**Keeping Up Appearances: A Comparative Approach to Aesthetics and the Politics of Public Planning**

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# Abstract

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(Under the direction of Carole L. Crumley and Norris Brock Johnson)


This research examines the politics of land use planning debates and compares how aesthetic ideals and values associated with a landscape impact public planning decisions in rural Chatham County, North Carolina and the traditionally agrarian Dutch Green Heart. Landscapes and the associated aesthetic values often emerge in these debates simply as attractive places, views and vistas, or synonyms for natural and ecological environments. The aesthetic ideals and attachment to particular landscapes, however, act as diacritical markers indicative of a specific social imaginary that is rooted in time and space. In this dissertation, I argue that battles over landscape ideals such as the preservation of the "rural character" in Chatham County elicit powerful emotive responses from residents. These emotional responses are embedded within socio-historic beliefs and practices that both implicitly and explicitly reflect deeply ingrained class and race-based components. The aesthetic ideals introduced by so-called "newcomers" since the 1980s and the recent battle to preserve the "rural character" of the region indelibly marks the landscape. The privileging of aesthetic

ideals in Chatham's planning documents and public debates masks unintended economic, class, and potentially race-based exclusionary practices and fosters a divisive social imaginary in the region. The aesthetic ideals promoted in the Green Heart region, however, actually unified Dutch support during the late 1990s as the European Union consolidated. The Dutch Green Heart emerged in public discourse as an idealized landscape that embodied Dutch ingenuity and perseverance. It acted as a central "national" identity marker at a time when the push towards integration and co-operation within the European Union decreased national sovereignty, and threatened the social and economic position of the Netherlands. Landscapes emerge in this research as sites of contestation and ongoing debate that link people, polity, and place. The aesthetic privileging of a particular landscape in planning decisions is, therefore, neither benign nor *a*political.

To Isa, Robert, and Rock
for your everlasting patience, love, and faith.

# Acknowledgements

Over the years, I've rehearsed these acknowledgements several times and mentally mapped out the words, but somehow the feelings and emotions I practiced don't quite fit the moment. Although it may sound odd, when I felt particularly lonely, frustrated, or disillusioned with graduate school, I comforted myself by silently recognizing the contributions of important people in my life. I suppose I held on to the notion that I would eventually reach this point and the internal roll call reminded me that I wasn't alone, that I have reason to be thankful, and that I am fortunate. Moreover, it reminded me to step away from my personal despair and to focus on people, things, and events that lifted my spirits. A heartfelt thanks for all who encouraged me, spoke to me, listened to me (whine), and who offered your analytical insights. I am especially appreciative of the farmers, planners, public figures, and concerned citizens in Chatham County, NC and the Dutch Green Heart who gave freely of their time and contributed to this research. Since pseudonyms are used for interviewees in order to shield their identities, I am not able to list the many people who enthusiastically participated in the research. Nonetheless, I am grateful for the open and honest way that most participants embraced the topic and their ability to engage with issues that have caused many a great deal of frustration.

Teaching has (almost always) made me happy and I am eternally grateful for the many students at UNC who entered not only my classroom, but who entered my life. From

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CCEC          Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities

CCLCUDP   Chatham County Land Conservation and Development Plan

CCFLPPO   Chatham County Farmland Preservation Program Ordinance

CCO           Compact Communities Ordinance

CCOBBS    Chatham County Online Bulletin Board Service

CCP           Conservation Plan

CCV           Chatham Conservative Voice

CDA           Christen Democratische Partij  (Christian Democratic Party)

KRO           Katholieke Radio Omroep (Catholic Radio Station)

NN             Nederland Natúúrlijk!

MCO          Major Corridor Ordinance

PVV           Partij voor Vrijheid (Party for Freedom)

RRHF         Rocky River Heritage Foundation

VROM        Volkshuisvesting Ruimtelijke Ordening en Mileubeheer (Ministry for Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment)

VVD          Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie  (People's Party for Freedom and Deocracy)

# Introduction: Landscapes, Aesthetics, and Social Imaginaries

The aesthetic privileging of a particular landscape in land use planning documents is often presented as if it is a benign or *a*political act. This research, as a comparative case study, examines the highly political and contentious nature of landscape values and landscapes as sites of contestation. Through the analysis of public planning decisions and public discourse, this research explores land use planning debates and the aesthetic privileging of a particular set of landscape values in Chatham County, North Carolina and the Green Heart region in the Netherlands. These landscape values, both socio-historic and economic in nature, drive ongoing land use planning debates that have increasingly emerged as a result of urban or peri-urban growth in traditionally rural areas. On a theoretical level, I frame the intertwined relationship between landscape aesthetics, economic interest, and urban development as *a politics of landscapes* (Zukin 1993; Mitchell 2003; Duncan & Duncan 2004; Low, Taplin & Scheld 2005).

Aside from the unique contexts of these case studies, this research emphasizes how battles over public planning often revolve around conflicting aesthetic values and meanings. The emotive attachment to aesthetic ideals potentially re-defines local responses in traditionally rural areas facing suburban sprawl from cities or other external social, economic,

and political transformations. The divisive and highly charged battles exemplify the aesthetic attachments as well as the politically charged, contentious nature of land use planning. Through the discursive analysis of public planning debates, this research explores how disparate interpretations and meanings emerge as "social imaginaries" and how these social imaginaries reinforce potential divisions and influence key public planning decisions. In particular, I examine how aesthetic beliefs and values arise in and through the differing social imaginaries. I reflect on how these beliefs impact the physical appearance, social composition, and economic functioning of the regions on the whole. I foreground the multiple ways aesthetic meanings and shared social imaginaries shape public decision-making and potentially change the rural "form and function" of the landscape. It is my contention that economic interests are re-defining the physical and social landscape in both Chatham County and the Dutch Green Heart and that these economic interests are embedded within a particular set of landscape values and a specific kind of social imaginary.

## 1 "Framing" Landscapes and Other Focal Concepts

Landscape research in anthropology has a relatively short history and only in the last 15 to 20 years have anthropologists consistently begun publishing on the topic (Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Athanassopoula 2002; Basso 1996; Bender 1992; Bender 2002; Bender 1993b; Crumley and Marquardt 1987; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Ingold 2000; Munn 1996; Rotenberg 1995; Tilley 1994). As a complex and historically rich term steeped in political, economic and aesthetic discourse, landscape definitions often seemingly conflict or contradict one another. When we examine the everyday usage of the concept, we encounter references to a scenic view, a horizon, an environmental region, or an inhabited place. In this

section, I seek to explain how anthropologists and other social scientists theoretically frame landscapes as physically and metaphorically inhabited places. Moreover, I will clarify how this theoretical framing relates to the socio-historic emergence of landscapes as social sceneries or aesthetically pleasing views and how this aesthetic emphasis underpins the emergence of particular social imaginaries.

Although anthropologists often recognize the ambiguous nature of the landscape concept (Athanassopoula 2002; Bender 1992; Bender 1993; Bender 2002; Hirsch 1995; Ingold 2000; Rowntree and Conkey 1980) many still do not articulate what they mean by landscape (Basso 1996; Rotenberg 1995). Despite the unambiguous use of the "landscape" idea in much academic research, landscapes are neither easy to conceptualize nor simple to deploy. Effectively approaching landscape values or beliefs requires a specific socio-historical contextualization. Historically, landscape research generally falls into two basic categories within the social sciences and anthropology, and broadly speaking, publications tend either to treat the landscape as a purely environmental or physical factor or the landscape as an aspect of human activity. In general, landscape conceptualizations have noticeably shifted away from landscapes as "sites" or backdrops subject primarily to the forces of nature and towards landscapes as socially and culturally constructed places or environments (Athanassopoula 2002). The landscape as a "site" approach externalizes the "natural world" and sustains the long-standing fondness in anthropology for binary classifications such as nature versus culture. This binary fondness often leads to an overemphasis on the ecological value or the subsistence value for humans inhabiting the "sites" and minimizes the social, emotional, or political attachments people have to theses

places. In early anthropological and social scientific research, the concept landscape was synonymous with a region or site-specific environment or ecological niche.

A shift in the approach to landscapes occurred in anthropology during the early 1980s paralleling similar changes within geography during the 1960s and 1970s (Rowntree and Conkey 1980). For the first time within anthropology, the contested nature of the landscape concept was addressed. A more definitive approach to landscapes materialized in the surge of space-place research in the 1990s and in response to a passing theoretical reorientation in British archaeology (Baker and Biger 1992; Basso 1996; Bender 1992; Bender 1993b; Crumley and Marquardt 1987; Feld and Basso 1996; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Munn 1996; Tilley 1994). Landscapes appeared among American cultural anthropologists within discourse on space and place (Basso 1996; Feld and Basso 1996; Jackson 1995; Munn 1996; Stewart 1996). Most of the literature emphasized the sensory experience of place; the way places are known, felt, sensed, lived and imagined. The full sensuous experience of place foregrounded the rationalized perception and conception of the place (Feld and Basso 1996). The phenomenology of place surfaced and the landscape emerged in this research as a particular "type" of place located in space and time. Simultaneously, British post-processual archaeology also began approaching the landscape through the experience of place and explored the perception of the landscape as it related to the socialization processes (Hodder 1986; Tilley 1994).

A great deal of disciplinary cross-fertilization appeared towards the mid 1990s. British social anthropologists appear to integrate earlier cultural ecological conceptions of the landscape with Marxist approaches to time and space. Bender's study of the contested and political nature of Stonehenge integrated time and space and "political and social charge"

associated with the landscape (2002: 104). Ingold approached the landscape as dynamically intertwined in social, environmental and temporal aspects of daily life. Hirsch (1995) presents a more aesthetically oriented interpretation, but also promotes an understanding of the landscape as a cultural process. The dual emphasis on landscapes as aesthetic orientations and as culturally constructed spaces enabled researchers to more fully examine the historical emergence of the landscape concept in 16th century Europe. The re-orientation in academic research revolved around the recognition that landscape research must address both the aesthetic value and social construction of the place within the lives of the people. How do the people inhabiting the space experience the landscape? What does it mean to claim that landscapes link people polity and place?

The landscape is not just an expansive view or a painting of a scenic vista. Nor is a landscape external to individual or social lives. One key shift in the meaning of the landscape concept over time is that it moved from being thought of as common*place* toward a thing that depicts or captures a scene. Olwig refers to this shift as the emergence of landscapes as the "make-believe space of scenery" (2002:216); in short, landscapes historically materialize in everyday thought as a purely aesthetic views or sceneries. Furthermore, Olwig argues that if the nation indeed stands for ties between people, the land, and "blood," then the landscape as a depiction or scenery personifies these common bonds. The point is that landscapes connect polity, space, experience and the imagination. The landscape, as the site of a shared "lived" experience, shapes the particular views of "nation", "community" and a national consciousness. Although community is a highly contested concept, it now stands in for networks of interactions that people perceive as real or imagined. It is a concept that is inherently political and was politicized fairly early within the social sciences, namely

sociology. A community, like traditional definitions of space, is generally more fluid and not necessarily bound to one site, whereas a nation, on the other hand, is the place where a community is bound through "blood and soil". According to Olwig (2002) landscapes originally referred to this connection between "blood and soil" in common thought. Anderson (1991) refers to the national consciousness as the perceptions of a community and the imagining and subsequent identification with a common*place* or a nation. Landscapes are, in this sense, "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991).

Piecing these parts together returns us to the social, cultural and historical emergence of landscapes as sites that links people, polity, and place. Olwig (2002) links the emergence of the landscape in the 16th century with notions of community and more specifically to developing nations such as Denmark, Great Britain and the Netherlands. According to Olwig the landscape as a scenery, a painting, an image created for consumption, both inspires affection and embodies the nation (Olwig 2001; Olwig 2002:123-124). Nation, unlike the concept country, underscores the bonds of blood and territory while the country refers most commonly to "a legal community united by customary law" (Olwig 2002:124). Nation and nature merge resulting in a common*place*, a shared space of common descent, as notions of blood and soil take root in landscape conceptions. The landscape embodies the emotive attachments people have to a community or a nation and the allegiance is captured in the aesthetic or outward appearance of the place.

Landscape ideals and landscape values are thus embedded in the imagination, in the experience of a space. The emotive attachments reflect both the physical appearance of a place as well as the shared meanings and beliefs associated with the place. It is this recognition and participation in a shared social imaginary, an imagined community not

unlike Benedict Anderson's that reaches beyond a functional description of a landscape as simply a view or vista or an environmental region. Does it matter if the idealized landscape you seek to preserve doesn't reflect the regions past? Does it matter if the landscape you adore no longer retains its traditional functions? Does it matter if the "rural character" is a modern Disney like re-imagining? A social imaginary is not bound to the borders of a place, but it does dwell in the way people perceive their relationship to both the polity and place. In this research, I approach the landscape as a "site" that elicits emotive responses and these responses reflect the individual and social position of people invested in the landscape debates. The recognition that landscapes embody and reflect social imaginaries compels me to address the aesthetic ideals and values that people associate with the place as diacritical markers indicative of a social imaginary. The deployment of aesthetic ideals about the landscape in Chatham County and the Dutch Green Heart underscore and sustain social imaginings about a place and frequently entail unintended economic and social consequences. Emergent social conflicts and land use planning debates draw attention toward perceived social differences or divisions and away from potential economic and social consequences.

## 2 A Babel-esque Confusion of Tongues: The Sites and the Debates

> "We decided that we needed to make a choice because we can expand the planning options endlessly. Everyone that feels or has connections with the Green Heart wants to be heard, but that means that we will again have other ***meanings*** or opinions and that can be problematic at times. Because we are trying to tackle the necessary problems there has to be a certain amount of direction and we [the Green Heart Team] are pointing things in a certain direction. We are trying to work through particular channels and not perish because of a *Babel-esque* confusion of tongues."
>
> H. Romein[1]

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[1]Psedonyms are used for all interviewees in the dissertation. Footnotes reference the date of the interview (06/24/2004).

I translated the Dutch expression "Babelse spraakverwarring as "a Babel-esque confusion of tongues", but idioms often loose their meaning and metaphorical immediacy when translated. Despite the translation, I feel that the "Babelse spraakverwarring" encapsulates the socio-historic significance of a recurring public planning issue. Plagued by miscommunication and the needs and wants of different people, the Tower of Babel never reached the heavens or God. Nimrod, the evil tyrant, instigated fights and led to discontent between people. Although many herald him as a founder of the Freemasons, he reportedly succumbed to an unsanctimonious, fiery death. This expression with its biblical ties, reminds me that there is nothing truly new or revolutionary about planning debates. Forged in a "confusion of tongues", it shouldn't surprise me that public planning debates in Chatham County as well as the Dutch Green Heart revolve around multiple interpretations and meanings of seemingly straightforward words, phrases, or concepts.

When the official Leader of the Green Heartteam, a co-operative organization with administrative oversight but no planning authority, stated that his organization didn't want the Dutch Green Heart to perish because of a "Babelse spraakverwarring", I choked. I literally choked on coffee. A scarcity of habitable land and the battle against rising water shaped the physical and social form of the modern-day Dutch landscape. Through the intense remodeling of the land and the creation of polders, namely land reclaimed from the water and protected by narrow canals, dikes and windmills, early inhabitants of the region overcame environmental obstacles. Consensual decision-making combined with a growing technological capacity enabled the inhabitants to physically form permanent, stable populations in low-lying regions (Figure 1A: Map of the Netherlands). With almost half of the total landmass in the Netherlands at or below sea level, the polder landscape became a

material symbol of Dutch perseverance, of mind over matter. Was this long touted process of "consensual-decision making" creating confusion and hampering communication? Six years later the fear of a "Babelse spraakverwarring" resonates with what I see as a major, recurring issue in public planning and it isn't limited to the Dutch Green Heart.



FIGURE 1: (A-Left) Map of the Netherlands with the area below sea level shaded in blue/gray (Map courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). (B-Right) Map of the Green Heart (Map courtesy of Uitvoerings Programma van het Groene Hart).

Public planning, as this idiom suggests, has socially and historically been a central source of division and the inability of differing people to communicate or agree on a single course of action keep them from reaching their goal, a heavenly paradise. On one hand, as Romein explains, there is a need for "direction" in order to limit the number of planning options. On the other hand, when you allow public input into the issues you risk having chaotic semantic battles that demonize those offering direction and lead to insurmountable obstacles. Nonetheless, this simultaneous need for "direction" and public input continuously

emerges in the public planning debates enveloping both Chatham County, NC and the Dutch Green Heart.

My dissertation research began with my study of the on-going discursive re-configuration of the Dutch Green Heart on a local, regional, national and pan-European Union scale in the period between 2001-2006. The Green Heart, the literal and metaphorical heart of the Netherlands, acts as a national identity marker and has been an enduring site of debate and for increasingly more restrictive economic and land use plans (Figure 1B: Green Heart Map). Touted as the #1 national landscape in recent national planning documents (VROM 2004; Stuurgroep Groene Hart 2009), planners push and continue push to preserve the historic value of the landscape through stringent land use regulations that are displacing the farmers. The historic value they seek to preserve, however, is the agricultural and so called, socio-cultural value of the landscape. Yet, the landscape *now* only reflects these values in an aesthetic sense because many farmers can not afford to maintain the farms as working farms. Instead of enabling dairy farmers to continue, the land use plans present the Green Heart as a large-scale cultural attraction for recreational use. Farmers are increasingly capitalizing upon the status of the Green Heart by investing in the visual appearance of the farm, actively promoting their farms as recreational havens, and "branding" the landscape for outside consumption (Struinen en Vorsen 2004). Moreover, the branding appears to me as a way for the Dutch to re-cast or re-present the "land" to a general public and to capitalize on long-standing emotional attachments to particular "historical scenes." The polder, land under sea level that was reclaimed, is the material representation of Dutch perseverance and their ability to overcome natural obstacles elicits quite powerful responses. By "freezing" the landscape, the Dutch are memorializing or codifying their claim to a particular place vis-à-vis

their history. Debates in the mid 1990s and through my research in 2006, however, make it clear that not everybody agreed on the future of this iconic landscape.

In mid 2006, I redirected my dissertation topic towards land use planning issues in Chatham County, North Carolina (Figure 2: Chatham County road map). With its close proximity to Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, the Research Triangle Park, one of the largest research parks in the nation, and three major universities, Chatham has increasingly been the center of public planning debates as residents, political leaders, and land developers, battle over the future of land development in the county. The economic boom of the 1990's and accompanying population growth in the region made Chatham County with its relatively cheap land prices an attractive "natural" bedroom community for people working in the Triangle. Discourse surrounding the debate often centers on the presentation of timeless, rural life, and picturesque natural surroundings threatened by rampant land development and an impending population explosion. Yet, the debate is not quite as clear-cut as pro-development versus anti-development rhetoric may suggest. The virulent and divisive nature of the debates on the future of land development in the county often perpetuate the confusion and focus attention away from the real issues at hand. The call to maintain Chatham's "rural character" by regional planners and community organizations brings into question what or whose "rural character" they seek to preserve. The longstanding call to protect the "rural character" of the region offered those wanting to restrict new land developments a foothold. The restrictions attempt to conserve the landscape's aesthetic appeal and traditional agrarian economic base by implementing restrictive land development policies. The restrictions ultimately re-define the planning language and the rhetorical direction of the debates.
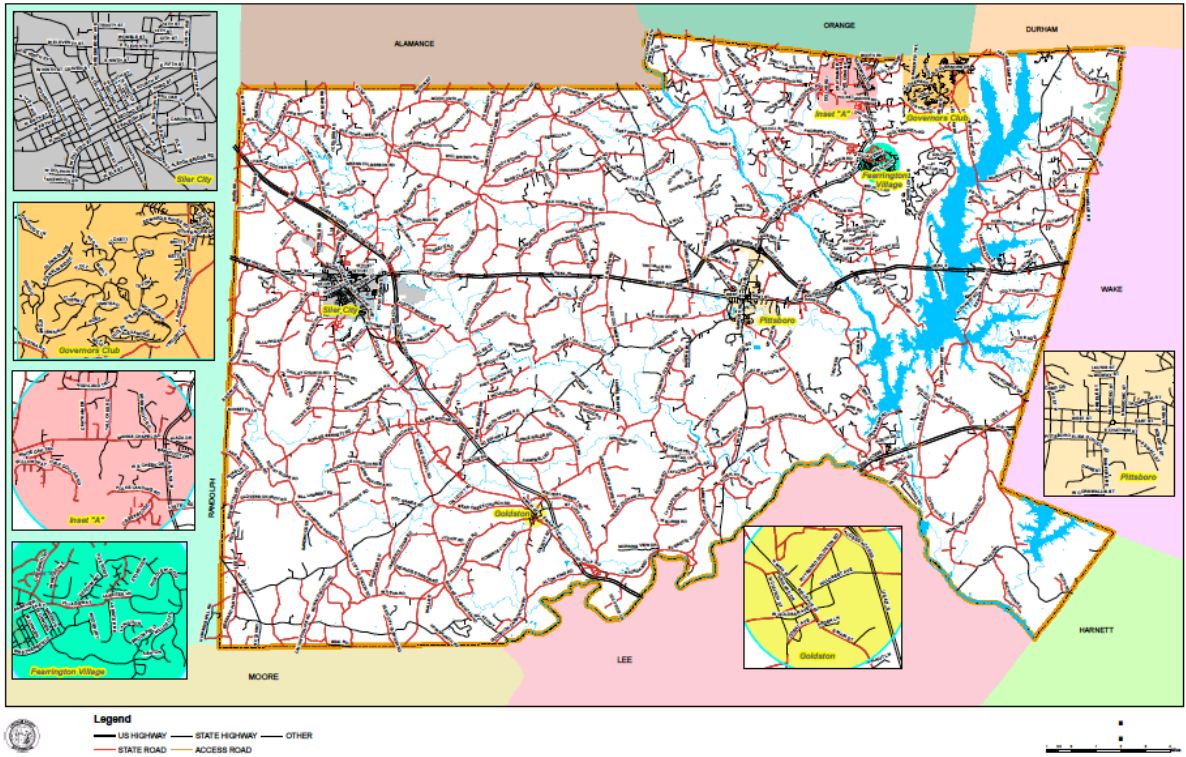
FIGURE 2: Chatham County Road Map (Courtesy of Chatham County, NC.)

With an emphasis on my research in Chatham County, I address the intersection of active political participation in regional planning decisions, landscape aesthetics, and the process of identity. It is my contention that landscape ideals often elicit powerful emotive responses. These responses are embedded in socio-historic beliefs and practices and may reflect deeply ingrained class and race based components. The research offers insight into how planning decisions, namely the incorporation of restrictive land use policies that preserve green spaces, may privilege certain aesthetic ideals and change the physical, social, and economic landscape of a region. The Dutch Green Heart and Chatham County offer unique perspectives on issues facing many communities. In order to capture the contested meanings and the complexity of the issues that are so tightly bound to the highly political, economic and social value(s) of the landscape in Chatham County, I focused on one specific

land development, Briar Chapel. After developers first proposed Briar Chapel, the development acted as a lightening rod and resulted in a significant outcry of those for and against the proposed development. Although my emphasis is on Briar Chapel and the Northeastern quadrant of the county, I also address issues impacting the entire county. Chatham County has a centralized, countywide planning board and a five member Board of Commissioners who are elected at large in countywide elections. The five board members represent a particular district where they must also reside, however, citizens residing in all five districts elect them in a general county election[2]. The structure and governance of the county is a continuous issue of debate and ongoing attempts to re-district the county or change electoral policies have led to heated public arguments.

The scale of the Dutch Green Heart requires me to approach it from a national, rather than a regional or local scale. This scale allows me to explore the contestation as a battleground for the (newly) emergent neo-liberal political agenda in the Netherlands. In addition, the continual presentation of the Green Heart as a national identity marker on national, regional, and local platforms allows me to frame the discursive deployment of the Green Heart within the context of recent political, economic and social developments within both the Netherlands and the European Union. The Babel-esque confusion of tongues, my name for the divisive and highly charged battles, exemplifies the aesthetic attachments and the political and contentious nature of landscapes and landscape values.

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[2] Information regarding the scale of governance in Chatham County is available on the Chatham County, NC website.

# 3 Meanings, Aesthetics and the Master

> 'I don't know what you mean by "glory",' Alice said.
>
> Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't — till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"
>
> 'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument",' Alice objected.
>
> 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.'
>
> 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'
>
> 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master — that's all.' (Carroll [1871] 1965: 198)

I have struggled to understand how specific words, phrases, or concepts presented in public planning discourse could mean seemingly disparate things to large numbers of people. For 10 years I've explored the aesthetic beliefs and values associated with two contrasting landscapes and the roles these aesthetic views played in public planning decisions in both the Dutch Green Heart and Chatham County, North Carolina. I wrestled to make sense of the language and to delineate between the implicit and explicit meanings attached to certain recurrent concepts by competing factions. In particular, I paid very close attention to variations in the use and meaning of language in public planning discourse and the volatile role these linguistic shifts played in often-intense public debates on the issues. Emotive attachments to these landscapes and the language that conveyed this attachment were in each field site highly politicized and divisive imaginaries. As I traced the transformation of particular phrases such as the "rural character" in Chatham County or the appearance and subsequent social capital of concepts such as the "Green Heart" in the Netherlands, my focus shifted. While the meanings and deployment of these concepts remained important to the research, I increasingly concentrated more on the economic privileging of a particular vision

or meaning. Indeed, the question no longer revolved around how these words could mean so many different things, but rather which of these meanings would be "master" (Carroll [1871] 1965: 198).

The intertwined meanings and emotive attachments to particular landscapes or places clearly influenced public planning decisions in Chatham County and the Green Heart. Untangling these meanings from their aesthetic appeal as I originally envisioned repeatedly led me to reflect on the economic significance. It wasn't enough to ask whose meaning counts. The meanings of these words and phrases that emerged in public debates, the meanings driven by emotional attachments, had clear economic and political implications in public planning discourse. What enabled this aesthetic privileging? How did the meaning of these words or concepts shift? What allowed this semantic shift to transform the public planning discourse? A complex *process* of aesthetic privileging emerged in response to these questions; a privileging that benefitted a particular view of the landscape. This privileged view emphasized a particular reading or interpretation of the planning discourse by granting authority to specific socio-economic values. With these questions and answers came less of an emphasis on what people meant and more on *how* these meanings reflected and upheld dominant social paradigms.

In both cases, emotive and aesthetic attachments subtly shielded and occasionally diverted attention away from the explicit economic privileging. Instead, passionate calls against a land development from individuals or members of organizations that seek to conserve the Haw and Rocky Rivers or other watersheds quite obviously emphasized the environmental value of their plea and the general ecological vulnerabilities and dangers to the region. With portions of both rivers designated as 303(d) impaired waters and severe

water supply issues throughout the county (CCLCUDP 2004; Impact Plan 2001), the individuals and outspoken members of organizations such as the Haw River Assembly presented compelling environmental impact research that strengthened their stance and leverage in public planning debates (Welch and MacFall 2008: 3-5; Tetra Tech/ NC Eco Enhancement Program 2005: 3-6). In essence, the research and awareness of these groups about gradual ecological changes that are often invisible to a lay person bolster the collective voice of these conservation groups and strengthen their stance when endorsing or denouncing public planning decisions. One could say it's almost a common sense question because who wouldn't favor environmental protections to preserve the ecological quality of a region. To argue that the collective voice of these conservation groups isn't deserved, likely feels counterintuitive to many educated people or concerned citizens. The improvements to water quality in the region and growing everyday awareness among residents about the relevance of future water quality decisions is frequently mentioned on the Chatham Chatlist, Chatham Journal, and Chatham County Online Bulletin Board Service (CCOBBS). With "proper planning" a rural area such as Chatham County that is facing intense urban growth can both preserve and conserve the natural resources while not limiting economic development. Organizations such as the Haw River Assembly, the Chatham Conservation Plan (CCP), and the Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities (CCEC) present their calls for stricter public planning guidelines within this framework and this argument makes sense in a very unambiguous and straightforward way[3]. Yet, it is the seemingly basic nature of this argument that obscures and diverts our attention away from potential socio-economic biases rooted to a fundamental aesthetic privileging and cloaked in affective attachments.

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[3] The CCP MOU Charter, CCEC website, and Haw River Assembly Frequently Asked Questions all address these concerns.

This landscape aesthetics reflects value(s) and tastes, an "embodied" appreciation and privileging, that emerges through specific historical and cultural practices. The aesthetic privileging emphasizes very particular values or beliefs and an appreciation of a landscape. This appreciation is not simply visual, nor is it defined through idiosyncratic perceptions or inert rules and principles. As collective aesthetic values these perceptions are rooted to social beliefs and values that simultaneously alter and shape the aesthetic appreciation. The embodied nature of the process allows one to follow the taste and the meanings attached to the particular aesthetic values. As Bourdieu argued "taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (Bourdieu 1984: 7). How can one apply this to the basic nature of the argument that proper planning will allow Chatham County to preserve the regions natural resources, protect the environment from poorly executed land developments, and stimulate the local economy? How is this embroiled in an "embodied" appreciation and aesthetic privileging?

If there isn't one right or universal way of thinking about landscape aesthetics or aesthetic taste, one must question the inherently value-laden meanings attached to practices and beliefs or the "cultural competence" of the individuals promoting particular standpoints. Within this logic, environmental preservation personifies systematic and totalizing structures of beliefs that often fall outside of an individual's recognition or awareness. Our aesthetic appreciation and taste reflect life style choices that move beyond individually defined preferences and embody socially constructed preferences. These preferences potentially uphold or support hegemonic practices, even when the preferences maintain seemingly "just" causes. In short, taste matters. The causes we support, the lawn ornaments in our yard, the parks we visit and the products we purchase in the grocery store are aesthetic markers and convey more than simple, individual preferences. These choices are marked by social

differences and carry multiple, often conflicting meanings. These preferences and the implications of these preferences are at the heart of my research.

Public planning decisions that emphasize aesthetic ideals ultimately privilege particular social and economic values and needs. Aesthetic privileging marks the public plans implicitly and explicitly. The plans embody socio-historic beliefs and are subject to the continuous process of aestheticization. The aesthetic appreciation or ideals are not neutrally defined or abstract. Protecting a landscape and thus protecting a landscape aesthetic *is* a political act. Beyond the explicit planning needs, beyond the environmental causes, and within the realm of affective attachments and landscape aesthetics are social values and historical practices that simultaneously define and re-define the character of a region. Valuing Chatham County's "rural character" or the Dutch Green Heart's polder landscape classifies the tastes as well as those who recognize or value the aesthetic appreciation. My use of aesthetics, and more importantly the aesthetic appreciation of landscapes, reflects how people "engage" with the landscape and the meaning making process (Carlson and Berleant 2003). The engagement isn't predicated on just knowledge or experience any more than the aesthetic appreciation of the landscape is purely sensed and felt. Aesthetics as embodied values can't be understood without addressing a range of socio-historic and economic factors, as well as individual social and cultural experiences. Aesthetic appreciation is an all-encompassing term that reflects a person's subjective experiences and active understanding of an object or landscape. Aesthetics, and more importantly the process of aestheticization, enables individuals to draw upon social values and beliefs when deeming a landscape meaningful or worthy.

The concepts and information presented in public planning documents reflect the seemingly disparate meanings people attach to landscape aesthetics. Through my research, I attempted to make sense of these disparate meanings by emphasizing the contrasting role that aesthetics play in the meaning making process. The concepts at the center of planning conflicts, "rural character" in Chatham County and the shifting meaning of the "Green Heart" in the Netherlands, embody and reflect social imaginaries about what "fits" or belongs in each of these landscape. These imaginaries and the public planning debates reveal information about both the collective and individual nature of the aesthetic beliefs. I speak of these beliefs and values, I speak about the outward appearances of things as aesthetics. I do this in order to get at what these values *do* in very real terms and how meanings, feelings, and an appreciation of a landscape are social practices. In the research, I problematize landscape aesthetics as a set of practices and explore the shifting and conflicting aesthetic meanings and values that emerge in public planning debates. Clearly addressing how aesthetics is politicized has potential positive and negative consequences and these consequences extend beyond the "looks" of the landscape (Benjamin 1968; Duncan & Duncan 2004). The question for me is how aesthetics as embodied values act to "reaffirm" or possibly override specific social and political concerns (Smith & Low 2006: 5). Moreover, the question is how the embodied values define and re-define a region and how this process influences which of the meanings, values, and beliefs will become master.

## 4 Imagining Places and Marketing the Debates

> "They worked two years long- *two years long* - on the marketing plan. And it was *never* completed because they began fighting before the presentation. They don't know, by God, how it began or what it means… They don't know what they are talking about. It is a very vague concept. If you can't even agree about the identity of the region together, what does it mean? Marketing, marketing, marketing [is what it means]…"
>
> Knel[4]

The aesthetic privileging of landscapes is such a "naturalized" part of everyday life that many often don't recognize the value-laden nature of the privileging. People don't necessarily question what constitutes "proper planning" and protecting natural resources is viewed as a modern panacea for past human-made indiscretions. To problematize and politicize the issue, to foreground the process of privileging in planning decision making, is to draw out how collective and individual values become institutionalized and objectified and more importantly, commodified. When I speak of the aesthetic privileging in Chatham County or the Dutch Green Heart I am referring to the embodied nature of "cultural capital" and an enduring set of beliefs with clear ties to status and prestige (Bourdieu 1984: 53). These longstanding beliefs structure planning decisions and ultimately impact both the social and physical landscape. Likewise, these beliefs are reflected in the individual, institutional, and organizational practices that support them and through the treatment of the landscape as an object as well as a commodity. How "rural character" is defined has less to do with the historic character of Chatham or the Green Heart and more to do with how social imaginaries and economic values fuse to form a pleasing or idealized rural environment. This idealization emerges on both an individual and social level with institutional structures that support

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[4] The editor of Het Groene Hart Magazine, Founder of the Foundation for the Green Heart, Founder of the Organization of Green Heart Municipalities was interviewed on June 21, 2004 in Oudewater, the Netherlands.

value-laden imaginaries. The aesthetic privileging of landscapes refers to the way that both individual and social beliefs or values about the landscape are institutionally codified and objectified as discussed above.

One must identify the qualities or landscape features that are privileged and explore whose perspectives influence the planning debates and the planning process. By focusing on the way various groups of people in Chatham County and the Netherlands speak and write about the landscape and the planning battles surrounding it, I identify particular aesthetic features, real or imagined, that emerge in and through the discourse. Conflicting meanings and approaches to public planning decisions regularly stand in direct conflict with the wants, needs, and the agendas of multiple organizations or individuals. The Dutch Green Heart, for example, as simultaneously the most protected national landscape and natural area is commonly understood to be one of the earliest sites of continuous reclamation and social, physical, and economic engineering (VROM 2004). For 46 years federal spatial policies protected the unique character of the traditionally agrarian Green Heart from the urban and industrial overflow of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht. Representing the region as "rural" and "natural", however, bring into question context based interpretations. How is the Green Heart "natural"? What do we mean by "rural"? With a population density in the area is between 100-250 people per sq. mile and the knowledge that the Green Heart region was reclaimed from the North Sea over the last 1000 years, these questions are not easy to answer. Both the battle to protect the region and the labeling of the area exemplifies how conflicting meanings and views envelope the Green Heart and often emerge in contentious debates. Getting at the embodied nature of aesthetics means identifying the

landscape "qualities" that arise in embellished terms and whose idealized presence revolves around socio-historic and economic beliefs and practices associated with them.

