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Zonneveld, W.A.M.

DOI
10.4324/9780203383346-15

Publication date
2021

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
The Randstad

Citation (APA)
Zonneveld, W. A. M. (2021). Randstad: From a spatial planning concept to a place name. In W. Zonneveld, & V. Nadin (Eds.), *The Randstad: A polycentric metropolis* (pp. 227-254). (Regions and Cities; Vol. 147). Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203383346-15

11 Randstad

From a spatial planning concept to a place name

Wil Zonneveld

Introduction

There are not many polynuclear urban regions with a name as widely known as the Randstad. 'Randstad' though is an entirely artificial concept: a deliberately chosen metaphor relating to urban form at a roughly 80km x 80km scale which does not go back to any pre-existing geographical name. It is a genuine planners' concept, invented with the sole purpose of defining spatial planning issues and to formulate strategies to deal with them. The Randstad became internationally widely known – at least amongst planning professionals and academics – through two books both published in 1966: *Greenheart Metropolis* by Gerald L. Burke and *The World Cities* by Peter Hall. Peter Hall's book in particular became famous and was updated in 1977 and 1984. The first edition included two polynuclear regions: 'Randstad Holland' and the 'Rhine-Ruhr'. In the third edition Rhine-Ruhr was dropped 'for reasons of space' (Hall, 1984: 3); while the verdict on the planning approach towards metropolitan growth of the Randstad was even more positively compared with the original 1966 version, albeit with one reservation: what about implementation of all the paper plans? (Hall, 1984).

It is most likely that Peter Hall (he died in 2014 at the age of 82) would have been very disappointed about the present situation. In the Netherlands today Randstad has become a rather neutral place name. In the sense of place identity, Randstad does not mean a lot to most people, the area is simply too large (Musterd and Van Zelm, 2001). As a *planning* concept, a term used to express public norms and aspirations towards a desired territorial structure, it no longer has a distinct flavour, neither as the object of *national* spatial planning (one may even doubt whether currently there is still such thing as national spatial planning) nor as a region in which there is strong cooperation between local and regional administrations. The idea of an integrated spatial planning approach, advocated by many planners over the course of decades, has evaporated as we will see in this chapter. The same has happened to the ambition to create a governmental authority at this level which over a period of three-quarters of a century was conceived several times, but has at each stage died more or less peacefully (this will be discussed in next chapter).

This chapter seeks to unravel the history of the Randstad planning concept. Our focus is primarily on the national level as a lot of the thinking about the Randstad has been carried out within national planning organisations (although not exclusively as we move towards the present) and trickled down to provincial and municipal planning. Our story starts with a short section about the very first visualisation of the Randstad which was created in the early 1920s. The metaphor of Randstad was not yet invented and planning on this large scale, let alone national planning, was far beyond the horizon.

The 1950s saw the genuine birth of the Randstad concept which was soon amended within less than a decade due to developments *outside* the planning system, in particular population and urban growth, together with a rising trend towards suburbanisation. Conceptual innovation *within* the planning profession included the arrival of novel geographical notions emphasising a trend towards decentralisation and deconcentration of cities and towns. This inspired planners to think in terms of multiscalar urban structures and an ever-larger Randstad.

We then turn to the 1970s and 1980s by which time there was a reversal in thinking towards a downscaling of the Randstad, which eventually led to a heavy emphasis on the fortunes and misfortunes of the individual Randstad cities. From the late 1980s efforts were directed towards conceptual innovation and new interpretations of the Randstad were introduced in two waves. Novel Randstad conceptualisations sought to move away from classic *location* issues towards the question of how Randstad cities and urban functions within them relate to each other and to (supra)regional urban structures and networks. We will see that these innovations eventually fail for various reasons. We then explain the gradual marginalisation of national spatial planning from the 2000s when comprehensive spatial planning gave way to project-based planning in which there was less interest in spatial concepts like the Randstad. We end the chapter with a discussion of critical issues arising from the various Randstad conceptualisations.

Early images of the Randstad

Early traces of the Randstad concept go back as far as the 1920s and 1930s. Planning at the regional level did not exist, at least not in statutory planning. Scattered development was taking place which went against the ideas of 'systematic urbanization' (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994: 54) advocated by professionals who we now would call 'spatial planners'. On the occasion of the 1924 Amsterdam Conference of the International Garden Cities and Town Planning Association (the forerunner of the present International Federation for Housing and Planning), one planner presented a map which is generally considered as the very first visualisation of the Randstad, although the term as such was not yet in use. This vintage GIS map prepared by Van Lohuizen (the original is lost, just a photograph is left of it) presents population growth of municipalities in the west of the country during the 1869–1920 period

(Van der Valk, 1990). The map clearly shows a ring of cities and towns with high growth figures surrounding an area with hardly any growth (see Figure 11.1). The map was used to call for statutory regional planning. Politically this fell on deaf ears. About three decades later Van Lohuizen became involved in the preparation of the report 'The Development of the West of the Country' report (Ahsmann, 1990) which we discuss below.

In 1938 the actual Randstad metaphor was born but interestingly not as part of a town planning agenda but as part of a transport logic. In a letter to the Dutch government, KLM (then and now the main Dutch airline) advocated a new location for an airport far more central than the existing airport which was near Amsterdam. KLM said the new airport should be located right in the middle of the 'Randstad Holland' east of the city of Leiden. It was the particular configuration of the Randstad which led to these thoughts. (Van der Valk, 1990: 60; translation by author, emphasis added)

> [A] large horseshoe shaped *city* with over 3 million inhabitants, (…) the population centres Utrecht, Het Gooi, Amsterdam, Haarlem, the Bulb Area, Leiden, Wassenaar, the Hague, Delft, Schiedam, Rotterdam and Dordrecht forming one *contiguous* area.

In the national airport debate other terms were used which, according to Meijers (2019), gives a clear indication of uncertainty in finding an appropriate territorial concept (translation author): *metropool Holland* (metropolis Holland), *zoom-metropolis Holland* (edge-metropolis Holland) or *wereldstad*

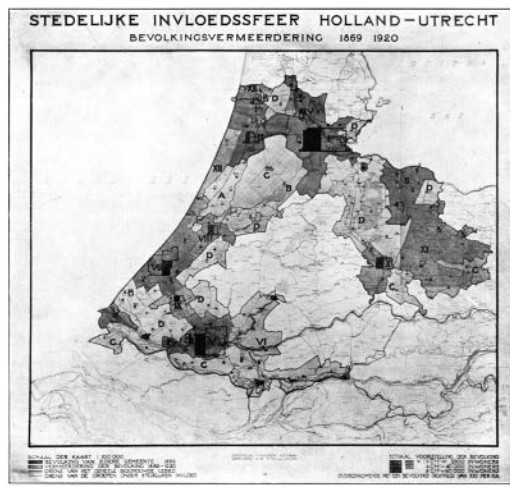

Figure 11.1 The very first visualisation of the Randstad *avant la lettre* by Th.K. van Lohuizen.
Source: Van der Valk, 1990.

