

DUTCH SPATIAL PLANNING AND HIERARCHY: MAKING DIFFERENCES, THINK-DO-ACT, AND RENEWED RE-ACTIVISM

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INTRODUCTION

Where, how, what

The majority of the world's population has always lived in coastal areas, and especially in deltas – always 'living dangerously'. This was worthwhile because of fertile lands and the opportunities for trade. Prosperity only comes if one is ready to take risks and make a difference.

Important factors in making differences are the strength of our cities and their social and economic impact. Nowadays the majority of the world's population live in cities. Our Randstad Holland is one of the forty or so most important deltas in the world, in economical and cultural terms, and one of the most densely populated areas in the Western world. By US standards the whole of the Netherlands is one big urban area. In this northwest European urban field, cities such as Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht are major centres of culture, commerce and international politics.

A major influence on this is our perception of climate change: if the most extreme scenarios of climate change come true, we, the Dutch, will have a big problem. With this comes another big challenge; the effect of the current financial crisis and how to stay competitive whilst keeping in mind long term goals. Climate change, financial crisis, social robustness and the way we operate, elaborate, and innovate, are our main assets.

Thus, when we discuss the key factors in Dutch spatial planning, we must deliberate on the importance of the city, on the importance of taking risks, and on how to make a difference in a highly competitive world.

As Director for National Spatial Planning of the Netherlands Ministry of Housing Spatial Planning and the Environment, I present my point of view on these challenges. My core business is to think and make thinking possible and in position. I formulate visions and develop instruments to make those visions come true. These may be laws and regulations, but could equally be subsidies or investments in key projects.

The most important vision we produced last year was about the Randstad: "Randstad 2040 Structural Vision". It is a comprehensive approach to the challenges we have to face to secure our future. Our goal is to ensure that the Randstad in 2040 will be a competitive network of cities that stands out among the other important European metropolises. A safe delta, whatever climate change has in store for us. To put it briefly: a genuinely attractive place to live.

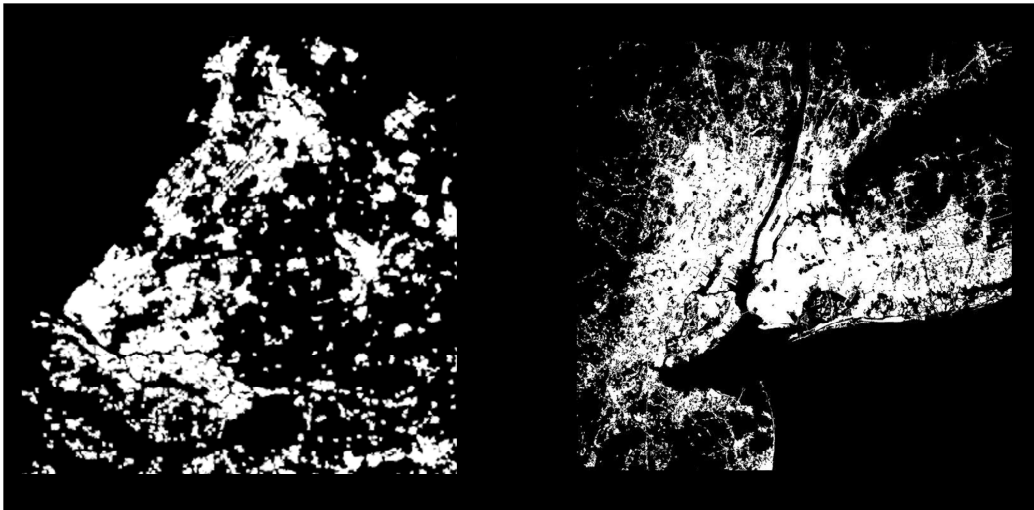
In this essay I will use this vision Randstad 2040 to demonstrate that to ensure visions like this are a success three shifts are necessary: in attitude, in ideas, and in the role of government. I will explore this by giving a short description of the Randstad and the challenges we face. I will elaborate on the shift in attitude that is necessary, and that this means a renewed re-activism, with the corresponding elements of the vision Randstad 2040 as example. I will show you the necessary shift in ideas required to make a difference with the Randstad vision. And thirdly I will discuss what this means in terms of government, knowing that a shift is necessary from 'control' to 'trust'.

1 RANDSTAD HOLLAND IN SHORT

Position and importance

The Randstad – officially called Randstad Holland – is situated in North-West Europe and is the delta of important rivers. The river Rhine, for instance, links this urban area with the most important industrial areas of Germany. The Randstad is a political, administrative, social and cultural centre and the most important economic engine of the Netherlands (GRP: €271.2 billion in 2007, 51% of the national GDP). It is one of the most densely populated areas in the OECD, with 7 million inhabitants – 41.5% of the Dutch population on less than 20% of the Dutch territory.

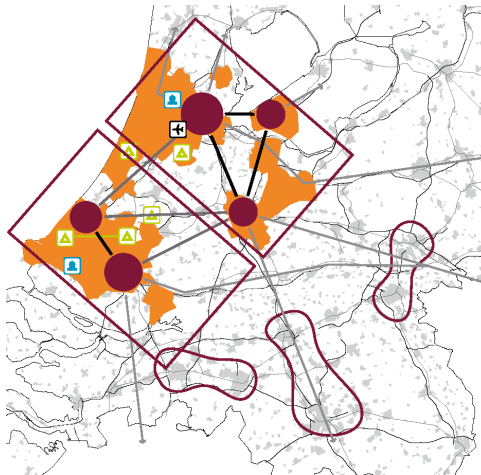
It is not a monocentric metropolis, but polycentric, and when we take a look at the current commuter patterns we can discern four daily urban systems. The Randstad consists of four large cities close to each other, around the open space of what we call the Green Heart. The Randstad is of international importance because of the many NGO's and international institutions, multinationals, banks and centres of science that are established here, the international events that take place, the number of tourists, and the international accessibility through one of the world's biggest harbours and the fourth largest airport in Europe. Amsterdam is an internationally oriented financial, business, and IT hub and a centre of creativity. Rotterdam is the worldwide logistic junction of Europe – the centre of logistics and trade, and the base for our Dutch Delta Technology. Utrecht has a concentration of national business and creative services, while The Hague is the seat of many (mainly international) organisations for peace and justice.



