INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1980's, several Dutch towns have initiated many urban planning and design activities for their existing area. Special attention was given to the development of a comprehensive plan for the whole existing town which could serve as a frame of reference for on-going ad-hoc urban (renewal) activities. These so-called 'umbrella-plans' intended to serve as a reply to the increasing complexity faced in urban planning.

In the last few years the spatial task has become substantially complicated and differentiated. Decisions are only justified after detailed and extensive consideration upon all kinds of spatial claims from sectoral developments. Furthermore, the responsibilities among those who are involved in the planning process have changed dramatically. The local government is no longer main actor concerning the development and implementation of the urban policy. Private actors increasingly become involved in the planning process.

Due to the fact that conventional planning instruments were considered ill-suited to get a stronger but also more flexible hold on the transformation of the urban planning area, a new approach is introduced: 'Strategic Urban Planning'. The paper discusses the promising attempts of strategic urban planning in the Netherlands.

In the first place a short outline is made of the theoretical use of the concept of 'strategic planning'. Several publications, most originating from the sciences of business and public administration, are used to point out the important constituent elements: a comprehensive plan concerning the allocation of long-term goals to available means and the tuning to 'market conditions'.

Given these topics, serious attention is given to the question whether 'Strategic Planning' really concerns a 'new' item in urban planning, either it concerns old wine in new bottles. For answering this question, the history of Dutch planning is analysed from a bird's-eye view. Special attention is given to the parts that have acquired a solid place in the procedure of urban planning through the years. After this the actual planning process is observed in three middle-sized cities: Eindhoven (190.000 inhabitants), Tilburg (165.000) and Maastricht (120.000).
THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Nowadays, the key-word 'strategic' is being used more and more in a fashionable way. The adjective appears in all kind of publications, mostly in combination with words like 'policy' and 'planning' and seems to guarantee a sort of deliberate decisiveness. The application of the word 'strategic' seems to mark the end of a period of thick amendments and 'bureaucratic language'.

The word 'strategic' and the magic surrounding it, provides strong incentives for many experts. It is regularly used in the announcements of congresses and symposia and it emerges in articles published in the specialist literature. For instance, in the beginning of 1992 the editorial staff of the Dutch specialist magazine on Housing and Urban Renewal (SenV) decided to publish some related articles on 'Strategic Investments in Planning'. The contribution of several authors to this serial has led to a nice overview of the way Dutch scientists make use of the adjective 'strategic'. It provides a useful summary that helps one understand the meaning of 'Strategic Planning'.

The adjective 'strategic' has its origin in military science. Strategy is clarified as the art of conducting war. Frieling interprets this 'art' as the combination of defining the purpose of the war actions and succeeding in fulfilling these goal in accordance with the given circumstances. As Frieling mentions, reaching a certain goal requires a real insight into the available means and the opportunities to mobilize them (SenV, 1992, 15). Winsemius refers to these elements directly in what, according to him, the essence of strategy is: "...the division and mobilization of available means in accordance to the implementation of the lines of policy" (Winsemius, 1987).

In both sciences of business and public administrations the word 'strategy' has been common-place for some time already. Within these disciplines especially the purpose of fulfilling (policy or management) goals is more explicitly elaborated upon. Strategy involves the definition of long-term policy goals and rules, intent on the continuation of the company, in which all possible forms of interaction with its environment have to be taken into account (Blox e.a., 1987, 82). More specifically, Blox identifies that the concept of strategy concerns two main items:
- the formulation of a comprehensive (management) plan which includes the allocation of (long-term) goals to available means (the so-called 'internal' task);
- tuning in with the prevailing circumstances or the external environment, in most cases the market (the so-called 'external' task).

Strategic planning refers to the combination of both items. As a result we can say that the success of strategic planning greatly depends on the degree to which the adjustment of both items succeeds.

Since the mid-1980's, the word 'strategy' has become more and more common in urban planning. Perhaps inspired by 'the art of conducting war' De Klerk (1993, 22) notes that the introduction of the word underlined the competitive spirit in which
cities were ending up in the late eighties. However, the concept of strategic planning rather seems to refer to structural changes in administrative management.

