

# INTERNATIONAL NEW TOWN INSTITUTE

## REPORT INTERNATIONAL NEW TOWN DAY 2018 New Town Boom Town



## INTRODUCTION

After two successful International New Town Days in Almere, NL (2016) and Milton Keynes, UK (2017) we brought the International New Town Day to Rotterdam. This year's day of coming together and sharing experiences was themed *New Town Boom Town*.

Ten years after the global financial crisis of 2008, the construction sector is again operating at full speed worldwide. A growing economy goes hand in hand with urbanization and New Towns are again on the agenda everywhere. This no longer applies only to China and Asia, but increasingly also to Africa. Are these cities good enough to stand the test of time or are they purely commercial projects that only aggravate the most urgent contemporary problems - inequality, segregation, climate change? What resources can be provided from urban planning and design to make New Towns future proof?

Closer to home, in the Netherlands, the former *groei-kernen* ('growth centres') are starting to grow again some four decades after their birth. Is the pressure on the Randstad an opportunity for a long-awaited quality improvement of these cities? And what role can the young heritage of architecture and urbanism from the 70s and 80s play in this?

The International New Town Day 2018: *New Town Boom Town* is a day in which an international group of designers, planners, activists, developers, policy makers, students and historians present and exchange knowledge and ideas, engage in dialogue about shared interests and start new collaborations.

## HOLLAND BOOM TOWN

The first session of the day, called Holland Boom Town, was introduced by Michelle Provoost. She pointed out the possible role of *groei-kernen* (growth centres) in the current urbanization of the Randstad. A short summary of her introduction:

No one will have missed out on the fact that also in the Netherlands the building sector has recovered, architects and developers are working overtime and the prospects in the construction industry are bright. Again, there is a housing task of no less than 1,000,000 homes. To achieve this, the priority is to intensify the existing urban area.



Introduction by Michelle Provoost (Director of the International New Town Institute)

The question then is: which urban area? The historic cities can be further compacted, but is there enough space? And if so, for how long and with what quality of life? Are we talking only about the five big cities or also about the small towns in the larger Randstad (the megalopolis of the central- western Netherlands), known as the (former) groeikernen such as Zoetermeer, Hoofddorp, Almere, Spijkenisse or Nieuwegein?

Should the focus be on strengthening Amsterdam to become a metropolis or is there reason to intensify and transform all of the existing networks of cities and towns? Is the housing task an opportunity for the growth centers? The groeikernen were built in the seventies within the 'bundled concentration' policy, to accommodate almost 1,000,000 dwellings. Their suburban urbanity is characterised by excellent infrastructure and public transport that connects the New Towns to their 'mother cities', Rotterdam, Amsterdam or Utrecht. Generally, the towns are spacious with enough room for extension or intensification.

Over the last decades, many of these groeikernen have invested in their city centre, renewing and transforming it and adding theatres, libraries and shopping malls. There are urgent urban and societal issues, such as sustainability, changes in health care policy, aging residents and new ways of working. Does the current pressure on the housing market mean that former groeikernen can profit and improve the town's quality? Or will instead their living qualities and suburban character decrease because tranquillity and green space are disturbed?

The session started with two presentations that both presented an analysis of the future challenges and possibilities of the groeikernen. The presentation of Marc Hanou from the *Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency* (PBL) focused on the previous transitions in the groeikernen and the social issues that came with it, whereas the presentation of the Marleen Hermans from *Brink Management / Advies* focused on the maximum capacity of the future transformations of groeikernen.



Marc Hanou (PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency)

Marc Hanou stated that housing, economy, and climate adaption are the biggest tasks that the groeikernen are facing. Also, he mentioned that the aging population and rigid zoning of functions are important themes for the groeikernen to focus on. In the process of coping with these challenges, Hanou stated that we need to consider that "spatial planning means: to create differences", which means that not every urban context should be treated in the same way or with the same objectives. Moreover, Hanou indicates that there is a need to elaborate on the already existing qualities of the groeikernen, to consider to what extent these qualities need to be maintained, and to examine what their value is for future transformations.

Therefore, we need to visualize the existent qualities and not to focus too much on the urge of densification, since the groeikernen already possess an average density which is comparable to other cities.

Marleen Hermans addressed the possibilities of densification in the groeikernen and her analysis examined to what extent the housing task can be realized within the existing urban area. Using Zoetermeer as an example, she pointed out that there is space for residential construction within the existing urban area, but it would also suppress the existing accommodations and is therefore very complex. Moreover she states that in this big task, consideration must be given to liveability, mobility, economy and climate adaptation, and close attention must be paid to the housing demand per groeikern. She pointed out that if the groeikernen hold on to the current densities, there will be relatively little possible in terms of increasing the numbers of households. With the prediction that in the near future the number of single households will increase to 40%, it is needed to strive for higher densification. In the end, Hermans stated that “we are living in an enormous bubble”, and that the shift of decentralization of decision-making from the national authorities to the local authorities has caused problems and stagnation in the area of mobility and housing.

