

BUILDERS AND PLANNERS

A history of land-use and
infrastructure planning in
the Netherlands

Editors

Jos Arts, Ruud Filarski, Hans Jeekel and Bert Toussaint

Authors

Jos Arts, Greet De Block, Arjen van der Burg,
Nil Disco, Ruud Filarski, Hans Jeekel, David de Kool,
Bruno De Meulder, Gijs Mom, Odette van de Riet,
Bert Toussaint and Frank Veraart

Timeline

Arjen van der Burg

CONTENTS

List of contributors to this book	IX
Introduction	1
<i>Hans Jeekel, Ruud Filarski & Jos Arts</i>	
1 What is this book about?	1
2 A densely populated and intensively used country	6
3 Spatial planners and infrastructure builders	8
4 High points and opposition	9
5 Response to the opposition and more recent developments	12
6 The structure of this book	13
Chapter 1. Paradise Regained?	17
<i>Greet De Block, David de Kool, Bruno De Meulder</i>	
1 Anno 2013: Towards shared concepts in Dutch infrastructure and spatial planning	18
2 Dutch and Belgian planning traditions: a caricature	24
3 The preindustrial Low Countries	28
4 Balancing city and countryside in 19th century Belgium	32
5 A different revolution: the Netherlands at the end of the 19th and first half 20th century	40
6 1920 – 1997: “le retour aux champs” in Belgium	50
7 Second half of the 20th century in the Netherlands: Strong infrastructure and spatial planning	58
8 Tentative Conclusion	67
First intermezzo: Building planning traditions	69
<i>Hans Jeekel & Jos Arts</i>	
Chapter 2. The emancipation of the urban view: Dutch spatial planning in an international context (1920-1950)	73
<i>Gijs Mom</i>	
1 Introduction	73
2 Non-urban roots of planning: ideas and institutions	74
3 A delicate question: Who should lead the planners’ practice?	95
4 Dutch non-urban planning: its conceptual and institutional roots	104

5	The ideology of “order”	115
6	Post-war poldering	127
7	Conclusions: the planner’s emancipation	136
	Second intermezzo: The first decades after World War II	140
	Hans Jeekel & Jos Arts	
	Chapter 3. The West and the Rest: The Green Heart and the breakthrough of spatial planning (1950-1982)	143
	Gijs Mom	
1	Introduction	143
2	Dutch planning concepts in government memoranda and reports	145
3	The politicization of infrastructure building and the convergence of the planning perspective	171
4	Expectations and results: interpreting the outcome of the struggle	185
5	Conclusions	196
	Third intermezzo: From a professional arena to a political arena	202
	Hans Jeekel & Jos Arts	
	Chapter 4. Contested spatial planning: ca.1965-1985	209
	Arjen van der Burg, Odette van de Riet & Bert Toussaint	
1	The sixties and beyond: the making of a counter culture, democratization and environmentalism	209
2	Shifting perspectives: the contested RW 14	234
3	Conclusions	260
	Fourth intermezzo: Process planning and its difficulties	272
	Jos Arts & Hans Jeekel	
	Chapter 5. On the Right Track?	279
	Ruud Filarski	
1	Introduction	279
2	Rotterdam and International Container Transport	282
3	The Mainport Concept	285
4	Proponents and Opponents of the Betuwe Route	287
5	Report of the Van Der Plas Commission	292
6	A New Government Policy	296
7	The Infrastructure Planning Act of 1993	298
8	The Netherlands Railways Takes the Lead	301
9	The Government Assumes the Reins of Power	304
10	The Opposition Organizes Itself	306

11	The Spatial Integration. Policy Deliberations	309
12	Five Supplementary Studies	312
13	Decision-Making in the Second Chamber	316
14	Reconsideration? The Hermans Commission	318
15	Reconsideration? The Second Chamber	322
16	The Controversy Among Investigators, Builders and Policy Makers (I)	323
17	The Controversy Among Investigators, Builders and Policy Makers (II)	328
18	The Finances	332
19	Comparison of the Transport Prognoses with the Actual Development	335
20	Conclusions	337
	Fifth intermezzo: From plan-driven to project-driven planning	345
	<i>Jos Arts & Hans Jeekel</i>	
	Chapter 6. A Farewell to Big Planning? 1990-2010	351
	<i>Nil Disco & Frank Veraart</i>	
1	Introduction	351
2	The Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning	361
3	Back to Basics: The Fourth Memorandum (Extra): VINEX	370
4	Planning and Building Leidsche Rijn	377
5	Opposites Attract: The Fifth Memorandum and the Report on Spatial Development	418
6	A Farewell to Big Planning?	430
	Conclusions and a Look at the Future	439
	<i>Jos Arts, Ruud Filarski & Hans Jeekel</i>	
	Introduction	439
1	Development and interaction of both traditions with their actors	439
2	What has been achieved in practice	449
3	Comparison with the planning tradition in Belgium	454
4	A number of common threads	456
5	A look at the future	460
	Glossary	467
	Literature	471
	Index of persons	499
	Index of government departments, agencies and organizations	503
	Index of places, roads and waterways	513
	Illustration Acknowledgements	519

