

THE DUTCH SPIRIT OF PLACE. BRINGING SPIRIT OF PLACE TO CITIES IN THE NETHERLANDS*

Henk Jan Solle**

Keywords: urban planning, cultural history, 21st century city planning in The Netherlands

Abstract: For several centuries, the issue of urban development in The Netherlands was mainly left to private initiative. By the end of the 19th century, with industrialisation and the growth of the working classes, these ideas changed. Slowly the state government built up a framework to ensure reasonable housing for the entire population, later on widening into a legal framework for spatial planning as a whole. Around the same time, the concern for the protection of cultural and natural history started to increase as well. Legislation on the subject of monument care developed in the 20th century into a firm legal protection system, ensuring the protection of valuable cultural and natural historical sites.

However, as the legal framework is quite thoroughly written down, no law can bring spirit to a place. The beginning of the 21st century shows a development towards the inclusion of the existing cultural historic values of an area into the design for new developments. Three examples of this approach are given, each representing an approach to the creation of a spirit of place to a newly developed urban area. The first example is the Waalfront project in the city of Nijmegen. In the urban plan of the new neighbourhood several historic layers are being made visible. The second example is located in the town of Almere. This new town, situated on the bottom of the former Zuiderzee, is only a few decades old. One of the main points in the design for a large new neighbourhood are the many archaeological sites which are dotted around the area. The last example is a project in the city of Rotterdam. One of many recent developments is the building of the Market Hall, a large indoor market where the walls and roof consist of commercial shops and apartments.

Rezumat: În Olanda, secole la rând problema dezvoltării urbanistice a fost lăsată mai ales în seama inițiativei private. Pe la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea, odată cu industrializarea și cu dezvoltarea clasei muncitorilor, aceste idei s-au schimbat. Treptat guvernul a construit un cadru normativ necesar pentru a asigura locuințe accesibile pentru întreaga populație. Acesta s-a transformat ulterior în cadru legal pentru planificarea spațială în întregul ei. Concomitent, preocuparea pentru protejarea istoriei naturale și culturale a început de asemenea să ia amploare. Legislația dedicată protejării monumentelor s-a transformat în cursul secolului XX într-un sistem ferm de protejare legislativă, care asigură protejarea siturilor naturale și culturale istorice valoroase.

* This paper is based on a presentation given at the symposium "Architecture. Restoration. Archaeology" which was held in April 2011. The theme of this 12th edition of the symposium was 'Archaeology in the city, the spirit of place'.

** Henk Jan Solle, MSc, studied in Human Geography and Planning at the University of Groningen (The Netherlands). He currently holds a position as planning specialist at the municipality of Westvoorne.

Totuși, indiferent cât de solid ar fi cadrul legislativ, nici o lege nu poate asigura spiritul locului. Începutul secolului XXI indică o evoluție spre includerea valorilor cultural-istorice existente ale oricărei zone în procesul de planificare și proiectare pentru noile investiții. Sunt oferite trei exemple ale acestei tendințe, fiecare reprezentând câte o atitudine referitoare la crearea spiritului locului într-o zonă urbană nou constituită. Primul exemplu este proiectul Waalfront, în orașul Nijmegen, unde Planul urbanistic al noului cartier dezvăluie câteva straturi istorice. Al doilea exemplu se găsește în orașul Almere. Acest oraș nou, situat pe fundul fostei Zuiderzee există de doar câteva decenii. Unul dintre principalele obiective ale proiectului pentru un nou mare cartier îl constituie numeroasele situri arheologice care sunt răspândite pe teritoriul său. Ultimul exemplu este un proiect pentru orașul Rotterdam. Una dintre numeroasele investiții recente este construirea unei mari piețe acoperite unde pereții și acoperirea constau din spații comerciale și apartamente.

Introduction

This article consists of two parts. First will be presented a short background to the situation in The Netherlands with regards to the legal framework of urban planning and cultural history. Following this introduction there will be a presentation of several examples of the way cultural history is represented in present day urban planning in The Netherlands.

The author is not in any way affiliated to either the design of the mentioned projects nor part of the execution or decision-making processes of the developments.

Laws and legislation against the cultural background of The Netherlands

Planning in The Netherlands has a long tradition. Over half of the present day country is in danger of flooding, either by sea or by rivers. Many areas in the lower (western and northern) parts of The Netherlands have been claimed from the sea. Many lakes have been dried and almost all natural swamps have been cultivated (Fig. 1). In the southern and eastern parts of the country woodlands, peatbogs and heather have been cultivated and transformed in agricultural land, pastures and urban landscapes as well.

Especially the battle against the sea has been a hard one. Many times the people claimed land from the sea, in many other cases the sea took back the land and the people inhabiting it. After long periods of more or less 'spontaneous' land use, around the year 1000 AD several reasons gave way to a development of more and more structured urban planning and land use systems. Ruling elites, merchants, entrepreneurs and religious authorities each had their own reasons for creating a structured way of planning the landscape. After several centuries large areas of The Netherlands were planned, designed and structured in a way that fitted the population best.¹

¹ Van der Cammen, De Klerk 1999.



Fig. 1. De Grote Bosatlas, 52th edition, Groningen, 2007, p. 44.

