



QUALITY GUIDE NATIONAL LANDSCAPES

CULTURAL HERITAGE AS BASE FOR DEVELOPMENT

wonder
city + landscape

QUALITY GUIDE NATIONAL LANDSCAPES

How do you make the key qualities of Cultural Landscapes of national importance applicable in everyday's practice? For this, wOnder has developed a system and elaborated it for several landscapes of the province of Utrecht in the Netherlands.

Duration: 2009-2010 - Commissioned by the Province of Utrecht, the Netherlands

In cooperation with OKRA landscape architects, the Netherlands

Published in 2011, by the Province of Utrecht (see cover image).

The issue

The national government of the Netherlands has designated 20 National Landscapes in their 'Nota Ruimte' (the national policy document on spatial planning). These are the most unique cultural landscapes of the nation. The intention is not turn these landscapes into ivory towers of protection; to prevent any changes from happening. They are living landscapes, where the new Dutch Belvedere-adagio "preservation through development" is utterly at place.

But what should be preserved or developed? The Nota Ruimte formulates firmly and to the point what makes each landscape unique, what their key qualities are. However, quality descriptions are full of words and notions like 'openness', 'peat-meadow-character' and 'cohesive system'. These are not immediately practical applicable. They ask for specification, for a translation to the practice of everyday. Commissioned by the province of Utrecht, wOnder has developed a system to elaborate the key qualities and make them practically usable. This system is then utilized for all the six National Landscapes in the province.

Sharp, rich and meaningful

We state that the key qualities only become practically usable, when you convert them into images. How can you see them? Which spatial aspects of the landscape actually define the key qualities? This asks for a sharp analysis, based on a thorough field-exploration and through the view of the key qualities. This is not a value-free analysis, but a coloured one. Elements that do not contribute to the key qualities are left out. We sharpen the analysis by focusing on the essence of what you see and experience in the National Landscape. That essence we catch in one image and five icons. Sub-areas nuance the one-image and make it more profound, create a rich analysis.

In our view, a spatial analysis alone is not enough. What you see has to take on a meaning and become logical. The visual becomes charged, becomes more valuable through the stories behind them. This is something else than a discourse about how the landscape came to existence and developed. The landscape is made humane by showing the 'drama' in the landscape: the grubbing to cultivate the land, the struggles for power that took place, or the expressions of standing and money. These story-lines are told and shown how you can see them in the landscape.





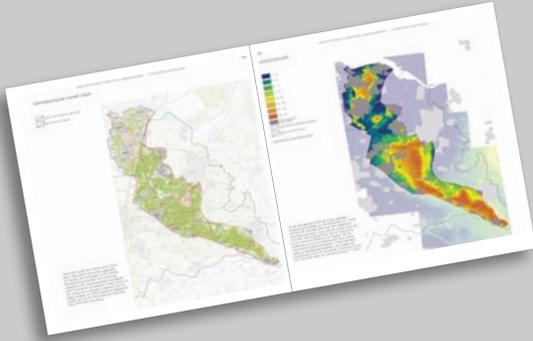
Characteristic image of The Green Heart, the national landscape encircled by the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht.

Area directly covered by the quality guide

Landscapes continuing in adjoining provinces, indirectly covered by the guide

Plan area of the Quality Guide in The Netherlands

PART 1. OBSERVATIONS



1.1 Factual landscape

Thematic maps and descriptions of the landscape give a cartographic impression of the landscape.



1.2 Narrative landscape

In a bird's-eye view the development of the landscape is shown, followed by four story-lines that are characteristic for this landscape. The stories tell the special events that explain the landscape and enrich the perception and experience.

1.3 Dynamics

The current and near future spatial developments in the landscape are mapped. This is the base to determine on what subjects design-principles are required in 2.4.



The system

The guide for every National Landscape consists of two parts:

1. Observations, showing facts, narratives and dynamics of the current landscape;

Pages are all from the Utrecht Hills guide.

Performable and cooperation

The spatial and story-telling analyses together show crystal-clear in what features the key qualities of the National Landscape manifest themselves. This brings us to the next step: how can you develop the landscape based on these key qualities?

