



Panta Rhei interdisciplinarity and public participation: an adventure with democratized Dutch Waterboards and the 2021_OmgevingsLaw

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INTRO

Panta Rhei enhances interdisciplinarity: the authors, hydrologist, and environmental scientist cooperate interdisciplinary with colleagues in the waterboard party WaterNatuurlijk at HollandsNoorderkwartier (HHNK). Secondly, Panta Rhei promotes interaction between hydrology and society. Public participation of spatial organization is ameliorating in the Netherlands, and we hope these experiences are relevant to other countries.

This paper is a 5-year follow-up of “Water and Democracy” (G. Rot, 2014). By now, democratized Waterboards are safeguarded: 21 Waterboards form the so-called 4th functional/executive government layer; other layers being Central Government, 12 Provinces, and 355 Municipalities.

POSITION OF WATERBOARDS IN THE OMGEVINGS_LAW_2021 (SURROUNDINGS_LAW)

By 2021 one Omgevings_law should replace dozens of existing laws on the spatial organization. The law was five years postponed, being far more complex than foreseen. Some bottlenecks:

*How can inhabitants submit their spatial plans at only one government counter.

*public access to all spatial databases.

* Waterboards tried to include the “Watertoets (Watercheck)” in the Omgevings_law. The watertoets is currently a legal hydrological evaluation of all municipal spatial plans. Its status is however just advisory (with provincial control).

*Central, provincial and municipal authorities should write juridically binding Omgevingsvisies (containing clear objectives and maps, explaining which changes are allowed and which not, regarding landscape and nature protection, etc. See for example (Province_NH, 2017).

* A "waterboard Omgevingsvisie" has no juridical status in the Omgevings_law. It is nonetheless useful for communication between governments and waterboard stakeholders, who contributed to and participated in executive programs. (HollandsNoorderkwartier, 2012).

PROGRESSIVE POLICY MAKING IN A “FUNCTIONAL/EXECUTIVE” WATERBOARD

Cooperation and trust is the driving force behind the Omgevings_law. The attitude towards the public is no longer negative, “not allowed, unless,” but open, “allowable if meeting constraints.”

2008 the waterboard political party ‘WaterNatuurlijk’ was founded. There are only two national waterboard parties. Two progressive parties represented in the other government layers, also support WaterNatuurlijk, which ranked one in the 2015 elections. 20 March 2019 the next waterboard elections are held for four years (simultaneously with provincial ones).

WaterNatuurlijk underscores the goal of optimal public participation, based on goodwill! Calling itself progressive, WaterNatuurlijk HHNK developed a new government layer strategy since 2015.

Our strategy is not juridical, but rather persuasive. We “politize” the 4th functional/executive waterboard status by communication: we try to get mandates from the other three government layers for our goals, for instance, to build climate-resilient landscapes (WaterNatuurlijk, 2019). We try to communicate the water aspects of citizens and farmers and nature protectors, recreants, etc. to get mandates for waterboards. The paper provides examples.

REFERENCES

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