

NEGOTIATING A COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAME GUIDING THE DECISION MAKING

A narrative approach to interactive decision making processes within
infrastructural projects

Master Thesis
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FOREWORD

I can vividly remember the day I walked into my boss's office to tell to her that, even though I really enjoyed my work, I had decided to follow my passion and to go back to university. Although I was pretty certain of my decision I was both excited and nervous. Excited because I was really looking forward to starting my bachelor Anthropology followed by a master Culture, Organization and Management. Nervous as this decision was about to change my life completely. Did I really need to go back to university to reach my goal; was this not some kind of flight from working life? How would I support myself financially without any student grant? Would I connect with the other students as I was already 24 years of age, while the other students were five to six years younger? Would this mean I needed to live in a student residence for another four years? What if it turns out to be the wrong decision?

Luckily, all these questions turned out to be of minor importance. I was able to support myself financially as I was able to keep my job for two days a week. I did connect with the other students as it turned out it is more important to share the same ideas about our study than to share the same age. I did live in a student residence for another three years which I really hated, but eventually took for granted. And most importantly I did not make the wrong decision and I indeed really felt that I needed to go back to university to reach my goal; it was definitely not a flight from working life.

The past four years at university have been fun and easy going as well as tough and burdensome. I do not think I could have finished this journey without the support of a few people. Kees, Joke, Sander and Jeanin (and Beau) thank you for supporting my decision even though you were just adjusted to the fact that your daughter/sister (in law) was no longer a student but a working lady. Tink thanks for saying "go for it", for being there and for all the laughter; Suus thanks for our 'new' friendship, for our fierce discussions and for the fun we have; Lau thanks for all the evenings with great fun, good talks and (lots of) wine; Mary-Anne thanks for your positive energy, for the wise words and for all the 'gezelligheid'. And a special thanks to Tim who always makes me feel special and loved even in times when I must have been difficult to live with (especially when needed to meet the strict deadlines).

However, this journey could not have ended without finishing this master thesis. Doing research is something a person cannot do alone. Therefore, I would like to give a special thanks to my interviewees, informants, and the organizations who gave me access to their time, information and experience. Another special thanks to the people at RWS who made me feel welcome the moment I walked in the office. I am grateful that none of the parties I worked with refused my

request for interviews or access to internal and external documents. I would also like to give a special thanks to Helen Dupuis who helped me a great deal with improving my written English. Last but not least, I would like to thank Sander Merkus who, as my supervisor, always provided me with good advice, new things to think about, and a sharp eye.

I hereby would like to present you the last piece of my university journey: my master thesis. Please join me in reading (or glancing, perceiving, observing) **Negotiating a collective action frame guiding the decision making**. *A narrative approach to interactive decision making processes within infrastructural projects.*

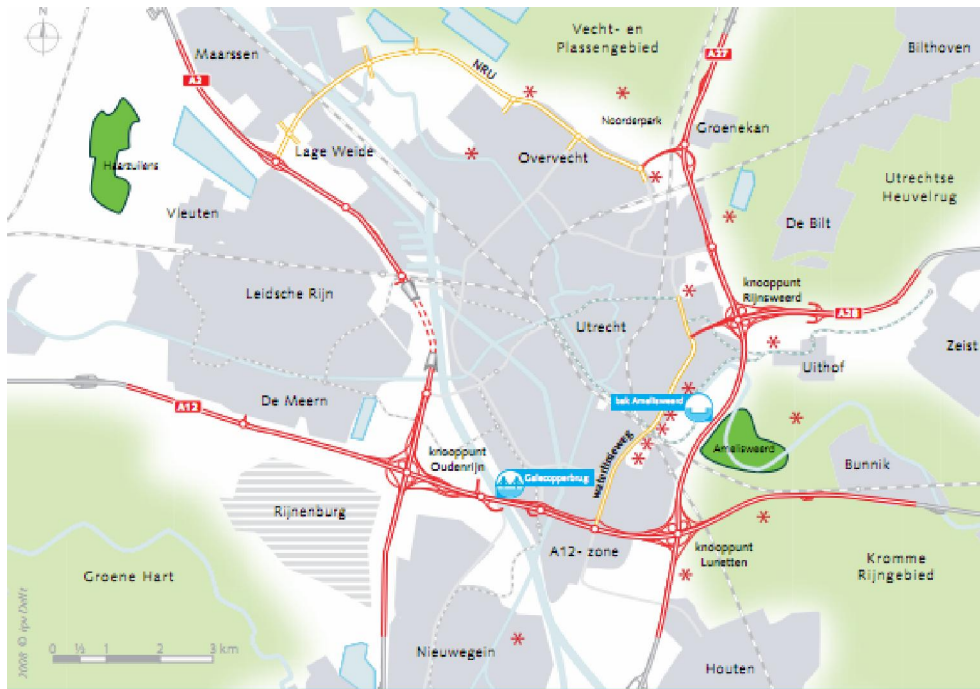
All the best, Daniëlle

Utrecht, August 2011

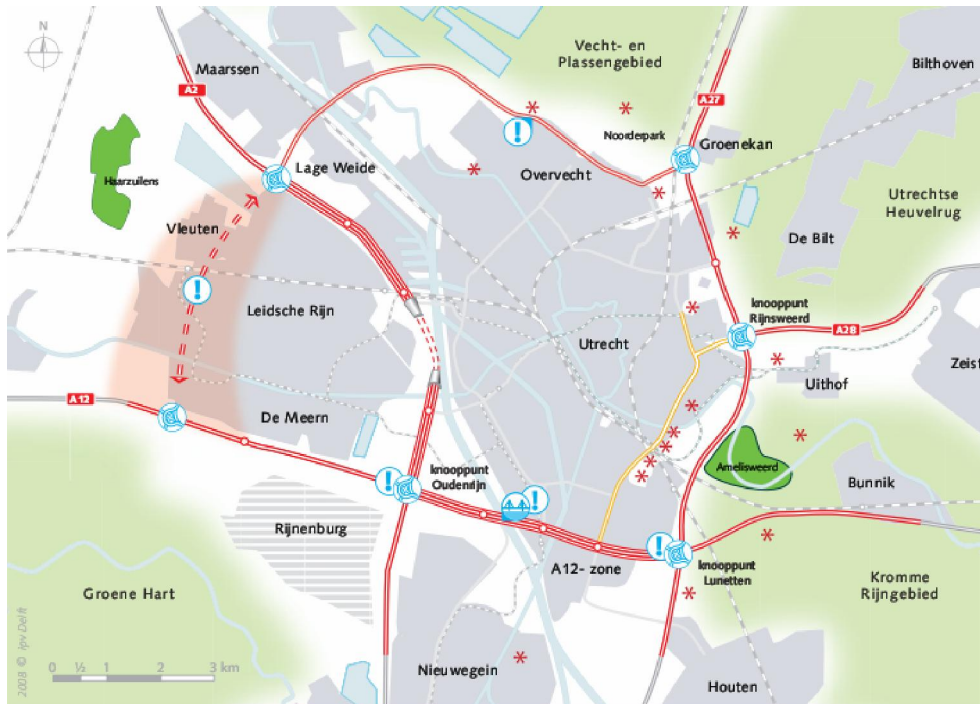
ABBREVIATIONS

BRU	Bestuur Regio Utrecht
MER	Environmental Impact Statement (<i>Milieueffect rapportage</i>)
Ministry of I & M	Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment (<i>Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu</i>)
Ministry of VROM	Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment (<i>Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu</i>)
Ministry of V & W	Ministry of Transport, Public Works, and Water Management (<i>Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat</i>)
NMU	Natuur en Milieufederatie Utrecht
NHW	Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie
NRU	Noordelijke Randweg Utrecht
RWS	Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management (<i>Rijkswaterstaat</i>)
VVA	Vrienden van Amelisweerd
UVVB	Utrechts Verkeer en Vervoer Beraad

MAPS

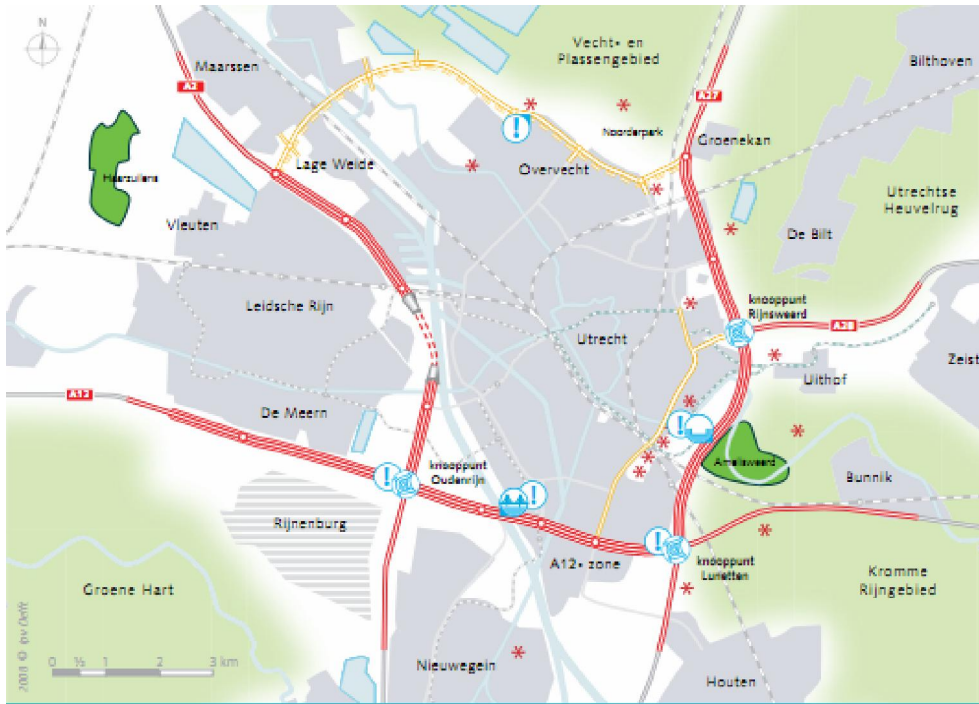


Map 1: Area of analysis of Planstudie Ring Utrecht¹

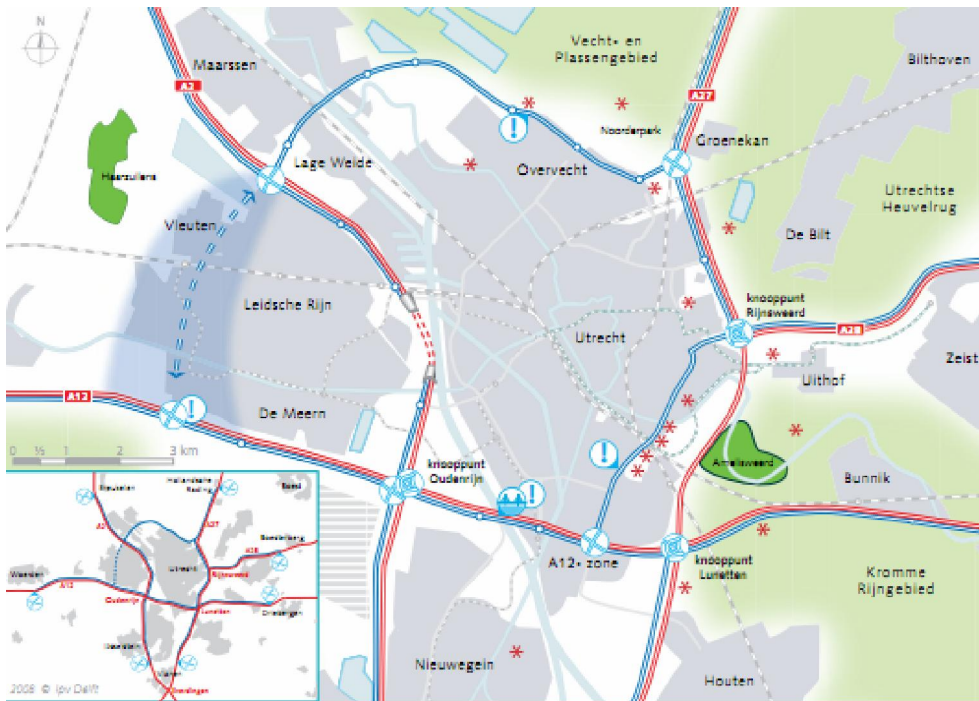


Map 2: Alternative widening, *variant A*

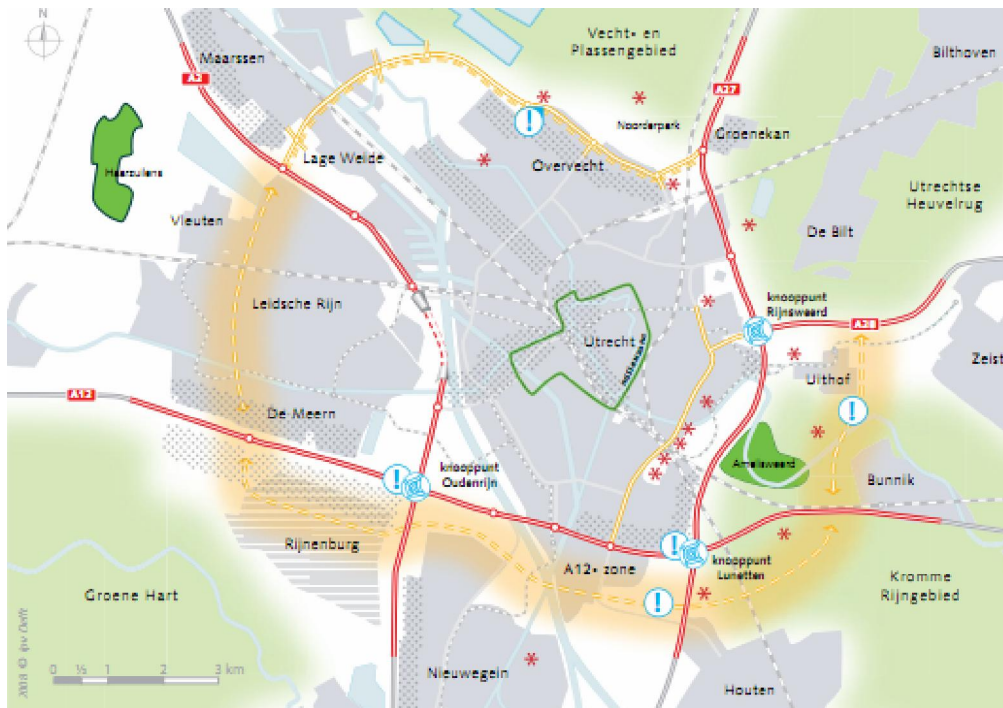
¹ Source for Map 1 to 5: Startnotitie Ring Utrecht, Rijkswaterstaat, December 2008



Map 3: Alternative widening, *variant B*



Map 4: Alternative sorting



Map 5: Alternative spreading

GLOSSARY

Alternatives

In the Introductory Memorandum alternatives are described for a consistent package of measures. One alternative or a combination of alternatives will form a possible solution for the traffic problems of the Utrecht region.

BO-MIRT

A bi-annual administrative consultation between Ministers, state secretaries and regional administrators to discuss and realise the district agendas. For Planstudie Ring Utrecht the BO-MIRT of November 2009 and 2010 were mainly of importance.

Committee Elverding

Committee founded by Peter Elverding by request of the former Minister of Transport, Public Works, and Water Management, Camiel Eurlings, to investigate possible solutions for the bogged down decision making processes in Dutch infrastructural project. The official name for this committee is Commissie Versnelling Besluitvorming Infrastructurele Projecten.

Committee m.e.r.

A nationwide committee of independent experts. The committee advises the four authorized bodies regarding the directives for the MER and about the quality of it.

Draaischijf Nederland

A name used to describe the network of traffic and transport in the Utrecht region.

Driehoek

The triangle (*driehoek*) formed by motorways between Utrecht, Amersfoort, and Hilversum which consists of the A27 from junction Rijnsweerd to junction Eemnes, the A27 from junction Eemnes to junction Hoevelaken, and the A28 from junction Hoevelaken to junction Rijnsweerd.

Introductory memorandum (*Startnotitie*)

Formal document part of the Transport Infrastructure (Planning Procedure) Act and the law of environmental management where the planning study is announced.

Ladder van Verdaas

A fixed order of measures to be considered when solving a problem of mobility. Following order will be taken into account: spatial planning, price policy, public transport, mobility management, utilization, adjustment existing infrastructure, new infrastructure.

m.e.r.

Environmental impact statement (*milieueffectrapportage*). When written in small letters the actual procedure (Introductory Memorandum, opportunity for public comments, directives, recommendations, and environmental impact guidelines) is indicated.

MER

Environmental impact guidelines. When written in capitals the actual document with the elaboration of the environmental consequences is indicated.

Network analysis

An analysis for spatial and mobility development of a determined area.

Panel of interest

A panel formed out of organisations with different interests. The panel is consulted and advised by the Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management regarding the three planning studies. After each meeting the panel of interest advises the Utrechts Verkeer en Vervoer Beraad.

Planning study

A study to explore the possibilities and consequences of expansion of the trunk road system.

Planning Procedure

Decision of Minister of Infrastructure and Environment to broaden or construct the trunk road system.

Preferred alternative

The preferred alternative forms the starting point for the exploration phase for the MER 2nd phase.

Preferred direction

An extra inserted stage between the Introductory Memorandum and the agreement on the preferred alternative. This stage forms the foundation for the eventual decision on the preferred alternative.

Randstad

The area around large Dutch cities as Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, and The Hague.

Randstad Urgent

Program of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment where twenty to forty projects are selected for special treatment. This treatment holds that an administrative partnership, with a Deputy and a Minister, is responsible for reaching consensus and making decisions within the prescribed period. Planning study Ring Utrecht (part of VERDER and known as the covering name Draaischijf Nederland) falls within the scope of this project and has therefore an administrative partnership of the Deputy of the Province of Utrecht and the Minister of Transport, Public Works, and Water Management (later the Minister of Infrastructure and Environment).

Ring Utrecht

A ring road surrounding the city of Utrecht. The ring road is complete but only exists for three quarters of trunk roads (freeways). The northern part is a secondary road (motorway) with roundabouts and traffic lights. This road is called Noordelijke Randweg Utrecht and is half owned by the Province of Utrecht and half owned by the city of Utrecht.

Secondary road network

All roads in the Netherlands which are not part of the trunk road system. These roads are not managed by The Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management.

Transport Infrastructure (Planning Procedure) Act

The law that decides how decisions on expansion or adjustment of trunk roads should be taken. It describes the necessary procedure to take decisions.

Trunk road system

System of A-roads that forms the main structure of the Dutch road-system. These roads are managed by The Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management (as executive organisation for Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment).

Authorized body

For this project an extraordinary authorized body has been formed who is qualified to take decisions within the framework of the Transport Infrastructure (Planning Procedure) Act and the law of environmental management. During this project (from Introductory Memorandum until the agreement on the alternative of preference) there were four authorized bodies, namely Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Ministry of Housing Spatial Planning and the Environment, Province of Utrecht and city of Utrecht. End of 2010 the two Ministries formed the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment, which resulted in three qualified authorities.

Utrechts Verkeer en Vervoer Beraad

An administrative platform that coordinates the transport policy in the Utrecht region. All conjugated parties of VERDER are also represented in the Utrechts Verkeer en Vervoer Beraad.

Variants

Multiple possibilities to form parts of alternatives.

VERDER

The program VERDER is the umbrella name used for drafting and executing solutions for Ring Utrecht and Driehoek. The process is in hands of project bureau VERDER and is a collaboration of Ministry of Transport, Public Works, and Water Management, Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment, Bestuur Regio Utrecht, city of Amersfoort, city of Hilversum, city of Utrecht, Gewest Gooi- en Vechtstreek, Province of Utrecht, Amersfoort Region, Utrecht West Region, Utrecht Zuidoost Region, and Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management.

INTRODUCTION

Practitioners and politicians have claimed and acknowledged that decision making processes in infrastructural projects are inert. The lengthy procedures lead to economical and environmental lack of quality. Therefore, in November 2007, the former Dutch Minister of Ministry of Transport, Public Works, and Water Management installed the committee Elverding to analyze the causes of these overextended decision making processes (Elverding, de Graeff et al. 2008). The conclusions drawn by the committee provided more insight in the underlying problems. For instance, there are often too many administrators involved which make it difficult to come to collective decision making. And even when decisions are made they are often turned back. This leads to unnecessary delay of the overall planning and to cost overruns. The committee concluded that the number of administrators involved should decrease and a change of culture is needed. Next to this, they conclude that a more solid planning study phase is needed with a broader participation of other actors involved (Elverding, De Graeff et al. 2008). In this research, a broader participation refers to the definition Edelenbos (2005: 111) holds namely the government involving social organizations, enterprises and other stakeholders.

A pitfall or paradox of the culture change within decision making processes of administrative culture, proposed by the committee, is the occurrence of a conflicting situation where on the one hand administrators need to embrace broader participation while on the other hand they need to be persistent when making decisions. The idea behind the new proposed decision making process is that administrators are entitled to make decisions in name of citizens. But this rationality is in contrast with the rationality of participation of other actors based on equality. This situation becomes even more complicated when more authorized bodies come into play. In infrastructural projects normally one body is authorized to make decisions. One can imagine the extra difficulty of the decision making process when multiple bodies need to negotiate a decision making process together whilst embracing broader participation from social organizations, enterprises and other stakeholders.

Allowing other actors to participate and having more authorized bodies can lead to more administrative crowdedness; something the committee Elverding rejects (De Heer, Berendse et al. 2010: 77; Raad voor het openbaar bestuur 2010; Klijn and Koppenjan 2000). The administrative crowdedness assumed to be present, when more actors are involved, will lead to an increase of different understandings of the infrastructural project and will complicate the negotiations leading to a joint decision making. Especially in 'a context where consensus is highly valued and actors cannot overrule each other's authority' (Merkus 2011: 11). This perspective on decision making focuses on the interpretation and the understandings of actors involved. In this view, the unnecessary delay of the overall planning and the cost overruns is not due to lack of

specific procedures but is because of the difficulties emerging when actors negotiate for a common meaning of an infrastructural project. Decision making processes are not formulated by one actor, but can be conceptualized as a result of series of decisions within interconnected arenas in which different actors present and negotiate their strategies (Teisman 2000: 943-5, Merkus 2011). It is assumed that all actors have different understanding of the infrastructural project and that the actors need to negotiate a common meaning leading to a decision making. This research therefore focuses on the negotiated administrative decision making arena.

Research objective

The objective of this research is to explore the administrative culture of decision making and in particular to explore the process of negotiation leading to a decision making, especially focussing on senior officials and stakeholders. In these research stakeholders refer to organized groups such as special interest groups and civic organizations that were engaged in the decision making processes. Civilians are not part of the stakeholders group unless they are organized in a civic organization.

Research question

This research assumes that the decision making process becomes more difficult when actors need to negotiate for a common meaning of an infrastructural project. Especially in a situation where more actors have granted authority to make decisions and when these authorized bodies need to embrace a broader participation. In this way it becomes more difficult for administrators to hold on to their decisions made earlier as they now have to negotiate with more parties while retaining deadlines and time schedules of the infrastructural projects. Negotiation and publicity do not easily go hand in hand; decision making processes are easier when fewer actors are involved (Bovens 2000: 10-11).

This research would like to explore how a common meaning of an infrastructural project is negotiated leading to a decision making process. This objective can be translated into the following research question:

How do administrators and stakeholders negotiate a common meaning of an infrastructural project leading to a decision making?

In order to answer this main question, following sub-questions need to be explored:

How do administrators and stakeholders make sense of the infrastructural project?

How is influence performed within the negotiations?

How do negotiations change within the decision making process?

Definitions of the research concepts

To answer my research question I will drawn up a theoretical framework with three main concepts. The concepts will be explained in detail in the framework, but below you will find a brief explanation of the three concepts.

Collective action framing

The concept of collective action framing is not just a collection of individual frames of references, but is 'the outcome of negotiating shared meaning' (Gamson in Benford and Snow 2000: 614).

Sense making

The concept of sense making refers to a social process in which sense in being constructed into meaning (Weick 1995). Sense making can be resembled with the activity of cartography. The mapmakers want to present some terrain but the actual mapping depends on 'where they look, how they look, what they want to represent, and their tools for representation' (Monmonier in Weick 2000: 9). Each mapmaker and, with that, each actor, make sense in a different way.

Influence

The concept of influence is interlinked with the concept of power and refers to the possibility to use means to affect the outcome of behaviour of actors (Zimmerling 2005).

Research field

To explore the administrative culture of a decision making process it is useful to use one case to narrow the scope of inquiry. For this research, Planstudie Ring Utrecht is the case study of choice. The case study is of special interest as the project involves four designated authorized bodies and multiple stakeholders. This means that different meanings of the infrastructural project are present and multiple actors need to negotiate to reach a decision making for the infrastructural project.

Planstudie Ring Utrecht is one of the many large infrastructural projects in the Netherlands and has its focus on the Utrecht region. Started in 2008, the planning study is intended to finalize in 2020. During this period, several decisions need to be made to ensure that there is no unnecessary delay of the overall planning and there are no cost overruns. One of the decisions, within the whole decision making process, was the decision on the preferred alternative agreed in December 2010. Between December 2008 and December 2010 the authorized bodies interacted, negotiated, and made compromises to secure the decision making process. Moreover, they allowed other actors to participate as well. The arena with various actors, with different meanings about the preferred alternative for the Planstudie Ring Utrecht, is the research field of this study.

Research approach

This research will be explored from a social constructionist perspective on administrative culture. A functionalist and instrumental perspective on administration focuses on patterns and structures of behaviour and does not connect these processes to social and political issues involved. It does not take into account possible changes within cultures. A social constructionist perspective on the other hand, believes behaviour is dynamic and a process of meaning making (Kaplan 2008: 730). This perspective 'deals with the process of making conscious choices among various alternatives and selecting strategies that have meaning for human action' (Jun 2006: 79). It does not focus on the objective reality but rather on how people give meaning to their social reality. This research will follow the social constructionist approach and will focus on interpretations and understandings of actors dealing with decision making processes.

A narrative approach helps to reveal these interpretations and understandings of the different actors involved. Stories are part of the process of sense making in discourse (O'Conner 1995: 777). Narrating stories, or storytelling, is a traditional way of exchanging information. Well-designed stories that 'comprehend both information and emotion, both the explicit and the tacit, and both the core and context' can be a very powerful way to present claims (Snowden in Sole and Wilson 1999: 3). Narratives are used to provide a sense of the self and the other in relation to others. Stories explain why events occurred in a particular way and provide grounds for shared understanding and interpretation (Patterson and Monroe 1998: 316-21). In this way, narratives can be used as a primary source of knowledge in research. This research will tell you the stories of different actors about the events happened during the first two years of the exploration phase of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. I will use stories and narratives to understand and to explain the meaning making and collective action framing of actors involved.

Scientific and societal relevance of the research

Boeije (2010: 27) said that 'describing what people think and don't think, believe and don't believe, and do or do not do is a contribution to scientific knowledge in itself'. Providing a thick description of occurrences happened in a specific field provides a researcher with new information, and possibly new knowledge. However, it is not only important to describe the *what* but also important to describe the *why*. This research does not only describe what events happened during the decision making process of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht, it also describes why these events happened as they did. This thesis will provide more insight in the negotiated administrative decision making arena.

The societal relevance of this research is the showing of the social relevance of stories. The different stories told by the actors involved will provide the reader with insight in the differences in meaning making of one event. These differences are an illustration of the characteristics of social interactions. People can have different believes and ideas of the world; no absolute truth exists. It is important to try to grasp more than a single story as a single story is incomplete. Especially in interpretative studies it is evident to illustrate where similarities and where difference are found in stories, as it is in these similarities and these differences that we can understand and describe a complete story.

Structure of the thesis

The first chapter of this thesis starts with a theoretical framework where I will explain and elaborate on the concepts used for this research, namely collective action framing, sense making, and influence. The concepts provide a conceptual framework to help interpret and understand the stories told by the respondents about the events occurred during the decision making process of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. Chapter two describes how I gained access to the field, the research techniques I used during my field study, the reflexivity and trustworthiness of this research, and my personal reflections. Chapter three provides a short outline of the origin of the collaboration of State and regional parties in the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. This helps the reader to understand the objectives, the complexities, and the imputed relations of influence of the planning study. Chapter's four to eight are used to present and analyze the results of the research. The research is concluded with a conclusion of the analyzed results, an answer for the research question and the limitations for this research.

CHAPTER 1 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The process of decision making is often complex because of a lack of consensus on whether certain assumptions fit in with the social reality of the involved group (Schein 2010: 118). Administrators share the idea that decision making processes have become more complex. Along with the different phases of decision making processes, new decisions can be made or directions can be changed. Next to this, more stakeholders have joined the decision making arena and a larger variety of problems and solutions emerged (Teisman 2000). In the Netherlands it is acknowledged that problems exist that can complicate the decision making process within infrastructural projects. The problems emerge because the actors involved have different meanings of the infrastructural projects and each of these actors will try to influence the decision making process (De Heer, Berendse et al. 2010).

Several authors elaborated on interactive decision making processes. Schön and Rein and Scharpf show the two extremes of interactive decision making. According to Scharpf the nature of the problems in decision making varies. It depends on the decision rules (unanimous, majority or unilateral/hierarchical decisions), on the orientation of actors, and on the possibility of one actor to influence other actors. Based on these problems, Scharpf states that it is problematical to achieve effective agreement. He distinguishes between problem-solving, bargaining, and confrontation as decision styles and claims that bargaining is the more robust style. When bargaining, actors will actively pursue their interest and will bargain for a joint decision making. However, Scharpf claims there is a trap to find when bargaining for a joint decision. Actors try to influence the decision making as much as possible and will try to prevent a decision making that does not accord their interests even though this decision would be more efficient from a problem-solving perspective (Scharpf 1988).