However, the long tradition of 'free market' planning over time gave way for several negative side effects. One of the most problematic was the housing situation. For instance, the draining of the Lake Haarlem and the subsequent 'wild colonisation' between the 1850s and 1880s led to an alarming rise in malaria, typhoid and cholera outbreaks. The former lake being right on the doorstep of cities as Amsterdam and The Hague, the poor living conditions of the rural working classes received more attention by the end of the 19th century. In that same period the housing situation in the city centres as well was considered by many to be far below acceptable standards. With urbanisation thriving, more and more people were packed in unsuitable housing quarters, giving way for disease, crime and social problems as alcoholism to thrive.²

Until the late 19th century providing housing for the people was mostly left to private initiative. But with the rise of socialism and a growing labour class in the cities, the government was urged to get involved in the housing issue. This led to the first Law on Housing, established by the State Government in 1901. This law was mostly designed to create the framework to improve housing conditions in the overpopulated, dilapidated housing districts around the old city centres. The law introduced the building permit, gave minimum criteria for the quality which houses should meet and it introduced the possibility for social housing companies to receive grants from the government for building and maintaining social housing projects. The law also introduced the zoning plan, municipalities were urged to design zoning plans for new residential and other urban

developments.³

The law proved useful. Many new residential neighbourhoods were established and the worst housing conditions in the cities were improved to a more acceptable level. The law was revised several times and in the 1930s the state government started working on a new, revised Law on Housing. However, the result was presented on the 10th of May 1940, the day Germany declared war on The Netherlands and invaded the country.⁴

After the Second World War finished, the focus of the government was on rebuilding the country. The sense that a new law on planning was necessary still hung around, and in 1965 it was adopted. This Law on Spatial Planning was more designed on planning (as the name implies), leaving the rules and regulations about building criteria for houses being given in a revised Law on Housing. The Law on Spatial Planning continued many of the rules and regulations from the previous law of 1901. Each municipality had to constitute zoning plans for its territory, in which the permitted functions and buildings are given. On a more global level the planning instrument of the structural plan was introduced, in which the broader vision for a city, town or municipality is given.⁵

In 2008 the old law was replaced by a new Law on Spatial Planning. The law was designed to reduce the limitations for municipalities in designing their spatial policy. With the new law, each government layer (state, province and municipality) had to limit its policy to its own scale. The national government for example only deals with (inter)national infrastructural works, large economic clusters as the port of Rotterdam or the airport hub Amsterdam-Schiphol and issues dealing with mining or exploitation of the North Sea. Another important issue in the new law is a large scale standardisation and digitalisation operation.

Laws and legislation on the protection of heritage and monuments

Compared to the planning tradition, monument care has a far shorter history in The Netherlands. Legislation on this matter was being issued relatively late when compared to other European countries. In the late 19th century private initiative led to a movement which raised awareness for the protection of cultural and natural monuments. Industrialisation in The Netherlands only started to have a large impact in the second half of the 19th century.⁶ Combined with an ever smaller area of wild land and nature, the thought that soon there would be no truly natural habitat left started to mobilise certain (elite) groups in society. In the early 20th century this led for example to the foundation of the private society

² Wolfram 1998, p. 472.

³ Van der Cammen, De Klerk 1999.

⁴ Voogd, 1999.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ Duijvendak 1998, p. 503.

Natuurmonumenten (Natural Monuments). This society bought pieces of land to preserve the natural environment. Their first achievement was buying the Lake of Naarden and its surrounding swamps, thus preventing it from being turned in a large garbage dump for the expanding nearby city of Amsterdam.⁷ Also the protection of build heritage became more and more important. In 1911 for instance the Bond Heemschut (Union for the protection of one's premises) was founded. Yet another private society, this one was mainly concerned with protecting build cultural heritage.⁸

These private initiatives were often started by rich citizens belonging to the city elites. The government, consisting mostly of members with a liberal political viewpoint, kept far from the subject. However, the Second World War ended this situation. The war meant the start of the state government dealing with the protection of cultural historically important things. After the bombing of the historic city centre of Rotterdam in early May 1940, the state government (then in exile in the United Kingdom) declared a Decision on reconstruction. (With the lack of a functioning democratic parliament in exile, the constitution prohibited laws to be issued.) In this Decision protection and reconstruction of build heritage was included. After the war had finished a revised Decision was adopted, followed in 1950 by a Temporary Monuments Law. The temporary law was replaced in 1961 by the Monuments Law.

The Monuments Law creates the possibility for the national government to declare buildings a state monument. Besides these also provinces and municipalities each have possibilities to declare a monument. Monuments can be buildings, landscapes and areas.⁹

In 1988 a revised Monuments Law was adopted. Since then, the most important amendment to this law was the inclusion of the Treaty of Malta in 2007. This meant that the protection of archaeological heritage was included in the Monuments Law.

Cultural history and planning together

The inclusion of the Treaty of Malta in the Monuments Law had consequences for the Law on Spatial Planning as well. From then on municipalities were obliged to include a system in their zoning plans which protects the existing and known archaeological remains but also to set up a system to prevent expected archaeological heritage from disturbance. In most cases, this means that building or other ground-disturbing works are forbidden unless a developer or property owner can prove with an archaeological research document that

there are no remains being (unacceptably) demolished.

In line with the receding state government, implementation and responsibility for the proper execution of the Treaty of Malta was given to the municipalities. They became responsible for the protection of the archaeological heritage in their respective communities. Another important change is that conducting the actual archaeological research was left to the private market. Many research companies jumped to this opportunity, whereas the (state) government focuses primarily on setting the criteria for the research, guiding the quality and assessing the research reports.

