



VOLLMER &
PARTNERS

stedebouw en landschap



Landscape as a legacy

*Summary of a design research
on natural burial sites in the Dutch landscape*



'Countless memories on a country estate', an impression

The emergence of natural burial sites is an international phenomenon. The present Dutch supply however doesn't meet the rising demand. Demographic aging will only increase the need for burial space. Natural burial sites can provide a sustainable, attractive and highly upgraded way to tune supply and demand.

We define natural burial sites as places where nature and landscape are sustainable alternatives to the current individual graves. The arrangement and marking of the graves adapt to the nature of the area. Eventually allowing nature to absorb the graves. Long lasting burial rights associated with natural burial are not common in the Netherlands. They provide an alternative sought after by different cultural groups.

Twelve designs

We have made twelve designs to illustrate how natural burial sites can be integrated in characteristic Dutch landscapes. By doing so we want to prove that natural burial sites can fit in more than the obvious geographical places - with sandy and chalky soil. For example, there are also possibilities to find sites in areas with peaty soil. Moreover, there are places to be found with a rich cultural history embedded in our landscape such as military forts, mounds and polders that can also serve as burial sites.



'Farewell on a former fortress', an impression

Landscape burial

The designs we made resulted in an array of interesting findings. Natural burial can provide the financial means for maintenance and/or development of precious landscapes and the preservation or restoration of vulnerable landscaping elements such as shrubs or hedges. In the Netherlands, uncultivated landscape is nonexistent. Cultivated Dutch landscape is highly valued and has many appearances. Extending the concept of natural burial to a broader perspective enlarges the possibilities for application. It can lead to unique and authentic places.

Nature

Nature preservation can only be achieved when natural conditions are taken into serious account. In existing natural environments this will lead to lower grave-densities than in newly developed landscapes. In areas that are part of ecological infrastructures, such as the EHS (National Ecological Network) and Natura 2000, ongoing research is necessary to make up the balance between the amount of graves and natural conditions. Most promising is the combination of natural burial and newly developed landscape. Cultural heritage also offers interesting possibilities, while higher grave-densities can achieve increasing feasibility.



*Sample design former Military airport:
Present situation*



*Sample design former Military airport:
Future situation*



*Sample design former Military airport:
Intended functions*



*Sample design Refuse-dump Kortenhoef:
Present situation*



*Sample design Refuse-dump Kortenhoef:
Future situation*



*Sample design Refuse-dump Kortenhoef:
Intended functions*



*Sample design Terps on clayish soil:
Present situation*



*Sample design Terps on clayish soil:
Future situation*



*Sample design Terps on clayish soil:
Intended functions*

Basis and translation

Strictly speaking there are no legal obstacles for the realization of Dutch natural burial sites. There are some pioneering projects that illustrate a cautious transition into a comprehensive development zone map. Negative sentiments due to misconception and unfamiliarity are felt during consultation rounds in legal procedures. Here lies the task to enlighten and illustrate the benefits of a natural burial site.

Drainage is an important issue in the Dutch burial practice. Since the clearance graves is common, Dutch law prescribes the minimal distance between coffin and highest level of ground water and between coffin and ground level.

Advantages

To enlarge the social, administrative, and financial basis of natural burial sites, it is important to outline the landscape characteristics and the management aspects. A combination of necessary adjustments such as enlarging the possibilities of water collection, the covering of waste dumps and the maintenance of landscape elements can strengthen the financial basis.

Landscape conditions, physiographic characteristics and remains of former human activity can offer an alternative for landscapes that don't seem an obvious choice for burial sites, considering the high level of ground water. Barrier beaches, creek ridges, former rail tracks, refuse-dumping places can for instance offer suitable



*Sample design Country estates in coastal area:
Present situation*



*Sample design Country estates in coastal area:
Future situation*



*Sample design Country estates in coastal area:
Intended functions*



*Sample design Reclaimed land:
Present situation*



*Sample design Reclaimed land:
Future situation*



*Sample design Reclaimed land:
Intended functions*



*Sample design on sandy soil and Open fields:
Present situation*



*Sample design on sandy soil and Open fields:
Future situation*



*Sample design on sandy soil and Open fields:
Intended functions*

locations.

