

# THE EXECUTION OF A REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN <sup>1)</sup>

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*The following article is based on a lecture given on July 5, 1957 by Mr. S. Herweijer, Director of the Government Service for Land and Water Use in the Netherlands, at the International Seminar on Regional Planning and Development held in the Hague from July 1 till 6, 1957.*

*The lecture deals with the different stages in the execution of a regional development plan.*

*The Editorial Committee.*

## INTRODUCTION

Land development plans in the Netherlands fall into two groups :

- a the development of new agricultural areas from inland lakes, the Zuyderzee and the North Sea ;
- b the entire reform of backward agricultural areas.

After a short description of these two groups a number of problems concerning the execution of regional agricultural development plans will be dealt with.

## THE LAND RECLAMATION WORKS

These works have been carried out for centuries. The area covered by these works is largely determined by the level of engineering sciences. In former centuries small areas were reclaimed ; at the end of the last century and the early part of this century larger areas up to 20.000 hectares were tackled. To-day areas of 40.000 to 50.000 hectares at a time are embanked, drained and provided with roads and water courses, farms, villages and towns. These new areas form economic, geographical and sociological units.

Formerly the sole aim was the getting of cultivated land. The works were carried out by and for account of private individuals. The government was in no way responsible, neither administratively nor financially. Villages and residential centres were established more or less spontaneously just like the settlement of farmers. Usually such an unorganized construction period was attended with a number of unsolved problems in the economic and administrative fields. Very often the first generation was partly ruined economically as well as socially and morally. A community was only formed by the second generation.

These extensive works are now executed by the state through 4 services :

- 1 the Board of the Zuyderzee Works (civil-technical works and works in the field of macro town and country planning),
- 2 the Zuyderzee polders Development and Colonization Authority (agricultural works and works in the field of micro town and country planning),

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- 3 the Service of Public lands (settlement and granting of land),
- 4 the Civil Affairs Service (temporary administration).

The services mentioned under 1 and 2 come under the Ministry of Transport and Public Works; the service mentioned under 3 under the Ministry of Finance and the service mentioned under 4 under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Director of the service mentioned under 1 is a civil-technical engineer; the Director of the services mentioned under 2, 3 and 4 – the same person – is an agricultural graduate; the last-named 3 services are of allied structure. The 4 services work closely together and are virtually one service divided in 4 sections with a decentralized administration.

#### THE LAND IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT WORKS

These works are of far more recent date than those mentioned before. In former centuries many partial improvements were carried out, such as road building and improvement of water control, but an allround improvement of backward agricultural rural structures is only of recent date. In the Netherlands this type of work has sprung from land consolidation, that is the re-allotment of fragmented agricultural holdings. In many agricultural areas agricultural land ownership and land use are much fragmented. This is due to inheritance, the absence of legal provisions for sale, etc. As a result of this and sometimes also through causes of a technical and sociological nature, many areas in the Netherlands are backward in their development. The demographic development is such that outside help is desirable to find or keep the right course. The fragmentation of agricultural holdings has been met by means of land consolidation. The execution is made possible by means of a Land consolidation Act.

The task of the Government Service for Land and Water Use in the Netherlands is to accelerate the development of the backward areas, of course in close and constant cooperation with many other bodies, provincial and municipal authorities and private organizations. This service is a part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

#### THE DETERMINATION OF AN ORDER OF PRIORITIES ON A NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND FINANCIAL BASIS

Though in the Netherlands serious attempts have been made, it appeared that it is not yet possible to determine on scientific grounds an order of priorities for the various types of government investments. The possible sectors include road building, harbour and canal construction, railway construction, housebuilding, regional land reclamation, regional land development, telecommunication, waterdefence and watersupply works, slum clearing, mining, regional industrial development, education, health service, vocational guidance, schooling. In the last few years more and more investigations have been made in this field.

