The Netherlands: Adaptation of the Carefully Planned Structure

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Abstract (to be checked)
The facility structure in post war areas in The Netherlands is probably one of the most intricate in the world, with facilities clustered in neighbourhood units that are functionally ordered across the cities. However, developments in society harmed the viability of the hierarchic structure and forced to adaptation or dismantling of the neighbourhood centres of the lower end of the pyramid, a process still continuing. Economic viability competes with social desirability of a neighbourhood centre as a social heart of the neighbourhood.

As a reaction to the problems of pre World War II urban areas, most post-war developments in The Netherlands, constructed during the 1950s and 1960s, were designed according to the principle of the neighbourhood unit, each with its own schools and shops within walking distance and, perhaps typically Dutch, larger centres at cycling distance to serve two or perhaps more of those neighbourhoods. City centres provided facilities at the highest level of the urban hierarchy. A neighbourhood was considered as both an area where individuals could live in a safe and familiar surroundings and one that provided all daily facilities.

However, this well thought out structure for facility provision experienced viability problems in later decades, due to developments in society, and changes in population, in neighbourhood centres and within the facility structure itself. These developments led and will continue to lead to adaptations of the structure of facility provision.

In this article the history and development of post-war neighbourhood centres in The Netherlands is examined. The aim is to analyse the origins of the intricate facility structure, to determine what developments have threatened and changed this structure and what the future prospects of neighbourhood centres in The Netherlands will be.

The next section discusses the origins, the ideas behind the layout plans, the construction and the outcomes of the neighbourhoods and their centres. The following section deals with the developments of these centres up to the present day. General demographic, economic, societal, political and other developments has changed their positions, in general in a negative way as is described in the following section. Several strategies are being tried to adapt or revitalize these centres. This links with general policies to renew neighbourhoods. The last part goes into the future of these neighbourhood centres; a future that could be a change in function, for example into housing. Or it could be that other services fill in the gap, for example small firms. Moreover, future general trends and policies can change the local position of neighbourhood centres.

The article is illustrated with a case study of the South-West district of The Hague, an example of a large 1950s and 1960s development with an intricate structure of facilities. The original ideas, the development afterwards and future prospects are examined.

The Origins of Neighbourhood Planning in the Netherlands

The high point of neighbourhood centre planning was in the post World War II decades. This period can be characterized by both the battle against the ever lasting housing shortages and a change towards a completely different planning concept that was based on the idea that a modern egalitarian society could be physically developed. The urban design of the post-war neighbourhoods was strongly influenced by CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne). The modern architect had the task of supporting and creating a new, modern, and egalitarian society (Turkington *et al.*, 2004). CIAM had an enormous influence on the development of many post-war neighbourhoods. Standardization, repetition and functionality became the buzzwords of this period, resulting in neighbourhoods with many identical housing types and planning layouts.

Some neighbourhoods from the 1950s and 1960s were built in a hurry to relieve the housing shortages and were not very well conceived, but quite a lot of others were very well thought out as ideal neighbourhoods. It is ironic that just these neighbourhoods are at present subject to large urban renewal schemes in The Netherlands.

The Neighbourhood Idea

After the Second World War, the material and social damage was enormous. Almost one-fifth of all dwellings had been destroyed or damaged, while there had been a standstill in construction during the war years (de Vreeze, 1993, p. 250). Together with an increasing population, this was the cause of a housing shortage that continued much longer in The Netherlands than in most other countries.

Already during the war years architects started the post-war reconstruction of The Netherlands. In Rotterdam – the city so heavily bombed in 1940 – an influential study group was formed, chaired by A. Bos, director of the Rotterdam Housing Department. They published a report, *De Stad der Toekomst, de Toekomst der Stad* (*The city of the future, the future of the city*), in 1946. It was written as a programme for the rebuilding of Rotterdam after the war, but was of great influence on all post-war urban development in The Netherlands. The basic idea was that to structure the city into several neighbourhoods would stimulate a better society and therefore better personal well-being.

A central concept in the report was the neighbourhood idea as an answer to the chaos of the war and the fear of the unstructured urban growth of the years before. Bos *et al.* considered the city too large, too chaotic and too complex for healthy, individual development. The prewar city was considered an obstacle to healthy personal development and community life. The neighbourhood idea was the answer to the dangers of the anonymous city, and the report's authors believed that a well-developed new area would lead to better community life and a more democratic society. The key question would be, according to Bos *et al.* (1946, p. 49), how to offer the urban inhabitant a convenient and reasonably sized living environment with which he could identify. The answer lay in the segmented structure of the city. The city of the future, in the words of Bos, should no longer be a chaotic conglomeration of made up of rows of new houses, but should be ordered into a structure based on separate neighbourhoods, each with its own character and its own social and cultural sphere. The city would be made up of smaller, orderly social communities close to the individual residents. Figure 1 shows how the chaotic disordered urban planning should be transformed into organized cities, structured according to hierarchic principles.

Figure 1 near here [The segmented city in four figures]

Origins of the Neighbourhood Unit

The neighbourhood idea was derived from the concept of the *neighbourhood unit*, originally conceived by the American pedagogue and urban planner Clarence Arthur Perry (Perry, 1929). Perry reacted on the influential Human Ecologists of the Chicago School (especially on *The City*, the 1925 study of the Americans Park, Burgess and McKenzie). The Human Ecologists were not as pessimistic as earlier researchers and argued on the base of research in booming Chicago that urban neighbourhoods would flourish by themselves and that all kinds of spontaneous social contacts would exist.

Clarence Perry was less optimistic. He pleaded for an active urban planning based on the neighbourhood unit. Perry in turn was influenced by the Ebenezer Howard's Garden City ideas (Hall, 2002; de Klerk, 1980). Howard developed complete new towns outside cities, which consisted of 'wards', areas of about 5,000 people, each of which would contain local shops, schools and other services. This, in embryo, is the origin of the neighbourhood unit idea (Hall, 2002). Perry worked this out for New York and developed the idea not merely as a pragmatic device, but as a deliberate piece of social engineering which would help people achieve a sense of identity with the community and with the place (Ibid; see Figure 2). Carefully planned neighbourhoods should provide a safe and quiet environment in which the individual development could flourish. A neighbourhood unit should contain:

- Safe traffic. In those days the United States had a car ownership rate that would be reached in The Netherlands only by 1970(!);
- A primary school;
- Daily amenities and its own community centre;
- An attractive environment with green spaces and playgrounds. (de Klerk, 1980; van der Cammen en de Klerk, 2003)

Figure 2 near here [Scheme of a neighbourhood unit]

The ideas of Perry's neighbourhood unit as a starting point for urban development inspired the group around Bos in post-war Netherlands. Another influence came from England, where Forshaw and Abercrombie just had published the County of London Plan in 1943, 'a marvellous piece of work', in the words of Bos *et al.* (1946, p. 351). The more well known Greater London Plan (Abercrombie, 1945) crossed Bos' experiences, but certainly would have impressed him as well. Bos and his colleagues considered the redevelopment of war damaged London an example for their own situation in Rotterdam. Going further than Clarence Perry, an explicit goal in the London Plan was the creation of a heterogeneous society in every neighbourhood of city. This idea was taken on board by the Dutch and has resulted in the mixed neighbourhoods that have been developed in The Netherlands in the post-war decades. In fact, mixed neighbourhoods have been an explicit aim in Dutch urban planning until the present day. Moreover, Bos and his colleagues added to Perry's four aims above and the London feature of heterogeneity, another goal, a political one. Bos wanted to decentralize the city and give political power to the neighbourhoods.

