

Creative Place

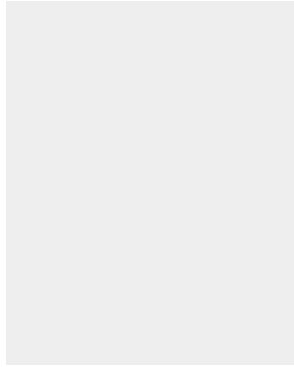
Le pôle des futurs de Deauville

11-12 juin 2009

La prospective territoriale au cœur de l'action des élus


*The Randstad2040 case
Foresight and Spatial Planning in the Netherlands*

Gerda ROELEVELD



Gerda ROELEVELD

Index



Introduction	4
1. Dutch spatial planning system	4
2. Foresight	5
3. Randstad2040, the case	5
3.1. Context: why a long term vision for the Randstad?	5
3.2. Process	6
4. Conclusions	10
5. Questions for discussion	11
Figures:	12



Introduction

Before embarking on describing the actual case of ‘Randstad2040’ as an example of ‘foresight’ it seems appropriate to highlight some basic principles of the Dutch spatial planning system first and then to introduce how some fundamental characteristics of foresight are used in this paper to evaluate the case. Paragraph 3 illustrates the why, what and how of the Randstad2040 project and the paper concludes with some observations and questions for discussion.

1. Dutch spatial planning system

From July 2008, a new Spatial Planning Act came into force in The Netherlands, replacing 1965’s first law in this field. The new law substantially simplifies spatial planning procedures, clarifies responsibilities of government authorities and provides all actors in spatial development processes with appropriate instruments, at the same time leaving them much freedom in how to use these. There are only two types of plans under the new law: the land use plan and the structural vision. In principle all three administrative levels in The Netherlands: national, regional (provinces) and local (communities) have the right to draw up and decide land use plans and structural visions¹. All formerly existing plans such as Key Planning Decisions, Structure Schemes, Regional Plans and local Structure Plans are abandoned and phased out under the new law. Whereas the land use plan is a legally binding document for governments, citizens and enterprises alike, the structural vision only binds the authorities that signed for it (self binding). By means of general legal instruments, e.g. orders in council (state level) or by-laws (regional and local level), public authorities can pro-actively prescribe requirements regarding procedures or content of land use plans or structural visions, to be met by lower level authorities. Such requirements need structural visions for a basis.

A structural vision is a strategic policy document on mid- or long term spatial development in a certain area; the document should include an explicit implementation strategy (legal and voluntary instruments, financing, \time schedules). Ultimately, its policy objectives materialize in land use plans. The structural vision ‘Randstad2040’ is one of the first structural visions adopted by parliament under the new law and is integrated of nature, covering all spatial aspects of the area².

1. Here, the principle of subsidiarity is put into practice. Land use plans are primarily a community responsibility. Only if central or regional government consider a certain development (for example a railroad link of national interest) or a certain area (for example an urban network of regional interest) to be first and foremost their own responsibility, they can decide upon land use plans themselves, overruling the authorities at local level in doing so.
2. Structural visions can also be thematic of nature, e.g. the National Water Plan, adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in December 2008.

2. Foresight

Trefwoorden: toekomstverkenning, regional foresight

From the several definitions of 'Foresight' given in the recently published Glossary³ by DIACT, some basic characteristics can be derived for a spatial planning process to be considered an example of 'foresight', namely if:

- > anticipation on possible and/or desirable futures guides current decision-making
- > rational research and analysis is paired with intuitive visioning and imagination
- > policy objectives are translated into concrete actions, and
- > an integrated (holistic) and trans disciplinary approach is followed. In the following description the 'foresight' character of the Randstad2040 project is illustrated by focusing on these characteristics, with less attention paid to the actual nature of problems and solutions for the Randstad region.

3. Randstad2040, the case

3.1. Context: why a long term vision for the Randstad?

In their article⁴ for the 44th ISOCARP Congress in 2008, Van der Burg and Vink mention that, already in 2006, Dutch parliament requested a long term vision to be drawn up for the Randstad area, the long standing economic and cultural centre of the Netherlands, comprised by the so called 'Big 4': the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht and the green area these cities more or less encircle, usually referred to as the Green Heart. The population of the Randstad adds up to 7 million people, i.e. 45% of the total Dutch population, living on 26% of the country's land area, generating about 50% of the country's GDP. As a reason for the interest of parliament in a long term vision for the Randstad, Van der Burg and Vink recall that Dutch parliament when they approved of the national Spatial Planning Policy Document ('Nota Ruimte'⁵, 2006) felt that this document did not provide with enough detailed policy measures for the future development of this most important area of The Netherlands, especially so in view of issues relevant to climate change, its time horizon being 'only' 2020. This time horizon was thought to be too close to be appropriate for preparing necessary long term investment decisions of national importance, such as e.g. the development of Schiphol Airport or major housing development projects, not to mention adaptation of the water management system related to climate change. Major investments in the physical realm like these,

