

About the Dutch Institute for Ecologic Management (NIVEM)

We offer consultancy services in various areas of spatial organisation, urban planning and financial strategy, for the execution and control of projects that are longterm and large in investment. To this end we create arithmetical and organisational instruments, and take care of the project management.

Because the market is an important financial source of many large projects, NIVEM makes systematic connections between the market and socially relevant - and thus ecologically desirable - actions. This results in forms of public-private co-operation (PPS) with a common financial framework for commercial parties and public authorities.

About NIVEM

"NIVEM is really a spin-off of my theoretical formation in matters of democracy, urbanistics and spatial economics - the three elements of my professional and democratic foundation. In the course of my career, I have acquired certain ideas and experiences, of which NIVEM is the practical exponent. NIVEM represents my move from making plans to executing them, applying the alternative approaches to spatial organisation that I developed during my long professional life. Fundamental to NIVEM is the idea that there should be a counterforce to the dominant economic powers in spatial organisation, to guarantee the quality of public space. The concepts of 'ecologic management' and 'Durable Autarkic Strategy' are based on this thought. I still get the greatest professional satisfaction from supporting those parties, municipalities for instance, that don't pack the same financial punch their corporate partners do in the process of spatial organisation."

Ecologic Management

"At the end of the 70's, beginning of the 80's, I taught Environmental Studies at the Technical University in Eindhoven. In my lectures, I stressed the relationship between economy and ecology. In traditional theories of economics, the concepts of economy and ecology - 'the environment' - are strictly separated. Waste is seen as a byproduct of the production process; the consequences for the environment are labelled as 'external effects'. Ecologic management doesn't distinguish between 'internal' and 'external' effects, but looks at various streams, the 'metabolisms' in any urban or regional economy of which 'ecology' and 'environment' are essential elements. The goal of ecologic management is to make the ecological effects of economic activity appear on the energy balance sheet, to control these processes and to even out the balance."

Democracy and Durability

"The democratic aspect of urban and regional development was present in my work for the so-called 'wetenschapswinkel' ('science shop') and the department for urban development of the city of Rotterdam. At the time, they had a unique situation: ideas for urban development originated for a large part in the neighbourhoods themselves. Citizens had a direct voice in the planning, through project co-ordinators who reported directly to the city alderman. This was proof that democracy didn't necessarily mean putting citizens behind the drawing board, but that it stimulated independent thinking, as opposed to planning from above. This principality

of local initiatives is an important element in DAS, Durable Autarkic Strategy. It's all about exploring the possibilities of using local resources and setting up local or regional circulations. In the daily reality of NIVEM the aspect of durability, of durable building is most visible. The first published origination of these concepts is an article written around 1985: '*De macht van tante Truus*', in which I analysed the relationship between rich and poor economic circuits."

Wang's Law

"As from 1995, NIVEM has been focusing more on the financial aspect of urban and regional development. I have become increasingly aware of the fact that urban development essentially boils down to real estate development, and that corporate influences on spatial economics are more important than politics. NIVEM is now primarily concerned with the financial strategy of exploitation projects in public spaces.

In the context of these projects, NIVEM is responsible for co-ordinating so-called Public-Private Cooperation Contracts between housing associations and municipalities (specifically in Vlaardingingen and Schiedam). NIVEM looks at the proceeds and costs of the building, ground and real estate exploitations, and analyses the risks for all parties involved. To divide these risks in a fair manner, and to ensure that the building quality fits the budget, NIVEM uses the formula '**Vex-Bex-Grex=0**', which essentially means that the proceeds of the real estate exploitation must cover the costs of the building and ground exploitations. This principle - 'Wang's Law' - protects public interests, but accounts for the financial reality as well. Naturally, this approach requires all parties involved to have a long term vision."

The future

"I'm worried about the future of urban and regional development in the Netherlands. Spatial economics are in danger of being trivialised; the differentiation in the Dutch landscape will decrease even further than it already has. The current 'Nota Ruimte' of the Ministry of VROM (Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment) gives free reign to the economic forces; there is less and less governance on the administrative level. We are abandoning a unique Dutch tradition in urban planning, in which there is great consideration for the quality of public space, but it is most important that this aspect remains firmly on the foreground.

As for democracy: on the face of it, citizens are being more directly involved in matters that concern them than they used to be, but this is really a farce. Democratic processes have been taken out of the citizens' hands, and are increasingly controlled by lobbies. I believe this is a sign of deterioration; there really is no integrated democracy.

In the long run, I would like to develop my ideas about democracy, urbanistics and spatial economics. Especially in the field of urbanistics, there remains a great theoretical area to explore. We still don't have a real theory of urbanistics. To many people, urban planning is still the same as designing the grid, the city plan, but a much more comprehensive theory of urban planning is possible. The works of Françoise Choay (*La règle et le modèle*) and Leon Battista Alberti indicate this. Eventually, once I find the time for it, I will return to exploring the intellectual aspects of my profession."