

## **DUTCH STRATEGIES FOR THE HISTORIC URBAN CORE, THE HISTORIC INNER CITY, FADED GLORY OR CORE BUSINESS**

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### **Abstract**

*This article is about the strategies of Dutch cities for the historic urban core, based on empirical research done on the policy reports of twenty Dutch cities. In addition to the policy reports plans for spatial and functional interventions, initiated by the local government, were analyzed.*

*The analysis were made in the years 2006, 2007 and 2008. The years just before the start of a possibly long lasting economic recession. Apart from some reflections on this subject at the end of this article no attention is paid to this in an analytical way.*

**Keywords:** historic urban core, strategy, transformation, identity

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cities are more and more competing with each other in different leagues, for the favor of the high educated creative settlers, the cultural visitors, companies looking for a new location and to keep those already bound to the city (Gardiner, Martin, & Tyler, 2004; Gospodini, 2002; Greffe, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2008; van der Borg, Costa, & Gotti, 1996; Wiesand, 2005).

The historic urban core seems to have characteristics which are significant in the context of that competition. Characteristics often referred to as unique qualities and specified in terms of identity, authenticity, historic continuity, organic grown street patterns etc. (Lewicka, 2008; McCabe & Stokoe, 2004; Murtagh, Graham, & Shirlow, 2008; Murzyn-Kupisz & Gwosdz, 2011; Pendlebury, Short, & While, 2009) Zirubavel argues that the past and the present are not entirely separate entities (Zerubavel, 2003) and that people have a need to bridge the gap between the two. The physical surroundings which remain relatively stable constitute a reliable locus of memories and often serve as major foci of personal as well as group nostalgia. That underscores efforts to preserve those parts of the city that provide us with a link to the past. Lowenthal argues that in western society, because people live longer and are more mobile, they seldom remain surrounded by the things they grew up with. That is why there is an increased interest in history and why people stick to the last recognizable things (Lowenthal, 1985). The historic urban core gives the opportunity to make contact with previous generations and step in the footsteps of our ancestors.

The same message as Lowenthal, is given nearly twenty years later, in a policy document of the central government of the Netherlands. The following statement is made in that document: “The need for historical embedded identity, for slow movement in time, for distinction ability, for nuances, familiar situations and variety, can also be seen as the counter point for the dominant influence of the levelling global culture. Handling the cultural heritage with respect guarantees the historical continuity and opens up possibilities to preserve the cultural identity of a village, city, region and even the whole country” (VROM, 1999) Kotkin is explicitly referring to the historic urban core giving a sense of place and history amidst a society in which the barriers of time and space are under constant assault. “As centres of arts and culture, repositories of our past history and architecture, the core retains a powerful tug of consciousness. It reminds us not only who we are but also what we have been” (Kotkin, 1999)

The function and significance of the still present characteristics of the historic urban core has changed over the last decades and will develop further, giving support to the presentation of the city image. In order to fully equip the historic urban core for its actual and future function spatial and functional interventions are maybe needed. Or certain interventions by private parties maybe support opposing objectives and need to be prevented. Because of the delicate structure of the historic urban core interventions have to be planned and executed very carefully (Doratli, Hoskara, & Fasli, 2004). There are many parties, private as well as public, which have an interest in the historic urban core. Because of the general interest the historic urban core can be considered a common good particularly on a local level. That does impose the role of mediator, navigator and initiator on the local government for the way the historic urban core is utilized and optimized.

This project, of which this paper is about, is primarily concentrated on Dutch cities with an historic urban core, dating from around 1000 a Chr. In Gospodini's terms (Gospodini, 2002) Dutch cities are smaller cities. He classifies the cities in the European global system in three main categories: metropolitan cities, larger cities and smaller cities. According to Gospodini, with reference to Commission of the European Communities (CEC), 1992, smaller cities are considered to be the dynamic force of modern urban Europe and the majority of them are expected to continue growing successfully in the new competitive milieu. According to eurostat statistics concerning more than 300 European cities more than 50% of Europe's population is living in cities with less than 500.000 inhabitants. For the smaller cities in Europe the maintenance, preservation and enhancement of the qualities of urban space is a dominant selling product in the context of the before mentioned competition. The historic urban core is often, for the smaller cities, their flagship project while the bigger cities have the possibility, and take the advantage, to create new ones.

In order to execute its role as guardian of the historic urban core the local government needs a long term strategy framed in possible future developments. To orientate on this subject research, about which this paper is giving account, has been done based on the leading question:

**What is the future strategy, in terms of vision, objectives and means, of Dutch local governments for their historic urban core?**

In this paper first attention is paid to what is supposed to be the content of a long term local government policy strategy. Then the selection of 20 cities is explained. The strategies of the 20 cities appeared to be very "look alike". Therefore the choice is made to present them in the form of an average, being the strategy for the theoretical reference of Dutchtown. In the end conclusions are drawn concerning the main characteristics, focus points and shortcomings of the strategy. This article is illustrated with examples of interventions in the historic urban core in three of the twenty cities.

## **GOVERNING CHANGE OF THE HISTORIC URBAN CORE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGY**

What is a strategy? The concept was adopted as a management tool taken from the area of competence of the military generals. In that context the concept is as old as mankind. In the field of management the concept is given various meanings by scholars and managers in the field.

