

From Top-Down to Co-operative Planning in Randstad Holland

Stepping-stones for contemporary Shanghai city-regional community planning

Urban planning in the Netherlands evolved from an inevitable top-down planning, trying to guide the predicted rapid growth in the sixties and seventies, to a more concept-driven and co-operative planning in the recent decades of an improving metropolitan quality of life. There are strong parallels with the contemporary urban planning challenges for Shanghai. In the Shanghai Urban Planning Review 2013-4 John Friedman paid attention to those "Post-Urban planning challenges", signaling a huge vacuum in the Anglo American planning literature on this topic of "Incremental mutual adjustment". The recent planning history of Randstad Holland may offer some stepping stones to narrow this gap and define an agenda for scientific co-operation and cross-pollination.

The present challenges of Shanghai have much in common with the modern history of dutch spatial planning. The size and challenges of the chinese city-regions, like that of Shanghai, are comparable to the Randstad Holland. (fig 01) The diameter of the metropolitan conurbation is about sixty kilometers. The density is a difference. The Shanghai region has now about seventeen million inhabitants, where Randstad has about seven. But the efforts that were made in Holland to accommodate a fast growth, similar to the New Town policy of Shanghai now, have much in common. Whether or not to spread the urbanisation, designing a network that affords mobility, economic strength, living quarters where one feels "at home" and last but not least recreational area's next-door, where one feels one with nature.

Also comparable with the past fifty years of Randstad planning the challenges of spatial planning in China are part of a changing social context:

- Changing from a rather centralized

planning and design to a multi-actor design process.

- Transformation from an institutional democracy to a plural society.
- Moving from blueprint recipes to a context specific approach.

Inevitable Top-Down planning from 1960-1980

The tranformation of an agricultural small scale production society to industrialisation and business-finance-public services, combined with the highest birthrate of Western Europe, caused an explosion of the planned urban area in Randstad Holland of about 300% between 1960 and 1990. No arguing that this rapid transformation needed a national plan.

The Amsterdam extensions of the period 1950-1975 are a perfect visualization of this rapid growth. (fig 02) Complementary to the predicted autonomous growth of the Dutch population immigrant workers from the mediterranean region were encouraged to help grow the industrial economy. Up to that came over 400.000



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01: UDLab lecture IACP conference 2012 Wuhan, comparing Randstad and Shanghai New Town policy

south-east Asian and Carribean compatriots as a result of the "loss" of Indonesia and Surinam, being colonial area's of the Netherlands until 1948 and 1970.

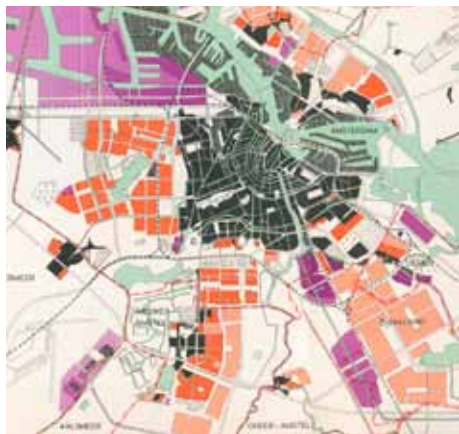
In the Netherlands there is a strong awareness of the need to co-operate, to participate in public affairs. Both if it comes to watermanagement, dealing with floods from sea and rivers, but also political and economic, due to the strategic geographic position in the triangle Germany, England and France. However an official national plan for guided urban-

ism is a step further.

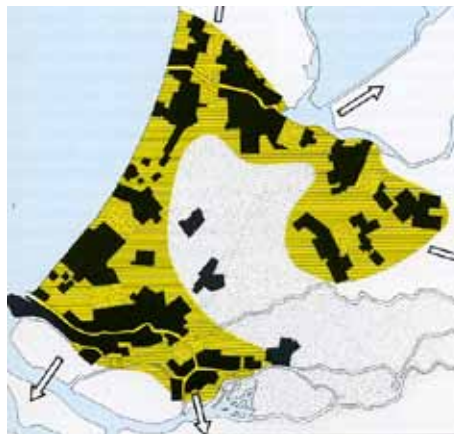
One can say that a planning level of national or regional scale was, and maybe still is, a blind spot in the minds of dutch citizens. And not very popular. Holland never had a centralised political power and the Dutch foster sweet memories of cherishing trade, arts and science in the Golden 17th-Century. The Netherlands were a republic of proud and autonomous cities, not a Nation State. (fig 05)

