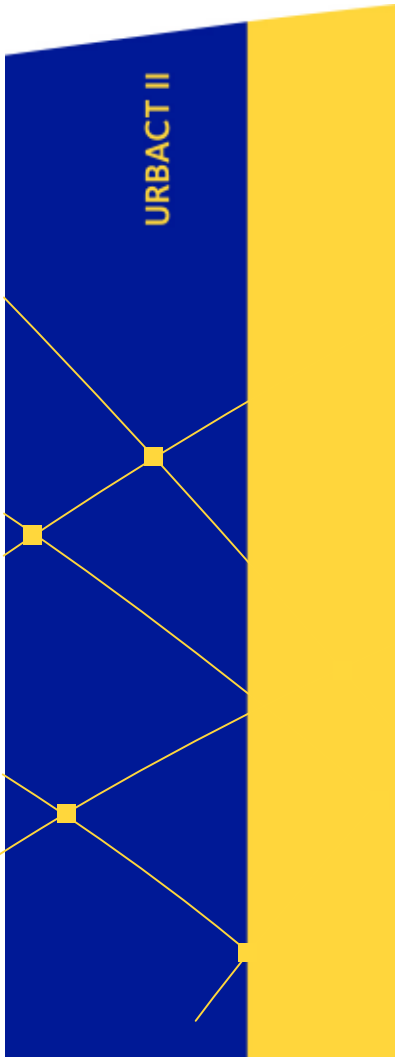


The Netherlands URBACT National Dissemination Point Bi-Annual Report



THE DUTCH LOCAL ELECTIONS AND URBAN POLICY

BY EVA DA COSTA & SIMONE PEKELSMA, NICIS INSTITUTE

Introduction

In March 2010, the Dutch local elections took place. These elections have produced remarkable results. Some major political shifts have occurred in comparison to the elections in 2006. Nicis Institute, the Dutch centre of excellence for cities, analysed the local political changes in its report 'Political landslides in large cities' (Politieke aardverschuiving in grote steden). In addition, it looked at the current challenges for cities. Can the new political context in local governments solve today's most pressing issues?

Political shifts

The local elections have led to more fragmentation within the municipal political spectrum. The main reason is that - nationwide - the highest number of votes went to small independent parties. Compared to the previous local elections in 2006, the parties that gained a considerable number of votes were very different. Especially, the right wing part (PVV) of Geert Wilders, which only participated in two cities - Almere and The Hague -, gained popularity. In Almere the PVV became the largest party and in The Hague the second largest. Also, the liberal democrat party (D66) and the 'greens' (GroenLinks) gained a large number of seats in municipal councils. However, both leading parties, the Christian Democrats (CDA) and the Labour Party (PvdA) lost a large number of their votes. Apparently, the downfall of the Dutch cabinet caused distrust of those leading parties among the Dutch population.



Effects on urban policy

According to the analysis of Nicis Institute, the political changes produced by the local elections could have an important effect on urban policy. The analysis states that one of the most important issues that will have to be tackled by cities in the following years is reversing the negative effects of the economic crisis. In order to effectively address this matter, the authors of the analysis believe that cities have to choose a clear and focused approach. Going about things as usual is not an option, they claim. They see the following (ideal) options:

- 'The caring city' focusing on the support of citizens (e.g. unemployed, disabled, multi-problem families);
- 'The entrepreneurial city' focusing on entrepreneurship and business;
- 'The sustainable city' focusing on sustainability (e.g. energy efficient housing, public space, traffic);

Conclusions

Dutch cities will have to make clear choices. They have to be determined to solve their local problems. However, the conditions for such clear policy choices are also determined nationally. The outcomes of the national elections that will take place in June 2010 will therefore also play an important role in the future of urban policy.

For more information, please download the Nicis Institute analysis (in Dutch) [here](#)

AREA-BASED POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN THE HAGUE

BY EVA DA COSTA & SIMONE PEKELSMA, NICIS INSTITUTE

Introduction

Campus The Hague, part of the Leiden University, has conducted a study illustrating area-based policy development in The Hague. Four districts in the city were selected and investigated for a period of two years (2008-2009). The final report of the study illustrates how and why national and local policy ambitions are often transformed in unexpected ways on the neighbourhood level. It also includes some important policy recommendations for local policy makers and practitioners. The report is part of the research programme 'Experimental situations' that was supported by the municipal department of Education, Culture and Welfare. The research also forms part of the 'Nicis Consortium Good Governance' which is implemented in cooperation with the Tilburg School for Politics and Governance

Area-based policy in The Hague

Area-based policy is part of a wider and longer trend of decentralisation in local policy in The Hague.

