of interest to look at the institutions of the organization. These are defined as the values, norms and ideologies that structure social interactions and are often unwritten but well maintained over time (Galik & Chelbi, 2021), but a more thorough definition will be given in the theoretical framework. Through their institutions we can imagine that SBB, as well as other stakeholders, were not passive observants of the policy reforms of this period. As mentioned in the opening paragraph, all stakeholders have their own goals in mind when discussing policy in an attempt to mold it to what they see as best practice. As foresters are conservative in their practices, it is possible that they do not have perfectly aligning goals with policy makers, and through interpretation of vague policy goals to real cases can find room to fulfil their own objectives.

From the literature, there is a lot known about the policy reforms around 2010 already, but there are also some knowledge gaps. There are articles about the history of forest policy being integrated into broader nature policy (Veenman et al., 2009), comparisons of governance arrangements between the Netherlands and other European countries (Sergent et al., 2018, Sotirov & Storch, 2018), and the initiation of the reforms through the use of critical discourses (Buijs et al., 2014). There is also a lot of valuable information available on SBB in the form of official evaluations. These are carried out by consultation firm Ecorys on behalf of the ministry of agriculture, nature and food quality. The leading questions asked are on the effectivity of SBBs operations as well as goal achievement of the 2014 covenant (Briene et al., 2018, Briene et al., 2023). The evaluations state that SBB does their best to incorporate the three themes (protect, experience, use) in their activities, but faces challenges in balancing the needs of each theme. For example, (sustainable) use of natural resources should not detract from the experience of visitors to the park (Briene et al., 2023). Another challenge faced is in balancing the three themes with the vision and goals of the provinces. The provinces put most emphasis on nature protection which leads to tensions with the experience and use objectives of SBB (Briene et al., 2018). It is clear that SBB makes its own choices in implementing the covenant, which it does seemingly well according to the evaluators, but what is missing from all these sources is the perspective of SBB on the process side of things. Not a lot is known about how they experienced the reforms and how they navigated their organization through the reforms. These questions are currently not being

asked despite the knowledge on both the policy reforms and resilience of old institutions. This thesis aims to fill the knowledge gap by analysing this perspective.

The report is structured as follows. In the next chapter, the institutional approach that will be taken in this thesis is explained. Following that is the research objective and questions. Chapter 4 will explain the methods that were carried out as part of the research. The results chapter will present the data gathered after carrying out the methods. Following that, the results will be discussed in more detail and limitations of the study will be mentioned. Finally the conclusion will summarise the findings of the report and answer the main research question.

2 Theoretical framework

Types of institutional theories

Institutions are very important in shaping processes of social interaction. They enable and constrains the actions of actors by providing both written and unwritten rules on the processes of interaction (Patterson & Beunen, 2019). To dive any deeper in the topic of institutions however, it is necessary to talk about the three classical types of institutionalisms: rational, historical and sociological institutionalism, as well as the newer discursive institutionalism.

Rational institutionalism places a lot of meaning on the ability of actors to behave in a rational way. Institutions here work as a means to lower transaction costs when interacting with other actors. Institutions come into existence when the need for lowering these costs is identified and stay relevant as long as the institution continues to provide the most benefits to the actors involved (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

Historical institutionalism places most emphasis on the timing of political events and processes. These always build upon each other over time, in a way that previous events constrain the options for future developments. The concept of path dependency is thus central in this institutional theory. The creation of an institution will limit the availability of alternative structures or rules to become institutionalized and this leads to institutions to remain in place (Fioretos, 2011).

Sociological institutionalism takes a more constructivist approach to institutions. Institutions go beyond just norms and values, but also include cognitive scripts and symbols that allow actors to interpret reality in a similar way, which in turn allows them to understand each other. Institutions are adopted when they reaffirm the existing culture. In contrast to rational institutionalism where institutions are about efficiency, here they are more about appropriateness. Institutions are thus created when they enhance the shared culture and are maintained because it is hard to legitimize norms and ideas outside of the currently accepted 'reality' (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

Since the establishment of these three theories, discursive institutionalism also gained relevance to fill in some of the gaps the previous three had left behind. This theory shows how, through ideas and discourse, actors are both able to work in an institutional context that is given to them as well as think about them critically and shape them themselves. Discursive processes are used to convey ideas in an interactive process with other actors which can then lead to institutional change if these ideas are taken up (Schmidt, 2008).

None of this is to say that one of these streams is the one true theory. Political reality is way too complex for one explanation, so all theories offer at least a bit of truth about how institutions work and come about (Schmidt, 2008). The theories can even be incorporated with one another. For example, one might choose rationally between multiple options, but those options may only have come into focus because they are filtered through cultural appropriateness (Hall & Taylor, 1996). Therefore for this thesis, the diversity of theories will be embraced as much as possible. By

keeping an open mind with regards to institutions, the more institutions can be recognized in the research process which allows for a more complete picture of present institutions in this case.

Policy networks as institutions and principal-agent models

Next, it is also possible to consider policy networks as institutions. The cooperation that occurs in these networks is repetitive and relies on shared meanings through agreed upon rules and norms (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2006). These networks are important to the scope of this study as the actors that participate in them take part in the policy process. Actors also value participation in their networks as they are willing to compromise on certain decisions to preserve the relationship and hold onto their position in them (Blom-Hansen, 1997).

Actors in the networks can also have different relations to each other. One that is important to highlight is that of the principal and agent. Rather than one specific theory, principal-agent models provide a flexible approach for analysing institutional arrangements where one actor has power (principal) but delegates a task to another (agent). Central elements to their interactions are information asymmetries, incentives and agency loss (Gailmard, n.d.). The principal will delegate something to an actor because that actor possesses more knowledge and expertise than the principal. Both actors also act based on their incentives, which in general should be compatible with each other, but the agent will also try to increase personal gains like budget for example. Agency loss is when actors have the possibility to also pursue their own interests. While these three elements might make this relationship seem negative, it often leads to positives for both. With agency to pursue their own interests, agents are better incentivized to use their knowledge and experience to the best of their abilities which is beneficial for the principal too. If the principal was able to reach their goals or ideals, they would do it themselves, but that is either not possible or too costly, so getting as close as possible by the use of an agent is often the next best thing (Gailmard, n.d.).

Institutional stability and change frameworks

To bring all these ideas about institutions together, the framework of institutional stability by Galik & Chelbi (2021) and the pathways of institutional change framework by Micelotta et al., (2017) will be used in this thesis. Each framework has been created by conducting a review of the existing literature on institutional stability and change, and capture the broad diversity of institutional processes. This strong literary backing and diversity of institutional process is why these frameworks were chosen. This should allow the research to capture the wide range of processes that is likely present in this case.

The framework of institutional stability uses the factors of intentionality and directionality of actor's action to explain the persistence of institutions over time. Intentionality is defined as whether actions actively have purpose or intent behind them or if they are more passive, while directionality is defined as whether actions either promote the continued existence of an institution or block a change or new institution (Galik & Chelbi, 2021). Especially the focus on intentionality is important because the role of agency in institutional work is often understudied, but this framework both incorporates actions with and without clear agency (Patterson & Beunen, 2019). Besides, the framework was not made with one institutionalism in mind. The authors are able to show links between their categories and ideas from the three classical institutional theories (Galik & Chelbi, 2021) and also uses concepts from discursive institutionalism. Resulting are four categories of institutional stability which are shown in figure 1 and will be discussed now.

Passive stability is when actors continue to adhere to the set standards of existing institutions. Concepts like norms and values are important because it contributes to the institutional culture (Christiansen & Vanhoonacker, 2008). Language is also important as narratives or discourses fix meanings in place that are able to be used by actors (Blanc & Huault, 2019). Lastly emotions are important as it ensures actors continue using institutions. Adhering to norms exemplifies good behaviour which is associated with feelings of pride, while stepping out of line will induce shame (Delmestri & Goodrick, 2016).

Active stability relies on the concept of institutional work or maintenance which are specifically actions to maintain current institutions. An important mechanism to this is once again language through controlling the existing discourses surrounding institutions (Baker & Rennie, 2018). This is usually done by more powerful (groups of) actors who have something to gain from the institutions remaining as they are now (Zantvoort, 2017).

Failed action has similar emphasis on agency as active stability, but here the directionality is different and it is responsive rather than proactive. The role of power asymmetries is also important. Putting institutional change in motion requires more influential or powerful actors to be on board with the changes, but if they are not, they act as veto-players and thus change is avoided (Béland & Powell, 2016). Veto-players may even frame the current institutions as the default or way things should be, thus making any proposed changes become seen as impractical or inappropriate (Galik & Chelbi, 2021).

Intended inaction is the “intentional avoidance of actions that could contribute to change” (Galik & Chelbi, 2021). Transaction costs and uncertainty are the major concepts in this category. The actions to reform are inherently costly so stability is by default the cheaper option (in the short term). Furthermore there is always uncertainty when transitioning to a new situation (regardless of predictions, we cannot look into the future) and actors in power are usually risk averse. Also new institutions would get rid of the learned experiences with current ones thus further increasing transaction costs. These factors are barriers to institutional reform and thus avoiding change becomes more incentivized (Bedock, 2014).

Lastly, it is important to note that in reality, multiple categories can be relevant when it comes to institutional stability. Multiple motivations as well as actions (some unconscious) can play a role in maintaining institutions. Thus when applying the framework to a complex real world situation, it can be expected to find multiple of these categories being present even within one actor.

		Intentionality	
		Actions Non-Purposeful	Actions Purposeful
Directionality	Institution Reinforced	<i>Passive Stability</i>	<i>Active Stability</i>
	Change Avoided	<i>Failed Action</i>	<i>Intended Inaction</i>

Figure 1: the four modes of stability, categorized by intentionality and directionality of actions (Galik & Chelbi, 2021).

The framework of institutional change (Micelotta et al., 2017) uses different variables to explain change processes but still lays them out in a two by two table. The theoretical basis of the theory is grounded in the different ways that agency is described as contributing to institutional change

processes. Earliest theories ascribe change to exogenous macro-level events or shocks, which were followed by theories of institutional entrepreneurship, and lastly followed by theories that emphasize changes in micropractices. The framework builds on all these ideas by using the variables of pace of change and scope of change. When it comes to pace, change is either relatively fast through revolutionary processes set in motion by macro-level events or disruption, or relatively slow through evolutionary processes such as unobtrusive changes by ‘change agents’ or micro-level changes such as improvisations to cope with new challenges or situations. The scope of change is either transformational or developmental. When transformational change happens, old institutions are often replaced or altered beyond recognition, while developmental change seeks to incorporate new ideas with existing institutions. Similarly to the previous framework, these variables result in four categories of change, shown in figure 2, that will be discussed now.

Institutional accommodation entails that disruption is introduced by actions that want to challenge the status quo and is thus revolutionary in pace (Micelotta et al., 2017). However, due to contestation and power dynamics between actors, change is not able to be transformative as certain ideas or frames are unable to be dislodged completely. Rather it results in developmental change as actors settle for smaller or incremental changes (Gray et al., 2015).

When it comes to institutional displacement, the revolutionary nature of pace changes are able to set transformative change in motion. Here either the mobilization of institutional entrepreneurs or large scale exogenous changes push for revolutionary changes. These changes, usually at the top of organisations can lead to change in a policy field or further down an organisation (Micelotta et al., 2017).

