

European landscapes: continuity and change

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[Introduction]

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

This paper is partly the result of discussions Theo Spek, Mats Widgren and I had in the past year, preparing for this conference. Our aim was, to bring history back into landscape research. When we look at the present conference, there are many papers on historic and heritage landscapes. But a look at the abstracts also makes clear that very little research goes farther back than the 19th century.

The main aim of my paper is to stress the importance of research into the long-term history of landscapes. I had prepared a short paper on this subject. During the last three evenings I have extended the paper, which made it possible to develop my arguments a bit further. I was lucky to find some more pictures on my laptop, but it was impossible to check all my data and references.

DIA 1 Structure of my paper

What I plan to do in this paper is, after an introduction, say some general things on landscape change. Next I will give some examples of changes in European landscapes during the Early Modern Period. Then I will say a few things about research. I will conclude my paper with some remarks on the consequences for heritage planning.

DIA 2 Frame Gaasterland

But let me start with a few words on the definition of landscapes. When I first visited one of the PECSRL-conferences, in 1981, this discussion was almost non-existent. Most papers were on the history of village types and field-patterns or, to use a then popular term, the morphogenesis of the cultural landscape.

Since the 1980s, there is an ongoing discussion on definitions of landscape. However, to summarise this discussion as short as possible, two meanings are essential. The first is the medieval meaning of a landscape as a territory, with the institutions that govern and manage it. This meaning can still be found in for example the Dutch region of Drenthe, which is called 'the old landscape'. Also a number of territories in the former Dutch East Indies, which were subjected to indirect rule, were known as 'self-governing landscapes'. These territorial definitions of landscape can be traced through the old German Landschaftsgeographie to modern landscape ecology. Landscapes according to this definition are of course subjective, but at the same time they can be investigated and mapped by fieldwork and archival study. The second meaning developed when painters started to make pictures of rural scenes and called them 'landscapes'. In due course, not just the paintings, but also their object itself became known as landscape. Dutch painters re-introduced the word landscape in the English language, where the word therefore had a more visual meaning than on the Continent. These visual definitions make landscape into a composition that is made within one's mind. With these definitions, without observers there is no landscape.

Since the early 1980s we all lost our innocence in matters like this. We are aware of the subjectivity and of the constructed character of our ways of looking at landscapes. Nevertheless, in my paper, I will stay closer to the first definition and will look primarily at the concrete landscapes of settlements, field-patterns and agrarian land-use types.

It is good to realise that, in the shadow of the academic discussions on concepts and meanings of landscape, also the more traditional research into landscape history has made some progress. Much of this research points to the dynamics of landscape development. Although landscapes do show continuities, they are also subject to transformations. In general, we now see the history of the cultural landscape as more complex, but also as more interesting, than we some decades ago.

On the other hand, in landscape planning as well as in landscape ecology it is still too often taken for granted that the recent and present transformations of European landscapes are more or less unique. Recent dynamics are presented as opposed to a 'traditional' landscape that seems not just more stable but also less troubled than the present one. In my opinion, these ideas tell us more about the present authors than about the history of landscapes. It is not just incomplete history writing: it is the writing of desired history.

From recent literature, I took two examples of graphics that show this idea of traditional landscapes. Both come from books that were published in 2007 and that I see as important contributions to the field of landscape studies and both come from researchers I admire (and that are today with us). But in this aspect I take the freedom to disagree with them.

DIA 3 Model Pedroli et al.

This first picture comes from a book edited by Bas Pedroli and shows a landscape-ecological vision. This graphic shows a more or less linear development, in which human influence grew and landscape diversity as well as biodiversity grew with it, reaching a maximum around 1900. Among Dutch ecologists, there is a long tradition behind this graph. Already during the 1930s, the ecologist Victor Westhoff, a key figure in the history of Dutch nature conservation, made a distinction between the earlier human activities that enriched nature, as opposed to the recent human influences that have diminished diversity. It is a viewpoint that is not without discussion among ecologists, as there are others who claim that a purely natural ecosystem has the highest biodiversity and all human influence is a degradation of natural systems.

But what troubles me today is this vision of a gradual, linear development towards a kind of landscape climax in the period around 1900.

