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

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CHAPTER TWO
WHERE PEOPLE LIVE AND WHY THEY LIVE THERE...
THEORIES ABOUT THE DYNAMICS IN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

2.1 Introduction

The questions ‘where do people live?’ and ‘why do they live there?’ have always been among the central issues of concern for geographers in general and urban geographers in particular. Much has already been written on the factors that might explain why people settle in a certain place. Very often, the explanation has been sought in economic and technological development. International, national and regional economic growth and decline are generally accepted to influence population distribution in the advanced capitalist world. In recent decades, the restructuring from a mainly manufacturing-oriented to a mainly service-oriented world economy has also been mentioned frequently, but the extent to which this shift really produced changes in the spatial distribution of population is still largely unknown. The same is true for the influence of new and improved information and communication technologies. Socio-cultural changes and demographic trends are also often pointed at as relevant processes for the dynamics of population distribution in countries and regions. In this respect, the most often mentioned processes are the increasing share of small households in relation to the rapidly declining birth rate and the individualisation of Northwest-European societies, and the increase of foreign migration since the 1960s.

This chapter will try to give an overview of the most influential publications dealing with these factors, without the ambition of presenting a complete overview of the relevant literature. While section 2.2 focuses on some of the most influential recent contributions dealing with the spatial impact of economic and technological development, section 2.3 will pay attention to the possible role of the radical societal, cultural and demographic changes in Northwest Europe since the 1960s. As both groups of contributions have been able to offer only a partial explanation at most, in the 1980s and 1990s several attempts have been made to integrate them into multidisciplinary approaches. Some of these approaches are discussed in section 2.4. The factor cluster ‘policy’, discussed in section 2.5, has been much less included in explanations of population distribution dynamics so far. As mentioned earlier, the influence of policy, especially physical planning policies aimed at controlling the urbanisation process, will have a central place in this study. Section 2.6 presents a conceptual model for the explanation of recent trends in the distribution of population and activities in Northwest Europe that will be applied to the cases of the Netherlands, Switzerland, West Sweden and Northern England in the empirical analyses of the Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

2.2 The spatial impact of economic and technological development

2.2.1 Economy and urban growth:
growth pole theory, export base theory and cumulative causation

The growth pole theory is an explanation of urban growth that is entirely based on local and economic development. In this theory, introduced by Perroux in the 1950s, the central line of thought is that a process of economic growth originates from a ‘key firm’ (‘ firme motrice’ or ‘pôle de croissance’) from which growth is spread via a network of firm contacts. Perroux calls this network ‘economic space’. This term causes confusion,
certainly amongst geographers, since Perroux refers to an abstract meaning of 'space' and not to the geographic meaning. However, in later publications of Perroux and others (like Massey, 1984), the growth pole theory was extended with locational patterns: "The functioning of markets and multinationals, of capital and knowledge, is indeed influenced by locations, the locational patterns and the production environment in which a firm settles" (Lambooy, 1988, p. 93; translation by author).

With the addition of the locational component, the growth pole theory became more aimed at application in policy practice. The central question for many policy makers and theorists was how the growth effects of the network of relations of a growth pole could be used to the benefit of the region as much as possible. In more recent publications, the term 'growth pole' therefore became more identified with the location of the firm than with the firm itself.

A possible objection against the growth pole theory is that it does not offer a sufficient explanation for the location choice of firms and for regional economic development. Without doubt, the presence of large multinational companies can contribute to attracting additional employment and generating economic growth, but it is only one amongst many factors in the location choice of a firm. Another problem in recent decades is the process of economic restructuring. The growth pole theory was introduced in an era in which large industrial complexes still provided many thousands of jobs, a situation that in most countries no longer applies (Lambooy, 1988).

A theory often used in combination with the growth pole theory is the export base theory. Export produces wealth in the country or region of origin and can increase its production capacity. According to the export base theory, a country or region needs export-oriented industries to realise economic growth. The profits of the export-oriented industries can be used to stimulate the development of service industries and institutions like education, health care and retail. In the export-base theory, however, an important question is not answered: how does a region attract these export-oriented industries? According to Jane Jacobs (1984), only regions able to develop a city with a differentiated network of activities can be assured of consistent long-term economic growth. Regions without a (large) city or with a one-sided production structure normally do not have good prospects on long-term economic growth.

A third theory that could possibly contribute to the explanation of the urbanisation process is the theory of cumulative causation (Myrdal, 1957). According to this theory, the improvement of the regional production environment can give a region a comparative advantage to other regions. The quality of production factors and the improvement of circumstances of production can attract new economic activities to the region, which could then gradually become a 'core region'.

After some time, decentralisation of economic activities will threaten the economic growth of the core region, but the dominant position of the core region will not be lost. This is because decentralisation will generally be a selective process in which especially the economically weakest sectors will move out, and also because the decentralisation process takes the form of an extension of the core region rather than a move to another region. Furthermore, core regions will have the potential to attract new growth impulses because their production environment is favourable for innovations. Following this model of cumulative causation, once a core-periphery pattern has come into existence, it will always remain in place or even reinforce itself (Lambooy, 1988).
The most important problem with the growth pole theory and export base theory is their strong focus on the development of the urban local economy. In these theories, urban growth is almost exclusively seen in terms of growth of the urban economy. The dynamics of urban and regional population distribution as a result of economic development are hardly considered. While a concentration of urban employment generally coincided with a growing urban population until at least the 1950s, when the growth pole theory and the model of cumulative causation were introduced, this is no longer the case in most Western countries. The considerable growth of income for large parts of the population of Western countries since the 1960s and improvements in transportation technology, amongst other factors, facilitated sub-urbanisation and increasing distances of commuter traffic. Population deconcentration has made explanations of urbanisation based on local and regional economic (employment) growth much less relevant. In the choice of the most attractive place to live, the importance of distance to the job location gradually decreased, while the importance of the quality of the house and the living environment has increased. Therefore, while an urban economy might grow rapidly, the urban population can decrease considerably at the same time. When the economic explanations of urban growth are applied on a somewhat wider geographic scale, like agglomerations (see section 2.2.3) or functional urban regions (see Chapter 3), the growth pole and export base theory might still contribute to an explanation of the dynamics of population distribution. In this respect, the theory of cumulative causation seems more applicable since it is already referring to regions instead of places (cities). However, also in this model, alternative factors that are not directly related to economic production and specialisation, like improvements in transportation technology and the increased importance of housing quality and an attractive living environment, are not considered.

2.2.2 The pros and cons of agglomeration

Referring mostly to the North-American context, Simmons (1978) presents four models for the development of urban systems:

- The 'frontier' model, in which "(...) the growth of cities is initiated externally by investment decisions from a previously developed urban subsystem" (p. 67). The earliest phase of US urbanisation from the North East coastal area towards the west followed this pattern.
- The 'staple export model', based on a surplus of agricultural production.
- The 'industrial specialisation' model, in which the growth of cities is primarily determined by the growth of the national economy and "(...) the relative strength of the cities' sector of economic specialization" (p.67).
- 'Social change', a model that actually does not seem to deserve to be called 'model' considering Simmons' description of it: "(...) the growth of cities is largely unpredictable in the face of rapid social and technological change" (p.68).

