

Greater than the sum of its parts

Strategic Stakeholder Dialogues in the Conservation of National Parks

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PREFACE

In business-society management the strategic stakeholder dialogue was introduced as a concept to shape the relationships with stakeholders, to ensure that private parties address both environmental and social responsibilities. Large businesses increasingly meet these increased social demands, which has become of strategic importance to their long-term viability and survival. In this thesis, a first step is made to look into the perspectives that the strategic stakeholder dialogue can offer in natural resources management. In this field of study it is also acknowledged that, to address pressing issues, the relevant stakeholders should co-operate to ascertain the sustainable management of these resources. Dutch National Parks were chosen as examples of natural resources, to investigate what perspective the concept of the strategic stakeholder dialogue offers in meeting the most important objectives.

Sustainable management of National Parks in the Netherlands has already been safeguarded under the umbrella of the IUCN-objectives, and is further laid down in Dutch legislation. Therefore, the somewhat harder aspects of the strategic stakeholder dialogue, regarding process agreements, seem to be not applicable. However, with regard to the softer aspects, which stress values such as co-operation, effectiveness, learning, ownership, participation and so on, the concept has a lot to offer. Dutch National Parks have been successful with relatively limited authorities and means, but there is still some work to be done. Not only by promoting the system of Joint National Parks, but also in the organization of the consultative bodies. By incorporating certain aspects of the strategic stakeholder dialogue into their organization, they could operate in a more efficient and decisive manner. Although the conclusions and recommendations are based on Dutch National Parks, I hope to have provided Enviu with recommendations to deal with stakeholders in unique natural areas in Latin-America.

I would like to thank my supervisors from Utrecht University, Carel Dieperink, and from Enviu, Wouter Kersten, for their patience and substantive contributions. I very much enjoyed conducting the interviews with the members of the consultative bodies from the four National Parks. Generally, they were enthusiastic, helpful and often sacrificed quite some time to answer my questions. Last, but definitely not least, I thank my husband, parents and brother and friends, for supporting me unconditionally.

SUMMARY

Introduction

The strategic stakeholder dialogue is a concept which originates from business-society management, and focuses on the recognition that both private parties and their stakeholders have the power to influence the profit-earning capacity of private parties. Therefore, managing their relationships with stakeholders adequately has become of *strategic* importance to private parties. Little research has been carried out with regard to the perspectives that the concept of strategic stakeholder dialogues can offer to natural resources management.

Research question and objectives

In this study the main research question is “Under which conditions is the tool the strategic stakeholder dialogue most fruitful in the conservation and management of National Parks and which measurements can be taken to increase the chance of success?”. Next to answering the research question, the objectives of this thesis are to learn from practice and to make recommendations to increase the chance of success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the conservation and management of National Parks.

Methods

First, the literature on strategic stakeholder dialogues was linked to the theories of strategic dialogues, interactive methods, process management and mediation and facilitation. This resulted in a list of 24 conditions for success, to assess to what extent the strategic stakeholder dialogue takes place in the consultative bodies of four National Parks: Schiermonnikoog, Oosterschelde, De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug. Per National Park 5 interviews were conducted with members of the consultative body: the independent chairman and secretary, a representative from a governmental body, a private owner or representative from a nature conservation body and, finally, a representative from an interest group. In addition, in a survey two key figures from the Foundation of Joint National Parks, and a random selection of stakeholders from the consultative bodies, were asked to review which conditions determine the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogue in the consultative body.

Results

National Park Schiermonnikoog

The stakeholder analysis pointed out that the most relevant stakeholders are represented, with the exception of the fishing industry. It is hard to assess to what extent the composition of the consultative body has determined the outcome of the decision-making processes. Today, as a result of regulation, large-scale cockle fishing is prohibited in the Wadden Sea. Although the case is relatively successful based on the presence of conditions for success, there is an area of tension between the islanders on the one hand and the professional bodies on the other hand. The islanders claim to be more involved with the National Park and to some extent they feel that after the establishment of Schiermonnikoog as a National Park, the government has 'taken over' their island, because they are restricted in carrying out traditional fishing and hunting practices.

National Park Oosterschelde

In the consultative body of Oosterschelde, which consists of 20 stakeholders, the most relevant interests, rather than all individual stakeholders, are represented. Most representatives occupy high positions in their organizations and they almost always attend meetings of the consultative body themselves. Some stakeholders represent conflicting interests, particularly fishery versus nature conservation interests. Therefore, it is quite an accomplishment that the consultative body is able to reach consensus. According to the interviewees the chairman succeeds in maintaining excellent relationships with the representatives, and also contributes to a good relationship between representatives. Problems are solved through attunement and consultation, rather than voting or using rules of the game. There is no need for explicit rules of the game and as such there are no conflict

resolution possibilities and the consultative body does not specifically offer the parties an exit option. The consultative body of Oosterschelde has an excellent chairman with strong communicative and strategic skills, who contributes to a large extent to its success. The case Oosterschelde can be considered to be very successful.

National Park De Biesbosch

In the consultative body of De Biesbosch almost only governmental bodies are represented. Interest groups are represented indirectly in the interest group council. De Biesbosch was a relatively successful case, but it struggled with a decreased interest among representatives. Besides, there were a large number of governmental bodies with responsibility in the larger Biesbosch area, which caused entanglement and obscurity. After the publication of a report which stated that the recreational pressure on De Biesbosch will strongly increase in the future, the consultative body decided to start an organizational change to reduce the number of organizations with responsibility. In the new governing body the executive committee of the consultative body will be merged with the executive committees of the two nature- and recreation boards. This new body has increased authorities and a decreased number of governmental bodies, which enables the development of a zone for recreational purposes around National Park De Biesbosch. In order to realize the ambitious plans for the larger Biesbosch area, the new governing body may increasingly need the co-operation of interest groups.

National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug

In the consultative body of Utrechtse Heuvelrug the most relevant interests and stakeholders are represented on a voluntary basis. Actual 'users' are represented in an interest group platform and there is a thorough co-operation and feedback between this and the consultative body. Although the representatives occupy high positions, they regularly send delegates to the meetings of the consultative body. Next to governmental bodies and nature conservation bodies, private owners of estates manage a considerable area of the National Park. The preconditions for the co-operation of the 27 private owners are that nothing can be compelled and that the government contributes to the management of the National Park with financial means. Because of this, it is vital that decisions are made through consensus, rather than voting or coercion. So far, the consultative body has been relatively successful in gaining sufficient support for the objectives.

Discussion and conclusion

From the four cases Oosterschelde is the most successful case. Deduced from this case and the umbrella-view from key figures and a random selection of stakeholders, the following conditions are determining in the success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the consultative bodies of National Parks;

- 1 In the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented;
- 2 Stakeholders in the consultative body occupy high positions in the organizations they represent;
- 3 Stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to a joint problem analysis and solution;
- 4 Stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation;
- 5 Stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making;
- 6 Both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented;
- 7 Stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents;
- 8 Despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues;
- 9 Stakeholders are familiar with the process agreements or rules of the game before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue;

- 10 The consultative body has sufficient time, human resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily;
- 11 Stakeholders that are member of the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet certain objectives; and
- 12 The presence of a chairman who is neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in the result of the decision-making process.

The concept of the strategic stakeholder dialogue fits into the conceptual framework of interactive governance, but the entire concept is not always fully applicable in the conservation and management of National Parks in the Netherlands. First, the consultative bodies were entirely dependent on the Ministry of LNV, but this has shifted to being dependent on the province for financial means and human resources. Second, the direction and trend of solutions is largely decided upon by government, which indicates that rather than a *strategic* stakeholder dialogue, a stakeholder dialogue takes place with regard to conservation and management. In this respect stakeholders in the consultative body of a National Park should be considered as *partners*, rather than *stakeholders*. Finally, when stakeholders engage in a regime that is dynamic and self-regulated and the outcome is by no means determined yet, it is likely that the conditions which refer to the protection of core values and the existence of process agreements are considered to be important, which is not the case in National Park conservation.

Recommendations

Measures should be taken to speed up the progress and speed of the process as decision-making proceeds slowly and sluggish. A first measure to prevent slow decision-making is to ensure that governmental representatives and other officials attend meetings of the consultative bodies themselves or send delegates with equal positions and mandates. An incentive towards increased participation of governmental and other officials is to make the items on the agenda more appealing and of strategic importance.

Decisions made by the consultative body are not binding and it cannot exert influence on unfavourable developments, therefore the consultative bodies should increasingly seek connection and co-operation with governmental authorities which determine the policy with regard to National Parks.

The consultative body has insufficient time, human resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily. Therefore, first, the secretariat of the consultative body should be reinforced. Second, it could also increasingly co-operate with the nature conservation bodies and look for duo-branding opportunities. Third, alike foreign National Parks, the Dutch National Parks could look into ways of generating more resources themselves.

At last, since there is no monitoring system, the consultative bodies should evaluate the course of affairs one-by-one with each stakeholder after a set amount of time. With the appointment of new chairmen, it is advisable to select a chairperson with a strong administrative, governmental background with an excellent set of skills, to facilitate increased co-operation with governmental bodies and other organizations.

I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Management of National Parks

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) distinguishes several types of areas that require protection. The most important are: Protected areas, National Parks, Regional or Nature Parks, Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites. National Parks are areas which are managed mainly with the aim of ecosystem protection and recreation. According to the IUCN (1994) a National Park is ‘a natural area of land or sea or both, designated to (a) protect the ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations; (b) exclude exploitation or occupation inimical to the purposes of designation of the area and; (c) provide a foundation for spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities, which must be environmentally and culturally compatible’.

In 1969 the Netherlands joined the IUCN and consequently started to protect important ecosystems, for instance by establishing National Parks. In the Netherlands a National Park is an area of at least 1000 hectares which is characterized by exceptional or outstanding natural value. They were established with four main objectives in mind; i) the protection and development of nature and landscape, ii) outdoor recreation, iii) education and iv) research. In the Netherlands there are 20 National Parks, of which the first two “De Hoge Veluwe” and “Veluwezoom” were established in the 1930s. The remaining eighteen National Parks have been established from the 1980s onwards by the successive ministers of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. For each National Park the Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality has set up a consultative body, in which the different stakeholders are represented. Provincial authorities have the responsibility of running the secretariat of the consultative body. Together the stakeholders have to develop a common vision for the area, which usually covers a 10-year period and is laid down in a management & development plan.

The consultative bodies of National Parks have formally no legal status and thus no formal authorities. They are financed by the province where the National Park is situated. The province receives a budget from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and it consequently divides and allocates these resources to rural development incentives and objectives. Next to being the main financier, the Ministry is also responsible for the functioning of the system of Dutch National Parks and the development of the nature conservation policy in force. National Parks are protected indirectly by the Spatial Planning Act (Wet Ruimtelijke Ordening) and the Dutch Nature Conservation Act (Natuurbeschermingswet 1998). The consultative body is responsible for the management, development and general functioning of the National Park, as is laid down in the management & development plan, which should be approved of by the Provincial Executives.

Many groups in society are involved in the conservation and protection of natural areas such as National Parks. These groups, or stakeholders, may have convergent, but also divergent opinions concerning the future of a National Park. In order to safeguard the conservation and protection of a National Park, but serve other interests as well, it is crucial that the stakeholders arrive at a common vision for the area. A useful tool to come to a solution amongst stakeholders seems to be to conduct a “Strategic Stakeholder Dialogue” (SSD). In the next paragraph the concept of strategic stakeholder dialogues will be elucidated.

1.2 Strategic Stakeholder Dialogues

Conducting a fruitful stakeholder dialogue is not easy and it depends on several factors. A stakeholder dialogue can actually only be fruitful if it is both strategic and longer term-oriented (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006). The most important features with regard to its objectives, participants and procedures are described below.

The main objective of a strategic stakeholder dialogue is to come to sustainable solutions for environmental and social problems through the input of a wide variety of stakeholders. Although it aims to develop longer-term win-win solutions, the parties of a strategic stakeholder dialogue must accept that participating might result in short-term win-lose situations for some. Participating in the process of a strategic stakeholder dialogue implies that parties foster a commitment to the implementation of the formulated agreements.

Strategic stakeholder dialogues do not only consist of meetings with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but with participants from all sectors from the state, market and civil society nexus, such as market parties, employees, shareholders, governments, local action groups, etc. In order for the dialogue to be successful, the participants must co-operate on a basis of trust and need to recognize one another's expertise and legitimacy. Mutual trust also implies that participants correctly represent the interests and views of their constituents. It is therefore crucial that participants are committed to the process at the highest levels of the organization. Most often the participants have diverging interests which they want to achieve at the end of the process. As all participants contribute to solving the problem by investing resources, it is important that they recognize each other as legitimate and respect one another's interests. In order to solve the problem successfully, which is of importance to all the participants, they need to be willing to reconsider own interests and may have to accept that not all of their interests will be achieved. During the process of successive dialogues, the aim is to integrate the represented views by the formulation of a new viewpoint.

Strategic stakeholder dialogues seek to establish common standards as a means to measure progress and facilitate coordination and implementation (Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006). Also, agreements need to be made on how participants deal with confidential information and how they need to report to their constituents and the media. During the dialogues participants disclose confidential information to one another and there is always a chance that some might only present that what suits their agenda best. In order to prevent false information an external party can verify provided information in advance of the process.

In this thesis a strategic stakeholder dialogue is defined as “an interactive and iterative process of constructive dialogues between actors from the state, market & civil society nexus concerning an environmental or social problem in order to achieve goal-coherence between actors”.

1.3 Research objectives & Relevance

1.3.1 Background

Nowadays, the challenges facing traditional government have become too complex and contradictory to be solved single-handedly by one party of the state, market and civil society nexus. The complexity refers to the government which is no longer able to ‘manage’ today’s society, which has become increasingly dominated by other parties that are equally - or more - powerful. Therefore, a trend occurs in which top-down control by government is being complemented by “Interactive methods”. “Interactive methods” refer to new ways of approaching collective problems, formerly dealt with solely by government, in which actors from, but also beyond government, such as market and civil society, are drawn into the process of solving collective problems. In the literature, “Interactive methods” are often named differently, of which “governance” has gained wide support from many political theorists and social scientists. A form of governance in environmental policy-making is the formation of a “co-operative management regime”, which involves several actors aiming to solve a specific environmental or social problem by collaboration. In co-operative management regimes, actors become involved in an interactive and iterative process of constructive dialogue, reflection on interests, negotiation with other interests, compromise between interests and finally arrive at an agreed solution.

1.3.2 Objectives

Aim of this study is to analyse what the characteristics are of a successful strategic stakeholder dialogue. Next to answering the research questions, an important objective of this thesis is to ‘learn from practice’. So far, the significance of strategic stakeholder dialogues is only known to business-society management. This thesis is a first step towards assessing if, and under which conditions the strategic stakeholder dialogue is a fruitful concept in the management of natural resources. Another objective is to formulate recommendations to increase the chance of success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the conservation and management of National Parks.

1.3.3 Scientific relevance

In general this thesis is linked to research concerned with designing new relations between the state, market and civil society nexus (Dubbink, 2003). A lot of this work is devoted to developing new mental models of social organization, which aim to increase the public responsibility of the market and to enlarge the role of civil society in solving social and environmental problems (Glasbergen, 1998). The strategic stakeholder dialogue is used as a tool in the communication process with stakeholders and is thus also linked to research on co-operative management regimes (Lafferty & Meadowcroft, 1996, Meadowcroft, 1998).

This thesis is linked to the topic “governance” of the research programme of the “Copernicus Institute for Sustainable Development and Innovation” of the faculty of Geosciences of Utrecht University. Its research activities are focused on the question how new societal arrangements influence social activities, processes and structures that could contribute to sustainable development. Not only does this require understanding of which social developments can affect the quality of the natural environment, but also of the best ways to manage these developments. According to the programme, liberal democratic societies consist of three domains - the state, market and civil society - which are only relatively autonomous, because they are simultaneously dependent on each another. With governing in the traditional sense targeted political interventions are made by public actors from the state, whereas governance refers to a style of governing in which a plurality of actors from the three domains are involved and where the boundaries between the public and private domains become blurred. In other words; governing relies on regulatory styles of steering and governance relies on steering in new societal arrangements. Governance is the main subject of analysis of the research programme, with a focus on its relationship with traditional governing mechanisms. It is at the centre where the state, market and civil society domains converge where, according the programme, modern governance for sustainable development can be situated. However, as the actors from the state, market and civil society are not used to co-operate, there is a need for learning processes in which the actors together can create a common viewpoint for specific problems and eventually might share their problem-solving capacities. Co-operation has a relatively voluntary character but does lead to contractual arrangements. As in the new societal arrangements “learning” is a crucial element, the way environmental problems are handled will evolve along with the process itself. The research programme for “governance” aims to contribute to the learning processes in the following ways (<http://www.geo.uu.nl/research/topics/governance>):

- by analyzing and evaluating (new) societal arrangements for sustainability issues; and
- by sustaining learning processes in and of new alliances for sustainability issues.

The present thesis is linked to both aims mentioned above. First, actors from the state, market and civil society nexus participate in new societal arrangements to develop a long-term vision which addresses objectives with regard to conservation, recreation and education for National Parks. New societal arrangements are analysed and evaluated *indirectly* by assessing whether the learning process and the outcome have been fruitful. Second, in this thesis the strategic stakeholder dialogue is evaluated as a possible useful tool to structure and facilitate communication and consensus-building between actors, to develop a sustainable solution for the future of the specific National Parks. In this sense a strategic stakeholder dialogue is also a learning process in which actors need to listen and communicate with each other, in spite of the absence of a mutual interests or even trust.

1.3.4 Social relevance

Enviu (Rotterdam) is a non-governmental organization which searches for applied sustainable solutions for environmental issues within the nexus of state, market and civil society. It supports the thought that, in order to solve complex environmental issues, actors need to cooperate instead of trying to solve problems single-handedly, since no actor has sufficient knowledge and resources to do so. Enviu focuses on involving young people with a social or economic background, as these people will form the next generation of leaders and executives. In doing so, Enviu increases the chances of “sustainable development” being incorporated in current and future decision-making. However, volunteers, students and young professionals with other backgrounds and from other branches are also invited to contribute to solving sustainability challenges. Its main projects are executed in the Netherlands and Latin America, primarily Chile, where for the latter it searches for developing sustainable strategies in unique wilderness areas to manage pressing environmental issues. Enviu considers the linkage of the eminent dimensions of sustainability - Planet (Ecology), Profit (Economy) and People (Social context) - to the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues (SHD) between the different sectors of society (Public, Private and Citizen and Non-profit), as the core of the solution process for sustainable development. The three dimensions visualized below (figure 1) are introduced by Elkington (1997) as the coherent concept “triple bottom line”. However, today, the three sectors of society increasingly overlap one another. The results of this study will therefore contribute to the ‘design of interaction’ between the three sectors. The present thesis can be placed in the middle of the right figure below, as profitable sustainable solutions can only be achieved if the traditional sectors engage in stakeholder dialogues. Furthermore, this thesis provides Enviu with information on how to approach strategic stakeholder dialogues in the conservation and management of natural areas, such as National Parks. Although the conclusions and recommendations are based on Dutch cases, Enviu can apply these in their projects abroad.

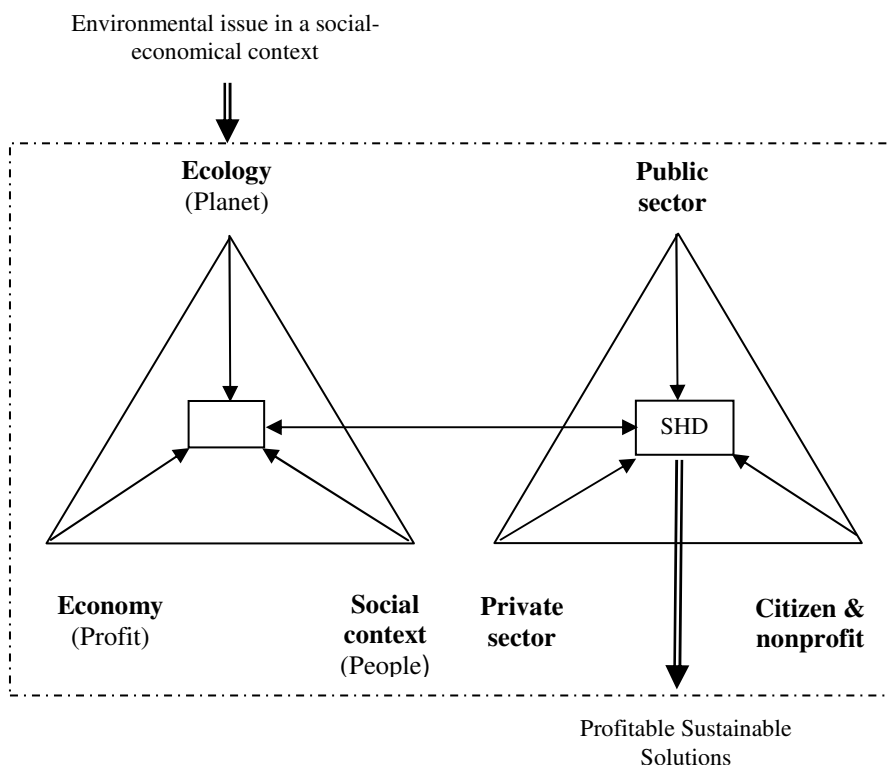


Figure 1 Triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997)

1.4 Research questions & Theoretical framework

1.4.1 Main and Sub research questions

The main research question is as follows:

“Under which conditions is the tool the “Strategic Stakeholder Dialogue” most fruitful in the conservation and management of National Parks and which measurements can be taken to increase the chance of success?”

In order to answer the main and sub research questions, several steps will have to be taken. Figure 2 (research framework) schematically illustrates the phasing of this study. As can be seen the study consists of five separate phases. In the first phase a literature review will be performed. Since the literature on strategic stakeholder dialogues is rather concise and mainly focuses on shaping the reciprocal relationships of businesses and their stakeholders, the review will be supplemented with literature on “strategic dialogues”, “interactive methods”, “process management” and “mediation and facilitation”. From these theories the conditions which embody the characteristics of successful strategic stakeholder dialogues will be deduced. Next, four National Parks (cases) will be selected which meet the selection criteria described in § 1.4.3. In the second phase a stakeholder analysis for each case will be performed. Aim of the stakeholder analysis is to reveal any discrepancies between the stakeholders who *are* represented and the stakeholders who *should be* represented in the consultative bodies of each National Park. In the third phase the four cases will be confronted with the defined conditions by means of conducting interviews and analysing documents. Interviews will be held with the independent chairman and secretary and with three relevant stakeholders per case. If possible annual meetings of the consultative bodies will be attended. In the fourth phase, each case will be analysed individually and when all the cases are evaluated the analytical data per case are compared with the other cases to detect the differences between cases. In the fifth phase, both the analytical data of the cases separately, as well as the analytical data of the case comparison, are used to draw conclusions and recommendations.

The main research question can be divided into sub research questions. Consequently, the sub research questions are divided into theoretical questions and empirical questions. Below each question the methodology used to answer the question is made explicit.

1.4.2 Theoretical questions

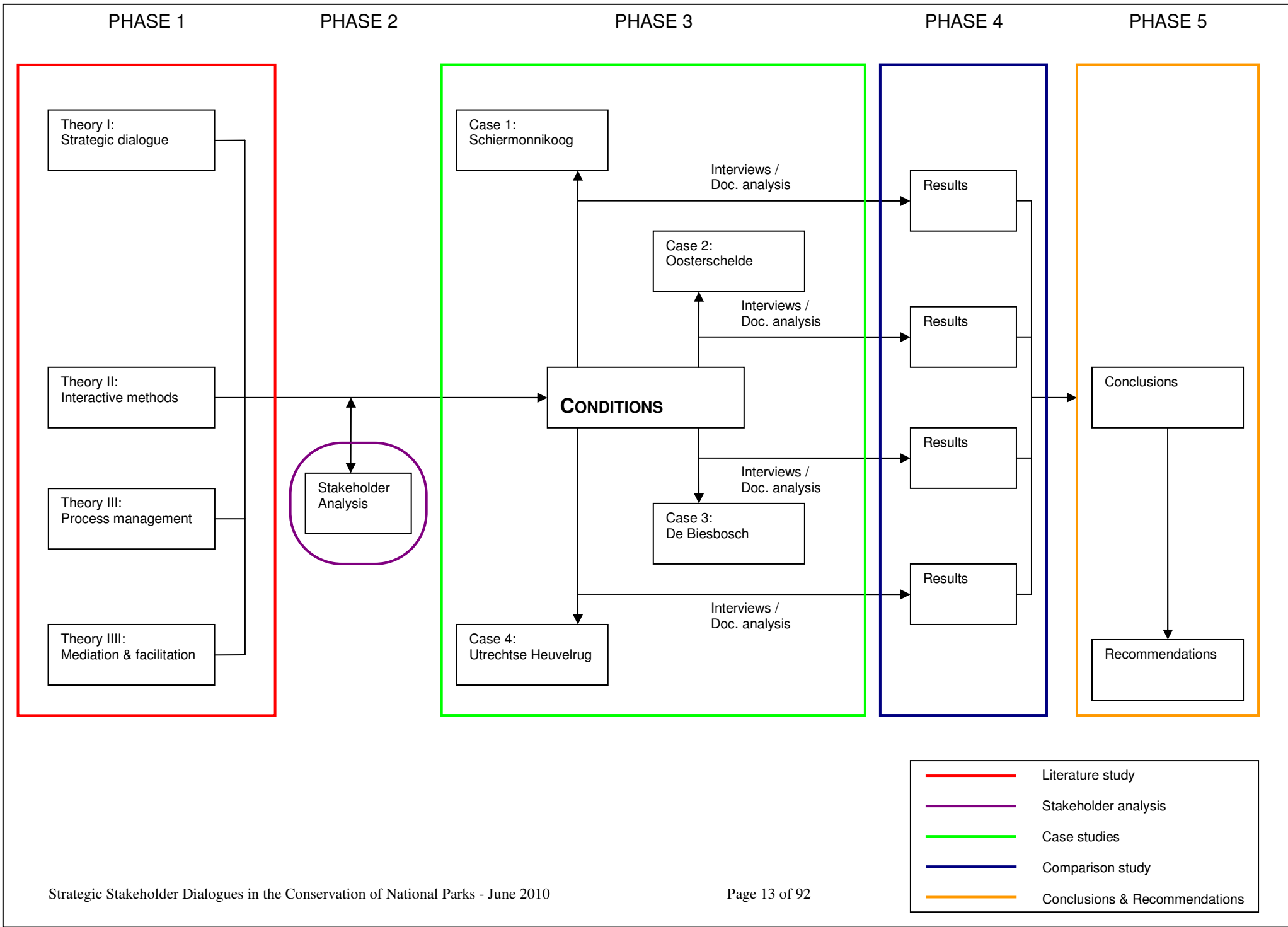
i) How did the concept “strategic stakeholder dialogue” materialize and which synonyms can be found in the scientific literature?

The main subject of study is the strategic stakeholder dialogue. In order to evaluate the tool the strategic stakeholder dialogue in the conservation and management of National Parks, it is important to understand where the concept comes from and which synonyms are used in the scientific literature. In the first phase a literature review will be performed in order to understand how the concept of “strategic stakeholder dialogues” developed and which synonyms can be found in the literature.

ii) Which conditions of success when performing a “strategic stakeholder dialogue” can be deduced from the theories of:

- a. “Strategic dialogues”?
- b. “Interactive methods”?
- c. “Process management”?
- d. “Mediation and facilitation”?
- e.

