

## Managing Randstad Holland

### Holland managed. How is it being managed – if at all?

Randstad Holland is often pointed out as the world's most famous model of a planned system of cities. However, was it planned? Is the transfer of a dozen small and medium-sized cities to a European poly-nuclear network metropolis being managed? What should be aimed at? Historical roots, departmentalization and an egalitarian attitude, not aiming at excellence, tend to hinder the promotion of Holland's strengths.

#### 1 Introduction

In the delta of the Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt rivers, northwestern Europe has met the world's seas and cultures since the Middle Ages. *Hollanders* have reclaimed large parts of their country from the sea. Their 'delta' economy, furthered by water boards, provinces and cities in the west of the Netherlands, has contributed to the development of an attractive country and a governance policy, in managerial scope sometimes referred to as 'polder model'.

The poly-nuclear network metropolis of Randstad Holland represents the urban and peri-urban quarter of the western Netherlands (>6 million inhabitants, 5400 km<sup>2</sup>). It is the functionally differentiated motor of Dutch economy, with some clusters of excellence, including one of the major content-driven intersections in the global e-community, at Amsterdam.

The area can be perceived as a 'ring of cities' that is gradually developing into a metropolitan region. Its agricultural 'green heart', with areas of abundant water, has the potential to stand out as a recreational network area, along with agricultural use and nature reserve areas. The region's strengths in Europe are the main air and seaports, professional staff, the flower and agricultural industries, international tourism and congress industries, and the position of the national governmental seat as an international city of peace and justice.

The differences between Dutch cities and regions create optimal conditions for functionally differentiated government, although budgetary the Netherlands is still quite centralized.

On that basis the provinces of North Holland, South Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland, the four major cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, and the four city region bodies around (and including) these cities started a super regional cooperation in the 1990s. Its aim is to strengthen its international competitive position and to maintain the high quality of life in Randstad Holland.

At the heart of the 'polder model' policymaking is the fact that political and non-governmental power in the Netherlands are widely spread. City, regional and provincial councils, governments and authorities are ruling their territories along with public water boards and corporations, such as semi-public chambers of commerce and semi-private housing boards. National government ministries and agencies, as well as business associations, citizens boards and private persons all take some part or another in decision making on almost every activity that is going on – or that needs to go on, but is thus being delayed.

The all-Dutch easygoing attitude of not really striving for the top, has long been preventing a policy for promoting the strengths and designating the Randstad Holland part of the Netherlands to a special position and mission. The political-administrative attitude has been aiming at equal partitioning, and suspended success by helping out weak parts of economy, rather than being interested in a long-term investment policy to strengthen the forward line.

In fact, the scale of Randstad Holland, half of the nation's economy on less than 15% of the territory of the Netherlands, makes a special position with regard to the other parts of the country relatively hard to realize, politically.

The failure to take courage politically, perhaps until very recently, is being reflected in an island mentality within government and local authorities, resulting in elaborate and hard to accelerate or change planning procedures, departmentalizing ministries and red tape.

During economically abundant periods, and when the pace of development is not too fast, the long-standing mutual understanding of policies and practices tend to work. Now that there is a shortage of investment activity, and a growth in population diversity, resulting in a lack of social cohesion, going the 'polder model' way is tough and quickly becoming out-dated. This especially is the case in the cities and on the national level.

Randstad Holland is often pointed out as the world's most famous model of a planned system of cities. Due to radical changes in society, renovation is to be expected of the government system. The politically and managerially coordinated practices of the authorities in Randstad Holland, and their cooperation, is relevant to that. Both from a point of view of the city regions and provinces, and from a national and European point of view.

Randstad Holland – was it planned?

Is this lengthy transfer from a dozen of far apart towns, to a belt system of cities and into a European poly-nuclear network metropolis, a real World City, being managed?

The answer to these questions can be a simple twofold 'no'.

Randstad Holland just was caused by enterprising public private cooperation in a hard but promising geographical location, embracing innovative science, medicine and industry, and keeping up a diversity of competitive local and regional authorities.

Discussing these issues in a parliament that is fearing cold feet, as most parliaments on the edge of renovation do, the minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, Ms. Sybilla Dekker, predicted that the country, with emphasis on Randstad Holland, in 2030 will be: "A very dynamic and prosperous place, since we have unlocked it in 2004<sup>1</sup>."

## **2 The historical context in a nutshell**

As early as 1966 Peter Hall not only defined the multiple roles of world cities, but also postulated Randstad Holland as being one of the seven World Cities in his famous juvenile work of the same name<sup>2</sup>. The fact that he put forward Randstad Holland alongside London, Paris, Rhine-Ruhr, Moscow, New York and Tokyo, was very much to the surprise of planners and government officials in the Netherlands at that time. They had a high esteem of their own town and even country planning qualities, and most certainly also of their public governance. But they had no idea yet, that Randstad Holland would internationally be recognized as a unity at world top level.

Actually, the Dutch were still hardly used to the word. To many, the notion of a 'Randstad' was new, and most people had not the faintest idea of what a Randstad or a metropolis concept would be, or might bring.

The history of Holland as a whole is based upon urbanization. In Holland urbanization is first and foremost to be understood as the development of a place to stay and to live in what used to be wetlands. Originally, a scarcely inhabited area between the sea and the eastern part of

the Netherlands, the larger half section that has always been above sea level. These original eastern and southern Netherlands areas and provinces, bordering the German and French states and regions, have been playing a modest role throughout Western European history, with the exception of the Hanse era.

In the eastern part of the Netherlands, merchants in the port villages, especially along the IJssel branch of the Rhine, formed Hanse societies in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, intending to manage trade with foreign cities where the same development took place. This resulted in the formation of alliances of cities, and in its heyday in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century in a flexible network of mutual assistance between more than hundred cities of this 'Hanseatic League' throughout the North European Plain. Eventually their co-operating power developed into a trade monopoly in the Baltic and North Sea regions. The early 16<sup>th</sup> century saw the downfall of the League, mostly because of internal futilities in the German states, and of the rising superiority of national states, among which the states of Sweden, Denmark, England and Spain, and of the provincial states and North Sea port cities of Holland, with their dominating navies. Later the marine trading power of the Dutch East Indies Company had a strong influence, scaling up and transferring economy from the Baltic Sea to the Atlantic Ocean, and beyond, to the other world oceans.

Nowadays the former Hanseatic League tradition is lingering as a tool of city marketing and common understanding between local governments of some northern European cities.

The history of the western section of the Netherlands, that is almost completely below sea level and being protected by dunes and dikes, is closely linked to the struggle against the sea, and therefore with the rise of water boards and the provincial state governments.

Long before that development in time, the Romans were highly interested in the potentials of the delta of the Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt rivers. Living conditions in this delta, however, were so rough and demanding, that they were unable to keep up this outskirts of their empire, and they withdrew, leaving the swamp area of those days to the original scattered fishermen and farmers. Having learned that, if left to nature, the whole area eventually would turn into wetland woods, 'houtland', or 'holtland', the 9<sup>th</sup> century origin of the word 'Holland'.

After a non-governed and scarcely documented era, with Vikings roaming around the rivers in Holland and the climate warming up several degrees, causing plenty of rains and floods, the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries show the rise of cooperation between land-developing farmers. Growing to public managers of nobleman status, they organized themselves to keep out abundant water from the rivers and the sea, by forming water boards. These boards, based on common interests of agricultural and urban land-owning inhabitants, were the first public government organizations.

The water boards enabled people to establish villages and cities and to develop a traders' economy, first among a few cities, and later among the provinces in the western part of the Netherlands. The free farmers in North Holland developed a trade in value added agricultural products. In 1441 a treaty with the Hanseatic League marked the maritime ambitions of the boorish Hollanders and after that Holland very slowly rose to power, in continuing rivalry with the British, the French, the German/Austrian Habsburgs and the Spanish world rulers.

Since the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century temperature dropped again, causing a small Ice Age and, around the year 1600, famine all over Europe.

Based on corn transport, but quickly expanding to tropical trading, the 1602 establishment of the 'world's first multinational' VOC, the Dutch East Indies Company, and the 80 years of the Holland freedom war against catholic Habsburg and Spanish domination, resulted in prosperity in the 'golden' 17<sup>th</sup> century of Holland, and more specifically of the cities and provinces

that are now partners in Randstad Holland. During that whole era, trade, sciences and the fine arts flourished, and Amsterdam was in the top of the World Cities ranking. Actually, *Amsterdammers* considered themselves to be ruling the world, if not the waves.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century Holland mostly relied on the continuation of power and business, not really seeing through the fact that its creeping stagnation would lead to decline. Finally, the citizens were not even surprised to find themselves ruled by the French, who after the establishment of their Republic arose from their near starvation and lethargy decades before the Hollanders awoke themselves.

The French rule (1795-1813) decayed from 1809 on, and in 1813 the streets turned orange.

'To help restore independence and prosperity' prince Willem Frederik of Orange returned to the Netherlands on the Scheveningen beach, and was crowned in Brussels in 1815 as the first King, Willem I, empowered almost as an absolute monarch of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. The neighboring countries-to-be Belgium and the Netherlands even had to fight a neighborly war (1830-1839), before finding themselves fit for independent modern statecraft. The crisis of the Netherlands state since 1780, almost leading to bankruptcy in 1844, finally paved the way to the establishment in 1848 of the Constitutional Kingdom of the Netherlands.

From then on, the Netherlands, and especially the internationally oriented Holland part, would have one more century to profit from its international status of colonial power. The development of energy from windmills, canals for inter-town traffic, roads and, after the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century even railways (first one: Amsterdam-Haarlem, 1839) and adequate port entrance from sea (Rotterdam 1872, Amsterdam 1876), facilitated industrialization. Very slowly general living conditions developed well, encouraged by a Housing act in 1903.

From 1870 on the cities in Holland expanded accelerating, way beyond their defense moats, but without complementing each other, without functional interrelations. This went on during almost the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century. 'What we observe since 1870 is not the rise of a Randstad, but the autonomous development of separate cities, not bringing about a capital<sup>3</sup>.'

The country managed to stay neutral during World War I, not having been part of the French-German war of the 1870s that was underlying this slaughtering 'Great War'. The Netherlands muddled through and relatively flourished, until the 1930s crisis and World War II, during which the economy was disrupted and robbed flat, due to German occupation. Consequently, the Netherlands also had to face the proclamation (in 1945) and granting independence to the Indonesian archipelago in 1949.