INTRODUCTION

Hans Jeekel, Ruud Filarski & Jos Arts

1 WHAT IS THIS BOOK ABOUT?

The plan for this book arose when the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management (*V en W*) and the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (*VROM*) in the Netherlands were merged in 2010 into a single new organization: the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (*I en M*). In doing so, the two organizations consisting of the infrastructure builders (builders) and of the spatial planners (planners) respectively – who in the last decades had played such a significant role in the national policy for land-use in the Netherlands – were suddenly joined into a new form of cooperation. This led to the question how both organizations had worked with one another in the past. How had they developed their plans regarding the country's spatial lay-out and the transport facilities over time? How had they worked together, or against one another? What results had been achieved? What failures had there been and what had been its reasons? Were there any joint successes that could be further built upon in the future? And were there mutual sensitivities to be better avoided in the future?

The existing literature scarcely provides an answer to these questions. In contrast, there is plenty of literature on the development of spatial planning in the Netherlands¹, although this mainly covers the origins of

1 See for example: Hans van der Cammen and Len de Klerk with Gerhard Dekker and Peter Paul Witsen, *The Selfmade Land – Culture and Evolution of Urban and Regional Planning in the Netherlands* (Houten/Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Unieboek/Het Spectrum, 2012); Andreas Faludi and Arnold van der Valk, *Rule and order; Dutch planning doctrine in the twentieth century* (Dordrecht/ Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994); Cor Wagenaar, *Town planning in the Netherlands since 1800; responses to enlightenment and geopolitical realities*, (Rotterdam: Nai 010 Uitgevers, 2011); and more recently Ries van der Wouden, *De ruimtelijke metamorfose van Nederland 1988-2015* (Rotterdam: Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving/ Nai 010 uitgevers, Rotterdam, 2015).

the plans, the national spatial policy and town planning aspects. A critical examination how spatial plans were eventually realized, and their connectivity with infrastructure development, is for the most part lacking. How did the cooperation evolve between the spatial planners and the ministers involved, parliament, the press, the infrastructure builders, the local and provincial authorities, businesses, residents involved with the plans and the pressure groups? What impact had this on their plans? What compromises had to be made when carrying out these projects? Furthermore, the relationship between spatial planning and the planning and implementation of large transport infrastructure projects, like new highways, ports and railways, are hardly addressed in spatial planning literature.

The available information on the development of transport infrastructure in the Netherlands is less abundant, but more than sufficient to investigate this evolution.² This literature looks extensively at the development of the traffic, the competition between the various transport modalities and the realization of infrastructure. There is also much knowledge about the interaction of infrastructure builders with local and provincial authorities, parliament, press, road users, the residents involved, pressure groups, transport companies and economically interested actors. But here, too, a clear picture how the plans for large transport infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, waterways, ports and airports, were attuned to spatial planning, and vice versa, is lacking. Furthermore, literature does not examine the interactions between the infrastructure builders and the spatial planners, nor the modes they used in attempting to influence each other's plans and ideas.

This book examines the interaction between the infrastructure builders and the spatial planners, who from now are referred to as builders and planners – for the sake of brevity. The most important question is how two forms of planning – spatial planning and infrastructure planning – each with their own figureheads, instruments and key figures, have

2 See for example: A. Bosch and W. van der Ham, *Twee eeuwen Rijkswaterstaat, 1798-2015* (Asten: Nieuwe Uitgevers, 2015); H. Boom, and M. Metze, *Slag om de Betuweroute – het spel langs de lijn – de adviseurs, de milieulobby, het politieke gevecht, de miljoenenverslindende aanpassingen, de inspraak van de burgers*, (Amsterdam: Balans, 1997); A.M.C.M. Bouwens and M.L.J. Dierikx, *Op de drempel van de lucht; tachtigjaar Schiphol*, (The Hague: SDU, 1996); Ruud Filarski, *Tegen de stroom in; geschiedenis van de Nederlandse binnenvaart en de vaarwegen* (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Matrijs, 2014); Gijs Mom and Ruud Filarski, *Van transport naar mobiliteit. Part 2: De mobiliteitsexplosie (1895-2005)* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2008); Guus Veenendaal, *Spoorwegen in Nederland; van 1834 tot nu* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2004).