3. 'Les mots clés de la prospective territoriale', sous la direction de Ph. Destatte et Ph. Durance; DIACT, 2009
4. 'Randstad Holland towards 2040 – perspectives from national government', Arjen J. van der Burg and Bart L. Vink, 2008.
5. The fifth such document since the Spatial Planning Act came into force (1965).

require a long time to prepare, whilst actual construction adds even more to that; hence it was considered sensible to start preparing now, for beyond 2020.

3.2. Process

Kick-off: critical issues and parallel tracks The Randstad2040 project started in September 2007, with a Starting Memorandum, agreed by the Cabinet of ministers. The Starting Memorandum put forward seven critical questions for debate: How to ensure a climate proof Delta in the future? What are considered strategic spatial investments in the area? What kind of green-blue framework could act as a means to structure further urban development? What balance between concentration within the boundaries of existing cities (including high-rise options) and green field development should an urban strategy strike, to be considered sustainable? What would a sustainable transportation concept for the area look like? How can existing strong economic functions like harbors, airports and related industries, that put a heavy weight on the environment, be reconciled with the demand for attractive living and working space corresponding with further development of the knowledge economy, in an area where competition for scarce space is fierce? Can Schiphol Airport, as the fourth most important airport in Europe, continue to grow in a sustainable way? Inspired by a strong belief in the necessity of a participatory approach in drawing up a structural vision for the Randstad, government parties involved chose to launch an intensive consultation campaign based on these critical questions, consisting of four parallel tracks: a dialogue with the public; research and advisory contributions, either requested or unsolicited; visioning exercises, and an inventory of strategic implementation alliances.

Dialogue In order to obtain reactions from the public⁶, a special website was created from where the Starting Memorandum and other relevant documents could be downloaded. Four interactive on-line discussions with citizens were organized, in which some 400 citizens participated. Advertisements were put in newspapers and a random selection of citizens received a letter, inviting them to join the debate and react upon the questions raised. (International) professionals in the field filled a special Randstad2040 issue of *Nova Terra*, an expert magazine on spatial planning matters, with articles. A total of seven 'Randstad tables' (Figure 1) were organized in the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, where stakeholders, citizens and professional planners exchanged views, helped by three visions of the future Randstad (in 2040), that were obtained from the visioning exercises (see below). An on-line questionnaire attracted 13.500 participants, who gave quantitative scores to what they deemed to be the major issues for the structural vision. The outcome showed that improvement of 'mentality' and 'health' are considered as top-priority issues, with accessibility, attractive living and working environments with sufficient, accessible green areas and multipurpose utilization of water ranking second. At a conference in May 2008, dialogue results were wrap-

6. Focusing not only at inhabitants of the Randstad area, but nation-wide.

ped up into an advice which was presented to the minister of VROM, responsible for spatial planning⁷.

Research and advice To provide a solid scientific base for policy making, government bodies involved⁸ ordered reports on a wide variety of subjects from scientist employed within their own organizations as well as from policy-independent, state funded science institutes such as the Spatial Planning Bureau⁹; Nature and Environment Planning Bureau¹⁰; Central Planning Bureau¹¹, independent consultants, advisory councils to the government¹²¹² and from the OECD¹³. From some amongst these they also received unsolicited advice, which they also took into account. This way were obtained, among others: Scenario's regarding standard of life and environment; an inventory of implementation strategies in other European regions; long term perspectives on water management, on spatial development, on mobility and on the structure of economic sectors; reports on spatial development policy in general and on governance issues in the realm of spatial planning; ex-ante evaluation- and environmental effect reports of the eventual structural vision. In addition to this, a temporary platform of experts was installed, who procured advice on the strategic position of the structural vision and its implementation; this platform also developed a definition of the concept 'sustainable top-region', using the 'people, planet, profit'¹⁴ paradigm as a framework. To enhance the political status of consultation activities and to facilitate necessary negotiations in a later phase of the process, a group of national and regional politicians was formed. This group consisted of one minister representing the Cabinet of ministers, two county council members and two community aldermen representing regional and local level government. In addition, a so called Randstad ambassador was appointed to facilitate cooperation amongst different levels of government. During the process the group of government representatives received four different advice reports, respectively from the four provinces making up a large part of the Randstad area, from (the four largest) communities and city-regions within the area, and from

7. Responsibilities of the ministry of VROM comprise Housing, Social Integration, Spatial Planning, and the Environment. At this occasion the minister of VROM represented three other ministries responsible for policy fields with major impacts on spatial planning: Agriculture, Nature and Food safety (LNV), Transport and Water management (V&W) and Economic Affairs..

