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Chapter 3

The Dutch Approach

Public Participation and the Role of NGOs and Local Authorities in the Protection, Management and Development of Cultural Landscapes in the Netherlands

Henk Baas, Bert Groenewoudt, and Edwin Raap

Abstract The preservation of the cultural landscape of the Netherlands is a complex matter, partly because responsibilities are divided between several ministries and administrative levels. Guided by the motto ‘conservation through development’, the Belvedere Programme was launched in order to combine efforts and to



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develop and put into practice projects aiming at actively taking into account historical values in the process of spatial planning. In accordance with the European Landscape Convention (ELC), the care of the cultural landscape has increasingly become the responsibility of local authorities. Consequently landscape protection is to an increasing degree dependent on arousing public support. In shaping local policy towards landscape, all parties involved are faced with the challenge of combining scientific knowledge with local demands and initiatives. To achieve this, Landscape Development Plans and research guided by the ‘landscape biography’ concept have proven to be an effective strategy. Especially on a local level, the long-term history of humans and landscape can be used to inspire future developments.

Keywords Conservation through development · Landscape Development Plans · Landscape biography · Landscape Manifesto

3.1 Introduction

As a result of a new Spatial Planning Act (*Wet Ruimtelijke Ordening, WRO*) in 2008 (Ministerie van VROM, 2008), responsibility for landscape management in the Netherlands is increasingly being delegated to the municipalities. This development is in accordance with the European Landscape Convention (ELC). Nonetheless, there is also opposition against making municipalities responsible for the landscape. Their ability to make sound decisions with regard to landscapes is being questioned. There is, moreover, a potential conflict between, on the one hand, local economic targets, which find their expression in housing developments and business parks, and, on the other, the desire to improve landscape quality.

We believe that a local policy that respects the character of a historical landscape is perfectly feasible, provided it meets certain conditions. These include maximum use of existing policy instruments, as well as complete integration and application of all available expertise on landscape and culture history. During the past 10 years, the Belvedere Programme in particular has generated much experience in this field.

This chapter gives an overview of the ‘Dutch approach’, which focuses on the local scale and juxtaposes different approaches. We examine ways in which care for the historical landscape can be developed at the level of the local community. Central to this is the Landscape Development Plan (*Landschapsontwikkelingsplan*), a municipal policy instrument which is particularly suitable for combining historical and modern dimensions. This plan can be supplemented by Village Surroundings Plans (*Dorpsomgevingsplannen*), which assign a significant role to the inhabitants of an area. One of the questions we address is to what extent the wishes and the expertise of the local population can be incorporated into the planning process. We believe that the concept of *landscape biography* provides excellent opportunities for this. We conclude the chapter by offering some suggestions for policy and research, which need to inform each other now perhaps more than ever before.

3.2 Conservation Through Development

Landscape is the object of much attention in the Netherlands. Increasing interest is reflected in several policy documents, such as the Land Use Planning Memorandum or *Nota Ruimte* (Ministries of VROM, LNV, V&W and EZ, 2005) and the recent Agenda Landscape (*Agenda Landschap*) (Ministries of LNV & VROM, 2008). Twenty National Landscapes have been designated thus far (Fig. 3.1), each of them being an area that:

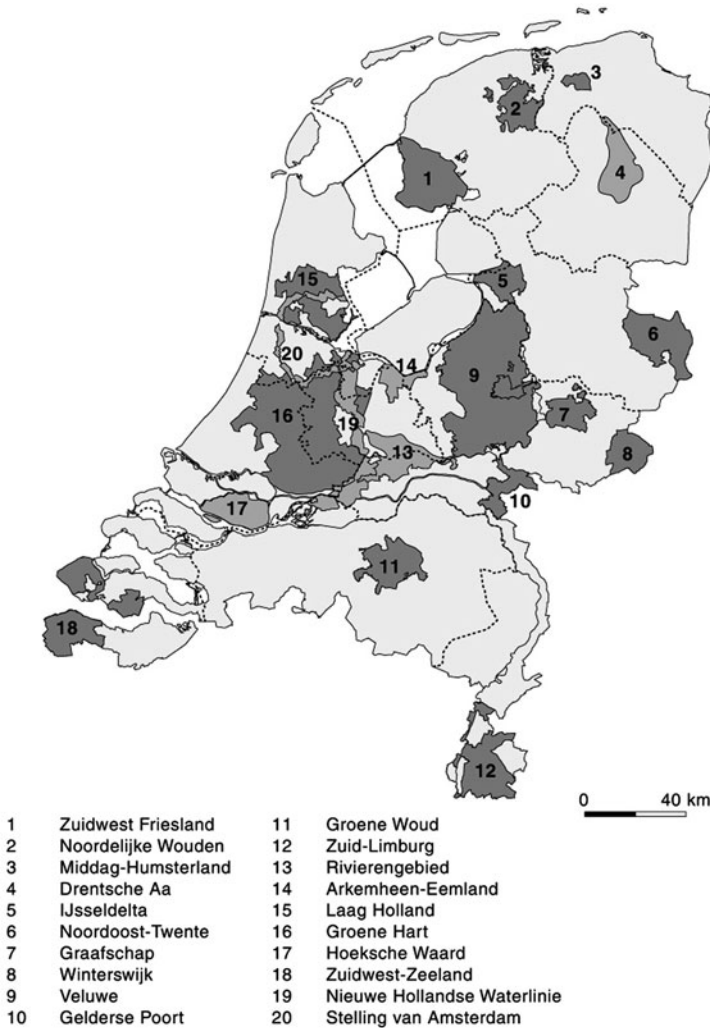


Fig. 3.1 Location of the 20 National Landscapes in the Netherlands

...possesses a unique combination of cultural-historical and natural elements. ... The National Landscapes are characterized as areas with specific coherence between nature, surface, land use and occupation. They are not museums, but areas where people live, work, venture, and recreate (Nationale Landschappen n.d.).

