

The evolution of the countryside over time.¹

The countryside as a development area

As soon as the first people settled in what is now the Netherlands, the restructuring of the countryside began. The farmers – at that time almost everyone was a farmer – took the lead.² Little by little they cultivated the land and they created a surplus which permitted the founding of villages and towns, where people with other occupations settled.

This process of cultivation has never been easy. It was not easy to keep the land dry, particularly in the densely populated alluvial part of the country. The construction of dikes was an important instrument for the prevention of floods. Accordingly, the polder model was invented in the eleventh century, along with its corresponding organisational model (the district water boards) and the associated wind technology. With the help of this technology, peat digging became possible. This process transformed the fenland in the west and north of the Netherlands into lakes and pasture, while moorland was turned into arable land. Peat was also already excavated from some higher parts of the Netherlands.³ However, most cultivation activities there consisted of getting the moorland under plough.⁴

This transformation was inspired by the *utilitarian* view that the land was there for people to use as they liked. In fact, areas only belonged to the countryside when they were cultivated. There was no appreciation for wasteland, which was viewed as land that had to be cultivated as soon as possible.

With the help of the new technology which had become available during the industrialisation process, an offensive began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to clear the last wasteland, which around 1900 covered about twenty percent of the surface of the Netherlands. This technology was primarily used for drainage and deep ploughing. The actual clearing was done by manual labour, for the greater part in the context of unemployment relief projects. Dur-

¹ A Dutch version of this article 'Plattelandontwikkeling. De lange termijn' was published in W. Asbeeck Brusse, J. Bouma, R. Griffiths (eds.) *De toekomst van het gemeenschappelijk landbouwbeleid: actuele vraagstukken en perspectieven voor Nederland* (Lemma: Utrecht 2002). This article combines some insights presented in Pim Kooij, *Mythen van de groene ruimte* (Wageningen 1999); Pim Kooij, 'Agrarische geschiedenis in de actualiteit', in Pim Kooij et al. *De actualiteit van de agrarische geschiedenis*. *Historia Agriculturae* 30 (Groningen/Wageningen 2000) 1–27; Pim Kooij, 'Van platteland naar groene ruimte' *Spil*, 177–178 (2001) 14–20.

² Sjeff Hendriks, *De ontginning van Nederland* (Utrecht 1998).

³ M.A.W. Gerding, *Vier eeuwen turfwinning. De vereningen in Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe en Overijssel tussen 1550 en 1950*, A.A.G. *Bijdragen* 35 (Wageningen 1995).

⁴ P.H.M. Thissen, 'Van heide tot boerenland en bos', in Marty de Harde & Hans van Triest (eds.) *Jonge landschappen* (Utrecht 1994) 21–38.

ing this process the last collective administrations, the so-called 'marken' which still existed in the east and the south of the country, were replaced by individual property rights.⁵

Technological innovations also made operational management in agriculture uniform. In the arable farming areas artificial fertilisers brought an end to mixed farming, and in grassland areas, the rising demand from abroad combined with the possibility of mechanical milk processing resulted in the intensification of dairy farming. Mixed farming survived in sandy areas. Here, intensive farming, especially in the form of the stock rearing of pigs and confined poultry farming, became specialties.⁶ The regional farming styles were replaced by uniform styles based on scientific recommendations and the imitation of successful farmers. Farms also became more uniform.

By around 1950, the cultivation of the Netherlands was more or less complete. An extension was now planned in the new polders in the IJsselmeer. These polders stood in stark contrast to some parts of the 'old land'. The greater part of the old land, however, was adapted to the new conditions through land consolidation, a process which had already been initiated in the early twentieth century but which was now being intensified.⁷ This was accompanied by the state policy of Regional Development (Streekverbetering), a combination of advice and land consolidation intended to modernise the more undeveloped parts of the country.⁸

These developments illustrate that the countryside remained primarily utilitarian until around 1960. However, at the same time, voices expressing another vision of the countryside grew louder. These voices had an unmistakable urban accent.

The countryside as an urban backyard

Viewed from a cultural perspective, town and countryside can be considered as each other's opposites, with the modern city set in contrast to the backward countryside, and rural peace and quiet set against urban stress.⁹ Seen from an economic perspective, however, town and countryside are each other's complements. If we go back in time, these complementarities become increasingly manifest.