Porter stressed the competitive character and defined a strategy as "a broad formula for how a business is going to compete, what its goals should be, and what policies will be needed to carry out those goals." (Porter, 1980/1998)

Henry Mintzberg indicated that strategy is a *plan*, a *pattern*, a *position*, a *perspective* and he indicated that it can also be a *ploy*, a maneuver intended to outwit a competitor. (Mintzberg, 1994)

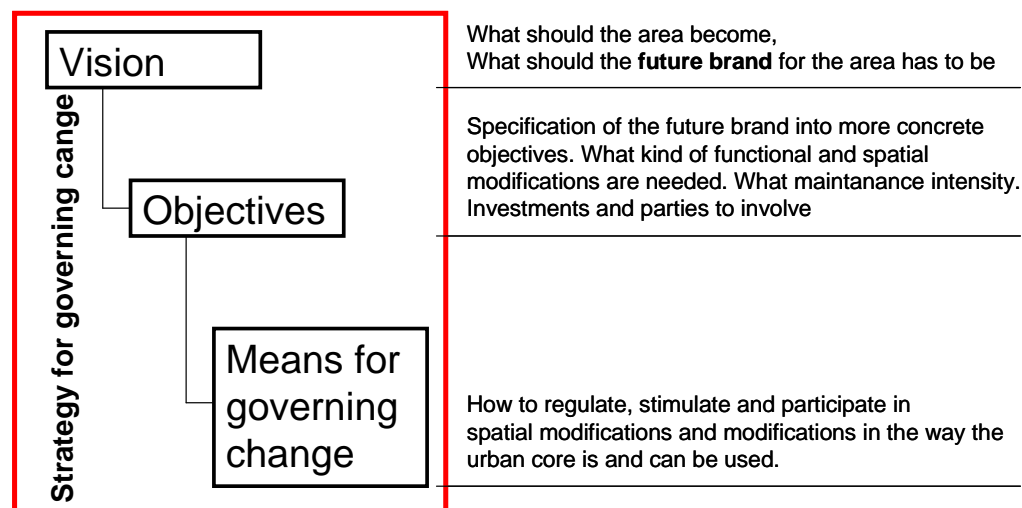
Private corporations were the first to use the strategy concept in their management activities. Public institutions and authorities followed in their footsteps. Also in the field of urban management and the management of specific urban areas, like the historic urban core, local government strategies are used as a guideline for management activities.

A set of local government decisions concerning spatial and functional management activities framed in objectives which are paving the way to a future vision or future brand are forming a strategy. (Figure 1)

The historic urban core is very differentiated with regard to ownership of property. This means that many different parties are involved in the changing process of this area. A process that is, historically seen, a continuum of small scale interventions. The municipality has the abilities to govern that process using a range of management tools or means that can be categorised in regulation, incentives (financial support with public money), initiate and participation in interventions (Figure 2)

Related to real estate and spatial planning a strategy is always covering a long time. Real estate and spatial patterns have a very long life cycle, sometimes ages. Decisions in that context have therefore long term effects. Those effects should be taken into account as important considerations for decisions to make and for the strategy to develop. Qualification and quantification of long term effects is only possible if a strategy is placed in the context of future developments not being part of the strategy but often highly detrimental for the strategy success. Future developments forming the context for a strategy cannot be influenced or predicted. Therefore a strategy is placed in the context of different possible futures or scenarios in order to specify its possible effects and also to test its 'strategic response capability'. That is the capability to respond adequate on changes in the context, which cannot be influenced, by flexibility and robustness of the strategy. (Bettis & Hitt, 1995; Lindgren & Bandhold, 2009)

The policy reports of the 20 municipalities were analyzed taking the scenario/strategy approach as a basic principle and taking the framework given by figure 1 and 2 as a structure.



**Figure 1** The strategy components

Below an explanation is given for the means that can be used as part of a local government strategy.

### Governing change

The management means of the local council can be classified in the following main groups:

1. Regulation

2. Incentives
3. Participation in execution

### Regulation

Regulation implies the contextualisation of spatial changes of buildings and urban structures through rules. These rules are laid down in legal frameworks, such as:

- Zoning plans
- Registration of conservation areas
- Registration of monuments
- Procedures for applying for planning permission

Regulation implies laying down what is permitted and what is not permitted with regard to spatial and functional interventions.