Development should not be a theoretical discourse, but based on practical matters. Where are the key qualities under pressure and what kind of developments are really happening? Together with the people of the province, we map the dynamics in the cultural landscape. This leads, combined with the analysis, to ambitions and design-principles. The ambitions are formulated to improve the key qualities themselves. We help the people of the province to focus

on the main issues. After all, governmental time and energy to direct developments are limited. For the developments that are going on in the landscape, we make a wide range of design-principles. They give a manual how developments can be designed and integrated, so that they strengthen the key qualities. These are highly practical directions, for everybody who wants to develop a plan.

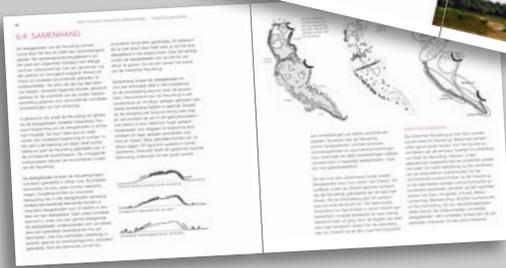
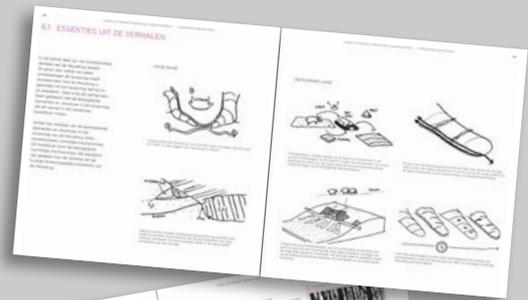
The quality guide has to give directions to "preservation and development" in the National Landscape. wOnder is just a small chain in realizing this goal. We help the client, the people of the province, to sharpen their story, to put it in images and on paper. But in the end it has to be

PART 2. VALUATION



2.1 Key qualities

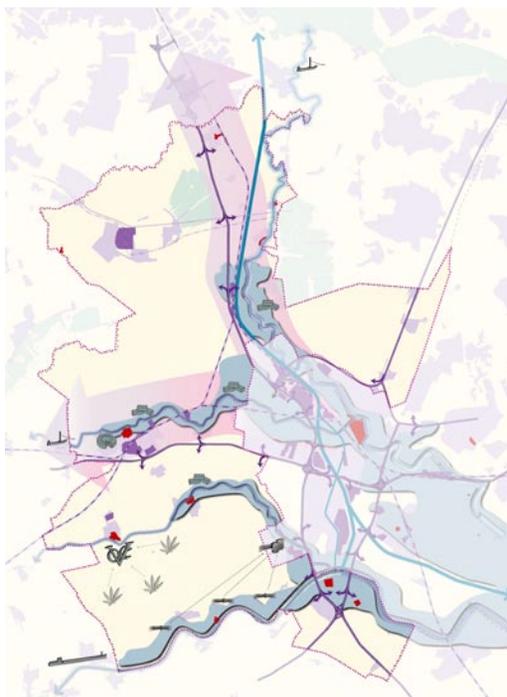
Description of the key qualities of the landscape, as decided upon by the National Government. These key qualities are the base for the value-based analysis.



2.2 Visual landscape

First is specified how the narrative landscape is connected to the key qualities. Then the spatial characteristics are analysed, in one image and five icons. Sub-areas are distinguished, their cohesion is indicated and this all is related back to the key qualities.

2. Valuation, with the key qualities, translated to the visual landscape, ambitions and design-principles to handle the dynamics in the landscape.
3. In a separate third part the policy instruments are worked out.



Map of the storyline
"economical axes" in
the Green Heart National
Landscape

their guide, which they are proud of, like to work with and propagate. Therefore we collaborate closely with the people of the province. And in the course of the project we slowly retreat from the process.

In the analysis, most work is done by wOnder, intensively using the knowledge within the province. In the second part, the ambitions, we give guidance to the discussion, keeping it sharp and bring suggestions to the table for inventive solutions. In the third part, the translation to policies, we are chiefly criticaster. Gradually the guide is more and more made and carried by the province. It becomes their guide, the best guarantee for a long lasting and effective use.



