

Regional strategy, local dilemmas, and values. A study of values underlying a complex regional process and their role in solving local dilemmas.

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1 Introduction

During the last 20 years, the nature of spatial development in the Netherlands has changed. Instead of being centrally governed, spatial development has become the responsibility of regional and local government. Furthermore, the influence of non-governmental organizations and civilians on spatial development decision-making has increased during this period: they no longer stand on the sidelines, but have become partners in drafting and implementing spatial development policy. An example of this type of collaborative planning in the Dutch province of Overijssel is a regional strategy for riverbed enlargement in the Vecht Valley region, called ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’¹.

Using the ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’ regional strategy as a case study, this paper sets out to examine whether this new method of spatial planning is an improvement on current methods. Instead of using a more traditional interest-oriented approach, the case study is analysed from a value-oriented approach. The goal of this approach is to identify the values on which the various stakeholders base their basic choices. Basic choices are those choices in which different, sometimes conflicting, values are taken into consideration (Buunk, 2010a, pp11-13).

After describing the ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’ case, this paper continues with a short description of the research method used to identify values involved in the complex process of collaborative planning. In addition to describing the method, an overview is given of the storylines, value sets, and values that form the process of the Vecht Valley regional strategy. Next, this paper identifies three possible dilemmas that are likely to occur. I will focus on one of these dilemmas, namely that of nature versus agriculture, by describing the basic choices that are involved in this dilemma and the values that may clash in making these choices. I will conclude by considering whether a complex process of collaborative planning, like that involved in the ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’ regional strategy, should be adopted or avoided in the practice of spatial development.

1.1 The Vecht Valley region, The Vecht and ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’

¹ NB: Literally translated to ‘Room for the river Vecht’

The Vecht Valley region is located in the north east of the province of Overijssel and consists of four municipalities, including the province's capital Zwolle. Together the municipalities Zwolle, Dalfsen, Ommen, and Hardenberg are home to roughly 220,000 inhabitants, half of whom live in the city of Zwolle. The rest of the Vecht Valley region is mostly rural, with 1324 agricultural businesses, and consequently most of the region's GDP comes from agriculture. The riverbed is home to 20 agricultural businesses.

The economic importance of agriculture in this region is relatively new. Before the 20th century, the region's economy relied heavily on the river. In these earlier centuries, the river Vecht was a shipping route used to transport sandstone from Bentheim to the Zuyder Zee and beyond, to countries as the United States of America. However, in the 20th century, the river Vecht's main economic function and appearance changed, due to canalisation of the river. The river lost its characteristic meanders and gained multiple weirs to stop it from flowing too fast and, as a result, the river has become increasingly hidden in the landscape.

In addition to having become a hidden element within the landscape, the river Vecht also faces other challenges. For example, as recently as 1996 the Vecht Valley Region was confronted with high water levels and minor flooding. In 1997, responding to the flood, the regional water boards and Rijkswaterstaat² wrote a policy document on flood protection in the Vecht Valley region, which envisaged the river Vecht as a 'semi-natural' river. This semi-natural Vecht should freely meander through the landscape, with little riverbank protection, eroding the riverbed and creating its own path.

To achieve this goal, a number of projects were started in the Vecht Valley region, but ten years on little progress had been made. Therefore, the province of Overijssel took the lead and initiated a regional strategy called 'Ruimte voor de Vecht', in which developing a semi-natural river became the first goal. However, the province realised that the Vecht Valley region also faces other challenges that needed to be addressed and they therefore decided to combine these with the Vecht Valley regional strategy. These challenges include the ageing population and an economic decline in the region. Consequently, to tackle these issues, the second goal of the regional strategy is to give the region a socio-economic boost.

The third goal of the strategy is related to the natural environment of the Vecht Valley region. In 1992, European Union governments adopted legislation, called Natura 2000, designed to protect habitats and species across Europe. In line with the Natura 2000 legislation, the Dutch government drafted additional legislation, called the 'Ecologische Hoofdstructuur' (EHS)³. In accordance with the EHS legislation, the Vecht Valley region has to gain approximately 1100 hectares of new nature characteristic to the

² The national institution responsible for water management

³ NB Literally this term means 'Main ecological structure'

natural habitat of the region. Since the Vecht Valley region is mainly a wetland, new areas of nature should include vegetation such as marshes and grasslands.