Although some of the National Landscapes are also on the UNESCO World Heritage List, not all of them are necessarily the most valuable areas from a cultural heritage point of view.

The fact that the Netherlands now possesses twenty National Landscapes is remarkable, for all earlier attempts since the 1970s had failed because of the political influence of the agricultural sector, which feared potentially adverse effects of any form of landscape protection upon agricultural development (Renes, 2008). After the recent decline of the influence of the agricultural lobby, it became possible to put landscape protection back on the political agenda (Fig. 3.2).



Fig. 3.2 Aerial photograph of the characteristic peatland landscape of the western Netherlands (National Landscape Groene Hart), 2007. In the centre of the photo is a *geriefhoutbosje*, a coppice for private use by farmers (Photo: Courtesy of Paul Minkjan)

As a result of the designation of the twenty National Landscapes, 20% of the total land surface of the Netherlands is more or less protected – ‘more or less’, since the current regime does not provide much actual protection. The guiding principle is that development is allowed provided it takes certain aspects into account, such as the preservation of cultural heritage. This is a typically Dutch solution: some areas are protected, but then again, they are not really protected. Whether this approach will result in effective protection of complete cultural landscapes is doubtful, for it requires constant attention as well as continuity in policy (Janssen et al., 2007). According to Dirx (2009), the state has set a bad example in this respect, leaving the protection of National Landscapes almost completely in the hands of provincial authorities and providing hardly any guidelines or recommendations.

Interest in landscape and cultural heritage culminated in 1999 with the Belvedere Memorandum on cultural heritage and spatial planning (*Nota Belvedere*) (Ministries of OCW, LNV, VROM and V&W, 1999). This memorandum, which was endorsed by no less than four ministries, introduced an approach named ‘conservation through development’, which involves the incorporation of cultural-historical values (archaeology, built heritage, and historical landscape) into new developments (e.g. building, infrastructure, and nature development). This strategy has proved to be very successful (Evaluatie Belvedere, 2008). The Belvedere memorandum also contained a map of national cultural-historical values, which has had great impact on national and provincial policy. Moreover, the project agency has taken several initiatives. Thanks to project subsidies, over 300 projects (local, regional, national, and knowledge-based) could be executed, all of them variations on the central concept of ‘conservation through development’. Since then, attention to the cultural landscape as part of the cultural heritage has increased, and historical geographers and archaeologists no longer have to beg for it. Quite the reverse; they have found themselves cooperating with landscape architects and spatial planners. This has proved to be a fruitful relationship.

3.3 Landscape Biography

The national government in the Netherlands is responsible for the protection of what are termed the ‘core qualities’ of the twenty National Landscapes (such as maintenance of characteristic field patterns or different kinds of small-scale landscape elements). The state, in close cooperation with the provincial authorities, provides National Landscapes with a certain degree of protection through the application of spatial planning instruments. These ‘core qualities’ are described in the Land Use Planning Memorandum, but only imprecisely and in general terms. One may also wonder whether the inhabitants of the National Landscapes recognize these ‘core qualities’ as the most important qualities of the landscape they live in. Research has shown that people have more appreciation for local and regional history, and for the stories that relate to the history of their own landscape, than they have for larger, more abstract issues (Koedoot, 2004).

Research into historical cultural landscapes in the Netherlands increasingly involves the concept of 'landscape biography'. Dutch archaeologist Jan Kolen introduced this concept in the Netherlands. He considered it to be a helpful instrument in the continuous struggle between, on the one hand, the material landscape and, on the other, the world of ideas, meanings, representations, and memories (Kolen, 2005). Landscapes change constantly, just like people and even objects (see e.g. Kopytoff, 1986). These changes involve their material shape, their meaning, and their interpretation (Kolen, 1993; Hidding et al., 2001). Hence landscapes can be read like a book, albeit a book without a clear beginning and definitely without an end. The concept of landscape biography is particularly useful when studying and describing long-term developments in the relation between people and their environment, as well as the processes related to this. It does, however, demand an interdisciplinary approach involving the disciplines such as physical geography, archaeology, historical geography, building history, and historical ecology (Groenewoudt, 2006). The most important goals and points of consideration (Hidding et al., 2001) are:

- The effects of processes of change, dynamics, and 'breaks' in the history of landscapes on the dimensions of continuity and sustainability
- The perception of landscape history in the past
- Landscape development considered in the (very) long term, including both the earliest (pre-5000BP) and the youngest (post-120BP) habitation history
- The relation between the historical and the present dimensions of a landscape; this last point implies an active role for the present inhabitants and users of the landscape.

A landscape-biographical approach also makes it possible to describe a landscape not merely as a physical but also as a social and a mental reality. Studies of the physical landscape (e.g. soil, vegetation, reclamation patterns, settlement patterns, and infrastructure) can incorporate cognitive and cultural perspectives, such as past and present appropriation of the landscape and mental ordering of space (Roymans, 1995; Rooijakkers, 1999). Folk tales and place-names, among other things, can be used as sources of information for this.

