



FINAL REPORT ON TRANSITION TO NATURE

As part of the INTERREG III B project “Boundless Parks, Naturally!”

By:

Regenboog Advies - Consultants for Nature and Economy, Wageningen (the Netherlands) in co-operation with:

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Helena Berends
Wageningen, 26 October 2004

The contents of this report are the responsibility of Regenboog Advies (info@regenboogadvies.nl) but the work was monitored by a Joint Working Group on Transition of the Interreg III B project “Boundless Parks, Naturally” and independent advisors. Minutes of the meetings, which give an insight in the process of how international regional co-operation can use comparative regional studies, are reproduced in Annexes 6 and 7.

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Foreword

Speaking for the three regional partners that are participating in the Interreg IIIB project “Boundless Parks, Naturally”, I am very pleased to present this report on how we can stimulate transition to more and better nature in our regions. All three region’s fulfill an important role in preserving nature and landscapes for biodiversity as well as for recreation activities for the increasing urbanisation.

Like in many other places in Europe, our three regions have beautiful and important natural areas and important landscapes, but also ‘disturbing’ economic and social activities like intensive tourism, intensive farming, military areas, mining and quarrying and even industries or remnants of important industries. These activities bring traffic, noise, light, fences and pollution with them, making it difficult or impossible for fauna to migrate and for tourists to enjoy a larger area.

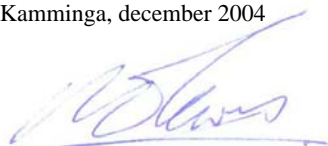
So we looked together at how we can move away from intensive farming in sensitive areas and towards more natural grazing (Dutch case), how to move social institutions with an urban function back to the city, so that the woods and heather in which they are situated now become more natural again (Belgian case) and how regions can transit from an economy based on mining industry to one based on nature and cultural tourism (Welsh case).

An important outcome is that integrated regional planning is a must, based on longer term action-plans that have been prepared and agreed with all stakeholders in the region.

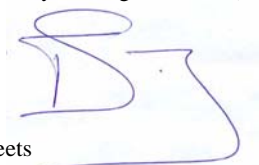
As Commissioner of the Queen I would like to add that I am fully convinced of the need for ecologically sound, economically feasible and socially desired investments. Such investments are described in our plans (the Veluwe 2010 plan in the Netherlands, the plan for the National Park Hoge Kempen in Belgium, the plan for a World Heritage Site in Wales). We invest a lot of money in our regions for those purposes. Support from Brussels will remain an important factor for reaching sustainable development.



Jan Kamminga, december 2004



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Common issues relating to “transition to nature” and “greening” of rural areas

This report deals with “transition to nature” and the “greening “ of rural areas. It is part of the “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” Interreg III B project in which three European regions/parks¹ are working together on how to improve the quality of their natural and cultural environment while at the same time catering for societal needs such as recreation and tourism and using a participatory and integrated physical planning method.

Some of the common strategic issues for the three regions are: the fragmentation of the areas due to the presence of ‘disturbing’ activities such as mining, intensive farming and military sites, but also the proximity to metropolitan areas and the resulting visitor pressure. The three regions have a clear wish to create multifunctional green areas which include high quality nature but also space for recreation, cultural activities, (some) farming and where even well-planned and clean industries can find a place. Another less publicly expressed common issue for the partners was how to get further funding for such “green transition”.

The issue of stimulating regional “transition to nature” and the “greening” of the rural areas can be compared with the movement towards the “greening of industry” which took place in the seventies and eighties. That greening was stimulated by the UN conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992, included in EU environmental legislation and financially supported by EU structural funds. Rural “greening” which has begun in some regions, in particular the ones involved in this Interreg project, will probably find further support from the EU through the new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, currently under discussion.² This Fund brings together support for both a cleaner and greener rural environment and for rural development, combining development and environment within a rural setting.

This is therefore a timely opportunity to demonstrate how certain regions are already investing in “greening their countryside”, show the characteristics and lessons of such a transition process and how these and other regions might obtain co-financing by the EU.

This study on Transition was specifically included in the “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” Interreg III B project as one of the Dutch partners (the NGO Natuurmonumenten) requested co-funding for a new type of activity: the buying up of highly efficient farmland at a few strategic locations so that these areas could make a “transition” to nature and “blend in” with the surrounding nature areas. This pilot

¹ The three regions are: the **Veluwe** in the province of Gelderland in the Netherlands (in which both the Province of Gelderland and the environmental NGO Natuurmonumenten participate), the **Hoge Kempen** National Park in Flanders (Belgium) and the **Blaenavon Industrial Landscape**-World Heritage Site (Wales).

² Proposal for a Council Regulation on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), document COM(2004) 490 final of 14.7.2004.
http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2004/com2004_0490en01.pdf .

project was accepted for funding by Interreg under the condition that such (and other interesting) transition projects be analysed and documented as to distill lessons for other regions and, possibly, pave the way for more systematic funding of such activities by the EU.

This report on transition and its results

This report focuses on transition issues and aims at analyzing, guiding and reinforcing the transition process towards more nature (and tourism) in the three concerned areas of great natural and cultural beauty, so that:

- the three regions can learn from each other about how to support and accelerate “green transition”,
- other regions in the North West of Europe can emulate and begin such a transition,
- the EU might include support for such transition and nature development in rural areas where some activities need “greening”.

The study was carried out in three phases between February and September 2004. The results are summarized below:

Phase 1- Characterisation of each region in terms of transition

This first phase addressed the following questions: what is the current situation in regions, what are their long-term objectives and: can indicators be used to describe and monitor such a transition? This was done using a common format for data collection (described in Annex 1). The main results are given in Chapter 2 (and Annexes 3, 4 and 5) and are:

Characterisation of the regions and their green transition:

1. The regions can show that transition is taking place and where they want to go. There are many good examples, pictures and maps of transition which may serve as examples for other regions.
2. But: there is a lack of accurate quantitative data for measuring transition objectively.
3. As a result it may be difficult to obtain substantial EU funding for such transition as the Structural Funds require sound quantitative data and indicators for monitoring and measuring performance.

Phase 2- The study of three transition cases

Three case studies were then chosen and analysed. This phase was included as regions wanted to identify the economic, social and ecological factors speeding up transition and factors holding it back. A checklist was developed (Annex 2). The chosen cases included the transition away from agriculture (the Interreg financed pilot in the Dutch region of Oud Reemst), the removal of the Molenberg children’s centre from the middle of the woods in the National Park Hoge Kempen in Belgium and the transition away from industry to a World Heritage Site in Blaenavon, Wales. The main results of these case studies are:

Factors stimulating “green” transition:

- A situation needing improvement
- A common vision of the stakeholders in the region
- A good plan
- Leadership
- Legislation or other site designation that protects the environment
- Public/ political participation and support
- Finances: national, regional, local and international (Interreg, Leader+,etc)

Factors holding back “green” transition:

- Transition takes time!
- Fear of change (by politicians, institutions, local farmers)
- Policies for regional development do not usually use the concept of transition
- Financial schemes do not normally include this type of support
- Or forbid it!
- Support is ex-post and not ex-ante
- Physical planning is often one-dimensional
- Lack of supportive data on costs and benefits of improving nature

Phase 3- How can the EU help such transition?

The analysis of existing EU support mechanisms (agricultural and rural development funds, other regional and environmental funds) and of recent European plans for a new agriculture and rural development fund, have shown that:

Results from the analysis of EU support schemes:

- Many EU schemes for rural development are underused
- Existing definitions of less-favoured areas should include farms in or adjacent to nature areas
- The proposal for a new EU fund combining support for the environment and for rural development looks very promising but would need to include explicit support to transition.

This transition study and report was prepared by Regenboog Advies, a Dutch consultancy for Nature and Economy who won the bid in reply to a call for tender by the partners in this “Boundless Parks, Naturally” Interreg III B project in November 2003. Project director was Helena Berends, econometrician and human ecologist from Regenboog Advies (the Netherlands), with the co-operation of Sophie House (senior consultant at GHK, UK) and Dirk Criel (Director of Econnection, Belgium).

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CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION AND STRUCTURE

The regions working together on the “Boundless Parks, Naturally” Interreg III B project are:

- The Veluwe (the Netherlands). Project leader is the Province of Gelderland, with participation of the environmental NGO Natuurmonumenten.
- The Hoge Kempen (Flanders, Belgium). Project leader is the office of the Regional Landscape Kempen and Maasland, focussing on the National Park Hoge Kempen.
- Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, a World Heritage Site (Wales, United Kingdom). Project leader is Torfaen County Borough Council.

These three regions of great natural and cultural beauty have a number of common characteristics and issues:

- Part of the area has high ecological protection status or is of high ecological (scientific) value,
- There is a demand for recreation in the area from nearby metropolitan areas,
- There are insufficient recreational facilities in the region,
- There is a need to monitor visitor pressure and guide or concentrate recreation towards less sensitive areas,
- Presence of “inappropriate” economic activities in sensitive areas (e.g. mining, air fields, tourism and recreation, intensive farming and polluting industries) and presence of other activities incompatible with the environment or causing fragmentation such as military terrains, radio stations and various social centres,
- Fragmentation of the area as a whole,
- All three areas have large and multi annual investment plans for upgrading the natural and cultural/ recreational environment.

The regions decided to work together (and develop an Interreg project) with the following strategic questions:

- How to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural value of these beautiful areas bearing in mind the potential tension between two possibly contradicting goals: protecting and enhancing biodiversity and the quality of the nature; and making the area attractive for various forms of sustainable use, including tourism.

- How to support and accelerate the implementation of existing and ongoing plans and activities aimed at de-fragmentation of the area and how to stimulate transition to a higher level of nature and cultural identity.

This “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” Interreg III B project has a number of sub-projects such as the creation of clear and inviting gateways to the areas, developing a branding and information strategy, increasing stakeholders participation, a pilot on agricultural transition and, finally, a study on the transition or greening of rural areas that lie near or in national parks. This report deals with the transition study. Other reports of the “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” can be found on the website.³

³ www.boundlessparks.com

The specific research questions dealt with in this report were:

- Can such transition to nature or the greening of rural areas be defined, measured and monitored??
- Which lessons can be learnt from successes and failures so that the three regions can learn from each other and other regions can benefit from these experiences?
- How can the EU support these types of transition more effectively?

The study was undertaken in three phases:

Phase 1. Analysis of the present transition situation in the three regions, using a common format for baseline data collection (Annex 1). The results are presented in Chapter 2 and in the Annexes 3, 4 and 5) and discussed with the “Boundless Parks, Naturally” Interreg partners at a meeting held on the 24 March 2004 (Annex 6).

Phase 2. Identification and analysis of three case studies on transition:

- Transition from intensive (fenced in) agriculture to a more natural agriculture in Oud-Reemst (South West of the Veluwe) so that deer can roam freely (and eventually forage) and visitors can watch. A second form of transition is the re-colonisation by nature as a result of devolution of agricultural lands to nature. This case was chosen because the Dutch NGO participating in the “Boundless Parks, Naturally” project received Interreg funding for a pilot which allowed the buying up of agricultural land for such a transition.
- The planned demolition of a children’s centre (the Molenberg) in the middle of the woods in the National Park Hoge Kempen in Belgium,
- The (partly finished) transition from intense mining and industrial activities to a natural and historic landscape in Wales (the Blaenavon case).

The results of these cases are presented in Chapter 3 and were discussed at the meeting with the Interreg partners in September 2004 (Annex 7).

Phase 3. How can EU funds help transition to nature and the greening of rural areas?

This last phase was considered especially important as it would allow the three partners to understand better how their efforts could further be supported by the EU. This information is also important for other EU regions who are planning or implementing such a transition. Chapter 4 provides advice to the EU on the benefits of incorporating aid for such transition in the new funds.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents the overall conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2- CHARACTERISATION AND COMPARISON

2.1. Definitions and the need for (regional) baseline data in a common format

This report deals with rural areas of great natural and cultural beauty, situated in or near a national park which attract many tourists / visitors from nearby cities. Furthermore, in each region a process is taking place to make the area greener and more attractive. This “greening” is based on a locally and jointly prepared plan in which substantial investments are made so as to conserve and improve the natural and cultural environment, while at the same time improving the accessibility of the region for tourists.

The ongoing transition in each of the three studied regions is described in this report. The main characteristics of the sort of transition taking place are:

- Protecting and increasing the area with high value nature and culture by giving it a conservation status and managing it correctly. Data on size, official conservation status, land use, ownership and management were therefore considered essential.
- De-fragmentation of the area, by buying up of land to connect nature areas, by making eco-ducts, by taking away fences and otherwise removing inappropriate (economic, military and other) activities from the area. Data on existing economic activities and potential conflicts in particular in sensitive or strategic areas were collected.
- Investing in projects that aim at increasing the quality of nature and making the area more interesting for tourists in terms of nature and cultural heritage. Data on existing improvement projects and forms of financing therefore needed to be collected.
- A plan-making and implementation process has taken place in which many stakeholders are involved through consultation and /or participation. Data on policies and financial support schemes were also collected.

It was important to define a statistical base line with the data described in this Chapter (and in more detail in Annexes 3, 4 and 5) showing the current situation of the regions, using some sort of a quantitative scale indicating the degree of “greenness” or “naturalness” or “cultural value” of the areas. This would allow a better understanding of the regions’ long-term target. Most EU funds require objective indicators, in order to measure effectiveness and monitor progress.⁴ Where it has not been possible to find or provide such indicators, it was nevertheless useful to be able to show with examples, pictures and maps the extent to which the situation had improved and where the regions are aiming to go with their plans and investments.

⁴ The EU guide “Managing Natura 2000 sites- the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats directive 92/43/EEC” ISBN 92-828-9048-1 deals with possible measures to restore, maintain or enhance natural areas and the need to account and assess the effect of any financial support to such measures. Article 6 deals with how Natura 2000 sites are to be managed, and as such has a very strict and limited scope, but the guide is very useful in terms of definitions, methodology and socio-political and economic context of measures in natural areas.

The common definitions of “nature” or “greenness” or “cultural identity” that would apply to all the areas were also looked at. The assets of each area were focused on and the factors that promote progress analysed. A common definition of nature that applied to all regions was difficult to find as the three regions are very different in terms of greenness, nature and cultural identity:

- **The Dutch region is large** (100,000 hectares) and has high value nature, a commercially run national park and intensive farming activity. In some farms and in some areas agricultural practices are ecologically and socially “disturbing” as the farmland is bounded by fences and high levels of fertilizers and manure are used. In other areas the “greenness” of the farms is appreciated by tourists and the activity is less socially ‘disturbing’. However these farms may still present a barrier to deer and be detrimental to other protected animals. Thus, greenness or naturalness can be measured more or less objectively in ecological terms (using biodiversity indicators) and in social terms (how these areas are used or perceived by the public) but for each specific area or (sub) region the two scores may be very different. For example: an area that has been used for military training and is closed for the public has low social value as tourists cannot access it but may have high ecological value as the heather has been relatively undisturbed. The Veluwe 2010 transition plan includes removal of many different activities in many different places, each with its own history and social and ecological characteristics. Because of this variety of situations, the degree of “greenness” or “naturalness” of the Veluwe as a whole, in both environmental and social terms, was impossible to define.

Picture 1- The Veluwe- Typical landscape



Picture 2- The Veluwe: walkways through the woods



Picture 3- but also highways..



- **In the Belgian region** there is a high percentage of protected areas, no farming but many other economic and social activities such as quarrying and mining, an industrial site, social and religious institutions in the middle of the woods and a motor-cross track. These activities reduce the nature value of the area as whole: they cause noise, traffic, pollution and scarring of the landscape. The plan for the new National Park Hoge Kempen foresees the buying up and/or removal of most of these activities that are perceived to be disturbing. As in the Dutch case, an objective indicator for greenness or naturalness could not be established.

Picture 4- The Hoge Kempen typical landscape



Picture 5- The mining past can be seen in the landscape



- **In the Welsh area** transition from mining and industry to a much greener area with cultural heritage monuments and cultural tourism has been on-going. The landscape does not include so many “protected nature areas” as in Flanders or in the Dutch case: part of the area is a designated ‘common’ agricultural land (for grazing) or woods. However World Heritage Status affords protection from development whilst some areas are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest which provides a high level of legal protection. These many different cases illustrate how natural value can have different forms and definitions.

Picture 6- Bleanavon Industrial Landscape - World Heritage Site typical landscape



Picture 7– Bleanavon Industrial Landscape: Garn lakes Country Park which was formerly an industrial site



2.2. How the data collection proceeded and which were the results

A considerable amount of data had already been collected by the three regional partners in the preparation of the “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” project, but a common framework for presentation and analysis was missing. A common format was needed as this transition study aims to provide recommendations on issues relating to transition to nature that are not only useful for the three partner regions, but also for other regions in North West Europe. The common framework or format for data collection was developed and used to gather the data (Annex 1). Each of the three national parks/natural areas authorities was asked to present its data in the common format, reviewing existing data and looking for missing data with assistance from the consultants from Regenboog Advies, Econnection and GHK. The three consultants produced the overviews for the three regions that can be found in Annexes 3, 4 and 5.

In those three annexes (and in less detail in this chapter) each region is described in terms of size, land-use, ownership and management regimes, and in terms of their naturalness:

- How much of the area has important natural habitats,
- How much has lower quality nature (such as farmland),
- How many other activities are there in the area that planners may wish to remove, to transform or to transfer to activities that are more compatible with, or more related to, nature?

Data on the economics and social issues of the region, as well as existing aid schemes are also given.

This exercise showed that there are still many gaps in the “baseline” data. This was recognised by the partners at the joint meeting in March 2004 (minutes in Annex 6). However the partners found the overviews helpful as they showed the many different aspects of the regional economy and how these contribute and relate in different ways to how green or natural or cultural a region is. The three regions and the consultants produced photos of “before” and “after” situations (shown in this chapter) and provided maps (idem), showing how transition is taking place or is planned to take place.

For a further analysis of transition, it was decided to proceed with a case study approach, described in Chapter 3.

2.3. Important data, examples and images of the transition taking place

As the data collected showed, many types of transition are currently taking place in the three regions. This section looks at the past trends in these regions, the plans to revert negative trends and the current status of the transition.

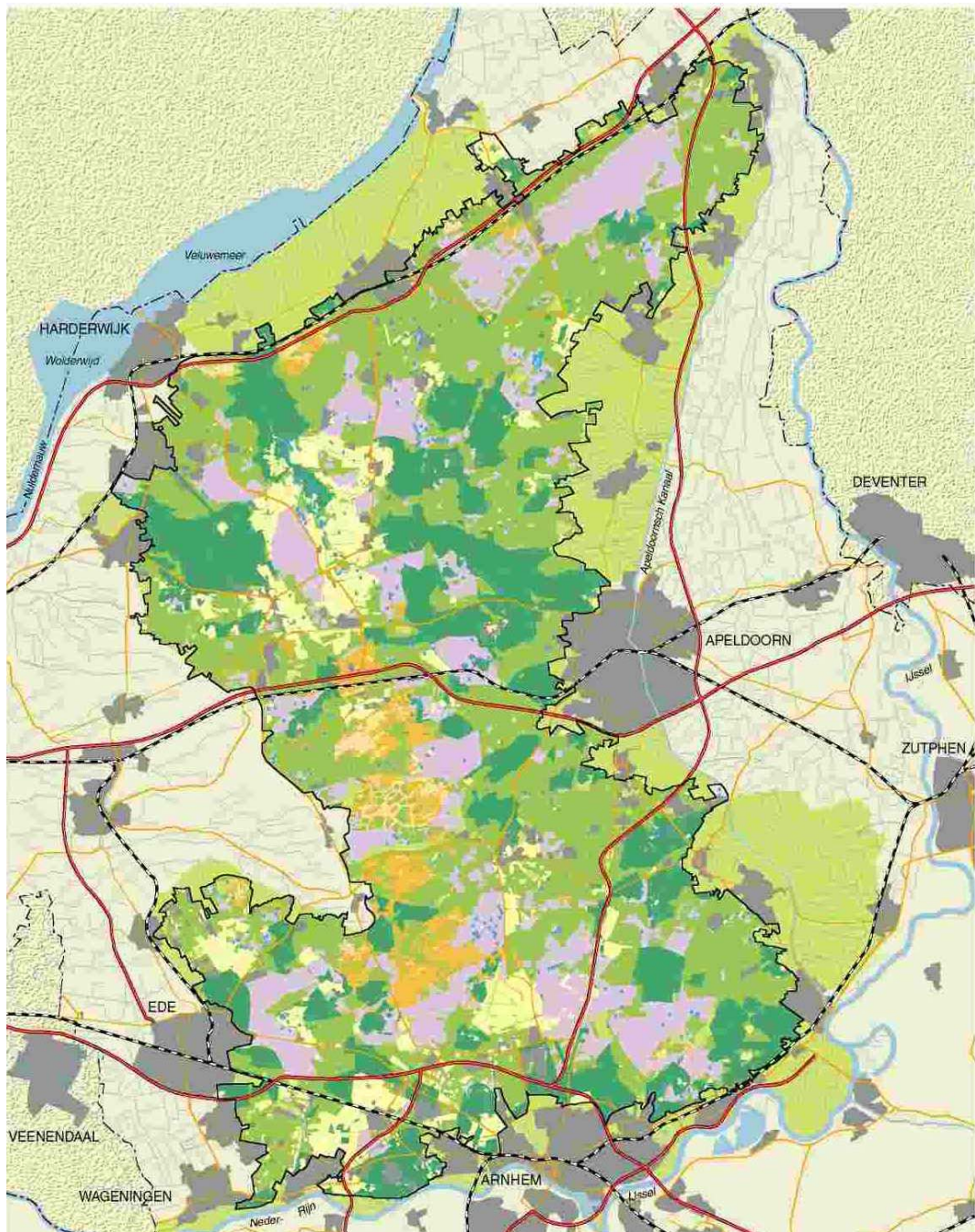
2.3.1. *The Veluwe*⁵

Overall description of the site

The Veluwe is a 100,000 ha glacial formation at an altitude of 100 meters, surrounded on three sides by water systems, the Rhine in the south, the IJssel in the east and the Veluwemeer (part of former Zuidersea) in the north. As a result of this geomorphological constellation there is a rich variety of soil and water conditions, which leads to a diversity in landscapes, ecosystems and species. On the fringes of the Veluwe itself there are several kinds of heathlands with ferns and different types of forest-ecosystems. Floodplains with marshes, rich floodplain grasslands, oxbow lakes, sandy beaches and dykes are found near the rivers. The landscape between the (higher lying) Veluwe and the (lower lying) rivers is arable land with streams, wetlands, small forests, moist grasslands and hedges. Around 70% of the area is covered by forests, 20% by heathlands (the largest in Europe) and 5% is agriculture.

⁵ For more information on the Veluwe, see Annex 3.

Map 1- The Veluwe as it is now



Legend: Dark and light green: forests (respect. old forests and other forested areas)
Yellow and yellow-green: agriculture
Light Purple: heather
Dark and light orange: sand
Grey: urban/industrial areas

The Veluwe is now well protected under Dutch law and by the European Bird and Habitat directives. This means that there are very strong restrictions on building houses, roads, business sites or other new activities or infrastructures that have a negative impact on nature, the landscape and the environment. In the past the situation was different and many other, non-nature related activities were developed, causing

fragmentation of the area and harming the (natural) quality and identity of the region. Veluwe is nevertheless, because of the improvement plans, an attractive and well known recreation area. More than 400 campsites, caravan parks and parks with cottages are available for overnight stays and longer holidays.

Picture 8- Cycling in the Veluwe



Past trends that need curbing

Until a few decades ago the Veluwe was considered as wasteland, because its soil was too poor for cultivation. As a result the area was thinly populated and there were few or no restrictions on development. Below are a few examples of past development trends that emerged:

- Human activity in the Veluwe is over 7,000 years old, when forests of beech, birch and oak covered most of the region. By the year 1,000 AD overgrazing and agriculture had left the region denuded and subject to intensive wind erosion.
- In the 20th century, wealthy people bought large areas of land and fenced these off for private use (hunting, amongst others).
- The government used very large parts of the Veluwe, especially the dunes and heathlands, for military training and construction of military barracks and complexes. Some buildings are being pulled down but some new ones are also being built.
- Many of the main transport infrastructure between the important port of Rotterdam and Germany (initially railroads and later motorways) was constructed in the Veluwe region because the land was cheap and population density low.
- In the first half of the 20th century, due to the availability of artificial fertilizer, large areas of poor heathland were converted into arable land.
- Another development which is rooted in the past and which has had and still has a great impact on the quality of the Veluwe is the large-scale development of campsites, holiday parks and recreation homes. From open spaces in the woods where people could set up a tent, more sophisticated camping sites emerged, first allowing trailers and later on year-round caravan homes. Some of these sites have been bought up by investors who have built luxury “secondary homes” which are sometimes occupied year round. This practice, whilst not allowed by law, is tolerated.

