

## Planning and managing the city of the future

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Dutch planning legislation provides for the (optional) preparation of long-term master plans by municipalities. For either the whole of the municipal territory or a part thereof (e.g., the city or any built-up area). In the Netherlands, such plans are called "structure plans" because they are concerned with the underlying structure of the city or region rather than details, but in this summary the term "master plan" is used. In practice, few municipalities make use of this possibility, although there is a trend towards increased use of more informal instruments such as concept plans, sketch plans or statements of planning policies. In some cases, urban planning makes use of sector plans (e.g., housing, traffic planning). The manner in which principal spatial policies are determined varies considerably, as does the authority attached to them by municipalities.

The research undertaken as part of this study indicated that local government councils and officers do not always adhere to a jointly prepared and adopted plan; apparently, the existence of such a plan offers no guarantee that it will be implemented. Interviews established that one reason for this is that the cooperation between officers and councillors is not always what it should be, another is that cooperation within local government organisations (e. g., between organisations of local government officers, or between such organisations and councils) is not always optimal.

The research comprised the following components:

1. identifying Dutch central government policies concerning urbanisation, urban planning concepts and processes, and urban problems currently encountered by cities in The Netherlands;
2. identifying urbanisation policies, plan types, plans and other instruments, and studying urban management practice in the municipality of Enschede (located in the east Netherlands);
3. identifying urbanisation policies, plan types, plans and other instruments, and studying urban management practice in the municipality of Utrecht (located in the central Netherlands);
4. research into the existence and use of master plans, and visions of a desirable future and related aspects (e.g., strategic research or urban survey strategies) in the 27 other municipalities (located throughout The Netherlands);
5. a report on the plan from and the planning system proposed for the city of León, in Nicaragua, and their potential role a paradigm for planning and managing future urban development in The Netherlands.

The research indicated that the general government's fourth memorandum on spatial planning in The Netherlands, and later also the "VINEX" memorandum, strongly influenced the urbanisation policies of the municipalities of Enschede and Utrecht. In other municipalities too, the VINEX memorandum led to great attention being paid to the development or economic and cultural potential of cities. The central government's policy of concentrating the growth of the built environment in cities drew attention to the scarcity of land (e.g., for the realisation of new

residential areas or new industrial estates). As a consequence, both Enschede and Utrecht were looking at the wider urban management issues involved.

The municipality of Utrecht was found to be relatively more advanced in the direction of integrated urban planning than Enschede, apparently attributable to a well-developed vision of the future and a strong resolve to realise that vision through the use of supporting strategies. In Enschede, the necessary instruments were found to exist in principle, but there a need to improve urban management (e.g., by supporting use of the available instruments with a sense of direction and a vision of the future city). In both municipalities, there was a considerable gap between ambitions in the areas of urban management and development, and the financial ability to achieve those ambitions. In neither case were strategies in place for addressing this problem, although in Enschede a start had been made to formulate investment strategies - these, however, had yet to be implemented. Utrecht has ambitions concerning the future role of its master plan, but realisation of these ambitions was yet to commence. It further appeared that the relationships between master planning and area planning required clarification, which suggested a need to identify city-wide priorities.

The research results indicate that in The Netherlands more attention should be given to the matter of cooperation between local authorities and the private sector. The existing areas of cooperation are largely limited to projects. Here, the private sector often secures its own interests by purchasing real estate on the basis of expectations raised by special plans. In this way, developers and builders attempt to ensure the future turnover and thus the continuity of their organisations.

However, cooperation at planning rather than project levels and the lack of a shared vision of a desirable future mean municipalities are unable to fully exploit market potential. In this area of concern, special attention should be given to the case of the housing corporations, which, through the recent liberalisation of the housing market, now have a more difficult role. The development of a structure for strategic consultations between local authorities and local representatives of the private sector could promote the identification of relevant private sector potential, and help set common priorities.

Of the 29 municipalities surveyed, only a few were found to have master plans or other operational plans that are kept up-to-date through continuous adjustment. Some municipalities (e.g., Tilburg, Deventer and Groningen) are moving towards new master plans; others are developing optimal solutions for one or more specific aspects of urban planning (e.g., Eindhoven is developing a methodology for improving the spatial quality of the city as a whole, and Hengelo is working on an investment strategy).

In general, the future concepts and master plans of the surveyed cities focus on urban expansion, changes in structure, improvement of the city centre (e.g., in view of its role as the motor of economic development) and improvement of spatial quality. Few city plans address issues of urban management or urban problem areas. Owing to the current withdrawal of central government concerning the fields of urban renewal and housing the changes in the responsibilities of the local government are increasing. In view of the lack of adequate financial provisions supporting this move, local government is increasingly compelled to rely on its own resources. In this context, it is of interest to note that the European Community is directing increasing attention to the problems and development potential of cities and urban regions.

