



ARCHITECTURAL POLICY 2001-2004

# SHAPING THE NETHERLANDS

SUMMARY

## SHAPING THE NETHERLANDS AIMS...

to make a tangible contribution to the spatial and architectural quality of our country by launching a number of Major Projects in which design is to play a central role. The projects, each serving as models for future reference, are as follows: the Delta metropolis, the Zuiderzee line, a motorway design, the new Rijksmuseum, the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie, redevelopment of sandy-soil areas, private initiative, review of public space, and a new building for two government departments operating in the field of cultural history;

to examine government responsibility for architecture policy (e.g. management, facilitation);  
at the same time to continue creating conditions that benefit the architecture climate in general;

to do justice to the public aspect of architecture and public space, and to stimulate public debate on the built and rural environment, using modern media;

to strengthen the relationship between cultural history and modern architecture, by taking the cultural heritage as a source of inspiration for spatial planning, while aiming for conservation through development;

to give culture a major role in weighing up claims on space, in addition to traditional spatial planning interests, which are generally well represented (by builders, investors, infrastructure managers, housing corporations, environmental organisations);

to stimulate design studies before projects are finalised;

to stimulate greater variety in homes and living environments, to do more justice to people's needs and the Netherlands' changing culture;

to accept society's need for mobility, and to cater for it in an architecturally sound manner, keeping future needs in mind;

to combat the fragmentation of the open spaces between urban areas by strengthening the individual features of the landscape;

to devote more attention to quality, by adopting an attitude of practical idealism in promoting the effectiveness of processes and preventing compartmentalisation;

to combat fragmentation of knowledge and skills in the architecture and construction sector by building bridges between the various 'worlds';

to promote cultural patronage, both large (professional principals) and small (individuals);

to look at what is possible, not what is obligatory.



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## INTRODUCTION

The Netherlands has acquired an excellent reputation in the international architecture world. The façades of many Dutch private houses and other buildings have become far livelier in recent years. What is more, a revival of landscape architecture has combined with growing interest in land-use planning to focus attention on the cultural dimensions of developing the characteristic Dutch landscape. Commentators at home and abroad have expressed their appreciation in a growing series of exhibitions and publications about Dutch designers and their architecture, including landscape architecture. Praise was lavished worldwide on the Dutch pavilion at the Hanover world exposition (by the architectural firm MVRDV) which was viewed more or less unanimously as the most interesting architectural exhibit. Yet somewhat paradoxically, in spite of these auspicious signs, there is a sense of unease among large sections of the Dutch community about the direction taken by planning in recent years. There are concerns about the loss of remaining open spaces, the housing estates burgeoning around towns and villages, the sometimes dilapidated state of public spaces in Dutch cities, and an apparently haphazard growth of office and industrial sites. In a word, the Netherlands is becoming 'cluttered'.

What is more, many members of the public consider the proposition that people should simply accept whatever buildings and homes are on offer an outmoded view. The desire to be involved in creating one's own physical surroundings is clearly growing.

Given its role as custodian of this public interest, central government wishes to help mould 'the face of the Netherlands' by creating more scope for the vital contribution of design disciplines when matters of planning and architecture are up for discussion. It also wishes to focus more attention on the public nature of architecture, town planning, landscape architecture and infrastructure facilities. The plans are set forth in the policy document *Shaping the Netherlands: Architectural Policy 2001-2004*. The gist of the policy document is presented in this summary.

The policy document was presented to the Lower House of Parliament on 5 October 2000 by Rick van der Ploeg, State Secretary for Education, Culture & Science (OCenW), Johan Remkes, State Secretary for Housing, Spatial Planning & the Environment (VROM), Tineke Netelenbos, Minister of Transport, Public Works & Water Management (V&W), and Geke Faber, State Secretary for Agriculture, Nature Management & Fisheries (LNV).

The policy document is an action plan. In this sense it is a radical departure from the first policy document on architecture (*Space for Architecture*, 1991) and the second (*The Architecture of Space*, 1996). It would appear that the cultural, social and economic roots of the present architecture policy are now strong enough to permit vigorous new growth. The new policy document therefore challenges everyone working in the field to participate

in a series of Major Projects. These nine concrete projects cover the entire range of architectural and spatial design in the Netherlands. Each of the Ministers and State Secretaries most closely involved will 'adopt' a number of the projects. Once realised, the nine projects will serve as models for similar situations, generate new knowledge and supersede older ideas, forge refreshing new alliances, fire people's enthusiasm and win their commitment by setting specific design goals. New policy and its implementation will be closely interwoven.

The Major Projects will invite participation, reflection, commitment and action. Combining the useful with the pleasurable, they will keep the Netherlands very much 'on the map' in the field of cultural design.

