

Randstad Holland towards 2040 - perspectives from national government

1. Introduction: About the Randstad

Aviation pioneer Albert Plesman introduced the term 'Randstad Holland' (Rim City Holland) in the 1930s while flying across the Netherlands and noticing a strip of cities at the edge of a circle of open agricultural area in the centre. The term became popular in Dutch spatial policy in the 1950s, when employment and population grew rapidly in the western regions (in and around Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague). This 'Dutch metropolis' gained international renown when Gerald Burke published a book entitled *Greenheart Metropolis* in 1966. In the same year, the book *World Cities* by Peter Hall catapulted the Randstad into the global league of large cities. The Randstad has been the undisputed economic, cultural, political and demographic focus of the Netherlands since the Middle Ages. But since the introduction of the term 'metropolis' discussions have been ongoing about whether this character is in fact desirable, about how the Randstad should develop further and about how it should be governed. These discussions are continued in an original fashion with the government's new vision entitled 'Randstad Strategic Agenda 2040'.



Why a vision on 2040? The simplest answer is as follows: Because parliament has requested it. There are two observations underlying this request: 1. In the Spatial Planning Policy Document (*Nota Ruimte*), the national planning strategy of 2006 applying to 2020¹, the Randstad section was mentioned, but not discussed in sufficient detail. 2. The preparation of investment decisions about large infrastructures such as the national airport (Amsterdam Schiphol Airport) and enormous housing locations takes a long time, often 10 years, while the actual construction can easily take as long; that is why we need to start looking at post-2020 today. The content of the Spatial Planning Policy Document also lacked an answer to a

number long-term spatial issues relevant to climate change, with the declining openness between the cities and the wish to excel economically and being willing and able to remain at the top in the long term.

The Randstad has a population of seven million; 45% of the total population on 26% of the country's land area. A number of key figures on the spatial development of the Randstad indicate that a significant demand for housing still needs to be met - 15% at any rate and, if rapid growth should occur, even 30% of the current housing supply. Contributing factors include growth in infrastructure, room for employment (especially for seaports), for nature, water storage and recreation. Estimates are especially high in the container transport sector (between 4x and 6x the scope of 2000). These figures indicate that the general concerns about space shortages and urban sprawl have remained high.

However, these figures also make it clear that the spatial issues are also becoming more complex: developments are increasingly expanding across municipal and provincial borders, while sectoral solutions, such as new roads or new residential areas, are becoming more and more difficult to realise. The slow pace at which projects are being realised in the Netherlands in practice is therefore also a growing problem. That has led to not only the issue of spatial planning being placed high on the agenda, but also the governing of the Randstad becoming a focus of attention.

This document will firstly focus on the issue of governing the Randstad, then on the new vision on spatial planning, and lastly on the issue of what impact this will have on urban sprawl.

2. Governing Randstad Holland

Public government of Randstad Holland is shared between the state (i.e. at least five ministries), four provinces, two hundred of municipalities (including the four major cities of the Netherlands), and a dozen water management boards, while public transport is taken care of by a mix of municipal, private and state transport companies and infrastructure providers. To create vigorous urban regions that can survive in world competition, this structure came to be considered as inadequate: complex, slow, and working at times, against itself.

Measures to restructure formal government have resulted in a decrease in the number of formal bodies and the creation of regional authorities: small municipalities have been merged forcefully, and this process will continue; the water management boards have merged so that only four major water boards now exist in the Randstad area. The creation, in 1995, of statutory urban planning-and-transport authorities around each major city has been a half-won victory of regional thinking that has been curtailed recently, in the sense that statutory regional-urban planning tasks have been removed from the books. This is a setback for those who advocate a strong connection between land-use planning and transport planning.

All other attempts at restructuring formal government, such as cutting urban regions out of the realm of their provinces (and creating 'city-provinces'), or the 2006 attempt by a prestigious state committee to create one Randstad province (instead of four), have failed so far. As far as this Randstad province is concerned, the present government concluded that most issues to be dealt with are not related to the Randstad-scale but mostly to smaller scales. Furthermore, a Randstad province in the Dutch context creates several problems, not only related to the restricted internal coherence of this area. The dominance of such a province would make it necessary to further reform the other eight provinces as well as restrict the state's influence and responsibilities. Such a major reform weakens the focus on the spatial and other problems that have to be solved and does not contribute to an efficient and effective spatial policy.