On the first of January 2012 an amendment to the law gained power. With this amendment, the scope of protective measures in the zoning plan was extended beyond the archaeological remains which are underground to include as well the cultural historic values existing in the build and natural environment above ground.

After the 2010 national elections a minority coalition of liberal – rightwing Christian-democratic signature gained power. One of the main issues of this coalition was the announcement of a structural revision of the legislative framework concerned with the built and natural surroundings. This new law should comprise of the legislative framework for planning, housing, monument care, environmental and nature protection etc. The existing 60-odd separate laws for these topics should be integrated in one new law, reducing the number of rules and regulations forced on by the state government. The first drafts of the new law coming available in 2012, the planned date for it to achieve legal status is the 1st of January 2014.¹⁰

Laws and spirit of place

Overall the risk for destruction of cultural historic values is known. During the second millennium many landscapes, cities and buildings of significant importance were designed, built, created, redesigned, demolished and redeveloped. Especially the last 200 years saw many changes in land use with a major impact. With a country constantly under threat of being flooded, densely populated and with a constant demand for development space the risks for cultural historic values to be damaged or even permanently destroyed is significant. The government acknowledged these threats the past decades and as described earlier has built up a firm legislative system to protect cultural history, archaeological values, heritage and monuments from destruction.

However, no law can bring spirit to a place (Fig. 2). Whereas the existing heritage is being protected by a legal framework proposed by the (state) government, the spirit of place is still depending on private initiative,

⁷ Natuurmonumenten 2011.

⁸ Heemschut 2011.

⁹ Voogd 1999.

¹⁰ Ministry of I&E 2012.



Fig. 2. Wilco'z Pics, www.wilcozpics.wordpress.com [retrieved April 2011].

much as it was in previous centuries. Within the legal framework developments can take place which enrich the existing spirit of place and which can attribute to the rich and varied cultural history which is present in The Netherlands today.

As much as development can pose danger to remnants of by-gone ages, today is also the day cultural history is being made for the next generations to come. Developments are wide and varied, many of them are complying to economical criteria and demands from the market only. As a fact, not every real-estate developer wishes to attribute to the spirit of a place.

However, some developments do build bridges between past and present, between old and new. They in themselves exist only because of the demand for a new development, but in their design, in the ideas behind the planning and in their architectural efforts they use the past to continue the tradition of planning in The Netherlands. Because they are a combination of many factors, including financial and other economic arguments, it is not a forced-on spirit of place. As well as with many of the cultural historic significant remains

from previous eras, economic value still is the best insurance against destruction. Something useful will not be discarded that easily.¹¹ With this thought several new developments have been planned which use the cultural history as a framework for the design.

In this paper three examples of such an approach to bring spirit to a place are given. They do not act as examples of how things should be done, merely they represent how spirit can be brought to a place by using the remnants of the past in design and planning. For each example a short introduction is given, followed by a description and explanation of thoughts. They do not represent the proper way, but they do offer insights in how cultural history is used to create a spirit of place more deeply rooted in history than the simple 'copy-pasting' of façades from the 18th century.

The Waalfront Project in Nijmegen

The city of Nijmegen

Situated on the eastern border with Germany, the city of Nijmegen is regarded by many as the oldest city of The Netherlands. The exact foundation date is unknown, but it is known that around 50 BC a Batavian (Celtic) village was situated on the southern banks of the river Rhine. After defeating the local Batavian tribes in 60 AD, the Romans established fortifications on the place of the former Celtic village. Alongside the fort a small marketplace developed. Around 100 AD this city of Noviomagus Batavorum or Ulpia Noviomagus was granted market rights. Since then the city has been a prominent trading and marketplace, maintaining its position as a centre for trading throughout the Middle Ages. In the 19th century, the development of industry areas upstream the river Rhine, especially the Ruhr area in Germany, contributed to the city's growth as a trading place.¹² Today the city, with 165.000 residents, is one of the larger cities in The Netherlands, boasting a university and functioning as a regional centre.

The present day city centre is situated a mere kilometre further east than the Roman city origins. After the Romans withdrew from the area of the lower Rhine around 300 AD, the old fortifications declined and gradually disappeared. The city degraded to a village and moved slightly east, the centre being build on the edge of a small hill banking the river. Overtime, parts of the remnants of the Roman city disappeared when the Rhine changed its course. The remaining parts 'disappeared' underground with sand and clay being deposited by the river, later developments covering it up. Most of the area developed as a primarily agrarian landscape, with small farms dotted along the river embankments.¹³

¹¹ Graham, Ashworth, Tunbridge 2000.

¹² De Pater, Schoenmaker 2005, p. 404.

¹³ Broeksma *et alii*. 2007, pp.16-121.

Although the city of Nijmegen was near, the borders of the city didn't extend far, limited by the restrictions for fortified cities. Few urban developments thus reached the place of the former Roman city. Among the few, the most notorious was the construction of fort Krayenhoff. This fort was part of a defence line of fortifications which the state government build around Nijmegen and many other cities in The Netherlands in 1814 after the liberation from the French.¹⁴ When not even a century later the fort already lost its use, the municipality decided to demolish it in 1914. Only a few pieces of the fortifications were left intact alongside the river. With fortification restrictions being released, being situated close to the city centre and next to the river, the site then got developed as an industrial zone. Up until today it houses various commercial, industrial and harbour related companies.¹⁵

The Waalfront project

Due to its presence right next to the city centre the pressure for redevelopment became ever more increasing in the later parts of the 20th century. The commercially relatively low-value industrial and harbour activities did not seem appropriate anymore for this location. As various factories became redundant, the area seemed destined to deteriorate. At that point the local government, together with residents of the city, drew up a plan for redevelopment.