### **A BRIEF HISTORY**

*Space for Architecture* created the conditions for architectural quality, based on a concept that integrated cultural and user value with value for the future. This document, which was produced by the Ministry of Health, Welfare & Cultural Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning & the Environment, not only looked at architecture itself but also at the way people experienced it, i.e. it looked at both supply and demand. It led to the establishment of the organisation Local Architecture, consultants for potential principals, and the Netherlands Architecture Fund, which allocates grants to interesting projects. The document also provided the basis for the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam. The Architecture Policy Think-tank is an inter-ministerial working group that was set up under the chairmanship of the Government Architect to supervise implementation of architecture policy and, in particular, to break through the barriers between ministries. An indirect, bottom-up effect of the document was an unprecedented growth in the number of architecture centres springing up throughout the country.

The second policy document – *The Architecture of Space* – attempted to upscale policymaking. Policy had now been launched, but disciplines such as urban development and land-use planning were inevitably entering the picture. At the time, radical infrastructure and planning projects, like the high-speed railway lines, and the expansion of Schiphol Airport, were in the pipeline. What is more, the Netherlands was undergoing another less spectacular, though no less radical change: its open green spaces were gradually shrinking. It was proving difficult to find the right answers to these trends.

Another important phenomenon discussed in the second policy document was the emergence of market forces. They proved to be a major factor in spatial planning, particularly at the Vinex locations, those areas designated for large-scale residential development. It was high time the government entered into a dialogue with market

players. The integrated notion of quality adopted by the first policy document was also incorporated into the second. The Ministries of Agriculture, Nature Management & Fisheries and Transport, Public Works & Water Management now joined forces with the ministries responsible for drafting the first policy document.

In some of its features, the *Shaping the Netherlands* action plan continues and updates the policy set out in the first two policy documents, and sharpens its focus. The ministries concerned with architecture back the new policy document to the full, since they were involved in drafting it. It interprets the policy of the past ten years, introduces improvements, and takes into account the comments issued by the Council for Culture. An example of an amendment to policy is the decision to disband the Temporary Design Platforms, which were launched in the second document, but which have proved ineffective, apart from their work on the southern segment of the high-speed railway line. These platforms have now been replaced by the Major Projects, into which more thought has been put.

### **CHANGING TIMES**

In the four years since the second policy document was published, society has changed radically. Spatial dynamism has grown enormously. It is impossible to predict in which direction the country will develop. The notion of the perfectible society, with its aim of producing an 'engineered society', is now outdated. It is therefore better to start out with an excellent design, and to build on that.

The multicultural society is a hot issue on the political agenda, and the subject of much debate. Our system of norms and values is shifting. Minority cultures are enriching our society. The parallel rise of individualism and the network society are leading to conflict in both the private and public domains. With their new-found wealth, individuals now wish to be involved as equal partners in decisions on their living and working environment.

These two major changes to society were decisive in determining the direction this document would take. It looks, for instance, at the subject of public space, and the rights of people to lay claim to it. The new, assertive citizen no longer accepts a paternalistic approach to housing. Individual enterprise will be encouraged. The aim is to put a third of building projects in the hands of end-user clients in the period between 2005 and 2010. But the document also asks whether the many new homes that are now being built will maintain their value in the future. Should market players and private builders be given support in enhancing the cultural value of their ventures, and scope to adopt an integrated approach to architecture?

Of course, the document also deals with current issues such as water management, urban sprawl, pressure on space, growing mobility and the fading distinction between city and countryside.

The document explicitly advocates greater awareness of cultural history among all the parties involved in town and country planning. Many people are nostalgic about the past, because the face of the country is changing so rapidly. But time seldom stands still. However, if planning decisions take account of cultural and historical values, the Netherlands can develop in a more balanced, comprehensible way.

An important subject addressed by this policy document is the relationship between the government and the individual. What place does government occupy in this neo-liberal society of ours? Is it one of many actors, or does it occupy a special position? The role of government must become clearer in the next few years. It has hived off and privatised many of its tasks; local and provincial authorities now display a tendency to compete with each other.

Architecture policy may have gained a place on the agenda, but its implementation is not universally successful. That applies to the government, which is also faced with the complication of separate decision-making procedures for rural development, housing and transport. And it applies to market players. Faced with the need to make a rapid return on their investment, they opt for superficiality: architecture whose external features are the decisive factor. As a result, there is too little emphasis on intrinsic aspects: architecture as a spatial art. The aim of the national Seven Pyramids award is to promote cultural projects, but more needs to be done.

If we are to believe publications in the professional journals, Dutch architecture scores well abroad, and foreign architects like working in the Netherlands.

