

NATIONAL REPORT OF THE NETHERLANDS ON HABITAT



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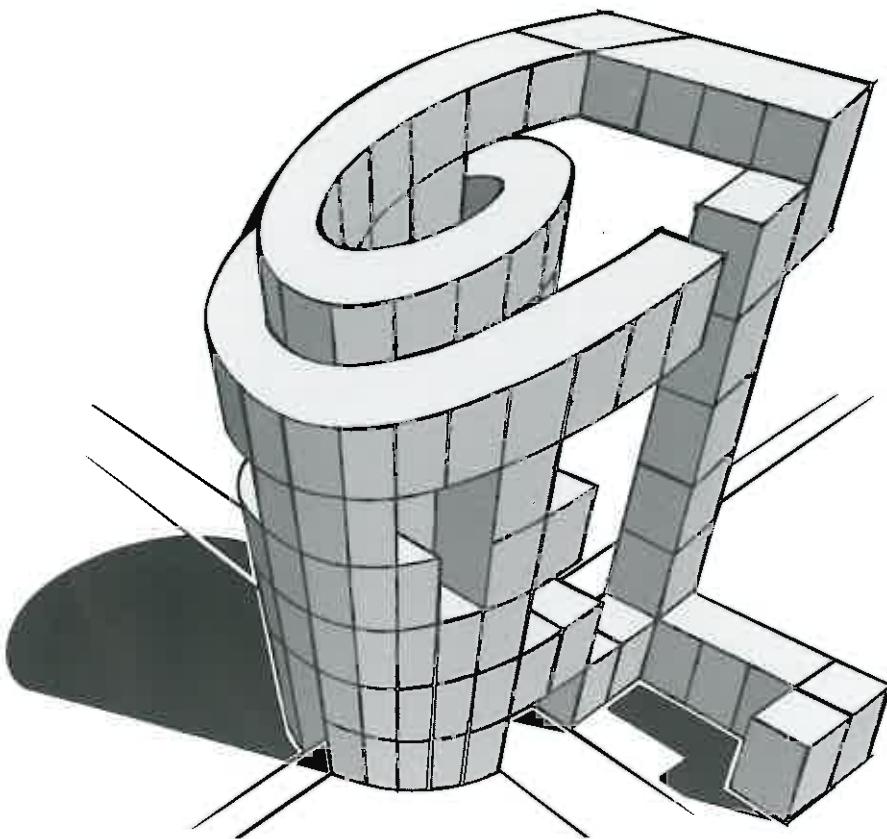
The recognizability of the problems in the Netherlands

This report deals with the habitat policy in the Netherlands and is intended for the Second UN World Habitat Conference in 1996. The report is more than a mere compilation of our successes, in that we have included a clear description of the various challenges facing us for the benefit of our fellow global citizens.

INTRODUCTION

The central theme of Habitat II, as well as of our national policy, is that of sustainability. The key variables playing an important role in this are: energy, biodiversity and space. The Dutch habitat policy, too, is governed by these variables. Management of our energy consumption is reflected by the policy directed towards sustainable building and the search for optimum locations for housing and employment, to reduce the volume of commuter traffic. Efforts to preserve biodiversity include conserving the amount of space used and the design of compactly built cities. The variable of space not only plays a role, it is one of the decisive factors in residential quality.

Urban problems - and the way these are approached - are different in the Netherlands from other countries. Whereas in developing countries the struggle is mainly directed against urban poverty, the discussion in the Netherlands concerns the affordability of a two or three-room dwelling for single-person households living on minimum social security benefits. Instead of an explosive population growth, our cities are facing an explosive growth in the amount of space consumed per capita. We do not talk about an equitable distribution of land parcels on which to build our own dwellings, but about an equitable distribution of the affordable self-



contained dwellings available to which every adult member of the population is in principle entitled. When we refer to the problem of the homeless, we are talking about a small group without access to regular housing due to reasons of a psycho-social nature (and not economic reasons).

A final example: instead of referring to 'access to drinking water' this report refers to the need to economize on the consumption of drinking water.

In short: the recognizability of Dutch problems and the strategies applied to solve these fades the greater the geographical distance from our country becomes; the problems will be more recognizable to northern Europeans than to west Africans. On the other hand, however, the number of common problems is also on the increase, such as suffocating traffic congestion in major cities or the expanding energy consumption by the cities.

No attempt is made in this report to translate our approach to urban problems to the global situation; that would have been too ambitious. Our aim was to present our experiences to the outside world in the knowledge that many of our solutions would be relevant primarily to affluent countries with mixed economies.

This is not to say, however, that there are no generally valid ideas to be found in the policy pursued in the Netherlands which would not be useful in other countries. An example which could be mentioned in this respect is that of the decentralization of state funding.

While our cities have not expanded uncontrollably, we, too, have discovered that there are limits to the degree to which society can be moulded.

The emphasis is now on stimulating sustainable urban development by creating favourable conditions for desired developments and by altering the course of undesirable developments. Every decision that can be taken at the local level without endangering the



structural whole, is assigned to that level (subsidiarity).

Landing in the Netherlands

Visitors are always surprised at how orderly, how 'neat and green' our country looks. There are few supermarkets or ribbon developments along the approach roads to the cities.

A closer look reveals how strong our system of housing and how effective our tradition of urban development and town and country planning is. Our need for order may perhaps partly be explained by our collective struggle against the water and our high population density. With its 16 million inhabitants, the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with approximately 400 inhabitants per square kilometre. In the highly urbanized western part of the country, the density is as high as 1000 inhabitants per square kilometre. Spatial planning is a basic requirement for guiding the development of the cities in any particular direction.

Despite all this, there are also foreign visitors who regard our cities as **polluted and unsafe**, who have the feeling that here 'everything goes'. And while we lead the way in the fight against environmental pollution, we nevertheless find it painful to sacrifice even a tiny part of our affluence to do so. Dutch cities may at first sight, apart from a few districts, look fairly clean, yet with our high level of affluence and our energy-guzzling transport, industry and horticulture, we, too, actively contribute to the pollution of the global environment.

The backbone of our housing system is still intact and flexible: the some 800 'housing corporations', operating as non-profit landlords, provide housing not only to those subsisting on minimum incomes, but to half the population; subsidized rented dwellings are well-maintained, rents tend to be reasonable and the majority of the housing corporations have solid financial reserves.

But housing expenses are not evenly distributed. Some pay far too little - measured against their income - and others far too much. The problem of housing expenses of the lower income groups particularly requires attention. Important dilemmas therefore need to be studied. We have summarized these

into four major themes: the well ordered city, the affordable city, the sustainable city and the liveable city.

In brief: in some respects we may still be a 'model country' but in many respects we, too, are still feeling our way. We are pleased, nevertheless, to show the visitor round.

The scope of the national report

This report focusses on the policy areas of housing and spatial planning, with a few excursions into environmental management. These three policy areas (plus the land registry and the government buildings agency) all belong in the Netherlands to a single ministry: the **Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment**.

Painstakingly argued policy documents and voluminous studies have appeared on all the topics discussed in this report; we have distilled only the **generally applicable ideas** from these which we think may possibly be of interest to the outside world. A separate 'Compendium of Laws and Regulations' has been appended to this report.

Also available as separate **appendices** are the following:

- * the statistical housing and urban indicators for the Netherlands according to the UN format;
- * a selection of 'Best Practices': short, illustrated descriptions of successful examples taken from practice, which correspond to the four themes of this national report.

The period under discussion is in principle the past 20 years, from the first to the second Habitat conference:

1976 - the autumn of 1995.

In some cases, background information may be required in order to be able to understand the developments. The focus is on the developments over the past five years.



Government from a distance

Especially important is the role of the government with respect to the private sector. During the years following the Second World War - in which our country suffered much damage and destruction - the necessary reconstruction of the Netherlands called for a strong presence of the national government in the area of housing and spatial planning. In recent years, however, the national government has attempted, from a somewhat more distant position, to create conditions conducive to the desired urban development, thereby assigning a key role to the municipalities.

The main policies of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment have been laid down in the following policy documents:

- * **Policy Document on Housing in the 1990's:** this document specifies
 1. how the landlords of subsidized housing (the housing corporations) are to move towards financial independence (i.e. further privatization and relaxation of the ties with the government) and
 2. the gradual reduction of building and operating subsidies; the 1990's will see the transition to an entirely new housing system. The Decree on Management of the Subsidized Rented Sector provides that government supervision be put in place to guarantee that the landlords of subsidized housing will continue to offer good, affordable dwellings for the lower income groups and share the responsibility for ensuring liveable neighbourhoods.How to respond to the consequences of the ageing population and of the trend in which the elderly are stimulated to continue to live on their own as long as possible are other policy spearheads.
- * **The Policy Document on Urban Renewal in the Future** offers a framework for the improvement or replacement of inner city dwellings. The quality deficiencies are indica-



ted and also the distribution of the government funds to the municipal urban renewal funds. The urban renewal operation which was launched during the early 1970's as a reaction to the post-war period of neglect will have largely been completed by the year 2005.

- * **The Fourth Policy Document (Extra) on Spatial Planning** guides the urbanization process into the desired channels and offers a framework for regional and local spatial planning. In the period 1995 - 2005, nearly one million dwellings will be built in our highly urbanized country. Building locations are to be chosen as far as possible adjacent to existing cities ('the compact city'), must be favourably sited with respect to public transport (in order to limit automobile use) and leave areas with landscape or ecological value intact.
- * **The National Environmental Policy Plan** sets down the targets for limiting environmental damage in the future. This involves the quality of the air, the water, and the soil, the use of scarce raw materials and the preservation of the landscape. In the area of housing and construction, the Action Plan for Sustainable Building was recently published detailing the following elements: energy conservation, life cycle management of raw materials and sustainable quality.



The Netherlands is famous for its discussion culture. It is typical that in our country, much importance is attached to collective consultation and policy documents. The basic principles have naturally been laid down in laws: the Housing Act, the Housing Rents Act, the Housing Allocation Act, the Environmental Management Act and the Spatial Planning Act, to name a few of the most important.

The overview at the end of this report provides a short description of the legal instruments, in the same order as the chapters of this report.

However, instead of enforcing matters by legal means, the government prefers to govern on the basis of **social consensus**. All new policies are preceded by extensive consultation with all the organizations in the relevant sector. It should be pointed out that the existing legal protection which serves to promote careful decision-making facilitates this procedure.

Decision-making consequently tends to occur harmoniously and local actors conform to an important degree voluntarily with the policy, making corrective action on the part of the government largely unnecessary.

The extensive consultation does make decision-making more complex and hence more laborious, as a result of which large visionary schemes are difficult to realize or are soon reduced to 'fragmented' politics.

A national government that wishes to govern more indirectly is particularly dependent on accurate and current information about what is actually going on.

For monitoring the situation in the area of housing, two basic information systems are available:

- * the **Housing Needs Survey**: the housing shortage is determined on the basis of this survey, in which migration trends are monitored and demand and supply in the housing market are analysed.
- * the **Qualitative Housing Survey**: this serves to measure the quality of the housing stock and to underpin the programmes for urban renewal and housing improvement.

Both surveys are held every four years by means of a large scale national random sample. The integral population and dwelling census was abolished at the end of the 1970's. The statistics in the policy fields of housing, spatial planning and the environment are produced by the Central Statistical Office. These not only incorporate data from the two databases mentioned above, but also data from other sources.

In order to pursue a sound habitat policy, the government keeps well abreast of the **social trends** in society. To this end, annual reports are submitted by, among others, the **Social and Cultural Planning Office, the Central Economic Planning Office and the Scientific Council for Government Policy**.

These reports cover a plethora of fields, including residential-related issues and the environment. For example, trends relating to demographic developments and income developments are relevant, among other things, in setting up house building programmes. On the initiative of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, the **Housing Experiments Steering Group** was instituted to support experiments and innovative projects. This independent foundation manages an Experiments Fund set up by the ministry, stimulates and evaluates local projects and reports on the newest developments to

the ministry. Important experimental programmes are: housing accommodation for the elderly, sustainable building and the privatization of the housing corporations.

The main urban problems

There is no integrated action plan covering the entire habitat domain, although much is being undertaken in various sub-fields. As expressed in Dutch policy jargon: lists of 'bottlenecks' are identified to which the government responds with 'policy spearheads'. In anticipation of the four thematic chapters which follow, let us now set out the main urban problems which require attention in the future. Naturally, the list is not an exhaustive one. On the other hand, inclusion of a problem on the list does not necessarily imply that the national government also bears prime responsibility for finding a solution. The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment will, however, have to consider every problem and reflect on the know-how and the range of instruments available.

The planned city (see chapter 2) necessitates a **clear division of tasks between the national, provincial and local administrations**. The state, provinces and municipalities are currently discussing the need to review the tasks and competences concerned.

The search for **new building locations** in the western part of the country is **more difficult than ever before**.

The best building locations have already been claimed. In the years to come locations will have to be used which are within existing urban areas, squeezed between roads and canals or situated on expensive horticultural land.

Fewer land and building grants are available today than in the past.

The high prices of land and the expensive infrastructure call for extremely compact building, yet consumers continue to demand a house with a garden in a green neighbourhood.

Dutch cities are still - by European standards - affordable cities (chapter 3), and the privatization of the subsidized housing sector is generally proceeding very satisfactorily.

The aim is for 30% of new housing construction in the future to be realized in the subsidized rented sector. The problem of high land prices has already been mentioned. The current favourable interest rates allow construction of reasonably affordable and good quality new housing. Also, the aim is to create neighbourhoods with more diversity: to this end, the new neighbourhoods should also incorporate cheaper housing, while expensive dwellings should also be built in the older districts. Generally speaking, home ownership is on the rise, in part thanks to the



favourable fiscal climate. In the near future, owner-occupied homes will make up 50% of the total stock of dwellings.

The sustainable city (chapter 4) demands **better management of automobility**, although the rise of the car has hitherto seemed irrepressible. Measures reducing accessibility of car traffic to the central parts of the cities and major investments in public transportation have failed as yet to stem the growth in car use, although they have led to a more selective use. The worst congestion appears to have shifted from the cities to the highways.

Too many building materials are used which are **harmful to the environment** or which are not easily recycled. The level of knowledge about the environmental impact of various building materials is at present insufficient to

warrant stringent measures. International co-operation in the area of research and legislation is needed. Moreover, not enough attention is given to the environment in the design of dwellings and neighbourhoods.

In recent years, the Netherlands has **implemented stringent controls on compliance with environmental legislation** on soil contamination and noise and odour nuisance. As a consequence of the new regulations, it has become increasingly difficult to find building locations, especially in urban areas which meet all requirements and remain affordable. These are precisely the locations which, from the spatial planners' point of view, are to be preferred.

Sustainable building also implies construction which meets the requirements of all stages in the life-cycle. The current



housing stock is **insufficiently equipped to meet the requirements of senior citizens aged 75 and over, and the disabled**, groups which already make up a considerable part of the population. Dwellings still contain a host of obstacles which impede the ability of these groups to live independently. In newly constructed housing, more consideration is given to the human life-cycle. The liveable city (chapter 5) has been neglected in a number of urban neighbourhoods due to concentrations of the unemployed and economically weak population groups. **Pollution, vandalism and lack of safety** make intensification of management and supervision in the everyday living environment imperative.

Problems of liveability are not only found in the old urban renewal districts, but also in a number of **post-war high-rise neighbourhoods**. The management of high-rise buildings often appears to present more difficulties, because of their large scale and heterogenous population structure. The investment needed for demolition and rebuilding or for drastic modifications of apartment blocks is, however, huge, which means that the option chosen tends to be that of alterations on a limited scale. A programme of the efforts in the field of housing has been set up to coordinate the urban renewal projects in pre-war and post-war districts and in the building locations specified in the Fourth Policy Document on Spatial Planning (see chapter 2).

The Cabinet has meanwhile entered into a covenant with a considerable number of major cities on an **integrated approach** to the problems of the cities. These include unemployment, health care, education, safety, the economy and the liveability of the city. A start has been made with the compilation of district and community management plans.

The **integration of large groups of immigrants** is a process which generally - and in particular in the area of



housing - has encountered few major problems, but it is slow process, in particular regarding employment and education. It is a matter of spacially differentiated build up of districts according to income, due to the build up of the housing stock, but this process has hitherto had no demonstrably negative effect on the social integration. An additional issue is the housing and integration of the substantial flow of refugees in recent years. With the cooperation of the municipalities, the task of housing this group has been extremely successful. In addition, the arrival - especially in the major cities - of illegal immigrants and the growth in the numbers of homeless have led to **tensions**, particularly in the shoddier boarding and rooming houses.

Land policy and land ownership

To realize a sustainable, liveable and affordable city in a densely populated country requires a certain degree of planning, spatial planning but also administrative and legal planning. During the immediate post-war years, the Dutch government resembled a director who also starred in a number of major roles.