With the assistance of the Marshall help program, Holland and especially the port and city of Rotterdam, that were thoroughly destroyed in the early and latter days of WW II, caught up with traffic and affluence remarkably well. In those days a strong policy steering and management on national government level was institutionalized, and not been loosened again.

This centralizing policy marked an unusual post-war development in Holland, where during many centuries local and provincial governments were more or less self-supporting, competing and competitive on an international level, with national power background support only.

Consequently, after World War II, the national government, for the first time in Dutch history, promoted centralized planning guidance throughout the country and for all planning levels. This role fitted well in the spirit of those years. During the years after WW II an outburst of planning activity took place everywhere in Europe, driven by the motivation for reconstruction of bomb damage, of the housing backlog in most European countries and by the postwar baby booms.

Towards the mid 1970s, following the 1960s demonstrations at universities all over Europe by a generation of students that rejected postwar affluence and the values of their parents, planning turned to *Small is Beautiful*, trying to set *The Limits to Growth*, as E. Schumacher's environmental campaign slogan and the influential 1972 Club of Rome report were labeled. 'Underlying this was a general hostility to the advanced capitalist system and a desire for a return to simpler lifestyles, coupled with deep paranoia about the ways in which the system was managed by professional technocracies,' Sir Peter Hall stated in 1998<sup>4</sup>. He noted that one principal result for planning was a demand for bottom-up advocacy-style planning, in which professionals acted as servants to local communities, marking the point at which public participation in planning first became a major issue.

Because of the frequent changes in policy intensity and policy direction, the national spatial planning, although manifested in a series of national land use planning acts<sup>5</sup>, has not been very adequate. Being entangled in detailed local planning consequences and 'polder' discussions without an end, during the 1960s and up to now (if not until recently, as far as the cabinet is concerned) the national government has neglected some of the foremost tasks on national level: timely development and maintenance of the national transport infrastructure, the acceptance of main policy directives for co-government by provinces and cities, a long-term public investment policy, and securing safety against natural disaster and organized crime.

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, notably the May 2002 assassination of Pim Fortuyn, a rising outsider politician contesting rusted government relations by surprise, marks the dangerous tension arising from all too quick demographical changes and stagnating economic growth. The Netherlands as a whole, and Randstad Holland as its forefront, appears to be lacking renovating drive and skills.

The very long-term concern of water management has, through the ages, formed the solid basis of existence in Holland on which both agricultural and urban prosperity flourished. This common water governance culture has long penetrated the policymaking of the Netherlands' institutions: managing the 'polder model' way tried to consider everybody's interests at length, and since the 1960s also very much at the risk of stagnation.

By the very nature of the continuing thread of both the rivers and the sea, however, civil power in Holland must be able to act at once if the safety of the country (or of parts of it) is being jeopardized. That is the case now.

In 2002 it became evident to the political forward-line that the time had come to change the indecisive role of government. And perhaps even to renovate government itself. Changing patterns first needed a short-lived Balkenende I cabinet before in 2003 Balkenende II made a start, under very poor economic conditions. This cabinet now is planning, from conviction and necessity, to renovate the international competitiveness of Randstad Holland.

The world city and global village of Holland can easily draw on best practices and most competitive markets to brighten its image. An open mind, solid knowledge and of course its function as a gateway to Europe are the enviable ingredients of Randstad Holland. Its name, by the way, is not historical as 'Holland' is, neither devised by government, nor by any one of the many decentralized authorities, or 'World City Randstad Holland' Peter Hall.

In 1937 the aviation pioneer Albert Plesman<sup>6</sup> went on an exploratory flight from the small Schiphol airfield close to Amsterdam. He made his trip above his major catchment area, the western Netherlands, looking for a patch of ground in the heart of Holland, in order to relocate Schiphol to a new airport site, nicely in between the major cities of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht. Flying in the middle of the belt of historical cities, he noticed that the edge (*rand*) of the heart of Holland, above which he was searching, seemed to grow to a future city (*stad*) in a circular and connected ensemble, a *Randstad* Holland.

### 3 The traditional political context

The Netherlands is a densely populated country with a strong international orientation and an open economy. Although economic growth and a growing and diversifying population should keep the country in a permanent state of innovative reconstruction and alteration, things tend to change very slowly in the Netherlands.

The country is small. The longest distances across the country are 300 kilometers (north-south) and 200 kilometers (east-west). The total surface of the country is an ample 41.500 square kilometers, including almost 7700 km<sup>2</sup> of inland water. Some 16.3 million inhabitants live in the Netherlands, the average density being about 485 per square kilometer.

Randstad Holland concentrates well over 6 million inhabitants, on 5.400 km<sup>2</sup> (not counting more than 3.000 km<sup>2</sup> water, including large inner lakes), resulting in a density of about 1100.

At present 15% of the surface of the country is in use for housing, businesses and infrastructure and some 70% as agricultural land. Natural environment occupies approximately 15%, this environment in the whole of the Netherlands being nature cultivated by the hand of man.

In Holland these latter figures are approximately 25, 65 and 10%, the Randstad densities not being very much apart from those in the whole of the Flemish cities and Brussels, Greater London, Milan and Rhine-Ruhr; only the inner city of Paris being a very dense exception.

Scarce land and complicated land use regulations demand careful spatial and environmental policies. A wide range of participants with various interests is operating in city development, recreation, conservation, agriculture and horticulture, livestock farming, traffic and industry.

The Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy. The monarch (since 1982 Queen Beatrix) is the formal head of state, but has limited powers. The ministers are responsible to the parliament. The legal and administrative structure of the country is based on the *trias politica*: the divided unity of government, parliament and court, successively responsible for governance, legislature and independent jurisdiction.

The parliament ('States General') consists of an upper and a lower house, the major legislative power being in the hands of the lower house ('Second Chamber'). Its 150 members are directly elected at least every four years; the 75 members of the upper house ('First Chamber') are elected indirectly by the directly elected members of the provincial parliaments.

Members of parliament arise from political parties, the main ones being at the moment CDA (Christen Democratisch Appèl), a merger of various Christian denominations, PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid), labor party, VVD (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie), party of the liberal movement, D66, a left-liberal party, Groen Links ('Green Left'), a merger of small left-wing parties, SP (Socialistische Partij), a left-socialist party, and the Pim Fortuyn party, admirers of the late Pim Fortuyn and his predominantly right-wing and no nonsense policy ideas.

As no one single party ever achieves a majority in parliament, the government is always a coalition, since 2003 consisting of members of CDA, VVD and D66 chaired by prime minister Jan Peter Balkenende (CDA). Both the parliament and the government reside in The Hague, but Amsterdam is the official capital of the Netherlands. As in other EC countries, a substantial part of the legislation now originates from the European Commission in Brussels.

Besides developing EC power and eroding national boundaries' relevance to policy-making, there are currently two main reasons for radical reform of government: the growing gap between people and government and the increasing complexity of society.

The usual style of Dutch government, involving detailed regulations, is increasingly at odds with the demands placed on government on all traditional levels, national, regional and local. Modern government, like any other large organization, is judged on its effectiveness, efficiency, flexibility and low level of bureaucracy.

In an action plan 'Different Government' (*Bestuur Anders*) Dutch government is taking a critical look at itself – at its tasks, powers and responsibilities, at its internal organization and transparency, and at the way its policies are put into effect. Also the separation of powers between the executive and the council (dualism) at both provincial and municipal level has been introduced, with the goal to boost the quality of government and public involvement. This dualism is not being very successful yet, mostly because it is wrongly being understood as a polarization model between council and executive<sup>7</sup>.

Policy, bureaucracy and public management reform is needed on various fronts, including the public service provided through information and communication technology<sup>8</sup>.

In 1848 the influential Minister of the Interior, Thorbecke, reorganized the state of the Netherlands, including the two historically far more important tiers of government in the country: the provinces and the municipalities and cities. Since then, the constitutional organization of the Netherlands has not been changed, in spite of urbanization, converging developments between provinces, city regions and cities, and the Randstad Holland cooperation, complemented by provincial cooperation in the three other quarters of the country.

In recent years, a number of legislative reforms have touched on constitutional issues. Topics including corrective referendums, on-line voting, and electing the mayor. But, with only one half-hearted exception (proposing the strengthening of city and regional cooperation by law, called *WGR+*), no legislative yet dared to touch on the traditional three levels of government in the Netherlands. Nor on the hundreds of functional and territorial intermediary and cooperation bodies that have been established in recent decades. They are caused by the fact that the existing historical boundaries have become inadequate to stimulate modern problems to be resolved.

Many problems and developments do not respect provincial or municipal boundaries, so cooperation is essential.

The relationship between the three tiers of government, to which public power should be restricted again if efficiency is of importance, also has to be brought up-to-date, in terms of finance, and also in the complementary division of responsibilities and powers.

The Minister of the Interior is now, as ever, responsible for cohesion in government and must ensure that provinces and municipalities can exercise power and remain close to the people.

Recently, he and the whole cabinet have again been trying to assign authority to provinces and municipalities that they have lost in the past. Additional powers and budgetary options are being considered, but long-expected rulings concerning public real estate ownership and regional executive planning authority have not passed parliament yet.

National budgetary constraints stay so rigid that the effect is the opposite.

These often make local, regional and provincial bodies hesitant to develop new dynamic policies, and to 'unlock' deep-rooted mutual suspicion. Although seeking all possible new ways of empowering regional policy is, of course, the very best thing to do.

During the last two decades government in metropolitan areas developed a cooperative approach owing to the close ties between cities and the suburban municipalities around them.

And during the two most recent hectic years in Dutch public governance, the provinces are beginning to feel at ease with the chance of harmonizing the scale of complementary governments themselves. They, like the city authorities, are aware of the fact that the differences and incompatibilities that have grown in inhabitants and power do not empower them adequately for the principle of subsidiarity.

Subsidiarity among tiers of government demands a lucid allocation of auxiliary duties. This is not in the Dutch governmental tradition. Moreover, public duties have changed enormously, and the traditional political context has been following too slowly, maybe until recently, since the May 2002 occurrence. And forced by the Brussels bureaucracy, that has experienced subsidiarity being the first managerial demand to meet the quest for effective government.

#### **4 A new National Spatial Strategy**

The Dutch national government has recently adopted a Memorandum on Space<sup>9</sup> (*Nota Ruimte*), including a new National Spatial Strategy. The economy now plays a greater role and the government wants to create more space for development than Dutch government has been doing (or proposing) ever since World War II. This gives greater responsibility for action to other actors: the provincial and municipal councils, the institutions of civil society, and not least to individual citizens.