The policy document pinpoints architecture's shortcomings. Design plays too small a role in large-scale projects. Studies launched at the start of complicated projects in which many principals are involved could lead to unity of design. Moreover, where projects are very large, architects in the Netherlands display too little boldness and vision to produce an overall design. What is more, there is a yawning gap between the world of culture and the construction world. There is too little social debate on architecture, and the roles of public and private parties are insufficiently delineated (who will shoulder responsibility for the problem?).

## **MAIN THEMES**

The two main themes running through the policy document are: 'architecture is everyone's business' and 'shaping the Netherlands'. The second theme, encompassing measures, recommendations and activities to get the nine projects off the ground, is easier to implement than the first.

In asserting that architecture is everyone's business, the policy document points out that architecture is an intrinsically public affair. It is an art form that impinges on everyone's life. But is architecture rooted in society? Is it not a matter for the high priests of culture, with their own language and rituals? Yet at the same time has it not been reduced to a form of vulgar imagery, which does no justice to the notion that building is the cornerstone of our society? Let there be no misunderstandings: architects are professionals. But according to the document, policy itself may well be responsible for architecture's one-sided orientation in the past few years. The document introduces the challenging idea that architecture is everyone's business in an effort to prompt widespread debate. But in doing so, it reveals its own vulnerability, since it is inviting questions to which it has no ready-made answers.

## **COMBINING WORK AND PLEASURE**

Why has the document opted for the Major Projects? Because its underlying aim is to boost the contribution other design disciplines can make to spatial and architectural projects. It is up to the government to give this aim concrete shape.

A combination of factors contributed to the idea of the Major Projects: the increasing threat to rural areas, renewed attention for the cultural history as a component in design, the major infrastructure works, and the need to make a wider public aware of these factors by presenting the problems they entail as an attractive venture.

The Major Projects will be organised to measure by the government, and will be conducted under its management or direction. This is the difference compared to previous policy documents: the government shoulders direct responsibility and sets an example. The projects will regularly be presented and evaluated, and they will be put before parliament each year.

The nine subjects are as follows:

- The Delta metropolis. This term refers to the Randstad, a ring of major cities around a central green area in the west of the Netherlands. A new name, a fresh start? A consensus is emerging that the Randstad should be allowed to develop into a network of cities and towns, set in plenty of green space, working together to ensure good governance and decent planning instead of standing in each other's way. Together they will form a metropolis, and will construct an environmentally-friendly railway network around the

- Green Heart (the Randstad's 'Central Park'), whose main task will be water catchment, and the provision of leisure facilities;
- The Zuiderzee line. This is a rapid rail link connecting Amsterdam and Groningen, possibly in the form of a magnetic train.
  - A comprehensive design for an existing motorway, e.g. the A12. Motorways are becoming increasingly ugly, a chaos of poorly designed noise barriers and road signs. What is needed is an aesthetically pleasing combination of architecture, infrastructure and landscape;
  - The Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie, an 85-kilometre-long defensive line of canals, sluices, fortifications and bunkers built in the 19th century to ward off potential invaders. This project has already been designated as one of the national Belvedere projects, which stimulates the role of cultural heritage, whether it be monuments, archaeological sites or historical landscapes, in new developments. The fortifications must gain a sustainable place in the landscape, and the buildings worthwhile new functions;
  - The redevelopment of sandy-soil areas in western and southern regions of the country. As a result of the reorganisation of the pig industry, intensive farming in these sandy-soil areas is now on the decline, and land and buildings can be put to other uses;
  - Individual initiative. The plan is for a third of new housing projects to be private commissions by 2005-2010. What position will architecture occupy? It is here that architecture is truly everyone's business;
  - Public space. Matters such as public access, social problems, and art as public property are factors here;
  - The new Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. How can you prepare a building by P.J.H. Cuypers and the special collection it houses for the 21st century?
  - A new building in Amersfoort to house both the Netherlands Department for Conservation and the National Archaeological Field Survey Commission.

### **PLAN DE CAMPAGNE**

The section entitled Plan de Campagne sets out the specific aims and plans of the *Shaping the Netherlands* action plan, and outlines their funding. Designers must be given the opportunity to use their creative powers more effectively in the implementation of Major Projects. Upscaling of architecture and design must be stimulated. The government will provide the conditions to ensure harmonisation and management; policy will be focused in such a way as to eradicate ministerial compartmentalisation and buck-passing.