As well as creating new nature, the EHS legislation also prescribes the creation of a so-called natural network in the Netherlands. Several natural areas and reserves in the Netherlands are separated from each other, which causes problems for biodiversity. To increase the biodiversity in Dutch nature, it is necessary to create connections, known as *robuuste verbindingszones* (RVZs), between different natural areas and reserves. These connections are, for example, created by building ecological bridges over motorways so that animals can cross safely. Initially four RVZs came together in the Vecht Valley region, however, following recent political changes, these have been reduced to just one.

Although the regional strategy 'Ruimte voor de Vecht' has no formal responsibility concerning the implementation of EHS and Natura 2000 legislation, its stakeholders are committed to creating new nature in the Vecht Valley region. This commitment has partially caused the dilemma on which this paper focusses, namely that of nature versus agriculture in the Vecht Valley region, and will be discussed in more detail towards the end of this paper.

The three goals of 'Ruimte voor de Vecht' make it a very complex regional strategy. Furthermore, this strategy is based on the principles of good governance, which, among other things, promotes collaboration with non-governmental organizations and civilians. This collaboration has become a key element in drafting and implementing the 'Ruimte voor de Vecht' regional strategy. As a result, thirteen different governmental and non-governmental parties play a formal role in the process management, whom all consider the development of their region from different points of view, based on different values.

This method of planning, which combines different types of policy goals and is based on collaboration, is relatively new in the Netherlands. Although it is a new method, it seems to be successful and therefore interesting to evaluate.

2 A value-oriented research approach

This paper draws on research into the Vecht riverbed enlargement strategy and aims to evaluate this program by revealing the values on which stakeholders base their choices about the design, use and management of the area. This approach differs from a more traditional interest-oriented policy analysis that analyses the stakeholder's interest, assuming he/she behaves rationally and chooses a certain option because this option best fulfils his/her interests. While stakeholders tend to talk explicitly about their interests, they often keep values implicit in negotiations, although values do form a stakeholder's point of view. In this paper a value is defined as a wish, a goal or a motive that a person or organization aims to realize.

Although value-oriented policy analysis is new territory in spatial development research, it is a relevant approach to analysing regional strategies in which both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders cooperate. Since values, like interests, may determine the choice a person makes when facing different options (Haidt, 2007 , pp.103), it is likely that values will also play a role in a complex regional strategy in which stakeholders have to choose between different options. However, the stakeholder's final choice may not necessarily be the one that is in his/her best interest, since choices based on values are not, by definition, rational. Therefore, if the underlying values are not made clear, choices based on values can be confusing. Such confusion can lead to a stalemate in a regional strategy, making it an unsuccessful planning instrument. As a result, it is important to take values into account when assessing a planning instrument.

Based on a value-oriented approach, this research uses discourse analysis to identify the values on which the stakeholders draw. Discourse analysis is a generic term for many different approaches. As described in (Buunk, 2010a, pp.46-47) and (Buunk, 2010b, pp.15), the approach used to analyse the regional strategy 'Ruimte voor de Vecht', focusses on storylines, value sets, and values. Based in part on Maarten Hajer's definition, a storyline can be defined as: "*(crisp) generative statements that bring together previously unrelated elements of reality. The main function of storylines is that these short narratives help people to fit their bit of knowledge, experience or expertise into the larger jigsaw of a policy debate.*" (104). In this study, the storylines were constructed using document analysis and interviews with stakeholders in the Vecht Valley region. From the storylines, values were extracted and categorized into a small number of value sets (Buunk, 2010b, pp.15-16).