Schön and Rein have a different understanding about interactive decision making. They state that policy making has underlying structures of belief and perception and claim a frame-critical approach to interactive decision making is needed. According to Schön and Rein, controversies in decision making can be analyzed as conflicts of frames. Actors reflect and learn during a decision making process and are capable to review how their own actions exacerbate the conflict. Actors are capable to frame and reframe the issue that is under negotiation (Schön and Rein 1994).

This research adopts the interactive decision making arena but instead of focusing on formal procedures, as for instance processes and phases, it will focus on informal procedures; on interpretation, perception and agency of the different actors involved. Organizations create knowledge by making sense of the social reality (Du Toit 2003). It is assumed that this creation

of knowledge is not something a single person can do, but is something done through collective interaction of individual perceptions of reality, and the roles of the self and the other within that reality.

1.1 Sense making

Two perspectives are leading within the decision making process. First, the Behavioral Decision Making School which holds that decision making is falsified in different ways and people need better training to overcome these falsifications (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974; Bazerman 2006; Gilovich et al. 2002; Kahneman et al. 1982 in Winch & Maytorena 2009). Winch & Maytorena state that the fundamental proposition of this school is that no new information is sought at the time the decision needs to be made; the answer for the problem is assumed to be available, which is not the case in every situation. Often, situations are new and unpredictable and no straight forward decisions are at hand (2009: 185). The Sense Making School is the second perspective. Scholars within this approach, such as Weick (1993); Starbuck and Millikin (1988); Gephart (1993); Vaughan (1996); Porac et al. (1995) quoted in Winch & Maytorena (2009), see decision making processes as something more tacit and emergent. The sense making approach was originally developed to explore how people make sense of their crossing with organizations, media, messages, and situations. Since then, the approach has been applied in various fields with different levels of analysis. Individuals, groups, communities, and cultures are studied in both quantitative as qualitative studies (Dervin 1999: 331-4).

'Sense making is well named because it literally means the making of sense' (Weick 1995: 4). It refers to a process of interpretation where individuals and groups interpret and reflect on situations to make sense of a situation that does not make sense initially. Actors are constantly seeking for information to make sense of the social context. They use this information to shape the context followed by action based on their sense making of this context. In this way there are no criteria for the sense made, it relies on the interpretation of the context on that moment (Winch & Maytorena 2009: 186). Sense making finds place within interpretative schemes and it is not about who is wrong and who is right. It is about a search for meaning and about motivation for describing a situation to make it right (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld 2005: 415). When people experience change they must 'make sense in a way that relates to previous understanding and experience' (Gioia et al. 1994: 365). Social reality is constructed and reconstructed when actors interact. The social reality depends on the context, can change instantly, and is therefore different for each actor (Bate 1994). Narratives are used to construct meanings and provide actors with accounts of the process of organizing (Brown et al. 2008: 1039).

One stream in the literature on sense making state that groups of people tries to understand and to see the world in similar ways (Brown 1978; Louis 1980; Pfeffer 1981;

Sackman 1991; Smircich 1983 in Brown et al. 2008). Organizations are seen as networks in which actors collectively try to make sense of situations. The idea is that groups create mutual routines and patterns of actions to comprehend community understandings. It is assumed that work teams in organizations have a shared collective thinking, interpretative scheme and a collective knowledge structure (Brown et al. 2008: 1038). Louis states that the norms and values within the organizational culture are shared and interactively emergent. Newcomers in an organization will learn the organizational culture and will therefore enact in the sharing of collective sense making (1980: 230-31).

Another stream in the literature of sense making explain there are differences between the sense making of individuals and groups (Brown 2000; Starbuck & Milliken 1988; Weick 1995 in Brown et al. 2008). Even though individuals will try to negotiate a collective sense making, there is often a lack of consensus. Actors make sense differently as their interpretive schemes are individually specific. According to Brown et al. it is generally acknowledged that sense making is constructed through their individual needs for self-enhancement, self-efficacy, and self-consistency. Social actors make sense in unique ways and it is difficult to create a shared meaning (Brown et al. 2008: 1039-40). Following Brown et al., I assume that every actor makes sense in unique ways and there are no shared rules. Although actors can share a common narrative frame they will always have different understandings on many aspects.

Sense making is of importance for this research as it lets the actors 'explain the meaning of their actions, providing an authentic that can only come from the main characters involved in the story' (Rhodes 2005: 20). Sense making forms a process of individual framing and therefore affects the collective action framing.

1.2 Framing and collective action framing

The concept of framing can be found in psychology, linguistics, communication and media studies, discourse analysis, political science, and political studies. Especially in social sciences, scholars are extensively interested in framing processes in relation to social movements. Benford and Snow explain that social movement scholars started to explore framing processes that was ignored by scholars until the mid 1980s. These social movement scholars were interested in meaning work and conceptualized this as framing. Framing was described as active as something was being done. It was further described as processual as framing is a dynamic process (Benford and Snow 2000)

A frame of reference can be explained as a set of basic assumptions that determines behaviour. According to Goffman, framing is a sense making technique that actors create to make sense of the world (in Creed et al. 2002: 36). 'Like a window, we see the world through frames that determine our perspective while limiting our view to only a part of a complex world

around us' (Creed et al. 2002: 36). Keeping this in mind one can understand that each individual has its own unique frame of reference in which they see the world within their system of values and beliefs. In decision making processes it is important to have shared ideas about which decision will be the leading one (Schein 2010: 118). But, as Kaplan (2008: 729-31) argues it is not always possible to create shared ideas about such a decision. All people have frames of references in which they act and enact.

Framing can be seen as 'an active processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction' (Benford and Snow 2000: 613). This implies that actors use framing to get support for their view. This is also present in administrative culture or 'politics of culture' where administrators and participants have different points of views depending on relationships, and on influence positions in certain situations (De Heer 2008: 26-7). With each actor having their own background there are different stories about what is going on in, for instance, infrastructural projects. These divergent stories can lead to misunderstanding or to disagreement (Dewulf et al. 2011: 53). As said, in decision making processes it is important to have one story. Collective action framing is intended to mobilize the different frames of references and to form one collective frame of reference (Benford and Snow 2000: 613-4).

A collective action frame is not just a collection of individual frames of references, but is 'the outcome of negotiating shared meaning' (Gamson in Benford and Snow 2000: 614). Collective action frame is a negotiated and shared frame of a certain condition by the involved actors. This negotiation process is a struggle to decide which frames are more legitimated than others. The description, or story, of one actor's situation may possible never become *the* story. One group or actor might find the story plausible while another group or actor believes another story is plausible (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld 2005: 415). Ideas and meanings are thus not per se created through structured events or existing ideologies, but more through negotiation of meaning of actors involved (Benford & Snow 2000: 613). People do not necessarily need the most adhered decisions to solve a problem; they need to make sense of the situation (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld 2005: 415).

Although frames can be constructed and reconstructed, there are limits to the reconstruction of framing based on the actor's value and belief system. The collective action frame needs to be constructed within the boundaries of the meaning making arena of actors involved (Kaplan 2008). Administrators and stakeholders have to negotiate the construction of collective actions leading to a decision making. It is assumed that each actor will try to reconstruct the frame of other actors into a frame consistent with, or equivalent to, their own frame of reference during the negotiations leading to a collective action frame.

1.3 Power or influence?

The conceptualizations of the concept of power by the philosophers Foucault, Machiavelli, and the scholars Lukes (2005), and Dahl (1957) have been very influential in social and political science. Dahl defines power as a relation between people which is expressed in symbolism. Some people have more power than others. He explains this by stating that in one situation a person can have more power because of his particular role while in the other situation another person has more power due to his particular role. Dahl composed a formula for this: '*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* otherwise would not do' (1957: 203). Power is therefore a relation and in particular a relation between people. Power is a non-tangible and tacit social construct. Human societies develop ordering systems (who has more influence than others) but the process and the outcome are complex and varied. In an organization, such as an infrastructural project group, the process of sorting out who will influence whom can be very unpredictable (Schein 2010: 101-4).

Everyone would probably agree that relations of influence and power are of importance when trying to understand organizations. It is a common belief that people will try to wriggle as much as possible to gain or keep influence or power in political, organizational, and social systems. But what do influence and power exactly mean? Can we say that influence is part of the concept of power? Or is power part of the concept of influence? Or are these concepts the same? There are different opinions when it comes to the connection of these two concepts (Zimmerling 2005: 98-9). There is an option of 'using influence as a synonym for power' (Zimmerling 2005: 99), but what Zimmerling learned, by examining the existing literature, was that there are three basic assumptions on the relation between power and influence (Ibid 2005: 99-102). If one accepts the fundamental ideas of power defined by Dahl, namely that '*A* has power over *B* to the extent that he can get *B* to do something that *B* otherwise would not do' (1957: 203), it becomes possible to look at the three assumptions that Zimmerling explains.

The first assumption is that power is the more general concept. Simply said it means that influence results when power is successfully performed. 'Power is something that one 'has', and influence is something that 'happens' when power is somehow used' (Zimmerling 2005: 105). Cassinelli and Cartwright are in favour of this assumption claiming that influence is something that can be exercised while power cannot. Power is the ability to influence. If one influences another, it can be said that one has power over another (in Zimmerling 2005: 105-120).

Second assumption is that influence is the more general concept. Zimmerling examines the statements of Lasswell and Kaplan who claim that power is a special case of influence. All cases of power are cases of influence, but not all cases of influence are cases of power (in Zimmerling 2005: 120-28). Wrong (in Zimmerling 2005: 129-33) emphasizes on the effect of power and influence instead of the means. According to Wrong there is a difference to unintended and

intended influence, the latter being power. In this case, influence is the more general concept as well.

The third assumption rejects the first two assumptions. Mokken and Stokman (in Zimmerling 2005: 138-41) opted in the 1970s already to define power and influence as abilities. Their view of power is

'the possibility to restrict or expand freedom of action, or the capacity to preserve that freedom to a given degree [...] the capacity of actors to fix or change a set of action alternatives or choice alternatives for other actors' (ibid: 139).

Mokken and Stokman state that influence is

'the possibility to determine the outcomes of the behaviour of others, without the restriction or expansion of their freedom of action or expansion of their freedom of action [...] the capacity of actors to determine (partly) the actions or choices of other actors within the set of action or choice alternatives available to those actors' (ibid: 139).

The difference of both views is that power has the possibility to limit or amplify the freedom of action of actors, while influence has the possibility to affect the outcomes of behaviour of actors without limiting or amplifying the freedom of action. In this way, power can be seen more as a means of convict and influence more as a means of impact. Influence can be associated with communication and information that affects the behaviours and can change the frame of reference of actors. This communication and information can be used intended and unintended. Actors can use information to exercise influence but actors can also exercise influence due to specific information.

The three different assumptions show the discussions between the concepts of power and influence. I assume that power and influence are two different concepts with two different possibilities to determine the outcomes of behaviour, but I will leave open what the balance is between these concepts. In a political arena, such as the decision making processes within infrastructural processes, it is difficult to overrule each other's authority as the actors involved highly value consensus. Keeping this in mind I expect to find processes of influence rather than processes of power. On the other hand, Flyvbjerg showed with his research on the 'Aalberg Project' that there was a strong relationship between power and knowledge within the decision making process. He explained that the relationship between knowledge and power is conversable. Knowledge is power, but power is also knowledge. He calls this the *rationality of*

power which holds that 'power defines what counts as rationality and knowledge and thereby what counts as reality'. The more power one has the less rationality is needed; but power relations are constantly changing and there is a limit to rationalization (1998). I will not go as far as Flyvbjerg by claiming that actors use power to influence the decision making, but I acknowledge that the concept influence sometimes appears to be a concept of power.

This is supported by Van Tatenhove et al. who claim that there is little known about the processes of power in decision making. First, they state there is more emphasis on the horizontal relations instead of the vertical relations in which inequality comes to play. Second, a lot of attention is paid to management of governance or to democratizing networks which leaves less or no room to collaborate on power relations. Third, no actor has overriding power to define the outcome of decision making (2010: 610). It is especially the last sentence to find that one may needs to consider using the concept of influence rather than the concept of power in decision making. I assume that actors will try to negotiate the collective action frame without the restriction or expansion of their freedom of action. Especially in decision making processes, where more actors are authorized to make decisions, it becomes more difficult to actually use power. Instead, these actors may try to determine the outcomes of the behaviours and may try to change the frame of reference of others by the use of intended or unintended information and communication gathered, which sometimes appears to be an act of power. What determines the influence of one actor over another is not clear at this stage. The outcomes of this research will hopefully provide more insight in where influence is to find.

1.4 Discussion

Actors tell stories about how they make sense of infrastructural projects within their own frames of references. These different stories together become a matter of negotiation in the process of collective action framing of actors involved. With each story, an actor will try to call attention to events supporting their frame of reference. The determined collective action frame depends on the existing influence relations. These influence relations can constantly change, which in turn, can lead to renewed negotiations for a collective actions frame. I assume that one or several actors have more influence than others but I am not sure where to find the difference of influence. The negotiated collective action frame will only lead to a decision making when the negotiated frame is agreed upon by all involved actors. It is therefore, that the stories of actors involved will help me to understand and to interpret the negotiation for a collective action frame leading to a decision making.

CHAPTER 2 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of qualitative research, and especially interpretative research, is to describe, interpret and explain behaviours, experiences, understandings and 'products' of the people involved with minimal disturbance to the natural environment. This means that the researcher will implement an open examination procedure, will describe meanings and behaviours and try to understand and exemplify them, and will use an inductive method of analysis to explain the results of the research ('t Hart et al. 2005: 253-63). In this thesis, I will take the reader through the events occurring during the Planstudie Ring Utrecht by the use of narration. Following Flyvbjerg (1998: 7-8) I will tell the story of Planstudie Ring Utrecht from what the respondents of this case have told me. These stories are diverse, complex and sometimes conflicting. I have tried to be as unbiased and objective as possible covering the different perspectives of the respondents. This leaves room for the reader to make different interpretations and conclusions and to decide the meaning of the case. The Planstudie Ring Utrecht is explained in terms of events that had happened in a particular context. This narrative elaborates on the relation between respondents and events connected to the theoretical framework, as explained in the previous chapter.

In this chapter I will explain the choice and access of the field, the research techniques used the reliability and validity, and my personal reflections.

2.1 Choice of and access to the field

My research objective is to explore the administrative culture of decision making processes in large infrastructural projects. In particular, I will focus on how administrators and stakeholders negotiate a collective action frame guiding a decision making. As I was not familiar with planning stages of large infrastructural projects, it was not that easy to find a suitable case for my research. I had an open mind when it came to seeking a suitable case but the one thing that was important to me was that I wanted to have some sort of connection with the case of my choice.

Fortunately, I came across someone who had a contact at Bestuur Regio Utrecht (BRU). This person was willing to see me and a week later we met in his office at BRU. After telling him about my objectives and ideas he made the connection with Planstudie Ring Utrecht. Only one month earlier, the authorized bodies of Planstudie Ring Utrecht had made the decision on the preferred alternative. He explained to me that this was an important decision in a series of decisions throughout the whole planning process. And moreover, this was a project where a lot of stakeholders were involved. Immediately I thought Planstudie Ring Utrecht would be an interesting case as it met my requirements, I was able to do research within a retrospective

demarcated area, and it was a project that would have a major impact on my hometown, which made me connect to it in a special way.

The person at BRU brought me into contact with someone at the Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management (RWS), who was enthusiastic about my intentions but he also warned me that it might be difficult to get all the information I needed. Planstudie Ring Utrecht was only in the 1st phase of the planning process of the project and all parties still needed to work, discuss and negotiate with each other for several years to come. There was a risk that the involved parties would not put their cards on the table. I took this up as a challenge and chose Planstudie Ring Utrecht as my research case. And so it came that I was given access to the field during the period of February to August 2011.

The RWS gave me access to all the official documents that had been published under the name of RWS or VERDER, a collaboration of State and regional partners, during the period of November 2006 (starting with the network analysis) to January 2011 (concluding with the official announcement of agreement on the preferred alternative, and agreements made for the 2nd phase). Moreover, they helped me to introduce me to the stakeholders who I had selected based on the document analysis I had conducted.

2.2 Research techniques

According to Schein, every group or organization has its own distribution of influence. To understand how an authoritative system, as the decision making process of Planstudie Ring Utrecht, works it was necessary to be sensitive to nuances of language during the research period (2010: 102-4). In order to become acquainted with this *emic* perspective I myself was the instrument to collect the data ('t Hart et al. 2005: 261). I used a combination of in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis to retrieve the information needed for this retrospective research.

2.2.1 In-depth interviews

One of the most important research techniques for this thesis was the use of in-depth interviews. The events within the demarcated research area had already taken place, starting with the published network analysis in 2006 up to the decision on the preferred alternative in 2010. I was not able to engage in extended participant observation as the events already happened, but I was able to perform some form of participant observation during my presence at RWS. Further, I relied on information given by the actors who actually took part in the process.

It was essential to make an extensive selection of possible respondents. First, all authorized bodies were identified. I contacted the involved persons at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment (Ministry of I & M), the Province of Utrecht and the city of

Utrecht. All three parties were willing to give their assistance. Second, I selected the executive organizations of this project. The involved persons of BRU, RWS, VERDER and a consultancy firm (who was consulted during the decision making process) were contacted and again all parties were willing to provide their assistance. Third, I made a selection of civic organizations and special interest groups. Guided by the summary of rights and opportunities for public comment on the introductory memorandum, and the consultation document, I was able to make a selection of parties who were actively involved in my chosen research topic. By actively, I mean parties who had both a say about the introductory memorandum and about the decision on the preferred direction. These parties were involved during the whole period that fell within the scope of my research area and not just one part of this process. Out of the nineteen organizations I contacted, seventeen were willing to help me. By interviewing eighteen respondents of seventeen organizations involved I was able to acquire an extensive view of the actors and the events that had been occurred¹.

There are a number of interview methods a researcher can use. One extreme is an interview where informants have the control and the interviewer is just an observer. Another extreme is where the interviewer uses exactly the same questions for each informant (De Walt & De Walt 2002: 121). For this thesis I performed unstructured interviews to allow the informant to control the interview. In this way I was able to create a situation where the informant was more or less the storyteller of certain events. The interviews lasted for 1 to 2 hours and were as open as possible. I had a list of topics at hand that could be consulted when the conversation seemed to lead to a dead end². I hardly ever had to use this list as almost all respondents touched on the most important subjects and events automatically. The only thing I needed to do, but something that was very important though, was to keep on asking questions if a subject had not been discussed fully to my opinion. For instance when a respondent explained me he or she attended a particular meeting without elaborating on the meeting itself I would ask him or her: "could you tell me more about that meeting?", "why were you present at that meeting, what was your role?". The exact questions depended on the situation. The main idea was to keep asking open questions.

For my own peace of mind I chose a respondent from VERDER, a collaboration of State and regional partners, for the first of the many interviews. VERDER provided assistance during the project and was not one of the authorized bodies or one of the stakeholders. You could say they had more of an 'outsiders' role and I thought they might talk more freely about certain topics. Moreover, VERDER provided the overall documentation during the project which meant

¹ Please see appendixes A and C for a complete overview of involved actors.

² Please see appendix D for the interview topic list.

that the respondent was well informed. This proved to be a good choice. The respondent from VERDER was able to provide me with a lot of information and, not unimportantly, with the confirmation that I had enough background information about the process to carry out the other interviews and to know when to ask further questions.

During the whole period I tried to be as flexible as possible, as information from one interview could sometimes be used during another interview. Or information from one interview led me to be 'ignorant' during another interview. Both occurred several times during my interviews and helped me to gain more or other information than I otherwise would have gathered. One example is that one respondent told me about the events during a meeting where an important decision needed to be made. For some reason information about the decision made was leaked before the involved parties actually made the decision. The first person who told me this information was not present during the actual meeting, so it was second hand information. I now knew what happened but wanted to know what the attended persons would tell me about this event. When one of the respondents, who was present during the meeting, started to explain to me what had happened I acted as if this information was new for me. If I acted as if I already knew what happened there was a risk that the respondent would not further explain what happened because he or she would think that I knew this already. Each story of one event is of equal importance and it is important to let each respondent their meaning making of such an event.

Out of eighteen interviews carried out, sixteen were taped, transcribed and analyzed. For the other two interviews I made extensive notes and analyzed these afterwards. To analyze all this data I grouped the information by topics. I chose to work with topics that I connected to subjects or events that the respondents found most important when thinking and talking about the decision making process of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. A total of eleven topics were chosen and all related remarks of the respondents about such a topic were bundled. The following topics were used: network analysis; introductory memorandum; reaction to the introductory memorandum; Kracht van Utrecht; recommendation m.e.r. committee; directives MER 1st phase; MER 1st phase; preferred direction; BO-MIRT; consultation; preferred alternative. For instance, the following sentence was labelled in the topic network analysis:

The network analysis was published and it showed very clearly that there were many bottlenecks in the trunk road system and secondary road network, so many that it was clear one party could not solve this.

By labelling in this way I gained a full overview of the different perceptions of different stakeholders and authorized bodies regarding one topic and regarding the perceptions of each other relating to that topic. Depending on the amount of material I was able to see certain

patterns and was able to draw conclusions from the collected quotes. I made use of the quotes and have put them into the context to support my arguments. The outcomes of my analysis will be discussed in chapters 4 to 8.

The interviews helped me to understand how individuals made sense of the infrastructural project and how collective action frames were negotiated. I asked each respondent to tell their story of the, for them most important, events that had happened during the period of the outcome of the introductory memorandum until the decision for the preferred alternative.

With the use of a narrative approach, where individuals elaborated on their particular stories, more insight was given on how administrators and stakeholders gave meaning and found logic in certain situations within the decision making processes. Following this social constructionist perspective on public administration, with a narrative approach, was therefore essential for this research.

2.2.2 Observation

Participant observation has its origin in anthropology. Malinowski (in De Walt & De Walt 2002: 1-4) was the first to describe this approach as a research method. It is a method where the researcher participates in daily activities, interactions, and events of one person or a group of people. It is a way to describe both *explicit* and *tacit* aspects of culture. In principle, all humans are participants in everyday interactions, but few engage in the systematic use of information for scientific use. It is therefore important that the method of observation includes information gained from observing through recording, writing and analysis of this information.

As this research was retrospective I had no means to conduct participant observation during the actual demarcated research area as that already had been taken place. Luckily, it was possible to observe during my interviews and (formal) meetings and gatherings at RWS. Although less powerful than actually observing during the events, I am confident my observations were of importance during my research period. As De Walt & De Walt state, it is important for a researcher to understand the actors involved as this provides a sense for the self and the other. This cannot easily be put in words or be met when using surveys or other models with more formal research tools. Saying and doing are two different things. One can say one thing and do another. Observation helps the researcher to uncover this (2002: 8).

I was able to receive valuable information while observing during interviews, meetings and gatherings. One example is that I attended a consultation meeting with civic organizations and the RWS. Although this meeting was for another planning study, this form of consultation was also used during the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. It gave me a good idea of how such meetings within the context of my research project would have been set up, what possible tensions could

have occurred, and how the atmosphere would have been. I have written down all my observations during or after this event and have used these observations when analyzing the consultation meetings in my own project.

Another example of a useful observation was that by being present during environment management meetings I was able to get a closer look at the environment management in Planstudie Ring Utrecht and at the experiences of RWS with their stakeholders. Though just one-sided information, I could use this during my interviews to clarify or to gain more information on certain topics. It provided me with information on the practices carried out during a planning study process and it helped me to understand and to use the correct terminology.

These insights helped me to gain trust with my respondents and to become fully embedded. The observations have helped me to get intangible information about certain topics, or to clarify certain events, which were useful when conducting the interviews. For instance, during one interview the respondent did not want to go into detail from which channel he received certain information. When the respondent talked about the topic I saw he could not sit still and became somewhat nervous. I sensed this had to do with not wanting to put all cards on the table. This made me attentive during other interviews when this topic came up. To make sure the respondent would talk extensively about it I did not interrupt the story in any way (no nodding, no confirmative words). Eventually one of the respondents, in a split of a second, mentioned from which channel this information came.

2.2.3 Document analysis

Official and unofficial documents are of great importance during research as these provided me with valuable background information. Analyzing the documents not only gave me an insight into the official structure of decisions made and of the events that had taken place, it also gave me an insight into nuances between written and oral texts. When something is written down it is an interpretation of a certain event by the person (or persons/organization(s)) who writes the report. It is possible that a text is written down with a certain intention. Or that some sort of hidden or double messages can be found in the text. Sometimes this became clear unintentionally during an interview I conducted or sometimes the respondent intentionally explained to me what the actual message meant. One example of this is the use of the word extreme when presenting the possible alternatives for the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. One respondent explained that with the use of extreme they wanted to explain to the public that these alternatives were, for now, only part of the exploration phase and would not per se be the alternative used. Such information I could use for analyzing the collected data.

The important accounts of documents included official documents as the network analysis, the introductory memorandum, the MER (environmental impact study) documents, the

consultation document, the summary document, and official letters from the Minister of I & M to the Senate of the Dutch Parliament. Further, I have used unofficial documents on the websites of the authorized bodies, the civic organizations, the special interest groups, and the executive organizations. Moreover, I have used published documents of civic organizations and special interest groups related to the project (i.e. the report Kracht van Utrecht).

2.3 Reflexivity and trustworthiness

The quality of interpretative research is connected with terms as trustworthiness and reflexivity. Reflexivity concerns the influence of judgment by accidental or non systematic faults. Trustworthiness concerns the influence of judgment by systematic faults ('t Hart et al., 2005: 281-3).

2.3.1 Reflexivity

For qualitative research, reflexivity is difficult as it relies on interpretations of both the respondents and the researcher. I did not work with one or several instruments measuring symptoms concluding the same results. I conducted unstructured interviews with no specific questionnaire and I participated and observed the subjects of my study leading to a process of meaning making and meaning giving in itself. It is not possible for a researcher in qualitative research to have a neutral view of the events. Just as any other qualitative researcher I have a certain view that unintentionally influences my observations. The outcome of this thesis has therefore been influenced by the social constructionist perspective of the researcher.

My counter-plea, though, is that I was able to compare outcomes of in-depth interviews and observations with document analysis. Data collection and data analysis succeeded each other. Statements from my respondents were replicated with the available documents. In this way I was able to acquire a form of reflexivity that is accepted for interpretative research.

2.3.2 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness can be both internal and external. Internal trustworthiness relates to influencing the research due to systematic faults. To achieve internal trustworthiness I have aimed to acknowledge what my respondents thought of as relevant. By listening, viewing and asking I was able to observe these relevancies. This contributes to the internal trustworthiness as there is only a small distance between that data and the reflection of the reality of these data. When a respondent comments on certain subjects or events again and again it is probably because he or she finds these topics very important. Remarkably, all respondents more or less commented on the same topics which made it clear to me that these were the most important subjects or events for the meaning construction guiding the decisions made. Acting as an accomplice also

contributed to the internal trustworthiness. Involvement is necessary when wanting to know what goes on in the minds of the respondents. I have also described in detail the research techniques used and the way the analysis was performed for the reader to understand the thread through my research. And last, I asked for feedback from my respondents. Every respondent received a copy of the transcript of our interview. They were able to respond and comment on this transcript. To make sure respondents agreed to how I used their citations, I sent them a copy of all citations used when requested. Again, they were able to respond and comment. In this way they were able to have a say if they did not agree with the way I used their citations or information.

But next to this, there are some potential threats for the internal trustworthiness of interpretative research. One threat can occur when part of the research population is not willing to contribute. This actually happened during my study. Two of the selected civic organizations did not respond after several attempts at contact. One of these organizations did not reply at all. I began to wonder whether I had been given the wrong name for the contact person. But in the last week of my fieldwork period I saw a document, with an appeal for another regulation, signed by that contact person, on behalf of that civic organization. The other civic organization replied after multiple requests and agreed to make an appointment in the last week of my fieldwork period. Unfortunately they never actually confirmed the appointment and the interview did not take place. Even though I was not able to get in contact with these two parties, I am convinced I was able to collect the data I needed. During the weeks of my interviews with ten other civic organizations and special interest groups I had acquired the information needed for my research. I believe the point of saturation was met even without the other two civic organizations and therefore I am confident this situation did not cause a threat to the trustworthiness of my research.

External trustworthiness relates to whether or not the conclusions of this research apply to other cases. Fundamental generalization is valid for this research. The outcomes of this case are not isolated but are applicable and useable for other cases. This research provides important insights for other comparable planning studies in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands it is becoming more and more usual for citizens and organizations to get involved and participate in spatial development. It is therefore important for scholars and practitioners to get more insight into decision making processes where stakeholders and authorized bodies are actively involved. Due to the specific regulatory processes involved in large infrastructural projects in the Netherlands, it is not possible to use the outcomes of this research for cases in other countries. The outcomes of this research are also not particularly useful for infrastructural projects where no multiple authorized bodies are involved. This research elaborates on the collective action framing of authorized bodies and stakeholders. This process of collective action framing can be

somewhat different when only one authorized party is involved. Collective action framing will be present in such a case as well but takes place in an arena where the objectives within the organization of the authorized body are likely to be more or less the same.

