

Park Gravenrode

*“In Holland we not only create land out of sea,
but we also raise nature out of ashes.*

Park Gravenrode in South Limburg is our proof.”

Anya Niewierra,

General Director Tourist Board South Limburg (NL)





**“He (or she) who wants to find the pearl,
must open the shell first.”**

*So first I tell you something about whole region of South-Limburg,
before I get to Park Gravenrode,
which is a part of this southernmost region of the Netherlands*



Park Gravenrode is part of the region of South Limburg, and South-Limburg is a part of a **multi-national metropolis**



By train:

- **2** TGV stations within 30 minutes
- **8** intern. airports within 1 hour

By car:

- **45 minutes** to Düsseldorf (D)
- **1 hour** to Brussels (B)
- **2,5 hours** to Amsterdam (NL)
- **3 hours** to Paris (F)

South Limburg, the appendix of NL and the center of EU

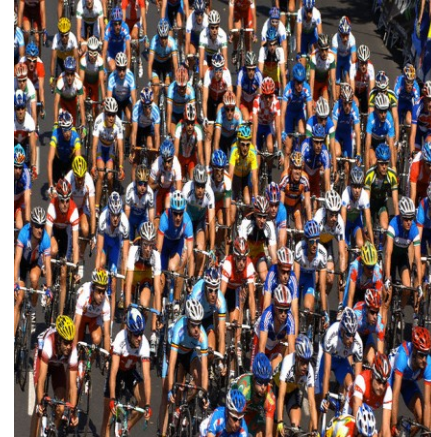
- Part of NL only since 1839 = almost no Dutch history
- Birthplace of the Euro (Maastricht Treaty 1993)
- 20 x 20 km** surface, **650.000** inhabitants, **220 km** border with D and B, **8 km** with NL
- Candidate European Capital of Culture 2018 (Maastricht)
- Capital Maastricht = oldest city in NL and awarded best city in quality of life in NL
- 3,7 milion** inhabitants within **50 km** in **3** countries, with **3** languages.
- Awarded 5 star scenery, with first EDEN destination in NL (Park Gravenrode)
- A vibrant region: 26.000 students of which 40% international.
- AND: the most popular domestic tourist destination in NL**

Tourism in South-Limburg

- ↳ Turnover : € 1.000.000.000 (industry-wide)
- ↳ Beds: : 81 per km² (highest in NL), 2nd is Noord-Holland with Amsterdam (42 beds per km²)
- ↳ Employment : 21.000 full time (7,4%) + 12.000 overflow
- ↳ Overnights : 5 million (90% Dutch, mostly short breaks)
- ↳ Day Tourism : 30 million (estimation)
- ↳ **Oldest destination in NL (tourism already since 1850)**

South Limburg was and is *'the foreign country within the country'*

South Limburg: the oldest & most popular domestic tourist destination in NL



 **MECC Maastricht**
Exhibitions | Conferences | Events



South-Limburg, 5 different sub regions in 1 region
Parkstad Limburg (6), a former coal mine area
is the new jewel on our crown

