

# Towards an EU Urban Agenda

Working together on the future of European cities  
and promoting European urban success stories



# Colophon

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Cover photo: Artist impression of the centre of Amsterdam and the A'DAM Tower, seen from the north.

Photo De Urbanisten

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**Unlock the potential in cities.  
Give them room to harmonise their  
development within EU policy.**

Cities such as Amsterdam, London and Barcelona are top centres for creativity and invention. Our European strengths include unique powers of thought and creativity, which we had in the past and still possess to this day.

To put this succinctly: Europe does have a strong basis to face an increasingly globalised world confidently. Nevertheless, a lot still remains to be done.

**Ronald Plasterk**

Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

# Growth potential

When I talk about the EU Urban Agenda, I sometimes show a satellite photo, which illustrates European light intensity really well. At a glance, it is possible to see the huge urban conurbation, which stretches from London to Milan, with in between the built-up areas of our Randstad, Flanders and the Ruhr. An area often referred to as the "Blue Banana", because of its shape.

Here we find an area with one of the world's biggest concentrations of people, money, trade and industry. This is where European growth potential is situated.

I have written "growth potential", as more and more people are pulled towards cities. That's where the most money is earned and where the most jobs are to be found. Places where people congregate, where it all happens!

A fair number of European cities are doing well internationally, though this doesn't mean we should rest on our laurels. As Education Minister I happened to visit Shanghai a few years ago. At that time in the Netherlands we were discussing the renovation to the Rijksmuseum, and we had endless debates as to whether a cycle tunnel under the museum should be constructed or not. During that same period of time Shanghai managed to build a suburb to house twenty million people.

This demonstrates two different traditions of urban growth and democracy. It also exhibits the fact that in the world we live in, growth can occur rapidly. That is why the EU Urban Agenda exists; to unlock the potential in cities, and to give them room to harmonise their development within European policy.

To achieve harmonisation, we might mean answers to questions such as: Which rules can we remove or (temporarily) adjust? How





Skyline of the City of London.  
Photo EU Media Service

# Towards an EU Urban Agenda

**In heavily urbanised Europe, cities are the future. To allow them to play a key role, it is vital that local, national and European governments provide the appropriate conditions for urban development. This is the aim of the EU Urban Agenda. During the Dutch Presidency in the first half of 2016, member states will sign a pact to work on this.**

Cities are of major importance. Almost three quarters of Europeans live in urban areas. The population of cities is increasing rapidly and will quite probably reach more than the 80 per cent mark by 2050. Metropolises generate two thirds of European Gross Domestic Product. Cities are the motor for economic growth and would appear to hold unprecedented innovative

keys to solutions for modern social problems. Several cities and conurbations are internationally highly rated, in terms of competitiveness, innovation and quality of life.

Simultaneously, cities and urban areas are facing great transport, environmental and social challenges. Many economic, social and sustainability questions can be solved by the cities themselves. In the long-term however, they may reach their limits in this. The challenges are only realistically going to be solved utilising an integrated approach with varying authorities co-operating. The EU Urban Agenda offers governments, cities, citizens, companies and European organisations a framework and handhold to achieve concrete change.

## Urban-friendly Europe

Cities' economic growth has become much more dependent on the global economic climate, technical developments and infrastructure. Cities and other decentralised authorities often

experience that European policy doesn't connect with the place based approach at local and regional level. The EU Urban Agenda aims at a better link between European policy and guidelines and urban practice. Better accessibility to European funding and knowledge sharing regarding urban issues will also be focussed upon.

In recent years much more governmental attention has been achieved as regards city and urban regional development. An urban-friendly European policy is highly necessary to ensure full growth potential for job creation and economic development: growing

towards a Europe of competitiveness, high quality of life and sustainability.

Cities are the places where the effect of European policy on certain themes can be seen at first hand. In order to strengthen urban potential, urban dimensions needs to be strengthened in EU policy. This is not about more competences for the EU or new EU legislation, but more about a new way of policy design – which is aimed at more cooperation between the European Commission, member states and cities themselves. An initiative such as the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment's *Make it work*, shows us how a co-operative approach can produce smarter laws and regulations.

## Growing sense of urgency

The Netherlands and Belgium were key players calling for attention to urban issues back in 2013. Under the Italian presidency the EU member states called for the joint development of an EU Urban Agenda by the member states, the EC and cities. During Latvia's Presidency, attention was called to the needs of smaller and medium-sized cities. On June the 10th 2015, the ministers responsible for urban development of all 28 European Member states agreed to develop and launch a joint EU Urban Agenda under the Dutch EU presidency.

## Deputy-Mayor of Nantes

# Eurocities seeks recognition for an inter-regional, city-wide approach

**“Eurocities”, a network of 130 European cities, has been striving for thirty years to have urban issues dealt with on a pan-European scale. Its main aim is mutual learning, support and co-operation whilst consulting with European institutions. Karine Daniel, Deputy-Mayor of Nantes and deputy chair of Eurocities explains why.**

Deputy-Mayor of Nantes: “Mayors are not leading the world as yet, but we are discovering that there is much innovative experience in finding solutions to thorny problems.”  
Photo Photo Patrick Garçon



“There are numerous European policy areas which have direct implications for what happens in cities. Take for instance the rules for the environment, transport, and energy.

As the Eurocities group, we attempt to exert influence over European policy which affects our cities in the European Parliament, European Commission and other European institutions.”

## What is the importance of the Urban Agenda in this context?

“The EU is used to utilising criteria based on statistics for whole regions. Specific problems in certain parts of regions are therefore often hidden from view. Nantes is the only large city in this area and the problem solving approach in parts of the conurbation is similar to that of other cities in Europe, as is the inability to claim regional grants. It is not a matter of course that the voice of the cities is heard in regional committees. Fifteen years ago this wasn't really necessary, however, rapid demographic growth, and the impact of changes in cities, socially, economically and culturally has changed this radically.

We as Eurocities are asking for inter-regional attention to be paid to problems on a city-wide basis. We know that around seventy percent of public investment goes to cities. We represent the voice of city dwellers in Europe and therefore earn the right to be heard by European policy makers.”







Ile de Nantes  
Photo Valery Joncheray

#### Any results?

"In Nantes and in other European cities, we encourage companies working for the public sector to take their corporate responsibility seriously, through strict compliance to social and environmental legislation. We want to ramp this up to a pan-European scale and are therefore in discussion with the European Commissioner regarding this. Mayors are not leading the world as yet, but we are discovering that there is much innovative experience in finding solutions to thorny problems. We need more dialogue between the cities and the EU to ensure this expertise becomes more visible and the EU provides further support. We are working hard and booking results. Recently we have had much more access to both the European Parliament and Commission. We presented our vision as regards the Urban Agenda to the EU Commissioner Cretu, responsible for regional and urban development at an informal meeting in Riga last June. This is the first time that Eurocities has been invited to such a meeting."