Institutional alignment is slower evolutionary change that is only developmental. Either institutional entrepreneurs adopt a strategy that aims to incorporate smaller changes into existing institutions, or institutional actors make small changes to adapt to new developments or trends to bring about change. The existing institutions keep their core intact but are slightly different as a result (Micelotta et al., 2017).

Institutional accretion lastly is evolutionary in pace but transformative in scope. It is brought about through more bottom-up processes or practices that end up leading to significant changes (Micelotta et al., 2017). A handful of individuals can make changes in their practices here and there, that on their own seem trivial, but together they give completely new meanings and order to interactions that then get adopted on a large scale (Smets et al., 2012).

		Scope of Change	
		Developmental	Transformational
Pace of Change	Revolutionary	<i>Institutional Accomodation</i>	<i>Institutional Displacement</i>
	Evolutionary	<i>Institutional Alignment</i>	<i>Institutional Accretion</i>

Figure 2: The four pathways of institutional change, categorized by pace and scope of change from Micelotta et al. (2017).

These frameworks together provide a comprehensive view of institutional processes. Together both instances of institutional stability as well as change can be analysed, answering questions

like when do institutions change or remain stable, how do they change and what the role of actors in stability or change processes are.

3 Research objective and questions

Policy as a study field is very broad and complex, and everything that is included in that would be too much for one MSc thesis. Therefore a well defined scope is important to the success of this project. It is known that the Dutch State Forestry is part of the forest and nature policy network. Previous theses have shown that SBB is involved in a lot of interaction with other actors with various degrees of power. This was demonstrated on a local scale (Buse, 2024, Van Poeteren, 2024), but is also applicable on national scale. Actors always have their own goals in mind and try to advocate for them, and interactions and rules of policy networks can be considered institutions. For the sake of the thesis, the policy network will not be the unit of analysis. A Thesis would not suffice for that. However the research will include institutions between SBB and their most important policy partner(s), those being the ministries. Considering that the ministry instructs SBB about tasks, we can identify the ministry as a principal, and SBB as the agent. This would fill a gap in the literature surrounding the policy reforms as well as give more insight into how the SBB as a state forestry organization works. While the thesis is not meant to be a normative evaluation of SBB or other actors involved, hopefully the insights could be beneficial to future developments in the field of forest and nature policy. This does not limit itself even to development in The Netherlands. Other European countries have also undergone forest policy reforms and the results could potentially inspire research abroad.

Thus the research objective of this thesis is to research the development of institutions within the Dutch State Forestry throughout the 2010-2014 policy reforms by analysing the policy reforms from the perspective of the Dutch State Forestry. This results in the following main research question:

How have the institutional arrangements of the Dutch State Forestry developed throughout the 2010-2014 policy reforms?

this will be analysed according to the following sub questions.

- What institutional arrangements are common in forest management and policy in the EU?
- How have the policy reforms impacted the institutions in SBB?
 - What institutions have changed and what have remained stable?
 - How have the institutions changed?
- How can the actions of SBB throughout the 2010-2014 policy reforms be categorized?
 - What mechanisms were used to promote institutional stability?
 - What mechanisms were used to promote institutional change?

Hypotheses can also be formulated for the questions. The institutional developments can be seen in the light of SBB as the agent in a principal-agent model. Institutions for SBB are not the goal to preserve, rather the means to preserve the position of authority and expertise. It is the assumption that the Dutch State Forestry has actively worked towards maintaining institutional stability not just because of risk-aversity of the forestry sector, but also as a way to remain in power. However, changes were embraced either out of necessity or because new tasks or roles continue to justify the organisation's existence. To go about this, it is hypothesized that the actions of SBB can be categorized as active stability or institutional accommodation.

4 Research methodology

To answer the research questions and test for the hypotheses, a literature study as well as semi-structured interviews were carried out. How these methods were applied will be discussed in this chapter.

4.1 literature study

The qualitative data that was analysed was gathered from both academic and non-academic sources. The database CAB Abstracts was the primary source for academic literature. A query was set up and refined over multiple attempts, and the final query that was used can be found in table 1. Articles were filtered on release date (2000-2024) and had to be peer-reviewed. Timber or logging were excluded as search terms because papers containing those terms had a more economical focus. The goal of this search was to look for other scholarly articles that discussed policies and institutions in national forestry sectors throughout Europe. Abstracts were read to assess each paper on relevancy, and only relevant papers were considered for analysis. This allowed the researcher to familiarize themselves with institutions arrangements that might also be applicable in the Dutch context. Inputting the same query in the database Scopus yielded one extra relevant result. Earlier versions also used Dutch terms to look for articles written in Dutch. However, these did not yield any results as Dutch authors also wrote in English and thus translated terms were left out of the final query. Ultimately the search resulted in 37 papers, of which 19 were deemed relevant for analysis.

Table 1: Final query that was used in CAB Abstracts and Scopus. All fields were left on optional except for the first row.

	netherlands or dutch or holland or Europe (AB Abstract)
AND	"state forestry" or "state forest management"
AND	policy
AND	institution* or discourse* or narrative* or norm*
NOT	timber or logging

To search for non-academic sources that could give insights into the Dutch national context, first the website zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl was used. This is a service by the national government of The Netherlands which publishes all official government documents. All 174 'handelingen' and 'kamerstukken' published between 2009 and 2024 that included staatsbosbeheer as a term were assessed based on title. Furthermore, a WUR E-depot was used that contained all yearly reports by the Dutch State Forestry going back to 2006. Some additional snowballing methods were also applied (for example, some documents mentioned national forestry policies and laws). Lastly, the website natuurtijdschriften.nl was used to access Dutch nature magazines. The search terms used were 'Staatsbosbeheer, beleid, politiek'. Of the 39 results, only 5 were relevant. This can be explained by the search engine for this website not being as expansive as CAB Abstracts and Scopus. The engine retrieves any article that mentions these words no matter how important these as topics are. Some articles mentioned Staatsbosbeheer in a personal anecdote or as source of a picture, but this does not mean that the article actually talks about policies and politics of Staatsbosbeheer.

The literature analysis was different for academic and non-academic articles because the information that can be extracted from them serve different purposes. The academic articles were analysed using an inductive qualitative coding analysis, which meant that as the texts were being read, coding categories were created according to similar topics or themes that were identified

by the researcher. These categories correspond to different institution types, which allows the first sub question to be answered. The coding categories were applied to all 17 articles in the program Atlas.ti. The non-academic articles did not receive the same in depth coding analysis, as these did not focus on institutions. Rather they highlight different aspects of forest and nature management and the visions of Staatsbosbeheer and the national government. These were solely read to familiarize the researcher with the state and context of Dutch forest and nature policy and management.

4.2 Interviews

The interview process was structured according to the five stage model by Kallio et al. (2016), an overview of this model can be seen in figure 3. Identifying the need for semi-structured interviews was the first step. These interviews allow the researcher to gain knowledge from respondents' perceptions on the topic that is not present currently in written material. The second stage is gathering already existing knowledge. This allows the researcher to get familiar with the topic that needs to be interviewed and to identify knowledge gaps that need to be addressed with the interview. This was done in the form of a literature study as described in the previous section. After the first two steps, the semi-structured interview guide was drafted (Kallio et al., 2016). The structure and type of questions follow according to principles by Roberts (2020). The interview starts with a 'grand tour' question, to get respondents talking about experiences relevant to the research with follow up questions for more details when needed. Then the interview pivots to multiple 'mini tour' questions that dive into more specific aspects of the topic, in this case these are the identified institution types from the literature (Roberts, 2020).

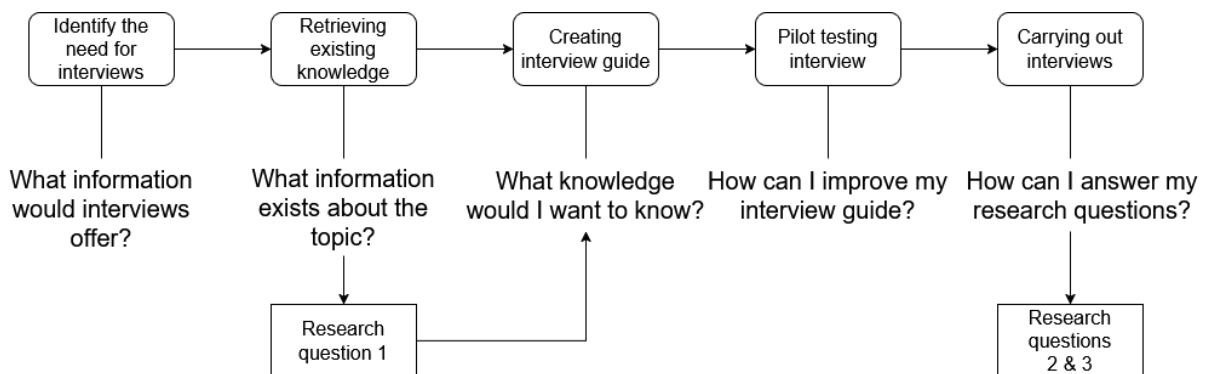


Figure 3: Overview of the five stages to create an interview guide for semi-structured interview from Kallio et al. (2016)

After the interview guide is drafted, the next step was to pilot test the interview guide (Kallio et al., 2016). This allows the researcher to test if the questions are formulated correctly and to gain experience with using the interview guide. This was done through external testing by presenting the interview guide to other forest and nature policy students in a thesis ring. Moreover the interview guide was adjusted for the last interview to accommodate the position of the respondent as they were the only participant not part of Staatsbosbeheer. Both interview guides are available in appendix 1 and 2.

The last step is to actually carry out interviews (Kallio et al., 2016). To create a research sample, first a judgemental sampling strategy was applied (Kumar, 2019). People were selected by the researcher as potential candidates for the interview if they were actively involved with the Dutch State Forestry in the period of 2010 until 2014 for at least 2 years. This was determined by noting down names that were present in articles (or of writers) that were retrieved through the (non-)academic literature study and using Google to find more information about their work

experiences, activities and contact options. This means that they were either working with or for SBB or the ministry of economic affairs, or they had contact with SBB as a WUR researcher. These candidates were approached through either their personal email address (if this was publicly available), through the organization that they are (or were) working for or through their LinkedIn page. Furthermore, a snowballing sample strategy (Kumar, 2019) was applied by asking the respondents for other potential candidates that they deemed relevant. They were then approached in the same way as the earliest respondents. Over 15 people were (indirectly) approached and this resulted in interviews with five people, four of them from SBB and one from another terrain managing organisation. Reasons for decline were lack of time, inappropriateness (determined by the respondent) or unavailability (the government said their employees could not be spoken to). Some respondents did not respond at all. The interviews took place both online and offline, depending on the preference of the respondent, and between the 9th of January and the 22nd of January. Each interview took roughly about an hour and all interviews were carried out in the Dutch language.

The first step after the interviews were carried out was transcribing each audio file into a text file. This was done using the software Rev Basic. An automatic transcription was first made which was checked by the researcher for accuracy and reliability. The transcripts were not translated. The files were then exported to Atlas.ti for a coding analysis. Deductive codes from the previous literature analysis were used to categorise the institutions. To identify cases of institutional stability and change, the four modes of stability and four pathways of change were used as codes and applied to the interview transcripts for further categorisation.