shaped Dutch physical space since the 1920s, which has been planned increasingly intensively and in which a large infrastructure network was laid. We distinguish between two main traditions, referring to them as the builders' tradition and the planners' tradition. The builders' tradition consisted mainly of engineers, who essentially wanted to build and aimed to provide their country with a network of roads, waterways and railways, fitting into and in line with the pursuit of prosperity. These engineers tend to have a civil engineering background. Important design concepts for them are efficiency, feasibility and safety as well as being regarded as objective.³ Planners form a more diverse group. For them, there is an important field of activity outside the cities, in rural areas, and in the design and realization of the new polders. Besides, an urban tradition has been developed, rooted in the local context. Planners often have a background in the social sciences, geography, architecture or town planning – or in landscape architecture, particularly for those with a rural focus. The spatial plans they develop are a reflection of social priorities, and consequently – by definition – subjective.⁴ Planners and builders think differently, and hold different worldviews. This is reflected in their institutions as well. Planners are more connected with the major social debates of their time and want to 'order' (*ordenen*).⁵ Builders want to carry out their work as professionals and mainly want to build.⁶ But they all work within and on the same Dutch space.

Regarding the relationship between builders and planners, this book focuses on three topics:

1. Central to the study is the interaction at the national level between spatial planning and transport infrastructure planning: how did they influence one another, where did they reinforce one another,

3 G. de Block, *Engineering the territory : technology, space and society in 19th and 20th century Belgium*, (Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2011) 31.

4 In her thesis, De Block also examines the relationship between builders and planners and the professional gulf between the two. According to De Block, infrastructure is the 'Cinderella' of urban studies, urbanism and geography (p.31). Only a few spatial planning historians give attention to the vital role of infrastructure in spatial planning – De Block mentions people such as Dupuy, Rouillard, Bélanger, Smets and Shannon – and likewise few infrastructure historians – apart from people such as Picon and Rabinow – examine the interaction between engineering and urbanism. The thesis of De Block – one of the authors of the first chapter of this book – also looks at this dichotomy between builders and planners. See in particular 31-48.

5 Accordingly, Faludi and Van der Valk have called their study on Dutch spatial planning 'Rule and Order'.

6 Of course, in their project preparations builders had to plan. Likewise, the planners had to think in building concepts in order to be able to realize their projects. However, their focus was on building and planning respectively.

where did areas of conflict arise, and how did these conflicts develop? In addition: what role did a number of central players and institutions play in the spatial planning of transport infrastructure projects? First of all, this involved Rijkswaterstaat (RWS)⁷, the National Planning Agency (RPD, *Rijksplanologische Dienst*) and the National Planning Coordination Committee (RPC, *Rijksplanologische Commissie*). Next, there were the ministers involved, parliament, the press, the decentralized authorities (both local and provincial) and interested actors (businesses, residents and pressure groups) who were also closely involved with policy-making. What role did they play and to what degree were the planning concepts influenced by this? The existing literature on the interaction between spatial planning and infrastructure planning gives an incomplete picture, as this addresses either spatial planning or infrastructure planning, but seldom both fields;

2. Secondly, we wish to examine the results of planning in practice. What were the original objectives? What problems arose during practical implementation, from concept to realization? What changes had to be made in the planning concepts in order to realize the plans in practice? To what extent did the projects meet the original objectives after being completed?;
3. The third objective is to express the specific character of Dutch spatial planning more clearly. Many Dutch experts believe that the Dutch system of spatial planning, with its strong ordering (*ordenen*) approach, its comprehensive institutional system and consultation structures, its focus on the perceived problems of overpopulation and scarcity of space, its emphasis on a compact building, bundled infrastructure development and keeping open green zones, is unique. International studies comparing the planning systems in

7 Rijkswaterstaat (RWS) is currently part of the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (*Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu*) and before that of the Ministry of Transport, Water Management and Public Works (*Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat*). Rijkswaterstaat is the executive agency of this Ministry. It is responsible for the main roads, rivers, canals, shipping connections and a part of the flood defences, as well as for water management. The *Rijksplanologische Dienst* (RPD) was part of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (*Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieubeheer*, VROM) and was responsible for the national spatial planning and for supervising its execution. The *Rijksplanologische Commissie* (RPC) was a commission of civil servant experts who advised the Minister of VROM on planning matters.

various countries are, however, rare.⁸ In order to put Dutch planning in a clearer perspective, we have compared spatial policy of the Netherlands with that of Belgium – a country, which in terms of size, population density, prosperity and geography can be compared to the Netherlands. However, it is also a country with a different economic, ideological and cultural development and has a planning tradition that is very different to that of the Netherlands.

