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

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CHAPTER SIX
THE INFLUENCE OF URBANISATION POLICY ON POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN THE NETHERLANDS

6.1 Introduction

As indicated in Chapter 5, the Dutch administrative system rests on a strong position of national government on the one hand and of municipalities on the other hand. This is also reflected in the physical planning system. The general division of tasks is that the national planners deliver the long-term national strategic plans that serve as a framework for the municipal planning actions on the local level. In-between are the provinces that are responsible for the regional plans. However, the position of the provinces is relatively weak compared to that of the national and local planners. Since the local plans have to fit in the regional plans, and these regional plans in turn have to be in line with the targets of national urbanisation policy, national control on local planning is quite considerable. The fact that no less than 84% of the municipal budget comes from national government transfers (Veer, 1997) strengthens the dominant position of the national government in Dutch physical planning even more – at least on paper. In addition, the strategic planning documents of the Dutch national planners since the 1960s clearly demonstrate a strong ambition of national planners to influence the direction of spatial development of the Netherlands. The reports tend to contain quite clear and concrete goals and accompanying targets, like the number of houses to be built on a certain location in a certain period. The combination of the highly influential position of the national government within the Dutch planning system and the high level of ambition in the national plans since the 1960s lead to the expectation that Dutch physical planning policy has actually been able to direct the development of urbanisation in accordance with the national plans.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to check whether this expectation is justified. To what extent has it been possible in the recent past to implement the national planning strategies on the local level? The answer to this question is sought in an empirical analysis of a core element of Dutch national physical planning policy: urbanisation policy. The results of this analysis are presented in section 6.6. Before turning to the empirical analysis, the sections 6.2 to 6.5 pay attention to the societal and political context in which Dutch national urbanisation policy was formulated and executed and give an impression of the historical development of Dutch physical planning and its central strategic concepts. The chapter will conclude with a short overview of the most recent developments in Dutch national urbanisation policy (section 6.7).

6.2 Development of population distribution in the Netherlands

6.2.1 Long-term development

One of the most striking features of the Netherlands in comparison to many other European countries is the absence of a ‘primate city’, a city that dominates the country’s urban system in terms of population size and economic, political and cultural functions. However, this was not always the case. The Netherlands was late to join the industrialisation process. This happened only in the second half of the 19th century. Until then, Amsterdam had been a ‘primate city’ in many aspects. For example, in 1795 its population was four times as large as the second largest city, Rotterdam. Furthermore, Amsterdam dominated the Dutch economy and culture, largely thanks to its strong
international position (Engelsdorp Gastelaars & Ostendorf, 1994). However, when industrialisation finally reached the Netherlands, it was especially Rotterdam that benefited from it. Through its favourable position in the Rhine Delta, Rotterdam rapidly developed as the main transit harbour for the German hinterland, most of all the rapidly industrialising Rhine-Ruhr area. At the same time, The Hague strengthened its position as the national political and administrative centre, while Utrecht became the main national distribution and logistics node. Amsterdam was left with only its roles as the main national financial and cultural centre. The four large cities as they are now known in the Netherlands are therefore a quite recent phenomenon, a situation that only came about in the late 19th century. In the same period, industrialisation also led to a rapid growth of new specialised industrial cities in the south and east of the Netherlands, like Eindhoven and Enschede.

Parallel to this redistribution of urban functions, the turn of the century also brought a first wave of sub-urbanisation around the Dutch cities, most notably around the large cities. Until the late 19th century, the Dutch settlement system was characterised by a clear dichotomy between the cities and the countryside. Then, this dichotomy started to fade, first through city extensions, later also through suburban growth in formerly rural villages (Hidding, 1997). Initially, the extent of this suburban migration remained quite limited since it was only affordable for the highest income groups. After 1900, with the help of considerable improvements of public transport, sub-urbanisation became possible for middle-income groups as well (Hoekveld & Deurloo, 1981). Most of the early suburbs were located in regions like the coastal zone of North and South Holland and east of Amsterdam ('t Gooi') and Utrecht ('Utrechtse heuvelrug').

The severe economic crisis of the 1930s, World War II and the period of post-war reconstruction preliminarily stopped the sub-urbanisation process. In the late 1950s, a new upsurge of sub-urbanisation started. The large cities lost inhabitants with a constantly increasing pace. This time, the sub-urbanisation movement was more a middle class than an elite phenomenon. Suburban migration became possible for a larger share of the population due to rapidly rising household incomes, accompanied by the increasing affordability of the private car. Under these circumstances, the new suburban movement not only involved considerably more households than in the early 20th century, but it also took place across larger distances. The out-migrants from the large and medium-sized cities in the West of the Netherlands not only left to suburban locations near their cities of origin, but also to other parts of the country (Atzema, 1991). This sub-urbanisation trend was only partially compensated by the growing in-migration of foreigners, related to the recruitment of 'guest workers' from Mediterranean countries. At first, this new wave of sub-urbanisation was mainly a deconcentration of population, while economic activities remained concentrated in the large cities and regional centres. The dominant trend of sub-urbanisation around the large and medium-sized cities contributed to the formation and gradual extension of daily urban systems (Engelsdorp Gastelaars et al, 1980; see also Chapter 3).
6.2.2 **Main trends since 1970**

Table 6.1 shows the development of the number of inhabitants of municipality types in the Netherlands between 1970 and 1995. The municipality categories in this table are based on the typology introduced by the National Bureau of Statistics Netherlands (CBS) introduced after the Census of 1971 and used as the standard typology in all population statistics for more than two decades afterwards (see Appendix Map 1). The category 'rural' contains municipalities that had more than 20% of the working population in agriculture in 1971. In the category 'urbanised rural', agriculture is also a prominent sector in the local economy, but manufacturing and services have more importance. Municipalities are called 'suburban' when, in 1971, more than 30% of the working population was commuting to other municipalities. The growth centres are, because of their specific population development, added as a separate category. These are the locations selected by the Dutch national planners to realise the policy of 'concentrated deconcentration' that will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter (see also Chapter 4).

The four largest cities of the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) experienced a huge population loss in the period 1970-1985. Actually, as mentioned before in section 6.2.1, this decline had already started in the 1960s. The most extreme population loss for the large cities was recorded in 1973, when Amsterdam lost 25,000 inhabitants and Rotterdam lost 20,000 inhabitants in only one year (Meulenbelt, 1997). Around 1985 the large cities started to gain inhabitants again. Their population grew quite considerably until 1995. Since then, the large cities once more experienced a slight population loss. The medium-sized cities (100,000 - 200,000 inhabitants) generally had a more positive population development than the large cities, but in the 1970s, also some medium-sized cities lost population. The period of population loss was shorter than that of the large cities, and the medium-sized cities lost a much smaller share of their population than the large cities.

**Table 6.1**

Population development per municipality type, Netherlands, 1970-1995; deviation from national growth rate

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanised rural</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>-0.7</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-100,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>-5.3</td>
<td>-3.5</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td>-1.2</td>
<td>-15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-200,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>-14.4</td>
<td>-9.6</td>
<td>-6.8</td>
<td>-1.6</td>
<td>-0.9</td>
<td>-34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;200,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth centres</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>164.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The growth centres reached large population gains as was intended in the policy of 'concentrated deconcentration', especially in the period 1980-1985, when the building production reached its peak (Jobse et al., 1991). After the end of their 'growth task', some growth centres got a stagnating or even declining population. With the exception of the 'growth centres', most population growth occurred in the categories 'rural' and 'urbanised rural'. In general there seemed to be a strong relation between urbanity and population growth: the least urban municipalities experienced the fastest population growth. However, this was especially true for the period 1970-1975. After 1975, suburban and rural growth has been considerably less spectacular and the differences in population development with between rural, suburban and urban municipalities have been decreasing continuously.

The group 'suburbs' as a whole went through a considerable growth of inhabitants. However, this doesn't apply to all members of this group. The 'old' suburbs (the municipalities that started to receive out-migrants from the large cities in the 'first suburban wave' in the late 19th and early 20th century) have even declined between 1970 and 1995. Suburban growth is mainly concentrated in a newer group of suburban villages and small towns. These newer suburban municipalities can mainly be found at the outskirts of the Randstad, partly in areas that the government destined to be 'open', like the Green Heart (see section 6.4.1). In the table they are not only grouped in the category 'suburbs', but also in 'urbanised rural' and 'rural'. This is caused by the fact that the typology used here is based on the situation at the start of the research period. After 1970, a lot of former rural municipalities have acquired a more suburban character.

Within the municipality categories mentioned in Table 6.1, there is considerable variation in population development. Map 3 and 4 in the Appendix demonstrate this variation. Map 3 in the Appendix shows the geographic pattern of population growth in the Netherlands on the municipal level. Generally speaking, the pattern of growth and decline is fairly mixed. Concentrations of growth can be found mostly in areas just outside the Randstad ring of cities. These are the areas that in the 1960s and 1970s were called 'overspill regions' of the Randstad, indicating that these regions should provide housing for the out-migrants from the Randstad cities (see section 6.4.1). Apart from the growth centres, this includes municipalities close to growth centres, and several (suburban) municipalities around the large and medium-sized cities in the west, east and south.

When Appendix Map 3 is compared to Appendix Map 2, almost all these fast-growing municipalities appear to be located in the part of the country that was introduced as 'Central Netherlands' in Chapter 5. However, in the same part of the country, a concentration of declining municipalities can be found. These are the large and medium-sized cities and the 'older' suburban municipalities. The Randstad ring of cities, including most of the suburban municipalities between its cities, is dominated by the colour grey indicating population decline. Also in the other parts of Central Netherlands, in the provinces of North Brabant and Gelderland, cities lost population. Further concentrations of decline appear mostly in peripheral regions, most notably at the borders with Belgium and Germany and in the northern provinces.

Map 4 in the Appendix shows the population development on a regional level. The regional division used is that of the COROP-regions. This is one of the standard regional divisions that the National Bureau of Statistics Netherlands has used in its regional statistics since the early 1970s. The map shows that the population development of the
regions of the large cities is to a large extent determined by the performance of their central cities. The COROP regions of Amsterdam and Rotterdam as a whole only managed to grow slightly, while the region of The Hague even lost population.

