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Ideology of Dutch Housing Associations

Introduction: Dutch Housing Associations

The history of housing in the Netherlands cannot be separated from Housing Associations. Nowhere in the world have private, non-profit associations played such a large role in housing production. At its height in 1980, Housing Associations owned 41% of the housing stock nation-wide. Today, that number is still 36%, by far the highest figure in the European Union. [See Figure 1.] This means that nearly six million Dutch residents live in decent, well-managed, affordable, dwellings. In turn, there are very few homeless in the Netherlands. This paper examines the ideological underpinnings of Dutch Housing Associations and analyzes how these ideologies have been reinforced during three distinct time periods: the 1901 Housing Act, the post-war boom, and the present entrepreneurial period. Changing relationships with central and local government are also examined.

Figure 1. Social-Rental Sector in Western Europe

Countries	% social-rental dwellings
Netherlands	36
Denmark	19
France	18
Ireland	9
Belgium	7

Source: Ministerie van VROM 2001

Ideology of Dutch Housing Associations

Independent “Third Party” Involvement in Service Provision

While forms of the welfare state can be found in many European countries, the uniqueness of Dutch politics is the active “third-party” players situated between the government and the people. These instrumental “third-party” institutions – in numerous fields including health, schools, and housing – have at times been self-sufficient charity organizations, and at other times essentially agencies of the government.

The Housing Associations grew up in the context of a strong coalition government and strong consultation culture. These “third-party” institutions reflect an unusually active involvement of Dutch citizens in their collective well-being -- a reflection of the also deeply held Dutch “Polder Model.” Polders are literally marshlands reclaimed from the sea with dikes. Some theorize that because water has been such a continuous threat to the Dutch, different groups and interests in Dutch society have been forced to cooperate to fight the sea, whatever their material or ideological differences. The Polder Model is defined as: consultation between government and market parties (in this case non-profit entities) resulting in mutual agreements directed to economic development and a good social organization with social services and an income guarantee for everyone.¹

Compared to English or Swedish models where a municipal housing model was chosen, or Germany, where certain private companies undertook social tasks for a time – in the Netherlands, the chosen model allows various social groupings to take the initiative and set associations under their own management, within a legal frame work laid down by the State.²

In alignment with strict government regulation and internal self-regulation, Housing Associations have been found guilty of few abuses of power – despite the fact that by year 2000, they had a joint balance sheet total of almost 84 billion euros and their own

¹ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p.3

² ibd, p. 26

assets of more than 9.3 billion euros. They built up those assets over many decades, with years of financial support from the State. For that reason, these assets are often referred to as ‘tied social assets’ meaning built up through carrying out the social responsibilities with the sole purpose of ensuring their capability of undertaking these responsibilities in the future.³ A series of checks and balances, and underlying ideologies (outlined below) makes Dutch Housing Associations quite distinct from an agency such as the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which is mired in endless scandals of money laundering.

First and Foremost: Housing the Poor

The first Housing Associations were founded in the second half middle of the nineteenth century, with a simple and laudable goal: decently house the poor. At that time, industrialization had brought thousands of working poor to the cities and they lived in privately owned dwellings. Many of these dwelling were overcrowded, poorly maintained, and unhygienic. The spread of diseases such as cholera drove philanthropists to found the first Housing Associations, as an alternative to the exploitative private-market landlords.

Re-Distribution of Wealth

The profound commitment to decent housing, and lack of tolerance for homelessness, grows out of long-held values of equality. For over 100 years, the Dutch have been willing to tax themselves to allow for the re-distribution of wealth, and in exchange for plethora of social services such as: health, schools, housing. Income taxes remain about 50%. With this basic ideology, housing policy has never been a highly contentious issue in party politics, and has enjoyed a high degree of continuity and support.⁴ A socialist bent has long been part of Dutch ideology; fierce individualism is seen as a cause of world disorder.⁵

³ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p. 26

⁴ McCoone, Gavin & Stephen, Mark, Housing Policy in Britain and Europe, UCL Press, 1995

⁵ Grinburg, Donald, Housing in the Netherlands 1900-1940, Nijgh-Wolters-Noordhoff Universiteit Rotterdam, 1977, p.47

Strictly Housing

The mission of providing housing has not wavered in over century. Since 1901, Housing Associations were granted financial support, as long as they worked: “exclusively in the interests of the improvement of social housing.”⁶ While there has been discussion at times about allowing Housing Associations to invest their assets in the stock market or other such market activities, this has never been allowed. Housing Associations are disallowed from using their assets for any other purposes other than housing. They are thus not set up for profit making.⁷ Non-profits differ from the private market, which is, by definition, less focused on social goals. Even in recent years, when the Housing Associations have become more entrepreneurial and financially independent from government, they are still regulated. The Ministry of Housing can withdraw a Housing Association’s permit to operate if they go beyond their allowed activities.⁸

Integrating Incomes

While the primary focus of Housing Associations has been the poor, a broad mix of incomes in social housing is a unique hallmark of the Netherlands. Negative phenomena such as stigma, ghetto formation and social isolation, which are common in social housing in England and America, hardly arise.⁹ The ideology has been that social mixing in neighborhoods leads to common understanding, fewer prejudices, and less stereotyping. While some are concerned about this shifting in the future with recent policies introduced (leading to more income segregation)¹⁰, the ideology of mixing incomes remains constant, and will not shift dramatically. Even with urban renewal and revitalization schemes, care has been taken to insure a mix of incomes within nearly every block.

