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Authors: Rudolf van Broekhuizen, WU (NL)
 Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, WU (NL)
 Henk Oostindie, WU (NL)

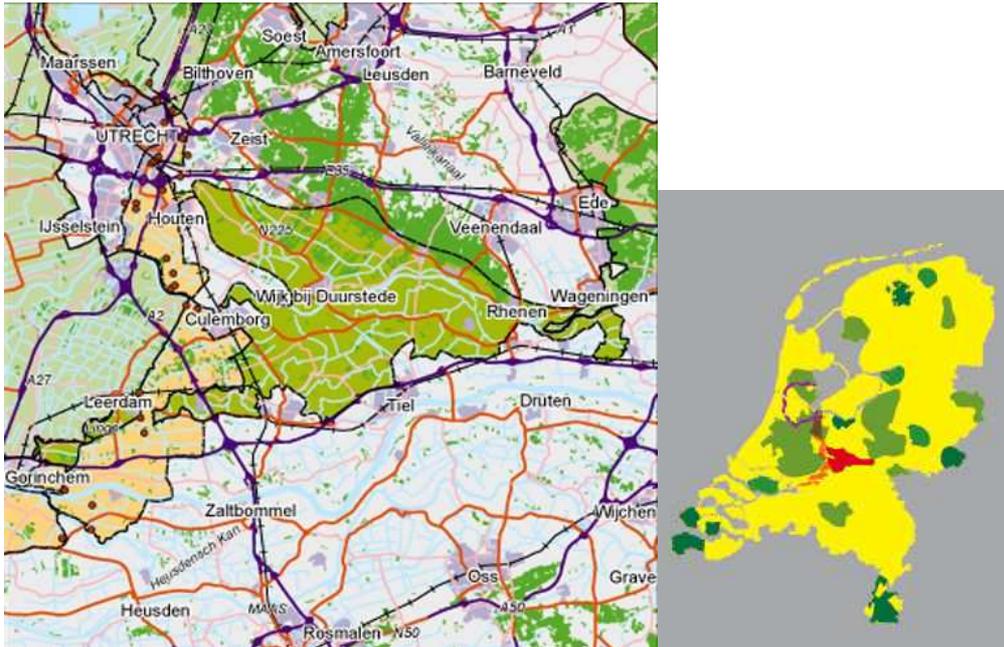
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1. Summary

Rivierengebied is a Dutch rural area that has been recently denominated as a National Landscape area. Literally meaning River area, it is located in the heart of the Netherlands along major national rivers De Rijn, De Waal and smaller rivers as De Linge. The area has a total of about 50-60.000 inhabitants¹ and about 30-40 villages and small settlements with a few thousands to a few hundreds inhabitants. Utrecht (289.000 inhabitants) Den Bosch (136.000), Arnhem (143.000), Nijmegen (161.000) are close by larger urban centers. Veenendaal (62.000), Tiel (41.000), Geldermalsen (26.000), Wijk bij Duurstede (24.000) are smaller urban centers directly located at the borders of National Landscape area (see map).



Building on a broad range of available material, it will be shown that the area is relatively strong in economic, environmental cultural and symbolic capital and weaker in social and -in particular- institutional capital. Chapter 3 goes more into detail in regional dynamics, key events and challenges. Subsequently rural web dynamics in *Rivierengebied* will be characterized by presenting two storylines that focus on positive (storyline 1) as well and negative rural web domain dynamics and interactions (storyline 2). Building on these different storylines it will be concluded that in *Rivierengebied* the emerging rural web is probably best to be understood as a kind of counter structure within a broader context with structural limitations that make it impossible to distinguish a rural web at national landscape level (chapter 4).

Consequences of ongoing dynamics for rural competitiveness and quality of rural life in *Rivierengebied* are principle subjects of chapter 5. This will be followed by some reflection on major web design challenges and ideas about how to strengthen rural web design (chapter 6). Final section of the document focuses on an impact analysis of prevailing policy arrangements (chapter 7)

¹ More precise data are still lacking due to delineation characteristics that do not correspond with available statistical units of analysis

2. Structural characteristics

2.1 Introduction

In this first paragraph we will give an impression of *Rivierengebied* structural characteristics by applying a capital asset approach. As a national landscape area we will start with a characterization of its specific environmental assets. This will be followed by ongoing dynamics in rural/ regional economic, social, cultural, human and institutional capital assets. The analysis builds on a wide variety of data sources (statistics, research material, policy documents, websites, etc.) which resulted in a broad scope of indicators for different types of rural capital assets. Mostly indicators will be presented in a relative way, that is to say; in comparison to other regions, National Landscapes, economic sectors, agricultural sectors, nearby urban centers, etc. This based on the conviction that a description of structural characteristics based on available capital assets gets in particular meaning in relation to its relevant contexts.

2.2. Environmental Capital

Its recent status as a National Landscape area could be seen as an illustration of societal growing awareness of available environmental capital assets in *Rivierengebied* which combines three different types of landscapes: 1) the somewhat higher *levees* along the river course with light sandy-clay soils; 2) the *depressions*, or back swamps at some distance from the river with very heavy clay soils and 3) the flood plains outside the winter dikes. In particular the *levees* are characterized by a long inhabitation history that trace back to Roman times when the rivers, together with the dry levees, formed important transport axis through the wilderness. In contrast, the *depressions* are only inhabited since the 50's when these were transformed in productive agricultural areas after large scale land consolidation schemes.

As a river land area, environmental assets of *Rivierengebied* are primarily preserved through a history of active water management which now a days is facing important challenges due to climatic changes. This is e.g. expressed in ongoing discussions about needs for extra water retention areas and opportunities versus limitations for multifunctional land use in which agricultural activities are being combined with these water management challenges (references to be included). Of regional agricultural activities animal husbandry is most important in land use are relatively environmental friendly animal husbandry (in terms of dependence on chemical inputs, mineral balances, manure surpluses, etc. (in comparison to other regional agricultural activities and more intensive animal husbandry systems in other regions). Other features of *Rivierengebied's* environmental capital can be summarized as follows:

- Relatively high dependencies on chemical inputs in fruit production and tree nurseries (in comparison to dairy farming).
- Relatively strongly affected by a history of Rhine river water pollution due to eutrophication, domestic and industrial sewage, organic and inorganic residues of agrochemicals and organic manure (ARD, 2004).
- Relatively complicated overall water management in River Plains due to e.g. high dependence on drainage systems, seepage of river water into lower embanked areas (Waterschap Rivierenland, 2007).
- Relatively important role of agricultural activities in biodegradation processes and changes in a biotic environments due to agricultural modernization driven water management priorities (ARD, 2004).
- Complex, little flexible and highly agri-expert driven agro-environmental regulations (see

- also chapter 6).
- Still relatively little agricultural involvement in sustainable energy production through e.g. wind and biomass energy (see e.g. Grondmij, 2006).

2.3. Economic capital

Following set of indicators gives an overall impression of available economic capital of Rivierengebied. Together these indicators picture a rural region that is relatively well of in economic capital assets. It is also shown that in agriculture dairy farming, still dominant agricultural land use in *Rivierengebied*, is facing relatively difficult times and continues to be relatively strongly dependent on direct income support.

(Relative) economical capital indicators as derived from available material:

- Favorable location in the Netherlands/ EU region (Provincie Gelderland 2005a, Regio Rivierenland, 2007).
- Good infrastructure, in particular external accessibility (Provincie Gelderland, 2006a).
- High percentage SME's (ibid, Kamer van Koophandel Centraal Gelderland, 2004).
- High percentage of agricultural land use (www.CBS.nl).
- High percentage of agricultural land use for dairy farming (www.CBS.nl).
- Somewhat higher agricultural contribution tot regional employment / gross added value (in comparison to provincial average) (Provincie Gelderland 2006a).
- Concentration of highly international oriented fruit chains (Fruitpact, 2008, LTO Noord 2005 and 2006).
- Concentration of tree nursery sector as a second highly international oriented agro-cluster (LEI, 2006 and 2007).
- Large differences in added value per hectare between agricultural activities (LEI, 2007).
- Low added value per hectare in dairy farming, also due to absence of processing facilities (in comparison to other agricultural activities, LEI, 2007).
- High dependency on direct income support in dairy farming (average: € 18.000 in 2005, (LEI, 2006, DLG-Gelderland 2004)).
- High but also increasingly fluctuating agricultural incomes (www.CBS.nl, LEI, 2007).
- High percentage of multifunctional dairy farms in comparison to non-national Landscapes (LEI, 2006).
- Strong orientation on nature and landscape management as other gainful activity (ibid).
- Low levels of agri-tourism and care-provision as other gainful activities (ibid).
- High agricultural land prices compared to national price-levels (NVM Agrarisch Onroerend Goed, 2006).
- Still underdeveloped regional / rural tourism sector (Gemeente Culemborg, 2007, CBS, 2006, Regio Rivierenland, 2006, Regionaal Bureau voor Toerisme Rivierenland, 2008, StER Rivierenland, 2006).
- Strongly agricultural related major tourism events (Fruit Corso, Fruit blossom arrangements, Country Fairs, Christmas Fairs).
- Strong position of transport and commercial services in regional employment (Etil, 2003, Provincie Gelderland 2004b)).
- Weaker position of non-commercial services in regional employment (ibid).
- Above provincial and national growth in regional employment (ibid).
- Slower growth rate of higher income jobs (ibid).
- Average income per person and households (ibid).
- Easy accessible urban employment opportunities (ibid).
- Low regional unemployment rates (ibid).
- Low dependencies on social welfare payments (ibid).

2.4 Social Capital

To assess ongoing dynamics of social capital it is important to realize that *Rivierengebied* is primarily delineated as an area that shares similar landscape values. A broadly shared socio-cultural identity is still largely lacking; most inhabitants will identify themselves much more with sub-regional identities as De Betuwe, Land Van Maas en Waal, Kromme Rijn, Langbroekerwetering, etc. Therefore, social capital in *Rivierengebied* is in particular available at sub-regional, village and/or sector level. In the analysis of rural web dynamics we will go into detail in the interrelations between social capital and issues as inter-sectoral cooperation and urban-rural partnerships in *Rivierengebied*. Here we limit ourselves to following characterization of available social capital:

Social capital indicators:

- Strong tradition of religious and village based social cohesion (De Jonge, 1954, Bieleman, 1995, Van Esterik, 2003, Provincie Gelderland, 2005b).
- Strong social cohesion in small rural settlements (Provincie Gelderland, ?, Vereniging Kleine Kernen, 2005, Spectrum, 2004).
- Long tradition of agricultural cooperatives (Bieleman, 1995, De Jonge, 1954).
- More recently established networks of multifunctional rural enterprises (Agrarisch Natuurbeheer Tieler- en Culemborgerwaarden, 2008; Capreton, 2005; www.Capreton.nl; www.anvkrommerijnstreek.nl; www.theodorata.nl; www.terechtanders.nl; www.van-lingestreek.nl).
- Newly emerging territory based networks of rural SME's around rural tourism, leisure, fun Shopping, art, antiques, etc. (www.rivierarrangementen.nl; www.waardart.nl; www.antiekroute.nl; www.betwuwijn.nl; www.betuwetocht.nl; www.kunstrouteburen.nl).
- Still little expressions of social capital through new rural-urban partnerships.
- Similar to other national rural areas, Rivierengebied is facing positive as well as negative impacts on available social capital due to a growing importance of commuting (Sociaal Cultureel Plasnbureau, 2006; Spectrum, 2004).