Apparently, the growth in the surrounding suburbs and the growth centres of Rotterdam and The Hague could only compensate for the loss of the central cities, not contribute to an overall regional growth. The case of Amsterdam is different: only half of the growth centres for Amsterdam is inside the Amsterdam COROP region. The more distant growth centres are located in regions that rank among the fastest growers of the Netherlands. Meanwhile, the Utrecht region did much better than the other large city regions, scoring an overall growth above the national average despite the huge population loss of its central city. Again, some peripheral parts of the Netherlands appear as areas with a stagnating population growth.

Before turning to the analysis of the influence of national urbanisation policy on the population dynamics in the Netherlands since the early 1970s, the following sections will briefly describe the economic, demographic and socio-cultural context in which the Dutch national planners had to operate.

### 6.3 Economic trends influencing Dutch population distribution

Like all economies in Western Europe, the Dutch economy went through a major depression following the first oil crisis in 1973. This depression was worsened after the second oil crisis of 1979. In the same period, the process of economic restructuring (decline of the secondary sector, increasing importance of the service sector) also contributed to severe job losses. For the first time in decades, real household incomes were stagnating or even declining. In the second half of the 1980s however, the national economy started to recover. With the interruption of a new, but short crisis period around 1990, the main trend of the last decade is economic growth and a continuous increase of real household incomes. Figure 6.1 shows the development of the real gross domestic product of the Netherlands between 1970 and 1995 as an illustration of the above.

**Figure 6.1**

Development of the real gross domestic product of the Netherlands, 1970-1995
(yearly average growth per 5-year period in %)

In Chapter 2, the hypothesis was stated that economic growth is directly linked to suburban growth: when the national economy grows, the sub-urbanisation process will intensify and when the economy stagnates or declines, sub-urbanisation will slow down or even stop entirely. How well does this hypothesis apply to the recent development of the Dutch economy and population distribution? To get some insight in this possible relationship, the municipality types shown before in Table 6.1 have been aggregated into two types of municipalities. The categories ‘rural’, ‘urbanised rural’, ‘suburban’ and ‘growth centres’ from Table 6.1 were merged into one category, ‘rural and suburban municipalities’. In Figure 6.2, the development of the rural and suburban population growth is compared with the development of economic growth, again with the yearly average growth of the real gross domestic product as an indicator for economic development. For the period from 1970 until 1985, the hypothesis seems to be supported: a decline in economic growth is paralleled by a decline in suburban growth. However, while economic growth recovers after 1985, suburban population growth keeps declining.

**Figure 6.2**

![Graph showing suburban/rural population growth and economic development](image)

Based on data of Table 6.1 and Figure 6.1; sources: OECD (1997), *Historical Statistics* and CBS, *Bevolking der gemeenten van Nederland* (Population of the municipalities of the Netherlands), 1970-1995.

At the same time, the Dutch economy shifted its focus from a manufacturing-oriented to a service-oriented economy. This process already set in during the 1960s. As can be seen from Table 6.2, in 1968 already the tertiary sector exceeded the secondary sector in terms of the share of total employment. Afterwards, the share of tertiary jobs increased further to occupy almost two-thirds of all Dutch jobs in 1995. When the tertiary services and quaternary (government) services are taken together, it appears that almost 75% of all jobs in the Netherlands were in the service economy in 1995. Meanwhile, the share of jobs in the secondary sector decreased rapidly towards one of the lowest levels worldwide (OECD, 1997). It is this economic restructuring, combined with changes in the household composition of the population, that might offer an explanation for the recovery of urban population growth since the mid-1980s (see also section 6.4).

The restructuring of the Dutch economy affected different parts of the Netherlands in different ways. The functional urban regions of the large cities developed in markedly different directions in the 1970s and 1980s. Cheshire et al (1986) designed a ranking of 103 functional urban regions in EU countries based on a ‘problem score’. This problem score was measured through variables expressing unemployment rate, household income,
net migration and travel demand. Amsterdam was among the top-10 of functional urban regions in the period between 1971 and 1984. Utrecht (46th place) and The Hague (60th) had average scores and ranked in the ‘midfield’ of functional urban regions, while Rotterdam had a relatively high problem score and therefore ranked low on the list of functional urban regions (81th). A division of the research period from 1971 to 1984 into three sub-periods demonstrated that there was hardly any variation in the problem scores for the four Dutch functional urban regions during the 1970s and early 1980s.

Table 6.2
Share of economic sectors in total employment (in %), Netherlands, 1968-1995

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaternary</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD (1997), Historical Statistics.

In a study of the economic vitality and development potential of urban regions, Louter (1999) makes clear that in the 1990s, the functional urban regions of Amsterdam and Utrecht were among the fastest growing parts of the Netherlands, while the regions of The Hague and Rotterdam clearly lagged behind. This study once more demonstrated that the Randstad could be divided in a ‘North Wing’ and a ‘South Wing’ in terms of labour market structure. Apparently, towards the end of the 20th century, this division within the Randstad resulted in a concentration of the fastest-growing economic sectors in the North Wing (information technology, consultancy, finance, trade and airport-related activities) and a concentration of declining sectors (port-related activities and government-related activities) in the South Wing. Although also in The Hague and Rotterdam a strong growth of commercial services has recently taken place, this could not compensate sufficiently for the job loss in the port-related activities in Rotterdam, and the job loss in government-related activities in The Hague resulting from several cutbacks and efficiency operations during the 1980s and 1990s. The most recent economic developments point at a further concentration of economic growth in the North Wing of the Randstad. The combination of a metropolitan business environment in and around Amsterdam, the central location of Utrecht and the strong growth potential of Schiphol airport have led to an acceleration of employment growth in this region in the 1990s (Ministerie EZ, 1999).

However, apart from the redistribution of economic growth within the Randstad, one could also speak of a redistribution of growth on a national level. The traditional dominant position of the Randstad as a whole within the Dutch economic system was increasingly challenged since the 1970s. Especially the areas just outside the Randstad, regions in the so-called ‘intermediary zone’ (between core and periphery), demonstrated an above-average employment growth. Parallel to this development, also some regional centres in the periphery had an above-average employment growth. This growth is often attributed to the relocation of companies from the Randstad because of problems with expansion and accessibility. This is certainly a part of the explanation, especially with respect to space-demanding activities within the industrial and logistics sector that deconcentrated to the edges of the Randstad and other parts of the country (Ministerie EZ, 1999). However, part of the success of these regions is certainly also explained by their own economic growth potential. For example, the southeast of the Netherlands became
highly specialised in knowledge-intensive industries like consumer electronics, car production and chemical industries. At the same time, a clear strength of the intermediary zone is its highly diversified economic structure (Louter, 1999). Furthermore, the government policy to stimulate the development of backward regions in the 1960s and 1970s might have played an important role: through investments in accessibility, service level and living environment, the government took away many of the objections of companies to settle in the intermediary and peripheral parts of the Netherlands (see also section 6.5.2). In addition, changes in location demands of companies were an important factor. The commercial services sector has much less specific location demands than most industrial companies, which might have resulted in a more equal distribution of economic activities across the country (Velden & Wever, 2000).

6.4 Demographic and socio-cultural trends

The mid-1960s marked the start of many societal transformation processes affecting the demographic structure of the Dutch population. The most important of these transformations was the growing differentiation of the population with respect to household types. Until the 1960s, the nuclear family was clearly the dominant household type. Since then, the emergence of various alternative lifestyles led to a decreasing share of nuclear households and a rapidly increasing share of one- and two-person households. Related to this process was a steep decline of the birth rate. These changes in the household structure were of course not unique to the Netherlands, but happened at the same time in most Northwest-European countries. However, the pace of these socio-demographic changes in the Netherlands was much higher than in most other West-European countries. This was due to the fact that - compared to other countries - Dutch society in the early 1960s was still relatively strongly based on traditional family values. In that respect, the transformation from a family-oriented to a more individualised society had a more revolutionary character in the Netherlands than in many other West-European countries (Meulenbelt, 1997; Bootsm a et al., 1993). A large part of the reason why Dutch society was hanging on to a family-oriented perspective relatively long should probably be sought in the unique societal system of ‘pillarisation’. This was a segmentation of society along cultural dividing lines. Each of the ‘pillars’ (catholic, protestant, socialist and liberal) had its own organisations in almost every element of Dutch society during most of the 20th century. The process of secularisation that also gained momentum in the 1960s led to a diminishing influence of the catholic and protestant church on a large part of the Dutch population and therewith of their traditional moral values with respect to marriage, divorce, the family etc. With the process of secularisation, gradually also the Dutch ‘pillarised’ societal system disappeared. This led to more pluriformity in household types and lifestyles (Pater et al, 1989). To an increasing extent, people with comparable lifestyles tended to concentrate in certain segments of the housing market. Because of differences in space-time behaviour and different service demands that follow from it, each lifestyle leads to different preferences towards the living environment (Vijgen & Engelsdorp Gastelaars, 1992).

Under these circumstances of increasing individual freedom of lifestyle and a decreasing importance of societal norms, young people more and more tended to form a one- or two-person household in the first years after leaving the parental home. The automatism of starting a family as soon as a person left the parental house disappeared. Especially in the largest cities, the proportion of one-person households has increased a lot during the last decades: in the inner cities this household type even started to form the majority of the
population (Jobse & Musterd, 1992). Another rapidly growing group was the two-earner household. With the increase of participation of women on the labour market, also the proportion of two-earner households increased, contributing to a considerable growth of the share of 2-person households in general as well (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3
Share of household size types in the Dutch population, 1971-1995 (in %)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 person</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 persons</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 persons</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 persons</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 persons or more</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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</table>


Another consequence of the declined birth rate is the greying of the population. The effects of this process are still unclear, but it is certain that in the next decades, elderly people will become a more prominent group in the Dutch society. The extent to which this will also be noticed in changes in housing preferences of the population is doubtful. Although one might expect that the elderly often have quite specific demands of their living environment, recent research rather shows that the housing preferences of the elderly are not so different from those of other population categories (VNG, 1994). However, there is a considerable difference between elderly households and younger households with respect to the propensity to move. Elderly households (55 years or older) are generally moving much less frequently than younger households. Possible reasons for this difference are a higher level of satisfaction with the existing living environment among the elderly and the fear of losing the neighbourhood’s social network, a factor that is of more importance to elderly than to young households. Another reason is that quite often, a good alternative for the present residence is simply not available (Filius, 1994).