Segmentation of the City

Structured neighbourhood planning fitted very well with both the modern ideas of CIAM (with famous Dutch architects such as Van Eesteren, Stam-Beese, Van den Broek and

Bakema) and those of more traditional architects and planners like Granpré Moliere and Kropholler. Although both streams were competing, they supported the idea of the neighbourhood unit, which made it a powerful urban planning concept. The neighbourhood was both a self-supporting geographical unit and a part of the functional hierarchy of the whole city. As a result, most housing development in the 1950s and 1960s in The Netherlands was arranged according to the principles of the neighbourhood unit. Bos *et al.* gave a size to the ideal neighbourhood. They distinguished between two scales. A larger neighbourhood area (in Dutch: *wijk)* should average 5,000 dwellings with, in those days, around 20,000 inhabitants. The smaller neighbourhoods, more like daily communities (in Dutch: *buurt*) were a functional part of the larger *wijk*, each with 2,000–4,000 inhabitants. In the smaller *buurt* neighbourhoods, facilities, such as shops for daily needs, communal playgrounds, a kindergarten and a small community centre, were required . Figure 3 illustrates the hierarchic segmented structure of the functional city. W.F. Geyl, a Rotterdam colleague of Bos, visualized more often the concept of the structured city in more detail. The urban planner had a clear role to plan the neighbourhood unit according to empirical rules as to required population and facilities, to provide all material conditions for a healthy urban community life.

Figure 3 near here [Schematic view of the city]

The larger neighbourhood areas (*wijk)* would provide amenities such as a park, a central community centre, sports facilities and medical and cultural services. On this level also schools and churches were provided. After an international comparison, Bos *et al.* (1946, p. 339) concluded that the average Dutch neighbourhood would be larger than in other countries because of a specific Dutch phenomenon: denominational divisions. Dutch society was very much split in those days according to ideological and religious lines. The consequence was that many new neighbourhoods were provided with two or even three primary schools and the same number of churches, community centres and cultural facilities, all centrally located in the area. The North American neighbourhood unit was clustered around the school as the central element, and consisted of around 5,000–6,000 inhabitants. In the Dutch situation facilities such as schools, churches, sports facilities, cultural and community centres all were located centrally in the larger neighbourhood area (*wijk*). Often two or three of each were present in an area: a Protestant one, a Catholic one, sometimes a socialist one and a public one, and sometimes even in sub-varieties.

In areas where denominational divisions were less of an issue, neighbourhood planning differed. In the Catholic southern provinces or the Protestant North, often only one facility of each kind was needed, so neighbourhoods could be smaller. In the Catholic south neighbourhoods were built with about 600 dwellings, arranged around the church and the school, and connected to the city with wide roads (Blom, 2004). Figure 4 shows an illustration of the neighbourhood idea according to Catholic builders. The family is the base of the urban community, with facilities in the direct vicinity (the inner circle), the neighbourhood (with the primary school, pub and local church) and urban facilities in the outer circle. The church is positioned most prominently.

Figure 4 near here [The neighbourhood idea according to Catholic builders]

Functional Hierarchy

Neighbourhood centres were planned according to a functional hierarchy. The arrangement of the urban hierarchy was based on distance and proximity. A range of centres can be distinguished at successive levels, comparable to a pyramid: the urban centre at the top, (in large cities an urban district centre), an area centre (*wijk*), a smaller neighbourhood centre (*buurt*), and scattered facilities, like shops in the old parts of town. This 'classic' hierarchy is based on the urban scale. The early post-war development of The Hague clearly shows this hierarchy (see below). More recently, large peripheral centres have been developed, undermining this urban structure. These may be branches, like building markets or furniture strips on inexpensive land in the suburbs or industrial zones, or they can be large stores such as IKEA. Shopping malls as found in the United States or hypermarkets as in France are scarce in The Netherlands, due to planning restrictions in the past, which have been gradually relaxed.

The functional hierarchy planning principles fitted well into the Central Place Theory of the German geographer Walter Christaller, who formulated his ideas in the 1930s (Christaller, 1933, 1966; see also Bolt, 1995). He determined a geographical pattern of functional hierarchic relationships, in which the larger centres are dispersed and surrounded by smaller centres of a lower hierarchy, each containing fewer services, and a smaller supporting area. This functional hierarchy is valid for both commercial services like shops and also non-commercial services, like schools, libraries and medical care. Leendert Bak has been one of the most influential researchers to support the shopping hierarchy in the Dutch planning system (Bak, 1971). Both post-war urban areas and new villages in The Netherlands are planned according to the principles of the Central Place Theory. A famous example of the latter is the design of the newly won land of the Noordoostpolder in the 1950s, with one central town (Emmeloord) surrounded by a ring of nine villages. Figure 5 shows Christaller's schematic view of hierarchic service areas, in which the neighbourhood units are easy to recognize.

Figure 5 near here [Functional hierarchic relationships according to Christaller]

Christaller's findings were based on an agricultural society where everyday journeys had to be made on foot. Car mobility has changed this pattern. However, as Bolt (1995) and Kooijman (1999) state, distances are still most important for acquiring necessary products including food. The intricate structure of facility planning in The Netherlands has been based on the distance relationships for ordinary products of the Central Place Theory. The question is what has happened, and what will happen, when mobility and products change again.

Critics of the Neighbourhood Unit Idea

The segmented structure of the city promulgated in the neighbourhood idea was to become a widely accepted principle in the town planning of the 1950s and 1960s. The neighbourhood as a spatial and social entity took an important place in between the individual dwelling, the sphere of the family, and the city as a motor of cultural and societal development. It was a workable principle to order society and an answer to the threat of the massive and anonymous urban society (de Vreeze, 1993, p. 240).

