



Annual Plan 2017

Uitgave

Platform31
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Platform31

Platform31 monitors **trends** in the city and region. We **connect** policy, practice and research to arrive at an **approach** with which administrators, policy-makers and executive agencies can set about resolving topical issues, **Everyone benefits** from the results.

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In this Annual Plan, we examine the trends which form the basis of our projects and programmes. We conduct those projects in association with our partners, which include government authorities, private sector companies and societal organisations. Together, we seek innovative and effective solutions to the challenges of today and tomorrow. This is the strength of the Platform31 network: the forerunners arrive at new insights, everyone benefits from the results.

We are also alert to problems which demand more urgent solutions. The world is constantly changing. Platform31 will change with it as necessary.

I hope we can rely on your support.

Hamit Karakus

Executive Director, Platform31

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Platform31 identifies socio-economic trends, formulating an appropriate response to the challenges they create. In 2017 our focus is on four main trends, as described in this Annual Plan. We include a selection of the ongoing projects in each.

Trend 1: Widening social and spatial differences

The distance between various social groups continues to grow in terms of income, education and employment opportunity. Differences can be seen between urban neighbourhoods, between the inner city and the peripheral districts, and between the city and the rural regions.

Spatial diversity creates freedom of choice and is therefore a good thing. When differences become too great, however, there can be serious consequences. Marked inequality between groups and regions threatens the economic vitality of the city as well as the liveability of neighbourhoods and villages.

In many cities, the recent upturn of the housing market has reinforced the processes of social division. The city centre is a popular location and prices here tend to be high. People in the lower income groups are forced into the less desirable neighbourhoods. The process also accounts for population shrinkage in former growth regions and in peripheral districts.

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There are marked health differences between the wealthy and less wealthy neighbourhoods. There are also major differences in terms of average life expectancy.

Vulnerable people need support and assistance. Many have been living in poverty for years and see little prospect of change. The poorer urban districts tend to attract refugees, newcomers from the former Eastern bloc, people with psychological or addiction problems, and those whom we euphemistically describe as 'confused'. Their presence can test the tolerance of existing residents. Concerted efforts by a wide range of actors are needed to resolve the social and economic challenges.

Challenges

1a Improving housing and welfare services at neighbourhood level

The elderly now live in their own homes for longer. The target groups for health and welfare services are many and various: people who need constant care and those who are mentally or physically infirm are no longer placed in residential care but are encouraged to live in the community, often in the underprivileged neighbourhoods. How should

housing corporations and welfare organisations work together to provide the necessary support? How can they improve housing and welfare services at neighbourhood level?

Platform31 has initiated experiments at the local, neighbourhood level to arrive at new and better solutions. We also devote attention to organisation and funding.

1b Resolving inequality and segregation

The distance between social groups – in terms of income, education, health and employment opportunity – has increased in recent years. We must ensure that people do not fall into unmanageable debt, whereby poverty becomes a ‘legacy’ handed down from one generation to the next.

Many neighbourhoods have a population made up of scores of different nationalities. It often seems that they are all living in different worlds with little or no interaction. This can create social tensions. How can we avoid segregation, mistrust and radicalisation? How can we resolve the unrest caused by the arrival of refugees? How do we heal the social divisions?

Do housing associations and local authorities enjoy adequate opportunity to influence the demographics of a neighbourhood to avoid the problems associated with a lack of social diversity? What is the role of developers and investors? Platform31 is helping to develop new approaches. We identify best practices and organise knowledge-sharing events.

1c A brighter future for cities and regions

If a city is to function well, attention must be devoted to socio-economic and spatial aspects in combination. Mixed neighbourhoods, a wide range of shops, attractive parks, good schools and sports clubs close at hand will encourage social interaction between the various groups. Smart, adaptive cities are at the forefront of new technology. They have been quick to pursue climate adaptation and implement the energy transition. Diversity, (self-) organisation and the new forms of collaboration between government and the general public offer new prospects for urban regeneration.

