



SHERPA
Rural Science-Society-Policy
Interfaces

GOVERNANCE IN RURAL AREAS



MAP SOUTH EAST DRENTHE, NETHERLANDS

MAP South East Drenthe discussed citizens' involvement in developments in the immediate environment: landscape, nature and quality of life. Members from science, society and policy participated in the dialogues.

The MAP primarily discussed citizens initiatives on nature management. This topic has broader significance as it touches on many aspects of broad prosperity and the core qualities of the south-east Drenthe region and it could be seen as a space for learning about participatory governance in rural areas. With regard to multi-level governance, it deals with the coordination between the lower levels of governance, the collaboration between citizens initiatives, municipalities and provincial levels.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Future rural policy

- Citizen involvement in nature and land use planning holds significant value as a long-term and integral social intervention; it contributes to social cohesion, prosperity and trust building between government and citizens.
- Provide municipal workers with time, space and awareness to learn to work together with citizens as it requires new skills and attitudes.
- Citizens involvement is an investment that fosters a sense of belonging, ownership and connection.
- Promote the exchange of experiences between municipalities and citizen initiatives on citizen participation.

Future rural research

- Develop instruments to quantify the value of citizen involvement to make it easier for consideration by governing bodies. It can be part of the social cost and benefit analysis.
- Strengthen municipal capacity to coordinate and collaborate with citizens initiatives in nature management. This requires adaptations in the attitude and way of working of the municipality department that normally is in charge of this management.
- Develop strategies to balance and share responsibilities between citizens initiatives with policy objectives.

KEY STRENGTHS

- Variety of engaged citizens interested and taking initiatives to manage patches of natural resources.
- Provincial nature management organisation very motivated to involve citizens in nature management.
- Inspiring experiences with citizen initiatives and insights in the risks of miscommunication. Willingness to learn to collaborate between different levels of governance.

KEY NEEDS

- Develop strategies to involve different categories of citizens in nature management.
- Develop workable strategies to involve bigger groups in nature management & work together equally to develop a vision and manage the Drenths landscape.
- Create more clarity in the relation between citizens and municipal nature managers (e.g. via a ticket window for citizens, formalising agreements, etc.).
- Develop capacity to resolve tensions and competing functions in public spaces and the living environment.
- Clarify and strengthen the legal status from citizen initiatives vis a vis the government. How are responsibilities and decision making power shared?



EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Making a **landscape biography** is a good way to involve citizens in an integral way and create commonality in landscape management. A landscape biography is a life course description of an ever-changing cultural landscape and helps to recognise the qualities of the landscape. In addition to specialized experts, citizens, government, and students can be involved in the process. In this way, citizen initiatives and public nature management can be developed and implemented in coordination.

