

URBAN MANAGEMENT, RENEWAL AND EMPOWERMENT

THE 'GOUDA' CONNECTION

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE URBAN ENVIRONMENT



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The field of urban management, renewal and empowerment may appear diffuse and subjective, yet is essential for better and healthier living conditions in our Low Countries by the sea. Good urban management contributes to the well-being of people and to the quality of life. A healthy region needs vitality of its cities, and vice versa.

Management, and specifically urban management, can be viewed within that context as a systematic set of measures to prevent the deterioration of (urban) areas.

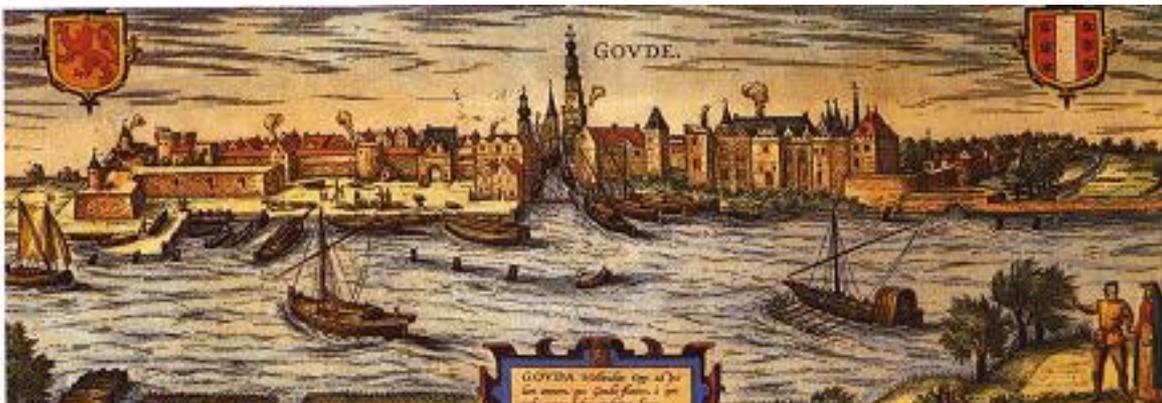
1. Urban management in The Netherlands: sticks and carrots

At the central government level in the Netherlands, there are various safety valves that ensure that municipality councils, which operate relatively autonomously, take adequate action to prevent increasing inequality within their region. Such measures could be financial, e.g. subsidies, legislative, or consist of special status allocation, for instance pilot status or being placed under financial supervision. Management, and specifically urban management, can be viewed within that context as a systematic set of measures to prevent the deterioration of (urban) areas in the Netherlands.

In 1995, the Dutch central government put in place a set of policies that specifically targets urban renewal in the larger cities. The objective of these policies is to preserve the cities as dynamic and safe places that are appealing to live in. Increasing problems associated with large urban areas demanded a joint effort of public and private stakeholders. Urban renewal management differs from traditional urban regeneration in its holistic approach. Integral to urban renewal is that it does not focus solely on physical problems, but also targets social and economic issues.

The Dutch Central Government made a covenant with the 25 largest cities to finance single objective projects during the time period of 1995-1999, and to finance longer-term multi-objective programmes during the period 1999-2004.

Although Gouda is not one of those largest 25 cities in the Netherlands, it shares many similar problems.



Gouda seen from the river, AD 1575



Korte Akkeren 2004



Gouda Oost 2004

INTERMEZZO 1: GOUDA (AD 1272)

Gouda is one of the oldest and most prominent cities in the Netherlands. It is situated in the centre of the green region in the largest Dutch conurbation (Randstad or Green Heart Metropolis). It is also part of the so-called Dutch 'bible belt'. Famous for its cheese, Gouda has in the last decades become associated with being a problem city. For the last 40 years, the local government has been placed under financial supervision of the central government. Gouda's financial problems are caused by a poor substrate, ill-advised budget allocation during the 60s and 70s, and a lack of possibilities for development and construction outside the city boundaries (at the moment, construction is restricted to 10 to 30 houses per year). Furthermore, it was not in a position to redevelop brown field sites within the mediaeval city boundaries when the economic climate would have been sufficiently encouraging. Finally, since the sixties, there are problems in Gouda associated with a large ethnic population.

Gouda wants to boost its image. Therefore, the Gouda central government has instigated a City Vision Plan (2000), a City Vision Action Programme (STAP 2001-2004) and a multi-annual programme of urban regeneration (ISV 2000-2005), as well as multiple strategic projects. Two of these strategic projects are the neighbourhood development or urban management of the Gouda Oost and Korte Akkeren neighbourhoods, discussed in this paper.

