LEARNING FROM DUTCH CITIES

Achieving Sustainable Urban Growth

urbed TEN

Photographs courtesy of Andrew Armes, Paul Evans, Nicholas Falk, Bob West
Case study of Borneo courtesy of Building for Life/CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment)

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PARTICIPANTS

TEN

TEN is a small group of senior local authority officers who meet on a regular basis to share ideas and to exchange knowledge on achieving urban renaissance. What links them are common concerns and a desire to gain space for blue sky thinking. In overall terms they wish to explore how to use the powers available to them to effect change; discover techniques for facilitating change; and develop their role as urban impresarios.

As part of its 2004-5 programme, TEN organised a visit to a group of major Dutch cities in the Randstad (ring city) to draw lessons on achieving sustainable urban growth.

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The Netherlands

Learning from Dutch Cities

OVERVIEW

Useful lessons can be learned from Holland, which has had a similar culture and history to Britain, and which more than any country has had to deal with the challenges of living in a relatively small area, some 360 by 200 kilometres. As much of the building land has been man-made, there has been a particular respect for planning and Holland has been in the forefront of moves towards the European Spatial Development Perspective. Like Britain, there is a major concern over where the new houses needed to cope with falling household size are to go.

Dutch towns and cities, such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Almere, provide excellent models for how to create more sustainable communities, and how to spread the benefits of town and city renewal. Britain has much closer similarities to the Netherlands than it does, for example, to North America, due to its long industrial and imperial history. Also most people live in dense conurbations, and there are similar challenges in terms of coping with the car, and saving natural resources. There have also been high levels of immigration, and nearly half the population in both Amsterdam and Rotterdam now come from abroad, creating similar issues in terms of social cohesion. However cities are not only much more productive than comparable British cities, such as Leeds or Bristol, with significantly higher levels of GVA per capita, but they are also much fairer, with lower disparities in incomes and educational levels, and there is a much wider choice of social and affordable housing.

Joined up thinking

With few clear boundaries, and a relatively small population of Dutch speakers, Holland is much more integrated with the rest of Northern Europe, and this has boosted economic development and innovation. Also with limited natural resources, the country has had to be more frugal and inventive in applying technology to meeting urban needs, for example making the most of wind and water and conserving fuel. There has been a long tradition of civic independence, and investment in the public realm and infrastructure. Finally they tend to think 'interconnectedly' and have long been exponents of 'joined up' thinking, rather than engaging in interprofessional conflicts. A paper by Lord Richard Best (*Appendix A*) stresses the greater emphasis put on building consensus through the use of intermediaries like architecture centres.

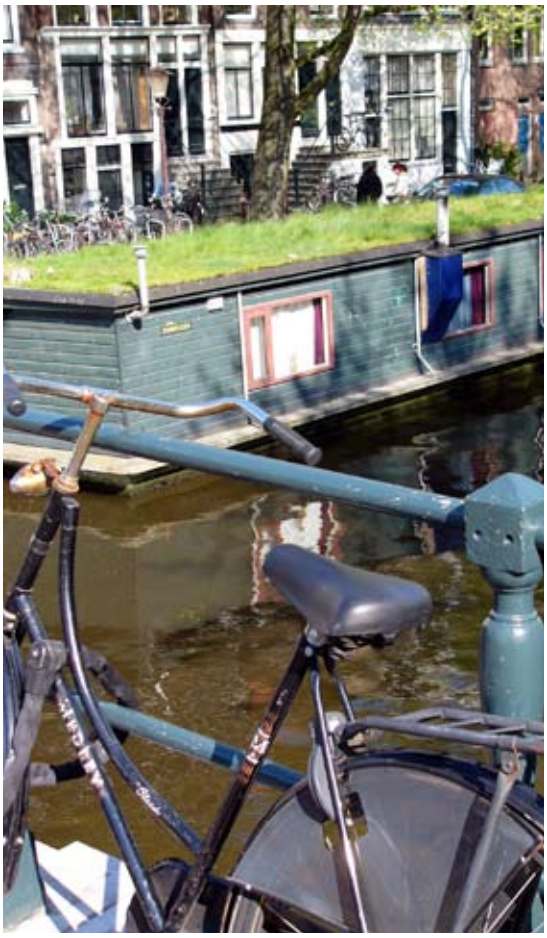
Positive planning

Heavily damaged in the last World War, the Dutch, along with neighbouring Northern European city regions, have been leading the way in promoting the ideas of 'compact cities' and 'polycentric city regions', which inspired the European Spatial Development Perspective. Through positive planning, and publicly led partnerships, they have shown how investment in infrastructure, consensus building, and higher density and mixed tenure housing, can produce cities that are living places, energy conscious, and icons for good urban design and modern architecture. However, like British cities, they also face continuing threats from the loss of better-off people to the peripheral areas, particularly smaller historic towns and villages, the challenge of maintaining the competitiveness of centres against sprawling 'edge cities', and very real problems of achieving social cohesion, building more homes, and dealing with pressures for development in the green belt or 'Green Heart'. The difference is that to a much greater extent they seem to have turned the visions, and rhetoric, into tangible results.

Neighbourhood management
Even though house-building levels have fallen, they are still 50% higher than British levels, and new developments are genuinely mixed, with little obvious distinction between units for sale and for rent. The secret lies in a combination of a shared vision or common culture that sees cities as major public assets, a willingness to work as teams, both across professions and sectors (in part reflecting the so-called Polders mentality of uniting to keep the sea out), mechanisms for investing in the public realm and its maintenance, and a relatively classless society. There is also a careful balance between the social control needed to make dense neighbourhoods work, and areas of freedom, including not only the famous coffee houses and Red Light District, but also the many people who live on boats, or who have small huts on allotments near one of the drainage ditches on the edge.

Architectural innovation
There has been a strong tradition of innovation coming from the public sector, with 35% of housing being publicly owned, rising to 60 or 70% in the cities. Housing associations are being required to raise their finance privately, but this is not presenting a problem in view of the range of housing they provide. Housing and planning are seen as closely related, and there has been a tradition of building cities in concentric rings, linked by public transport to new corridors of development. Architects have played a leading role in thinking, and the strong tradition of autonomous cities has encouraged local innovation within a national framework.

Design excellence
Dutch towns feel very attractive, not just because of the extensive canal system, but also because the streets are so well-proportioned, with many more four storey buildings, with large windows. The historic cores have been carefully conserved, and traffic has been largely tamed.



Instead of trying to separate out different uses, mixed use zones have been positively encouraged through careful planning. Competitions are used to select design and development teams, but within briefs that have been drawn up by the local authority, often using consultants. There is much less professional infighting, and this makes it easier for teams to produce schemes that really work.

Environmental responsibility

The main key to the attractiveness of the centres of Dutch towns is the way traffic has been handled. Though car ownership is higher than in the UK, usage is actually less. In part this is because of the superb public transport systems, which tie all of Holland together with very frequent and comfortable services in modern trains. But what really makes the difference within the town itself is the much greater use of bicycles, probably the highest in Europe. People can own as many as four different bikes, and this has been encouraged through measures such as bike lanes, bike racks, changing facilities and showers in places of work, and few roundabouts. Bikes are particularly beneficial where many people live several miles from the centre. As many as 30% of trips in Holland are taken by bicycle compared with 3% on average in Britain, even though the weather is not very different.

Development has been focused on locations with high standards of accessibility by public transport. Planners have sought to avoid excessive competition from out of town sites by controlling the amount of parking allowed. This has been done within a national policy for parking standards linked to levels of accessibility. As an example, the new development of a power station site in Groningen only allows half a parking space per apartment. More parking is allowed around railway stations to encourage people to change to public transport, and to

promote higher density development there. Much more use is made of car hire.

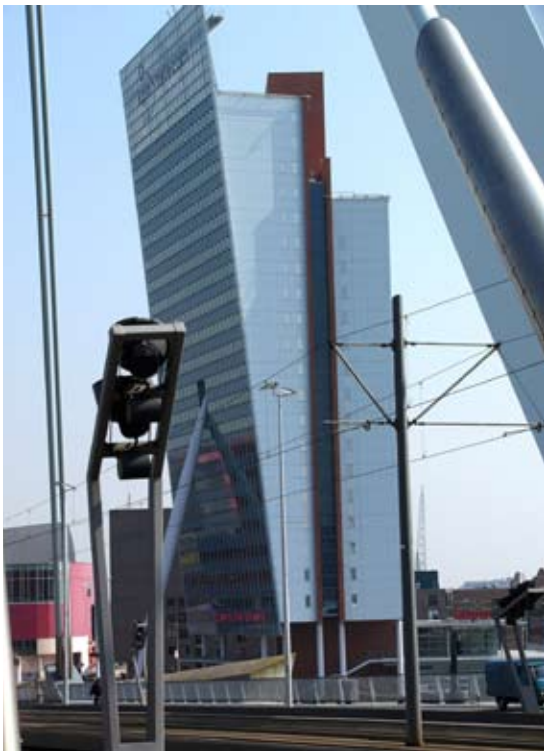
Within residential areas, there has been a long practice of creating Home Zones or Woonerfs where streets have been made safe for children to play. Children get themselves to school which provides a strong socialising influence, and saves parents having to spend time driving children around.