A plan to counter act these trends and make a new transition

In response to the deterioration of the quality of the area, and the identified need for recreation for the population of large cities in the Netherlands, a comprehensive plan was developed and adopted by all the stakeholders in the region. The Veluwe 2010 plan aims to minimize the negative impacts of human development and to enhance the landscape and the naturalness of the area for conservation purposes, biodiversity improvement and sustainable recreation. In many cases past activities and facilities have lost their original purpose and meaning, and through the planned “transition projects” old uses are being converted into new functions. In other cases the negative impact of past decisions is being minimized through specific solutions, e.g. the construction of eco-ducts over motorways. The following paragraphs present and analyse these ongoing transition projects.

Removing selected military facilities

The Veluwe has been, and still is, one of the largest and most important military bases in the Netherlands. A distinction has to be made between the (outdoor) training sites and the barracks in the area. Over the last 15 years approximately 5000 ha of training ground was given up by the ministry of Defence and transformed into a nature reserve. It is expected that some 13 000 ha will remain as a military training area.

With regard to the use of military buildings in the natural surroundings of the Veluwe, two possibilities have been identified. Buildings of cultural or historical value will be preserved and used for activities which are compatible with the goals of the Veluwe, e.g. a green university. Buildings without historical value will be pulled down and the area will be “given back” and re-colonised by nature. One such cluster of buildings, located in the centre of the Veluwe region, covers a 60-hectare area that is mostly occupied by barracks. These buildings (the Winkelman kazerne) are now being pulled down. In 2005 the whole area will be restored and will become an integral part of the surrounding natural environment. Participants/ stakeholders involved in this process are: the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry for Physical Planning and Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Province of Gelderland, the municipality of Nunspeet, the Directorate for landservices (DLG) and the State forestry service. Total cost of removal is €10 million.

Picture 9- Military training sites in the Veluwe



A new destination for Radio Kootwijk

In 1929 the first long distance telecommunications station was built in the middle of an extensive heathland area of the Veluwe. It was the first concrete building in the Netherlands, and it has a very remarkable design. It is called the 'Cathedral of the Veluwe'. For many years it was used for telecommunication operations. Over the years large antennae were added to the site, and a few years ago there were plans to erect a 350 meter high broadcasting antenna. Due to the expected negative visual impact on the Veluwe landscape, the initiative was turned down by the Courts. The owner, the Dutch telephone company, then started negotiations to sell the site. Because of its special qualities (history, architecture, and natural landscape) the national, provincial and local governments bought the building and the important surrounding heathlands in December 2003. The buildings and the 450 ha of heathland were purchased for €8 million.

Picture 10- The old building of Radio Kootwijk



The cost of restoring the former radio station is not yet known, but is estimated to be several million euros. The historical building will thus be preserved for future generations and it is most likely that it will be used for special cultural activities. The more recently erected buildings and antennae will be removed to restore the skyline. The heathlands are well protected and will be conserved through proper management by Staatsbosbeheer, the state forestry service.

Participants involved in this transition project are: the former owner telephone company KPN, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry for Physical Planning and Environment, the Province of Gelderland, the municipality of Apeldoorn, the Directorate for landservices and the State forestry service.

Picture 11- Many camping sites have become bungalow parks



Reducing the number of campsites or moving them

As mentioned earlier, the Veluwe has more than 400 campsites, caravan parks and parks with cottages that are available for overnight stays and longer holidays. This provision meets current demand, but there is a perceived problem regarding the low quality of some of the infrastructure and the location of some campsites. Most of the campsites are situated close to local villages but some are near vulnerable habitats or are a disturbing factor for migrating wildlife.

The Veluwe 2010 program includes a project for relocating campsites that disrupt or disturb the spatial quality of the natural environment. The owners that are willing to move their campsite from a sensitive location to a more favourable site will receive government support for relocation. So far two transition projects are reducing the impact of campsites. At one location the development rights for building 250 additional cottages on an existing campsite were purchased by the government. Another campsite was bought from its owner. The campsite and its facilities were removed and the natural conditions of the site were restored.

Participants/ stakeholders involved in this type of transition project are: the owners of the campsites, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry for Physical Planning and Environment, the Province of Gelderland, local municipalities, the Directorate for landservices and the State forestry service.

Transition of farmland to ‘grazing land’

Ancient forms of land-use have been beneficial for the natural landscape and environment of the Veluwe. Old farm houses, small roads and land-parcelling reflect the history of centuries of land-use and farming. The hedges, streams, ponds and arable fields and wet grasslands contribute to the richness of landscapes and biodiversity. This process is being supported by a pilot project in this “Boundless Parks, Naturally” Interreg project (see case study in chapter 3).

There are also very modern farms in the Veluwe. Agricultural enclaves have found niches in the North West and South West of the Veluwe and are characterized by clusters of individual farms with large crop monocultures, with little historical and

low ecological value. In order to protect the crops against intruding red deer and wild boar these farms have put up fences. Clearly the present land use in these enclaves is in conflict with the goals for increasing the naturalness of the Veluwe region. Therefore the Veluwe 2010 program has created a project to better match the use of these enclaves with the goals of the surrounding environment. There are different approaches to the future management of these arable enclaves, the most radical being a complete transition to 'natural grazing land'. 450 ha of arable land were recently bought from owners in the South West region (see case study in Chapter 3) and the land is being re-colonised by nature. All fences were removed and the former enclave has become a part of the surrounding forests and heathlands. The red deer, wild boar and other animals that inhabit the surroundings will now colonize the former enclaves. Scientific research has proven that the transition of arable land to a rich natural habitat has the most chance of being successful in the presence of additional grazers like cows and/or horses. The food from these grazing lands is an excellent addition to the nutrient-poor diet that the deer and boar have to cope with elsewhere on the Veluwe.

Picture 12- Agriculture with fences



Picture 13- New agricultural lands



Participants/stakeholders in this transition project are: the farmers/ owners of the farming land, the Ministry for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the EU in the Boundless Parks Naturally! Project, the Province of Gelderland, the Directorate for landservices and the NGO Natuurmonumenten. The cost of buying land is currently around €20,000- 30,000 per ha.

Corridors in the landscape for biodiversity

As mentioned earlier, the Veluwe is a large glacial formation at an altitude of 100 metres with interesting gradients towards the Rhine in the south, the IJssel in the east and the Veluwemeer (part of former Zuidersea) in the north. The landscape between the (higher lying) Veluwe and the (lower lying) rivers is a mix of arable land, streams, wetlands, small forests, moist grasslands and hedges.

A few of these natural gradients have been identified and have now been designated as 'landscape corridors for biodiversity'. These corridors are being protected against further urbanisation and a lot of energy and money is being invested to restore the landscape and ecological conditions in these corridors. Measures include restoring the water conditions, enlarging the natural habitats through the transformation of intensive farmland into extensively managed farmland, and enlarging the area of forests and wetlands. Furthermore, unnatural barriers in these corridors will be minimized by reducing traffic and by the construction of eco-ducts over motorways. Three have already been built, another 15 are planned.

The new landscape corridors will be protected by law against urbanisation (this is not currently the case). They will also be used as ecological corridors for wildlife migration between natural areas and will link the Veluwe to other parts of the EU Natura 2000 network. In very special situations buildings may be removed.

The largest effort to realise a landscape corridor is currently taking place in the municipality of Renkum, in the south West of the Veluwe. Here the Veluwe is naturally connected to the Rhine by a small but highly valued stream. Many improvements in the quality of nature and in the working of this area as a corridor are planned. The most important step is the removal of an old industrial site which is located in the middle of this beautiful and vulnerable natural stream. National, regional and local governments have decided to finance the purchase and removal of the industrial site. This was a unique decision as for the first time in the history of (Dutch) green planning an industrial site will be demolished for the sake of nature.

Picture 14- Renkum valley with factories



Picture 15- Renkum valley without factories



This decision has sparked the energy and will for other improvements. Another former government building was taken down and a large farm was bought for transition to grazing land. The whole project will take 10 years before it is finalized.

The main participants/stakeholders in this transition project are: the owners and users of the industrial site and several farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry for Physical Planning and Environment, the Ministry for Traffic and Transport, the Province of Gelderland, several municipalities, the Directorate for landservices and the State forestry service.

Costs: Purchase and removal of the industrial site, including the restoration of the water system amount to €36 million. The cost for purchasing the land is approx. €25,000 per ha and the costs for the construction of the eco-ducts lie between €3 and €5 million.

The different ways in which land-use change can be accomplished in the Netherlands and the policy instruments that support such change are described in detail in Annex 3.

Conclusion

The Veluwe is an important region for both nature conservation and for tourism purposes in the Netherlands. Past human activities have degraded the area. The “Veluwe 2010” plan was developed by stakeholders and proposes large investments to link nature areas, to bring back nature on agricultural lands, to close down military sites, and to move/ displace factories and some camping sites.

It is not yet possible to describe these plans and current progress with quantitative indicators of “greenness”. However the pictures and maps shown above provided help to demonstrate the type of transition being achieved and hoped for.

2.3.2. Kempen and Maasland ⁶

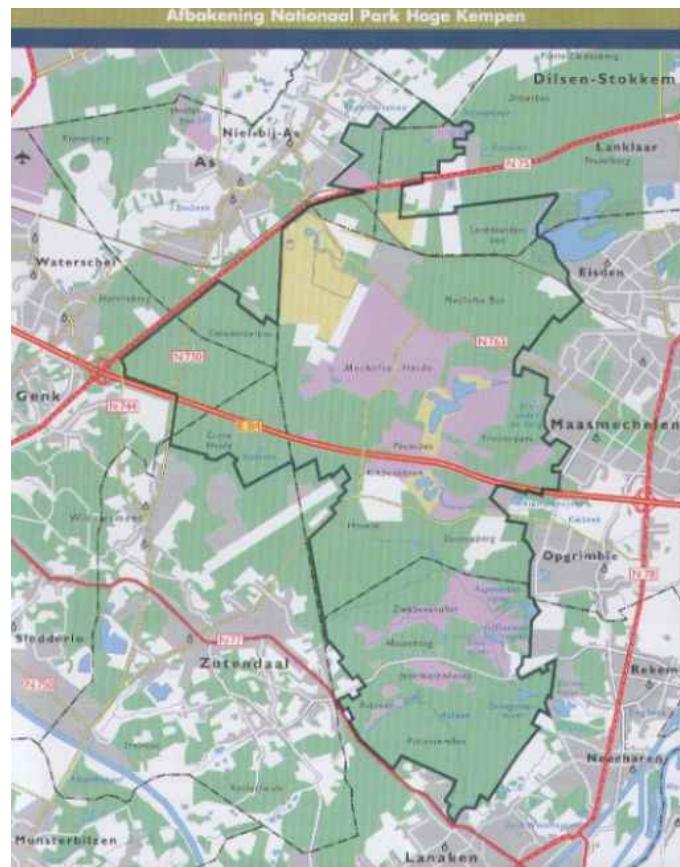
Overall information

The region of the Kempen and Maasland has many similarities with the Veluwe as it has forests and heather but is much smaller in size (almost 6 000 ha). The ecological importance of the area is confirmed by its status as a Bird and Habitat conservation area (in particular the Mechelse Moors and the valley of the Ziepbeek). The extended forests– mostly coniferous- and heathlands are characteristic of the region but the ecological richness comes from mosaics of dry and wet heaths, dry grasslands, fens, upland moors, broadleaved woods such as oak-birchwoods and alluvial forests with elder, springs and spring brooks.

Many birds and other animals depend on these complex habitats and profit from the diversity of environmental conditions. The honey buzzard, nightjar, bluethroat and wood-lark are protected by the Bird Directive. In addition to birds there are several other protected species (amphibians, reptiles, insects, mammals and fish).

⁶ For more information see Annex 4.

Map 2- Boundaries of the National Park Hoge Kempen



Legend:

Green- woods

Light purple- heather

Yellow- sand or stone quarries

Grey- urban or industrial areas

Past trends that need(ed) reverting or curbing

As in the Veluwe, the area has a number of social and economic activities that are not geared to nature conservation nor to nature friendly recreation: there is an industry park in the area, mining and quarrying sites, several social service buildings (a centre for asylum seekers, a nunnery, a children's day care centre and a public health centre) and buildings owned by the Belgian royal family. All these buildings are imbedded in (private) parks and most are closed to visitors. Near the area there is also a military site, a campsite and a noisy off-the-road circuit. There are no farms in the area.

Picture 16- Quarrying in the area



Picture 17- Industrial site



Picture 18- Motor cross site



Picture 19- Social buildings embedded in woods



Similar to the Welsh region, the lager area has a 100 year- old association with coal mining and much has been done in the last ten years to rehabilitate the area and make it fit for tourism. Coal was found in 1901 and was first exploited in 1917. Between 1917 and 1992 some 250,000 mine workers were employed and 400 million tonnes of coal were extracted. Between 1987 and 1992 the mines closed down. This intense mining activity left scars in the landscape and waste heaps. In particular the mine heaps are fragile and unstable and reconstruction is expensive. However they are important landmarks.

Some 15 years ago it was decided to find a new function for the coal mining area given its size (1 100 ha) and strategic position near larger cities in the region of Limburg. Much was done to bring back vegetation (using special gels and seeds).

Picture 20- Waste heap “before”



Picture 21- Waste heap “after”



New plans to make a further transition

In 1990 the area was chosen to be one of (currently) 9 regional landscapes: the Regional Landscape Kempen and Maasland. New investments in nature conservation and development for attracting tourists were seen as good alternatives for the region. Investments have been made mainly for allowing access to the area via cycle and foot paths and for a natural transformation of quarrying heaps and pits.

Picture 22- New foot paths



In 2001 further action was taken by the Flemish government to create a masterplan for the creation of Hoge Kempen National Park to promote recreation and tourism in the area and to ban or phase out other activities such as sand and gravel mining and quarrying, industry and other inappropriate land use. The religious community would be the only one allowed to remain. The plan was supported by a broad group of governmental and non-governmental organizations from the province of Limburg and Flanders. Social partners also became also involved. Around 80% of the area (mostly the forests) is publicly owned which makes it easier to implement the Master Plan.

Ongoing projects

There are plans to either rehabilitate the various existing quarries (sand and gravel) in the area and/or to stop activity by phasing them out as contracts expire.

The Master Plan foresees the relocation of the off-the-road circuit ‘Duivelsberg’ at Opgrimbie to another area outside the park but the area should retain a recreational function. The land is owned by the municipality of Maasmechelen but its management will be transferred to the Flemish government.

There are two scenarios for the 60 ha industrial site ‘Op de Berg’ at Maasmechelen: the activity should stop either by the year of 2020 or by the year 2030, with nature development after 10 years with an “extra” income from sand exploitation or nature development after financial compensation for dismantlement of industrial site and relocation of firms. Management will be transferred to the National Park Hoge Kempen.

All these projects are described in more detail in Annex 4.

Conclusion

The Flemish region participating in this Interreg project has, like the Dutch and the Welsh region, a lot of experience in investing in the greening of the area and in transition to more nature and nature-friendly tourism. As in the Dutch case, this transition is easier to illustrate with pictures and maps than with quantitative indicators.

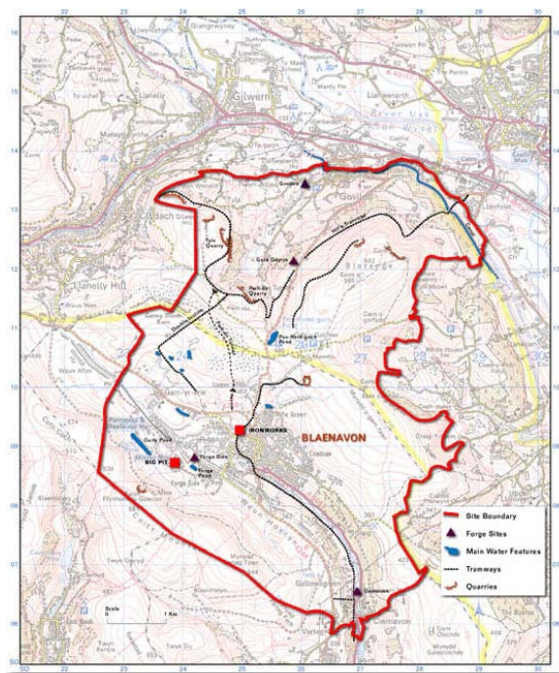
2.3.3. Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, World Heritage Site in Wales⁷

*Overall description of the site*⁸

The site area (3.29 thousand ha) around the town of Blaenavon lies about 40km north east of Cardiff, within the boundaries of two Unitary Councils (or local authorities: Torfaen Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Council). Approximately 45% of the site lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The site includes extensive areas of mountain land together with adjacent valleys and lies between the altitudes of 70m and 581m. The landscape includes many different areas of diverse habitat including moorland and semi-natural ancient woodland and contains a range of Scheduled Ancient Monuments of National Importance, many listed Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest and Blaenavon and Cwmavon Conservation Areas. There are also 4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and one SAC (Special Area of Conservation), designated because of their ecological significance. There are two major preserved sites of historical importance: Blaenavon Ironworks (a Scheduled Ancient Monument in state care) and Big Pit, an historical coal mine and museum in the care of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales.

Map 3- Blaenavon World Heritage Site



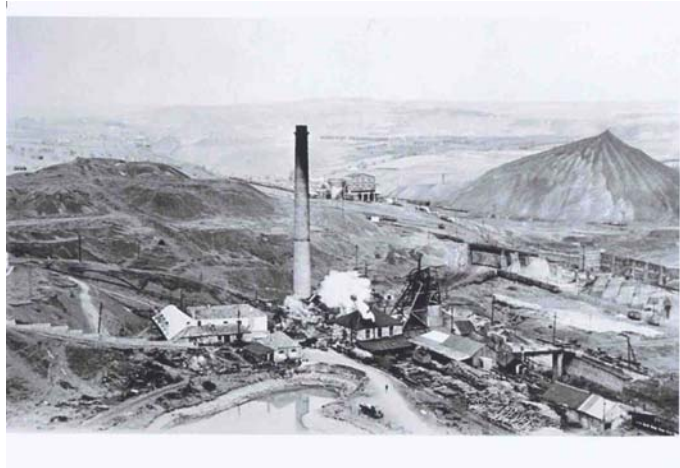
The area is now a World Heritage Site and is one of the finest surviving examples of a landscape created by coal mining and ironmaking in the 18th and 19th centuries. For

⁷ For more information, see Annex 5.

⁸ Source: “Nomination of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape for inclusion in the World Heritage List”, prepared by The Blaenavon Partnership, October 1999.

over a century the natural landscape of Blaenavon was changed by ironmaking, coal extraction settlement and related activities.

Picture 23- Big Pit circa 1950



Picture 24- Big Pit nowadays



As in the Dutch and Flemish regions, there are extensive areas with heather but in the case of Blaenavon these are designated common grazing ground. In this sense this is agricultural land and is not described as “pure nature” as in the other two regions.

Past history

Similar to the Belgian region, the area in Wales was deeply marked by coal mining but it also had an important iron industry. The area was an undeveloped rural area in 1787, dependant on agriculture, relatively poor but rich in natural resources (coal, iron ore and limestone). One hundred years later Bleanavon was a small town of 12,000 inhabitants, in an area with intense iron making, coal mining and a successful steel industry. In the following 100 years a dramatic decline in economic and social capital took place, most rapidly after the Second World War. The town’s population declined to 6 000 inhabitants.

Picture 25– The landscape was scarred



Picture 26– and a lot of cleaning up was needed



There is still pressure on nature and the landscape from past activities. The public have right of access to the area and commoners have the right to graze stock within specified limits. But due to absence of fencing, grazing is uncontrolled and over grazing by sheep can prevent natural re-vegetation of old tips and mine areas. However, grazing has prevented the area from being overgrown and produced turf tracks for access to the site. Further problems are: old tips subject to motorbike scrambling which is illegal and leads to erosion. The slopes are also subject to illegal four wheel drive vehicles activity. There are several identified walks, and increasing use of the area will require work to ensure public safety.

Current plans

Since 1966 the upgrading and transformation of the area and inscription as a UN World Heritage Site in November 2000 has transformed the area into an attractive region for cultural tourism and for living, both near a city (Cardiff) and a National Park (Brecon Beacons).

The Blaenavon Partnership was set up in 1997 and has maintained contact with community councils and groups including business leaders, residents and the local tourist association. The Blaenavon Partnership has also maintained contact with major landowners in the area and commoners associations who have direct interest in the landscape.

A Management Plan for the World Heritage Site was formally agreed by the Blaenavon Partnership in October 1999. This plan proposed that the management structure should include a “Landscape Working Group”. The aim of the group is to implement proposals for improved access to and interpretation of the Blaenavon Industrial landscape. The following organizations are represented:

- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Monmouthshire County Council
- Brecon Beacons National Park
- WDA (Welsh Development Agency)
- British Waterways
- Countryside Council for Wales
- CADW
- Royal Commission for Ancient Monuments
- Police

Ongoing projects

Many projects relate to the conservation of the Blaenavon site as well as the regeneration of the greater area. It was anticipated that around £20m (€30m) would be spent between 1999-2004 on these activities.

Projects include:

- Repair, protections and enhancement of buildings, monuments, other public buildings and the canal.
- Economic regeneration activities such as town traffic and access improvements, landscaping schemes and the establishment of a local community heritage group.
- Land acquisition, programme of re-vegetation to prevent erosion, improved access and interpretation of the landscape, as well as restricting inappropriate access to parts of the area.
- Development of walks, cycle routes, improvement of visitor attraction and amenities; community and education initiatives; and development of a community wood.

Recent Schemes

- Ironworks car park – upgrading of the car park: overall cost £308,000
- Blaenavon Gateways Environment improvements including native tree planting, fencing, walling etc completed in 2001. Total Investment £220,000
- Whistle Road car park Upgrade car park to create 'Gateway to the WHS. Completed in 2003. £35,000
- Business Environment programme
- Afon Lwyd channel Repair of a significant length of the Afon Lwyd near Garn Lakes in 2003 - Total Investment £255,000
- Cycleway extension Extend national cycleway from Varteg Road to Garn Lakes. Works to be completed in March 2004. Total Investment £440,000
- Southern Gateways Upgrade roadside environment mainly through replacement of existing fencing
- Forgeside Community Wood Small access improvements completed in 2003. Total Investment £10,000.
- Forgeside Community Wood – Minewater remediation scheme completed by the coal authority in 2000. Approximate Investment £250,000.

Picture 27- Ironworks car park



Picture 28- Cycle way extension



Picture 29- Blaenavon gateway



Current projects

- World Heritage Site Iron Mountain Trail – creation of 16 km footpath route through the site, linking many of the visitor attractions in the area. Total value around £100,000.
- Forgeside junction & Blaenavon Cemetery Funding has been secured from the WDA (Welsh Development Agency) and the Enfys, National Lottery, for works to upgrade the perimeter of the cemetery and land at the junction to Forgeside, Blaenavon. The works will include installation of new walls, gates, railings, planting and an artist-designed feature to highlight the road to Forgeside. This is a very successful partnership between TCBC, Torfaen Voluntary Alliance and Forgeside Residents and Tenants Association. Total Investment will be in the region of £80,000
- “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” Stakeholders and Ranger Pilot. The aim of this project is to establish a warden service to help manage and raise people’s awareness about the importance of ecosystems, landscape and history.
- “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” Gateways. The aim of this project is to create innovative and sustainable Gateways to the World Heritage Site and Brecon Beacons National Park.

Conclusion

Compared to the other “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” regions, the transition process in the Blaenavon area has been going on for a longer period. As the area has obtained the status of World Heritage Site, the transition process can be seen as an example of “best practice” for the other regions. But it is much smaller than the other two regions and has less nature related tourism and more cultural related tourism. Nevertheless it provides good material for the case studies on transition that are described in the next chapter.

2.4. Conclusions of phase 1 of the project

Phase 1 of this project provided data on land-use / ownership and management, and an overview of the ecological values, the social issues and economic environment of the areas. The policies that are being used in the areas to promote transition are described in the annexes. This chapter looked at the geography of the areas, summarised the natural, cultural and economic worth of the regions, focussing on past negative trends and the corrective measures that have been taken, and provided information on investment as well as maps and pictures.

The study shows that much more ecological data than economic data is available. Without reliable and quantitative data and insight in where each region is at present in ecological, economic and social terms and where it is planning to go, it will not be easy to secure substantial funding for large and ambitious development programmes. Nevertheless there has been funding in these regions. The issues that make up this process are further analysed in the next Chapter 3, which presents the three case studies.

Complementing the results of this Phase 1 with three case studies was a request by the “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” partners, who met in March 2004 (minutes of the meeting in Annex 6). The case studies show which factors (ecological, economic, social) have helped these regions make a favourable transition towards more nature and culture while maintaining a focus on economic return and the present and future social demands.

CHAPTER 3- ANALYSIS OF CRITICAL FACTORS FOR TRANSITION- THREE CASE STUDIES

3.1. The three case studies and the methodology used

At the meeting of the three partner regions co-operating on the “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” project in March 2004, it was decided that the following three cases would be analysed in phase two of this study:

- For the Veluwe in the Netherlands: the transition from agriculture to grazing lands and/or to more natural agriculture in three agricultural enclaves in the South West of the Veluwe. This case involves private farmers, a farmers’ association, a not-for-profit (but commercially run) National Park, an environmental NGO which owns and manages land in the area, a semi-public agricultural service and several government bodies. This case was chosen because it links to the pilot project in Oud-Reemst which was financed by Interreg in the overall project “Boundless Parks, Naturally!”.
- In the region of Kempen and Maasland in Belgium: the planned removal of the Molenberg children’s centre from a core wooded area, and return of the social services to nearby cities. This example involves a not-for-profit organisation (the owner of the buildings) and various public bodies at local and regional level.
- In the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, World Heritage Site in Wales: the transition that has taken place and is still taking place from an industrial economy based on coal, iron and steel to an economy based on cultural heritage, nature and tourism.