#### What has been learnt from cross-city co-operation?

"We have a large regeneration project on the Ile de Nantes, right in the heart of the city. We want to develop a creative neighbourhood here. When we started this project we looked at similar projects in other European cities and discovered which pitfalls may arise along the way. Our policy and the manner in which we run the project is directly based on experiences gained in other cities such as Amsterdam, Barcelona, Aix-La-Chapelle and Utrecht.

Together we develop specific policy instruments, a real example of cross-city co-operation, which benefits all cities involved. However, there isn't just one simple solution to all the various problems. Cities face a great diversity of problems and need many diverse solutions to these, depending on local circumstances. What works well here in Nantes, doesn't necessarily work in a different European city."

In the summer of 2014, the European Commission carried out public consultation to gauge the opinions of stakeholders; in order to discover what the most important elements of the EU Urban Agenda should be. The results of this were published in the *Commission Staff Working Document* in May 2015. The Commission stresses in this document that the stakeholders are collectively of the opinion that the EU Urban Agenda is necessary, so that cities can better employ their knowledge and expertise in European policy development. The respondents made it known that in the EU Urban Agenda, urgent attention must be given to three main themes: smarter cities, greener cities and social cities. The European Commission is going to give priority to these three areas. The Commission will also improve the co-ordination of policy initiatives aimed at cities.

## More involvement of our cities in European policy-making

Various stakeholders at European level have professed their support for EU Urban Agenda. Representatives of cities and regions, such as the Committee of the Regions, Eurocities and the Council of Municipalities and Regions have all expressed their need for a pan-European Urban Agenda.

#### New co-operative ties

The ambition exists to stimulate co-operation between member states, cities and European institutions through the formation of so called "partnerships". The partnerships will focus on the most urgent European issues. The aim of the partnerships is a strengthening of the urban dimension of EU policy through:

1. Improving European Regulations
2. Improving access to European funding
3. Better knowledge-sharing and inter-city co-operation

The partnerships will focus on themes like urban poverty or sustainable urban transport. The partnerships will explore how to strengthen the urban dimension of EU-policy on the selected themes through a case based approach and implement concrete actions. The first of these "partnerships" will take the stage during the Dutch EU Presidency. >

Committee of the Regions  
Mayor Bas Verkerk

## Urbanisation has to be on national and European agendas

Current discussions concerning the future of cities would appear to be a useful impulse for European policymakers. In that aspect alone the EU Urban Agenda is a stimulating and innovative instrument. The Committee of the Regions adds to this by playing an important role as contributor of best practices and championing policy and governmental reforms.

The Committee of the Regions advises the European Commission and European Parliament regarding regional socio-economic affairs. In the context of the realisation of the EU Urban Agenda; the committee has busied itself with creating best practices for European urban development and further selecting and presenting these. "The importance of cities is nowhere near to being fully recognised", states Bas Verkerk, Mayor of Delft and a member of the Committee of the Regions. He finds this a strange situation, because it is exactly these European cities that are so attractive, and competitive in economic, cultural and social terms.

"It's in cities and urban areas where it is all happening! Of course this occurs in conjunction with the surrounding rural areas – something which is often overlooked. It is undeniable that urbanisation in Europe is occurring at rapid pace. This calls for vision, policy and measures also being taken at European level."

#### Opportunities

Mayor Verkerk is a lawyer and town-planner and has immense experience in the spatial planning field; at city level in The Hague and Delft, though also at a regional level.

"It surprises me that in Brussels, not only in the European Parliament but also in the European Commission, so little attention is paid to innovative possibilities or economic development in urban areas. Disintegration of focussed policy and financing is almost certainly the reason for this. European structural funding could be stimulated more and applied more cleverly", is Verkerk's opinion. The mayor of Delft also thinks it is necessary that all relevant parties should prepare themselves to work at European level in order to create urban



Delft Mayor Bas Verkerk: "Urbanisation calls for vision, clear policy and measures, at a European level too"  
Photo Gemeente Delft

policy which is aimed at improving the current social and economic climate in cities.

Together with his Committee of the Regions' colleagues he has been researching urban development ideas and new themes. Many working-visits to colleagues crisscross throughout Europe have produced a varied and current view of the importance of urban networks and economic opportunities.

## "It's in cities and urban areas where it is all happening!"

"Despite the evident importance of well functioning, sustainable cities and regions it would seem that only compartmentalisation and stagnation are present in Brussels. Whilst in areas such as infrastructure and environment policy is applied at European level, that's less so for cities. In my opinion heavy investment is needed in implementation, co-ordination and financing of urban renewal projects by the European authorities."

Robbert Coops



### Dutch Urban Agenda

Apart from the EU Urban Agenda a Dutch national urban agenda has also been developed. The European and national agendas are closely interwoven. Increasingly urban questions are cross-border affairs and mutually comparable. The national Urban Agenda can provide examples of innovative

innovation. These calls to attention can become part of the EU Urban Agenda dialogue aimed at EU policy improvement.

The Dutch Urban Agenda has started to map, opportunities and threats, the availability of scientific knowledge, urban and national ambitions, public and private tasks and all related initiatives.

Cities are challenged with determining exactly what their urban tasks are. Based on these findings “City Deals” are established. Cities and other involved parties work jointly to carry out this work. This is mainly about cities and urban areas being assisted in solving concrete problems and helping them fulfil their ambitions. In the words of the Dutch Cabinet: “Initiatives with a strong innovative character, which are also applicable internationally”.

The Dutch central government aims to adjust legislation and regulatory frameworks to create more space for new

ideas, where necessary and possible; tailor-made for regions, coupling funding sources, easing financial constraints and working towards new forms of tendering within urban projects.

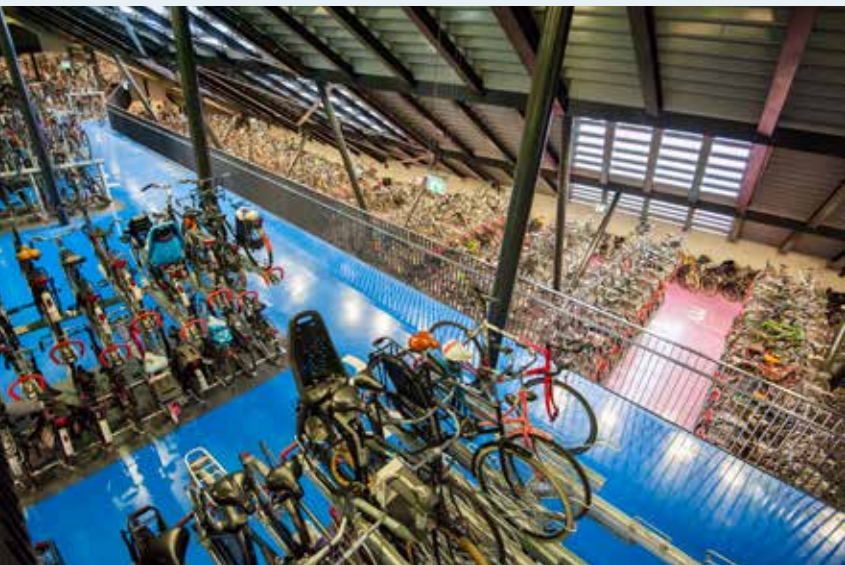
Zinzi Speear,  
Pedro Campos Ponce

Euronantes-Tripode A, new living area at Île de Nantes.  
Photo Jean-Dominique Billaud



### Best practice

## Knowledge centre *Europa Decentraal*



Contemporary bike-parking at railway-station Utrecht Centraal; sometimes it's difficult to understand which rules or exemptions are applicable.

