Natuurmonumenten (Natural Monuments Society), a Dutch NGO for nature conservation, is well known in the Netherlands. It is much less known however that the society also manages an impressive collection of cultural heritage. Properties include castles, country estates, cultural landscapes and archeological remains. In short, Natuurmonumenten owns a broad array of typical Dutch landscapes, together with hundreds of historical buildings, wooded banks, hedges, lanes and other landscape heritage.

This book is based on research on the management of cultural heritage of a nature oriented organization. Focus lies on the historical cultural landscapes Natuurmonumenten manages and their management in historical perspective. With this book, I hope to draw attention to the role of the society for cultural heritage and more specifically cultural landscapes.

Framework of the book

Seven chapters compile this book. Four chapters are devoted to four different case studies. Each chapter illustrates the cultural heritage management of a certain terrain in the property of Natuurmonumenten. An introductory chapter and a chapter about the theoretical framework and method of this study precede the case studies. The seventh and final chapter contains the conclusions.

1 Introduction

The introductory chapter starts with an introduction of the central themes of this thesis: landscape, heritage and nature. The small ecological reserve of Alert Bay, Canada, BC, illustrates the strong interrelationship of these themes in nature reserves. What appears to be a natural landscape is strongly influenced by men on closer inspection. The ecological reserve comprises therefore both natural and cultural heritage.

My motives for this research lay in my daily profession as a cultural heritage and landscape specialist for Natuurmonumenten. Over the past nearly twenty years, I gained lot of experience on the cultural heritage aspect of this nature conservation society. This knowledge I would like to share with my fellow historical geographers and other heritage specialists.
Therefore this book presents, in short, the relationship between landscape, heritage and nature with Natuurmonumenten. The central question of this thesis is:

What is the relationship between natural and cultural heritage with nature management in the Netherlands, particularly for Natuurmonumenten?

To answer this question, a thorough understanding of the nature-culture interrelationship in the management of nature reserves in an historical perspective is necessary. The four case studies which comprise the main part of this book (chapters 3-6) provide the information needed to study the nature-culture interrelationship.

Four questions are defined to precise the central question of this research:

1) What's the character of the cultural heritage in the studied nature reserves?
2) What is the role of the cultural heritage in the management of the studied nature reserves?
3) Is there a change in the attitude of Natuurmonumenten towards cultural heritage in the four nature reserves studied?
4) Which concepts of nature, heritage and landscape are usable for nature preservation organizations like Natuurmonumenten?

Natural and cultural heritage are still often regarded as opposing concepts. Reason the more to explore the relationship of these themes in this volume.

The first chapter concludes with the structure of the book and an introduction of the two most important images of nature used in this book: Arcadian nature and wildness. Arcadian nature is about small scale, historical landscapes, often intensely and plot-wise managed. Wildness however illustrates large-scale nature, seemingly untouched by humans and managed by natural processes as for example grazing.

2 Landscape, heritage and nature: Theory and methods

This chapter starts with the treatment of the central themes of this book: landscape, heritage and nature. Two parks of Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown, the British eighteenth century landscape and garden architect, are introduced to illustrate how strong the influence of the current management can be on the nature-culture interrelationship.

Landscape is introduced from a geographical and an art-history perspective. Especially in painting, landscape has been important since the fifteenth century, and even present-day artists are still inspired by the landscape. Geography has different views on landscape. Historical geography and cultural geography are important to this research, as both regard landscape as more complex than the visual and actual landscape alone.

Heritage, like landscape (and nature as well), also has a lot of different meanings and interpretations. Build heritage, archeological heritage and intangible heritage all have their own history in the Dutch heritage tradition.

Nature is also very complex. Vision on nature varies in space and time, as does the
human-nature relationship. The two images of nature as introduced in chapter 1, wilderness and Arcadian nature, are described in this chapter.

Landscape, nature and heritage are combined in some fields of expertise. Historical geography, landscape ecology and landscape biography all link these complex terms in one way or the other. Landscape biography is the main scientific method used in this book. Landscape biography studies the mutual relationship between man and landscape. The relationship however is not characterized by a slow and graduate process. Like the biography of a person, specific events or actions by men form the landscape. The landscape is therefore dynamic and changes over time. The nature-man relationship is also determined in the action of man in a certain landscape. In this perspective, it is possible to identify authors in the landscape; people or events that have a lasting impact on the landscape. In the case studies, identification of the authors in the researched landscapes is an important aspect of the study.

After the more theoretical approach of the first part of chapter 2, the second part gives a historical overview of the management of nature and landscape in the Netherlands. Existing periodizations are looked upon from a heritage perspective. The protection of natural and cultural heritage were easily combined in the Netherlands starting in the beginning of the twentieth century. The beauty of the landscape combined natural and cultural aspects and the protectors of heritage and nature shared the same networks. A strict separation of heritage and nature seems to date from the late seventies of the last century. The attention given to large scale nature development and the popularity of the wilderness-nature grew considerably in the last decades of the twentieth century. And although the attention for cultural heritage in nature management is growing ever since, there still seems to be strict separation between nature and culture to this day.