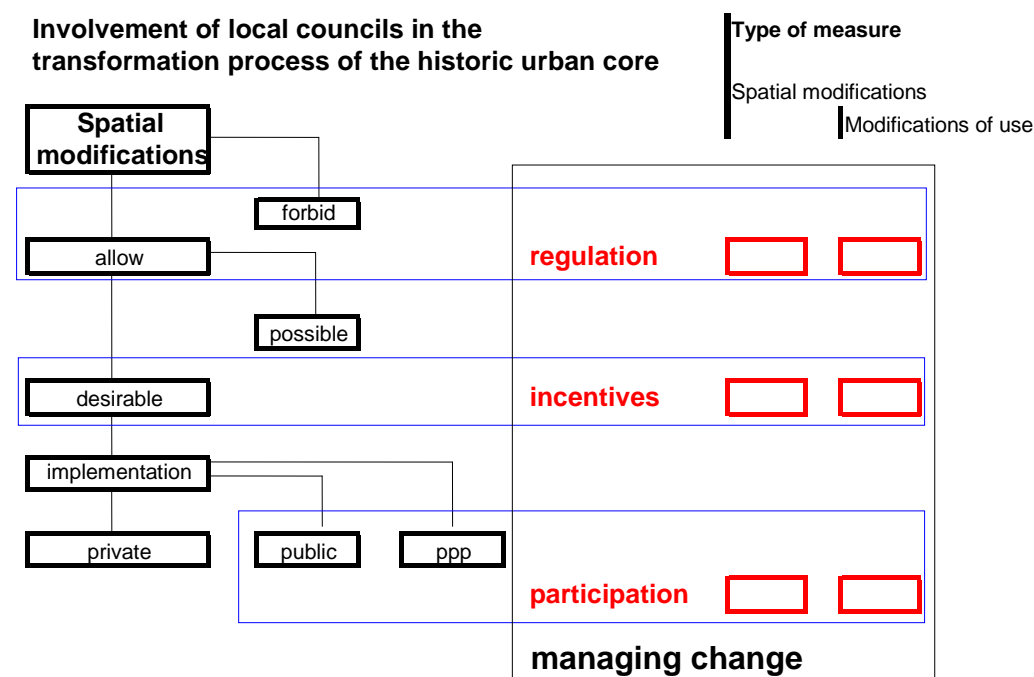
Regulation also concerns the contextualisation of possible uses. For example, a traffic circulation plan sets rules for how the road system is used.

### Incentives

Within the scope of what is permissible, a distinction can be made between what is possible and what is deemed desirable. Incentives can be used to put the focus on what is desirable. Subsidy schemes clearly belong to the category of incentives. One example of an incentive is advice and subsidy for the promotion of the use of authentic colours. However, incentives can also take the form of active cooperation from private initiatives through official municipal bodies, which can lead to quicker and more streamlined procedures.

### Participation

The municipality is responsible for the spatial planning and management of public spaces. The municipality also owns a considerable share of the property in the historic urban core. The initiative for interventions in the historic urban core, therefore, often lies with the municipality. The participation of private parties is also necessary, in order to produce an intervention that is qualitatively well-balanced and financially feasible. There are no set norms for the division of roles within local councils.



**Figure 2** Managing change

Traditionally, regulation is the main working area of local councils. To a limited extent, incentives are an extension of this. Risk-bearing initiatives and participation in large-scale transformation investments are less obvious areas of involvement.

### **THE EMPIRICAL FUNDAMENT, THE POLICY OF 20 DUTCH CITIES**

In order to gain insight into the strategies applied by Dutch local governments, an analysis is made on the policy reports of 20 municipalities. First an explanation is given on how the 20 municipalities were selected. After that some general characteristics of the local policy reports and strategies involved are presented. Finally an average of the strategies of the 20 cities is worked out.

The strategies of the 20 municipalities involved in the analysis turned out to correspond on many points. This made it feasible to embed the policies of the 20 municipalities within the framework of a theoretical reference municipality, without detracting from the differentiation in policy. We called the theoretical reference municipality 'Dutchtown'. The focus in the analysis is laid primarily on the way in which the local policy documents described the positioning and the future prospects of the historic urban core. A note was also made of the measures proposed in the policy documents for providing spatial and functional support to the future profile of the historic urban core. Finally, the measures noted were sorted according to the principles outlined in figure 3.

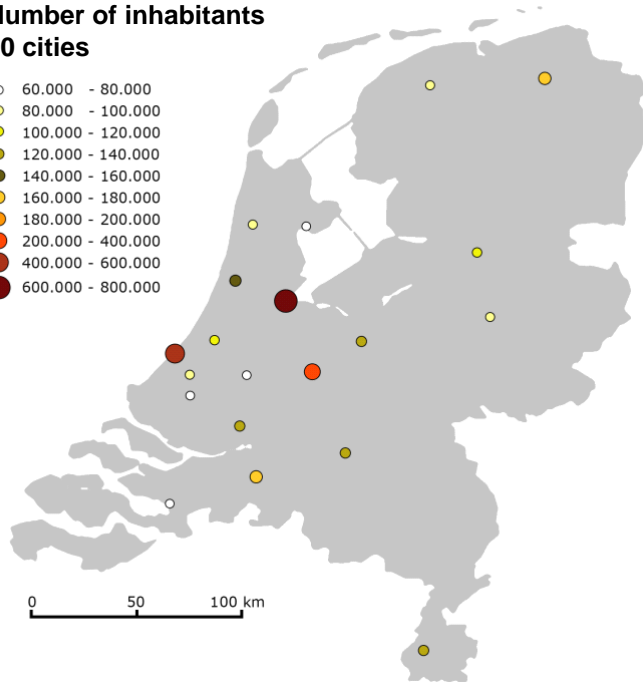
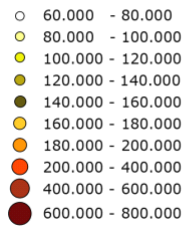
#### **Selection of the cities**