From these theories the characteristics which embody a strategic stakeholder dialogue are deduced and translated into conditions for success. In § 3.2 to § 3.5 the theories are further explored and it is explained why they are relevant to the concept of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and this thesis.



1.4.3 Empirical questions

To answer the main and sub research questions, four National Parks (cases) were selected. Selection criteria for the cases were:

- involvement of a wide range of stakeholders who represent a variety of interests;
- availability of a long-term vision for the area (a management & development plan); and
- availability and accessibility of sufficient information.

The four National Parks below meet the selection criteria:

National Park Schiermonnikoog

In the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog besides governmental bodies and nature conservation organizations, the local inhabitants of the island also participate, representing a variety of interests.

National Park Oosterschelde

In the consultative body of Oosterschelde 20 stakeholders are represented. They represent various interests, some of which seem conflicting at first sight, such as the fishing industry and nature conservation bodies and NGOs.

National Park De Biesbosch

National Park De Biesbosch is owned by State Forestry Service (Staatsbosbeheer) and the Directorate-General for Waterways and Public Works (Rijkswaterstaat). There is a tension between safeguarding high biodiversity on the one hand and facilitating recreational development on the other hand.

National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug

National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug is owned and managed by three nature conservation bodies, but a considerable area is owned and managed by 27 private landowners, which are strongly represented in the consultative body.

- iii) How are the strategic stakeholder dialogues organized during the decision-making processes and what are the results in the following cases?
- a. “Schiermonnikoog”?
 - b. “Oosterschelde”?
 - c. “De Biesbosch”?
 - d. “Utrechtse Heuvelrug”?

Since the future of each National Park is partly determined by the composition of stakeholders in the consultative body, a stakeholder analysis is performed and an assessment is made of how this composition has determined the outcome of decision-making processes. Per case, the stakeholder analyses are performed based on information on the composition of the consultative body and the five interviews with members of the consultative body. It results in an overview of the stakeholders which are represented and the stakeholders which should to be represented.

- iv) Which conditions have determined the success of “strategic stakeholder dialogues” in:
- a. “Schiermonnikoog”?
 - b. “Oosterschelde”?
 - c. “Biesbosch”?
 - d. “Utrechtse Heuvelrug”?

In order to evaluate the tool the strategic stakeholder dialogue it has to be determined to which extent the conditions for success deduced from the literature have been met by the four cases. This will be done by conducting five interviews; with the independent chairman and secretary (2 interviews) and with three of the most prominent stakeholders. In the consultative bodies of National Parks the most prominent stakeholders usually are governmental bodies (1 interview), private owners or managers from nature conservation bodies (1 interview) and interest groups (1 interview). In the interviews they

are asked to review to what extent the characteristics of strategic stakeholder dialogues are present based on an ordinal scale from 1 to 6¹. After having concluded the interviews it is possible to assess which conditions for success are present in each case and next to compare the four cases and evaluate which case has been most successful. In addition to the interviews, the data will be supplemented by analysing the “management & development plans” and the minutes of annual meetings.

v) To which extent is “strategic stakeholder dialogue” a useful tool in the conservation and management of National Parks and in which situations can it best be applied?

When the cases have been confronted with the conditions for success and have been evaluated, it will be possible to conclude under which conditions the strategic stakeholder dialogue is a useful tool in the conservation and management of National Parks. To answer the question, the results of the case studies will be compared in a comparative case study design.

Aim of the comparison is to be able to - next to the analytical data of each separate case - make an analysis of the differences between the cases and to draw conclusions. Based on these results, conclusions can be drawn and in general it can be said in which situations of National Park conservation strategic stakeholder dialogues can best be applied.

vi) Which conditions determine the success of “strategic stakeholder dialogues” in the conservation and management of National Parks?

Based on the conclusions from the individual case studies and the comparative case study, it will be possible to conclude which conditions are determining in the success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the conservation and management of National Parks. In addition, in a survey key figures from the Foundation of Joint National Parks and a random selection of stakeholders across the four cases are asked to review the list of conditions and to select those conditions they consider determining in the success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the consultative body.

vii) Which measurements can be taken to increase the chance of success of “strategic stakeholder dialogues” in the conservation and management of National Parks?

After answering the previous research question it is known which conditions are most important for the success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the conservation and management of National Parks. Based on the conclusions, it is possible to provide the consultative bodies with a set of recommendations to increase the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogues in the decision-making. Plus, the results can be extended to other forms of natural resources management in which the strategic stakeholder dialogue is used to facilitate decision-making.

1.5 Outline of report

In chapter two the differences between a dialogue, a stakeholder dialogue and a strategic stakeholder dialogue are clarified. In chapter three the theories of strategic dialogues, interactive methods, process management and mediation and facilitation are further explored. Subsequently, a synthesis is presented of the conditions for success that have been derived from these theories and which embody the characteristics of strategic stakeholder dialogues. In chapters four to seven the results of the extent to which the conditions for success are present in the cases Schiermonnikoog, Oosterschelde, De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug are presented. In chapter eight the cases are compared and the results are discussed. Finally, based on the analysis of the differences between the cases, conclusions are drawn in chapter nine. In addition, recommendations are made to improve the chance of success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the conservation and management of National Parks.

¹ Interviews are based on a list of 24 conditions and the scores are as follows; 1) fully agree 2) quite agree 3) more or less agree 4) more or less disagree 5) quite disagree 6) fully disagree and 0) not applicable.

II STRATEGIC STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUES

In this chapter it is set out how the concept of “strategic stakeholder dialogues” has materialized and which synonyms can be found in the scientific literature. There is only concise scientific literature available on strategic stakeholder dialogues, which is of a recent date and has a strong focus on business-society management (Van Tulder *et al.*, 2004 and Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006). Below, it is summarized what the differences are between a dialogue, a stakeholder dialogue and a strategic stakeholder dialogue and the main characteristics of the strategic stakeholder dialogue are explained (based on chapter 2 from Van Tulder *et al.*, 2004).

2.1 Introduction

There is a great need for well-organised, well-structured communication between companies, governments, non-governmental organizations, science and other societal groups to deal with societal problems that have become increasingly complex, interdependent and transboundary. However, two information gaps need to be bridged first; companies on the one hand do not know precisely the expectancies of their stakeholders (expectancy gap) and stakeholders on the other hand are often not aware of the extent to which companies already meet their demands (perception gap). Effective communication takes away mutual distrust and misunderstanding and paves the way for chances and solutions. Nowadays, dialogue and stakeholder dialogue are seen as instruments to facilitate communication between the above-mentioned groups, but what exactly is a stakeholder dialogue and when does it need to be strategic?

2.2 What is a dialogue?

Dialogue comes from the Greek word ‘dialogos’ which means ‘conversation’, in which the message becomes clear to the discussion partners and which results in a common definition or meaning. A dialogue requires a certain level of participation and mutual influencing from the discussion partners and the expressed arguments, points of view and preferences should be taken into account in the end result. Participation by the discussion partners is active and always voluntary.

Harris (2002) has distinguished five categories of interaction with stakeholders; i) information providing; ii) information gathering; iii) consultation; iv) bounded dialogue and v) open dialogue. Each type of interaction can be deployed for interaction with stakeholders, as long as stakeholders know what may be expected from the interaction and are aware of the underlying intentions.

A dialogue attempts to stimulate discussion partners to learn from each other and strengthen relationships in order to take collective action. It is process-oriented rather than issue-oriented. At first, partners engaged in a dialogue explore each others thoughts and values (divergence), before reaching an agreement or creating surplus value (convergence). They look for linkages through self-reflection, to eventually reach common ground. Common ground can serve as a basis for collective activity in order to deal with societal problems.

2.3 What is a stakeholder dialogue?

A stakeholder dialogue is based on the same principles as a dialogue. It usually entails that the primary stakeholders are involved in policy-making or implementation or both. With regard to companies the primary stakeholders most often involve employees, suppliers, providers, buyers, customers and governments.

The stakeholder dialogue has two dimensions which are inseparable; first, a dialogue is a *way of communicating* using a specific set of techniques, skills and ‘rules of the game’, second, a dialogue refers to a process within which two parties or more are trying to establish a long-term relationship

based on mutual trust. The second dimension lays the emphasis on the dialogue as stakeholder *engagement*. Both dimensions are required to grow closer together: without dialogue as a way of communicating stakeholders can not build a long-term relationship; without a long-term relationship and mutual trust an effective dialogue is virtually impossible.

When stakeholders are engaged in a dialogue they exchange views, discuss current and future interests, expectations and initiate collective action. What are the arguments to involve stakeholders in policy-making and implementation of companies?

- A *pragmatic* argument: participation of stakeholders makes policy more effective. Stakeholders are being made co-responsible when they are involved in policy preparation. Moreover, it prevents decisions from being opposed or tempted in a later stage. Involvement of stakeholders ensures societal support for the developed policy, provided that the different points of view are actually incorporated into the decision-making.
- A *moral* argument: stakeholder participation increases the legitimacy and democratic content of the developed policy. Sustainability issues concern society as a whole and are not ‘owned’ by statesmen, business strategists and policy makers. In a stakeholder dialogue the emphasis lays on the exploration of one another’s basic assumptions, principles and values. Questions like “what do we want and why?” are important as is the search for larger communal interests.
- A *substantive* argument: participation of stakeholders generates more and better arguments that can serve as a solid base for future policy. The arguments are better because they take into account the concerns and questions of a large and diverse group of stakeholders and they emanate from a confrontation of insights, interests and knowledge. In this way, social and political issues such as (in)equality, (in)justice and cultural authenticity can be incorporated in the policy-making.

Currently, stakeholder dialogues focus strongly either on the pragmatic approach or on the moral approach. A dominant pragmatic approach focuses on achieving certain results and targets, not on questions like “do we actually want this?” and “why do we want this?”. Problems are solved within existing solution spaces and there is no encouragement for participants to explore new boundaries (‘out-of-the-box-thinking’). Therefore a pragmatic approach will not necessarily result in effective long-term solutions. A strong emphasis on the moral approach may result in ongoing discussions between participants on principles and values. Holding on strongly to ideologies may moreover result in a distance between discussion partners, so that they are not able to focus on possible solutions.

2.4 What is a strategic stakeholder dialogue?

A strategic stakeholder dialogue is an interactive, structured and particularly proactive process, aimed at the development of sustainable strategies. Strategic stakeholder dialogues deal with concrete matters and responsibilities and parties look for practicable, realistic and shared solutions which are translated into proactive and sustainable policy. Parties first search for common premises and values that serve as a basis for collective action and clearly define the boundaries for the strategy. Only by combining moral principles and pragmatism the basic conditions are created under which parties come to effective results that enjoy support and do justice to the common interest.

What are the characteristics and objectives of strategic stakeholder dialogues?

- Finding better and sustainable solutions for complex problems by incorporating the input of a wide range of stakeholders;
- Integrating different insights and generating new insights to create wide support, regardless of existing conflicts of interest;
- Bringing together the most relevant stakeholders and work on building mutual trust. Parties acknowledge and appreciate the importance of each other’s contribution and expertise;
- Creating effective win-win situations on the long term; thereby realizing that long-term win-win situations may result in win-lose situations for some stakeholders on the short term.

Potential losers should also be involved to prevent unnecessary opposition during the implementation of the strategy;

- Self-regulation is neither an objective nor a way to prevent legislation, but a manner to deal with sustainability more effectively. In most cases, strategic stakeholder dialogues result in a combination of re-regulation by government and self-regulation by companies and NGOs;
- International co-ordination of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and international implementation of the agreed solutions;
- Preventing information asymmetry between parties caused by a lack of transparency;
- Sharing responsibilities by considering each other as partners;
- Creating commitment; when solutions enjoy support from the participating stakeholders, the implementation phase will progress more effectively and efficiently;
- Putting people first in the selection and implementation of policy options.

In order to actualize the above-mentioned objectives the strategic stakeholder dialogue has to come up to the requirements of a number of instrumental principles (Appendix I). In the academic literature on stakeholder dialogues the same principles are found throughout, which often overlap each other because they are strongly interconnected (Hemmati (2002) and Fisher & Ury (1981)).

When stakeholders consistently adhere to the above-mentioned principles, the basic conditions are created under which they can start working on building a relationship. Confidence in the discussion partners (*source trust*) and in the dialogue process (*process trust*) is required. Source trust may come into being when parties come across sincerely and do not appear to have ulterior motives. It should also be clear from the start for what reasons and with what intentions stakeholders participate in the dialogue process. In addition, a shared feeling of commitment is essential to live up to the made agreements. Process trust is concerned with the way the process is designed and how it is filled in further by the participants. It is about involving a diverse and representative group of stakeholders, legitimacy, transparency and providing information, and giving feedback on preliminary and final results. In this respect participants share responsibility for the agenda, the basic conditions and the way the process is organized. Participants should also have confidence in the management of the process. The more strategic the stakeholder dialogue, the more the dialogue has to meet the requirements of the instrumental principles.

Actors from the state, market and civil society nexus are increasingly aware of the fact that only by co-operation they can meet the necessary sustainability objectives. Businesses and their stakeholders *both* have the power to increase the profit-earning capacity of market players, but they also *share* the responsibility to optimize the social contribution of business leaders. In other words, stakeholders no longer have a one-sided interest in businesses, but a good relationship with stakeholders increasingly becomes of strategic importance to market players. Only by exchanging facts, points of view and values with stakeholders on a structural basis, market actors can live up to their new responsibilities and keep touch with the fast changing business environment. Market actors that maintain relations with their stakeholders can more easily prepare for future developments and so have an advantage with respect to competitors. Hence, the stakeholder dialogue has a strategic dimension for businesses (and their long-term survival). The above-mentioned does not only apply to the relationship between businesses and their stakeholders, but to parties in general who (should) co-operate in order to solve sustainability issues.

Eventually, the instrumental principles should lead to the most important principle that actually makes the stakeholder dialogue strategic: the stakeholder dialogue should contribute to sustainability. Sustainable development is often referred to as a process of social system development, in which actors enter into a process of continuous change. Changes take place within the 'socio-technical' systems and not only respect the ecological boundaries, but also meet the requirements of social justice, which are continuously subject to discussion. For that reason, the strategic stakeholder dialogue is the heart of sustainable development.

III CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the theories of i) strategic dialogues, ii) interactive methods, iii) process management and iv) mediation and facilitation are explored to deduce the conditions for success when performing a “strategic stakeholder dialogue”. Subsequently, a synthesis is presented of the “conditions for success” that have been derived from these theories and which embody the characteristics of “strategic stakeholder dialogues”.

3.2 Strategic dialogues

This paragraph on strategic dialogues begins with an introduction to stakeholder identification theory. Stakeholder theory originates from studying the firm in its environment. It focuses on the question of which groups are stakeholders requiring attention from managers and which are not? So far different scholars have answered this question in various ways. Who is a stakeholder and what is a stake? There is not much disagreement on who can potentially be a stakeholder, however, the existence and nature of a stake is an area of argument.

Virtually all kinds of persons and groups can be stakeholders and even the natural environment is sometimes acknowledged as a legitimate stakeholder. Stakeholder theorists do however differ considerably on whether they adopt a broad or narrow view when defining potential stakeholders. One of the broadest definitions in the literature is the following from Freeman (1984, p.46); “a stakeholder in an organization is (by definition) any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organizations objectives”. Using this definition, the number of stakeholders and possible stakes is virtually indefinite. An example from a narrow definition of stakeholders comes from Clarkson (1994, p.5), who divides stakeholders in voluntary and involuntary groups; “Voluntary stakeholders bear some form of risk as a result of having invested some form of capital, human or financial, something of value, in a firm. Involuntary stakeholders are placed at risk as a result of a firm’s activities. But without the element of risk there is no stake”. In general it can be said that narrow definitions include mainly those stakeholders who contribute to the firm’s mere survival in the economic sense. For managers of the firm the narrow definition is straightforward and easy to apply. However, recent thinking emphasizes that the firm and stakeholders both have the power to increase the profit of the firm and that they share responsibility to improve sustainable entrepreneurship. Singer & Deakin (1999) define that stakeholders are “those whose relations to the enterprise cannot be completely contracted for, but upon whose co-operation and creativity it depends for its survival”. In contrast, these broad definitions are bewilderingly complex for managers to apply and thus to divide resources, time and attention effectively and efficiently.

On what constitutes a valid stake is the area of argument amongst stakeholder theorists. Scholars favouring the narrow definition emphasize the *legitimacy* of claims stakeholders have on the firm, which are based on contract and legal right etc. On the other hand, scholars who advocate the broad definition emphasize the *power* of stakeholders to influence the behaviour of the firm, irrespective of whether or not their claims are legitimate. Mitchell *et al.* (1997) propose a bridging concept between the broad and narrow approach when it comes to stakeholder identification. Besides the key attributes of *legitimacy* and *power*, they argue that the attribute of *urgency* needs to be added to come to a comprehensive method for managers to identify those stakeholders that require resources, time and attention. *Legitimacy* and *power* being the core attributes, claims of stakeholders are to be evaluated on whether they have to be addressed urgently or not. Although the theory of stakeholder identification mainly focuses on the firm and the reciprocal relationships with its environment, the theory can be extended to other fields of science.

Strategic dialogue originates from ‘management research’, focusing on creating a shared vision within an organization from management team to lower organizational levels, in order to minimize the dispersion of organizational energy and associated cost. If the visions of managers and employees are characterized by large discrepancies, this will impede the effective operation of an organization as a result of a lack of cooperation (Vennix (1996) in De Haas & Algera, 2002). In order to prevent an unbalanced allocation of human resources - time, energy and attention - the mental models of the actors involved need to be convergent. A mental model is an individual’s cognitive representation of a system (e.g. an organization) and the individual’s interaction with the system (i.e. behaviour), with particular focus on how the individual’s interaction with the system causes outcomes of interest (i.e. goal attainment) (De Haas & Algera, 2002, p.42). Strategic dialogue is proposed as a means to align the mental models (interests) of the actors involved and achieve goal-coherence from lower to higher levels in an organization. If this is not the case, resources might be wasted and the organization may not achieve the formulated objectives.

Both stakeholder identification theory and strategic dialogues are of relevance for the conservation and management of National Parks. First, the former theory can be used to critically assess the composition of stakeholders who are engaged in the strategic stakeholder dialogues and whether or not the presence or absence of a particular stakeholder has possibly affected the outcome of the process. Second, the latter theory focuses on a way to align the interests of stakeholders engaged in a form of collective action to solve a certain problem. In the conservation and management of National Parks the stakeholders also invest resources and have to search for common grounds as a basis for the development of a long-term vision.

3.3 Interactive methods

A trend occurs in which top down control by government is being complemented by “interactive methods”. “Interactive methods” are governing mechanisms for solving collective problems, in which actors from state, market and civil society are drawn into the decision-making process. Within the literature, “Interactive methods” are given several names by scientists, such as governance (Stoker, 1998; Jessop, 1998; Merrien, 1998), co-operative management regimes (Lafferty & Meadowcroft, 1996; Meadowcroft, 1998), network synthesis or management (Glasbergen, 1998). Why do we need new governing mechanisms and where do they come from? In recent years the societies of modern welfare states, which the state has to “govern”, have become increasingly complex and other domains – market and civil society – have emerged and become equal to or more powerful than the state. The state finds itself incapable of meeting the growing plurality of demands. Its tasks are also often contradictory because they are both regulatory and facilitative. The fact that the state simultaneously has to ensure long-term environmental protection and continuous economic growth exemplifies the contradiction in the made demands and required action. Besides, the state more-and-more loses touch with civil society, and can not meet the increased load of social needs. Due to all these factors the state experiences a “crisis of governability” and finds its room for manoeuvre confined. This crisis of governability means that the state is unable to fulfil the tasks that are currently assigned to it, with the available resources it has at its disposal. Many political and social scientists have acknowledged the existence of this crisis and have proposed new models of social organization to reshape the relations between state, market and civil society. Many of these new models assign more power to the domains of the market and civil society, to better reflect the existing power dependence of the state on other domains. Within the new models the three domains share their power and combine resources in such a way that collective issues are solved more successfully than within the traditional model.

In response to the crisis of governability, the governing mechanisms of the new model of social organization are thought to be better suited to the circumstances. Since the state does not have the knowledge and resources to solve collective problems solely, it must share its power with other domains and form partnerships, especially with the private sector. Together, they have more knowledge and resources at hand to come to efficient and effective solutions for occurring problems. It is important to note that these partnerships should be directed not towards pursuing own interests, but towards achieving the best solutions for collective issues. This new theory is often named

“governance” and although it is used in a variety of ways, the baseline agreement is that it refers to the blurring of boundaries between the private and the public sector and the development of governing mechanisms which do not rely on “command and control” by government. Governance is ultimately concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action (Stoker, 1998, p.17). In order to manage collective problems better, the governance perspective draws actors from state, market and civil society, which form self-governing networks. The difference between traditional government and governance does not concern the outputs - as these are the same - but the processes to achieve these outputs. According to Merrien governance rests on three theoretical principles: i) the existence of a crisis in governability, ii) that this crisis reflects the exhaustion of the traditional forms of state intervention and iii) the emergence of a tendency or of a convergent political trend in all the ‘developed’ countries that is giving rise to a new form of governance better adapted to the context (Merrien, 1998, p.57).

A form of governance in environmental policy-making is the formation of a co-operative management regime, which involves several actors engaged in partnerships, aiming to solve a specific environmental problem by collaboration. Important conditions for the succeeding of partnerships are that all actors engaged in the process view each other as legitimate stakeholders, entitled to representation within the network, and that all actors are willing to compromise between interests and come to a solution which will affect all of their interests. Groups engaged in partnerships should ultimately arrive at an agreed solution through a process of discursive consensus formation, preferably supervised by a trained facilitator or mediator. Once the groups have come to a solution, all parties bear a certain responsibility for the implementation of the agreed solution. In a partnership the role of the state is equal to the other groups and it does no longer hold a hierarchical position.

The theory of “Interactive methods” is of relevance, since the main subject of study is the “strategic stakeholder dialogue”; a type of dialogue between stakeholders from the state, market and civil society nexus. Interactive methods help to identify the main characteristics of arrangements between the three sectors of society. Regarding this thesis, the consultative bodies of National Parks should be considered as partnerships, in which actors from the three sectors co-operate to devise a long-term management & development plan. As such, the literature can help to understand the characteristics and objectives of such partnerships and as such serve as a framework to assess the extent to which strategic stakeholder dialogues in the consultative bodies have been successful.

3.4 Process management

When parties engage into the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues in order to reach a decision for a common problem, it is important that in advance a well-considered process design has been made. A process design specifies “the rules of the game that the parties involved will follow to reach a decision” (De Bruin *et al*, 2002). A well-considered process design will have to take four core elements into account and will always be a trade-off between them. Each core element is consequently translated into design principles leading to a good process design. The following core elements can be distinguished: 1) openness, 2) protection of core values, 3) speed and 4) substance. Starting with the first core element, the following design principles lead to open decision making:

- *All relevant parties should be involved in the decision making*

However, which parties are relevant in the process of decision-making? A first consideration is to involve parties that have *blocking power* in the decision-making. Involving these parties in the process, may prevent them from exercising their blocking power. Inviting parties that have blocking power also depends on the extent to which they can block the process. If it is absolute there is no question whether or not to invite them. A second consideration is to involve parties that have *productive power* in the decision-making. These parties have for example money, powers, relations, physical resources or expertise in order to implement a decision. A third consideration are parties that have *an interest* in the decision- making without being able to contribute to the solution of a problem or block a solution. This last consideration points out that there are reasons other than those of power to invite parties in decision- making. Moral grounds may also lead to the involvement of parties that

do not have a powerful position, but might nevertheless experience the results of the decision made. It is important to point out that when a party meets one of the above considerations, it does not necessarily mean this party must be invited.

- *Substantive choices should be transformed into process agreements*

The second design principle implies that as few substantive choices as possible are made before the start of the process. Substantive choices are transformed into process agreements.

- *The process and its management should be transparent*

According to the third design principle the design for the decision-making process should be transparent. Transparency means for example that parties can check the course of the process, how interests are protected, which decision-making rules will be applied and which parties are involved. An opaque process, on the contrary, can lead to distrust and ultimately to conflict between parties. Also the process manager has to meet the transparency requirement; he or she should be an independent.

An open process is not necessarily attractive to stakeholders; there is a risk that they are unable to advance their own interests sufficiently. Therefore, stakeholder committing themselves to a process must be given adequate protection of their core values. A second set of design principles ensures that the core values of stakeholders are protected:

- *Parties' core values should be protected*

Protection of core values ensures the parties that participate will not be forced to adopt certain behaviour against their will. Core values are the "essence" of an organization and exceed the importance of one item about which a decision has to be taken.

- *Parties should commit themselves to the process rather than to the result*

Parties cannot be forced to commit themselves *a priori* to the result of a process; what they can do is commit themselves to the process itself. Within this "safe environment" there is little chance of core values being harmed.

- *Parties may postpone their commitments to decisions made*

Before a final decision is reached, usually a number of sub decisions have been made in an earlier stage of the decision-making process. It is important for the protection of core values that parties do not have to commit themselves to these sub decisions during the process. Otherwise parties may perceive the process as a trap and may have the idea that their core values are being harmed.

- *The process should offer the participants an exit option*

An important design principle is that the process has rules enabling parties to exit the process while it is still in progress. This design principle makes it easier for some parties to participate in the process in the first place. It also removes the trap perception as parties are allowed to exit before any decisions have been made.

If a process meets the design principles from the first two core elements, consultation and negotiation between stakeholders may take place, but there is a substantial risk that no decisions are made. Therefore, the third set of design principles concerns the progress and speed of the process:

- *The process should create prospects of gain and incentives for co-operative behaviour*

Although the parties engaged in the decision-making process are mutually dependent, they also face strong differences and possibly mutual conflicts. Therefore an adequate design for a decision-making process has to offer incentives for co-operative behaviour. The main incentive for co-operative behaviour is the prospect of "gain" at the end of the process.

- *The participants in the process should have commitment power*

A process should have participants who have authority and commitment power. They should be able to commit their constituencies to the process and adhere to the decisions made.

- *The process should have an environment, which is used to speed it up*

The process may benefit from parties that do not engage in the process, but that do have an interest in the process or its outcome.

- *Conflicts should be transferred to the periphery of the process*

The process should provide means to prevent too many conflicts from arising between parties during the process. As many processes have a layered organizational structure, conflicts that arise in the working or project groups may not directly affect the steering committee. However, the steering committee might use the information to come to a better understanding of the respective viewpoint and differences in their decision making.

- *Command and control can be used as an incentive to speed up the process*

Particular forms of command and control may be an incentive for parties to join the process and adopt a co-operative attitude in it; it is thus a driver for process management and speeds up the process.

In the fourth place, this progress and speed should also meet the requirement of substantive quality. At last, the following design principles guarantee the substance of the process:

- *The process should prevent the process-drives-out-content mechanism; the roles of experts and stakeholders are both bundled and unbundled*

A decision-making process should not drift too far away from the substance. The process manager has the responsibility that the process remains sufficiently substantive. The process should be structured in such a way that relevant insights can play a role within the process. In addition to stakeholders, substance experts can be invited during the process. They may facilitate the decision-making with their knowledge. The distinction between stakeholders and experts should be clear to all parties; experts should remain independent and should not have an interest in the decision-making process.

