

## New Strategies for Implementing Locally Integrated Stream Restoration Projects

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**Flooding risks in the Netherlands have been a high priority for decades because of its high population density, proximity to the North Sea, and extensive use of land reclamation techniques. With confounding factors such as climate and land-use changes, the Dutch water boards, governments, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), local farmers, and private citizens are addressing the vulnerabilities related to increasing flood risks by improving the resilience of the natural and social systems. Based on an existing framework of important governance regime characteristics, we explore how local groups work toward a more sustainable situation by producing synergetic win-win situations, constructive and cooperative planning and implementation, and the development of a high level of trust.**

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The Netherlands is a small, densely populated, and flood-prone nation. National water management techniques have been developed to address these issues in relation to a number of important geographic conditions: the southeastern portion of the country is a river delta, the three large rivers (the Rhine, Waal, and Meuse) separate the country into fragments, and the extensive system of dikes and polders enable a large portion of land below sea level to be used for development. This special context has prioritized the national development of modern flood management, risk reduction, and awareness techniques (Kuks, 2005). As early as the 12th century, local watershed-based government agencies called *waterschappen* (water boards) were developed to maintain desirable water levels for agriculture and housing, as well as to provide flood protec-

tion. These water boards are still functioning today, though the context in which they operate is changing.

Following the North Sea major flooding in 1953 that killed nearly 2,000 Dutch inhabitants, the country began the construction of the famous Delta Project, which would reduce the risk of flooding to once per 10,000 years in the coastal provinces of South Holland and Zeeland and to once in every 4,000 years for the rest of the country. The project included the building and raising of 3,000 km of outer sea dikes and 10,000 km of inland canals and river dikes. The rising sea is not the only problem related to climate change for the Netherlands, as erratic weather patterns can cause the inland rivers to overflow. High levels of urban development and river channelization further increase the threats by impacting drainage, the peak and speed of flood events, and the frequency and magnitude of baseflow events (Allan, 2004).

Increasingly severe weather events and the related runoff issues experienced over the last few decades in the eastern part of the country have led to serious reconsiderations about how the water boards approach their water management responsibilities. The cost effectiveness of the traditional technological approach with man-made infrastructure to control surface water flows both from inland and the sea is currently being debated, and new solutions are emerging. A general belief held by the water-board managers interviewed is that for acceptable flood safety levels to be maintained by the traditional method of dike building, the economic and spatially related investments required would need to be scales of magnitude larger than they have been in the past.

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In this article, we report on the actions of the water board of Regge and Dinkel and its partners in working to add as much as 10,000 hectares (ha) of water retention area to a 53-km stretch of the Regge River. The general strategy for accomplishing this goal is based on the implementation of restoration-focused projects to reconnect the river with its floodplain. Restoration involves removing the (impacts of) man-made intrusions of the past, restoring flood retention and storage, supporting natural riparian habitat, and enabling the return of the river's variability with respect to water levels and path. The nearly 14 (and still increasing) different subprojects developed as part of a shared vision among the stakeholders include a wide range of various land uses.

This article describes the general aspects of the Regge restoration case, as well as an illustrative subproject that provides specific examples of the strategies related to the completion of the restoration goals. What is important to the authors' conceptualization of the implementation process is that the actions of the local stakeholders take place in a specific context that is influenced by the governance regime. The *governance regime* is defined here as the structural context surrounding the implementation process, which affects the actors involved. As in a previous European Union (EU) research project (see Bressers and Kuks, 2004), the characteristics of this regime are hypothesized as being influential in the implementation process (apart from its direct contents). In addition to the two characteristics of extent and coherence used in this previous study, we highlight where the flexibility and intensity of this regime impact the ability of project implementers to fulfill their tasks.

## Valley Setting

### Climate and Hydrology

In Europe (and many other parts of the world), climate change is expected to lead to an increase in the amount and irregularity of rainfall and, consequently, river levels, causing higher peaks and more severe droughts (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007). Storms have highlighted weaknesses in water systems throughout Europe as protection against river floods has become increasingly difficult to provide (Heck et al., 2006). A new paradigm in water management that is aligned with the EU Water Framework Directive seeks to make maximum use of op-

portunities to support natural ecosystems where possible and to restore a less extreme variation in water levels.