In the urban plan for the new neighbourhood the various landscapes from the past have been integrated (Fig. 3). The area has been divided in different areas, the urban design each representing a period from the past of the area. Due to its proximity to the city centre most functions changed to residential, the task was to design an attractive residential neighbourhood which would add a new cultural historic layer to the already existing ones in the area.¹⁶

The Roman city is represented in the design of the neighbourhood by an area where the grid pattern of streets simulates the urban grid of the Roman fortress. This part is proposed exactly on the spot where the fort used to be, the northern edge of the former fort being disintegrated in the river, the street pattern follows suit here. The sharp edges in the street pattern represent the orderly way by which the Romans designed and built their towns.

The area of the former fort Krayenhoff will be restored to its former form. A century after it got demolished, the fort will be rebuilt and put to use as a recreational park and meeting point. Part of the Waalfront project is the construction of a new bridge

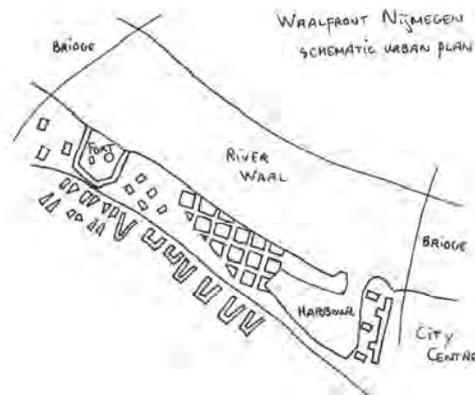


Fig. 3. F. Broeksma *et alii.*, Masterplan Waalfront Nijmegen, Nijmegen, 2007.

which will connect both sides of the river. With the new bridge urban developments on the northern side of the river are within reach, connecting the park on the site of the former fort and the Waalfront development as whole to recreational areas on the north side of the river.

On the western edge of the Waalfront project area, three apartment buildings will tower high above the surrounding area (Fig. 4). The buildings will act as beacons, referring to the several high rise buildings such as church towers which are dotted along the rivers of The Netherlands and act as navigational beacons for ships. The buildings will also function as a gate to the city, marking the city's western border on the riverside. Third, the towers refer back to the many factory chimneys which once used to line the river, forming very characteristic landmarks in the river landscapes.

The urban plan for the southern part of the Waalfront project refers back to the agrarian past of the area. Safely situated behind the dikes protecting them from flooding, the housing blocks are open to the river. They thus create an inner garden which opens up to the river, the inner courtyards both functioning as a secure, secluded area but also open to the neighbourhood.



Fig. 4. Lodewijk Baljon Landschapsarchitecten, www.baljon.nl [retrieved April 2011].

¹⁴ NHW 2004, p. 16.

¹⁵ Broeksma *et alii.* 2007.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

Another apt function lies in connecting further away neighbourhoods of the city to the river. The industrial area has for a long time blocked the more southerly situated residential areas from interacting with the river. By developing the Waalfront project, they too get access to the riverfront.¹⁷

Not the entire area, however, will be redeveloped. The harbour, the Waalhaven, will remain intact. It will be partly redeveloped to offer recreational harbour facilities, but it will also continue to function as a harbour for commercial riverboats.¹⁸ On this way the harbour and riverlife will be integrated in the new residential quarters. In keeping the harbour functioning it also contributes to the continuation of the old functions in the area.

Slightly outside the Waalfront project proper but situated immediately adjacent to it is the old Vasim textile factory. The factory was built in 1948 and is a proponent of the post World War II architecture. This example of 'new industrial heritage', though only opened in 1950, became abandoned already in 1985. It was used by various other companies but in 2000 the last factory had to close down due to strict environmental regulations. Since then the building has been used by various artists and cultural foundations, offering cheap but spacious housing accommodation.¹⁹ Combined with the development of the Waalfront project the Vasim building will act as a cultural centre for the area, and the city of Nijmegen as a whole.

The Waalfront project is not only comprising new developments, but also the revitalisation of valuable cultural history. The last two decades a strong movement within Dutch society has sparked interest in history and archaeology. Integrating the history of a place in the design of new developments can be seen as one of the results of this movement.

The design of the actual buildings which will be developed in the area is not known yet. The financial crisis has slowed down developments. Intentions are however to integrate the various stages of development of the area in the design of the buildings, referring back to previous functions but creating a new design altogether.²⁰ Combined the buildings and the layout of the street pattern will add to the value of the new neighbourhood, creating a spirit of place which is both unique to the area but firmly rooted in its existing history, adding an exciting new page to the 2000 years of city life in Nijmegen.

Archaeology parks in Almere

The city of Almere

The Dutch are known worldwide for their ability to take land from the sea and create a living on places which do not seem suitable for it by nature. A prime example of this ability is the city of Almere. It is the youngest city of The Netherlands, the municipality only founded in 1984. The city lies in the south-western corner of the province of Flevoland. Besides two small former islands, this province consists only of land reclaimed from the former Zuiderzee (Southern Sea). After the construction of the Afsluitdijk finished in 1932, the Zuiderzee got disconnected from the open water and slowly turned from salt into freshwater. As part of the so-called Zuiderzee Plan, large parts of this now shallow lake were designed to be turned into agricultural land. Several large areas were claimed from the water, with the draining of Southern Flevoland being completed in 1968. On average the surface level of the province is close to 5m below sea level.