Fifteen to 20% of houses in Gouda are situated in the Gouda Oost and Korte Akkeren neighbourhoods, home to 15000 people. Roughly 20% and 40% of the population in these neighbourhoods, respectively, is of an ethnic background. Most of the ethnic population has arrived in the Netherlands as guest workers, and stayed; one of the trends accompanying a growing globalization. The majority of the ethnic immigrant population in the Gouda neighbourhoods is from a Moroccan background, a smaller part is Turkish.

The ratio of rental to private properties is strongly biased towards rental properties. Especially some social housing blocks have badly deteriorated, and offer little or nothing for the future. At the same time, there are beautiful examples of architecture and city planning, typical for city of Gouda's size and scale. Both neighbourhoods show evidence of the consequences of a weak substrate and bad maintenance.



Typical Korte Akkeren



Korte Akkeren (right) + mediaeval city (left), side by side

2. Good management makes good neighbourhoods

One of Gouda's main problems is that it is built on 'thick water', a thick peat layer that causes large parts of the city to subside about 5 to 10cm annually. Because of this, a relatively large part of Gouda's budget is reserved for daily maintenance and upkeep. What is more, any counter measures tend to have a very short shelf life, as subsidence will recur after a few months. Consequently, the council has been virtually destitute for many years.

Specific problems in the Korte Akkeren and Gouda Oost neighbourhoods are its surplus of small cheap properties, however picturesque these may be, and a lack of homes for middle incomes. As a result, the middle-income households have mostly moved out of these neighbourhoods. Especially in Gouda Oost, the cheaper housing has become predominantly occupied by migrant workers, often with a limited level of education.

The first and second generation Moroccan immigrant population is hit especially hard by the recent economic recessions. This section of the ethnic community strongly retains its traditions, speaks little or no Dutch, and has overall shown a slow pace of integration into the rest of the population. Because of this, the traditionally tight social cohesion in these neighbourhoods has all but disappeared. For example, the local football club or scouting group is forced to refuse children from immigrant backgrounds, because the parents tend not to participate in the voluntary structures that are essential to run such organisations.

3. Urban empowerment and development: pillars, programs, projects and partners

Urban development encompasses much more than simply 'building (for) a better neighbourhood'. Its approach to improvements to a neighbourhood is based on three pillars: social, economic and physical. In other words, social and economic empowerment is integrated with physical measures. Gouda has added two more pillars added to this approach: communication and participation. After all, it is vital that a contribution is made at the grassroots level, and that the population in these areas is actively involved in boosting their neighbourhood's and their own opportunities. No local government can do such a job by itself, and 'an inhabitant who is involved will care'. The important sixth pillar is of course financial.

The city council has allocated 15 years for the metamorphosis of these neighbourhoods (2000-2015). The local government and the inhabitants are both partners and stakeholders in this process, together with institutions from Gouda such as the three main housing corporations who own up to 30% of all homes.

This process has been in the planning stage since 1998. In those years a few so called 'tasters' were realised e.g. two Public Neighbourhood Information Centres, marked 'to see is to believe'. This planning stage has recently (April 2004) been concluded by a council decision on two structural planning visions and completion programmes called 'Welcoming East Gouda' (Gastvrij Gouda Oost) and 'Characterful Korte Akkeren' (Korte Akkeren- Karaktervol). These programmes involve roughly 80 small and large projects. Many more are likely to join from local initiatives over the next few years.

After years of playing safe, the moment has come to start making a difference!

4. Synergy: financing, cooperation and organisation.

The present urban development programme for both neighbourhoods will require an extra 40million euros from the local government (73million USD), which does not yet include a 5million euro contribution from the regional council. Further financing will come