Holland (world city Holland). The idea of a single metropolis in which one has to find the most logical, central location was far beyond the horizon of the involved municipalities. Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague advocated three different locations with one shared characteristic: proximity to these three cities. In 1938 the government decided that the national airport should stay in the same location: at Schiphol near Amsterdam. Although some sort of regional approach towards territorial issues was beginning to emerge within several provincial administrations (Van der Cammen and De Klerk, 2012), the Randstad concept nevertheless looked stillborn close to the outbreak of the Second World War and the German occupation of the country in 1940.

The arrival of the Randstad as a comprehensive spatial concept

The start of national planning

Under the German occupation from 1941, a rather centralised planning system was introduced, a somewhat contested beginning for Dutch national (and regional) spatial planning (Van Dam and Vuijsje, 2011). This created the basis for establishing the *Rijksdienst voor het Nationale Plan* (RNP), or Government Service for the National Plan (referred to as Government Service from here). The National Plan itself would give broad outlines of development which were to be detailed in mandatory provincial structure plans and municipal zoning plans. Room for discretion would be limited as the content of the National Plan would be binding.

During wartime one of the key issues addressed by the Government Service was industrial dispersal. Although the ports in the west of the country offered good locations for industry and employment, it was a question whether continuous concentration in the West (in these days often written with a capital letter) was desirable (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994: 79). To reverse migration trends '*geleide industrievestiging*' (guided industrial development) would be needed. A prime motivation was the maintenance of the structure of the Randstad and its 'dispersed pattern' (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994): there are no cities with more than one million inhabitants while the Randstad at large should remain a 'garland of […] towns arranged around a more or less unspoiled agricultural area' (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994: 79). So, the future of the Randstad implied an ordering of the main spatial structure of the entire country and a very wide and strong mandate for national planning. This normative position could not be maintained in the immediate post-war period as this would imply a trespassing of the boundaries of other ministries and a violation of the principle of the Netherlands as a decentralised unitary state where provinces and municipalities play a strong role in policy development and implementation (Toonen, 1987, 1990).

Attention to the West

In spite of the sensitive relationships with sectoral departments, it was the West which became the focus of national planning at the end of the 1940s and early 1950s. Its development became a matter of great political concern as the built-up area of the Randstad was expected to double in size over the following 30 years or so. In the political discussions several problems were identified. For instance: the vast greenhouse complex called the Westland would be threatened by urbanisation as the nearby city of The Hague, thanks to its coastal location, could not grow in any other direction. With fresh memories of the 1944 winter of starvation the – partial – loss of such an important centre of food production was highly sensitive. The expansion of the steel works in the north-western corner of the Randstad, a prime objective of industrialisation policy, would require an entire new city. In the north-eastern Randstad corner of The Gooij the constellation of mid-sized towns surrounded by forests and heath was already turning into an area where pockets of nature were encircled by urban areas.

In 1950 the Minister of Reconstruction and Housing, responsible for national spatial planning, invited the executives of the three western provinces and the three largest cities (Utrecht evidently was not considered relevant at this stage) to discuss the future of the West. His worries were shared and for him this was enough to invite the so-called Permanent Commission on Spatial Planning, one of the bodies created during the wartime period, to study the development of the West. This request was a sensible move: the idea was that advice on planning should not come from spatial planners directly but from and through a body in which all relevant government departments were represented by senior officials (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994). Planners could play their game, so to speak, in a Technical (sic) Working Commission, formed by specialists from various government departments and agencies, as well as from the three western provinces and the three largest cities. This cross-sectoral as well as multi-level approach towards policy making would become a rather strong characteristic of Dutch national planning.

The Advisory Report was published in 1958: '*De Ontwikkeling van het Westen des Lands*' (in literature the common translation is: The Development of the West of the Country). It presented a comprehensive vision of the Randstad (WWDL, 1958a), supported by an intricate and extensive empirical ('technical') analysis in a separate volume (WWDL, 1958b). The Report opens in the style of a geography textbook (including images) to explain the spatial structure of the Randstad and why the sum of the urban agglomerations of the West should be called Randstad (WWDL, 1958a): two large conurbations with a segmented structure, each shaped like a bow located around a large, relatively empty agricultural area: the Green Heart. It argues that the structure of this 'Dutch metropole' (WWDL, 1958a) is such that there is a 'healthy interplay' (WWDL, 1958b) between the city and the countryside. This is absent in many other multi-million 'metropoles' across the Western world as these tend

to grow from one single centre. The structure is under pressure though from 'multiple concentration' largely due to a favourable location of the Randstad in the Rhine delta: it is in fact the 'port function' which drives development in the West.

In just over one and a half pages the quintessence of the advice is presented: the 1980 Development Scheme is based on three 'basic principles':

1 a clear delineation of areas for agriculture and areas within the urban sphere meaning: concentration on the urban ring while preserving an agricultural middle area;
2 preservation of the main agglomerations as spatially identifiable elements of 'sound habitable' size, and where needed growth is rounded off; and
3 expansion of the Randstad in an outward direction through an overspill to adjacent areas north, east and south of the Randstad (WWDL, 1958a: 32–33).

These principles '…will make it possible that the Randstad can develop into a decentralised *world city* of true Dutch nature, while the spectre of some foreign metropoles is avoided.' (WWDL, 1958a: 33; translation author, emphasis added). How this could be achieved is elaborated in a set of highly connected spatial concepts. The first principle leads to the Green Heart as we have already seen. The second one leads to the almost military metaphor of buffer zones which should be at least 4km wide to separate cities visually as well as 'virtually' (WWDL, 1958b). The third principle is simply called (outward) radiation through the creation of new towns, the Dutch term (*nieuwe steden*) being a direct translation of the British term. The two conurbations also get a metaphorical label: north and south 'wing'. Most metaphors were rather expressive and plastic as they were primarily about urban morphology (Figure 11.2).

Compared with this bold vision the governance philosophy is quite shallow (WWDL, 1958a). There is a general call for cooperation between government, trade and industry and civil society. Provinces are summoned to elaborate regional plans (under post-war provisional law they acquired the necessary competences) or modify the existing ones, while municipalities should provide proper extension plans. The Advisory Committee also emphasised a need for 'administrative provisions' like 'inter-municipal bodies'. It argued that these should acquire all critical competences from municipalities, an idea which would in fact lead to an administrative, fourth layer between municipalities and the three provinces. In subsequent decades the idea of such a fourth administrative layer emerged several times but was always strongly opposed from all sides (as explained in the following chapter).

