

History is alluring

Self-organisation and the significance of history in the search for a new local sense of collectivity

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This research reveals the significance of the reference back to historical organisational forms in present-day self-organisation initiatives in the Dutch rural landscape.

Self-organisations have been analysed which refer back to the historical:

- *marke*, bounded common land
- *meent*, common grazing grounds
- *naoberschap*, the obligation within a small social community to help each other.

The research reveals that the initiatives don't wish to revive history. Only a few initiatives use some customs in a symbolical way. Communal landownership, a characteristic element in the historical *marke* and *meent*, is not an objective in the present-day initiatives.

The historical connection appears merely to refer to their desire to collectively develop, use or maintain the landscape on a local scale. The initiatives are small-scale organisation with a lot of local commitment which are based on on the mutual exchange of rights and responsibilities. The coordination of the activities is a mix of informal organisation aspects (Handshake mechanism) and formal aspects (Handbook mechanism).

Self-organisation is a new phenomenon in the planning and management of the landscape. It can be explained by means of the four levels of institutions from the New Institutional Economics (NIE). Changes and shortcomings in the social (1) and institutional (2) environment explain the rise of self-organisation. For example, the urbanisation of the countryside (social level) and the changing government policy (institutional level) are reasons for people to get together and take care of their local living environment.



'Naobers van Zudert'
Thirteen neighbours in Zudert are collectively organising the maintenance of the private property to restore and preserve the characteristic 'water farming' landscape. The naming of the initiative derives from the positive connotation of the historical concept of naoberschap, solidarity in a strong local community.