The industrial specialisation model could be applied to the European situation in most of the twentieth century as well. The central thought behind this model is the economic theory of agglomeration advantages, in which the development of cities and regions is strongly connected to the development of the regional, national and international economy. However, in the last decades of the twentieth century, the role of other factors in urban (economic) development apparently gained importance. These other factors are
discussed by Simmons (1978) under the header 'social change'. The factors he mentions are extremely diverse and include 'amenity' factors like climate and recreational opportunities and the influence of region-specific government investments (in the US context, for example investments in the defence and space industry in California).

Already during the 1960s and 1970s, the end of the agglomeration advantages of metropolitan areas seemed in sight. In a comparative study of migration between core and peripheral regions, Vining & Pallone (1982) discovered considerable differences in recent migration patterns between categories of countries. While the selected countries in Northwest Europe and North America all demonstrated a net out migration from the core to the peripheral areas, countries in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia showed an opposite migration movement. Vining and Pallone claimed these differences were mainly caused because in Northwest Europe and North America, the economies of further agglomeration in the core areas no longer existed, while in Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia these agglomeration economies still existed and were in several cases promoted through national spatial-economic policy.

The rapid emergence of the information and communications technology since the 1980s could be expected to undermine the validity of theories of agglomeration advantages of large metropolitan centres (see section 2.2.5). Van der Vegt and Manshanden (1996) suggest that there might be as much disadvantages as advantages resulting from agglomeration of economic activities. The most important disadvantages are traffic congestion around the large cities and relatively high costs of land and housing for companies and their employees. However, there are still advantages left, the most important of which (for employees as well as consumers) is the diversity of service provision. As a further reason to hold on to agglomeration of economic activities, the necessity of a centralisation of decision-making paradoxically resulting from the increasing internationalisation of the economy could be mentioned. Directly connected to this is the question of the value of 'face-to-face'-contacts. On these points, opinions in recent literature are strongly divided. The accumulation of knowledge and expertise of companies and their employees might contribute to a fast exchange of information and innovations in cities. Van der Vegt and Manshanden (1996) doubt if this will continue to be the case due to the further development of the 'electronic highway', exchanging face-to-face contacts through digital contacts, and the problems of traffic congestion around large cities when so many people would have to travel there for their meetings. Changes in the relative importance of each of these factors might contribute to trends of suburbanisation or re-urbanisation dominating the process of population distribution. This issue will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2.4.

2.2.3 Urbanisation as a phased process

In the late 1970s, a Dutch research group presented a model for the process of urbanisation in Europe (Klaassen, 1979; Berg et al, 1982). Their model presented urbanisation as a cyclical process, inspired by earlier comparable thoughts on urbanisation, most notably of Hall (Hall, 1971; Hall & Hay, 1980). The basic assumption of the model is that urbanisation takes place in phases and that eventually all urban regions in Europe will go through the entire series of these phases. The model is summarised in Figure 2.1.
The stages of urban development in this model are primarily determined by changes in the regional, national and international economy. Phase I starts due to the emergence of industrialisation, which brings many migrants from the countryside to the cities looking for a job. At first, the financial means of these in-migrants are very modest and their housing demands therefore could not be too high. Gradually, however, the incomes of most city inhabitants increased. Together with the mass production of cars, this leads to a considerably larger freedom of choice of housing locations for many of them. On the city’s edges as well as on more remote locations new housing areas are built: the urbanisation process entered the phase of sub-urbanisation (Phase II). Manufacturing companies also start to move outwards from the city centre in search for more space to expand. In this phase, the term ‘city’ seems to lose much of its relevance. Van den Berg et al (1982) speak of ‘urban area’ or ‘urban district’ instead.

While in the sub-urbanisation phase cities still grew slightly, this is no longer the case in phase III. In this phase, the problems of traffic congestion more and more hinder the accessibility of companies and services in the city centre. This encourages people as well as companies (including the tertiary sector) to move out towards suburban locations. The urban region extends further outwards, beyond the suburbs built in phase II. The newly formed, larger-scale urban region that grows out of this phase is called ‘functional urban region’ (see also Chapter 3). Within this functional urban region, economic and population growth is said to occur mostly on the outer edges. The fourth and last phase proposed by Klaassen (1979) is also the most challenged one among geographers. Re-urbanisation would take place if the long-term trend of urban depopulation would be stopped and exchanged for a new period of urban growth. Berg et al (1982) foresaw re-urbanisation as one of the alternative future developments of European cities, the other one being a further acceleration of de-urbanisation.

The ‘stages of urban development’ model has some clear strengths. Especially the first two stages of the model, urbanisation and sub-urbanisation, can be applied to the historic development of most European urban regions. The strong link between urban development and changes in the economic structure (industrialisation and de-industrialisation) is another strength. Although urbanisation can certainly not exclusively be explained by economic changes, it is certainly an important part of the explanation. A
third strength of the model is the attention paid to housing preferences, a factor often overlooked in other economic explanations of urbanisation. The third and fourth phase of the model, however, are far less convincing. The differences between 'sub-urbanisation' and 'de-urbanisation' are rather vague. In addition, once the de-urbanisation phase is questioned, the 're-urbanisation' phase loses its logic too: if the de-urbanisation phase never occurred, there can be no re-urbanisation phase following it either. Furthermore, although many European cities indeed demonstrated a population growth in the 1980s and 1990s after losing a large part of their population in the 1960s and 1970s, this population growth was only very modest, generally well below the national growth, and the preceding decline could not be compensated. It is therefore questionable to refer to this development as 're-urbanisation'. This becomes even more questionable if the population growth of cities is compared to that of suburban and rural areas. Furthermore, the position of medium-sized cities (often showing a continuous growth while the large cities were in decline) is hard to implement in the model. As the empirical analysis of population distribution trends in Chapter 6 and 7 will illustrate, the main trend of Northwest-European population distribution since the 1980s should rather be interpreted as a 'status quo' between (large and medium-sized) cities, suburbs and rural areas. To the critique on the 'stages of urban development'-model summarised above, Atzema (1991) adds the tendency of Klaassen and Van den Berg to make deterministic statements without testing these statements empirically, and the neglect of the role of the individual actor in the urbanisation process.

2.2.4 Technological changes, internationalisation and economic restructuring

The global economy has become increasingly organised around collecting, processing and generating information and knowledge. Old industrial cities lost ground and were forced to shift their economic focus. New centres specialised in information technology have emerged. Although the results of this economic restructuring are still highly uncertain, several social scientists have already suggested that the development of the 'information highway' will have consequences for society as revolutionary as the development of railways in the 19th century (Hall, 1993; Castells, 1992).

The development of the 'new economy' is also characterised by a continuously increasing integration of the economic system on the global level, and a 'new international division of labour'. Not only the economy, but also policy, education and culture are getting more and more international in character. This does not necessarily mean that the world is becoming more uniform. Parallel to the increasing importance of the international sphere, regional and local differentiation appears to be strengthened as well. Processes that seem contradictory at first sight such as spatial homogenisation and spatial differentiation, or increasing spatial mobility and increasing spatial fixation, not only take place at the same time, but could even be seen as two sides of the same coin (Musterd et al., 1998). This paradox is often expressed in the somewhat curious term 'glocalisation' (Pater & Van der Wusten, 1996).

