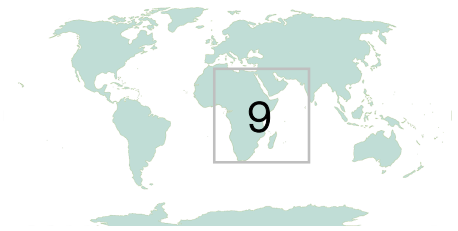


## IN-Between Metropolitan Strategies Programme Interview #9 | Randstad, The Netherlands



Within the context of the activities of the Community of Competence on Metropolisation<sup>1</sup>, INTA and Deltametropool Association joined forces to design the programme In-between Metropolitan Strategies pursuing earlier discussions and exchanges on metropolitan strategies ongoing in a worldwide spectrum.

During the first phase, a series of interviews have been realised to several metropolitan cases covering various themes: the scale of the metropolitan area, the governance and cooperation, new forms of urbanity and metropolitan environments, the innovative economical sectors within the metropolitan area and how to develop the metropolis sustainably.

### **Randstad, The Netherlands**

Interview with Mr. Duco Stadig, former Alderman of Amsterdam and chairman of Deltametropool Association, The Netherlands

#### **1. The metropolitan area**

*How extensive is the metropolitan area and how are the metropolitan values and identity formed for this the area? What makes your metropolitan area internationally attractive?*

We used to define the metropolitan area as Randstad Holland (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) however, now it is larger as the cities of Zwolle, Eindhoven, Breda, Arnhem and Nijmegen have been included.

For this metropolitan area, there is no real boundary. I usually use the metaphor of the Galaxy: from a distance, it looks like one thing, but as you get closer, you start seeing much more, i.e. the different stars and a centre of gravity. Then, even closer, this dilutes.

The metropolis has no map: it is defined by the human and economic activities that take place in this area. Neither does it have governance besides the National Government. Metropolitan development was notably not mentioned in the last Dutch Coalition Agreement, and for this reason, no Minister is currently responsible for it.

The only current debate on governance at a larger scale is on uniting different provinces (North-Holland, Utrecht, Flevoland) to a unified 'Randstad Province'. The Province of South Holland is excluded from this union however. So, in other words: instead of creating a governance at the level of the metropolitan area, this potential union will cut the area in two. If Randstad Holland was more specifically governed, this governance would have disproportionate power compared to the rest of the Netherlands. This is therefore not a desired situation.

At present, the cooperation levels between the four main cities in Randstad Holland is weak. In Amsterdam for example, the Mayor one day expresses that the city can 'take on the world', while he then proceeds to celebrates a collaboration with Eindhoven on the A2 motorway, or with the Port of Rotterdam the very next day. Of course all of these concepts are simultaneously correct, and in the end: these cooperations are mainly just ideas.

The Hague is also trying it alone: it brands itself as the International City of Justice and

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.inta-aijn.org/en/communities-of-competence/metropolisation/metropolisation-home>

Peace, and similarly Rotterdam markets itself as the biggest Port of Europe. When I was an Alderman in Amsterdam, there was a greater motivation to co-operate. The basic idea was that: if the four main cities would cooperate, this would increase their chances of receiving more funding from the central government. Now, the central government has no money, so their motivation to cooperate has largely disappeared.

Although there is no official metropolitan governance for Randstad Holland, it does continuously work as a metropolitan system in reality. The mobility flow between the four cities is increasing more rapidly than the mobility between the cities and their own region. All you need to do is count the cars, and you can see what is happening.

Randstad Holland has a specific internationally attractive structure. The greenery is uniquely situated within it, not outside of it like other metropolises. This makes it easy to use the green areas for recreational purposes. Surrounding Amsterdam, for example, the landscape has been kept open, making the city attractive to walk around..

Other qualities are the Schiphol Airport and the Port of Rotterdam. Socio- political qualities that the Netherlands has and is interesting for multinationals is the a multilingual population, people do not strike a lot and the country has a stable political system and is therefore secure for long term investments.

Randstad Holland has a well-established image in the professional world, but foreigners are not yet fully aware of this. Its strongest international brand is Amsterdam.

Nationally, Randstad Holland is used most frequently by young people for their daily activities. For them, especially the use of Internet and media has decreased the distances between the cities.