The two presentations were followed by a panel discussion with Arnold Reijndorp from the University of Amsterdam and Desiree Uitzetter from BPD Developers, and reactions from several representatives of the groeikernen Nissewaard, Almere, and Zoetermeer.

Reijndorp stated that the contrast between the big cities and the groeikernen is partly an artificial contrast. De groeikernen urbanize and the big cities suburbanize. “As a residential area, it is precisely the quiet and sheltered urban zone that is popular.”

Desiree Uitzetter talked about the outcomes of the research *Thuis in de toekomst*, which showed that more realization and awareness is needed because of the fragmentation and the large amount of parties that are involved, and the lack of attention towards commercial activities and companies.



*Presentation of Marleen Hermans (Brink Management / Advies) during the session 'Holland Boom Town'*

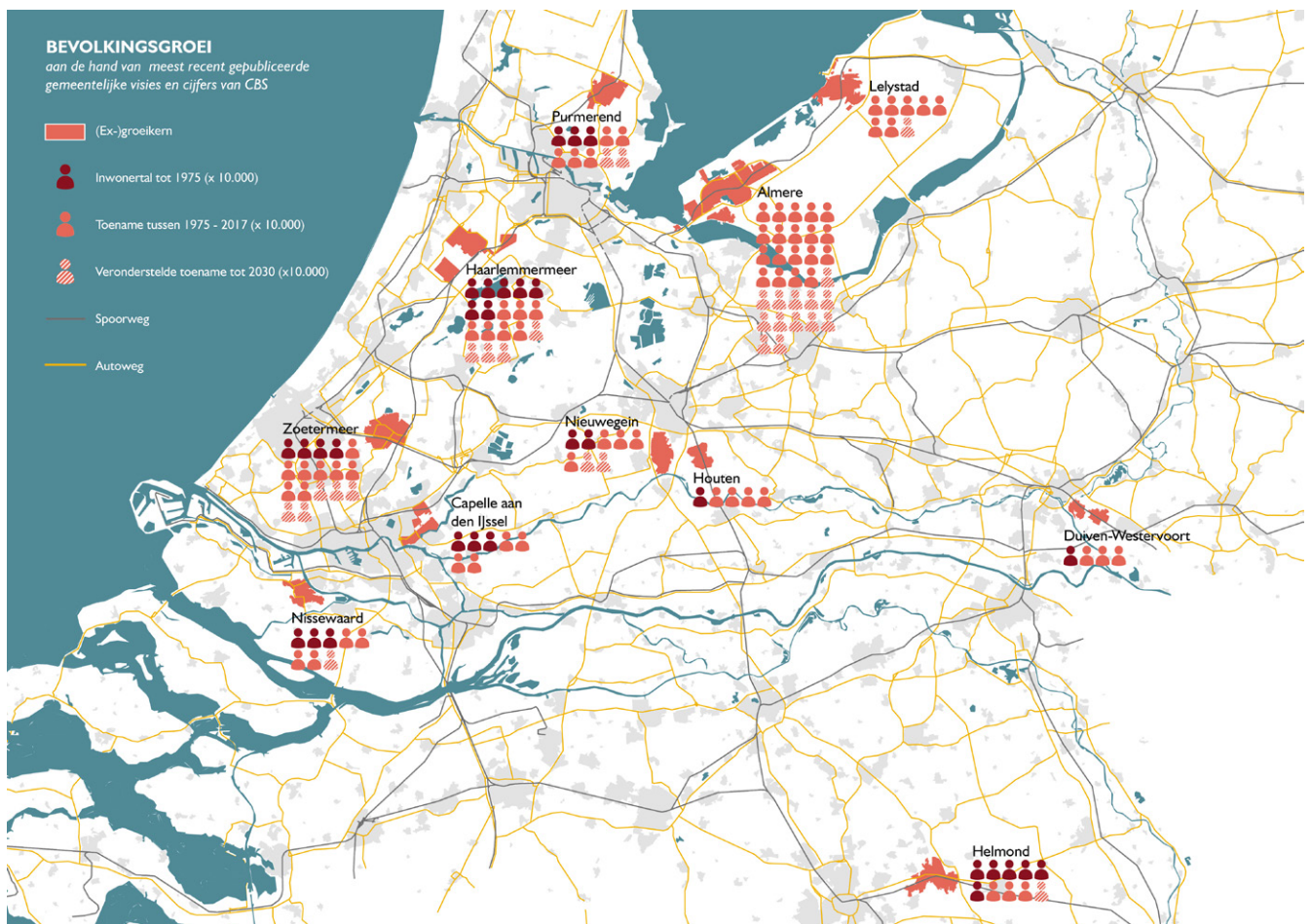


*Marleen Hermans (Brink Management / Advies)*



*Paul Gerretsen (Deltametropolis Association), moderator of the session 'Holland Boom Town'*