3 The stories and values in the Vecht Valley region

In the process of the regional strategy 'Ruimte voor de Vecht' four storylines can be identified, namely:

- The semi-natural river
- Rediscovering the Vecht Valley identity
- The affluent river Vecht
- The connecting river Vecht

3.1 The semi-natural river

The semi-natural river is the most prominent and extensive storyline in the development of the Vecht Valley region. It focusses on the appearance of the river Vecht and its position within the Vecht Valley region. From the start of the development of the river Vecht in 1997 until now, the idea of a more natural-appearing river has been a guiding principle. All human interferences in the river's path have made it dull and hidden. By

allowing the river to become more natural and by allowing the river more space in the landscape, it may be possible for the river Vecht to regain some of its former glory.

An important theme in this storyline concerns the technical problems due to climate change, and possible solutions. Climate change poses a problem for many rivers in the Netherlands, including the river Vecht, because it demands an increased runoff capacity to prevent flooding. Furthermore, climate change increases the need for land for controlled flooding, which is particularly important for rainwater rivers like the river Vecht. Such rivers need more land for controlled flooding to be able drain off the distribution of water in the rainy season. To prevent flooding the Netherlands has directives on the runoff capacity a river has to meet and, in the case of the river Vecht, the runoff capacity must be increased. To many stakeholders, this is the key problem in the Vecht Valley regional strategy, and solving it, namely developing the most suitable river regime, is a vital task for them.

When stakeholders talk about the river Vecht as a semi-natural river, it becomes clear that this storyline is not only about the river's regime. The other themes in this storyline, namely flood safety and scenery, are concerned with the surrounding area of the river. To stakeholders, the scenery of the Vecht Valley region also plays a role in developing a semi-natural river, because this development not only requires adjustments to the river itself, but also to the natural environment of the riverbed. Throughout the process of developing the river Vecht, the province and its partners have consulted the University of Wageningen on the type of adjustments that can, and should, be made to the river and the surrounding riverbed. These studies have shown that, to create a successful semi-natural river, not only the

The theme of flood safety is closely related to the river's regime. Stakeholders believe flood protection of the surrounding riverbed can be improved by developing a semi-natural river with more meanders to increase the river's runoff capacity. On the other hand, a semi-natural river has more control over its own path, thereby decreasing human control over the river. Consequently, stakeholders, especially the water boards, believe that maintaining a controlled river regime is also important for flood protection. In short, when deciding on the development of the river Vecht, stakeholders have to consider different elements. They cannot simply decide on a number of technical adjustments that increase the river's meanders and runoff capacity, but they also have to consider the effect of these adjustments on the surroundings of the river. Furthermore, the stakeholders have different opinions about the extent to which the river's regime should be changed and which adjustments are most suitable to do so. Thus, while the first storyline may seem clear-cut on the surface, it is a storyline with many complexities and possible dilemmas.

3.1 Rediscovering the Vecht Valley identity

The second storyline ‘rediscovering the Vecht Valley identity’ also plays a vital role in the regional strategy. Stakeholders of the regional strategy consider the Vecht Valley to be a tightknit region, where inhabitants strongly identify with the region. However, the Vecht Valley region is a relatively new concept that came into existence at the end of the last century. In fact, just a small percentage of the inhabitants consider themselves as inhabitants of the region, rather than inhabitants of the town in which they live. However, the stakeholders of the regional strategy report that they wish to promote this concept of the Vecht Valley region and that they aim to stimulate the inhabitants of the region to rediscover their collective regional identity.

The importance of the Vecht Valley identity is a new concept. Prior to the province becoming involved in 2007, rediscovering the region’s identity was not an important issue. Before this time, the relevant water boards and Rijkswaterstaat were only concerned with the development of the river and the surrounding area, and had no interest in rediscovering or creating a collective identity for the region. In fact, stakeholders first discussed the need for a collective identity when the province took over in response to a suggestion by an independent research bureau. This agency advised the province that a collective Vecht Valley identity would contribute to accomplishing the multiple goals of the collaborative regional strategy. Furthermore, a collective identity might increase the connection inhabitants feel with their region, a feeling they can propagate, in turn increasing the popularity of the region in the rest of the Netherlands. The province and stakeholders acted on this advice and made it part of the regional strategy.