5 Results

This chapter presents the main findings of all the research, arranged per research sub question. This means that first the general institutions in forest and nature managed will be discussed, then which of these institutions have changed for the Dutch State Forestry and how these have changed, and lastly what mechanisms were used by SBB to promote either institutional stability or change.

5.1 What institutional arrangements are common in forest and nature management in the EU?

One of the more common categories of institutions are formal and informal institutions, often also called written or unwritten institutions (Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018). However, these categories have been expanded upon by grouping frequently appearing themes in the literature into subcategories. For each of the subcategories, examples from the collected literature will be given (which are often about change as institutional developments are clearly shown that way). Because all four institutionalism theories are drawn from, the understanding of institutions is very broad which allows the research to explore many aspects of the reform period. An overview of all the (sub)categories can be found in the figure below, while the table at the end shows relevance of institutions in The Netherlands. While some of the categories share overlap with another, each category has a focus on a mechanism that can influence behaviour.

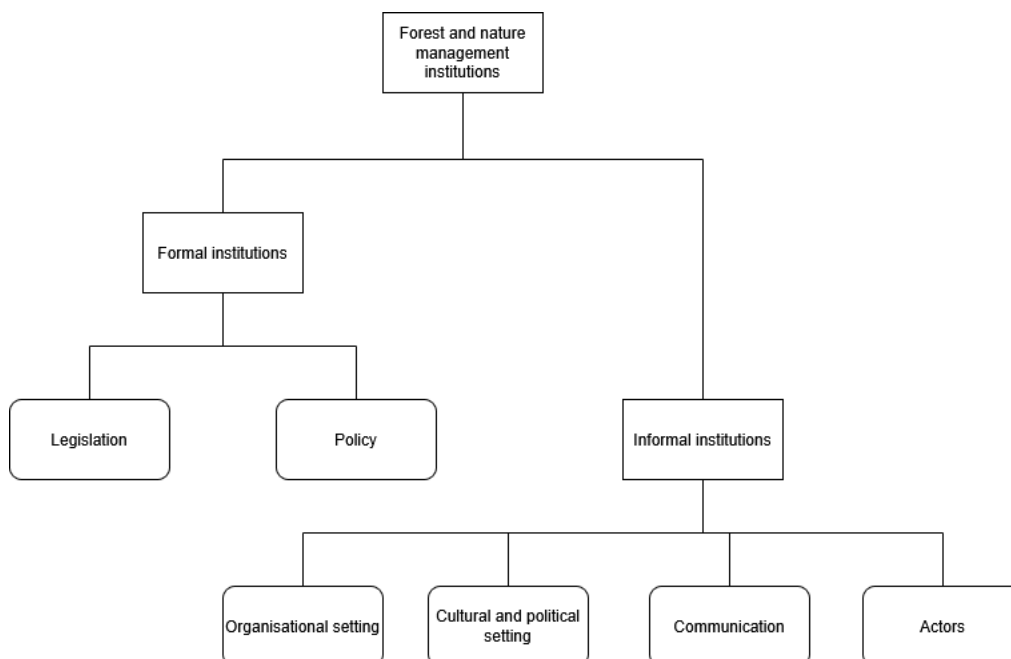


Figure 4: Overview of institutions found in forest and nature management in the EU

5.1.1 Formal institutions

Written institutions entail institutions that are clearly formulated on paper. The main institutions in this category are legislation and policy.

Legislation

Legislation is the main formal institution as it provides legal foundation to determine whether actions by forestry related actors are allowed or not. Most discussed examples are about laws

regarding property rights. These define rights over land and associated assets to different actors (Weiss et al., 2019). An example in the UK is of the changes to Land reform in 2006 that allowed the purchase of land for community forestry development (Ludvig et al., 2021). In Bulgaria, Hungary or Slovakia, there are laws that support traditional forms of sharing land after inheritance (Weiss et al., 2019). Several papers studied cases of restitution processes in former socialist countries and the different ways they have been developed (Dobšínská et al., 2020, Weiss et al., 2019, Nichiforel et al., 2020, Sikor et al., 2009, Nordberg, 2007). Other laws were regarding data sharing (Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018), hunting and land use laws (Nichiforel et al., 2020) or the enforcement of forest rules by armed guards such as in Romania (Sikor et al., 2009). Due to the replacement of former socialist legislation, the number of changes to legislation were a lot higher in former socialist countries than in Western countries, as for Western countries slight updates or incorporating EU laws were their biggest concerns (Nichiforel et al., 2020).

Policy

Policies are documents that support or restrict the abilities of actors to pursue courses of actions. These take shape as policy instruments to achieve desired policy goals (Weiss et al., 2019). Often laws are also considered policy instruments alongside economic or information-based instruments (Le Galès, 2011), but because of their 'hard' nature they were considered their own sub-category here. There are many different examples of instruments in the literature, both from national governments and from international bodies such as the EU. One such example is that of national forest programmes, which set the plan for the development of forests in a country. This steers other actors in the country to adopt measures that are in line with the programme (Schanz, 2002). Furthermore there could be data protection policies that outline procedures for exchange of information (Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018). Another example is of national forest inventories in Sweden that among other purposes were used by forest owners to identify areas with high biodiversity to (voluntarily) set aside for nature conservation (Hallberg-Sramek et al., 2020). Also in Austria the government has set up training programmes for forest managers (Ludvig et al., 2021). Internationally, the EU has created the 2013-2020 EU forest strategy to provide better expert based forest information to aid owners with making better management decisions (Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018). Besides, the influential Natura 2000 policy pushes for conservation efforts for their member states (Nichiforel et al., 2020, Weiss et al., 2019), just like the UN has done in their Convention on Biological Diversity (Schulz et al., 2014). Lastly, international certification schemes such as FSC and PEFC have seen increasing uptake by forestry owners (Hallberg-Sramek et al., 2020). Overall, while the general trend is of liberalisation or deregulation, more restrictions can also happen if there is a strong nature conservation actor coalition (Nichiforel et al., 2020) or to implement Natura 2000 policy (Weiss et al., 2019).

5.1.2 Informal institutions

Informal rules are not written down but are still adhered to by actors because violation leads to negative consequences. Organizational culture, cultural and political setting, communication and actors are the institutions of this category.

Organizational setting

The first subcategory of unwritten institutions are institutions that influence social interaction of actors within and between organizations, here called the organizational setting. It has to do with shared values, goals and trust or competition (Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018).

The diversity of actors has an influence on the diversity of values and goals that appear in organizational settings (Weiss et al., 2019). Seeing forests as a business model or something to conserve or holding biocentric or anthropocentric beliefs can shape the formation and fulfilment of policy goals (Weiss et al., 2019). This can also translate to the type of management that should be carried out in forests. Both the views of active management and letting nature take care of itself are commonly held by forest related organisations (Blicharska & Van Herzele, 2015). Besides, organisations can also hold onto the goal of the continuation of their own existence. Going back to the case of restitution, it was observed that organisations responsible for returning land to former owners slowed down the process, as ‘solving’ the issue would put themselves out of business. So they would introduce complicated and long procedures to avoid having to restructure and lay off staff because their organisation would continue to be needed (Dobšínská et al., 2020).

The held goals and beliefs can either promote trust or distrust of other actors. This can lead to the formation of coalitions or groups between organisations (Baycheva-Merger, 2019), but can also influence the behaviour of actors within an organization (Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018). Cooperation occurs between those that have similar goals to push for while competitive orientations form when actors cannot be trusted to work together and refrain from opportunistic behaviour that only benefits them (Baycheva-Merger, 2019, Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018). This also heavily influences information sharing practices. Sharing information is usually restricted to trusted partners that will not misinterpret or misuse information for their own goals, especially when holding information represents holding power. Information outside a network is usually met with scepticism because actors might suspect hidden agendas (Baycheva-Merger, 2019, Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018). However, working on trust between actors with different values and goals is possible through repeated contact and the social norm of promise (Baycheva-Merger, 2019).

Cultural and political setting

Looking broader at society, there are elements in either the culture of a country or how the political setting is structured that can influence actor behaviour. Elements like a shared common sense, larger issues or developments, the decision-making structure and level of decentralization are the focus of this subcategory.

Nationally, what gets on the political agenda determines which issues are given most attention by politicians and policy makers or what is taken for granted in society. The prevalence of certain discourses can shape the public debate. Environmental discourses can put more focus on topics such as biodiversity and climate change (Nichiforel et al., 2020, Schulz et al., 2014). The Concept of multifunctionality in forests clashes with more traditionally segregated conservation and production approaches (Schulz et al., 2014 (Sergent et al., 2018). Bioeconomy policy goals push for social innovation and modernization in forestry to make it a more competitive sector (Morales, 2021, (Weiss et al., 2021). Privatization and New Public Management thinking have led to smaller public sectors and increasing market mechanisms in the forest sector (Dobšínská et al., 2020, (Sergent et al., 2018). Furthermore the process of restitution has led to many changes in forest policy (Dobšínská et al., 2020).

In addition there are different decision-making structures in EU countries. Some countries are very top-down and corporatist, while other countries make decisions based on consensus between a larger group of involved actors (Schulz et al., 2014, (Baycheva-Merger, 2019). Participation also holds different levels in these structures, ranging from just being informed, to

consultation and sometimes even deliberation (Schanz, 2002). A third factor is the level at which decisions are made, which can either be centralized or decentralized (Schulz et al., 2014). However, actors can also actively refrain from formal decision-making structures and get forestry work done outside of the formalized sphere (Krott & Giessen, 2014), which happens more often when central states seem to lack authority (Sikor et al., 2009). Customary or common sense rules are still strong in some countries for inheritance (Weiss et al., 2019) or property rights claims (Sikor et al., 2009).

Communication

Communication is how actors discuss forest and nature related topics. The main factors are the role of (scientific) information in discussions and the use of narratives and discourses in conversation.

Discourses that were already circulating in society can be intentionally used by groups or individual actors to set larger trends in motion like deregulation or privatization as discussed in the cultural and political setting subcategory (Nichiforel et al., 2020, Sargent et al., 2018). Interestingly, the same trend can be supported by utilizing different narratives. For example, the drivers behind bioeconomy development in Catalonia are focused on economic development, job creation and modernization, while in Lapland they also feature elements of further working on local cultural and economic activities as it “is something they have been doing for 100 years” (Morales, 2021). Narratives can furthermore be used to shape ongoing developments as can be seen in cases about woodland key habitats in Sweden and management of Białowieża forest. Certain individuals or groups of actors painted themselves or the forest as a victim of woodland key habitats to either push for economic forestry or nature conservation measures (Hallberg-Sramek et al., 2020). In Białowieża, there was a lot of discussion on the role and relation that people have to nature to define the level of human intervention that was necessary to manage the forest (Blicharska & Van Herzele, 2015). An important tool in communication is framing. Framing highlights a certain perspective with the goal of getting others to adopt that particular view (Hallberg-Sramek et al., 2020). Communication is not only about “what issue to think about, but also how to think about that issue” (Park & Kleinschmit, 2016).

The way that information or knowledge is used has various aspects to it. First of all, information is not restricted to just scientific knowledge. It can also encompass cultural and moral knowledge derived from personal experiences and through argumentative communication, new knowledge claims can be created (Schanz, 2002). Furthermore, information can be an enabler in giving access to communicative processes. Advisory boards were created to aid citizens in the restitution processes for example, as information on the administrative process or rightful properties was uncommonly held (Dobšinská et al., 2020). Moreover, information can aid decision making in the policy process. In order to argue for a decision, information must be presented that supports a line of action and thus gives it validity. This is required because the forest policy domain is considered to be highly complex (Baycheva-Merger, 2019, Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018). This results in information not being neutral or objective, but as a ‘discursive weapon’ because holding information is a way to wield ideological power, which also explains why information sharing happens in cases of trust while it does not in cases of distrust or competing interests (Baycheva-Merger, 2019, Baycheva-Merger et al., 2018).