Randstad - New York

Challenges

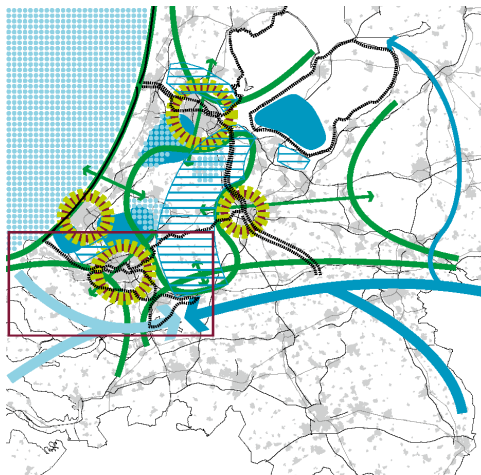
The future has much in store for the Randstad. Whereas elsewhere signs of demographic contraction are already evident, the Randstad's growth is forecast to continue for the next few decades. The growth will be in numbers of people and even more in the number of homes for households that are continually becoming smaller and smaller. Economically speaking there will be a rise in employment, which demands greater ease of access to the cities. And we all want green, attractive and climate-resilient living environments, not just for ourselves, but also for the generations to come. In the meantime, we are rightly concerned about uncontrolled 'urban clutter' and the loss of green and open spaces. This concern illustrates the potential conflicts that the government and the Randstad's administrators have to address in their vision for 2040.



Longterm challenges for the Randstad: networks, urbanisation and economy

In short, the most important long term challenges that have to do with networks, urbanisation and economy are:

- connecting labour markets and housing markets on a higher level of scale;
- urbanisation – qualitative diversification and quantitative growth;
- relations with other (international) urban regions;
- attract international top level functions in cities, greenports, airports, and harbours
- mobility and improvement of accessibility on three levels: between the cities, between the northern and southern part of the Randstad and (inter)nationally.



Longterm challenges for the Randstad: water, nature and landscape

The most important long term challenges that have to do with water, nature and landscape are:

- ecological values and biodiversity;
- quality of green areas around the city;
- water quality;
- water safety (rivers, sea level rise, deep polders, low peat areas, dykes and coast, extra attention for the area around Rotterdam).

2 THE NECESSARY SHIFT IN ATTITUDE: RENEWED REACTIVISM

To make the long term “Randstad 2040” vision a success, we must change our attitude. I call this renewed reactivism. Why reactivism? It's not the opposite of proactivism. That is too easy and too obvious.

And it is far more complex than simply trying to walk in front of the crowd instead of lagging behind. Governing and politics will always be reactive to a certain extent to publicly perceived pros and cons. *Renewed* reactivism means that spatial planning requires an active interplay with all those forces in the public arena. This means that planning must become more interactive and shift from working in a predominantly linear way to a multidimensional approach.

Three frames will have to change: our frame of actions, our timeframe, and our frame of output.

Our frame of actions: Think-Do-Act

In the predominantly linear approach there is always the presumption of a certain sequence of actions, however chaotic reality may be most of the time. The presumption is that we are starting from ideas, and progressing through various activities towards implementation.

But reality is rarely like that. Planners should know better, and anticipate better too. They could start by observing that the elements of the Think-Do-Act triplet always operate simultaneously, even if one of the three sometimes has the upper hand. Planners could learn to exploit this fact by deliberately arranging for some aspects to have indeed the upper hand.

Think smart, invest in research and development, know by knowing, connect and collaborate. Do your job skilfully, with good design and policymaking, be the best, make the best, and show this explicitly. Act, manifest yourself, the plan, choose very consciously the position you need to succeed, seek negotiation and the arena to 'fight', find differences to invest in quality. And relate this Thinking-Doing-Acting to each other all the time.

Currently many complaints can be heard in the Netherlands about how plans always become bogged down, and are implemented, if at all, only after an uphill battle. In my opinion, this has to do with people having a too narrow view of Think-Do-Act. We tend to stop after 'think' and 'do', which produces a surplus of activities without really framing projects effectively. The cause, in my view, is the omission of the 'act' element, in promulgating a clear political will and the associated perspective. Doing all sorts of things without perspective - at least without knowing that you're doing it without perspective - is clearly the worst conceivable situation. 'The ignorant and the ignorance' as the worst-case scenario. The perspective should be communicated constantly in order to keep awareness of the long lines of planning alive.

However, we are programmed to be reactive and prescriptive. Incidentally, this problem is not peculiar to the public sector, but is one that many businesses also suffer from. We react to events with an almost lazy, wait-and-see attitude, and do too little to formulate, neither stipulating our own message nor put it across.

We are familiar with the word 'act' from the world of theatre. This theatrical aspect definitely plays a part in Think-Do-Act. Planning revolves around performing, in the widest sense of the word: propagating and conveying, negotiating and rebelling, fighting for and over what it is you want to happen.

Revision of our frame of time

If we understand the concurrency inherent in think-do-act, we also realise that we have to revise our timeframe. Time, likewise, is not purely linear, as if the past and present have the lead, and as if the future was an extrapolation of the past and present. The truth is closer to the opposite. What we want to happen in the future determines our present.