The increase of foreign migration also had consequences for population distribution. In the 1960s, because of a labour deficit, large amounts of labour migrants popularly known as ‘guest workers’ were attracted from Mediterranean countries. This was meant as a temporary solution, but the majority of guest workers stayed in the Netherlands. Since the mid-1970s, family reunification of the former guest workers increased the presence of especially the Turkish and Moroccan community considerably. Another important migration flow came from the former Dutch colony of Suriname, peaking after its independence in 1975, and from the Netherlands Antilles. In the last few years, foreign migration was to an increasing extent dominated by two other groups, strongly differing from each other in their reasons to migrate. The first of these groups consisted of migrants from industrialised countries. Within this group, especially the in-flow of migrants from member states of the European Union (EU) became of increasing importance, supported by several measures promoting the political and economic integration of the EU. However, the counter-flow of Dutch citizens to other industrialised countries more or less balances out the effects of this last category of in-migrants. Furthermore, a considerable part of the in-migration from the industrial countries is short-term rather than permanent (Van Amersfoort, 1991). The second group consisted of refugees and asylum seekers. The number of incoming asylum seekers fluctuated heavily, but the main trend was growth
during the 1980s and early 1990s. However, in recent years the Dutch and EU regulations for asylum have been tightened considerably, leading to a sharp decrease of the yearly admitted number of asylum seekers in the Netherlands. The development of total in- and out-migration and the resulting net in-migration are presented in Table 6.4.

Except for the elderly, all of the above mentioned household types are considered to be more urban oriented in their housing preference than the traditional autochthonous nuclear family. This is not to say that groups such as young one- and two-person households or ethnic minorities exclusively prefer to live in cities, but rather that the share of people having an urban preference tends to be larger than among autochthonous family households. In addition, it should be said that in many cases, young households and households from ethnic minorities might prefer a suburban living environment too, but cannot realise their preferences. Factors like the large social housing stock, relatively high vacancy rates in certain parts of the cities and the provision of special accommodation for young 'starters' make the cities, and most of all the large cities, locations where young households and ethnic minorities have much more chances than elsewhere (Jobse & Musterd, 1992). The proportional increase of these groups could lead to a growing demand for apartments on urban locations and a decrease of sub-urbanisation in the near future. However, the urban-to-suburban migration flow is not likely to disappear or become meaningless. Meulenbelt (1997) and Musterd & Ostendorf (1998) indicate that it is more likely that to an increasing extent, a 'bi-polar' housing market will develop, in which both suburban and inner city locations are the most popular living environments, while the areas 'in-between' become less popular. Recent developments on the Dutch housing market indeed seem to point in this direction.

Table 6.4
In-migration, out-migration and net in-migration, Netherlands, 1970-1995 (yearly averages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Immigration, yearly average (x 1000)</th>
<th>Emigration, yearly average (x 1000)</th>
<th>Net immigration, yearly average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>61.2</td>
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<td>1975-1980</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>37.8</td>
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<td>1980-1985</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-1990</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1995</td>
<td>114.6</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In Chapter 2 (section 2.4.3), following the argumentation of Everaers & Musterd (1994), a hypothetical link was proposed between three processes manifesting themselves in Northwest-Europe in recent decades: the recovery of urban population growth in the 1980s, the shift from a manufacturing-oriented to a service-oriented economy, and the continuous increase of the share of one- and two-person households in the population since the 1960s. In Figure 6.3, this line of thought is applied to the Dutch situation. The 'urban population growth' in this figure is an aggregate of the population development of the three types of
cities presented earlier in Table 6.1. The hypothesis seems to hold only for the period after 1985, when urban population first starts to grow again (1985-1990) and then accelerates its pace of growth (1990-1995). Between 1975 and 1985, however, urban population first reaches a zero growth, which is a clear recovery from the previous period of loss, but then falls back into a modest decline (1980-1985). This does not fit the hypothesis of Everaers & Musterd (1994) too well, although an alternative view could of course be that this slight backdrop of urban population development was only a short interruption of a long-term recovery trend. In addition, it could be argued that the modest recovery of urban population development in the late 1970s was mainly based on ‘negative’ reasons: under the circumstances of deep economic crisis, many urban households wanted to suburbanise, but could not afford it. In this period, although the share of small non-family households (with a more urban orientation) was already increasing rapidly, the traditional family household (with a more suburban orientation) still dominated Dutch society. In the second half of the 1980s, economic growth recovered, so much more households could afford to suburbanise again. However, meanwhile, the small non-familial household had become the dominant group in Dutch society. The acceleration of urban population growth in this period was much more connected to a ‘positive’ choice for an urban living environment, amongst others by young non-family households.

**Figure 6.3**
Development of the share of service sector jobs, the share of one- and two-person households, and urban population growth in the Netherlands, 1968-1995

Based on data of Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.
Left axis: percentage scale for share of 1- and 2-p. households and service sector jobs.
Right axis: percentage scale for urban population growth.
The reappraisal of the inner city as a living environment manifested itself most of all in the large cities. Two processes in particular should be mentioned here. First, in the early 1980s, several Dutch geographers saw evidence for the process of 'gentrification' in the large cities, most of all in Amsterdam. Since the early 1970s, young households discovered some derelict inner city neighbourhoods as potentially attractive living environments. Old warehouses that lost their function were turned into luxury apartments and to a large extent sold to upper middle class households with a high profit (Cortie & Van de Ven, 1981). This development was for some time seen as the starting signal of a large-scale upgrading of the inner city and 19th-century neighbourhoods, but this never really came about. However, a second development since the late 1980s contributed to a further reappraisal of urban living. In several large and medium-sized cities, old industrial and harbour sites were turned into high-density housing areas. With large luxury apartments in close proximity of inner-city amenities, especially young upper middle class households with a preference for urban living were targeted. The success of these projects was, and still is, overwhelming. The 'flagship developments' in this respect were the Eastern Harbour Area in Amsterdam and the 'Kop van Zuid' in Rotterdam. Both locations took the maximum advantage of another recent tendency in Dutch housing preferences: the increasing popularity of living on waterfronts.

An alternative explanation of recent dynamics in Dutch internal migration sees the Randstad, and most notably the large cities, as an 'escalator region', following the hypothesis of Fielding (1992; see Chapter 2). A longitudinal study of in- and out-migration of the Randstad between 1978 and 1990 showed that the Randstad region had a constant surplus of young in-migrants with an educational or a job-related migration motive. At the same time, older households, leaving the Randstad mainly to improve their housing situation, dominated the out-migration from the Randstad. This suggests that the Randstad functions as an 'escalator region' in the Netherlands, in which people enter the region at a young age, improve their educational level, start their labour market career and leave again when they managed to reach a higher status level (Nijstad & Hooimeijer, 1996). The escalator region concept certainly explains a significant part of recent Dutch migration patterns. However, the recent popularity of the Amsterdam and Rotterdam inner-city redevelopments among young 'upper middle class' households, that do not leave the city although they could easily afford it, does not fit well in this picture.

6.5 Dutch policies on planning, housing and regional development

6.5.1 The Dutch welfare state

The foundations of the modern Dutch welfare state were mainly established in the 1930s and 1940s. The Dutch government took several measures as a reaction on the crisis period of the 1930s and the following war years. Especially in the immediate post-war period, governmental interventions in the national economy and social security increased dramatically. Important sources of inspiration were the plea for government intervention to reach full employment and a stable economic development by Keynes, and the Beveridge report of 1942 that is considered as the 'blueprint' of the British welfare state (Veen, 1990; see also Chapter 7, case Northern England). Esping-Andersen (1990) characterises the Netherlands as a corporatist welfare state, although he also recognises some features of the social-democratic welfare state type.
In the early post-war period, the Netherlands could be described as a strongly planned society (Cammen & De Klerk, 1996). The Dutch government pursued a strict wage policy. This went along with considerable investments in key industrial sectors like steel, mining, and commercial services. The combination of limiting wage increases and the investments in industry had to make the Dutch industrial sector healthy and competitive again. The 1950s policy laid the foundations for the enormous expansion of Dutch economy in 1960s and early 1970s. In the early 1960s, the development of wages was released and a steep increase in average incomes followed. Since the severest poverty problems were apparently solved, the welfare state shifted in focus from the distribution of wealth to the distribution of welfare (Veen, 1990). This involved a further expansion of welfare state arrangements and caused a considerable rise in welfare expenditures.

The oil crises of the 1970s and following economic downturn led to a discussion about the limits of the welfare state. The welfare state was feared to have become uncontrollable and unaffordable. Critics claimed that the demands on welfare policy had become much too high. These problems were mostly linked to the supposed unique character of the Dutch welfare state, and solutions were also sought within the specific Dutch context. Only in the late 1980s was it recognised that welfare states in other Western countries suffered from comparable problems (Engbersen et al, 1993). In the 1980s and 1990s, considerable cuts in welfare state arrangements were unavoidable. Several state companies were privatised and there was a general tendency of withdrawal of the government in various fields of welfare policy.

The Dutch political system is characterised by a dominant position of the national state. The local level of government originally had a strongly autonomous position, but during the 20th century and especially since World War II government was increasingly centralised. On the one hand, several government tasks were transferred from the local to the national level. On the other hand, national and local policy actions became increasingly intertwined (Veldheer, 1989). Groenendijk (1998) mentions in this respect that one could speak of 'co-governance' of local and national government in most fields of policy. A decisive factor in the national-local government power relations is the fact that a very high share of local government funds comes from the national state. In the early 1980s, no less than 94% of local government funds consisted of money transfers from the national level. Probably even more significant was the nature of these money transfers: over 60% of it came from goal-specific funds (Toonen, 1981). Although the share of national transfers in municipal budgets declined significantly since the early 1980s, it was still 84% in 1996 (Veer, 1997). As Kloosterman and Lamboooy (1992, p. 127) effectively summarise: "The Dutch welfare state, therefore, is - generally speaking - locally administered, centrally determined, and nationally funded."

