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Fig. 1 Three development scenarios for three case studies.  
 Fig. 2 Map indicating the blank areas of the *Landscape Atlas* and the examined areas.

# New Landscapes in Flanders [1]

## Landscape Development in Flanders

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### Definition of New Landscapes

According to the landscape specialist Marc Antrop 'new landscapes', as opposed to relic landscapes, can be defined as '... landscapes that emerged from a "tabula rasa" method, after the Second World War. What is remarkable is the large scale approach, the "international" nature, the tendency towards standardisation and the obliteration of the traditional diversity of our landscapes.'<sup>1</sup>

According to Antrop, examples of new landscapes included new agricultural landscapes, rural (rural and urban) landscapes, residential landscapes, infrastructural landscapes, industrial landscapes, recreational landscapes, etc. As a reaction to the rather negative connotations of this definition, the New Landscapes in Flanders study attempted to emphasise the qualities and potential of new landscapes instead of concentrating on their weaknesses. The focus of the study was the so-called 'blank areas' in the *Landscape Atlas*. Due to a lack of cultural-historical value, these areas were not included in the atlas and therefore did not fall under any form of policy. By means of this study Labo S hoped to counter this shortcoming by formulating a methodology to deal with these blank areas.

The research by design developed by Labo S consisted of three Flemish case studies, each subjected to three scenarios or approaches, all of which were examined from an urban design perspective as well as with aesthetic criteria. The resulting prognoses then set the agenda for several policy strategies.

### Case Studies

The current instruments that determine the landscape policy in Flanders – such as the *Landscape Atlas* – seemed to paint a fragmented and incomplete picture of the Flemish territory. Therefore, each case study started from an extensive scan of the region in order to detect spatial elements and processes. This

scan led to the determination of certain typical landscape categories, which were characterised by a level of spatial coherence. For all three case studies various stakeholders could be discerned, each with their own agenda concerning the future development of the area, ranging from nature conservation to establishing new SME zones (zones designated for small and medium enterprises). Three scenarios, relating to the three different policy attitudes, explored in which way these divergent ambitions could be reconciled in order to create added value for the whole area.

### Scenarios

The scenarios proposed by Labo S were based on three attitudes towards policymaking. The first approach assumed passive development, wherein the government does not interfere in the development of a landscape. Instead, the landscape is shaped by an extrapolation of current processes. These processes are not considered problematic, which would make an intervention unnecessary.

A second attitude, adjusted development, limits the involvement of the government to a guiding role. This process of guiding and adjusting has a receptive and a proactive aspect. The receptive aspect implies waiting for the emergence of development opportunities, while the proactive aspect refers to the vision the government has to formulate regarding the development of a specific area. In the third and final scenario the policymakers take up a more active role. This attitude requires a considerable level of engagement since the government itself initiates the development of certain regions. Active development could be desirable when the urge for action is high, for example, in areas where valuable landscapes are under pressure of development. Furthermore, the government could choose to participate in current planning processes and projects.

### Notes

- 1 M. Antrop, *Het landschap meervoudig bekeken*, Kapellen, DBB/Pelckmans, 1989, pp. 149–157.

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