

Staatsbosbeheer's experiences with demand-driven working

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Staatsbosbeheer, the Dutch State Forestry Service, was established in 1899 when the nation needed an organisation to plant trees in order to stop walking sand dunes from covering villages. Nowadays, it is more correct to describe Staatsbosbeheer as a 'public body guarding the natural heritage of the Netherlands'. The agency manages over 250,000 hectares of protected areas, including national parks, which amount to around 7% of the total surface area of this small, crowded country. Staatsbosbeheer has a tendency to try and please everyone, everywhere. For example, it tries to provide every facility in every area, from paths to equestrian trails, from picnic benches to information panels. This results in some places becoming overcrowded and a bland uniformity developing. In the meantime, a different method has been adopted based on the question: what do urbanites, tourists or recreationists want? This question is subsequently matched to the site qualities present or yet to be developed.

Three years ago, Staatsbosbeheer switched from provision to demand-driven methods. The organisation intends to be a host to everyone and visitors are welcome almost everywhere. 92% of our sites are open to the public. Because there is no such thing as the person seeking recreation, a target group subdivision was sought which provided sufficient differentiation: the motive group approach as developed by WUR-Alterra (Goossen & de Boer, 2008). On the basis of these motive groups, Staatsbosbeheer can state that it does not cater solely to nature lovers, but for example, also to fun seekers and mountain bikers (Staatsbosbeheer 2007), and you can't do that all in the same place. Demand-driven working provides us with tools for selection and enables us to provide more quality to the target group selected. This simultaneously leads to a more diverse range of products and services.

In recent years, Staatsbosbeheer has sought for an approach that would flesh out demand-driven working. Cooperation is central to this. The organisation cannot retreat to its own sites; we also look at what others provide. In order to get a grip on the recreational performance of a site, we have opted to carry out recreational site analyses on the basis of the 5 following characteristics (availability, accessibility, suitability, familiarity and involvement). For the suitability aspect in particular, we have differentiated various motive groups. Experiences so far have revealed that the motive groups can be easily translated into various site structuring wishes which reinforce the desired recreational experience. Moreover, the motive groups are easy to understand. Everyone – from administrators to entrepreneurs – can recognise themselves.

Trials with these recreational site analyses were held in a number of areas, for example in Schouwen-Duiveland (Leisure Result 2007). A number of steps were taken in order to arrive at a substantiated, regional vision:

Market analysis:

- Desk research;
- Inhabitant analysis by means of telephone questionnaires.

Policy analysis:

- Policy study;
- Input from stakeholders through face-to-face and telephone interviews.

Collecting this information provides insight into which opportunities and bottlenecks have to be taken into account. Personally involving stakeholders early on (by means of a meeting) creates

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commitment which can, in the future, lead to good cooperation. This allows a properly substantiated development course to be set out which is promising and has regional support. Ultimately, the recreational site analyses lead to new structuring plans which include proposals per sub-area, for improving the way in which certain motive groups are served. All the cooperating parties contribute to the implementation.

The motive group approach also proves to work well internally. People share the same framework of reference and this makes it easier to talk to each other about the desired structuring of a site. This approach is particularly successful for the briefing of landscape architects. In order to concretise the various experiential atmospheres and the accompanying facilities, a digital image bank was used which contains reference images, good and bad practices, and examples of plans for sites. The motive groups have since been incorporated into the operational control system. The priority motive groups have been included in the 9 types of recreational management that we distinguish and have subsequently been translated into a particular level of facilities. The standard costs have been calculated per recreational management type. Every area demands a specific approach which suits it and the problems it faces. The search is therefore far from over, but the newly developed system and working with motive groups helps to further concretise demand-driven working.

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