The Regge River basin drains most of Twente, a region with a population of over 600,000 in the eastern part of the Province of Overijssel. The water levels were regulated in the past through an artificial drainage system of canals, sluices, pumps, ditches, trenches, and drains to provide faster drainage of farmland and to increase the land available for use. These interventions have left the resulting water system lacking the natural qualities and buffering capacity required to handle the droughts and increasingly heavy rainfalls of the expected future scenarios. A broader view of water's functions, including its role in supporting the ecosystem and natural landscape, has gained wider acknowledgment among Dutch water managers (particularly in the water boards), and consequently river restoration projects have commenced that are largely "undoing the past."

### Land Cover, Use, and Ownership

Biodiversity losses expected due to climate change impacts are further compounded by the habitat fragmentation found in natural areas (Opdam and Wascher, 2004). As do the majority of nature restoration activities in the Netherlands, the Regge restoration takes place in conjunction with implementation of the National Ecological Network [Ecologische Hoofd Structuur (EHS)], which is an interconnected network of natural areas throughout the Netherlands that are protected from intrusive developments. The EHS works to reduce the impact of the high fragmentation of Dutch land use by supporting the development of viable corridors of passage for various species. The inclusion of the EHS into the Regge projects has thus provided additional funding opportunities, as well as opportunities for collaborative work among interested organizations. In addition to the provincial role in the implementation of the EHS, the municipal authorities, water boards, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and landowners are also all involved in the process. The financial support for these projects, however, has recently been withdrawn by the national government, which has caused some uncertainty regarding the exact way in which the projects will continue to develop.

The increased spatial and planning requirements associated with managing water through supporting natural systems and dynamics (e.g., enlarging and increasing floodplains, meandering) rather than with man-made interventions (dikes, sluices, canals, etc.) are especially relevant in densely populated countries like the Netherlands. Dutch

spatial planners have extensive experience in trying to increase the intensity with which the land is being used and have deliberately increased the multifunctional character of land use. River restoration requires that additional aspects, such as space for river floodplains, drainage, and habitat provision, now need to be considered valuable in land-use planning.

Another important aspect in the development of restoration activities is that agriculture is no longer the main occupation or economic base of the Dutch rural area. A new form of rurality is developing where the functions of agriculture are increasingly mixed with nature, recreation, landscape, education, rest areas, and so on (De Boer and Bressers, 2010). Consequently, the river restoration projects in these areas have chosen to strategically combine various goals that they see as being complimentary to one another based on the specific context of the project area.

Actions aimed at meeting water quantity and water quality objectives are of the type that are often easily reconciled with nature protection goals. As such, the provincial administrators responsible for the implementation of the EHS in our study area considered areas with already existing water channels as desirable places for connection zones. Interests and goals related to agriculture, revitalization of the countryside, recreation and tourism, economic diversification, and the like, are also used as targets in various combinations to develop projects that support the restoration goals. Numerous laws, regulations, and public and private actors, along with their different interests, need to be considered at the various stages of the implementation process. The mutual dependencies were witnessed by project leaders in the area as being large and the potential benefits of synergies among many of the goals involved to be sufficiently alluring that the additional complexity related to extending the scope of the projects was accepted. As such, the successes of these projects can be studied as showcases for managing cooperation in a complex and dynamic context.

## **Restoring Flood Storage and Retention to the Regge River Valley**

### **The Regge Vision**

The water board of Regge and Dinkel (which is in charge of watersheds belonging to the Regge and Dinkel Rivers) has a broad goal of realizing around 10,000 ha of flood

water retention area in the Regge Valley. The area also contains portions of the EHS, is covered by the EU Water Framework Directive, and includes many large estates and various types of agricultural and other private business and residential activities. Within the area studied, different levels of government, nature organizations, farmers, companies, and citizens are involved. The project's success is based on enabling all the parties to work together to address their similar and overlapping goals and overcome their differences. The results of these actions greatly increased the multifunctionality of the landscape.