To ensure the revitalization of cities, local governments are urged to adopt a more 'challenging' way of planning. With this, the interest for managerial administrative techniques to approach urban problems in a strategic-instrumental way increased (Boelens, 1990, 48). At the same time, everything is done to tighten the relation between urban policy and 'the market': contributions from the (local) government to revitalization must be in interaction with the emphatic wishes and demands of the market. This is not least because for the execution of the plans, the limited financial means of the government need to be complemented with those of private participants. Conventional planning instruments were considered ill-suited for the new challenge in urban politics. And so, 'Strategic Urban Planning' was introduced as a new phenomenon.

Given the general and preliminary description of the concept 'Strategic Planning', the question can be raised if it really concerns a 'new' phenomenon in urban planning. In other words: is it not the case that old ideas are parading as new ones?

This question can be answered with the results of a research that is done by the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning at Eindhoven University of Technology concerning "Strategic Planning; research and practice in three middle-size cities in the Netherlands".

For this, the history of Dutch planning is analysed from a bird's-eye view until the need for 'Strategic Urban Planning' appears. Special attention is given to the parts that have acquired a solid place in the procedure of urban planning through the years, and as such, can also be recognized as constituent parts of strategic urban planning. Next, the concept of strategic urban planning can be further explored by the observation of the actual process of planning in three middle-sized cities: Eindhoven (190,000 inhabitants), Tilburg (165,000) and Maastricht (120,000). These cities were selected because on the one hand they created a distinct profile for themselves recently with the presentation of some striking plans. On the other hand, they gained a name with innovating planning techniques in the past.

The results of these analyses will be presented below.

**PLANNING ITEMS FROM THE PAST**

**Blue-print plans**

The fifties and sixties were a feast for planning based on scientific research. Stimulated by an unprecedented believe in the growth of prosperity, the government presented some ambitious goals to solve huge problems like the lack of housing, migration problems, and the modernization of the city centres. It was therefore an urgent necessity for every respectable town to draw up an urban development
programme.
According to Van Eesteren, this programme had to refer to "...an extensive research based on a thorough knowledge of the current situation of the town executed by specialists" (Van Eesteren in Van der Cammen en De Klerk, 1986, 93). Scientific knowledge was mobilized for every little detail in planning: the thorough analysis of problems themselves, the prospects for the future plotted by means of trends, the handling of procedures, the management of implementation. Even the consensus necessary for the approval of the plan was determined in a scientific way. Finally, affected by the functional subdivision of the city (according to the range of ideas from the CIAM) and the influences from across the channel of the 'civic survey' (by Patrick Geddes), analyses of activities (or 'functions') and demographic research became regular components in planning practice.

Planning did not serve spatial purposes only; in those days spatial interventions also served certain social goals. Planning was seen as an instrument to bring about social progress. This was expected to be rather easy, because even social processes were thought to be predictable due to the rather stable social development. As such, it was possible to present a 'blue-print of a new society'.

The scientific prognoses were used to develop a spatial programme in line with the needs of people. This programme, combined with the clear idea about the functioning of the city (CIAM) served as a basis for a definite plan for the layout of the urban environment (De Klerk, 1982, 10). The 'General Development Plan' (Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan) of Amsterdam, to which Van Eesteren contributed is still a famous national and international example.

Nobody doubted this method of planning. The planning was mainly dictated by the government and the relationship between the government and social groups was known as 'centralized' or 'top-down'. The very strong institutionalization of all facets for planning served and preserved the formality and organizational stability (Van der Cammen, SenV 1982, 381).

To incorporate the few dynamics within society, the overall plan was implemented through partial plans which offered enough flexibility within certain limits. Discussions about the plan were rare.

If there was any discussion at all, it mostly concerned the method of implementation; agreements were more or less always concerned with the organizational transactions (De Klerk, 1982, 11).

Process planning and urban renewal

At the end of the sixties it became clear that reality was different from planners had hoped for. The results of scientific analyses of social processes and structural spatial trends did not appear to be as unambiguous as has been presumed. Besides that, the progress of prosperity did not meet expectations: prosperity does not automatically mean more welfare. One of the obvious examples was the negative spiral which
affected existing cities badly. The declining of cities made clear that society was more dynamic than presumed. To steer any social or spatial development, it became clear that more attention had to be given to social processes and wishes.

Considering the shortage in planning, it was suggested that direct interaction with the actual circumstances was necessary.