On the surface, the planning debates in Chatham County and the Dutch Green Heart bear little resemblance to one another. Different histories and distinctive social forces ultimately shaped the planning debates in both places. Planning debates in these locations, however, both revolve around an idealization or romanticization of the landscape, but the outcomes of this romaticization are site specific. On one hand, the romaticization and increased identification with particular landscapes in Europe such as the Green Heart reflect what Bender refers to as the "freezing" of the palimpsest landscape (1996: 26). The "freezing" is a re-creation of a landscape that embodies recognizable socio-historic markers but masks the how the value-laden idealization literally re-configures the existing landscape (Bender 1999:26). This normative process highlights a dualistic rift between what once was a commonplace landscape, an active part of everyday life, and what is now an "extraordinary" landscape, distanced from everyday realities. On the other hand, the romanticization of Chatham County's "rural character" appears to wipe away local or regional particularities and replace them with re-imagineered notions of "community". Unlike the romanticization that "freezes" the particularities in relation to a specific socio-historic imagination both are rooted in time and place. In particular, the idealization of Chatham's "rural character" highlights the more individualistic nature of landscapes as individual property.

In both cases the romanticization hinges upon a dual process of commodification and consumption. For the Dutch, freezing the palimpsest landscape means maintaining the sight of windmills, farmhouses, small canals, cows in the meadow and the flat lushly green land as recreational spaces, views or vistas. Preserving the shape and content of the Green Heart

landscape and its relationship to Dutch socio-historic practices, often outweighs the social, economic, and infrastructural needs of the people who inhabit the region. The overt commodification of the polder landscape unifies the Green Heart and the nation by presenting this particular polder "landscape" as an identity marker rooted in the past and cherished in the present. The newly polished image and re-packaging of the landscape encourages the general public to consume or to both individually or collectively capitalize on the long-standing emotional attachment to the polder landscape and its socio-historic value. Most of all the Green Heart *differentiates* the Dutch from "others"; it embodies and perpetuates ideals about what it means to be Dutch. In contrast, the re-imagineering of the "American" or even the "Southern" landscape emphasizes the commodification for individual consumption. The public planning documents in Chatham County seek to preserve the "rural character" of the region. "Rural character" is not concisely defined, but appears in general terms as a way to identify agrarian or specific regional features. Unlike the Dutch who seek to preserve their history, in Chatham and other places across the United States, there appears to be a "whitewashing" of the landscape based on class aesthetic ideals (Duncan & Duncan 2004). While the Dutch are in a sense Disneyfying the landscape by turning it into a "theme-park", Chatham appears to re-imagine the landscape as a certain kind of "place" and a site for individual consumption

In Chatham County, for example, the proposed land developments such as Briar Chapel, developments presented through idealized imagery, become sites of public debate. Approval of these developments often hinges on their ability to meet both the environmental and aesthetic demands of vocal inhabitants. Developments of this sort bear a strong aesthetic resemblance to developments found across the region and nation and project an aesthetic

veneer that lacks local or regional uniqueness. These reconfigured landscapes embody beliefs and values of a community and place, without necessarily reflecting local socio-historic values. The land development plans in Chatham are not necessarily promoting the "authentic" "rural character". These plans often don't even present a historically accurate representation of Chatham's unique character. The plans, in my opinion, seek to maintain the appearance of the landscape for individual consumption, as "property" rather than present a shared space of socio-historic value. While the content of the public planning debates surrounding these quite distinct sites are socially, historically, and politically unique from one another, they offer insight into comparative case studies.

In the Netherlands, the romanticization of landscapes on the whole underscores the complex relationship between polity, place and identity politics. In Europe where the sovereignty of the nation-state was continually challenged through the solidification of European Union integration over the last decade, landscapes were *crucial* sites of identification within the local/regional, national, and European context. Simply put, in Europe landscapes are often battlegrounds for differing socio-political agendas. Landscapes are recognizable identity markers and in this sense, landscapes are sites of power and contestation. Landscapes play pivotal roles in reconciling the dual pull towards nationalism, localism, and European Union disintegration and the increasing push towards integration, co-operation, and decreasing national sovereignty in Europe. The explicit idealization, historicization and promotion of the Green Heart region, for example, functions as a marker for the Dutch. At a time when the Dutch are losing their perceived status as a European powerhouse and are simply one of the many nations within the European Union, the Green Heart as a polder landscape, embodies core aspects of the Dutch identity that seem lost

within the pan European framework. With the pressures of European Union integration and the political and social de-valuation of the Netherlands through integration, preserving, promoting and even marketing the Green Heart appears as a re-valuation of Dutch identity. It is the subjective experience of the Dutch landscape that differentiates it from other European landscapes; it is the subjective experience of the landscape that to some extent unites the nation, people, and "blood and soil."

Both cases offer significant insight into the subjective nature of identity politics and the role this process of identification plays in land use planning contestation. Although the debates center on the public battles and institutional discourse, this research examines the value-laden ideals and images that repeatedly emerge within this contestation. These emergent social imaginaries enable people to make sense of their social existence and draw on collective frameworks for interpretation. The battles underscore the divergent meanings of key concepts and differing views of landscape aesthetics and they bring to light the collective frameworks that maintain the divisions. An emphasis on these differences, on the emergence of shared subjectivities, offers more a complex understanding of the nuances that render "opaque structures visible" (Shore and Wright 1997: 17). Diversionary tactics and name calling, the open ended aesthetic projections of what does and does not belong, often distract us from the social and economic processes that are transforming the landscapes. This research explores how the power to define key planning concepts and the power to wield the concepts publicly transforms the physical, social and economic landscape.

## 5 Research Questions and Organization of the Dissertation

In order to capture the contestation and the complexity of the public planning debates that are tightly bound to the highly political, historical, and social value(s) of the Dutch Green Heart and the landscape in Chatham County, I delineated between several research components and their distinct research methods. Traditional ethnographic fieldwork often entails an in-depth study of a particular situation or site. Given the broad social and geographic scope of the research, effective ethno-historical research in the Green Heart required me to focus on one particular community. Oudewater, a medieval village in the center of the region was the focal point for the original research in the Netherlands. My fieldwork 2004 explored how farmers in the Green Heart respond to the spatial policy changes and growing infrastructural demands, and how they act upon their emotional or affective attachment to the landscape. By addressing particular social, historical, economic, and political realities, examine how farmers in the Green Heart initially responded to socio-economic demands such as fewer economic and physical restrictions. Likewise, Chatham County required me to focus more fully on planning issues surrounding one planned compact community. The emphasis on green building, natural public green spaces, and the ongoing debates over the land development made Briar Chapel an ideal focal point for the research. Since Briar Chapel was approved for development in 2005 and is in the first phase of development, I sought to grasp what residents, county commissioners, planners, and land developers thought about the "rural character" of the county and how they viewed Briar Chapel within this context.

Although the dissertation is comparative in nature and based on two distinct research projects, an emphasis is placed on the Chatham County research. The Green Heart acts as

contrasting case study and the majority of the analysis revolves around issues that pertain to Chatham County. As such, I focus predominantly on how individuals sought to define or re-define the "rural character" of Chatham County and the relationship between their views and the public plans for Briar Chapel. The first of the components I sought was to: 1) define what counts as "rural character" in Chatham County and what "rural" social, economic, and physical landscape elements citizens seek to preserve, import, or highlight in planning decisions; 2) examine who participates in the conception and creation of the public plans with regard to green space decisions in Chatham County more generally and Briar Chapel more specifically; and 3) explore the textual and visual documentation of the relationship between existing socio-historic landscape values in North Chatham alongside the landscape values presented by research participants or by Briar Chapel. The battles enveloping all three components as well as those that emerged from the Dutch Green Heart study are central structuring tropes for the dissertation.

Chapter 1 presents a brief synopsis of the "back story" and the methodological approach of the research. It briefly contextualizes the relevant scales offers insight into how the research was conducted. Chapter 2 examines theoretical beliefs and practices related to public planning and social life and highlights land use issues in Chatham County as well as the Dutch Green Heart. In particular, the chapter explores key concepts such as "rural character" and the socio-historic value of these concepts in everyday life. I seek to understand what the aesthetic landscape values are in Chatham County and how these ideals relate to past and present experiences. The conflict in Chatham County emerges within this socio-historic framework and as response to significant changes in everyday life in the region.

In juxtaposition to Chatham County, I also examine these theoretical beliefs in relation to the socio-historic context of the Dutch Green Heart.

In Chapter 3, I focus on what the land use plans entail in Chatham County and how the protest surrounding a proposed residential development spawned a revision of planning documents and increased citizen awareness of planning decisions. Active residents battled to position themselves vis-à-vis aesthetic and economic wants as the battle over controlling the future planning decisions in the county attempted to balance social, political, and most of all, economic needs. In particular, I explore how the aesthetic values and beliefs residents ascribed to the landscape take shape in the physical division in Chatham. The planning conflicts and larger social division in Chatham materialized both as an outgrowth of a socio-economic divide and a tangible feature of the county's social and physical landscape. The seemingly neutral aesthetic ideals and values ascribed to the landscape emerge as central tropes that intensify the division and underscore a new social imaginary. Chapter 4 examines how value-laden ideals enable residents to make sense of the planning debates and locate themselves within an interpretative framework. The language used acts as an explicit and implicit identity marker and enables people to express their ideals and beliefs while simultaneously reinforcing shared visions of the county and reinforcing the division. The shared beliefs, the share social imaginaries, intensify the division within the county and appeal to people whose aesthetic views of the social and physical landscape literally re-inscribe the county.

Chapter 5 examines the move by residents and farmers in the Dutch Green Heart to employ the landscape's status as *the* symbol for Dutch ingenuity and perseverance by branding it and marketing it. By focusing less on the national spatial planning demands and

re-defining their position within the landscape, farmers and residents sought to profit from the Green Heart as a logo and a brand. The Green Heart emerges as place to be consumed both aesthetically and recreationally. This chapter draws together key socio-historic trends in the Netherlands and frames them within the European Union context by addressing the relationship between the economic value or worth of a landscape and the non-quantifiable socio-cultural values intertwined in landscape politics.

# Chapter 1: The Back Stories and the Methodology

My interest in landscapes is most likely a result from a childhood spent staring out car windows as we drove along the sandy Mississippi Gulf Coast towards New Orleans and across high arched bridges and then long low ones that weaved through the swamps of Southwestern Louisiana. I sat silently fascinated by the subtle shift from patches of pine trees surrounded by sand to the giant live oaks that gracefully bowed as their long locks of moss swayed, to the cypress stumps lost in the murky waters and exposed by the interstate bridges built sometime before I was born. I looked for alligators and snakes, wondered how those trees ever grew in water, rolled down the window and took in the smell. Although I'm told I was always reading as a child and that it was a struggle to get me to look out the window, I remember endless hours of staring out the car window. I remember the smells of the Cyprus trees, the sounds of the pines, and most of all, the way live oaks captured my attention. I don't know which came first, my emotional attachment to particular landscapes or my acute awareness of my physical surroundings.

Regardless, this attachment and awareness is the driving force behind my research and a leading cause for my own self-inflicted academic alienation. Although the "postmodern" turn in the social sciences opened the doors for multi-vocal research dealing with emotional attachments to place, the research often does not capture the more sensual

attachments to spaces and places does exist. Research on the highly political and contested nature of these spaces and places is now readily available, but in my estimation the accounts miss the power and imagination. They miss the force behind the emotions and attachments that motivate people to take a stand or openly debate these issues. Moreover, research that frames how these emotional attachments function, as social and political tools, are relatively few in number. When people get angry about planning decisions or publicly protest a new development, it isn't just a political act or part of a social movement, nor is it all about feelings and emotions. Overemphasizing the emotional attachments or the actions of individuals or groups as larger features of a social movement neglects the middle ground that this research so desperately seeks. The connection between these two distinct areas of space and place research, the emotional or sensual attachments to particular landscapes and the social, cultural and political impact of these aesthetic attachments forms a starting point for this research. Despite the unquestionable nature and importance of these attachments as central features in social life and a key role in the socialization process for human societies, little time is spent exploring how these attachments and emotions emerge in the politics of everyday life. For years I have struggled to articulate the process whereby emotive and aesthetic attachments materialize or take form in public life.

## 1.1 Approaching the Green Heart

Although my research in the Netherlands began officially in 2001, my interest in Dutch landscapes, more particularly the Green Heart, dates back to July 1989. When I travelled to the Netherlands for my senior year abroad, I expected to see coffee shops, dikes, tulips, and red light districts, but I was unprepared for the landscape, the geometric paradise,

that I first saw from the airplane window. The neatly organized gently curved lines of houses, snaking canals, rectangular green plots framed by narrow, straight canals and followed by more rows of gently curved buildings. On the ground, the order and rationale of the place left me with a sense of wonder and fueled my growing attachment to the Dutch landscape. During my 10 years in the Netherlands, I desperately tried to take in the color, the shapes, and the sheer symmetrical spectacle that is the Netherlands, but I found it difficult to separate the aesthetic appeal of the Dutch landscape from the polder as a site of intense social and physical engineering. During the 1990s, politicians and planners argued about running the high-speed train through the Green Heart and protecting this rural landscape from social and environmental damage seemed of crucial, national importance.

I entered the research questioning why the Green Heart, located slightly west of the geographic center of the Netherlands, appeared throughout the 1990s in public discourse as the quintessential polder landscape. Was the affective and aesthetic attachment a result of the polders historical significance as the first large-scale water works project during the 16<sup>th</sup> century that reclaimed the Green Heart and allowed Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht to form permanent populations creating what is now known as the Randstad (Lambert 1985)? The abrupt physical difference between the industrialized Randstad and the agrarian Green Heart drew the attention of spatial planners and public policy makers during the 20<sup>th</sup> century for various reasons. Most notably following World War II, Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht emerged as the economic and social core of the nation and as a spatial obsession for professional urban planners and public policy makers. The memory of mass starvation during the 1944-45 Hunger Winter influenced the government's dual promotion during the 1950's of agricultural self-sufficiency in the Green Heart and an

industrial revival. Ensuring agricultural self-sufficiency meant protecting the Green Heart, the agrarian center closest to the industrial core, from urban sprawl and promoting more autonomy among farmers through increased subsidies and tax breaks. The Randstad's drastic population boom in the early 1960's, coupled with the scarcity of arable and habitable land, repeatedly brought the Green Heart into public discourse. The unwieldy population overflow in the Randstad threatened both the agricultural autonomy and environmental significance of the Green Heart. Spatial planners and policy makers struggled to alleviate the housing shortage due to urban growth while also maintaining the agrarian value of the Green Heart.

As an ex-patriot living in the Netherlands during the 1990s, what stood out to me most about the Green Heart debates was the undeniable fact that the "Green Heart" was no longer simply a "planning term" (VROM 1966). The Green Heart as a planning concept originated alongside the Randstad concept, the literal U-shaped ring of cities that through urban growth surround the Green Heart. Both concepts entered public policy discourse with the publication of the *Second Memorandum for Public Planning* in 1966 and Burke's book the *Greenheart Metropolis* (1966). Public planners as well as the general public embraced the Randstad as a practical everyday term that referenced the urban sprawl that accompanied the growth of the major cities, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and the Hague. Instantaneously, the Randstad entered everyday parlance, however, the Green Heart went largely unnoticed by the general public until the early 1990s and was used solely until that period as a spatial and economic planning concept. For me, the never-ending cry that the Green Heart is "fictional" (van Eeten and Roe 1994) belies the fact that the Green Heart was rooted as much to a physical reality as a social imaginary. Unlike the Randstad, which remains difficult to translate in English or other languages, the Green Heart possesses both a metaphorical and

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literal power. While contestation over the Randstad centered on the comical translation of a "Rim City", the debates over the Green Heart questioned the socio-historic, physical, and aesthetic value of the landscape. Moreover, the proposal in planning documents to re-conceptualize the Randstad as the "Delta Metropolis" further underscore the search for a concept that encapsulates the urban growth in visual, metaphoric, and internationally translatable terms. Although the Randstad as a conceptual term made sense to the Dutch, it lacked the emotive, aesthetic power of the phrase "Groene Hart" to capture the public imagination. To reiterate, what stood out to me was how the concept through the contestation and prolonged parliamentary debate became *the* heart of the nation that united people, polity and place.

My intense and longstanding experience as a resident of the Randstad living on the edge of the Green Heart for a decade deeply informed my methodological approach to the research. My longitudinal grasp of the issues and familiarity with the language, the place, and the people enabled me to dive quickly and efficiently into the research. With a limited amount of time available for ethnographic fieldwork, I spent 4 months participating, observing, and interviewing planners, advocates, farmers, and inhabitants of the Green Heart as well as collecting relevant social and historical documents. My goal to return in order to conduct extended fieldwork, however, never materialized and I found myself developing a second research project closer to "home". With a continued interest in landscape issues and aesthetic attachments, I began following the intense local debates in Chatham County. Vocal residents actively argued over a large-scale mix use land development with county commissioners, planners, and eager land developers. From these debates emerged plans for a

2,500 mixed-use compact community with over 900 acres of open public green space and over 24 miles of biking and walking trails.

## 1.2 Enter Chatham County

Chatham County is a continuous site of public debate as residents, politicians, land developers, and environmentalists battle over the future direction and appearance of development in the county. With its close proximity to Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, and Research Triangle Park, one of the largest research parks in the nation, Chatham County became a "natural" bedroom community for people working in the Triangle during the 1990s. With relatively cheap land prices and the economic boom of the 1990's, Chatham County experienced a 39% population increase between 1990 and the 2009 as compared to the relatively mild 16% population increase from 1980-1990[5]. Although Northeastern Chatham County has experienced the most drastic population boom, the entire county has experienced unprecedented growth and a noticeable shift in the social and economic demographics (Figure 2: Map of Chatham County page 12). These sudden social, economic, and demographic shifts resulted in a clearly divided county and contentious public planning debates.

Despite the population surge, Chatham County remains relatively rural with approximately 85 people per square mile, but borders four counties with population densities that range from 300 to 850 people per square mile[6]. Nonetheless, population projections for Chatham County for 2020 predict a steady increase of approximately 16% that almost

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5 Population data taken from the U.S. Census Bureau (2000-2009), the North Carolina State Data Center (1990-2009), and the North Carolina Digital Collections (1980).

6 Information on the population per square mile was taken from the 2000 and 2011 US Census information.

appears at odds with the often-rancorous discourse surrounding public planning decisions in the county. Discourse suggests a more ominous situation. Many present the county as a timeless, rural environment, and picturesque natural surrounding threatened by rampant land development and an impending population explosion. While others argue the economic well-being of the county is at stake and that land developments would increase business opportunities for the ailing county and revive the tax base. Yet, the debate is not quite as clear-cut as pro-development versus anti-development rhetoric may suggest. Delineating between those for the conservation of Chatham's natural surroundings does not in any way imply that conservationist are not working hand in hand with land developers or public officials favoring land development. The call to maintain Chatham's "rural character" presented in public planning documents and utilized by various community organizations brings into question what or whose "rural character" they seek to preserve. Factions within Chatham have attempted over the past decade to conserve the landscape's aesthetic appeal and traditional agrarian economic base by creating protected open green spaces within new compact communities and by implementing restrictive land development policies throughout the county. Others have pursued land development as an avenue for economic growth and a way to help longstanding as well as lower income residents meet their needs.

In this research, I examine how aesthetic beliefs and values about the landscape potentially drive key public planning decisions. Specifically, the research explores how the process of public green space decision-making in North Chatham County, North Carolina upholds the aesthetic privileging of particular landscape ideals. The research investigates the impact of this privileging on planning decisions as well as on the physical appearance, social composition, and economic functioning of the region on the whole. While this research

explicitly explores particularities related to Chatham County, it also more generally addresses the intersection of active public participation in regional or countywide planning decisions, landscape aesthetics, and the politics of public space issues in the United States as a whole. The power of this research rests in its comparative value, rather than as simply a case study. For this reason, the research explores numerous very material practices and concerns in Chatham County that are equally as relevant to traditionally rural communities facing New Urban growth across the United States. New Urbanism, as a highly calculated planning movement, creates communities or "places" that emphasize a diversity of building styles, forms, and mixed uses, while creating highly interconnected and walkable communities. Public spaces and public green spaces are central to the New Urbanist ideologies. In order to address the growing emphasis in new mixed-use communities on the "green" appearance, I examine how landscape ideals or values reflect both existing and newly imported socio-historic values and beliefs.

These values play a role in economic and political matters and are anything but *a*political. By clearly delineating what and whose beliefs or values emerge in planning decisions, I hope to better assess the qualitative impact the decision-making process has on the physical as well as socio-economic landscape. It is my contention that landscape ideals often elicit powerful emotive responses. These responses are embedded in socio-historic beliefs and practices and may reflect deeply ingrained class and race based components. The research offers insight into how active political participation privileges particular beliefs through public planning decisions. Namely, the incorporation of public green spaces privileges certain aesthetic ideals and changes the physical, social, and economic landscape of a region. More specifically, the research emphasizes how local responses in traditionally

rural areas facing suburban sprawl from cities with large universities or research related institutions or corporations may face changes that highlight the *importation* of landscape ideals or social imaginaries from beyond the local or regional level.

When residents in Northeastern Chatham County, North Carolina demand that public planners and elected officials preserve the rural "form and function" of the landscape, one must specifically question "which" rural "form and function" they seek to conserve. Many city and regional planners promote New Urbanist projects as a panacea for suburban sprawl. Mixed-use compact communities such as Briar Chapel, for example, strictly control land use within the developments through restrictive codes and ordinances and offer the users an abundance of public green space. These public green spaces act as both a substitute for city and countywide recreational spaces and as buffer zones or green barriers between the new developments and the surrounding area. The creation of public green spaces and the aesthetic privileging of these landscapes is neither benign nor *a*political. This research, as a case study, examines the highly political and contentious nature of landscapes and landscape values; it examines who *imagines* these spaces and how these *imaginaries* emerge in public debates. Through the material analysis of public planning discourse, this research explores how aesthetic beliefs and values about the landscape potentially drive key public planning decisions. This research offers insight into how access to and control of public green spaces impacts the physical appearance, social composition, and economic functioning of the region on the whole. By examining what constitutes "public" green space as well as who the "public" is that promotes the creation of these green spaces, this research foregrounds the multiple ways that aesthetic beliefs, practices, and ideals change the rural "form and function" they seek to preserve.

## 1.3 Into the Thick of Things

For a period of 18 months prior to my first interview in Chatham County, I closely examined planning documents, researched and collected newspaper articles, op-ed stories, countywide publications that discussed land use planning in Chatham or Briar Chapel as well as followed the daily listserv messages from the Chatham Chatlist and the relevant posts on the Chatham County Online Bulletin Board. I had informally observed numerous events, talked with people as I observed and participated in as many Chatham based activities. I poured over angry post after angry post in this rather virtual environment and from a so-called objective distance. After several false starts, I finally pushed forward and began contacting people from my long wash list of names about participating in the research project. I quickly arranged a series of 15 interviews with several past and present county commissioners, the Chatham Planning Department, real-estate developers, outspoken citizens who wrote op-ed pieces or people who took part in activist organizations. Things were rolling along, until suddenly the summer doldrums hit and I was unable to schedule interviews or find willing participants. I decided to post my institutionally approved recruitment flyer on the Chatham Chatlist in an attempt to recruit interested research participants. The Chatlist, a listserv that offers people the chance to "experience the world of Chatham, NC", is sent to members on a daily basis and consists of posts bearing from questions about plumbing or plumbers to ongoing debates about central social issues in the county. Within minutes of posting my recruitment flyer to the Chatlist, numerous interested participants began contacting me. In the two to three weeks following the post, I interviewed 1-2 people a day and while the interviews were meant to last a half hour, none were shorter than an hour. I found myself once again overwhelmed with scheduling interviews,

interviewing, taking notes, and constantly traveling from one end of Chatham County to the other.

Although I followed the Chatlist during this period, I had neglected to read the most recent posts on the Chatham County Online Bulletin Board Service (CCOBBS). Key discussions from the bulletin board are regularly sent over the Chatlist, summarizing the main discussion threads. When things finally tapered off, I once again started sifting through past bulletin board posts. I was delighted when my keyword search for "rural character" showed several posts in a recent thread. I was less excited when I realized that my recruitment flyer was the reason "rural character" suddenly appeared in multiple recent posts. Under a forum entitled "Is There Anything Silly That Annoys You?"[7], a regular CCOBBS contributor pasted the contents of my entire flyer. In response to a post where an individual complained about useless land use plans and golf courses, another individual alerted the poster to my research and suggested that he call me and "rant on".

No other references were made to my research project, but I had an uneasy feeling about the placement of the research information, my positioning vis-à-vis the issues, and the responses I garnered from Chatlist members when I first posted my recruitment flyer. While I considered the response to my Chatlist request in positive terms, my uneasiness led me to reassess all of the e-mail responses I received as a result of the Chatlist. I was aware that the people opposing land development plans such as Briar Chapel and quite vocal, but hadn't quite heard from outspoken residents who were either for the developments were less concerned about the increase in land developments. What struck me for quite some time was that people were actually defining their positions on the issues in paradoxical terms. A large number of people actively affiliated themselves with groups that opposed recent land

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[7] CCOBBS posted on June 24 2009.

development plans and they publicly supported this cause. They expressed concern for the future of Chatham as a community and the socio-economic well-being of the region. Many people, however, appeared more outspoken about their opposition to the people or ideals upheld by those who sought to restrict land development then they were about public planning issues.

The bulletin board and the Chatlist are often filled with rancorous rhetoric and county land use plans are a lightning rod for the hostile online attacks. The bulletin board and Chatlist are central sites of public debate and the often invisible or hidden presence of the contributors allows for a level of open and fearless exchange among members. Most recently under pseudonyms such as "Casper the Friendly Ghost", "Ms. Piggy", and "Mr. Green", residents express their frustration with politics, the economy, land use planning, and everyday life. There is no true moderator, however, the members are active monitors and unwelcome or excessively aggressive posts are met with immediate responses. The Chatlist and CCOBBS founder, who also runs the Chatham Journal a countywide online publication that publicizes community events and chronicles public notices, gathers Chatlist submissions and forwards them to members as a daily journal digest. Rarely does he comment on the quality or content of the messages; rather, he simply passes the unedited messages onto the listserv. Fearful of inserting myself into this environment, my participation was quite passive until I submitted my recruitment flyer.

Despite this one particular incident, my participation and research remained under the radar. Keenly aware of positioning myself, or rather the possibility of mis-aligning myself, allowed me to approach the debates in terms of displaced anxiety. Soon after discovering this particular CCOBBS thread, I was struck by a parallel when discussing the place of invasive

plant species such as kudzu and wisteria in the Southern landscape. Invasive plant species such as kudzu, originally planted by government agencies to control soil erosion, quickly spread when growth was left unrestricted (Kirby 2006: 112). Recognized as harmful, the xenophobic rhetoric about invasive plant species corresponds to the deeply divisive and paradoxical terms used to present opposing stances on land use debates. The need to keep these "newcomer" species out and the fear of being outnumbered and overrun by rampant land developments mirrored the economic and social fears presented by all sides of the debate on public forums and in interviews. This displaced anxiety often contradicts the proposed logic and fosters a divide that distracts and diverts attention away from the larger issues at hand. On one hand, the newcomers attracted to the region because of the natural charm and lower house prices are also the ones who actively debated over the plans for the proposed compact community Briar Chapel. Likewise, the so called good ol' boys or long time residents who vehemently complain about the influx of "newcomers" are also the ones who support the growth of large land developments that attract more newcomers. The anxiety provoking parallels and the paradoxical presentation made it clear to me that the debate wasn't just about taking sides. It led me back to my earlier research in the Netherlands and to research questions that underscored the intertwined nature of the meanings, aesthetic values and beliefs, and the emotive attachment to the landscape.

## 1.4 Methodology

The research consisted of two distinct ethnographic experiences between May 2004 and May 2008 and extensive archival research for both sites. In the Dutch Green Heart, the fieldwork included 4 months of ethnographic research primarily in Oudewater. During the

fieldwork, 22 separate interviews ranging in length between 30 minutes to 3 hours took place with farmers, advocates, and both governmental and non-profit organizations actively engaged in Green Heart issues.  In addition, I attended meetings, events, and various gatherings when possible including weeklong activities promoting farm life and awareness in the Netherlands as well as two pivotal Green Heart forums. During all of these events and gatherings, I actively participated and informally spoke to other participants about the research and their views on the issues. With an emphasis on public discourse, I collected an extensive number of books, articles, brochures, maps, and miscellaneous items published about the Green Heart between 1945 and 2008.

Unlike the fieldwork in the Netherlands, my research in Chatham centered on a combination of interviews and discursive analysis. Although I spent a great deal of time participating and observing activities and events in the region and attended several public forums and meetings, the bulk of my research relied on intense interviews with 27 active participants in the land use planning debates. Some interviews lasted 45 minutes to an hour, but the vast majority of the interviews ranged between 2-3 hours. In addition, I followed all online news and blog sources and poured over numerous newspaper articles, journal articles, and public information websites related to Chatham County and land use planning in Chatham as well as North Carolina more generally. Despite the extensive collection of documents and rich nature of the interviews, I feel that I have only just begun my research on this topic. What follows is a glimpse into the central patterns that emerged through my analysis of the documents, interviews, notes and planning documents

# Chapter 2: Theory, Context, and Planning Conflicts in Chatham County

Kevin: "…that was one of the issues when I was hired in 1979. It was how do you preserve the agricultural *character* of the county. Farmland preservation was very high on the list and here we are 30 years later and it is still talked about as preserving the rural character. In a strategic plan it was talked about in "form" and "function" and not just what it looks like. How do you preserve it so that agricultural communities can still function, which they are supposed to support? You do have the Seed and Feed Store and the Tractor Supply store, but it's kind of like a Walt Disney world façade of a farm and you still have all this other stuff that is still here. So that was talked about [in 1979] but not with the *look* that it has now."

John: "…I think that what people's perception of rural character is and what they want preserved versus what the reality of what rural character is, are vastly different… I think that what has changed is we have four lane roads, utilities, and people want as Keith said that "Walt Disney approach". They want to preserve what they think is a farm and Fearrington Village is the prime example of what a lot of people think is rural. Preserving the rural character now, it is really just a façade." [8]

Within the first 5 minutes of an interview with two Chatham County planners, I was

told in no uncertain terms that the battle to preserve the rural character of Chatham County

was just a façade. They both explained from quite different standpoints that preserving the

"rural character" in Chatham was nothing new, but that the emphasis on the "look" of the

landscape and not the rural form or function of said was quite recent. In their own words,

preserving the rural character wasn't about maintaining farms or farmland as such. They both

commented on the "Walt Disney approach" to landscape preservation wherein emphasis is

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[8] The interview with the Chatham County planners took place on 06/10/09 in Pittsboro, NC. Pseudonyms are used throughout this research.

placed on an imagined rural ideal versus the reality of what rural character is. The fact that the working farm landscape isn't necessarily attractive and may involve large equipment, noise from heavy equipment and unpleasant smells is often in direct conflict with what new landowners and residents in the area want or expect. Many farms in the area have been recognized as a part of a voluntary agricultural district, which means that "notes" are put up for developments that state you are within a certain distance of farming and farm activities.[9] These notes are necessary in order to avoid nuisance complaints from residents who are annoyed with features such as tractors slowing down traffic, making noise early in the morning, and odors from the farms. The sudden influx of residents from the major cities surrounding Chatham County who are seeking both affordable housing and a rural setting has made the preservation of the "rural character" almost counterintuitive. How do you preserve the rural character and offer adequate housing options that meet the needs and demands of the surrounding population? Can you preserve the "rural character" and support the boom in the population growth?

As the planners in Chatham County pointed out, it isn't as much about preserving the agricultural communities anymore as it is about preserving a particular "look" or aesthetic value of the landscape. The local farmer in the Dutch Green Heart commented on a nearly identical process that had overtaken the region. Preserved for its agricultural benefits, the Dutch Green Heart now restricts farming activities during particular times of the day and specific days of the week. Tractors and farm equipment are not allowed to on many secondary roads that recreational bicyclists or visitors to the region use during the weekend or holidays. In fact, some areas restrict the specific times that tractors and farm equipment may be used so that residents in the area are not bothered when they return home from work.

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[9] Interview on 06/10/09 in Pittsboro, NC.

Although Chatham attracts numerous bicyclists and people seeking outdoor recreational activities, they do not face the extreme impositions as found in the Dutch Green Heart. Called the "uitlaatplaats" or the backyard for 6 million Randstad residents, the Green Heart more noticeably presents the issues inherent to cultural heritage preservation movements versus the environmental or ecological restrictions placed on Chatham County.

Subtle shifts in the meaning or use of certain concepts in planning documents must be examined within the social and historical context of each site. Evident in my research in both Chatham County and the Dutch Green Heart are the overwhelmingly intertwined way that people negotiate and position themselves vis-à-vis the landscape and battles over the landscape. In Chatham, we see a movement similar to movements found across the United States and our upheld through New Urbanist plans and land developments. These New Ubanist plans for walkable, compact communities emerge within the social landscape. They are not simply the reflections of individual investors or land developers, nor do they all face the same public planning scrutiny. The debates over these land developments, these contested conflicts, directly reflect the social and historical relationship that individuals have to the landscape as well as the way they envision or imagine the landscape. The search for "rural character" in this situation does not necessarily reflect the original push in 1979 in Chatham to preserve the rural and agricultural character of the region. Although both the Dutch Green Heart and Chatham County face similar urban growth pressure as the surrounding cities spread into the adjacent rural communities, the outcomes are quite different. Both cases, however, have unique mitigating social and historical factors that must first be explored within a theoretical framework.

Theoretically, I approach landscape research as a way to examine sites the relationships between people, polity, and place and seek to move away from landscape research that privileges the ecological nature of the land over the social, economic, and political value of the land. This research emphasizes not only how people feel about the land and their environment, but also how people imagine their surroundings and situates themselves within these surroundings. Inherent to this approach is the understanding that their view or imagining of the landscape reflects their position, beliefs, and social values. As an anthropologist, I find it impossible to study cultural practices and beliefs without examining the social and physical surroundings of the people. For me, landscapes are social spaces that are defined by and through cultural practices as much as they define and elicit cultural practices. In other words, landscapes are ubiquitous and presuppose anthropological notions of culture. Yet landscape research in anthropology remained relatively unproblematized until a mid-nineties flourish of landscape publications. These publications drew from various disciplines and presented a much more complex and intertwined view of landscapes. There is no literal definition of the concept landscape that captures what it means in the lives of people. The words, land and -scape, highlight the land as a social and physical place or site as well as the sensual understandings and practices of the place. In this research, I present landscapes as just that, as sites that mix social and sensory experiences and that are inherently meaningful in the lives of those who inhabit it. In particular, I emphasize on a theoretical level how the intertwined relationship between landscape aesthetics and urban development as *a* politics of landscapes (Zukin 1993; Mitchell 2003; Duncan & Duncan 2004; Low, Taplin & Scheld 2005). A politics of landscapes reflect the complex relationship that people have with these places and the social beliefs and values they hold about the places

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and their position *with*in the landscape. It also incorporates a discussion on the larger structural forces at work. In order to make sense of the issues and identify the planning conflict; we must examine the historical antecedents, the specific landscape values and beliefs in relation to each site as well as the theoretical frameworks at play.

## 2.1 New Urbanist Planning: Avoiding Junkyards and Strip Malls

> Chatham County will be a place that cooperatively controls its own destiny to assure the state of well-being desired by all of our people, while proudly preserving diverse cultural heritages and the County's rural character.
> -- Vision prepared by the Strategic Plan Development Committee and signed by the five governing boards in the County. (CCLCUDP 2005: 1)

When public planning documents in Chatham County, North Carolina call to preserve the rural "form and function" of the landscape, one must immediately question "which" rural "form and function" they seek to maintain. While the rural form and function are listed broadly as "the landscape, agriculture, and home-based businesses" a great deal of room is left for interpretation (CCLCUDP 2005: 1,11,16). Most notably questions arise as to who determines the form or the look of the landscape? What is meant by agriculture or home-based businesses? How does the traditional form and function merge with newer visions from the shifting population demographics? In other words, how do aesthetic differences in taste, changing economic needs, wants, and social demands influence the "form and function" of Chatham County? The seemingly intuitive definitions and open-ended language in the planning documents make this particularly pertinent questions. Given the social and economic developments in Chatham as well as the overall region over the last 40 years, one must question whether the "rural character" is being preserved or actually re-purposed.