This does not mean that the municipality is only putting national policies to practice on the local level. Within the limits set by the national state, local governments can still pursue an autonomous policy. In this respect, the Dutch welfare state has often been described as a 'decentralised unitary state' (a.o. Toonen, 1981; Veldheer, 1989; Groenendijk, 1998). Among the policy fields where local influence is quite considerable are housing and physical planning policy. Furthermore, in recent years local autonomy has increased. Since the 1980s, the share of local taxes in the total municipal budget was raised, while the funding of municipalities from the national state level changed its character. The national funds for the municipalities have gradually become more 'general'
and less 'goal-specific', which gives local authorities more freedom to decide how to spend their money (Cammen & De Klerk, 1996).

The government level in-between, the provinces, is relatively weak both in political influence and financial means compared to the local and national government. Still, the provinces certainly also have their role to play in the Dutch welfare state. While the municipalities function as the primary administrative units in all matters that directly influence the daily life of its citizens, the provinces take care of coordination of municipal policies and advocating municipal interests on the national level (Wissink, 2000). Throughout recent decades, there has been a frequently returning discussion about the province's right to exist. Many suggestions have been made to either abolish the provinces or to rearrange their borders, because the provinces did not always seem to match the scale level of regional developments. Probably the most notorious issue in this debate was the formation of 'city provinces'. In the early 1990s, a new regional policy level of city provinces was proposed by national government as the solution to frequently occurring political conflicts, mainly between cities and their surrounding municipalities. City provinces were to be formed around the large cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague and also around several regional centers like Eindhoven and the 'twin city' Enschede-Hengelo. Meanwhile, however, all proposals for city provinces have been abolished or at least postponed, partly because of the opposition of suburban municipalities, but also partly because of strong opposition of the urban population. The proposals to install city provinces in the regions of Amsterdam and Rotterdam were subject to referenda in 1995. In both cases, the city province was rejected by more than 90% of the voters (Veer, 1997). Under these circumstances, it is understandable that new attempts for alternative regional policy arrangements are hardly discussed now. Instead, however, several urban regions formed voluntary cooperation arrangements to try to deal better with societal and political issues that go beyond municipal borders.

6.5.2 Physical planning, housing policy and regional economic policy

As mentioned in Chapter 5, Newman & Thornley (1996) categorise the Netherlands into the group of 'Napoleonic countries'. In general, the Napoleonic countries have a systematic planning approach based on a national law and a clear hierarchy in the division of planning tasks between the national, regional and local level. However, there is considerable difference between the countries of the Napoleonic group in the way this system is worked out in detail.

In the Netherlands, the national government is very influential in the physical planning system. It sets up reports on physical planning regularly. Especially since the 1970s, these reports contain very concrete directions about locations and amounts of houses to be built. Building outside these locations is generally severely restricted, at least on paper. However, the enforcement of physical planning policy in reality tends to be much less strict, as will be illustrated in the evaluation of planning success later in this chapter. Apart from the dominant national government, also local government has a powerful position in Dutch physical planning. This is a logical consequence of the overall design of the Dutch welfare state as a 'decentralised unitary state' (see section 6.5.1). In-between are the provinces that have planning on a regional level as their responsibility. However, compared to the national and local level, the position of the provinces in spatial planning is quite weak. Local plans have to be approved of by the provinces, and regional plans have to fit into the national planning principles (even though regional plans do not have to
be formally approved of by the national government). The Dutch planning authorities have some powerful instruments at their disposal that help to reach the ambitious planning goals considerably. Probably the most powerful tool is the dominant role of Dutch municipalities on the land market. Land is explicitly treated as a public good in the Netherlands (Dransfeld & Voss, 1993). The municipalities release land for development according to the preferred land uses they laid down in their local development plan.

Dutch physical planning has traditionally always been strongly intertwined with housing policy and regional economic policy. Especially the interconnectedness of physical planning and housing throughout the 20th century has been striking. Attempts of the Dutch government to 'regulate' urbanisation through housing already have quite a long tradition. The first attempts can be placed at the end of the 19th century. Industrialisation and a high natural growth rate had caused a rapid growth of urban population. This called for a huge effort: a large amount of new houses had to be constructed in a short period. The main concern of the real estate developers was maximizing their profit, while city governments were mainly aiming at providing as many new houses as possible. As a logical result, the attractiveness of the living environment and sanitary conditions of the resulting neighbourhoods were, generally speaking, very poor. Around the turn of the century, government and influential groups in society became convinced that better living conditions were necessary. The first official document resulting from this idea was the Housing Act in 1901. This document was meant in the first place to guarantee minimum quality of housing, but can also be seen as the first attempt to achieve control over urban growth (Faludi & Van der Valk, 1990).

In the period until World War II, the influence of municipal government on urban growth increased. Housing projects were more and more planned, on a municipal or sometimes even on a regional level. In 1924, at the annual conference of the International Garden Cities and Town Planning Association in Amsterdam, the idea of national planning aiming to preserve open spaces was launched. Some decades later, this would lead to the Randstad / Green Heart concept (Wusten & Faludi, 1992). The development towards a more controlled urban growth reached its transitory peak in 1934 with the Extension Plan of Amsterdam, which would dictate further development of Amsterdam in the next three decades.

After World War II, the main governmental concern was the recovery of the national economy and society. One of the biggest problems in this respect was housing. War damage and restrictions to building during the war had caused an immense housing shortage. This was increased by the rapid population growth in the post-war years. Traditionally, most economic growth was taking place in the western part of the Netherlands, with a concentration in the Randstad area. This area attracted huge flows of migrants from the rest of the country. Planners and politicians feared an overcrowding of the Randstad, contrasted with an almost empty periphery. This fear, which was expressed in the so-called 'doom scenario', could be visualised as "(...) an ocean of houses reaching from north to south and east to west" (Wusten & Faludi, 1992, p.22). The 'doom scenario', combined with an anti-urban bias, dominated the first attempts to physical planning on a national scale at the end of the 1950s. The main issue in the 'First Report on Spatial Planning' (1960) was therefore how to reach a more equal distribution of population and economic development throughout the country.
In the 'Second Report on Spatial Planning' (Ministerie VRO, 1966) the fear of an overcrowded Randstad and the anti-urban bias were still present. Another concern of national planners was sub-urbanisation. The concept of 'concentrated deconcentration' was launched to prevent two unwanted developments of the settlement system: uncontrolled suburban growth and further growth of the large cities. Especially the 'Green Heart', the agricultural area between the urban regions of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague (Figure 6.4), was to be kept 'empty'. The planners tried to promote a more equal spread of population and economic growth over the country, to release the pressure on the Randstad. Economic and population growth were directed 'outwards' to the outskirts of the Randstad and to other parts of the country. Government offices were replaced to the North, East and South and relocation of companies to these areas was encouraged by financial incentives. In this phase of the evolution of Dutch physical planning, regional economic development of relatively backward parts of the country also played a major role. The severe economic problems of areas that were hit by the deterioration of their traditional industrial base, like Southern Limburg (coal mining) and Twente (textile industry), were yet another incentive to stimulate economic growth outside the Randstad.

Figure 6.4 The Green Heart (south of Aalsmeer)

In the 'Third Report on Spatial Planning' (Ministerie VRO, 1974; Ministerie VRO, 1976), the policy of concentrated deconcentration was still the leading concept. To realise the ideas already put forward in the 'Second Report', 16 'growth centres' were appointed. The planners no longer tried to reach a more even distribution of population and economic growth across the country. Nevertheless, there was still a fear that the large cities might become too large and unliveable. Therefore a large part of the housing demand of inhabitants of the large cities was provided in the growth centres, which were almost all situated within or at the outskirts of the Randstad.

In the 1980s, the concept of concentrated deconcentration was left behind. The concept was quite successful in resolving the housing shortage of the Randstad, but not all goals of the policy were reached. While a huge group of households was moving to the growth centres, companies were not following them. Therefore, many of the new inhabitants of the growth centres kept working in or near the large cities and increased their commuting
distance. This commuting generally occurred by car, which caused an increase of traffic jams around the large cities. This was one of the most important reasons to reconsider the policy of concentrated deconcentration (see section 6.6.1 and 6.6.4 for a more detailed discussion). Also, the municipalities of the largest cities wanted to stop the outward flow of middle-income households because they feared the cities would eventually become concentration areas of lower income households. The city municipalities considered a mix of different income groups a more desirable situation and wanted to build for middle- and higher income groups within and near the cities. National physical planning was redirected to building 'compact cities' (Ministerie VROM, 1983; Ministerie VROM, 1990). Housing and economic developments were to be concentrated within and around large and medium-sized cities. This was a remarkable shift in the planning doctrine: the compact city, which in the Second Report was considered an impossible and unwanted phenomenon, was turned into the ultimate planning goal in the Fourth Report. The Randstad was also placed in a more positive light: it was recognised as 'the motor of the Dutch economy'. By trying to divert economic growth away from the Randstad, the Dutch economy as a whole might have been damaged. The peripheral regions were not completely 'out of sight', but their economic development was no longer subsidised by the national government.

In the following section, the above brief general overview of the development of Dutch physical planning policy will be analysed in more detail. Most attention will be paid to the efforts to influence population distribution. The analysis will focus on the period between 1970 and 1995. The main aim of this analysis is to evaluate the success of Dutch population distribution policy. 'Success' in this case is measured through the degree to which the actual development of Dutch population distribution developed in accordance with the development planned by the national government.

6.6 Between planning visions and urbanisation reality: an evaluation of the results of national population distribution policy in Central Netherlands

A general problem with the evaluation of government policy is that the eventual policy targets cannot be quantified. This problem certainly applies to Dutch national population distribution policy as described in the national reports of physical planning since the 1960s (Nozeman, 1986). The area with the most consistent and concrete population distribution policy since the 1960s is the Randstad and its 'overspill areas' in the provinces of Flevoland, North-Holland, North-Brabant and Gelderland. The analysis presented in the following sections will be focused on this area, which will be referred to as 'Central Netherlands' (see Appendix Map 2).

Section 6.6.1 will briefly summarise the main targets of national population distribution policy for Central Netherlands throughout the period from 1970 until 1995. In section 6.6.2, the actual population development in the municipality types targeted in the national population distribution policy will be analysed. This results in a confrontation between policy targets and actual developments in section 6.6.3. An additional evaluation of national population distribution policy, based on the typology of policy situations presented in section 5.2 (Figure 5.2), is discussed in section 6.6.4.

