



These are the Netherlands
70 years ago



and these are the Netherlands
today



This is where Nagele is

NAGELE



Nagele - Life in a Rectangle



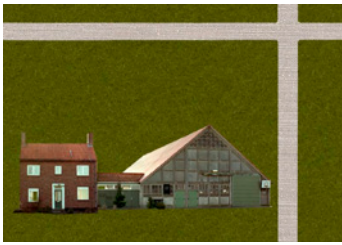
Village map



Start Film



Back to the Village



I am Hendrik te Raa, called Henk.

I came to the polder in 1943, in order to survive, to try to get through the war and then return home again. But once I got here I thought: I will stay here. Here you have good soil and here I can easily get a farm. It was not the same as in the "old country", where I came from.

In the past there was an island between Urk and Schokland. And the old people of Urk say that a third down the way from Urk to Schokland, a little bit to the North, that's where the island of Nagele was. The island was very shallow, it was also called the Nagele dip. A few people lived there, councilors from Kampen.

Then, at the northernmost point of England, two fishermen started to quarrel. A pastor (it was before the reformation, so it must have been a pastor) tried to settle the dispute between the two. The fishermen became angry, so angry that they took their knives and stabbed the pastor. And on his last breath the pastor said that Nagele was doomed. Close to death he had a vision: if Nagele will appear once more, it will be humble. Do you understand? Flat.

We are not as estranged anymore as we were in the past when Catholics and Protestants lived completely separate from each other. People began to marry each other and simply had more to do with each other. But I for example am from

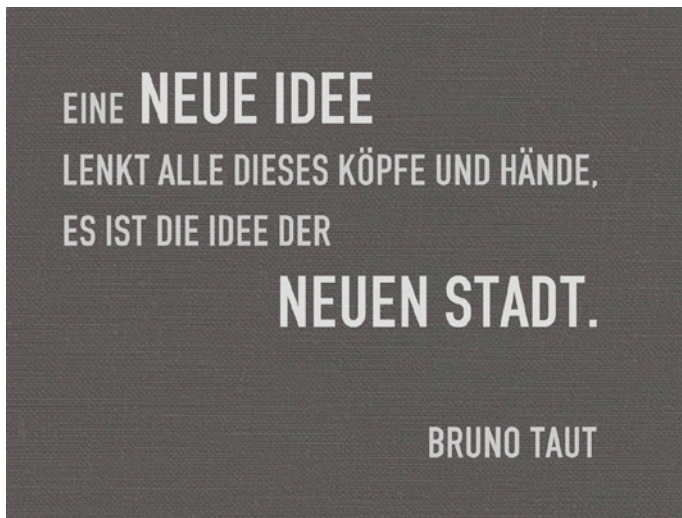
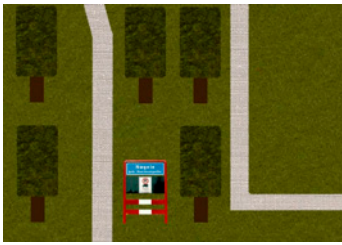
Borculo and I had never met a Catholic before. There simply were none. And then I came here. He had such a „men's club“ and we went out together. There in the bus, I spoke to a Catholic for the first time. It was very nice and we got along really well. That was a real revelation. I will never forget how when the bus arrived in Nagele one of them said: Well, Reintje, if we never meet again we will meet in heaven. We as Christians would have never said something like this. We did not talk about such things.

Back then we used to cycle to church in Urk. And there we were pulled off our bicycles because you were not allowed to ride your bicycle on Sundays in Urk. Yes, this is what it was like. At that time large trailers with straw were also set on fire by the people of Urk. We had taken their water, they said. We had taken their fishing grounds and therefore they took revenge on us. Yes, occasionally something went up in flames.