There are, however, forms of governance around special subjects. Examples are the Holland Business Promotion Office, and the half-year conferences between state and regions about infrastructure and spatial development, leading to formal agreements about short- and middle-term investments. In the period 2002-2006 the government stressed its economic goal for the Randstad as a whole and focussed its attention in practice on the lower scale of the major urban and economic areas in the Randstad. In doing so, the Randstad was mainly treated by National Government as consisting of four entities, the North Wing, the Utrecht region, the South Wing, and the famous Green Heart. A program was developed for the North Wing in combination with the Utrecht Area and for each of the other areas, and one minister was appointed as coordinator for each area. Another example is spatial development, which is partially governed by 'urbanisation contracts' between the state, metropolitan authorities and provinces. In those contracts, municipalities promise to develop housing areas in exchange for state subsidies for green spaces, land-making, soil sanitation and regional transport.

In 2007, the new Cabinet chose to focus more on Randstad Holland as a whole, and at the same time to concentrate on speeding-up decisions on priority investment projects. As a result, program management on the level of sub-areas has been discarded.

In conformity with modern theories, major operations aiming at new Randstad-level formal structures are not given priority. 'Territorial optimisation is not an adequate response to the changing nature of spatial development. ... [M]ultiplicity of space urges to multiplicity of action'. 'Thinking about discontinuity of space as a consequence of the juxtaposition of the 'far' and the 'near' - and demising by this a traditional Euclidean conception of space - also requires new trans-scalar and trans-sector perspectives for planning and governance.'ⁱⁱ All urban regions in the world have complex governmental structures, Randstad is no exceptionⁱⁱⁱ. Voluntary governance structures have arisen in parts of Randstad Holland, e.g. Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, and new alliances will be stimulated, e.g. between the ports of Rotterdam en Amsterdam. Ideas to install a Randstad (Public) Transport Authority are cautiously being studied again, including options to create such authorities for a lower geographical scale (the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (including Utrecht) and the Rotterdam-The Hague area).

Formal government structures aside, national government has chosen to remedy an old illness: the retardation of decision making for projects that benefit the whole of the Randstad area because of lack of 'ownership'^{iv}. 35 projects are framed in a 'Randstad Urgency Program'. One minister (for Transport and Water) is responsible for coordinating this program on behalf of the Cabinet. His main focuses are: reaching deadlines based on formal agreements between state and region, and the participation of decision makers who feel a strong personal responsibility. These projects, ranging from transport to urban development, are 'governed' by couples: a cabinet minister with a regional politician, sharing the responsibility to promote quick decision-making. Regular reports go to parliament, so that a certain amount of 'naming and shaming' can arise.

A supporting team, with representatives from five ministries and the region, monitors the projects, helps projects, and prepares high level meetings. An additional factor is the so-called 'ambassadors' to each project: well respected civic leaders that can bring parties together from inside and outside of the government.

Thus far, this construct of 'twin governors' has produced higher awareness of the state of projects and resulted in reaching some difficult milestones.

The Randstad 2040 vision project is one of these projects with a high national urgency and one of the few that aims to produce a long term vision as basis for new investment projects. It builds upon the investment projects in the Randstad Urgency Program. This vision creates

the basis for new projects that can in the future be brought under the umbrella of the Randstad Urgency Program.

3. Spatial planning: The new vision

3.1 A sustainable, competitive European top region

Since the 1950s, the government has been aiming to make the Netherlands competitive on the global market, and the physical structuring of the country is one of the means of achieving this.

The Netherlands has always been a key player on the global market, trading in agricultural products such as salted herring and colonial wares and, of course, in currency. These trading activities meant that the Netherlands (= the Low Countries, which also included the current Flanders) was one of Europe's most urbanised regions in the early Middle Ages. Since the Second World War, the western parts of the Netherlands have been known for their trade, logistics and service provision as well as the relevant export sectors such as petroleum, chemicals and horticulture and generate about half of the GDP on a quarter of the country's land area. The economic structure of the Netherlands is unlikely to change much, but it is expected that, due to the further internationalisation of the economy and the increasing ageing of the population, the international competition to attract businesses and employees will continue. Labour productivity must be increased to maintain the level of prosperity. Trade and service in their old and new forms will continue to dominate the character of the western Netherlands to a large extent.