1 > Westelijke Mijnstreek

2 > Heuvelland Noord

3 > Maastricht

4 > Valkenburg

5 > Heuvelland Zuid

6 > Parkstad Limburg



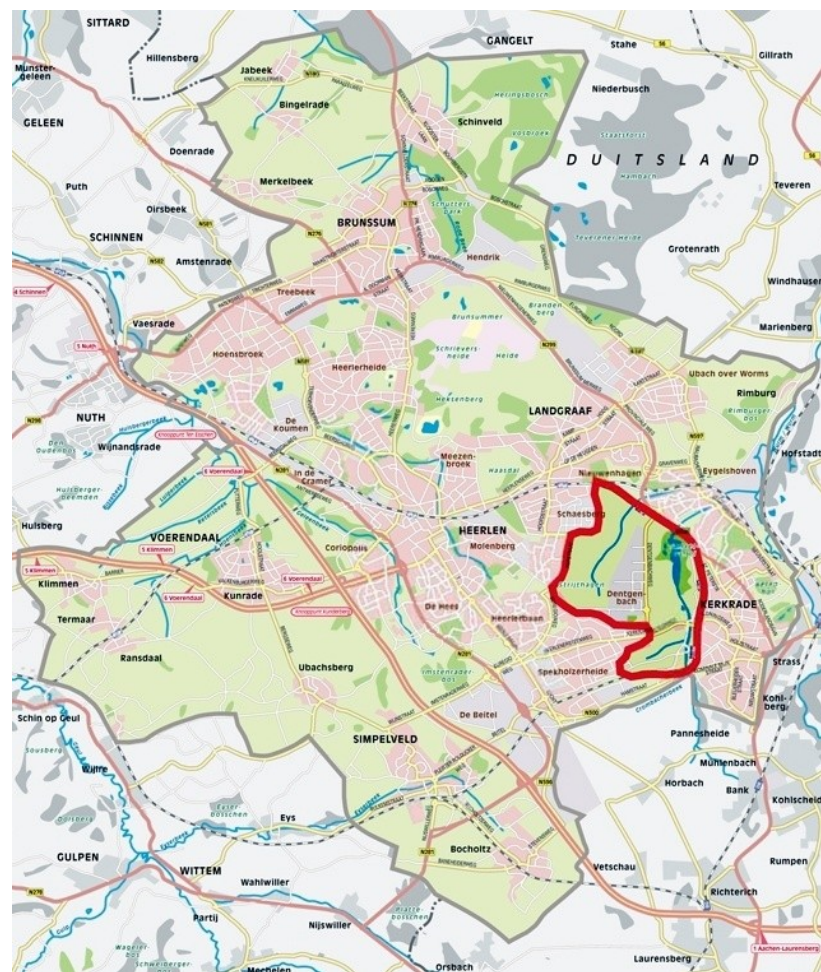
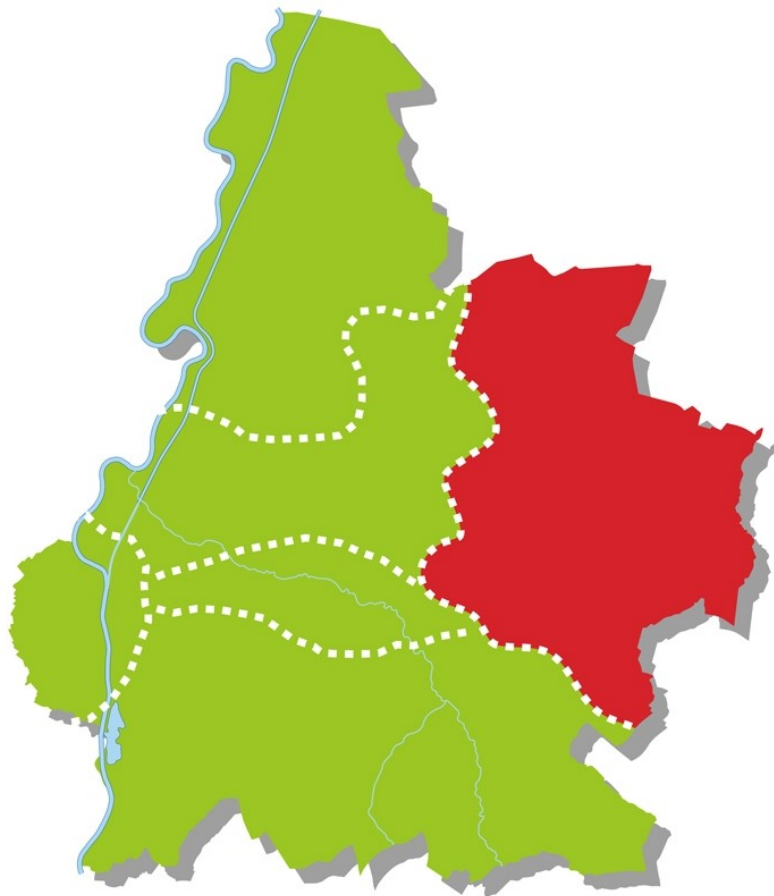
**Parkstad Limburg (with Park Gravenrode),
from NOTHING in 1995 to THIS in 2012,
being the fastest growing tourist destination in NL**