The people in Urk of course talked about the importance of their fishing grounds and as soon as we got close to Urk, doing our cultivation work, the young people started to set fire to everything they could. And when a new house was built the windows were smashed. It got better later on, but in the beginning it was bad. The young people still cause problems today, I hear. They are at sea during the week and want to enjoy life on Sunday. Urk is strictly religious, they are not allowed to do anything there so they drive onto the polder to have fun. This happens all the time.

In the beginning, when I went to the first meetings of the women's association there were a few women from Urk. I was amazed about the way in which the ladies behaved and how they insisted on their rights. I was speechless. Later on I understood. The men were away the whole time and the women had to take on their roles. The men were at sea the whole week. The women had to make the decisions because the men were not at home. I realized that at this meeting.

A very beautiful village, a very beautiful area, I would live nowhere else. Yes, I agree.



A new idea guides all these heads and hands; it is the idea of the new town.
Bruno Taut

Nagele is the last village to be built in the Noordoostpolder (= North Eastern Polder) and is exceptional in its architecture and town planning in the history of the polder villages. All the other villages on the Noordoostpolder and Wieringermeerpolder had been created by planners of the traditionalist Delft School. Just like many other European countries the Netherlands have become a battle ground between the traditionalists and the new movement in architecture and town planning: the Nieuwe Bouwen (= New Building).

The movement of the Nieuwe Bouwen criticizes both, the romanticized vision of the grown village as well as the Delft School's play with form. The mostly young generation of planners is fascinated with scientifically created plans for equal and healthy living spaces for all which are mass-produced. Daylight, air and sun and a form of architecture developed out of the needs of living together, are the aims of the progressive planners. Form follows function in urban design and architecture.

The groups "de 8" from Amsterdam and "Opbouw" from Rotterdam are the main representatives of this thinking. Prominent representatives are Cornelis van Eesteren, Aldo van Eyck and Gerrit Rietveld. In 1949, after 10 years of planning,

members of these groups present a plan for a village with 300 flats at the International Congress for Modern Architecture in Bergamo.

The village Nagele is clearly and strictly organized. The middle of the village is formed by a big green area with central institutions, public buildings and a small shopping centre. A ring road around this green centre leads to the residential areas. The remaining traffic circumvents the village. The style of the buildings is modern in form and function. The elements of the flats are mass-produced and they are furnished with eat-in kitchens. This ultra-modern design provides urban living to the agricultural worker. The Nieuwe Bouwen represents not just an architectural but much more a cultural idea of a new society.



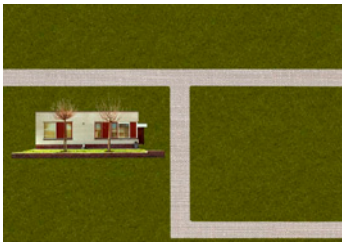
has an association representing the interests of the village. They work closely with municipality. The major task of the „dorpsbelang“ association is to preserve the quality of life and security of the village.

I am Henk de Haan. I was born in Leiden. After school and military service I went to the Wieringermeerpolder to work. There I did research into the use of agricultural machinery and tractors. That was directly after the Second World War, when the mechanization in agriculture just began here.

The big advantage of a village on a new polder is that you are very welcome there. People do have family, there are still some retired farmers here, whose sons took over the farm, but otherwise people are without family here. And as soon as you arrive, you are being asked: Do you want to become member in this association or in that association? You are accepted very quickly, if you show you are willing. And as soon as we got here I wrote to all the neighbours, that I would like to get to know them and wouldn't they like to come over for a cup of coffee or a snack.

I personally think that someone who does not earn as much money should nevertheless be able to live in a nice place, too. And that was actually the basic principle of the group „de 8“. This is the only village in the Netherlands which was entirely pre-planned before it was built, down to the smallest detail. We would really like to maintain this as the main characteristic of the village.

This here is the municipality of Noordoostpolder which consists of Emmeloord and ten villages surrounding it, the ten „green villages“. Each village



I am Gerard Spigt. I was born on the Noordoostpolder, in Bant. I came to Nagele when I was one and I grew up here. First I lived on a country road, my father was an agricultural labourer, he worked for a farmer. I have been living in this village for 10 years.