Interestingly, the Advisory Report contained a minority report from the representative of the transport ministry, Le Cosquino de Bussy, who was fully against the idea of a Green Heart and outward growth. With the exception of the South Wing, where urban pressure was particularly strong,

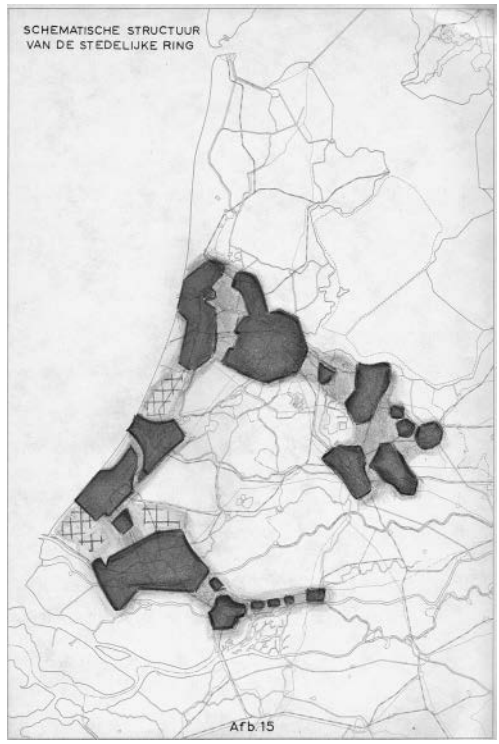

Figure 11.2 Visualisation of the desired morphological structure of the Randstad. Source: WWDL, 1958a.

he proposed an inward growth of the Randstad. He did not agree that the Randstad was already a 'world city'. Instead he argued that if the Randstad would like to play its future role as one of the large centres of Western Europe, 'concentration is of fundamental importance' (WWDL, 1958a: 41–42; translation author); that trade and industry would not be helped by geographical dispersal and long distances and travel times; and that cultural facilities and citizens would benefit from concentration from employment opportunities that could be reached much more easily. He also argued that the Green Heart could accommodate growth of some of the existing centres, provided it was done carefully. Altogether, he was of the view that the principles on which the advisory report is based 'are too much postulated as axioms and need to be reconsidered' (WWDL, 1958a: 42, translation author).

Obviously, this forms a full-blown attack on the empirical as well as normative base of the Randstad vision. However, in 1960 the government accepted the majority vision in the very first national report (*nota*) on spatial planning (Ministerie van Bouwnijverheid, 1960: 89–91). This report

combined national dispersal policy as laid down in a 1958 report on industrialisation (Ministerie van EZ, 1958) with the Randstad vision. The Report rounds off with a 20-page chapter on implementation. A key role is given to a new spatial planning act being prepared at that stage. This act would give the provinces a major role in regional planning. Proper coordination between government departments is also emphasised. No overhaul of the country's administrative system is foreseen, although there are many small municipalities that faced the challenge of adequate administrative power and the capacity to prepare sound spatial plans, the solution has nevertheless to come from municipal cooperation and, if that is not sufficient, through amalgamation. Only for the largest agglomerations was government willing to introduce new bills to create special 'administrative solutions', but what this could mean apart from the annexation of smaller municipalities by the larger cities is not explained (Ministerie van Bouwnijverheid, 1960: 136).

Enlargement of the Randstad concept

A novel institutional base for spatial planning

In 1965 the planning armamentarium changes quite drastically. Finally, after years of discussion the new Spatial Planning Act comes into force, clearly describing planning competences at all three administrative levels. The new law closely follows the principle of the Netherlands as a decentralised unitary state. This means that the only plan which binds citizens is the municipal zoning plan. Relationships between the three administrative levels and their statutory plans are subtle. For instance, although the municipal land-use plan needs approval from the provincial executive, its content is not prescribed in the provincial regional plan. The province can issue a directive, so can the national government. However, due to the deliberative nature of Dutch planning culture the use of this 'nuclear' option is not used very often (Needham, 2007; see also Needham, 2014).

The 1965 law established the National Spatial Planning Agency. This gives a new zeal to policy making and plan-making. Important to note is that the Dutch name of the new agency no longer makes any reference to a (national) plan, just to 'planology' (*Rijksplanologische Dienst* or RPD from here). The law takes effect in a period of rapid spatial changes. After years of austerity there is a steep rise in income. This makes it possible for many to buy a car as well as to move from a city apartment in an old neighbourhood to a new, semi-detached house outside the city. Above all there is a population boom. The 1960 planning report already assumed 15 million inhabitants in 2000 (the actual figure in 1960 was about 11.5 million), forecasts in the mid-1960s are a couple of millions more.

It is in that context that the 1966 Second Report on Spatial Planning is published. Yet again a new vocabulary is introduced. New terms and visuals may give the impression (for this view see Schuyt and Taverne, 2000: 141) that the report abandons the 1958/1960 scheme of Randstad, Green Heart

and buffer zones. What the Second Report in fact does is an enlargement of the territorial scope of the Randstad concept. Both Randstad wings are expected to evolve in giant urban zones, especially the North Wing: from Alkmaar in the north-west of the country to Arnhem/Nijmegen in the east; an area about 140 km wide. Other urban zones (*stedelijke zones*; the foreign loan word 'conurbation' is dropped) in the south and south-east of the country will also emerge, while similar processes in the east and the north of the country are regarded as highly likely. As a consequence, the Green Heart has to become bigger. The new, rather tedious technical name is *Centrale Open Ruimte* ('Central Open Space'), formed by the Green Heart, the adjoining river area in the centre of the country and a large offshoot in a south-western direction: the Middle Delta as the Delta flood works turn estuaries into recreational lakes. Next to the Green Heart also the buffer zone concept is rolled out to other parts of the country.

Novel relational planning concepts

The real innovation of the Second Report regards the regional level. Clearly inspired by international as well as novel domestic literature on so-called *stadsgewesten* (city regions) and the rising trend towards suburbanisation, the notion of self-contained cities and (new) towns, highly characteristic of the 1958 Randstad report as well as the 1960 government report, is abandoned. 'The almost total motorization of society' (Ministerie van VRO, 1966: 77; translation author) will inevitably lead to a 'spread fabric' of large urban centres surrounded by a range of small centres which through their mutual relations form a 'functional whole' (Ministerie van VRO, 1966). The makers of the report do not expect any territorial limitations to this process as individual city regions would eventually merge into the already mentioned urban zones. Infographics are used to elucidate these developments (see Figure 11.3). Altogether this means that key principles of the 1958 report on morphology and zoning are combined with a more relational understanding of urbanisation. This regionalisation of urban structures is supposed to affect the administrative structure of the country, especially in its most urbanised parts. In a lengthy exposé (Ministerie van VRO, 1966), which amongst others emphasises that a fourth administrative layer is highly undesirable, government concludes that in these parts of the country (the city regions in the Randstad and a number of city regions elsewhere) a genuine regional administration needs to be established. In these regions municipalities will remain but planning competences of the provinces are to be transferred. Although this would cut big chunks out of provincial territories, especially in the three western provinces, no grand changes are anticipated at this level.