Of the 50 largest municipalities in the Netherlands, those municipalities were selected with a historic urban core that still exists for a considerable part (number of listed buildings in the historic urban core/inhabitants of the total city  $\geq 2$ ). Fig. 3 and 4 shows an overview of the 20 municipalities thus selected. Some characteristics of the selected municipalities are:

- By far the greater part of the selected cities were granted city charters around 1250. The exceptions to this are Deventer (956) and The Hague (1806).
- Around 20% of the population of the Netherlands live in the 20 selected municipalities (89% of the Dutch population live in urban areas).
- In the area of the historic urban core, there are generally less than 10% of the number of dwellings in the whole city. Exceptions to this are Amsterdam, Leiden, Delft and Bergen op Zoom.
- On average, the Dutch Real Estate Appraisal Act (WOZ) values of the dwellings in the historic urban core are 6% higher than the average WOZ value of the dwellings in the city as a whole. In 14 of the 20 municipalities, the WOZ value of the dwellings in the historic urban core are considerably higher than the average value of the city as a whole.

Letters were sent to all the municipalities in the selection in 2006 and 2007, asking them to provide policy documents relevant to the area of the historic urban core. Information was also sought through the municipalities' websites. The analysis includes a total of 91 policy documents from 20 municipalities.

**Number of inhabitants  
20 cities**



*Figure 3 Selection of Dutch cities*

the 20 cities	city inhabitants	monuments/ inhabitants x 1000	number of dwellings	dwellings inner city	year of city legimization
Amsterdam	735.526	9,5	374.952	45.960	1306
Den Haag	457.726	2,3	221.966	10.370	1806
Utrecht	260.625	5,0	114.116	6.030	1122
Groningen	175.569	3,6	81.997	6.340	1040
Breda	163.427	2,3	71.053	5.140	1252
Haarlem	147.831	7,5	66.964	6.250	1245
Den Bosch	131.697	3,7	55.940	5.070	1195
Amersfoort	129.720	2,8	53.612	2.530	1259
Maastricht	122.005	13,0	54.333	940	1204
Dordrecht	120.222	7,0	52.331	4.070	1220
Leiden	117.170	10,2	50.271	8.341	1266
Zwolle	109.000	3,8	46.311	1.510	1230
Delft	96.936	6,2	42.694	8.770	1246
Alkmaar	92.992	3,6	40.185	2.430	1254
Leeuwarden	90.516	6,0	43.323	2.620	1285
Deventer	86.072	6,4	36.507	2.700	956
Schiedam	76.576	2,3	35.453	1.730	1275
Gouda	71.688	4,6	29.920	2.730	1272
Hoorn	66.458	5,5	28.007	2.050	1357
Bergen op Zoom	65.793	3,4	27.734	3.940	1213

source:

Nyfer atlas voor gemeenten 2003 (gegevens hebben betrekking op 2002)

*Figure 4 Some figures of the selection of Dutch cities*

## **DUTCHTOWN STRATEGY**

As a consequence of the credit crunch also municipal budgets are cut down and priorities are reconsidered. Related to that there is a tendency towards more involvement of market parties and more restrictions in order to exclude financial not profitable investments.

The Dutchtown strategy, being an average detected from 91 policy reports and presented hereafter was formulated before the credit crunch. Therefore it is likely that, on the short term, there will appear some modification in the strategy to adjourn the investments needed.

### **Characteristics and significance of Dutchtown core**

The Dutchtown urban core has been created over many centuries and is characterised by a great degree of diversity. This development process is illustrated by new and old buildings. The current urban development situation has grown slowly, as the buildings have been replaced and changed over the centuries. The presence of different building periods also means a variety of construction techniques and methods and differences in architectural styles.

The buildings in the urban core are characterised by 'unity in diversity'. This unity is formed by a common idiom, in which the building height, the vertical character, the classic façades, the roof directions, the parcelling, the use of materials and the small scale are characteristic features. The greater part of the buildings were built in accordance with the traditional means and possibilities of the times. Afterwards, in more recent periods, many buildings were changed in both appearance and function. The diversity of the architectural picture is expressed (within the common characteristics described above) in a rich architectural variety of façade lay-outs, gable ends, ornamentation and numerous small differences in guttering heights, ridge heights and use of materials.

Seen against the background of increasing globalisation of society, competition between the municipalities and the regions will play an ever larger role. It will be increasingly important that the municipality of Dutchtown, too, assumes its own identity and tries to distinguish itself from others, with the goal of creating a positive image by promoting the municipality through its unique selling points. The historic heart is that, or at least a very important selling points of Dutchtown. It is not only of great importance for the urban economy, but also largely determines the character of Dutchtown, and thus functions as a magnet for visitors from the city itself and from elsewhere.

### **Future Objectives for the urban core**

#### **Cultural tourism**

In the coming years, cultural history will occupy a central place in ideas about the identity and image of the city. In the new municipal policy on the conservation of monuments and archaeology, links are made with city marketing, cultural tourism and the city's economy. The heritage of Dutchtown – both below and above ground – will be utilised in order to profit optimally from all the potential in these areas. Sometimes cities formulate something like a 'Cultural Profile' master plan, in which the strategic opportunities of the heart of the city are specified.

