



Sustainable tourism at National Park De Biesbosch

Evaluating the stakeholders' implementation of
sustainable tourism concepts at National Park De
Biesbosch

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Index

Index	2
Abstract	4
Chapter 1. Introduction	5
Chapter 2. Theoretical basis	7
2.1 Key concepts	7
2.1.1 Governance	7
2.1.2 National Park	9
2.1.3 Sustainable Tourism	10
2.2 Concepts of sustainable tourism	13
2.3 Conceptual model	15
Chapter 3. Methodology	19
3.1 Methods	19
3.1.1 Literature study	19
3.1.2 Interviews	19
3.1.3 Policy analysis	20
3.2 Operationalisation	20
Chapter 4 Governance structure	21
4.1 Introduction	21
4.2 Regulatory context on international, national, regional and local level	22
National policies	22
Regional policies	23
Local policies	23
4.3 Other stakeholders	24
4.4 Conclusion	27
Chapter 5 Perceived impacts of tourism	29
5.1 Introduction	29
5.2 Environmental impacts	29
5.3 Economic impacts	32
5.4 Socio-cultural impacts	35
5.6 Conclusion	37
Chapter 6 Applied concepts of sustainable tourism	39
6.1 Introduction	39
6.2 Conservation	39
6.2.1 Conservation of environment	39

6.2.2 Protection local economy	41
6.2.3 Protection socio-cultural livelihood	41
6.3 Sustainable development	42
6.3.1 Sustainable development of environment	42
6.3.2 Sustainable development local economy	43
6.3.3 Sustainable development of socio-cultural livelihood	44
6.4 Conclusion	45
Chapter 7 Planning objectives, translated into activities.....	46
7.1 Introduction.....	46
7.2 Parkschap Nationaal Park De Biesbosch.....	46
7.3 Staatsbosbeheer.....	47
7.4 Tourists.....	48
7.5 MuseumEiland.....	49
7.6 WSV Biesbosch	49
7.7 Conclusion	50
Chapter 8 Room for improvement	51
8.1 Engagement stakeholders in governance.....	51
8.2 Appealing to needs of users	51
8.3 Managing impacts tourism	52
8.4 Conclusion	52
Chapter 9 Conclusion	53
Chapter 10 Discussion and reflexion	54
Reference list	56
Appendix	59
Appendix I: Topic list interviews:.....	59
Appendix II: Charter aims:	59
Appendix III: ECST key-topics and key-actions.....	61

Abstract

At the Biesbosch, an statutory wetland, for almost 600 years people have lived with and fought against the water. Now it is a national park, and the water is more under control, but finding the balance between nature and economy continues. The managing authorities of National Park De Biesbosch have put effort over the past years into becoming more sustainable, by practicing sustainable tourism management. Given the importance of the Biesbosch in that area for both working, living and enjoying, it is important to understand how sustainable tourism works and is applied by the managing authorities. This thesis has found that the governance structure is a unique joint management, that successfully understands which impacts to be aware of, and how to account for them by applying current concepts and principles of sustainable tourism. I believe that the successful managing of sustainable tourism derives from the actual understanding of the importance of sustainable management of national parks, and the ability to create partnerships and learn from others. The sustainable tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch could be improved by better engagement of tourists and local residents in planning and management of policies, better suiting new developments to the actual needs of the eventual users and by facilitating better circumstances for respectful behaviour in the national park, possibly by improving social control tourism engagement through an online platform.

Chapter 1. Introduction

With 90 km² National Park De Biesbosch is one of the largest national parks in the Netherlands. Concerning tourism, National Park De Biesbosch is one of Netherlands' main attractions for international tourists, and it is also popular among domestic tourists. With almost 2.000.000 visitors annually (NRIT, 2009) it is one of the most visited national parks in the Netherlands and therefore of crucial importance to be maintained, because it is a unique national park and of high value for tourism. Therefore it is important that, given this number of tourists visiting the national park annually, their visitation won't threaten the preservation and biodiversity of this national park. Managing National Park De Biesbosch in a non-sustainable manner, undermines the continued existence of the national park and it's tourism. Therefore it is of importance to society to get a better understanding of the management of National Park De Biesbosch and if that management is sustainable enough to preserve the current condition of the national park.

From an ecological point of view, National Park De Biesbosch is also important to society, because it enables the preservation of a unique biodiversity and therefore presents a unique piece of nature for everyone to see and experience. Several species especially live and flourish in National Park De Biesbosch and as the largest national park the Netherlands it contains different unique landscapes and wetlands. Also, it is the point where sweet water reaches the salt water of the delta, a fragile position for the ecosystems. Again, the preservation and sustainable management of this national park are important so that society and tourists can keep exploring and enjoying this national park, now and in the future.

Since it is a preserved and isolated national park (in terms of the possibility to isolate nature) and since it contains several ecosystems and a broad biodiversity, National Park De Biesbosch is also of particular importance for research purposes. Because of the human engagement to preserve biodiversity and because of the tourists visiting the park, the stakeholders of National Park De Biesbosch have the challenge to preserve biodiversity and contain the negative impacts of tourists visiting the park, without letting nature undergo the negative influences and even unsustainable practices that accompanies massive tourism. The importance of this thesis for science will be in the form of a contribution to the research field of sustainable tourism. It will contribute to a more complete understanding of what can be done to manage tourism in a sustainable manner at National Park De Biesbosch, and in particular, how concepts of sustainable tourism are, can and should be applied by the stakeholders of National Park De Biesbosch.

The goal of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the roles and interrelations of stakeholders managing and planning tourism at National Park De Biesbosch and to map out the sustainability challenges tourism brings along at the national park. Also, the current concepts of sustainable tourism will be investigated and compared to intended goals and actual practices of stakeholders' tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch, in order to define the gap between intended sustainable management of tourism, actual sustainable tourism management and the best practices of sustainable tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch. Therefore, this thesis will operate the following central research question:

How do the stakeholders of tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch incorporate concepts of sustainable tourism in their planning objectives and activities and how can this be improved?

To answer the central research question, the following sub research questions are formulated.

(1) What is the governance structure of sustainable tourism management and planning at National Park De Biesbosch?

- (2) What are the main impacts of tourism on the environment, economy and socio-cultural livelihood in National Park De Biesbosch as perceived by key stakeholders?
- (3) What are the concepts of sustainable tourism management applied in National Park De Biesbosch?
- (4) What are the planning objectives of the stakeholders concerning sustainable tourism and how does this translate into activities?
- (5) How can the sustainable tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch be improved?

Chapter 2. Theoretical basis

In search for answers to the central research question and the sub research questions, boundaries of this research have to be set.

Specified terms, concepts and theories concerning the sustainable management of tourism need to be derived from literature, so therefore first, (1) the used terminology will be substantiated and defined by the literature. Then, (2) literature will enlighten the current theories concerning the different terms that are used, and the approaches to these subjects. Further, (3) the current concepts concerning sustainable tourism and its management and planning will be covered and finally (4) the concepts and the relevant theories will be covered in a conceptual model.

2.1 Key concepts

In this paragraph, the key concepts that are used in this thesis are described and explained from literature.

2.1.1 Governance

Governance

A considerable amount of literature has been published on governance, all trying to define this term and understand its boundaries. In Graham, Amos and Plumptre (2003) a broad overview of this term and associated subjects is presented, in which they state that "governance is the interactions among structures, processes and traditions that determine how power and responsibilities are exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say." Fundamentally, governance is about power, relationships and accountability: who has influence, who decides, and how decision-makers are held accountable (Graham, et al., 2003).

Graham (et al., 2003) states ten basic governance principles that governance can be evaluated on, therefore stating categories on which governance should apply. Eagles (2009) uses these principles to categorize governance in the following five combined categories, displayed in a table. In the first category Legitimacy and voice, governance should take into account that public participation is possible and that the orientation on which direction should be taken is consensus-based so that as many as possible preferences of as much as possible parties are represented. In the second category Direction, governance should be done with a strategic vision, so that long-term goals can be achieved and are accounted for. In the third category Performance, governance can be evaluated on their responsiveness to stakeholders, which involves pro-active communication with their stakeholders and taking complaints or criticism serious. Also, governance costs time and money, so the effectiveness and efficiency should be high. In governance, the fourth category Accountability states that accountability to the public and stakeholders is important so that responsibility is taken for decisions made or for incompetence. Transparency provides insight into the processes, which is of importance for the public and stakeholders affected. Equity and Rule of law are about Fairness, the fifth category. Fairness in treating similar cases in similar ways, and fairness in following the law in all actions (Eagles, 2009).

Stakeholders

This brings us to the next term that needs further specification: stakeholder. Although this term is broadly used in literature and can almost be considered common knowledge, for the sake of clarity this paper will use the most popular definition. A stakeholder is "any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives" (Freeman, McVea, 2001). This definition is mainly focused on business organisations and not so much on nature conservation, but it can be applied to any kind of business or organisation's objectives, including the conservation and management of protected areas and national parks.

Stakeholders are an often mentioned party in literature of governance, along with the government, NGO's and civil society (Graham, 2003; Eagles, 2009). Key stakeholders are the stakeholders that are of crucial importance in the stakeholder network.

Governance and government

Important to notice is that governance differs from government, a somewhat vague but important difference. In ancient Athens, commonly seen as the cradle of democracy, when citizens were meeting at the marketplace to deal with their issues, this was called 'government'; the "process for dealing with issues" (Plumptre, Graham, 1999). Today, however, government is seldom defined as a process; it is instead seen as an institution (or a set of institutions), one of several societal 'players' or actors (Graham, et al., 2003). Government can be part of governance.

Governance and management

Another important distinction that should be made clear, is the difference of governance and management. There is something to say for governance being management, not just by the government, but by all the engaged parties. However, an important difference between management and governance is pointed out in a publication by Borrini-Feyerabend, Dudley, Jaeger, Lassen, Broome, and Phillips (2012). They argue that management is about what is done in pursuit of given objectives and about the means and actions to achieve such objectives. Governance, on the other hand, is about who decides what the objectives are, what to do to pursue them, and with what means. Also, how those decisions are taken, who holds power, authority and responsibility and who is (or should be) held accountable (Borrini-Feyerabend, et al., 2012). Therefore, management can be seen as 'managing' what should be done to achieve a certain goal, where governance concerns an upper-level decision-making entity that determines which goals have to be achieved and which parties need to achieve this. Also in the IUCN report from 2015 the distinction between governance and management is made clear.

Governance types

The IUCN and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) distinguish four broad governance types, as also mentioned in Borrini-Feyerabend (2012):

- A) Governance by government (at various levels and possibly combining various institutions)
- B) Governance by various rightsholders and stakeholders together (shared governance)
- C) Governance by private individuals and organisations
- D) Governance by indigenous peoples and/or local communities

In Graham (2003) similar governance types are formulated, but more specific applied to governance of Protected Areas. Also it has a distinguishing within the four categories to more specific governance

management types. These are best understood when presented visually, therefore the following figure 2.1.

Protected Area Governance Types									
A. Government management			B. Multi-stakeholder management		C. Private management			D. Traditional community management	
National or provincial/state agency	Local / municipal government	Delegated management	Collaborative management	Joint management	Individuals	Not-for-profit organizations	For-profit corporations	Indigenous peoples	Traditional local communities

Figure 2.1 Governance Types for Protected Areas (Graham et al., 2003)

What do multi-stakeholder management and joint management mean? Characteristic for multi-stakeholder management is that authority and accountability for management of the protected area is shared in various ways among a number of parties (Graham, et al., 2003, p. 34). These parties, such as government agencies, local communities, indigenous peoples organizations, NGO's, private landowners, or industry representatives (Graham, et al., 2003) can vary, depending on the context of the protected area. How these varies parties are organised and how this authority and accountability for management is divided is not specified in Grahams description of multi-stakeholder management, but it is when describing the joint management structure. "In joint management, accountability for management of the Protected Area rests jointly with various actors who sit on a management body with decision-making authority" (Graham, et al., 2003).

Environmental governance

Environmental governance can be seen as governance of protected areas. All stakeholders and government agencies and other groups who are responsible for making decisions regarding environmental management are involved and part of environmental governance. In the IUCN publication it is argued that governance is "a critical part of protected areas that identifies how organisations administer a protected area and the associated power and decision-making arrangements. It addresses who makes decisions for protected areas and their management, and how the decisions are made." (IUCN, 2015). Governance is about how power is exercised, how decisions are taken on issues of public concern and how citizens or other stakeholders have their say (Graham et al. 2003).

2.1.2 National Park

Protected area

To get to the national park, first the broader terms need to be specified. The general term for nature that needs preservation and protection is 'protected area' (IUCN, 2015). They are places that people establish to conserve natural and cultural heritage and to sustain their benefits for society. The definitions of the International Union for Conservation of Nature are widely accepted as the preferred definitions. A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated

and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. (Dudly, 2008; IUCN, 2015).

National park

The first area of nature that was officially demarcated with the intention of preservation, was Yellowstone National, established in 1872 (Nash, 1970). This was the first of what now is known as a national park. Since then many more national parks have been established, with different characteristics, so a definition is in place. Based on management objectives, the IUCN defines six categories in which protected areas can be divided and of these six categories, number II is national park. The IUCN defines national parks as “Large natural or near-natural areas protecting large-scale ecological processes with characteristic species and ecosystems, which also have environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities” (Dudly, 2015). In the Netherlands there are 20 national parks, all contributing to the protection and preservation of large-scale ecological processes throughout the Netherlands and even across borders, through Europe (SNP, 2010).

2.1.3 Sustainable Tourism

Before defining sustainable tourism, first this term needs to be divided into smaller parts and definitions to completely understand it’s meaning.

Tourism

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (UNWTO, 2013). This means it can also concern domestic trips, for example to national parks for leisure purposes. Therefore tourism in this thesis will mean all recreational activities related to people visiting the national park and its near surroundings, including the related tourism industry of (local) entrepreneurs.

The activities of persons staying in places outside their usual environment means in context of visiting national parks that they are active in or near a national park. The presence of tourists and their recreational activities has, one way or another, effect on the national park.

Conventional tourism

Conventional tourism, or unsustainable tourism, is best described as tourism with solely profit as main goal, without the priority of either conservation of nature or sustainable development of economy and social livelihood, in balance with nature. Conventional tourism in national parks therefore uses the natural resources of the national park for profit, without putting effort in sustaining this very nature and without returning and sharing profits to the local economy and local residents. This one way and short-term profit oriented tourism is on the expense of nature without inclusion of local economy and livelihood. This is destructive and unsustainable for the conservation of nature and sustainable development of local economy and social livelihood, which can ultimately lead to exhaustion or even full destruction of natural, economic and social resources.

Sustainable tourism

It is important to understand that sustainable tourism should not be regarded as a separate component of tourism, like a set of niche products, but rather as a condition of the tourism sector as a whole, which should work to become more sustainable (UNWTO, 2013). Also, it should not be taken as a finite state of tourism (WTO, 2005), but rather a continuous process of improvement. UNWTO's definition of sustainable tourism is often quoted and says that it is "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (UNWTO, 2013).

As explained in box 2.1, a common use of the term sustainable tourism in literature is in context of developing countries. Given that National Park De Biesbosch is situated in the Netherlands, and given that this thesis does not focus on managing development of countries through tourism, this use of the term sustainable tourism as described in box 2.1 is not applied to this thesis.

In addition to the definition of the UNWTO, the definition of sustainable tourism by UNESCO is "tourism that respects both local people and the traveller, cultural heritage and the environment". The definition of sustainable tourism by the UNEP is practically the same as the one from UNWTO because most of their publications are collaborations between these two institutions. An interesting similarity between these definitions is that all of them seem to divide the concept of sustainable tourism into environmental, economic and social or socio-cultural components. This seems to come back not only in the definition, but also in the application of sustainable tourism.