2.5 Human Capital

Rivierengebied is a relatively densely populated rural area and therefore relatively well of in terms of availability of human capital, which is furthermore relatively young in comparison to adjacent regions that are already more serious confronted with ageing problems. That formal education levels are somewhat lower in *Rivierengebied* is probably at least partly to be explained by a long tradition of 'learning by doing' and relatively strong regional interest in (rural) entrepreneurship. A relatively high outflow of younger inhabitants might be the outcome of a regional somewhat lower percentage of higher level jobs as well as the vicinity and attractiveness of larger urban centers as Den Bosch, Utrecht, Arnhem. Later we will go more in detail about the presence of different types of learning and innovation driven regional networks of farmers and other rural entrepreneurs. As in the Netherlands as a whole, also *Rivierengebied* is characterized by a highly present agri-expert system that brought enormous increases of agricultural productivity as well serious negative site-effects in terms of environmental problems (mineral losses, water, air and soil pollution) and loss of rural amenities as landscape and nature values. In last decades this highly present agri-expert system is characterized by lack of internal agreement about the role of agriculture in sustainable rural development. In the analysis of rural web dynamics more about ongoing conflicts in rural development discourses and the role of agriculture. Here we will limit ourselves to following more general characterization bases on available material about the relative strength and weaknesses of available human capital in Rivierengebied:

- Slightly more densely populated than adjacent NUTS 3 areas (Provincie Gelderland, 2004)
- Somewhat higher percentage of younger people than adjacent regions (ibid)
- Somewhat higher percentage of job starters that leaves the region (ibid)
- Somewhat higher percentage of persons with lower educational levels (ibid)
- Long farmers' tradition of international market orientations (Bieleman, 1995)
- Strong tradition of innovation driven sector + agro-cluster based learning networks (Fruitpact, 2008; LTO-Noord, 2005 and 2006; www.ltonoord.nl; www.glaskracht.nl)
- More recent emergence of novelty driven new territory based learning networks around multifunctional agriculture (www.terechtanders.nl; www.betwusbest.nl; www.avnkrommerijnstreek.nl; www.van-lingestreek.nl; www.capreton.nl)

2.6 Cultural Capital

There are many aspects that could be highlighted to describe cultural capital assets of *Rivierengebied*. Just a brief introduction on following long list of cultural indicators that has been distilled from the analysis of available material. As a river area, early settlements in Rivierengebied trace back to Roman times. This long history is getting increasingly attention in the promotion of the area, which is further expressed in all kinds of projects that focus on more recent cultural history such as the renovation and rehabilitation of fortresses and other water related military heritage. Agricultural history is in particular famous for its fruit production. This goes in particular for the sub-region De Betuwe, which probably continues to be Dutch most famous fruit production area, also due to rather successful early fruit promotion campaigns based on the Flipje Tiel image (see figure). Other aspects of regional cultural assets that could be mentioned: a long agricultural history of incorporation in international markets (in particular German and English markets), little food culture heritage in terms of regional typical food products due to decades of agricultural modernization and a relatively large inflow of rural newcomers, in particular better of middle aged persons that appreciate rural lifestyles and can afford relatively high rural estate prices (see also paragraph 5.2. on quality of life).

Other expressions of available cultural capital (in relative terms):

- Long tradition of pluri-active farm-households (Bieleman, 1995, Van Esterik, 2003)
- Famous for its fruit products (apples, pears, cherries, berries, etc. (www.flip-tiel.nl))
- Recent (re-) attention for regional typical food qualities (www.betuwsbest.nl, www.SPN.nl)
- Strong loss of cultural heritage due to agricultural modernization in fruit and dairy production (loss of stand fruit tree orchards, typical breeds, typical farm buildings, etc. (in comparison to many other EU rural areas (see e.g. Ruimtelijk Planbureau, 2008))
- Little regional typical food culture (in comparison to other EU member states)
- Little military + industrial heritage (compared to neighboring National Landscape Dutch Water Lines)
- Primarily small scale cultural events/ attractions/museums (Provincie Gelderland, 2004b)
- Lower per capita municipal investments in cultural activities than provincial average (ibid)
- Less rural estates and other cultural heritage as fortifications and castles than neighboring rural regions (Provincie Gelderland, 2004a)
- Strong sub regional identities in De Betuwe, Land van Maas & Waal and Bommelerwaard (Regio Rivierenland, 2007; Regionaal Bureau voor Toerisme Rivierenland, 2008)
- Many rural newcomers compared to less central localized rural regions (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2006)

2.7. Symbolic capital

Additionally to previous cultural capital assets, following more symbolic capital assets of *Rivierengebied* are worthwhile mentioning:

- Famous icon of Dutch River Landscapes although somewhat less than neighbouring National Landscape 'Dutch Water Defence Lines' which applied (partly) for World Heritage status (see also www.hollandsewaterlinie.nl).
- Popularity of river landscapes as rural residential areas (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, 2006).
- Spectrum, 2004; Stichting Wonen voor senioren, 2003).
- Weak protection of distinctive food qualities (e.g. currently fruit processing under regional label based on cheap fruit imports from elsewhere according to SNP representative).
- Positive professional status of farmers (Farmer in search for spouse actually by far most popular national television programme in the Netherlands.).

These indicators refer to different manifestations of symbolic capital such as territorial reputation, social status of farming as well as collective capacity to protect and valorise regional typical food qualities. Most of these aspects of regional symbolic capital assets have been mentioned earlier in relation to available environmental and cultural capital assets.

2.8. Institutional Capital

A good impression of dynamics in institutional capital assets of *Rivierengebied* should start with the more general remark that Dutch society is characterized by an enormous institutional density in the sense that institutions are omnipresent and of great importance to understand e.g. rural development dynamics. In particular the longstanding spatial planning tradition applied at different scale levels (national, provincial, municipal) has been of great importance to understand rural dynamics in terms of opportunities versus limitations of function integration at different scale levels. Secondly it is important to realize that rural development in the Netherlands has been traditionally dominated by sector approaches, that is to say; relevant policy fields as agriculture, nature and landscape, water management, social welfare were primarily sector based implemented with little attention for integration at territorial level. Dutch institutional interest for more territory based policy approaches is of relatively recent data, as e.g. demonstrated by the late introduction of the European LEADER program. Only in last decades a growing institutional interest can be witnessed for territory based policies, including a re-shaping of responsibilities between national ministries, provincial administrations and municipalities, going along with multi-level governance conflicts, uncertainties and in transparencies. More details about ongoing institutional dynamics in *Rivierengebied* follow in chapter 4 with the rural web analysis . At this moment we will summarize its institutional capital assets as follows:

Relatively:

- Short history of experiences with territory based (rural) policies compared to other rural areas, which goes in particular for the part of Rivierenland that belongs to the provincial Gelderland administration (Provincie Gelderland, 2007b; Programmabureau Rivierengebied, 2006)
- More recent start of (sub-) regional cooperation among rural municipalities (www.rivierenland.nl)
- Little territory based cooperation through new rural-urban partnerships in comparison to other National Landscapes as e.g. Laag-Holland (see other Dutch case-study report)
- Differentiating experience with LEADER approaches. Already longer in provincial Utrecht

part of Rivierenland, more recent in provincial Gelderland part (Provincie Utrecht, 2006a and 2006b; Regiebureau POP, 2007; Streekcommissie Rivierengebied-West, 2007; Stuurgroep Kromme Rijn, 2007; Gebiedscommissie Langbroekerwetering, 2006; Netwerk Plattelandsontwikkeling, 2007)

- Little institutional coherence on role of agriculture in rural development (DLG-Gelderland, 2004, Gelderse Mileufederatie, 2005; Rabobank, 2003;
- Long tradition of 'quantitative mediation' of differentiating claims on rural space (Provincie Gelderland, 2007a, Provincie Utrecht, 2006)
- Tradition of distrust among rural dwellers in higher level administrations (Van Esterik, 2003)
- Many institutional barriers for lower level function integration (Praktijk Onderzoek Plant & Omgeving, 2006)

3. Development dynamics of the territory

3.1 Key events and challenges

Following our WP2 typology, Rivierengebied is most adequately to be classified as a segmented rural area in which agricultural development is characterized by the co-existence of differentiating development patterns. Underlying contrasting sustainability paradigms (ecological modernisation versus multifunctional agriculture) are in competition for scarce land resources and institutional support. The sustainability paradigm that focuses on cost efficiency through ecological modernisation tries to strengthen its position by advocating that agricultural production systems are best to safeguard by so-called agri business parks, areas with an absolute priority for agricultural modernisation, not to be frustrated by any limitations that origin from growing societal demand for other rural functions as the preservation of nature, landscape, leisure, tourism, etc. In contrast with this still highly present ecological modernisation discourse, there is growing interest in different domains as practice, policy and science for multifunctionality based on an integration of rural functions. The co-existence of conflicting sustainability paradigms is typical for ongoing debate about rural development and the future of agriculture in the Netherlands. This goes along with frictions and tensions within the agricultural sector, relevant institutional setting and rural stakeholders as well as the emergence of new coalitions, partnerships and forms of cooperation, as will be demonstrated in more detail for Rivierengebied in the rural web analysis of chapter 4.

3.2 Rural-urban relationships

Major urban centres in and adjacent to Rivierengebied do not yet actively support its National Landscape status. Smaller urban centre Tiel did even actively oppose against the National Landscape status due to the fact that its threatened that such a status would become a barrier for existing urban expansion plans. At institutional level little initiatives can be witnessed to come to active rural-urban partnerships to strengthen regional competitiveness. A major challenges to initiate such partnerships concerns the problem that adjacent larger urban centres as Utrecht, Den Bosch and Arnhem are historically more attached to other rural areas than to Rivierengebied. Also the fact that Rivierengebied consists of multiple rural areas in terms of historical orientations on urban centres for employment, education, religion, leisure, etc. makes rural-urban interaction rather diffuse and little supportive to the creation of sense of belonging and / or regional identity (see chapter 4).