8. Including the ministers mentioned in footnote 7 as well as provincial and local authorities

9. Ruimtelijk Planbureau (RPB)

10. Natuur en Milieu Planbureau (NMP)

11. Centraal Planbureau (CPB)

12. Social Economic Council (SER); Transport and Water management Council; Rural Areas Council; Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (VROM)-Council; Scientific Council for Policy making (WRR).

13. OECD Territorial Review of the Randstad (2007) 14 standing for three aspects widely associated with sustainability: (respectively) social, ecological and economic aspects.

14. standing for three aspects widely associated with sustainability: (respectively) social, ecological and economic aspects. standing for three aspects widely associated with sustainability: (respectively) social, ecological and economic aspects.

parties (public and private) cooperating within two sub area's separately, the so called North wing- and South wing parties.

Visioning exercises: research by design The drawing up of the structural vision for the Randstad sets an example when it comes to involvement of experts from the architectural domain e.g. landscape architects and urban designers in spatial planning processes. Although this procedure was considered good practice since the early twentieth century, the Dutch Cabinet of ministers recently committed itself by means of a new architectural policy¹⁵ to explicit regulations and protocols to ensure an even wider and more consistent involvement of design experts

in all phases of spatial planning procedures, from the very start till the end of the implementation phase. The role of design during a spatial planning process can be described in the first place as imagining, 'visioning', or forward casting of possible and/or desirable futures for the area at hand. The images or drawings that result from such visioning exercises communicate comprehensive pictures of possible futures, integrating different aspects of complex questions in one view and in doing so facilitate discussions with stakeholders and other actors. By providing integrated solutions to complex, interrelated questions, spatial designs offer a starting point for further scientific and technical research (backward reasoning) and prove to be helpful in better defining the problems to be solved. This approach, labeled as 'research by design'¹⁶, was applied in the Randstad2040 project in the following way. Over a period of one week, three design ateliers took place with teams of some ten experts each¹⁷, led by renowned spatial designers (atelier masters). Each team departed from a different set of given starting points, the focus of each set being on a different theme: green/blue development, network development and urban development. The sets of starting points were derived from the many documents and other contributions (e.g. interviews with experts), collected as part of the research and advice trajectory (see above); they served as terms of reference for the design teams. Each team was asked to come up with three different spatial development perspectives with their given theme as primary focus (Figure 2). A fourth atelier, supervised by a member of the atelier of the Chief Government Architect¹⁸ was dedicated to integrating those thematic development perspectives and resulted into three future images of the

15. Vision on Architecture and Spatial Design, Design as part of Dutch Culture, The Hague, 2008.

16. So far no widely recognized definition of this term has been established. Recently Deltares started a reconnaissance study into this phenomenon, together with Wageningen University Research centre (WUR) and Technical University Delft (TUD).

17. Urban designers, landscape architects, national and regional government officials from the area and experts in fields such as water management, housing, environment, transport etc.

18. This atelier serves as the working bureau of the Chief Government Architect and three other Government Advisors: on Landscape, on Infrastructure and on Cultural Heritage; together they advise the government on design and policy issues regarding architecture in the broadest sense of the word.

Randstad area: Wereldstad (Global city), Kuststad (Coastal city) and Buitenstad (Outer city; Figure 3). The results of all ateliers (thematic as well as integrated) served as input into the dialogue trajectory (mentioned above). They were published on the aforementioned website and shown to the public in simultaneous expositions in six different cities within the Randstad area. During the 'Randstad table' discussions (see Dialogue, above), they proved to be very helpful in structuring discussions on the main choices to be made for the future of the Randstad and by inducing more explicit and concrete conclusions.

