

Big Shifts in Spatial Planning in The Netherlands

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BIG SHIFTS

In Spatial Planning in The Netherlands

A position paper by the group of Spatial Planning & Strategy & partners

Delft University of Technology



Bodegraven

BIG SHIFTS IN SPATIAL PLANNING

In The Netherlands

COLOPHON



A position paper by the Group of Spatial Planning and Strategy & Partners

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Abstract Based on the understanding of the built environment as result of competing claims on space that must be resolved via recognition, fair distribution of burdens and benefits of our human association, respect and care for the planet and just procedures to decide on those claims, Spatial Planning and Strategy is a chair in the Department of Urbanism within the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the Delft University of Technology, committed to helping create sustainability, resilience and spatial justice through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement and the European New Deal, among other frameworks. This commitment is reflected in activities, events, and courses. We are concerned with knowledge about the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategic and urban planning tools – visions, strategies, plans and programmes.

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In accordance with the ethical guidelines for academic research, we assert that all authors in this booklet have contributed significantly to the writing of each of the texts where they are listed as authors. The order to authors reflects the importance of each contribution. All authors were involved in revising the manuscript critically for intellectual content, and they have all approved the final version to be published. Each author has agreed to be accountable for the integrity and accuracy of the work, ensuring that all queries related to the work will be addressed accordingly.

In the conduct and dissemination of this policy paper, we have adhered to the highest standards of ethical research practice. This study does not involve human participants, human data, or human tissue; hence, it does not require approval from an ethics review board.

We acknowledge any potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that could influence the execution or interpretation of this work, and state that there are none. Where applicable, we have obtained permissions for copyrighted material and have been transparent about any affiliations, funding sources, or institutional backing which could constitute a conflict of interest.

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Ypenburg

CONTENTS

08 Designing our Future

Caroline Newton & Steffen Nijhuis

18 Governance

Caroline Newton, Marcin Dąbrowski,
Simbarashe Chereni & Cinco Yu

26 Values, Democracy & Citizenship

Juliana Gonçalves & Roberto Rocco

36 Spatial Quality

Qu Lei & Verena Balz

44 Housing

Darinka Czischke

52 The Rebalancing Act

Rodrigo Cardoso, Remon Rooij & Lukas Höller

DESIGNING OUR FUTURE

**Collaborative
Pathways for
Spatial Excellence in
Dutch Planning**

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Emmen

The Netherlands has long been recognised for its strong and innovative position in the realm of spatial planning. Rooted in a rich tradition of visionary and strategic design, Dutch planning has continuously adapted to address the evolving needs of its people and environment.

The seeds of this approach to urbanism were sown before World War II, sparked by the ground-breaking collaboration between Theodoor van Lohuizen and Cornelis van Eesteren. Their Amsterdam General Extension Plan laid the foundation for a new era in urban planning in the Netherlands, with echoes around Europe. When they joined Delft's faculty in 1947 and 1948, their visionary integrative research and design methodology not only shaped research and education in Delft, but it also left a lasting mark on Dutch urban design, planning, and landscape architecture practice and education. The legacy of their innovative approach continues to inspire and drive the field today and has inspired the Delft approach to Urbanism, in which interdisciplinary is key.

Spatial Quality

As part of the tradition in Dutch spatial planning, the emphasis on spatial quality has contributed greatly to how the Netherlands functions, looks like and sustains itself. In the current planning document “Programma Mooi Nederland”, spatial quality is highlighted as a ‘guiding principle’ in dealing with all major challenges. In line with the effort being made to bring back the leading role of national spatial planning, it is expected that the power of design could play a more central role in creating a co-ordinated development pathway towards a more desirable future for all. However, this is not going to happen without commitment.

The current conceptual framework of spatial quality has been used for a while. It pursues three main values: functionality, experience and future proof. In our view, this framework needs to be updated with more emphasis on inter- and trans-disciplinarity, to cope with the unprecedented challenges spatial planning must address, such as those brought by climate change, growing spatial inequalities and the just sustainability transition. **Spatial quality is not just an ‘added value’ when dealing with such complex issues, nor something that can be ignored when time and budget do not allow. Instead, it is at the centre of the solutions sought to address these challenges, while design is the tool that can contribute to the integration of disciplines and stakeholders’ interests.**

In this context, rejuvenating design-thinking and boosting spatial quality becomes crucial for sustainable development. But the discussion on spatial quality can also function as a democracy-building exercise, rallying citizens around ideas of sustainability, resilience, and spatial justice. By integrating spatial quality into our democratic and participatory planning processes, we’re not just amplifying public voices; we’re fostering consensus, engaging stakeholders in future visioning, and deploying contemporary planning tools that allow for the collection of multiple perspectives in spatial planning.