The form, the "look of the landscape", and the function, the "activities it [landscape] supports", are defined in Chatham's land use development plan in relation to the "attitude and lifestyle of the people who live" in the region (CCLCUDP 2005: 16). The traditional

form and function, in other words, should maintain "agricultural areas" and "natural areas" as well as preserve "scenic and historic landscapes" and facilitate new residential developments that fit into the rural surroundings (CCLCUDP 2005: 16). These goals enable the county to preserve a semblance of the agricultural form and function and the aesthetic appeal while offering it the flexibility to transform the landscape as the county grows. The questions, however, of "who" determines what fits into the landscape, what is scenic, natural or how agriculture is defined is not truly addressed in the document. In fact, the planning document advises that the "rural character" reflect the views, actions, and beliefs of the residents. Although this ideal is noble, the shifting demographic make-up of the county opens the door to the importation of *new* aesthetic and economic sensibilities. The recent population growth easily slants the balance of power within the county and makes access and knowledge of public decision-making processes a central concern in planning debates. This in turn allows new or different approaches and views of what it means to protect the "form and function" of Chatham County to potentially set the planning agenda.

The open-ended planning documents (CCFLPPO 2001; CCLUDP 2005; CCO 2004) mirror larger movements within city and regional planning that promote "citizen participation" (Brody 2003; Brooks 2002; Fainstein 2005) and New Urbanist projects as a panacea for suburban sprawl (Beatley and Manning 1997; CNU Charter 2001; Katz 1999; Meredith 2003). The promotion of citizen feedback began in the 1960s with federal demands that citizens have input in federally funded planning projects (Brooks 2002: 146), however, the explosion of grass roots activism in the 1980s and 1990s has considerably changed the dimension of citizen participation. Likewise, the increasing use of the internet to disseminate information, alert interested citizens, and offer a forum for public debate has changed the intensity and nature of citizen participation (Goodspeed 2008). The potential benefits of this

"e-government" often collide with questionable "goodwill" practices and are also plagued by access issues that reflect social and economic divisions. The ability to receive or find information requires access to costly technology and internet services and knowledge of "how" and "where" to find the information. Furthermore, public participation in the planning process generally emphasizes the negative views and experiences in opposition to a plan or idea (Brooks 2003: 146; Irvin and Stansbury 2004: 59). These participatory concerns make consensus possibly quite difficult and create the appearance of a "loaded agenda" or emphasize the dissatisfaction about the decision making process (Irvin and Stansbury 2004: 59-60). Since people actively engage in the issues when they perceive a problem, citizen participation and public forums revolve around the dramatization of dissatisfaction and negative perceptions of public plans. Coupled with the New Urbanist push to rethink the physical planning approaches and outcomes as well as the public policy processes and practices (CNU Charter 2001) public participation in the planning process offers unique opportunities for both community building as well as community division.

Dedicated to "reclaiming" urban and rural spaces through "participatory" planning processes, New Urbanism extinguishes sprawl through the creation and re-definition of empty spaces and places (CNU Charter 2001: 1). In theory, New Urbanist plans seek to *build* community by creating livable and living social places (Moe and Wilkie 1997: 35) and the proposed Compact Community Ordinance in Chatham drew specifically on the tenets of New Urbanism. The mixed-use compact communities, for example, strictly control land use within the developments through restrictive codes and ordinances and offer the users an abundance of social spaces including recreational and aesthetic green space. The compact communities offer residents all the amenities of a picturesque "village life" as well as thoughtfully

considered economic, social, and environmentally sustainable comforts. Instead of developing a street or neighborhood, compact community developments create an orchestrated social scene that is both a substitute for the city and countryside. In particular, the creation of public green spaces within and surrounding the compact communities act as buffer zones or green barriers between the new developments and the outside world. Likewise, they offer green countywide recreational spaces and preserve the "rural" look of the area. Plans for compact communities with an emphasis on "public" and green privilege present the appearance of a rural form and a rural function.

With the increasing pressure from population growth in Chatham County and the publication of public planning documents promoting the protection of the "rural character", it should be no surprise that increasingly larger and more contentious debates arise with regard to potential residential developments. A sudden change in county commissioners and the zealous approval of numerous residential developments by these new County commissioners in the late 1990s and early 2000's brought the issues to a head. Disgruntled residents, namely a group of people living Fearrington Village, began openly questioning the process of public planning and questioned the proposed development that later became Briar Chapel. RB Fitch, who developed Fearrington Village in the late 1970s, initiated a discussion between politically like-minded residents in his development because Briar Chapel directly threatened the pristine and peaceful nature of his development. This group, which later became the Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities (CCEC) took a personal vested interest in the issue as Briar Chapel would physically impede on parts of Fearrington village, but more importantly, the large-scale proposed residential developments would possibly destroy the

rustic environment that attracted them to the region.[10]

From the perspective of these disgruntled residents, this Board of Commissioners, including Bunky Morgan, "never saw a development that they didn't like".[11] Having replaced an environmentally conscious County Commissioner who fully supported "slow growth" planning policies, Bunky Morgan and his Board of Commissioners actively pursued and approved 62 (check exact number) residential developments in a two-year period. Described in interviews as a commissioner "who never saw a development he didn't like", Bunky Morgan's approach was viewed by many as promoting "unabated" growth that suited the needs of developers versus the needs of the citizens.[12] With an eye on stimulating the economy and cashing in on the housing boom, Chatham faced potentially losing its rural flair and ironically many of the "newcomers" pouring into the area over the last 30 years were the people who sought to limit or slow down the possible damage from unrestricted growth. As one founding member of the CCEC stated:

> Chatham can grow, that is critical for North Chatham… and we can do it with appropriate guidelines. There is no reason if a developer wants to come in and build whatever, that he should dictate how we grow. The citizens should dictate it! When I first came down, Fearrington was unique and he [RB Fitch] has done a pretty good job of retaining a certain austerity as opposed to some of the other developments.[13]

The notion that citizen input is essential to healthy growth in the county continually emerged during discussions with residents. The development of the county shouldn't emerge organically from the needs and desires of land developers; rather land developers should be held accountable to the citizens and the county. It is precisely this belief that resulted in the

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[10] Interviews on 05/26/09 05/28/09 with founding members of the CCEC brought this to light.

[11] Interview on 05/26/09 at the Belted Galloway in Fearrington Village.

[12] Interview with a current Chatham County Commissioner at the Pittsboro General Store on 06/11/09.

[13] Interview on 05/26/09 at the Belted Galloway in Fearrington Village.

revamping of the Chatham County Land Conservation and Use Development Plan (2005) and the Compact Community Ordinance (2004).

On one hand the new regulations and guidelines, predicated upon a system of "citizen participation", and the desire to maintain the "rural character" of the county allowed what one person referred to as a "Fearrington-centric" view of development.[14] As the earlier quote attests, Fearrington Village maintains a certain "austerity" and those actively participating in the debates argue that oversight is necessary and developers should not determine the "form and function" of the county. While the founding members of the CCEC all resided within Fearrington Village and fought fiercely for citizen oversight, they also ironically resided in the "original" mixed use New Urbanist community in Chatham County. From this perspective, the desire to create more cohesive and aesthetically appealing land developments clearly reflects social and economic ideals and values as well as class-based privileges. Adequate zoning helps avoid a haphazard juxtaposition of buildings or buildings that sprawl across the landscape and attest to an organic, unplanned growth. Keeping up a rural façade and maintaining a cohesive appearance entails not only a privileging of aesthetic tastes, but codifying this taste in planning rules and guidelines.

Nowhere was this idea more evident than in discussions with interviewees about the Major Corridor Ordinance (2009) and the detailed presentation in the planning document of what does and doesn't belong in the landscape. On three separate occasions and with three different people a single example was given that captured the emotionally charged nature of the aesthetic divide. When discussing the level of detail incorporated in the document, a current county commissioner as well as a member of the Appearance Committee and CCEC, repeated how the Major Corridor Ordinance would hopefully prevent businesses from

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[14] Interview at the home of the interviewee in Northeastern Chatham on 06/29/09.

looking like Allen and Son Bar-B-Que located on 15-501 between Cole Park Plaza and Pittsboro. Both maintained that the barbeque restaurant, while possessing an iconic position in the region for it's down home simplicity and charm, was an example of poor planning with its disheveled appearance.[15] The goal, as I was told was to "create new ordinances, update our ordinances because we that our ordinances were deficient" and this zoning deficiency inhibits developers and businesses from making "a proper choice that betters the environment."[16] Allen & Sons, while a physical and social landmark, presented several challenges and a view of the landscape that polarized. A county planner also relayed how Allen & Son was flaunted as an example of an "anything but" place by some residents and active committee members. The "anything but" scenario was a call for appearance standards that were "anything but" the example given. The planner immediately explained how he questioned what is meant when people propose "appearance standards" that are supposed to preserve the "traditional" look and feel of Chatham County, but fail to identify iconic architectural places or features that embody the "traditional form and function" of the region.



FIGURE 3: (A-Left) Allen & Son Bar-B-Que, an architectural standards and the appearance many seek to (Author's personal image). (B-Right) Image of Jesse Fearrington's house, silo, and barn circa 1950s, which are now the Fearrington House Restaurant and iconic silo and barn in Fearrington Village (Courtesy of Fearrington Village).

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[15]  Interview on 07/16/09 and 05/28/09 at the homes of the interviewees in Northeastern Chatham County.

[16] Interview at the Belted Galloway in Fearrington Village on  05/26/09.

Having passed the restaurant almost every trip through Chatham County, I was struck by my personal preference for this wood frame building with wide awnings and very little parking. To me, it seemed to blend into the surroundings. This interview quickly turned to the crux of the argument as another planner chimed in that they, the active citizens engaging in public planning debates and who proposed appearance standards, "don't want gas stations to look like gas stations" and he explained, they don't need or appreciate junkyards anymore[17]. It is this southern "junkyard landscape" that vacillates between utilitarian needs and quaint or ramshackle appearances. The "junkyard landscape" is a notable presence in places such as Chatham County where restrictive zoning is relatively recent and landowners feel they should be able to "do what they want on their land" without unnecessary interference. Junkyards, much like the clusters of family homes and businesses set on one piece of property, have lost their utility in many southern landscapes and the haphazard location of clustered family properties or junkyards is viewed by planners and residents as problematic.

The southern "junkyard landscape" or working landscape is a utilitarian landscape with a mix of buildings, equipment, and gardens and it is a powerful symbol. In my experience, the clusters of houses, barns, sheds, cars, farm equipment and outbuildings that rise and mark a space as an immediately recognizable southern landscape. While searching for images of a traditional working landscape, what I considered an example of this southern junkyard landscape, I found an image of Jesse Fearrington's house, silo and barn (FIGURE 2). The image displays a "big house" surrounded by a cluster of other buildings with the large barn and silo to the right and a large plowed field surrounded by a barbed wire fence. In my minds eye, I envision a typical overflowing flowering garden at the front of the big house as well as

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[17] Interview with Chatham County planners on 06/10/09 in Pittsboro, NC.

a small kitchen garden. Southern gardens with winding paths, clusters of wild flowers and an asymmetrical design, much like the junkyard landscape, are works in progress and often reflect a working or utilitarian landscape. Littered yards with old equipment and trucks, and miscellaneous outbuildings and multiple dwellings, however, confound those attempting to preserve the rural character and defy the clear logic of newly implemented "appearance standards" (Chatham County Design Guidelines 1999).

The chaotic nature of the "junkyard landscape", such as the Fearrington farm, makes it difficult for the uninitiated to appreciate the function and form of these cluttered spaces. Nonetheless, a re-imagining of Jesse Fearrington's house, silo, and barn have turned it into one of the most distinctive and affluent land developments in Chatham County. Strict planning regulations seek to limit the number of these traditional built environments and render this particular form and function useless or worthless within the social and economic parameters of the county. Instead, the preference is for clearly organized village style developments or communities. While it may appear rather obvious that many people don't want to live adjacent to a working landscape or that there are sound environmental reasons why buildings being build should be monitored, much attention is given in Chatham zoning ordinances to severely limiting the number of residential dwellings permitted on a single lot (Zoning Ordinance 2006: 11-12). Officially, only one principal residential dwelling is permitted on a single lot, with two notable exceptions. If one of the residential dwellings is a manufactured home and if the lot is larger than 10 acres, then more than one residential dwelling is permitted (Zoning Ordinance 2006: 12). Essentially, as long as the lot is considered large enough, 10+ acres, or the dwelling is not permanent in nature, permission may be granted to build another residence for a family member but the land may not be

subdivided or deeded The symbolic nature and utility of a "junkyard landscape" is lost on those who only see the chaos and fail to see the social and cultural value of this aesthetics. Small family farms or family property with multiple independent dwellings located in close proximity to one another were frequent features of farm life or reflective of life in the south and rural life more generally.

The organic and unplanned growth of this junkyard or working landscape emerges, as one can easily imagine, as families grow, buildings are constructed to meet a need or demand, pragmatic equipment and objects are used until they fall into disrepair, and those buildings are repurposed or fall prey to the elements. You don't have to drive far or look hard for this pragmatic everyday landscape in the rural United States, the lived space, farmed and inhabited, dwelled upon by generations and used and sold properties dot the countryside. Although the appearance of the buildings and environment differ greatly from region to region, versions of this working landscape are easily identifiable and ever present. In my mind, this type of landscape is the epitome of a unique rural character replete with farm stores, vacant buildings, churches with signs, and gas stations with garages that still have an office, and not a store or fast food restaurant. It is the "space at the side of the road" that reflects the movements, events, and materializes in the imaginations and it is landscape and place experienced and imagined not as a "straight line of progress but as a flash of unforgettable images" (Stewart 1996: 15-16). As with Stewart's research in Appalachia, this rural junkyard landscape collects objects and decay, and it embodies a way of being, doing, and seeing spaces that defy an idealized rural aesthetics.

To be clear, this is not the rural character that planners in the last 20 years partially describe in their documents, or what newcomers or residents seek to preserve in Chatham.

Although participants in this research often reflected on the ideological nature of the public planning debates as well as their individual ideological beliefs, most did not reflect how these ideological stances either weaken or strengthen the currency of particular spaces or landscapes. In other words, the approach to the preservation of the rural character disconnected the true "material histories" by sweeping aside the chaotic nature of the utilitarian junkyard or working landscape from the potentially "untenable idealism" of conflicting and even compatible ideological beliefs and views (Mitchell 1996: 5). The disdain for cluttered landscapes appears in debates as a natural and neutral outcome of logically assessed plans that are detached from a calculated or tactical desire embedded in the social conflict. Wishes and desires, personal aesthetic preferences all seemingly fade away because the attachment to the physical place has no *currency* when it is viewed separately from the landscapes. Landscapes represent the "architecture of social class, race, and gender imposed by powerful social institutions" but are not simply reflections of hegemonic powers or the dominant class ideologies (Zukin 1991: 19).

A desire often expressed by those opposing unfettered or unzoned developments was to avoid monotonous and unappealing "strip malls" from lining the major corridors in Chatham County. The 15-501 corridor in Durham and 64 entering Siler City were offered as aesthetically unappetizing examples of what the CCEC and Chatham Coalition sought to avoid. The Major Corridor Task Force presented their plans to the public in August 2009 and pushed for the creation of "nodes" at central intersections where commercial and retail developments would grow. Much like the New Urbanist residential developments these nodes would offer walkable and aesthetically cohesive designs set back from the road as to minimize their visual impact. In addition, the plans call for ample foliage surrounding the

nodes, scaled back signage, and facades that blend well into the surrounding environment. When newspaper articles with headlines such as "Chatham Tries to Avoid Strip Mall Littered Future" in the Durham Herald Sun and the Raleigh News and Observer, people immediately began questioning the effect these regulations would have on property owners (CCOBBS)[18]. One post suggested that by limiting commercial developments to already identified nodes would have devastating financial consequences for farming families who own land along the major thoroughfares. The poster argues that land ownership as the primary investment for many family farmers, this approach to development would "essentially wipe out from 50%-75 of their investment by greatly reducing how their land may be used" (CCOBBS). Others pass the blame freely directing the anger at the liberal planning task force with the ominous claim that, "Sometimes the effect you want isn't the effect you get" (CCOBBS).

Underlying the frustration is a clear sense of malcontent with the influence that those controlling Chatham because they have little affinity with the plight or needs of the working poor. What continuously returns in arguments and discussions is this disconnection between Chapel Hill worldviews and rural life in Chatham as well as rural Alamance and Orange County. Chapel Hill, as a city founded around the oldest state university in the United States, carries a ring of exclusiveness or elitism, especially in comparison to surrounding communities. In an interview conducted for the Southern Oral History Program, an older woman explains the tension between rural areas surrounding Chapel Hill:

> …So, I think it was probably like a lot of the other very, very rural areas. And the thing that I think is unique is being so close to Chapel Hill. And Chapel Hill was always viewed with a jaundiced eye out here because it had those strange people that weren't from here, did not have generally the same values, generally did not understand…Well, first of all they live all clustered up together. That was one. And you never knew - and I think it even goes back to that basic thing I was talking about, the cause and effect. A real tie with the land and a real tie with what we considered the, the way to live. And I think perhaps they held the same view of other people in

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[18] "Chatham Tries to Avoid Strip Mall Littered Future" appeared on the CCOBBS on 01/08/08.

the surrounding areas. But I think perhaps Chapel Hill most of all because it was like a transient thing. How could these people establish values when they're only here for a short time and then they go away and another set comes in with another set of values? (Nancy Holt interviewed by Frances Webb 10/27/1995 for the Southern Oral History Program)

Chapel Hill was described in terms of the "transient" nature of people who lack the family or cultural ties to the region and who just don't have the same values. As with many of the angry CCOBBS posts, there is still a strong sense that the "newcomers" are just here today and that their views and values as well as their relationship to the land is just not the same.

While the divide in Chatham County is visible and etched into the physical surroundings, the divide is embodied in the aesthetic preferences that signify "not just a political issue, but a cultural issue… that is based on economics."[19] Preserving the "rural character" in a county where there is no major city that dominates social and political life and where approximately 50,000 of the 62,000 inhabitants live outside of the towns makes it difficult to speak of a singular "rural character". This junkyard or working landscape is marked by the forces of labor embedded in its fabric and this particular kind of "rural character" goes against the "rural idyll" that seek to mask it (Mitchell 1996: 105). Preserving the "rural character" is in the words of a Chatham County planner is " just a façade." When I think of the South, this "façade" is what comes to mind and as I travelled through Chatham County both the presence and absence of a diverse forms of rural character repeatedly stood out to me.

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[19] Interview on 06/11/09 at the Pittsboro General Store.

## 2.2 "Place-ment" in the Landscape and the Aesthetic Imaginary

After briefly explaining my research project to a politician and land developer in Pittsboro, he immediately began explaining what he perceived as a key historical distinction between the southern landscape and other areas in the United States. While social, educational, and professional mobility is historically limited and hindered in many areas and for many groups of people living in the South, these groups are a visible presence in the southern landscape in ways that defy how non-southerners view or think about the South and segregation. Much like an earlier interview with a University of North Carolina professor who lived in Chatham County for almost 40 years but grew up in New Orleans and Durham, he too remarked on the often intertwined physical spaces people use and inhabit in the South in juxtaposition to the implicitly distinct social spheres occupied that by the groups in the South.[20] There are multiple intertwined and complex ways that minorities in the South are able to interact on an everyday level with a socially and economically diverse group of people and aesthetically impact the landscape. It is not a question of whether social mobility is much more possible for minorities outside of the South or to what degree segregation and racism are still present in Chatham County or the South more generally[21]. For me, the question of how the "place-ment" of people and beliefs, whether marked by race, gender, class, and education, appear to mask the planning agenda and thus transform the physical and social "form and function" of Chatham County. The question revolves around the socio-

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[20] Interview at Weaver Street Market on 07/20/09.

[21] This is a complex topic and my presentation is not meant to down play the relevance of these questions or the issues or to overgeneralize. My presentation simply initiates a discussion that uses a historically, grounded issue in the South, something that people think about the South, without necessarily delving into the exact details. In other words, I am drawing on shared assumptions and views often presented during interviews about life in Chatham and the South. Interviewees repeatedly discussed these "assumptions" about segregation in relation to their experiences in Chatham. I am juxtaposing their experiences and general assumptions or preconceptions with those people commonly have about the region.

historic impact race, gender, education, and class played in the general development of a distinct southern landscape aesthetic and the enduring impact on the experiences of people in Chatham.

The expression to "know your place" implies a person understands their social rank and position and behaves accordingly. With a long and less than glorious social history in the United Sates, the idiom often references the domination and subordination of women, minorities, and socially vulnerable. The expression, for example, was featured in World War II propaganda posters commanding citizens to "know your place" and to "shut your face" as well as advertisements featuring women in the 1950s with one of a woman notably being spanked. The idiom, beyond the immediate negative connotations that an individual should not move beyond their social designation, captures the divisive way aesthetic preferences appear in public planning debates and the impact of population growth on the physical surroundings in Chatham. Knowing "your place" implies a certain racialized socio-cultural knowledge of what historically is and isn't acceptable. With over 37,000 people settling in Chatham County since the late 1980s, the popular perceptions of what constitutes a person's "place" have clearly shifted. Active participation in public planning by the relative "newcomers" has significantly influenced the direction of planning needs and the aesthetic preferences.

> What you're studying right now, the issue of aesthetic is quite complex in Chatham. A lot of these native, indigenous folks, whether they were white, black, or brown grew up with pre-Civil War, post-Civil War, Jim Crow era developments or with folks around them who are from a similar class and background. But the people coming down here from other areas and who were all into these covenant restricted developments are saying but I don't like this and him "garbage" or this collection of

stuff, right! But that is part of the southern landscape, but it is not part of this manicured Levittown landscape that they purchased.[22]

The "garbage" that once clearly had a place in the southern landscape and the people, who inhabit the traditional places full of "stuff", do not fit into the idealized community envisioned by those moving into the area. In essence, the "newcomers" don't "know" the place or *their* place within the existing framework and they are simultaneously re-defining it in reference to a social imaginary.

Landscapes have long been battlegrounds for differing socio-economic agendas and the idealization of the countryside and its class-based contestation is well documented in literary analysis as well as social scientific research. The romantization of the countryside by urban elites, fantasizing about the idyllic nature of life outside of the city, most notably emerge is in the work of Raymond Williams (1973) who argued that a dual class contestation and idealization of the countryside underscored classic British literature. The romantization of the countryside depicted in British literature and art exploited so-called rural-life. British literature and art continually harkened back to sentimental and exaggerated notions of the countryside's supposed timeless nature. These idealizations or illusions, these collective suspensions of disbelief, shackled the countryside to a past imagined by the economically powerful and divorced from the reality of working class and peasant life in 19th and 20th century Great Britain.

The so called "golden age", the idealization of a peaceful, harmonious, socially cohesive and "natural" rural life as portrayed by poets and artists, was according to Williams a social imaginary based on a "backwards logic" (1973: 34). It was a backwards logic where urban and economic beliefs about the countryside ultimately defined the countryside and thus

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[22] Interview with a politician and land developer at the Pittsboro General Store on 07/28/09.

the national social imaginary. These class-based values, however, directly impacted the social and economic development of rural life in Britain. In the case of England, Williams traces how the class struggles and the whims of the wealthy marked the landscape and acted as an imaginary, capable of rejuvenating the nation. The countryside emerged as a pristine environment, pure and unmarked, and quite distinct from the stressful social and economic forces found in the cities. Structured urban spaces appear inherently different than these romanticized landscape notions and both the city and the countryside become shared recognizable imaginaries represented through public discourse, literature, popular images and musings. The shared nature of these musings has the power to re-define both the social and physical landscape in relation to the city.

Don Mitchell (1996) reflects on the "rural idyll" as a romanticized vision of the California landscape represented in terms of its beauty rather than the rural labor tethered to unhealthy living and working conditions between approximately 1910 and 1930. Mitchell illustrates how the landscapes unify "materiality and representation, that are constructed out of the contest of various social groups" (Mitchell 1996: 28). The workers, whose Wheatfield strikes draw attention from reformers, but ultimately create other problems in terms of their social and physical wel- being. The idealizations, the emphasis on the beautiful nature, masks the labor and toil, it masks the horrible working conditions of the farm camps and stands in stark contrast to the "progressive" and simultaneously "repressive" shifts in land use policy (Mitchell 1996: 40-41). In a transformative moment in California history following the Wheatfield strikes, the Commission for Immigration and Housing took a bold stance implementing a program of environmental and social protections. Simultaneously the CIH launched practices that disempowered workers, severely restricted their autonomy, and

diminishing their ability to strike. At a time when California appeared as an agricultural paradise with a plentiful bounty and natural beauty, it attracted migrant workers from across the nation and other nations. Mitchell's analysis underscores the ideological nature of the California "rural idyll" and the ongoing attraction of the "California Dream" imaginary, a socially and environmentally progressive system founded in "repressive" structures and rooted to highly aestheticized musings.

For Chatham County, where the vast majority of "newcomers" move to the county from urban areas and often from outside of the South and North Carolina, a similar "backwards logic" and social imaginary rooted to the idealized cohesiveness and naturalness of "rural life" holds sway. Fed by notions of quaint, rural life with all of the perks of city life close by, many are drawn to covenant ruled, New Urbanist communities. The romanticized notions of farm life and the rural idyll come head on with the reality of living in a rural agricultural community quite often. In attempts to deter complaints, a Chatham planner explained:

> Around this area, the farms have been recognized as part of the voluntary ag district and we've put notes up for developments. [The notes] say you are within a certain distance of farming and typical farmland activities dealing with odors and noise and conflicts, that this isn't a regular residential area in advance. This is to prevent nuisance suits.[23]

Noise and smell complaints are quite regular, and what appears "quaint" and "beautiful" from a distance, may cause problems, as the nature of agricultural commerce does not fit neatly into the residential community covenants. Attempts to subvert complains and alert interested developers and potential residents in the area of the farm activities reflect a particular disconnection between what people think and expect from the rural experience and what it actually means to live an agricultural area. Landscapes as "social imaginaries" are

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[23] Interview on 06/10/09 in Pittsboro, NC.

powerful symbols that often evoke an emotive allegiance from people who inhabit the places or from people who just envision the place as a "groundwork" for something larger (Cosgrove 2003; Mitchell 2002; Olwig 2002; Williams 1973). This allegiance reflects the individual grounding and position of the people; aesthetic preferences, social experiences, and political, educational, and economic position all deeply influence the form of the imaginings. These aspects also clearly act as touchstones for people settling in the area and enable relative strangers to form a community based on shared imaginaries.

The disconnect between the way "rural" life is presented in public debates and the research on the countryside is pertinent to me because it explicitly reflects a struggle to grasp how common public discourse or shared views about "rural" life are often at odds. More importantly, I am fascinated by the way that this public discourse or the debates on planning issues define "rural" and also simultaneously impact my personal understanding of "rural" as well as the way county residents experience "rural character". At the heart of the issue here is the juxtaposition of regional or local landscape aesthetics versus the importation of an idealized or romanticized landscape aesthetics that is detached from the particularities of a "place". The issues at hand are ones facing numerous traditionally rural communities in the United States that are experiencing population growth and an influx of educated, financially secure newcomers.

Mr. Everson explained to me from his porch in Siler City his concern that the young hardworking Latino boys who lived across the street would be unable to find gainful employment in the area or afford higher education after graduation. He pointed down the road named after his father and repeated a refrain, "We've got Third World living conditions

just down the road."[24] He thoughtfully detailed how the Chatham County Board of Commissioners in recent planning documents such as the Major Corridor Ordinance seem more concerned about the size, shape and placement of business signs or whether new businesses are set back far enough from major roads than they do with providing affordable services or creating jobs that would keep the younger people in the area. Likewise, another Chatham County Commissioner and Chair until the 2010 elections, expressed a similar sentiment despite holding a diametrically opposed political stance from Mr. Everson. When I asked him about the Major Corridor Ordinance, he stated quite simply:

> I think it has too much detail; I think it is too prescriptive. I could give a hoot about some of the signs stuff; I think people went overboard with it. I think people went overboard with it, but I think the essence of it I agree with… there are unintended consequences when you are overly prescriptive.[25]

The "prescriptive", detail oriented approach to planning loses sight of the bigger picture and fixates on details that frustrated citizens see as lightening rod issues. The "prescriptive" mandates limit the ability for people to act autonomously and force others into socially undesirable positions or leave them with few alternatives. The unintended consequences that the idealizations or "façade" often mask are of crucial importance. Understanding these consequences requires an understanding of the socio-historic appearance of Chatham's landscape. I will not examine and identify the landscape ideals and the romanticized visions of a southern landscape as well as frame the socio-historic context of the "place" based debates in order to expose the debate in a different light as well as present the unintended consequences of re-imaging Chatham's southern landscape.

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[24] Interview on 06/22/09 in Siler City, NC.

[25] Interview on 06/10/09 at the Pittsboro General Store.

## 2.3 Why Aesthetics Matters: Zombie Developments and Village Life

On a Sunday morning in October 2009, I ran into an acquaintance at a coffee shop and we began discussing several of her upcoming articles about Chatham County politics and land use developments. We had chatted on several occasions about my research and her experiences working as a freelance journalist. We spent time bouncing ideas back and forth about the implications of failed developments on the county and over the next few months we directed each other to resources. On January 13, 2010 the *Independent Weekly* published her cover story about the overwhelming financial failure of recent residential developments in Chatham County. The article highlighted how these developments had failed to actually sell houses, 4 of the 12 developments discussed in the article filed for bankruptcy, 3 of the 12 stalled and were no longer building or selling vacant lots, and the remaining 5 developments are completely vacant with no homes (Cowell 2010). These so-called "zombie" communities stand in stark contrast physically to the surrounding area and are the result of Bunky Morgan's pro-growth platform that actively approved approximately 50 subdivisions between 2002-2005. The reference in the article to these subdivisions as "zombie developments", developments that simply laid the foundation for houses but failed to actually prosper, is one that entered mainstream planning with the collapse of the housing market. The assumption that these developments would increase the tax base and improve the financial position of Chatham County has instead led to further financial pressure on the county's infrastructure.

The question of interest for my research doesn't revolve around the failure of these developments; rather it revolves around the way that these failures highlight the unintended consequences that result from the differences in representational and material views of the

landscape. Referred to as the legacy of Bunky Morgan and his allies, these developments only further separate the pro-growth advocates in Chatham County from their slow growth, local growth, or smart growth opposition. The ousting of Bunky Morgan and his allies in 2006 initiated a new period of what one person referred to as commissioners who were responsive to "where you stand on public views"[26]. As a result of Bunky Morgan's overzealous planning agenda these proposed subdivisions continue to impact shape and form of the county. Even though these developments never fully materialized, the *vision* behind these developments deeply influences the present aesthetics and future developments.

In particular the battle over the initial proposal for Briar Chapel, a compact community that continues to grow and thrive despite the crash of the housing market, led this subdivision to actually incorporate many of the aesthetic features valued by the inhabitants of North Chatham. According the Briar Chapel website, the community features 24 miles walking and biking trails, over 900 acres of open space, and environmentally conscious and sustainable building approach. Unlike the smaller subdivisions that have floundered, Briar Chapel has succeeded and has set the stage for future developments by incorporating features that attract many newcomers to Chatham County. Not only did set the stage for future development expectations and it also set the stage for how residents expect to participate in these planning decisions. Many of those who actively opposed Briar Chapel, felt as if they lost the battle, however, by opposing the development they actually succeeded in making the development incorporate current aesthetic ideals that dominate North Chatham County. Likewise, they simultaneously laid the foundation for how the future developments should look, function, and market themselves. The success of Briar Chapel, in my opinion, isn't that

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[26] Interview on 07/20/09. With very few exceptions the vast majority of the commisioners unseated Bunky Morgan and his allies were replaced by moderately pro-growth commisioners in the Nov 2010 election.

it was financially successful because as the true financial success of Briar Chapel is based more on the fact that it is bankrupt or hasn't stalled. What is abundantly clear is that by embracing the views of those opposing its development, Briar Chapel has succeeded in branding and thus marketing a landscape aesthetic that is compatible with the ideals of current residents of in North Chatham. They have captured an essence of the "rural character" as imagined by people moving from the surrounding urban area to Chatham's countryside.

Real or imagined, the emotive attachment to a particular landscape aesthetics underscores the power of a landscape to captivate people on a local, regional, and national level and to elicit public outcry if threatened. In Chatham County, there is palatable shift away from the landscape's local and regional identity towards a more nationally recognizable "rural" aesthetics. The "rural character" and clearly illustrate how landscape imaginings potentially re-create a landscape ideal foreign to the region, yet immanently recognizable beyond the local. We will briefly examine two obvious examples in Chatham. At first glance, Fearrington Village in North Chatham with its Belted Scottish Galloway cows, rolling grassy knolls, village architecture, and well-manicured village greens is the epitome of the romanticized English countryside. The folksy whirligigs, silo and adjacent landscape attest, however, to something quite different. Fearrington Village is not a traditional English landscape, but rather a 30 year old planned community located on an old North Carolina dairy farm that was *intentionally* modeled after an English farm village (Koski 2000: 9). Historically, Fearrington Village marked a monumental change in the land use planning in the Chatham and a shift in the "character" of the county.

FIGURE 4: (A-Left) The image is of the entrance to Fearrington Village with the silo and Vollis Simpson's whirligigs (Author's personal image). (B-Right) The stonewall entrance to Briar Chapel with large leaf metalwork projecting upward (Author's personal image).

Fearrington Village is known throughout the nation, as their New Yorker ads claim, for its English garden scenery and elegant rural appeal with Italian Bocce and croquet lawns, and the small village shops and restaurants in the heart of the village. Fearrington Village's aesthetic appeal represents a national, even global aesthetic appeal; an appeal more directly tied to class aesthetics and age based desires rather than to a local or regional character. Despite the presence of Jesse Fearrington's wood frame house with a long, wide porch and surrounding similar buildings in the village proper, there is nothing particularly southern about most of the buildings, landscapes and gardens[27]. Viewed by many as a sort of "retirement community" for "Yankees", few of the residents had local ties to the area prior to moving to Fearrington Village. Nonetheless, Faerington Village was featured on more than one occasion in the magazine *Southern Living*. Although RB Fitch faced a great deal of resistance when her first proposed the development in 1974 with 436 residents signing a petition against the development and people vocally resisting in public forums, Fitch received a permit that allowed the re-zoning of the land from agricultural/residential to

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[27] The gardens could arguably be viewed as "southern", but the emphasis on "English village life" leaves me feeling as if the gardens are less "southern" and more English cottage style. In the next few pages this distinction will be more concisely explained.

residential, recreational, and light commerce (Koski 2000:8-9). People expressed a great deal of fear that Fearrington Village would irrevocably change the agricultural nature of the county. Much like the conflict 20 years later surrounding the proposal of Briar Chapel, numerous public debates took place at the monthly county commissioner meetings and numerous op-ed articles appeared in local and regional papers.

The entrance to Briar Chapel located within a mile of Fearrington Village on the opposite side of 15-501. As one drives south towards Pittsboro on 15-501, a stone wall, reminiscent of the stonewalls that crisscross the University of North Carolina campus and city of Chapel Hill. Atop the long curves wall, are three large metal sculptures of branches and leaves and the neatly manicured lawn is bordered with season plants. The pine trees stand tall behind the wall and unlike the entrance to many recent subdivisions, the developers have "intentionally designed [Briar Chapel] to inhabit the land without inhibiting its true nature."[28] The community plans to build 2,389 homes on 689 of the 1589 acres and will house restaurants, shopping, and offices in the "village center" as well as offer extensive walking trails, parks, an amphitheater, and a private residents club. Unlike Fearrington Village, the imagery, name and building design within Briar Chapel reflect recent planned communities in Chapel Hill such as Meadowmont and Southern Village. Houses are for the most part wood frame or brick with pillars and wide porches, neat grass lawns, a muted color palette, and line homogenous streets ringed with trees. Briar Chapel is quite distinct from Fearrington Village in its appearance and the developers are marketing the community to younger couples with children and they proudly boast the presence of a charter school, baseball and soccer fields, and a community swimming pool. Ironically, RB Fitch, the founder of Fearrington Village, initiated the largest and most vocal outpouring against Briar

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[28] Information on Brira Chapel can be found their website at www.briarchapelnc.com.