In 1998, the Regge and Dinkel water board and the Government Service for Land and Water Management<sup>1</sup> worked together to gather their common interests under a general vision related to the restoration of the Regge River. The project was designed to be as clear as possible in terms of goals, with specifics on implementation and planning purposefully omitted. The resulting Regge Vision provided information on the ideal situation toward which they would work, and the difficulties and complexities they would encounter, as well as possible measures they could use to reach their goals. They mentioned the various partner institutions that they expected to be strategic in accomplishing the project, as well as a number of accepted criteria for various measures of acceptable drainage, water quality, etc. Given the large scale of the project, it was accepted by the project leaders early on that spending too much time in the planning stages would be seriously detrimental to the achievement of the overall goals. Developing an all-encompassing plan that reached each and every goal for the area was not sought. They chose to adopt an opportunistic approach in which they would wait to see what project opportunities would develop autonomously and then work jointly to include as many aspects of the vision as possible.

The water board took advantage of opportunities to purchase land outside of the Regge Valley so they could offer to exchange it with landowners (generally farmers) whose operations were not in line with the desired landscape and activities stemming from the plan. The water board would then transform the farmer's old land into an appropriate combination of water storage, nature development, and/or recreational area. Short-term project efforts that followed up on coincidental overlapping of interests were later built upon by trying to fill the gaps between them. In 2010, eight realized projects and six that were in progress resulted in only 7 of the 53 km existing without any activity in preparation. These projects varied in size and scope, but the

knowledge and trust gained in each project informed the work of the project managers in the subsequent developments.

A substantial portion of the projects involved the removal of intensive agricultural activities from the river's shores. Farmers in the Netherlands have strong land-use rights, and the project managers' experience suggested that trying to force farmers from their lands had generally been unsuccessful and significantly reduced the constructiveness of the relationship between the two groups. This is a strong reason why the water-board officials had developed the practice of purchasing land in less fragile areas to use as bargaining chips to entice the farmers to move. When farmers along the Regge had chosen to either retire or move independently, the water board of Regge and Dinkel would take the opportunity to purchase their land and transfer the rights to nature organizations. The history of the water board's relationship with the farmers and shared experiences in the area opened up these sorts of discussions between them. In other instances, farmers were paid a yearly or lump-sum fee by the water board and the province to allow nature to reclaim the directly riparian areas of their land, as well as to allow the area to be flooded when necessary. These sorts of land and use exchanges have been quite successful in the implementation of the Regge restoration. One of the more complex projects is described next to highlight how different activities and projects can be combined through strategic overlapping of resources and opportunities in order to further reach overall restoration goals.

### The "Green Mold"

Nijverdal is a town, with a population of approximately 25,000, located in the eastern Overijssel Province. The city's northeastern urban boundary is located along the Regge River. The first phase of the project began in the late 1990s with the intention to build a sports stadium just north of the Regge at the city's northern edge.

A portion of the area corresponds with a planned ecological connection zone of the National Ecological Network (EHS). To address the changes in drainage and buffering capacity caused by this new development and to support the development of the EHS, the water board and municipality worked with the developers to add an additional naturally landscaped and meandering side channel to the Regge. In this particular instance, the water board became aware of the development intentions because it was required to approve the development changes related to the impacts on the water system. At this point, the water board

decided to build upon the current developments by supplying additional resources that would enable the development to go beyond the traditional solutions of additional pipes and drainage infrastructure and hence more efficiently meet their additional water retentions needs in the area.

In addition to this, a development under way would see Nijverdal's currently separate train and highway lines combined in a tunnel that would reduce the project's negative aesthetic impact on the urban center. Though at first sight this might seem unrelated, the water board project managers worked alongside this development to see where they could cooperate in the infrastructural arrangement to add additional natural flood protection areas. Given that the two transit lines were previously forcing an unattractive separation of the central city area, they would also be working to improve the North-South Connection Highway that provides one of the few routes for traversing this separation. The water board then collaborated, as well, with the roadwork so as to add the natural habitat required as part of the work closer to the EHS and river restoration areas. The municipality has had the lead in realizing all of these developments; however, a large portion of the space was created in cooperation with the water board, which was interested in supporting the restoration of the Regge.