Spatial Quality as lace and keystone

The concept of spatial quality, as a metaphorical lace and keystone, serves as a framework that unites and supports various elements of our modern society. As a lace, it interweaves various themes, providing cohesion and connectivity between different sectors and paradigms. As a keystone, it holds the weight, allowing to find a harmonious balance between socio-spatial development, environmental preservation, and sustainability. Spatial quality acts as a robust framework that unites, supports, and propels key elements of our society, nurturing new governance models, guiding vision formulation and consensus, safeguarding a landscape-centric approach that reveres the unique Dutch geography, addressing societal needs, such as affordable housing and sustainable mobility, and ushering us into a post-growth era.

The natural landscape is a fundamental layer of this system. To ensure a robust and dynamic coastal zone, for instance, spatial quality takes into account not just human interests, but also the ecological balance that must be maintained. Similarly, the re-humidification of the peat bog area and the connectivity and compartmentalisation of the water system are other critical elements to consider. This attention to the natural environment also includes sensitive construction in polders and making room for rivers - both of which represent sustainable human responses to the challenges faced by our natural landscapes. Within this spatial quality framework, the establishment of robust regional landscape and natural networks further emphasise the interconnectedness of the system. These networks include regional systems of parks, natural areas, and agricultural, and cultural landscapes, as well as ongoing walking, cycling, and sailing routes. Adding the cultural-historical zones and hotspots, along with the variety of landscape types, reinforces this sense of cohesion, diversity, and unity in our spatial experience.

Sustainable mobility and multi-modal accessibility are other significant threads in the lace of spatial quality. The emergence of Transport Oriented Development (TOD), especially around public transport nodes,

plays a key role in this aspect. The development of regional public transport networks, multi-modal hubs, and attractive regional bicycle and hiking networks contribute to the notion of accessible and sustainable mobility. The spatial quality framework underlines the significance of re-thinking logistics and distribution systems. Additionally, it underscores the restructuring of road networks and the promotion of car-free zones in substantial sections of the city.

In governance, the keystone of spatial quality enables a novel approach that harmonises grassroots innovation with top-down strategies, expanding citizen participation. Digital innovations accelerate this evolution, fostering the co-creation of solutions, even in the face of multifaceted crises. As a lace, spatial quality interweaves various themes, providing cohesion and connectivity between different sectors and paradigms. This intricate weaving is evident in how we address our natural regional landscapes and natural networks, and sustainable mobility.

Finally, cities that are habitable, socially and ecologically inclusive represent the keystone of the spatial quality model. Through the processes of densification, intensification, and function mixing (living, working, amenities), the concept of spatial quality seeks to create environments that are suitable for everyone. The strengthening of environments that foster social interaction, the creation of climate-adaptive, green, and inclusive public spaces, and ensuring housing for everyone further enhances the liveability of our cities, bolstering the resilience of our communities in the face of multifaceted crises.

In vision-making, spatial quality shines as a collective approach, inviting citizens into the heart of the decision-making process. Collective vision-making broadens inclusivity and reinforces the democratic ethos, which are critical as we confront myriad societal challenges. Digital tools are emerging as powerful allies in this effort, facilitating this inclusive and collective approach to collective vision-making.

The fabric of spatial quality, with the natural landscape as its basis, robust regional landscape and nature networks as its threads, sustainable mobility as its pattern, and liveable, inclusive cities as its cornerstone, manifests the shared responsibility for our collective future.

Therefore, this lace and keystone notion invites us to participate actively and democratically in co-creating a sustainable and inclusive future.

The Delft Approach: Interdisciplinary Pathways to Spatial Quality

Spatial quality, a multifaceted concept, necessitates the integration of ecological, social, and economic aspects while emphasising the beauty, multifunctionality, and durability of the urban landscape. It requires a unified approach that actively interlinks diverse elements such as water, nature, cultural landscapes, public spaces, housing, urban typologies, sustainable transport systems, the knowledge economy, and agricultural production.

Such a broad-based integration is best facilitated by a governance structure that endorses and actively champions this synergy. This collaborative approach enables the creation of spatial quality through a co-creative process. It lays the groundwork for visioning, strategy-making, and design explorations by understanding systems across various scales and from a diversity of perspectives brought by the participating stakeholders.

To maintain balance in this complex system, equal consideration should be given to both long-term and short-term perspectives, regional and local dimensions, as well as to the harmony between robust structures and flexible infills. This process necessitates the utilisation of design and design-thinking as critical tools in the planning process. They foster trans- and interdisciplinary collaboration, while integrating diverse themes and contextualising design principles.

Furthermore, a focus on design-oriented knowledge is integral to fostering socially and ecologically inclusive development, thereby ensuring spatial quality. The intricate interplay of the physical environment (hardware), people and knowledge (software), and governance (orgware) is a critical aspect of this process. By emphasising these interdependencies, we build a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of spatial quality.