Social well-being

As in England, there has also been a tendency for wealthier families to leave the city for rural areas, though there is now an increasing enthusiasm for living in the city. Hence there is a concern to promote cohesion through spatial as well as economic policies.

Most people live in apartment blocks. In the past some 80% of these have been in the social sector, and rented out. Major changes are now under way to 'privatise' half the housing stock, with the role of the local authority becoming more of a catalyst for development. Within social housing, rents are linked to income levels, and can be no higher than a third, hence helping to ensure a wide spread of people living close to each other and keeping housing costs down. There has not been the same stigma associated with renting or public housing as in Britain.

Apartments are generally much more spacious than in Britain, and in part this is due to highly efficient construction processes. Most blocks are built using an ingenious concrete 'tunnel' structure. This is formed very quickly on site and prefabricated elements like bathrooms can be easily added. However, they are generally clad in traditional materials like brick or stucco, so that they do not stand out, as British system built flats used to. The apartments are often managed by housing associations. The public spaces are kept secure and are well-looked after.



With the supply of housing land being largely controlled by the local authority, housing developers have put more effort into producing better products. An interesting difference has been the way some of the largest house builders are linked to financial institutions. (An example is the ING Group, now involved in Milton Keynes.) With an interest in both controlling construction costs and also generating continuing rental income, a more sophisticated approach to housing development has resulted, where new products appeal to a much wider market than in Britain.

Though there is a much more liberal attitude to soft drugs, drug taking is in fact much less extensive than in England. As a result, crime levels are also lower. Streets feel safe because there are far more people on the pavements, and far less aggressive behaviour.

Collaboration between towns

After the last war, Holland had to invest heavily in rebuilding its bombed cities, and in modernising its industry. Local authorities have played an important role, and as in Britain now, there has been a division into regions or provinces, as well as counties and municipalities. However, there has been a greater reliance on regional planning through groups of towns working together. Experts from Holland have been leading proponents of the idea of European Spatial Development Perspective. There has been a respect for collective action and municipal autonomy, linked to careful resource management. The Dutch recognise the interrelation between accessibility, location of investment, quality of life, and economic performance. The need to maintain a complex drainage system, has led to strong collaboration between different agencies, and little of the ideological conflicts over the role of the public and private sectors. While there has been some tradition of voluntary action, it has tended to focus on the needs of disadvantaged groups rather than fighting development proposals.

AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam was Holland's largest industrial city, as well as being a world city as far as tourism is concerned. So in addition to encompassing the largest historic core in the World, it also contains huge former industrial areas, such as the old Eastern Harbour, with sites like the former Shell Refinery, just across a wider river from the heart of the city. It lies only an hour from the Hague and Rotterdam by train, and together with Utrecht and smaller historic towns, forms part of the Randstad or Ring City, one of the most successful urban conurbations in the world. The findings of research, for example *Competitive European Cities: where do the Core Cities stand?*, shows how the Dutch spatial and economic planning strategy has paid off. The regeneration of the Eastern Harbour area, which was the subject of a boat tour by members of TEN, provides an iconic model for how to develop new forms of housing and mixed communities on former industrial and isolated waterfront sites. An overview by Jon Rowland draws some lessons for Britain (*Appendix B*).

Productivity

With GDP/per capita and productivity levels some 50% higher than the similarly sized British cities of Leeds or Newcastle/Tyne and Wear (though significantly below the levels of Hamburg or Paris), both Amsterdam and Rotterdam offer interesting models for how to adapt to economic change. Rather than relying on high employment rates, as for example in the Thames Valley counties of Berks/Bucks/Oxfordshire or Brussels, they have succeeded in attracting firms with high levels of productivity, and that hence can pay higher wage rates. This is particularly obvious in the huge office parks around Schiphol Airport, and the office towers of Rotterdam. The decision of Shell to retain their laboratory facility employing some 1,200 on their refinery site, and turning it

into their world research centre reflects the company's view that highly liveable and well-connected cities are the best places to attract and retain the most talented staff, who represent their main capital for the future. Similarly Rotterdam is not only the world's largest port but is also the main European centre for logistics. Holland along with Sweden continues to have a healthy heavy commercial vehicle manufacturing industry, and industry probably has a higher status.

Their success in exploiting the main drivers of economic competitiveness: innovation, connectivity, and a skilled workforce, has been a crucial factor in Holland's relative success. A major study of Amsterdam's experience published in 2000, *Amsterdam: the Major Projects*, emphasises that '*To meet European competition, Amsterdam must enter into alliances with other cities in the Dutch Randstad and indeed throughout Western Europe…. The four major Dutch cities – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague and Utrecht – have already united in the "Delta metropole" project aimed at enabling the Randstad to develop into an urban agglomeration of European significance.'* This is not only more far-sighted than anything yet to emerge in England, but is rooted in what is realistically attainable, given their strategic location.

Livability

Continental cities have succeeded in retaining their attractiveness as places for a wide range of groups to live. *Amsterdam: the Major Projects* points out that *'If the structural upgrade is to be successful, the physical renewal of individual buildings, public spaces and amenities must go hand in hand with social and economic renewal.'* Some 40,000 new homes are planned, and the population is rising as fast as London's, in part because of the growth of higher education, but also due to immigration. The Amsterdam plan identifies the key goals as *'accessibility, sustainability, multiple land usage and mixed functionality, public space and the quality of life'*. Hence the task is seen as building

better neighbourhoods, not just new housing. Most of the population are used to living in rented housing, with a subsidy proportionate to income levels, so there is little of the stigma associated with renting, as in Britain. The new schemes seek to create a greater mix of tenures without any obvious distinction. Clever ideas have included putting students on the fifth floor of new blocks of flats without lifts, and having a multiplicity of architects design units within overall masterplans. A case study of an influential high-density development of Borneo Island has been produced by CABE (*Appendix C*). Costs have been kept down by using 'Tunnel Construction' methods on larger blocks in which a concrete shell is cast within a framework.

New developments involve much narrower carriageways than in Britain, with no clutter of signs or lines, and with more space for parking and cycling instead. Ten major housing associations account for the bulk of construction. Major financial institutions, like the ING Bank, have set up development and property management subsidiaries. Significantly ING are developing the old Shell Refinery site through a sub-lease from the City Council, which has provided them with the security needed to acquire the site from Shell, and there are penalty clauses in the contract to ensure that development is not delayed. Hence both public and private sectors work together in a proper partnership governed by the equivalent of the Landlord and Tenant Act.

Connectivity

Bicycles rule in Holland and the ratio of private cars to public transport and bicycles in Amsterdam is 55:25:20. Though there is by British standards a relatively good public transport system, with close integration between the airport, the inter-city rail system, and the suburban train and tram services, priority is being given to upgrading them still further. Development of a new underground

line and a massive interchange around the Central railway station, started with the construction of a multistorey structure for parking 7,000 bikes. Though the ABC policy for relating parking standards to public transport capacity has not quite worked out as planned, due to rivalry between authorities in attracting jobs, there are still much higher levels of office development around major transport nodes. The post-war suburbs are also being renewed. Controls on parking, for example the continuing reduction in the numbers of spaces in the city centre, are linked to the development of new neighbourhoods around new or upgraded stations.