DIA 4 Model Antrop

The second graphic is from Marc Antrop's recent book. It shows more history, with phases of dynamics and phases of stability, but also in this graphic, the twentieth century is fundamentally different from all earlier centuries.

In my paper, I oppose the vision of a distinction between modern, dynamic cultural landscapes on the one hand, and 'traditional', relatively stable landscapes on the other. Many landscapes have gone through a number of transformations during the last millennia. Between such dynamic periods, there have been periods of relative stability, in which

landscapes could become 'old' (which in the present period often leads to an interest from the heritage-sector).

DIA 5 Land use in Central Europe

This graph shows a number of changes that can only be described as radical. Changes in land use that stand for transformations of the European landscape, are strongly related to periods of population growth or decline. The end of the Roman period shows a strong decline, which went together with desertions and a return of forests. After that, a long period of growth started, accelerating in the 10th and 11th centuries. In the 14th century a combination of epidemics and other causes led to a catastrophic decline of population numbers and, hence, an agrarian crisis. A slow recovery was followed by the so-called 'long sixteenth century', a period of prosperity for farmers. Another crisis followed in the middle of the seventeenth century, to be followed by another period of growth a century later.

DIA 6 Effects of population pressure

The geographer David Grigg gave a systematic review of the effects of population pressure. In his vision, population growth in a pre-industrial society will mean a growth of agrarian production, by reclamations, specialisation, new varieties, more productive crops and reduction of fallow. Another effect is the growth of non-agrarian occupations. Migration and birth-control are mechanisms to diminish population pressure. It is interesting to note that a number of these developments, in particular specialisation, the growth of non-agrarian occupations and migration to towns, point to a stronger economic integration.

DIA 7 Land use in Central Europe

So, we can expect that some periods, in particular the 10th to 14th centuries, have been characterised by many of the processes I just mentioned. In most of Central Europe, colonisation, reclamation and urbanisation led to a situation around 1300 in which almost all present towns and villages already existed and in which even some regions were more populated than even today.

DIA 8 Waldhufen in the Black Forest

Here some typical results of large scale and partly planned colonisation during this period. Also the 'long 16th century' and the second half of the 18th century have been periods of strong growth. Not only was new land reclaimed. Other changes were, for example, the introduction of new techniques and new crops, the diminishing of fallow etc. Many of these changes take place within an existing landscape structure. During the Early Modern Period, many open fields saw new types of use, when an earlier infield-outfieldsystem, with a monoculture of grain on the infield, gave way to permanent arable on which complex and ever more individualised rotations of grain, fodder crops, nitrogen fixators and cash crops took place. In many regions, these developments were incorporated within the existing fragmented strip-fields.

On the other hand, some new crops led to large direct as well as indirect changes. The potato had some direct effects on the landscape, as it was grown partly on places where no other crops survived. Relics of the potato are the small fields in the Dutch coastal dunes as well as the lazy-beds in Ireland. But the potato (for most of Europe) and the maize (for the

Mediterranean) had particularly large indirect effects on the landscape by making a much larger population density possible, especially in regions with poor sandy soils.

As opposed to the effects of growth, periods of crisis were characterised by decline and extensification. Especially the fourteenth and early fifteenth century were a period when arable was converted to grassland and grassland to forest and in which thousands of settlements were deserted. The remaining farmers usually had more land than before. Such was the degree of economic integration in Europe, that these processes took place almost everywhere on the continent.

DIA 9 'Ostkolonisation' and 'Wüstungen'

This slide shows how the landscape in central Europe underwent two radical transformations in a few centuries. The first was the colonisation movement during the 10th to 14th centuries, when north-western Europe more or less exploded and people from this region colonised regions that were, at least in most cases, thinly populated. From England, a first wave of settlers moved into Ireland, from France people moved southward to fill the open spaces in the lands that were conquered on the Muslims and from the German lands people moved eastward, following routes through the coastal marshes and through the mountain ranges and avoiding the much more populated lowlands. The westward and southward moving colonists quickly merged with the existing population, but the ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe kept their own language and identity and added to the ethnic mosaic that characterised Eastern Europe until the Second World War and in some regions even longer.

This colonisation was followed almost immediately by the collapse of the late-medieval crisisperiod. Particularly in some of the mountainous regions, population numbers declined sharply and some of these regions did not recover until the present day.