For example, in the guide for policymakers by UNEP and WTO (2005) these three components define the three broad criteria that tourism should adhere to be considered sustainable. Thus, sustainable tourism should:

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- 3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation. (UNEP; UNWTO, 2005).

Building on these three criteria, the UNEP and WTO have formulated 12 'Aims for Sustainable Tourism' for an agenda for sustainable tourism (2005). As with the definition of WTO, UNEP and UNESCO, and these 12 aims, again there appears to be a consistency: they can be divided into three categories: environmental, economic and socio-cultural aims. This is visualised in table 2.1.

Box 2.1

Boundaries to the use of term 'sustainable tourism'

Most sources concerning sustainable tourism define sustainable tourism in a broad sense, allowing it to be used for several applications within literature.

A common use of the concept of sustainable tourism is within literature that concerns developing countries.

However, in this thesis the term 'sustainable tourism' is not used as a tool for development of countries from the Global South in a sustainable manner, but as sustainable management of the impact tourism has on protected areas in general, and national parks in particular.

		Environmental	Economic	Socio-cultural
1	Economic Viability		X	
2	Local Prosperity		X	
3	Employment Quality		X	
4	Social Equity		X	X
5	Visitor Fulfilment			X
6	Local Control			X
7	Community Wellbeing			X
8	Cultural Richness			X
9	Physical Integrity	X		
10	Biological Diversity	X		
11	Resource Efficiency	X		
12	Environmental Purity	X		

Table 2.1 12 'Aims for Sustainable Tourism' (UNEP; WTO, 2005), divided into environmental, economic and socio-cultural categories (self).

Sustainable tourism management

As Fodness argues, there does not seem to be a consistently used term for sustainable tourism management within literature, so the working definition is a simple synthesis of the concepts of sustainability and management; the incorporation of principles of sustainable tourism into tourism strategies and operations (2017).

In Eagles, many different ways to manage tourism in protected areas are presented (2009). In most cases, this involves some form of partnership. A partnership means it will not be just one institute like the government or a private organization that is responsible for the protection and managing of a protected area or national park. This can be very diverse, so a categorization is needed. More (2005; in Eagles, 2009) proposed five models, which he called: (1) fully public model; (2) public utility model; (3) outsourcing; (4) private, non-profit ownership and (5) private, for-profit ownership. In the fully public model, a government agency operates all services. In the public utility model, a government agency operates as a private corporation. Outsourcing involves contracting out services to private companies. Private, non-profit ownership is ownership and operation by a nongovernment organization, while private, for-profit ownership involves ownership and operation by a private company.

In addition to this, Graham et al. (2003) suggested four models for managing protected areas: (1) government management; (2) multi-stakeholder management; (3) private management and (4) traditional community management. They suggested that government management can occur with two approaches: (a) a national, provincial, state or municipal government agency or (b) delegated management from government to some other body. Multi-stakeholder management can occur as (a) collaborative management or (b) joint management. Private management can be executed by: (a) individuals; (b) not-for-profit organisations or (c) for-profit corporations. At last, traditional community management can occur with: (a) indigenous peoples or (b) local communities.

In practice, none of all the situations can be covered by just these six management categories. However, Eagles (2009) mentions a top eight of most commonly used management models for protected areas and national parks, which comes close to capturing most of the relevant management models:

First is the national park model, second the parastatal model, third the non-profit organization model, fourth the ecolodge model. As fifth, the public and for-profit combination model, as sixth the

public and non-profit combination model. Seventh is the aboriginal and government model and as for last, the eight is more recently added, it is the traditional-community model.

2.2 Concepts of sustainable tourism

First and foremost, a perhaps redundant statement is that ‘the’ concepts of sustainable tourism do not exist. Broadly speaking there is consensus between institutes and researchers on which topics, principles and actions are needed in order to perform management of protected areas and more specifically national parks in a sustainable manner, but there does not exist a definitive set of concepts that need to be met in order to ‘be sustainable’. Also, it is often argued that tourism may never be totally sustainable—sustainable development of tourism is a continuous process of improvement (WTO, 2005). This means that sustainability is not a final destination that you can reach, but more of a way of thinking and acting that you can acquire. Adhering to and implementation of certain principles and actions helps to concretise this way of thinking. Therefore, although there is no definitive set of concepts of sustainable tourism, there are definitely principles and objectives that substantiate in most publications concerning sustainable tourism. These can be used to formulate the applied concepts in this thesis.

Ultimately, this thesis will base its applied concepts of sustainable tourism on the criteria of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas which is considered to be the most widely accepted standard of sustainable tourism criteria within protected area management (Berndsen, 2017, EUROPARC, 2015). This charter is created by EUROPARC, the European federation for implementing sustainable tourism management in national parks in Europe (and to some degree outside of Europe). The criteria of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism align with the international Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for destinations, and the European Commission’s tourism policy (EUROPARC, 2015).

It’s priority is “to promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism”. Their criteria are broadly summarized in these five principles (EUROPARC, 2015):

Principles for sustainable tourism	
1	Giving priority to protection
2	Contributing to Sustainable Development
3	Engaging all stakeholders
4	Planning sustainable tourism effectively
5	Pursuing continuous improvement

Table 2.2 *Five principles for sustainable tourism from ECTS (EUROPARC, 2015)*

These five principles form the basis for what describes sustainable tourism best within this thesis. However, these principles are not concepts yet. Also, they are not concretised, which makes it hard to evaluate National Park De Biesbosch. In order to get to clearly defined concepts of sustainable tourism, first these five principles need to be concretised.

These five principles are concretised into 10 more concrete key-topics national parks should conform to in order to be sustainable, and if they conform, to receive the charter for sustainable tourism from EUROPARC (EUROPARC, 2015). To make the key-topics more universal and applicable, the key-topics will be shortened from the original key-topics, and are divided into environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions (self) to make them adhere to a more universal standard (self):

Key-topics		Key-topics in short	Environmental	Economic	Socio-cultural
1	Protecting valuable landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage	Conservation	X	X	X
2	Supporting conservation through tourism	Conservation through tourism	X	X	
3	Reducing carbon footprint, pollution and wasteful resource use	Reducing impact	X	X	
4	Providing a safe and special experience of PA, available to all	Good visitor experience	X	X	
5	Effective communicating the area to visitors	Communicate the area		X	X
6	Ensuring social cohesion	Social cohesion		X	X
7	Strengthening prosperity in local community	Prosperity		X	X
8	Providing training and capacity building	Education	X	X	X
9	Monitoring tourism performance and impacts	Monitoring	X	X	X
10	Communicating actions about sustainability	Communication	X	X	X

Table 2.3 10 key-topics from European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, (EUROPARC, 2015) with own alterations and classification.

This classification simply is based on the question that when a key-topic is carried out, which dimensions will be addressed? Interesting to see is that none of these key-topics solely consist of only one dimension; showcasing the interconnectedness of all topics.

Based on all the above literature, and on interviews with key-stakeholders this thesis argues that ultimately, sustainable tourism consists of the following two core concepts: conservation and sustainable development. All used definitions of sustainable tourism, all principles and concretised key-topics in some way involve or contribute to either the conservation or the sustainable development of environment, economy and social-cultural livelihood. In some cases these principles or key-topics overlap the two concepts of conservation and sustainable development, and in many situations principles and key-topics are overarching the environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions. Ultimately, these two core concepts (conservation and sustainable development) with acknowledgment of the three dimensions they consist of (environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimension) form the defined concepts of sustainable tourism applied in this thesis.

To clarify the relation between the core concepts, the principles, the key-topics and key-actions of sustainable tourism, a conceptual model visually summarises these relations.

2.3 Conceptual model

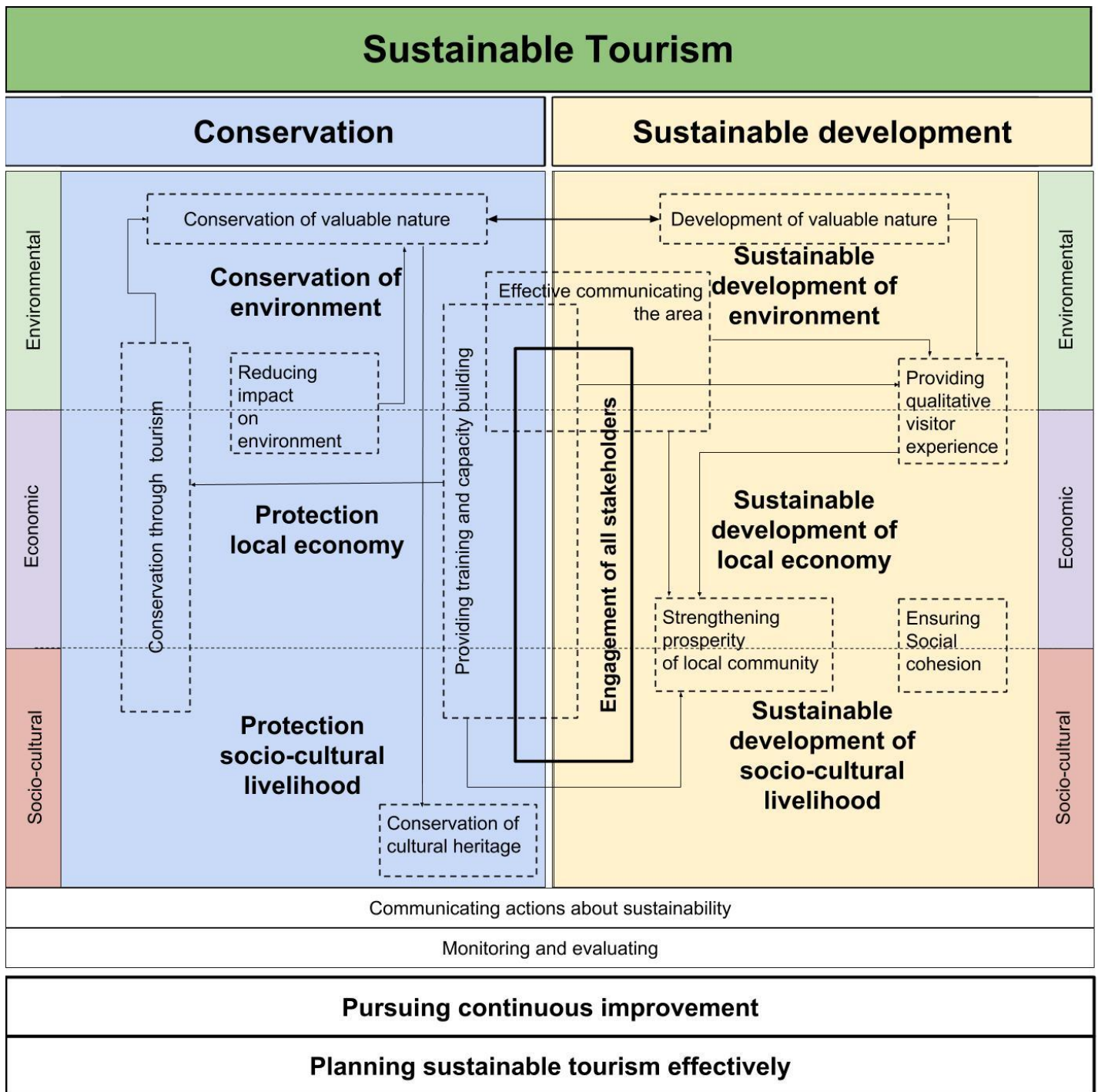


Figure 2.2 Conceptual model sustainable tourism concepts, divided by dimension (self), with principles and key-topics (EUROPARC, 2015) divided by concept and dimension.

This conceptual model presents sustainable tourism, as applied within this thesis, as consisting of two core concepts: conservation and sustainable development. These two core concepts are divided into three dimensions: environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions, just as most literature on sustainable tourism can be divided in these same dimensions. The two core concepts, applied to each dimension, therefore create the six categories of the two core concepts, presented in the middle of each box. These categories are: conservation of environment, protection of local economy and protection of socio-cultural livelihood; and sustainable development of environment, sustainable development of local economy and sustainable development of socio-cultural livelihood.

Within these six categories, further theory is implemented. It concerns the 5 principles of sustainable tourism from the ECTS, and the connected 10 key-topics. This is done so that in this thesis, the incorporation of sustainable tourism concepts in the planning objectives and activities of the stakeholders can be measured by concrete topics. To each key-topic in the ECST key-actions are applied. Because this goes into too much detail for this purpose, the complete list of key-topics and associated key-actions is attached in appendix III.

The ECTS principles are identified within this conceptual model by their thick, uninterrupted boxes and bold text. The 10 key-topics are characterised by boxes of thinner, striped lines and with regular text. Both the principles and key-topics fit within the six previously defined categories. The following six paragraphs will explain how.

The first two principles (1) 'Giving priority to protection' and (2) 'Contributing to Sustainable Development' (European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, 2015) partly coincide with both core concepts, so are therefore not also mentioned individually in this conceptual model. The third principle of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism is (3) Engaging all stakeholders (2015). This applies to both the core concept of conservation and the core concept of sustainable development and works within every dimension. It focusses on involvement of all stakeholders concerning decision making and implementation of policy concerning sustainable tourism and is therefore placed in the centre of all dimensions, and under both core concepts. Principle four (4), 'Planning sustainable tourism effectively' covers the requirement that everything that is done in pursuit of sustainable tourism, needs to be done effectively. Because it concerns all actions and processes of sustainable tourism, it is placed underneath the division of the two core concepts and three dimensions, applying to them all.

Principle five, (5) 'Pursuing continuous improvement', is the notion that sustainable tourism never is truly sustainable, for it is a continuous process of improvement (WTO, 2005). Therefore it is placed even under principle four, because also the degree of effectiveness can constantly be improved. The key-topics of sustainable tourism applied in the conceptual model of this thesis do not fit simply within one core concept or one dimension at all times. The conceptual model shows the relations between different key-topics and to which concepts and dimensions they can be attributed. The key-topic 'conservation of valuable nature', applies to both the conservation and sustainable development of environment, because the conservation of nature in protected areas can not only be accomplished by protecting vulnerable nature against negative impacts, but must also influence land use planning and influence the location, type and design of new tourism developments (EUROPARC, 2015).

Further, the key-topic 'reducing impact on environment' mostly fits within the category 'conservation of environment', because it focuses on ways to minimise the impact tourism and its associated activities has on the environment in National Park De Biesbosch. Therefore this key-topic falls under the conservation of environment. However, a few 'key-actions' that are formulated by EUROPARC (2015), are for example 'working with tourism business to try to improve their environmental management', or 'promoting the use of public transport over personal (fossil fuelled)

vehicles'. For these two example key-actions concerning the local tourism businesses, key-topic two 'reducing impact on environment' therefore also fits in the category 'protection of local economy'. The conservation of cultural heritage is officially part of key-subject 1, but doesn't fit within the conservation of environment. That is why the conservation of cultural heritage is divided separately within core concept conservation, namely under the category 'protection of socio-cultural livelihood'.

Conservation through tourism is an important aspect of sustainable tourism, because it is important that visiting tourists contribute to the conservation of the natural area instead of only 'taking'. In this conceptual model, conservation through tourism is a joint effort of both local people living in the Biesbosch area, and local businesses that collect money from tourists. This money can then be used for the maintenance of facilities in the national park, and for conservation of National Park De Biesbosch. Therefore, key-subject 'Conservation through tourism' falls in the all three dimensions of the core concept conservation.

Information concerning activities, facilities and other interesting information about the area needs to be shared with tourists. Both the Parkschap can realise this by having appropriate marketing material, but they can also include local businesses in providing relevant and accurate information about the area. If done correctly, this improved understanding of the tourists about the area might contribute to better conservation and sustainable use of the area, and a better understanding of what businesses exist, therefore sharing this key-subject under the categories conservation of environment, sustainable development of environment and sustainable development of local economy (EUROPARC, 2015).