As mentioned above, the first villages emerged thanks to an agricultural surplus. This surplus could feed the villagers, but it could also be traded. This im-

⁵ Jan Bieleman, *Geschiedenis van de landbouw in Nederland 1500-1950* (Amsterdam/Meppel 1992) III

⁶ Bieleman, *Geschiedenis landbouw*, III

⁷ G. Andela, *Kneedbaar landschap, kneedbaar volk. De heroïsche jaren van de ruilverkaveling in Nederland* (Bussum 2000). Simon van den Bergh, *Verdeeld land. De geschiedenis van de ruilverkaveling in Nederland vanuit een lokaal perspectief, 1890-1985*. *Historia Agriculturae* 35 (Groningen/Wageningen 2004).

⁸ Erwin H. Karel, *De maakbare boer. Streekverbetering als instrument van het Nederlandse landbouwbeleid 1953-1970*. *Historia Agriculturae* 37 (Groningen/Wageningen 2005).

⁹ P. Kooij, 'Stad en platteland', in F.L. van Holthoon (ed.) *De Nederlandse samenleving sinds 1815* (Assen/Maastricht 1985) 93-119. A. Schuurman, 'Plattelandscultuur in de negentiende en vroeg-twintigste eeuw. Modernisering en globalisering. Een essay', in *Jaarboek Nederlands Openluchtmuseum* 5 (1999) 270-302.

plied the creation of markets, which initially were real places where supply and demand met and where additional activities – transport, wholesale – were concentrated. These activities became so multifarious in some villages that they turned into multifunctional centres, into towns. From around 1000 CE the specific character of these towns was accentuated by sovereigns through the granting of charters, which placed them outside the feudal system. The importance of their urban functions was stressed by the erection of walls.

Demand was exerted on the countryside by the towns' demand for rural products and for labour. This resulted in the intensification of the agriculture located around towns in the form of horticulture and dairy farming on small-scale lots of land. The demand for labour was translated into migration from the country into the towns. This movement remained constant because the death rate in the towns was far higher than in the countryside until the 19th century.¹⁰

In addition, in some regions the rural population had become involved in the urban production of goods as early as the Middle Ages. The putting-out system was introduced in Flanders, where some parts of the production process, like spinning and weaving, were performed by small-hold farmers and their relatives. This system also evolved in Twente and in central Brabant. It also implied the possibility of improving the profitability of small farms.

The development of the countryside in the sense of increased planning was directed from the town. This was not only the case for the urban fringe but also for remote areas. Peat digging, for instance, was organised from the towns. The demand from Amsterdam stimulated the process in the province of Groningen in the north. The town of Groningen took the lead in peat exploitation in this area, but urban companies were active elsewhere. Land was considered by urban dwellers as a profitable and stable investment. The farmer-tenants had to obey the rules of such absentee owners.

Towns people also started to live in the countryside. Many rich inhabitants from Amsterdam considered their city too crowded and dirty to live in permanently as early as the 17th century. At that time, Amsterdam had about 200,000 inhabitants. These 'refugees' settled along the rivers Vecht and Amstel, and in the dunes along the North Sea coast. Their country estates also appeared near the Hague and Middelburg, the capital of the province of Zeeland.

These owners of country estates had a different view of the countryside than the farmers. In a way, their vision was also utilitarian, in the sense that they also wanted to cultivate the land. However, they did not want to do so for the production of goods but for their own pleasure. They preferred a well cultivated landscape. Initially, they created formal gardens around their houses, following the French example. This implied an extra civilised contrast with the surrounding 'wilderness'.¹¹

¹⁰ F.W.A. van Poppel, *Stad en platteland in demografisch perspectief. De Nederlandse situatie in de periode 1850-1960*. NIDI report (Voorburg, 1984).

¹¹ Hans Renes, 'Bossen en buitenplaatsen', in De Harde & Van Triest (eds.) *Jonge landschappen*, 38-51.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the English landscape style became popular, which implied a more park-like landscape with curving paths and the use of water features. In fact it was tamed nature – a hill as a metaphor for a mountain, a group of trees pretending to be a forest and a pond representing a lake. Furthermore, a pleasant fauna consisting of peacocks, swans and pigeons took the place of wild animals.

