

Report of the Netherlands Landscape Learning Journey

'Building a joint landscape learning agenda'

Introduction

Around the globe, landscapes are providers of a wealth of products (water, timber, minerals, food, fibre, fuel) and services (recreation, tourism, ecological regulation, climate change adaptation/mitigation, and restoration). Increasing global demand for these products and services offer great opportunities for landscapes to economically develop. However, increasing demand also leads to competing claims and conflict at the landscape level. Well-known are the problems related to over-exploitation and environmental degradation, as well as social conflict with regard to land use choices and spatial decision making. Especially in developing countries and emerging markets, problems with environmental degradation, social conflicts and 'land-grab' are on the increase.

The integrated landscape approach is increasingly considered to be a practical way to reconcile this increased competition for space, through balancing competing demands and striving for smart integration of agricultural production, nature conservation and livelihood options at the landscape level. It actively promotes to combine private and public interests, and stakeholder collaboration within sourcing areas and commodity chains, highlighting the importance of placing value chain performance within a place-based or landscape performance (Van Oosten et al., 2014; Ros-Tonen et al., 2015).

The landscape approach is not new to the Netherlands. Apart from a long history of landscape approaches in Dutch rural development and spatial planning, the landscape approach has often laid the foundation for Dutch development organisations to develop their overseas intervention programmes. It is estimated that Netherlands ODA programmes currently include a portfolio of over €100,000,000.00 (one hundred million euros) invested in programmes having an integrated landscape focus. It is in this context that Wageningen University Centre for Development Innovation organised a '*Netherlands Landscape Learning Journey*', especially for partners of the Landscapes for People, Food and Nature Initiative (LPFN), which is an international collaborative initiative of knowledge sharing, dialogue and action to support the integrated landscape approach worldwide (<http://peoplefoodandnature.org/about/>)¹. This, not only for LPFN partners to get

¹ LPFN has over seventy partners working on landscape approaches worldwide. Most important partners are: World Bank, FAO, WWF, Bioversity, IUCN, and a range of Dutch development partners such as Wageningen

acquainted with the landscape experience within the Netherlands, but also for LPFN partners to actively exchange their knowledge with Wageningen scholars/students, as well as with a range of Dutch organisations working with the landscape approach in the Netherlands and beyond.

An additional objective of the '*Netherlands Landscape Learning Journey*' is for Dutch development partners themselves, to be better connected, and start operating in a more coherent manner. Not only to be better informed of each other's landscape related experiences and lessons learned, but also to create a stronger collective identity and visibility to more effectively contribute to the global landscape debate.

1. The aim of the Netherlands Landscape Learning Journey

The Food and Business Knowledge Platform (F&BKP) decided to finance the Netherlands Landscape Learning Journey, under the condition that it would contribute to achieving the following objectives:

- Strengthen the LPFN network by providing it with knowledge and experience on the landscape approach as how it is operationalised within the Netherlands, as well as abroad, through the overseas activities of Dutch development agencies;
- Increase the insights on the application of the landscape approach at the global scale, both its successes and its challenges, in order to get an overview of the most urgent knowledge gaps, and develop a landscape knowledge agenda which will strategically contribute to the generation and dissemination of landscape knowledge across the globe;
- Strengthen the relations between Dutch development organisations and their global partners operating from a landscape approach, including landscape management and landscape governance, to better streamline the Dutch landscape activities, and more strategically contribute to the global landscape debate.

2. General outcomes of the Netherlands Landscape Learning Journey

The Netherlands Landscape Learning Journey took place on June 29th 2016, and was built upon a combination of field visits and thematic sessions, covering the three topics of 'landscapes for nature', 'landscapes for food', and 'landscapes for people'.

The most important outcomes of the day were conform the objectives of strengthening relations between national and international players in the field of integrated landscape approaches, sharing ideas and interests, and coming up with a set of generally shared knowledge gaps. This, to be able

to establish a strategic 'knowledge agenda' for Dutch partners to contribute to the international landscape debate.

Based on the outcomes of the various sessions, we were able to recognise the co-existence of a variety of landscape approaches, all influenced by the changing relations between people and their environment; and the segregation of landscapes' functions as producers of food and producers of nature. Spatial planning is the process in which these functions are assessed, weighed and mapped. Landscape governance is the process in which spatial decisions are being taken, through dialogue between inhabitants, producers, larger agro-food industries and their financial support sectors, and the different governments operating at the local, national and international level. The actual landscape performance is the outcome of all these processes, which vary over place and time. It is this spatial variation that makes the exchange of knowledge and experience so important, and should therefore be high on the international landscape agenda.

2.1. Reflection on the morning excursion on 'landscapes for nature'

During the morning session we visited the Blauwe Kamer, which is a small conservation area close to Wageningen. Here, a team of landscape inhabitants showed us the geomorphological process that shaped the landscape, the rich biodiversity of the area, its rich biodiversity, and the historically shaped cultural values of the area. Subsequently, Dr. Matthijs Schouten elaborated on the changing role of nature in society, with 'nature for people' as upcoming frames, expressing people's desire to 'manage' nature. How are these changing roles reflected in the landscape? And what does this changing role imply for (inter)national nature policy, food production and climate change?