No natural breeding ground maybe for a Randstad idea, a metropolitan region

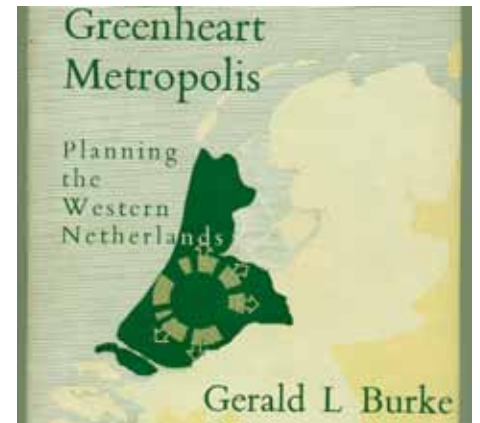
of connected existing cities. Formed like a horseshoe, surrounding a remaining green agricultural heart. A strong iconic concept, proposed as a national guideline in 1958 by the National Plan Authority. (fig 03) It might have been convincing to explain and support the proposed concept because of its obvious smart use of the economic, cultural and infrastructural heritage. Dutch landscape painters of the 17th century are famous while they not only visualise the never ending spectacle of moving clouds and scenery



02: Amsterdam growth 1950-1975



03: Randstad Greenheart concept 1958



04: Cover Greenheart Metropolis 1966



05: Holland, a Republic of cities 1750



06: View on Haarlem, J. van Ruysdael 1690

lightning, but also sparkling town silhouettes at the horizon, illustrating the appreciated symbiotic relation between town and country. (fig 06)

But the accompanying text in the national planning documents was a rather defensive one. Sketching a Greenheart Metropolis is one thing, but in fact most attention was paid to a strategy to spread the urbanisation outwards from the ring of cities. No attention was paid the first decades to the possible benefits of inter-city co-operation. Neither was there any intelligent anticipation on the added value for recreation and agro-economics of the central green area. Despite the recommendations of the Randstad concept by Sir Peter Hall in his famous 1966

survey "The World Cities" and by Gerald Burke who coined the concept that same year with his highly rewarded book "Greenheart Metropolis". (fig 04)

Until now many british professional colleagues I meet at conferences emphasize their sympathy for the concept with a clear: "I like the idea of Randstad!". But the dutch officials never dared to agree fully. This ambiguity resulted in the "National Plan 2000", of which the map shows a glimpse of the horseshoe concept (fig 07) but of which the key strategy was a sprawl of New Towns called: "bundled de-concentration".

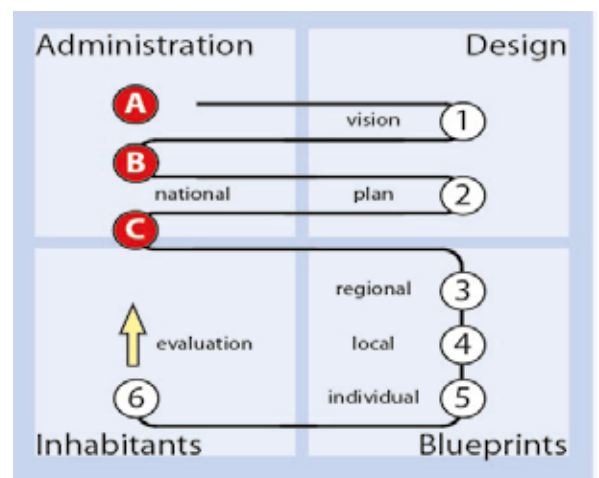
This operation was strongly guided by the Urban Planning Ministry for about three decades of a rather blue-print-like

planning. (Figs 08) An era in which the social political context changed drastically. The social subdivision according to the diverse flavors of Christianity was no longer determining. Socialist and Liberal party's gained terrain.