In regions with a shrinking population, public amenities no longer enjoy the level of support they need to remain viable. In semi-urban and suburban districts, including some former expansion zones, we can already see severe decline. Platform31 is exploring ways in which these areas can recover and maintain their vitality.

Example projects

Project	Description
Shrinkage, youth migration and the rural areas	Young people are leaving the rural areas due to lack of employment opportunity, often due to automation. We have begun experiments intended to improve young people’s prospects on the local and regional employment market.
From complete city to complete region	The future of our cities is very much a product of their position in the region. In this project, we offer cities and regions inspiration as they strive for complementarity, and we offer advice on cross-border cooperation.
Big data and health	Big data creates many new opportunities, not least in the health domain. In this project, we examine how big data can help to prevent or alleviate health risks.

Trend 2: Society is changing faster than the city

Our cities are changing by the day. So is society, but at a different rate. The disparity calls for flexible, adaptive cities. Demand for homes, offices, retail premises and commercial property will be very different in twenty or thirty years' time. Vacancy rates are now high. Some properties, but by no means all, lend themselves to repurposing. Demand and supply are not always in the same location: there can be a shortage in one area and a surplus in another. We must find the balance between long-term security and flexibility.

Demand for housing can only rise. Now that market recovery can be seen in most parts of the country, we need policy at the local and regional level, setting out where new housing is to be created and how: newbuild, transformation or a combination of the two. This calls for cooperation between the government and the market, as well as between local and regional authorities.

To create an attractive climate for both businesses and residents, long-term vitality must be restored, especially in the city centres. Bankruptcies and high vacancy rates have left their mark on the high street and in the traditional retail clusters. Trends such as population ageing and the growing popularity of online shopping make it essential to plan for the future. Cities must continue to develop if they are to meet the wishes and requirements of their residents and other users. It is time to develop an integrated vision of the city centre of the future, its functions and structures. Vacant retail premises offer new opportunities to introduce (or restore) different functions – housing, business and leisure – into the very heart of the city.

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Challenges

2a Urban development

Official prognoses (produced by Statistics Netherlands and ABF Research) indicate that housing demand will rise significantly over the next few decades. The situation is not dissimilar to that of the late 1980s, when the government announced a major urban expansion and housebuilding programme. Various types of dwelling, some permanent and some temporary, must be created to meet the needs of diverse target groups. Flexible, innovative solutions are required because it is not yet clear whether we shall need half a million new homes or three times as many. National, regional and local visions should be developed, with effective coordination between the various levels. In the more popular cities, demand for housing will continue to grow. Elsewhere, we shall see shrinkage and overcapacity. With such significant regional differences, there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Each situation requires a tailor-made

response. In addition, there is the question of 'appropriate accommodation'. Not all properties owned and let by the housing corporations meet the target group's requirements. Platform31 actively promotes a discussion about urban development between the various stakeholders.

The transformation and repurposing of vacant buildings is one way in which future requirements can be met. Offices, retail premises and even residential care homes can be converted into housing. We must also consider technological development and changing mobility patterns. How will they affect the spatial development of our cities and regions? These questions – and many others – form the basis of a forthcoming Platform31 programme which will complement ongoing local and regional initiatives.

2b Cities and neighbourhoods 2.0

The focused ‘neighbourhood approach’ is no longer applied so vigorously, but this is not because all social and physical problems have been solved. Platform31 identifies neighbourhoods which continue to experience serious problems and examines what remains to be done. We distinguish between general, neighbourhood-wide problems and those which are more localised: energy efficiency in the home, delays in repurposing vacant property, or social problems such as poverty, nuisance neighbours, isolation, loneliness and radicalisation. New problems can be seen in some locations, such as nuisance caused by Airbnb rentals and ‘youthful exuberance’ in the student cities. Do we now need a new Neighbourhood Approach or an Urban Renewal 2.0 programme? If so, what form should it take?