The planning methods in the beginning of the seventies offered few clues on how to bring this about. A more 'consumer-like' planning demanded several drastic changes. The most important one was to put planning in a realistic spatial and administrative situation which takes all the possibilities and restrictions into account of the institutions and population involved. (Van der Cammen, SenV 1982, 379).

Finally, this resulted in two complete different approaches: one focused on adjusting the administrative system and one on the practical implementation of planning.

To cope administratively with new developments as the politicizing and socializing of the planning process, a more dynamic approach was introduced. The unwieldy and far from concise procedures of the blue-print plans were replaced by the idea of a cyclical and thus continues process of planning, so-called 'process planning'. A well-known representative of the 'process planning' is the phenomenon of 'goal-achieving'. For this, the process of planning was divided into several separate phases, starting with the formulation of a broadly accepted socially relevant goal by the government. After this, the goal was specified step by step in the discussion between all kinds of participants involved in the process of planning. The discussion was about all kinds of paperwork which supported the aims or came up with alternatives based on the clash of interest of the participants. Scientists steered the process of consideration according to the requirements of rationality and supervision. They led the process with methods like 'strategic choices', fixed procedures and controlling mechanisms (De Klerk, 1982, 13).

The possibility for participation and consulting was new, but it did not lead to a 'revolution' in the administrative system at first. For this, planning according to the approach of 'goal achievement' depended too much on the customs of the existing hierarchical administrative apparatus. Participation especially developed in the direction of explicitation of the clash of interests and in that way legitimizing policy decisions.

As De Klerk put it: "...the best way to reach consensus is to study the differences of interests in the depth" (De Klerk, 1983, 13).

The execution of urban renewal did not quit fit in with processes of extended well-considered procedures and discussions as advocated by the approach of 'goal achievement'. Former State Secretary J. Schaefer put it nicely by saying: "...People can't live in government amendments". Much more effective was the direct confrontation with the situation, as was intended with the 'strategic-problem' approach. The problems faced during the implementation of urban renewal served as a starting point for this new 'bottom-up' approach. These problems were translated
into so-called ‘working purpose’. As a result, the practical implementations were already incorporated in the earliest stage of the planning process. For the formulation of the ‘working purposes’ serious attention was paid to neighbourhood inhabitants to allow participation at an early stage of the planning process. Several neighbourhood organizations were established and in Rotterdam they even held a majority position in decision making.

The procedure proved to be very efficient. Without the interference of the administrative procedures, it was possible to work pragmatically and flexibly to a tailor-made solution. The implementation of the ‘bottom-up’ approach occurred in small-scale projects, which made the organization of activities relatively simple. Urban renewal developed more and more as a systematic effort focused on a limited territory. In this way, it was possible to make use of all the opportunities offered in spatial, social, economical, cultural, and environmental areas by combining them to an optimum. The inhabitants served as the points of reference instead of the built environment (Smeets, 1992, A5).

Revival of the city

The beginning of the eighties marks a point of reflection on the role of the government. Because of the overwhelming attention for the (internal) policy procedures in the previous period, planning had itself administratively moved away from the actual planning practice. The wish to coordinate sizeable processes had resulted in an increasing bureaucratization (administrative centrism). However, when society suffers from an economic recession and drastic governmental cutbacks, it is more appropriate to pay attention to economic and financial consequences than to fixate on an overall and systematic policy.

Besides, more success was gained with the actual execution of urban renewal according the ‘strategic-problem’ approach. This success even affected the administrative procedures. An interdisciplinary study "Planning as an Enterprise" (Planning als Onderneming, De Hoed e.a., 1983) suggested that planning should be more business-like, more challenging. In other words, the prevailing image of thinking and discussing had to be replaced by that of actual doing (’the entrepreneur style’, Boelens, 1990, 46).

Within this new style, neither the spatial planners nor the financial or economic planners had the exclusive right to do urban planning. The centre of planning shifted in the direction of a network of public and private participants (market): the ‘multi-agencies planning’. The market was considered to be an adequate regulating instrument and played a decisive role. Not only did the market modify the selection of potential spatial development possibilities, it also represented those who were expected to implement the policy of the ‘entrepreneur style’.

Kreukels (1988) stated that the networks gained the most from a project-wise approach, the so-called ‘strategic project planning’. The most famous examples of this approach are the ‘large-scale urban revitalisation projects’ like the Banks of the Y in
Amsterdam or the ‘Kop van Zuid’ in Rotterdam. There are many international examples too: London, Toronto, and the famous revitalisation projects of Barcelona.