Chapel when he organized a meeting with residents and many of these residents actively took up the cause. The original plans which called for clear cutting parts of the property, developing more and less of an eye towards inhabiting the area without "inhibiting nature" subsequently led to major revitalization of the planning process in Chatham.[29]

Both communities are examples of how the romantization of a landscape ideal, an ideal recognizable beyond the local or regional, fuels a social imaginary. Fearrington draw on the classic English countryside that exudes an eliteness and peaceful "village" life. The incorporation of the North Carolinian Vollis Simpson's whirligigs as well as maintaining the original silo and cows in the pasture, albeit imported Scottish cattle, gives Fearrington at least a little local flair. Briar Chapel, on the other hand, re-interprets more locally recognizable features such as stonewalls, building types, and the unpaved walking trails that criss-cross the area. These too, however, bear a close resemblance to higher-end residential developments across the United States. The houses are a blend of colonial, cottage, and craftsman and felt to at once familiar without necessarily conveying a distinct regional uniqueness. These communities more importantly, reflect an ongoing tension between landscapes as representational and material places juxtaposed to their socio-economic value and "place" in society.

Chatham's struggle revolves around land use plans that balance protecting the "looks" or scenic value of the landscape and the socio-historic value of the region while not adversely damaging the economic or commercial value of area. The difficulty between a landscape valued for its social and historical aesthetic worth and the landscape as valued for its direct utility and market price inter-mingle and underscore landscape features that the conflicting parties truly value in Chatham. The historical tension between the appreciation of a landscape

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[29] Quote taken from an interview with a founding member of the CCEC 05/28/09.

as a space that surrounds or envelops us, as objects of sensory consumption, and as romanticized or idealized communities, is at odds with the place of landscapes as controlled and structured property, regulated through political means, and as sources of economic capital. The tension between the places as aesthetic objects as places to experience and the land as a commodity and source of capital is exacerbated through population growth and the influx of outsiders. This tension and need for balance conflicts with the aesthetic preconceptions and often the needs of "newcomers" and the heightened economic stress longstanding residents present when discussing the economic position of the "newcomers". The tension is not just about a difference in aesthetic or economic values; the conflict emerges as parallel views of property rights and economic values between the "newcomers" and the longstanding Chathamites that places two distinct aesthetic imaginaries at the fulcrum. In essence, there are two scales or balances and aesthetics as *embodied* values are axis or fulcrum that keep these two parallel views in balance.

Aesthetics as an embodied appreciation of a landscape is not simply visual. Rather the aesthetic appreciation, according to Berleant (1992) reflects a viewer's complete "engagement" with an object or landscape. This engagement is embodied in the sense that the person viewing an object or landscape does not simply rely on knowledge or experience, but rather senses or feels an appreciation based on multiple factors. It is my contention that aesthetics as embodied values reflect an array of socio-historic and economic components as well as other factors related to social and cultural experiences. As stated in the introduction, these factors together are crucial when thinking about landscapes as highly contentious sites, as more than a view or vista. The notions of "rural character" or what constitutes an aesthetically pleasing southern landscape are reflective of the social and cultural experiences

of the individual and are embedded within potentially non-neutral, highly contentious practices. The tension between the historical or representational and material landscape aspects, in my opinion, maintains the divide within the county, but could hypothetically act as bridge between various socio-economic groups within a community. Theoretically, landscapes, according to Don Mitchell (2003), as sites of political and economic activities, naturalize the space while appropriating it for the ruling class. Reminiscent of William's discussion of the English countryside, Mitchell (1996) draws on Zukin's (1991) metaphors of: landscapes of the state, landscapes of consumption and landscapes of production. Mitchell moves beyond the metaphorical utility of these labels and illustrates the intertwined nature of the landscape and how migrant workers in California produced the landscape of these landscape metaphors. I model my use of the landscape conceptually, not metaphorically, as sites of experience, work, consumption and everyday practices that "carry forward social processes" (Ingold 2000: 196). To "carry forward social processes" also entails carrying past social and cultural perceptions forward. In other words, in a county with the majority of its population having settled there in the last 30 years, "carrying forward social processes" means reconciling the imposition of "other" social and cultural experience and imaginaries with the landscape.

Given there isn't a possibility of turning Chatham "back" to its pre-Fearrington Village or pre-Briar Chapel state as many of the longstanding residents would gladly undertake, the other option is to frame or understand the cultural underpinnings and the aesthetic preferences associated with them. Many of those interviewed expressed fear and remorse over changes to the county and those who actively sought limits and oversight in future residential developments were clear that this was about preventive maintenance. The

stricter planning regulations and more clearly defined zoning parameters will prevent the area from resembling areas such as Cary where there are developments upon developments and shopping centers everywhere. "Cookie cutter" and "beige" were often used as descriptors of the developments in Cary and this loss of "character" was something people wanted to avoid. In addition, I was repeatedly informed that zoning was necessary for the effective growth of the towns and in developing commercial nodes. Establishing commercial nodes would allow planners and citizens to determine the shape and content of the county versus allowing developers to determine where and how businesses would appear. These concise zoning parameters would allow for "smart growth" and enable cohesive and balanced land use that does not overtax the infrastructural capacity of the county. The question that continuously emerged, however, is how to resolve the underlying tension sketched above and balance the scales.

## 2.4 In Relation to the Dutch Green Heart

Wim Knel doesn't mince words. As the editor of the *Green Heart Magazine*, owner of a full service printing company, founder of a Green Heart non-profit, and a lifetime resident of the Green Heart, he doesn't hesitate to tell you where he stands on the issues. Although his magazine and the non-profit present nostalgic and picturesque images of the Green Heart, it simultaneously offers the reader critical glimpses into the life of the Green Heart with articles about failing farms, environmental concerns, future development projects, and political commentary. During a 3 hour interview, he openly critiqued a project his non-profit foundation had undertaken with Focus Locus, an European Union supported and funded movement to create and maintain Sustainable Open Spaces (SOS). Focus Locus,

during the second phase second of the SOS project between 2003-2005, sought to create a "cultural blueprint" for future re-structuring of the Green Heart region by collecting stories and tales, writing poetry, and taking pictures of the area. In full swing during my research project in the summer of 2004, I heard mixed reviews and concerns about the effectiveness of Focus Locus from local farmers. In particular, when I asked Wim Knel about projects the Foundation for the Green Heart was undertaking, he ironically articulated what Focus Locus was doing and his concerns about their approach.

> …We are fixing an old fort up [Fort Wiekerschans in Bodegraven] and we are doing a project with "Focus Locus". We are sending people who have little or no affinity with the region down the Oude Rijn in a small boat. And these people who may or may not have any feel for the region have to write poems, stories or paint about the *value* of the landscape. It gives them the chance to experience the landscape… You have to imagine what that means for the farmers who live there! Here comes this old hippie down the Oude Rijn in a boat, just like the Romans as I imagine it (laughs), to save the landscape. That is *sooo* far away from what is *actually* the issue.

At a time when Green Heart dairy farmers were struggling to maintain family farms and readjusting to the increasingly restrictive land use policies imposed on a national level as well European Union environmental regulations, it came across to many farmers and residents as rather absurd to send poets, artists, and writers on a boat to "capture" the essence of the Green Heart. The images depict various aspects of the landscape and the people, with an overemphasis on recreational activities such as bicycling, boating, and walking and there is little or no attention given to the farmers or farm life.[30] Experiencing the Green Heart clearly translates in the project to "enjoying the Randstad's backyard" and the so-called "cultural blueprint" appears as more of a tourist's family vacation album.

Much like the Focus Locus project, concerned residents and activists organizations within the Green Heart struggled to balance the market oriented push to sell or consume the

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[30] The images are copyright protected and I am not legally entitled to include them as examples. You may view the Focus Locus images on a partially defunct website http://www.focuslocusouderijn.nl/

Green Heart experience with the need to maintain a viable working landscape. Whereas cultural heritage movements or historic preservation movements during planning debates do not impact Chatham County as profoundly, the Dutch Green Heart is memorialized and enshrined by these heritage movements. The historic value of the Green Heart as the first site of large-scale reclamation and the reason that stable permanent populations formed in Amsterdam and the surrounding cities makes it quite different from Chatham. Bicycling through the Dutch Green Heart with its Roman ruins, windmills, canals, and picturesque sky, cows grazing, and red brick villages is like stepping into another time. Unlike Chatham where villages are suddenly created and the charm of rural farm life mythologized in New Urbanist plans, the Green Heart and its past are being polished and enshrined like a museum exhibit.

The longstanding restrictive land use policies in the Green Heart concentrate more on preserving the "scenic value" of the landscape as opposed to supporting or maintaining the socio-cultural value. The way of life at the center of the Green Heart is in drastic danger, but the interest for planners is on preserving the place as an object to be appreciated and a place to be enjoyed. The issues facing residents and farmers, who through the restrictions struggle to stay above water both literally and metaphorically, are often downplayed in favor of the wants and needs of the transient city-dwellers, looking for a break from urban life. The Focus Locus project brings into perspective the way that privileged and idealized landscape aesthetics may reinforce a sanitized and romanticized landscape imaginary. As mentioned earlier, farmers in the Green Heart face extreme restrictions because of potential nuisance complaints from non-farmers moving into the region. Moreover, most secondary roads prohibit farm equipment, trucks, or even motorized vehicles from using them during the

weekend because it may interfere with recreationalists and bicyclists. Packaged and marketed, the value of the Green Heart landscape is understood in terms of the individual aesthetic interest.

# Chapter 3: "Balanced for Progress": Conflicting Needs, Conflicting Wants, and "Other" Values

Petty political bickering and partisan mudslinging is a mainstay in online media forums in the United States. Virtual communities allow people to voice opinions and views with fewer face-to-face social repercussions and offer many a broader platform of potential listeners. These platforms, however, amplify the political rifts while allowing for a faster, more effective transmission of information. The almost instantaneous way that information is shard among large numbers of concerned individuals has changed the level and quality of civic engagement that people undertake. The lower threshold, the fact that somebody can email their views on public planning decision to the Chatham Chatlist and immediately reach hundreds of people, changes the tenor of public planning debates and foregrounds social divisions. It is both easy and dangerous to engage in online disagreements for numerous reasons. These online battles, however, serve as constant reminders of the socio-historic divide in Chatham County that is both literal and figurative.

It is easy to describe the divide by drawing on stereotypes that only tangentially relate to the disagreements. Reading the bulletin board posts and Chatham Chatlist or speaking to vocal concerned citizens will likely only strengthen the stereotypes. It is a challenge, as a politically engaged and an outspoken individual, not to partake in the disputes or not to take

sides when discussing the issues during interviews. But I grew up in the Deep South and my years as a teenager on a 120 acre farm in rural North Mississippi during the 1980s farm crisis left an indelible mark on my aesthetic values and understanding of rural life. As a single mother and graduate student piecing together an income from adjunct teaching, research assistantships, tutoring and miscellaneous part-time academic work, I can appreciate the economic needs and wants of those who beg online for "regular grocery stores" in Chatham or for more affordable box stores closer by rather than another upscale store that caters to the more affluent. If I could afford to choose a $4 loaf of bread over two $2 loaves, I might buy one. Since this isn't an option, I appreciate having a choice and I empathize with those people in Chatham who also greet the appearance of more and more higher end grocery stores. In seeking some degree of objectivity, I found myself searching for a more objective balance, a way to focus on the issues causing the divide and less on describing the division or taking sides.

What stood out to me, when examining the rancorous public arguments online and published reports in the media alongside the planning documents, research data, and historical material is how out of balance many debates appeared. Wim Knel's claim that sending people down the Oude Rijn to experience the Dutch Green Heart was "*sooo* far away from what is *actually* the issue," rings true in Chatham County. The division in the county reflects a clear divide in the very distinct set of problems and concerns facing the West Chatham versus North Chatham. As the editor of the community newspaper Chatham County Line stated:

> The Haw River is really the unofficial dividing line between two totally different worldviews. There are different values and different ways that people feel things should be run, in particular how things look. For example, you have somebody who buys a townhouse in Fearrington Village and wants to see the little roads and fields

when they drive around. And so, somebody who owns 600 acres off of 64 and can't make a living farming it anymore and has their taxes coming up, wants to turn it into a huge kind of Wal-Mart… [31]

The "different values" and different "worldviews" that he references are at the heart of the debate. Just as a boat ride down the river doesn't directly benefit the plight of a farmer in the Dutch Green Heart, erecting large communities without clear-cutting the land and creating walkable communities with recreational nature paths does not directly benefit the working class residents in West Chatham. In both cases, however, there are tangible disadvantages or negative consequences to planning decisions that foreground the needs of recreationalists as in the Green Heart as well as those that disproportionately stress the "values" or "worldviews" associated with a more economically privileged population. Zoning laws that restrict commercial development to specific designated nodes or severely limit an individual's use of their land could have significant repercussions for any person struggling to stay afloat. As the above quote suggests, the needs and wants of the county are quite different. Aside from the socio-historic antecedents and geographic divide in the county, there are also differences in so-called "worldviews" that relate to class, educational, gender, and race based disparities.

## 3.1 A County Divided: The Debate

> Do you understand what I mean when I say the good old boy system? That's a slogan, a saying, in the South. The good old boys are those powerful white guys like who are on the county committee. Those business types who tend to run the county. And often they aren't in a rural place, like Chatham has been; they aren't sophisticated in a traditional way. They don't wear three-piece suits. They might just be farmers, but they still are— those are some of the good old boys, and then they can be lawyers or doctors too. But there's a network. Those guys kind of help each other. (Charles D. Thompson interviewed by Jun Wang 10/15/99_SOHP

> In trying to gage the division in the county and thus the debates over land use plans,

one must better understand the socio-historic context of the battle in Chatham County. On the

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[31] Interview in Carrboro, NC on 06/25/09.

surface it appears a more typical politically right versus left division with the partisan language and excessive hyperbole. Even presenting the divide in terms of "pro-growth" and "smart-growth" proponents focuses too much on the political party lines than on the longstanding division in the county between Siler City, the largest town, and Pittsboro, the sleepy county seat. The debate is more deeply etched into the "soil" of the state and social geography of the county than the simple right left divide would suggest. The divide between Northeastern Chatham including Pittsboro and Siler City is tied to the socio-economic development in Western Chatham and the relationship between Pittsboro and Northern Chatham to the nearby cities and universities. Referred to by many as a "cultural conflict", the divide has deep ties to the distinct economic development within the county.

As one person explained, the metamorphic clay soils in Chatham were not as conducive to large plantation agriculture as the Triassic soils in the eastern part of the state. Settled by mostly small farmers, Chatham historically lacked the elite or aristocratic farmers found in the swampier eastern part of North Carolina. Wealthy farmers and elite fled the swampier eastern portion of the state during the summer and Pittsboro because of its proximity to the Cape Fear became a "resort destination" for the affluent who were fleeing the coastal heat and mosquitos. Steamships navigated to Moncure, the most western inland port through a series of locks, which also allowed for the transport of coal to the coast prior to the railroad.[32] Few framed the historical divide quite as poetically as did Mr. Everson when he aligned the "cultural conflict" with the geomorphology of the state and the economic basis for the Northeastern orientation. Various people reflected on the religious division between the two towns with the first church established in Pittsboro being

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[32] Information on Chatham County history came from several sources including the Chatham Historical Society Archives, interviews on 06/20/09 and 06/22/09 and the Chatham County, NC 2011: website.

Presbyterian and the first church in Siler City being Methodist[33]. Despite the lack of transparency or a singular origin for the divide, what is abundantly clear is that what people referred to as a "cultural conflict" is quite obviously rooted to differences in educational and socio-economic practices.

The battle as I see it is one that divides Chatham County in two separate spheres Western Chatham and Northeastern Chatham. Having grown-up watching Andy Griffith, the name "Siler City" was synonymous stores and shopping and Andy, Barney, or Aunt Bee always seemed to go to "Siler City". Unlike the mental image I had of the place based on the small town views of the citizens in Mayberry and Aunt Bee's desire to live there following the end of the TV series, West Chatham and Siler City were not nearly as affluent or cosmopolitan as I originally thought. Siler City, with its population of almost 9,000 people, is described as having an "industrial" base rooted to the presence of the railroad, which established in Matthews Crossing in 1884. Incorporated as the town of Siler City in 1887, it prospered immediately as a site for textiles, furniture, and industry and dominated county politics until the population boom in Northeastern Chatham during the 1980s.

Since the early to mid 20th century, Siler City has struggled with economic development and like much of the United States, the lingering impact of the Great Depression and World War II was felt as economic prospects worsened after the end of the war.[34] With a long history and emphasis on economic diversification, namely the expansion

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[33] The issue of the religious division in the county is beyond the scope of this project. Although several people referenced the divide as rooted to the religious orientation of these two main towns, few articulated how this related to current issues, nor were clear historical references attributed to this divide. Quakers are said to have first settled in the region prior to the Revolutionary War.

[34] Much of the background information was gathered at the Chaham Historical Society located in the Pittsboro Courthouse prior to the destruction of the building during the March 2010 fire. The information was taken from several "scrapbooks" that were given to the Chatham Historical Society as well as the 1963 documentary. *Siler City.*

and attraction of industry, the Siler City Development Corporation organized in 1948. This development corporation founded a year after the formation of the Siler City Chamber of Commerce and acted as an active think tank that brought together prominent businessmen in order to stimulate economic growth in the area. In an attempt to broaden the economic base and attract new industry to the area, Siler City adopted the slogan "Balanced for Progress". A slogan contest sponsored by "Carolina Power and Light", now "Progress Energy", around 1950 exemplifies the long-standing attachment to industry and economic growth as well as the widespread community support for this industrial growth.



FIGURE 5: (A-Left) Cover of the promotional scrapbook for Siler City circa 1954 (Author's personal image). (B-Right) Photograph inside the scrapbook featuring the products "made" in Siler City (Author's personal image).

Embraced by local citizens, the "Balanced for Progress" slogan remained a notable fixture in other citywide campaigns, publications, and memorabilia. A MA thesis written in 1950 analyzing the economic viability of agriculture in Chatham County adopted the slogan as its title, *Chatham: Balanced for Progress* (Bagwell 1950), although it only briefly references that the title hails from a promotional slogan. A 1958 Siler City Chamber of Commerce brochure entitled "Balanced for Progress" and with a spinning top logo and exclaimed, "Wheels of industry turned to build a progressive city," and then presented by

multiple images of industry. Referred to in this 1958 Siler City Chamber of Commerce brochure as a "new look" modernization program, this slogan inspired multiple beautification projects. The pet projects four different Garden Clubs involved revamping 30 houses and 15 businesses, citing various junkyards in violation of city ordinances, and the massive "Don't be a litterbug" campaign spearheaded by the mayor's wife. One page in the scrapbook entitled *The Story of Siler City* features the headline "Everybody in our town worked on this project!" followed by several newspaper articles on the cleanup efforts and pictures from newspapers of women, children and several African-American doing their part in the citywide cleanup. Another scrapbook, also entitled "Balanced for Progress" captures changes in the community such as the impact of the anti-litter campaign in 1958, the widening of the old and new highway on the juncture of 421, the creation of sidewalks in 1953, the new courtroom completed 1954, and the 40,000,000 gallon reservoir leased for one dollars for 99 years starting January 1954 as well as the creation of various recreational facilities such as Brag Park and the swimming pool in 1954. As the founder of the Siler City Development Corporation, FJ Bowling, stated in the 1963 documentary, "No man in a White House on the hill" determines growth or industry in Siler City. The presentation of Siler City as not just an industry town, nor a one-business town, but rather a town dependent on community support as well as "farsighted industrialists" resonates with the divide in the county.

The emphasis on the furniture, poultry, hosiery, and tobacco industry as defining the city is most accurately captured by the claim, "what *makes* Siler City makes Siler City" (Figure 5). Below the quote are displayed all the products of industry and education… chairs, hosiery, vegetables, cattle, tobacco, chickens, desks, and food. The theme of working together to make good development carries throughout these documents. Moreover, the view

that "economic development" meant cash flow in the community is evident in many ways. New factories such as a hosiery plant paid workers in two-dollar bills in order to demonstrate that "money earned in the community is spent in the community" (Siler City Documentary 1963). By paying workers in two-dollar bills, new industries could see whether the money was actually returning to local businesses and profiting the community at large. Nowhere in the Chatham Historical Society's archives was such direct reference made to the economic well-being of a particular area. Although several mills were present in Northeastern Chatham and the large-scale exportation of the Chatham rabbit, the sleepy county seat, Pittsboro, and Northeastern Chatham County did not undertake such large scale, ongoing attempts to bolster their economy.

In addition to the difference in economic growth, Siler City and Western Chatham County have not experienced the same demographic shift as faced in Northeastern Chatham of the last 30 years. Although the population in Siler City *has* grown 13% over the last 10 years, the population growth reflects the influx of unskilled Latino laborers to work in the poultry industry. The Hispanic population comprises 39% of Siler City's total population and 12% of Chatham County's entire population. In real terms, the Latino population rose from a countywide estimate of 586 individuals in 1990 to an estimated 7,876 in 2008 (Chatham County NC 2011: website). With the vast majority of the Hispanic population residing in and around Siler City and the relative sudden demographic shift, Siler City faces significant quality of life issues as well as periodic racial tension (Holland et al 2007: 67-72). Compared to Chatham's entire population growth of approximately 24,888[35], the Hispanic population accounts for 29% of Chatham's population growth. In short, the population influx in the

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[35] These figures were taken from the NC Office of State Budget and Management website. The numbers are found in the 1990-2000 and 2000-2010 County Growth Tables.

Northern Chatham of educated professionals who predominantly work in Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, and RTP differs significantly from the growth felt in Western Chatham where the population is predominantly comprised of skilled and unskilled Latinos. Both the socio-historic differences in the approach to economic development and the substantial differences in the demographic composition of the county are often obscured in the planning debates.

Interestingly, when interviewees emphasized what they referred to as "cultural issues" or a "cultural conflict" as a source of division in the county, race and ethnicity were not clearly acknowledged as potentially playing into the issue. Unanimously, however, participants emphasized economic values, socio-economic class, or the "place" based economic associations they felt contributed to the division. While people were silent about the racial implications of the planning changes or did not perceive the potential for race based conflicts, many vehemently reacted towards perceived economic infringements, limitations, and a de-valuation of the landscape. When I asked George Lucier what he thought about the Major Corridor Ordinance that developed guidelines for structured and thoughtful economic growth in the area, his response caught me mildly off guard. As an advocate for structured zoning and responsible, local economic growth and the Chair of the Board of County Commissioners who initiated as task force for the Major Corridor Ordinance, I was surprised to hear him refer to the aesthetic ordinances as too "detailed" and "too prescriptive" building. He was abundantly clear about his overall support of the Major Corridor Ordinance, but he explained:

> I think people went overboard with it, but I think the essence of it I agree with. I think you have to give guidance on the sizes of commercial areas and to identify where those can best occur for the interest of the county and we should make sure that they are conducive to balanced growth throughout the county and not just up here in the

Northeast. When I start looking at things such as [whether there is a freestanding sign] I could care [less], I could care less. I think it is too much of an intrusion into people's rights… The vast majority of it I am satisfied, very satisfied with, but we need to have performance standards for what we want to accomplish and this less prescriptive… there are unintended consequences when you are overly prescriptive.[36]

In the county commisioner's statement, his concern with the overemphasis on detailed, restrictive building practices deters attention away from the central goals of the ordinance to "ensure that proposed developments are designed in a way that promotes or retains rural character throughout Chatham County" (MCO 2009: 1). The goal is to preserve the "rural character" and "identity" of Chatham County by enabling economic growth, protecting the natural environment, and ensuring "a high quality appearance for developments while promoting good design" (MCO 2009: 1). A programmatic and prescriptive plan for the minutiae of building policies, however, enraged residents who realized that something such as the size of the sign, the size of the lettering, as well as the color, overhang, and number of signs for a business was highly regulated (MCO 2009: 31-34). The numerous images depicting aesthetically appropriate buildings and signs featured stucco, beige retail businesses and office buildings at Southpoint Mall in Durham, Meadowmont Village in Chapel Hill, and similar developments in Charlotte (Figure 6). The images and design standards are meant to protect and retain the "rural character" while allowing the county to accommodate commercial, economic, and residential growth.

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[36] Interview on 06/10/09 at Pittsboro General Store.

FIGURE 6: All five images appeared in the Major Corridor Ordinance (2009: 6, 32, 23).. The top two images are examples of desirable "regional node examples" taken of Southpoint Mall and an adjacent shopping center in Durham, NC. The bottom two sigs are examples of proper "freestanding signs" and the bottom far right image demonstrates permissible "unifying elements" and proper lighting for an outdoor café (Courtesy of Chatham County, NC).

All of these images present possibilities and strategies that allow those involved in the planning and zoning process to "visualize" what is deemed acceptable. Although the Major Corridor Ordinance explicitly seeks to promote "good design allowing individuality, creativity, and artistic expression", the appearance standards and images leave little room for creative manipulation. In an attempt to retain Chatham's character while avoiding the "beige" aesthetic monotony of Cary and the "Burlington schlock along I85", residents are presented with design alternatives that many argue lack character at all (CCOBBS)[37]. The examples of proper designs presented in the document drew a great deal of attention and as a bulletin

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[37] CCOBBS thread begun on 12/19/07.

board post concisely stated "It looks like a lot of personal preferences" (CCOBBS)[38]. The overemphasis on the aesthetic designs by the Major Corridor Ordinance Task Force led to hostile Chatham Chatlist and Bulletin Board exchanges and several op-ed articles in regional newspapers[39]. What a county commissioner accurately pointed out was that the overemphasis meant to protect the "rural character" of the region overshadows the goals of the ordinance and results in "unintended consequences." As one Chatham Bulletin Board post asked, "who is going to police the policies" or "remove the signs"[40]. From my perspective, however, this quote and the interviews described in this chapter all share and reflect larger social issues embedded in the aesthetically oriented designs of the Major Corridor Ordinance. As residents complained about the time spent designing the plans and discussing how to protect the "scenic view", an equal number threw their hat in the ring when a CCOBBS member wrote, "It would be interesting to know if there was any discussion concerning the effect of the ordinance."[41] The plans instead of protecting the "rural character" appear now to prescribe a manner for obtaining a cohesive county character, a rural façade. The debate over the design details only further masks central issues and directs the attention away from the effects or potential unintended consequences these plans.

## 3.2 "Values" and the Unintended Consequences

I interviewed a member of a Chatham County commission at the Chatham Marketplace, a local grocery co-operative, located in historic Chatham Mills on the edge of

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[38] CCOBBS "Summary Recommendations" thread begun on 04/15/2009

[39] CCOBBS and Chatlist threads or exchanges were on 03/19/09; 04/15/09; 04/19/09; 07/13/10.

[40] CCOBBS "Business Signage" thread begun on 07/13/10.

[41] CCOBBS "Business Signage" thread begun on 07/13/10.

Pittsboro. The 80 year old former cotton mill now houses several businesses and the large lawn is a site for local music performances and other performing arts. A member of the Appearance Commission suggested we meet for coffee at the Chatham Marketplace, since it was a central meeting point for us both. I arrived early and spent time talking informally to people within store as well as others on the large patio. When I spoke to an employee [Brian] about hanging up my recruitment flyer, he curiously asked me questions and began explaining how he adored Pittsboro and Chatham County. As we spoke, he jotted down the names and email addresses of potential research participants on a torn sheet of paper, a handbill of sorts and explained how Siler City didn't really fit into his conception of Chatham County. This sentiment is one that I frequently encountered in Pittsboro and Northeast Chatham. It wasn't until I walked away that I noticed the image of a blackbird, possibly a Grackle, perched on spool as tugs on a black thread. Boldly surrounding the image were the words, "The Village at Chatham Mills" followed by in downtown historic Pittsboro.

For one brief second I was reminded of my 2nd grade teacher Mrs. Kramer who presented the class large poster sized sheets of paper with information about various birds. Blackbirds were a "nuisance" and the Common Grackle, like Mockingbirds, chattered incessantly and unlike other birds, Blackbirds travel in large, mixed flocks that some call plagues. SS060609 arrived and I had little time to contemplate the image. Although the interview itself was informative, it wasn't until after the interview officially ended and I was straightening some of my papers that our conversation shifted. The torn sheet of paper with the image of the blackbird lay atop my notes, and I commented on the name "the Village at Chatham Mills" and how so many recent developments in the area incorporates the word "village" into their names. It reminds me of the expression "it takes a village…", but that is

odd how these developments now emphasize "owners" or ownership rather than a more commonly accessible community. My interviewee immediately exclaimed that there are no privileges for "renters" and that if you aren't a property owner you have no right or access to the once communal "village" care. In fact, the metaphor of ownership extends into the co-operative business model that many local grocery stores such as Chatham Marketplace use. When joining the co-op, you become an "owner", not a member, and this "owner" status means you have access to a "village" common. You can afford to be a member of the community. A single mother with a "modest income" responded to an individual's call for "upscale grocery stores" and shops in Fearrington Place or Briar Chapel by drawing the parallel between "upscale" and the catch phrase "rural character." She exclaims, "I NEED to be able to shop at "regular" grocery stores that offer affordable prices and accept coupons" and she furthers the argument asking how increasing traffic and congestion in residential communities is going to prevent "urban sprawl" (CCOBBS)[42]. The advantages of being able to afford to be an "owner", shop at "upscale" shops, and to have an option to choose organic when feeding a household on a modest income emerges from arguments against many of the progressive more liberal land use plans.

My discussion with the Appearance Commission member turned to notions of community building and words such as "village" and "Chapel", code words that enhance the sense of belonging to a community or convey ties to specific communities or particular past. These phrases and words not only in the newer housing developments in Chatham County and the Triangle region, but they also appear in shopping centers and business parks. Repeatedly these code words appear and reappear in interviews and in the public discourse on planning future in Chatham County. What struck me at the moment during the interview

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[42] "On Living in Chatham" thread begun on 06/07/08.

and continues to stand out to me are the purely economic practices associated with these seemingly social conceptualizations. The overwhelming presence of the "owner" mentality that underscores private property ownership and excludes "non-owners" from a seemingly public practice must not be overlooked. Incorporation of such capitalistic terminology alongside the nostalgia laden imagery associated with "village life" or the historic elitism of the place such as Chapel Hill underscores an aesthetics of privilege that is perpetuated openly and publicly through an outspoken reimagining of use "value" as an exchange value. The code words re-define our understanding and sense of place and the past.

While land developers and entrepreneurs obviously focus on the bottom line and emphasize the cost and benefit of their decisions, this aesthetics of privilege is not simply about economic value. Fearrington Village stands as certainly one of the most familiar examples to residents in Chatham County and the surrounding areas, but is often treated as an anomaly. Like many people from outside of Chatham County, I had grown familiar with Fearrington Village through its regular advertisements in the New Yorker magazine. Catering to recently retired or semiretired childless couples, Fearrington Village offers inhabitants a peaceful rolling landscape, with a beautiful old silo, pastures filled with Belted Galloway cows and private wooded houses surrounding the small village circle with shops and restaurants. With 2000 residents, the majority were newcomers to North Carolina and moved to Fearrington because as one resident stated on 05/26/09, "It has a reputation. Just look at *Southern Living* or *The New Yorker*." Although the development is located in the South and featured in a magazine about southern lifestyles, one would be hard-pressed to find many Southerners living in this land development. For the most part, the inhabitants, like the current Home Owner Association president are east coast natives or "Yankees" as many

North Carolinians say. The president embraces this approach and even proclaims this status on the Fearrington Village website. Fearrington Village, like many of the so-called "village" developments, caters to middle and upper middle-class people. Shops and stores within the "historic village center" often supplied organic and fair trade goods. In fact one of the largest local co-ops in the region, Weaver Street Market, has a store located in a high-end land development close by. And again, when one joins the co-op, they are called "owners" rather than members. It has always struck me as odd that such a liberally motivated co-op uses the word owners.

The questions that arise for me highlight how the re-appropriation of words and phrases embody the "cultural conflict" and facilitate a deeper division within the larger community. Rather than unifying citizens in Chatham County, the prescriptive plans and the loaded code words or phrases perpetuate a division rooted in class and potentially race influenced aesthetic social values. More specifically, the push during Bunky Morgan's term to approve all land developments mirrors the outwardly aggressive approach of the "farsighted industrialists" in Siler City of the last century, but also embodies what interviewees referred to as a "good ol boy" network. Having never seen a development they didn't like, as many people stated during interviews, the county commissioners between 2002-2006 immediately approved numerous developments and ultimately flooded the market. The corresponding economic down turn left sales within the proposed developments low and/or led to investment and bankruptcy problems for the developers. Unlike the efforts for new industry in Siler City during the 50's, the economic benefit for the county is questionable since the need and thus use value have significantly lowered or overshadowed the exchange value of the stalled subdivisions for the county and residents. On the other end

of the spectrum, there are citizens, mostly referred to as "newcomers" who buy into village and community life in scenic and rural Chatham and vocally oppose the potential consequences of under-zoned or ill defined proposed land developments. These developments endanger both the natural environment, the social and physical surroundings they imagine, as well as potentially lower their property values.

It appears, however, that while the stalled subdivisions may not on a financial level bring an immediate return to the developers or the county, the social impact is unmistakable. The unintended consequences flowing from the potential of such developments momentarily define future use and social value (Harvey 1989: 100). Where need and want, thus the use value, are met, then the exchange value is swept aside. Assessing the success of the developments purely from a monetary standpoint fails to consider the intertwined way use and social value actively impact aesthetic values and thus the future exchange value. The success of people protesting the original Briar Chapel plans has set the stage for other interventions and for stricter guidelines regulating land use and economic growth in the county. The Major Corridor Ordinance is best viewed in terms of these successes as it is the outcome of citizen participation and reflective of the needs and wants of those who actively engaged with land use planning.

A struggle in Chatham revolves around the inability to reconcile the economic value of the landscape with the socio-historic values associated with the landscape. The qualitatively rooted values, the notions and beliefs held by various people or groups about the county, and their rights as citizens seem inextricably linked to the economic worth of the land. Ingold (2000: 194) distinguishes between value as "the denominator of commodities" which enables people to assess the worth of the property. In contrast, he juxtaposes landscapes and

"use-values" as the social properties of "the object that commend it to the project of the user" (Ingold 2000:194). Useful in this discussion is Ingold's clear-cut delineation between land as an object and landscapes as produced through the work of people. In turn this discussion forces me to more intensely question the relationship between the values people associate with the landscape as well as the use and exchange value of the land. Assessing the "values" of a landscape are not in my opinion mutually exclusive acts. Landscapes as background features, the places that surround us or the views that we behold may be bought and sold. As I've argued before, a simple formula does not fully capture the value of the landscape. The aesthetic appreciation, however, does not theoretically rest more firmly in one value over the other. Although the differences do reflect "personal preferences" as the bulletin board posting suggests, the preferences also clearly personify shared social ideals and aesthetic imaginaries.