2.4 Personal reflections

As I used myself as an instrument for this research, I am aware that my being in itself has influenced the research. Although I tried to be unbiased I cannot confirm I have not been biased. Yanow (2003) claims that interpretative researchers are almost unable to reduce or avoid bias. For instance, being a woman of 28 years of age, with a Bachelor in Economics and Anthropology and residing in the city of research will give another view of the case than if I was a man of 25 years of age with a Bachelor in Communication and not residing in the city of research. I believe there is nothing wrong with this but it is something to be aware of for both the researcher and the reader. Further, my respondents could have used the effect of our interaction. 'This is inherent in a constructionist view of data: they are seen as being co-produced in the interaction, rather than as objectified, free-standing entities that can be removed from the field setting' (Yanow 2003: 16). In favour of my research, I have tried not to give any judgments and to ensure that my own preferences did not play a part. It is up to the researcher to zoom out again and to look objectively to all the information gathered before starting with the analysis. I believe I have managed to do meet this requirement.

CHAPTER 3 - THE PLANSTUDIE RING UTRECHT PROJECT

In September 2006 the Ministry of Transport, Public Works, and Water Management (Ministry of V & W) and regional partners of the Province of Utrecht published a network analysis exploring mobility issues in the region of Utrecht for the year 2020. The main conclusion of the network analysis was that by 2020, without additional measures, a large amount of the defined roads on the trunk road system and secondary road network would not meet the requirements needed according to the mobility standards determined by the government. On the trunk road system, the traffic bottlenecks were concentrated on the highways A2, A12, A27, A28 and A1. On the secondary road network it was mainly the parallel roads next to the highways and the roads flowing into the highways that provided for an overload of the road network. The network analysis provided six possible solutions within the fields of 1) spatial planning; 2) pricing; 3) mobility management (including bicycle solutions); 4) public transport; 5) roads; and 6) goods traffic, to diminish the expected mobility issues in the region of Utrecht. Further, the network analysis concluded that State and regional parties should work closely together to provide a solid mobility network in the region of Utrecht. The idea behind this conclusion was that by creating a situation where both State and region were responsible for the same problem it would contribute to a competent and coherent decision making process.

On account of this conclusion, an administrative agreement was signed on November 13, 2006 by State and regional partners of the Mid-Netherlands. With this agreement all parties agreed to invest a maximum of 3.1 billion euros in order to improve mobility issues in the region. Further, an official collaboration of State parties as the Ministry of V & W; and the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment (Ministry of VROM), and regional parties as the Bestuur Regio Utrecht (BRU); city of Amersfoort; city of Hilversum; city of Utrecht; Gewest Gooien Vechtstreek; Province of Utrecht; Amersfoort Region; Utrecht West Region; Utrecht Zuidoost Region; and the Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management (RWS), was born. VERDER, as the collaboration was named, was launched with the Utrechts Verkeer en Vervoer Beraad (UVVB) as their administrative initiator.

3.1 Ambition and collaboration

The ambition of the collaboration of VERDER was to improve the competitive position of the Randstad, the spatial area around large Dutch cities as Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, and The Hague, by exploring the possibilities to enhance mobility in the broadest sense of the term (i.e. roads, public transport and mobility management). By request of VERDER the RWS would explore solutions for traffic bottlenecks in the Dutch trunk road system in the region of Utrecht. RWS was

assigned this exploration phase as it is the trustee and developer of the Dutch road and water system and therefore has the knowledge to come up with possible solutions. To make sure that State and regional partners could handle the large improvements of mobility in the region it was decided to divide the exploration area of the region of Utrecht into three areas with three matching planning studies.

Planstudie Ring Utrecht would explore solutions for the Ring Utrecht with the highways A2, A27, A12 and the Noordelijke Randweg Utrecht (N230). Planstudie knooppunt Hoevelaken would explore solutions for the junction Hoevelaken, close to the city of Amersfoort, with the highways A1 and A28. Planstudie A27/A1 would explore solutions for the junction Eemnes, close to the city of Amersfoort, with the highways A27 and A1. The three planning studies also became known as the Draaischijf Nederland, given the area of analysis was considered the turning table of the Dutch road network by the Dutch government.

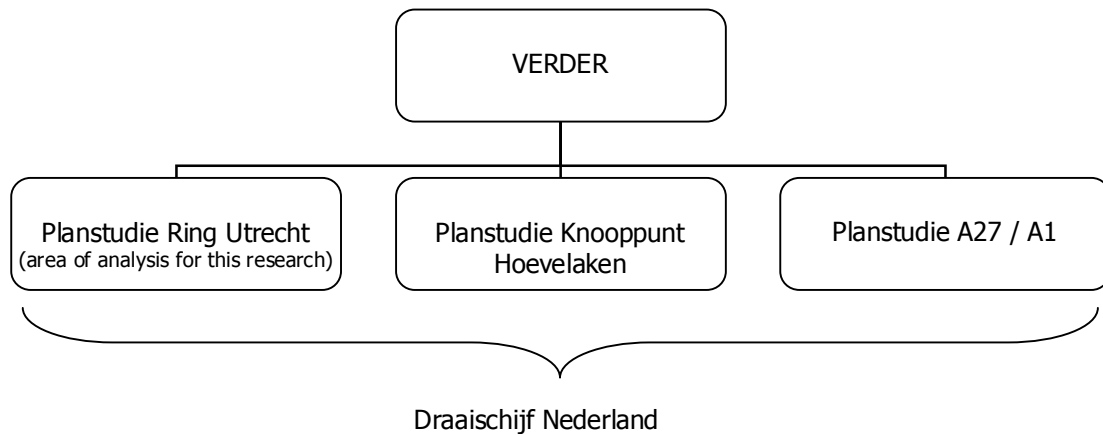


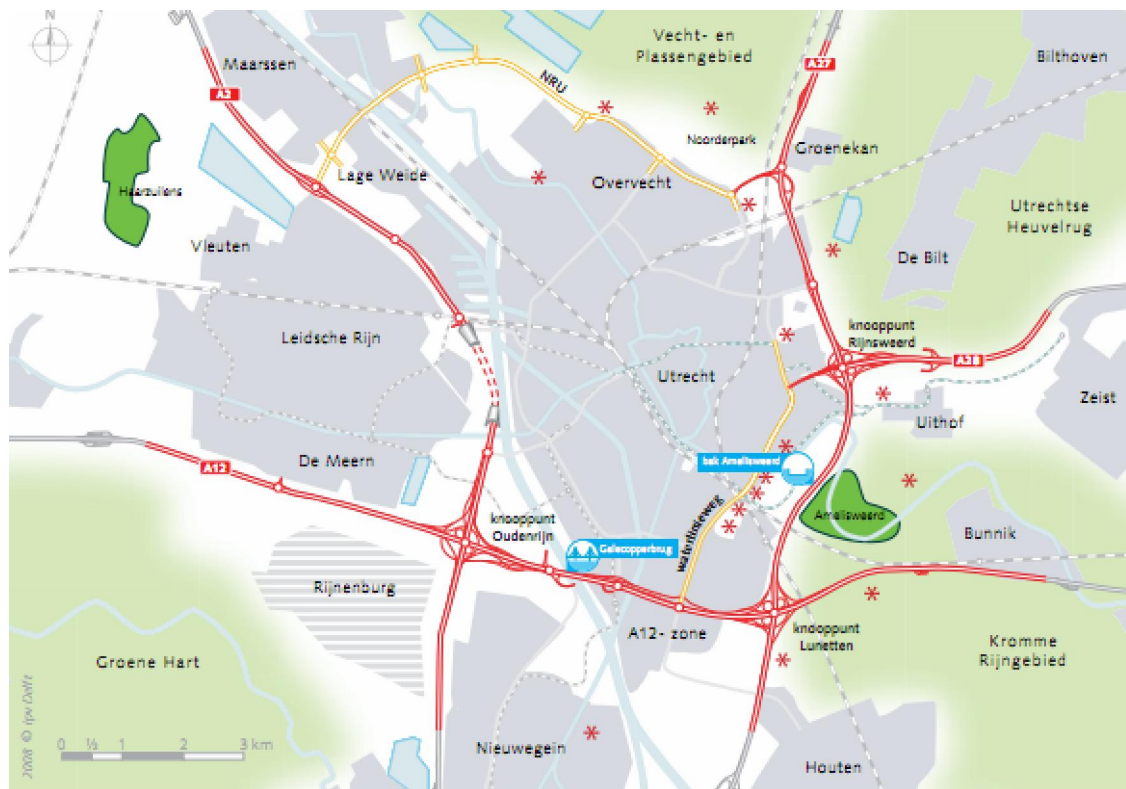
Figure 1: Overview of the classification of three planning studies that fell within the scope of the collaboration of VERDER



Picture 1: Draaischijf Nederland; the area of analysis of the three planning studies was considered the turning table of the Dutch road network by the Dutch government

Overall, all State and regional parties involved in the collaboration of VERDER were responsible for the three planning studies. In practice, the three planning studies each had their own authorized bodies to make decisions, and each planning study had their own timeline. The research area for this thesis was the decision making process of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht.

As stated earlier, the area of analysis for Planstudie Ring Utrecht was the area with the highways A2, A27, A12 and the Noordelijke Randweg Utrecht (NRU):



Map 1: Area of analysis of Planstudie Ring Utrecht³

3.2 Complexities of the project

In the Planstudie Ring Utrecht project a threefold complexity was to be found. First, the committed collaboration of VERDER contributed to the complexity. With this commitment State and regional parties had agreed to work closely together to come up with solutions for the region of Utrecht. Normally, it was just the Ministries of V & W and VROM who had the authority to make formal decisions for large infrastructural projects. But in the case of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht, the Province of Utrecht and the city of Utrecht were also granted authority. This can be explained when looking at the different jurisdictions of the roads surrounding the city of Utrecht.

³ Source: Startnotitie Ring Utrecht, Rijkswaterstaat, December 2008

The highways A2, A27, and A12 fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministries of V & W and VROM (as of 2010 the Ministry of I & M) and the NRU fell under the jurisdiction of both the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht. For the benefit of a consistent and coherent decision making process it was decided to give authority to all four parties for the planning study phase of the Ring Utrecht. It meant that all four parties had a say in the decisions being made for Planstudie Ring Utrecht. This construction of four authorized bodies was new. Now, the Ministries of V & W and VROM needed to consider the opinions and interests of the Province of Utrecht and the city of Utrecht as well. The different parties could have conflicting opinions and interests, making it more difficult to negotiate and collaborate, which in turn could hinder the decision making process.

A second complexity was that there were no simple solutions for the Ring Utrecht. The city of Utrecht is surrounded by a road network and each decision would affect a large number of residents in the city. For instance, expanding the A27 would affect residents in the district of Voordorp and Lunetten. The construction of a new road in Leidsche Rijn or Amelisweerd would affect residents in the district of Leidsche Rijn and visitors of nature reserve Amelisweerd respectively.

The last complexity was the large number of stakeholders involved. Infrastructure projects were no longer just about techniques or economy but, increasingly, were also about aspects such as the environment, nature conservation, and quality of life. The parties involved did not all have the same interests, which made the different stakes to increase. EVO and Transport Logistiek Nederland (TLN), for instance, had an interest in the flow of traffic as they looked after the interests of the transport organizations. While the Natuur en Milieufederatie Nederland (NMU) and the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie (NHW), for instance, looked after the interest of the environment and the preservation of the bastions surrounding the city of Utrecht.

Due to the complexities of the project a two-phase MER study was developed for Planstudie Ring Utrecht. The MER stands for environmental impact guidelines and is used in infrastructural projects to indicate the environmental consequences. The MER 1st phase, a two-year process, was used to explore the possible main solutions leading to the decision on a preferred alternative. The process started in December 2008 with the introductory memorandum and finished in December 2010 with the decision on the preferred alternative. The MER 2nd phase was going to be used to further develop and implement the preferred alternative. The MER 1st phase of Planstudie Ring Utrecht is the area of research for this thesis with keeping in mind the developments leading to the published introductory memorandum (i.e. the network analysis, the administrative agreement, and the composition of VERDER).

3.3 Objectives for the future

At the start of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht project the authorized bodies took it as a given that the main problem was to be found within the road network system instead of the public transport system. Although the objective of the collaboration of VERDER was to provide solutions for mobility issues in the region of Utrecht in the broadest sense of the term, the distribution of the available budget laid emphasis on the road network. Out of the available 3.1 billion euros, a total of 2.6 billion euros was made available for the three planning studies. A planning study is a study to explore the possibilities and consequences of expansion of the trunk road system, which comes down to road adjustments. The 0.5 billion euros left was made available for public transport and cycle track measures. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M explained this as follows:

The network analysis concluded that the Ring Utrecht has a large traffic bottleneck, apparently on the road. That is the traffic bottleneck you need to resolve. It would be great if this can be dissolved with public transport. But the point remains that the problems of that bottleneck needs to be resolved.

One possible explanation is that the conclusions of the network analysis were based on the mobility standards set by the government. According to the obtained numbers the A2, A27, and A12 did not meet the mobility standards and the NRU did not meet the standards of air quality. This is not to say that these government measures were wrong or contaminated. Everyone I spoke to was convinced that there were huge traffic bottlenecks on these roads. At set times parts of these roads are just silting up. But opponents claim the traffic bottlenecks can also be resolved with a larger expansion of the public transport system next to expanding the roads. The difficulty is that the network analysis concluded that a growth potential for public transport was present but the explicit normative guidelines were missing. To calculate the effectiveness of expanding the public transport system some standards are needed and these standards were not yet at hand.

Another possible explanation is that the focus of the then government (2007-2010) lay on an expansion of the road system. That government agreed to asphalt more kilometres of road than the previous government (2003-2006). Moreover, the former Minister of V & W was very interested in Randstad Urgent projects. As one of the program managers of VERDER explained:

The Minister could relate to Randstad Urgent and wanted to put it on the map. All the regional administrators wanted to lift on that.

Randstad Urgent was a program of the Ministry of V & W where several infrastructural projects were selected for special treatment. For these selected projects, an administrative partnership of

a Deputy of the Province and a Minister were responsible for reaching consensus and making decisions within a certain timeline. The three planning studies, which explored solutions for the trunk road system, fell within the scope of Randstad Urgent.

3.4 Imputed power relations and the width of participation

In the project of Planstudie Ring Utrecht some form of imputed power was to be found. Before the project started, there was a determined authorized body of four (and later three) government parties. These parties formally granted the right to make all decisions within this project. Together they formed a steering committee and prepared the fundamental discussions and issues to be examined during the meetings of the UVVB, the administrative initiator of VERDER.

Another point of attention was the strength of the collaboration of VERDER. Before any public statement went out the State and regional parties discussed with each other. Behind closed doors they could fight for their own objectives but in the end they always communicated one shared story to the public. One of the program managers of VERDER explained how he interpreted the differences in objectives of the authorized parties:

RWS and the Ministry of I & M clearly wanted a solid network. The city of Utrecht wanted, besides a solid network, a flow through of traffic, attention for the environment and attention for alternatives. The Province of Utrecht wanted a flow through of traffic, a positive economy, and consideration for space and quality.

Further, being part of Randstad Urgent, the Planstudie Ring Utrecht had an administrative partnership of the minister of V & W and the delegate of the Province of Utrecht to promote a decisive and joint decision making. Because of this partnership, an administrative decisiveness was to be reached. To make sure this process passed off quietly, the two program managers of VERDER were connected to the minister and the delegate. Although formally not having any mandate, the program managers did have a certain form of influence as they advised their politicians. One of the program managers of VERDER explained the situation:

The program bureau was needed to make sure that all parties would remain to keep the same message. That was the added value of our program bureau. I was hired by the Province and my colleague by RWS. The moment that something went on we immediately had got hold of the right people with the Ministry and the Province. We had no mandate but people definitely listened to us.

We can see three forms of imputed power relations. Legally it was decided that there were four authorized bodies. With this the authorized bodies could more easily influence the decision making process. Further, the VERDER collaboration had some form of influence as they made sure that one joint story was communicated to the public. Even though the parties could have

their differences of opinion, in the end they needed to agree on one story. Last, the program managers of VERDER had a form of influence as they advised the partners of the VERDER collaboration when it came to communicating that one shared story. In this role where the authorized bodies had a form of pre-described influence the partners decided on the width of participation. During the Planstudie Ring Utrecht project, the authorized bodies started by just informing civic organizations, and consulting special interest groups about the project. When they were further along in the planning phase of the MER 1st phase, civic organizations were also consulted.

3.4 Discussion

This chapter helps to understand the background of the events that had happened before the Planstudie Ring Utrecht had started. It also gives insight in the complexities of this particular planning study. Having four authorized bodies mean that there are likely more individual frames of references to be found and that it becomes more complicated when needed to negotiate a collective action frame guiding a decision making. At the start of the project the authorized bodies seem to share the opinion that the traffic bottleneck needs to be resolved with road measures, but each of the bodies also has their own frame of reference. The RWS and the Ministry of I & M want a solid network in the Utrecht region. The city of Utrecht wants a solid network, but also wants to pay attention to the environment and to possible alternatives. The Province of Utrecht wants a flow through of traffic, but also wants to preserve a positive economy and to consider space and quality issues. It is assumed that each authorized body will try to reconstruct the frame of the other authorized bodies that is consistent with their own frame of reference. During the decision making process we can expect to find illustrations of these negotiations in further chapters.

Another complexity is the densely populated area combined with a city surrounded by a road network. A majority of civic organizations and special interest groups wonder if it would be possible to do less on road adjustments and more on public transport adjustments. Although they share this understanding of the infrastructural project, the civic organizations and special interest groups will likely also have different interpretations and perspectives on the infrastructural project. Some stakeholders, for instance, have more interest in the environment and others have more interest in the quality of health and the quality of living.

Before the project started it was decided to grant authority to four State and regional bodies who authorized to make decisions about the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. For both the individual authorized bodies and the civic organizations and special interest groups it becomes important to use framing to get support for their view and in turn to influence the negotiation of

the collective action frame of the authorized bodies leading to a decision making. Let us find out what happened when the introductory memorandum was published.

CHAPTER 4 – ‘THANKS FOR THIS ST. NICOLAS’ GIFT’

After a two-year period of exploring the possible solutions for the traffic bottleneck of the Ring Utrecht, the introductory memorandum was published in December 2008. During this period of two years almost no information or communication about the proposed process was brought out. Behind closed doors, RWS did engage in a form of participation with a few selected organizations looking after the interests of the transport industry, the economy, and the environment. Civic organizations were not involved during this process.

The introductory memorandum was made open for public inspection on December 5. And even though more dates of importance were remembered by stakeholders, this date seemed to be more loaded as it was compared with one of St. Nicolas’ worst presents. I do not believe the authorized bodies intentionally chose this date, as they did not seem to recall this date as they did with other dates. But either intentionally or unintentionally, it gained the connotation of the document that was compared with a bad gift from the government. The reason why most civic organizations and special interest groups equated the introductory memorandum with something negative was because of the extreme solutions defined in the document. An employee of the NMU recalled:

I thought it was shameful to send people off into a fit for a variant which even I, a layman in this field, could see was not possible. And then they said, no but we do want to explore the extremes. I thought it wasn’t right, not even when exploring extremes.

The main reason for the negative feeling of the stakeholders was that people believed these extremes would not even be possible; neither financially nor technically.

4.1 The alternatives

Given the main problem for the traffic bottleneck on the Ring Utrecht was to be found on the A2, A12, A27 and the NRU, the authorized bodies agreed that the RWS would explore a broad spectrum of alternatives. As executive agency of the Ministry of V & W the authorized bodies agreed that the RWS possessed the knowledge and skills to implement the process. The exploration phase led to the elaboration of four alternatives next to the zero alternative.

1) Alternative not widening⁴:

This alternative explores the option to solve the problem of the Ring Utrecht without the need for road widening.

⁴ See map 2, page vi

2) **Alternative widening**⁵:

This alternative consists of two variants. *Variant A* explores the option to upgrade the NRU from secondary road to trunk road. Next to this it will explore the option to extend the NRU from the A2 to the A12 (also known as the new road through Leidsche Rijn). *Variant B* explores the option to add extra traffic lanes to the existing layout.

3) **Alternative sorting**⁶:

This alternative explores the option to sort transfer traffic and commuter traffic. The trunk road system will be divided in a main road system and a parallel road system with an extension of the NRU from the A2 to the A12 (also known as the new road through Leidsche Rijn).

4) **Alternative spreading**⁷:

This alternative explores the option to include an extra regional ring to give a better spread of commuter traffic. The NRU will be extended from the A2 to the A12 (also known as the new road through Leidsche Rijn) and a new road will be developed from the A12 to the A28 (also known as the new road through Amelisweerd).

The alternatives were developed, keeping in mind the technical complexities of existing structures. Following the calculations, RWS concluded it was not possible to expand the tank of Amelisweerd because of construction difficulties and because of the additional costs. The tank was exclusively assembled for the construction of the new A27 back in the 1980s, and was aimed at maintaining a balance between road and nature reserve. Because the calculations stated an expansion of the tank of Amelisweerd was not possible, new alternatives were brought up. One of these new alternatives was the new road through Amelisweerd, which became widely contested.

The RWS, the Ministry of V & W, and Amelisweerd already had a history together. At the end of the 1970s, a student discovered that a new road was about to be constructed in Utrecht. This road would run straight through the nature reserve Amelisweerd. Despite demonstrations, signatures, the pressure group Vrienden van Amelisweerd (VVA), and an announced summary procedure, the RWS cleared a large area of woods in 1982 even before the summary procedure was completed. After a period of four years of construction, the A27 was officially opened in 1986. Though the regulations regarding the possible construction of new roads have been positively changed, this antagonism is still present. Since then, RWS is also known as the *buldozermagnaat* (bulldozer baron) and the VVA is also known as the *bomenhangers* (tree

⁵ See map 3, page vii

⁶ See map 4, page vii

⁷ See map 5, page viii

hangers). The president of the Vrienden van Amelisweerd illustrated the prehistory of antagonism:

While I was at the courthouse on September 24, 1982 for a summary procedure of the Vrienden van Amelisweerd against the plans of the RWS, the forest was cleared. We felt some procedural matters still needed to be dealt with, but they proceeded with the clearance without awaiting the final judgement.

The possible construction of a new road through Amelisweerd did not only produce a recollection of this history, but it also produced a great deal of protest from the VVA and other environment groups.

Even though the introductory memorandum clarified that the preferred alternative would most likely be a combination of parts of detailed alternatives, the document also led to agitation in Leidsche Rijn. In three of the alternatives, the option of a new road through Leidsche Rijn was to be explored. Leidsche Rijn, the RWS, and the Ministry of V & W did not have a history together but there was something else of importance for the residents of that district. In between the buildings a large strip of grass was kept free of any constructions. I have heard different stories as to why this area was not built on. A senior official of the city of Utrecht explained it as follows:

We have reserved that strip of green. It was meant as a reserve for an eventual connection between north and south. But now a gas pipeline lies under that strip, so you cannot build anything there anyway.

One of the program managers of VERDER had a somewhat different explanation:

That road was present in the first drafts of Leidsche Rijn. It was not without reason that this strip has not been built on. But, at a certain moment it became a green area. And people who lived there thought 'this is a green strip which is good'. But in the original plans it was a road.

Although the stories of the senior officials did not match, in the end it did not matter to the residents what the real reason was or is. The important thing was that the residents of Leidsche Rijn were under the assumption, either correctly or incorrectly, that this area was reserved as a green area with no constructions in the near future. This framed image was so strong that the presupposed plans of the RWS led to a lot of resistance.

4.2 To be extreme or not to be extreme that is the question

By presenting the solutions as extreme situations with possible new roads on the east and west side of the city, civic organizations and special interest groups started to doubt the integrity of

the authorized bodies. So much so, they even believed the extreme alternatives in the introductory memorandum were a planned trick. An active member of Milieuwerkgroep Houten described it as follows:

The extremes in the introductory memorandum. Yes, who thought that up and what did they want to accomplish? Did they want to start up a discussion? We suspect that they just tried something. If a lot of reactions came on the east variant they would take the west variant and vice versa.

The Vrienden van Amelisweerd believed they used the nature reserve of Amelisweerd as a diversion. The president recalled:

Administrators practiced a communication trick. A road through Rhijnauwen on the east of Amelisweerd was brought up as one of the alternatives to divert attention away from Amelisweerd. In order to state, later on, that the road would not be constructed through Amelisweerd.

An active member of the Wijkcommissie Zandweg-Oostwaard had the assumption that the alternatives presented were never realistic:

I believe that they consciously added crazy variants that would summon a lot of resistance. After which they concluded that the least worrying variant will be chosen. ... In my opinion these alternatives were not realistic and were part of the strategic play.

The people's greatest concern was that they believed the authorized bodies played them. Although the introductory memorandum explained that it was more likely that a combination of extreme alternatives would eventually be combined into one alternative, some stakeholders believed the opposite was true. In their view the authorized bodies used these extremes to press through a predefined preferred alternative. As Utrecht is surrounded by trunk roads one could expect resistance from every corner. So, why not use extreme alternatives to divert the attention from the one thing that does matter? When so many people are upset about a possible new road through Amelisweerd and a possible new road through Leidsche Rijn, they must be very relieved when the eventual solution would be a road widening. This thought seems apparent. In this way, the authorized bodies could claim they have used a wide analysis area with a participation-oriented approach by involving the stakeholders. Stakeholders could contend the construction of a new road through Amelisweerd or Leidsche Rijn would lead to a decrease of the quality of the living environment. After which the authorized bodies could claim that, after consulting the stakeholders, they would make the concession not to construct new roads but to just broaden existing roads.

I raised this issue during my interviews with the main actors of the authorized bodies and of VERDER. I called their attention to the fact that stakeholders believed they have been tricked

with the extreme alternatives in the introductory memorandum. The authorized bodies were aware of this view, but claimed it was not a planned trick. A senior official of the Province of Utrecht told his reaction:

It is difficult to explain how we investigated all options. We put in variants with the idea that building stones would come out of it that was acceptable for all. Putting this into practice turned out to be difficult.

Asked the same question, a senior official of the city of Utrecht responded in a similar way:

The inset was that we would investigate everything and we would not let this stand in our way. We discussed at an official level that we were going to investigate the whole palette. And that is exactly how we explained this: we will investigate the extremes and afterwards we will explore in depth the rest of the variants.

Their explanations for exploring the extreme alternatives are pretty much alike. All authorized bodies knew that the extremes would cause a lot of attention and a lot of resistance. In their view it was not possible to leave these extremes out of the area of analysis as it otherwise would always come back in a next phase. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M described it as follows:

You run a risk when you think it will lead to a specific side. If you do that and you plan several alternatives for that side you will always hear, 'but why did you not investigate this and why did you not investigate that'. That is why we explored a broad area of analysis.

One of the program managers of VERDER thought much the same way. He explained:

It was not at all clear how this was going to be carried out. The new road through Amelisweerd was very sensitive. ... A new road through Leidsche Rijn was sensitive. Even very sensitive. But it is better to take it all into consideration and that is how we communicated it. Otherwise it would always be hanging over the market.

The aim of the authorized bodies was to explore a broad area of analysis. They did not expect it would lead to so much agitation as it was 'just' an introductory memorandum with extreme alternatives to be explored.

4.3 Analysis

The authorized bodies never questioned the calculations done by the RWS concerning the alternatives presented in the introductory memorandum. The RWS concluded that the existing techniques would not be adequate to expand the tank of Amelisweerd considering the costs. It is not to say that the calculations of the RWS were wrong or contaminated, but the outcome of the technical information of the RWS was used by the authorized bodies to make sense of the

context of the planning study on that moment. Based on their sense making of this context it became a logical choice to add the exploration of a new road through Amelisweerd to the extreme alternatives. The collective action frame of the authorized bodies was actively formed by the influence of the calculations of the RWS.

As we could read in this chapter, each actor has their own story about what is going on in the planning study for Ring Utrecht. These different stories are interpreted individually and can lead to misunderstanding or to disagreement on the objectives of the project. Following the calculations of the RWS the senior officials of State and regional parties mobilized their different frames of references and negotiated a shared meaning. Based on this shared meaning the authorized bodies determined their perspective and decided to explore a wide area of alternatives, including a new road through Amelisweerd.

The authorized bodies knew that the extremes would cause a lot of attention and a lot of resistance. Therefore the State and regional partners tried to frame the frames of references of the stakeholders to get support for their view on exploring a broad area of analysis. It seems as if the authorized bodies used language to influence the stakeholders' perception on the infrastructural project. The word *extreme* was linked with the likeliness that a combination of all alternatives would eventually be combined into one alternative. By trying to influence the point of view of the stakeholders, by framing the alternatives as extremes, the authorized bodies hoped they could influence the meaning making of the civic organizations and the special interest groups.

But as we learned from Kaplan (2008), there are limits to the construction of framing. The introductory memorandum of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht was published on December 5, 2008, the day that people in the Netherlands celebrate St. Nicolas day. Because of the extreme alternatives most of the stakeholders interpreted the document to be a bad St. Nicolas present. This interpretation of the information gathered shaped their context of the planning study. For them, it made sense to connect the Planstudie Ring Utrecht with something negative and to interpret the alternatives as not realistic and as a trick planned by the authorized bodies.

This chapter illustrates that sense making is something that relies on the interpretation of the context of that moment. For the authorized bodies it made sense to explore the extreme alternatives based on the technical information of the RWS. Although the authorized bodies wanted to construct this frame for the stakeholders as well, it is showed that there are limits for framing based on the value and belief system of the actors involved. Most of the stakeholder did not believe that the alternatives were realistic.

CHAPTER 5 – IN ANSWER TO...