From a desired future or what comes over us, we can 'look back' to the present, to our present position. And in this present we can only act effectively if at the same time we know what things did and did not work in the past. If we know the meaning of the past we need the courage to hold on to these meaningful results. It is a trap to want to invent everything anew each time. In fact this is a typical planners and designers trap. *Tabula rasa* is a seductive approach. Where we came from, who we are, what forces have developed, and how they came about, is an awareness of long lines that include the future – or rather, the possible futures. In the process of change between now and tomorrow we have to react and adapt intelligently to current concerns and issues, and must understand the meaning of the past.

Our frame of output: stories and designs, instruments, projects

The concurrency also influences our output and its timing. We fall particularly short in how we use stories. What I mean by stories is not the same as visions. Visions, such as the "Randstad 2040 Structural Vision", have a formal status and are spatial planning instruments. Stories, on the other hand, can be far

more adventurous and unconstrained, and more provocative too, and so can explore possible futures and possible paths to them.

Telling stories is hard for political driven organizations, governmental and public authorities because they are conditioned to be cautious, prescriptive and reactive. Stories facilitate many things that we are unaccustomed to – making statements that are indefinite, confronting, provoking, and seductive. And while that does involve risks, it also sets real interaction in motion. To achieve interaction you have to be prepared to take risks. This asks for more than a storm of stories, it asks for an intelligent approach, a strategy that ensures that this ongoing process of story telling is connected to getting actual results.

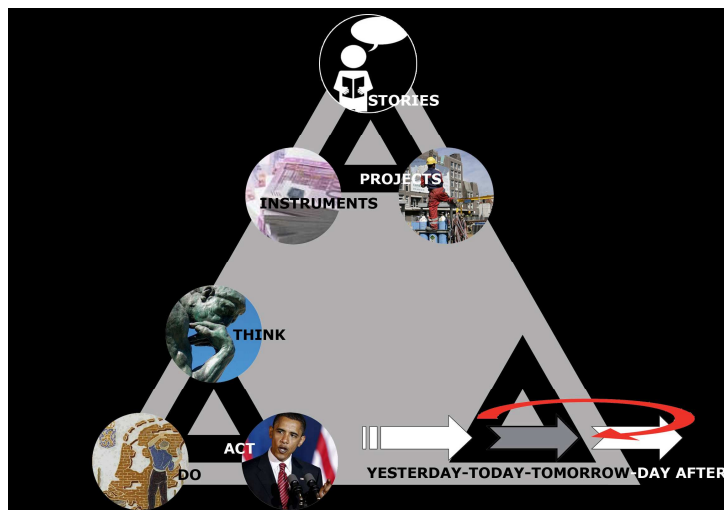
It goes without saying that telling stories is a form of acting, as I mentioned before – and indeed, without acting, there would be no stories. You have to put stories and story telling - the 'object' and the 'act' – together into position if they are to play a decisive part. Designs are also part of these stories – a very important part indeed. Designers are storytellers. They - designs and the designers - belong to the core of spatial planning. They not only make tactile what cannot be seen by "imagining", but their research by design, the possible futures that emerge, and the performance of both product and actor, make design a core tool, process, actor and outcome of planning.

Needless to say, projects are the real test. They produce the tangible results that prove what went well, and what could have been better. This is where you learn the best, and what you get most knowledge from. These lessons should immediately be incorporated into the stories and into the structural visions, in order to help subsequent projects moving in the right direction. In our frame of output too, it is a matter of concurrency instead of linearity.

The multidimensional attitude

Because spatial planning has no laboratory – other than practice – the development of projects, visions, instruments and stories are closely interrelated. Visions give the overall direction, which is firmed up in projects. The lessons from the projects must serve to refine the overall visions and instruments to be employed. This is the core of the multidimensional approach: the ability to use multiple perspectives simultaneously, and to vary the connections between the elements of Think-Do-Act, Past-Present-Future, and Stories-Instruments-Projects. This is how to make politics work in our extraordinarily complex society.

With the narrative we bring our imagination to the fore. With stories we can explore the impossible. With visions we point in the direction we want to go. We constantly test our stories and visions in projects. In combination and in step with the above, we develop instruments to make our visions come true.



The multidimensional attitude: frame of actions, timeframe and frame of output

Randstad 2040 as a new way of thinking, doing, acting.

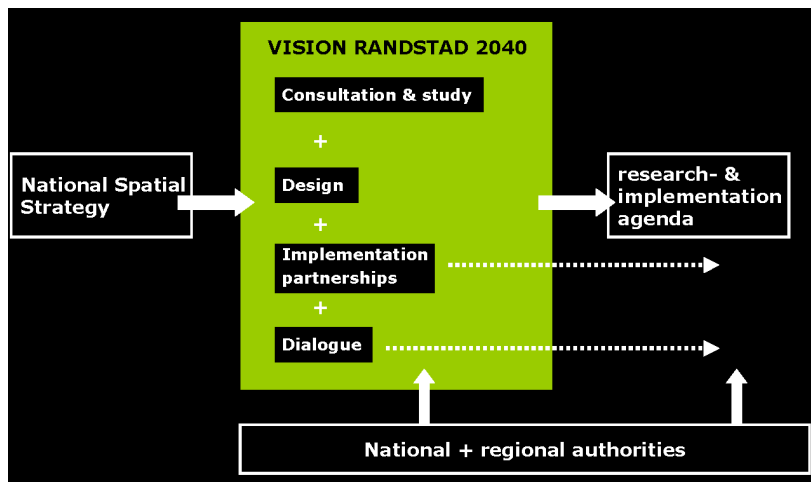
The way we drew up the “Randstad 2040 Structural Vision” can serve as an example of the new multidimensional working approach. The vision we have formulated is a stimulus for a Randstad that can measure up in all respects to other urban areas in Europe, while at the same time being sustainable and

climate resilient. The vision sets the path for our long-term spatial development, not just in terms of building and planning, but also of the relationship between spatial development and such things as nature, leisure activities, education, health, and labour market participation.