Clearly, the Second Report is a product of research and urban design, the latter more strongly than the former. A strong indication of this is the concept of environment differentiation (there is no ideal translation of the Dutch original *milieudifferentiatie*). City regions in the future form a mosaic of four

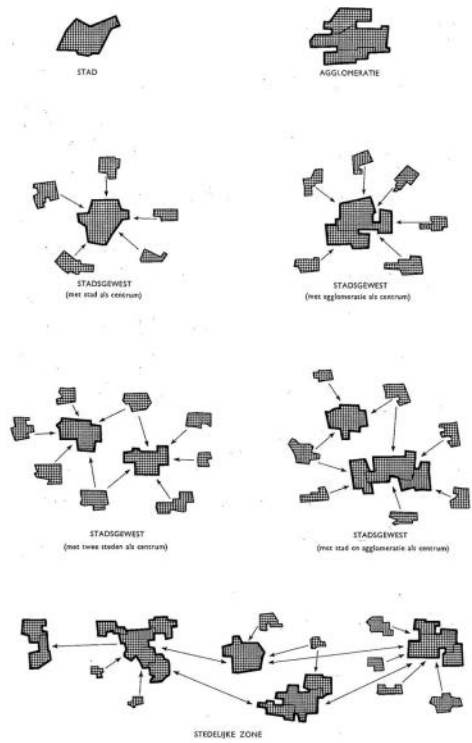

Figure 11.3 The historical development from freestanding cities to large, complex urban zones.
Source: Ministerie van VRO, 1966.

different types, simply called A, B, C and D. These types range from small villages and towns of about 5.000 inhabitants plus services (the A type) to the D type, central units of about 250.000 inhabitants with high-level services like a concert hall, shopping malls and high-capacity public transport facilities. The numerical relation between the four types follows rather closely central place theory as there are many units of the A type but far less of the D type. It is assumed there will only be 9 D environments in the year 2000, the time horizon of the report: 5 in the Randstad (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Dordrecht) and 4 elsewhere. A highly detailed map of the entire country was made which showed the exact location of all A-B-C-D environments. As these were all visualised as squares and rectangles this map became known as the *blokjeskaart* (block map). National planners even dared to cross the borders with Belgium and Germany, as the future 2,000 structure of the Antwerp-Ghent, Liège and Aachen city regions was 'designed' in the same way.

The most well-known concept of the Second Report without doubt is *gebundelde deconcentratie* (generally translated as 'concentrated deconcentration'). This oxymoron is a brilliant invention as it seeks to join up a societal trend with a planning ambition. The former is the ever-stronger trend (at least in the 1960s) to live outside cities in a neatly organised suburban environment, the latter is the planning objective to steer development in such a way that open spaces, with their agricultural economy and valuable landscapes, are safeguarded. According to Peter Hall, this is '[…] a model well worth study by other nations' (1984: 115).

The bold vision and spatial concepts of Second Report are well regarded today but have received some serious criticism in their time (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994; Siraa *et al*., 1995), in particular, the empirical base, and the consideration of alternatives as well as implementation were thought to be weak. Interestingly, the Amsterdam spatial planning professor Steigena commented that nobody seems to be responsible for the Randstad (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994). A critical issue was that government did not specify how overspill centres would be realised, although, unlike its 1960 predecessor, locations for some of these centres were identified (Ministerie van VRO, 1966).

In the early 1970s a debate took place around the question of whether the Randstad is a metropole. The discussion was centred around the idea of an 'E-environment', which '…is equal to (and which can compete with) that of metropoles elsewhere in northwest Europe' (RARO, 1972: 6; translation author). In this debate the general conclusion was that in the Netherlands only the Randstad offers the necessary condition for 'metropole formation'. But this would only possible if the functional coherence within the Randstad was increased: entailing more functional specialisation within and between cities, and better transport connections between them (especially between the 'big four') and other European 'core areas' (Zonneveld, 1992). However, many questions were raised. Is the E-environment a spatial entity having a concrete location? Does the competition between Randstad cities allow for shared metropole status? Is the creation of an E-environment dependent on urban growth and to what extent is decentralisation of the Randstad through outward radiation and overspill centres undermining the necessary critical mass? Is The Netherlands not too small to carry an E-environment? (BSPO, 1975).

The debate gradually fizzled out. A main reason was that the development of the E-environment became associated with the reconstruction (opponents in those days would say: destruction) of inner city areas and the replacement of houses by offices and urban highways. This became highly contested, especially in Amsterdam. The debated ended in 1976 as government concluded that 'metropolitan development' would have an adverse effect on the quality of life in inner cities because the loss of houses and their replacement elsewhere could threaten the Green Heart.

Downscaling the Randstad

A change of spatial concepts in a relatively short period of time is often caused by what can be called 'explosive issues' (Zonneveld, 1991). In the early 1970s such issues made a revision of the Second Report necessary. It was argued that, suburbanisation was not 'bundled' but rather, haphazard and that migration out of cities was hollowing out the demographic and economic base of the cities. The grand reconstruction of inner-city areas was meeting ever-greater opposition. The oil crisis of 1973 demonstrated the vulnerability of urban structures based on car use. Also the demographic forecasts of the mid-1960s proved to be false.

The new creed of the 1970s expressed in a massive Third Report became the 'bundling of urban development'. While the makers of the Second Report foresaw an expanding urban region, the Third Report proposed clear perimeters based on travel time by public transport. The notion of the Randstad then became a constellation of the four large and contained city regions (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) with an outer perimeter based on 35 minutes travel time by public transport, and for the smaller cities 25 minutes. *Groeikernen* (growth centres; *overloopkernen* or overspill centres acquired a rather negative connotation) should be located within these perimeters.

The Third Report is not entirely consistent since not all the proposed growth centres met the new criteria. The location of some was based on the rationale of the makers of the 1958 Advisory Report discussed above: further away from the Randstad and expected to become economically self-sufficient. This counts specifically for Alkmaar, Hoorn and Lelystad and to a certain extent also for Almere. The realisation of a new railway line in the 1980s makes the location of this latter town consistent with the urban region perimeter. By the mid-1970s the tools and financial arrangements were set in place for 'bundled urbanisation' and what was to become one of the largest projects in the history of Dutch spatial planning but what some would call a thinning out or depletion of the Randstad (Frieling, 1983, 1997).

The Third Report is made up of sub-reports. The main one for our discussion is the *Verstedelijkingsnota* (Urbanisation Report) first published in 1976 and revised in 1979. By 1983, the politically binding part was revised again. The perimeters around the urban regions were tightened so as to avoid expansion resulting from faster public transport. Boundaries using travel time were replaced by fixed distances: 12km from the centre of the four largest cities and 8km for other cities. The notion of *bundeling* (bundling) was replaced by *concentratie* (concentration). Growth centres located outside urban regions were to end their tasks by 1990.

There are two main reasons for this change. First, the fall of the population of many cities, partly caused by spatial planning overspill and the creation of new towns, put critical urban services under pressure. Second, the growth centre policy became highly expensive for government in the context of a serious economic recession kicked-off by the 1979 oil crisis. The Randstad

concept continues in use but to a large extent reduced to a place name only with emphasis now on the individual urban regions and cities. The 25-year objective for outward migration from the Randstad was dropped. In translation: 'Regions on their own force' and not 'Randstad force' is the new creed, with again, a close relationship between Randstad policies and national spatial-economic policy.