This research is carried out with a combination of research methods; fieldwork, archival research, literature and oral history were used. It is quite remarkable, however, that in a country like the Netherlands, where man’s influence on the landscape is considerable, nature and culture are strictly divided in nature management. The landscape protection categories of the UNESCO’s World Heritage List are an example of the possibilities to combine natural and cultural aspects of the landscape heritage. This gives interesting thoughts for the case studies.

3 The Baron. To preserve ‘the present state’:
65 years protecting the landscape of the Eerder Achterbroek

The Eerder Achterbroek is a small scale cultural landscape, part of the Eerde estate near Ommen, Overijssel, in the eastern part of the Netherlands. In 1949, Natuurmonumenten bought this part of the estate from Baron Philip Dirk van Pallandt. This Baron had his own particular ideas about the management of the country estate. He inherited the entire estate, comprising 23 farms, 1700 hectares and a castle unexpectedly in 1913. Due to financial difficulties however, he was soon forced to sell parts of his estate. Natuurmonumenten was offered the Eerder Achterbroek. The small scale landscapes comprised farm-
steads, arable fields surrounded by wooded banks, meadows and little heathlands, were considered old-fashioned already in the late forties of the twentieth century. Van Pallandt valued this part of the estate as the most beautiful. The Baron however had strong connections with Natuurmonumenten since the beginning of the century, which was the reason he awarded it to the society. Natuurmonumenten acquired the Eerder Achterbroek not because of the high ecological values, but for historical and aesthetical reasons.

How did Natuurmonumenten manage this cultural landscape since 1949? The management was aimed at the preservation of the estate in the state in which it was acquired. Clumps, rows of oak trees, unpaved roads, the farmhouses, all had to stay as they were when sold by Van Pallandt in 1949. The aesthetically motivated management preserved many landscape features, but changes did occur: small heathlands healed up, rows of trees faded with the aging and dying of the oaks, and wooded banks became small forest strips as coppicing stopped. The historical, mainly agricultural management, and the periodically cutting of wooded banks were largely abandoned leading to a change in the appearance of the landscape.

A recovery plan was implemented in recent years, based on landscape-biographical research. From this research was concluded that the Baron had strong personal influence on the landscape of the Eerder Achterbroek. He was a keen amateur landscape architect, had opinions on individual trees and strived to imitate an English landscape. Natuurmonumenten continued the aim of Van Pallandt with the aesthetical management described above. The recovery plan however must obtain a sustainable management for the Eerder Achterbroek landscape, without erasing the signature of the last noble owner of the estate. This means active management of heathlands, rows of trees and wooded banks with respect for the additions Van Pallandt made. For Natuurmonumenten, this means searching for a subtle balance between nature and culture. The heritage argument however keeps a dominant position in the management since 1949. This makes the Eerder Achterbroek a remarkable example of heritage oriented management within the terrains of Natuurmonumenten.

4 The builder of pill boxes
Concrete in the dunes: contested military heritage and nature management in the dunes

Nowhere in the Netherlands are more complete ensembles of the Atlantic Wall to be found as in the nature reserves in de Dutch dunes. Nowhere, however, is less attention drawn to this contested military heritage. This chapter aims to explain this paradox using the dune reserves of Natuurmonumenten as example.

The Atlantic Wall, a coastal defense line reaching from Norway till the South of France and built by the German occupation forces during the Second World War, is contested. This military heritage is looked upon differently by different groups in society, hence its contested character. In the Netherlands, the remnants of the Atlantic Wall are still regarded by some as unwanted relics from the era of the German occupation. The attention for
the Second World War however is increasing. So what can explain the lack of attention for the Atlantic Wall in the dunes?

A few examples of German Second World War military heritage in nature reserves abroad gives a varied picture. It varies from open air museum in the Belgian dunes to only partly cleared concrete pill boxes of the former Westwall defenses in Germany.

In the Netherlands, dunes were and are viewed upon as wildness nature. In this type of nature human influence seems to be absent. In this particular type of wildness, which is rare in the Netherlands, Natuurmonumenten was confronted with the Atlantic Wall.