Governance

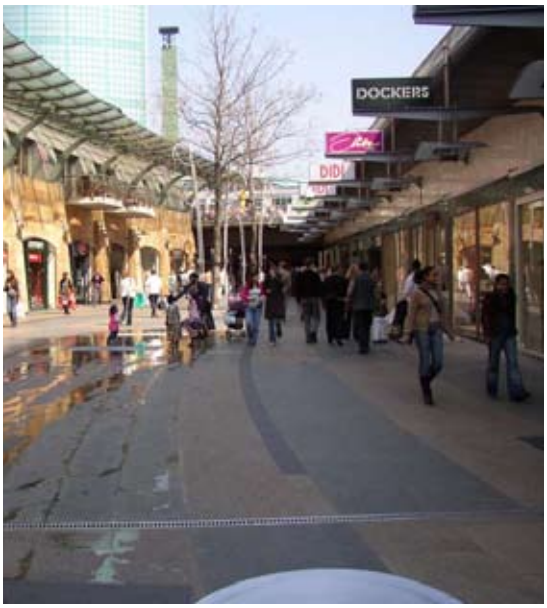
Dutch cities like Amsterdam have planned not only at the neighbourhood level, but also at the city region level, to make the polycentric growth model work. Over 80% of the land within the municipality is owned by the city, which gives it a key role in promoting development even though local authorities raise a relatively small proportion of their own finance. The Amsterdam Development Corporation brings together the city estate department and its housing department in an agency that can build long-term partnerships with developers. Mayors appointed by the government, a highly positive planning system, and a proportional representation system means that there is much less doctrinal and organisational change than in the UK, and a greater chance for learning from experience. Similarly the private sector is used to working with leadership coming from the local authority. Masterplans consider a range of options, and the resulting choice is expressed in terms of a series of design guidelines to allow for a degree of flexibility. Considerable use is also made of Architectural Centres and other intermediaries to help build consensus, and the subject of cities and architecture is taken much more seriously than in Britain.

ROTTERDAM

Largely destroyed through bombing 60 years ago, Rotterdam like many English cities has also had to cope with a legacy of ugly post-war commercial buildings, and poor blocks of housing, along with much stronger competitors in terms of culture and the knowledge economy. The city's renaissance started in the early 1980s with projects to make the most of its waterfront, including an iconic block of cube houses, that helped put the city back on the map. Having considered proposals from a number of well-known architect-planners, the city appointed a new Director, who spent two weeks brainstorming the city with her staff, to come up with 30 projects aimed at making the most of the city's hidden assets. She then secretly commissioned a famous Dutch architect planner to come up with a new masterplan for the Kop Von Zuid, a notorious old dock area. Public support for the key ideas, including an exciting new bridge, have led on to a series of innovative architectural projects.

Productivity

Back in the 1980s Rotterdam feared it could never compete with the Hague or Amsterdam, but in fact it has succeeded in bringing new office employment into the heart of the city centre. Whereas before the war some 80,000 people lived in the centre, today only 28,000 do, but there are 80,000 jobs, many in the headquarters of major public and private organisations. Like Amsterdam, the city has succeeded in providing a clear sense of direction, backed up with suitable sites, and has made the most of its pivotal position at the mouth of the Rhine. Instead of wasting resources covering over the shopping centre, the city has remodelled its centre, and made the most of new leisure facilities to create a linked series of public spaces. Fodor's guide provides useful background (*Appendix D*).



Livability

Rotterdam not only lost population to the edges as a result of the war, but also has seen a wide range of immigrant groups replace its traditional white working class population in some areas. In turn this has led to conflicts at neighbourhood level, which the city has sought to address through an innovative programme called Opzoomeren, after the first street where it was tried. The basic idea is to challenge residents to take responsibility for their own environment. A three stage programme uses facilitators, backed by the police and social workers, to negotiate agreements street by street. After an initial diagnostic phase, it starts with efforts to get people to know their neighbours, through street parties that celebrate diversity. They then go on to develop rules of 'urban etiquette'. A social contract uses the incentive of the municipality putting in some investment, for example new street names, in return for the residents taking responsibility. Since 2000, the programme has already operated successfully in over 700 of some 2,400 streets, focussing on neighbourhoods known to be unsafe. There is a target of agreeing social contracts in 150 streets by 2006. Underlying the approach is the idea of a 'ladder' for social cohesion, ranging from aggression at the bottom to self control at the top (see page 19).

Another innovation has been the development of a series of high rise apartment blocks that are proving very popular with the new knowledge workers. Though the residential population is still only a third of what it was before the last war, the growing population is helping to make the city feel safer and more attractive at all times.

Connectivity

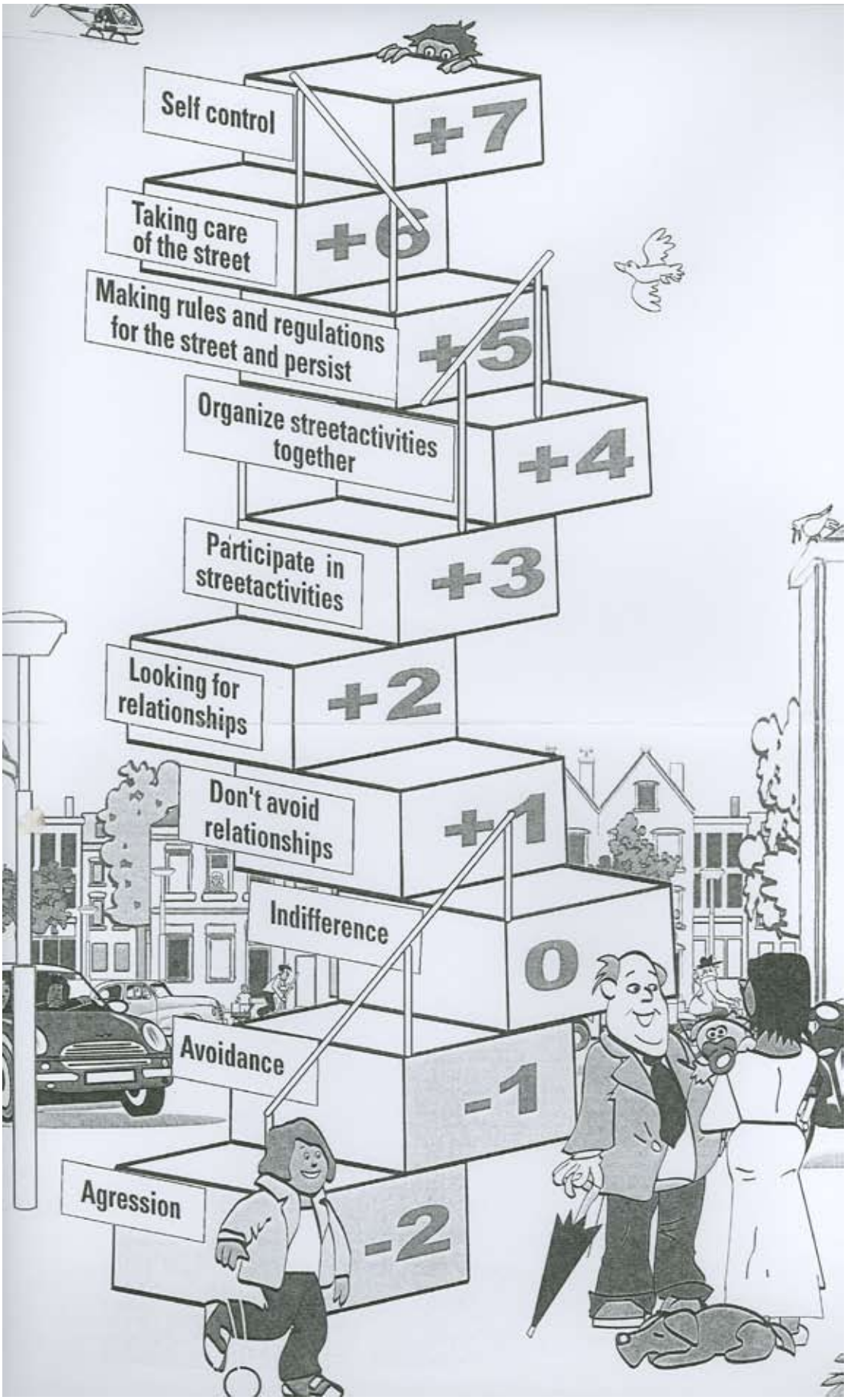
Rotterdam has invested in a high quality tram system, and also an underground railway with several lines stretching over 80 miles. A new tram line was built in advance of the major

development of the Kop von Zuid area, to assist the area's regeneration and encourage the use of public transport. Park and Ride on the periphery also helps keep traffic down in the centre, and through roads have been turned into boulevards. A noticeable difference over the last 20 years is the extensive pedestrianised network, which permeates the new waterside developments, creating a memorable place to visit. Rotterdam is improving its connectivity still further with a major project to upgrade the area around the main railway station.

As with other Dutch cities, there is a great stress on communications, with a large and sophisticated shop front visitor centre, using techniques such as Virtual Reality.

Governance

A key element in Rotterdam's renaissance has been their entrepreneurial Director of Development. The city has sought to learn from the best of practice overseas, and for example contributed to the 1988 Highbury Initiative in Birmingham, and is twinned with Shanghai. There is a focus on neighbourhood management as well as strategic planning. Considerable use has been made of architectural competitions to get innovative buildings that are also affordable, given the relatively low rental levels that the city can achieve.