Population growth in the groeikernen in the Netherlands

As examples of densification possibilities, she mentioned business parks and recreation areas, and more mixing in living and working. But, however, “is the densification of the New Towns an answer to the demand in the region? Or are new New Towns needed?”

Jeroen Scholten, the urban development advisor of the Municipality of Zoetermeer, reacted on this session with the answer that densification is necessary because of the public support for facilities and public transport. He stated that the task of building 1.000.000 housing projects, contains much more than just housing; it also brings the need of 5000 schools, businesses, shops, etc. And how do you guarantee the existing qualities within this big task? Scholten called it the ‘classic planning drama’, where the existing residents must participate in future transformations, and that the planners have to deal with the opposition that the plans evoke. There will of course always be a tension between the desired peace and calm in the living environment and the need for densification and intensification.

Floor Hartog, Head of the Department of Security, Permits and Enforcement of the Municipality of Nissewaard, reacted that for Nissewaard, accessibility and mobility are important tasks to focus on in terms of densification

and that maintaining solidarity with existing residents is key. Hartog also mentioned the negative living and working balance. “It is the aim to create a step towards a situation where residents can find their work in vicinity. But how to carry this through?”

Jaap Meindersma, Deputy Director of the City Management Department of the Municipality of Almere, responded that he finds it rather sad to constantly talk about the quantity of the housing task. “It is time to look in a different way and not only focus on the physical space, but also on the mental space. This is the kind of space that we have had, still have and always will have and where a lot of opportunities can be found. The New Towns invented other ways of urbanizations and that is their strength.”

Jeroen de Bok, senior urban planner at the Department of City Management & Urban Development of the Municipality of Rotterdam, also stated that within the big housing task, other transitions are coming our way, such as mobility, water issues, ecological issues, etc. De Bok stated that it is important to intensify in a strategical way and therefor maintain the qualities of the urban environment, the proximity of a bigger city, the proximity of nature, and intensify around existent public transport hubs.

After the panel discussion and reactions, moderator Paul Gerretsen (Vereniging Deltametropool) ended with the statement that groeikernen are extraordinary promising areas. To achieve something within the housing task, groeikernen have to be looked at from a regional perspective to understand their context and to see in the mutual relationships between them and the larger cities in the Randstad. It is time to start looking to solutions instead of problems.

## NEW TOWN HERITAGE AGENDA

Do New Towns have heritage? Or history? These aspects are not commonly associated with New Towns as they are relatively young. As with any period in architectural and planning history, it takes some time for both the public and experts to appreciate the particular style and characteristics of New Towns. Presently, the discussion on New Town (or Post-65) planning and architecture is alive and kicking. Heritage is becoming more



*Panel Discussion during the 'Holland Boom Town' session with Desiree Uitzetter (BPD Area Developers), Marc Hanou, Marleen Hermans and Arnold Reijndorp (University of Amsterdam).*



*Reactions from Jeroen de Bok (Municipality of Rotterdam), Jaap Meindersma (Municipality of Almere), Jeroen Scholten (Municipality of Zoetermeer) and Floor Hartog (Municipality of Nissewaard).*

*Next page "New Town Heritage Agenda - A Call For Action"*

# New Towns Heritage Agenda - A Call For Action -

## PART ONE: TOWARDS A NEW TOWNS HERITAGE AGENDA

### I. INTRODUCTION

New Towns and associated urban extensions and designs of the post Second World War period (henceforth summarised as 'New Towns') are a remarkable social, planning and environmental achievement that deserve wider recognition. The **New Towns Heritage Research Network** (henceforth referred to as the 'Network') is a collection of towns, cities, universities and other organisations to advance the understanding of the significance of these places for their heritage and cultural contribution to modern society. The Network advocates the research and learning value these places can have for current and future urbanisation, growth and diversity.

The **Heritage of New Towns is at risk** due to social changes and lack of recognition from society in general. Yet the Network asserts that their heritages and legacies are highly relevant to contemporary planning of building new settlements, sustainable places, and identity of place. Network **case studies** (Milton Keynes, Harlow, Peterborough, Rotterdam and Saint Quentin Yvelines) have shown that post-war New Town architectural, design and planning heritage can play a **crucial role** in the planning and development of new growth.