In the early 1990s, Castells (1992) pointed at the following processes as the most important influences on European urban development:

- A fundamental technological revolution, based on production and exchange of information, having far-reaching consequences on economy and society;
The emergence of the 'informational society' as a result of this technological revolution: "By such a concept, I understand the social structure where the sources of economic productivity, cultural hegemony and political-military power depend, fundamentally, on the capacity to retrieve, store, process, and generate information and knowledge (p.4)."

The formation of a 'global economy'. This is a fundamentally different economic system from the 'world economy' that emerged centuries earlier (of which the Netherlands of the 'Golden Age' in the 17th century form an example). The main difference between the global economy and the world economy is the mutual dependence of capital flows and labour markets across the entire world in the global economy. Power and wealth are distributed across the world in a very uneven way. Castells points at constant accumulation of power and wealth in North-America, (Northwest) Europe and Southeast-Asia. These regions are immensely attractive for immigrants from the poorer parts of the world.

European integration, the shift of power from nation states to the European Union which also offers opportunities for a shift of power from the national to the regional and local level ('Europe of the regions').

The emergence of the 'social movements of the informational society', like the environmental and the emancipation movements.

Still according to Castells (1992), these processes reflect themselves spatially in cities in the following ways:

- Concentration of management and control-functions in national and international business centres increases;
- Creation of 'exclusive spaces' by and for the elite groups that thank their improved socio-economic position to the emergence of the informational society. These elite locations can be found outside as well as inside the large cities;
- Increasing polarisation: not only elite groups, but also marginal groups become increasingly concentrated in large cities. "It is in the core administrative and entertainment district of European cities where urban marginality makes itself present" (p.13).

The resulting city landscape was dubbed 'informational city'. The strengthening of the international key position of metropolitan centres, the downturn of industrial regions (in some cases re-emerging as concentration locations of commercial services and ICT) and the upsurge of regions like the French Midi and Andalusia (Spain) led to a new division of labour in Europe. This led Castells to his famous and intensively debated statement that the 'space of flows' is getting more important than the 'space of places'. The debate on this issue will return in more detail in Chapter 3.

A term showing many similarities with the informational city is the 'post-industrial city'. Herbert & Thomas (1991) described the historical development of the urban system, in which three phases were distinguished: the pre-industrial, the industrial and the post-industrial city. The transformation from industrial to post-industrial city is said to have taken place during the second half of the twentieth century. The transformation from industrial to post-industrial city was accompanied by the emergence of a post-industrial society, characterised by:

- An economy in which the service sector plays the central role;
- The growing importance of 'professional and technological classes':
• The growing importance of research and development as a basis for company strategies and government policies;
• More attention for the possible future consequences of technological innovations;
• The emergence of new systems of information and communication.

These processes, amongst others, lead to concentration and centralisation of economic power in a selective group of large metropolitan centres. The transition from the industrial to the post-industrial society has consequences for the spatial structure of urban areas and the spatial distribution of population as well. Herbert and Thomas (1991) refer to the emergence of new growth regions like the Sunbelt in the United States and the Outer Metropolitan Area of London and the process of counter-urbanisation: "a situation in which smaller towns and semi-rural areas beyond the traditional metropolitan rings begin to act as magnets for people and activities" (p.39). This process will be dealt with in more detail in section 2.4.1. Furthermore, the authors claim that the meaning of location and distance have considerably declined as a consequence of the emergence of the post-industrial city. Continuous improvements in transportation and communication technology have made an increase in people's action radius possible. This claim has been challenged by several other observers of recent trends in urbanisation, however. The discussion on the meaning of distance and location will return more extensively in Chapter 3 as well as in the remainder of this section.

In addition to the above-mentioned economic factors determining the changing face of cities and urban regions, Jobse & Musterd (1994) point at the increasing flexibility of products and production processes. Not only people and organisations, but also the city has to be able to adapt to fast changes in production processes. This results in cities getting more complex, multiform and volatile: "In brief, the city as a kaleidoscope and a paradox, where dynamics have become the norm, disparities between rich and poor are demonstrated and prosperity and decay manifest themselves at short distances from each other" (p.3, translation by author).

Most of the trends suggested above, but most of all the supposed rise of a global economy and the political integration of Europe, might contribute to a further strengthening of the functional ties between European cities. Since the early 1980s, several urban and economic geographers approached European cities as locations within a network of cities on the European scale. The central thought in their analyses is that all cities in Europe form a functionally interrelated network, which in its turn is linked (mainly via the 'global cities' London and Paris) to a worldwide system of cities. Theorists following this line of thought have studied recent trends in economic development and population growth and decline of metropolitan areas and tried to deduct general trends occurring throughout the entire collection of European metropolitan areas.

Among the trendsetters in the European urban system approach were Hall and Hay (1980). The central question in their study was to what extent urbanisation trends in Europe had followed the 'American model' of urbanisation in recent decades, or could be expected to follow this model in the near future. This American model implied as the dominant trends of urban growth:
• 'top-down' through the (inter)national hierarchy of metropolitan areas (with the highest-ranked metropolitan areas in terms of population and economic importance growing the fastest);
• an outward movement within metropolitan areas;
• net migration from metropolitan to non-metropolitan areas;
• replacement of urban growth from old industrial regions to newly industrialising regions and urbanising regions dominated by tertiary activities

Hall and Hay concluded from their study that European cities generally did not follow the American model in the 1970s. While in the US the traditional pattern of net migration from the countryside to the metropolitan areas was turned around, a process also known as counter-urbanisation (see section 2.4.1), this development did not take place in Europe. However, another trend from the American model, namely the outward movement within metropolitan areas, could be found in a large part of the European metropolitan areas. This outward movement within metropolitan areas intensified during the 1970s.

Building on this research, two groups of urban researchers have tried to establish a hierarchy of metropolitan areas in the European urban system. Cheshire et al (1988) explored the distribution of wealth across functional urban regions in Western Europe. As a measure of wealth, 4 indicators were used: the income per capita, the unemployment level, a migration index based on incoming and outgoing migration streams, and the demand for hotel beds as an indicator of economic vitality and the attractiveness of the living and working environment. A comparable study was done by a French group of urban researchers (Reclus, 1989). This study set up a hierarchy of European urban regions according to the functions represented in the urban region. All agglomerations of 200,000 or more inhabitants in 14 countries in Northwest and Central Europe were included in the study. For each agglomeration, information was gathered on 16 characteristics of economy, financial services, international relations, research and development, communication, culture and population size. This produced a European urban hierarchy, in which the agglomerations with the most complete functional profile claimed the top positions. The agglomerations were also divided into groups according to their functional specialisation. Furthermore, the Reclus-group drew a map of the European urban system, in which a number of urbanised areas that were presumed to form a functionally integrated urban region were presented. The largest of these regions was an area extending from London via the river Rhine towards North Italy. A second border-crossing urban region was supposed to be found along the Spanish, French and Italian Mediterranean coastline. Cortie and Dignum (1991) undertook an interesting attempt to combine the urban region hierarchies of Cheshire et al (1988) and the Reclus group (1989). They concluded that longer-term prosperity of urban regions (at least in the Northwest-European context) was most of all promoted through the presence of internationally orientated activities in commercial services, culture, communications and research. The geographic position and the number of economic activities were considered less important than the degree to which urban regions possessed of those economic sectors that were (and still are) the most relevant in the recent international economic development.