In addition to the interactions between the builders and the planners, this book also introduces a second area of possible conflict. Builders and planners are both civil servants. Their conflicts and cooperation equally ensue in a professional arena. In this book, this professional arena, spanning half a century – approximately between 1920 and 1970 – plays a central role. As of 1970, yet another area of conflict arose: between professionals and the interested citizens becoming increasingly empowered. The latter wanted to have the possibility to contribute ideas, be able to provide their own input on necessary infrastructure and spatial organization of their country, as well as on the area where they live. Professionals had to provide an answer to this demand for involvement, and this playing field has become clearly apparent alongside the professional field, certainly between 1970 and 2000.

This book, which primarily focuses on planning at the national level, also constantly makes connections with the ideas in the political domain. The traditions translate and influence the formation of political opinions, and vice versa. As in the 1930s debates on ordering (*ordenen*) were held, with the objective of social elevation of the population, in the 1960s and 70s we were witnessing the emergence and growth of the welfare state; and around 2000 a more neo-liberal perspective in the national spatial planning⁹ arose. Again, builders and planners were

8 One of the rare examples is the international comparative work of Martin de Jong and in particular the publication from M. De Jong, *International Comparison of Decision-making on Infrastructure*, (The Hague: Ministry of Transport Public Works and Water Management, 1999). This study, however, deals more with decision-making in the infrastructure sector than with planning.

9 Although already important in the policy of the Lubbers Cabinets in the 1980s, it was relatively late in the day before neo-liberalism began to make progress in national spatial planning. It took quite some time, for example, before neo-liberal concepts as Public-Private Partnerships, early market involvement and integrated contracts such as DBFM (Design, Build, Finance, Maintain) became generally accepted within Rijkswaterstaat. See also A. Eversdijk, *Kiezen voor publiek-private samenwerking* (The Hague: Boom/Lemma, 2013); S. Lenferink, *Market Involvement throughout the*

influenced by the dominant political images and visions of their time, and contributed to this as well, as we shall see later in this book.

2 A DENSELY POPULATED AND INTENSIVELY USED COUNTRY

Land is a scarce commodity in the Netherlands. In 2015, the country had a population of 16.9 million, who lived on a surface area totaling 37,354 km². With a population density of 450 people/km², the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. What's more, almost 20% of the country's surface area consists of water. In order to ensure that the economy, the necessary living and recreational space for the population and the environment can develop in a balanced manner, effective spatial planning is vital.

A large proportion of this population – more than 7 million people – lives in the so-called *Randstad*, a densely populated urbanized region in the west of the country surrounding an open central region, the Green Heart. The *Randstad* and the Green Heart together encompass a surface area of approximately 3,000 km². The four largest cities of the Netherlands are located in the *Randstad*: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, as well as eight other large cities with a total population of more than 100,000 people. What is more, Rotterdam has the largest port in Europe. Due to the size of its population and its economic importance, the *Randstad* is one of the most important conurbations within the European Union, along with London, Paris and the Ruhr Area.

Between 1880 and 1980, the Dutch population grew from 4 to almost 16 million, whilst prosperity greatly increased at the same time. As a result of this development, the large cities began to burst at the seams. Population growth, increasing prosperity and a reduction in family size led to an ever greater demand for new and larger houses, located in a healthy environment, where children could play freely without having to worry about traffic. From around 1880, large new residential areas were constantly being built on the edges of the large cities, whilst villages

in the neighborhood of these large cities experienced turbulent growth. After the Second World War, new offices, industrial and business estates, recreational facilities, transport infrastructure and shopping centers all required vast amounts of extra space, particularly in the *Randstad*.

In the years after the Second World War, concern was broadly felt about the spatial development of the *Randstad*. The Dutch economy was experiencing a golden era. The Netherlands witnessed a period of explosive population growth. Forecasts predicted that the population would increase from 11 million in 1950 to 20 million by the end of the century¹⁰. Without the necessary measures, this growth would be concentrated mainly in the *Randstad*, the engine of the Dutch economy. But it was precisely this area that faced major problems concerning the available space. Due to the lack of new housing in the 1930s and devastation in the major cities during the Second World War, the already existing housing shortage became an even bigger problem throughout the country. And this was only made worse by the explosive population growth and the increasing prosperity. To solve this problem, new housing developments were necessary throughout the *Randstad*. At the same time, a lot of space was necessary for the expansion of ports and the establishment of new industries, particularly in the area of Rotterdam and Amsterdam. A vast industrial and port area grew around Rotterdam. The increasing prosperity also resulted in a growth in car ownership. Well-to-do residents began to leave the cities, with their monotonous high-rise blocks, for the surrounding countryside, where suburbanization loomed. The rural populations from the northern and eastern provinces, and the province of Zeeland, began to move en masse to the *Randstad*, where there were more jobs and better salaries. Consequently, the problems in the *Randstad* intensified further. Many feared that this situation would lead to the *Randstad* cities expanding to such an extent that they would merge and form a single large unmanageable metropolis. Further urbanization and overpopulation would lead to ghettos and slums with uncontrollable social problems. On the other hand, it was feared that in the northern and eastern provinces, as well as in the province of Zeeland, these developments would lead to depopulation, deprivation and an ageing population¹¹.