3.3 Relevant policies and institutional arrangements

Relevant policies and institutional arrangements will be more in detail presented in chapter 4. At this moment we will limit to the following more general impression. Firstly it is important to realize that the Netherlands is characterized by a long history of an active spatial planning with most prominent roles for the national and municipal administrations. Rural spatial planning tradition build last decades primarily on function segregation (agriculture, nature, residential areas, etc.) to preserve agricultural modernisation opportunities, actively supportive by large policy investments in land consolidation schemes. More recently institutional setting might start to demonstrate a growing interest for spatial function integration that might support a.o. multifunctional agriculture but the long tradition of function segregation is certainly still omnipresent in national spatial planning framework.

A second important institutional characteristic of Rivierengebied is its rather limited experience with more territory based policies. Typical for the Netherlands as a whole, but

certainly for Rivierengebied due to the fact that it did not belong to the regions that started to gain experiences with integrated territory based policy schemes from early nineties of last century. National policy experiments with these integrated policy schemes were concentrated in southern and eastern rural areas with most serious environmental problems due to their more intensive livestock and husbandry systems. Rivierengebied started more recently to develop more integrated regional/rural development approaches, in particular after the implementation of the 'Investment Budget Rural Areas' (Wet Investeringsregeling Landelijk Gebied, WILG) through which national governance aims to stimulate the integration of previous primarily sector based policy frameworks (see also paragraph 3.3). This decentralization of rural policy making goes along with so-called 'performance contracts' in which provinces and national governance agree on the performance to assess and monitor provincial rural policy contributions to national policy goals. Recent implementation makes it premature to draw any conclusions on future impact of WILG. Current redefinition of responsibilities and relationships between national administrative levels, however, is certainly an issue of major importance in relation to rural policy design, - delivery and - implementation.

A third characteristic of institutional setting in Rivierengebied concerns its limited experience with more participatory rural development approaches such as the European LEADER programme. Partly this reflects a broader Dutch policy context of highly defensive attitudes towards CAP reforms that include a transfer from agricultural production related support towards an expansion of European rural development policies. Also for this reasons the Netherlands implemented the LEADER programme relatively late. In prevailing rural development programme for the period 2007-2013, LEADER might be officially embraced by reservation of 10% of total national RDP budget for its continuation (Regiebureau POP, 2007). In practice, however, there are different kinds of signals that the role of LAGs is being reduced with regard to decision making on rural development projects and taken over by regional multiple stakeholder platforms created to stimulate integrated rural development. Private actors in these platforms are predominantly rural stakeholder representatives, that is to say professional employees less rooted in rural communities than many LAG participants. In other words, national institutional setting shows little enthusiasm to implement LEADER actively as a grass root level participatory rural development approach. Some interviewees explain this by ongoing decentralization tendencies in rural policy design. In their views the LEADER approach would only increase current limited transparency in the distribution of responsibilities and decision making power between public and private actors. Others, such as members of the national LEADER network, strongly continue to advocate more participatory rural development approaches (see also www.plattelandsnetwerk.nl)

4. The rural web configuration

In depth analysis of ongoing rural dynamics in *Rivierengebied* in line with the rural web concept of ETUDE's theoretical framework illustrates that it might be the case that domain interactions should be characterized as multi directional in which both positive as well as negative interaction features can be distinguished. Following two storylines aim to illustrate this co-existence of contrasting domain interactions

4.1 Rivierengebied as an emerging rural web

A first story starts from the premise that recent National Landscape status of Rivierengebied should be understood as a strong indication for regional growing policy and societal support for the maintenance and valorisation of landscape values as an endogenous trajectory for further rural / regional development. A trajectory that is actively supported by newly emerging territory based networks of multifunctional rural enterprise, as e.g. illustrated by the presence of several agri-environmental cooperatives of which the first has been already created in 1998. In 2008 several agri-environmental cooperatives are involved in a merging process with the overall objective to further professionalize agriculture's provision of nature and landscape values and to become as multifunctional farm enterprises even more serious partners for rural policy delivery and professional nature and landscape organisations (see e.g. Capriton, 2005; Vereniging voor agrarisch natuurbeheer, Tieler- & Culemborgerwaard, www.capriton.nl; www.van-lingestreek.nl; www.natrumonumenten.nl; www.staatsbosbeheer.nl; www.landschapsbeheergelderland.nl; www.utrechtslandschap.nl; www.geldersekastelen.nl

In addition to agri-environmental cooperatives, there are other territory based networks that actively promote multifunctional agriculture through e.g. stimulating agri- and rural tourism (www.terechtanders.nl; www.betuwetocht.nl), regional typical food qualities (www.betuwsbest.nl) and -albeit of more recent dates- care provision in agricultural environments (www.zorgboerderijen.nl). Together with the emergence of territory based cooperation between other rural SMEs active around rural fun shopping (www.antiekroute.nl; www.betuwewijn.nl; www.waardart.nl) this illustrates how rural entrepreneurship in Rivierenland is actively responding to new rural markets through collective action, learning and marketing. Also building on a long tradition of cooperatives in traditional food markets (in particular in the dairy and fruit sector (Bieleman 1995), these new expressions of territory based cooperation demonstrate that farm households and other rural SMEs in Rivierengebied respond actively to agricultural price squeeze tendencies through broadening and deepening activities, as also confirmed by growing statistical evidence (LEI, 2006 and 2007). Nature management through participation in agri-environmental schemes is most popular broadening activity in Rivierengebied. About one third of regional farm enterprises participates in these schemes with estimated average financial compensations of 10.000 euro (LEI, 2007). At National Landscape level there might be little other statistical information about current socio-economic impact of new rural development activities, but a short internet exercise gives a broad range of examples of multifunctional rural enterprises (see e.g. www.coutnryculinair.nl; www.wilco-ijs.nl; www.wilgje.nl; www.paddestoelrijk.nl; www.polderwinkeltje.nl; www.geldersehoeve.nl; www.koienvlaaien.nl; www.defruitspelen.nl; www.veldkeuken.nl; www.boterbloem.nl

There is also the material from regional Chamber of Commerce that illustrates regional dominance of SMEs in rural areas and their strong social and cultural embeddedness (Kamer

van Koophandel Centraal Gelderland, 2004). The latter is e.g. expressed in high appreciations of business locations and low percentages of rural SMEs with plans to move to other locations and rural SMEs sponsoring activities of social and cultural events. In other words, farm enterprises and other rural businesses contribute positively to rural/ regional social capital building as another crucial element of the rural web in *Rivierengebied*.

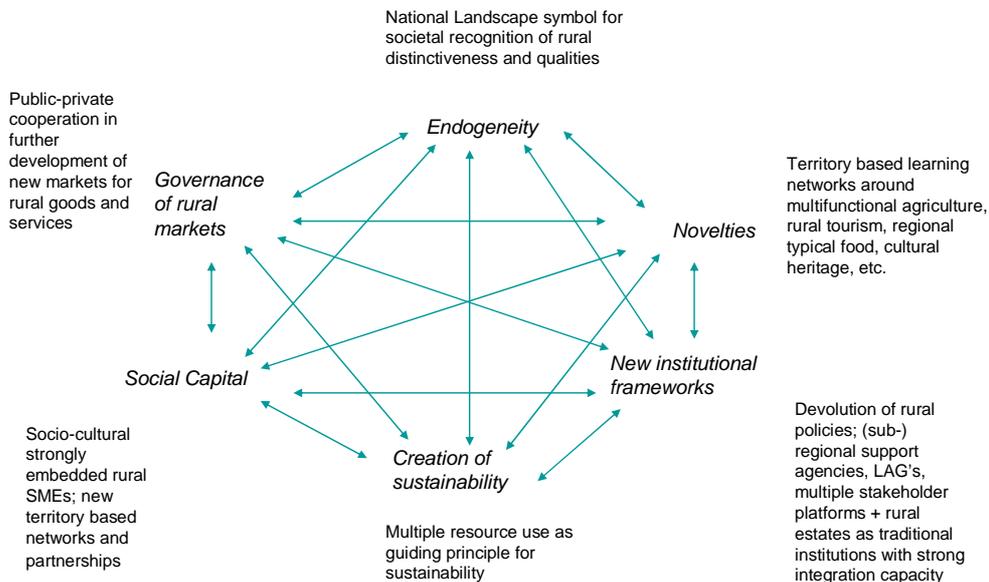
If we look at ongoing dynamics within the institutional setting, its important to recall recent introduction of WILG, Wet Investeringsregeling Landelijk Gebied, see paragraph 3.3.. As argued, its recent implementation makes it difficult to foresee overall impact of ongoing redistribution of policy responsibilities between national and provincial administrative levels. WILG, however, certainly increases regional opportunities for lower level rural policy design. There is also ongoing experience within *Rivierengebied* with multiple stakeholder platforms to implement rural development policies. Local action groups exist longest within the part of *Rivierengebied* that belongs to the province of Utrecht, where provincial administration does experiments successfully with LEADER approaches in the Kromme Rijn and in the Langbroekerwetering (Gebiedscommissie Langbroekerwetering 2006 and 2007, Stuurgroep Kromme Rijn, 2007). The part of *Rivierengebied* that belongs to the provincial administration of Gelderland, got more recently a formal LEADER status (Streekcommissie rivierengebied-west, 2007). Formal in the sense that it has been decided that already existing multiple stakeholder platform for the implementation of WILG (see paragraph 3.3.), will function as a Local Action Group. To stimulate multi-stakeholder rural policy design, both involved provincial administrations (see www.Utrecht.nl and www.Gelderland.nl) are creating regional Program Offices to facilitate and stimulate territorial cooperation and project development (Provincie Utrecht, 2006, Provincie Gelderland, 2007) that will have to cooperate at National Landscape. Provincial National Landscape coordinators point at steadily better inter-provincial policy coordination, notwithstanding different provincial administrative traditions with regard to role definitions in rural development processes. Whereas the Province of Utrecht defines its role as a process *facilitator* that aims to delegate decision making as much as possible, the Province of Gelderland want to be much more an active process *manager* that takes the lead in project development and tries to convince involved stakeholders. Such differences in institutional role perceptions might sometimes complicate inter-provincial institutional cooperation.

There is also the institutional search for policy frameworks that increase opportunities for new functions in redundant farm buildings (Praktijkonderzoek plant & omgeving, 2006). In policy discourses it is increasingly recognized that redundant farm buildings might be 'nursery places' for new expressions of rural entrepreneurship and that spatial planning regulations are often too restrictive in allowing such new expressions (Provincie Gelderland, 2007b). There is also policy experiments with so-called 'new rural estates' (see also below), a new policy instrument that combines extra building permissions in rural areas to conditions as 'residences with allure' and the creation of new nature areas of a minimum of 5 ha accessible for visitors (reference). Another example of institutional search for new policy instruments to mobilize extra financial resources for nature and landscape management are compensation payments. This principle is e.g. applied in ongoing large infrastructural investments as the expansion of the A2 as major north-south traffic line. In overall budget a certain percentage is reserved for investments in nature and landscape values. In *Rivierengebied* the compensation entails the creation of a new nature area that, in contrast with earlier times when professional nature organisations were 'privileged partners', will be managed by regional agri-environmental cooperative. This as another illustration of how multifunctional farm enterprises participate in new territory based institutional arrangements.

