

Over the centuries country houses, landed estates and castles have played a big part in shaping the landscape of the Netherlands. Historical estate landscapes, which often define the visual character of the region in which they are located, can be found all over the country. In recent decades much has been written about individual country houses, landed estates and castles, but rarely in conjunction with one another or in relation to their significance in terms of landscape. There are some exceptions, however. Henri van der Wyck, in the revised edition of his doctoral thesis, *De Nederlandse buitenplaats. Aspecten van ontwikkeling, bescherming en herstel* (1974, 1983), called for research into and protection of estate landscapes. In so doing he was the first to use the term, which he defined as: 'The landscape whose character is defined by a number of country estates'. With his famous atlases of the Veluwe and Twente regions, complete with historical and self-drawn maps, Van der Wyck set the tone for research into estate landscapes in the Netherlands.

In 1967 Frans Maas assumed the post of professor of landscape architecture at Delft Institute of Technology with an inaugural lecture entitled 'From gazebo to caravan. The contribution of the country estate to landscape formation'. In his lecture he put country estates metaphorically on the map as landscape-forming elements, adding that historical examples could serve as inspiration for new forms of housing, recreation and nature development. Maas was also the first to put estate landscapes literally on the map, with a landscape types map onto which he projected the locations of historical Dutch country estates and castles in order draw attention to their interrelatedness. In *De buitenplaatsen historisch-geografisch gezien* (1976), Pim van Tent took a more geographical approach. He demonstrated that a logical connection exists between choice of location and natural substratum, accessibility and availability of land, which in turn gives rise to landscape zones of country houses and landed estates. More recent writings on this topic include Ben Olde Meierink's article 'Buitenplaatslandschappen' (estate landscapes) in *Kasteel & Buitenplaats* (2017).

In these publications, individual country houses are examined not only in combination with their immediate surroundings (garden, park, landscape), but also at the regional level, as landscape architecture ensembles of several country houses, landed estates and castles together with their spatial context. So the focus here is on networks of country houses, landed estates and castles that together make up a landscape zone. In this thematic issue

of the Bulletin we use the term 'estate landscapes' or the plural form 'country houses landscapes' to refer to this phenomenon. There are also related terms like 'landed estate zones', 'landed estate landscapes', 'country estate networks' or 'country estate biotopes', that introduce nuances and emphasize the differences between country house estate and landed estate or the unity of house, garden and park. To avoid confusion, we use the following definition: 'Estate landscapes are landscapes whose character is defined by historical castles, country houses (including their gardens and parks) and landed estates'. In other words, it is an inclusive definition intended to indicate the coherence or the unity of the component parts, whether they be buildings, gardens and parks, woods or farming areas.

Why a thematic issue devoted to estate landscapes? Firstly because this is a rapidly developing and increasingly important field of research. A situation report on the state of research from the perspective of different disciplines is therefore relevant. It can stimulate theorizing and discussion with respect to how we might better understand the historical estate landscape and how we might strengthen the link between research, policy and design. Beyond that there is the fact that estate landscapes are under enormous pressure from climate change and urbanization – along with associated challenges relating to water, nature, energy, farming, recreation and tourism. These challenges have such huge spatial consequences and are so complex that a regional perspective is necessary in order to achieve coherent solutions. At that level, based on the existing landscape structure, spatial strategies can be developed for the protection of the estate landscape and the addition of new qualities. That 'helicopter view' is also necessary as a commonly agreed basis on which owners, governments, experts and other stakeholders can work together to create future-proof estate landscapes.





The aim of this thematic issue is to promote further research into estate landscapes and to that end it presents recent findings drawn from the Dutch academic and practical field. Five wide-ranging contributions underscore the fact that estate landscape research, policy and design calls for an interdisciplinary approach in which different perspectives complement and reinforce one another. By way of introduction, Hans Renes presents an overview of the historical evolution of the term ‘country estate’ and of estate landscapes in the Netherlands from a historical-geographical perspective. Next, Hanneke Ronnes summarizes the historiography of research into estate landscapes and offers a few suggestions for future research. Elyze Storms-Smeets takes the Gelders Arcadië estate landscape as the inspiration for a socio-geographic approach to understanding estate landscapes. Paul Thissen sketches the growth of government involvement in country house and landed estates in Gelderland. Finally, Steffen Nijhuis introduces a regional design approach in which the historical layering and landscape structure serve as a basis for enhancing the resilience and adaptability of estate landscapes.

We wish you much reading enjoyment and inspiration.

ON BEHALF OF THE EDITORS:

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