

# Public support of private-public co-operation to realise forest area enlargement in Flanders

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## ABSTRACT

There is an urging political and societal demand for forest conservation and afforestation in Flanders (northern part of Belgium). The need for forest area enlargement is confirmed in many policy plans. The policy goal is an enlargement of 10,000 ha between 1994 and 2007. In spite of many policy instruments the forest area has declined with 3700 ha during the period 1994-2000 and between 2000 and 2005 there was only a small increase of yearly 79 ha. The failure of the policy program could be partly explained by the following implementation gaps: (1) the official communication is too specialized, (2) there are inconsistencies with other legislation, (3) the financial support is too low to convince farmers and other private landowners and (4) policy makers did not gather relevant information on the main agents.

This study investigated the public support on the political, official and public society level of legislation adaptations and new policy instruments to accelerate the forest area enlargement in Flanders. In depth interviews were held with 28 key persons. All of the interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and analysed using Nvivo.

Instruments with a high support level and a high chance to accelerate the forest area enlargement are the Forest fund (without additional company support), the Expert support (especially by the forest groups) and the Rural estates (with a control possibility). Long lease is an instrument with a high support level, but the interviewees believe that its contribution to forest area enlargement will be small. For the instrument Red for green no conformity exists between the interviewees.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Political and societal demand for forest conservation and afforestation are coersive, especially in densely populated and sparsely afforested regions, such as Flanders (North Belgium), Randstad (the Netherlands), Copenhagen (Denmark) and Paris (France) (Konijnendijk 1999). For 66% of the Flemish cities with more than 30,000 inhabitants the accessible forest area is less than 1 ha/100 inhabitants. The need for forest area enlargement is confirmed in many policy plans (e.g. Long-term plan Forest<sup>1</sup>, Spatial Structure Plan Flanders<sup>2</sup>). The policy goal is a forest area enlargement of 10,000 ha between 1994 and 2007. It is impossible to satisfy this need by using only public land. Since European (Zanatta et al. 2000) as well as Northern American (Sampson et al. 2000) private owners control more than half of the forests as well as most of the agriculture land, the extension of forests depends strongly on co-operation of private forest owners and farmers. Thus the agents for realising this forest enlargement target are the Flemish Forest Service, local administrations and private landowners (including farmers). To encourage landowners to adopt the government policy of forest area enlargement, policy makers have used a wide range of regulatory, economic and informational instruments (Vedung 1998). The policy instruments used in Flanders are grants and income compensation as financial instrument and restrictions for deforestation as regulative instrument. In spite of implementation of these instruments the forest area has declined with 3700 ha during the period 1994-2000. Between 2000 and 2005 the forest area increased yearly with only 79

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ha. With this speed the policy goal of 10,000 ha forest area enlargement between 1994 and 2007 won't be reached. To support this effective forest area enlargement the Flemish government will designate<sup>3</sup> also 10,000 ha of land as forest (planning support).

The aims of this study were to investigate (1) the reasons for failure of the forest area enlargement funding programs and (2) the public support on the political, official and public society level of legislation adaptations and new policy instruments to accelerate the forest area enlargement in Flanders.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1. Document analysis

To get insight in the forest area enlargement problems in Flanders a solid document analysis was crucial, including:

1. the PhDs of Bogaert (2004) and Van Herzele (2005),
2. policy plans: Long-term plan Forest, Action plan Forest, Spatial Structure Plan Flanders, Environment Policy Plans 1997-2002 and 2003-2007,
3. legislation: Forest, Nature and Landscape decree (including implementation orders), Field code and Tenure law,
4. policy documents and letters of the Flemish ministers responsible for forest policy,
5. Forest declaration of the Flemish higher forest council (VHB),
6. evaluations of forest area enlargements by Dumortier et al. (2003), Van Gossum (2005) and Dumortier et al. (2005),
7. documents of the forest area enlargement team of the Flemish forest service,
8. documents of the ad hoc work group forest area enlargement of the VHB,
9. documents of the cluster natural entity of the co-operation agreements between the Flemish and local governments and
10. EG regulations 2080/92 and 1257/99.