The physical environment - or rather more correctly the 'spatial quality' - has become a more distinguishing feature among countries and regions. After all, labour and capital markets are becoming increasingly homogenous, and knowledge is rarely restricted to local areas. 'Knowledge' as a production factor is gaining ground. The same applies to the appeal and quality of the city and urban environment in the eyes of multinational professionals, businessmen and creative thinkers. Knowledge intensive 'advanced producer services' are the leading economic activities that these cities and urban agglomerates seek out^v. They compete globally and this leads to specialisation and a concentration of key positions and of decision makers. These regions offer special qualities that attract people to them. It is therefore not surprising that top tourist and university cities such as Copenhagen, Brussels, Barcelona and Amsterdam have enjoyed dramatic growth in recent years and are continuing to strengthen their positions. The agglomeration advantages of these cities and their regions form part of that. Contributing factors to this power includes not only the urban climate, but also the reinforcement of agglomeration advantages. The relevant disadvantages of an agglomeration must obviously remain limited. Because of the key role fulfilled by prominent decision makers of companies and institutes, and by knowledge workers and creative thinkers, there is a demand for attractive living, working and leisure-time environments for highly educated workers. After all, many consider the living environment a critical factor, whether it concerns the supply of housing, the amount of green spaces in the area, the level of the university programmes, safety or the cultural activities and leisure-time facilities on offer. These advantages of an agglomeration are partly contained in the international and regional connections and partly in the centres and cities where people choose to establish themselves. The Randstad cities (and the Randstad as a whole) fall short on all of these points, according to the OECD^{vi}. This conclusion is qualified by other reports^{vii} which have concluded that Amsterdam can indeed compete with the best of Europe and highlighted the opportunities that Amsterdam offers for the entire Randstad assuming a leading position.

Sub-optimal use of 3 key Randstad assets

⇒ **The Randstad has not reached a sufficient critical mass to compete with global cities**

Sub-optimal use of 3 key Randstad assets:

<p>Opportunities that a polycentric metro-region offers (agglomeration economies)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Low internal mobility; ✓ Lack of high quality housing; ✓ Under-use of some Randstad assets (such as the Green Heart) ✓ Lack of coordination in key economic sectors among the 4 agglomerations (tourism; higher education): duplication rather than economies of scale
<p>Randstad high knowledge potential and good knowledge infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Limited private sector innovation ✓ Limited linkages between firms (esp. SMEs) and knowledge institutes; much scientific knowledge not translated into commercial activity ✓ Low attraction of highly skilled people (students or workers) ✓ Limited attraction of innovative foreign firms
<p>Randstad labour market potential</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One of the most inflexible labour market in the OECD ✓ High inactivity rates of ethnic minorities concentrated in G4 cities

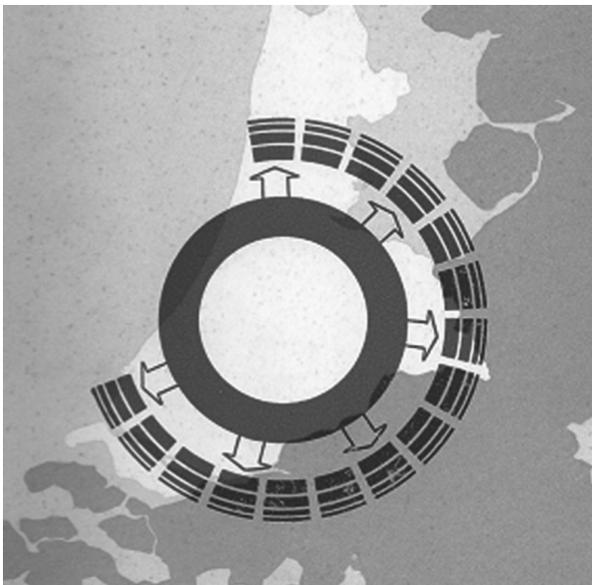
**Better use of agglomeration economies, knowledge and labour market
⇒ likely to have a substantial impact on LT growth prospects**

Source: OECD

In addition to these spatial-economic aspects, there is also the immense task of climate-proofing the Randstad to protect it from floods while conserving its ecology and landscape. The government is currently setting out a new course on these issues as well.