The Opzoomeren model for neighbourhood management

ALMERE

Almere is the largest of the Dutch New Towns and is expected to grow from its current 250,000 to over 400,000 inhabitants. Only half an hour by train from Amsterdam, it has been built around a series of new stations along the railway line to provide a growth point on land reclaimed from the sea. The aim, like Milton Keynes, is to create a town that is relatively self-sufficient, but at present most people still commute out for jobs.

The city is expanding along the railway line, to a plan that has been developed with the neighbouring authorities (see John Best's paper – Appendix E). The town is built at relatively high densities, but within a spacious green framework, and has proved a popular place for young families to bring up children.

Productivity

The strength of Amsterdam's economy, and the range of other employment centres that can be reached easily, mean that Almere has not suffered from a lack of jobs. The original aim was to have only 10% working outside, and 50% of the jobs in the city are taken by people commuting in from outside. New employment has been provided in the public services needed to serve a growing town. Some offices have been attracted by the available workforce, and there are over 125 foreign companies, and 70 media companies, plus a World Trade Centre.

The generally high standards of Dutch education, with a much higher proportion of people finishing their education, and speaking several languages, has given the urban conglomeration a real boost. The City Centre is being remodelled to a plan by international architect Rem Koolhas, with a stress on making it much more distinctive.

Livability

Though it lacks a historic core, the town has been developed as a series of six districts, each with a large number of neighbourhoods averaging some 4,000 residents, with their own schools, shops and meeting places. The population is still relatively young. The city was influenced by the Club of Rome reports, and the need to save natural resources (unlike Milton Keynes!). There is a stress on creating distinctive places, and for example in one neighbourhood the different street blocks have been painted in different palettes of colour.

New developments are being built at higher densities, but with large green spaces and lakes between them. 36% of the total 61,500 acres area is given over to agricultural land, making it a very green and blue city, with more water than Rotterdam. When the land was reclaimed sixty years ago, a start was made on growing a forest, to help protect people from the wind. Along with Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, and richly planted front gardens, there is a sense of living close to nature. The distinctive character of the new homes comes from the application of carefully worked out Design Codes, and masterplans that intensify development around public transport corridors. A policy of 'shared surfaces' means that relatively little space is given over to roads in residential areas, and parking is carefully designed to separate houses from the street. There is a stress on harmony and the use of colour, and residents are accustomed to conform.

There are 13 different neighbourhoods, and the district we visited has some 50,000 citizens of which 35% are non Dutch. Interestingly in areas that would strike British visitors as very successful there are concerns about levels of participation in community life, and 'affection for the area', which are closely monitored so that corrective action

can be taken before a problem arises. Indicators include parent involvement in schools, security, child health, and mobility. In the 1970s people moved every three years, but this has slowed down as house building has fallen. A proportion of social housing is built into all developments, and some end up with a higher proportion if there is a lack of buyers. Overall about half the homes are owner occupied, and the density is about one fifth of the average for Dutch cities, though new developments are being built at around 60 dwellings to the hectare. The priority is seen as getting households to identify with their neighbourhood and children with their schools.

Connectivity

Though Almere is essentially car based, there is a first class bus system running at relatively high speeds, as stops are spaced 6-800 metres apart. Dedicated grade separated cycle ways are provided throughout alongside the roads. People typically cycle for 3-4 km but not the 10 km from the edge to the centre, so a good bus service linking up with the trains is seen as essential. The stops become the nodes around which social facilities are to be concentrated.

As well as the five railway stations, another one is planned to link up with a few thousand new houses. The suburbs are designed around 'shared surfaces' which have replaced the Home Zone (or Woonerf) as the model for how to design living places. Though there are inevitable tensions between transport engineers, planners and designers, they speak the same language and work as a team, co-ordinated at district level.

Governance

Strong partnerships are seen as essential as no one organisation can do it all. Each part of the city has a city manager, whose job is to coordinate daily services, and also to integrate the social and physical,

including developing new vision. The job involves responding to incidents and also looking at trends, and they try to build up networks, and to promote collaboration with companies. The planning of Almere is part of the sub-regional spatial framework, which ensures that neighbouring authorities are represented. There are three plans concerned with physical structure, infrastructure, and social development and renewal. The key objectives are to secure a better balance and greater diversity of population. As the municipality owns most of the land, it has a high degree of control, but is dependent on land sales and government grants for funding the infrastructure. As an example, the new station, which has been built as part of the next phase of development, has only basic platforms, and it will be up to the municipality whether and when they develop facilities on or around them.

There is much closer collaboration or team working between the different professions than would be usual in Britain. Similarly there are neighbourhood teams under a City Manager responsible for ensuring that new residents are absorbed into the community, and that all the services function well. A significant achievement was the idea of creating a new forest, which 50 years ago was seen as mad, but with a lot of care and patience is now a protected landscape. The fundamental vision is to create a city that is both harmonious and sustainable.

Responses from Participants

Participants commented on the main impacts that the study tour had for them.

'*A different culture and way of living, that cannot easily be replicated –*

re: modern architecture

re: using space differently

re: ceding control to local authorities

re: supporting mixed/public transport'

'How very sensible the Dutch are and how we manage to make everything so very complicated and difficult with the result people give up before they have even tried. I still cannot get over Rotterdam deciding to put the elevated railroad below ground. If I tried to phrase this more sensibly I would say: the lack of a common sense of purpose between public agencies in the UK and, especially, in transport the dead hand of rigid cost benefit analysis…. We only measure them in terms of journey times, which would mean Rotterdam's project would have been dead before it started.'

'As ever the willingness of the Dutch to take risks ... and then mitigate and manage the risk … as demonstrated by both Borneo Sporenburg and the Rotterdam agenda over the last 20 years.'

'Building in more space for creative process and ideas – the 2 week planning awayday in Rotterdam; the architect-designed street in Amsterdam. We need to create more space for innovation.'

'An accepted culture of modern style ... probably the product of a long engagement with the issue …. But the new individual build area could easily be seen as a descendant of the typical Amsterdam street.'

'Individual architect designed homes within a framework of plot sizes and storey heights looked very good. Couldn't we do this in Milton Keynes?'

'A lower cost base and more rented property... which gives scope for innovation.'

'Water everywhere .... Obvious but it influences so much including the acceptance of shared space. Let's capitalise even more than we do. (But not always ahead ... it was a bit like Docklands 1990 in places and some of the design was more routine.)'

'Straight lines can work …. With flat land being made new they are uncompromising about the logic of layouts, with variation coming from simple devices rather than twee space-wasting twiddles.'

'The public sector role in major development proposals. The local authority is always the key landowner and has control through ownership. This allows them to deliver quality. Hence the community seems better able to cope with new approaches to design than e.g. in London. This could be because the public sector delivers it there.'

'Land Ownership used as a lever on redevelopment, particularly in Amsterdam.'

'Time and money spent on presenting to the public and to business on a permanent basis pictures of where cities are going, e.g. through architecture shops.'

'The way in which they had high ambitions for Rotterdam and managed to get it regenerated. It is similar to UK cities, and was partly redeveloped by British architects.'

'High quality of strategic coordination and project management and architectural and urban design skills in local authorities to the extent that this is well respected by the private sector.'

'What impressed me was the timescale in which Rotterdam were planning their city programme – it covered about 40 years. Given how long certain transport projects take in the UK we run on much shorter time frames and therefore limit what we can shape. By my experience few authorities manage to hold to much more than 10 year timescale – and that's being optimistic.'

'Opzoomeren – a new experience ... the Rotterdam Street initiative was a very interesting approach to dealing with disrespect, not going the route of banning hoodies, but putting people into streets and neighbourhoods and giving them time to develop things themselves … a fantastic result with limited resources ... and replicable.'

Some Lessons

Though Dutch towns and cities have evolved quite differently from British equivalents, there are a number of lessons that can be drawn from their experience since the last war:

- Holland has concentrated on rebuilding its economy after the war by making the most of its strategic location, and links with adjoining countries, such as Germany and France.
- By rebuilding its towns and cities in ways that are highly livable and well-connected, it has helped to make the city centres more vibrant and economically successful.
- The differences in the way the centres look reflects a different approach to working together, and also a different attitude to towns, which are seen as major cultural, social and economic assets.
- The challenges that induced Dutch people to collaborate in creating a better environment, also now apply to many British towns and cities, and so it may be possible to transfer more of their thinking to the UK, particularly to London and the South East.