I am Anneke Schouten. I was born in Friesland (= Frisia) and I grew up in Amsterdam. I moved here 28 years ago. I met Gerard here in Nagele and we built a new life for us here together.

When you first came to Nagele, what was your first impression? Holidays! Holidays? Yes, a large house, it was in the summer and it was at the other end of Nagele, a forest behind my house, a large meadow with sheep beside my house, a big garden. Yes, I had a real holiday feeling during the first years. I was on holiday in Nagele. It was very beautiful. I could go for walks with the children, go outside with the children and I had much more space for myself.

As a "Nageleze" I can say it is paradise on earth to live here.

Very healthy. We live in the healthiest part of the Netherlands. No industry on the polder. The wind and no industry, it is very healthy to live here. And the women's association, we call it the „Plat-telandsfrauen“. Today mainly older people are members. In the past you got to know each other there, you chatted and exchanged. But you also

did things together, like knitting for example. No more today. They also invited people to talk about village affairs and go on trips together. Thus, you make such things for a long time here, since the first residents came here it was made like that.

The only disadvantage is public transport. You are very dependent on it here. We have a car, but there are lots of people, who don't. And if you want to go to Emmeloord on a Saturday evening, for example, to go to the theatre or to the cinema, you can't get back to Nagele. There is no bus anymore.

The people who were here in the beginning had the chance to make a new start and they have tried to build a community in which everybody is able to live well. And you still notice that today, that it is very important, that you do things together, not because you have to, but because you want to, without pressure. If you can do things together, things are much better.



Paula Loderus. We came to the Noordoostpolder in 1955, my husband worked as a farmhand and Nagele didn't exist yet.

We went to church here, of course, therefore we knew the village and sowed seeds of friendship which would sprout later.

In the first weeks I often thought: Oh dear. The houses at the Vliegtuigweg are much bigger than here; you had to use each meter to full capacity, but you got used to it quickly.

I found it beautiful then. I thought the village itself was also beautiful. We have a good view on everything here, sitting here you can see the street and you have a meadow in front of the house. When it was built, it was very special, there were only flat roofs and everybody said: This is not good – all these flat roofs. You have no storeroom and in the house at the Vliegtuigweg we had a storeroom and it was totally full. And here we had none and so I had to tidy up a lot.

And in the past we had also no toilet downstairs, only upstairs. And it was only young families that lived here and they all had small children. When the children were too small to go upstairs, they had a potty here at the back and the children used the potty. Now the houses have been done up and there is an upstairs and a downstairs toilet which is a lot easier. I did always say that only a man could come up with something like that. No woman would have ever had that idea.

Most streets have a neighbourhood association, as they call it, they get together a few times a year. Not everybody is a member but many are and if someone is in hospital and the wife or husband has no car the neighbours rally together. Once a year we have a barbecue in the street where we all get together and it is very nice, very sociable.

When we got here, the farmer my husband worked for had three workers, one permanent and two seasonal workers. When my husband left there was only one. The farmers now do much contract work; a lot has changed over the years. Many farms were sold. There are more machines. In the past you had to dig up the potatoes by hand but that was a long time ago. There are machines for everything now. You do less with your hands.

If a dyke breaks the water will be three metres high here. But it doesn't look like it will happen! You don't think about it and I am not afraid of it either. The dykes here are very good. And if something happens we can climb on the roof.

If you want to pour yourselves more coffee, there is more.



My name is Anneke Keur. I was born on the Noordoostpolder. Not in the village; I was three when I came to this village. In everyday life I am a farmer and I work for this museum with a great enthusiasm.

Everything was new. And that had to do with the land. There were new schools, there were new blackboards and chairs, even the toilets were new. Very beautiful. It was the same in the farmhouse, too. We thought it was wonderful, of course. It was a real new beginning for my father and my mother and for us it was really exciting and nice.