## 3.3 Economy of Scale as Re-valuation

Nonetheless, the growing commercialization of landscapes, the way economic and commercial desires often drive cultural heritage movements and environmental conservation more generally, cannot be ignored. Ultimately the maintenance of a landscape feature may produce a shared sense of "place" and the members of the Rocky River Heritage Foundation and Chatham Conservation Partners undoubtedly share an emotive and aesthetic attachment to the places and features they fight to preserve. Their ongoing fight to protect the river from unchecked urban developments, industrial-farming practices, and restore the river for pleasure and enjoyment captures their sense of urgency, while also marketing the environment for recreational consumption. Garnering support for the cause moves them to

frame their conservation concerns in terms of benefits and values for the county. The six benefits of preserving and restoring the Rocky River Basin include: an abundance of "fish and wildlife, great recreational opportunities, safer drinking water for residents of western Chatham County, higher property values and more local government revenues" (RRHF 2010: slide 37). In addition, this PowerPoint presentation that introduces the viewer to the issues, ends with an image of clean water flowing over stones in the Rocky River and with the phrase, "Thanks for your help in saving our little corner of "God's creation" (RRHF 2010: slide 42). It isn't that one should feel shocked or surprised that conservation programs present the value of their project in terms of economic and individual benefits. Nor should it come across as odd that they would attempt to appeal to the use value for the larger community. What stands out here is the dual appeal to emotive attachments and the economic use and exchange value. The benefit of the clean water, prevention of environmental degradation, and the protection of disappearing wildlife and an ecosystem, are presented as serving the community by improving property values, tax revenue for the county and offering recreational opportunities. In other words, the "value" of conserving the Rocky River Basin, in order to garner financial support from funding agencies and from the general public, comes down to value as "created by the market and its worth for the public"

The concept value appears in this case as an "economy of scale"; the more inclusive and extensive the process of preserving the "rural character" becomes, the more the tax revenue, commercial enterprise, and property values remain high. In principle, the more all encompassing the land use plans become, the fewer issues we encounter that impede upon the use and exchange value, which will lead to a greater return on investments the county and citizens will see. This economic value of a landscape refers to the quantifiable monetary

worth as an object and as a means for exchange. One may also think of this as the market value of the land—the going price for a piece of property. Yet this economic or market value is intimately connected to socio-historic perceptions and imaginings of these places. Landscapes most often emerge as identity markers constantly in process, some becoming tourist or recreational destinations re-imagined to meet local, regional, national and supranational demands[43]. The Rocky River Basin, with 88% of the river in Chatham County, may be presented as one of the truly unique features of the county as opposed to the Haw River and its tributaries, which cut across Rockingham, Caswell, Alamance, Orange, Chatham, Durham and Wake counties. Both are important to the ecological functioning of the county, but the possibility of presenting the Rocky River as an inherently valuable natural feature of Chatham exists. According to Gudeman (2001), value systems are determined within a social context that reflect shared interests tied to public spaces or a commons[44], a necessity or (perceived) scarcity of particular natural resources, and often the energy invested into the production of the value system. There is nothing inherently valuable about the Rocky River; only within the social context of a particular value system is the Rocky River seemingly valuable. The value placed on the Rocky River is obviously higher in an area where natural estuaries are not as readily available as well as an area heavily dependent on its natural resources, or so it would seem. Likewise, according to this approach, the value of the Rocky River would rise within a context where the financial, social, and environmental investment is high. This foray into the "value context" is particularly important to me, as I

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[43] Chapter 5 covers this topic extensively in relation to the Dutch Green Heart.

[44] I define a *commons* much in the same way as Gudeman (27-28). The mutual inter-dependence of a commons and community, of shared interests not necessarily tied to a physical object or property but rather to social or human desires, is what I mean by commons.

attempt to make sense of how land use plans and public debates have lead to a re-valuation of Chatham's "rural character."

The aesthetic re-valuation of the landscape and the re-inscription of a past into the landscape appears to me a quite noticeable unintended consequence of approaching land use planning in terms of balancing people's effective attachment and the economic value of the land. Contested landscapes often become a site for "re-telling" the past as the claim to control and maintain these landscapes generally acknowledges specific hegemonic claims. Barbara Bender's research on Stonehenge demonstrates how specific hegemonic claims, namely how various institutionalized factions such as archaeologists, historians and English Heritage, restrict access to the landscape by monopolizing the past. Bender's focus is on contested landscapes, landscapes as sites of hegemonic political and economic coercion and domination. By pinpointing *who is* contesting, she offers alternative histories and identifies whose history is *really* being told. In Chatham, the "appearance standards" and land use plans that encourage the development of New Urbanist "villages" may be understood as potentially claiming the "rural character" and re-telling the Chatham's story.

As a result of these re-tellings, the landscape is literally and metaphorically inscribed Stonehenge and the battles or debates essentially establish whose historical re-telling matters most. In Bender's example, English Heritage, restricts access to the site thus enabling what Bender calls, "passive, nostalgic, *heavy*-with-history notions of landscape" (1999: 26). As is the case with Stonehenge, the history of Chatham County's landscape appears less fluid and more polarized in terms of interpretation. With much of the public input into planning documents coming from middle to upper-middle class "newcomers" with roots outside of Chatham, there appear to be an imbalance in how "rural character" is interpreted. Fearrington

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Village plays into similar "heavy with history" nostalgia, despite the fact that very little other than the re-furbished barn, silo, and "Fearrington house" have a historic value. The barn, which is a shell of its original structure, hosts large events and weddings and outwardly re-tells the lands past, albeit gentrified and packaged for modern consumption. The gardens incorporate some recognizable features associated with southern gardens, but lack the informality generally found in farm gardens. Much more reminiscent of the idealized cut parterre gardens that typified elite Southern estates such as Monticello, the gardens at Fearrington Village have, in my estimation, more of an English cottage garden aura.[45] Although the issues are at play in Chatham to some degree, the Dutch Green Heart is a more extreme illustration of how institutionalized forces inscribe the landscape with a historical re-telling that privileges particular socio-historical values and experiences.

Institutionalized forces within new land developments in Chatham exert control in a very real sense over the physical access to community features or public spaces. Groups excluded from access to these spaces or excluded from land use decision making processes will likely frame and present their vision of the landscape in juxtaposition to the hegemonic exclusionary forces. Through active engagement with the institutions that create physical restrictions and limited access to the site itself, the marginalized groups potentially offer an alternative reading of the landscape. The Dutch Green Heart is an excellent example of how marginalized groups position themselves vis-à-vis institutional decisions and offer alternative experiences of the landscape or "other" views of history. In Chatham, marginalized groups or people who feel excluded have not moved beyond the institutional structures in place in an attempt to re-define their status or the landscape. An obvious unintentional outcome of the proposed land use plans could involve residents who perceive themselves as marginalized

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[45] See Appendix 1 for a complete discussion of what constitutes a "southern garden."

and who seek to shift the course of land use planning in the county. Older family farmers and the influx of small local farmers could initiate a shift in tides much like the Green Heart farmers[46]. Just as the idealization of landscape imaginings transform the way people view a region and their place in the region, so too can these imaginings unify marginalized groups and enable them to capitalize on the "value" of the place.

## 3.4 "Balanced for Progress": Farmers in the Dutch Green Heart

The actions and practices of Dutch farmers in the Green Heart who struggled with the impact of restrictive land use plans could offer insight into how marginalized groups offer an alternative reading of the landscape and re-define the issues by drawing attention to their position. Farmers involved in agro-tourism, for example, invite weekend tourists to enjoy "the peace, space and the presence of the open grassy polder landscape[47]" and arrange a host of recreational tours and farm related activities. Through creative marketing, agro-tourism farmers explicitly draw attention to the non-agrarian signs of modernity in their promotional material by staging images to avoid looming electrical lines and yellow trains that speed by every 10 minutes (Figure 7). Having arranged a stay this particular farmhouse in 2004 based on the picturesque website, I was stunned when I first arrived and saw the large electrical grid running in front and next to the house. A few minutes later, as my children and I explored the beautiful garden we were greeted by the sound of a passenger train speeding past at 10 to 15 minute intervals. Together these "traditional" and "modern" images

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[46] Based on interviews, the growing land trust movement, and the popularity of locally grown farm produce, I feel the farmers in the region occupy a unique position in Chatham. Although it is beyond the scope of this research, I feel the tide is clearly changing and that farmers and large landowners are now at a distinct advantage in Chatham County.

[47] Quote taken from brochure from the Tuinhuis Ruige Weide (see also http://www.tuinhuisruigeweide.nl/)

ironically highlight the complexity of what it means to preserve the Green Heart as an idealized, seemingly timeless, polder landscape. Despite train lines and electrical towers crisscrossing the landscape, the Green Heart does, for the most part, feel as if you are far, far away from the surrounding cities.



FIGURE 7: (A-Left) Advertisement image promoting the "idyllic" historical farmhouse and Bed & Breakfast the Tuinhuis Ruige Weide (Courtesy of the Tuinhuis Ruige Weide). (B-Middle) A picture taken from behind the Bed Breakfast, which faces large power lines (Author's personal image). (C-Right) The Bed & Breakfast's property adjoins train tracks (Author's personal image).

The battle to preserve the rural agrarian character of the Green Heart revolves around the preservation of the region as an idealized place at the historic "heart" of Dutch art, commerce and industriousness (van Eeten & Roe 2000). The presentation of the Green Heart as *the* stereotypical Dutch landscape must be understood within its socio-historic context. The Green Heart, approximately 45 km in diameter, bears the physical mark of intensive environmental engineering and these marks, the cattle farms, windmills, narrow canals and dikes, and historic forts, are what the spatial policy plans until 2004 sought to preserve. Unlike national parks and nature reserves, the Green Heart owes its distinct status as the most important "national landscape" to its position as a human made "cultural historic landscape" created through and surrounded by industry (VROM 2001: 148; VROM 2004: 118-119). How farmers deal with socio-economic demands and an affective attachment to the landscape offers direct insight into the political contestation

surrounding the Green Heart. Frequently referred to as the "guardians" of the landscape, the farmers in the Green Heart inhabit a unique position with regard to the Green Heart struggles. The battle to preserve the landscape implies protecting the farmers *within* the landscape. The responsibility of protecting the Green Heart literally falls on the shoulders of the farmers. Yet the farmers, like small farmers across the globe, struggle to make ends meet through traditional farming practices. How the farmers respond on a day-to-day basis to seemingly conflicting demands could shape future perceptions of the Green Heart and warrants further exploration.

In April 2004, a drastic shift in spatial planning occurred as the VROM suddenly decentralized, leaving planning decisions to be decided by provinces, regions, or municipalities. Given this drastic shift from highly rigid national planning to a decentralized localized policy and the chronic shortage of habitable or arable land, farmers in the Green Heart were fearful that rampant land development would consume parts of the region. The fear, however, was not just about "rampant development." Many feared that non-agrarian city folks would suddenly flock to the countryside and purchase large tracts of land and old farmhouses that they could convert or modernize. With the loosening of the highly restrictive planning regulations, farmers eagerly sought to strengthen their alliances with one another in order to improve their position in relation to institutional forces.

Organizations such as "Friends of the Countryside", a national non-profit founded by the one of the largest national media enterprises in the Netherlands, the Katholieke Radio Omroep (KRO), promoted life in rural environments, forged networks among farmers across the country, organized events including the "Week of the Countryside", and published a magazine. In addition, national organizations played a central roll in mobilizing groups beyond their own municipalities

by promoting the value of the Dutch landscape and rural life.[48] In 2004, "Friends of Countryside" organized several events in the Green Heart for their annual national "Week of Countryside" including a mock parliamentary style debate that resembled a popular television show entitled Lagerhuis. At 8:00 PM on a warm June evening, the mock Lagerhuis debate took place on a small family farm next to the train tracks and the village Papenkop. Bleachers of hay were built and the 80 or so participants, mostly farmers or Green Heart business owners, filled the hay bleachers and actively engaged in the debate. The moderator introduced two different topics and the two debaters presented their sharply contrasting standpoints in overly exaggerated ways to the audience. After these two people presented their views, the audience joined in the debate by standing up and stating their views and/or responding to earlier claims. At the end of the allotted time, the audience would loudly applaud in support of the debater they felt "won" the contest. When the moderator presented the second topic, he mentioned that now was the time to talk about "agro-tourism." He quite simply asked the two debaters, "Who owns the countryside, who owns the landscape?" There was no consensus and one debater stated they just needed to sell all the farms to Center Parcs and the other called for a more balanced approach from city-dwellers because "a farm is a farm, and farming is a profession." When the moderator opened the floor for debate, people returned to marketing laced language about "farmers as producers," "consumers," "products," "images," and "entrance fees." Most spoke about the economic implications of increased agro-tourism and few seemed to discuss the aesthetic value of the landscape until one farmer called out:

> "If you want to maintain the landscape, then you need the farmers, but if they don't offer me subsidies to maintain the landscape then I don't think there is anything wrong with earning a few cents on recreationalists."

The debate literally fell apart as everyone began talking at the same time and people in different ways repeated the same argument: "we are the landscape." I often returned to this refrain during

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[48] "Friend of Rural Life" closed its door in May 2006 and is no longer a viable non-profit.

the interviews and discussions following the event, but without respite those being interviewed returned to momentary sound bites about marketing strategies or what others referred to as the "image campaign" stimulated by European Union subsidies (Knol 2003: 3).

The argument that "we are the landscape" coupled with the overtly outspoken discussion of purely marketing terms went hand in hand. The farmers in the Green Heart were quick to form alliances and coalitions and these networks proved invaluable in overcoming or subverting the full impact of the originally plans. In the 1990s, when the Green Heart entered everyday language and farmers increasingly struggled to work within the necessary parameters to earn a living, many turned to supplementary incomes or other jobs and many only farmed part-time on the side. The lack of recreational or public green spaces in the Netherlands, made their position in the landscape pivotal for many people seeking relaxation or an escape from the densely populated urban centers. In a country where everybody bicycles and people drive miles in order to take a Sunday walk in the woods with hundreds of other people, the farmers in the Green Heart quite rightly realized they needed to capitalize on the growing number of people seeking recreational activities in "public" green spaces. Having a "designated" picturesque bicycle path pass in front of your farm was like money in the bank. During the mid 1990s, the Green Heart region went from being a loosely affiliated agrarian area with similar a landscape to a "destination" and much sought after vacation experience. Workshops were held, marketing bureaus jumped at the opportunity, and farmers began brainstorming ways to attract people to their little corner. Traditional walks through the polders turned into "polder safaris," contests for "vaulting over the waterways" now lured large audiences and included intense seminars teaching the layperson "how to vault" and "sleeping on a farm" became a weekend destination for families, parties, and company events. Maintaining the

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landscape and upholding the picturesque nature of the experience allowed people to promote their place as a public space and a common good.

Public green spaces are thus crucial sites in political and economic struggles over landscape aesthetics. Three key components make spaces both "public" and green. First, these are sites, places both material and non-material, that bring people together and that are "open to greater or lesser public participation" (Smith and Low 2007:5-7, 4). Moreover, the incorporation of green features or emphasis on views, scenery, and/or a recreational value qualifies these spaces as distinctively "green". As is the case in the Netherlands, the "public" nature of these spaces range from fully subsidized or government controlled, to open-access civic spaces such as parks and bicycle paths, and to natural or recreational areas accessible for free or even a fee. Likewise, many of these types of public green spaces are also available to differing degrees within Chatham, although spatial planning documents emphasize the creation of public green spaces that are open spaces or corridors that simply provide a "natural" viewshed. In Chatham much of the newly designated public green spaces that are located outside of recent residential developments are generally "buffer zones or "viewsheds." These green buffers or viewsheds protect the visual form of the county without necessarily offering residents access to usable green spaces.

Within *privately* controlled developments such as Fearrington Village and Briar Chapel, the dual social and green nature of public spaces clearly foregrounds a particular class based aesthetic sensibility. The aesthetic sensibility, the essentializing notions of what makes a landscape beautiful-- notions so clearly tied to specific socio-historic class and race-based values-- frequently influence the land use plans within both the private residential developments as well as the larger public sphere. Nevertheless, these aesthetic values

attached to the buffer zones and viewsheds appear in public planning discourse as a seemingly neutral terrain, despite the influence they exert in the realm of public planning decisions and land development. Unlike Chatham, the farmers in the Dutch Green Heart, those who saw their role as the "landscape," fought together to protect and promote the outward appearance of their region. Their struggle to balance the demands of maintaining the landscape, farm life, and economic need were eased considerably when they collectively sought to profit from the recreational wants of city-dwellers. As owners of the land and guardians of the landscape the balance for them came in the form of collective agro-tourism business ventures and as landscape hosts.

A pivotal difference and one that keeps Chatham seemly off kilter relates to excessively cohesive appearance of public green spaces and private property within new residential and commercial land developments. The Major Corridor Ordinance and zoning ordinances offer guidelines and strategies that both intentionally and inadvertently create a visibly unified physical, social, and economic community. The liberal distribution of public green spaces and aesthetic restrictions within these newer developments creates more than "just" a visual barrier between the new land developments and the larger community. These communities produce economically and socially homogenous living conditions that are often in direct opposition with existing towns or neighborhoods (Low 2006: 99)[49]. Compact mixed-use communities and the design standards presented in the Major Corridor Ordinance will undoubtedly limit particular features of sprawl and conserve or re-create a cohesive kind of rural landscape. Likewise, these plans will continue to alter and re-define the "rural character" as well as conceivably changing the socio-economic function of rural life based on

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[49] The 2010 Census as well as preliminary census data collected in 2009, show that particular areas in Chatham County exhibit cohesive social and economic distributions as opposed to other areas in the county such as Pittsboro and Siler Cty.

the particular aesthetic ideals. On a theoretical level, these developments potentially alter the social and economic landscape of a region through aesthetic restrictions that reflect the influx of specific socio-historic and economic values that are not directly tied to families or people with deep roots in the area. The proposed use of buffers and viewsheds in the major planning documents landscape aesthetics does little to alleviate the social, economic or physical divide in the county. The use of these design standards essentially frames this cohesive and rigidly structured view of the landscape as *the* correct view of "rural character."

The aesthetic privileging of *the* "rural character," the push to conserve specific green features and develop others, produces and is produced through hegemonic practices with strong socio-historic class and race components (Duncan & Duncan 2004; Mitchell 2003; Zukin 1991). During interviews, several people who actively fought for stricter regulations or who were members of the Major Corridor Task Force, presented their stance as a question of "right and wrong" ways of planning for future growth in the county. Fearful of the "growth that was about to begin," some intervened because they "knew what we were leaving behind" and "once you have bigger, you will never get back to rural country again."[50] Repeated numerous times during interviews, the goal was to make sure land developers did not determine the form of the county, but to put into place clear regulations that gave them guidelines so that they could do the "right" thing. Most of those fighting for the regulations were relative "newcomers" who moved to the area specifically for its "rural character" and many painfully noted that their experiences growing in urban and heavily suburbanized America made them acutely aware of potential pitfalls. The balance and forethought many sought to insert into planning debates, however, appears to disrupt the debate and exclude the

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[50] Interview on 05/28/09.

economic needs and aesthetic wants of people who lacked a certain social capital from the equation.

In the Netherlands, where the farmers have managed to survive for decades in a highly restrictive spatial framework and where their ties to the land were valued and directly correlated with the landscape, a certain measure of balance emerged for the farmers. The farmers were able to profit from their attachment and the affective attachment that the Dutch have for farmers in the landscape. Chatham, however, faces quite a different set of issues as the socio-economic divide between West Chatham and North Chatham puts the aesthetic desires of the relatively wealthier, better educated "newcomers" at a distinct advantage over longstanding residents and farm families. The decision making process, when shrouded in seemingly neutral language about "maintaining the rural character," enables those with the ability to forge alliances and who share a social imaginary to create a community that maintains their aesthetic and economic self-interests, despite potential negative social and economic repercussions for others (Duncan & Duncan 2004).

# Chapter 4: Good Ol' Boys and Newcomers: Chatham's Social Imaginary

**Someone took a bulldozer to "The Parks" gate entrance and a house**
« on: November 18, 2007, 05:42:58 PM »

I was driving by and there is an abandon bulldozer on top of the gate went right through the gate, took the pillars and bricks everywhere. Had to be kids or a angry employee. It's really a mess and sad that someone would do this! This wasn't any accident just by looking at it (CCOBBS)

The rather unextraordinary thread posted on the Chatham County Online Bulletin Board Service (CCOBBS) launched a virtual battle about the aesthetic properties of residential land developments, class differences in the county, gated communities, and the future of land development and growth in Chatham County. With 135 replies and 10799 views, the discussion spanned several months with active members and numerous guests posting their opinions about the topics. As is often the case in virtual environments such as the CCOBBS, many of the replies pointed fingers and expressed extremely caustic views on the issues, views that the poster would likely not articulate in a face-to-face social situation. However, the thread, as well as CCOBBS posts in general, captures the bitter divide as well as formidable insight into the pervasive social climate in the county. Moreover, the voluntary nature of the participation on the forum and the fact that people repeatedly return to the

debates regardless of whether their views were well received offers insight into how residents envision the county, the issues at stake and their position with it.

Within the thread people immediately took "sides" and suggest that a rather simple act of vandalism is actually equivalent to a subversive insurrection or civil disobedience or even freedom fighters. Name calling included several different references to "morons," rednecks, elitist, liberal, and "Yankees" and the land developments were referred to as "Yankee containment areas," gated communities, and instant villages. Mostly, people expressed a simultaneous since of glee and outrage at the actions of the land developers, "newcomers" and whoever managed to disagree. Emotions ran high as one female explains her stance:

> I think this mindset shows alot about how folks feel about the "construction"....w/o stopping to think of the personal (everyone has to live somewhere) or financial (everyones got to make a living) sides of the issue. It's so much. It's everywhere. It's displacing wildlife, it's screwing my quality of life, personally speaking.(a little, at any rate) IT'S an entity without warmth or personality. It's growth.... it's like a cancer, and some folks want it cut out. No, this is not funny. But it's not nearly as bad as things are going to get when the water isn't here. The bubble has burst, for now anyway. W/O water.....we're all bulldozed, metaphorically speaking of course. It's hard to respect an industry that seems to have so little respect for the county we live in (CCOBBS)[51].

This person, who in a later thread identifies herself as non-native to Chatham and an "other" and whose user name suggests a potential affiliation with Duke University, reflects on the personal impact the environmental damage has on the county as she passionately sweeps the the economic issues aside. "We're all bulldozed" according to her, when land developers don't respect the environment and the county. Another "newcomer," the early morning jogger who "who found the mess that morning," vehemently conveys a fear and frustration with the thread as it presents her neighbors and the area in such a negative light. She

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[51] CCOBBS thread begun on 11/20/07

addresses the class issue head-on and ponders what is wrong with being "rich" and argues

that "class envy is just as pathetic as those who would rather live in gated communities and

not get to know their neighbors" (CCOBBS 12/06/07). She like others is offended by the

assumption that all newcomers are rich Yankees, just as some who expressed "glee" at the

bulldozer incident reacted vehemently to the suggestion that they were "poor" or uneducated.

One frames their disdain for the assumption that rural means poor as he explains:

> Most folks here in the rural area are very well off and built a house on 5-10 acres of
> land, it's nothing personal about wealth, some folk just don't like the idea of these
> instant cities being built in a rural area's when we already got a water shortage
> (CCOBBS 12/06/07).

While he does not align himself with the native Chatham side, his argument references

values and ideals most commonly associated with the environmentally conscious

"newcomers." Within this thread are numerous markers and indicators that identify in

nuanced ways the posters social position. These markers, the words, phrases, and concepts

enable people to identify particular values and present their beliefs and values within an

interpretative framework.

In this chapter, I examine how value-laden ideals and images that underscore the way

people make sense of their social existence materialize within public discourses and

institutions. These emerging social imaginaries further perpetuate and re-define the long-

standing division within Chatham County by privileging cultural practices that underlie "new"

or educated, middle-class aesthetics. Namely, I analyze the way planning documents, public

hearings, and other public forums such as newspapers and blogs unite people within a

collective framework by drawing on common interpretations of concepts and language, and

building upon older texts, values, or institutions. This collective framework, an interpretive

community, shares a reading of the texts and naturalizes and legitimizes this particular

reading. Individual and collective actions simultaneously construct and frame thoughts by applying and re-using concepts that reference new interpretations and meanings. Within these interpretations are embedded social and moral expectations and assumptions, a social imaginary that manifests itself in public conflict.

This chapter presents an analytical framework for understanding the mechanisms that maintain a conscious focus on the unquestionable division and divert attention away from the social imaginaries that maintain the divide. This analytical framework offers a way to emphasize the public debates and written discourse as well as recognize the underlying principles that fuel the social imaginary and unite interpretive communities. Specifically, I examine the central principles set forth in official public planning discourse and how these principles transform debates appearing on public forums. The transformation, as revealed in the public battle over Briar Chapel and discussed in interviews, clearly exacerbated the perceived division in Chatham County and set the tone for both future land use planning and avenues for social protest or activism. Analyzing the events, the documents as texts, and the interpretation of the people involved in terms of intertwined social imaginaries allows me to avoid a causal description of the battle. Moreover, this analysis offers insight into the implicit senses of right and wrong as well as the moral order of things, which silently arouses the social imaginaries.

## 4.1 Envisioning Divides, Approaching an Imaginary

The conflict in Chatham is not just a reflection of differing political or economic values. The emphasis on group characterizations, such as left wing/right wing, obscures the multiple ways that people think, see, and perceive the issues. The conflict is intertwined

within a framework of socio-cultural perceptions and interpretations that simultaneously produce the differences, while also fortifying alliances or building communities. To understand the process that sustains and maintains the "cultural conflict" involves moving beyond the labeling of views or the explicit identification and description of the standpoint or group. The individual positioning of key figures may superficially reflect seemingly straightforward historical antecedents or political ties, but the labels, as a product, are upon closer examination, always up for interpretation and always *in* process.

The labels are not static and they change in meaning, content and authority over time. While the process of interpretation rests on the individual ability to make sense of a text or experience, these understandings are mediated by the individual's participation in multiple communities of interpretation within specific social contexts. In other words, the process of identification is more complex than the label of "newcomer", "good ol' boy", "right wing", or "liberal" suggests. While these labels seem to capture a shared vision, these are products of interpretation that are embedded within collective practices and social institutions. The understandings are social constructs and rely on a person's reading and interpretation of the issues, as well as interactions on ideational, personal, and social levels. When discussing the issues in Chatham, participants often referred to "others" using labels meaningful to them or labeled themselves in terms of how "others" view them. The identification process appeared to position them in terms of how they understood their place within Chatham and in relation to "others" in the county.

During interviews, when asked I asked participants how long they have lived in Chatham County most non-native residents responded first with statements such as "I'm a "newcomer" officially" followed by the number of years they lived in Chatham (052609LH,

052809RS, 061909JP). The constant refrain "I'm a newcomer" did not seem to reflect how they thought of themselves as much as it reflected their position or location within the debates. Interestingly, southerners or North Carolina natives never referred to themselves as "newcomers" and most often they would preface their response with a disclaimer such as "I grew up in Burlington" or "I lived in Charlotte as a child." A woman who identified herself in an earlier post as hailing from Charlotte reflected on a poetic blog about the peaceful "rural character" of the county by beginning her response with "I don't know much about this newcomer to Chatham" (CCOBBS 06/07/08). People referenced being "southern" or growing up in North Carolina, but did not seem to embrace the status of "newcomer" even if they aligned with the newcomers on planning issues. The implicit justification that they weren't really "newcomers" colored their position vis-à-vis both sides of the debate. Whereas outspoken "newcomers" often justified their stance by emphasizing how they consciously chose to move to the area, they also emphasized a parallel thought process; smart growth and pre-emptive land use planning relied on intentionality and conscious forethought. To describe ones situation in terms of conscious decision-making and choice as opposed to a natural unfolding of circumstances, as someone who was born and raised in place or who ended up in an area due to circumstances, speaks to how those involved approached their role within the debates.

At the forefront was their explicit presentation of the issues and the way they overtly deployed or appropriated familiar concepts and linked them to a shifting set of beliefs or experiences. Protecting the "rural character" involved identifying aesthetic preferences groups associated with "rural character" and explicitly linking these preferences in public debates. Visibly, the labels used to describe the debate captured the county divide and these

labels acted as outwardly identifiable markers or codes associated in general terms with their viewpoint. "Rural character" and "newcomer" both stand for something more than just the look of the landscape or a non-native resident in Chatham. Identifying the "rural character" that in need of protection and labeling oneself as a "newcomer," however, do not capture the multiple ways that people reinforced their vision of the "rural character" or their beliefs and values as relative newcomers through everyday practices.

On a social level, what participants rarely addressed were the implicit, ingrained ways that they personified their understandings of the concepts, labels, and aesthetic preference. Nor did they relate these implicit understandings to a collective moral order that their practices or understandings embodied. The emphasis by participants on overt or empirical ideas, institutions, beliefs or values in defining their position, underscores the necessity of addressing the *implicit* social imaginary. The concrete way that the participants frame their position obscures the more nuanced subtext that validates emergent thoughts and actions, unites a community, and makes their explicit understandings appear even more meaningful. Inflammatory name-calling claims attention and allows the more abstract ideas and conceptualizations, the shared subtext that actually unites, to go unnoticed. As with the "newcomers" who view their own actions as "intentional," this shared subtext carries with it a meter by which others can measure their own position.
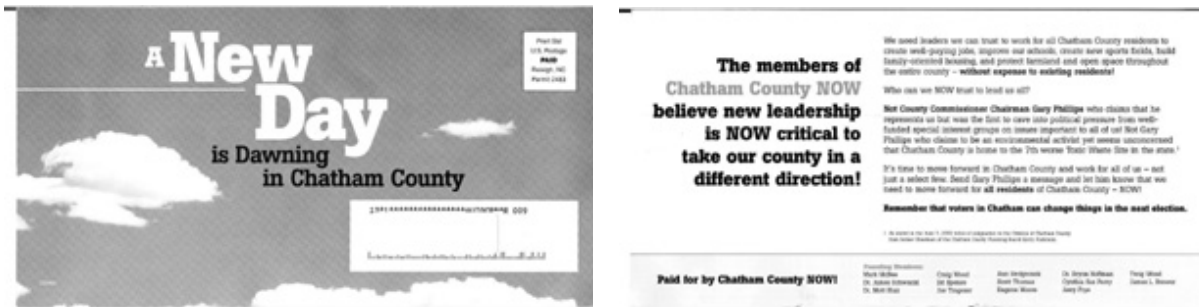
FIGURE 8: This mailing with an image of a blue sky calls for the defeat a liberal pro-environmental county commissioner and the election of a conservative real estate developer (Publicly distributed brochure courtesy of ChathamNOW).

As seen in the defamatory advertisement, the call "to take our county in a different direction" and allow "progress for everyone" is juxtaposed to a critique of then slow-growth county commissioner Gary Phillip who the flier accuses of having special economic interests. By voting in the next election the card states, you'll "send Gary Phillip a message and let him know that you've had enough of his double talk". While the Chatham County NOW flier is particularly harsh and borders on slander, it also reflects very common political practices and campaign strategies found in the United Sates. On the surface, the overt message appears to mirror obvious ideas institutionalized in the nation's two party system that pits the liberal left against the conservative right. This reading seems relatively straightforward when viewed within the framework of current political advertising strategies. Upon closer look, however, the flier like much of the public debates and rhetoric in Chatham County simultaneously strengthens the divide while obscuring the analogous ways that both sides deploy and construct a similar implicit ideological stance.

The rhetoric and imagery in the flier reference progress, sunny skies, and a new day, stark modernist artwork is reminiscent more generally of the often-idealized 50s. More specifically, it implicitly references Chatham's and Siler City's campaigns during the 40's and 1950's to move the county and city forward by encouraging industrial growth and

beautifying the region. The stress during these past campaigns in Chatham was twofold. On one hand, "far-sited industrialists" such as FJ Bowling courted industrial development by increasing water and sewage capacity as well as strengthening the regional infrastructure. On the other hand, prominent townspeople, namely white women, encouraged people of color and mill or factory workers to "clean up" their lives, their community, and to follow the lead of the white middle-class citizens (Siler City 1963: Industrial Development Film). The beautification projects were a call to action to all citizens and they sought to improve the social and economic appeal of the region. Similarly, the Chatham County NOW flier calls upon individuals to make a difference, to change the course of the county by practicing their rights as citizens, and to improve the county for everyone. Do your part as a citizen and make the county a better place now and in the future. Outwardly, the flier appeals to voters tired of special interests influencing county decisions by offering a pleasant image of blue skies and a "new day".

The flier juxtaposes the common right/left divide, while blurring the lines between ideas and beliefs that simultaneously reinforce and diminish the assumed division. In other words, the flier, as an example, overtly calls for changes by underscoring the obvious rhetorical differences. The aggressive "call" for change reinforces a divide, but overshadows the shared beliefs and associations; the call for change minimizes the shared subtext that actually unites both sides. The emphasis is on the division between the questionable practices of a slow growth environmentalist who allows special interests to guide him and the proposed plans of real estate developers and prominent businessmen who seek clarity and reform in county level decision-making. Ironically, when Gary Phillips, the slow growth county commissioner, lost his bid at re-election, Chatham County faced a "new dawn" of

unrestrained real estate development and citizen outrage because of the lack of transparency in county decision-making. The exact complaints that ChathamNOW leveled at Gary Philips in the flier are ultimately the exact complaints that organizations such as the Chatham Coalition and Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities (CCEC) lodged against ChathamNOW supported candidates. While emphasizing the *division* is one way of framing the issues, as in this example, this emphasis is an outgrowth of a social imaginary and not the cause of the divide. This emphasis is tautological in nature and lacks explanatory power as well as analytical depth.

## 4.2 Social Imaginary and Interpretative Communities

Social imaginaries are more than just shared ideas, institutions, symbols and social practices. It is not just the call to vote, the rhetoric reflecting an idealized past, or the political system that are social imaginaries. Rather social imaginaries enable ideas, institutions, or symbols and produce "the practices of society" through individual sense making (Taylor 2002: 1). The way people envision or *imagine* their place in society and their interactions and expectations of others are social imaginaries; they are "common understandings that make possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy" (Taylor 2002: 106). These commonalities, or the perception of commonalities, enable collective, social practices that legitimize explicit expectations as well as implicit moral assumptions (Taylor 2002: 106,107). The shared or common nature of the imaginaries normalizes an individual's outlook and beliefs within a specific social context and this sense of a shared outlook then enable social practices that infuse public life with meaning and legitimacy (Taylor 2002:106-107; Gaonkar 2002: 4, 11). On a superficial level, the divide in Chatham mirrors the social

imaginary as people clearly envision their place in the county and this quite obviously is reflected in their interactions and expectations of others. The division or imagined division, however, acts as a lightening rod and absorbs the brunt of the attention while simultaneously diverting the threat away from the underlying institutions, ideas, or symbols.

For example, retirees from New York seeking tranquility and a natural surrounding or highly educated middle class young couples working in the Triangle move to Chatham with particular expectations and assumptions. For the most part, the expectations and assumptions revolve around a quaint community, wooded lots, and limited commercial developments. These views and beliefs that were relatively absent to the county when RB Fitch created Fearrington Village, since occupy a central position in the public debates. Although the influx of people into Chatham is hardly uniform— as age, gender, sexual orientation, economic situation, and education vary greatly— congruent assumptions and expectations about the "nature" of the region emerge. The assumptions and expectations are visible through their individual social practices and configure their recent collective actions. For example, ongoing arguments regularly appear on the Chatham Chatlist about supporting the "local" economy and these arguments usually revolve around how one defines "local business". When a mobile espresso truck began selling coffee in a vacant dealership parking lot in Pittsboro, the Chatham Chatlist exploded with accusations of how these outsiders were not paying taxes, were stealing business from more established coffee establishments, failed to support or show an "interest" in the local economy, and lastly, how their "ugly truck" was an eyesore.[52]

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[52] This ongoing discussion appeared in the following Chatham Chatlist messages: 12/13/09, 12/16/09, 12/18/09, 12/20/09.