The Delft approach to Urbanism is anchored in science that bridges research and design. As a design-oriented planning activity, urbanism

focuses on creating sustainable urban landscapes that adapt to climate change, embrace circularity, promote social equity, and foster ecologically inclusive urbanisation across all scales. It employs design-thinking in addition to academic rigour and is solution-focused, internationally-oriented, and context-driven. By cultivating this integrative Delft approach to urbanism, the Department of Urbanism gained an excellent global reputation in societally relevant academic research, as expressed in the highest score for excellence in the research assessment in 2022.

The Delft approach to Urbanism leverages disciplinary perspectives from Urban Design, Landscape Architecture, Spatial Planning & Strategy, Housing, Urban Studies, Urban Data Sciences, and Environmental Technology & Design. These knowledge fields form the foundation for inter- and transdisciplinary, context-driven, and problem/solution-focused research and education.

In terms of contributing to the “Mooi Nederland” programme, this approach enables the development of vision and policy in three main ways:

- 1) Theories: Contributions include socially inclusive urban development, citizen participation theory, landscape-based urbanism, and circularity.
- 2) Development of practice-oriented methodologies and applications in research and design: Governance, regional design, and design processes are among the contributions.
- 3) Research, design, and education on key themes: These themes include social inclusivity, ecological inclusion, and other umbrella topics. This integrated approach positions the Department of Urbanism and the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment to deliver excellence in societally relevant academic research and education.



Nijmegen

GOVERNANCE

**The Future is Now:
Navigating Challenges
and Opportunities in
Governance**

Caroline Newton
Marcin Dąbrowski
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SPS



Den Haag

Current challenges: The current governance structure in the Netherlands is facing significant challenges in addressing the country's future needs.

First, there is a lack of a clear shared vision for the future of the Netherlands. While putting challenges on the table, the NOVI initiative does not provide a comprehensive vision that considers the pressures, opportunities, and choices that need to be made to shape the country's future. It is essential to develop a true vision for the future that is based on a participatory visioning exercise involving diverse stakeholders and, critically, the citizens in the process.

Second, the concept of "soft planning" in the context of NOVI presents a unique set of challenges, especially when it comes to cross-border issues and financing of initiatives that require spanning across administrative boundaries, for instance, climate adaptation, water management, public transport or promoting circular economy. While 16 NOVEX areas are put forward to address such key issues within functional areas, those boundaries do not match existing administrative divisions and the current planning competences at different levels. There is a need for tools to coordinate and avoid multi-level governance gaps that would hinder addressing those challenges effectively.

Third, this points to the challenge of developing adequate capacity within the governance structure in the Netherlands. There is a need to rebuild capacity for cross-scale, integrated planning after a period of *laissez-faire*, in which the state withdrew from managing spatial change. This requires capacity-building at the central level and the development of the ability to integrate policies and actions across scales. Additionally, the capacity needed to drive radical socio-technical and socio-ecological tran-

sitions in cities and regions remains uneven across municipalities, which creates challenges in implementing sustainable policies and initiatives. In many cases, this has also resulted in gaps between higher-level strategies and the implementation of projects at the municipal level lacking forward-looking elements.

Opportunities for challenging the *status quo*

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities for rethinking the approach to governance and challenging the status quo. Crises such as the housing, nitrate, and energy crises, create opportunities for change. The NOVI initiative also opens a window of opportunity for discussing and rethinking the role of planning as a future-oriented action to coordinate activities in space towards more sustainable outcomes. Digital innovations in communication also bring new opportunities to engage stakeholders and citizens in co-creating pathways and solutions to achieve those outcomes.

Ideas and tools to break lock-ins that neoliberal planning has created are desperately needed if we want to address these challenges successfully. This includes new approaches to tackling the housing crisis, sustainable farming, and climate adaptation.

To develop such contextualised and innovative approaches, we need to put an emphasis on co-production and development of capacity at both the level of planners and policymakers, as well as „futures literacy” among citizens and other stakeholders. A new model for connecting bottom-up participatory innovation with a more top-down approach to upscale engagement of citizens is also much needed.

Part of the solution to this is to use knowledge institutions and students to produce new critical insights that challenge the status quo, scenarios, and visions for the future. Academics and students can engage more directly with planners in municipalities, and provinces, as well as with citizens and neighbourhood organisations. This approach, known as the Machizukuri approach in Japan, emerged during the 1960s; but gained

momentum during the reconstruction after the 1995 earthquake in Kobe, as well as the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Tohoku. This approach not only allows for more effective planning, but also assists local communities in taking ownership of their own development and shaping the future of their neighbourhoods. Also, in the Netherlands, there is scope for working on co-creative pilot experimentation and then feeding this knowledge to the national level. This approach would also create local linkages across sectors and help develop students' skills in the engagement of stakeholders. Another potential opportunity is to harness issues brought in by pressure groups, those adjudicated in court cases, and those that come in through municipal consultative processes; and to feed them into knowledge exchange platforms and re-envisioning processes.