Enabling this level of integration required a lot of cooperation both at the administrative board and civil servant level. Considering the priority given to the more urgent tunnel plan and other developing interests by the municipality, the water board decided it would be most effective to link its objectives to these plans in order to best implement aspects of the Regge Vision.

Despite the very cooperative atmosphere present from the very beginning, the project (which is still under way) has required a lot of time to develop because of its highly complex nature. The project discussions began with an exchange of ideas at the civil servant level. By using so-called charcoal sketches, the project team began to figure out how they could work with each other to combine all of the separate goals. This process was supported by a local landscape development consultant who provided various renderings of combinations of land uses in the relevant areas.

It is essential to make good decisions regarding who to include and not to include in this exchange when working in such a congenial manner. There is a limit to what extent additional actors' interests can be included without exces-



sively diluting the core perceptions. Extending this too far beyond the purpose of attracting additional resources should not be done when it will force the collective development to become unproductive. In practice, it was witnessed that these decisions are made initially on the basis of ownership and who is going to contribute to the overall payment and then further as a result of who is going to manage the area after the project is realized.

Following the development stage of the initial project idea, to search for additional support, the funders decided to present their idea to higher levels of government not originally included. At this point, the project team made a critical assessment regarding who further was required in order to complete the project. It was decided in this case that the Rijkswaterstaat (state public works agency) and ProRail (state company for railway exploitation) needed to be involved because of the necessary permitting, planning, and infrastructural requirements of the train tunnel project. In the end, the water board of Regge and Dinkel, Landschap Overijssel and Natuur en Milieu Overijssel (two provincially based NGOs), Dienst Landelijk Gebied Overijssel (Government Service for Rural Land Management), the Province of Overijssel, Rijkswaterstaat (Directorate General of Public Works and Water Management), and the municipality of Hellendoorn were all part of the project team. This kind of “snowballing” is regarded in general as the model for the growth of the project team. In this project, the perceived benefit of removing potential obstacles through the open and inclusive plan development did indeed result in a project that was not hindered by internal or external objections.

Land-use changes are subject to various types of local regulations, including zoning and public consultation processes. The alternative routes initially suggested for the transport lines that cut through open space and river areas were considered by various external stakeholders to be too detrimental to the natural areas surrounding the city. The final decision best represented an integration of the various interests—nature, culture, infrastructure, and transit needs—though it also had a number of drawbacks. The need to redesign the north-south corridor brought about many concerns regarding urban quality, valuable agricultural lands, the cultural and historic value of two neighboring estates, and its close proximity to the Regge Valley, which is designated to become an ecological linkage zone. The Netherlands has very strict land-use planning and zoning guidelines in place to prevent the overuse of the country’s limited natural areas for urban development. As part of the town’s zoning instruments, there is a hard

redline in place to contain urban developments in the land-use plans of several layers of government. This would have prevented developing any of the possible plans for the corridor. The project participants referred to this as being trapped in a *red mold*.

At this stage, two provincial deputies, the mayor, two aldermen, and some involved local civil servants met and decided to develop a solution that would satisfy the various interests. This implied that they would encroach over the redline at the expense of some of the nature and water interests. They decided to develop an area plan that would deal with all issues concerning that area in an integrated way. In contrast to the red mold, which was designed to contain urbanization, the *green mold* would cradle integrated developments that had a high priority for nature and landscape interests. The process was not defensive, but optimizing and creative, striving for overall improvement, in a give-and-take. A voluntary agreement, known as an *administrative accord*, developed between the different government levels and the water board.