Foregoing examples of policy instruments and institutional arrangements could be understood as active regional attempts to build sustainable rural development on multiple resource use and function integration as guiding principles. Also other important rural stakeholders as e.g. regional Water board (see www.waterschaprivierenland.nl) and professional nature organisations (www.staatsbosbeheer.nl; www.natuurmonumenten.nl; www.Gelderslandschap.nl; www.landschapsbeheer.nl) are increasingly in search for function integration. Regional Water board e.g. experiments with water management systems that integrate multiple objectives as agricultural land use, extra (temporary) water storage capacity and nature management (see e.g. ARD, 2004, Waterschap Rivierenland, 2007). This in cooperation with members of regional agri-environmental cooperative that successfully mobilized interest among farmers by building on available social capital. Other examples of multifunctional land use are ongoing professional nature organization's attempts to integrate nature management, rural tourism and the preservation of cultural heritage, often stimulated and financially supported by national (www.Belvedere.nl) and provincial (www.Belvoir.nl) policy schemes to preserve and promote cultural heritage. Also actively promoted by *Rivierengebied's* special status as a provincial pilot area for more territory specific promotion of cultural heritage. This pilot project includes a.o. some interesting educational projects in which almost all regional secondary schools participate actively (see e.g. www.kcg.nl) and story telling events at locations with high cultural values (Gebiedsgericht Cultuurbeleid Rivierenland, 2008). For more detailed impressions of ongoing activities related to the promotion and valorisation of regional cultural heritage see also www.gelderskastelen.nl; www.landschaperfgoeduytrecht.nl; www.fortvechten.nl; www.geofort.nl; www.limes.nl; www.gelderlandbinnenstebuiten.nl; www.oudheidkamer-tiel.nl; www.erfgoedlalacarte.nl; www.kasteleninrivierenland.nl; www.tussenrijenlek.nl; www.mijngelderland.nl

Rural actors with a more traditional focus on function integration are rural estates. As rural properties with historical roots in nobility, religion, mercantile or early industrial capital, many of these rural estates are actively in search for new rural markets that build on the valorisation of specific rural qualities and the creation of new urban-rural interaction patterns (see e.g. www.Marienwaerdt.nl; www.landgoedhemmen.nl;). As earlier outlined in the ETUDE Quick-Scan case on rural estates, these represent relatively strong lower level rural webs that contribute positively to rural competitiveness and quality of rural life. Later we will return to the relevance of rural estates in relation to challenges and opportunities for future 'web design' (see chapter 6). At this moment it is more important to conclude that also rural estates contribute positively to domain dynamics, interactions and mutual exchanges that translate in an emerging rural web at the level of National Landscape Rivierengebied. Figure 1 tries to visualize these dynamics in terms of mutually reinforcing tendencies and positive externalities.

Figure 1: Rivierengebied as an emerging rural web



4.2 Rivierengebied as a still weakly developed rural web

Another story can be told about ongoing dynamics in *Rivierengebied*, a story that much more acknowledges and emphasizes the presence of different kinds of frictions and tensions between web domains and, therefore, a counter image of the positive domain interactions as highlighted in the first storyline.

This second story could start with the different types of conflicts that emerged around the delineation of the National Landscape area. For different reasons several stakeholders in Rivierengebied opposed seriously against a policy status as National Landscape. Firstly this goes for conventional farmers' organisations. In particular the organisations that represent the interests of tree nurseries and glasshouse farmers feared that a National Landscape status would sooner or later would go along with limitations for agricultural modernization and 'level playing field' conditions. These organisations succeeded to change first delineation plans of national governance and to exclude areas with a concentration of avenue tree nursery (around the village Opheusden) and glasshouse vegetable production (around the Bommelerwaard) from a National Landscape status. Firstly it illustrates conventional farmers' organisations still prominent role in rural policy design and secondly shows that there are still strong forces within agriculture that oppose against multifunctionality as guiding principle for sustainable agricultural and rural development. Much more than multifunctionality, agricultural modernization building on further specialization and scale enlargement is actively being advocated as the future for regional farmers, as also expressed in a broad variety of policy statements and project proposals (see e.g. De Boomkwekerij, 2007, Fruitpact, 2008, LaanBoompact Betuwe, 2006, LTO-Noord 2005 and 2006)

Another delineation conflict relates to urban opposition from the Tiel administration, major regional urban centre that in initial plans partly was included within National Landscape boundaries. Tiel's administration opposed in particular against the 'zero demographic growth' objective as part of a National Landscape policy status, which could frustrate its plans for further expansion. This conflict has been resolved by excluding the municipality of Tiel completely from the final delineation as an illustration of also broader still highly limited direct urban commitment to protect, safeguard and actively strengthen rural qualities in *Rivierengebied*. Some interviewees explain this lack of urban commitment by referring to a lack of awareness of the importance of adjacent rural areas among smaller regional urban centres. Another reason would be, although perhaps as a unintended consequence, that national policy frameworks continue to stimulate urbanization more actively than regional administrative policies that focus on safeguarding and preservation of rural spatial qualities. This due to the fact that national support budgets for municipalities increase progressively according to number of inhabitants. Other interviewees emphasize that adjacent *larger* urban centres as Arnhem, Utrecht and Den Bosch are historically much more oriented at other rural zones in their direct vicinity than in *Rivierengebied*. Also this would be an important reason for a governance of rural markets not yet characterized by strong urban-rural partnerships that strengthen the development of new rural markets for goods and services and succeed to decrease current dependencies on globalization tendencies in food markets.

Another characteristic of the institutional setting in *Rivierengebied* relates to overall limited policy attention for its 'governability'. Final delineated National Landscape area involves two different provincial administrations and no less than 14 municipalities, mostly partly located within National Landscape boundaries. In particular involvement of two provincial administrations complicates policy design and coordination at National Landscape level. As argued, this is partly explained by the fact that both provincial administrations have their own rural policy traditions, including different role perceptions. Inter-provincial coordination is furthermore little stimulated by national financial budgets for a National Landscape status. Current national budgets for a National Landscape do not exceed an annual 2 million euro and are certainly of little significance in comparison to e.g. provincial WILG budgets (see also Table 1). Therefore, there might emerge new institutional arrangements supportive to the emergence of a rural web in *Rivierengebied*, but it should be also acknowledged that there continue to exist serious institutional barriers that impede an adequate institutional coordination at National Landscape level.

These limitations in the institutional setting can't be isolated from the absence of a shared socio-cultural identity at the level of *Rivierengebied*. The National Landscape area includes different more or less well known socio-cultural identities as De Betuwe (partly) Land van Maas and Waal (partly), Bommelerwaard (partly), Kromme Rijngebied (completely) and Langbroekerwetering (completely). In other words, *Rivierengebied* has been delineated as a rural area with distinctive landscape qualities, but lacks a broadly shared socio-cultural identity. This manifests itself in different ways. In the tourism sector e.g. branding initiatives can be witnessed under the name **Rivierenland** that joins sub-regional networks of rural tourism enterprises in the Betuwe, Land van Maas en Waal en Bommelerwaard and gradually succeeds to overcome sub-regional identity based sensitivities (see also www.rivierenland.nl). The director of public-private regional tourism organisation Rivierenland is all but pleased with the creation of a National Landscape under the name *Rivierengebied*. In his opinions this demonstrates above all a lack of institutional capacity to build on ongoing regional network dynamics and a highly limited institutional commercial sensitivity. His organisation, together with the municipalities that also cooperate under the name **Rivierenland** did send 'a letter of

complain' to the national ministries of agriculture and spatial planning about the implementation of a National Landscape under the name *Rivierengebied*. This initiative turns out to be little successful, also due to the fact that rural actors in other sub-regions as Kromme Rijn and Langbroekerwetering show little enthusiasm to cooperate under the name *Rivierenland*. In short, it illustrates how current absence of a broadly shared social-cultural identity seriously complicates social capital building at National Landscape level and shows how interrelations between social capital, institutional arrangements and governance of rural markets continue to be rather weakly developed.

Other indications for a still weak rural web relate to the domain of novelty production. In *Rivierengebied* different innovation networks can be witnessed with a clear strategic orientation on agriculture's competitiveness in international food markets. There is e.g. the Betuws Bloem initiative (literally Betuws Flower), an agro-cluster based innovation project for fruit producers, avenue three nurseries and mushroom producers (Fruitpact, 2008). This innovation project is characterized by a strong involvement of knowledge centres as Wageningen University, profiling itself as Food Valley and Nijmegen University as Health Valley. Closer cooperation with both regional universities should result in high tech innovations with respect to environmental performances, food logistics and product innovations. An innovation approach that follows much more a sectoral and ecological modernization logic than the valorisation of available endogenous resources. Strength of these primarily *sector* based innovation networks should not be neglected. In terms of economic strength and institutional partnerships these are certainly stronger than the much younger and still less established regional learning networks of multifunctional rural enterprises as presented in storyline 1. Number of regional farmers with strategic preferences for agricultural modernization might decrease steadily, but these remain influential partners of national agro-expertise system with a strong institutional interest in further agricultural modernization. Just to give just an impression of differentiating economic revenues of land use practices following contrasting agricultural development trajectories: costs per hectare fruit following the modernization logic (that is to say: high yielding fruit varieties commercialized in anonymous fruit markets) are about 5 times less than fruit production systems that build on standard fruit varieties with their valued contributions to typical landscape values in *Rivierengebied*.

Current institutional interest in multifunctionality is primarily oriented at high-tech function combinations such as food production with (biomass) energy production. Fore mentioned innovation program Betuws Bloem e.g., includes a project to further develop the basic idea of a glasshouse vegetable production system that becomes a net energy producers by using and exploring solar and earth warmth. Certainly an innovative approach, but again with little explicit attention for potential integration with other endogenous resources such as e.g. landscape values. Institutional focus on ecological modernization as guiding principle for multifunctionality translate in extreme cases in future scenario's without agricultural land use in *Rivierengebied*. This is e.g. expressed in ideas about the creation new moors and rivers in *Rivierengebied* that claim to integrate different rural functions as nature and water management with additional space for attractive rural residences (Innovatienetwerk plattelandsontwikkeling, 2007). Other studies express similar claims by focussing on the opportunities for floating rural residences (www.rivierarrangementen.nl/Bataafsewaterhutten).

Simultaneously there are different kinds of serious institutional barriers that impede multifunctional rural enterprises to further develop their businesses (Praktijkonderzoek Plant en Omgeving, 2006). In particular spatial planning frameworks at different levels (provincial,

municipal) continue to offer often marginal opportunities to combine rural functions at enterprise level, notwithstanding overall institutional growing interest for new arrangements that more actively stimulate lower level function integration (Animal Science Group Wageningen UR, 2005, Ernst & Young, 2006, CLM, 2002 and 2007). Earlier we mentioned ongoing experiments with new rural estates as an example of new policy instruments that aim to stimulate the integration of rural functions. Workshop participants (see also Annex I), however, show little enthusiasm about the first results of this new policy instrument. Mostly the ‘happy few’ that can afford to build estates under the specific conditions would demonstrate little sensitivity for regional cultural heritage in architectural choices. A minimum of 5 ha of new nature area would be also too marginal to contribute positively to landscape values.

