



PERFECT (Planning for Environment and Resource eFFiciency in European Cities and Towns)

**Work-shadowing: City of Amsterdam visit to the Greater London Authority
11th – 12th June 2018**

Amsterdam and London are both rapidly growing metropolitan areas that face serious challenges to make use of the opportunities for growth in a sustainable way. Expert presentations on urban development in London and Amsterdam at the PERFECT PSC3 in Ferrara made clear that the incorporation of green infrastructure in planning is a vital condition for sustainable urban development.

The Amsterdam PERFECT delegates expected that Amsterdam planners could benefit from the experience of Greater London Authority (GLA) colleagues who work on strategic planning for green infrastructure in London and partnership working on the preparation of the environment strategy alongside the new London Plan. There was a specific interest in the integration of a 'Green Space Factor' and work on natural capital accounting, as the City of Amsterdam is now working on an all encompassing 'environmental plan' anticipating the introduction of a new national Environmental Planning Act.

Work-shadowing within the PERFECT framework creates a productive context for interaction and exchange of knowledge and thus can raise professional awareness on multiple benefits of green infrastructure in larger European metropolitan areas. On this basis the TCPA, the City of Amsterdam and the GLA prepared an Amsterdam work-shadowing visit to London from 11th- 12th June with a strong focus on shared challenges. The report of Wouter van der Veur, head city planner at the Planning and Sustainability Department of the City of Amsterdam, and Geertje Wijten, senior planner at the Planning and Sustainability Department of the City of Amsterdam, demonstrates which lessons were learned in what turned out to be a very fruitful and relevant visit.

11th June 2018

Delegates from City of Amsterdam and the TCPA New Communities Group to meet Mathew Frith, London Wildlife Trust at the Coal House Café
<http://www.woodberrywetlands.org.uk/>

In the morning we meet up with Mathew Frith from the London Wildlife Trust at the Coal House Café in the Woodbury Wetlands. We are joined by planners from the TCPA New Communities Group. Mathew Frith gave a presentation on the activities of the London Wildlife

Trust (LWT). The LWT aims to enlarge, protect and develop green infrastructure for its intrinsic value as well as for people to use. They do so by influencing developers, governments and other influential parties. Woodbury Down was build as a water reservoir, but in the last decades it turned into a fenced off wilderness. In the surrounding area there used to be rich estates, but they were replaced by large scale (social) housing after the second World War. In the nineties this area slowly turned into a no-go area. A plan was made to remodel Woodbury Down, including the building of three times as many dwellings, mostly high rise.

The LWF goal was to turn this wilderness into an attractive wetland, parallel to the redevelopment of the surrounding area. This was a struggle. It was calculated that the benefits of this green space could be as high as £2.8m per annum, but finding the money for improvements or maintenance remains a constant struggle. The main tool to influence developers and other parties is by talking. A lot can be achieved that way. For example, many developers have committed themselves to bringing back more natural value after the development has taken place. Green roofs are the main strategy. In the end it is all about good relationships, contacts and speaking each other's languages.

Woodbury Wetlands is run by volunteers. The café is an important source of income and 6 days a year the park is closed off for private use (mainly weddings). Investments into the park were financed mainly by private money (Lottery Fund). There is no money from the surrounding developments put into this park, even though many inhabitants benefit from a green view and recreational park on their doorstep. The Woodbury Wetlands are very different from the other green spaces in the vicinity (more nature oriented) and therefore complementary.

There is much discussion about the benefits and risks of the so-called natural capital accounting approach. Besides the difficulties of putting a monetary value on 'green', it should be acknowledged that nature and green infrastructure has its own intrinsic value. Or sometimes even an emotional value for people. You can't put a price on that. It also suggests that you could 'pay off' this value by just paying the price for a tree or piece of green in order to make other developments possible. Often it is not really a trade off, but an essential part of a liveable, attractive surrounding. The same discussion takes place in Amsterdam. We do believe that natural capital accounting can at least feed a good discussion and increase the awareness of the multiple benefits of green infrastructure.