The outcome of the survey suggests that the future of urban planning in The Netherlands would be well served by the continuous monitoring of city problems and urban potential. Such a process

would require uniform urban monitoring methods, and techniques for changing data into information to support decision-making in urban management. This would improve the quality of urban management by promoting more integrated decisions in spatial planning (e.g., social and physical aspects of spatial planning would be integrated). Such "new-style" master planning based on continuous information flows would require new legislation and new central government policies (i.e., policies that would take account of ongoing urbanisation and real-world economic and social (e.g., demographic) developments). The survey results further suggest that in the near future concepts will need to be developed for revitalisation cities (e.g., the concepts of the "recreational city" and the "working city").

Despite the lower profile expected of central government in some areas of responsibility, it can be assumed that government policies will continue to be a major factor in urban management. This implies a need for central government to include urban revitalisation among its areas of concern. Since the VINEX memorandum, the attention of central government has focussed largely on developing the opportunities offered by cities; it could therefore be necessary to shift the focus to addressing the problems arising in cities. The backlog in this area would need to be made good, and people and businesses in problem areas would need to be furnished with new perspectives on their future. Thus issues relating to the economy - formal and informal - of cities will have to play a bigger role in the future.

Suggestions regarding a layered economy invite reference to and comparison with cities in developing countries. There, in contrast to the situation in The Netherlands, cities are expected to continue to grow rapidly, even explosively. Given the increasing role of the informal economy, attention will have to be paid to developing small-scale enterprise. The fight against urban poverty will prioritise the development of resources, however humble, as well as concern for the housing situation of large segments of urban populations. The case study of Nicaragua indicated that self-determination and self-help are the best strategies, with government assuming the role of promoting and enabling (e.g., by creating favourable conditions). As the study showed, the Nicaraguan strategy met with success, and certain aspects addressing urban poverty may be relevant to similar situations in cities in the Netherlands.

All the evidence derived from studying topics as diverse as national planning in the Netherlands and small-scale enterprise in a developing country suggests that Dutch cities might benefit if, in the new-style planning, clearer distinction was made between three levels of planning:

- neighbourhood and community planning;
- urban planning;
- planning at the level of the urban region.

This would promote the recognition and identification of distinct interactions between the levels. This statement is supported by the fact that there has been a search in The Netherlands for new ways of governance, for instance through regional government, mini-provinces and urban provinces (e.g., Amsterdam). In considering these options, the point of departure was always that no fourth tier of government should be added to the present three (i.e., stat, province and municipality). Yet, the fact is that in this century (twentieth), and even more so in the last decades, the urban spheres of influence have, in geographic terms, expanded as never before, usually without boundary adjustment of the territories of the authorities concerned. In view of these considerations, it is recommended that the three-tier system of government be retained (i.e., not to form urban provinces) and, instead, to distinguish between different kinds of municipality (e.g., rural, urban, and urban agglomerations with authority delegated to sub-municipalities). Such a distinction would need to be accompanied by differentiation among and

specialisations of functions, whereby central and provincial governments would assume coordinating roles.

In urban planning. This differentiated approach would be complemented by a new role for master planning. This would be a central role (e.g., in determining and implementing key policies). At the same time, each master plan would fulfil this role in a different way because each plan (e.g., of an urban agglomeration, a city, a town, a rural municipality or a recreation-based municipality) would be different, in recognition of the differences in the nature of the territorial entities. For this reason, there can be no standard master plan; each plan should be according not only to measure but also to kind.

The new-style structure plan would need to be supported by new product development, as well as fresh legislation. Product development would involve reshaping earlier master plans into flexible and adaptable plans that are continuously rather than periodically updated. This would conceivably change existing relationships among master plans and other planning instruments and practices. For instance, municipalities that have an approved new-style master plan might not need to submit zoning schemes for separate approval at provincial level, if it could be demonstrated that these schemes were consistent with the approved master plan. Also, a legal provision might end the current optional use of a master plan.

A demonstration of the theory advanced concluded the dissertation. The demonstration describes a system of urban planning recently applied in León, Nicaragua. Through using this system, an attempt could be made to combine a number of elements of the new-style master plan. By aiming to start a dynamic and cyclic planning process, this attempt resulted in an implementation-oriented master plan for the urban area of León, as well as for its rural environs.

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