- *The process should move from substantive variety to selection*

Scientists or experts facilitate decision making, they do not come up with final answers. A variety of views, or expert advice, which falls within the bandwidth of what is tenable from a scientific point of view, should be submitted and then selected.

Process management offers a perspective to complex decision-making processes in networks where neither command and control nor project management is effective. In order to reach decisions in such networks it is important to design the decision-making and interaction processes intelligently. Regarding this thesis, the consultative bodies of National Parks are networks in which decision-making is sometimes complex. Command and control only or project management are not the best approaches to deal with the occurring problems.

3.5 Mediation and facilitation

When persons or social groups engage in a communication process with the aim of solving a specific problem that affects all of them, every person or group has interests which they wish to have achieved at the end of the process. As it is highly unlikely that the interests of all groups are alike, all will need to participate in an agreement-seeking process (consensus building). Most consensus building processes seek to achieve unanimous agreement amongst stakeholders (Susskind *et al*, 1999). Stakeholders thus have the right to advocate their own interests, but also the responsibility to propose solutions that meet the interests of all those represented. When the represented stakeholders are face-to-face they need to talk and listen, which is not easy, especially when some stakeholders disagree strongly. Therefore, it is helpful to have someone who has no stake in the outcome who can facilitate

this process. A facilitator helps a group (stakeholders) to work together in meetings. In professional circles there is some debate on whether or not a facilitator should be someone from outside the group. An outsider is less likely to use the authority to advance own interests. In situations of conflict, a mediator can help stakeholders resolve a dispute. Whereas a facilitator is present only when parties are 'at the table', a mediator assists parties before, during and after meetings. Before the consensus building process starts, the mediator can help with the selection of the right participants, the setting of the agenda as well as offering clarification of the 'rules of the game'. During the process a mediator might explain the constituents of the representative what has happened and what has been decided and might also be a spokesperson to the media. It can also be part of his or her task to monitor implementation of the decision(s) made. Theorists differ of opinion on whether a mediator can or should be neutral. Some claim that although a mediator should be non-partisan, he or she can not simply ignore blatant unfairness (even if the rules have been respected) and should then intervene.

The theory of Mediation and facilitation is relevant, since the presence or absence of a trained facilitator or mediator during the strategic stakeholder dialogues might determine success or failure of the process. It is vital that the consultative bodies of National Parks are chaired by independent chairpersons, who are neutral and impartial and have no interest in the decision-making. They are considered as the facilitators of the process and they may also have to take on the role as mediators in case of conflict between stakeholders.

3.6 Conditions for successful strategic stakeholder dialogues

In the previous paragraphs the theories of strategic dialogues, interactive methods, process management and mediation and facilitation have been addressed and from these theories a set of 24 "conditions for success for conducting strategic stakeholder dialogues" have been deduced. In this paragraph the conditions are elaborated upon further and per condition a synthesis is presented of the most relevant insights from scholars. In order to classify the conditions, they have been categorized into six themes;

- I. Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives;
- II. Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships;
- III. Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements that apply in the consultative body;
- IV. Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with;
- V. Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts; and
- VI. Remaining conditions.

In table 1 an overview is displayed of the 24 conditions for success for conducting strategic stakeholder dialogues.

Categorization of conditions for success for strategic stakeholder dialogues	
I	Conditions regarding the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives
1	In the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented
2	Stakeholders in the consultative body occupy high positions in the organizations they represent
II	Conditions regarding the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships
3	Stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to a joint problem analysis and solution
4	Stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation
5	Stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making
6	Both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented
7	Stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents
III	Conditions regarding 'rules of the game' or process agreements
8	Despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues
9	The consultative body is a safe environment; the process ensures that the core values of the stakeholders enjoy protection
10	Stakeholders commit themselves to the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue rather than to the (interim) results
11	The process offers conflict resolution possibilities and offers stakeholders an exit-option
12	Stakeholders are familiar with the process agreements or rules of the game before the start of the (process of) the strategic stakeholder dialogue
13	Stakeholders support the process agreements or rules of the game before the start of the (process of) the strategic stakeholder dialogue
14	Measures are being taken in order to speed up the progress and speed of the process
15	The consultative body has sufficient time, human resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily
IV	Conditions regarding the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with
16	Before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue as few substantive choices as possible are made
17	The selection of options is transparent to all stakeholders and is supported by sound arguments
18	Stakeholders that are member of the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet certain objectives
19	The problems are not that urgent that immediate action is required and a decision should be taken immediately
20	The problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body concerning the scale and interwovenness with other problems
21	The problems the consultative body deals with can be defined with regard to other problems
V	Conditions regarding the role of the chair(wo)man and experts
22	The presence of a chairman who is neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in the result of the decision-making
23	Experts who are consulted in support of the decision-making, have no interest in the result of the decision-making process
VI	Remaining conditions
24	The result of the decision-making is not contrary to the legislation in force and fits into the legislative framework

Table 1: Overview of conditions for success for strategic stakeholder dialogues

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives.

1) In the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented

There are several arguments why it is important that all the relevant stakeholders are represented in the consultative body. Most of these arguments have already been discussed to a large extent in chapter two. Summarizing, the literature on strategic stakeholder dialogues emphasizes that there are *pragmatic*, *moral* and *substantive* arguments to involve stakeholders in decision-making processes (Van Tulder *et al.*, 2004). Recent thinking in strategic dialogues also illustrates that managing relationships with stakeholders adequately has become of *strategic* importance to private parties (Singer & Deakin, 1999). Interactive methods place governance for sustainable development at the centre where the domains of the state, market and civil society nexus converge. Process management literature states that in complex networks, it should be considered to involve parties with *blocking power*, *productive power* and parties with *an interest* in the decision-making (De Bruijn *et al.*, 2002). It is vital that the relevant stakeholders are represented, to ensure that the main objectives regarding the protection of nature, recreation, education and research are met in a National Park.

2) Stakeholders in the consultative body occupy high positions in the organizations they represent

According to De Bruijn, *et al.* (2002) there are four key requirements that must be met to come to a comprehensive process design. The third requirement concerns the need for the process to have sufficient incentives for speed and progress. One of the ways to achieve this is to ensure that the participants in the process have authority and commitment power. Why do participants with authority and commitment power facilitate the decision-making? First, it increases the process's external authority and its aura. Second, a representation with authority has more commitment power. If the representation is too lightweight, commitment can often be obtained only by a great deal of consultation between the representative and the constituents. Naturally, this will seriously slow down the progress of the process. Commitment is far more a matter of course if there is a heavyweight representation. Third, a representation with authority can more easily distance itself, if necessary, from the organization represented. This is also important, because representatives may have to make concessions which may be difficult to accept. Fourth, a heavyweight representation creates prospects of gain as well as incentives for co-operative behaviour. Heavyweight representatives have extensive networks which make participation in the process attractive: parts of the extensive networks of other representatives become available to a participating party. Fifth, it offers prospects to create win-win package deals as a representation with authority has more room for negotiation (and less consultation with their rank and file). Finally, extensive networks also have the advantage that more matters can be dealt with in one package, for they create extra potentialities to match problems and solutions.

With regard to the conservation and policy-making of National Parks several arguments are of importance. Besides the arguments presented above, another consideration is that the issues the consultative body deals with are quite complex. Also, the consultative body needs to operate in a complex legislative framework, determined by governmental policy, provincial policy, municipal policy, but also legislation regarding water management, economic development, recreational facilities, and so on. Therefore, representatives need to be able to "have an umbrella-view" and be able to put themselves in the position of other representatives in order to come to an agreement. Heavyweight representatives are better suited for this task than lightweight representatives.

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships.

3) Stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to a joint problem analysis and solution

In recent decades governance as opposite to government has gained popularity. Governance refers to a way of steering in which stakeholders from the state, market and civil society nexus together seek to find adequate solutions for problems of mutual concern (Meadowcroft, 1998). It acknowledges the fact that environmental and social problems in particular have more than one owner. This multiple ownership also implies that stakeholders are dependent on each another to resolve environmental problems successfully. For that reason, stakeholders need ultimately arrive at a common vision for the problem. An additional argument to come to a joint solution, is that each stakeholder is concerned with one or more aspects of the problem. Co-operative management regimes encourage pluralist input to decision-making. Pluralist input from the relevant stakeholders, ensures that the problem is addressed in a manner that covers every aspect. Thus, the common vision consists of a comprehensive problem analysis and definition and the implementation plan addresses resolution directions for the relevant aspects. Moreover, it increases the chance that stakeholders at least feel some responsibility for the implementation of the agreed solution, or even better, accept joint responsibility for the management of an environmental problem from implementation to monitoring. Obviously, stakeholders need to embrace the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making.

Now the significance of a common vision has been explored, the question is how it can be achieved. Although win-win scenarios are quite rare - environmental problems can involve acute conflicts over priorities and distribution of social costs - processes of discursive consensus formation can help to align the interests of stakeholders. Environmental and social problems may result in reconsideration of deeply rooted social practices and an adequate solution may only be possible through a gradual alteration of patterns of activity and perceived interests. Co-operative management regimes can be the framework to facilitate such a shift in thinking. A precondition for this engagement to succeed is that stakeholders recognize each other as legitimate representatives. Discursive consensus formation refers to processes in which “groups become engaged in exchange and interaction with other social organizations and administrative agencies and, through constructive dialogue, reflection, negotiation and compromise, ultimately arrive at an agreed solution to the problem” (Lafferty & Meadowcroft, 1996). Despite actual power differences, stakeholders should be considered equal in the process of discursive consensus formation. Reflection on interests precedes the transformation of interests. Interests are first often perceived as given and are second almost always associated with material advantage. Problem solving is thus reduced to settling disputes over the distribution of resources along existing power alignments. Nevertheless, the best approaches to conflict reconciliation seek to alter stakeholders’ perceptions of their interests. In processes of discursive consensus formation, dialogue serves not only to alter positions, but more importantly to facilitate the redefinition of group interests in the context of a common interest. A crucial aspect of the redefinition of interests is to underline the similarities in the actual interests of stakeholders. Alteration of the problem perception can induce the gradual adjustment of at first insurmountable constraints. Solution spaces that were previously thought to be inconceivable, can become part of the range of potential answers. Ultimately, the formulated policy should gain greater societal support, enjoy enhanced legitimacy and experience temporal stability. Co-operative management regimes are characterized by a long-term orientation; the prospect of being dependent on one another to combat future environmental problems is an incentive for stakeholders to adopt a collaborative attitude.

4) Stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation

A co-operative management regime is a type of formation in which social partners collaborate in an attempt to solve environmental problems (Lafferty & Meadowcroft, 1996). Two characteristics are

essential of co-operative management regimes. First, they are based on processes of discursive consensus formation. Parties (stakeholders) become engaged in exchange and interaction with other social organizations and through iterative processes of constructive dialogue, reflection on interests, negotiation with other interests and compromise between interests they come to an agreed solution. An important precondition for the success of co-operative management regimes is that the parties (stakeholders) view each other as legitimate stakeholders. Each and every stakeholder should accept that various perspectives are entitled to representation in the search for the solution to the problems that affect their interests. Second, each party or stakeholder takes some responsibility for the implementation of the agreed solution. At its simplest this may be that the solution is publicly endorsed and sold to the parties' membership or constituency. It may also involve more elaborate agreements, such as the continued monitoring of environmental performance and adjustments of practices if necessary.

5) Stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making

There are several arguments as to why it is important that parties are committed to the process and support joint decision-making:

- Support: interactive decision-making involves parties that have blocking power; they may cause decision-making to stagnate (for a long time). In order to prevent this and lend their support, they should be involved in the process of problem-defining and problem-solving;
- Reducing substantive uncertainty: when it comes to unstructured problems, it is vital that the relevant information is available. Confronting the different sources of information with each other may improve the quality of the information used, in order to solve the problems adequately. Hence, to facilitate such a confrontation, the relevant parties should be involved in the problem-solving;
- Enriching problem definitions and solutions: parties may have entirely different perceptions of and (normative) views on problems and solutions. Confronting these different perceptions and views may have an enriching effect. Enrichment not only concerns the product of a process, but also the knowledge and values of an individual party. Thanks to the process a party may itself come to a better understanding and valuation of the views of other parties. Both forms of enrichment may contribute to gaining support. According to Lafferty & Meadowcroft dialogue in co-operative management regimes serves not only to alter positions, but more importantly to facilitate the redefinition of group interests within the context of a common interest (1996). An initial commitment to try and find a solution collectively, leads to the development of a joint 'action plan' to which each party feels an attachment. As a result, the agreed solution or formulated policy should gain wide societal support, enjoy enhanced legitimacy and greater temporal stability. The established consensus may also be a foundation for future collaboration between the parties that have participated in a co-operative management regime.
- Incorporating dynamic: within a process new developments may take place, as a result of which problem definitions and solutions may become obsolete fairly soon. Unwilling parties may take this opportunity to distance themselves from a chosen solution, by referring to new information or new solutions available. The only way to prevent that new insights and information are available outside rather than within the problem-solving process, is to involve the relevant parties - the carriers of new insights and information - in finding a solution. Incorporation of dynamic means that parties can learn from each other, which may lead to a reflection on their own views.

6) Both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented

In order to come to sustainable solutions for the management of natural resources such as National Parks, it is important that both the both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented. If short-term interests

prevail over long-term interests, there is a risk that decisions are made which satisfy short-term objectives at the expense of the long-term preservation and maintenance objectives.

7) Stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents

In interactive processes representatives should genuinely represent their constituents for *moral* and *pragmatic* reasons; a correct representation of the constituents of the representatives increases the legitimacy of the decisions made and since the representatives propagate the opinions and views of their constituents, the decisions enjoy a greater support, which also contributes to the progress and speed of the decision-making process.

Category III: Conditions with regard to ‘rules of the game’ or process agreements that apply in the consultative body.

8) Despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue

Governance refers to a new way of steering that draws actors from state, market and civil society into the decision-making process. However, one of the questions raised is to which extent group-centred processes can be considered “democratic”. Common objections concern the fact that (1) groups command unequal resources, and structural circumstances generally favour organizations of producers over consumers, business over labour, corporations over environmental pressure groups and the rich over the poor; (2) both market parties and parties from civil society are seldom run along democratic lines internally and therefore it is uncertain to what extent leaders do represent their rank and file; and (3) group-centred processes undermine government because authority and policy-making is partially transferred to actors from the market and civil society. The central objection is that ultimately these processes will reflect existing power differentials and, as a consequence, will not seriously address the environmental and social problems.

Although these concerns are legitimate, they do not debilitate the difference group-centred processes can make in our common effort to meet environmental and social challenges. With regard to the mentioned objections, first, it is true that groups command unequal resources, but besides group-centred processes also other initiatives will have to take account of this reality. Second, although it can be argued that groups that are not run democratically should be precluded from participation, this would deprive society of their specific resources to solve today’s problems (Lafferty & Meadowcroft, 1996). Third, this objection suggests that government is able to solve the problems and implement the right solutions single-handedly. Recent decades have shown, however, that solutions have only been found through engagement with other groups representing different aspects of the problem. Two other considerations in favour of group-centred processes are that groups are selected based on their interest, activity and organization. This means that powerful players can not be ignored, but groups which otherwise would have been excluded from participation can be join the “negotiation table”. Also, as groups engage in an interactive and iterative process of constructive dialogue, reflection on interests, negotiation with other interests and compromise between interests this might encourage gradual change of reform (Meadowcroft, 1998).

Summarizing, groups participating in group-centred processes are considered equal in order to prevent that actual power differentials are reflected in the outcome or final decision. Another argument to support this condition is that when groups are equal they have a common responsibility to arrive at the best decision for all. This encourages group dialogue and co-operative dynamics which can lead to an improvement of the outcome or decision. How can this condition be met within the consultative body of national parks? Two considerations are of importance. First, a stakeholder analysis has to point out which stakeholders have to be represented within the consultative body. It is important to note that it is not a precondition that every stakeholder is represented, but that it is more important that every

relevant interest is represented. Second, how is decision-making dealt with within the consultative body; consensus-building or majority-ruling? The most important consideration in favour of consensus-building is that when majority-ruling is used groups do not need to listen to the minority or take their vote seriously, because they have the ability to simply outvote them. This makes certain groups very powerful, especially when the majority of groups represent the same interest. Also, as there is no moral aspect to the way of decision-making, there is no guarantee that the majority of the group will favour a morally acceptable decision.

9) The consultative body is a safe environment; the process ensures that the core values of the stakeholders enjoy protection

A good process design incorporates four core elements; a) openness; b) protection of core values; c) incentives for speed and d) substantive quality (from De Bruijn at al., 2002). Openness means that the initiator allows other parties to participate in influencing and steering the future decision-making. In spite of this, the open character of the decision-making process, can be perceived as a threat to parties that are invited to participate. They have particular interests and are not always sure whether they serve their interests by participating in an open decision-making process. As a result, they might be dissatisfied with the outcome, which they partly justify by their participation, while it is difficult for them to withdraw from the process at that stage.

One way to prevent this is to offer the parties protection of their core values. They need to be certain that their core values will not be prejudiced, regardless of the outcome of the process. Core values concern the essence of an organization and therefore exceed the importance of one single issue about which decisions are to be taken. Prejudicing core values means harming the essence of an organization and might rule out its proper functioning. A core value should not be confused with a stance an organization adopts in a decision-making process. By offering parties protection of their core values, the process becomes a secure environment. Relevant parties are more likely to participate and by allowing the parties room, participation proceeds relaxed, as a result of which the process is given a fair chance of being effective. Two important conclusions can be drawn; the first is that a secure environment increases the chance of participation of the relevant stakeholders, and the second is that protection of core values may be a strong incentive for co-operative behaviour. What are the core values of involved parties and how can their core values be protected?

- Politician: the core value of a politician is political responsibility; at all times he has to give account for his actions before an elected body. A politician who participates in a process might get stuck between the other participants in the network on the one hand and the elected body on the other hand.
- Companies: the core value of companies is the confidentiality of corporate information; they do not want to disclose information on the development of markets or the cost structure of their products to third parties.
- Societal organizations: the core value of societal organizations is to inform and to activate the public opinion; at all times they want to keep informing the public on the findings and information on the matter which is subject to mutual decision-making.

Core values can be protected by establishing 'rules of the game' or process agreements and by using the process to create respect among the parties for the core values of the other parties. Nevertheless, some parties will too easily invoke their core values to protect their own position in the process. Process agreements nearly always result from negotiations between the parties. In these negotiations a party will put forward its core values. Other parties will learn that this party will adopt a co-operative attitude only if its core values are protected by process agreements, while the party with the core values will learn that other parties are anxious that the core values will be invoked too lightly. This often leads to the following arrangement: the core values of parties enjoy protection on the one hand, but there are incentives to prevent parties invoking their core values too lightly on the other hand.

10) Stakeholders commit themselves to the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue rather than to the (interim) results

A safe environment is created by the process agreement that parties commit themselves to the process rather than to the results and that they may postpone their commitments to made decisions (from De Bruijn at al., 2002).

Parties commit themselves to the process rather than to the result

Processes have an unpredictable dynamic, making it impossible to forecast the final result of the process. For that reason parties cannot be expected to commit themselves to the result of the process beforehand. At the start of a process, the parties should always be offered room to distance themselves from the result. If there is no such room, the process will be ponderous. This is because the parties will do everything to prevent the process from taking a direction unwelcome to them and will want to influence any interim result in a direction as favourable for them as possible. As a result stakeholders will behave unco-operatively and the decision-making costs are likely to be high. The parties' commitment will therefore limit itself to a commitment to process agreements; they are willing to join the process if it abides by the 'rules of the game' agreed beforehand.

Parties may postpone their commitments to made decisions

A decision-making process tends to consist of a large number of sub decisions, which will result in a final decision at some stage. Parties cannot be expected to commit themselves to these sub decisions. Commitment to sub decisions will reinforce the perspective of the process-as-a-trap; if parties have to commit themselves to particular decisions early in the process, they may perceive this as passing a point of no return. This makes it difficult to go back on earlier positions later in the process without harm. Parties will sooner feel that their core values are being prejudiced, which may frustrate the course of the process. Against this approach a party does not have to commit itself to sub decisions and commitments may be postponed which has the following advantages;

- Postponing commitments reduces the decision-making costs, because of the abated uncertainty about the final decision-making and the own position;
- Postponing commitments offers possibilities for dealing with the capriciousness of the decision-making;
- Postponing commitments offers possibilities for building mutual trust and as a result parties are more likely to behave co-operatively;
- Postponing commitments furthers learning processes, so that a common frame of reference can be developed; and
- Postponing commitments relieves the decision-making.

11) The process offers conflict resolution possibilities and offers stakeholders an exit-option

A good interactive process should have exit-rules: rules allowing parties to exit the process while it is in progress (from De Bruijn at al., 2002). It may be included in the process agreements that the parties may consider after some time whether they wish to continue their participation. This may be an important agreement, which may lower the threshold for particular parties to join the process. Such an exit rule also greatly reduces the risk of participation for an individual party. A party is allowed to leave the process before any final decisions are taken. Naturally, the process manager will make every attempt to prevent that parties use the possibility to exit the process. Ideally, participation in the process is so attractive to the parties after some time that exiting is no longer an option. Here, too, the mechanism applies that the parties should be offered room, but that the process should then be made so attractive that parties do not use this room offered. Just as conditions 9 and 10 this process agreement increases the chance that the relevant parties enter the process as well as being a strong incentive for co-operative behaviour.

The process agreement may state that the parties may consider after some time whether they wish to continue their participation in the process. The chief incentive for co-operative behaviour by parties is the prospect of 'gain'. In order to prevent that parties use the room offered, and the incentive to behave co-operatively is maintained, the possibilities for the involved parties for making gains should be at the end of the process.

12 + 13) Stakeholders are familiar with and support the process agreements or rules of the game before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue

Standardization of process agreements is almost impossible, because the configuration of actors and the substance of the problems to be solved will continually differ (from De Bruijn at al., 2002). An important condition for the success of a process design is that it should be attractive to each of the parties involved: they should be convinced that the design allows them a chance of influencing the decision-making and that their core values are protected by the design. In general it will be difficult for one of the parties, or for an independent third party, to draw up an attractive process design unilaterally, even more so when strong conflicts of interest occur between some parties. The solution to this problem is that the process design itself is the result of a process of negotiation; an attractive process design of which all parties are the joint owners, can only come into being if these parties are involved in framing this process design.

When the parties comply with and support the process agreements, this improves co-operation, prevents opportunism and organizes intercourse between parties. It prevents that the decision-making becomes so unpredictable that a consolidation of decisions is virtually impossible. If parties comply with and support the process agreements the positive effects of keeping a process going can be realized. In other words; compliance with the process agreements safeguards the predictability and stability of both the process and the mutual relations. At the same time, there are serious risks when compliance with process agreements is seen as an aim in itself. Important risks are that process agreements are no longer monitored critically and that it is not verified whether they still serve the purpose for which they were created. This may result in a too strong faith in the process agreements: compliance with the process agreements is seen as a guarantee that the advantages of the process approach will be realized.

When the negotiations take place about the 'rules of the game' the following subjects should be taken into account:

- The entry and exit rules; the entry and exit rules state which parties participate and under what conditions parties are allowed to enter the process and how they can exit the process;
- The decision-making rules; the decision-making rules stipulate how parties reach decisions: consensus or majority ruling. They also include agreements about conflict handling;
- The organic rules; the organic rules state how the process is organized, for instance, which bodies are required (steering committee, working groups, etc.), the chairmanship and the secretariat of these bodies and the role of the process manager, etc; and
- The rules about planning and budget; the rules about planning and budget describe what activities should be performed in what order and with what deadlines. It also includes an estimate of the cost of the activities and the process management and who bears what costs.

14) Measures are being taken in order to speed up the progress and speed of the process

The conditions that provide openness and protection of core values raise the question if these conditions can guarantee the progress of the process. For instance, there could be a multitude of stakeholders each with numerous issues. In that case the process is hard to manage. If stakeholders have a multitude of core values, that are not negotiable, there will be a reasonable chance that the process will progress very slowly or even comes to a stalemate. Enough progress and speed will reduce the risk of a sluggish process, which never produces a clear result.

Although classical process mechanisms as deadlines are hardly usable in SSDs, there are several methods and design principles that can enhance the progress of the process, for example:

- An important stimulus for the speed of a process is prospect of gain, before, during or at the end of a process. The prospect of gain is a stimulus for co-operative and disciplined behaviour, in an environment dominated by conflict and mutual disagreement. The process manager has several methods to advance co-operative behaviour and to influence the process, such as: the agenda, planning of activities and intervention;
- The process can be progressed by representatives of stakeholders with authority and commitment power in the process. They have the power to commit their rank and file to the decisions made. The authoritative representative can also distance himself to a certain extent from those represented.
- The process manager can use the environment, external actors or outcomes to speed up the process. Expectations of the process by its environment are a stimulus for co-operative behaviour. During the process it becomes harder to ignore this phenomenon.
- The layer of organizational structure can be used by the process manager to resolve conflict as much as possible at the outside of the core of decision-making. This is necessary in order to lessen the chance of slacking the process by conflict (from De Bruijn *et al.*, 2002).

15) The consultative body has sufficient time, (human) resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily

Interactive policy-making usually requires extra effort compared to 'classic' policy processes, from both the board or management and the participants. In most cases, interactive policy is a separate project for which a project manager is appointed. Costs should be made to organize the interaction with participants in for example meetings. Managers, politicians, policy-makers and communication consultants should have a sufficient amount of time to contribute to the interactive policy. Naturally, the same applies to the participants that are involved in the interactive policy (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1999).

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with.

16) Before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue as few substantive choices as possible are made

Openness means that parties that enter the process should be given the opportunity to participate in influencing and steering the future decision-making. If the parties are under the impression that the envisaged decision has in fact already been taken then certain parties refrain from participation in the process. Although an inventory is made of the substantive items, then it is merely indicated how the decision-making process will take place. At the moments of choice defined beforehand the parties in the process take a substantive decision, in accordance with the process agreements made beforehand (from De Bruijn *et al.*, 2002).

In the interactive decision-making process there is room for initiative; the substance of the policy of the board or management has not yet been determined. This is not the case if the board or management has in fact already taken a decision or if the policy has already been negotiated with other parties. Besides, the board or management is able and prepared to share influence with the participants. If the board or management leaves no room for initiative for the participants, then it would serve no useful purpose to the participants to contribute to the policy-making. Participants are not able to exert an influence on the policy-making if the substance has in effect already been determined. Such 'interactive' policy-making is doomed to fail. On the contrary, openness of the policy arena inspires confidence and increases the commitment of the participants. As a result there is a greater chance of interactive policy-making being successful (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1999).

17) The selection of options is transparent to all stakeholders and is supported by sound arguments

With regard to the views that fall within the bandwidth of scientific tenability, the process should move from variety to selection. First, a variety of views should be submitted, after which selection can take place. Selection that takes place too early or that is based on a limited variety will not usually be authoritative.

From the perspective of the substance and the quality of the decision-making the most desirable progress of a process is one from variety to selection. The underlying idea is that the greater the variety of options that have come up for discussion, the better the quality of the decision-making process. If a particular option is not included in the decision-making this will damage the quality of the decision-making process. Variety is important for the following reasons:

- The greater the variety from which the eventual option results, the more authoritative the option will be;
- The actors involved are offered maximum chances of learning processes. They take note of the options and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in interaction; and
- In the discussions about the options, possibilities will be explored of improving them and making them acceptable to a maximum number of actors. This improves the quality of the options.

