

3

Urban History in the Netherlands.¹

Urban history as a discipline in the Netherlands started in 1974, when Jan de Jonge, Professor of Economic History at the Free University in Amsterdam, published a long article on the city of Delft.² He analysed the transformation in the nineteenth century of this quiet tidy place into an industrial centre with the help of a number of financial, demographic, and economic sources, which until that time had seldom been utilised by historians. Innovative in Dutch historiography was also the link he made between town and countryside in terms of centre and hinterland. In the same year, this relationship between centre and hinterland became the subject of a conference of Dutch historians interested in cities. At this conference, attention was paid to the developments in Great Britain and the United States, where pioneers like Jim Dyos et al. and Eric Lampard et al. were creating a framework and a forum for urban history as a new, distinctive historical sub-discipline.³

An actual link with international mainstream in urban history was effected in 1979, when the Dutch Association of Urban History (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Stedengeschiedenis), founded by Jan de Jonge and some colleagues, organised an international conference on 'Urbanisation and Functional Differentiation'.⁴ At this conference, among other things, Jan de Vries from Berkeley presented the kernel of his book on European Urbanisation⁵, a fine article on urbanisation in the west of the country was launched⁶, and I applied a method of measuring functional differentiation by calculating concentration coefficients.⁷ The main organiser of the conference was Herman Diederiks of Leiden University, who in the subsequent years organised more conferences of this kind: *The Visible Hand and the Fortune of Cities*, and *Cities of Finance*.⁸ Together with Peter Clark, Bernard Lepetit, and Herman van der Wee, Diederiks also initiated

¹ Published in *Helsinki Quarterly* 3/2002, 18-24.

² J.A. de Jonge, 'Delft in de negentiende eeuw.' *Economisch- en Sociaalhistorisch jaarboek* 37 (1974) 145-248.

³ P. Kooij, 'Stadsgeschiedenis en de verhouding stad-platteland', *Economisch- en Sociaalhistorisch Jaarboek* 38 (1975).

⁴ H. Schmal, (ed) *Patterns of European Urbanisation since 1500* (London 1981).

⁵ J. de Vries, 'Patterns of urbanization in pre-industrial Europe, 1500-1800', in Schmal, *Patterns*, 77-111.

⁶ R. van Engelsdorp Gastelaars & M. Wagenaar, 'The rise of the 'Randstad' 1815-1930', in Schmal, *Patterns*, 229-247.

⁷ P. Kooij, 'Urbanization. What's in a name?', in Schmal, *Patterns*, 31-61. See also P.Kooij, 'Peripheral cities and their regions in the Dutch urban system until 1900' *The Journal of Economic History* 48 (1988) 357-371.

⁸ Herman Diederiks, Paul Hohenberg, Michael Wagenaar (eds.) *Economic policy in Europe since the late Middle Ages. The visible hand and the fortune of cities* (Leicester/London/New York 1992).

Herman Diederiks & David Reeder, *Cities of finance* (Amsterdam 1996).

the international conferences of the European Association of Urban Historians. He even organised the first one in Amsterdam in 1992.

On entering this international domain, a specific problem of Dutch urban history emerged. Although Dyos as the editor of the *Urban History Yearbook* welcomed everybody who studied cities and developments in cities in a scientific way to the forum on urban history, the Dutch needed a framework. This is because Dutch historiography is for the most part urban based. The Low Countries, together with some parts of Italy, were the first urbanised areas in Europe and, moreover, The Dutch Republic was a federation of provinces and cities. Therefore, individual cities had been paid a lot of attention within the context of general history, which had not been the case in more centralised countries like the United Kingdom or France. Since it was no use to rebaptise Dutch general history as urban history, a more limitative framework was needed.

In this quest, the first Dutch urban historians derived their inspiration mainly from geography.⁹ Towns and cities were defined as multifunctional central places: concentrations of political, economic, social, and cultural functions or activities. These concentrations required a specific morphology, which in its turn influenced processes and activities. It is this interaction between space and function, between morphology and activity, which became the core of Dutch urban history. Since 1976, eleven doctoral dissertations which elaborate this relationship have been published. I will now briefly characterise the directions in which the interests of Dutch urban historians have spread.