Reconceptualising the Randstad: from West Wing to Deltametropolis

The rise and fall of the Randstad West Wing

Efforts to plan the development of the Randstad were seemingly over with the finalisation of the growth centre policy in sight. National planning, and with it the RPD, was heavily criticised for overly technocratic planning and inward-looking negotiative processes guided by 'administrative centrism' (Den Hoed *et al*., 1983; Kickert, 1996). In parliament, spokespeople from various political parties called for a less elaborate, more forward-looking sort of planning far less focused on housing given the recession. This required a less procedural and more appealing and visionary planning which was delivered in a Fourth Report, with an apparently radical relational vision on the Randstad.

For the RPD the making of a new planning vision putting planning high on the political agenda was an urgent task in the light of rumours of possible abolition of the agency after the 1986 general election. The new vision would need a radical approach both in process and content, employing new spatial imaginaries (Neefjes, 1988). If the economy is suffering, what planning has to do is to integrate economy in its spatial concepts, something which had not happened before (Waterhout *et al*., 2013). In 1986, the RPD published a spatial planning Memorandum on its own account, eschewing the norms of interdepartmental negotiation which might have diluted its visionary and spatial design content.

This Memorandum almost exclusively focuses on the Randstad, meeting the call for selective instead of comprehensive planning. The rationale is above all spatial-economic, arguing that the Randstad is the most important area for the establishment of competitive companies and by far has the best international and global connections. Inspiration is taken from the 'Europe 1992' project leading to the finalisation of the dismantling of trade barriers with the then European Community and the expectation that a new phase in European integration would expose regions and cities and not countries as a whole to growing international competition.

After conferences in various parts of the country, in itself an indication of a more open, outward looking plan-making philosophy, the RPD concluded that the classic Randstad concept is no longer valid, as the economic core also involves places outside the Randstad which made the scale of the

traditional Randstad concept 'too small'. On the other hand, the Randstad is 'too big': the best conditions for the establishment of international companies in the most competitive economic sectors (above all business services) are offered in an area much smaller than the classic Randstad. The RPD draws the conclusion that Utrecht does not belong to the Randstad but instead to the so-called *Stedenring Centraal Nederland* (Central Netherlands Urban Ring) (Zonneveld, 1992; Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994; Van Duinen, 2004; see also Van Duinen, 2015). The remaining part of the Randstad acquires a new name: *Westvleugel* (West Wing).

The first official draft of the Fourth Report was not even printed when this reconceptualisation of the Randstad met with serious opposition. The Ring concept is readily accepted, but the Ministry of Economic Affairs was against the idea of a West Wing. It rejected both the sectoral emphasis on business services as well as the spatial emphasis on just three Randstad cities. The ministry claimed: there is no empirical ground for such 'discrimination' (Zonneveld, 1992). The trespassing of another ministerial domain, that of the Ministry of Economic Affairs is also a bone of contention.

Not surprisingly, there was widespread opposition to the Fourth Report from the city and province of Utrecht about the 'relegation' to the Central Netherlands Urban Ring, and, among others, from the other three Randstad cities and provinces. In 1995 these bodies formed a cooperation body known as the *Randstad Overleg Ruimtelijke Ordening* or RORO (Randstad Platform on Spatial Planning) (Quist, 1993: 49). The idea of the West Wing was roundly criticised because it threatened the presentation of the Randstad as a whole to the international audience while it also undermined genuine cooperation within the Randstad. Opponents also argued that the RPD used out-of-date empirical evidence and that the proposals threatened the Green Heart and the green belt between the North and South Wings.

The outcome was that on empirical as well as normative grounds the West Wing idea was rejected. Interestingly the metaphor gives some reason to expect urbanisation in areas which so far are regarded as open spaces. This can be explained by the fact that the Wing concept in the sense of North and South Wing has been used over the course of years as a label to describe areas of intense urbanisation and urban growth. That the West Wing is not about urbanisation but, following the RPD, about three cities regarded as best positioned in the international, economic competition, did not come across (Korthals Altes, 1995). From the perspective of conceptualisation as communication the decision to choose the Wing as the preferred metaphor is therefore quite a blunder. In the first official 1988 version of the Fourth Report 'West Wing' is replaced by the *Westelijk deel Randstad* (Western Part Randstad), on the assumption that this would neutralise opposition. However, Utrecht was still not regarded as belonging to this 'part'. In the event, parliament rejected the idea and the four Randstad cities received equal status with the same symbol used for all on the statutory policy map.

In 1989 the coalition government shifted from centre-right to centre-left and a social-democrat became minister for spatial planning, which according to Waterhout *et al.* (2013) set a novel neo-liberal course for planning. The international position of the country moved to the background and planning returned to 'its roots' (Faludi and Van der Valk, 1994). Growth management and the location of new housing again became central themes, together with environmental quality, and another round of plan-making resulted in the *Vierde Nota Extra* or VINEX (Fourth Report Extra). The Randstad is defined as a 'horseshoe' of nine city regions (four big and five smaller) with no clear outer perimeter. A set of criteria is given for the location of new urban areas according to the principle of bundling, and the perimeters of the Green Heart are mapped with the provinces required to detail them precisely.

Some attention to the international position of the Randstad remains, although somewhat hidden in text and images. In light of the fierce discussion just a few years earlier, it is rather surprising that the VINEX states that the best chances to attract international companies can be found in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague (Ministerie van VROM, 1993: 38). In the years up to about the 2000s, main political attention is given to the second large urbanisation project in the history of Dutch national planning: the realisation of the so-called VINEX areas which were to absorb over 50 per cent of new housing growth. The Fourth Report starts out as a conceptual revolution by introducing a new Randstad concept based on the economic competitiveness of just three main cities instead of focussing on the urban form of the classic Randstad 'ring' and measures to preserve open spaces. In the end, the latter prevails in planning politics.

From Randstad to Deltametropolis

From the perspective of planning the 1990s form a decade with different faces. While national planning embarked yet again on a gigantic national housing project, criticism of national spatial planning grew again, with great concerns about the role of national government, vis-à-vis other levels of administration and society at large. There was also criticism about government's perception of spatial structures and consequences for intervention strategies. Underlying the critique the idea of a network society was highly influential. It suggests that, organisationally, national government should become far more selective and focus on issues and territories which are of genuine national importance (NSCGP, 1998; Hajer and Zonneveld, 2000; Van der Cammen and De Klerk, 2012). Conceptually, government should drop the idea that cities are morphologically as well as functionally demarcated particularly regarding the west of the country.

