

**Interdisciplinary Thesis Lab
2023-2024:**

**Sustainable and
Just Landscape
Transformation in
South Holland**

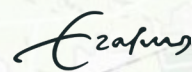
LDE CfS Cities-Hub



**Universiteit
Leiden**



**Erasmus
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Rotterdam**



**provincie
Zuid-Holland**



Colofon

This document includes the challenge and explanation of the thesis lab 'Sustainable and Just Landscape Transformation South Holland'

LDE Centre for Sustainability - Cities Hub

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Source image on front page: <https://circulair.zuid-holland.nl/activiteit/ruimtelijke-strategie/>

Centre for Sustainability
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Introduction

Thesis Lab

The Sustainable and Just Transitions in South Holland lab-program runs from the beginning of February until the beginning of July 2024. It is a biweekly program where students participating in the lab come together to follow in-depth lectures and workshops related to their sustainability challenge formulated together with this year's partners, The Province of South Holland and Acezz. In this thesis lab we focus on the sustainable transformation of the landscape in South Holland that is related to the following main question: What are possibilities and challenges for transforming towards a more sustainable and socially just (rural) landscape in South Holland?

The question will be addressed by focusing on what transformation means for future and current generations and explicitly on the role innovative professionals, entrepreneurs and organized civil society groups who are active in the field of agrifood and landscape transformation. The challenges will be addressed by unpacking the following themes with a diverse group of student researchers:

1. Governance & transition
2. Landscape design and spatial planning
3. Water and soil management
4. Biodiversity & ecology
5. Circularity, agrifood and landscape transformation
6. Social economy / wellbeing or welfare economy (in Dutch: 'brede welvaart')
7. Perceptions, communication and culture
8. Topics introduced by students

Cities & Regions Hub

The Cities & Regions Hub facilitates practice oriented research and education that goes beyond sectoral and disciplinary boundaries. We bring researchers, students and various stakeholders from urban practice together to work on innovative, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches.

We offer an entry point for those who want to collaborate with LDE-researchers and students: to develop and share knowledge, innovative methods and approaches. We welcome your contribution. We can connect you to others who are passionate about innovating in impactful urban knowledge production for the sake of more sustainable cities.

Make sure to check the [website](#)

Interested in joining the Thesis Lab?

Get in touch with or submit your application online
Registration opens on the 27th of September 2023



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For more information on enrolment and selection procedure, [click here](#)

The Context of South Holland

The South Holland region (more or less demarcated by the administrative borders of the province of South Holland) is a densely populated and highly productive region with a strong economy and many ecological and social resources and challenges. South Holland has a strong agrifood sector (with agriculture, grazing lands on (sinking) peat soil and horticulture) that contributes to the region in many ways, but that also pressures the environment. Additionally it is a delta where water management is highly sophisticated, yet vulnerable. It hosts the largest port of Europe and has a strongly urbanized character. Within an important programme of the province of South Holland three main areas are defined within the South Holland landscape that all have their own characteristics and challenges (see Map):

■ Veenweiden / Fields on peat land

Peatland is sinking and that causes CO2 release, cattle produces nitrogen release, the water system cannot absorb droughts and heavy rainfall, sweet water supply is under pressure, need for enriched biodiversity (e.g. birds), landscape strongly connected to historical identity, economic dependency on current practices, etc.

■ Kust en Duinen/ Coast and Dunes Strong

horticulture sector, vulnerable nature, water management challenges including access to sweet water, managing droughts, low ground water level, sinking soils, ecosystems under pressure, non-native/ exotic plants, nitrogen release, socio-economic and housing challenges also in relation to labour in horticulture

■ Zuid-Hollandse delta/ Delta of South Holland

Nitrogen deposition, water management challenges including access to sweet water, high pressure from residential areas, ensuring enough space for innovative and sustainable agriculture, strong recreational sector, influence of tides