A call to action

The existing Dutch territorial governance system faces considerable obstacles in meeting the country's future demands. The most significant challenges are the need for a clear vision of the future, the inability to steer spatial changes effectively, and deficiencies in institutional capacity and planning expertise.

As the future progresses, it is increasingly evident that the expertise required for effective planning must be pluralistic. This necessitates the integration of knowledge and skills from various disciplines and the ability to mediate and engage with stakeholders, communicate effectively, and navigate the boundaries between different fields. Furthermore, the capacity to synthesise multiple perspectives and work collaboratively will be essential for achieving optimal results. This presents a significant challenge, but also a unique opportunity to redefine our planning practice.

Knowledge institutions and students can help generate fresh critical insights and alternative methods. By contrast, legal institutions act as barometers to measure the legality and legitimacy of local policies, strategies and tools for this. Cross-municipality sharing of governance experiences can also help in this, especially in issues that involve uncertainty and call for new solutions and innovation.

These advances might be accomplished through seed funding to encourage co-creative pilot actions and urban experiments involving knowledge institutions alongside governmental, private, and civic stakeholders. This would not only allow for the testing of new ideas and methods, but also foster cross-sectoral connections at the local scale while providing opportunities for collective learning and developing abilities in stakeholder involvement among the students involved. In turn, this can help bridge capacity shortages at the national level by preparing future planners to engage citizens and stakeholders more effectively in the planning process. We can ultimately overcome the challenges that NOVI brings about and establish a truly sustainable future for the Netherlands through a combination of innovative solutions, co-production, capacity-building and co-creation of a new territorial governance paradigm, combining bottom-up participatory innovation with more top-down methods for steering sustainable economic and spatial development.

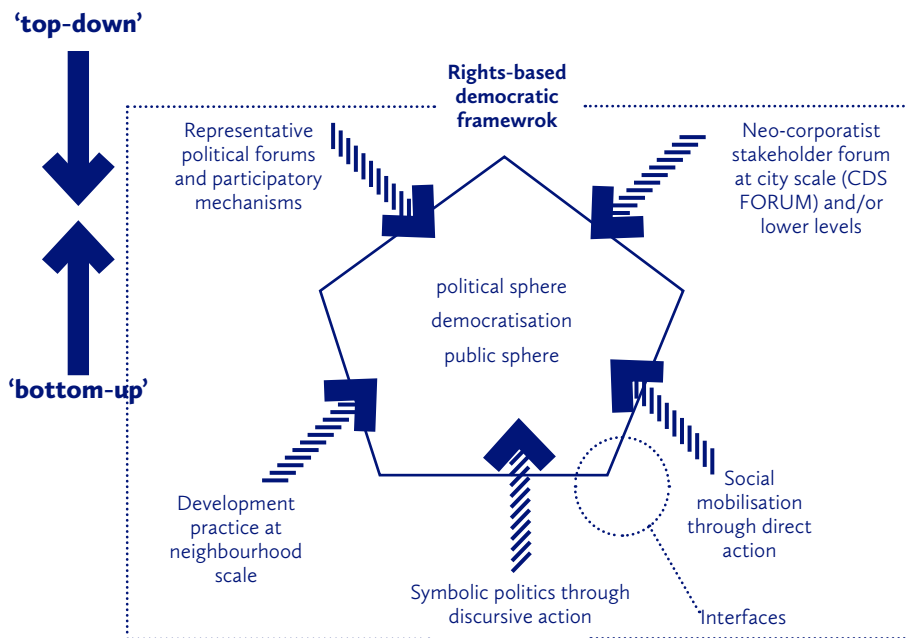


Figure 1: Domains of political engagement in the relational city.

Adapted from Pieterse, E. (2008). Working notes on a relational model of urban politics. African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town. Available from: <https://www.princeton.edu/~piirs/projects/Democracy&Development/papers/Pieterse,%20Relational%20Urban%20Politics.pdf>



Ijsselstein

Values Democracy & Citizenship

Juliana Gonçalves
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SPS



Leeuwarden

The collective challenges we face today require a real systemic transition towards sustainability, which includes deep changes to the ways we inhabit, move, work, produce and consume. It also requires a deep rethinking of our relationship with the planet and our fellow travellers, animals, plants and ecosystems.

Despite initial efforts and investment towards that transition, we have not been able to mitigate climate change and are now likely to overshoot the 1.5° C global warming target, according to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report (2022). “The IPCC says that humans and nature are being pushed beyond their abilities to adapt. Over 40% of the world’s population are ‘highly vulnerable’ to climate, the sombre study finds” (MacGrath, 2022).