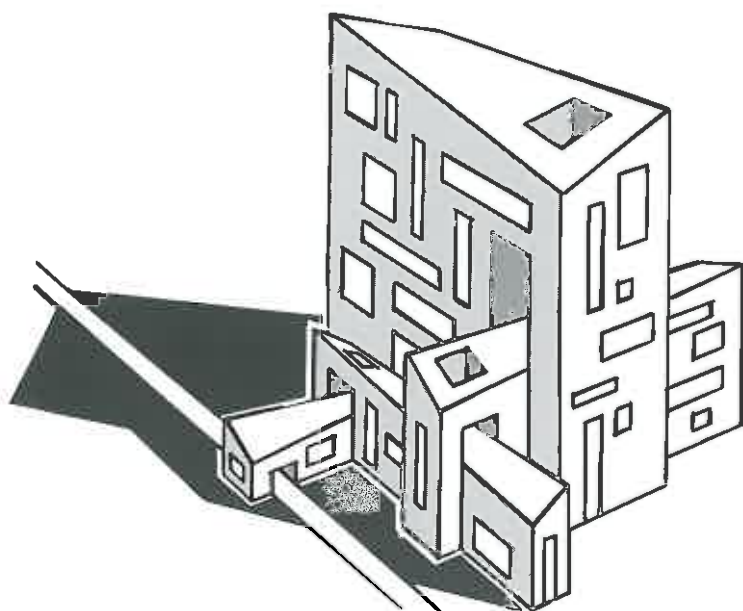
Today, the government aims to leave more freedom for the regional and local levels, and to withdraw in order to play a stage-setting role, retaining the possibility of adjusting the course where necessary. An important steering instrument is the public ownership of, or the public claim to, land.

1. THE WELL ORDERED CITY

Just as in other western European countries, land regulation is based on private titles to ownership of land and real estate. The **Land Registry** is responsible for a meticulous and independent registration of ownership and the rights associated with that ownership. This incontestable and publicly accessible record of ownership rights is a sine qua non for any willingness to invest in real estate.

At the same time, this registration is also the basis for local taxes: property taxes are the main form of direct taxation by local governments in the Netherlands and constitute a sustainable funding base for the management and maintenance of public areas and public utilities (both ownership and actual use are taxed). Coupling the civil registry to the records of the utility companies subsequently yields an up-to-date picture of who exactly lives where.

Another important aspect of well-kept records of property ownership concerns investigation into and prevention of environmental crimes. In principle 'the perpetrator pays', but for this to work, precise information about who the owner of the land and premises was at the time of the pollution is essential.



Since the beginning of this century, national and, to an even greater extent as far as the large cities are concerned, local governments in the Netherlands have been major landowners. Owning land was not only an instrument by which public services and corporations could be housed, but also by which spatial planning could be steered. A - somewhat exceptional - example of the state as 'major landowner' is the newly reclaimed **polderland in what was formerly the Zuiderzee**, which was drained and developed between 1930 and the 1970's. In the beginning, all the reclaimed land belonged to the state, and the IJsselmeerpolders Agency was the sole administrator permitted to develop the land by building towns and villages, houses and farms and finally selling the land to private individuals or institutions.

The property owned by the state does not extend beyond the canals, highways and railways, plus a few nature conservation areas and military training grounds. The development and construction of entire towns and villages is not viewed by the state as appropriate to its task.

In the Netherlands municipalities, and in particular the urban municipalities, own all the public areas such as roads, squares and parks as a matter of course. Since the beginning of the century, it has been customary for every urban expansion or reconstruction to be preceded by **acquisition of the land by the municipality**.

If landowners refused to cooperate, municipalities were legally entitled to resort to **expropriation**, if need be.

After a site was prepared for construction, the municipality subsequently sold or let out on a long lease parcels of land to private individuals. The long-lease instrument is primarily used in large cities and is a means by which the municipality can profit in the long run from the appreciation of land values. In principle, the role of the municipality is an influential one. The municipality is responsible for adopting zoning

plans within the framework drafted by the higher tiers of government. Building plans may only be realized if these are in agreement with the zoning plan. Moreover, the municipality may also acquire land, prepare this for construction and allocate it. Real estate developers and construction companies often attempt to buy up strategically located parcels of land in areas where urban expansion is planned. The municipality is then dependent on their cooperation in realizing the projected zoning plan. In the most extreme case, the municipality can exercise its power of expropriation in order to realize its goal, although it prefers less long and complicated methods. The parties instead attempt to reach agreement by means of negotiation. This drives the



price up when developing new zoning plans. To strengthen the position of the municipalities in the struggle to develop new areas, the government recently proposed a new initiative by which the pre-emption right of the municipality in the acquisition of land would be laid down by law. The amendment providing for this has only just been presented to parliament. The amendment provides for a broadening of the scope of the **pre-emption right to include all land assigned a (new)**



non-agrarian use, and will apply for a period of two years prior to the (draft) zoning plan, enabling municipalities to anticipate plans not yet published. At present now that, especially in the western part of the country, space is at a premium, we are facing a huge new building task. The amendment will come too late for many of the locations where building is needed today, but will have a moderating effect on prices due to the fact that the land may be further sold only to the municipality. Generally speaking all construction is subject to permits, which must fit into the scope of the zoning plans.

In most places, however, the municipalities themselves seek **public-private partnerships with builders and investors** as they lack the means to make the enormous investments required in the public infrastructure on their own. By entering into covenants with corporations and consortia of builders and investors the municipalities are able to limit their risk and to safeguard development of the area. Naturally, the municipalities stipulate conditions in these covenants for sustainable urban development. The fact that the municipalities are even able to make conditions at all is mainly due to their position as a public body and not because of the fact that they own the land.

The range of instruments available to the municipality in designing a planned city stretches beyond allocating land. **Building ordinances** allow the municipality to stipulate conditions and to exer-

cise supervision of the quality of buildings, including dwellings. Until recently, ordinances municipalities could differ widely per municipality, and many felt that the municipality was too strict in the requirements with which structures had to comply.

Typical examples were the rigidly stringent procedures for permission to build dormers, dovecotes and sheds in garden. At times, the object of all these regulations, namely the prevention of nuisance to neighbours and passers-by, was completely lost sight of. There were also many regulations with regard to the interior of the dwellings, such as the standards for master bedrooms and children's bedrooms, in complete disregard of the large number of non-family households in the cities.

In 1992, the **Building Decree** became effective on a national level, in which national, uniform building regulations were provided. The Building Decree stipulates few requirements except where safety, utility, energy conservation or health are concerned. In accordance with the principle of the free choice of layout, the number of regulations on the interior of dwellings and buildings was consciously limited. On the other hand, the requirements regarding insulation and energy conservation were tightened. As far as the planning of existing cities is concerned - in particular the older areas - the practice of building supervision should not go unmentioned.

Building supervision is mainly aimed at dilapidated or poorly maintained buildings and can lead to measures being taken to prevent collapse or to force the owner to carry out the overdue maintenance needed, which occurs only sporadically in practice nowadays.

Land policy and building supervision constitute a powerful pair of instruments by which municipalities can guide city planning in the desired direction. The framework for the desired direction, however, is marked out by the spatial planning instruments.

A strong tradition of spatial planning

The Netherlands has a strong tradition of spatial planning. The entire territory is covered by regional and zoning plans regulating the way the space is used.

The state does no more than indicate key elements for urbanization.

The four **Policy Documents on Spatial Planning** which have appeared since the 1960's reveal both constant policies and swings of the pendulum.

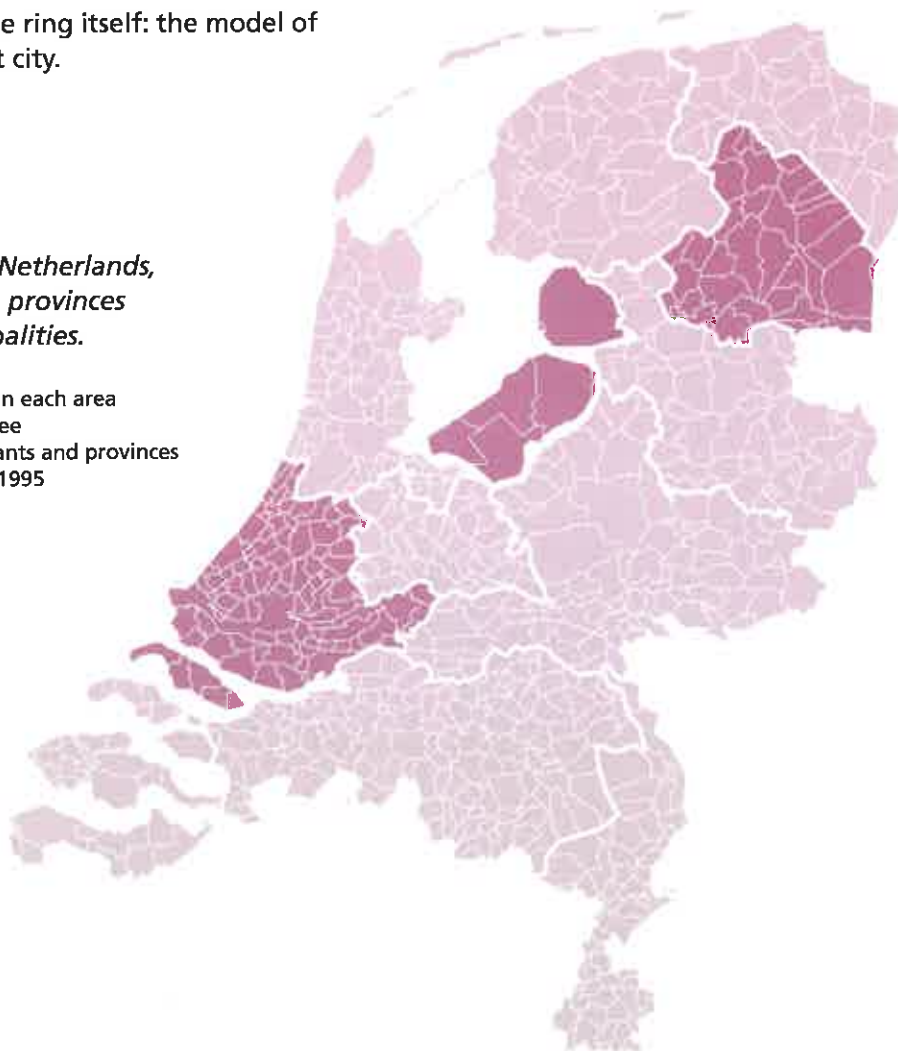
The government has consistently rejected random suburbanization and has always sought to channel the development of agglomerations in an orderly fashion.

If we consider the period 1975-1995, we notice that policy has shifted from the notion of the 'radiating effect' from the urban ring known in Holland as the Randstad - the Randstad was to overspill into urban growth centres and new towns - towards the consolidation of the ring itself: the model of the compact city.

Another constant was the desire to resist the pull of the Green Heart of the Randstad - economically speaking the most favourable development - and to restrict this in any case to certain zones. Inside the urban ring - and the same holds for the 'bands of cities' in the southern and eastern parts of the country - the aim is to prevent the cities from fusing into a single mass of dwellings and buildings; green buffers are to remain between the various centres. Although there are always exceptions built outside the designated building locations and designated directions for expansion, compared to its neighbouring countries, the Netherlands has been highly successful in its orderly channeling of urban development.

Fig. 1:
*Map of the Netherlands,
divided into provinces
and municipalities.*

Municipalities in each area
under the decree
on building grants and provinces
636, 1 January 1995



As far as implementation of the spatial policy is concerned, however, the state remains dependent on close cooperation with provincial and local governments.

The present discussion on the restructuring of the administrative organization and the position of the cities (municipalities) in that process may be summarized as follows: **Framework:** the main object in restructuring the administrative organization is to improve government performance, in order to be able to solve social problems in a better way.

In the present discussion on the restructuring of the organization, it was chosen to strengthen the main existing structure: state, province and municipalities. To this end, the assignment of tasks between these administrative tiers is currently under review. In addition, the borders of the provinces and municipalities may be modified.

A review of the assignment of tasks: citizens have a direct relationship with local government. After all, the town hall is close by, administrators and public servants are recognizable and approachable. Compared to the state and the provinces, the municipalities

are far better equipped to deal with tasks with a direct bearing on their inhabitants. The people must be able to turn to the municipality for as many matters as possible.

The **twelve provinces** play an important role in Dutch spatial planning. In their regional plans, the provinces develop the details of the national government's broadly outlined spatial policy. These plans also indicate in quantitative terms, how much is permitted to be built and where during a given period. If the building plans of the municipalities are too ambitious, the province may reject their plans for expansion.

Regulating the development of large scale shopping centres is also the responsibility of the province; major supermarkets along the highways, so often seen in other European countries, are a rarity in the Netherlands; the shopping centres in the city centres, districts and villages are protected against competition of this kind. Also, the planning of other functions transcending local boundaries, such as hospitals or recreation parks belong to the jurisdiction of the provinces. Moreover, in the field of nature conservation and water management, they also have implementing powers. Neverthe-



less, the role - and even the very existence - of the provinces has lately come under discussion. Compared with the national government and the important municipalities, the provinces form a weaker administrative tier, with a much smaller administrative system than the major cities and a limited range of actual powers.

A somewhat confusing situation has arisen over the past twenty years due to the development of a **patchwork of different regional partnerships between municipalities** in this tiny country - partnerships in the areas of housing, the police, the fire departments, public transport, health care, and so forth, which only seldom overlap one another and almost never follow provincial boundaries. This situation is hardly beneficial for spatial planning and can easily lead to a waste of public energy and funds.

Although redrawing various municipal boundaries has reduced the number of tiny municipalities in recent decades, the increase in scale of spatial planning processes has been more rapid than the process of enlargement of scale of the municipalities, and the number of developments transcending municipal boundaries continues to rise.

In future years, important decisions will have to be taken. A choice must be made between the options of either increasing the importance of the provinces with additional tasks and more funds (with here and there a few changes in provincial boundaries) or remapping the municipalities, thereby allowing the major cities to grow into agglomerations with greater competences.

In recent years, strong regional partnerships between municipalities - and also between **housing corporations** - have developed in the field of housing, of which the areas approximately correspond to the housing market regions around the major cities. Two developments contributed to this.

In the first place, since the beginning of the 1990's, agreements have been

made about building and land subsidies at regional level.

In the second place, the **Housing Allocation Act** was introduced, which has tended to promote regional cooperation in allocating the available housing accommodation.

Most municipalities attached conditions to residence permits for inexpensive rented and owner-occupied dwellings as long as there was a shortage of such housing. Persons already living or working in the relevant municipality were given priority over persons without local ties. Exceptions were made only for those to whom such a requirement could not be reasonably applied, such as refugees.

The Housing Allocation Act is based on the principle of freedom to choose where to live and has started to overcome the barriers which the municipalities had erected around their borders. In a number of areas, the municipalities now collaborate with each other in allocating the available housing accommodation. Via the province and the region, we now arrive at the role of the municipalities in spatial planning. This role is and will remain extremely important. The municipality is in fact the level at which the striving for a sustainable, liveable yet affordable and therefore planned city is worked out in detail. Municipalities have a formidable variety of instruments at their disposal for realizing their coordinating, planning and stimulating role.

The **zoning plan** provided for in the Spatial Planning Act has already been mentioned. Municipalities can assign a specific function and use to buildings and land, specify frontage lines and building heights and determine densities. In existing built-up areas, in particular in historic city centres, such zoning plans can be extremely detailed, down to specifying roof shapes and back extensions. Some degree of flexibility in both the designation of functions and frontage lines is important in order not to unduly frustrate the continuous process of functional change

and to maintain the vibrancy of the urban fabric.

In new urban expansion areas, the tendency since the 1970's has been to opt for a **broad** zoning plan in which a functional programme is set out without specifying the physical urban design concept. From the middle of the 1970's this led to patchworks of different urban development patterns, loosely stitched together by access roads and green belts, here and there disintegrating into a maze of residential developments and cul-de-sacs. The hoped for breakthrough of the rigid segregation of functions with these looser forms of urban development failed to be realized, except in a few relatively small central areas. The end of the 1980's saw a backlash against the lack of coherence in urban planning. With reference to the great architects of the start of the century - such as Berlage - once again, axes, squares and circles started being drawn. A new instrument was developed to convey the vision of city planners: the **image quality plan**. This plan contains the image of the streets, squares and public spaces visualized by the designer; in some cases reference is made to districts dating from our 'classical period' during the first half of the century.

The compact city

Just as in so many other European countries, the Netherlands, too, has gone through a pendulum movement: in the 1960's and early 1970's, an **explosion** of the city occurred, in which the population and functions dispersed over a huge suburban area and the pre-war compact urban fabric seemed to be doomed. A reaction from the population halfway through the 1970's led to a re-evaluation and re-use of existing buildings, which again was not without its excesses: there was a great deal of protest primarily against the demolition of old dwellings. It is always tempting to assume that we have now - according to the dialectic

principle - reached the proper synthesis; let this be judged in twenty years.

The fact is that the compact city appears to be a sustainable one: not only in the material sense but also as a community offering a mesh of functions within a compact area: living, working, shopping, schools, sport and recreation. This is of enormous importance to urban dwellers who must combine work and household tasks.

Property built in the pre-war period has proved surprisingly adaptable to new functions and occupies an unassailable position on the market, similar to the work of an artist who is no longer living. The re-use of existing buildings has gained acceptance; redesign for residential purposes is by far the favourite re-use. Nowadays, former school buildings, stations, hospitals, factories, offices and even water towers are used for residential purposes. During the 1970's, the government launched a vigorous campaign, supported by grants, to provide housing for single-person and two-person households, with a particular focus on the young. Some tens of thousands of housing units were built in the central locations desired by this group. Prime movers behind this development were the municipalities and the housing corporations, although actions undertaken by squatters, who at times noisily took over empty buildings to force the authorities to take action, gave the initial push towards the policy change. In a city like Rotterdam, however, where a great deal of student housing has been realized in empty office buildings - thus taking advantage of the slump in business properties - the boom in housing built specifically for the young has passed. In recent years, more has been built for all age and income groups. For example, attractive examples of communal housing for the elderly are found in former medieval almshouses, but also in what used to be factory buildings.

