Landscape Biographies

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Abstract
The Eerder Achterbroek, part of the Eerde country estate, is an exceptionally well-preserved enclosed landscape in the province of Overijssel, The Netherlands. In this chapter two authors of this agricultural landscape are identified: the last owner from the baronial family, Philip Dirk van Pallandt, and the current owner, Natuurmonumenten. Van Pallandt, who inherited the estate in 1913, was an idealistic man with strong ideas about nature and landscape architecture. He made his own contributions to the estate, but respected the framework of the existing historical landscape. Due to the financial burden of the inheritance, he was forced to sell parts of the estate. In 1949 Natuurmonumenten, a non-governmental organization aiming at the preservation of nature and landscape in the Netherlands, bought the Eerder Achterbroek. Natuurmonumenten was well aware of the historical value of this purchase. The management since then has been aesthetic and conservative. The landscape was to be preserved as it was. Historical research, as presented in this chapter, has pointed out that the Eerder Achterbroek is not a textbook example of an east-Netherlands enclosed landscape, but is strongly influenced by the identified authors. The outcomes of this research, a combination of field study, oral history and archival research, are useful for the management, which is changing its aims from aesthetics to heritage preservation.

Keywords: landscape biography, landscape history, nature conservation, enclosed land, landscape change
Figures 8.1a-b  Two oaks, photographed in 1949 and again in 2009

Source: photo 1949 Van Dijk photo collection, Library Natuurmonumenten, ‘s-Graveland
Photo 2009 Michiel Purmer
Introduction

In 1949 a small series of photographs was taken on the country estate of Eerde (province of Overijssel, The Netherlands). The photographs, that were probably commissioned by the new owner, the Vereniging tot Behoud van Natuurmonumenten in Nederland (Society for the Protection of Natural Monuments in the Netherlands; shortly known as ‘Natuurmonumenten’), for publicity purposes, ended up in the archives of the Society. When visiting the exact locations of these pictures, the resemblance is often striking. The two oaks in the photo (see figure 8.1a and b) hardly seem to have grown in the past 60 years. This is a typical situation for the landscape of this country estate, but a rarity elsewhere in The Netherlands.

In this chapter I present the results of a research project on the landscape history of the Eerde country estate, focusing on its agricultural landscape, the so-called Eerder Achterbroek. By a combination of fieldwork, archival research and oral history I try to explain the forms and structures of the

Figure 8.2  The Eerder Achterbroek, 2008

Characteristics visible on this picture are the unpaved roads, many oaks and the old farmhouse. Note the narrow bike lane on the right: former tenants told us that the bike lanes were constructed in the 1930s, commissioned by Philip Dirk van Pallandt to accommodate cyclists.
Photo: Michiel Purmer
present landscape (see figure 8.2). In this perspective, I also try to identify some of the authors of the landscape, as described by Marwyn Samuels (1979), Jan Kolen (2005) and others in their publications on biographies of landscape.

The Eerder Achterbroek Project in the Context of Dutch Landscape Research

Historical geography in the Netherlands has a long tradition of applied research for planning. Much research – and most of the researchers – aimed at mapping landscape relics. The remaining research aimed at obtaining a better understanding of the historical developments of landscape patterns. Perhaps a typical Dutch tradition has been the close connection between historical and physical geography. Many research questions came from physical geographers and focused on human influences on physical landscapes. This stimulated a static view of the landscape. The common idea was that the landscape developed gradually until the 19th century, and was rapidly changed during the 20th century by intensification, scale enlargement and land consolidations. In this perspective, the Dutch landscape around the turn of the century was romanticized as the heyday of the historical landscape. This was in line with the opinions of nature conservationists that biodiversity was at its peak in the period around the 1900s. From the 1970s onwards, historical geographers developed a more dynamic vision of the history of the landscape, which gave attention to the many transformations that had taken place (see for the development of historical geography in the Netherlands Braaksma et al., 2010). Research became more interdisciplinary, involving archaeologists, historians, architectural historians, ecologists and others (see for example Spek, 2004 and 2006).

Only in recent years has the influence of humanistic and (new) cultural geography brought new questions into the debate, particularly aimed at gaining better insights into the human factor in the landscape. More attention was given to different views and perspectives on the same landscape. In his survey of cultural geography in The Netherlands, geographer Ben de Pater states: ‘The landscape can be “read” in different ways, and thus can be given different meanings’ (De Pater, 2003).