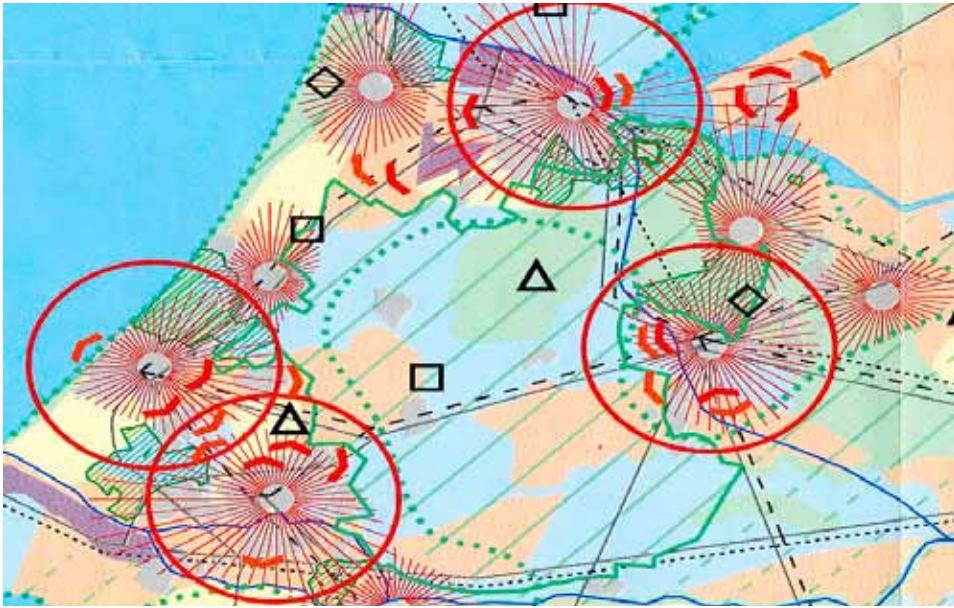
In the seventies a socialist government emphasized on spreading economy towards the periphery of the Netherlands and at least spreading the population to New Towns on the outer Ring, like Lelystad, Purmerend and Hellevoetsluis. This was accomplished by moving some great state owned companies and by implementing ingenious constructions on tax relief measures for commuters and house owners. Combined with income subsidy for those reliant on social housing.



07: the 1966 "National Plan 2000"



08: Top-Down planning scheme 1960-1990



09: the 1992 city regional Vinex vision

This comprehensive type of planning and financial engineering was strongly supported by the expected profits of the discovery of huge gas-reserves in the northern province of Groningen and the dutch part of the North-Sea area.

Arising a fruitful Multi-Actor Play-ground since 1980

Since the eighties both Socialists, Christians and Liberals subsequently had their Prime-Minister as a result of elections. This led to a change from what we can call an Institutional Democracy to an Open Democracy suiting the plural society where different parties sometimes dare to change their minds depending on arguments and growing awareness. In the beginning of the 1980's a thorough care for the quality of living in the core-cities gained terrain and resulted in more balanced schemes on a regional and inter-municipal scale. The national planning authorities stepped down a little, in favour of a new administrative level namely the city-regions. (Fig 09) A national Act on Urban renewal became a strong instrument for an exemplary and

remarkable improvement of the central cities, old harbour/business areas and late 19th century mass housing. In 1992 the Fourth Report on Spatial Planning, also known as the "Vinex" report envisioned extension of the existing major cities with attractive living quarters for young families. Urban renewal combined with extension of the existing cities defined the building task at 1 million houses from 1995-2015.

Rotterdam City-Regional co-operative planning 1990-2000

The Rotterdam region went ahead in co-operation with neighbouring municipalities. New processes arose for urban planning that could rely on support from relevant actors including the involvement of citizens as well as local entrepreneurs. For a decade the idea was to install a compliant regional administration. To prove the good intentions the Major of the central city of Rotterdam with nearly one million inhabitants suggested the revolutionary proposal not to annex the neighbouring municipalities but to split up his own Rotterdam in five parts, each of them near the size of the surrounding

municipalities. However that appeared to be a bridge too far for the Rotterdam citizens. The idea was renounced after a referendum. The co-operation on administrative level was nevertheless proceeded and led to a City+Region Planning Department of which I became a trailblazer. Thus my work as an official on urban renewal in direct contact with inhabitants became enriched with the sometimes more misty and tricky world of longer term urban planning driven by politicians. And not only politicians of one municipality, but a dozen of them who together formed the brandnew Rotterdam City-Regional Council. From a planning-theoretical point of view it turned out to be rather a different playground than that of the strategic goal-solution approach described by most of the academic planning theories those days. Neither me nor my colleagues had the experience how to deal with a "design process" in these incremental circumstances. Happily I remembered the slides preceding the planning theory lectures around 1980 at TU Delft. One of them was a rather psychedelic quote of Grace Slick, the vocalist of Jefferson Airplane: "It's a wild time, I'm doing things that have not got a name yet." Also the role-playing games of professor Engberts proved their worth. His finest moment in his workshops on "Urban Planning Organisation" always was when he drew the card of the decisive moment in many design processes: "the unexpected occurrence!". The City-Regional Structure-vision that we developed (Fig 10) proved its worth as a convincing content for negotiations with the national government in the financing of Regional Housing, Infrastructure and Leisurelandscaping. It got national recognition as a model for the three other city-regions of Randstad. But



10: City-Regional Structure vision 1992



11: Delfland Wedge structureplan 1996



12: eight centuries of infrastructure

above that it triggered the neighbouring municipalities to work together with Big Brother Rotterdam mainly because of its sincere recognition of cultural historic remnants as inspiration for new developments. Delfland Wedge Structure Vision (Fig. 11) is a prove of that. It wakes up the remnants of the 13th century canal Pol-dervaart and guides until now the investments in ecology, bike-network and real estate planning around the four railstops in the zone.