The awareness that landscape itself is a history book is important for closing the gap between national and local or regional interests. Applying the concept of 'landscape biography' in daily practice, however, is far from easy because of its multiple perspectives. It aims to produce scientific knowledge about a landscape and its history, but at the same time also focuses on the knowledge and perceptions of the inhabitants and users of that landscape (Abrahamse et al., 2008).

Recently, the Cultural Heritage Agency, in cooperation with several Dutch universities and a large number of other organizations, explored the implementation of the 'biography concept' in the context of the research programme 'Protecting and Developing the Dutch Archaeological-Historical Landscape (2001–2007)' (Knaap and Valk, 2006). Within this programme, four regional research projects were designed. In each of these interdisciplinary projects, dealing respectively with parts

of the northern, southern, western and eastern Netherlands, attempts were made to establish useful connections between science, policy, and daily practice. The chosen research methods and results displayed a considerable degree of variation, depending on the specific topics addressed, the local socio-political circumstances, and the backgrounds and viewpoints of the researchers involved. For instance, within the project dealing with the Drentsche Aa region, situated in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands, a wide variety of quite successful ‘applied’ and interlinked projects were given shape in close collaboration with the inhabitants. Examples are an interactive digital cultural atlas and a project dealing with field names, resulting in an easy accessible book (Elerie and Spek, 2009). What all these activities have in common is that they aim at using heritage to inspire future developments.

Cooperation with local inhabitants is especially important for organizations involved in the protection of historical landscapes. Such cooperation offers opportunities to link the biography approach to other instruments, such as the Landscape Development Plan (LDP). It is thus able to close the gap between ‘official’ cultural heritage and ‘popular’ cultural heritage with regard to how each group values a landscape or its elements. According to Duineveld (2006), this gap can be a problem, especially for archaeology.

The biography approach also makes it possible to combine landscape history with landscape architecture and landscape planning. Studying the forces that shaped the landscape as we know it today can help us to tackle current problems.

3.4 Landscape Development Plans

The Landscape Development Plan is the main instrument available to local governments for landscape management and landscape development (Fig. 3.3). The first LDP (called Landscape Policy Plan until 2001) was completed in 1988. It was essentially a ‘green plan’, dealing mainly with greenery around farms and alongside roads in agricultural landscapes. This was to be expected in the circumstances of the time, when natural values received little attention. During the next 15 years, two thirds of all municipalities in the Netherlands drafted a Landscape Policy Plan (Baas and Herwaarden, 2001). The special subsidy from the Ministry of Agriculture proved to be very successful. A municipality is entitled to a refund of up to 50% of the costs, and if several municipalities combine their application this may reach 75%. This is conditional on the outsourcing of the drafting of the plan to a bureau that employs at least one registered landscape architect. Towards the end of the twentieth century, when the Belvedere Memorandum was published, the traditional conservation policies were replaced by the ‘conservation through development’ strategy. The Landscape Policy Plan became the Landscape Development Plan, and the role of cultural heritage was emphasized (Baas and Herwaarden, 2001). On the occasion of the formal introduction of the LDP, Geke Faber, then undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, clearly formulated the goals of the LDPs:

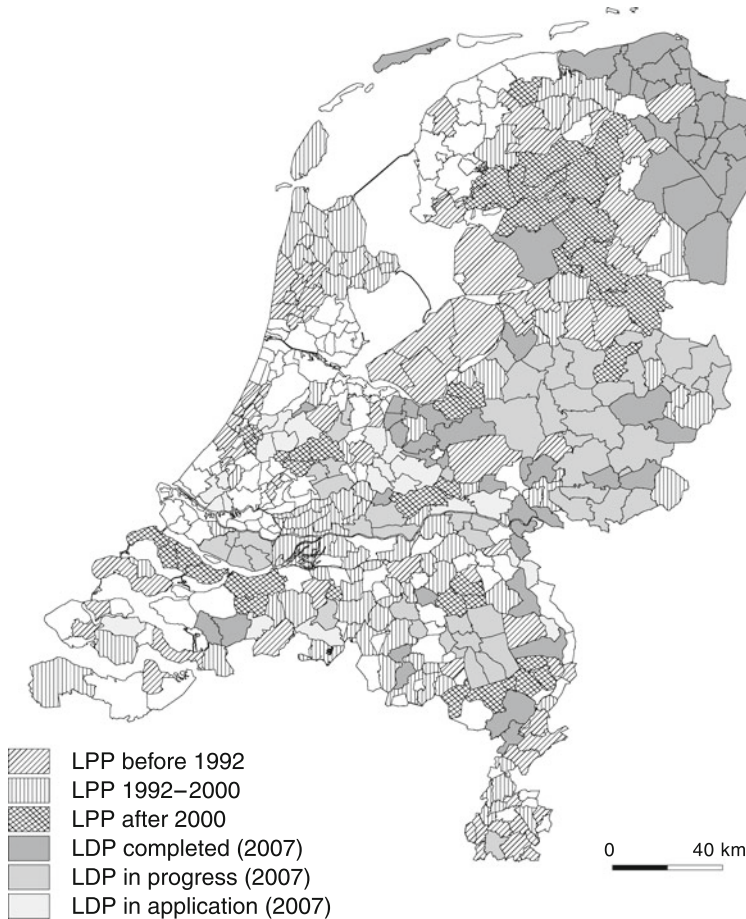


Fig. 3.3 Location of current Landscape Policy Plans (LPP) and Landscape Development Plans (LDP) in the Netherlands. There are notably fewer such plans in the densely populated, western part of the country

they were to contribute to the dynamics and by extension to the quality of the landscape. Furthermore, they were expected to support local and regional initiatives in such a way that these would contribute to the preservation of the specific character and variety of the Dutch landscape (Fig. 3.4). The role of the general public in these processes was important, and the general public were to be involved to a greater extent than had hitherto been the case (Woestenburg, 2008).