Annual number of dwellings/housing units through rebuilding of existing non-residential house buildings:

1985: 2,600	1990: 2,300
1986: 2,600	1991: 1,800
1987: 2,100	1992: 1,900
1988: 2,800	1993: 2,100
1989: 3,100	1994: 3,400

More problematic is the transformation of the **post-war high-rise buildings**.

In the period between 1964 and 1974, the country seemed to be in the grip of high-rise fever. As a historical irony, it is now precisely the large-scale industrial construction dating from this period, praised by designers and builders, including the national government, alike as 'flexible in use' and 'full of future value', which is ready - sometimes after only 25 years - for demolition or costly renovations.

The problems may be assumed to be familiar, as the situation is the same in other countries: constructional faults combined with social problems partly

deriving from the huge scale. By now, sufficient experience has been gained with scenarios for dealing with these problems. If a certain point in the spiral of deterioration has been reached, further investment is pointless.

Demolishing the building and replacing this with new construction - despite the high, non-recurrent costs - is the bitter pill that must be swallowed in the course of adapting to the demands of a differentiated market. This has been necessary only sporadically in the Netherlands; in total, a few thousand dwellings in various different cities have met this fate.

More often (yet still only to a modest degree) 'high-level alterations' are required. The apartment building is given a complete face-lift and 're-introduced into the market', often for a new target group (the elderly, higher-income groups). Naturally, both the investments and the risks are high.

Far more often a strategy of minor alterations is opted for (repairing defects, adapting unsafe storage areas and

fig. 2: Households, residents and number of districts owing to building period (WBO '93/'94/WMD '91)

	number of districts	total number of households	total number residents ²	average house occupancy	number of households per hectare ³
Pre-war districts up to 1945	198	757,000	1,562,000	2.1	31
Post-war districts 1946-1980	515	1,706,000	3,946,000	2.3	17
Current districts from 1982	152	412,000	1,122,00	2.5	14
Mixed districts	152	496,000	1,119,00	2.2	21
Other	2,903	2,855,000	7,755,000	2.6	
Total	3,920	6,226,000	15,504,000	2.4	

Source: RIGO

1. Districts having a dwelling stock from various building periods have been classified in the "mixed districts". They are of less importance to the comparison.

2. 1991 is the year of reference as for the number of households and 1994 as for the number of persons and the average household occupancy.

3. Derived from the soil statistics.

4. The other districts consist of postal code areas in residential places with less than 30,000 inhabitants and of postal code areas having densities less than one household per hectare.

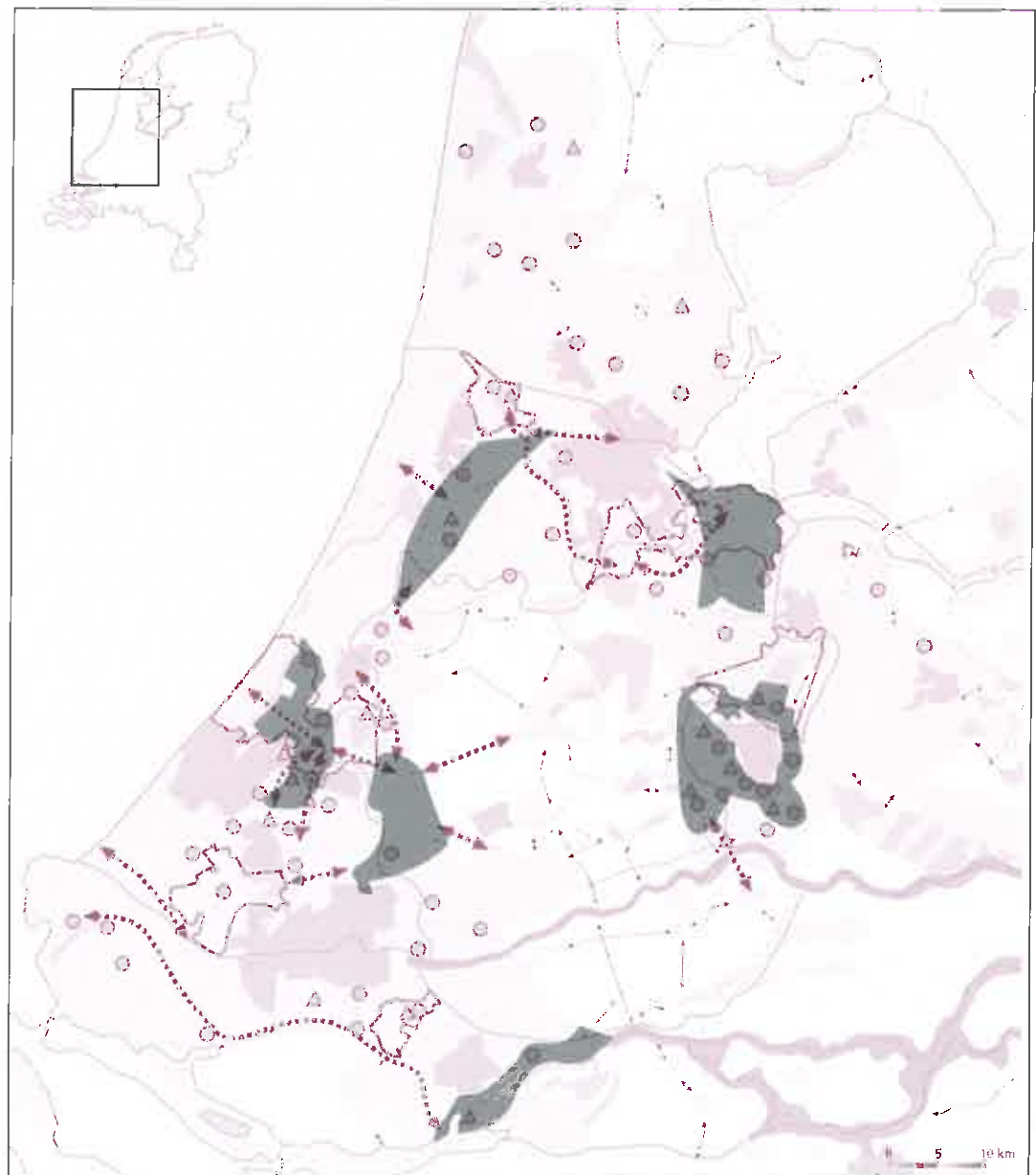
entrance halls) in combination with measures of a managerial and supervisory nature. In this way the position of the apartment building in question is once again secure for the time being - as long as the housing shortage

continues in the sector of inexpensive rented accommodation.

While Dutch high-rise districts give an impression of high density, they are not really compactly built. The then prevail-

fig. 3:

Randstad: Habitation and Green fields - enlargement of the Western conurbation



■ zoekgebied groot groengebied

--- ruimtelijke verbinding van belang voor recreatie en natuur

■ stedelijke kern

○ recreatiegebied / -project *

△ staatsboswachterij *

* volgens het Tweede Voorbereidingsprogramma
Randstadgroenstructuur 1991-1995

werkgebied Randstadgroenstructuur

— groene hart

--- bufferzone

■ kerngebied ehs

■ natuurontwikkelingsgebied ehs

■ kern- en natuurontwikkelingsgebied ehs

--- te ontwikkelen of te versterken verbindingzone ehs

deel vier structuurschema groene ruimte



ing garden city philosophy ensured that generous belts of green space were laid out, and abundant space was reserved for public amenities in the neighbourhood. This may well be the most enduring quality of the post-war districts. For some time now, the market has demanded low-rise building in the form of a house with a garden. Because of lack of space (and because of the cost), the government has been building **compact low-rise**.

At the start of the 1980's, the Netherlands looked to be almost 'completed', yet by the end of the decade, unexpectedly high immigration rates, a climbing birth rate and the wishes of senior citizens to remain independent longer meant that building targets had to be revised.

In the Fourth Policy Document (Extra) on Spatial Planning, the government indicates where the new construction is to be situated. The old 1960's ideal in which new cities were to be developed some distance away from the old cities has made way for the ideal of the compact city.

A considerable amount of space has been found for 'infill' in existing cities. The majority of these rediscovered areas are obsolete port and industrial areas, land vacated by large-scale functions which have moved to the city's rim (e.g. hospitals) and residual areas

in the generously laid out post-war garden suburbs. The return to the city - reversing the suburbanization trend of previous decades - can be seen in the partial recovery of the former population figures.

Although the cities appear to be able to accommodate rather more inhabitants than was considered possible twenty years ago, the national spatial planning policy document nevertheless is based on the assumption that the development of a large number of building locations is vital. In view of the population concentration in the urbanized west, it is here that most of the dwellings will once again be required to be built, as close as possible to the existing cities.

As the best building locations have already been taken, the degree of difficulty has now risen. Locations squeezed in between highways and canals, locations requiring the expropriation of costly horticultural land, even locations in the IJsselmeer or in the North Sea - all options within a small radius of the city centres are being considered. High land prices emphasise the need for compact construction. The challenge to construct sustainable and attractive living environments - as the architects of the Amsterdam school succeeded in doing - is greater than ever.

Towards sustainable finance for public housing

In recent decades, the Dutch government has granted massive financial support in various ways to public housing and urban renewal. We still reap the benefits of these past efforts every day. In 1994, however, only 3% of total government expenditure was spent on this policy and the government is currently engaged in withdrawing from the foreground. Will this threaten the affordability of the cities in the long term? And is there still enough financial leeway for realizing the sustainable city, the liveable city?

2. THE AFFORDABLE CITY

In the past, our government has always intervened strongly where the construction of dwellings for the lower income groups was concerned: even to the extent that the income groups considered as the 'primary target group in housing' comprised almost half of all the households at the end of the 1980's. The stock of subsidized rented housing is considerable when set against the rest of Europe (45% of the stock) and until recently, Dutch rents were among the lowest in Western Europe, especially in relation to the quality provided. The **approximately 800 housing corporations**, non-profit organizations that build and manage subsidized rented housing, form the backbone of the Dutch housing system, and their position will be given special attention in this chapter.

In the post-war period, the instrument of rent control, in combination with balanced **running cost subsidies**, was developed. The government determined the rents that the corporations and municipal housing agencies could charge, standardized the costs and made up the difference between operating expenses and rent revenues with running cost subsidies. This set of instruments, through which Dutch housing

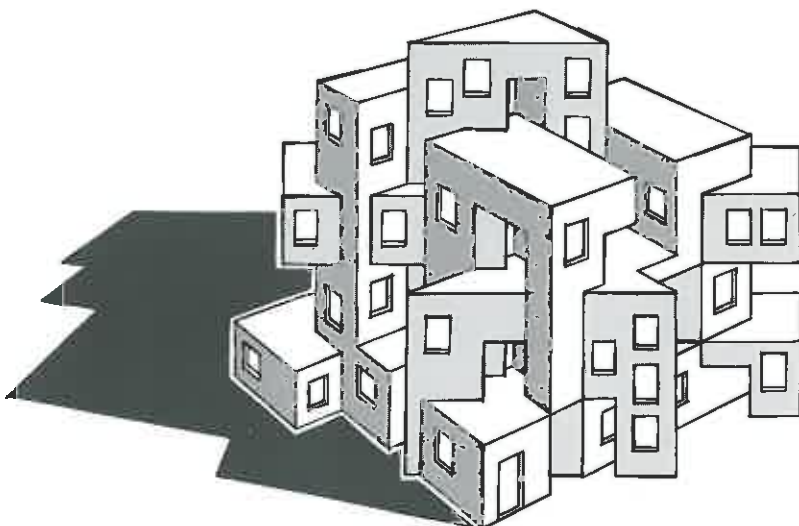
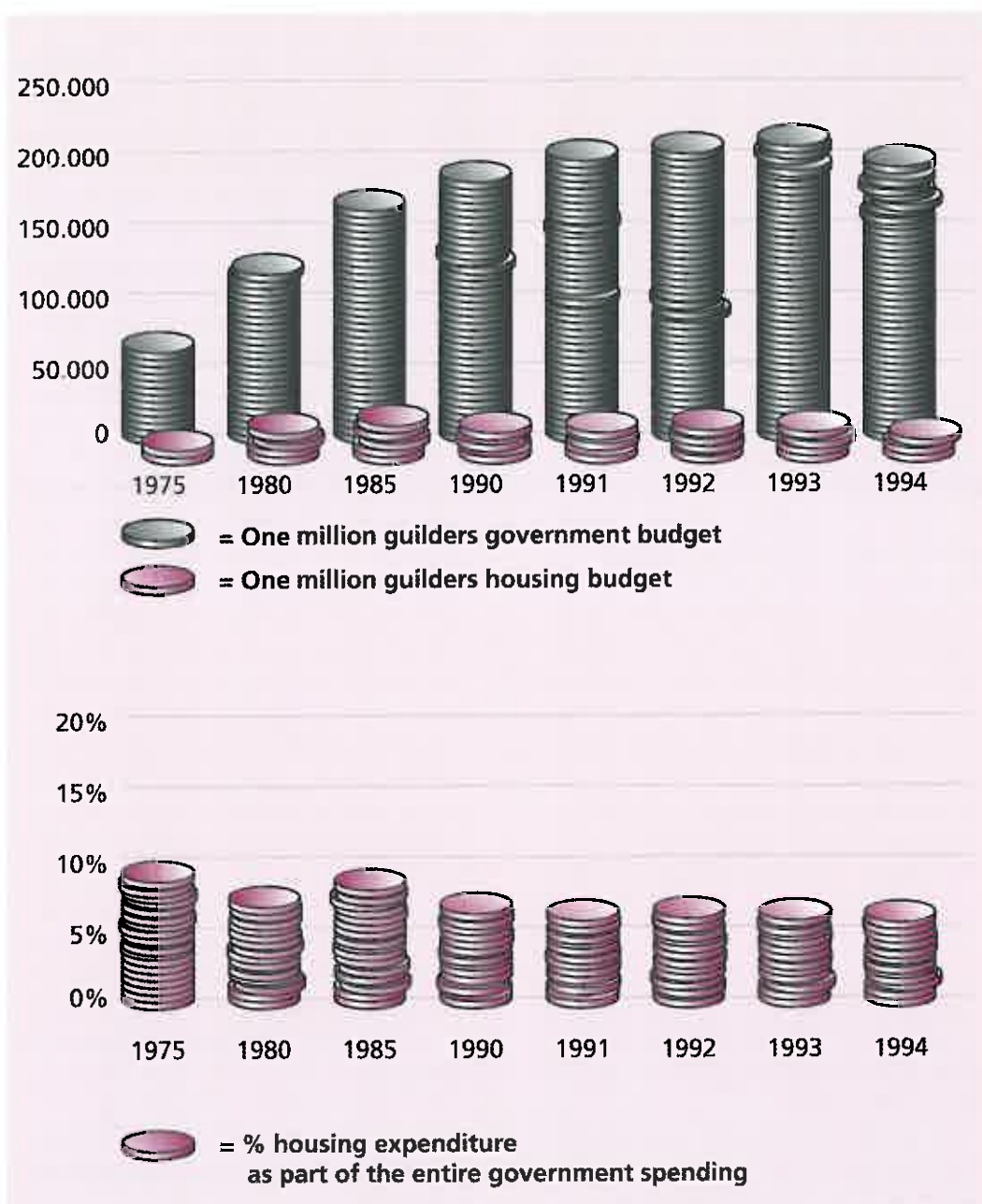


fig 4: Spending on housing as part of total government expenditure 1975-1994



became a qualitatively high but somewhat uniform product, dominated the sector for decades.

Recently, however, a settlement took place between the state and the housing corporations: running long-term subsidy commitments and loans were bought off, yielding a lower interest charge to be borne by the state. A symbolic turning point was reached with the so-called '**grossing-up operation**', in which billions of guilders in promised running cost subsidies were cancelled at a single stroke against the

billions of payable state loans outstanding. Both parties were relieved at the severing of these old financial ties.

The standard applying as the average rent for a newly constructed dwelling in the 1970's was the 'housing price', which meant that an average worker's family had to be able to pay the rent for a newly constructed dwelling. Already in the 1970's, this housing price was shown to be unattainable due to the rising interest rates and building costs. A supplementary system of **individual rent allowances** was introduced

by which the rent for the lowest incomes was reduced - by individual request - to the standard rent of 18% of the income. The right to both running cost subsidies and individual rent allowance was established in advance. As a result, the state was unable to oversee the financial demands to which these rights would lead, in view of the relationship to the interest rate and income development. Major holes consequently appeared in the budget in certain years. Now that the running cost subsidies have been bought off and rent subsidy requirements tightened, the possibility of financial setbacks has become smaller.

Besides construction of subsidized housing within the scope of the Housing Act, a **premium-assisted rented sector** was open to private builders. Premium-assisted housing was realized by both profit and non-profit institutions. Major investors, private building firms, but also non-commercial or denominational foundations - and latterly the housing corporations themselves - were all welcome to build premium-assisted housing.

Moreover, there has been much support - direct and indirect - in the Netherlands for many years for the **promotion of home ownership** (now approaching 50% of the stock).

In the first place this support is indirect in the form of tax deductions. In addition, in order to encourage home ownership among the lower middle income groups, a variety of premium assistance schemes were launched. Purchasers of premium-assisted dwellings received annual income-dependent payments from the government.