I would like to term the vision of these new dwellers in the countryside *arcadian-paradisaical*, because it contains ideas of a lost landscape. They did not seek to evoke a time when the earth was waste and idle, but a delightful, lost paradise, like the often depicted landscape of Greek Arcadia, where the people had a grand old time in the company of various mythological figures. However, the Amsterdam regents preferred a lazy *dolce far niente* rather than the exciting pastoral scenes painted by Rubens and others. When their portraits were painted at their manors, it was always in full dress.

There were also country estates in the east of the Netherlands, but people originating from the towns did not live there. Rather, they were inhabited by large landowners who fostered the remnants of the feudal system and exploited their estates in an utilitarian manner through a number of farms. Nevertheless, they created around their houses their own Arcadia, often in the form of an English garden.

Initially, only the very rich could afford to dwell outside the towns. Other townspeople had to content themselves with less expensive solutions, such as small summer houses (*theekoepel*) immediately beyond the walls. However, most town dwellers satisfied their arcadian-paradisaical impulses with a stroll in an urban park or to a café along an arterial road. The first parks were constructed in the eighteenth century. They were rather formal and the paths were often designed in the form of a star. In the 19th century the English landscape style became dominant, which was promoted by landscape architects such as Zocher and Springer.¹²

In the 19th century the industrialisation and the growth of the transit trade along the Rhine resulted in the rapid increase in the numbers of the newly rich, who in turn followed the example of the Amsterdam regents. Industrialists and tradesmen from Amsterdam settled in het Gooi, a country region south of Amsterdam. It was easily accessible thanks to the opening of a railway in 1845. A part of the Rotterdam elite moved to the Hague, to the Van Stolk Park and other villa parks which were created in the healthy sandy area near Scheveningen. This was facilitated by the construction of an electric railway from Rotterdam to Scheveningen.

The train and tram also enabled the wealthy inhabitants of Utrecht to settle in the hilly eastern part of the province, where many country estates were built. At the same time, members of the lower social orders could profit from the rising

¹² Maurits van Rooijen, *De wortels van het stedelijk groen: een studie naar ontstaan en voortbestaan van de Nederlandse groene stad* (Utrecht, 1990).

standard of living and the new means of transport. In part they also left the towns. Het Gooi – an area where some villages became towns – and the area around Arnhem and Nijmegen – two places which were easily accessible by train – became popular locations.¹³

Arcadian enclaves thus increasingly appeared in the countryside. Even some provincial natives followed this example. A number of large farmers in the province of Groningen transformed their kitchen gardens and orchards into so-called ‘slingertuinen’ in the English landscape style.¹⁴ This arcadian-paradisaical environment was not restricted to the countryside. The defortification of cities, which was completed around 1874, enabled the construction of extensions to towns following this tradition. This is illustrated by the villa quarters around the towns. The construction of these quarters was often combined with the creation of parks. The Sarphati Park and the Vondelpark in Amsterdam are good examples.¹⁵ Sometimes, parks were created by industrialists to provide the lower income groups – among them their own employees – with paradisaical retreats of their own. Examples of the type include the People’s Park (Volkspark) in Enschede and the Town Park (Stadspark) in Groningen. Entrepreneurs also built villages for their labourers near their factories, related to the garden city idea.¹⁶ Moreover, the spirit of utilitarianism and Arcadia was combined in allotment gardens, which appeared around 1900 in connection with the extension of towns.¹⁷

All these developments implied the dissolution of the border between town and countryside. The quarters for labourers at the outskirts of the towns now alternated with villa parks for the well-to-do along the arterial roads. This, however, was not considered as a harmonious mix. A growing number of people were frightened by the expanding industries and the fast extension of towns. In their opinion what was left of nature was now severely threatened. This fostered a new vision of nature, which could be termed *nature-empathic* because people wished to know nature by projecting themselves into it.

The countryside as a nature reserve

Living nature, rather than stuffed animals and dried plants, was what the pioneers Eli Heimans and Jac. P. Thijsse – both teachers – were looking for in the countryside.¹⁸ In the west of the Netherlands almost all the arable land had been brought into cultivation, with only the dunes and riverbanks preserving some ‘unspoiled’ nature. In the east there was somewhat more nature but this was also

¹³ Kooij, ‘Stad en platteland’.

¹⁴ IJnte Botke, *Boer en heer. De Groninger boer 1760-1960* (Groningen 2002).