10 Tweede nota over de ruimtelijke ordening in Nederland (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1966).

11 H. van der Cammen and L. de Klerk, *Ruimtelijke ordening; van grachtengordel tot Vinex-wijk* (Utrecht: Het Spectrum, 2003) 194-229.

3 SPATIAL PLANNERS AND INFRASTRUCTURE BUILDERS

The first spatial plans in the Netherlands were formulated in the 19th century and aimed at improving transport infrastructure. In the first few decades of the century, plans were made for building a national network of paved roads along with a network of canals. In the second half of the century plans followed for the development of a national railway network, for the improvement of the shipping connections of Amsterdam and Rotterdam to the sea and for inland navigation. Civil engineers played a leading role in formulating and realizing these plans. Through their work, they created a modern transport network that played a major part in concentrating the increase of economic activity and population growth of the Netherlands in the *Randstad*, although the new rail network also led to a trend of a spreading population.

At the end of the 19th century, a second category of spatial planning developed at the local scale: the urban extension plans. Overpopulation, a rapid population growth, housing shortage and wretched hygiene conditions made it necessary for the large cities to start large-scale building of new residential areas. The necessary services had to be carefully planned in advance. The end of the 19th century witnessed the publication *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (1898)¹² by Ebenezer Howard, launching the garden city movement. In 1901 the Dutch Housing Act (*Woningwet 1901*) was introduced. It obliged all municipalities to set up extension plans that had to be reviewed every 10 years. Town planners were becoming involved with the quality of these urbanization plans. As a result, a second professional group became concerned with spatial planning.

From the perspective of urban planning, it was a small but logical step for town planners to take land use matters around the cities also in consideration. This land use, after all, exerted a significant influence on the urban societal climate. Polluting industries were often based here. However, the 'garden cities' could also be built here, which could offer the city's population fresh air, space and a healthy living environment. In addition, the city dwellers could escape to the surrounding country-

12 E. Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1902/Faber and Faber Covered Editions, 1965).

side for tranquility and space for recreation in order to recuperate from the hustle and bustle of city life.

The Housing Act of 1931 opened up the possibility for the provincial authorities to incorporate the land use outside the cities in so-called intermunicipal 'regional plans'. These regional plans allocated particular uses for the land (agriculture, roads, industry, housing, nature) and made it possible to harmonize interests at a regional level. The town planners and architects were important propagandists for such an approach and worked hard to provide a scientific basis for such plans. Gradually, a number of these professionals developed into spatial planners during this period. The first regional plans were developed in the Netherlands between 1930 and 1939.

During the same period, civil engineers continued with the large-scale construction of highways and canals, as well as with the reclamation of large areas, thereby exercising a considerable influence on the (future) use of the land. Gradually, a situation arose in which the builders planned large-scale transport infrastructure projects in areas for which the planners had made urban extension plans and regional plans. There was incidental contact about this, but no cooperation on an equal footing. Thus, at the end of the 1930s, the question arose whether, and if so how, the plans of both professional groups could be harmonized. Or to put it more bluntly: who had the final word in planning: the builders or the planners?

4 HIGH POINTS AND OPPOSITION

In 1940, the Netherlands was occupied by Germany. The Dutch government fled to London, and the German occupiers demanded that the Dutch economy should be directed towards the German war effort. This required a large-scale political, economic and infrastructural restructuring. The Dutch State took the lead in this transformation process. With this in mind, in 1941, Dutch top officials, who governed the country under the supervision of the German occupiers, set up in collaboration with the German authorities the State Agency for the National Plan (*Rijksdienst voor het Nationale Plan*). This agency was charged with spatial planning of the national interests, the supervision of the regional plans and land-use plans (*bestemmingsplannen*) and the necessary research that would form the basis of these tasks. After the Second World War, this

agency remained, but it initially functioned primarily as a research and advisory service (whose coordinating role didn't amount to much).