Additional in depth interviews were done with two experts (other than in §2.3), one on the evolution of the forest policy and one on the forest enlargement strategy of the Flemish forest service,

and with a project co-ordinator of a private-public co-operation (see §3.2) between a waste company and an environmental NGO to realise a forest area enlargement.

### 2.2. Juridical analysis

Firstly a definition of public-private co-operation (ppc) in the field of forest area enlargement was developed in co-operation with some experts. In a next step we investigated the different ppc-instruments in Europe on their potency for forest area enlargement. Based on expert input, the 5 most important instruments were selected and for each of these instruments the objectives, the essential juridical adjustments of existing decrees or laws and the impeding and success factors were investigated.

### 2.3. In depth interviews

In depth interviews are characterized by a direct face-to-face contact between the interviewer and the interviewee, a long duration, a limited structure (topic list) and profundity. Because of the intensity and the duration of this type of interview only a small number of interviews are possible. Twentyeight key persons were selected. For all the political parties in Flanders (see Table 1), the key persons were either responsible for environmental topics inside the party or were member of the environmental commission of the Flemish Parliament. The Cabinet of Environment was questioned as well. Officials of the Flemish administration and the civil society (see Table 1) were selected on their relation with forest area enlargement. In addition, four experts were selected (see Table 1).

The following topics were addressed during the interviews: forest area enlargement in general, juridical adjustments of the Tenure law and the Field code and the six selected ppc-instruments. All the interviews were tape recorded, transcribed (about 270 pages in total), and analysed using NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). To facilitate the coding of the transcript a tree node structure was developed.

Table 1 The interviewed political persons (cat. 1), administrations (cat. 2), organizations of the civil society (cat. 3) and experts (cat.4)

Acronym	Name of organization or party or knowledge field	Translation	Cat.
ANB	Hoofdbestuur agentschap natuur en bos	Board of the agency nature and forest	2
ARP	Afdeling Ruimtelijke Planning	Administration spatial planning	2
BB	Boerenbond	Farmers union	3
BL	Bebossing van landbouwgronden (2 pers)	Team for afforestation of agricultural land	2
BUT	Bosuitbreidingsteam (2 pers)	Forest area enlargement team	2
CD&V	Christen Democratisch & Vlaams	Christian Democrat party	1
CE	Kabinet van Leefmilieu	Cabinet of environment	1
EFN	Inverde	Educative forest and nature centre <sup>4</sup>	3
Exf		Expert forest area enlargement	4
Exl		Expert legislation	4
Exps		Expert public support	4
Exsp		Expert spatial planning	4
FG	Bosgroepen (3 pers)	Forest groups <sup>5</sup>	3
Groen!	Groene partij	Green party	1
LV	Landelijk Vlaanderen	Forest owners' association	3
MINA	Milieu en Natuurraad Vlaanderen	Nature and Environment Council	3
NARA	Natuurrapport team van het Instituut van Natuur- en Bosonderzoek	Nature evaluation team of the Nature and Forest institute	2
NP	Natuurpunt	Nature organization (the biggest in Flanders)	3
NVA	Nationale Vlaamse Alliantie	National Flemish party	1
sp.a	Sociaal progressief alternatief	Socialist party	1
VB	Vlaams Belang	Ultra-right party	1
VBV	Vereniging voor Bos in Vlaanderen	Flemish Forest organization	3
VHB	Vlaamse Hoge Bosraad	Flemish higher Council of Forest	3
VLD	Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten	Liberal party	1
VLM	Vlaamse landmaatschappij	Flemish land organization	2

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Document analysis

The document analysis discovered many bottlenecks in the current forest area enlargement policy. In the next paragraphs we will discuss these bottlenecks, grouped under the topics (1) communication, (2) legislation, (3) financial instruments and (4) other aspects.

The official communication on forest management and forest area enlargement is too specialized, both in the contextual sphere and the used language. Communication should use local knowledge and incorporate ethic and esthetic aspects of forests (Muys et al. 2006). The appropriate communication level still needs to be

selected: should communication be on Flemish, intermediate or local level?

