

Woltjer, Johan; Al, Niels

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Strategic capacities in Dutch water management and spatial planning

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Strategic capacities in Dutch water management and spatial planning

Paper prepared for: 45th Congress of the European Regional Science Association, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 23-27 August 2005

Johan Woltjer
Niels Al

Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies
Universiteit van Amsterdam
Nieuwe Prinsengracht 130
1018 VZ Amsterdam
E-mail: j.woltjer@uva.nl, n.m.al@uva.nl

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Abstract

Based on a literature review and case studies, this paper raise some questions as to how efforts to synchronize Dutch regional water management and spatial planning match international insights in strategic planning, focusing on strategy making and capacity building. Following Healey et al., we understand regional strategy making to include a notion of providing regions with ‘institutional capacity’ and social, intellectual, and political capital. Accordingly, we regard the association between ‘water and space’ as a strategic process, emphasising ‘real vision’ and the need for more ‘imagination applied to building a strategy’.

Key words: strategic planning, water management, Netherlands, capacity building

1. Introduction

Dutch water management currently is in a position of fundamental change and renewal. As a consequence of factors such as climate change, continuous land subsidence, urbanisation pressures, and a lacking natural resilience of the water system to absorb water surpluses and shortages, the emphases has shifted from technical measures such as heightening dikes and enlarging drainage capacities towards allowing water to take more space. Since the late 1990s, water management has been modified from an approach of ‘keeping it out’ towards ‘fitting it in’. As a consequence, ‘water management’ and ‘spatial planning’ are associated more closely, especially at the regional level of scale.

Recent efforts by spatial planners and water managers to establish new connections have been mainly oriented towards a regulatory planning style: mutual reviewing of policy documents, the interchange of technical knowledge, the establishment of new legal instruments, and the imposition of norms and standards. The paper introduces the observation that a supplementary strategic planning style could be helpful. Further attunement between ‘space’ and ‘water’ requires strategic capacities to ‘frame mindsets’, ‘to organise attention’, and to transform restrictions into opportunities.

To what extent can current attempts to link Dutch water management and spatial planning be regarded as a reflection of a more strategic planning style? How do prevailing institutional conditions offer constraints or opportunities for further strategic action? We employ the Dutch case to explore some of these exemplary questions.

The paper sets out with providing a general idea of the Dutch administrative system for water management and spatial planning, emphasising changing water policy and new challenges at the regional level of scale. Section Four will then lay the groundwork for considerations about making a strategy for regional water planning. The sections Five and Six feature two cases in the North-Holland region: the Saendelft housing site and Wieringen Border Lake project. Each of these cases, in their own way, can be regarded as exemplary for a further move towards strategic water planning. Section Seven, of course, finishes with some concluding remarks.

2. Dutch organisation for water management and planning

As a starting point for understanding strategic capacities in Dutch water management and planning, it is essential to be aware, in generic terms, of the Dutch form of administration. A key feature, following the Dutch constitution, is that there are only municipalities and provinces as legitimate types of general administration at the local and regional level of scale. Water Boards are a strictly functional type of administration. The central idea of this constitutional organisation is that the Netherlands are a unified state in which local and regional communities use the political organisation to facilitate unity, agreement, and mutual consent for collective decisions (Toonen, 1998). Provinces, water boards, and especially municipalities are still largely autonomous, while, at the same time, they participate in collaborations and a partly centralized attunement of policy and decision-making.

Water system and water management structure

The Dutch water system can be divided in two parts: the main water system and the regional water system. The main water system contains the coastal zone, the main rivers (like Rhine and Maas) and the IJsselmeer. This area is controlled by the Ministry of Transport, Public

Works and Water Management (Rijkswaterstaat). The regional water system includes polder water and the surrounding outlet and drainage waters, which are controlled by water boards. In our paper we focus mainly on the water problems within regional water systems. Water boards play an essential role here.

In general, there are three tasks devoted to water boards: flood defence, water quantity management and water quality management. Flood defence means protecting the land against flooding by ensuring dikes, dams and dunes are in good condition. Water quantity management implies making sure that the right amount of water is at the right place at the right time (appropriate water level). Water quality management involves the care for the treatment of urban wastewater and ensuring that water quality in ditches and canals is good enough for functions like recreation and agriculture. These water-board tasks may seem broad enough, but it is not the case, that water boards have a principal position in water tasks. Ground water issues lay with provinces and municipalities, sewage solutions and local surface water tasks lay with municipalities, drinking water involvement rests with drinking water supply companies, several ministries and provinces have strategic tasks related to norms, designation of water protection, transportation and safety, etc. Clearly, many actors are involved in Dutch water. Figure 1 provides a general overview of the system concerned.

Planning system

Overall, for spatial planning, the state sets the broad strategic lines (via so-called Key Planning Decisions). Provinces then translate these lines into specific features for their province in regional plans. Municipalities prepare detailed plans for land-use in accordance with the provincial plans. The local land-use plans allocate functions for certain areas like housing, industry, public services, and they lay down infrastructure like roads, canals, railway lines and parks. In addition, the municipality can also opt for making a more strategic municipal structure plan. Figure 1 provides a related overview.

The provinces are responsible for a considerable amount of regional planning in the Netherlands. Since the 1960s, the regional plan is aimed at reaching full horizontal and vertical integration between plans at the various government levels (state-province-municipality), and across various policy fields (housing, transport, industry, nature, agriculture, water, etc.). Another important characteristic is the regulatory function for the regional plan. Municipal plans have to be tested on conformity against the regional plan.