The difficulties are mainly caused by the fact that it is nearly impossible to express in figures the economic, social and mental significance of the so-called infra-structural investments. Even more difficult it is to do so for the social overhead capital. For the time being the obvious way would be to

analyse the separate categories for :

- a cost-benefit ratio ;
- b imput-output ;
- c labour effect ;
- d import-export effect ;
- e secondary economic effect ;
- f social, human and political effect.

The result will be a combination of calculation and description. The choice is heavily affected by the economic, social, demographical and political structure of a country. Virtually it will come down to the weight assessed to each of the factors a to f. One factor may be decisive. The increase of the population in the Netherlands by 100.000 persons per annum (in 1947 : 10 m, in 1957 : 11 m) gives f.i. major priority to housebuilding.

The very big differences in prosperity between the existing agricultural areas in the Netherlands compell the government to execute an active regional land development program. The Government Service for Land and Water Use has divided the Netherlands into 750 districts. For each district an investigation has been made into a number of technical, economic and social factors. Further, it has been ascertained what measures are required in each individual district to accelerate economic development. On account of the results obtained, the Service tries to determine regional urgency. The policy-making Central Committee for Land and Water Use, on which are represented 5 ministries (Finance, Social Affairs, Public Works, Town and Country Planning and Home Affairs) and the 6 organizations of farmers and farm labourers, will take the final decision.

The investigations are nearly completed and the results of the above-mentioned survey and the decisions made will be published at the end of 1958.

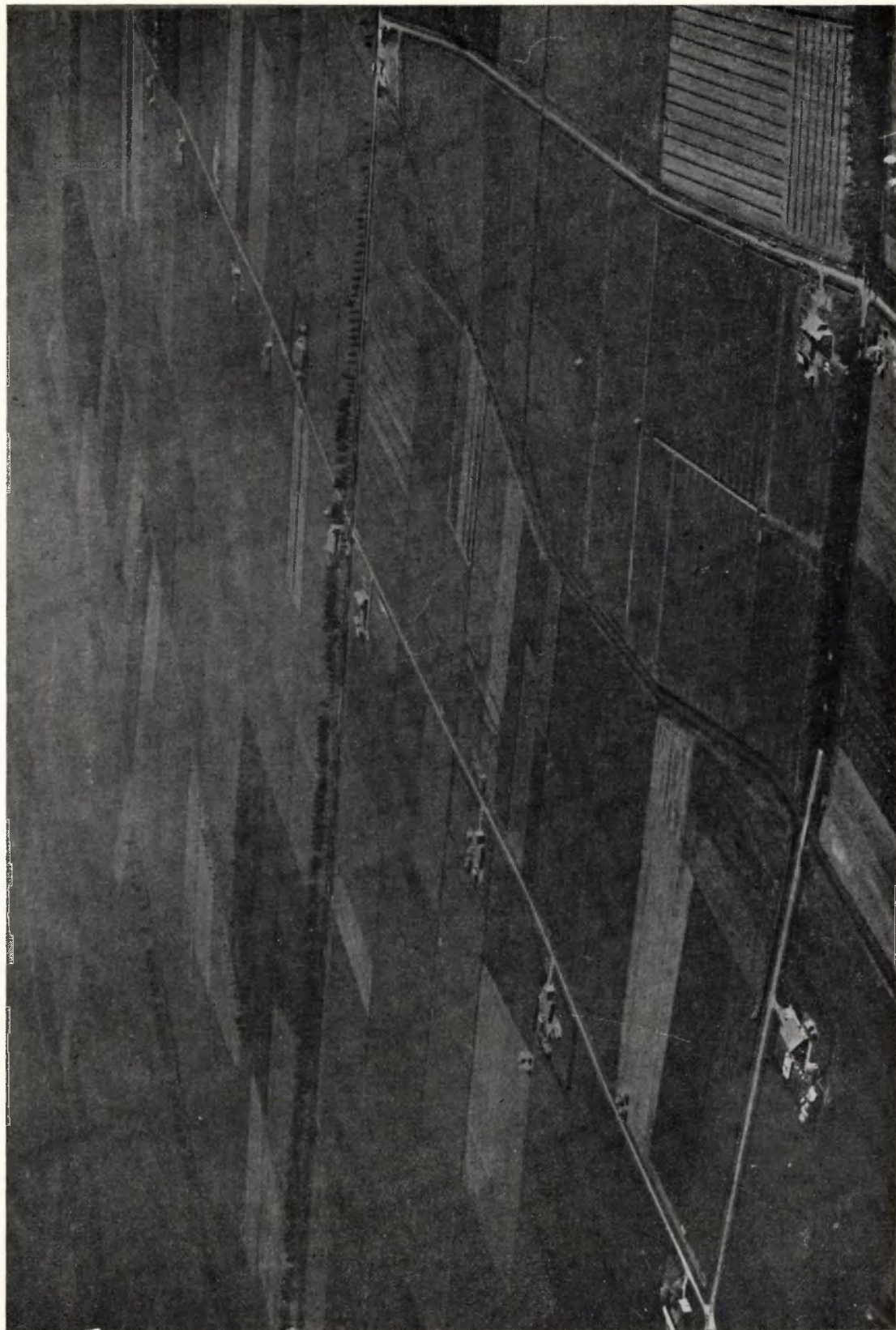
#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAFT PLAN (FIRST STAGE)