Henk van Dijk analysed the relationship between the booming of the Rotterdam economy and the demographic growth of the city until 1880, which was mainly caused by immigration.¹⁰ Herman Diederiks concentrated on the economic delay in Amsterdam around 1800, and the demographic consequences of this on the individual quarters of the city, each of which had a specific socio-economic character.¹¹ Piet 't Hart interrelated economic and demographic development in Utrecht at the beginning of the 19th century.¹² Pim Kooij reconstructed the economic structure as well as the social structure of Groningen around 1900 in relation to residential segregation and migration to and from this regional capital.¹³ Michiel Wagenaar analysed city formation in Amsterdam, and residential segregation in the context of the extension of Amsterdam around 1900.¹⁴ Clé Lesger reconstructed the urban network system in the northern part of the province of Holland in the early modern period, and analysed the position

⁹ P. Kooij, *Stadsgeschiedenis*. Cahiers voor lokale en regionale geschiedenis 4 (Zutphen 1989). Pim Kooij, 'The Netherlands' in Richard Rodger (ed.) *European urban history. Prospect and retrospect* (Leicester/London 1995).

¹⁰ H. van Dijk, *Rotterdam 1810-1880. Aspecten van een stedelijke samenleving* (Schiedam 1976).

¹¹ H.A. Diederiks, *Een stad in verval. Amsterdam omstreeks 1800* (Amsterdam 1982).

¹² P.D. 't Hart, *De stad Utrecht en haar inwoners. Een onderzoek naar samenhangen tussen sociaal-economische ontwikkelingen en de demografische geschiedenis van de stad Utrecht 1771-1825* (Utrecht 1983).

¹³ P. Kooij, *Groningen 1870-1914. Sociale verandering en economische ontwikkeling in een regionaal centrum* (Groningen 1986).

¹⁴ M.F. Wagenaar, *Amsterdam 1876-1914. Economisch herstel, ruimtelijke expansie en de veranderende ordening van het stedelijk grondgebruik* (Amsterdam 1990).

of Hoorn as a satellite of Amsterdam.¹⁵ Carolien Koopmans focussed on the 19th century transformation of Dordrecht into an industrial city after the transfer of its major functions as a seaport to Rotterdam.¹⁶ Paul Holthuis studied the defensive functions of Deventer in relation to the demographic consequences of the loss of its hinterland during the Eighty Years War.¹⁷ Rolf van der Woude concluded that Leeuwarden was the regional capital which had profited least from the economic specialisation in the 19th century, which had been caused by new transport opportunities.¹⁸ Carl Denig studied residential segregation in 19th century Utrecht,¹⁹ and Henk Schmal did the same for The Hague.²⁰

As is now clear, the leading topics in Dutch urban history are residential segregation, demographic development, especially migration, the functioning of cities within the urban network system, and the relationship between regional capitals and their hinterlands. The studies of residential segregation have mainly focussed on the second half of the 19th century. In that period, industrialisation started in the Netherlands. Industry was for the most part located in the cities. This attracted large groups of immigrants. At the same time, most cities were allowed to remove their fortifications. This resulted in prestigious extensions. The elite seized the opportunity to create residential quarters for themselves and left the overcrowded and socially mixed inner cities. Separate new quarters were also built for labourers and members of the middle class.

Most studies on immigration also covered this very dynamic period in Dutch urban history. Around 1870 there was a pattern of stepwise migration from the countryside to the regional capitals, and from there into the urban network system. This process was accompanied by a return migration of about 30%. By the turn of the century, migration from a number of second rank places skipped the regional capital, which meant that these places had found their own connection with the urban network system.²¹

The urban network system in the Netherlands was given shape by Jan de Vries in his innovative study of the transportation network by barge in the 17th and 18th centuries.²² The railway and tramway systems in the 19th century promoted further specialisation in regional capitals. In line with the theory of Paul

¹⁵ C.M. Lesger, *Hoorn als stedelijk knooppunt. Stedensystemen tijdens de late middeleeuwen en vroegmoderne tijd* (Hilversum 1990).