Kerngebied Kust & Duinen

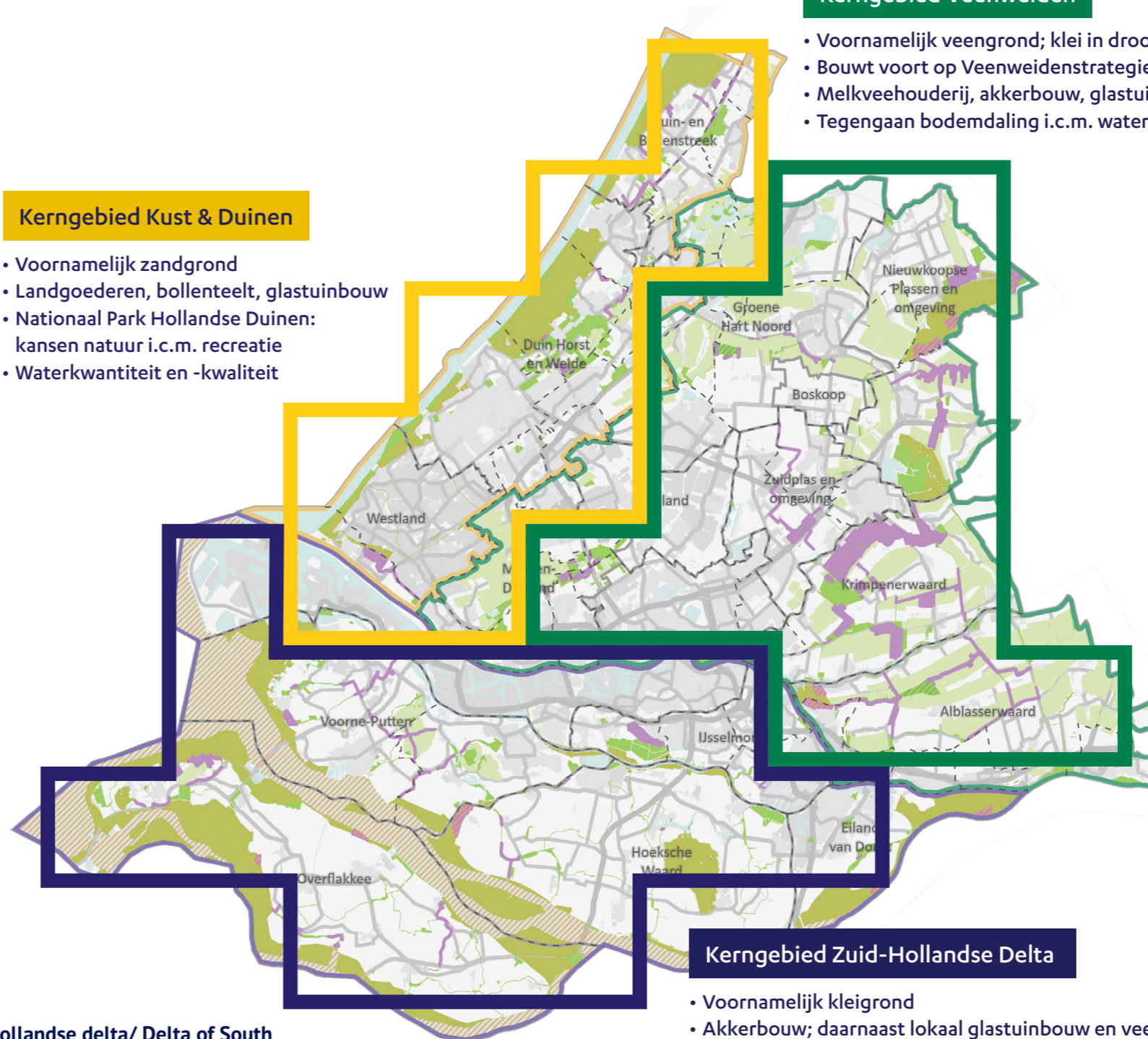
- Voornamelijk zandgrond
- Landgoederen, bollenteelt, glastuinbouw
- Nationaal Park Hollandse Duinen: kansen natuur i.c.m. recreatie
- Waterkwaliteit en -kwantiteit