The general strategies in the Randstad 2040 vision are:

- sustainability *and* economic strength;
- a focus on quality, people and cities;
- operating on different scales at the same time;
- vision *and* implementation;
- national government, regional governments *and* the market.

As to implementation, the “Randstad 2040 Structural Vision” is part of the government-wide Randstad Urgent programme. This programme involves municipalities, provincial governments and urban regions alongside the government, all working towards a strong Randstad and a strong Netherlands. This programme comprises several projects that require decisions in the short term, so we are combining a vision for the long term with performance now.



The Randstad 2040 process

The government arrived at its choices after an extensive process along the following lines.

- Dialogue: The opinions, views, and ideas of the public and stakeholders were gathered in a dialogue process conducted on the internet and in physical meetings, in such a way that all parties could contribute to the spatial development concept.

- Consultation and study: We made use of existing studies and on some subjects we initiated studies of our own. The government solicited the advice of important governmental and scientific councils: the Netherlands Social and Economic Council (SER), the Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, in consultation with the Council for the Rural Area and the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management. The Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research, the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis and other agencies have also carried out specific studies concerning the Randstad.

- Design: The detailed discussion and the dialogue about the future of the Randstad were supported with concepts that emerged from research through designing, a process of depicting new design issues. We held three design studios on different themes, leading to a concluding design studio. The results of both research and design were implemented in the final plan.

- Implementation partnerships: For implementation of the vision and projects several partnerships were established in the course of the process, with stakeholders such as public authorities, private developers and investors and public interest organisations. The implementation partnerships are about acting today while thinking about the day after tomorrow. This is a ‘test and do’ approach that brings forward new insights into how we can actually make Randstad 2040 work. Additionally this asks for the implementation of the results into our execution strategy and investment program (MIRT).

- **Politics:** The officials directly involved formed a consultative group that met several times throughout the process. There was also organised involvement of regional authorities, with those directly involved liaising with the regions.

- **Projects:** We are now working on translating the goals and strategies into ongoing policy programmes and agendas of national and regional government. We are investigating possible 'Randstad Key Projects' for the period after 2020. These will be a small number of substantial projects, of major national significance, with international appeal in both spatial-physical and functional senses, that are comprehensive in nature. The implementation partnerships I mentioned are to be continued as alliances for implementing other projects. The government is aware that it is unable to achieve the ambitions unaided. Instead, partnerships of public authorities, private developers and investors, public interest organisations, and the public, are needed to tackle the execution together. Seven partnerships of this kind have been started in line with the vision, including those for metropolitan parks, port cooperation and urban transformation and densification.

3 THE NECESSARY SHIFT IN IDEAS: MAKING DIFFERENCES

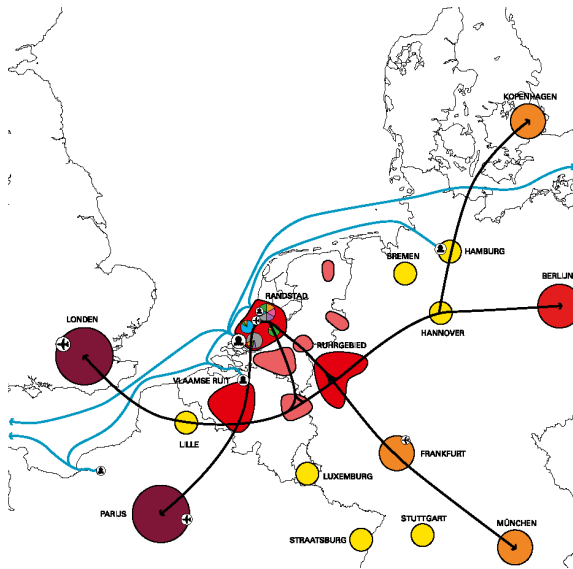
We need excellence, not mediocrity; we need cities for making differences

Not only a shift in attitude is necessary to succeed in making visions and making visions work. A major shift in ideology is necessary too. We should no longer strive, as we used to, for the kind of painstakingly equitable distribution in which every individual and every city is deemed entitled to an equal slice of the cake to be shared out. A prominent side effect of this approach is that it promotes mediocrity. Instead, we now concentrate on aspects that hold promise, and on existing strengths, because this yields the highest return on investment in terms of people, planet and prosperity. This is our only way of guaranteeing the Netherlands' future ability to compete with other metropolitan regions in Europe. It is not about the generic 'middle' but about the specific 'top'. Together with strength and sustainability it is about the attractiveness of specific quality and the differences that stand out.

We need excellence, not mediocrity. As the population of Europe shrinks and its economy loses its world dominance in relative terms, and as climate change compels us to adapt our spatial behaviour and energy consumption habits, we must very explicitly put our energy where it is most likely to yield the best results. We must strengthen what is already strong or favourable. Not all cities are fit to excel in the world of tomorrow, at least not in the same way. And excellence is what is required.

A plain focus on urban development and especially city-regions fits within this framework of 'making a difference', because that is what makes the difference between winners and losers. Cities, as the carriers of knowledge, quality, and the economy, have the greatest future value. Cities are the places where life is edgier, more intense, and more explicit. The city magnifies our challenges, confronting climate change with segregation, quality with unemployment, mobility with innovation, and creativity with economic crisis. The city stands for all our challenges in one, the ultimate confrontation between today's stories of tomorrow, the place where design and politics must confront each other. In other words, the city is not just the site and the catalyst of confrontation. It is also the place where confrontation leads to growth, innovation and change, bringing new strength. And the city is the place where our actions have maximum effect on our ambitions for sustainability. The city makes our spatial challenges political.