The drawing up of the first stage of a development plan for a given agricultural area of approximately 10.000 hectares takes a planning team from 3 to 5 years. This is the so-called "avant project", the draft plan.

In a country where a certain economic policy is conducted, the prosperity of the farming districts is determined by the way in which soil, labour and capital cooperate. This cooperation depends, among other things, on the following three conditions :

##### *a The general conditions for production*

These are the conditions for production that can hardly be improved, if at all, by the farmer and the market gardener individually, but only by concerted action.



PART OF THE RECONSTRUCTED AREA "MAAS AND WAAL-WEST" IN THE RIVER DISTRICT OF THE NETHERLANDS. Photograph: K.L.M. Aero-carto

A few examples :

- 1 farm size,
- 2 employment,
- 3 water conservancy in a wider sense,
- 4 re-allocation and opening-up in a wider sense,
- 5 quality of the soil in a wider sense,
- 6 leasehold relations and the rental and soil price control,
- 7 public utility provisions (water, electricity, telephone).

*b The conditions for production on the individual holding*

These are the conditions that can be changed, on the whole, by the farmers and the market-gardeners themselves.

A few examples :

- 1 the production plan,
- 2 manuring,
- 3 water conservancy on a small scale,
- 4 soil improvement on a small scale,
- 5 the buildings (farm and market-garden),
- 6 implements,
- 7 financing.

*c The social and mental conditions*

These could be defined as the conditions that have a direct influence on the way of living and the attitude towards life of the farmers and the market-gardeners, as well as their wives and families.

A few samples :

- 1 character, skill, progressive spirit and commercial-mindedness,
- 2 the influence of advise and education,
- 3 the influence of agricultural and social organizations,
- 4 the influence of religion and spiritual life,
- 5 the influence of tradition as regards the right of inheritance and the distribution of estate,
- 6 the influence of the residential environment and the home itself.

All the above-mentioned conditions together determine the structure and the prosperity of the country-side. The various groups, into which these conditions have been classed, influence each other, but the conditions within each group are also interrelated.

It is possible to draft a development plan on account of a critical analysis of the above-mentioned factors. Several experts should cooperate, each for his own section. It is recommendable to have several surveys made for the separate factors by specialized research institutes and engineering bureaux, for instance, a sociographic and economic survey, soil survey, existing road and water survey, sociological survey, etc. During this period of research two aspects require much attention :

First an extensive research in which the population is systematically included. This greatly promotes the mental preparation of the population, who have to benefit by the new possibilities in course of time. Secondly the population should be included in the research so as to prevent the resistance of the population to the projects. Testing and response panels are essential. In this way the plan will become their own plan.

#### THE DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO CARRY OUT THE PLAN (SECOND STAGE)

In the Netherlands this decision has two sides, namely : the government and the region.