During the last decade the biography of landscape, as was particularly advocated by Kolen (2005), became a popular concept in Dutch historical landscape studies. The term was introduced in 1979 by the American geographer Marwyn Samuels in his essay ‘The Biography of the Landscape’.
In this essay, Samuels identified ‘authors’ in the landscape. In his view, landscapes are not the outcome of autonomous processes and development models, but are, at least partly, the work of individuals. These ‘authors’ are influenced by their perception of the existing landscape. This perceptual context in which people shape the landscapes around them are called landscapes of impression. The results of the work of the authors in the spatial reality are called landscapes of expression (Samuels, 1979, 70-78; see also the introduction by Kolen and Renes and the contribution of Koren in this volume).

In recent years, the concept of the landscape biography has been broadened and applied in different research programmes. In his PhD thesis, Kolen states that the landscape biography approach provides us with a different perspective on landscape development (Kolen, 2005, 112 ff). In the introductory chapter of this volume, five topics are presented: exchange, authorship, temporality, layeredness and inheritance. All these are relevant for the present study, but in particular the topic of authorship will be addressed here. Two main authors of the *Eerder Achterbroek*...
landscape can be identified for the last century: the last private owner and Natuurmonumenten (itself an organization in which individuals could put their own mark on the landscape). These two authors and the relations between them will have a central position in this chapter. Other authors are the tenants and local governments. All their activities are influenced by local circumstances, particularly by the heritage values that have been attached to this landscape during the last century. We shall see whether their activities can be traced to recognizable layers in the landscape.

**Eerde and the Eerder Achterbroek**

The country estate of Eerde is first mentioned in the thirteenth century. In the fourteenth century Eerde gained some fame as the defensible base of a robber knight who terrorized the region and the nearby cities of Zwolle and Deventer. Finally, the small castle was destroyed, and then rebuilt and destroyed again several times in the next centuries. In 1709 the estate was bought by Johan Warner van Pallandt, who had become rich as a military commander in the War of the Spanish Succession. He built the present house and commissioned gardens and park in a geometrical style (for the early history of the estate see Lamberts, 1986). The estate remained within the same family until 1982 (see figure 8.3).

The baronial Van Pallandt family enlarged the estate in the course of time. In 1913, Philip Dirk van Pallandt (1889-1979) inherited the estate from his great-nephew. During the 1930s it proved impossible for him to keep the estate intact (see below) and between 1932 and 1982 he and his heirs sold parts of the estate to various, mostly state-owned parties, hoping to protect the core of the estate from fragmentation and commercialization (Steen & Veldsink, 1948).

In 1949 Natuurmonumenten bought a first part of the estate, the Eerder Achterbroek, an agrarian landscape of around 300 hectares that was described by the baron himself as the most beautiful part of the estate (Anonymous, 1948). The name means ‘the wetlands behind Eerde’. The area included nine farmhouses, each with their own enclosed arable lands and pastures. The northern part of the area consisted of former heathlands, which were for the most part reclaimed at the end of the 19th century. Already in 1949 this small-scale landscape was seen as somewhat old-fashioned (see figures 8.4a and b).
Figures 8.4a-b  Topographical maps, showing the Eerder Achterbroek around 1900 and a century later

Note the relatively small differences. The small-scale landscape of the medieval enclosures in the southern part contrasts with the relatively open northern part, heath reclamation.
Source: Topografische Dienst Kadaster, Zwolle
Although Van Pallandt sold parts of the estate to the municipality of Ommen and the State Forestry Commission (Staatsbosbeheer), Natuurmonumenten was the first non-governmental institution to buy a part of the estate. The ‘Vereeniging tot Behoud van Natuurmonumenten in Nederland’ (Society for the Preservation of Natural Monuments in the Netherlands) was founded in 1905 and started buying threatened nature reserves and landed estates. By 1949, the Society was an established organization that managed several important nature reserves throughout the country. With the Eerder Achterbroek, Natuurmonumenten for the first time bought an agrarian landscape, justified by the newly developed insight that such landscapes were becoming a threatened phenomenon. When trying to raise funds to buy Eerde, Natuurmonumenten printed a brochure, in which the Society stressed the importance of preservation of this ‘old Saxon landscape’ (Van Tienhoven & Drijver, no date).

Later, Natuurmonumenten would purchase other parts of the estate as well. The house, park and small hamlet of Eerde have been fully owned by Natuurmonumenten since 1982. In total, 552 hectares of the former property of the Van Pallandt family is now managed by the Society. In this chapter, however, I shall focus on the first purchase, the agrarian landscape of the Eerder Achterbroek.