To further the understanding of the informal give-and-take, it is helpful to explain the general perception regarding the future development for the area. The outskirts that were at the time open green space (though formally developable within the urban fabric) were generally regarded as being better protected as a part of the integrated plan and administrative accord. Their close proximity to the urban area had been viewed as a significant weakness in preventing future urbanization impacts such as fragmentation and reduced landscape attractiveness.

Because of the integrated planning process, the existing Regge bed was able to remain and additional developments of urban leisure functions were enabled. *Zomps* are cultural-historical riverboats that were once a traditional form of transport in the area. As a result of new recreational infrastructure developments and the maintenance of the riverbed, they can travel through to Nijverdal and provide for thousands of recreational trips per year. Recreational opportunities were regarded as important for the plan, given that the recreational co-use of the developments are crucial for securing public support. Given that it is quite common for land-use planning projects in the Netherlands to be met with court appeals by citizens and private and public organizations, the lack of any appeals in this case is seen as a good indicator that the main stakeholders were satisfied by the outcomes.

## Governance Setting

### Complexity and Adaptive Implementation

The governance context in which the Regge renaturalization projects take place influences the setting in which the actors operate. It is important in understanding how and when the processes observed are successful, as well as how contingent they are on this broader context. The various interests included within the Regge projects makes them multilevel by nature. Multilevel governance is based on the acknowledgment that all levels and scales influence a certain situation simultaneously (though probably not to the same degree) and that all levels influence one another (Bressers and Rosenbaum, 2003). Though the projects studied in this article are local by nature, the abundant relations with upper levels (including EU and world climate change accords) and lower levels (kitchen-table conversations with individual citizens) are at center stage.

Inevitably, projects of the size and ambition of the Regge River restoration are complex, but moreover they are dynamic. The period over which they are implemented is inherently lengthy, and stakeholders were observed by the authors to be working to continuously modify the context of implementation. Analysis of the processes involved thus needs to be concerned additionally with how its contexts evolve.

We take our main concepts from *contextual interaction theory* (Bressers, 2004, 2009; De Boer and Bressers, 2011) and thus see the interaction processes of the different actors involved in the project as the basis for understanding the process and results. To succeed in integrating multiple publicly and/or socially legitimate and desired uses, multiple actors' consent, sectoral policy schemes, funding rules, time frames, and scale issues, the project teams need to be skilled *boundary spanners*, who are people who can see, use, and sometimes create windows of opportunity (Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 1999) that span different groups, time lines, and geographic boundaries. If potential synergy is perceived across the different parties, then boundary-spanning strategies are more likely to create productive links (Bressers and Kuks, 2004, pp. 259–262). Consequently the (inter)actions discussed in the preceding empirical section are not only valuable for developing the case-specific narratives, but are also highly informative on what strategies are being used to achieve good results within various contexts.

### Adaptive Implementation Strategies

Research on the success and failure of complex spatial projects and policy implementation in complex situations in general confirms the importance of *adaptive implementation* (Olsson et al., 2006). Reality is not seen as a field of obstacles, but as a terrain of potential and often unexpected opportunities where adaptive behavior is focused on incorporating each window of opportunity in achieving the chosen objectives. In these cases, the possibilities for complex multifactor causal developments are so high that results often appear to be *coincidental*, which can at times be more appropriately labeled as *emergent* (Van der Walle and Vogelaar, 2010). The lengthy time requirement and resulting complexity of river restoration are in this perspective seen to provide additional opportunities as opposed to being a hindrance to efficient project implementation.

External strategies relate here to efforts directed at altering the setting for implementation. These strategies can be undertaken as a response to unsatisfactory processes that the actors wish to change. These strategies can also be primarily preventive in trying to avoid an unproductive setting. It may be possible to bring in new actors, exclude existing ones, or try to redefine the process and its issues at stake differently to shift it to another institutional arena with a (partially) different governance context (for an elaboration, see Bressers and Lulofs, 2010, pp. 27–30).

Actors can also better prepare themselves from an internal (organizational) perspective to participate in, and make positive gains from, external situations. These internal strategies are an attempt to increase their receptivity. Jeffrey and Seaton (2003–2004) describe *receptivity* as being dependent on the degree of exposure to new knowledge, as well as the way that an actor can associate and exploit new knowledge around existing knowledge, activities, and objectives. Being receptive is not a form of passiveness or weakness but rather a form of alertness and openness toward dynamic external contexts.