However, the neighbourhood unit was criticized from two angles. Architects concluded that little came in practice of the socially desirable pattern of homogeneity and differentiation, because the focus was on the realization of large numbers of dwellings rather than on the communal facilities. Most residential schemes were mono-functional and widely seen as

monotonous, due to the large numbers that were built of a given dwelling type and to the big areas and repeated geometric patterns. The uniformity led to monotony; in fact there was only one type of building that successfully evaded the scourge of uniformity: the church (Ibelings, 1996).

Another criticism came from sociologists, who argued against the territorial point of view of the neighbourhood units. Modern relationships should be based on functional relations, according to occupation, personal interest and motivation, rather than on the very local concentration of the direct environment (de Vreeze, 1993; WRR, 2005). Most prominent was the sociologist Van Doorn (1955), who condemned the neighbourhood unit as reactionary and artificial: social communities could not be shaped, and people would find their own relations, inside and outside their own neighbourhood. In fact, the debate about the role of the environment on the behaviour of inhabitants is still going on. The neighbourhood has never developed into the platform on which most relationships are formed, but a well functioning neighbourhood does contribute to the quality of life, as a recent influential report states (WRR, 2005).

Despite its critics, the neighbourhood unit functioned well throughout the 1950s and 1960s as a means to develop newly built areas, including an intricate structure facility (de Vreeze, 1993). An important reason why this structure had to change lies within other major trends in society, such as technological and demographic changes. These major developments are discussed in the next section.

Developments since the 1960s

Most neighbourhoods including their hierarchically ordered centres were very well developed in the 1950s and 1960s according to the functional and hierarchic principles of Bos, Perry, Christaller and others as discussed above. What happened once they were realized? This section goes into the developments since the 1960s.

The traditional structure has been threatened, and will be in the future, by a range of factors, which can be categorized in four groups. The first three are on the demand side (the consumers' side), such as a declining household size and increasing mobility. The fourth category has to do with the supply side, like the process of scaling up. The four groups are:

(*a*) Demographic developments;
(*b*) Technological developments;
(*c*) Changed attitudes and behaviour;
(*d*) Developments in the supply of facilities: shops and non-commercial facilities

Demographic Developments

The first demographic development in the post-war neighbourhoods is *less people*. The houses of the 1950s and 1960s were built for families with children. The Hague's South-Western suburbs were developed for 100,000 people, but at present, there are merely 60,000. Table 1 shows some examples of developments in other Dutch neighbourhoods that were built in the decades following World War II. On the average, today's population is only two-thirds of the original. There are less people per house, and less people on the streets. All of these neighbourhoods are subject of major renewal schemes today. One of the aims is often to enlarge the number of dwellings to keep up the population size.

Table 1. Development of population in selected neighbourhoods.

City, area	Building period	Dwellings	Inhabitants then	Inhabitants now
Vlaardingen, Westwijk	Around 1960	5,600	20,000 (start)	11,700 (2000)
Tilburg, Stokhasselt	1960s	2,700	8,900 (start)	7,200 (2000)
Zwolle, Holtenbroek	1960s	4,500	14,000 (1970)	9,500 (2002)
Arnhem, Malburgen	1950s +1960s	7.500	21,000 (1980)	17,000 (2002)
Utrecht, Kanaleneiland	Around 1960	over 8,000	30,000 (start)	19,000 (1999)
Schiedam, Nieuwland	1950s	6,700	21,000 (1971)	16,000 (2001)
The Hague Zuidwest	1950s +1960s	31,000	100,000 (1970)	61,000 (2002)

Source: Wassenberg, 2004.

The second demographic development is *older people*. The then young families have grown old, children left the house, but many people stayed. When people died or moved to newer neighbourhoods their place was taken by newcomers, often young singles or couples. At present in 65 per cent of all Dutch dwellings there are no children. This used to be 57 per cent in 1987 and 45 per cent in 1970. In less attractive areas, with an austere housing stock or liveability problems, the exodus was more intense. In these more problematic neighbourhoods many newcomers are immigrants families, thus reversing the decrease in population.

The third demographic development is *poorer people*. Most newer suburbs were built at a higher standard, aiming at the middle classes. Every new house and new neighbourhood was just slightly larger, more luxurious and more expensive. Each new house resulted in the existing houses being less appreciated. This caused selective migration processes, meaning that the out-movers had higher incomes than the in-movers. The socio-economic position of the inhabitants of the post-war areas gradually decreased, while it had been above average at the beginning. Table 2 shows some characteristics of the population in the post-war areas. On average, in these areas there are now more elderly, singles and people with low incomes. Moreover, in these areas the proportion of low-income immigrants has increased sharply, as the case of The Hague illustrates.

Table 2. Population according to building period, 2000.

	1945–1959	1960–1969	Netherlands Total
Low income*	47%	39%	35%
55 plus	42%	45%	35%
Single	39%	32%	31%
Dwellings (numbers)	785,144	989,496	6,505,253

* Priority groups for housing policy and housing allowances
Source: Ministerie van VROM, 2003.

Technological Developments

Three kinds of technological developments can be identified: mobility, household appliances and telecommunications.

In 1960 there were only half a million cars in the Netherlands – less than the level of car ownership in the United States in the early 1920s. While the number of cars had multiplied by

ten in 1990, and today there are about 7 million cars, fourteen times as many as in 1960. That is on average one car per household, but well below that in countries such as Germany or Italy (or the United States) (Wassenberg, 2004; Van der Cammen and de Klerk, 2003). However, cars dominate every street scene. The empty streets we see in photographs from the 1950s are replaced by rows of parked cars. Another consequence is that most people can use a car to do their shopping in the discount stores further away or go sports facilities on the other side of town. But declining urban neighbourhood facilities are a problem for those who do not have a car.

A second feature is the growth of household appliances. Most important are the refrigerator and, later on, the freezer. These made it possible to do the bulk shopping once a week, and diminished the need for daily shopping close by.

A third development is telecommunications. From the 1960s the television was introduced as the main entertainment centre in the living room, which was an attack to neighbourhood life in community centres. The influence of television has grown since then, nowadays accompanied by the availability of Internet and mobile phones. All of these technological developments made people less dependent on activities and facilities in their own neighbourhood.

Social-Cultural Developments

Consumers in the 1950s and 1960s were fairly predictable. The average household consisted of a husband, who 'went out to work', a wife, most of whose social contacts were nearby and children. Society was focused in the neighbourhood, where facilities were available; children kept the mother at home or in the close vicinity, and facilities and work were easily reached on foot or by bicycle. Shops were visited daily, or services such as the baker and the milkman delivered at home. Most of the income was, outside recurrent expenses, spent on food (Bolt, 1995).

Today consumer preferences are not as predictable as those of their (grand-)parents. Traditional families are being replaced by a mix of household types, less people visit shops and other services on a daily base. Women have gone out to work on a wide scale, family sizes have declined and time has become a scarce commodity, limiting the time for shopping as much as possible.