Photo Kees-Jan Bakker Utrecht

Due to the complexity of European legislation, which is implemented in the form of various policies and directives, the need for information at the level of local government is increasing. The Dutch knowledge centre *Europa decentraal* aims to explain European legislation to local and regional governments in clear, understandable language. In this edition, managing director Fenna Beekmans and her colleague Lisanne Vis, legal advisor, will explain how they contribute to improving knowledge of European legislation.

Initially, the local governments asked basic legal questions. These days, the questions are much more complex and may relate to e.g. the (European) legal consequences of highly ambitious policy objectives. Fenna Beekmans explains: “Cities and urban districts work on many projects in the field of innovation and smart and creative cities. Those projects often qualify for European funding.” However, when applying for European funding, they also have to comply with the European

state aid rules. Exceptions to these rules are to be found in the so-called *General Block Exemption Regulation* (GBER). The GBER is part of the new state aid legislation and has been implemented for a year now. Pursuant to this revised regulation, certain categories of state aid are exempted from the notification procedure (culture, research, development, innovation and regional aid). However, a lot of knowledge is necessary to comprehend exactly the terms and procedures. This is where *Europa decentraal* comes in.

### Bike parking & EU law

“Cities are directly involved in matters concerning public procurement and state aid. For about a year now, most questions we have been receiving at our helpdesk concern state aid,” Lisanne Vis states. The more complex territorial planning projects become and the more stakeholders are involved – both (semi) public institutions and private companies –, the more legal questions we receive. Lisanne Vis:

“Think of a situation where a housing corporation and a developer are involved: partly social housing and partly private housing market. The question, then, is which rules of EU competition law are applicable and which are not? Social housing and local infrastructure qualify for an exemption on the basis of the GBER. Indeed, local infrastructure is a fairly recent addition to the GBER. Recently, we received a question as to whether funding for a facility for bike parking qualified for

this exemption for local infrastructure. These types of legal questions are examples of the questions our legal advisors advise about. We discuss the findings with our fellow experts at the national government, the European Commission and cities in this country.”

### Link with local practice

All our questions and answers are stored in a database, which now contains over ten thousands of Q&As regarding European law. Therefore, *Europa decentraal* is an important link between European policy-makers and daily practice. If we suspect bottlenecks in legislation, we pass on the factual information to the local and regional governments’ representative bodies and the Dutch Ministry of the Interior. Subsequently, they can lobby – e.g. at the European Commission – to

## Database with more than ten thousand Q&As regarding European law

see if legislation needs to be amended. The knowledge centre allows the representative bodies and the Dutch Ministry of the Interior to collect input from local and regional practice regarding the implementation of European legislation.

Marcel Bayer

For more information: europadecentraal.nl

Knowledge centre *Europa decentraal* was established in 2002 by the local and regional governments’ representative bodies (VNG, IPO and UvW) together with the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Its aim is to explain European law and policy to local and regional governments.





EU Urban Agenda as one of the spearheads

# The Dutch EU Presidency 2016

A European Union, which is focussed at the essentials and committed to growth and job creation. Striving for connection between all parties, citizens and social organisations being at the heart of the matter. These ideas will be in the vanguard of the Dutch EU Presidency in the first six months of 2016. Cities play a vital role in the fulfilment of these wishes, as an innovative hotbed for sustainable and socially inclusive development.

From January to July 2016 the Netherlands hold the Presidency of the European Commission. Holding the chair is primarily concerned with ongoing European affairs. The Dutch government is committed to the strategic agenda the European Council laid down last year. Smart, socially inclusive and sustainable growth are main goals in that strategy. Growth, which will add to the innovative nature of the European economy, where inclusivity is at a premium and future generations are not burdened with today's problems.

"The Chair's role is predominantly that of a trustworthy and efficient mediator, who forges compromises between the 28 member states, Council, Commission and European Parliament", states Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Bert Koenders, in his letter to the house of representatives about the priorities of the Dutch EU presidency. The member state, which holds the presidency, can stress elements that aren't necessarily an extension of national policy.

## Improved regulatory framework

The Netherlands wants a EU, which concerns itself with major issues and contributes added value to what member states and decentralised authorities within the member states, should and can do.

Cities and other urban authorities are important players in applying European regulations, which attempt to improve quality of life and creating an economically level playing field for all. To ensure that the cities and regions get the chance to develop their qualities to the full, it is sensible to look at how regulations can be simplified and improved. This does not simply concern de-regulation but is more about better link-ups between legislation and various regulatory frameworks.

## Roofscape

The Rotterdam municipality wants to encourage 'sustainable roofs'. De Urbanisten, innovative office for urban research and design, examined the conditions for the multifunctional use of rooftops and visualized the potential of the Rotterdam Roofscape.

Image De Urbanisten

It will result in the reduction in administrative burdens for citizens, firms and local authorities. This is in line with the plans regarding better regulatory frameworks as published by Euro Commissioner Frans Timmermans earlier this year. This package looks at improving transparency in EU decision-making processes and improving the quality of new legislation.

## Growth and Jobs

A second spearhead during the Dutch presidency will be innovation as the key to a sustainable and inclusive economy. The innovation agenda is multi-faceted. It concerns removing obstacles to innovation within the internal EU market and the enlargement of the focus on innovation in all European funds. Strengthening the digital economy is also sought. Highly important is that society embraces renewal and the challenges itself. Job-creation is obviously a top priority; however the social face of Europe should play an integral role and the strategic agenda should aspire to serve the needs of the people.

## Connect and Support

The "Better Regulatory Framework" agenda ties into the wish for a Union, which is based on fundamental truths and is supported by its citizens. "Support for European decision making comes into being through powerful participation and influence" writes Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Koenders in the abovementioned letter. For the Dutch Cabinet, strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the EU remains at the forefront of their aspirations.

Transparency in decision-making is a crucial factor in maintaining support. More tangible and less opaque results regarding important issues for both citizens and the business community are vital too.

There is a great deal of support amongst cities, member states and other stakeholders for the effort to enlarge the attention given to urban questions within European policy.

## Amsterdam Pact

Within the EU Urban Agenda, governments, cities, European Union member states and European institutions are all working towards a sustainable, innovative, liveable and

## EVENTS 2016

Leading up to and during the ministerial meeting a certain number of events connected to the EU Urban Agenda will take place.