Almere, and several other new towns in the province of Flevoland, have long been struggling with their identity. For a long time, the 'frontier spirit' of claiming land from the sea and making it suitable for human life was a strong key mark in marketing the new land. However, the new land was in the first place designed to enlarge the area suitable for agricultural production. The rural idyll of the 1940s, 50s and 60s of brilliant waterworks engineers, tough farmers and national pride of building a brave new world (Fig. 5) already started to cease in the 1970s, just when plans for Almere were drawn up. Agrarian overproduction on a European scale slowed down the demand for farmland, causing almost half of the area of Southern Flevoland never put to use for farming.²¹

Ideas changed considering the use of the claimed territory primarily for farming. Situated closely to the city of Amsterdam, Almere was designed specifically to function as a satellite city for the capital, providing cheap houses in spacious neighbourhoods for those who wished to escape the busy urban city. After the first proper house was built in 1976, the city quickly expanded and will soon reach the 200.000 inhabitants mark. It is at the moment the 8th largest city in The Netherlands and the fastest growing one. Several large urban developments are being planned, Almere aiming to house 350.000 residents by the year 2030.²²

But how to create an identity for Almere? Where to find the spirit of the city if it only has a built history of some 30-odd years? Almere has no characteristic old buildings, many of its residents have been born in other

¹⁷ *Ibidem.*

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

¹⁹ Vasim 2012.

²⁰ Broeksma *et alii*. 2007.

²¹ Almere 2011a.

²² *Idem.*



Fig. 5. Anonymous, *De afsluiting en gedeeltelyke droogmaking der Zuiderzee*, Amsterdam, 1936, cover page.

cities, or even countries, and the social structure of the city has yet to develop. The quest for a spirit of place for such a new town has been one of the key issues in urban planning in Almere in recent years. One of the ways of finding a spirit of place in Almere found in its recent history. For instance, Almere took the initiative to found the International New Town Institute. The INTI focuses on the interaction of the several actors involved in the successful design of new towns worldwide.²³ Another track followed by Almere to find its spirit is going way further back than the past decades and encompasses this much more historic past into the layout of the new town itself.

Archaeology parks

However, just because Almere is built on land claimed from the sea does not mean it has no history. In far earlier days, there was not even a sea. In the Stone age, the present site of Almere was part of the European mainland where small tribes of hunter-gatherers traversed the plains. They left many remnants of their dwellings; huts, fireplaces and waste pits.²⁴ As time passed, various reasons led to the expansion of large open water bodies connected to the North Sea. This ultimately led to the creation of a sea, first known as Almere and later as the Zuiderzee. The floods caused the remains from the Stone age being covered by sediment, preserving them in the underground. Only with the draining of lands in the 20th century, these archaeological remains became visible again.

The sea from which the city of Almere was claimed always has been a fairly shallow and heavily travelled one. Connecting the many cities and villages around the Zuiderzee, in previous centuries many ships were used for trading. Over time, storms and bad luck caused many a ship to sink. Its remains sank to the bottom,

slowly being covered by sand and clay. When Southern Flevoland got drained from the 1950s on, many of these shipwrecks unveiled themselves. Some were partly above ground and easy to find, others were discovered only later deeper underground when conducting engineering works or farming the land. Several finds proved quite special, giving precious insights in the way trading has been performed in this area for centuries (Fig. 6). Some shipwrecks were given the status of national monument, others were granted protection statuses of a lower level.²⁵

In the new residential area Almere Hout, one of the ways to create a spirit of place has been the integration of these archaeological remains in the urban design. Urban planning for the city expansion started in 1992 and by then archaeology was an issue to be dealt with in the planning process. When a new highway was constructed, many archaeological discoveries were made. Considering the narrow strip researched for the highway, chances to find many more archaeological remains while constructing a whole neighbourhood seemed high. The local government however jumped to the opportunity. A



Fig. 6. State department for Cultural Heritage, *Tijdschrift van de Rijksdienst voor Cultureel Erfgoed*, number 1, 2012, p. 28.

way to create a spirit for the new neighbourhood, but also a way of preserving the valuable historical remains, the municipality made protection of the historical remains a priority in the structural plan for the area. Development of the area had to be planned following the framework of archaeological sites. On these sites a public park had to be designed, giving protection *in situ* for the valuable remains underground and providing areas of leisure for the residents. The parks were thus contributing to the social structure of the neighbourhood Almere Hout, providing natural spots for meeting each other. By connecting all the parks by a walking route, aptly named 'the spirit of Hout',

²³ INTI 2011.

²⁴ Almere 2011a.

²⁵ RCE 2011.

they also provide a recreational route.²⁶

The combination of these goals resulted in the project '99+1 city gardens'. The urban plan was designed around the archaeological sites, the parks being constructed also before actual construction of the houses and other buildings started (Fig. 7).