After the publication of the introductory memorandum the document was placed open for public inspection for six weeks. After these six weeks it was no longer possible to send in a reaction to the introductory memorandum. Stakeholders protested against this short amount of time given, as this period was enfolded in national holidays. An employee of the Natuur en Milieufederatie Utrecht (NMU) explained:

This would run through the whole month of December. People are away a lot. It is of course an enormous plan that people are faced with. Then, six weeks is not long enough. So we told them that we wanted a minimum of 8 weeks to write a response. And we got that.

This observation was confirmed by the communication advisor of VERDER and of a senior official of the RWS. What is interesting though is that the RWS initially proposed to have a period of eight weeks for public inspection. A senior official remembered:

We initially suggested placing the introductory memorandum open for public inspection for eight weeks. The authorized bodies discussed this during the UVVB meeting and agreed to have a period of six weeks instead, following the proposal of the deputy of the Province of Utrecht. The RWS could not do anything else than going along with it even though we knew that the introductory memorandum would lead to a lot of commotion and people would wanted to have a say about it.

Although the RWS did not agree with the period of six weeks, they needed to go along with the decision made by the authorized bodies. It was only then when the city council of Utrecht protested against the period of six weeks, probably triggered by the objections of the stakeholders, that the authorized bodies agreed to prolong the period of public inspection with two weeks.

During the period of eight weeks, residents of the city of Bunnik held a protest against the plans for a new road through Amelisweerd on January 17, 2009. Approximately 2,500 people gathered and formed a human cordon through the nature reserve.



Picture 1: Human cordon through nature reserve Amelisweerd protesting against a new road through Amelisweerd⁸.

The news item was covered by regional and national newspapers and television stations. Within three days the news was written or broadcasted at least thirteen times⁹. It reminded a lot of people of the early 1980s when the Vrienden van Amelisweerd protested against the construction of the A27. This was the first sign of an overwhelming, almost entirely negative, response to the introductory memorandum.

5.1 Gatherings and a public hearing

In the public inspection period of eight weeks, the RWS organized six information and public comment meetings concerning the introductory memorandum. Next to the opportunity to react in writing, people were invited to have their say on the introductory memorandum during the meetings; a secretary recorded the minutes. Besides these gatherings, the RWS organized one public hearing in the information centre of Leidsche Rijn. Especially the public hearing was remembered vividly by some of involved parties. The communication manager of VERDER did not attend the meeting but recalled what colleagues have told about it:

We had a public hearing in Leidsche Rijn. 750 people came to the hearing, too many people to fit in the building. So we had to split the evening in two. ... People could speak during the meeting. After someone had spoken people roared and applauded. People were stirring up each other. It was a threatening atmosphere.

A senior official of the city of Utrecht did attend the meeting and confirmed the threatening atmosphere of the meeting:

⁸ Source: EdeStad.nl, <http://www.edestad.nl/page/Inter-nationaal/Binnenland/Duizenden-mensen-op-de-been-tegen.310303.news>

⁹ Source: RTV Utrecht, <http://www.rtvutrecht.nl/dossiers/artikel/192290/193387>

You don't want to know about that evening in Leidsche Rijn. It was threatening. ... The room was full of people. In the end, the officials were threatened by the residents. Not with violence but with verbal abuse. ... There was a lot of understanding as well, but a group of fanatic residents started to verbally threaten the officials.

The strong feelings against a road through Amelisweerd and Leidsche Rijn made an impact on the authorized bodies. They realized how great the effect was for the residents of the region of Utrecht that the extreme alternatives of a new road through Leidsche Rijn and Amelisweerd were part of the exploration phase. For a total view on the impact, the authorized bodies needed to wait for the deadline of the whole participation process. Next to the gatherings and the public hearing, there was an opportunity to hand in a written response.

5.2 Summarized: 2,064 reactions by 3,036 people or organizations

The written accounts for the introductory memorandum were handled by an official Dutch participation organization. This organization collected all the responses to the introductory memorandum. In a period of eight weeks a total of 2,064 individual public comments were handed in. In addition, 958 people signed a coordinated response. Besides this, there were 19,277 signatures on a petition of the NMU. An employee of the NMU narrated:

We must be partially grateful for the extreme alternatives presented in the introductory memorandum. It was the perfect way to involve the public. ... We thought it was our job to make sure it became well-known as it has such an impact for the region Utrecht. ... We started a petition against new roads through green areas. ... This petition immediately attracted national media. It was hugely picked up.

Alongside this petition, 82 people signed three other petitions. Finally, 472 reactions were handed in on behalf of other people (one organization or person designed a reaction which other people co-signed). The reactions can be summarized in eight main points:

1) Either against or in favour of one alternative:

New roads through Amelisweerd (670) and Leidsche Rijn (1,396) were rejected. The alternatives not widening and sorting (801) were preferred. Next to this defined preference, new or complementary solutions for public transport were put forward.

2) New alternative:

New suggestions were opted that were not part of the introductory memorandum. A new road located more to the west of Leidsche Rijn, which is also known as A2 ½. And new railway connections between Utrecht and Breda and Utrecht and Almere.

3) Withdrawal of the introductory memorandum:

Some reactions stated that the procedure was not clear and that new roads through Leidsche Rijn and Amelisweerd were not preferred on forehand (328).

4) Attention for air, noise and health:

Special attention is asked for the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie (NWH) and their bastions surrounding the city of Utrecht. Attention is also asked for the air quality, sound pollution and health damage due to increased traffic.

5) Alternative not widening:

Some of the reactions suggest this alternative is unnecessary as it does not solve the problem. Other reactions claim that this alternative should be investigated more seriously as public transport gets too little attention.

6) Divergent policy:

The proposed alternatives are in contradiction with the government policy. How can you construct new roads (especially through Leidsche Rijn and Amelisweerd) when the government is trying to protect the area at the same time?

7) Suggestions for new technical solutions:

Two-storey roads and tunnels are mentioned as possible technical solutions.

8) Procedure:

A lot of reactions contained the assumption that the procedure is not transparent with multiple authorized bodies and multiple phases.

With a campaign against a new road through Amelisweerd, a heated public hearing in Leidsche Rijn, and over 2,000 reactions against one or several of the alternatives mentioned in the introductory memorandum, one could confirm there was excessive attention for this project. Except for a positive combined reaction of EVO, Transport en Logistiek Nederland (TLN), VNO-NCW Utrecht (lobby organization for commerce), and the Kamer van Koophandel Midden-Nederland, only negative reactions were handed in.

The intentional plans of Planstudie Ring Utrecht attracted both regional and national media attention which was highly exceptional in this phase of a planning study. The broad attention and the amount of reactions was something the authorized bodies could almost hardly ignore. One of the program managers of VERDER explained:

Interviewer: There were almost 3,000 reactions for the introductory memorandum. What was the internal discussion like?

Program manager of VERDER: Well, then of course you know what is feasible and what is not. Where do you get a lot of resistance and where do you get little resistance. Then it became clear for the partners of the region that we must get rid of the extremes.

The negative reactions against the introductory memorandum and its extreme alternatives had seen to it that the regional partners started to doubt the position they had taken. Even before the actual calculations on the four alternatives were performed, the regional partners, the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht, believed the new road through Leidsche Rijn and the new road through Amelisweerd were no longer a real option.

5.3 Counter plan Kracht van Utrecht

Some stakeholders did not think it was enough to just hand in a public comment, to sign a petition, or to join a campaign. The NMU and the VVA joined hands and prepared a counter plan for the introductory memorandum. An employee of NMU recounted:

We went through with our plan for two reasons. First, we thought that if we become vocal we also needed to give an alternative. You cannot complain just for the sake of complaining. Second, if you think in extremes you should also think of an alternative without highways. So we thought of an alternative with extreme public transport measures.

In April 2009, four months after the publication of the introductory memorandum, the report of NMU and VVA was published. The name of the report, Kracht van Utrecht (KvU), symbolically referred to the strength of Utrecht. In the summary of the report, KvU stated that massive automobile traffic has a negative impact on space utilization, health, landscape, climate, and environment. In answer to the introductory memorandum, a counter plan was developed with the Ladder van Verdaas (order of measures defined by the government to be considered when solving a problem of mobility) kept in mind. The KvU advocated a better implementation of space in the region of Utrecht with more public transport solutions and with kilometre fees for entering the city of Utrecht (this last solution was in line with the then far advanced plans for kilometre fees of the former government).

The NMU and the VVA were hoping that the report would unleash reactions from the authorized bodies, but the opposite turned out to be true. The president of the VVA recalled:

We got no response to the Kracht van Utrecht alternative from officials, the Province of Utrecht or the RWS. We did not get any reaction on what was good or wrong in the report. Then we started to use other channels.

The report did get attention from other sides. On April 23 GroenLinks published an article on their web site concerning the publication of the KvU report with the headline 'new public transport alternative for the Utrecht region'. With this publication, GroenLinks strongly implicated their support for the KvU. GroenLinks is a Dutch political party with the accent on, among other things,

a greener living environment with greener means of transportation. Although neither the employee of the NMU nor the president of the VVA specifically gave away how they employed the other measures mentioned above, I very much believe they used their contacts at GroenLinks to get more attention for their report. Support for this interpretation can be confirmed by the fact that one of the old activists of VVA was not only involved with the drafting of the report KvU, but he was also an active member of the Provincial Executive for GroenLinks. Besides this, the NMU has strong ties with the GroenLinks party in the Province of Utrecht. The political party supported and stood behind the initiatives of NMU by publishing multiple items on their web site.

However, it was not just GroenLinks who made efforts to get more support. In the town-council report of Utrecht on May 14, 2009 a member of the local CDA party stated that with the joint help of a CDA member of the House of Commons the report of KvU indeed got more attention as the NMU and the VVA were invited by the House of Commons committee of V & W on June 11 to explain the outcomes of the KvU report¹⁰. That same day, the House of Commons requested the then Minister of V & W to involve the KvU report in the exploration phase. Referring to the motion of Vendrik of June 30, the House of Commons agreed that the Kracht van Utrecht should be taken up in the MER 2nd phase as a fully-fledged alternative. Strengthened with this outcome, the NMU and the VVA had high ambitions regarding their counter plan.

5.4 Analysis

During a period of a few months a lot has happened. Even though the RWS advised the authorized bodies to have a period of eight weeks for public inspection, it made sense to the authorized bodies to decide to have a period of six weeks. Based on their experience, the RWS knew a period of eight weeks would be more satisfactory, but as they were not one of the authorized bodies the RWS could not perform further pressure and needed to bend.

For the civic organizations and special interest groups it made sense to have a longer period for public inspection since the period was enfolded with holidays and people would not have enough time to give their reaction to the planning study. These stakeholders did not want and did not need to bend. Explaining that this period was enfolded in national holidays the stakeholders were able to reframe the frame of reference of the supporters of the city of Utrecht, namely the city council. During one of the meetings of the city council of Utrecht, the council members demanded from the Alderman to negotiate a prolongation of the period of public inspection. Influenced and pushed by his supporters, and guided by the protests of the stakeholders, the Alderman started new negotiations with the other authorized bodies to extend the period of public inspection with two weeks. What we see is that it was not the expert

¹⁰ Source: <http://www.utrecht.nl/smartsite.dws?id=88539&GID=313400>

information given by the RWS that influenced the decision for the public inspection period, as it was earlier on the case with the decision making on the extreme alternatives. It was the performed pressure of the supporters of the Alderman of Utrecht that changed the frame of reference of the Alderman. This in turn led to new negotiations between the authorized bodies. With the information at hand the city of Utrecht was able to reconstruct the collective action frame of the authorized bodies; the bodies negotiated an extra two weeks of public inspection. It illustrates that there can be a shift in influence relations by an outside happening.

Although the civic organizations and special interest groups did not have any form of authority, they did everything in their power to object to the proposed plans of the Ministries of V & W and VROM, the Province of Utrecht and the city of Utrecht. The organizations made use of the official participation-oriented approach of handing in a public comment and by trying to get attention from the regional and national media. These forms of resistance have similarities with the forms of resistance in the 'Aalborg Project', described by Flyvbjerg. Flyvbjerg provided with a description of one public hearing in which people's protests against the plans are received by great applause of the audience. This, next to the attention from the media, formed much of the basis for a city engineer to change frame of reference of the project. Flyvbjerg explains this as an example of power defining rationality (1998: 56-61). Just as in the 'Aalborg Project' the public hearing and the attention from the regional and national media put pressure on the authorized bodies. Although Flyvbjerg explains this pressure as a concept of power, I would rather use the concept of influence to explain this process. The written and spoken narratives of the stakeholders changed how the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht interpreted and made sense of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht, probably because the regional parties also had an interest in taking care of their residents. This in turn influenced the frames of references of these bodies. It seemed as if the internal divisions within the authorized bodies changed, but the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht were not able to reframe the collective action frame at this stage.

Another form of influence was performed by the stakeholders the NMU and the VVA. Although the NMU and the VVA did not get support of the authorized bodies for their counter plan the Kracht van Utrecht, the stakeholders started to use other channels to tell their story. As we learned, the NMU and the VVA were very effective in narrating their story. By using their network and by framing their story the Kracht van Utrecht was presented to the House of Commons committee which resulted in the decision by the House of Commons to take up the KvU in the MER 2nd phase as a fully-fledged alternative. The authorized bodies first seemed to ignore the KvU by just focussing on the alternatives offered in the introductory memorandum. With this decision, the authorized bodies were overruled by the House of Commons and were obligated to take up the KvU in the MER phase. Although no official authority, the VVA and the

NMU were able to perform influence on the decision making process with the help of the House of Commons, the supporters of the Ministry of the V & W. The authorized bodies and the stakeholders used this information to shape the new context of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht.

CHAPTER 6 – A BUMP ON THE ROAD

The reactions concerning the introductory memorandum seemed to have changed the internal relations within the authorized bodies, as the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht no longer believed the new road through Leidsche Rijn and the new road through Amelisweerd were real options. Though, next to these developments another series of developments emerged that were of importance. After the publication of the introductory memorandum for the Planstudie Ring Utrecht, and taking into account the public comments on the introductory memorandum, the authorized bodies officially needed to consult the nationwide committee of independent experts, the m.e.r. committee, for advice on themes that needed to be examined for and for input on the level of environment interests that needed to be examined for in the MER 1st phase. The recommendations for the directives of the MER 1st phase were published by the m.e.r. committee in March 2009. The report contains advice for the directives for the MER 1st phase; the recommendations of the committee are not binding. Nevertheless, as the report was made public and available for all stakeholders it was important for the authorized bodies to seriously take the report into consideration.

Before the authorized bodies could write their report of the directives of the MER 1st phase, they needed to agree on reasons for why certain items would be incorporated and why others would not. Precisely this process caused discussion between the State and regional bodies.

6.1 The power of language

One of the items that the m.e.r. committee wanted to have explored by the authorized bodies in the MER 1st phase was the issue of health. The committee requested the authorized bodies to describe in the directives for the MER 1st phase how they would deal with the consequences of air quality and external safety on public health. With this statement, the committee followed the main points raised by civic organizations and special interest groups concerning the introductory memorandum. In the public comments, many people asked for attention for air quality, sound pollution, and health damage issues when exploring the alternatives for Planstudie Ring Utrecht.

However, the Ministries of V & W and VROM did not have a policy for health regulations and did not want to take this up in the directives for the MER 1st phase. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M explained:

There is not really a policy for health issues. Health effects are something that comes on top of aspects of sound, air, and safety. These are things we are already exploring. It is just another way of looking at it. There are no rules for what is acceptable and what is not.

For the city of Utrecht the position of the Ministries was not acceptable. The city agreed with the recommendation of the m.e.r. committee and did want to include the issue of health in the directives. To strengthen their position the city of Utrecht tried to find support from the Province of Utrecht. A senior official of the city narrated:

We wanted health to be part of the directives, but the State initially did not want this. Therefore we presented this to the Province. Reluctantly the province agreed to take up the issue of health. With this it became more likely that health was going to be part of the directives.

What emerged was a struggle for power between the authorized bodies. The city of Utrecht did not want the item of health to disappear from the directives for the MER 1st phase but they knew they needed support from the Province of Utrecht or it would otherwise become a situation of three against one. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M explained:

We needed to agree upon the directives with all four parties. Well, we had some discussions about the directives. Especially on the issue of health.

During the series of negotiations and discussions the senior official of the Ministry of I & M learned that the government was working on a new policy on public health. Leaning on the prospected new policy, the Ministries of V & W and VROM agreed with the regional partners to take up health in the directives, but only on one condition. The State parties would only agree to take up health as one of the items in the directives, if it were based on the expected government policy on public health. And that is what happened. In the published directives of the MER 1st phase the following sentence was to be found:

*'NB: The way in which the issue of health should be admitted in the MER 1st phase will be further specified on the basis of the expected policy on public health.'*¹¹

One could say that the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht came out the strongest negotiators during the discussions, but if we look more closely this is not the case. What did the sentence actually say? What could be concluded when we literally read the sentence? The health issue would be explored based on the expected policy on public health. With the publication of the directives of the MER 1st phase, none of the authorized bodies knew what the new policy would entail. Moreover, it was not known when to expect the policy. If we speculate, there is a chance that: 1) the new policy will be released further along in the process of the MER 1st phase or even released after finishing this process, and 2) the new policy could contain statements on

¹¹ Source: Richtlijnen MER 1ste fase, 18 mei 2009, Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat

health that, according to the regional bodies, would be too general and would not fit their standards.

It seemed like as if the senior official of the Ministry of I & M had used a form of power during the negotiations. This interpretation can be confirmed by the statements of one of their senior officials:

There was no policy on the issue of health. You can formulate something yourself about such an issue, but we did not want that. So we referred to the upcoming policy with a general sentence.

The senior official was aware that there was no set date for the outcome of the policy. He gave in on the discussion concerning the health issue but at the same time he gained ground by not giving in on the bargaining strength. In the first place, the discussion was temporarily postponed because of the agreement that the authorized bodies would follow the policy of the Ministries. In the second place, the Ministries would always be the advantaged party as they would need to follow a policy that their government would formulate and would therefore support.

I believe the regional partners must have been aware of the actual meaning of the sentence but at the same time knew they had gained some ground. Especially for the city of Utrecht, who already believed the power relations between the authorized bodies were uneven. As a senior official of the city of Utrecht recalled:

It is not really a collaboration with equal partners, you just feel that. ... It is more than you had, you also need to count your blessings.

Although the city felt there were differences in equality within the collaboration they were also blessed that they were even part of the collaboration. As we learned earlier, the cities and Provinces surrounding the infrastructural projects are normally not involved in the decision making process. The city of Utrecht was pleased they now had the position of being one of the authorized bodies.

6.2 Analysis

After the publication of the introductory memorandum and the recommendations of the m.e.r. committee the authorized bodies were heading towards a new decision within the decision making process. The four parties needed to negotiate to construct a collective action frame that would guide the decision making for the directives of the MER 1st phase. Following the many negative reactions for the introductory memorandum, the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht seemed to have reshaped their frames of references in order to make sense of the new situation of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. These frames of references

determined their behaviour regarding the drafting of the directives of the MER 1st phase. Influenced by the request of the stakeholders and strengthened by the recommendation of the committee m.e.r. to pay more attention to air, noise and health, it can be assumed that the city of Utrecht believed they needed to take up the issue of health in the directives for the MER 1st phase to make sure that the issue would not recede into the background. When officially noted in the directives, the authorized bodies needed to take health into consideration with the decision for the preferred alternative. The reason why the city of Utrecht found it so important is believed to be found in the relationship between the city and the stakeholders. Most stakeholders are either residents of the city of Utrecht or organizations located or interested in the city of Utrecht. The city of Utrecht has both the responsibility for a solid network and the responsibility to look after the interests of the city and its citizens.

During the negotiations the city of Utrecht tried to take up the issue of health in the directives of the MER 1st phase. The Ministries of V & W and VROM did not want this as the government had no policy about the issue of health. As the senior official of the city of Utrecht believed the power relations between the authorized bodies were uneven, with the Ministries as the stronger parties, the city tried to get support for their view of the Province of Utrecht. The city of Utrecht used the information given by the stakeholders and the committee m.e.r. to reshape the context of the planning study for the Province. This new interpretation of the context changed the way the senior official of the Province made sense of the project; the Province of Utrecht started to believe that the issue of health was indeed of importance to involve in the directives.

The new frames of references of the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht led to the entering of new negotiations between the authorized bodies and affected the collective action frame. The State and regional parties negotiated and agreed that the issue of health would be taken up in the directives based on the new policy on public health developed by the government. It seemed as if the frames of references of the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht were more influential in the struggle for a collective action frame, but I believe it were the frames of references of the senior officials of the Ministries that were more influential. Indeed, the Ministries gave in on the request to take up the issue of health in the directives but they only did this on their condition. This condition was very powerful. Following the publication, none of the authorized parties knew what the government policy on health would look like. Nonetheless, the regional parties agreed on this condition during the negotiations. I believe the regional parties agreed on this point, and with that let the State parties influence the decision on taken up the issue of health, as they realized this as much as the State parties would give in. During the negotiations for this decision within the decision making process the Ministries seemed to have more influence. In fact, this form of influence

tended towards a form of power. This form of power resulted from the developments on the governmental policy on health. The Ministries used this development to gain more influence in the negotiation process.

CHAPTER 7 – PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE OR PREFERRED DIRECTION?

During the months after the publication of the introductory memorandum a lot of things happened. In May 2009 the directives for the MER 1st phase were published. A month later, in June, the NMU and the VVA presented their counter plan, the Kracht van Utrecht, to the House of Commons committee of V & W. The presentation led to the motion of Vendrik that same month with approval in July for the exploration of this extra alternative in the MER 2nd phase. During these events something else of importance was going on.

Following the publication of the directives for the MER 1st phase, the authorized bodies were planning to make a decision on the preferred alternative in November to be taken along in that autumn's national BO-MIRT. The BO-MIRT is an administrative gathering of Ministers, State secretaries and regional administrators who have a final say on decisions made by authorized bodies concerning, for instance, planning studies. This gathering is of importance for administrators as it determines the progress and eventual funding of the project. After agreement of the BO-MIRT the authorized bodies could further precede with their planning for the MER 1st phase; they could further explore the chosen preferred alternative. The intended planning of the authorized bodies soon seemed to be hasty though. Already early in the planning process for the MER 1st phase, the State and regional partners decided that they needed to revise their planning without running the risk that their project would be thrown 'of the table' of the BO-MIRT meeting.

7.1 Drafting a new planning process

For the authorized bodies it became clear that the project of Planstudie Ring Utrecht was far too complex to reach an agreement for the preferred alternative within six months. Besides this, something else of importance had happened. In March 2009, the Executive Board of the city of Utrecht had collapsed due to a dispute regarding the action plan for air quality, something that was not related to the Planstudie Ring Utrecht project. A month later, a new Executive Board had installed with a different Alderman for traffic and transport. The new installed Executive Board would only be in office for eleven months, until the official city elections were held in April 2010. Although the particular reason for the collapse had nothing to do with the developments of Planstudie Ring Utrecht, it appeared to be of major importance as a senior official of RWS explained:

People saw it coming that the Alderman did not have the authority to commit to the decision for the preferred alternative with the upcoming elections in sight. The authority does not reach that far. ... But the city did commit itself to the introductory memorandum. ... Then the idea was conceived: we will not

design it as a preferred alternative but as a preferred direction. With that we will make progress, but it does not have the formal status of a preferred alternative.

The Alderman was expected not have the authority to get approval from the city council for the final decision for the preferred alternative determined by the qualified bodies. The risk was too high that the Alderman would not succeed. Although not explicitly mentioned by the authorized bodies, this statement does make sense when we recall earlier statements of the authorized bodies that their aim was to make competent and coherent decisions within the fixed time line. If the bodies were not able to come to a decisive decision they would face a stalemate on a topic that was not 'important' enough for stalemate. One of the employees of the special interest group had heard these statements in the corridors as well and interpreted:

Employee of EVO: The preferred direction should have been the preferred alternative. Because there was a lot of remorse concerning the social basis they put in an extra phase to put the plan into soaks. To see what the reaction would be.

Interviewer: Was that put in words like that?

Employee of EVO: No, but that is how I saw it. You quickly notice that from the confused answers you get for explaining the extra phase. Then you see what the impact is for politicians when communicating the negative side of the planning study. The majority is advocating a broadening of the roads, but the minority made so much noise that it had send the politicians of into a fit. And they put in their electoral position. Then they say: we get so much noise that we will not get re-elected. ... But it was because of the noise of such a small group that the whole decision making process became somewhat shaky.

Therefore, instead of heading for a preferred alternative in November 2009 the authorized bodies decided to add an extra step which would give them one extra year of analysis. This extra step became known as the in-between phase. Instead of heading for the preferred alternative for the BO-MIRT of November 2009, they were now heading for the preferred direction for that particular BO-MIRT. In this way, the BO-MIRT could make a decision on the preferred direction which would ensure the progress and eventual funding of the project. The decision on the preferred alternative would be pushed back one year and would be put on the agenda for the BO-MIRT of November 2010. The new planning was drafted as follows:

Phase 1a: exploring the area of alternatives (May-July 2009)

Phase 1b: further analysis (July-November 2009 with a decision on the preferred direction approved by the BO-MIRT of November 2009)

Phase 1c: finishing the MER 1st phase (November 2009-August 2010 with a decision on the preferred alternative approved by the BO-MIRT of November 2010)¹²

¹² Source: Hoofdrapport MER 1ste fase Ring Utrecht, 17 augustus 2010, VERDER

7.2 Phase 1a

In phase 1a the main alternatives: the alternative not widening; alternative widening; alternative sorting; and alternative spreading were explored on mainlines. After finishing phase 1a, the authorized bodies publicly presented the score so far in July 2009. In this document the authorized bodies explained that the main problem for the Ring Utrecht was the flow of traffic. Keeping this in mind, the RWS used model calculations to examine to which extent the flow of each alternative corresponded with target values from the mobility memorandum developed by the government. The alternatives were assessed for on five criteria: traffic; environment; spatial planning; technical feasibility; and costs. Based on these criteria the main conclusion of the report was that the moving from lane to lane at the A27 was the main problem. However, the expansion of roads would not be good enough to solve the problem. The authorized bodies concluded they needed more time to further explore the alternatives.

The above mentioned story seemed to be the official story, but behind closed doors another discussion had been going on. One of the program managers of VERDER explained:

Program manager of VERDER: In the beginning of July we made our strong objections very clear to the Ministry regarding the proposal they wanted to push through in the decision making process. We said that it was not manageable, that was not something you can push through.

Interviewer: And that was the choice for a road through Leidsche Rijn?

Program manager of VERDER: Yes, we knew that you couldn't push that through. We played it hard for a while.

Although all authorized bodies indicated that there was no preferred direction at hand before the publication of the introductory memorandum, it seemed as if the Ministry of V & W did have a preference. Following the statements of one of the program managers the Ministry of V & W wanted the new road through Leidsche Rijn to become part of the preferred alternative. The regional partners did not agree on this and wanted more proof that this new road would indeed solve the traffic bottleneck on the Ring Utrecht. The authorized bodies were in conflict and not able to make a decision on the preferred alternative. It was the second reason why the Ministries of VROM and V & W, the city of Utrecht, and the Province of Utrecht agreed on an extra phase with a deeper exploration of the alternatives.

The extra months to further explore the alternatives provided the authorized bodies with the opportunity to take up the Kracht van Utrecht in the MER 1st phase instead of the MER 2nd phase. As we recall, the House of Commons approved the motion of Vendrik and agreed that the Kracht van Utrecht should be taken up in the MER 2nd phase as a fully-fledged alternative. This decision was based on their knowledge that the MER 1st phase would be finalized in July 2009 for the BO-MIRT in November 2009. As the MER 1st phase was still at the beginning of the

exploration process with the decision to add an in-between phase, the authorized bodies decided to take up the KvU in the MER phase 1b already. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M recalled:

We then said we needed to further explore the 1st phase so we take the KvU up in the 1st phase. It was the logical thing to do with respect to the content. The 1st phase is used for weighing the alternatives and the KvU was an extra alternative. In the 2nd phase you want to go further with one alternative in accordance with Elverding.

Instead of taking up the Kracht van Utrecht in the MER 2nd phase it was already taken up in the MER 1st phase.

7.3 Phase 1b – further exploration

In the period of May to July 2009 the employees of RWS had put in a whole lot of extra hours into presenting the calculations of the alternatives on time. A senior official of RWS explained the situation as followed:

Senior official of RWS: We really worked hard. I would almost say until we were exhausted. We really pushed ourselves to the limit. And then there was no decision in July. But there were requests for further information and for further research. There was a strict deadline coupled to it, because it needed to be delivered in four to five months.

Interviewer: This deadline was for the BO-MIRT?

Senior official of RWS: Correct. And then they said, we cannot do this to the people who have been working on it. ... Then a consultancy firm was hired.

The employees were physically no longer able to help out with the extra requests from the authorized bodies. This illustrates the pressure exerted by these bodies. Because the authorized bodies were not able to make a decision, they asked the RWS to further explore the alternatives. Yet, all this needed to be accounted for before the upcoming BO-MIRT as the decision on the preferred direction, made by the authorized bodies, needed to be agreed upon during that meeting. If they did not make this deadline their agenda item was to be moved to next years BO-MIRT, the one in 2010. To respect the employees of the RWS the management of the RWS decided to hire a management consultancy firm to help them out. The consultancy firm had been involved in the Planstudie Ring Utrecht earlier on. The then involved employees of the consultancy firm were not part of this new team of advisors to make sure the new team started off with a blank page. The instructions for the consultancy firm were clear. Within just two months, they needed to reorganize the information gathered during the project and they needed to provide a possible preferred direction with their expert judgment.