The Voornes Duin nature reserve was already managed by Natuurmonumenten on the outbreak of the war. The developments in this and other nature reserves are described in this chapter. Short after the war, the concrete buildings, barbed wire, mines and paved roads were regarded as highly unwanted in the coastal nature reserves. First priority was the removal of mines, ammunition, barbed wire and other obstacles from the terrains. Soon, the need was felt to get rid of the concrete bunkers as well. The demolition of these structures however turned out to be far more complex as anticipated, also due to administrative hassles. There was confusion about the ownership of the buildings and funds for demolition were not available to nature reserves or private owners of dune areas. Demolition by using explosives brought to much damages to the surrounding area, so alternative ways were explored by Natuurmonumenten. In practice however, most pill boxes and other concrete structures were literary put under sand and remained where they were.

In the fifties, sixties and seventies there seemed to be little attention for the remains of the Atlantic Wall in the dunes. Where third parties, like Rijkswaterstaat (State agency for the main infrastructure facilities) proposed to demolish structures in nature reserves, Natuurmonumenten reacted reluctant. Main reason was the wish to let the nature undisturbed.

In the following years, Natuurmonumenten acquired important nature reserves in the dunes, including complete sections of the Atlantic Wall. Apparently, former private owners also had difficulty with the removal of military remnants in their properties.

When large scale nature development took place in the nineties some structures were demolished, but at Natuurmonumenten much was left untouched to preserve the nature. It was recognized that the concrete bunkers had natural values on their own, especially for hibernating bats. All in all, there are large portions of the Atlantic Wall military landscape preserved in the nature reserves managed by Natuurmonumenten. Preservation by neglect and the wish to leave the dunes undisturbed explain the presence of the Atlantic Wall remains in the nature reserves.

The growing public and professional attention for the Atlantic Wall leaves Natuurmonumenten with a choice how to manage these Second World War relics. Therefore, this chapter concludes with three different scenarios for future management. The ‘ruin-scenario’, which strives to a balance between nature and culture, seems ideal for nature conservationists.
The Geul river valley in the southern part of the province of Limburg, was described in 1911 as an Arcadian landscape with an abundance of beauty and geological and natural rarities by nature conservationist Eli Heimans in his book Uit ons Krijtland. The landscape Heimans described was mainly an agricultural landscape. This landscape was subject to change; land use changed under influence of supply and demand on the market and the growing mining industry nearby. The early development of tourism in the region also had its influence. Nature conservationists showed interest in the Geul valley. They did however not buy the lands in order to establish a reserve, but tried to avoid large scale developments in the area which were threatening the landscape, for instance a projected water reservoir.

It’s only after the Second World War that nature conservation organizations started to buy properties. Natuurmonumenten acquired the Genhoes country estate including its castle in 1955. Management was aimed at preservation of the existing landscape. The landscape of southern Limburg was changing rapidly after the war under influence of changing agriculture and a rapidly growing population. In the seventies, land consolidation was planned as well, which threatened the Geul valley landscape. One of the reactions of Natuurmonumenten and Het Limburgs Landschap (foundation for the protection of nature and landscape in Limburg) was the Geul valley action, Aktie Geuldal in 1977. Main objective of the action was heritage oriented: the purchase of two historic watermills and a farmstead with their surrounding grounds. The action was very successful. However, the acquired meadows in the Geul valley didn’t have the botanical richness as was described in 1911.

Natuurmonumenten managed the growing area of terrains in the Geul valley from an Arcadian-historical perspective. Large scale nature development brought different opinions on the management of the reserves. On the one hand, large scale wildness nature was the objective but on the other hand maintenance of the Arcadian small scale landscape was desirable as well. In reality however the Arcadian landscape Heimans described was under constant pressure and vanishing slowly.

With the growing attention for cultural heritage and cultural landscapes since the late nineties-early years of the twenty-first century, Natuurmonumenten focused more on restauration of the small scale landscape. Large scale nature development however in the river valleys in southern Limburg is still high on the nature conservationist’s agenda. For the nature reserves of Natuurmonumenten in the Geul valley, a form of zoning could bring a solution. More intensively managed zones of small scale cultural landscapes surrounding historic buildings such as water mills, castles and farmsteads could be alternated with more extensively managed grounds. In both cases however, the Arcadian landscape described by Heimans more than hundred years ago can be inspirational.
In the twenties of the past century, Natuurmonumenten bought some heathland near Mantinge in the province of Drenthe. These heathlands were threatened by heath reclamation. In this period, Natuurmonumenten bought several terrains in order to preserve some of the beauty of the landscape for reclamation.

As the years went by and the surrounding heathlands were reclaimed, the nature reserves of Natuurmonumenten became more or less isolated. In the late eighties and early nineties, society grew rapidly and the concept of large scale nature development arose interest. The main idea was to connect isolated reserves to each other with the goal of connecting populations with each other, which otherwise were bound to become extinct in their isolated locations. There was strong belief in the possibility of creating large scale nature reserves which were maintained by natural processes, without the interference of man. For the Mantingerveld area Natuurmonumenten designed a large scale heathland, to be formed out of farmland and to be managed by grazing. The government supported Natuurmonumenten and their ideas on nature development and made it possible to launch several plans aimed at large scale nature construction.