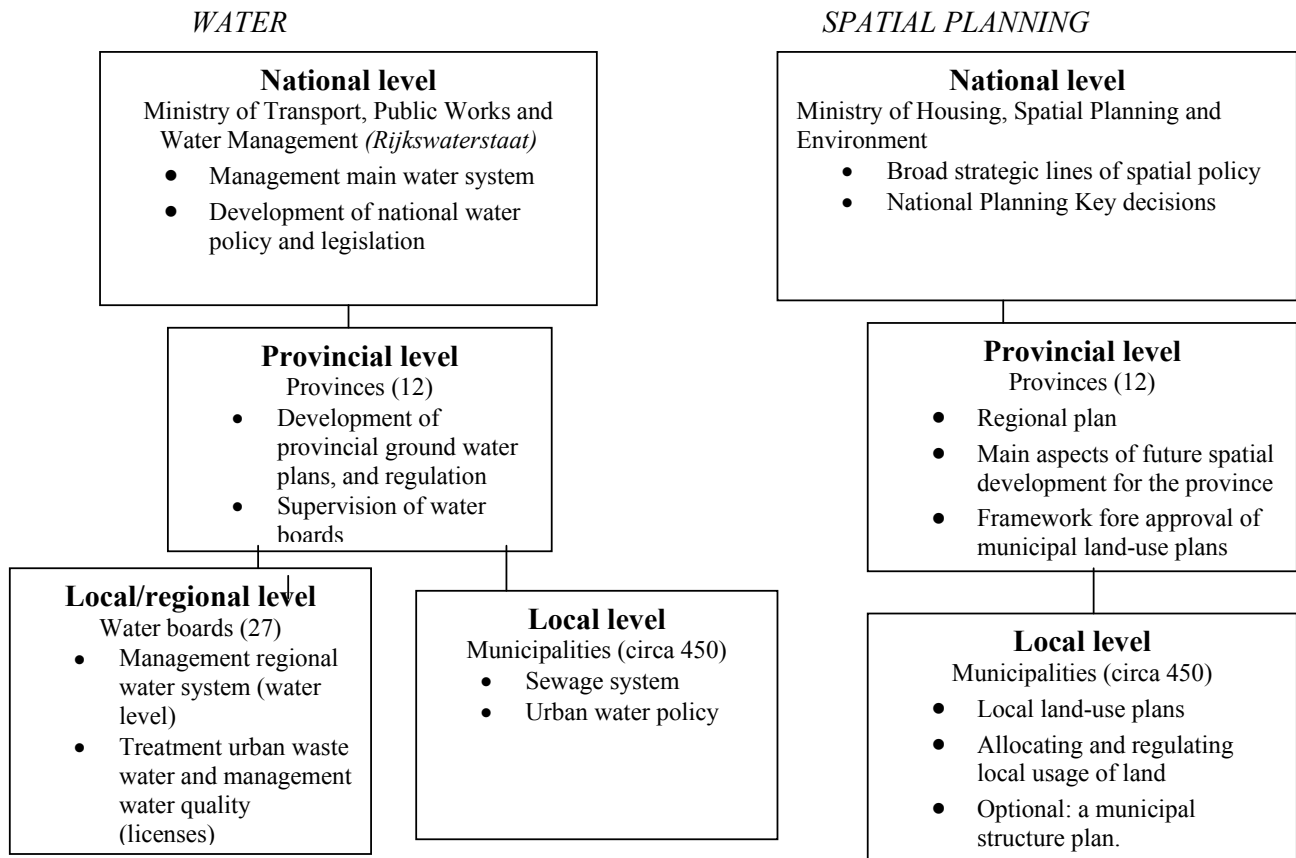


Figure 1. A summarizing overview of the Dutch water management and spatial planning system

New developments at the regional level of scale

For both regional water management and spatial planning, there have been some potent changes, recently, that impose pressure on the system described above. Below, we will discuss some of these changes, focusing on planning and water related changes, respectively.

A key development at the regional level relates to the discrepancy between new geographical patterns and the institutional practices and arrangements that should respond to them. Many Dutch authors have argued that -for these reasons- more consideration should be given in the Netherlands to spatial development at a regional level (e.g. Priemus, 2002). A key reason to put forward is the fact that the territorial range of the labour market, the housing market, mobility patterns, and coherences in environmental functions and water systems have increased to a supra municipal level.

A clear further development entails the on-going debate on whether the territorial levels of general government (state-province-municipality) should be retained. Related proposals - including a possible 'fourth level' of administration (see: IPO, 2002) - have regularly failed to reach formalisation. New regionalisation demands emerge, such as the rescaling of water management tasks at river basin level. Water boards, especially, have been subject of rescaling. In 1950 there were for example 2.500 water boards, now only 27 are

left. Generally, however, there is difficulty to match democratic representation and interests representation in both legitimate and democratic terms at the regional territorial level (Gualini & Woltjer, 2004). As a result, there is a discussion about the need for new institutional practices and capacities, often bordering informal and ‘experimental’ settings.

There is also a substantial repositioning. New regional issues emerge, and new topics will have to be combined. In particular amalgamations between, for example, nature and water, culture, health-care and housing, infrastructure and economy, etc. have emerged. For water boards, the greatest challenge might be bridging the gap between water quantity, water quality and spatial developments. Internal and external integration of water management have become essential conditions reaching the goal of a safe, clean and sustainable water system.

Another development features the attention to an active, more governance-oriented role of the regional plan. While in the past provincial regional planning was often primarily seen as a governmental activity aimed at the production and review of some kind of a spatial framework, now it implies regional co-ordination involving multiple local authorities and relevant stakeholders. A regional approach includes non-governmental actors too. Therefore, notions such as networks and governance have played an increasing role in the current position of regional planning in the Netherlands (e.g., WRR, 1998).

Overall, the change in the character of regional planning is due to a more fundamental change of orientation of Dutch planning into the direction of development planning (see also: IPO, 2002). One of the dominant viewpoints is that the active development of various project initiatives by means of a comprehensive plan should be strengthened at the provincial level (e.g., Koeman, 1999). We are looking here at some potentially fundamental changes in planning activities at the regional level. Herein, regional governments (i.e. the provinces) play a much more active role (IPO, 2002). They no longer limit themselves to activities such as planning, testing, and regulating, but also claim a role in further strategic action.

3. New challenges for water policy

This section will examine changing water policy and new challenges for regional spatial planning. We will focus on efforts to establish connections between spatial planners and water managers, some inherent tensions that occur, and the need for further strategic action.

A general basis for Dutch water management policy features the two-faced side of water problems. The relation between water and humans has always had two faces: water as an enemy (battle against water) and water as a friend (Borger, 2004). The battle against water is characterized by land loss, land reclamation (for agriculture) and flood disasters (see Figure 2). The other face of water, ‘water as a friend’, is reflected in the use of water as a defence

tool, the presence of usable waterways, agricultural benefits and water as esthetical element in city planning. Currently, both faces are clearly visible in recent developments.