#### **Readability of history**

The objective of keeping the city's history readable and reinforcing it where possible is a front runner in policy. In meeting this objective, attention is paid not only to the conservation of monuments, but also to the conservation of the structure of urban planning over the whole terrain of the city. The relationship of cultural history to urban modernisation is addressed as well.

### **Preference for conservation and restoration**

Conservation and restoration takes precedence over modernisation. The historic building materials, structures and methods of construction represent an important monumental and historical value. This value must be respected as much as possible, so that the history and development of traditional building, and the daily use of a monument are readable. Replacement would entail this readability being lost forever.

Cultural historical identity must be more decisive in spatial planning. In order to maintain its distinctness from other historic cities, Dutchtown must retain its original image and reinforce it in a modern way, rather than immediately searching for a totally new image or other identity factors.

### **The pedestrian tourist**

The implementation policies that focus on restricting traffic in the urban core will benefit its character and attractiveness to guests. The same applies to the construction of parking garages. It is expected that tourism will occupy an increasingly important place, and this is part of the reason why retaining a small-scale character is extremely important.

### **Expand the urban core domain**

Dutchtown wants to intensify the use of the urban core with permanent and temporary public attractions and to modernise the character of the city as reflected in the architecture and activities. This is possible by reinforcing the working function and urban housing, as well as expanding recreational and shopping facilities. Further reinforcement of such a multicultural urban core requires space, but this space is only available to a limited extent within the current urban core borders. It is therefore important to expand the urban core domain to include some neighbouring areas.

## **Local government measures**

### **Regulation**

Regulation requires good information about matters to which the regulation applies. This explains why attention is paid in many policy documents to the documentation of everything that is situated within the historic urban core. This includes:

- Drawing up a map of areas of historical architectural interest and charting historical architectural values in the urban core
- Charting archaeological values and designating areas of archaeological interest
- Developing digital charts of cultural historical values
- Historical architectural research and formulating historical morphological reports
- Formulating cultural historical investigation and effect reports

Designating and protecting valuable inner areas, on the basis of inventory charts.

Implementing stringent visual quality policy for the urban core, focusing on architecture, use of colour and material, street and façade advertising, spatial planning for public spaces, street signs and street furniture. New buildings in the urban core must fit the historic image of the city, with regard to size, scale and character. Spatial planning for public spaces must be matched to the character of the historic image of the city (important factors include the design of street signs and street furniture). Restoring architectural coherence, so that the shop front and the rest of the façade (which is often historic) is seen as a whole once more.



## Spatial extension of the urban core: the case of 's-Hertogenbosch

### The historical background

's-Hertogenbosch is an average-sized Dutch city, dating from the 13th century. At present, it has a population of 132,000. The mediaeval structure of the historic part of the city, with its ramparts and pattern of narrow streets, has been largely preserved. The old city is situated on a sandbar, surrounded by marshy land. Because of this, urban expansion was very problematic in the past. Furthermore, 's-Hertogenbosch was a fortified city with impressive, sturdy ramparts. The city plan of 1652, shown in fig. 1, is still very recognisable in the present city plan. In the 19th century, the city was forced to find solutions to the growing need for space by opting for a high concentration of buildings within the city walls. It was only in 1874, when a law was passed stating that the fortifications of Dutch towns and cities were no longer functional, that creative solutions were sought for making the surrounding marshy land suitable for building. The railway and the station were built on the periphery of the historic urban core, where 590 national and municipal monuments are situated. These buildings strongly determine its authenticity and historical character, and therefore its attractiveness. The area has therefore been given protected status, making it difficult to realise any spatial and functional interventions. The urban core also plays an important role in the economic functioning of the city, because more than a third of employment is situated here. Though 's-Hertogenbosch has maintained and reinforced its past role as an urban centre, this has been accompanied by a growing need to extend it.

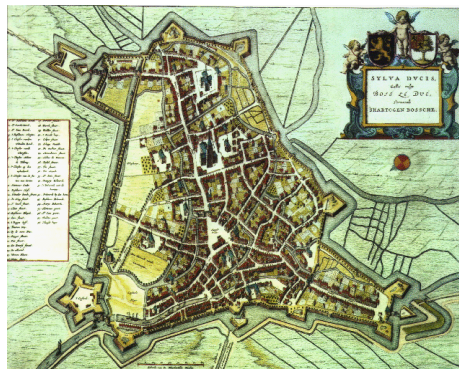


Fig. b A historical map of the city of 's-Hertogenbosch Source: Blaeu's Toonneel der Steden (1652).

*Plan of the city and the extension to the west*

### The need to extend the city centre

The economic growth of 's-Hertogenbosch put ever greater pressure on the urban core to accommodate offices, shops and housing. From the eighties onwards, the municipality searched for possibilities to extend the urban core.

At the end of the eighties, the decision was taken to extend the urban core in a westerly direction. The challenging title given to this risky undertaking was the 'leap over the railway'. On the western side of the railway was an industrial site that had been developed around the war years. Many of the businesses that had originally occupied this site had moved in the meantime to locations that offered more space and were more accessible, and where carrying out the business was less of a nuisance for those in the immediate surroundings. Existing buildings started to become empty in the eighties, which offered perspectives for large-scale redevelopment. Fig. 1 gives a schematic view of the extension.