2c Maintaining the vitality of city centres

A city’s centre defines its character. It is the face and the lifeblood of the city as a whole. City centres now require an approach which goes beyond tackling vacant retail premises. A vital inner city should be more than a shopping centre. It should be a place in which people live, work, study and spend their leisure time. Platform31 wishes to abandon the sectoral approach with its strong divisions between policy domains. We shall take a wider view, joining forces with diverse partners to restore the vitality of our city centres. The way in which those centres function varies from one part of the Netherlands to another, and often depends on the nature of the city concerned. The issues to be addressed are also extremely diverse. Platform31 will work to professionalise cooperation to enhance complementarity and develop more effective policy based on knowledge from ‘smart’ urban development projects.

Example projects

Project	Description
Transformation and repurposing: the role of social real estate	Offices, shops, commercial premises, schools and churches are standing vacant for longer. The problem is even more acute in the Netherlands than in the neighbouring countries. This project promotes repurposing and reuse.
New concepts for city centres	The city centre is more than a cluster of (vacant) shops. In a ‘living lab’ project, we are developing new business models, functions and services for the city centres. We support a politically neutral process of co-creation in pursuit of new and promising concepts.
Urbanisation	According to the prognoses, between 300,000 and 1.6 million new homes will be required by 2040. This demands a construction volume approaching that of the ‘Vinex’ expansion programme of thirty years ago. Housing is not the only function that demands space. We must find appropriate locations for new residential development, but we must also pursue intensification, mixed usage, repurposing, and greater flexibility of buildings.

Trend 3: Towards a sustainable society and sustainable growth

The transition to a more sustainable society is no longer confined to the aspects of climate and energy. It is also a matter of ensuring long-term 'prosperity' in the broadest sense: economic prosperity (measured in GDP), health, wellbeing, quality of life, happiness and inclusivity, education, the circular economy, smart cities and mobility, the housing market and an employment market that is constantly in balance. A growing number of companies now regard sustainable processes, products and services as crucial to their continuity.

Globalisation and technological developments such as automation have raised the bar. Employees and jobseekers must offer a higher level of knowledge and they must be more flexible. We see the emergence of new professions, while traditional occupations are changing or disappearing altogether. For people without skills and qualifications, it is becoming ever more difficult to find and retain employment. Even some skilled artisans see their livelihood at risk. But there are also new opportunities. How should we respond?

The economic, social and cultural differences between the regions are becoming more marked. Now that we have emerged from the economic crisis, it is time for an action programme to stimulate regional economic development. The regions must be given new impetus.

The vast majority of buildings in the Netherlands fail to meet modern standards of energy efficiency. This applies equally to owner-occupied homes, the rental stock managed by corporations and investors, offices, retail premises and other types of commercial property. Nevertheless, ninety per cent of these buildings will still be standing in 2050. The renovation programme must be fast-tracked, with attention devoted to 'circular procurement'.

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Challenges

3a Social opportunities based on work and employment

Temporary contracts of employment are now more common, while many people have opted for self-employment. Automation has changed the employment prospects of many people, including skilled professionals. Unemployment, whether short-term or long-term, remains a problem. The 'working poor' are increasing in number, as are those who must hold down two or more jobs just to make ends meet. For the increasing number of older people claiming unemployment benefits, the chances of finding a job are low. The same applies to those in regions of demographic and economic shrinkage, regardless of age.

There are varying opinions regarding the impact of globalisation, flexibilisation and automation on employment opportunity. Similarly, there are varying opinions about what to do about the increasing number of 'NEETs' (people not in employment, education or training). Platform31 wishes to establish the facts. We hope to develop smart, innovative strategies to mobilise the non-working population. We will help to increase the organisational ability of private sector companies, government authorities and societal organisations.

3b Strengthening the regional economy

We now see economic recovery, but it is slow. The high unemployment rate (by Dutch standards) suggests that instruments at the macro-level are no longer having the desired effect. In a globalising economy, the Netherlands cannot compete on the basis of low wages. Regional cooperation by all parties, incentives for start-ups, innovation in the small and medium-sized enterprise sector and investment in creating an attractive business climate are far more likely to prove effective.