The tasks of the Architecture Policy Platform and those of the Government Architect will be adapted to the new policy objectives. There will be more consultation between the Platform and the architecture institutions involved in implementing policy. The institutions and funds will be expected to work more closely together and to incorporate the principles of this policy document into their annual programmes. They will also have to collaborate

more closely with organisations in related policy fields. The ten architecture institutions will be given more financial elbowroom to allow them to perform the important task of disseminating policy. Every year, around NLG 5 million will be earmarked for the organisation of exhibitions, debates, studies and design competitions, and for publications, supply of information and recommendations, to maintain the collection, and for environmental education. Policy on the theme 'architecture is everyone's business' will aim to extend the debate on architecture and policy, improve environmental education and promote appreciation of architecture in schools. Closer co-operation with the market is also called for, as is modernisation of the building regulations.

The policy document puts forward the following proposals to assure the quality of the Major Projects. The Architecture Policy Platform will act as supervisor and monitor, and will receive support from the Working Group on Public Design. A support base will have to be created at local government level too. The projects will be preceded by information campaigns led by people with public appeal. There will also be workshops, reports and so on. The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning & the Environment and the Ministry of Education, Science & Culture will contribute NLG 0.8 million a year to the Major Projects; the other ministries will contribute from existing project budgets.

The government will earmark around NLG 7 million a year extra for the new policy measures. In addition to the sums earmarked for ministries' normal building and planning policies, the annual budget for specific architecture policy will grow to more than NLG 30 million.

#### FOOTNOTES REFERRING TO TABLE ON PAGE 8

- <sup>1</sup> Subject to conditions.
- <sup>2</sup> The contribution is based on specific commissions, e.g. for the preparation and implementation of courses for clients in rural areas.
- <sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Transport, Public Works & Water Management finances the extra focus on design quality in the Major Projects through the project budgets.
- <sup>4</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management & Fisheries finances the extra focus on design quality in the Major Projects through the project budgets.
- <sup>5</sup> Including NLG 50,000 for research into recordkeeping related to landscape architecture.
- <sup>6</sup> The measures will be continued in modified form, with greater emphasis on improving the quality of landscape design. It is not yet possible to indicate how much money the new approach will involve.

**OVERALL TABLE FOR 2001-2004**

All sums should be multiplied by 1,000 guilders

	OCenW	VROM	V&W	LNv	Total
<b>Institution</b>					
Netherlands Architecture Institute	10,019 <sup>7</sup>	750	250	150	11,169
Architecture Biennial	1,500 <sup>1</sup>		(2 jr)150		1,500+2 jr 150
Local Architecture	256	650	150	150 <sup>2</sup>	1,206
Berlage Institute	1,748 <sup>1</sup>	225 <sup>1</sup>			1,973
Netherlands Architecture Fund	3,818	3,200	150	150	7,318
Institution for practical training in architecture and urban design		200			200
BKVB Fund	2,734 <sup>8</sup>				2,734
Europan	311	100			411
Archiprix	130				130
ArchiNed	152				152
Institution for bibliography and workregister of Dutch architects	50				50
<b>Subtotal institutions</b>	<b>20,718</b>	<b>5,125</b>	<b>550 +2 jr 150</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>26,843</b>
<b>Other activities</b>					
Major Projects	450	350	p.m. <sup>3</sup>	p.m. <sup>4</sup>	800 + p.m.
Building regulations	(2 jr) 100	(2 jr) 500			(2 jr) 600
Platform	100	250	150	50	550
Working Group on Public Design			150		150
Seven Pyramids	100	250	150	150	650
Intensifying policy on private commissioning (e.g. industrial zones)	200	125			325
Rietveld Pavilion Venetië	46				46
Culture and arts education-1 (through Netherlands Architecture Fund)	(2 jr) 200				(2 jr)200
International policy	100				100
Government Architect studies		300			300
Interministerial and sectoral studies	300	300 <sup>9</sup>		350 <sup>5</sup>	950
Regulations governing quality of landscape design				p.m. <sup>6</sup>	p.m.
Groeneveld Castle				100	100
Law Governing Use of Title Architect	50	175		25	250
<b>Subtotal other activities</b>	<b>1,346</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>4,221</b>
	<b>+ 2 jr 300</b>	<b>+ 2 jr 500</b>	<b>+ p.m.</b>	<b>+ p.m.</b>	<b>+ 2 jr 800+p.m.</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,064</b>	<b>6,875</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>1,125</b>	<b>31,064</b>
	<b>+ 2 jr 300</b>	<b>+ 2 jr 500</b>	<b>+ 2 jr 150+ p.m.</b>	<b>+ p.m.</b>	<b>+ 2 jr 950+p.m.</b>

<sup>7</sup> This includes interest during construction and payments for the building.

<sup>8</sup> This relates only to the contribution for individual architecture grants.

<sup>9</sup> Through the Directorate General for Housing budget.