In order to answer these questions, we looked at the Blauwe Kamer from various perspectives. First, through the eyes of farmers, perceiving the area as a provider of seasonal food production (dairy mainly). Second, through the eyes of politicians and their aim to reduce dairy production, which has led to an extensification of agricultural production. Third, from the perspective of climate change, which led to the ambitious project 'Room for the River', including the opening of the dikes to allow surplus water to flow in. And fourth, from a recreational perspective, highlighting the use of the new wetlands for the creation of 'new nature', which responds to the increased societal desire for 'real' nature and 'wilderness'. To this end, large herbivores were imported, offering a unique 'wilderness' experience to citizens, and providing a new identity to the landscape.

As a conclusion, we stated that experiencing the Blauwe Kamer from a landscape perspective means a recognition of the changing relation between people and place, as being shaped by biophysical factors, political economies, and inhabitants' emotional attachment to their environment. Intensive societal dialogue has led to the local transformation of place, in line with society's changing perception of the functions and services that landscapes provide.

2.2. Reflection on the 'landscapes for food' lunch on Region Food Valley

During lunch, we listened to Arnoud Leerling from Region Food Valley, who explained the concept of Region Food Valley, which is all about creating sustainable food and business networks which envisage both local sustainability as well as global food security. We learned that Region Food Valley has contributed to the formation of a strong network of regional entrepreneurs, knowledge institutes, local governments and citizens, who collectively strive for the production of safe and healthy food, which is reasonably priced from both a producer and consumer perspective.

During the discussion, we focused on the dual approach of Region Food Valley: on the one hand it emphasises the strong regional identity and authenticity of the area, and aims to support locally and sustainably produced food through area-based labelling and branding. On the other hand it supports a high-tech agro-food industry which is regionally clustered and embedded in globalised food chains. Region Food Valley aims to combine the two, but prioritises the latter, through strong collaboration between producers, local governments, and knowledge institutes, which has led to the creation of 'agro-knowledge hubs', embedded in infrastructural networks, policy networks and knowledge networks, clearly visible in the landscape.

2.3. Reflection on the afternoon seminar 'landscapes for people'

The afternoon seminar was aimed at bringing together the members of the LPFN network and students and scholars from Wageningen University, to reflect on landscape governance, spatial planning and landscape business & finance. In each of these sessions, there was an introductory speech, followed by in-depth discussions and knowledge exchange amongst participants. In each of the thematic sessions, knowledge gaps were identified, and addressed as being potential ingredients for a joint knowledge agenda to be developed by partners.

2.3.1. Thematic session on landscape governance

The topic of landscape governance was introduced by Prof. Dr. Bas Arts of Wageningen University's Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group, who defined landscape governance as 'a process of multi-sector, multi-actor and multi-level interactions and spatial decision making at the landscape level'. Landscape governance, so he said, aims at the development of landscape specific policy targets rather than at sectoral objectives, as landscape governance is considered to be a way to achieve environmental, economic and social objectives simultaneously. He mentioned the widely accepted '*Ten Principles of an Adaptive Landscape Approach*' (Sayer et al., 2013) which reflect the participatory nature of landscape approaches and their embeddedness in a process of multi-stakeholder governance within landscapes. Although landscape approaches are increasingly adopted and implemented, in practice it appears to be challenging to meet all these principles in practice.

Knowledge gaps

Within this thematic group, three major knowledge gaps were identified, which are:

1. Landscape governance arrangements are often constructed in an informal way, as landscape boundaries do not tally with political-administrative boundaries. This implies that the processes of building stakeholder coalitions and networks from the bottom up are often not embedded in formal planning processes, as they do not have the mandate to formally represent constituencies, and do not fit in the decentralised structures of states. This makes it hard for landscape governance to be translated into larger policy frameworks, and be upscaled to higher levels of implementation. Although many organisations are actively experimenting with landscape initiatives, stakeholder networks, partnerships and other landscape governance arrangements, still little is known on how these arrangements operate, and how effective they are.
2. It is generally recognised that there is a need for '*spatialisation*' of governance, which means the reconnection of governance to the spatial conditions of place, and the integration of sectoral policies within landscapes. This requires landscape actors to not only build coherence and stakeholder collaboration within landscapes, but also to connect to external policies, institutional frameworks and markets. It is rare to find landscape actors having the capability to take up this double responsibility, and few are the opportunities to be trained in this aspect.
3. So far, there are only few possibilities for training and capacity development in the field of landscape governance, and these few possibilities are not aligned nor connected. Universities and professional colleges do not have existing curricula which address landscape processes from a multi-disciplinary perspective, and there are no training institutes that systematically build landscape governance capacities at scale.