The choice of cases make the three “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” areas more comparable in size. Also, each case deals with a different type of transition: from industry to nature (Wales), from agriculture to nature (Veluwe), and from social functions to nature (Kempen). Many social/political/administrative factors play a role in speeding up or slowing down transition, but many critical economic and ecological can also be identified.

A third point in the development of a methodology was the fact that a good Interreg project should always lead to common benefits and insights as partners learn from each other. To make sure that the collected data on each case would lead to comparable results and useful conclusions for other EU regions, a common analytical framework was developed guiding the analysis of each of the cases and the interviews with the relevant stakeholders (given in Annex 2).

The methodology used in the case studies consisted of:

1. Use of a three dimensional analytical approach to transition which included three types of critical factors for transition:
 - economic factors influencing transition to more nature,
 - social aspects influencing transition,
 - ecological “goods” and/or constraints to transition.

This list of critical elements (in Annex 2) is based on the experience that if the transition to more natural environment with greater bio-diversity is to be sustainable, such transition has to be economically viable, sociably desired and the natural capital should improve (in quantity/ quality).

2. Identification of relevant stakeholders, analysis and description of their position and vision on transition.

3.2. The DUTCH CASE: Transition from agriculture to nature in the South-West of the Veluwe

The Dutch case is described below followed by the analysis of the social, economic and ecological factors promoting or slowing down transition.⁹

3.2.1. The different types of agriculture and the planned transition to nature

In this case study three different types of transition from agriculture to nature are analysed:

- Reintroducing mediaeval agricultural practices with (low input) crop growing and allowing wildlife on the land. Location: Oud Reemst, partly in the National Park Hoge Veluwe and partly on land owned by the environmental NGO Natuurmonumenten.
- Allowing nature to take over i.e. reverting to unfenced grassland on newer agricultural land. Location: Oud Reemst South and Reijerscamp enclave.
- Providing incentives for efficient farmers on agricultural lands further south (Wolfheze, Renkum) to unfence their lands and revert to other forms of economically sound agriculture with higher value for nature and tourism.

These three cases all lie in the South West part of the Veluwe and are described in more detail below. The transition in these three agricultural areas is included in the Veluwe 2010 plan.

The three types of transition identified above are taking place in three distinct areas and can be further described as follows.

Transition type 1- Back to “Old-style Agriculture”- In the area called Oud Reemst there are two landowners: the National Park Hoge Veluwe (a not-for-profit but commercial organisation) and an environmental NGO (Natuurmonumenten). The land was farmed in the Middle Ages as small plots of grain crops, fertilized with manure from sheep grazing on the heathlands. Low rows of bushes functioned as fences but also as habitat for smaller animals and insects.

The National Park has reverted to this type of land-use and farming on this plot of 11 ha. As part of the “Boundless Parks, Naturally!”, the environmental NGO has recently acquired the adjacent land from a private farmer after his lease expired, and will copy

⁹ Checklist provided in Annex 2.

the Park's nature management strategy towards a more natural and historic farming on former heathlands. The environmental NGO wants to move towards the ecological production of historical grain varieties instead of the current intensive crop of maize, sugar beet and potatoes. The site will be restored to its past state through the demolition of the current farm buildings and renovation of the historic 'wallen' (embankments shielding the fields from the heather which used to exist around the enclave), which will succeed to traditional species such as 'meidoorn' as a result of natural processes. Public walkways will be built.

Picture 30– “Old” farming



Both organisations wish to revert to ancient agricultural practices for two reasons: firstly for historical / cultural reasons (landscape value and attractiveness to tourists) and secondly for ecological reasons (deer can forage on the small grain fields). There is, however, a road separating the two areas and a fence (bordering the National park) preventing wildlife species from migrating from one plot to the other. A plan has been developed (called 'Hart van de Veluwe') for a wildlife migration eco-duct across the road between the two areas.

Transition type 2- “Giving it back to nature”, i.e. allowing agricultural land to revert to grassland. A little to the South of Oud Reemst, a 59 ha piece of land called Oud Reemst South is farmed using relatively modern agricultural practices, farmers using both new fertilisers and manure. This land is now managed by the environmental NGO Natuurmonumenten which will allow the land to revert to heathland over the course of several decades. In the intermediate period the unfenced and largely unmanaged grassland will be relatively food-rich for grazing ponies, deer and wild boar. The deer in the area have a magnesium deficiency due to nutrient-poor heathlands, so the remaining nutrients in the grassland will have a positive effect on their diet. The nutrient contribution of these grasslands is expected to last well over

ten years. At the same time, endangered ‘red-list’ insect and butterfly populations will be strengthened by a more integrated management approach and an increase in the effective habitat area. A publicly accessible viewing terrace is also planned. This project was co-financed by the EU through the “Boundless Parks, Naturally” Interreg project.

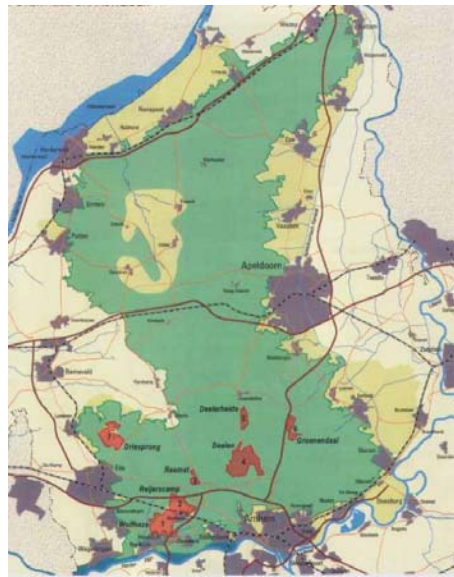
This second type of transition is also present at the **Reijerscamp** enclave: an intensively farmed enclave of approx 340 ha. Two large farms (185 ha) which came up for sale were purchased by the directorate of landservices (DLG Dienst Landelijk Gebied) with money from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Safety and were subsequently handed over to the environmental NGO Natuurmonumenten for management. This area will soon be turned over to natural cattle/ deer/ boar grazed grassland. Experience with this type of combination of grassland and grazing is 15 years old, e.g. in the Nieuw Reemst area, also in the Veluwe.

Picture 31- Natural grassland in the area

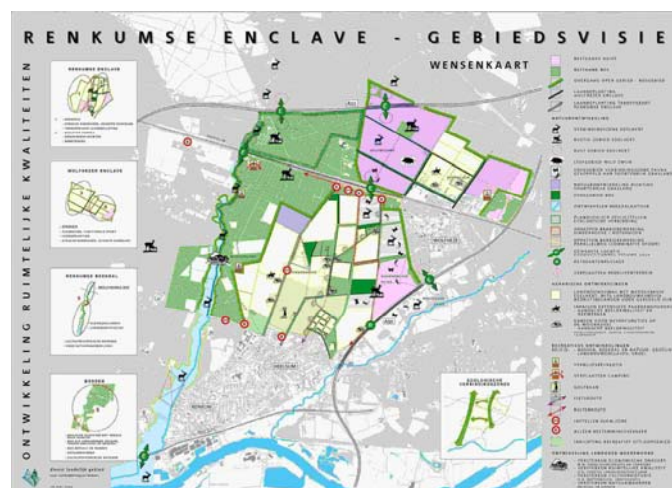


Transition type 3- “Providing incentives for existing farmers” around the villages of Renkum and Wolfheze further south, either to: revert to nature-friendly agriculture (with existing subsidies) or grasslands combined with cattle grazing with compensation for damage from foraging deer or producing less damage-sensitive crops. This area of ca. 550 ha used to be heathland but was transformed to intensive agricultural land relatively recently (in the 1920s). One farmer has already leased his land (60 ha) for a period of 30 years to a golf club. The land is now unfenced and “open” to use by wild fauna.

Map 4- Areas for transition from intensive agriculture to extensive agriculture in the South west of the Veluwe (in dark red)



Map 5- The agreed plans and “wishes” for the Renkum/ Wolfheze area



Legend:

Pink- heather

Lighter green- woods

Purple- transition to grasslands

Darker green- possible transition to woods

Yellow- agriculture and foraging deer if a compensation scheme is found

Other symbols show where wild-life passages ways will be made and where recreation will be allowed

3.2.2. Analysis of critical SOCIAL elements for the transition

A common Vision and a Plan:

The existence of the Veluwe 2010 plan which gives a vision for the development of the Veluwe region with a list of needed investments, is a positive and critical element for promoting transition from (in this case) farming to more nature. The plan was adopted in 2000, after a two year consultation process with all regional stakeholders.

The Province of Gelderland had already become actively involved with the Veluwe in 1982 as it wanted to stop the decline in the quality of nature and promote the “right type” of recreation. In the period between 1986 and 1994, this resulted in the adoption of an integrated regional policy. Several national policies for the conservation of nature were integrated in the further plans for the Veluwe.¹⁰ The level of ambition for the Veluwe gradually increased and the Veluwe 2010 plan was adopted in 2000. It took 18 years of planning, discussion and participation to get to such a comprehensive and far reaching plan.

Co-operation and communication:

A second positive factor stimulating transition to more nature is the previously mentioned co-operative and participatory approach adopted towards the future of the Veluwe (including its agriculture). Concerning the agricultural transition, all stakeholders (farmers and their association, the National Park, the nature NGOs, the Province, the directorate for landservices DLG, the cities in the Veluwe area and the sports / tourist sector) are actively engaged in the discussion regarding the transition in this area and are largely in agreement. Interviews have revealed, however, that there are still points of disagreement and that continued communication is needed. A matrix showing the stakeholders’ positions in this specific case of transition is given in Annex 4. It should be noted, however, that by the beginning of June 2004, the plans for the Renkum/ Wolfheze area were finalised and agreed. The environmental NGO Natuurmonumenten is leading and the directorate for landservices DLG will be responsible for the execution of the project.

Leadership:

This case study shows that there were active leaders that initiated projects and garnered support. This has helped the transition to more nature. The role of politicians like H. Boxem and of committed and knowledgeable civil servants like W. Eckhart and A. Vreugdenhil has been of critical importance to stimulate transition to more nature. Also the environmental NGO Natuurmonumenten and its staff (in particular J. Gorter and M. Bosch) have been very active in the area around Oud Reemst, helping to buy out farmers and offering to manage former agricultural land.

Other policies that support transition from agriculture to nature

The existence of well thought out policies for agricultural transition to nature are also of critical importance in promoting such transition. The EU approval of this Interreg project, the national and EU agri-environmental measures and at the Dutch Flora and Fauna policy were assessed. The results show that:

- The fact that the EU allowed the “Boundless Parks, Naturally” project to include the pilot on returning to traditional land- management techniques (case Oud Reemst) has been very positive.
- The existence of national policies supporting agri-environmental measures (the national SAN and SN regulation¹¹) based on EU legislation¹² was crucial for

¹⁰ Among others the EHS, the national network of ecological (protected) areas.

¹¹ The so-called Progamma Beheer which includes subsidies for nature management: SN = Subsidieregeling Natuurbeheer, supporting nature management by farmers and other land owners (including nature organisations), and SAN= Subsidieregeling Agrarisch Natuurbeheer, supporting nature management for grazing, among others.

stimulating discussion of a transition from agriculture to nature in the area. However, in the interviews held with stakeholders, it became clear that not all of them were aware of the existence of such policies, nor of the fact that the EU policies could be given a much broader interpretation and scope in national policy.¹³ A negative factor for promoting the transition from agriculture to nature is for instance that the SAN policies concerning actively grazed grasslands, do not allow year-round grazing or the application of fertilisers. Such treatment may however be needed in this area in order to avoid excessive de-nudification of the poor heath lands by grazing.

Farmers also complained about the SN and SAN policies as they require a lot of administration which is beyond the capacity of some of them. The environmental NGO which recently introduced grazers in this area said that the administrative requirements for keeping grazers can be “extremely frustrating”. The National Park Hoge Veluwe commented: “Currently, foraging by large grazers on agricultural lands is inadequately compensated. In order to attract land owners to this type of project, a good compensation scheme needs to be in place”. As a result, the SAN programme as it stands now is not a positive policy to promote transition to nature in the studied areas.

A “farming in deer country” scheme, if it were to be included in the EU support schemes for farming in areas with natural or other handicaps, may encourage farmers to unfence their lands and move to other forms of land-use such as grasslands combined for instance with ecological meat production. Article 20 of the EU regulation dealing with less favoured areas specifies that such areas “may include areas affected by specific handicaps, in which farming should be continued, where necessary and subject to certain conditions, in order to conserve or improve the environment, maintain the countryside and preserve the tourist potential of the area etc”.

- In the Dutch Fauna and Flora law, it is envisaged to include a compensation measure for crop damage from foraging deer and wild boar when farmers lower or remove fences around agricultural land. The compensation schemes under this law, for instance for damage to agricultural land by wild geese, require significant administrative work. Crop damage is evaluated on an individual basis by an independent evaluator.¹⁴ Farmers say this gives the impression that they are not to be trusted with a more general ex-ante (rather than ex-post) compensation measure. Farmers also fear potential personal conflicts with the evaluators or inspectors. Similar incidents have already been noted with inspectors evaluating the results of SN subsidy on a farmer’s land, where one of the farmers said that inspectors are ‘occasionally unclear about what they need to be looking for’. In the case of disagreements, it is always the responsibility of farmers to provide evidence of their compliance.

¹² Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of May 17 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) in Official Journal series L, nr 160 of 26.6.1999, pag 80- 102 or http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/rur/leg/1257_en.pdf Also: Regulation (EC) No 1783/2003 of 29 September 2003 in Official Journal series L 270 of 21.10.2003, pages 70- 77 or http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2003/l_270/l_27020031021en00700077.pdf.

¹³ In particular the Dutch scheme does not use the support that can be given to farmers in areas with special handicaps (the former support to farmers in mountainous areas), which are now very broad and might be used to support farmers in nature areas, that support wild-life with their farming practices.

¹⁴ “Taxateur” in Dutch.

Fear of change:

Some farmers fear change. They are concerned about their livelihood and some feel that they cannot trust the Government to provide long-term support, either to move from crops to grassland, or to remove fences to allow for foraging wildlife on their farms. Farmers would like to have some degree of certainty, as is normally provided under the Common Agricultural Policy, when they decide to make the transition to nature management.

Other critical social factors like ageing farmers:

Many farmers in the Reijerscamp/Renkum enclaves are approaching retirement age. Some have retired and sold their land to a nature NGO and have thereby promoted transition to nature. Whether or not the farmer has a son or daughter interested in continuing the family enterprise has also been an important factor in freeing up land as some farmers decided to sell their land for a good price.

Official Status:

The fact that the Veluwe became part of the official national network of protected areas (EHS) and that a scheme was created for buying up land for inclusion in the EHS and for creating wild-life corridors has helped transition to more nature. The designation of the area as a so-called Valuable Cultural Landscape (Waardevol Cultuur Landschap or WCL) has been positive as it has meant returning to traditional forms of nature and land management. The later designation garnered the (financial) support of the ministry of Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food safety, the ministry of the Environment, Spatial planning and Health, and the Ministry of Transport and Waterworks. The WCL support ended in 2001 but a new policy for regional development was created (Subsidieregeling Gebiedsgericht Beleid) which bundles together financial support from the above ministries. All these plans recognise the importance and value of farms in relation to nature. As such, they can promote transition to more nature.

3.2.3. Analysis of critical ECONOMIC elements for transition**Decreasing traditional agricultural prices:**

Important trends in farming in the studied area are: declining return for agricultural produce; limited expansion possibilities; and increasing environmental constraints. The prognosis is that this situation will worsen in the future as EU agricultural subsidies decrease. Some farmers in the area admit that their agricultural viability in the coming years is at risk. The transition to nature management tasks and/or the production of so called “green services” by farmers and other land managers is already taking place in the area, stimulated by the negative prospects for traditional agriculture in the region. Transition from crops to grassland should therefore also be of interest to farmers, in particular if this led to increased income. It is worth noting that the transition to more nature management tasks is stimulated by the (EU co-funded) SN and SNA schemes and that “green services” related to tourism have also generated new incomes for the farmers.

Interreg funding of the “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” project:

Interreg approved the buying up of farmland in Oud Reemst for reconversion to nature. The EU scheme provided funds for establishing a large natural grassland area

and a small ecological farm in the northern section, as well as public walkways and a viewing terrace. This has clearly been very positive for promoting transition.

Agri-environmental subsidies and/or financial compensation:

The funding schemes were described previously, their financial influence is described below. The position of most farmers within the Renkum/Wolfheze enclave is that they are not being offered any financial compensation under the existing national agri-environmental funding scheme (SN and SAN) for **grazing lands**, for instance in combination with (ecological) meat production. The existing SN and SNA subsidies for nature management tasks do not allow year- round grazing or the use of fertilizers. Both activities would have to be supported to provide an incentive for farmers to choose grazing lands. The Directorate for landservices DLG argues that in general farmers receive realistic and fair compensation for measures in favour of nature management. The problem is that subsidies for the envisaged transition are not included in SN / SNA.

The lack of subsidies to compensate for crop damage by deer is also a problem faced by farmers who are willing to move away from traditional crop production. In the Netherlands there is a financial scheme that supports farmers who suffer damage from wild geese, but no such scheme exists for compensating farmers for damage from foraging deer.

3.2.4. Analysis of critical ECOLOGICAL elements for transition

The presence of large herbivores and other mammals:

The Veluwe is the only area in the Netherlands where a mix of large herbivores and mammals is found. Such a natural asset will necessarily benefit from the removal of fences, as this may help the Veluwe to become an ecologically self-regulating nature area. This fact should support the transition from traditional intensive and fenced-off agriculture to grasslands where deer can forage. There are also many other important and endangered species in the area (such as badgers, birds, butterflies and other insects) which will greatly benefit from higher quality and less fragmented parcels of nature.

The nutritional needs of the deer:

Some deer in the Veluwe suffer from magnesium deficiency, as the Veluwe is very poor in nutrients. By allowing deer onto old agricultural land converted into unmanaged grasslands, deer will have access to better quality fodder which will help improve their nutritional balance.

Poor soils:

Farmland in the South-West Veluwe is generally characterised by very poor, nutrient deficient soils. Consequently the land requires good management and large amounts of fertilizer and manure and irrigation for crop production. Such inputs have a negative impact on the quality of the ground water and biodiversity in general. Therefore the natural and ecological conditions in themselves form favourable conditions for transition to grasslands.

Too many fences:

The many fences around agricultural properties, around the Park Hoge Veluwe, the airfield and campings in the area are a negative factor for promoting transition to more nature and higher quality tourism in the area. Such fences should be lowered or removed from the farms in this case study, if deer and natural grazers are to have access to a larger foraging area. The removal of fences is in discussion between various landowners, each wanting to protect his/her own interests. In particular the Park needs its perimeter fencing to keep out non-paying visitors and to keep wildlife in. Visitors' entry fees provide for around 75% of the Park's turnover and strictly regulated hunting also contributes to the Park's income. The negotiations taking place for a safe wildlife migration corridor across the road as part of the Hart of the Veluwe programme are, however, encouraging.

Picture 32- Fence around the National Park de Hoge Veluwe

**Biotopes:**

In the area around Oud Reemst there are a number of important biotopes, home to rare endangered butterfly species and other populations (birds, amphibians, reptiles). By integrating the management of these areas more effectively (creating greater continuous tracts of nature) and with an effective ecological linkage between the nature NGO Natuurmonumenten lands and the National Park, the conservation of these species can be stimulated.

3.2.5. Conclusions from the analysis of the Dutch transition case

Most of the identified critical social elements such as a common vision, a plan, co-operation and participation were shown to be very positive for promoting transition. Communication with stakeholders was good but needs to be sustained. The impression was also given that individual farmers may be more willing to transition than the farmers' organisation.

Some of the identified economic elements favour transition, such as the decreasing returns from traditional agriculture. Most of the ecological push and pull factors support the desired transition.

There is, however, a lack of policy and financial support for:

- The transition from arable / intensive agriculture to grasslands, where high priced meat (ecological meat) from all year grazing (with sporadic fertilisation when needed) could go hand in hand with foraging deer. While this transition would have a positive effect on nature in the region it is not included in the existing SN and SAN schemes that support farmers move to more environmental and nature friendly production methods (based on the EU agri-environmental measures). Also, existing SN/ SAN scheme do not allow year round grazing which would be necessary for combining grasslands with grazing for high priced (ecological) meat production.

- The transition from intensive agriculture to other crops, with removal of fences and compensation for deer damage. There is currently no compensation scheme for damage by deer, although a scheme exists to compensate for damage to agricultural land caused by foraging wild geese.

This case shows that the national agri-environmental support schemes (co-financed by the EU) and the Flora and Fauna law would have to be broadened (in line with the most recent EU proposals, see next chapter) to include such measures, if transition from agriculture to nature is to be promoted in this area.

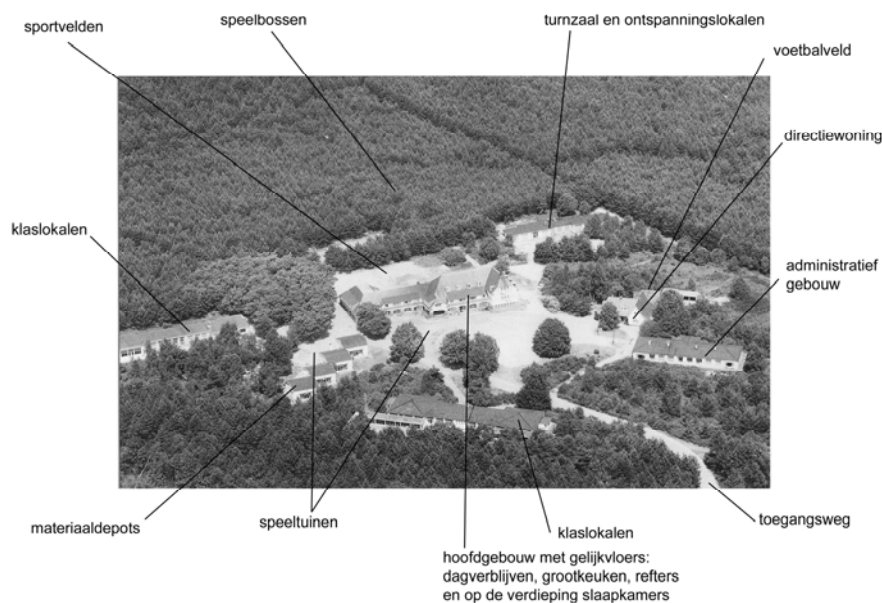
3.3. The FLEMISH CASE: Transition from a social function to nature

3.3.1. Description of the case

This case deals with the removal of the Molenberg children's centre from a wooded area inside the national Park Hoge Kempen, and return of these services to nearby urban areas. The 7 ha site is situated in a park of almost 6 000 ha. The Molenberg is one of the several buildings that are to be removed (total area of buildings 74 ha).¹⁵ The proposal to buy the land and remove the buildings, allowing the land to revert to heather, is included in the Master Plan for the National Park. This would result in a larger continuous green area, good for nature and for recreation.

¹⁵ Industrial estate 'Op de Berg' in Maasmechelen (62 ha), asylum seekerscentre 'Onze-Lieve-Vrouw Ter Dennen' in Rekem, (+/- 5 ha) and childrens centre 'Molenberg' in Lanaken (7 ha). It has recently been decided that the Nunnery 'Opgrimbie' will not be removed.

Picture 33- Aerial view of Molenberg centre in the larger area (with woods and heather)



The Molenberg centre was created during the second world war for undernourished and weakened children. After the war a not-for-profit foundation ('Openluchtwerken-Limburg') was set up by the Catholic church and several provincial social work institutions. More buildings were built, among them a children's hospital, but later the social functions took over from the medical ones, allowing for permanent and temporary placement of children. The children's hospital was later sold and rented out to the Red Cross and is now an asylum-seekers centre, also to be displaced.

The Plan makes provision for funding of all the planned activities that will make the new park become a reality. However no specific budget has been allocated for the buying of the Molenberg. Setting a specific budget might present some difficulties as the purchase of the Molenberg will be subject to negotiation and there will not be a fixed sale price. The owners of the centre are willing to sell and move out but concrete negotiations have not yet begun. In the meantime the buildings are degrading.

