



# Social conflict and stakeholder involvement: The dynamics of conflicting social representations of biodiversity



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# Headlines of presentations

1. Drents Friese Wold
2. National Park + Natura2000  
→ biodiversity (BD) goals + recreation (?)
3. Conflicts, action group
4. Diverging social representations of BD
5. Participation

Social Representations BD - Participation -Conflicts

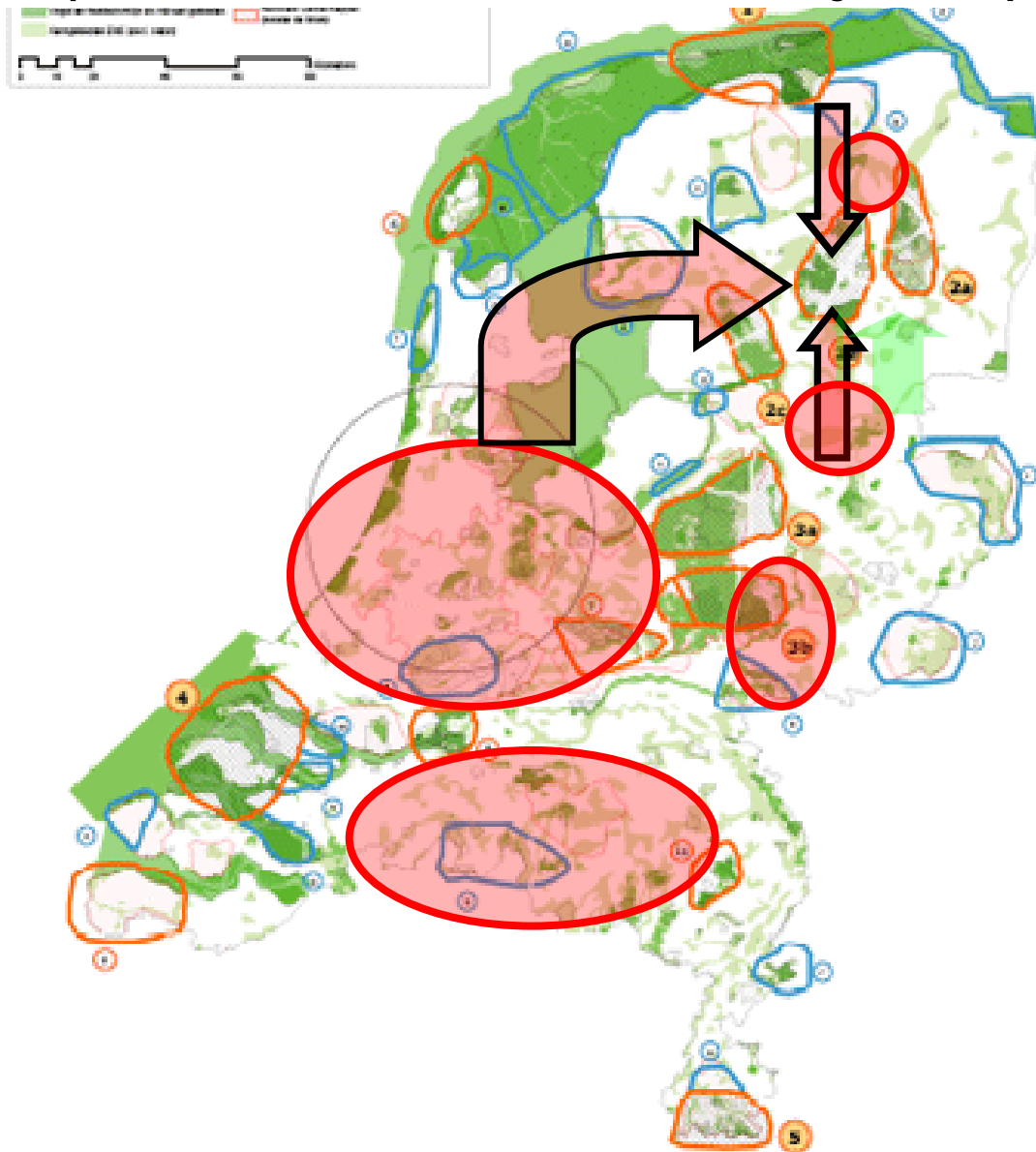