Another aspect of LDPs is their emphasis on implementation. Evaluation of previous policy instruments has brought to light their lack of attention to this particular issue (Verhoeven, 2000). The new policy and its associated subsidies actively stimulate the implementation of plans, for example by offering compensation for the appointment of a landscape coordinator. Evaluation has demonstrated

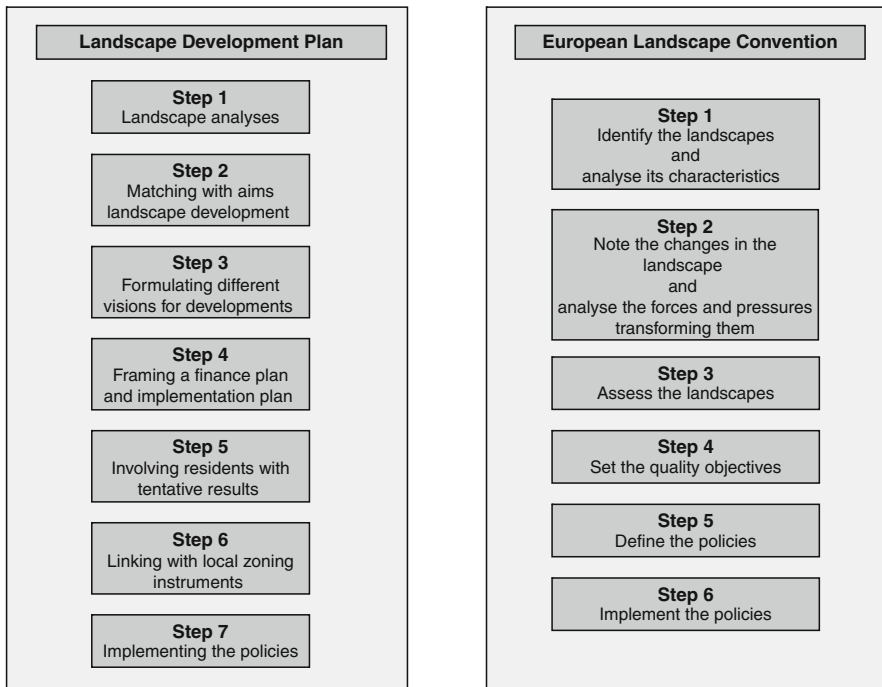


Fig. 3.4 The phased plan for the implementation of Landscape Development Plans, largely proceeding in accordance with the policy process proposed by the European Landscape Convention

that the presence of such a coordinator greatly contributes to the success of an LDP (Landschapsbeheer Utrecht, 2000).

An important element of an LDP is analysis of landscape genesis, which in turn generates information important to the formulation of a landscape vision. However, the specific methods for such an analysis are not prescribed, and each company that is involved is free to make its own choices. The provisions of the subsidy do not specify this point. Nonetheless, the municipality can make other demands, such as for the involvement of specialists.

The aspect of participation by the general public makes LDPs very attractive to politicians and policy-makers. Research into the perception of landscape by the general public demonstrates that there is a growing interest in landscape and landscape history. Although scientific research on this is scarce, it is estimated that a quarter of the Dutch population (i.e. roughly 4 million people) are actively involved with landscape, for example by helping with maintenance, by buying local products, or by participating in local landscape policies (Overbeek and Vader, 2008). Local people can and wish to take care of their own affairs, particularly when the landscape they live in is involved. More and more people can be expected to take the initiative, and local authorities should encourage this. This is what is meant by 'local ownership' (Vos et al., 2007).

The Landscape Development Plan is an easily accessible instrument that is designed in cooperation with local organizations. However, there is still room for improvement of this cooperation between the general public and professionals. The influence of non-professionals is generally rather limited and to a great extent dependent on the help of others (e.g. the local municipality or companies). In order to increase this influence, a Dutch non-governmental organization (NGO) involved in countryside management, *Landschapsbeheer Nederland*, has initiated a project called *Thuis in Groen* ('At Home in the Green'), which we will return to later.

Towards the end of 2008, the Ministries of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) and Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) issued the Agenda Landscape. In this document, both ministries present their plans for the next 12 years with regard to the preservation and development of landscape values in the Netherlands. It explicitly points to the municipalities for the implementation of the Agenda. Subsidies for the drafting of LDPs remained available until 2009, after which the government is redirecting these resources towards a stimulation measure that is comparable in purpose but focuses more on implementation and integration. This means that planning will receive fewer subsidies but implementation will be encouraged more. It also means that co-financing by other parties, including the municipality itself, will become necessary.

Besides introducing the Agenda Landscape, the government, in cooperation with other authorities and organizations (including *Landschapsbeheer Nederland*), also wishes to investigate yet another policy instrument: Landscape Impact Analysis (LIA), which investigates expected changes and developments and their effect on the landscape.