Natural burial sites can be of educational use. They can also contribute to opening up surroundings by creating new footpaths, connecting recreational tracks and by twice-using parking spaces. Hence, nearby existing buildings can host funeral ceremonies and farewell services. Natural burial sites can have a stimulating effect on local economies, since funeral practices stretch from poetry to pastry.

Appealing concept

Freedom of ceremony is an important feature for natural burial sites. However, unique ceremonies often contrast with strict regulation orders considering the marking of graves. Locations can be a source of inspiration for personal signs and

marks. A unique setting can partly compensate the restrictions concerning the personalization of graves.

The maintenance of natural burial sites is low in cost compared to common grave yards. It therefore offers an interesting alternative for people who do not want to burden their next of kin.

Merits

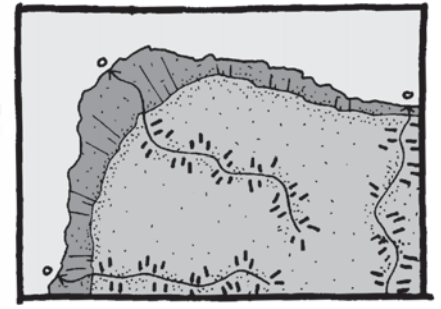
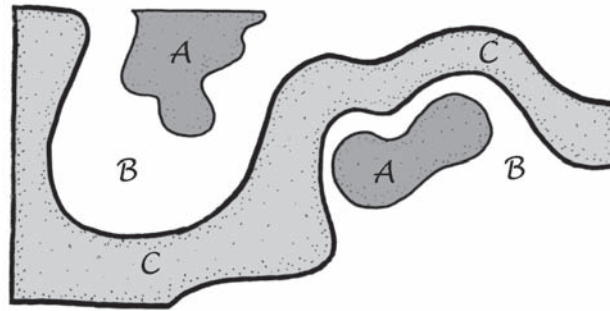
Natural burial sites reconnect people with their natural surroundings. They enrich our landscape by adding social values. Landscape as a legacy exceeds its meaning as a place of remembrance. It adds value to the way in which future generations will experience their landscape.



'Sailing severance in the moorland', an impression

In summary we would like to make some recommendations:

1. Natural burial can be an instrument of planning for national, regional and local authorities.
2. Regional governments should phase out prior conditions and principles to free the way for local policy, enabling efficient developments.
3. Local authorities should be able to recognize chances and possibilities concerning natural burial. They can increase support by overcoming negative sentiments attached to the burial practice in general.
4. An open mind and local approach offers the best chance to landowners and developers. Every location offers unique possibilities.
5. The marking of graves should connect to unique local characteristics. Here lies a challenge for the creative industry, such as artists, inventors and designers. The personal need of expression characterizes our time and deserves a place in natural burial practice.
6. Further research is requested to validate the ecological relation between nature values and local landscape characteristics. This may be done following our illustrating designs.



Aerial view of the present context around Delfland

Adjusting to the geomorphologic structure:
Trough the ages the low-lying moorland area has drastically set. The lowest parts (A) exist from spongy shrubbery and open water. Less low situated are the extensive grass- and meadowlands. The old creek with its muddy and sandy soil did not set and is consequently visible as a characteristic ridge in the landscape (C).

Conceptual mode of graves on the mound

■ = 1x grave or double grave



E	Entrance
P	Parking space
*	Audience
XxX	Schematic indication burial places
☼	Open air Ceremonial space
⚓	Landing stage/Basin
—	Main road (externally)
—	Internal circuit
---	Navigational route

'Sailing severance in the moorland', an impression worked out

We hope this design research will contribute to the quality of town and country planning in the Netherlands. We also wish to support initiatives for natural burial since we are convinced it supplies a genuine want.



'Dust to dust in reclaimed land', an impression



'Last Post at a former military airport', an impression



'Restoration of an Ancient Terp', an impression



'Resting in Peace in an Orchard', an impression

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