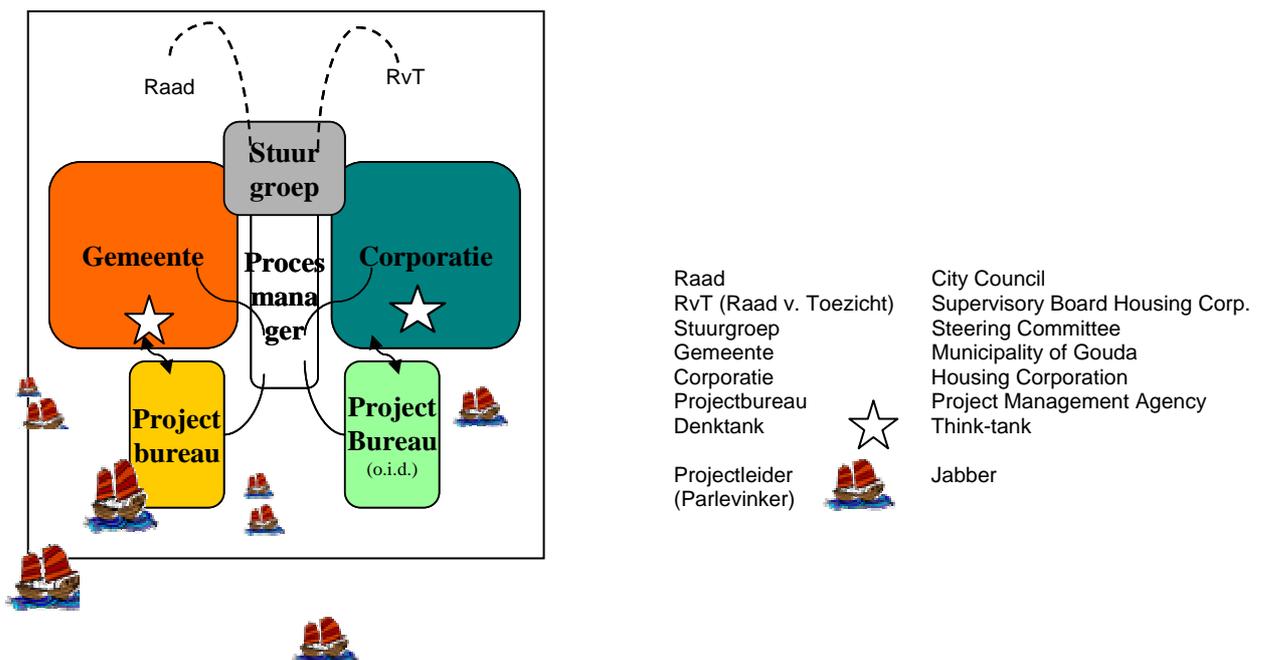
from the regular local council budget. In the 2000-2004 period, this amounted to 37million euro. The investment of housing corporations in this programme over the 2000-2015 period has been estimated to tenths of million euros, for both maintenance and new development.

Urban development has to compete with many other claims on the budget of the local council. Long term commitment of the local council is a serious cause for concern. This calls for the project organisation to show a flawless performance, as well as maintaining a high level of constant communication detailing successes and milestones of the programme. Politicians tend to count their blessings on a daily basis...

It is essential to create a synergy between all the separate projects and budgets, so that the total is more than the sum of its parts. This raises organisational and logistical issues. How can constructive cooperation be achieved between groups that have essentially different objectives? Even the housing corporations and the local government, the main partners in the process, take vastly differing approaches. The housing corporations operate in a corporate framework, and, after the privatisations in the 1980s, have moved towards acting as real estate developers on a profit basis. This clashes with the local government, which operates on a non-profit basis representing the common interest. However, even within the local council there are different schools of thought and political conviction. Resulting clashes have repeatedly led to intervention and even mediation.

To unite all these conflicting interests, the programme will be managed in projects, each with a relatively short decision path. We term this an 'implementing organisation', or the 'Butterfly and Jabbers Organisation' ('Vlinder & Parlevinkers').

The directors of the housing corporations and local government form a steering committee, headed by a member of the local council. Both the housing corporations and the local council have created a project management agency. In these agencies, the process managers act as the liaison officer to their counterparts in the parallel agency. The project leaders have one or more projects in their portfolio. The project leaders function not unlike small, independent supply craft in a harbour (jabbers), delivering quality within a definite time frame, budget and authorisation structure. If required, the project leaders of the local government can facilitate and aid their counterparts in the housing corporation.



5. The proof is in the pudding: concrete projects.

The following section describes a small selection from the 80 projects which are the building blocks for the social and economic empowerment and physical development programme.

- *Social project: involvement of young adults*

Young adults in the 16-23 age group who leave school without qualifications typically show a low participation in the job market. Particularly in the current economic recession, there is little demand for unqualified workers. These young adults fall outside most other 'regular' social government schemes. There is a high proportion of premature school-leavers in Gouda Oost, especially in the second and third generation Moroccan immigrant families. Families that came to Holland as so-called temporary 'guest workers' but never went back. The social consequence is a 'lost generation' that struggles to integrate into Dutch society, or will reject it. In other words, premature school leaving may be an obstacle to integration, and certainly leads to a generation of youths that hang around on street corners, causing trouble and vandalism without contributing to the economy. Such groups of young people have been the focus of much criticism, even in the Netherlands which prides itself on its tolerance.