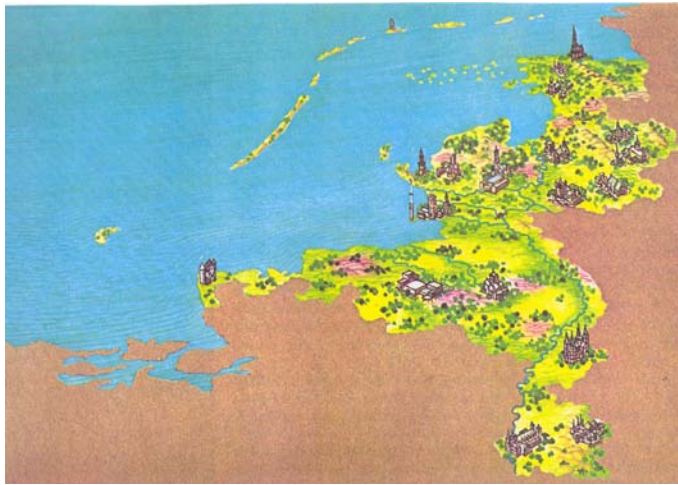


Figure 2. Water as an enemy: 65% of the Netherlands would be flooded without dikes (source: Waterschappen in Nederland, 1981)

New developments are related to the understanding that technical measures like dikes, dams, canals, ditches and pumping-stations are paramount for the existence of the Netherlands as a country, yet that they do no longer satisfy upcoming problems related to climate change and land subsidence. Especially the western part of the Netherlands, which is densely populated and where important economic centres are situated (Schiphol Airport, Harbour of Rotterdam), is vulnerable for flooding by sea, river and heavy rainfall. Another key development is related to the emergence of new European water policy, which, in contrast to prevailing Dutch water policy, is generally focused on water quality, and a mutually coherent view on water and land at a sub river basin level (WFD, 2000; Hassoldt & Van Hall, 2003).

Some flooding threats in 1993, 1995 and 1998 reinforced a general feeling that conventional water management would not be adequate to deal with issues such as climate change (wetter winters and drier summers), rising sea level, local land subsidence and urbanization pressures, and a lacking natural resilience of the water system to absorb water surpluses and shortages. A national committee (Commissie waterbeheer 21e eeuw, see: CWB21, 2000), therefore, suggested a shift towards allowing water to take more space. Spatial measures include, for example, the construction of water retention and storages areas near city's and rivers. The committee recommended to anticipate much more the changing climate and the rising sea level and encourage retaining water, rather than drain it away. The suggested approach was soon adopted and elaborated into new water policy documents such as 'A different approach to water' (V&W, 2000), and the Fifth Memorandum on Spatial

Planning (VROM, 2001). Water management was modified from an approach of ‘keeping it out’ towards ‘fitting it in’.

For spatial planning, the new water policy implies that water claims must be taken into account for any spatial development. Water is to be considered a determining element instead of being adapted to the desired spatial development. This development implies that water actors and planning agencies have to collaborate much more. Collaboration, up till now, has proven to be challenging, and largely limited to regulatory issues (e.g., Schwartz, 2004).

Tensions between water and space

Developments as discussed above make clear that a supreme challenge for water managers and spatial planners is bridging the gap between water and spatial developments. A close tuning between water and spatial planning is essential. It also implies that close collaboration between water managers and spatial planners during the strategic phases of planning and decision-making is vital.

To improve the relation between water and space, different measures have recently been taken. Particularly important are the: mutual reviewing of policy documents on the different levels, the interchange of technical knowledge, the imposition of norms and standards, the development of concepts as ‘integrated water management’ and the establishment of new (legal) instruments.

One of the most clearly elaborated instruments includes the so-called water assessment, which, since 2003, is compulsory for spatial plans such as municipal land-use plans. Its goal is: ‘to guarantee that water interest are taken into account in spatial and land use planning, so that negative effect on the water system are prevented or compensated for elsewhere’ (Handreiking Watertoets, 2003). The result of water assessment implies a section or so of concrete ‘water text’ in municipal land-use plans.

In practice, it seems, a bridge between water management and spatial planning is getting shape, but it is not yet strong (e.g., Wolsink, 2005). Water is still often not ‘in the picture’ when choices are made for a certain location (Vlist & Wagemaker, 2003). Because of this, the deepest polders are still built on, and interesting chances for multiple land-use, spatial quality and innovative solutions are missed (Al, 2004).

Clearly, there still are tensions within the collaboration process between water managers and spatial planners. These tensions are related to a longer institutional heritage: both ‘water’ and ‘planning’ actors have developed their own institutional structure and way of action, based upon a situation in which water and space were separated. Cultures, knowledge, plan making, and procedures differ. Water boards, for example, have a more profound technical orientation, while spatial planners are more likely to think in terms of

visions and concepts. In particular, social and intellectual capital between water boards and spatial agencies is lacking. Slowly, this capital is built by making together water assessments and urban water plans, but further attunement or strengthening the bridge between ‘space’ and ‘water’ requires further strategic capacities, and a move away from dominant regulatory practice. Our next section, therefore, will discuss in more detail notions of strategic action.

4. A move towards strategic planning

Our paper deals with efforts and considerations about making a strategy for regional water planning. This section examines the magnitude of the notion of strategic planning, which stands for a highly prominent international approach towards strategic action and strategy making, predominantly at the regional level of scale. Originating from private enterprise and the military, in the 1980s, strategic planning has been “...a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it” (Bryson, 1988, pp. 5-6).

Nowadays, there still is a large variety of concerns with regard to strategic planning at the regional level of scale, and there is still a great deal of indistinctness about its actual appearance. By reviewing recent literature, this section sheds some light on the question how we understand regional strategic spatial planning to be. In this discussion we would like to highlight issues of attention to *context*, *process* (e.g., involving stakeholders, capacity building), and *content* (e.g. integrated vision, long term perspective). Sections Five and Six will then subject our two cases to these issues.

Strategic planning and the attention to context

Strategic planning includes references to methods to identify external opportunities and threats and organizational strengths and weaknesses (‘SWOT’, see: Miller & Holt-Jensen, 1997). Context is of the essence. In this sense, strategic planning implies an identification of and response to changes beyond the control of the organization, yet, which eventually provides direction for that organization (So, 1986). We would like to point out two key guiding forces here.

One is that we are dealing with the importance of analyzing the current situation that an organization faces (Steiner, 1979). The organization should carry out a study of its environment and how this environment is changing. Obviously, for water managers and planners, we are dealing here with environmental factors such as economic and political developments, strategies by private actors and colleague government agencies, and changing regulations and techniques. An analysis of these developments will make clear some opportunities and threats to the organization over the foreseeable future.

A second point involves creating competitive advantages through insights into contextual developments (e.g., Hamel & Prahalad, 1994). In this sense, the term strategy refers to adequate ‘calculative behaviour’. It is all about improving ones point of departure or conditions (e.g., Mintzberg, 1983). Some examples of the latter approach include the ownership of land, efforts to add or change knowledge (research, collaborative projects), coalition building or enlarge mutual interdependence. Again, we are dealing here mainly with, following the strategic management approach, not viewing changes in the environment of planning agencies as mere threats that should be followed, but, rather, as opportunities that can be employed to make possible some long-term goals.