At some point in the decision-making process, the transition will be made from generating variety to selecting the best option or options. This selection will have to lead to consolidation: the selected option or options will have to stand up to criticism for some time.

In order to assess what the chances are that new, important options arise in the process, the process manager should check whether the decision-making process is continuing to induce learning processes among the parties involved. As long as the parties participating in the process continue to learn it is fruitful to continue the phase of generating variety. A distinction is made between cognitive learning and social learning. Cognitive learning means that parties still produce new facts and views and so on. As long as this is still the case, there is a chance of new variety being created. Social learning means that parties still establish new relations and interactions. As long as this is still the case, there is a chance of new insights arising and therefore new variety being created. A process is ripe for the transition from variety to selection if there is cognitive and social stabilization (De Bruijn *et al.*, 2002).

18) Stakeholders that are member of the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet certain objectives

Interactive policy-making can only succeed if the main stakeholders have a sense of urgency (Kotter, 1997). They are convinced that there are problems that need to be solved and that these problems can only be solved by some form of co-operation. A sense of urgency is a prerequisite for the success of a process (of for example strategic stakeholder dialogues). Without a sense of urgency, parties are most likely not prepared to negotiate about process agreements. If agreements are made nevertheless, they are unlikely to be respected, because they can easily be perceived as impediments if there is no sense of urgency. Therefore, momentum for process management should arise in the decision-making first (De Bruijn *et al.*, 2002).

In interactive decision-making processes the board or management wants to co-operate and to share its influence with participants, which is only meaningful if board and participants have, or are able to develop, a constructive relationship. A precondition to develop such a relationship is that the board and the participants need each other. If this is not the case, the relationship fairly soon becomes informal and open-ended. The degree and nature of the dependency between board or management and participants can be expressed in the closeness of the co-operative relationship. In general it can be

said that the relationship is closer when the dependency is bilateral compared to unilateral, lasting compared to non-recurring and covers multiple topics compared to one only (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1999).

19) The problems are not that urgent that immediate action is required and a decision should be taken immediately

Not every problem and topic are suitable for solving in interactive policy-making; one precondition is that problems or topics are suitable to be solved in interactive policy-making processes. Although a sense of urgency has been stressed in the previous condition (condition 18), the problems should not be that urgent that immediate action and an immediate decision should be taken. Time should be available to think about and discuss the future policy (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1999).

20) The problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body concerning the scale and interwovenness with other problems

The problems are 'manageable' or can be reduced to 'manageable' proportions. This means that the problems - with regard to their scale and interwovenness with other problems - do not exceed the competency of the board or management. It seems pointless, for instance, for local authorities to try and end a war in a foreign country by means of interactive policy-making with local citizens. Neither the local authority nor local citizens can exert some influence on ending a war in a foreign country. When the problems are reduced to organizing relief supplies they can exert some influence. Local authorities can co-operate with NGO's or facilitate these NGO's. When problems exceed the competency of the board or management, this may imply that it needs other governmental authorities or parties and needs to co-operate with them (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1999).

21) The problems the consultative body deals with can be defined with regard to other problems

Problems the consultative body deals with should also be manageable in the sense that they can be defined with regard to other problems. Although essentially problems are often interconnected, it is impossible to address all these problems simultaneously.

Problems should also be defined in time. A general exception is when governments or experts work on the problems continuously, but even then it is important to define the problems in manageable steps or sub processes (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 1999).

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

22) The presence of a chairman who is neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in the result of the decision-making process

When persons or social groups engage in a communication process with the aim of solving a specific problem that affects all of them, every person or group has interests which they wish to have achieved at the end of the process. As it is highly unlikely that the interests of all groups are alike, all will need to participate in an agreement-seeking process (consensus building). Most consensus building processes seek to achieve unanimous agreement amongst stakeholders (Susskind *et al*, 1999). Stakeholders thus have the right to advocate their own interests, but also the responsibility to propose solutions that meet the interests of all those represented. When the represented stakeholders are face-to-face they need to talk and listen, which is not easy, especially when some stakeholders disagree strongly. Therefore, it is helpful to have someone who has no stake in the outcome who can facilitate this process.

Facilitation is a way of helping groups work together in meetings and mediation is a way of helping parties deal with strong disagreement (Susskind *et al.*, 1999 in Campbell, 2001). The work of a facilitator is often confined to assistance during a meeting when groups are face-to-face, whereas mediators are called on to work with parties before, during and after face-to-face meetings. In situations of conflict, a mediator can help stakeholders resolve a dispute. Before the consensus building process starts, the mediator can help with the selection of the right participants, the setting of the agenda as well as offering clarification of the 'rules of the game'. During the process a mediator might explain the constituents of the representative what has happened and what has been decided and might also be a spokesperson to the media. It can also be part of his or her task to monitor implementation of the decision(s) made.

In professional circles there is some debate on whether or not a facilitator should be someone from outside the group. An outsider is less likely to use the authority to advance own interests. Theorists differ of opinion on whether a mediator can or should be neutral. Some claim that although a mediator should be non-partisan, he or she can not simply ignore blatant unfairness (even if the rules have been respected) and should then intervene.

An important building block for the process approach is transparency: consequently the design for a decision-making process should be transparent (De Bruijn *et al.*, 2002). In addition, transparency may also be required with regard to the process manager's actions. The process manager has the role of an independent facilitator. He fulfils a disinterested, independent role in the decision-making process and derives much of his authority from it. Obviously, the process manager should focus on the process rather than the substance: strong substantive views may be regarded as substantive prejudices by one or more parties, and thus as an infringement of the process manager's independence. It may also be concluded that the position and role of the process manager are never self-evident. In reality, the relationship between the process manager and the other parties is more paradoxical. In fact the relationship between the process manager and the other parties is very delicate; he should be transparent and adopt an independent position between the parties, while depending on the support of these parties to perform his task adequately. If the position of the process manager is at risk, the predictability and stability of both the process and the established mutual relationships are at stake.

Thus, the process manager's major concern is to keep the balance between process and substance. Finally, this leads to the question what substantive expertise the process manager should have. If he interferes too much with the substantive course of events it may put pressure on the process aspects. However, if he does not have any substantive expertise whatsoever, he runs the risk of being not taken seriously by the parties. It appears that a process manager should at least be able to ask the right questions. Usually, the process manager will acquire the ability to judge the answers to these questions adequately during the process. However, if the process manager is able to answer the questions himself, he might interfere too much with the substance of the process, as a result of which he jeopardizes his own position.

23) Experts who are consulted in support of the decision-making, have no interest in the result of the decision-making process

The process architect should ensure that relevant substantive insights can play a role within the process. He may do so by involving experts, next to stakeholders, in the decision-making. They may facilitate the decision-making with their substantive knowledge. However, there should be a clear distinction between the roles of experts and stakeholders. If experts become too closely involved in the conflicts of interests between the parties, they may no longer be able to play their independent role. As a result they may become a party with an interest in the process. In that case, the expert does not take a critical look at the (interim) results, but he justifies decisions by providing substantive argumentation for them. This can have a negative influence on the quality of the decision-making. At the same time, such as distinction poses the risk that the substance on the one hand and the process on the other hand are unbundled too strictly. Processes in which decision-making and scientific study are strictly separated have a faint chance of authoritative and consolidated decision-making. An agreement to

counteract this risk is to state that an unbundling of roles should be accompanied by a clear bundling of activities. Bundling means intensive interaction; experts have more insight into the course of the decision-making, and can therefore intervene at the right moment. Bundling also means that experts can indicate how the proposals and views submitted by the parties stand up against scientific insights. It allows decision-makers to question the experts about the scientific character of their research findings or views.

On the one hand, the roles of experts and stakeholders should be unbundled, on the other hand it is necessary to bundle the activities of both parties. They should interact intensively from their unbundled roles. Unbundling prevents experts from taking on the colour of one of the stakeholders. Bundling of activities means that the substantive knowledge from experts is more easily accepted as being authoritative and this knowledge can be submitted in the process at the right moment. Unbundling of roles and bundling of activities may be achieved by a process agreement stating that the stakeholders have to submit their (interim) results to the experts at particular moments and that they may submit their (interim) results at other moments. Such bundling of activities from unbundled roles improves the quality both of the decision-making and of the contribution to the process of the experts (from De Bruijn *et al.*, 2002).

Category VI: Remaining conditions

24) The result of the decision-making is not contrary to the legislation in force and fits into the legislative framework

It is important to note that, co-operative management regimes are a step forward in seriously addressing environmental problems, they are by no means a replacement for the existing environmental regulation and governmental policy-making. Glasbergen stresses that it is essential for co-operative management regimes to succeed that central authorities establish a clear strategic policy for environment at the outset (1998). Next to the legislative framework established by central government, co-operative management regimes need to be interwoven with other mechanisms to combat environmental degradation, such as traditional regulative ordinances, public education programmes and financial and fiscal techniques (eco-taxes, subsidies).

Although the concept of co-operative management regimes focuses on consensus, collaboration and the voluntary assumption of responsibilities, environmental problems may generate conflicts on priorities and the distribution of social costs. This is another argument why the general framework - within which co-operative management initiatives take place - must be set by the democratic state. Besides, fear of regulation by central authorities may be a powerful stimulus to encourage parties to come to consensus through negotiation and compromise (Lafferty & Meadowcroft, 1996).

One great advantage of co-operative management regimes is that their establishment does not require substantial governmental and/or legislative reform. They modify the context of environmental policy-making within the existing structures. Co-operative management regimes can be dovetailed to a great variety of existing institutional set-ups. However, co-operative management regimes are only likely to succeed in a context where government has made a clear commitment to improve environmental standards and encourage social institutions to contribute to "sustainable development" (Meadowcroft, 1998).

IV CHARACTERISTICS SSDs SCHIERMONNIKOOG

In this chapter it is set out how the strategic stakeholder dialogues are organized in National Park Schiermonnikoog during the decision-making processes and which conditions for success are present.

4.1 Introduction to National Park Schiermonnikoog

Schiermonnikoog belongs to the Province of Friesland and the entire island is part of the municipality of Schiermonnikoog. Schiermonnikoog is situated in between the islands Rottumerplaat on the east side and Ameland on the west side. With only 941 inhabitants² it is the smallest municipality in the Netherlands. Schiermonnikoog consists of 8 types of landscapes; mud flats, beaches, dunes, salt marshes, polders, forests, and a lake (Westerplas) and the village of Schiermonnikoog.

Schiermonnikoog was the first National Park to be established in 1989 by the Minister of LNV. The composition of the consultative body is displayed in table 4.1. Currently, the consultative body is working on the third Management & Development Plan which covers the period from 2010-2022. The main topics include objectives and incentives with regard to nature conservation and management, water management, recreation and leisure, information and education, protection of the coast and research.

Some perilous issues that have caused debate in the consultative body are traditional practices of islanders such as fishing and hunting. In local and national politics the large-scale cockle fishing in the Wadden Sea has received considerable attention.

Composition of the consultative body of National Park Schiermonnikoog	
1	Provincie Friesland (Leeuwarden)
2	Gemeente Schiermonnikoog
3	Ministerie LNV - directie Noord
4	Vereniging Natuurmonumenten
5	Wetterskip Fryslân
6	Schiermonnikoogs Ondernemers Verbond (eilandbewoners)
7	Natuur- en Vogelwacht Schiermonnikoog (eilandbewoners)
8	Boerenbelang Schiermonnikoog (eilandbewoners)

Table 4.1 Composition of stakeholders in the consultative body of National Park Schiermonnikoog

4.2 Characteristics of SSDs in Schiermonnikoog

In table 4.2 an overview is presented of which scores (scores 1 fully agree - 6 fully disagree or 0 not applicable) have been assigned by the 5 interviewees to the 24 conditions. Below each score is displayed how many interviewees have chosen this score. In the utmost right column the weighed average score is displayed (with regard to the first condition $(4 * 1 + 1 * 4)/5 = 1.6$).

Note: the conditions represent ideal circumstances, so the more interviewees fully agree, quite agree or more or less agree with a condition, the more this condition is met or present in a case. Below the results per category of conditions will be discussed in more detail.

Interviews have been conducted with the following members of the consultative body;

1. Chairwoman and secretary of the consultative body (1 interview);
2. Deputy-chairman and mayor and co-secretary of the consultative body (1 interview)
3. Representative of the nature conservation body the National Trust of Natural Heritage;

² Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 1 januari 2010.

4. Representative and advisory member from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV); and
5. Representative from the islanders (entrepreneurs and wildlife management).

Conditions	fully agree (1)	quite agree (2)	more or less agree (3)	more or less disagree (4)	quite disagree (5)	fully disagree (6)	not applicable (0)	average
I Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives								
1 Representation of relevant interests	4			1				1,6
2 Stakeholders occupy high positions	2	2		1				2
II Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships								
3 Willingness to reconsider interests		2	3					2,6
4 Mutual acknowledgement of representation	5							1
5 Commitment process and joint decision-making	4	1						1,2
6 Long-term orientation process and relationships	1	3	1					2
7 Stakeholders genuinely represent constituents	3	1	1					1,6
III Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements in the consultative body								
8 In process stakeholders are equal	1	1	1	2				2,8
9 The consultative body is a safe environment	1	4						1,8
10 Commitment to process rather than results	1	1	2				1	1,8
11 Conflict resolution possibilities and exit-option	2						3	0,4
12 Stakeholders know rules of the game	3	1		1				1,8
13 Stakeholders support rules of the game	1	3		1				2,2
14 Measures are taken to speed up the process		1	1	2	1			3,6
15 Time, resources and means are sufficient		2	2	1				2,8
IV Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with								
16 In advance no substantive choices are made		1	2		2			3,6
17 Selection of options is transparent	1	3			1			2,4
18 Stakeholders are dependent to meet objectives	3	1	1					1,6
19 Problems are not very urgent	1		2	1		1		3,4
20 Problems do not exceed the competency c.b.	1	1	1	1		1		3,2
21 Problems can be defined		3	2					2,4
V Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts								
22 Chairman is neutral and non-partisan	2	2			1			2,2
23 Experts have no interest in decision-making		4	1					2,2
VI Remaining conditions								
24 Results not contrary to legislation	3	2						1,4

Table 4.2: Overview of (average) scores based on the interviews with stakeholders from the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog.

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

Four out of five stakeholders fully agree with the condition that 'in the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented'. According to the advisory member from the Ministry of LNV, who more or less disagrees, the fishery sector is not represented in the consultative body.

Traditionally, the common practices of the inhabitants of Schiermonnikoog are fishing and hunting, for consumption and damage prevention. Nowadays, as a result of regulation, large-scale cockle fishing is no longer allowed in the Wadden Sea. Only small-scale fishing companies that use traditional fishing techniques are allowed.

Most interviewees agree that 'stakeholders in the consultative body occupy high positions in the organizations they represent'. Some interviewees state that most stakeholders have high positions, with the exception of the representatives of the inhabitants of Schiermonnikoog. N.B. Islanders in the consultative body represent the following three interests; (i) farming, (ii) nature and bird association and (iii) entrepreneurs and wildlife management.

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

Most stakeholders tend to “quite agree” or “more or less agree” with the condition that ‘stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests in order to develop a common vision for a problem’. According to the representative of the nature conservation body, the willingness to reconsider interests strongly differs among the stakeholders. Representatives from the ministry, the local municipality and the conservation body are more willing to do so than the representatives of the islanders. On the other hand, the representative of the islanders, states that the islanders are more closely involved with the National Park than other members of the consultative body.

All interviewees fully agree with the condition that ‘stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation’. Most stakeholders also fully agree with the condition that ‘stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making’. Almost all interviewees tend to consider these two conditions as a matter of course. According to the representative from the nature conservation body “the commitment to the process and the support for joint decision-making amongst the stakeholders in the consultative body has grown over time”.

Stakeholders agree with the condition that ‘both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented’. Generally the interviewees only quite agree with this condition, because there is always some tension between short and long-term interests.

Most stakeholders (3/5) fully agree with the condition that ‘stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents’. However, according to the representative from the nature conservation body, both the entrepreneurial and the wildlife management interest are represented simultaneously by one islander, while both interests can sometimes be contradictory.

Category III: Conditions with regard to ‘rules of the game’ or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

Opinions somewhat differ regarding the condition that ‘despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue’. According to the chairwoman and the secretary the authority and competence of the stakeholders in the consultative body is decisive when decision-making is concerned. However, the deputy chairman and co-secretary explain that within this precondition of authority and competence, decision-making is based upon consensus. This is important to create support amongst the participating stakeholders for conservation, preservation and the future of National Park Schiermonnikoog. The island representative of the entrepreneurs fully agrees and says “in the consultative body stakeholders do not vote, but they are seen as equal partners”, to add further that “one is able to say what one wants, but what happens next with it is unclear”.

Most stakeholders quite agree with the condition that ‘the consultative body is a safe environment, the process ensures that the core values of the stakeholders enjoy protection’. The chairwoman and secretary make a distinction between the internal and external environment. In the consultative body and working groups a safe environment is created (quite agree), whereas outside the consultative body a safe environment does not exist (more or less disagree). According to the advisory member of the Ministry of LNV “what should be said, can be said in the consultative body”. The representative from the nature conservation body quite agrees, but tends to say it is not applicable in the decision-making.

According to the chairwoman and the secretary the condition that ‘stakeholders commit themselves to the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue rather than to the (interim) results’ is not applicable in the decision-making process. Stakeholders generally agree, because “parties continue the dialogue”,

says the representative of the Ministry of LNV. Islanders are more focused on (interim) results rather than the process itself, says the representative of the nature conservation body.

The chairwoman and secretary state that ‘good conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option for stakeholders’ are not applicable in the decision-making process, whereas the deputy chairman and co-secretary fully agree with the condition. The advisory member from the Ministry of LNV says he is unaware of the existence of conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option. According to the representative of the nature conservation body ‘the parties in the consultative body are dependent on one another to keep the process going. Although the representatives of the parties can be replaced, the parties itself are indispensable. If one of the parties should withdraw from the process, this would lead to serious support problems. Although this applies to all parties in the consultative body, it applies in particular to the representatives from the island’.

Four out of five stakeholders agree with the condition that ‘stakeholders are familiar with and support the process agreements before the start of the strategic stakeholder dialogue’. According to the deputy chairman and co-secretary the process agreements are correct and fair. Of course, discussions and differences of opinion occur between the participants of the consultative body, but generally they are closely involved with the National Park and attach value to the continuity of the process. Only the advisory member from the Ministry of LNV quite disagrees, explaining that is not customary in the consultative body to explicitly set out the rules of the game before the start of the process.

Opinions largely differ with regard to the condition that ‘measures are being taken in order to speed up the progress and speed of the process’. Stakeholders give varying scores from quite agree to quite disagree. According to the representative of the nature conservation body, who quite disagrees, the consultative body often has difficulties with making decisions. The extent to which measures are taken to speed up the process changes per decision. It mainly depends on the interests at stake and the influence the consultative body can exercise hereupon, according to the representative of the islanders.

Finally, opinions somewhat differ with regard to the condition that ‘the consultative body has sufficient time, human resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily’. Most notably, the advisory member from the Ministry of LNV more or less disagrees with the condition. According to the representative from the islanders, time, human resources and means are slightly inadequate to fulfil tasks satisfactorily.

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

The chairwoman and secretary and the representative from the nature conservation body quite disagree with the condition that ‘before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue as few substantive choices as possible are made’. They state that the management & development plan is leading when it comes to making substantive choices. Furthermore, substantive choices are prepared and to some extent decided upon in the two working groups Conservation & Management and Information & Education. Other stakeholders either more or less (2/5) or quite agree (1/5) with the condition.

Most stakeholders generally agree with the condition that ‘the selection of options is transparent to all stakeholders and is supported by sound arguments’. An exception is the representative from the islanders who quite disagrees, explaining that most stakeholders in the consultative body were against the introduction of dynamic coastal management, the Ministry of LNV and the Ministry of Waterways and Public Works have decided otherwise.

All interviewees agree to some extent with the condition that the ‘stakeholders that are member of the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet certain objectives’.

Both the chairwoman and secretary fully disagree with the condition that ‘the problems are not that urgent that immediate action is required and a decision should be taken immediately’. Also, the advisory member of the Ministry of LNV and the representative of the nature conservation body more or less disagree. They both mention the large-scale cockle fishing matter in the Wadden Sea. The former explains that generally the problems are not urgent, with the exception of the large-scale mechanic cockle fishing, which affects the ocean floor in such a way that it has a direct impact on the populations of birds such as the eider and the oystercatcher. The latter adds that the consultative body does not have the authority to end mechanic cockle fishing, because it is a matter of national government. Whereas the representative of the islanders more or less agrees with the condition, he also mentions the ongoing conflict between cockle fishers and nature conservation organizations, which has resulted in a discontinuance of this form of fishery in the Wadden Sea.

Each interviewee has assigned a different score to the condition that ‘the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body’. According to the chairwoman and secretary, who fully disagree, some problems the consultative body deals with exceed its competency. However, they attempt to make the best consideration within the scope of their authority. Usually, the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body, with the exception of the cockle fishing matter, explains the advisory member from the Ministry of LNV. Again, the representative of the islanders stresses that the involvement of the islanders is much greater than that of the other stakeholders from the main land.

Most interviewees quite agree or more or less agree with the condition that ‘the problems the consultative body deals with can be defined with regard to other problems’.

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

Most stakeholders fully to quite agree with the condition that ‘the chairwoman is neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in the result of the decision-making process’. The representative from the nature conservation body explains that the current chairwoman, previously in her career, has been a member of the board of one of the parties that currently participates in the consultative body. Initially, the islanders in particular were afraid that her appointment would lead to a too strong input of the vision of her previous employer. However, according to this interviewee, she has succeeded to “let go” of her background. The representative of the islanders also explains that initially the appointment of the current chairwoman seriously raised doubts among the islanders. He gives her the benefit of the doubt, although he claims that the previous chairman of the consultative body - the mayor of Texel - was utterly and completely independent and impartial.

Most interviewees quite agree with the condition that ‘experts who are consulted in support of the decision-making, have no interest in the result of the decision-making process’. According to the representative from the nature conservation body, generally, experts who are consulted do not have an interest in the decision-making. Besides, the consultative body always aims to look at a problem from different lines of approach. Nevertheless, experts are never entirely neutral and non-partisan. For instance, an expert has been consulted about an increase in sea dynamics in the National Park. Although this expert did not have an interest in more sea dynamics in Schiermonnikoog, it was quite obvious that this expert was in favour of more sea dynamics in the Netherlands.

Category VI: Remaining conditions

Most interviewees fully agree or quite agree with the condition that ‘the result of the decision-making is not contrary to the legislation in force and fits into the legislative framework’.

4.3 Conclusions characteristics SSDs Schiermonnikoog

In this paragraph a basic stakeholder analysis is performed, which is based on the information on the composition of the consultative body and the conducted interviews. It also briefly summarizes the

extent to which the conditions for success have been met and evaluates the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogue in the consultative body of National Park Schiermonnikoog.

Stakeholder analysis

Apart from the independent chairwoman and secretary, the consultative body consists of 8 stakeholders. In the first place, the consultative body consists of governmental bodies, such as the municipality of Schiermonnikoog, the province of Friesland, the ministry of LNV and a water-board district. Second, the one and only nature conservation body is represented and third, three representatives from the inhabitants are represented, who respectively represent the farmers, the nature and bird association and the entrepreneurs and wildlife management. Based on the interviews which have been conducted and an analysis of the problems the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog faces, the most relevant stakeholders are represented in the consultative body, with the exception of the fishing industry.

Summary of presence of conditions for success

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

In the consultative body the most relevant are represented, with the exception of the fishing industry. Apart from the islanders, who do not fulfil administrative positions, the representatives occupy high positions in the organizations they represent.

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

Generally, the ‘professional organizations’ are more used and willing to reconsider interests than the inhabitants of the island. Islanders on the other hand say that they are much more involved with the National Park. Stakeholders in the consultative body unanimously agree that they view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation. Also, they almost unanimously agree that they are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making. Although there is always some tension between short and long-term interests, both the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues and the relations between the stakeholders are longer-term oriented. At last, stakeholders who participate in the consultative body genuinely represent their constituents.

Category III: Conditions with regard to ‘rules of the game’ or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

When decision-making is concerned, the authority and competence of stakeholders is decisive. However, within this precondition decision-making is often based on consensus to create support among the participating members. Generally speaking, stakeholders perceive the consultative body as a safe environment. Although the chairwoman and secretary state that commitment to the process rather than interim results is not applicable, some stakeholders state that the consultative body meets this condition, because they say that “parties continue the dialogue”. Rules of the game regarding conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option are not applicable in the consultative body. Although it is not customary to set out the rules of the game explicitly in advance, stakeholders are familiar with and support the rules of the game at the start of the strategic stakeholder dialogue. According to quite a few interviewees the consultative body sometimes has difficulties with making decisions. The extent to which measures are taken to speed up the progress depends on the interests at stake and the influence the consultative body can exercise thereupon. More time, resources and means are welcome so that the consultative body is able to give more body to the fulfilment of its tasks.

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

Regarding the condition that before the start of the process as few substantive choices as possible are made, interviewees generally more or less disagree, because the management & development plan is leading when it comes to making substantive choices. Also, substantive choices are prepared and to some extent decided upon in the working groups. Most interviewees express the opinion that the selection of options is transparent to all stakeholders and is supported by sound arguments.

Stakeholders in the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet objectives. Stakeholders are indispensable, if one of the stakeholders, in particular the islanders, withdraws, this would lead to support problems. In general the problems the consultative body deals with are not urgent and do not require immediate action, with the exception of the adverse effects on biodiversity and bird populations caused by the large-scale cockle fishing industry. Usually, the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body, again with the exception of the cockle fishing matter. Most problems the consultative body deals with can be defined with regard to other problems.

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

Although the current chairwoman previously in her career has been employed at one of the organizations that takes part in the consultative body, stakeholders say that she has succeeded in disrooting herself from her background. She also increasingly gains the trust of the islanders.

Experts who are consulted do not have an interest in the decision-making and the consultative body aims to look at problems from different lines of approach.

Category VI: Remaining conditions

Decision-making by the consultative body is not contrary to the legislation in force.

Evaluation and conclusion

The stakeholder analysis has pointed out that the most relevant stakeholders are represented, with the exception of the fishing industry. It is hard to assess to what extent the composition of the consultative body in which the fishing industry is not represented, has determined the outcome of the decision-making processes. Today, as a result of regulation, large-scale cockle fishing is prohibited in the Wadden Sea. Possibly, an early involvement of cockle fishers from the establishment of the National Park in 1989 onwards, could have contributed to an *earlier* shift to more sustainable fishing practices.

An additional comment is that the local inhabitants do not trust the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV), because according to them it does not respect traditional islanders fishing and hunting practices. Due to national and international laws and regulations fishing and hunting are reduced to hunting as a conservation measure and small-scaled sustainable fishing. According to the islanders the involved ministries do not respect these traditions. To some extent the islanders feel that after the establishment of Schiermonnikoog as a National Park, the government has 'taken over' their island. In the consultative body the islanders feel that they are more closely involved than the other members. With regard to some conditions, there is some tension between governmental bodies on the one side and local inhabitants on the other side.

V CHARACTERISTICS SSDs OOSTERSCHELDE

In this chapter it is set out how the strategic stakeholder dialogues are organized in National Park Oosterschelde during the decision-making processes and which conditions for success are present.