Since the 1980s initiatives have been developed in order to intensify the contact between citizens and the local government. This has also been the case in the four neighbourhoods studied: Mariahoeve, Laak Noord, Schilderswijk and Duindorp. How has area-based policy shaped these neighbourhoods? The researchers found that people create the city and the neighbourhood through official participation in project teams, debates and steering group meetings and, at the same time, through informal encounters at the coffee machine or drinks.

Policy makers involved in area-based policy have to deal with many different people and institutions and have to be very flexible because of that. In addition, the coordination and adjustment of goals, values and means among stakeholders has become increasingly important.

The four cases studied reflect the new dynamism of area-based working structure and show how different parties cooperate locally in The Hague. The report also illustrates what skills and instruments are needed to tackle local neighbourhood problems.

Conclusions

The report presents many conclusions in relation to area-based policy, among others :

- Many stakeholders are involved in one problem. New groups in which area-based policy is defined anew are continuously being formed in terms of their agenda, means and cooperational structures. As such, the working method of these groups can easily be adapted to local developments ;
- Area-based policy demands increased cooperation and the formation of new relationships between institutions. This means that the potential for conflict has increased. That is why stakeholders involved in area-based policies need to find a productive way of dealing with conflicting interests and working methods ;
- City hall often ignores or denies local neighbourhood realities because they do not correspond with its political wishes. As a result, local practitioners feel they have to conform to these political aspirations in order to receive funds;
- Local neighbourhood problems often require context specific solutions that do not always fit within the city's general policies.

Policy recommendations

The report offers the following policy recommendations for stakeholders:

- Formulate specific contextual instruments and solutions;
- Attempt to accommodate different interests, not to reach compromise;
- Involve citizens;
- Provide accountability in terms of results;
- Be forward and outward looking;
- Be consistent in your external communication.

For more information, please download the report (in Dutch) [here](#)

PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES IN CITIES

BY EVA DA COSTA, NICIS INSITUTE

Introduction

How can cities promote healthy lifestyles among their citizens? The programme 'Healthy Impact' (Gezonde Slagkracht) carried out by ZonMW (the Netherlands organisation for health research and development) provides the answers. The programme, commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) stimulates and supports Dutch municipalities to find innovative ways to encourage people to live healthy lives.

Healthy impact

The Netherlands want to become one of the top 5 countries in which people live healthy lives. Thus it is important that cities, the most populated areas in the country, promote healthy lifestyles among residents. In this respect, the 'Healthy Impact' programme encourages an effective integral approach on the local level linked to national policy. The aim of the programme is to reduce four factors which could damage citizens' health including overweight, alcohol, drugs and smoking.

Fifty municipalities have the possibility to participate. In total the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports has made 10 million euros available for the development of integrated approaches in the field of health and prevention. In the upcoming years, cities can apply for subsidies between 100.000 and 250.000 euros to help develop their integrated health strategies.

Each municipality can implement its own intervention policy or project and share knowledge with other participating municipalities. In other words, the municipality determines the content of the policy and project and can serve as an example for other cities. In this case knowledge exchange between municipalities is very important. A special common intervention-database has been created in which municipalities can share knowledge and evaluate each other's policies and practices.

Cities that do not qualify for a subsidy are still able to participate in the special Knowledge and Learningprogramme which forms part of the Healthy Impact programme. This learning programme is offered by Nicis Institute in the form of newsletters, so-called knowledge ateliers and conferences.

Fore more information, please visit the website of [the Gezonde Slagkracht](#) programme

Visit the website of the [Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport](#)



INVESTMENTS IN CULTURE USEFUL FOR CITIES

BY SIMONE PEKELSMA, NICIS INSTITUTE

Introduction

In times of recession and budget cuts, the general benefit of culture for the city has to be proven with hard numbers. However, such numbers are often not available. They are generally limited to elements such as employment in the cultural sector and tourist expenditure. However, according to Gerard Marlet, Director of the 'Atlas for Municipalities' and author of the publication 'Music in the City', there is more to culture. As culture improves the attractiveness of cities, the general living climate improves as well. This is an important element for businesses. In addition, Marlet claims that there is a link between the presence of a highly educated, creative population and employment.



and historic heritage has proven to have a positive effect on the general attractiveness of cities. Indirectly, culture also has a positive influence on the livability in neighbourhoods.