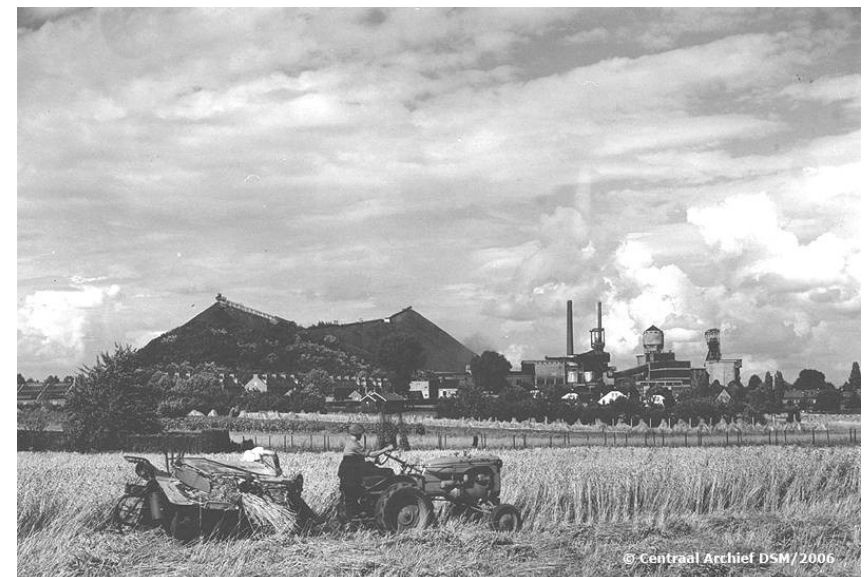
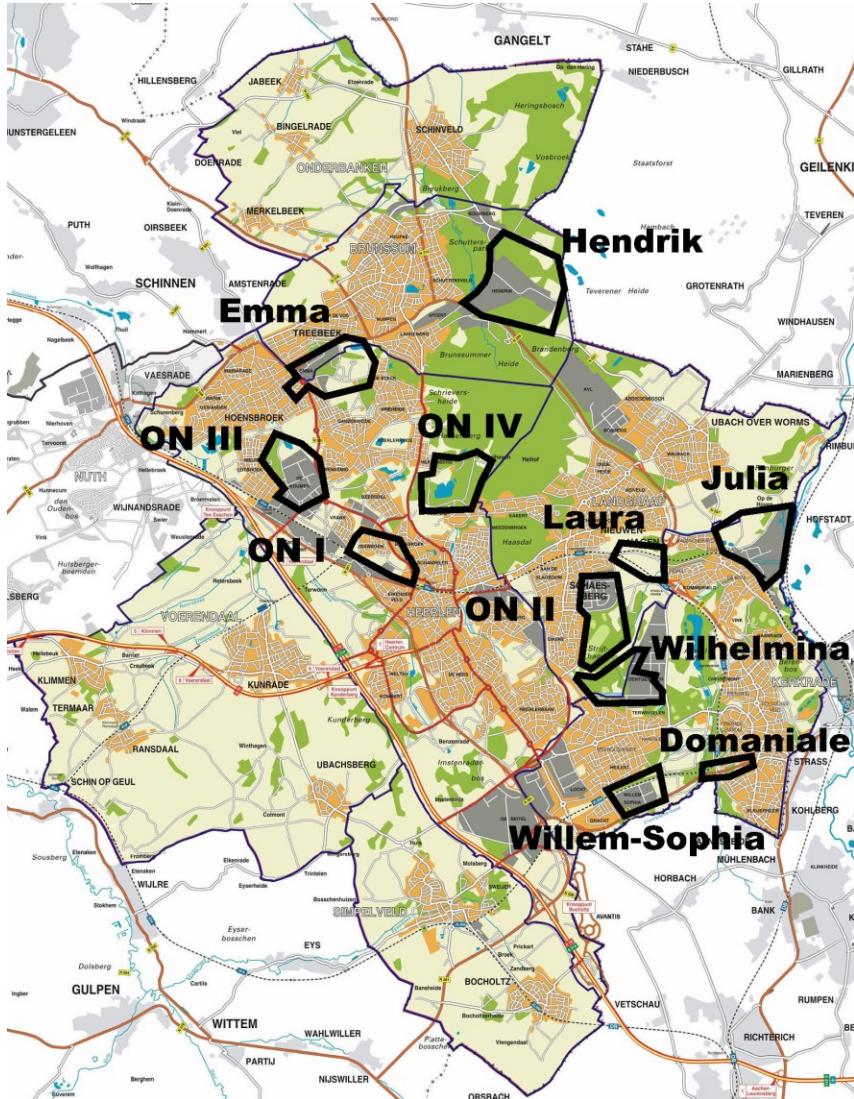
Parkstad Limburg (with Park Gravenrode), from NOTHING in 1995 to THIS in 2012, being the fastest growing tourist destination in NL