This process proved to be very difficult as one of the Partners of the consultancy firm explained:

It was the most idiotic project in my whole career. In such a short amount of time we needed to get done what the authorized bodies could not do, that was difficult. ... We started off with a big team to reorder the large amount of information at hand. ... We first got lost in the information. We got stuck. ... Until we sat together on a Friday, I can vividly remember, and we turned around the information. We just started unravelling it in one morning. What are the possibilities? We can do something on the eastside and we can do something on the westside. In there we need to consider the options. ... We started to visualize that and in this way we took along the administrators.

The consultancy firm was not hired to make new calculations for the alternatives or to be co-writer of the MER 1st phase report, but was hired to create order in the chaos of information that had been gathered throughout the last eighteen months. With a fresh eye, and without the knowledge or feelings from the authorized bodies, the consultancy firm looked into all the objective evidence. The authorized bodies and the consultancy firm met twice during the two months to discuss progress. During those meetings the consultancy firm showed the authorized bodies why certain alternatives could work and why others just did not. One of the Partners of the consultancy firm narrated:

It soon became clear that the westside was extremely expensive and that the traffic resolving capability was limited. Obviously we needed to blot out that one. The Ministry of V & W had staked their reputation on that alternative. They thought they could make one large beautiful Ring. That is a strong image. Nevertheless, we said that it was not supported by the analysis. ... Eventually, the authorized bodies made a deal that the green strip through Leidsche Rijn would be reserved for a possible future study.

The Ministry of V & W started to see that there were just no options for a new road through Leidsche Rijn. The costs were too high and the new road would not resolve the traffic bottleneck. With this new insight from the consultancy firm the Ministry knew they needed to give in, but they only gave in under one condition. As a senior official of the Ministry of I & M explained:

Everyone knows that if you broaden the eastside, and there is another problem in the future, you cannot broaden the eastside again. If you do that once, it is just packed there. So, what if we need something in the future? Therefore, we wanted to leave open the opportunity for the westside, the side we are not choosing now, in the future. There is now still room for it.

The other authorized bodies agreed on this condition and left room for the consultancy firm to further explore the eastside, as the Partner continued:

On the eastside it was complex with Amelisweerd. All the administrators had put their energy in the Amelisweerd matter. That it was not possible to choose that option because of the resistance. But with

this, they forgot that they couldn't sell the other alternative as historical legacies were situated there, namely the bastions of the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie. ... The moment we connected those two things it became clear that this alternative was not possible. That whole vat of information does not provide one with that information.

The alternatives for the eastside seemed to have been overshadowed by the problems of Amelisweerd. The authorized bodies were so engaged in the large amount of resistance that they forgot to look closely to the other alternatives. For the alternative sorting, the authorized bodies had the idea to sort transfer traffic and commuter traffic. Following the calculations of the RWS it was not possible to construct a parallel road for the commuter traffic in the tank of Amelisweerd. Therefore, the authorized bodies wanted to explore the option to upgrade the Waterlinieweg instead (a municipal road through the city of Utrecht on the left of Lunetten)¹³. The Waterlinieweg is located next to former land that was used as a defence line. If the authorized bodies were to choose the alternative where the Waterlinieweg was to be upgraded, it was almost certain it would affect the bastions on the right of the municipal road. This would damage one of the cultural legacies of the Netherlands.

The authorized bodies and the consultancy firm were now at a point where they agreed that the westside was not an option and that an upgrade of the Waterlinieweg was not an option. The authorized bodies were back to where they started. The new road through Leidsche Rijn was no option, the new road through Amelisweerd was no option and the upgrading of the Waterlinieweg was no option. The consultancy firm went back to work and knew they would have a difficult job. One day, however, the working team of the consultancy firm discovered something interesting as the Partner explained:

Another point in the analysis we run into, was that at some point it was stated that an expansion of the tank of Amelisweerd was not possible. ... Then we said, why isn't that possible? Then we went back and it turned out to be that it simply was a quick assumption in some report that had multiplied itself. The team started to look into it again to see whether it was possible or not. It very cautiously became a yes; it might be possible. Then RWS said: 'this is a whole other assumption. We thought we had closed this issue because it appeared to be not possible.' Based on our assumption and their reaction we have authorized a second opinion.

A senior official of the Province of Utrecht confirmed the described situation of the consultancy firm:

We didn't know if there was any realistic solution that would meet the traffic needs. ... For an important part it relied on the former statement of the RWS that it wasn't possible to expand the tank. ... Then it became clear that the tank was very crucial and we authorized for a second opinion by the RWS. What

¹³ See map 4, page vii

are the actual costs, the risks, and the technical feasibility if you pull out the coat anyhow and expand it a part.

In just two months, the consultancy firm brought up three points of importance that the authorized bodies had not thought of or did not mention. Although nothing could be decided yet, the consultancy firm had made it possible for the authorized bodies to strike through some of the alternatives by simple reasoning. The advantage of the consultancy firm was that they did not have to deal with stakeholders or with supplementary requests from the city or provincial council.

With the new information gathered by the consultancy firm it became clear that the authorized bodies might need to focus on broadening the eastside. One of the program managers of VERDER recalled:

At some point it became clear that you needed to take off the extremes and that you needed to broaden in the existing construction. And then everyone started to take their positions. The city wondered what it would mean for the decision making of the city if we chose for broadening the existing. It would mean that the NRU will get a fly-over crossing and that the speed limit might be 100 kilometres per hour. But there are all these farms next to the NRU. How will we fit that in? And will we get that through the city council? The Province did not have any problems with that, but they started a discussion about a cover. They thought that if we would make a cover over the tank of Amelisweerd we could pull the city a bit closer to the landscape just as it formally was.

During our interviews, the authorized bodies did not further explain the discussions that went on, but interpreting the statement of the former program manager of VERDER it seemed as if the authorized bodies started to take new positions. But before the negotiations to draft the preferred direction could start, the authorized bodies needed to wait for the results of the counter plan the KvU. During the two months of negotiations between the authorized bodies and the consultancy firm, two other parties, the Bestuur Regio Utrecht (BRU) and another consultancy firm (an advice agency for traffic and transport), were responsible for calculating the measures for the KvU.

7.4 Analysis

During a period of eight months a lot has happened during the planning study of Planstudie Ring Utrecht. Considering the events that went on, the authorized bodies constructed a collective action frame to make sense of the new developments. The authorized bodies negotiated a new planning process which was influenced by expectation that the new Alderman would not have enough means or the authority to get approval from the city council of Utrecht for the preferred alternative. This form of influence was triggered by an outside happening and was something that the authorized bodies could not completely control. Without the approval of the supporters

of the city of Utrecht there would be a risk that the authorized bodies were not able to negotiate a collective action frame for the decision on the preferred alternative. To make sure the authorized bodies would take the next step, they decided to add an extra phase.

Moreover, the negotiation for a new planning process was also influenced by the different frames of references of the authorized bodies, concerning the preferred alternative. The further along in the process the authorized bodies got, the more differences in interpretations there were to find. During the negotiations for a collective action frame leading to a decision on the preferred alternative, the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht learned that the new road through Leidsche Rijn was considered a real option by the Ministry of V & W. It was even considered to be the preferred option as the Ministry saw the opportunity to construct a complete ring surrounding the city of Utrecht. This view of the Ministry was not supported by the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht and seemed to cross the boundaries of the meaning making arena of the senior officials of the regional parties. The authorized bodies were not able to construct a collective action frame but did not want to jeopardize the whole decision making process of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. The State and regional parties agreed that they would present the preferred direction instead of the preferred alternative during the BO-MIRT in November 2009. The authorized bodies developed an in-between phase because they were not able to negotiate a collective action frame guiding a decision on the preferred alternative due to the large differences in the frames of reference of the authorized bodies.

The in-between phase provided the authorized bodies with the opportunity to take up the counter plan KvU in the MER 1st phase instead of the MER 2nd phase. The advantage of this was that the counter plan, just as the other alternatives, was only evaluated and calculated for the objectives for the MER 1st phase which are more general than the objectives for the MER 2nd phase. Although not confirmed by any actor, this renewed process could be interpreted as a strategy by the authorized bodies. We already learned that none of the authorized bodies initially responded to the counter plan. Only when the House of Commons overruled the authorized bodies they needed to take the counter plan into consideration. The difference between MER 1st phase and 2nd phase is that the 1st phase is an exploration phase where alternatives are calculated for in general terms. MER 2nd phase performs more extended calculations. When the counter plan is taken into consideration in the MER 1st phase it can be tested for on more general terms.

The authorized bodies decided to hire a consultancy firm for the in-between phase to help them reorganize the data and to help them construct and negotiate a collective action frame leading to a decision on the preferred direction. The consultancy firm used the information gathered to make sense of the situation of Planstudie Ring Utrecht. This is an illustrative example of what Schön and Rein explain as reframing. Instead of bargaining a collective action frame, the

consultancy firm reflected upon the decision making process. The authorized bodies learned about and reviewed on their own actions during the decision making process. With the new information the authorized bodies made sense of the changed context of the planning study. In this way the consultancy firm was able to influence the negotiations leading to a decision making.

The first new information shown by the consultancy firm was that the westside (the new road through Leidsche Rijn) alternative was too expensive and would not solve the problem. The consultancy firm walked the authorized bodies through the information gathered and narrated the story. For the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht it made sense that the westside would no longer be considered an option. For the senior official of the Ministry of V & W it also made sense to cross out the westside but it further made sense to leave the option open to construct on the westside in the future as, in their point of view, there would probably be no more opportunities on the eastside in the future after construction during this planning phase. The senior official of the Ministry of V & W framed the frames of references of the senior officials of the regional parties by telling the story and getting support for this view. The authorized bodies negotiated to put aside the alternative for the westside but with the reservation to further explore the possibilities in the future.

Other new information gathered by the consultancy firm also changed the interpretations of the authorized bodies. By focussing too much on the resistance from the corner of Amelisweerd, it appeared as if the authorized bodies forgot that the other option for the eastside, the upgrade of the Waterlinieweg, had big implications for the Dutch cultural legacy. The consultancy firm reframed the collective action frame by telling the story to the authorized bodies. This illustrates that a frame of reference is just like a window through which we see the world while limiting our view. The authorized bodies merely focussed on the resistance, which in turn shows the impact of the resistance, and limited their view of the complex infrastructural project. The authorized bodies reviewed the new information and reconstructed their collective action frame. The State and regional partners supported and understood that the cultural legacy needed to be protected.

The last, but most important piece of information was that the authorized bodies followed the conclusion of the RWS that the tank of Amelisweerd could not be expanded without questioning. The consultancy firm questioned this and asked for further calculations. The authorized bodies framed their collective action frame based on the information given by the RWS. The facts gathered with the further calculations provided the authorized bodies with new information to interpret. With the information and the story of the consultancy firm the authorized bodies reframed the situation in order to make sense of the situation. They now could negotiate a collective action frame depending on the outcomes of the counter plan the KvU.

CHAPTER 8 – THE EXPLORATION PHASE CONTINUES

8.1 Phase 1b – the KvU counter plan

The VVA and NMU were excited that their counter plan KvU was going to be taken up in the MER phase. They had the feeling they were being taken seriously. In August 2009, the chairman of the VVA was called and was informed that a working group had been formed to judge the KvU counter plan in the MER 1st phase. The BRU and the consultancy firm led the working group and they made a start with their calculations. The authorized bodies did not really elaborate on the process of judging the counter plan during the interviews. The president of the VVA said the following about his interpretation of the process:

The working group started somewhere in August 2009 but under strange conditions. We couldn't get a hold on the plan explaining the instruction for the working group, the weighing scope was not clear and the way the Kracht van Utrecht was going to be compared was not clear. We only saw these documents with the presentations concerning the calculations. We then said: 'who can we talk to about the input of these calculations?' And then it was suddenly finished. No report, nothing. And then we thought: is this the way they do things?

The VVA and the NMU did not have the feeling they were part of the process at all. The counter plan was calculated with models of the BRU, but the VVA and the NMU felt it was all processed behind closed doors. The BRU and the consultancy firm only made the figures public in the presentations concerning the calculations.

Following these calculations, the authorized bodies concluded that the KvU would not meet the effects needed to diminish the traffic bottleneck. The reason could, for a large part, be attributed to the plans of KvU to make use of kilometre fees in the city of Utrecht. This solution was in line with the far advanced plans of the former government. However, the government was not able to reach an agreement for applying kilometre fees and the decision was pushed back to at least 2012. This meant that the KvU should meet the standards without the use of the kilometre fees in the city of Utrecht, as the measure itself was not agreed upon. The BRU and the consultancy firm concluded that the use of kilometre fees accounted for three-quarters of the effects on diminishing traffic on the roads. Without this measure the effect would be greatly reduced. Further, the costs for the measures were too high to fit in the available budget. The effects were higher for the road alternative. With this conclusion, the KvU was officially laid aside in the MER phase 1b.

The VVA and the NMU were filled with indignation on two points. First, they felt as if they were not involved in the process of judging their counter plan and they further believed that the

models were used in such a way that the KvU could never get positive results. An employee of the Natuur en Milieufederatie explained:

One of our ideas was the expansion of the railway line from Almere-Utrecht-Breda. All the billions for the full railway line were completely added up to our alternative. En then they said it cost 6 billion, way too expensive. Well, in this way you can ruin everything. ... Then I would like to see them take up all the roads from Breda to Almere, now and in the future, in the calculations for the Ring Utrecht. In this way I will also get 10 billion. I can come up with more of this as well. The kilometre fees for instance. We learned from a good source that the officials of the Ministry were working on rush hour fees. That was 11 cents. So we stated 7 cents for flat fee and 11 cents for rush hour fee. Indeed, that was 18 cents in total. But the Ministry brought out biased information in their press report. It said 18 cents kilometre fees, but it was 7 + 11 cents, so 7 cents for kilometre fees. If it then stated somewhere that it is 18 cents I do not believe it was not done on purpose. There were just too many of those things in it. ... Then you are not listening but just taking in all information while thinking how to distort it. And, they did next to nothing with the good things in the report.

This feeling was present with civic organizations as well. Even though the civic organizations did not always completely believe in the effects of the counter plan, they did believe the authorized bodies could get something good out of it. An active member of Wijkcommissie Zandweg-Oostweg explained:

What they didn't explore was the combinations between public transport and roads. I could have told before that the Kracht van Utrecht wasn't feasible on its own, but why didn't they explore the combinations? ... I really think the KvU is too extreme, but I also think that a variant with just highways is too extreme. ... I think it is really bad that they wiped this of the table so early.

An active member of Milieuwerkgroep Houten had a somewhat similar reaction:

Yes, we did have the hope that the KvU would accomplish something. We therefore always stated in our reactions: 'we support the initiative'. We supported one big story together. ... Well, we have apparently lost that. ... We can take part in the conversation, but we have no influence.

The organization that did not support the counter plan of KvU was EVO, a special interest group for transportation in the Netherlands. EVO followed the calculations of the BRU and a consultancy firm and stood behind the authorized bodies. The employee explained "we could not support this as it would have had a huge economic impact". This comment is understandable when we think about the interests of EVO. If the authorized bodies went through with this plan this would mean that the transport organizations would have to pay money to transport their goods in and around the city of Utrecht. Their reaction was therefore not so surprisingly.

The second point of indignation was that the VVA and the NMU were surprised with the fact that their counter plan was taken into account earlier in the process than expected.

Moreover, they only found this out when the authorized bodies published the MER 1st phase document. The president of the VVA explained:

Administrators put the Kracht van Utrecht report aside in 2009 in phase 1b, while they chose to make a final judgement on the variants again in phase 1c. They were able to put aside the KvU as a result of separating the MER in pieces, as 1a, 1b, and 1c. Government wise they were clever, my compliments. ... But in our opinion you need to explore all available alternatives in the MER 1st phase without putting them aside early, already in phase 1b.

The president meant that by separating the MER in pieces, a process that was not common, the authorized bodies were able to put alternatives aside already in phase a, b, or c. It is possible that by planning the process in a certain way the authorized bodies were able to orchestrate a certain outcome. When asked, the authorized bodies always referred to the calculations and the outcomes of the calculations when we discussed the counter plan KvU. For the authorized bodies it made sense that the calculations showed that the counter plan was not able to diminish the traffic bottleneck. A senior official of BRU spoke more freely though. His statement supported the claims of the VVA and the NMU in some way:

The BRU stands behind the plans of the KvU based on their public transport ambitions, so we started working on that. But we do not believe that a road widening will be unnecessary. ... Everyone can look differently at the feasibility of things. ... You can, of course, think up a packet of mobility management and price policy. When practicing a strong price policy you will get rid of the traffic jams. But it is a political consideration. Will you go that far or not? The politics in the Netherlands will not go that far. ... Theoretically everything is possible. But we have chosen the government ourselves and they are the ones who will decide in the end. And they have chosen otherwise up until now.

This statement of the senior official does not mean the calculations were wrong or contaminated with, but this means that the authorized bodies put aside the counter plan earlier on, in the MER 1st phase, based on the government standards.

Although the counter plan KvU was not about to be part of the preferred direction, it did provide the BRU with opportunities to come closer to the decision making arena of the authorized bodies. As from now on, the BRU would be playing an important role in supporting public transport measures combined with measures for the road for the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. I never really understood the actual role of the BRU and I therefore asked the authorized bodies how they saw the role of the BRU. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M said following:

The BRU had a special role. They became part of the study through the KvU. They were not formally an authorized body, but in this way they were taking some part in the decision making.

In the interview a senior official of the Province of Utrecht emphasized the role of the BRU when speaking of the different interests of the authorized bodies:

Senior official Province of Utrecht: Everyone had conflicting interests and there are a lot of interests in it.

Interviewer: The city, the Province and the State?

Senior official Province of Utrecht: Yes and the BRU is also in it, isn't it?

Interviewer: But the BRU was not one of the authorized bodies, right?

Senior official Province of Utrecht: No, but I find the role of BRU still a bit complicated.

The city of Utrecht was also aware of the special role of the BRU; a senior official recounted:

The city tries to find the Province to see if we are on one page. And if that works we are with two, or three with the BRU in it as well, directed at the State. Then they cannot walk over us just like that.

From this statement we can interpret that the authorized bodies did not know what the exact role of the BRU was either. The BRU was not officially an authorized body, but they all mentioned the BRU when recollecting the decision making process. It seemed as if the authorized bodies accepted the role of the BRU in some way. The BRU indeed started to play a big role in phase 1b and would play an even bigger role in phase 1c.

8.2 What was the decision again?

Based on the new information gathered together with the consultancy firms, the authorized bodies reached an agreement on the preferred direction in time for the BO-MIRT of 3 November, 2009. Although an official step, none of the authorized bodies expected any strange turns to come up. The senior officials of the BRU and the Ministry of I & M explained the BO-MIRT was "not a meeting where something of surprise happens", but mostly "a meeting with formalities". This BO-MIRT though turned out to be very interesting. All authorized bodies, the program manager and the communication manager of VERDER, one of the senior officials of RWS, and one of the senior officials of the BRU told me how strange they thought this meeting had been.

One of the program managers of VERDER attended the meeting together with regional and national administrators. He compared the meeting to some sort of henhouse. Fifty people attended the meeting in a room just big enough for the whole group. The meeting was scheduled for 18.00-21.00 hours with the Planstudie Ring Utrecht as one of the last points on the agenda to discuss. Just after 20.00 hours the program manager saw the amount of text messages on his phone rising. He opened the first message and was speechless. "Hey, how nice, I just saw the news. Congratulations, you found the answer!". Interestingly enough, the BO-MIRT meeting had

not even started the discussion on the planning study of Planstudie Ring Utrecht; no decision had been made yet.

The NOS, the Dutch broadcast foundation, reported in their eight o'clock news that: "There will be no new highway constructed through the nature reserve Amelisweerd in Utrecht. And no highway will be constructed through the new housing estate Leidsche Rijn, close to the city. Despite this, the Minister of V & W had reached an agreement with Utrecht on how the city can be made more accessible. For that, the highways on the eastside and south side of the city will be broadened. And on the north side a new highway will be constructed for Utrecht to really get a Ring"¹⁴. This text was supported with following picture:



Picture 2: Image of the presumable decision of the preferred direction for the Ring Utrecht.

The reported news item was released too early. Moreover, the news item reported a decision that had not been formally decided. Although somewhat alike, I have heard three different stories of this specific event. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M remembered:

Information leaked out to the press just before the item was discussed during the BO-MIRT, we do not know who it was. I have an idea from whom or at least from which side. During the meeting people received text messages that the preferred direction had already been covered on the news, while the item was still on the agenda.

One of the program managers of VERDER told:

Program manager VERDER: A press release went to ANP (Dutch press office) from the Ministry with the outcome for the preferred direction, but with the wrong outcome.

¹⁴ Source: <http://nos.nl/video/47667-geen-nieuwe-snelweg-door-amelisweerd.html>

Interviewer: The wrong outcome?

Program manager VERDER: Well, the one that could not be the outcome of the administrative meeting.

Interviewer: That was the outcome that Leidsche Rijn was dropped?

Program manager VERDER: No, that was the outcome that it had not been rejected yet. But that was the discussion, there was still a discussion left for in the BO-MIRT.

Interviewer: Was that done by accident?

Program manager VERDER: No, I believe that has been done with a certain purpose. I know who it is and I know what the purpose was, but that is not relevant now.

A senior official of the RWS explained the event as follows:

Senior official of RWS: The meeting was still going on and it was nevertheless leaked by the spokesman of the V & W. Moreover, it showed a map where the extension through Leidsche Rijn was shown.

Interviewer: That was the wrong decision right?

Senior official of RWS: However, the illustrative text made clear what the real decision was. The text was correct.

Everyone thought that the information had been leaked to the news stations on purpose. One person claimed not to know who it was, one claimed to know who it was but did not want to share that information and one claimed that it was the spokesman of the Ministry of V & W. Based on the information that was leaked, namely that there were future plans to complete the Ring Utrecht, I believe the information from the senior official of RWS to be true. In earlier meetings, together with the consultancy firm, it was already known that the Ministry of V & W wanted to have a reservation for future construction in Leidsche Rijn. In the picture, the new road on the left of Leidsche Rijn was drawn as if this road would be constructed. The accompanying text, though, did not mention this new road. Illustrated with the picture it seemed as if the last sentence, 'And on the north side a new highway will be constructed for Utrecht to really get a Ring', linked to the line drawn through Leidsche Rijn, but in fact it aimed at the NRU that was going to be upgraded as a highway to complete the Ring.

The senior officials of RWS and the Ministry, and the program manager of VERDER could understand that the person who leaked the information wanted to make sure that the news would be covered by the eight o'clock news that same day as this topic received a lot of attention. The authorized bodies probably wanted the public to know, as soon as possible, what the outcome of the meeting was. But I think there was another reason the information was leaked as well. We will probably never know the real reason, but as we explore the data it seemed as if the Ministry of V & W wanted to put pressure on the decision making for the reservation in Leidsche Rijn process. We already learned that they had a strong preference for adding a new road through Leidsche Rijn to the preferred alternative. Maybe they used the

leaking of information to put make sure the agreement for the reservation was officially added as a condition for the exploration phase of the preferred direction.

When several people received the text messages it was communicated to the Minister that information had been leaked. One of the program managers of VERDER elaborated:

Program manager of VERDER: It put pressure on the meeting and it turned out to be a remarkable meeting. ... Eventually the decision for the preferred direction came out with a broadening and the cover for Amelisweerd in it.

Interviewer: What was eventually announced on television? Did the Minister of V & W declare that the wrong messages had been given out?

Program manager of VERDER: No, I do not think he rectified it, he just said that this was the outcome of the administrative meeting.

That was indeed the case. Every news item I have found did not mention any rectification. In the online news items one could see that it was last updated after 23.00 hours, when the meeting had finished. The old text had been replaced by the new text. There are no traces to be found that it caused any commotion.

8.3 The preferred direction

The authorized bodies published a summary document in November 2009 in which the preferred direction was explained. The most important conclusions were¹⁵:

1) KvU:

The authorized bodies wrote they appreciated the work established by the VVA and the NMU. From the studies that have been done it appeared that the KvU has valuable items in it. The most effective and feasible measures have been taken up in the overall VERDER program. Other public transport measures will be taken into account later that year. The region of Utrecht will further explore public transport measures for the region. Nevertheless, it is concluded that measures for mobility management, bicycle and public transport will only lead to a limited decrease of traffic on the Ring Utrecht. Further, the investments of the KvU are calculated for 6 billion euros which is too much. With this, State and region conclude that an enlargement of the road system is needed for the Ring Utrecht.

With this statement the authorized bodies illustrated the public that the KvU was calculated for and it did not appear to be a possible solution for the traffic congestion at the Ring Utrecht. The VVA and the NMU shared a different opinion. The president of the VVA explained:

¹⁵ Source: Voorkeursrichting Ring Utrecht, November 2009

On the one hand you believe you are being taken seriously. Even so, what else can you do? If you start complaining about it you will be seen as the complaining party. ... While us only saw the numbers and with that it was finished. There would be no report of it none so whatsoever. We had put in a lot of effort to make sure there was going to be a report. Eventually, this came out, but only one month after the administrative decision of November 2009.

By their choice of wording the authorized bodies could explain that the KvU did not meet the standard needed for diminishing the traffic congestion. While they did not state that there was no official report with all the outcomes. For an outsider this does not look strange, but for the NMU and the VVA it was definitely important.

2) Eastside:

Taking everything into consideration the authorized bodies decided the preferred solution is to be found on the eastside of the city.

3) Preferred direction:

The preferred direction is a broadening of the A27 on the eastside of the city and a separation of the junctions Lunetten and Rijnsweerd. An expansion of the A12, by construction an extra road on both sides. An upgrading of the NRU, with a fly-over crossing and a speed limit of 100 kilometres per hour.

4) Broadening the existing tank of Amelisweerd:

The preference of the authorized bodies is to broaden the existing tank of Amelisweerd with fourteen roads in total.

5) Preconditions:

All of the constructions needed to fit in the budget of 1.2 billion euros. The preferred direction is expected to cost 1.4 billion euros. Therefore, State and region will look into possibilities to reduce costs. If this is not possible State and region will look into options to raise their contributions. A cover of the tank of Amelisweerd is irrevocably connected to the preferred direction.

6) The highway A12:

Further research for exploring the options to develop the A12 will be disconnected from the development of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht.

There were important things to acknowledge. The preferred direction would cost more than expected and more than the available budget. Nevertheless, the authorized bodies went through with this alternative as there were no other possible solutions as we discovered during the exploring phase of the consultancy firm. To make sure all available budgets would be used for the preferred direction, the intended plans for the A12 were disconnected from the Planstudie

Ring Utrecht. The intended plans would be executed but within a different planning study. Something else of importance was that the condition of the Ministry of V & W, the possibility to further explore the westside, was not taken up in the document.

The civic organizations and special interest groups had their own thoughts concerning the summary document. The VVA and the NMU did not agree with the words the authorized bodies had chosen to explain their alternative of preference. According to them they were deceived. As the president of the VVA explained:

It was said that the plan for a road through Amelisweerd was cancelled. While in the decision making it was decided that Amelisweerd would be broadened. Then I thought how is this possible? ... In November the administrators agreed that the road through Amelisweerd was no longer an option, while in the decision is stated that the road will be broadened for 1.2 billion euros. ... That is just playing with language. The road through Amelisweerd was cancelled, everyone happy, congratulations Vrienden van Amelisweerd...!

An employee of the NMU stated:

And what happens now is that the current administrators, with the trauma of the administrative failure of Amelisweerd, actually say: we want to make up for that. And with that they tied themselves up with a cover to connect Amelisweerd to the city. It cannot be a tunnel as they will then need to meet all sorts of requirements. But what do you actually connect? And will a deer actually walk over it? Who will camp on that? That is a waste of money as there is not so much money anyway. Just think about it before you do this.

Although not as involved as the NMU and the VVA, an active member of the Wijkcommissie Zandweg-Oostwaard had a similar feeling:

I think that the cover at Amelisweerd was just a gift. I think that if they didn't do that the city would made trouble. I think the protests have played a part with the cover for Amelisweerd. I mean: why a cover with Amelisweerd and not for Overvecht or Maarssen? Why would you cover anyway? It is just a mitigating measure as it is formally called. And that is the only mitigating measure stated in the whole MER. For the rest it will be explored later on. I guess this is already given as a present to diminish the protests. ... That wasn't out of love, but out of fear. If we don't do this, then we cannot get the decision through the city council or then everyone will chain themselves to trees.

The stakeholders were correct in their assumptions. The cover over Amelisweerd was indeed a form of negotiation but not of the city of Utrecht. It was the Province of Utrecht that wanted the cover. A senior official explained the reason for the Province to negotiate this point:

Yes, that is negotiation. That is the same with the cover. Why do we have a top-up mitigating measure of a cover of the A27? While you did not even do a MER, you don't even know what it does. That is to

make it acceptable for all parties, but also just for the social discussion. We are not only going to make it better for the car owner, but also for the people who live there.

The Province thought they had done well with the negotiation of a cover of Amelisweerd while in fact the stakeholders were critical. However, the mitigating measures did make sure that the authorized bodies were able to come to a joint decision. Now the preferred direction was known, the authorized bodies had nearly a year to complete phase 1c and to complete the whole of the MER 1st phase.