Strategic planning as a process

Not surprisingly perhaps, strategic planning literature has devoted continuous attention to the identification and involvement of stakeholders. The involvement of stakeholders can deliver such benefits as getting relevant knowledge and information, developing acceptance and support, and thus make implementation easier (e.g., Woltjer, 2003). There are two key points one can make here.

A first point is that involvement also refers to building stronger institutional capacity within regions (Albrechts et al., 2003). We are referring here to a fundamental effort in international planning practice to develop regional governance further, and equip regions with ‘institutional capacity’, including networks of interpersonal relations among public and private actors. These networks could have a positive effect upon the innovative capacity of those regions possessing ‘institutional thickness’, i.e. regions whose governance structures are ‘embedded in networks of interpersonal relations’ (Amin & Thrift, 1994). The central idea is that the region is at a level at which institutional networks and institutional thickness are best developed. A region is small enough for regular face-to-face interactions, yet large enough to sustain a critical mass of interpersonal networks. Policy making, then, should be directed towards strengthening regional networks, and creating clusters of innovation.

Accordingly, strategic planning should be regarded as a social process. Its activities include using, influencing, and creating all kinds of institutional relations aimed at “developing and implementing strategies, plans, policies and projects, and for regulating the location, timing and form of development.” (Healey et al., 1999, p.340-41). Therefore, strategic planning efforts are also exercises of will-shaping and persuasion. They include ideas, inspirations, invitations for dialogue, possible procedures for consensus building, etcetera, which should have some bearing on investment and regulatory activities. Generally, we refer to strategic planning as an activity that creates some ‘soft’ outputs such as social capital (Putnam, 2000). Or, as Healey et al., put it: “...strategic spatial planning as a social

process for developing and maintaining territorial relationships (through resources of trust: social capital), infused with shared knowledge and cemented by common frames of reference (knowledge resources: intellectual capital), through which effective territorial mobilization is possible (political capital).” (Healey et al., 1999, p.343).

A second additional point needs to be made here, however. While new institutional arenas appear on the scene, conventional structures of government are also often themselves changing. In our case, there is a rich institutional inheritance already present. Water boards, for example, are well-established decentralised functional public authorities with legal tasks (regulations), their own elections, a history that goes back to middle ages, and a self-supporting financial system. Strategic spatial planning, therefore, is not just a matter of creating completely new institutional arenas, but also a matter of shaping the institutional heritage that is already operational.

The content of strategic planning efforts

There are three key substantial features of strategic planning. One is the emphasis on the ‘longer-term perspective’ and ‘real vision’. Strategies were to give a longer-term (several decennia) direction to shorter-term decisions. A related key characteristic is that strategies hold no inherent steps to achieve the final destination. This is how it can be distinguished from implementation and control plans developed for individual projects.

There is also an emphasis on ‘real vision’ or the need for more ‘imagination applied to building a strategy’ (Mintzberg, 2003; Hamel, 1996). A truly new perspective can only be found when a discussion of strategy is open to many people, especially those that are younger and older than the ‘guardians of the status quo’. It should not just be an intellectual exercise for the corporate elite. The idea is to create vision and use personal networks that help build intellectual capital.

A second content-related feature is selectiveness. Strategic planning is clearly not meant to be comprehensive in terms of recognising all the goals of an organization (Gordon, 1993; So, 1986). Rather, the idea is to identify and follow only the most essential ones. Some arguments as to why such an approach would be a good idea include that it would be more practical and keep the list with projects and activities limited, which would facilitate effectiveness. Bryson (1988) in particular makes clear, strategic planning generally focuses on only selected critical issues. The reasons to do so include the ability to foresee external developments, and to carefully work on getting necessary support from actors with the necessary means to implement strategic goals.

The third feature involves a new perspective on integration. There is a long history of discussion, of course, about integration and comprehensiveness in planning (e.g., Innes,

1996). Especially integrating the social and economic policy fields within spatial planning has been a long-standing exercise. A new type of integration, of course, involves the amalgamation of territorial policy with water management tasks. Accordingly, John Friedmann (2004, p. 52) describes strategic planning as follows: “Strategic planning is thus conceived as long-range planning for territorial development. It calls for new institutions of governance, and, in the long tradition of spatial planning, it calls for a new comprehensive, integrated approach.” (also see: Salet & Faludi, 2000). The idea is that projects are only relevant if they are set against a context of strategic frameworks and visions for territorial development (Albrechts et al., 2003). This includes coherent view on issues such as water, transport, environment, and housing, and an emphasis on place qualities and the spatial impacts and integration of investments.

With our strategic planning key points in mind, we will now turn our attention towards two cases in the North-Holland regional arena. First (Section Five), we will discuss a large-scale housing site, showing a transition towards a gradually closer association between water and space. Second (Section Six), we will elaborate a more recent and strategic effort to merge water-management and spatial-planning considerations into a multi-functional lake.

5. Case 1: Large-scale housing in ‘Saendelft’

5.1 Introduction

Some key strategic decisions about large-scale housing in the Netherlands have been made within the scope of the so-called Fourth National Policy Document on Spatial Planning Extra (1993, acronym: VINEX). This document appointed locations across the Netherlands for house building. A central objective of the policy was to create housing close to existing cities and, accordingly, to protect the open landscape and limit commuter traffic. The sites were called ‘Vinx-districts’, and, in total, laid down the construction of about 635.000 houses. Saendelft is one of those ‘Vinx-districts’, and is situated in the municipality of Zaanstad (north-west of Amsterdam). Below, we will look into the strategic features of this large-scale housing project. Saendelft can be divided into a western part and an eastern part, each with its own character (see picture below). The western part (3500 houses) will get the character of a park; the eastern part (1500 houses), which is already finished, has a watery character.

The Saendelft case is a typical case related to the closer association between water and space. The relatively long plan history (start 1994) and its distinct role of water within the case provide a good overview of changing Dutch water policy and tensions that occur at the concrete level of planning. We will first review some main findings from an in-depth evaluation study (Accanto, 2001), and, then, reflect on Saendelft-East in terms of strategic

action. In addition, we will look through the same strategic glasses, using various policy documents (Zaanstad, 2005; HHNK, 2005) that reflect recent attempts by the municipality of Zaanstad and water board ‘Northern Quarter of Holland’ (Hoogheemraadschap Hollands Noorderkwartier¹) to build closer links between water and space.