The succes of Parkstad in tourism started in 1998 in Park Gravenrode, which is a former coal mine site of 700 ha



Parkstad Limburg in 1960, 11 coal mines, the largest coal mine site in the Netherlands.



A part of Park Gravenrode, how it was in 1950: COAL & slag heaps



Park Gravenrode in 1965:

Mono economy based on coal. The Dutch government decides to close the mines, due to cheaper foreign coal.



Park Gravenrode in 1974: the last coal mine is closed.
A dark period starts for the region with mass unemployment of > 33%



Park Gravenrode in 1975 – 1995:

- > Several projects to get new economy to the region. Most of them fail.
- > The coal mine sites get cleaned up, but remain ‚war scenes‘







1995: the master plan Park Gravenrode is developed.

The dream or ambition:

1. Offer new 'product development' to the decreasing tourism in the whole of South Limburg (at the time) by creating a new tourist attraction zone (**reinforcing economy**)
2. Create new nature and clean up the lake and river (**reinforcing nature**)
3. Rebuild the monuments and historic gardens which were in the region before the coal mines came (**reinforce culture**)
4. Improve the infrastructure of the region, like roads, light, signing (**reinforce mobility and accessibility**)
5. Create new walking – and cycling routes through the area from the surrounding residential area's (**reinforcing liveability**)

1995: the master plan Park Gravenrode is developed.

Philosophy:

Use the (re)creation of nature to (re)create economy

- ✧ **Creating new nature** (forests) and clean up the remaining “nature” on the partly polluted inner part of the former site (river, lake)
- ✧ **Realizing new tourist attractions** on the outer and heavy polluted former coal mine plants and on the slag heaps
- ✧ Having the new **tourist attractions ‘pay’** partly for the new nature
- ✧ The new attractions are obliged to have a relation with nature. Or they must be ‘just right’ for the spot.
- ✧ **Realizing good connections** with the other parts of South Limburg (which were and are a catchment area for tourists)

1995: the master plan Park Gravenrode is developed.

Approach:

- ✧ **A long term vision** and strategy, which was completed with a **detailed short term plan**
- ✧ **Strong communication** (consultation) with all possible stakeholders (Province, inhabitants, politicians, Limburg Investment & Development Fund (LIOF), tourist board, entrepreneurs, etc.
- ✧ **Proactive attitude** by the local government (*“We will fetch those investors, we will not sit here and wait for them to come!”*)
- ✧ Strong **coordination** by the local government with educated tourism professionals in the municipality offices

1995, the public opinion in Holland at the time:

1. “No tourist will ever visit the most ugly part of the Netherlands”
2. “They better dream at night.”