Other stakeholders and their position in the process are:

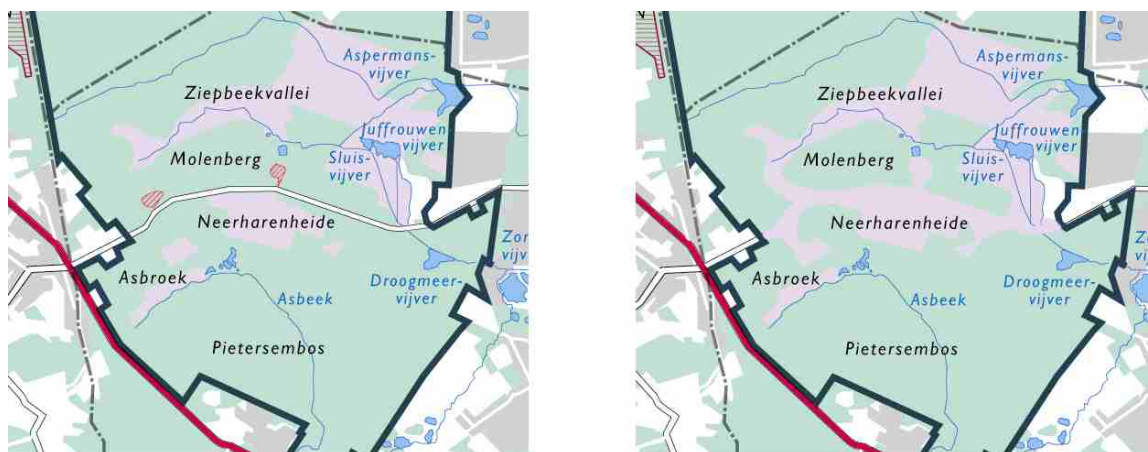
- The "Project bureau" created to execute the plans included in the Master Plan for the Park. They want to move ahead.
- The management of the bureau is delegated to a non-profit organization, the "Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland v.z.w." or RKLM, the partner in the "Boundless parks, Naturally!". This not-for-profit organization is responsible for the execution of the plans and organising, mobilizing and maintaining contacts with the other partners in the region. It is keen to start the work.
- The Flemish government (which provides the funds) has not yet given the green light. There is an outstanding legal issue concerning the demolition of public-owned buildings, which is currently illegal.
- The provincial economic agency LISOM (Limburg Strategic Development Agency, Limburgse Strategische Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij) was appointed by the Flemish

government in January 2003 to create an organizational and management structure for the national park 'Hoge Kempen'. LISOM also ensures that the necessary funds are available for operating the bureau and for tourism concerned with nature within and around the park borders. It says it has not received the funds for the Molenberg purchase.

The main issues in this case study are:

- The lack of earmarked funds to buy the Molenberg from the total budget of € 28 million allocated to the making of the regional park,
- LISOM has no financial means of its own for the purchase,
- The Flemish government states that the financial means provided through LISOM cannot be used to demolish buildings (= destruction of capital).

Map 6- The Molenberg site before (left) and after (right) removal of the building, showing an increase in heather (pink)



3.3.2. Analysis of critical SOCIAL elements for transition

A desperate or difficult starting point

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a large area around, and partly within, the park was previously a coal mining area that has left behind an ugly and scarred landscape with spoil heaps and pits. It is nevertheless in a strategic location to cater for the recreational needs for the cities nearby. This situation, together with the supply of land (abandoned area) and the demand for land (for recreation) has stimulated transition in terms of the adoption of a Master Plan for the area. However there are no particularly negative ecological or social factors presented by the children's centre, situated in a wooded area. In this sense the "push" factor in this case is missing as a positive trigger for transition.

A vision and a plan:

Both the Flemish government and the province of Limburg have a vision to create a network of nature areas which is conserved for environmental reasons but also allows recreation and tourism of high quality.

Positive elements for stimulating transition to nature in this particular area are:

- the existence of an approved regional structure plan for the Province of Limburg reflecting this philosophy,
- the fact that the region has the status of Regional Landscape, and
- the approval of the idea to make a National Park in this area.

The fact that there now is a Masterplan for the National Park, in which the demolition plans are mentioned, is also a positive critical element in support of transition to nature. According to the Master Plan for the park, the area should have its own identity, based on nature, and not on activities that have no strong links with nature (such as an industrial estate or a children's centre).

A negative factor slowing down the demolition of the buildings and the transition to nature is, as mentioned earlier, that the plan does not include earmarked funding for the purchase of the building.

Cooperation and communication:

The plans for a National Park Hoge Kempen were prepared by a core group composed of staff from the project bureau for the Regional Landscape, civil servants from the department of Nature, from the Forests and Green services and politicians of the Province. The core group started with the campaign "Hoge Kempen – A green opportunity" to create public support. The plans were later supported not only by the Flemish and the provincial government, but also by the 12 municipalities in the area and by several organisations which all form part of the RKLM.

A study:

An incentive for including transition to nature in the plans for a National Park was the fact that the Regional Landscape team and the Flemish government commissioned a study in 1998. This study, carried out by biologists, analysed the carrying capacity of the region for tourism. It also indicated where, on the 10 000 ha of the plateau of the Kempen, a national park might be located. However, no socio-economic studies were commissioned, and so there are no estimates of the economic and social costs and benefits of the transition. Such a study might have played a positive role in the public debate, increasing public interest and awareness and helping decision-makers move forward. (See for instance the case of the removal of a factory in the Veluwe, based on a study and public debates.¹⁶)

Leadership:

Similar to the other two regional cases analysed in this report, a number of very committed people pushed forward the plans for transition to nature. Mr M. de Coster was a consultant hired to co-ordinate the making of the Masterplan for the National Park. The idea for the creation of a National Park originated among the staff of the Regional Landscape Kempen and Maasland, but was taken up in 1999 in the Action plan for Limburg. This plan was strongly promoted by the province governor Ms Houben and got a positive reply from the former Flemish Minister for the Environment and Agriculture, Ms. Dua.

¹⁶ "Haalbaarheidstudie Renkumse Beek- Kosten en baten van herstel van een ecologische verbindingszone", Alterra report nr. 143, 200, by Jan Vreke.

Politics? Culture?

It is possible that the plans for the removal of the buildings have stalled for the moment because there are political differences between several stakeholders and parties. It is difficult to analyse whether such political differences are or are not a critical factor in impeding the transition process to more nature in this case. But politics and culture are often related and culture can be defined as the set of views and guidelines for behaviour that differ according to how people deal with people, with time and with nature.¹⁷ In particular how one sees and treats nature can be different from organisation to organisation. It is known that co-operation between organisations can be slowed down by such differences that need time to be understood and overcome. Even though it has not been proven in this case that such political or cultural differences exist, this possibility is mentioned as this study's goal is also to help other regions, where this aspect might be very important.

A social demand for nature:

The fact that 750 000 visitors per year use the cycle paths is a critical (positive) factor, supporting transition to more nature.

Knowledge base and best practices on the importance of natural resources:

There are few studies and examples that show how a region can develop (sustainably) in such a way that:

- there is sufficient economic return,
- social demand is successfully met, and
- nature is improved.

The lack of information about what one could call “modern or sustainable economics” can possibly slow down transition cases such as this one, where the plan is to demolish buildings in favour of nature. Clearly such removal of buildings is an unusual practice and more information about costs and benefits will probably be needed to move this project forward. The issue of what to do with the old military buildings in the Veluwe may also benefit from such studies. In the next section (on critical economic elements) some interesting studies for other regions are mentioned.

Social capital:

A project commissioned by the European Commission to study the effect of regional funding on sustainable development, based on 19 case studies, defined sustainable development as increasing four types of capital simultaneously:¹⁸

- natural capital (nature, environmental quality),
- man-made capital (buildings, roads, other infrastructures for instance for recreation, water or waste treatment),
- human capital (level of education, number of people able and willing to work),
- social capital (e.g. the existence of well-working administrative, legal, criminal and financial institutions, trust in politicians, low criminality, social and racial integration, the existence of a lively democracy, of voluntary groups, etc.¹⁹)

¹⁷ See for instance F. Trompenaars and C. Hamden-Turner in “Riding the waves of culture”, C. Storti in “The art of crossing cultures” and the more famous work by G. Hofstede: “Cultures and organisations, the software of the mind”, McGraw-Hill, London 1991.

¹⁸ Evaluation of the Contribution of the Structural Funds to Sustainable Development, led by GHK, with participation of GHK for the British cases and Helena Berends for the Dutch and Belgian cases.

¹⁹ The concept of social capital was developed by Prof Paul Ekins in the UK.

That study showed that even if large amounts of funding is available, without “social capital”, little will change. It is possible that a lack of awareness and knowledge about such socio-economic studies might slow down the process of transition to nature in this case.

3.3.3. Analysis of critical ECONOMIC elements for transition

Financial aid:

Subsidies from the EU Fund for Regional Development under the Objective 2 scheme for the construction of a 1000 km long cycle path in the area, was critical to making the area accessible to the public and drawing attention and support for further transition to nature in the area. Interreg II, the Flemish government, the Dutch and Belgian provinces of Limburg and the cities in the area, all co-financed this project. Now, under Interreg III, gateways to the National park are being made and a publicity and marketing strategy is being developed. All these actions support the planned transition.

The wish to remove man-made capital:

The envisaged demolition of the buildings of the Molenberg children’s centre with the purpose of nature-creation is currently in stalemate, due to the lack of earmarked funds and a legal / institutional problem (the apparent prohibition to pull down buildings). LISOM does not want to exclude the possibility of using the buildings for other uses. In this sense the wish to demolish (and reduce) man-made capital is a critical element in slowing down transition, and in line with the reasoning that sustainable development is best if all 4 capitals are increased at the same time. A law allowing the demolition of buildings in nature areas would probably need to be underpinned by an economic rationale. An economic simulation of the effects of demolition, as compared to a ‘business-as-usual scenario’ would be needed. Such a study, as the one mentioned earlier for factories in the Veluwe²⁰, could either speed up the process of the demolition, or, if this option does not seem economically sound, the study might lead to a change of plan. In both cases this would help the transition process.

It should be pointed out that in many other areas of Belgium buildings in nature areas are being pulled down, as in the dunes, supported by a law for coastal nature areas.

²⁰ This was a multi criteria study that looked at the social, economic and ecological consequences of two options- demolition or not. The results of the study were used in the public and political debate and decision making in the following years. On the basis of this study and the public debate, the city of Renkum decided to demolish the factory and move it to elsewhere. Ref: “Haalbaarheidstudie Renkumse Beek- Kosten en baten van herstel van een ecologische verbindingszone”, Alterra report nr. 143, 200, by Jan Vreke.

Pictures 34 and 35- The buildings of the Molenberg Centre



New economic activities:

The fact that new economic activities are expected to come to the area when the nature is improved, is seen as a positive element in promoting transition. This positive effect or pull factor could be strengthened if private entrepreneurs and other organisations were asked to present their investment ideas/ plans for promoting economic livelihood in the area related to nature and tourism. In other countries even quite traditional nature organisations have been able to move towards a strategy that is both geared to conserving and developing nature as well as creating revenue through tourism. Companies in the tourism sector have also learned to invest in nature.²¹

More attention for nature conservation can create more jobs

In general, a transition to more nature and in particular to *well* managed nature, is expected to create more jobs than (polluting) industry. Again studies and best practices can show this, stimulating awareness-raising and helping move the transition process forward as explained earlier.

3.3.4. Analysis of critical ECOLOGICAL elements for transition

Increase in the size and quality of the nature area:

The prospect of an increase in the area of nature and an improvement in its quality are clearly critical positive elements that promote transition, as long as it is proven that this will indeed happen (and no pollution from the old buildings will be left behind).

Taking away fences and de-fragmenting the area:

Removing buildings, roads and fences, reducing traffic and/or blocking roads for car traffic, are all positive elements stimulating the increased migration of fauna, fewer road accidents involving animals and in general transition to more nature.

High biodiversity and protection status:

The area of the Molenberg centre is one of the seven completely protected EU Bird directive areas in Flanders. This high quality nature and its ensuing protection status, is a positive element that helps the transition to more nature in the area.

²¹ See for instance the study on demand and supply of nature by Helena Berends: “Vraag en aanbod van natuur- Over de maatschappelijke vraag naar natuur en over het antwoord daarop van eigenaren en beheerders van natuur”, Alterra report nr. 605, 2002.

More tourists:

The expected increase in the number of visitors can have a negative influence on the transition to more nature: as more nature is created, the increase in the number of visitors may have a negative impact on nature, taking away a further incentive for transition. On the other hand, the existing centre presently causes damage to nature through road traffic and wildlife accidents.

3.3.5. Conclusions from the analysis of the Flemish transition case

The main factors slowing down transition to more nature through the demolition and removal of a children's centre situated in a nature area are related to:

- a lack of earmarked funds,
- a legal problem that makes the demolition of buildings impossible or in any case very difficult,
- a lack of verifiable information as to who is blocking progress,
- sensitivities around this case.

What can be done to help this situation?

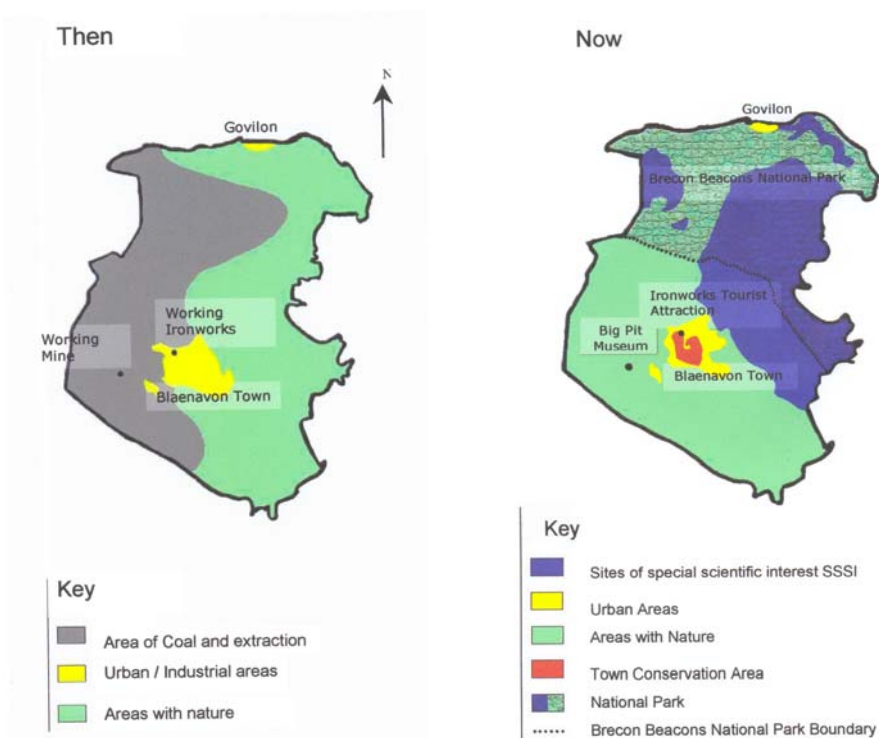
- Several studies show that investing in nature can cause both an increase in economic benefits and in social welfare. The necessary condition, as said before, is that there is a certain critical mass of social capital such as trust in politicians, an open and participatory discussion on best practices, and a better knowledge of best practices and of cost benefit studies.
- A campaign giving information on how the demolition of buildings can be more economical than their repair and how it can improve the quality of the physical and social environment. Many buildings are being demolished in the Flemish dunes and elsewhere for precisely these reasons. Dissemination of knowledge relating to such practices would be useful.
- An open public debate or a regional referendum might also help.
- It is also possible, however, that alternative solutions to the demolition of the Molenberg may have to be proposed in order to gather more public support. An independent commission to judge the results of a competition with a prize for the best plan for the site might help.
- In any case lack of progress does not seem to be caused by a lack of capable staff or insufficient/ poor ecological conditions.

3.4. The WELSH CASE: Transition from industry to nature and cultural tourism at the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site

The Blaenavon case is an example of transition from an industrial economy based on iron, coal and mining to one based on cultural tourism and scientific research, within a “living landscape”.

This case analyses the transition process that took place in this region. As previously mentioned, the region has seen a dramatic transition from a (poor) rural area, to intense coal mining and iron production, decline after WW2 and upgrading since 1996. When analysing the effect of this process on nature, it is important to note that both the size of the current natural area (compared to before) and where nature has emerged are being assessed. In this particular case, nature has recolonised many areas which were intensively industrialised without any ‘reclamation’ assistance. For example the Garddyrys Forge site is now regionally important for Fungi and the Pwll Du Quarry is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Maps 7 and 8 - The area of Blaenavon before and after



3.4.1. Analysis of critical SOCIAL elements for transition in Blaenavon

Situation of desperation:

The decline of the mining and steel industry after WW2 was painful in physical, social and economic terms and exacerbated by the retail revolution. Shops were boarded up, houses not selling and the general town fabric was in poor condition. The Aberfan disaster in the late 1960's drew attention to the need of improving social

conditions in Welsh mining regions and the need to reclaim the landscape. Clearly this has stimulated the need and the will to make improvements.

Picture 36- Oto Gas Plant c. 1950



Picture 37- Oto Gas Plant site today



Leadership:

The catalyst for change came in 1996 when a new local authority was created: Torfaen County Borough Council. The new authority had responsibility for the three towns of Cwmbran, Pontypool and Blaenavon. The new Council leader wanted to develop a strategy for each town, especially for the deprived Blaenavon. The idea of *'Building a future on the past'* emerged for using Blaenavon's heritage and past as an opportunity to move forward.

Mr. John Rodger was appointed by Torfaen as project leader to make a plan for submission to the British government and to the UN, asking for the area to be given the special status of UN World Heritage Site. To support the nomination in 1999 a Management Plan was prepared with strong links between Heritage, Conservation and Regeneration. Torfaen County Borough now leads the regeneration to make sure the transition does not lose momentum and energy.

Studies and conferences:

In 1997 Torfaen authority started the process of regeneration and transition by commissioning consultants to carry out a Blaenavon Heritage and Regeneration study, as input for a conference led and organised by Torfaen in October 1999 on “Heritage from the past”. UK and international tourism and culture experts were invited to discuss the prospect of creating the future from the past and the links between Heritage and Tourism.

A common vision:

After the 1997 conference, the conditions for making the most of Blaenavon’s industrial landscape and heritage were seen as favourable. The vision that resulted from the study and the conference was later used and further developed when the opportunity arose for presenting a more concrete plan.

An opportunity:

A window of opportunity had arisen in terms of the UK government putting forward a shortlist of tentative sites for nomination as a UN World Heritage site.

Co-operation:

The partnership which had emerged around the conference (composed of Local authorities, Government Agencies, British Waterways, the National Trust) was further united by it and buoyed by the optimistic conclusions of the report and outcome of the conference. The partnership was keen to make the most of the opportunity given by the British government and the UN for site nomination and funding.

The Blaenavon Partnership includes:

Torfaen County Borough Council

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Monmouthshire County Council

Blaenavon Town Council

Wales Tourist Board

CADW- Welsh Historic Monuments

RCAM- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

British Waterways Board

Countryside Council for Wales

Brecon Beacons National Park

National Museums and Galleries of Wales

Welsh Development Agency

National Trust

A Plan:

A Nomination document and Management plan for the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape to be inscribed by UNESCO as a UN World Heritage Site were prepared. The plan was formally agreed by the Partnership in October 1999 based on a modified and ameliorated Heritage and Regeneration report and a carefully thought out management plan.

Political / popular support:

The broad partnership helped gain public support. The plan had also the support of the Welsh Assembly. The region clearly has a social history worth while conserving.

Picture 38- St Johns Church in Bleanavon circa 1813



Picture 39- St Johns church now



Official Status:

- Almost half of the area of the site (1458.5 ha) falls in the much larger and adjacent Brecon Beacons National Park, which has Natura 2000 status and highest planning protection.
 - The site has 4 SSSIs (Special Site of Scientific Interest), total 191 ha.
 - Ownership and support by the CADW (Welsh Historic Monuments) of the two main monuments meant that the buildings would remain in state control, the restoration work would be authentic and longer term (public) ownership secure.
 - The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape was inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in November 2000.
- All these are positive for stimulating the transition.

3.4.2. Analysis of critical ECONOMIC elements for transition in Blaenavon

A desperate economic situation at the start, calling for change

The area suffered from physical, social and economic decline as explained above.

Seed funding

The partnership itself was able to draw down funding from its own sources. Seed funding from Torfaen County Borough Council was important: commissioning the Heritage and Regeneration Study (with contributions from other partners), organisation of the conference and appointment of a consultant to champion the UN World Heritage Site nomination and regeneration initiative. This initial funding, as well as commitment in time and effort of quality staff can be seen as essential elements that supported the transition.

Funding for activities

One of the reasons for applying for UN World Heritage Site status was that it would be a catalyst to bring in funding. The status provides a framework within which bids can be made and an added cachet. Many funding packages have been developed using money from the partners. This has been augmented by funding from the European Union, Welsh Assembly and Heritage Lottery Fund with approximately £25 million being invested in the local economy in the first 5 years of the project.

Commitment to long-term development funding

Commitment to long-term development funding was probably also a critical factor in support of transition, reinforced by a strong partnership, the UN World Heritage status and success of projects and securing other funding.

Economic gains (and win-win from combination of goals: income, jobs, nature)

- Property values in Blaenavon have doubled over the last 3 years and properties are being snapped up.
 - Younger people and people from outside the area are moving in.
 - Half of the vacant properties on the main street have been put back into use, and more are to be converted over the next few years
 - Around 100 jobs have been safeguarded and/or created: tourism at Big Pit, construction jobs for local builders and through the Booktown project.
- All of these factors help a further transition through changes in perception and economic terms.

Picture 40- Before the funding (business plant)



Picture 41- After the funding (the Business Park)



Spin-off to regional economy

Clearly a critical factor, via increased tourism expenditure.

Possibility of avoiding risks or damage posed by ‘non-green’ companies in the area

There is a fairly large industrial estate with mostly light industry (e.g. manufacturing enzymes, other chemicals, weighing systems etc) on the Blaenavon site. A number of companies in the area have taken advantage of grants available to improve the environment of their premises. This has had a major impact on improving the environment of the industrial estate (see pictures above).

Other push factors: decline in agricultural incomes, a need to find other sources of income

All available.

Other pull factors:

Crowded North West Europe and a public demand for recreation and nature (and a need to invest in nature).

Possibility of linking the project to existing EU Structural Funds and other subsidy schemes

Yes, as mentioned before.

3.4.3. Analysis of critical ECOLOGICAL elements for transition in Blaenavon

Being inside or part of a network of nature protection

The site is partly in the Brecon Beacons National Park, with highest National and European ecological protection. This supports transition to or management of nature.

Presence of protected and/or native species and habitats that require protection, and can be rehabilitated and enhanced

There are four Sites of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation. The fact that there was industry in some of the areas in the past prevented these areas from being intensively farmed. With the industrial decline the landscape was neglected in many areas and nature re-colonised the land without artificial assistance.

Moorlands and low nutrient grassland, rich in fungi, developed naturally. The “transition” in this case has a somewhat different (and more complex) character than in the other regions in this project.

There is a landscape or there are landscape elements with an important socio-cultural value

Yes.

There is a diverse range of landscape elements (e.g. water, historic roads, tramways, walkways)

All these elements are present and help the transition to nature. The protection of the industrial and ecological landscapes is seen as key factor for a higher demand from tourists, which in its turn guarantees further protection. Tourism figures are not (yet) an issue in terms of impact on the countryside.

Interestingly, the protection is partly based on the remediation of over-exploited and polluted nature (by coal mining and the iron industry). It is also partly based on the retention of industrial scars which may also have an important bio-diversity value.

Picture 42- Forgeside circa 1900



Picture 43- Forgeside today



There are interesting or important natural landscape gradients and / or ecotones

The area includes hills, valleys and waterways. There is a type of mountain top landscape with a lot of 'common land', but also cliffs from former quarries.

There is a possibility of creating a more logical structure in the landscape, as it now appears as a collection of random and disorganised elements

Yes.

There are unique (international, national or regional) habitats

There are four Sites of Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation.

Not identified as critical elements in this case:

- The potential to create (a) larger continuous tract(s) of nature
- The presence of intensive agriculture causing pollution or degrading the environment
- Size and quality of nature cannot cope with the population pressure from cities nearby (although the proximity to Cardiff helped funding by Interreg NW Europe.)

3.4.4. Conclusions from the analysis of transition in the Welsh case

Social and economic factors have been critical in creating the need and the will to do something towards improving the region and using the existing assets. The investment of seed money in a study, a conference, plan making and co-operation, added to the possibility of applying for nomination for a UNESCO World Heritage Site. All these factors were crucial for the transition to a better protection, management and enhancement of nature and culture.

Social capital (good co-operation and organisation) has been essential in promoting transition: the presence of an active political leadership, excellent project management and many organisations adhering to a common vision and plan making.

The ecological pull and push factors have been less prominent, but fortunately the region maintained some sites untouched and these have become official sites of special scientific interest. Also the fact that the area lies partly in a national park with high protection status was positive. For the rest it is interesting to note that the area has become attractive partly because of the overexploitation of nature (mines, spoil heaps) which has brought with it beautiful historical buildings and an industrial landscape of worldwide significance.

Also very typical of this site is that the transition to landscapes with greater biodiversity interest and improved habitats for native plants and animals occurred hand in hand with the decline in industry. The preservation and good management of what is there now has been made possible by becoming a World Heritage Site as a large percentage of the landscape nowadays is very important for nature. The regional partners consider protecting and managing as very important, to prevent deterioration of the ecosystems and to enhance ecological value where required. But they also stress that deliberate change in land-use (as in the other regions in this Interreg-project) is different to managing what is present and has been created by transition.