What kind of investments?

Gerard Marlet claims investments in culture are good for cities. However, he does believe that these investments should fit certain criteria. Investments should be made in cultural activities that are:

- Diverse;
- Well-situated in the city;
- Continuously available;
- Aimed at the local population.

Culture and employment

According to Gerard Marlet, the relationship between a highly educated, creative population and employment is formed by four mechanisms.

1. People with a high level of knowledge and skills are more productive. Therefore it is attractive for businesses to locate in places where these kinds of people are widely available;
2. Highly educated people spend more money in cafes, restaurants, theatres and retail. These expenditures create employment, especially for people with a lower education;
3. Highly educated people are more inclined to start a home-based business;
4. Cities with many highly educated people adapt more easily to new economic circumstances. This is because they are more creative in finding alternative economic activities.

Successful investments in culture start with knowledge about the local context and an understanding of the competitive position of the city.

For more information, order the publication 'Music in the City' (in Dutch) [here](#)

Visit the website of the 'Atlas for Municipalities' [here](#)

Culture in the city attracts people with possibilities. At the same time, culture is important for the local economy. Especially the presence of performing arts

RANDSTAD 2040

BY SIMONE PEKELSMA, NICIS INSTITUTE

Introduction

The Randstad is a densely populated conurbation in the Netherlands, consisting of the four largest urban areas Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. 50-75 percent of the Dutch population lives in the Randstad. The area plays an important role for the country.

In 2008 the Dutch government presented its ideas of what the Randstad should look like in 2040 in the so-called 'Structuurvisie Randstad 2040'. This long-term vision indicates how the Randstad can be developed into an internationally strong, sustainable and attractive region in the next 30 years.

Recently, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) organised a conference about the future of the Randstad. One of the main conclusions of this conference was that the government should make clear choices about and focus on the long-term future.

Dare to choose

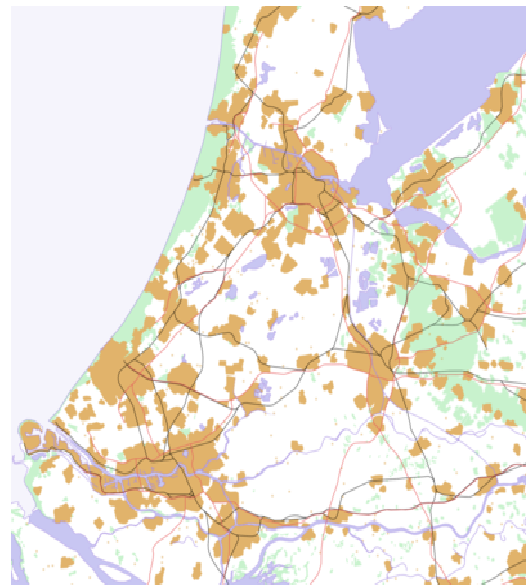
The conference 'Strong Cities, Strong Randstad' stressed the fact that the development of the Randstad is a vital issue for the future of the Netherlands. The participants concluded that in order to optimise this development, the government should dare to choose and make decisions. It should focus on a limited number of projects that are of national importance, instead of trying to divide attention among a large number of small projects. The government should explore the areas in which the Randstad could be a world player and excel. Attracting the Olympic Summer Games 2028 could for example stimulate the spatial-economic élan of the area.

2040 is now!

Apart from stating the importance of making a clear choice when it comes to the development of the Randstad, the conference stipulated the fact that long term plans should be developed. In practice, political urgency is often focused on the short term, but the long term future also needs to be acted upon now.

Main elements Randstad 2040

- **Water management & nature**
- **Differentiation of landscapes**
- **Development of agriculture**
- **Green (and blue – water) living**
- **Strengthening international functions**
- **Strengthening international connections**
- **Improving connectivity**
- **Climate**
- **Development Almere in relation to the Amsterdam region**