3.2 The old vision

The old vision dates as far back as 1958 and saw the Randstad as a collection of *city regions*, kept firmly apart by *green zones* (buffer zones) and by a large *central open area* (the Green Heart). This is illustrated by an urban ring around a green centre, or heart.



Source: *De ontwikkeling van het Westen des lands*, 1958

The city regions were linked by main routes extending across the national borders. The international corridors were formed by two important transport junctions - Rotterdam (seaport) and Amsterdam (airport) - and international places of establishment in the four large cities.

This vision was born of two preoccupations. Firstly, it was believed for some time that each region in the Netherlands deserves a fair share of the national attention and investment (known as 'distributive fairness') and that wealth should be distributed equally^{viii}. Secondly, after the war, a majority of politicians believed that very large cities - 'metropolises'

such as Paris - were a threat to moral values and would develop at the expense of the agricultural areas^{ix}. For that reason, the cities in the west were deliberately 'restricted' to one million residents and the buffer zones were intended to keep the cities firmly separated. Large parts of the housing requirements were therefore met in new towns that were located at significant distances from the 'donor cities'. The Green Heart was primarily intended as an agricultural area.

The term ‘metropolis’ was nonetheless applied loosely and the Randstad was called our ‘Dutch metropolis’ - intended to mean the combination of large numbers of people and economic activities on a small territory, but without the problems of the very large foreign cities and with ample open outlying areas. Everyone supported this viewpoint. In 1958, there were only a few who considered it economically damaging^x.

Later literature started referring to it as a polynuclear metropolis. This entity would provide a good equilibrium between the advantages and disadvantages of an agglomeration and be able to compete with other ‘metropolises’.

3.3 The new vision

A Dutch metropolis without the agglomeration disadvantages and other drawbacks of classic metropolises such as Paris - that is how the old vision could be described. The new vision starts with the assertion that this collection of city regions is not equal to metropolises in its functioning. It concerns daily urban systems that do lie close to one another and form a *morphologic* network, but do not form a strong *functional* entity. Most relations between businesses, in as far as they occur within the Randstad, play out in and around the municipalities and their environments, while the relations between the cities seem to be dominated by Amsterdam in many respects^{xi}. Although there is an indication of a network, it is not strongly integrated with specialised components^{xii}. The POLYNET study^{xiii} shows that the above also holds true for other so-called polynuclear regions such as Northern Switzerland and Flanders. Zurich, for example, is dominant in the Northern Swiss system.

These conclusions have contributed to a functional approach being chosen as starting point in the ongoing political discussion about the Randstad ‘as a whole’ and to a more detailed picture emerging of where precisely the different international qualities of the Randstad are to be found. The main focus of the metropolis ambition is no longer on quantity, but instead on attaining a key position in international spatial-economic networks. Relatively small cities like Barcelona, Madrid, Milan, Munich, Frankfurt, Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam play a significant role, after London and Paris, in terms of functions of international importance: conventions, trade fairs, airports, seaports, knowledge, NGOs, urban tourism and head offices of companies and institutions. As far as our capital is concerned, this position must be strengthened and utilised for the benefit of the entire Randstad. Specialised functions that also serve an international and leading position are to be found in other cities in the Randstad: Rotterdam as Europe’s largest port, The Hague as legal capital. These positions, too, offer the Randstad and the rest of the Netherlands as a whole opportunities for international competition between cities. A basic assumption of the new vision is that the internationally strong and powerful functions, in particular, need to be reinforced and that the relevant efforts in terms of policy and implementation should contribute to this without assuming a ‘Randstad’ scale from the beginning. After all, this scale does not always suit the relevant function in every case. Furthermore, the great advantages of an agglomeration in large metropolises like London and Paris should be kept in mind. A larger functional substance of the city regions in the Randstad could contribute to this. Larger agglomerations could help realise greater specialisation and improved quality. The physical development resources available here are upscaling, intensification and improved connections.

Admittedly, the Randstad’s green spaces offer too little in terms of quality and quantity to be considered highly appealing for recreational purposes, while too many limitations have been imposed on the requirement for green living environments to be competitive even if these environments are given a face-lift.