We saw earlier that the concerns regarding the spatial development of the *Randstad* led to the national government taking control after the war and regulating the land use in the Netherlands. Between 1955 and 1972, coping with overpopulation in the *Randstad* was a major concern. It was feared that the large cities as well as the port and industrial areas of the *Randstad* would grow to such an extent that they would merge into a single large metropolis, which would result in unmanageable conditions and ghettos. And on top of this all, land was necessary for agriculture. In retrospect, one could question whether this fear was realistic, but the fact remains that at the end of the 1950s those in leadership positions thought it was a real threat. The then governments therefore took many measures to prevent the *Randstad* from stifling. Hence, in 1960 and 1966, the first national plans for spatial planning (First Memorandum on Spatial Planning, Second Memorandum on Spatial Planning) were introduced, in which the government meticulously planned how the land in the Netherlands was to be utilized in the future. According to these plans, the population and employment in the *Randstad* had to be concentrated as much as possible within the existing cities and their adjoining urbanized zones, whilst the Green Heart and green buffer zones between the cities had to be kept open as much as possible. Outside of this Green Heart, the population growth had to be absorbed as much as possible in new urban cores, so-called *groeikernen* ('cores of (urban) growth'). This policy was given the name *gebundelde deconcentratie* ('bundled deconcentration'): 'deconcentration', because part of the growth had to be outside the *Randstad*, and 'bundled', because this growth had to be concentrated in the growth cores.

In 1965, the Spatial Planning Act was introduced and the Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning was formed. Under this ministry, the comprehensive system of spatial planning in the Netherlands was created and received its final shape. Compact building, economical and carefully thought out land use, and preservation of open spaces would become the key values of Dutch spatial policy, which are still applicable today. For the planners, this act was a tremendous success: the dream they had fostered for so many decades now had finally become reality. The builders, however, did not welcome these newcomers with open arms. They had, after all, lost some of their influence. Who would now make the decisions regarding the spatial planning of major infrastructure projects? They or the new ministry?

As of 1970, environmental concerns and the concern for nature and human well-being as well as increasing popular opposition to large-scale infrastructural projects became more significant, also for the policymakers. In 1973, the Explorative Report on Spatial Planning (*Oriënteringsnota Ruimtelijke Ordening*) was introduced, the first part of the Third Memorandum on Spatial Planning (*Derde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening*). The reason for conceiving this memorandum was that the population was growing less quickly than originally expected. Around the turn of the century, the population would not account 20 million but only 17 million. At the same time, due to the rapidly increasing car ownership, the city population increasingly moved to the countryside. The villages benefited from this, whilst the cores of growth could not develop on their own. The government attempted to use this Third Memorandum to gain control of this unbalanced growth. Using land costs and infrastructure subsidies, the government attempted to concentrate the population growth near the cities and in the cores of growth. Expansion of villages and building in open spaces was prevented as much as possible.

In this period, the population began to oppose the construction of large infrastructure projects, such as highways, ports and industrial areas and airports. As of 1970, nearly every large-scale operation met with great opposition. This resistance reached its high point with the construction of a highway near Utrecht through the Amelisweerd nature reserve (1971-1982). This opposition put the government under great political pressure. In order to meet the wishes of the population, planning and decision-making procedures had to be radically modified. Consultation and transparency were key concepts to this. Projects became subject to a more scientific approach. From then on, prior to decisions being made, it was required to extensively analyze the necessity of the project, and to point out various alternatives for a solution, the economic effects, the consequences for the population and the environment, and different route alternatives, collected in project reports. This was followed by a decision-making procedure, wherein the local and provincial authorities, involved residents, lobby groups and other interested sides could give their opinions on the project, as well as put forward alternatives, after which expert advisory bodies were to give advice to the government regarding the realization. At the end of this extensive process, the government would make a decision, often only after a debate in the Dutch Parliament.

5 RESPONSE TO THE OPPOSITION AND MORE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

For the builders and planners, these new procedures, with their comprehensive weighing up of interests, required major adjustments. Until 1970, these two professional groups almost had a monopoly on spatial planning, and in their activities they were taking account of economic interests, housing, nature and keeping the green spaces open. Politicians and the people supported the transport infrastructure projects and became scarcely involved with spatial planning. In the 1970s, this monopoly disappeared. Builders and planners were unexpectedly confronted with a vocal population, who did not want noisy and smelly roads near their living environment, who demanded a say in the plans and who did not simply accept expert opinions. The environment, nature conservation and the care for human well-being suddenly formed dominant factors when weighing up the various interests. Because the political weight of projects considerably increased, the ministers involved in decision-making increasingly played a prominent role. Due to political pressure the number of projects was also kept to a minimum.