There can hardly be any doubt about the continuously growing intensity of economic relations between large metropolitan centres, both on a European and a global scale. However, the degree to which this results in changes in the distribution of population and activities on lower scale levels (countries or regions within countries) is still largely unknown. Even less is known about the actual spatial consequences of the growing influence of ICT in the world economy and society. The literature on the spatial consequences of a complex of economic and technological factors such as ICT, the shift from an industrial to a service economy, globalisation and European economic integration
so far is dominated by hypothetical thinking. Lots of possible influences, often working in opposite ways, have already been suggested but the eventual outcome of all these suggested trends in terms of the spatial distribution of population and activities still remains a mystery. Many observers, following the argument of Castells (1992) about the growing importance of the ‘space of flows’ at the expense of the ‘space of places’, foresee a development towards further deconcentration. Others, like Fielding (1994), expect a rather stable distribution of population under the influence of economic restructuring and the upsurge of ICT. Fielding explains this by pointing at the compensating effect of welfare state transfers to regions with declining industries and the largely ‘endogenous’ nature of the development of new industrial districts. With this latter point he means that the development of new economic branches might to some extent have taken place in locations that were not industrialised before, but that this development mainly came about by using the special skills of people already living in these locations without causing large shifts in the distribution of population. The term ‘new industrial districts’ mainly refers to clusters of small companies in ‘niche’-markets. These new industrial districts often originate spontaneously; however, once they have formed, they tend to be relatively strongly bound to their geographic location (Scott, 1997; Storper, 1992; Musterd et al 1998). Herewith we already touched upon the central theme of Chapter 3, which deals with the supposed scale enlargement of human action space as a result of (amongst others) improvements in transportation and communication technologies. While in this section the lasting importance of geographic location for economic development was repeatedly stressed, Chapter 3 will argue that the same holds true for individuals and households in their daily activity behaviour.

2.3 The spatial impact of demographic and socio-cultural changes

Economic and technological changes alone are not sufficient to explain the dramatic changes in population distribution in Northwest Europe since the 1960s. Parallel to the economic and technological changes discussed in section 2.2, considerable shifts have also taken place in the way of life of households and individual members of these households in Europe, most of all in Northwest Europe. Due to various coinciding and partially interrelated trends the 1960s and 1970s turned out to be a ‘demographic watershed’ (Faus-Pujol, 1995). The development of European population was radically changed from a fast growing towards a ‘zero-growth’ population in the course of only 40 years. This caused the Dutch demographer Van de Kaa (1987) to announce ‘the second demographic transition’. Starting in the 19th century in Northwest Europe, the first demographic transition involved a rapidly dropping death rate caused by improvements in hygiene and health care. This, in combination with a high birth rate, resulted in a considerable acceleration of natural population growth. The second transition started in Northwest Europe when (in the 1960s) also the birth rate started to fall and landed (in the 1990s) at a level just above, or in some countries even slightly below, the death rate. Although the drop in European fertility actually already started in the late 19th century, this did not immediately result in a dropping birth rate. At first, the fertility decline was compensated by a rapid decline in infant mortality, again due to improvements in hygiene and health care, but this compensating effect diminished in the second half of the twentieth century (Faus-Pujol, 1995).

One of the most powerful trends resulting from the dropping birth rate was the decrease of average household size. However, also several socio-cultural developments played an influential role as well. All these developments can be seen as products of the process of
individualisation - through which traditional institutions as the nuclear family, the church and the neighbourhood lose their relevance for the way of life of individuals - and the process of emancipation. Hall (1993, p. 892) mentions "(...) rising divorce rates, the survival of widowed partners, and the departure of young people to higher education or careers" as the most relevant developments changing the demographic and socio-cultural structure of society. Champion (1992) adds the rapid increase of labour market participation of women since the 1960s. This led to a strong growth of the share of two-earner households in the population. The two-earner household tends to postpone family extension and in many cases chooses not to have children at all. Two-earner households generally give more priority to the labour market career than the traditional one-earner households.

Ageing is another demographic process with consequences for the household structure of the population. Continuous improvements in health care have resulted in a marked increase in life expectancy. Together with the decrease in the birth rate this has led to an increase of the share of elderly households. In the coming decades, ageing will bring down the share of the ‘active’ population, that is, the share of the population that is or can be active on the labour market according to current standards (generally defined as the population between 15 and 65 years old). However, if in the long run adaptations to an ageing population would be made, like a change of the retirement age, the eventual effect might not be as ‘catastrophic’ as many now tend to think (Faus-Pujol, 1995). The ageing process also contributes to the decrease of average household size since elderly households generally exist of only one or two persons. It could be expected that the increasing share of elderly in the population might have consequences for housing preferences and eventually also for the spatial distribution of population. Surprisingly little research has been done to find out to what extent the housing preferences of the elderly are different from those of the population as a whole. This lack of knowledge was already recognised by Wames (1992) in the early 1990s, but little seems to have changed in this picture since then. An increase of retirement migration is frequently mentioned, within Northwest-European countries from urban to rural areas (Droogleever Fortuijn & Ostendorf, 1999; Thissen & Engelsdorp Gastelaars, 2000) and within metropolitan areas to seaside resorts (Champion, 1992), but also to an increasing extent from Northwest to South Europe (Williams et al, 1997). However, the effects of this retirement migration on both the departure and the destination locations have remained largely unclear so far.

The growth of foreign migration in recent decades, however, has had a compensating effect on the decrease of average household size as well as on the ageing of the West-European population (Hall & White, 1995). Many West-European countries suffered from a shortage of labour in the early 1960s. The solution was sought in attracting temporary labour migrants from abroad, mostly from the countries of the Mediterranean region. Many of these migrants, popularly known as ‘guest workers’, eventually chose for a permanent stay in the receiving country and let their families come over from their country of origin. Parallel to these significant foreign migration flows of guest workers and their families, countries like the UK, France and the Netherlands received another sizable group of foreign migrants. This in-migration originated from the countries’ former colonies that gained independence in the 1960s and 1970s. From the 1980s on, both mentioned migration flows decreased in importance. However, they were replaced by a new rapidly emerging migration flow of refugees and asylum seekers (Muus, 1995). Put in very generalised way, all these foreign migrant groups are characterised by a household size considerably above the average of the receiving countries. Gradually, after staying in
the receiving country for some decades, the household size of most migrant groups tends to decrease towards the national average (Van Amersfoort, 1991).

Both the increase of the share of small (one- and two-person) households as the increase of foreign migration is claimed to have had positive consequences for the population development of the cities, most of all the largest cities. Generally, young one-and two-person households, more often seem to have a preference for an urban living environment than family households. Foreign migrants generally tend to start their housing career in the largest cities of the receiving country, where the chances to find a job are highest and earlier migrants from the same country have often already settled (Jobse & Musterd, 1992). These groups therefore largely compensated the selective out-migration of the cities since the 1960s, mainly existing of middle- and higher income groups and family households (Ottens, 1989).