¹⁶ Carolien Koopmans, *Dordrecht 1811-1914. Een eeuw demografische en economische geschiedenis* (Hilversum 1992).

¹⁷ Paul Holthuis, *Frontierstad bij het scheiden van de markt. Deventer: militair, demografisch, economisch; 1578-1648* (Deventer 1993).

¹⁸ Rolf van der Woude, *Leeuwarden 1850-1914. De modernisering van een provinciehoofdstad* (Leeuwarden 1994).

¹⁹ Carl Denig, *Utrecht van ancien régime tot nieuwe tijd. De bewoning van de Utrechtse binnenstad in haar ruimtelijke structuur* (Utrecht 1995).

²⁰ Henk Schmal, *Den Haag of 's Gravenhage. De 19^{de}-eeuwse gordel, een zone gemodelleerd door zand en veen* (Utrecht 1995).

²¹ Pim Kooij, 'Migrants in Dutch cities at the end of the nineteenth century' in Denis Menjot & Jean-Luc Pinol (eds.) *Les immigrants et la ville* (Paris 1996) 207-230. See also this volume.

²² J. de Vries, 'Barges and capitalism: passenger transportation in the Dutch economy 1632-1839' A.A.G. Bijdragen 21 (1978) 33-139.

Hohenberg and Lynn Hollen Lees,²³ the regional capitals outside the heavily urbanised western part of the country acted as gateways between the urban network system and the regional central place system.²⁴ In the 20th century, these regional capitals mainly lost this gate function, due to initial industrialisation in the countryside, de-industrialisation in the cities, and suburbanisation, as has become clear from a study of six European regional capitals, including the city of Groningen. Many regional capitals were saved from depopulation by the growth of the services sector, a university, tourism, and sometimes modern industry.²⁵

Apart from the studies mentioned above, many books and articles have been written about the urban infrastructure: health care, education, housing, and poor relief. The aim of the authors, however, was not to make a contribution to urban history, but rather to the history of medicine, the history of education, etcetera. The town or city, with its limited scale, offers good opportunities for exploring the various aspects of social infrastructure and their interrelationships before tackling them on a national scale. Dutch urban historians, like historians elsewhere, are still discussing whether this kind of medical history etc. in an urban context may be considered as urban history. At any rate, no discussion is needed about infrastructural studies related to space, such as the topography of contagious diseases like cholera,²⁶ or building companies.²⁷ Studies where an aspect of the social infrastructure is linked to the specific social structure of a town may be considered as urban history, for example poor relief in Alkmaar,²⁸ or in Zwolle.²⁹ The same is the true of some studies of Amsterdam and Rotterdam,³⁰ which primarily concentrate on the labour market. For Amsterdam, Van Zanden and Knotter discovered that during the second half of the nineteenth century, the labour market acquired a dual character: on the one hand were the big mechanised export industries which paid relatively high wages, and on the other were the traditional craft industries, which acted as a reservoir for the modern ones.³¹ The same was the case in Groningen³².

So far, all the studies mentioned have a socio-economic character. Political and cultural studies in which the city is more than just a décor are rare. There are some studies of Amsterdam in which politics is linked to social or economic factors, for example the book by Boudien de Vries on the social composition of the electorate in the 19th century, or that by Diederik Aten on the political

²³ Paul Hohenberg & Lynn Hollen Lees, *The making of urban Europe 1000-1950* (Cambridge Mass. 1985).

²⁴ Kooij, 'Peripheral cities'.

²⁵ Pim Kooij & Piet Pellenbarg, *Regional Capitals. Past, present, prospects* (Assen 1994).

²⁶ P.D. 't Hart, *Utrecht en de cholera* (Zutphen 1990).

²⁷ C. Schade, *Woningbouw voor arbeiders in het 19e eeuwse Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1981).

²⁸ L.F. van Loo, *Armelui. Armoede en bedeling in Alkmaar 1850-1914* (Bergen 1986).

