

The need for streamlining EA in The Netherlands



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Outline

- Introduction
- Development of EA in the Netherlands
- Example of energy transition and EA
- Conclusions



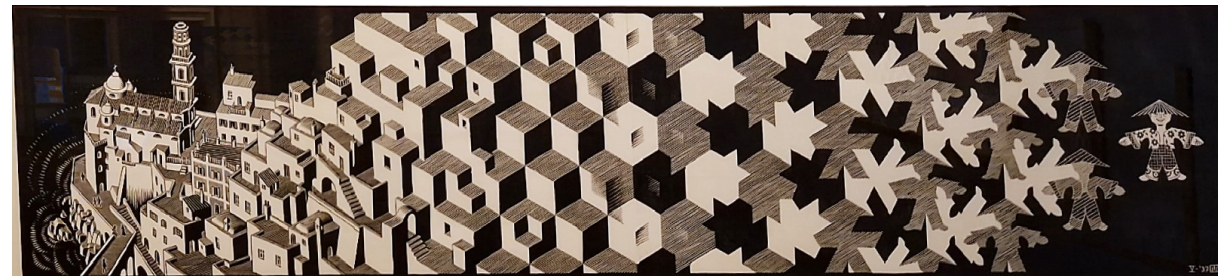
Introduction

Need for spatial planning in The Netherlands

Topics: energy transition, climate change, decreasing biodiversity, need for houses and infrastructure

Issues:

- High pressure on land use, conflicts of interest
- Environmental pressure: nature, air, noise, water, soil





Development of EA in The Netherlands

35 years of EA (in The Netherlands) for infrastructure projects:

- Dutch regulation in 1987
- Implementation of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in 2006
- "Faster & Better" (2008)
- Modernisation of EIA (2010)
- "temporary" Crisis and Recovery Act (Chw, 2010)
- Environment & Planning Act (2024)





Saveguards for EA at the start

- Explicit
- Formally regulated scoping
- Alternative Most Favourable to the Environment (AMFE)
- Public consultation (twice)
- Independent review (twice)
- EIA at strategic level for plans and programmes
- EIA-system regularly evaluated



Environment & Planning Act (2024)

- New Act announced in 2010
- Purpose: simplify and merge the rules for spatial development and environmental protection
- Combines 40 acts
- Similar as Crisis and recovery Act (Chw), but with broader scope and field of application
- Reduction of safeguards
- Complicated and long implementation process -> 1-1-2024

Changes relevant for EA:

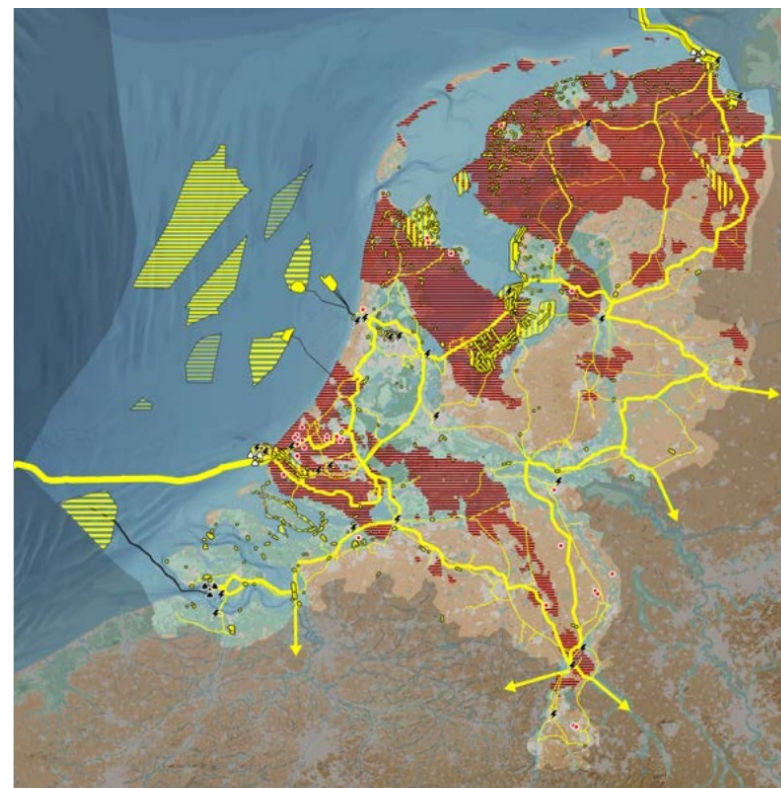
- Open screening process
- Release of some safeguards:
 - No distinction between simple, complex or Chw projects → all treated as simple projects
 - Involvement of EA-Commission (NCEA) is mandatory for SEA, but optional for projects
 - No notification of intent needed