Learning from Dutch cities

Dutch cities like Rotterdam and Almere offer a number of ideas which could be used to improve planning in Britain. These relate to five factors that URBED believes lie behind regeneration that improves the prospects of people and places together:

1 Connectivity:

Spatial planning is concerned with securing polycentric growth, and involves collaboration between neighbouring authorities to create a clear framework for development. Economic links are reinforced by higher levels of investment in integrated and high

quality public transport. Pedestrians and cyclists are given priority in town and city centres, and development is concentrated where accessibility is highest.

2 Choice:
Land supply through local authority ownership or acquisition of most development land is used to reinforce national and sub-regional plans. Though there has also been a shift towards suburban living, the greater role of housing associations, with rentals linked to earnings, makes for more balanced cities, with a greater social mix at block level. Social mix has also been encouraged by building attractive high density housing in former industrial areas on the waterfront, and gentrification does not seem to be seen as a threat, possibly because there has been a much higher building rate.

3 Character:
Design quality has been promoted through a greater use of masterplans, design briefs, architectural competitions, and the provision of Architecture Centres in almost every city to improve communications and the level of debate. As a result innovation in the design of facades and house layout has been combined with the creation of highly walkable streets.

4 Cohesion:
Service provision is coordinated at a neighbourhood level, with an emphasis on securing full participation from everyone in activities like parent teacher associations. Social control is also used to encourage good citizenship in maintaining tidy streets, and public space is valued more.

5 Collaboration
Above all the Dutch show us how to develop better places through closer collaboration, between professions, organisations, and sectors, which we need to copy if we are to build truly sustainable communities.

APPENDICES

A Public Participation - *Lord Richard Best*

B Amsterdam Docklands - *Jon Rowland*

C Borneo Sporenburg, Amsterdam - *Building for Life/CABE*

D Rotterdam – Colossus of the Waterways - *Foder*

E Almere, Holland: Expanding a New Town - *John Best*

F Fact File - *Foder*

Appendix A PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Introduction

The Built Environment and Transport (BET) Panel's Planning the Future Task Force has established two sub groups. This report comes from the Public Participation Sub Group which visited Groningen and Amsterdam on 25/26/27 June 2000. Our hope was that a look at the scene in Holland would give us a glimpse of a possible, better, future for the UK. This report sets out our impressions and conclusions.

Overview

Public participation in the planning system raises the same issues in the Netherlands as in the UK. In both countries there is a recognition that greater citizen awareness, and the extension of democratic processes, requires those planning new developments – particularly major infrastructure projects – to engage with local communities to a much greater extent than in times past. More extensive consultation, participation and involvement brings the hope that conflict can be reduced, differing views can be reconciled, hassle and delay can be minimised.

But equally, there are concerns in both countries about timescales being extended, about pressure groups exerting disproportionate influence, and about the quality of decision-making being dumbed-down not improved.

Both countries face the same issues of local antagonism and political manoeuvring which can make it hard to reconcile the wider public interest with the objections of those most affected by big infrastructure projects – like a new airport (or extra terminal) or a major new railway line.

In Holland, as in the UK, these issues are being addressed from the top down – with central and local governments seeking to be less distant and paternalistic in their planning processes – and from the bottom up with environmental, amenity and neighbourhood groups, and individual citizens, becoming more vocal and more sophisticated.

Only at the margins can it be said that the Netherlands shows us the future. Both countries are grappling with the key questions for similar reasons and with similar outcomes. Indeed, to some extent the tradition of the active citizen is stronger in parts of the UK; many in Holland have passively accepted a higher degree of State decision-taking than we might tolerate. And in terms of how to consult and engage, the various techniques we discovered in Groningen and Amsterdam would not be ground-breaking in the UK.

But despite these similarities, we unearthed a good deal of evidence that the level of commitment to the process, and the likelihood of success, may well be greater than for many equivalent UK exercises.

Why does "participative planning" – "interactive public debate" – appear to be more effective in the Netherlands than in the United Kingdom?

Cultural Distinctions

As always, the UK seems to be positioned somewhere between mainland Europe and the United States. Without going to the extremes of America's laissez-faire capitalism and minimalist welfare provision, we find ourselves nevertheless a more privatised, unequal and entrepreneurial society than the Dutch:

- Lifestyles in Holland are more "collective", with a high proportion of Amsterdam homes being in social housing (despite higher living standards and fewer poor households), with many more communal, public open spaces, with more extensive use of public transport and, of course, of bicycles rather than cars;
- More land is in the ownership and direct control of local authorities and State intervention in relation to land is entirely acceptable. Historically, landowners were often foreigners (whether from Orange, France, or Spain or Austria); and traditionally the rich and powerful have not invested in country estates. The creation of so much "man-made land", the long-standing dependency on government for handling floods, tides (and, later, the effects of global warming?), and the absence of exceptionally beautiful countryside, all make the Dutch less precious about land ownership. (Is it the case that an almost completely flat country finds extensive new housebuilding less objectionable because it is largely invisible? Without hills, development on them cannot be seen from below, nor can development be witnessed by looking down from the hills above!)
- Urbanism is a long tradition: relatively high density apartment living remains common-place for the better-off; the rural idyll does not beckon for so many; willing dependency on the bicycle reduces interest in moving out; urban extensions are regarded as good for the environment – rather than a threat – because they produce the revenue for enhancing natural habitats;
- Despite making similar mistakes to their UK equivalents, local authorities have not had their powers emasculated and their funding slashed. The public – with many hesitations – retains faith in governmental planning; strong city mayors/chief executives have real power. Their municipalities, therefore, remain central to real decision-making about what happens in their areas;
- The (alleged) reduction in competence of our local authority planners is not necessarily matched in Holland: broadly-based urbanists can find fulfilment working within local councils, thereby sustaining the quality that gives the public confidence in their decisions;
- And it is still acceptable (even though it may become less so) for taxation to be at much higher levels than for the UK. Central and local government can take large scale planning decisions and make them happen without dependency on private sector capital.

These changes – fundamental but possibly waning as globalisation and the cultural onslaught from further West takes its toll – seem to make the tasks of achieving more successful public participation and more proactive planning rather easier in the Netherlands than in the UK.

Can we learn anything?

Rather than learning new tricks, exposure to the Dutch scene may reinforce our current views on the most sensible participative arrangements. But possibly they may also encourage us to do more frequently what we now do only occasionally.

I. The purpose of participative planning

The Dutch seem rather clearer than us on what public participation is intended to achieve. The aims are: to avoid simplistic confrontation; to see less use made of "the emotional card"; to ensure that any protagonists understand more clearly what are the points of disagreement; to enable those involved to see the whole picture/context, from its many perspectives. It is not expected that enhanced discussion will always lead to consensus; and it is accepted that key parties will leave the table where no further compromises are negotiable. But the progress to date in Holland does indicate that greater and more interactive engagement with the range of affected parties makes for less confrontation, for higher quality debate – irrespective of whether agreement is achieved – and a greater likelihood of more people being satisfied with the outcome.

II. National Agreement

Holland is just completing its consultative exercise on a new National Agreement to cover the period up to 2010 (with the possibility of modest changes each year in the light of changing circumstances). The arrangements begin with publication of a Preliminary Plan – before the formal, legal process begins – with encouragement for all views to be aired.

To assist in this process, the relevant Ministries employed the Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek (IPP), the Dutch Centre for Political Participation, funded by the Ministry for Adult Education. The IPP secured 20,000 completed questionnaires following newspaper advertising and selective mailings. It sought to by pass the campaigning bodies and get the views direct of individual citizens. A sample survey confirmed that the feedback fairly reflected a fair cross-section of opinion.

III. Structure Plans

Consultation is becoming much more widespread in relation to the plans at County/City levels. Organisations like the Groningen Institute for Architecture and Urbanism – one of 38 such institutions – were engaged to arrange local meetings, use models and videos, put forward alternatives/options to stimulate debate.

IV. Project Consultation

For small planning/urban decisions – e.g. on issues like creation of an underground car park or selection of a scheme for redeveloping a downtown site – real devolution of decision-making is taking place in specific cases. Since the big player in Holland is so often the municipality – not private sector developers – exposing the politicians to local opinion can be more directly effective.

For major infrastructure projects requiring greater sophistication, the Dutch may be achieving a little more than we are. There is recognition that although the processes of participation are likely to add an. extra year to the decision-making timescale, it takes an average of 17 ½ years to reach decisions on major projects: so far more time is being spent in resolving disputes between different departments, and different tiers, of government than in the consultative procedures (which, if deployed successfully, may end up saving time).