Many inconsistencies exist between the forest area enlargement policy and other legislations. One of the most important obstacles is the Tenure law. In Flanders 70% of the agriculture area is leased. The Tenure law does not allow terminating the tenure for afforestation, unless the justice of the peace<sup>6</sup> gives dispensation after he/she heard the advice of the local agricultural expert (art 10). In addition the tenant can not afforest without written agreement of the leaseholder (art 28). Articles 6 and 7 allow the government (not the leaseholder) to terminate the tenure through expropriation for public benefit and for objectives with general importance (such as afforestation and forest area enlargement). The government needs to respect the

legal notice of respectively three months and 9 years and 3 months (art 11, 1°). In reality, the Forest service works with a compromise model, so that the negative consequences for the tenant are limited. This method won't be satisfactory to reach the policy goal of 10,000 ha till 2007.

Other inconsistencies are the obligatory advices and permissions in specific designations enforced by the Landscape decree, Nature decree or the Field code. For afforestation of land with an agricultural designation it is needed, also for the higher authorities and their administrations (like the nature and forest service) to request the municipality for permission (art 35bis§5), and also the land administration and the higher forest official (Forest decree). Those permissions are not compulsory for spontaneous afforestations. The provisions of the permissions are sometimes misused to hinder decisions of the Flemish government or for favouritism. For nature designation or protected landscapes an advice or permission of respectively the nature administration and the landscape administration is needed. The policy objectives of the nature and landscape administration sometimes differ from those of the forest administration, so these permissions can also counteract the forest area enlargement policy.

Finally, the designation on spatial executive plans<sup>7</sup> of the spatial targets for nature, agriculture and forest of the Spatial Structure Plan Flanders runs to slow; these targets won't be reached in 2007. The Flemish Council of Environment and Nature determine that only 1309 ha of the 10,000 ha were designated by the end of 2005 (De Smedt 2006).

The financial support of the Flemish government is too low to convince farmers and other private landowners. Income support is only paid for five years for afforestations with poplar, conifers and non-indigenous broad-leaved species. For farmers this period is too short for income-security, agricultural grants being too competitive. Furthermore, farmers were not involved in the policy process of the programme "Afforestation of agriculture land". According to Mendes (2004), this can cause an implementation failure, since the acceptance of the program by non-participants in

the policy process can be low (FAO/ECE/ILO 2000). Public participation aims at enhancing the acceptance of forest policies, plans and operations by giving people a chance to take part and influence the decision-making (FAO/ECE/ILO 2000). A second failure was that policy makers did not gather relevant information on the main agents (private forest owners, farmers and owners of non-forest land other than farmers), which, according to Mendes (2004), can cause implementation failures because of information imperfections. For example the funding program may induce an agents' behavior, incompatible with the targets set by the policy makers. Finally, the agents were not aware of the financial programme. A Flemish study on the attitude of private forest owners (Serbruyns et al. 2001) revealed that only 40.3% of the small forest owners (< 5ha) had knowledge of the existence of grants for afforestation and only 42.5% of them were aware of subsidies for reforestation.

These implementation gaps alone do not explain the total picture of forest area enlargement problems. Dumortier et al. (2003) give as additional reasons for this tardy progress:

- the time-consuming and inflexible purchasing procedure (dependent on price estimates and bureaucracy),
- the high sale prices of agricultural land,
- the recurring local resistance of the agricultural sector (NIMBY-effect, 'not in my backyard') which (still) exerts a strong influence on the local political decision-making in Flanders,
- the lack of official support by other administrations,
- the time-consuming character of the academic preparation and final realisation of urban forests.

### 3.2. Juridical analysis

Private-public co-operation in the field of forest area enlargement is defined as an engagement with obligations wherein the private and public partner afforest a non-forest land to deliver ecological, social and environmental services and products. The commercial benefits for the private partner vary between financial benefits (excluding the normal grant system) and image-building.

In the next paragraphs we will discuss the different investigated ppc-instruments, i.e. Forest fund, Expert support, Long lease, Red for green, Farmers for nature and rural estates.

In its most basic form, a Forest fund is designed to set aside a portion of national revenues for forestry purposes. The fund exists for more than a single government's budget cycle, segregating specific forestry-related revenues and earmarking them for investment in the forest sector (Rosenbaum & Lindsey 2001). In Flanders, the earnings from forest compensation<sup>8</sup> paid by companies and individuals are added to the Flemish forest fund. This fund can only be used to buy non-forest land for afforestation. Due to a lack of time of the Forest service team (BUT), responsible for forest area enlargement, only a small part of this fund can be used. During the in depth interviews we investigated (1) the public support of a forest fund managed by the government or managed by the government and a private partner and (2) the public support for additional financing from carbon benefits and companies (image-building).