The Transition to Sustainability is urgent, but will it be fair and inclusive? The European Green Deal introduces the JUST TRANSITION as one of its main pillars. But for this transition to succeed, a paradigm shift

is needed on how transitions are planned and implemented, away from a technocratic approach and towards a democratic and collective process. TRANSITION GOVERNANCE needs to ensure that all sectors of society understand the challenges ahead and are on board for the transition, easing the way for big shifts in behaviour and societal transformation. This is also the case in the Netherlands, where societal rifts have already started to appear with protests by farmers, growing energy poverty, and increase in spending to 'keep our feet dry' (the expression used by the Dutch to explain the monumental societal effort to keep the country free from flooding).

This great societal shift needs COLLECTIVE VISIONING to which all members of society can contribute. Visioning is a collective exercise that enables governments to communicate challenges and aspirations and shape the attention (and the actions) of stakeholders. Not having a national transition vision makes it difficult to communicate those challenges and their urgency to citizens, alienating them from decision-making that directly affects them. Collective visioning enables the identification of societal values from a large and diverse array of social groups and also enables the identification of innovations and opportunities, particularly niches of innovation that are not yet mainstream and may have untapped potential to help achieve the transition.

Towards solutions: Visioning as a tool for shaping attention, behaviour & support

By engaging citizens in collective vision making, we can consider diverse perspectives leading to decisions that cater to a larger array of needs and aspirations. But in fact, identifying societal values properly via citizen engagement has the potential to do more than help design better policy. Citizen engagement is crucial to influence citizens' behaviour. In short, citizen engagement increases the support to, compliance with, and fitness of

policy. These three elements are crucial to sustaining big societal shifts in behaviour. Citizen engagement has also the potential to reinforce trust in democracy and in institutions, which are key for the success of any strategy. As the democratic project has been eroded around the world by the emergence of populism, reinforcing that project has become a crucial endeavour in the fight against climate change, guaranteeing that citizens' imaginations are not captured by false claims, easy solutions and scapegoating.

The small territorial scale of the Netherlands allows for a national visioning exercise that provides new ideas and new impetus while reinforcing that democratic project. Citizen assemblies, open consultations processes, participatory budgeting are all part of the life of many Dutch municipalities. At this stage in the fight against climate change and several other societal challenges, a national visioning exercise can help the national government explain and discuss the challenges and solutions in a much more democratic, inclusive and fair way.

Recent technological advances have enabled the development of new digital tools for participation, with great potential to reach larger numbers of participants, enabling remote participation and two-way interaction between the public and the government. Digital tools are also compatible with the ongoing digitalisation of governance practices, facilitating the documentation and monitoring of policies and supporting transparency and openness between the public and the government. However, experiments with citizen engagement must be conducted to ensure that engagement processes are fit for purpose and that all voices are heard, avoiding creating false expectations leading to disenchantment with participation and institutions.

Many people believe digital participation concerns individuals operating on social media, but there are different ways to organise and conduct participatory processes which allow for collective vision-making and the development of a public debate in a structured way. This process is profoundly different from social media engagement, where conversations are not structured and where disinformation flourishes.

There are both technical and process-related challenges to digital participation, including the engagement of those who do not have access to or are not digitally handy. Digital tools should also facilitate individual participation on mobile or desktop devices as well as participation in group settings supported by devices like maptables, guided by professionals.

The challenges in pursuing collective visioning are many, such as time

consumption, difficulty in engaging the right participants, hard-to-overcome distrust, and more. But collective visioning exercises are an essential part of the governance of transitions to sustainability as they allow for the formation of more democratic, inclusive and diverse paths to a sustainable future.

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Values, Democracy and Citizenship

33





Bijlmermeer

SPATIAL QUALITY

**the challenges
ahead**

Qu Lei
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Zweth

As part of the tradition in Dutch spatial planning, the emphasis on spatial quality has contributed greatly to how the Netherlands functions, looks like and sustains itself. In the current planning document “Programma Mooi Nederland”, spatial quality is highlighted as a ‘guiding principle’ in dealing with all major challenges.

In line with the effort being made to bring back the leading role of the national spatial planning, it is expected that the power of design could play a more central role in creating a coordinated development pathway towards a more desirable future for all. However, this is not going to happen without efforts. The main challenges ahead include:

1. The making of visions as an inter- and trans-disciplinary process: The current conceptual framework of spatial quality has been used for a while, which has three values in it: functionality, experience and future proof. It needs to be updated with more emphasis on inter- and trans-disciplinarity, to cope with the unprecedented challenges to spatial planning, such as those brought by climate change and circular transition. Spatial quality is not just an 'added value' when dealing with such complex issues, nor something that can be ignored when time and budget do not allow. Instead, it is at the centre of the solutions, while design as the tool can contribute to the integration of disciplines and stakeholders' interests.