Photo 1: At the right Saendelft Saendelft-East; left Saendelft-West. (source: Saendelft, *wonen in 't Saense groen*)

5.2 Evaluation Saendelft-East

A key moment for this housing project occurred in 2000, when a conflict with a nearby factory about building limits (odour nuisance) resulted in a halt of the development of Saendelft. At that moment, the planning process of Saendelft-East had been completed, while the actors involved were about to start with preparing Saendelft-West. Just in that period, it became clear that the anticipated amount of surface water in Saendelft-West would be insufficient to accommodate expected rainfall. In the same period, also new water policy was presented at national level, emphasising spatial planning to take the water system into account (V&W, 2000). The municipality, water boards and private actors involved, therefore, used the break in the development of Saendelft to perform an evaluation about how new insights in water management, and the experiences from Saendelft-East, could be employed for the elaboration of Saendelft-West (Accanto, 2001).

The fact that this evaluation was carried out must be seen as progressive and practically unique. It was one of the first times that water-management and spatial-planning considerations were linked explicitly in an open collaboration with key stakeholders.

¹ Water board Northern Quarter of Holland has emerged, in 2003, out of a merger between six water boards. For Saendelft-East, two water boards were involved: ‘Uitwaterende Sluizen’ and water board ‘het Lange Rond’. Northern Quarter of Holland is responsible for the water management (both water quantity as water quality) in almost the whole province of North-Holland (see: www.hhnk.nl).

Some key findings of the evaluation included (Accanto, 2001):

- The water system was not taken into account during decision making about location;
- Much attention was paid, relatively, to water considerations during the design phase. As a result of the fact that water had a low place on the political agenda, most ideas stranded;
- The water boards were not invited at meetings about the development of Saendelft-East. Only just at the end of the planning process the water boards were informed. Consultants and policy-advisors, not the water boards, took the role of bringing forward knowledge about the water system into meetings (also see; Schwartz, 2004).
- Knowledge about the water system was spread over various actors. As a consequence, this kind of knowledge comes too late, is not available or is not understood mutually.
- Politicians have less attention for water.

The evaluation results of Saendelft-East did not directly change the design of Saendelft-West. Lateral agreements between the different actors about building density and the amount of houses had simply progressed too far. It was agreed that shortage of water storage would be realised in a green area around Saendelft (Zaanstad, 2004). The evaluation, however, did pinpoint some indirect results. The most striking one, perhaps, is related to the emergence of mutually improved insight and responsibilities. The establishment of an informal study group water management in 1999, for example, contributed to this capital building notion.

5.3 Strategic calibre of Saendelft-Oost

The evaluation as discussed above provides a clear view of the way water managers and spatial planners have treated each other during the planning process of Saendelft-East. Based on our experience with comparable cases, Saendelft-East can be seen as characteristic for the way water boards and municipalities have dealt with each other for a long period of time. Even in recent cases (for example shopping mall Cruquius, see Al, 2004), we still find large similarities with the 'old' way of handling. In this way, the Saendelft case can be considered representative for many similar projects, even today. It seems building bridges between water and space is not straightforward.

The reflection we provide in this section must be seen within the right spirit of the times. When Saendelft-East was developed, other rules of the game structured planning processes between water and space than current rules do. The goal of the reflection, therefore, is to show the on-going nature of relations between water managers and spatial planners. We will discuss this case following our key points of attention related to strategic action: attention to context, the plan-making process (i.e., involving stakeholders, institutional capacity), and issues of content (i.e., long term view, selectiveness, new integration).

Context

Clearly, until the end of the 1990s, considerations about the water system have been subordinate to spatial planning concerns. The role of water was limited to an element that planners use for reaching a higher quality of urban environment. Policy documents such as the Fourth National Policy Document on Spatial Planning Extra (1993), which forms the foundation of the 'Vinex-district' idea, generally paid no attention to the chances and threats the water system might offer.

So, in spite of the fact that Saendelft is built on peat and the water system is vulnerable, water simply was not on the list of potential treats and opportunities that municipalities use during plan development. There was a general feeling that water systems can be adapted with technical measures to the desired situation. Because of this, the municipality put limited effort in involving the water boards into the planning process, and, also, the water boards took a passive attitude towards the process. Water boards generally perceived spatial developments as changes beyond control of their organisation, on which they do not anticipate.

Process

We will now focus on the interaction process between water boards and municipality, reflecting on key themes such as involving stakeholders, capacity building and will shaping.

Involving stakeholders

Many actors have been involved during the planning process of Saendelft. Actors have included the municipality of Zaanstad, private parties, the Province of North-Holland, the Regional Conference Group Amsterdam (ROA), and the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM). Typically, perhaps, the water boards were not involved because they were considered not a 'real' stakeholder (no interdependence between water and space). Information about the water system was brought into the process by consultancy agencies. It was only at the end of the planning process when water boards were informed and involved in discussion about how the water system could be adapted. In this sense, the water boards overall fulfilled a 'deliver and go' role and were not actively involved. As a result, relevant information about the water system stayed hidden for a long period.

Capacity building and will shaping

As we have seen, there was little interaction between water boards and other actors during the planning of Saendelft-West. Knowledge and ideas from water boards about how to implement spatial development into the water system, for example, were not brought into the process. It can be concluded here that no efforts to build social capital (trust, mutual understanding), intellectual capital (shared knowledge) and political capital were instigated between water managers and spatial planners during the planning process of Saendelft-West. The lack of capital at that moment practically caused no problems. But when water managers and spatial planners started trying to collaborate more closely, the lack of capital became visible. It became clear that without trust, mutual understanding and interpersonal relations collaboration does not work.

The establishment of the informal study group water management (IWB) in 1999 was as a significant step forwards. Here, actors tried to step out of ‘normal’ patterns and structures, and find ways together to bridging the gap between water and space. The fact that the IWB-group was established and an evaluation was carried out, shows that there is a willingness to work together and that there is an understanding about interdependencies between water and space. The collaborative drafting of the evaluation study set out the building of social and intellectual capital. The discussion between political representatives after the evaluation (Accanto, 2001) can be seen as building political capital.

Content

As made clear in our preceding discussion, water was not ‘in the picture’ during the selection of objectives for the Saendelft housing site. It was simply no critical issue at that moment. In addition, water boards only focused on their own goals and objectives and were not especially seeking ways to spread their vision or to build a shared vision with other actors. For water boards the attention and responsibility at that time was focused on the water system itself and not at ‘outside’ developments or not developing long-term vision.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the water boards merely focused on short-term questions about control and implementation (e.g., ‘what water level is needed there?’). Short-term decisions within regional water system were made without an overarching water vision. A challenge to change this passive, internal focus into an active and external focus remained. The section below examines recent attempts to tighten the relation between water management and spatial planning by actors involved in Saendelft.