Research Method

Nearly 60 years later, in 2006, the first systematic historical research was carried out in the Eerder Achterbroek, as part of the preparations for a new management plan that aimed at restoring the historical landscape. The two historical geographers working for the Society, Sandra van Lochem and the present author, started describing and evaluating the landscape heritage of the Eerder Achterbroek and Eerde. The results were used in the restoration plan. The research started with extensive field research. Hundreds of hedges, rows of trees, woodlands and enclosed fields were surveyed. Old topographical maps and aerial photographs were used for dating the structures. Additional data came from archival research and from interviews with former tenants and with both daughters of the last baron. The archives of Natuurmonumenten provided much information about the purchase of the estate in 1949 and the management until the mid-1970s. Letters and reports gave an impression of the landscape in this

1 The archival research was carried out by Hans Renes and the author.
period and the motivation for the management of *Natuurmonumenten* in the years after the purchase.

Altogether more than 300 landscape elements and structures were mapped and collected into a database (Purmer & Van Lochem, 2008). Research focused on the last 150 years and in particular on the period since 1949. The results have already been used for the restoration of the landscape. Although it is clear that many structures in this landscape have a medieval origin, due to a lack of historical and archaeological research the origins of this landscape are still unclear. Further historical and archaeological research remains a wish for the future.

**Landscape Characteristics and Landscape Change**

The *Eerder Achterbroek* can be divided into two different types of landscape. The northern part consists mainly of former heathlands. Topographical maps from around 1850 show this area as a landscape dominated by heathland, with a duck decoy as the main exception. Most of the heath was reclaimed during the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. This reclamation, however, was never completed and small parcels of heathland survive until the present day. During the 1930s, small-scale forestry was carried out. Still, the landscape of this part of the *Eerder Achterbroek* was relatively wide and open.

The southern part of the *Eerder Achterbroek* has a different historical background. Here medieval enclosures (in Dutch: ‘kampen’) border the Bevert brook. The fields are relatively small and surrounded by hedge banks and rows of trees. The landscape is small-scale compared to the northern part.

To discover changes in the landscape, topographical maps from the period around 1900 were compared with maps and aerial photographs from the period around 1950 (the period of acquisition by *Natuurmonumenten*) and with modern maps and fieldwork data. Since 1900, the landscape has changed remarkably little. The overall structure and scale of the landscape were almost entirely preserved. This contrasts highly with the surrounding landscape, where intensive farming led to a more open and large-scale landscape.

When studied in detail, however, there were a number of interesting developments. Since 1949, the scale of the landscape in the northern part of the *Eerder Achterbroek* has become smaller, mainly by trees on the edges of the small heathland relics. At first glance, these resemble hedge banks, but in fact they developed spontaneously. The southern part, on the other
The research made it clear that these rows of trees are a historic feature of this landscape, not yet identified outside Eerde.
Photo: Michiel Purmer

hand, has become slightly more open, because a number of trees have disappeared and have not been replaced.

The landscape is usually described as a typical example of the small-scale enclosed landscapes of the sandy regions of the Eastern Netherlands. This was in fact one of the main reasons for Natuurmonumenten to buy the area. However, fieldwork has made clear that the Eerder Achterbroek differs from the textbook examples of this landscape, for example by the huge number of oaks in hedgebanks and elsewhere. Some groups of oaks resemble clumps in the landscape gardens.

Other interesting features are the rows of oak trees in the southern part of the Eerder Achterbroek (see figure 8.5). At first glance, they appeared to be degraded hedges.2 Closer inspection showed no indication that these rows were ever coppiced and these rows of trees even appeared on old topographical maps. This kind of planting is not known from other enclosed

2 This argument was used in a critical survey of the management practices of Natuurmonumenten (Landschapswacht, 2004). This report collected examples of neglect of historic landscapes. In this particular case, however, the report oversimplified. Careful research proved the rows of trees at Eerde to be a historic feature instead of a badly managed hedge bank.
landscapes in the Netherlands. More research is needed to explain these differences, but there are indications that the last baron may be responsible for some of the typical aspects of the area.

Even though the landscape was well preserved by the last two owners, developments did take place. As agriculture was – and is – the economic basis of the estate, the farmers had to adapt to survive. Much correspondence in the Natuurmonumenten archive is related to the tenants, who had to work in a historical landscape with all its limitations.3 Already in 1949 the Eerder Achterbroek was old-fashioned in its farming and this became more problematic in the course of time. In 1957, nine active farms existed and a number of neighbouring farms rented land within the estate: altogether 35 tenants were active. Nowadays, only two farms remain and manage most of the area: one ‘mainstream’ farmer and one organic farmer, with the last one also actively developing care farm activities.