We expand receptivity to describe the ability to combine new information with existing cognitions, to recognize new goals as matching existing motivations or the values behind them and to recognize the opportunities of new resources or combinations with existing resources to optimize their capacity and power. Receptivity plays a major role in recognizing the opportunities that an enlarged *domain perception* (what and who belongs to the issues at stake) might have to enable the creation of synergies across activities. The receptivity of an organization is not entirely

fixed and can be altered over time by external factors and deliberate *internal strategies*. Good communicative, flexible, and entrepreneurial attitudes are necessary to contend with the risks inherent in innovative and progressive project proposals.

### Supportive Governance Settings

The conceptual understanding as considered here begins with the premise of the governance regime characteristics of extent and coherence as being relevant for natural regime management. The *extent* refers to the completeness of the regime in terms of which important uses and users are left unregulated. The *coherence* is the degree to which the various elements of the regime are strengthening rather than weakening one another. In the work of Bressers and Kuks (2004), these qualities were applied to the five elements of governance (rather than public policy) that they discern, being: a multiplicity of relevant levels and scales, actors in the policy network, problem definitions and resulting goal ambitions, instrument mixes, and, lastly, responsibilities and resources for implementation.

The previously described use of adaptive strategies to influence not only the process itself, but also in turn its setting, has implications for the relevant regime qualities. Extent and coherence are the most important regime qualities in more or less steady-state situations or in situations where one wants to compare the before and after situations of resource use. In a highly dynamic process in which success depends on quick and timely adaptive action, the flexibility of the regime is also an important influential quality. The level of flexibility indicates to what degree the relevant actors have formal and informal liberties and stimuli to act in an adaptive way. Further, as a fourth quality, the intensity of the regime can be characterized as how strongly these actors are encouraged to concentrate their actions in the direction of sustainability. Governance regimes that have sufficient extent and coherence and adequate intensity and flexibility can be regarded as robust and thus *resilient* governance systems.

## Reflections on the Strategies for Implementation

### The Specific Context

Although the Green Mold project is not yet complete, there are already a number of recognizable results: linking of

existing nature areas by the creation of new natural connection zones; additional water drainage by the addition of a partial parallel river course; additional water buffering, enabling urban growth needs; and new road, bridge, and rail infrastructure, as well as improved land and water recreational facilities. It was felt that although some aspects of the plan reduced some natural value, with additional costs and with agricultural land being sacrificed, that this was done without compromising the social, natural, and landscape value over the whole area.

Efforts put toward beginning the process with a small coherent project group with members who already knew and trusted one another through cooperation in previous projects had a number of beneficial results. This increased the receptivity of the members and hence their ability to consciously pay attention to the inclusion of their personal as well as one another's interests, which further reinforced the trust and enabled more creative solutions. Generally, it can be said that as a result of the conscious attention paid through the use of external strategies to the development of the network and structure of the actor relationships, the motivations, cognitions, and resources of the different participants were quite complementary in nature. The groups' ability to overlap common water, nature, and recreation goals with the urgency to create new infrastructure for trains and cars was supported by this complementarity. Purposefully increasing the multifunctionality of the project did increase project complexity, although this was complexity clearly was inherently unavoidable because of the existing conditions. The initial momentum and consensual successes sought by the project leaders at the early stages was secured in order to reduce a number of forecasted constraints. Based on past experiences of the project leaders, the internal strategies and organizational receptivity of the civil servants involved that helped to satisfy the joint interests would likely have been hindered by stronger "personal interest" type negotiations.

The main *regime inflexibility* that had to be overcome by the agreement accord came from land-use planning and the hard redlines confining development within a "red mold." They are meant to protect rural landscape, but in this case were making it impossible to protect the Regge Valley. They were replaced by a "green mold" that guaranteed at least an equally beneficial solution for nature and landscape. Thus, the main inflexibility of the regime was indeed proven to be surmountable by clever concerted action of the project team.