Forest owners are not only interested in financial instruments, but individual Expert support is also very important (Jones et al. 1995; Barden et al. 1996). The BUT-team or the forest groups have a lot of experience and will support a forest owner by his/her afforestation.

Long lease as ppc-instrument gives the government the opportunity, if a yearly ground-rent is paid, to lease land for periods between 27 and 99 years. The government gets the full possession of the land and can afforest. It is an interesting instrument for owners who own land near urban areas and are not interested in selling their land for speculation reasons. This system can also be used by corporate investors (like pension funds or insurance companies): the investor purchases land and leases out this land to the government, afforesting the land. One example is Fortis estate which has a portfolio of 25,000 ha of land with a value of €450 million, 25% of this land being in long lease (Somsen 2002). The ground-rent percentage is 2.95% by lease duration of 26 years.

The concept *Red for green* can be described as a dynamic process to direct spatial development on

the long term (Evers et al. 2004). This planning instrument must be locally oriented, interactive and integral, with a broad financial base. The concept includes more than just the development of green functions (i.e. forest, park, landscape) with the benefits of red functions (the surplus value from a change in designation from i.e. yellow to red functions). Moreover, the connection between the residential and green area and the equal distribution of the benefits between all owners of the project area are important. The initiative to project realization is the responsibility of the investors, social organizations or developers, but not the government. Additional different authors (Garrod & Willis 1992, Tyrväinen & Miettinen 2000, Morancho 2003) have proved the positive impact of forest, nature or parks on house prices, we think that red-for-green will be a feasible instrument.

In Flanders, the owners of estate are lobbying for a similar Estate act as in the Netherlands. The Estates Act of 1928 gives owners of real estates tax reductions (e.g. inheritance tax, income tax, capital tax, corporation tax), provided that the estate is preserved and the natural beauty at the estate is supported. For a comprehensive discussion of the Dutch Estates act we refer to Hoogstra & van Blitterswijk (2001). We investigated the public support of this act in Flanders.

### 3.3. Support analysis

#### 3.3.1. Support for forest area enlargement

All interviewees are positive in regard of forest area enlargement. The majority refers to the binding regulations (10,000 ha forest area enlargement) of the Spatial Structure Plan Flanders. The reasons for this forest area enlargement are biodiversity (sp.a, Groen!, MINA, NP, VBV, exl), the need for recreation in our overstrained society (sp.a, exsp, VHB, exl) or in urban regions (MINA, VHB, VB, BUT, exl), the multifunctional use of forests (Natuurpunt, ARP, Nara), hunting (forest groups) and the buffer function of forests (exf). Sp.a prefers large forests with a good accessibility. The beauty of the landscape should be preserved (exsp, ARP, BL, LV, exps) and insuperable difficulties for other sectors should be avoided (BB, VB). Some point out the

need for an integration of the sectors nature and forest (MINA, CE, NARA, NP, ANB).

Support is the essential key for forest area enlargement (NP). The support of forest is very big, certainly after the recent change in mentality of the society in regard of forests (EFN, MINA). Other interviewees (MINA, ANB and VLM) endorse this statement of a big public support, especially in the case of urban forests. Nowadays, the political support for forest area enlargement is declining because of the not so forest-minded Flemish government (VLM). When the forest area enlargement projects become concrete the NIMBY-syndrome occurs and the support is declining (FG, EFN). It is striking that when forest area enlargement was hindered by local authorities in particular municipalities, the public support for the forest increased tremendously.

### 3.3.2. Support for private-public co-operation for forest area enlargement

Most interviewees are advocates of the realization of forest area enlargement through private-public co-operation (ppc), only the VLD and Vlaams belang are against. Purchase of land to afforest by the Forest service is not the only possibility and ppc is more meaningful than doctoring with financial and regulative instrument to stimulate forest area enlargement (CE). Ppc can be a win-win situation for both partners (exsp, BL, FG, BUT, LV, CE), being cost-effective for the government and important for the image-building of the private partner (exsp). Two other advantages of ppc are the social benefit and the commercial return. Forest area enlargement is more socially embedded when private partners co-finance the project (exps, CD&V, NARA, BL, NP). Ppc provides a good opportunity to negotiate with the neighbourhood of the new forest, increasing the public support and in advance solving conflicts (exsp).