¹⁵ Michiel Wagenaar, Amsterdam 1876-1914. *Economisch herstel, ruimtelijke expansie en de veranderende ordening van het stedelijk grondgebruik* (Amsterdam 1990) Ch. 7.

¹⁶ C.G.P. Linssen, ‘Over fabrikanten en hun inspanningen tot verbetering van de arbeidershuisvesting, in W. Frijhoff & M. Hiemstra (eds.) *Bewogen en bewegen* (Tilburg 1986).

¹⁷ C.L.W. Ruys, *Het belang van de volkstuinten* (The Hague 1958).

¹⁸ J.P. Verkaik, Jac P. Thijsse. *Een leven in dienst van de natuur* (Zutphen 1995).

threatened. It was necessary to draw attention to it and to take measures for its preservation.

The nature-empathic vision did not distinguish wasteland. On the contrary, this was viewed as interesting and worth studying and preserving. The attitude engendered many associations for the study of nature and associations for its preservation, such as the Nature Conservation Society (1905).¹⁹ Even the national government founded the State Forestry Authority (1899), targeted not only at the production of wood but also at the conservation of forests. The Nature Conservation Society started to buy nature reserves, such as a lake near Amsterdam (Naardermeer) and country estates in various parts of the country.²⁰ Parts of these country estates were not very natural, but at that time the boundary between the arcadian and the empathic visions was not very distinct.

This diffuse boundary was also accentuated by the way the Dutch Touring Club (ANWB) - founded in 1883 - organised its members' encounters with nature. The cyclists were safely guided by signposts along cycle tracks, and pedestrians also got their well-marked tracks.

In 1919, in the province of Gelderland, the first provincial association for the protection of nature was founded. This initiative was soon copied in the other provinces. They all bought their own nature reserves. Initially, these associations confined themselves to the conservation of these areas. Around 1970, however, they started to work to reinforce 'nature values'. This term was invented at that time.²¹ Nature values could be strengthened by improving existing nature reserves, for instance by raising the groundwater level. However, new reserves were also created, especially in the estuaries of the major rivers. The spontaneous genesis of a natural area in the recently reclaimed IJsselmeer polder Oostelijk Flevoland acted as a catalyst. This rather wet area was set aside by the planners and was extremely rapidly colonized by rare plants and animals. This suggested potentially similar outcomes elsewhere.²²

It is tempting to regard this active creation of natural areas emerging from within the nature-empathic vision of nature as implying a complete revolution in thinking. Instead of a process of cultivation, the reverse was carried out. In fact, this creation of natural areas could be considered as merely a special form of cultivation, on account of the need for a set of active conservation measures, such as the introduction of large grazing animals to keep an area open.

Nevertheless, this creation of natural areas was experienced by many people as a culture shock. They were upset by the substitution of well-cultivated countryside areas by waste nature, given that so much effort had been put into ridding the country of wasteland in previous times. They mobilised opposition. However, they also had to cope with other developments in the countryside.

¹⁹ H. van der Windt, *En dan, wat is natuur nog in dit land. Natuurbescherming in Nederland* (Meppel 1995).

²⁰ H.P. Gorter et al., *Vijftig jaar natuurbescherming in Nederland* (Amsterdam 1956).

²¹ Van der Windt, *En dan, wat is natuur nog in dit land*, 139.

²² Frans Vera, *Metaforen voor de wildernis. Eik, hazelaar, rund en paard* (Wageningen 1997).

The countryside as arena

According to the landscape specialist R.J. Benthem, the Dutch landscape was at its zenith around 1900. The land was not densely populated, it supported only 5 million inhabitants rather than today's 16 million. In addition, this number of people was living in balance with nature. The limited options offered by technology resulted in a sound use of water and land, which preserved the environment. Moreover, the skyline was uncluttered, agriculture was small-scale, and most country estates were inhabited by individual owners and still had their original structure and functions.²³

As we have already seen, a number of people living around 1900 had a different opinion. Viewed with the benefit of hindsight, they had many reasons for their feelings. The big cities in the west had exploded in size, especially Rotterdam, which between 1870 and 1900 grew from 116,000 to 318,000 inhabitants. Furthermore, the new industrial cities of Tilburg (woollen industry), Enschede (cotton industry) and Eindhoven (electronics) were spreading rapidly across the countryside. The railways had reached all four corners of the country, taking up a lot of land, while the new canals in the west – the Nieuwe Waterweg (1872) near Rotterdam and the Noordzeekanaal near Amsterdam (1876) – had started the partial transformation of the dune landscape into that of industry.