Influenced by these demographic and socio-cultural trends and the economic and technologic developments described in section 2.2.2, the West-European society is said to have become ‘post-modern’. Post-modernism is supposed to have become the successor of modernism, a societal mainstream development characteristic for most of the twentieth century. Modernism was dominated by ideals like the ‘logical, analysing human being’ and a firm belief in progress through technologic innovations and large-scale planning of economy and society. From the late 1970s on, modernism was more and more challenged. The emerging alternative of post-modernism is characterised by stressing “(...) the confused, the fragmented, the manifold, the lack of consensus and of orderly principles in society” (Pater & Van der Wusten, 1996, p. 239). In terms of housing preferences, an increasing diversification of demands for housing types and environments would be the most logical outcome of this increasing fragmentation. This might have spatial consequences through changes in residential mobility patterns. However, at least in the Netherlands, this has not (yet) led to a situation in which the traditional housing preferences have been completely pushed aside. For the Dutch case, it has been argued that the demographic and socio-cultural changes described above have resulted in a housing market that is increasingly ‘bi-polar’ of character. Both young small households and foreign migrants are said to have a more urban housing preference than the Dutch population as a whole, which might explain the recent revival of the popularity of central urban housing locations. However, although decreasing in importance, family households still form a considerable part of Dutch population and especially households with young children still demonstrate a suburban housing preference. The housing environments ‘in-between’ (the outer urban areas) have gradually lost their attractiveness according to this line of thought (Meulenbelt, 1997; Musterd & Östendorf, 1998).
2.4 Interdisciplinary approaches: population distribution dynamics as a product of economic, demographic and socio-cultural trends

Just like the economic-technological trends discussed in section 2.2, also the demographic and socio-cultural trends discussed in section 2.3 can only offer a part of the explanation. An interdisciplinary approach that tries to combine both factor clusters promises a more complete and powerful explanatory framework. Several urban researchers have made attempts for such an interdisciplinary, multi-factor explanation in recent decades. Some of these explanations will be presented in the following pages.

2.4.1 Counter-urbanisation

In the 1970s, several urban researchers signalled a 'clean break' in the development of settlement patterns in the Western world. As with many urbanisation tendencies during the twentieth century, the United States were seen as trendsetters in this respect. Berry (1976) coined the term 'counter-urbanisation' to indicate a turning point in the US urbanisation process. He defined counter-urbanisation as "(...) a process of population deconcentration; it implies a movement from a state of more concentration to a state of less concentration." (p. 17). This movement away from population concentration was, in Berry's view, rather a comeback of the traditional American preference for a non-urban living environment than something completely new. Counter-urbanisation could be attributed to traditional American values like 'the love of newness', 'the desire to be near nature', 'the frontier spirit', 'the freedom to move' and 'the wish to maintain the individuality of the homogeneous subgroup'. Berry has a very broad definition of counter-urbanisation, including not only the return to a more 'ruralised' society, but also planned new towns and even the high-rise urban extensions in the formerly socialist Eastern Europe.

Following this broad definition of counter-urbanisation, one could wonder if it is not simply a continuation of a trend already started long before the 1970s: sub-urbanisation (Atzema, 1991). Champion (1989) and Hoekveld (1985) judge that Berry's definition is too vague, including all possible forms of population deconcentration. However, Champion agrees with Berry that a far-reaching change in the urbanisation process of Western societies took place since the 1970s. He draws this conclusion on the basis of his own research and that of several others in Europe and the United States. Champion introduced an alternative definition that clarifies the difference between sub-urbanisation and counter-urbanisation: while sub-urbanisation refers to a population shift from the city core to the surrounding region within the metropolitan area, counter-urbanisation involves a shift across the borders of the metropolitan area. Counter-urbanisation then occurs when the population of non-metropolitan areas grows on the expense of the population of metropolitan areas. Although Champion recognised that the development of the population distribution during the 1970s and 1980s varied considerably within Europe, he stuck to the hypothesis of counter-urbanisation as a general trend in both North America and (Northwest) Europe. In a more detailed way, he expresses counter-urbanisation in the following working definition:

"In brief, counterurbanization is deemed to be the prevailing tendency when the distribution of population is shifting from larger to smaller places, where 'places' are defined in terms of relatively self-contained areas comprising an urban centre and its commuting and servicing catchment. On this basis counterurbanization does not require the abandonment of all types of urban settlements in favour of the villages and isolated
dwellings traditionally associated with the countryside, nor does it necessitate a return to the rural life-styles in the sense of giving up the trappings of modern society. It does, however, require the faster growth of those smaller places that are not linked to major cities by significant commuter ties or other frequent journeys than those that are, and therefore specifically excludes the long-established processes of sub-urbanisation and metropolitan expansion" (Champion, 1989 p. 32).

Champion interprets counter-urbanisation as a cyclical process. This process also includes 'ups' and 'downs', originating from the national and regional economic development, the transformation from a manufacturing-oriented to a service-oriented economy, demographic trends like changes in the age and household structure of the population and the urbanisation policy of national governments. As a logical consequence from the nature of the process, counter-urbanisation would gradually lose its intensity: "(...) because, defined as a negative association between net migration and settlement size, counterurbanization contains the seeds of its own destruction in a way that was not true of urbanization. Whereas the latter process can be considered a cumulative process in that the largest places grow fastest and thereby increase their attractive power, counterurbanization is self-defeating because the fate of the smallest places that, by definition, are the most attractive, is that they should grow most rapidly and thus decline in their attractiveness. In theory, therefore, the pace of counterurbanization will tend to decline over time as places become more evenly matched in size." (Champion, 1989, p. 241).

With this interpretation of counter-urbanisation, Champion comes close to the phase of de-urbanisation of the stages of urban development – model presented in section 2.2.3. Further support for this viewpoint can be found in the work of Cheshire, who claims that during the 1980s, a long-term process of population deconcentration in Northwest-Europe has come to an end. In the 1980s, most functional urban regions in Northwest-Europe experienced a stabilisation or modest growth of their population. In some regions, even the population of the central city started to grow again after decades of decline (Cheshire, 1995).

However, the counter-urbanisation thesis is criticised by many. The criticism is largely based on the same arguments challenging the stages of urban development-model, to which the counter-urbanisation thesis is clearly related. The difference between suburbanisation and counter-urbanisation is, despite Champion’s attempts to clarify it, still rather vague. Therefore, the claim that counter-urbanisation is something new and not a continuation of a long-term deconcentration trend is doubtful (Dean et al. 1984). Furthermore, the term ‘counter-urbanisation’ could work misleading in the sense that it would suggest that, in the 1970s and 1980s, cities and their immediate surroundings were constantly losing population to remoter areas. Instead, cities went through a process of functional specialisation, attracting specific population groups and pushing out other groups. The increase of in-migration of small non-family households and foreign migrants to the cities in many European cities during the 1980s is hardly considered in the theory of counter-urbanisation (Atzema, 1991).
2.4.2 The escalator region

An alternative explanation for inter-regional migration patterns is the concept of the escalator region as introduced by Fielding (1992). The escalator region hypothesis starts from two basic ideas:
- people with the same qualifications living in different regions experience different chances to get ahead in life in terms of their education and labour market careers;
- by moving from one region to another, people can improve their chances on upward social mobility.

In the context of inter-regional migration, escalator regions are then:
1. Regions that attract many young people at the start of their labour market careers;
2. Regions that provide a context that encourages an acceleration in upward social mobility for these in-migrating young people;
3. In a later stage, these regions lose a significant share of people who profited from this accelerated upward social mobility through out-migration.