Together with the new style of planning and urban revitalization, special attention was given to the architectural and urban design (Boelens, 1990, 46). Visualization of plans seemed rather attractive in the battle for the favour of investors or developers: an architectural design offered an attractive, thus useful element in decision making concerning town development. The design discipline was no longer restricted to the design of a plan in the executional phase, but was used determinatively to stimulate public discussion. It succeeded far better than ever had been possible in the executional phase (Voogd, Rooij, 1989, 117).

**Strategic planning**

The experiences with the strategic projects as mentioned above led to a new development in the beginning of the eighties. Soon it became clear that urban revitalisation did not suffice with the ad-hoc creation of ‘glossy’ (business) buildings at the most favourable spots in town. Instead, new projects had to be considered as a part of the existing town structure because they modify the city as a whole (Tilman, 1992, 109). Yet most cities lack a frame of reference to this modification. Only in cases of extreme (political) pressure and to counterbalance the great amount of freedom on the market, the local government designed an overall plan (Kreukels, 1988).

The political pressure only became urgent for all cities when the support for the projects decreased enormously, because only a limited number of people profited from the renewal activities.

At the same time, all kinds of new developments made it impossible to capture the dynamics of urban transformation into a suitable uniform solution. Besides the continuation of the economic recession, society was struggling with the effects of three major developments of which consequences were becoming more and more clear. Mastop refers to them as ‘mega-trends’: the increasing emancipation and individualization of the people, the increasing in scale of social and spatial processes, adjoining processes of internationalization of economic and administrative connections, and the continuation of the technological development. With these mega-trends, the multiformity of spatial problems increased to an enormous extent (Mastop, 1992, 12).

The complexity has also enhanced by the introduction of ‘new’ items; items that should be given more attention in the new planning approach. National Plans such as the ‘Fourth National Plan’, the ‘Policy Plan for Traffic and Transportation’ and the ‘National Environmental Act’ urged one to considerate items regarding the environment, mobility, visual quality on a smaller scale.
These remarks can be considered the source of the introduction to a new generation of overall plans; plans by which a better motivation and consideration of decisions was possible in favour of a well balanced urban development.

Intermezzo

The analysis of the history of planning can be summarized with the following figure (see below). The ‘lines’ of planning approaches starts with the blue-print approach, a typical overall planning technique which combines scientific knowledge with a top-down management approach. In the seventies, a division in two lines can be distinguished: one specially concerned with the perfection of administrative procedures (the ‘goal-achievement’) and one focused on the implementation on the site (the ‘strategic problem’ approach). The project-wise ‘strategic problem’ approach offered the most promising attempts for the next phase: the ‘entrepreneur style’ or ‘strategic project planning’. At the beginning of the nineties again some adjustments are necessary. Trends show the development of some sort of overall plan.

A great effort is made by several local governments to develop this new kind of overall plan under the phenomenon of ‘Strategic urban Planning’. These efforts are useful to outline the concept one step further. The most promising attempts of three cities in the Netherlands are discussed below.
STRATEGIC PLANNING IN EINDHOVEN, TILBURG AND MAASTRICHT

Since the end of the eighties the cities Eindhoven, Tilburg and Maastricht appear to have been very busy in trying to capture the dynamics of the city in an overall plan. A Masterplan or something similar was successively introduced in Maastricht in 1989, named "City in balance, balance in movement" (Stad in evenwicht, evenwicht in beweging); in Eindhoven in 1990, named "Eindhoven within the fringe" (Eindhoven binnen de ring) and in 1991 Tilburg issued its "Urban Management Plan" as a real Masterplan according to the WRO (the physical planning act). For this purpose the traditional Masterplan (or a similar plan) is still favourite. Even if it seems impossible to speak of 'one' plan: the Masterplans are backed up and executed with several related memorandums or constituency plans, which are introduced just as easily before or after the presentation of the Masterplan. Urban policy can no longer suffice with 'one' plan.

Frame of reference

One by one the Masterplans present an integral plan. Each plan covers the future spatial claims of different policy sectors, supported by scientific analysis and prognoses. As is usual for a Masterplan, the spatial consequences are balanced and combined in an overall plan.