5.1 Introduction to National Park Oosterschelde

The Oosterschelde is an estuary in the province of Zeeland. The water is surrounded by the peninsulas of Schouwen-Duiveland, Sint-Philipsland and Tholen, Noord-Beveland, Zuid-Beveland and one original branch of the river Schelde. Since the construction of the Oosterschelde barrier in 1986 the Oosterschelde can be closed from the full sea. National Park Oosterschelde consists of various biotopes of seawater and freshwater, shallow water and great depths, which each contribute to a large variety of ecosystems.

With an area of 37.000 hectares Oosterschelde is the largest National Park of the Netherlands. In May 2002 Oosterschelde was established as a National Park. The consultative body is responsible for the functioning of the National Park and is composed of the stakeholders as displayed in table 5.1. In the management & development plan is laid down what the objectives are and how they should be achieved.

Composition of the consultative body of National Park Oosterschelde	
1	Domeinen Zuid (Breda)
2	Ministerie LNV - Directie Zuid
3	Rijkswaterstaat - Directie Zeeland (Middelburg)
4	Provincie Zeeland (Middelburg)
5	Waterschap de Zeeuwse Eilanden (Middelburg)
6	Gemeente Goes
7	Gemeente Kapelle
8	Gemeente Noord-Beveland
9	Gemeente Reimerswaal
10	Gemeente Schouwen-Duiveland
11	Gemeente Tholen
12	Gemeente Veere
13	Staatsbosbeheer (Tilburg)
14	Stichting Het Zeeuwse Landschap (Wilhelminadorp)
15	Vereniging Natuurmonumenten (Rotterdam)
16	Vertegenwoordiger Natuur, Zeeuwse Milieufederatie (Goes)
17	Vertegenwoordiger Visserij, Productschap Vis, Zevibel (Yerseke)
18	Vertegenwoordiger Recreatie, Breed Overleg Deltawateren (Tholen)
19	Vertegenwoordiger Voorlichting & Educatie, IVN Consulentenschap Zeeland (Goes)
20	Particuliere eigenaren

Table 5.1 Composition of stakeholders in the consultative body of National Park Oosterschelde

5.2 Characteristics of SSDs in Oosterschelde

In table 5.2 an overview is presented of which scores (scores 1 fully agree - 6 fully disagree or 0 not applicable) have been assigned by the 5 interviewees to the 24 conditions. Below each score is displayed how many interviewees have chosen this score. In the utmost right column the weighed average score is displayed (with regard to the first condition $(2 * 1 + 3 * 2)/5 = 1.6$).

Note: the conditions represent ideal circumstances, so the more interviewees fully agree, quite agree or more or less agree with a condition, the more this condition is met or present in a case. Below the results per category of conditions will be discussed in more detail.

Interviews have been conducted with the following members of the consultative body;

1. Chairman of the consultative body;
2. Secretary of the consultative body;
3. Mayor of the local municipality of Kapelle;
4. Representative from the Ministry of Waterways and Public Works (Rijkswaterstaat); and
5. Representative from the interest group ZMf (previously Zeeuwse Milieufederatie).

Conditions	fully agree (1)	quite agree (2)	more or less agree (3)	more or less disagree (4)	quite disagree (5)	fully disagree (6)	not applicable (0)	average
I Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives								
1 Representation of relevant interests	2	3						1,6
2 Stakeholders occupy high positions	5							1
II Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships								
3 Willingness to reconsider interests	2	2		1				2
4 Mutual acknowledgement of representation	4	1						1,2
5 Commitment process and joint decision-making	4	1						1,2
6 Long-term orientation process and relationships	3	1			1			2
7 Stakeholders genuinely represent constituents	4	1						1,2
III Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements in the consultative body								
8 In process stakeholders are equal	4	1						1,2
9 The consultative body is a safe environment	1	1		1			2	1,4
10 Commitment to process rather than results	2						3	0,4
11 Conflict resolution possibilities and exit-option	1						4	0,2
12 Stakeholders know rules of the game	3	1	1					1,6
13 Stakeholders support rules of the game	3	1	1					1,6
14 Measures are taken to speed up the process	3		1	1				2
15 Time, resources and means are sufficient		2	1	1	1			3,2
IV Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with								
16 In advance no substantive choices are made	2	1		1			1	1,6
17 Selection of options is transparent	3	1	1					1,6
18 Stakeholders are dependent to meet objectives	3	2						1,4
19 Problems are not very urgent	3	2						1,4
20 Problems do not exceed the competency c.b.	3			1	1			2,4
21 Problems can be defined	4		1					1,4
V Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts								
22 Chairman is neutral and non-partisan	5							1
23 Experts have no interest in decision-making	2					1	2	1,6
VI Remaining conditions								
24 Results not contrary to legislation	5							1

Table 5.2: Overview of (average) scores based on the interviews with stakeholders from the consultative body of Oosterschelde.

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

Most stakeholder fully agree (2/5) or quite agree (3/5) with the condition that 'in the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented'. In the consultative body of Oosterschelde 20 representatives of different parties are represented (for an overview see table 5.1). According to the chairman and secretary of the consultative body many parties are already represented. With this current number of parties it is already difficult to reach consensus, should this number increase

reaching consensus would become even more difficult. The most important thing is that all the relevant *interests* are represented. Although not every single organization with an interest in Oosterschelde may be represented, all the relevant interests are represented (most notably nature, leisure/recreation and the fishing industry).

The representative from the Ministry of Waterways and Public Works (Rijkswaterstaat) also states that all the relevant interests are represented within the consultative body, but that not all stakeholders are represented directly. This applies in particular to the leisure industry. Many parties have an interest in the decision-making process, and it is impossible to involve all those parties in the consultative body. However, they can voice their interests indirectly through one representative.

The stakeholders in the consultative body occupy high positions within their organizations (5/5 fully agree). During meetings of the consultative body they are almost always present themselves. If they can not attend the meetings themselves they send delegates who have high positions as well (for instance, when the deputy can not attend he/she sends an alderman rather than a civil servant or official). Naturally, higher positions do sometimes exist within the organizations that are represented, but it is not necessarily relevant that those people take part in the consultative body.

The representative from Rijkswaterstaat fully agrees with the condition. All representatives occupy high positions within their own organization; the deputy represents the province, the mayor or alderman the local municipalities and the managing directors or head of district from the nature conservation bodies. He also states that they hardly ever send delegates, but join the meetings themselves.

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

Stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to a joint problem analysis and solution.

The willingness to reconsider interests is present with the representatives who are take part in the consultative body. This is definitely not easy, because some parties do have contrasting interests. In national park Oosterschelde an area of tension is perceptible between the interests of nature and fishery. It is difficult for both parties to reconsider own interests and their own position. Because of mutual trust between the stakeholders and the chairman and secretary enjoy the parties' trust, the consultative body is able to take action unambiguously to third parties. Since fishery policy is a matter of central government, the consultative body can not exert any influence on it.

According to the mayor of Kapelle the willingness is reconsider interests strongly depends on the nature of the matter. When it concerns important issues stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, with less important issues some stakeholders are less inclined to critically evaluate own interests.

The employee from the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie emphasizes that actual problems are not solved in the consultative body, because its authority is too limited. He states that the actual problems are being solved in other governmental bodies, such as the local municipalities or ministries.

In general stakeholders are more than willing to reconsider own interests, says the representative from Rijkswaterstaat. However, sometimes stakeholders find it difficult to let go of their interests. It applies to all stakeholders in the consultative body that they find it difficult to let go of their interests every now and then.

The consultative body of Oosterschelde meets the condition that 'stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation' (4/5 fully agree). One stakeholder comments saying that parties respect each another as being parties that are entitled to 'have a voice in the matters' the consultative body deals with. Only one stakeholder

quite to more or less agrees. He explains that the consultative body consists of stakeholders from three main sectors, i) nature conservation ii) water management and safety and iii) fishery. These sectors are well-organized. Also, the recreation and leisure sector is represented in the consultative body. However, compared to the former three sectors, the latter sector is quite heterogeneous and not well-organized. The homogenous, well-organized sectors do acknowledge each other as legitimate stakeholders, this is not self-evident for the recreation and leisure sector (both within the sector itself as towards the other three sectors).

Within the consultative body 'stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making' (4/5 fully agree). Amongst the four stakeholders that fully agree, one is inclined to opt for score 2 (quite agree), because despite the fact that all stakeholders support joint decision-making, sometimes the self-interest of stakeholders prevails. One stakeholder quite agrees, as the representatives of the three sectors mentioned above are committed to the process and support joint decision-making, whereas this applies to a lesser extent to the representatives from the recreation and leisure sector.

Most stakeholders fully agree (3/5) or quite agree (1/5) with the condition that 'the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders is long-term oriented'. One stakeholder does mention that there is some tension with regard to the long-term orientation of the process, as occasionally some parties are more focused on the short-term (for instance, politicians or municipalities who want receive a certain state subsidy). Only one stakeholder quite disagrees, he states that 'there is an attempt to make to process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues long-term oriented, but this does not live up to its promise. This is due to the fact that the argumentation that plays a role in the decision-making, is always focused on the short-term interest of stakeholders.

'Stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents'. Most interviewees fully agree (4/5) with this condition, one of them comments that 'in discussions they clearly react from their own perspective'. Another stakeholder says that he 'simply does not know whether the stakeholders genuinely represent their constituents. Besides, the constituents of organizations are not necessarily unanimous and thus have a heterogeneous nature'. He suggests replacing 'genuinely' into 'generally' and then quite agrees with the condition.

Category III: Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

The first process agreement concerns the way decisions are being made within the consultative body and the condition states that 'despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue'.

In the consultative body all stakeholders have the right to vote according to the chairman and secretary. The mayor of Kapelle is unable to tell whether decision-making is based on consensus or majority-ruling. He assumes it is based on consensus, because the stakeholders always manage to resolve issues together in harmony. Decision-making never takes place following a set of rules. The employee from the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie states that despite differences in authority the stakeholders are considered equal in the consultative body. However, the actual authority of the consultative body is limited and within the consultative body stakeholders never really vote. The representative from Rijkswaterstaat also states that within the consultative body parties never actually vote. The current chairman of the consultative body is an excellent choice; he has no interest in the (result of the) decision-making. With regard to perilous matters he tries to come to a solution (between parties) through mediation. Decision-making takes place based on (attunement) and consultation rather than voting.

According to the chairman and secretary the condition that 'the consultative body is a safe environment; the process ensures that the core values of the stakeholders enjoy protection' is not

applicable in the consultative body of Oosterschelde. The chairman only recalls one incident where he signed a statement on behalf of all stakeholders, to avoid that stakeholders had to sign individually, because it was contrary to the policy of the organization of one representative.

The extent to which the consultative body is a safe environment differs per stakeholder. According to the mayor of Kapelle the representatives of the local municipalities are less 'tied' to their constituents than for instance the representatives of the Ministry of LNV or Rijkswaterstaat. The latter directly propagate the policy of the organization they represent.

The current chairman contributes to a great extent to creating a secure environment within which the core values of stakeholders enjoy protection, expresses the representative from Rijkswaterstaat. Without the chairman this might have been a problem. When difficult decisions need to be made he is able to create rest, for example for an alderman who has to give account for his actions before the local municipality.

According to the representative from the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie the stakeholders are not able to come up with their interests freely and discuss them with other stakeholders. Again, he emphasizes that the actual problems are being solved elsewhere.

The chairman and secretary state that the condition that 'stakeholders commit themselves to the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues rather than to the (interim) results' is not applicable either. According to the representative from the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie this condition is not applicable as the consultative body not does deal with weighty policy-issues. Therefore there are no important (interim) results, and does the background of this condition not apply. Some stakeholders however do agree with the condition to the extent that despite the conflict in interests between cockle fishers and nature conservation organizations they continue the dialogue in the consultative body.

Four of five interviewees mention that 'the process offers conflict resolution possibilities and offers stakeholders an exit-option' is not applicable in the consultative body. Chairman and secretary explain that since there are no clear rules and regulations there are neither conflict resolution possibilities nor does the consultative body specifically offer stakeholders an exit option. Thus far there has been no need for such process agreements. The chairman states that he would find it very regrettable if parties were to withdraw from the consultative body after a conflict and would blame himself for it.

Most stakeholder fully agree (3/5) with the conditions that 'stakeholders are familiar with and support the process agreements ('rules of the game') before the start of the (process of) the strategic stakeholder dialogue'. The chairman and secretary add that the 'usual course of things' is familiar with the stakeholders, rather than a defined set of process agreements. There has been no need to develop clear rules and regulations, since the stakeholders in the consultative body are on good terms with each other. One stakeholder states that 'participation in the consultative body means acceptance of the process agreements'. Other stakeholders confirm that there are no explicit process agreements, except from the "general codes of conduct which are common with regard to interest representation".

According to the chairman and secretary 'measures are being taken in order to speed up the progress and speed of the process' (average score 2,0). However, concerning some problems the consultative body is dependent on politics on a national level, such as the rapid disappearance of the salt marshes, mud flats and sand flats, which has enormous consequences for nature and safety. The mayor of a local municipality says that the measures that are taken to speed up the progress and speed of the process are dependent on the existence of long or short connections within an organization. Within the local municipalities for example the connections are short, which enables them to speed up decision-making. Within large governmental bodies such as the Ministry of LNV or Rijkswaterstaat connections are long, as a result of which decision-making may be slowed down. Finally, the representative from Rijkswaterstaat states that the current chairman plays a crucial role in speeding up decision-making. He is able to 'soothe' perilous matters which are important to stakeholders.

According to the chairman and secretary ‘the consultative body has sufficient time, (human) resources and means at its disposal’ as National Park Oosterschelde is as a static park when conservation and management are concerned. It could use, however, more time, human and financial resources for educational and recreational objectives. National Parks in the Netherlands have been established by the Ministry of LNV, eventually they will have to evaluate the success of their policy with regard to National Parks. The mayor of the municipality of Kapelle more or less disagrees, stating that “the consultative body has insufficient time, manpower and means at its disposal in order ‘to put flesh on’ its tasks and objectives”. According to the employee from the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie “the Ministry of LNV wants something for nothing”.

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

The chairman and secretary fully agree with the condition that ‘before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue as few substantive choices as possible are made’; choices are made within the framework of the Management & Development Plan. The mayor of the municipality of Kapelle quite agrees, although he adds that it should be the case that as few as possible substantive choices are made in advance, but that in practice in the working groups decisions are being prepared or a selection is being made of options that have already been determined. The representative from the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie states it is not applicable, because the condition is based on the assumption that the consultative body has the authority to solve relevant problems. However, important and weighty choices and dilemma’s are made and solved in other (governmental) bodies. In other words, matters that are truly important are not dealt with in the consultative body. The representative from Rijkswaterstaat more or less disagrees explaining that it occurs occasionally that the chairman makes (substantive) choices prior to the process. He does so in order to speed up the process and with these choices no other interest are violated. As a result, during meetings of the consultative body decisions are being made about subjects that are truly important.

Most interviewees agree with the condition that ‘the selection of options is transparent to all stakeholders and is supported by sound arguments’. The representative from Rijkswaterstaat more or less agrees and again says that occasionally the chairman makes substantive choices prior to the process, so relevant issues can be addressed in the meetings of the consultative body. Alternatives and options are being prepared in the workings groups, where sometimes options are already dropped.

Most stakeholders acknowledge that ‘stakeholders that are member of the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet certain objectives’ (3/5 fully agree and 2/5 quite agree). The employee from the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie claims that the consultative body in the first place depends on other (governmental) bodies to meet certain objectives. However, regarding objectives they are able to meet or problems they are authorized to solve stakeholders in the consultative body are dependent on each other. According to the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat the stakeholders in the consultative body are dependent on each other to a great extent to meet certain objectives, however not for a full 100%. All the involved organizations do have their own budget and furthermore they do not own the National Park.

In general the interviewees fully agree (3/5) or quite agree (2/5) with the condition that ‘the problems are not that urgent that immediate action is required and a decision should be taken immediately’. However, the chairman and secretary plus the stakeholder from a governmental body stress that the disappearance of the salt marshes, mud flats and sand flats, which causes a serious threat for nature and safety, is an exception being quite an urgent problem. Both the stakeholder from the local municipality and the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat also mention the necessity to reinforce the dikes to decrease the risk of flooding as a result of the rise of the sea level (the inner dikes should be levelled with the height of the delta by means of applying steel slags).

The chairman and secretary fully agree with the condition that ‘the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body (concerning the scale and interwovenness with other problems)’.

They explain that they operate within the existing legislative framework. According to them the consultative body has an important task in observing, warning and taking the initiative with regard to tackling (potential) problems. According to the employee from the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie the problems can even be considered 'too light' compared to the 'heavyweight' chairman, secretary and stakeholders.

The mayor from the local municipality quite disagrees, as the problems substantially do not exceed the competency of the consultative body, but they do regarding the actual solutions to some problems. Again, the disappearance of salt marshes, mud flats and sand flats and dike reinforcement serve to exemplify the fact that the consultative body does not have the required authority and means to solve these problems adequately (for instance, the Ministries of LNV, VROM and the Ministry of Waterways and Public Works do have the authority to solve these problems).

Most interviewees fully agree (4/5) with the condition that 'the problems the consultative body deals with can be defined (with regard to other problems)'. According to the employee from the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie the problems can be defined too much from other problems, because the consultative body does not have the power and authority to solve the weighty problems regarding the National Park.

Category V: Conditions with regard the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

Interviewees unanimously fully agree with the condition that 'the chairman (process manager) is neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in (the result of) the decision-making process'. Both the chairman and secretary say they are neutral and non-partisan, but naturally they represent the 'interests' of National Park Oosterschelde. They carefully mind that the basic principles from the Management & Development Plan are met; which means that safety (protection against flooding) is the first priority, followed by nature conservation and development and ensuring that the fishery sector can continue to exist. They are neutral and non-partisan to the extent that the basic principles and guidelines of the Management & Development Plan allow them to be. According to the representative from Rijkswaterstaat the current chairman is pre-eminently neutral and non-partisan. He enjoys authority and has an enormous network at his disposal.

Interviewees differ of opinion concerning the condition that 'experts who are consulted in support of the decision-making, have no interest in the result of the decision-making process'. Whereas the chairman and secretary state that the condition is not applicable, two stakeholders fully agree and one stakeholder fully disagrees. According to the representative from Rijkswaterstaat the consultative body has consulted an expert regarding to the topic of heightening the inner dikes with steel slags. This expert had no interest in the result of the decision-making process. The mayor of the local municipality disagrees, saying that of course experts who are consulted in matters such as the disappearance of marshes and flats or the heightening of the inner dikes have an interest in the decision-making (not only do they have an interest in the decision-making, sometimes one organization represents two contrasting interests as an expert, for instance, Rijkswaterstaat embodies both safety and environmental interests).

Category VI: Remaining conditions

All interviewees unanimously fully agree with the condition that 'the result of the decision-making is not contrary to the legislation in force and fits into the legislative framework'. One of them explains that the representatives from the Ministry of LNV and Rijkswaterstaat are compelled to comply with the legislation in force.

5.3 Conclusions characteristics SSDs Oosterschelde

In this paragraph a basic stakeholder analysis is performed, which is based on the information on the composition of the consultative body and the conducted interviews. It also briefly summarizes the extent to which the conditions for success have been met and evaluates the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogue in the consultative body of National Park Oosterschelde.

Stakeholder analysis

With the exception of the independent chairman and secretary, the consultative body consists of 20 stakeholders. In the first place, the consultative body consists for the greatest part of governmental bodies, such as a number of local municipalities, provinces, a water-board district and the Ministries of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (advisory member) and Waterways and Public Works (Rijkswaterstaat). Second, the main three nature conservation bodies are represented and a number of private owners and third, the most relevant other interests are represented by three members, being nature conservation, the fishery sector and a recreation and leisure association.

In the first place the stakeholders with blocking and productive power are represented in the consultative body of Oosterschelde. With regard to stakeholders that have another interest in the decision-making, the conclusion is that the most important *interests* are represented; being as stated above nature conservation, the fishery sector and recreation and leisure associations. Of course, there are more interest groups - particularly from the recreation and leisure sector - that would like to join, but increasing the number of participants would make reaching consensus even more difficult.

Summary of presence of conditions for success

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

In the consultative body not every *stakeholder* with an interest is represented, however the relevant *interests* are represented. It is already difficult to reach consensus with the current number of 20 stakeholders, should this number increase this would become even harder. Representatives in the consultative body occupy high positions within the organizations they represent. They almost always attend the meetings of the consultative body themselves and when they are unable to come, they send representatives who also occupies high positions.

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

Stakeholders are certainly willing to reconsider interests and overcome differences, which is sometimes difficult, because some have strongly diverging interests (there is a strong area of tension between nature and fishery interests). In the consultative body stakeholders view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation, this almost appears to be self-evident. Only one interviewee argues that is not valid for the recreation and leisure sector. In general stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making, however in some instances the self-interest of stakeholders prevails. Despite the fact that there is always tension between short and long-term interests, both the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues and the relations between the stakeholders are longer-term oriented. Finally, stakeholders who participate in the consultative body genuinely represent their constituents, as in discussions they clearly react from their own perspectives.

Category III: Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

Decision-making is based on consensus and stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues despite differences in power. Most stakeholders perceive the consultative body as a safe environment, although the chairman and secretary explain that this condition is applicable only very rarely. Just as the previous condition, the condition that stakeholders commit themselves to the process rather than the (interim) results is not applicable according to key figures, however, some stakeholders agree because despite conflicts in interests the nature and fishery sectors continue the dialogue. There is no need for conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option, as problems are often solved by the chairman through consultation and mediation between stakeholders.

In the consultative body stakeholders are familiar with and support the 'usual course of things', rather than a defined set of process agreements, there has been no need to develop clear rules of the game, because stakeholders are on good terms with each other.

Measures are taken to speed up the progress and speed of the process, although regarding some problems the consultative body is dependent on other governmental bodies. Sometimes the chairman makes decisions to speed up the progress, always without violating interests. Time, resources and means are sufficient with regard to conservation and management, however more time, resources and means are welcome for educational and recreational purposes.

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

The management & development plan is the framework within which substantive choices are made and substantive choices are prepared in the working groups. When choices have to be made the options are clear and transparent and supported by sound arguments, sometimes options are dropped after preparation in the working groups.

Stakeholders in the consultative body are highly dependent on each other to meet objectives within the scope of their authority, but the consultative body also depends on other governmental bodies to solve certain problems. In general the problems are not urgent and do not require immediate action, with the exceptions of the disappearance of marshes and flats and the dike reinforcement. Usually, the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body; the consultative body might not have the authority to tackle certain problems, it has a very important task in addressing, observing and developing initiatives to solve certain problems according to the chairman and secretary. Some critical interviewees state that the consultative body is unable to exercise an influence on some serious problems, such as the disappearance of salt marshes, mud flats and sand flats and the necessity for dike reinforcement; these problems are solved in other governmental bodies. Most problems the consultative body deals with can be defined with regard to other problems.

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

The current chairman is pre-eminently neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in the decision-making. He maintains excellent relationships with the representatives, but also plays a crucial role in ensuring that the mutual relationships between the representatives are based on mutual trust. He enjoys a lot of authority and has an enormous network. Some interviewees also gave him (and the secretary) credit for contributing to a safe environment, managing the consultative body in such a way that explicit rules of the game are unnecessary, solving acute conflicts bilaterally through mediation and facilitation and speeding up the progress of the process by making decisions for the consultative body, without prejudicing interests of stakeholders.

Opinions tend to differ regarding the condition that 'experts who are consulted in support of the decision-making have no interest in the result of the decision-making'.

Category VI: Remaining conditions

Decision-making by the consultative body is not contrary to the legislation in force.

Evaluation and conclusion

The consultative body of National Park Oosterschelde consists of 20 stakeholders. Most representatives occupy high positions within their respective organizations and some stakeholders do represent conflicting interests. Therefore, it is quite an accomplishment that the consultative body is able to reach consensus. According to the interviewees the chairman succeeds in maintaining excellent relationships with the representatives and also contributes to the fact that the mutual relationships between the representatives are based on mutual trust. Problems are solved through attunement and consultation, rather than voting or using rules of the game. There is no need for clear rules of the game, and so there are no conflict resolution possibilities and the consultative body does not specifically offer the parties an exit option. When difficult decisions need to be made, the chairman is able to create rest and contributes to a great extent to a safe environment.

VI CHARACTERISTICS SSDs DE BIESBOSCH

In this chapter it is set out how the strategic stakeholder dialogues are organized in National Park De Biesbosch during the decision-making processes and which conditions for success are present.

6.1 Introduction to National Park De Biesbosch

De Biesbosch is a wet area with hundreds of creeks, small islands, and willow forests in which rare animal and plant species occur. With an area of approximately 9000 hectares it is one of the larger National Parks in the Netherlands. It has been established as a National Park in 1994. At this moment, the consultative body of De Biesbosch has almost completed an organizational change, which is further addressed below (based on "Perspectieven voor Nationale Parken" by Schol *et al.*, 2009).

There are a lot of governmental bodies with authority in National Park De Biesbosch; two provinces, three municipalities, two nature and recreation boards and two water-board districts. Next to these governmental bodies, the Ministry of Waterways and Public Works, the Ministry of Finance, State Forestry Service and a water company are also represented in the consultative body. National Park De Biesbosch is governed by the consultative body. An executive committee acts as the daily organization of National Park De Biesbosch. The secretariat of De Biesbosch is accommodated at the province of Noord-Brabant. An interest group council has been established, which serves a double purpose; (i) to gain support from the interest groups for the decisions made by the consultative body and, (ii) to communicate the points of view of the interest groups to the consultative body about developments in De Biesbosch.

Since the 1970s two nature and recreation boards are active in the area of De Biesbosch; board 'De Hollandse Biesbosch' (Zuid-Holland) and board 'National Park De Biesbosch' (Noord-Brabant). Together both boards cover an area which consists of National Park De Biesbosch and its direct surroundings. They are managed by representatives of the provinces and the municipalities in the respective areas. It is the responsibility of both boards to protect nature and manage recreation. To do so, they have drawn up laws and regulations and they are charged with the enforcement of those laws and regulations. Both boards consist of a general committee, an executive committee, a secretariat and an interest group council.

In the future, the recreational pressure on De Biesbosch will strongly increase (Kortman & Kuysters, 2007). In order to cope with the increasing recreational pressure, an area with a recreational function is to be developed within a radius of 15 kilometres around National Park De Biesbosch. By developing an outer zone designated for recreational purposes, the recreational pressure is less likely to have an adverse effect on the core area with high biodiversity. However, the development of this outer zone requires a lot of consultation between the multitude of governmental bodies.

In December 2008, the consultative body has decided to start an organizational change, to reduce the number of governmental bodies with responsibility in the larger Biesbosch area, and to facilitate the development of the outer zone for recreational purposes. This should lead to the establishment of a Park organization ("Parkschap"). In the "Parkschap" the two nature and recreation boards will be merged into one organization for the entire Biesbosch area. After establishment of the "Parkschap" the consultative body will probably be discontinued.

In January 2009 a Governing Committee has been set up which acts as the "Parkschap" to be established and which is in charge of its further establishment. Until the "Parkschap" is fully established, both nature and recreation boards and the consultative body remain in function. Although the organizational structure of the "Parkschap" is not entirely clear yet, it will most likely consist of the two provinces and the three municipalities in the area.

6.2 Characteristics of SSDs in De Biesbosch

In table 6.1 an overview is presented of which scores (scores 1 fully agree - 6 fully disagree or 0 not applicable) have been assigned by the 5 interviewees to the 24 conditions. Below each score is displayed how many interviewees have chosen this score. In the utmost right column the weighed average score is displayed (with regard to the second condition $(2 * 1 + 3 * 2)/5 = 1.6$).