Also, it is important that visitors have a qualitative experience. The key-subject of qualitative experience falls under both sustainable development of environment and local economy in this conceptual model. Local businesses can profit from more people visiting there business and when tourists enjoy their visit to National Park De Biesbosch and are well informed, this will contribute to their overall experience and make them return (EUROPARC, 2015).

National Park De Biesbosch can also try to strengthen local prosperity in the Biesbosch region by promoting local produces or businesses, this way creating more interest in the local economy. The key-subject 'strengthening prosperity of local community' falls under the category of sustainable development of both local economy and social livelihood, which in this case together concerns socio-economic prosperity.

Within the same two categories in this conceptual model is the key-subject 'Ensuring social cohesion'. This mostly concerns realising a good balance, no conflicts and good communication between all local stakeholders like local residents, businesses, visitors and the park authority (EUROPARC, 2015) which in this case is Parkschap National Park De Biesbosch. The Parkschap can also facilitate in key-subject 'providing training and capacity building', which concerns both the core concept conservation as core concept sustainable development, in all three dimensions. They can either train their staff in sustainable tourism management, contributing to better understanding of how to conserve and develop the nature sustainably, or encourage local businesses and residents to follow training courses to better understand sustainable tourism. For the local businesses this can result in official certification, proving their business to be sustainable, and for local residents their education can mean they can start giving guiding tours through the Biesbosch as volunteer (EUROPARC, 2015).

More in general, communication about sustainable tourism actions and results at National Park De Biesbosch needs to be communicated to local stakeholders and more widely, at a local, regional and national level. This concerns all activities and results, and is therefore placed under all categories in this conceptual model.

At last, without monitoring and evaluation of all of the above projects and initiatives, there is

no learning curve. Therefore it is important that there is monitoring of actions and results of the tourism businesses, the tourists themselves and monitoring of the impact of tourists on the environment, economy and socio-cultural livelihood. Key-subject 'monitoring and evaluation' is placed under both core concepts and three dimensions, because everything above it must be monitored.

With these core concepts, principles and key-topics the sustainable tourism practices at National Park De Biesbosch can be evaluated in a concrete way. Therefore the following methodology is used.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The goal of this chapter is to explain the research context in which this thesis takes place, to explain which methodology is used for the research of this thesis, and how this research is executed.

3.1 Research Context

National Park De Biesbosch is one of the largest national parks in the Netherlands, a wetland stretching for 90 km² between the province South-Holland and North-Brabant, being the meeting point between the rivers Rhine and Meuse, and the start of the Dutch delta area. In this thesis, both the Biesbosch and the Biesbosch area refer to the same: the nature area called the Biesbosch, for almost 600 years. However, when concerning specific characteristics of the national park, there will always be referred to this as National Park De Biesbosch. But at many times, what goes for the Biesbosch area, automatically counts for National Park De Biesbosch as well.

3.2 Methods

The methodology that is used in this thesis consists of three parts:

- literature study
- policy analysis
- qualitative interviews

3.2.1 Literature study

A literature study is conducted to gain complete insight in current theories and definitions the key concepts. Also the literature study is used to draw the lines of which concepts and theories will be used, which evaluating systems are compliant with National Park De Biesbosch, and to gain more insight in best practices from sustainable tourism. Ultimately, from literature final concepts will be derived, including more concrete and measurable topics. This will be used to have a consistent instrument to answer all research questions.

3.2.2 Interviews

In this thesis the use of interviews will be convenient for a better understanding of the stakeholders. Through an interview direct questions can be asked, instead of interpreting the goals and opinions of those stakeholders through policy reports or position papers. Because a structured interview will be too narrow and won't leave room for additional questions, a semi-structured interview will be applied. This semi-structured interview will be based on a topic list which will create a vast amount of questions, but will leave plenty of room to talk about other subjects when the respondent wants to talk about something different. This will create pathways to new subjects that in turn can be used to present new findings. The topics list is largely based on the research questions, but tries to get more concrete answers from respondents. This way the answers can be used in answering the research questions. The topics list is attached in the appendix.

The people that are interviewed are key stakeholders in governance of National Park De Biesbosch, and other relevant stakeholders. Marloes Berndsen is national strategical adviser for recreation at

Staatsbosbeheer (SBB, English: State Forreest Service). Marianne den Braven is policy manager visitor management at Parkschap National Park De Biesbosch. Peter van Beek is director of Biesbosch Museumeland-Werkendam which also functions as Visitor Centre. Erik van Dijk is general board member external communication of Watersportvereniging (WSV) Biesbosch, director of Foundation Keurmerk Milieu, Veiligheid & Kwaliteit (KMKV) and national operator of Green Key and Blue Flag. Also, interviews with three tourist have been held on location in National Park De Biesbosch. The role and importance of these organisations and foundation will be further covered in the results chapter.

3.2.3 Policy analysis

A policy analysis is the last of three chosen methods to be used in this thesis, because it can be used to analyse official policy documents from all relevant stakeholders. It will be interesting to read which goals make it to policy documents, and to what extent these goals are translated into activities. This will be the neutral and controlling part of the methodology, on which the findings from the interviews can be compared. The policy analysis will be a side-to-side comparison of policy documents of all relevant stakeholders and legislation, based on the sub research questions.

3.3 Operationalisation

Concept	Policies	Literature	Activities
Governance	SNL Natura, 2000 RWS, 2006 Parkschap, 2011 SBB, 2016 EC, 2017 EUROPARC, 2015	(Graham, et al., 2003) (Borrini-Feyerabend, et al., 2012) (Eagles, et al., 2009) (Plumptre & Graham, 1999)	- Define governance - Map out differences in use of governance - Map out management - Define management concepts, for comparison
Stakeholders	- Year report Parkschap National Park De Biesbosch - Policies NGO's and other stakeholders - Policy Dutch Government - Policy European Union (Natura 2000)	(Freeman & McVea, 2001) (Graham, et al., 2003)	- Define term stakeholder - Make complete list of stakeholders - Interview stakeholders - Compare stakeholders with each other - Compare objectives stakeholders with activities, from policies
National park	All documents for STEPS programme Year report 2018 Parkschap, 2011 SBB, 2016	(IUCN, n.d.)	- Define national park - Interview stakeholders concerning their perception of threads tourism on national park -

Chapter 4 Governance structure

This chapter presents and discusses the results based on the first sub research question, “what are the governance structures of the stakeholders concerning tourism management and planning at National Park De Biesbosch?”

The goal of this chapter is to

- Explain who are the stakeholders involved in sustainable tourism at National Park De Biesbosch
- Elaborate on their roles within the governance of sustainable tourism at National Park De Biesbosch
- Present a model of the governance structure of sustainable tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch
- Explain this governance structure and answer the first sub research question

4.1 Introduction

National Park De Biesbosch is a protected area and as a national park, following the IUCN classification (2015), it is classified as protected area type II: National Park. This thesis argues that the governance structure of National Park De Biesbosch has the most resemblance with the protected area governance type derived from Graham (et al., 2003) called ‘multi-stakeholder management’ and, within that category more specifically, with ‘joint management’. This conclusion is based on interviews with the key-stakeholders and analysing the policy documents and literature on governance.

The governing body of National Park De Biesbosch, called Parkschap Nationaal Park De Biesbosch, or Parkschap in short, is similar to this theory of joint management. It consists of an Executive Board (Dagelijks Bestuur [DB]), a General Management (Algemeen Bestuur [AB]) and a Governance Committee (Bestuurscommissie [BC]). These together form the Parkschap and are accountable for management of National Park De Biesbosch. Therefore the Parkschap is the joint management of National Park De Biesbosch. A construction like this is fairly unique in the Netherlands (Berndsen, 2017). Most national parks have something similar called a consultative body (overlegorgaan), which does not function as a legal body like the Parkschap does.

In the General Management [AB], most key stakeholders have their say. This body meets at least two times a year (Parkschap, 2012) and consists of one representative of both provinces (province of South-Holland and North-Brabant) and all four municipalities (Municipality Dordrecht, Drimmelen, Werkendam and Sliedrecht) the national park is situated in. However, starting 2018, both provinces and the municipality of Sliedrecht will retreat from the Parkschap. Furthermore, Staatsbosbeheer [SBB] (State Forrest Service) has one representative in the Parkschap, because Staatsbosbeheer is the environmental managing party of National Park De Biesbosch (Berndsen, 2017).

In order to answer the questions in this chapter which leads to explaining the governance structure and ultimately the first sub research question, the other stakeholders and their roles need to be explained and elaborated on. But first, the regulatory context in which the governance of sustainable tourism at National Park De Biesbosch takes place needs clarification.

4.2 Regulatory context on international, national, regional and local level

In the Netherlands, many laws and regulations are involved in defining management policies for national parks, including National Park De Biesbosch. The policies range from international to local.

International policies

The highest level of policy involved is that of the European Union, which conducts the Natura 2000 network of protected areas. This network is not legal legislation on its own, but is based on a legal framework that is common to all countries of the European Union: the Birds Directive (1979) and the Habitats Directive (1992) (EC, 2017). Based on these directives the Natura 2000 network is functioning in order to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats, which are listed under both directives (EC, 2008; 2017).

The Natura 2000 determines many legal obligations nature conservation parties must obey to. Almost the whole area of National Park De Biesbosch is also Natura 2000-area, making the Natura 2000 a very present policy for the management of National Park De Biesbosch.

National policies

On national level, the Dutch government pursues policy for the regulation and protection of nature under the legislation called Nature Network Netherlands (Natuurnetwerk Nederland [NNN]), which until 2013 used to be called Ecological Main Structure (Ecologische Hoofdstructuur [EHS]) (Rijksoverheid[a], 2017). This Nature Network Netherlands can be seen as the Dutch equivalent of Natura 2000, being a network for the inclusive management of nature. The Nature Network Netherlands covers the following types of nature (Rijksoverheid [a], 2017):

- Existing nature areas, among which the 20 National Parks
- Areas where new nature is developed
- Agricultural areas, managed by agricultural nature management
- Over 6 million hectares of big waters: lakes, rivers, the coastal line of the North Sea and the Wadden Sea
- All Natura 2000-areas

Of all national parks covered in the NNN, most also fall under the Natura 2000 structure. This is not completely coincidental, because both the Natura 2000 network and the NNN aim to conserve valuable nature with unique ecological structures and the most important species and habitats (Rijksoverheid, 2017; EC, 2017). Dutch legislation needs to meet European standards, so priorities of which species and habitats to conserve overlap for greater parts. As several stakeholders mentioned in their interview, most regulation and laws they are concerned with in the management of nature find their origin in the Natura 2000 (Den Braven, 2017; Berndsen, 2017).

For implementing these regulations of valuable nature, the Dutch government replaced three existing laws with one new act in 2017, called the Nature Conservation Act (Rijksoverheid [b], 2017). This law is also largely based on the Birds and Habitat directives. Together these form the regulatory context.

The responsibility for executing these laws and the NNN is no longer a responsibility for the Dutch government, since in 2014 they transferred these responsibilities to the provinces.

Regional policies

The provinces are on regional level responsible for environmental planning, regional economy and its nature. The role of the provinces has grown since the government made them responsible for realisation of the NNN, their Natura 2000 areas, (agricultural) nature management and species management (Bij12, 2017). Subsidy for execution of this is granted through a nationwide system called Subsidy system for Nature and Landscape Management [SNL] (Subsidiestelsel Natuur en Landschap) (Bij12, 2017). Through SNL provinces grant subsidy for the preservation and development of (agricultural) nature areas and landscapes (Bij12, 2017). Although they are responsible, they do not manage the national park themselves; that is what the subsidy is for. The provinces let environmental management parties (natuurbeheerders) take care of nature management. In the case of National Park De Biesbosch this is Staatsbosbeheer (Berndsen, 2017).

Concerning National Park De Biesbosch this means that the provinces of North-Brabant and South-Holland function as policy bodies that are responsible for the realisation of nature management within the national park. They decide what type of nature is created or maintained where (Berndsen, 2017). Important to notice is that these decisions are not restricted to the borders of each province, but stretch beyond those borders through all of the Netherlands. Provinces set up a Nature Management Plan (Natuurbeheerplan) which is adapted to the needs of the province and those of the other provinces (Bij12, 2017). If subsidy is possible depends on what is determined in the Nature Management Plan. Ultimately they decide through the Nature Management Plan which nature areas should be openly accessible for the public for free for at least 358 days a year. For making the nature area openly accessible, environmental management parties receive subsidy for the realisation of public services, and optionally for monitoring of the nature area (Bij12, 2017).

Another partner National Park De Biesbosch has to work with together is Rijkswaterstaat, the government body that is responsible for water management in the Netherlands. Their most influential activities for National Park De Biesbosch are that from 'Ruimte voor de Rivier' (Space for the River), a nation-wide spatial plan for water management (Rijkswaterstaat, 2006) that needs to be coordinated with spatial land-use planning for the Biesbosch. Regarding National Park De Biesbosch, their most influential activity was the removal of the Noordwaard polder (ontpolderen Noordwaard) to create more space for the rivers (Rijkswaterstaat, 2017). Another role Rijkswaterstaat has is the responsibility for the operation of the sluice gates around National Park De Biesbosch. Important is that Rijkswaterstaat holds no position in policy bodies for National Park De Biesbosch.

Local policies

Policy on local level in the Netherlands is mostly about municipalities. Municipalities involved in managing National Park De Biesbosch are the municipalities of Dordrecht, Drimmelen, Sliedrecht and Werkendam (Parkschap, 2011). Until 2017, all four municipalities had a representative in the General Management of the Parkschap. Starting 2018, the municipality of Sliedrecht will withdraw from the Parkschap (den Braven, 2017, Parkschap[b], 2017). The main concern of municipalities regarding National Park De Biesbosch is if new plans for spatial development fit in the general development plan (bestemmingsplan) of the municipality (Overheid, 2016). Every municipality has a development plan which is set in place to avoid spatial conflicts. Boundaries of what such a development plan should consist of are set in the Wet Ruimtelijke Ordening [WRO] (Town and Country Planning Act) (Overheid, 2016). When there are new development plans, first it must be evaluated against the development plan to determine if it is allowed and that there are no conflicts. Concerning National Park De Biesbosch, this means that whenever there are new plans for development, it has to be in

line with the development plan for this area of this municipality.

An example of conflicts could arise when certain interests of a new development initiative conflict with interests of local inhabitants. Through the municipality's development plan, inhabitants of the region Biesbosch are represented in decision making; their interests are incorporated in the development plans for certain regions areas. However, inhabitants do not have a direct say in this, they must rely on the judgement of their municipality.

4.3 Other stakeholders

Now the regulatory context on international to local level has been laid out, the other stakeholders of sustainable tourism in National Park De Biesbosch can be described. The other stakeholders are not responsible for the policy that among others enables sustainable tourism, but are involved with sustainable tourism through other ways.

Local entrepreneurs

Many local entrepreneurs in tourism-recreation in the Biesbosch region are engaged with the Parkschap in sustainable tourism. The Parkschap maintains a close relation with entrepreneurs in tourism-recreation, for example, if interested, by making them hosts (gastheren) of the Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017; Parkschap[b], 2017). They set up a bilateral agreement with reciprocal rights and duties concerning sustainable tourism, tailored to every individual entrepreneur (den Braven, 2017; NP De Biesbosch [a], 2017). This way, local entrepreneurs are involved with sustainable tourism in and around National Park De Biesbosch.

Tourists

Tourists are not only a passive subject of research in this thesis, but also key stakeholder in the approach of sustainable tourism. Their role in governance of sustainable tourism in National Park De Biesbosch is somewhat limited. Most of the tourists are regional residents with 73% from the province South-Holland and 18% from North-Brabant (NRIT, 2009). Only 9% is from another province. Within these visitor numbers of tourists visiting over land, the majority is from the area of local towns Zwijndrecht, Dordrecht to Hardinxveld-Giessendam (NRIT, 2009), which directly align with National Park De Biesbosch. The majority of the visitors, as measured by research group NRIT, are locals from the neighbouring area. Given the lack of a governing or informing body that enables these tourists and local residents to have a say in policy making and management in National Park De Biesbosch, important stakeholders are left out in the process of policy making or management. Now the only way for these stakeholders to have a voice in such matters, is by attending the meeting of the General Management (Algemeen Bestuur) of the Parkschap that meets at least twice a year.