But the new frame of references also shows some important differences. It is rather innovative that the local governments express some lucid statements concerning the actual execution of the policy plan. These statements are the result of a clear consideration of both potential development areas (expansion locations) and areas that need a preservation (management) policy. The Masterplans are presented as a new strategy making it possible to anticipate dynamic developments and if required can serve as an instrument to stimulate or restructure these development.

In the Masterplan of Maastricht 24 'action items' are presented, completed to an equal number of areas spread across the city. These items concern typical revitalisation projects like the 'Maasoovers', but also renewal projects in existing neighbourhoods like 'Annadal'. In the plan, the 'action items' are concretised to a large extend. The Masterplan of Eindhoven shows no detailed lay-out for the development of locations in town. It 'only' gives a broad outline of the way processes of change may effect the existing city structure.

The Masterplan is based on a simple model which represents both the existing and desired development. In the model the city is roughly divided into three zones: a quiet zone, an activity zone and the city centre. Each zone refers to a certain function which is dominantly present (e.g. in the activity zone most of the industry in Eindhoven is situated). In the model the areas are selected that appear interesting in the light of the desired (functional) development of Eindhoven.

These potential development possibilities largely determine the choices in urban policy. According to the model the north-west side of the town (the activity zone) has
all kinds of possibilities to strengthen the economic position of the town. And the south-east side, which is dominated by the river Dommel (quiet zone), offers all the opportunities to reinforce the living environment and add some cultural and recreative services.

Similar to the tradition of the Masterplan a few designations are distinguished on the map of the Urban Management Plan (Tilburg) called ‘urban management zones’. Just as in Maastricht these areas are situated all over town. Within these zones, the local government makes clear whether it concerns an intention to change the existing function of the area or one to conserve. Changing the existing function means the production of all kinds of development plans; preserving means checking to see if the actual use meets the so-called ‘overall quality’. If, according to the Urban Management Plan a lack in quality is noticed it is compensated by means of a special programme of temporary jet-accelerated intervention.

As such, the Urban Management Plan not only designates within the urban area, it also describes the proceedings of conserving or changing functions.

For all three cities it appears that the frame of reference can be considered an integral plan, just like the traditional Masterplan. It is completed with the appointment of some clear priorities concerning the execution of the urban policy: some strategic choices have to be made.

The new approach reflects the results of the considerations made by the local government with respect to its role in the process of planning. After the unrealistic expectation in the seventies regarding the possibilities to steer the urban development, the government now takes on a more modest role (instead of being the initiator it dedicates itself to a coordinating and stimulating role). The understanding that the government can’t do everything at the same time is a part of this new role. In answer to this, the designation of priorities is an essential part of coordinating policy and thus for ‘Strategic Urban Planning’.

The quality aspect

Another aspect is seen as a significant improvement to the new type of overall plans. They no longer involve quantitative expressions only for the future division of urban functions over the city, they also include some indications concerning the preference of buildings, the design of public space; in short the ‘city shape’.

As in Eindhoven, Tilburg and Maastricht also designate certain areas were urban dynamics lead to radical changes. They are, in the first place, also led by functional and economic potentials. However, Tilburg and Maastricht go one step further. Tilburg draws up an extensive list of all the processes of change on the urban level in its ‘Urban Management Plan’. In this it is not only the spatial-functional component that counts. Being in favour of an integral framework, two lines of approach are joined. On the one hand expectations regarding the future have been formulated,
concerning all spatial claims made by so-called ‘care sectors’ (living, working, traffic, environment, landscape…). Parallel to the list of spatial claims, the existing city is divided by means of historical elements and morphological marks. For instance areas can be characterized as ‘historical’ or ‘artificial’ elements, as well as relatively open or closed neighbourhoods.

For the interpretation of the concept ‘quality’ Tilburg uses the socio-psychological inheritance of Kevin Lynch. Lynch developed a very practical outline of the concept of quality. He used the perceptual recognition and orientation of the user on the built environment (Doevendans, 1992, B5-4). These components, that determine the quality of the built environment (‘quality of image’) can also be recognised in Tilburg: structured routes which are carried by several spatial guides and the presence of orientation or landmarks.

Nevertheless, the Urban Management Plan leaves the item of quality for what it is. The local government has just called for extensive research concerning this item. The Department of Architecture and Urban Planning is participating in this research.