Note: the conditions represent ideal circumstances, so the more interviewees fully agree, quite agree or more or less agree with a condition, the more this condition is met or present in a case. Below the results per category of conditions will be discussed in more detail.

Interviews have been conducted with the following members of the consultative body;

1. Chairman of the consultative body;
2. Secretary of the consultative body;
3. Managing director of nature and recreation board 'De Hollandse Biesbosch';
4. Water manager from the Ministry of Waterways and Public Works (Rijkswaterstaat); and
5. District manager from State Forestry Service.

Conditions	fully agree (1)	quite agree (2)	more or less agree (3)	more or less disagree (4)	quite disagree (5)	fully disagree (6)	not applicable (0)	average
I Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives								
1 Representation of relevant interests	1		1	2	1			3,4
2 Stakeholders occupy high positions	2	3						1,6
II Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships								
3 Willingness to reconsider interests		3	1	1				2,6
4 Mutual acknowledgement of representation	4	1						1,2
5 Commitment process and joint decision-making	1	2	1	1				2,4
6 Long-term orientation process and relationships	1	2	1	1				2,4
7 Stakeholders genuinely represent constituents	3	2						1,4
III Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements in the consultative body								
8 In process stakeholders are equal	2	2	1					1,8
9 The consultative body is a safe environment	2	2		1				2
10 Commitment to process rather than results		3					2	1,2
11 Conflict resolution possibilities and exit-option	1	3	1					2
12 Stakeholders know rules of the game	1	4						1,8
13 Stakeholders support rules of the game	1	3	1					2
14 Measures are taken to speed up the process		4	1					2,2
15 Time, resources and means are sufficient	1			2	2			3,8
IV Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with								
16 In advance no substantive choices are made		2		3				3,2
17 Selection of options is transparent	2	3						1,6
18 Stakeholders are dependent to meet objectives		3						2
19 Problems are not very urgent	2	1						1,3
20 Problems do not exceed the competency c.b.	1		1		1			3
21 Problems can be defined	1	1	1					2
V Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts								
22 Chairman is neutral and non-partisan	5							1
23 Experts have no interest in decision-making	2	2	1					1,8
VI Remaining conditions								
24 Results not contrary to legislation	4	1						1,2

Table 6.1: Overview of (average) scores based on the interviews with stakeholders from the consultative body of De Biesbosch.

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

On average the condition which states that 'in the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented' has a score of 3,4. Both the chairman and the secretary agree that in the consultative body mainly governmental bodies are represented. Other interest groups are represented in the interest group council. According to the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board the relevant stakeholders are represented in the consultative body, with the exception of private entrepreneurs. The disestablishment between governmental bodies and interest groups has worked well thus far, says the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat.

Most interviewees fully or quite agree with the condition that 'stakeholders in the consultative body occupy high positions in the organizations they represent' with an average score of 1.6. Both the chairman and the secretary state that the representatives of the governmental bodies do occupy high positions on paper, however, they quite often send delegates to the meetings of the consultative body who occupy lower positions. According to the secretary there is a decreasing interest in National Park De Biesbosch amongst representatives of governmental bodies since its establishment in 1994, except during the NAM-business (the Ministry of Economic Affairs gave the Nederlandse Aardolie Maatschappij (NAM) permission to perform gas drilling operations in De Biesbosch, the consultative body raised objections against this decision).

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

The condition that 'stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to a joint problem analysis and solution' has an average score of 2,6. According to the chairman an area of tension exists between the interests of nature conservation versus recreation; in the heart of De Biesbosch nature conservation is the first priority, whereas the outer area is designated for recreational purposes. Some surrounding municipalities want to expand the recreational facilities as this is economically profitable. A number of parties are focused too much on their own interest, rather than that of National Park De Biesbosch, according to the secretary.

The stakeholder from the nature and recreation board also states that stakeholders participate in the consultative body from their own interest. Furthermore, small-scaled interest groups are less willing to reconsider interests than larger organizations. With the establishment of National Park De Biesbosch in 1994, the parties that take part in the consultative body have all signed the covenant, with which they endorse the objectives that have been laid down for National Park De Biesbosch. They participate in the consultative body to meet these objectives in co-operation. According to the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat the willingness to reconsider interests is linked to these objectives. In the Governing Committee which consist of governmental bodies that have an important interest in the National Park the willingness to reconsider interests is present to a great extent, says the stakeholder from State Forestry Service.

Most interviewees tend to find the condition that 'stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation' self-evident (average score 1,2). Although the secretary also fully agrees he adds a critical observation by pointing out that the consultative body for the greater part consists of governmental bodies.

Opinions differ regarding the condition that 'stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making'. According to the secretary the extent to which stakeholders are committed to the process depends on the items on the agenda. Nevertheless, all stakeholders support the concept of joint decision-making. Once more, the representative from Rijkswaterstaat emphasizes that the disestablishment between governmental bodies and interest groups works well and should be maintained. Contrary to most stakeholders in the interest group council, stakeholders in the consultative body have formal responsibility. Although the input from the interest

group council is taken very seriously by the consultative body, strange things would happen if they were given a serious say in the matters the consultative body dealt with.

Opinions also differ with regard to the condition stating that 'both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented'. According to the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board an area of tension occurs between short-term and long-term interests. In the consultative body the discussion often deals with short-term aspects. Also, the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat states that the strategic stakeholder dialogues regarding the conservation and development of the National Park should have a long-term orientation. However, in practice the short-term interest prevails in discussions.

With an average score of 1,4 most interviewees agree with the condition that 'stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents'. According to the secretary most stakeholders genuinely represent their constituents, although personal preference sometimes plays a role.

Category III: Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

On average the condition which states that 'despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue' has a score of 1,8. Decisions are made in consideration of the objectives of the management & development plan, fitting into the municipal spatial planning plans in force and within the available budget, explains the chairman. According to the secretary stakeholders are considered equal; formally the consultative body makes decisions based on majority-ruling, however, in practice based on consensus. He adds a critical note by referring to the composition of the consultative body in which organizations other than governmental bodies are not represented.

Stakeholders are able to have their say in the consultative body without respect of persons, says the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board. However, the different interests of the parties are weighed in the decision-making process. Depending on the decision to be made, interests of a certain party may weigh heavier than those of others. In the consultative body the stakeholders co-operate on the conservation and management of National Park De Biesbosch, with the retention of their authority, explains the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat.

With an average score of 2,0 most interviewees agree with the condition that 'the consultative body is a safe environment; the process ensures that the core values of the stakeholders enjoy protection'. According to the chairman the consultative body is a 'safe environment', when an alderman 'gets stuck' between the consultative body and the elected body he [the chairman] exercises clemency. Also, the secretary explains that the consultative body is a safe environment, as in some cases consensus is sought actively amongst the stakeholders. When conflicts arise, there is an attempt to meet a parties' wishes. The consultative body is a safe environment, because the topics that are being discussed are safe, the more risky topics are dealt with bilaterally, states the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board. Also, the 'real debate' is not conducted in the consultative body, but elsewhere. According to the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat a safe environment is inconsistent with the fact that meetings of the consultative body are open to the public, which always causes some interference. In a closed environment it is sometimes easier to achieve certain things.

Most interviewees quite agree (3/5) with the condition that 'stakeholders commit themselves to the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue rather than to the (interim) results', whereas others (2/5) are of the opinion that it is not applicable in the consultative body. Only the chairman comments on the condition by saying that next to process agreements, also the culture within the consultative body plays an important role, which makes that unwritten rules also apply.

The condition that ‘the process offers conflict resolution possibilities and offers stakeholders an exit-option’ has an average score of 2,0. Both the chairman and secretary explain that the consultative body offers conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option. However, everything will be done to settle conflicts within the consultative body and to prevent stakeholders from exiting the process, first by the chairman and if he does not succeed by the Minister of LNV. The question which immediately arises with the stakeholder from State Forestry Service is what purpose is served by exiting the consultative body. According to her exiting the consultative body has a symbolic, rather than a substantive effect.

With an average score of 1,8 most interviewees quite agree with the conditions that ‘stakeholders are familiar with and support the process agreements before the start of the strategic stakeholder dialogue’. The secretary explains that the process agreements are laid down in a covenant from 1994. According to the chairman not only process agreements play a role, but the culture within the consultative body is just as important, which makes that unwritten rules are also part of the process. The stakeholder from State Forestry Service says that the existence and use of process agreements is not entirely clear. She is of the opinion that with a capable chairman this is not necessarily a problem. In the consultative body she does not perceive the lack of clear process agreements as a loss.

Most interviewees are of the opinion that the consultative body meets the condition which states that ‘measures are being taken in order to speed up the progress and speed of the process’ (average score 2,2). Only the stakeholder from State Forestry Service comments that with the establishment of the interim Governing Committee the process proceeds differently than under normal conditions.

The condition that ‘the consultative body has sufficient time, (human) resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily’ has an average score of 3,8. Both the chairman and secretary agree that most notably human resources are insufficient to fulfil the task of the consultative body adequately. According to the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board human resources, financial means and time are altogether insufficient; the capacity of the secretariat of the consultative body should be reinforced. Besides, he is in favour of a new governing model for the entire Biesbosch area, which is increasingly aimed at rural development and elevates the National Park and its surroundings.

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

Opinions are quite divided regarding the condition which states that ‘before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue as few substantive choices as possible are made’. The chairman explains that choices are being made within the framework of the management & development plan and that as such this plan determines to some extent the direction of the decisions to be made. According to the secretary the decision-making is being prepared in the executive committee, which also determines the policy to some degree. It is important to set the substantive framework within which choices can be made prior to the decision-making process, says the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat. He explains that decision-making takes place within the framework of the covenant from 1994 and that choices are made jointly, but with the retention of stakeholders’ own authority.

All interviewees agree with the condition that ‘the selection of options is transparent to all stakeholders and is supported by sound arguments’ with an average score of 1,6. According to the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board the options are supported by sound arguments and although stakeholders find it sometimes difficult to accept certain choices, they always respect the decisions made. At the moment, both the consultative body and the Governing Committee are in charge, as a result of which a parallel process takes place. The decisions made in the Governing Committee are not always transparent and clearly stated, says the representative from State Forestry Service.

Stakeholders quite agree unanimously that ‘stakeholders that are member of the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet objectives’. According to the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat

exactly the fact that stakeholders in the consultative body are dependent on each other to achieve the set objectives, which they would not be able to meet single-handedly, should be the added value of the consultative body.

Most stakeholders agree with the condition that ‘the problems are not that urgent that immediate action is required and a decision should be taken immediately’ (average score 1,3). Strategic topics are usually not urgent and are thus suited for joint decision-making, says the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board. However, when serious problems arise decisions ought to be made at once.

Opinions are quite divided regarding the condition that ‘the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body (concerning the scale and interwovenness with other problems)’. According to the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board with its current status and authorities the consultative body is unable to exercise influence on developments that take place outside the park, but may have an (adverse) impact on National Park De Biesbosch. He states that the National Park should not be considered as an isolated area, but as an integral element of a larger geographical region; interaction between the National Park and its surroundings occur, where developments in the National Park have an impact on the surrounding area and vice versa. In order to cope with this reciprocity and to strengthen the position of the consultative body he is in favour of a new governing model. The stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat explains that the problems the consultative body deals with are often related to matters that are under discussion at a higher (governmental) level, for example the Ministry of Economic Affairs decides upon the gas drilling operations in De Biesbosch. On the other hand, the stakeholder from State Forestry Service believes that the problems the consultative body deals with all lie within its scope.

Stakeholders agree with the condition that ‘the problems the consultative body deals with can be defined (with regard to other problems)’. Both stakeholders from the nature and recreation board and from the Ministry of Waterways and Public Works explain that the boundaries of the National Park are demarcated, however some of the problems the consultative body deals with are transboundary. Due to the reciprocal relationship between National Park De Biesbosch and the surrounding area, solutions to some problems go beyond the boundaries of the National Park.

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

Interviewees unanimously fully agree with the condition that ‘the chairman (process manager) is neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in (the result of) the decision-making process’ (average score 1,0). According to the secretary both the chairman and secretary are neutral and non-partisan, since they do not represent a governmental body, organization or interest group with an interest in decision-making in National Park De Biesbosch. Also, the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board states that the chairman has no interest in the result of the decision-making. His main interests are that the consultative body makes progress and that it functions well.

With an average score of 1,8 most interviewees agree with the condition that ‘experts who are consulted in support of the decision-making, have no interest in the result of the decision-making process’. An example which demonstrates that the consultative body meets this condition is that it has consulted a renowned landscape gardener to assess the impact of a large tower to be built near the edge of De Biesbosch close to Werkendam. According to the chairman this independent expert had no interest in whether or not the tower would eventually be built. Sometimes experts are consulted from an organization that is also represented in the consultative body, explains the stakeholder from the nature and recreation board. In that case there is a slightly more prominent interest in the result of the decision-making. A solution might be to consult contra-experts. On the one side in the working groups decisions to be made are prepared, and the members have a clear role in a specific topic. On the other side neutral and non-partisan experts are consulted by the consultative body, such as the landscape gardener, elucidates the stakeholder from State Forestry Service. An expert should not have a personal interest in the result of the decision-making, however he may stand for a personal opinion with regard to the problem and the potential solution. Sometimes it is hard to draw a distinction between the two, says the stakeholder from Rijkswaterstaat.

Category VI: Remaining conditions

Almost unanimous agreement exists with regard to the condition that ‘the result of the decision-making is not contrary to the legislation in force and fits into the legislative framework’ (average score 1,2).

6.3 Conclusions characteristics SSDs De Biesbosch

In this paragraph a basic stakeholder analysis is performed, which is based on the information on the composition of the consultative body and the conducted interviews. It also briefly summarizes the extent to which the conditions for success have been met and evaluates the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogue in the consultative body of National Park De Biesbosch.

Stakeholder analysis

In the consultative body of De Biesbosch almost only governmental bodies with blocking and productive power are represented; local municipalities, two provinces, two nature and recreation boards, water-board districts and the Ministries of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (advisory member), Waterways and Public Works (Rijkswaterstaat) and the Ministry of Finance. Second, the main nature conservation body State Forestry Service and a water company are represented.

Other stakeholders with an interest who are not able to contribute directly to the decision-making are represented in the interest group council. In the current organization of National Park De Biesbosch these stakeholders are not able to contribute largely to the decision-making. Using the typology of interaction with stakeholders according to Harris, the consultative body interacts with stakeholders from the interest group council based on consultation (Harris, 2002). In interaction based on consultation the initiator (consultative body) aims to get informed feedback on a proposal; the initiator seeks for opinions, points of view and feelings of stakeholders (interest groups). Stakeholders are given the possibility of having a say in the matter and their input *may* lead to adjustment of the plan. However, in light of the ambitious future plans for the larger Biesbosch area, members of the current consultative body (Governing Committee) are looking for a new role for the interest group council.

Summary of presence of conditions for success

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

In the consultative body of De Biesbosch mainly governmental organizations are represented, the interest groups are represented in the interest group council; to realize the ambitious future plans the consultative body (or "Parkschap") might increasingly need the co-operation of interest groups that goes beyond the current interaction based on consultation.

Representatives in the consultative body occupy high positions within the organizations they represent. However, they often send delegates to the meetings of the consultative body who occupy lower positions. Also, the representatives of the governmental bodies have slightly lost interest in the national park since its establishment in 1994. They have regained interest with the establishment of the new organization, the "Parkschap".

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

To some extent the stakeholders in the consultative body are willing to reconsider interests, but some stakeholders are focused too much on their own interests. It is not easy to reconsider interests either, since there is an area of tension between nature conservation and recreational development.

Stakeholders in the consultative body view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation. However, the presence of this condition should be seen in the light that the consultative body for the most part consists of governmental bodies, interest groups are organized in the interest group council. Generally, the stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem-solving. Most notably, the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues is not always long-term oriented. In the consultative body short-term aspects often prevail in the discussions and an area of tension occurs between short-term and long-term interests. Stakeholders who participate in the consultative body genuinely represent their constituents.

Category III: Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

Despite actual power differences, stakeholders are considered equal, because decision-making is formally based on majority-ruling, in practice it is based on consensus.

The consultative body is a safe environment, when an alderman 'gets stuck' between the consultative body and the elected body the chairman exercises clemency. Some interviewees agree with the condition that stakeholders commit themselves to the process, rather than the (interim) results, others say it is not applicable in the consultative body. The consultative body offers conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option. In the first place everything will be done to settle conflicts and to prevent stakeholders from withdrawing.

Stakeholders are familiar with and support the rules of the game at the start of the strategic stakeholder dialogue. In the covenant basic rules of the game are laid down (decision-making), furthermore there are unwritten rules, rather than extensive process agreements.

Most interviewees agree that measures are taken to speed up the progress and speed of the process when it proceeds too slowly. The consultative body has insufficient time, (human) resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task adequately. Most notably it lacks manpower.

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

Regarding the condition that before the start of the process as few substantive choices as possible are made, interviewees generally more or less agree, because the management & development plan is the framework within which substantive choices are made and substantive choices are prepared in the executive committee. Stakeholders are of the opinion that the selection of options is transparent and is supported by sound arguments.

In the consultative body stakeholders are dependent on each other to meet objectives, the fact that stakeholders are not able to meet the objectives single-handedly, is the added value of the consultative body. The problems the consultative body deals with do not require immediate action and because several topics have a strategic component, they are suitable for joint decision-making. Although the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body, the development of a recreational zoning around the National Park and other developments can not be dealt with adequately. Also, the problems the consultative body deals with can generally be defined, however reciprocal relationships between the De Biesbosch and its surroundings makes that solutions to some problems go beyond the boundaries of National Park De Biesbosch.

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

The chairman of the consultative body is neutral and impartial and has no interest in the result of the decision-making. Most interviewees from De Biesbosch share the opinion that experts have no interest in the decision-making.

Category VI: Remaining conditions

Almost unanimous agreement exists with regard to the condition that the result of the decision-making is not contrary to the legislation in force and fits into the legislative framework.

Evaluation and conclusion

Prior to the current ongoing re-organization representatives from governmental bodies to some degree grew disinterested in National Park De Biesbosch since its establishment in 1994. Representatives in the consultative body occupied high positions 'on paper', but they regularly sent delegates with lower positions and unclear mandates to the meetings. Besides, the representatives operated in a complex web of governmental bodies that had a say in the matter; a consultative body and an interest group council and two nature and recreation boards who also had established two interest group councils. As a result, the same problems were being discussed several times by mostly the same people.

After the publication of a report which stated that the recreational pressure on De Biesbosch will strongly increase in the future, the consultative body decided to start an organizational change which should reduce the number of organizations with responsibility in the larger Biesbosch area. In the new governing body (the so-called "Parkschap"), the executive committee of the consultative body will be merged with the executive committees of the two nature- and recreation boards.

With the formation of a new body with increased authorities and a decreased number of responsible governmental bodies, it will become easier to develop an outer area for recreational purposes around National Park De Biesbosch. However, the downsides are that participation in the new body is no longer voluntary and this may result in a loss of support among some actors (Schol et al., 2009). Also, the current interim Governing Committee may reconsider the role of the current interest group council, whose co-operation may increasingly become important to the development of the larger Biesbosch area. Rather than interaction based on consultation their role may evolve into interaction based on bounded dialogue, of which the aim is to find support for decisions that have already been made and to find partners for the implementation of the policy and possibly further develop the strategy set out by the initiator.

VII CHARACTERISTICS SSDs UTRECHTSE HEUVELRUG

In this chapter it is set out how the strategic stakeholder dialogues are organized in National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug during the decision-making processes and which conditions for success are present.

7.1 Introduction to National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug

National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug is a sand ridge in the province of Utrecht. Utrechtse Heuvelrug is the second largest forest area in the Netherlands, but also contains a number of moors and some drifting sands. Its grounds belong to a multitude of owners. About half of the area is owned by private owners, in addition to the three main nature conservation bodies State Forestry Service (State Forestry Service), Het Utrechts Landschap and the National Trust for Natural Heritage (Vereniging Natuurmonumenten). Management of the National Park is implemented by the various land owners. In 2003, the Minister of LNV formally established National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug.

7.2 Characteristics of SSDs Utrechtse Heuvelrug

In table 7.1 an overview is presented of which scores (scores 1 fully agree - 6 fully disagree or 0 not applicable) have been assigned by the 4 interviewees to the 24 conditions. Below each score is displayed how many interviewees have chosen this score. In the utmost right column the weighed average score is displayed (with regard to the first condition $(1 * 1 + 3 * 2)/4 = 1.8$).

Note: the conditions represent ideal circumstances, so the more interviewees fully agree, quite agree or more or less agree with a condition, the more this condition is met or present in a case. Below the results per category of conditions will be discussed in more detail.

Interviews have been conducted with the following members of the consultative body;

1. Secretary of the consultative body;
2. Representative of the private owners (of estates);
3. Owner and representative from nature conservation body foundation 'Het Utrechts Landschap';
4. Chairman of the interest group platform.

Conditions	fully agree (1)	quite agree (2)	more or less agree (3)	more or less disagree (4)	quite disagree (5)	fully disagree (6)	not applicable (0)	average
I Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives								
1 Representation of relevant interests	1	3						1,8
2 Stakeholders occupy high positions	1	1	2					2,3
II Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships								
3 Willingness to reconsider interests		1	3					2,8
4 Mutual acknowledgement of representation	1	2	1					2,0
5 Commitment process and joint decision-making	2	2						1,5
6 Long-term orientation process and relationships	1	1	2					2,3
7 Stakeholders genuinely represent constituents	1	3						1,8
III Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements in the consultative body								
8 In process stakeholders are equal	3			1				1,8
9 The consultative body is a safe environment	1	1	2					2,3
10 Commitment to process rather than results		3	1					2,3
11 Conflict resolution possibilities and exit-option		2	1	1				2,8
12 Stakeholders know rules of the game	2	1	1					1,8
13 Stakeholders support rules of the game		2	1			1		3,3
14 Measures are taken to speed up the process		2	1	1				2,8
15 Time, resources and means are sufficient		1	2			1		3,5
IV Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with								
16 In advance no substantive choices are made	1		1	1			1	2,0
17 Selection of options is transparent	1	2	1					2,0
18 Stakeholders are dependent to meet objectives	1	3						1,8
19 Problems are not very urgent		4						2,0
20 Problems do not exceed the competency c.b.	1	1	1				1	1,5
21 Problems can be defined		2	1	1				2,8
V Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts								
22 Chairman is neutral and non-partisan	2	2						1,5
23 Experts have no interest in decision-making		1		1	1		1	2,8
VI Remaining conditions								
24 Results not contrary to legislation	3	1						1,3

Table 7.1: Overview of (average) scores based on the interviews with stakeholders from the consultative body of Utrechtse Heuvelrug.

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

Most stakeholders to some extent agree with the condition that 'in the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented' (average score 1,8). Both stakeholders from the private owners and the nature conservation body state that all the relevant stakeholders are represented in the consultative body, with the exception of the actual "users" of National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug. Interest groups and/or "users" are represented in the interest group platform, which has been established by the consultative body.

With an average score of 2,3 most interviewees quite agree with the condition that 'stakeholders in the consultative body occupy high positions in the organizations they represent'. According to the secretary stakeholders do occupy high positions, but they regularly send delegates to the meetings of the consultative body.

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

The condition that 'stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to a joint problem analysis and solution' has an average score of 2,8. According to the

representative from the private owners the willingness to reconsider interests is certainly present, however a number of representatives are guided too much by the organization they represent.

In general most interviewees agree with the condition stating that 'stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation' (average score 2,0). According to the chairman of the interest group platform the condition not only applies to the consultative body, but the members of the consultative body also acknowledge the representatives in the interest group platform.

Most interviewees agree with the condition that 'stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making' with an average score of 1,5.

On average the condition that 'both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented' has a score of 2,3. According to the secretary some members already have participated in the consultative body since its official establishment in 2003. Besides, the stakeholders benefit from the mutual relationships they have built up. On the other hand, the representative from the private owners states that it would be better if the mutual relationships between the stakeholders would be long-term oriented. However, this is not always made possible. Finally, the chairman of the interest group platform explains that particularly the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue is merely focused on incidents, rather than being long-term oriented. Topics of the day clearly prevail in the discussions in the consultative body.

Opinions are quite alike regarding the condition that 'stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents' (average score 1,8). Generally speaking the stakeholders genuinely represent their constituents, according to the secretary. An exception however is that the three representatives from the private owners sometimes let their own interests play too large a role.

Category III: Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

Most interviewees fully agree with the condition that 'despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue' (average score 1,8). Both the secretary and the representative from the private owners explain that stakeholders are considered equal in the consultative body, as decision-making is based on consensus.

In general the interviewees tend to agree with the condition that 'the consultative body is a safe environment; the process ensures that the core values of the stakeholders enjoy protection' (average score 2,3). According to the representative of the private owners a safe environment is also influenced by the presence of a good chairman; the consultative body of National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug is presided by a good chairman.

With an average score of 2,3 most interviewees quite agree with the condition that 'stakeholders commit themselves to the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue rather than to the (interim) results'. According to the secretary there is an attempt to commit all stakeholders to the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue, however there are exceptions when stakeholders do not agree to (interim) decisions.

Opinions are quite divided regarding the condition that 'the process offers conflict resolution possibilities and offers stakeholders an exit-option' (average score 2,8). According to the secretary the consultative body does not offer conflict resolution arrangements. Participation in the consultative body happens on a voluntary basis. Also, the representative from the private owners states that the private owners participate in the consultative body voluntarily. He explains that none of the stakeholders has ever withdrawn from the consultative body, although one of the private owners has

once threatened to withdraw. Naturally, animosities every now and then arise between the stakeholders, says the chairman of the interest group platform, but these are usually solved bilaterally.

With an average score of 1,8 most interviewees agree with the conditions that 'stakeholders are familiar with and support the process agreements before the start of the strategic stakeholder dialogue'. According to the representative from the private owners it is well-known that one of the preconditions for the co-operation of the private owners is that nothing can be compelled. He also states that the process agreements enjoy the support of the stakeholders, because they are prepared in the working groups. Besides, the outlines of the management & development plan are followed as much as possible. In general the rules of the game in the consultative body are fairly simple, says the chairman of the interest group platform. Altogether the rules of the game become difficult because the consultative body is dependent on the province; it depends on quite complex provincial procedures and the province each year decides upon the amount of financial resources that are available to the National Park.

Most interviewees tend to agree with the condition that 'measures are being taken in order to speed up the progress and speed of the process' (average score 2,8). If the process proceeds too slowly, measures are taken in the form of interventions to speed up the process, according to the secretary. In some cases the progress of the process is hampered when a stakeholder only renders her co-operation to (the execution of) a certain measure when another measure has been carried out satisfactorily.

Opinions somewhat differ concerning the condition that 'the consultative body has sufficient time, (human) resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily' with an average score of 3,5. Most notably there is a shortage of manpower and time; the estimated hours (fte) to conduct the work are much lower than the actual hours spent, which is valid for the tenured employees of the consultative body, says the secretary who fully disagrees with the condition. Both the representatives from the private owners and the chairman of the interest group platform are less pronounced and respectively state that "as a matter of course more time, means and manpower are welcome" and "the amount of time, means and manpower the consultative body has at its disposal is always insufficient".