# National Park Drents Friese Wold (DFW)

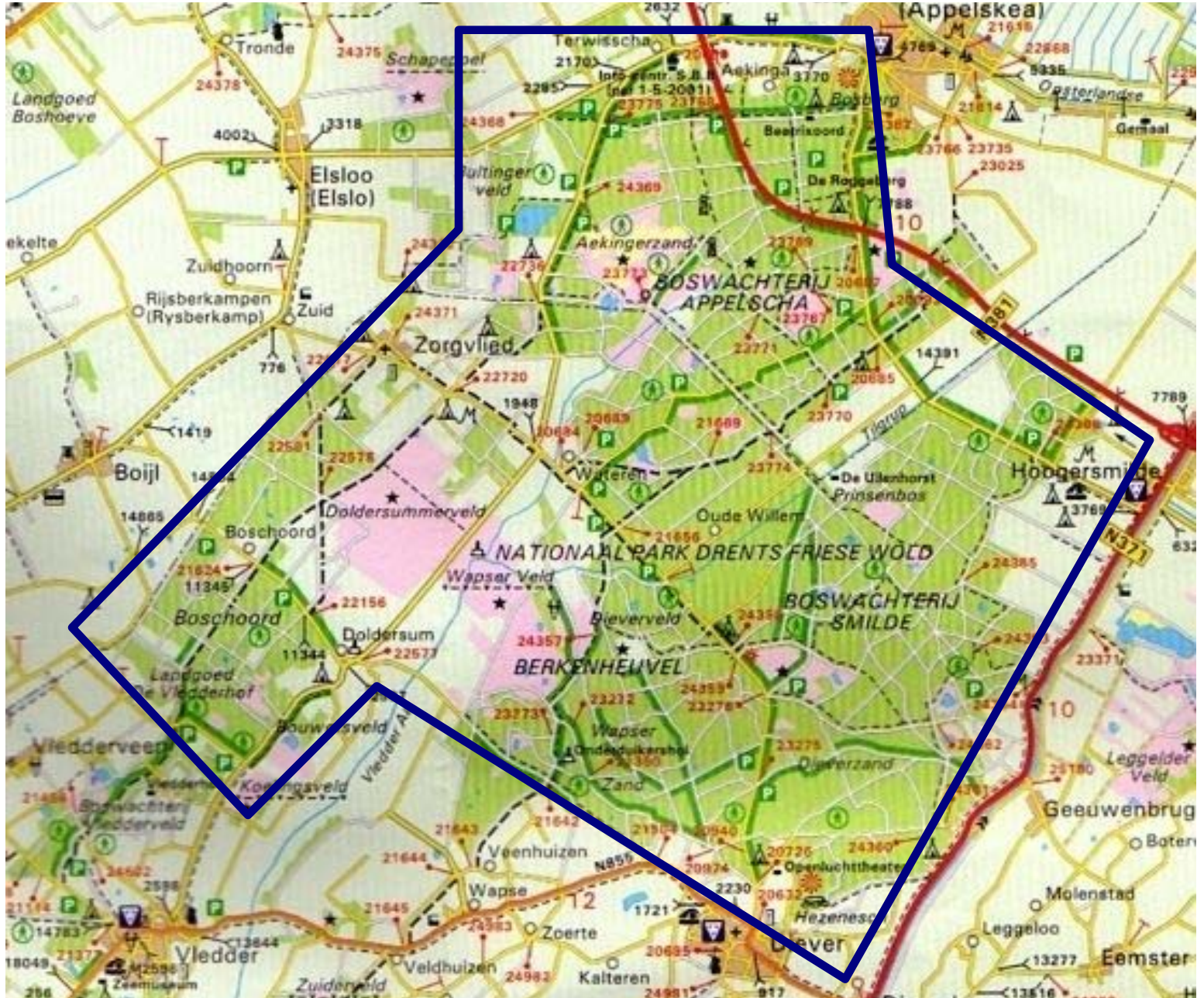




# Peri-Urbanization (Retired, footloose jobs)

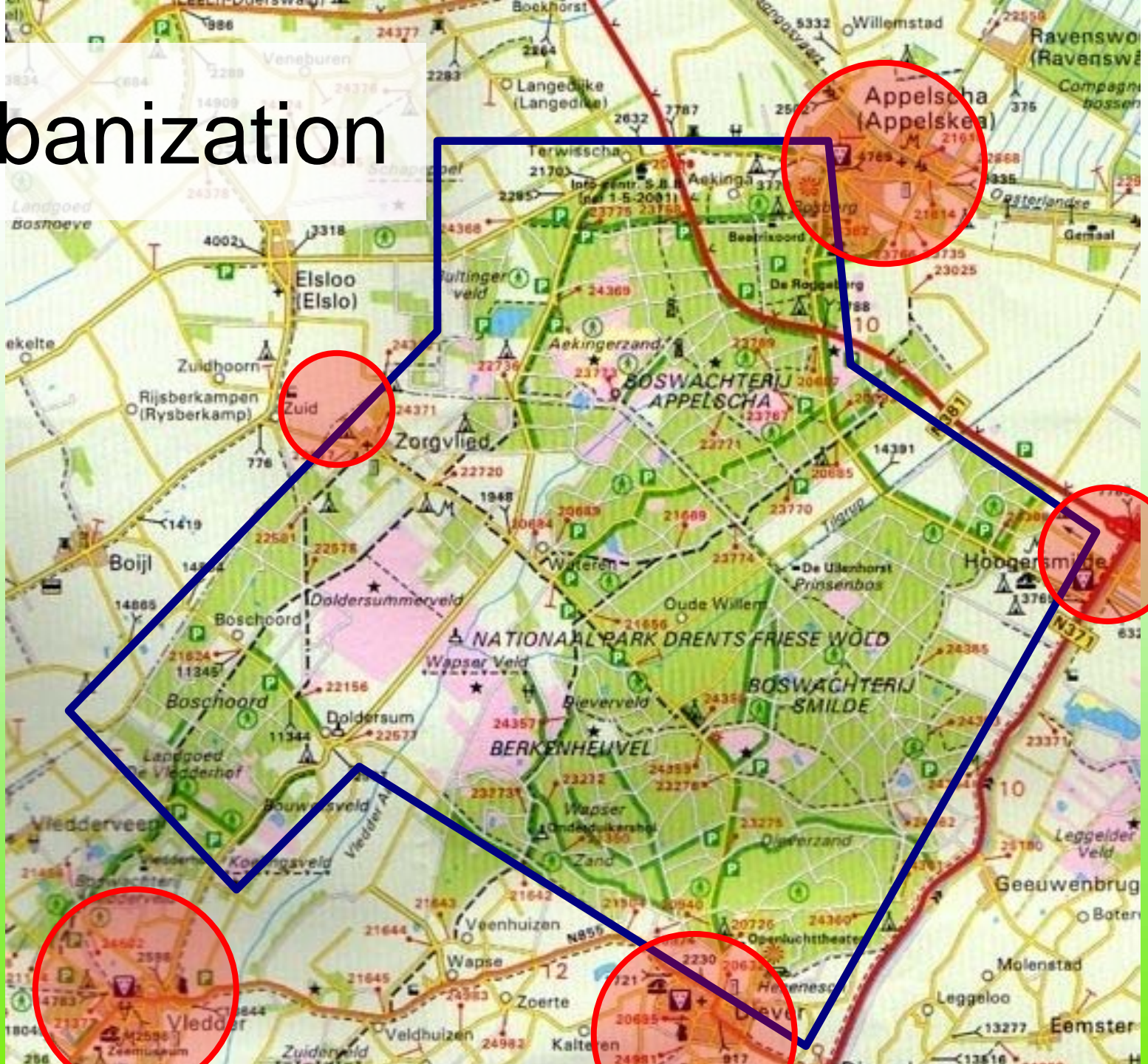


# Drents Friese Wold (6100 ha)

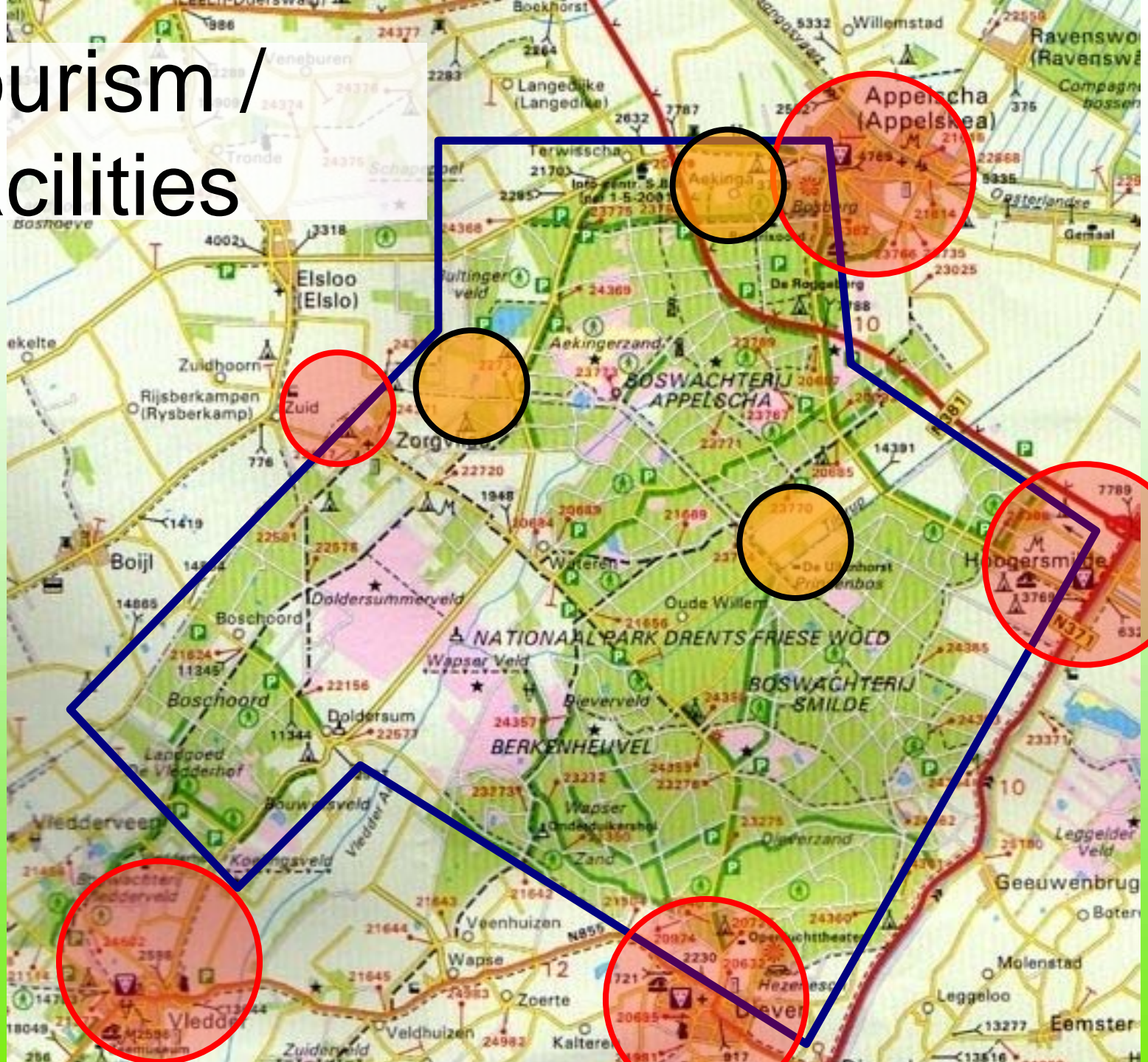




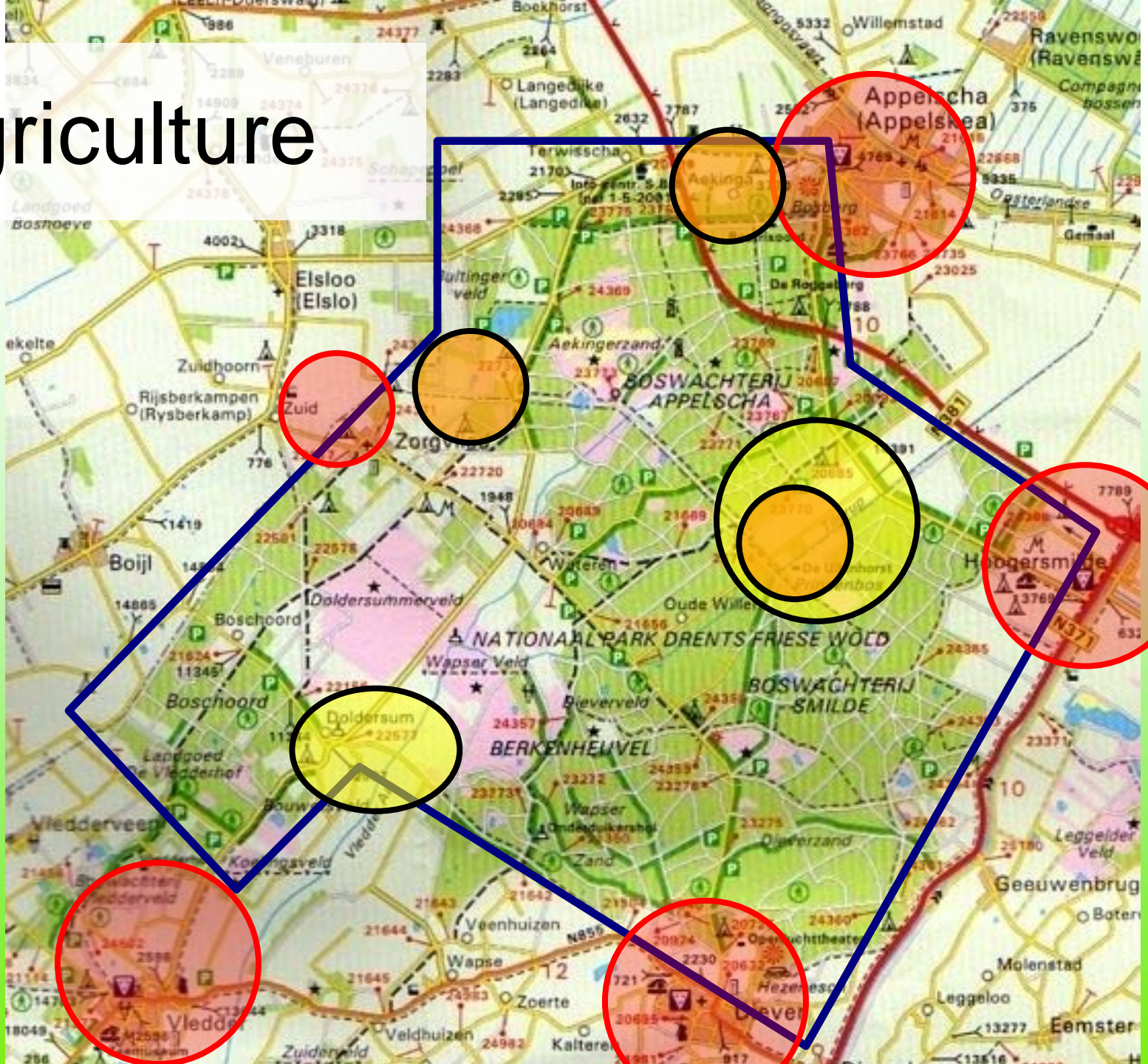
# Urbanization



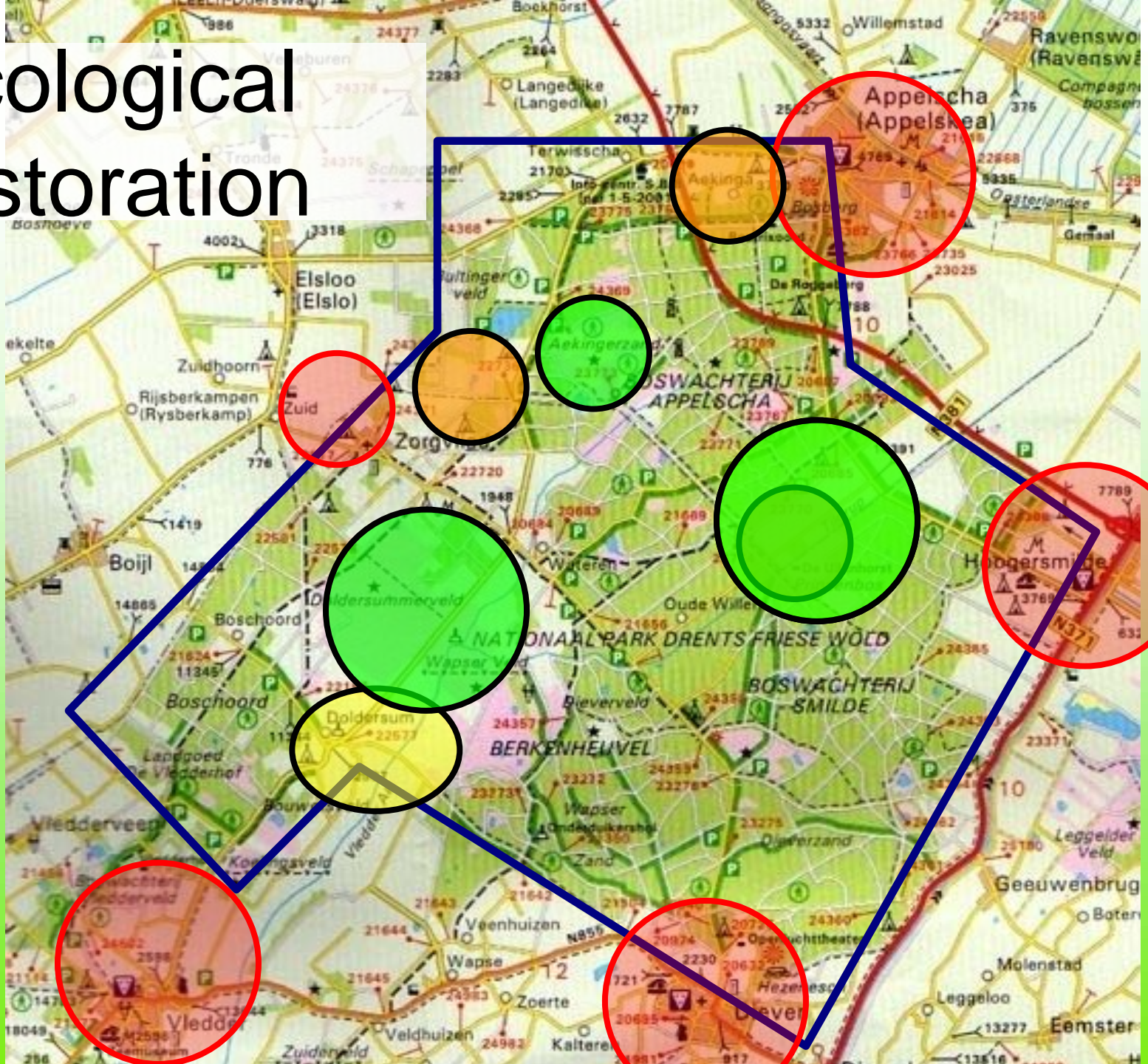
# Tourism / Facilities



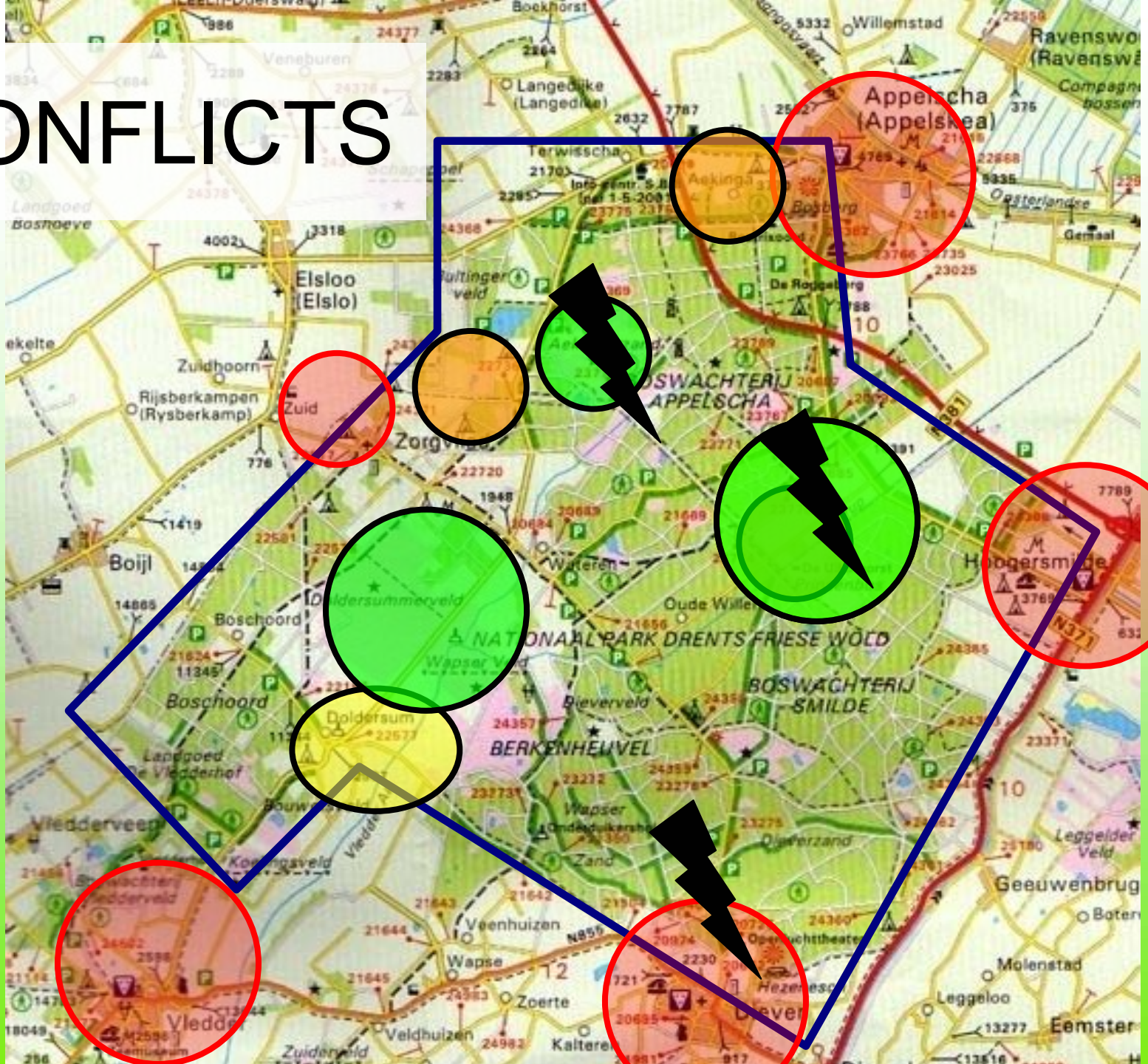