Sectoral policy departments questioned the monopoly of the ministry responsible for spatial planning by introducing alternative planning concepts and strategies (NSGCP, 1998; Priemus, 1999). The Ministry of Economic Affairs was most challenging, taking the metaphor of network society in a

rather extreme way by pleading for economic development along the network of motorways in the shape of corridors and business sites at motorway junctions. In this context of conceptual turmoil, in 1996 a group of professors from the Universities of Delft and Amsterdam launched an initiative called *Het Metropolitane Debat* or HMD (The Metropolitan Debate) (Van Duinen, 2004). They demonstrated that a high level of dispersal of population and jobs and therefore a further thinning out of the Randstad is inevitable unless planning is willing to change. In collaboration with the four Randstad cities, in 1998 they published what was to become a highly influential document: the *Verklaring Deltametropool* (The Deltametropolis Declaration). A new concept was born: the Deltametropolis.

The Declaration can be read as a straightforward attempt to breathe new life into the old idea of the western part of The Netherlands constituting the country's most important production and consumption environment, the future of which should be put expressly in a European perspective (Lambregts and Zonneveld, 2004). It argued that the Randstad and the Green Heart should not be conceived as an accidental collection of cities with rural zones between them, but rather as a coherent polynucleated metropolitan region which should be encouraged – through spatial policy – in its competitive struggle with other European metropolitan regions. The declaration opposes the idea that the Randstad was overpopulated, so strong formerly. Instead, the area was a rather thinly populated metropolis with ample opportunity for improving the spatial quality through better coordination of policies and more daring spatial design.

Initially, it seemed that the claims of the councils of the four Randstad cities would fall on deaf ears. 'Deltametropolis' was not mentioned once in the Starting Memorandum issued in preparation of the fifth policy document on spatial planning (Ministerie van VROM *et al.*, 1999). The Randstad was not even considered to be a coherent spatial entity, but rather to consist of three smaller entities (Lambregts and Zonneveld, 2004). In the first edition of the fifth policy document on spatial planning this was 'corrected' (Ministerie van VROM, 2001: 226; translation author) (Figure 11.4).

> The image of the spatial main structure of the western part of the country, based on the development of two independent mainports, nine city regions, a range of regional overspill areas and buffer zones is to be exchanged for one single spatial concept. The Deltametropolis becomes […] one national urban network.

The designation of the Deltametropolis was controversial though. Some, like the Deltametropolis Association, thought that the government did not take the idea far enough, while others considered it too great a move up the ladder of spatial scales (Lambregts and Zonneveld, 2004). In the end, central government followed the path of the Working Commission for the Western

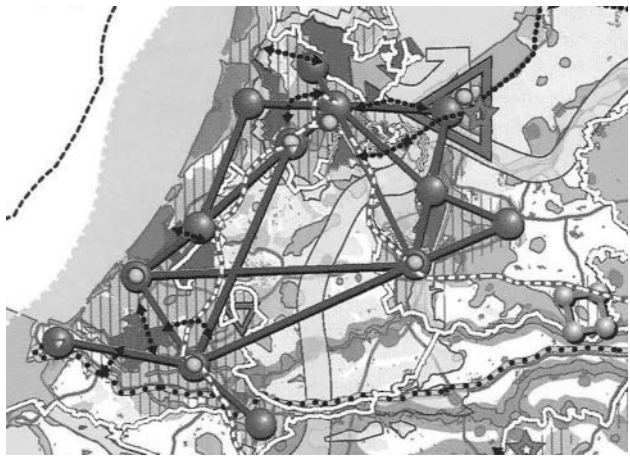

Figure 11.4 Detail of the statutory Fifth Report map 'National Spatial Policy'.
Source: Ministerie van VROM, 2002.

Netherlands 45 years before, to single out the level of the Randstad/Deltametropolis as the most relevant for policy making in the west of the country. Strong emphasis was also put on the international ambitions attached to the concept. Deltametropolis is explicitly presented as a 'national urban network of international magnitude' (Ministerie van VROM, 2002: 34, translation author), the development of which is the country's 'best bet' for future success (Lambregts and Zonneveld, 2004).

Reconceptualising the Randstad once more: towards project-based planning

Spatial and economic concepts

April 2002 saw the collapse of the coalition government responsible for the Fifth Report. By then the document was about three-quarters of its way through the formal adoption procedure. In the Netherlands a fallen government usually rounds off any current business, but the finalisation of the Fifth Report was on the parliamentary list of politically controversial issues that should be rolled over to the next administration. This was in stark contrast to the technical view of planning dominant in earlier decades. Parliament deferred the reading of the Fifth Report and, in effect, sounded its death knell (Zonneveld, 2005).

The follow-up document in Dutch still carried the word *Nota* or Report in its title (*Nota Ruimte*), although the English title better reflects its real ambitions: 'National Spatial Strategy'. While a report suggests a pile of paper,

strategy suggests making things happen. Also, the Strategy has a meaningful subtitle: 'Creating Space for Development', development clearly meaning here, economic development. The prime motto became 'decentralize when possible, centralize when necessary' (Ministeries van VROM *et al.*, 2004a: 24, translation author; see also: Waterhout *et al.*, 2013; Zonneveld and Evers, 2014). Compared with the Fifth Report there was far less emphasis on spatial quality and a less restrictive attitude to the location of urban development. Also, while all preceding planning reports have been prepared within the ministry responsible for spatial planning, the Strategy has a new powerful co-author: the Ministry of Economic Affairs (officially the strategy bears the signature of four departments). This clearly had a decisive effect on its content in general and how it considered the Randstad in particular as we will see.

Legally, the National Spatial Strategy is the final version of the Fifth Report (the full, official title in English is: National Policy Strategy for Infrastructure and Spatial Planning). To avoid going through the obligatory national planning report procedure again, the Strategy partly follows the approach of the preceding Fifth Report while at the same time clearly following a different path in terms of content. For example, it neatly adopts the definition of urban networks from the Fifth Report, but retains only six of 13 networks (Ministeries van VROM, LNV, VenW en EZ, 2004b). Furthermore, the Strategy is less strict about the composition of the six national urban networks and apart from the core cities, leaves it up to local government to decide. The Strategy only shows schematically the areas where urbanisation will be 'bundled'. Nowhere is the concept of Deltametropolis used. Instead, the Strategy returns to Randstad, adding 'Holland' to its name.

The Strategy introduces a second urban concept clearly showing the signature of the Ministry of Economic Affairs: economic core areas. Thirteen are identified, located partly in and partly outside the urban networks with three situated in the Randstad (see Figure 11.5). The Strategy accords more or less equal importance to the concepts of urban network and economic core area, but the relationship between the two is rather obscure. The urban networks form a policy layer from the VROM Ministry, while the Ministry of Economic Affairs adds the policy layer formed by the economic core areas. This discretionary approach encouraged municipalities to work together so that they received available subsidies for economic core areas for the realisation of large, complex business estates, a.k.a. 'top projects' (Ministeries van VROM, LNV, VenW en EZ, 2004b). The latter points to a key characteristic of the Strategy: a third policy layer above the other two of nationally supported project spaces, most of these located in the Randstad Holland. Probably the most important ones are the mainports Rotterdam and Schiphol (the squares in Figure 11.5). There are other 'ports' as well: Brainport Eindhoven and five Greenports, (the triangles in Figure 11.5) large agricultural complexes, four out five located in the Randstad. Finally, there are the so-called 'New Key Projects': the makeover of five main railway stations, with again four out of

Figure 11.5 Detail of the statutory 2004 Spatial Strategy map 'National Spatial Main Structure'.
Source: Ministerie van VROM *et al.*, 2004b.

five located in the Randstad (Spaans *et al.*, 2013) (see the stars in Figure 11.5). This project-oriented, pragmatic instead of visionary approach (Balz, 2018) to national spatial planning was to become the main characteristic of the 2012 successor.