2. Re-inventing leadership in spatial planning: In the time when the national spatial planning used to be THE leading power in guiding spatial development in the Netherlands, the leadership was reflected through a relatively more dominating manner. However, in the past decade, the paradigm of spatial planning has shifted towards a more decentralised system. Regaining the leading role does not mean going back to the old model, but moving forward with a new way of working. The challenge here is about how to take the lead in shaping future visions and development strategies by generating shared values and interests within society.

Strengths and Opportunities

Therefore, although spatial quality has always been an integral part of spatial planning in the Netherlands, to proceed in the current planning context, it needs to be placed more at the centre of integrated solutions to sustainability transitions. Similarly the 'Delft approach' as a tradition of TU Delft research and education is experiencing the same transition. In recent years, the inhouse expertise of TU Delft Urbanism Department

has expanded from spatial planning, urban design, landscape architecture, environmental technology, to urban studies and geomatics. The strength of TU Delft on research by design has been enhanced through years of research and educational experiences on inter- and trans-disciplinary projects. Examples include the EU funded REPAiR and Horizon Europe DUST projects, breaking new ground, respectively, in territorialising circular economy and democratising regional transitions to post-carbon futures, Urbanism MSc Research and Design Studio 'Spatial Strategies for the Global Metropolis', Planning Complex Cities MSc graduation studio projects.

As for the section of Spatial Planning and Strategy, a unique expertise is the use of regional design in exploring potentials within and beyond certain territories and experimenting solutions for a variety of future challenges, with special emphasis on spatial justice. This requires skills and experiences with holistic thinking and good understanding on the role of spatial planning in inter and trans-disciplinary approaches. Such skills and experiences were gained through research projects and the creation of a situated learning environment for students in collaboration with societal partners (e.g. the Deltametropolis Association, Province of South Holland).

Search for solutions

To cope with the two main challenges mentioned above regarding spatial quality in national spatial planning, a closer collaboration between planning practice, scientific research and education is instrumental. Built on the tradition of design in spatial planning in the Netherlands - as a collective way of thinking and working, new and updated design tools and methods for vision and strategy making are popping up both in practice and the academic field, involving inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches. The contribution of universities in this setting are two fold: deepening the scientific and methodological basis of decision making in spatial planning for sustainability transitions, as well as cultivating the next generation planners and designers who are trained to play a leading role in such inter- and trans-disciplinary settings. By working together in this way, re-

newal of the power of design thinking in the new planning context can be expected, as the key to strengthen spatial quality while achieving goals of sustainable development.

Another crucial point is related to the democratic and participatory processes of spatial planning: how to use new planning tools that fit today's societal and technological developments, in shaping future visions for all? This is not only about raising the voices of people, but also generating shared values and interests in society. Spatial quality as part of a planning narrative can contribute to societal debates and eventually consensus building. Thus, spatial quality should not only be illustrated as part of the planning objectives, but also addressed as a communication tool during the planning process, to engage all stakeholders in the discussion of desirable future scenarios. It is the role of planning schools with design education to deepen the understanding of participatory processes for just transitions, including new tools to facilitate design-thinking and promote spatial quality in such processes.



Westland

HOUSING

**a reflection on
the current state
and policy
responses**

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Helmond

‘Housing crisis’ has become a common headline not only in the Netherlands, but in large parts of the world. Due to a combination of land speculation, house price inflation and rising construction costs, increasing sections of the population are experiencing housing exclusion; young people and starters; middle incomes earning too much for social housing, but not enough to get a mortgage.

Elderly people are increasingly living independently at home, but there is no adequate housing supply and care facilities. Overall, the number of households is growing faster than the housing stock and there is a discrepancy between the supply and demographic developments. Government policies tend to focus mainly on numbers. However, an overarching vision that guides specific policies and targets is lacking. Furthermore, by now it has become clear that the linear economy, entirely based on growth, has reached its limits. The development of a sustainable housing stock should be based on long-term value development. To this end, a joint approach is necessary; those responsible for housing, social security, care and sustainability must experiment and innovate together in order to come up with new answers to these complex challenges. And, in doing this, the end-user, the residents, need to be put at the centre.

Strengths and opportunities

To be effective, policy needs to respond to new types of demands and to new, different ways of living and working. Especially after the COVID19 pandemic, the boundaries between these activities and spaces are blurring. (How) are policies responding to these changes? We see many opportunities from what's already started to happen on the ground, e.g., shared living forms, collaborative, cooperative and participatory housing practices. These approaches show how powerful it is to put (future) residents at the centre.