5.4 A view on recent attempts

A recent effort by the municipality of Zaanstad and water board ‘Northern Quarter of Holland’ to create further links between water management and spatial planning is

encapsulated in the water plan ‘Zaans Blauw’². The document features as a central objective the realization of good cooperation between water board and municipality (Zaanstad, 2005). The policy proposal is geared towards an integrated view: “a water system that functions well is essential for our everyday environment. Such an approach not only implies preventing water flooding but also attention to water quality, health, spatial insertion, urban developments, recreation and transport” (Zaanstad, 2005). This quotation makes clear a considerable shift has taken place and that the municipality is well aware of mutual interdependence of water and space. The way the making of the Water plan is organized makes it possible that networks of interpersonal relations originate and capital is build. Apart from a group government representative, there is a group of politicians involved and an external feedback group (representatives from nature organizations etc.), offering the opportunity to create a broadly based plan (framing mindsets and organise attention) that gives direction to future developments.

The Policy Outlook (Zaanstad, 2005) shows, for twelve separate areas, how the current water system functions (both water quantity as water quality) and how the desired water system should look like. Such an approach would provide every developer or spatial planner with a certain knowledge base, which, in turn, could enlarge the change of successful interaction between water boards and municipality/private developer. In essence, we are looking here at some aspects of strategic planning, at least in terms of a coherent vision on the relation between water and space, which can be used for checking concrete spatial plans.

In addition to the municipality and water board making plans together, they also make plans by their ‘own’. In line with the ‘Zaans Blauw’ water plan, the ‘General Framework Plan’ by the water board also pays close attention to the collaboration with other actors (HHNK, 2005). In this sense, the water board shows that control over the water system can only be exercised in close collaboration with other parties, who might have a better position to clarify anticipation options to ‘changes beyond control of organization’. The water board explains this as follows: “more goals can be served than only reducing the risk of flooding”, and the landscape, historic-cultural element must take into account (HHNK, 2005).

A point like this is an indication that the water board has changed its intentions. It is a move from a passive, internally focused organization, into an organization that scans the environment for changes and threats, is more active and broadens its goals en objectives. A telling example of this are the lists in the General Framework Plan, which show spatial developments that could be used for water storage. It illustrates that the water board has broadened its focus. Also communication strategies illustrate some striking changes. The

² The National Administrative Agreement Water (NBW, 2003) prescribes the option for water boards and municipalities to collaborately develop a Water plan. An early version of the water plan for the Saendelft region is available under the title ‘Visienotitie Waterplan Zaanstad’.

water board, for example, organizes water debates across the province to explain new policy to citizens and authorities. Their intention is to, accordingly, create public support. Public support is seen a necessity: “preventing water flooding: we can’t do it alone” (HHNK, 2005).

The overall emphasis, however, largely remains with implementation, regulatory action, and replies to common threats, not yet as much on creating integrated, long-term views, anticipating opportunities and further strategic coordination platforms, aimed at innovation.

6. Case 2: The ‘Wieringen’ Border Lake project

6.1 Introduction

The Wieringen Border Lake case (*WBL*, ‘Wieringerrandmeer’) involves an initiative to construct a lake between former coast and empoldered land in the North of the province of North-Holland and to deliver, at the same time, houses, new economic activity, recreational facilities, improved ecological conditions and enhanced water management. We will discuss this case following our key points of attention related to strategic action: attention to context, the plan-making process (i.e., involving stakeholders, institutional capacity), and issues of content (i.e., long term view, selectiveness, new integration). Evidence from communication with key actors, related policy documents, and local newspaper articles underpin our findings.

6.2 Attention to context

The plan-making process overall has featured little reference to anticipating external, autonomous developments. The project is not part as such of an overarching coherent view, and it assumes in essence a sum of objectives by the actors involved³.

WBL has not been part of a nationally integrated, long-term policy view. The fifth spatial planning memorandum qualifies WBL as a regional project. The current national planning policy document entitled ‘Space Memorandum’ (VROM, 2005) also refers to WBL as a regional project, under the full responsibility of the province of North-Holland. National water management policy, as reflected in the report ‘Water Management 21st century’ (V&W, 2000) sees a small role for WBL, related to an optional catchment area for excessive water from Lake IJssel. National nature development policy does not refer to WBL at all. WBL’s strategic position has remained limited to a list of projects documented in the provincial spatial strategy (see: PNH, 2005).

³ These objectives include: Construction between 700 and 1300 new houses; Focus on aquatic business activities; The lake contributes to considerable water storage capacity; Facilities for housing, work, and recreation bear the cost of achieving additional ‘green’ development; The lake will be at least 200 meters in width and 10 kilometers long.

Also the plan-making process shows how this project has led a life of its own. It has not been part of an integrated long-term view. The initial idea to create a border lake south of the former island of Wieringen was already mentioned during preparations for large-scale water works, land reclamation and impoldering during the 1910s and 1920s. The idea for a border lake emerged again in the late 1980s by a member of Provinciale Staten, and during the 1990s during preparatory discussions about future spatial planning options for the region.

Another important context-factor bears relation to market insights of key stakeholders. The strategic position of municipalities, province and water board has been subject of market analysis (Etty & Teulings, 2003). Public parties involved, it was thought, have a useful position to engage in strategic collaboration with private parties. Their strong points incorporate competences pertaining to public law such as permits and spatial planning procedures, some considerable land-ownership in the region, a willingness to contribute public money, staff capacities, local and regional knowledge and competencies, and regional political and social capital. A potential weak point is embedded in the uncertainty about the stability of long-term political commitment due to four-year election cycles and inherent administrative changes. Public parties were thought to also lack some attributes that private parties have, such as risk capital, knowledge about area development, insights in market developments, design capacities, etc.



The plan-making process shows some more fundamental signs of strategic action. In this section, we follow WBL through three consecutive stages, emphasising notions of stakeholder involvement and institutional capacity. In addition, we spend some separate discussion on the position of the water board.

Initial stages

The initial stages of WBL are related to a cooperation of local and regional government agencies (province of North-Holland, Municipalities of Wieringen and Wierringermeer, and the Water Board North Quarter of Holland and its predecessors) entitled 'Water Binds'. An essential starting point was made, here, when the province sold their share in the publicly owned 'Una' electricity company. In 2001, the province allocated a part of the profit towards WBL, and bought some pieces of land in the area. The 'Water Binds' steering committee made as an interim decision in November 2001 to go ahead with actually carrying out a border lake (PNH, 2001).