Nonetheless the LDPs will not disappear, for every individual municipality can still decide to draft one. It is to be expected, however, that with the disappearance of some of the existing subsidies the growth in the number of new LDPs will slow down compared to previous years. As long as financial resources are redirected towards the implementation of the plans, the landscape could still benefit. The future will tell if this will be the case. What has already become apparent is that the landscape coordinators appointed by some municipalities are doing excellent work, trying to get the policy targets formulated in the LDPs implemented.

Reformulating their conditions with regard to landscape analysis (which are at present rather vague) in more specific and detailed terms, in combination with explicit references to culture history, would turn LDPs into even more powerful instruments.

Box 3.1 An example: the past landscape of *Berlewalde*

The forgotten medieval *Berlewalde* wilderness (Fig. 3.5) may serve as a powerful source of inspiration to shape new local developments within the context of a Landscape Development Plan. *Berlewalde* (the name is *pars*

pro toto) once covered much of the low-lying and formerly marshy centre of the Achterhoek region (Groenewoudt and Keunen, 2008; Van Beek, 2009). For many centuries this was a border zone. Nowadays low-lying areas are predominantly pasture and used intensively for cattle-breeding and milk production. The landscape is flat, parcelled out in large sections and open. It was reshaped after the vast, virtually treeless commons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were partitioned in the nineteenth century and subsequently reallocated in the twentieth century.

Between the Iron Age and the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries AD, however, the area looked radically different. *Berlewalde* was a sparsely populated landscape covered by a mosaic of wood pasture (*Hudewald*), dense woodland (predominantly alder carr), coppice, shrubs, marshland, and raised bog. Habitation was for a long time restricted to a few isolated sandy ridges and the banks of the river Berkel. *Berlewalde* initially had a spectacular fauna: brown bear, elk, red deer, roe deer, wild boar, wolf, beaver, common crane, etc. Medieval sources up until c.1500 AD also mention the herding of 'forest horses' and 'wild horses'.

The area was reclaimed from the thirteenth century onwards. The last woodlands disappeared largely in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although some patches may have survived longer (Groenewoudt et al., 2007).

Berlewalde could potentially become an attractive historical reference point, and a source of inspiration for the realization of policies concerning water management and nature conservation, certainly for the development of recreation and tourism, and for the establishment of the 'new country estates'. There are several possibilities:

1. Spatial planning and landscape architecture could try to mark a deliberate contrast between the highly domesticated and planned modern landscape and the older, more chaotic and mysterious *Berlewalde* wilderness.
2. *Berlewalde* could become an authentic and inspiring frame of reference for nature conservation, nature development, and water management.
3. *Berlewalde* could contribute to regional branding (and encourage a sense of regional identity).
4. *Berlewalde* definitely would make an ideal breeding ground for more adventurous recreational activities.
5. The reintroduction of semi-wild horses would fit in well with the ongoing 'horsification' of the Dutch countryside. *Wildpferde* (wild horses) like those that formerly roamed *Berlewalde* have survived in the Merfelder Bruch nature reserve near Dülmen in Germany, where they are a major tourist attraction (Die Dölmener Wildpferde... n.d.) (Fig. 3.6).
6. The reintroduction of charcoal-burning (terminated in 1906) would give tourists and local people the opportunity to use *Berlewalde* charcoal for their barbecues. It could also help to make traditional coppicing

profitable again. The charcoal-burning itself could also be a tourist attraction.

7. Resuming coppicing would have a positive effect on the (now declining) biodiversity and recreational value of woodland and hedges.
8. Investigating, explaining, and using landscapes of the past may help to communicate the reality that landscape change is normal.