The Netherlands is a small but densely populated country, where there is already an extensive supply of residential and non-residential buildings, albeit much of it requires upgrading. While wanting to build new, it is important to avoid repeating the same mistakes from past waves of mass house building, where our cities and suburbs were plagued by homogenous, low density, mono-functional and sub-optimal quality housing developments. The challenge is to match the existing stock to current and new demands. Besides expensive new build that is dependent on economic cycles and other macro-structural crises (war in Ukraine and rising geopolitical tensions, rising costs of energy and materials, etc.), there are plenty of opportunities to work with the existing stock through creative interventions including e.g., splitting, "optopen", adaptive reuse

and conversions into different kinds of (shared) living forms. The latter, for instance, are growing in popularity, as exemplified by an increasing number of collaborative, community-oriented housing projects such as cooperatives, senior cohousing, and other collective living forms based on different degrees of sharing.

A case in point is the intersection of the housing agenda with the concern for ageing and care. Recently, in policy and media circles, we have seen a rather negative tone with regards to the elderly “not wanting to move out” of their family-sized homes and into smaller properties. The claim is that this would allow making room for families who cannot find suitable housing, thereby unlocking the ‘housing flow’. We think that there is a better way. We need to find, together with the elderly, creative and win-win solutions.

An inspiring example is a recent action research project carried out with elderly residents living in Delft Tanthof, by a team from the TU Delft, the municipality of Delft and architecture firm Inbo. The municipality faces the mismatch between elderly living in large homes in this part of the city, while families struggle to find suitable accommodation. How to solve this? We chose a co-creation approach whereby we asked a group of elderly Tanthof residents about their housing preferences and aspirations if they were to leave their current home, including the home and neighbourhood level. We invited them to visit collective housing projects, such as CPOs, cohousing and housing cooperatives, where elderly people live among each other, or with other age groups in and around Delft, so that they would become familiar with these living forms. As (international) research shows, there are several advantages of these living approaches for the elderly, including improving their physical and psychological health through regular social interaction. In parallel, the architects designed different options of collective living forms, in different available locations within and in close proximity to Delft Tanthof. The team presented these options to the participating elderly in a workshop session, where they commented on the designs and expressed their preference to move into any of the different options. The result was a positive disposition from most participants to move out of their current homes into the different designs and locations proposed, provided they met their aspirations in terms of the dwelling, the close environment and proximity to their established social networks in the area.

Search for solutions

What does the above example tell us? First, matching the residents' housing preferences and aspirations requires giving them a voice. It is a mistake to assume that age groups - or any other constructed 'social' category - is homogenous and will want the same. Therefore, participation is crucial to achieve a better understanding of housing demand, and how to match it with current and future supply. Second, if residents are given a wider set of options (including some with which they are not familiar, such as collective and shared living forms), it is likely that more people will opt for these alternatives. Third, housing preferences are a very local issue. National level, top-down designed mass solutions do not necessarily work well on all local communities. While these approaches might require more time investment from civil servants and engaging professionals such as researchers, designers and facilitators, their potential impact in terms of effectiveness, suitability and resident satisfaction is significant.

The bottom-line is: residents need to be given a voice. Whether it is through local participatory exercises such as the one described above, or through wider consultations, the fundamental question to ask the Dutch population is: "How do we want to live, today and tomorrow". This points to the need for a larger "vision", that goes beyond numbers. We need to build together an inspirational and shared idea of how we want our cities, towns, and villages to be in 20, 50 or 100 years from now. How do we want our homes to be? What kind of relationship do we want with our neighbours? How do we imagine our daily lives in our homes, streets, schools, and workplaces? What are the changes that this vision requires? How can market, public and societal actors work together to achieve this vision?

Our housing policy, just like our spatial planning policy, needs an ambitious and inspirational new social contract. This should be the starting point for detailed plans and targets. So that we can all engage and commit to make it happen, together!



Maastricht

THE REBALANCING ACT

**Dealing with long-term
paradigm &
values changes**

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SPS



Heenvliet

The new National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment (NOVI) is supposed to provide guidance for decision-making, clearly stating that we cannot do everything everywhere and difficult choices need to be made.

In the National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment (Nationale Omgevingsvisie - NOVI), the national government presents its long-term vision for the future development of the living environment in the Netherlands. The NOVI is supposed to provide guidance for decision-making, clearly stating that we cannot do everything everywhere and difficult choices need to be made. When that happens, it is important to clarify what paradigms and values should preside over those choices. In recent years, the unilateral focus on economic growth has been increasingly contested due to the negative externalities it brings for ecological balance and human health and wellbeing. This discussion started in academia and environmental activist circles but has become a prominent topic for regional and urban policymakers as well as the media and public opinion in general.