2.3.2. Thematic session spatial planning at the landscape level

The introduction of Dr. Ed Dammers of the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency focused largely on the Netherlands, where environmental qualities are no longer at the centre of spatial planning, as regional economic development have become more prominently in the forefront. A gradual withdrawal of the State from spatial planning can be considered an opportunity for citizens, civil society and private sector actors to get involved in spatial planning, thus bringing spatial planning closer to a landscape's inhabitants. But still, there is little knowledge on how these private initiatives emerge and operate, and how effective they are. There are several pilots ongoing, both in the Netherlands as well as in the Global South, but little is known about the outcomes of these pilots, and the potential for these pilots to be upscaled to higher levels of implementation.

A totally different yet important topic which was raised during the discussion, was to what extent spatial planning is related to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). It is

often suggested that a landscape approach would provide a suitable spatial framework for achieving the SDGs in an integrated manner. Especially the SDGs related to food and nutrition security would benefit from a landscape approach, where food and nutrition security could be addressed from a spatial perspective. But again, how does this tally with the monitoring system of the SDGs, which is strongly linked to jurisdictions? And how does it link to larger food systems, which exceed the landscape level, as they stretch out over various levels and scales?

Knowledge gaps

Within this group, three major knowledge gaps were identified, which are:

1. How to construct inclusive and proactive stakeholder networks at the landscape level, having the mandate to design and implement spatial planning and decision making?
2. How to combine the various priorities within a landscape, and reconcile economic development with nature conservation, sustainable livelihood, and food and nutrition security at the landscape level?
3. How to understand the linkages between landscapes, spatial planning and the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the ones related to food and nutrition security? Could the landscape approach offer a framework for monitoring the achievement of the SDGs, and how would this work?

2.3.3. Thematic session on landscape business and finance

The introduction of Prof. Dr. Lars Hein from Wageningen University's Environmental Systems Analysis Group, focused on the valuation of natural capital within landscapes. This, with the aim to understand the capacity of ecosystems to generate ecosystem services at national or the landscape level, to be translated into systems of national accounting. This would allow for the integration of the costs and the benefits of maintaining ecosystem services into gross national products. This would provide a basis for environmental markets to emerge, and attract private capital to finance landscape level projects.

The presentation led to a vibrant discussion on the potential of private sector engagement in the landscape approach, and the need for the development of landscape business models and landscape finance. Several organisations, including the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, are experimenting with the development of landscape business models, which are not product-based but place-based. Also in the financial world there is experimentation ongoing, and some pioneering funds (Althelia, Root Capital) are experimenting with combinations of public and private finance (blended finance) to reduce the risks for private investors, and get them invest in landscape level projects. But again, little is known about the outcomes of these experiments, and there is no evidence that businesses are willing to change their business models, and that private financiers are able to develop the financial products that are needed to make this happen.

Knowledge gaps

Within this group, three major knowledge gaps were identified, which are:

1. There is increased interest from the private sector to look beyond product chains, and have more consideration for their spatial impacts. Several organisations are experimenting with the development of landscape based business models, but how do these landscape business models actually look?
2. If landscape business models are based on a range of complementary products and services, then how to create the business networks which can collectively shape landscape business up to a scale at which they can be financeable through private investments?
3. How to create the financial vehicles for landscape business finance, including the level of aggregation and the financial support services to get private investors on board? What are the options to blend private capital with public capital, to take away part of the risks related to this new type of investment?

3. Conclusion: towards a joint landscape learning agenda

Based on the outcomes of the day, we can formulate a preliminary Theory of Change, in which we believe that the landscape approach can make a difference, in the sense that it provides opportunities for the emergence of multi-stakeholder processes at the landscape level, which are able to 'spatialise' governance, or in other words, bring governance processes closer to the spatial realities of landscapes and their inhabitants. This triggers citizens' initiatives, and promotes private entrepreneurship within landscapes. It offers suitable frameworks for spatial planning, as well as for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the ones related to food and nutrition security. And finally, the landscape approach offers opportunities for the private sector, as it provides a way to move from product-based to place-based business models which have more consideration for the sustainability of sourcing, and form a basis for appropriate investment mechanisms to be developed.

But this theory of change is still based on a range of assumptions, and there needs to be more evidence that the landscape approach actually work. There is a great need for testing its practical applicability, hence there is a need for pilot testing, generation of good practices, and development of tools and instruments for effective operationalisation. Much of this is already done by individual organisations, but there is the need to better exchange experiences, co-create knowledge, and develop to better manage resource systems, achieve coherence within landscapes, connect landscapes to wider policy frames and markets, deliver sustainable goods and services, and adaptively learn.

If Dutch development partners, together with their international partners, can demonstrate that the application of the landscape approach contributes to place-based governance, better spatial planning and decision making, achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the development of sustainable and responsible business and finance, then we can contribute to the global landscape debate, feeding it with the practical experiences, case studies, tools and instruments which are so desperately needed. To get the landscape approach to a higher level of policy uptake and implementation, we have to make an effort to better conceptualise the approach, and to understand and demonstrate its impact and effectiveness through evidence derived from systematic case study analysis, identification of good practices, and translating this into tools and instruments that work well. Only in this way, the landscape approach can move beyond the level of isolated projects, which, however successful, are not enough to substantially change mainstream sector policy frames.

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