In a knowledge-based economy, the (self-) organising ability of society is particularly important. Collaboration must be evident at all levels: local, regional and supraregional. As noted by the Study Group on Public Governance in its 2016 report *Maak verschil* ('Make the difference'), new forms of regional cooperation which bring together public sector authorities, private sector companies and knowledge institutes are required. Platform31 researches new forms of cooperation intended

to strengthen the regional economy and uses its results as input for further experiments.

3c Good, flexible housing without an ecological footprint

Many residential buildings in the Netherlands are technically sound but are not energy-efficient. Neither do they meet modern requirements in terms of comfort, care, space and flexibility. Many are the result of development processes which account for excessive use of materials and produce significant waste flows. How can we create better, affordable and sustainable housing while reducing the ecological footprint? We must accelerate progress towards energy and resource efficiency if we are to meet the international agreements. Current legislation and instruments stand in the way, based as they are on an overly sectoral approach. Platform31 is seeking ways in which to fast-track the necessary transitions. Closer cooperation, for instance, is likely to bring quicker results.

Example projects

Project	Description
Towards an innovative regional employment policy	Regional employment policy must encourage both innovation and participation. Platform31 is conducting a study to support an experiment intended to help the regions develop such a policy.
Helping newcomers into work	Newcomers, including refugees, will integrate more quickly and completely if they have some purposeful activity which allows them to contribute to Dutch society. Platform31 is investigating how local authorities help this group to find gainful employment and is following refugees who have started their own business (or intend to do so).
Renovation drive	The least sustainable dwellings in the Netherlands are in private ownership. They are poorly maintained, are not wheelchair accessible, or are far from energy-efficient. Platform31 is developing standard solutions for the renovation of the most common types of property. This reduces costs and makes the upgrade a more attractive proposition for private owners.

Trend 4: New players and rules are changing the game

At one time, all sectors and domains were subject to rigid top-down regulation by the government, and notably the local authority. That is no longer the case. The government is now just one many actors. Results depend on the input of housing corporations, investors, health and welfare providers, local residents and a growing field of new parties. They may be active at the very local, neighbourhood level, at the international level, or anywhere in between. The new governance structure means that the entire game has changed; there are different players, different rules and a different field of play. Nowhere is this better illustrated than by the *Omgevingswet* (Environmental Planning Act), due to come into force in 2018. It combines and simplifies existing environmental and spatial planning legislation. It provides various instruments and resources, but it also forces public sector authorities to adopt an entirely new approach. It can help us all to play the game better.

In the social domain, central government has opted to transfer many rights and responsibilities to the local level. There has been a process of decentralisation. Many cities now have multidisciplinary social welfare teams working at neighbourhood level. In some cases, the relevant authorities wish to gauge the effectiveness of this approach and plan its future development. It is time to take the next step in the transition to a more integrated, demand-led method of working which encourages people to be more self-reliant. Ways of monitoring and evaluation the new approach must be found, not only for the purposes of validation but to identify opportunities for improvement.

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There are many sectors in which society at large is being given more responsibility. The government has relaxed its grip on the housing market and the housing corporations are once again focusing on their 'core business'. As a result, we see many projects and initiatives by (groups of) engaged citizens: shared allotments, communal DIY workshops, small-scale housing cooperatives and 'bottom-up' area management. Volunteers also make a significant contribution to sports and social clubs. What can we learn from the 'energetic society' in terms of innovative citizenship?

The owner-occupied housing market is flourishing once again, albeit with significant regional differences. Institutional investors have opted to focus on the top end of the rental market. Countless new players have moved in to fill the void at the bottom of the market, offering cheap and readily available rental accommodation. However, there has been little investment in the mid-segment. There remains a severe shortage of affordable units offering reasonable quality.

