

Summary

Spatial development is high on the political agenda. Until recently, the responsibility for the living environment quality belonged to the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM). Now other Ministries are expected to lend a hand. In practice, however, this is complex and the compartmentalisation difficult to overcome. With the addition of the spatial component to MIT¹ (MIRT²) and the introduction of regional agendas, a major step has been taken towards integrated spatial development. As follow-up to these changes, the Advisory Council for Transport, Public Works and Water Management (RVW) intends for this advisory report to provide recommendations on content and procedures to government bodies (central, provincial and municipal) that jointly have the task of bringing spatial development to fruition.

Motivation: quality of living environment is important

Mobility is an inseparable part of spatial development and contributes directly to the living environment quality. Quality of the living environment is a common goal of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management (V&W) and VROM.

Challenge: different perspectives

Spatial development that encompasses mobility as well as quality of the living environment is possible only if the joint project in question takes priority over the interests of the individual sectors. This is difficult in the case of mobility and spatial development because each of these areas is the responsibility of a different Ministry. As the creation of infrastructure often overlaps several areas, there are also differences in the scale of operations. Municipalities will consider mainly local interests, whereas the central government places mobility in a much wider framework. An additional challenge is that 'spatial quality' does not yet have a clear definition, making it difficult to quantify.

Objective: working on shared projects

The regional agendas prepared by the Dutch government and the regional areas are an excellent basis for working on shared projects. These agendas individually generate a variety of projects that are highly interrelated. It is only these projects that represent integrated spatial development. Execution of such projects could bring many benefits. The point is not one of slotting in a separate well-defined project, but collaborating on all the planning stages for those projects for which collaboration has been specified as essential in advance.

Scope: MIRT and regional agendas as starting point; supplementing Elverding recommendations

The MIRT and regional agendas together form the starting point for this advisory report. MIRT's ground rules refer to three stages of plan development: exploration, definition and completion. The advisory report of the Elverding Committee is focused mainly on speeding processes up. With its report, RVW focuses on supplementing the Elverding report, mainly in terms of improving the content of projects. As such, it deals with the definition stage. The entire policy cycle could be the subject of a follow-up advisory report to the one here.

Recommendation 1: Have the MIRT initiative embrace the interrelated regional projects on the regional agendas

The regional agendas refer to a number of projects for housing, infrastructure, the environment, etc. Of importance is to carry out projects that influence one another as a single initiative. An

¹ *Meerjarenprogramma Infrastructuur en Transport*, a long-term infrastructure and transport programme.

² *Meerjarenprogramma Infrastructuur, Ruimte en Transport*, a long-term infrastructure, space and transport programme.

example is 'Schaalsprong Almere', where projects for housing, infrastructure, the economy and the environment are being executed together. A joint approach to projects that influence one another is a prerequisite for addressing the area of living environment quality. In this context, it is important that the various government bodies start out by collaborating.

Recommendation 2: Amend the MIRT assessment framework to suit interrelated regional projects so that living environment becomes a fully recognised element

Interrelated regional projects are not included in the MIRT as an initiative until they have undergone an assessment against the Mobility Policy Document, the Spatial Policy Document and the structural visions for the regions and provinces. Checks on the spatial components of infrastructure projects are still too often in terms of slotting in and testing. VROM and V&W have to set up the reviewing framework in such a way that it also enables assessment of the common objective of living environment quality. The development of additional criteria for assessing living environment quality is a prerequisite for making this quality a core element of the joint plan.

Recommendation 3: Use the implementation strategy to formulate the joint regional projects and goals

Projects arising from the MIRT are selected and executed individually. The implementation strategy, agreed on at managerial level, protects the intrinsic interrelations and is necessary for deciding on priorities. This is the time for the various government bodies to decide whether the projects are individual sector projects, projects that overlap other disciplines managed as sectors, or interdisciplinary spatial development projects. Projects identified as development projects with a multidisciplinary specification undergo a full plan definition process.

Recommendation 4: Ensure better solutions by jointly producing quality designs

Traffic and urban development experts reason from different perspectives and fail to understand each other's motivations enough. This problem can be largely solved by combining the sector interests and working together to find a solution. There has to be a dialogue, with the spatial plan being an effective means to make the consequences of certain decisions quickly understandable. The idea is to inspire traffic experts to become involved, rather than just acting as reviewers. As a result, urban development experts and landscape designers have a better understanding of the safety and environmental limitations and can incorporate them more creatively in their designs.

Recommendation 5: Appoint a management team that operates like a project office or project developer, for each spatial development project

Projects identified as spatial development projects within a single development area have multiple problem owners. RVW advocates appointing a management team for each spatial development project. This team operates across sectors, like a project office or project developer does. The management team represents all policy disciplines involved and is responsible for the joint plan definition.

Recommendation 6: Examine funding options and learn from current experience

Current funding is an area of tension: the Dutch central government has more money than the regions; V&W has more money than VROM and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV). Given this situation, the financial responsibility for spatial development must also be properly defined. It is now up to the Ministries to take action. In this area, good experience has been gained from two projects: the Maastricht A2 motorway underpass and the A7 motorway stretch near Sneek.

Recommendation 7: Establish the implementation programme at managerial level

Joint plan definition results in an implementation programme, which includes agreements on the contributions required from the individual sectors for the common objective to be achieved. The interventions themselves are carried out by the policy sectors when they re-enter the picture for the completion stage. Of importance for the implementation programmes is that there is

managerial commitment by all the policy sectors involved. This has to be established by contracts, covenants or delegation orders, and through the division of powers and resources.

Recommendation 8: Weigh up in advance the pros and cons of the Transport Infrastructure (Planning Procedures) Act and the procedure in the Spatial Planning Act

Within the context of an integrated approach, it might be better in some cases to use the Spatial Planning Act as a framework, rather than the Transport Infrastructure (Planning Procedures) Act, since the former currently provides sufficient scope. RVW recommends the Ministries to re-evaluate which approach is the most suitable for each project individually.

Recommendation 9: Use guidelines, like the Revised Motorway Design Guideline, as a guideline and not as a standard

It still happens too often that a guideline is employed as a compulsory standard. By reflecting jointly on matters during the design stage, there is less need for an assessment using rigid criteria. Provided there are sound reasons for doing so, it has to be possible to deviate from a guideline if, for example, this benefits the living environment quality. Yet it still occurs too often that the Revised Motorway Design Guideline (NOA) is used as a compulsory standard. But it is precisely when the Guideline is truly used as a guideline during the design stage that the freedom to produce a widely evaluated integrated design can be guaranteed.