The abovementioned concerns the economically competitive ‘urban’ side of the issue. The new vision also makes demands on the sustainability of the spatial planning, and climate proofing plays a key role in that regard. This is new; a development born out of necessity. There is no reason to focus on discouraging urban development in the generally low-lying Randstad. However, supplementary measures are needed. For the Randstad as a whole, drastic measures concerning the Maas and Rhine basins are imperative if we want to keep

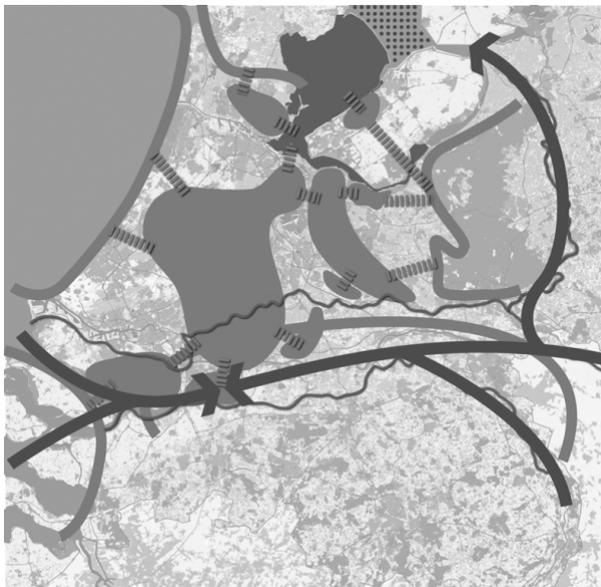
the Rotterdam/Dordrecht regions dry. Especially since it is no longer possible to drain the entire Green Heart for agricultural purposes. This area offers opportunities for introducing recreational features and attractive homes on the water. Furthermore, the Green Heart must not be seen as an isolated region but should instead be scaled up to become part of a system between Zeeland and IJsselmeer that is shaped by the water and lies below sea level for the most part.

Another side of sustainability is the space available for nature, open countryside and recreation. Viewed against the backdrop of the anticipated growth in the demand for urban space, it is of the utmost importance to limit the new utilisation of space and keep valuable landscapes free. This can only be realised if the use of existing urban regions receives top priority and is intensified wherever possible. This applies to both housing and employment, especially at industrial estates.

3.4 New image

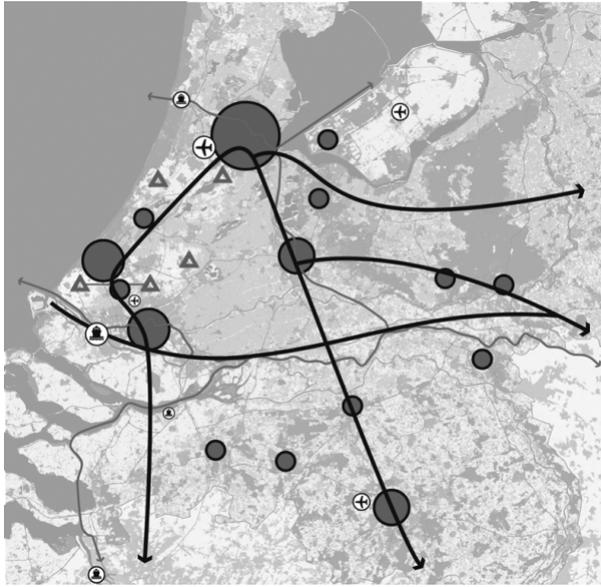
To speak in metaphors: The traditional image of a ring of cities around a green heart needs to be changed. It is based on a traditionally one-dimensional morphologic image of the division between 'red' and 'green'; between city and countryside. It also demarcates the Randstad region on the map, and this is too restrictive from a functional viewpoint. The new image will first be built up from two images that correspond with the green-blue structure and the urban structure. Both of these structures have their own driving forces, opportunities and threats.

Firstly, we have the robust green-blue structure of the south-western Delta up to IJsselmeer - the 'green-blue delta'. National landscapes such as the Green Heart and Waterland form part of this. Sustainable water management is possible here, the area is protected from rising sea levels, recreational activities of note are offered and green living environments are offered on selected locations. This green-blue structure is undergoing expansion and water logging (larger areas of water; raised water level in the deepest polders).