Translated into the metaphoric terms of the escalator region concept, young people ‘step on the escalator’ when they move to a region where they have more chances on upward social mobility, and ‘step off the escalator’ again when they have reached this upward social mobility and move out of the region towards a more attractive living environment. Fielding based his escalator region hypothesis on an empirical study of migration patterns in England and Wales. He compared the social mobility of migrants moving into, and out of, the South East region with that of the total national and regional populations. From this study he concluded that in-migration and out-migration differed considerably in age and socio-economic status. The in-migrants into the South East were more often ‘potentially upwardly mobile young households’, while the out-migrants from the South East were more often older middle and upper class households that increased their socio-economic status between 1971 and 1981. Also, by comparing data of the national censuses of 1971 and 1981, Fielding could prove that upward social mobility in the South East was generally much faster for young people than in all other regions of England and Wales.

This escalator region concept could be seen as part of larger explanatory framework encompassing links between economic restructuring and international and internal migration. Fielding (1993) presented such an explanatory framework, in which interestingly no distinction was made between foreign migration and inter-regional migration as they were thought to be largely explained by the same economic and societal processes that only took place on different geographical scales. In the model of Fielding (1993), the effects of economic changes on migration to and from West European metropolitan cities and regions were considered to take place at three levels, also connected with three timeframes:

1. Through the combined forces of the ‘conjuncture’ of economic growth and decline, the business cycle and housing market cycle (short term processes): in-migration rises when the urban and regional economy grows, unemployment falls and new housing construction rises, and falls when the urban and regional economy and housing market decline and unemployment rises;
2. Restructuring (medium-term): in the ‘fordist’ regime (until the late 1960s), national sectoral specialisation generated international migration of manual activities.
workers, with a concentration in metropolitan regions. When the economy transformed into ‘postfordist’ (since the late 1960s), the ‘new international division of labour’ resulting from the internationalisation of the economy generated international migration of managers and professionals. At the same time, de-industrialisation reduced the international migration of manual workers. A third restructuring phase distinguished by Fielding is ‘international functional integration’ (since late 1970s), characterised by high international migration, creation of new industrial spaces and a balance between in- and out-migration for most metropolitan regions.

3. ‘Deep structural’ (long-term): at this level Fielding mentions three phenomena with relevance for migration to and from metropolitan regions: ties with former colonies, world city formation enlarging global inequality, and the function of European metropolitan regions as escalator regions.

The escalator region hypothesis seems to offer a logical explanatory framework for the long-term migration patterns in the UK. The traditional net migration gains of the South East at the expense of especially Northern England, Scotland and Wales and the strong concentration of economic growth in the South East in the second half of the twentieth century have often been indicated as the ‘North-South divide’ (Lawton, 1973; see the case study on Northern England in section 7.4). In countries with a comparable ‘primate city’ like France (Paris and the Ile-de-France region), comparable selective migration patterns would undoubtedly be found. However, it is questionable if the escalator region effect also applies to countries lacking such a primate city, which is the case in most of Northwest Europe. When education and employment opportunities are distributed in a more equal way, the need for young people to move to other regions to improve their chances on upward social mobility might disappear. Nevertheless, also in the Netherlands, a country with a highly decentralised settlement pattern, some evidence for an escalator region effect of the Randstad region has been found: the Randstad region had a growing net gain of migrants who moved to the region for educational and labour market reasons during the 1980s (Hooimeijer & Nijstad, 1996). Unfortunately this potentially interesting hypothesis has not been worked out in more detail and across longer time periods so far. It has therefore, for example, remained largely unknown to what extent the volume of migration with the motive of upward social mobility to the supposed escalator regions differs from those between other regions. Also, if housing environments meeting the demands of those that moved into an escalator region to realise upward social mobility are sufficiently available within the region, the in-migrants might not have not leave the region in later stages of their housing career at all.

2.4.3 Economic restructuring, changing household composition and the revival of urban population growth

As mentioned in section 2.2.3, the stages of urban development model (Klaassen, 1979; Berg et al, 1982) includes a fourth phase in which at first the urban region and later also the central city recover from a period of severe population loss and enjoy population growth again. While the first three phases seem to reflect the actual development of population distribution in Northwest Europe quite adequately, this re-urbanisation phase has been criticised by many urban researchers, as has been discussed earlier. Remarkably, though, only a few years after the Klaassen and Van den Berg model was introduced, many urban regions in Northwest Europe demonstrated the recovery that was predicted by the stages of urban development model. This produced a lively debate about whether this
recovery was the beginning of a structural, long-term urban growth, as for example Cheshire (1995) argued, or only a short-term interruption of a long-term development towards further deconcentration.

One of the theoretical approaches that would suggest a genuine ‘urban revival’ revolves around the process of ‘gentrification’. Gentrification could be defined as the process in which a renewed interest of middle and upper class households for deteriorated urban neighbourhoods first leads to improvements in the built environment in these neighbourhoods and eventually, through a rise of real estate prices, also to a (partial or complete) displacement of the original inhabitants of these neighbourhoods (Bontje, 1996). First witnessed in London and several North-American cities in the 1960s and 1970s, the phenomenon was recognised by many researchers across the advanced capitalist world in the 1980s and 1990s (for example: Cortic & Van de Ven, 1981; Smith & Williams, 1986; Blasius, 1994; Falk, 1994). The gentrification process generally ‘takes off’ when an unpopular neighbourhood is discovered by young low-income households in search for cheap housing. These new inhabitants often include quite specific groups like students and artists and have been described as ‘pioneers’ (Gale, 1980) or ‘marginal gentrifiers’ (Rose, 1984). Typical characteristics of a potential gentrification neighbourhood are a location close to the city centre, an attractive built environment (in terms of historic architecture and public space), the availability of relatively large dwellings that could easily be adapted towards the newcomers’ own interior decoration preferences, and low rents and/or selling prices (Falk, 1994). While the ‘pioneers’ often have no intention to ‘take over’ or change the neighbourhood character, later in-migrants often upgrade their houses and turn run-down apartments or former business sites (like warehouses and storage rooms) into luxury apartments. These later in-migrants were attracted to the area by real estate developers and the local media that noticed the changes in the neighbourhood’s population composition and may have advertised the area as ‘trendy’. The second generation of newcomers might also attract new businesses to their neighbourhood that cater their service needs, or start these businesses themselves. After a while, this group might then profit from the increased interest in their neighbourhood and sell their apartments with a high profit. The gentrification process could eventually lead to radical changes of the neighbourhood: a rapid rise of real estate value, changes in the neighbourhood economy (mostly with regard to shops, bars and restaurants) and as a result, the partial or complete displacement of the population that lived there before the process started. In the end, even the ones that started the process, the ‘pioneers’, might be forced to leave because they cannot afford the neighbourhood’s price level or they don’t appreciate the neighbourhood’s atmosphere anymore (Gale, 1980; Smith & Williams, 1986; Rose, 1984).

