

# A desire for transition

## Polish and Dutch framework instruments at the local level

***Landscape expresses the quality of life of its inhabitants, its level of civilization and culture (...) a harmonious landscape reflects the spatial order, social discipline and consistent implementation of goals by the local or regional communities.***<sup>1</sup>

**This leads to a conclusion that lack of spatial planning proves absence of management, egoism of society and the fulfillment of immediate but not planned goals.**

**Poland is an example of a lack of good management, that is why grayness, ugliness, visual contrasts or in one word chaos characterize most Polish cities, those factors unfortunately became the present Polish identity.**

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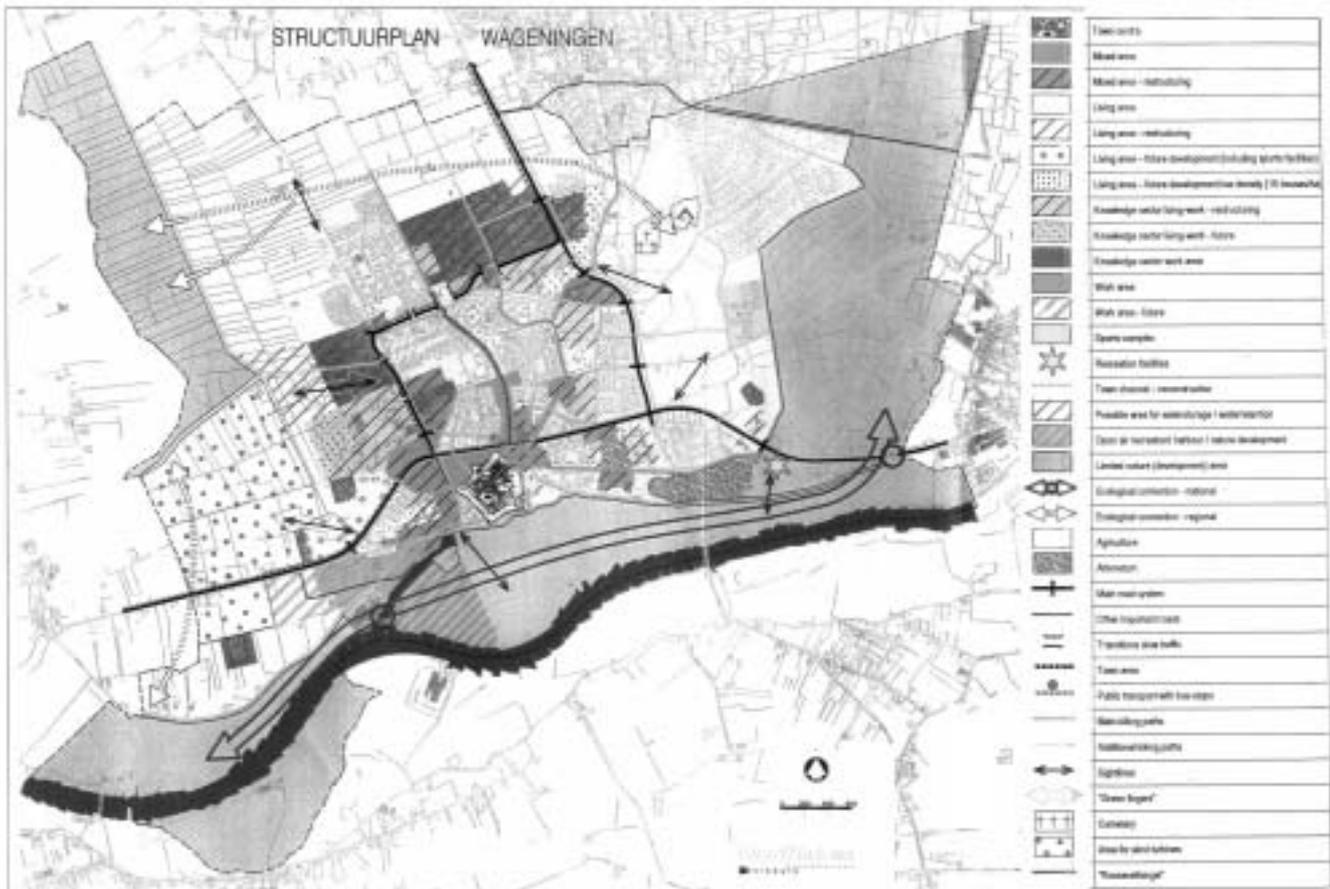
The 1990s in Poland were not only a period of random planning solutions, but also the blooming of all possible architectural forms. The art historian - Marta Le[niakowska - has commented the 1989-1999 decade in Poland “*is everything: Modernism and Neo-modernism, Post-modernism and Post-post-modernism, new/old ‘vernacular’, new Classicism, fundamentalist Classicism and new anti-Classicism, new Social-Realism, High-Tech and Handmade, Symbolism and Formalism, this and that... Eclecticism*”<sup>2</sup>. A free market and especially a free land market cause this, and it presents a serious threat to the quality of landscape, as private interest often dominates public interest. The source of these weaknesses is self-governmental administration in the field of spatial management and spatial culture, which brought about negative consequences in the former, communism period and are doing the same at present. Another weak point is the lack of executive regulations which create a broad scope for various interpretations of legal acts. However a new Spatial Development Act<sup>3</sup> was resolved and will take effect in July 2003.