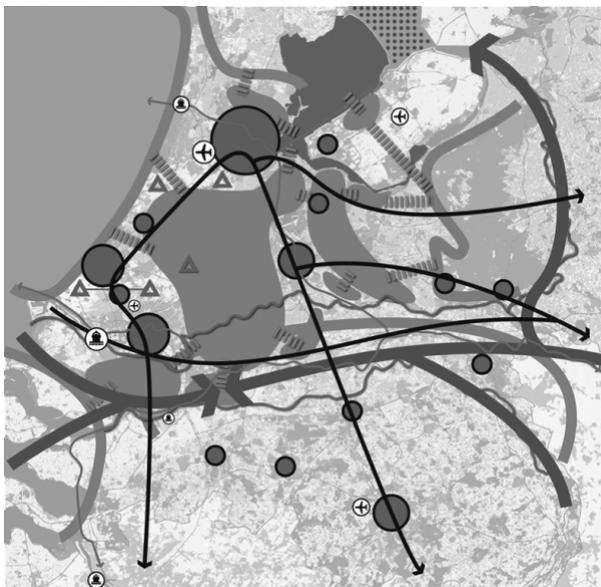


Secondly: A network of large urban and economic centres, which serve as junctions in international connections (road, water, air, rail, internet), with Amsterdam as international gateway. This network is unlimited and geographically linked rather than contiguous. This spatial functional structure will be scaled up, land use will be intensified, the internal and external accessibility will be improved (increased substance) and the urban quality and intensity will be reinforced. The focus will shift towards the power of the cities. Further intensification of spatial expansion - if realised in a proper and appealing fashion - will contribute to this power. This will serve to broaden the Netherlands's long-standing

reputation as distribution country. People - including those in key international positions - will be attracted by urban power and the spatial qualities of the cities and countryside.



These structures converge in the spatial (morphologic) reality; after all, there is only one physical space. The new image is that of a number of powerful cities (Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht) with a specific national/international character and Amsterdam as a type of internationally oriented central business district in various fields, with a robust and large-scale green-blue structure of IJsselmeer to Delta and from Coast to the Heuvelrug and a number of attractive metropolitan parks.



3.5 Planning according to the new vision: the national/international level

We distinguish between what needs to be done on the international and on the national scale and what is important on the local and the regional scale. The government will first and foremost ensure that the national and international scale receive the proper attention. It will also see to it that provinces and municipalities are able to cope with the local and regional developments. What exactly needs to be done in the period up to 2040 and what investments are needed are topics that will be worked out in greater detail in the next few years. However, the direction in which this new vision is heading is already clear.

The main focus on the *national and international scale* will be on the protection and development of the blue-green delta. The greatest task with reference to protection is against flooding from the rivers, especially in Dordrecht and Rotterdam. The main dyke around the Randstad is strong enough, but reducing the risk will require measures on the coast and along the large rivers (specifically the Rhine and Maas). Construction can only take place in the river areas if high water is taken into account (floating homes, for example). The North Sea coast will be reinforced in the next few years (weak links), for example near Scheveningen (The Hague), and should offer sufficient protection until 2040. Measures are also under preparation for the period up to 2100.

Other tasks include raising the water level at a number of locations inland. Because pumping activities have caused various types of farmland to shift to lower regions, good water quality can no longer be maintained (becomes brackish, for example). Raising the water level will make agriculture in the area less profitable and increase the risk of flooding. The solution is sought in raising the level in combination with environmental and housing developments. Housing developments will also help generate funds to implement these measures, while the international climate for establishing businesses will benefit from attractive living environments on the water; one of the strong points of the Netherlands which is unable to offer homes with a mountain view. How much water level increase and water logging will be required will depend on factors such as technical innovations including underwater drainage.

What should also be dealt with on the national and global scale are the international economic strengths available. Topping the list are the cities, owing to their international functions, each with its own specialisation: Rotterdam in freight logistics, The Hague in international law, Utrecht in education and research, while Amsterdam stands out with a broad profile, but especially in terms of professional and creative services and tourism, as already mentioned. The large horticultural areas with their logistics centres (Westland, Aalsmeer, etc.) will also require reinforcement, as some of the production function seems to be shifting towards other parts of the country and the centre function on the current location continues to expand. That same expansion process of the spatial productivity is taking place in the field of logistics, where ports are turning into network ports and parts of the freight processing takes place in the hinterland (e.g. West-Brabant and Noord-Limburg with respect to the Port of Rotterdam). In this sense, reinforcement of the collaboration between the Dutch seaports (Rotterdam and Amsterdam at any rate and possibly also Antwerp and other foreign ports in due course) has also been placed on the agenda. Current key projects (HST stations, large inner-city transformations, greenport projects, science parks) are already giving shape to these developments and new key projects will be developed.

