

Tri-Country Park set to become landscape laboratory

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The Tri-Country Park (Drielandenpark) is the name for the cross-border landscape area between Maastricht, Hasselt, Heerlen, Liège and Aachen. The area is home to some 4 million people and attracts many visitors every year. A proposal put forward will turn the Tri-Country Park into an innovative cross-border landscape laboratory, intended as an incentive to the joint development of the area.

The area covers 50 x 50 kilometres and is hugely diverse in terms of culture, history, landscape and natural beauty. Nine regional government bodies from the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium are working together to protect and develop the region. The European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion (ESPON) has commissioned a shared landscape policy for the region. The results have been set out in a publication in four languages. Annet Kempenaar, Marlies Brinkhuijsen, Fiona Morris and Adri van den Brink worked on the project on behalf of Wageningen University, together with colleagues from RWTH Aachen University and the Center for Studies on Sustainable Development (CEDD) in Brussels.

"This international cooperation project involved working alongside stakeholders to devise a landscape perspective to ensure that all future changes will be properly coordinated," says Annet Kempenaar. "We did not only look at urban development in the area, but also considered changes in agricultural techniques and, for example, water management." The researchers have identified two key principles: unity and diversity. Unity because landscape structures such as river valleys, plateaus and natural areas in the region overlap, and diversity on account of the numerous cultural differences and specific local details relating to architecture, village structure and land use.

Annet Kempenaar: "We used these principles to develop four policy strategies for the landscape perspective. We hope that these will help the stakeholders to coordinate local and regional initiatives across the Dutch, German and Belgian borders. We have described the background and details of the strategies in our publication, and included plenty of examples. This spring, the government bodies taking part will launch a programme to encourage local and regional initiatives and projects. We would expect to see current growing interest in eco-system services and green infrastructure creating new investment opportunities. The project could therefore be considered a living [landscape](#) laboratory."





Provided by Wageningen University

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