This brings us to the broader issue of ongoing interrelations between the institutional setting and social capital building. In storyline 1 it has been emphasized that there emerge different types of new institutional arrangements that build on and simultaneously strengthen social capital in *Rivierengebied*. There is, however, also a regional problem of selective accessibility of rural development funds. New territory based networks as agri-environmental cooperatives might get increasingly institutional support, but simultaneously face severe competition in the distribution of rural development funds. Less co-financing capacities and / or experience with rural project development makes that major parts of rural policy budgets continues to go to traditionally strong rural stakeholders as conventional farmers’ organisations and professional nature organisations. Distribution of rural development funds, therefore, is subject of debate within *Rivierengebied*. Table 1 gives an impression of regional priority setting in and availability of financial resources for rural development for the period 2007-2013².

Table 1: Rural development budget allocation Rivierenland for 2007-2013 period.

RD Investment categories (million €)	Total foreseen costs for period 07-13	Reservations from National Investment Budget rural areas	Reservations from EU RD programme	Reservations from Provincial Budgets	Foreseen contributions from regional public and private actors
Sustainable water management	78.5 (31%)	6.5	6.0	2.0	53.0
Nature, Landscape and Cultural heritage	49.0 (19%)	14.2	9.5	9.9	15.4
Rural liveability	44.0 (17%)	0.0	4.0	9.0	31.0
Sustainable agriculture	38.7 (15%)	9.8	3.8	4.2	20.9
Tourism & Leisure	34.8 (14%)	6.5	5.5	6.0	13.6
Diversification of rural economy	9.0 (4%)	0.5	1.0	1.5	4.0
Communication	1.4 (0.5%)	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.5
Total	255.8 (100%)	37.7 (15%)	30.2 (12%)	32.9 (13%)	153.8 (60%)

As shown, financial resources are in particular allocated to: 1) sustainable water management; 2) nature, landscape and cultural heritage; 3) rural livability 4) sustainable agriculture and 5) tourism and leisure. The Table further illustrated that European, National and Provincial

² Figures are not completely covering the National landscape area. Data about the area that belongs to the province of Utrecht are not included, whereas the provincial delineation of *Rivierengebied* covers an area that is somewhat larger than the National Landscape delineation.

administrations contribute more or less equal to total rural development budgets, to be supplemented with about 60% from regional public and private actors.

More in-depth analysis of budget spending learns that sustainable agricultural development is primarily defined as agricultural competitiveness in international markets. Support to multifunctional rural enterprises will come primarily from the budget category 'Nature, Landscape and Cultural heritage'. The fact that it has been agreed that 40% of total budget for nature and landscape management will be reserved for private landowners and 60% for professional nature organisations gives an idea of current balance in political influence of farmers and private landowners on the one hand and professional nature organisations on the other.

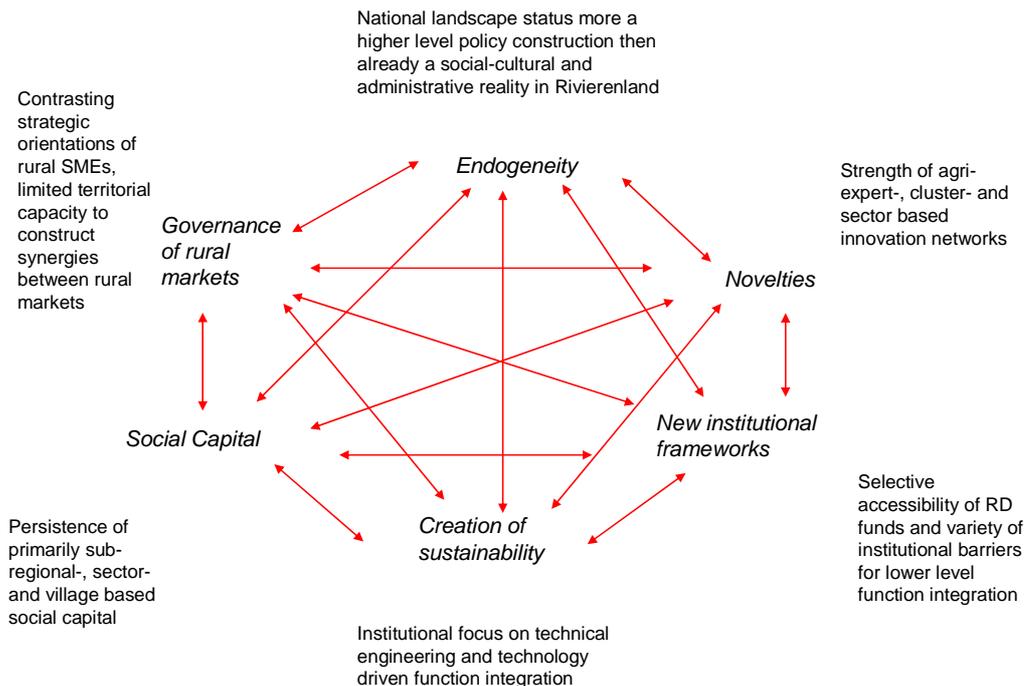
The relatively large budget for 'rural liveability' will be primarily allocated to the creation of so-called 'Kulturhuses', multifunctional meeting places in smallest rural villages and settlements that combine public and private services with overall objective to strengthen quality of life and social cohesion. High foreseen budget for sustainable water management expresses above all growing national societal concerns about climatic change and its consequences for water management challenges. Consequences for agricultural development opportunities in *Rivierengebied* are still unclear. Multifunctional land use could be stimulated in which farmers get prominent roles in (temporary) water retention, as suggested by some studies (references to be included). Others claim that temporary extra water retention is difficult to combine with prevailing safety regulations of food production systems and argue that therefore that is best to be realized through expropriation of agricultural land users.

Table 1 also shows that foreseen rural development budget for tourism and leisure almost equals the budget for sustainable agriculture. This confirms growing importance of tourism and leisure in the rural economy of *Rivierengebied*, although co-financing capacity of rural tourism sector is still relatively low compared to the agricultural sector. Finally, relatively small budget category 'diversification of rural economy' will be in particular reserved for the renovation and modernization of small scale business parks in rural areas.

More in general this information about rural development priority setting illustrates again the absence of a broadly shared view on sustainable rural development and the co-existence of differentiating agricultural development patterns. This becomes also manifest in the ongoing governance of rural markets. As argued, in *Rivierengebied* certainly a growing interest can be witnessed for new rural markets as tourism, leisure, regional typical food etc. Regional capacity to further develop these markets through new institutional arrangements and new public-private partnerships remains weakly developed. This is e.g. reflected in the absence of adequate regulations to protect regional symbolic capital related to fruit quality. As argued, Betuws fruit is having a long national tradition as quality fruit. Now a days this symbolic capital can be explored by fruit processing industries that mainly produce on the basis of cheap fruit imports from central and eastern European countries. Other important shortcomings in ongoing governance of rural markets are a lack of cooperation between multifunctional and conventional rural tourism related SMEs in the promotion and development of regional tourism sector and relatively little attempts to develop new rural markets as e.g. care provision in agricultural environments, as actively constructed in National Landscape Laag-Holland (see other case-study report). As a whole current weaknesses in the governance of rural markets reflect a rather limited territorial capacity to: 1) create synergies between different rural markets; 2) to reduce farm enterprise's dependencies on anonymous food- and other agricultural markets and 3) to create new urban-rural partnership that actively support the development of new rural markets.

Figure 2 tries to summarize these and other major conclusions of this second story-line. It emphasizes that in addition to the first storyline that focused on positive dynamics within and between domains, its important to acknowledge that *Rivierengebied* is also facing all kinds of limitations in ongoing rural dynamics that translate together in a still limited overall territorial capacity to a strong and robust rural web in the sense of mutual reinforcing domain interactions and positive externalities.

Figure 2: Rivierengebied as still weakly developed rural web

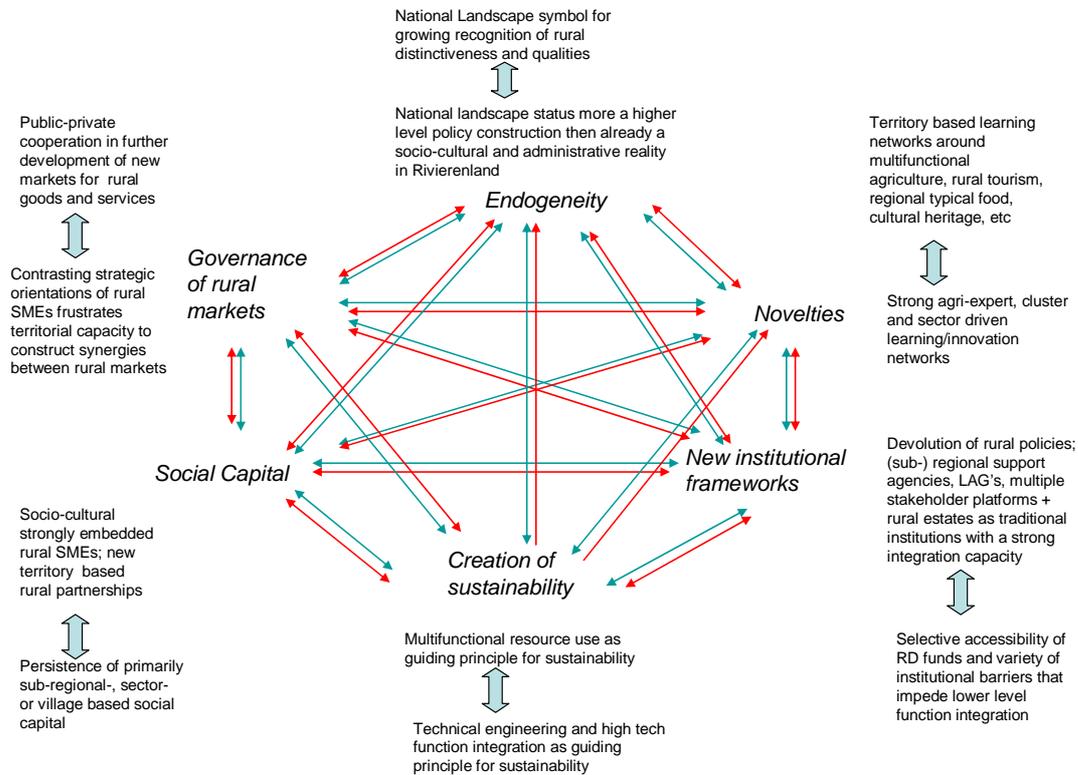


4.3. Actual configuration of the web

Two different story-lines have been presented to illustrate differentiating and contrasting tendencies within rural web dynamics in *Rivierengebied*. On the one hand dynamics have been identified that suggest mutually reinforcing domain interrelations and interactions that point at the emergence of a rural web at National landscape level. On the other hand a variety of frictions and tensions within and between domains have been distinguished that feed the conclusion that it is still impossible to distinguish a rural web at the level of *Rivierengebied*. Figure 3 tries to integrate the two storylines by representing both the positive as well as the negative aspects of ongoing domain dynamics and interactions. As whole the positive interrelations indicated at the top around domains, might be understood as a kind of counter structure since prevailing dynamics that represent barriers within and between domains (indicated at the bottom) continue to be highly dominant and persistent.