# Agriculture



# Ecological restoration



# CONFLICTS



# Ecological restoration



# Driftsand expansion



# Access regulations



# History of National Park DFW

- Recreation+Tourism: 1960's onwards
- Agricultural decline 1980's onwards
- Forestry → nature conservation 1980's
- National Park 2003, Natura 2000
- Participation: steering committee
- Aim: **biodiversity** + recreation / tourism



# Social background

- 50.000 inhabitants (2 villages)
- Rural → peri-urban
- Newcomers ← → “original” residents
- Originals: farmers, rural mentality, community-oriented
- Newcomers: older, highly educated, city dwellers (values!), political network



# Research question

- Biodiversity goals...
- Is new (scientific) concept (residents+tourists)...
- And causes conflicts with recreation/tourism

→ *What representations do residents and tourists use to understand “biodiversity” and to develop attitudes on management?*



# Theory: Social representations

Social representation=

*“a system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function:*

- 1) *To understand the material and social world around us*
  - 2) *To enable communication between people*
- Describes what meanings a certain group attaches to an phenomenon (e.g. biodiversity)
  - Holistic
  - Discursive
  - Used in rural studies (Halfacree, 1993)



**National Park**

**Steering committee**

**2003**

**2004**

**2005**

**2006**

**2007**

**National Park**

**Steering committee**

**Foundation of  
Action Group  
“Woudreus”**

**7000 signatures, MP,  
Local newspapers,  
...**

**2003**

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**Formal agreement**

**2003**

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**2006**

**2007**

**Focus  
Groups (5)**

**Focus  
Groups (5)**

**Analysis local media**

**Analysis official documents**

# Preliminary results

1. Participation (steering committee): inclusive?
2. Social representations → attitudes
3. Influence of participation on BD-representations