²⁹ Hilde van Wijngaarden, *Zorg voor de kost: armenzorg, arbeid en onderlinge hulp in Zwolle* (Amsterdam 2000).

³⁰ H.J. Visscher, *Rotterdamers op de trappen der historie* (Rotterdam 1997).

³¹ J.L. van Zanden, *De industrialisatie in Amsterdam 1825-1914* (Bergen 1987). Ad Knotter, *Economische transformatie en stedelijke arbeidsmarkt. Amsterdam in de tweede helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Zwolle 1991).

³² Pim Kooij, 'Artisans and the labour market in Dutch provincial capitals around 1900', in Geoffrey Crossick, *The Artisan and the European Town, 1500-1900* (Aldershot 1997) 239-257.

strategies which were used to extend economic influence in its hinterland.³³ In the cultural field, the number of studies is growing steadily, especially on urban planning and architecture. The pioneer study by Ed Taverne on the extension of Leiden, Haarlem, and Utrecht in the 16th and 17th centuries,³⁴ has recently been followed by two on Rotterdam,³⁵ and one on Maastricht.³⁶ Interesting, too, are the dissertations on political culture in the second half of the 19th century within the Public Works in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, the organisations which designed those cities.³⁷ Moreover, there are also some contributions on the use of public space.³⁸ Representation, which is currently very fashionable among cultural historians, is being increasingly incorporated into integral urban studies, about which I will speak in a moment.

Since the beginning of the nineties, there has been a real debate among Dutch urban historians about the nature of urban history. This debate was initiated in 1991 by Harry Jansen of the University of Nijmegen in his theoretical dissertation on the approaches by urban historians. This book has recently been translated into English, which may result in the spread of the debate to other countries.³⁹ According to Jansen, urban history in the Netherlands is dominated by socio-economic historians, who use a half-open system approach in which cities are studied in relation to their hinterlands and in the context of the urban network system. The relatively closed system approach, in which the city is contrasted with its environment, has been neglected. Still, the closed system offers more opportunities for an integral description of a city. Collective participation, derived from Max Weber, could be a key category to obtain that integration.

Integration is indeed a serious problem. Older city biographies consist of a range of successive articles, sometimes even written by different authors, on different topics which are in no way interrelated. In the last decades of the twentieth century, this treatment has been repeated for all larger Dutch towns by the extremely successful, well-illustrated series *Ach Lieve Tijd* (Those were the days). Fortunately, a number of local authorities wanted a more scientific description of their municipalities and donated large grants to this end. Consequently, in every large city, and in some smaller ones, teams of urban historians were formed to produce urban histories. At the universities of Rotterdam, Utrecht and Leiden,

³³ B. de Vries, *Electoraat en elite. Sociale structuur en sociale mobiliteit in Amsterdam 1850-1895* (Amsterdam 1986); Diederik Aten, *'Als het gewelt comt...' Politiek en economie in Holland benoorden het IJ* (Hilversum 1995).

³⁴ Ed Taverne, *In het land van belofte: in de nieuwe stad. Ideaal en werkelijkheid van de stadsuitleg in de Republiek 1580-1680* (Maarssen 1978).

³⁵ Cor Wagenaar, *Welvaartsstaat in wording, De wederopbouw van Rotterdam 1940-1952* (Rotterdam 1992). Hans Bonke, *De kleyne mast van de Hollandse coopsteden. Stadsontwikkeling in Rotterdam 1572-1795* (Amsterdam 1996).

³⁶ Marijke Martin, *Tussen traditie en vernieuwing. Ruimtelijke transformaties van Maastricht 1650-1795* (Groningen 1997).

³⁷ J. van den Noort, *Pion of pionier. Rotterdam-gemeentelijke bedrijvigheid in de negentiende eeuw* (Rotterdam 1990). Ida Jager, *Hoofdstad in gebreke. Manoeuvreren met publieke werken in Amsterdam 1851-1901* (Rotterdam 2002).