Actors

This category has to do more with characteristics of actors and their role in interactions. Actors themselves are usually not considered as institutions, but this category focuses on rules about

interactions that actors have to adhere to or deal with. Whether actors are new to forest policy or old, the power they have, if they are part of top-down or bottom-up processes and the general diversity of actor constellations all have an influence on social interaction.

Once again the case of restitution provides valuable insights, as the process of returning land to former owners, in tandem with creating new departments to handle this task, has led to new actors in the forest policy sphere in some countries (Dobšinská et al., 2020; Nordberg, 2007). However, other processes such as privatization have created new (for western European countries) ownership categories such as community forests, and the amount of female forest owners has also been on the rise (Weiss et al., 2019). Due to these actors having a different lifestyle (such as having no background in forestry, or being “urban” forest owners) they often do not share the same interests as more traditional forest owners (Weiss et al., 2019; Nichiforel et al., 2020). As they now interact with the institutional framework, they can work to modify (or preserve) its arrangements, which can lead to even more institutional changes (Nichiforel et al., 2020).

As to be expected, not all actors have the same capacity to influence the institutional framework. As previously mentioned, the decision making structure of a country can delegate power to actors, but within these systems there are still differences. The share of forestry towards the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is an important factor as it can give lobbying power to private forestry actors. This is very prevalent in corporatist systems, but even in consensual systems, the forestry sector can dominate and push away conservation hard law in favour of self-enforced norms (Schulz et al., 2014). Besides, while modern governance trends try to move away from strict top-down governing with meaningful public participation, the government is still the most dominant actor (Schulz et al., 2014; Schanz, 2002; Sergent et al., 2018). A government can stimulate more bottom-up processes, but commonly does not relinquish its power when doing so. However, bottom-up processes can also organically materialize if the public is dissatisfied with policy failure and institutional gaps (Weiss et al., 2021). Lastly not all processes can be clearly defined as either top-down or bottom-up as often the interactive process is more complex than the simple divide suggests. The Austrian Greencare programme for example is a government led program, but its history is rooted in activities organized by civil society which influenced that government program (Ludvig et al., 2021).

Table 2: Overview of institutions in forest and nature management common in the EU based on the literature study. As institutions are often present due to country specific developments, this table shows which institutions are relevant in the Dutch case (and what they will focus on) and which are not (and why that is)

Main category	Sub-category	Content	Relevant in this case?
Formal	Legislation	Land/property rights Data sharing	No (restitution process) No (focus on other actors/network)
	Policy	National forest programmes International policies and programmes	Yes (Dutch national policy) Yes (Nature 2000 and certification schemes)
Informal	Organisational setting	Values and goals	Yes (internal values of SBB)
	Cultural and Political setting	Discourse	Yes (present in society)

		Decision-making structure	Yes (focus on decentralisation)
	Communication	Discourse Role of information	Yes (utilization of discourse) Yes (how it is valued by others)
	Actors	New actors Power differences	No (restitution process) Yes (within SBB and relation SBB and government)

5.2 How have the policy reforms impacted the institutions of SBB?

In this chapter we will be looking at both cases of change in institutions as well as cases of stability and describing the changes in concrete form. This chapter will use the same structure as the previous one, meaning that for each category of institution, findings for the two related sub-questions will be presented. These results are based on the interviews and it is shown between brackets which findings correspond to which interviewee's data. SBB refers to respondents from the Dutch State Forestry, and TMO refers to a respondent from another terrain managing organisation.

Formal institutions

On the legislation side, the SNL subsidy is the biggest financial change to how SBB is able to fund their operations (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4, TMO1). Instead of receiving one large budget for all operations, the budgets now are per province. This has led to some complications, as some areas require more funds for maintenance than others, but it is not possible to shuffle budgets from lower cost areas to higher cost areas (SBB4). Further, the total budget SBB receives has been reduced, even further complicating the process of funding the more expensive nature areas such as parks near cities, nature on relatively wet soils or relatively small areas to develop ecological connectivity (SBB1, SBB4, TMO1). Besides funding, another change that has made it more difficult to develop new nature areas were the changes to spatial planning laws. Due to the 'equal rights principle' (gelijkberechtigingsbeginsel), the process of buying land became more difficult which led to a standstill in the development of ecological connectivity (SBB1). Lastly, other changes included requiring permits, which have to be issued by a province to SBB, for management measures before they are carried out instead of giving a notice afterwards (SBB4). As all these changes were parts of a longer process, it meant that ongoing projects were not impacted all that much, but new projects required a new approach to management (SBB2, SBB3).

Second, there are a number of policies that have an impact on the behaviour of SBB. Dutch national forest and nature policy is based on principles of ecological connectivity and stimulating natural processes (SBB1, SBB4) since 1990 with the introduction of the Ecologische Hoofdstructuur (EHS) (SBB4). In 2013 that became the Natuurnetwerk Nederland, but the underlying core remains similar. As for SBB, their core objectives have also not changed. They still are instructed to manage national natural areas for the benefit of society, which means that for a long time already they were not solely focused on the 'protect' term. Thus the more social terms 'experience, use' were introduced in the covenant but did also not lead to much concrete change (SBB1). Their approach to these goals did change however, as the 2014 covenant tasked them with embedding themselves more in society and generating more own income (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3,

SBB4) . Further, it was noticed by several respondents that there was a process of formalization and specification in these policy goals after the nature and landscape subsidies (SNL) got increasingly utilized (continuing after 2014 too) (SBB2, SBB3 SBB4). Also both SBB and other nature organizations stress that a local approach has been important in translating their more abstract objectives into concrete management plans (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4, TMO1).

Organizational setting

From the interviews, it can be concluded that just like the policy goals, the internal values of the Dutch State Forestry have remained stable over the years (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4, TMO1). They have always valued nature very highly and strive to take good care of it while also allowing people to experience the beauty of nature. The three terms ‘protect, experience, use’ are the result of development of this vision even before the reform period (SBB1). Furthermore creating distance between SBB and the national government and thus becoming more independent was another long term goal to allow SBB to work in a stable manner (SBB1, SBB4). By ‘keeping politics outside’ it would ensure that SBB could work towards their goals without being interrupted by changing political ideas (SBB1). Creating a long-term covenant was already planned when the next big step in this process was due to happen (SBB4). Interestingly it was noted that this trend of distancing has been steadily reversing towards the end of the reform period and that especially afterwards SBB has become more of an extension of the state (SBB1, SBB4).

However, the biggest identified changes internally are about ‘people and money’ (TMO1). SBB made good effort to change how they handle external communication. Attracting new people and training workers was necessary to make communication more ‘down to Earth’ and understandable for general public to deal with social changes (which will be described in a later chapter) (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4, TMO1). The reforms had a negative impact on the public image of SBB. SBB started to be seen as an organisation that was ‘just messing around’ (SBB3) or as a company that is only out for own financial gains (SBB2, SBB3). For example, SBB does harvest wood from their forests, but with the main goal of financing their management while providing high quality and locally sourced products for biobased solutions (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4) or to create space for more diverse tree species (TMO1). Or for another example, they engage in wildlife population management not out of love for hunting but to control wildlife populations (SBB2, SBB3). Two respondents noted that Bleker’s reforms were a ‘kick to the butt’ to become a more mature and stronger organization and to have the courage to speak out against negative narratives that they believe misrepresents (the actions of) SBB. It made the organisation realise they had to put more effort into communication and public reputation instead of trying to ignore uncomfortable negative opinions (SBB2, SBB3).

“But the kicking therapy from mister Bleker has made us reposition ourselves” (SBB2) “It has made us more mature and strong” (SBB3)

Moreover, the setting between SBB and the ministry of economic affairs (which also housed agriculture, nature and food quality) has been impacted in multiple ways. On one hand, it has been more intensified and formalized to discuss administration and financials and for broad topics that also require Rijkswaterstaat’s involvement for example (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4). On the other hand, it has also lessened as topics of management budgets or nature policy could not be discussed anymore to the decentralization process (SBB1, SBB4). Besides some respondents felt that their input fell on death ears when it came to topics such as the state of nitrogen emissions or Nature 2000 development, as the government never went to tackle these issues (SBB1, SBB4, TMO1) . However, SBB still functions as an important partner for the ministry as the

largest nature managing organizations and their close ties to the national government (SBB2, SBB3, TMO1).

Cultural and political setting

Nationally, the decentralization is of course a big rearrangement of the political culture as it delegates nature policy and planning to the provincial level. This has resulted, in tandem with nature in general being a lower priority political topic, that SBB does not get much value out of spending time and resources towards developing the relationship with the ministry (SBB1, SBB4, TMO1). Furthermore the presence of the EU is being felt more and more. EU laws are described as an ‘anchor’ for nature in The Netherlands, as it sets limits in the context of N2000 development or nitrogen emissions (SBB4, TMO1). However, some respondents felt that framing laws as ‘from the EU’ is somewhat misleading as that is in part a result of Dutch political culture focusing on exploring the limits of what is allowed. Nature was not seen as very important so the discussion of ‘what do we want’ in this country was not stimulated (SBB4, TMO1). Furthermore implementing EU laws on tracking the origin of wood for wood-based products is not seen as very new as SBB had been part of the Dutch branch of FSC. Instead it is seen as an opportunity to show the importance of locally sourced wood to the public (SBB2, SBB3).

“Support for nature and nature policy and conservation is very broad and we always say nature is not left-wing or right-wing, nature is for everyone” (TMO1)

Culturally there have also been some important developments. The government and in extension also national organisations like SBB have seen a decrease in authority among the public. This means that actions are more likely to be questioned which leads to more public discussions (SBB2, SBB3, SBB4). These discussions have become more difficult to hold because SBB’s arguments are often based on scientific knowledge while the public would argue from their feelings or morals (SBB2, SBB4). The required shift in communication by SBB to tackle this disconnect will be discussed in the next chapter. What has remained stable however is the support of the public for nature. Multiple interviewees referred to a study by Nature Monuments (Natuurmonumenten) which found that an overwhelming majority finds nature to be important and that more should be done for nature (SBB1, SBB4, TMO1). However this does not translate to a feeling of individual or personal responsibility or voting patterns. While the public can get involved in local projects, this dissonance is unfortunately not something SBB can bridge on a national level (SBB1, SBB4).

Communication

The Dutch State Forestry as has been said, have had to change a lot about their communication. Not just having more communication avenues, but also the way you approach the public in communication. In many cases, explaining their management decisions carefully using arguments based in scientific knowledge still suffices, but for some cases, a more participative approach is necessary. Communication becoming a two-way street is not completely new, but because of the discussed societal changes this is becoming more the norm (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4). That is why SBB has made more efforts to attract employees from communication science backgrounds to add to their knowledge mix. This leads to learning from each other within the organisation and forest stewards better versed in the ‘language of the people’ (SBB1, SBB3).