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

The condition that 'before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue as few substantive choices as possible are made' has an average score of 2,0. According to the secretary no substantive choices are made in advance, for decision-making takes place based on consensus. Decisions are prepared in the working groups, which means that the trend of the decisions is already remotely determined. Although the decisions are prepared in the working groups, the final decision-making takes place in the consultative body, says the representative of the private owners.

With an average score of 2,0 most interviewees agree with the condition that 'the selection of alternatives/options is transparent to all stakeholders and is supported by sound arguments'. Based on the comments from the members of the consultative body on the documents the selection of options and the argumentation is not always entirely clear, states the chairman of the interest group platform. However, he claims that this is also due to the large number of policy plans in force which address the development of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug area. The extensive policy with regard to the Utrechtse Heuvelrug is complex to such an extent that it plays a major role in the choices that are made in the consultative body.

Most interviewees quite agree with the condition that 'stakeholders that are member of the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet certain objectives' (average score 1,8). None of the interviewees elaborates further on this condition.

Interviewees unanimously (quite) agree with the condition that ‘the problems are not that urgent that immediate action is required and a decision should be taken immediately’ (average score 2,0). Again, none of the stakeholders has any further comments.

With the exception of one stakeholder most interviewees agree with the condition that ‘the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body (concerning the scale and interwovenness with other problems)’. According to the secretary on the one hand the problems with regard to conservation, management and development do not exceed the competency of the consultative body. On the other hand, the new way of financing National Parks does exceed the competency of most members of the consultative body (except for the secretary).

Since the consultative body is not a corporate body, it has formally speaking a very limited authority (and thus competency). However, the government assigns a great status to the consultative bodies of national parks. Despite its limited decision-making authority, the consultative body has a moral authority, for instance with regard to road construction and house building within the boundaries of the national park. It has the ability to exert an influence on such developments by warning for the consequences of such interventions. Because the consultative body officially has no authority and thus competency, the representative from the private owners marks this condition as not applicable.

Most interviewees agree with the condition that ‘the problems the consultative body deals with can be defined (with regard to other problems)’ with an average score of 2,8. Sometimes it is difficult to clearly define the problems the consultative body deals with, because they quite often interconnect with other problems, explains the chairman of the interest group platform.

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

With an average score of 1,5 interviewees agree with the condition that ‘the chairman (process manager) is neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in (the result of) the decision-making process’. According to the secretary both the chairman and the secretary perform the duties of process managers. They are both neutral and non-partisan, but they act in the interest of National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug. Also, the representative from the private owners confirms that both the chairman and secretary are impartial and have no interest in the decision-making.

Opinions diverge regarding the condition that ‘experts who are consulted in support of the decision-making, have no interest in the result of the decision-making process’ (average score 2,8). According to the secretary and the representative of the private owners this condition is not applicable in the consultative body. They respectively state that "the consultative body hardly ever consults experts" and that "the ambition is that this condition is met through the working group conservation & management, which advises the consultative body on substantive matters". On the other hand, the chairman of the interest group platform says that experts do have an interest in the decision-making process and that to some extent entanglement of interests always occurs. For instance, a consultancy company that is consulted in support of the decision-making, has an interest in the continuation of the work for its customer.

Category VI: Remaining conditions

Almost unanimous agreement exists with regard to the condition that ‘the result of the decision-making is not contrary to the legislation in force and fits into the legislative framework’ (average score 1,3). On the one hand the representative from the nature conservation body fully agrees with the condition, because the decisions the consultative body makes are not contrary to the legislation in force. On the other hand he fully disagrees with the condition, since the consultative body is not a corporate body and hence the decisions it makes are not legally valid.

Which conditions have determined the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogue in National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug:

7.3 Conclusions characteristics SSDs Utrechtse Heuvelrug

In this paragraph a basic stakeholder analysis is performed, which is based on the information on the composition of the consultative body and the conducted interviews. It also briefly summarizes the extent to which the conditions for success have been met and evaluates the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogue in the consultative body of National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug.

Stakeholder analysis

In the consultative body of Utrechtse Heuvelrug stakeholders from governmental bodies, owners and nature conservation bodies and larger interest groups are represented. It consists of governmental bodies; the province, local municipalities, a recreation board, a water-board district and the Ministries of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (advisory member). Second, three nature conservation bodies and three representatives of a total number of 27 private owners (of estates) are represented. Finally, the larger interest groups participate, being an agricultural interest group, a recreational interest group and the association for Environmental Education.

In this respect organizations with blocking power and productive capacities and the larger interests are represented, with the exception of stakeholders that are not able to contribute directly to the decision-making, being the 'users' of National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug. They are represented in the interest group platform, which consists of local schools, sports and leisure unions, scouting and nature lovers, etc. However, there is a thorough co-operation and feedback between the consultative body and the interest group platform. A side note is that it is understandable that the private owners are not willing to share influence directly with these interest groups.

Summary of presence of conditions for success

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

In the consultative body governmental organizations, private owners and nature conservation bodies and larger interest groups are represented. In the interest group platform the actual 'users' are represented; there is a thorough co-operation and feedback between consultative body and interest group platform. Representatives in the consultative body occupy high positions within the organizations they represent. However, they regularly send delegates to the meetings of the consultative body who occupy lower positions.

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

Generally, stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests to come a joint problem analysis and solution, however a number of representatives are guided too much by the organization they represent. Stakeholders engaged in the strategic stakeholder dialogue recognize each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation. They also acknowledge the interest groups in the interest platform, which has been established by the consultative body two years ago. Most stakeholders appear to find it self-evident that they are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making. Both the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues and the relations between the stakeholders are to some extent longer-term oriented, however 'topics of the day' clearly prevail in the discussions in the consultative body. Stakeholders who participate in the consultative body genuinely represent their constituents.

Category III: Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

Despite actual differences in power, stakeholders participating in strategic stakeholder dialogue are equal in the decision-making process. Decisions are made based on consensus. Most interviewees are of the opinion that the consultative is a safe environment. They also agree with the condition that stakeholders commit themselves to the process, rather than the (interim) results, although stakeholders in some cases disagree with (interim) decisions. There are no explicit conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option, as participation in the consultative body happens on a voluntary basis.

Generally, stakeholders are familiar with and support the rules of the game at the start of the strategic stakeholder dialogues (the average score with regard to the extent to which stakeholder support the rules of the game is higher due to an outlier).

Measures are taken to speed up the progress and speed of the process, according to the secretary the chairman intervenes when the process proceeds too slowly. The consultative body has insufficient time, (human) resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily. Most notably manpower and time are insufficient.

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

Regarding the condition that before the start of the process as few substantive choices as possible are made; the decisions are prepared in the working groups. Final decision-making always takes place in the consultative body. Most interviewees are of the opinion that the selection of options is transparent to all stakeholders and is supported by sound arguments.

Stakeholders in the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet objectives. Also, stakeholder unanimously (quite) agree that the problems are not that urgent that immediate action is required and a decision should be taken immediately. Usually, the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body; however, the consultative body is not a corporate body and thus has very limited authority. Despite its limited *competent* authority, it has a strong *moral* authority in warning for interventions. It is sometimes difficult to clearly define the problems, because they quite often interconnect with other problems.

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

Both the chairman and the secretary of the consultative body are neutral and impartial and have no interest in the result of the decision-making, they both act in the interest of National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug. In the consultative body experts are hardly ever consulted in support of decision-making.

Category VI: Remaining conditions

Decision-making by the consultative body is not contrary to the legislation in force.

Evaluation and conclusion

In the consultative body of Utrechtse Heuvelrug the most relevant stakeholders are represented on a voluntary basis. Actual 'users' are represented in the interest group platform and there is a thorough co-operation and feedback between consultative body and interest group platform. Despite the fact that representatives occupy high positions on paper, they regularly send delegates to the meetings of the consultative body. Next to governmental bodies and nature conservation bodies, private owners own and manage a considerable area of the National Park. One of the preconditions for the co-operation of the 27 private owners is first, that nothing can be compelled and second, that the government contributes to the management of the National Park by making available financial means. Because of

this, it is vital that decisions come into being through consensus based on attunement and consultation, rather than for instance voting or coercion. So far, the consultative body has succeeded in gaining sufficient support for the formulated objectives amongst the stakeholders.

VIII COMPARISON OF CASES AND DISCUSSION

8.1 Comparison of cases

In the previous chapter it has been set out which conditions are present and which of these conditions have determined the success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the cases Schiermonnikoog, Oosterschelde, Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug.

In this paragraph the results of the case studies from the previous chapters will be compared in order to make an analysis of the differences between the cases concerning the presence of conditions. The comparison of cases results in an overview of the cases in which the strategic stakeholder dialogue has or has not been a successful tool and why. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion to what degree the strategic stakeholder dialogue is a useful tool in the conservation and management of National Parks and in which situations it can best be applied.

Conditions	Schiermonnikoog	Oosterschelde	Biesbosch	Utrechtse heuvelrug
I Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives				
1 Representation of relevant interests	1,6	1,6	3,4	1,8
2 Stakeholders occupy high positions	2	1	1,6	2,3
II Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships				
3 Willingness to reconsider interests	2,6	2	2,6	2,8
4 Mutual acknowledgement of representation	1	1,2	1,2	2,0
5 Commitment process and joint decision-making	1,2	1,2	2,4	1,5
6 Long-term orientation process and relationships	2	2	2,4	2,3
7 Stakeholders genuinely represent constituents	1,6	1,2	1,4	1,8
III Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements in the consultative body				
8 In process stakeholders are equal	2,8	1,2	1,8	1,8
9 The consultative body is a safe environment	1,8	1,4	2	2,3
10 Commitment to process rather than results	1,8	0,4	1,2	2,3
11 Conflict resolution possibilities and exit-option	0,4	0,2	2	2,8
12 Stakeholders know rules of the game	1,8	1,6	1,8	1,8
13 Stakeholders support rules of the game	2,2	1,6	2	3,3
14 Measures are taken to speed up the process	3,6	2	2,2	2,8
15 Time, resources and means are sufficient	2,8	3,2	3,8	3,5
IV Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with				
16 In advance no substantive choices are made	3,6	1,6	3,2	2,0
17 Selection of options is transparent	2,4	1,6	1,6	2,0
18 Stakeholders are dependent to meet objectives	1,6	1,4	2	1,8
19 Problems are not very urgent	3,4	1,4	1,3	2,0
20 Problems do not exceed the competency c.b.	3,2	2,4	3	1,5
21 Problems can be defined	2,4	1,4	2	2,8
V Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts				
22 Chairman is neutral and non-partisan	2,2	1	1	1,5
23 Experts have no interest in decision-making	2,2	1,6	1,8	2,8
VI Remaining conditions				
24 Results not contrary to legislation	1,4	1	1,2	1,3

Table 8.1: Overview of average scores for the cases Schiermonnikoog, Oosterschelde, Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug.

The comparison of cases is based on the categorization of the conditions for success as displayed in table 1.

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

In the three cases Schiermonnikoog, Oosterschelde en Utrechtse Heuvelrug interviewees on average agree with the condition that ‘in the consultative body all the relevant interests are represented’ (the average scores are 1,6, 1,6 and 1,8 respectively). An exception is National Park De Biesbosch with a high average score of 3,4.

Regarding the three cases which meet the condition, the stakeholder analyses pointed out that in National Park Oosterschelde and National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug the most relevant interests are represented. In the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog the only relevant interest or stakeholder that is missing is the fishery sector. Regulation of the fishery sector in the Wadden Sea is a matter of central government, but it makes sense to involve the sector, just as it is also represented in the consultative body of Oosterschelde.

In the consultative body of De Biesbosch almost only governmental bodies are represented. In the consultative body of Utrechtse Heuvelrug next to governmental bodies, private owners and nature conservation bodies, the larger interest groups are represented. Both National Parks De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug have a specific body in which interest groups are represented. In the interest group council from De Biesbosch interest groups such as private entrepreneurs and recreation boards or organizations are represented. It differs from the interest group platform of Utrechtse Heuvelrug where mainly users (local schools, sports and leisure unions, scouting, etc.) are represented.

However, the new governing body of De Biesbosch has the ambitious plan to develop a rather large zoning area for recreational purposes around the National Park. To realize this ambitious plan, the governing body may increasingly need the co-operation of the interest groups. Therefore, the high average score of De Biesbosch indicates that the co-operation if interest groups may increasingly be required to meet the objectives. In Utrechtse Heuvelrug this disestablishment between both bodies works well, because the consultative body is not dependent on the members of the interest group platform to meet its objectives. Plus, it seems unlikely that the private owners are willing to share influence directly with interest groups. Besides, both cases differ in the extent that the interest group platform of Utrechtse Heuvelrug is chaired by an independent chairman, contrary to the interest group council of De Biesbosch.

Average scores quite differ with regard to the condition that ‘stakeholders in the consultative body occupy high positions in the organizations they represent’. In the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog the condition is valid for most stakeholders, with the exception of the inhabitants of the island who do not occupy administrative positions. At the same time, the islanders are indispensable in the consultative body; they are the direct link between the consultative body and the total number of inhabitants of the island. In that sense the representatives have commitment power to gain support for the objectives of the National Park amongst the other inhabitants of the island (with regard to the process management theory of De Bruijn, *et al.*, 2002).

National Park Oosterschelde is the only case in which stakeholders both occupy high positions and almost always attend the meetings of the consultative body themselves. If they send delegates, they have high positions too, which prevents a lot of consultation with their constituents and is beneficial for the speed of the process.

De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug are alike to the extent that stakeholders in the consultative bodies occupy high positions, but they regularly send delegates to the meetings. According to De Bruijn *et al.*(2002) one way to guarantee the speed of the process, is to ensure that participants have commitment power. In this respect it is quite notable that both De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug

have higher scores (condition are present to a lesser extent) regarding the condition that 'measures are taken to speed up the progress and speed of the process'.

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

Among the four cases there is a considerable congruence with regard to the condition that 'stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to joint problem analysis and solution'.

In National Park Schiermonnikoog the 'professional' bodies are more used to and willing to reconsider interests than the inhabitants of the island. Opposite that the local inhabitants are more involved with their island than the representatives from the 'professional' bodies. In National Park Oosterschelde the willingness to reconsider interests is certainly present, although this is not easy amongst the large number of stakeholders and the diverging interests. Most notably there is a contrast in interests between fishery industry and nature conservation. Beside the fact that fishery affairs are a matter of national government, the consultative body is able to operate collectively because stakeholders mutually trust each other and the chairman and secretary. In De Biesbosch it is not easy to reconsider interests either, since there is an area of tension between nature conservation and recreational development. Several interviewees mention that (some) stakeholders are focused too much on their own interest. An interesting remark by one of the interviewees is that the willingness to reconsider interests is linked to the objectives laid down in the establishment-agreement (covenant). In Utrechtse Heuvelrug the willingness to reconsider interests is certainly present, however a number of representatives are guided too much by the organization they represent.

Most interviewees from the four cases find it almost self-evident that 'stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation', therefore the average scores amongst the four cases are quite alike.

According to one interviewee from the consultative body of Oosterschelde the condition is valid for the three most important sectors represented, however, it is not self-evident for the fourth sector, the recreation and leisure sector.

A critical note is that the condition is present in De Biesbosch, but it should be taken into consideration that the consultative bodies mainly consist of governmental bodies. According to the chairman of the interest group platform from Utrechtse Heuvelrug the consultative body also acknowledges the interest groups in the interest group platform.

As with the previous condition most interviewees from the four cases generally agree with the condition that 'stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making'.

In the consultative body of National Park Oosterschelde this condition seems to be less self-evident for the recreation and leisure sector than for the other sectors, according to one interviewee. Since its establishment as a National Park in 1994, representatives of governmental bodies have lost interest over time in De Biesbosch, except during the NAM-business. At the moment, with the establishment of a Park organization, governmental organizations have regained their interest.

Average scores between the four cases hardly differ regarding the condition that 'both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented'. It is notable that the average scores indicate that most interviewees agree with the condition, but that they often state that in discussions short-term interests frequently prevail and that there is an area of tension between short-term and long-term interests. Some stakeholders from National Park Oosterschelde mention that "there is some tension with regard to the long-term orientation of the process, as occasionally some parties are more focused on the short-term". Similar

remarks are made by representatives of the consultative body of Utrechtse Heuvelrug, as one stakeholder states that "topics of the day clearly prevail in the discussions in the consultative body". Interviewees from De Biesbosch also state that "an area of tension occurs between short-term and long-term interests and in the consultative body the discussion often deals with short-term aspects".

According to most interviewees from the four cases 'stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents'.

Category III: conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

There are considerable differences between the four cases regarding the condition that 'despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues'. Among the four cases Schiermonnikoog has the highest score (score 2,8), which means that the condition is present to a lesser extent. This average score is underpinned by the fact that in the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog formally the authority and competence of the stakeholders is decisive when decision-making is concerned. In practice, within this precondition of authority and competence decision-making is often based on consensus, which is important to create support amongst stakeholders for the conservation, preservation and the future of Schiermonnikoog.

Decision-making is based on consensus in the consultative body of Oosterschelde. It has the lowest score among the cases (score 1,2), which means that it is present to a large extent. It is notable that some interviewees are not exactly aware of the decision-making procedures, they explain that it never takes place following a set of rules and the stakeholders always manage to reach decisions in good harmony. A few stakeholders give the chairman the credits for this, as he tries to come to a solution regarding perilous matters through mediation. In De Biesbosch decision-making is formally based on majority-ruling, in practice decisions are made based on consensus (average score 1,8). In National Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug decision-making is based on consensus (average score 1,8).

It is difficult to compare cases adequately concerning the condition which states that 'the consultative body is a safe environment; the process ensures that the core values of the stakeholders enjoy protection', because stakeholders interpret this abstract and ambiguous condition differently. In general the conclusion can be drawn that only a few interviewees - often the chairman and secretary or interviewees with an administrative political background - tend get the grasp of this condition. On the other hand, it is a good sign that most stakeholders experience the consultative body as a safe environment (it is often quoted that "what should be said, can be said").

In the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog the chairwoman and secretary make a distinction between the internal and external environment; the consultative body is a safe environment, whereas outside the consultative body a safe environment does not exist. According to the chairman and secretary the condition is not applicable in the consultative body of Oosterschelde. Other stakeholders state that it depends on the stakeholder as some have closer ties with their constituents than others. Also, a stakeholder says the chairman contributes to a large extent to creating a safe environment. In De Biesbosch the chairman explains that he exercises clemency when an alderman 'gets stuck' between the consultative body and the elected body. According to the secretary consensus is sought for actively amongst the actors which makes the consultative body safe. In general the interviewees from Utrechtse Heuvelrug agree with the condition. Again, a stakeholder acknowledges the large role of the chairman in contributing to a safe environment.

The next condition embroiders on the previous one and states that 'stakeholders commit themselves to the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue rather than to the (interim) results'. It is interconnected with the previous connection in the sense that an important aspect of the protection of core values is that stakeholders cannot be asked to commit themselves *ex ante* to the result of a process; all that they may be asked for is commitment to the process (De Bruijn, *et al.*, 2002). In the consultative bodies of Schiermonnikoog and Oosterschelde the condition is not applicable according

to key figures such as the chairman and secretary. In both cases stakeholders however agree with the condition, because despite conflicts of interests, stakeholders continue the dialogue. Regarding De Biesbosch the secretary and one stakeholder are of the opinion that it is not applicable, whereas the other interviewees quite agree with the condition. Interviewees from Utrechtse Heuvelrug mark this condition as valid. According to the secretary there is an attempt to commit stakeholders to the process, but there are exceptions when stakeholders do not agree to (interim) decisions.

Again, the condition 'the process offers conflict resolution possibilities and offers stakeholders an exit-option' is linked with the two previous conditions and contributes to a safe environment, in which the core values of stakeholders are protected. According to the chairwoman and secretary of the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option are not applicable (average score 0,4). Some stakeholders mention that the parties in the consultative body are dependent on each other and if one of them - in particular the islanders - should withdraw from the process, this would lead to serious support problems. In the consultative body of Oosterschelde the average score of 0,2 also points out that this condition is not applicable. According to the chairman and secretary there are no clear rules and regulations and so far there has been no need for such process agreements (the chairman would blame himself if one of the stakeholders should retreat after a conflict). Both the chairman and secretary from De Biesbosch explain that the consultative body offers conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option (average score 2,0). In the first place everything will be done to settle conflicts and to prevent stakeholders from withdrawing. Most interviewees from Utrechtse Heuvelrug agree with the condition (average score 2,8); according to the secretary and the representative of the private owners participation is on a voluntary basis and there are no conflict resolution arrangements.

In general there is very little variation between the cases regarding the condition that 'stakeholders are familiar with the rules of the game before the start of the (process of) strategic stakeholder dialogues'. Most interviewees of the four cases are of the opinion that this condition is present in the consultative body. According to the deputy chairman and co-secretary from Schiermonnikoog the process agreements are correct and fair. Only one stakeholder explains that it is not applicable in the consultative body that rules of the game are made explicit before the start of the process. In the consultative body of Oosterschelde stakeholders are familiar with the 'usual course of things', rather than a defined set of process agreements. According to the chairman and secretary there has been no need to develop clear rules of the game, because stakeholders are on good terms with each other. Stakeholders confirm that rules of the game are never used and don't seem to be necessary. In de Biesbosch the process agreements are laid down in the covenant from 1994. According to the chairman next to the rules of the game, the culture and unwritten rules are equally important. In the consultative body of Utrechtse Heuvelrug on average most interviewees agree with the condition. The representative from the private owners stresses that it is a precondition for the co-operation of the private owners that nothing can be compelled.

It is striking that the consultative bodies have laid down only very basic rules of the game - usually regarding decision-making; consensus based or majority-ruling - and that quite a few stakeholders are not aware of the rules of the game or state that there seems to be no need for clear rules and regulations. In Oosterschelde and De Biesbosch stakeholders do not experience the lack of (extensive) rules of the game as a deficiency, because the consultative body is presided by a good chairman. De Biesbosch is the only case in which (basic) rules of the game are clearly laid down in a covenant and also offers conflict resolution possibilities.

There is not much variation either among the four cases regarding the condition that stakeholders support the process agreements before the start of the process. In general most interviewees from the cases quite agree with the condition; the average score from Utrechtse Heuvelrug is higher due to an outlier.

There are notable differences between the cases regarding the condition that 'measures are taken to speed up the progress and speed of the process'. National Park Schiermonnikoog has the highest score

(score 3,6, present to a lesser extent). Most stakeholders disagree with the condition and some elucidate that the consultative body has difficulties with making decisions. Most interviewees from Oosterschelde agree with the condition and it has the lowest average score (score 2,0, present to a greater extent) among the four cases. Most interviewees from De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug are of the opinion that the consultative body meets this condition (scores 2,2 and 2,8 respectively).

A way to guarantee the progress of the process is to ensure that the representatives have authority and commitment power. In the consultative body of Oosterschelde the representatives have high positions and they also attend the meetings themselves. Representatives of De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug regularly send delegates, which might also explain the slightly higher scores with regard to this condition compared to Oosterschelde.

Finally, the four cases slightly differ regarding the condition that 'the consultative body has sufficient time, (human) resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily'. While Schiermonnikoog and Oosterschelde on average 'more or less agree' with the condition, De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug 'more or less disagree'. National Park Oosterschelde is a static park when it comes to conservation and management, however, they state that more resources for educational and recreational purposes are welcome. In the consultative bodies of De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug there is most notably a shortage of manpower and time as the estimated hours to conduct the work are much lower than the actual hours spent.

Most interviewees among the cases generally agree that the secretariat of the consultative bodies require reinforcement; the secretary is charged with the daily organization of the consultative body and has an appointment at the province of 0,5 fte.

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

At a first glance it seems that there are considerable differences between the cases regarding the condition that 'before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue as few substantive choices as possible are made'. In practice, stakeholders together devise a management & development plan for a period of ten years, in which the objectives with regard to the National Park are laid down. Decision-making is prepared and elaborated upon further either in the executive committee (case De Biesbosch) or in the working groups (other cases). Next to the management & development plan, decision-making in De Biesbosch also takes place within the framework of the covenant from 1994.

Based on the relatively high scores (present to a lesser extent), it seems that the consultative bodies do not meet this condition, because the management & development plan serves as a guideline when substantive choices are made and substantive choices are further prepared and to some extent decided upon in the working groups. However, the stakeholders in the consultative body jointly develop the management & development plan in co-operation. It covers a 10-year period and when that period of time has passed it is revised. Decision-making is elaborated upon further in the working groups, which consist of members of the consultative body and are often organized along the themes conservation & management and information & education.

In general the largest part of the interviewees from the four cases agrees with the condition that 'the selection of options is transparent to all stakeholders and is supported by sound arguments'. There is not much variation in the average scores between the cases. National Park Schiermonnikoog has the highest average score, as the representative from the islanders disagrees, because most stakeholders were against the introduction of dynamic coastal management, but the ministries in charge have ultimately decided otherwise.

Among the four cases there is not much variation regarding the condition that 'stakeholders that are member of the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet certain objectives'. Generally speaking, the consultative body does not have the authority to solve some of the problems it faces, for

some problems it is dependent on other (governmental) bodies. However, stakeholders are dependent on each other with regard to the objectives that are within their scope of authority. In that respect the added value of the consultative body is that stakeholders are able to meet those objectives, in which they would not be able to succeed single-handedly.

Among the four cases the average scores differ considerably regarding the condition that ‘the problems are not that urgent that immediate action is required and a decision should be taken immediately’. Schiermonnikoog has the highest average score (3,4), which indicates that the consultative body in some cases has to deal with urgent problems. Most interviewees refer to the cockle fishing-matter, where the large-scale cockle fishing industry had an adverse impact on the populations of birds for which Schiermonnikoog is an internationally important habitat. Although the interviewees from the consultative body of Oosterschelde agree and say that the condition is valid for most problems (average score 1,4), exceptions are the disappearance of the salt marshes, mud flats and sand flats and the necessity for dike reinforcement. In De Biesbosch the problems are not perceived as urgent and most interviewees agree with the condition (average score 1,3). Regarding Utrechtse Heuvelrug interviewees don’t mention urgent problems and they quite agree with the condition (average score 2,0).

There are considerable differences in the average scores concerning the condition that ‘the problems do not exceed the competency of the consultative body’. Again, the scores vary, but in essence most interviewees across the four cases share the same opinion. Generally, they state that despite the fact that problems do substantively not exceed the competency of the consultative body, it is often not the competent authority to solve the problems. Some key figures from the parks elucidate that while the consultative bodies are not authorized to solve certain problems, they do have a strong moral authority when it comes to warning for certain developments and they can take initiatives towards solving problems beyond their league.

A few good examples are the cockle fishing matter in the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog, which is a case of national government, but also played a large role in the consultative body. Also, the problems of the disappearance of the salt marshes, mud flats and sand flats and the necessity to reinforce the dikes are examples of problems which substantively do not exceed the competency of the consultative body of Oosterschelde. Solving these problems is an entirely different matter which is in the hands of the ministries of LNV, VROM and Waterways and Public Works. One of the arguments for the organizational change that takes place in De Biesbosch is to be able to deal with the reciprocity of developments between the De Biesbosch and its surroundings. An example that shows that the consultative body faces problems that exceeds its competency are the potential gas drilling operations in De Biesbosch, for which the Ministry of Economic Affairs is the competent authority.