Now the examples of processes I mentioned, make clear that some developments, such as reclamation of new arable lands, lead to changes in the morphology of the landscape. But other developments can lead to substantial changes in the way the landscape functions but need not necessarily bring direct changes in the landscape.

DIA 10 Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

This series of maps of a village in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (northeast-Germany) shows the complexities of local historical developments. A medieval village with a three-field system developed into a landed estate with the estate farm exploiting the complete former village territory. The former free farmers were reduced to the status of farm labourers. A short-lived land-reform in 1946, that divided the estate, was followed quickly by collectivisation. The collective farm has certain similarities with the old estate farm, certainly where it used the same buildings. The manor house usually became the office of the local party-leader. After 1989 many of the collective farms were privatised, collapsed and were taken over by private persons, often from Western Germany. They now run the former village as a large private farm.

So, the first transformation did change the landscape too. But since then, although ownership patterns, economic systems and political systems showed drastic changes, in the landscape structure much continuity can be distinguished.

DIA 11 Czech-Austrian border

People make structures, but structures also limit people's possibilities for change. In one of Monday's papers Anita Zarina talked about path dependency. This picture shows the Austrian-Czech border. On the Austrian side, an incredible small-scale landscape survives, which makes large-scale farming difficult and must be one of the reasons that Austria has one of the strongest organic farming sectors in Europe. On the other side of the border, the Czech landscape has been completely reorganised with the introduction of collective farming after the communist take-over. After 1989, most farmers decided to continue the large-scale collective farms, now as a cooperation on a voluntarily basis.

Anyway, economic and functional change is partly independent from morphological change. In this respect, a landscape can be compared to a building, that can change from a factory to a supermarket and to luxury apartments and still keeps its internal structure and external appearance, although it gets ever new meanings. This brings me to another aspect: the relation between landscapes, landscape change and the inhabitants of that landscape. Part of this relation is defined by landscape preferences.

DIA 12 Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot - Between Lake Geneva and the Alps

As the landscapes themselves, these preferences show an interesting combination of continuity and change. It seems that the savannah-like landscapes, such as medieval game parks (and probably also the montados) have always been liked. In fact positive opinions about the aesthetic qualities of these landscapes already date from the Middle Ages, from before the so-called discovery of the landscape during the Renaissance.

The sublime landscapes, such as the high mountains and the sea, were only discovered during the 18th century. During the Middle Ages, the Alps were seen as bleak and dangerous, as a place to avoid when possible, even as a place where even dragons still lived. During the 18th and 19th century, these same Alps were transformed into the main tourist destination of the European elite. Similar stories can be told about the English Lake District and about the sea coast.

As most definitions of the term 'landscape' use the term perception, we may say that different meanings of landscape do change the landscape. So, landscapes can change in meaning and still keep the same structure.

But there is another aspect of the relation between landscapes and inhabitants I want to ask your attention for. In old history writing and in modern planning, there is a lot of nostalgic ideas about local people being heavily connected with their surrounding landscape and therefore being the best suited for shaping the future of their landscapes.

Although I am greatly in favour of participatory planning, the idea of a long-standing local population as partner is, in my opinion, romantic wishful thinking. Not only is a landscape handed over to a next generation every few decades, but also have there ever been movements of population. People living in a landscape they shaped themselves, are the exception, not the rule.

DIA 13 Slavonice

And what is true for individuals also holds for communities as a whole. This picture shows the small town of Slavonice in the southern part of the Czech Republic. For many centuries the small town was named Zlabings and was populated mainly by ethnic Germans. In 1938, after the Munich Agreement, the region was handed over to Nazi Germany. The Jewish population and the ethnic Czechs were evicted and the "Unterer Platz" or Lower Square was

renamed "Adolf-Hitler-Platz". In 1945 the German population in turn was evicted and the town was repopulated with Czechs, partly from nearby, partly from further away (part of the new empty spaces in the Czech mountains were repopulated with so-called Wolga Czech, the descendents of people who had migrated to Russia during the 19th century). The communists, who came to power in 1948, renamed the square "Namesti Miru" or Peace Square. In 1953, after the Russians withdrew from Austria, the town became part of the border zone, just behind the Iron Curtain, and was more or less isolated. A few years later, the government decided that the built heritage was threatened by crisis and depopulation and the town was taken out of the border zone. It more or less survived the rest of the communist period. Since the fall of communism, the town was discovered by artists, who settled there in some numbers. Now the town is a relatively quiet tourist attraction near a minor border crossing. Stories like this can be told in many places in Central and Eastern Europe. The town of Gdansk is rebuilt by and for a recently settled Polish population and the former Polis town of Lvov is now inhabited by people from the Ukraine. These new inhabitants prove to be able to develop strong ties with a town that was built by other ethnic groups or even former enemies. This example show that sometimes behind a heritage landscape lies a very troubled history.