The main specification for redeveloping the area around the railway was to 'lift' the inner city over the railway to create a place in the western section of that zone for city centre functions that could not be accommodated in the historic urban core due to lack of space. The location was one that offered possibilities for creating a new, high-quality urban environment, with new, high-density architecture and modern solutions. An additional specification was to create space for the new 'spatial claimants' on the market - large-scale organisations in education, the service industries and banking - which had resulted from mergers. The functions of these organisations, as far as scale level was concerned, no longer fitted into the finely meshed parcelling of the historic urban core.

Developments in the urban core are based on such points as finely meshed parcelling, human size and scale, individual buildings, historic parcelling and street patterns. The stone size of individual buildings in the urban core forms the basis for the degree of combining different functions and joining parcels. Paying attention to appropriate use of colour and material, moulding, scale and human size, in order to maintain the desired small-scale intimacy. Retaining a building as the base unit for a function (instead of a pre-determined maximum floor area, for example). Opposing the joining of historic buildings, so that there is sufficient differentiation between larger and smaller buildings. In principle, it is not permitted to unite two buildings into one. The unit must remain intact as far as possible.

## **Stimulation**

### **Historic colours**

The historic image of the streets is strongly influenced by the colours of the façades. Consistently using historic colours on woodwork, such as doors, window sills and frames ensures a recognisable character of Dutchtown colours. Owners of monuments and buildings that determine the image can be offered assistance by compiling a palette of historic colours. The historic colouring of façades of dwellings in the Protected City Image (Beschermd Stadsgezicht) is being researched and translated into a colour fan (following the example of the Dordrecht municipality). Research into the colouring (which has now disappeared or faded) of the façades of these buildings, particularly the original coloured reliefs, is being translated into concrete colour restoration projects – where possible and desirable.

### **Parking rates**

Parking problems are an important point for attention in the policy of many cities. The steady rise in car ownership gives a temporary character to every solution that has been thought up in the past. The historic urban core can offer no more space for cars in combination with a policy that focuses on increasing the attractiveness of the area. The raise of parking rates will discourage visitors to come by car. The Amsterdam historic urban core has the highest parking rates in the world.

### **Restoration financial support**

Many private owners of property in the historic urban core do not have sufficient financial means to renovate their property to a high standard. With regard to this, the creation of a Dutchtown Revolving Fund as a financial instrument for restoration will be investigated. Investigation will be carried out into the possibilities of an integral, more area-oriented subsidy system, besides subsidies for individual monuments and complexes. The formulation of Long-term Maintenance Programmes may be made obligatory for restorations to be subsidised. A variety of initiatives will be undertaken for this, ranging from distributing informative leaflets and expanding the website and publications to talks with owners/residents, interest groups, restoration institutions and housing associations about cultural history.

Establishing a depot for old building materials for repair work to monuments.

### **Empty storeys above shops**

During the day, the shopping streets in the historic urban core present a lively picture, but when the shops shut their blinds at night, the street image changes starkly, with negative consequences for the quality of life and the attractiveness of the area. Reinforcing the residential function in the urban core can contribute to combating these consequences. One way of doing so is to put now empty storeys above shops to good use again. This will involve technically complex and financially difficult interventions, particularly in relation to

## Public space intervention: the Breda Harbour restored

In Breda, a city of 163.500 inhabitants, plans were developed in the nineties to restore the filled-in inner harbour. Since the very beginnings of Breda, the harbour had fulfilled a function that helped determine the city's right to existence. 700 years after Breda was granted its city charter, it was decided in 1964 to fill in this 'monument' in order to make the city more car-friendly.

Meeting accessibility demands in order to support the economic interests of the historic urban core was a decision that fitted the spirit of the times. However, forty years after the decision to fill in the harbour, it has been decided – once again on the grounds of economic interests – to restore the buried monument. The plans for restoring the harbour in Breda are combined with modernisation interventions. The Belvedere Memorandum refers to this type of plan as follows: 'In essence, current shared opinion is that cultural history is not only worth saving, but that it also offers exciting opportunities for development whenever and wherever a synthesis can be found between the retention of existing historic values and the creation of new spatial values'.

The **Belevedere Memorandum** is a Dutch policy document on the relationship between cultural history and spatial planning. The memorandum was published in the summer of 1999 and signed by four ministries: the ministries of Education, Culture and Science, Public Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, and Transport, Public Works and Water Management. The development plans for Breda form an illustration of the synthesis referred to in the quotation above, in a set-up where public and private parties work together.



*Figure a The original harbour, transformed into a four lane road, the new 21 th century harbour and real estate development along the water*

In Breda, there was agreement on:

- The importance of restoring the city's oldest monument
- The significance of this for the city's identity and competitive position
- The significance for the increase in value of land and property in the direct vicinity of the harbour.

The municipality took on by far the largest share of the costs of this intervention in the public space. The project, which was completed in 2006, needed an investment of EUR 29.5 million. During the development of plans for the restoration of the historic urban waterway, there were many discussions about authenticity. Far-reaching concessions were made in this area, particularly under pressure of financial feasibility. Identity needs were apparently satisfied to a sufficient extent through something that evokes associations with the current, socially upheld view of history. In Breda, the choice was made to return the water (the harbour as the source of Breda's origins) to the city – but then to the city of the 21st century.

accessibility. The municipality provides incentives for initiatives in this area, including subsidies and procedural and organisational support.