At first, the gentrification hypothesis provoked enthusiastic reactions among several local urban governments. Several plans were made to facilitate or encourage gentrification since this seemed to be an effective medicine to cure the social and economic problems of their city as a whole and of older deteriorated neighbourhoods around the city centre in particular. However, the phenomenon of gentrification generally remained very limited in its effects on cities. Many older neighbourhoods failed to meet the conditions that might favour gentrification. Sometimes, the changes of the built environment, population and local economy as a result of gentrification were even only limited to a few streets or a few houses. In addition, a factor remarkably largely overlooked by most observers of gentrification was the housing system. Gentrification in its purest form could only take place in a housing system dominated by the owner-occupied or private rental sector. This
is certainly true for the North-American countries and to a lesser extent in the UK where some of the most spectacular examples of gentrification were reported (Gale, 1980; Smith & Williams, 1986), but much less for continental Northwest Europe. In most continental Northwest-European countries, the majority of the housing stock in (inner) cities is in the social rental sector and is distributed through housing corporations or municipalities. These government and semi-government organisations are of course also interested in a housing stock as profitable as possible, but they are also supposed to serve certain 'social goals' like providing housing for low-income people. Furthermore, gentrification had at least as many opponents as defenders in the scientific and popular debate. Gradually, the phenomenon has acquired a quite negative image. Many authors see gentrification (and often also urban revitalisation in general) not as a process initiated by spontaneous initiatives of 'pioneers' at all, but as a means for local government to attract more affluent people to the inner city at the expense of the original inhabitants (Marcuse, 1992; Rose, 1984; Zukin, 1991).

During the 1980s, another phenomenon changing the urban built environment and population structure was the restructuring of old harbour and industrial sites into residential neighbourhoods. The economic crisis of the 1970s had hit heavy industries and harbour activities concentrated on the urban waterfront particularly hard. In many North American and Northwest European cities, dockland areas changed from lively and profitable production environments into derelict sites in the course of only 10 to 20 years. In the context of a radical change in urban socio-economic policies, in which the focus shifted from small-scale urban renewal and anti-poverty policy to the promotion of new urban economic growth, the docklands were chosen as locations for prestigious housing and business developments. The approach proved to be a success in the harbour areas of Baltimore and Boston, and many American and Northwest-European cities tried to follow their example afterwards (Harloe et al., 1992; Hall, 1992). This produced projects like Battery Park in New York City, the London Docklands, Albert Dock in Liverpool, the Eastern Harbour Area in Amsterdam and the south bank of the river Maas ('Kop van Zuid') in Rotterdam in the 1990s. The redevelopment of urban waterfronts took place within a broader trend of ambitious building projects meant to produce 'tempting images of the city' (Cammen & De Klerk, 1996; Jobse & Musterd, 1994). Projects like the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin and the construction of a new high-rise office centre in The Hague could also be seen as exponents of this trend.

Both gentrification and these ambitious urban restructuring projects could be considered as representations of an overall restructuring of the socio-economic structure of Western cities. Short (1989) saw a 'new urban order' emerging in the 1980s, most of all in 'global cities' like London and New York. This new urban order was a result of de-industrialisation and the increasing influence of private investors on the housing market, especially in the inner cities. The economic restructuring and the increasing commercial pressure on inner city locations went together with a growing polarisation between rich and poor in the inner cities, popularly expressed with the terms 'yuppies' ('young urban professionals' or 'young upwardly mobile persons') and 'yuffies' ('young urban failures'). The household types that are typically associated with this 'new urban order' are young singles and childless couples and single parent families. Often they are described as 'new households', suggesting that these household types did not exist before. However, the term 'new' is only a relative one, as it refers to household types that were always present in the cities. Still, since the 1960s, these household types have increased in absolute and relative figures dramatically (Häussermann & Siebel, 1987; Engelsdorp.
Gastelaars & Vijgen, 1992). Nevertheless, as mentioned above for the gentrification process, this growing polarisation of inner city population was especially a phenomenon of North American and British cities, while in the continental part of Northwest-Europe this process was much less extreme.

Everaers & Musterd (1994) suggested a possible explanatory framework that links the processes of economic restructuring, the rising share of (young) small households and the revival of urban population growth. They derived this explanatory framework from an empirical study of the changes in residential patterns of household types in sub-areas of Dutch metropolitan regions. For the case of the Netherlands, their explanation could be summarised as follows:

- The oil crises of 1973 and 1979 led to severe job losses in the manufacturing sector and gave an extra impetus towards a restructuring from the Dutch economy from a manufacturing-oriented to a service-oriented economy;
- This economic restructuring, combined with a growth of flexible employment, was especially beneficiary to women that were at the same time, thanks to the emancipation movement, increasing their participation in the Dutch labour market considerably;
- The increasing labour market participation of women contributed to a shift of priorities in which a labour market career gained importance, while having children was in many cases postponed or reconsidered. This contributed to the increase of small households (singles and two-earner households) and to the decrease of the share of family households. Another, but not unrelated process that contributed to this development was individualisation;
- The relative concentration of service jobs in urban agglomerations and the relatively high preference (compared to family households) of young one- and two-person households for an urban living environment might in this way have contributed to the recovery of urban population growth. This urban preference is probably related to the need for proximity for all kinds of services that are offered more in cities than elsewhere (Vijgen & Engelsdorp Gastelaars, 1992).

The above discussion certainly gives reason to assume that the 1980s and 1990s have been an era of recovery of urban population growth. The degree to which this recovery was only short-lived remains to be seen. Everaers & Musterd (1994) also point at the limits of the new urban growth because the growth of small households that is the generating this growth will inevitably diminish or cease in the long run. Apart from that, two other migration flows will decide on the long-term development of urban population in Northwest Europe. First, the inflow of foreign migrants that is traditionally highly concentrated in (large) cities might be supporting the continuation of urban population growth. It is surprising that foreign migration and the migration behaviour of established ethnic minorities is hardly considered in all the approaches of urban revival discussed above. Second, sub-urbanisation certainly did not cease to exist. While the migration behaviour of young small households might be connected to the process of economic restructuring, this is much less true of the migration behaviour of family households. The process of sub-urbanisation, still largely dominated by family households, is rather determined by economic growth and decline: it tends to intensify when the economy grows, and to diminish when the economy declines (Everaers & Musterd, 1994). This complex of migration flows into and out of the city has produced a housing market that is increasingly bi-polar of character, with peaks in both suburban and central urban housing areas (Meulenbelt, 1997; Musterd & Ostendorf, 1998).
2.5 The withdrawal of the welfare state and the role of physical planning

The economic downturn of the 1970s and early 1980s forced most West-European countries to reconsider their welfare state arrangements. Many instruments and policies of the welfare state programme became too costly. This was most of all true for arrangements for unemployment and health care. The insight that not too many people should become dependent on government funds gained popularity. More generally, the idea of a society that could be re-created through welfare state policy lost its attractiveness. In the plans to restructure welfare states, the key word 'equity' was traded for 'efficiency' (Jobse & Musterd, 1994).

The housing sector did not escape from the huge cutbacks in welfare state policies. In most West-European countries, the 1980s and 1990s were a period in which governments allowed and encouraged private parties to get more influence on several activities previously being part of welfare state policies. Housing policy forms an example. The share of social housing in new housing projects has decreased considerably in countries like the UK and the Netherlands as a result of large cutbacks in housing subsidies (especially object subsidies) and investments. In the Netherlands, housing corporations were privatised. The corporations received a lump sum from the government meant to encourage a lasting commitment of the corporations to social housing provision. This produced a more market-oriented approach with an increasing share of expensive rental and owner-occupied housing, both in new housing production and through selling parts of the social housing stock. However, the Dutch government still has a strong influence on the housing market through instruments such as the housing allowance and the large amounts of potential building land it possesses.