The new situation demands a new attitude on the part of the traditional parties. They must make way for new actors and new initiatives. The political mandate no longer automatically allows four years 'in power', with the ability to impose top-down control. Nevertheless, not everyone in society is willing or able to contribute to the same degree. If the inactive citizens live in the same neighbourhood as the engaged citizens, there will inevitably be challenges. The government now encourages people to live in their own homes for as long as possible: it is promoting care in the community, even for those with complex care requirements. This demands effective, flexible and preventive support. It demands adaptations in the home and adequate facilities in the neighbourhood. It demands cooperation between various actors at both the local and regional level.

Challenges

4a Modern governance involving the citizen

There are still distinct dividing lines between the social, physical and spatial domains. All will benefit from better connections with each other. The new Environmental Planning Act creates both challenges and opportunities. It calls for significant changes to current practice. Every province, municipality and water management authority must decide how it is to implement the Act in practice.

Platform31 is working to create a new professionalism among these authorities with a view to creating logical connections and far greater coordination between both policy domains and levels of government. We do so by various means, including communities of practice, knowledge-sharing meetings and pilot projects. The process will demand time, a proactive attitude and the ability to appreciate other positions and points of view. There must be a willingness to adopt new working practices and to connect the informal and formal circuits. The relationship between government and the engaged citizen will create a more diverse democracy. How can government authorities reconcile the responsibility they give to some citizens with the principles of democracy and equal treatment? The same issue must be addressed in terms of regional cooperation.

Platform31 will monitor and evaluate new approaches. How do the members of a coalition, including the various levels of government, structure and manage their joint activities? Sometimes, new developments will call for new policy, instruments and other arrangements. The 'learning' government will be willing to experiment. Inspiring best practices, including those developed in other countries, will help to shape the transformation.

4b Promoting self-reliance

How can local authorities, neighbourhood teams, housing corporations and informal networks increase the citizen's own strength and self-reliance? An increasing number of people are opting to start a business, build their own home, restore an old building, generate their own electricity or tend a communal allotment. Seniors are living in their own homes for longer. At the same time, there are vulnerable citizens who need support and assistance. How can we promote self-reliance and prevent social isolation, stress and deprivation? How can people who rent their homes be given greater influence in the maintenance of the building and its surroundings? Platform31 supports local initiatives in various ways, such as organising workshops and knowledge-sharing meetings.

4c Government, market and societal midfield must intensify their cooperation

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The traditional arrangement is for developers to build property for owner-occupation, housing corporations to let inexpensive social housing, while institutional investors own and manage the more expensive rental properties. But who is serving the mid-segment? Some people do not qualify for social housing and cannot (yet) afford to buy their own home. To whom can they turn?

The housing market is anything but flexible. Affordable homes are few and far between. Something must be done, but what? The housing corporations are reverting to their core business of providing social housing. What effect will this have? There are significant differences between the corporations and their stock. Demand and supply are unevenly distributed and it is unclear whether this situation can be resolved, even with a regional

approach. What role can local authorities play in stimulating the housing market? With its broad network, Platform31 is ideally placed to

promote and support cooperation between public sector authorities and the market parties.

Example projects

Project	Description
Implementation of new legislation	The new <i>Omgevingswet</i> (Environmental Planning Act) represents the most far-reaching reform of legislation in the physical domain ever undertaken. Platform31 organises various meetings and workshops to consider all aspects of its implementation and to prepare public sector authorities for their new role.
From policy department to kitchen table... and back	The decentralisation of tasks and responsibilities in the social domain has been ongoing for some time. Platform31 assesses progress in both policy and practice. Do results match the government's promises? We formulate recommendations and guidelines, and where necessary we dispel myths.
Role of new players on the rental market	There is a severe shortage of rental accommodation in the mid-segment, particularly in the large cities. New players are filling the void created by the housing corporations and public sector authorities. In this project, we are examining the extent to which the influx of new players is necessary and desirable, and the effect it will have on the role of the established market parties.