The collective Vecht Valley identity has become increasingly important in the regional strategy since drafting the master plan for the regional strategy ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’. It has become a regularly recurring subject in policy documents, minutes, and debates, but also in interviews conducted for this paper. When stakeholders talk about the Vecht Valley identity, it is clear they consider it to be an important issue in the Vecht Valley development, even though there is no exact definition of the Vecht Valley identity. For example, some stakeholders use words such as *peaceful* and *quiet* to describe the region’s identity, while others think of the valley as a more *economic, agricultural region*. To discover the true Vecht Valley identity, the province initiated a cultural-historic study of the Vecht Valley region. This resulted in a book that describes and highlights the collective history of all the Vecht Valley inhabitants. Overall, the story of rediscovering the Vecht Valley identity seems to be a successful one, with recent studies showing that an increasing number of inhabitants of the Vecht Valley are aware of the concept and consider themselves to be inhabitants of the Vecht Valley.

3.2 The affluent river Vecht

The second storyline is called ‘the affluent river Vecht’ and is linked to the regional strategy’s goal of boosting the Vecht Valley region’s socio-economic situation. Although the river Vecht historically brought wealth to the Vecht Valley region, the

main economic resources nowadays are tourism and agriculture, and both of these branches are currently declining. The tourism branch in the Vecht Valley region faces many challenges because of a lack of awareness of the region in the rest of the Netherlands and Germany. Another problem reported by stakeholders in the tourism branch is their inability to fully utilize the river's business potential. Because of the many weirs in the river's path, boating is not an attraction for visitors and tourists. However, for the most part the challenges in the tourism branch have been overcome already. The tourism branch seems to be growing again in the Vecht Valley region, and apart from some issues on where boating should be allowed, the planning policy has succeeded.

The agricultural branch, on the other hand, faces tougher challenges and poses more difficulties for the regional development. Farmers in the region feel it is becoming increasingly difficult to compete in the national and global agricultural market and, consequently, many Vecht Valley farmers believe they have to expand their businesses to so-called factory farms to secure their future. These farms can, for example, house more than 120,000 laying hens and are highly debated in the Netherlands for ethical and environmental reasons. In contrast, the stakeholders involved in the 'Ruimte voor de Vecht' regional strategy believe that the future of agricultural businesses in the region does not lie in developing factory farms but in developing diversified farms. This type of farming is considered a wiser choice because animals are treated better, but also because it fits more closely with the third goal of the Vecht Valley regional strategy, namely to protect and develop nature in the Vecht Valley region.

The debate on farming defines the storyline. Most of the Vecht Valley farmers believe the government, especially the province of Overijssel, is interfering in their business management and making choices *for* them instead of *with* them. Therefore, the Vecht Valley farmers, represented by the Dutch farmer's organization LTO, had no interest in being part of the regional strategy for the first few years and did not join the regional strategy until 2009. After joining, the LTO drafted its own plan for the Vecht Valley development, together with the region's farmers. This plan was completed last year and will define/direct/guide their contribution to the regional strategy.

In the story of the affluent river Vecht, stakeholders and farmers do not always see eye to eye. The farmers believe the regional strategy may limit their choice on how they want to develop their agricultural business. The stakeholders in the regional strategy, on the other hand, believe there *is* no choice as diversified farming is the only stable future for farmers in the Vecht Valley region and is the only type of farming that fits with the vision of the regional strategy.

3.3 The connecting river Vecht

The final storyline is that of the connecting river Vecht, and revolves around collaboration. Collaboration is one of the distinguishing features of the regional strategy

‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’, and is not limited to collaboration with governmental organizations: non-governmental parties and even citizens are also stimulated to get involved. This need for extensive collaboration is what distinguishes ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’ regional strategy from other regional strategies and spatial development plans, and makes ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’ a complex collaborative planning process.