Ppc is only possible in combination with a Flemish purchase policy (BUT) or when the government controls the projects (exl) or at least the spatial position of the forest area enlargement (ARP). The public support expert (exps) too doesn't believe that this measure alone will be enough; the government must take also his

responsibility on all policy levels. Sp.a and BUT agree on an obligatory minimal accessibility of the ppc-funded forest. The real motives of the private partner for ppc must be verified by the government to preclude improper use, especially in the case of image-building. Thus ppc should occur within a certain deontology (exsp). Therefore a reliable, unambiguous and wide definition of ppc (NVA, ANB, VHB, FG, VBV, CE, NP, LV) and a clear definition of its targets (FG, ANB, VBV) are crucial.

The first condition to use ppc for forest area enlargement is good public support. Only when public support exists, is it advisable that the government give regulative and financial incentives to invest in afforestations (CE). It will be easier to create ppc for management of existing forests than for forest area enlargement, because changes in land use on private land occur very slowly (ARP, exl). Many interviewees (CE, VLM, Groen!, BUT) believe that the advantages of forest area enlargement are small for the private partner. The farmers union thinks nonetheless that there will be enough owners interested in this co-operation with the government.

Some interviewees don't believe in this ppc-instrument. The VLD addresses at the advantages, being too small for the private partner. Vlaams Belang considers forest area enlargement a task for the government, eventually in co-operation with local policy levels.

### 3.3.3. Support for legislative changes

At the moment of the in depth interviews there was an enactment of the Tenure law (change of article 7 with additional cancellation clause of the Tenure agreement when the owner wants to realise afforestation) by the sp.a. This was not the first time; the VLD has done it earlier. One of the reasons of the difficulties to change this law is that agriculture has long been a federal competence<sup>9</sup> and it was impossible to change this law by a Flemish decree (exf). However, the Tenure law has recently been amended by the Surface mineral decree<sup>10</sup> on Flemish level. What is possible for private interest, should be possible for public interest (afforestation) (exf). A second problem is

that the Tenure law is a sacred cow for the agriculture sector because the agriculture use is fiercely defended (EFN, MINA, BL, NP, ARP, Groen!). The agriculture sector is nowadays under great pressure (exf), but the lobby is stronger than ever (Inverde, exsp). Under the previous legislature with the Green and Liberal party the change of the Tenure law has not gone through and now, with the Christian Democratic party in the government, it will be politically impossible (EFN, exf, FG, VBV, ANB, Mina, exsp, NVA, VHB, BL, VLM) because of the strong link between this party and the agriculture sector. Nonetheless, some (NP, ANB, exsp, exf) expect a few changes in the near future, because the use of the open space by the agricultural sector is less accepted by the public (NP, exf) and farmers realize that extensification and new forms of agriculture (like farm tourism) will become important (ANB, exf). Thus, the public support by farmers for a change of this Tenure law is increasing. At the moment many interviewees are advocates of a modification of the Tenure law (VBV, NP, exsp, EFN, ANB, exf) or an integral revision of this law (Groen!, exsp). Motives for this modification or revision are twofold.

- The Tenure law is a barrier for the forest area enlargement policy (LV). It is federal legislation, archaic (Groen!, NP, sp.a, VHB, exsp) and not completely legally correct, which is known and admitted by the farmer organizations (NP).
- This change will accelerate the forest extension enlargement because the owner can stop the tenure for afforestation (LV, exp, FG, VLM).

To increase the political feasibility, the cancellation clause for afforestation can be linked to certain spatial designations (the green ones and the afforestation designation) (VHB, FG, BL, exsp, NVA, ARP, BUT, VB). The drawback of this linkage is that in the other designations afforestation will be forbidden, what can not be the aim (BL). On the other hand, the afforestation cancellation possibility must be controlled for misuse (LV, NARA, VLM, VBV, exl). The enactment of the Tenure law should be accompanied with soft instruments - like communication and participation - and hard economical instruments (exps, VLD, NVA). Small

parcels of forest must be avoided through fitting individual afforestations in the larger forest area enlargement objectives (exsp, ARP).