Interestingly, the two predecessors of the current Water Board, i.e. Water Board 'Discharging Locks' and 'Crown of Holland' played a leading role in setting up exploratory studies for WBL, and encouraging decision-making. The main effort was to exclusively raise additional public funding from the state and the EU, follow standard procedures and decide about construction in 2003. Main objectives included the economic development for the region as a whole: the 'Head of North-Holland'.

There were a few clear strategic intentions. Strategic considerations by the province included the development of recreation via a new waterway for large sailing ships, the necessary continuity of agricultural activities through insuring adequate fresh water supplies, and the anticipation of further cultural and historic meaning for the area by recreating an island. The water board spoke of the need to 'keep our feet dry'. Some considerations included the fact that pumping stations had superseded in a time where the river Rhine would increasingly bring water and sea levels would rise. The water objective was to create storage capacities for excessive water, and WBL could do exactly this (NHD, 2001).

The 'Water Binds' initiative toward WBL led to considerable support among participating parties and municipalities. It also ended somewhat disappointing, however, when, in 2002, national government typified the project of only regional significance, and refused national funding. Also EU funding turned out problematic. At the same time, the active participation of both water boards ended during a reorganization into the larger water board covering most of North-Holland.

Project bureau stage

The project took another decisive turn in the second stage, when the province of North-Holland established the Wieringen Border Lake Project Bureau in 2002. An established politician and policy consultant, Walter Etty, was appointed as a project manager. Etty and his team displayed a remarkable ability to setting up initial institutional capacity for the project.

During this stage, the province aimed to establish WBL further, principally in cooperation with private parties as well (PNH, 2002). The province also announced an allocation of 29 million Euros (PW, 2002).

A key strategic move here involved the enlargement of the project from strictly constructing a border lake south of Wieringen, toward understanding WBL as a truly regional project, potentially contributing in terms of housing and business activity to the whole northern part of North-Holland (Witte, 2005). There were some bland reactions to this shift. A spokesman from the water board claimed it would be unlikely for national government and the EU to provide funding, while the region would not be able to pay by themselves.

Etty organised several meetings and conferences, such as a symposium at the Wieringermeer town hall about using a more strategic and area oriented type of planning. Several comparable projects such as WBL were actively discussed by representatives from the ministry, the municipalities, large, nationally oriented interest groups such as the Nature Reserve Foundation and, crucially, management board members of large companies. Local newspaper articles featured enthusiastic local administrators and mayors (NHD, 2003).

The importance of adequate communication was reflected in a guiding communication plan. The strategy recorded in the communication plan (2003, see: Witte, 2005) implied some plain choices with regard to communicating with citizens, interest groups, private investors and government agencies. There was a distinct choice not to engage in any public interaction about substantive matters as they were thought to be subject to private negotiation only. The idea was that the negotiation process could easily be damaged if in-between results would be communicated 'prematurely'.

An additional communication aspect is concerned with marketing the project. The idea was to bring the potential of WBL out into the open as much as possible. The project team participated in a broad-spectrum of meetings and conferences throughout the Netherlands about development-, and area-oriented planning, linking WBL to this new style of planning.

The Spatial Planning member of the Provincial Executive, Henry Meijdam, has played a decisive role around this time (Witte, 2005). Meijdam was chair of the steering committee (involving all public and private parties) and played a highly active role in communicating the project during public meetings, press conferences and in contacts between province, municipalities and various interest groups. In line with a national debate about 'development planning', he generally pointed out the necessity of following for spatial planning an active development-oriented planning style (e.g., PNH, 2003).

With its clear emphasis on implementation, Meijdam attracted also abundant attention to the financial side of the WBL project. The provincial government put aside a budget of about 29 million Euros. There was an understanding within the province that the project could

not be carried out with this relatively small amount. Total cost was estimated to range between 200 and 250 million Euros. Clearly, the reservation was meant to be an indicator for private parties that the province was serious in its plans, and that it was interested in establishing public-private partnership (Witte, 2005). It also became apparent that the province was ready to take risks. Public money was going to be put into action to buy land, to match private investments, and take market-oriented decisions without full public control.

This decisive stage in the WBL project finished in the summer of 2003 with the decision to use an open development competition to invite private parties for financial and creative participation. This decision by the provincial government also articulated a move to the following stages in further plan-making, a move to a new internal project manager from the province, and further private involvement.

Private involvement stage

At the start of the *private involvement stage*, late 2003, nine interested parties were evaluated based on their conceptual capacities and their experience with implementing large scale projects such as WBL. Early 2004, five consortiums filed a strategic view on WBL, based on established basic principles by the municipalities of Wieringen and Wieringermeer, and the province of North-Holland⁴. A jury of ‘professionals’ elected ‘Lago Wirense’ as a winner. The role of water as a catalyst for quality, enterprise and nature development was highly valued (PW, 2004). The Lago Wirense proposal (see Figure Three) also laid development risks related to housing and infrastructure with the private consortium, while public and private parties would share responsibility for blue (water) and green (landscape and nature) objectives via a collaborative land development company (Lago Wirense, 2004).

A negotiating stage followed. The provincial project bureau engaged in negotiations with Lago Wirense about the further distribution of risks, land acquisition, contracting, and financial feasibility. The results were laid down in a declaration of intent in October 2004. This declaration then had the purpose to serve as the foundation for drafting a detailed plan in 2005 (SW, 2005).

⁴ These consortiums included: ‘Lago Wirense’ (Volker Wessels Stevin, Boskalis, Witteveen+Bos), ‘Wironi’ (Ballast Nedam, H+N+S, Ecorys), ‘More than dune’ (AM, Rabo Real Estate, BVR, Concire, Vista), Heijmans-Arcadis, and Grontmij-Bouwfonds-de Vries & van de Wiel.



Figure 3. Plan submitted by 'Lago Wirense'

In December 2004, the process came to a temporary halt when the municipal council of Wieringen expressed their disagreement. Provincial and Municipal Executives had already approved the declaration of intent. A majority of the council opposed the extent and distribution of the financial risks, and they wanted more participation in the draft plan (PNH, 2004). The steering committee replied with a proposal to reduce financial risks and to engage in a concentrated interactive elaboration period of a month. Members of the provincial executives and councils together laid down an understanding of the coming deliberations. A few weeks with intensive dialogue between all parties involved followed. Some functional and financial details were changed, after which a considerable political support towards the declaration of intent emerged. The project followed with a move in the summer of 2005 towards establishing a further declaration of collaboration.