In this way, the characteristic structure of the Dutch housing system developed: a subsidized rented sector, a premium-assisted sector (owner-occupied and rented accommodation) for middle income groups and a free sector (for the most part owner-occupied dwellings) for the higher income groups. Typically, the distribution in new residential dis-

tricts was until recently: 40% subsidized rented dwellings, 40% premium-assisted housing and 20% free sector housing. The complexes of these **three sectors** were so physically integrated that the children from different income groups could attend the same schools. The system represented a truly remarkable housing feat, yet threatened to become, even for a wealthy country like ours, simply too expensive. Specifically the running costs subsidy model, in which all risks were covered by the state, constituted an almost unbearable financial burden for the state. The system, in which annual payments had been promised for 50 years, meant that national budgets would be charged with the payment thereof for generations to come. More incentives were needed for stimulating a simple and effective housing system; the consumer must start to pay a greater share of the costs of housing consumption. This **policy shift** yielded a number of concrete measures during the first half of the 1990's. The aim of these measures was to provide a sustainable social and financial foundation for the housing sector and to decrease the degree of dependency on the political agenda. The structure of the housing sector, erected in the past, now appears to be so strong that the operation seems set for success.

The thrust of the **operation 'Housing in the 1990's'** is based on the following elements:

- a new role for the housing corporations as independent social entrepreneurs instead of government branches with behaviour dictated by subsidies;
- in this context a strengthening of the position of the tenants' organizations;
- application of the capital already invested in the sector as a revolving fund: building grants only for difficult situations/locations;
- replacement of government funding and government guarantees by private financing and semi-private guarantees; but: increased

government supervision.

In conclusion, attention will also be given to the development of the owner-occupied sector:

- home ownership will continue to be promoted, although only through fiscal incentives and risk-limiting safety nets.

The position of housing corporations and tenants' organizations

Housing corporations are so-called 'approved institutions' under the Housing Act of 1901, the basis of the Dutch housing policy. By virtue of this 'approval', they enjoyed certain privileges, in particular with regard to subsidies.

The corporations are **non-profit organizations** that aim to provide good and affordable housing to those unable to achieve this on their own.

That this social aim is interpreted very liberally is obvious from the fact that some 45% of all Dutch households rent from a housing corporation. The housing corporations are the absolute leaders in the market for rental accommodation, even to the extent of building - especially after the war - entire city districts.

They are formally regarded, for urban planning purposes, as private institutions with a specifically public-oriented task, and are under government supervision. During the immediate post-war years, when entire garden cities and overspill towns were springing up everywhere, the role of the housing corporations was that of implementing municipal policy. It was not uncommon for the director of the housing corporation to be given the keys on completion and delivery of a apartment building, after which his corporation could then let the dwellings - under the direction of the municipality; he was given no say during the design and construction phase.

Since 1975 and in particular since becoming independent around 1990,

the **roles have undergone drastic change**. Corporations have now become 'social entrepreneurs' who make their own investment decisions.

The corporations still play an important, although now a more independent, role in urban planning. A medium sized town has perhaps many thousands of private home owners and three to five housing corporations. The municipality can make agreements with them, for example about sustainable building. Nor is it uncommon for the corporations themselves to initiate activities in social policy fields, with the municipality following in their wake. They are the professionals and because of their local (or regional) scope, are rooted in the town or the region in which they are active; if a town prospers, so do they.

The importance of this sector as counterweight to the private sector should not be underestimated.

The position of **local residents' organizations** has remained underdeveloped. As the market mechanism in housing starts to take hold, the consumer organizations may be expected to gain strength.

The **women's advisory committees** on housing construction were instituted shortly after the war because it was felt that 'a housewife's expertise' could not be missed when designing housing. Their advice was requested at first on particularly practical details in the home; later, issues such as the internal environment and social safety were added. Later, more new emancipation-oriented organizations were formed which took up such causes as social safety and flexible design - with a view to the households other than family households.

In the turbulent 1970's, when many a renewal plan in the old city districts was rejected by **neighbourhood organizations**, the role of the tenants' organizations was for a brief period, extremely important.

They helped in adjusting the approach to urban renewal and planning - which

had hitherto been technocratic in nature - towards one in which respect for the urban fabric which had developed over decades was emphasized. However, as ideas about the preservation of the existing buildings and maintaining affordability gained increasing recognition by the municipal councils and municipal corporations, the role of the neighbourhood organizations became less prominent.

At the national level, interest groups were formed of groups which tended to be overlooked in the housing market, such as young people, single persons and foreign guest workers.

In the 1980's, all the housing consumer organizations mentioned above, with the exception of the women's advisory committees, merged into the **Netherlands Housing Confederation**. Both organizations receive financial support from the government; their local sections generally receive funding from municipalities and the housing corporations.

New interest groups have increasingly started to play a role in the housing field: organizations representing the interests of the elderly, the disabled and of home owners. Should the housing corporations lose sight of their objective for even a moment, there are numerous residents' organizations ready to help remind them of this.

The relatively strong **legal position** of tenants in our country - major efforts are required to procure cooperation for house improvements or exceptional rent increases, let alone eviction - enables them to hold back or at least greatly delay developments which they consider undesirable. It is more difficult for tenants to push through desired developments.

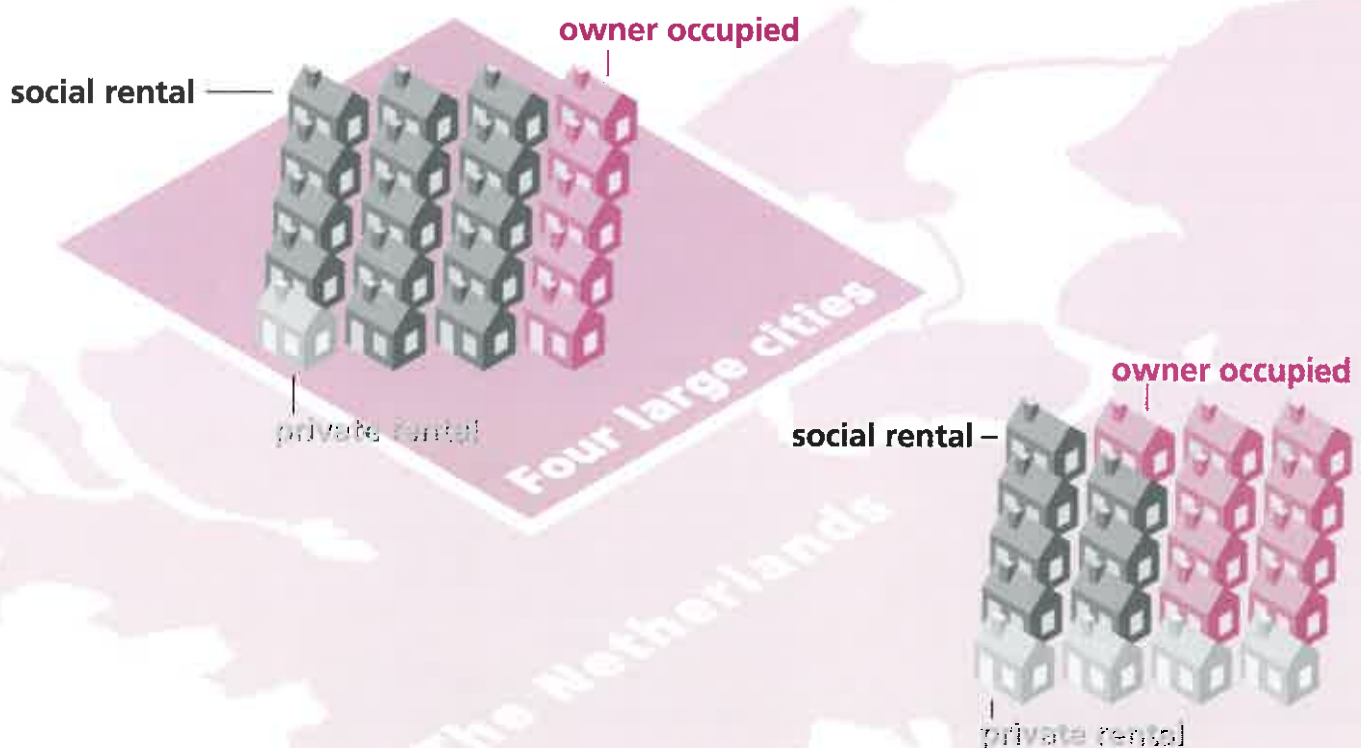
With the recent independence of the housing corporations the importance of **strong professional residents' organizations** has reappeared on the political agenda. Now that the corporations have acquired more policy freedom in

*Fig 5a:
Living expenses
quotas tenants
and buyers
in the Netherlands,
1-1-1994*

HOUSING STOCK



= 5% of housing stock



areas such as rental policy and investments in quality improvements, the need for an organized counterweight has increased. The government aims to encourage this by, among other things - in typically Dutch fashion - urging the corporations to support their own opponents. The future will show whether residents choose the path of organized interest groups or, due to the increased competition on the supply side, instead opt for the role of critical consumers.

The subsidized rented sector gains independence

Around 1990, after decades of running-cost subsidies and government loans, a situation developed where the large majority of landlords of subsidized housing (housing corporations, municipal housing agencies) were deemed capable of paying their own way. The property is - exceptions aside - in good condition and considerable investments in improvements have been made in the recent past. Most of the corporations have been able to build up an **operating reserve** allowing them to enjoy substantial income from invested capital. This operating reserve is primarily for financing major

maintenance work and for covering operating risks.

The average rent level was low until a few years ago; the financial basis of the landlords of subsidized housing has

been strengthened over the past four years

(as directed by the national government) by raising rent levels by twenty-five percent.

Corporations are by law non-profit institutions (which is why they are

exempt from VAT). The accumulated capital may solely be spent 'for the benefit of and on housing'. This implies that the total value of the property owned by the corporations will function as a '**revolving fund**', which will generate new funds for the benefit of the housing sector.

The often healthy solvency and profitable operation of large sections of the property, in addition to the guarantee provided by the Guarantee Fund for Subsidized Housing and the government safety net are all factors securing the ability to attract low-interest capital market loans with which to fund new construction and housing improvements.

appropriate




 = 5% of housing stock

Fig 5b:
dwelling too expensive,
dwelling too cheap,
dwelling appropriate

The broad scope of the subsidized rented sector, comprising almost half of the total housing stock, not only provides accommodation to tenants with low incomes but also to many tenants in the middle-income bracket. It has been calculated that a quarter of the Dutch households reside in **disproportionately priced dwellings**, i.e. dwellings with rents that are either too high or too low in relation to the household income. A substantial number of these rent from the corporations. This fact is seen as the 'hidden reserve' of the housing corporations: in other words, targeted policy could help a large part of this group of tenants to move to dwellings more appropriate to their income.

The government as monitor

In every country, the guiding rule is 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. Under the old system, the landlords of subsidized housing were tied to the state by 'golden bonds'. The state thus naturally occupied a position in which it could exact social recompense.

In the new system, guidance by means of financial flows has been replaced by **guidance by means of advance agreements and retrospective supervision**.

This supervision, laid down by law, entails that municipalities - with the state in the background - check whether the corporations have performed as agreed (in advance) in the field of (loosely) the following:

- * provided sufficient housing accommodation for the lower income groups;
- * maintained the quality of the property and service;
- * offered sufficient opportunity for participation to tenants;
- * provided for solid financial continuity;
- * ensured sufficiently liveable neighbourhoods and districts (a recent addition).

The supervision model has not yet been put to the trial. A few corporations were reprimanded for speculating with the invested capital on the financial markets. On the other hand, corporations have also been reprimanded for refusing to implement the rent increase prescribed by the government. Generally speaking, the impression is that the corporations **have performed**

well in the said areas and that their financial independence has not led to their conversion to commercial enterprises, nor to their handing out public funds to tenants.

The new system has only just come into force and all parties are still feeling their way within the altered structure of relationships. The state has the ultimate sanction at its disposal: the withdrawal of the recognized status of the corporation, as a result of which the property owned by the corporation would fall to the community.

Government expenditure on building grants and premiums have been considerably reduced. Now, only **targeted, non-recurrent building and location subsidies** are granted in certain areas and for specific purposes. As long as the urban renewal operation is running - until the year 2005 - huge annual payments will also continue to be paid into the urban renewal funds of the cities.

To stimulate building in difficult locations within the existing urban structure (see 'compact city') and on the new building locations designated by the government, 'lump-sum' location-specific building subsidies will be made available which will be granted in a single package together with payments for soil clean-up and the infrastructure. The municipalities can then easily oversee the financial position but must further bear all the risks themselves. In the Netherlands subsidized housing is of excellent quality and rents reflect the non-profit objective.

Direct government expenditure (object and subject subsidies) related to housing in the Netherlands, 1970-1995, in millions of guilders.

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990 (a)	1995(1)
Property subsidies(*)	450	1,840	3,420	7,402	9,041	40,000
Individual subsidies(**)	0	235	978	1,445	1,790	1,970

(a) Projected figures.

(1) Provisional figure, 1995 has a once-only raised budget owing to the grossing up.

(*) As per 1985, including the Urban Renewal Fund

(**) As per 1985, excluding tax and subsidies

Source: Ministry VROM, various budgets, National Accounts.

Fig 6.
Annual expenditure on building subsidies and housing allowances in the rented and owner-occupied sectors.

The 1990's have seen the virtually total withdrawal of the government from its role as risk-bearing investor, although a number of **safety nets have been created** to support the subsidized rented sector, which is in principle able to cope independently.

Under the old system, the government granted loans and guaranteed the redemption of the capital market loans. In the new system, the corporations themselves attract loans on the capital market, which are then guaranteed by the Housing Guarantee Fund, which comprises contributions from both the government and the corporations. Ultimately, the state and the municipalities are guarantors of this fund. Moreover, the corporations are able to build up their own equity. The confidence of financiers (pension funds, insurers) in the solvency of the corporations, in addition to the existence of the Guarantee Fund as a safety net, effectively ensures low-interest loans. A second fund established by the state and maintained with resources from this sector is the Central Housing Fund. This fund is intended to help ailing housing corporations and to avoid bankruptcies in the sector. Up until now, the number of requests to the Central Fund has been extremely modest, another factor which contributes to the solid reputation of the sector.

Perhaps the most important financial safety net created by the state in the housing sector is that of the **individual rent allowance**.

This is an extremely effective instrument due to the fact that the funds are directly paid by the government to the lower income groups. The instrument has hitherto been considered to be politically unassailable. Many senior citizens are recipients of individual rent allowances, because the relatively expensive newer dwellings often are the only type able to offer suitable accommodation. Another important group of recipients dependent on minimum social benefits is women, often single mothers. In view of the

fact that important social groups such as senior citizens and women are the ones that derive chief benefit from the individual rent allowance scheme, changes to it are, politically speaking, a sensitive subject.

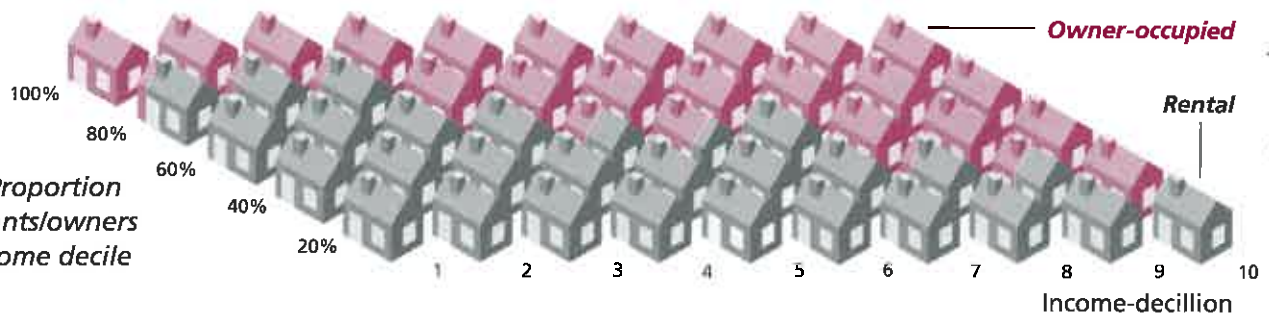
In 1995, the effectiveness of the individual rent allowance was subjected to fundamental analysis. After all, the new systems offer fewer instruments for guiding the use of rent allowances. It is the task of the landlords of subsidized housing to ensure via the allocation of dwellings and the rent policy that tenants with the lowest incomes are allocated dwellings with low rents. The landlords are in the position to push the control buttons, while the state foots the bill. The challenge today is to develop a mechanism which offers sustainable incentives for an efficient use of the scheme (implementation at the local level) whilst continuing to guarantee the same rights to everyone in the country (national standards).

Housing in the owner-occupied sector

In the Netherlands, the income level at which the majority, instead of renting, owns their own home used to be rather high. Naturally, there is no sharp cut-off point; tenants and home owners are found shoulder-to-shoulder in nearly every income group.

The current generation has a preference for home ownership and dares - in part due to the increased level of affluence - to take more risks. Home ownership forms a natural element of the policy pursued by the state, which is aimed at rolling back the frontiers of the welfare state and encouraging its citizens to take responsibility for their own affairs.

Fig 7: Proportion of tenants/owners per income decile



The state promotes home ownership, even among the lower income groups, in various ways. Hard lessons were learned from the boom period around 1980. At the end of the 1970's, the situation on the housing market was frenetic. Demand far exceeded the supply of houses for sale, prices soared and interest rates were high. When the market for owner-occupied dwellings collapsed at the start of the 1980's, many were unable to sell their homes without incurring considerable debt.

dwellings are hardly different from the dwellings in the subsidized rented housing sector as far as size and quality are concerned; sometimes the decision on whether to sell or to let the dwellings is not made until they are near completion.