Organised user groups - water

Another way that tourist and local residents are represented is through user groups (gebruikersgroepen). The largest user group of water recreation is Watersportvereniging Biesbosch [WSV Biesbosch] (Aquatics Association Biesbosch) with 380 members (van Dijk, 2017). WSV Biesbosch is an association with active members and consists mostly of local residents (van Dijk, 2017). Van Dijk explains that these members are users that have been coming to the Biesbosch for many years and are not to be considered as sporadic visitors. Although as a unification WSV

Biesbosch has more political weight than individual visitors, established influence in policy concerning aquatics and general use of the Biesbosch seems to be lacking.

Representation of interests user groups- water

There is even a unification of most water recreation associations called the Federatie van Watersportverenigingen 'De Biesbosch', or De Biesboschfederatie in short (Federation of Aquatics Associations the Biesbosch, Biesbosch federation in short). Set up in 1975, the Biesbosch federation tries to unify the aquatics associations of the Biesbosch and to promote their interests (Biesboschfederatie, 2017). They meet two times a year, to inform the aquatics associations. However, since the Biesbosch federation is a body for the representation of interests, there is no formal structure in which the Biesbosch federation takes part in forming policy; most influence goes through informal ways. Although being the representatives of 42 associations with a total of 8000 contribution paying members (Biesboschfederatie, 2015), they do not seem to be taken that serious as a valuable stakeholder in management of National Park De Biesbosch. That is the image that stuck when interviewing with key-stakeholders and even with van Dijk from WSV Biesbosch, one of represented aquatic associations. This is what the Biesboschfederatie seems to face as well, because in their five-year policy plan for 2015-2020 they mention not feeling to be taken seriously for a 100% (Biesboschfederatie, 2015). This shows by receiving either no or out-dated replies on their letters and requests, by promises that are not being (completely) kept and by politics that are characteristic of them being send from pillar to post (Biesboschfederatie, 2015).

Volunteers

Volunteers in National Park De Biesbosch function mostly as qualified Biesbosch guides for visiting tourists. They are united in the following four volunteer organisations:

- IVN Dordrecht
- Madese NatuurVrienden
- Vereniging van Vrijwilligers Hollandse Biesbosch
- Natuur- en Vogelwacht Biesbosch

These organisations arrange the education of Biesbosch guides and receive support for this by Instituut voor natuureducatie en duurzaamheid [IVN] (Institute for nature education and sustainability), the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer (NP De Biesbosch [b], 2017).

Educational partners

IVN is the party that the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer work together with concerning education about nature, training tour guides and local businesses (NP De Biesbosch [c], 2017). This can be education of future volunteers, education of school classes that visit National Park De Biesbosch or as partner in educating local entrepreneurs in the course for 'Gastheerschap van de Biesbosch' (den Braven, 2017; Parkschap[b], 2017; IVN, 2017).

Certification partners

Stichting Keurmerk voor Milieu, Veiligheid en Kwaliteit [Stichting KMKV] (Foundation mark for Environment, Safety and Quality) worked together with Parkschap Nationaal Park De Biesbosch. Commissioned by the Parkschap, Foundation KMKV issued a large certification process of sustainability of local tourism-recreation entrepreneurs. In the categories of accommodations where you can eat, sleep or have fun (van Dijk, 2017) Green Key and Blue Flag certifications were awarded

to the companies that met the criteria. Green Key is for hospitality accommodations on land, Blue Flag for beaches and marina (van Dijk, 2017). The efforts of the Parkschap to work together with local entrepreneurs to become more sustainable, could be rewarded with recognisable and established sustainability marks for those companies.

Visitor centres:

The visitor centres have a special role in governing National Park De Biesbosch. They do not hold a managerial position within the governance structure of National Park De Biesbosch, but they are the entrance ports for many of the visitors and function as the communication link between the management of National Park De Biesbosch and its visitors. There are three visitor centres (Parkschap[b], 2017):

- Biesbosch Centre Dordrecht
- Biesbosch MuseumEiland Werkendam
- Biesbosch Centre Drimmelen

Biesbosch MuseumEiland Werkendam needs further elaboration, because it is a visitor centre and also a museum in one. This way it not only informs visitors, but also educates them about history of the Biesbosch, and how it was shaped to what it is now (van Beek, 2017). According to van Beek (2017), the MuseumEiland holds a special position within the governance of National Park De Biesbosch. The museum is not so involved with day-to-day policy and management of the national park, but serves as neutral grounds for all involved stakeholders to meet and learn. This role has naturally grown, but has more established since both the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer hold (regional) office in the museum (van Beek, 2017). This way informal meetings are more enabled, which improves communication in the management of National Park De Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017; van Beek, 2017).

Management in the Nature

The monitoring and conservation of nature of National Park De Biesbosch is largely done by people actually being in the natural park. For the conservation of nature forest rangers (boswachters) walk around and inspect the national park.

The monitoring of the national park for the sake of public safety and protection against vandalism and trash pollution is done by police patrolling National Park De Biesbosch. However, for both kinds of monitoring and protection is no budget and priority to actually pay people to do this work (Berndsen, 2017; den Braven, 2017; van Beek, 2017; van Dijk, 2017). Results are that Forest rangers complain they have too much administrative workload and too little time to actually walk around in the Biesbosch (Berndsen, 2017). Also, surveillance and monitoring of the few police that patrol in National Park De Biesbosch has little effect on such a large area (Berndsen, 2017; den Braven, 2017). That is why Buitengewoon Opsporingsambtenaren [BOA] (special investigating officers) are being trained to do the work of park rangers and police (Berndsen, 2017; den Braven, 2017). BOAs are regular people who receive training in a certain field (forest ranger, law enforcement) and after completion have authority to enforce the laws within their jurisdiction (Rijksoverheid, 2013). There is criticism among the stakeholders on the fact that BOAs are doing the work of forest managers and police man, because they do not have the experience forest rangers and police officers have. However, this is not on the account of BOAs themselves; the stakeholders are glad at least BOAs are doing the work forest rangers and police officers cannot (Berndsen, 2017; den Braven, 2017; van Beek, 2017; van Dijk, 2017).

4.4 Conclusion

Governance structure model

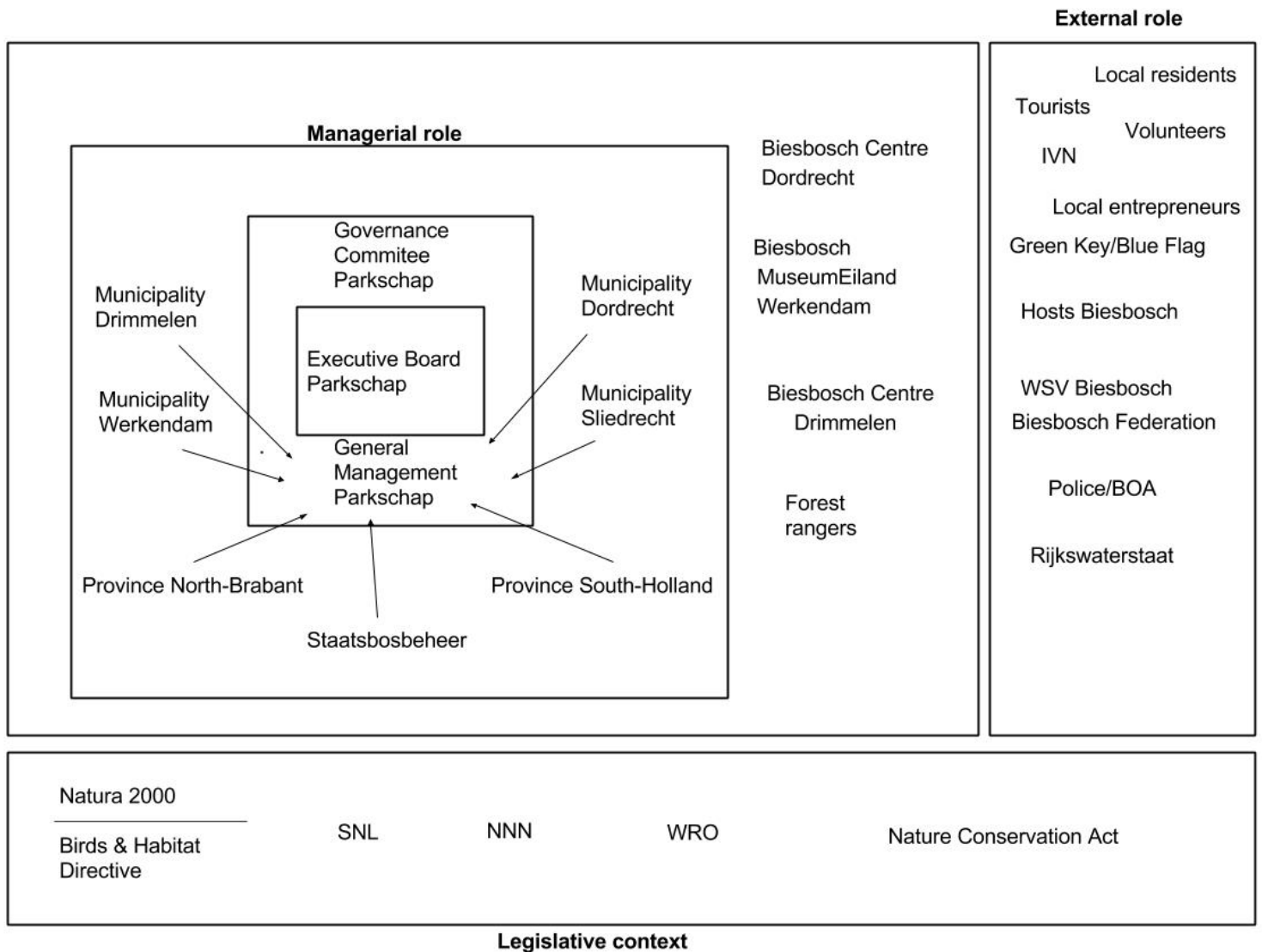


Figure 4.1 Governance structure model of sustainable tourism at National Park De Biesbosch

The governance structure is divided in managerial roles, external roles and legislative context. The legislative context determines the foundation in which this governance structure functions. It consists of the Natura 2000 act on European scale, and on the Nature Network Netherlands, the Dutch equivalent to the Natura 2000 network.

In the core of the managerial roles is the Parkschap. The Parkschap in turn consists of an executive board, and a governance committee. The general management of the Parkschap is the body that engages other key stakeholders in the management of National Park De Biesbosch. These stakeholders are the provinces South-Holland and North-Brabant, and the municipalities of Dordrecht, Werkendam, Drimmelen and Sliedrecht. Starting 2018, both provinces and the municipality of Sliedrecht will have retreated from the general management.

Actively involved with the management, but not with the policy making of sustainable tourism in National Park De Biesbosch, are the visitor centres Drimmelen, Dordrecht and MuseumEiland Werkendam, and the forest rangers. Stakeholders that have a less active role in governing sustainable tourism, but are important in the implementation of it, are described in the right box of external stakeholders.

The governance structure of sustainable tourism at National Park De Biesbosch is a joint management structure that includes almost all of the key stakeholders. The only key stakeholders to not have a place in the management are the tourists and local residents.

Chapter 5 Perceived impacts of tourism

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the impact of tourism on the National Park De Biesbosch, as perceived by key-stakeholders of sustainable tourism. There are many possible impacts of tourism and different structures of these impacts, so in order to make this a clear overview, the perceived impacts in this chapter are structured in contemporary and future impact of tourism in environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions. The representation of these results will be structured per above mentioned categories, covering all opinions of all stakeholders. Every paragraph has a summarised overview of all impacts, accompanied with the stakeholders' views. At last a conclusion on these results will conclude this chapter.

5.2 Environmental impacts

Possible impacts of tourism in National Park De Biesbosch concerning the environment, as perceived by stakeholders, can be summarised in the following two components: disturbance and pollution of environment. The disturbance of environment consists of the disturbance of flora and fauna, and the pollution of environment concerns the pollution of land, water and air. Examples of disturbances and pollution and, perhaps more importantly, the perceived severity of these impacts as explained by stakeholders, will be presented later in this paragraph.

First, an overview of each type of environmental impact tourism has on National Park De Biesbosch is summarised in the following table 5.1, together with the remark stakeholders had regarding that impact.

Impact of tourism on environment	Parkschap	Staatsbosbeheer	Tourists	Museum-eiland	WSV Biesbosch
Disturbance of nature (flora)	Too large visitor flows at fragile nature areas can cause disturbance and destruction of plants	Affecting quality nature	Hiking off-trail, engaging in disruptive activities, increase in traffic	Recreational pressure, Asocial behaving tourists	Asocial behaving tourists
Disturbance of nature (fauna)	Disturbance of breeding- and living area animals	Affecting living and breeding area of important animals	Hiking off-trail, increase of traffic on land/in water disturbs fauna	Recreational pressure, Asocial behaving tourists	Asocial behaving tourists
Pollution of nature (land)	Tourists leaving trash, especially around trash containers	Tourists leaving trash, especially around trash containers	Leaving trash behind in nature	Tourists leaving trash, especially around trash containers	Tourists renting boats leaving trash

Pollution of nature (water)	-	Regulated well	Pollution of boats, leaving trash	Water quality is very clean	Releasing of toxic fluids after the winter
Pollution of nature (air)	Emission of fossil fuels by vehicles and boats	-	Increase of visitors, more cars in Biesbosch	-	Emission of fossil fuels by boats

Table 5.1 Summary of environmental impacts of tourism on National Park De Biesbosch as perceived by key stakeholders

Disturbance of nature (flora)

Concerning the disturbance of flora, the Parkschap perceives too large visitor flows in fragile nature areas to be the cause of the disturbance and destruction of vegetation in National Park De Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017). The severity of this impact however is not perceived to be high, because current zoning activities are effective in guiding tourists away from vulnerable nature. When visiting the Biesbosch by water, certain creeks are prohibited to visit when using a boat instead of a canoe or rowing boat (den Braven, 2017). Staatsbosbeheer also perceives too much recreational pressure of visiting tourists to be affecting the quality of nature, for example that when too much tourists visit an area paths will be trampled. However, they acknowledge that by zoning of tourists this impact of tourism on flora can be mostly prevented and therefore does not pose a direct threat to the nature of National Park De Biesbosch (Berndsen, 2017).

Tourists visiting National Park De Biesbosch mention that too many people are visiting the Biesbosch these days and that when this growing number of visitors will wander off the paths this might cause disturbance of flora. However, since a large number of these visitors is of older age, interviewed tourists are not afraid that these older tourists will engage in adventures or irresponsible activities and that they will stay on the paths. As long as tourists will do so, growing numbers of visitors will barely have disturbing impact on the flora of the Biesbosch (Tourist 1, 2017). Van Beek, director of MuseumEiland, also names the possibility that when too much visitors visit on one small area, this puts pressure on the flora. However, according to him recreational pressure is not really an urgent issue at National Park De Biesbosch, because the water forms a natural boundary for mass tourism, and the nature is robust and resilient (van Beek, 2017). So, disturbance of nature is not perceived as an existing problem by the MuseumEiland. At the Aquatics association WSV Biesbosch, a perceived possible impact of tourism in National Park De Biesbosch is that inexperienced sailors can hit the reed or other vegetation at the water site, therefore disturbing the flora (van Dijk, 2017). However, according to van Dijk this is barely an issue and even when it happens, the damage and disturbance of flora is perceived to be minimal. Further, there is a good infrastructure on water, guiding sailors away from vulnerable areas (van Dijk, 2017).