The most noticeable adaptation is its governance steering model and the way national policy will be further elaborated and managed at the regional and local levels through the participation of a range of actors: the public sector, private firms and non-governmental organisations.

Central government no longer wants to be involved in all planning matters and is decentralizing responsibilities to the other tiers of government, intending to give strategic guidance on spatial development and to determine the direction on matters involving the national and international interest, provincial and municipal authorities having freedom to determine their own course of action<sup>10</sup>. Positioning and promoting Randstad Holland as a European region thus is to be considered as a matter of (inter)national and regional interest simultaneously.

Matters of national importance are included in the national spatial framework, such as Amsterdam Airport Schiphol and the Port of Rotterdam, and the infrastructure linking these main port regions with the metropolitan areas in the Netherlands and abroad.

The National Spatial Strategy indicates what central government expects for each topic. A revived 'instigator principle' will apply if a project has negative effects. Those responsible for a project may not pass the consequences on to other functions or existing land users, and government will not pick up the bill. Plans for new development will have to respect green spaces, recreational interests and water management requirements.

'In essence, the Government wants to place the responsibility for decisions that affect the use of space closer to those most directly affected. It wants to transform spatial *planning* into spatial *development* and thus become a partner for change instead of simply a regulatory body that obstructs development,' the VROM ministry states<sup>11</sup>, inviting everyone - all tiers of government, civil society, private parties including developers and investors, and citizens - to contribute to regional development visions that command widespread support and to take an active part in implementing them. 'But this must not be at the expense of the things we all value. The Government's ambition is to improve the spatial quality of the Netherlands, and that means giving proper consideration to the functional value, amenity value and future value of new development. ... In the years to come it expects to see much collaboration between government authorities and between government authorities and private parties.'



Randstad Holland, the administrative, cultural, social and economic heartland of the Netherlands, is being considered a key region in the National Spatial Strategy. As well as improvements to the economy and the infrastructure in the Randstad, such as the extension of crucial motorways, the development of the Amsterdam Zuidas (and the other Randstad urban key projects) and space for Schiphol Airport and the Port of Rotterdam, the Randstad must also provide an attractive living environment. A further 360,000 to 440,000 homes must be built between 2010 and 2030. Some of the required space will be found by increasing urban densities; a more flexible interpretation of the rigid Dutch safety regulations systems hopefully will help to ensure that 40% of new homes can be built within existing urban areas, and yet without casting out small industry.

The national government has also reserved land for the construction of at least 40,000 new homes near Almere, to be added to the existing 66,000 of the just 25 years old town, and has initiated a planning study to obtain a clear picture of the required transport infrastructure. Space for new urban development will also be found in the Haarlemmermeer region, incorporating the limitations imposed by the presence of Schiphol Airport, the water management needs and other agreements relating to green economy and space.

The existing open space along the rivers will be retained under the 'Space for the Rivers' policy, which has been in force for some years. In conjunction with the spatial strategy, a separate decision will be drawn up to ensure that the necessary open space is retained for river flows. Nevertheless, in time, climate change and land subsidence will make it impossible for the dikes and rivers to contain all the water always. Besides engineering measures, spatial planning measures will be used to solve this problem, for instance by preventing any large-scale development and new capital-intensive activities in areas that may be required for current and future water management purposes.

Central government wants more attention to be given to the Dutch world heritage sites and the landscapes for which the Netherlands is famous abroad: areas like the Green Heart of the Randstad, the Veluwe (forests and heaths), the main river floodplains, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Defence Line of Amsterdam, de *Stelling van Amsterdam* (that has never been used and is hard to identify in the plains) and the *Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie*, also a 19<sup>th</sup> century project of land to be flooded as a defence line, consisting of canals, sluices and fortifications along Utrecht. These areas will be subject to a 'yes, provided that' regime: building will be allowed only if the new development adds to the core qualities of the landscape.

The provinces are made responsible for drawing the boundaries of the various landscapes and for implementing policy, and central government states that it will provide the necessary co-financing. Government also will remain involved in the development in the Green Heart, entering into agreements on the financing of new development and any further policy tools.

The development program for the Green Heart will be based on a system of quality zones to guide the improvement of landscape quality. This will set out the types of development considered suitable and those considered unacceptable in each zone. For example, in 'transformation zones' small-scale building could contribute to strengthening landscape structure.

The National Spatial Strategy can only be successful if all spatially relevant policies form a coherent whole, supporting the spatial strategy and being based on the same governance model. This concerns policies, and concluding acts, such as the Agenda for a Living Countryside (*Agenda vitaal platteland*)<sup>12</sup>, the Memorandum on Mobility (*Nota mobiliteit*)<sup>13</sup> and the 'Peaks in the Delta: Territorial Economic Prospects (*Pieken in de Delta, Gebiedsgerichte economische perspectieven*)<sup>14</sup>.

The Agenda for a Living Countryside sets priorities where living, employment and leisure come into conflict, as an example of central government setting the spatial framework and

leaving room for regional decision-making. National government rural regulations have been brought together in a single Rural Investment Budget (*Investeringsbudget landelijk gebied*) and the relevant legislation will be incorporated into a single Rural Planning Act (*Wet inrichting landelijk gebied*).

The economic prospects fostered by the Memorandum on 'peaks' is a brave effort to change official governmental focus from scattered regions and economies doing badly, to the parts of the country that are able to compete best on an international level. Since only sustainable competitiveness can result in growth, scarce funding for government stimulus measures should primarily be used for collective investments that support summits in economy.

Summits in western economy in general can only be developed in densely urbanised areas, since they draw on scientific, industrial and service clusters. Close to these clusters concentrations underdeveloped areas are also to be expected. This combination is a challenge to be taken up by regional politicians and management.

As EU Commissioner Frits Bolkestein remarked: 'The Randstad provinces form the beating heart of the Netherlands. I wouldn't like to deny the importance of any province, but North Holland, South Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland are the backbone of economic development for the whole country. However, the urban areas in these provinces are facing major problems. Immigration over the past three decades has resulted in a transformation. In ten years, the majority of people in the four major cities will be of immigrant descent. That will have consequences for those cities. Urban areas in other European countries are also facing major changes<sup>15</sup>.'

Many of the changes influence the economic competitiveness of the different urban regions. In order to take this up and to influence the Dutch government's policymaking, *Regio Randstad* established a working party in 2003, chaired by Willem Kleyn of the Amsterdam Economic Department and assisted by Atze Verkennis of ECORYS Nederland. Under the political leadership of the Economic Committee of *Regio Randstad*, chaired by Wim Deetman, the mayor of The Hague, this group has developed a comprehensive and interesting joint strategy for the economic development of Randstad Holland<sup>16</sup>.

Along with this strategy and based on SWOT analyses a Randstad Economic Agenda was adopted, containing about thirty 'lines of action'. Each of them is important to develop the interrelations within Randstad Holland, and to enlarge and utilize existing potentials. This must result in a a masterplan, and its realization, to improve the accessibility of economic centers in the polycentrical Randstad. The target is a coherent and competitive, public and private investment climate and to enlarge the economic and social basis of facilities serving the whole Randstad, and of the economic landmarks in the Delta.

The reliability of the Netherlands' major road network is under steadily increasing pressure. The associated problems have a serious economic and social impact. Without additional policy measures, the lack of reliability on connecting routes will continue to deteriorate. Unreliability in the off-peak period will reach virtually the same level as during the present-day rush hour. Expanding the regional road system to form a coherent network will have a favorable effect in terms of journey time, but has not yet been seriously considered by the responsible provinces and city regions since they are hardly on speaking terms concerning transport policy.

Expanding the major road network will have the greatest effect on reliability. 'The key concept is the creation of alternative routes. Alternatives make it possible to circumvent unreliability and to keep it under control,' is the key conclusion of a policy advice of unsuspected source<sup>17</sup>, but the report quoted has almost completely been ignored, since it does not coincide with policy opinions past generations.

Yet, crucial to the future competitiveness of Randstad Holland will be the endorsement of the economic necessity of the accessibility measures adopted recently by national government. This should pave the way towards a renovated policy on mobility. A prerequisite is that on issues of mobility and infrastructure the different actors – authorities, government agencies and local authorities – join focus and combine forces. That will also require the Central Planning Bureau (*CPB*) to incorporate indirect effects in their forecasts instead of tearing to pieces all public infrastructure propositions.

The spatial aspects of a future Memorandum and a succeeding Act on Mobility should be based on the economic and spatial strategy and is supposed to provide the framework for ensuring reliable accessibility in the Netherlands in the near future. However with the best intentions, a draft of the memorandum does not seem to stimulate policymaking the right way with adequate targets nor funding<sup>18</sup>.

Adequate and clear targets, on which all authorities involved agree, a broad and established social and political basis, and mutual trust between the public and private sectors are the prerequisites to realize any government spatial strategy.

## **5 Contemporary Randstad Holland**

Ever since the middle ages, the western part of the Netherlands has been active internationally. As a seafaring nation the provincial states of Holland have contested world powers like Spain, France and the British Commonwealth. Especially since they closed the ranks in the Union of Utrecht (1579), in which they pledged that the regions would be united forever, as if they were one province, though each maintaining its own rights and privileges.

As communities of traders, parsons and scholars, often complemented by foreign influences, the cities of Holland have maintained a reputation for freedom of thought and expression through the ages and Holland was in the forward line of innovation in a series of sciences, trades and industries.

As a self-ruling community, its democratic civic governance experiences are to be recognized in the American Constitution (1787) and in the Declaration of the French Revolution shortly afterwards. The establishment of a constitutional monarchy in the Netherlands in 1813 is the relatively recent choice of its people.

In recent times the Netherlands were among the six founding members of the European Coal and Steel Community (Treaty of Paris, 1951) and the European Economic Community (Treaty of Rome, 1957), straight predecessors of the European Union.

Nowadays the Netherlands economy is 10<sup>th</sup> on world level, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) being in the same order of magnitude as the joint GDP of the ten countries (together with five times more inhabitants) that joined the EU on July 1, 2004. In 2003 the Netherlands rated 5<sup>th</sup> on the World Human Development Index<sup>19</sup>, including one hundred countries, but only 14<sup>th</sup> with regard to investment project announcements per capita according to the European Investment Monitor<sup>20</sup>, which is scarcely above the European average and implying an erosion over the last five years. In the 2004 Lisbon Review<sup>21</sup> on the March 2000 intention of the EU summit to make Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world' by 2010, the Netherlands still ranked 5<sup>th</sup> out of 25 EU members.