However, many questions arose from the structural plan of the municipality. How should such a city-garden look like? Who maintains these gardens? And how can a link be made between the design of the gardens and the archaeological site underneath it? Initially the plan was to create a 'pilot garden' (the 1 in 99+1) which would serve as an example for the other city gardens. This first garden would be used to figure out answers on the various questions raised by the idea. However, soon this idea proved impractical. The area of Almere Hout is large, around 2.800 hectares, and is being developed in several phases. Figuring out a framework

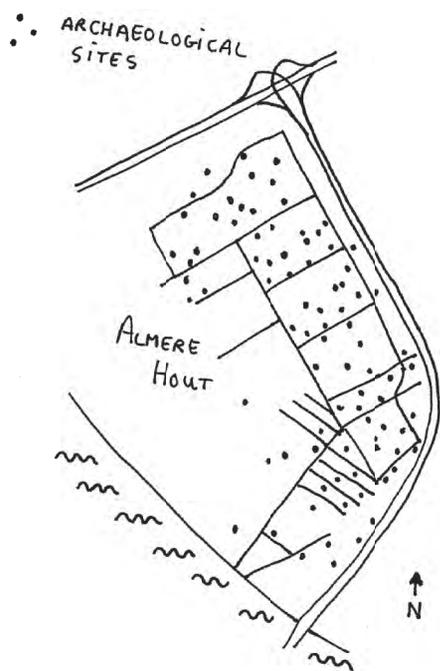


Fig. 7. State department for Cultural Heritage, project 99+1 stadstuinen Almere Hout, www.projectenbankcultuurhistorie.nl [retrieved March 2011].

for all 100 city gardens proved unrealistic, not in the least because it was not in all cases known exactly what specific finds were identified on sites. Sites were marked, but not thoroughly researched, the adagio of preserving *in situ* if there is no need to disturb the site.²⁷

The idea of gardens being developed before construction of the houses was left intact though. This also meant the ground level of the gardens is below the level of the area around it. Before construction of houses starts the area is raised with sand to create a steady building surface. In the city gardens the former bottom of the sea is however still visible, providing a link to the former looks of the area. Many of the gardens are walled or fenced off. This serves a double purpose; it clearly marks the area but it also provides shelter and makes the city garden a safe and relaxed area to visit.

The ambitious plan got changed, but the idea remained. The Almere city gardens are an example where archaeological remains are used to build a framework for further development. In designing the urban plans for the new neighbourhood, the gardens are fixed points around which the structure of the new residential and commercial areas have to be designed. The known sites are under heavy protection in the zoning plan, any building activities on the site being banned.²⁸

The Market Hall in Rotterdam

The city of Rotterdam

Describing the city of Rotterdam seems to be an easy task. One of the largest harbour cities in the world, it lies conveniently on the banks of the river Maas. Around the year 1100 AD a small village was situated on the site of present day Rotterdam. After the construction of a dam in the tributary river Rotte, blocking it from the main river Maas, the village slowly developed into a city.²⁹ During the middle ages the city became one of many trading cities in Holland, using its position on a large river and near the sea to expand its harbour activities. In the 19th century trading shifted, Rotterdam profiting from the industry developing in the German Ruhr area and other areas in its hinterland. The construction of a new waterway connection to the North Sea in the 1870s meant a big boost for the city's harbour activities.³⁰ With the expansion of industry and the related trading, Rotterdam developed in a major harbour city. Soon Rotterdam became the largest harbour in The Netherlands, further on developing into the largest harbour in the world.

The dawn of the 20th century meant further growth, expansion of the harbour and development of large residential neighbourhoods housing the many workers involved in industry and harbour activities.³¹ In the centre of the city large-scale reconstructions began, with renowned architects designing the buildings which belong to a large city with international status. The famous White House, constructed in 1898, for a long

²⁸ Almere 2011b.

²⁹ BOOR 2009a, p. 3.

³⁰ De Pater, Schoenmaker 2005, p. 488.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 488-489.

²⁶ *Idem*.

²⁷ *Idem*.

time carried the title 'highest skyscraper of Europe', being 10 storeys high. The opening of the Bijenkorf department store, designed by famous Dutch architect Dudok, attracted a staggering 70.000 people in 1930. The construction of the Maas tunnel, the first tunnel designed to be used by cars in The Netherlands, started in 1937. Many stately offices were built by the harbour tycoons, as well as many residential buildings.³²

However, the date of the 14th of May 1940 is carved in the soul of the city. Everything changed that day. Four days earlier, the Germans had declared war on The Netherlands, dragging the country into the Second World War. Yet only a few days into war, the Germans had expected to surrender the small country already, reaching the coast of the North Sea and bringing the primary goal of England within reach. Germany gave the Dutch an ultimatum to surrender, enforcing it by bombing the centre of Rotterdam with massive air strikes. Almost the entire historic city centre was destroyed, leaving only a few buildings intact (Fig. 8). The bombings and the fires that blazed the centre afterwards destroyed almost 25.000 houses, leaving the city without its historic centre.³³ The Germans threatened to treat the city of Utrecht the same way the next day. This made the government decide to surrender and meant the start of almost five years of oppression under the Germans.

Already during the war, reconstruction of the centre commenced. The debris of the bombings were used to fill up canals, the layout of the new city centre already prepared.³⁴ (Some claims have been made that plans for large scale destruction of the historic city centre to make way for new developments were already drawn up by the city council in the late 1930s.) Only ten days



Fig. 8. source unknown, via www.militair.net [retrieved April 2011].

after the bombing by the Germans, the city council disowned at once all property in the city centre from its previous owners. Plans for reconstruction were drawn up, only finally to be adopted by the local council in 1946.³⁵

After the war had finished Rotterdam soon started to rebuild, in the 1950s and 1960s creating the image of Rotterdam as a 'working town'. Rotterdam created for itself the image of a modern town, developing as the most American town in Europe. High-rise office towers in the city centre, the construction of a subway network, modern design and other state of the art urban planning made Rotterdam boost. The near lack of a historic city centre gave opportunities to develop the city as a prime city for industry and trade, its harbour activities soon again expanding. Development of oil and gas related trade, together with the still excellent infrastructural connections to (West-)Germany soon made Rotterdam the largest harbour of the world again with its harbour terrains even extending into the North Sea with the construction of the Maasvlakte harbours.³⁶

The Market Hall

However, in the 1970s the ideas for the city changed. A new generation grew up, a generation that did not know firsthand about the Rotterdam of the 1920s and 1930s. The focus on trade and business became less prominent, strengthened by the movement of harbour activities away from the city and further out to industrial terrains towards the seaside. Life in the city became less entwined with the harbour. Changes in the harbour industry itself also had an effect, the growth of container transport and other mechanisation developments heavily decreasing the number of workers in the harbour.

