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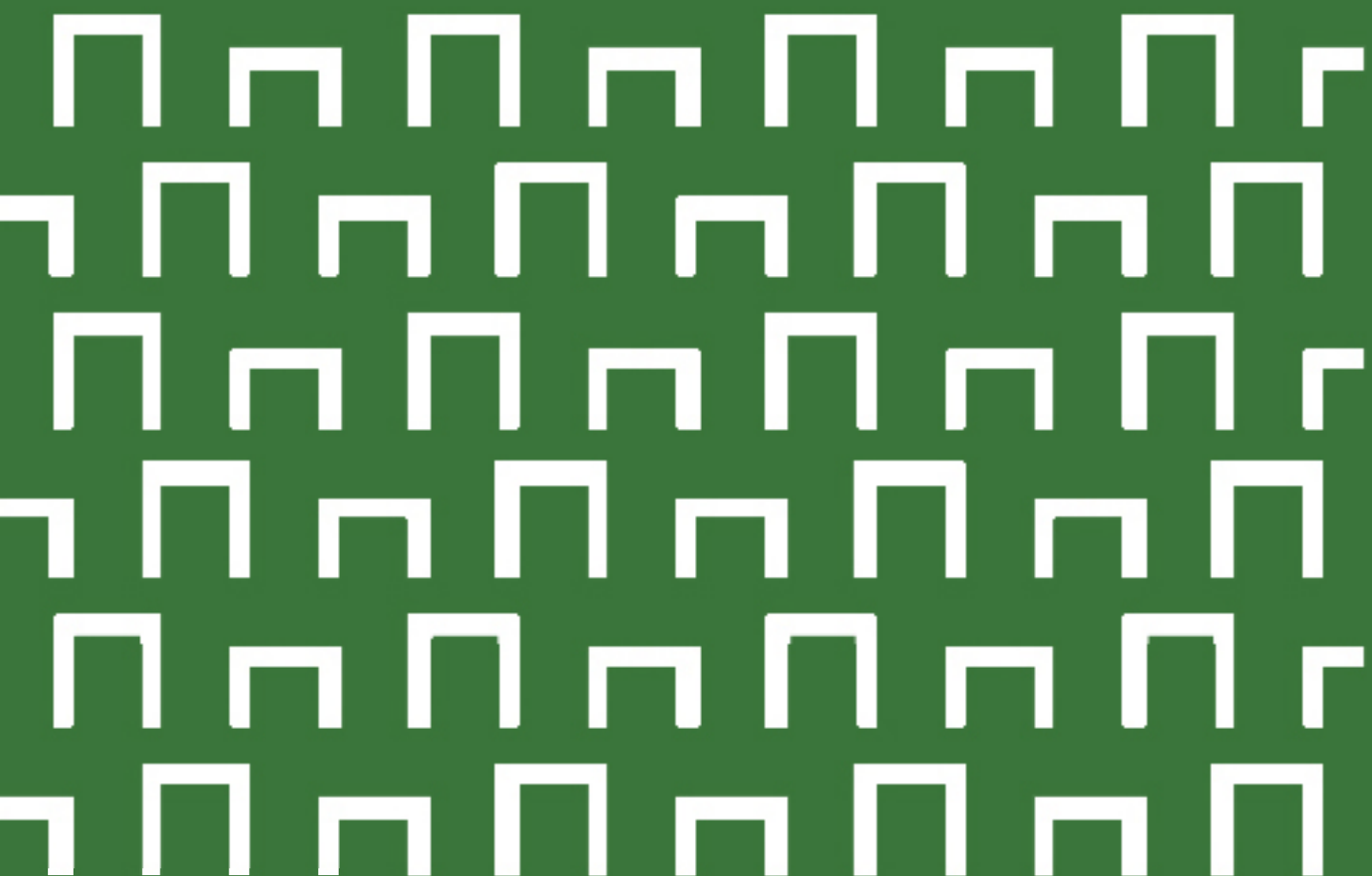
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