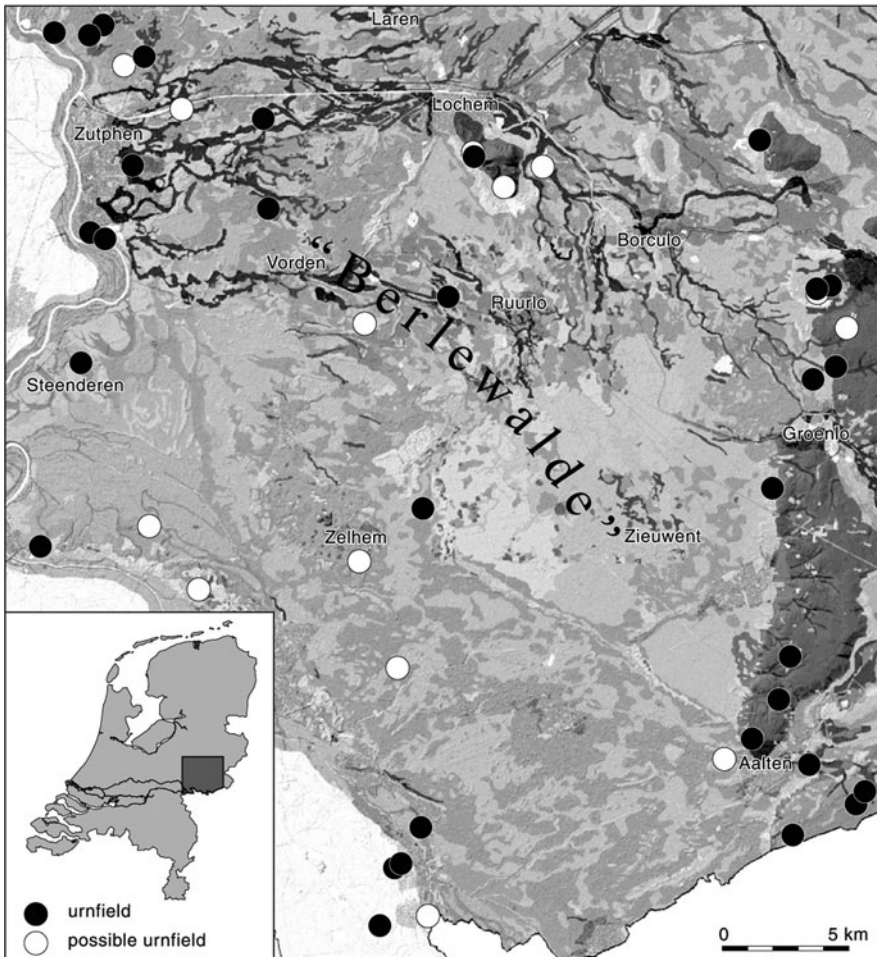


Fig. 3.5 The medieval *Berlewalde* wilderness in the Achterhoek region of eastern Netherlands. In general, the area contains very little archaeology predating the late Middle Ages. This is illustrated by the distribution of urnfields (1000–500 BC)



Fig. 3.6 Wild horses are a major tourist attraction in the German Merfelder Bruch nature reserve near Dülmen (2008). Reintroducing wild horses to *Berlewalde* would fit in with the ongoing ‘horsification’ of the modern landscape and stimulate tourism (Photo: Courtesy of Gitta Gesing)

3.5 Biography Approach and Landscape Development Plan

An interdisciplinary approach with a biographical perspective can be an important stimulus for local interest and involvement (see Box 3.1 for an example of the biography approach). This makes the biography concept a particularly useful tool for the study and description of landscapes, for instance when a Landscape Development Plan is to be drafted.

We will illustrate this point using a Landscape Development Plan for a part of the Dutch Achterhoek region in the east of the Netherlands, involving the municipalities of Bronckhorst, Lochem and Zutphen. The eastern Netherlands is rapidly being transformed from a predominantly agricultural area into the multifunctional eastern rim of the Dutch ‘Delta Metropolis’ (*Deltametropool*). The area is also increasingly becoming a transit zone between Rotterdam harbour and the growing markets in the east, especially in eastern Europe. These developments are accompanied by major changes that in turn have important effects upon the landscape. There is growing demand for recreational and housing facilities, water management offers multiple challenges, and agriculture is undergoing rapid changes. The implementation of the National Ecological Network (*Ecologische Hoofdstructuur*) involves nature

development as well as the designation of several National Landscapes. Furthermore, there are plans for the development of a number of ‘new country estates’ (*nieuwe landgoederen*). A new country estate is a publicly accessible area, including a residential building with up to two or three units and a minimum size of at least 5 ha of forest. The house itself creates an architectural unity with the surrounding greenery.

The interdisciplinary Eastern Netherlands Project (*Oost-Nederland Project*) of Wageningen University and the Cultural Heritage Agency was initiated to study in-depth, and for the first time, the landscape history of the area, and to generate ideas and tools to keep its past alive in a rapidly changing environment. The participants in this project included municipalities, counties, water boards, and nature conservation organizations (Beek and Keunen, 2006).

The new expertise generated by the Eastern Netherlands Project will be applied to the drafting of new Landscape Development Plans. For the LDP Bronckhorst-Lochem-Zutphen, this process has already been initiated through workshops (Ziel and Baarslag, 2008). In these workshops several organizations contributed: the municipalities of Bronckhorst, Lochem and Zutphen; the Regional Tourism Board; the Federation of Private Landowners; several interest groups in the fields of agriculture and horticulture, liveability of the countryside and small villages, and nature and landscape preservation; the District Water Board; and the provincial authorities of Gelderland. The workshops indicated that there was much local interest, particularly in the unexpected degree to which the landscape appeared to have been dynamic, and in the previously unknown ‘chronological layers’ in the history of the landscape. Knowledge of these forgotten landscapes offers unexpected opportunities to shape the landscape of the future. Raising awareness of and using past landscapes may also help to communicate the incontestable fact that landscapes always and inevitably change.

3.6 Landscape Manifesto and the European Landscape Convention

The European Landscape Convention was ratified by the Netherlands in 2005. All ratifying countries must implement a ‘systematic landscape policy’, and they must also guarantee the involvement of local communities. With the publication of two national memorandums and the designation of the twenty National Landscapes, the Netherlands fulfilled the first requirement. At the lower levels of administration, the policy has either not yet been worked out in sufficient detail, or focuses too much on nature conservation, and there is still much work to do in this respect.

The ELC was the inspiration for a unique cooperation of thirty-four organizations in the Netherlands, resulting in the formulation of the Landscape Manifesto (Landschapsbeheer Nederland, 2006). The main purpose of this manifesto is to emphasize to politicians, decision-makers, and the general public the importance of landscape. Its ultimate purpose is to create a more attractive landscape. Besides

organizations involved with nature and landscape, participants also include organizations with other goals such as the Dutch Society of Property Developers. Cooperation between these different types of organization is essential, because landscape is everywhere and always present, and is owned by everyone. As stated in the ELC, the landscape is integral, regional and cross-border in scope.