The pressure on our cities is immense, which is fortunate, because it provides the energy needed to make our cities truly powerful. Exactly how powerful depends on their context, scale and position among the other international metropolitan regions in Germany, France and Belgium.



Randstad 2040 international spatial development perspective

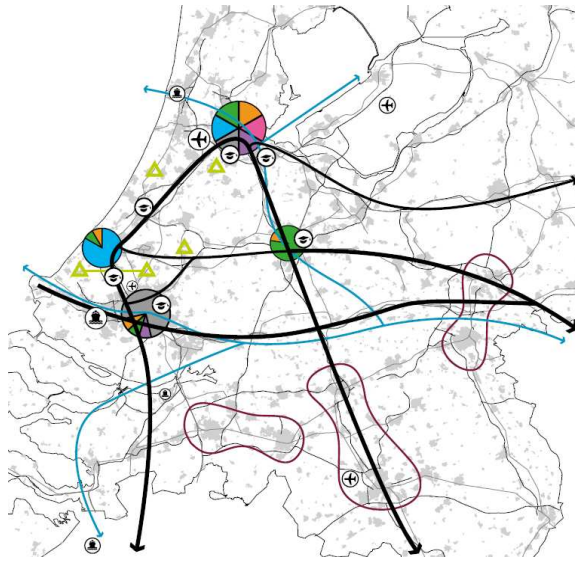
Different qualities in cities and landscapes

Making differences however is not only a matter of focussing on city-centres. We should have a keen eye for the qualities of the countryside and spacious provinces far outside the Randstad. The quality of the living environment is of overriding importance in competition with the advanced economies and cultures around us. And in that respect all the different qualities of city, countryside, periphery, landscape and nature must stand out. All those differences in total will make the real difference.

We were an agriculture-based society for a long time. The Netherlands is still one of the world's largest exporters of agricultural products, even though that industry is no longer primarily land based. Land use, certainly immediately adjacent to the cities, is increasingly serving urban society, in particular for leisure activities. It is then desirable to reconsider the role of land policy. Land policy in the Netherlands has traditionally been agricultural policy. Now that land use is being determined increasingly by urban wishes and needs, we need new instruments for achieving a better balance between costs and benefits, such as in achieving attractive green recreational areas to serve the cities. The fact that land use is actually determined mainly by the city has yet to penetrate into national-level spatial planning thinking. We have developed already the necessary new instruments, now it is time to put them in action.

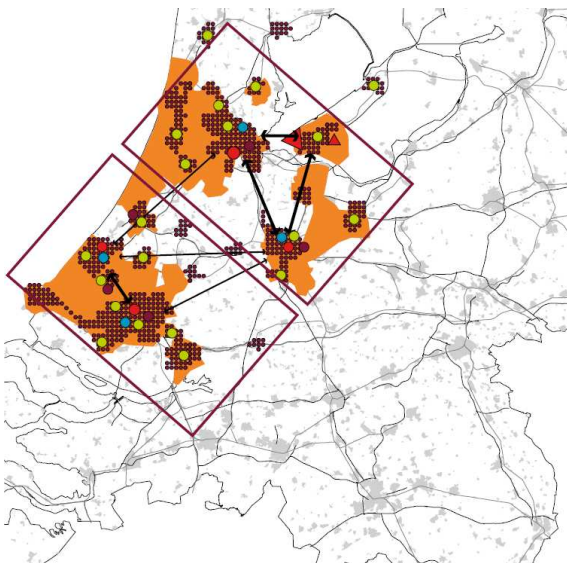
Randstad 2040 as example: focus on cities and investing in strength

The Netherlands is developing from a 'distribution country' with an accent on international traffic and trade, to a creative and innovative 'knowledge-based country'. Our cities are the most important basis for strengthening this new economy and our international competitive position. Therefore strengthening the cities, their individual qualities and identities, is one of the most important goals in our Randstad vision for 2040. This includes a focus on densification in the cities. The Randstad 2040 vision acknowledges also that because of the competition in the future between individual European cities and their regions as international business locations, it will be equally important to be able to offer an attractive living environment for employees. So the quality of the city comes to the forefront in three respects: the cities and city centres themselves; the relationship with the 'green' (nature, landscape) and the 'blue' (water) inside and outside the cities; and the accessibility of cities and the various interchanges in urban regions, on a local, national and international scale.



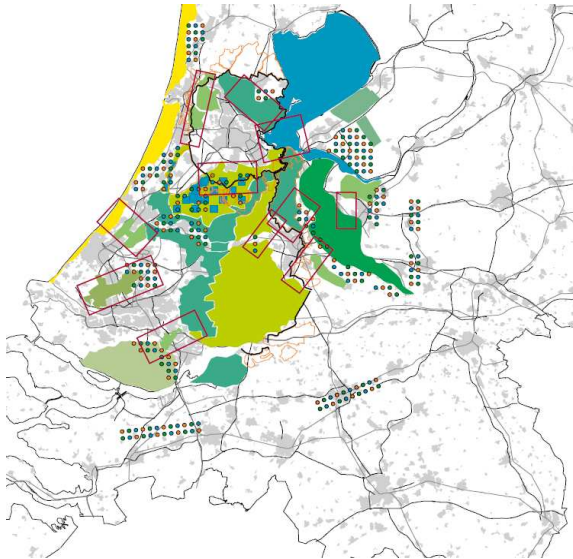
Randstad 2040 choices: Strengthening what is already strong internationally