But the local governments of Landgraaf and Kerkrade remained with their plan, continued, sought and found money and investors and they did it, **in 10 years.**

Between 1998 – 2012 the region went through a ‘**total make over**’ and the former coal mine sites were developed into this:

2012 Map of Park Gravenrode:

Inner part = nature

Outer part = attractions

All connected with
new roads,
new walking & cycling routes



Park Gravenrode, the outer part, in 2012

Megaland festival area (known from Pinkpop).

Pinkpop is the oldest open air music festival in the world.



SnowWorld: open in 2002 on a slag heap

Snowworld, is the largest indoor Ski Village in the world



Outdoorpark (next to Snowworld), open in 2012
Also the largest in Europe



The longest stairs of the Netherlands, on a slag heap

With 360° Europe view. Open in 2005



**Gardens Mondo Verde, open in 2004:
the largest new build gardens in NL**



**Strijthagen Castle, open in 2004,
renovated and with a clean lake...**



Discovery centre Continium, open in 1998, one of the largest discovery centres in Europe, with 'coal' as important theme



GaiaZOO Kerkrade with Dinodome, open in 2005.

Already for 4 years the most popular Zoo in the Benelux



GaiaPark 3e keer verkozen tot
MOOISTE
dierentuin
VAN DE BENELUX

The former coal train became a steam train attraction



The renovated Erenstein Castle with renovated French gardens



Renovation of the 1930 Botanical Gardens of Terwinselen, now one a recognized Museum Garden



2009: Park Gravenrode receives the EDEN Award and becomes the first European Destination of Excellence in the Netherlands

– Quote jury:

“The open wound that this former coal mine area was, has been turned into an opportunity beyond any prediction. Park Gravenrode can easily be compared with a Phoenix that rose out of her ashes.

This area is the example in the Netherlands of development of spacial quality and all this in an excellent cooperation of these two local governments with their stakeholders.”



Park Gravenrode brought a new future to Parkstad!

- ✍ The quick success of the attractions in Park Gravenrode lead to **a lawine of new investments in tourism** in all other parts of Parkstad Limburg
- ✍ In only 10 years this former “ugly” and “debased” coal mine area became responsible for 33% (!) of the total turn over in tourism of South Limburg
- ✍ **5.500 jobs, € 300.000.000 turn over (2010), 600.000 overnights (2012)**
- ✍ The region **shows pride again** and a new cultural revolution has started
- ✍ The region dares **to think ‘big’ again**, like it used to do 100 years ago when they build one of the most modern and successful coal mine area’s in Europe.

The example of this ‘thinking big’ is the project **Nature Wonder World** which is planned now in Brunssum

Nature Wonder World with Grand Canyon as a start!



Location Nature Wonder World today



What made Park Gravenrode into such a success, in such a short time?

At first there was this dream:

*You are, what is your most inspiring wish
As is your wish, so will be your will,
As is your will, so will be your deeds,
As are your deeds, so will be your destiny...*

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad IV.4.5

What made Park Gravenrode into such a success, in such a short time?

- ↳ Having an inspiring dream while **THINKING 'BIG'**
- ↳ A good, authentic, integral, **MARKET ORIENTED PLAN**
 - > And, of course, **keeping up to that plan**
 - > **ALSO AFTER ELECTIONS!**
- ↳ **STRONG POLITICAL LEADERS** who were not afraid to make choices
- ↳ **ACTIVE** enterprises
- ↳ **TOURISM PROFESSIONALS IN THE MUNICIPALITIES.** So no family members with no tourism knowledge doing the job!

What made Park Gravenrode into such a success, in such a short time?

- ✍ **CONSTANT COMMUNICATION** with stakeholders
- ✍ **ACQUISITION** of investors (not waiting till they come)
- ✍ **FAST DECISIONS** (avoiding long procedures, by doing work in advance)
- ✍ **GOVERNMENT ENTHUSIASM**, that makes stakeholders cooperate
- ✍ **GOOD MARKETING** *“Be good, and tell it!”*

**And now a film of Parkstad Limburg
anno 2012**

taken 15 years after „the dreaming started“

*(can also be viewed on
www.vvvzuidlimburg.nl)*



Thank You for your attention!