Previous analysis based on a distinguishing two different storylines makes it impossible to define domain roles in one dimensional terms as ‘initiators’, ‘outcomes’ or ‘lubricants’ as suggested in the WP4 guidelines. Depending on the specific narrative, roles of domains will vary, might include different roles or are primarily to be characterized as a ‘barrier’.

Figure 3: Frictions and tensions between around domains in Rivierengebied



4.4 The web in act: initiatives coming from and strengthening the web

Table 2 presents a selection of relevant initiatives *Rivierengebied* to illustrate ongoing rural network dynamics. All initiatives have been introduced before in previous web analysis and, therefore, are in this section only summarized to characterize ongoing rural network dynamics in line with WP4 guidelines. It is further important to notice that following selection of 10 initiatives is rather arbitrary which becomes in particular meaningful as part of overall resources that have been consulted to analyse rural web dynamics. These include not just initiatives, but also websites, policy and research documents with relevant information about characteristics and priority setting in rural development programmes, rural development discourses, etc. etc. See also chapter 7 with a complete overview of consulted resources.

Table 2: Selection of initiatives

Title of initiative	Actors involved	Short description
1. National Landscape Rivierengebied	national, provincial and local administrations, Provincial coordinators, rural stakeholders, urban administrations	New policy category aiming for preservation of rural areas with high landscape values
2. Samenwerkingsverband Rivierengebied	Cooperating regional municipalities	Territory based cooperation between rural municipalities to strengthen supra-local/ regional policy development and cooperation, Rural development budgets and priority setting for period 2007-2013,
3. WILG	National, provincial and municipal administrations,	New institutional arrangement for rural/regional policy delivery aiming for integrated rural/regional development
4. Regionaal Bureau voor Toerisme Rivierenland	Regional entrepreneurs active in rural tourism	Interest organisation for rural tourism and region branding
5. Agri-environmental cooperative Tieler- & Culemborgerwaard	Regional farmers cooperating around agricultural's provision of nature and landscape values	Network of rural entrepreneurs with a strategic preference for multifunctionality
6. Betuws Bloem	Regional farmers with a strong strategic preference for agricultural modernisation, agribusiness, agri-expert system, Universities of Wageningen (Food Valley) and Nijmegen (Health Valley) oriented,	Innovation network for agricultural modernisation/ chain based cooperation /learning
7. LEADER LAGs in Kromme Rijn and Rivierengebied-West	Rural dwellers, rural entrepreneurs, national/regional local administrations	Grass roots initiatives at sub-regional level created by EU LEADER programme
8. Rural estates Hemmen, Marienwaerdt	Rural estate managers, owners, tenants, local/regional, national administrations	Larger scale rural enterprises with a long tradition and a strong capacity to integrate traditional and new rural functions
9. Landschapsbeheer Gelderland	Rural dwellers / Land users interested in nature and landscape management	Environmental organisations that promotes voluntary landscape management
10. Provincial Pilot promotion territory based cultural heritage	Educational centres, provincial administration, municipalities	Provincial pilot project around promotion of cultural heritage

Again in line with WP4 guidelines, table 3 aims to give an impression of most significant web domains of the initiatives as presented in table 2. Firstly it shows that domain significance indeed might vary, although in all initiatives at least 5 domains are being classified as (highly) present. Secondly, overall table content suggests that governance of rural markets might be weakest developed domain in Rivierengebied, although, as argued before, selection of initiatives remains arbitrary. Domain relevance as summarized in Table 3, therefore, is best to be understood as supportive to the analysis that builds on the distinction of different narratives.

Table 3: Relevance of domains in initiatives

DIMENSIONS	Initiatives/Networks (see table descriptions)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Governance of rural markets	+	--	--	++	++	+	+	++	0	+
New Institutional frameworks	++	++	+++	+	+++	+	++	0	+	0
Sustainability	+	+	+	+	++	+	+	++	++	+
Endogeneity	+	+	+	+	++	--	++	+++	++	++
Novelties	0	+	+	++	++	--	++	++	+	+
Social capital	+	+	+	++	++	+	++	++	++	++

5. The web and the transition of the area

5.1 Impact on rural competitiveness

Previous characterization of rural web dynamics in *Rivierengebied* makes it difficult to draw simple conclusions on its impact on rural competitiveness. Following the narrative of an emerging rural web, it could be argued that *Rivierengebied* shows a growing capacity to develop a kind of resilience capacity against the urbanization pressures that metropolitan rural areas have to face. Its National Landscape status is probably most symbolic for this resilience capacity, a status which provides a certain kind of protection against further urban annexation through expanding residential areas, creation of new business parks, land claims for extra infrastructural works, etc. Also the variety of other positive domain dynamics and interactions as highlighted in storyline does suggest that rural competitiveness in *Rivierengebied* is strengthened by an emerging rural web at National Landscape level.

Storyline 2 much more emphasizes that its rural competitiveness is still weakly developed in terms of overall capacity to strengthen the socio-economic basis of its typical rural qualities. Current co-existence of contrasting agricultural development patterns and competing sustainability paradigms were mentioned as important sources of conflicts and disagreements between and among rural stakeholders. This results in still little coherence in rural policy design; limited institutional incapacity to create synergies between traditional and new rural functions and a weakly developed active governance of rural markets. All also manifested in the absence of rural-urban partnerships that might preserve, support and strengthen rural qualities and further develop new rural markets for e.g. tourism, leisure, care-provision, education, green and blue services, quality food, etc. As long as major adjacent urban centres continue to be primarily oriented at other rural areas, direct urban commitment to and involvement might be difficult to mobilize. This is contrast with ongoing dynamics in other National Landscapes as e.g. *Laag-Holland* where Amsterdam as metropolitan administration is increasingly participating in initiatives, projects and networks that explicitly aim to strengthening its adjacent *rural* qualities (see also other Dutch case-study report). Without similar new urban-rural partnerships, it will be probably difficult to safeguard, preserve and strengthen *Rivierengebied's* typical landscape qualities as its most distinctive endogenous rural resources. Therefore, perhaps an overall growing awareness of the value and relevance of its endogenous resources can be distinguished within policy, science and practice, but it is still highly premature to conclude that *Rivierengebied* might indeed maintain its rural competitiveness through developing into a strong and robust rural web.

5.2 Impact on quality of rural life

Quality of rural life will be approached as a relational concept that only gets meaning in comparison to quality of life in other rural areas or of that in urban environments. An appropriate conceptualization of quality of life requires furthermore the recognition of; 1) dynamics in time (it gets better or worse) and 2) the need for 'fine tuning' between different quality of life dimensions as: 1) the physical (attractiveness of landscape, nature, etc.); 2) the social (sense of belonging, availability of networks, meeting points, agency, feelings of safety, etc.) and 3) the economic (quality of services, infrastructure, employment opportunities, creation of added value, social mobility opportunities etc. etc).

Building on such a conceptualization, available material allows firstly for the general conclusion that quality of rural life in *Rivierengebied* is highly appreciated. This can be

demonstrated more in detail by following indicators that refer to its physical, economic and social dimensions:

- Slightly higher average incomes in comparison to provincial and urban averages (Sociale Atlas van Gelderland, 2004) .
- Slightly lower unemployment rates in comparison to provincial and adjacent urban centres (ibid).
- Relative high rural estate prices in comparison to urban estate prices (www.cbs.nl)
- Relatively high number of enterprises per 1000 inhabitants in rural areas (Kamer van Koophandel Centraal Gelderland, 2004).
- Popularity of River landscape values in comparison to other typical Dutch landscapes (Alterra reference to be included).
- Relatively popularity of rural areas, in particular those close to urban centres (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, 2006).
- Most positive self-evaluation of rural dwellers with regard to social cohesion and overall safety feelings in rural settlements in Rivierengebied (Spectrum, 2004).
- Higher participation of rural dwellers in voluntary organisations (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2006).
- Less concerns about multicultural society in rural areas (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2006).

At the same time it is important to include the research material that points at serious concerns with regard to quality of rural life in *Rivierengebied*. These concerns can be summarized as follows:

- Social exclusion problems in smallest rural settlements due to loss of public and private services in direct vicinity that effect in particular less mobile rural inhabitants (Ecofys, 2004; Ecorys,2005; Provincie Gelderland, 2006b; Kardol, 2005).
- Social exclusion problems due to restricted rural building policies and high rural estate prices (e.g. Stichting Wonen voor Senioren op Boerderijen, 2003; Vereniging Kleine Kernen, 2005).
- Transport congestion problems complicating a.o. rural commuting (Provincie Gelderland, 2005d).
- Degradation of landscape qualities and –more in general- quality of rural space (Ruimtelijk Planbureau, 2005 and 2008).

As a whole available material learns that quality of rural life in Rivierenland is in general highly appreciated and in many aspects by rural dwellers perceived as superior to urban quality of life, albeit that this will vary according to age and life-style. At the same time it is emphasized that high quality of rural life is vulnerable for threats that in particular relate to its physical (deteriorating landscape and broader rural spatial qualities) and social dimensions (increase of social exclusion problems).

5.3 Web design challenges

As argued, quality of rural life and in particular rural competitiveness in *Rivierengebied* face some important challenges. In the following we will present some ideas about active ‘rural web design’ that might contribute positively to competitiveness of and quality of life in *Rivierengebied* by distinguishing three different types of challenges. A first addresses in particular the challenges that the institutional setting is facing. A second trajectory is primarily oriented at rural entrepreneurs and the reproducibility of design principles that make

rural estates strong rural webs. The last trajectory focuses on rural web design as complex learning and negotiation processes that require active process management at territorial level.

Trajectory 1: Focus on institutional setting

At institutional level simultaneous action around different domains will be necessary to strengthen current still weakly developed rural web in *Rivierengebied*. Institutional setting is in particular challenged to improve multi-level coordination and to ‘align’ to ongoing network dynamics that strengthen basic ideas of the National Landscape status. A first step could be the institutional gesture to change the choice for *Rivierengebied* as name for the National Landscape into *Rivierenland* as a demonstration of institutional willingness to align actively to ongoing network dynamics within tourism and leisure.