A form of policy generally not considered in studies of population distribution is physical planning. This is remarkable, since many European countries have demonstrated the ambition to influence the development of the settlement pattern and the population distribution of their countries in the second half of the twentieth century. Policy measures in various fields can have direct or indirect influence on the spatial order of society. Except for the policy field most directly involved, physical planning, other policies to be mentioned are housing policy, national and regional economic policy, traffic infrastructure policy, agricultural policy and environmental policy. In this study, the focus will be on physical planning policy, and more specifically on national urbanisation policy. National urbanisation policy could be defined as the set of measures on the national government level intended to influence the spatial pattern of urbanisation on the national and/or regional level.

National policies aimed at regulating the process of urbanisation have been practiced, and are often still practiced, in several European countries. These urbanisation policies often existed of a combination of physical planning and housing policy measures. Examples are the Dutch growth centre policy, the French 'villes nouvelles' and the UK 'New Towns'. An important aim of most urbanisation policies through time has been either to limit or to channel sub-urbanisation and prevent a too large loss of population of the larger cities. Most European planning authorities realised that sub-urbanisation, a process in which many people were able to move to their preferred living environment, could not be stopped. Nevertheless, an unlimited sub-urbanisation would lead to large-scale loss of open, green space. Therefore, instead of trying to stop sub-urbanisation, most planning policies aimed at concentrating the out-migration of the cities in a limited number of
locations. While the above-mentioned countries have left this policy and exchanged it for a compact city approach in the 1980s, more recent examples include the Swiss policy of ‘centralised decentralisation’, with a key role for the regional centres, and the joint planning initiative of the ‘Bundesländer’ Berlin and Brandenburg, in which a model of concentrated deconcentration should contribute to a more even distribution of population and economic growth between the metropolitan area of Berlin and the surrounding periphery. The policies of concentrated deconcentration and the compact city will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The restructuring of West-European welfare states limited the possibilities of government planners to influence the development of the settlement pattern and population distribution. The decision where to build new housing areas and business complexes is increasingly left to private investors (Dieleman et al, 1999). Their ideas about the most suited building locations do often not coincide with the locations preferred by the national government. Another issue of constant concern regards the coordination of various policy measures with effects on the spatial distribution of population and activities, both ‘horizontally’ (the coordination at the national level between ministries, and at the regional and local level between departments) and vertically (how well do local and regional planning policies and practices fit in the national plans?).

Considering the high ambition level often expressed by several European governments in their physical planning programmes, a certain influence of physical planning policy on the development of population distribution should be expected. This is certainly true for the Netherlands, a country often praised for its effective physical planning policy measures and the consistency of its national urbanisation policy by national and international commentators (Hall, 1992; Faludi, 1994; Dutt & Costa, 1985; Davies, 1989; Dieleman et al, 1999). However, as mentioned above, physical planning is a factor generally overlooked in recent explanations for the development of population distribution. In this study, the relationship between physical planning and trends in the distribution of population and the development of urban (regional) form is the central issue. Would the settlement patterns and the patterns of the distribution of population and activities have looked significantly different in the Netherlands and other European countries if there would not have been physical planning policy in the period since World War II? And what could be the consequences of the recent withdrawal of government from welfare state policy in general and physical planning as a part of it? The international theoretical debate on these and related questions will be addressed more extensively in Chapter 4, while in the chapters 6, 7 and 8, the influence of national urbanisation policy on the distribution of population and activities in the Netherlands and Northwest Europe since the 1960s is explored in further detail.
2.6 Conclusions:  
a model for explaining recent urbanisation trends in Northwest Europe

In the limited space of this chapter it was only possible to present a selection of recent contributions to the issue of dynamics in population distribution. First, a division was made between studies that stressed economic and technological explanatory factors (section 2.2) and studies that deal mostly with socio-cultural and demographic changes (section 2.3). Although all of the presented views have certainly contributed to our understanding of the factors determining population distribution dynamics, neither of these two categories could offer a satisfactory explanation for the development of population distribution in Northwest Europe since the 1960s. Instead, the explanation should rather be sought in multidisciplinary approaches that combine economic, technological, socio-cultural and demographic factors. Some examples of these multidisciplinary approaches were discussed in section 2.4. However, even these approaches still largely ignore at least one potential cluster of possible influences on population distribution dynamics: the influence of various types of policies. In the second half of the twentieth century, all Northwest-European national governments have extended their political influence on society through welfare state arrangements. Some of the policies within the welfare state framework were introduced with the explicit aim to bring about changes in the spatial distribution of population and activities. Other policies did not intend to have this effect but unintentionally produced changes in the distribution of population and / or activities.

Figure 2.1 tries to express the complex of factors and processes determining the dynamics of the distribution of population and activities as simple as possible. In this figure, the factors that stand most central in this study are highlighted with bold lines and bold typing. The other factors will certainly not be neglected, but will mainly serve as a background context while the analysis will concentrate on the relations between physical planning policy (especially national urbanisation policy) and recent trends in population distribution, the development of urban (regional) form, and daily mobility.

The factor clusters 'economic-technologic development', 'socio-cultural and demographic trends' and 'policy' influence a complex of processes that in turn are strongly interrelated: dynamics in population distribution and the distribution of activities, residential mobility and daily mobility. To make the picture even more complex, the factor clusters on the left hand side of figure 2.2 are also strongly interrelated. Of all the relations shown in this model, the influence of policy measures on the distribution of population and activities is without doubt the least researched and most unknown relationship. While especially physical planning policy presupposes that is possible to influence socio-spatial developments in a desirable direction, surprisingly little is known about the extent to which this has been realised in the recent past. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the current debate in planning science seems to concentrate more on the planning process itself than on the eventual outcome of this process. Many planning researchers seem to consider the completion of 'the plan' on paper as the ultimate goal of the planners. Therefore, the current discussion in planning science concentrates on themes like the effective use of concepts, how to reach consensus, and the role of the several parties involved in the planning process. There seems to be much less concern about the eventual changes in spatial configurations for which these plans were produced in the first place. On the other hand, geographers and other social scientists that are trying to explain recent dynamics in the urbanisation process often neglect the possible role of government
policies like physical planning. This study wants to contribute to bridging this gap between geographers and planners. While constantly taking the context of economic-technologic, socio-cultural and demographic changes into account, it will take national urbanisation policy plans as its point of departure and try to explore the extent to which this type of policy has in the recent past managed to change the dynamics in the urbanisation process. Before focusing on the development of national urbanisation policy in the Netherlands and Northwest-Europe, however, attention should also be paid to another relevant strand in urbanisation research that is specifically concerned with the distribution of activities over space and the urban (local and regional) form this produces. This type of urbanisation studies was already referred to before in this Chapter and will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

**Figure 2.2. Conceptual scheme of explanatory factors for urbanisation trends in Northwest Europe**

ECONOMIC & TECHNOLOGICAL TRENDS
- Internationalisation
- Restructuring towards service-oriented economy
- Growing and declining regions
- Improving transport / communication technology and infrastructure

SOCIO-CULTURAL & DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS
- Changing household composition
- Individualisation
- Rising foreign migration

POLICY TRENDS
- Physical planning (esp. urbanisation policy)
- Other policies with spatial impact

URBANISATION TRENDS
- Population distribution
- Business locations
- Service provision
- Development of urban (regional) form

RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY

DAILY MOBILITY