Strategic alliances Inspired by the results of a comparative study into successful implementation strategies in other global cities, various strategic alliances or implementation partnerships formed in the run-up to the structural vision, to ensure that ambitions for future development would actually be brought further once the structural vision was published. These partnerships include public authorities, market parties, social organizations and citizens. So far, five partnerships are active, covering the establishment of metropolitan parks, port cooperation, urban transformation processes, city-centre and sub-centre development and The Hague – city of human rights, freedom and safety. The Metropolitan Parks partnership for example plays an important part in opening up the huge potential of the so-called Green Heart area for providing accessible, high quality green space for the entire Randstad population. This partnership includes the minister of agriculture, nature and food safety, who asked a taskforce for advice on new financial constructions, which might be of interest for private investors to invest in attractive landscapes, leisure facilities, regional food production etc. The partnership is preparing a business case for a metropolitan park of international allure, which can serve as a model for further such development within the Randstad. Another partnership unites Amsterdam and Rotterdam harbour authorities and the ministry of Water management and Transport. Coordinated international profiling of both harbours – which are fierce competitors – is one objective under discussion, as well as cooperation to be more effective in innovation and sustainable development. Formation of a national harbour holding on the longer run is an option currently studied. Bottom up initiatives for new implementation partnerships on other subjects are stimulated and can count on support by government authorities as long as they fit the ambitions laid out in the structural vision. Additionally, the possibilities for a new series of key-projects of national importance, funded largely by national government, are explored.



4. Conclusions

The visioning trajectory provided ample food for discussions organized with all kinds of stakeholders during the Randstad2040 structural vision process. In total 12 'possible futures' were created and presented to audiences at meetings and on the website and the results of these consultations were valued as important input for decision making. So it seems fair to conclude that the Randstad2040 project meets the first criterion of foresight (par. 2, above) in that it incorporates anticipation on possible and/or desirable futures in a prominent way. It is not easy however to establish a clear relationship between the final, politically agreed choices laid down in the structural vision on the one hand and the content of the possible futures and discussion results on the other hand. How the latter actually gave guidance to the decision making process remains an interesting question for further research.

Combined, both the visioning and the research and advice tracks fulfill the second criterion for foresight: rational research paired with intuitive imagination during the process. Again, it would be interesting to know how both tracks actually influenced each other and how the decision-making process benefited from this interaction.

From the start, all parties involved emphasized the importance of an implementation strategy, taken up parallel to the structural vision. As a result, five strategic partnerships had been formed at the time the structural vision was agreed (September 2008) and an additional project, researching new national key projects within the Randstad area, was launched as a follow up of the structural vision. In view of desirable developments after 2020, the most important concrete actions at this moment may be to create funding for globally defined long term investments. It would be right to state that the structural vision helped create the sense of urgency needed for this type of actions that are now taking place in fore mentioned partnerships. The Randstad2040 project therefore meets the third criterion of foresight: translation into concrete actions.

As for the fourth foresight criterion: an integrated and trans disciplinary approach, it is clear that the range of critical questions raised in the Starting Memorandum already give evidence of a ambitious holistic approach. Also the research and advice track show a wide variety of topics covered by scientific research reports as well as specialists advice. The visioning exercises are particularly interesting, because they show different ways of integrated approaches. To start with, the series of three thematic design ateliers, focused on finding solutions for one specific problem, whilst taking into account effects of these solutions on other themes. Followed by a fourth integration atelier, in which particular combinations of 'thematic' solutions were integrated in three different designs for the future. Finally the structural vision itself, presenting on a single map twelve choices made, which are clearly interrelated, most of the choices bearing answers to several questions at the same time (Figure 4). In addition, the participants of the ateliers comprise experts from different fields, whose knowledge found

its way into the various designs. Yet, the emphasis on the physical spatial system seems to overshadow somewhat the economic, social and cultural aspects that cannot easily be mapped or designed.

5. Questions for discussion

The time horizon chosen for the Randstad structural vision is 2040. This seems far enough and yet not too far into the future, to raise interest for long term investments, which was a main driver for the vision. However, the impacts of climate change largely extend this period; from that point of view, 2040 seems rather close. In addition, some of the future perspectives developed in the ateliers seem to have chosen a later time horizon than 2040.

Questions: How to define the right time horizon when practicing foresight? How to deal with different time horizons for different trends, when imagining a situation at one point in the future?

The term 'foresight' is difficult to translate into Dutch. Maybe in general the word 'toekomstverkenning', literally: investigation into the future comes close. In the field of spatial policy making in the Netherlands 'research by design', as explained in this paper, is formally adopted as part of the process. Research by design seems to have a lot in common with the foresight approach.

Questions: To what extent can foresight, when applied in spatial planning, be considered synonymous with a 'research by design' approach? If not, what are crucial differences?

One of the important characteristics of the Randstad2040 project is the effort taken to involve as much participants as possible during the process. Images and maps of possible futures – one of the ingredients of foresight - played an important role in this regard, facilitating discussions and getting a clearer picture of problems as well as solutions.