V. Partnership Models

Academic studies in the Netherlands have led to the establishment of a number of key principles which are being promulgated as the basis for successful public participation policy making. The cornerstone is a model of partnership – between the municipality, the community and the developer – operating on the basis of:

- a separation of roles to avoid confusion and conflicts of interest;
- a division of the tasks so that participants own a distinct part of the whole;
- synchronisation of contributions, so that events need not happen in sequence, but together;
- an understanding of the strategies and objectives of each party;
- clarity on the liabilities and risks for each participant;
- integration of transport/infrastructure/environmental/other aspects: giving equal prominence to each, not allowing one to dominate the process;
- always providing a number of variants/options/alternatives, never just one, to allow real choice. (NB: The traditional Dutch "poldermodel" always works with a single plan. Participation is passive and confined to making small adjustments to compensate for negative effects. The newer partnership model which replaces this concentrates on participants choosing the most promising of a number of alternatives.)
- bringing together all the financial considerations – value, capital cost and revenue implications – over a life cycle (not considering only short term gains and costs);
- ascribing a monetary value to all ingredients, even more intangible ones. (E.g. "How much are you prepared to pay to keep the old church?")
- applying cost-benefit analysis to ensure value-for-money.

In conclusion

Are we looking into our own future when observing how things are done in the Netherlands?

It is possible that – however much they may dislike it – the opposite may be true. The Dutch may find the penetration of a more privatised culture – with more owner occupation, more desire for personal transport, greater scepticism of State institutions, and taxation more at UK levels than their own today – all makes planning for the public good, and involving the wider community in decision-making, more difficult.

But, equally, it may be true that the shift in the UK over the last 20 years towards a more individualistic, private-sector, anti-local/central government approach is creating its own reactions: the pendulum may be swinging back, if only a little, toward the more collective culture we were pursuing in the post-war decades. If so, since there are lessons for us to learn from our failures in that era, the Dutch experience may help us to shape our new destiny:

- We need to reinforce the message that planning decisions (including for major infrastructure projects) require the legitimacy, credibility, authority and acceptability which can only be achieved if the general public is involved and "owns" the outcomes;
- Central government (and our Regional Development Agencies/Government Regional Offices) need to recognise that this process must begin at the national level, involving a debate – no doubt conducted at least in part through the news media – on the principles behind future development policies;

- Techniques are needed to include in that exercise individual citizens who are not part of organised groups;
- Despite the lower profile of our local authorities, it is at the level of the municipality – and the individual neighbourhood within it – that higher levels of interest will be achieved because of the proximity of the citizen to the actual development proposal. It is here that time will be needed (but will be well spent) engaging individuals as well as the lobbying organisations when canvassing opinions (and always ensuring that the public has the chance to choose from more than one option);
- With private sector operators – companies undertaking infrastructure schemes, and major developers – being more prominent in initiating and pursuing development of all kinds in the UK, we may need to draw lessons from Holland on the partnership models that work best. Instead of our local authorities and our local communities simply being reactive – most often in a negative way – we need to see how they can engage constructively in setting the parameters for private sector activity and in participating with the private developers in partnership arrangements;
- Far more extensive use than today can be expected for the Internet which, at least for the more active citizen with basic IT skills, will speed up the processes of engagement;
- Deployment of intermediary bodies – whether coming at the issue from the perspective of Adult Education (in citizenship and democracy), like the IPP, or from a basic interest in supporting public participation in urban processes, like the local Institutes for Architecture and Urbanism (with their central body) – seem critical to galvanising participation in Holland. If the UK is to make a step change in the quantity and quality of public participation it will need to invest in comparable institutions here;
- Training for professionals – planners, architects and those in the new disciplines of urbanism – needs to embrace the dimension of participation and the extra skills it implies. This new world also means a cultural shift for some national and local government officials – and their politicians – who need to learn the techniques for listening, for letting go, for taking more of a risk in acting upon the feedback from the people most affected by planning decisions;
- And, regrettably, taking questions of public participation seriously probably means spending more public money – supplemented as appropriate from private sources – to allow this approach the level of time, professional input and status it deserves.

One way or another, the UK must cope with development on a substantial scale – whether in major infrastructure schemes or necessary development on greenfield sites – over the years ahead. If these processes are not to lead to constant tensions, frustrations, political upsets and bruising confrontations, we need to do better in engaging our citizens in the planning processes. The Dutch cannot give us the silver bullet that will end our problems but they can show us that it pays to achieve more clarity of purpose, more persistence and professionalism in pursuing the processes of participative planning.

Richard Best, Planning The Future: Public Participation
Draft Report To The Foresight's BET Panel, 2000

Appendix B AMSTERDAM DOCKLANDS

With the increased interest in high density housing, Holland provides a source of inspiration. Jon Rowland describes recent schemes in Amsterdam's docklands.

Think of housing development in this country and the knee-jerk reaction brings to mind village greens and market squares. It might also bring to mind the garden suburbs of the early 20th century.

Think of waterfront housing and the reaction is not too different. One only has to look at the early housing in the dockland area of such cities as London or Cardiff. The response to the opportunities provided by waterfront sites was confused. Some examples tried to re-create these rural forms in urban environments through the use of standard house typed with added maritime elements. Warehouses provided the basis for a new lifestyle to the extent that as a building type they created new opportunities.

This has been changing. We have looked to America for waterfront inspiration. The results have been developments like Chelsea Harbour or more recently Monte Vetro. Now with the increased interest in high density housing the European experience has become the focus of our attention. In particular it is housing in Holland that provokes the most interest.

Whilst we may still be struggling with our emotional response to the rural idyll, the Dutch have remained rational. If you wonder what happened to Georgian and Victorian terraced housing, they are alive and well and being re-interpreted in contemporary terms in Amsterdam's docklands.

Projects in the Oosrelijk Havengebied – the Eastern Harbour areas of the city – are proceeding apace. The close working partnership between public authorities and the private sector has enabled some 8,000 houses and apartments to be built in the last ten years. The public sector, often the landowner is able to set out the design and financial terms for the development – allowing the private sector to bring finance and development expertise to the table.

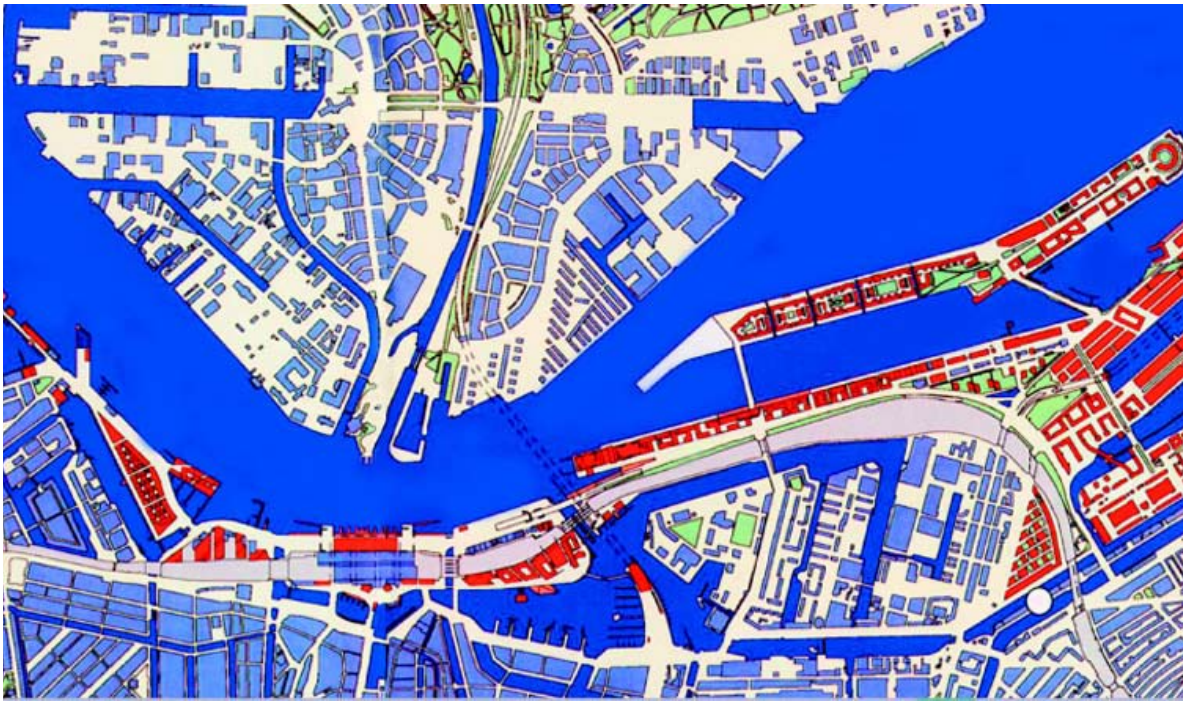
So what can we learn from the Amsterdam experience? Well apart from the idea of opening up the market to individuals rather than developers – and revisiting the idea of plotlands, three aspects are relevant to the UK:

Partnership
The role of the local authority as land assembler, and that of the private sector as developer. An 'open-book' system operates that allows the City Council to monitor the financial performance of the development as it is designed and developed.