### **Communication/education**

Intensifying education about surroundings and heritage. Knowledge about the past and the surroundings of Dutchtown will contribute to pupils' appreciation of their city. Central cultural historical information point for architects, urban planners, building contractors and clients. Presentation of results of archaeological and construction history research in an open depot set-up. Incidental exhibitions (construction history, archaeology or conservation of historic buildings). Publication of cultural historical magazine. Giving on-the-spot information about the location of the archaeological and construction history research. Accessible information about subsidy regulations for monuments. Giving lectures and guided tours. Permanent and semi-permanent public presentations about the results of archaeological and construction history research and conservation of historic buildings. Listing and describing spatial characteristics, valuable cultural historic elements and valuable historic green elements. Coordinating and organising an Open Monument Day. Putting Dutchtown on the map through publications.

### **Participation**

#### **Re design public space**

Reducing 'searching' traffic, e.g. through better street signs and better access to information about compartmentalisation and traffic flows. Making it easier to load and unload. Realising delivery routes for freight traffic to the urban core. Traffic light systems that give priority in the urban core to bikes and public transport instead of cars. Expanding the low-traffic area of the urban core. Introducing one-way traffic. Constructing attended bike sheds in the urban core. Realising a system of signs to parking garages and promoting parking garages.

Erecting urinals, creating taxi stands near entertainment areas, and ensuring socially safe lighting. Creating historic street lighting in the urban core. Existing fences, posts and basement grilles, etc. must be protected. Coherence of street furniture, in keeping with the historic image. The Urban Core Tree Preservation Society (Behoud Bomen Binnenstad) ensures an approach to planting and preserving trees that is in line with policy. Protecting city gardens, trees with preservation orders and ecologically valuable structures.

The green in the urban core does not often consist of continuous stretches of green, as is the case, for example, in post-war districts. In the urban core, there is much less grass and low greenery than elsewhere. Nevertheless, many urban cores give a green impression, which is due to the distribution of many trees over public spaces and along canals, etc.

Refurbishing squares, streets and avenues, paying attention to historic building lines, use of sustainable materials and research into historic predecessors. Choice of materials, structure and colour for road surfaces and pavements are essential for setting off monuments.

Underground refuse collection. Centrally organised graffiti control. Discouraging dog dirt, graffiti and illegal bill posting, and controlling weeds.

Attending to and maintaining the structure of canals, streets and alleyways, vacant areas (inner courtyards), building and parcel borders and premises.

### **Management and marketing cultural tourism**

In many cities, centre management is a joint initiative by the municipality and companies in the urban core. Within that collaboration, agreements are made about management, maintenance of the public space, lighting historic buildings, street signs, advertising, character of shopping streets and promotion.

Using the characteristics of the urban core as a unique selling point and keeping in line with the municipal promotion policy to highlight the possibilities of Dutchtown.

The tourist function of the historic urban core can be reinforced by building conference facilities and expanding hotel capacity. Making space for large-scale events and festivals in and around the historic urban core. Creating new developments that link up to the cultural historical tradition. Combining the forces of cultural organisations, tourist organisations, the marketing and information branch, the municipality, and residents and (cultural) entrepreneurs, in order to strengthen cultural historical tourism. The cultural historical centre of the urban core forms the setting within which cultural tourist attractiveness is reinforced.

### **Out of site parking**

The aim is to exchange the parking areas on public roads for parking space in constructed facilities.

The constructed facilities are often realised in the form of multi storey underground car parks just on the edge of, but outside the historic urban core.

### **Extend the urban core domain**

Realising 'overspill' locations. Here, space can be offered to functions that are too big, or have grown too big, for the historic heart of the city. In these outskirts, there is also space for high-density new buildings. In this type of initiative, the municipality can restrict itself to creating incentives for initiatives by private parties. The municipality can also choose for a more active approach. Den Bosch is a good example of this.

### **Strengthen the cultural function**

Cultural and recreational functions will be given incentives. Cultural facilities in the urban core that focus on ethnic and cultural minorities will be promoted.

Concentrating the accommodation of cultural institutions in monumental buildings in the urban core, in order to safeguard this compact cultural experience and promote cooperation. The monuments in possession of the municipality are destined with precedence for cultural functions.

## **The municipality as owner and custodian of cultural heritage**

### **Renovation of Utrecht Town Hall**



*Fig.c The old and new townhall in one*

The town hall in Utrecht has a long history dating back several centuries. It was over 650 years ago that the government of the city of Utrecht took up residence on this spot.

In 1997, the Spanish architect Enric Miralles (1955-2000) was commissioned to create an open, transparent and accessible building. Miralles was chosen for the job mainly because of his respect for history, combined with his innovative and daring architecture. Miralles was particularly renowned for the way in which he interwove the old and the new. “The main thing is to make history readable”, he wrote himself.

Miralles created a new entrance at the back of the town hall, which gives the building two faces, as it were. The town hall has an exciting but logical structure, so that visitors and users can find their way around almost automatically. The entrance building of concrete, steel and glass spatially integrates the square behind the town hall with the town hall itself.