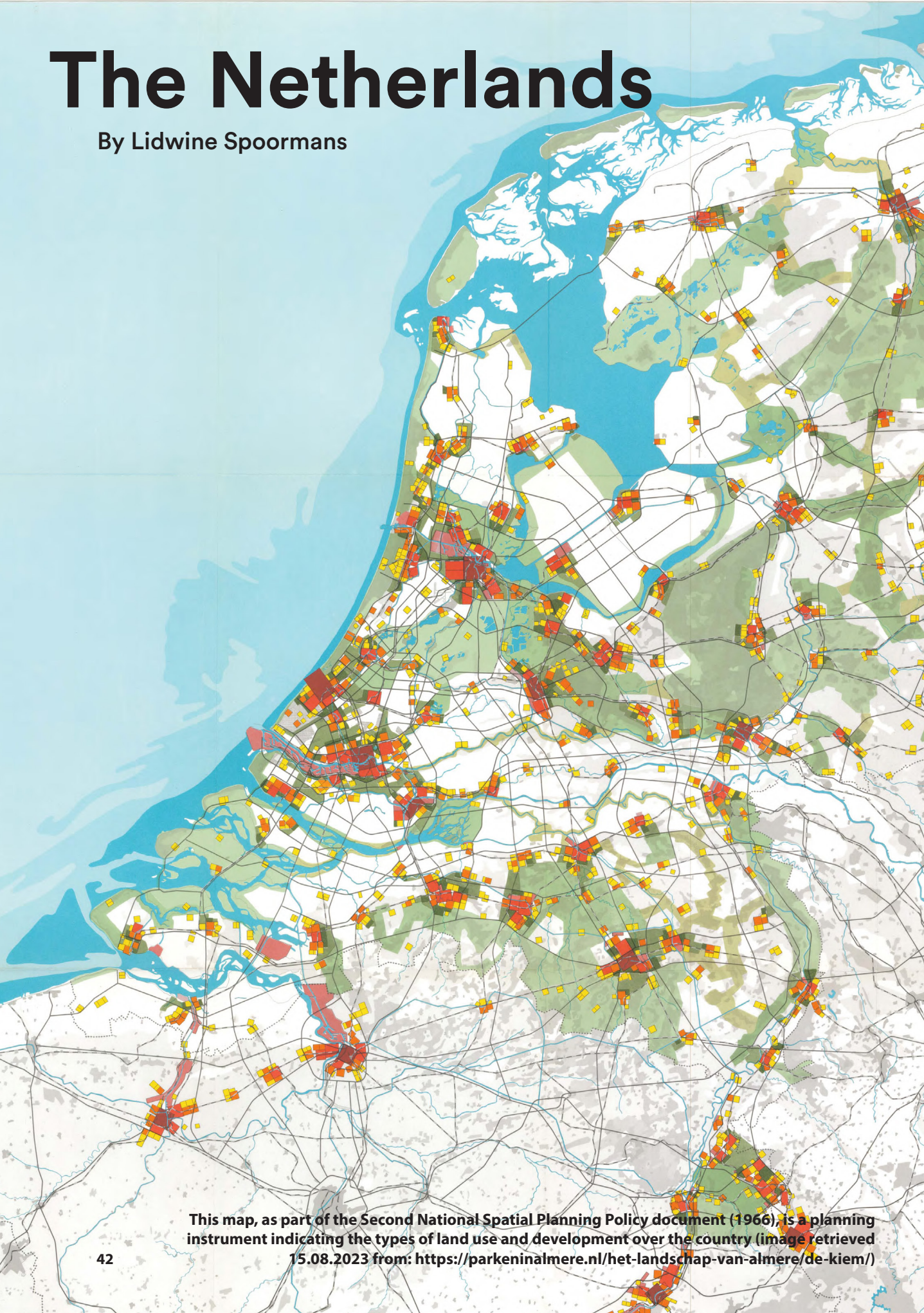
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**Edited by
Müge Akkar Ercan and
Uta Pottgieser**