I do guided tours through the village and because I do it a lot, I recognize the beauty of the village. It has been designed generously, it is very calm and maybe that has to do with the open space in the centre of the village which looks a little bit like a park. And it is very beautiful. There is much green but with the houses I also find it a little boring.

This is, of course, land that has been designed on the drawing board with rulers and pencils and that's why it had to turn out like this. If you were born here, if you cycle to school and live here you are not conscious of that. But we always have exhibitions here which make you aware of it: hey, this is actually very special. This did not just develop like this naturally. Well, it is important to let the people know why Nagele is so special. It did, in fact, take ten years to design Nagele.

33 architects were involved in it.

Many people come here from abroad because the two architectural teams, „de 8“ and „opbouw“ as well as Rietveld and van Eesteren and Aldo van Eyck and Mien Ruys are such well known names in architecture.

Nagele gives people space. The way the village itself was designed in a spacious way, it gives people space to live. And Nagele has a warm social feeling. For me it does.



I am Wiechert Hoefnagel, I have been living here in the village for 36 years. My parents opened the supermarket here. I am 36 years, I have been working in the supermarket for quite some time, I took it over from my parents, but they still work here. And I am very happy here, I enjoy it very much.

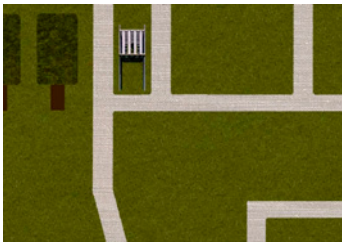
Everything is rectangular in Nagele. The shape is unique. If you go through the village, you do not notice it immediately, but if you look at an aerial photograph shot, you recognize the green centre zone, where all the public buildings are: schools, churches and the gym. Surrounding that are more rectangles made up of houses with a green grass centre. That creates a very spatial effect. If you see the village from above or you stroll around in the summer, it is beautifully green and also very roomy and wide. And that gives a very calm feeling.

I do not think that it is “superbeautiful”; but I also don’t think it is ugly because it is part of Nagele. But if you see such a row of houses without knowing Nagele then, I can imagine that you could think it is beautiful. But if you look at the village itself, where everything is rectangular, then it is very special. Then it is rather beautiful.

My parents are originally from Urk, but my grandparents are from Schokland. Schokland is about 5 km east and Urk about 8 km west. And Nagele is just in between. And I live here now and

my forefathers are from Schokland and Urk and I live right here in Nagele. I think that’s a nice development.

I was born here, I don’t know anything else, so I don’t really think about it. But sometimes I cycle around and I get to Schokland and I see the tall Schokland dam; and then you remember, that the sea broke against it. And then I tell my children, do you know, that we are cycling on the bottom of the sea? And if you think about that or you have a meal at home you realize, that you are actually eating on the bottom of the sea; you mull over such things and it is funny.



dyke was built and is finally banned. The massive intervention in the environment destroys ecological systems such as the tidelands and salt water meadows.

The people in the Netherlands have always fought against potential flooding because large parts of their country are below sea level.

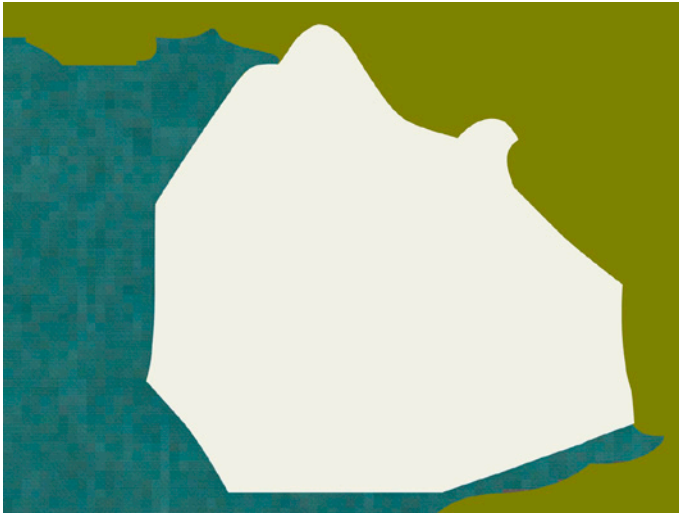
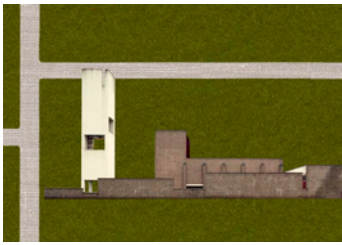
In the 13th century however people began to build dykes not only for protection but also to make land from the sea by building dykes around it, creating the so-called polders.

