

In the past, many municipalities in the Netherlands purchased bordering country estates. They were incorporated within the city's urban structure. To this day such development is still on going.

This development has been neglected by researchers in recent decades. Even the Atlas of urbanization in the Netherlands, pays insufficient attention to this. It pays no attention to the integration of country estates in the urban structure. Transformed and incorporated estates are being threatened yet again by new spatial developments.

In 1982 the exhibition: 'Estates in Utrecht' was organized. The topic was the five surviving and the 25 disappeared country estates within the municipality of Utrecht. The exhibition showed that no outdoor area still had its original function, but they were still present in a very reduced form and had been retained with a different function. Around the same time the municipality of Haarlem placed a focus on outdoor locations within the city with an exhibition on 400 years Haarlemmerhout (1984), in which the former country estates on the edge of the Haarlemmerhout were presented. Neither of these exhibitions nor the accompanying catalogues and books, paid much attention to the question of how urban planners coped with their task to incorporate country estates within their plans. In large-scale urban expansions from the mid-nineteenth century and especially since the beginning of the twentieth century it shows that agricultural land, market gardens and country estates disappear. Some estates were acquired in their entirety, the farmlands were intended for housing and the country estate itself was used as a city park for the inhabitants of the newly developed residential areas. We see that the main structural elements such as water features, paths, roads and gardens were lovingly incorporated by urban planners and much attention was paid to greenery.

Since 2000 the green spaces in urban areas are under pressure. New planning requirements such as increase in building density, changes in infrastructure and expansion and developments such as office vacancy rates, high land prices, and cuttings on maintenance costs for public parks and greens, threaten these incorporated country estates, for the second time in their existence.

On the other hand we also see that since 2000 country estates and even remnants of country estates have had a positive contribution, and were even leading, in the design of new neighbourhoods in Houten and Utrecht Leidsche Rijn. Municipalities are since 2012 mandatory to include cultural history in their new zoning plans. This legislation will give more attention to the incorporated estates. A thorough historical analysis of the way in which these estates were incorporated in the past 100 years and the coming future is highly recommended for the further conservation of these estates.

There is fragmented knowledge on the subject, the broader historical context is missing. The endeavour to save as much as possible of these estates and their remnants would be supported by further research of the way in which in the past these were incorporated into the city structure and were transformed into urban green structures.