Disturbance of nature (fauna)

According to the Parkschap, another possible impact of tourism is the disturbance of fauna. This might happen through recreational pressure, for example when too many tourists visit an important breeding area. The severity of this impact is perceived to be more serious, because the breeding areas of for example the white-tailed eagle (zeearend) is very important for the habitation of these rare birds in National Park De Biesbosch. However, the disturbance of fauna is also not perceived to be a pressing issue by the Parkschap, but it is an issue that needs proper monitoring (den Braven,

2017). According to Staatsbosbeheer, the impact of tourism through recreational pressure is perceived to be affecting the living and breeding area of animals, when zoning is improperly managed. Also, when too much traffic is situated in one area, this can disturb the fauna, especially when it concerns fossil fuelled vehicles, both on water and on land (Berndsen, 2017). However, current zoning is perceived to be rather successful in guiding the largest visitor flows towards more resilient nature, so the disturbance of fauna is not perceived to be a serious impact in its current state (Berndsen, 2017).

The increase of touristic activity is mentioned by tourists as possible impact that disturbs fauna in the Biesbosch (tourist 2, 2017). Especially large touring busses and cruise ships will be disturbing for fauna, causing them to live elsewhere. At the MuseumEiland, the disturbance of living and breeding area of animals living in the Biesbosch is also perceived to be a possible impact of tourism on the environment of National Park De Biesbosch, but when zoning is still applied, there should be enough living space for these animals to not be disturbed by tourism (van Beek, 2017). Van Dijk acknowledges that at peak hours, it can get very busy in the Biesbosch, but that almost all of the other hours there are barely people in the Biesbosch (2017). He argues that the white-tailed eagle, the osprey and beaver do not care about anything that happens around them and live their life without feeling disturbed by tourism. Outside these peak hours these animals have plenty of space to live undisturbed. As prove, van Dijk showed the nest of a white-tailed eagle, settled on top of an old transmission tower seen from the clubhouse of WSV Biesbosch (2017). Also, at summer time, many evenings at sundown three beavers walk past his front yard close to the Biesbosch, he tells. Therefore, disturbance of fauna is not perceived to be an issue at all by WSV Biesbosch.

Pollution of nature (land)

According to den Braven, pollution of the nature in National Park De Biesbosch is an issue, especially concerning tourists that throw away trash in the nature (2017). Interesting to notice is that the placing of trash bins in National Park De Biesbosch has an aversive effect, causing people to throw away their trash instead of keeping it until they get home (den Braven, 2017). On busy weekends, these trash bins do not have the capacity of collecting all trash, causing tourists to throw their trash away next to the trash bins where it ends up in the nature of National Park De Biesbosch. This same problem is mentioned by Berndsen, van Beek and van Dijk (2017). The removal of trash bins forces tourists to keep their trash with them until they go home, therefore decreasing the problem of pollution of land in National Park De Biesbosch. The Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer, together with MuseumEiland perceive the pollution of the land with trash as an ongoing impact of tourism that needs to be managed, but since the removal of most trash bins they perceive this problem to be decreased. Van Dijk mentions that especially tourists renting boats leave trash behind when resting somewhere on land, and although this being bad the nature of the Biesbosch, doesn't perceive this to be a major threat (2017).

Pollution of nature (water)

The pollution of nature on and in water at National Park De Biesbosch is relative small issue, consisting of trash in water, and the pollution by fluids. At WSV Biesbosch this last impact is regarded as a problem in the following situation. During winter, to prevent break down of their motors, boat owners use chemicals in their motors. After winter, these chemicals are released into the water of the Biesbosch when turning on the motor, unless boat owners actively catch these chemicals. Apart from this impact, water quality is excellent according to van Dijk, even causing problems for boat owners (2017). Because water quality is so good, certain water plants flourish, resulting in complete areas on water to be covered by these water plants. These plants can get stuck in the motors,

causing them to break down. Apart from this, there do not seem to be perceived impacts of tourism on water, and the existing impacts are relatively simple to manage (van Dijk, 2017). Other stakeholders did not share anything about pollution of water.

Pollution of nature (air)

There is consensus among the stakeholders concerning that the emission of fossil fuel powered vehicles in National Park De Biesbosch have negative impact on the air quality and environment of the Biesbosch. They also agree that the introduction of electrically powered boats is a positive development, contributing not only to less disruption of flora and fauna, but also contributing to better air quality.

Future

Concerning future environmental impacts of tourism on National Park De Biesbosch, the stakeholders do not perceive any of the identified environmental impacts of tourism to be worrying when continuing in the current state. One major condition for this is that zoning as it is carried out now will be continued, ensuring that flora and fauna will not be disrupted more in the future. However, if the trend of a growing amount of tourist continues, interviewed tourists do fear that this will be disruptive for fauna, causing animals to live somewhere else (tourist 2, 2017). When presented afterwards with the number of visitors in the whole Biesbosch region, namely 2 million annually, this tourist suggested that future growth should be contained to a maximum of 2,5 million visitors annually (tourist 2, 2017).

5.3 Economic impacts

Tourism creates economic activity. Some of that activity is beneficial for business affiliated with tourism, some of that activity is even beneficial for the nature of National Park De Biesbosch. However, economic activity caused by tourism can also be of negative influence on National Park De Biesbosch. Regarding possible economic impacts of tourism at National Park De Biesbosch there seems to be consensus among the stakeholders. The most identified impacts concern the stimulation of local tourism businesses, the maintenance costs for and due to visitors and the fact that plans for touristic economic development can disturb the environment when not in line with plans for nature protection and development.

Impact of tourism on economy	Parkschap	Staatsbosbeheer	Tourists	Museumeiland	WSV Biesbosch
Stimulating local economy	Stimulates local economy	Creating value together with entrepreneurs	-	Economic impulse due to growth of visitors (not yet experienced).	Good for local economy

Income through tourism for conservation NP	Introducing the 'vaantje', user fee for aquatics	-	-	Entrance fee difficult to apply	'Vaantje' good idea, if their voice and effective perception costs are guaranteed
Economies of scale	Same investments are relatively cheaper on a larger scale	-	-		
High maintenance costs	Erosion of facilities like small marinas and paths	Erosion of paths and facilities	-	-	Not satisfied with state of facilities
Disturbance of (vulnerable) nature by economic activity	Wrong economic activity at wrong destination	Wrong economic activity at wrong destination	Cruise ships and large touring busses disturb environment	Use of 'boeren verstand' is adequate	Marina at vulnerable area

Table 5.2 Summary of economic impacts of tourism on National Park De Biesbosch as perceived by key stakeholders

Stimulating local economy

An important aspect of tourism is the associated economic activity that it generates. Tourism in the Biesbosch region has a positive impact on local economy, according to the Parkschap, Staatsbosbeheer and WSV Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017; Berndsen, 2017; van Dijk, 2017). Also the MuseumEiland recognises the potential positive impact tourism can have on local economy, however van Beek mentions that he does not see such a stimulation of local economy yet (2017). As an example of possible economic development he tells about the need for accommodation at the boarder of National Park De Biesbosch a few years ago. A company already invested in this project, but the expectations were not met and therefore the investment that was made did not pay off (van Beek, 2017). Van Dijk tells a similar situation, where exploitation possibilities opened up for accommodation at the Biesbosch marina, because the municipality of Drimmelen invested in a house with accommodation purpose. However, no one was interested to start this accommodation and eventually the house was sold with loss to the British company that also bought the Biesbosch marina. So in conclusion, the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer are positive concerning the impact tourism has on stimulating local economy, but not all stakeholders agree on the actual economic development tourism creates.

Income through tourism for conservation NP

Another economic impact tourism has on National Park De Biesbosch, is the possibility to gain income through tourism for the conservation of the national park in general and facilities (den Braven, 2017). The Parkschap explains that this is not a naturally occurring impact, but more an opportunity that can be used to gain more income for conservation. WSV Biesbosch as an aquatic

association is in favour of a possible fee (vaantje) for boat users to access the Biesbosch, if this fee also contributes to the conservation and development of quality facilities and that they get a voice in these matters (van Dijk, 2017). Also, the perception costs shouldn't be too high, which van Dijk until now perceives to be a problem.

An entrance fee is a good way of securing income through tourism and works really well for the museum of MuseumEiland, according to van Beek (2017). They can rely on a fixed income they are fairly certain of. Applying an entrance fee to the Biesbosch on the other hand will be very difficult he thinks; because of the vast amount of entrances to the Biesbosch it is impossible to control this system. Working on a voluntary basis might be the best solution, according to the Parkschap (den Braven, 2017).

Economies of scale

Another occurring positive impact of growing tourism numbers, is economies of scale. With more visiting tourists some investments will be economically more interesting than when done for little users (den Braven, 2017). This especially applies for sustainable investments, for example a project the Parkschap initiated where electric boats can charge their boats within National Park De Biesbosch. Den Braven tells how this project was quite expensive, and as turns out is not used very much by the user group they meant to target (2017). Van Dijk also tells how this project is used more often for charging electronics on board of boats, than the actual charging of electrical boats. However, when such investments are made for a larger amount of prospected users, the relative costs will turn out lower. It is important to be aware of this economic impact of tourism, whether there will be many people using facilities that are invested in, or not.

Maintenance costs

An economic negative impact of a growing amount of visitors in National Park De Biesbosch is that with growing numbers of visitors, also the use of facilities is intensified. The Parkschap mentions high maintenance costs as an negative economic impact of tourism at National Park De Biesbosch, because of erosion of paths and facilities (den Braven, 2017). There is not enough money to pay for higher maintenance costs, so this impact has a high severity. At WSV Biesbosch they recognise the same impact, in form of bad conditions of facilities. Other ways of conserving these facilities are needed (van Dijk, 2017).

Disturbance of vulnerable nature by economic activity

When pursuing economic touristic activity, such as the development of a new marina or outdoor activity centre, a balance needs to be found between the importance of this new touristic economic development, and the possible disturbance this will cause for the surrounding environment (Berndsen, 2017). If this economic impact on nature is bad for its surrounding environment completely depends on the kind of development plan. Berndsen mentions as example the development of a new marina next to a breeding area for birds, which is something that will never be allowed. Van Dijk recognises the same responsibility to account for this impact of tourism through economic development. However, it is perceived as a major impact, because irresponsible developments will never be allowed by either the MuseumEiland, or by Staatsbosbeheer and the Parkschap (Berndsen, 2017; den Braven, 2017). The potential damage this economic impact can cause for the environment of National Park De Biesbosch is perceived to be high by all stakeholders, and perhaps therefore the awareness of this possible impact is also high.

In the future, the stimulation of local economy might be a positive economic impact on National Park De Biesbosch according to the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer, but the MuseumEiland is more sceptical about the actual economic benefit tourism will cause in the Biesbosch region. The Parkschap sees opportunities in sustaining income through touristic economic activity for the maintenance of National Park De Biesbosch. The increase of tourists visiting National Park De Biesbosch might have a positive impact through economies of scale and negative impacts because of higher maintenance costs according to the stakeholders, and they are both important to be aware of, but are not perceived to pose a direct threat for National Park De Biesbosch. Ultimately, the economic development for tourism yields potential for large disruption of vulnerable nature, but by continuing the current approach to such new developments there is no cause for alarm as perceived by the stakeholders.

5.4 Socio-cultural impacts

Socio-cultural impacts of tourism mostly concern local residents, but in a smaller portion also concerns the preservation of cultural heritage of the Biesbosch area.

Most stakeholders are concerned with visitor experience. Because there is an increase in visitors compared to previous years, stakeholders perceive the visitor experience to be under pressure. Consensus and different believes concerning the visitor experience will be covered later in this paragraph. Another perceived socio-cultural impact due to tourism is the disturbance of the Sunday rest of religious communities. Also, partly aligned with the visitor experience, is the increase of tourists that are not well known or connected with the nature of the Biesbosch that display asocial behaviour. Not only does this have an effect on the nature, which is an environmental impact of tourism, but also in a lesser degree this might have an impact on the behaviour of other, initially more respectful behaving visitors.

Social-cultural impact of tourism	Parkschap	Staatsbosbeheer	Tourists	Museumeiland	WSV Biesbosch
Contributing to respect for nature	Contributing to public support, contributing to respect nature	Contributing to public support	-	Educating and informing about nature	Intergenerational respect for nature Biesbosch
Stagnation of quality visitor experience	Conflicting user groups, walking in traffic jam.	Conflicting user groups	Rapid growth of visitors, not a problem	When too crowded, visitor experience is worsened.	Sometimes too busy during popular hours
Disturbance of peace and quiet local residents	Account for needs when developing new facilities	Account for needs when developing new facilities	-	Disturbance of Sunday rest religious communities	Not a problem

Social control	Difficult to control behaviour visitors	Difficult to control behaviour visitors	Supervision is only way to influence bad behaviour	Not enough supervision, but impossible to control whole Biesbosch	People not well known with use of the Biesbosch, displaying asocial behaviour on the water
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Table 5.3 Summary of environmental impacts of tourism on National Park De Biesbosch as perceived by key stakeholders

Contributing to respect for nature

According to the Parkschap, people visiting National Park De Biesbosch learn to appreciate nature, which contributes to more respect for nature (den Braven, 2017). Staatsbosbeheer argues that it is important to create public support for conservation and appreciation of nature, because without public support there will not be financial support as well (Berndsen, 2017). The role of the MuseumEiland concerning this social impact of tourism is informing and educating tourists about the cultural heritage of the Biesbosch, which also creates understanding and respect for the origin of the Biesbosch (van Beek, 2017). According to WSV Biesbosch, respect for the Biesbosch is practically integrated within their members; many of them grow up sailing through the Biesbosch and respect for the nature and the Biesbosch is not only self-evident, but also passed on from generation to generation. They consider the Biesbosch to be their own backyard and treat it as such (van Dijk, 2017).

Stagnation of quality visitor experience

The visitor experience is very important to the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer (den Braven, 2017; Berndsen, 2017). With increasing tourists visiting National Park De Biesbosch, the experience of a quiet Biesbosch will be derogated, especially at popular hours and on the weekends. The Parkschap perceives the impact of tourism on the quality of the visitor experience to be high, and very important to manage (den Braven, 2017). Without proper management, different user groups may have a bad experience in National Park De Biesbosch. Staatsbosbeheer also actively tries to improve the visitor experience through zoning and accounting for different user groups, so through this the visitor experience can be maintained (Berndsen, 2017). Still, with more tourists visiting National Park De Biesbosch this social impact is important and sometimes difficult to manage. Van Beek (2017) and van Dijk (2017) also acknowledge that during popular hours the Biesbosch can feel like being overcrowded. Van Beek tells that it is important to manage this, but he also mentions that this can be very difficult (2017). However, van Dijk perceives this not as a major problem, because most of the time you will feel like being alone in National Park De Biesbosch (2017).

Disturbance of peace and quiet local residents

The presence of tourists in the Biesbosch region can disturb the livelihood of local residents. There is consensus among the stakeholders concerning this impact, and when developing new facilities they account for local needs (den Braven, 2017; Berndsen, 2017). However, they do not perceive this to be a major impact, because few people live in National Park De Biesbosch self, and people living near the national park are not effected much by the presence of tourists. An increase in visitors might have more negative impact on the livelihood of local residents, so the stakeholders are aware of this, but in the foreseeable future this is not conceived as a worrying impact. Van Beek however mentions how during a meeting, the municipality of Werkendam emphasised that National Park De Biesbosch

should not become an attraction like the Efteling, a very popular theme park in the Netherlands (van Beek, 2017). So there is concern to some degree from local residents concerning the direction National Park De Biesbosch is going. One specific group of people, according to van Beek, are religious people living in the Biesbosch region. They value their Sunday rest, so for them the many tourists visiting the area in the weekend can be experienced as more problematic. However, not many people are actually disadvantaged according to van Beek (2017).