The scale of agriculture had also changed. In the early 19th century in the richest areas, such as Groningen and Zeeland, large farmers typically had fifty hectares. In Groningen between 1828 and 1910 the number of farmers cultivating fifty hectares or more rose from 278 to 719.²⁴ The villages, however, had more or less remained the same. During the Great Depression (1878–1895) many inhabitants had left their villages for the large cities in the west or the United States. There were some exceptions – the villages near Amsterdam, Rotterdam and the Hague were turning into towns. Since most nature conservationists also lived in these big cities, these were the villages they considered as typical, and this of course increased their concern for the destruction of the countryside.

Nevertheless, there remained room for all three visions of nature: the utilitarian, the arcadian-paradisaical and the nature-empathic. The adherents to the empathic vision had no objection to the clearing of moorland, which they considered of little value. However, the list of the most valuable nature areas, which was made around 1930 by the associations for the conservation of nature, aroused the first opposition from the farmers' organisations.²⁵

After the Second World War, the opposition increased. The utilitarian farmers, who had proved to be of enormous value to the food supply during the War, now received the support of the Government in its effort to attain food

²³ R.J. Benthem, 'De toekomst van het landschap', in *Spectrumatlas van de Nederlandse landschappen* (Utrecht 1979) 252.

²⁴ Peter Priester, *De economische ontwikkeling van de landbouw in Groningen 1800-1910*, A.A.G. Bijdragen 31 (Wageningen 1991) 96.

²⁵ Van der Windt, *En dan wat is natuur*, 109.

security. The Land Consolidation Act of 1954 completely acceded to the needs of the farmers. The reconstruction of the countryside and the reclamation of the IJsselmeer polders was performed in an utilitarian manner. This was combined with stimulus for farmers to expand their farms within the new European economic structure, while small farmers obtained the option to liquidate their activities.²⁶

However, groups with a different vision of the countryside also manifested themselves. Initially the growing population was confined to the cities, where the luckiest managed to get their own apartments in tall blocks of flats while the rest had to lodge with other families. In 1966 a government communication was circulated granting some villages permission to grow. This resulted in suburbanisation around towns and cities, allowing the former town dwellers the opportunity to create their own paradises. This was such a success that in the west and the centre of the country some villages – such as Zoetermeer, Nieuwegein and Houten – almost completely disappeared beneath the new housing. Moreover, people who had remained in the towns also travelled to the countryside with increasing frequency, in many cases with their new cars. They came as tourists or holidaymakers and were able to spend the night at camp sites or holiday camps. Sporthuis Centrum (later Centerparks) launched a new paradisaical formula in the 1960s, with large tropical swimming pools, which was imitated on a large scale by other chains.

This implied additional claims on space, which were capable of threatening the claims of the nature-empathic. However, concern for the environment increased at that time, which meant extra support for empathic organisations, also from some political parties. Nevertheless, their claims for space were primarily rewarded in areas with low economic value such as river estuaries, the Waddenzee and poor soil in remote provinces.

Little by little the countryside transformed into an arena in which farmers, village dwellers and nature conservationists battled for control of scarce space. This was particularly true in the west of the country, the so-called Randstad, which was home to six million people – more than the population of the whole country a hundred years before. This demographic growth, combined with a rising standard of living, resulted in increasing numbers of families being able to afford a house with a garden in the countryside. On the other hand, however, agriculture industrialised, which placed a growing demand on space. Prices for land for economic purposes passed the magic threshold of NLG 100,000 per hectare, and real estate developers paid much more. Nature became priceless.

The countryside as a green area

Once the countryside had become an arena for competing visions and interests, the need for an arbitrator grew. The central government had to perform this

²⁶ Jan Bieleman, 'De Nederlandse landbouw in de twintigste eeuw', in Pim Kooij et al., *De actualiteit van de agrarische geschiedenis. Historia Agriculturae 30* (Groningen/Wageningen 2002) 27–49.

role. Spatial planning was introduced as its main instrument, to regulate the use of space by different parties. A second administrative layer, the province, also became involved. Provinces gained competence in the fields of building, environmental regulation and the economic infrastructure (transport and energy, for instance). The municipalities were initially kept out of these decision-making processes, but by the late 20th century they gained competence at the expense of the provinces. In the meantime, municipal regrouping had created much larger municipalities.