Within the Netherlands, Randstad Holland, with a GDP today comparable to that of Sweden, owes a predominant position to the enterprising history of its cities and provinces, resulting from their location in the North Sea delta of busy rivers. That position primarily appears from world trade. Randstad Holland for instance includes both the world's 1<sup>st</sup> and Europe's 4<sup>th</sup>

ranking seaport, Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Amsterdam is the world's 4<sup>th</sup> Internet data exchange, in Europe second only to London<sup>22</sup>. Amsterdam Airport Schiphol rates 4<sup>th</sup> in Europe, including a 4<sup>th</sup> position in air cargo. Both in passengers and in air cargo London, Paris and Frankfurt outnumber Schiphol<sup>23</sup>. Not surprisingly, taking into account the importance of air traffic, these regions are the main European competitors of Holland.

Among these competitors London, with an annual average of 8.2%, established a much higher GDP growth rate during the 1995-2002 period than Randstad Holland, which delivered a sober 3.2% (Paris/Ile-de-France 2.5%, Frankfurt/Main 1.7%)<sup>24</sup>. But regions like Dublin (9.4%), Stockholm and Manchester (6.8%) have beaten Holland, as did the three major cities on the Iberian Peninsula, Barcelona, Lisboa and Madrid (with 3.2, 3.4 and 3.8%). In labor volume and employment growth only the Dublin, Madrid and Barcelona regions outnumbered Randstad Holland, but many regions did better where labor productivity and its growth was concerned<sup>25</sup>. Since 2002, running the risk of far-reaching changes should be taken into account, although the cabinet is trying to turn the tide.

Income and income growth per capita in Randstad Holland in the prosperous years 1995-2000 years was only slightly above the EU-15 top twenty regions average: 3.6% compared to 3.4%. In 2000 and in 2002 unemployment took up the rear (3.0 and 2.7 compared to 8.3 respectively 7.8%)<sup>26</sup>. Berlin was at the top of the twenty regions listed, with 14.4 and 15.7%, and almost all German city regions rated above average and found themselves in economic difficulties, which is a disadvantage to Holland with its economy closely related to German economy. This is even stressed by the fact that German cities rank higher in innovation, by the standard of patents being applied for per Regional GDP billion, Rhine-Ruhr and Frankfurt/Main about twice as many, Munich (top performer) more than six times!<sup>27</sup>

On a worldwide scale Holland rated 5<sup>th</sup> (and Europe's 2<sup>nd</sup>) in a 2002 monitor on main port functions, comparing sea cargo and air cargo and air passenger transport, and the amount of megabits per second as a 'teleport' function. In that monitor New York is 1<sup>st</sup> (56,4), being succeeded by London (39,9), Singapore (39,9) and Los Angeles (37,1), followed by Randstad Holland (31,3) and the other main port areas Hong Kong, Chicago, Atlanta, Paris, the SF Bay Area and Tokyo (28,6, 27,6, 26,2, 25,2, 24,2 and 23,3). Frankfurt (22,1) is the only other European metropolis on the monitor result list of 25<sup>28</sup>.

In a reputable listing of business establishment conditions in city regions<sup>29</sup>, the Amsterdam area is hitting a stable 5<sup>th</sup> position, behind top rating London, and Paris, Frankfurt and Brussels. Amsterdam, however, is expected to drop to 11<sup>th</sup> position in 2008, Rotterdam is expected to stay steady at the 32<sup>nd</sup> position, and The Hague and Utrecht not reaching the top fifty in this survey. In the yearly number of nights spent at a hotel Amsterdam still is a steady 5<sup>th</sup>, behind London, Paris, Rome and Berlin<sup>30</sup>. The whole of Randstad Holland, however, has dropped out of the best European distribution center locations, mostly because of accessibility getting worse. Corporate tax and difficulty for qualified staff to enter the country are other setbacks to the corporate climate, the latter also having a negative influence on progress in the academic world.

Influence on affluence and poverty, in relation to scale and 'elasticity' of cities, is remarkable in a study by David Rusk, an expert on urban affairs. He has not only compared American cities, but has also done a survey comparing the Washington-Baltimore region (Washington being international capital), the San Francisco Bay Area (leading technology center) and Randstad Holland: 'the commercial entrepôt of Europe'.

'What is clearly missing is a level of effective regional governance to complement and strengthen internally the external role of these global city-states. In the 1990s, the California legislature rejected an initiative to create a regional government for the Bay Area. The Washington and Baltimore components of that region have only weak, voluntary councils of local

government. The national government's active planning role and capital investment policies are the principal glue holding together the diverse communities of the Randstad,' Rusk wrote after visiting Holland and being impressed<sup>31</sup>.

The Netherlands, however, witnesses a sudden down fall, during a longer period than elsewhere in Europe, maybe except for Germany. The 'Dutch miracle' of the fabulous 1980s and again the 1990s turned into a 'Dutch disease', within two years after the turn of the century<sup>32</sup>. Government's active role and investment policy totally vanished, and if it does not return, the glue will vanish, too, and with it all the Randstad potential as a European region.

'We may have lost our track a little, due to the Fortuyn era,' Lodewijk de Waal, chair of the largest labor union thinly commented at the 2004 'Holland in the World' meeting of the Holland Chapter of VNO-NCW, the largest Dutch employer's association. 'There is, however, also a lack of leadership,' added Jan Franssen, Commissioner of the Queen in South Holland, and also chair of *Regio Randstad* and of the National Association of Provinces (*IPO*), and he continued: 'We are too risk-avoiding, there is too little pride, and too much financial rigidity bothering government, just hoping to be the best boy in class.' 'But we are last, viewing our growth rate,' at once VNO-NCW chair Jacques Schraven concluded quite rightly<sup>33</sup>: 'Politicians don't seem to understand any longer what business society needs.'

'You have to remember that it no longer goes without saying that economically strong areas will continue to keep on achieving high scores. To strengthen their competitive profile, regions will have to work proactively in their own area, and continue to learn from each other how to solve similar problems,' Tom de Bruijn, the Netherlands ambassador to EU, has warned<sup>34</sup>. He recognizes how other regions did.

The inaugural edition of a European Competitiveness Index<sup>35</sup> renders recent data on how other regions did. The index is based upon five core themes: creativity, knowledge economy, sectoral productivity performance, economic performance, and infrastructure and accessibility. It covers almost one hundred European regions and the former-15 European Union nations, as well as Switzerland and Norway.

The National Index rates the Netherlands in 7<sup>th</sup> position, behind four Scandinavian countries and top-ranking Switzerland and Luxemburg. On the Regional Index the four quarters of the Netherlands do rate 14<sup>th</sup> (West, a position in between Norway and Denmark), 20<sup>th</sup> (South, comparable to Finland and Sweden, and to the Dutch average score), 29<sup>th</sup> (East, comparable to Germany) and 50<sup>th</sup> (North, perfectly honorable in between Austria and Belgium).

Of course, it will be interesting to observe, how rankings change in time. For that same reason *Regio Randstad* has started to have data built up on development in Holland, expected to become available to policy makers in an inaugural '*Holland in Europa*' at the end of 2004. This will contribute to the implementation of a European Economic and Social Committee recommendation, to define the metropolitan areas in the 25 EU Member States and to produce data and evaluate Lisbon Strategy indicators for these areas, and provide local and regional authorities with an assessment of their competitive ranking<sup>36</sup>.

As part of a broader strategy to capitalize upon the Randstad metropolitan and economic potentials and to strengthen its international competitive position all three tiers of government have been taking action during recent years.

The two (in 1840 separated) Provinces of North Holland and South Holland, together with the centrally located Utrecht Province, started Randstad cooperation in the early 1990s. The first public introduction took place in 1992, with a conference of the members of the three provincial parliaments. In 1994 Flevoland Province, consisting of the newly established polders in the IJsselmeer to the northeast of Amsterdam, joined forces.

In 1998 the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht introduced the name 'Deltametropolis' as a new icon for the western part of the Netherlands in a 'Declaration Deltametropolis' document<sup>37</sup>. Eye opener in the declaration was the vision, that this Deltametropolis should be considered as a low-density European World City, instead of the highest density part of the country of the Netherlands.

Along with this view, the four major cities each joined forces with their suburbs, establishing regional bodies, with a specialty in public transport planning authority and spatial coordination tasks. The basis for these indirectly elected cooperative bodies emerged from an effort, in 1995, to establish city regions with directly elected parliaments, which ended disastrously.

The proposal of such city regions was voted down by a great majority of the people in the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, mostly because of failing confidence in the possibility that disparities between inner cities and their suburbs could ever be solved without great losses to both. The defensive feelings expressed in the inner city 'part-parliaments' exploited this illogical argument.

These 'part-parliaments' and their district executives, a fourth tier of elected government, are meant to be 'citizen oriented first line government'. Both Amsterdam and Rotterdam have over a dozen of them, although their functionality is being questioned more and more.

Since the two city parliaments did not consider liquidating themselves, in favor of the new city region on the one hand, and of the inner city sub-parliaments on the other, the idea of city regions as a fifth tier of government also encountered both opposition and repugnance. The public management flop was completed by failing confidence in the two mayors of that time. Thus for a long time labeling any public discussion on a sensible and necessary formal restructuring of government in the Netherlands quite impossible.

During the 1990s the four Randstad provinces, the four major cities and the new city regions came to the conclusion, that the only way to turn the highly-urbanized region of Randstad Holland into a high-quality metropolis would, for now, be not to go further on the way to elected city regional parliaments, but to join forces and overcome long-standing disparities.

Two different but interdependent developments took place. Upholding their separate responsibilities, and their powerful municipal and more modest provincial planning departments, the governments joined a private initiative establishing an informal Deltametropolis Association (*Vereniging Deltametropool*), and besides that, they combined governmental power in a formal Region Randstad (*Regio Randstad*) cooperation.

The initiators of Deltametropolis, especially prof. Dirk Frieling of Delft University and the Amsterdam Alderman for City Planning Duco Stadig, considered the constituting of the European Union both a threat and an opportunity. From the beginning they felt that the economies of scale that generate the dynamics of private companies cannot be neglected by public bodies like city governments who are responsible for territorial conditions, and have to facilitate the right spaces to settle and the right transport systems for interaction.