Kerngebied Veenweiden

- Voornamelijk veengrond; klei in droogmakerijen
- Bouwt voort op Veenweidenstrategie
- Melkveehouderij, akkerbouw, glastuinbouw, sierteelt
- Tegengaan bodemdaling i.c.m. waterkwaliteit

Kerngebied Zuid-Hollandse Delta

- Voornamelijk kleigrond
- Akkerbouw; daarnaast lokaal glastuinbouw en veehouderij
- Aandacht voor beschikbaarheid zoetwater
- Recreatie, duingebieden, getijdennatuur



Zuid-Holland in cijfers



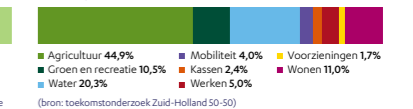
Agrarisch natuurbeheer



Natuurnetwerk inclusief Natura 2000



Bodemgebruik



Partners

The thesis lab is supported by two partners:

1. The Province of South Holland
2. ACCEZ

During the lab you can expect the following things of these partners.

■ Collaborative Question Formulation

Partners work together with other stakeholders and the thesis lab facilitators to formulate questions that you as a student can investigate.

■ Mentorship for Student Researchers

Partners are matched with a group of students who are conducting research relevant to the partner organization's interests and needs.

■ Regular Engagement

Partners maintain ongoing communication with their assigned student researchers, meeting at least once every 2-3 weeks. More frequent interactions are encouraged if both parties find it beneficial.

■ Participation in Key Events

Partners are expected to actively participate in essential program events, including the kick-off event in February 2024, the round-table discussion in April 2024, and the final presentation session in early July 2024. Partners are also encouraged to join other program gatherings and meetings.

Province of South Holland

In the dynamic realm of landscape transformation, the province of South Holland emerges as a significant actor, spearheading a visionary program known as the ['Zuid Hollands Programma Landelijk Gebied'](#) (ZH-PLG).

Nestled in the heart of the Netherlands, South Holland is a province brimming with diversity, juxtaposing urban cores with vast rural expanses. At the core of this transformation lies the commitment to justice and sustainability in the evolution of its landscapes.

The Zuid Hollands Programma Landelijk Gebied (ZH-PLG)

The ZH-PLG represents South Holland's strategic blueprint for navigating the evolving contours of its rural areas and broader landscapes. Rooted in a nuanced approach, this program epitomizes the concept of 'place-based' or 'area-based' development. It is a strategic paradigm that directs its gaze towards spatially defined regions, encompassing a spectrum of scale levels.

The province has several roles to play in the landscape transformation:

1. Strategic Planner
2. Policy Shaper
3. Collaborative Partner
4. Guardian of Landscape Heritage



Accez

ACCEZ is an organization dedicated to facilitating and supporting sustainable transitions in various sectors. Their mission is to assist individuals and businesses in addressing the pressing need for sustainability and innovation. Here's a brief explanation of what ACCEZ aims for and their role in driving landscape transformation

Mission and Aims

ACCEZ recognizes that the status quo is no longer sustainable, and they believe it's time to take action towards necessary sustainable transitions. Their primary goal is to provide guidance and expertise to individuals and organizations looking to make a positive impact on society and the environment. They offer a unique approach to tackling the challenges of sustainability, with a focus on innovation and collaboration.