Today, people's scope has broadened. Globalization, combined with technological possibilities has given people contacts all over the world. Friends and relatives do not live close by, as they had done for centuries, holidays have provided contacts with other cultures, immigration has made foreigners part of society. As a consequence, people are not as dependent on their local neighbourhood as they were in the 1950s.

Developments in the Supply of Facilities: Shops

Facilities in the neighbourhood can be divided into commercial (mainly shops) and non-commercial, such as schools, care, sports, libraries and social centres. Both categories were planned carefully according to the principles of the neighbourhood unit, accessibility and distance dependency as described above.

Problems with declining shopping centres in the post-war areas are easy to see. Five or ten shops in a row, one empty, one with a closing-down sale, one brand new. It is never busy, turnover rates of premises are high and profit is low. Meanwhile on the other side of town, new large shopping malls arise, sometimes in peripheral locations, sometimes in a business

park or near an existing district centre. Both developments are part of the same process of scaling up and economic rationalization.

The increase in scale is very evident from the data, most of which refer to shopping area (in m^2 floor space), and not to shops. While the total number of shops decreased marginally, the average area of a shop increased from 50 m^2 in 1960 to 100 m^2 in 1980 and 170 m^2 in 1998.

Figure 6 near here [Developments in retail]

The Netherlands is a country where planning and building is subject to restrictions. Most of the debate in this field, however, is over restriction on housing plans. New businesses and shopping areas are much easier to realize. Figure 6 shows that there has been a large increase of shopping area over time. The total shopping floor area has multiplied by four since 1960 up to 25 million m^2 today (left axis). The rise was strongest during the last ten years. Plans for the next couple of years will add a further 3 million m^2 (NVB, 2005). The figure shows that at the same time the sales per square metre did not catch up with this trend. The process of economic scaling up leads to more shopping area, but lower sales per square metre of shop.

The total shopping area per person has risen from 0.6 m^2 in 1960 and 1.0 m^2 in the late 1980s, towards 1.5 m^2 in 2004. This means more floor space and more choice for the customers. In fact, the contemporary Dutch 1.5 m^2 per customer is the highest in Europe (NVB, 2005). 'Nowhere in the world exists such an intricate structure of shopping facilities. The shopping area per square kilometre cultivated land is about three times that of the rest of Europe (EU-15)', according to Bolt (1995, p. 42). A consequence of this growth is both more vacancies and a large and increasing competition. Vacancy in shopping premises rose by 34 per cent during the period 2000–2004, or 1.6 million m^2, which equals 6.7 per cent of the total floor area of all shops (Locatus, 2003; Dasselaar, 2004; NVB, 2005).

There is a big difference between shopping area and floor space. There are about 2,800 shopping centres in The Netherlands, defined as a minimum of five concentrated shops (Kooijman, 1999). Half of all shopping centres can be found in neighbourhood centres (*buurt*, 5–10 shops) and area centres (*wijk*, 10–25 shops). However, these comprise a mere 7 per cent of all shopping floor space. The rest of the shopping floor space is divided among the central areas (40 per cent), city district centres (8 per cent) and scattered and peripheral shops (Bolt, 2003; Dasselaar, 2004). The fastest growth is found in the scattered and peripheral shops, which hardly existed in 1970, but at present make up some 45 per cent of all floor space. Shops in neighbourhood centres are limited by size.

The conclusion from these data might be that the role of neighbourhood and area centres has decreased in shopping area, sales and position in the retail market. The processes of economic enlargement of scale have minimized the economic role of neighbourhood centres.

One could argue that most of the new shopping is non-food, thus development does not harm food stores in the neighbourhood. In retail literature, shopping is divided into three categories: runshopping, funshopping and thematic shopping (Bolt, 1995; Terpstra, 2003). The last two categories are less interesting for neighbourhood centres. Funshopping is in between buying commodities and leisure. City centres provide the best environment for the simultaneous combination of buying and leisure, but with competition from new large peripheral shops. Thematic shopping refers to larger purpose-driven purchases, for which customers want to compare shops.

Runshopping is the purchasing daily necessities, characterized by a frequent use, and a small variety in quality, type or price. These are the commodities offered in neighbourhood centres. Runshoppers want to save time. Supermarkets serve this goal best. Kruyzen (in

Terpstra 2002) points out that most Dutch customers are not interested in their daily shopping. Three-quarters buy all food products, including all fresh items, in supermarkets. The large majority does this by car, and only once or twice a week. The number of products offered in supermarkets has increased fivefold since the 1960s (Terpstra, 2002). The assortment of supermarkets is broadening, the amount of non-food offered increases, the concept of 'one-stop-shopping' is elaborated and the enlargement of scale is continuing. Moreover, opening times for shops have been relaxed since 1996, a gesture that has favoured the major supermarkets.

Another feature is worth mentioning, especially in the neighbourhoods of the 1950s and 1960s, where immigrants start new businesses. The share of 'ethnic entrepreneurs' (born in non-Western countries) is growing. While the total number of all firms in the Netherlands was more or less stable during the period 1993–2003, the share of ethnic entrepreneurs almost doubled from about 5,000 to almost 9,000. Although a rather large part of them does not survive the first year (14 per cent in 2003), this figure is slowly improving (28 per cent in 1993) (van den Tillaart and Doesburg, 2004). These ethnic entrepreneurs open a large proportion of new businesses in the post-war shopping centres. An obvious feature is that, despite their limited size, they 'sell everything', and moreover, they serve not only their own ethnic group, but all local residents.

Non-Commercial Facilities

Not only shops, but also non-commercial facilities have suffered, from the 1970s onwards, from the changes in society mentioned above. In the first years after completion the neighbourhoods functioned well. Schools, kindergartens, social services, playing facilities, libraries, and churches: all came more or less up to the expectations. However, children grew older, looking for places to play football or hang around instead of facilities for small children. Secondary schools grew while kindergartens shrank. Later on, the children left, making their parents 'empty nesters'. Meanwhile, the population decreased. The next generation of children lives in newer neighbourhoods farther away, leading to empty schools in the older areas. Some of the carefully planned neighbourhoods of the 1950s and 1960s went another way. In these areas turnover rates were high, selective processes of migration occurred, newcomers replaced a large part of the original population. In these less popular estates many immigrants entered, their children making the local schools into 'black schools'.

Sporting facilities went the same route. Originally, there were several sports clubs, but because of pull factors (most sportsmen live in the newer areas) and push factors (the green spaces were attractive places to use for other functions) many football, hockey and other sports clubs have moved. The case of The Hague illustrates this change, which also can be seen in smaller towns.