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6.6.1 Main targets of national population distribution policy in Central Netherlands

In the period between 1970 and 1995, the historical development of national population distribution policy in the area of Central Netherlands could roughly be divided into periods of five years. In each of these five-year periods, one policy report dominated national urbanisation policy in general, and national population distribution policy in particular. In the period 1970-1975, the most influential document was the Second Report on Spatial Planning, published in 1966. In this report, the concept of 'concentrated deconcentration' was introduced as the central concept for population distribution policy. Concentrated deconcentration served two main policy targets. On the one hand it was meant to prevent a too large loss of green and open space to urban sprawl. On the other hand, the concept presented an alternative to large-scale growth of the large and mediumsized cities. To realise the concept of concentrated deconcentration, the national government selected a number of 'overspill centres' around the large cities Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. These overspill centres, meant to provide housing for a large part of the out-migrants of the large cities, were mostly located in the areas directly north, northeast and south of the Randstad. These locations were chosen to prevent the 'Green Heart', the relatively sparsely populated area enclosed by the Randstad ring of cities, from losing its agricultural character. At the same time, the large and medium-sized cities of the Randstad itself were limited in their growth opportunities. Buffer zones were installed between the Randstad cities to prevent them from growing into one urbanised whole. In addition, the Second Report mentions the major cities of North Brabant and the region of 'Central Gelderland' (with the cities Arnhem, Nijmegen and Ede) as potential overspill locations for the out-migration of the large Randstad cities. The Randstad and these urban areas were separated from each other through a 'central open space', in which population growth was supposed to be limited. Some central nodes were selected to cater for the population growth in this central open space (Ministerie VRO, 1966).

In 1974, the 'Orientation Report' (Oriënteringsnota) appeared. This report marked the start of a period of ten years in which the Third Report on Spatial Planning was worked out. The Orientation Report set the stage for national urbanisation policy in the period 1975-1980. Many of the points of departure from the Second Report remained untouched. The main function of the Orientation Report was to announce concrete measures to realise the development of the overspill centres. The name of these centres was changed into 'growth centres' and the number of houses to be built in each of the growth centres was determined. The Dutch national government provided generous subsidies to encourage the housing production in the growth centres. Herewith, the policy of concentrated deconcentration was continued, although the focus within this concept shifted from deconcentration to concentration. The 'central open space' and the central nodes within this area remained in place, as well as the 'overspill regions' in which the growth centres were located (Ministerie VRO, 1974). In addition, the 'growth cities' were introduced. These were medium-sized cities in the intermediary and peripheral parts of the Netherlands that had to cater for the housing need of their own urban regions (Cammen & De Klerk, 1996). These 'growth cities' have continued their functions as regional centres of population growth in the 1980s and 1990s.

The 'Urbanisation Report', the second part of the Third Report on Spatial Planning, was published in stages between 1976 and 1979. This Urbanisation Report was the leading document in national population distribution policy for the period 1980-1985. Once more,
the policy of concentrated deconcentration was continued. However, for a part of the growth centres, an end date of their growth task was indicated. After 1985, these growth centres would no longer function as concentration locations for the overspill of the Randstad. This category of growth centres mainly existed of locations relatively far from the large cities (Nozeman, 1986). The end of their growth task followed from a redefinition of urban regions. The urban regions of the Urbanisation Report were considerably smaller than the urban regions used in earlier documents during the concentrated deconcentration era, resulting in some growth centres being located outside the newly defined urban regions. Another important policy change was that the ambition to stimulate population growth in the overspill regions at the expense of the Randstad was abandoned. Starting from the Urbanisation Report, Dutch national urbanisation policy aimed at a balance between in- and out-migration on the sub-national level (the regions West-, North-, East- and South-Netherlands).

In 1983, the ‘Structure Outline Urban Areas’ (Structuurschets Stedelijke Gebieden) appeared, a document that dominated national population distribution policy in the period 1985-1990. This report was an update of the Urbanisation Report. Although the Structure Outline took over most of the principles and policy ambitions of the Urbanisation Report, there were some marked changes as well. The Structure Outline announced a change of the central concept in urbanisation policy: from concentrated deconcentration to the ‘compact city’. Remarkably, this change of concept had no immediate consequences for the growth centres. Those locations that kept their growth task after 1985 according to the Urbanisation Report were also maintained in the Structure Outline. Meanwhile, the central nodes within the central open space disappeared as a separate municipality category in national population distribution policy. These central nodes were no longer seen as providers of housing for the population growth of the central open space (Ministerie VROM, 1983). This implied that the complete central open space was now treated as an area in which population growth should be restricted.

In 1988, the time was ripe for a new national report on physical planning, the Fourth Report. In a further elaboration of this document, known as the Fourth Report Extra (VINEX), the compact city concept was worked out into concrete measures (Ministerie VROM, 1990). More explicit than ever, the new policy aimed at limiting sub-urbanisation and urban sprawl. The national government once more selected locations where new housing should be concentrated. This time, however, the building locations were inside of, or directly bordering the existing built-up areas of large cities and regional centres. After decades of growth limitations, the Randstad was now encouraged in its population growth. Although the central open space was no longer mentioned as one entity, the largest part of this area was still targeted by a policy of restrictions to population growth. The Fourth Report Extra determined national physical planning policy in general, and population distribution policy in particular, in the period 1990-1995 as well as in the years immediately afterwards.

On the basis of the above brief summary of the main goals of national population distribution policy affecting Central Netherlands, and starting from the assumption that this national policy is indeed effective, scores could be given for the expected population development in municipality categories. Table 6.5 lists the scores for each municipality category mentioned in at least one of the reports described above. Three scores are possible: ‘growth well above the national average’, ‘growth close to the national average’
and 'growth well below the national average'. These scores are based on statements made in the above-mentioned reports per five-year period.

**Table 6.5** Expected scores on index of population growth based on Dutch national population distribution policy, for municipality categories in Central Netherlands.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural municipalities</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suburban municipalities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large cities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other centres of urban regions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth centres, end of growth task in 1985</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth centres, continued growth task after 1985</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth cities</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central open space</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central nodes in central open space</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overspill areas Randstad</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expected score on population growth index (in which national growth average = 100)
- growth well under national average (index score < 80)
0  growth around national average (80 < index score < 120)
+  growth well above national average (index score > 120)
*** no prediction possible (not part of national policy in this period)

6.6.2 *Dynamics of population distribution in Central Netherlands, 1970-1995*

In Table 6.6, the actual population development of the municipality categories targeted by the national population distribution policy for the region of Central Netherlands is presented. For each five-year period, population growth figures are indexed according to the population growth of the Netherlands as a whole.

Between 1970 and 1975, the population development of a number of municipality categories deviated remarkably from the national growth trend. The rural and suburban municipalities of Central Netherlands experienced a substantial growth. This was a continuation of a trend that had already started in the 1960s. Another trend that had been initiated in the 1960s, the rapid loss of inhabitants in the large cities, was maintained in the early 1970s. The growth centres already demonstrated a growth well above the national average, although the instruments to stimulate population growth through housing production were not in place yet. Other fast-growing categories were the municipalities in the central open space (not only the central nodes within this area) and the areas indicated as 'overspill regions' of the Randstad in the Second Report.

In the second half of the 1970s, the population growth of rural municipalities diminished considerably, but remained well above the national growth average. The growth cities, introduced in the Orientation report as centres of regional population growth, had to cope with a slight population loss instead. The large cities kept losing inhabitants, but the
regional centres showed a modest recovery. The population growth of the growth centres increased its pace. Population growth in the central open space clearly declined, while the central nodes within this open space maintained a stable development. The increase of population in the overspill areas continued, though at a much less spectacular level than in the early 1970s.

Between 1980 and 1985, the population increase of the growth centres reached a stunning peak. The large cities kept losing considerable amounts of inhabitants. The other categories all moved towards the national growth average.

Table 6.6
Index of population growth per municipality category, 1970-1995, Central Netherlands
(Population growth Netherlands = 100)

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<tr>
<td>Rural municipalities</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban municipalities</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>Large cities</td>
<td>-200</td>
<td>-170</td>
<td>-160</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other centres of urban regions</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>-40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth centres, end of growth task in 1985</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1220</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth centres, continued growth task after 1985</td>
<td>790</td>
<td>1140</td>
<td>1610</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth cities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central open space</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central nodes in central open space</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overspill areas Randstad</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From 1985 on, the growth figures of the growth centres dropped fast. This was most of all true for the growth centres that lost their task in 1985. This category even experienced a growth under the national average after 1990. The large cities enjoyed a growing population for the first time since the early 1960s. The smaller regional centres also fastened their population growth after 1985. The same was true for the central nodes in the central open space. In this period, the population increase of the growth cities was finally realised. Meanwhile, the growth figures of the rural and suburban municipalities hardly diverged from the national average.

6.6.3 Population distribution development as planned?

To what extent, then, could the Dutch national population distribution policy be considered successful? As discussed before in Chapter 5, there are various ways to answer this question. One of the available evaluation methods of planning success is based on the criterion of goal conformity. This criterion refers to the degree to which a certain project managed to reach its initial goals. In the recent past, most notably the Dutch policy of concentrated deconcentration has been judged on its goal conformity. More specifically, this analysis focused on the growth centres. The conclusions of this evaluation were very positive: the government succeeded to develop growth centres at the intended locations and close to half a million out-migrants of the large cities moved to these growth centres (Faludi & Van der Valk, 1990; Faludi, 1994).
Nevertheless, the question remains if the entire package of measures within the framework of Dutch national population distribution policy since the 1960s has been successful. Will the conclusions be just as positive if the population distribution policy as a whole, and not just the growth centres, are evaluated with the criterion of goal conformity? Such an analysis is presented for the region Central-Netherlands in Table 6.7. For each five-year period between 1970 and 1995, the population development of the before-mentioned municipality categories has been confronted with the policy goals for this category. This leads to a judgement about the degree to which the actual population development has matched the policy goals. In the table, a ‘+’ indicates that the population development of a municipality category has been ‘as planned’, while a ‘-’ means that this was not the case. As this table reveals, the development of the growth centres between 1970 and 1985 was indeed a convincing success of Dutch national population distribution policy. After 1985, the category of growth centres that was supposed to end their growth task experienced a continuation of fast growth, but in the early 1990s the end of their growth task was apparently implemented successfully after all.