Afternoon – Meeting of City of Amsterdam delegation with officers from the Town and Country Planning Association to learn about work of health and planning; Garden Cities; affordable housing and new communities.

In the afternoon we talked to Henry Smith and Julia Thrift from the TCPA. Founder of the TCPA at the end of the 19th century was Ebenezer Howard who also started the garden city movement. The TCPA is a charity with 13 employees and 1000 members. Through all sorts of campaigns they advise governments and other parties on spatial planning issues. They currently work on topics like land value capture, social affordable housing and long term stewardship of public space (e.g. community to manage green spaces). Julia tells us about the assignment TCPA got from the National Health Service to advise on health related to physical planning. Health and planning were two very different worlds. They are now starting to talk to and learn from each other. There are more opportunities now that public health moved back into local government 5 years ago. Therefore we can now focus more on specific local issues (e.g. obesity). Furthermore, the health sector is very used to monitoring goals, which the planning world is not. The goals we set together will now also be monitored. Planning in relation to food is something we want to learn more about. The main conclusions were published in a TCPA report which is shared with us. Some of the conclusions include:

- The form of the build environment can influence health;
- Places with strong communities are healthier - especially mental health issues occur through isolation;
- New technology helps.

We shared our knowledge on health and physical planning with Julia. A huge effort has been put into this topic in the past years due to an alderman in Amsterdam who showed particular interest in this field. Like in London, new coalitions were formed between the health organisations and the planning department. One important conclusion in Amsterdam is that high density environments with many facilities, which facilitates walking and cycling, turn out to be healthier than suburban areas. Amsterdam and TCPA exchange reports and publications including these Amsterdam guidelines to 'an active city' https://issuu.com/urhahn/docs/the_20active_20city_20-202017_2010

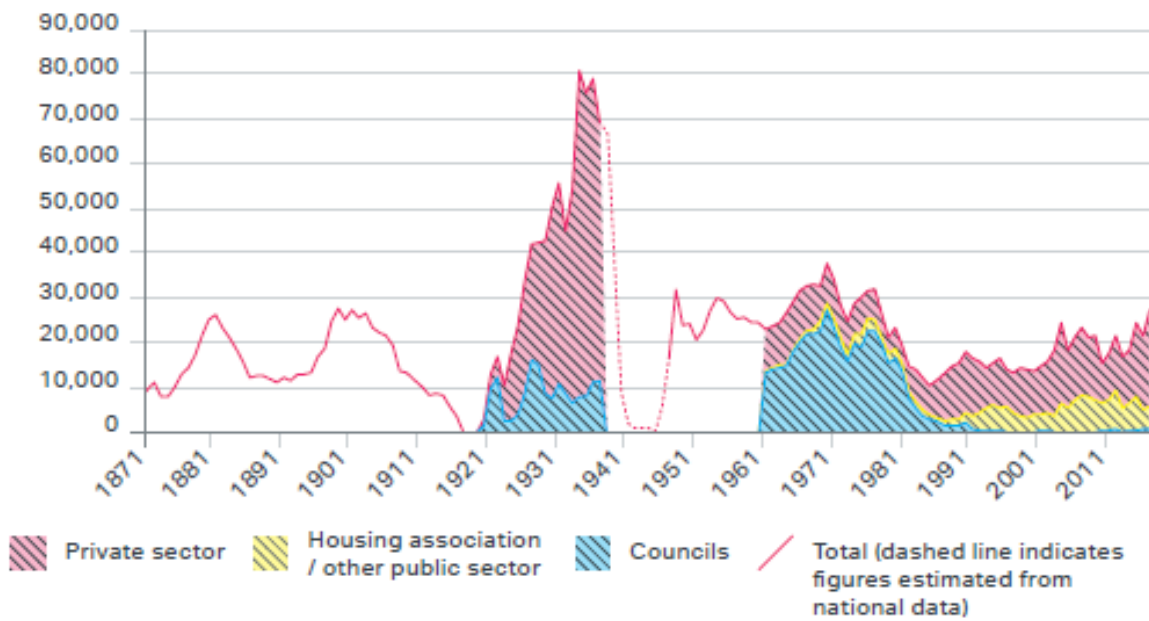
12th June 2018

Meeting of City of Amsterdam delegation with Rachael Hickman, Senior Area Manager, Housing and Land and Edward Richards, Senior Area Manager, Housing and Land at Greater London Authority offices at 169 Union Street, London, SE1 0LL.