Churches often were the centres of the neighbourhood when built in the post-war years. However, processes of secularization, which began in the late 1960s, undermined their central position. Some churches have been pulled down, or transformed into housing or other uses (sometimes even mosques) or have broadened their scope with other functions such as social activities. Social centres mostly survived, although subject to cutbacks every now and then, relying on volunteers to organize social activities.

Consequences of the Developments for Neighbourhood Centres

The previous sections showed how post World War II neighbourhood centres in The Netherlands were ordered and organized, according to a functional segmentation of the city, and what happened since the 1960s. This section will look at the consequences of these developments for several kinds of centre. We will divide them into winning and losing locations, joining Bolt (1995, 2003), Locatus (2003) and WPM Groep (2005). First, the winners. On top of the pyramid is the city centre, which has gained in importance. This may be unlike American cities, but is similar to many European cities. The numbers of shops and pubs in the inner cities have grown since the 1960s, while they have been lost in the non-central parts of town. After decline in the 1970s and 1980s, the population in most Dutch inner cities has grown in the last decade, due to intensive building schemes. Inner cities have been upgraded, restyled and beautified, to make them more attractive. The inner cities have proved to be very flexible in accommodating all kinds of facilities. Below the inner-city level in the pyramid are the major centres elsewhere in the city. They have gained as well, but often after major modification in the 1980s and 1990s. Furniture stores, media suppliers and garden centres have grown on peripheral boulevards. These larger districts centres profit from the often difficult car accessibility and parking problems in central cities and have developed a regional function, as the case of The Hague shows. Providing a wide range of daily foodstuffs, non-food goods and leisure and offering easy and cheap accessibility, these district centres are competing city centres.

Figure 7 near here [Development of floor sale area per type of location]

The losers can be found in the neighbourhood centres of the post-war decades, as well as facilities throughout the older, pre-war areas. There are less shops and non-commercial facilities at the bottom of the pyramid. Figure 7 illustrates this for commercial facilities and shows the change of floor sale area in The Netherlands since 1970, divided among three kinds of areas, and corrected for the growth of population. The total amount of floor space tripled from about 7.5 million m^2, or 0.6 m^2 per person, to 22 million m^2, or 1.5 m^2 per person (WPM Groep, 2005; NVB, 2005). More interesting is the development as to type of location. The city centres show a growing amount of shop-space since the 1970s. The shops in peripheral locations have grown even more and at present equal the summed city centres. The losers obviously are the neighbourhood centres and other local shops (WPM, 2005). More than half of all shops (in floor space) was found in these small shops and neighbourhood shopping centres until 1970, but slowly their amount has decreased, both proportionally and in absolute numbers. While in the country the amount of shopping area tripled since the 1970s, it continuously decreased in the neighbourhood centres.

Renewing the Local Neighbourhood Structure in The Hague South-West (*Den Haag Zuidwest*)

The South-West in The Hague is a good example of careful facility planning, unexpected developments afterwards and recent strategies to adapt the intricately planned facility structure. The South-West district contains most of The Hague's expansion from the 1950s and 1960s. The area originally was developed to house 100,000 people. The city of The Hague forms a part of the densely populated south wing of the Randstad with at present 470,000 inhabitants. The South-West district was developed according to modern ideas of urban planning. Wide streets divide the district into four to six larger neighbourhood areas (*wijk*), each of these being divided into several smaller neighbourhoods (*buurt*). Most of the houses

were social rented flats in long four-storey blocks. Facilities such as schools, churches, community and medical centres were well provided, especially sports facilities (there were 37 football pitches), but employment premises were kept low as a result of the division of functions. Originally there were twenty-eight shopping centres in South-West, carefully planned according to the principles of even dispersion and accessibility. Scattered shops were avoided, according to the planning doctrine of clear arrangements.

However, as a result of general developments in society, almost all of the twenty-eight centres experienced viability problems. First and probably most important, the population declined by 40 per cent to only 60,000 inhabitants. Moreover, the socio-economic status of the population dropped. Ouwehand (2002) describes this process: in the 1950s and 1960s the dwellings were inhabited by the middle classes: white collar workers, civil servants, teachers and better off working classes. In the 1970s and 1980s, new areas were built with affordable single-family houses and filtering processes in the housing market took place. Quite a lot of newcomers were poor inhabitants from the old neighbourhoods that were being renewed. South-West became synonymous for monotony and massiveness. The middle-class households from the 1960s were still dominant in the mid-1980s. A report from that time states that unemployment was about three-quarters of the city level, the number of migrants about half the city average, and half of the inhabitants were over 50 years old (a third in the city). Only 11 per cent was under 15 years old, which has had consequences for schools and sports facilities (Gemeente Den Haag, 1987). Today, the situation has changed. The number of people over 65 years is still large (over 20 per cent in 2003), but on top of that, most newcomers are young singles or couples, the number of children is rising again, the share of migrants (of non-Dutch origin) has grown rapidly from 30 per cent in 1995 to 44 per cent in 2001. The average annual incomes range from €17,200 to €18,900, well below the urban average of €21,400. South-West is one of the poorer parts of The Hague (Gemeente Den Haag 2003).

On the supply side there have been processes of scale increase and growing competition in the wider region. Already in the 1980s there was a increasing concern about facilities such as schools, churches and sports facilities, which were not used very frequently. Some of these had to close. This process was most visible in the shopping structure. The twenty-eight shopping centres functioned well in the early years. However, ongoing global trends such as depopulation, greying, economic up scaling and rising car mobility had their impacts. From the late 1980s on, the policy was to concentrate the remaining shops in viable centres (Gemeente Den Haag, 1987).

Now the strategy is to concentrate amenities in only fourteen centres, and redevelop the remaining fourteen. Six of the fourteen are being actively renewed and stimulated, part of a large urban renewal scheme for the whole district. One centre at the top of the distribution pyramid, Leyweg, has been redeveloped and is now promoted as 'the second centre in The Hague', after the inner city, with 37,500 m^2 of shopping floor space and 125 shops.

Leyweg is being supported by two district (*wijk*) centres and three minor neighbourhood (*buurt*) centres. Eight other centres are receiving some attention, while the remaining fourteen are being redeveloped. Vacant shops can be converted into dwellings, or small business premises or art centres. This offers several goals at once: inexpensive accommodation for start-up firms, more employment within the district, and a mix of functions (Gemeente Den Haag, 2003).

The main centre, Leyweg, has been modernized to fulfil a regional function. When South-West was built, Leyweg was the only larger centre in the agglomeration of The Hague, after

the historic cores of The Hague and Delft. Six other district centres have been developed since, all of them with a regional function (Figure 8).

The case of The Hague South-West clearly shows the consequences of a process of enlargement of scale: the pyramid of facilities was widened at the top and hollowed at the bottom, at the same time.