For the past 3 years, several study groups of the Manifesto have worked hard to convert its goals into actual projects. One of the results is the establishment of Civilscape, a platform of NGOs from all over Europe that support the European Landscape Convention (Civilscape n.d.). In 2009 the platform started a campaign to raise awareness of landscape, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

The wide interest in landscape is demonstrated by the existence of the twenty National Landscapes, the European Landscape Convention, and the Landscape Manifesto. There are, moreover, numerous local initiatives as well as several instruments that aim to create and improve a durable landscape. Many of these organizations, projects, and initiatives involve to a greater or lesser extent local inhabitants. These initiatives are based on the principle of 'local ownership', which is concerned with small-scale participation by an area's inhabitants in local projects (Vos et al., 2007).

3.7 Dutch Approaches to Participatory Planning

Besides instruments designed to make information on the historical cultural landscape available to policy-makers, it is equally important – in the spirit of the European Landscape Convention – to involve non-professionals in all the planning stages. Several recent initiatives attempt to do just that, for example the project called 'At Home in the Green' started by *Landschapsbeheer Nederland* in cooperation with the National Association of Small Communities (*Landelijke Vereniging Kleine Kernen*). The project aims to test the ECOVAST (European Council for the Village and Small Town) method (Fig. 3.7) (ECOVAST, 2006). ECOVAST resembles the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), a method used in the UK by which local residents are stimulated to become involved in their environment (Swanwick, 2002). Where historical and archaeological values are involved, a variant of this method is the Historic Landscape Character Assessment (HLC) (Fairclough n.d.). ECOVAST operates on a smaller scale than LCA, and places more emphasis on the role of local residents. 'At Home in the Green' attempts in a structured manner to create a sense of place within the landscape by closely cooperating with the residents. The method can be used to allow spatial development to fit in better in the local environment, to accentuate important landscape types, and potentially to stimulate people to take care of the landscape themselves. At present it is still too early for conclusions, but the first results from the province of Friesland look promising.

The ECOVAST method assists municipal councils both with the protection of existing landscapes and with attempts to achieve desired situations. The guiding



Fig. 3.7 The ECOVAST method helps local residents assess their landscape (2006), and can at local level facilitate the planning, protection, maintenance, and improvement of landscapes (Photo: Courtesy of Landschapsbeheer Nederland)

principle of the method is to determine which aspects of the landscape are important to the residents of the village, district, or neighbourhood. On the basis of information about what is already valuable to them and what perhaps need extra attention, plans will be drawn up to realize the ideas that came up, e.g. forming ‘green teams’, which will enthusiastically take care of the landscape and its nature. Crucial to the success of ECOVAST (and indeed any LCA) is that the results receive formal status by being incorporated in the spatial plans of the local government, for this will prove to the residents that their efforts have been successful.

This approach is an example of what is variously called participatory planning, communicative planning, interactive planning, and consensus planning (Sager, 1994; Roo et al., 2001). As elsewhere in Europe, this type of planning process has rapidly gained ground in the Netherlands, in reaction to the classic type of planning process in which the authorities and property developers would launch major plans without first properly consulting residents and other stakeholders. In the new type of planning, these groups are involved at a very early stage in the process, allowing them to present any alternative ideas they might have. The extra time invested early in the planning process will be regained at a later stage.

A fine example of participatory planning took place in Den Hoorn, a small village on the largest Dutch Wadden Sea island, Texel (Vos et al., 2007). A group of farmers and local entrepreneurs took the initiative for a Village Surroundings Plan. The main goal of this plan was to develop the potential for sustainable tourism and recreation. The study group and the municipality did not want an abstract document but instead a straightforward list of things to do that could give new impulses to

existing ideas. The Village Surroundings Plan was drafted during an interactive process involving residents and other interested people, with a professional landscape architect assisting. A group of representatives from the municipality, the province, and the international cross-border project ‘Landscape and Cultural Heritage of the Wadden Sea Region’ (LanceWad n.d.) provided feedback to the project. The residents were, and still are, themselves responsible for the execution of the plan, during which a typically agrarian landscape such as Texel’s will gradually be transformed into a recreational one. This transformation involves a variety of actions:

- New small landscape elements will be planted or created (as the case may be) in cooperation with local farmers (Fig. 3.8)
- Old elements such as the characteristic sheepfolds of the area will be converted into hikers’ cabins
- New landscape elements will guide visitors through the history of Den Hoorn and the surrounding landscape
- Pilot beacons will refer to the maritime history of Texel and Den Hoorn.

According to Elerie (2004), such Village Surroundings Plans create a framework for cooperation between experts and residents, and between historians and designers. It is crucial that research and design supplement each other, and that a participatory design process involves the residents. Working with landscape biographies and Village Surroundings Plans requires historians and designers to develop new methods. The recent planning methods used in the Netherlands, which have



Fig. 3.8 A pond in an agricultural landscape, reconstructed on the initiative of local residents with the assistance of local farmers, 2007 (Photo: Henk Baas)

a local focus with close attention to interactive planning processes and public-private cooperation, require such an approach. This creates new opportunities for the landscape.

3.8 New Chances for the Local Landscape?

In spite of the variety of instruments that are available for the preservation and further development of the landscape, monitoring suggests that the quality of landscapes is deteriorating (Egmond and Vonk, 2007). Indicators of this process are, for example, the backlog in landscape maintenance and the loss of local identity. This is particularly felt by local residents in the case of newly developed business parks.