3.5. Conclusions from the three case studies

The three areas have shown how diverse transition can be either: to more nature, or to a greener rural area or to a new regional economy in which nature and cultural identity are prominent.

In the Dutch case many transition projects are under way and have obtained funding through an extensive and effective partnership resulting in a good plan. This chapter looked in more detail at the transition from agriculture to more natural practices, in particular in the South West of the Veluwe where this Interreg project has financed a pilot project (Oud Reemst). It was interesting to note the many different interests and positions of stakeholders but also the will to move towards each other, in particular when funding was available for making agriculture more environmentally friendly and eventually letting nature re-colonise some areas. Compensating the farmers appropriately and with minimum administrative burden for the eventual damage resulting from the bringing down of fences and foraging by deer and wild boar was also seen as essential.

The analysis of the Belgian case has shown that demolishing buildings for increasing the nature area is a novel idea, opposed by many and prohibited by law. There are also very few examples and studies of costs and benefits of such practices elsewhere. It is recommended that such cases be made available in order to initiate a public debate and that funding be given for a pilot.

The Welsh case study was described as a best-practice case where the existing unfavourable circumstances were seen as opportunity for change and where a study, an active partnership, a good leader and opportunities (the UN scheme) gave the area a new impetus and a new future based on natural beauty and cultural heritage. The transition in this case is characterised by nature development on the land abandoned by mining and industry which has been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. This land now requires careful management rather than further “transition” activities.

The analysis of the three cases of transition from respectively agricultural, social activities and industry to more nature show that there is a large number and a broad range of critical elements that support these types of transition. These positive elements, such as a common vision, a good plan, partnership, leadership and finances can be transferred to other regions across the EU that also have a (similarly) good ecological starting point.

The identified bottlenecks or factors that slow down or impede transition are:

- **Existing policies** for nature protection that are too narrow and do not recognise the value of such areas in transition to higher quality nature and low-impact tourism,
- **Existing policies** to support farmers to engage in more nature friendly production do not include support for the transition from traditional crop farming to grazing lands,
- **Existing rules and procedures** that forbid certain types of aid (for year round grazing in the Dutch case or for demolition of buildings in the Belgian case).

- **This leads to: lack of finances** as existing schemes do not foresee or include support for this type of transition,
- **Lack of supportive data/ studies**, causing a lack of awareness and insight in the workings of a sustainable economy based on increases in natural capital, leading to an increase in economic activity, while also increasing social welfare. This lack of knowledge about sustainable win-win situations can be caused by existing legislation (Belgian case- some institutions) or fear for the unknown (Dutch case- some farmers).

Other factors causing a slow-down in the transition:

Change in land-use or land management is always difficult!

In the Welsh case, in which transition is most advanced compared to the other two regions, no major land-use change is envisaged, except greater access to the area and more tourist/ recreation. No major conflicts have arisen between the stakeholders. The Belgian and the Dutch case foresee major shifts in land-use and movement of property from one stakeholder to another, which has created more diverging interests. For example, ending sand and stone quarrying in the Belgian region will represent a substantial loss of income for some companies.

Concerning the management of land, there is intense negotiation between the environmental NGO in the Dutch case and farmers and their organisations for buying of land and /or changing the type of agricultural production. In the Welsh case there are some problems with ensuring effective nature management in the important areas for biodiversity as most of the area is not owned by the Council and funds available for such management are not sufficient.

Participatory planning takes time!

Participation is an essential factor for promoting transition or the greening of rural areas. Transition means change and uncertainty. Unless plans are prepared and agreed upon by policy makers and decision makers together with local organisations and civil society, such plans have a real chance of being boycotted and not implemented for lack of support. Co-operation and trust are key factors for the success of plans. Furthermore, plans that are made in a participatory manner tend to be consensual instead of a compromise only and in a consensus many stand to gain, thus accelerating change and transition. But such planning is time consuming and can be so innovative and “learning by doing” that mistakes are made. Using pilot projects with good monitoring and regular feed-back to stakeholders is useful.

Information and Marketing strategies needed!

Even when there is a participatory approach, there is a continuous need for good (new) information, communication and events to maintain public support and participation of stakeholders in the public debate concerning nature, economic and social needs. There are still not very many examples of (large) regional sustainable projects, with a combination of focus on nature conservation and enhancement, which are economically sound, and attend to existing social needs. A study of new sustainable practices and the continuous attention to such projects (also elsewhere) is useful for generating local ideas and pushing the process forward.

Recommendations to other regions are found in Chapter 5. An analysis of existing EU schemes and how they may help in the future is presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4- HOW CAN NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN POLICIES HELP TRANSITION?

The “Boundless Parks, Naturally!” project has shown that rural areas of great natural and cultural beauty, near urban areas, can suffer from social and economic demands that are put on them. (Rail)roads were built through them, intense quarrying took place and industry was set up causing pollution and leaving scars and spoil heaps, large chunks of land were singled out and used for other specific purposes such as military training, hospitals, religious activities (in cloisters and convents), airfields and intensive agriculture. Even though some of these fenced-in areas have often maintained interesting habitats for certain plants and insects, the fences have been a barrier to the movement and reproduction elsewhere of larger fauna. Broader use by the general public has been made impossible or undesirable because of the fences and the degradation/ pollution. Modern intensive agriculture has also negatively affected the historical identity and landscapes which people enjoy.

In the three areas, many activities have been undertaken over the last few years to reverse the damaging trend “away from nature”. Scarred areas have been rehabilitated and replanted, polluted land was cleaned up, land has been bought up to be managed by nature organizations, fences removed, eco-ducts constructed etc. All of this required planning, consultation and investments. In some cases neglect by a declining industry has had a positive impact on nature by reducing the intensity with which the land is managed and allowing nature to re-colonise. As a result, all three areas now have, in one way or another, special protection status such as being part of the European Natura 2000 network, being a Birds or Habitats Directive area, a National or regional park, a World Heritage Site, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, etc

In the three regions there are major investment plans for nature enhancement and protection activities promoting socially desired and economically sound “transition to nature” or the “greening” of rural areas. Some of the ongoing projects are: building of information centres and gateways to the areas, developing and implementing a communications and marketing strategy, a park rangers’ project and a pilot project dealing with agriculture. In particular the Oud-Reemst pilot project showed the importance of EU subsidies and their transposition into national law and schemes.

This chapter, which builds on the lessons learned from the three regions on how to promote the right sort of transition, looks at how national and European policies can help (these) and other regions in their transition to sustainable nature.

4.1. Which (EU) schemes are available? Did they help? How can they improve?

Chapters 2 and 3 examined how the different regions have used national and international policies and funding schemes to promote the desired development. These schemes were supported by European funds such as the EU based agri-environmental measures in Wales (small in terms of overall funding) and the “Boundless Parks, Naturally” Interreg project itself (which allowed the purchasing of

land for the Dutch pilot). Other funds have been available including regional, national, NGO and private funding. In the Welsh case the designation of U.N. World Heritage Site has given the area a certain status, which has helped convince people and organisations of its importance, and led to financial assistance.

Existing EU financial support mechanisms that are or might be used to support the type of regional development in this transition project are investigated below. Existing schemes and then at the new European plans for the period 2007-2013 are assessed.

4.1.1. “Classic” regional or structural funds

The “classic” regional or structural EU funds provide finances for programmes and projects supporting development in the less prosperous areas (Objective 1 areas), conversion of regions facing difficulties (Objective 2 areas) and for the development of strategies for a competitive Europe. The EU programmes called Interreg and Urban fund (inter)regional cooperation and urban renewal projects respectively. Regional funding is also given through the Cohesion fund in particular for the new member states. Transport and the environment related projects in applicant countries have also received funding.²²

Two of partner regions in this Interreg project (Wales and Flanders) are partly in or near areas that are either less prosperous (Objective 1 areas, with a GDP less than 75% of the EU average) or are facing structural difficulties that are often the source of high unemployment (Objective 2) or are in the process of phasing out such aid (Flanders). The Interreg III scheme and in particular the III B strand offers (and has offered) well targeted opportunities for the type of transition dealt with in this report, namely aiming at achieving “sustainable, harmonious and balanced development in the EU and higher territorial integration”.²³

The project on transition described in this report was funded by Interreg III B. In particular the pilot project in Oud-Reemst (the Netherlands) which deals with transition from agriculture to more natural systems was approved, under the condition that a study of this type and other relevant transitions (in the three regions concerned) was carried out. Interreg can therefore be considered as being instrumental for promoting transition.

4.1.2. “Classic” agricultural funds and other funding for rural development

In addition to the agricultural “guarantee” funds that provide direct payments to farmers for production of many agricultural products at a guaranteed level, there are also “guidance” funds for rural development e.g. modernising farms, the set-aside of land, the reafforestation of former agricultural land, training and for early retirement. Compensation is also available for farmers in less-favoured areas and areas with environmental restrictions, extensification of farming and management of low-intensity pasture systems.²⁴ These last measures are the so-called agri-environmental

²² See www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy or www.europa.eu.int/grants/structural_funds

²³ See www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/Interreg3.

²⁴ Seven types of so called structural agricultural measures are described in Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on “Support for Rural development”, Official Journal of the European Communities series L, nr.160 of 26.6.1999, pages 80- 102, updated/modified by Council Regulation

measures. Support for farms in less-favoured areas and for farming in a more environmental friendly way are of particular interest for this transition project. The Leader + EU programme for rural development, also financed through the agricultural budget, are also of interest. These are looked at in more detail below.

Agri-environmental measures

The agri-environmental measures, funded by the European Agricultural Fund represent around 4% of the direct (guarantee) payments to farmers and funding is given for a number of activities that benefit the environment.²⁵ Payments are either based on costs that were incurred to obtain a higher level of environmental protection or are compensations for lost income due to lower production or damage. The regulation is compulsory and dictates what can be supported but it is up to the member states themselves to propose to the EU the concrete areas and measures for which support will be made available. Member states pay the farmers and the EU reimburses a percentage of these costs (in general 50%).

A possible consequence of the flexibility member states have in the interpretation and application of this regulation is, according to the European Environment Agency, is that agri-environmental schemes in different countries are “highly variable and generally not targeted on the basis of commonly agreed criteria” and the implementation of the agri-environmental schemes in different EU countries varies considerably. In Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg, Austria and parts of Germany more than 40% of the utilised agricultural areas (UAA) have agri-environmental schemes. At the other end of the spectrum Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Southern Italy and Greece less than 5% of the utilised agricultural areas fall under agri-environmental schemes.²⁶

In terms of spending the European Environment Agency point out many unexplained differences in how the agri-environmental measures are used: Austria spends on average €167 per ha UAA and Finland €109 per ha, while at the other end Spain spends 7 €/per ha, France €12 and the Netherlands and Belgium around €15 per ha on average.

(EC) No 1783/2003 of 29 September 2003 (Official Journal No L 270 of 21.10.2003, pages 70-77) and corrected by a Corrigendum published in the Official Journal L 94 of 31.3.2004, page 71. Text on line: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/rur/leg/1257_en.pdf and http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2003/l_270/l_27020031021en00700077.pdf

²⁵ Originally the agri-environmental measures was laid down in Council Regulation (EEC) 2078/92 of 30 June 1992 on “Agricultural production methods compatible with the requirements of the protection of the environment and the maintenance of the countryside”, later integrated in the earlier mentioned Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999.

²⁶ Figure 9, page 13 of EEA/UNEP Report nr 1/2004: High nature value farmland: characteristics, trends and policy challenges, based on data from: EEA, Environmental Assessment Report nr. 8 (2001), based on data of the European Commission, DG Agriculture.

BOX: Can agri-environmental measures help transition?

Everything points to the fact that agri-environmental measures can be used to support transition (and integration) of agriculture to more nature, as is being aimed at in this Interreg project with among others the Oud-Reemst pilot project. It would however be necessary to find out why the existing EU support for extensification and set-aside under the agri-environment regulation are now being under-utilised. In this connection it is also important to find out why some countries have made little use of this regulation (like the Netherlands) and why in some countries the scheme is used extensively. In some countries compensation payments were higher than the maximum level allowed by the EU (countries are allowed to ask for a derogation).

Less-favoured areas measures

The European Agricultural Fund (Guidance section) also supports farmers in so called less-favoured areas. This support was first created when the UK joined the European Union to help farms in mountainous areas. Without this scheme that gave a supplement to farmers, many farmers in the UK would not have been able to benefit from the “normal” EU guarantee prices for agricultural produce. Later a new measure was introduced to support farming in “other” less favoured areas, i.e. with other unfavourable physical conditions such as little rainfall (Southern states) or a very cold climate (Northern states). Still later the definition of less-favoured areas was broadened to include areas “affected by specific handicaps, in which farming should be continued, where necessary and subject to certain conditions, in order to conserve or improve the environment, maintain the countryside and preserve the tourist potential of the area in order to protect the coastline”. This was added so as not to exclude any other member state or special situations.

In this last definition²⁷ the emphasis is not only on physical conditions, but also on social and landscape conditions. This makes the less-favoured areas regulation in principle applicable for support to farms in “overcrowded” areas where the farms manage open and green space for urban populations, or on the contrary, for farming in remote areas or in areas with other handicaps like (possibly) foraging deer or boar. Such recreational or physical planning or environmental needs and issues can in principle be used by Member States to classify areas as less-favoured. Member states are free to interpret and apply the definition of a less-favoured area and explain this to the European Commission. Once the EU has approved the chosen definitions and areas, member states can financially support the farms in these areas (and receive at least 50% back from the EU).²⁸

As a result of this flexible approach, spending on less-favoured areas is very diverse among EU countries. Finland spends on average €192 per ha of UAA and Luxembourg €110, whilst Denmark spends €1 per ha and Belgium and the Netherlands €1,5 respectively.²⁹ But it must be emphasised that the broad definition in article 20 of the regulation gives many possibilities to member states to compensate for extra costs or loss of income due to certain conditions that make agricultural

²⁷ Laid down in article 20 of the 1257/1999 Regulation.

²⁸ A European civil servant, closely involved in the workings of this regulation said that article 20 was designed to include countries and regions that do not have mountains or other great natural handicaps but have strong physical planning needs or other social (recreational) needs, such as the Netherlands.

²⁹ EEA/UNEP Report nr 1/2004: High nature value farmland: characteristics, trends and policy challenges.

production in certain regions less favourable compared to other (average) regions. The regulation would allow a member state to explain why farmers which are situated in a national park or in a national landscape where deer and/or wild boar roam freely and can damage production, may receive compensation.

BOX- Can the less-favoured areas scheme help transition?

The European Regulation on less-favoured areas (EU Regulation 1257/1999, later 1783/2003) allows for subsidies/ compensation to farmers in areas with certain handicaps. In particular Article 20 of the regulation, presenting a broad definition of less-favoured areas, seems to allow support for farmers such as ones studied in this Interreg project: farms in areas of outstanding natural beauty, in historical landscapes or in a national park in which deer and other animals roam freely and cause damage. .

An evaluation of the 1783/2003 Regulation which includes the less-favoured areas scheme, the agri-environment aid and other measures like the premiums for set-aside or for the making farmland open to the public was recently carried out.³⁰ It shows that “highly positive results” were recorded in terms of nature protection measures and maintenance of landscape. But it also revealed that other measures have been very little used, such as the funds for extensification, the scheme subsidizing a 20-year set-aside or the funds for improving public access to agricultural land. The evaluation says furthermore that there are difficulties in data gathering concerning the positive impacts on nature but that “reports” confirm that nature management frequently requires extensification and grazing of low-intensity pastures. The evaluators reported that the underutilization of the “extensification of livestock scheme” and of the funds available for “maintenance of extensive systems” may have been caused by too low compensation payments.³¹

Furthermore the stakeholders interviewed in the Dutch case stated that it was difficult for them to find the right support scheme which fitted their circumstances. The EU rural development programme includes 26 different measures, which are then transposed in a large number of national regulation and schemes.

The following UK schemes are shown to give an idea of how many schemes there are:³²

In England:

- Environment Sensitive Areas Scheme
- Countryside Stewardship Scheme
- Funds for “Special Projects”
- Funds for Agri-environment Reviews
- Funds for “Broad and shallow scheme” proposals

In Wales:

- Tir Gofal

In Northern Ireland:

- Countryside Management scheme

In Scotland:

- Rural Stewardship Scheme
- Organic Aid Scheme

³⁰ See <http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/envir/report/en/> facts and figures

³¹ In Summary of Part III (The impact of measures) points 6-8.

³² From the website of the Royal Society for the protection of Birds in the UK: www.rspb.org.uk.

- Environmentally Sensitive Areas scheme
- Countryside Premium

BOX – More funds for extensive and other more natural farming?

In the particular case of the South-west of the Veluwe (a.o. Oud-Reemst) there are opportunities for nature managers, farmers and the other partners involved in the Veluwe 2010 plans, to come together and ask the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture and Nature to include the South West Veluwe in the list of less-favoured areas, given its proximity to nature areas. This would make it possible for those farms in the area who have a plan for transition to more nature, to receive compensation for the more natural forms (more extensive, less productive) of production.

Leader +

Leader + is a European Community initiative. Unlike the previously discussed regulations, it does not have to be transposed into national law by the member states. As such Leader+ offers a direct opportunity for a wide range of initiatives that promote “integrated territorial rural development strategies based on a bottom-up approach and horizontal partnerships”. There are no concrete examples of Leader + projects that have supported transition to more nature in specific regions (comparable with the transition promoted in the three regions of this Interreg project). But the scheme clearly aims to support sustainable regional development where high quality nature goes hand in hand with economic and social goals. All types of organisations can develop plans and ask for co-financing from the EU (up to 75% in Objective 1 regions and 50% elsewhere) for Leader + projects.

4.1.3. “Environment and nature” funds

A third source of European support funds for transition is the EU LIFE scheme.³³ LIFE supports innovative environmental pilot projects but also concrete projects dealing with nature conservation and management in a great variety of habitats and socio-economic situations, usually involving different stakeholders. LIFE constitutes “a veritable laboratory for the conservation of natural habitats”.

A study published in 2003 looks back at 10 years of funding by LIFE.³⁴ The study shows that LIFE was often used to help set up the NATURA 2000 network of nature sites in the EU. Natura 2000 is a network of sites under the Birds Directive and under the Habitats directives³⁵ plus other connecting areas. In 2003 there were 20 000 Natura 2000 sites (10% of the surface of the EU) some very large and some small. LIFE has been an important promoter of NATURA 2000 sites for instance by funding large (nature) inventory projects in Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Ireland and in smaller areas/countries such as Cyprus, Corsica, Azores. These inventories used existing data but new and extensive field work was also carried out.

³³ See www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life

³⁴ Life for Natura 2000, 10 years of implementing the Regulation, in: Life Focus, European Communities, 2003.

³⁵ Regulation 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EC respectively with their SPAS (Special Protection Areas) and SCIs (Sites of Community Interest respectively).

LIFE financed large nature inventories

As a result of these inventories, new Natura 2000 sites were created. Acquisition of land was also financed by LIFE, the making of nature management plans or the application of such plans.

By the end of 2001 the 700 LIFE (and pre-LIFE) projects that were financed by LIFE covered only 10% of these Natura 2000 sites. This means that (potentially) LIFE could be used in regions of great natural and cultural beauty like the ones studied in this Interreg project, where the area also include Bird and Habitats directive sites. More detailed figures for the period between 1992 and 2001 (when LIFE spent more than €415 million on 550 projects) show that projects were submitted by regional authorities, NGOs or national authorities, usually in a partnership. This is also positive for possible funding for the stakeholders that work together in this “Boundless Parks, Naturally” Interreg project.

Detailed assessment of the nature management plans that were financed by LIFE (to see if they could be used for transition projects such as those studies in this Interreg project), shows that there were three types of nature management plans (below). In all of these cases, it is evident that promoting transition may necessitate such studies or guidelines.

- Global nature management plans

This type of aid includes projects that have resulted, for instance, in the setting of objectives for all French Natura 2000 sites or the development of the UK Management scheme for Marine SAC sites. A project dealing with transition to more nature in a global/methodological way (how to assess the level of transition reached, how to establish future goals, how to support transition, etc) might be a good LIFE project.

- More specific regional nature management plans

The second type of nature management plans that were funded by LIFE include, for instance, aid for making plans for nature reserves in France, Belgium, Sweden, Ireland and Wales. Forestry management or development plans were also financed in Germany, Austria, Finland France.

- Very detailed nature management plans

The third type of more concrete nature management plans include detailed preliminary studies of agricultural, pastoral or forestry technical guidelines or other technical notes (in France and Greece).

The “preliminary studies” that were financed by LIFE, show what type of knowledge is gathered (and what possible parallels there are with the Interreg project on transition). The Evaluation study for LIFE states that the following preliminary studies were financed:³⁶

- Knowledge of eco-systems (inventories, evaluation; research on certain species and populations, forestry issues
- General environmental studies: hydrology, morphology, etc

³⁶ Page 32.

- Impacts of human activities: studies of damaging or disturbing activities, studies of the historic use of an area
- Studies of the site's economy and its frequentation: socio-economic studies, pastoral/ agricultural diagnosis, management or development of visitors use
- Evaluation of action.

Box- Can LIFE help transition projects?

The evaluation of LIFE nature shows clearly that there is scope for applying for funding in a region wishing to promote transition from socio-economic activities to more nature or when looking for a better integration of these activities with nature, aiming at the same time a higher quality nature for these activities.

4.2. Which new (EU) schemes are coming up? How can they be used?

4.2.1. New EU proposals to combine aid to agriculture and rural development

Fairly radical reform of the first pillar of the CAP (that gives direct payments to farmers for production) has taken place in the last years, reducing guarantee payments and milk quotas so that they become more in line with prices on the world market. This is leading to a decrease in farm income in many areas, which has subsequently led to many farmers either abandoning farming or buying land to increase land size and productivity, or seeking additional income from other services like nature conservation or tourism on the farm.

The Guidance Section or Second Pillar of the CAP (which was discussed above) is also going through a process of reform and it is important to look at these proposals as they deal with new funding that will be available for the period 2007-2013. The proposal by the EU Commission is to create a new fund, combining aid to agriculture with aid to regional rural development.³⁷ This is relevant to this Interreg project on transition. The EU document brings together the “old” support measures (described above, for the less-favoured areas and the agri-environmental measures, etc) and a Leader+ program that has an even more regional and participatory character than the previous Leader+.

The proposed new fund has three axes:

- Support for increasing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector through support for restructuring
- Support for land management schemes, to enhance the environment and the countryside
- Support measures targeted at the farm sector and other rural actors, to enhance the quality of life in rural areas and to promote diversification of economic activities.

³⁷Proposal for a Council Regulation on support for rural development by the Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), document COM(2004) 490 final of 14.7.2004, see: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2004/com2004_0490en01.pdf.

It is clear that all three axes have links to the Interreg project: a high quality (regional) combination of nature, economic activities and catering for social needs in a new type of regional economy, where stakeholders work together using a participatory planning approach. In particular the focus on land management and land-use in the new proposal is promising, as transition does not deal with farmland exclusively but also with many activities in the area, be it industrial, social, military or other.

As concerns the support for less-favoured areas and for the so called agri-environmental measures, the proposal does not bring much change. The new fund would still support aid for farms in mountainous or otherwise handicapped areas, but also for the earlier mentioned “special” areas, for instance for farms that are in or near a nature area with wildlife that can cause damage to farmland. A new feature of the fund is the explicit inclusion of Natura 2000 sites in the list of areas that can receive funding, in addition to the less-favoured areas or the areas where farmers can get support for implementing agri-environmental measures (reduced use of fertilizers, etc).

BOX- Can the new EU fund help transition?

- The EU proposal of July 2004 for the creation of a new fund for agricultural restructuring and rural development seems very positive for the type of transition processes dealt with in this Interreg project, namely where regional partners make plans for an increase in the quality of life, combining enhancement of nature with economic and social goals.
- The “Boundless Parks, Naturally” partners and other regions that are promoting transition to nature should tell their governments that they agree with the new EU proposal, but that they want to see aid to transition included.

It is therefore recommended that the “Boundless Parks, Naturally” partners communicate with their ministries of nature/environment, who are now negotiating on this new fund, in order to let them know that they agree with the EU proposals. The partners should suggest that explicit attention should also be given to aid for (rural) transition processes, where farming and other activities and buildings like military or old industry complexes can receive compensation for moving away or for changing their land use or land management practices. Finally, Interreg partners could also look at the new concept of High value nature farmland, described below, to be included in less-favoured or agri-environmental schemes.

4.2.2. A new concept: *high nature value farmland*

Also of importance, when looking at future EU funding for the natural areas in transition to higher value nature is the operationalisation of the concept of “High nature value farmland”, that is, farmland that has a high value in terms of nature. A new publication by the European Environment Agency draws attention to this type of farmland.³⁸ In particular it shows that the definitions of “less-favoured areas” and the areas that now fall under the agri-environmental support measures, are too restricted and should be broadened to include farmland with a high nature value.

³⁸ EEA/UNEP Report nr 1/2004: High nature value farmland: characteristics, trends and policy challenges.