³⁸ Heidi de Mare & Anna Vos (eds), *Urban rituals in Italy and the Netherlands* (Assen 1993). Jan Hein Furnée, 'Beschaafd vertier. Standen sekse en ruimtelijke ontwikkeling van Den Haag, 1850-1890' *Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis* 27 (2001) 1-32.

³⁹ Harry Jansen, *The construction of the urban past. Narrative and system in urban history* (Oxford/New York 2001).

chairs were even created to guide this process. This proved to be a major impulse for integration, since all aspects of city life had to be treated according to the newest scientific insights. As a result, during the last ten years studies have been published, for instance, on Haarlem⁴⁰, Dordrecht,⁴¹ 's-Hertogenbosch,⁴² Leeuwarden,⁴³ Rotterdam,⁴⁴ and Utrecht,⁴⁵ and many more are forthcoming. An urban history, preferably consisting of several volumes, has become a major public relations object for every city that respects itself. An extra advantage of this kind of study is that they also cover the twentieth century. In this way, a historical background is provided for a number of contemporary problems in larger cities, such as de-industrialisation, social intolerance, and congestion.

Considering the results so far available, neither an open nor a closed approach seems to be the key to integral urban history. It is a combination of the two approaches which generates the best results. The books on Leeuwarden and Rotterdam demonstrate this very clearly. Economic development, for instance, is effortlessly linked to representation, which in the case of Leeuwarden is even treated in a very post-modern way. Urban identity is also a major issue in most of the other books mentioned. In almost every chapter, a spatial basis – local, regional, national or international – supports the analyses. Moreover, comparisons are made with other cities, sometimes in neutral terms, sometimes within the context of urban rivalry, which has always been an issue in Dutch historiography.⁴⁶

Thus, we may conclude that Dutch urban history over the last decade has transformed itself from a mainly social and economic discipline into one which covers all societal domains, and that it is no use treating the half-open and relatively-closed approaches as contrasting paradigms. Nor has it been proved that closed pre-modern cities have transformed into open industrial cities, as Oscar Handlin supposed.⁴⁷ The political and economic networks of pre-modern cities included the national and political capitals – Amsterdam and The Hague – as well as the outskirts of their hinterlands. And the port cities all had interrelations with cities abroad. But in fact, as recent archaeological excavations have shown, every Dutch town originally had a harbour.

⁴⁰ G.F. van de Ree-Scholten, et al., *Deugd boven geweld. Een geschiedenis van Haarlem* (Hilversum 1995).

⁴¹ J. van Herwaarden, D. de Boer, F. van Kan, G. Verhoeven, *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht tot 1572* (Hilversum 1996). W. Frijhoff, H. Nusteling, M. Spies (eds.) *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht van 1572 tot 1813* (Hilversum 1998). P. Kooij & V. Sleebe (eds.) *Geschiedenis van Dordrecht van 1813 tot 2000* (Hilversum 2000).

⁴² A. Vos et al., *'s-Hertogenbosch. De geschiedenis van een Brabantse stad 1629-1990* (Zwolle 1997).

⁴³ René Kunst, Goffe Jensma, Paul Th. Kok, Yme Kuiper, Meindert Schroor, Hotso Spanninga, Rolf van der Woude (eds.) *Leeuwarden 750-2000. Hoofdstad van Friesland* (Franeker 1999).

⁴⁴ Arie van der Schoor, *Stad in aanwas. Geschiedenis van Rotterdam tot 1813* (Zwolle 1999). Paul van de Laar, *Stad van formaat. Geschiedenis van Rotterdam in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Zwolle 2000).

⁴⁵ R.E. de Bruin, P.D. 't Hart, A.J. van den Hoven van Genderen, A. Pietersma, J.E.A.L. Struick (eds.) *'Een paradijs vol weelde'. Geschiedenis van de stad Utrecht* (Utrecht 2000).

⁴⁶ P.B.M. Blaas & J. van Herwaarden, *Stedelijke natijver* ('s-Gravenhage 1988).

⁴⁷ O. Handlin, 'The modern city as a field of historical study', in O. Handlin & J. Burchard, (eds.) *The historian and the city* (Cambridge Mass. 1963) 1-26.