The Randstad comprises multiple residential and labour markets. To ensure the Randstad's position as a leading international region, the government has chosen to 'strengthen what is already strong internationally'. Emphasising and making the most of differences implies taking particular advantage of Amsterdam's special position as the strongest of the Randstad regions. From an international point of view, the Amsterdam region occupies a leading position because of its highly versatile economic profile and metropolitan character. Schiphol is one of Europe's largest airports, and the Zuidas is a prime international location for business and financial services. The world port of Rotterdam has the largest maritime cluster in Europe and together with the port of Amsterdam (4th of Europe) and a network of national smaller ports it stands out within an international context. The Hague has a worldwide reputation as an international city of peace, justice and security. Furthermore, the Utrecht region is an attractive living environment with a creative knowledge climate. The greenports are an international market leader in the production, processing and logistics of horticulture and ornamental plants.



Randstad 2040 choices: Powerful, sustainable cities and regional accessibility

Besides these internationally prominent functions, all cities also have more regionally and nationally oriented strengths and potential. A strong Randstad will contribute to a strong Netherlands. Strengthening the various cities' and urban regions' own identities and developing their own strengths must therefore be their highest priority.



Randstad 2040 choices: Creating quality through greater interaction between green, blue and red

Randstad 2040 addresses the additional step up in quality on top of the green space that already exists, in the form of 'metropolitan parks' near the cities. This development will demand a joint effort between public authorities and private developers and investors. Besides their importance for the residents of the cities, metropolitan parks are also meant to be attractive for national and international visitors. The parks enhance quality of life and improve the commercial climate near cities, and in that way complement urbanisation in an attractive way. Areas such as Midden-Delfand (between The Hague and Rotterdam), the Delta Gateway (between Rotterdam and the urban areas south of Rotterdam) and Waterland (north of Amsterdam) are potential metropolitan park sites. The new approach for the Green Heart will be a combination of development and protection, to enlarge spatial and cultural diversity.

In the light of the foreseen change in the climate, the predicted rise in sea level and increased water levels in the rivers Rhine and Maas, we do not view the development of the Randstad as a problem, but rather an opportunity. The Randstad used to be called a 'Green Heart metropolis'. That heart is to become a green and blue network, connected to the major waters outside the ring of cities, namely the IJsselmeer, the North Sea and the Zeeland Delta. As one of the safest highly developed deltas in the world, the Randstad will prove the strength of Dutch Delta Technology.



Randstad 2040 choices: Living in a safe, climate-resilient and green-blue delta

The “Randstad 2040 Structural Vision” makes the Green Heart part of a large Green-Blue Delta. The Green Heart can be protected, developed and made climate-resilient by steering development towards a delta of this kind. The area will also be liberated from its isolated position. The traditional picture of a single open zone surrounded by cities neither does justice to the greater whole that the Green Heart is part of, nor does it adequately express the multiple landscape qualities and diversity of the Green-Blue Delta. This traditional picture will therefore be superseded by one with more diversity, and by an area-specific approach. The diversity will mean a policy of water logging in some parts of the Green Heart, while retaining characteristic dairy farming in others. Elsewhere there could be unique combinations that include homes. The development of a Green-Blue Delta can facilitate a more effective response to the impacts of climate change. The delta also offers a firm basis for a system of smaller ‘green-blue’ links with the cities, which will be an attractive and necessary complement to urbanisation.

In the Randstad we will build at least 500,000 houses up to the year 2040, with 60,000 of them built in ‘new town’ Almere. Nowadays many people choose to live in Almere because of the availability and pricing of houses. To match future demands, in combination with the development of Amsterdam, Almere’s new living and working environments must offer a greater diversity of living and working environments. Our aim is to build a sustainable city with a proper balance between people, planet and profit. ‘Cradle-to-cradle’ principles will be applied within socially acceptable cost constraints on all scales (i.e. regional, city, district and building) and to the multifaceted relationship between land and water.

4 THE NECESSARY SHIFT IN GOVERNMENT: FROM CONTROL TO TRUST

The role of government

The shift in attitude and ideas is accompanied by a shift in the role of government. This shift has various aspects. To begin with, the “Randstad 2040 Structural Vision” does not stand in isolation, but is part of a system of stories, instruments and projects. To sum up the most important:

- The vision-forming process was started as part of the Randstad Urgent programme. The vision now forms the technical framework for the short-term projects in this programme. We are working concurrently on an investment strategy and programme.
- The revised Spatial Planning Act is an important instrument for implementing the vision. The Act gives Randstad 2040 and other structural visions a clear place as directive frameworks.

- The various sectoral actions that issue from the Mobility Approach, the Landscape Agenda, the National Water Plan and other plans that have been adopted, play an important part in achieving practical results.
- The government has documented the position of design in an 'Architectural and Spatial Design Vision'. The motto is 'design is paramount'. By virtue of their content stories, design, and research by design thus acquires an influential position.
- Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Netherlands is contemplating hosting the 2028 Olympic Games, which would be another opportunity for spatial planning. It would be a challenge for the physical domain to work on a vision with a deadline. Randstad 2040 can help the Netherlands achieve Olympic level. The Olympic deadline may help realise the Randstad vision in time.



The Randstad 2040 vision is part of a system of stories, instruments and projects

New Spatial Planning Act

A crucial related factor is the new Spatial Planning Act, which came into force in July 2008. The new Spatial Planning Act delegates responsibilities to each governmental layer and stakeholder much more than its predecessor. The Act forces parties to be very aware of what they want, to determine an individual position and also to promote it loudly and clearly. If you don't, you can't join in the spatial planning 'game'. Without your own story, you will not have a place at the table. On your behalf, others will arrange anything you don't arrange properly yourself. So every actor must have considerable self awareness and good context sensitivity.