There are other crucial issues that require much more institutional coordination and coherence to come to an active rural web design in *Rivierengebied* such as:

Governance of rural markets. Major challenge: how to reduce existing tensions in strategic orientations of rural SMEs and how to strengthen synergies between new rural markets. Within this broader theme different types of problems need to be tackled as e.g. ongoing conflict between the agri-environmental cooperative and regional Water Board about financial remuneration of agriculture’s provision of blue and green services by means of the creation of extra water retention capacity in nature friendly water slopes. Rural tourism and leisure and agricultural care-provision are other examples of having potential for synergies between rural markets that are still weakly explored in *Rivierengebied* in comparison to other rural areas in the Netherlands

Novelty based learning and innovation. Major challenge: how to build on and strengthen learning capacity of multifunctional rural enterprises within *Rivierenland*? As indicated, there are several (sub-) regional networks that actively search for further development of multifunctional rural enterprises. Current institutional setting could more actively stimulate cooperation and creation of sense of belonging at National Landscape level and try to actively support novelty based learning and innovation around themes as multifunctional land use, nature and landscape management, rural tourism, leisure, care-provision etc. Similar to other Dutch regions where emerged in the last few years different types of ‘knowledge ateliers’ in which regional knowledge institutions try to cooperate closely with local actors in community of practices around regional and local development. An active institutional support to novelty based learning and innovation could also include exchange of learning experiences with other National Landscapes with already longer experiences with e.g. region branding, certification systems for ‘Landscape Proof’ rural enterprises, organisation of National Landscape events (e.g. Groene Woud), marketing of regional typical food, regional organisation of care-provision by farms, urban-rural partnerships, etc. (e.g. Laag Holland)

Accessibility of RD-funds. Major challenge: how to (re-) organize access to RD-funds in such a way that current high transaction costs for in particular ‘grass roots’ initiatives can be significantly reduced. As argued, current rural development policy is rather selective accessible and, therefore, in general terms does not contribute positively to social capital building in *Rivierengebied*. There is certainly no easy solutions to resolve current dissatisfaction about the allocation of rural development funds among grass root initiatives. Rather fundamental shifts from project based towards much more process and network based support systems seem to be crucial components of this specific institutional challenge

Trajectory 2: Focus on Rural entrepreneurship

In addition to the institutional setting, also rural entrepreneurs face important challenges in relation to rural web design and the creation of mutually reinforcing externalities that translate in robust rural web configurations. Earlier we identified traditional rural estates as interesting examples of lower level rural webs in the sense that these frequently demonstrate a strong capacity to integrate traditional and new rural functions. From a rural entrepreneurship perspective, it is a rather intriguing question to what extent underlying design principles of rural estates are reproducible in modern times:

- Strongly embedded in cultural (religious) values
- Locally grounded multiple resource use (natural, cultural, social)
- Relatively large scale land ownership / management
- Professional management (In terms of capacities to 1) create coherence in overall resource use, 2) to safeguard/ maintain and deepen distinctiveness; 3) to cooperate with other rural stakeholders (public and private); 4) to mobilize co-financing resources; 5) to resist urbanization 'temptations' as well as create new rural-urban alliances.)

These design principles could function as a kind of source of inspiration for future rural entrepreneurship that contributes positively to *Rivierengebied's* socio-cultural and landscape identity. Workshop participants did react to different degrees enthusiastic on the idea to build future rural entrepreneurship more on these rural estate design principles, as illustrated by ideas such as the creation of a Fruit Infotainment Centre that valorises *Rivierengebied's* symbolic capital as fruit production area or the design of large scale dairy farm that does succeed to integrate scale enlargement with positive contributions to nature, landscape and cultural resources, in contrast with current scale-enlargement effects in dairy farming. They expressed serious doubts if social capital in agriculture would be sufficient to organize necessarily collective action with regard to e.g. land resource management. Rural estate representatives did react most positive and even argued that it would be rather easy to interest institutional investors for such ideas.

Trajectory 3: Focus on process management

Scholars within innovation studies characterize rural development more and more as complex and combined processes of collective learning and negotiation. Certainly in densely populated rural areas as in the Netherlands with its manifold claims on scarce land resources rural development initiatives are almost per definition contested and subject of debate among involved stakeholders. For that reason it is increasingly accepted that active rural development policies require an active management to facilitate involved complex collective learning and negotiation processes. As argued, at the level of National Landscape *Rivierengebied* an active process management is still largely lacking, although both Provincial Program Offices might claim that these made a start with it. A really supportive process management, that is to say concentrated on the maintenance, strengthening and valorising of rural qualities and the creation of a *rural* resource based economy, presupposes much more activating and coordinating activities around following fields:

- Web design as outlined in paragraph 6.1 and 6.2.
- New rural partnerships that build on multifunctional resource use.
- New public-private partnerships that stimulate and integrate new rural markets and synergies.

- New urban-rural partnerships that strengthen the economic basis of *rural* resource based economies.
- Territory based learning networks / communities of practices supportive to *rural* resource based economies.
- Active region branding.

6 . Impact of policy arrangements

6.1. Introduction

Additionally to earlier remarks about rural web design challenges in *Rivierengebied*, case-study material allows for some more specific reflections on the role of policy arrangements in relation to rural web unfolding. Without pretending to give a complete overview of policy arrangements of relevance at different policy levels, this would imply serious extra analysis, it is possible to give a more general impression of policy arrangements of relevance for rural web design. Firstly different policy arrangements will be presented with positive impacts on rural web unfolding in *Rivierengebied*. This will be followed by some reflections on policy arrangements that much more impede and frustrate rural web unfolding and major challenges for a more stimulating policy environment.

6.2 Policy arrangements with positive impacts

National Landscape status

As already mentioned, *Rivierengebied* has been recently denominated as a National landscape, a national policy framework for rural areas with distinctive and valuable landscape values. This status becomes gradually, although to different degrees, also for involved provincial and municipal administrations, a kind of guiding principle for policy interventions. Positive impacts of the National landscape status can be summarized as follows:

- it increases rural resilience capacity against urbanization pressures
- it valorises endogenous resources as nature and landscape values
- it offers (limited) extra financial resources for rural development
- it stimulates territorial coherence in policy design

WILG (Wet Investeringsregeling Landelijk Gebied) (Investment Regulation Rural Areas)

This other national policy arrangement has been implemented in 2006 with the overall objective to stimulate the integration of a set of primarily sector based national policy frameworks and to decentralize (to a certain extent) decision making on the integration of sector based policies to provincial administrations. To give an impression of its relevance, total WILG budget is about six times higher as the EU budget for Rural Development Programme in the Netherlands, which shows its major importance in terms of rural policy delivery. As foreseen, major benefits of WILG will be:

- a transfer of decision making power on rural policy delivery to lower level governances
- a stimulus for more integrated rural/ regional policy design and implementation
- a stimulus for territory based public-private partnerships

Territory based multi-stakeholder platforms

WILG also includes the creation of (sub-) regional multi-stakeholder as formal consultancy, advisory and decision making entities in which public actors (provinces, municipalities) cooperate closely with rural stakeholders as farmers organisations, environmental organisations, village organisations, health organisations, Water Boards, etc. etc. Within the limits of nationally defined broader rural policy goals, these regional platforms are becoming increasingly of importance with regard to priority setting in rural development and the

selection of rural development projects. Most positive contributions of this specific policy arrangement to rural development are:

- Stimulates collective learning (and negotiation) around integrated rural development
- Strengthens public-private cooperation in policy design and delivery
- Strengthens territory based network building and social capital

LEADER programme

Rivierengebied includes currently two LEADER areas. A first has been only recently approved by the provincial administration of Gelderland and functions since 2007 under the name Rivierengebied-Oost . The fact that regional multiple stakeholder platform (see above) has been chosen to function also as a LAG for this areas shows how LEADER is being incorporated in the implementation of WILG. To what extent such an incorporation indeed will contribute to the central LEADER philosophy of rural development driven by grass root initiatives can be questioned. Private actors in regional multi-stakeholder platforms are mostly professional employees of rural organisations with not always strong roots in local/regional rural societies. Second LEADER area in Rivierengebied, the Kromme Rijn Area in the province of Utrecht represents much more the genuine LEADER philosophy with a LAG that indeed consists primarily of locally rooted actors. Experiences within this LEADER area demonstrate that LEADER as an European policy arrangement indeed succeeds to contribute positively to:

- Mobilization of locally available social capital for rural policy delivery
- Strengthening of territory based networks / new rural partnerships
- Local capacity to develop projects in line with rural develop goals
- Strong public-private partnership for rural development design and delivery
- Creation of shared views on rural development
- Internal coherence between rural development projects

6.3. Policy arrangements with negative impacts

Partly in line with previous remarks on the characteristics of the Dutch institutional setting (see paragraph), different types of shortcoming of prevailing policy arrangements can be witnessed that are of relevance for ongoing rural dynamics in *Rivierengebied*:

Incoherencies

Firstly, prevailing policy arrangements are frequently characterized by lack of internal coherence, which might be in particular the case for the Netherlands due to following combination of reasons:

- Scarcity of land resources / intensity of land use
- Co-existence of strongly contrasting sustainability and rural development paradigms
- Co-existence of differentiating agricultural development trajectories
- A long tradition of policy arrangement that primarily built on rural function segregation and resulted in all kinds of path dependencies that make it rather difficult to respond adequately to growing societal demand for function integration and multiple resource use as guiding principles for rural development.
- Density and complexity of regulatory frameworks that impact on rural development

Selectivity

Secondly, there is a set of limitations of policy arrangements that relate to their selectivity. Following different expressions of current selectivity of policy arrangements could be distinguished for Rivierengebied:

- Bias of EU rural development programme (still strongly oriented at farm-enterprises and less at other relevant expressions of rural entrepreneurship)
- Preferential positions of professional nature organizations in policy delivery (policy arrangements for nature and landscape management by private landowners still little stimulating, see also 3)
- Dominance of professional employees in multi-stakeholder platforms for policy delivery (see earlier remarks on characteristics of LEADER implementation in Rivierengebied-Oost)
- Inaccessibility of rural policy budgets (high transaction costs, in particular for rural actors with more limited co-financing capacities and excluded from preferential positions through e.g. multi-annual programme financing)

Little stimulating

In addition to incoherencies and selectivity, also little stimulating policy arrangements might impact negatively on rural development. One of the policy fields for which this is clearly the case concerns prevailing agri-environmental schemes. Building on case-study material from Rivierengebied as well as national growing stock of research material different kinds of barriers can be distinguished:

- Dominance of short term agri-environmental contracts instead of longer term contracts that allow to integrate provision of green services in broader strategic decision making on farm development.
- Financial compensations that continue to be primarily based on loss of agricultural income instead of market conform remuneration systems for societal demands for new rural services
- Need for more context specific agri-environmental schemes and more performance based remuneration systems
- Monitoring systems primarily based on quantitative performance indicators show severe limitations
- Implementation of ideas about alternative policy arrangements for agriculture's provision of green services are frequently being frustrated by EU 'state-support proof' checks

Absence of adequate institutional frameworks

A fourth limitation of prevailing policy arrangements concerns the absence of adequate new arrangements needed to create strong rural webs. This relates e.g. to new policy arrangements that stimulate urban-rural partnerships. As has been argued, prevailing urban-rural interaction continues to be an important weaknesses of ongoing rural web dynamics in Rivierengebied. New policy arrangements as WILG might stimulate territory based cooperation and integrated rural development, but do not yet succeed to actively mobilize also urban support for rural development. At the same time is increasingly realized that new urban-rural partnerships are of crucial importance around different policy issues as sustaining food production and consumption, public health, region branding; public food procurement, supply and demand of new rural services (nature, landscape, leisure, care, tourism, etc.), rural accessibility, spatial

planning, etc. etc. Case study material shows that in Rivierengebied, as in most other Dutch regions, policy arrangements that explicitly search for new urban-rural partnerships are emerging only slowly. Therefore, after focussing on the strengthening of **rural** based partnerships, new **urban-rural** partnerships might be coming decades transfer in the major challenge for rural policy design at different policy level.