In an area with a newly thriving local food economy, an influx of sustainable business technologies, and Maybury-esque store fronts, these "mobile gypsy vendors" or "travelling businesses" were for many people out of place. This particular argument emphasized the public way those arguing drew on assumptions and expectations about the region, American ideals, taxes, and what physically does or doesn't belong in the region. Even in a period of time where virtual, online businesses and telecommuting are common experiences, the implicit standpoint in this Chatham Chatlist exchange is that a business owns or leases property and is part of a concrete community. It exemplifies the aesthetic assumptions by a large number of people about what belongs in Chatham. A mobile vendor set up in an abandoned or vacant car dealership is not a welcomed site and underscores how other individuals also share these views about what constitutes local. The seemingly individual practice of "posting" opinions or views to the Chatham Chatlist and Chatham Bulletin Board, offer a space for particular beliefs to take root and for collective actions to form. It also simultaneously offers a space for individuals to identify with both the explicit statements a person makes as well as parallel implicit meanings. Posting on these online forums is an explicit act that positions the person posting within the framework of the debate. In Chatham County, the assumptions and expectations of the "newcomers" as well as the longstanding residents congeal through these very public practices and actions. Although many people undoubtedly share views about the issues and do not engage in the online forums or public debates, this research focuses solely on the public practices associated with planning issues. Within this explicit, public framework the perceived positioning intensifies the divide and polarizes. As a result the underlying symbols, institutional structures, and systemic beliefs are swept to the side. One must question whether the arguments genuinely are about mobile

vendors, unattractive buildings, or "local" businesses or to what degree the veiled sentiments, symbols, and beliefs are the heart of the debate?

The implicit or frequently veiled values and beliefs that fuel the battle in Chatham emerge in this research as a conflict *over* the belief in individual property rights and a shifting moral agenda that nourishes and sustains this particular social imaginary. I conceive of property rights broadly as the legal authority, rights, or entitlements that individuals have to property. Property, both private and public, includes real property such as land and personal property such as objects, things, and possessions owned by an individual. Property rights more specifically, entail the "right" to use and/or to determine how one uses real property, personal property, or publicly governed or held under public governance. In other words, property rights, either the ownership or possession of property and the right or legal authority to determine how the private property or public property is utilized or managed, is a central social imaginary that nourishes and maintains the debate in Chatham County.

Although the division appears in interviews and public discourse as a battle between individual wants and needs with regard to land use planning or even against particular individual values about the land, the division is inherently linked to American beliefs in individual rights and most notably, individual property rights (Burton 2002). These property rights unify the material economic concerns of the residents with their social and political ideological views and act as shared imaginary; a social way of envisioning the issues that allows a person to simultaneously make sense of the debates by using this shared imagining. Citizen participation in the planning process, public debates, and online contributions are explicitly presented as democratic acts or first amendment rights and the division in the county does not reflect a disagreement about the right to property since this right is viewed in

unambiguous terms. The division in the county resides for many in differing interpretations and understandings of *what* their property rights are or entail and how these shared meanings both unite and divide. It is the implicit notion of property and ownership that underlies much of the aesthetic debate.

Under the common banner of "freedom of speech" and civic activism, citizens on both sides of the division have challenged the public planning process. Most notably, the newer transplants openly questioned the planning ordinances and the practices at county hearings and simultaneously examined and appropriated longstanding language used in planning documents. As pointed out, theses "newcomers" presented beliefs and practices prominently visible in the Chatham NOW flier in order to defeat the candidates supported by Chatham NOW in the next election. The critiques of the "Shot of Spro" truck strongly resembled the arguments made about the "newcomers". In essence, many don't have ties to the area and moved out of personal self-interest in order to benefit from the low cost of land and taxes, and ultimately have driven the land prices, taxes, and the cost of living up. Few actually work in Chatham County and many critiquing these "newcomers" complain about their negative impact on the business economy. All of this disenfranchises the less affluent longstanding inhabitants who were rapidly outnumbered in the early 1990s. These "newcomers" are, like the Shot of Spro truck, "out of place" to many of the Chatham old guard.

Theoretically, this social imaginary, the belief in individual rights and property rights with its shifting moral imaginary, "occupies a fluid middle ground between embodied practices and explicit doctrines" (Gaonkar 2002: 11). In a very real sense, a social imaginary represents both the understandings and practices embedded in a collective *habitus* as well as

the social forms or forces that emerge from them. These forces and forms that residents identify as right or wrong, what I call the shifting moral agenda, and belief in individual rights emerge from the collective *habitus*. The imaginary emerges from the shared *habitus,* which simultaneously sustains the shift and firmly underscores the desire to uphold individual rights within Chatham. As an old family farmer explained in a news article about the proposed Major Corridor Ordinance:

> "You never know when you might need to sell a piece of land or something," said Charles Lutterloh, whose family farm is off N.C. 87. The Lutterloh family has owned the property since the late 1700s, but he said the operation now barely breaks even, forcing the family to run a trucking business on the side to make a living. The growth plan would eat into potential profits if he wanted to sell some of his land, Lutterloh said. "Developmental costs would be dramatically increased," he said. "It's just taking individual property rights away from landowners" (Hartness 2009).

For this farmer, the zoning regulations unduly restricted his property rights and entailed dire economic consequences. It isn't a life shattering revelation to claim that a staunch belief in individual rights and property rights is a central imaginary for Americans or more specifically for inhabitants of Chatham County. While Lutterloh argues that the proposal has significant financial consequences for larger landowners, an active member of the Major Corridor Task Force and a County Commissioner argues that it won't make land less valuable, but that it would "protect the county's rural character" and thus stabilize the value of land in the county (Hartness 2009). This example of the shift moral agenda and of contrasting views of property rights consistently slides to the forefront of land use arguments in Chatham County; nevertheless, these contrasting understandings and practices are rarely receive attention.

Yet when understood through this dynamic, circular relationship, a social imaginary differentiates itself from Bourdieu's *habitus* or from other products of social life. Social

imaginaries are "ways of understanding the social that become social entities themselves"—hence ideas, institutions, and symbols-- that mediate common practices and common understandings of social life (Gaonkar 2002: 4). As such they influence embodied, collective practices that both produce and sustain social forms and forces by instilling these practices and social entities with meaning and legitimacy. In other words, the belief in individual rights or property rights and the desire to right a perceived social injustice or change the ethical environmental values of a region is not only a way of viewing the social issues, but it simultaneously *becomes* the social issue. Preserving the "rural character" and the aesthetic preferences in Chatham became a means for maintaining the value; the aesthetic approach to the county is a way of viewing and making sense of changes in Chatham County and a reason many settle in the area. Preserving the "rural character" is legitimized and upheld through institutional forces and these specific aesthetic preferences act as a marker that reinforces the shared values and sustains the social imaginary. These explicit beliefs and practices privilege particular social entities or practices and infuse them with meanings that are legitimized through the shared, public debates. To argue that "smart growth" is necessary and that it will protect the "rural character" of the county privileges a particular kind of experience with the landscape as well as specific uses of the land. This explicit way of understanding or viewing the landscape is simultaneously codified in institutions as a social entity and embedded in implicit moral agendas.

Of particular interest in Chatham are the very public and contentious ways that these social imaginaries fueled public planning debates. The explicit arguments and standpoints, thus the rancorous debates that act as lightening rods, overshadowed the implicit moral assumptions and expectations that both sustain and become the social imaginaries. In

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particular, the planning debates that emerged following the submission of the original Briar Chapel development plans angered residents of Fearrington Village, the abutting property owners, and lead to the formation of the Chatham Citizens for Effective Communities (CCEC). When RB Fitch, the founder and developer of Fearrington Village, drew homeowners together and initiated a call to arms, he did so out of concern for the community he created. Property values and life in the community would certainly change and not in a positive way for Fearrington Village, if a visible, abutting development interfered with the peaceful, idealized community he had created. By bringing introducing outspoken community members to the project, he acted to protect investments and private property. The issues environmental issues and the concerns that would negatively impact the "rural character" of Fearrington Village would also negatively impact the property values and rights of others in the area. The CCEC quickly began voicing dissent and drew attention to the planning documents as well as the Chatham County Board of Commissioners public hearings. The process by which the citizens began actively engaging in public debates by aligning with like-minded people underscores how they used the dominant planning language and the documents as authoritative tools for legitimizing their value-laden ideals. As mature, mostly retired and highly educated middle to upper middle class residents, most understood how to successfully navigate through institutional structures and make sense of the formal documents. In fact, the members of the CCEC organized a Citizen's College, where they periodically trained and guided other concerned citizens in filing complaints and navigating through the bureaucratic channels.

Stanley Fish's theory of multiple "interpretative communities" is useful in approaching the implicit assumptions by focussing on the text and the reading experiences

that pulls together individual readers through their common interpretations (Fish 1981, 1989). He emphasizes the process by which individual interpretations signify larger social and cultural practices and that the individual's "point of view or way of organizing experiences" belongs to communities who produce and consume knowledge and mediate behavior (Fish 1989: 142). Accordingly, interpretive communities draw on pre-defined ideas that normalize expectations and govern behaviors by offering the individual a framework for understanding the texts. The texts and the responses elicited are meaningful to those within the community. The different ways of understanding the planning documents, which are related to a specific interpretive community, play only one part in the divisions in Chatham County and the battle over Briar Chapel. Again, it isn't just that people are reading the documents differently and that those readings embody specific values or beliefs. Rather, the issue is that particular readings are granted interpretive authority and legitimized. As with the social imaginary, this interpretive authority carries with it explicit assumptions and expectations and an implicit moral order. Those individuals who differ in their reading of the texts and issues, who fall outside of the interpretative community and lack the interpretive authority, are silenced.

## 4.3 Conflict, Labels, and Interpretative Authority

In a serious tone Mr. Everson explained, "The guy who put up the Confederate soldier in Pittsboro in 1906 was a *prophet*." I paused briefly, not wanting to offend, but also not certain how to position myself as I anticipated a religiously tinged response to my question about the Siler City and Pittsboro divide. "Confederate statues face due north. That statue faces slightly northeast, towards Chapel Hill because he knew where the next invasion was coming from." Without hesitation, we both laughed quite loudly. Although clearly stated

in jest, 062209TE accurately captures what he referred to earlier in the interview as a "cultural conflict" within the county. The population growth in the Northeastern portion of Chatham County during the 1980's and the continued influx from Chapel Hill, Durham and Cary underscore what many refer to as a "good ol' boy" and "newcomer" divide. The growth of an educated middle class in North Chatham over recent years is juxtaposed to the increasing Hispanic population working as unskilled labor. Both sides label the "other" using a specific socio-geographic point of reference such as Chapel Hill and the Old South and these points of reference have quite distinct historic components.

For the former county commissioner, the divide embodies longstanding historical and economic divisions that pit the "liberal activists" in the Northeast against the "salt of the earth" type people in the Western part of the county.[53] The "liberal activists" represent the non-Southern entities that moved to the region and Pittsboro and Northeastern Chatham, more generally. They profit from their proximity to wealthier surrounding areas and a direct connection exists between the adjacent Chapel Hill, Durham, Research Triangle Park, and Raleigh area and decidedly middle-class and educated who flock to the "rural." According to the most recent US Census Data (2010) over 80% of the population in North and Northeaster Chatham work outside of Chatham County and this stands in stark contrast to the relatively low percentage of residents in West Chatham who work elsewhere. The significant demographic differences between Northern and Western Chatham contribute greatly to division. Recently ranked as having the third highest per capita income in North Carolina, Chatham County outwardly appears quite affluent (Chatham County website).

The people who vocally opposed the development of Briar Chapel and favor the Major Corridor Ordinance, such as the founders of the Chatham Coalition and Chatham

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[53] Interview with Chatham County planner on 06/10/09.

Citizens for Effective Communities (CCEC), are in general highly educated professionals who moved from the Northeast or Midwest to North Carolina. While some of those interviewed relocated to the county over 40 years ago and some are natives to the South, many participants in this research moved to the area in the late 80s up through 2000. Many are retired and most women, namely the Caucasian women, had graduate degrees. These "newcomers" live for the most part in Northeast Chatham or Pittsboro and form a relatively homogenous group based on education standards and socio-economic class. Missing from the research were representative numbers of "newcomers" between 25-45 who also settled into the area for work or financial reasons, but who aren't actively engaged with the issues[54]. With free time after retiring, the knowledge of "how" to make change, and the time available to actively invest in the issues, these "newcomers" effectively altered the form and content of earlier debates. Speaking out at public forums as well as educating the citizens of Chatham about impending plans and coordinating dissenting voices in response to the plans, breathed new life into the existing "cultural conflict". Likewise, it brought the longstanding county divide to the forefront as the battle over Briar Chapel challenged planning approaches and guidelines for the entire county. The battle over Briar Chapel changed the planning process from that time forward and gave residents, as one actively engaged participant expressed, "…the clout to be able to influence developments." The political "clout" wielded by concerned residents, namely in the Northeast, over the last 10 years intensified the perceived division within the county and also put planning procedures into motion.

Although the divide in Chatham obviously has relevant historical antecedents, the current division reflects a more nuanced positioning vis-à-vis the public planning documents

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[54] Many from this age group may not actively engage because they are with jobs or children, and have less time to devote to the causes. Many of these people are, however, owners and supporters of local businesses and embody similar values as described in this chapter.

and public discourse. The language used in these public documents and on public forums, such as the Chatham Chatlist, Chatham Online Bulletin Board Serviceor published op-ed newspaper articles, bolsters older alliances and creates newer virtual communities. In particular, the planning documents offer the reader a text and guidelines that may appear concrete, but often lack clear definitions and explanations. The ambiguous appeals to "preserve the rural character," "protect viewsheds," and "promote local businesses" (CCO 2004) act in subtle ways as markers and a call to arms. The more subtle polarization depends on an individual reading of the text and functions as a catalyst that locates individuals within collective frameworks.

The explicitly shared values or beliefs appear to overshadow the original conduit or marker that united individuals by privileging the collective as defined by the shared traits. The push in Northeast Chatham to support local businesses, for example, focuses on ownership rather than employment; in other words, a locally owned sandwich shop with 2 employees is praised on public forums over a locally owned franchise with 6 employees The difference between "locally owned" and locally owned is subtle. The uses of the terms, as well as other key conduits, are central organizing themes that simultaneously align and divide the county as "local" versus local. These alignments are subsequently understood and presented under a more general rubric with concrete characteristics and not

In search of country living, many over the last 40+ years are drawn to Chatham's greenery as a retreat from the city and urban growth or their demanding jobs. These so-called "newcomers", unlike the "newcomers" in past centuries, signify a critical shift in values that arose with the arrival of Vietnam draft dodgers and the back to the earth movement in the

late 60's and early 70s (CCOBBS)[55]. Eclectic enclaves such as Blue Heron Farm, an "intentional community" comprised of approximately 15 different households set on farmland once owned by the Lutterloh family[56], prospered (www.bhfar.org/vision). The Northeast and Pittsboro mirrored the growing social consciousness embedded in environmental and social justice movements since the 70's, as well as more recent alternative economic choices and "soft consensus decision making" (Estill 2008: 207). As Estill, the founder of Piedmont Biofuels explains in his book on economic alternatives in Chatham, "soft consensus" is decision-making is guided by causes and opinions of people who care about the issue at hand and is much like the Haw River Assembly's approach to activism as "empowerment through chaos" (Estill 2008: 207). As he states, "If you don't have an opinion on a decision, you stay out of the debate" and as an active voice in Chatham's participatory decision-making, he like many of the "newcomers" are quite vocal about their opinions (Estill 2008: 207).

The "soft consensus" and "empowerment through chaos" approaches personify implicit assumptions embedded in a social imaginary that draws a certain kind of "newcomer" to Chatham. Articles written in progressive publications such as the regions Independent Weekly often laud these efforts and this approach:

> Through the combined efforts of the state and a nonprofit conservation group called the Haw River Assembly, the banks above the dam remain a haven for a warm, summer day. That's how Chatham County is: There are things here worth preserving and advocating, and there are enthusiastic, creative people with the willpower to do it (Currin 2007).

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[55] CCOBBS "An Outsider's History".

[56] Ironically, it is Charles Lutterloh who was interviewed in several news articles about his view of the Major Corridor Ordinace. In line with the Chatham Conservative Voice (CCV) and th John Locke Foundation publications, Lutterloh argued that the cash poor farmers would suffer from the devaluation of their property.

Even when these articles aren't expounding upon public debates or the decision-making process in the county, they often present the area as a scenic haven for the artistically and socially minded by emphasizing the grassroots movements such as the Shakori Hills music festival and the Chatham Arts Incubator or the more recent boom in sustainable, local business such as the Chatham Marketplace and Piedmont Biofuels (Currin 2007). People with the "willpower" to initiate change attract like-minded supporters who choose to follow those with strong opinions or voice their strong opinions in debates. This increase in co-local operatives and other initiatives geared towards building a sustainable local economy, such as the introduction of the Plenty, a local currency cooperative in the North Carolina Piedmont that many "locally owned" businesses now accept. The growth of these businesses and business practices and the emphasis in the progressive press signals the shift in social consciousness occurring in many politically progressive areas across the United States (Estill 2008). This shift turns citizens into activists or engaged participants and just as the co-operatives turn members or consumers into owners and supporters. Within this context, the act of buying an apple, eating out at the Pittsboro General Store, and visiting the Haw River Assembly's Stream Watch station carries social and political implications. Within this context property rights and personal property seem to indicate an opinion, a "soft consensus" and mark a shift in public participation in the debates.

In contrast to the socially conscious "locally owned" movements, Siler City and Western Chatham, traditionally dependent on large industrial operations and agriculture, struggle economically as these businesses are rapidly disappearing. With the booming Hispanic population, the loss of industry and the beleaguered industrial poultry and hog farms, there are few employment opportunities to support either unskilled or skilled laborers.

Unlike the Northeast, Western Chatham attracts few people from the Triangle and depends on local businesses and commerce to meet the employment needs of the residents. A new chain or box store, such as a Walmart, potentially leads to 100+ new retail jobs within 1-5 years, but may result in a loss of possibly 50 retail jobs as other retail businesses close (Basker 2005: 174-183). The almost immediate increase in minimum wage jobs must be weighed against the long-term impacts. Priorities for economic development in Western Chatham, the emphasis on increased jobs and immediate personal and business revenue, seem at odds with those presented in Northeastern Chatham. Research brings into question the positive economic impact of "big-box" stores such as Walmart and links the noticeable presence of Walmart to increased family poverty on a county wide level (Goetz and Swaminathan 2004: 4). While the introduction of a new store may increase jobs, it is questionable whether the increase in jobs brings in new money or simply re-circulates money with a minimal impact on the local economy[57].

Many residents in Western Chatham question whether the restrictions in the Major Corridor Ordinance (2009) coupled with the decline of businesses and potential employers, will inhibit new businesses, namely sizable employers, from settling in the area. Will these appearance standards make it too expensive for lower end establishments to start up or will it lead more higher end specialty chains opening in the region? As a well known conservative voice on Chatham's Online BBS writes:

> The proposed Major Corridor Ordinance will stand to make the property owners located in "nodes" of development wealthy because their land will be marketable - an estimated 7% of Chatham residents. My understanding is that much of the 'nodes" are full at this point anyway (which is why what's left would be so valuable). The remaining areas of the Major Corridors of Chatham *could* be Commercially

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[57]The parameters and standpoints are important in this chapter because they support an analysis of how people position themselves with regard to the language and build a community of believers/followers.

marketable areas, but revenue opportunities will be lost on the local Chatham business person. Also certain to suffer will be the families who intended that pass the property in these areas on to their families. The only people who will be able to afford the time and cost of development and zoning requirements as a result of passing the MCO, will be national companies. Some won't even come because the aesthetics restrictions will be so limiting, that even corporations will not want to build a business that will have to be hidden, be not as accessible and also have to maintain a appearance that will be restricted by universal requirements to all Chatham businesses - not unique to theirs (CCOBBS).[58]

The poster draws together central threads of an argument about economic viability and property rights, refrains that are repeatedly voiced on these online forums. The aesthetic restrictions and the "preservation of the rural character" weaken the commercial appeal to outside businesses as well as lower property rights by limiting the use of the land. This post captures the wants and needs of people who are both socially and geographically separated by the conflict.

In this sense, many opposed to the more restrictive land use plans are arguing that these plans grant interpretative authority to the "newcomers" and those behind such ordinances. Protecting the "rural character" is re-imagined in terms of building uniform and cohesive developments that do not diminish the "green" nature of the county. By explicitly proposing to protect the aesthetic value of the "rural character" through prescriptive, uniform designs those proposing the ordinance are given the implicit power to refuse or deny plans that do not meet their aesthetic ideals. Although preserving the "rural character" has been a longstanding planning concern in Chatham, the debates surrounding Briar Chapel and the Major Corridor Ordinance demonstrate a shifting moral agenda. The social beliefs and values shared by those who originally spoke out against rampant residential developments now stand ready to determine what is rightfully meant by "rural character."

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[58] CCOBBS "Is this the end of the middle class" thread begun on 04/17/2009.

## 4.4 This Land is Whose Land?

Siler City's economic situation and dependence on attracting new businesses is defined in temporal and spatial terms in public discourse and during interviews. Poverty surrounds them and even the wealthiest see, feel, sense, and recognize the everyday struggles facing the working class in the area. The woman in the post above identifies herself as socially and economically middle class, but draws on an economic imaginary, a fear that seems absent from the "newcomers." The economic situation is simultaneously defined as something foreign, yet known, as immediately present and "here", but as alien or out of place just 15 miles away. As Mr. Everson stated, "There are people living in 3rd world conditions 500 yards from here." Pointing to his porch and then beyond his driveway, he maintains, "This is a universe away from Pittsboro." For many of those who supported Bunky Morgan and other pro-growth development commissioners, the proposed planning restrictions such as those presented in the Major Corridor Ordinance (2009) impede new commerce by limiting the new commercial growth to 10 specific business nodes that cover approximately 7.5 % of the county.

Located along major corridors, those against the Major Corridor Ordinance also highlight how the appearance standards, the prescriptive building designs and landscaping presented in Chapter 2, required in specially designated nodes act as an aesthetic form of camouflage. Drawing on a publication from the John Lock Foundation, a conservative non-profit think tank that actively lobbies North Carolina policy makers, people began referring to the Major Corridor Ordinance as "Chatham County's Land Grab". The emphasis on preserving the "rural character" would lead to an imbalance in decision making and lessen the power of the cash poor, but land rich residents. "Benefits go to those in the county who

believe that their aesthetic values are of more importance than the property rights of the owners," argued the John Locke Foundation as well as numerous online participants (CCOBBS) [59]. Those opposed to the restrictions contend that the explicit building requirements and restrictions are cost prohibitive for small or expanding businesses especially in the Western portion of the county. Although the plans are meant to stimulate both local businesses and the economy, some fear it will only further exacerbate economic prospects around Siler City by pricing "out the little guy in favor of deep pockets" (CCOBBS).[60] Many small, family owned and run commercial businesses possibly won't have the start-up capital or resources to expand in order to meet the planning restrictions. Some argue that those with the social and economic capital, with access to the finances, education, and social resources, will navigate the restrictions, locate in business and retail parks, and have an unfair competitive advantage. The sting from the 2006 County Commissioners election, where those in Pittsboro and the Northeast won the countywide elections and created the Major Corridor Task Force that subsequently proposed the ordinance, stands as proof to those who disagree that the deck is stacked against them.

As further evidence, those who disagree also argue that the restrictions meant to preserve the "rural character" by limiting the size and placement of commercial nodes, will lower land values for the majority of landholders in more rural areas of Chatham. Those with acreage who want to sell are unduly constrained, unable as was mentioned repeatedly to sell 20 acres to save their 300-acre farm. Instead, the value of land owned in the designated nodes is disproportionately priced and this pricing mirrors the unequal land prices and incomes of homeowners in Northeast Chatham as compared to West Chatham. With this emphasis on the

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[59] CCOBBS "Chatham County Land Grab" thread begun on 12/14/08.
[60] CCOBBS "Chatham County Land Grab" thread begun on 12/14/08.

aesthetics of commercial developments, some residents question whether this will further separate the county between the poor and the wealthy. The fear that the decline in industrial, agricultural, and retail jobs may just result in the disappearance of Chatham's working middle-class and re-define class issues in the county.

If we return to the question of individual rights and property rights as central to understanding the division of the county as part of a shared social imaginary, what stands out is how both sides implicitly emphasize their rights as landowners to voice their concern about land use planning in Chatham County. Both the good ol' boys and the "newcomers" draw on their values with regard to property rights. There is however a clear difference in the way that they imagine their rights as landowners and the value of their property. In North Chatham, many spoke of how unregulated land use or damage to the environment infringed upon their access to public property as well as their personal property. In a sense, raising the aesthetic standards in Chatham would improve land values as well as the quality of life in the County, while also maintaining the features that attracted them to the region. Members of the CCEC all repeated a common notion that land developers and residents would make environmentally sound and sustainable choices if they were aware of these options and the options were not perceived as costly. As East Coast transplants, who were well aware of how uncontrolled developments could harm a community, many pushed the idea that once you develop the land, you will never be able to return the land to its original, pristine nature. The formation of organizations such as the CCEC and the Chatham Coalition reflect a desire of the active participants to participate in democratic decision-making and to protect the community, the commons, and their personal property. As the founder of the CCEC explained, "Once you have big you can't go back to the small. Don't spoil it for me!"

Driven by a belief in their rights as individuals and citizens as well as their desire to protect their property and exert their rights as landowners, the so-called newcomers or liberal, North Chatham residents clashed with the more conservative good ol' boy network in Western Chatham County. Although these labels do not truly embody the difference, they are useful for me in exposing the shared social imaginaries and the authority granted to particular views and values. For those disagreeing with the Major Corridor Ordinance, the underlying argument often revolved around the infringement of their property rights. In several interviews, various people summarized the opposition to the Major Corridor Ordinance as having to do with autonomy and property rights. Repeatedly, those favoring the more recent proposals told me how people in Western Chatham were highly resistant to being told what they could with their land. In a meeting organized by the Major Corridor Task Force and the CCEC at Jordan High School, land use plans for the county were presented and arguments erupted as many exclaimed, "It is my land and you are telling me what to do with it." Whereas the "soft consensus" approach works when the participants share beliefs about citizen participation, the differing social imaginaries and the implicit moral agendas prevented productive discussions on the issues.

As an outsider listening to the debates, I often felt as if I had stepped through the looking glass. The meanings and values that people attached their views and the way they envisioned their position within the debates seemed at odds to me. Both arguments appeared to approach the issue from parallel places and use the same language. What continually emerged were quite different meanings that people attached to key concepts and the implicit or underlying imaginings. It was quite clear that the debate was a battle over which of these

understandings would be "master" and thus which of these approaches to land use management would be granted interpretative authority.

# Chapter 5: God Created the Earth, but the Dutch Created… then Branded the Green Heart

> In the depth of my thoughts I have a strange feeling about the Green Hart. I, like many of million inhabitants in the Western Netherlands, have an idea that the Green Heart belongs to me. It was made for me. Somebody looked deep into my soul and made a list of everything that is important to me and what moves me, and afterwards they made the Heart to fit as if it were a glove. In the beginning I didn't realize it. The Heart was already there and I just took a peak. (Vuisje 2001: 9)

> There is in the Netherlands confusion about what constitutes nature. For the biologist nature is everywhere. In the clouds where small organisms live, on the earth's surface with all the plants… For the ecologist, nature is all the areas barely touched by people. That isn't much in the Netherlands. For the average walker or bicyclist, nature is all the green outside of the city. From this standpoint the Green Heart is a gigantic natural area, even though the entire landscape is for centuries manipulated by culture. People have thought of a nice term for this hiking path nature: farmer nature. (Buissink and Fey 2001:19)

The battle over the Dutch Green Heart differs from the divisive debates between residents in Chatham County. The battle in Chatham to preserve the "rural character" and attempt to manage future land use plans revolves around the process of defining *a* "rural character" to protect. The demographic shift in the county has deeply impacted Chatham's social and economic composition and underscores the influx of new or different landscape values. Although future land use plans are presented in neutral or sterile language, the battle to re-define the "rural character" and to legitimize a definition and claim interpretative authority is highly political and contentious. The struggle for the Green Heart, however, is

not as much about "re-defining" the character of the Dutch landscape as it is about positioning the landscape and the Dutch within a shifting social, political, and economic agenda. In both cases, the way policies "cloak the subjective, ideological, and highly "irrational" goals in the guise of rational, collective, and universalized objectives" (Shore 1997: 11) is central to understanding how individuals use policies to legitimize their social and moral agenda. The seemingly sterile language and the supposedly "neutral" appearance standards presented in the Major Corridor Ordinance masks, if only temporarily, the partisan nature of the plans. The proposed policies are not simply rhetorical communities; rather policies are "contested political spaces" that lend authority to the prevailing voices (Shore 1997: 11-13). While concerned citizens vie for a semblance of legitimizing power by controlling the shape and form of land use policies in Chatham, 40+ years of spatial planning policies have firmly established the Dutch Green Heart's place as a unique symbol and iconic landscape.

The proverb, "God created the earth, but the Dutch created Holland," captures a particular Dutch pride for mastering natural obstacles and shaping the nation. Windmills, wooden shoes, dikes and narrow waterways dot the physical and metaphorical landscape of the Netherlands, reminders of the technological innovations and social organization that restrained nature and allowed the nation to flourish. Likewise, the proverb attests to the conscious role inhabitants played as the social and physical architects of the land and the nation. The polder landscape, the land reclaimed from the water, and the physical structures associated with the polders thus embody the proverb and the commonly held notion that the Dutch mastered both nature and the nation. With its picturesque, low-lying peaty meadows, narrow canals and dikes, countless windmills, and ruminating cows, the Green Heart is the

quintessential Dutch polder landscape and a pivotal site of contestation. The traditionally agrarian landscape was the first site of large-scale reclamation in the Netherlands and this reclamation enabled permanent, stable populations to form in the major cities. This "farmer nature", this landscape manipulated for centuries, moves people in the Netherlands; the Green Heart captures an imagination and means something to the average citizen. While people have long argued that the Dutch Green Heart is not "real" or that it isn't really "nature", people rarely argue that the polder landscape, the Hollansde Waterline or the Amsterdamse Stelling don't have a unique social and cultural power.

For 46 years federally mandated spatial policies protected the unique character of the Green Heart from the urban and industrial overflow of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht. Following the publication of the *Nota on Space* in April 2004 spatial planning in the Netherlands was suddenly and quite drastically decentralized. The federally imposed restrictive physical and economic growth policies that severely limited development in the Green Heart disappeared. The abrupt disappearance of federally mandated policies that were meant to protect the aesthetic, economic and environmental value of the landscape, literally and metaphorically signified the Green Heart was open for business. During the summer of 2004, residents, farmers, planners and bureaucrats eagerly spoke to me about what they saw as the future of the Green Heart. The initial doomsday predictions were that greedy, rich city dwellers would descend on the area and purchase old farms and picturesque farmland. Or vacation centers, camping businesses, and even entire villages would suddenly blanket the landscape. Despite the bleak outlook, there were no obvious or outward signs that the Green Heart was in immediate danger. In fact, there appeared to be a defined trajectory and local, regional, provincial, and federal structures remained in place.

The Green Heart, however, occupies a unique position within Dutch public planning policies and the longstanding restrictive policies actually strengthened the regions place in the social imagination of many. It is my contention that the evolution of the Green Heart as a planning concept played a pivotal role in establishing the Green Heart as an iconic symbol and a national identity marker. The idealized and romanticized "place" of the Green Heart in the minds of many must be understood within a socio-historic framework that addresses emotive attachment to the polder landscape in the Netherlands. After 40+ years as a central planning concept and the emergence of the planning concept during highly publicized political debates at the outset of European Union integration, the Green Heart possessed a relatively privileged place on the national, regional and local agenda. It was and is a desired destination that is both close to home and to "heart." The Green Heart stood apart from other National Landscapes in the planning discourse and this rhetorical privileging, in part, secured its place within the Dutch social and political landscape. As a result of the Green Heart's unique position and the powerful and evocative emergence of the region in policy documents was parlayed into a useful and valuable marketing tool by invoking shared, national imaginings.

Landscape research in Europe underscores how particular landscapes as symbols and signs of a shared past are often battlegrounds for differing socio-political agendas (Bender 1995; Ingold 2000; Olwig 2002). Recent research demonstrates how the landscapes as socio-historic sites and recognizable identity markers take on re-newed importance within the framework of European Union integration (Murray 2006; Viara 2006; Anderson 2006; Waldren 2006) Through the process of European Union integration the sovereignty of the individual nation-states in Europe is continually challenged and landscapes are increasingly

becoming contentious sites of identification. As recognizable identity markers landscapes such as the Green Heart are, in this sense, both sites of power and contestation. While landscapes are **in principle** a "common good"—a space either literally or figuratively accessible to all. Yet we also know that the landscapes and access to the landscapes is "differently privileged" and they are not truly a "common good" accessible to all. The vision of property rights in Chatham as well as the over emphasis in the Netherlands on landscapes as recreational spaces underscores both access limitations and differential privileging. Since landscapes encompass multiple geographical and metaphorical scales of community, they frequently play crucial roles in nation-building projects. Whether real or imagined, landscapes are powerful symbols that often evoke an emotive allegiance from people who inhabit the places or from people who just envision the place. In many cases, these emotive attachments illustrate the symbiotic relationship between people in and of the land.

In this chapter, I will connect the broadly defined area of landscape research to the changing European social, political, and economic landscape. Again this landscape research is characterized by the move away from landscapes understood as purely ecological environments or settlements and towards landscapes as sites that link people, polity and place. For this reason, I draw together several socio-historic trends within Europe and the European Union by addressing the relationship between the economic value or worth of a landscape and the non-quantifiable socio-cultural values intertwined in landscape politics. It is my contention that the economic value of the Green Heart and the socio-cultural values associated with it reflect the emergent identity politics within the European Union.

I approach landscapes as a "common good", as shared spaces of social and historical value that both embody and naturalize ideologies of polity, place and community. Drawing

on issues surrounding the Dutch Green Heart, I underscore the necessity for studying landscapes as sites of contestation often embroiled in hegemonic discourses. Landscapes are not muted background features or simply views that we behold. Landscapes are frequently powerful social, historical or naturalistic symbols that evoke an emotive allegiance and in many cases are emblematic of the affective attachment between people in and of a land. The increasingly commercial deployment of landscape narratives and the growing national romanticism associated with particular landscapes is, in my opinion, an extension of these affective attachments and is frequently reflective of shifting socio-economic values. When viewed from this perspective, Chatham County's battle over the "rural character" may actually be indicative of larger movements across the United Sates, where an educated middle class moves into historically agrarian communities. Drawn to notions of "rural", real and imagined, these agrarian communities may face similar battles to balance economic wants and needs. The growing commercialization and re-imagining associated with landscapes, whether in terms of its "rural" value or as a cultural monument is neither a new, unintentional or socially neutral occurrence.