DIA 14 Connemara

It is not the only example. Is this a traditional landscape? The west of Ireland is one of the iconic heritage landscapes of Europe, full of relics from every period in history and prehistory and even inhabited with some of the last people who speak some language no-one understands (Irish). But again, it is a landscape with a troubled history. Two centuries ago, this landscape was full of people. Around 1840 Ireland had some 8 million inhabitants, as many as England. Now Ireland has five million, a tenth of the English population. The potato-crisis, but also the failure of 19th-century Ireland to industrialise, made this poor and overcrowded landscape into a poor and empty landscape. The ruined church is a relic of this history.

[Landscape change during the Early Modern Period]

But there is not just a history, but also a geography of change. Let's start with a global map of landscape types.

DIA 15 Landscapes (Lebeau/Clout)

The main landscape types are often seen as structuring very stable differences within the European landscape. Everyone who takes the fast train from Paris to the west of France is struck by the almost sudden change of the landscape, from the huge grainfields of the Paris Basin, the open fields with their large nucleated villages hidden in the stream valleys, to the small-scale enclosed landscape of the so-called bocage (in fact not a very lucky term, because it originally means a forested landscape). Although many villages and hamlets here had small open fields, the overwhelming image is that of a very much individualised landscape in which farmers living in dispersed farms had all their fields enclosed with hedges or drystone walls. This is perhaps the most fascinating landscape divide in Europe, yet, even this divide is perhaps much stronger than in medieval periods. In the early Middle Ages these landscapes much have looked less different from each other.

One typical aspect of European landscape research is the underestimated dynamics of the Early Modern Period. In the large majority of landscape histories, it is taken for granted that most of our landscapes were founded in a certain period and, after that, remained more or less intact until the 19th or early 20th centuries. But when we look at the main landscape types, they all have changed considerably during the Early Modern Period.

The open fields started as small areas of permanent arable, probably around the 9th or 10th century. In the course of the medieval period, many open fields grew in size and became ever more subdivided in ownership. These processes went on during the Early Modern Period but this period also saw more complex rotations with more different crops (I already mentioned that) and with, as a result, a more individual management. For this reason, we might say that the heyday of these subdivided open arable fields were over by then. Although the open field system still gradually expanded eastward, for example in parts of Russia (including parts of the Baltic states), open fields with a three-field system were introduced during the 16th century. At the same time the open fields in north-western Europe started to disintegrate.

DIA 16 Air photograph Otley

In some regions, the emphasis on arable gave way to specialisation in animal husbandry and this was one of these functional changes that immediately brought changes in landscape morphology. It is almost impossible to combine large-scale commercial animal husbandry with subdivided open fields. The English enclosures were started by landowners who succeeded in buying most of an open field and then evicted the tenants and turned the whole village territory into one large sheep farm. Most medieval deserted settlements in England differ from those on the continent, as in England these desertions are less a retreat from marginal land but are instead the result of an active consolidation process. Typical for the English deserted settlements is, that usually one farm survives.

Similar developments as in England took place elsewhere, for example during the 16th century in the Pays de Herve (north of the industrial and mining town of Liège in present-day Belgium), where a landscape of open fields gave way to an enclosed landscape when the farmers specialised in dairy farming.

DIA 17 Nitz – Development land consolidation

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the English enclosures became a more general procedure that was also used for arable. Now it became part of the making of more efficient arable and mixed farming landscapes. This example was followed by other countries, particularly Denmark, Sweden and some parts of Germany (particularly Hannover, where the ruling family occupied the British throne).

These examples show that the border between open field and enclosed landscapes was moving.