The Field code was written in 1886 with the aim to give the municipalities the possibility to act against active afforestation in the scope of a good neighbourliness (VLD, CE). Within the current spatial planning this legislation is out-of-date and the aims are less relevant nowadays (VLD, Cabinet, Groen!, Natuurpunt, exl). Furthermore, it is strange that a federal act gives restrictions to regional matters like forestry, spatial planning and nature conservation (sp.a).

Almost half of the interviewees are advocates for an abolition of article 35bis of the Field code (sp.a, exps, EFN, exf, exsp, FG, exl, VHB, NP, VLD, ANB, Groen!). This article gives the municipalities the veto right for afforestation in agriculture area, even when the Forest service wants to afforest. It is contradictory that the projects of the Flemish government are thwarted by the municipalities (sp.a, exps, exf, ANB, BUT, Groen!). The fact that the local authorities - often with strong links with agricultural coalitions - must supply permission, generates a serious hindrance for afforestation and forest area enlargement (exps). It is also far-reaching patronizing that owners must ask permission for afforestation (VHB, BUT, exps, BL). A regrettable trend is the misuse of the permission obligation to block Flemish policy objectives on local level or to fight out political tribe disputes (NP, ANB, BL, exf, CE, EFN). The drawback of the abolition of article 35, however, is that it will become impossible to afforest in agricultural designation (LV). The farmers union is explicitly for an agricultural area without forest. The Christian Democratic and the National Flemish party want to retain this local autonomy. The Cabinet expects that the local authorities respect the spatial decision of the higher political level and that the municipalities keep their own decision right within this framework.

### 3.3.4. Support for the new instruments

#### *Forest fund*

The Forest fund is judged positively by almost all interviewees. Forest area enlargement is important

and it is a plus-point that the budget stays apart from other environmental expenditures (exl, exps). The strength of the Forest fund is that it is privately financed (compensation, CO<sub>2</sub> or image-building) and refines back private projects (BUT). It is important that the Forest fund can operate more flexible than the government (BUT). The greatest difficulty is finding land to afforest (NP, sp.a, CD&V, BL, VLM, VBV, ANB), especially with the known barriers of the Tenure law and the advice and permission obligations (VBV, ARP). But there are also some linked dangerous aspects. Budget technically is a fund easy to juggle with (CE, CD&V). The need for an ethical or deontological code emerges, because people or companies may deposit to salve their conscience. In the Netherlands they speak of account-activism (exps). Another condition is the clear link between the funding company/person and the new forest (exl, BL). For ARP is it very important that the location of the forest corresponds with the spatial executive plans or master plans<sup>11</sup>.

The additional financing of forests through carbon benefits is considered a good instrument by many interviewees (BL, CD&V, VLD, NVA, exf, exsp, MINA, CE). The farmers union suggests that the agriculture production can be stimulated by carbon benefits as well. This idea is not supported by environmental organizations because the climate problem isn't effectively solved (Groen!, NP). Belgium won't use this mechanism for reaching the target of the Kyoto protocol, so the funding will be minimal (ANB).

Additional financing through companies' image building is judged differently. The CD&V and the farmers union are against. For Natuurpunt it is only possible on a project base; for the experts spatial planning and public support only under strict deontological conditions. On the other side, the expert forestry and NV-A support the idea; the VBV and Vlaams Belang believe that this type of fund will increase the public support of afforestation and according to ANB and NARA a demand already exists.