The network was originally enabled by a 2017/18 **Arts and Humanities Research Council** (AHRC) grant. At the conclusion of this project the Network agreed to develop a **New Towns Heritage Agenda** to increase the awareness and advocate the role of heritage in the future. The Network does not presume to speak for all New Towns. It sees the development of this Agenda as a **starting point to promote debate** around its content and to encourage others to join the Network and/or participate in its ongoing public programme.

### 2. A SHARED HERITAGE

Heritage is a contested concept, modernist built environment heritage even more so: all aspects of New Towns Heritage require painstaking analysis, interpretation and debate. But Heritage is also part of a dynamic and developing context. Understanding the core and essence of New Towns heritage can give it a **positive role in urban development**. However, heritage in New Towns is both **material and immaterial**; material heritage involves objects, buildings and the urban structural elements. Immaterial heritage involves ideas, concepts, narratives and culture.

The development of a New Towns Heritage Agenda is seen by the Network as a response to **securing this heritage legacy**. Buildings as well as infrastructure of the initial New Town development period are under threat from demolition or neglect and need to be assessed for their heritage value. Appropriate conservation or heritage orders need to be employed as these places plan their next future phase and they need to be identified before it is too late. Some progress towards protection and recognition of this heritage has been made in several New Towns with the designation of conservation areas and special heritage or cultural status but this should be greatly extended. The work of the 20th Century Society in the UK and Government and local authorities in the Netherlands is a very important start.

New Towns Heritage can only be successfully interpreted and protected in conjunction with diverse local stakeholders. Promoters of the value of New Towns Heritage must be prepared to be challenged by those living and working in these places.

### 3. PROMOTING A UNIQUE DESIGN IDENTITY FOR URBAN GROWTH

New Towns, often contested and challenged by commercial pressures and social changes since they were constructed, provide a framework of roads, landscapes, public spaces, town centres and neighbourhoods that still shape the planning of new settlements today. Their main characteristic is a **Master Plan** in which New Towns explored a wide range of **new concepts in planning, architecture and landscape design** as well as a commitment to **public services and community coherence**. These concepts are as relevant today, when many countries are faced with the challenge of meeting the housing and employment needs of growing populations, as they were in the decades after 1945. Their spatial as well as their programmatic importance for the community should be recognized and reinterpreted to gain future relevance.

New Towns need **reinvention** to face their future. Heritage can play a role in this reinvention; it gives **identity and character**, promotes **civic pride** and prevents the generic tendencies in contemporary planning. The Network believes that creating the narrative of the New Towns in a comprehensible and attractive way needs to engage residents, businesses, professionals, public organisations and politicians.

Furthermore, New Towns are part of an international – European and global – family. They share the same DNA. For that reason, it is fruitful to **exchange experiences and knowledge to learn, adapt and create new opportunities** – a key objective for the Network.

## PART TWO: A STATEMENT OF INTENT

### AGENDA AIMS

The New Towns Heritage Research Network aims to:

1. Achieve greater awareness and recognition of the significance of New Town Heritage; and those places that share a New Town DNA;
2. Advocate New Town Heritage policies locally and nationally which include specific protection for key buildings, spaces and infrastructures in the post war New Towns in recognition of their unique modernist heritage character; and,
3. Promote case studies and principles of New Town planning and design, within the current urban growth agenda, to shape and deliver successful liveable cities for all.

The Network will further these aims through continued academic and community **Research** and through the development of a co-ordinated **Public Programme** of activities and events.

### RESEARCH

The Network will use **Research** to raise awareness of, advocate protection for and actively promote case studies in New Town Heritage by:

1. Elaborating **common approaches** for cultural assessment (valuing) and using these methods in future growth planning processes and development;
2. Promoting research on **best practices, methods and techniques** for preservation, including sustainable (re-) usage of infrastructure;
3. Recognising **interpretation and re-use** of New Town Heritage as important aspects of economic, ecological and social sustainability

### ACTIVITY PROGRAMME

The Network will use a co-ordinated **activity programme** to raise awareness of, advocate protection for and actively promote case studies in New Town Heritage by:

1. Targeting **New Town residents, businesses and public organisations** as well as academic and special interest groups to widen enthusiasm and participation in New Town research;
2. Involving **children and young people** in educational activities about their New Town Heritage to support New Town reinvention for the next generation;
3. Widening the participation of **other New Towns** through a diverse programme of projects, networks and collaborations, and,
4. Lobbying local and national government and public institutions for the **protection of New Town Heritage**.