From yet again two Randstad wings to a place name

In 2005, in the middle of finalisation of the National Spatial Strategy, parliament raised concerns about weakly underpinned investments decisions and called for improved justification through long-term strategic planning (Balz and Zonneveld, 2018). Apparently, the Strategy itself, in which projects became to overshadow spatial concepts, was not regarded as sufficient. By July 2006 the centre-right government collapsed, followed by elections and extensive coalition talks. It was not until February 2007 that a new government, again led by Christian-Democrats announced first a reform of the process protocol for the allocation of infrastructure funds, and second, a new planning framework confined spatially to the Randstad region.

The manner in which the second issue was taken up needs some explanation. The ministry responsible for infrastructure was struggling with delays in the implementation of projects, supposedly due to administrative fragmentation, which was particularly problematic for the Randstad as the country's most important economic region. To counteract fragmentation, the ministry started the so-called Randstad Urgency programme. Its main intention was

to prioritise projects from the many proposals that crowded the ministry's agenda. The Ministry of VROM managed to insert a special project into the programme: the *Structural Vision Randstad 2040*. Randstad 2040 was to establish guiding principles for long-term spatial planning and in this way influence future (infrastructure) project decisions (Balz and Zonneveld, 2018). As Waterhout *et al.* (2013) point out, under 'old style' planning (roughly up to the Fifth Report) a vision like Randstad 2040 would have been developed *beforehand* as a framework for identifying and justifying projects. As the Randstad Urgency program fell under the authority of the ministry responsible for infrastructure, the ministry of VROM obviously feared being sidetracked. Therefore, the making of a planning report was a project intended to influence all other projects.

The most striking element of the Randstad 2040 report published in 2008 is that it returns once more to the structure and composition of the Randstad. On the basis of an array of figures and what is regarded as factual evidence on daily urban systems, it reached the conclusion that the Randstad is not a single network but two distinctive regions: Northern and Southern Randstad (see Figure 6 in chapter 14). They are not 'closed' but have important physical and economic connections with other urban regions. Gone is the use of striking metaphors, in language or in visuals: the two Randstad areas are simply visualised as rectangles avoiding any suggestion of boundaries. The spatial development perspective shown in Figure 14.6 has an under layer of highly stylised symbols (lines, arrows and dots) and an upper layer of projects (the small black circles) which are ongoing or under discussion, most of which are not led by VROM. The obvious suggestion is that this development perspective should form the framework guiding the decision-making processes on the myriad of Randstad urgency projects.

Randstad 2040 was published exactly half a century after *The Development of the West of the Country*. While the 1958 report was an advisory report, Randstad 2040 is a policy report, in fact the very first to be dedicated to only the Randstad. With hindsight we can say it is also the *last* genuine spatial planning strategy at the national level. It was seeking to integrate the objectives and actions of various interests, in particular between spatial quality and economic development and competitiveness. It clearly bears the signature of social-democratic thinking about spatial planning because the responsible minister was from this political group which traditionally takes interest in trying to steer spatial development.

The year of publication, 2008, is ominous. It was the beginning of the most severe economic recession since the 1930s. In the same way that the recession of 1980 led to the introduction of competitiveness in national spatial planning, the recession of 2008 led to an overall dominance of economic objectives in national spatial planning. The political composition of the government coalition clearly contributed to that. In 2010 a new coalition took office, positioned more strongly to the right compared with the coalition

responsible for the 2006 strategy and even more compared with the coalition responsible for Randstad 2040. The new minister was from the centre-right liberal party and an outspoken adherent of neo-liberal thinking.

The new coalition was highly energetic on spatial planning. As part of a wider reorganisation of the public sector it immediately started to dismantle the ministry of VROM (RO stands for *Ruimtelijke Ordening*). Spatial planning is moved to a ministry called Infrastructure and Environment. This means that for the first time since 1965 there is no ministry with RO in its name: obviously a case of *nomen est omen*.

On taking office, the coalition government immediately began work on a new planning policy, and Randstad 2040 was abandoned. Although the new planning report aimed to replace eight other policy documents and while such an endeavour in the past would have taken several years, the new (draft) National Spatial Strategy for Infrastructure and Planning (SVIR: *Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte*) took only a few months to prepare (Zonneveld and Evers, 2014). The 2006 approach to 'decentralize when possible, centralize when necessary' went further: government will only act if national interests are at stake. Consequently, the number of national interests was brought down from 39 to 13 and only one was loosely connected to urbanisation: 'cautious consideration and transparent decision-making in relation to all spatial and infrastructural decisions' (Ministerie van IenM, 2012: 60; translation author). In essence this is a procedural statement which replaces the former national interest 'bundling of urbanization and economic activities' (Ministerie van IenM, 2012: 108; translation author). The spatial concept of bundling was terminated and likewise: urban networks, national buffer zones, and even the Green Heart. 'Spatial quality' was only used in a descriptive way (see: Ministerie van IenM, 2012: 13) because every statement which includes 'strengthening of spatial quality' was also deleted.

None of the descriptions of the 13 national interests mentions Randstad. The 'National Spatial Main Structure' map (see Figure 11.6) pictures the (former) Randstad in a way which is entirely different compared with all preceding policy reports. What we see is a layer of projects which is almost the same when compared with Randstad 2040, although the symbol for metropolitan parks is gone. The red lines encircle 'urban regions with a concentration of top sectors'. The concept of urban regions is only descriptive: the policies are in the projects. The red lines were simply called 'elastics' in the hallways of the ministry of I&M (Balz and Zonneveld, 2018). For the Randstad there are two elastics which connect to the classic understanding of the Randstad formed by a northern and a southern wing. They do not have any meaning in terms of policy. The Randstad, if used at all, has become only a place name. The same counts for the successor of the SVIR: the 2019 (Draft) National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2019).