Shortcomings of project based approaches

Fifth, there is the issue of primarily project based policy arrangements (see also paragraph 5.3.). As has been argued, more process based policy approaches are needed to stimulate more effectively 1) territory based network formation; 2) new partnerships (rural, public-private, urban-rural) and 3) longer term mutual commitment to rural development processes. This as a response to rural development policy as a kind of 'project circus' with important shortcomings such as; 1) little coherence between projects; 2) volatile contributions to network creation; 3) selective accessibility due to high transaction costs; 4) little supportive to rural development as collective learning and negotiation processes.

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Multiple stakeholder platforms + LEADER programmes
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Tourism promotion material:
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3. Supplementary interviews:

Chairman regional agri-environmental cooperative
Provincial project-coordinator National Landscape Rivierengebied in Gelderland
Provincial project-coordinator National Landscape Rivierengebied in Utrecht.
Manager Regional Tourism Board Rivierenland (RBT)
Representative of Regional Chamber de Commerce
Representative of Water Board Rivierenland
Representative of Regional Nature and Landscape Organisations
Owners/managers of Rural Estates Hemmen and Marienwaerd
Project-coordinator Cultural Policy Rivierenland
Counsellor of Culemborg municipality
Consultant regional typical food marketing
Manager rural estate Hemmen
Director rural estate Marienwaerd

Annex 1: ETUDE Workshop , Rivierengebied

Date: 24/6/2008

Location: Rural Estate Marienwaerdt

Participants:

Frans van Lynden (manager rurale state Hemmen)

Kees Pieterse (Coördinator National Landscape Rivierengebied of Provincie Gelderland)

Frans van Verschuer (director rural estate Marienwaerdt)

Roeland Geertzen (municipal administration Culemborg)

Teunis de Jong (Agri-environmental cooperative Tielerwaard)

André Nagelhout (Provincial environmental organization for Landschape management Gelderland)

Wageningen University: Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, Henk Oostindie, Rudolf van Broekhuizen.

Workshop programme:

1. General introduction on ETUDE and workshop purpose
2. Presentation of preliminary case-study results (see Annex 2)
3. Informative questions
4. Issues for discussion

Summary of workshop findings

1. Recognition of rural web weaknesses

- The relevance of the rural web analysis, illustrated by the outcomes for Rivierengebied, is broadly recognized. Participants support our classification of Rivierengebied as perhaps unfolding rural within a broader context of many structural limitations. Partly in line with and partly complementary to our analysis of domain specific frictions and tensions, participants highlight the presence of different kinds of limitations that make it impossible to speak of a strong 'rural web' at the level of Rivierengebied. Most important issues raised by participants can be summarized as follows:

- Adjacent major urban centers (Arnhem, Nijmegen) continue to be primarily oriented at other nearby rural areas (Ooijpolder, Gelderse Poort, the Veluwe) and much less at Rivierengebied.

- Most urban regional municipalities (Zaltbommel, Tiel and Culemborg) do not include rural areas in their administrative boundaries which would also translate in relatively little attention for the rural part of Rivierengebied.

- Although one of regional urban administrations (Culemborg) recently officially stated not to aim for further expansion but to place quality of life on top of its policy agenda, other regional urban administrations would be still mainly characterized by a focus on urban growth.

- Administrative relationships between three major urban municipalities and smaller rural municipalities are mostly weak and /or conflictive.

- Also relationships between rural municipalities would be primarily characterized by competition and conflicts and much less by cooperation and coordination. In addition to municipal conflicts there is also the remnants of national policy of administrative scale enlargement of last decades. Amalgamation of small rural municipalities continue to face frequently internal tensions that trace back to former administrative boundaries.
- National policy frameworks continue to contain financial logics that stimulate municipal administrations much more to opt for expansion than to safeguard and strengthen rural amenities and spatial qualities.
- Last decade the region would have under spend available budgets for rural/regional development, which points at an overall rather limited capacity of regional administrative, public-private and multiple stakeholder cooperation.
- Provincial administration would realize insufficiently that *Rivierengebied* locates multiple rural estates that contribute positively to rural qualities (provincial attention for rural estates is traditionally oriented at the Achterhoek region, known for its high density of rural estates)
- Regional agri-environmental cooperative exists for 13 years and actively tries to contribute to the realization of underlying policy objectives of recent National Landscape status. Yet, the agri-environmental cooperative also faces a general farmers distrust in the institutional setting and rather limited regional budgets to seriously remunerate and stimulate farmers that contribute positively to National Landscape objectives.
- Regional attitude/ mentality of inhabitants of Rivierenland would be somewhat defensive and less pro-active compared to adjacent regions.
- Regional promotion and branding under the name Betuwe, with a much longer tradition and better known than alternatives as *Rivierengebied* or Rivierenland would be impossible due to the fact that the delineated National Landscape area covers more than the well known Betuwe region and includes multiple relatively strong socio-cultural sub-regional identities.
- The National Landscape area indeed still lacks a regional identity that builds on shared sense of belonging. This in contrast with e.g. adjacent National Landscape Nederlandse Waterlinie (Dutch Water Defense line) where stakeholders would be much easier to mobilize based on shared identities and shared ideas about priority setting in regional/ rural development..
- Participants confirm that co-financing requirements of rural development policies create all kinds of accessibility problems and that alternative financial constructions are needed to overcome current selectivity of rural development policy.
- Ongoing policy experiments with 'New Rural Estates learn that these do not contribute positively to the maintenance and preservation of landscape values and rural spatial qualities in broader sense.

2. Unfolding web

Additionally to the structural limitations that make it impossible to distinguish a strong rural web, participants recognize the emergence of counter tendencies. Additionally to initiatives and dynamics as presented in the workshop introduction, participants refer to following other expressions of such counter tendencies:

- Rural estate Marienwaerdt succeeds increasingly to cooperate constructively with environmental organizations as Gelders Landschap/SBB and Natuurmonumenten as another example of how rural stakeholders increasingly recognize the need for more territory based cooperation to support multifunctional land- and resource use.
- Multi-stakeholder policy platform *Rivierengebied* actively tries to establish closer contacts with urban administrations of Arnhem and Nijmegen to promote rural tourism and leisure facilities.
- Rural newcomers might play different roles in *Rivierengebied*, but there is certainly also rural newcomers that become major driving forces of collective action around an active preservation of landscape values.
- Agri-environmental cooperative is currently actively involved in a project in cooperation with regional Water Board to increase (temporal) storage capacity of water systems. As argued, applied 'kitchen table' approach got a remarkable high positive response with regard to farmers' attitudes to potentials for the integration of agricultural activities and water management challenges. The agri-environmental cooperative is currently in a (rather difficult) negotiation process with the Water Board about how to progress in the concretization of these potentials.
- Overall sensitivity among rural dwellers for landscape values would have increased significantly, as e.g. demonstrated by the presence of an active agri-environmental cooperative. At the same time it is emphasized that additional 'room for manoeuvre' for territory based policy frameworks is of crucial importance to build more adequately on this growing sensitivity.

3. Driving actors

Workshop introduction included the three different trajectories for rural web design as earlier presented in this case-study report. During the workshop time was to discuss these trajectories in detail, but the issue who should take the lead in active web design was explicitly discussed with following major outcomes:

- Several participants opinion that regional administrations should stimulate territorial cooperation. It is in particular emphasized that municipal administrations are of crucial importance to create the new alliances underlying the rural web idea.
- Other participants emphasize that also public-private partnerships as RBT (regional organization for Tourism) are important driving forces to come a better coordination in regional/rural policies
- Some participants suggest that it might better to focus on rural stakeholders with enthusiasm and energy instead of local and regional administrations to grasp chances

and opportunities for project development that step by step will contribute to collective identity building at national landscape level.

- It is emphasized by several participants that Rivierengebied could learn from adjacent National Landscape Water Linie (Water Defense Line) about how to create territory based cooperation among a broad variety of rural stakeholders which would have resulted in all kinds of innovative and promising projects.

4. Priority setting

At the end of the workshop participants were asked to reflect on the question: what would you personally do if you get the opportunity to spend a serious amount of money for rural development in Rivierengebied?

Reactions can be summarized as follows:

- Create a physical link between the rural estates Hemmen and Marienwaerdt through land purchases.
- Support initiatives that contribute to a functioning of the National Landscape similar to the logics of rural estates .
- Extra opportunities to create smaller landscape elements and interconnections between small landscape elements
- More active support of rural tourism to generate additional financial resources for an active landscape management.
- Stimulate activities that contribute to collective identity building as an essential prerequisite for safeguarding, preservation and strengthening of regional landscape values. .
- Develop and implement a policy for nature friendly water banks to make the National Landscape policy more visible for farmers and other landowners.
- To rehabilitate historical north-south transport routes as a contribution to an active preservation of cultural heritage and ‘transparency’ of the beautiful rural landscape of *Rivierengebied*.

5. Overall conclusions

The workshop did certainly contribute to a more profound understanding of ongoing rural web dynamics in *Rivierengebied*. Although participants did have had some initial problems with the rather complex rural web concept, workshop progress learned that the concept was increasingly perceived as an interesting way to look at, analyze and understand ongoing rural dynamics. In short, the workshop gave the opportunity to check, confirm and deepen our preliminary analysis. Other potential positive impacts such as territorial network building and collective learning have been probably more limited due to the choice to focus on stakeholders known for their positive attitudes on the National Landscape status. In a rural context with different kinds of conflicts and frictions, a wider and more representative group of stakeholders would have probably resulted in a less open exchange of thoughts, opinions and ideas about rural dynamics in *Rivierengebied*.