New planning paradigm visualisation

Lacking a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences the National Urban Planning Ministry supported my initiative to organise monthly “Engine-Room” workshops through the whole country. It lead to a well received interim Parliamentary Report of the process and thematic ambitions which became a tutorial for the ongoing Vinex planning process. (fig 13) That marks the start of UDLab, Urban Dynamics Lab in Delft. Recently it lead to the visualisation of a “concentric” co-operative planning process, which may serve as the UDLab contribution to the nowadays challenge to provide theoretical background for multi actor co-operative urban planning. (fig 14)



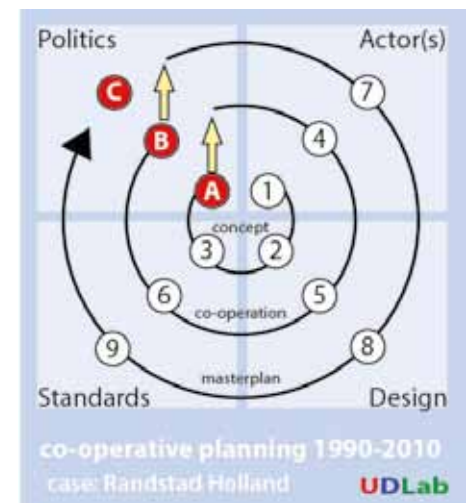
13: Vinex “Engine Room” report 1996

In the co-operative planning scheme) twelve checkpoints are passed in a process that starts with thinking about content for co-operation in relation to the environmental challenges. The three circles define stages in which this content can grow to a feasible concept. They pay attention to both the direction in which the actors want to find solutions, the design skills and knowledge that have to be applied for , the standards that have to be met or adapted and the political decisions or deals that have to be made

Sometimes the century old sentiments of competing municipalities within one cityregion are a threat for effective solutions. The playground scheme with four fields of expertise proves to be very helpful in dealing with those sentiments. Thereby it is pretty disarming to precise the variety of actors within one field. For instance in the “design” field you may expect engineers as well as make-believers or “illusionists”, sometimes combined in the same person. The same diversity occurs of course in the other three fields of the planning playground. (fig 16)

Randstad-Greenheart versus Shanghai town and countryside

Thanks to the vacuum on the na-



14: co-operative planning scheme

Randstad + Greenheart



15: Greenheartmap first edition, 2014



16: co-operative planning playground

tional planning level since 2000, the concept of a new interpretation of Randstad+Greenheart gets a chance to grow in a co-operative attitude of professional conceptual planners, Dutch Tourist Union ANWB and agricultural co-operations like Friesland-Campina. The possibilities of this huge high-tech productive agricultural garden with great natural values sparkled with vivid historical cities form a perfect asset for an acceleration of the Greenheart Metropolis concept. The coming decades it should not be only the professional british planners who “like the idea of Randstad!”.

The recent publication of the Greenheartmap.nl is an UDLab support of this potential. (fig 17) It offers a rather new



17: Anting historic centre



19: 7 km northeast of Jiading

visual experience of the close relation of the historic canal towns with the countryside via still existing tow paths and a fine meshed network of farmer lanes. Via a network of 12 adjacent circular bikeroutes it will provide in a growing collective awareness of the qualities nearby. This will evoke initiatives that contribute and enhance those qualities.

I think the Shanghai countryside is also, or maybe even more, in need of stimulating such an awareness. There are encouraging starting points. The attention paid recently to the historic qualities of watertowns like Anting (fig 17) and Jiading are reminiscent of Delft and Leiden (fig 18). And the remaining Shanghai countryside (fig 19)deserves to share the Randstad Greenheart experience of both strengthening the agricultural production, clearing the water and multiplying the culture-touristic value. (fig 20)

Triple Highway concept

The withdrawal of national planning responsibilities gives thus way to a more environmental and cultural driven attitude. Room and opportunities for initiatives of local actors and experts, not seldom in co-operation with more pro-



18: Leiden historic centre



20: 7 km southeast of Delft

fessional and institutional partners. An example with close involvement of UDLab is the alternative “cattle-highway boardwalk” concept for the A4 highway section through the vulnerable farmland between Delft and Schiedam.