The scramble in the Netherlands, for example, to brand the Green Heart as the " #1 national landscape" and market the landscape as both a socio-historic landmark and recreational haven directly relates to recent socio-political changes. It is my contention that the extra-ordinary reverence towards the Dutch polder landscape and the struggles over the preservation and promotion of the Green Heart, as the quintessential everyday polder landscape, directly relate to socio-economic changes in the Netherlands. The increasing force of European Union integration, an at times explosive relationship between first and second generation naturalized immigrants and the Dutch, as well as the economic wax and wane of

high tech business during the 90's all deeply impact the shape and place of the Green Heart. In this chapter I explore the theoretical relationship between the process of Europe building and the increasing emergence of a place centered national icon, and the role of identity politics within the shifting economy. Underlying my interest in the various theoretical issues is a need to demonstrate how "differently privileged" voices may claim and reconfigure the historical, physical and at times metaphorical landscape (Bender 1995: 199). Recent European Union research (Heffernan; McNeill; Shore; van Ham) and landscape research both foreground how these supposedly disparate voices are always in dialogue with one another. Generally the ongoing dialogue evokes an emotive identification with a real and/or imagined landscape, underscoring the historical and present day value of the places. I begin with the social and historical on-going discursive re-configuration of the Dutch Green Heart, the literal and metaphorical heart of the nation as it appears in planning documents. The discursive re-configuration is essential in understanding how the Green heart went from being a planning concept to the #1 National Landscape (VROM 2001)

## 5.1 "Placing" the Green Heart on the Policy Map

The Dutch polder landscape embodies core values and a sense of aesthetics essential to understanding Dutch culture. Although the Dutch only half-jokingly claim that "God may have created the Earth but the Dutch created the Netherlands", the vast majority of Dutch people proudly recognize the authenticity of this claim. A polder is namely land reclaimed from the water and protected by narrow canals, dikes and windmills. Since over half of the total landmass in the Netherlands is at or below sea level, the creation of polders enabled people to form permanent, stable populations in the low lying regions (Lambert 1985). The

rationalist mindset of the early inhabitants allowed the Dutch to overcome so called natural obstacles through technological savvy and a careful, judicious eye for spatial planning. The polder landscape is a material symbol of Dutch perseverance, of mind over matter. Yet despite its industrial origin, the polder landscape inspired 16th century landscape artists and poets, and it remains the muse for countless Dutch people today. The 17th century representations of the nation and the landscape, demonstrate how the polder landscape is complex site of identification for many Dutch people. Jacob van Ruisdael's landscape painting, dating from the mid 17th century, captures the everyday nationalist imagining as it relates to the landscape. The nation itself is playfully transformed into a lion, a longstanding Dutch symbol of strength and courage. Likewise the seemingly "naturalistic" depictions of the landscape in 17th century Dutch landscape art illustrate the cultural, social and historical link between people and place. Both the Leo Belgicus and the 17th century landscape art create and maintain a recognizable image of what the Netherlands is and these depictions are a common or everyday form of nationalist imaging.

The agrarian Green Heart, encircled by Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht is the quintessential polder landscape. The encroachment upon the Green Heart by these major cities, known collectively as the Randstad, is a point of contention between environmental advocates, public policy makers and the inhabitants of the Randstad/Green Heart (Burke 1967; Dieleman & Musterd 1992; Louise 1998; van Lier 2002; VROM 1966; VROM 2001). Literally translated "Randstad" means the edge or rim city and is best understood in relation to the Green Heart, the rural area in the Randstad's U-shaped center (van der Wusten and Faludi 1992:18). The first large-scale water works projects reclaimed the Green Heart region. The early reclamation projects allowed permanent settlements in the

provinces now known as Utrecht, North Holland and South Holland and the major cities, Amsterdam, Utrecht, the Hague and Rotterdam all formed stable and permanent populations as a result of the reclamation. This region proved advantageously located for commerce and as early as 1514 approximately 50% of the entire Dutch population resided in this space of 50-60 km in diameter (Shetter 1987 and Lambert 1985). The trend continues today with well over 60% of the Dutch population living in the Western portion of the land, which is less than a fifth of the country's total area (Lambert 1985: 327).

Although Amsterdam, the Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht, and their ties to one another extend well into the 12th century, the Randstad as a concept is relatively new and has a specifically interesting origin. Albert Plesman, the pre-war director of the KLM, publicly commented on the horseshoe-like shape of urban growth in the western portion of the land and the open green space it surrounds. Legend has it that Plesman noticed this pattern after flying over the country in search of an airport site in the 1930's. Plesman is habitually credited with coining the term Randstad and inspiring the term Groene Hart (Green Heart)[61]. Physical planners in the Netherlands translated the Randstad concept into a plan of action (Burke 6) and the Randstad became a "playground" for urban planners following World War II (van der Wusten and Faludi 1992:17). Devastated during World War II, the Randstad cities swiftly re-emerged as the economic and social core of the nation. The memory of mass starvation in the Randstad during the 1944-45 Hunger Winter plagued the government's dual promotion during the 50's of agricultural self-sufficiency and an industrial revival. Ensuring

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[61]Few people, however, agree upon the details of the story or on the originality of Plesman's statement (Lambert 1985 and Shetter 1987). Various sources referred to this aerial expedition in some way, shape or form although none of the stories seemed to truly match. Furthermore van der Wusten and Faludi (19) question the validity of the story since van Lohhuizen, an engineer and city planner, created maps featuring the "Randstad" prior to Plesman's infamous flight. Regardless of the authenticity, this "urban legend" played and continues to play an important role in a Dutch urban planning imagination.

agricultural self-sufficiency meant protecting the Green Heart, the agrarian center closest to the industrial core, from urban sprawl and promoting more autonomy among farmers through increased subsidies and tax breaks.

In 1951 a special committee organized by the Ministry of Spatial Planning examined the economic and physical development in the Western portion of the land. The committee published the first official spatial planning document following World War II on the Randstad and Green Heart (VROM 2001:15). The first national document with regard to planning appeared in 1960 and sketched the future economic and geographic position of the Netherlands within Europe. Titled, *The National Document with Regard to Spatial Planning,* remained in place for 6 years and noticeably emphasized planning issues in the Western part of the land. The Randstad and Green Heart received a great deal of attention and planners projected continued economic growth and increasing urban sprawl. The Ministry sought to restrict urban sprawl by artificially maintaining the "natural" and "green" character of the Green Heart (VROM 2001:15). Furthermore, the publication sought to preserve the individual quality of each of the major Randstad cities by creating green buffer zones or viewsheds between the cities (VROM 2001:15).

The cities would, therefore, grow outside of the Randstad ring. City dwellers now had easy and quick access to "green" recreational spaces through the preservation of the Green Heart and the creation of green buffer zones (VROM 2001:15). Complications quickly arose as the drastic population boom during the 50's and early 60's threatened the agricultural autonomy and environmental value of the region public policy makers named the Green Heart. The severe housing shortage following World War II continued to increase and public

policy makers struggled to find viable alternatives despite the scarcity of arable and habitable land in the region.

During the late 1950's and early 1960's the Randstad as a concept attracted attention from a wider audience outside the confines of bureaucratic planners. The Randstad emerged in national public discourse as a "place". The Green Heart concept originated alongside the Randstad concept but did not truly enter public discourse until the publication of the *Second National Policy Document for Spatial Planning* in 1966 and Burke's book the *Greenheart Metropolis* (1966). Despite the growing demand for "green" recreation such as sailing, bicycling and hiking the Green Heart concept remained relatively little known outside professional planners (Figure 9: Map of the Randstad/Green Heart and book cover from Burke's book)[62]. Unlike the Randstad, the Green Heart remained a concept and ultimately a place bounded through public policy discourse. The Green Heart didn't take hold of the Dutch imagination(s) until the politically charged "green revolution" in the 1980's. Despite the fact that these concepts did not catch hold of the popular imagination until much later, the planning documents increasingly produced more complex and colorful representations and maps of the region. The mapping trend in the planning documents gradually increases as reproduction technology improves and these often stunning visual representations certainly captured my imagination.

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[62] Based on numerous discussions, I've found most Dutch people were wholly unfamiliar with the concept Green Heart until the late 80's.
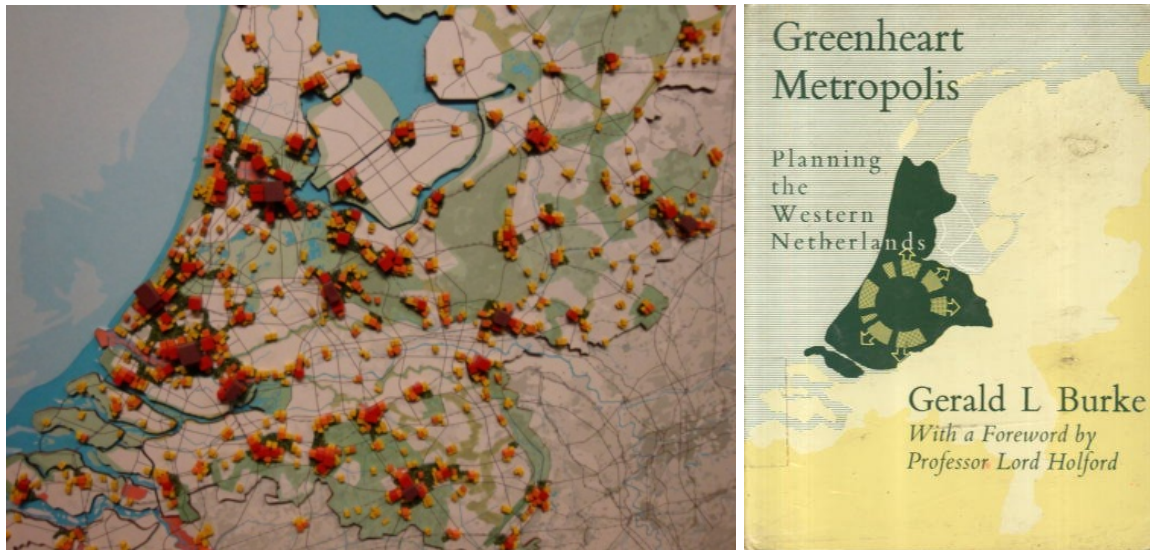
FIGURE 9: (A-Left) Map of the Randstad (red dots) encircling the Green Heart scanned from the *2ⁿᵈ National Policy Document for Spatial Planning* (VROM 1966). (B-Right) Cover of Burke's cover showing the Green Heart (1966, Lewald).

The desire for "recreation in the green"[63] grew drastically during the economic boom in the 60's (VROM 1966). The second document emphasized maintaining the green buffer zones and the Green Heart, but also introduced building restrictions to thwart migration into the Randstad as a whole (VROM 2001:17). A drastic population surge in the early sixties forced the Ministry to reconsider earlier proposals in the first document and reassess the situation in the second document. The second document specifically encouraged population growth and economic development outside the Randstad, a trend continued in the *Third National Policy Document for Spatial Planning* (1974). Both the third and fourth documents focus heavily on improving transit infrastructures and relieving the housing/space shortage. The reclamation of the Flevopolder and subsequent "creation" of a number of "new" cities offered an outlet for the overflowing Randstad metropolis.

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[63] This is a literal translation of a Dutch expression "recreatie in het groen". The expression is found throughout the VROM publications as well as other general sources such as the newspaper, television and recreational brochures.

## 5.2 Politics, Rhetoric, and the Green Heart as a Unique Selling Point

The early spatial planning documents emphasized "livability" issues for inhabitants. During the 1980's the emphasis shifted from livability for the inhabitants to "livability for marketability". The *Fourth National Policy Document for Spatial Planning* (1988) presents the Randstad and Green Heart as *the* competitive center for economic development and presents livability issues in relation to maintaining the competitive edge (VROM 2001:17). Raising the "quality" of life in the region translated into a better economy according to the fourth document. During the 80's and 90's environmental advocates campaigned to preserve the aesthetic and environmental significance of the Green Heart. Preserving the Green Heart appears as a unique selling point for the public policy planners, a trend that gains momentum in the fourth and fifth policy document. Interestingly it is during the late 80's and early 90's that GroenLinks (GreenLeft political party) emerged and massive demonstrations about environmental issues took place. During this period both environmental advocates and the beleaguered Ministry of Spatial Planning embraced the preservation of the Green Heart as an aesthetic issue and the Green Heart appears as an idealized landscape in public discourse.

The *Fourth National Spatial Planning Document* proposed "restrictive growth policies" for the Green Heart and a special "extra" edition of the fourth document appeared in 1991 and more thoroughly explains residential VINEX[64] developments (VROM 2001:21). The restrictive policies severely hampered economic development and population growth in particular towns and areas within the Green Heart. The federal government placed artificial restrictions on those living and working within the region. The restrictive policies protected

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[64] VINEX complexes were concievedof as compact suburban planned communities with high population densities and centralized markets and stores to meet residential needs.

the green "quality" and "function" of the region by limiting economic development and population mobility (VROM 2001; Louise 1998). In actuality, limiting economic enterprise and growth in the region harmed the "green functions" more than it helped (Louise 1998). The restrictive policies encouraged a new utilization of green spaces which seemingly preserved openness but which limited economic activities for the inhabitants of the Green Heart. The overemphasis on recreational access and "preservation" of the land restrained the type and nature of land use. Although the restrictive policies protected the aesthetic appeal of the area, the restrictive growth policies severely hampered economic prosperity (Louise 1998).

Mass migration out of the Green Heart by the younger populations led to an uneven age and income distribution (Louise 1998: 76-77). Young people fled to the cities for work, while middle and upper income professionals who could afford to live leave the Green Heart avoided the commute by moving to the Randstad or Randstad bedroom communities. Restrictive growth policies also limited the types and numbers of houses built which made the area less attractive to those seeking affordable housing. Forced to artificially stay small and "quaint", the Green Heart villages were losing residents and failing to attract new residents because of these overly restrictive policies. The fiasco surrounding the High-Speed Train aggravated many inhabitants of the Randstad/Green Heart as well as those outside the region. The separation between the government and inhabitants appeared even more pronounced. Plans to run the HST through the Green Heart brought the Green Heart in the news on a daily basis during the mid to late 90's. Ultimately a HST tunnel through the Green

Heart took place but at an exorbitant price. More friction and dissatisfaction arose between various political parties as well as among inhabitants outside of the Randstad[65].

The publication of the *Fifth National Spatial Planning Document* (*Vijno[66])* in 2001 preceded a fairly drastic political shift in the Netherlands. Growing dissatisfaction with the coalition government consisting of the Worker's Party (PvdA), Democrats 1966 (D66) and the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)[67] led to heated debates and the formation of new "ultra" conservative political parties. Ultimately the "purple coalition" government fell following the release of the Srebrenica Report[68] and a few months prior to the previously scheduled elections in May 2002. Less than a week before the election an environmental activist gunned down Pim Fortuyn, the right wing sociology professor and founder of an extremely popular "ultra" conservative party bearing his name (LPF). Despite Fortuyn's death, his party, along with the Christian Democratic Alliance party (CDA), received the vast majority of votes and a new "ultra" right wing cabinet formed which included the VVD. The reactionary right wing government, consisting of the CDA, LPF and VVD, "fell" within 3 months of the May 2002 election. The new elections in December 2002 yielded a seemingly more balanced return but the mildly more center left cabinet from 2003 collapsed in 2006 and the single liberal presence was omitted from the cabinet. In 2006, 2007

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[65]I've often heard the comment that the train runs underground where "nobody" lives but above ground through various cities where "everyone" lives. The HST literally runs through cities but underground through a portion of the Green Heart.

[66] The Vijfde Nota was shortened to *Vijno* in everyday language. In keeping with many of the people I spoke to, I refer to the Vijfde Nota as the *Vijno*.

[67]PvdA is a left wing party and premier Kok was a PvdA member. D66 is also a moderately left party that appeals to the "highly educated". VVD is one of the most conservative parties. This coalition is often referred to as the paars or purple cabinet.

[68]Srebrenica Report (April 2002) implicated the Dutch peace keeping battalion (Dutchbat) in Bosnia of "misconduct" with regard to the fall of Srebrenica. Nearly 8,000 Muslim men and boys were murdered while Dutchbat failed to intervene/ report the problem and at times expedited the murders.

and most recently on October of 2010, increasingly more conservative parties have taken political control. The current cabinet is lead by the VVD and consists of the CDA and the Party for Freedom (PVV), which formed in 2005 in response to the murders of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh and has quite unrepentant "facist" tendencies. Needless to say, the cabinets are quite obviously more conservative with regard to economic and environmental policy than the cabinets during the 80's and 90's as well as much more "Euro-scpetic."

The *Vijno* (2001) appeared at a time when there was open critique of environmental policy and the overly restrictive federal policies were under fire. Although the *Vijno* was well received by conservatives who wanted less government intervention, environmental advocates were highly critical of it. The provinces implemented many of the procedural recommendations of the plan even though the government never officially approved of the *Vijno*. Restrictive growth policies in the Green Heart, despised by the VVD and other conservative party followers, more or less disappeared from the agenda with the publication of the *Vijno*. Unlike earlier national policy documents, the most recent one offers few structured "policy procedures". Individual towns or provinces have more freedom to do as they please. The *Vijno* offered more of a general strategic plan, as opposed to a detailed approach to specific problems. With a shrug of the shoulder the Ministry encouraged a neo-liberal approach to environmental policymaking and presented numerous glossy, high-resolution images and maps that simultaneously branded the region as technologically savvy and a site of consumption (FIGURE 9: Map of the economic structure and network of cities and the cover image from the *Vijno*). These images convey some of the representational shifts since the earliest national planning documents, while also reflecting the larger socio-economic shift taking place in the country.
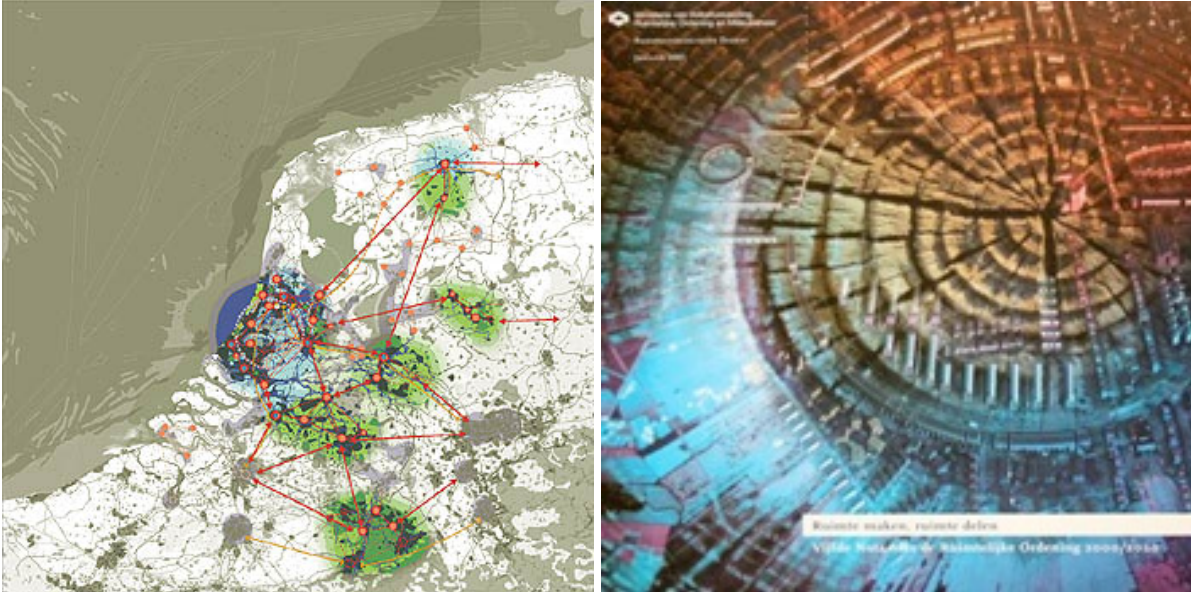
FIGURE 10: (A-Left) Map showing the economic strucure and network of cities (VROM 2001) and (B-Right) Cover of the glossy *Vijno* which visually resembles a coffe table book (VROM 2001)

The *Vijno* (2001) evaluated primary environmental issues alongside the network/infrastructural demands and the social/economic "needs" of the population. Water management, for example, shifted away from "pure" ecological issues towards satisfying recreation and transportation needs. Hence, water management for the general prosperity of the nation doesn't mark the issues as a central concern or top priority. Water management projects must also have an added value outside their purely functional purpose. Top priority water management projects should *do* more such as "transform" the rural regions and have a multifunctional use value (VROM 2001:128)

> More space for water also offers possibilities for water and green (high-value green-blue qualities) in the city and country, and also for the expansion of a recreational and professional waterway network (VROM 2001:128).

There is an underlying neo-liberal shift in environmental and economic policy making. Under the motto "Don't plan too much,"(VROM 2001:78), the fifth and final spatial planning document opened the door for diverse economic and physical developments between public-private partnerships. A water park may work, for example, hand-in-hand with

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the Ministry in developing the recreational possibilities of a formerly reclaimed area by re-submerging the piece of land. Re-submerging the land could help relieve both the shrinking water table and offer more control over water problems, but ultimately it is the combined value as a recreational place that would mark the project as a top priority.

The shifting use of language, the move for example away from the notion of "key projects" (sluetelprojecten) in the forth policy document, towards integrative high tech terminology in the *Vijno* is quite noticeable (VROM 2001:19, 25, 32-41). Images and language convey a sense of connectivity and the document contains numerous schematic maps and network images (Figure 10). A clear emphasis is placed on networks and the document introduced new concepts such as the "network economy" and "network society" (VROM 2001:62, 109). There is persistent emphasis on investments in Schipol, the Rotterdam harbor and on building and improving technological and economic networks. For the first time, decision making for specific urban developments now resides in the hands of the cities or provinces themselves. This shift foreshadows the sudden decentralization proposed in the final national spatial planning document, the *Nota on Space* (2004). Don't worry about how many houses are built in the polder, your province or community will keep an on this issue. No, these are not the chief concerns for the Ministry anymore. The publication of the *Vijno* supports the first subtle and then "sudden" shift away from the Ministry's authoritarian role and towards an increasingly laissez-faire approach during the 90's.

For example, instead of moving forward with the Randstad and Green Heart concept, the publication introduced the "green" Delta Metropolis (VROM 2001:148). The Delta Metropolis, which supercedes the Randstad as a planning concept, included the four

provinces North Holland, South Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland and further perpetuated the underlying theme of a "network society". The Delta Metropolis combined existing imagery of the Netherlands as a low-lying watery land with notions of a lush urban center. An urban center that offers culturally, socially and above all else financially a little bit of everything. The *Vijno* (2001) clearly presented the Delta Metropolis as a region that personfies Dutch culture/Culture and history while distinguishing itself from other European urban centers.

> The international profile of the Randstad as an urban network is effectively articulated with the introduction of the concept Delta Metropolis. The internationally reknown water-land character ('delta') as well as the heavily urbanized region ('metropolis') are captured and give the region it's own face within Europe. The policy strengthens the economic position and the unique character of the Randstad by enlarging the availability of living and working environments and by the qualitatively improving the Green Heart (VROM 2001: 148-149).

So the Delta Metropolis as a "slogan" should speak to more people than the term Randstad, especially since the literal English translation of Randstad, "Rim City," always, in my experience, garners a few unintentional laughs or blank stares when discussed in Dutch speaking circles. Instead of defining the region in terms of urban or rural/Randstad or Green Heart terms, planners within the Ministry created a new concept that reflects the transnational connectivity and "unique" value of the region as a selling point. In my frequent readings of the *Vijno,* I am always left with the quite explicit feeling that I am being sold a piece of swampland. The overt marketing and packaging of the fifth planning document has always come across as a marketing campaign, and the introduction of the concept "Delta Metropolis" does little to convince me otherwise. In line with the Ministry's push to promote the concept a Delta Metropolis Organization was created and only a limited number of representative individuals were allowed to participate. A young bureaucrat (06/29/04) shared how he had "accidentally" been invited to join the organization and that very quickly it became clear to

him that this accident was very fortunate for his career as people were constantly vying for an invitation. The status associated with the notion was mildly baffling to him

Following the publication of the *Vijno*, however, three left-wing political leaders presented a motion to the Dutch House of Representatives pleading for a "nature offensive" (van Lier 2001:13) The "nature offensive" called for a written environmental plan of action and a financial commitment from the government within eight months. The motion called for a joint proposal of long and short-term environmental needs with the ultimate goal of receiving funding to support the implementation of certain projects while garnering support among various (competing) environmental advocates. *Nederland Natúúrlijk!* (*NN*) (van Lier 2001) is an official environmental proposal that was published by various individuals and environmental advocacy groups exactly eight months after the original motion. *NN* bridged particular environmental concerns among the often-competing advocacy groups by creating a holistic plan of action. *NN* presented an unambiguous plan for future development but is most interestingly characterized by the unusually provocative and urgent tone. Although *NN* was written for bureaucrats and politicians, it clearly is a call to "arms" for the public at large.

The manifesto draws heavily both from literary sources and earlier spatial planning documents. Poetry, evocatively phrased questions, straightforward reviews of pressing issues and a ranked "plan of action" intermingle in an unusually emotionally charged way. Keywords such as "nature", "recreation" and "economic growth" answer *NN's* bold faced question, "In which land do we want to live in 2020?" (van Lier 2001:2-3). The question, which appears as the header five times in two pages, is the underlying question for the publication and the keywords, "nature", "recreation" and "economic growth", are the primary concerns of the publication. Like the *Vijno*, the concern for the environment relates most

importantly to the perceived leisurely and infrastructural "needs" (VROM 2001:149). Both

documents ultimately reduce most environmental issues to socio-economic interests.

> "Nature" is inspirational and offers rest and relaxation, most of all "nature" offers a place to consume and "recreate" (van Lier 2001:1,2,3).

Over and over *NN* hammers on the idea that while "nature" inspires, it is there for "our"

enjoyment, to meet our needs:

> Nature and a naturally controlled landscape offer a place for recreation, peace and quiet, which allows us to be healthy and fit" (van Lier 2001:2).

> Aside from its productive function, rural areas are also a place for the "consumption" of fresh air, quiet, a beautiful view and a glimpse of an extraordinary animal" (van Lier 2001:2)

These needs also blend with visions of past and possibly future glory, as answers to the

rhetorical question, "In which land do we want to live in 2020?" are tentatively offered (van

Lier 2001: 3). The question of whether people want to inhabit a land where "world famous

Dutch landscapes" are recognizable A land where the world famous Dutch landscape is still

recognizable in National Landscapes: large nature preserves and protected parts of rural areas

that characterize the origin and cultural history of the Netherlands" (van Lier 2001:3). A land

where there is prosperity, true prosperity and not only economic prosperity. A land where

humans and nature are in balance" (van Lier 2001:3). In short, the publication crafts a vision

where nature exists for human pleasure; a vision where the "balance" clearly corresponds to

"nature" for human pleasure. The manifesto calls for cooperation among disparate and often

times competing political and economic entities. Highlighting the unique selling point for all

branches of the government and encouraging activists to band together with bureaucrats, *NN*

attempted to create a uniform outline. Structuring these proposed projects involves

recognizing the overarching problems or issues. *NN* summarizes three key components that

must be addressed in each plan: first, revamping the water management system, second, claiming and investing in recreational space, and third, restructuring administrative control of environmental policy (van Lier 2001:8,11,13).

For fairly obvious reasons attention to water management is crucial for environmental plans in the Netherlands. The historical reclamation of particular regions has created new problems in recent years. Water shortages during the summer months and changes to the overall climate over the last few decades have led many dikes in the Green Heart to burst in recent years[69.] More importantly the rich alluvial soil is shrinking and the once watery land now faces new kinds of water problems; flooding in the wet months, substantial shortages in the summer months (van Lier 2001:8-10). In addition particular flora and fauna disappeared due to the intense environmental changes (van Lier 2001:8-10). The most interesting component for me is the emphasis on recreational space. The description of the other two components also referenced how changes would improve or increase recreational resources. By submerging potions of the Green Heart under water, for example, sporadic water shortages would not cause severe problems. The "new" lakes would offer recreational amenities such as boating, sailing, fishing and swimming options. Also, we mustn't forget, the "newly" wet environment offers a place for vanishing wildlife to firmly re-establish itself (van Lier 2001:5). Nevertheless, in order to sell the water management projects, the emphasis on "vanishing wildlife" takes a backseat to picturesque vistas, hiking, bicycling and general water recreation.

Alongside the fundamentally radical changes such as the creation of new lakes, forests and heaths, many of the recreational changes entail more and easier accessibility by

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[69]Evidently extremely dry conditions cause shrinkage and cracks to form. When there is suddenly more water or an abundance of water the dikes, hardened and cracked from the drought, burst open.

cyclists and pedestrians (van Lier 2001:12). Most importantly, recreational areas and green buffer zones appear in the text as a necessity or byproduct of city life. The green spaces, therefore, must be easily accessible to all. The densely populated Randstad as well as the other major cities require special consideration according to *NN* (van Lier 2001:13). The re-creation of the Green Heart as an idealized urban park such as New York's "Central Park" resonates throughout *NN* and includes historic quaint villages, traditional farms, windmills and the preservation of the typically Dutch landscape. Reminiscent of the calls in Chatham to protect Rocky River basin and the Haw River

*NN* discusses environmental projects throughout the country and is not limited to the preservation or maintenance of the Green Heart. The general discussion (van Lier 2002:1-15) draws heavily on particular images associated with the Green Heart such as polders, dikes and windmills when in fact the vast majority of the proposed projects are outside the Green Heart. One noticeable difference in the description of the various proposed projects rests in the presentation of the Green Heart. The description of the Green Heart project begins by clarifying what the region has to offer and relates directly to the *Vijno's* (2001:148-150) reference to the Delta Metropolis: "The Green Heart offers the possibility of peace, space and green in a dynamic metropole" (van Lier 2001:36). Of the 21 projects described in NN no other description begins by "marketing" the place itself. Most begin with a description of the project, not an advertisement for the place: "Restore, on the coastal provinces, the natural line of the dunes via an inner dune ring to the polders" (van Lier 2001:34) and "Expedite and support the changes that the Hondsrug and Hunzedal regions are experiencing" (van Lier 2001:33). The description in my opinion reflect the tactical and emotive discursive appropriation of the Green Heart that people frequently use in discussions about the Green

Heart. Public policy discourse employs the Green Heart as a unique selling point and as the quote at the outset of the chapter indicates, the concerns and issues are framed in terms that obscure the needs of the people in the affected communities. After all, the Dutch are abundantly aware of the historical reclamation of the region.

Yet, despite the efforts of environmental advocates and the immediate response to the *Vijno* (2001) by concerned citizens that opening the region to public-private, or neo-liberal projects would irrevocably damage the area, the VROM decided to decentralize the spatial planning process with the publication of the *Nota Space: Room for Development* (2004). The visually scaled down final, national spatial planning document builds on the notion of "network cities" as economic centers, and avoids the Delta Metropolis concept by returning to the notion of the Randstad and Green Heart (VROM 2004: 118). The maps and visual imagery do little to explain how things will change or whether there are any specific changes for the regions (Figure 11: National landscapes as they are numbered and ranked). The Green Hart, as the #1 National Landscape, occupies a privileged position and unlike other regions in the nation, the Green Heart has several built in back-up protections that other national landscapes lack. Most notably, changes to Green Heart require provincial approval from all three provinces that contain portions of the region. The map, however, attests to a cartographic precision that differentiates the Green Heart visually from the other National Landscapes. The eye is drawn to it and the black outline surrounding its precise borders adds depth; the landscape is marked, defined, and foregrounded in the same way that the nation on the whole is marked, defined, and foregrounded in reference to its surroundings.
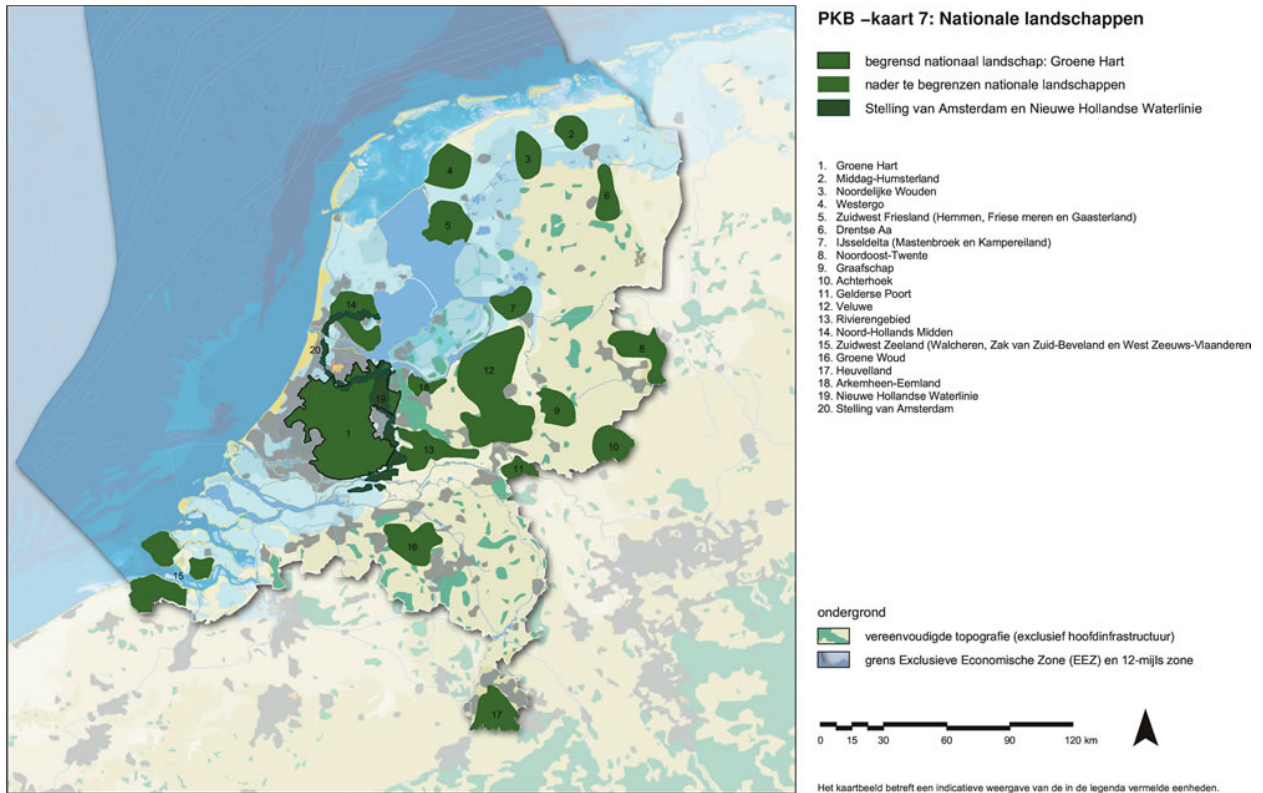
FIGURE 11: The national landscapes as they are numbered and ranked in terms of importance. These landscapes appeared in quite similar terms in the *Vijno*. The Green Heart is #1 and visually stands out on the map with clearly defined borders. (VROM 2004).

What clearly emerges from the *Nota Space* is how "economic" concerns are a driving feature for future planning. The emphasis on "recreation" as well as cost, benefits, and profit offer a single approach and that approach is to allow the cities and concerned communities determine what the best route is for development. Interestingly enough, all the provinces adopted the push for red and green contours or buffer and building zones that were presented as procedures in the *Vijno*. In the end the provinces have acted more cautiously with building than prior to the decentralization. Since the *Vijno* was proposed, but never definitively set into action, it is interesting that the provinces would all implement the more conservative or cautious procedures set forth in the *Vijno*, rather than wholeheartedly accept and implement plans from the *Nota Space*.

Although I spent the summer of 2004 listening to doomsday predictions about the end of the Green Heart, little has truly changed in the landscape. Rather than dissolve and blend with the surrounding urban centers, the Green Heart maintains its status as #1 landscape and the provinces have adopted relatively strict development procedures in their regional planning decisions. Instead of rampant development, the Green Heart remains a viable symbol and a more powerful identity marker for the Dutch. In fact, it is my contention that the Green Heart because of its unique status vis-à-vis the Randstad was spared the full force of development and through the restrictive economic and spatial plans *became* a beloved landscape. As farmer laughingly confided to me during an interview, "My family has lived in this house since 1910. I didn't even know we lived in the Green Heart until 94 or 95". Until the Green Heart entered mainstream parlance in the 90s, people in different parts of what we now call the Green Heart, did not see themselves as part of the same landscape. It isn't uncommon to hear people argue about whether the Green Heart is "real" and many farmers and residents found the label relatively meaningless. Nevertheless, the Green Heart exists and the common landscape holds both a literal and metaphorical power unlike any other Dutch landscape or monument. The landscape

## 5.3 "Regardless of Size, I Yield to Nothing:[70]" The Business of Landscapes

> Ok, so now they got 100,000 euros from Brussels in order to professionalize the organization. For the professionalization of the organization and then it goes wrong from that moment with the organization. Then they have money, but they don't do the things they should do such as create a booking office, print flyers or folders. NO! They make a film about the identity of the region. And then the "professionals", the knowledgeable people come and they think, "Hey, that is business." Of course we are going to support them because this is good for my office. It is legitimate. But they

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[70] This is a literal translation of a well-known Dutch idiom "Hoe klein ook, ik wijk voor niets." A literal translation is tricky since the idiom captures a sense of how the Dutch often speak of their position in world affairs.