The plan for the Mantingerveld was the first large scale nature development on sandy soils in the eastern part of the Netherlands. When the plan called Goudplevier (golden plover) was introduced in 1992, there were mixed feelings and also opposition. Natuurmonumenten however started buying farmland in order to be able to execute the plans. Despite some serious setbacks the society was able to start landscaping in 1995. No attention was given to the disappearance of the young heathland reclamation landscape at the time. In older part of the area, consisting of meadows alongside a stream with rows of alders, mowing and coppicing was replaced by integral grazing.

Soon after 2000 however, insights changed. In 2005, integral grazing was stopped in the stream valley and the rows of alders were restored. In 2012 there were some adjustments to the plan for large scale heath restoration, although the idea of a large scale, open heathland was maintained. Especially near the small village of Nieuw-Balinge attention was given to the restauration of the small scale landscape which once existed here. An ammunition depot from the Cold War period illustrates the changing attitude towards cultural heritage as well. First, demolition was proposed, but under the influence of revaluation of recent military heritage the buildings were preserved en later became listed as monument.

The Mantingerveld illustrates the changing attitude towards cultural heritage with nature conservationists. Since the beginning of this century an equilibrium is sought between nature and culture. The main idea of a large scale heathland connecting the old relics still prevails: the large scale transition of farmland into nature can be regarded as a cultural act in itself. It’s not surprising that the cultural heritage of the young heathland reclamation didn’t play a role of significance in the Goudplevier plan early nineties, as attention for younger cultural landscapes was scarce. In the current situation however, the
search for a more balanced integration of cultural heritage for the areas still to redevelop could lead to a more layered landscape in which traces of the more recent past are still visible.

7 Conclusions

Natuurmonumenten has always been an important owner of cultural heritage. In all the researched nature reserves described in the chapters 3-6, Natuurmonumenten manages heritage ensembles: small scale cultural landscapes, farmsteads with surrounding arable lands, castles and country estates with gardens and parks as well as a broad array of archaeological terrains, all imbedded in nature reserves.

In the first seventy-eighty years after the founding of the society in 1905, natural and cultural heritage were in cohesion within the terrains. Aiming for the preservation of the beauty of the Dutch landscape motived the purchase of marshlands like the Naardermeer – first purchase of the society in 1906 – as well as castles like Genhoes (chapter 5). Polarization between nature and culture increased from the late seventies onwards and was formalized when the society introduced different nature strategies, one of which was the cultural landscape. Since the beginning of this century there is increased attention for the cultural heritage in the nature reserves of Natuurmonumenten. The balance between culture and nature however remains a subject of discussion till the present day.

The landscape-biographical approach used in the case studies revealed the big influence of man on the nature reserves. Natuurmonumenten managed the landscapes following previous owners. The Arcadian landscape composed by Baron Philip Dirk van Pallandt on the Eerde estate, the military landscape build by the Germans in the dunes, the small scale agricultural landscape in the Geul valley were the foundation for the management of Natuurmonumenten. Successive staff members of Natuurmonumenten, from the forester in the field to the chairman of the society, all had their influence on the landscape. The chosen vision on nature, whether Arcadian or wildness, was maintained locally throughout the years, even when on a national level the insights changed. This research shows, that nature reserves are dynamic landscapes in the first place, with different layers illustrating a long history of development.

These days, the challenges for integrated management of nature reserves are big. Sustainability, spatial quality, landscape and climate change all will have their effect on the terrains of Natuurmonumenten. From a historical geographical angle I would like to add the outcomes of this research to the debate, especially now rewilding brings back the desire for large scale nature development, also in the Netherlands. Today, the fields of nature management and cultural heritage are both aimed at future developments. A dynamic nature reserve is appropriate when taking the often long historical and ecological development of the landscape into account. At the end of this book I introduce a model to test the effect of management on the landscape. Important aspects of this model are the scale of the landscape, historical perspective and attention for the existing layerdness of the landscape. Management measures are reviewed on their influence on the beauty
of the landscape, whether it enriches or impoverishes the landscape and if it respects the layeredness of the existing landscape. The aesthetic aspect of the landscape, also referred to as the beauty of the landscape, has long been absent from the discussions on landscape change. This side of landscape deserves a place in the discussion. After all, the Dutch landscape remains for the most part a man-made landscape, or is at least very strongly influenced by men. Nature management in the Dutch landscape is a cultural act.

This book ends with a plea for a more combined nature-culture approach of the management of nature reserves in the Netherlands. Natuurmonumenten is often overlooked as an important stakeholder in the field of cultural heritage. I would encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience on academic historical geographical research and the management of cultural landscapes, even if these landscapes are listed as nature reserves.