The **New Towns Heritage Agenda** as a **Call for Action** is inclusive, transformative and open-ended in its appreciation of the legacy of post Second World War New Towns and associated urban extensions and designs. We would like to extend our invitation to other towns and cities and interested parties to join the Network: <http://www.mkcdc.org.uk/new-towns-heritage/>

### New Towns Heritage Research Network

Rotterdam, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018

and more relevant given the enormous challenges which New Towns Europe-wide face: some have to cope with social problems and dilapidated environments, others have to deal with the pressure to densify and transform. The groeikernen in the Netherlands put forward some interesting dilemma's: the landscape of the groeikernen is dotted with the symbols of the welfare state of the 1970s: buildings for education, health care, welfare, self-development and public services. Many of these buildings are empty, under threat or already demolished. When the intangible heritage of the welfare state is disappearing, what should happen to its physical symbols? A thorough understanding of the meaning of 1970's architecture and urban planning within its social context should underpin our dealings with it. It seems that if we really want New Town architecture and planning to be recognized on a wider scale, we need to actively engage in promoting it. This was the reason for the establishment of The New Towns Heritage Network, originating in the UK and reaching out to Mainland Europe: to share research and policy on the architectural heritage value of the Post War New Towns. After a series of meetings in Milton Keynes, Harlow, Peterborough, Rotterdam and Coventry, a New Town Heritage Agenda was formulated, looking forward to a possible heritage approach to the Post-65 generation of architecture and planning projects. Will New Towns always stay Boom Towns, restlessly transforming and developing without looking back, or will they recognize their young heritage as a way to grow roots and strengthen their identity?

During this session, we received a presentation from Sabine Coady Schäbitz, Associate Head of the School of Art and Design and Principal Lecturer in Architecture at *Coventry University*, and a reaction of Anita Blom, specialist in post-war urban planning heritage at the landscape department of the *Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency*. In her presentation, Schäbitz presented the emergence of 'The New Town Heritage Agenda as a Call for Action'. This agenda is inclusive, transformative and open-ended in its appreciation of the legacy of post Second World War New Towns and associated urban extensions and designs. In reaction, Anita Blom states that the Agenda could be seen as a starting point to create more awareness, interest, and recognition in terms of the qualities of the New Towns. At the end of the session, the New Town Heritage Agenda was handed over



*Presentation of Sabine Coady Schäbitz (Coventry University) during the 'Handing over Ceremony of the New Town Heritage Agenda' session*



*Reaction from Anita Blom (Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency)*



*Handing over the New Town Heritage Agenda to the representatives of the different municipalities.*



to the five representatives of the Dutch New Towns (groei-kernen) in a small ceremony, with the aim to create more awareness within the groei-kernen and involve them in this project. Also, the 'Groei-kernen Kenniskring' was announced in this session as the platform in which the discussion about the future of heritage in New Towns will continue in 2019.

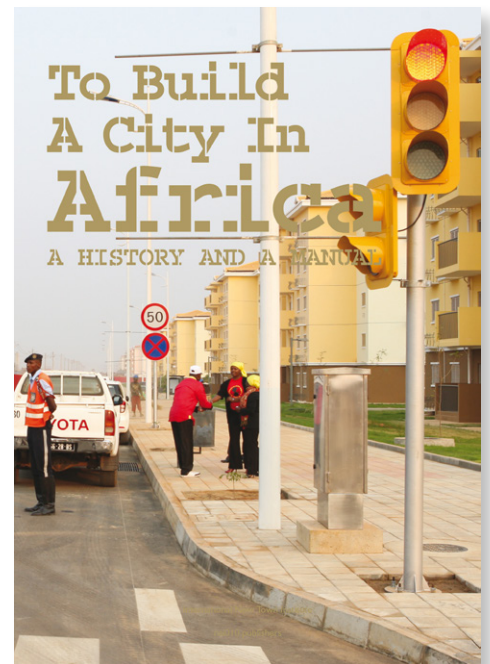
## TO BUILD A CITY IN AFRICA

During this session the book 'To Build a City in Africa; A History and a Manual' (eds. Rachel Keeton, Michelle Provoost) was presented, which offered the opportunity to discuss how to improve the New Town developments currently planned or under construction in Africa. Urbanization is happening faster in Africa than on any other continent. The vast majority of this urbanization is unregulated and unplanned. At the same time, New Towns are being privately developed for the 'middle' and upper-income groups as an alternative to what are seen as 'crowded', 'congested', and 'unmanageable' cities.