#### *Expert support*

The majority of interviewees considers expert support a good instrument, because training or

education increases the effect of the other forest area enlargement instruments (exsp). There is some discussion about the most appropriate organization: supporting the private forest owner by the BUT-team or the forest groups? The BUT-team is a kind of forest ambassador (sp.a). Through disseminating their expertise the forest administration can realize a part of his vision (NARA) and stimulate people to afforest (NVA, CD&V, VB). But the BUT-team may not foist themselves on the private land owners or farmers, otherwise owners could feel too strongly patronized (VLD, FG, CE, VLM, VHB). Private owners show a big aversion against the administrations in general (VHB, LV), so the forest owners association doesn't believe that the BUT-team is the appropriate organization for education and training. The task of the forest service is rather to set up conditions for and to facilitate forest area enlargement (Groen!, exl). The forest groups are in a better position to sensitize private owners (Groen!), because they have closer connections with the owners (exl). The role of forest groups in this expert support is supported by many of the interviewees (EFN, NARA, exps, ANB, NVA, FG, CE, NP, VB, VBV, VLM). Another advantage of the forest groups is that the forest owner will have only one contact point (EFN).

#### *Long lease*

Long lease is a good instrument (BL, exps, NVA, ARP, VB, ANB, Groen!, VBV), useful and usable (VLM), depending on the opportunities (BUT). These opportunities are small, so the instrument will only give the best solution in a few situations (exsp, VLM, CE, BUT, EFN, NARA). The principal argument pro Long lease is that the instrument already exists and gives an additional possibility to realize forest area enlargement (VLD, NVA, VBV, exps). It is anyhow a better strategy to offer a mix of policy instruments, so that the owner can choose the most suitable instrument for his/her situation (MINA, exl, ANB, CD&V, NVA, CE, NARA).

The advantages of the instrument Long lease are:

1. the creation of a financial return for the owner without selling his/her land (MINA), especially for the nobility (exps);

2. the flexibility that gives the government the possibility to use this instrument only for specific areas in order to realize her vision (ARP, ANB);
3. the involvement of land owners in policy-making (MINA).

Two major disadvantages of the instrument can be distinguished.

1. Time limitation: the investment can be lost when the lease contract terminates (exps, NARA). The government has to choose the most efficient instrument (long lease versus purchase) for each situation (NARA, BUT, ANB).
2. Long lease should not be used as an alibi to terminate the purchase policy of the government (MINA, Groen!).

#### *Red for green*

The instrument Red for green is of Dutch origin. Copying a current policy is faster than developing a new one, but has also an important drawback. Because of the differing institutional context in the Netherlands and in Flanders it is uncertain that a copy of the Dutch policy will work in Flanders (NP, exps). The spatial planning is fundamentally different in the Netherlands and Flanders, so the instrument Red for green will be different as well (exps, exsp). It is a better method to take the best elements of the Dutch instrument and translate them to the Flemish situation (exps, MINA, Groen!, CD&V, ARP, NP, exsp, exl, EFN). Many of those elements are already in use in Flanders, such as the compulsions by allotments (exps, NP, exsp, exl, Groen!, ARP, CD&V) and the plan profits<sup>12</sup> and plan losses (MINA, EFN). An alternative to the Red for green instrument is to make the instrument “plan profits-plan losses” more effective and with a higher enforcement (MINA). Nevertheless, Red for green is a debatable and good principle (LV, EFN, Groen!, CD&V, ANB, sp.a, BL, VHB, VBV, VLD) with a number of advantages:

- the simultaneous creation of new space for both house-constructing and industry and for nature and forest (sp.a);
- an effective realization of new ‘green’ space (BL) and

- a better health because of the positive link between health and green neighbourhood (BL, VHB).

But the instrument carries also some risks.

- The connection between Red for green and the allotment and speculation (LV, exps) will increase the parcellisation of the open space (LV).
- In the Netherlands, Red for green is used as an excuse to build up the open space (ARP). The government should absolutely prevent to tolerate residential area or industry in the open space for a little bit green (ARP, NARA, EFN, exsp).

Because of these risks, some interviewees are resolutely against this instrument (BB, ARP, NARA, exsp). An important aspect is the scale size: many of the interviewees consider the instrument rather wrong for the house project of an individual (CD&V, VHB, NP, VLM, exf, exl), but appropriate for large development projects, industrial projects or companies (CD&V, VHB, VLM, exf, exl).