Within the context of the urban development, the local government has developed an integrated set of measures to target problems associated with such groups of young adults. This includes prevention of premature school leaving, extending the provisions made for this group, offering activities and starting a process of social activation. The 'social activation' project consists of a 26 week training period in social skills, interviewing skills, empowerment and IT training in both hardware and software. These people will either return to full time education, or will pursue placements or employment. They will receive mediating support in this process by a local job agency, which has been contracted, or the social services.

The first group of young adults will successfully finish their training summer 2004. Eight out of ten young adults will finish the training programme, a good score.



Young adults in Gouda Oost



General information evening

- *Economic project: 'Neighbourhood entrepreneur scheme'*

In 2003, the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce together with the Gouda local government has started a 'Neighbourhood entrepreneur scheme'. This project aims to contribute to the revitalisation of the neighbourhood economy by stimulating local enterprise. The economy in the Korte Akkeren and Gouda Oost neighbourhood had been in decline these past decades. The character of the shopping malls deteriorated, street safety declined, and with that the number of shoppers and the profit margins and investment in local shops and companies. It was suspected that some immigrant entrepreneurs might not have sufficient knowledge to optimally participate in a future

neighbourhood economy, especially with regards to laws and regulations, knowledge of Dutch consumer behaviour and administrative and IT requirements. There was a lack of local shopkeepers or entrepreneurial associations, which also was reflected in a low level of cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce.

In reaction to this situation, the Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with the urban regeneration project agency of the local council, has started to stimulate local enterprise in the Korte Akkeren and Gouda Oost neighbourhoods. In order to do this, opportunities were highlighted to

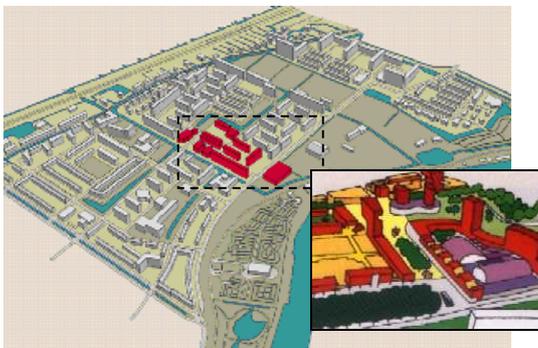
- 1) Screen (potential) new enterprise in the neighbourhoods, with the aim to create baseline conditions;
- 2) Knowledge transfer of skills to local entrepreneurs;
- 3) Increasing the level of organisation of the entrepreneurs;
- 4) Extension and information to existing and potential entrepreneurs;
- 5) Initiation of mentoring projects;
- 6) An inventory of available and potentially suitable commercial premises.

The project started with several general information evenings aimed at knowledge transfer. Since then, the neighbourhood has seen a mentoring project, an inventoring exercise to locate multiple premises or a single building that would be suitable as an 'enterprise hub', and the formation of shopkeepers associations. Especially the latter proved to be very popular in the local immigrant community.

- *Physical project of social-economic origin: a new multifunctional neighbourhood centre*

An important focal point in the urban regeneration of both neighbourhoods is improvements to the centre, in conjunction with improvements to the amenities. We hope to boost the appeal of the neighbourhood and the liveliness of the street scene. This contributes to local safety. The improvement of the shops on offer and their turnover also reinforces the economic strength of the neighbourhood, as well as creating employment opportunities. At the same time, combining central amenities with housing for senior sector of the population increased the 'lifelong opportunities' of the neighbourhood. 'Lifelong' refers to the potential to live in a neighbourhood from birth through to old age, which has a positive influence on social cohesion.

The first research stage of this project has recently started in Gouda Oost. We are drawing up a program of requirements and demands, and will undertake location and mass studies. Simultaneously, we are carrying out a study of the financial attainability and an impact assessment of the results. The target of this stage is to reach a development strategy, and to be able to answer the question whether the best result is achieved by the local government acting as a developer, or whether this will be an open opportunity for market mechanisms.