There are some differences in the average scores between the cases, in general most interviewees agree with the condition that ‘the problems the consultative body deals with can be defined with regard to other problems’. Nonetheless, several interviewees acknowledge that the boundaries of the national parks are demarcated, some of the problems the consultative body deals with are transboundary. They also recognize that it is sometimes difficult to clearly define the problems, because they often interconnect with other problems.

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(woman) and experts

Across the four cases stakeholders generally share the opinion that the consultative body is chaired by a person who ‘is neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in the result of the decision-making’. Schiermonnikoog has the highest average score, because the representative from the islanders disagrees with the condition. Initially, the islanders were fearful that the chairwoman would attach more weight to the interests of her previous employer. However, she has succeeded in disrooting herself from her background. Whereas both De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug have good chairmen, Oosterschelde is the only case in which stakeholders explicitly state that the chairman

largely contributes to the success of the consultative body. He maintains excellent relationships with and among the stakeholders and has strong binding, communicative and strategic skills.

There are some differences in the average scores with regard to the condition that ‘experts who are consulted in support of the decision-making, have no interest in the result of the decision-making process’. In most cases interviewees state that experts who are consulted have no interest in the result of the decision-making. On the other hand, several interviewees mention that experts are never entirely neutral, for instance, it is sometimes obvious that experts are in favour of a specific solution or that a consultancy company benefits from continuation of advisory work.

In the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog experts do not have an interest in the decision-making and usually the consultative body aims to look at problems from different points of view. An expert has been consulted on an increase in sea dynamics in the National Park, it was obvious that this expert was *generally* in favour of more sea dynamics in the Netherlands. In the consultative body of Oosterschelde the chairman and secretary state the condition is not applicable. Other interviewees say that experts have been consulted with regard to the disappearance of marshes and flats and the dike reinforcement. Stakeholders differ of opinion on whether these experts are impartial and have no interest in the decision-making. Most interviewees from De Biesbosch share the opinion that experts have no interest in the decision-making, however, some also state that the distinction between interests and personal favours is sometimes hard to make. In Utrechtse Heuvelrug key figures state that this condition is not valid, because the consultative body hardly ever consults experts.

Category VI: Remaining conditions

Interviewees from the four cases almost unanimously agree with the condition that ‘the result of the decision-making is not contrary to the legislation in force and fits into the legislative framework’. There are no examples of decisions made by the consultative bodies that were against the legislation in force. However, this is not surprising since the consultative bodies of National Parks either consist almost entirely or for the greater part of governmental bodies.

8.2 Conclusion of comparison of cases

National Park Oosterschelde is by far the most successful case. First, table 5.2 shows that most of the five interviewees very frequently fully agree (score 1) with the conditions, resulting in more than 20 conditions with average scores between fully agree and quite agree (scores 1 to 2). This indicates that these conditions for success are present to a large extent. Second, table 8.1 of the comparative case study displays that the average scores of Oosterschelde are considerably lower than those of the other cases. Finally, the explanatory notes provided by the interviewees confirm this analysis. Below it is further elucidated why National Park Oosterschelde is the most successful case and to what extent it differs from the other cases regarding the presence of conditions for success.

In the consultative body of Oosterschelde 20 stakeholders are represented and with this number it is the largest body. Based on the stakeholder analysis, the most relevant *interests* are represented directly in the consultative body. Although not every single *stakeholder* with an interest in decision-making is directly represented, the relevant interests, being the nature conservation lobby, the fishery industry and the recreation and leisure sector, are represented.

Oosterschelde differs from two cases in which the most relevant interests are not represented. In the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog the fishery sector is not represented and the consultative body of De Biesbosch is composed of almost only governmental bodies. Both private parties and interest groups participate in the interest group council.

Representatives in the consultative body of Oosterschelde not only occupy high positions, they almost always attend the meetings of the consultative body themselves. If the representatives are unable to

attend the meetings, they send delegates with high positions and a clear mandate. Such representation on a high level indicates a great commitment among the stakeholders in the consultative body and also contributes to a great extent to progressing and speeding up the decision-making. This explains why Oosterschelde also has the highest score regarding the condition that ‘measures are being taken in order to speed up the progress and speed of the process’.

Representatives from De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug also occupy high positions, but they regularly send delegates with unclear mandates to the meetings of the consultative body. To some extent the level of participation by the representatives is an indicator of the commitment among the members of the consultative body. Most notably, prior to the re-organization of the consultative body of De Biesbosch representatives from governmental bodies grew disinterested in the National Park since its establishment in 1994.

It is an accomplishment that, with the large number of stakeholders, the consultative body succeeds in making decisions based on consensus and that it is able to act as an entity despite the contrasting interests (nature conservation versus fishery industry). If necessary, the consultative body is a safe environment to governmental representatives, when they get stuck between the decisions of the consultative body on the one side and the policy of the elected body on the other side.

There is no need for conflict resolution possibilities and an exit-option, as problems are solved by the chairman through consultation and mediation between stakeholders. In the consultative body stakeholders are familiar with and support the usual course of things, rather than a defined set of process agreements. So far, there has been no need to develop clear rules of the game, because stakeholders are on good terms with each other.

Although the consultative bodies from other cases do not largely rely on rules of the game either, it is striking that rules of the game in the consultative body of Oosterschelde seem redundant, because the relationships between the stakeholders are characterized by mutual trust and a strong confidence in both the chairman and secretary.

Finally, and possibly most important, the chairman of the consultative body is pre-eminently neutral, enjoys authority and has an enormous network. He has excellent *binding*, *communicative* and *strategic* skills.

8.3 Discussion

To gain a more profound insight, the director and secretary from the Foundation of Joint National Parks, and a random selection of stakeholders from the consultative bodies, have reviewed the list of conditions. They were asked to select those conditions which they consider determining in the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogue in the consultative body.

The conditions that were marked three times or more are considered to be the most relevant conditions. This has resulted in a list of seven conditions (first three in order of importance), of which is indicated below to what extent the conditions are met in the individual cases.

1. Stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to a joint problem analysis and solution

Key figures are of the opinion that this condition is vital for the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogues in the consultative body. In most cases the average scores indicate that this condition is only more or less present, with the exception of National Park Oosterschelde. However, in all the cases interviewees report that stakeholders sometimes are focused too much on their own interest and experience difficulties in reconsidering interests. In most National Parks there are stakeholders with diverging interests, such as the islanders and the governmental bodies (case Schiermonnikoog), fishery sector and nature conservation (Oosterschelde) and nature conservation and recreational development

(De Biesbosch). On a positive note, only through the reconsideration of interests consensus can be achieved, which suggests that stakeholders succeed in reconsidering interests, because in practice decision-making is based on consensus in the four cases.

2. Stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation

Contrary to the previous condition, the average scores indicate that this condition is present in all the cases. A critical note is that the consultative body of De Biesbosch mainly consists of governmental bodies.

3. The consultative body has sufficient time, (human) resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily

In general this condition is not met by the four cases. On the one hand the National Parks Schiermonnikoog and Oosterschelde are less outspoken, as both parks are relatively static with regard to conservation and management. They, however, also state that more time, manpower and means are welcome. On the other hand, National Parks De Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug seriously experience a shortage of manpower and time.

4. In the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented

This condition is met by the cases Oosterschelde and Utrechtse Heuvelrug. In Schiermonnikoog the fishery sector is not represented and in De Biesbosch both in the consultative body and the "Parkschap" only governmental bodies are represented. In light of the ambitious plans for the larger Biesbosch area the governmental bodies may increasingly need the co-operation of interest groups, most notably the recreation sector.

5. Despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues

Formally, this condition is only present in the cases Oosterschelde and Utrechtse Heuvelrug. In the consultative body of Schiermonnikoog the authority and competence of stakeholders is decisive when decision-making is concerned. In De Biesbosch decision-making is formally based on majority-ruling. However, in both cases decision-making is based on consensus in practice to create support.

6. Stakeholders are familiar with the process agreements or rules of the game before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues

In the four cases this condition is present; the rules of the game are basic and usually consist of decision-making rules. Rather than rules of the game or process agreements, the way of working in the consultative bodies is better described as the 'usual course of things'.

7. Stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents

According to most interviewees from the four cases 'stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents'.

In conclusion, it is almost impossible to objectively measure success. Despite the fact that the Dutch National Parks have a more or less similar organization, they all operate in very different administrative and governmental contexts. Between the National Parks there are considerable differences in composition of the consultative bodies, which in each case requires a different approach.

This chapter will end with a brief analysis of the extent to which the strategic stakeholder dialogue is a useful tool in the conservation and management of National Parks and in which situations it can best be applied?

In the consultative bodies of National Parks in the Netherlands the strategic stakeholder dialogue is not the concept along which decision-making comes into being. The strategic stakeholder dialogue is a concept which is used in business-society management, in which stakeholders are accounted for as "those whose relations to the enterprise cannot be completely contracted for, but upon whose co-operation and creativity it depends for its survival" (Singer and Deakin, 1999). Involving stakeholders herewith is a *strategic* choice, which gives businesses the so-called 'license to operate' with lesser chances of being challenged by interest groups after the implementation of decisions (Harris, 2002).

However, the concept of the strategic stakeholder dialogue fits into the conceptual framework of co-operative environmental governance. It can be extended from the literature on business-society management (Van Tulder et al., 2004 and Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006) into co-operative management regimes or group-centred processes, in which solutions for environmental or social dilemma's are sought beyond traditional modes of government. The main argument why strategic stakeholder dialogues do not occur in decision-making processes of Dutch National Parks, is that some of its main characteristics and principles are not present or applicable.

First, the consultative bodies are largely dependent on the province. The province in which a National Park is situated, divides the budgets which are available for rural development objectives. Therefore, the province determines to a great extent the level of ambition of a National Park. This means that the consultative bodies are by no means self-regulating. Second, the trend of the decisions and future of the National Parks are already predestined, because they function under the umbrella of the objectives for protected areas according to the IUCN-directives. Also, the framework in which decisions are made is determined further by Dutch legislation, such as the Spatial Planning Act and the Nature Conservation Act 1998. This implies that, rather than a *strategic* stakeholder dialogues, a stakeholder dialogue takes place with regard to conservation and management, because the strategic component has already been filled in by government. Third, when stakeholders engage in a regime that is dynamic and self-regulated, and the outcome is by no means determined yet, it is likely that the conditions which refer to the protection of core values play an important role. Particularly those conditions are not applicable in the conservation and management of Dutch National Parks. In addition, in dynamic and self-regulating regimes, rules of the game often are the product of a process of negotiation among stakeholders. In the consultative bodies of National Parks the culture seems more important than rules of the game and with a strong and neutral chairman there is no need to adhere strictly to extensive process agreements.

In the consultative bodies joint objectives are achieved by stakeholder dialogues in a regime which is best characterized as a partnership. In this respect stakeholders in a consultative body of a National Park should be considered as *partners*, rather than *stakeholders*, whose interests require protection and who only commit themselves to a process rather than the end results. This approach is also more consistent with the fact that all stakeholders participate in the consultative body on a voluntary basis.

From this analysis it can be deduced in which situations the strategic stakeholder dialogue can best be applied. The strategic stakeholder dialogue seems to be an excellent tool which fits into the concept of interactive governance for environmental and social dilemma's that requires the participation of stakeholders from, but also beyond government. Although some conditions and aspects of the strategic stakeholder dialogue can certainly be applied in National Park conservation and management, the comprehensive concept seems to be more suited in circumstances where National Parks are being managed in a self-regulating regime. Summarizing, the strategic stakeholder dialogue is a tool which can best be applied with regard to challenges that require the input from a broad circle of stakeholders which are drawn from government, but also from the market and civil society. These challenges should be characterized by a certain degree of open-endedness and should not have been met already by the legislation in force. Meeting these challenges should require a self-regulating regime that

operates alongside government, rather than being the initiative of government, in which government commands and controls both human and financial resources.

IX CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

The main research questions of this thesis are “under which conditions is the tool strategic stakeholder dialogue most fruitful in the conservation and management of National Parks and which measurements can be taken to increase the chance of success?”. The objective of this study is to investigate the current practice and to formulate recommendations that may increase the chance of success of strategic stakeholder dialogues.

For this purpose four National Parks were selected. The selection criteria were (i) the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders who represent a variety of interests, (ii) the availability of a long-term vision for the area in a management & development plan and (iii) the availability and accessibility of sufficient information. This resulted in the selection of the National Parks Schiermonnikoog, Oosterschelde, Biesbosch and Utrechtse Heuvelrug.

The concise literature on strategic stakeholder dialogues (Van Tulder et al., 2004 and Van Tulder & Van der Zwart, 2006) has been linked to the theories of Strategic dialogue, Interactive methods, Process management and Mediation and facilitation. This has resulted in a list of conditions for success to assess to what extent the strategic stakeholder dialogue takes place in the consultative bodies of National Parks. For each National Park five interviews were conducted with the following members of the consultative body: (i) independent chairman, (ii) independent secretary from the province, (iii) a governmental body, (iv) owner or manager from a nature conservation body, and (v) an interest group. In addition, in a survey the director and secretary of the Foundation of Joint National Parks, and a random selection of stakeholders from the consultative bodies, were asked to review which conditions for success determine the success of the strategic stakeholder dialogue in the consultative body.

From the four cases National park Oosterschelde is the most successful case, mainly because the relevant interests are all represented in the consultative body and the representatives of the stakeholders occupy high positions and show great commitment by always attending the meetings themselves. This commitment advances the progress and speed of the process and facilitates the implementation of decisions. The mutual relationships between stakeholders are characterized by trust, despite diverging interests between the fishing industry and nature conservation bodies. In the consultative body decisions are made based on consensus and it is a safe environment to stakeholders. Rather than a defined set of process agreements, stakeholders adhere to 'the usual course of things' and conflict resolution possibilities are not necessary because of mutual trust. Instead, conflicts are solved through mediation between stakeholders by the chairman. The chairman is neutral and impartial and has excellent binding, communicative and strategic skills.

In Dutch National Parks the strategic stakeholder dialogue may offer guidelines to shape the process of joint responsibility of partners or stakeholders in their long-term conservation and management. Some conditions and aspects of the strategic stakeholder dialogue can certainly be applied in Dutch National Park conservation and management, although the comprehensive concept seems to be better suited in circumstances where National Parks are being managed in a self-regulating regime with stakeholders from the state, market and civil society.

9.2 Conclusions

In the discussion the results were presented from the survey in which key figures from the Foundation of Joint National Parks, and a random selection of stakeholders, have reviewed the list of conditions. This resulted in a selection of seven conditions which determine the success of strategic stakeholder

dialogues in the consultative body. To come to a comprehensive selection of determining conditions, the survey results are integrated with the results of the comparative case study.

Table 9.1 shows the integrated overview of conditions. Determining conditions that resulted from the survey can be distinguished from the conditions which came forward by the comparative case study by the added word survey in brackets. Below it is argued why these conditions determine the success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the conservation and management of Dutch National Parks.

Overview of determining conditions for the success of SSDs in National Parks	
I	Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives
	In the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented (<i>survey</i>)
	Stakeholders in the consultative body occupy high positions in the organizations they represent
II	Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships
	Stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to a joint problem analysis and solution (<i>survey</i>)
	Stakeholders engaged in the process of strategic stakeholder dialogues view each other as legitimate stakeholders entitled to representation (<i>survey</i>)
	Stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making
	Both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented
	Stakeholders who participate in the strategic stakeholder dialogue genuinely represent their constituents (<i>survey</i>)
III	Conditions with regard to ‘rules of the game’ or process agreements that apply in the consultative body
	Despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues (<i>survey</i>)
	Stakeholders are familiar with the process agreements or rules of the game before the start of the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue (<i>survey</i>)
	The consultative body has sufficient time, human resources and means at its disposal to fulfil its task satisfactorily (<i>survey</i>)
IV	Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with
	Stakeholders that are member of the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet certain objectives
V	Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts
	The presence of a chairman who is neutral and non-partisan and has no interest in the result of the decision-making process

Table 9.1: Conditions that determine the success of SSDs in the conservation and management of National Parks.

Category I: Conditions with regard to the composition of the consultative body and the commitment power of the representatives

It is vital that ‘in the consultative body all the relevant stakeholders are represented’. In practice, these are stakeholders who have blocking and productive power and stakeholders who have a relevant interest in the decision-making, without being able to contribute to it directly (De Bruijn *et al.*, 2002). As regards the conservation and management of National Parks this is important to create support, but it also results in decisions which are underpinned by sound and substantive arguments and which are increasingly effective (Van Tulder *et al.*, 2004).

Representatives with high positions usually have commitment power (De Bruijn *et al.*, 2002). They have the required mandate to make decisions and they have more room for negotiation. Heavyweight representatives do not have to consult their rank and file with each decision to be made and as such representatives who occupy high positions are beneficial for progressing and speeding up the process of decision-making.

Category II: Conditions with regard to the willingness to reconsider interests and the nature of mutual relationships

In the consultative bodies participation happens on a voluntary basis and decision-making is in practice based on consensus. Decision-making based on consensus can only be achieved through processes of discursive consensus formation in which actors come to an agreed solution through dialogue, reflection and compromise (Lafferty & Meadowcroft, 1996). A precondition to make conditions based on consensus is that 'stakeholders are willing to reconsider interests, to open up negotiation spaces and come to a joint problem analysis and solution'.

A precondition to develop a common vision is that 'stakeholders engaged in the process view each other as legitimate representatives entitled to representation'. Only if this precondition is met, stakeholders are able to gradually reflect on interests and are able to develop a joint action plan that enjoys the support of all stakeholders.

It is also vital that 'stakeholders are committed to the process and support the concept of joint problem solving and decision-making'. Since participation in the consultative body is voluntary, there is a large chance of the consultative body becoming open-ended and without obligations. Representatives should commit themselves to the consultative body to ensure that decisions are being implemented and the objectives as regards National Park conservation and management are met.

In order to come to sustainable solutions for the management of natural resources such as National Parks, it is important that 'both the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogues and the mutual relationships between the different stakeholders are long-term oriented'. If short-term interests prevail over long-term interests, there is a risk that decisions are made which satisfy short-term objectives at the expense of the long-term preservation and maintenance objectives.

In interactive processes 'representatives of stakeholders should genuinely represent their constituents' for *moral* and *pragmatic* reasons; a correct representation of the constituents of the representatives increases the legitimacy of the decisions made and since the representatives propagate the opinions and views of their constituents, the decisions enjoy a greater support, which also contributes to the progress and speed of the decision-making process.

Category III: Conditions with regard to 'rules of the game' or process agreements that apply in the consultative body

Since participation in the consultative body happens on a voluntary basis, and the decisions made are not legally binding, it is important that the decisions enjoy sufficient support from the stakeholders in the consultative body. This can only be achieved if 'despite existing differences in power, stakeholders are considered equal in the process of the strategic stakeholder dialogue'. A joint decision or a jointly developed management & development plan, to which each stakeholder feels an attachment, increases the chances of implementation success of decisions made by the consultative body.

When 'stakeholders are familiar with the rules of the game before the start of the process', this improves and structures the co-operation between the stakeholders. Compliance with rules of the game safeguards the predictability and stability of both the process and mutual relations. In the consultative bodies most notably decision-making rules, organic rules and rules about planning and budget seem to be vital. Organic rules refer to the different bodies in a process, their respective duties and tasks and

who chairs these bodies, etc. Extensive process agreements - where the rules of the game are the product of a process of negotiation itself - are not applicable in the consultative bodies.

The consultative body needs sufficient time, human resources and means to fulfil its task satisfactorily. Most National Parks experience a lack of manpower to fulfil the tasks of the consultative body.

Category IV: Conditions with regard to the nature and substance of the problems the consultative body deals with

It is vital that 'stakeholders in the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet objectives'. If stakeholders in networks such as the consultative body, are not dependent on each other, the relationships fairly soon become informal and open-ended. Consequently, both the decision-making and the implementation of decisions are put at risk. In the consultative body stakeholders acknowledge that only through co-operation they are able to meet the objectives from the management & development plan.

Category V: Conditions with regard to the role of the chair(wo)man and experts

The success of the consultative body is largely determined by an experienced chairman with strong binding, communicative and strategic skills. Members of the consultative body of Oosterschelde, the most successful case, gave the chairman credit for:

- Contributing to a safe environment, where stakeholders, if necessary, are offered protection of their core values;
- managing the consultative body in such a way that explicit rules of the game are unnecessary; instead, stakeholders adhere to the usual course of things because they are on good terms with each other, despite contrasting interests;
- solving acute conflicts bilaterally through mediation and facilitation rather than using rules of the game or referring to process agreements;
- speeding up the progress of the process by making decisions on behalf of the consultative body, without prejudicing interests of stakeholders; and
- contributing to an environment in which mutual trust grows over time and stakeholders increasingly consider each other as partners with a shared responsibility.

Based on the case studies and the comparative case study most of the determining conditions for the success of strategic stakeholder dialogues are met. A set of recommendations should be directed towards those conditions that are met to a lesser extent and can be changed. In the next paragraph recommendations are given that increase the chance of success of strategic stakeholder dialogues in the conservation and management of National Parks.

9.2 Recommendations

One of the main problems that have come forward in this study is that the consultative bodies with their current authority and competency are not able to operate in a decisive and resolute manner. Participation in the consultative body is on a voluntary basis, decision-making is based on consensus and the decisions are not binding. Decision-making proceeds slowly and governmental representatives regularly send delegates with an unclear mandate to meetings. Because the consultative body does not have the status of a corporate body, it is not able to make legally binding decisions and therefore it is not able to influence or challenge developments that have an adverse effect on the National Park. In 2009 a consultancy company in co-operation with the University of Groningen has looked at the merits and demerits of giving the consultative body a corporate status with associated authorities (Schol *et al.*, 2009). They concluded that in *theory* the consultative body should be able to operate in a more decisive manner. In *practice*, however, it would result in implementation problems, because other governmental bodies will probably refrain from handing over authorities to the consultative

bodies. Other disadvantages are that the current constructive and positive way of consultation will become pressurized and that there is an increasing chance of making vague decisions. However, the most important disadvantage is the expected diminished support among members of the consultative body. It is a major achievement that consultative bodies have managed to come this far without relying on a corporate status and authorities (Schol et al., 2009).

As one of the interviewees has put it: “exactly the fact that partners in the consultative body are dependent on each other to meet those objectives, which they could not have achieved single-handedly, should be the added value of the consultative body”. In other words, the consultative body is "Greater than the sum of its parts". A consultative body is successful when it is able to connect the interests of stakeholders and when it succeeds in creating added value for a National Park in co-operation.

Despite the success of the consultative bodies, a number of problems should be addressed. The problems and recommendations for their solution are given below:

Problem

The process of decision-making is slow and sluggish.

Recommendation

Measures should be taken to speed up the progress of the process. It is important that governmental representatives attend meetings of the consultative bodies themselves or send delegates with equal positions and mandates. Attendance of meetings of the consultative body by representatives with clear mandates is beneficial for the decision-making and the progress of the process. A first incentive towards increased participation of governmental and other officials is to make the items on the agenda more appealing (Schol et al., 2009). Generally, the consultative bodies operate in a web of governmental bodies and other organizations and during meetings they should increasingly focus on matters that are of *strategic* importance and require the consultation between the different governmental bodies.

Problem

Decisions made by the consultative body are not binding and it cannot exert influence on unfavourable developments.

Recommendation

A recommendation made by Schol *et al.* is that the consultative bodies should increasingly seek co-operation with governmental bodies that determine the policy with regard to National Parks (2009). National Parks are part of the Spatial Planning Act (Wet Ruimtelijke Ordening) and, with the exception of one park, National Parks are (partly) Natura 2000-areas under the Dutch Nature Conservation Act 1998 (Natuurbeschermingswet 1998). At the moment, the responsible governmental bodies are working on management plans for these areas which have a legal status. The consultative bodies should increasingly co-operate with these governmental bodies to ensure that their management & development plan is incorporated in documents with a legal status (and the other way around).

Problem

The consultative body lacks sufficient time, human resources and financial means to fulfil its task satisfactorily.

Recommendation

In order to strengthen the consultative body and ensure that it is equipped to fulfil its tasks satisfactorily, the secretariat should be reinforced, which is also stated by Schol *et al.* (2009). However, the secretary is an employee of the province who is made available to the consultative body to fulfil the role as secretary for 0,5 fte. Thus, reinforcing the secretariat is a matter of the province. Next to reinforcing the secretariat, consultative bodies could also increasingly co-operate with the main Dutch nature conservation bodies (State Forestry Service, the National Trust for Natural Heritage

and the Provincial Landscapes). Some of these bodies are confronted with a decrease in memberships. Duo-branding, in which the names of the National Parks are linked with one of these nature conservation bodies, might be an opportunity to strengthen the position of both organizations. On the one hand the nature conservation bodies may increasingly establish an image by linking their name to the system of Dutch National Parks and on the other hand the consultative body might benefit from their volunteers or sponsoring.

Finally, consultative bodies may start to generate more resources themselves, such as National Parks abroad that receive budget from the national or local government, but also generate a part of the budget themselves .

General recommendations

There is no evaluation or monitoring system that addresses the performance and general functioning of the consultative bodies. A suggestion by the chairman of National Park Oosterschelde is to assess the course of affairs one-by-one with each stakeholder after a set amount of time. This could result in a standard for general functioning of the consultative bodies of Dutch National Parks.

Both in this study as in the report on the “Perspectives for National Parks” (Schol et al., 2009) the importance of a strong chairman is emphasized. When new chairmen should be appointed, it is vital that they have strong *binding*, *communicative* and *strategic* qualifications. Also, in respect of the recommended increased co-operation with other governmental bodies, it is advisable to select a chairman with an administrative, governmental background.

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APPENDIX I INSTRUMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE SSD

Below, the instrumental principles of the strategic stakeholder dialogue are presented (Van Tulder et al., 2004).

Cooperation:	Working together and engaging in partnerships; creating networks; solving conflicts; working towards common goals; creating interesting options for all parties; sharing responsibilities
Effectiveness:	Goal-orientated, working towards workable solutions & pro-active strategies in a systematic fashion.
Flexibility:	Ability to adapt own opinion, the process and / or (preliminary) results to new conditions and insights. Room for 'trial and error', tolerance towards each other.
Inclusiveness:	Involving a broad and diverse group of stakeholders that each have different values, points of view, expertise and expectations; involving 'winners as well as (potential) 'losers'
Legitimacy:	Transparent and honest dialogue process guided by collective agreements, ensuring all parties view the results as being legitimate.
Learning:	Reflective capabilities; new insights actually lead to new principles and new ways of thinking, old patterns and habits are got rid of. Mutual information transfer to prevent knowledge gaps on important subjects.
Ownership:	High level of involvedness; all parties involved can identify with the dialogue process and feel responsible for the implementation of the results.
Participation:	Stimulating active, informed and committed participation of everybody involved, on a voluntary basis without exerting pressure.
Fairness:	Equality, impartiality, without prejudice; striving for equal participation of all involved parties, combating power differences, power abuse and power manipulation. Fair distribution of public responsibilities and private revenues.
Accountability:	Responsibility for the living up to agreements about dialogue process and results, complying with ethical and relational duties, making dialogue outcomes transparent to all of those involved, other not-participating stakeholders and society in general.
Transparency:	Being open about points of view, opinions, assumptions and expectations; being open about relevant business interests, supplying all relevant parties with all relevant information.
Voices, not votes:	All parties involved have the opportunity to voice their opinion and all points of view are viewed as being legitimate. Opinions do not lose legitimacy when a majority is in favour of something else. There is 'separation of the problem from the people' and 'focus on the interests and not on positions'.