Partly due to the recent successive rent increases, the competitive position between the rental and ownership sectors has shifted somewhat in recent years. This is evident in areas with the

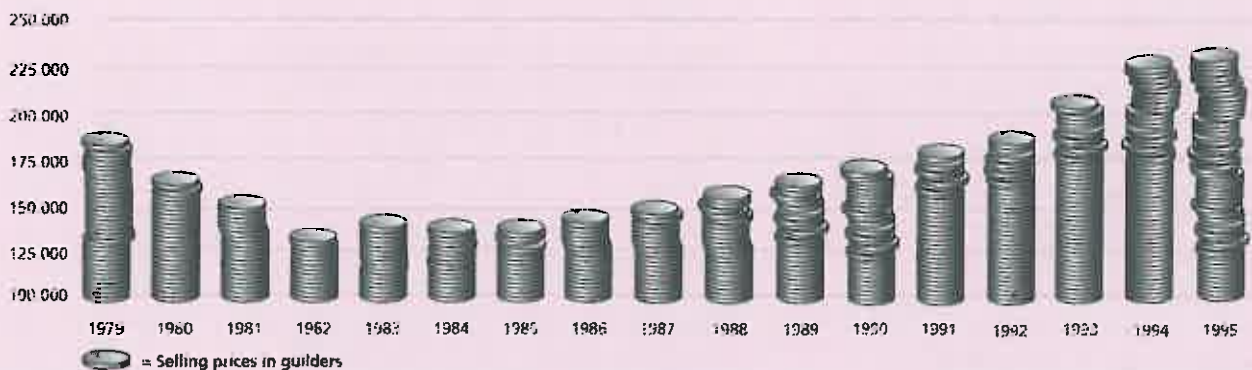


Fig 8: average prices of dwellings sold per year,

During the period 1985-1995, the market for owner-occupied dwellings remained reasonably calm, with slowly rising prices and moderate rates of interest. The municipal guarantee system was privatized, analogous to the guarantee fund in the subsidized rented sector. A notable development is the continued existence - despite the virtual elimination of building subsidies on owner-occupied dwellings for the lower income groups - of a sizable level of owner-occupied housing among the lower income groups. In recent years, the housing corporations have been building more and more owner-occupied dwellings, for, among other groups, their own tenants who are ready to move on to more expensive dwellings. These owner-occupied

least tension on the housing market, i.e. the peripheral areas of the country. In these areas, housing corporations have been resorting to the sale of rented dwellings, in many cases to the sitting tenants. This yielded a double advantage: occupancy or letting difficulties were avoided, and the revenues from these sales could be used for maintenance of their core stock of inexpensive rented accommodation and possibly to supplement this stock with new dwellings for which shortages exist, such as housing for senior citizens. The sale of rented dwellings is not a widespread phenomenon; there is little pressure from the market to do so and the type of dwelling - flats or maisonettes - are often less in demand. In the cities, however, more and more

dwellings are currently being built for **owner-occupation**. In the heyday of urban renewal (1975-1985) the slogan was 'building for the neighbourhood'. This meant: the construction of subsidized rented accommodation.

The construction of owner-occupied dwellings was a political taboo. The result has been - added to the already existing housing stock - a surplus of subsidized (good quality) and private (poorer quality) rented accommodation, in particular in the major cities. In Amsterdam, for example, owner-occupied dwellings make up less than 10% of the housing stock. Not only those with a low income live in the remaining 90% - largely cheap - stock of rented accommodation, also people who would like to and who have the means to purchase a house, especially one offering more quality or space, occupy these dwellings. To retain these middle-income groups, too, in the city, recent years have seen a shift in the policy pursued by the cities, leading to the construction of many more owner-occupied dwellings. Compared with cities in the other countries of Europe, the prices are moderate. This development will strengthen the economic and social base of the cities and reduce social segregation.

Experiments with the construction of owner-occupied dwellings in districts where the percentage of immigrants is high have revealed that these groups, too, now form a new group of potential buyers. In contrast to the 'emergency purchaser' of the past, they are now more than able to finance their purchases. Because of the conception that immigrants automatically lived in rented accommodation, Dutch instruments promoting home ownership have hitherto not been geared to the culture of these groups.

Senior citizens are another population group to which special attention in the area of home ownership should be given. In the Netherlands, there is a strong tradition among more elderly home owners to sell the house as soon

as their health starts to fail or one of the partners passes away, and to move to rented accommodation. The savings invested in the dwelling are then lost to the housing sector. What is more, this often means a premature move away from the area in which they feel at home.

Models have been developed lately in which the housing corporations assume the management and the maintenance of the dwelling and the capital saved is 'activated' for adapting and improving the dwelling. Also, residential projects for senior citizens are being developed in the owner-occupied sector on a small scale.

For some time now, the costs of maintenance of the dwelling - originally meant to promote home ownership - have no longer been tax deductible in the Netherlands, unless the dwelling is a historical monument.

However, mortgage loans which are increased for the purpose of carrying out maintenance are fully deductible. As stated earlier, the condition of the houses in the owner-occupied sector tends to be good. The exceptions have always been certain old districts in the cities containing many emergency buyers and where investors sell off individual flats in apartment buildings creating an unstable ownership situation. Municipalities have developed instruments to promote house improvement by private individuals in these types of problem areas as well.

In the context of the campaigns for urban renewal, building offices and building teams were created, charged with the task of organizing owner-occupants of property in deteriorating streets and to help with a collective approach to **private house improvement**. This collective approach, which involved arranging finance and subsidies, proved highly successful in a number of major cities.

Conforming to the general trend, these improvement subsidies have virtually disappeared, and the slogan now is selfhelp for owners in realizing and financing maintenance and improvements themselves.

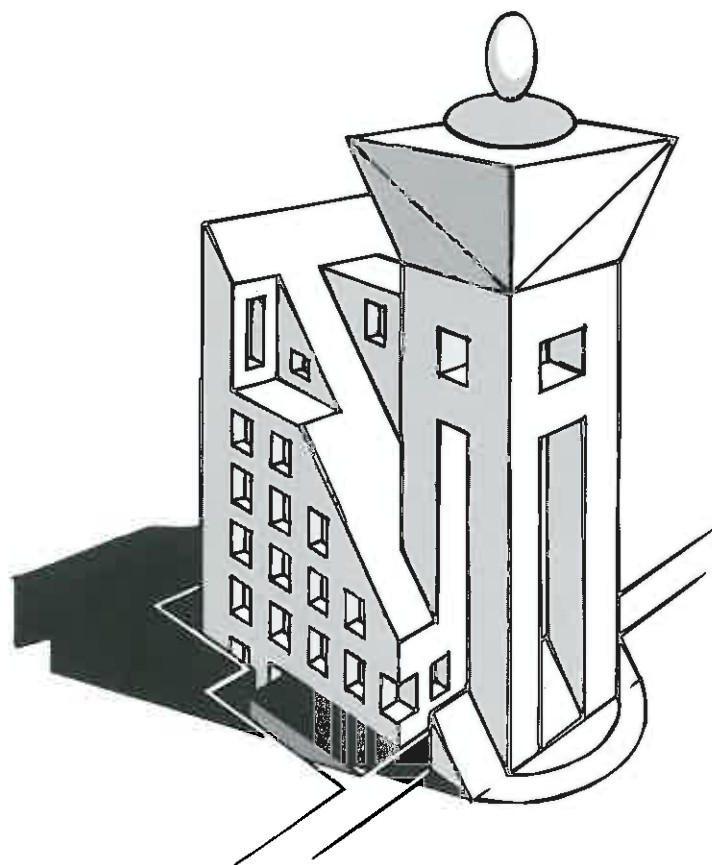
How thrifty are the Dutch?

Sources which are not renewable must be spared. Materials produced via environmentally damaging productions methods may only be used if they are highly sustainable and able to be recycled

3. THE SUSTAINABLE CITY

The concept of sustainable building which has gained such popularity in recent years in our country is based on three main foundations:

- energy conservation in dwellings and other buildings, as well as in traffic and transportation;
- life cycle management: reduction of the use of raw materials, the use of renewable raw materials and recycling of construction materials already used;
- quality care: sustainable quality lengthens the life cycle of buildings and increases the chance of a second life with a different function; this concept also includes the aspects of health (the 'internal environment') and safety.



Since the energy crisis in 1973, the Dutch government has pursued a vigorous campaign aimed at energy conservation in dwellings and buildings. Since 1989, this campaign has formed part of a wider campaign within the scope of the National Environmental Policy Plan. The aim is to reduce emissions of CO₂ and NO_x and to prevent the exhaustion of fossil fuel sources.

Experience has taught us that more progress has been achieved with some of the major consumers (industry, building) than the - harder to reach - smaller consumers such as households, small-scale businesses and the agrarian sector. Certainly, consumers willingly cooperate with energy conserving measures, yet consumption continues to grow at a faster rate than the population. We move into larger houses, drive more kilometres, buy more

Fig 9: Energy conservation envisaged and realized

	Aim for 2000	Realization 1994	Realization 1991-1994	Realization in % 1991-1994
Households	54	5.0	17	31
Office Blocks	29	2.5	7	23
Industry	21	0.3	0.3	1
Heat market	83	7.2	38	46
Sustainable energy	17	4.6	2	14
Remaining new technologies	4	0.1	0.3	3
Landfill gas	3	0.6	1	47
Total	212	13.9	66	31

Envisaged and energy saving realized (in PJ) Source: *EnergieNed*

household appliances and take more vacations. These types of consumption are expected to double in 30 years.

The results achieved in housing construction are varied. In new dwellings, both the insulation and the efficiency of the installations have been greatly improved, reducing energy consumption considerably compared with dwellings constructed 10 to 15 years ago. For a number of years, a subsidy scheme has been operative for insulating the outer shell of existing dwellings, for the purchase of high-efficiency central heating boilers and of solar-powered boilers.

In existing dwellings, this task has by no means been fulfilled. Only a small part of the stock has been insulated and in 1993 no single separate insulating measure had been implemented in over half of the dwellings (except double glazing in the sitting room). In the near future, insulation of the dwelling and the installation of energy saving heating systems will be vigorously promoted. The energy performance standard in the Building Decree will be tightened.

A campaign was also recently launched which was aimed at reducing household water consumption.

Even in a country like the Netherlands, where water has always been plentiful, the production and treatment of ever higher quantities of drinking water is starting to become a problem.

Falling groundwater levels, pollution by water treatment installations and the use of energy to produce warm

water are the main negative points.

Experimentally, it has been shown that with cheaper technologies, a 30% reduction in water consumption is more than feasible. Here and there, experiments in which drastic water conserving measures (rainwater for flushing the toilet and for garden purposes) are already in progress.

For years, government policy has been directed at reducing the use of the automobile. In spatial planning, support for this policy is given in the form of developing major new building locations for dwellings and offices only at sites which are easily accessed by the mass transit systems.

Moreover, plans for new roads have been largely dropped, huge investments have been made in public transport and use of the automobile has been made more expensive. In city and town centres and in the older districts, stringent and restrictive parking policies have been implemented.

All these efforts, while in essence effective, have not managed to achieve a significant reduction in car use, nor led drivers to opt less often for the automobile. We can only assume that it would have been worse without these measures. The increasing mobility, in both the work and home domains, no longer appears able to be checked; nor, for that matter, can the preference for the car be restrained, even though a small car has now become more expensive on an annual basis than a first class national public transport season ticket, and even when kilometres of traffic jams are reported on the radio every

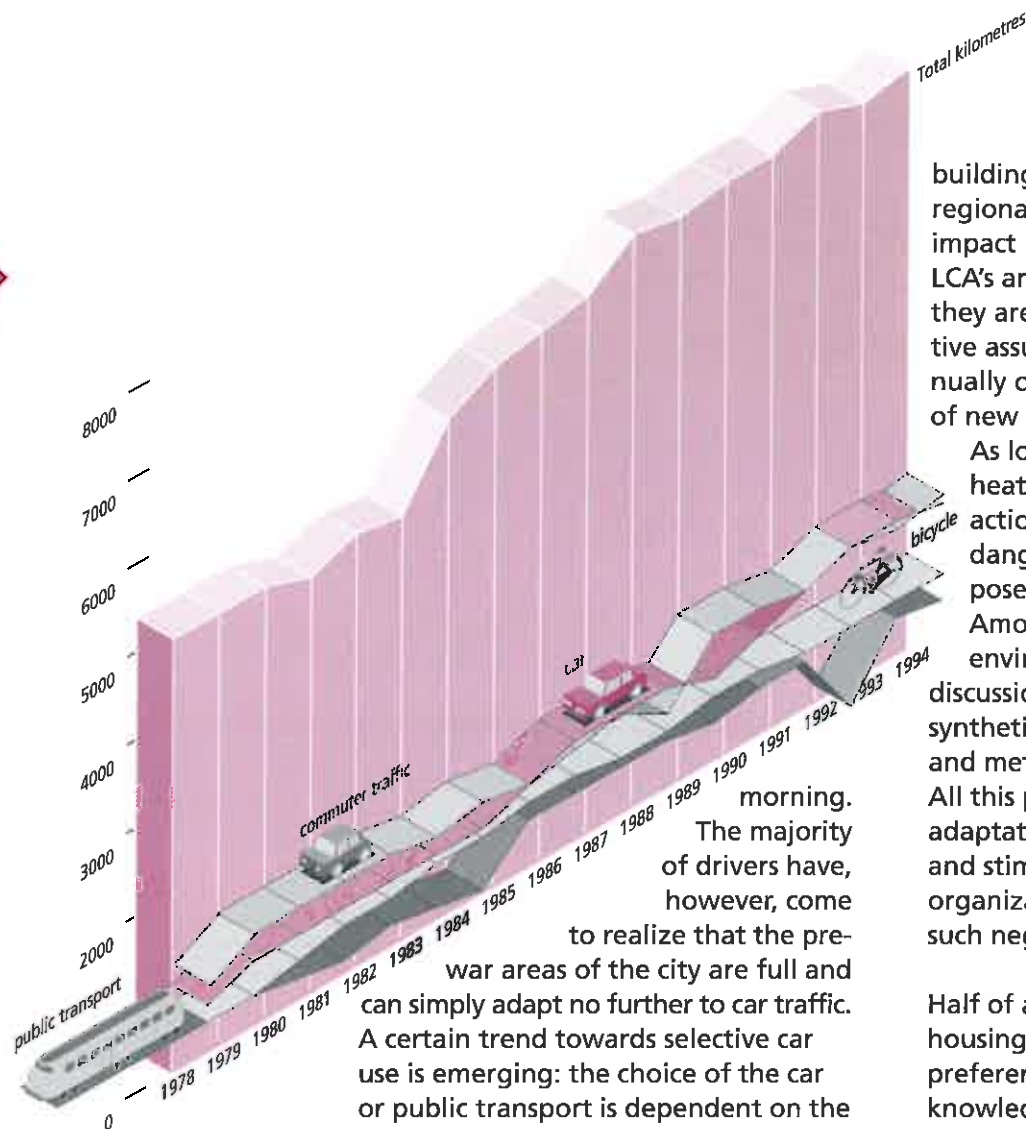


Fig 10:
Total number of kilometres, broken down into car/bicycle/public transport and commuter traffic.

morning. The majority of drivers have, however, come to realize that the pre-war areas of the city are full and can simply adapt no further to car traffic. A certain trend towards selective car use is emerging: the choice of the car or public transport is dependent on the destination. Experiments with car free districts and shared automobile use have been set up to elicit how such selective behaviour in the use of the car works in practice and how our cities can be planned accordingly.

The use of sustainable materials

The time when we happily made use of asbestos in housing construction has long since passed, yet in recent years we have become, if anything, even more critical in our choice of building materials. Nowadays, no longer do health concerns alone play a role. Issues such as exhaustion of the supply of raw materials, the environmental damage caused by the extraction and processing of a material, and the environmental damage caused by demolition waste, and especially the possibility of recycling demolition waste, have also become important. Life-cycle assessments (LCA's) are currently being performed on various

building materials, in which the global, regional and local environmental impact in the long term is examined. LCA's are costly and time consuming; they are moreover based on quantitative assumptions which can be continually overtaken by the appearance of new scientific data.

As long as the LCA's are running, heated discussions - and legal actions - are carried on about the danger which various materials pose to the environment. Among the materials of which the environmental impact is under discussion are tropical hardwoods, synthetic paints, PVC plastics, concrete and metals such as aluminium and zinc. All this publicity in itself encourages adaptation of the production process and stimulates the set-up of a recycling organization for materials receiving such negative press.

Half of all the municipalities and housing corporations now make use of preference lists based on the level of knowledge to date. These lists specify per building sector the alternative building materials in order of preference: '1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th preference'. A new and improved version of this list of sustainable construction materials is under preparation. The municipalities enter into covenants with the housing corporations - and with the private building firms - by which environmentally-preferential materials are agreed to be used. The municipalities have the power (but not the formal competence) to do this, because they determine in many cases who is permitted to build what where. The use of environmentally-preferential materials has by now assumed such proportions that producers and importers of materials with low scores are starting to report a considerable falling away of sales. Construction firms are in favour of uniform, compulsory environmental regulations which apply in all municipalities. They have no problems with stricter environmental regulations, as long as all building firms are subject to

the same regulations. The building industry has stimulated the development of a national basic package of environmental standards for which there is general consensus.