In the morning we talked to Rachael Hickman and Edward Richards from the GLA about the number one priority of the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, in the London Plan: providing enough affordable housing. Compared to the rest of England, the median monthly market rent in London is sky high. Shared ownership is very common and the only way to find a house for especially young professionals and students. In most of the 32 boroughs there is still a good mix of housing for rich and poor. By drawing up housing plans boroughs are in the lead to provide enough affordable houses.

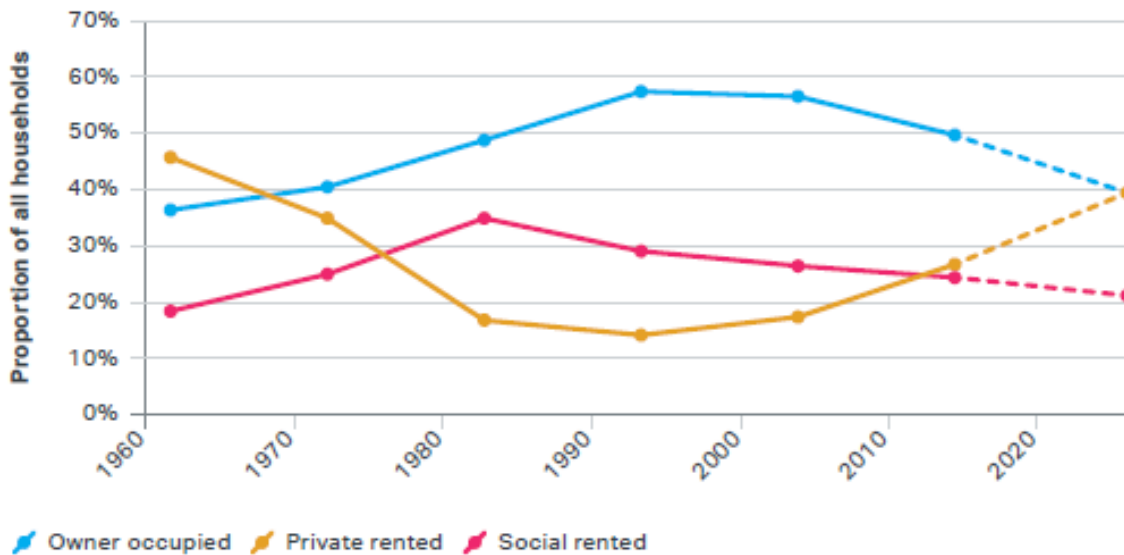
Between 1961 and 1991 the number of council houses (social housing provided by the councils) grew at a rapid pace. This trend was slowly turned around when Margaret Thatcher introduced the 'Right to Buy' in 1981. This is still in place today. About ten years ago the housing associations were cut by 63% which forced them into selling a proportion of their social housing stock. Today we see that private renting is still growing, house ownership is a little below 50%.

Figure 3.1: Estimated number of new homes built in Greater London, 1871 to 2017⁴³



London is growing with 70,000 new inhabitants every year. The London population is set to top 10 million within 25 years. Kahn is set to provide 35-50% genuinely affordable housing, by adding 116,000 affordable houses by 2022. The definition of 'affordable' is crucial. It used to be a very broad definition, from rental houses to shared home ownership. 80% of the average market price in the vicinity was regarded 'affordable', which in reality was still way too expensive for low income people. In the new definition affordable is linked to what you earn, instead of a certain percentage of the market value.