The UN/ECE Kyiv resolution on biodiversity in 2003 agreed to identify high nature value farmland and take adequate conservation measures.³⁹ The agreed target is to cover ‘a substantial proportion’ of such areas with rural development and agri-environment measures by 2008. According to the preliminary identification and mapping exercises, roughly 15-25% of the European countryside qualifies as high nature value farmland.⁴⁰ The largest areas are found in Eastern and Southern Europe and consist of natural grasslands, so called dehesas and montados (found in Spain and Portugal) and steppe areas. High nature value farmland is also relatively abundant in mountainous regions like the grazed uplands in the UK and alpine pastures and meadows. Agriculture in these areas is usually extensive and vulnerable to change.

This study is important for regions who have such high value nature farmland and who want to make a transition to more nature. The study notes for instance that highest biodiversity coincides with low agricultural inputs. Extensive mixed arable systems may also support high biodiversity. But the real hot-spots for biodiversity are semi-natural grasslands. In the Dutch province of Friesland, for example, only 1.5% of the land area is unfertilized semi-natural grassland, yet 60% of terrestrial plants are more or less confined to that habitat.⁴¹

The following table shows how different areas in each country can be called less-favoured, or suited for agri-environmental measures or are high nature value farmland.

Country	UAA (Utilised Agric. Area), million ha	High value nature, % of UAA	Agri-environmental spending (€ ha UAA)	Spending on less-favoured (€/ha UAA)
Greece	3.6	53	15.9	38.2
Portugal	3.9	37	32.4	19.7
Spain	26.2	34	6.8	3.4
United Kingdom	15.8	27	17.2	14.9
Ireland	4.4	24	65.7	44.8
Italy	13.1	21	43.1	7.8
Sweden	3.1	20	83.6	18.5
Austria	3.4	19	167.3	88.0
France	27.9	15	11.8	14.6
Finland	2.2	5	108.6	191.6
Germany	17.2	3	40.6	17.2
Denmark	2.6	3	18.9	0.8
Netherlands	2.0	2	15.3	1.5
Luxembourg	0.1	1	94.1	109.8
Belgium	1.4	1	17.2	1.4
TOTAL EU-15	127	15-25%	18.5 €/ha UAA	11.7 €/ha UAA

There is clear scope for some countries to increase their spending on some of these schemes to promote transition to higher quality nature.

³⁹ Fifth Ministerial Conference ‘Environment for Europe’, Kyiv, Ukraine, 21-23 May 2003, United Nations/ Economic Commission for Europe, Document ECE/CEP/ 108.

⁴⁰ The IRENA project is developing an indicator for such areas.

⁴¹ Schotsman cited in Baldock and Bennett, 2002.

CHAPTER 5- CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Lessons from the past

In Chapter 2 we saw how the three regions can be characterized from the point of view of:

- Quality and size of nature
- Land-use, ownership and forms of land management
- Ecological value
- Social issues, plans and position of stakeholders
- Economic issues: types of economic activities such as industry and services (including tourism), farming, military, etc
- Policy analysis: instruments and aid

It became clear that the three regions, as yet, do not have a baseline of good quantitative data and indicators for future monitoring of the process of transition.

On the basis of these findings, the regional partners concluded that the project should aim to provide at a moderate amount of quantitative data, to be complemented by qualitative information such as examples of transition cases in the three regions using interviews, photos, maps, and undertaking an analysis of the critical elements of transition. A three dimensional approach should be used in this analysis (social, economic, ecological) to analyse and present critical factors for transition.

Three areas and three cases were chosen for further analysis: one dealing with transition from agriculture to old forms of agriculture, to grazing lands or to more nature friendly methods; the second dealing with transition from a social function to nature; and a third with transition from industry to a World Heritage Site, with high historical, cultural, ecological and tourism value.

5.2. Lessons for the future

The studies concluded that four regional assets/ capitals are of importance for transition to nature:

- **Ecological capital:** having high value nature helps to obtain a special (conservation) status and funds,
- **Human capital:** a good plan including both a vision and a management plan, a 'champion' to take the project forward and political and public support are all key factors in promoting transition. Including the community by informing them, facilitating their participation and obtaining support through public events, marketing, demonstration and promotion of projects and of the value of nature are also very important.

- **Social capital:** having a regional identity, a sense of community, the will to make a change in a degraded / deprived area and a strong partnership are elements of the social capital of an area and as such of importance for promoting regional development or transition.⁴² Culture and values are also of importance: in a culture that perceives agriculture as the basis of livelihood and much more important than nature, transition from agriculture to nature will be difficult. In a more market-driven culture such transition can be more readily accepted if the economic benefits can be shown. When there is no experience of the economic and social benefits of investing in nature, demolishing buildings can be seen as a waste to be avoided. Pilot projects showing the advantages of such practices and of new investments in nature may help in such cases.
- **Economic factors:** financial aid for transition is necessary and has been obtained in the three regions. This was, however, a long process and in some cases funds are still not readily available (e.g. no earmarked funds for removing buildings) or are too small to provide incentives for farmers to move out or revert to more extensive and wildlife friendly nature.

In the last and third phase of the study, an analysis was made of how European funds for the environment, for regional development and for farming in special areas can be used to promote transition. Chapter 4 concluded:

- EU (Structural) **Regional Funds** targeted at Objective 1 or 2 regions can help such regions with natural beauty when they are “less prosperous areas” (Objective 1 areas) or “regions facing difficulties” (Objective 2 areas). Support for demolishing buildings or changing their function to become more compatible with nature and tourism is in principle allowed under such schemes.
- EU (Structural) **Agricultural funds** for supporting farmers in special regions (less favoured or in areas with environmental constraints) can and are used for promoting transition to more extensive and nature friendly farming. However different countries use these EU regulations differently and in some countries the definition of less- favoured areas is restrictive and does not include areas near or in national parks and near cities. There is however scope for influencing the ministries of agriculture to include such areas to receive aid for more natural farming like extensive grazing and/or receipt of compensation of damage from wild-life.
- LIFE, the EU **Environmental Fund** for innovative environmental (pilot) projects and for nature conservation has financed many projects that have similarities with the transition projects studied here.
- The recent EU proposal for the creation of a **new European fund for agricultural guidance and rural development** contain many positive

⁴² A study by GHK, financed by EU DG Regio, looked at whether EU structural funds help promote sustainable regional development and it showed that such social capital is very important: a community identity, low discrimination and little social exclusion, the presence of volunteer organisations, trust among partners etc.

elements.⁴³ However it would be useful to include an explicit mention of rural transition plans, prepared in a cooperative way and promoting a transition to higher quality nature, combined with a healthy regional economy and social needs.

5.3. Recommendations for other regions

As in the three areas studied in this report, many other natural areas near European cities have seen a gradual degradation in their attractiveness and their positive potential for recreation. Many such areas have been used for unplanned or sprawling new economic and social needs such as coal mining and polluting industry, farming on previously former heathland, housing, ugly infrastructures, asylum seekers centres, expanding camping sites, children's summer or other camps, airfields, military use, hospitals, nunneries, etc. It is clear that many of these economic and social activities need the space provided by these areas.

However problems occur when natural areas near urban areas are not “well taken care of”, that is, when they are not **included in an integrated and long term planning, with the involvement of stakeholders**. A costly and serious effort has then to be made to “undo” the damage and regain some of the quality these areas had before, from the point of view of nature and from the social point of view (eg recreation needs of the city dwellers).⁴⁴

For other European regions that have recognised their past mistakes and have also embarked on a transition process to more nature, the lessons in this report can be useful as they show what to promote and what to avoid.

Focussing on the positive elements of transition that can be copied in other regions, the following ecological, social and economic factors were seen to be important for promoting transition to more nature:

- The will to make a change in a degraded and deprived area
- A strong partnership arisen from a participatory form of planning
- A ‘champion’ to take the project forward
- Political and financial support
- Existing assets (natural, social, economic) to build upon
- Research into how such assets can best be used to reach sustainable development
- Examples of the ecological, social and economic benefits of investing in nature.

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⁴³ Proposal for a new Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), COM(2004) 490 final of 14.7.2004, see: http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2004/com2004_0490en01.pdf

⁴⁴ Total Cost Veluwe 2010 plans: €100 million, Blaenavon site plans: £ 1.8 million for 2000-5, National Park in Flanders: €87 million.

ANNEX 1

Common format for data collection (baseline data) on the three areas

1 . Size, land-use, ownership and land management

1.1. Size and land-use in relation to “naturalness” of the total area

TYPE OF AREA	Size in hectares	Size in % of total	Which % is used for recreation
Total area			
Area with “top quality nature”, i.e protected area under various regimes: national, bird/habitat/Natura 2000, etc			
Area with other nature such as forests, heather, rivers, etc, public or private			
Area with other “less natural” use of land but which visitors enjoy such as foot paths, cycling roads, non intensive farming, camping sites, conference centres, historical or other “adapted” housing and buildings, etc)			
“Least natural “ or “non-nature” areas such as industry, mining, roads, some types of farming and housing, etc that are to be transformed to more / better nature			

Make a map of your region (by hand or digital) using the following colour scheme for each of the above defined areas:

Dark green for protected areas,

Light green for areas with nature,

Yellow for areas that still have a link and some “feel’ with nature,

Grey for areas of transition.

1.2. Ownership of the area(s) and management regime

Describe the ownership for the overall area but also (if possible) for the different segments / areas as defined above and most importantly, for the areas that were defines by the partners as transition areas to more/better nature (and/or recreation).

NB: is the national park/ natural area predominantly public owned (like in de Kempen) or is it also private or owned by nature conservation organisations?

Describe also how the area(s) is managed (by whom- volunteers or public or private).

NB: This type of data is important as the ownership/ management regime plays an important role in the choice of the optimal or appropriate policy instrument or tool or process to reach the goal of transition.

2. Ecological description and valuation

Overall description of area and possibly use of standard 'Type of nature' index: is it predominantly sand / heather/ woods or something else? How valuable or unique is the area? Use overall description or more formalised measure.

3. Economic description and valuation

In this section we collect and analyse socio-economic data, complementing and detailing data on land-use collected under paragraph 3.1.

Here the focus is on identifying and describing all the socio-economic interests and (money making) activities in the area as they will be the target and /or carrier of the transition measures. These socio-economic activities / sectors will probably be the most affected by the transition measures and hopefully positively integrated if they can and will cooperate.

Fill in the matrix below:

- 1- Is the activity in the area? Yes or no
- 2- If yes: what is its size (employment, or income)

The objective of this section is also to generate a LONG list of activities so please add the sectors that are available in your area but are not on this list yet. Goal is to make a list which other regions can use as a checklist when making a plan for "transition" .

SECTOR	In the area yes or no	Indicator	Overall effect on nature
Agriculture			
Intensive farming			
Extensive farming			
Livestock (intensive breeding)			
Livestock (extensive)			
Green houses			
Forestry			
Fishing			
Hunting			
Industry			
Food industry			
Drinks industry			
Wood industry			
Furniture industry			
Sports & camping equipment			
Other industries			
Mining and quarrying			
Coal			

Sand			
Gas			
Stone/ slate			
Water collection			
Other			
Construction companies			
Road construction & repair			
Housing			
Transport companies			
Tourist sector			
Camping sites			
B and Bs			
Hotels			
Cafes/ restaurants			
Cultural activities (music, Museums, castles)			
Horse riding facilities			
Cycling shops & repair			
Other recreational facilities like for swimming/ flying / skating			
Other services			
Conference centres			
Hospitals / revalidation			
Schools			
Sport facilities			
Water distribution			
Asylum seekers centres			
Waste collection and Management			
Other (private and civil) services			
Military			
HOUSES- How many?			
ROADS- How many?			

Give input-output matrix of area if available, showing how the sectors depend on each other.

4. Social structure and dynamics

4.1. The stakeholders

Describe the actors and partners and the (potential) conflicts:

- Land owners and other local, regional, national or European social, political and economic actors.

Describe other relevant social aspects: population pressure/ public demand for nature and recreation.

4.2. Ongoing Projects

Describe which projects related to the socio-economic functions and actors described above have taken place in the past, which are taking place in the present and which have been formulated for the future.

5. Policy analysis - identified (and sometimes already used) policy instrument and measures in the existing plans

Fill in the matrix by ticking yes or no if the measure is available in the country/ in the area.

Also: add to the list any other existing measures (so that other EU regions who want to deal with transition have a checklist).

POLICY MEASURE	Available yes or no	Remedial, Preventive or Pro-active?
LEGAL		
Expropriation		
Creation of a nature reserve or of a protected area		
Non extension of contracts for quarrying etc		
Other		
ECONOMIC		
Buying of land / houses		
Buying of companies		
Building or subsidizing the needed infrastructure :		
Eco ducts		
Cycling and hiking paths, Etc		
Making roads narrower Or destroying them		
Restoring historical buildings		
Restoring old water ways		
(Re)planting with local species		

Compensation:		
Subsidies to land owners to “produce” nature/ change their activities		
Subsidies to land owners who are already managing nature		
Subsidies to move activities out of the area		
Subsidies to stop activity		
Others		
SOCIAL		
In plan making:		
Consultation		
Participation		
Creation of a fund		
Other		

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ANNEX 2

List of critical elements for stimulating transition

A three-dimensional approach

Critical elements that help transition to more nature or to a more natural or historic landscape can be subdivided in social, economic and ecological conditions or factors. Critical elements can also be divided in “push factors” and in “pull factors”. For instance, the fact that there is a public demand for nature in a certain area is a critical (positive) pull factor for getting a transition project on the political agenda. The fact that the situation was bad at the start (a push factor like pollution from farms, ugly landscape from mining) can also promote transition. Having insight in these conditions in our areas can stimulate the change process in other regions.

The critical elements below are the ones that came forward and were discussed at the last JWG meeting. Not all of these elements will necessarily apply to your region, please add and remove elements as applicable.

This list should help you when you are describing and analysing your transition example. Use the list to explain if and how the factors below have influenced the transition process in your region/ case. Was this element or aspect important? Why? How is it being dealt with?

CRITICAL SOCIAL ELEMENTS

- Situation of ‘desperation’ (eg: situation in Wales had been bad for a long time, disaster with school children was catalyst for change)
- Common vision (where does the region want to go from where we are?)
- A plan of action (to get money)
- A management plan (to maintain control)
- A demand both by local residents and city-dwellers
- Political support
 - How / why did decision makers come on board
 - How was commitment secured at the highest/ lower levels
 - Was there reluctance/ willingness from civil servants to execute the plans?
 - Was there political or civil service continuity?
- A ‘status’ for the area- a special recognition by eg. World Heritage Site, SSSIs, or Natura 2000, a national nature scheme, or ownership by forestry service or NGO.
- A marketing strategy or a plan on how to sell the project: Branding and communication strategy, changing people’s perceptions
- A way of countering perceived threat, change can be perceived as being scary!
- The presence of elements/ objects of cultural heritage
- Stakeholder participation
- Social networks, partnership board, NGOs,
- Presence of a ‘prominent personality’ to provide a driving force
- Initial actions began at local level (grass roots, bottom up)? Was region/ EU approached later?
- A regional approach/coherency to align with EU regional development policy

CRITICAL ECONOMIC ELEMENTS

- Initial funding or ‘seed’ money to make a start
- Finances for the activities of the project
- Commitment to long-term development funding
- Possibility of gains and win-win from combining several goals (income, jobs, more nature)
- Possibility of adding value (spin-off) in the regional economy (housing, recreation etc.)
- A desperate economic situation at the start, calling for change
- A period of economic upturn (easier to secure funding)
- Possibility of avoiding risks or damage posed by ‘non-green’ companies in the area
- De-fragmentation of the area (making the area more unique, more valuable)
- A push factor: decline in agricultural incomes, a need to find other sources of income
- A pull factor: crowded NWE (even though it may be costlier to invest in nature here than in eastern Europe)
- Possibility of linking the project to existing EU Structural Funds and other subsidy schemes
- A link to Natura 2000 and Bird and Habitat Directive to facilitate in obtaining funds

CRITICAL ECOLOGICAL ELEMENTS

- Presence of protected and/or native species and habitats that require protection, and can be rehabilitated and enhanced
- Being inside or part of a network of protection (national, European, global)
- The potential to create (a) larger continuous tract(s) of nature
- Presence of intensive agriculture causing pollution or degrading the environment
- Size and quality of nature cannot cope with the population pressure from cities nearby
- There is a landscape or there are landscape elements with an important socio-cultural value
- There are interesting or important natural landscape gradients and / or ecotones
- There is a diverse range of landscape elements (eg. water, historic roads, walkways)
- There are unique (international, national or regional) habitats
- There is a possibility of creating a more logical structure in the landscape, as it now appears as a collection of random and disorganised elements

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ANNEX 3

Basic data on the Veluwe

1. Size, ownership and land-use

1.1. Size and land-use in relation to “naturalness” of the total area

TYPE OF AREA	Size in hectares	Size in % of total	Which % is used for recreation
Total area	100 thousand		
Area with “top quality nature”, i.e protected area under various regimes: national, bird/ habitat/ Natura 2000, etc		80%	100%
Area with other nature such as forests, heather, rivers, etc, public or private		Same area, has 70% mixed forests, 20% heathland, plus ‘dunes’	100%
Area with other “less natural” use of land but which visitors enjoy such as foot paths, cycling roads, non intensive farming, camping sites, conference centres, historical or other ‘adapted’ housing and buildings, etc)		5/25= 20 %, 15% is agricultural	
“Least natural “ or “non-nature” areas such as industry, mining, roads, some types of farming and housing, etc that are to be transformed to more / better nature, airports, military buildings and camps		Approx. 10% 5/25 = 20% military use	

Explanation: the Veluwe has several distinct areas:

A central nature area, protected under the Dutch nature conservation regime (is part of the ecological network =EHS) and EU Habitat and Bird directive. It is the largest nature area in the Netherlands and amounts to about 50 % of all Dutch nature. Inside this area there is an enclave of farms on naturally formed wetter/better soils (4% of the total central nature area). The National Park Hoge Veluwe, a not-for-profit but commercial park is inside this area.

Around this central area, four other areas are part of the Veluwe 2010 project area which we will call the Veluwe:

- To the North West, an area composed mostly of farms which links the central area to the waters of the Zuider sea.
- To the North East: mostly farmland, linking the central area to the waters of the Apeldoorn Canal).

- To the South East: mostly farmland, linking the central area to the waters of the IJssel river, including the National Park the Veluwe Zoom, run by the environmental NGO Natuurmonumenten.
- To the South: flood plains (mostly agriculture) linking the central area to the waters of the Lower Rhine.

1.2. Ownership of the area

There are several owners:

National Park Hoge Veluwe – 5 000 ha, a well-run commercial operation for visitors, including an information center, a museum, and well-maintained trails and sites for viewing wildlife.

National Park Veluwe Zoom- 4900 ha, owned and run by the environmental NGO Natuurmonumenten with free entry for the public.

The Dutch Royal Family (Het Loo) 10 400 ha

Staatsbosbeheer (state forestry service)

Geldersch Landschap en –Kastelen- 7 800 ha, a not-for-profit NGO that owns and manages nature areas and castles in the province

Local municipalities that own and manage forests and other green spaces

Private farms (5% of the area)

Private land and estate owners

Military sites owned by the Ministry of Defence

Tourism related companies.

2. Ecological description and valuation

The Veluwe is the largest green/nature area in the Netherlands with a rich variety of ecosystems:

forests
heathland
sandy areas (shifting)
rivers and summer dykes
floodplains
farming

The sandy areas are unique in Europe and the heathland is the biggest in Europe. Soils are very nutrient-deficient because of peat extraction, and now the “characteristic” heathlands have a tendency to disappear and natural reforestation is taking place. Efforts are made to maintain the heathlands and to restore the sandy areas.

Concerning the fauna:

The Veluwe is the most important area (because of its size) in the Netherlands for threatened species, large wildlife like red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*).

The main problems for nature are:

highways and traffic

urbanisation

military use

fences

permanent housing

noise, pollution, dryness

3. Economic description and valuation

There are many economic activities in the Veluwe but the main sectors are:

Tourism

Agriculture

Some forestry

Water collection/ production

SECTOR	In the area yes or no	Indicator	Overall effect on nature
Agriculture	Y	Jobs/ income?	
Intensive farming	Y		
Extensive farming	Y		
Livestock (intensive breeding)	Y		
Livestock (extensive)	Y		
Green houses			
Forestry	Y	Jobs/ income?	
Fishing			
Hunting			
Industry			
Food industry			
Drinks industry			
Wood industry			
Furniture industry			
Sports & camping equipment			
Other industries			
Mining and quarrying			
Coal			
Sand			
Gas			
Stone/ slate			
Water collection	Y	Jobs/ income/ liters?	
Other			
Construction			

companies			
Road construction & repair			
Housing			
Transport companies			
Tourist sector	Y	€1,2 billion, 22 thousand jobs, 30 million visitors per year	
Camping sites	Y	500 bungalow parks and camping sites	
B and Bs			
Hotels	Y		
Cafes/ restaurants	Y		
Cultural activities (music, museums, castles)	Y	Revenue of <i>National Park de Hoge Veluwe</i> , with information center, museum, trails and sites for viewing wildlife	
Horse riding facilities	Y		
Cycling shops & repair	Y		
Other recreational facilities like for swimming/ flying / skating	y		
Other services			
Conference centres			
Hospitals / revalidation			
Schools	y		
Sport facilities	y		
Water distribution	y		
Asylum seekers centres			
Waste collection & management			
Other (private & civil) services			
Military	y		
HOUSES- How many?	y	3 inhabitants per km2 (average in	

		NL is 450!)	
ROADS- How many?	y		

Like in the case of Flanders and Wales, there are very few reliable indicators for this region. This must be noted and improved as European funding requires that a good data base be established.

4. Social analysis

The Veluwe has a long history of human interference, and besides economic interests, there are many cultural and historic factors and organisations involved in the development of the Veluwe. The National Park Hoge Veluwe is a result of private efforts: the Kröller and Müller families purchased poor and dry land for hunting purposes. Ms. Müller enjoyed art and brought a unique collection to the site. Their property is now a national park run by a semi-commercial firm.

In 1996 the Veluwe was designated as an area for nature and recreation in the regional plan. In 1997 an ecological appraisal was presented and influenced further political and social choices. In 1999 the national and the regional authorities started talking about giving the Veluwe a qualitative impulse. An intention agreement was signed in 2000 and in that same year an investment plan was drawn up and presented (for 2010) signed by all the important stakeholders and partners in the region.

The Veluwe Commission has been involved in this process and is comprised of representatives from:

Government:

- Four ministries: Agriculture/Nature/Food Quality, Environment/Physical planning, Defence and Waterworks.
- The Province of Gelderland (both civil servants and 1 politically-chosen member)
- 19 Local Councils

NGOs for nature/environment: Natuurmonumenten, Staatsbosbeheer, Gelderslandschap, Milieufederatie, National Park Hoge Veluwe

Other associations: land owners association, farmers and of private companies in the recreation sector (Recron)

Tourism offices: ANWB, GOBT

RGV Holding

Issues/potential conflicts of interest:

There are many issues/ (potential) conflicts as the partners have agreed on an investment plan combining better nature with increased recreation/ tourism! The main issues are:

- **Population pressure:** a large number of (nature) visitors come from the nearby cities and from further away (larger cities) and as a result increase the pressure and impact on the area (cars, traffic). The park can be reached by car or by train, bike and by foot. Busloads full of foreign tourists visit the National Park de Hoge Veluwe because of the very large and unique collection of Van Gogh paintings.

- **Local towns and municipalities** in the Veluwe want to expand their urban area, by building new houses, new business centres, leisure/sports facilities, at the expense of green areas/ agricultural land. They complain that they can't expand while their population is growing.
- **Many smaller roads** cross the Veluwe and they are increasingly used to avoid traffic congestion of the highways. The Veluwe 2010 wants to close down some of these roads, which will be opposed by those who need to cross the Veluwe!
- **Private landowners** receive a subsidy (in the form of a reduction of taxes on the ownership of land) when they open up their property /estate for the public, mostly for walking. But they complain that the amount they receive does not cover the costs of maintaining the footpaths, cleaning the waste baskets, etc. The owners also complain that it is the tourism and recreation related businesses in the area (like the camping sites, cafes, etc.) that profit the most from an increase in the number of visitors, while they provide the natural setting and "infrastructure" for this type of recreation.
- **Some nature conservation groups** (and some landowners) don't agree with giving a lot of space and place to tourism. The nature groups want a high-quality nature but are aware that the government finances (and the public opinion) don't accept closed 'nature' areas and so they see the need to cater to the general public.
- **The tourism and recreation enterprises** do not see why they can't stay and expand their businesses where they are now. The Veluwe 2010 plan foresees moving some firms and concentrating them in a few areas only. The businesses believe that the visitors want to have recreation/ camping facilities spread over the whole area and not only in a few places. The companies also complain that "others" have an erroneous view of how much they earn / profit from the available nature. They say they are doing a service to the visitors and that they don't earn a lot.
- **The farmers association** is critical of the transition to nature and the moving of farmers to less sensitive areas, while many individual farmers are willing to sell their land and sometimes even their buildings.
- **The farmers'** association and private farmers are willing to move to less intensive production methods and to the development of "green services", i.e. maintaining the landscape, and they are eligible for a financial compensation for this, although they don't find this compensation in the form of subsidies high enough. In the north-west central nature area, there is an area with better/ wetter soils and in this area an enclave of farmers has established themselves. They are part of a regional re-conversion plan the outcome of which is not predictable at the moment. In the South-west of the Veluwe, there are several smaller and newer farming enclaves where farmers are willing to negotiate on a transition to more nature. These cases are described as a case study in chapter 3.
- **The military** have a large area with many buildings and have used it as a training site. As military service is not compulsory any more, and the ministry has had to radically reduce spending, they have agreed to dismantle buildings and donate a large part of their own property to nature management authorities.
- **Representation:** in drafting the Veluwe 2010 report, the Veluwe Commission was keen to strike a balance between representation and decision-making capacity. Consequently, although many more institutions are involved in the program, the Commission's membership is limited to 15 representatives. Every effort has been made to represent all major stakeholder groups in this commission, and revolving representation assures that a larger group of institutions will play a decision-making role. That role was also assured in defining the new program vision, when participation of the widest possible range of institutions was encouraged and broad consensus for an ambitious set of objectives was forged.