The periods 1970-1975 and 1975-1980 demonstrate the highest degree of goal conformity. In these periods, the central nodes in the central open space grew relatively fast, as projected in the relevant national planning reports (the Second Report on Physical Planning and the Orientation Report). The intended rapid population increase of the overspill areas of the Randstad was also realised. The aim to limit population growth in the large cities and smaller centres of urban regions seem to match with the loss of population in these cities. However, it is questionable whether the national government really wanted such a huge loss of inhabitants for the cities, most of all for the large cities.

Table 6.7
Goal conformity of national population distribution policy in Central Netherlands, 1970-1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural municipalities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban municipalities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large cities</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other centres of urban regions</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth centres, end of growth task in 1985</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth centres, continued growth task after 1985</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth cities</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central open space</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central nodes in central open space</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overspill areas Randstad</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CBS, De bevolking der Nederlandse gemeenten, 1970-1995; Table 6.5; Table 6.6.

+ = population growth of municipality category 'as planned'
- = population growth of municipality category not 'as planned'
*** = no score (not part of national policy in this period)
as took place in the 1970s. Elements of the national population distribution policy that were not successful were the growth restrictions on the countryside and in the suburbs in general, and the stringent growth restrictions in the central open space in particular. Despite the intention to limit population growth in 'open' agricultural and natural areas as much as possible, the central open space was one of the fastest growing parts of Central Netherlands.

In the 1980s, the national government seemed better able to curb the population growth of the countryside, the suburbs and the central open space. Still, the population of the central open space grew considerably faster than Dutch population as a whole, which means the criterion of goal conformity was still not met. Except for the earlier mentioned success in the realisation of the growth centres, the results of national population distribution policy were not convincing. The switch from concentrated deconcentration policy to compact city policy, as announced in the Structure Outline in 1983, could not yet be made during the 1980s. The growth centres with finished growth task indeed slowed down their pace of population increase, but at the same time, the intended recovery of urban population growth was a slow, hesitant process and happened at a too modest level. The growth cities, destined to cater for most of the population growth in their regions, only reached an above-average population growth in the second half of the 1980s, while they should have reached this goal already in the late 1970s. Furthermore, the central nodes in the central open space, paradoxically, experienced a faster growth after 1985 even though they were skipped as growth concentration locations in the Structure Outline in 1983.

In the period 1990-1995, the national planners finally had a set of instruments at their disposal to realise compact city policy 'on the ground'. The main instrument to realise the population distribution goals of compact city policy were the so-called ‘VINEX-locations’, large-scale new housing areas within and bordering to existing built-up areas of large and medium-sized cities. Nevertheless, population growth in the large cities and the other centres of urban regions was still lagging behind national population growth. Although urban population growth clearly recovered further, this is not enough to speak of 'goal conformity' because the cities were supposed to grow well above the national average. Meanwhile, the population growth in the central open space diminished further, but since it stayed well above the national average instead of well below (as intended in the Fourth Report Extra), this area still did not meet the criterion of goal conformity either. Although it is tricky to simply sum up the partial results of population distribution policy since the targets for each municipality category had a different level of priority for the national planners, it might still give an indication of the 'overall’ result of population distribution policy. As can be seen from Table 6.7, the 1970s (and most notably the period from 1975 to 1980) appear as the most successful period of Dutch national population distribution policy in the region Central Netherlands. In this period the number of 'plusses' clearly exceeds the number of 'minuses', leading to a positive overall score. During the 1980s and early 1990s, the number of 'minuses' grows, eventually leading to a negative overall score.
6.6.4 National population distribution policy: between wish and reality

In defense of the most recent phase of national population distribution policy that did not turn out very successful in the analysis above, planners could easily argue that the realisation of the compact city policy really got started only after 1995. Several years of negotiations and participation procedures were needed before the actual housing production at the VINEX-locations could commence. The real effect of the new housing areas of the VINEX-locations could therefore only be witnessed after 1995, and probably even in the first years after 1995 the visible effect would only be very modest. In other words, it is too early to judge upon the eventual degree of success of the compact city policy. This situation could be compared with the realisation of the growth centres that was already announced in the Second Report in 1966, but did not become reality before the late 1970s.

Does this mean that there is a good chance that the compact city policy will work out on the longer term? This is very doubtful. Apart from the start-up problems of the building activities on the VINEX-locations, the compact city policy of the Fourth Report extra also suffers from a considerable divergence between the planners’ ambitions and feasibility of their plans. Contrary to this, ambitions and feasibility of the policy of concentrated deconcentration matched considerably better. This appears from an analysis using the typology of physical planning policy situations introduced in section 5.2 (Figure 5.2). In the following, the policies of concentrated deconcentration and the compact city are evaluated on the two dimensions of this typology:

- which party is expected to invest in the realisation of the goals of the urbanisation policy (the government or the market);
- which interests are mainly served through the urbanisation policy: individual or general (societal) interests.

Figure 6.5
Typical growth centre neighbourhood (Hoofddorp)
The policy of *concentrated deconcentration* was introduced when the Netherlands experienced a huge population growth and suffered from a large and rapidly increasing housing shortage. In the early 1960s, it was expected that the Netherlands would have 20 million inhabitants by the year 2000. This meant an increase with about 8 million inhabitants in less than 40 years. Another concern of the national government was the high population density in the western part of the country. Meanwhile, especially in the West, housing demand became more and more suburban of character. Housing production outside of the cities would fit the population’s wishes the most, but it was feared that this would contribute to a further acceleration of sub-urbanisation and a huge loss of open areas. If the national planners would not intervene, a dispersed suburban growth could easily lead to all urban areas in the West growing together. An amorphous megalopolis would be the end result (Engelsdorp Gastelaars & Ostendorf 1991).

This perspective functioned as a ‘doom scenario’ and formed the setting of the policy of concentrated deconcentration. The national government did not want further concentration, because this would be contrary to popular housing demands, but at the same time, urban sprawl was not an attractive foresight either. The logical compromise was a concentrated form of deconcentration. The plan was to stop urban growth, prevent urban sprawl and develop a number of new cities that could function economically independent from the large cities. The accompanying goal was to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants and most of all their housing situation, in the (large) cities as well as the new towns (Ostendorf, 2001). The production of suburban living environments in the new cities, often one-family houses with a garden and for a large part in the social rented sector, largely met the supposed housing demand of Dutch family households. Figure 6.5 gives an impression of a typical growth centre living environment: multifamily, low-rise row housing in a green setting. The new suburban neighbourhoods in the new cities were especially attractive for families from the lower and lower middle class that could not afford owner-occupied suburban housing outside the cities. It was expected that once the new migrants had settled, companies would follow them automatically so that enough employment would be provided.

In the 1970s, the policy of concentrated deconcentration did not work out as planned yet. As shown earlier in Table 6.1 and 6.5, sub-urbanisation peaked in the early 1970s and population growth outside the growth centres was, contrary to the plans, considerable. Housing production in the growth centres started only hesitantly, while building activity in other (suburban) locations was at a high level. After 1973, however, the first oil crisis resulted in a clear decrease of housing production. The housing market came under increasing pressure, leading to a rapidly rising price level. In 1979, under the circumstances of the second oil crisis, the Dutch housing market collapsed. The persisting economic uncertainty led to a stagnation of the owner-occupied housing market. This was the ideal moment for the government to give an extra impetus to the production of social housing, most of all in the growth centres. In 1980, the housing production in the growth centres gained momentum and in 1981 en 1982, the combined housing production of all growth centres reached its peak (JOBSE et al, 1991).

The growth centres could be developed ‘against the grain’ because of the powerful role of the national government. The national planners did not only have the instrument of social housing, but also generous subsidies for the owner-occupied sector at their disposal. Especially on locations where land was government-owned, like in Flevoland, this made a large-scale production of affordable houses for a sizable share of the population possible.
The degree of goal conformity of the policy of concentrated deconcentration became very high in the early 1980s. The goals with respect to the amounts of houses to be built in the growth centres were easily reached. Faludi (1994, p. 493) was clearly impressed with this result: "most (new towns) exceeded their targets, and there are now more than half a million witnesses to the success of this policy, i.e., those people who have migrated to where successive government documents said they ought to go".

Meanwhile, however, the Dutch government was not able to improve the employment opportunities of the growth centres. Most companies were not interested in moving towards the growth centres that, in their perspective, were situated rather peripheral and the government did not have the instruments to force or persuade them. The effects were an enormous increase of commuter traffic across relatively large distances (from the growth centres to the large cities and their urban regions), worsening congestion around the large cities and a high level of unemployment in the growth centres. Furthermore, the large cities started to oppose to the policy of concentrated deconcentration because of the negative effects of their decreasing number of inhabitants. The feelings of dissatisfaction of the large cities were encouraged further because the economic crisis of the 1970s hit the large cities the hardest, while the slight recovery in the mid-1980s benefited mainly the medium-sized cities and large suburban municipalities. This set the stage for a new policy in which the compact city became the central urbanisation concept.

Summarising the above, the policy of concentrated deconcentration could be interpreted as a 'trade-off': the 'doom scenario' of urban sprawl had to be prevented without neglecting the popular housing demands. Considerations of desirability and feasibility balanced each other out, even though the accent was probably mostly on the aspect of feasibility through the production of large amounts of subsidised housing in the growth centres. Aspects of desirability dominated the employment policy for the growth centres. Companies were supposed to follow the migrating households to the growth centres, but this did not happen because most companies did not see any benefits in such a move. Despite the failure of this part of the policy, the role of the government in the period of concentrated deconcentration was particularly strong: the policy was largely 'plan-conform' as well as 'goal-conform'.

Nevertheless, the image of growth centres as dormitory towns, growing commuter traffic and car use, environmental problems and increasing international competition between cities resulted in the compact city policy. The national population distribution policy now mostly aimed at the development of new housing and employment locations in and close to the cities. The main policy ambition changed into revitalisation of the cities. Compact urbanisation ought to prevent a new 'doom scenario': ever increasing traffic jams resulting in the large cities being virtually unreachable. The plan was to create compact cities; this was to be realised by locating new housing and employment locations in the cities, or as close to them as possible. Suburban housing areas and the development of office locations along highways did not fit into the compact city policy. The accompanying goals were to reduce individual mobility, or at least stop its growth, to protect the environment and to enhance prosperity (Ostendorf, 2001).