The old Act left much scope for local, regional and national public authorities alike to intervene **after** unforeseen events and undesirable developments. It was possible to exercise influence until very late in the planning process through a variety of control mechanisms. The new Act has greatly curtailed the scope for ad hoc policy of this kind. Every government layer must make clear what is important and desirable and what is not. Anything left open or unmentioned really is unconstrained. Only in highly exceptional cases is there still an opportunity for a public authority to change its mind if plans transpire to be disagreeable once they are submitted.

The old Act encouraged a wait-and-see attitude by permitting adjustments to be imposed at a late stage. The new Act forces public authorities to adopt a more active attitude: if you don't decide what you want, if you don't position these wishes well and promote them effectively, you will soon be played out.

On the other hand, the new Act gives public authorities more options for triggering those things that are actually deemed necessary. Each government layer has the opportunity to create zoning plans that compel the desired development. The national government can prescribe what is to happen through orders in council.

Trust instead of control

This change in responsibilities and roles asks for new forms of partnership and a reconsideration of the scale of our work. On all fronts we must constantly and consciously choose our position, and this position will vary depending on the task and the stakeholders we are confronted with.

Because the new Spatial Planning Act forces us to spell out where we stand and what we want, these new forms of partnership can be based on a truly substantial story, and it is not merely a process-oriented position game. The new Spatial Planning Act is therefore a splendid opportunity to manage and cooperate with greater clarity and transparency.

But this new interplay between all stakeholders is also a major challenge, because it in fact compels us to adopt a different attitude: from 'control' to 'trust'. We must make clear in advance what we want and then allow everyone the freedom to make this work. This means working on the assumption of trust and based on content. We must dare to let go of what we do not control – what is arranged by others and still affects ourselves.

But this is something we still largely have to learn. For a large part, public authorities – and parliament! – are still sharply focused on control. When the chips are down, those involved do not yet dare to let go and give other actors their freedom. We say 'trust', but usually still do 'control'. We have yet to resolve this dilemma within ourselves, and no single actor or public authority can do this alone. We will have to demonstrate to each other that we are worthy of each other's trust. And that will demand that the content of our story is sound, and that we know what we want and express that clearly.

It also demands that we are able to act in a wide variety of roles. New forms of cooperation are needed: new alliances in which the government will sometimes have the lead, and at other times will follow. Sometimes it will be a matter of stimulating with subsidies or otherwise, or facilitating with a well-measured set of checks and balances. And at other times the government itself will actively invest and participate in projects.

Randstad 2040 is a substantial 'story' from the national government, with which it clearly chooses its position. It is a structural vision in accordance with the new Spatial Planning Act. We can use the Spatial Planning Act instruments to follow through with the execution of this vision. The question now is what the national government itself is to do, and what would be better left to others. A criteria for national government action is whether the values deemed important by national government can be realised without national government action, or would be lost if the national government does not provide guarantees or undertakes the execution. The new Spatial Planning Act makes it possible for the national government to set down these values in its own zoning plans or orders in council. However, national government action can also have other elements: helping others create their story; putting others in a position of responsibility; or encouraging them in different ways to cooperate with their stakeholders. In this way, we as public authorities can act in various ways with a greater emphasis on 'trust' than on 'control'. I already mentioned, in my earlier account of how the "Randstad 2040 Structural Vision" was drawn up as a new way of thinking, doing and acting, the variation in forms of partnership and alliances that we have tried.

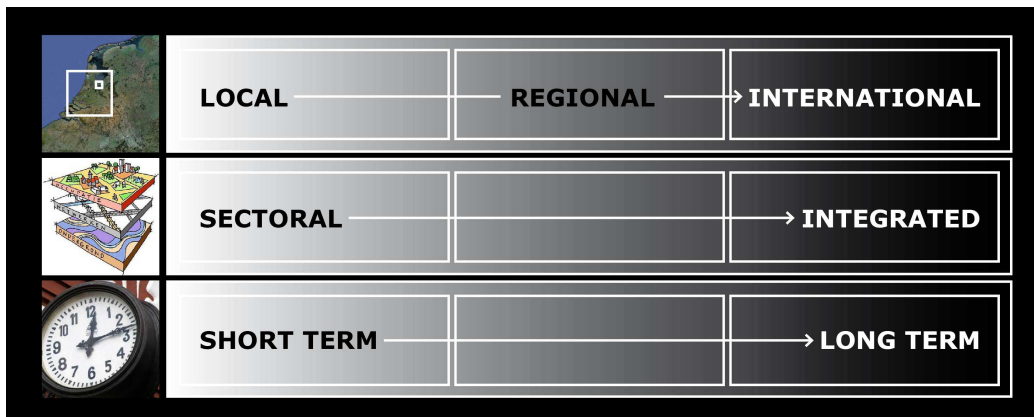
Acting on different scales

Furthermore a major characteristic of the vision is that it is not restricted to only one scale or approach. In this respect the vision does not stand in isolation. More than ever we will differentiate the scale of our work. The best scale for addressing an issue must be investigated in each case.

That issues must be tackled on the scale at which they operate, implies in some cases an international approach. Such an example is the mitigation of river flooding risks that are exacerbated by climate change. Other issues have more of a local or regional impact, such as on the housing market. The choice is also concerned with the scale of policy we employ: whether it is more sectoral or more integrated. A further scale is the time span we wish to cover: the short or the long term.