Social control

When more tourists are visiting National Park De Biesbosch on popular days, surveillance can be difficult, according to all stakeholders. Misconduct of tourists can put pressure on the environment, and may decrease the experience other visitors have. Van Dijk mentions how all of the members of WSV Biesbosch will feel social control throughout each other and will point each other out on asocial behaviour (2017). But tourists renting a boat do not feel this social control of the aquatics association and sometimes lack responsibility when sailing through the Biesbosch. Their behaviour can have an effect on other visiting tourists, stimulating asocial behaviour (van Dijk, 2017). However, most inappropriate behaviour happens on land on the side of Dordrecht (van Beek, 2017; van Dijk, 2017, den Braven, 2017) and the more vulnerable core of the Biesbosch is more difficult to reach, especially when not in possession of a boat, therefore better protected (van Beek, 2017). Still, misconduct of tourists is a concern for all stakeholders and is difficult to manage, because of the vast amount of unsupervised nature across National Park De Biesbosch. Although there is not enough manpower or money to supervise important (den Braven, 2017; Berndsen, 2017; van Beek, 2017), it is also not possible to have surveillance across the whole national park. This is a social impact of tourism that concerns all stakeholders. Tourists do not necessarily experience asocial behaviour of other tourists (tourist 1, 2 & 3, 2017), but one tourist says that sadly but true, the only way to prevent people from doing things they shouldn't be doing, is when they know they can be caught (tourist 1, 2017).

Regarding future expectations, an increase in visitors at National Park De Biesbosch will lead to a loss in visitor experience if not well managed according to Berndsen (2017) and den Braven (2017). Also, the more tourists visiting National Park De Biesbosch, the harder it becomes to provide social control and supervision, according to all stakeholders. Especially the perceived prospect of growing visitor numbers when there is a limited availability of money and manpower for supervision is perceived to be a serious problem for the safety and control on misconduct at the Biesbosch. When tourism further develops in National Park De Biesbosch, peace and quiet of local residents, especially of religious communities, might be put under more pressure. For now, this is not an impact stakeholders mention to be actively worried about. Possibilities to change the expected outcomes of current impacts might be the further development of respect for nature among visiting tourists.

5.6 Conclusion

Concerning the perceived impact of tourism, the stakeholders seem to be very well informed about the possible impacts tourism can have on the environment, economy and socio-cultural livelihood in the Biesbosch region. Also, they seem to be equally informed, because in general lines there is consensus about which impacts of tourism exist and the severity of them. They take all impacts seriously, but also realistically, meaning that they have a rather positive outlook on these impacts tourism can have. The general principle that underlines most opinions concerning the tourism

impacts is that the nature of National Park De Biesbosch is resilient and cannot easily be disturbed by the current levels of tourism. Even at the most popular hours, when the Biesbosch is rather overcrowded, they see no serious harm in the pressure this puts on the environment, economy and socio-cultural livelihood. The nature of the Biesbosch is resilient and not easily disturbed, and the flora and fauna will adapt and flourish when it is calm and quiet again, which is the majority of the time. The level of pollution is not causing any alarm and is even relatively low. The local economy mostly profits from many visiting tourists, although there is no consensus among the stakeholders concerning if there is actual contribution to the local economy yet, or just on paper. Negative economic impacts can be relatively easy handled or even averted. The socio-cultural livelihood seems almost indifferent to the current state of tourism in the Biesbosch area, not experiencing disturbances during the week and only in some cases during popular hours. The religious community might experience disturbance to a higher degree, so that is something that should be accounted for, but it does not seem to worry the stakeholders that much. Perhaps the only impact that is a challenge is the social control; finding ways to supervise National Park De Biesbosch and ensuring appropriate conduct without having the money or manpower to do so. Perhaps the positive social impact, contributing to respect for nature, might become useful in ensuring this.

In terms of the foreseeable future the main perceived prediction of development among stakeholders is an increase in tourists visiting National Park De Biesbosch. Although current ways of managing impacts of tourism on environment, economy and socio-cultural livelihood seem sufficient according to the stakeholders, they do acknowledge that when increased tourism increases pressure on the Biesbosch, they will have to maintain or even improve their level and quality of management of tourism impacts in order to keep sufficient control of the tourism impacts.

Chapter 6 Applied concepts of sustainable tourism

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents what the applied concepts of sustainable tourism are at National Park De Biesbosch. The structure of this chapter will follow the six defined dimensions of the conceptual model, derived from dividing the two core concepts conservation and sustainable development over the three dimensions environment, economy and socio-cultural livelihood. The goal of this chapter is to present which concepts of sustainable tourism are applied how by the stakeholders of sustainable tourism at National Park De Biesbosch.

6.2 Conservation

6.2.1 Conservation of environment

At National Park De Biesbosch, sustainable tourism management of conservation of environment should in principle: conserve the environment, reduce impact on environment, engage all stakeholders in conservation, provide training and capacity development and effectively communicate the area to users.

The parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer manage visitor flows, activities and behaviour in sensitive areas and sites through zoning (den Braven, 2017; Berndsen, 2017). Den Braven explains zoning simply as keeping harmful activities as much as possible away from sensitive areas (2017). Through a zoning plan that regulates the sustainable management and spatial planning of tourism in National Park De Biesbosch, the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer manage the visitor flows, activities and behaviour. To apply zoning effectively, visitors are divided into user groups, predicting their expectations and behaviour in National Park De Biesbosch. Based on these user groups, which were investigated by research group NRIT (2009), the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer have a good view on the background of visitors. Apart from keeping activity away from sensitive areas, zoning does also consist of creating alternative areas for activities from certain harmful user groups (den Braven, 2017), and by keeping different user groups from conflicting each other's experience (Berndsen, 2017). Interesting to notice is how at MuseumEiland, the extensive use of different user groups is not perceived to be very helpful in the end in controlling tourists, because ultimately visitors cannot be defined completely by colour labels and categories, according to van Beek. He argues that instead of focussing all our energy on creating extensive zoning plans and steering visitors through zoning based on which group they are, it would be better to simply make them aware of the reason this steering is applied. By simply telling straight away why certain areas are closed for example, this will have more effect than zoning without explaining why, van Beek believes (2017). However, zoning to a certain degree is a good way to protect vulnerable nature, but when applying zoning principles, also explain the reason behind it, people will appreciate it van Beek argues (2017).

All stakeholders actively try to reduce their impact on the environment of National Park De Biesbosch, with different degrees of effort and success. WSV Biesbosch has improved their sustainability by applying sustainable alternatives at its clubhouse, like having renewable energy,

energy-efficient lights and waste recycling (except for plastic recycling, that is not possible there) (van Dijk, 2017). The only subject they do not actively pursue is the transition towards more electrical boat use. This mostly has to do with the fact that boats are large investments for most people, and making an extra investment in electrical motors is not something all members of WSV Biesbosch can afford (van Dijk, 2017). At MuseumEiland, the recent development of their new building was done sustainably, by accounting for their impact on the nearby environment. However, according to van Beek most of these actions were mandatory due to construction legislation and therefore not so much the result of their own preference to construct sustainable (van Beek, 2017).

The Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer work together with local businesses to improve their environmental management. By certifying local businesses for their sustainable practices they encourage local businesses to join in this certification process. The Parkschap encourages local businesses to obtain the Green Key certification for tourism facilities on land, and to a lesser degree to obtain the Blue Flag, a certification for marina and beaches. By promoting these Green Key tourism businesses, the Parkschap encourages this participation in reducing impact on the environment by local businesses. Van Dijk and van Beek both describe how responsible behaviour regarding the Biesbosch comes naturally for people that live together with the Biesbosch, and that concerning their own organisations, they do not need an external motivation to behave sustainable (2017).

In the conservation of the environment of National Park De Biesbosch many different stakeholders are engaged. Staatsbosbeheer, as environmental manager, works together with different government bodies in achieving conservation. Also, the Parkschap has initiated bilateral agreements with local tourism businesses, with reciprocal rights and duties concerning sustainable tourism including the obtaining of Green Key or Blue Flag certification (den Braven, 2017; van Dijk, 2017). This way the Parkschap involves local businesses in the conservation of National Park De Biesbosch. The MuseumEiland has no involvement with policy making regarding the conservation of nature (van Beek, 2017), and although they do try to perform sustainable, their engagement in the contribution to conservation of environment is limited to their individual activities. Official engagement of user groups or individual visitors is minimal, both in conservation and in sustainable development of environment.

The Parkschap provides the possibility for tourism businesses to become host of the Biesbosch through training courses, meaning they become sustainable businesses that are ambassadors of the Biesbosch area. Through a multi-day training course they obtain this status, but their ambassadorship is not without obligation: through a bilateral agreements with reciprocal rights and duties concerning sustainable tourism the Parkschap is the first national park authority in the Netherlands to officially register this agreement (NP De Biesbosch [a], 2017). Also the Parkschap gives the opportunity for local residents and people in general to become a qualified volunteer guide through a training course, enabling them to provide guided tours for visiting tourists (den Braven, 2017; NP De Biesbosch [b], 2017).

The effective communication of the Biesbosch area is regulated through the posting of information panels across National Park De Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017) and recognisable posts at entrances to National Park De Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017). Local businesses and residents also provide qualitative information for tourists regarding the Biesbosch area, through the ambassadorship of local tourism businesses (NP De Biesbosch[a], 2017) and tours by qualified guides (NP De Biesbosch[b], 2017). Specific information tailored for visitor groups of special interest like young people, schools and students is provided through guided tours that account for the interests of these user groups.

An important application of conservation through tourism is the establishment of Beleef&Geef de

Biesbosch (experience and contribute the Biesbosch), a program that engages local businesses into contributing to conservation through tourism activities (NP De Biesbosch[a], 2017). These local businesses can decide themselves how they want to implement this contribution, for example by opting for an extra 2 euros on the bill at a restaurant, or adding ten percent to an arrangement for cruising through the Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017). This charitable offence tries to let tourism directly contribute to the conservation of National Park De Biesbosch.

6.2.2 Protection local economy

The main protection of local economy through conservation is the conservation of environment. Local tourism businesses relying on the nature from National Park De Biesbosch, like renting companies, or paid excursions, all rely on the conservation of the environment of National Park De Biesbosch. Conservation of the environment therefore also implies the conservation of local tourism economy. The Parkschap applies the conservation of local economy by conserving the environment of the Biesbosch, and also by including local businesses in the conservation of the environment, as described in paragraph 6.2.1. Also, the constant presence of tourism in the Biesbosch region plays a role in job security within the tourism industry.

The protection of local economy is carried out by the Parkschap by encourages the certification of local tourism businesses. This contributes to conserving the environment of National Park De Biesbosch, and this in return also favours the continuation of these tourism businesses themselves, because when sustainability principles are applied to their business, this will improve the overall functioning of the business and makes them also more attractive for tourists (den Braven, 2017; van Dijk, 2017).

6.2.3 Protection socio-cultural livelihood

When tourism grows, this should not be at the expense of socio-cultural livelihood, meaning tourism should not disturb or create conflicts with the way of life of local residents.

The Biesbosch region is a cultural heritage to local residents, who work and live together with the Biesbosch region for many centuries. The contemporary increase of tourists visiting National Park De Biesbosch should not conflict with the possibility for local inhabitants of the Biesbosch region to enjoy 'their' Biesbosch. Van Dijk, inhabitant of the Biesbosch region for almost all his life, also refers to the Biesbosch as "our Biesbosch", this is very common among local residents (2017).

In order to conserve the socio-cultural livelihood of local residents, it is important for the Parkschap to manage current conflicts between socio-cultural livelihood and tourism and to foresee possible future conflicts that might arise. The Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer apply the conservation of socio-cultural livelihood mostly through respecting the general development plans from local municipalities (den Braven, 2017, Berndsen, 2017). In these destination plans, the acceptable boundaries of what may happen with a certain area are made clear, as decided by the municipality. By applying to these general development plans the conservation of socio-cultural livelihood is adhered to.

6.3 Sustainable development

6.3.1 Sustainable development of environment

Staatsbosbeheer is the responsible party for environmental management of National Park De Biesbosch, controlling potentially damaging developments. Berndsen describes that economic development is encouraged, unless there is reason to believe it will damage the environment of National Park De Biesbosch (2017). Because of its status as national park, all spatial developments by municipalities need to be in line with the spatial development planning of National Park De Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017). Through this spatial planning, the location, type and design of tourism developments is also regulated: without permission from National Park De Biesbosch for certain touristic developments, these plans will not be pursued (Berndsen, 2017). Only after appropriate changes address the conflict between tourism development and the environment successfully, these development plans can be pursued.

During the recent development of the new building for MuseumEiland, the possible impact of this development was accounted for, keeping in mind the impact their development had on the nearby environment (van Beek, 2017). Given the fact that their location is in the centre of the Biesbosch, they also have integrated their building into the environment by for example implementing grass on their rooftops, as can be seen on the picture (6.1) below.



Picture 6.1 Entrance of new building MuseumEiland, integrated into the surrounding environment (Lanting, 2016).

Apart from policies protecting the environment of National Park De Biesbosch from harmful touristic developments, engagement of other stakeholders is also present in sustainable development. The general managing body from Parkschap Nationaal Park De Biesbosch includes Staatsbosbeheer and the municipalities Dordrecht, Werkendam and Drimmelen in decision making, creating opportunity for dialogue concerning touristic developments (den Braven, 2017). However, the municipality of Sliedrecht and the provinces of South-Holland and North-Brabant no longer participate in this managing body starting January 2018, thinning the amount of government bodies that actively participate in planning of sustainable development. Local residents and businesses are represented partly through their municipalities, but actual direct participation of local residents and businesses in

planning for sustainable development is lacking. A joint initiative of Staatsbosbeheer and the municipality of Drimmelen together with local businesses and tourists called Voortuin van de Biesbosch (Front yard of the Biesbosch) tried to promote tourism in Drimmelen, by engaging local tourism businesses and local residents in planning activities. However, this initiative did not lead to desired results (van Hooff, 2013). Other bodies engaging local residents or businesses in actual planning of sustainable development do not appear to exist. However, stakeholders that are not included in the decision making of official managing bodies can still let their voices be heard. The meetings of the general management body from the Parkschap is openly accessible for anyone that is interested, which is an opportunities for stakeholders that are left out initially in spatial planning. Also, the Parkschap organises informal breakfast meetings for local businesses, creating an opportunity to let their voice be heard (den Braven, 2017).

The Biesbosch federation is a body that represents almost all aquatic associations. The Biesbosch federation meets several times a year, and attends the public meetings from the general management of the Parkschap (Biesboschfederatie, 2017). Although this seems as a good starting point for the management of National Park De Biesbosch to gain insight in needs of user groups, there is no official policy to structurally receive feedback from the user groups. Better integration of such feedback could be really helpful in the determination of how sustainable development initiatives could be carried out, to gain maximum usage of such initiatives. An example is the placing of three electrical power outlets within National Park De Biesbosch, for charging electric boats and bicycles. These power outlets turn out to be barely used, and when they are used, it is often for the charging of electrical devices on board of fossil fuelled boats, instead of charging electric boats (den Braven, 2017; van Beek, 2017). The application of the sustainable tourism principle of engagement of stakeholders regarding environmental development is relatively mediocre concerning the engagement of user groups, however concerning governmental bodies the engagement is much more implemented.

Effective communication of the Biesbosch area concerning environmental development is, as with the communication concerning conservation of environment in paragraph 6.2, managed through education of local businesses and local volunteering guides. However, regarding the implementation of facilities, effective communication is lacking. As van Dijk (2017) mentions, projects like the development of electrical charging points are not finished when they are build and placed, but only when tourists are aware of its existence and actually use these facilities. This is an issue that needs to be addressed in order to effectively communicate about new developments. Online, Staatsbosbeheer is rather effective in reaching people with new developments. Staatsbosbeheer has a website called the boswachtersblog.nl (Forrest ranger blog) and has tweeting forest rangers, for example forest ranger Thomas van der Es. These forest rangers function as a public representative of the Biesbosch, they share updates and 'vlogs' about the area and its new developments using social media.