Two Photos near here [Den Haag Bouwlust and Den Haag Leyweg]

Figure 8 near here [The region of The Hague with the historical inner cities of The Hague and Delft]

The Future and Discussion

Post-war neighbourhood centres have been planned according to a functional hierarchy that has resulted in an intricate facility structure. This has been the planning principle for all kinds of facilities in The Netherlands in the post-war decades, for both commercial (shops) and non-commercial facilities, like schools, care and culture. The functional hierarchy can be regarded as a pyramid, with the city centre at the top and small neighbourhood centres at the bottom.

This hierarchy functioned well in the 1950s and 1960s. Later on, somewhere in the 1970s and 1980s, the intricate structure came under pressure. Processes of scaling up and rationalization led to fewer shops and facilities such as libraries and childcare at the neighbourhood level. Demographic processes led to fewer people and people with other characteristics. Individualism and prosperity led to a wider travel patterns and less dependency on local contacts. Technological progress made people less dependent on their daily environment and car mobility replaced the need for proximity.

The role of neighbourhood centres has decreased, and the prospects are that this process will continue. Some data illustrate the decline of local shopping centres in post-war areas: the overall total shopping area has tripled in The Netherlands since the 1970s, but it has decreased in the neighbourhood centres. Half of all shop floor space was situated in neighbourhood and supporting centres in the 1960s, but this has diminished to only 15 per cent at present.

Many other services in the neighbourhoods are declining as well. Community centres, pubs, restaurants had viability problems and many have closed, or moved out. Facilities on a wider scale (*wijk*) have moved as well. Post offices, banks, libraries, medical centres, police stations, city halls, all of these have concentrated due to processes of economic rationalization. In short, the two lowest levels of the functional pyramid have declined and probably will decline further in the near future.

It is remarkable, however, that at the same time we can see support for the lowest level, the neighbourhood. Local shops are getting support, not for commercial, but for social reasons. The last supermarket in the neighbourhood – similar to the village – has a growing importance as a social meeting point. There is a lively debate in The Netherlands in support of commercial facilities for social reasons by not only local authorities, but also housing associations. This is more the case in the areas built in the 1950s and 1960s, where housing associations own much property. They can, for example, offer the shops a moderate rent. And there is support by the local residents themselves, who are confronted with vacant properties instead of lively meeting places. People can buy shares to support a commercial interest.

Another kind of concentration is taking place within the school sector. New school buildings are realized, in which often the old, secularized, schools are concentrated. These buildings are used more intensively, for functions after school hours such as afternoon

activities for school children, adult courses, sports and social events. Schools have a more central function within the neighbourhood.

Policy

There are two major national policy areas worth mentioning regarding the future of neighbourhood centres. The first is economy oriented, following current trends. The careful neighbourhood planning in the 1960s was accompanied by restrictive policies to maintain the intricate facility structure. Gradually the role of national government became less restrictive. Large peripheral shopping centres were prohibited, and only in the late 1980s occasionally permitted. However, as in other countries in Europe and in the United States the shopping landscape was overrun by mega-shops in the countryside.

Recently, the national government has released a firm planning doctrine. The provinces and the municipalities have to agree on location policy for new shops – including claims from new peripheral malls – and the possible consequences for the overall structure. As a result, neighbourhood centre planning is back (again) on the political agenda. The case of The Hague is illustrative. Local (and regional) governments have to find a balance between economic forces and the needs of the local population. Local authorities frequently formulate an active policy and distinguish between economically viable and unviable neighbourhood centres. The ones above the line are actively stimulated, while those below are actively redesigned.

The second area of national policy is urban renewal, focused on the post-war areas of the 1950s and 1960s. (See Priemus, 2004 and Kleinhans, 2004 for an overview of Dutch urban policy programmes.) One of the aims is the support of the local economy, along side renewal and differentiation of the housing stock, improvement of the environment and quality of life, social programmes for distressed people and as well as emphasis on jobs, schooling and integration. Commercial centres have to be revitalized, a mix of functions encouraged and there should be more employment within the neighbourhoods themselves. The aim is vital neighbourhoods in vital cities.

The redevelopment of retail in neighbourhood centres is a key element within the urban renewal scheme. The revitalization of run-down neighbourhood centres is claimed to renew the whole neighbourhood. This conforms to similar developments in England, for example (Lowe, 2005).

Most often, initiatives are taken by the municipality, standing for the public interest and the public space, or the housing associations, as large property owner, or sometimes residents, as those experiencing the environment on a daily basis. In some cases, private owners or commercial developers play an important role.

The result of the processes of enlargement of scale is oversupply and vacancies. This is obvious in the neighbourhood centres. The question is what to do with these properties. Some of these are converted into dwellings, as has happened many times in the case of former small shops in pre-war areas. However, in recent years the awareness has grown that the mix of functions, already scarce in these areas, should be fostered. These former shopping strips are a good location for starting local enterprises, such as small businesses, immigrant shops and ateliers. The mix of functions is one of the aims of national urban policy, to enhance the quality of life in the neighbourhood, improve social safety and offer local employment. This is in line with the often cited ideas in Richard Florida's book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). Florida emphasizes the need to offer starting places for creative entrepreneurs. The former neighbourhood centres provide ideal locations for them. Fiscal policy is being discussed to create a liberal tax climate for those areas to help starting entrepreneurs.

At the lowest level, another tendency can be noticed. Municipalities 'discover' another function of neighbourhood centres: that of being a *centre* – the heart of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhoods of the 1950s and 1960s were planned according to the division of functions, but the final result is that they are experienced as boring and monotonous. A real heart for the neighbourhood can counteract that and bring identity to place. People and politicians have become aware that a neighbourhood centre not only offers specific services, but can also function as a heart for the neighbourhood and therefore add to the quality of life. This 'new' function actually goes back to the original ideas, and maybe it can help to revive the neighbourhood centres.

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Figure 1 **The segmented city in six figures** (according to Opbouw, 1946, in Blom, 2004)

Left on top: the family as both the middle point and the smallest part of society

Down left: Most pre war areas were not properly planned, which resulted in a random pattern of facilities and disorder (left side): where should I be? A structured city should be well ordered and organized.

Middle on top: The structured city with nine areas (*wijk*) and the neighbourhood unit (*buurt)* as the smallest of the squares

Middle down: Enlargement of one of the nine areas (*wijk*) into four neighbourhood units (*buurt*). Each unit has a small centre, with a larger centre in the middle.

Right on top: The neighbourhood centre as the core of the community. There are three schools, two of them next to a church, and shops concentrated on one side.