Among the three dozen members of the Deltametropolis Association are cities, water boards, chambers of commerce, housing corporations, farmers' associations, business associations, public transport companies and provinces. The association aims to be an interchange of ideas and innovating concepts to improve synergy in the metropolitan system, and it is active in four subsystems: the water system, the transport system and the urban and rural systems.

The Deltametropolis Association is being supported by a Foundation of Friends of the Deltametropolis. In this Foundation, chaired by Joost van Iersel, and its Advisory Board, chaired by ING Real Estate CEO Jan Doets, a select gathering of companies participates, being ex-

cluded from the non-commercial Association. A first alarming, though enthusing publication<sup>38</sup>, with interesting graphics designed by Zandbelt&vandenBerg, was dedicated to 'The world in motion, Deltametropolis in the top 10, but not unthreatened'.

The formal public government cooperation is embodied on a corporate basis in a 'Randstad Region'. This *Regio Randstad* intergovernmental body is aiming at the same development, strengthening Randstad Holland as an attractive metropolitan region to live in, at the same time strengthening its competitiveness as a European metropolitan region. For this endeavor the Deltametropolis Association is the non-committal 'think tank' and *Regio Randstad* is the body where formal government responsibilities meet.

Partnership in *Regio Randstad* is restricted to the twelve cooperating authorities. Together they form a twenty-four-member council that elects an executive committee of five. This committee searches for the most effective ways to coordinate the widely spread managerial responsibilities within local authorities, provinces and national government, and within sub-regions consisting of representatives of these tiers of government, the later to be explained 'Wings' of Randstad Holland.

For the partners, *Regio Randstad* is the place to compare notes, exchange lines of policy and join forces on the national level that is indispensable to deliver favorable terms for developing Holland as a world city on its physical, functional and managerial polycentric basis.

The provinces of North Holland, South Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland, the four major cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, and the regional bodies around (and including) these cities formalized their super regional cooperation in September 2002.

Primary target is realizing its aim through all activities of the partners themselves, influencing the national government to provide a national basis for their policies and implementing them, where relevant, on a national scale too, and promoting the position of Randstad Holland internationally, with emphasis on European development and competition.

The ways in which the public partners in Randstad Holland manage their daily planning practice and what they are aiming at will be highlighted in the next chapter.

The National Planning authorities, embodied mostly within the ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning (Regional Development?) and the Environment (VROM), have been struggling in their policy-making with the position of the Randstad ever since World War II. It used to be common understanding that promoting this strongest area in the Netherlands would not be in the interest of the whole country. So in a series of National Acts on Spatial Planning, national government mentioned the ideas, but recoiled from consequences while working them out.

That ambiguous attitude has, through the post-war decades, conditioned national policy reports and national planning practice; powers in national government and parliament always trying to seek for different ways to disperse people and economy throughout the country.

Dispersing people and economic activity, however, has proved not to belong to an economically open society, not even assigning it top priority, and especially not from a point of view of long-term macroeconomics, an enduring competitiveness, and public transport.

National policies have also frustrated local policy wishes. Villages and cities were not allowed to choose their favorite development direction, since national policy only scarcely coincided with local common sense and political impulse. This makes it very unusual that the present day national government has chosen to return to the philosophical roots of 'Holland' policy and turn to the other tiers of government, provinces and municipalities, to take the lead in urban development, as they used to do throughout the ages.

This change not surprisingly coincides with the insight, that people themselves also should act more on their own responsibility, the Dutch society apparently having become a non-competitive factor in the European economy and, therefore, in a future European affluence.

Is it not sour, that the line of thought of the Memorandum on Space (*Nota Ruimte*), the draft version of what in fact will become a 5<sup>th</sup> National Act on Spatial Planning since World War 2, is very much congruent to the minority report that was attached to the very first national memorandum on spatial planning<sup>39</sup>, a statement that only one official felt obliged to make?

The civil engineer M. le Cosquino de Bussy, who at the time was one of the directors of '*Rijkswaterstaat*', the National government agency for public works and water management, stated in his lonely attachment to the generally accepted 1960 policy memorandum<sup>40</sup>: "For future affluence and economic tenability of the Netherlands it is essential, that the most profitable conditions are being created for an efficient economic development of our country, taking into account both decentralizing and centralizing tendencies. For the other parts of the country the measures of this Memorandum will do. For Randstad Holland, however, in the future possibly being one of the greater centers of Western Europe with special tasks in the field of transport, trade, and the processing industry, the possibility of concentration must be considered as fundamental. Geographical dispersion and the resulting prolonged transport of goods, and the loss of time of workers while traveling, should be considered as loss. This is proven by the fact, that all over the country there is a demand for faster highways, and that constructing highways turns out to be very profitable."

And a little farther on: "The Memorandum mentions the two large 'conurbations', forming the main elements of the Randstad, namely the Northern along the North Sea Canal and going on further South-East, and the Southern along the mouth of the Rhine and Meuse rivers. This may have grown this way, but the undersigned wonders whether it would be effective to keep up this separation artificially. To the contrary: the economic struggle commends to promote the functional connection of these two parts, since together they will stand stronger than separately. The Netherlands, being the least affluent country of the non-affluent Western Europe cannot afford the wealth to handle this rashly, damaging its economic tenability. This does not need to imply turning it into one physically united urban development at all."

Wasn't it the French, German-born ironic Heinrich Heine who stated that in the Netherlands things tend to happen fifty years later? Even his ironic remark has not yet turned into reality.

The post-war poverty referred to by De Bussy has long gone. But the theme of economic tenability of the Netherlands is back again, since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Although the ideas of the long-forgotten De Bussy now finally are almost common knowledge in the cabinet, there is still strong skepticism among top bureaucrats and left wing parties in national government, and disbelief among many municipalities and even most provinces.

Among the people, environmentalists in front, there still is a strong resistance against a more decentralized and less bureaucratic policy of urban development; at least as long as there is no proof that it will result in all-embracing planning, that will promote 'soft' developments like nature and recreational land use along with 'strong' commercial land use and all sorts of urban (re)development.

Of course, there is ample reason for disbelief. Having been ruled as a centralized country, in a decentralized culture, it will take time for new relations to find their way and to pay off.

Still quite a few national government authorities and almost all environmentalists do believe, that (re)decentralizing is just a trick to cover up the cutting back of national expenditure. And many national government bureaucrats will hesitate to leave daily work to colleagues in other



tiers of government, colleagues who, they expect complacently, will not yet be as fit for the job as themselves. And they are right, insofar they, and not their colleagues in 'lower' tiers of government, possess the taxpayers' revenue and a legislative link with national parliament.

In the meantime, responsibilities, competence and power will overlap and will be prone to misunderstandings, 'not-invented-here' deadlocks and waste of time and money.

Of course, 'Spatial Planning' minister Ms. Dekker has not had a chance as yet to succeed in passing new legislation in parliament, declaring a new set of means for public property ownership, regional planning and averaging expenses and revenues of real estate developments to provide for non-paying and non-profitable land use. But she is rightly being optimistic.

And sure, it is common knowledge that in order to promote both the business and logistics part of the economy, and the freedom of the inhabitants to commute, roam around and travel abroad, it is absolutely necessary to invest much more in infrastructure and a free and safe flow of all modes of traffic, including cargo, than has been invested yearly since the 1960s.

Having travelers, by car as well as by public transport, pay more directly for their infrastructure use would bring in the necessary money to invest, if the general taxpayer is not to be burdened. But the ministry of traffic and transport is hesitant to pursue this policy direction, knowing the advocating majority handles several policies that will appear to exclude each other, once the issue is made clear. So the cabinet will most likely leave initiative to the public partners in the Randstad Holland region, since traffic is being congested there the most.

Policy makers tend to 'forget', however, that in any open society, such as Holland, introducing a traffic toll without first harmonizing the system throughout neighboring countries in Europe, would bring about a negative influence on local or regional economy. And in the case of Holland, that would strongly influence the economy of the country at the same time.

Yet, in Randstad Holland forced optimism reigns. Provincial and local authorities are right. If they do not take care of necessary changes, contemporary Holland will stay in its standstill, slipping away as a European region. The present-day crisis may result in a distinguishable jump in flexible solutions during the coming years. Not only in infrastructure and urbanization, of course, but also in business establishment circumstances, social climate and quality of life.

And maybe in giving content to and promoting Holland as a European metropolitan region.

National government has taken the lead, by formulating a Randstad Holland promoting policy in the Memorandum on Space, by assigning individual cabinet members to special tasks in overcoming departmentalization within and between their Hague ministries, and by stressing the importance of the role of the VROM minister, chairing the BCR (*Bestuurlijke Commissie Randstad*). BCR stands for the steering committee on Randstad issues, in which all relevant cabinet members participate, together with the executive committee of *Regio Randstad*, representing the twelve public authorities in Randstad Holland that are most influential in planning and in managing Holland in practice.

## **6 Planning and managing Holland in practice**

Since World War II national government influence is predominant in spatial planning policy. On the other hand check and balances between provinces and cities allowed for the latter to go ahead with urbanization. On Randstad level national policy was based on the two urban 'conurbations' of the Randstad. Developing their own urban area, however, was prime target of the four major cities, resulting in four very separate agglomerations. They now are at the basis of urban planning in Holland, including the necessity of city regional cooperation.

Today's practice comes down to the southern conurbation 'wing', two 'wings' in the northern conurbation, with a special position of Almere attached, and the Green Heart within the conurbations. All relevant authorities cooperate within these four relatively informal and internal consultation bodies. This is so since the mid 1990s, because big cities and their surrounding municipalities as well as these cities and the provinces have disputed each other's competence and power for a long time.

Disputes on competences have long resulted in the fact that the ambiguous national planning institutions, very compartmentalized among and even within themselves, were the only ones supposed to guide all major developments in the Netherlands, including the Holland part. This goes beyond the formal fact that only national government is supposed to set out principle spatial planning guidelines of national interest and supply them with funding, the provinces translating them in respect to regional circumstances in regional plans (*streekplannen*) and cities and municipalities fine-tuning them to development plans (*bestemmingsplannen*) that commit both authorities and citizens.

Developments, however, go much faster, and are under much more international influence than this scheme provides for. Moreover, in the Netherlands, sometimes even more than elsewhere, there is an excess of government and government agencies, and no clear picture of separate responsibilities that simply link up with each other. Also, in the Netherlands there is a specific egalitarian attitude, distributing power and facilities all over the country alike, and a focused concern on pay and incentive issues in detail, instead of a comprehensive reform concern<sup>41</sup>. So for decades little progress was being made.

