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# Planning for the future; towards a sustainable design and land use of an ancient flooded military defence line

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## Abstract

In a time of increasing pressure and increasing demands on space a critical view is needed in order to preserve our cultural heritage. Mere preservation or restoration is not an approach that assures the survival of heritage in the future. In The Netherlands a new approach is being developed by which cultural heritage is integrated into physical planning and the development of new functions. In addition to contemplating on the theoretical advantages and disadvantages of the approach, this article shows an example of a successful participatory approach by which a landscape plan was designed for an area around a historical military defence line. The defence line is one of the first of the kind and originates from the Dutch War for Independence (1568–1648). The structure is threatened by present spatial developments. In co-operation with stakeholders a vision was formulated that formed a framework for future developments. The project showed that preservation through development is an approach that has great potential and should in many cases be preferred to the more common approach of protection and restoration of relics. The new approach provides more support for the preservation of cultural heritage and doesn't block other social developments.

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## 1. Introduction

In physical planning it is important to create new notions about spatial development of (new) functions of our society in medium and long-term perspective. Since our society is complex and dynamic, a great variety of factors have to be taken into account. Recently the issue of sustainability has made explicit choices in planning necessary. During the past two or three decades the significance of cultural landscapes have also become a point of increasing interest. As a result in many western European countries applied historical geographical research has been established (Bethemont, 1994; Vervloet, 1994; Denecke, 1982).

When the new research theme was first to be integrated into the practice of planning, the agencies were mainly interested in catching up on the backlog of knowledge. In the initial phase, mostly inventories about the exact location of relics and ensembles of relics in the landscape were carried out. Information about the history of cultural landscapes became a booming business.

Recently the involved researchers have become more and more aware that for sufficient use and protection of the cultural heritage more than accumulating knowledge and deliberating with peers is required. To achieve lasting success, knowledge and skills of the historical geographer are to be integrated in the planning process in an early phase. An approach of preservation or restoration is not always desirable or possible. Furthermore, the support

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by local landowners and land users in projects is essential.

This implies a new approach by which the historical aspects of cultural landscapes have to be connected with other functions and interests by means of integral planning associated with a large circle of involved disciplines, institutions and citizens. This planning method is called ‘cultural planning’.

To conduct this process of co-operation between policy, planning and cultural history in the Netherlands, the so-called ‘Belvedere Memorandum’, a policy document examining the relationship between cultural history and spatial planning was introduced in 1999. It was introduced by four ministries involved in the future development of the rural landscape: the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Housing Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries and the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management (Nota Belvedere, 1999).

The memorandum is based on a vision regarding “cultural history as being of vital importance to our society and to each individual citizen”. Conservation and use of our cultural heritage are supposed to add an extra cultural dimension to the spatial structure. The approach recommended in the ‘Belvedere Memorandum’ centres around the continuous development of our cultural heritage, rather than replacement by new elements or severe restriction on the use

of objects. It is an approach that must be realised by means of integral spatial policy. The strategy stresses the traditionally a rather defensive approach to valuable landscapes and relics in physical planning will be replaced with a more proactive attitude towards cultural heritage with an open mind for the chances of historical landscapes and elements by adaptation and change. In the field of tension between restoration and preservation on the one hand, and continuous development on the other hand, it is advisable to have profoundly provoking discussions with planners and landscape architects about the future of historical landscape structures.

We suggest this new approach to be tried in practical projects. Only in this way we can avoid getting bogged down in endlessly repetitious theoretical arguments. Of course, we do not deny the importance of theoretical reflections. We suppose, however, that by tackling practical problems in the field, a lot of material can be gathered for future scientific evaluations.

In this article we illustrate the new approach with a project that started in 2001. In the project landscape visions were constructed around a 17th century military defence line (Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by local stakeholders and its main goal was to get the defence line “back on the map”. We will show that the strategy of creating an integrated vision for cultural heritage and other functions proved to be a fruitful one. Furthermore, the project was an example

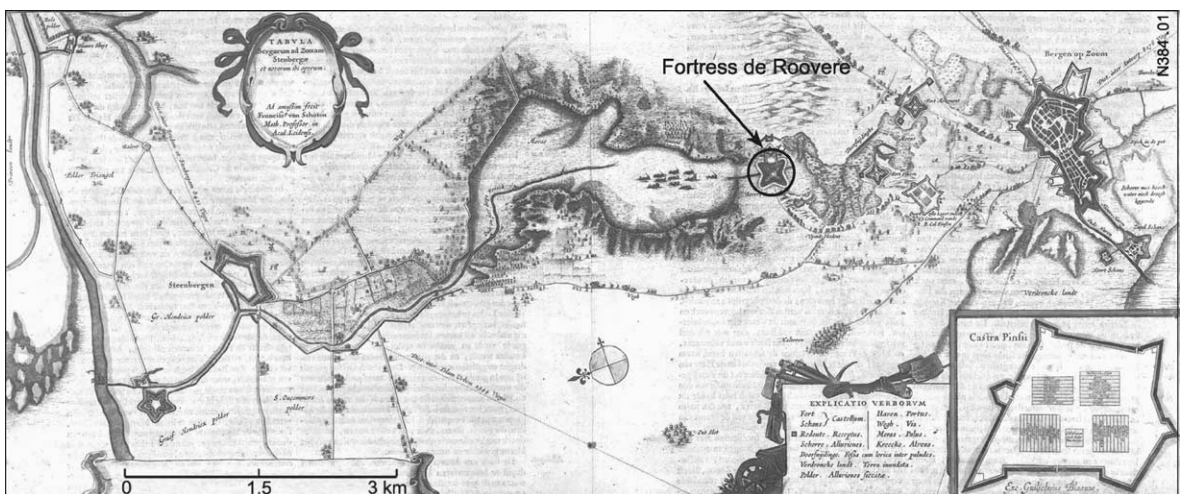


Fig. 1. The military defence line from Bergen op Zoom to Steenberg on a map of Frans van Schooten (1628).

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