The national government is highly committed to the issue of sustainable building, as evidenced by the Action Plan for Sustainable Building published in the summer of 1995, but is moving cautiously through the area of tension mentioned. The Action Plan is directed at the implementation and stimulation of existing policy through the structuring of knowledge, modifying regulations, by making agreements and by financial support. It is a programme outlining key elements, which are to be worked out in further detail jointly between the state and the private sector. Environmental requirements about which no consensus has yet been obtained will not be incorporated into the building regulations. The government is inclined to wait for the results of the life cycle assessments. Insights change over the course of time.

The government is in addition not only responsible for creating sustainable cities, but also affordable cities.

Up to now, however, the extra costs of sustainable building appear to be quite reasonable. If we base this on a modest package of basic requirements, the extra costs are shown to amount to a few percent of the building costs at the most.

More stringent requirements are generally accompanied by 'initial extra costs': as long as a given product is only rarely used it tends to be more expensive, yet this difference

disappears in time, if the use increases.

Energy and water conservation measures repay themselves over time.

Just as in the area of energy conservation, here too the renovated housing is lagging behind newly constructed housing, partly because of the unavoidably high costs of replacing existing materials and construction elements.

A temporary premium-assistance scheme will be instituted by the state in 1996 for 'sustainable renovation'.

Health and environmental hygiene

In addition to energy conservation and sustainable building, there is a third set of environmental standards which impact on housing construction and management, namely the requirements relating to soil quality, **noise and odour pollution** and health.

Legislation has already been enacted in these areas. Where public health is at issue, the neutral cost principle no longer applies. There are environmental requirements which may therefore clash with the goal of affordability.

An important cost-raising environmental standard with which the government has long been wrestling is that of the 'clean soil certificate'. In a densely populated country like ours, it has become more and more necessary to build housing on former industrial sites. Before construction can start, however, a certificate must be issued testifying that - in the case of soil contamination - the top soil layer has been cleansed. For housing construction to be feasible, the state is often compelled to help pay the costs of soil decontamination operations. These costs have risen in recent years and are starting to eat up an ever-increasing proportion of national investments in housing construction. The near future will undoubtedly see an increasingly heated discussion of whether the environmental standards in our country are not too strict in relation to other interests such as the affordability of housing accommodation. No one wants a situation in which the health of the population can be jeopardized, yet where are the limits?

In addition, our environmental legislation also lays down new regulations on noise and odour pollution. All over the country, noise barriers have been erected along railways and roads. Industrial firms bitterly protest against plans for housing in their vicinity, as they fear being subsequently saddled with the bill for measures to restrict odour pollution. In existing urban areas, where

the construction of new buildings has been relegated to 'infill' space, it is frequently difficult - and sometimes impossible - to meet these standards. In such situations, the interests of the compact city will have to be weighed against the environmental standards.

Finally, measures are pending to reduce exposure to radon gas from the crawl space under dwellings through better insulation and by sealing off cracks in the floors. Like asbestos, the use of lead in drinking water pipes will be pushed back as much as possible.

A house for different occupants

A conscious effort must be made to avoid constructing buildings which are not suitable for different functions and re-use. Sustainability also means anticipating the life cycle, and therefore adaptable and flexible construction.

As early as the 1960's it was argued in the Netherlands that the outer shell should be kept separate from the interior elements. The outer shell would be neutral in character and have a long life. Different interior packages could be installed within the outer shell, like the inner part of a matchbox. These modules would have a shorter life cycle and correspond with the life cycle of the occupant and with social trends. This principle of separating the outer shell from the interior structure - later known as Open Building - met with much response from architects and building firms, but never managed to break through to mainstream housing construction. This was due to, among other things, the initial extra costs and lack of central coordination.

Nevertheless, the Open Building movement has had impact on practical house building and management in the Netherlands. Increasingly, the possibility of altering the layout is being taken into account in the design of dwellings. It is becoming more common

for tenants to be permitted under the terms of their contract to - under certain conditions - change the interior of their dwelling.

Freedom of layout was also an important starting point when drafting the Building Decree. In this Decree, as few requirements as possible are made with respect to rooms and areas.

A possible impediment to the freedom of layout is the fact that the size of the average new dwelling has shrunk since the start of the 1970's. This development, owing to financial reasons and to the fact that the size of the house-



holds has continued to decline, while not without advantages for the environment, limits the possibilities for re-use. In particular, the narrowness of single-family homes can yield problems for rearranging the layout.

A concept closely touching that of the sustainable city is that of life cycle sustainability. This concept refers to the idea that houses and cities should be suitable for all people in all stages of the life cycle, even when they are elderly or develop a handicap. A quarter of the Dutch population is currently made up of persons over the age of 55 and disabled persons, while ageing will only increase this proportion. The neighbourhoods built after the war

were designed for families with children. The elderly do not always enjoy living in these older districts, although for other reasons (lack of safety, heavy traffic). Many flats or maisonettes have no lift and virtually none of the dwellings can accommodate a wheelchair.

It goes without saying that these are all factors which cannot be solved at once. However, much attention is currently being devoted to these matters. For years, conferences on housing for the elderly and for the disabled have been well attended, and numerous innovative projects are underway.



The Netherlands not only took note of the concept of Open Building at an early stage, but also of that of adaptable building. Much new construction, especially in the subsidized sector makes use of design guidelines which take account of future handicaps which occupants may develop, and hence incorporate wider doors, no thresholds, stairs with a gradual incline and so on. The senior citizens' organizations have devised a consumers' hallmark with 16 basic requirements which a dwelling must meet in order to earn the designation 'suitable for all ages'. Interestingly, it was the elderly themselves who tested the dwellings! At the risk of sounding monotonous,

it must nevertheless be repeated that here, again, existing housing is more resistant to change than newly designed and built dwellings. A threshold is easy to leave out; removing it costs money. Nevertheless, progress is being made, especially in flats. With the financial support of the government, elevators have been built later - copying Sweden's example - into hundreds of apartment buildings, while the industrial world has responded by developing cheap, light, compact lifts in which a wheelchair will just fit.

Overall wheelchair accessibility throughout the housing stock is not affordable right now, but all sorts of minor adaptations made to dwellings for the elderly and disabled persons who are not in a wheelchair have been carried out with success, on a subsidized basis.

The policy in the Netherlands is aimed at making as large a part of the housing stock possible accessible to all, including the elderly and the disabled. This 'stock strategy' is completely opposite to the strategy of building specific categories of dwelling complexes for senior citizens or the disabled, which dominated our country until a few years ago. In the past, so many nursing homes were built in the Netherlands that nearly 10% of all Dutch elderly people (persons over the age of 65) live in an institution. This is not only expensive, but is also not conducive to the independent functioning of this group. There are currently a large number of 'residential care complexes' under construction which combine a more independent life style with a much more varied care package (customized care concept). Many senior citizens opt for a more sheltered dwelling form because they no longer feel safe in regular housing. Various different experiments are currently in progress on ways to encourage the elderly to continue to live on their own: by security measures (accident prevention, burglary prevention), by offering service packages and by improving alarm systems.

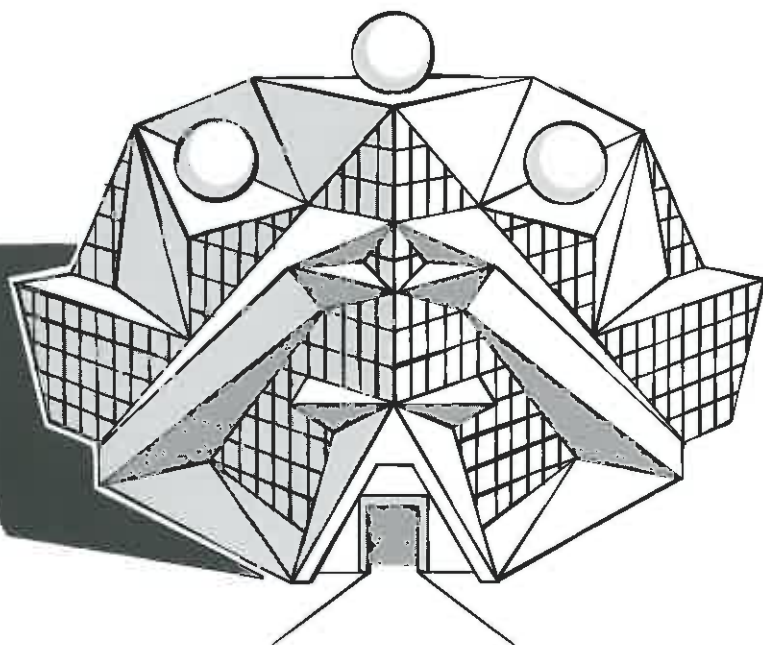
Renewing the city while society crumbles?

The Netherlands has achieved a remarkable feat over the past 25 years in the area of urban renewal. To date, over half of the pre-war dwellings and a substantial portion of the early post-war dwellings have been renovated or rebuilt. Practically speaking, the urban renewal operation will be completed in ten years.

4. THE LIVEABLE CITY

The quality of the sizeable subsidized rented sector has largely already been brought up to standard and good progress in this respect has been made in the owner-occupied sector. Other countries have shown a great deal of interest in the architecture of our urban renewal plans. Flaking paintwork, leaking roofs and cracked walls are the major sources of concern in the older, private sector rented dwellings. This sector, which is only very small in this country (15%), is primarily concentrated in the three largest cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague. During the 1970's, the cities bought tens of thousands of dwellings from private owners, who were generally more than happy to sell. The municipal housing agency of Rotterdam nearly collapsed under the high costs of acquiring and improving the dwellings. Currently, purchasing in this way has tailed off due to a combination of high prices, the high costs of improvement and expiring subsidies.

The 1970's were the heyday of participation and involvement. Residents protested against clearance plans, demanded a say in house improvement plans and in the new layout and design of residential areas. Neither a broken bench nor a wrongly installed gallery railing could escape attention. Now, twenty years later, smoothly operating procedures for urban renewal and property management have devel-



EXPENDITURE ON URBAN RENEWAL (Government and municipal assistance) 1985-1993 (included)



Fig. 11:
expenditure on
urban renewal

oped, which generally take scrupulous note of the interests of the residents.

During the 1980's, we started to discover that just building and building - even if the result was architecturally pleasing - in many cases was not enough to halt the **deterioration and decay** of urban neighbourhoods. Many cities can point to examples of districts where the process of degeneration continued even after they had been physically completely rebuilt.

We came to realize that investments in urban renewal can be wholly negated without a simultaneous process of social renewal.

Some city districts became dirty and neglected; graffiti was everywhere; measures were taken against rent arrears only after months had passed; vague feelings of being unsafe

increased even though the actual crime rate was long well below the average European rate.

The abolition of labour intensive forms of building and neighbourhood management in situations where social cohesion and social control were crumbling proved not only detrimental to the liveability but also - in combination with the huge unemployment in the same districts - a form of **waste of human potential**. In our country, the unemployed receive an unemployment benefit which is high enough to live on, but at the same time they are prohibited from earning anything extra. Attempts to step up neighbourhood management efforts on the basis of voluntary work have - apart from a few isolated instances - failed. Few people feel like cleaning up the mess in problem areas without a form of proper reimbursement.

The government's **Social Renewal campaign** launched during the mid-1980's, was a turning point. 'Additional' jobs in neighbourhood management were created via a variety of routes. Official compartmentalisation at the local level was to be broken down; every last fund earmarked for a specific objective was deposited into a single fund for social renovation. Parallel to this were the attempts to involve the local residents in drawing attention to problems and indicating priorities in employing people and resources.

Neighbourhood residents are also able to be motivated in the 1990's for short, practical voluntary actions. The now famous Opzoomerstraat in Rotterdam is an example of this type of **spontaneous neighbourhood action**, during which trees were planted, rubbish cleared away, speed ramps were laid and streetlighting installed. The motto here is: not words but deeds.

Meanwhile, the municipalities have responded to practical actions on the part of the local inhabitants by granting the neighbourhood finance and materials for the follow-up. The trend has been not to allocate public resources to neighbourhoods according to various objective distribution codes but to reward positive neighbourhood action. That, too, is a type of social renewal.

Finally, the liveability of various cities has been increasingly endangered by concentrations of **homeless people**, most of whom either have a drug or psychiatric problem, generally rendering them unfit to live on their own in their own accommodation. The new no-nonsense approach involves offering combinations of low standard living accommodation coupled to a form of care, and repressive measures, such as simpler eviction procedures.

The current Minister of Housing has opened a discussion on the **liveability** in a policy memorandum, calling it a new 'field of responsibility' for the housing corporations. As a result, they will be required

annually to account for their performance in the areas of neighbourhood management and in stimulating neighbourhood involvement. They are already required to account for their activities in the area of housing for specific groups such as refugees, ethnic minority groups, the disabled and senior citizens.

The implications of the policy memorandum are that the corporations be given more freedom to invest in the residential environment, instead of only in their own stock of dwellings and land.

Taking neighbourhood management seriously

From the moment the slogan 'the work is out on the streets' began to be heard, fruitful interaction between the government and local initiatives started to develop. Community management became one of the spearheads in employment programmes.

A temporary subsidy was made available in order to reinstate the so recently abandoned post of **caretaker** in apartment buildings. Under a 'job pool' scheme, assistant caretakers, supervisors, neighbourhood janitors and patrollers can all be appointed at very low costs. Within the context of the Youth Employment Guarantee Plan, efforts are made to retrain jobless young people as uniformed handyman and cleaning teams.

Many long term unemployed have been put to work for the municipalities and housing corporations within the scope of these programmes. In a number of neighbourhoods and housing complexes, intensive management has been proved to work: pollution and vandalism declined, the feeling of safety returned, the streets looked better. The expectation was, however, that the '**self-regulating capability**' of former problem districts would be restored after a period of intensive management. This has up to now not been realised. Such districts require permanent professional attention,

which may be due to their planning and design (large scale, anonymous) or to their unbalanced social structure (a plethora of unconnected underprivileged groups).

And here we arrive at the Achilles' heel in the employment programmes: the new management functions are per definition temporary; as soon as some degree of working experience has been gained, the former jobless are expected to move on into the regular labour market. A second problem is the fact that they are permitted to do **'additional work'** only, as to avoid endangering other regular jobs.

On the basis of this finding, several experiments have now been launched with 'community management bureaux' following the example of the French **'Régies de Quartier'**. These bureaux take on regular unskilled management work in a district, divide it up into as many part-time segments as possible and then recruit neighbourhood residents as workers. The Régies de Quartier perform cleaning work, simple technical maintenance work, carry out maintenance of public parks and green areas and patrol work, but also operate local restaurants and hotels.

Recent government initiatives will expand the margins for community management offices and similar social enterprises.

The invitation extended by the Secretary of State for Housing to the housing corporations to develop more activities in the area of community management has already been mentioned.

The Minister of Social Affairs and Employment has launched a number of new employment plans which will enable the municipalities to create 40,000 new regular jobs in, among other areas, that of community management.

Within the scope of the Policy for the Large Cities, the government has entered into **covenants** with numerous cities. Integrated programmes for neighbourhood and community

management will be implemented in the poorer sections of the cities designated by the cities themselves, for which substantial multi-annual budgets have been set aside. These are intended to finance the overheads of professional organizations providing jobs to the unemployed; the labour costs of the jobless will be subsidized through application of the social security benefit money saved. Other aspects involved in the integrated approach are care, education, safety, the economy and liveability of the city.

It goes without saying that the costs of intensive community management are high, with only limited possibilities of charging these to the local residents. However, the costs of putting people to work in community management - in terms of the application of community funds - are not very much higher than the costs of keeping these same people idle on social security benefits. **Combatting the waste of human potential can coincide with the objective of a liveable city.**

Participation and integration

'The Netherlands is not an immigration country' was for a long time official policy (with reference to our high population density).

We now know better. The arrival of guest workers from the countries around the Mediterranean Sea, migrants from the former colonies and - most recently - refugees from war zones on the various continents has boosted the percentage of **inhabitants of foreign origin** to the level of the rest of Europe. They now make up 6% of the Dutch population and 22% of the population of the major cities. They live in our cities for the most part in the cheaper pre-war and post-war districts, where the concentration of immigrants can climb to over 50%.

As far as housing is concerned, the government has steadfastly rejected

the compulsory dispersal policy proposed by some municipalities and housing corporations, invoking the national and international rights to **freedom of domicile**. At the same time, the policy is aimed at allocating dwellings in an impartial manner. In the past, there have been instances where housing complexes were informally closed to minorities, to prevent tensions arising between the residents.

The new trend in the Netherlands in which dwellings owned by the housing corporations are offered for rent via 'open' advertisements in newspapers, where the sole criteria applying are that of waiting period, age, income and size of the household, has helped to break open the housing market for ethnic minorities even further. Local evaluation studies in cities where rented accommodation is advertised in the newspapers failed to show that ethnic minorities had to wait longer for a dwelling than native Dutch applicants. A number of the housing corporations has continued to support a placement policy by which they can influence the number of minorities per staircase or per block of dwellings, in order to achieve a certain balance in the population structure on a micro-level.