The Netherlands

By Lidwine Spoormans



This map, as part of the Second National Spatial Planning Policy document (1966), is a planning instrument indicating the types of land use and development over the country (image retrieved 15.08.2023 from: <https://parkeninalmere.nl/het-landschap-van-almere/de-kiem/>)

Housing developments in the Netherlands have been influenced by national and local policies regarding spatial planning, building regulations, tax regulations and subsidy programs. At the beginning of the 20th century, the 'Woningwet' [Housing Act, 1901] kick-started Dutch policies on housing. This act aimed to put an end to unhealthy housing conditions, promoting the construction of good housing. Although the Housing Act made public housing a 'matter of the State', it designated municipalities as the first executors.

Spatial planning policies are laid down in a series of ministerial memoranda. During the post-World War II reconstruction, the national government made a centrally managed planning in which the number of houses, materials and construction workers were distributed throughout the country (Lans, 2016, p. 52). Later, the focus shifted from 'building large numbers and at high speed' to 'where should we build'. In the 1958 memorandum 'The Development of the West of the Country' the urgency to regulate the problem of overcrowding and congestion was put forward (Faber, 1997, p. 9) followed by the 1960 First National Spatial Planning Policy document sketching an outwardly-focused model for growth for the Randstad around the central open 'Green Hart' (Maas, 2012, p. 7). In the Second National Spatial Planning Policy document of 1966, 'bundled de-concentration was introduced as the happy medium between concentration in large metropolises and total de-concentration as urban sprawl, leading to a series of 'Groeikernen' [new towns] in the Third National Spatial Planning Policy document of 1974. The 1983 memorandum 'Outline for the urban areas' included a preference for new developments at shorter distances to the larger cities again. This led to re-urbanisation and new building locations on the outskirts of cities, laid down in the Fourth Policy Document on Spatial Planning (1988). In 2010, the Ministry of Housing and Spatial Planning was abolished, on the assumption that the Netherlands was 'completed' and new developments could be left 'to the market'. However, a Minister of Housing and Spatial Planning was reintroduced in 2022 to make spatial developments, including housing, a 'matter for the State' again. In the National Agenda on Housing and Building, the Dutch government's ambition is to build 900.000 homes by 2030, two-thirds of which will be affordable (BZK, 2022).

In addition to the policies on the urban planning level, there are also national policy programmes related to building regulations, such as technology, utilisation,

safety regulations and sustainability. This series of legislation also starts with the 1901 Housing Act, which stipulated that municipalities had to make building regulations. Because that law did not prescribe what it should contain, large differences in quality arose between municipalities, upon which a provincial model building regulation appeared in the 1930s. In 1950, building regulations, as well as a distribution system of scarce building materials, were enshrined in the Reconstruction Act, developing towards a Model Building Regulation in 1965. The regulations then regarded technical regulations on building, use, planning, and administration (Scholten, 2001). In 1992, the Bouwbesluit [Building Act] was introduced, which has since been developed and updated and is still in use. It distinguishes regulations for different building functions and between new construction and changing, enlarging or renovating existing buildings. This law gives detailed regulations on safety, health, use and (later added) energy efficiency and environment. The Bouwbesluit is the main policy instrument regarding the sustainability of buildings, with regulations, e.g., for insulation and installations, becoming increasingly stringent. Other sustainability policies consist of subsidy schemes for sustainable measures, such as solar panels. These vary from period to period and fluctuate with government policy.

Lastly, there have been several policies by which the national government has promoted homeownership. The main policy instruments used are financial instruments, like mortgage interest deduction, mortgage guarantees and subsidies. Although in The Netherlands, a large part of the population can live in rental social housing, homeownership is believed to positively contribute to citizens' personal development, like wealth and asset accumulation, self-determination and emancipation. But although home ownership has grown from 28% in 1947 to 58% in 2019, the Netherlands lags far behind many European countries (Boelhouwer, 2019, pp. 3, 20).

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