In the case study presented in Chapter 3, we identified the following positions of stakeholders:

Perspectives of Stakeholders with respect to transition from agriculture to nature in three areas

DLG = semi-governmental agricultural organisation DLG (Dienst Landelijk Gebied)

GLTO = Farmers' association (Gelders Land- en TuinbouwOrganistie)

Stakeholders: Areas:	National Park Hoge Veluwe	Environmental NGO Natuurmonu- menten	Individual farmers/ GLTO	Veluwe 2010 Policy Paper/ DLG
Oud Reemst Agricultural area dating from the Middle Ages. Partly located within Park Hoge Veluwe, and partly within the Planken Wambuis region of Natuurmonumenten.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A site of cultural and historical importance. • Focus on the interaction of humans with nature, then and now. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree but more nature/ landscape focussed, less emphasis on cultural values. • Making an exception in Reemst case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer negotiated settlement with DLG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A site of cultural and historical importance • Remove fences between two owners • Transition to grassland • Recognition of cultural/historical value.
Reijerscamp Enclave Large intensive crop agriculture enclave (2 farms) surrounded by high quality nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general in favour of emphasis placed on the human interaction with nature: recreation, rural vitality, landscapes but have no particular opinion about this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildlife shelter area • Ecoducts construction across motorway for wildlife migration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One farmer has sold his land, now in the management of Natuurmonumenten. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove fences. • Transition to (agricultural) grassland
Renkum Enclave Large intensive crop agriculture enclave, owned by several farmers, one nature organisation, and local council. One farm has become a golf course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general in favour of emphasis placed on the human interaction with nature: recreation, rural vitality, landscapes but have no particular opinion about this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from intensive agriculture to grassland or grain crops • Removal of fencing to allow wildlife access to lands • Ecological linkage to river floodplain. • Ecoduct construction across railway track for wildlife migration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essentially not opposed to shifting to nature management and other crops • Current financial compensation for nature transition insufficient. • Waiting for better offers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove fences. • Transition to (agricultural) grassland

5. Policy analysis

POLICY MEASURE	Available yes or no	Remedial, Preventive or Pro-active?
LEGAL		
Expropriation	Yes	Remedial, pro-active
Creation of a nature reserve or of a protected area	Yes	Pro-active
Non extension of contracts for quarrying etc	No	
Other		
Legal plan for the exchange of land	Yes	Remedial, pro-active
Making roads safer for the wildlife by reducing speed limit	Yes	Remedial, pro-active
ECONOMIC		
Buying of land / houses	Yes	Pro-active
Buying of companies	Yes	Pro-active
Building or subsidizing the needed infrastructure :		
Eco ducts	Yes	Pro-active
Cycling and hiking paths, Etc	Yes	Pro-active
Making roads narrower or destroying them	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Restoring historical buildings	Yes	Remedial
Restoring old water ways	Yes	Remedial
(Re)planting with local species	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Compensation:		
Subsidies to land owners to “produce” nature/ change their activities	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Subsidies to land owners who are already managing nature	Yes	Remedial
Subsidies to move activities out of the area	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Subsidies to stop activity	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Others		
Voluntary land Exchanging scheme	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Reallocation of farmland	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Green corridors	Yes	Pro-active
(Re) introduction of local landscape elements	Yes	Pro-active
Replanting the homestead	Yes	Pro-active
Creating new estates	Yes	Pro-active

Creating transfer points for various modes of transport	Yes	Pro-active
Making roads safer by physical speed limits (speed bumps)	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Removing fences	Yes	Remedial
Restoring and maintenance of archeological values	?	Remedial, Pro-active
Restoring and maintenance of historical landscapes	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Remediation of creek beds	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Management of soil humidity	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Banishing fertilizers along waterways with high ecological values	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Reducing the use of pesticides	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Pulling down redundant farms	Yes	Pro-active
Creation of a national education center	Yes	Pro-active
SOCIAL		
In plan making:		
Consultation	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Participation	Yes	Remedial, Pro-active
Creation of a fund		
Other		
Improvement of image national park	Yes	Pro-active
Establishment of real-estate bank	Yes	Pro-active

Policy instruments used for change in land-use

In the Netherlands there are multiple alternatives for changing the function of an area to nature. Five of these alternatives are given below:

- Buying the land from the owners and giving it back to nature. After this has taken place, an organisation like the State Forestry Service or a national nature or land management NGO can manage the area so that it evolves into the nature type for which it has been earmarked.
- Expropriation when the owner does not want to voluntarily sell his land. The landowner receives compensation. This expropriation can take many years as a result of the legal mediations involved and this instrument is not often used.
- The land may be owned by a farmer who is willing to exchange his land for another parcel located elsewhere. In doing so a larger piece of nature can be realized and the farmer's lands will be closer together- a win-win situation.
- When a larger area is under consideration for landscape development, a Commission can be established. This commission will buy about 10 percent of the total land, and after that all the farmers in the area will 'pool' their land. Now the commission reallocates the parcels over the farmers in such a way that both nature and farmland are concentrated together. After the reallocation a win-win situation exists for nature as well as for the farmers.
- Last but certainly not least (because this is the current, preferred option) the farmer can fully or partially transform his farm land to nature. In doing this the farmer receives subsidy for nature conservation and achieving set management goals described by the maintenance program.

The following national schemes can be used in the area:

Maintenance programme (SAN & SN)- This is by far the largest scheme!

Landowners of semi-natural habitats (mostly farmers) can voluntarily participate in a national management and protection programme called 'Programma Beheer' (Programme Management) and receive annually a financial subsidy for the work they carry out in managing and protecting a designated habitat. The amount of money they are eligible for is dependant on the amount of work that is required per habitat type. For example: forest management requires less input or work than the annual mowing of moist grasslands, so the latter habitat receives more subsidy than the first. Furthermore, in most cases it is possible to choose between a easier 'basic' package and a 'extra' nature management package. A 'basic' package is simpler to set up and manage and thus it receives a reduced amount of money compared to the 'extra' package for which the goals are more difficult to attain and involve more management and monitoring (the counting of nest on the field, etc).

Programma Beheer has two classifications: a subsidy programme for nature in agricultural areas (SAN) and a subsidy programme for maintenance of "pure" natural areas (SN). The users of this scheme that have been interviewed (for the case study in Chapter 3) have often complained about bureaucracy and too low compensations.

Creating social acceptance and popular support with BOL and RDN

The main goal of the Dutch policy vis a vis landscapes, is to develop landscapes with their own characteristic identities. The BOL (Besluit Ontwikkeling van Landschappen) regulation makes it possible to receive subsidy for working towards a social acceptance of landscape development plans. This regulation stimulates cooperation between municipalities and other participants. Beyond this, the subsidy allows a better execution of the plans with higher levels of quality.

The goal of the RDN (Regeling Draagvlaknatuur) regulation is to increase the social acceptance of nature. There are subsidies available for environmental education, other awareness raising activities, joint vision development and cooperation between organizations.

Regulation for stimulating ecological production methods (RSBP)

This regulation stimulates farmers to adopt an ecological approach to farming. There is also EU subsidy available for this method of production. RSBP (Regeling Stimulerend Biologische productiemethode) is targeted primarily at farmers that are willing to switch towards biological production. But there is also financial support available for those who are already engaged in ecological farming, but this is rather limited.

Subsidy regulation network national walking paths

A subsidy programme for the construction of public walkways on private farmland. With this subsidy a national network could be established. For every meter of path there is a fixed subsidy depending on factors like the type of soil and whether or not the path is sealed. The paths must of course be open to the public and routinely maintained. Furthermore the land of the farmer must lie on the route of the established national walking path, which makes this regulation strict and somewhat limited.

‘Pristine Nature Law’, 1928

Under this law (Natuurschoonwet) there are certain cases where country estates may be exempt from taxation. The most critical requirement is that the estate must be open to the public. There are also many other criteria like a set minimum land area, the percentage of woods, etc. This regulation makes it a bit easier for managers to maintain the estate.

Flora and Fauna law

This new law was made to compensate farmers for damage caused by protected animals like geese. Users of this scheme say that payment is not satisfactory as it is done ex-post and evaluated by inspectors that don't have the necessary knowledge. It is also said that this is counter to a good environmental law which pays ex-ante to stimulate the “right” sort of action.

ANNEX 4

Basic data on Kempen and Maasland

1. Size, land-use and management

1.1. Size, land- use in relation to “naturalness” of the total area

TYPE OF AREA	Size in hectares	Size in % of total	Which % is used for recreation
Total area	5746	100%	
Area defined and protected as nature in international (EU) context (Bird and Habitat Directive) *	3515	61%	100%
Area defined as “green” in national and/or regional planning context **	5472	95%	100%
Area with nature such as forest, heather, natural water, grass, moorland, etc.	5066	88%	?
Other “natural “ areas :	?	?	?
Royal family domain			
“Non-nature” areas:	680	12%	?
Agriculture			
Industry	60		
Quarrying			
Services (in green surroundings):			
Children’s centre	25		
Asylum seekers centre			
Nunnery-religious community			
Recreation:			
Camping sites	0		
Off-the road circuit			

* Bird conservation area ‘Mechelse Heide en Vallei van de Ziepbeek’ (2.344 ha)
Habitat conservation area ‘Mechelse Heide en Vallei van de Ziepbeek’ (3.741 ha of which 3.095 ha belongs to the national park area)

** Gewestplan

1.2. Ownership of the area(s) and management regime

Around 83% of the area (4800 ha) is publicly owned, mostly forests of which 4022 ha or 70% is conserved for nature purposes.

3100 ha is conserved and managed by the AMINAL-department Bos & Groen of which

- 1430 is owned by the Flemish government
- 1670 ha is owned by the communities As, Dilsen-Stokkem, Genk, Lanaken, Maasmechelen and Zutendaal

More than 1000 ha is conserved and managed by the AMINAL-department Natuur of which

- 7 ha is owned by the province of Limburg
- 24 ha is owned by the Flemish government
- the rest is owned by the communities Lanaken and Maasmechelen

Overall, in the area there are many public owners:

*Local communities/cities: As, Dilsen-Stokkem, Genk, Lanaken, Maasmechelen and Zutendaal

* The Flemish government

* The Province of Limburg

* The Regional Development Agency Limburg (GOM-Limburg)

* Flemish government - AMINAL-department Bos & Groen and AMINAL-department Natuur

* The Children's centre "Kinderdorp Molenberg" - centre for child care and family support - a private organisation managed by the Koninklijke Openluchtwerken-Limburg v.z.w.

* Royal Domain (ownership of the royal family)

Private ownership:

- The asylum seekers home 'Onze-Lieve-Vrouw Ter Dennen' is a private property managed by the Red Cross Flanders

- The off-the- road circuit 'Duivelsberg' is owned by the community of Maasmechelen

- The Royal domain is owned by the royal family

- The convent 'Opgrimbie' is on land owned by the diocese Hasselt

1.3. Land-use transition as planned

1.3.1 Mining and quarrying sites:

The gravel pit ALGRI-Bormans at Dilsen-Stokkem will stop functioning by the beginning of 2006, it will be managed by the Flemish government and nature should be able to develop there. The same applies to the abandoned gravel pit 'LKW' at the same location.

The Gravel pit LBU 'Mechelse Heide west' and the gravel pit and sand quarry 'Mechelse Heide east', both at Maasmechelen, will end their exploitation only after 2030 and the area should then be used for nature development. The owner is the Regional Development Agency Limburg (GOM-Limburg) but exploitation has been given to private firms.

The sand quarries 'Kikbeekbron' and 'Berg' owned by the city of Maasmechelen will end its exploitation after 2030 and between 2012 and 2015 receptively, but the management will then revert to the ministry of the environment (section Nature).

The coal mining terrain 'Rode terril' at Eisden should become a "green area" according to the regional plans and managed by the Flemish government.

1.3.2. Recreational sites

The off-the-road circuit 'Duivelsberg' at Opgrimbie is to be relocated outside the area but the site should remain a recreation area. The land is owned by the municipality of Maasmechelen but its management will be transferred to the Flemish government

1.3.3 Social services/ special buildings

- **Day-care centre for children and public health centre ‘Molenberg’**

Location: Lanaken

Destination on regional development plan: area for public use

Ends by: undecided

Re-destination: none

Owner: Koninklijke Openluchtwerken-Limburg v.z.w.

Exploitation: Koninklijke Openluchtwerken-Limburg v.z.w.

Size of area: 7 ha

Management transfer to: undecided

- **Asylum seekers center ‘Onze-Lieve-Vrouw Ter Dennen’**

Location: Rekem

Destination on regional development plan: area for public use

Ends by: indefinite

Re-destination: none

Owner: private

Exploitation: Red Cross Flanders

Size of area: + - 5 ha

Management transfer to: undecided

1.3.4. Industrial sites

- **Industrial site ‘Op de Berg’**

Location: Maasmechelen

Destination on regional development plan: industrial area

Ends by: 2020 (scenario 2) or 2030 (scenario 1)

Re-destination: 1. nature development after 10 year sand exploitation
2. nature development after financial compensation for dismantlement
of

industrial site and relocation of firms

Owners: several private owners

Exploitation: several firms

Size of area: 62 ha

Management transfer to: National Park Kempen en Maasland

2. Ecological description and valuation

The ecological importance of the area is confirmed by its protection status as a Bird and Habitat conservation area (‘Mechelse Heide en Vallei van de Ziepbeek’).

The area has forests – mostly coniferous forest – and heathlands but its ecological value lies in the mosaics of dry and wet heaths, dry grasslands, fens, upland moors, broadleaved woods such as oak-birchwoods and alluvial forests with elder, springs and spring brooks.

Many protected special depend on these complex habitats and profit from the diversity of environmental conditions. Breeding birds which are protected by the Bird Directive are honey buzzard, nightjar, bluethroat and woodlark. Besides birds also several species of amphibians (like natterjack and moorfrog), reptiles (for example smooth snake), mammals (badger and several species of bats), fish (like brook lamprey) and insects (several rare species of butterflies, dragon-flies, beetles and grasshoppers) are living in the area.

The presence of several artificial habitats, arising from ground exploitations, result in broad patches of bare, sandy grounds with standing waters all over the area. They alter the landscape radically but they also offer opportunities for the development of habitats for thermophile animals and open pioneer vegetations on poor soils.

Conclusion: an area of high interest for fauna and flora.

3. Economic description and valuation

SECTOR	In the area yes or no	Indicator	Overall effect on nature
Agriculture	N		none
Intensive farming	N		
Extensive farming	Y		non-natural land use; habitat destruction
Livestock (intensive breeding)	N		
Livestock (extensive)	Y		non-natural land use; habitat destruction
Green houses	N		
Forestry	Y		positive but mostly planted coniferous forests
Fishing	N		none
Hunting	Y		killing of animals; disturbance
Industry	Y		destruction of soil and habitat
Food industry	Y		
Drinks industry			
Wood industry			
Furniture industry			
Sports & camping equipment			
Other industries	Y		
Mining and quarrying	Y	?	destruction of soil, relief and habitat; disturbance water economy; can be turned into positive through measures
Coal	N		
Sand	Y		
Gas	N		
Stone/ slate	Y		
Water collection	N		
Other	N		
Construction			
Road construction & repair	N		
Housing	N		

Transport	N		
Tourist sector			
Camping sites	N		
B and Bs	N		
Hotels	N		
Cafes/ restaurants	N		
Cultural activities music, museums, castles)	N		
Horse riding facilities	N		
Cycling shops & repair	N		
Other recreational facilities like for swimming/ flying / skating	N		
Other services			
Conference centres	N		
Hospitals/revalidation	Y		loss of habitat; destruction of landscape scenery
Schools	N		
Sport facilities	N		
Water distribution	N		
Asylum seekers centres	Y		loss of habitat; destruction of landscape scenery
Waste collection and management	Y		
Religious organisations	Y		loss of habitat; destruction of landscape scenery
Other (private and civil) services	N		
Military	N		
Housing*	Y		none
Major roads and traffic**	Y		loss of habitat; habitat fragmentation; fauna casualties

* Only scattered houses no enclaves.

** 6 major roads in the area (in descending order of importance): E314, N75, Steenweg to As, road to Zutendaal, road to Heiwick and Daalbroekstraat.

Like in the other regions of this Interreg project, there is a lack of data that can be used to describe and quantify the economy of the region in a coherent and verifiable manner (e.g. in terms of input-output data).

Quarrying of sand and gravel is the most important economical activity. Licensees want to continue extracting and gravel until 2030. There is a growing demand for sand and stone on the market but no decision has been made yet by the Flemish government.

Industrial activities in the area are confined to the north and concentrated in the industrial zone 'Op de Berg' at Maasmechelen. The provincial structure plan - a framework for future social, economic, and physical development of the province of Limburg - plans a relocation of the site to an area outside the park.

As said before, in the south there are several buildings situated in the middle of the forest which serve social goals such as public health (Centrum voor Kinderzorg en Gezinsondersteuning Molenberg), accommodation for asylum seekers (Onze-Lieve-Vrouw Ter Dennen) and housing for a religious community (Opgrimbie). The latter was included in the plans for demolition but this decision has been turned around recently.

Many of the pine-forests were planted for the mining-industry. After closing the mines in Limburg, forest exploitation has become a secondary activity. Most forests are now maintained for nature purposes by governmental services.

4. Social structure and dynamics

Not many people live in the area but the park is surrounded by densely populated and connected villages: such as Genk and Zutendaal on the west side and Lanaken and Maasmechelen at the east. There is no data for public demand for the natural environment and for recreation but the area is regarded as very important for recreational use by both regional and provincial authorities.

The action plan to create the National Park was therefore supported by a broad scale of governmental and non-governmental organizations from the province of Limburg as well as Flanders. Social partners also became involved.

Looking at the stakeholders and potential social conflicts or conflicts of interest, we see that the public authorities are important stakeholders as they own and manage/conservate the biggest part of the area and keep it partly open as a public domain.

As quarrying is an important economic activity, decisions concerning their practice are a potential source of conflict. The decree on gravel exploitation wants to end quarrying by 2006. Gravel companies - such as ALGRI n.v., Bormans, SCR-Sibelco and Limburgse Berggrinduitbating n.v. (a joint venture of Gralex n.v., Gravelcompany SBS n.v. and Gravelpit Varenberg) - are not opposed to the plans to phase out their activity as they want to remove their permitted tonnage of material first.

The influence of other private landowners is limited.

5. Policy analysis

POLICY MEASURE	Available (yes or no)	Remedial, Preventive or Pro-active?
LEGAL		
* Expropriation	yes	remedial
* Creation of a nature reserve or of a protected area	yes – creation of a national park	pro-active
* Non extension of	no - quarrying ongoing until	partial preventive

contracts for quarrying and other industries	2030 yes - no extension of environmental permissions within industrial area	
* Nature and landscape protection legislation	yes	preventive
* Other		
ECONOMIC		
* Buying of land / houses	yes	pro-active
* Transfer of land	yes	
* Buying of companies	no	
* Building or subsidizing the needed infrastructure :		
Underpasses and overcrossings for wildlife	yes	remedial
Cycling and hiking paths	yes	
Making roads narrower or closing them	yes	remedial
Restoring historical buildings	no	
Restoring old waterways	no	
(Re)planting with local species	yes	remedial
* Compensation:		
Subsidies to landowners to “produce” or restore nature/ change their activities	yes	remedial
Subsidies to land owners who are already managing nature	yes	
Subsidies to move activities out of the area	no	
Subsidies to stop activity	yes (compensation)	
* Others		
SOCIAL		
* In plan making:		
Consultation	yes – consultation of landowners and users	pro-active
Participation	yes - partial for creation master plan	pro-active
* Creation of a fund	yes (LISOM)	pro-active
* Other	yes - encouragement of recreational development	pro-active

A legal framework like the RUP (for physical planning purposes , in Dutch: ruimtelijke uitvoeringsplannen) can and is used to conserve and restore natural habitats and to protect and enhance the natural heritage and the beauty of the landscape. Physical planning is an important instrument to give a legal basis for transition or change in land-use. Elsewhere, i.e outside the Kempen and Maasland area, plots of ecologically important agricultural land have been given a new function as “green area”, legally underpinned by the use of the so called RUP. The same RUP has to be used if one wants to change industrial land or arable land for (other) public purposes.

Because most of the land in the area is owned by the government or the municipalities in the area, using measures that encourage participation of private owners and land users is seen as good practice to facilitate transition to more/ better nature. Public services use the policy instruments for nature protection and habitat conservation provided by the government such as: buying of land, nature management, transformation of woodland, construction of wildlife crossings, etc.

ANNEX 5

Basic data on the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site

1. Size, land-use, ownership and land management

1.1. Size and land-use in relation to “naturalness” of the total area

TYPE OF AREA	Size in hectares	Which % is used for recreation
Total area	3290 ha	100
Area with “top quality nature”, i.e protected area under various regimes: national, bird/habitat/Natura 2000, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) within the site (total 191 ha) 1458.5 ha in Brecon Beacons National park. 	100
Area with other nature such as forests, heather, rivers, etc, public or private	Rest of natural land on site, including the Brecknock and Abergavenny Canal.	100
Area with other “less natural” use of land but which visitors enjoy such as foot paths, cycling roads, non intensive farming, camping sites, conference centres, historical or other “adapted” housing and buildings, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blaenavon Ironworks: 1.75ha Big Pit (mining site) plus railway sidings: 27.6 ha 	100
“Least natural “ or “non-nature” areas such as industry, mining, roads, some types of farming and housing, etc that are to be transformed to more / better nature	The town of Blaenavon and other housing (area unknown) Gilchrist Thomas Industrial Estate	?

1.2. Ownership of the area

The ownerships of the site are numerous and diverse in size and character. There are many interests within the town of Blaenavon, in contrast with the large areas of open land which is in the ownership of a few. As well as owners, there are significant users of the buildings and open landscapes. Much of the area is “urban common”. This means that the area is unfenced and used by the “Commoners” for grazing sheep. The common land is also available to the public with free rights of access on foot.

Public sector owners:

Blaenavon Ironworks: Cadw (Welsh Historic Monuments), on behalf of the Secretary of state for Wales.

Substantial parts of the open landscapes are owned by local authorities (e.g. Torfaen Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Council)

Brecon Beacons National Park own small areas of land

Canal owned by British Waterways

Big Pit (National Mining Museum): owned by the National Museums and Galleries of Wales.

Private owners:

The Walters Group owns the largest areas of the mineral landscapes.

The rt. Honourable The Lord Rees: South of the site, not within the Brecon Beacons Park

Executors of the late 10th Duke of Beaufort: Small area within the Brecon Beacons Park

S.E. Wales hang Gliding and Paragliding Club: Bloreng Mountain within the Brecon Beacons National Park

Other owners:

Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway: owned by the National Museums and Galleries of Wales trust but managed by a charitable

Town of Blaenavon: 100s of separate owners and tenants of residential, commercial and other properties, including churches and chapels. Several listed buildings.

1.3 Management of the area

There are a number of local authorities and Government agencies with management responsibilities for, or interests in the area. The Blaenavon Partnership was established in August 1997 in order to achieve a coordinated approach to management of the area. The partners are:

Torfaen County Borough Council
Monmouthshire County Council
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority



Direct management responsibilities

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Blaenavon Town Council

Other local government bodies

Cadw

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

National Museums and Galleries of Wales

Countryside Council for Wales

Government Agencies

Wales Tourist Board

Welsh Development Agency

British Waterways

National Trust

NGO

Since 1997 the Partnership has maintained contact with community councils and groups including business leaders, residents and the local tourist association. The Blaenavon Partnership has also maintained contact with major landowners in the area and commoners associations who have direct interest in the landscape.

The nomination of the area as a World Heritage Site means that a management plan has been set out for the area. In implementing the plan, the contacts described above are maintained and a formal meeting called annually. Six working groups have been established to take

forward various aspects of the WHS Management plan and the chair of each group reports directly to the project board who meet 3 times per year.

The Management Plan for the World Heritage Site was formally agreed by the Blaenavon Partnership in October 1999. This plan proposed that the management structure should include a “Landscape Working Group”. The aim of the group is to implement proposals for improved access to and interpretation of the Blaenavon Industrial landscape. The following organizations are represented in this group:

- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Monmouthshire County Council
- Brecon Beacons National Park
- WDA (Welsh Development Agency)
- British Waterways
- Countryside Council for Wales
- CADW
- Royal Commission for Ancient Monuments
- Police

2. Ecological description and valuation⁴⁵

2.1. Overall description of ecology of the area

In the north of the site, scattered scrub and bracken are interspersed with calcareous grassland and basic cliffs. One of the quarries in the area supports a relatively large area of calcareous grassland, open basic cliffs and limestone boulders. A large area in the centre and north of west of the site comprises spoil – much of the former bare spoil (as recorded in 1990) would have now succeeded to heath. Surrounding the spoil are various types of heath, intermixed with unimproved acid grassland.