An increasing number of housing corporations find themselves dealing with tenants of many different nationalities, and are seeking ways to come into contact with these clients. The tested and tried **Dutch participation model** is based, on the one hand, on permanent representation of tenants in the members' councils of the housing associations and residents' committees per complex of dwellings, and on the other hand on incidental residents' participation on issues such as urban renewal or plans for large scale maintenance. Apart from a few exceptions, immigrants are not found in the participation model. They often feel unable to keep up with the discussion culture prevailing in the Netherlands. Like many native Dutch tenants with little education, they are seldom inclined to become involved in matters which do

not yield immediately tangible results. Housing corporations and municipalities are now attempting to establish contact with their ethnic clients in a more direct manner: by recruiting them into their service.

Several of the housing corporations in the major cities have now set targets in this respect, aiming to employ a certain percentage (e.g. 20%) of personnel with an ethnic background. Here and there, the target has already been exceeded. These members of the workforce are in a certain sense the 'ambassadors' for their population group. Also, the community management offices mentioned above have shown that immigrants are most definitely interested in community management - but as a paid job, not as volunteer work.

The immigrants who have been arriving since the 1970's have recently been joined by a flow of **newcomers**, who are primarily refugees.

Over two thirds of the group of official refugees is single, younger than 30 and in most cases, male. They, too, have multiple problems. Officially, they are entitled to housing, education and a job. The housing for official refugees has up until now proceeded virtually without a problem: in two and a half years municipalities and housing corporations have allocated nearly 50,000 dwellings to this group, around 8% of the vacancies opening up in the subsidized rented sector.

Funds have been granted by the government to set up 'integration courses', but the waiting lists are long and there is hardly any work for the newcomers. The Netherlands should look to the larger countries of Europe, which have been coping with large numbers of homeless and uprooted people for some time, to learn how to deal with this problem. Inspiring projects such as 'foyers' for the young, in which employers and training institutions collaborate, can function as a pressure cooker and finally a melting pot for the integration of young newcomers. After finishing the integration course, the move to the regular housing market/

market for rented rooms must be guaranteed.

Clients with special needs

With some 30,000 people homeless, of which only a few hundred actually sleep on the streets, the situation in the Netherlands at the bottom of the housing market is by global standards by no means alarming. However, their number would appear to be on the rise and the percentage with severe, multiple problems is high. Precisely because people seldom end up in the streets because of housing or income problems alone, the group of the homeless is largely made up of people with a drug, alcohol or psychiatric problem. They generally receive social security benefits (except for the group of illegal aliens), and can therefore in principle afford a home.

In the case of nuisance caused by the drug trade, an accelerated eviction procedure is available which is applied more today than in the past. It is important to move quickly, as otherwise neighbours who are willing to testify are often intimidated. If the tenants themselves are addicts or suffer from mental disorders, the strategy is more complicated. Traditionally, the position of Dutch tenants has always been strenuously protected. If evicted, tenants are offered suitable alternative accommodation. This merely serves to move the problem elsewhere. What the corporation does is offer 'last-chance dwellings' in which the rent contract is accompanied by a contract with an institution able to provide the care needed. Some welfare institutions have difficulties with mandatory forms of care, while funding is often also a problem.

Of the group of homeless - who should not be confused with the groups causing nuisance - a proportion (around 20%) lodges in subsidized shelters, the rest makes use of squats or stays in private pensions. Until recently, the

housing corporations paid little attention to this section of the housing market, while the municipalities were involved only in a repressive sense: supervision of fire safety and hygiene and eventual eviction.

In fact, the modest Dutch version of a slum has been hidden behind the facades in the older sections of the cities, yet the function is the same: a springboard for destitute newcomers, expansion tank in a highly strained housing market.

Recently, activities were launched by a few housing corporations within the scope of their social task with the aim of doing something about the situation at the bottom of the housing market. One corporation in Amsterdam has renovated a large former squat and has rented it as a shell for next to nothing to the squatters, who are being allowed to rebuild the interior and obtain the ownership thereof. A Rotterdam corporation plans to operate a corporation pension (on a social basis), in order to offer more competition to the commercial sector and where necessary, to streamline this. The student housing foundations in the university cities - traditional experts in the area of cheap housing for the young - are buying up unoccupied buildings and offering better rooms at the same rents as the commercial pensions. A different approach, developed by the municipality of The Hague, involves distinguishing good quality private pensions from those of poor quality, by means of a quality hallmark. Naturally, no one harbours the illusion that it is possible to completely redevelop or regulate the entire stock of pensions in the large cities; in a metropolitan society there will always be a marginal sector which the allocation regulations cannot reach and where newcomers can find their way without recourse to the formal channels.

Housing

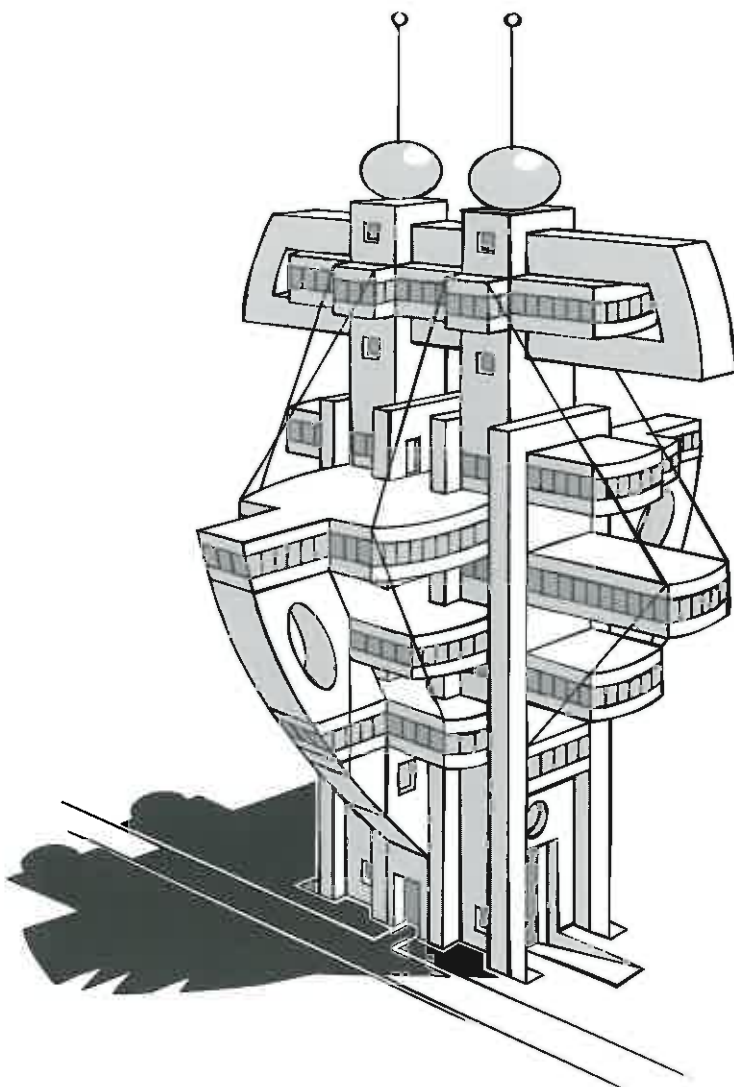
Apart from a limited number of vagrants, everyone in the Netherlands has a roof above his or her head. There must also be sufficient and suitable housing accommodation available in the future as well.

The second task is to ensure that these dwellings are in attractive areas and neighbourhoods for occupants to feel at home and safe.

In the third place, sufficient attention should be paid to the sustainability (future value and environmental impact) of the residential areas.

These starting points for the future translate, in concrete terms, into the following policy agenda.

5. AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE



The statistical housing shortage may not exceed 2% of the housing stock. The Dutch housing need will continue to grow as a result of immigration, the individualization of households and senior citizens who continue living longer on their own. Moreover, the demolition and replacement of dwellings will continue.

In the period from 1997 to 2005 around 486,500 dwellings must be built. Space for these dwellings will have to be found somewhere in our already intensively used country.

The affordability of housing must be guaranteed in the future as well. In recent years, rents have increased faster than the incomes. As a result, the Netherlands is no longer a country where rented accommodation is relatively inexpensive, by European standards. Recently, however, rent increases have appeared once again to be tapering off.

The system of individual rent allowances will remain the cornerstone of the living expenses policy, yet is currently being assessed as to its effectiveness. Tenants will be encouraged to defend their interests, for example by the adjustment of a legal stipulation in the

rights of tenants, and subsidies for the housing consumers' associations.

The **liveability of neighbourhoods and districts** is the third action point.

More expensive dwellings will be built in areas with a high rate of unemployment and low incomes, in order to achieve a more mixed social structure at district level.

A separate Secretary of State for the Policies for the Large Cities has been appointed to the Ministry of the Interior.

Agreements have been made with the 19 largest cities in the country on the application of funds for intensive community management, increasing the safety of the local residents and employment projects.

Moreover, much will be spent in the immediate future on completing the urban renewal operation; good management and maintenance after the improvements have been made or a new dwelling has replaced the old one will be stimulated.

The fourth action point is **housing for elderly people**. The ageing population, and the fact that senior citizens are continuing to live on their own for longer and longer demands targeted investments in the existing housing stock and in the living environment. The capacity of nursing homes and residential homes will not be expanded. Measures to widen the accessibility to the existing housing stock include the installation of elevators and preventive measures for those with a handicap. Measures in the living environment overlap to some extent the action point on liveability (increasing social safety) and, in addition, include more home services and better local facilities.

The fifth point is the goal of **sustainable building**.

A separate Action Plan was devoted to this in 1995. Together with the private sector, a national package of Sustainable Building measures will be developed concerning building materials, building design and urban design.

The environmental standards applying to new construction in the Building Decree will be tightened (including the energy conservation standards).

A temporary incentive scheme - in connection with the high costs - will be operative with respect to measures in the existing housing stock. Subsidies will be granted for 55,000 dwellings over a period of three years.

New regulations on conserving water and separating household waste in apartment buildings are being developed.

Spatial planning

The urbanization policy planned will be implemented over the next ten years. Increasing attention will be devoted to strengthening the relationship between the new urban expansions and existing urban areas. Two aspects are concerned here, namely that of an optimum use of transport links and that of the collective **urban identity**.

The ongoing objective of a compact city implies that new building locations must be as close as possible to the existing cities and become as far as possible part of the cities. The laws are being amended to grant municipalities more instruments to acquire land and to keep land speculation on new building locations in check.

The choice of new building locations for housing, employment and services will be guided by the aim to **limit unnecessary mobility**, and in particular, the use of the car.

Within the scope of the **City and Environment** project, solutions are sought at the local level to the dilemma of building in high densities and the environmental laws and regulations, such as the standards for noise pollution.

Even if we build 70,000 dwellings a year until 2005, it will still not be enough. The Netherlands, as experience has taught us, will never be 'completed'. Already, the search for

feasible urbanization locations after 2005 has commenced. Competing spatial claims have to be weighed against one another.

In the Randstad Holland, in the western part of the country, the spatial planning problems are most acute. The ring-shaped Randstad, made up of large and small cities and towns, surround the so-called **Green Heart**. To prevent the Green Heart from being completely suburbanized, an offensive strategy is needed: the area must not only be defended against marauding cities, but must itself develop its (green) qualities as a counterweight to the Randstad. The further development of the (shrinking) agricultural and horticultural functions and of the (expanding) recreation and nature conservation areas will take on more importance in the future.

Environmental management

The message of the National Environmental Policy Plan in 1993 was clear: it is possible to deal and dispose with a large number of the existing environmental problems and to prevent new problems from arising within the span of a single generation, before 2010.

It now looks as if we will have at least the local or regional problems under control by then, but not the problems on a national scale.

On the national scale, the 'ecologizing of the tax system' will be worked on: assessing the system of taxes and subsidies for their positive and negative impact on the environment.

Concrete objectives have been formulated for **energy conservation**.

By the year 2000, CO₂ emissions must have been reduced by 3% to 5% compared with 1990. NO_x emissions are to have lessened by 60%.

The production structure in the Netherlands is still an energy-intensive one, partly owing to the - by European

standards - low costs of energy.

The main measure for the cities regards the proposal to introduce a tax on the energy consumption of households and small businesses. The revenues from this levy are to be wholly pumped back into the energy conservation incentive scheme.

Moreover, stricter NO_x emission standards for central heating boilers, gas installations and engines and higher energy performance standards in new dwellings and buildings will be implemented.

Another sensitive issue is the problem of the growth of **road traffic**. Next to all the measures already taken, stimulation of the use of small economy cars is being considered. Also, car use will be discouraged by means of speed limiting devices, electronic toll systems and increased excise on petrol. Steady investments will continue to be made in upgrading public transportation systems and in bicycle facilities. More extensive trials will be held with teleworking within the various ministries which will allow employees to work part of the time from home, as an example to the business world.

In the **long term**, it is essential that Dutch urban society now starts to contribute to developing a strategy to deal with global environmental problems. Our pattern of consumption should be revised and we should restrict our mobility.

The idea of 'compact living and working', using telematics, should find more general application.

Our stock of dwellings and buildings must be built to last, which calls for the use of sustainable materials, a flexible layout and for ensuring construction which is suitable for more than one use. And finally: environmentally friendly, and in particular energy-saving technologies developed in the Netherlands will be made available to, for example, the countries of Middle and Eastern Europe and the countries with rapid economic growth in Southeast Asia.

Policy for the Large Cities

The government recently entered into a **covenant** with the four major Dutch cities (Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht) that provides for a joint approach to the main problems of the large cities in the period 1995-1999.

The starting point is providing the cities with more instruments enabling them to approach the problems in an integrated manner. By decentralizing the funds, the state increases the financial leeway of the four largest municipalities. These funds are to be deployed to prevent a divide opening up in these cities along socio-economic and ethnic lines. The cities themselves may designate the impoverished districts requiring priority.

It has been agreed to publish a report in the spring of 1998 on the progress of the policy for the large cities.

Unemployment in the disadvantaged sectors of the cities will be combatted by creating a large number of subsidized jobs. The work will mainly involve areas such as street patrols, safety, (senior citizens') care and day care for children.

Moreover, financial and fiscal facilities will be available to medium-sized and small businesses, especially those in disadvantaged districts.

The results of the **primary school system** must be improved. The cities will be given more freedom to spend the funds from the education budget in a manner designed to yield better teaching results. Measures will also be implemented targeted at reducing the number of those who drop out of secondary school and to improve the chances of school leavers on the labour market. Compulsory integration courses (including Dutch language courses) for official refugees will be established.

Neighbourhood safety plans

will be implemented in districts of the large cities in cooperation with the police, private institutions and local residents' organizations.

Within the scope of these plans some tens of thousands jobs will be created for city and neighbourhood patrols who will assist the police and public transportation inspectors in maintaining public safety and enforcing civil order. Also, the regular police force will be strengthened. Furthermore, investments will be made in extra measures to combat juvenile delinquency and drug-related crime. These measures will offer a mixture of prevention, support/help and detention/repression.

In the area of **care and social assistance**, measures targeted at the homeless, addicts, psychiatric clients and those with debt problems are packaged together. In particular, funds will be applied to prevent and combat drug-related nuisance, among other things by establishing 'social pensions'. Care renewal funds will be set up for mental health care which will yield extra funds for clients not in psychiatric institutions.

The cities must ensure the availability of a network of care facilities, so that clients are not shuffled around or fail to receive any assistance at all.

The covenant closes with measures aimed at improving the **liveability** of the disadvantaged sectors of the city. Integrated programmes for district and neighbourhood management are to be established for areas designated by the cities themselves. Many of the concrete measures have been discussed above: more intensive management of the residential environment (cleaning, maintenance repair work), increasing safety on the streets, construction of owner-occupied housing and more expensive rented accommodation in the disadvantaged sectors and the construction of cheaper rented dwellings outside impoverished districts.

Background

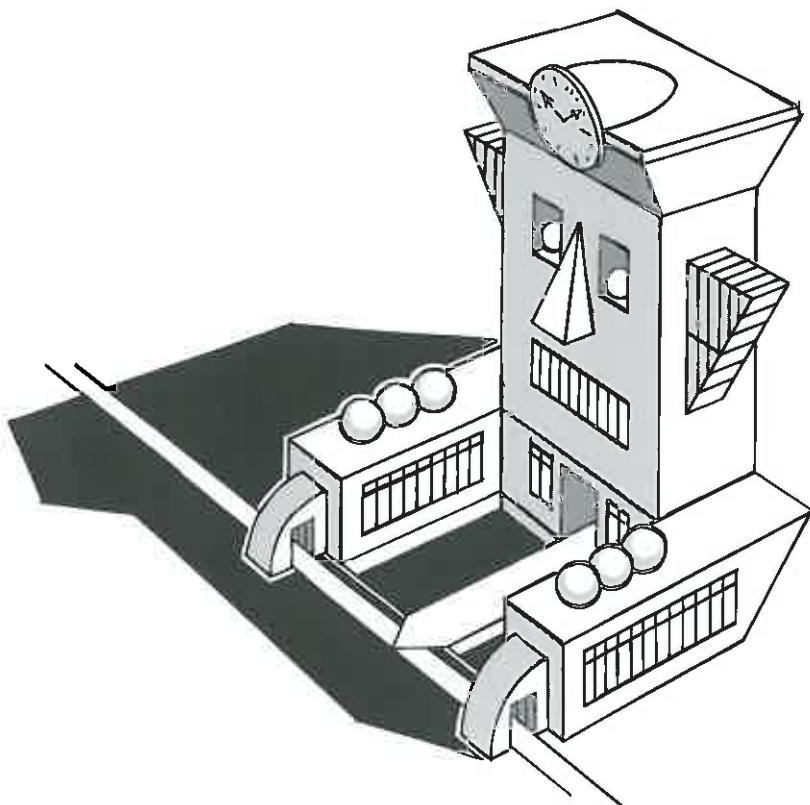
The explosive growth of the cities of the Third World and the concentration of poverty there has recently led the multilateral donor organizations to move the problem of urban poverty up to the top of their agendas. Until only a short time ago, rural development was assumed to be the best defence against the rapid process of urbanization. Rural development is still high on the Dutch agenda for Dutch development aid. Practice has taught us, however, that these strategies serve hardly even to temper the burgeoning urbanization process. Moreover, particularly in more developed countries, the growth of the urban population owes more to natural factors than to migration. In other words, urbanization has become an irreversible process and a factor of fundamental importance in the entire development process.