Only a few projects on a larger scale than the usual inner city developments have been successful, although vulnerable; the development of the new towns of Zoetermeer and Almere both ranking high, because their scale was and is such, that their development has been managed relatively separate from existing government departments.

Not only globalization developments are influencing spatial development by the government. 'Space changes especially because society changes', stated Wim Derksen recently on the internet<sup>42</sup>. He is director of the Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research (*Ruimtelijk Planbureau*, a national agency trying to do its best not literally to fulfill its Dutch name 'Spatial Planning Bureau', being in memory of only recent Soviet-like government planning pretensions).

Referring to a recent study by his agency 'A Thousand Things every Day'<sup>43</sup>, Derksen's column points out that society, with couples in which both partners work, being a recent development in the Netherlands, has changed spatial demands tremendously in a very short period of time. Domestic recreational traffic has become almost as extensive as commuter traffic, and the leisure industry demands ever more space. 'Different interests are in conflict with each other. Should economy take precedence, or ecology? Leisure industry, or nature? Sometimes government is needed to facilitate the weighing up. But that does not necessitate government to decide on spatial planning. If government is important in this, then it is to think up cunning solutions, doing justice to more interests. In essence, spatial development is no more than the repercussion of social, economic and cultural changes.'

This exactly points out why planning and managing Holland in practice primarily has become a challenge taken up by four informal consultation bodies on a sub-Holland level, resulting from the provinces and the four major cities. It is on that level that the majority of relevant developments are to be dealt with, and should be realized, too.

The four consultation bodies are almost completely relying on the bureaucracies of their most powerful partners, and their success depends on their growing mutual trust. The bodies are:

- the 'South Wing' called southern conurbation (*'Zuidvleugel'*), including Leiden, The Hague, Delft, Rotterdam and Dordrecht, and being coordinated by the province of

- South Holland together with the two major city governments, Rotterdam and the Hague, and including the city regions of Rotterdam and Haaglanden;
- the North Wing (*'Noordvleugel'*), part of the northern conurbation, with Amsterdam and the Amsterdam region, including Schiphol Airport city and the Amsterdam seaports and the new town of Almere, with an active role of the province of North Holland; and a part of the conurbation east of it;
  - the Utrecht region (*'NV Utrecht'*), in which the province of Utrecht, the Utrecht regional body and among others the cities of Utrecht, Hilversum and Amersfoort joined forces; with, in between these three southern, northern and eastern urban dominated bodies:
  - the Green Heart (*'het Groene Hart'*), the agricultural and recreational area at the heart of Randstad Holland, including fast-growing towns like Alphen aan den Rijn, Gouda and Woerden, and also including large natural reservation areas, the body being coordinated by the three relevant provinces of South Holland, Utrecht and North Holland.

Besides the four informal 'wings', the twelve most influential public authorities within Randstad Holland have joined forces in a formal but light overall cooperation. This cooperation body is '*Regio Randstad*', as mentioned earlier. In matters of common interest to all four sub-regions in Holland, and notably with a common opponent, *Regio Randstad* is being granted clearance to initiatives that are not directly derived from all the partners' own planning aims.

*Regio Randstad* has made a successful start during its first years of existence, but neither the Randstad board, being composed from the executives of its members, nor of course the Randstad staff, can be considered to manage Randstad Holland. To answer any question on managing Randstad Holland, first of all it would be necessary to determine what that management should aim at and, equally important, on which scale each different development should be considered to optimize its chances.

On these two dilemmas a common view is beginning to grow. This primarily happens in five committees, consisting of members of the executives of the partners, in the policy fields of spatial planning, accessibility, economy and recreation, water and agriculture. The fifth committee consists of the provincial deputies in charge of European affairs. They first and foremost consider that 21<sup>st</sup> century Randstad Holland under all circumstances will be a polycentric metropolis. The basis of this statement is not only the poly-governmental history of Holland, but also the fact that the four major cities are the core of their own daily urban system and city region and therefore the first to guide and realize their own regional development. But the dilemma is also faced as a challenge to the coherent development of the Randstad.

The city centers of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht are as the crow flies consecutively only 50, 20, 55 and 35 kilometers apart, Amsterdam/Rotterdam and The Hague/Utrecht, being the diagonals in the Randstad Holland diamond, each 55 km.

In between Utrecht and the other three urban agglomerations the distance of 55 km seems enlarged by the fact that parts of the Green Heart area run in between, preventing urbanization from becoming a continuous ribbon. This is most tangible between both Utrecht and Schiphol, and Utrecht and Gouda, Gouda being situated on the edge of the agglomerations of The Hague and Rotterdam. Thus the Green Heart is a prominent part of even the connecting links between the major cities in the polycentric metropolis of Holland.

This brings the openness of the Green Heart within easy reach of all housing developments, although accessibility of recreational grounds, including water areas, is still relatively poor.

In between the Amsterdam and The Hague agglomerations pressure is high, Schiphol being situated at the Hague side of Amsterdam. Only the Schiphol noise nuisance limits prevent a much more intense urbanization in between. This is a main issue of debate in the west of Holland, between the Amsterdam-Schiphol area and the rapidly integrating South Wing.

## South Wing

Somewhat to their own surprise the urban agglomerations of The Hague and Rotterdam find themselves these days in a concerted urban network development.

Although on the shortest distance from each other, The Hague and Rotterdam city cultures always have been most far apart, and they still are. Rotterdam has a port and workers' city history, with the majority of inhabitants from countryside descent, while the formal Hague has been the seat of Dutch government ever since something like that grew out of the deep down decentralist Holland governance culture. The Hague has grown to become a center of international peace and justice, 4<sup>th</sup> in the top of United Nation cities.

With the technical university city of Delft in between, and the university city of Leiden north of The Hague, the maritime city of Dordrecht south of Rotterdam, and the historical city of Gouda east of both, all within one conurbation, the provincial government of South Holland took charge of focusing on a common development policy.

In the next ten to fifteen years this will lead to integration of the two major cities' public transport networks, thus becoming a joint daily urban system in the province of South Holland. This accessible and fast urban transport system plan is supposed to profit from the railway capacity becoming available on the existing intercity railroad tracks, once the newly constructed high-speed connection between Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Brussels and Paris/London becomes operational in 2007. Putting into use the 'Betuwelijn', a dedicated cargo track from the Rotterdam port eastbound to Rhine-Ruhr, in the same year, will also render more room to public transport on existing tracks.

For the purpose of realizing the tall order of having more than 175,000 houses built before 2020, counting without the demolition during the same period, the South Wing predominantly looks for development capacity directly related to this urban public transport network.

This South Wing idea coincides perfectly well with long-standing national spatial and environmental policies, pressing on condensing and further urbanizing existing cities, rather than starting all new developments in the Green Heart, or other open areas.

The national bookkeeper ministry of Finance, however, is short of money and in fear of exceeding the maximum monetary deficit that has been agreed upon in the European Union. It stalls to give approval on any long-term public transport investment drive, nor is it willing to agree with national highways and lower rating traffic interrelations being constructed, or even planned, to the demand of society. This is why the ministry of transport is also keeping itself very quiet, searching for other ways to respond to pressures from society and the economic need to improve the highway system in Holland really quickly.

This being as it is, the South Wing partners have decided to take the lead in promoting public transport track planning, and a few important road connections, that have been on the planning tables way too long. Rotterdam has also decided to move on with the port, by extending it seaward with *Maasvlakte II*. To do so it appeared advisable to turn the port into a city-owned company, in which the national state took a stake.

Not only the world port of Rotterdam is a driving force in the system of growing South Wing economy, but so are four major horticultural centers, growing vegetables, flowers, bulbs and trees. Together with the Aalsmeer flower center near Schiphol, the five so-called 'Green Ports' of South and North Holland are world top in flower R&D, quality, volume and trading. The innovative cooperation between the Leiden, Delft and Erasmus Rotterdam universities is also at the basis of the South Holland economy, the overall economy internationally being oriented on the port and industrial complex, logistics, horticulture and international law.

For coordination purposes the partners in the South Wing cooperation have set up an office at the South Holland province venue. Members of the relevant councils and parliaments meet a few times a year, to endorse common policy that is at the basis of carrying out the plans by the different South Wing partners.

### **North Wing**

The North Wing of Randstad Holland is very much complementary to the South Wing. Instead of a network of a dozen more or less complimentary cities, sub-regions and one province, maintaining a production bureau, as in the southern conurbation, the northern conurbation is dominated by the Amsterdam-Schiphol duo. Maybe duet is a more comprehensive notion, since the Amsterdam and the Schiphol areas flourish on each other, on tourists and cultural visitors, and with international business joining in, as does the province of North Holland policy-wise.

The Amsterdam/Schiphol area is a unique airport/seaport/ict/media/science environment, strongly contributing to the 5<sup>th</sup> position of Holland in a worldwide ranking study of main ports. The functional diversity within a half hour reach of the historical city is unusually great, and includes top living quarters along the dunes, the lakes and a chain of hills connecting the area to Utrecht, including the affluent *Goof* quarter.

Delivering conditions to keep up its living conditions and its international business position forced the many Amsterdam oriented local and regional authorities to found a platform on regional cooperation. This informal coordination body, with the city of Amsterdam and the province of North Holland as leading partners, is managing the search for and the local development of attractive building sites for the net increase of a similar 150.000 dwellings that are expected to be built before 2030, besides a 50.000 target within the nowadays already urbanized areas.

Most of this 150.000 is envisaged on the axis between Leiden and Lelystad, or more precisely from Nieuw Vennep in the Haarlemmermeer polder (1855), along Schiphol and the 'South Axis' (*Zuidas*) top development in Amsterdam through Almere in the Flevoland polder (last part clear of water in 1968). As the southern part potentially conflicts with the growth of Schiphol airport, and the northern part is first in need of elaborate new infrastructure, that normally would burden national government budget, the cabinet has started new studies on the most effective development. It is not expected that a policy choice will be made before early 2006.

Although this is to the disappointment of the North Wing partners, they cannot but cooperate.