Figure 2.3: Decadal trend in household tenures, London 1961-2011, with PwC projection to 2025²⁴



How is the Mayor intending on achieving this goal? The London Plan is an important instrument to steer boroughs and developers in the right direction. The Mayor also has a fund of £4.3b to co-fund affordable housing. Councils and developers can apply for this money when the building of extra

affordable housing starts before 2022. Most of the land in London is in private hands, so developer-led schemes are important.

Like in New York, the Mayor requires that all publicly owned land contains at least 50% affordable housing. There are subsidies for social units as well as intermediate properties, like shared ownership. With approved providers a lot is based on trust. They can apply for a lump sum like £400m provided they build 12,000 affordable houses. All rules are explained in the funding prospectus 'Building homes for Londoners'.

Councils are also starting to set up their own development agencies.

The programme seems fairly straight forward and simple, there are however a few concerns. In the first place regarding the quality of housing that is provided, including for example green infrastructure. All focus is now on the large numbers. Also, many owners become private renters, it is difficult to check the quality of housing. This is also a target point of the Mayor.

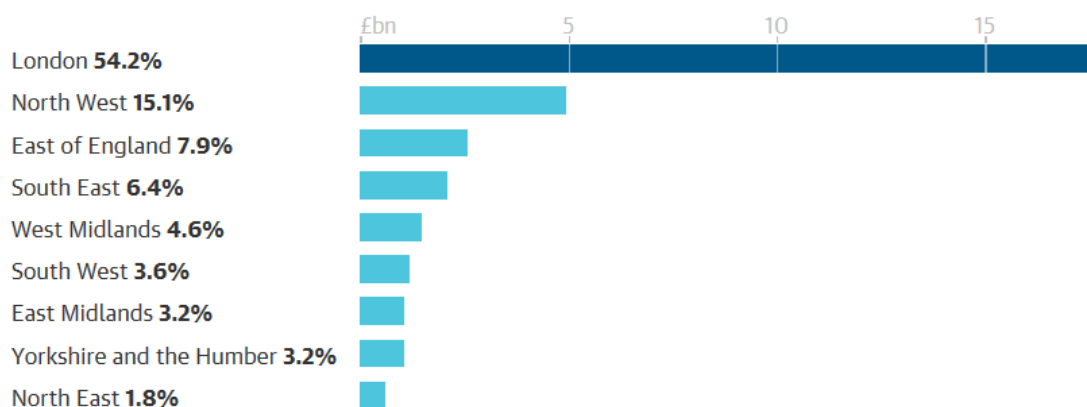
Most councils do not have the knowledge, capacities or the money to meet the Mayor's demands. GLA is working on a programme to train staff and share good practices. Although the GLA will support cooperation between boroughs in reality there is very little cross border coordination on housing programmes. There is very little steering on where affordable housing is realised.

There is also concern that the subsidy for developers (£28,000 per unit) turns out to be too low.

And finally, the right to buy is still national law. Renters get £100,000 pounds off the market value if they decide to buy. Fortunately, in today's reality the price will still be too high for most people.

Most of the money needed for infrastructure in London comes from the national government. Transport for London also successfully used borrowing to finance large infrastructure projects. Crossrail, a new east-west connection will open next year.

Annual spending on transport, 2016-17 onwards, £bn



Guardian graphic | Source: IPPR North analysis of HM Treasury and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority National Infrastructure and Construction Pipeline Spreadsheet

More info on the London Housing Strategy:

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018_lhs_london_housing_strategy.pdf

Affordable homes programme:

- Funding guide <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/homesforlondoners-affordablehomesprogrammefundingguidance.pdf>
- Draft estate regeneration guide <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/draftgoodpracticeestateregenerationguidede c16v2.pdf>
- Affordability and viability SPG https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ah_viability_spg_20170816.pdf
- Building Council Homes for Londoners https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/building_council_homes_for_londoners_16_may.pdf

2.00pm – Meeting of City of Amsterdam delegation with Peter Massini, Lead – Green Infrastructure, Development, Enterprise and Environment at Greater London Authority, City Hall, The Queens Walk, London SE1 2AA

The GLA was only installed 15 years ago. Before that there was no regional (or London scale) government. Thatcher got rid of regional London government. There are now 32 boroughs in London and a special entity called City of London. The boroughs have most planning power. Greater London has 8.6, inhabitants, which is expected to rise up to 12m in 2050. London is a compact city, 52% of the surface is green, of which 20% is publicly accessible. Little land is owned by the city, most is in private hands.