Masterplanning
The importance of the masterplan is to shape development. Integrated terms of landscape designers, architects, planners and engineers establish the development ethos. That spirit is exemplified in the form of urban housing in which the Dutch excel. Part of that ethos inverts our British attitudes so that our concern about privacy is transformed into a positive approach to neighbourliness, health and safety regulations to community and self-responsibility; traffic orientated development to pedestrian friendly environment.

Urban Design Guidelines
Strong guidance on materials, height, massing, landmarks sometimes prescriptive, but flexible enough to create a canvas for imaginative and innovative responses to a very simple and well understood urban form – the terraced house.

Jon Rowland, SUN DIAL Waterfront Edition, Spring 2003



Appendix C BORNEO SPORENBURG, AMSTERDAM

Reproduced from Building for Life/CABE

BUILDING FOR LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Borneo Sporenburg represents about one third of an enormous redevelopment of Amsterdam's Eastern Docklands area. Of the 17,000 housing units in the Eastern Docklands, those in Borneo Sporenburg are the most innovative, offering a vision of urban living tuned to an aspiration by many to live in the city's historic core, or some place like it.

As part of the phased regeneration of these now disused areas, a residential brief of 2500 dwellings was set for the two peninsulas of Borneo and Sporenburg, dictating a high density of housing.

The Borneo Sporenburg plan divides the low-rise buildings into three zones with architecturally distinctive high-rise residential buildings creating significant landmarks within the harbour landscape. The variety of dwelling types includes both three storey terraces with patios and gardens, some of which are poised on canals, and apartment blocks (the most renowned of which is 'the Whale').

Borneo Sporenburg reverses the predominant social trend towards a dense urban core inhabited by childless couples, singles and the extremes of high and low income, and a suburban fringe occupied by middle-class families. The development demonstrates that family housing is not incompatible with dense urban areas.

DESIGN PROCESS

Borneo Sporenburg was designated a 'pre-Vinex' location in 1989 which meant the city of Amsterdam would receive a considerable contribution from national government for preparing the ground for building, on the condition that work on the development would begin before 1996. In order to fulfil this condition, Amsterdam formed the Eastern Docklands Area project group who became responsible for carrying out the project. Development of Borneo Sporenburg began in 1992

The housing corporation collective, the New Deal Development Society, and the Urban Planning Service started the planning process. One of the most important decisions made was to develop the two peninsulas as one planning area. In order to achieve the large number of dwellings necessary, they referred to a study that the Amsterdam architect Rudy Uytenhaak had performed for Java Island, with stacked dwellings which each had a front

'The whale' apartment block

DESCRIPTION

Average density: 100 dwellings per hectare (the 600 dwellings in the three large housing blocks bring up the average density)

Number of dwellings: 2,500 for Borneo Sporenburg / 17,000 for the Eastern Docklands

Client: City of Amsterdam

Designer: Masterplan by West 8; individual units by international and local architects

Year: 1996-2000

door onto the street and its own exterior space. He showed that by organising the dwellings in a compact system of plots and small streets, higher densities could be achieved. This study was important in making it clear that Borneo Sporenburg did not have to be built as medium-size high rise structures.

Six architectural practices were asked to conduct a study into dwellings with ground-level entrances, investigating the possibilities for developing a good neighbourhood with pleasant, varied three or four storey residences. Following this research, a study project was commissioned for urban planning bureau Quadrat, architect Wytze Patjin and landscape architects, West 8, to draw up an urban planning proposal which included 600 residences with individual ground level entrances.

West 8 designed the masterplan for Borneo Sporenburg. They were successful in bringing diversity to the urban form within a familiar matrix of streets. Over 100 architects were involved, working within West 8's design framework.

The masterplan set strict yet imaginative rules for the development, including guidelines for streetscape, parking, private open space, storey height and plot width. The masterplan was based on a new approach towards the familiar demands of single-family houses – generous private outdoor space, a secure parking space, safety and individuality. West 8 was successful in creating a framework for high density living that satisfies all the demands of a conventional household.

The development of Borneo Spoenburg has been a complicated and difficult process. There has been considerable experimentation in the legal construction of New Deal and in the architectural and urban planning sense. Choosing the urban planning proposal from West 8 was a choice for the new, for the unknown. Never before in the Netherlands has there been an experiment with such a high density in dwellings with individual, ground-level entrances.

EVALUATION

Character

Drawing upon Dutch architectural heritage, West 8's plan for Borneo Sporenburg was inspired by villages on the former Zuiderzee, where small, intimate houses descend towards the water. More that 100 architects participated, developing

new housing prototypes and the resulting designs include patios, roof gardens and striking views of the waterfront.

The variety of house types, distinctive apartment blocks and the waterfront add character to the peninsulas and make the neighbourhood easy for visitors to navigate. Streets are well overlooked helping to make public spaces feel safe. The narrow low-rise housing types are conceived as introverted patio houses. All private outside spaces as well as parking places are to be found within the plot. Car ports share the street frontage with the entrances, and are made palatable by inventively designed porches, doors and gates.

On a small part of Borneo, the city has made available 60 'free parcels' on which private individuals are able to have their own homes built, under strict urban planning and architectural preconditions. These 'architects-houses' are an exemplar of good design, with each building individually designed, but achieving harmony by its adherence to the underlying design code.

Roads, parking and pedestrianisation

A range of car parking treatments are used in Borneo Sporenburg: the low-rise terraced houses have internal car ports, 'the Whale' apartment block has an underground car park and there is some on-street car parking.

Where possible, houses facing internal canals have private waterfront access. Pedestrians and cyclists are well catered for and there are three bridges connecting the two peninsulas.

The building layout clearly takes priority over the roads and car parking layout. There is however less variety in the streetscape than West 8 hoped to achieve. Originally West 8 wanted to have around a dozen architects design most of the housing, but to scatter these houses in rows of 5 to 12 units to avoid long, monotonous facades. However, after the first 250 units were built, developers petitioned the city to limit the choices to only the six most popular unit types. The result is that some street fronts are lined with long, horizontally oriented slablike structures rather than the fine-grained rhythm of vertical facades that West 8 planned.

Many of the houses have however used planters and pots to create small areas of defensible space, breaking up the facades. Residents have positioned benches outside dwellings, and toys and bicycles are left safely on the street.

'Architects-houses': each dwelling is individually designed

BUILDING FOR LIFE

Design and construction

The design of the apartment blocks and the low-rise dwellings are specific to the scheme. The most notable of the apartment blocks is referred to as the Whale because of the unusual shape of its roof, reminiscent of the profile of a huge whale diving under the water and then surfacing. The extraordinary design permits the Whale to offer plenty of views of the surrounding environment. To allow natural light to reach even the lowest floors and the inner courtyard of the building, it is raised on two sides to create a central fold increasing the available light. The shape of the roof follows the route of the sun, drawing a striking shape and letting space and light into the building's heart.

The apartment blocks in Borneo Sporenburg contain collective open spaces in the forms of courtyards or gardens. There is little public green space in the development as a whole, with the water surrounding the docks serving as the dominant public space, open to Amsterdam's boating culture.

The low-rise housing structures are arranged into strict branded blocks which are sub-divided into individual parcels, each containing an inside void that comprises 30 to 50 percent of the parcel. The idea was to drive daylight deep into the volumes of the houses, making smallish spaces appear larger and taking advantage of the water views, while maintaining privacy. Double-height spaces were mandated within canal-side units to draw light and shimmering reflections inside.

Environment and community

Borneo Sporenburg includes a school and housing for the elderly. Reflecting the nation's greater wealth, only 30 percent of the units are subsidized social housing (not long ago 70 percent would have been typical); the rest are market rate. There is a range of accommodation provided with both low-rise dwellings and apartment blocks.

West 8 were committed to creating unique structures within a unified whole. They designed the gardens and other open spaces, as well as the three sculptural bridges that connect the different neighbourhoods on the peninsulas.

From Borneo Sporenburg, it is a 15 minute bike ride to the centre of Amsterdam. The development is clearly urban in character, but lacks local shops and facilities. In time, this may lead to increased car dependency and subsequent parking problems.