So the focus for the city started to shift to vitality for its residents and providing good residential quality. Ideas of Rotterdam as a city for architects and urban renewal however remained. Many of the buildings that were build shortly after the Second World War suffered from typical failures caused by the quick building process. Bad interior climate, designed only for one specific purpose, hard to adjust to changing demands. Not the prime examples for sustainable urban development. In pace with the cities motto 'no words but deeds', many plans for redevelopments were designed. Tempered by the economic crisis of the 1980s, several large scale construction works commenced in the 1990s and continued after the year 2000. A few examples consist of the Kop van Zuid (harbour terrain redevelopment immediately on the south bank of the river) and the construction of the Erasmus bridge (connecting the city centre with the southern part of town). Several redevelopments were also scheduled in the city centre.

³² Rotterdam 2012.

³³ De Pater, Schoenmaker 2005, p. 489.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 490.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 490.

³⁶ Rotterdam 2012.

Many post-war commercial and office buildings proved to have a much shorter lifespan than expected.³⁷ Due to the almost entire destruction of the city centre in the Second World War, the limits for development are far smaller than in any other city in The Netherlands. Since the end of the war, this made Rotterdam to be almost virtually a permanent construction site.

One of the more prominent developments of the last decade is the construction of the Market Hall. This building is situated in the eastern part of the city centre. It is close to the historical Church of Saint Lawrence, the only remaining medieval monument in the centre of Rotterdam. The site is immediately on the Binnenrotte, part of the river Rotte that got filled up in the 1870s to make way for a railroad. After a tunnel was opened for the railroad in 1993, the square has served as a (fresh food) market.³⁸

The new building (Fig. 9) holds various references to the historical past of the area. The Market Hall was designed by MVRDV, matching the Rotterdam tradition, again an internationally known architecture office. The building serves basically as a roof for a large indoor market, the 'roof' and walls of the building comprising of residential apartments and commercial office space. On the ground floor, a large indoor fresh-food market is being designated, with several restaurants and other small retail shops on the ground floor and first floor sides. It provides a covered market space for a permanent fresh food market.³⁹ The market function refers back immediately to the origins of the city of Rotterdam. The building site is almost on the exact same position where the dam in the river was constructed almost a 1000 years ago and subsequently a market- and harbour town developed (Fig. 10). With European

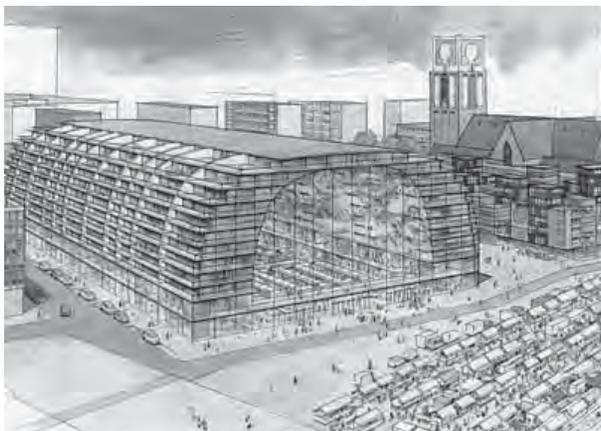


Fig. 9. The Red Apple, via www.tratvve.nl [retrieved January 2012].

³⁷ *Idem.*

³⁸ *Idem.*

³⁹ MVRDV 2011.

Union regulations on processing and selling fresh food products in the open air becoming more and more strict, moving the market indoors secures the future of the market in the city centre.

Large covered markets are common in many large cities in Europe. Many are familiar with the covered markets in Barcelona, Budapest or London. In Paris, even if demolished, Les Halles are still a well-known phenomenon. Rotterdam, with its worldwide exposure, puts itself in this line of prominent European cities with the construction of a market hall. However, in being a city of architectural experiments, Rotterdam added a new element to the market hall by combining it with residential housing. This meant a new development, creating an extra dimension to the design of the building. The apartments are built in a semi-circular shape, creating a 40 m high ceiling for the market stalls. The 'roof' of



Fig. 10. City of Rotterdam Archaeological Service BOOR, *Van Rotta naar Rotterdam*, BOORnieuws, 12, 2009, pp. 2-5.

the market consists of some 200 apartments, with a view on one side on the market and an outside view over Rotterdam. Combined with the market, there will be a normal supermarket below ground level and also a large parking garage.⁴⁰ The building as a whole thus serves also as an example of the current idea to mix several functions in the city centre, meant to create a more vibrant and lively city centre for Rotterdam. Because of its prominent position in the city centre the building will also serve as a landmark, marking the edge of the centre.