The number of collaborating stakeholders in the ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’ regional strategy has increased since the start of the planning process. As with the ‘rediscovering the Vecht Valley identity’ storyline, the involvement of the province in the planning process changed the nature of the Vecht Valley development. In 1997, the development was aimed solely at the river and the riverbed, making it a plan in which relevant water boards were the only necessary partners. The involvement of the province not only broadened the goals of the development, but these policy goals also had a greater impact on the Vecht Valley region. For example, on the one hand, some of the goals implied a structural change in the appearance and the spatial function of the Vecht Valley region. On the other hand, developing a collective Vecht Valley identity meant that the inhabitants of the region also needed to change. Therefore, for the strategy to succeed, it was important to have a wide range of support, meaning the province and its initial partners needed to involve as many parties as possible. The number of collaborating stakeholders has now grown to thirteen, including a regional environmental group and the regional farmers interest group.

Initially the regional farmers interest group was reluctant to join the Vecht Valley regional strategy, because they were wary of the role they would play and the influence they would have on the decision-making. In the first meeting of the regional strategy they raised concerns about their lack of involvement in the early-stage fundamental decisions and thus decided to withdraw from the collaboration. Eventually the stakeholders already involved in the regional strategy successfully convinced the regional farmers interest group and the farmers joined the Vecht Valley regional strategy in 2010.

When interviewing the stakeholders of the regional strategy, it becomes clear that are not only bureaucratic reasons to invest time and effort into collaboration in the Vecht Valley development. What makes this storyline interesting is that stakeholders also find collaboration important on a non-bureaucratic level. They feel that the development of the Vecht Valley region should involve everyone in the region, so that the result is something everyone agrees on.

This feeling of collaboration is even symbolized in the use of a flower, namely a pink carnation, that can only be found in the Vecht Valley region. The story surrounding this carnation is that it cannot exist without collaboration between different elements in nature. As with the carnation, the Vecht Valley region can only flourish if everyone works together.

3.4 Values in the Vecht Valley region

After describing the storylines, the analysis of the collaborative regional planning strategy ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’ continues with an account of the values identified in this process. Values are not normally the subject of research when evaluating the use of a planning method; instead, such research usually analyses interests. However, as argued in this paper, values may play a vital role in the success of a planning method, especially one that relies heavily on collaboration, like the Vecht Valley regional strategy.

The values on which stakeholders draw in the Vecht Valley regional strategy can be divided into six different value sets, namely safety, nature, lively river, self-determination, landscape and cooperation. Within these value sets, sixteen distinct values have been identified. For example, a value in the landscape value set is ‘self-consciousness’, which means that stakeholders who draw on this value consider it important that inhabitants and communities in the Vecht Valley region become more conscious of their own regional identity. Another example is the value ‘utilization’ in the lively river value set, which has a more economic meaning. Stakeholders who draw on this value consider it important that the business potential of the river is utilized. The following table gives an overview of the value sets, the values and their meaning in the Vecht Valley regional strategy:

Table 1 Valuesets and values in the Vecht Valley regional strategy

Six sets of values	Key values and meaning in Vecht river management process
Safety	<i>Prudence</i> . Adequate river regime is a necessity.
	<i>Guilt and penitence</i> . Climate change is man-made burden to which society needs to adapt.
	<i>Fear</i> of flooding limits possibilities of natural river regime <i>Sobriety</i> in the natural river regime is needed.
Nature	<i>Responsibility</i> for global biodiversity (in particular rare species and habitats).
	<i>Love</i> of local variety of nature and natural landscapes
Lively river	A lively river has high <i>aquatic diversity</i>
	The <i>beauty</i> of natural river dynamics needs to be visible in the landscape
	<i>Harmony</i> in natural beauty and recreational experience of the river
	<i>Utilisation</i> of business potential of the river
Self-determination	Economic <i>self-determination</i> for farmers who wish to seize investment opportunities with changes in allotment of their fields
	<i>Justice</i> in respecting property rights, not only decisive public interests in changing the river regime and surrounding grounds
Landscape	<i>Pride</i> in the singular scenery of Vecht valley region
	<i>Self-consciousness</i> of regional identity should grow with individual inhabitants and communities
	The agricultural, military, recreational and spiritual <i>history and</i>