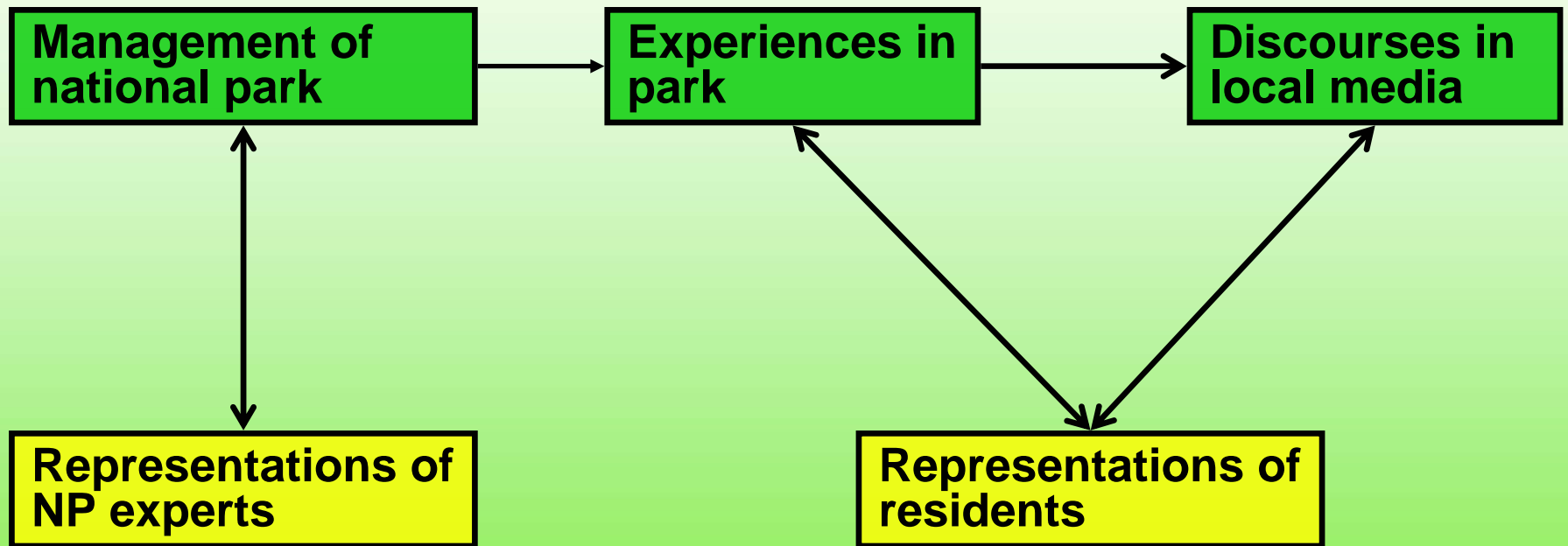


# 1) Participation in management NP

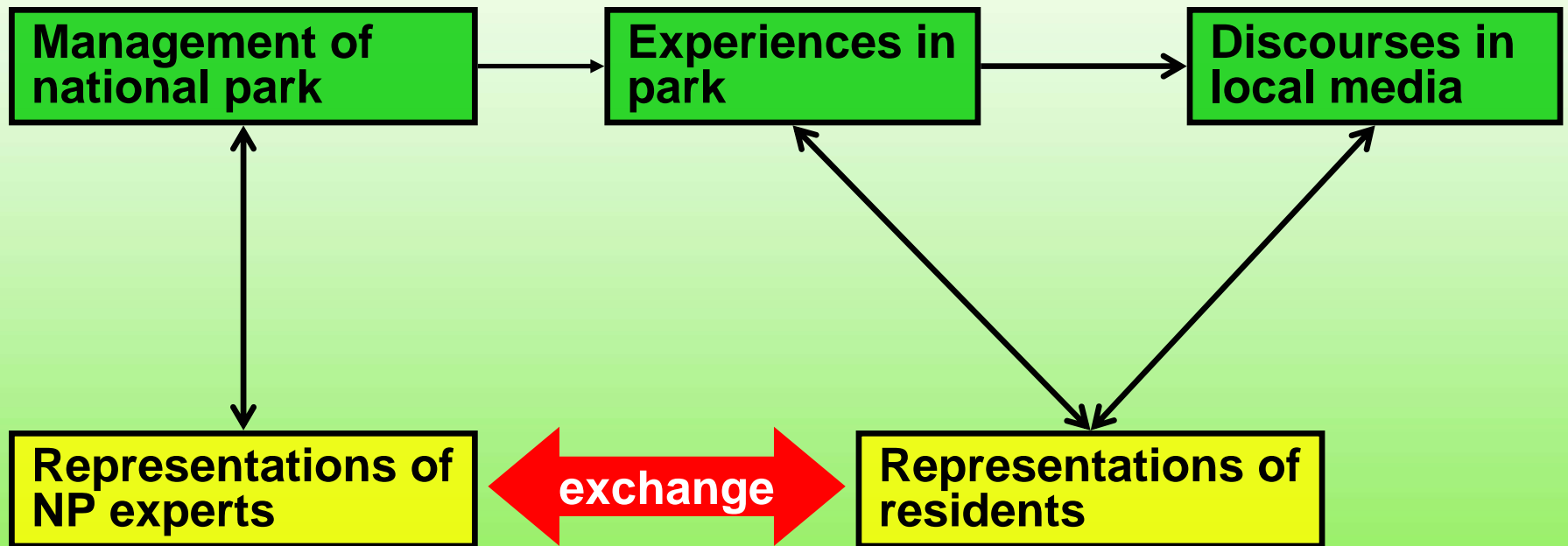
- Steering committee
- Officially inclusive: all institution actors involved:
  - tourism business, municipalities, agriculture, nature NGO's
- Practically: no residents, no tourist