- In February a "New Europe City makers" meeting will take place, where social innovators involved will discuss ways to meet major urban challenges.
- On the 14th of April the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, and Ministry of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure and the Environment will host the Innovation Fair "2016 Cities of the Future", a network of around four thousand entrepreneurs, policy makers, scientists and inspired citizens.
- On the 21st of April, the Municipality of Amsterdam will host an international innovation conference.
- On the 30th of May, the Committee of the Regions is organising a high level meeting for local politicians from the EU.
- Again on the 30th of May a "City Maker's Summit" will convene. This enables entrepreneurs to create input for the EU Urban Agenda. During this summit social innovators from different European cities will discuss about the EU Urban Agenda.
- And finally, also on the 30th of May, the ministerial conference concerning the EU Urban Agenda takes place. The "Amsterdam Pact" will be signed here.

economically strong Europe. The objectives of the Netherlands for the EU Urban Agenda during its Presidency are ambitious. On the 30th of May 2016 an informal Ministerial meeting will take place. During this conference, the member

## Strengthening of growth, sustainability and innovation

states, with support from the European Commission, and representatives from cities and regions will determine the content of the EU Urban Agenda through the Amsterdam Pact. This agreement will commit member states to the EU Urban Agenda and to work together with European Commission and





cities in strengthening the urban dimensions of EU policy. The innovative urban partnerships are going to explore how the EU can better tailor its policy to urban practice. The first thematic partnerships will also be launched during the conference.

## Present your best achievements on a European stage

### Innovative approach

Scientific researchers, town planners, entrepreneurs, and public institutions are all convinced that cities are dynamic breeding grounds for innovations, which overlap between town planning, technology and socio-economic issues.

### Wall of Knowledge

The margins of the inner city of Amsterdam as an open wall, where universities can be at the centre of knowledge and innovation, a space of connectivity for students, start-ups and newcomers. Image OverZaaijer Architects

Moreover, cities really contribute to economic growth. At various international meetings during the Netherlands' Presidency, various Dutch cities, which have developed successful innovative solutions to urban problems, will present their findings. On the 14th of April 2016, three major Dutch ministries will launch the Innovation Fair 2016 – "Cities of the Future".

This is a network of around four thousand entrepreneurs, policy makers, scientists and inspired citizens. Together they collaborate on technological breakthroughs and innovations that should make a big difference to cities in the

future. This network is meeting up during the Innovation Fair, in order to exchange ideas, show its public strength and to formulate collective ideas and strategies. Social entrepreneurs will also contribute to the EU Urban Agenda. An exchange of knowledge and experience shall undoubtedly occur, providing an opportunity to demonstrate their fortitude during the City Makers summit.

**Marcel Bayer**



Ahmed Aboutaleb

## The Lure of the City

The city continuously renews itself – just the annual influx of newcomers alone. I often compare the city with a tree that grows and continually creates new bark. The core however remains the same. That's how you retain your values, such as an international character, hard work, multiculturalism and tolerance.



The newcomers have to make these values their own and help build the city. Meanwhile, Rotterdam comprises 174 nationalities. In this respect our city resembles New York. Every year a new population influx, including entrepreneurs, breathes new life into old neighbourhoods, offices and industrial areas. They fulfil their dreams in a city where anything is possible.

The inhabitants themselves are taking the initiative. Creating agricultural areas within the city to grow food, building climate-neutral housing and ensuring safety and a high quality of life in the areas where they live. They often possess a solution to a problem or a new idea for an area before any city official has come by. We are gradually moving towards co-creation, where inhabitants help determine and decide what should be done in their area and who does what.

In an age where we are all becoming world citizens and a restless world reaches us through social media on a daily basis, the need to have something of our own grows. People often derive their identity from their close proximity, their own city or neighbourhood.

This is how I see my own city, as a breeding ground for socio-economic renewal, where inhabitants and companies from far-flung corners of the world feel at home and are able to show initiative.

The call of the city is not simply always a success story. There are winners and losers. Worldwide, the divide between rich and poor is increasing at an alarming rate both within the city and between urban and rural areas. Cities worldwide will in the future have a more difficult task to ensure necessary social improvement for their citizens.

Though they can achieve this! Utilising aligned policy within cities to become the nursery for new generations; who using their motivation and talent can carry the city to the future on their broad shoulders. Motivated citizens are the building-blocks for European cities. An exceptional focus on education is necessary to achieve this. This must be the breeding ground for talent, ambition and social skills.

The economy will grow hugely in the coming decades. To be able to cope with international competition, we need to form new alliances and governmental restrictions mustn't be too limiting. We need to think more practically than ideologically.

The national government shouldn't see cities as mere instruments to implement national policy. It needs to support cities in the challenges they face and only formulate constraints when necessary. In short, ensure urban regions receive bigger budgets and more authority.

The Netherlands wants to set up EU Urban Agenda in 2016. With four fifths of the populous living in urban areas, it is clearly important that Europe develops serious policy and frees up finance for cities. Some progress has been made, though far from enough. Currently European cities are suffering from high unemployment figures – in some areas up to forty or even as high as fifty percent. It is difficult to grasp that from the EU budget of € 145 billion almost 60 billion goes to agriculture and rural development. To tackle unemployment (via the ESF) a mere ten billion Euros is available.

One of the Agenda's aims is better outlay of European funding towards cities. If this entails that the Netherlands is committed to achieving more funding, then I can only strongly support this. A visible contribution to urban development will only increase support for the European project by citizens. This to me is of significant importance.

**Ahmed Aboutaleb,**  
Mayor of Rotterdam

This text is an abstract of his H.J. Schoo Lecture, which was partly published in *Elsevier magazine* in Dutch



# Co-producing solutions

Cities need knowledge, experience and tools to develop integrated responses to the urban challenges they are confronted with today, whether social, environmental or economic. URBACT promotes the exchange of ideas and policy experience on sustainable urban development, fostering the integrated and participatory approach to deal with urban issues.

Partners in TUTUR, the URBACT network on temporary use as an instrument for redevelopment, are visiting Viadotto Dei Presidenti in Rome at their concluding meeting last summer.  
*Photo URBACT*

For more than 10 years now, hundreds of cities, urban practitioners, policy-makers and experts, have shared their experiences and worked together to build a wealth of practical knowledge, expertise, and good practice that is available to all. While the URBACT II programme is coming to an end, the third generation of the programme is now being launched, with a new round of networks about to kick-start their activities. An appropriate timing to take a look at this European Territorial Cooperation programme to grasp how it can further support cities in enhancing their urban policies.

## Local partnerships

Under the URBACT II programme, 550 cities have been involved in fifty thematic networks to solve the thorniest of urban problems (check [www.urbact.eu](http://www.urbact.eu)). They have done so using the “URBACT method”, that is going for an integrated approach and co-producing solutions with all local stakeholders

concerned by the policy challenge. In each URBACT partner city, a local partnership was set up, the URBACT Local Support Group, gathering the relevant stakeholders, from across the city departments to break silos, from NGOs, local agencies, business representatives, education institutions, depending on the policy challenge to be addressed. In the end, more than five thousand local stakeholders working on urban development have been involved in the programme.