When it comes to communication with other partner organisations, there are two notable discourses that have seen more prominence. These discourses are about the role and state of nature in the country. Nature can be framed as strong and thus an opportunity to tackle many

societal challenges, or as fragile and in need of protection from society. Similar to this, news about nature can either be framed as positive or negative. SBB on one hand utilizes the strength of nature in its messaging about for example biobased solutions or climate adaptation and good news to report on the beauty of their nature areas. On the other hand SBB notes that it needs to be strict with its funding to protect fragile nature areas to the best of their abilities (TMO1). Furthermore, some of the topics themselves, such as biobased innovation, are not new to SBB. Departments focusing on this have been established before the reforms and some respondents note that the term 'use' of the covenant fits very well with their previous activities (SBB1, SBB2, SBB4). Lastly the role of science has also not changed much. Cooperation in for example the OBN nature knowledge network is still ongoing after 35 years and many organisations such as the association of nature terrain owners (VBNE), which for example SBB and Nature Monuments are a part of and the ministry of LNV are still a part of that today (SBB2, SBB3, TMO1). However, if that knowledge brings about change is in doubt, as the ministry often says 'it is no longer our duty' about nature policy and negative reports about nitrogen emissions N2000 do not get much attention (SBB1, SBB4, TMO1).

Actors

One of the changes in actors was the appointment of a new director in 2013. He was described as a very strategical and analytical mind that was always focused on the question of what the Dutch State Forestry should be for the nationally managed nature areas (SBB3, SBB4, TMO1). This led to the described trend of moving back towards the state again due to the importance of providing national direction in a decentralized policy field (SBB1, SBB4). An example is the program for large water bodies (PAGW). Together with the national water management organisation (Rijkwaterstaat) and the ministries of LNV and infrastructure and water, they provide national direction for local projects aimed at increasing water quality (SBB4). Besides he also brought more entrepreneurship to the organisation with the goal of SBB being more self-sufficient in generating the necessary budget for nature management activities. This was done by looking into better and more efficient utilization of timber products to keep wood harvest rates consistent (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4, TMO1). Looking lower down the organisation, the role of forest stewards has changed as described earlier. They are not just protectors of nature but also sources of information and participation as well as spatial planners of the different functions a nature area needs to provide. Also the amount of volunteers has increased a lot (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4, TMO1).

“Sylvo has done well to make the national components of Staatsbosbeheer stronger and to show that you can be an implementation service of the state” (SBB4)

Lastly, the other actors that are important to SBB can be discussed. SBB is still part of the previously mentioned nature knowledge generating platform OBN, and while the association of nature terrain owners (VBNE) was created in 2013, it was a successor to a similar forestry board (TMO1). At the start of the reform period, SBB sought out other green parties, NGOs and terrain managing organisations under for example the Green 11 (Groene 11) to explore together how to respond to the drastic changes of Rutte I. When SBB was moving back towards the state however, these relationships became less pronounced as lobbying was not deemed fitting for the role of the organisation (SBB1, TMO1). Moreover, other actors that became more important due to the decentralisation were of course the provinces but also private business actors. SBB had to build relationships with the provinces, who already had existing organisations such as the provincial landscapes. This was sometimes challenging due to existing history with landscapes and the image of SBB still being more nationally oriented (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4). As part of

entrepreneurial goals, SBB was seeking out more business type relations as well. This fit well with goals of innovation related to the 'use' theme and to improve independent revenue to deliver a better product for lower societal cost (SBB2, SBB3, SBB4, TMO1). After all these changes, respondents note that SBB is still a very influential actor for nature policy as they are the largest nature managing organisation, still hold ties with policy makers and have a large knowledge base that is necessary to tackle problems in the face of climate change (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4, TMO1).

5.3 How can the actions of SBB throughout the 2010-2014 policy reforms be categorized?

In this chapter, a next step in analysis will be presented. The content of the interview will be compared to the institutional theories of stability and change as presented in the theoretical framework. This chapter will rely more on interpretation of both the theory and the interview data by the researcher, as respondents were not asked to group their actions into a category of either theory (This would have meant that all respondents should have had a thorough understanding of institutional theory, which was not feasible). Thus in certain cases it might be argued that some of the institutional developments could also be placed in a different category. Furthermore there is also some overlap of categories due to the complexity of interactions between institutions and processes. Lastly it has to be noted that there were no cases found of intended inaction. While some of the arguments that should support this mode of stability were mentioned, such as getting rid of learned experiences, this did not obstruct institutional change. At the bottom of each chapter is an overview of either institutional stability (table 3) or institutional change (table 4).

5.3.1 What mechanisms were used to promote institutional stability?

Passive stability can be seen most when it comes to the views and values about nature and how to manage it. Two examples of data that can be interpreted as passive stability are as follows. First, support and views about nature among society have always remained stable as mentioned before (SBB1, SBB4, TMO1). Second, At the start of the reform period, the vagueness of policy plans gave SBB a lot of room to continue to shape their management plans in line to their own values about nature management (SBB1, SBB2, SBB4). This is quite in contrast to the social and entrepreneurial side of SBB, where changes to communication, participation and revenue generation were seen as necessary (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4). A theory put forth by one interviewee (SBB4) is that the current nature policy sphere is lacking real visionaries who are willing to be obstructive and challenge values and views about nature management. For example there is no discussion about whether targets for species conservation are still feasible in the face of changing local conditions due to climate change. A comparison was made with Frans Vera who pushed for more natural development and connectivity through the creation of the EHS in the 90s. As the relation between SBB and the national government has become more formalised and distant, on top of policy makers being more focused on obligations of EU laws, there are less discussions about what people want to do for nature in The Netherlands. This focus on obeying rules also feeds the negative stance towards the EU as mentioned in the previous chapter. It is in part recognized, for example Sylvio Thijsen gave an oratory about perhaps moving towards a new Nature 2100, but the current relations and passive stability make it harder developments to move through organisations.

“If an organisation does not have people that strive for something... and bring their own ideas, then policy will not see change.” (SBB4)

To identify failed action mechanisms, it is useful to look at powerful actors that can block changes. The EU was here a mentioned example of a powerful actor when it comes to policies about Nature 2000. Because of N2000 policy, Dutch nature is being held to a standard that other actors cannot easily disregard. It makes this a bit of an anchor for SBB as it gives more of an assurance that long term plans for nature areas cannot be completely thrown away (SBB4, TMO1). On the other hand the national government can act as another veto-player which we see for example in the discussion about nitrogen. Nitrogen emissions have been known to be too high long before even the reform period, but the government has found many ways to divert or stall plans to do something about it. So despite reports the government would not tackle this problem and in turn neither could SBB (SBB1, SBB4, TMO1).

“It got reported to the House of Representatives, but nothing was done with it. But every year nature was deteriorating and every year the reports came in.” (SBB1)

Active stability can be seen as apparent in the long term planning that SBB makes. In a sector where it takes a long time to see the result of your efforts, it is necessary to make plans together for the future and sticking with them. The creation of a covenant in the next step of becoming more independent was already planned in order to write down agreements that should give further stability for the future (SBB4). Communication is another tool often used to promote stability. Explaining your methods towards both policy makers and the public justifies the course of action and the continuation of it (SBB1, TMO1). Moreover, even an institutional change such as seeking out more or other business partners can be done to solidify SBBs status as a serious actor in nature management. SBB actively seeks out partnerships which in turn means that other actors start to see SBB as a serious cooperative partner (SBB2, SBB3). Becoming embedded in these types of relationships can help with working towards being able to complete your long term goals.

Table 3: Overview of key institutional stability mechanics

<p>Passive stability Organisational setting: passive adherence to internal values, no obstructive agents to question current ideas</p> <p>Cultural and political setting: support for nature has remained high over many years</p>	<p>Active stability Formal institutions: Writing down long term plans (in a covenant) to guide direction</p> <p>Communication: justify long term plans to other actors and the public</p>
<p>Failed action Cultural and political setting: EU blocks national government from making changes to N2000 policy. National government stalls and obstructs taking action against lowering nitrogen emissions</p>	<p>Intended inaction</p>

5.3.2 What mechanisms were used to promote institutional change?

Changes that were part of processes that were already set in motion even before the reform period can be interpreted as institutional alignment. One of the objectives of the reforms was that SBB would become more independent, but this was already a goal for them for a long time (SBB1, SBB4). At the end of the period and also after the reforms, the organisation did move more towards being an organisation of the state again (SBB1, SBB4), so whether it counts as stability (because the positionality of SBB ended up where it used to be) or change (because this movement went both ways) is debatable. Other changes are the use of wood-based products

and labelling them to track their origins (SBB2, SBB3), the decentralisation changing the actors to discuss nature management and budgets with or attracting new employees from different backgrounds (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4). The examples show that not all changes that were ushered in throughout this period were unanticipated or against the goals of SBB.

“It became more independent to give politics less direct influence. To keep the ‘politics of the day’ out of the organisation.” (SBB1)

Like with the category of failed action, for institutional displacement processes it is useful to look at powerful actors to identify them. However, instead of being a veto player to block change, they are the actors to push for it. State secretary Bleker is most associated with the degradation of nature policy and changing the discourse around nature. Through the changes he brought to nature policy and by proclaiming anti-nature sentiment, it led to the public image of SBB being damaged and this prompted a defensive response from the organisation (SBB1, SBB2, SBB3, SBB4, TMO1). The change in director offered a unique possibility to deal with the reforms as for SBB some of the changes were quite significant for an organisation that had become quite set in its ways for the past 110 years regarding communication, participation, positionality and private income generation (SBB2, SBB3). One of the mentioned strengths of the new director Sylvio Thijsen was that he was very good at analysing the state of affairs of the organisation and he used that to explore the role and responsibilities of a state forestry and its employees (SBB3, SBB4, TMO1). Also, his entrepreneurial background was useful in exploring how SBB can improve in covering their managerial expenses (SBB2, SBB3, TMO1). Lastly, policy and law changes to the subsidies (in the form of the SNL system) and spatial planning required a new approach to management from SBB.

“The fact that the organisation, that was working in a particular way for 110 years... perhaps it was also for the better.” (SBB2)

Changes through accretion processes are about smaller changes over time that end up making transformational change. There are two examples that could be interpreted as belonging to accretion. The first is the change in argumentativeness of society that led to the uptake of participative processes in management decision making. Participative approaches about controversial cases are not completely new. One respondent spoke about the question of whether dogs must always be leashed in a particular nature area or not, which in the end resulted in the public themselves coming up with a good compromise (SBB4). However, it has led to social impact, just like ecological impact, becoming one of the main motivations whether to make a management decision instead of it becoming something to address after it has taken place (SBB1, SBB3, SBB4). Second, the decentralisation has become another step that led to a lot less connection to the ministry. Long before the reform period, departmentalisation of policy, research and implementation had already happened which created more distance between people of the different responsibilities (SBB4). Over time, people worked less together and became less connected. The reform period was the next step in this distancing which in tandem with the formalisation led to perhaps even apathy towards the other actor (SBB1, SBB4, TMO1). So, when the actors with the ecological knowledge are no longer talking with the actors who write the policy plans, then no new directions will be taken to tackle emerging problems (SBB4).

“That separation was constitutionally a good decision, but the mechanisms to ensure that each role would continue to be adequately played, that did not go well.” (SBB4)

Lastly, accommodation can be seen as changes that did not make a big or lasting impact on SBB. As mentioned before, the positionality of the state has moved back and forth towards the state and cooperation with the Groene 11 has lessened over the years (SBB1). The result after the reform period thus seems stable, but these institutions did in fact change, so here they are a case of first alignment followed by quicker accommodation. Finally, some of the key terms of the covenant support practices that were already taking place in the organisation (SBB1, SBB2). Thus these changes seem to accommodate and strengthen existing practices instead of creating whole new ones.