Working on the London green spaces

Many green spaces are very protected, mainly from a heritage and recreational point of view. The focus shifts a bit to climate adaptation and health now. The majority of parks are managed by the boroughs, but it is no legal requirement to develop or maintain these parks, like providing health services and education. There have been huge reductions on spending on the parks in the last decades. Parks are sometimes restored with money from the Lottery Fund. Restoring historic value of a green space is the main goal of these funds. It is, for example, very difficult to open up city parks and get rid of the fences around it.

So city parks are not actively redeveloped/ redesigned parallel to changing uses and demands. The London Plan is clear about the Green Belt, there will be no building there. However, the green and recreational function of the Green Belt is not actively improved. We may have one positive side effect of the Brexit: if we no longer receive funding for agriculture we will have to rethink the future of these areas around London. If there is less subsidy a more natural and recreational inclusive form of agriculture may be the way ahead.

The key question is how green spaces can be an integral part of the development of the city as a whole, instead of just protected spaces. We need a more holistic approach where green spaces can also help achieve other statutory tasks, like health, infrastructure, education, etc. The only way to be able to develop green spaces is if we manage to connect to key issues like air quality, the health agenda, and the zero carbon ambitions of the city. There is limited human capacity at the GLA (e.g. in the green and environmental strategy team there are three people). Therefore there is a lot of talking to try and influence policy making and to help forward some key innovative projects. One recent initiative is that of the London National Park City, introduced by **Daniel Raven-Ellison**. Many parties support the idea, including the Mayor. It is up to the foundation to attract private money and

put the idea/campaign into actions. The GLA is not actively involved and there is no public money put into it.

London Plan

The London Plan is the most powerful instrument on the level of 'Greater London'. The London Plan is not a statutory binding plan, however boroughs do have to 'meet the principles of the plan'. It took 1.5 years to write. The London Plan is mainly about new developments and little about the existing city. Apart from this plan and some implementation money, the Mayor has limited power to steer developments. There are no maps in the London Plan, that is up to the boroughs. Many of the stakeholders want more detail in the plan, and boroughs want less. In general, you could say that the process of making a London Plan and working with it, is more important than the product itself.

The number one priority of the Mayor in the London Plan is affordable housing. This is now very number driven, quality is not a big issue. And as the land is in private hands (and bought at a high price) the mayor is limited in 'demanding' anything extra. Things like green spaces might fall through to make affordable housing possible. We hope that in the 2nd term (if Kahn is reelected) there is more room for quality, including green.

We are getting better at cross-departmental working, for example with Transport for London (TfL) (which is not connected to the London Plan, but more or less independent). By connecting to mobility goals and air quality, we can achieve some of our green ambitions. Healthy streets are now an important topic to connect to. Moving away from polluted streets to investing in walkable pleasant public spaces. To realise healthier streets the Mayor is also very dependent on the boroughs. The transformation of Oxford Street to a healthy, pedestrianised street has been stopped by residents, as they are afraid detours might cause extra traffic in other places.

The congestion charge has helped stop the growth of traffic, however there are still traffic jams and the speed is very low. Buses are now the biggest problem, they all drive through the city center. Especially our tunnels are determining the capacity, which is limited and not build for growth. We need a totally new design of the public transport network.

Clever cities

The GLA is partner in a European project that could be of interest for PERFECT as well: The Horizon 2020 Clever Cities project. Hamburg is the leading the project and other partners include Madrid, Milan and ICLEI. The project is in its initial state and its main objective are the benefits of the integration of nature-based solutions.