6. Habitat and International Co-operation

With a view to these developments and the fact that this urbanization process has simultaneously meant the urbanization of poverty, a special programme was launched in 1991 to combat urban poverty. Unlike the relatively large scale infrastructural interventions which the Netherlands already supports in urban areas in especially the field of water and sanitation, this programme is aimed more at small scale activities which are innovative and catalytic in nature.

Key themes

In the Dutch approach to development aid, poverty and poverty-related problems are approached from three interrelated angles: economic, social and political. The key themes of the War on Urban Poverty programme



correspond with the angles referred to above: work and income, the living environment and institutional development.

a. Work and Income

The most direct cause of urban poverty is the lack of work, and hence of income. Attempts to combat urban poverty without sufficient regard for this aspect will therefore never yield a sustainable result. The work and income-generating activities undertaken by the poor themselves in their struggle to survive are the most important. The interventions are directed in the first instance at improving the subsistence base of the poor by reducing the costs of living (for example, by collective buying) and by stimulating a greater degree of self-sufficiency with regard to basic needs. In the second place are the interventions via intermediary organizations (non-governmental organizations), such as temporary and massive employment programmes, compensation programmes ('food for work') and direct support initiatives such as credit programmes, training, technical aid and marketing.

b. Habitat: the physical and social environment

Poverty is not only a lack of income, but just as much a matter of poor housing, inadequate facilities and an unhealthy living and working environment. Physically this refers primarily to the slum districts which house around half the total urban population of the Third World, to the access to the housing and property market, to drinking water, to which 40% has no direct access, to sanitation facilities, to waste disposal and finally, to fuel and transport, which occupies an increasing part of their time and budget.

These are all facilities which determine to a large degree the quality of the physical living environment and which stand at the top of the so-called 'brown environment' agenda (= the relationship between neighbourhood sanitation, environmental hygiene and public health). In the urban context, this brown



environment is frequently bracketed with the 'grey environment', which refers to water, air and soil pollution. The Environmental Programme in Dutch development aid focusses in particular on these problems, mainly by lending support to a number of international programmes (see below).

Urban environmental management and promotion of the capacity for urban environmental management and planning are also necessary in order for initiatives at the district level to have a chance of success.

Among the social needs and basic facilities are education, food and health. Scant access to these facilities means less chance of betterment for those who are poor. The level of education is the most important indirect determinant of fertility and poverty. The food supply is a daily recurrent problem which weighs heaviest on the household budget of the poor.

c. Institutional development

As a consequence of the rapid growth of the cities, numerous problems relating to planning, management and administration have arisen. Very generally speaking, with respect to the **management** of developing cities, nothing short of a crisis situation has occurred. Managers and planners

have proven unable to respond adequately to this explosive growth. The complex of problems has grown so intricate that traditional, top-down solutions are no longer practicable.

Important institutional points of attention are decentralization, privatization, local government funding, organizing urban management, participation and the supportive role of the central government.

Decentralization towards the city governments make it possible to identify and to gear local needs, interests, resources and possibilities to one another. Also, transferring tasks and competences to the private - whether or not commercial - sector can be effective socially. Effective decentralization to local authorities demands the availability of sufficient resources. Good urban management also requires enlarging the capacity and understanding of the administrators to enable them to cope with this wider range of tasks. Extra results are achieved by training local authorities, if the collaborating non-governmental and local organizations also have at their disposal sufficient technical and management capacity due to training. This will increase the possibilities of participation for the poor, which in turn yields a greater identification with a project

and hence with their living situation.

Points of departure

Essential in combatting urban poverty is to determine the forces and mechanisms which are instrumental in maintaining the downward spiral of poverty and deprivation. From the outside, the informal living and working sector appears to satisfy many of the most elementary needs of the poor. Yet, however paradoxical it may sound, this informal existence is not simply one of destitution, it is also expensive, time consuming and wasteful. To change this situation, bottlenecks in the informal system must be traced and dealt with and steps taken to ensure that the potential of this system is optimally utilized.

Sustainability, both ecologic and social, and **enablement** (support, creating conditions) are key concepts in the theme programme. In the implementation of this programme an approach from 'inside out' is essential: the position, perception and perspectives of the poor and local institutional actors should lead the way in interventions. The activities to be supported are in principle small scale, operative on a local and micro-level and act as far as



possible as triggers.

Much importance is attached to innovative management methods and implementation of policy, in which attention is also given to spreading and duplicating the strategies which have proven successful. Given the coherent, multi-sectoral nature of poverty at the micro-level, the most strategic interventions tend to be those which represent an integrated approach to the problem. The actual situation will dictate the extent to which activities can be supported, or whether further study is advisable.

The theme programme aims at a process-oriented, direct war on poverty in line with the above without distinguishing specific target groups inside the group of poverty-stricken city dwellers in advance. Nor are priority intervention strategies indicated beforehand. Where marginalization and exclusion are concerned, first the margins themselves are examined together with the possibilities of restoring the integration with the social process.

Prioritization is mainly a matter of **dialogue, especially at the local level.**

Dutch policy towards the war on urban poverty is best summarized as follows:

- a. The struggle against poverty should be, as far as possible, an **endogenous** process: hence from inside out and from the bottom up.
- b. Identify the "systematic deficiencies": the structural causes of the poverty spiral, of exclusion and marginalization and analyze the consequences and costs of informality.
- c. Programmes and projects are in principle to have broad social application possibilities (labour intensive/capital extensive). The policy is aimed at interventions which could have been generated by the population itself, were it not for the fact that....
- d. No target groups are indicated in advance and blueprint-type



methods are avoided; process-oriented approaches are preferred.

The Netherlands and Habitat II

The central principles upheld by the Dutch in formulating the most important document of this world conference, the Global Plan of Action, are: sustainable development, participation and good urban management.

Sustainable development:

The central objective as far as human settlement is concerned is to improve the quality of the environment and the social and economic circumstances in human settlements, including the living and working environment of humankind, in particular the poor. In realizing this objective, tensions arise. Urban population concentrations mean, on the one hand, stress on the global environmental carrying capacity. On the other hand, the sustainable development of the cities can augment the development possibilities within the available global environmental carrying capacity. The challenge of Habitat II is to contribute to augmenting these development possibilities, among other things by identifying and taking stock of policy options in the area of human settlements (inter alia via examples of

good practice). This may contribute to the process of replacing non-sustainable patterns with more sustainable life styles, thus creating more room for sustainable growth. This is particularly important for the poorest population groups, whose development possibilities are the most drastically limited owing to their non-sustainable life styles.

Participation, or preventing exclusion

There are two dimensions of participation, namely the development of strategies to mobilize all those with an interest in this on the one hand, and to develop flanking policy to prevent exclusion on the other.

Human settlements form the main physical environment where the economic and social functioning of humankind occurs. To create an optimum living and working environment, all those with an interest therein must be able to determine their own needs and have a direct say in the decisions involving the establishment of the living and working environment. The participation of all those involved (including women, non-governmental organizations and local organizations, the private sector etc.) throughout all the relevant phases is crucial for the realization of sustainable settlements. The **importance of participation** should be a thread running all throughout the final document of Habitat II. This opinion is not only based on the Dutch conviction that democracy is essential for a sustainable society, but also on the idea that settlements can function well only if their inhabitants have a sense of belonging to them. Participation is an essential condition to create a base to support a successful policy targeted at human settlements. An 'enabling approach' is the means by which to mobilize those concerned. Key words in this approach are local autonomy, local dialogue, decentralization etc.

Although participation should pre-empt the exclusion of particular groups, it is vital to state explicitly the fact that exclusion is to be resisted. This explicitly pertains not only to the exclusion of

the poor in developing countries, but also to the prevention of exclusion of the poor, foreign workers, immigrants etc. in the industrialized countries. Furthermore, exclusion should not be interpreted only in a political sense. Economic (lack of work, unequal access to aid resources) and social exclusion must also be attacked. To this end, flanking policy (in the form of safety nets, for example) must also be developed.

Good urban management, decentralization and legal security

The crisis confronting national and local authorities is revealed in its full magnitude in the problem of human settlements. More decentralization towards local authorities is necessary in order to make the problems visible, and subsequently manageable.

The Netherlands will urge, before and during the conference, the necessity of transferring competences and resources to local authorities, in particular where the implementation of policy is concerned. This transfer is not only necessary to promote participation, but also in order to achieve optimum mobilization of locally available knowledge and resources. Next to their supervisory and regulating tasks, local authorities can effectively function as catalysts of development. In this context, it is therefore important that the Global Plan of Action not only offers a framework for national policy plans, but most of all, for implementation at the local level.

Another aspect of good urban management is the institutional framework to be put in place by national authorities in order to create conditions for legal security. This concerns matters such as keeping records on ownership titles and rights of use.

Support for the preparations for Habitat II

The Netherlands supports numerous preliminary activities, varying from supporting the Habitat-II secretariat, a Round Table about Human Resource Development for Better Cities, the

Women in Human Settlement Development Programme, participation in and preparation for various Non-Governmental Organizations, the Best Practices Initiative and the Community Development Programme.

The Netherlands further provides support to twelve partner states with their preparations: Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Benin, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jamaica, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

In conclusion, the Netherlands supports a number of habitat-related programmes and projects, the most important multilateral of which are: the Habitat Forum (this is the national preparation committee for Habitat II which has as its objective, among other things, to promote national awareness and the establishment of funds), the Urban Management Programme

(UNDP/WB) the Sustainable Cities programme, the Local Initiative Facilities for the Urban Environment (UNDP, 12 countries), and the Healthy Cities Project (WHO/UNDP in 5 countries).

In the implementation of its policy, the Dutch government also reaps the advantages of the opportunities for cooperation via the ties between cities through the Association of Dutch Municipalities. The expertise offered by the Dutch municipalities can be utilized via this Association.

The Netherlands also supports a large number of habitat-related activities in a bilateral context. In the follow-up of Habitat-II, the Netherlands also proposes to play an active role, both in cooperation with the UNCHS and other multilateral institutions, and in bilateral programmes.



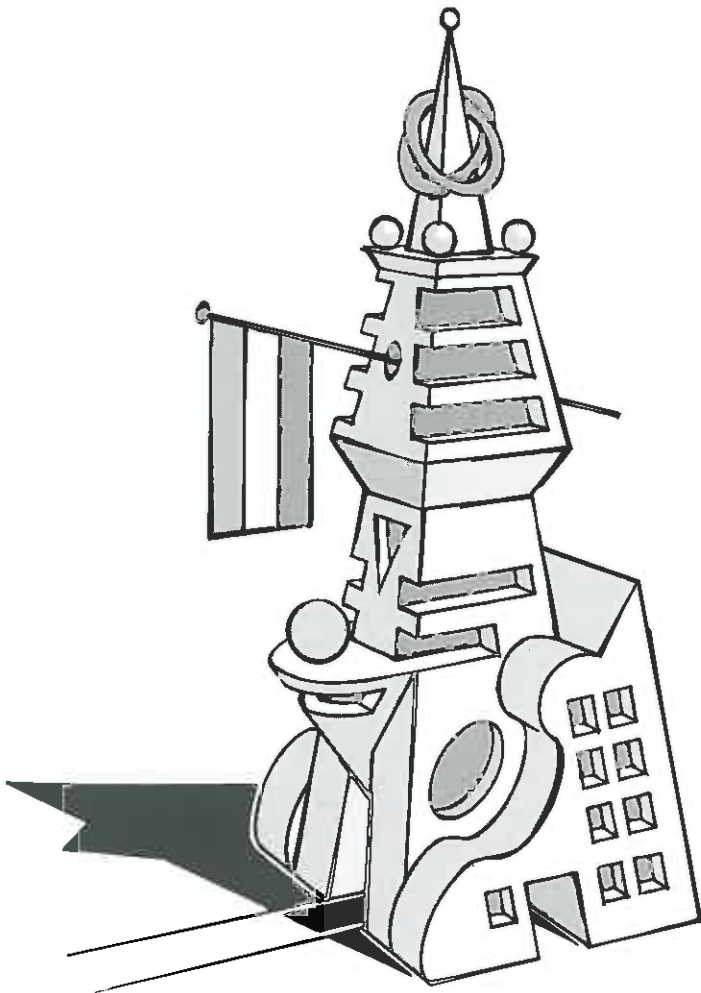
Constitution

Ensuring the availability of sufficient housing facilities is a concern of the government.

7. Compendium of Housing Legislation

Regulation (general)

- **Municipal Act**
This act is an elaboration of the Constitution where this lays down the competences of the municipal governments with regard to the regulation and administration of their management. By virtue of this law, municipalities set standards for the quality and quantity of existing and future dwellings.
- **Provincial Act**
This act is an elaboration of the Constitution where this lays down the competences of the provincial governments with regard to the regulation and administration of their management. In the field of housing, the tasks of the province are the supervision and coordination of the activities of the individual municipalities.
- **Framework Act on Administrative Changes**
This Framework Act is a temporary act in which the transition for seven urban areas to a definite form of administration at an inter-municipal level is set out.
- **Spatial Planning Act**
The Spatial Planning Act contains regulations on the responsibilities and decision-making powers accorded to each administrative tier with regard to the spatial planning of the physical territory of the Netherlands.
- **Act on the Municipal Right of Pre-Emption**
The Act on the Municipal Right of Pre-Emption provides that owners of real estate in designated areas must offer to sell their property to





the municipality before all other parties.

- **Expropriation Act**

The Expropriation Act embodies an administrative and legal procedure according to which the powers of compulsory purchase may be exercised.

Physical development and public housing may be considered legal grounds for expropriation, if within the framework of the implementation of a zoning plan.

Regulation (housing)

- **Housing Act**

The Housing Act constitutes the legal framework for government intervention in the field of housing: this act lays down the obligations and competences of all the parties involved in housing.

Decentralization of tasks and competences forms the starting point for regulation.

- **Policy Document on Housing in the 1990's**





This Policy Document (1988) reviews the housing policy hitherto pursued and offers a policy vision for the subsequent period. This vision has led to a reorganization of housing policy in the Netherlands and still operates as the basis for the present policy.

- Decree on the Management of the Subsidized Rented Sector
This Decree is directed at the landlords of subsidized housing (institutions which, pursuant to the Housing Act, have received approval to fulfil housing tasks with financial support of the government). In this decree, the function and position of these landlords (housing corporations and municipal housing agencies) have been laid down.

General Housing Legislation

- General rights and duties of tenants and landlords: these are set down in the Dutch Civil Code; including the landlord's obligation to maintain the dwelling, the tenant's duty to conduct himself well and to pay the rent, as well as the procedures for terminating a rent agreement.
- Housing Allocation Act
This Act is directed at municipalities

and provinces and contains provisions designed to promote a balanced and just allocation of the scarce housing accommodation.

- Housing Accommodation Rents Act
The target group of this act are the tenants and landlords. The act contains provisions on (the determination of) rents and the manner in which disputes about rents are to be solved.
- Rent Tribunals Act
This act lays down the function and position of the rent tribunal, which plays an important role in rent disagreements between tenants and landlords.
- Grossing-up Act
This act describes the implementation of the grossing-up operation in which the subsidy commitments of the state to landlords of subsidized housing are cancelled against outstanding loans made by the state to these same landlords.
- Building Decree
This decree is aimed at municipalities, clients, building contractors and other bodies involved in construction, and contains technical standards for buildings.

Financial Housing Legislation

- **Act on the Individual Rent Allowance**
This act is aimed at lower income households; in it, rules and regulations are provided according to which these households qualify for a rent allowance.
- **Decree on Location-specific Subsidies**
Pursuant to this Decree, partnerships of municipalities and provinces may receive a contribution to the costs of the development of locations for housing construction.
- **Decree on Dwelling-specific Subsidies**
Pursuant to this Decree, municipalities or regional partnerships of municipalities may be allocated a budget from which they may grant subsidies for building and improving dwellings.
- **Urban and Village Renewal Act**
This act is directed at municipalities and provides them with the instruments needed to pursue an urban renewal policy tailored to the local situation.
- **Central Housing Fund**
The target group of the Central Housing Fund is the housing corpo-

rations. It has the nature of a solidarity fund to which corporations may have recourse in the event of financial problems. The corporations pay a mandatory deposit into the fund themselves.

- **Guarantee Fund for Subsidized Housing Construction**
The target group of this fund is the approved institutions and municipal housing agencies.
The fund guarantees loans to these landlords of subsidized housing.
- **Guarantee Fund Owner-Occupied Dwellings**
This guarantee fund is an independent foundation charged specifically with providing guarantees on behalf of the owner-occupied sector.
- **Residential facilities for the handicapped: decentralized to the municipalities; handicapped persons may receive a grant to adapt their dwelling, e.g. to improve accessibility and use of the dwelling.**

Note: Information on the Dutch housing system may also be found in the report drafted for the UN Esocul convention.