According to the national compact city targets set out in the Fourth Report Extra (Ministerie VROM, 1990), a large share of new housing construction should be realised in urban regions. Within those urban regions, two major types of concentration locations were highlighted; within the existing built environment of the cities, and just outside the
existing built environment of the cities. The latter type became popularly known as ‘VINEX-location’. The policy of the Fourth Report Extra (abbreviated in Dutch as VINEX) meant a break with the preceding policy in a number of respects. An important change was the more prominent position of the market sector in housing production. The targets that at least 70% of the new houses in the locations outside the cities, and at least 50% of the houses in the locations inside the cities, were supposed to be owner-occupied or private rental is exemplary of this. Implicitly, the more prominent role of the market sector also meant that the importance of housing policy as a regulating factor in Dutch physical planning policy diminished.

Apart from the reducing share of social housing, also a number of subsidies were abolished that were installed mainly to encourage the development of the growth centres. The reduction of funds for the growth centres seems a positive and logical step to encourage a more compact urban development. However, this decision was not followed by a comparable financial impetus for new housing locations in the compact city. The market sector was largely left to realise the targets for housing production as well as the attraction of new employment. This has to happen within a tight framework of conditions put forward by the national planners. Opportunities to build large residences are scarce and space around the houses is very limited. Housing density is fairly high, the amount of space around the houses is limited and plot sizes are quite small. Apart from the housing density, the site of the VINEX-locations outside the cities contributes to its rather uniform character. These locations are neither really urban nor really suburban. Furthermore, most of them are large extensions and this fact only already means that the new housing areas run a high risk of becoming monotonous. Figure 6.6 shows a typical example of an extension area built within the VINEX policy framework. Even though the areas themselves generally show a considerable variety in architecture and housing type (detached, semi-detached and low-rise apartment blocks), the areas seem to look almost identical throughout the country. Moreover, most VINEX areas are almost exclusively housing areas, which threatens to increase their monotonous character.

**Figure 6.6**
Large-scale VINEX extension area under construction (Hoofddorp)
The VINEX-locations that were planned to provide housing for suburban oriented households seem insufficiently able to meet their demands. An opinion frequently heard in public media, but increasingly also in the academic debate (Ostendorf, 1999; Dieleman, 1999; Aalst et al. 1998) is that the houses offered in the VINEX-locations are generally speaking too small, to uniform and built in a too high density to attract the suburban oriented households. This even seems to hold true for those VINEX locations that are offered at more suburban locations within the urban regions. Figure 6.7 shows a typical example. In this neighbourhood, a part of the inhabitants could choose their own housing design, resulting in a rich variety in architecture. However, apparently the available plots were too small to allow for both a spacious dwelling and a spacious garden. Most inhabitants chose for large dwellings at the expense of garden space. It remains to be seen how long they will be satisfied with the end result. At the same time, the supply offered on VINEX-locations outside the cities does not meet the demand for urban living environments either: for this, most of the locations are too far from the central city and its city-specific services. On the contrary, the inner-city projects that are part of the VINEX program meet the high demand for inner city living very well. Projects like the Eastern Harbour Islands in Amsterdam and the ‘Kop van Zuid’ in Rotterdam offer high-quality, spacious apartments in high densities at a stone’s throw from the city centre. Initial fears that the (for Dutch standards) unusually high densities in these inner-city projects would scare potential buyers away were so far not justified. The owner-occupied and luxury rental apartments on the inner city sites were an instant success and the demand for this type of urban living environments appeared to be much higher than could be provided for. Still, looking at the overall preliminary results of compact city policy, one could not speak of a ‘trade-off’. The doom scenario of total congestion should be avoided by this policy, but the popular housing demands were not met sufficiently. The compact city, that was judged as not feasible in the era of concentrated deconcentration, was supposed to be realised after all in the 1990s. The market sector had to play the leading part in this policy, against its own preferences. In the compact city policy, therefore, considerations of desirability and feasibility were not balanced. The desirability of compact city development dominates the scene at the expense of feasibility considerations. The role of the national government in compact city policy was herewith quite weak.

Figure 6.7
Smaller-scale VINEX extension area in a suburban setting (Castricum)
6.7 Current and future developments in national population distribution policy: from compact city to urban network?

The development of national urbanisation policy in the Netherlands in the second half of the 1990s could be summarised with the terms ‘confusion’ and ‘lack of orientation’. There seemed to be only one broad consensus, namely that the compact city policy no longer matched the demands of the population and the national economy and that a new direction in national physical planning policy as a whole, and urbanisation policy in particular, was needed. The growing dissatisfaction about the direction taken in the Fourth Report Extra led to the announcement of a new national plan, the Fifth Report, in 1997. The negotiation and plan-making process towards this Fifth Report has been a long one and along the way, the eventual publication of the Fifth Report was more than once postponed. Finally, the policy document appeared in January 2001, but it was already heavily contested before it was even published.

The publication of the ‘New Map of the Netherlands’ in 1997 (Modder et al., 1997) more or less kicked off the debate. This ‘New Map’ was a visualisation of how the Dutch built environment would change when all building projects initiated within the framework of the Fourth Report Extra would be completed. The overall image presented was a country that rapidly lost its open space to new housing developments, traffic infrastructure and commercial estates. Surprisingly, this map provoked several shocked reactions although it was only showing locations of developments that were already determined by the national and local governments years ago. Apparently, not many people at that time realised what the overall effect of all building projects initiated with the Fourth Report Extra would be (Bontje, 1997).

The Department of Housing, Physical Planning and Environment organised a countrywide debate on the future spatial development of the Netherlands in 1997 as well. Under the header ‘Netherlands 2030’, scenarios were constructed of possible future designs of the Netherlands. Several experts from academic and private research institutes as well as lobby organisations could send in their future vision. Regional conferences were organised where all interested persons and organisations could give their opinion on the desirability and feasibility of the concepts proposed by these experts, the National Planning Agency and other departments of the national government. The debate resulted in four ‘perspectives’ for the possible future spatial development of the Netherlands:

- ‘Land of Cities’, a perspective based on the principles of strong concentration of urban development and keeping the countryside as open as possible;
- ‘Land of Flows’, a perspective that views water and traffic flows as the basic ordering principle in physical planning, aiming at a concentration of ‘high-dynamic’ functions along traffic axes and a connection of ‘low-dynamic’ functions to water flows;
- ‘Landscape Park’, a perspective that tries to weave city and landscape together to one integrated whole;
- ‘Palette’, a perspective in which freedom of location choice for citizens and companies stands central, along with a decentralisation of arranging competing claims for space to the regional and local level.

(Ministerie VROM, 1997)

The first reactions to the outcome of the ‘Netherlands 2030’-debate from the national planners indicated a strong preference for the perspective Land of Cities. This meant in
fact a continuation of the compact city policy. However, soon afterwards this opinion shifted in the direction of the Land of Flows – scenario. This happened under the influence of a strong lobby of the Ministries of Economic Affairs and Transport, business representatives and also some academic planners and economists. Both the Department of Economic Affairs (Ministerie EZ, 1997) and the Department of Transport (Ministerie V&W, 1995) published their own vision on the future spatial development of the Netherlands before the Netherlands 2030-debate had even started. The spatial vision of the Department of Transport supported the compact city policy, but wanted to extend this spatial concept to include locations with good connectivity along public transport axes between urban regions. The vision of Economic Affairs launched a spatial concept that was new in the Dutch planning debate: the corridor concept. In the vision of Economic Affairs, this corridor concept involved concentrated urban development along transportation axes. This version of corridor development could have two spatial forms: concentration of business locations at intersections of road, rail and/or water transport, or a more or less continuous built-up area along highways and/or railroads between urban regions.

In 1998, two advisory councils of the Dutch national government provided new incentives for the debate. The Council for Housing, Planning and Environment (VROM-Raad, 1998) supported the National Planning Agency in its preference for the Land of Cities perspective. The choice for a future urbanisation policy based on the Land of Cities perspective would do most justice to the conservation of what the Council described as ‘collective values’: cities with an attractive living environment and a historically grown identity on the one hand, and characteristic cultural landscapes on the other hand. Nevertheless, in the view of the Council, a few elements should be added to the Land of Cities approach. The advice contained a plea for a controlled development of corridors between the urban regions and between parts of the country. The combination of compact city development and controlled corridor development was baptised ‘Land of Cities Plus’. Other proposed changes included the trade nationwide generic concepts for region-specific ones and to pay more attention to the position of (parts of) the Netherlands in the wider geographic context of Northwest-Europe. The advice of the Council also marked the first mentioning in official policy documents of the urban field concept (see Chapter 3 and 8 for a more detailed discussion).

The other influential advisory report came from the Scientific Council of Government Policy (WRR, 1998). The central concern of this report was to what extent the Dutch approach of strategic planning was fit to meet the demands of the emergence of the ‘network society’ (see Chapter 2). In the view of the WRR, not only new spatial concepts were needed in future physical planning policy, but also a new approach of institutional arrangements. The council argued for the development of a ‘spatial development policy’, characterised by a more selective influence of the national government, a clearer coupling of spatial plans with spatial investments, and an explicit formulation of political goals combined with the introduction of new independent controlling agencies. The spatial development policy would consist of a strategic vision of the national government, the so called ‘national main spatial structure’, which should offer the framework within which more detailed plans on a regional level should be developed. The size of these regions could then vary, depending on the planning subject. Temporary ‘ad hoc’ co-operations between regional and local organisations could be established to develop these more detailed plans. In this advice also, a clear preference was given to region-specific concepts for future urbanisation policy instead of the traditional national generic ones.
The advisory studies of the VROM-Raad and the WRR formed the basis of the ‘Startnota Ruimtelijke Ordening’ (Ministerie VROM, 1999a), the document in which the National Planning Agency put forward its principles of the future spatial development of the Netherlands until 2030. Therefore, the spatial development perspective chosen as the core of the report was ‘Land of Cities Plus’. In addition, a new urbanisation concept was launched as the successor of the compact city: the network city. Six regions, three in the Randstad and three in other parts of the Netherlands, were described as ‘network cities’ (see Chapter 3 and 8 for a more detailed discussion).