8.4 Analysis

The counter plan the KvU was taken up in the MER 1st phase instead of the MER 2nd phase. Based on the calculations of the BRU and a consultancy firm the authorized bodies agreed to lay aside the KvU in phase 1b of the MER. This illustrates that sense making is a process of interpretation of both individuals and groups that is unique for every actor. For the VVA and the NMU it made sense, based on the information they gathered about the infrastructural project, to use kilometre fees in the city of Utrecht to diminish traffic. And although the government pushed back the nationwide decision, it made sense for the VVA and the NMU that the city of Utrecht could continue with a local policy on kilometre fees. The authorized bodies saw the infrastructural project within their system of values and beliefs. Since the government was not able to reach an agreement for applying kilometre fees and with it the policy was no longer on the government's agenda, the policy of kilometre fees no longer fitted in their system. Based on this collective action frame of the authorized bodies, it did not make sense to use kilometre fees as a measure to diminish traffic. This was supported with the information gathered by the BRU and the consultancy firm and shaped the context of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht for the authorized bodies. Their action to lay aside the KvU in phase 1b of the MER was based on the sense making of the authorized bodies of the planning study. The calculations of the BRU and the consultancy firm framed the collective action frame of the authorized bodies and therefore influenced the decision making on the preferred direction.

The negotiations between the authorized bodies to create a collective action frame led to a decision on the preferred direction. The decision needed to be officially approved by the members of the BO-MIRT in November 2009. It seemed as if the Ministry of V & W leaked information to the national news station to possibly influence the conditions to agree on the decision for the preferred alternative. It can be interpreted that the Ministry of V & W wanted to frame the collective action frame of the members of the BO-MIRT by already providing the information on the preferred alternative with the possibility to explore possible construction on the westside. Although frames can be constructed and reconstructed, there are limits to the

reconstruction of framing based on the actor's value and belief system. This proved to be the case with the BO-MIRT decision on the preferred direction. Even though information already leaked there was no change in the eventual decision and there were no signs that their condition was officially taken up in the official document of the preferred alternative. The Ministry of V & W was not able to influence the decision making.

When the information on the preferred direction was communicated, it was interesting to see how administrators and stakeholders made sense of this new situation. The authorized bodies had just made an important decision and were ready to go to the next phase. No new road was constructed through Leidsche Rijn, no new road was constructed through Amelisweerd, cultural legacies were secured, and a cover was to be constructed over the tank of Amelisweerd. The stakeholders had another view on the situation. They believed the cover of the tank of Amelisweerd was just part of the negotiations and had no added value. The Province of Utrecht believed this cover was something the residents of Utrecht would be happy with as it would connect the city with Amelisweerd. The majority of the stakeholders interpreted this cover to be an outcome of negotiations of the authorized bodies and not something to be of use for the citizens of the city of Utrecht. For them it would make more sense to use this money for other measures based on requests of the citizens of Utrecht.

Further, the majority of the stakeholders felt betrayed. Even though the authorized bodies claimed no new road was constructed through Amelisweerd, the majority of the stakeholders believed there was a new road constructed through Amelisweerd with broadening the tank and constructing new roads. This is an illustration of the difference in frames of reference regarding the meaning of the words 'new road'. The meaning of the words 'new road' was framed as a construction of a new connection between two roads by the authorized bodies. For the stakeholders the words 'new road' did not only mean a new connection between two roads but did also mean the construction of extra roads next to existing roads. This difference in frames of references explained the difference in the sense being made by the actors involved.

CHAPTER 9 – JUST ONE YEAR LEFT

9.1 Phase 1c

The final phase for the MER 1st phase was phase 1c. This phase was used to further explore the preferred direction and to find out whether this would be feasible financially. Between November 2009 and June 2010 the authorized bodies did not communicate frequently to the public. Most developments took place behind closed doors. The months were taken up by further explorations, calculations, and meetings. After this was finished, both the Ministries of V & W and VROM agreed on the final conclusions but the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht had other opinions. As a senior official of the Ministry of I & M explained:

The Province supported the city but didn't really have an opinion about it. The city wanted extra details in the MER report. Extra research for, I believe, the items noise, extra traffic numbers, and quantitative data on health. All the discussions of a year before came back again.

The reason for the return of the discussion on noise, traffic numbers, and health was to be found in the recent developments of the Executive Board of Utrecht. In March 2010, there were local elections for the city councils. This resulted in a new elected Executive Board in Utrecht in April that same year. The new Dutch government that was installed in June 2010 consisted of a majority for the VVD party that was pro-traffic. No real changes were to be found for this authorized body. The new Executive Board of the city of Utrecht consisted of a majority of the GroenLinks party with a GroenLinks Alderman for Mobility. 'Green, open and social' was the name of their city council program. GroenLinks had, together with their Executive Board, taken the view of green mobility. The goal of this Executive Board was to make Utrecht a public transport and bicycle city¹⁶.

The negotiations between the authorized bodies had become difficult as the city of Utrecht did not want to agree on the MER 1st phase without the extra details. An anonymous source believed that the State parties may have felt that the new Alderman of GroenLinks had a difficult job with supporting the Planstudie Ring Utrecht without extra research on issues of noise and health. The source stated that the State parties proposed the city of Utrecht to implement an OV MIRT study to explore possible bottlenecks in the public transport system. This would provide the Alderman with something to take back to his city council. On the one hand he needed to give in on the road adjustments as agreed with the authorized bodies, but on the other hand he was able to negotiate a green and social measure with the OV MIRT study. For now, the negotiations

¹⁶ Source: Collegeprogramma 2010-2014, GroenLinks – PvdA - D66, 16 april 2010

were assured, the report was released, and the authorized bodies got ready for the consultation meetings concerning the report MER 1st phase.

9.2 Consultation

In September 2010 the stakeholders were invited for consultation meetings. In between these two moments the stakeholders were not actively involved by the authorized bodies. This was agreed with a senior official of the Province of Utrecht who said: "I can image that the civic organizations and special interest groups say they could not have done much. Up until the consultation meetings they were almost not involved".

The consultation meetings were meant as informal information gatherings and not as a formal moment for public comment. The civic organizations even found out that their comments would not be taken along with the m.e.r. committee for the directives for the MER 2nd phase. A member of the Laet Lunetten Niet Stikken explained their concerns:

The consultation moment. We really needed to fight to have it taken along to the m.e.r. committee. ... We even called the advice committee and asked what was going on. We heard from the environment manager that we would be heard, but that it would be put in a shoe box afterwards. ... We made a summary of a few lines but it didn't have any formal status. ... We also sent a letter to the authorized authorities with: what is this? We hear that you will put it behind closed doors, as a matter of speech, and we want to be heard and we want to see what you have done with it. ... Eventually that worked.

The president of the working group traffic of the Bewoners Platform Overvecht shared the concerns. The president recalled:

At some point we found out that it wasn't possible to hand in a written comment on the preferred direction. We told the other civic organizations and special interest groups and we sent a letter that went straight to the Ministry. Program bureau VERDER didn't like that very much. They said: but we thought we had a good relationship? Yes, but at that moment it seemed as if we couldn't hand in a written comment. That was only confirmed later.

It became very clear the civic organizations wanted to be heard. They did not have the feeling that they were part of the process and did not want to end up with a decision they would not agree upon. Luckily, it became possible to hand in written comments and it became even possible that the authorized bodies would publish a summary report of the consultation. This summary would also be given to the m.e.r. committee for them to take it along in their recommendation for the directives of the MER 2nd phase.

One of the members of Bewoners Platform Overvecht did not think a consultation meeting with just RWS people was sufficient so she requested with the RWS to have a joint evening. In one area of the meeting room RWS provided the residents of Overvecht with information and in

another area the Bewoners Platform Overvecht and the NHW provided the residents of Overvecht with information. The Bewoners Platform Overvecht and the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie got in contact due to the far advanced plans for the NRU. They believed they would have a stronger position if they worked together. The RWS agreed on the proposal of the Bewoners Platform Overvecht as the president of the working group traffic explained:

We thought at the consultation meeting that we shouldn't let VERDER organize this alone. ... We had the impression that they wouldn't write down our comments exactly as we said it, but with an interpretation of what we said. We would rather give a comment accompanied by a letter.

The combined consultation meeting was a huge success. A lot of residents came to the meeting and were now informed on the far advanced plans for the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. The residents even had the opportunity to hand in a public comment for the MER 2nd phase.

About 600 people visited the five consultation meetings. The total amount of reactions was as follows: 175 single reactions, 4 combined reactions (for 82 people), 19 reactions from civic organizations or special interest groups, and 4 reactions of cities in the Utrecht region. The main outcomes of these meetings were that people did not think that asphalt was a solution for the problem. The stakeholders further doubted the (calculation) models used and they believe some alternatives had not been explored enough or were put aside too easily. For the MER 2nd phase people would like to see that the items health and quality of life would be taken more into consideration.

The comments of the public were sent to the m.e.r. committee who took it along in their recommendations for the MER 2nd phase.

9.3 From consultation to preferred alternative

After the consultation meeting the city council of Utrecht demanded from their Alderman that he would further negotiate some conditions set by the city council. In the city council report of November 4, 2010, the city agreed on the decision to work out the east alternative in the MER 2nd phase based on following conditions: further exploration of the preferred alternative needs to take the Ladder van Verdaas (order of measures defined by the government to be considered when solving a problem of mobility) into account, further exploration of broadening within the existing tank of Amelisweerd (instead of an expansion of the existing tank), further exploration of a speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour on the NRU (instead of just exploring the option for 100 kilometres an hour)¹⁷. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M explained:

¹⁷ Source: <http://www.utrecht.nl/smartsite.dws?id=88539&GID=350831>

After the summer we had a discussion with the city of Utrecht. The Alderman was asked by his city council to make sure that the Kracht van Utrecht was going to be part of the MER 2nd phase as well. And we thought it should not as this alternative was already examined. Then it becomes a negotiation in which everyone needs to give in on some points and everyone will win some points. If there are four authorized bodies, one cannot have it all.

The authorized bodies had the difficult job to prepare an agreement for the next BO-MIRT. The city of Utrecht had certain conditions for the MER 2nd phase and wanted to have further explorations on special items. This was the moment that a lot of things happened behind closed doors. A senior official of the BRU elaborated:

Senior official BRU: When GroenLinks came to power we strongly tried to make a connection between the decisions for the road and the investments for the public transport. In brief: we are prepared to work along with the asphalt, as long as there will be investments for the public transport.

Interviewer: Could you use that because there was a GroenLinks city council?

Senior official BRU: It was not that deliberate, but yes. ... And then something began to hang above the market in The Hague as well: o no, GroenLinks is in power of Utrecht, they will prevent our plans. So there developed some sort of play of pushing and pulling: how far can I push you to a specific side?

The statement from the senior official is interesting. He talks about "we want to cooperate" as in the BRU and the city of Utrecht. Nevertheless, the BRU did not have any formal authority and still spoke of "we want to cooperate". In this you see that the BRU managed to establish some form of authority in finding a partner in the city of Utrecht. He explained that "we couldn't co-decide, but we were part of the steering group because of our public transport contribution". The BRU were actively part in the negotiations that followed after the city of Utrecht demanded further explorations. A senior official of the BRU explained:

I don't want to be too precise on that. But you should imagine that officials talk with each other. Politicians talk with each other. And senior officials talk with each other. And at some point you receive a phone call from the official side. Maybe there is some pot of money there and there. Approximately so and so much. And if you ask that and that question, we would be giving that and that answer. That sort of negotiations.

Although not confirmed by the senior official of the BRU this specific phone call most likely came from the side of the Ministry as they were the ones who could invest extra money. This extra money was going to be used for a tram line through the city; from the central station to the Uithof, the student complex of the city. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M recounted:

We originally received signals from the region that there was a shortage of 50 to 70 million. We tried to find out if we had some money left. But then the region came up with an amount of 250 millions or so.

The Ministry of V & W explored the possibility to provide extra money for the city of Utrecht to construct a tram line. The Ministry did not want to give the city 250 million and wanted to further negotiate. This was because the Minister had, at some point, connected the tram line with the original plans stated in the Planstudie Ring Utrecht.

And again the elections turned out to be argument to agree on a specific decision. In June the new Dutch House of Commons was elected. From that moment there was a new Minister of V & W, who became the Minister of I & M (a merger between the Ministries of VROM and V & W). The Minister needed to establish the authority within the cabinet of Ministers. I believe the Minister tried to do this with agreeing on extra budget for the tram line. In this way one of the first decisions the Minister would make would be a decision on public transport, which would probably be received in a more positive way than a decision on road adjustments.

The Ministry and the city of Utrecht and the BRU continued the negotiations. The BRU and the city of Utrecht were not aware that the Minister had connected the tram line with the Planstudie Ring Utrecht and tried to make sure the Province was also on their side. As a senior official of the BRU explained:

The city and the BRU are hand and glove. That is different than with the State and the Province. The Province found it hard to stand behind the tram plans of the city. ... It is of importance to agree on a decision with the regional partners. Who pays what? So we explained to the Province what the benefit of this line was. Moreover, we knew already that money for that tram was going to come from the State; the Province didn't know yet.

The Province was convinced by the city of Utrecht and the BRU and then the real negotiations started. A senior official of the Ministry of I & M explained the process of these negotiations:

At some point all sorts of contacts come up. Then you get back: the Deputy called with the Minister, on this. The major called with the Minister and agreed that and that. ... Then we came up with 100 million. ... All this, under the condition that the MKBA (cost and benefit analysis) will be positive.

In the end the authorized bodies agreed that the State would provide 110 millions for a tram line through the city of Utrecht. It seemed as if the last 10 millions were negotiated behind closed doors. Although it seemed as if the Ministry claimed the condition for the MKBA (costs and benefit analysis) to always have a pressure means this was not the case. Even before the official statement came out that the MKBA condition was met, the rumours were that the State would probably go along with it even if the results were a little negative.

Not everyone was so pleased with the agreement for the tram line. An active member of the Milieuwerkgroep Houten recalled:

We are trying to reduce the speed limit for the NRU, now they have put it on 100 kilometres an hour. We know that the city will support that, there is a GroenLinks Alderman, but he needs to go along with the national story, with the covenant. Also because that is where the money was for the tram line to the Uithof. Those 100 million euros extra is not something the city can pay for. That was the deal. He agrees on the tram line and will try something later on. Yes, that's smart play. I admit it is a difficult position for GroenLinks. They want to govern and co-decide as well. But how will this turn out in the long run?

9.4 The preferred alternative

The BO-MIRT of November 2010 was slightly pushed back for the new Minister to read up on the topics that would be on the agenda. Without any problems the preferred direction was turned into the preferred alternative for Planstudie Ring Utrecht. In the MER 2nd phase the authorized bodies would adjust the preferred alternative into a draft decision on the planned road. The authorized bodies decided following in December 2010¹⁸:

- The A27 will be broadened on the eastside of the city of Utrecht and will be traffic streams will be divided at the junctions Lunetten and Rijnsweerd.
- The A12 will be expanded with one extra road on each side (further research for exploring the options to develop the A12 will be disconnected from the development of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht)
- The NRU will be upgraded with at least 2x2 roads, a fly-over crossing, and at least 80 kilometres per hour.
- A tram line between Utrecht central station and the Uithof (based on a positive result of the MKBA exploration).

The only thing that disappeared from the decision of the preferred alternative is the reservation for a possible construction through Leidsche Rijn. For a long time, the Ministry of V & W kept that as a demand, but further along the MER 1st phase something of importance had happened. The city of Utrecht was in a far advanced stage of amplifying their development plan for Leidsche Rijn and there was no place to fit in reservations for a possible construction. Although this development plan was under development for quite some time, the Ministry asked the city whether they could adjust the plans. A senior official of the city of Utrecht explained:

The development plan for Leidsche Rijn was realized and we will not turn that around. First we thought that they held on to Leidsche Rijn for a negotiation position. ... But then they asked if we could change the development plan and it became very serious. It wasn't just strategy, the Minister just wanted it.

¹⁸ Source: Letter of Minister of Infrastructure and Environment to The House of Representatives of the States General informing of agreement on alternative of preference and agreements made for 2nd Phase

The city of Utrecht was not able to revise their far fetched development plan and in the end the Ministry of I & M did not push further. This development led to new negotiations between the authorized bodies with an agreement on the decision for the preferred alternative. An active member of the Laet Lunetten Niet Stikken said following about the decision for the preferred alternative:

But what I see in the MIRT meeting, where the Minister turned up for the first time in December, is that she is directed by the officials who have been there for many years. You just see it happen before your eyes. And that she says that she just got there and that she has over 140 projects. That is true, but then you immediately see who does the real. The officials and these officials are not approachable.

As explained earlier, the stakeholders were not granted a lot of official participation. The stakeholders did try to be part of the decision making process and they sometimes succeeded. With the decision on the preferred alternative, the Planstudie Ring Utrecht started with the MER 2nd phase. There are advanced plans to broaden the participation process during the drawing up of the actual plans for the infrastructural project.

9.5 Analysis

With a decision on the preferred direction the authorized bodies needed to further explore and calculate the direction to turn it into a preferred alternative. But then the Executive Board of the city of Utrecht was elected in March 2010 with a 'green' party in power. Although the authorized bodies all made the decision for the preferred direction the city of Utrecht started to get new ideas on the planning phase. With the new information the senior official of city of Utrecht created a new frame of reference with a new perspective on mobility. This changed the influence relationship and the story of negotiations. The city of Utrecht influenced the new collective action frame by demanding that certain items were being taking into account the issues of health and noise. Only then the city of Utrecht would approve the MER 1st phase.

The stakeholders used their story to communicate that it was important for them to hand in written reports concerning the MER 2nd phase. They not only communicated this to the authorized bodies, but also to the m.e.r. committee. Civic organizations and special interest groups framed their story in such a way that they got support for their view. I believe the authorized bodies agreed that the stakeholders could hand in a written report as well because of the influence performed by sending a letter to the Ministry of I & M. Pressured by the Ministry of I & M the senior officials of the State and regional parties bended.

When the actual preferred alternative needed to be negotiated for the city of Utrecht changed their position. They would only approve the MER 1st phase when certain demands were being taken into account. The BRU made use of these statements and tried to find an ally in the

city of Utrecht. Together they had more influence to affect the further negotiations. To make sure they had a stronger role they convinced the Province of Utrecht to support their view. The Ministry felt that they were reaching a stalemate. If they wanted to make sure that there was no unnecessary delay of the project which would lead to cost overruns, they needed to come up with something. To make sure more effort was put in public transport the Ministry of I & M agreed to free money for the tram line through the city of Utrecht. This negotiation process was a struggle to decide which frames were more legitimated than others. Eventually, the city of Utrecht seemed to have more influence in deciding on the pre-conditions. Based on these pre-conditions, such as the tram line, the city council of Utrecht agreed on releasing the MER 1st phase. The other authorized bodies agreed on these pre-conditions because they believed the tramline would be useful and because they believed this was not something to reach stalemate for. The authorized bodies were able to negotiate a collective action frame in which they believed a broadening on the eastside (the A27) and an upgrade of the NRU would help to diminish traffic, and a tram line between Utrecht central station and the Uithof would positively influence public transport in the city. This collective action frame led to the decision on the preferred alternative.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The stories of the authorized bodies, the civic organizations, and the special interest groups have helped to understand and to interpret the negotiation for a collective action frame leading to a decision making. Throughout the decision making process smaller decisions had been made, that eventually led to the decision for the preferred alternative. For each decision the authorized bodies needed to mobilize the different frames of references and to negotiate a collective action frame as it would only then lead to a decision making that is agreed upon by all involved actors. That this is a difficult task was proven by the thick description given about the development of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. Throughout the decision making process all actors are constantly trying to find balance, but this balance can and will change with each smaller decision and with each difference in the context of the planning study.

Actors are constantly looking for information to make sense of the social context. They use this information to shape the context followed by action based on their sense making of this context. Every actor makes sense in unique ways and that is why it is difficult to negotiate a collective action frame. Each actor will use framing to get support for their view. Although the authorized bodies agreed upon the collaboration of VERDER in which they would search for the solution to diminish traffic jams, it is important to acknowledge that each authorized body has its own unique way of making sense of the situation. The whole decision making process is a struggle for influence. None of the bodies can overrule each other's authority and it is therefore important to negotiate the decision making. The reason that the authorized bodies keep engaging themselves in these negotiations is that each body has its responsibility to their followers which determines their involvement.

In what we have learned with this case it is possible to answer the research question and the sub-questions:

How do administrators and stakeholders make sense of the infrastructural project?

Administrators and stakeholders make sense of the infrastructural project in their own unique way. There are no specific rules for this. Actors will use the information gathered to make sense of the social context. This was illustrated in this research more than once. At the start of this planning study most stakeholders did not believe that traffic could diminish with only road measures. Based on the information at hand the stakeholders thought measures of public transport and mobility management were just so effective, or even more effective, than road measures. For most stakeholders it made sense that the Planstudie Ring Utrecht would unfold a

mixture of measures of public transport and roads. For other stakeholders, like EVO and TLN, it did make sense to focus on road measures for the planning study as calculations for the transportation section showed the special interest groups that road measures would probably be most effective for ensuring a flow through of traffic. For the authorized bodies it did make sense to look into both road measures and measures of public transport, but with a larger focus on road measures, based on the information gathered with the network analysis. The conclusion of this network analysis was that the bottlenecks were to find on the road.

When the actors experienced change they needed to make sense in a way that relates to their understanding and experience. It means that sense making can change when actors interpret the context of that moment in another way. This was illustrated when the reactions to the introductory memorandum became known. The written and spoken narratives of most of the stakeholders showed the authorized bodies that there was a lot of resistance. Especially from the side of the civic organizations there was a lot of protest. It changed the way the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht made sense of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. For them, it meant that the authorized bodies might need to take another stand when considering the extreme alternatives as a new road through Leidsche Rijn or Amelisweerd. It probably only changed the way these officials made sense of the project as the regional partners are also responsible for their supporters as, for instance, the citizens of the city of Utrecht.

Although the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht already believed the extremes needed to be wiped off the table, the senior officials of the State parties did not. When the consultancy firm showed the authorized bodies that the westside was too expensive and would not solve the problem, the senior officials of the Ministries were convinced as well. Based on this new information it made sense for the senior official of the Ministry of V & W to cross out the westside and to cross out the other extreme alternatives, but it further made sense to leave the option to explore further construction in the future. This sense making derived from the knowledge that there would probably be no more opportunities on the eastside in the future after construction during this planning phase. A reservation to explore options on the westside therefore made sense.

The developments concerning the counter plan the KvU also changed the way the senior officials made sense of the infrastructural project. The information available that was calculated for by the BRU and a consultancy firm was interpreted in two ways. For the VVA and the NMU it made sense that the city of Utrecht would continue the policy for kilometre fees. With that the counter plan would still be an option to consider. For the authorized bodies it made sense not to use kilometre fees for the city and with that the counter plan was not considered an option.

The examples illustrated show that actors use information to shape the context. This is followed by action based on their sense making of this context. There are no criteria for sense made and it relies on the interpretation of the context on that moment.

How is influence performed within the negotiations?

Authorized bodies and stakeholders have showed, with their stories that they tried to influence the negotiations by determining the outcomes of the behaviours of others. A first form of influence is found in outside happenings beyond the control of actors. For instance, a new city council or a new government can change the frames of references which in turn change the influence relations and the negotiations for a collective action frame. This form of influence was illustrated with the developments around the new elected Executive Board of the city of Utrecht with a new Alderman for mobility. The change of parties changed the scope of the city council; the new city council considered green mobility as an important issue. For the city of Utrecht it became more important to involve issues of health and noise in the MER phase and to strengthen their position the city claimed they would not approve the MER 1st phase. The outside happening was further illustrated with the decision to take up the counter plan KvU in the MER phase by the House of Commons. The House of Commons demanded the authorized bodies to not ignore the counter plan. With this decision the authorized bodies were overruled and needed to consider the KvU.

A second form of influence is found in the ability to use networks. One example illustrated is the use of national and regional media by stakeholders to get support for their view. The great amount of attention for the Planstudie Ring Utrecht made more people aware of the developments within the planning study and showed the resistance of stakeholders to the larger public. Another example is that the VVA and NMU used their political network to get attention for the counter plan the KvU. Some politicians who supported their view arranged for the VVA and the NMU to present their counter plan to the House of Commons.

A third form of influence is found in the offering of resistance. The stakeholders that resisted the plans of Planstudie Ring Utrecht tried to influence the authorized bodies by expressing their feelings during one of the public hearings, but also with handing in public comments and getting attention from regional and national media.

A fourth form of influence is found in the expert information at hand. The calculations of the RWS, for instance, influenced the decision making on which alternatives would be taken up in the introductory memorandum as the authorized bodies knew that the RWS possessed the knowledge and skills to implement the process. Other expert information was provided by the consultancy firm who helped the authorized bodies to reorganize the data and to help construct and negotiate a collective action frame. The new information provided to the authorized bodies,

the westside being too expensive and not dissolvent, and the upgrading of the Waterlinieweg destroying a cultural legacy, changed the context of the planning study and influenced the negotiations leading to a collective action frame. Another example is the influence performed by the calculations of the BRU and the consultancy firm for the counter plan KvU. As the calculations showed the authorized bodies that the counter plan was too expensive. This influenced the decision to already lay aside the KvU in phase 1b.

A fifth form of influence leans towards a form of power and is found in the government regulations. The Ministry of V & W influenced the negotiations for the directives based on the new national policy on public health, even though the policy was not yet developed. The Ministry could use this form of influence or power as there were no regulations for the issue of health at that moment and the regional parties knew the issue of health would only be taken up based on the governmental rules.

All the illustrated examples of the different forms of influence changed the relative positions of the authorized bodies and it changed the negotiations for a collective action frame. This negotiation process was a struggle to decide which frames were more legitimated than others. This research has shown that no actor has overriding power to define the outcome in decision making. The involved actors may try to influence the outcomes of the behaviours and may try to change the frames of references.

How do negotiations change within the decision making process?

Authorized bodies needed to negotiate for a collective action frame leading to a decision making. Negotiations change within the decision making process by the use of framing, a sense making technique, and by the use of influence and are triggered by changing circumstances as was illustrated with this research. At the start of the planning study the authorized bodies negotiated that, based on the outcomes of the network analysis, with the introductory memorandum of the Planstudie Ring Utrecht all possible alternatives would be explored. Further, the State and regional parties negotiated that the emphasis would lay on road adjustments as roads were considered the bottle neck of the traffic jams. For each decision within the decision making process the negotiations could change. For instance, the negotiations between the authorized bodies first started to change when negotiating for a collective action frame leading to a decision on the directives for the MER 1st phase. For the city of Utrecht it was of importance that the issue of health would be taken up in the directives while the Ministries did not want that. To make sure the city of Utrecht would have more influence in the negotiations the senior official tried to frame the frame of reference of the Province of Utrecht by explaining the need to consider the objectives of the stakeholders and the m.e.r. committee. This new interpretation of the context changed the way the Province of Utrecht looked at the information at hand and how the senior

official framed the new situation. Now there were two parties that believed the issue of health needed to be taken into consideration and these regional parties were supported by the m.e.r. committee. This made it difficult for the Ministries to neglect the issue of health and the Ministry needed to give in.

An example of influence that can change the negotiations is to find in the situations as, for instance, when a new Executive Board was elected. Based on the objectives of this new Executive Board, namely green mobility, the city of Utrecht needed to make sure they would gain some ground in the public transport domain to assure support from their citizens. If the city does not have support from their supporters at this time, the city council might not approve the MER 1st phase. This made sense for the other authorized bodies; none of the bodies did want to reach stalemate during the decision making process. The negotiations changed. Together, the authorized bodies negotiated the new conditions of the city of Utrecht.

A negotiation is a discussion between two actors or more who are trying to reach an understanding about the discussed issue. Each actor will try to influence the negotiation process by trying to get support for their point of view. Actors use framing or influence to actively change negotiations.

How do administrators and stakeholders negotiate a common meaning of an infrastructural project leading to a decision making?

Authorized bodies and stakeholders tell stories about how they make sense of infrastructural projects within their own frames of references. The combined stories of the authorized bodies become a matter of negotiation in the process of collective action framing. With each story, the authorized body will try to call attention to events supporting their frame of reference. The determined collective action frame depends on the existing influence relations. These influence relations can constantly change, which in turn, can lead to renewed negotiations for a collective action frame. Each authorized body can perform influence in some way but this influence is not everlasting. This thesis has shown that influence depends on the occurrences happening outside of ones impact, the use of networks, the offering of resistance, the expert information at hand, and the government regulations; the occurrences can be used to influence the negotiation process. Stakeholders did not have a lot of influence during the first two years of the infrastructural project. Despite this, they took on each effort to make sure some form of influence affected the negotiations.

Although the authorized bodies agreed a solution was needed to diminish traffic in and around the city of Utrecht with measures of road adjustments and public transport, all senior officials had different frames of references. Following the interpretations of one of the program managers of VERDER, the RWS and the Ministry of I & M wanted a solid network of roads, the

city of Utrecht wanted a solid network while considering the issue of environment, and the Province of Utrecht wanted a flow through of traffic while considering the issues of space and quality. Though the authorized bodies had different frames of references they were able to negotiate a collective action frame that illustrated their shared meaning to explore all possible alternatives for the Planstudie Ring Utrecht. For the State and regional parties it made sense to have an extensive exploration phase as they believed it otherwise would always hang over the market.

One example of a change in negotiations was when the authorized bodies needed to negotiate to construct a collective action frame that would lead to a decision making for the directives of the MER 1st phase. The regional parties learned that most of the stakeholders wanted to diminish traffic with mostly measures of public transport and little measures of road construction. Other stakeholders had a somewhat similar vision as the authorized bodies and acknowledged the need for road measures. The resistance of the side from the stakeholders who were also considered their supporters changed the way the senior officials of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht made sense of the infrastructural project. For the regional partners it was important to take up the issue of health and the authorized bodies had a struggle to decide which frames were more legitimated than others. The regional parties used the strategy of involving their supporters and explaining their responsibility towards them. The State parties used the strategy of referring to the government policy on the issue of health. The Ministries agreed to take up health in the directives if they agreed that it would be according to the new government policy. This overture saw to it that the frames of references of the regional senior officials were framed by the State parties and the authorized bodies could negotiate a common meaning.