The future of Schiphol as transport junction for Amsterdam and the rest of the Netherlands is crucial. Like many other large airports (such as Heathrow), Schiphol is outgrowing its capacity. Three strategies are being pursued: In the first place, technical measures will be used to maximise air capacity to prevent the noise levels from increasing. In the second place, part of the growing air traffic will be diverted to Lelystad (east of Almere) and Eindhoven. This will however require fast and reliable connections with the Randstad (especially by train). In the third place, the independence of transit passengers on Schiphol will be reduced through the further growth of Amsterdam and its greater environment as a strong economic region that generates more origin/destination (O/D) passengers. This fits in with the strategy to intensify and upgrade the urbanisation process and the intended improvement of the appeal of the Amsterdam region and the Randstad as a whole so that it more frequently becomes the destination of travellers.

Other improvements in the transport system will be based on the urban developments around the transport axes from Amsterdam, namely the A4 [Amsterdam-The Hague-Rotterdam-Antwerp (Belgium)], A2 [Amsterdam-Utrecht-Eindhoven-Liege (Belgium)] and the A2/A12 (Amsterdam-Utrecht-Arnhem-Ruhr area (Germany)). Modal shift, especially towards

rail transport (including HST) is also anticipated here in addition to modest expansions of the road network.

3.6 Planning: local and regional scale

There are two main issues in terms of the green-blue network: protecting the differentiation of landscape and offering the cities a green quality impulse, partly to support the intensification of the urban areas. So-called buffer zones, a legacy from the 1950s, are currently situated between the large cities and are increasingly serving as recreational areas for the most part rather than a 'green belt' to keep the cities apart. The need for outdoor recreation is still great and increasingly forming part of the primary factors determining the quality of life. The 'metropolitan parks' model will serve to strengthen the recreational character; more parks will be realised and others will be expanded. Naturally, this will include links to the national landscapes. The development of larger expanses of water will be accompanied by the highly desirable living environments in lower-density areas.

All of the urban areas are under constant pressure in terms of growth. More central urban living environments are needed in part, which forms a good basis for intensification around transport junctions, for example, and for switching to new urban functions such as housing on former industrial and port sites, railway yards and the like. The utilisation of existing urban areas will at any rate be continued through, for instance, the transformation of an old port terrain into a living or living-working area. The aim is to meet at least 40% of the new housing demand in existing built-up areas. Priorities in that regard include the multiplicity of space, 'greening' (e.g. grass roofs), high-rise developments and the shortage of underground space. In the Randstad vision, the government emphatically expresses the desire to achieve more in this regard as part of the efforts to strengthen the city and reduce the spatial pressure on the quality of the landscape. This does not alter the fact that, besides the extra housing in the cities, new housing locations will be needed on various locations. Almere will be the largest in 20 year's time, with 60,000 homes, but Haarlemmermeer is also experiencing drastic growth, while elsewhere (especially in Utrecht) the urban spatial needs cannot be met in the current city alone. It therefore makes sense that a number of locations are being developed as a continuation of the Spatial Planning Policy Document. If a serious and intensive investigation of the inner-city opportunities indicates that new locations are needed, these will primarily be sought in direct connection with the cities, partly using the possible shift of extensive ground utilisation functions on locations situated relatively higher and linking up with the traffic and transport infrastructure. Only when very little space is left will a shift to locations further afield, outside the traditional Randstad, be considered (east of Utrecht). Naturally, each new spatial development project will include a design task to shape it to such an extent that it improves the spatial quality and appeals to people.

4. The contribution to preventing urban sprawl

Now that the state has opted to make use of the existing governing structures and it has become unlikely that the provinces will merge (into a single Randstad province, for example), or the collaboration between municipalities will be strengthened, the question remains how urban fragmentation can be prevented. Another paper^{xiv} has indicated that the concept of a 'concentrated deconcentration' has been proven to provide a sound basis for relatively concentrated urbanisation, while allowing room for the housing needs for greener living environments. That concept also holds true for the Randstad and is shaped in particular by imposing restrictions on the landscapes that can undergo urbanisation on the one hand, and through contracts between the municipalities and provinces and the government on the other. At the same time, the government currently places greater emphasis on the cities and the concentration of urbanisation in the cities in the Randstad vision. This can be realised when the possibilities are explored and utilised in collaboration with other parties and the government contributes to it with adequate regulatory measures and financial resources.