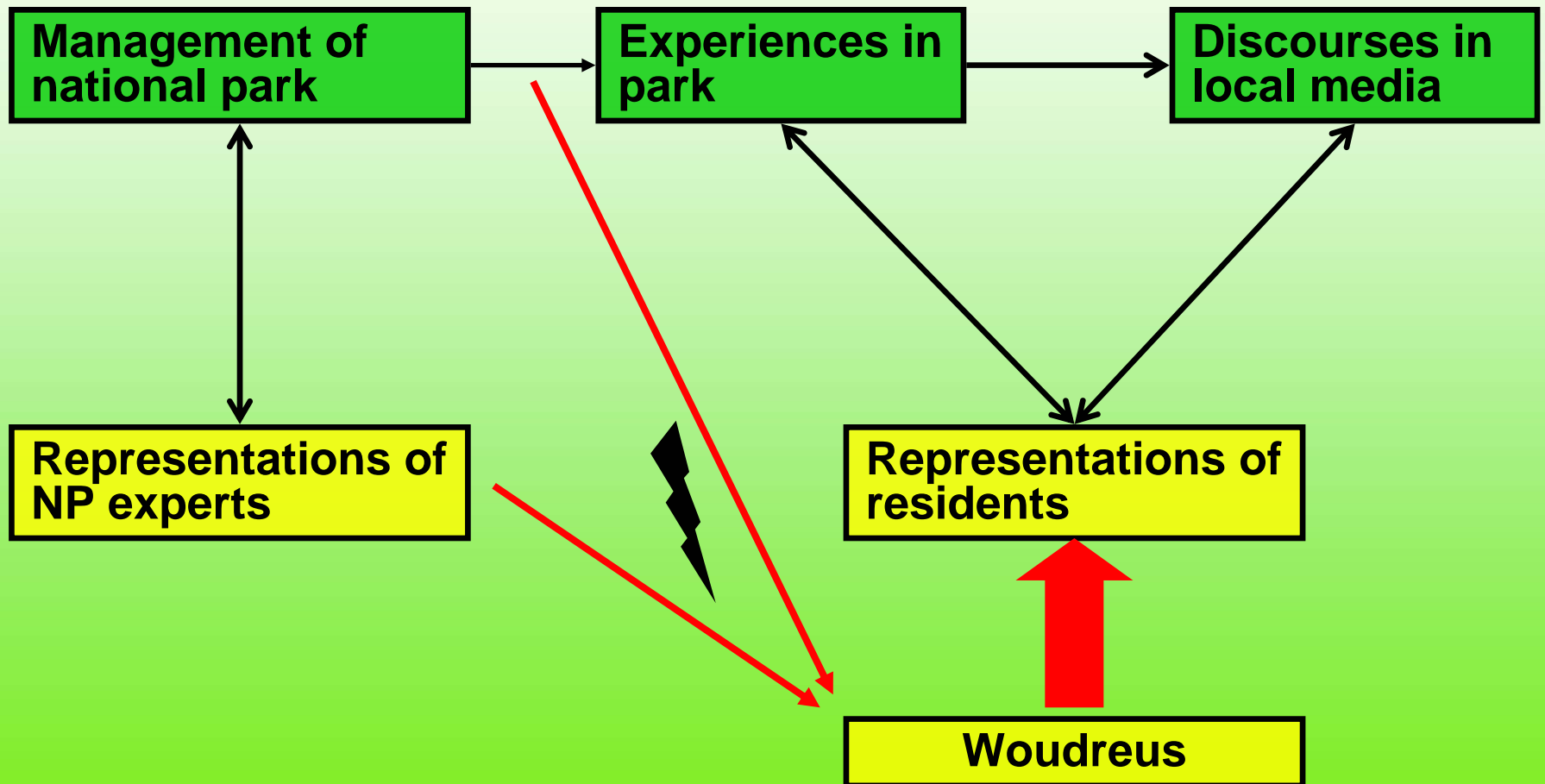
# Exchange of meanings: reality



# Ideal situation: participation, communication



# Dominance of Woudreus in discourse



# Social representations of biodiversity

## NP-experts

### Benefits of BD

- Global responsibility
- Stability of habitat
- ...

### Attributes of nature

- Autarky
- Dynamics
- ...

### Views on managements

- Habitats
- Mitigating measures

...

## residents

### Benefits of BD

- Aesthetic functions
- ...
- ...

### Attributes of nature

- Diversity
- Stasis / balance
- ...

### Views on managements

- Human related goals

...

# Development of attitudes

## Benefits of BD

- Aesthetic functions
- ...
- ...

## Attributes of nature

- Diversity
- Stasis / balance
- ...

## Views on managements

- Human related goals

## Attitudes towards biodiversity management

+ Nature conservation

- Expanding driftsand area
- Access regulations
- Invasive species management

**National Park**

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**Focus  
Groups**

# Formal agreement: dynamics of representations of BD?

- Agreement between Woudreus and NP
- Adjustment of management plan
- Better communication by N.P. (excursions etc.)

## BUT:

- Agreement to disagree
- Differences in views too big!
- No change in representations of BD
- Zoning: near residential areas “aesthetics-management”, core/ecological hotspots: ecological management
- 2008: new conflicts (interpretation)

# Conclusions + implications

- Diverging social representations of biodiversity between residents and experts
  - Different interpretations of functions and priorities
  - Conflicts
- Participation: inclusive
  - not only institutional actors
  - Municipalities do not represent residents (ecologists!)
  - Tourism business do only partly represent tourists
- Too late = too late
  - social representations of BD stabilized (Action group!)

Thank you

Questions?

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