Future New Towns can be an opportunity to address environmental and social issues proactively rather than contributing to existing challenges. Until now, very little has been published on the most recent generation of urban extensions, New Towns and cities in Africa, despite the massive social, financial, ecological, and political implications of these new developments.

The book 'To Build a City in Africa; A History and a Manual' presents the research by INTI and UN-Habitat with in-depth case studies, comparative analysis and large data sets in a clear and visually engaging manner - making information available to the public for the very first time. In her presentation, Rachel Keeton addressed the problems that appear in African New Towns such as spatial segregation, lack of public transit, lack of public space, lack of housing stock diversity, climate change threats, and waste management. She also explains the gap between academics and architects in the process of building a new town. With this book, Provoost and Keeton try to build a bridge between academia and practice which hopefully offers a step towards better new towns in the future.

Michelle Provoost explained the process that led to the Manual, included in the book, which offers ten principles to improve the planning and urban design of New Towns, developed with a variety of stakeholders from government, commercial parties, scientists and



Cover forthcoming book "To Build a City in Africa"



Presentation of the publication 'To Build a City in Africa' by Rachel Keeton (INTI & TU Delft)



Presentation of the publication 'To Build a City in Africa' by Michelle Provoost (Director of INTI)



grassroots organisations. The principles are a New Town-specific addition to the New Urban Agenda by UN Habitat and aim to prevent often made mistakes in New Town planning. The ten principles are:

1. Planning is an ongoing process
2. Plan for adaptivity
3. No New Town is an island
4. Use no cut and paste universal model
5. Embrace new ideas
6. Infrastructure and mobility for all, from the start
7. Use a blue-green infrastructure as the central framework
8. Incorporate local cultural heritage(s)
9. Combine top-down and bottom-up
10. New Towns need diversity

Several parties shortly reacted on these two presentations, such as Tim Beighton (Rendeavour) and Gareth Edwards (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill) who reinforced and commented on the planning guidelines within the Manual by referring to specific examples within their work in Africa and mentioned some of the practical obstacles they encountered. Femke van Noorloos, a social science researcher (University of Utrecht), stated that protecting the rights of pre-existing and surrounding populations is key, but not an easy task in the increasingly complex spaces where New Towns are built. Anteneh Tesfaye Tola (TU Delft) stated that the integration of local assets into the mainstream design and planning process, and the development of the necessary set of tools to do so will enable designers, planners and decision makers to generate cities as places of hope, equity and coexistence. Bert Smolders (ARCADIS) considers the inclusion of informality in New Town development as important, points out that there needs to be an awareness of cultural differences between our system and the system of Africa, and that we need to question how these cultural differences also reflect legislation. Javier Torner (UN Habitat) agreed with the ten principles but also pointed out that we should consider and think about how a New Town based on these ten principles is going to appear physically in the future and how we can influence decision makers that still don't know how to address it.



*Javier Torner (UN Habitat) reacting on the 'Ten Principles'*

## LESSONS FROM THE LABS

In this session, Michelle Provoost introduced why the topic of Urban Labs is discussed at this International New Town Day. The format of an Urban Lab, described as a rapid urban planning workshop, is more and more often used as a tool by international organisations to respond to growing urbanisation in the Global South. In these labs, international and local professionals from different urban disciplines are brought together to find innovative and convincing solutions for pressing urban planning issues. Within a limited amount of time, ideas and strategies are assembled for the concerned location so as to lead new developments in the desirable direction. Through the New Town Labs organised by INTI and the Urban Design & Planning Labs by UN Habitat, Dutch professionals have become closely involved with challenges concerning urbanization in Africa, Asia and South America.

With the session 'Lessons from the Labs' we aimed to professionalize the method of the Urban Labs by answering the question of how these Labs can best respond to current urbanization challenges from a methodological perspective.

In addition, we wanted to point towards the need for a long term commitment and continuity of Urban Labs and to discuss and highlight the potential of Urban Labs as a means to combine the aspects of development aid and the promotion of the Dutch Creative Design abroad.

In the four presentations given by Linda Vlassenrood, Simone Rots, Helena Casanova and Javier Torner, they all shared their personal and professional experiences from the several Urban Labs they participated in.

Vlassenrood talked about her extensive work in Shenzhen, for the municipal government of Guangming and addressed the question of how to make the Urban Lab more sustainable, more practical and efficient. Within the format of the Lab there are many varieties and every Lab should be customised according to its goal and specific question. Moreover, she highlighted the interdisciplinarity of the Urban Labs and considered this as an essential feature that leads to a lot of productive actions.