## **2. Governance & Cooperation**

*Is there a form of metropolitan strategy in place and what fields of policy does it entail? Which stakeholders are involved and what is their role and responsibility in this metropolitan strategy? How are the different territorial levels associated to the metropolitan governance? And how is the cooperation of different territorial levels maintained in the planning process that is increasingly subject to a rapid changing economic, social and technological environment?*

In the Netherlands, there is currently no official Metropolitan Strategy. The funding of Deltametropolis Association in 1998 was based on the assumption that co-operation between the cities would increase the chances to receive more funding from the central government. Besides this, the cities recognised that global competition lay in the larger Metropolitan regions. If the four cities would not co-operate, they would not stand a chance in this competition as they simply are too small. Together, the cities formed a region of 6 million people, which ranked them 54 in the international ranking list. On the night view of a satellite image, the different activities within the four cities becomes one "heat centre". At the time, all the Mayors and Aldermen of the four cities would meet once or twice a year. This was mainly symbolic and only partly content driven, but it did help the cooperation between the cities. I don't know if this is still being organised.

Now that money is no longer coming from the Central Government, the cooperation between the cities has also diminished. On top of this, the cities also tend to think that they can play a part in this international network of cities on their own. Amsterdam especially thinks it can do it alone. Rotterdam and The Hague are working together, but this isn't really working well yet. This is because The Hague is performing well, while Rotterdam isn't. Their main motivation to co-operate is because these cities are

located next to each other.

Utrecht, however, has no real ambition in this matter. Its central location within the national road and train network gives Utrecht a favourable location in the Metropolitan Network.

### **3. New forms of urbanity and metropolitan environments**

*What are the key development projects (flagships, major infrastructure, social or cultural equipment, etc.) and programs (information, incentives, investments), of your metropolitan strategy? How is the dialogue carried between the specific ambitions of local key projects and the ambition of the metropolitan territory?*

At present, there is no money to develop any metropolitan projects in Randstad Holland.

The key projects in the past have been:

- The Thalys train, which connects us better with the outside world. The project is finished, but the trains are still not functioning perfectly.
- The enlargement of the Port of Rotterdam, which is logistically important for the whole metropolis.
- Amsterdam, with its many cultural buildings as international attractions for tourists.
- Zuidas, together with Schiphol, which has many direct destinations all over the world.
- Greenports, Aalsmeer and the Westland, which is a strong sector in the Netherlands.
- The Hague, as international city for Justice and Peace. This attracts many new international organisations with its large international symbolic value.

Due to a population of only 15 million inhabitants in the whole country, one could say that a metropolitan key project for the Netherlands is a project of which there is only one possible in the Netherlands. These projects are all dispersed in the metropolitan area.

### **4. Innovative economical sectors**

*Is the regional level competitive enough in a globalised economic and innovation-led system clusters and does it remove the obstacle of the vertical organisation of public policy?*

Depending on the cluster, the region plays a role. Furthermore, how do you define 'innovative'? In the Netherlands, there are two highly innovative clusters: nanotechnology and genetic research.

These two sectors are not exclusively located in Randstad Holland however. For these sectors, the metropolitan region therefore does not really matter for the location. They are mainly strongly connected to the nearby universities.

Other interesting location factors are Amsterdam as a internet hub, and the NWO institutes (National Organisation for Scientific Research) in Watergraafsmeer. The technical and mathematical department of the University of Amsterdam has moved there.

These innovations are currently mainly funded by the public sector, mainly because the research is carried out and organised in the universities. A Philips lab is still located next to the University of Eindhoven. This has resulted in a spin-off of small businesses in which innovation takes place.

**5. Sustainable development**

*On which central themes and key policies is your metropolitan strategy set upon? How do these themes and policies overcome the short-term instability of any long-term vision and deliver a performing and resilient territorial development?*

One of the main problems Randstad Holland currently faces is water and the rising sea levels. As the delta of Europe, the Netherlands is under the threat of flooding, and in combination with continual urbanisation, there is less space for water to infiltrate other places along the river in Europe.

The rise of the sea level is a slow, continuous process and a long-term problem. Due to the high and low tide, potential floods from the sea are easier to handle as the water that comes will eventually flow back again. The rivers have extremes between floods and droughts and are therefore a more current problem. When there is a flood, the water keeps coming and something can only be done when the level of the river lowers, which can take days. This is therefore more unpredictable and urgent.

To cope with the water problem, the Delta programme has been created and is already partially implemented, for example with the reinforcement of the dunes in Scheveningen. At the moment however, discussions still continue on how the large water problem will affect the Netherlands in the future.

Water management and the battle against flooding is in the genes of the Dutch however. This is why Dutch water engineers are internationally renowned and are an international knowledge export product.