The policy context was provided by guidelines issued by the Ministry of Planning Affairs and other ministries. Marijke van Schendelen analysed these reports and has shown clearly their enormous impact, that they differed depending on which ministry published them, and that they were often surpassed by new developments that required fresh guidance.²⁷ Moreover, some policy statements implied subsidies, which caused considerable excitement in the lower administrative layers but also among academics focussed on the countryside.

Since the central government had no interest in creating polarisation between the three visions of the countryside and the claims linked to these visions, it developed, in line with the Dutch polder model, three concepts with which to approach disputes – green area (*groene ruimte*), modernisation of the countryside (*plattelandsvernieuwing*) and cultural heritage (*cultuurhistorie*). These concepts covered scientific programmes and practical measures.

The term green area was used for the first time in 1966 in the scientific field of agricultural engineering by Professor Van Duin in his inaugural lecture at the agricultural university in Wageningen.²⁸ At that time there was marginal but growing interest in preserving natural values in land consolidation plans by including small areas of nature into cultural areas. Engineers aspired to become involved in this creation of natural areas and it was therefore in their interest to abolish the difference between the cultural and the more or less natural landscapes. The government, having the same plan, adopted the term because the term green area implied a continuum in which the interests of farmers, other inhabitants of the countryside and its protectors could all be found.

The green area contains everything outside the towns and cities – villages inasmuch as they have a green aura, farms and farmland, forest, lakes, dykes and so on. From this perspective the discrepancies between culture and nature disappear. Farmers could act as stewards of adjacent natural areas and their land could become part of an ecological superstructure which was designed by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1990. This ecological superstructure should enable flora and fauna to spread across the country without restriction.

The green area has proved to be a firm concept, by offering a base for a broad variation in landscapes and functions. It covers village gardens as well as a meadows or corn fields, existing national parks like the Hoge Veluwe as well as re-

²⁷ Marijke van Schendelen, *Natuur en ruimtelijke ordening in Nederland. Een symbiotische relatie* (Rotterdam 1997).

²⁸ R.H.A. van Duin, *Boeren, burgers en buitenlui* (Wageningen, 1966).

cently created nature reserves like the Blue Chamber (Blauwe Kamer) along the Rhine between Rhenen and Wageningen.

An interesting case to test the elasticity of the green area concept could be the Blue City (Blauwe Stad) project. The east of the province of Groningen is a clay area in which only grain and sugar beet will grow. The fall of the corn prices threatened the profitability of the farms. Therefore, 800 hectares of arable soil will be inundated to create a lake. Expensive housing will be built alongside the lake, while 350 hectares will be transformed into nature. Agriculture will be marginalised. In fact the Blue City implies the end of the dominance of agriculture. Within the context of the green area a new equilibrium has to be found. This will not be easy because the farmers' organisations do not approve of this waste of land.

The same is true of the Green Heart. As noted above, the Randstad in the west of the country is gradually swallowing the green area within this conurbation, the Green Heart. This has resulted in the Green Heart becoming the front line in the countryside debate in the Netherlands.²⁹ It remains an open question whether the green area concept will moderate the discrepancies between the different parties.

Modernisation of the countryside is a concept that was launched in the 1990s by sociologists at Wageningen University and later adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture. It implied firstly the provision of an alternative for farmers who could not cope with the industrial mode of production in agriculture.³⁰ Apart from the claims made on them by arcadians and empathics, they were threatened by the European Union's revision of its agricultural policy – from interventionism to a free market system – which in most cases resulted in a fall in incomes. To remedy this, farmers tended to turn to solutions which had been successful in the past – intensification, extensification or specialisation in new products. Since the first two solutions were undesirable because of problems with manure and the scarcity of land, the third solution was promoted. The government provided financial stimulus for additional activities such as nature management, the growing of flowers or fish farming, running camp sites or bed-and-breakfasts at the farms, the provision of care for the elderly or the disabled, and so on. Additional attention was paid to regional products and to the reconstruction of regional farming styles.³¹

It was the intention of the modernisation concept to minimize the clashes between farmers and nature conservationists through the inclusion of both groups into the process of countryside management, with the regional specialisation approach promoted to farmers being felt to be something that could be appreciated

²⁹ Guus Borger, Adriaan Haartsen & P.H.C. Vesters, in cooperation with Frits Horsten, *Het Groene Hart: een Hollands cultuurlandschap* (Utrecht 1997). See also the contribution on the Green Heart in this volume.