A new centre, focal point in Gouda Oost



The 'Old Cemetery'

- *Inhabitants initiative and participation project: the Old Cemetery ('de Oude Begraafplaats')*

Over time, the Korte Akkeren neighbourhood has become increasingly densely built in, which has been to the detriment of its green open spaces. The historical cemetery had become neglected, and played no roll in the atmosphere of the area. This changed following a local neighbourhood initiative. The initiative petitioned financial support, as well as manpower support from the local council. They looked at possibilities to upgrade the cemetery and its direct surroundings. The plan was approved spring 2004 and will be implemented this very year.

This initiative is interesting from many points of view, as it shows

- 1) Spontaneous initiative of the neighbourhood inhabitants;
- 2) Inhabitants making the plans and the decisions;
- 3) The local council indicates the financial opportunities;
- 4) Civil servants from the local council acting as advisors to the neighbourhood inhabitants.

- *Social-economic project and inhabitants + housing corporations initiative: apartment complex janitors*

For years the social apartment complexes in Gouda Oost suffered severely from vandalism and were in a filthy state, especially the blocks with high percentage Moroccan families whose cultural background holds a different view on how to treat one's environment. The problem of vandalism and filthiness can be associated with the young adults as discussed before. The repair and daily cleaning amounted to ten thousands of euros on a yearly base and were a great loss for the housing corporations and even worse, those residents who felt unsafe and could move went away.

Several years ago the housing corporations and the representative of the Moroccans put their heads together and decided to appoint a resident in each block as 'apartment complex janitor'. The resident-janitor receives a small amount of money befitting his unemployment allowance. We now have 12 janitors, 10 Moroccan and 2 Dutch. At the beginning the group was trained how to handle troublesome residents. Every three weeks the janitors come together to discuss their experiences and to learn from each other.

As for the results, every year the damage is less and even better, larger groups of residents behave more decent and participate in sessions to discuss improvements. As for the janitors themselves, from being looked upon as 'traitors' in the beginning (a difficult start!) they now have status and are respected by their fellow-countryman.

6. Impact assessment and monitoring of the project

It is important to perform regular impact assessments and monitoring studies to check the effectiveness of programmes, projects and results. For example, a recent nationwide study indicates that safety in neighbourhoods may not improve after development. Until social structure and cohesion improves, problem areas will remain unsafe. A lot more is needed to turn a neighbourhood around than just the introduction of attractive new developments and beautification of the streets.

7. Continuous risk management

Apart from assessment, there is a demand for continuous risk management. This is especially poignant given the culture in the Gouda local government, which was

characterised by a lack of confidence between parties, many diverse interests, a lack of professionalism on the side of the local government and a vast complexity of the issues involved. A recent nationwide study shows that the cooperation between local government and housing corporations is frequently beset by problems. The dissatisfaction with the level of cooperation is substantial. A common opinion is that cooperation does not achieve much worth mentioning, while it gives rise to many conflicts between councils and corporations.

8. Epilogue: looking through the eyes of the urban planner

The strength of the Gouda urban renewal programme is joining physical intervention, change, renewal and improvement. We often have to work without an empirical foundation underpinning our social, economic or physical interventions; causal relationships are unspecified, and more often than not, conclusive figures that should support proposed measures are still lacking.

The field of urban management, renewal and empowerment may appear diffuse and subjective, yet it is essential for a better and healthier living conditions in our Low Countries by the sea. Good urban management contributes to the well-being of people and to the quality of life. Vitality of the cities is essential for a healthy region and vice versa.

INTERMEZZO 2: LESSONS LEARNED

1. *The essential challenges of urban management, apart from defining the tasks, are to forge coalitions, create an enduring political support structure and to communicate with citizens and stakeholders.*
2. *In this respect, the urban planner functions more as a process manager than as a technical specialist. In this role, (s)he will draw on tools such as intervention, mediation, innovation (procedures) and maintaining a clear overview of a multitude of projects, initiatives and programmes. Last but not least, urban planning requires intuition to react to constantly changing conditions.*
3. *Good urban management requires that a redevelopment budget is spent intelligently on both the social, economic and physical structure of neighbourhoods. These categories are interlinked, and therefore may impact on each other, either negatively or positively.*
4. *Urban management starts first with a 'clean, functioning and safe' living environment. This is fundamental to implementation of holistic approaches, social and economic empowerment and physical development.*
5. *Metamorphosis and transformation without alienation is essential at the scale of the urban development in the Gouda neighbourhoods. It is essential that inhabitants can always keep feeling at home in their neighbourhood. It is therefore vital to respect the identity of the neighbourhood within the structure of the larger city.*

References:

Translation: dr. ir. H. Martine van de Poll / London
Birds-eye view: Partnering team / Delft