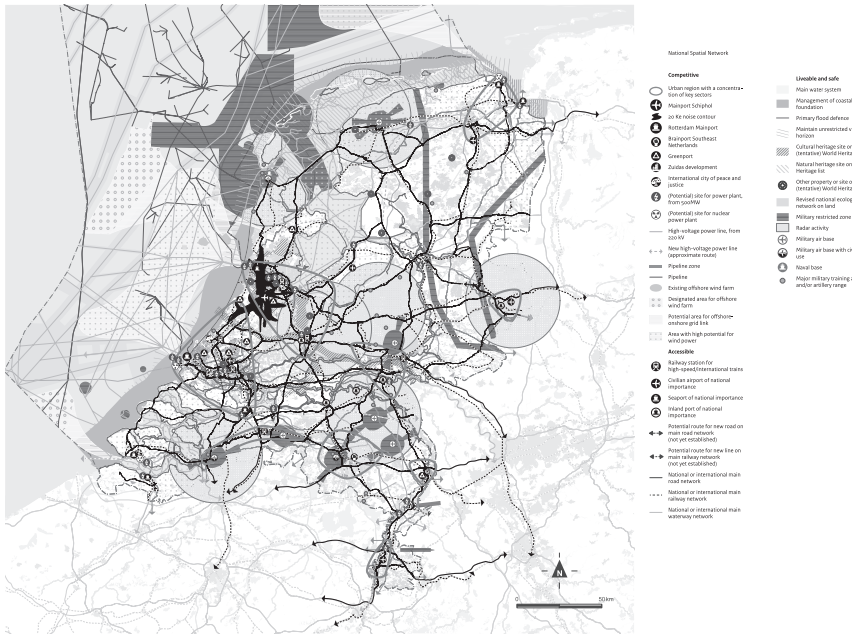

Figure 11.6 The National Spatial Main Structure according to the 2012 National Policy Strategy.
Source: Ministry of IandE, 2011.

Discussion and conclusion

The Randstad as a planning concept has been around for more than 60 years, if one recognises the 1958 advisory report about the 'West of the Country' as the starting point. There are grounds to argue that the concept is much older, about a century. Although the metaphor 'Randstad' was not invented at the time, the 1924 map made by Van Lohuizen obviously showed the emergence of a supra-regional scale in need of government intervention to avoid endless, contiguous urban areas.

If one overlooks the entire period discussed in this chapter, whether this period is sixty years or (nearly) one hundred years, the continuity in the efforts to conceptualise and re-conceptualise the nature of the Randstad supra-region is striking. This is evident in the almost constant change between levels of scale at which spatial planning should act, and expressed by a bewildering variety of terms, metaphors and visuals. Briefly, Randstad planning began with an emphasis on the independent nature of cities (late 1950s and early 1960s); followed by perceptions of boundless city regions and urban zones (late 1960s); and a very long period of ever-restricted visions of well-defined city regions; then promotion of the compact city idea (late 1980s and 1990s); and more recently, with the notion of urban networks. Today the Randstad (Holland) is just a place name.

Conceptualisations of the Randstad move back and forth between an emphasis on urban *form* or morphology as expressed by the distinction made between built-up and open areas or 'green' and 'red', and an emphasis on urban *structure*, which is primarily about relationships between different parts of the Randstad, as expressed by flows and complementarities between cities. The latter is a relational interpretation of the structure of the Randstad, which was a feature of the 1966 Second Planning Report, the controversial concept of the Randstad West Wing of the late 1980s (which was almost paradoxically combined with a very strong emphasis on compact cities and severe restrictions on building programmes outside main cities), and the Deltametropolis concept of the 2001 Fifth Planning Report. The urban network concept is probably the most 'relational' of all Randstad concepts as it looked beyond commuting patterns, inspired by the seminal work on the network society by Manuel Castells as well as European discussions on urban patterns across the continent (NSPA, 2000).

This brings us to the following question: does the constant revision of interpretations of the geography of the Randstad matter? If geographies in the 'real' world change, should planning not change as well and adopt a new 'concept'? We think that there are a few dangers. First of all, the changes in the vocabulary of planning have taken place with time intervals of about 5 to 10 years. This is obviously much faster than the actual change of the Randstad geography and points in the direction of a policy domain which is highly internalised and parochial in the way it functions in the political world. It is exactly why national spatial planning has been criticised over the course of years, in particular during the late 1990s (NSCGP, 1999). This clearly has contributed to the discontinuance of the Spatial Planning Agency in 2001 to be followed by the abolition of the ministry of VROM in 2010.

Second, while recognising that planning and planners should always be prepared to learn from spatial and societal changes: the continuous adoption of new planning concepts does not favour continuity in policy. Before implementation measures are put in place, the conceptual basis of planning might have changed already. The most important example highlighted in this chapter concerns new town policies. We have seen that the idea of new towns as an alternative to the continuous growth of cities was introduced in the late 1950s. It took almost 15 years to reach full agreement between administrative levels and policy sectors on how and where to create these new towns (which had even acquired a new name). By then perceptions of critical urban problems had changed which meant that the location of some of these new towns was no longer reasonable. The other side of the story is nevertheless that over the course of several decades hundreds of thousands of houses in the Randstad (but also elsewhere) have been built on locations selected by and through spatial planning. This may be called a success as do Faludi and Van der Valk (1994) and Korthals Altes (2006).

Next to success there is failure. Possibly the grandest failure of Randstad planning is its incapacity to arrive at a proper integration on the question of where to locate new urban development and how that could or should relate

to infrastructure planning, especially in the domain of public transport. As Schrijnen points out in Chapter 15 the main public transport structure at the Randstad level is offered by the national railways (NS: *Nederlandse Spoorwegen*). One level down, at the level of the Haarlem-Schiphol-Amsterdam-Utrecht and Leiden-The Hague-Rotterdam-Dordrecht 'wings' there is nothing which could be compared with, for example, the German S-bahn systems or the RER system to be found in the Paris region. There is currently one single regional rail link between Rotterdam and The Hague, somewhat deceptively called Randstad Rail. All other rail systems in this southern Randstad wing, apart from the NS system, are local although one former NS local line from Rotterdam to the coastal town of Hoek van Holland has been re-opened as a light rail link in 2019. The multibillion Amsterdam North/South line with its length of just under 10 km is just a local line: opened in 2018 it does not go beyond the municipal border. Preliminary discussions have started for an extension to Schiphol Airport which would add another 14km of rail track. Whether this will materialise and on what time scale remains to be seen.

One may speculate about the causes of the lack of integration between urban and infrastructure planning. Obviously, policy departments often behave like the proverbial policy silos. Nevertheless, we would also like to suggest that a major cause is situated in the domain of *spatial* planning which deliberately aimed for a segmented Randstad morphology preventing the arrival of critical population mass needed for high quality public transport links at the regional 'wing' level. The uncertainty and ongoing discussions across several decades about the level of *functional* integration of the Randstad did not help either. The decision taken in the 2008 Randstad 2040 planning report that the Randstad is in fact a constellation of two regions, put an end to all pleas to develop a new orbital public transport system connecting all four Randstad cities. Whether such a highly centralised system with a limited number of stops would fit the strongly polynuclear structure of the Randstad is a moot point though.

A final conclusion we would like to draw here is that the sheer scale of the Randstad, an area of approximately 80 by 80km, is probably too large to handle as a single spatial planning region. Currently, the national government is no longer willing to take the lead in terms of visioning and policy making. The next chapter seeks to make clear whether the so-called metropolitan regions of Amsterdam and Rotterdam The Hague are capable of taking a leading role.

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