After all, the current efforts in the Randstad do not suffice. As mentioned before: relevant in this regard is the ambition of increasing the urban power and functional substance; an objective that can be encouraged through above-average intensification in central-urban areas and through the development of new living and working locations in tandem with new or improved transport junctions. Dramatic improvement is also needed with reference to public transport and transfer points from public transport to bicycle or car. The growth opportunities of the strongest region should be supported to this end.

At the same time, part of the housing demand will have to be met in less dense environments to comply with the various wishes of citizens and to be internationally competitive, which would indeed result in a form of dilution/deconcentration. This might however contribute to the spatial quality if the locations selected are situated near large centres with ample transport and other facilities and by rejecting extremely densely populated areas (fewer than 10 homes per hectare, for example^{xv}) while better conserving the most valuable landscapes. To that end the government is preparing a drastic simplification of control. The combination with water storage can also ensure that a relatively permanent division is created between built-up areas and 'open spaces' which, owing to the high market value of waterfront homes, offers more effective protection than lines on a map. The role of the government is not limited to the urbanisation contracts, regulations and financial resources. In fact, its main contribution lies specifically in developing the large green-blue delta and improving public transport and junctions. And as far as the international positioning of the Randstad and its cities is concerned, the government will explore how improved inclusion in the international network of high-speed lines can be obtained, for example by means of HST trains between Amsterdam, Eindhoven and Liege and between Amsterdam and Cologne.

ⁱ Bart Vink and Arjen van der Burg, 2006, 'New Dutch spatial planning policy creates space for development', in *disP*, 164, no. 1 2006, p. 41- 49.

ⁱⁱ Willem Salet, 2006, 'Rescaling territorial governance in the Randstad Holland: The responsiveness of spatial and institutional strategies to changing socio-economic interactions', in *European Planning Studies*, vol. 14 no. 7. p. 959-977. See p. 965.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ruimtelijk Planbureau, 2008, *Bestuur en ruimte: de Randstad in internationaal perspectief*, Den Haag.

F. Hendriks, 2006, 'Shifts in governance in a polycentric urban region: The case of the Dutch Randstad', in *International Journal of Public Administration*, no. 10.

^{iv} We thank Sandra Konijn, Ministry of Transport and Water, for kindly giving us background information about this program.

^v See Peter Hall and Kathy Pain (eds.), 2006, *The polycentric metropolis*, London: Earthscan.

^{vi} OECD, 2007, *Territorial review: Randstad Holland*, Paris

^{vii} For example: Rozenblat, *Villes européennes*, 2003

^{viii} This notion was only abandoned in the 1990s in favour of a spatial-economic policy of 'regions on their own steam': each region should utilise its opportunities. In the past, the state supported the developments with the greatest chance of succeeding rather than those lagging behind (on the other hand is a generally effective social policy that guarantees all citizens a minimum standard of life, access to education and housing, etc. regardless of where they live).

ix The 'Winter of Starvation' of 1944 (during the Second World War) played an important role in this. The event was still fresh on the minds of many and there was still serious concern about an independent food production system.

x Only one member of the commission that drafted the old vision in 1958 (a member of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management) spoke out forcefully against the decision in a dissenting opinion.

xi The Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research, 2006, *Vele steden maken nog geen Randstad*, The Hague.

xii Evert Meijers, 2006, *Synergy in polycentric urban regions*, Delft: Eburon.

xiii See also Peter Hall, 2008, 'How polycentric are mega-city regions?', in *Nova Terra*, 2008, January, p. 24-29. he came to the conclusion, possibly to his own surprise, that (with the exception of South East England) the polynuclear regions studied had limited internal functional connections and that each region has a so-called 'first city' that served as centre for the advanced producer services.

xiv Yvonne van Remmen and Arjen van der Burg, *Past and future of Dutch urbanization policies*, ISOCARP 2008.

xv Popular living environments that people experience as 'green', 'rural' or 'rustic' often have significant densities (around 25 homes per hectare), especially in traditional towns. The landscape, the parking and traffic solutions, the amount of green spaces, the size of the neighbourhood and so forth help create a satisfying environment without an extremely low density.