ACCEZ plays a pivotal role in landscape transformation by offering:

1. Research and Knowledge
2. Facilitating Perspective Shifts
3. Partnerships with 'unlikely' collaborators
4. Identifying opportunities



Knowledge partners

We have formulated our questions in consultation with our knowledge partners:



Other partners

During your research and the thesis lab other partners might be interesting to approach to gain extra information. You can think of parties such as:

1. Universities (of applied science) in South Holland
2. Hollands Agrarisch Jongeren Kontakt (HAJK)
3. Wij.land
4. Nieuwkoopse boeren met perspectief
5. Jongeren met natuur
6. Herenboeren
7. Field Labs/ Living Labs
8. Waterboards

Thematic Focus

In this thesis lab we focus on the sustainable transformation of the landscape in South Holland. While we pay special attention to the rural areas, we deliberately use the term 'landscape' since rural areas have to be understood in their connection to urban and industrial places as well as the infrastructure and its related logistics (e.g. the Port of Rotterdam). We define sustainability not simply as maintaining the status quo. It focuses on regeneration, remaining within the planetary boundaries, but also addressing social justice elements (see also the Doughnut Economy of Kate Raworth and the Brede Welvaart approach that is being applied in the Netherlands).

The main question, central to this lab is:

What are possibilities and challenges for transforming towards a more sustainable and socially just (rural) landscape in South Holland?

We will focus on what transformation means for future and current generations and explicitly on the role innovative professionals, entrepreneurs and organized civil society groups who are active in the field of agrifood and landscape transformation. This includes young farmers or collectives around sustainable agriculture but also innovative water managers, etc.

The lab invites students to apply for thematic challenges that connect to this overall thematic focus. Those challenges will then be re-formulated by the students to make it suitable for a thesis assignment within their specific study programmes. Related to the following thematic challenges:

1. Governance & transition
2. Landscape design and spatial planning
3. Water and soil management
4. Biodiversity & ecology
5. Circularity, agrifood and landscape transformation
6. Social economy / wellbeing or welfare economy (in Dutch: 'brede welvaart')
7. Perceptions, communication and culture
8. Topics introduced by students

More details on the topics/challenges and possible research questions will be provided on the following pages.



What are possibilities and challenges for transforming towards a more sustainable and socially just (rural) landscape in South Holland?

Thematic Challenges

1. Governance & transition

While it is acknowledged that we need to think and act differently our governance, monitoring and steering mechanisms are often focused on controlling risks and increasing efficiency.

Exemplary research questions:

- How can the landscape transformation be governed, monitored and guided?
- What are current practices and trends of governance, monitoring and 'transition' management?
- What is needed to become more sustainable, circular and regenerative? How does this relate to transparency and effectiveness?
- How can law play a role in this process? What are the implications/consequences of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) on economic activities in South Holland?

Relevant disciplines include, but are not limited to: public administration, especially governance of sustainability, transition studies, management studies, technology policy and management, evaluation studies, political science, law, etc.

2. Landscape design and spatial planning

Imaging what kind of landscape South Holland could have in 20, 50, 100 or even more years from now is important to support our capacity to act in favour of desirable changes.

Exemplary research questions:

- What are different spatial scenarios for transforming the (rural) landscape in South Holland?

- What can the future be? What is desirable, what is likely?
- What are the most important spatial connections between the rural landscape and the rest of the region (urban landscape, industrial sites, port, other important infrastructure)? Do those connections hinder or support a transition towards a more sustainable and socially just future for South Holland?

Relevant disciplines include, but are not limited to: urban and landscape design, architecture, spatial planning, geography, infrastructure planning, biodiversity and sustainability, etc.

3. Water and soil management

One of the main Dutch 'spatial policy priorities' is to regenerate the health of the Dutch soil and the water system. Strategies include to reinforcing and regenerating natural soil and water systems, but also technological solutions are being formulated.

Exemplary research questions:

- What are different scenarios for managing the water and/ or soil challenges in the South Holland Landscape?
- What innovative water and / or soil management technologies exist that are already transforming the use of the land and the (rural) landscape?
- What would South Holland look like if this becomes the norm?

Relevant disciplines include, but are not limited to: (water) systems engineering, biology, geography, chemistry, environmental biology, industrial ecology, earth sciences, etc.

4. Biodiversity & ecology

Biodiversity loss and disbalance in ecosystems is a major concern in South Holland that is connected to how we the economy functions, how land is used and how people are using natural resources.