Nowadays Poland is taking an example from countries with a long tradition in spatial planning, one of which is the Netherlands. In my master thesis, I investigated and compared documents at a local level in both countries, which are under the common name “framework instruments”<sup>4</sup>. The compared documents are the Dutch “*structuurplan*” of Wageningen, Den Bosch, Leiden and the Polish “*study of present conditions and directions of spatial development of the community*”<sup>5</sup> of Torun, Gdansk, Bydgoszcz, Grudziadz, Chelmza. The research question was: what are similarities and differences between Dutch and Polish framework instruments in spatial planning at the local level? In a case study Wageningen and Torun were compared. The main conclusion is that the similarities and differences depend on present conditions; a problem approach in the sense of scale of transformation

and needs. In the Netherlands the level of change is not large, at present the Dutch planners are improving the existing conditions and trying to implement new trends. For instance in the Structuurplan Wageningen such an example was the Ecopolis model, where the Dutch planners wanted to implement proper, pro-ecological thinking. Poland has much more “serious” problems. For example in The Study of Torun, greenery structures were on a distant position; the main economical forces are focused on the construction of a ring road or on building two new bridges. The Netherlands has an advantage over Polish economical situation. Poland needs some time to improve existing structures and to prepare “ground” for new changes.

In the Netherlands the “structuurplan” is a document that gives a policy and future vision for the municipal development. The form of the plan is rather indicative; nevertheless it can have legal implications. The Polish study documents are laid out for the entity of the community area, and aim to define the spatial policy of the local self-government. The study is not the community regulation in the legal binding sense, and therefore it cannot be the base for decision-making. Being “the act of internal management of community”<sup>6</sup> the study binds only the authorities of a community and the organization units subordinated to them. In this way each new drawn up land-use plan should be compatible with the resolved study.

The principal difference between Dutch and Polish framework instruments is the objective for which it is drawn up. The Polish study documents are mainly drawn up to define areas for land-use plans and precise their guidelines, whereas the plans in the Netherlands mainly show interesting future structures. Also, the Polish study document lacks uniqueness and coherence. The reason for this is the Spatial Development Act<sup>7</sup>, which has just got a procedural character and no executive ordinance concerning the way of drawing out.



The Wageningen Structuurplan; bron gemeente Wageningen

All investigated documents have a common “denominator”, which are Act regulations. Nevertheless, in the Netherlands Acts are often more precise than the Polish Acts. But even the best written act will not fulfill a purpose, if inhabitants and the governmental administration do not employ the principles of it...

### Conclusions

On the foundation of the carried analyses we can conclude that Polish planners have a similar approach to the spatial planning problems as the Dutch,

however those problems have a different scale. The only hope that Poland will improve its standards in the field of spatial planning, is a development of a proper thinking and awareness of the quality of the land and landscape, by both inhabitants and the governmental administration. Fortunately, most of the Polish have such desires: a good beginning for a long way of transitions!<<

### Footnotes

- 1 Dr Andrzej Michałowski, 2000: III Forum of Landscape Architecture, National Institution for Culture, Warsaw.
- 2 Marta Lejnakowska: Dekada, czyli Eklektyzm, “A-m” 8/2000, p.48.
- 3 New Spatial Development Act from 27th March 2003, previous Spatial Development Act from 7th July 1994, full text January 1999, Dz.U. 1999 nr 15 poz. 139.
- 4 Definition is taken from The EU compendium of spatial planning systems and policies, 1997: Regional development studies, European commission nr 28.
- 5 For abbreviation of this long name it is often used the term “study” and „community” in Dutch means “gemeente”
- 6 Poradnik Metodyczny, 1996.
- 7 Spatial Development Act from 7th July 1994, full text from January 1999, Dz.U. 1999 nr 15 poz. 139.