DIA 18 Examples Hodges / Astill & Grant Landscapes

But also the enclosed landscapes themselves were less stable than even most landscape historians have always taken for granted. Recent research in the bocage-landscapes rewrote the history of these seemingly timeless landscapes. Early medieval sources give little evidence of hedges and give the impression of landscapes with small settlements, surrounded by some fields but mainly by extensive common forests and grazings. In the course of the last thousand

years, these landscapes have gradually been filled with newly reclaimed fields, surrounded by hedges. This process continued into the 19th and even 20th centuries, with the situation in the beginning of the twentieth century probably showing the largest length of hedges and drystone walls in history. The land that has been reclaimed later in the twentieth century is visually more open because of the widespread use of barbed wire and electric fences.

In France the historian Annie Antoine has made clear that large parts of the bocage landscapes are much younger than we always thought. In southwest England, Sam Turner and the team of the Landscape Characterisation Project in the county of Devon also discovered that quite a substantial part of the patchwork landscape is post medieval.

The same stories can be told about almost any landscape. In the Netherlands the fenlands were reclaimed during the 10th to 14th centuries. The Fenlands of East Anglia, however, were only reclaimed during the 17th century. Even more complex is the history of the coastal wetlands in the Mediterranean, where these landscapes are even more vulnerable. When their drainage systems are not properly managed, they become invested with malaria and other diseases and become inhabitable.

In his recent book on the Mediterranean in the Early Modern Period, the Turkish/American historian Faruk Tabak presents a strong picture of alternating movements to the plains and to the hills. During the 17th century, many coastal plains were deserted and the use of the hills intensified. A few centuries later, a reverse movement took place.

But also the landscapes of multiple use have shown more development during the centuries than is often realised. The savanna-landscapes for example, including the Portuguese montados, the Spanish dehesas and the medieval wood-pastures of north-western Europe, can have very old roots. But the growth of the wine trade during the 18th century led to a strong growth of the planting of cork oaks and in fact many of the dehesa's are now thought to date from the 18th to the early 20th century.

DIA 19 Example Denmark

This example of a village in Denmark shows something of the changes of landscapes in southern Scandinavia during the Early Modern Period. The first map shows the village of Aarslev in 1786, with an open-field system. One farm owned 78 small strips. The reallocation of 1786, connected to a change in agrarian system (the introduction of the so-called Koppelwirtschaft), diminished the number of parcels; the same farm now had 21 strips, dispersed over the nine fields. Only 9 years later, the common-field system was abolished and every farm received a single, enclosed field. On the edges of the field the local cottagers received small plots.

DIA 20 Core regions Europe

There is not only a history of change, but also a geography. Especially many of the economic changes in landscapes were connected to developments in the wider economy. In the Early Modern Period, in particular the emerging European world-system, as described by Wallerstein, Braudel and others, was a strong force, that led to a reconstruction of the European countryside. It was the late Hans-Jürgen Nitz, for many years an active member of PECSRL, who succeeded in connecting the economic theories of Wallerstein and Braudel with developments in European landscapes.

Within Europe, the core regions show a surprising degree of continuity. There is a direct line from the dual-core Europe from the late Middle Ages to the present so-called Blue Banana.

DIA 21 Nitz – Europe in the World-system

Now Hans-Jürgen Nitz succeeded in showing that already during the 16th and 17th centuries, large parts of the European agriculture was oriented on the then core-region in north-western Europe. It must be possible to make similar maps for Mediterranean Europe, focusing on Northern Italy and the town of Istanbul.

In the northern half of Europe, the map shows regions with the most intensive agriculture in the core region. Here, a substantial part of the population lived in towns. Somewhere during the end of the 16th century, the county of Holland must have passed the point where more than half of the population lived in towns (based on towns of at least 2500 inhabitants). The Netherlands as a whole passed this point much later, around 1900, the European subcontinent around 1950 and the world as a whole only last year. But in the old core regions of Europe, we have to speak of an urbanised landscape from at least the 16th century, characterised by farmers working for an urban market.

But even for many regions in the periphery of Europe, the integration into the larger economic system meant a stronger market orientation and the taking of a role in the new system. For the eastern part of the Baltic, it meant a specialisation in grain production, whereby these regions could only compete in the European market by cutting costs. The same system that brought prosperity to family farms in the coastal plains around the North Sea, stimulated the emergence of large estates with forced labour in parts of the Baltic.