Simone Rots also emphasized the importance of interdisciplinarity within the cooperation of the Urban Lab she has been leading in Tatu City, working for a commercial client, Rendeavour. The basis in sociological, spatial and historical research is what distinguishes INTI's New Town Labs from similar formats. It is recognized by the client that the Lab brings in something the organisation itself couldn't deliver.

The presentation of Helena Casanova was enriched with her projects in Albania, which started with seed money by the SCI and recently reached the next phase in which their office opened a branch in Tirana. She emphasized the importance of continuity and personal engagement. In her opinion, to build up relations and trust by collaborating with local experts and stakeholders, is key to successful results.

Javier Torner focused on the Urban Labs organised by UN-Habitat. He pointed out the differences and varieties between the Labs in terms of research, clients and dissemination and the importance of recognizing that there is not just one model that fits all the interventions. However, he mentioned that there are some common aspects that can be applied, such as the principles, the methodologies and the tools that UN Habitat uses. "A project is not moving forward without addressing design, the legal framework, and the finance. And if you don't consider the political timing, the bureaucracy, the limitations that it entails, the possibilities that it brings you, and if you don't involve the private sector, you get stuck." These areas are key in how UN Habitat makes the labs sustainable. Moreover, Torner



*Session 'Lessons from the Labs', moderated by Christine de Baan*

addressed that UN Habitat has identified four key areas that have to be framed in a different way in order to continue a process after failure (due to political change for example). These four areas are Urban Planning & Climate Change, Urban Crisis, Urban Planning & Innovation, and Finance & Bankability.

Torner ended his presentation by talking about the next steps of UN Habitat and their role within the Urban Labs. He recognized the multitude of organisations working within the format of the Labs and asked the question: “How can we move collectively forward? We need a network of collaboration and create a charter.” UN Habitat also needs to be identified as a neutral broker, which means that they pursue the interest of the government and the interest of the communities. Moreover, UN Habitat can be the matchmaker between the public sector and private sector by focusing on the preparations of the projects and pushing innovation through.

In the following discussion, the participants were: Markus Appenzeller (MLA+), Martin Sobota (Cityförster), Tim Beighton (Rendezvous), Javier Torner (UN Habitat), Zineb Seghrouchni (Creative Industries Fund), and Jann de Waal (Topteam Creative Industry).

As a participant in many Labs both by UN Habitat as INTI, Markus Appenzeller recognized the differences between the Labs in which political leverage is an essential difference; while INTI-Labs are research based and deliver a quick and practical result, the Urban Labs by UN Habitat are aimed at gaining political support and require a longer term. But an engagement of 2 or even 5 years can prove not to be long enough. In this respect, the sudden politically motivated choices by the Creative Industries Fund to support different countries (‘focuslanden’) every 4-year period according to national cultural policy, is counterproductive. This goes at the expense of the voluntary work of the designers. From the audience it was added that longevity of the engagement with the Lab-locations also has an ethical reason: hit and run Labs are damaging and disrespectful to local stakeholders and collaborators.

Jann de Waal stated that the Labs are supported by cultural funding, but this can never be enough. The Labs are creating value, but for whom? If they create value for investment funds or banks, these are the parties that should support the Labs.



*Panel discussion with participants and sponsors of the Urban Labs with Markus Appenzeller (MLA+), Javier Torner (UN Habitat), Martin Sobota (Cityförster), Helena Casanova (Casanova+Hernandez architects), Jann de Waal (Topteam Creatieve Industrie), Zineb Seghrouchni (Creative Industries Fund), Linda Vlassenrood (INTI) en Simone Rots (INTI)*

## NEW TOWN HERITAGE: ARCHITECTURE & TRANSFORMATION

This session, moderated and introduced by architecture historian Jaapjan Berg (INTI), focused on the subject of New Town architecture and design heritage in the context of future transformations. A subject that has gained more attention over the recent years. This is due to two main reasons. Firstly, the New Towns and groeikernen are slowly but gradually reaching an age that makes the question what to do and how to deal with their built and general cultural heritage relevant and in some cases already urgent. Secondly, most of the western New Towns are everything but solid and static entities. Their growth, further development and adaptation to new insights in a healthy, vital and attractive (sub-)urbanity are nothing more than logic. This continuing development, that is similar to every other city, raises continuing questions of how and where additions and alterations in the built space need to be accommodated. The option of not reacting (passiveness) and/or solely promoting the conservation of the existing city is economically and, foremost, politically not a popular viewpoint.