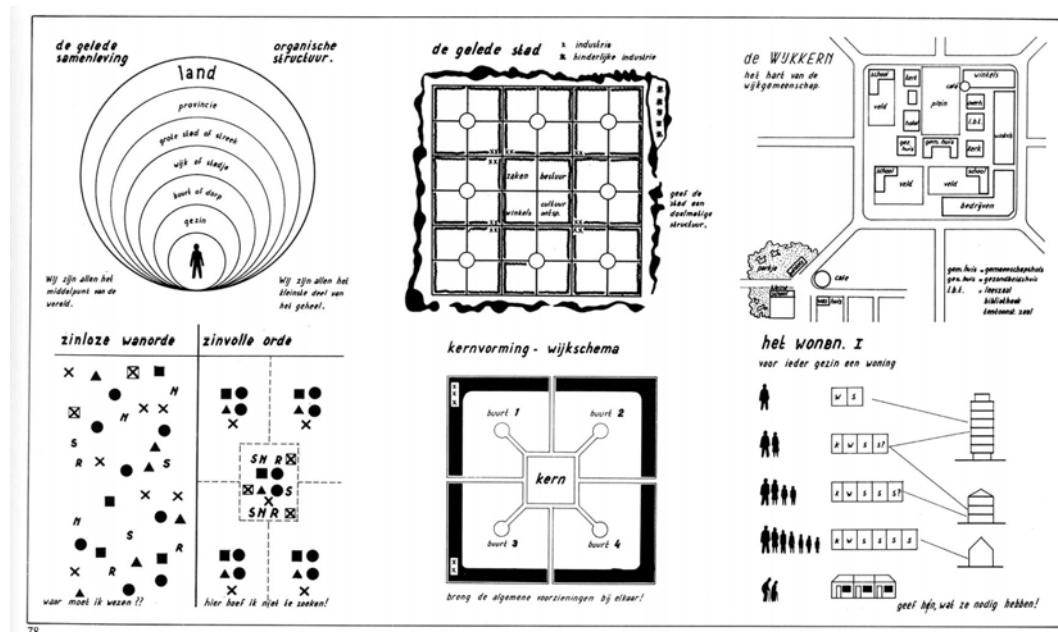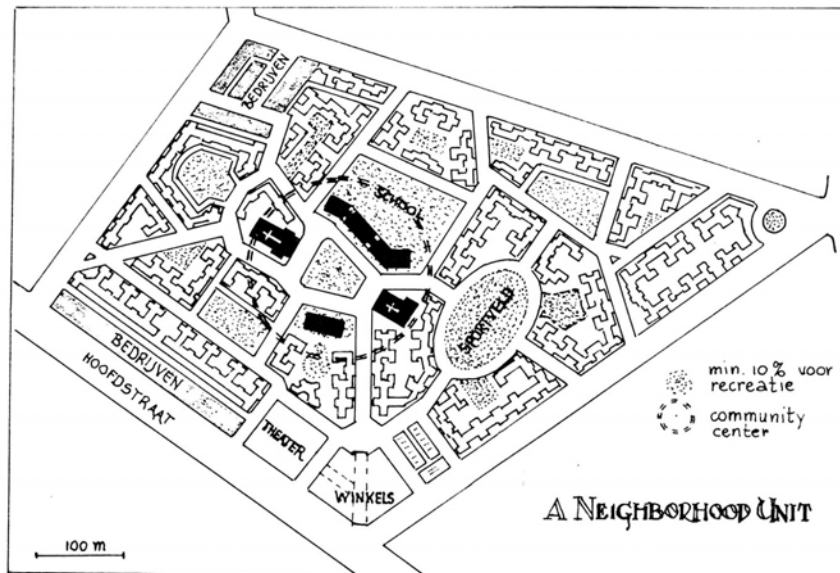Right down: For every kind of family the appropriate dwelling

Figure 2   Scheme of a neighbourhood unit, arranged around facilities in the centre. Mind that there are two churches and two schools (after den Hartog, 1946, in Van der Cammen& de Klerk, 2003).

Schema van een 'neighborhood unit'
(naar Den Hartog)

Figure 3 **Schematic view of the city** (the whole circle) in larger areas (*wijk*) and smaller neighbourhoods (*buurt*). The cores are greyed.
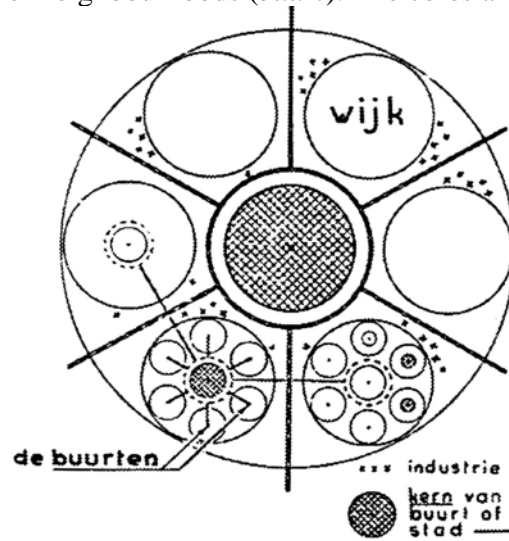

Source: W.F. Geyl presented in 1946/1947 regularly this scheme of the structured city, in a.o. Barbieri (1983) and Blom et al (2004).