Almere and Amsterdam go even further. Almere installed a workshop under the guidance of renowned town planner Theun Koolhaas, right in the heart of Amsterdam, facing the IJ water, reminding of the leading port role of historical Amsterdam in the 'golden' era. On their way into the world the VOC ships then passed the inner sea in which now Almere is situated. In that ambiance Almere prepares for a comprehensive development in the IJ Lake, envisaged for a long-term growth of Almere to the same scale as the cities of Utrecht and The Hague, although national government is still being very skeptical about Almere growing to this scale.

It may well be that the resulting development of Almere 'Pampus' will become one of the great missions of Holland since the Delta Works, when the sea arms in the province of Zeeland were closed, after the disastrous flood in the night of February 3, 1953.

Managerial power in the informal North Wing of course is insufficient to realize this challenge. National endorsing power will be necessary, including ways and means to finance the indispensable infrastructure. Fortunately, government is very much in on it. Not only because na-

tional government authorities own most of the land, but government also owns the dominant problems: having to search for large-scale alternative space to be developed outside the Schiphol noise limits, and as a principal being engaged in a competition for high-speed public transport between Schiphol and the utmost northern town in the Netherlands, Groningen.

This competition has been opened, although there is a strong resistance to the possibility of constructing a piece of infrastructure, that has no prospects economically north of Lelystad, not even if ever the time comes to extend it to Hamburg/Berlin and Copenhagen.

That illusion should, of course, not hinder the response to the short-term need for infrastructure in Randstad Holland itself. But there seems not to be a public authority free to allocate financial partnerships and means, beyond the day's delusion.

Nowadays it would make much more sense, for instance, to develop a rapid transit connection between Lelystad, Almere, Amsterdam-Zuidas, Schiphol, Leiden and The Hague. But this option has not even been included in an annex to the competition.

All over the North Wing there is a shortage of adequate infrastructure. Not only Schiphol airport will be enlarged to keep up with international competition, but for the same reason the Amsterdam port is very much in need of a second large sluice, since sea ships and short sea vessels have all grown so dramatically in individual size that, of the four-sluice complex, the two smallest sluices are left to recreational yacht shipping, and the capacity of the other two will turn critical within the coming decade.

Infrastructure capacity in and around Amsterdam is a long-standing problem – though, because of the polycentric structure of Randstad Holland, less dominating than in the London and Paris metropolises. However, the fact is depressing that, though construction started in 2003, it will take many more years to complete the north-south metro connection from Amsterdam North, and eventually Zaanstad, through Amsterdam city center, to Zuidas center development and on to Schiphol, passing the internationally high-ranking Amstelveen area.

On an equal basis the urgent need to enlarge capacity of the Coen Tunnel has been a plaything of undecided authorities for many decades.

Thirty years of slow-witted or future-denying officials have caused arrears, and the necessity of making up for them is very much to the disadvantage of new investments that should realized these years.

Under that light it is comforting, that the connections from Almere to Utrecht are a later priority. Yet it is evident, that the Almere area eventually will grow not only southwest, connecting it well to the Amsterdam/Schiphol area, but also southeast, demanding a well-developed highway to establish a perfect private and cargo traffic connection from Almere eastbound, and a public transport connection to Amersfoort and Utrecht.

### **Utrecht Region**

The Utrecht Region, including Amersfoort and Hilversum, although not often in international focus, represents an important GDP area in Holland, second only to the Amsterdam area.

Utrecht has the deepest roots of all Dutch cities mentioned, being descended from the Roman city of *Trajectum*. In fact the diocese city has for centuries maintained a reputation for arguing with the towns and provinces of Holland – but is now a strong part of the Randstad.

The Utrecht Region area includes the city of Utrecht, the city region of Utrecht, including the Utrecht surroundings, the NV Utrecht Region, including Amersfoort, Hilversum (although part

of the province of North Holland) and a handful of sub-regions and water boards, and finally also the province of Utrecht.

It is here where public governmental overpressure is most immanent. But it is incorrect not to expect about the same in the other Randstad regions.

The intensive Utrecht Region cooperation started only very recently. Up till a year ago, the region was notorious for its stagnating policymaking, though that did not prevent economy from flourishing and the environment from being promoted as well. The region, however, was being underrated and neglected by national policymakers, and by the natural partners in the North Wing as well, the region traditionally being part of it.

The strategic position of the Utrecht region, and its well-developed economy, being linked to the Amsterdam/Schiphol developments, challenges the partners in Randstad Holland to cooperate closely with the provincially coordinated 'NV Utrecht' regional cooperation.

Priorities of the NV Utrecht cooperation include building 110.000 houses until 2030, 20.000 of which are to be situated in the Flevoland polder, east of what is nowadays Almere. Development focus is on the main railroad station areas of Utrecht and Amersfoort, both being of strategic importance to the Dutch railroad system, and for several decades' local development issues.

Further priorities are focusing on a city center development in the large western extension of Utrecht, *Leidsche Rijn*, the Media Park development in Hilversum, superbly located between ranges of hills and lakes, being the heart of the Dutch media industries, and the promotion of the '*Uithof*' premises of Utrecht University, in fact being the top-ranking university in Holland.

Most important to Randstad Holland, however, is the focus on a reliable accessibility to, and passage through, the Utrecht region. Holland will gradually grow beyond the reach of Europe if the Utrecht highway and railroad intersections are not redeveloped in time.

The long-standing stagnation and public failure to recognize this need has not yet completely been dismissed. For instance, there is legitimate doubt whether the recently adopted policies will reach far enough to meet future needs where the northern section of the Utrecht beltway is concerned, since national government seems not to share this priority.

Contrary to that, government does recognize the need to improve the *Lage Weide* industrial estate, offering ample chances for multimodale developments in between the Rhine and the Amsterdam seaports, practically in the heart of the Netherlands. It is part of a scheme of fifty priorities from the ministry of Economic Affairs, promoting important existing major industrial and business estates to be restructured, and developing a strategic selection of new ones.

## **The Green Heart**

The provincial and local authorities in the Green Heart of Holland have also managed to coordinate their policies. To that end they abolished the mythical but obsolete ideology, that the central area of Randstad Holland would be, and even stay forever, a virginal pasture. Actually, Holland within the Randstad ring is an economic power, fundamentally on an agricultural basis, but in the course of postwar developments grown to modern industrial proportions.

Designing quality zoning for the inner-Holland area has been the first step to giving common guidelines to the development. In between the Gouda/Rotterdam/Zoetermeer triangle a very diverse and complicated development planning is under way, combining difficult water and soil conditions with new large-scale functions in horticulture and living quarter developments.

Also between Schiphol and Leiden a search is going on to condense urbanization, incorporating the growth of Schiphol airport. Along the historical branch of the Rhine, flowing from Utrecht to Leiden (and on into the North Sea just north of Katwijk) urbanization will be permitted within the 'transformation zoning', consisting partly of industrial areas becoming obsolete.

It is the Green Heart that assures Randstad Holland of being a metropolis that is unique on a world scale. Potentially it is a huge Central park, an internal equivalent of the Greater London 'Green Belt'. This 'Green Heart Metropolis' does combine the functional diversity of a world city with the leisure facilities of a holiday resort and with intensive and professionally highly developed agricultural use. The realization, however, of many recreational areas in Randstad Holland stagnates. Even plans that are supplied with the necessary investment means seem to have a hard time to get going.

In a series of on the spot discussions the reasons for that have been analyzed, trying to find tailor made solutions to the problems encountered. Among them: a lack of political interest, deficiencies in regulations, tough ground acquisition since property owning farmers tend to wait for urbanization, failing professionalism, red tape and (consequently!) outdated plans. Going on this way, realization might take ten years more instead of being ready by 2013. Discussing these issues and confronting key players is supposed to help out<sup>44</sup>.

The quality of life in urban areas is very much determined by the vicinity of open space and by the quality to use it freely. In urban concentration zones in general the built up area is rapidly expanding with increasing environmental pressures due to urban growth, traffic and intensive agricultural use of the land. The amount of open space is diminishing and the quality of environment, of biodiversity and landscape is indeed under threat.

In Europe, therefore, special attention is being paid to the peri-urban open space, in which the piling up of urban pressure and rural land use dynamics pose serious environmental and spatial development problems. There cannot be a sustainable urban development in densely populated regions without a sustainable open space.

With the implementation of the Mid Term Review of June 2003, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in Europe is moving to a next phase. The policy implies a comprehensive and fundamental reform, including strengthening of rural development policy, in terms of both scope and financial resources. This very much influences the Green Heart potentials and policies and also stresses urbanisation of open space to be subject to an integrated planning process. In Holland this is being managed by the provinces of South Holland and Utrecht, the majority of the Green Heart being under their geographical jurisdiction.

The CAP is founded on two pillars: agricultural and rural development. Agriculture in Europe has to undergo major restructuring processes towards sustainable production, international competitiveness, food safety and traceability, and product quality. The urbanizing regions need to ensure that enough space is available for food production and sufficient quality of life for their citizens, EU policies promoting urban and rural areas to complement each other.

This only can be reached at a regional level, and in Holland it will be particularly tough, since farming is under high pressure, and most of the area is peat bog, drained in past centuries, and still sinking, some parts even quite rapidly. On the initiative of both South Holland and *Regio Randstad* sharing this experience will be the topic of a meeting in October 2004 of the European Bureau of the Brussels based Committee of the Regions in The Hague<sup>45</sup>.



## 6 If Randstad Holland were managed

To Randstad Holland its mere existence sometimes seems to be a barrier in itself.

First of all, even city life loving professionals, like artists, journalists, and city and regional planners tend to romanticize the Dutch countryside. Time and again painters have been depicting the lowlands, the coast, the dunes, the rivers, the trees, the cows. Dutch painters are famous for their clouded skies. As almost all of the abundantly present museums in the Netherlands show, it was and still is the countryside that intrigues the Dutch. Holland's foremost painters Mondriaan, Van Gogh and Rembrandt were inspired by trees, fields, and the outskirts of Dutch towns, but not by city life itself.

Even the two probably most famous single paintings in the Netherlands illustrate this point.

Rembrandt's 'Night Watch' depicts a group of dignitaries. Not in their common business surrounding, but dressed as a night watcher's team that was supposed to watch over the unsafe city life. Managing Randstad Holland in that 'golden' 17th century era was managing and minding your own business, and doing your city council networking and responsible duties in spare hours. Public management meant managing support of the people for public private enterprise purposes, and preventing the people from engaging in their small criminal acts, for which cities were the natural breeding ground.