The Parkschap continuously tries to improve their sustainable tourism practices, for example by engaging in a learning process with other estuary national parks in the STEPS programme (Parkschap, 2011). With courses they organised for each other, and comparing best practices, this leads to a better understanding of sustainable tourism and its governance within estuary national parks similar to National Park De Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017).

6.3.2 Sustainable development local economy

Sustainable tourism can contribute to viable local tourism economy, mainly by creating more customers for the tourism businesses and by creating jobs. The Parkschap facilitates this by engaging in partnerships between them and local businesses (den Braven, 2017). Staatsbosbeheer also acknowledges that local tourism can be improved through tourism, and they apply this by creating value together with local businesses (Berndsen, 2017). An example of this is the 'Voortuin van de Biesbosch' project, in which Staatsbosbeheer worked together with local tourism businesses for improvement of tourism in municipality Drimmelen. However, eventually this project was not fairly successful (van Hooff, 2013).

By improving the visitor experience of tourists, the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer also strengthen the local prosperity. An example is when visitors know that it is possible to spot beavers in the Biesbosch, they would love to go on an organised boat trip to spot them, using the tour boat of a local tourism company. By improving the tourism experience, more and better use of tourism businesses are the result. One stakeholder thinks differently about the application of this principle, because as van Beek mentions, economic development was promised several times in the recent history of the Biesbosch, but did not happen (2017). As example he mentions several years ago, there were reasons to believe an increased need for accommodation would develop in the Biesbosch due to increasing visitors. However, a growth in the need for accommodation did not occur back then, therefore not contributing to local economy. Some investments were already made (van Beek, 2017), therefore this principle even had a negative impact on economic growth.

Through the STEPS programme the Parkschap engaged in, they also learned about the establishing of partnerships with local entrepreneurs (den Braven, 2017), contributing to their continues improvement.

6.3.3 Sustainable development of socio-cultural livelihood

By strengthening the economic viability of local tourism businesses, the prosperity of local community is also positively affected in many cases, because the local tourism businesses employ local residents. This way, the active pursuing from the Parkschap to improve economic viability, they also create prosperity of local communities.

Ensuring social cohesion however is a more difficult topic, which the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer do try to address, for example by monitoring existing and potential conflicts between different user groups of National Park De Biesbosch. The possible disturbance of local residents by tourism activities is something the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer try to address, by anticipating, monitoring and minimising any existing or potential conflicts that might occur between tourism and local residents.

One specific group of interest is the religious community that values their Sundays rest. Although not being perceived to be a major problem, this is a conflict between tourism and social-cultural livelihood. At Parkschap they try to avert these possible conflicts beforehand, by thinking about the balance between the touristic development, and the possible disturbance of local livelihood. Also, the degree of perceived disturbance varies from person to person (den Braven, 2017), for one local inhabitant might not bother with a parking lot next door, and others already feel disturbed by tourism when a tourists walks past the back yard (den Braven, 2017). Ultimately, the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer try to constantly account for possible conflicts between tourism and socio-cultural livelihood. A way of approaching possible conflicts, is by engaging local residents and tourists into

spatial planning development plans. Perhaps the effective communication of spatial development plans with local residents might create more understanding among them.

6.4 Conclusion

It can be concluded that both core-concepts conservation and sustainable development are applied in the sustainable tourism management of National Park De Biesbosch and that active participation of all stakeholders in most situations is valued and strived after. When zooming in on these two core concepts, it turns out that at every environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimension, appropriate sustainable tourism management is applied, as compared to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism principles and key-topics. The only subjects where application of sustainable tourism management can use an improvement is with the lacking of structural engagement of stakeholders in planning and managing bodies. Also, the mismatch of sustainable development projects or facilities and actual visitors needs is a waste of resources, because once the development of facilities is executed, that money cannot be spend a second time on the improvement and adaption of this facility.

Chapter 7 Planning objectives, translated into activities

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the stakeholders' intended planning objectives concerning sustainable tourism and show how these planning objectives are translated into activities. This chapter will be structured by each key stakeholder and their planning objectives, resulting in five separate paragraphs and a conclusion.

7.2 Parkschap Nationaal Park De Biesbosch.

The Parkschap has many objectives concerning both the conservation and sustainable development of tourism and the environment of National Park De Biesbosch.

Concerning conservation, the Parkschap expressed the following objectives. First, den Braven mentions the establishment of public support. National Park De Biesbosch should be worth it for tourists to visit the national park, and for tourism businesses to engage in partnerships and establish their business in the Biesbosch region. To translate this into action, the Parkschap actively tries to create more partnerships through the Hosts of the Biesbosch programme with local businesses, and to educate more local tourists to become a qualitative volunteer guide. More broadly, the Parkschap rooted for the title of Nationaal Park van Wereldklasse (national park of world-class), a national competition organised by the Dutch government to promote qualitative nature in the Netherlands (den Braven, 2017). They received the jury-price, placing them at the top 3 of rewarded national parks in the Netherlands. This should contribute to their visibility among the competition of national parks in the Netherlands, and with the received reward of €300.000 they can continue to implement more projects and facilities in order to improve user experience and therefore the establishment of social support (den Braven, 2017).

Also, concerning conservation, the Parkschap wants to create more ownership by tourists and local residents, meaning that tourists feel more responsible for their own part in taking care of the Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017). For example among local businesses, National Park De Biesbosch can contribute to more healthy employees, and when local business realise that they should feel more responsible for the Biesbosch, also for the benefit of their own business. Also among tourists the Parkschap wants to create more ownership, in the hope they will feel more responsible. This does not only concern their responsible behaviour when in National Park De Biesbosch, but also that they will co-finance the conservation and development of National Park De Biesbosch. The parkschap has translated this into action by establishing a partnership with local businesses called the Beleef&Geef de Biesbosch fund, a fund where local businesses let tourists voluntarily pay a contribution to the conservation of National Park De Biesbosch.

The last mentioned objective concerning conservation is the supervision, enforcement and control of misconduct in National Park De Biesbosch. At certain areas near Dordrecht misconduct of tourists is a growing problem, especially because there is not enough money or manpower to manage this development. The problem of not having enough money or manpower as partly solved for the short term, by educating BOAs to become the supervisors in National Park De Biesbosch. They take the roll as either law-enforcement, or as forest ranger in the Biesbosch. However, this is a short term solution, because although doing the job, BOAs are not qualified enough to do the job policeman and forest rangers should be doing.

Concerning sustainable development, the Parkschap has used the recently acquired prize money from the 'Nationaal Park van Wereldklasse' competition to invest in sustainable development of the following objectives.

First, the development of multi-day arrangements in the Biesbosch region. To promote tourism and increase the income from tourism, the offer of multi-day arrangements should be increased, according to den Braven (2017). For example by establishing accommodation in the Biesbosch region, or even by adding the Biesbosch to the list of possible revalidation resorts for recovering patients. This process is still fairly new, so not many of these objectives are already translated into actual activities. One project that has already been established, is the multi-day accommodation in the Ecolodge, an off-the-grid floating lodge within National Park De Biesbosch, as accommodation for overnight tourists. This is established in cooperation with Stayokay Dordrecht, the largest accommodation near the Biesbosch and bearer of an European ecolabel. Together they run the ecolodge and it is popular among tourists; booking needs to be done almost half a year in advance (den Braven, 2017; Slapen op de Ecolodge, 2017).

Another objective is the improvement of over water connections throughout the Biesbosch. Especially the connection from the South can use some improvements (den Braven, 2017; van Beek, 2017). Already there are some pilots with small ferries maintaining connections (den Braven, 2017, Parkschap [a], 2017), but eventually tourists should be able to navigate through the whole Biesbosch area over water using mostly ferries.

Further objectives that still need to be fully implemented are the establishment of new governance, since Sliedrecht, South-Holland and North-Brabant retreated from the Parkschap management. Also, creating a more detailed users map of all user groups and their area in the Biesbosch (den Braven, 2017), and the establishment of three nature development projects (den Braven, 2017; Parkschap [a], 2017; Parkschap[b], 2017).

7.3 Staatsbosbeheer

Staatsbosbeheer applies the objectives 'Bescherm, Beleef en Benut' (protect, experience and gain profit) throughout the Netherlands concerning the management of nature (Berndsen, 2017). This also counts for the Biesbosch region.

The formulated objectives of Staatsbosbeheer are in general that priority areas like the National Parks of World-class, areas near the big rivers, the green metropole and Natura 2000-areas need a quality impulse (Berndsen, 2017). Until recently, Staatsbosbeheer has managed all their nature relatively equally, resulting in relatively quality of nature. Now Staatsbosbeheer wants to improve the nature, infrastructure and recreation possibilities in these formulated priority areas, and the quality is measured by the grade visitors give to this nature. They are striving for an eight as result. More specifically concerning National Park De Biesbosch, the following objectives are formulated (Berndsen, 2017).

Work demand based

Staatsbosbeheer wishes to improve visitor experience of tourists in National Park De Biesbosch, by working more demand-based, therefore knowing what the visitors want and where to offer these possibilities. By applying this to zoning, this will subsequently improve the conservation of environment in National Park De Biesbosch, and increase the visitor experience, contributing to local prosperity (Berndsen, 2017).

To translate this into action, Staatsbosbeheer will start a user panel in 2018, which works as an advisory council consisting of actual users, who contribute on a managing level to the management of the nature of Staatsbosbeheer. This way stakeholders at a visitor level will actually gain influence in the management level. Also, to improve zoning and the visitor experience in general, Staatsbosbeheer will start educating their forest rangers in a course called Customer Journey, teaching the forest rangers to understand and deliver what visitors want to experience (Berndsen, 2017). Also, to improve the visibility of possibilities in the Biesbosch, Staatsbosbeheer wants to encourage and facilitate more Visitor Generated Content, for example on online platforms as TripAdvisor, where visitors are enabled to share and recommend what they value in National Park De Biesbosch (Berndsen, 2017).

Opening up of agricultural area:

By opening up the agricultural area, Staatsbosbeheer tries to improve the connection between National Park De Biesbosch and its surrounding area (Berndsen, 2017). This is mainly because there are many more possibilities in the agricultural area to regulate visitors, without worrying about damaging of quality nature. Berndsen calls this a second zone of zoning, first being the guiding of tourists away from vulnerable nature based on user groups. This second level of zoning catches visitors even before entering the National Park De Biesbosch, therefore regulating and reducing their impact on the environment of the Biesbosch region. Important to notice is that Staatsbosbeheer is not the owner of agricultural areas, so technically they cannot determine the destination of these areas, but stakeholders in the Biesbosch area have shared interest in the conservation and protection of the Biesbosch, so Berndsen thinks this will be possible. However, the actual implementation of these ambition are not yet started.

A last thought of Berndsen was that in the current system, there is only a subsidy as reward for the qualitative management of nature through the Nature Network Netherlands, but not for the qualitative management of tourism on itself. When there will be subsidy for qualitative nature as well, the tourism in the Netherlands will improve drastically, according to Berndsen.

7.4 Tourists

The tourists of National Park De Biesbosch are crucial in the actual functioning of sustainable tourism practices. If they do not 'bite', all efforts are without desired result. Although tourists until now do not have a role in the formulating and managing of objectives concerning the implementation and management of sustainable tourism, it is interesting to see what they would consider to be good objectives. When asked about their opinion on future development of tourism in the Biesbosch region, they all don't consider further development of tourism activity to be a current threat to the Biesbosch, and the current state and quality of the Biesbosch is perceived to be good (tourist 1, 2, 3, 2017). However, some developments are more worrying, like small signs of mass tourism (tourist 1, 2017). Generally, their opinion on which objectives should be accomplished was that growth of further activities was okay, but not when it grows too much. Developments like several large touring busses filled with Asian tourists (tourist 1, 2017) and large cruise ships through the Biesbosch would hurt the experience of the Biesbosch and perhaps more importantly, would cause the animals like the white-tailed eagle to live somewhere else (tourist 1, 2017). Therefore continuation and

stimulation of touristic activity in the Biesbosch according to tourists is a good objective, but it is important that the scale of such activities is tempered by the managing authorities.

7.5 MuseumEiland

The MuseumEiland does not have formulated their own objectives, but uses the general objectives of the Parkschap, as mentioned in their Toekomstvisie 2021 (future vision 2021) as guideline for their own activities. However, being a museum with a fixed entrance price and a small area to manage, as opposed to the openly accessible vast area like National Park De Biesbosch, these objectives are of another nature and therefore do not truly comply with the situation of MuseumEiland (van Beek, 2017). The organisation structure of the MuseumEiland is simple and flat; there is a director (van Beek), and a board. This causes way less white noise in the communication between management layers than is the case with the management of National Park De Biesbosch.

The objectives for the MuseumEiland self are relatively simple: maintaining an interesting museum that attracts more visitors each year. Their previous objective was to reach 52.000 visitors in 2017, and that number is already passed in the summer of 2017 (van Beek, 2017). More generally concerning tourism in National Park De Biesbosch, the MuseumEiland officially has not formulated any objectives concerning sustainable tourism, but their approach to managing the Biesbosch sustainable is applying an integral approach. Van Beek explanation shows that not specific objectives is not a lack of ambition to improve sustainable tourism, but simply the result of that what they consider sustainable tourism, already is embodied in their way of managing developments. Van Beek calls it “using our ‘gezonde verstand’ (gut)” when it comes to managing the MuseumEiland (van Beek, 2017), meaning that taking the environment and flora and fauna into consideration comes natural for them.

Also, van Beek believes that the steering of tourists in National Park De Biesbosch should be based less on forming policy, and more based on simply acting. As objective for the protection of nature, simply closing the area while showing an understandable explanation would suffice (van Beek, 2017), and should count for everyone, not based on user groups.

7.6 WSV Biesbosch

WSV Biesbosch does not have official policy stating their objectives concerning sustainable tourism, nor is there a verbal policy that they apply. However, this does not mean they do not care about improving sustainable tourism or about being ‘sustainable’ at all. Comparable with the approach of the MuseumEiland, in everything they do respect for nature is present. This is mostly because the Biesbosch is considered to be “our Biesbosch”, their own front yard. This is the ownership the Parkschap wishes to establish among all tourists visiting National Park De Biesbosch.

However, WSV Biesbosch does have some objectives. Their main objectives, as explained by van Dijk, are to promote the aquatics in the Biesbosch. This is written in their statutes. This could be changed to “promoting aquatics in a sustainable manner” according to van Dijk, but this would be mainly arbitrary and unnecessary, because this comes natural to all users of the Biesbosch at WSV Biesbosch.

A more concrete objective of WSV Biesbosch is to improve their waste management and

energy efficiency, by further recycling their trash. Being a social aquatics association, they also have a bar and up till now there is no possibility to recycle their glass.

The transition towards the use of more electric boats is a difficult objective. The use of more electric boats is desired, but WSV Biesbosch does not like the idea of mandatory transition. Because boats are large investments, the only way WSV Biesbosch wants this transition to happen is by eventually facing out the use of unsustainable boats, one boat at the time. Mandatory use of electric boats in the Biesbosch would cause major protests from their aquatics association, but van Dijk mentions to be interested in the opportunity for electric boats to sail in the areas of the Biesbosch that up until now are only allowing unmotorised boats. He also mentions that the implementation of Vaantjes (small fees for boat users in the Biesbosch) seems inevitable and that they are in favour of this fee, if they also get a voice in the destination of this acquired money.

The establishment and preservation of social control is another objective. Within WSV Biesbosch social control plays a major role in appropriate behaviour of its members, together with the fact that most of the members grew up with the Biesbosch as their back yard. However, people renting boats and visiting the Biesbosch do not feel this social control and individuals can disturb the Biesbosch by misbehaving, according to van Dijk (2017). Perhaps social control can contribute to appropriate behaviour of all tourists in the Biesbosch, by showing how people should behave by setting an example and by addressing people who don't behave appropriate. By engaging the younger generations in this behaviour, this social control and respectful behaviour will be conserved for generations to come.