The new Spatial Planning Act that was introduced by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment in July 2008 gives national and regional governments new opportunities to continue to shape their landscape policy (Ministerie van VROM, 2008). With regard to the assignment of responsibility and authority, the state, provinces, and municipalities are from now on each responsible for their own interests. Provincial or national governments can only interfere with municipal affairs if provincial or national interests make this necessary. On the other hand, under the new Act, the national and provincial governments are authorized to implement their own spatial planning policies, just like the municipalities. National and provincial governments can, moreover, issue general directives and guidelines in order to protect their own interests. This new situation therefore requires a pro-active attitude in which participants take the initiative rather than evaluate afterwards, as was the case prior to July 2008.

Another important element in the Spatial Planning Act and the accompanying Exploitation Act (Ministerie van VROM, 2008) is compensation. New 'red' developments, i.e. detrimental to landscape and/or 'green' values, must be compensated by 'green' investments, with the LDP providing directions for which areas qualify for these green investments. This situation is similar to that in Germany, although the German regulations are more specific and indicate precisely where these green investments should take place. The Dutch LDP is vague on this point, mentioning no specific areas.

A consequence is that the automatic and top-down influence of national policy on regional and local policies no longer exists. If, for instance, a province or other regional authority fails to include detailed national objectives in its own regulations, a local government is no longer obliged to take into account, say, the key qualities of National Landscapes as formulated by the national government. This is a real danger if a provincial government neglects its responsibilities, but it also offers new opportunities. In their regulations, the provinces can stipulate that local governments must formulate new LDPs or include existing ones in their own spatial policy, bringing them into line with provincial policies. This option is strongly promoted by the participants of the Landscape Manifesto. It increases the legal status of LDPs and guarantees their official position in spatial planning.

Provinces can also formulate their own objectives with regard to preserving landscape values in other contexts than National Landscapes. This makes regional regulations a better instrument to strengthen landscape policies than they have been in the past, but whether provincial authorities are willing to use them as such remains to be seen. Landscape Development Plans can also be added to landscape targets adopted earlier, and this makes them a more powerful instrument for local governments.

If both national and regional governments decide not to use these new instruments, the only remaining option is what is termed the ‘national stimulation policy’ (*nationaal stimuleringsbeleid*). This means that information on ‘how to deal with landscape, heritage and preservation’ is given, and that local governments are free to use this information as they see fit. Hence, local governments are not obliged to include landscape policy in their spatial planning, nor do they have to meet National Landscape targets in the drafting of their own most important policy instrument, zoning regulation (*Bestemmingsplan*). They are free to do so, but it is doubtful if they will. Without national or regional directives, the preservation of the Dutch landscape becomes a voluntary, local responsibility. Whether this is good or bad remains an open question.

To us, the ideal situation is one in which each municipality has its own Landscape Development Plan, based on the principle of ‘local ownership’ and supported by such policy instruments as landscape biography, LCA and ECOVAST, and Village Surroundings Plans. Which of these instruments are used is not important, as long as they work (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Summary of policy instruments available to municipalities for assessing landscape quality and maintaining and developing landscapes

	LDP	VDP	ECOVAST	BIOGRAPHY
Context	Municipality to Region	Village + around	Village + around	Village to Region
Who is leading	Experts	Locals	Experts	Experts
Local involvement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Focus upon	Landscape	Livability	Landscape	Landscape history
Legal status	Limited	No	No	No
Fixed set-up	More or less	No	Yes	No
Subsidy	Yes	No	No	No
Method	Mixed	Bottom-up	Mixed	Mixed
Planning tool	Yes	No	Yes	No

LDP Landscape Development Plan

VDP Village Development Plan

ECOVAST European Council for the Village and Small Town

BIOGRAPHY Biography of the Landscape

3.9 Conclusions

The Landscape Development Plans that have been or are being drafted by many Dutch municipalities form a useful framework for policy-making, maintenance, and further development of historical cultural landscapes. The subsidies that are attached to this instrument enable municipalities to formulate their goals at relatively low cost, and to involve other parties in the implementation of the plan. However, it is important that this implementation is approached actively, and that the plans are not left to gather dust at the bottom of a drawer. To ensure an active approach, it has been decided to turn this instrument into one even more focused on implementation.

Another aspect of LDPs is the option to involve the local population in the planning and execution stages. Since this aspect has so far not got off the ground sufficiently, additional policy instruments are being developed, such as the Village Surroundings Plan. This type of plan functions at a more local level and deals to an even greater extent with the local population's wishes with regard to their environment, and with the translation of these wishes into concrete projects. This is local ownership in its purest form.

Furthermore, *Landschapsbeheer Nederland* is currently experimenting with ECOVAST, a variation on the Landscape Character Assessment developed in England. The ECOVAST method can be applied at several levels, such as an LDP or a Village Surroundings Plan.

The concept of landscape biography with its cultural-historical character has been shown to be a welcome addition to the series of landscape policy instruments that are available. Particularly its interdisciplinary approach, its in-depth study of landscape history, and the cooperation of professionals and non-professionals in producing the biography have all added to its value. Professionals and non-professionals differ in their priorities, in the 'histories' they write, and in their assessments of situations. Involving both groups in a landscape planning policy that is intended to have a local basis is essential for creating local support and commitment.

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