Another example is the negotiation for a common meaning of the infrastructural project leading to a decision on the preferred direction. For the State parties it made sense to leave the option open to construct on the westside of the city of Utrecht. The regional parties had another view and for them it made sense to cross out that option. Together the authorized bodies were not able to negotiate a common meaning. The consultancy firm that was hired to reorganize all the information reviewed the information to let the authorized bodies learn about their own actions. The Ministry of V & W was willing to cross out the westside if the authorized bodies agreed to make a reservation for possible future options on the westside. Again, the approach of one actor saw to it that the frames of references of the other actors were framed and the authorized bodies were able to negotiate a common meaning.

A final example is to find in the decision to agree on the MER 1st phase. Following the elections for a new Executive Board of the city of Utrecht the frame of reference of the senior official of the city changed. The city wanted a greater focus on public transportation and was supported by their supporters, the citizens of the city of Utrecht. The decision making process

could reach stalemate if the authorized bodies were not able to negotiate a common meaning. The Ministry of I & M and the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht started to negotiate the opportunity to construct a tram line through the city of Utrecht. In this way the Alderman of the city of Utrecht could give the citizens of the city a measure of green mobility. This development framed the frame of reference of the senior official. The authorized bodies were now able to negotiate a common meaning leading to a decision making on the MER 1st phase.

During the whole decision making processes the parties involved need to negotiate a common meaning to guide a decision making. This research has shown that the decision making process becomes more difficult when different actors need to negotiate for a common meaning of an infrastructural project. Especially in a situation where more actors have granted authority to make decisions and when these authorized bodies need to embrace a broader participation. In this way it became more difficult for administrators to hold on to their decisions made earlier as they now had to negotiate with more parties while retaining deadlines and time schedules of the infrastructural projects. Common meaning was negotiated by calling attention to events that supports the frame of references of the actors involved. Depending on the influence relations, whom as we see have constantly changed, a collective action frame was negotiated.

Limitations

This research is conducted during a specific period of time within a specific infrastructural project. The Planstudie Ring Utrecht is somewhat special as it was determined to authorize four parties to negotiate a decision making. Not only were the Ministries authorized, but also the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht. In other infrastructural projects it is more likely to find the cities and Provinces to be stakeholders instead of authorized bodies. This complicated the decision making process but it also made the decision making process more interesting to observe. Further, because of the complexity of the planning study it was decided to separate the MER study in two phases; MER 1st phase and MER 2nd phase. This research had its focus on the MER 1st phase. The outcomes of this research are specific for this case and can therefore not be easily generalized. One must keep in mind that the events happened during the Planstudie Ring Utrecht are unique. Each planning study will face different events, uncertainties, and difficulties with other actors and stakeholders involved. In general, the results of this research have provided the reader with an insight of the importance of negotiating a collective action framing leading to a decision making.

This research has its focus on both administrators and stakeholders. As we have learned the stakeholders sometimes did play an important role during the decision making process but up until the consultation meetings they were almost not involved. I had expected to find more of an interactive decision making process where the authorized bodies actively involved the stakeholders to investigate how different values and interests are incorporated in decisions. In

turn, I found stakeholders actively trying to get involvement in the decision making process by applying their networks to influence the decision making.

Suggestion for further research

Especially for the case Planstudie Ring Utrecht, it would be interesting if further research would be done during (or after) the MER 2nd phase. Considering the new developments of this planning study it is expected to have implications for the negotiations between the authorized bodies. With the decision for the preferred alternative the authorized bodies decided to cut the planning study in two. The city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht are responsible for and authorized to make decisions on the further planning of the NRU, while the Ministry of I & M is responsible for and authorized to make decisions on the further planning of the A27. It would be interesting to see what the differences and similarities are in negotiating the decision making processes to discover possible patterns. Next, it would be interesting to see how the context will change now the roles of the city of Utrecht and the Province of Utrecht have changed from being authorized bodies to being stakeholders in the further planning phase of the A27. These insights would provide valuable information about administrative negotiation in Dutch infrastructural projects. In particular when keeping in mind the trend of stakeholder involvement in decision making in which it is expected not to be without problems (Edelenbos and Klijn 2005).

For infrastructural projects in the Netherlands in general I recommend further research on the tension of standing behind a decision made on the one side and having the responsibility to someone's supporters on the other side. As this research has shown, the decision making within a planning study can change when the demands of the supporters change. Administrators are not only responsible for a decision making on the planning study but also for the demands and wishes of their supporters. We have seen that demands of supporters are granted by the authorized bodies which in turn changed the decision making arena. It would be interesting to see whether there are patterns to find and whether there are boundaries in granting demands to once supporters.

APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS INVOLVED IN PLANSTUDIE RING UTRECHT

Bewonersplatform Overvecht (working group transport)

A civic organization. The working group transport, part of Bewonersplatform Overvecht, acts as a sounding board for the city of Utrecht and puts forward suggestions for the improvement of the travelling environment¹⁹. Overvecht is directly located next to the NRU.

Bestuur Regio Utrecht

A collaboration of nine cities in the Utrecht region, namely the city of Bunnik, the city of De Bilt, the city of Houten, the city of IJsselstein, the city of Nieuwegein, Stichtse Vecht, the city of Utrecht, the city of Vianen and the city of Zeist. Together they advocate improvement of the accessibility and amenity of the region²⁰. BRU is the transit authority for the region Utrecht.

EVO

A special interest group who looks after the logistical interests of companies that transport commodities²¹. EVO has an interest in a good flow of traffic in the region Utrecht.

Laat Lunetten Niet Stikken (Bewoners Overleg Lunetten)

A civic organization. Laat Lunetten Niet Stikken is part of Bewoners Overleg Lunetten and aims at informing residents about new mobility developments in and around the district and urges residents to take a stand²². Lunetten is directly situated next to the A27.

Milieuwerkgroep Houten

An organization founded to protect the environment in and around the city of Houten²³. This organization is directly situated next to the nature reserve of Nieuw Wulven that is located next to the A27.

Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment

Former Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment and Ministry of Transport, Public Works, and Water Management. The Ministry is responsible for amenity and accessibility

¹⁹ <http://bewonersplatformovervecht.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

²⁰ <http://www.regioutrecht.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

²¹ <http://www.evo.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

²² <http://www.laatlunetten.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

²³ <http://www.milieuwerkgroephouten.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

over roads, railways, water and through the air²⁴. One of the authorized bodies and trustee of the trunk road system. Moreover, the Minister was one of the partners in the administrative partnership between State and region.

City of Utrecht

One of the authorized bodies and trustee of a part of the NRU, the part where the maximum speed limit is seventy kilometres per hour (the part of the road that runs next to Overvecht).

Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management

Trustee and developer of the Dutch road- and water system by order of the then Ministry of V & W and current Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment²⁵.

Natuur en Milieufederatie Utrecht

An organization that raises attention to the environment in the Province of Utrecht. In collaboration with Province of Utrecht, municipalities and the government they try to attract attention to durable mobility²⁶. Also a member of the panel of interest.

Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie

A foundation that protects the preservation of the former defence line, the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie, which is now one of the nature reserves in the Utrecht region²⁷. Several of their bastions lie next to the A27 and the NRU (Fort 't Hemeltje, Fort Rhijnauwen, Fort de Gagel).

Province of Utrecht

The province governs twenty-six municipalities and is one of the greenest provinces but also has the most crowded network of roads²⁸. One of the authorized bodies and trustee of part of the NRU, the part where the maximum speed limit is hundred kilometres per hour (part of the road that runs next between Utrecht and Maarsse, also called Zuilense Ring). Moreover, the Deputy of the Province of Utrecht was one of the partners in the administrative partnership between State and region.

²⁴ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ienm>, retrieved in May 2011

²⁵ <http://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

²⁶ <http://www.nmu.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

²⁷ <http://www.hollandsewaterlinie.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

²⁸ <http://www.provincie-utrecht.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

Staatsbosbeheer

An organization that represents the interests of nature reserves managed by Staatsbosbeheer²⁹. The Staatsbosbeheer nature reserves are located next to the A27 and the NRU.

Transport en Logistiek Nederland

An organization that looks after the interests of their members regarding freight traffic and logistical services³⁰. Transport en Logistiek Nederland has an interest in a good flow of traffic in the region Utrecht.

Twijnstra Gudde

A management consultancy firm that assisted the RWS with their environment management program. Moreover, they played a role in the process from preferred direction to preferred alternative.

VERDER

A collaboration of Ministry of Transport, Public Works, and Water Management, Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment, Bestuur Regio Utrecht, City of Amersfoort, City of Hilversum, City of Utrecht, Gewest Gooi- en Vechtstreek, Province of Utrecht, Amersfoort Region, Utrecht West Region, Utrecht Zuidoost Region, and Directorate General for Public Works and Water Management.

Vrienden van Amelisweerd

A sequel of the Werkgroep Amelisweerd that was founded in 1971 to protect the nature reserve of Amelisweerd and Rhijnauwen from the construction of the A27³¹. Now they involved again to protect the estates against broadening of the A27.

Wijkcommissie Zandweg-Oostwaard

A civic organization in the city of Maarssen who protects the interests of residents concerning developments of the NRU (the part of the Zuilense Ring)³². Maarssen is directly located next to the NRU.

²⁹ <http://www.staatsbosbeheer.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

³⁰ <http://www.tln.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

³¹ <http://www.vriendenvanamelisweerd.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

³² <http://www.zandweg-oostwaard.nl>, retrieved in May 2011

APPENDIX B: CHRONOLOGY OF PLANSTUDIE RING UTRECHT

September 2006	Network analysis of Utrecht region
November 13, 2006	Administrative agreement between Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management and regional partners Utrecht regarding Planstudie Ring Utrecht, Planstudie Knooppunt Hoevelaken and Planstudie A27 / A1
November 2006	Establishment of project bureau VERDER (a collaboration of Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management and regional partners)
February 25, 2007	Complementary agreement regarding dividing and covering the regional contribution
June 2007	Joint plan of approach covering the implementation of the administration agreement of November 13, 2006
October 2007	Agreement on regional engagements for Draaischijf Nederland, part of Randstad Urgent (signed by Camiel Eurlings, Minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management and Jan Ekkers, Deputy Mobility of Province of Utrecht)
December 2008	Introductory memorandum Ring Utrecht
Dec. 2008 – Jan. 2009	Opportunity for public comment about the Introductory Memorandum
March 2009	Recommendation of Committee m.e.r. for MER directives 1 st Phase
March 2009	Collapsing of Executive Board of Utrecht due to a dispute regarding the action plan for air quality
April 2009	Construction of new Executive Board of Utrecht
April 2009	Recapitulation of right and opportunity to have a say about the Introductory memorandum
May 2009	Directives MER 1 st Phase (agreed upon by the four authorized bodies)
June 2009	Note of response introductory memorandum (following the period of right and opportunity to have a say)
June 30, 2009	Motion of Vendrik regarding the investigation of Kracht van Utrecht as one of the possible alternatives (motion approved)
July 2009	Lie of the land regarding period of research and analyses (due to the long period in between determinations)
May – July 2009	Phase 1a MER (exploration of the alternatives)
July – November 2009	Phase 1b MER (further analyses and exploration of alternatives OV+++ and Kracht van Utrecht)
November 2009	BO-MIRT (agreement on preferred direction)

November 2009	Agreement on preferred direction in reference to MER Phase 1b (intermediate stage between Introductory Memorandum and alternative of preference)
December 2009	Final report OV+++ and Kracht van Utrecht
February 2010	Collapsing of Dutch government
March 2010	Letter of Minister of Transport, Public Works and Water Management to The House of Representatives of the States General explaining how the research of Kracht van Utrecht was handled with
Nov. 2009 – June 2010	Phase 1c MER (concluding of MER 1 st Phase without alternatives OV+++ and Kracht van Utrecht)
April 2010	Election of Executive Board of Utrecht (succeeding the local elections of March 2010)
June 2010	Election of the Dutch House of Commons
August 2010	Final report MER 1 st Phase Ring Utrecht
September 2010	Opportunity for consultation (gatherings organized by VERDER on September 13, 15, 20 and 21)
October 2010	Document of consultation
October 2010	Recommendation of Committee m.e.r. for MER 1 st Phase
November 2010	BO-MIRT (agreement on MIRT investigation regional public transport, no agreement on alternative of preference yet but this decision will be made December 6)
December 6, 2010	Agreement on alternative of preference plus agreement on streetcar rail (from Utrecht Central Station to Utrecht Uithof)
January 2011	Letter of Minister of Infrastructure and Environment (former Ministries of Transport, Public Works and Water Management and Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment) to The House of Representatives of the States General informing of agreement on alternative of preference and agreements made for 2 nd Phase
April 2011	Recommendation of Committee MER for complementary directives 2 nd Phase with scission of NRU and A27/A12 (also advising on and taking into account of consultation)

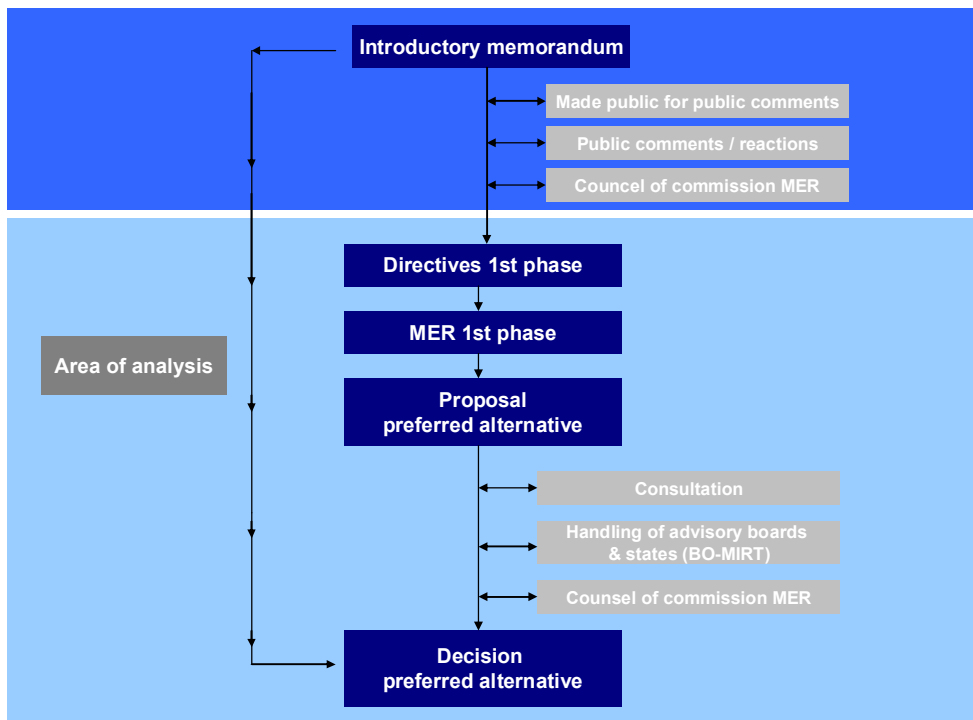


Diagram 4: Overview of the planning study process for the MER 1st phase

APPENDIX C: PARTNERSHIPS

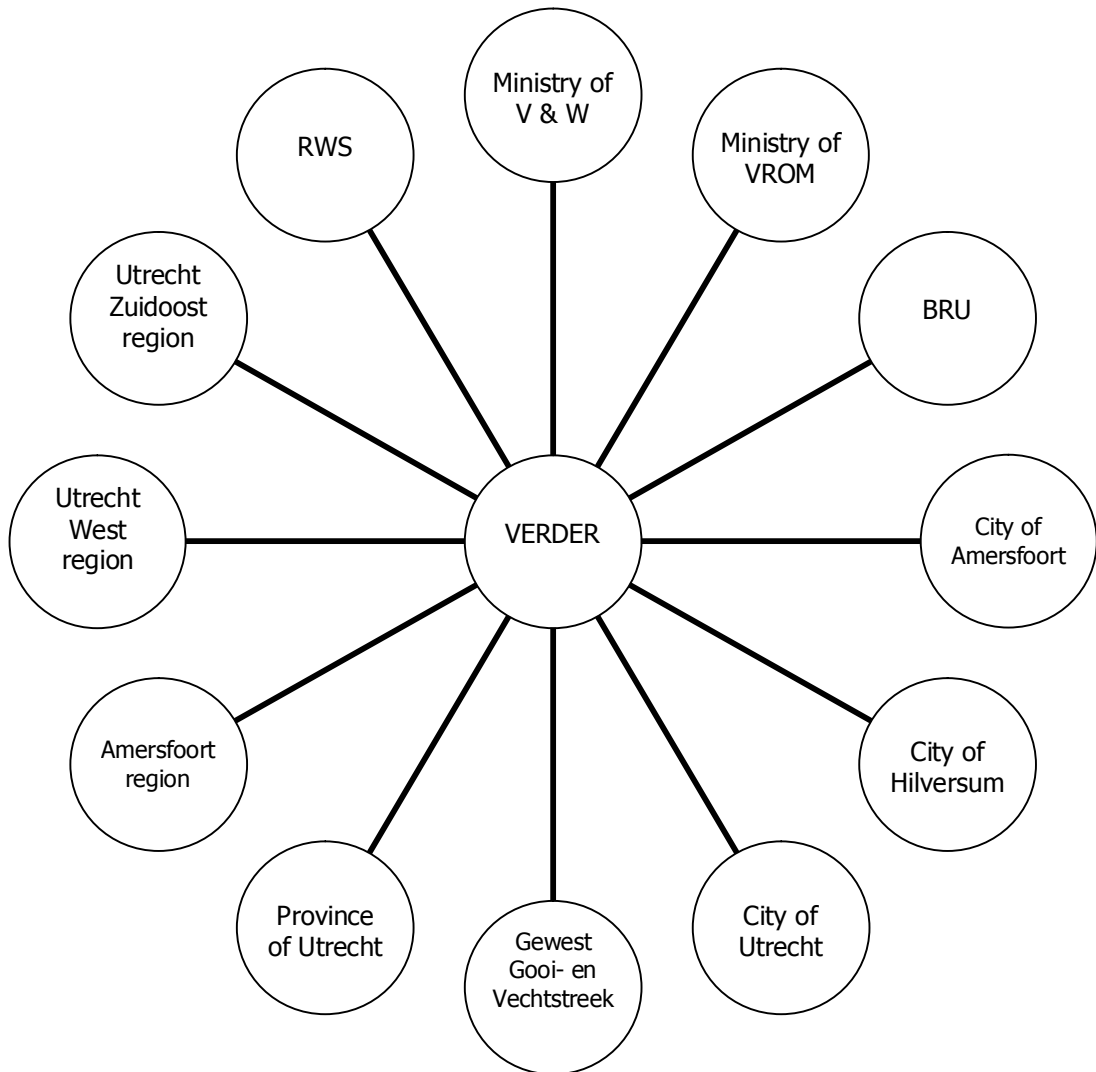


Chart 1: Diagram of the collaboration of VERDER responsible for the Planstudie Ring Utrecht, Planstudie Knooppunt Hoevelaken, Planstudie A27 / A1

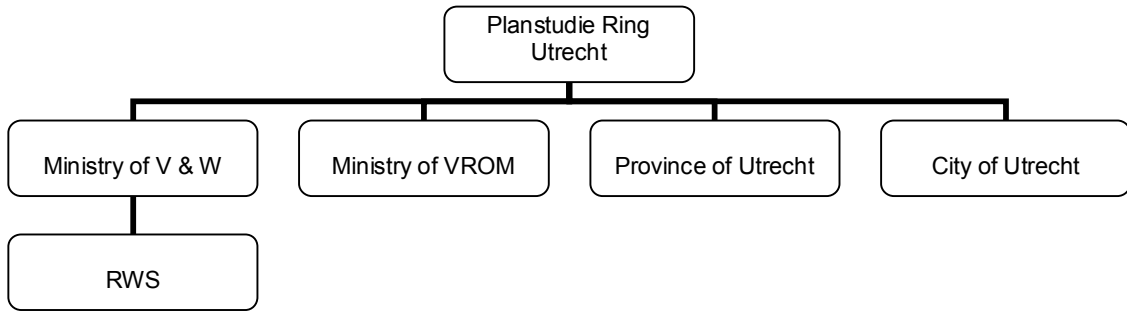


Diagram 2: Overview of authorized bodies for Planstudie Ring Utrecht with RWS as the executive agency of Ministry of V & W

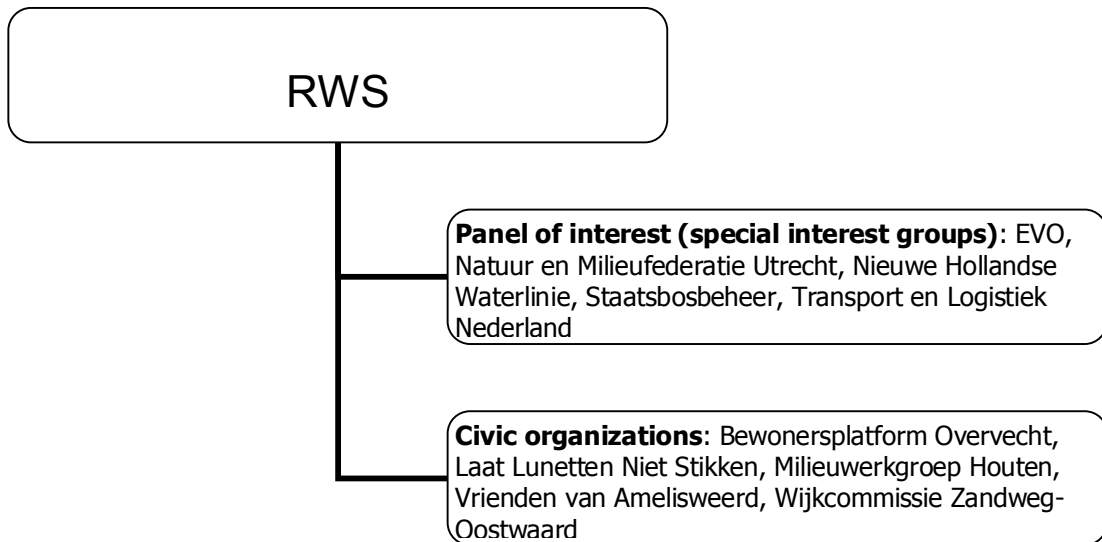


Diagram 3: Overview of special interest groups and civic organizations

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW TOPICS

Starting questions:

- What are the things you can recollect when thinking about the Planstudie Ring Utrecht?
- In which way were you involved in the planning study?
- Which key moments do you remember most?

Interview items / main events:

- Introductory memorandum
- Making public of the introductory memorandum for public comments
- Recommendation of the m.e.r. committee for the directives MER 1st phase
- Summary document of the public comments for the introductory memorandum
- Directives MER 1st phase
- BO-MIRT
- Preferred direction Ring Utrecht
- Final report OV+++ and Kracht van Utrecht
- Final report MER 1st phase
- Consultation meetings
- Consultation document
- Recommendation of the m.e.r. committee for the MER 1st phase
- Preferred alternative Ring Utrecht

Final questions:

- What can you remember most when looking back to the whole process?
- When you look back, would you describe the process as something good or as something problematic?
- When is a decision a decision? When is something decided?
- Would you like to add something to the interview? Are there items we did not discuss but are of importance?

APPENDIX E: OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEW QUOTES IN DUTCH

CHAPTER 2 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“De netwerkanalyse was uitgekomen en daaruit bleek heel duidelijk dat de knelpunten op HWG en OWG heel hoog waren. Er zaten zoveel knelpunten dat het duidelijk was dat je dit niet als een partij kon oplossen.”

CHAPTER 3 - THE PLANSTUDIE RING UTRECHT PROJECT

Vanuit de netwerkanalyse bleek dat er een groot knelpunt is op de Ring Utrecht, dus op de weg. Daar is het knelpunt, dus dat is het knelpunt wat je op moet lossen. Als je dit knelpunt met openbaar vervoer kan oplossen is dat op zich ook prima. Maar het gaat wel om het oplossen van het knelpunt.

De Minister had sowieso iets met Randstad Urgent en wilde dat op de kaart zetten. Alle regionale bestuurders wilden daar wel op mee liften.

RWS en het Ministerie van I & M wilden duidelijk een robuust netwerk. De gemeente Utrecht wilde naast een robuust netwerk ook dat het verkeer zou gaan doorstromen, dat er aandacht zou zijn voor het milieu en voor alternatieven. De Provincie Utrecht wilde dat het verkeer zou doorstromen, de economie positief zou blijven en dat er rekening gehouden zou worden met ruimte en kwaliteit.

Het programma bureau was nodig om ervoor te zorgen dat alle partijen dezelfde boodschap bleven houden. Dat was echt de toegevoegde waarde van ons programma bureau. Ik werd ingehuurd door de Provincie en mijn college werd ingehuurd door RWS. Op het moment dat er iets was, hadden we gelijk de juiste personen te pakken bij zowel Ministerie als Provincie. We hadden nul mandaat maar er werd zeker naar ons geluisterd.

CHAPTER 4 – ‘THANKS FOR THIS ST. NICOLAS’ GIFT’

Ik vond het schandalig dat je mensen zo de stuipen op het lijf jaagt om een variant waarvan ik als niet-verkeerskundige als kon zien dat het niet mogelijk was. En toen zei men, nee maar we willen de extremen onderzoeken. Ik vond het gewoon echt niet kunnen, ook niet als je extremen gaat onderzoeken.

Terwijl ik op vrijdag 24 september 1982 in de rechtbank zat voor het kort geding van de Vrienden van Amelisweerd tegen de plannen van Rijkswaterstaat, werd het bos gekapt. Wij vonden dat er procedureel nog een aantal zaken moesten worden afgewikkeld, maar er is gewoon doorgedaan met de kap zonder dat de uitspraak van het kort geding is afgewacht.

Wij hebben dat stukje strook groen helemaal vrij gehouden. Het was bedoeld als reserve voor als er ooit een verbinding moest komen tussen noord en zuid. Maar er ligt uiteindelijk een gasleiding onder, dus je mag er toch niet bouwen.

Met de eerste tekeningen van Leidsche Rijn zat die weg er al in. Het was niet voor niets dat die strook niet bebouwd was. Alleen, op een gegeven moment is die strook groen ingevuld. En mensen die er woonden hadden zoiets van ‘dit is een groen strook, dus dat is ideaal’. Maar in de originele plannen was dat een weg.

Die extremen in de Startnotitie. Ja, wie heeft dat bedacht en wat wilde men daarmee bereiken? Wilde men ermee bereiken dat er discussie kwam? We vermoedden dat ze iets uitgetprobeerd hebben. Als er veel reacties kwamen op de oost variant dan maar de west variant pakken en andersom.

Bestuurders hebben een communicatie-truc toegepast. Een weg door Rhijnauwen ten oosten van Amelisweerd hebben ze als alternatief naar voren gebracht om de zaak af te leiden van Amelisweerd. Om later te kunnen zeggen dat de weg niet door Amelisweerd zal worden aangelegd.

Ik geloof dat ze bewust van die gekke varianten erin hebben gezet die heel veel weerstand oproepen. Om vervolgens te concluderen dat toch de minst erge variant gekozen wordt. ... Wat mij betreft zijn het geen realistische alternatieven geweest en is dat onderdeel geweest van het strategische spel.

Het is moeilijk in de uitleg geweest dat we alles hebben onderzocht. We hebben het in varianten gestopt met het idee dat daar bouwstenen uit kwamen die voor iedereen acceptabel waren. Dat is in de praktijk lastig gebleken.

Dat was de insteek. Gewoon alles onderzoeken, dus zo'n weg niet uit de weg gaan. Met elkaar hebben we ambtelijk gediscussieerd dat we op deze manier het hele palet onderzoeken. Zo gaan we het ook uitleggen. We gaan de extremen bekijken en daarna gaan we de diepte in voor de varianten die overblijven.

Je loopt een risico als je heel snel denkt dat het een bepaalde kant op gaat. Als je dat doet en je bedenkt daar alternatieven voor dan zul je altijd horen, 'maar waarom heb je dit niet onderzocht en waarom heb je dat niet onderzocht'. Daarom hebben we heel breed gekeken.

Het was allemaal nog niet duidelijk in welke uitvoering deze wegen kwamen. De nieuwe weg door Amelisweerd lag gelijk heel gevoelig. ... Ja, en de nieuwe weg door Leidsche Rijn lag gevoelig. Heel gevoelig zelfs. Maar je kunt maar beter alles meenemen, zo hebben we het ook gecommuniceerd. Anders zou het altijd boven de markt blijven hangen.

CHAPTER 5 – IN ANSWER TO...

... Dan ga je door heel de decembermaand heen. Mensen zijn veel weg. Het is natuurlijk een enorm plan wat op de mensen afkomt. Zes weken is dan gewoon te weinig. Dus wij hebben gezegd dat we minimaal 8 weken de tijd wilden krijgen om schriftelijk te reageren. En dat hebben we gekregen.

Wij hadden in eerste instantie voorgesteld om de startnotie voor acht weken ter inzage te leggen. Tijdens het UVVB overleg is dat in eerste instantie terug gedraaid op voorstel van de gedeputeerde. RWS kon toen niet anders dan buigen, ook al wisten we dat de startnotitie tot veel commotie zou leiden en mensen graag wilden inspreken.