	<i>traditions</i> of the Vecht valley region are worth rediscovering
Cooperation	Cooperation is <i>useful</i> for all

One conclusion that can be drawn from this overview is that there is a broad variety of values at stake in the Vecht Valley region. When making decisions about the development of the region, stakeholders sometimes base their choices on different value sets, and thus different values. In other cases, stakeholders base their choices on different values from the same value set. This is especially the case when looking at the value set ‘lively river’, in which values like ‘beauty of the natural river dynamics’ and utilization of business potential’ come together.

4 Dilemmas in the Vecht Valley region

The analysis of the storylines shows that, in a complex collaborative planning strategy like ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’, stakeholders may draw on many different values when making choices. These values may complement each other, but they may also clash, leaving the planning process in an apparent stalemate. These clashes typically occur for dilemmas that are characteristic of the region and the regional strategy.

In terms of the ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’ regional strategy, the storylines reveal a number of current dilemmas and possible future dilemmas. For example, one dilemma concerns the extent to which the river Vecht can, and should, become semi-natural. Although much has been written about the wish for a semi-natural river, it remains unclear what exactly a semi-natural river entails and how the river’s path should be changed to achieve this semi-natural state. These questions form a dilemma because their answers require considering values concerning river safety, the natural environment and the economy. Another dilemma is that of boats on the river Vecht. One of the effects of a semi-natural river is that the depth of the river will decrease, leaving it less suitable for boating. Yet, in the Vecht Valley region, stakeholders from the recreational and tourism branch envisage the river Vecht as a river on which visitors and tourists can sail. In this dilemma, values concerning the natural environment and the economy have to be taken into consideration.

4.1 A dilemma of nature versus agriculture

This paper focusses on another dilemma in this strategy, which concerns a choice between the natural and agricultural function of the Vecht Valley region. Within the Vecht Valley region approximately 1100 hectares of new nature have to be developed to meet the criteria set by Dutch and European nature development legislation. Although the regional strategy ‘Ruimte voor de Vecht’ has no formal responsibility to meet these criteria, stakeholders have defined it as one of the three main goals, and thereby committed themselves to the Vecht Valley’s natural environment. Furthermore, as was described in the storyline ‘the semi-natural river’, to create a semi-natural river it is also necessary to make certain adjustments to the riverbed. Among other things, these

adjustments entail the cultivation of certain plants and vegetation that facilitate the river's runoff.

Due to the recent economic depression, the Dutch government was forced to implement a number of cutbacks in 2011, one of which concerned the EHS and Natura 2000 legislation. The Dutch central government decided to shift the implementation responsibility to the regional government level. In itself this was not a problem, because already the regional government was working on the implementation of both legislations, however the central government also decided that they no longer had the financial responsibility, meaning the regional governments also had to pay for all the adjustments required. Responding to these policy changes the province of Overijssel decided that they would no longer fully implement the EHS legislation, cutting back on the number of RVZ's and reconsidering the amount of grounds which would be used for the creation of new nature.

For the Vecht Valley regional strategy this contributed to an already existing tension between the natural and agricultural function of the Vecht Valley region. As described above, the Vecht Valley region is a mainly rural area, housing a high number of farms. Many of the farmers fear that the implementation of nature reservation legislation will limit their business possibilities in the region. One the one hand because grounds that could be used for agriculture are being used for nature reservation, and on the other hand the presence of nature reserves brings limitation to the magnitude of surrounding agricultural businesses. A larger farm will have more impact on its surrounding environment, so in order to protect the nature reserves, certain limits are set for surrounding agricultural businesses.

Furthermore, nature reservation is proving to be very expensive for regional governments, since they are not only responsible for creating new nature, but also for managing nature reserves. As a rule nature reserve management is outsourced to land managing organizations such as Staatsbosbeheer⁴, who are considered to be experts on the field of nature reservation. However, land managing organizations rely on government funding, resulting in a costly management of nature reserves. In order to solve this budgetary problem, multiple provinces, including the province of Overijssel, have decided to explore the possibility of outsourcing nature reserve management to private parties such as farmers.

