-Les Rencontres - Summary
the French-Dutch urban planning meetings
2024

Low-carbon cities : governance, costs, tools and systemic approach
The exchange had two parts: Brain (1) and Hart (2)

The Brain

We started the exchange with a dilemma:

building block <-- --> neighbourhood

'What is the most effective measure lowering carbon emission?' The dilemma here is that on the scale of the building block other measures can be effective than on the scale of the neighbourhood.

Ex: building near public transport has a lowering effect.

   Wood building<-- --> might be less high if you use wood.

We also discussed if we have methods to objectify the choice of lower carbon measures.

-We came to the conclusion that we don't have all the answers and that we have to accept this.

-We need a menu with solutions to measure the effects.

With items that can be looked at on a local (no cars, use of rest heat, agreements between public and private partners, laws on building material, more green, etc.), national (fiscal measures, energy label system or marketing, etc.) or any other scale.

-We also need to look at systems level.

We need to combine knowledge of different disciplines to learn from each other. We need to bring back complexity (complexity is that what is related). So design will be about finding a solution for more problems than a single handed problem. Or: no easy solutions anymore.

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-We also need to dare to make bold choices which stimulate the behavior we want and make the unwanted behavior impossible (if you don't want cars, than make car free zones).
-And last but not least: we need to bring back common sense and we need to dare to be humble again.

The Hart

As planners we can not solve the problem, but we can offer our skills. We have some nice unique selling points:
-We can bring the future in the here and now.
-We can help to visualize and with that draw perspective.
-We can help to make it about a system level. We can bring in the bigger picture (a wholistic view). We do that by analyzing patterns, the city and its layers, etc. And we can help to understand specialists and to co-create together (we speak more than one language).
-We are creative and can help to rethink the problem or solution.
These USP's can help to create engagement with many people and organisations which is needed to find solutions together.

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Climate impact: *the necessary adaptations to urban space*
Adapting Public Spaces

- Macro-adaptations: Incorporating resilient furniture and increasing green spaces.
- Trees and Vegetation: Essential for cooling and managing rainfall.
- Maximizing Rainfall Use: Enhancing water absorption and storage.

Specific City Concerns

- ***Lille***: Rainfall leads to waterlogging; built on argile and clay causing foundation instability.
- ***Amsterdam***: Located 6m below sea level, requiring elevated defenses and water management strategies.
- ***Marseille***: Faces heat stress, groundwater issues, and droughts, exacerbated by funding limitations.

Water Management Strategies

- Irregular Rainfall: Necessitates buffers in the Netherlands and slow-flow systems within buildings.
- Flooding: Requires public trust and effective storage solutions, such as tanks under roads.
- Flexible Approaches: Include accepting periodic flooding and creating upstream water spaces.

Innovative Solutions

- Floating Buildings: Proposed in the Netherlands as a modern approach.
- Architectural Adaptations: Examples include Hamburg's first-floor car parks and Paris' balance between aesthetics and functionality.

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Climate impact*: the necessary adaptations to urban space*

Urban Green Initiatives

- Heat Mitigation: Greening roofs and maximizing tree planting.
- Slow Mobility: Encouraged by projects like Utrecht's canal restoration.
- Award-Winning Projects: **Alkmaar**'s integrated green city award.

Sustainability Standards

- Policy and Vision: Need for forward-thinking policies that balance attractivity, sustainability, and economic costs.
- Carbon Neutrality: **Amsterdam**'s goal to ensure all new buildings are carbon neutral by 2027.

Challenges and Dilemmas

- Local Effects: Floods, sea level rise, irregular rainfall, wind, heat, drought, and soil stability.
- Innovative vs. Traditional Solutions: Balancing slopes, tanks, channel infiltration, and shading innovations.
- Cost vs. Sustainability: Standard materials versus sustainable criteria and economic considerations.
- Short-Term vs. Long-Term: Need for adaptable, non-static solutions.
- European Approach: Necessity for holistic, context-sensitive plans considering both heritage and social issues.

Conclusion

- Urban planning must integrate a variety of strategies tailored to specific geographical and climatic conditions.
- Emphasis on balancing short-term needs with long-term sustainability.
- Collaboration and innovative thinking are essential for effective climate adaptation.
- Holistic approach and resilience

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Mobility, *energy needs, impact on the sharing of space above and below ground*

Inventory. What topics do we want to discuss?

Alkmaar: limited space underground. When transforming an area: companies leave the intended construction site in phases. How do you plan closure of (cable) infrastructure and construction of new infrastructure? Amstelveen has 15-year plan for phasing out companies

Utrecht: how to promote active mobility?

Lille: how to promote alternative mobility (ex: via water) and share use ?

Hilversum: the 'waste of space' How do we fit all desired functionalities into the public space? Can a digital twin be used to model solutions?

The Hague: managing mobility. How can we properly manage through traffic with smart systems? Underground infrastructure. Trees for a liveable city but very limited underground space

St-Omer development of 'slow mobility' 'walking policies. First and last mile within mobility issues?

Nice: how to promote use of public transport?

Mobility should support the goal of becoming a healthy city.
We have to change the focus from car mobility to healthy mobility. We have to create safe streets for pedestrians and bikers. Our infrastructure has to be adjusted.

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Mobility, *energy needs, impact on the sharing of space above and below ground*

Subsurface

We have to develop a spatial planning for the subsurface supported by law. This has to be developed on a national level.

New Zealand has such a spatial planning.

Due to the necessary change in energy policies we have to take care of net congestion. This needs space! Both above and below the surface.

We have to take into account that maintenance work on subsurface infrastructure requires more space above the ground.

We also need to research the possibilities of the use of minigrids.

Other means of transport

Water can provide an alternative way of transport. Both for goods and people. City of Rotterdam has some good examples.

In the (near) future drones can also be an alternative for the transport of goods.

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Densification, *sharing public space and quality of life*

Densification is perceived as negative when quality of life is impacted. Measurement tools can be used to improve the quality, sensors for air quality, for noise etc... Those measurement can also solve problems.
Ex: in ***Alkmaar*** a discotheque was creating noise nuisance by measuring the noise on sensors together with time it allowed to correlate the nuisance to a low frequency used. By stopping using this frequency the problem was solved.

Acceptance of densification depends on the quality of the project and on the solutions we are able to find to problems that can occur.
Densification is possible when it answers the needs of the public. Diversity is a key . Densification should answer the needs of the population (family, student, seniors etc...)

With the space being limited in France and The Netherlands the urban planning needs to maximise the use of the space. By reducing the space used by cars you gain space for living and housing. In new neighbourhood the less ground floor is used for car the more is available for housing and pubic spaces (parks, leisure etc...) which makes densification acceptable and helps fight climate impact.
To limit the space used by car the development of public transports, soft mobilities and car sharing helps. The poorer areas need better connection to city centers and to employments area's.

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Densification, *sharing public space and quality of life*

How do you measure densification ?
The traditional registration systems like the cadastres and inhabitants per m2 are mostly used.
To be able to act on that data you also need to be able to make those numbers speak.
Utrecht designed a barcode (1 code by activities) which allows to analyse a neighbourhood.

Perception of density
Perception of density depends on the quality of the housing and facilities. When a densification project was presented to the inhabitant of a neighbourhood in ***Hoorn*** they first reacted negatively. The same people 5 years later were asking why they did not build even more housing. Quality of the project will help people accept the densification.

In The Netherlands the size of the housing which is getting smaller is the problem, in France it is the construction quality in itself which is a problem.
Density also needs to integrate the social issues to make those areas more liveable. Quality of the buildings and of the urban spaces.

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