Internal courtyard of 'the whale'

Footbridge designed by West 8

Appendix D ROTTERDAM: COLOSSUS OF THE WATERWAYS

As a city with few remnants of its fabled past, Rotterdam enjoys a future that is perhaps the brightest of all cities in Holland. Gone are the days before World War II when the city fathers would commission a statue of a paint manufacturer but refuse to clear away the grim jungle of its commercial core. On May 14, 1940, the task was done for them by Nazi bombs, which swept away some 30,000 homes, shops, churches, and schools in the course of a few brief hours. To the surprise of those who didn't know the vigour and hard headedness of the Rotterdam Dutch, a new city of concrete, steel, and glass arose in the 1950s and '60s, phoenixlike, from the ashes of its destruction. And today-with some of the most important buildings of the beginning of the 21st century continuing to rise-some pundits believe that were it not for the devastation of World War II, Rotterdam might never have become the dynamic and influential world port it is today.

Some time ago, Rotterdam ceased to be simply a Dutch city. Thanks to its location on the delta of two great river systems, the Rijn (Rhine) and the Maas (Meuse), and the enormous Europoort and North Sea projects, it has become the largest seaport in the world. Through its harbors - and there are many-pass more tons of shipping each year than through all of France combined. New industry settled in (which the Rotterdammers greatly welcomed: "The question is not how larger a tanker the channel will allow," one executive was quoted, "but rather how deep you want us to dredge it so your ship can get through"), followed by new populations. After the repair of the harbours in 1952, there was an increasing demand for labour; so recruits settled in from Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, and Morocco, followed in the 1970s by Cape Verdeans and Netherlands Antilleans. The wealth generated by industry led to new culture and architecture, with the absolute latest in futuristic design now studding the cityscape. Today, Rotterdam and modern architecture are so intrinsically intertwined that the one goes a long way toward defining the other. This architectural renaissance was capped when Rotterdam was named Europe's Cultural Capital in 2001, leading to a year long party of exhibitions, theatre, music, poetry, and design. Galleries' and museums' profiles were raised, ground was broken for even more modernistic edifices, and art journals hailed "Manhattan-on-the-Maas" as the standard-bearer of architecture of the 21st century and a power station for ideas about the look of tomorrow.

But post-modern architecture is only one of the attractions of the Maasstad, or City on the River Mass: the regular traveller will also find much else to satisfy. Visit the urban waterfront along the Maas River and admire the regeneration under way, with varieties of waterside cafes and restaurants. Window-shop through antiques markets. Discover what the Museumpark has to offer, the city's cultural axis running straight down the Westersingel, from Centraal Station to Kop van Zuid. Shop in designer boutiques, or choose to explore Chinese department stores on Westkruiskade. Take a look at avant-garde galleries on Witte de Withstraat, Binnenweg, and Delfshaven. Rappel down the Euromast. Rotterdam has a young, urban culture, with some of the hottest nightlife around-just check out the hipsters at clubs such as Now & Wow. In other words, don't be surprised to learn that techno-rock was born in Rotterdam.

The city divides itself into four main sectors but doesn't really have a central district; for all intents and purposes, that is simply a shopping area these days. The **Kop van Zuid** and **Entrepot** districts are on the south side of the bridge. Here, famous architects such as Sir Norman Foster and Renzo

Piano are designing housing, theatres, and public buildings to complete the area's transformation into a modern and luxurious commercial and residential district. **Delfshaven, Oude Haven**, and **Leuvehaven** are old harbours, but that's just where the comparison stops. In particularly charming Delfshaven you'll find a harbour so narrow it looks like a canal, lined with gabled houses dating back centuries and creating a classic Dutch scene. The Oude Haven, on the other hand, is surrounded by buildings not more than 20 years old, some of which, like the Blaak Rail station and Kijk-Cubus, are among Rotterdam's most photographed buildings. **Museumpark** is known as the cultural heart of the city, because it is home to four museums and bordered by a Sculpture Terrace; you can museum-hop from collections of giant animal skeletons to city history to Golden Age art. (Incidentally, if you plan to visit a lot of museums, it is always worth buying a Museum Jaar Kaart [Museum Year Card], or MJK for short; this pass gives you free entry to more than 440 museums throughout the country for a year and free entry to 15 in Rotterdam, and is available on showing your passport at VVV offices and participating museums for €25.)

Like Amsterdam's, Rotterdam's name is taken from a river-in this case the Rotte, which empties into the Maas at this point. The city's birth extends back to the 10th century, when, despite the constant threat from the sea, a small group of early Rotterdammers settled on the Rotte banks along a small stream running through the boggy, peaty area. The settlement flourished, but it was not until the Golden Age (1550-1650), when Holland was a world power, that the city became a centre of trade, home to both the United East India Company and the West India Company. The city's really spectacular growth dates from 1870 when the Nieuwe Waterweg was completed, a 17-km-long (11-mi-long) artificial channel leading directly to the sea.

Extract from Fodor's Holland, 2004

Appendix E ALMERE, HOLLAND: EXPANDING A NEW TOWN

Context Almere is the premier New Town in Holland, and forms part of a group of towns with Milton Keynes that has been sharing experience through Interreg. Created out of a polder on the coast a few miles north of Amsterdam, Almere has grown to more than 160,000 with 60,000 jobs in 25 years, and has suffered from the negative image of being a dormitory town. As well as using different approaches to the design and construction of houses, Holland has been the leading force within Europe in the development of sub-regional spatial plans and the European Spatial Development Perspective. It therefore provides an interesting source of inspiration for Britain, with a number of Anglo-Dutch companies, and a similar history of having once been an imperial power.

Strategic plans With very limited land to build on in the crowded Randstadt region, the government and the region want Almere to grow to 400,000 instead of the original target of 250,000. This means building some 3,000 homes a year up to 2005 and thereafter 2,000 homes a year, and will necessitate major investments in new forms of transport after 2010. Rem Koolhaas has drawn up a masterplan for intensifying the city centre, with a new higher density shopping and entertainment centre, as well as a high rise business centre next to an enlarged central station.

The 2010 Structure Plan is also concerned to diversify the range of houses and jobs, while reinforcing the 'green and blue' framework of woods, lakes and ponds. Nine additional plans have therefore been developed including proposals for the better utilisation of water and improving accessibility. Key features are the ideas of 'Gateway to the Randstadt', 'Greenery in the Randstadt' and 'Self Reliance in the Randstadt'.

The completion of the original plan, with six distinct quarters, will be reinforced by urban extensions, including low density urbanisation in a green setting or near water to create more diversity. There is a concern to modernise the existing town to secure coherence between the old and the new. Greater variety is intended to strengthen the 'draw in the chimney'.

Organisation The process is being coordinated through the Future Almere Project Office concerned with implementing the Delta Metropolis urbanisation plan. Hence the Project Office comes under the Department of Housing Regional Development and the Environment (VROM), but with the participation of other ministries and also and the provinces of North Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland, as well as the municipalities of Almere and Amsterdam.

Their aim is to establish an 'Integral Development Plan for Almere', which will culminate in a long-term management agreement. The first step was signing the 'Future Almere Starting Covenant' in April 2003. The parties recognise that Almere is a good location for growth, and that 'development arrears' in social and access terms should be eliminated. At the same time Almere is working on the Almere Plan, linking various strategic projects, a social structure and spatial framework plans, with 2003 'Town Manifesto' created through a dialogue between the council and its citizens (which presumably provides the vision). However it is the concordat between all the relevant agencies which is probably the most important innovation as far as British planning is concerned.

Based on material provided by John Best, November 2003

Appendix F FACT FILE

Fact file

- The Netherlands has a **population** just short of 16 million. Of these, some 730,000 live in the capital Amsterdam, 600,000 in Rotterdam and 450,000 Den Haag (The Hague). "**Holland**" comprises just two of the twelve Dutch provinces: Noord-Holland around Amsterdam, and Zuid-Holland around Rotterdam and Den Haag.
- The country is a constitutional **monarchy**; the present queen, Beatrix, was crowned in 1980. She presides – in a titular sense – over the country's bicameral **parliament**, named the States-General, which comprises an Upper House or First Chamber and a Lower House or Second Chamber. Parliament sits in Den Haag. The Lower House is directly elected; the Upper comprises representatives of the country's twelve provinces.
- Every Dutch city has a municipal **council** with delegated powers over a wide range of social issues, from public order and safety, drugs and housing through to economic development and culture. Currently, the two largest national political parties are the left-of-centre PvdA and the right-of-centre CDA. The green-left Groenlinks also make a significant showing in the big cities.
- Almost half the population declare no **religious** affiliation. The three largest churches are the Catholics, the Dutch Reformed and its nineteenth-century breakaway, the Reformed; there is also a sizeable Muslim minority.

From Foder's Holland, 2004