Table 4: Overview of key institutional change processes. Accommodation is about faster but only developmental changes, displacement is about faster and transformative changes, alignment is about slower and developmental changes and accretion is about slower but transformative change.

<p>Accommodation Organisational setting: Positionality of SBB towards the state did not make lasting change</p> <p>Formal institutions: Key terms of the covenant support already in place practices</p>	<p>Displacement Formal institutions: Introduction of SNL changed subsidy process</p> <p>Cultural and political setting: Anti nature discourses worsened the public image of SBB, which prompted defensive response</p> <p>Actors: New director Sylvo Thijsen introduced changes and brought his own personal qualities</p>
<p>Alignment Organisational setting: Becoming a more independent organisation</p> <p>Cultural and political setting: Discussing nature policy more with provinces</p> <p>Actors: Attracting employees with communication science backgrounds and attracting new business partnerships</p>	<p>Accretion Cultural and political setting: weakening relations and formalisation with the ministry. Decreasing authority of SBB and more argumentativeness of the public.</p> <p>Communication: Stimulating more participative approaches</p>

6 Discussion

This thesis was aimed at getting a better understanding of how public policy implementing organisations respond to public policy changes. The policy reforms to nature management initiated during the first two Rutte cabinets (2010-2014) in The Netherlands were the focus of the study. While other studies on this time period have addressed the political sphere or the results of the reforms, this study adds to the literature by exploring the process of implementing public forestry related policy reforms from the perspective of a state nature managing organisation. This was done by analysing the development of institutions of the Dutch State Forestry throughout the policy reforms of 2010 to 2014 as well as the implication for current and future nature management. Institutions are necessary for interactions, of which there are plenty in any policy field, thus also offering potential benefits beyond the topic of this study.

The study contributed to the literature on institutional theory by developing further categorisation of formal and informal institutions by analysing forest and nature policy in the EU. In the former category, there was a division between hard legislation and softer policy. In the latter category there were more sub-categories identified, those being organisational setting, cultural and political setting, communication and actors. While some institutions are widespread across Europe, also in part due to the EU aiming to harmonise in this field, many are country or region specific. The impact of former socialism on countries led to rapid development of institutions compared to countries in Western Europe for example. It was also seen that institutional change in one sub-category can set in motion changes in other sub-categories. For example, new laws lead to a new class of forest land owners that can partake in policy processes which leads to change in related institutions. As such not all mentioned institutions were relevant for the Dutch case.

What was found is that institutional stability is strong in the more nature side of SBB while the biggest changes were in the social side. The principles behind nature management are still based on a developmental turn in the 90s which put more emphasis on stimulating natural processes and ecological connectivity. Nature is still strongly valued in both the organisation as well as the general public. Further cooperation with the nature knowledge network and other terrain managing organisations is still ongoing. Meanwhile, lowered nature targets and changing spatial planning and subsidy laws have negatively affected the operations of SBB by complicating the process of buying land and distribution of the (lowered) subsidy budget for all provinces. Further, the relation with the ministry has become more formalised because decentralisation processes meant that nature policy now had to be discussed with the provinces. Communication became more participative as a result of changing social authority of the organisation and argumentativeness of the public. So instead of justifying taken management decisions to the public, local inhabitants were invited to become part of nature managing processes by inputting their own opinions and ideas. Moreover the organisation became more independent at the start of the reform period, but in the later half and especially after they positioned themselves more as a state organisation again. Lastly, the organisation became more entrepreneurial which has led to new actors from other businesses being approached for collaborative projects on improving sustainability and promoting a biobased economy.

For mechanics of stability and change, the reform period clearly shows the complexity and interactivity of institutions. To investigate institutional stability, a framework was chosen that based its categories on the variables of intentionality and directionality. The resulting categories were passive stability, active stability, failed action and intended inaction. For institutional

change, there were four categories too, based on scope of change and pace of change, those being institutional accommodation, displacement, alignment and accretion. All modes of stability and change, except intended inaction were displayed in this case and were shown to rely on each other. A change mechanic on one aspect could be used to promote a stability mechanic for a different aspect. For example, attracting new employees with communication backgrounds (alignment) to better deal with a more argumentative society (accretion) leads to being able to continue carrying out your long term goals (Active stability). Multiple key concepts from institutional literature such as agency, power asymmetries and discourse could be identified in the interview data. However it was not always completely clear what exact mechanic should be applied to an example of change or stability.

Next, it will be discussed how the results of this study compare with other literature. The four types of institutionalisms, derived from Hall & Taylor (1996) and Schmidt (2008), can be argued to be present in this case. Historical institutionalism can clearly be applied as interviewees often mentioned processes as a result of previous developments. Learned experiences and routines were mentioned as being important for efficiency, which is an important argument in rational choice institutionalism. Also, the focus on the identity and role of foresters and state forestry implies the workings of sociological institutionalism. Fourth, the role of discourse is visible through the strong or weak and good or bad news frames of communication. Furthermore, what became clear from the interviews is that multiple changes or reforms were happening, had previously happened, or happened after this period. The creation of the EHS, the drafting of the covenant, or a further increase in demand for nature during Covid lockdowns were all examples of this. Often institutional studies focus on specific events, like this thesis has done, or on long term processes. However, studies based on institutional theory therefore overlook that change can happen through multiple dimensions or reforms at once (Bedock, 2014). Think of for example a situation where reforms are happening at different (inter)governmental levels or in conjunction with cultural developments. Overall the thesis supports existing literature by showing the multifaceted nature of institutions.

The results of this study can also be compared with literature about the conservative nature of foresters. Are foresters in The Netherlands also risk-averse and hesitant to adapt their practices (Sauter et al., 2018 & Brunette et al., 2020)? The study did not address deep core values or all of the policy core beliefs, but the two normative precepts did get indirectly addressed. Environmental protection is the most important, yet economic development is not seen as conflicting by definition. SBB uses economic means to generate funding to support their management as long as that does not harm nature. Whether this does or does not conflict depends on any individual's views. For example, for Nature Monuments timber production is never a management goal, only a byproduct of activities (however their situation regarding funding is of course different). The second precept is 'groups whose welfare is most important' (Sotirov & Winkel, 2016), and according to SBB no group is more important than any other as SBB is for all of society. These precepts are also present in other nature managing organisations that they cooperate with on a regular basis. The first precept may also explain the willingness to innovate on the entrepreneurial side. SBB does not and has not considered themselves a purely nature conservation organisation because other activities are also part of their tradition. In the face of climate change and the increasing importance of sustainability, they see it as important to be an actor that pushes for innovations to for example make more efficient use of wood-based products.

Moreover, a comparison can also be made with the findings of the official government evaluation of the Dutch State Forestry. This study also confirms the findings that SBB does its best to incorporate the themes and goals of the covenant as it was found that the themes already aligned with the goals of the organisation and that they continue to develop their institutions in pursuit of them. Perhaps the way the reforms were carried out were more disruptive or shocking than they needed to be, but some necessary developments were not being made without them. The social embedding of the organisation for example turned out to be an important move in light of society's increasing argumentativeness and the organisations decreasing authority. A remaining concern however is the weakening relations and communication between SBB as the implementer of policy and the ministry as the makers of policy. The 2023 evaluation mentions that currently a restructuring is taking place where less people will occupy the head office in Amersfoort and more will move towards provincial offices. This can result in information exchange becoming less naturally between these departments (Briene et al., 2023) . While it is a good idea to work towards better alignment with provincial policy, as a local approach is deemed important and effective, this might strengthen the trend of weakening relations by adding extra space between implementers and national policy makers. If there is to be a discussion about a national vision for the future, the provincial offices need to find a way to allow new ideas to float towards the top.

With the reforms there is an interesting discussion to be had about balance and how SBB has to find new ground between familiar 'poles' (visualised in figure 5). SBB is a hybrid organisation which means they are not quite a state organisation but neither a private one. For SBB it has been a puzzle to determine where exactly they need to position themselves as a hybrid organisation and there have been differing opinions about it. Where leading up to 2010 there was the need to become more independent, during the latter years this idea got overturned and the balance point shifted more towards the state again. Other shifts can also be identified when it comes to dividing attention between central government and provinces. With the decentralisation, there has been more focus on developing relations with each of the twelve provincial administrations which has resulted in less time to keep up relations with the national ministry. Moreover, regarding environment and economy, it is harder to identify clear shifts. With the rise of discourses about biobased economy, it has become more important, also for SBB, to contribute through the usage of timber-based products. However SBB believes that this does not need to come at the cost of biodiversity conversation. The harvest rates have remained consistent and the organisation is committed to keeping it that way, thus more strides are made to make more efficient use of the harvested materials. It will be interesting to continue examining how the tension between these poles will play out in the future which will be discussed at the end of the discussion.

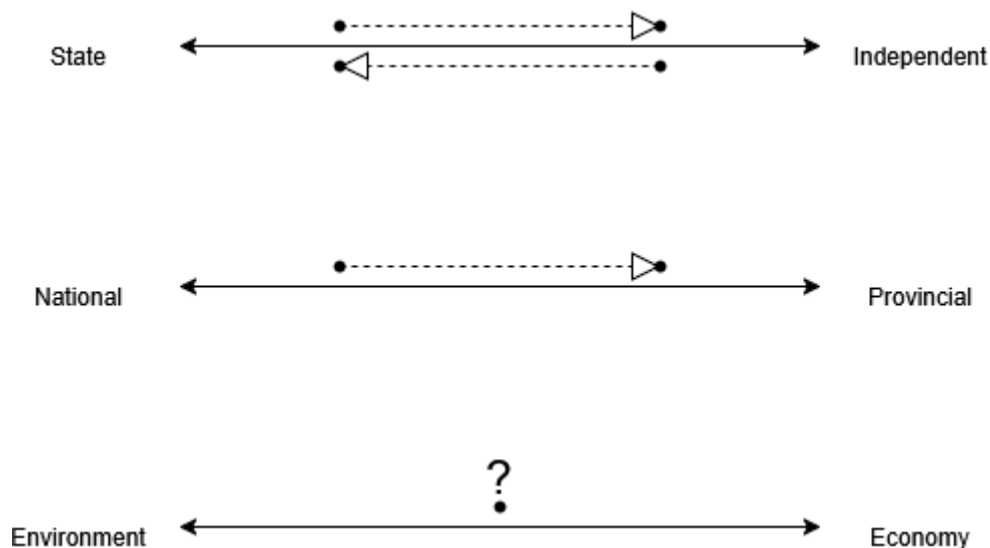


Figure 5: SBB has to find the balance between 'poles' in different scenarios. Their developments have been shown using arrows. The development between environment and economy is unclear due to the vision that these two poles are not in conflict with each other

However, there are a number of limitations that were encountered during this study that have to be mentioned. First, the sample size of the interviews is small. Only four people from SBB agreed to an interview, which means that their four perspectives are here representing the organisation. Of an organisation with over 1000 employees, it is thus only a handful experiences that could be recorded. The fifth interview was with someone from another nature managing organisation. This gave the research an external perspective to the workings of the organisation. It would have improved the data if interviews with more different organisations (especially governmental) could have been conducted, but potential candidates either declined or did not respond upon the invitations for an interview. While no hard number of interviews was ever set, it was an objective to reach a saturation point, but this did not occur. Besides the low sample size, two of the five interviewees were conducted based upon a snowballing sample method which is a method that has faced criticisms of leading to biased or distorted research samples. Other candidates often share a characteristic with the initial 'seed' or are put forth because the seed already considers whether others are likely to be willing to participate (Parker et al., 2019). While the initial candidates were approached based on whether their names appeared in documents such as yearly reports, scientific articles, government letters and reports or the official evaluation, this vetting process was not carried out for the snowballed candidates. All of this has implications for the study. Besides it was often difficult to directly approach potential candidates. This means that potential candidates might not have directly been able to respond to the invitation. Perhaps the use of social media like LinkedIn could have been more used to approach people, although that also brings obstacles as that platform employs character limits when reaching out to someone else for the first time. This would make it harder to explain the research project (including its societal relevance) which might not interest them enough to find out more. All of this makes it likely that there is more data available that could strengthen the reliability and accuracy of the findings. Just as the four interviewees represent SBB, their findings represent the institutional developments of the organisation. The research can only discuss the data it has collected and draw conclusions from them, but this does not mean that the research perfectly presents the situation as is.