The Baron and His Landscape

Some of the letters in the archives shed some light on the motives of Philip Dirk van Pallandt. In one letter, he expresses the wish to ‘preserve the terrain in its present state’ (Anonymous, 1948). Philip Dirk van Pallandt was an idealistic man. He was interested in nature and landscape design, according to an interview published in a small booklet about the Eerde estate (Ludgard & Alma, 1950). He was a board member of the Dutch Society for the Protection of Birds (Nederlandse Vogelbescherming) and Natuurmonumenten already long before he sold parts of the Eerde estate. As an estate owner, he wanted his estate to be enjoyed by the public as much as possible. Most of all, he wanted to keep the beauty of his estate intact. The financial burden of the inheritance forced him to sell parts of his estate, always however under strong conditions and only to governmental or non-profit organizations. He also donated parts of the estate to scouting groups. Himself a member of the Theosophical Society, in 1921 Van Pallandt offered the estate to Krishnamurti and Eerde became the headquarters of the Order of the Star in the East and the scene of the so-called Star Camps.

3 Sometimes tenants complain about the loss of income caused by the influence of the wooded banks surrounding the fields. See for instance the letter about this subject by inspector J. van Soest, employed by Natuurmonumenten (Van Soest, 1961). More common, however, are requests for conversions of the farmhouses. Natuurmonumenten reacts conservatively and strives to keep the buildings as authentic as possible. See for example the letter by Natuurmonumenten to the province of Overijssel (Natuurmonumenten, 1953).
in the following years. After Krishnamurti eliminated the Order in 1929, the estate was returned to Van Pallandt, who reluctantly accepted. By then the estate was mortgaged and was subject to capital transfer taxes. Part of the estate had to be sold for this reason (Van Eeten et al., 2009). However, the baron succeeded in keeping the core of the Eerde estate intact for another two decades.

In 1949, to safeguard the future of the estate, Van Pallandt decided to offer part of it to Natuurmonumenten, an organization he had served as a board member for thirty years. Correspondence surrounding the possible purchase of the estate shows that Natuurmonumenten was well aware of the significance of the area. The values were not botanical but, as described by the ecologist Victor Westhoff, scientific staff member of Natuurmonumenten: ‘The aesthetic and scientific significance of the area is almost entirely determined by the cultural landscape with its hedge banks’ (Westhoff, 1948). In a leaflet Natuurmonumenten issued to receive extra funding from its members, it describes as the main reason for the purchase the preservation of an example of one of those historical cultural landscapes that were threatened at that time in the Netherlands by land consolidation and, in general, by modern agriculture (see figure 8.6; Van Tienhoven & Drijver, no date). The leaflet stresses the aesthetic beauty of the landscape.

**Figure 8.6  Brochure, titled: “Our future property”, 1949**

The brochure was used to raise money in order to purchase the Eerder Achterbroek, stating the importance of the property as an example of an old cultural landscape.

Source: Collection Library Natuurmonumenten, ’s-Graveland
After acquiring the Eerder Achterbroek, Natuurmonumenten continued the conservative management of Van Pallandt. The archives hold significant correspondence about the preservation or, more appropriately, consolidation of the 1949 situation. The farmhouses were kept intact as much as possible, especially their external appearance. Permission to rebuild was always accompanied by strict conditions. When the municipality of Ommen wanted to pave a road in the Eerder Achterbroek, Natuurmonumenten wrote a petition stating: ‘our society highly values the preservation of the character of the Eerder Achterbroek as an old-Saxon cultural landscape and has grave objections against pavement of the road, which will damage the character of the landscape’. The road is still unpaved today.

Oral history gave additional information about the management of the Eerder Achterbroek in the later days of Van Pallandt and the early years of

4 Letter H.P. Gorter to the municipal council of Ommen (Gorter, 1963), about the remarks by Natuurmonumenten on the development scheme of Ommen.
*Natuurmonumenten* (see figure 8.7). Interviews with two tenants and the two daughters of Philip Dirk van Pallandt, all well into their seventies, made clear that the countless oaks in the Eerder Achterbroek for instance can at least partially be explained by the baron’s love for these trees: they were deliberately spared when hedges were cut (Purmer & Van Lochem, 2008).