So New Towns and groeikernen have little or no other option than to update and transform (at least larger parts of) their public spaces and greenery, their outdated business parks, to adapt the housing stock to a changing demographic, a need for more diversity and a better energy efficiency. The acceptance of the logical progress and adaption equally asks for carefulness and 'close reading' of the existing urban environment. In all these processes the 70's architecture is at stake. What are valid and reliable procedures and visions to recognize and classify this cultural heritage? Can we use the same strategies for protection as for architecture of the reconstruction era? Probably not, since the Post-65 New Towns are based on completely different designs and organisational concepts: small scale structures, labyrinthine fabrics, with less standardisation than in the previous period and moreover: a larger percentage of private ownership which means that the role of residents will necessarily be a lot more influential. Support from the public is necessary in protecting 70's architecture. But how do you engage with this non-professional audience?

In this session we looked at the topic of New Town heritage and transformation not so much from a policy-oriented perspective, but taking concrete plans and projects that deal with cultural heritage in the context of New Towns and groeikernen and architecture from the Post-65 period as a starting point for discussion between residents, designers, architects and institutions.



*Session 'New Town Heritage: Architecture & Residents, moderated by Jaap Jan Berg*

The session contained a diverse program of presentations. Simon Peart, who is the Council Conservation & Archaeology Manager of Milton Keynes, presented how Milton Keynes (UK) deals with heritage. He addressed a strategy that starts with getting heritage embedded into the planning system. The next step in this strategy is to create evidence. This includes setting up a statement of significance and selection criteria, and then questioning how to involve the community even more by encouraging investment and cultural tourism, encouraging community participation in heritage and design, and boost awareness of the New Town and aid education.

The given examples and the engaged process in Milton Keynes illustrated how important it is to create a clear and transparent process in which many layers of knowledge are integrated, meaning the full range of cultural heritage experts, politicians to inhabitants. They all need to be involved because they all have different emotions, ambitions and benefits from creating awareness and conserving cultural objects. The case of Milton Keynes also illustrates very well that a New Town can actually combine awareness for cultural heritage with continuing vitality and can even use cultural heritage to promote the city.

The next presentation was given by Willem Hermans. Hermans is one of the founders of 'Stichting Schatbewakers' ('treasure guards'), which is committed to unlocking and, together with third parties, actively bringing public attention to the recent Zoetermeer urban history in the field of architecture, urban design and landscape for upcoming new (re) construction tasks. The creation of awareness among the residents and local council is central to the foundation. They are trying to achieve this by organizing public talks, city walks and meetings with various professionals which has already resulted in more support from the local council.

The last presentation of the session was by Dafne Wiegers, architect at AHH architects (the office of Herman Hertzberger), about the transformation of a structuralist icon, the Centraal Beheer office in Apeldoorn, designed by Hertzberger himself almost half a century ago. This transformation gives a good example of how a monument can efficiently be transformed into innovative apartments with all kinds of amenities and still keep its own value and character. It is a prime example of integral sustainability through reuse. This was a good addition to this session because it was a concrete and visual example of how the transformation of a monument can be a success precisely because of its respectful approach to the original characteristics.

The three presentations were followed by a fruitful discussion. It started off with questioning the ways in which the earlier presented New Town Heritage Agenda could be useful in the presented practices. Is this agenda mainly a reminder of the value of this specific kind of heritage, is it a

document that can raise more political awareness and necessary funding, or is it a tool that can help putting things and people 'in motion' in the reality of New Town communities that are active and present? Or should it be a combination of these elements?

Within this search for awareness of heritage, an emotional aspect emerged as well. The fact that people who have lived in New Towns from the beginning have emotional attachment to places or buildings and have their own historic background, creates a different kind of awareness than for new inhabitants. This also results in a generational divide between the original inhabitants and younger generations. Moreover, it was clear that the presentation of Dafne Wiegiers was a good evidence of how transformation can be done and it created some optimism about the appreciation of New Towns. However, the participants of the panel discussion were also critical on several points and mentioned that heritage in general is still (or always) under pressure and contested. This tension obviously comes from the different and ever-changing ideas and attitude towards the balance between old/precious and new/vital. In either case the solution is never to be found in drastic or extreme positions (wither in favor of the old or the new) or unwavering attitudes. The answers that still need to be researched are necessarily based on the acceptance of a certain 'fluidity' between the poles of cultural heritage and preservation on the one hand and the equally needed continuation of change and renewal of the New Towns and groeikernen on the other hand.

Furthermore, it is of significance that the transformation of the particular Centraal Beheer-building in Apeldoorn is done by the same architect as who designed the building initially. This presence (in knowledge and experience) of an original designer will also become relevant and important for any steps in dealing with cultural heritage in New Towns and groeikernen. The availability of the original designers and planners who designed these cities is both a distinctive and crucial factor in finding a good balance in the future transformation of these cities, taking into account both their original architecture and their present users and inhabitants.