On these three scales – the geographical scale, the scale of policy and the time span – the national government must choose a position. We have in fact done this a few years ago with the story of the National Spatial Strategy. This is the major story that states what the national government wants, when, and on which level. Within this major story, other public authorities and stakeholders can choose their own position on what, when, and on which level they wish to act. It will be clear that the scope of the story of the National Spatial Strategy is mainly integrated, and oriented to the medium and long term (with a view to 2030), and the national and international scales. It is quite conceivable that others will choose a more sectoral, incidental, or local position within this framework.

It is not the case that the national government is automatically responsible only for national or international issues. As is evident from the accompanying chart, there can be issues for the national government on any scale, depending on how often a given issue occurs or how big the impact is on the national interest. National government action is legitimate if a local issue occurs widely around the country. Most of the time this action will consist of laying down general regulations or incentives. For less frequent, but nonetheless important, regional area developments, there may be participation in a variety of ways (e.g. contributing know-how, or facilitating processes). At the highest scale level, in unique circumstances, there will more often be an element of more direct national government interventions.



Acting on different levels of scale

An important starting point for the Randstad 2040 Structural Vision was that each issue should be picked up at the appropriate, relevant scale. There was no attempt to enforce an approach to the Randstad solely as a single whole or entity. There is good reason for some people to say ‘the Randstad does not exist’, which also happens to be the title of a report from the Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research. Indeed, only a limited number of issues operate on that scale. Most issues operate on multiple scales. From the local scale to a scale that also surpasses the Randstad, in which case we are concerned with the Randstad’s international competitive position and the quality of the living environment in this metropolitan region in comparison with counterparts elsewhere in Europe. The same applies to the ports and transport networks on an international scale. What is on a national scale is the Randstad’s ‘green-blue’ structure and how it is linked with adjacent important nature conservation areas and waters. Within the structure, the options for leisure activities in the green are to be investigated on the scale of the Randstad as a whole, in combination with the regional and local scales. On a regional scale, (in the north and south wings of the Randstad) optimisation of public transport is relevant.

We also differentiate in terms of time. While the Vision is oriented to 2040, we also distinguish actions to be taken in the short term or the foreseeable future.

There is also differentiation in approach: within the large integrated story, sectoral departments have main responsibility for some specific components.

CONCLUSION

I started my account by stating that the crucial points are: dare to take risks and make a difference; that cities are the engines of development, and Dutch Delta Technology should be our unique selling point. The

“Randstad 2040 Structural Vision” is therefore centred on the strength of the cities. We also view the Randstad as a core zone for testing sustainable strategies. We are bringing the new Delta Fund and the Delta Act into position in order to accept the challenges of climate change in a low-lying delta.

This is a technical, a cultural, and a political story. In many respects it is a form of ‘living dangerously’, which demands a change of attitude on our part. We will have to combine our thinking, doing and acting intelligently. We will make the lessons from the past and our wishes for the future productive in what we do today, and it demands of us that we intelligently combine our stories and designs of what we aspire to, with the instruments at hand, and how they can be resolved in projects. Stories, structural visions, projects, regulations and rules (frameworks) must be developed together, not sequentially. I have called this a change from a predominantly linear approach to a multidimensional attitude.

I explained why moving from policy to execution is now often such an uphill struggle. It is that we usually stop after ‘think’ and ‘do’, and then adopt a wait-and-see attitude. We do too little to promote what it is that we want, or to tell our stories, or communicate what inspires and motivates us. This is an act of willing, of political and of professional will. And it is an act of pride. The vision for the long term, of what it is that we want with our delta and our cities, is paramount, and goes hand in hand with designing for the future. Design and design research played important roles in drawing up the “Randstad 2040 Structural Vision”, and are needed in position more and more for an execution of great quality.

We are positioning ourselves very consciously in a long tradition. We are aware of the past, of how Dutch people of the past have made the country in to what it is now. This culture of entrepreneurship and pragmatism coupled with vision, is vital for utilising the opportunities that living in a delta offer. In order for this perspective to materialise we must dare to take the step from ‘control’ to ‘trust’. Because in a highly civilised and sophisticated society such as the Netherlands, there is only one way to live up to the challenges, and that is in a sharply focused cooperation of all the power we have, economically and intellectually.

But when design professionals no longer know why they are designing, when policymakers are driven forward by their own momentum rather than targets and objectives, when process gains the upper hand and the challenges (despite their clarity) are not embraced, then the content loses out. It is then that passing fads, procedures, and reactivity become our guiding principles. But the challenges we face are too great, too manifest, and too pressing for us to let that happen. And to make that point, we need stories and storytellers. Policymakers and designers are storytellers, and the imaginative confrontation between them helps give direction to our work.

The current political attention focuses on social, economic or financial matters. Security and immigrants are the issues that guarantee a packed House of Parliament. The question is ‘how do we re-politicise spatial planning?’ That’s our objective. It starts with making the challenges explicit, because their confrontation makes spatial planning political. When your family, your home or your street is at stake, you are involved as a human being, as a citizen: it impacts your life, your way of thinking, your position in the community. That makes it political. And that brings me back to the city. The city is what politicises spatial planning.

Design and the designer have to confront each other in the arena of our challenges. Confronting, contemplating, setting the agenda, and engaging in the dialogue. Politics draws its strength from those challenges, from the place where the questions, the public, the origins of the challenges are found. From the place where incomprehension and incapacity can be transformed through strength into stories, and into building and making.

In spatial planning, as designers and in politics, we need to do a lot of things at the same time: we must have the courage to test our ideas, to run risks, and to anticipate the future.

So the answer is to think, do and act at the same time. To act effectively in the here and now, we need to look to the future whilst also taking account of the past. For that we need effective reflection. To what city does this lead? It is the approach of think, do and act that makes a city of confrontation, a city of performance, tangible. A maximum city, with maximum people, with maximum stories and maximum design. A maximum city is maximum politics! Planning for cities is politics and design to the max.

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