The growth of the actual number of participants since 2003 is most impressive. However the success lies in the networking framework and methodology offered to cities



getting involved in the programme. “We invite cities to come and work on exploring their policy issues and solving their problems, so on themes that the cities themselves have put forward” explains Melody Houk, Projects Manager at the URBACT Secretariat. “Just about all urban policy challenges faced today can be addressed, and most of them actually are. URBACT partners work on social inclusion related issues, dealing with fostering opportunities for young people, adapting the city to an ageing population, supporting the creation of jobs. Others come to URBACT from an “environmental perspective”, willing to reduce their carbon footprint and develop resource-efficient policies in terms of transport, housing, urban

## Networking has to lead to concrete results in partner cities

planning, brownfield reversion. Whatever the main entry point, all cities commit to adopt an integrated approach and develop a local action plan that takes into account all relevant pillars of urban development, the social, physical and economic dimensions of urban issues.”

## The method

The challenges for cities are becoming more complex and global whilst financial resources are more limited due to the recent recessionary period. Most local authorities have had to apply stringent austerity measures and greatly limit their ambitions. That is when transnational co-operation, mutual learning and sharing of ideas and solutions is more especially needed. “There are cities in Europe that are more advanced than others in solving some of the most pressing policy challenges” states Melody Houk. “These cities can support colleagues in their approach to the problem, in initiating change, in avoiding pitfalls they may face and providing inspiration for them to develop their own solutions.”

All URBACT networks follow a “bottom-up” policy-oriented approach. “What we offer cities

through our networking programme is more than just simply a copy and paste narrative” stresses Melody Houk. She explains that a major specificity of the programme is the “URBACT method”. “On the basis of the policy issues they decide to address, the URBACT networking framework guides cities into revisiting their policy problems and how to frame these problems, depending on their own specific situation. Then through the transnational exchange and learning activities, collecting and sharing experiences, working with other cities in their network, the cities draw up action-plans. The formulation of such action-plans is compulsory from the moment they join one of our networks. And these action-plans must >



be developed in a participatory way, and building on an integrated approach. This involves the setting up of local support groups gathering relevant stakeholders, which is also a requirement for cities joining an URBACT network. It is essential that stakeholders involvement occurs not only in defining the action plan, but also right from the start, at the stage of

received an envelope of expertise, allowing the partnership to benefit from the support of an expert who accompanies partner cities in the exchange and learning journey, in terms of content and methodology. Of course, every network is led by a city acting as lead partner, yet cities are not always in the best position to draw lessons from their experience by themselves. Hence the expertise support. Both lead partners and network experts receive regular training and coaching to fulfil their role and support successful delivery of the networks activities. Melody Houk explains: “At least twice a year we have a meeting with our lead partners and experts. We know who they are, what they are up to and what is going on in the networks. We provide them with tools and methods to organise interactive learning seminars, peer-reviews and study-trips to make sure learning is taking place and

Melody Houk: “Just about all urban policy challenges faced today can be addressed, and most of them actually are.”

Photo URBACT

problem definition. Then they can also be involved in the implementation and delivery of the actions. Our aim is that networking leads to concrete results in partner cities, in terms of local governance through novel ways of developing policies, new partnerships being developed and of course, impact on the content and efficiency of the urban policies themselves.”

that this learning is being taken back to each city and their stakeholders. We are highly demanding as regards the quality of the experts, as they play a key role in the success of our networks. This close collaboration with lead partners and network experts produce fruitful results. This is how, together with them, we can achieve knowledge breakthroughs and the consequent knowledge sharing thereafter.”

## It is not just a “copy and paste” narrative. Each city is unique

### The Expertise

Not every local authority across Europe knows about or is even trained in the integrated and participatory approach to urban issues. During URBACT II, national training seminars were organised in all partner countries to provide partners with methods and tools for participatory and integrated policy-making. In these seminars not only did city representatives take part but also local stakeholders. Each network also

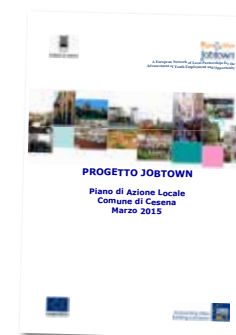
evaluations revealed that over two thirds of the cities were implementing their plans. The impact of these plans on the ground will only be visible at a later date as, when it comes to sustainable urban development, most action plans have a ten to twenty years life span. Nevertheless it is already a very positive achievement.

Melody Houk also underlines the importance of the intangible results, learning and change in local governance, that



Meeting friends and partners at the URBACT in Riga, June 2015. “The success lies in the networking framework and methodology offered to cities getting involved in the programme”.

Photos URBACT



### National URBACT points

The new URBACT III (2014-2020) programme is now on its way, with new types of networks, more capacity-building activities and enhanced out reach capacity at national level. URBACT III is setting up national URBACT points in each participating country. These will function as information centres to spread knowledge and experience to more cities, beyond the cities that are partners in URBACT networks. “It is important to foster access to the programme, its networks, its knowledge, good practices, in national languages”, explains Melody Houk, Projects Manager at the URBACT. “These National URBACT points should also facilitate an on-going dialogue between the different levels of governance that are involved in urban development, from the national level, to regional and local authorities. This is crucial to achieve results and sustainability.”

“We do need the national governments. In a handful of European countries, for instance Germany, The Netherlands or France, there is a strong national framework for urban policy. This helps cities to deal with the huge problems they face. Other countries could most certainly learn from this. URBACT can also play a useful role in ensuring capitalisation across Member States on such policy frameworks”

are achieved when cities work together over three years and inspire one another. “There is some kind of “peer-pressure” that is operating amongst the partners working together, during the network seminars and visits. Partner cities are acting as critical friends, looking at the host city from a different perspective, questioning the city about how certain problems

## Action-plans must be based on participatory and integrated approach

are being resolved. This is the best way to initiate change and different ways of developing policies at local level. Thanks to this transnational cooperation, meetings, study visits, a community of practice has been created. We think this is much more effective than us centrally monitoring and instructing... not sure we could do that anyway!”

Marcel Bayer





Helsinki as smart-city trendsetter

# Utilise your city!

In the last few years Helsinki has certainly been in the top ten of the world's smartest cities. That success is certainly due to the role smart technology has played in the daily life of its inhabitants, entrepreneurs and government. Equally as important are Helsinki's aspirations as to what sort of city it wants to be.