The daughters of the baron provided many examples of the direct influence of Van Pallandt on the landscape. He created vistas around the house and introduced exotic plant species such as American blueberry. According to one of his daughters, he bought several baskets with blueberries after tasting them in a delicatessen store. He planted them in various locations on the estate to find the best possible conditions and, after finding a good location, he made a small plantation which he decorated by planting rhododendrons and azaleas. The blueberries of Eerde were quite famous and attracted many visitors in the picking season.

Again according to one of his daughters, he could take action on individual trees. It all affirms his personal involvement in the landscape of his estate. Therefore, it seems more than likely that he influenced the management of the new owner *Natuurmonumenten* either directly or indirectly. Proof of direct influence however has not yet been found. His daughter could not remember any regular contact between *Natuurmonumenten* and Van Pallandt after the purchase of the *Eerder Achterbroek* in 1949. However, it must have occupied the baron, who continued to live on the estate.

**The Authors of the Eerder Achterbroek**

Early authors of this landscape were anonymous medieval farmers and only slightly better-known inhabitants of the medieval castle. For the manor house and gardens, the first Van Pallandt, who commissioned both during the early 18th century, can easily be identified as author. For the agrarian landscape in the *Eerder Achterbroek*, however, his influence is less clear.

For most of the 20th century, the agrarian landscape was managed by two owners who, although they consolidated rather than developed the estate, still put such a mark on the landscape that they can be seen as authors. Philip Dirk van Pallandt’s conservationist and idealistic views had very practical influences on the management of the estate. Sometimes large-scale, sometimes small-scale, the baron’s ideas shaped the centuries-old landscape of his estate without causing a real caesura in the development.

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5 Interview with Mrs. Oudshoorn baroness Van Pallandt van Eerde, 27th of January 2011.
Not only the manor house and gardens were mainly kept intact, also in the *Eerder Achterbroek* only minor changes in scale and function were allowed. Conservation was a choice in itself, because the baron appreciated the landscape as it was and resisted pressure to change it for commercial touristic purposes. But more than conserving the landscape, he ‘beautified’ it to his own taste, making it resemble an English countryside. Contemporaries of Philip Dirk were well aware of his vision. As stated in an anonymous report: ‘the whole offers according to baron Van Pallandt the impression of an English landscape with lots of timber trees and banks’ (Anonymous, 1948). Some clumps of oaks as well as the abundance of oaks in the hedge banks can probably be explained by this personal vision. His preference for juneberries is another example. Eerde was famous for these small trees, especially in full bloom. His daughter told us that the moment of full bloom was broadcast on Dutch national radio. Her father phoned the radio station when this moment arrived. Other influences of Philip Dirk van Pallandt on the landscape were more indirect, but no less interesting. His idealistic nature led him to open the estate for visitors for free, which was not common in the Netherlands at that time. Other country estates often charged entrance fees (see for instance ANWB, 1935). In this practical guide, the terms for admission for most of the Dutch country estates were listed. At that time, many estates were still fenced off; in Eerde, as the tenants told us, the fences were removed by Van Pallandt.

All these personal actions, however, fit into the centuries-old framework of the existing landscape. In this perspective it is interesting to realize that Philip Dirk inherited the estate unexpectedly and had only known the estate for some months before he became the new owner (Ludgard & Alma, 1950).

The second author of the *Eerder Achterbroek* landscape is the owner who succeeded Van Pallandt, *Natuurmonumenten*. With its management, the Society influenced the landscape until the present day. In the first decades after the purchase, the estate’s management was strongly influenced by the ideas of Philip Dirk van Pallandt. That is no surprise, knowing the idealistic intentions of the baron and his involvement with *Natuurmonumenten* as member of the board (from 1914 till 1972; see Gorter, 1986, 200-202).

The 2006 field research showed a remarkable resemblance with the 1949 landscape as known from archival material, aerial photographs and topographical maps. It can be assumed that *Natuurmonumenten* followed the wish of Van Pallandt to ‘preserve the terrain at its present state’ quite literally. It is no coincidence that *Natuurmonumenten* sometimes spoke of the ‘landscape reserve of Eerde’ (Natuurmonumenten, 1975). Renes states that the management in the second half of the 20th century was mainly
The focus on landscape preservation makes the Eerder Achterbroek an exceptional property for Natuurmonumenten, which in the first place is an organization for the protection of natural values. In the Eerder Achterbroek, the botanical and ecological values are strongly determined by the historical landscape. The small-scale enclosed landscape with its abundance of hedge banks and old trees is a habitat for many bird and plant species.