Figure 4   The neighbourhood idea according to catholic builders. The family is the base of society, the city is ordered in the direct neighbourhood (*buurt*) in the inner circle, the wider neighbourhood (*wijk*) and the city (outer circle). The church is most prominent (Source: Katholiek Bouwblad, 1947).
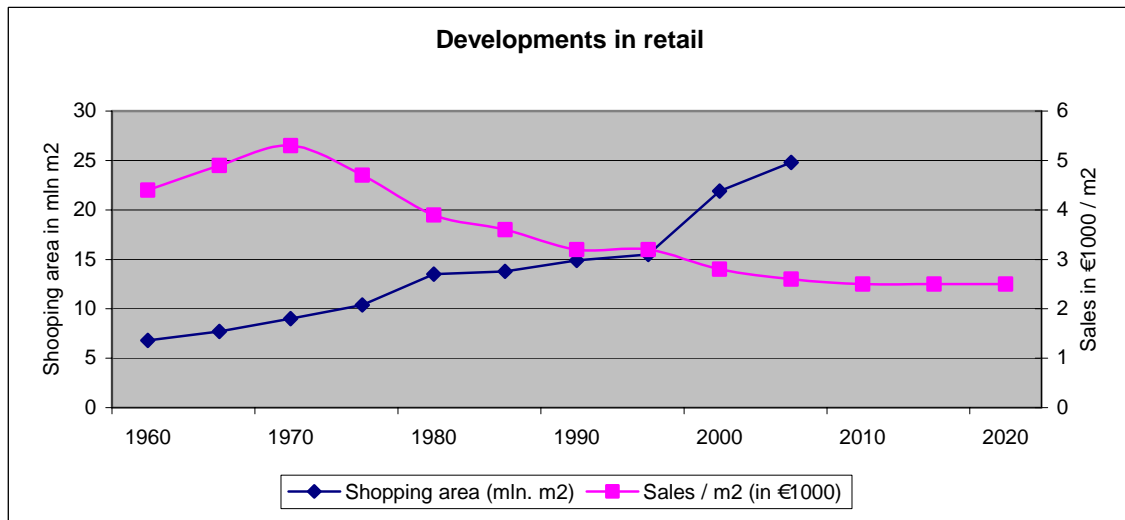
Figure 5   Functional hierarchic relationships according to Christaller
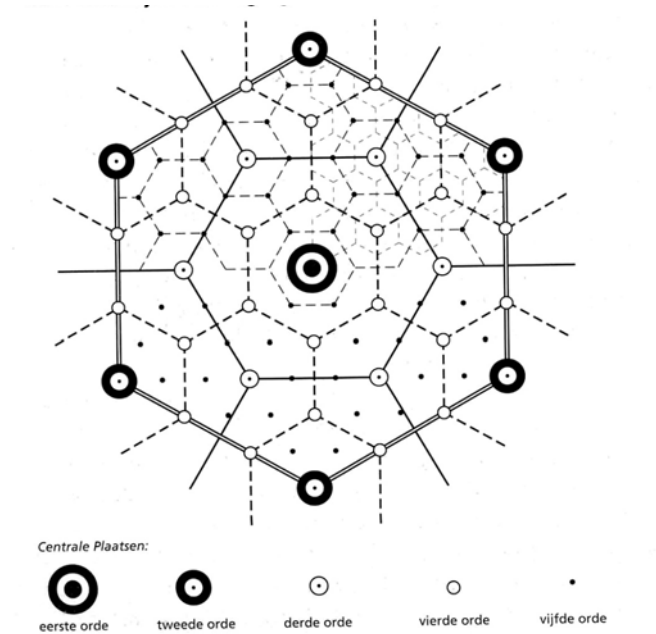
"Central places of first to fifth order"

Source: Bolt, 1995

Figure 6   Developments in retail

Developments in retail

Source: WPM Groep, 2005

Figure 7   Development of floor space area per type of location

Shop floor space per head of population

Source: WPM Groep, 2005

Figure 8 The region of The Hague with the historical inner cities of The Hague and Delft. The 1960s South-West area is dotted, with the centre Leyweg. Later on, Leyweg got competition of the mentioned newer district centres.
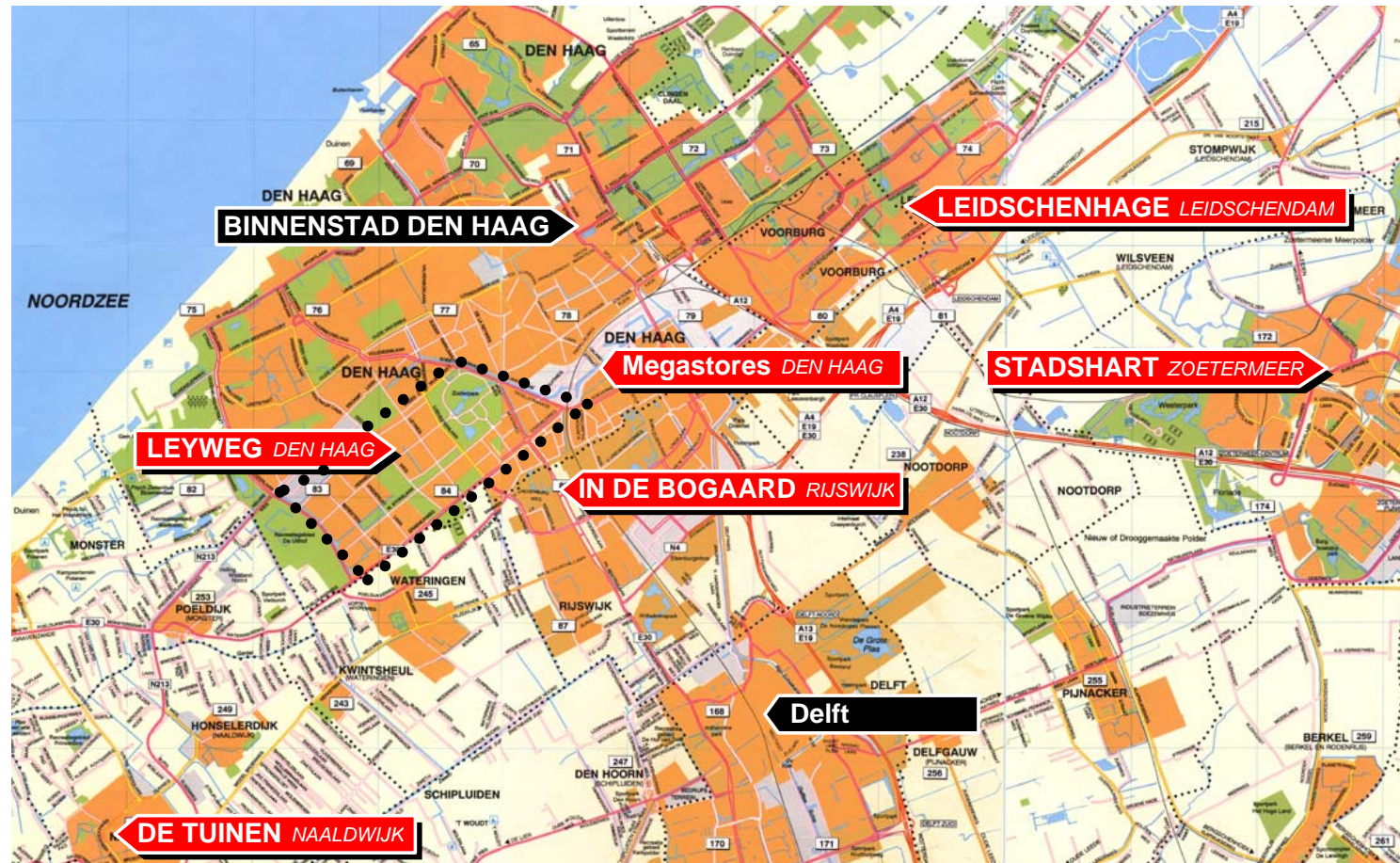
Two photos of The Hague South-West

(the one with the stairs):
The revitalization and upgrading of the main centre Leyweg has given it a regional function

(the one with the trees)
This neighbourhood centre in The Hague South-West will stay. It is a characteristic example of a post war developed neighbourhood centre.

Photo's: OTB illustration archive