Just as in other cities, initial schemes were mainly technology projects; handy apps such as smart parking, "real time" traffic info and online restaurant bookings all flowed out of these. Nowadays the emphasis is on complete city development, where an integral process and participation are guiding principles, the use of smart technology being a resource. Forum

Virium Helsinki and Smart Government play key roles in this strategy. The forum ensures that accessibility to data is wide-scale and available everywhere. Through Smart Government the Helsinki Municipality has boosted the success of the open data movement greatly. The whole process of policy making and decision making has been digitalised since the spring of 2013. Under the name Helsinki Region Infoshare, via the Open Ahjo interface Helsinki's populace can access all this information. Any policy document produced by any municipal department can now be read by citizens – as can minutes of meetings held by councillors and aldermen and agendas for forthcoming sessions.

## Open data and apps

"-Utilise your city- was the slogan my predecessor used to encourage our citizens to become involved in the development

of our city" states Marja-Leena Rinkineva, Director of Economic Development for Helsinki. "We genuinely believe that cities exist to be used and not just looked at. Openness and participation mean our citizens have ample opportunity to utilise and enjoy our city. I mean by this parks, public spaces and all facilities. More and more you see family parties being organised in one of our parks-and that is fantastic isn't it?"

But also the digital availability of all our information and documentation stimulates the utilisation of the city by its citizens. More than a thousand databases are currently publicly accessible and so up-to-date, that our entrepreneurs can carry out business based on the information held on them."

With an app on their smart phone, Helsinki's population can contribute to smart solutions to traffic problems on the roads in the metropolitan region.

*Photo City of Helsinki*



The Helsinki Region Infoshare website hri.fi is crammed with current datasets, mostly in Excel form, ranging from the economy, housing, tax income, the environment to recent visitor numbers to cultural events and the number of children per school. Small companies and creative citizens from the city itself have recently developed scores of mobile apps, making information easier to comprehend through visualisation, for instance current data concerning air quality and the traffic situation in each area. These apps strengthen the population's participation. Inhabitants can put forward their ideas for spatial planning on interactive maps and using an interactive tool, get involved in planning the future for education. With an app on their smart phone, they can contribute to smart solutions to traffic problems on the roads in the Helsinki region.

**FORUM  
VIRIUM  
HELSINKI**

## Shared platforms

The greatest successes booked thus far by Forum Virium Helsinki have been achieved through a cross-pollination of public and private ideas and initiatives. Harnessing the open data and pilots that the forum has helped set up, Helsinki has become a huge experimental stage for user-driven innovation. Thanks to the Smart City Network (initially supported by EU

# A huge experimental stage for use-driven innovation

Marja-Leena Rinkineva: "Openness and participation ultimately deliver livelier, more comfortable, and economically stronger cities."

*Photo City of Helsinki*



Funding) digital solutions are also applied in partner cities such as Amsterdam and Barcelona. The aim is to eventually involve cities in the whole world to contribute and use services on shared platforms. The Finns have already laid the foundations for this through their fruitful Six City Strategy (6Aika). The six larger Finnish cities have been working co-operatively on an inter-city wide platform for sustainable development. "Designing, again and again looking for different and better solutions are in our DNA" says Marja-Leena Rinkineva. "There >



was already a strong emphasis on service design in the World Design Capital Helsinki 2012 process.” On the subject of the rapid growth of smart digital services in Helsinki: “In

## Accessibility to data is wide-scale and available everywhere

an environment where openness and participation are central tenets, this ultimately delivers livelier, more comfortable, and economically stronger cities. A place where everybody can feel at home; especially because they are much more involved in what happens in their surroundings. Or as our mayor has been known to say: Helsinki is fun and functional.”

Marcel Bayer

### Smart Society Eindhoven

Making optimum use of the power of design, technology, open data and fast connectivity is also the City of Eindhoven’s ambition. Through so called Living Labs, the municipal authority is experimenting within IT-seeking smart solutions to manage energy, traffic flow and use of public space in a better way. It is also hoped this will contribute to an improved organisation within the care sector, education and culture. In the long run it is hoped this will have a positive effect on welfare, jobs and sustainability.

Inventing smart solutions and collaborations is most necessary in a city such as Eindhoven. The Council makes this clear in an announcement surrounding a recent budget. “The

Municipality can no longer allow itself to attempt to solve problems by simply throwing money at them. Moreover, the role of government is changing now that society is relying much more on networks.”

This is the reason that the council is giving services more attention (and money!) to the programme Residents and Government participation. The authorities hope to involve Eindhoven’s inhabitants more closely in policy issues and respond better to their needs. The Councillors and Aldermen call this “a quest” – which eventually should result in a fairer balance in the relationship between citizens and the authorities.

The city image of Eindhoven is changing. By installing high-tech city beacons residents, visitors and entrepreneurs have access to several digital and interactive basic functionalities.

Photo Nick Bookelaar



## Europolis, a vision of the future city

The involvement of the Dutch Government and European Commission in further developing an ‘urban agenda’ has to be applauded. The ‘urban’ is one of the main cultural achievements of our modern societies; spending time on how we can further develop our ‘greatest invention’ to make us really richer, smarter, greener, healthier, and happier, is certainly good invested. But actually, what do we need to address with an urban agenda, in terms of spatial forms, in terms of the urban society, or in terms of processes and relations operating in those societies and urban settings?



To answer these questions and in the interest to further stimulate discussion about resulting challenges and opportunities, let us formulate a couple of broad conjectures:

The city as we knew it will be replaced with a network of places and localities that are functionally closely interconnected. There is no ‘city’ anymore, at least not compared to the one we know now as the European City. Instead, there will be a granular urban structure, based on central infrastructure corridors and arterial connections that organize the flow of goods, data, people at a European – and some of them at a global – scale. The resulting urban structure in the Netherlands will be the heart of what the late Sir Peter Hall and his colleague Kathy Pain in 2006 called *Europolis*, the giant agglomeration centre in west-central Europe, stretching from London to Milano. This will be the central island of a European continent, which in other parts will also see deserts of abandoned regions emerging; disconnected and almost empty but a repository of non-urban opportunities like autonomous rural communes. We as citizens will live in this structure as permanent ‘shuttles’, switching between places.

Throughout our life cycle, we will be hypermobile urbanites, clustering and forming clouds with other citizens in different combinations of elective communities. We will be co-housing, co-working, co-commuting, and more generally co-creating the urban environments, which best reflect our respective needs at the time.

The cells of such a granular urban structure will be inter-generational co-housing hubs that produce excess energy, are based on a share-economy and shared-consumption philosophy, and that will offer their communal amenities as co-working spaces for their neighbours; the human-scale will not be lost in the *Europolis*. The

ever-changing space of flows cannot be fixed in one administrative super-structure, as a kind of extended version of the old fashion city council with a mayor on top structure. If old style cities ruled the world, parochialism would be the result. The urban cells are too independently minded and, given their expertise and capacities, also too demanding to be ruled from above. The processes required to operate those new spatial structures are based on relations; networks of people, lay and expert, set up task forces to face the challenges, embedded in such a development. Within that granular urban structure,

## Urban regions are too complex and independent to be governed top-down

costs and benefits are shared, responsibilities and opportunities negotiated and allocated across scales – and also across borders. And, most important of all, within that granular urban structure, a new ‘city of ideas’ is borne, not as a planned endeavour, but as the outcome of everybody’s right to urban life – an urban life that is not only meaningful and playful, but also conflictual and filled with dialogue, an urban life that is open to becoming and encounters, and especially, ‘to the perpetual pursuit of unknowable novelty’.