Source: Wikipedia

ENERGY @ HOME

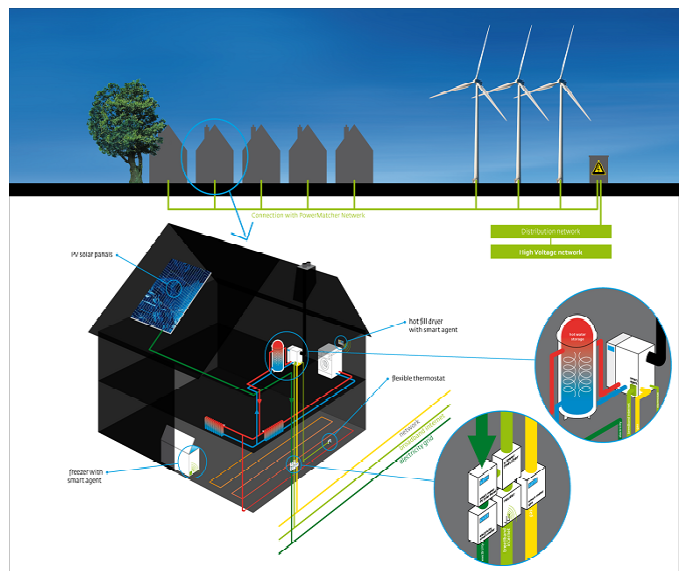
BY SIMONE PEKELSMA, NICIS INSTITUTE

Introduction

Energy knowledge network KEMA, research centre ECN, energy company Essent and software company Humiq have jointly realised a so-called 'smart-grid' in the town of Hoogkerk in Groningen, called 'PowerMatching City'. The project was ordered by the European Union and is the first living smart grid community in the world.

Smart grids?

A smart grid delivers electricity from suppliers to consumers using two-way digital technology to control appliances at consumers' homes to save energy, reduce cost and increase reliability and transparency. It overlays the electricity distribution grid with an information and net metering system.



www.powermatchingcity.nl

PowerMatching City

In the project 'PowerMatching City', the use and production of energy (wind, solar and biogas) are continuously synchronized. This means that electric appliances are automatically switched on when the supply of energy is high. At the same time, 'extra' energy is stored so that it can be used at a later time. People can even sell their unused energy to energy companies.

The smart systems making this possible have been applied in 25 homes in Hoogkerk. They have made the owners largely independent from the normal energy network.

The future

The 25 houses in Hoogkerk are virtually connected to each other. They all possess micro combined heat and power, hybrid heat pumps, smart energy meters, photovoltaics and smart electronic devices. Together these houses form a virtual power station.

It is believed that this form of power creation will gain importance in the future. Therefore, the goal of the PowerMatching City project is to develop a method to create energy locally and apply this method on a larger scale in the current energy infrastructure.

PowerMatching City on TV

[Een Vandaag – 3 December 2009](#) (EN/NL)

[Dutch news – 16 February 2010](#) (NL)

PowerMatching City on the radio

[Dutch news – 17 February 2010](#) (NL)

PowerMatching City YouTube

[2 December 2009](#) (EN)

“BEHIND THE FRONT DOOR”

BY SIMONE PEKELSMA, NICIS INSTITUTE

Introduction

In the Netherlands there is one form of outreaching social support that has increasingly been applied in the past few years. It is generally addressed as the ‘behind the front door’ method. Professionals using this method actively and directly approach marginalised people to find and help them with their most important problems. This new method has been widely applied in the Dutch ‘neighbourhood approach’. It is supposed to encourage cooperation within the social sector.

In a recent literature study of Nicis Institute, commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, different experiences within the ‘behind the front door’ approach have been collected. It aims to introduce professionals to these experiences, so that they can include them in their own work.

Behind the front door

The ‘behind the front door’ method is applied in a wide variety of projects and policy fields. This study includes the following working areas:

- Housing
- Debts, nuisance and abusive situations
- Education
- Family support
- Elderly people living independently
- Domestic violence

Main conclusions

- There is a growing tendency in the Netherlands to use a certain degree of force when it comes to preventing people from falling down the social ladder;
- Discussion about the ‘behind the front door’ approach mainly concern accountability and home visits. These visits should always be legitimate and well-founded;
- Most of the professionals using and clients ‘receiving’ the ‘behind the front door’ method are very positive about it;
- For multi-problem families the ‘behind the front door’ method has turned out to be very useful, because they often do not ask for help or do not know where to go;
- The ‘behind the front door’ method is a good way to spot social problems. However, the method does not seem to be *the* answer ;
- The ‘behind the front door’ method can only deliver lasting effects if the entire structure of social support is improved.

For more information, download the report (NL) about the ‘behind the front door’ method [here](#)



URBACT II

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development.

It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 255 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants

www.urbact.eu



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