Another limitation is the reliance on human memory for the gathering of data. The reliability of memory has been a topic of debate among psychologists for a long time (Brewin et al., 2020). Many factors such as emotional attachment, post-event information and importantly phrasing of questions can manipulate the retelling of historic events in for example interviews (Hu, 2022). Even some of the respondents in this study mentioned that the reforms were quite some time ago for them, implicating that they were aware that their memory of the topic may not be perfect. Nevertheless, it is accepted that memory still does a good job under normal circumstances (Brewin et al., 2020).

Moreover institutional theory as a whole as well as the interpretation of the chosen frameworks introduce new variables to the research. Theories try to make sense of the world around us and create labels for certain instances, but no theory can do complete justice to the complexity of the real world. Institutions especially are often abstract and require both the interviewer and the interviewee to be able to identify these or instances where they occurred. When it comes to the frameworks, the categorizations rely on axes that do not have strictly defined criteria. It is up to the researcher to answer the question whether something is 'significantly altered' or 'in a relatively fast manner' or whether it 'prevents change or promotes continuation'. Not every researcher would come to exactly the same answer and thus exactly the same conclusions.

Finally, there are three recommendations for future research that builds upon the knowledge of this thesis. The first two are more realistic options, while the latter is more challenging. The first option is to expand the scope of the research. This could be done by either including more actors or enlarging the time frame. While policy networks were regarded as important institutions, it would not fit into the scope of a thesis to analyse the network as a whole. Similarly, continuing to follow the development of institutions for the Dutch State Forestry could also generate more insights as the reforms were not the endpoint for institutional change. Both of these options did not fit into the research scope of this thesis, thus it provides a starting point for projects in the future.

The second option is to shift the research to a different level of implementation. This study has focused on the national department of SBB, but it was found that a lot of management decisions are taken at a more local scale. Local conditions, other stakeholders in the area or budget restrictions can all make plans change slightly. This is supported by theories such as Street Level Bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980). Research can then also test whether views or visions from the top still hold up in practice and how management or economic activities precisely take shape. It was reported that environmental protection and economic development are not in conflict with another. By looking at more local cases of how SBB is able to combine these ideals as well as see how the three themes are balanced could provide insights into how this plays out more concretely. This divide between environment and economy is often seen as a classic conflict so this could also potentially generate solutions for other organisations that do find it a challenge to deal with.

The latter option however is more ambitious and might require a change in the current political agenda. As mentioned before, SBB has taken on a changed role and carries out its new tasks well. However this is separate from the issue of nature policy and the state of nature on a national level. When urged to take action, the ministry replies with that it is not their concern anymore and their relationship is mostly out of formality. This opens up a possibility for future research by investigating the role that the government can take up in nature management. The emergence of multi-level governance has led to the notion that nation states may no longer be the best level to tackle environmental problems. Yet, it does not mean that the nation state has no role to play at

all and no longer has authority. The state has a unique placement in between decentralised sub-national and international actors. There is still a need for input towards the EU and hierarchical structure on a national level (Jänicke & Jörgens, 2009). The current political cabinet seemingly does not have much political will to tackle environmental concerns, and perhaps decentralisation is an easy excuse to not concern themselves with the topic. So again this would be a more ambitious option. Nevertheless, research that can give shape to what the state can still do and explores how to foster institutions that can connect people with a vision for future nature policy might be able to lead the discussion away from what we must do for nature (by EU law) towards what we want to do for nature.

7 Conclusions

To conclude, the main research question to be answered in this study was: How have the institutional arrangements of the Dutch State Forestry developed throughout the 2010-2014 policy reforms? This was done by analysing the policy reforms from the perspective of the Dutch State Forestry. The thesis aimed to fill the knowledge gap of how a state forestry navigates their organisation through policy reforms and implements forest and nature policy change.

It can be concluded that institutions have remained stable when it concerns core values and goals of the organisation or when other, often more powerful actors such as the EU with the Natura 2000 laws block change. Nature is still highly valued by SBB and the public through passive stability, while long term planning such as creating a covenant (or planning to create one in the future) was a more active measure taken to ensure the continuation of effective forest and nature management. On the other hand, the social and business side has undergone changes to cope with decentralisation and cultural and financial changes. Foresters had to get more in contact with the general public to deal with their increase in argumentativeness. This was done by attracting new employees with backgrounds in communication sciences and developing more participative processes in nature management decision making. Also, SBB broadened their policy network by building relationships with provincial administrations and working on projects with new business partners. Lastly, the introduction of the SNL subsidy scheme and changes to laws like spatial planning have hit new nature conservation projects or made current projects be put on hold, while it made SBB look for innovative ways to generate income to cover their management costs.

These conclusions can also be compared to the formulated hypotheses. While active stability and accommodation are indeed both seen in this case, other forms have also been equally prevalent. Furthermore, the underlying reason for institutional stability and change is not supported by the data. The position of authority and expertise of SBB was never at stake during the reform period. After this period the organisation remains the most important policy partner for the national government about forest and nature management. Thus this motivation was never taken into account for their institutional developments. Rather, nature as a topic on the political agenda has been more impactful. It has been receiving less attention and is seen as less important, which leads to concern for its potential future state. Hence, it remains important to pay attention to the developments of the politics and policy of forest and nature management, so that nature can continue to be protected, experienced and used for many years to come.

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Appendices

1. Interview guide for Dutch State Forestry workers

Introductie

Dit interview maakt onderdeel uit van mijn master scriptie onderzoek naar Staatsbosbeheer en hoe zij zich navigeren door beleidshervormingen. Deze scriptie is onderdeel van de bos- en natuurbeheer beleid stoelgroep van de universiteit van Wageningen. Als **rol** bent u benaderd omdat u kennis heeft over deze organisatie en we met uw perspectief tot nieuwe inzichten rond de dynamiek van beleid en uitvoering kunnen komen. Ik verwacht ongeveer iets minder dan een uur nodig te hebben. Hopelijk kunnen we in die tijd een goeie reconstructie maken van wat er in de periode van 2010 tot 2014 is gebeurd. Dit wil ik doen door een institutionele theorie lens op deze situatie te zetten. Instituties in het kort zijn een soort regels die sociale interactie vorm geven. Als simpel voorbeeld hebben wij elkaar bij binnenkomst de hand geschut omdat dat hoort bij een ontmoeting, maar een heel ander voorwerp kan zijn dat een onderwerp taboe is om over te praten. Deze instituties zijn dan weer belangrijk omdat uit interactie tussen mensen keuzes worden gemaakt voor beleid of de uitvoering daarvan, want bestuur doe je niet alleen. In dit interview wil ik kijken hoe de instituties van Staatsbosbeheer zich hebben ontwikkeld en wat voor implicaties dat heeft. Voordat we beginnen wil ik vragen of u het toestemmingsformulier gelezen heeft en of u bereid bent het te ondertekenen. Nogmaals dit betekent dat uw data anoniem wordt verwerkt in het verslag en u uw antwoorden op elk moment mag intrekken.

Deel 1: 'Grand tour' vragen

Voordat we dieper ingaan op de instituties zelf ben ik benieuwd naar uw persoonlijke ervaringen rond 2010.

- Wanneer hoorde u voor het eerst over plannen om het natuurbeheer te veranderen?
 - Hoe reageerde u erop?
 - Hoe reageerden anderen om u heen?

Daarna in 2012, er is een nieuw kabinet...

- Hoe was de reactie op die nieuwe plannen?
 - (het vorige kabinet overleefde het niet lang,) hoe pakte het nieuwe kabinet het aan?
- (Als u terugkijkt op die 4 jaren,) wat waren volgens uw perspectief de grootste consequenties voor Staatsbosbeheer?

Deel 2: dieper duiken in instituties & rol Staatsbosbeheer

Dan wil ik nu kijken naar de instituties. Uit vergelijkingen met bosbeleid in andere landen in Europa uit wetenschappelijke literatuur wil ik het hebben over vijf categorieën. Ten eerste wil ik het hebben over geschreven instituties, waarmee ik het heb over regels die daadwerkelijk formeel op papier zijn gezet.

- Hoe bepalend is het nationale beleid voor de bosvisie van Staatsbosbeheer?
 - Hoeveel speelruimte is er voor Staatsbosbeheer om los te staan van landelijk beleid?

- Hoe werd die speelruimte benut?
- Een belangrijk document is het convenant tussen het ministerie van economische zaken en Staatsbosbeheer. Hoe wordt dat convenant gebruikt om de taken van Staatsbosbeheer in te vullen?
 - Wordt een project geconsulteerd of getoetst aan de afspraken in het convenant?
- Wetten rond natuurbescherming waren ook aan het veranderen, de wet natuurbescherming werd in 2012 ingediend, in 2014 de omgevingswet. Wat merkt Staatsbosbeheer van de wetswijzigingen?

Dan wil ik het nu hebben over instituties die te maken hebben met de setting van en tussen organisaties, bijvoorbeeld gedeelde waarden, houdingen en vertrouwen.

- Wat is de impact van de vermaatschappelijking van Staatsbosbeheer op de kernwaarden van de organisatie?
 - In hoeverre werd de vermaatschappelijking gezien als ‘een logische volgende stap’ van de wet verzelfstandiging?
 - Hoe wordt er in Staatsbosbeheer gekeken naar de waarde van natuur?
 - Bijvoorbeeld Intrinsieke/extrinsieke/economische waarde van natuur?
 - Hoe kijkt Staatsbosbeheer naar de rol van de mens in natuur?
 - Heeft de natuur de mens nodig, of kun je natuur, natuur laten?
- Als we ook het ministerie erbij betrekken, daar wordt jaarlijks mee vergaderd. Hoe ontwikkelt de relatie tussen het ministerie en Staatsbosbeheer?
 - Wat is het voornaamste doel van deze gesprekken?
 - Is het voornamelijk elkaar op de hoogte houden, of om een band te creëren, of om nieuwe doelen te bespreken?
 - Met wat voor belangen gaat Staatsbosbeheer het gesprek aan met het ministerie?
 - Zijn er kernpunten die belangrijk zijn? Of juist onderwerpen waar compromissen over gesloten kunnen worden?