The other famous single painting, the almost 1700 m<sup>2</sup> Panorama Mesdag of Scheveningen, on display in its original 1881 rotunda in The Hague, was inspired by the fact that the city managers were planning to top off the highest dune of the Hague coast to allow a hotel to be built. Maritime painter H.W. Mesdag selected this site for a 360° panorama experience. Not only because he loved the sea and the beach beyond the city, but also as a painter's protest against the urbanization of the fishermen's coast, slowly turning it into a modern city resort.

Netherlanders (the Dutch) that live outside the western part of the Netherlands, in other parts than Holland and Randstad, in general refer to the Randstad as the place where they don't want to live. They agree that it is Randstad Holland where it happens, but they consider it too crowded, too speedy, too uncommon. The pace of life outside Randstad Holland is what keeps them home. And Holland being economically the front-runner, they tend to live a more relaxed life under the national government umbrella, nourished by Randstad affluence.

Even in Randstad Holland itself, people seem grouchy about urbanization. Sometimes they seem unaware of the fact that their own affluent spatial demands are bringing it all about. Within two generations, the average density in residential areas halved, as did the average occupancy, while the average surface area per dwelling doubled, and the recreational and traffic areas per capita grew very much more.

In spite of that it is stylish among journalists to reject renovating and urbanizing developments, paving the way for traditionalism and symbol policy, politicians remaining vague on the need for changes, and even more so if those changes might influence political push.

City and regional planners have to be very conscious and sometimes even cautious about planning new residential areas, high-rise buildings and highways. Only architects and planners that have reached star status, like Rem Koolhaas and Riek Bakker (being herself a landscape architect by education), feel free to utter what they consider necessary, such as the promotion of Randstad Holland as a surprising world city.

Of course, there is nothing wrong in cherishing small-scale life, that being at the basis of life in general, and Dutch life not being too far from general. But as Voltaire mentioned in the 18<sup>th</sup>

century Age of Enlightenment, of which he was one of the foremost exponents: 'God created the world, except Holland. That he left to the Hollanders themselves.' Moreover: it obliges.

The necessity of maintaining a metropolitan country that is mostly below sea level poses a burden on economy. It draws heavily on inventiveness in Holland and it explains a lot about the unitary state that has grown through the centuries, the Dutch being fond of the roots of diversity and of political checks and balances, also between all existing tiers of government.

If Randstad Holland were to be managed more effectively than it has been in the past, by abundantly present public authorities, and on confusing scales that do not match contemporary problems in society, the first thing would be to consider a choice between constituting new government structures, or making use of the existing ones, with their historical roots and handicaps. Any serious choice, however, will lead to both. Deriving new structures and developments from the existing situation is the only option, not disrupting a vulnerable society.

If Randstad Holland were to be managed more effectively, it is necessary to recognize that contemporary regional problems are to be solved on regional scales. Until now, they seemingly disappear between the national state government and the cities. Thus they stay unsolved. Local authorities growing to city region scale, as is shortly to be expected, is a first sensible step. It should be followed by strengthening the intermediate role of provinces.

'In the Netherlands we experience the worst for choosing a fragmented, differentiated, functionally departmentalized regional system, with a systematic shortage of regional direction,' as a provincial official has put it<sup>46</sup>. The prime solution is in the guideline of a recent British study<sup>47</sup>: 'City and regional competitiveness – a bridge not a barrier'.

Since the *Regio Randstad* cooperation partners gather the strengths of both the provinces and the cities, bridges are being built. A notable step in this process was drawing up the future development of the whole Randstad region in accordance with the concept of the Delta metropolis, and based upon the different regional plans of the city region and provinces. This Development View (*Ontwikkelingsbeeld*)<sup>48</sup> tried to make all the different plans compatible for the first time, and it will be updated regularly. The report and the comprehensive plans include both the ambitions of all twelve Randstad authorities in the long run (2030) and the mid-term tasks (2020). The expected situation in 2010 is mapped out, on the basis of the knowledge of January 1, 2003.

With the Development View the Randstad partners have pledged to seek a clever, attractive and timely approach to regional spatial developments and accessibility, strengthening regional economy through knowledge, new challenges and the formation of functional clusters, and vitalizing inner cities and the Green Heart of Holland.

The need for all that is evident. A June 2004 working conference of *Regio Randstad*, on the theme 'Randstad Holland Under Construction', agreed on the necessity of far-reaching renovation to improve the public and the private investment climate, to strengthen the international competitive position and image, to reach agreement between tiers of government on public works, and to connect economy, accessibility, landscape and urbanization on the Randstad Holland level.

What if not? No accessible cities, so no social safety. No renewed employment, replacing the jobs heading for Eastern Europe and Asia. Or going elsewhere in Europe, for instance following the port industries if sluice capacity in IJmuiden does not grow within the next ten years or so. Or fleeing to the De Gaulle Airport or other airport cities, if Schiphol becomes silted up. Cunning services will surely be following them, by nature. Roads and cities shunned by tourists, and most certainly by businessmen and top scientists. In brief: failing interrelations, fleeing knowledge, superfluous government<sup>49</sup>.

At the request of and together with its Randstad partners, and in close contact with national government agencies, *Regio Randstad* is active in drawing up super regional policy outlines in different areas of economic and spatial cooperation, including mobility. It offers an effective platform for coordination between concerted action from the Randstad partners with national government. This works both on the responsible political executive level and in civil service.

*Regio Randstad* interferes with the natural tendency to 'divide et imperare' behavior and contributes to the Dutch need for checks and balances. Also between the partners themselves, consulting one another. This has demonstrated to solve some of the provincial and local authority prisoner's dilemmas, giving way to seize the opportunity to rise above themselves.

Besides that, its Strategic EU-Randstad Agenda<sup>50</sup> is most relevant to plans and practices in Holland. In order to monitor and influence the European legislative process *Regio Randstad* takes part in the House of the Netherlands Provinces in Brussels. For the actions in Brussels, and the European actions in Randstad Holland itself, a separate agenda is being adopted on a yearly basis. The 2004-2006 Agenda assigns priority to monitoring the laborious implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, the accessibility of Holland, the development of the countryside, the infrastructure for knowledge-economy development and the Regional Policy 2007-2013.

'It is especially advisable to take an increasingly participatory part in decision-making on EU regulations in the fields of provincial and municipal competence.' 'It will also be necessary to work closely with partner regions in more policy fields. It is essential to have a well-conceived partnership with three or four areas, such as Greater Copenhagen, Rhine-Ruhr, Greater London or Ile-de-France, to be able to look after the Randstad region's interests in a larger EU with increasing competition,' wrote Alexander de Roo, Euro-MP (*GroenLinks* Party)<sup>51</sup>.

On the transfer to a knowledge driven society, and the exchange of best practices to make it work on a regional level, an international *Regio Randstad* conference is scheduled for 9-10 December 2004 in Amsterdam<sup>52</sup>. This also will grant the possibility to discuss partnerships.

The Randstad Economic Agenda, resulting in some thirty 'lines of action', will undoubtedly be one of the main issues of interest to the other European regions. Many of the actions are important to develop the interrelations both within Randstad and between Holland and its hinterland, as part of a Randstad Holland Masterplan, enlarging and utilizing existing potentials and resulting in a coherent and competitive public and private investment climate.

At least one soul-searching question remains. It has been put forward by Roelf de Boer<sup>53</sup>, former minister of traffic and public works, now chair of the Rotterdam port entrepreneurs. 'Our home region Holland is a wonderful and versatile house. In the whole world 'Holland' is a brand you can turn up with. Why do we have so much difficulty in presenting our 'house' as our one and unique selling point?'

## Conclusions

Holland has been managed through the ages. By whom is still unclear. The question is rather: by whom not, since (apart from the functional water boards) the traditional three tiers of government have crept to five, including Europe and the sub-city councils in the major cities. On top of that at all levels non-elected authorities, boards and cooperating bodies have been established, among them regional councils and formalized public cooperations.

*Regio Randstad* is such a cooperation, promoting Randstad Holland as a competitive European network metropolis and a world city. A polycentric urban region, in which living is relatively privileged, in spite of the fact that keeping up a land under sea level is a costly affair.

Bringing all bodies into line with what needs to be done has become an art in modern society. This art sometimes seems long forgotten, but may well rise as a virtual art, in a positive sense, as information becomes transparent and citizens active, demanding and responsible.

*Regio Randstad* is a cooperation of four provinces, four city-regional boards and four cities. They all are largely dependant on national government funding. Growing from 1992 and formally established in 2002 it is a platform for common attuning and general policy negotiations with national government. *Regio Randstad* aims to strengthen Holland's international position and to maintain the high quality of life. On partners' demand it combines policies on regional economy and spatial planning, accessibility and rural affairs, while inner-Holland developments are designed and endorsed on 'wing' level and decided and realized on partner level.

*Regio Randstad* is not engaged in restructuring governmental organization on any level. Structures are taken for granted, however inefficient, distant or overlapping. Unlike a traditional city, a polycentric metropolis has no acute need for one all-embracing political institution. Such a need may only grow if functional, spatial and accessibility necessities are not being taken up and solved in time, if cooperation of provinces, city regions and cities should fall apart, or if national government departments play their '*divide et impere*' too far. That inevitably would lead to '*divide et decide*', divide and decay.

To *Regio Randstad* globalization, European growth and regional cooperation are starting points. European urban regions are structured according to global level processes and dynamics. And the interactive process of adapting economic, social and environmental and spatial policies to European integration will contribute to dispersing economic growth.

The economic stagnation in the Netherlands, the inadequate accessibility of the western quarter and the departmentalization of superfluous government are main elements of what hinders the Randstad from flourishing. As are, of course, parts of the inner cities becoming obsolete due to shortage of investment activity, rising criminality and lack of social cohesion.

To *Regio Randstad* it is the concerted action of all partners that counts, facing these threatening circumstances and rusted relations.

A special focus is on what has to be done related to the European regional level, at which Holland used to be high ranking. To that aim a Randstad Holland Economic Strategy has been adopted, including a Randstad Economic Agenda, containing about thirty 'lines of action'. Many of them are directed to developing quick and reliable interrelations, both within Randstad and between Holland and its hinterland, enlarging and utilizing existing potentials.

This concerted 'Holland' action must result in a coherent and competitive investment climate, a knowledge-economy driven industrious urban society in a unique Green Heart Metropolis. In this way responsible politicians and public managers are to maintain Randstad Holland and develop its world city role, not the least in the eyes and the hearts of the Hollanders.

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