In the Vecht Valley regional strategy, creating nature and managing it is of importance for a number of reasons. First, in order to develop a semi-natural river, the surrounding riverbed needs to gain and maintain certain vegetation. Second, the extensive natural environment of the Vecht Valley region is used as an attraction in the promotion of the region's tourist information offices and the region-wide tourism branch. When

⁴ Staatsbosbeheer is a national organization commissioned a large part of the nature reserves in the Netherlands

considering the value sets and values that are identified in this region, stakeholders that stress the importance of nature reserves and nature development draw from the value sets nature and lively river. In particular stakeholders seem to draw from the values *responsibility, love, beauty* and *harmony*.

The farmers, on the other hand, draw from another value set to substantiate their wishes for the region, namely the value set self-determination. The vision they have for the region has room for agricultural activities, and emphasizes the cultural landscape instead of the natural landscape. In this choice they draw from values like *self-determination* and *justice*, after all they consider the Vecht Valley region to be a rural area, *their* rural area.

5 Conclusion

This paper has given a short overview of an analysis into the Vecht Valley regional strategy, in order to consider if this new method of spatial planning should be avoided or adopted in the practice of spatial planning. The planning method has two interesting elements which are considered, namely the combining of different policy goals into a single spatial plan and the degree of collaboration with non-governmental parties and citizens. Furthermore, this paper presented a new method of analysing spatial planning projects, focussing on storylines and values, rather than on interests. Finally, to illustrate the importance of values in a planning process an example was given of how values play a role in causing and solving local planning dilemmas.

Combining different policy goals into a single spatial plan has occurred before in Dutch spatial planning practice, involving multiple non-governmental stakeholders and citizens in a planning process, however, is relatively new. The key advantage of combining multiple policy goals within the same region is that it increases the efficiency of the development in that region. Not only does this approach allow for cost reduction, it also slims down the bureaucratic process involved, since there is only one board of stakeholders involved. The downside of this approach to planning is that the project can become too large or even megalomaniac, which in turn destroys any efficiency.

An extensive collaborative process also has several advantages and disadvantages. First and foremost, the wish for collaboration is driven by a need for support from the society. Many spatial plans fail, because non-governmental organizations and citizens feel they have no influence on the choices governments make and consequently these organizations and citizens will try to prevent the a plan from being implemented. If non-governmental organizations and citizens are involved in a planning process, they have a better understanding of the decisions that are made. The second advantage is that involving non-governmental organizations and citizens gives them a feeling of responsibility in the planning process. Implementing the plan is no longer the government's job, it has become everyone's job.

The main advantage of this type of collaborative planning is also clear, namely that an increased number of stakeholders also means more opinions have to be taken into consideration. No longer can governments only take their own interests into consideration, they now have to negotiate with stakeholders that have different point of views on how a region should be developed.

The Vecht Valley regional strategy seems to be a good example of how a complex collaborative planning strategy can succeed. Since the initiating phase of the strategy, collaboration has increased, the strategy plan has almost fully been drafted and the implementation has already begun. Apart from that, the goal of boosting the region's economy has been met partly, now that the tourism branch in the Vecht Valley region is growing again. The combining of different policy goals in one strategy has not produced a megalomaniac plan.

In short, from the analysis of the Vecht Valley regional strategy can be concluded that a complex collaborative strategy, in which different policy goals are combined, is a planning method with many advantages. It is planning method which can increase the efficiency of spatial development, and thus should be adopted more often in the practice of spatial planning. However as this paper also showed, there are some dilemmas that the stakeholders of the Vecht Valley regional strategy need to solve, in order to fully succeed. These dilemmas revolve around basic choices, in which different values have to be taken into consideration. Spatial planning is not only a matter of considering different interests and technical data, it is also a matter of considering values. Policy makers need to take a full deliberation of values in consideration, in order to be able to continue the on-going collaborative planning process in the region.

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