Professor dr Peter Ache

Chair of Spatial Planning, Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands





Growing segregation in European cities due to income inequality

# Narrowing the gap

The growing divide between rich and poor in European cities is leading to spatial segregation. Rich and poor are living further and further away from each other. This can have disastrous consequences for social stability and the competitiveness of cities, an internationally comparative study makes clear.

The growing divide between rich and poor in European cities is leading to spatial segregation. Rich and poor are living further and further away from each other. This has disastrous consequences for social stability and the competitiveness of cities, an internationally comparative study makes clear.

The research Socio-Economic Segregation in European Capital Cities. East meets West compares social-economic segregation in 2001 with that of 2011 in thirteen European cities: Madrid, Milan, Tallinn, London, Stockholm, Vienna, Athens, Amsterdam, Budapest, Riga, Vilnius, Prague and Oslo. The conclusion being that segregation has increased in all these cities, except in London (no real change, but segregation already being high) and Amsterdam (a reduction).

'Where is the colour?' A written protest on a grey wall in Madrid Rio, a recently developed vast urban park, could be read as reference to the spatial sorting out of social groups in the Spanish capital. The centre in most European cities are becoming increasingly gentrified.

Photo Marcel Bayer

The increase in segregation is of great concern to policy-makers in many European cities as this can undermine competitiveness and social sustainability. The spatial separation of rich and poor can lead to misunderstanding and social turmoil. The riots in recent years in Paris, London and Stockholm can not be seen separate from concentrations of poverty in these cities. Amsterdam was the only researched city where segregation has diminished.

## Spatial grading

Increasing inequality due to the influence of globalisation, economic and labour reforms, neo-liberalism – and in some cities – a reduction in investment for social housing have directly led to growing segregation. In certain more fortunate poor areas, gentrification takes place, whereby incomes rise here. In other less lucky neighbourhoods, the middle classes move out, reinforcing the segregation process. This is revealed in case studies and comparative research into detailed population studies regarding income and employment

in the thirteen cities under the spotlight. Although social inequality is increasingly translated into spatial grading in European cities, the processes vary from city to city.

Stockholm no longer has an equal distribution of social classes across all areas, a former characteristic of the Swedish "social paradise". In recent years the neo-liberal political climate has done away with this. Stockholm has seen the greatest rise in segregation between rich and poor in the last ten years.

The first ten years of the 21st century saw the disappearance of mixed rich/poor areas in Vienna, due to the large concentration of low-income families in social housing and an influx of immigrants. Income differences are also apparent in Athens, though strict spatial segregation is not a fact. There is little residential mobility in the home ownership dominated housing market of Athens, due to the economic crisis.

Amsterdam was the only researched city where segregation has diminished. This is presumably due to the recession. Middle-income families remained in the city, which has slowed the long-term process of increasing segregation. Now the housing market is looking much healthier, segregation will undoubtedly gain ground, researchers expect.

## Education and Social Mobility

By constructing mixed neighbourhoods of private and social housing, the authorities in many cities attempted to combat segregation right up to the start of the recession. In deprived areas a lot of social housing was demolished and replaced by private owned property. Through this expensive area-based policy, neighbourhoods

Luxury apartments in former ministries in the centre of The Hague; who is able to live in our cities in the near future?

Photo J.A.B. Janus

undergo a new lease of life; however nothing changes the underlying cause of segregation, namely income inequality. There is no convincing evidence that physical intervention in cities, such as a conscious mixing of socio – economic groups by placing private and social housing next to each other, contributes to solving the underlying inequality problem.

# Mixed housing doesn't solve socio-economic problems

In practice it is probably better to invest in education and social mobility. This is a sustainable solution, which contributes to economically stronger cities.

Maarten van Ham, Technische Universiteit Delft

Tiit Tammaru, University of Tartu

*Socio-Economic Segregation in European Capital Cities. East meets West*, editors Tiit Tammaru, Szymon Marcinczak, Maarten van Ham & Sako Musterd, is the outcome of a research financed by the European (ERC) and Estonian Research Councils and the Marie Curie programme.





The Danish capital plans to be CO2 neutral in 2025

# Eco-city Copenhagen



Copenhagen is one of the most environmentally sustainable cities in the world. Residents and entrepreneurs have always been heavily involved in city planning. The Danish capital is exemplary because of its clean technology, management techniques and sustainable buildings. Copenhagen is also known as the “organic” capital. Ten percent of food bought is organically produced. For example thirty percent of all milk produced is of organic origin.

In recent years, Denmark has scored highest in the United Nations Annual World Happiness report. This is not a coincidence. This country was one of the first in the world to introduce environmental laws. And the result of this is clearly visible in the Danish capital.

The transformation which was initiated twenty years ago is now bearing fruit. A run down and rapidly de-populating city centre with out-of-date housing and moribund industry has blossomed into a smart, attractive, sustainable city.

The city is surprisingly easily reached by car and public transport is well organised and affordable. Soon, a second circular metro line is to be opened. Orientation toward Sweden,



A third of the population chooses to cycle to work or school on a daily basis, the ambition is to bring that to fifty percent.

*Photo City of Copenhagen*

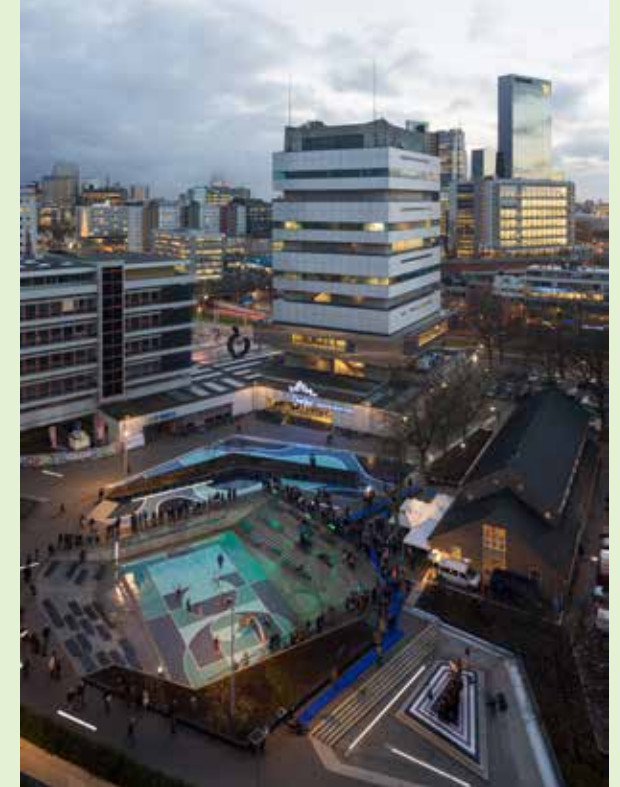


especially nearby Malmö, is not just of infrastructural significance. The erection of the Sont Bridge which links Copenhagen to Sweden was an important socio-economic impulse to both cities. The Danish government's energetic role was an important factor in its realisation. Co-operation may go further with a projected new metro line and joint harbour. The aims

## Sustainable Rotterdam

Rotterdam is much more than simply a port or the Gateway to Europe's main port. In spite of the petro-chemical industry and harbour activity the “Maasstad” is one of the most sustainably advanced in the world. The municipality is striving to double the number of city-centre inhabitants, whilst keeping the environmental impact to a minimum. Long-term policy is necessary to ensure sustainable development is achieved in Rotterdam. Part of this involves retention of water after heavy rainfall in public spaces. Bentheim square is not only a school and sports area, but also a reservoir.