Although the existing landscape strongly influenced both authors, their management aims and practices show not only continuity but also differences. Where the last baron tried to improve and beautify the landscape he inherited, the aim of Natuurmonumenten was just conservation. Van Pallandt strove for a beautiful, rather than a historical landscape. Although he respected the framework of the landscape he inherited, he surely made his additions, also by introducing and promoting plants that did not originate.
on the estate or even in the country. The juneberries and blueberries, but also the American oaks, are examples.\(^6\)

*Natuurmonumenten*, on the other hand, strongly focused on the historical values of the landscape, combined with the views of a nature preservation organization. Some personal ‘hobbies’ of Van Pallandt, as for instance the blueberries and juneberries, were not continued and even actively removed.

The results of our research, including the identification of Van Pallandt as an active author of the *Eerder Achterbroek* landscape, led to ongoing discussions as to whether his influence should be seen as a layer in the historic landscape that is worthy of preservation.

Part of the influence of both authors is not in what they did, but in what they did not do. Their aesthetic and idealistic purposes spared this landscape from large-scale developments such as land consolidations and touristic development. The comment of visitors to the *Eerder Achterbroek* is often that it reminds them of landscapes that have disappeared elsewhere. Historical geographers sometimes praise the completeness of this landscape. The agrarian landscape of the *Eerder Achterbroek* may not have been very rare in 1949, but it is very rare indeed nowadays.

Conclusions

At first sight, the *Eerder Achterbroek* is a prime example of an enclosed landscape, typical for the eastern part of the Netherlands. It was presented in this way in 1949, when it was purchased by *Natuurmonumenten*, and has been managed as such until the present day. The landscape research that took place during the past few years has made clear that the area differs from the textbook examples of this landscape type. These differences proved to be the result of the influence of two authors, baron Philip Dirk van Pallandt and, since 1949, *Natuurmonumenten*. Both wished to conserve this landscape, to slow down developments in agriculture and tourism that would threaten the characteristics of the historic landscape; at the same time, however, they have put their marks on the landscape.

In this way, the *Eerder Achterbroek* is a welcome case study to develop the concept of authorship of an agrarian landscape that has in the past been described as the work of many generations of anonymous farmers. The new

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\(^6\) Interview with Mrs. Oudshoorn baroness Van Pallandt van Eerde. The juneberries were probably already present on the estate before the arrival of Philip Dirk. The American oaks (in contrast to the native oaks) and the blueberries were introduced by Philip Dirk personally.
Insights in the authorship of this landscape have transformed our vision of it and have led to new questions for landscape management. In particular, the influences of the last baron are now re-evaluated, which is leading to changes in management aims and practices. For example, the exotic plant species introduced by the baron, that have been unpopular among ecologists of Natuurmonumenten, are now seen as part of the interesting heritage of the last baron. In general, management is changing its aims from aesthetic to historic, as historic methods for cyclic management, such as coppicing, are being re-introduced (see figure 8.9). Instead of a textbook example of an east-Netherlands enclosed landscape, Eerde is now seen as a unique landscape.

Such a way of looking at the role of individuals is common practice in the study of architecture, of landed estates and also of military landscapes (see for instance Tivers, 1999; he describes a British military landscape and its characteristics). It is, however, still very rare in the study of the history and heritage of agricultural landscapes. For these agricultural landscapes this approach offers many challenges for the highly varied Dutch landscape.
In this respect, the 82 landscapes described in the large-scale landscape characterization project ‘Ontgonnen verleden’ (Directie Kennis, 2010), offer an interesting chance for more biographical research. It is a way of looking at landscape management that has repercussions on the management of other properties too, as Natuurmonumenten has started to realize. In particular, research into the traces of individual authors leads to new degrees of subtlety in landscape management (Purmer, 2011). It’s not a coincidence that The National Trust, an organization sometimes compared to Natuurmonumenten, started the ‘Going local’ campaign in 2010, which fits in the internationally growing interest in local history and local heritage. This strategy illustrates the growing attention for the local community and the unique, distinctive features of the properties the Trust manages (National Trust, 2010).

It also brings new tensions. For example, government regulations for subsidiaries and contractors often use the textbook examples to describe, manage and subsidize landscape features. In the Netherlands, a division in eleven types of landscape is widely used in the historical geography research tradition. However, such a rather rough division allows ample space for unique characteristics and local developments.

Moreover, it leads to new questions for scientific research, as relatively little is known of local variety in historic management practices. Perhaps a role can be given to the many local history societies.

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