7.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the main objectives of stakeholders of sustainable tourism management contribute to the guiding of tourists to pose the least conflicting impacts on the environment, economy and socio-cultural livelihood in the Biesbosch region. They do this by engaging many stakeholders, especially in the implementation of such objectives, and to a lesser degree in formulating these objectives with engagement of all stakeholders. Also, the improvement of quality of the visitor experience should contribute to a better experience in National Park De Biesbosch, and to more profit for the stakeholders involved in sustainable tourism.

Chapter 8 Room for improvement

The goal of this chapter is to present how the management of sustainable tourism could be improved, based on different and sometimes conflicting objectives and believes of key stakeholders in sustainable tourism management.

8.1 Engagement stakeholders in governance

Without the participation of the provinces South-Holland and North-Brabant, and the municipality of Sliedrecht, an increasing number of governmental bodies have retreated from active participation in the management of conservation and sustainable development of National Park De Biesbosch. An important condition of sustainable tourism is the engagement of stakeholders in managing conservation and sustainable development of National Park De Biesbosch. Without the active participation of these governmental bodies in the general management body of Parkschap Nationaal Park De Biesbosch, other ways of engaging them need to be created by the Parkschap. Also, local residents and businesses are represented partly through their municipalities, but actual direct participation in planning for sustainable development is currently lacking. If the Parkschap does value participation of these key stakeholders, they should address this limitation as appropriate. This should be evaluated by the Parkschap and Staatsbosbeheer in the foreseeable future. The start of the user panel Berndsen mentions (2017) should be a good first step in the engagement of all stakeholders in governance, on the condition that their structural position in management of sustainable tourism is actually guaranteed.

8.2 Appealing to needs of users

To counter situations where sustainable developments do not work or are not used as intended, creating an investment that does not pay off, the opinions and needs of the end users should be accounted for better. For example the development of the electric power points facility for electric boats and bikes throughout the Biesbosch turns out to not be used as intended, or used at all. This is an unfortunate waste of a potential sustainable initiative. The communication concerning interesting features in National Park De Biesbosch can use more attention and improvement, and initially it would perhaps be better if developments of such sustainable facilities were developed with better engagement of the eventual users, enabling a better fit to demands of the eventual users. Inclusive engagement of eventual users in developments of new facilities and policies, with special attention to actual needs and desires of all stakeholders and effective communication about these developments, might result in a better outcome of initiated developments of sustainable tourism managers.

8.3 Managing impacts tourism

The management of possible negative impacts tourism poses on the environment and to a lesser degree on the economy and socio-cultural livelihood in the Biesbosch region is very well organised. Also according to the key stakeholders, there is no need for worrying about the current impacts that tourism has on the Biesbosch region, as covered in paragraph 5.6. The only impact that seems to be more serious according to the key stakeholders, is the supervision, control and law-enforcement in the Biesbosch area. Due to a lack of money for actual policeman and forest rangers, BOAs try to do that work, with varying success and contentment of the stakeholders. Given the lack of available money and resources for the supervision in National Park De Biesbosch, and given the vast area of the Biesbosch which makes supervision difficult, even with more manpower, possibilities lay in the further improvement of social control among visitors. Perhaps the Parkschap could communicate more stories about good behaviour and set examples, like the users of WSV Biesbosch also try to do. Facilitating this could improve social control, which in turn can contribute to more respectful behaviour of visiting tourists.

Continuing on this potential that could be further exploited, is the use of social media in facilitating supervision and social control. Until now, various forest rangers of Staatsbosbeheer have a fairly large online gathering of people following and engaging in their updates on the area. This creates online social control, where all users of National Park De Biesbosch have the opportunity to share their positive or negative experiences with the behaviour of other visitors, or with the park in general. The online possibilities are endless crossing all social platforms, so further facilitating this potential for supervision, social control, user generated content, information provision and discussion; in short creating room for engagement - is definitely a development that needs further development. By integrating social platforms into a user based platform for all these activities could integrate the environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimension and develop into a new, fourth dimension: the online dimension.

Another possibly interesting development that can contribute to the realisation of sustainability goals is the growth of the sharing economy. People nowadays no longer only buy boats, but rent them or preferably share them with friends, neighbours or even complete neighbourhoods. This development bypasses the restriction that individuals do not all have the financial power to invest in electronic vehicles, and unlocks potential for a more wide and integrated use of electronic boats and other vehicles that only have a positive impact on National Park De Biesbosch.

8.4 Conclusion

Ultimately, the sustainable tourism management of National Park De Biesbosch is a great example of how combined effort and genuine believe in the importance of implementing sustainable tourism principles into management can result in a very well-managed, viable and enjoyable National Park, for now and generations to come.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The main question this thesis has tried to answer is how the stakeholders of tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch incorporate concepts of sustainable tourism in their planning objectives and activities and how can this be improved?

National Park De Biesbosch is governed by a joint management structure that includes almost all of the key stakeholders. The only key stakeholders to not have a structural place in management are the tourists and local residents. The main impacts of tourism on the environment, economy and socio-cultural livelihood of National Park De Biesbosch as perceived by key stakeholders are easily manageable according to the stakeholders. Only the lack of supervision causes concerns, and the promise of increasing numbers of tourists and the uncertainty of the impacts that will have. The two core concepts conservation and sustainable development are applied in sustainable tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch, with a lacking structural engagement of all stakeholders in planning and policy making. The main objectives of stakeholders are contributing to posing the least possible impact of tourism on the environment, economy and socio-cultural livelihood at National Park De Biesbosch. The engagement of stakeholders in executing management is very well done, but not when developing the policies this management is based on. The sustainable tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch can be improved by engaging stakeholders more when developing and implementing policy and management, by facilitating possibilities to be aware of tourists needs when developing new plans, and by increasing the social control and cohesion, possibly by creating an integrated online platform for full engagement of tourists and other stakeholders.

Ultimately, the execution of sustainable tourism management at National Park De Biesbosch is admirably good and well managed, with relatively minor flaws whom can be addressed with enough effort and collective perseverance. If one thing is clear, it is that the management of National Park De Biesbosch is an example for other national parks and that their genuine believe in the power of sustainable tourism has resulted in a very well-managed, viable and enjoyable National Park, for now and generations to come.

Chapter 10 Discussion and reflexion

During the research of this thesis, the governance of National Park De Biesbosch was 'under construction', meaning that with the current retreating of both provinces South-Holland and North-Brabant and municipality Sliedrecht, they had to think of new ways to organise their governance. Also, the complete structure of the Biesbosch as a national park is overshadowed by the forthcoming changes that deliberately are not covered in this thesis, namely the formation of National Park Delta Biesbosch-Haringvliet, or shortly NLDelta. This will definitely have positive influence on the sustainable management of the Biesbosch as an area, because now the second 'level' of zoning, initially by using agricultural land, can now be extended to a far more larger nature area, giving the managing bodies as they exist now far more possibilities to connect the nature. Given the fact that nature does not care about artificial boundaries, this is a positive development, key-stakeholders agree. However, for the managing part this means, again, a complete new phase of reinventing their governance structure.

An interesting point is made during my interview with den Braven, where she argued that only a small portion of local businesses is intrinsically motivated to become more sustainable, and the others mainly participate in these sustainability programs because it looks good and attracts customers. This arose the question: is it bad when intrinsic motivation to become sustainable is lacking? I personally think it is not per se a bad development, because no matter the reason, it is always good when businesses put effort into becoming more sustainable. Possible green washing is a bad development, but when you apply clear criteria for the certification, like Green Key does, the end results will be the same, no matter if it concerns intrinsic or economic motivation. But when it concerns a larger organisation like the Parkschap, it think it does matter. And I mean that in a positive way, because my experience with their thoroughness of the effort into becoming more and more sustainable, would have not happened if it was just for the bucks, for marketing purposes. Also the degree of willingness to cooperate with me while investigating their organisation and sustainability practices was admirable. This must be said about all interviewed stakeholders by the way, everyone was very open and honest with their opinions. In conclusion, I think nothing is wrong with being economically motivated for becoming sustainable, or even green washing in some instances, but when you want to reach the degree of sustainability in National Park De Biesbosch, intrinsic motivation must definitely be your reason to try.

Another interesting point was made by Berndsen, when confronting her with the question how impact of tourism should be reduced. Her initial reaction was another question, namely if it is necessary to reduce such impacts, or that it is more desirable to simply manage them, posing the greater question: is tourism only a threat to nature, or is it something that can empower each other and create mutual benefits? The initial question was an assumption of something I later experienced to not even being the case. Since that interview I have used this more neutral approach during the rest of the research.

Also interesting to discuss, is my choice of key-stakeholders and the effect this has on the outcome of this thesis. For example by choosing not to interview with government bodies, or with local businesses and such, the results of this thesis might have a bias in favour of the initial managing bodies, whose versions of the governance, impacts, concepts, objectives and possible improvements are more dominant in the final results. Would local businesses be equally positive concerning partnerships with the Parkschap, and how would they value the quality of educational programs? The absence of interviews with local businesses or government bodies (Staatsbosbeheer not

accounted) does not mean that information concerning these stakeholders was not acquired; by listening to the defined key-stakeholders and by reading online statements of these stakeholders I learned and applied a lot of their experiences in this thesis. However, the fact that these stakeholders were left out when interviewing, does have effect on the results of this thesis. So when interpreting these results the reader should be aware of that given bias.

In reflexion on the rest of my research and writing process, I think that more thorough results could have been possible if the theoretical background would have been more clear earlier on in the writing process. Also the choice of key stakeholders, partly based on their actual relevance, but also based on others not responding or me not reaching out to them, definitely has had its impact on the outcome of this thesis. However, I do think that the stakeholders that I did have interviewed, were all very important in providing good information and were very useful to help me gain a better understanding of the quite complex organisation structure (which truly is very complex to comprehend). Ultimately, I think that within the boundaries of this research the results are very interesting, and hopefully will lead to a better experience and engagement of tourists and local residents, and to the continuous improvement of best practices that sustainable tourism eventually is.

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Appendix

Appendix I: Topic list interviews:

- 1) Governance and stakeholders (who, what, interrelation, end responsibility, transparency)
 - a. Who are **responsible** for the sustainability of tourism? (**division responsibilities for degree of sustainability of tourism**)
 - b. What are you doing now for the sustainability of tourism and what are your responsibilities? (**current actions + own responsibility**)
 - c. Who is accountable for the sustainability of tourism? (**perceived 'end'-responsibility**)
 - d. Are the above issues transparent on who's responsible for what, the matter of responsibility, actions and accountability regarding sustainable tourism? (**perceived transparency of above matters**)
- 2) Sustainability issues
 - a. What are the impacts that tourism imposes on the sustainability of National Park De Biesbosch, according to you? (**knowledge of/perceived issues caused by tourism**)
 - i. **Environmental**
 - ii. **Social**
 - iii. **Economic**
 - iv. **Time**
- 3) Concepts of Sustainable Tourism
 - a. What can you do to make tourism more sustainable in National Park De Biesbosch? (**knowledge of sustainable tourism concepts**)
- 4) Goals/objectives
 - a. @ Policy stakeholder: What are your planning objectives concerning the improvement of sustainable tourism? (**planning objectives, goals to achieve**)
 - b. @ non-policy stakeholder: What are your goals for the future regarding improving the sustainability of 'your' tourism practices? (**behaviour goals to achieve**)
- 5) Evaluation:
 - a. Is there a discrepancy between your current actions and your future goals? (room for improvement) I.e. define the gap. (**self-reflection on gap between current- and future activities**)

Appendix II: Charter aims:

The underlying aims of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas are to:

- Increase awareness of, and support for, Europe's protected areas as a fundamental part of our heritage, that should be preserved for, and enjoyed by, current and future generations.
- Improve the sustainable development and management of tourism in protected areas, which takes account of the needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors.

The charter principles involve working in partnership, preparing and implementing a strategy, and addressing key issues. Charter protected areas make a series of commitments to achieve the underlying aims:

- 1* To involve all those implicated by tourism in and around the protected area in its development and management.
- 2* To prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for the protected area.
- 3* To protect and enhance the area's natural and cultural heritage, for and through tourism, and to protect it from excessive tourism development by:
- 4* To provide all visitors with a high-quality experience in all aspects of their visit, by:
- 5* To communicate effectively to visitors about the special qualities of the area, by:
- 6* To encourage specific tourism products which enable discovery and understanding of the area, by:
- 7* To increase knowledge of the protected area and sustainability issues amongst all those involved in tourism, by:
- 8* To ensure that tourism supports and does not reduce the quality of life of local residents, by:
- 9* To increase benefits from tourism to the local economy, by:
- 10* To monitor and influence visitor flows to reduce negative impacts, by:

Source: <https://www.europarc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2010-European-Charter-for-Sustainable-Tourism-in-Protected-Areas.pdf>

Appendix III: ECST key-topics and key-actions

KEY TOPICS	KEY ACTIONS
1) Protecting valuable landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Influencing land use planning and the control of potentially damaging developments; 2) Influencing the location, type and design of tourism developments; 3) Managing visitor flows, activities and behavior in sensitive areas and sites.
2) Supporting conservation through tourism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Encouraging visitors and tourism businesses to support conservation, through donations, volunteering and other activity; 2) Using revenues obtained from tourism-related activity to support conservation; 3) Establishing, supporting and promoting tourism-related investments, projects and activities that help to conserve the natural and cultural heritage.
3) Reducing carbon footprint, pollution and wasteful resource use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Working with tourism businesses to improve environmental management, including use of energy and water, waste management, and noise and light pollution; 2) Promoting the use of public transport and other alternatives to cars.
4) Providing safe access, quality facilities and special experiences of the protected area, available to all visitors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Providing a wide range of access opportunities, with attention to safety and risk management; 2) Improving the quality of visitor facilities and services; 3) Providing visitors with specific tourism offers which involve discovery, interpretation and appreciation of the area's special natural and cultural heritage; 4) Providing facilities and information for visitors with special needs.
5) Effectively communicating the area to visitors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensuring that marketing materials and activities promote the area effectively and responsibly; 2) Providing good quality and effective visitor information and interpretation; 3) Ensuring that tourism businesses and other local stakeholders are well informed about the area and provide relevant and accurate information to visitors; 4) Providing specific information and interpretation for young people, schools and student groups.
6) Ensuring social cohesion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Anticipating, monitoring and minimising any existing and potential conflicts with local residents; 2) Maintaining good communication and engagement between local residents, businesses, visitors and the protected area authority; 3) Encouraging and developing appropriate partnership activity with and between stakeholders.
7) Strengthening prosperity in the local community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Promoting the provision and identity of local produce and services and their purchase and use by visitors and tourism businesses; 2) Supporting the economic viability and performance of local tourism businesses and the provision of local employment in tourism.
8) Providing training and capacity building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Providing relevant training for staff of the protected area authority in sustainable tourism development and management; 2) Providing and encouraging relevant training and capacity building for tourism businesses and other stakeholders in sustainable tourism.
9) Monitoring tourism performance and impacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Monitoring of visitors – volumes, patterns, spending and satisfaction; 2) Monitoring of tourism businesses – performance and needs; 3) Monitoring of tourism impacts – on the environment, economy and community; 4) Monitoring progress in implementing the action plan.
10) Communicating actions and engaging with the Charter	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Communicating sustainable tourism actions and results to local stakeholders and more widely at a local, regional and national level; 2) Promoting and making visible the award of the Charter; 3) Engaging with EUROPARC and the Charter Network, including participating in related events and activities; 4) Taking steps for re-application and renewal of the Charter.

Source: EUROPARC (2015), *Good for Parks, Good for People, Sustainable tourism in protected areas*