*Photo Ossip van Duivenbode*



for both cities are identical. Both are striving for a healthy, sustainable, urban knowledge region where state borders have no important role.

### Cycling Capital

Because the population is highly educated and attractive and comfortable accommodation is available, Copenhagen is a highly sought after location for leading companies and individuals. The city is rich in museums, cafes and restaurants, universities and institutes of higher education. Wealth is reasonably equitably shared out amongst the population.

Copenhagen is a real cyclist's city. There has been successful investment in a network of cycle paths and bike storage facilities. Around a third of the population chooses to cycle to work or school on a daily basis. However, the Dane's hold an ambition to achieve a fifty percent level of commuting by bike in the capital in the near future. There are free city bikes for tourists in Copenhagen.

In terms of energy supply Copenhagen is a world leader. A city heating system supplies the majority of houses with warmth. Energy-supply share through wind turbines and geo-thermal sources is relatively high. Interesting and hopeful experimentation is being carried out in the field of bio-fuel extraction from seaweed. In ten years, CO2 emissions have been reduced by thirty percent, proof that collective effort in this area can achieve astonishing results.

Despite the presence of many parks including Kongens

Have (King's Garden) and Frederiksberg Have, the Danish capital doesn't score highly in the abundance of nature and biodiversity stakes. The availability of “green areas” for the populace is indeed somewhat limited.

### Urban Dialogue

Copenhagen has had more than twenty years' experience in organising city-based dialogues. Planners, engineers, architects, but also residents, companies and varying organisations

## Consequent long-term policy including five sustainable initiatives

all collaborate on sustainable urban development. An integral approach is applied in areas such as energy and mobility. A virtual platform which interfaces with thousands of city dwellers proves its worth on a daily basis. This leads to consequent long term policy with strong support from many areas in urban society being applied to sustainability questions.

The Municipality's active position has led to a climate plan containing fifty sustainable initiatives, ranging from a wind park set up by residents to a housing association with ninety CO2 neutral dwellings. This plan will lead to a situation where Copenhagen will be CO2 neutral by 2025. Conforming to European guidelines on this issue.

**Robbert Coops**





Environmental rules need to be streamlined and co-ordinated

# Make it Work

European environmental guidelines could be made more logical and consistent. Within the *Make it Work* project EU member states are attempting to achieve more cohesion between both national and pan-European legislation, so that they work better in practice.

In *Make it Work* the Netherlands together with other EU countries are looking at problematic areas in national and EU legislation, which don't work in practice. This project is actually not connected to the EU Urban Agenda, but a good example of how legislation can be improved. Especially the positive approach to how member states can collectively

share knowledge and experience to ensure legislation is more effective in practice fits perfectly with the EU Urban Agenda.

## Complexity

For national ministries and European Directorate-Generals it would appear difficult to transcend the tendency to work in hermetically sealed sectors. They observe and approach the actual situation in another manner. Moreover, legislation can become uncoupled under different circumstances and time periods. Dutch environmental law consists of scores of laws and hundreds of rules as regards spatial planning, homes, infrastructure, environment, and water; all with their own working methods, principles and requirements. Even though most of these rules and regulations are in

## Green Deals

More than a hundred Green Deal already have been realised in The Netherlands, for example the Green Deal Car Sharing. Government, municipalities, leasing companies and insurers work together to stimulate grow car sharing into a network of 100,000 cars in 2018.

Photo MyWheels

place to protect citizens and the environment, as a whole, this is far too difficult for those who have to work within this framework. That is why the Dutch government is working on new all-embracing environmental laws, which will cut red tape, thus simplifying planning applications.

## European policy-cycles

One of the principles of the new Dutch environmental legislation in the making is a better connection with European law. Anke Willemstein from the "Simply Better" organisation within the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment has been involved with this for sometime now. "We have done some analysis of European guidelines as regards environment, water and nature; the three main policy areas. We have gleaned knowledge into the shared guideline systems and the policy-cycle for the accompanying instruments."

Dutch environmental law is based on an integrated approach to the environment. After analysis of European guidelines, it would appear that this clashes with the sector-oriented approach of European legislation. The compulsory nature of reporting within one guideline is often slightly different to another one. For instance the planning regulations concerning water guidelines contradict those found concerning nature, Anke Willemstein explains. "That is not to say that this always creates problems, but it could be much better, smarter and less clumsy.

There are indeed bottlenecks sometimes, because the aims of certain guidelines and policy areas don't match up". Willemstein again: "Within the EU we are faced with an enormous amount of rules regarding disposal of hazardous chemicals (REACH); with the aim of banning these dangerous substances from entering the environment. At the same time we have other European legislative aims which attempt to recycle and re-use chemicals as much as possible. All the various rules are plausible and can be easily explained, but

are often not attuned to each other. This tends to be difficult for member states to cope with. We wish to work toward a system with more attuned and seamless guidelines"

## Smarter design

Anke Willemstein stresses that *Make it Work* does not have the aim to create a type of environmental law at European level. "In our environmental laws, spatial planning takes

## Cutting red tape and simplifying planning applications

centre ground and this is not so easy at a pan-European level. National sovereignty gets in the way of this. Our experience in the Netherlands has shown us it is possibly better to make the system more transparent and to allow local government increased flexibility and space to apply their own integrated assessments within European and national frameworks. We see that it is not always sensible and practicable to reach solutions by imposing rules. There may well be other problem-solving methods. Possibly by stimulating a change in behavioural patterns. In the Netherlands we have the so-called "Green Deals", agreements with businesses, civil society organisations and authorities to establish green and sustainable growth. The Dutch government facilitates these initiatives by bringing stakeholders together or taking away unnecessary limitations in regulations. With such an approach, we hope to improve the environment, especially in our cities, and also to reach out and assist the rest of Europe."

## Marcel Bayer

*Make it Work* is associated with the European Commission programme Delivering better Results. The Netherlands during its period as Chair along with the UK and Germany wants to form a core group to establish a programme of work for the coming years. A debate next year within the advisory group for the environment will discuss smarter rules and other instruments to achieve collective results.