Even landlocked regions such as Hungary, played a role in this economic system by exporting horses and cattle overland to the Rhineland.

It is therefore good to realise that changes were not only taking place in the core regions. Partly even the opposite is true: the economies in the European core regions were characterised by a varied economic base which, just like a rainforest in ecological terms, had a certain flexibility and therefore stability or, to use a better term, resilience. Peripheral regions, on the other hand, were often dependent on a single product, making them vulnerable for change. Small changes in the core regions could lead to fundamental changes in the periphery.

[Research into long-term landscape history]

There are precedents of research into the long-term history of the landscape. A landmark study was the Swedish Ystad project, where the landscape that is now well-known to many of us as the landscape of Inspector Kurt Wallander, was the subject of an interdisciplinary project with a time scope of 6000 years.

DIA 22 Brabant

An example of a long-term research project is an interdisciplinary project in the southern part of the Netherlands and the adjoining part of Belgium. Here, some of the defining moments in landscape history were:

- At the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age, settlements and arable concentrated in a smaller area, characterised by better (loamy) soils.
- Around 225 AD the whole region was deserted, for unknown reasons.
- During the 12th and 13th centuries, settlements moved from the highest parts of the landscape to the edges of the stream valleys

- Shortly afterwards, the influence from the cities in Flanders grew and the region intensified. It soon became one of the most densely populated parts of the Netherlands. The first change, in the Early Iron Age, is the most important. This pattern survived depopulation and urbanisation and is still recognisable in the landscape.

A recent development in Dutch landscape studies is the so-called 'biography'-concept. The term 'biography of landscape' is used for the first time by the American geographer Mervyn Samuels in the well-known book 'The interpretation of ordinary landscapes'. But Samuels used the term to apply for more research on agency, on the individuals who made the landscape. But the true inspiration came from anthropologists, such as Appadurai and Kopytoff. Kopytoff wrote on the biography of things, making clear that objects have their own life histories. Objects are handed over from one person to the other and from one generation to the next. In this process they are damaged and repaired, are lost and refound and thereby get ever different meanings. An object can start its life as a religious token, can then become a holiday souvenir, then become recognised as a piece of art and in the course of time can become a heritage object.

In the same way, landscapes are handed over from one generation to the next, being transformed and gaining as well as losing meanings. The researcher who work under the banner of 'biography of landscape' look at landscapes in this way. It means research that focuses on the long-term history of the landscape, sometimes covering thousands of years. This necessarily means an interdisciplinary approach, with archaeologists cooperating with historical geographers, architectural historians and others.

Another aspect is the many different stories and narratives that different people and groups tell about the same landscape. It leads to the collection of oral history, to find out these different stories. It also means a new beginning for the study of field-names. These names have always been used to give insights in past landscapes and in landscape change. Now they are re-interpreted as sources for past perceptions of landscapes.

The long-term history of the landscape also includes the changing meaning of objects from the past. As the geographer Donald Meinig once made clear: every generation lives in a landscape that is shaped by earlier generations. Who looks for it, can find many examples of landscape features that have been re-used and re-interpreted by later generations. Many a prehistoric grave mound has been re-used for other burials, sometimes centuries later. But there are also examples of such mounds that have been used as field boundaries in medieval reclamations or as places where criminals were executed and sometimes buried. That meant that they were buried in grounds that were recognised as ancient and heathen, which meant that these criminals were refused a resting place in the Christian domain.

[Disadvantages of the 'traditional landscapes model' for planning]

So, the idea of traditional landscapes has disadvantages for historical research. It gives stories that are too simple, too one-dimensional and with a false impression of stability. They fail to show the complex histories and fail to show the dark side of landscape histories. Many landscapes have troubled, not to say traumatic histories. The Dutch painter and poet Armando once used the term 'guilty landscapes'.

But what does this mean for landscape planning and landscape management?

DIA 23 Waterland

Again an example. A recent project aimed at finding locations for a large number of new houses in a rural region near Amsterdam. It is part of one of the National Landscapes that were designated by the Dutch government a few years ago. Now in most countries this would mean that no large-scale building activities would be allowed. In the Netherlands, however, everything is part of processes of political trade and the pressure is great. The interesting thing is, that part of the region belongs to the municipality of Amsterdam, the largest town in the Netherlands, since the 1920s. Ever since, the municipality of Amsterdam has seen this rural landscape as part of the recreational open space. So it is now one of the rare places in the Randstad conurbation without any recent village extensions.