The ‘Startnota’ was initially meant to give an indication of what could be expected in the Fifth Report on Physical Planning. However, the reactions on the ‘Startnota’ from academic planners, planning practitioners on the regional and local level and members of the parliament were generally so negative, that the importance of the ‘Startnota’ rapidly diminished. The negative reactions were especially aimed at the network city concept. There was considerable confusion about the extent to which the network city should be seen as a functionally integrated unit. Another item of debate was the combination of continued compact city development and the introduction of corridor development. Many feared that the corridors, controlled or not, would seriously undermine the economic development of cities and their surrounding regions. This led the Minister of Physical Planning to exclude the corridor concept from the further plan-making process, as he indicated in a speech in early 2000. Instead, economic activities were to be concentrated around nodal points of infrastructure (Pronk, 2000).

Later in 1999, the National Planning Agency and the Minister of Physical Planning initiated a new round of debates. A regular meeting of key players in the Dutch national planning debate was introduced: the so-called ‘Polderoverleg’. All government departments involved in spatial development met with representatives of business, environment and consumer lobbies. In addition, all Dutch citizens were encouraged to fill out an enquiry about their preferences for the future spatial development of the Netherlands as a whole and of parts of the country. All this gave the strange impression as if the national planners still had no idea about the contents of the Fifth Report, despite all the earlier initiatives to gather opinions of politicians, project developers, lobby groups and citizens. In this phase, the aldermen of physical planning of the four largest cities found each other in a lobby for the development of Randstad and Green Heart into a ‘Delta Metropolis’ (Deltametropool, 1998). Soon, this lobby gained momentum and also medium-sized cities in the Randstad area became involved in it as well as influential consumer organisations and business and environmental lobby groups. The majors of five cities in the province of North Brabant undertook a comparable initiative: ‘Brabantstad’.

Meanwhile, both within the Department of Physical Planning and in the parliament, criticism on the gap between the intentions expressed in national plans and actual planning practice grew considerably. The National Planning Agency published the first edition of a yearly check on the results of its national planning policy (Ministerie VROM / RPD, 1999). The outcome with regard to several restrictive policies within the framework of the Fourth Report Extra was mostly negative:

- In 8 of the 12 Dutch provinces, the share of newly built homes in ‘concentration locations’ decreased between 1990 and 1998, while this share was supposed to increase;
In 8 of the 12 provinces, the share of newly settled companies in 'concentration locations' decreased between 1990 and 1998, while this share was supposed to increase;

- In most of the 'restrictive policy areas', that is, areas with limitations to new building activities defined in the Fourth Report Extra, the surface of urban land use and the number of postal addresses (as an indicator for building activity) increased considerably since 1990.

A parliamentary working group arrived at more or less the same conclusions as to the apparent lack of effectiveness of national urbanisation policy (Werkgroep Vijfde Nota, 2000). One of the key conclusions of this working group was that "physical planning policy stands or falls with good maintenance. The policy should be formulated in a maintainable way and the national government should have sufficient means and capacity of maintenance at its disposal" (p.293; translation by author). During the execution of the policy goals of the Fourth Report Extra, numerous examples of planning actions violating the policy goals appeared, mainly resulting from a lack of maintenance and the frequently occurring practice of leaving ample negotiating space to local and provincial planning authorities to adjust the national plans. The restrictive policy could not counterbalance the strongly increasing force of urban sprawl in the 1990s and suffered from several inclarities in policy goals and terminology. The most problematic issue, however, was that "restrictive policy is not a generally accepted norm but only one element in complex and lengthy decision making processes and negotiations. Restriction appears to be negotiable on any government level" (Werkgroep Vijfde Nota, 2000, p. 237; translation by author). Apart from various (often successful) attempts of regional and local governments to adapt restrictive policy measures in their advantage, also national policy measures were quite often violating the aims of restrictive building policy.

The preliminary outcome of the debate as presented in the finally completed Fifth Report in January 2001 (Ministerie VROM, 2001) seemed a clean break with compact city policy. The Fifth Report demonstrated a strong focus on enabling economic growth and international competitiveness, accompanied by a more liberal population distribution policy. The Delta Metropolis and Brabantstad lobbies proved to be successful, since both were adopted as national "urban networks" in the Fifth Report. The consequences of the acceptance of the 'Delta Metropolis' as a planning concept for the Green Heart were not very clear. On the one hand, the Delta Metropolis concept implied that the areas formerly known as Randstad and Green Heart, should now be integrated into one network of cities and green recreational spaces. On the other hand, the Green Heart was destined to become one of the 'National Landscapes', and this meant a continuation or possibly even a further strengthening of building restrictions.

Urbanisation should mainly be regulated via a system of 'contours' (see figure 4.2). 'Red contours' were to be drawn around the existing built-up area of municipalities, indicating the area in which further building activities were allowed. 'Green contours', on the contrary, were to be drawn around areas were building activities were severely restricted. The areas that were left after drawing the red and green contours were supposed to get 'light-green contours', indicating that building would be allowed here, but only under certain conditions and to a very limited extent. The contours are to be drawn by the municipalities themselves and afterwards the provinces should determine them in their regional plans, ultimately in the year 2005.
The influence of the Ministries of Transport and Economic Affairs is clearly reflected in the outcome of the debate. A much-telling event in this respect is the fate of the plan of the Minister of Physical Planning to regulate urban extensions through the system of contours described above. Under heavy pressure of the ministers of Transport and Economic Affairs, who feared that this approach would cause a severe shortage of space for new infrastructure and economic activities, the light-green contours were left out of the Fifth Report. This implies that probably more than half of all land in the Netherlands will not be 'contoured' at all, which gives ample space for building activities and seriously undermines the effectiveness of the green and red contours. Apart from this, the fact that the municipalities can determine the contours themselves raises doubts about their effectiveness. Since most local authorities are generally growth-oriented (Werkgroep Vijfde Nota, 2000), they will be inclined to draw the red contours well outside the existing built-up area. In addition, in the period until 2005 (when the contours should be determined) the existing agreements of the Fourth Report Extra might be seriously challenged. How much value will be given to agreements reached in the framework of a policy (the compact city policy) that has already been largely pushed aside by the national planners? This gives municipalities the opportunity to start new building projects and more or less force a wider extent of the red contours afterwards. Since many members of parliament raised these and other objections to the concept of the Fifth Report, the eventual outcome of the debate is still undetermined.

6.8 Conclusions

When the phases in Dutch population distribution policy from the late 1960s until the mid-1990s are evaluated with the criteria of plan and goal conformity (section 6.6.3, Table 6.5), the policy of concentrated deconcentration appears as the most successful phase. Especially in the late 1970s the main planning targets of national population distribution policy were largely reached. The national planners wanted to channel suburbanisation from the large cities to a select group of locations, the growth centres. That a large amount of houses was built in these locations and that a large part of the migrants from the large cities actually moved to these houses can only be seen as a success of national population distribution policy. Nevertheless, even in this successful period some targets were not reached, of which the much too fast population growth in the central open space should be mentioned in particular. The shift from concentrated deconcentration to compact city has been much less successful. The slowdown of growth centre development was realised largely according to the plans and the cities finally started to grow again after decades of population loss. This urban growth, however, kept lagging behind national population growth. This was certainly not in line with the ambitions of compact urban development and urban revitalisation that, amongst others, implied a concentration of population growth in the cities. The gap between the ambition of the national planners and the actual development of population distribution grew larger during the era of compact city policy.

A second evaluation based on the typology of desirability and feasibility (Table 5.4 and section 6.6.4) once again singles out the policy of concentrated deconcentration as a reasonably successful policy. This success most of all refers to the housing goals. This part of the policy of concentrated deconcentration could be characterised as a 'type 1' situation in Table 5.4: the government invested in houses wanted by many households. The housing part of concentrated deconcentration was feasible and it is no surprise that the goals with regard to housing were easily reached. At the same time, the government
invested in a concentration of houses at locations that were in the general interest, which meant the policy in this respect also contained some characteristics of 'type 2'. However, the national government did not invest in the employment part of concentrated deconcentration. The initiative in this respect was left to companies. Because relocation to the growth centres was not considered attractive by many companies (such a relocation would serve the general interest, but was not in the interest of individual companies), this part of the policy could be described as a 'type 4' situation. The employment goals of concentrated deconcentration, realising sufficient jobs in the growth centres to make them economically independent of the large cities, did not pass the stage of desirability and was not realised. The compact city policy as a whole is also an example of a 'type 4' situation: the market sector has to operate in the general interest. The compact city policy is not trying to 'accommodate', but is mainly 'preventive' of character. Desirability considerations dominate feasibility considerations. The earlier experiences with the employment part of concentrated deconcentration policy justify the expectation that the Dutch compact city policy is deemed to fail.

Apparently, this has also become the dominant opinion in the Dutch government and among the national planners. The strategy outlined in the Fifth Report seems to break radically with compact city development. Instead, 'urban networks' are chosen as the spatial and functional form of urbanisation of the next decades. Furthermore, the idea of a 'national plan' for the spatial development of the Netherlands seems to be left behind as well. More than ever before since the development of national planning, the initiative is left to regional and local governments. Still, however, the Fifth Report demonstrates a strong ambition of the Dutch national government to influence urbanisation through physical planning policy, and a firm belief that this is actually possible. The empirical analysis in this chapter already raised considerable doubts about the effectiveness of Dutch national urbanisation policy in the recent past, when 'top-down' planning control was supposed to be considerably strong judging from the very concrete directions given to regional and local government levels in the national reports. Still, on the local level, several developments that were not supposed to happen according to the national plans took place. How are national planners supposed to control local and regional development of population distribution if the influence of their plans is diminished even further? Is it fair to expect the lower-level governments to develop their plans in the common (national) interest?

While this chapter leads to some doubts on the degree of success of Dutch national urbanisation policy, it could still be that the Dutch results are much more positive than the results of national urbanisation policy in other countries, especially within Northwest-Europe. The following chapter will try to answer the question if differences in planning systems and (national) planning ambitions were reflected in different developments of population distribution. More specifically, Chapter 7 actually tries to find out whether physical planning has been able to influence population distribution dynamics in Northwest-Europe, and if this is the case, if the success of physical planning has been dependent on the planning system and the planning ambitions of the country in question.