Example of energy transition and EA

Focus on projects for the energy transition:

- High voltage cables for connecting wind farms at sea with hubs on land
- Interconnections between neighbouring countries (electricity)
- Pipelines for hydrogen, CO₂, etc.
- High voltage power lines on land
- Wind farms on land and at sea



National Interest 11: Achieving a reliable, affordable and safe power supply, that is CO₂-neutral by 2050, and the accompanying main infrastructure



Strategic plans, Programs and Projects

Strategic plan: "National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment" (2020)

➡ This vision has been accessed for its environmental impact with a SEA.



Program: "National policy program for spatial planning of national energy infrastructure"



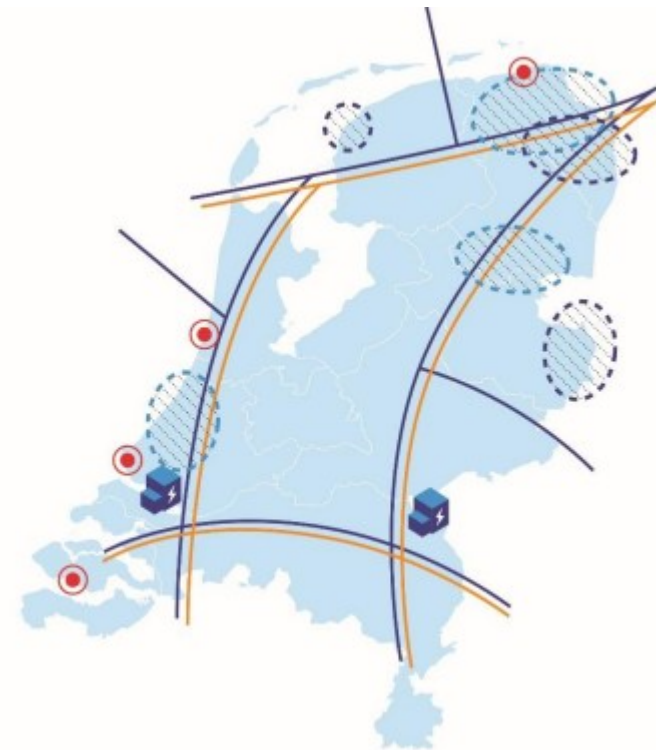
Specific programs for hydrogen and electricity transport will be developed.

➡ The programs will be accessed as well (SEA).



Projects

➡ The projects will be accessed for its environmental impact (EIA)



electricity cables, power lines, connections with wind farms at sea, wind farms on land, hydrogen pipelines and energy hubs



EA for energy projects

- We often prepare a combined SEA and EIA
- The SEA helps to find the best alternative from environmental perspective
- However that might not always be the preferred alternative
- For the decision making process EA is part of an **Integrated Impact Analysis**

Integrated Impact Analysis:

- Environmental impact
- Human aspects (stakeholder involvement)
- Technical feasibility
- Financial feasibility



Conclusions

- There is still a great need to speed up procedures, due to political pressure
- Many studies show that streamlining and simplification is not working (enough)
- Despite this there is frequently political pressure to implement these modifications
- On the other hand, decision makers (competent authorities) often have difficulty making decisions because they want to exclude all risks
- High dynamics of environmental regulations are also a threat to EA effectiveness itself
- EA has become a part of life in decision-making and is important for appraising environmental aspects
- However, EA is only a part of the decision-making process



Streamlining and simplification will always be an issue!

Let's continue the conversation!

Post questions and comments in the IAIA23 app.

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