Maastricht also regards the historical and morphological quality to be an important element. In contrast with Tilburg it is not the ‘quality of image’ that counts. In the Masterplan of Maastricht the city is seen as a cultural phenomenon, as a result of processes of growth and transition that create their own continuance and identity (Tilman, 1992, 113). The historical development of the landscape (the so-called ‘cultural identity’) is the basis for the instigation of new initiatives. Thus, the city is seen as a monument throughout time.

The historical dimension is used to map the structural spatial elements that have determined the identity of the city for generations, e.g. the central park, the boulevards, the canals and the fan of districts dating back to World War II. Due to this philosophy, urban development is seen as a result of historical continuity rather than that of activities that take place (functions). Therefore, city shape and land use are separated in the Masterplan of Maastricht.

This marks the difference with Tilburg concerning the concept of quality. According to Rossi (Doevendans, 1992, B5-4). ‘Perception’ and ‘function’ can be used as categories to label quality, but than the attention is basically focused on the actual being of the city. It does not take the image into account as a result of the historic collective. According to Maastricht that is just what quality is all about.

**The administrative organization**

A rather important third element can be distinguished in the new overall plans that is also quite different from traditional Masterplans. They also advocate an approach concerning the necessary (administrative) arrangements for the communication with, or participation of, all those involved. In this, a distinction is made between projects involving development locations or neighbourhood management.
Tilburg describes an explicit approach for neighbourhood management in her Masterplan. During the Annual Budgetary Debate, the government discusses the bottlenecks in the execution of the 'urban management zones'. Given the recommendations, an extended list is drawn up with possible solutions (top-down). This list is presented to the neighbourhood organizations involved. In the 'Urban Management Plan' a description is given in what way the administrative organisation has to be adjusted, to process the reaction from the neighbourhood accurately and integrally. Most promising is the annual presentation from a list of so-called 'signals' by the neighbourhood itself. This list also involves bottlenecks, but now drawn up from the point of view of neighbourhood inhabitants (bottom-up).

In the new plans, the organization of the participation for revitalisation project are not explicitly drawn up. Taken the presentation of the plans into account (vague, global, not explicit), it seems obvious that enough space is provided for participation. Given the limited (financial) means of the local government, more and more the implementation of Masterplans is being done by changing coalitions of public and private associates, who work together on the definition of several projects. The Master-plans are equipped for this. Besides a reference for spatial developments, they also serve as a basis for partnerships between public and private participants. There is, however, a difference between the different cities concerning the definition of the range of 'space' for participants.

Within the planning tradition of Eindhoven, the participation of several institutions plays a prominent role. In previous years these bodies took care of the financing of the project which made it necessary for the government to listen to their recommendations. They were not actually involved in the process of planning. This changed with the execution of a the project ‘Heuvelgalerie’ (1987). This project nowadays serves as an example for the ‘modern’ way of ‘handling’ the execution of a strategic project in Eindhoven. The ‘Heuvelgalerie’ includes a multi-functional centre that covers a third of the inner-city. It provides accommodation for a shopping mall, several offices and houses and some commercial and cultural services.

The analysis of the process of development shows that it can be characterized as extremely complex (Beekman, 1993). Despite the fact, that the local government considered in the beginning itself to be the only steering element in the process (it initiated the process with some stringent conditions) it turns out that the final result was determined by means of all kind of participants: the investor, the developer, the building corporations and also action committees. The ‘Heuvelgalerie’ reflects an intensive and dynamic process of negotiation between the local government and private participants.

Administratively, the process of developing the project continued against all expectations. Items like the pressure of time, compact organization with extended authority for officials involved, and the special treatment for proposals concerning the project, unmistakably contributed to the efficient and decisive view with which the local government impressed the other actors. The fact that the process often seemed to be
'closed' to other interested parties, balancing on the edge of what can still be deemed democratic, seems to have been quickly forgotten upon the realisation of an object satisfactory to all those involved.

With the 'Heuvelgalerie' the local government of Eindhoven has acquired its taste for large-scale development projects. Compared to the project 'Westcorridor' (1993) the 'Heuvelgalerie' is peanuts. This project 'only' offers a development strategy for a large three-pole area. The three poles are connected through a central axis, at which several concrete constituency projects are situated. Due to the large scale of this project, the local government has to rely on major public support concerning the approach of the project. Not only the cooperation with private participants has to be coordinated, but because the projects extend beyond the boundaries of the city contact with other municipalities has to be maintained. Much energy is put into the exchange of information by means of hearings or discussions for as many interested people as possible. The goal of these meetings is to get some response by discussing several variants of partial projects. After a period of gauging the public opinion, the local government hopes to get its ideas straight, so that the concrete interpretation of the constituent projects can be presented.