Now the provincial government developed plans to build 3000 houses in this National Landscape. But at least they want to do that in a way that saves the rural landscape as much as possible. The landscape architect who was in charge of designing the possibilities came up with a plan to build dispersed houses, in ways that would fit in organically into the existing settlement pattern. Therefore, he made a typology of settlement types and the designed an extension plan for each of the types.

The problem is the lack of any historical perspective, let alone research. The whole plan completely fails to recognise the historic layers of the landscape.

The settlement pattern of this landscape consists of a nucleated village and two rows of farms. These farms are recently moved from the village to the fields as part of a land consolidation project. So everyone who studies a 19th century map will come to the conclusion that the original settlement pattern consists of nucleated villages.

But for archaeologists and historical geographers, a 19th century map is not the only tool. In this region one of the first large-scale landscape archaeological projects in the Netherlands has taken place in the late 1970s. It resulted in the discovery of a completely different settlement pattern. During the first reclamation phase, somewhere during the 10th or 11th century, the strip-field pattern was laid out and each farmers built a house on a small dwelling mound within his field. The farms were standing more or less in a row. The small map, below left, shows the deserted dwelling mounds as they were discovered during archaeological research. In the course of time, agriculture became ever more difficult as the peatland subsided because of oxidation. The land gradually became too wet for arable and even animal husbandry became difficult. During the 14th and 15th centuries, a mixed economy existed, with the men working part of the year as sailors or fisherman. This developed into the main source of income and ever more people left the fields and settled near the church, where a nucleated village developed. The economic change was successful, as the village started to build a huge church. Then, at the end of the sixteenth century, the town of Amsterdam urged the sailors working for Amsterdam merchants to live in the town. The village shrank and the large church was left unfinished.

Gradually, drainage was improved and agriculture became more important again. During the second half of the 20th century, the land consolidation project made it possible for farmers to build a new farm in the fields, away from the crowded village. By returning to the land, they in fact restored the medieval settlement-pattern

A better historic analysis in cases like this, leads not automatically to a better plan. But it does lead to a more sophisticated discussion and it can bring original solutions that add new interesting stories to a landscape that is already rich in stories.

[Conclusion]

Ladies and gentlemen,

The great landscape historian W.G. Hoskins once wrote: everything in the landscape is older than we think. This is certainly true, but the opposite is also true: everything in the landscape is younger than we think. The history of European landscapes is characterised by periods of transformations and of relative stability. These developments were powered by economic and demographic, but also by political and cultural factors. Therefore, research in landscape history needs to be interdisciplinary. To get a real understanding of the processes behind landscape change, this type of research needs to take the long term into account.

A better knowledge of long-term landscape change is also necessary for landscape and heritage planning. A simple distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ landscapes can only be used to protect the first and to develop the second. But it is not enough to protect. We need more insights into the processes of landscape change and in the resilience of different landscape features.

Last Tuesday I was struck by a paper by Thanasis Kizos, in which a distinction was made between traditional and modernised montados. The first were disappearing, the second were intensifying. It is not the primary task of landscape historians to make landscape museums, although incidentally there is nothing wrong with a museum. But our primary task is to help in developing concepts for ways of modernisation that combine a living landscape, a prosperous population, a high biodiversity and an interesting heritage.

I thank you for your attention.

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[Summary] In landscape planning it is often taken for granted that the recent transformation of European landscapes was more or less unique. This paper opposes the vision of a distinction between modern, dynamic cultural landscapes on the one hand, and 'traditional', relatively stable landscapes on the other.

Many landscapes have gone through a number of transformations during the last millennia. Between such dynamic periods, there have been periods of relative stability, in which landscapes could become 'old' (which in the present period often leads to an interest from

the heritage-sector).

Continuity and change in European landscape history can be connected to a variety of factors, such as demographic and economic fluctuations, changing core-periphery-relations, technological developments and changes in the organisation of society. Besides, visions on historic continuities are also subject to the changing perceptions of researchers. The complexity of continuities and transformations will be illustrated with case-studies from different parts of Europe.

To understand the present landscape, interdisciplinary research into the complexities of long-term development is necessary.

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