Although refused by the national government, while not fitting the old prerequisites it got a warm welcome in the field of local participants and innovative infrastructure contractors. (fig 21, 22) The “triple highway” reconciles the opposition between the dynamics of highway-traffic and the stability and vitality of the area that is threatened by dissection.

An in-depth Environmental Assessment Report proved that instead of doing damage the concept delivers a significant contribution to the diversity and vitality of its environment and may serve now as a prototype for similar situations.

UDLab Shanghai academic and administrative cross pollination CN-NL

The current planning issue in China is that of a balanced sustainable growth. There is a growing awareness of the importance of a multi-actor approach. The

appropriate structure for the conceptual process and responsibilities are thought about and tested.

For me the Shanghai World Expo 2010, with the motto “Better Cities, Better Life” was of course a must see. Not only for the Expo, but also to find out how 17 million people live, and plan, together on an area not much larger than the city region of Rotterdam. Discovering Shanghai and talking with chinese colleagues I got the idea that sharing knowledge on a more structural base would be fruitful. Endorsed by contact a year later with the Community Planning Department at Tongji CAUP University. My handdrawn visualisation of the “concentric planning scheme” gave rise to a spontaneous: “that will be very interesting for us !” , and lead to lectures I gave on this topic in 2012 at both Tongji CAUP and Wuhan SUD University, as one of the lectures at the annual IACP conference.

Stimulated by the open attitude I perceive until now in China I decided to get a closer view on the nowadays elaboration and readjustment of the Shanghai structureplanning. And also to investigate the

topics and quality at the dutch universities who offer education to an increasing number of chinese students.

Thus the UDLab activities focus on “Exchanging academic and administrative knowledge on conceptual and co-operative urban planning between China and The Netherlands.”

The editorial staff of the Shanghai Urban Planning Review recognised this approach as a good opportunity to shorten the knowledge gap on the planning challenges of the Post-urban Era, remarked by Professor John Friedman in their autumn 2013 edition. As a follow-up on his article they generously offered room in the magazine to maximize the chance for appropriate feedback and participation.

Shanghai-Jiading pilot

The north-west zone of the Shanghai region, to Jiading and Kunshan offers plenty points of resemblance with the city-regional planning topics of the Rotterdam-The Hague metropolitan area.

To mention three of them:

1. Administrative finetuning



21+22: “Triple highway” concept Delfland





23: canal town Jiading and surroundings

Both the Shanghai region as well as the newly formed Rotterdam-The Hague planning authority have to find out the right administrative level and timing for conceptual planning questions. The concentric planning scheme offers a tool to define the right moments and to bring in the right info on the appropriate administrative levels.

2. Agro-Urban synergie.

The countryside north of Jiading has roughly the same conditions for a good synthesis between agro-business, recreation and nature as the surroundings of Delft. West and East of Delft are the glasshouse area's who top the world ranking



25: agriculture west of Jiading



28: meeting Jiading planning department



24: canal town Delft and surroundings

in food production and seeding. Combined with recent realisation of a green recreational network as part of Randstad Green Structure planning.

3. Environmental friendly mobility.

Recent transformation of the Rotterdam-The Hague Lightrail system, the Regional bike network and the Triple Highway concept can offer worthfull perspectives on the Shanghai city-regional mobility challenges.

These three themes were welcomed as urgent and relevant in a meeting I had at the Jiading Urban Planning Department, November 2013. They resemble the chal-

lenges defined in Shanghai's eleventh five-year plan which nominates the Jiading District as one of the three decisive districts for the succes of the overall long term Shanghai Master Plan.

Good conditons therefore for international knowledge exchange and on a "Jiading co-operative planning case."

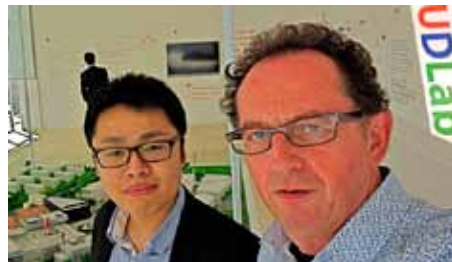
And it might be more than a lucky coincidence that that very same day in November the Jiading Now Factory opened its doors, (fig 30) adjacent to the Planning Department and meant to accomodate any initiatives of sharing knowledge and spirits in a true Living City.



26: mushroom nursery west of Jiading



27: west of Delft, grape nursery



29: UDLab at Jiading Now Factory



30: opening night Jiading Now Factory