## External Strategies

The Regge restoration employs an adaptive approach as a basic strategy for the Regge as a whole and takes opportunities to move subprojects such as the Green Mold forward as part of realizing the overall vision. In addition to this, a number of strategies were used to prepare and modify the direct context of the process to increase the likelihood of success. These careful strategies were regarding 1) actor constellation, 2) choice of institutional arenas, and 3) changing cognitions, motivations and resources of the actors.

### *Actor Constellation*

In a relatively continuous manner, the project group members actively learn from past projects who to ask (or not), how to build trust, and how to build informal contact. Likewise, good cooperation is presented as a positive example to desired future relationships. More generally, “giving in” somewhat was seen as a calculated risk that could help to build trust that would return future benefits.

The water board chose strategically not to start the project in isolation, instead attaching itself to an existing initiative of area development. Although not leading the process may have disadvantages under adversarial conditions, the water board expects mainly advantages when the overall goals of the project team members are in accord with one another.

### *Setting the Institutional Arenas*

The water board influenced the rules of the game that the actors were participating in through partnering and choosing voluntary programs as opposed to land expropriation and other legal coercion options.

### *Directly Affecting Cognitions, Motivations, and Resources of Other Actors*

The *cognitions and motivations* of the various actors slowly align toward a positive and open understanding of how communal interests can provide more than can separate ones. Direct personal communication with stakeholders, including farmers and neighbors, supports avoiding a clash of fundamental readings of reality. Institutional stakeholders’ open consultation and creative efforts to support one another’s interests creates upward spirals and eventually pays off, for instance, in terms of trust building. The entire public participation process is not thus simply a matter of

communicating but also of being open and moreover really trying to advance others’ interests whenever possible and when they can be made sufficiently compatible with one’s own.

Purchasing land prior to the project development, when good windows of opportunity arise, enables the water board to assume a private landowner *resource* position. This strategy clearly increases the board’s power and resources as an actor in the process and enables it to better implement the project and meet the end goals.

## Internal Strategies

The receptivity of an organization is very dependent on the quality of its members, and its internal organization and culture. Receptivity can also be a characteristic of the project team in which representatives of several organizations cooperate. Here it is important to proactively make strong project teams with well-chosen people from different organizations who have a joint loyalty to the project as a joint effort.

Within an organization, direct informal communication between civil servants and board members is very important. This increases the number of people available within the organization who can support one another’s actions in the subprocesses. It can also improve the process knowledge and the leeway given to staff in project design and development. High level administrators are generally asked to participate only under important circumstances and when there is a good chance for success.

Lastly, learning should grow beyond being open and alert to the presence of coincidental and occasional opportunities. Such learning leads toward actively searching for and then ultimately assessing the situation to look for possibilities to create new opportunities. Then, the adaptive management of the actors will align strategically with the types of efforts seen in this research to be successful.

## Conclusion

The Regge restoration process provides clear examples of how, under the governance structure in the Netherlands, a number of internal and external strategies have been used to work within a dynamic, complex context. Higher levels of government seem to be retreating somewhat by requiring separate quantitative accountability for sectoral goals. This could force project partners to compete rather than



compromise and optimize work as a whole, thereby making the end situation worse off for most, if not for all, of the stakeholders. Nevertheless, the analysis presented in this article shows a remarkable variety of strategies that the practitioners used within their specific context to take advantage of opportunities that developed. Further work would be valuable in terms of a larger quantitative analysis to draw out conclusions on the mechanisms that can support and determine the optimal level of the governance regime's flexibility and intensity. The information and lessons described in this article can serve as the basis for further detailed work in this regard.

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## Note

1. The Government Service for Land and Water Management works to take policy and implement it with specific on-the-ground projects that also incorporate policies and programs from the other levels of government dealing with open spaces for recreation, nature, water management, and agriculture. Specifically, they acquire land, redevelop it, and then transfer it to administrative authorities and individual farmers.

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