The public space around the town hall has been redeveloped in accordance with the architect’s plans. Miralles’ design has transformed the square into an outdoor space with trees and a water feature. In the road surfacing, bluestone outlines indicate where houses stood in the (distant) past. Cars are excluded as far as possible. The new wing rises up above a couple of small listed buildings, and is linked and interwoven with them. Part of the façade of the demolished part of the old town hall has been retained, and it is incorporated in the new wing. The council chamber is situated on the first floor and stretches to the ridge of the building. Here, it is clearly visible how Miralles has linked the old and the new. Open-work beamed ceilings give a view of the wooden roof boarding, and the exposed mediaeval beams, which are staggered halfway along, show that two buildings with storeys of different heights have been joined together. The inner wall of the council chamber displays a palette of materials and styles that have been used throughout the centuries: cast-iron profiles, arched windows, plasterwork sections and windows with a view onto the staircase or the new corridors.

In the building, components of constructional historical value have been re-exposed or re-used. Parts of the existing complex that were ‘just nice’ have also been retained and often given a new function. For instance, old ceilings are visible in several places, as well as joists, strips of brick, old staircases, mediaeval gutters, doors and windows, and gables, etc., which have all been exposed in surprising ways.

The budget made available for the commission by the local council was EUR 13 million. In the end, the intervention cost almost EUR 20 million. An intervention that paid less attention to historical details would have been considerably cheaper.



## CONCLUSIONS

- In most policy reports there is no clear distinction between what generally is seen as the historic urban core and what generally is seen as the city centre. In almost all the policy reports the focus is on the city centre, which covers a bigger area than the historic urban core.
- The time scope municipalities use in their policy reports to specify their future vision is very different, most of the times very short and sometimes they cover several decennia and everything in between. Most of the reports have a time scope of about ten years. That is short regarding the time that is involved in making functional and spatial changes in the core.
- The visions are not formulated in terms of the future function of the historic urban core within the context of the city as a whole, referring to the interaction between the different areas that together form the city. However the urban core is seen by all the cities involved in this analysis as their flag ship, especially aiming for the interest of the pedestrian cultural tourist.
- The characteristics and significance of the historic urban core are described in “soft specifications” like for example “unity in diversity”. That kind of specification cannot be used as operational assessment criterion for interventions in the historic urban core.
- The same problem occurs when taking a closer look at the objectives. For example the objective of “Keeping the city’s history readable and reinforcing it where possible” will awake a large number of different meanings given by different people. Most people can read a book but only a few learned how to read a city’s history.
- In many municipal policy documents, there is a lack of specification of measures that would give a concrete dimension to the strategies. The measures are still often formulated in terms of goals and good intentions.
- Most municipalities use a one track strategy. There are not alternative strategies presented as taken into consideration. There are no future scenarios, describing the scope of the possible future context for the strategies, taken into account. What we see is a single strategy approach placed in the context of a single scenario future. It is evident that taking a time scope of about ten years the approach with future scenarios does not fit with the objectives. The future developments used as a context for the strategy can be seen as a projection of trends that characterize the actual situation. Big changes in the future context, like the credit crunch or something likewise, have not been taken into account. What we see is a single strategy approach placed in the context of a single short term scenario future. Because of that approach the strategy (s) are not tested on their ‘strategic response capability’
- The focus of the municipality is on modifications in the public space and on marketing, aiming for the attention of the on culture oriented tourist.
- The financial feasibility is always a major criteria. Despite this decisive importance strategies very seldom have a financial paragraph in which is worked out what figure there is on the bill to pay and who is paying which part of that bill. In specifying the policy set out in the memoranda for the future of the historic urban core, local councils do not immediately take on long-term financial obligations that go further than what comes under regular expenses. Specific project-related investments are included separately in the political decisions.
- Investments by local councils for specific projects in the historic urban core are implicitly legitimised from the point of view of common interest. Participation by the local government in these projects is in most cases not financially profitable for the municipality. Local politicians use arguments related to the common interest for the city to legitimize

the input of tax payers money. That implicates that there needs to be a positive social attitude for giving priority to investments that support the quality and attractiveness of the historic urban core.

Based on the analysis and conclusions drawn from that, a need can be detected for an adequate theoretical framework for local government future strategies for the (Dutch) historic urban core

Following the ingredients from which a strategy is build up, being also the ingerredients for the theoretical framework:

1. A vision in which the future social economic function of the historic urban core in the context of the city as a whole is stipulated
2. The objectives, which make the rather abstract vision more concrete.
3. The means, which describe the kind of activities the local government will initiate in order to meet their own objectives.
4. Criteria. The characteristics and significance of the historic urban core and the objectives for the future of the historic urban core are often described in “soft specifications” . That kind of specification cannot be used as operational criteria in which a strategy can be formulated and assessed on forehand and tested on its effects later on.
5. Strategic response capability in the context of different future scenarios. Most municipalities use a one track strategy. There are not alternative strategies presented as taken into consideration. There are no future scenarios, describing the scope of the possible future context for the strategies, taken into account. What we see is a single strategy approach placed in the context of a single scenario future.
6. Cost and benefit. The financial feasibility is always a major criteria. Related to the social economic function of the historic urban core and related to the content of the proposed strategy a cost benefit analysis should be part of the framework.

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