In the 19th century the first plans were made for the partial draining of the Zuiderzee. The first step of the Zuiderzee project is the great dyke that is built to separate the Zuiderzee from the North Sea, creating the IJsselmeer.

In decades four polders are made in the IJsselmeer. The Wieringermeerpolder and the Noordoostpolder are mainly agriculture used. The two polders Oostflevoland and Zuidflevoland on the other hand are intended as space for the overcrowded "Randstad". Apart from many new flats recreation areas for the urban population are created.

An additional dyke between Oostflevoland and Noordholland is built which separates the IJsselmeer from the Markermeer. There were also plans for a further polder in the Markermeer. This fifth polder has remained unrealized until today.

By this land reclamation the Dutch increase the surface area of their country by about 5%. Through water coming in from several rivers the IJsselmeer by now has become a freshwater area which is used for drinking water. Fishing in the IJsselmeer has decreased drastically after the



The Noordoostpolder is made between 1936 and 1942. The plans for this polder which is mainly intended for agricultural use however, were made in the early 1930's. The plan intended for approximately 50.000 farmers, agricultural workers and traders to start a new life here.

Inspired by the English idea of garden city and the German theory of central places, ten villages with approximately 2.000 inhabitants each are planned. They form a ring around the main town of Emmeloord with 10.000 inhabitants. The distance between the villages should not be more than 7 kilometres, so you can cycle easily from one village to another. Apart from these artificially created places on the Noordoostpolder there are the former islands Urk and Schokland, which belong to the mainland now.

National authorities select the new inhabitants of the Noordoostpolder. The selection is supposed to reflect Dutch society, consisting in equal parts of Catholics, Protestants, Reformed and Socialists. In addition to that they must be able to read and write, be well educated, socially conscious, clean and orderly.

What is expressed here is the belief that a society can be created through a rational planned model.

Apart from the history of planning and social yearning for order, the construction of the polder and its settlement tells a story of civil resistance. In 1940 the Netherlands had been occupied by the

National Socialists. At this time the cultivation of the Noordoostpolder had already begun. The German forces supported this land creation because they hoped to gain a large area of land for agricultural use. Many Dutch people signed up to work on the polder in order to avoid labour camps in Germany. NOP at this time stood for "Nederlands Onderduikersparadijs", in English: Dutch paradise for disappearing. The construction of the Noordoostpolder served not only as a way of gaining more land, it allowed many Dutch people to escape from coercion of the National Socialists' occupying power.



I am Lena Manders. And I am Harry Manders. I was a businessman, we had a supermarket. We had a supermarket here and when the village stopped growing, we sold it and went to Almere and we had three there.

And when I was selected, I had to apply for the „Rijksdienst“ (a national authority) just like the farmers. And there you were selected, and when we were chosen, there was nothing here yet apart from a sign „This will be Nagele“. Yes, or „Village under Construction“. There was nothing there yet. We had to wait another year, but we were among the younger ones. I was 24 or 24 ½, when I started applying. And you were supposed to be 26 years old to be a farmer or to go into business. And I did not get the first position I applied for which was in Rutten. But I got a letter, which told me, that I was still on the list of applicants. And I was not as worried as the farmers, but it was a feudal authority. And I said to the man: Are you looking at the age or the education? Because I had a very good education for the time. But the regulation of the „Rijksdienst“ was 26 years.