Before building of the Market Hall commenced, the project showed its value in increasing the knowledge of the early foundation period of the city of Rotterdam. As the building consists of several storeys underground, construction reached well below the current street level. The site was thus under heavy scrutiny from the City of Rotterdam Archaeological Service BOOR, adding many

⁴⁰ Markthal 2011.

pages to the history book of the city.⁴¹ Several years were used to conduct archaeological research. Around 7 to 10 metres below the street level archaeologists reached the layer with habitation marks from the 9th century, thus reaching the birth level of the city.⁴² It is safe to say that the 21st century Market Hall of Rotterdam is firmly rooted on more than a millennium of market history on the banks of the river Maas.

Conclusions

Three approaches, three ideas, three examples. Each in their own represents a way as how to integrate the existing spirit of a place in a new design, a new urban grid or a new development. The idea behind the integration of the cultural history in the urban planning process is to improve the spirit of the place by adding new elements.

As was the case in the late 19th century, also in the beginning of the 21st century, many times it is private initiative that brings a new spirit to a place. There are no laws which can bring this spirit, it has to be brought by free will by people who care for it. Destruction is often an element included in this process, let it be by war, by the forces of nature or by the loss of commercial value for existing buildings and functions. It is the challenge however to maintain the spirit of a place and with the new developments add on to this spirit. Even if buildings and neighbourhoods are not designed to last forever, they are neither designed to be demolished carelessly after their lifespan has expired. Good care, well-thought design and a sense for the bigger picture are necessities in the current world of urban planning and architectural design. A building can be demolished and a new one erected, but this brings developments without a soul, developments which will turn out to be just piles of stones, connected only by cement...

The three examples mentioned in this article are all designed around the focus point that for the creation of a valuable working and living environment, a spirit of place is a must. As said in the introduction, they are not meant to act as evidence of the truth. However, this article will hopefully serve its purpose and give input for the discussions in the field of urban planning and cultural history.

Bibliographical abbreviations:

- Almere 2011a – Municipality of Almere, <http://english.almere.nl> [retrieved January 2012].
 Almere 2011b – Municipality of Almere, *Zoning Plan Almere Hout Noord*, www.ruimtelijkeplannen.nl/?planid=NL.

- IMRO.0034.BP5ACPZ01-on01 [retrieved January 2012].
 BOOR 2009a – City of Rotterdam Archaeological Service BOOR, *Van Rotta naar Rotterdam*, BOORnieuws, 12, 2009, pp. 2-5.
 BOOR 2009b – City of Rotterdam Archaeological Service BOOR, *Archeologisch vooronderzoek*, BOORnieuws, 12, 2009, p. 6.
 BOOR 2011 – City of Rotterdam Archaeological Service BOOR, *Markthal: onderzoek in het stadshart van Rotterdam*, BOORnieuws, 15, 2011, p. 2.
 Broeksma *et alii* 2007 – F. Broeksma *et alii*, *Masterplan Waalfront Nijmegen*, Nijmegen, 2007.
 De Pater, Schoenmaker 2005 – B.C. de Pater, B. Schoenmaker (eds.), *Comprehensive Atlas of The Netherlands 1930-1950*, Zierikzee, 2005.
 Duijvendak 1998 – M. Duijvendak, *Volkswelvaart in jubel en mineur*, Spiegel historial, magazine voor geschiedenis en archeologie, number 11/12, november/december 1998, pp. 500-505.
 Graham, Ashworth, Tunbridge 2000 – B. Graham, G.J. Ashworth, J.E. Tunbridge, *A geography of heritage; Power, culture & economy*, London, 2000.
 Heemschut 2011 – Erfgoedvereniging Heemschut, www.heemschut.nl/en.html [retrieved November 2011].
 INTI 2011 – International New Town Institute, www.newtowninstitute.org [retrieved November 2011].
 Markthal 2011 – Project website Market Hall, www.markthalrotterdam.nl [retrieved March 2011].
 Ministry of I&E 2012 – Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, www.rijksoverheid.nl (in Dutch) / www.government.nl (in English) [retrieved January 2012].
 MVRDV 2011 – MVRDV, www.mvrdv.nl (in English) [retrieved november 2011].
 Natuurmonumenten 2011 – Vereniging Natuurmonumenten, www.natuurmonumenten.nl (with limited English section) [retrieved November 2011].
 NHW 2004 – Stuurgroep Nationaal Project Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie, *Panorama Krayenhoff - linieperspectief*, Utrecht, 2004.
 RCE 2011 – State department for Cultural Heritage, *project 99+1 stadstuinen Almere Hout*, www.projectenbankcultuurhistorie.nl [retrieved March 2011].
 Rotterdam 2012 – City of Rotterdam Civil Engineering Department, www.rotterdam.nl/gw [retrieved January 2012].
 Van der Cammen, De Klerk 1999 – H. van der Cammen, L.A. de Klerk, *Ruimtelijke ordening*, Utrecht, 1999 (4th edition).
 Vasim 2012 – Culturefactory De Vasim, www.devasim.nl [retrieved January 2012].
 Voogd 1999 – H. Voogd, *Facetten van de planologie*, Alphen aan den Rijn, 1999.
 Wolfram 1998 – D.J. Wolfram, *Sociale politiek in Nederland na 1880*, Spiegel historial, magazine voor geschiedenis en archeologie, number 11/12, november/december 1998, pp. 471- 477.

⁴¹ BOOR 2009a, pp. 2-5.

⁴² BOOR 2009b, p. 6

Figures 1, 3, 7 and 10 were drawn after the originals by the author.