[the farmers] don't realize that the discussion isn't revolving around the things it should revolve around[71].

The proverb, "God created the earth, but the Dutch created Holland," captures a particular Dutch pride for mastering natural obstacles and shaping the nation. Windmills, wooden shoes, dikes and narrow waterways dot the physical and metaphorical landscape of the Netherlands, reminders of the technological innovations and social organization that restrained nature and allowed the nation to flourish. Likewise, the proverb attests to the conscious role inhabitants played as the social and physical architects of the land and the nation. The polder landscape, the land reclaimed from the water, and the physical structures associated with the polders thus embody the proverb and the commonly held notion that the Dutch mastered both nature and the nation. With its picturesque, low-lying peaty meadows, narrow canals and dikes, countless windmills, and ruminating cows, the Green Heart is the quintessential Dutch polder landscape and a pivotal site of contestation (Figure 12: Images from the Green Heart). People flock from the cities to the Green Heart during weekends and the small roadways fill with bicyclist and hikers. In one of the most densely populated nations in the world, the wide open greenery, the historical landscape elements and features offer a brief reprieve from city life.

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[71] Interview on 06/14/04 in Oudewater with the editor of the Groene Hart magazine.

FIGURE 12: (A-Left) Roman ruins in the Green Heart near Oudewater (Author's personal image). (B-Right) A view from a bicycle of the polder (Author's personal image).

I have repeatedly argued that the Dutch polder landscape is a "symbol of perseverance", an identity marker, a source of inspiration, a muse for 16th century artists, and a landscape appreciated, not for its inherent natural value, but for its socio-historic value. Manipulated and engineered for over 1000 years, the polder landscape is a commons. The polder landscape embodies community, reflects shared interests, and a common need for "dry feet" as the Dutch humorously state. The polder landscape is an innovation; through technological savvy, the Dutch created a landscape and enabled the country to succeed on a global scale. Given the natural obstacles facing the region, the large-scale reclamation of land and advent of polders literally and figuratively created a commons. The Dutch exclaim, "God may have created the earth, but the Dutch created the Netherlands," and it is this idiom that inspired my original research on the polder landscape in general and the Green Heart more specifically. The Green Heart, the polder surrounded by the four largest cities, is the quintessential polder landscape; it is in Gudeman's terms a *sacra* and is key to maintaining the base[72]. The longstanding battle over the preservation of the Green Heart and the recent marketing of the region reflects the deep-seated attachment in the Netherlands to the polder

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[72] The base "represents what it means to be a member of a community" (Gudeman: 30) and the base is that which a community shares, it is a commons.

landscape. Preserving the Green Heart is often presented as a preservation of a common good. It is the preservation of a shared history and a powerful identity marker.

More than just a reflection of a shared past, the Green Heart draws attention both on a metaphorical level as well as a physical place. As I argue later in this chapter, the phrase Green Heart has played an interesting role in projecting the place more firmly in the social imagination. On a physical or geographic level, the Green Heart's proximity to millions of inhabitants makes accessing the commons easy and with few impediments. With the prominence of bicycle paths in the Netherlands, a person can move from the heart of Utrecht into marshes of Maarssen within 20 minutes. Surrounded by the urban ring, the Green Heart is never too far away from the major city-dwellers. The contrast between the built-up brick cities and the polder landscape is significant. It isn't surprising to me that many people have fought vigorously to protect the aesthetic and social value of the landscape. Nor does it surprise me that local, provincial, and national government would invest a great deal of money to strengthen the network of bicycle paths, hiking trails, or the infrastructure in general. The need for outdoor recreation plagues urban centers in general (Low 2006). With the scarcity of land, the less developed agrarian spaces are prized as a commons, as resources that are collectively held and/or publicly shared or owned.

The Green Heart, however, is not publicly owned and even the historic forts, lakes, and canals are often private property or under the management of a public organization. In the *Vijno* (2001) and *Nota Ruimte* (2004) the Green Heart was listed as a "National Landscape" and thus a common resource. The planning documents differentiate between "National Landscapes" as more loosely defined culturally or historically relevant areas or environmentally and ecologically important areas that need to be maintained. This notion of a

"national landscape" and the naming of the Green Heart as the first national landscape as well as ranking it as the #1 landscape creates confusion for those inhabiting these landscapes. "Who owns the landscape?" a farmer asked at a public Lagerhuis debate in the Green Heart. The landscape belongs to the farmers a person said and then a women wisely differentiated from the land that the farmer owns and landscape that belongs to everyone and is owned by not one. Other farmers argued that they aren't allowed to peak into the yards of the city-dwellers, yet the city-dwellers don't hesitate to poke around on their property. While this debate was mostly in jest and some people were exaggerating their responses or playing devils advocate, it highlighted the fact that the landscape is a "common good" and the farmers, as the major landholders, owned the land. Moreover, it also underscores the frustration that many farmers felt at being the "rest area" for 15 million people. It is with notable ambivalence that many farmers welcomed the recreationalists to their farm, organized events, limited their mobility and farming schedule to avoid conflicts with tourists, and struggled to maintain the dairy farms after the European Union began restricting the number of cows allowed on the land. In the light of the increased media attention Green Heart in the mid 90s and its place a sacred site, a powerful social imaginary, the residents and farmers in the region began their own overt marketing campaigns.

While not everyone views the influx of recreationalists or city-dwellers or the overt marketing of the region in positive terms, farmers recognized that they can profit from allowing people to camp on their land, take a peak into their barns, sleep in their farmhouses, and even work with the cows or make cheese. By creating networks or establishing alliances with other farmers or tourist-oriented organizations, they supplemented their income and some even stopped farming altogether. Many provided "local" services or fresh goods for the

tourists and many opened small stores on their property to sell their wares as well as their neighbors wares. The restrictive policies following World War II and the central place of the Green Heart in planning discourse simultaneously protected the landscape as well as secured their position as farmers and stewards of the land in the Netherlands. The policies that were once viewed as a source of extreme limitations, ultimately lead the Green Heart to inhabit a unique position in the Dutch landscape. The overt marketing and selling of the Green Heart experience increases in a monetary sense the market value of the region, draws more visitors, and possibly sells more of the locally produced goods, but this marketing also transforms the landscapes social currency. The overt marketing of the region enables one to put a price on something that is, in a very real sense, priceless by putting a price tag on the polder experience. Likewise, it fortifies a particular view of the landscape and could lead, as is seen in Chatham County, to the creation or maintenance of a landscape façade. Instead of a sustainable farming community, we see the emergence of aesthetically pleasing agro-tourism.

Some mourn the loss of an authenticity or legitimacy so often associated with the sacred landscapes, but I disagree with the somber analysis that marketing the Green Heart, by selling the commons, leads to a loss of the "commonality" (Gudeman 2001: 32, 163). The commons, if approached within a situated "value context", is of value only if the commons exists. The value placed upon the commons, or its core, the *sacra*, is not inherently of "value." The overt marketing of the Green Heart is if anything an attempt to "maintain" the base and is the promotion of a symbol and identity marker. With the pressures of European Union integration and the political and social de-valuation of the Netherlands within the European Union, marketing the Green Heart appears as a re-valuation of the commons.

Greening and selling of the polder landscape, marketing the Green Heart, will ultimately result in the qualitative destruction of the commons, to the "creative destruction" inherent to capitalism (Harvey 2010: 16). This marketing of the landscape resonates more with me as a "spatial fix" or the inherent contradiction of building a "fixed space (or landscape)" only in turn to destroy the original and potentially devalue it in order to make space for a new "fix" (Harvey 2001: 24-25). The polder landscape was created in order to live, farm, and use the land. This creation or "fix" was necessary at the time, but the economic changes require a new "spatial fix" that may lead to devaluation or simply act as a new technological innovation. If the marketing of the Green Heart is approached as an innovation, the marketing could conceivably expand the value systems. Without the marketing of the Green Heart, particular features of the landscape and prized socio-historic identity markers could fall prey to impending sub-urbanization. The farmers, who created the Green Heart and are as much a part of the commons as the landscape itself, are rapidly disappearing from the region. Yet, through the creative promotion of the Green Heart, through the "spatial fix," farmers are both able to maintain the landscape and their position within it. Through this innovative shift the shape and content of the commons is preserved.

Marketing the Green Heart has, in my opinion, lead to a revival of the commons and only underscores the value of the polder landscape in Dutch society. Without the overt marketing of the emotive and symbolic attachment people have to the Green Heart, there would be a physical destruction of the commons and a literal social disappearance of commonality. If seen as an innovation, placing a price on something considered by many as priceless, changes the socio-historic context but it does not necessarily destroy the system of value. Rather, it leads to an inherently circular process valuing and re-valuing of the

landscape and thus a renewal of the "common good." The issue that continually arises and that Knel underscores is that the farmers in finding a potential "spatial fix" are changing the tenor of the Green Heart discussions. In essence, they are resolving one problem, but creating other issues and this means that "they [the farmers] don't realize that the discussion isn't revolving around the things it should revolve around". The Green Heart as a "business" venture differs greatly from the business of the Green Heart. By focusing solely on the promotion of agro-tourism and following the lead of knowledgeable business specialists, they are divorcing themselves from the everyday issues facing the farmers as a whole.

In the example provided by Knel, the Green Heart farmers alliance "Struinen en Vorsen" was awarded 100,000 euros in order to "professionalize" their business and their product. In two interviews with different members of "Struinen en Vorsens" board, I was told how they decided to seek professional advice and help from a marketing bureau. With the advice of the marketing bureau and members of Sustainable Open Spaces, the EU initiative that put together Focus Locus to promote Green Heart experiences, Struinen en Vorsen decided to create a promotional DVD film that could be used by tourist agencies or other organizations to learn about the Green Heart. The film would act as "calling card" I was told "an invitation" to learn about the cultural and historical relationship to the polder landscape[73]. It memorializes the story of the landscape, set in an unknown past, and features several farmers and members of the organization who boldly state, "Regardless of size, I yield for nothing" (Struninen en Vorsen 2004). The idiom is repeated in the film and one farmer who was featured in the film told me the idiom was important because it sent a "message to the bureaucrats and politicians" (van der Werf 062404). The irony that instead of creating an office, purchasing uniform supplies, creating tangible business cards, brochures, or

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[73] Interviews on 06/22/04 and 06/24/04 with two different farmers

supporting start-up initiatives, the members of Struinen en Vorsen presented themselves as static objects in an unchanging landscape. Their message that they do not yield was likely lost and the very expensive business card delivered little in terms of return value.

## 5.4 Branding the Landscape and Building Europe

During my research, I realized that territorial branding, as a form of corporate branding, attempts to unify the Green Heart and the nation by presenting this particular polder "landscape" as a commons. More specifically the landscape appears to the general public as a common good; an identity marker rooted in the past and cherished in the present. The newly polished image and re-packaging of the landscape encourages the general public to consume or both individually or collectively to capitalize on the long-standing emotional attachment to the polder landscape and its socio-historic value. The name "Green Heart" now clearly designates a particular place. The farmers comment that he didn't realize he lived in the Green Heart until he heard it on the news, ironically captures how the identity of a place could transform through a simple name change. The name no longer just describes an area between the cities but it epitomizes particular socio-historical values. The polder landscape is now inextricably linked to the "name" Green Heart. The Green Heart has truly emerged as a trademark or brand (Figure 13: Green Heart Logo).



FIGURE 13: (A-Left) The original "Green Heart" logo. (B-Right) One of the variations of the original logo, which reads "Green Heart, beating hart" (Courtesy of de Stuurgroep Groen Hart))

The "Green Heart" trademark appears in many places including websites, brochures and research documents and has become the "official" logo for the region. Variations of the logo regularly appear on official papers and brochures, but the lettering always remains the same. A member of the Green Heart team, a bureaucratic organization that officially mediated between government and non-government interests in the Green Heart until 2006, confided that "the logo was an accident, quickly created for a rapport published some time in the late 90's" (Niko van Brussell 061104). But he commented, "People recognize it and so we continue to use it."

The logo now appears in a variety of places (Figure 14: Examples of how the logo is used). The logo, however, remains the property of a governmental organization. Use of the Green Heart logo therefore reflects the official "sanctioning" by the government of particular products or services rendered in the Green Heart. When I asked the Green Heart team member "who" was allowed to use the logo, he resoundingly boomed "NOBODY." A bit taken aback by his resolute answer, I asked why the logo appeared on the cover of "The Project Report and Green Heart Marketing Plan" published by the South Holland Tourist Board. He then proceeded to tell me, "People who are working together with the Green Heart team are allowed to use the logo.[74]" In short, those organizations allowed to use the logo include tourist boards and particular agro-tourism entrepreneurs. Like Plesman's unintentional names, the Randstad and Green Heart, one cannot always anticipate what the power will be of particular words or symbols. The Green Heart logo, likewise, is a simple but effective symbol and as an official stamp of approval, it is now quite easy to gain permission to use or alter the image as you see fit. The automated approval system and the

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[74] I was granted permission to display the logo(s) in my academic writing.

straightforward instructions have simplified the process. The Green Heart website urges you to show your pride and use the logo.



FIGURE 14: (A-Left) Stamp placed on approved regional products (B-Middle) Tourist map produced by the VVV tourist board. (C-Right) The logo for the official farm stores (Courtesy of de Stuurgroep Groen Hart).

The branding, however, is not limited to graphic representations of the name. The name "green heart" has a metaphorical power that has literally shaped the boundaries of the region. Images such as the national tourism offices' (VVV) website map literally depicts the region as a "heart". While one can argue that the form of this heart may be coincidental, we are nonetheless left with a fairly "straightforward" image of a "green heart" and this literal green heart appears as a logo option. Other graphic representations such as this image taken from the Green Heart Foundation's website draws on the historical relevance of grass and water- windmills and farms. I find the form itself intriguing with its blue corridor dividing



FIGURE 15: (A-Left) Green Heart logo with the image. (B-Middle and C-Right) Maps that become emblematic logos of the Green Heart (Courtesy of de Stuurgroep Groen Hart).

the region. With the sharply outlined shape, the Green Heart appears to mirror the shape of human heart. The third image is a quite simple schematic drawing. Nonetheless is clearly conveys the message "Green Heart".

The Dutch Green Heart increasingly since 2000 appears in public discourse in the Netherlands as a marketing tool, as a trademark. The implications of this overt branding resonate with the increasing regionalization taking place in Europe (McNeill 2004; van Ham 2001). With the intensification of European Union integration, one would expect that nations would actively find ways of re-defining themselves. Further research is necessary, in order to understand the full implications of the territorial branding and how this relates to an explicit re-positioning of particular nations as a result of European Union integration. From the very brief examples, one can clearly see that the process of branding is highly political and deeply influences public perceptions about the region. In a period when the physical boundaries of European nations are less easily defined, territorial branding seems to me especially intriguing. Territorial branding is significant because it promotes a particular "relationship between territorial entities and individuals." It explicitly plays on an affective attachment people have for a particular landscape. I have presented the Green Heart as one explicit example of how public discourse uses the existing attachments to place. By marketing the Green Heart, public discourse on a very basic level brands the region as an easily recognizable place, worthy of identification by the Dutch.

How does this territorial branding, the overt marketing of the polder landscape, relate to Europe building? On the one hand, there is the explicit idealization, historicization and promotion of the Green Heart region. The Green Heart, a traditionally agrarian polder, was the first site of large-scale reclamation in the Netherlands and this reclamation enabled

permanent, stable populations to form in Amsterdam, the Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht. For many Dutch people the Green Heart, enveloped by the four largest cities, is the quintessential polder landscape; the landscape captured by 17th century landscape artists and created through technological savvy. Politicians, spatial policy makers and advocates for the region overtly "market" idealized polder images in their attempt to protect the Green Heart from urban sprawl. Analyzing the longstanding struggle to protect and preserve the Dutch Green Heart from social and economic disintegration within the framework of increasing EU integration is therefore, essential.

What *is* Europe building? Depending on the intonation, one can interpret the question in various ways. As a noun, Europe building often refers to the strengthening of European institutions and the expansion of European Union membership. Europe building in this sense reflects the creation of a union, concretized in formal treaties, institutions, legal structures, and housed in buildings in a bustling cosmopolitan city. Brussels, the capital of European bureaucracy, "home" to the European Union, European Commission, NATO, Western European Union, the national capital, Belgian parliament and numerous international political organizations, embodies the products of Europe building. Europe-building refers to the structural creation of alliances among geographically and historically intertwined nations. These alliances offer economic leverage and a common market to nations that would, without this 'new Europe', flounder in the global market. Under dispute, however, are the seemingly arbitrary boundaries that allow particular nations to join while excluding others. Yet, Europe-building is anything but arbitrary. With a flag, currency, constitution, clearly defined and policed borders, elected political leaders and a physically situated capital, the building

Europe process more accurately resembles the 20<sup>th</sup> century template for democratic nation building.

Europe building, however, entails more than the sum total of its material parts. From its origin in the post World-War II Common Market, the building of Europe reflects the continual negotiation, discord, and the shift towards some socio-cultural harmony among nations clearly invested in their socio-cultural heterogeneity. Identity politics continually hamper both political and economic agreements this building of Europe seeks to establish. The rejection of the EU constitution by both the French and the Dutch is only one of numerous examples. While the formal building of Europe began by promoting a Common Market with free movement of labor and capital, an eradication of trusts and cartels, and numerous labor reforms, one must question exactly what Europe is now actually building. The geopolitical Janus, the twin pull towards nationalism, localism and disintegration on the one hand and towards a more encompassing integration, co-operation and ultimately less social, cultural and economic sovereignty on the other, has a longstanding past in Europe (Heffernan 2005). What these twin forces meant in the past, however, do not coincide with the emergent meaning now or in the future. Europe as a state of mind, as an ideology, and not simply a geographically defined region is what Europe *is* building (Heffernan 2005, McNeill 2004; Shore 2000). The dual pull towards nationalism, localism, and European Union disintegration are reconciled with the increasing push towards integration, co-operation, and decreasing national sovereignty in Europe.

## 5.5 Branding a National Social Imaginary

How does this all relate back to landscape research? The increasing romantization of landscapes underscores the complex relationship between polity, place and national identity politics. The growth in romanticized landscapes- as idyllic places that hold time still highlights the ways in which everyday places take on extra-ordinary importance. Commercial and economic interests are re-defining cultural heritage and the national boundaries disappear. The realm of cultural heritage and landscapes as sites of preservation are becoming large-scale "attractions". The increasingly commercial deployment of landscape narratives and the growing national romanticism associated with particular landscapes is, in my opinion, an extension of dual push and pull within the European Union.

Landscape research in general and research on Europe must address a breadth of theoretical issues such as identity politics, nationalism and nation-building, notions of space and place, aesthetics, the economy of landscapes, everyday life and European Union integration. Intertwining these diverse issues requires theoretical stances that both obscure and coalesce traditional boundaries such as anthropology, ecology, history, political science, geography and art history. Rethinking conceptual approaches that guide landscape research may broaden our understanding of how "differently privileged" voices claim and reconfigure the historical, physical and at times metaphorical landscape (Bender 1995: 199). All of the topics in this chapter foreground how these supposedly disparate voices are always in dialogue with one another and how emotive identification with a real and/or imagined landscape underscores the historical and present day **value** of the places.

In Chatham County the preservation of the landscape involves the creation of "attractions" or entire villages that mimic a social imaginary and aesthetic ideals. In the

Netherlands protecting the Green Heart has involved memorializing it and changing the use and function of the landscape. The contentious battles in Chatham and in the Green Heart revolved in large part around the commercialization of the landscape and economic values associated with the landscape. This economic is intimately connected to socio-historic perceptions and imaginings of these places. In these papers landscapes most often emerge as identity markers constantly in process-- some becoming tourist destinations re-imagined to meet local, regional, national and supranational demands. The everyday importance isn't fully captured by the economic value assessment of the land or its natural resources. While landscapes as background features, the places that surround us or the views that we behold may be bought and sold, I highlight highlight how the value may not simply reflect the sum total of its parts. Nonetheless, the growing commercialization of landscapes—the way commercialism often drives cultural heritage movements and environmental conservation—cannot be ignored.

In this chapter, I've connected the broadly defined area of landscape research to the changing European social, political, economic and environmental landscape. This chapter draws together key socio-historic trends in the Netherlands and frames them within the European Union by addressing the relationship between the economic value or worth of a landscape and the non-quantifiable socio-cultural values intertwined in landscape politics. It is my contention that the economic value of a landscape and the socio-cultural values associated with specific landscapes reflect the emergent identity politics within the European Union. Landscape research must reconcile the economic value of a landscape with the socio-historic values associated with the landscape. The qualitatively rooted values, the notions and beliefs held by various people or groups about a place, seem inextricably linked to the

economic worth of the land. Struggles over water tables, the preservation of virgin forests or the privileging of particular environmental features are not devoid or absent of economic benefits or motives. In fact, much of the research on European landscapes presents situations where idealized landscape imaginings transform the way people view their region and their place within the region. Ultimately the maintenance of a landscape feature may produce a shared sense "place", it unifies people, while simultaneously increasing the monetary value of the place. In Europe the seemingly mild or harmless nationalist imaginings allow certain locals to re-define themselves within the framework of the European Union (Billig in McNeill 2004:38). The problem with referring to these landscape attachments as seemingly harmless "nationalist" imagining is that these imaginings have less to do with European nations and more to do with a growing regionalization in Europe.

# Conclusion: Keeping Up Appearances

In Chatham County, the battle over the preservation of the landscape's "rural character" revolves around the re-imagining of southern "ruralness" in North Carolina and the potential impact this re-imagining could have on the social and economic well being of the region. The divisive social imaginaries, predicated on differing views and values, emerged in public planning debates and often overshadowed effective public planning decision-making. Instead of working together towards a goal, people pushed their social, economic, and personal agendas in an attempt to claim legitimacy and to preserve their social values, their aesthetic preferences as a reflection of their individual rights and privileges.

It is my contention that the Green Heart is a battleground for the (newly) neo-liberal political agenda in the Netherlands and for emergent identity politics within the European Union. Central to this project is the continual presentation of the Green Heart as a national identity marker on multiple scales. Specifically the proposed research frames the discursive deployment of the Green Heart within the context of recent political, economic and social developments within both the Netherlands and the European Union. For example, the heightened process of territorial branding, the overt marketing of the Green Heart, invites a socio-historic "revaluation" of longstanding concepts and categories associated with the landscape and the Dutch. The constant use of "marketing" discourse in relation to the Green

Heart and the observable impact of the discourse on issues related to spatial planning and regional policy decisions struck a chord during preliminary research between May-August 2004. What role do market demands play in Green Heart spatial and economic policy decisions and what are the material repercussions on the landscape? Official Green Heart discourse brands the landscape for consumption relationship between European Union integration, issues of economy and identity politics are both theoretically and ethnographically essential to this dissertation.

For the most part, the land use planning debates in Chatham are represented in stark black and white terms. Most label the pro-growth supporters as politically conservative, "good old boys" or speak of them as the working class that just doesn't know any better. On the other hand, the slow-growth proponents are forever called left-wing "newcomers" or yuppies that have no idea what it is like to live on minimum wage. Nonetheless, the debate is not as clear-cut as the pro-growth versus slow-growth rhetoric may suggest. Delineating between those for the preservation of Chatham's "rural character" brings into question what or even whose "rural character" they seek to preserve. The call to protect the "rural character" originally emerged in Chatham planning documents during the late 70's as independent family farms were swallowed by agrarian industry and the factories and mills slowly disappeared. In this light, the call to protect the landscape was not about the aesthetic appeal of a quaint view or pristine environment; preserving the "rural character" originally meant maintaining the "form and function" of a rural place crippled by a changing economy.

Nevertheless, it is the aesthetic re-appropriation of the concept "rural character" by relative "newcomers" that triggered a paradigm shift in Chatham County. Looming images of rampant suburban developments, strip malls, and unchecked population growth fueled a very

public debate. Concerned citizens moved planning discussions away from the assumed economic necessity of particular land use plans and towards socially accountability, and economic and environmental privileges. I've explored how the call to preserve the aesthetic appeal of a traditionally agrarian county re-defined land use in Chatham and codified specific "appearance standards". In particular, I've focused on how publicly questioning the planning process and foregrounding the environmental and social impact of the decisions simultaneously united and divided the county. In essence, the paradigm shift resulted from making the planning process and ecological impact of these decisions both visible and accessible. In short, appearances matter.

Although appearances matter and the act of "keeping up appearances" is problematic, I am struck by the ease with which people "block out" those features that do not belong in the landscape. When I first arrived in the Green Heart at a farmhouse I had rented for part of the summer, I felt mildly underwhelmed. In front of the house was a huge electric tower and behind sped a passenger train every 10 or 15 minutes. Within a few minutes, however I didn't seem to notice. Likewise, when I walked with Tommy Emerson across his property on the outskirts of Siler City to catch a glimpse of the Uhwarrie Mountains, I couldn't help but notice the multiple re-purposed farm buildings, the natural way that paths and flower beds seemed to appear and the randomness of blended styles. His house and property felt familiar and in place. These moments made me pause. How is it that these detractors do not spoil my appreciation of the landscape? On a bicycle trip with my kids in the Green Heart, enveloped by the big sky and the peaty, smell of livestock, Isa exclaimed, "This is the perfect landscape." I smiled as a train speeds behind the bench where they were sitting and took a picture (Figure 16: Isa and Robert in the Green Heart). What is it that makes us love a landscape? The

romantization of landscapes underscores the complex relationship between polity, place and national identity politics. Europe where the sovereignty of the nation-state is continually challenged through the intensification of European Union integration, landscapes are sites of power and contestation. The growth in romanticized landscapes highlights the ways in which everyday places take on extra-ordinary importance. Commercial and economic interests are re-defining the character of the landscape as witnessed in Chatham County. These preservation movements and the push to protect the appearances as cohesive markers and even large-scale "attractions" play on the emotive attachments.



FIGURE 16: On a 30 km bicycle tour with Isa and Robert in the Green Heart. Isa recalls the bicycle rides and the landscape and her claim about the Dutch landscape (Lewald)

# Appendix 1: "Southern Gardens"/ Southern Places?

What is this "southern landscape aesthetic" and can we truly speak of a singular aesthetic? A nostalgic Maud Andrews writes in an 1890 newspaper article that for her "an ideal garden for the south" is like a "… quaint, old-fashioned one that our grandmothers watched and tended." Her ideal southern garden would just grow "Topsy" and haphazardly, seemingly "unplanned" and overflowing with roses, daffodils, narcissus, hyacinths, and flowering vines. In the literature reviewed, this vision of an old-fashioned southern garden corresponds with the often-wistful descriptions of the south and images associated with southern gardens and landscapes (Armstrong and Wilson 2007; Brown 1880; Crowther 2000; Harrison 1991; Hillyer 2007; Hunt 1982; Kirby 2006; Lawrence 1991; Martin 1993; Page 1897; Richards 1853; Rion 1860; Rushing 1987). The literature reviewed, however, also clearly demonstrates that there is no "one" true southern garden (Cothran 2004; Minnis 2003; Phillips 1998; Wagner 2001; Westmacott 1992). In order to speak of a "southern garden" one must recognize the multitude of social, cultural, economic, ethnic, race and gender-based influences embedded within the form and function of a particular southern garden (Dietzel 1996; Harrison 1990; Homberger 1991; Jordan 2005; SGHS 1996). Despite the diverse influences and numerous types of southern gardens, Andrews' emotive views of a singular "old-time" or "old-fashioned" southern garden are palpable in both the historic record as well as the socio-historic imaginations[75]. It is my contention that the notion of a timeless old-

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[75] Librarians, botanists, and historians shared similar views with me and both primary and secondary sources on southern gardens repeatedly addressed similar views. Most notably the books by both William Brown 1880 and Thomas Page 1897 are nostalgia laden autobiographical glimpses into the South and its built environment. Both speak in equally as poetic terms about the ornamental gardens.

fashioned southern garden is an amalgamation of southern gardens both real and imagined and incorporates very specific attributes from various types of southern gardens.

Delineating between the various types of southern gardens requires one to identify the period of time, the gender of the gardener, as well as the cultural and economic background of the garden owner. To speak of a "southern garden" therefore requires one to understand the complexly intertwined relationship between these factors as well as the potential use or function of the garden. Briefly identifying each type of southern garden and their specific attributes will help us better understand how these types and attributes influence one another and potentially merge to form a more integrated southern garden. This discussion will therefore offer more insight into what constitutes a southern garden and why. Likewise, it acts also as a precursor for identifying pertinent design features.

According to one source, prior to the 19th century the word "garden" in the south referred to kitchen gardens (Cothran 2004:8). The incorporation of ornamental gardens, so-called "pleasure gardens", appeared well before the mid-19th century and were based on formal European garden styles and "imported" seeds (Howett 1996; Loewer 2004; Jordan 2006a)[76]. Cothran divides Antebellum gardens associated with plantation houses into two basic categories: 1) gardens for pleasure and 2) kitchen gardens (2004:8-9). These pleasure or ornamental gardens were deeply influenced by grand European garden styles and incorporated flowers found in the Old World such as narcissus, daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, hollyhock, pinks, and pansies (Cothran 2004:9; Jordan 2006 4-8). These formal gardens were highly geometric, and "consisted of parterres subdivided by paths of gravel or crushed oyster shell" that created symmetrical maze-like parks that are still visible in many historic sites

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[76] An 1828 publication appeared that highlighted how managing the design of kitchen gardens for "impressions of pleasure" was critical (Quoted in Howett 1996: 33) and more publications emerged during the mid-19th century several that offered advice on how to plant fruits and vegetables as well as ornamentals (Howett 1996; Rion 1860; White 1856).

such as Middleton, Westville, and Monticello[77]. While these formal gardens reflect older "Continental" gardening sensibilities, Jordan claims that during the late 18th and 19th century there was a move away from this gardening style in England and towards more natural or wild gardens (Jordan 2006a: 1). Furthermore, the popularity of these "masculine" gardens— gardens designed, maintained, and planted by men—correlates to a call made by Hunter (Howett 1996: 33) and substantiated by Jordan (2006a: 1) for the need in America to differentiate the cultured and cultivated ways from the primitive and wild. In other words, the popularity of highly designed, ordered, and rigorously maintained ornamental gardens: 1) allowed Americans to differentiate their gardening practices from the chaos or savagery of native practices and 2) further separated white southern gentleman from all things outside their worldview and allowed them to maintain control (Dietzel 1996; Harrison 1990; Howett 1996).

Antebellum kitchen gardens, including various herbal gardens used for medicinal purposes, were also highly ordered into rows and planted with utility in mind (Howett 1996; Page 1897; White 1856). Unlike the Native American kitchen gardens in the southeast that were haphazardly shaped and found atop middens (garbage heaps) or man-made artificial hills, the white owned kitchen gardens were permanent in nature with a clear aesthetic order (Kirby 2006: 55; Wagner 2006). Both kitchen gardens, like the African American yards, which had an ornamental and utilitarian function, were the domain of women (SGHS 1995: 3-4; Wagner 2006; Westmacott 1992; Howett 1996). It is, however, unclear how much gardening white women during the Antebellum period actually did on the plantations, or

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[77] Jordan (2006a) mentions sand and gravel as the primary sources for the cut-work parterre garden paths. The material used for paths may have been dependent upon the location of the garden. Most sources mention "sand" over gravel and no one other than Cothran mentioned crushed oyster paths.

what role they played in the design of the gardens[78]. Thomas Nelson Page's declaration that the vegetable garden was a "test of the mistresses power" and the flower garden "proof of her taste" (1897:11), is somewhat supported by the remaining documentation (SGHS 1995; SGHS 1996). Existing documents, however, have a distinct class bias towards wealthy, educated women. Hence, gardening practices from everyday life and everyday women is not prevalent. Nor is documentation of everyday people in general easy to find. This bias also exists in the way publications from the period approach gardening as well as to the access women had to written material and the time, money, education, or freedom from wage earning work to actually consume the literature. Despite this bias, there is evidence that regardless of race, ethnicity or class, women played an integral role in southern gardening practices and are viewed by many as an "unsung", yet pivotal force in shaping the southern landscape (SGHS 1995: 1).

So, how does this all relate to what is meant by the term "Southern Garden"? The well documented cut-work parterre gardens-- the classic elite plantation gardens that displayed both rare, imported flowers from Europe and Asia as well as the abundant flowering native species, hedged with their manicured boxwood borders-- were an exercise in separating the wilderness from the civilized world (Cothran 2004; Howett 1996; Kirby 2006). These gardens seemingly designed, managed, and maintained by Caucasian men with sometimes a scientific rigor are just one type of southern garden (Loewer 2004; Cothran 2004; Howett 1996). They differ from the African American yards with their walled in vegetables and fruits as well as some ornamental native flowers (Westmacott 1992), yet this is another and equally relevant sort of southern garden. These yards, like the Native

[78] Brown (1880) recalls a slave being beaten for not finishing work in the field because his master's wife needed him to help her in the kitchen garden. Others mention similar scenarios that lead one to believe that much of the kitchen garden work was undertaken by slaves under white female supervision or with their assistance.

American kitchen gardens receive the least amount of attention in the literature. Both of these female dominated gardens have visibly influenced the content of kitchen gardens throughout the south as well as the form of later ornamental gardens in the south.

While one surely must acknowledge the place of all these variations, it is my understanding that the term "Southern Garden" is not necessarily just a literal term. "Southern Garden" refers as much to the "parterre" order as to the more wild, fragrant, and overgrown garden in Andrews' article (1890: 3) that are thus often likened to women or feminine traits. The oral histories and personal papers of Totten, Rankin, and Ferris located in the Center for the Study of the American South as well as the memoirs already mentioned, repeatedly describe southern gardens in very feminine terms. The overflowing beauty of the flower gardens are directly related to women-- the "delicious tangle" of blooming flowers and "the tall lilies, white as angels' wings and stately as the maidens that walked among them" (Page 1897: 17-18). These descriptions, photographs, and reminiscing seem further supported by Lawrence's (1991) and Rion's (1860) publications, publications that highlight the shift away from formal or parterre gardens and towards flower gardens fenced or bounded by blooming or flowering vines and with beds of roses or other cultivated flowers. A visual tour of Elizabeth Lawrence's private garden (Friends of Elizabeth Lawrence) further offers a clear depiction of where cut-work parterre and cultivated and wildly abundant flowering gardens converge.

I return yet again to the imagery associated with grandmother's "old-fashioned" garden, imagery mirrored in the walled nature of Elizabeth Lawrence's private garden, descriptions from Page (1897), and images from various archival sources. Andrews' (1890) description is not just evocative, but it clearly shows how the "walled" influences of African

American yards, circular forms and topsy-turvy growth found in Native American gardens, and a move away from the rigidly geometrical boxwood borders and European plants unite. The convergence of these images and forms—both literally and figuratively-- form a truly "Southern Garden". Grandmother's garden is one that blends past and present—for grandmother, the Native American name used to refer to gardens in the southeast-- embraces a multitude of influences and is rooted to numerous pasts and a living present. Hence, all the various types of gardens discussed are indeed southern gardens. But it is this ephemeral seemingly timeless, overgrown garden with its curved beds that are hidden behind a gate that people most commonly think of as a "Southern Garden."

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