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The challenge of planned urbanisation. Urbanisation and national urbanisation policy in the Netherlands in a northwest-European perspective
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PREFACE

In the very final stage of writing this book, only one thing was still missing: the title. In the four years of my Ph.D. research, a lot of 'preliminary' or 'working' titles have passed. How to capture the essence of the book in just one catchy phrase that might draw the attention of possible readers? The end result you see on the cover combines the attempt to summarise my research in one sentence (the subtitle) with my personal view on national urbanisation policy in the Netherlands and elsewhere. The word 'challenge' did not end up in this title by coincidence. It is a big challenge indeed to try to influence urbanisation trends through physical planning policy, and even more so when one tries this on a regional or even national level.

Writing this book has been a huge challenge for me as well. First there were the new disciplines I had to make myself familiar with: planning and mobility studies. The specialists in those fields might have their doubts about this 'outsider' entering their disciplines, but I hope it gave me the advantage of looking at things in a relatively fresh and original way. In addition, my research included an international comparison with three areas that I never studied before, and the available time for each of these cases was very limited. Fortunately I could rely on the help of local experts in geography, planning and several other sciences. Their names are mentioned in the acknowledgements section in the back of the book.

There are far too many people I should thank for their help in the past four years to be able to mention them all personally. Still I would like to mention specifically:

- my supervisors Sako Musterd and Wim Ostendorf, who are kindly thanked for offering me lots of constructive comments and constant encouragement, for never losing their patience with me, and for their confidence in the positive result of this Ph.D. (even when I was sometimes much less confident);
- my parents, who constantly showed their interest in my proceedings, even though this topic is certainly not their main area of interest, and also helped to make the publication of this book possible;
- my sister Petra and brother Arjan, who were willing to stand beside me during the public defense of my Ph.D.;
- Eva Pel, who also made a valuable contribution to this book with her cover design.

Among the many people that also contributed in many ways to my Ph.D, some groups I got involved in deserve a special mention: the Ph.D. colleagues at our department (if I can finish this job, all of you can certainly do it too!); the Ph.D. colleagues from 'the world outside of Amsterdam' I met in several congresses, but especially the participants in the pre-conference workshops of ENHR and AESOP; the people from all over Europe that I met through the young geographers network of EGEA; and my editorial colleagues of the Dutch journal 'Agora' (keep up the good work!). All other colleagues and friends that I got to know throughout the years, who offered interesting ideas for my research but also managed to make me forget about this Ph.D. for a while and enjoy 'life outside science': thanks a lot for everything and I hope we can keep in touch!

Amsterdam, August 2001

Marco Bontje