The draft plan with an estimate of costs and benefits and a proposal for the apportionment of the costs between government and region is discussed by the before-mentioned Central Committee for Land and Water Use. This Committee also weighs against each other controversial points in the field of physical planning.

When the Committee approves of the plan, it is explained in the region. At several meetings to which all owners and tenants are invited by letter, the plan is explained and deposited for inspection. After some months it is put to the vote. If the majority of the owners or the owners of more than 50 % of the area approve of the plan, it will be carried out.

#### THE DETAILING OF THE PLAN (THIRD STAGE)

In this stage the plans are worked out. For this purpose an executive committee, composed of persons of the region, is set up. Technicians, agriculturists and economists, if present, draw up alternative plans for separate parts in order to obtain an optimum economic and social result and to teach the members of the executive committee to consider various solutions. This method promotes self-activity and helps to make a better choice.

#### THE EXECUTION OF THE PLAN (FOURTH STAGE)

In the execution of the plan several aspects receive attention :

##### *a Planning and budgeting*

For a good execution accurate planning and budgeting are essential. The way of execution depends on the economic position of the country (foreign exchange capacity), the labour situation and the number, type and quality of technicians. The execution may be mechanized, whether or not with foreign

material, etc. A continuous execution is necessary because then the technical machinery can work on without jerks, which promotes teamspirit. It is also a fact that the population becomes rightly displeased at interrupted execution and that interrupted execution disorganizes the productive machinery and causes unnecessary loss of interest as other completed works usually are not yet remunerative.

*b The specification and execution of technical plans*

The Government Service for Land and Water Use usually charges a Consultant Engineering Bureau with the technical working out and the budgeting of the separate detailed plans. The Government Service can then remain of a smaller size, which is desirable for reasons of conduct, teamspirit and policy. Further, the working out of such plans by private industrial life promotes the diversity in the approach of problems and, consequently, the deepening of insight.

The works are carried out by contractors (from 60 to 80%) and on a management basis by some Dutch contracting companies (from 40 to 20%). The interaction of working on a tender basis and on a management basis greatly promotes efficiency.

*c Attendant measures in the economic, social, mental and spiritual fields*

The management of the farms must be adapted to the new conditions within a period of 5 to 10 years. In the modern land development areas in the Netherlands farms are drastically changed in size and structure. Farm-economic and technical advisory work is necessary to promote adaptability.

The education should also pay attention to this. In areas with many small holdings an industrialization programme combined with technical schools and vocational guidance should be prepared. The improvement of the housing conditions and scattered house-building require special advisory work concerning the mentality of the farmers and the living customs. The changed conditions in a region may also injure the religious feelings of the population, especially when certain forms of recreation and care of health (swimming) are introduced. In regions where many dike-breaks have occurred and where some ideas of fatality are prevailing with religious feelings adapted to them, careful mental influencing is necessary if the completed works are not to be neglected afterwards. For this purpose the sociological cultural patterns should be known. On this basis a social plan can be drawn up and executed. Unfortunately, the significance of these attendant measures in the mental and spiritual fields is still too often underrated.

In the Netherlands the execution of such works is as important as the execution of technical and economic works. This mental influencing of the farmers and their families is not done by the government but by and under the responsibility of the agricultural organizations, and the social, religious and humanitarian organs. The coaching of such a comprehensive advisory programme requires special provisions.

Owing to these causes, to which may be added the time required for preparations mentioned before, economists and politicians are apt to overestimate the rapidity with which a public works policy can meet any development of economic unemployment.

## CONCLUSION

Programming and planning are very essential parts of the execution of a regional development plan. At first the technical problems predominated, but attention is more and more given to economic problems, those of town and country planning and the sociological aspects. The economic approach to the problems, relating both to the whole and the parts, is still insufficiently treated on a scientific basis.

There is, generally, a discrepancy between the number of technicians and economists responsible for the planning of the works; the number of economists being too small. The great lack of pure economists will necessitate the economic training of agriculturists at the Agricultural University at Wageningen in the coming years.