Position of the water board

The water board Northern Quarter of Holland has taken a very specific position in the WBL process. A key point of interest for the water board, throughout, has lain with the desire that WBL contributes to accommodating water during flooding. The water board has repeatedly made clear that it was in their strategic interest for WBL to contain space for emergency water storage. A second key demand referred to ensuring a waterway (canal) for professional usage. A third demand consisted of adequate water inlet options for regional agriculture.

In addition to these claims, the water board regularly presented some overarching concerns about the direction WBL had been taking. An important concern featured the collaboration between public and private interests. The water board would have rather seen a

restraint towards PPP, and, preferably, a 'normal' tender procedure. An absolute must, following the water board was encapsulated in the demands related to water storage, a canal, and agricultural water inlets.

During the last stages of WBL, clearly, the water board has taken a distance from WBL plan-making. Some of the reasons as why the water board opted to not be involved are related to the structural task of the water board. This task mainly highlights the water board as an agency for control and supervision. Strategy building is not a part of their public responsibilities.

A clear indication of some argumentation resulting from this non-strategic position is encapsulated in some statements in the local press. The water board did not wish to bear any responsibility if the WBL plans would not hold (NHD, 2005). There was a deliberate effort to not be legally bound to any of the agreements made. The change in position is related to the move by the province to set up a project bureau and get involved in WBL by themselves. In addition to this, also the leading notion of using WBL as an option for water storage during periods of excessive rainfall retreated into the background, mainly because of reasons related to public support. Water policies are now aimed at creating small-scale water storage at the local level (PNH, 2004). The water board simply lost its interest in WBL, particularly when water board priorities turned out not to be reflected very clearly in the Lago Wirense plan. Especially typical water board topics such as safety from flooding and agricultural water quality guarantees had been lost disproportionately, it seems. As a result the water board is left with strictly an advisory role, restraining from taking on any risk or contributing any funding at all (also see: PW, 2003). They have now brought forward demands related to the actual construction of WBL. These demands include concerns related to the maintenance of dikes, the protection of fresh water from becoming brackish, and drainage capacities (WFO, 2005). Typically, perhaps, the Northern Quarter of Holland water board has made clear it would not grant permits for any water work if their demands would not be met.

6.4 Issues of content

There is considerable agreement as to the substantive definition for the project. Although there are no truly long-term views, there is a careful selection of topics likely to appeal to a complex of interdependent parties. Initially WBL was viewed as an excellent opportunity to bring to fruition a large-scale option for the storage of surplus water. Now, generally, the project is seen to contribute to improving the image and development of the region, and to anticipate its poor economic perspective (Witte, 2005). Key actors like the municipalities of Wieringen and Wieringermeer, the province of North-Holland, the water- and polder board Northern Quarter of Holland, and various private investors such as Volker Wessels Stevin and

Boskalis have articulated as strong points the presence of clean water for recreation and living and enhanced options for water transit between North-Holland and Friesland (PNH, 2005).

Some of the strategic moves during the second stage of WBL included an interesting broadening of objectives. New topics were integrated into the ideas for WBL, mainly in an effort to combine both public interests and private interests, and assure, consequently sufficient attraction for potential parties involved. The consultation document (Etty & Teulings, 2003), therefore, featured a review of the 'force-field' of potential interests involved. One example includes the combination of digging up the lake and the usage of excavated material such as sand and clay for road and housing construction. Other examples are the development, sales and management of houses, water-related industry parks, newly developed nature parks, water-dependent agriculture, and the improvement of water infrastructure beyond the region.

7. Some provisional conclusions

Throughout the paper, we have been investigating how efforts to synchronize Dutch regional water management and spatial planning match international insights in strategic planning. Generally, our study articulates a clear need to giving more emphasis to a strategic approach towards regional water planning. The regulatory level has shown various successful attempts at integrating 'water' and 'space', emphasising a formally established role for water in local spatial plans and more advanced interactions between local and regional public agencies. Our scan of recent Dutch experience also suggests, however, that water management efforts at the regional level of scale are only partly consistent with the basic principles of strategic planning.

One of the most prominent findings is the structural lack of truly integrated visions at the regional level of scale. There is a clear-cut emphasis, such as in the WBL case, on creating pragmatic 'agreement packages' of topics reflecting negotiable interests involved. There is also an overwhelming orientation on implementation. Water boards, in particular, are implementation-oriented and emphasise practical requirements and issues such as cost-effectiveness within the project. Also when the water board has an initiating role; capacity building activities generally focus on implementation and regulatory action. Also other actors such as the province display a structural 'bias' within their strategic water planning efforts towards implementation and carrying out. There are some indications that such an implementation-oriented strategic style is likely to lead to frictions in the regional arena, especially when competing responsibilities (such as those of municipalities) are involved. In the WBL case, for example, strategic planning featured at times a struggle among participants for lack of public support.

Clearly, however, both water management actors such as water boards and predominant spatial planning actors such as municipalities and provinces have invested a great deal of attention into creating institutional capital at the implementation level in particular. The Saendelft findings make this particularly clear. For this case and for the WBL case, it is not difficult to isolate some evident outputs of capital building such as longer-term stability, security via trust building, and, for WBL, the selection and active participation of a private consortium. While Saendelft still features a strong emphasis on networks of contributing public interests, for WBL a clearer private involvement comes to the fore.

Overall, there also is a lot of prudence with regard to assuming principally a strategic planning style. While the attention to building social relations, informal networks, and informal arenas is crucial, at the same time, is a underlying tension between the interpretation of responsibilities and new strategic water planning. An essential type of prudence is related to contacts with private parties. While municipalities and, increasingly, the province put unambiguous focus on finances, private involvement, and ad hoc financing, and read their strategic context progressively more in terms of market forces, water boards tend to keep a distance here. In both cases, the water board withdrew from a private interest focus, and reverted towards regulatory action.

If we look for a generic judgment, some considerations should be borne in mind. A key consideration is that, while the position of a regional agency such as the province enables it to do justice to its strategic intermediating position, for functional agencies with management and control responsibilities such as a water board, there is a different reality. Their fundamental position relates them to a regulatory role. And, it seems, this role could remain to be useful, even under a more profound emphasis at the regional level on strategic action. Strategic, development-oriented activities do call for a fair amount of actions related to supervision, review, control, regulation, and testing as well.

In this sense, a move towards further strategic water planning will have to focus on defining new platforms for strategy building related to water in North-Holland. This is a necessary and essential challenge, for which strategic planning literature gives ample suggestions. A further association of water management and spatial planning in the North-Holland situation should highlight informal coordination platforms in the region performing strategic scans of emerging societal developments and opportunities and threats, beyond solely referring to developments like 'climate change' and assuming intra-organisational goals. We would suggest, however, that additional regulatory activities remain.

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