The planners regarded this as a positive development. Policies of their minister corresponded with the views they had developed. In addition, the new procedures implied an expansion of their field of activity and an increasing social prestige. By contrast, many builders felt threatened by the new developments. Policies of their minister to reduce the number of projects did not tally with their own views. The new procedures meant that this somewhat more conservative, hierarchical professional group was suddenly faced with higher requirements for its communication skills and its flexibility. All of a sudden, they had to openly defend their projects on the television, in front of the press and the public at large. Journalists asked tricky questions, and brazen, vocal (in their eyes) 'amateurs' openly doubted their professional opinions during information meetings. On top of this, politicians – under the pressure of public opinion – sometimes suddenly withdrew their support for the projects. Some projects were even halted altogether, whilst others were shelved for years. For organizations like Rijkswaterstaat these new requirements signified that the staffing at the top of its organization had to be radically modified in a short period of time. For a number of builders this meant a break in their career, whilst others were advised to take early retirement.¹³

13 The author's own recollections (in casu, Ruud Filarski).

As of the 1990s, spatial planning, certainly at the national government level, unexpectedly began to lose impact, whilst the influence of the builders increased. Population growth turned out to be lower than forecasted, and the discourse on the scarcity of space became less urgent (or was regarded as such). In addition, decision-makers in particular started to ask themselves what the comprehensive system of plans, put in place since the 1970s, had actually achieved. Was this all really necessary for an effective and sensible organization of the physical space? This question led to a larger degree of decentralization of authority and planning power, put in motion through the *Nota Ruimte* (Report on Spatial Development, 2006). In this report, and in its successor, the *Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte* (SVIR, Structure Vision on Infrastructure and Spatial Development) (2012), the national government outlined a number of contours, but left the elaboration of its spatial consequences to the local and provincial authorities. And in interpreting these outlines for the local practice, much of the vision coming from the higher level of administration was (and continues to be) lost.

Since 2010, builders and planners have been working together in the new Ministry of Infrastructure and The Environment (*Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, IenM*), which now incorporates the portfolios Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. This combination provides new opportunities for integrating both planning perspectives. In addition, the *Omgevingswet* (Act on the Living Environment) also provides a new legal framework for placing spatial issues in a wider context than before and for formulating solutions to them.

6 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

This book consists of six chapters covering important historical episodes and case studies (see map on p. 24). The transition between the chapters is marked by intermezzos. The function of these intermezzos is to provide a connection between the individual chapters. They also provide a timeline of the most important developments in spatial planning, infrastructure planning and more general social developments in the Netherlands during the relevant period. Two perspectives are employed in this book: a *historical perspective* in the chapters and a more practically-orientated *planning and public administrative perspective* in the intermezzos, introduction and conclusions, which provides them with a framework for reflection concerning these historical descriptions. This intentionally gives the book a somewhat hybrid character; the book not

only aims to examine the interaction between builders and planners, but can also be seen as an experiment in forming a bridge between the disciplines of history and that of planning and public administration.

The first chapter is written by Greet De Block, David de Kool and Bruno De Meulder. This chapter compares the development of spatial planning and the transport system in the Netherlands with that of neighboring Belgium. Both countries are small, prosperous and densely populated, both had to make the most of their available space and they have a similar historical development. Despite all of this, land use in Belgium developed in a completely different fashion than in the Netherlands. The comparison makes it easier to put the specific characteristics of the Dutch development into perspective.

The second chapter is written by Gijs Mom. It covers the period from 1920 to 1950, and describes the emergence of spatial planning in the Netherlands and analyzes the background, motivations and way of thinking of the various groups of planners in this period. This chapter also examines the reclamation of the Zuiderzee, the largest infrastructure project ever undertaken in the Netherlands. Playing a central role in all this was the design of this area and the interaction between the town planners, civil engineers and agricultural engineers.

Gijs Mom has also written chapter three. He describes the breakthrough of spatial planning in the period between 1950 and 1980. The key question in this chapter is how the planners imagined the idea of keeping the open space in the *Randstad*, the Green Heart, free from housing development, and how they succeeded in this. An interesting question here is how the Green Heart would have appeared now if the Netherlands had not implemented such a stringent spatial policy.

The fourth chapter is written by Bert Toussaint, Odette van de Riet and Arjen van der Burg. The chapter begins with an analysis of how the population's opposition to spatial planning imposed by government began to take shape in the early 1960s. It then goes on to describe how this in the Third Memorandum on Spatial Planning led to a radical change in spatial policy and the decision-making procedures, which opened up more possibilities for the population and interest groups to make themselves heard. This chapter ends by examining the protracted battle waged against the construction of Highway 14, the northern ring-road of The Hague. The key question here is how the opposition of the

population and the local and provincial authorities to this project arose, and what surprising compromise was reached to ultimately resolve this conflict.

Ruud Filarski has written the fifth chapter. The chapter describes the conflict between the government, local residents, various interest groups and the scientific community between 1989 and 2000 concerning the Betuwe Route, one of the most controversial infrastructure projects in the Netherlands since the Second World War. The study concentrates primarily on the shortcomings in the decision-making process.