#### *Rural estates*

Within the scope of ppc rural estates are an essential topic (MINA). The forest owners association and the umbrella organization open space<sup>13</sup> are strong advocates of this concept (MINA, ANB). They complain of the many sectoral legislations and they plead for a more integrated legislation for rural estates (CE). The preparation of the administrative simplification of the legislation of the rural estates has already started (CE). However, the concept Rural estate should be discussed in advance (MINA, LV, ARP, sp.a, exl). Land owners will be interested in afforestation in exchange for fiscal advantages, if it is cost-effective (LV, BL, CD&V, EFN, VHB, VBV, exps). The adverse financial situation of the old nobility can be improved with this instrument, so that they can maintain their patrimony and afforest a part of their land (CE, exps). The farmers union awaits more clarity in which grounds will be afforested, before they give their opinion. When agriculture land is afforested, the tenant should receive a fair compensation. There must be a

control possibility to prevent the creation of particular enclaves that are not useful for society (BUT).

## 4. DISCUSSION

Instruments with a high support level and a high chance to accelerate the forest area enlargement are the Forest fund (without additional company support), the Expert support (especially by the forest groups) and the Rural estates (with a control possibility). Long lease is an instrument with a high support level, but the interviewees believe that its contribution to forest area enlargement will be small. For the instrument Red for green no conformity exists between the interviewees.

The advantages and the disadvantages of forest funds were also discussed by Rosenbaum & Lindsey (2001). Common arguments in favour are: (1) funds can help to meet needs for long-term investment; (2) funds can shield the forestry sector from the fluctuations and unpredictability of national budgets; (3) funds can help to stimulate more effective forest management by government agencies and (4) funds can allow for greater oversight of forest spending. Common arguments against are: (1) funds may invite corruption; (2) funds can transmit misleading economical signals to bureaucrats and (3) funds can prevent ideal allocation of government budgets. Most of those arguments were also mentioned by the interviewees. But in Flanders, the forest fund will probably generate more advantages than disadvantages.

The importance of the expert knowledge to support other instruments is confirmed by many authors (Jones et al. 1995, Barden et al. 1996, Van Gossum et al. 2005). The forest groups are suited to this job, because of (1) the improvement of motivation for and organisation of afforestation and reforestation (Kittredge 2005), (2) the sharing of knowledge and experience (Van Gossum et al. 2005) and (3) the distribution of information and education for private owners (Barden et al. 1996). Because of the common distrust of the government the, vision of/on the role of the BUT-team is more moderate. Not only forest owners show an increasing distrust for the traditional

representatives of the political system (as observed by Hiedenapää 2002), but citizens in general distrust the institutional framework of politics (Soneryd and Weldon 2003).

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## Notes

- 1 Regional forest plan in Flanders. There is no national forest plan because forest policy is a regional competence in Belgium.

- 2 A structure plan is a policy document that specifies the framework of the desired spatial structure. It gives the long-term outlook on the spatial development of the area in question. Its aim is to give the whole structure planning process (preparation, assessment, implementation) coherence.
- 3 Designation gives land a specific use and value. The designations were coloured on the planning document. Colours relevant for this document are: yellow (agriculture), red (residential area) and green (park, forest or nature reserve).
- 4 Inverde is the main contact point for education, directly or indirectly in co-operation with forest groups. One of the tasks of Inverde is to translate research results to education packages suitable for forest owners as well as employees of the forest service.
- 5 The forest groups (Co-ops of private forest owners) are the main actors for management advice and support and act as forum for consultations between private forest owners and the government.
- 6 The justice of the peace is the easiest attainable magistrate in Belgium. When somebody comes in contact with the court, it is mostly the peace court. The competence of the justice of peace is broad, almost all aspects of daily live are included.
- 7 This plan implements the structure plan. It reflects the real and legal situation of the different areas (designation).
- 8 Forest compensation must be paid (in cash or in kind) for most deforestations (art 90bis Forest decree).
- 9 Belgium has an interrupted federalisation process. Some competences like international trade and agriculture were first federal competence and are now shared among federal and regional levels.
- 10 Cancellation of the tenure by the owner to exploit the soil minerals.
- 11 This plan is a planning document that define the future designation of all land in Flanders within a legal document before the system of structure planning
- 12 The financial profit for the owner when the plan designation of his/her ground changes from a low value (like nature, forest or agriculture) to a high value (like residential area).
- 13 This umbrella organisation groups associations of hunters, horsemen, fishermen, water-skiers, farmers, forest and land owners, clay pigeon riflemen and rural guilds.