³⁰ H. de Haan & J.D. van der Ploeg, *Endogenous rural development* (Wageningen, 1994).

³¹ Tialda Haartsen, Peter Groote & Paulus P.P. Huijgen, *Claiming rural identities. Dynamics, contexts, policies* (Assen 2000).

by people with arcadian-paradisaical views. There are many records of successful initiatives.³² However, the question remains of course whether profitability is sustainable once the pioneers are imitated by many others. Moreover, the modernisation of the countryside concept is a container that can be filled with various innovations.³³ These innovations could also be developed by other countryside groups than farmers. These groups have already gained a majority. Even in the remotest villages the occupational structure is no longer dominated by farmers.³⁴ This makes the process of modernisation difficult to manage, particularly when financial claims are linked to it.

One of these claims has been already recognised. It is the concept of cultural heritage, one that has been taking shape since the 1970s. In the Netherlands it is called 'cultuurhistorie', a combination of historical geography, archaeology and building history. It centres on the development of the landscape over time. The early stages are analysed by archaeologists, while later stages are studied by historical geographers and building historians. Special attention is paid to remains that indicate former developments, landscape elements as well as artefacts in the landscape (such as mills, bridges, characteristic houses and farms).³⁵

The *Belvedere* report, published by four ministries involved in spatial planning, contains an effort to develop scales for the evaluation of remaining landscape elements and artefacts in the landscape.³⁶ These scales are linked to regional characteristics which also play a role in modernisation processes. Cultural heritage is a central category, referring to specific landscapes – natural as well as cultural – and specific buildings.

In fact, within the concept of 'cultuurhistorie' attention is paid to the spatial effects of all three visions of the landscape. This implies some intention to reconcile these three visions. However, the *Belvedere* report states that it will be not necessary or possible to preserve all these effects. Only the most characteristic elements should be protected. However, the setting may change in time. Protection by development ('Behoud door ontwikkeling') is the report's catchphrase. It is thus that an authentic brook or a characteristic pumping-station gets incorporated into a market-gardening area, a town extension or a rough natural area.

The countryside after 2000

Historians do not like to predict the future. They are in a unique position to know that things will always turn out differently. During a boom, priorities are quite different from those in times of crisis. An integrated approach leads to dif-

³² R. van Broekhuizen, L. Klep, H. Oostindie & J.D. van der Ploeg, *Atlas van het vernieuwend platteland* (Doetinchem 1997); Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, *De virtuele boer* (Assen 1999).

³³ W. de Haas, et al. *Kennis in plattelandsvernieuwing*, (The Hague 1997).

³⁴ Dirk Strijker, 'Agriculture: still a key to rural identity?', in Haartsen, *Claiming rural identities*, 47-55.

³⁵ J.H.F. Bloemers & M.H. Wijnen, *Bodemarchief in behoud en ontwikkeling. De conceptuele grondslagen* (The Hague 2001).

³⁶ Ministeries van OCenW, LNV, VROM, Verkeer en Waterstaat, *Nota Belvedere. Beleidsnota over de relatie cultuurhistorie en ruimtelijke inrichting* (The Hague 1999).

ferent results from an *ad hoc* policy where different parties at different times are differently rewarded. One thing is clear. In the future it will be impossible to have an exclusively utilitarian, arcadian or empathic view of the countryside. There is simply not enough space to meet these conflicting claims. Therefore, utilitarians who propagate large-scale agriculture on large plots of land have to move to the IJsselmeer polders and the sparsely populated corners of the country, or go abroad. People with arcadian sensitivities will notice that the cost of living in their own paradises in the countryside will rise enormously, which results in many people having to stay in or to go back to the compact cities. Finally, the nature-empathic will have to accept that 'their' areas will become easily accessible to holidaymakers and tourists.

Therefore, the only vision of the countryside which will stand the test of time will be a vision in which the three approaches are more or less combined and the sharp dividing lines have disappeared. The outcome will thus be typically Dutch - a green area with the characteristics of a polder landscape.