Laten we dan wat breder gaan kijken naar de culturele en politieke setting en landelijke of zelf internationale trends,

- (Zeker in de periode van Bleker werd natuurbescherming veel verschaald), in hoeverre waren de handelingen van Staatsbosbeheer (in bijvoorbeeld het proces van het convenant) een reactie hierop?
 - Waren een aantal van de zojuist besproken kernpunten een motivatie om te reageren?
- In hoeverre merken jullie de druk vanuit EU om bosbeleid te implementeren of hanteren?
 - Aan de andere kant, wat voor invloed heeft de decentralisatie op het handelen van Staatsbosbeheer?
- Hoe is de positie van natuur, ten opzichte van andere belangen op de politieke agenda, veranderd?
 - Hoe speelt Staatsbosbeheer in op veranderende vragen vanuit de samenleving?
 - Wanneer sluit Staatsbosbeheer een compromis en wanneer staan zij standvastig?
 - Merkt Staatsbosbeheer iets van het veranderende vertrouwen in wetenschappelijk kennis?

Vervolgens zijn er ook instituties over communicatie zelf, denk dan aan wat besproken wordt en ook hoe over onderwerpen wordt gepraat.

- Zijn er bepaalde thema's of onderwerpen die geïntroduceerd zijn of bestaande onderwerpen die belangrijker zijn geworden (denk aan biobased economy, duurzaamheid, privatisering, multifunctioneel bosbeheer)?
 - Hoe gaat Staatsbosbeheer om met gevoelige onderwerpen (zoals verhoogde houtproductie)?
- Hoe gebruikt Staatsbosbeheer zijn positie in de samenleving om informatie over te brengen?
 - Hoe wordt de kennis van Staatsbosbeheer gewaardeerd bij andere belanghebbenden?
 - (Staatsbosbeheer moet verder van de staat komen te staan,) wat heeft dat voor invloed op de communicatie?

De laatste instituties gaan over welke partijen betrokken zijn in interacties en wat voor rollen zij hebben in het beleidsproces.

- (in 2013 heeft Staatsbosbeheer een nieuwe directeur gekregen, Sylvo Thijsen) hoe is hij binnen het bedrijf gekomen?
 - Wat waren de voornaamste effecten van de nieuwe leiding?
 - Bracht hij een eigen visie duidelijk mee naar Staatsbosbeheer?
- (Met de nieuwe afspraken en financieringsregels in het oog,) hoe actief zet Staatsbosbeheer zich in om zijn sociaal netwerk te ontwikkelen?
 - Hoe stelt Staatsbosbeheer zich op tegenover zijn partners (of op welke manier worden partners betrokken)?
 - Hoe gaat Staatsbosbeheer om met de belangen van de diverse partners?
- Tot slot, kijkend naar Staatsbosbeheer (als 1 van de vele belanghebbenden op het gebied van natuurbeheer en bescherming), hoe ziet u de invloed van de organisatie op bos- en natuurbeleid?
 - Heeft daar een verschuiving in gezeten?
 - Hoe oefent Staatsbosbeheer zijn invloed uit op andere partijen?

Einde

Dat was mijn laatste inhoudelijke vraag voor u. ...Samenvatting... Hoe was het voor u en heeft u nog vragen voor mij? Ten slotte, schiet u toevallig nog iemand anders binnen die mogelijk geïnterviewd zou kunnen worden? Nogmaals hartelijk denk voor deze gelegenheid. Als u later nog vragen te binnen schiet dan kunt u mij altijd via de mail bereiken. Maar voor nu wil ik u nog een goeie dag wensen.

2. Interview guide for workers of other nature organizations

Introductie

Dit interview maakt onderdeel uit van mijn master scriptie onderzoek naar Staatsbosbeheer en hoe zij zich navigeren door beleidshervormingen. Deze scriptie is onderdeel van de bos- en natuurbeheer beleid stoelgroep van de universiteit van Wageningen. Als **rol** bent u benaderd omdat uw externe perspectief meer inzicht kan geven in de verschillen tussen de organisaties en over de samenwerkingsverbanden. Ik verwacht ongeveer iets minder dan een uur nodig te hebben. Hopelijk kunnen we in die tijd een goeie reconstructie maken van wat er in de periode van 2010 tot 2014 is gebeurd. Dit wil ik doen door een institutionele theorie lens op deze situatie te zetten. Instituties in het kort zijn een soort regels die sociale interactie vorm geven. Als simpel voorbeeld hebben wij elkaar bij binnenkomst de hand geschut omdat dat hoort bij een ontmoeting, maar een heel ander voorwerp kan zijn dat een onderwerp taboe is om over te praten. Deze instituties zijn dan weer belangrijk omdat uit interactie tussen mensen keuzes worden gemaakt voor beleid of de uitvoering daarvan, want bestuur doe je niet alleen. In dit interview wil ik kijken hoe de instituties van Staatsbosbeheer zich hebben ontwikkeld en wat voor implicaties dat heeft.

Deel 1: 'Grand tour' vragen

Voordat we dieper ingaan op de instituties zelf ben ik benieuwd naar uw persoonlijke ervaringen rond 2010.

- Wanneer hoorde u voor het eerst over plannen om het natuurbeheer te veranderen?
 - Hoe reageerde u erop?
 - Hoe reageerden anderen om u heen?

Daarna in 2012, er is een nieuw kabinet...

- Hoe was de reactie op die nieuwe plannen?
 - (het vorige kabinet overleefde het niet lang,) hoe pakte het nieuwe kabinet het aan?
- (Als u terugkijkt op die 4 jaren,) wat waren volgens uw perspectief de grootste consequenties voor Staatsbosbeheer?

Deel 2: dieper duiken in instituties & rol Staatsbosbeheer

Dan wil ik nu kijken naar de instituties. Uit vergelijkingen met bosbeleid in andere landen in Europa uit wetenschappelijke literatuur wil ik het hebben over vijf categorieën. Ten eerste wil ik het hebben over geschreven instituties, waarmee ik het heb over regels die daadwerkelijk formeel op papier zijn gezet.

- Wat is de invloed van het nationale natuurbeleid voor de visie en strategie van Natuurmonumenten?
 - (Veel natuurgebieden staan in contact met eigendom van Staatsbosbeheer of worden zelfs in samenwerking beheerd), wat merkt Natuurmonumenten op dat vlak van veranderend nationaal beleid?
- Wetten rond natuurbescherming waren ook aan het veranderen, de wet natuurbescherming werd in 2012 ingediend, in 2014 de omgevingswet. Wat merkt Staatsbosbeheer van de wetwijzigingen?
 - En als daar sprake van is, hoe is dat anders voor Natuurmonumenten?

Dan wil ik het nu hebben over instituties die te maken hebben met de setting van en tussen organisaties, bijvoorbeeld gedeelde waarden, houdingen en vertrouwen.

- Wat is de impact van de vermaatschappelijking van Staatsbosbeheer op de kernwaarden van de organisatie?
 - (Staatsbosbeheer moest zich gaan richten op de thema's beschermen, beleven en benutten), heeft u iets gemerkt van een grotere rol voor die thema's?
 - (Houtoogst is voor Natuurmonumenten slechts een bijproduct, Staatsbosbeheer moest meer private inkomsten genereren,) is er ooit sprake van botsing tussen verschillende belangen?
 - Hoe kijkt Staatsbosbeheer naar de rol van de mens in natuur?
 - Heeft de natuur de mens nodig, of kun je natuur, natuur laten?
- Hoe ontwikkelt de relatie tussen Natuurmonumenten en Staatsbosbeheer?
 - Wat is de invloed van de positionering van Staatsbosbeheer ten opzichte van de staat op de relatie met Natuurmonumenten?
 - Hoe vaak worden er overleggen gehouden tussen directeurs van beide organisaties?
 - Heeft daar een verschuiving in plaats gevonden vanaf 2010?
 - Wat zijn de voornaamste onderwerpen in die gesprekken?

Laten we dan wat breder gaan kijken naar de culturele en politieke setting en landelijke of zelf internationale trends,

- (Zeker in de periode van Bleker werd natuurbescherming veel verschaald), in hoeverre waren de handelingen van natuurorganisaties in het algemeen een reactie op de nieuwe plannen?
- In hoeverre merken jullie de druk vanuit EU om bosbeleid te implementeren of hanteren?
 - Aan de andere kant, wat voor invloed heeft de decentralisatie op het handelen van Staatsbosbeheer?
- Hoe is de positie van natuur, ten opzichte van andere belangen op de politieke agenda, veranderd?
 - Hoe kan Staatsbosbeheer inspelen op de vragen vanuit de samenleving?
 - Merkt Natuurmonumenten of Staatsbosbeheer iets van het veranderende vertrouwen in wetenschappelijke kennis?

Vervolgens zijn er ook instituties over communicatie zelf, denk dan aan wat besproken wordt en ook hoe over onderwerpen wordt gepraat.

- Zijn er bepaalde thema's of onderwerpen die geïntroduceerd zijn of bestaande onderwerpen die belangrijker zijn geworden (denk aan biobased economy, duurzaamheid, privatisering, multifunctioneel bosbeheer)?
 - Hoe gaat Staatsbosbeheer om met gevoelige onderwerpen (zoals houtproductie)?
- Hoe gebruikt Staatsbosbeheer zijn positie in de samenleving om informatie over te brengen?
 - Hoe wordt de kennis van Staatsbosbeheer gewaardeerd bij andere belanghebbenden?
 - (Staatsbosbeheer moet verder van de staat komen te staan,) wat heeft dat voor invloed op de communicatie?

De laatste instituties gaan over welke partijen betrokken zijn in interacties en wat voor rollen zij hebben in het beleidsproces.

- (in 2013 heeft Staatsbosbeheer een nieuwe directeur gekregen, Sylvio Thijsen) in hoeverre verschilde hij met zijn voorganger Chris Kalden?
 - Wat waren de voornaamste effecten van zijn nieuwe leiding?
 - Bracht hij een eigen visie duidelijk mee naar Staatsbosbeheer?
- (Een andere grote samenwerking van partijen komt samen in De Groene Elf, al fluctueert het precieze ledenaantal over de jaren heen.) Hoe zijn de verhoudingen tussen deze samenwerking en Staatsbosbeheer?
 - Is Staatsbosbeheer ooit lid geweest (of heeft het dat overwogen)?
 - Hoe stelt Staatsbosbeheer zich op tegenover zijn partners (of op welke manier worden partners betrokken)?
 - Hoe gaat Staatsbosbeheer om met de belangen van de diverse partners?
- Tot slot, kijkend naar Staatsbosbeheer (als 1 van de vele belanghebbenden op het gebied van natuurbeheer en bescherming), hoe ziet u de invloed van de organisatie op bos- en natuurbeleid?
 - Heeft daar een verschuiving in gezeten?
 - Hoe oefent Staatsbosbeheer zijn invloed uit op andere partijen?

Einde

Dat was mijn laatste inhoudelijke vraag voor u. ...Samenvatting... Hoe was het voor u en heeft u nog vragen voor mij? Ten slotte, schiet u toevallig nog iemand anders binnen die mogelijk geïnterviewd zou kunnen worden? Nogmaals hartelijk denk voor deze gelegenheid. Als u later nog vragen te binnen schiet dan kunt u mij altijd via de mail bereiken. Maar voor nu wil ik u nog een goeie dag wensen.