That was very strict. It was the education that mattered. And what else were the criteria? Whether you were proper! We have never been checked out, nor our parents but when we hired new people we had to report it. And then the police went to the village where that person came from or the mayor got a report that Pietersen had applied at Manders'. And then the mayor sent the

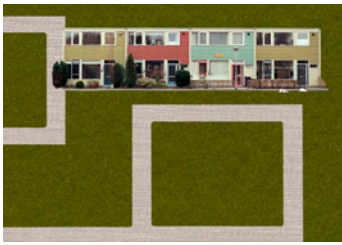
policemen to the traders of that village in order to find out whether they had any debts there and whether they were alright and well-behaved. Then we could hire them. We had also no „wanbetaler“ here if you understand that word: people who pay very little. Back then we didn't have any of those there; how we do.

But the teachers in school said this, too. They said that you notice that people had been „selected“ here.

The village was set up with flat roofs and we probably only have one third of the amount of flats here that other villages have. We have a lot of green and whatever we suggested it was always rejected. The town government also didn't want any change in this village. But the people there did not see what we saw here. They did not see that the numbers of customers decline if no new people come to live here. They simply wanted to leave it the way it was. And that's what happened.

The population was rather homogenous. There were farmers or workers. The teachers were a bit lonely, the policemen were a little lonely and we also didn't have much contact. Well, we had a lot of contact with people through the shop and we had a good relationship with the customers.

What is unique in my eyes – you may think differently – is the huge amount of space. And other people notice that, too. They say I live beautifully. Yes, now you do, but when you were a grocer, you would have preferred more flats than all that space. Yes, at that time I would have much preferred more flats.



My first impression is from 1943. We took the train to Steenwijk with our suitcases and bike and then went onto the polder near Blokzijl. There was no proper road yet, only a sandy path. It looked as bad there as it did later when we came to Schokland and Nagele. It was bad.

I was put in a camp. There was no tree, no hedge, no bush. There was nothing. Just a hut here and there. Everything was barren and nothing planned was planned for later either. There were only the labour camps in the place where later the villages were built. There were ten men, sometimes twelve in a room. I still remember how we were given our food in the evening with a large ladle from a large pan. It was good food, though I have to say.

The right water level had been reached and ditches and canals had been dug for draining off water from the polders. But then those were closed. If an area was chosen for cultivation, the first step was to dig a ditch and to make the canals deep enough. Then further ditches were dug, approximately one every 300 metres, about 1,20 m deep. Small areas were developed. We then dug more ditches through these and enclosed them. When I first got here we did all that with by hand. One third of this polder was certainly made with just shovels in our hands.

The dyke was finished in 1940. Right after the occupation in the autumn the dyke was finished and then the mills started to pump water. In the higher

areas the first harvest was brought in one year later. It generated income and gave us a harvest. And we got extra gas and diesel to transport the grain. Everything had to be taken off the polder with units of tractors; normal tractors on their own weren't able to make it.

There were two razzias here in 1944. That was in August. The Germans wanted to finish a project in southern Limburg. They wanted to take about 150 workers from this polder, I think. They were supposed to be taken away from road construction work. Then a crazy man who was later killed came to personally get the people, among them my brother. He was near Emmeloord. They fetched him from there and brought him to Limburg. And then, despite of all excuses like "that will never happen again", on November 17th, when we wanted to go to work there was an appeal: ready for evacuation. That applied to everyone younger than 35 but there were no older ones anyway. Somebody walking next to me suddenly disappeared in the reed. Nobody realized as the reet was metres high. And then we also hid in there. In the evening we heard shots. But we were not afraid that they might find us. I met another companion who told me that we had to report the next morning at 8 o'clock! I answered that we would, of course. Then we slipped away again and we never reported. But about 2.000 people were taken away.

Nagele - Leven in het vierkant | Nagele - Leben im Rechteck
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