Maastricht shows a completely different kind of participation. It also tried to start a broad discussion, but within restricted limits. The local government determined the conditions for the final (architectural and spatial) quality of the plan at an early stage. The project 'Céramique' serves as an example. It concerns the creation of a whole new neighbourhood in the centre of the town. This project is also steered by a compact organization. The short lines make quick decision making possible, but limit the possibilities for participation. Initiatives from outside the government are only accepted if it is proved that they follow the line of the urban policy. The urban planner of the local government is held responsible for the continuation of the strategy formulated in the Masterplan, through all phases of the process of planning, and this task is taken very seriously. Without the strict steering or coordinating of the process the local government would not be able to guarantee the quality necessary for strategic planning.

No longer the Masterplan represents a static overall plan. It is more considered as a 'potential world' which becomes more specific by consulting the institutions and population involved. For the gauging of ideas, several platforms are introduced by which the preliminary plans serve as an incentive invitation -as metaphor- for discussion.

At the same time, consultative arrangements should be established to pick up signals made by citizens on the actual urban policy. Thus, the Masterplan should also present a frame for procedures of consultation, cooperation, self-help, and participation.
CONCLUSIONS

Out of the foregoing, it can be concluded, that the three cities do agree on the basic idea of ‘Strategic Urban Planning’. By them, strategic planning is considered a modern way of urban planning which guarantee a purposiveness, well motivated and balanced approach of urban problems. The analogy with the ‘intern’ and ‘external’ item of the concept ‘Strategic Planning’ as used by business administrators is easy made: to make an end to the add-hoc approach of previous years once and for all, an coherent vision is presented (‘intern’) which anticipates emphatically on the urban dynamics (‘external’).

The three cities share the opinion that the basis of strategic planning is found in an integral urban plan. With the traditional Masterplan used as reference, a new overall plan is developed which again in most cases is provided with the name ‘Masterplan’. Nevertheless, it contents a lot of new elements. Three items catch the eye. The new overall plans, the modern ‘Masterplans’, represent an executional character. By the linking the distinguished favourable development sites and promising management areas to the available budget (the means), the Masterplan serves the selection and motivation of strategic choices within the urban policy. These choices are transformed in strategic projects, by which the experiences on project-wise organization form the urban renewal are opportune. Secondly, a lot of attention is given to the quality of the urban environment. New phrases as ‘tounscape’, ‘cultural identity’ and ‘quality of image’ refer to this. At first it was tried to elaborate on the architectural quality as stated during the urban revival. But gradually the attention moved to a broader perspective with fundamental research on (hidden) morphologic or historic qualities on the city structure. Also the prominent place dedicated to the organization of participation on behalf of reaching consensus or public support, is innovative. For this, the extended procedures for afterwards opinions is no longer favourite. In this respect, much is learned from the period of urban renewal. The formulation and presentation of the new overall plans imply a clear invitation to the outside world (the market) to participate in an early stage of the planning process.

However, each city use it’s own methods to put the items into practice. And by this, major differences occur during the implementation of the Masterplans. It is likely that these differences are caused by the planning history of the cities itself. Local governments preferably use methods, which earn their marks in the recent past and with some adjustments these are creatively used again to carry out new items. Concerning this, the three cities have their own past. By the way, this is not exceptional. Van der Cammen already once described the way in which individuals and groups involved try, for tackling a spatial problem, to agree on a method which served the most promising attempts. After rendered services, certain methods will next time be used as an example, and perhaps even develop to a model. The model, in best cases with the adjustments to the current situation and
the mood of people concerned, will be repeated elsewhere. Finally, the experiences cumulated during this iterative process can lead to a ‘break through’: "A new style of planning will be developed which will better fit to widely experienced urban problems (Van der Cammen, SenV 1982, 378).

Perhaps, in that line, Strategic Planning can be considered as an ‘break through’. After all, according to the three cities, it concerns a planning method which fits perfectly in these times.

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