In Leidsche Rijn hadden we een openbare hoorzitting. Er kwamen 750 mensen op af. Teveel voor de capaciteit van het gebouw. Toen hebben we de avond in tweeën gesplitst. ... Nadat iemand had ingesproken werd er veel gejoeld en geapplaudisseerd. Mensen waren elkaar aan het opjutten. Het was een bedreigende sfeer.

Die avond in Leidsche Rijn dat wil je niet weten. Dat was gewoon bedreigend zelfs. ... De zaal zat vol met mensen. De ambtenaren die daar zaten die werden op het einde bedreigd door de bewoners. Niet met geweld, maar met

scheldkanonnades. ... Er was ook veel begrip, maar een fanatieke groep bewoners die begonnen de ambtenaren gewoon verbaal te bedreigen.

Voor een deel moeten we dankbaar zijn voor de extreme alternatieven die de Startnotitie presenteerde. Het was de perfecte manier om het publiek erbij te betrekken. ... Wij vonden het onze taak om ervoor te zorgen dat het heel bekend zou worden omdat het zo'n grote impact heeft voor de regio Utrecht. ... We zijn een petitie gestart tegen nieuwe wegen door het groen. ... Deze petitie haalde gelijk de landelijke media. Het werd gigantisch opgepakt.

Interviewer: Er kwamen bijna 3000 reacties op de Startnotitie. Hoe is daar de discussie intern over gegaan?

Programma manager van VERDER: Ja, dan weet je natuurlijk wat haalbaar is en wat niet. Waar krijg je veel tegenstand en weinig tegenstand op. Toen werd voor de regiopartners wel duidelijk dat de extremen eruit moesten.

We hebben het plan doorgezet met twee redenen. Ten eerste vonden wij dat als je je mond opendoet je ook met een alternatief moet komen. Je kunt niet alleen maar zeuren om het zeuren. Ten tweede vonden wij dat als je in extremen denkt je ook aan extreem geen snelwegen moet denken. Dus toen hebben we een extreem OV alternatief bedacht.

Wij kregen zowel bij de ambtenaren, bij de provincie als bij RWS geen reactie op het Kracht van Utrecht alternatief. We kregen geen reactie over wat goed of niet goed was aan het rapport. Toen zijn we andere kanalen middelen gaan gebruiken.

CHAPTER 6 – A BUMP ON THE ROAD

Er was op dat moment geen beleid over hoe we omgaan met gezondheid. Gezondheidseffecten zijn min of meer iets wat bovenop geluids-, lucht-, en veiligheidsaspecten komt. Deze aspecten onderzoeken we al. Het is gewoon een andere insteek. Er is geen regelgeving voor over wat acceptabel is en wat niet.

Wij wilden gezondheid wel meenemen in de richtlijnen, maar het Rijk wilde dat niet. Dus wij hebben dit voorgelegd aan de provincie. Na veel moeite wilde de provincie gezondheid opnemen. Hiermee werd het waarschijnlijker dat gezondheid werd meegenomen.

Over de richtlijnen moesten we het met de vier partijen overeen komen. Ja, daar hebben we wel een aantal discussies over gehad. Vooral op het gebied van gezondheid.

Er was geen beleidslijn over gezondheid, deze was in de maak. Dan kun je voor dit project wat opstellen over zo'n thema, maar dat wilden wij niet. Dus hebben wij in de richtlijnen met een algemene zin verwezen naar de uiteindelijke beleidslijn.

Het is niet echt een samenwerkingsverband met gelijke partners, dat merk je gewoon. ... Maar het is al meer dan je had, je moet ook je zegeningen tellen.

CHAPTER 7 – PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE OR PREFERRED DIRECTION?

Werknemer van EVO: De voorkeursrichting had het voorkeursalternatief moeten zijn. Omdat er veel wroeging was over draagvlak hebben ze die richting ertussen gestoken om het hele plan in de week te zetten. Om te zien wat de reacties zouden zijn.

Interviewer: Is dat ook zo verwoord, naar buiten gekomen?

Werknemer van EVO: Nee, maar zo heb ik het wel gezien. Je merkt dat al snel uit de warrige antwoorden die je krijgt dat dit de reden heeft. Dan zie je wat voor impact het communiceren van de nadelige kant heeft op politici. Het merendeel is voorstander van verbreding, maar die minderheid maakte zoveel herrie dat ze de stuipen op het lijf van politici jaagden. En die gaan dan hun electorale positie hier tegen aanzetten. Dan zeggen ze: we krijgen lokaal zoveel herrie, dan worden we niet herkozen. ... Maar het was wel zo dat vanwege het kabaal van zo'n klein groepje het hele besluitvormingsproces dus wel nogal shaky werd ineens.

In die zin zag men wel aankomen dat deze wethouder geen mandaat had om zich, in het zicht van de verkiezingen, volledig te committeren aan het besluit tot een voorkeursrichting. Zo ver reikt het mandaat niet. ... Maar de gemeente heeft zich wel gecommitteerd aan de Startnotitie. ... Toen is de figuur bedacht: we maken er geen voorkeursalternatief van, maar een voorkeursrichting. Daarmee wordt wel een paaltje geslagen, maar heeft het nog niet de formele status van een voorkeursalternatief.

Programma manager van VERDER: Wij zijn begin juli fel geweest tegen het ministerie om het voorstel wat zij op dat moment in de besluitvorming wilde doen. Wij zeiden dat is niet haalbaar, dat ga je er niet doorheen krijgen.

Interviewer: En dat was de keuze voor een weg door Leidsche Rijn?

Programma manager van VERDER: Ja, wij wisten dat ga je er niet doorheen krijgen. Dat hebben we best wel hard gespeeld eventjes.

Wij hebben toen gezegd, de 1^{ste} fase moeten we nog verder onderzoeken dus we nemen de KvU mee in de 1^{ste} fase. Wat inhoudelijk gezien helemaal logisch is. De 1^e fase wordt gebruikt voor het afwegen van alternatieven en het KvU was een extra alternatief. In de 2^{de} fase wil je, conform Elverding, eigenlijk met één alternatief verder.

Hoge ambtenaar RWS: We hadden echt een slag in de rondte gewerkt. Echt tot uitvalsverschijnselen aan toe zou ik haast bijna zeggen. Collega's liepen echt op hun tenen. En toen kwam er in juli geen besluit. Maar er zijn wel aanvullende wensen om meer informatie te krijgen en nog meer onderzoek te doen. En er was een hele krappe deadline aan gekoppeld, want het moest binnen vier of vijf maanden opgeleverd worden.

Interviewer: De deadline was voor het BO-MIRT?

Hoge ambtenaar RWS: Juist. En toen was ook echt gezegd, dat kunnen we de mensen, die er tot dan toe mee bezig zijn geweest, niet aandoen. ... Toen is een consultant organisatie ingehuurd.

Het is het meest idiote project geweest ooit in mijn carrière. In zo'n korte tijd voor elkaar krijgen waar het bevoegd gezag niet uit kwam, was lastig. ... Toen zijn we met een groot team aan de slag gegaan om de grote hoeveelheid informatie die er lag, te gaan herordenen. ... We zijn eerst verdwaald in de informatie. Wij liepen vast. ... Tot op een vrijdag, ik weet het nog goed, we bij elkaar zaten en toen zijn we het gaan omdraaien. We zijn het een ochtend lang gewoon uit elkaar gaan rafelen. Wat zijn nou de mogelijkheden? We kunnen aan de oostkant wat doen, we kunnen aan de westkant wat doen. Daarin moeten we gaan afwegen. ... Dat zijn we zijn het gaan visualiseren en zo hebben we de bestuurders meegenomen.

Er werd vrij snel zichtbaar dat de westkant hartstikke duur was en het verkeersoplossend vermogen beperkt was. Dus die moest gewoon doorgestreept worden. Ministerie van V & W had daar zijn eer ingelegd. Die dachten er verkeerskundig één mooie grote Ring van te maken. Dat is beeldend heel sterk. Maar toen zeiden wij dat het gewoon niet ondersteund werd door de analyses. ... Uiteindelijk is daaruit de deal uitgekomen dat in Leidsche Rijn nog enige reservering in de toekomst mogelijk was.

Iedereen weet dat als je de oostkant gaat verbreden en je hebt in de toekomst weer een probleem, je niet weer de oostkant kan verbreden. Als je het eenmaal doet dan is het daar gewoon vol. Dus wat nou als je in de toekomst weer wat nodig hebt? Dus wij wilden de westzijde, waar we nu niet voor kiezen, wel open houden voor de verre toekomst. Want nu is die ruimte er nog. Dus dat wilden wij in de afspraken.

Bij de oostkant was het complex met Amelisweerd. Alle bestuurders stopten hun energie in Amelisweerd. Dat het niet mogelijk zou zijn door de weerstand. Maar daarbij vergaten ze dat het andere alternatief niet te verkopen was omdat daar historische erfgoeden lagen, namelijk de forten van de Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie. ... Op het moment dat we het koppelden, werd opeens zichtbaar dat het niet mogelijk was. Die hele bak analyses geeft die informatie niet.

Een ander punt in de analyses waar we tegenaan liepen, was dat er ergens ooit gesteld was dat een verbreding van de bak van Amelisweerd niet kon. ... Toen riepen wij, waarom kan dat eigenlijk niet? En toen zijn we terug gegaan en toen bleek dat het simpelweg een snelle aanname ergens in een rapportage was die zichzelf had vermenigvuldigd. En toen is een team nog eens gaan kijken, kan het ja of nee. En toen werd het heel voorzichtig, ja het zou wel eens kunnen. Toen zei RWS: 'dit is een heel andere aanname. We dachten dit afgesloten te hebben omdat het niet mogelijk was.' Naar aanleiding daarvan hebben we een second opinion laten doen.

We wisten gewoon niet of er überhaupt een realistische uitkomst mogelijk zou zijn die verkeerskundig iets zou doen. ... En hij hing voor een belangrijk deel op de uitspraak die RWS op voorhand gedaan had dat de bak niet breder kon. ... Toen is op een gegeven moment naar voren gekomen dat die bak wel heel cruciaal was. Toen hebben we de weken ervoor een second opinion laten uitvoeren door RWS. Wat zijn nou de kosten, de risico's en de technische haalbaarheid als je het vlies toch loshaalt en het een stuk breder maakt.

Op een gegeven moment werd duidelijk dat je de extremen eraf moest halen en dat je moest verbreden binnen het bestaande. En toen ging natuurlijk iedereen bepaalde posities innemen. De gemeente dacht, als we kiezen voor het verbreden van het bestaande, wat betekent dat voor de besluitvorming van de stad. Dat betekent dat de NRU een ongelijkvloerse kruising krijgt, en er misschien wel 100 gereden mag worden worden. Maar er staan allemaal boerderijen aan. Hoe gaan we dat inpassen? En krijgen we dat door de raad? De provincie had hier nauwelijks moeite mee. Daar ontstond de discussie over een overkapping. Als we een overkapping maken over de bak van Amelisweerd dan kun je de stad weer een beetje naar het land toetrekken zoals het vroeger ook was.

CHAPTER 8 – THE EXPLORATION PHASE CONTINUES

De werkgroep is in de loop van augustus 2009 gestart, maar onder buitengewoon vreemde condities. Het plan van aanpak met de opdracht voor de werkgroep kregen we niet te pakken, het afwegingskader was onduidelijk evenals de manier waarmee de Kracht van Utrecht zou worden vergeleken. Die kregen we pas in het zicht bij presentaties van doorrekeningen. Wij hebben toen gezegd: 'wie hebben we nu kunnen spreken over de input van die doorrekeningen?' En toen was het ineens afgelopen. Geen rapport, niets. En toen dachten wij: als dit de manier is?

Een van onze ideeën waren uitbreidingen van het spoor van Almere-Utrecht-Breda. En al die miljarden die werden volledig toegerekend aan ons alternatief. En toen werd er gezegd, het kost 6 miljard, veel te duur. Ja, zo kun je natuurlijk alles kapot maken. ... Ja ik wil dan ook nog wel eens een keertje alle wegen nu en in de toekomst van Breda tot Almere meerekenen bij de Ring Utrecht. Dan kom ik ook aan 10 miljard. Zo ken ik er ook nog wel een paar. Bijvoorbeeld met de spitsheffing. We hadden uit goede bron vernomen waar de ambtenaren mee werkten voor de spitsheffing. Dat was 11

cent. Dus wij hebben in ons rapport gesteld 7 cent platte heffing en 11 cent spitsheffing. Dat is inderdaad 18 cent bij elkaar. Maar wat het Ministerie in het persbericht naar buiten bracht was gekleurde informatie. Er stond 18 cent kilometerheffing, als generiek bedrag. Maar het was 7 + 11 cent, dus 7 cent kilometerheffing. Als er dan gewoon ergens 18 cent staat, dan geloof ik niet dat dat per ongeluk is gebeurd. En het leek alsof wij die hoge 7+11 cent hadden verzonnen, maar dat was het ministerie zelf. Er zaten gewoon teveel van dat soort dingen in. ... Dan ben je gewoon niet aan het luisteren, dan ben je alleen maar kennis aan het nemen en aan het denken hoe je het kapot kan maken. Terwijl, de goede dingen die erin zaten daar wordt te weinig mee gedaan.

Wat men volgens mij niet heeft onderzocht zijn de combinaties tussen OV en weg. Dat de Kracht van Utrecht alleen niet haalbaar was dat had ik op voorhand wel kunnen vertellen, maar om de combinaties dan niet te onderzoeken? ... Ik denk echt dat de KvU te extreem is, maar ik denk ook dat de variant met alleen maar snelweg te extreem is. ... Ik vind het echt slecht dat ze die KvU zo vroeg van tafel hebben geveegd.

Ja, we hadden wel de hoop dat de KvU iets zou bereiken. Dus we hadden in onze reacties steeds gezegd: 'we steunen het initiaief'. We ondersteunden met z'n allen een groot verhaal. ... Nou dat verliezen we dus. ... We kunnen wel meepraten, maar invloed hebben we niet.

Bestuurders hebben in 2009 het Kracht van Utrecht rapport in fase 1b afgeserveerd, terwijl in fase 1c weer gekozen is om een eindoordeel over varianten te geven. Dus door het op te delen in stukjes, 1a, 1b en 1c, hebben ze het KvU af weten te serveren. Dat hebben ze bestuurlijk gewoon kunstig gedaan, mijn complimenten. ... Maar naar onze mening moet je in de MER 1^{ste} fase een beoordeling geven van alle beschikbare alternatieven en moet je ze niet voortijdig, in fase 1b, afschrijven.

Op het gebied van OV ambities staat het BRU achter de plannen van het KvU, dus daar zijn we ook mee aan de slag gegaan. Maar wij geloven er niet in dat de wegverbreding dan ook overbodig wordt. ... Je kunt allemaal verschillend aankijken tegen de haalbaarheid van dingen. ... Je kunt best een pakket bedenken van mobiliteitsmanagement en prijsbeleid. Dat moet toch haalbaar zijn? Dat is het dus niet. Je kunt wel degelijk een streng prijsbeleid voeren, daar krijg je de files wel mee weg. Maar dat is een politieke afweging. Ga je wel of ga je niet zo ver. Politiek Nederland gaat niet zo ver. ... Theoretisch kan het allemaal wel. Maar wij hebben de regering zelf gekozen en die beslissen uiteindelijk. En die hebben tot nu toe anders besloten.

Het BRU had een bijzondere rol. Via het KvU zijn zij het onderzoek ingerold. Ze waren geen bevoegd gezag, maar konden in beperkte mate meebeslissen.

Hoge ambtenaar Provincie Utrecht: Iedereen heeft een tegengesteld belang en er zitten veel belangen in.

Interviewer: De gemeente, de provincie en het Rijk?

Hoge ambtenaar Provincie Utrecht: Ja, en het BRU zit hier ook nog in hè?

Interviewer: Het BRU was toch geen bevoegd gezag?

Hoge ambtenaar Provincie Utrecht: Nee, maar de rol van het BRU vind ik nog altijd een beetje ingewikkeld.

De gemeente zoekt de Provincie op en we kijken of we op één lijn zitten. En als dat lukt dan zijn we met twee, of met drie met het BRU erbij, richting het Rijk. Dan kunnen ze niet zomaar over ons heen walsen.

Vlak voor het BO-MIRT was er aan de pers gelect, we weten niet door wie. Ik heb wel een vermoeden van wie of in ieder geval van welke kant. Precies al wat het voorkeursrichting was. Dus tijdens het overleg kregen mensen smsjes binnen dat het voorkeursrichting al op het journaal was geweest, terwijl het pas verder op de agenda stond.

Programma manager van VERDER: Er was een persbericht naar het ANP gegaan vanuit het Ministerie met de uitkomst van de voorkeursrichting, maar dan wel de foutieve uitkomst.

Interviewer: De foutieve?

Programma manager van VERDER: Nou ja, die niet de uitkomst kon zijn van het bestuurlijk overleg.

Interviewer: Dat was de uitkomst dat Leidsche Rijn er was afgefallen?

Programma manager van VERDER: Nee, dat was de uitkomst dat daar nog geen afstand van was gedaan. Maar dat was de discussie, daar zat nog een discussie in het BO-MIRT.

Interviewer: Is dat per ongeluk gegaan?

Programma manager van VERDER: Nee, dat is wel met bepaalde opzet gedaan denk ik. Ik weet wel wie het is en ik weet ook met welk doel, maar dat is nu niet van belang.

Hoge ambtenaar van RWS: Het overleg was nog gaande en toch was er al door de woordvoerder van het V & W al gelect. Maar daar werd ook een kaartje getoond waarop de doortrekking van Leidsche Rijn te zien was.

Interviewer: Dat was het verkeerde besluit toch?

Hoge ambtenaar van RWS: Maar de toelichtende tekst maakte wel duidelijk wat het echte besluit was. De tekst klopte wel.

Programma manager van VERDER: Het heeft de vergadering wel even onder druk gezet en het is ook een enorm overleg geworden. ... Uiteindelijk is het voorkeursalternatief gekomen met verbreding in die overkapping erin.

Interviewer: Wat is er uiteindelijk op tv uitgesproken? Heeft Eurlings aangegeven dat de verkeerde boodschap is uitgegeven?

Programma manager van VERDER: Nee, volgens mij heeft hij het niet gerectificeerd, maar heeft hij gewoon gezegd dat dit de uitkomst was van het bestuurlijk overleg.

Aan de ene kant heb je het idee dat je serieus wordt genomen. Wat kan je dan nog doen? Als je erover gaat zeuren wordt je gezien als een zeurende partij. ... Terwijl wij alleen de cijfers hebben gezien en daarmee was het afgelopen. Er zou geen rapportage komen, niets. We hebben ongelofelijk veel moeite moeten doen om te zorgen dat er toch een rapport kwam. Dit kwam uiteindelijk een maand later, maar wel na het bestuurlijke besluit, in november 2009.

Er werd gezegd dat de weg door Amelisweerd niet door ging. Terwijl in de besluitvorming was besloten dat Amelisweerd verbreed werd. Toen dacht ik: hoe is dit toch mogelijk? ... In november 2009 gingen de bestuurders akkoord dat de weg door Amelisweerd niet door gaat, terwijl er in het besluit staat dat de weg wordt verbreed voor 1,2 miljard euro. ... Dat is gewoon spelen met taal. De weg door Amelisweerd gaat niet door, iedereen blij, gefeliciteerd VVA...!

En wat er nu gebeurt, is dat de huidige bestuurders met het trauma van toen, met de bestuurlijke vergissing van Amelisweerd, eigenlijk zeggen: we willen dat goed maken. En daarmee hebben ze zich vastgelegd op een overkapping om Amelisweerd te verbinden met de stad. Een tunnel mag het niet worden anders moeten ze aan allerlei eisen voldoen. Maar wat verbind je nou? En welk hert gaat daar nou lopen? Wie gaat er nu op kamperen? Dat is heel erg zonde van het geld, want er is al niet veel geld. Als je het dan al doet, denk dan drie keer na.

Ik denk dat de overkapping bij Amelisweerd gewoon een cadeau was. Ik denk dat als men dat niet had gedaan de gemeente Utrecht de kont dwars had gelegd. Ik denk dat de protesten wel een rol hebben gespeeld bij de overkapping

van Amelisweerd. Ik bedoel: waarom een overkapping bij Amelisweerd en niet bij Overvecht of Maarssen? Waarom zou je überhaupt een overkappen? Het is gewoon een mitigerende maatregel zoals dat formeel heet. En dat is de enige mitigerende maatregel die in het hele MER staat. Voor de rest worden dat soort maatregelen altijd later uitgewerkt. Volgens mij wordt die nu al cadeau gedaan om de protesten in de kiem te smoren. ... Dat was niet uit liefde, maar uit angst. Als we dit niet doen, dan krijgen we het besluit er niet door bij de gemeente of dan gaat iedereen zich vast ketenen in de bomen.

Ja, dat is onderhandeling. Dat is hetzelfde punt met de overkapping. Waarom zit hier een bovenwettelijke inpassing van een overkluizing van de A27? Terwijl je nog niet eens een MER gedaan hebt, je weet niet eens wat het doet. Dat is om het acceptabel te maken voor alle partijen, maar ook gewoon voor de maatschappelijke discussie. We gaan het niet alleen maar beter maken voor de automobilist, maar ook voor de mensen die er wonen.

CHAPTER 9 – JUST ONE YEAR LEFT

De Provincie steunde de gemeente maar had er verder niet echt inhoudelijke mening over. De gemeente wilde meer details in het MER. Extra onderzoek op het gebied van geluid, meer verkeerscijfers en kwantitatieve gegevens over gezondheid. De discussies die we een jaar eerder hadden gehad, kwamen weer terug.

Het consultatie moment. Dat hebben we echt moeten bevechten dat dat werd meegenomen naar de adviescommissie. ... We hebben zelf de adviescommissie gebeld en gevraagd wat er aan de hand was. Wij hoorden van de omgevingsmanager dat wij wel gehoord worden, maar dat het vervolgens in een schoenendoos wordt gestopt. ... We maken een uittreksel van een paar regels, maar het heeft verder geen wettelijke status. ... We hebben ook een brief gestuurd aan het bevoegd gezag van: wat is dit nou? We horen dat het achter slot en grendel gaat bij wijze van spreken en we willen gewoon volwaardig gehoord worden in dat consultatie document en we willen ook horen wat er mee gedaan wordt. ... Uiteindelijk is dat gelukt.

Wij kregen er op een moment lucht van dat het niet mogelijk was om schriftelijk een reactie te geven op de voorkeursrichting. Dat koppelden we terug aan de andere bewonersorganisaties en de belangenorganisaties en toen hebben we op hoge poten een brief gestuurd die helemaal naar het Ministerie is gegaan. Dat vond programmabureau VERDER niet zo leuk. Die zeiden: maar we dachten dat we een goede relatie hadden? Ja, maar op dat moment leek het zo geregeld te worden en leek het erop dat schriftelijk reageren niet mogelijk was. Dat is in tweede instantie pas toegezegd.

We dachten bij de bewonersavond dat we dat niet alleen door VERDER moesten laten doen. ... Wij hadden de indruk dat ze op de consultatie bijeenkomst niet zouden noteren wat er precies gezegd werd, maar er een interpretatie op zouden maken. Wij spreken liever in met een begeleidende tekst.

Na de zomer kwam er discussie met de gemeente Utrecht. De wethouder kreeg van zijn gemeenteraad mee dat het Kracht van Utrecht toch moest worden meegenomen in de MER 2^{de} fase. En wij vonden van niet, want dit alternatief was al onderzocht. Dan wordt het een onderhandeling waarin iedereen een aantal punten moet inleveren en een aantal punten krijgt. Als er vier bevoegd gezagen zijn, kan niet iedereen alles krijgen.

Hoge ambtenaar van BRU: Toen GroenLinks aan de macht was gekomen hebben we sterk geprobeerd om een verbinding te maken tussen die besluiten over de weg en de investeringen in het OV. Kort gezegd: we willen best meewerken met het asfalt als er ook een OV investering komt.

Interviewer: Kon dat worden ingezet omdat er een GroenLinks gemeenteraad was?

Hoge ambtenaar van BRU: Zo bewust hebben we dat niet eens gedaan, maar ja. ... Er ging toen in Den Haag ook iets boven de markt hangen: o jee, GroenLinks is aan de macht in Utrecht, die gaan natuurlijk onze plannen dwarsbomen. Dus er ontstond een soort van duw en trek spelletje: hoe ver kan ik jou een bepaalde kant op krijgen?

Ik wil daar niet te precies over zijn. Maar je moet je voorstellen dat er ambtenaren zijn die met elkaar praten. Er zijn politici die met elkaar praten. En er zijn hoge ambtenaren die met elkaar praten. En op een gegeven moment krijg je een telefoontje vanuit de ambtelijke werkvloer. Misschien is er nog wel een potje daar en daar. Ongeveer zo en zoveel. Als jullie nou die en die vraag willen stellen, dan zouden wij misschien wel dat en dat antwoord kunnen geven. Dat type onderhandelingen.

De oorspronkelijke signalen uit de regio gingen om een tekort van 50 a 70 miljoen. We hebben gepolst of er bij ons nog geld was. Maar de regio kwam ineens met een bedrag van ongeveer 250 miljoen.

De gemeente en het BRU zijn twee handen op één buik. Dat is anders dan met het Rijk en de Provincie. De Provincie vond het moeilijk om achter het idee van de tram van de gemeente te gaan staan. ... Het is wel van groot belang om het als Utrechtse partners eens te zijn over het besluit. Wie betaalt nu wat? Dus wij hebben de Provincie uitgelegd wat het nut van het tracé was. Bovendien wisten wij ook al dat daarvoor geld zou komen van het Rijk en dat wist de Provincie nog niet.

Dan gaan er op een gegeven moment allemaal contacten lopen. De gedeputeerde heeft gebeld met de minister, de burgemeester heeft met de minister gesproken en die hebben dat en dat afgesproken. ... Toen kwamen we uiteindelijk op 100 miljoen. ... Dit alles op voorwaarde dat het MKBA positief is.

Wij proberen de snelheid voor de NRU naar beneden te krijgen, nu is daar ingezet op 100 kilometer per uur. We weten dat de gemeente Utrecht dat wel ondersteunt, daar zit een GroenLinks wethouder, maar die moet mee met het landelijke verhaal, met het covenant. Omdat daar ook het geld zat voor de tramverbinding naar de Uithof. De 100 miljoen extra kan de gemeente zelf nooit betalen. Dus dat is de deal geweest. Hij gaat mee met die tram en probeert dan later nog wat. Ja, dat is een slim spel. Ik geef toe dat het een lastige positie is voor GroenLinks. Die wil ook regeren en mee besturen. Maar hoe pakt dat uit op termijn?

Het bestemmingsplan was gerealiseerd en dus gaan we het ook niet meer terug draaien. Wij dachten eerst dat zij vasthielden aan Leidsche Rijn om een onderhandelingspositie te hebben. ... Maar toen ze vroegen of wij ons bestemmingsplan wilden wijzigen werd het toch heel serieus. Het was dus niet alleen maar een strategie, de minister wilde het gewoon.

Maar wat ik bijvoorbeeld ook zie, in het MIRT overleg, dan zit daar de Minister als eerste keer bij zo'n MIRT overleg in december, en die wordt gewoon gedirigeerd door de ambtenaren die er al jaren zitten. Je ziet het gewoon voor je ogen gebeuren. En dat de minister zegt: ik weet niet van de hoed en de rand, want ik ben er nog maar net en ik heb 140 projecten. Dat is ook zo, maar dan zie je gelijk waar het echt werk zit. Bij die ambtenaren en die zijn niet benaderbaar.

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SUMMARY

Practitioners and politicians have claimed and acknowledged that decision making processes in infrastructural projects are inert. The lengthy procedures lead to economical and environmental lack of quality. The committee Elverding analyzed the causes of these overextended decision making processes and concluded that there are often too many administrators involved which make it difficult to come to collective decision making. And even when decisions are made they are often turned back. This leads to unnecessary delay of the overall planning and to cost overruns. The administrative crowdedness assumed to be present, when more actors are involved, will lead to an increase of different understandings of the infrastructural project and will complicate the negotiations leading to a joint decision making. In this view, the unnecessary delay of the overall planning and the cost overruns is not due to lack of specific procedures but is because of the difficulties emerging when actors negotiate for a common meaning of an infrastructural project. It is assumed that all actors have different understanding of the infrastructural project and that the actors need to negotiate a common meaning leading to a decision making. This research therefore focused on the negotiated administrative decision making arena.

Based on three months of interpretative research on the case Planstudie Ring Utrecht valuable insights were put forward to answer the research question *How do administrators and stakeholders negotiate a common meaning of an infrastructural project leading to a decision making?* Authorized bodies and stakeholders tell stories about how they make sense of infrastructural projects within their own frames of references. The combined stories of the authorized bodies become a matter of negotiation in the process of collective action framing. With each story, the authorized body will try to call attention to events supporting their frame of reference. The determined collective action frame depends on the existing influence relations. These influence relations can constantly change, which in turn, can lead to renewed negotiations for a collective action frame. Each authorized body can perform influence in some way but this influence is not everlasting. This thesis has shown that influence depends on the occurrences happening outside of ones impact, the use of networks, the offering of resistance, the expert information at hand, and the government regulations; the occurrences can be used to influence the negotiation process. Depending on the influence relations, whom as we see have constantly changed, a collective action frame was negotiated by calling attention to and frame events that supports the frame of references of the actors involved.