Exemplary research questions:

- What are the key challenges in terms of ecosystems and biodiversity in South Holland. What are possibilities for the regeneration of ecosystems and for increasing biodiversity in the (rural) landscape of South Holland?

Relevant disciplines include, but are not limited to: biology, zoology, geography, chemistry, environmental biology, industrial ecology, earth sciences, etc.

5. Circularity, agrifood and landscape transformation

The circular economy is concerned with taking care of (natural) resources and it is an economy without waste. A short manner to express its principles is: reduce, reuse, recycle. It is difficult to imagine a circular economy in South Holland, but it is important for developing new forms of agrifood production and for landscape transformation. Not only do we need new forms of production and transformation, there is also a need for new talent to tackle these challenges and become active in the agricultural sector.

Exemplary research questions:

- What innovative and circular-economy based business models can support agrifood and landscape transformation?
- How can different economic theories and approaches hinder and support landscape transformation and the transition towards

circular agrifood production?

- What kind of economic clusters and networks are could support circular agrifood production and what are transport requirements?
- What are infrastructure and network requirements for facilitating a circular agrifood sectors?
- How can the agricultural sector enhance its attractiveness to young individuals, encouraging them to pursue a career in farming? What are the attitudes and beliefs of young people (currently involved in conventional agriculture), and how can they be persuaded to embrace new, more sustainable farming practices?
- What forms of entrepreneurship, such as agribusiness diversification, digital agriculture, or sustainable farming practices, can make farming more appealing to young aspiring farmers?

Relevant disciplines include, but are not limited to: economy, business, transport planning, (economic) geography, management studies, etc.

6. Social economy / wellbeing or welfare economy (in Dutch: 'brede welvaart')

In addition and complementary to the notion of a circular economy there is a trend to emphasize the importance of addressing social and ecological limits, a famous example is the Doughnut Economy of Kate Raworth (2017). In the Netherlands and South Holland the term 'Brede Welvaart' (loosely translated as wellbeing economy) that should be a new indicator of welfare, rather than simply looking at GDP. It is also concerned with impacts of activities in South Holland elsewhere and of effects of what we do not (current generation) in the future (future generation).

Exemplary research questions:

- How can we assess the socio-economic impact of landscape transformations? How can such an assessment take the consequences for current generations and for the future generation(s) into account?
- How can we assess the health impact of landscape transformations? How can such an assessment take the consequences for current generations and for the future generation(s) into account?
- What are the most important economic connections between the rural landscape and the rest of the region (urban landscape, industrial sites, port, other important infrastructure)? Do those connections hinder or support a transition towards a more sustainable and socially just future for South Holland?
- What resources are available and used within South Holland for a sustainable use of the (rural) landscape within the planetary boundaries?

Relevant disciplines include, but are not limited to: economy, business, transport planning, (economic) geography, management studies, health studies, biology, industrial ecology, etc.

7. Perceptions, Communication and Culture

How we talk about transformation and transition (discourse), what we hear from others, our history, our traditions, etc. They all play a major role in change processes, or in the lack thereof.

Exemplary research questions

- What different perceptions exist among different groups in society (including different generations) about the possibilities for a sustainable and socially just future for South Holland?
- How is the current agricultural sector perceived? What makes it attractive/unattractive for different groups including youngsters?
- What is the importance of the landscape to different societal groups (including different generations)? How does resistance to change and willingness to change towards more sustainable ways of living and landscape transformation come about within different societal groups?
- What is the role of history, culture and tradition in processes of constructing alternative futures?

Relevant disciplines include, but are not limited to: psychology, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, development studies, cultural studies, political science, communication science, linguistics, etc.

8. Topics introduced by students

Students (of all disciplines) are also free to suggest their own combinations of the topics described above or to suggest their own research topic and questions that are related to the main challenge.

Excited?
Please contact us,
visit the website
or register online