The final chapter is written by Nil Disco and Frank Veraart. This chapter begins with an analysis of the decrease in national spatial planning between 1990 and 2010. The authors then proceed to investigate how the VINEX project Leidsche Rijn in the middle of the country near Utrecht was realized. At the start of the construction work, authorities promised concerned residents a high-quality transport network that would soon be available, along with good living conditions and plenty of public green zones. In exchange, the facilities for private car use were to be reduced. National government provided subsidies for these facilities, but the realization was in the hands of the local authorities. This chapter analyses the problems to deliver that arose in practice.

The book ends with conclusions for which the editors-in-chief are responsible.

It should be noted that this book focuses primarily on the interaction between the builders and planners in spatial planning at the national level, and forms only a first step in providing a historiographical account. Given the time and financial resources that were available for this study, only a number of the main elements of the spatial planning and a few of the most important infrastructure projects could be examined. Nonetheless, we hope that this book will contribute to the knowledge about the system of spatial planning in the Netherlands, the development of the ideas of the planners and builders involved, the relationship between the spatial planning and the major transport infrastructure projects, the interaction of ministries with local and provincial authorities, parliament, residents and interest groups, as well as about the results of a few major projects.

Finally, the editors wish to thank the other members of the reading committee, whose many stimulating comments have considerably improved the quality of this book: prof. Johan Schot, prof. Koos Bosma, drs. Kees de Jong and drs. Jacques Sistermans. Sadly enough, Koos Bosma passed away before this book was published. We are grateful for his feedback on the scope of the book and his very valuable reflections on the draft texts.



Map indicating the location of the case studies featuring in this book:

Wieringermeer and North Eastern Polder (Noordoostpolder) (Ch. 2);
Randstad (Ch. 3); N 14 (Ch. 4); Betuwe Route (Ch. 5); Leidsche Rijn (Ch. 6)

PARADISE REGAINED? CROSSING BORDERS BETWEEN PLANNING CONCEPTS IN THE NETHERLANDS AND BELGIUM (1830-2012)

Greet De Block, David de Kool, Bruno De Meulder¹

“Don’t smoke, fasten belts” [...] suddenly, beneath us [Belgium], appears a patchwork sewn together by a madman [...] a mess of roads and streets, criss-cross in all directions, apparently only responding to the anxiety for emptiness which, as we were taught, has also possessed the compositions of great painters of the little country [...] There it is; the realm of Breughel and Hiëronymus Bosch.

Who came from Schiphol [the Netherlands] and ran, from above, an admiring eye over the systematic expansion of the Dutch chessboard against the ever-present water, the style of Mondriaan, Order, [New] Objectivity ... even before landing in Melsbroek [Belgium], it hits him in the eye: strange things are happening down there, something unbecoming.² (Fig.1)

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- 1 Acknowledgments: Rijkswaterstaat, Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) and Spatial Policy Research Centre, Flemish Government.
 - 2 Renaat Braem, *Het Ielijkste land ter wereld* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1968) 5-6. Free translation of “‘Don’t smoke, fasten belts’... verschijnt daar onder ons ineens een door een krankzinnige bijeengenaaide lappendeken een warboel van wegen en straatjes, kriskras in alle richtingen, schijnbaar slechts luisterend naar de wet van de angst voor de leegte die, naar men ons geleerd heeft, ook de komposities van de grootste kunstschilders van het landje daar beneden heeft bezeten. Daar ligt het nu, het land van Breughel en Hiëronymus Bosch ... Wie langs Schiphol kwamen van boven af een bewonderende blik liet gaan over de systematische uitbreiding van het Hollandse schaakbord tegenover het alom tegenwoordige water, de stijl van Mondriaan, Orde, Zakelijkheid... die ontvangt vóór het uitstappen te Melsbroek reeds een stoot in de ogen: er is hier iets niet pluis, er gebeurt daar beneden iets onfatsoenlijks.”



1 ANNO 2013: TOWARDS SHARED CONCEPTS IN DUTCH INFRASTRUCTURE AND SPATIAL PLANNING

Fig. 1. Braem's perception of Dutch and Belgian space

In A 'Planner's Paradise' Lost (2003) Marco Bontje explores the divergence between international praise and national doubts about the success of Dutch physical planning policy to steer economic and socio-demographic processes.³ International observers, like the modernist architect Renaat Braem, have applauded the Netherlands for its robust and effective planning system producing what appears to be an orderly (socio-)spatial constellation. From the sky, the favorite vantage point of the modernist, "the country seems to be dominated by straight lines, agricultural land divided into rectangles with mathematical precision, sharp contrasts between city and countryside, and houses neatly arranged in rows, blocks and neighborhoods."⁴ However, while

3 Marco Bontje, "A 'Planner's Paradise' Lost? : Past, Present and Future of Dutch National Urbanization Policy," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 10 (2003) 135–151.

4 Bontje, "A 'Planner's Paradise' Lost?," 139.