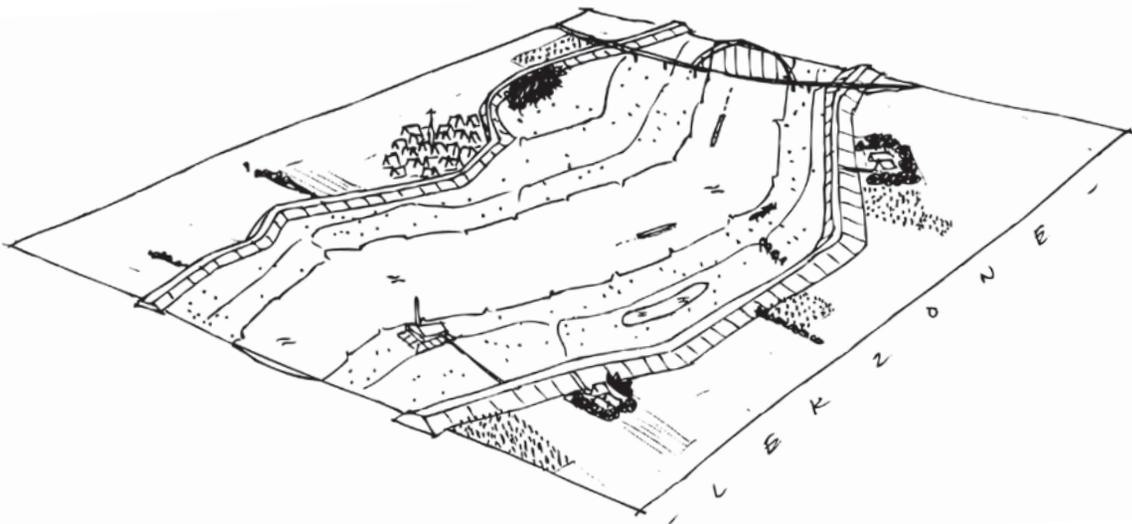
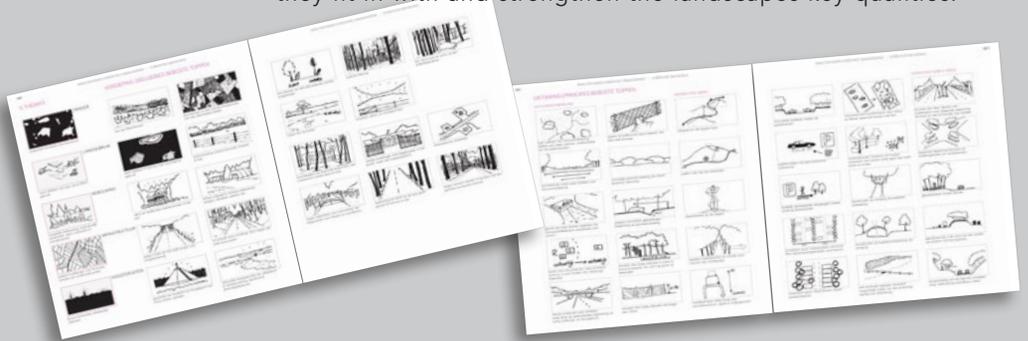
2.3 Ambitions

At some points the key qualities in the National Landscape are under pressure. Ambitions are formulated to improve the key qualities and focus the available resources of the province.



2.4 Deepening sub-landscapes

The five essential icons are further specified for the different sub-areas. They are followed by design-principles, which show how developments in these areas can be placed and designed, so that they fit in with and strengthen the landscape's key qualities.



Sub-area Lek-zone (River land landscape) at meso-level; cohesion summarized in a bird's-eye sketch

Characteristic image of the National Landscape Eemland Arnhem

"TO START WITH: COMPLIMENTS. (...) YOU CAN NOTICE, THAT NOW WE ARE WORKING ON IT FOR A WHILE, THE LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONALS OF THE PROVINCE ARE FULLY OWNING THE SIX QUALITY GUIDES."

**ABOUT THE TALKS WITH OTHER DISCIPLINES WITHIN THE PROVINCE:
"I HAD EXPECTED LOTS OF FIREWORK. THAT DIDN'T APPEAR. REMARKABLE HOW MUCH WE AGREED WITH ONE ANOTHER AND HOW EASY THE COLLECTIVELY WAS FOUND. COMPLIMENTS WERE EVEN EXCHANGED, IN AND OUTSIDE OF THE MEETING ROOM: 'NICELY TO READ', 'USEFUL', 'THIS WE CAN EASILY HANDLE'.**

Brendan McCarthy, project manager National Landscapes, province of Utrecht