Further pressures can occur in the Netherlands as the country approaches relevant spatial, environmental, and demographic capacity limits (Kuper, 2022). Still the second most globalised country in the world (Gygli et al., 2019), culturally a trading nation with the largest port of Eu-

rope, a high population density, and a productivity-oriented approach to the use of territory, the country faces several challenges related to land availability, spatial competition, capacity of energy grids and other physical infrastructure, emission limits, among others. While some years ago suggestions that the population of Amsterdam must double for economic growth (Obbink, 2015) still carried weight, today a more careful approach to the growth paradigm is visible, with the same Amsterdam pursuing a 'doughnut' model which states 'aim to thrive rather than to grow' (DEAL, 2020). This happens alongside an overall slowdown in highly developed regions of several trends that marked the 20th century, from population growth to innovation and productivity (Dorling, 2020), making it quite likely that alternative directions of development will need to be considered.

The emerging opportunities

The choices ahead therefore require a revision of existing socio-spatial development paradigms towards value-oriented, long-term visions of the future. Quantitative measures of perpetual growth will likely need to be reinterpreted towards more qualitative views of broad prosperity, co-reliance ('samenredzaamheid'), resilience, socio-spatial equity, fairness and wellbeing beyond economic priorities. If in the past many alternatives to growth priorities have been associated with fringe activism, the sheer facts before us suggest that they need to become part of the national political discourse on spatial planning.

However, these transitions usually face three key problems: economically, the awareness that growth is still urgent for regions and countries to catch up with others and realise their ambitions; socially, organisation (including legal) bottlenecks and unwillingness to cooperate across social actors and institutions; spatially, the struggle to upscale (sustainable) solutions designed to be local, autonomous and easily managed to the regional and national levels. Against this, the high levels of human and economic development of the Netherlands, alongside the Dutch tradition of pragmatism, consensus-building across society, and spatial vision-making at national and regional levels can lead the country to the forefront of

prosperity beyond growth development models.

As the Dutch government recognises its many environmental and socio-spatial challenges and returns to a coordinated and integrated approach to spatial planning, sensible discussions involving many stakeholders should be held about whether, where and when to prioritise regeneration, restoration, redevelopment, and redistribution rather than expansion. This involves concrete decisions about [i] planning housing, services, and public space focused on life cycles and human needs; [ii] enabling efficiency in mass mobility vis-a-vis encouraging proximity, walkability, and multimodal accessibility; [iii] cities, regions, and provinces being able to determine trajectories towards different kinds of prosperity and wellbeing and measuring their success accordingly; [iv] seeing the largest metropolitan regions as resource-sharing platforms with a redistributive responsibility, rather than accumulation nodes to boost agglomeration effects; [v] seeing people and cities as integral parts as well as stewards of the ecological system; [vi] experimenting with flexible and context-sensitive governance approaches in order to make tailor-made spatial planning decisions; [vii] enabling both long-term visions and quick responses, and the ex-ante, andante, and ex-post assessment of their impact; and [ix] allowing simultaneous and reciprocal approaches at local, regional, and (trans-)national scales in order to approach spatial planning questions integrally. With the necessary adaptations, most of these priority topics are valid both for urban areas as well as for rural and agricultural areas, water environments and the territory at large.

Encouraging solutions

Both tragic and fortunate events in European history show us that thriving from fundamental changes builds up from small and deep initiatives, but later requires the widespread support of society, based on mutual trust, clarity and transparency of decisions, and a fair social contract. In rebalancing our priorities in face of the coming paradigm changes, the way forward must avoid a sense of sacrifice or punishment to consider why and when people, households, firms, industries, and government bodies feel responsible for and are willing to contribute to collective long-

term values. To avoid further polarisation of society between privileged and left-behind territories, a challenge that affects the whole European Union, the new paradigm of prosperity beyond mere growth must be developed in connection with aspirational narratives for people, cities, and regions. The necessary big shifts must be perceived (and implemented) as a potential for a better life for all and social inclusion, rather than a limitation of opportunities and quality of life. Both the experience of individual perception and the reality of government practices must retain the notion that we all sit on the same boat.

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Stroe

The collective challenges we face today require a real systemic transition towards sustainability, which includes deep changes to the ways we inhabit, move, work, produce and consume. It also requires a deep rethinking of our relationship with the planet and our fellow travellers, animals, plants and ecosystems. Despite initial efforts and investment towards that transition, we have not been able to mitigate climate change and are now likely to overshoot the 1.50C initially envisaged, causing immense upheaval to the planet's natural systems and to our own systems of existence. Facing this great societal shift requires collective visioning to which all members of society can contribute. Visioning is a collective exercise that enables governments to communicate challenges and aspirations, making citizens the co-designers of their futures. Not having a national transition vision makes it difficult to communicate those challenges and their urgency to citizens, alienating them from decision-making that directly affects them. Collective visioning enables the identification of societal values from a large and diverse array of social groups and also enables the identification of innovations and opportunities, particularly niches of innovation that are not yet mainstream and may have untapped potential to help achieve the transition. The chair of Spatial Planning & Strategy of the TU Delft contributes to this societal challenge by investigating a number of spatial societal challenges and the ways to co-plan and co-design our common future.



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