Towards the south of the area, there are a number of habitats associated with the town of Blaenavon (buildings, improved and amenity grassland, as well as plantation woodland). In the far north-east are small areas of semi-natural broadleaved woodland. Unimproved acid grassland and marshy grassland are scattered throughout the site. Mixed habitats are a common feature of the area. Finally a number of pools and ponds are found, ranging from very small “depressions” associated with former mining activity to large ponds.

2.2. Detailed habitat description

Scattered and dense scrub, in some cases mixed with semi-improved neutral grassland. Scrub woodland is listed as a Biological Action Plan (BAP) habitat in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) for Torfaen Borough Council.

Bracken mostly in the areas near the quarries.

Acid scree: one patch found to hold a good population of oak fern, one of the few sites in South Wales for this species.

⁴⁵ Source: “Ecological Evaluation of the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Study Area”, ADAS Consulting Ltd, September 2003

Basic cliffs (limestone cliffs) – these support many bryophytes, many of which are rare at a County level and a few of which are nationally scarce. Also supports two species of whitebeam which are nationally rare.

Spoil: these areas are potentially of high ecological value for their invertebrate species. Also support bryophyte rare at county level, in addition to a scarce and declining vascular plant species. Colliery spoil is listed in the LBAP as medium conservation value.

Heath: heath areas are of ecological value, both for the heath communities themselves and for associated species such as the common lizard, red grouse and skylark. A wood tiger (moth) was recently found in an area of wet heath – the first record of this species in the county for several years.

Lowland heath is both a UK BAP priority habitat and an Annex I habitat under the Habitats Directive. Also included in the LBAP for Torfaen Borough Council. Conservation of extensive, good quality heath at one of the SSSIs is considered as a high priority.

Unimproved grassland – within the area unimproved acid grassland generally impoverished and of little ecological value. However it does support the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Wales amber list species skylark and red list species lapwing. Unimproved calcareous grass land is high priority in the LBAP and UK BAP priority habitat. Unimproved neutral grassland is UK BAP priority habitat and high priority LBAP for Torfaen.

Marshy Grassland: supports UK BAP species, skylark and reed bunting. High priority habitat at UK level and Torfaen LBAP. Good example of the Habitats Directive Annex I habitat purple moor-grass and rush pasture.

Standing water: two categories, oligotrophic and mesotrophic. Open standing water rated as high national conservation value and medium conservation value within Torfaen. Mesotrophic lakes are of high value at a national conservation level, medium conservation within Torfaen.

Semi-natural broadleaved woodland: found in one of the SSSIs. Lowland beech and yew woodland is a priority habitat under the UK BAP process and medium conservation concern within Torfaen.

Buildings, improved grassland and amenity grassland: Generally low ecological value, however built-up areas and gardens are included as an LBAP habitat for Torfaen. This is because buildings can support UK BAP priority species such as the barn owl and pipistrelle bat. Gardens can support populations of declining birds.

3. Economic description and valuation

The population of Blaenavon is 5,763 (2001 census). As of 2001 there were 2191 jobs.

The 5 largest sectors are:

- Manufacturing (30%)
- Wholesale and retail trade/repairs (15%)
- Health and Social Work (13%)
- Construction (9.5%)
- Education (7%)

SECTOR	In the area yes or no	Indicator	Overall effect on nature
Agriculture	Yes		
Intensive farming	No		
Extensive farming	No		
Livestock (intensive breeding)	No		
Livestock extensive)	Grazing land		
Green houses			
Forestry	Yes	- small area in Cwmavon	
Fishing	No		
Hunting	No		
Industry			
Food industry	No		
Drinks industry	No		
Wood industry	No		
Furniture industry	No		
Sports & camping equipment	No		
Other industries	Yes	– Gilchrist Thomas Industrial estate – mixed small scale manufacturing	
Mining and quarrying			
Coal	Yes	Mainly gone but one drift mine still remains in the area	
Sand	No		
Gas	No		
Stone/ slate	No		
Water collection	?		
Other			
Construction companies			
Road construction & repair	No		
Housing	No		
Transport companies	Yes – One based in Gilchrist Thomas Industrial estate		
Tourist sector			

Camping sites	No		
B and Bs	Yes – but very few		
Hotels	No		
Cafes/ restaurants	Yes	– Several in the town and public houses in isolated areas in the landscape	
Cultural activities (music, Museums, castles)	Yes	Big Pit (100,000 visitors/year) - Ironworks Cadw 10,000 visitors per year - Alexander Cordell Museum - Blaeanvon Booktown - WHS day - Countryside Fayre	
Horse riding facilities	Yes	Horse riding club	
Cycling shops & repair	No	N/A	
Other recreational facilities like for swimming/ flying / skating	Yes	- Paragliding and Hangliding - Caving - Leisure centre with Swimming pool - Public footpaths - Cycleways	
Other services			
Conference centres	No	N/A	
Hospitals / revalidation	Yes	One	
Schools	Yes		
Sport facilities	Yes	- Soccer and Rugby pitches	
Water distribution	No		
Asylum seekers centres	No		
Waste collection and management	Yes		
Other (private and civil) services	Yes	Churches, other public buildings	
Military	No		

HOUSES- How many?	Whole town		
ROADS- How many?	?		

Like in the other regions of this Interreg project, there is a lack of indicators.

4. Social structure and dynamics

4.1. Potential pressures:

Protection and conservation of key monuments: many require consolidation and repair works to prevent damaging decay.

Continuing economic decline of the area: the town has suffered economic and social difficulties with resultant deterioration in the fabric of historic buildings and infrastructure.

The use of the landscape for recreational and agricultural purposes: The public have right of access to the area and commoners have the right to graze stock within specified limits. The commons are unfenced and are accessed from several country roads and tracks and crossed by registered footpaths. The pressure on the landscape is as follows:

- Old tips subject to motorbike scrambling which is illegal and leads to erosion. Slopes also subject to illegal four wheel drive vehicles activity.
- Due to absence of fencing, grazing is uncontrolled and over grazing by sheep can prevent natural revegetation of old tips and mine areas. However, grazing has helped the area being overgrown and produced turf tracks for access to the site.
- There are several identified walks, and increasing use of the area will require work to ensure public safety.

The presence of residual coal reserves and interest in coal recovery by opencasting.

There has been some interest in recovering residual coal deposits from the area. However the Walters Group, who own the part of the site containing the coal reserves, have given assurance that they have no intention of extracting coal from within the nominated site boundary. The nature of this assurance is not clear (is it legally binding?).

In addition, recent planning policy decisions suggest that any application to extract would not be given.

Furthermore, there is not likely to be any significant problem of erosion or sustainability created by the levels of visitor activity. It is suggested that the protection and conservation of the area would benefit in an increase in tourism.

4.2. Funders of the ongoing plans described in Chapter 2:

- Welsh Development Agency (WDA) S15 Environmental improvement grants – up to 80%.
Land reclamation grants up to 100%
Business Environment strategy – grant to businesses to upgrade environment
Town centre grants
- European Union (ERDF Interreg IIIB)
“Boundless Parks, Naturally!” Project Grant 65% - Capital investment for the Decentralised Gateways project and the Ranger / Stakeholders project.
- European Regional Funds for Objective 1 areas (with a GDP less than 75% of EU average)

- Wales Tourist Board up to 50% funding for facilities, interpretation, environmental improvements through Herian or Visitor Amenity Scheme
- Monmouthshire County Council
Capital funding for Access, Environmental improvements, interpretation and conservation
- Torfaen County Borough Council
Capital funding for Access, Environmental improvements, interpretation and conservation
- Brecon Beacons National Park
Capital funding for Access, Environmental improvements, interpretation and conservation
- British Waterways partner and work in kind
- CADW Potential 50% funding for archeological surveys and conservation work
- Royal Commission work in kind. Will produce text for 18 interpretation boards over 3 years

5. Policy analysis

POLICY MEASURE	Available yes or no	Remedial, Preventive or Pro-active?
LEGAL		
Expropriation	No	
Creation of a nature reserve or of a protected area	Yes – creation of conservation area, World Heritage site and Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Pro-active
Non extension of contracts for quarrying etc	Yes (?)	
Other	Agreement (exact nature to be confirmed) with owners of the mineral landscape that they will not seek to extract coal within the area.	
ECONOMIC		
Buying of land / houses	Yes	Pro-active
Buying of companies	No	
Building or subsidizing the needed infrastructure :	Yes	Pro-active
Eco ducts	No	
Cycling and hiking paths, Etc	Yes	Pro-active
Making roads narrower or destroying them	No	
Restoring historical buildings	Yes	Pro-active
Restoring old waterways	Yes	Remedial, Preventive and Pro-active?
(Re)planting with local	No	

species		
Compensation:	?	
Subsidies to land owners to “produce” nature/ change their activities	Yes – Tir Gofal – see description below.	
Subsidies to land owners who are already managing nature	No	
Subsidies to move activities out of the area	No	
Subsidies to stop activity	No	
Others		
SOCIAL		
In plan making:		
Consultation	Yes – there has been ongoing participation with the stakeholders of the area eg residents, businesses, people using the land etc..	Pro-active
Participation	Need to investigate extent of participation in the development of the management plan.	
Creation of a fund		
Other	Yes. Blaenavon Partnership funds initiatives through the budget allocation of the partners.	

The “Tir Gofal” or “Caring for Land” scheme:

This is an agri-environmental scheme available on farmed land throughout Wales which rewards farmers for caring for the wildlife, historical and cultural features on their land. Agreements apply to the whole farm and last for ten years with a break clause after five years. The objectives of the scheme are:

- To protect and enhance habitats of importance to wildlife
- To protect and enhance the beauty of the landscape
- To protect and enhance historic and archaeological features
- To provide opportunities for new access to the countryside

The scheme is part funded by the EU. and delivered by the Countryside Council for Wales in partnership with a number of other organizations such as the Forestry Commission.

Farmers are given standard annual payments per hectare for:

- The whole farm section
- Management of existing habitats and environmental features
- Establishment and management of new habitats and features
- New permissive access for use by the public and one-off payment for capital works such as fencing and hedge-laying.

ANNEX 6

Minutes of the Joint Working Group on Transition

In the framework of Interreg project “Boundless Parks, Naturally!”

24 March 2004

At the RLKM office, Genk, Belgium

Chair: Bert Kiljan (Province of Gelderland)

Willem Eckhardt (Province of Gelderland)
Irma Koster (Province of Gelderland)
Bram Vreugdenhil (Province of Gelderland)
Jan Gorter (Natuurmonumenten)
Feiko Prins (Natuurmonumenten)

Gareth Phillips (Torfaen County Borough)
Jane Sardella (Torfaen County Borough)

Marc De Coster (RLKM)
Ine van der Stock (RLKM)
Natalie Henseler (RLKM)
Christof Landmeters (Flemish government)

Helena Berends (Regenboog Advies)
Boudy van Schagen (Regenboog Advies)

MINUTES

Willem Eckhardt opened the meeting by emphasising that the transition project plays an important role within the greater ‘Boundless Parks, Naturally’ project.

Bert Kiljan recalled the aim of the meeting: focussing on the goals we wish to attain and on the relationship between the parks (with very different sizes and many common issues like urbanisation pressure).

Helena Berends held a short presentation around three issues: (1) the goals that have been set for the overall project and for the transition project, (2) what has been done until now and (3) looking to the future: are we on track? Boudy van Schagen presented maps around the issue of finding an indicator for “before “ and “after” transition. Helena stressed that on the one hand all three consultants (Regenboog Advies, GHK and Econnection) did not obtain all wanted data but on the other hand there are now three reports that give a rich picture of the three regions using a common methodology.

The discussion opened with the question: Is the common framework, which was used for collecting the data, a good tool for each area? Does it provide you with enough information?

Gareth Phillips: the common framework and the consultant's report was quite useful in providing a lot of information and addressing the issues. It also helped as a mirror, to look at oneself. The more he read, the more excited he became about his own region!

Marc De Coster (replacing Van Den Bosche from RKLM who helped making the report): the three areas are not identical, they have very different scales. The three areas we are studying are essentially a small part of a larger natural area; we need to stress the differences. The political context in Belgium at the moment is very difficult, the issue is how to convince the decision makers. Who will pay for the plans?

Jan Gorter found the reports an impressive inventarisation, which we need if we want to show/ convince the EU what transition is. But we do need a good definition of transition. Transition should deal with transition of functions, buildings and land. Feiko Prins stressed that there is always a need for a common vision and for coherence! The partners need to pick up the challenge of transition; towards the EU we need to say how they can help transition projects (inform and secure funding).

Bram Vreugdenhil spoke about what was "waste land" in the past has now become beautiful! The new activities such as tourism can however be a danger for nature. There is a risk posed by 'non-green' companies wishing to secure sites/land. Areas under Natura 2000 and Birds and Habitat directives should be able to secure EU funding. Many sites require restoration. The goal of efforts is to increase the quality (biodiversity and green tourism). Need to give many examples of how local initiatives and how other initiatives in the EU have managed to obtain an increase in quality, so we can convince the "locals"! This social aspect is always present.

Other remarks:

- Phillips: change can be seen as scary! How do we get people on board? Takes 5-6 years of communication efforts (and a communication programme). Branding gives people the feeling of ownership, which is good.
- Prins: look at the function of each activity in the brand. City dwellers also feel they own the countryside, there is a lot of pressure on land for housing, recreation etc. In the past the countryside was for food production, water but now for leisure.
- Gorter: "beauty" is now cultural heritage, recreation, nature.
- Kiljan: NW Europe is very crowded, people want a "leisure landscape".
- De Coster: securing nature is more costly here than for example in Poland, but our citizens want it here! Belgium has not had a long history of spatial planning like in the Netherlands. Are we able to mobilize euros for demolishing things we now see as "ugly" things? Political courage is needed and good examples from other countries.
- Eckhardt: make pictures of "before" and "after"; he saw impressive changes in Eastern Germany (a military city was dismantled).

Some conclusions from this first part of the discussion:

- Need to sell/brand projects!
- Stress functional relationship between the urban and rural: rural supports urban.
- Need to 'describe' transition processes and use 'visualisation' tools.
- Statistics are important, especially for EU. We can add pictures, maps.
- Use figures like "area to boundary relationship" as indicators. Translate figures to indicators!
- Even if comparisons are not always possible, we can learn from the differences.

Second part of the discussion: Which is the best example of transition in your own area and what are the **critical elements** of transition?

Veluwe:

Gorter chooses two examples: transition from intensive farmland to grazing land, transition military land/complexes to nature.

Eckhardt sees as critical elements: no money, no project - no plan, no control. Also: when the economy is in a downturn, it is difficult to convince others to pull down buildings. Prins stresses the need to also look at benefits. Vreugdenhil sees as critical elements: (i) transition projects are expensive and must have a spin off to larger areas, (ii) the need to have the participation of stakeholders. A critical factor was also the commitment of high level civil servants and the backing of a politician (Boxem).

Wales:

Phillips gives as example for his area the transition from a coal mining industrial economy to an economy based on cultural tourism and nature areas of scientific interest. Critical issues: area in decline since 1945 (something HAD to be done in particular after the disaster in 1966 when 100 school children died), having a common vision, a management plan, a partnership board and stakeholders; obtaining a new official status for the area (UN site, SSSIs etc.), changing peoples perceptions about their area. Securing continuing commitment (from the Blaenavon partnership board) is also a critical element. Other factors: leaving some areas untouched (now of scientific interest), the presence of a prominent personality who is a driving force and is willing to battle for transition and having seed money to start (the first finances came from the coal board). All these factors play an important role as they influence policy and money streams. NB: goal was a living landscape, not nature!

Kempen and Maasland:

De Coster chooses as an example the health and children's centre now in a protected wooded area and which they wish to move to 4 locations in the city. The centre wishes to move but critical issues are finances, reluctance of civil servants to help. Other critical issues: fragmentation of area, a road dividing up the area in north and south. Successes up to now were obtained through political support and commitment at the highest level, a starting capital and the presence of a driving force (Stevaerts). Continuity of civil servants is also an issue and the so called "desperation" factor. Many studies were carried out but due to upcoming elections: need to secure new political commitment.

Gorter sees as a critical issue the decline of agriculture. Prins mentions sustainability as a critical element (EU: Lisbon strategy) and the need to address finance ministers (they decide on how much more or less money is to be allocated for our regions).

Berends says we can classify the critical issues in three categories: Social, Economic and Ecological. Showing what is already happening in different regions is of critical importance to get EU support as the European level always comes last (first initiatives on the ground, then national support, then a EU scheme). She also sees public participation and a regional approach as leading/ critical factors as they are now very prominent in the new EU approach to regional development. Need to approach European Commission staff to show them why such a support scheme for transition scheme is needed and how it can be set up.

Kiljan sees as a critical factor that the new EU structural funds are for a new, expanded Europe. So need to focus on Europe as a Europe of Regions, with special attention for crowded NWE.

Prins: The wider European impact of transition must be shown. Need to argue alongside N2000 why we need subsidies at EU-level. Transition can also improve quality within N2000 guidelines.

Eckhardt: Show it is a European problem, then EU funds will be channelled through to national and regional levels. National funds are for the worst “cases” at the national level; EU funds are for obtaining a multiplier effect. Need to show the linkages with Natura 2000 and get commitment at all levels.

Kiljan: Need to discuss wider importance of cities, broader natural area etc. and integrate into report. But this brings with it problems of data availability (Phillips) and scale (De Coster). Perhaps need to isolate specific transition regions but place in the wider geographical context (De Coster).

CONCLUSIONS

- Aim for a moderate amount of quantitative data. Complement such data with qualitative information such as examples of transition cases in the three regions, photos, maps, and other specific examples with analysis of the **critical elements** of transition
- Make the three areas more comparable by adapting the scale: focus on a smaller area inside a larger park/ nature area.
- Use the three dimensional approach (social, economic, ecological = the 3 Ps = sustainability approach) to analyse and present critical factors for transition.
- Go on as planned! Work on interim report for phase 2. Develop Final EU recommendations.

Closure of the meeting by Bert Kiljan, with thanks for everyone’s attendance and contributions.

XXX

Minutes by Boudy van Schagen and Helena Berends- Regenboog Advies
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30 April 2004

ANNEX 7

Minutes of the Joint Working Group on Transition

22 SEPTEMBER 2004

HOTEL DE ROSKAM, RHEDEN, THE NETHERLANDS

Chair: Bert Kiljan (Province of Gelderland)

Willem Eckhardt (Province of Gelderland)

Irma Koster (Province of Gelderland)

Guido Jochems (ERAC/ Province of Gelderland)

Madelon Roest (ERAC/ Province of Gelderland)

Bram Vreugdenhil (Province of Gelderland)

Jan Gorter (Natuurmonumenten, NL)

Machiel Bosch (Natuurmonumenten, NL)

Gareth Philips (Torfaen County Borough)

Sue James (Torfaen County Borough)

Andrew Nevill (Torfaen County Borough)

Johan van den Bosch (RLKM)

Inge Ketels (RLKM)

Natalie Henseler (RLKM)

Kristof Lantmeeters (RLKM- flying expert)

Daniel Karlsson (Regional Development, Orebro County Adm. Board, Sweden (advisory board)

Mike Wellman (Cheshire Project Team, UK) advisory board

Members of the Gelderland Provincial Council “Rural Areas”

Members of the Gelderland Province management team “Rural Areas”

MINUTES

Willem Eckhardt welcomed the participants and recalled the purpose of the meeting: presentation of the Pilot project on Transition and the evaluation and discussion of the report ‘Transition to Nature’.

Machiel Bosch from Natuurmonumenten gave a short presentation on the Transition Pilot. As of 1 November, Natuurmonumenten will become the land management agency for Oud Reemst, a previously intensively farmed area of land located within a nature reserve in the Veluwe. Fences hindering the passage of fauna will be removed. The northern part of Oud Reemst has historic landscape features and important cultural value, some farm buildings are to be demolished and agriculture will revert to traditional grain crops, grown biologically. The southern section will be allowed to develop naturally into an open grassland with a visitors’ walkway. The Transition Pilot will result in the removal of harmful agricultural and chemical inputs for nature, and leave an attractive, natural, open area for wild grazing.

Helena Berends from Regenboog Advies then presented the results of the report 'Transition to Nature'. She highlighted what we had done so far in characterising transition in each of the three regions, presenting before/after maps and photos. It had been difficult to obtain quantitatively sound baseline data. She then discussed the results of the individual case studies which were carried out by analysing the economic, ecological and social factors that promote or impede transition or greening of the areas. Thirdly, Helena presented an analysis of how European funds for the environment, regional development, and farming in special areas can be used to promote transition.

New European funds for agriculture and rural development look very promising with regard to financing the greening of rural areas that are both near high nature value national parks and near cities.

A discussion followed. Gareth Philips emphasized the need for better definitions of 'transition' and 'nature'. He said that the Blaenavon region differed from the Veluwe and Kempen Maasland: nature in the Blaenavon site is partly (common) grazing lands and partly sites of scientific interest and partly the national park Brecon Beacons. Also, the area is in a different (more advanced) phase of transition. Gareth also for an executive summary needed to be appended, addressing the broad context, the Transition Pilot, and the importance of EU funding. Proof-reading was also necessary.

Johan vd Bosch was amazed that 'transitioning' farms to nature in the Netherlands appeared to be so easy, in Belgium this would be absolutely impossible even if money was available. The food versus nature discussion is just beginning in Belgium. In Belgium, farms are seen as productive units only: if you take away my farm, who will provide me my egg for breakfast? Bert Kiljan commented that this discussion took place 20 years ago in the Netherlands. Mike Wellman noted a social trend reflecting a change in the social appreciation of agriculture and a move towards nature. In this sense the role of NGO/voluntary organisations is very important. Bert emphasizes that agriculture/nature transitions are always voluntary in the Netherlands and that without the cooperation of the farmer, the Transition Pilot would not have been able to take place. Where voluntary agreements have been made, availability of money was the key factor in achieving a transition.

-COFFEE BREAK-

The discussion went on about Next Steps, also at the request of Guido Jochem who noted that in each Interreg project the follow up actions are very important. As a reply to question "who are you going to talk to about this project and your region?" Willem Eckhardt stated that the EU will be informed, and because the Netherlands is currently chairing the EU Commission, this will also be an important communication objective. A brochure on the "Boundless Parks, Naturally" Interreg project is being prepared at the moment.

Wales will be promoting their project with the Council of Wales and Brecon Beacons National Park.

Johan vd Bosch said that the study will be forwarded to the steering group for regional developments. He commented that motivating studies such as this one are needed to persuade pro-agriculture environmental organisations to consider alternatives. Flanders will furthermore be producing a newsletter and a website.

As the Veluwe is host to the Europarks conference in October 2005, organised by Natuurmonumenten, the transition study will be placed on the agenda as well as focussing on deer and agriculture management contracts. A forthcoming report on Veluwe 2010 will also contain this study. Also, the Veluwe Commission, meeting in December 2004, will be informed. Jan Gorter mentions the possibility for new LIFE projects for less-favoured areas

where money is available for Natura 2000 and recreation projects, for example Veluwe gateways transition projects.

Gedeputeerde Keereweer (Gelderland) is very enthusiastic about the Transition Pilot! He may present this to the Council of the Province as well as the Queen's Commissioner.

With regard to new projects, Torfaen is involved in a Greening the Valleys project in which the 'value of green space' is an issue. He notes that for Objective 1 funding, one is always required to reply to 'what is the value of the project to the local economy?' Gareth would like to have more information on nature valuation in a regional context. In this context Mike Wellman notes that he is currently involved in an ECONET project which has commissioned a study and funded by the UK Government's North West Development Agency on social and economic valuation of the environment and land in particular, which may be useful for Wales. Helena is asked to make a list of studies which have already been carried out in the Netherlands and elsewhere.

Concluding, Bert summarises that some changes are needed in the report, of which the final version is agreed to be delivered in two weeks:

- Sections need to be reorganised (too many tables in the main text)
- Executive summary will be made which places issues into context at the beginning
- Some definitions of 'nature' is required, standardize context and definitions, probably for each region. Stress differences between regions. Answer the question: why do we want transition?
- Three regions, each with different ways of communicating the project and ideas.
- Address issue of 'handling' or conceiving transition.

Willem Eckhardt mentions that a brochure and website are in being made. Inge Ketels states there will be a Europarks magazine, with the possibility of contributing an article about transition. Regenboog Advies invited to present workshop on transition at the Europarks Conference 2005.

Bert asks for lists of names for sending the final report. Bert Kiljan is the contact person for email communication about the report. Electronic communication via BPN website, e-news and brochure. At Europarks 2005 Regenboog Advies will present a workshop on transition. Guido Jochems points out that all email communication should be centralised through Bert Kiljan.

Minutes:

Boudy van Schagen / Helena Berends- Regenboog Advies, with thanks to Mike Wellman.

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