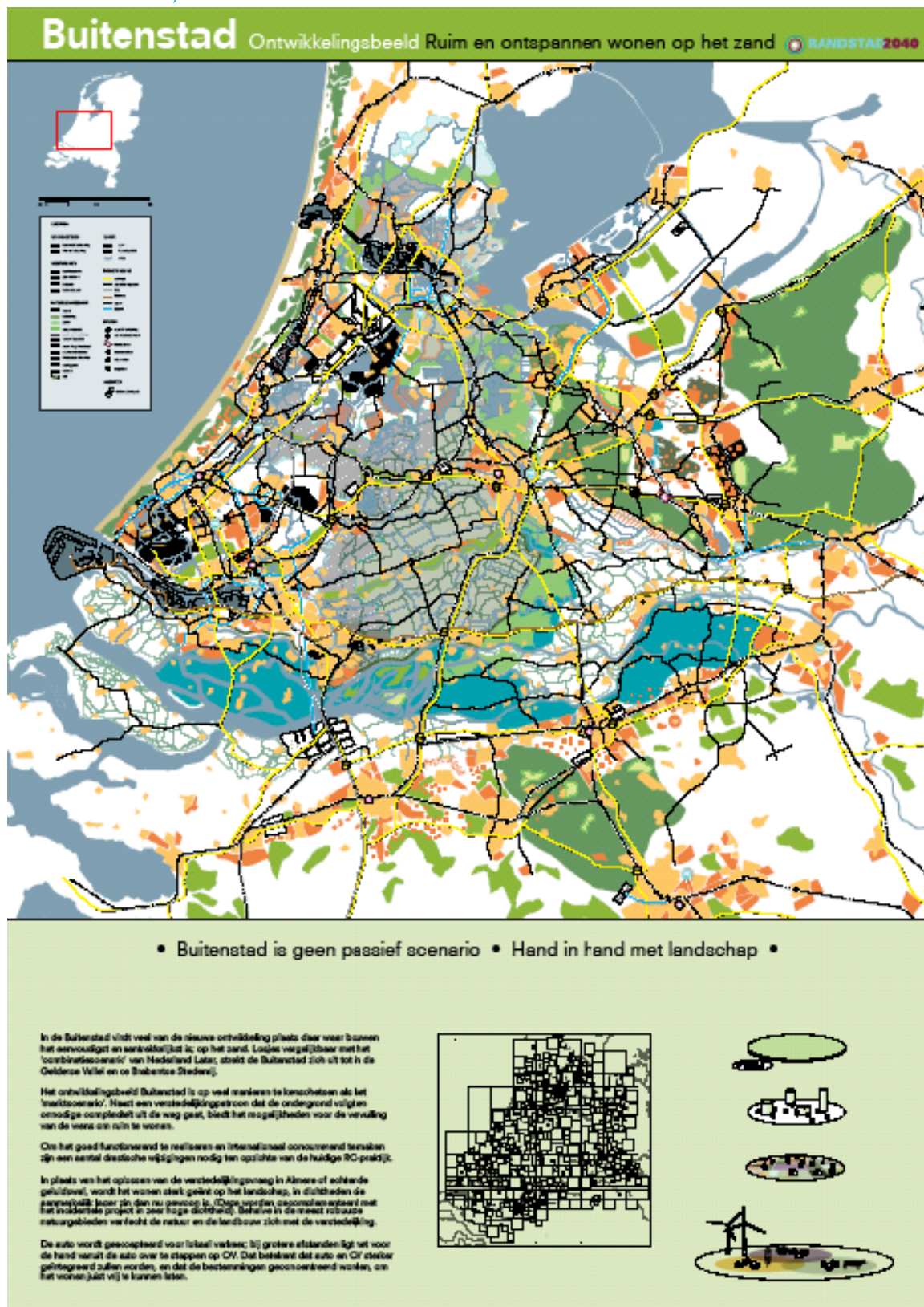
Questions: To what extent is foresight conditional for a participatory approach, or vice versa: can foresight benefit from a participatory approach? If this were the case for foresight as part of a spatial planning process such as Randstad2040, is it equally true for foresight in general? Or is a participatory approach a precondition dictated by the nature of spatial planning processes only, whether or not foresight is practiced?



Figures:



> Figure 1. Randstad Table meeting February 14, 2008



> Figure 3. One of three posters on the 'Outdoors city' development perspective, used for exhibition. Figure 4a Randstad2040 structural vision map Figure 4b Legend of Randstad2040 structural vision map



CreActive Place

Le pôle des futurs de Deauville

www.creativeplace.eu

contact@creadeauville.org



CreActive Place vous accompagne dans vos démarches de prospective appliquée, et met en oeuvre des ateliers de créativité.

Prenez contact : contact@creadeauville.org