⁶ From the Housing Act of 1901

⁷ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske *Dutch Housing Associations*, DUP Satellite, 2002, p 4

⁸ City of Hilversum, “Social Housing Organisations: Partners in Social Housing”, Aedes Publicaties, 1999, p.22

⁹ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske *Dutch Housing Associations*, DUP Satellite, 2002, p 1

¹⁰ For arguments regarding increased income stratification in social housing, see: van Kempen, Ronald & Priemus, Hugo “Revolution in Social Housing in the Netherlands: Possible Effects of New Housing Policies” *Urban Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2002

Local Accountability

Another important goal of the Housing Associations has always been responsiveness and local accountability. With professionalization and consolidation, the last few years have witnessed a merging of Housing Associations, but the goal of local accountability has remained constant. Recent policies require Housing Associations to show that tenants have been consulted with any new site plans, and Housing Associations must justify its work through annual accounting and reporting on social housing objectives. Multiple parties carefully review their financial ledgers.¹¹ The internal governance structure of Housing Associations works to improve accountability: the Tenant Council appoints the Supervisory Board, which hires the Director. There is a strictly abided-by conflict of interest restriction, for example: neither town council members nor mayors may sit on the Board of Housing Associations.¹²

High Quality

Decent quality was a priority of housing construction since early times. Studies were conducted from the beginning to assess the quality of living standards, such as a study conducted by the Amsterdam Health Board in 1874 which showed that 8% of the population were living in cellars – damp, dark, unventilated places intended for storage.¹³ Social housing was the first housing that gave the working class basic amenities such as: indoor plumbing, private bathrooms, drinking water, and sewage.

Meeting National Planning Goals

Partnering with Housing Associations for housing production, government has had a strong hand in determining where to build. Constant negotiation has allowed the government to play a key role in insuring the Housing Associations meet national planning priorities – such as high-density, compact cities, and social equity.

¹¹ City of Hilversum, “Social Housing Organisations: Partners in Social Housing”, Aedes Publicaties, 1999, p.21

¹² *ibid*, p.19

¹³ Grinburg, Donald, *Housing in the Netherlands 1900-1940*, Nijgh-Wolters-Noordhoff Universiteit Rotterdam, 1977, p.28

Re-Interpretations of Housing Associations' Ideology: 1901 Housing Act, Post-War Boom, and the Present

In this section, I highlight key events and policies over three time periods: the Housing Act of 1901, the post-WWII building boom, and, finally, the entrepreneurship of the present era. I discuss how the core ideologies of Housing Associations summarized above have been re-interpreted and re-enforced during these three time periods, in cooperation with and guided by government. While strategies have shifted, I argue that the core ideologies of the Dutch Housing Associations have stayed fairly constant: housing the poor, re-distribution of wealth, exclusively housing, integrating incomes, local accountability, quality, and meeting national planning goals.

Government Legitimization: 1901 Housing Act

In the nineteenth century, Housing Associations had little direct relationship with government, and their initiatives were mostly small-scale. At the same time, by the 1880's progressive members of the Dutch central government began to realize that the dominant *laissez-faire* economic policy was not providing quality housing for the working or even lower-middle classes, and state intervention in a number of fields was desirable.¹⁴ A key moment for Housing Associations was the passage of the 1901 Housing Act in the Parliament [See Figure 2], which legitimized and institutionalized Housing Associations. Designated “Authorized Institutions” were defined as: “non-profit associations concerning themselves solely with construction and operation of dwellings under close supervision of local authorities and the state.” By-laws guaranteeing public funds will not be misused were a requirement.¹⁵ While Dutch Housing Associations have their origins in the building societies that had already been set up in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Housing Act gave the sector extensive scope and power. It also made housing a national concern.

¹⁴ Prak, Niels & Priemus, Hugo “The Netherlands,” Housing Strategies in Europe: 1880-1930 Edited by: Pooley, Colin, Leicester University Press, 1992, p.173

¹⁵ Ouweland, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p. 1

Figure 2.

Summary of 1901 Housing Act¹⁶

Goal: End crowding of slums, control speculative development in cities, and boost model-housing societies.

Building Code	For the first time, local authorities were obligated to draw up a building code, including quality standards and urban design.
Building Permits	Building permits required for any construction or alteration. Local authorities were allowed to refuse sub-standard proposals.
Condemnation	Local authorities given condemnation powers, to evacuate or demolish dwellings.
Town Plans	Local authorities granted power to draw up town plans with layout of streets, canals, squares. (This eventually became the Physical Planning Act of 1962.)
Financial Assistance	Central government granted financial help to local authorities or to Housing Associations in the forms of loans and subsidies.

The Housing Act created new public funding mechanisms for Housing Associations. It also gave local governments themselves the impetus needed to build affordable housing – though municipally-owned units have always been a small percentage of social housing. Local authorities often acted as the principal client and then transferred the dwellings, once they were built, to housing associations.¹⁷

The new funding opportunities led to a plethora of new Housing Associations – independent, idealistic organizations, run by enthusiastic amateurs, operating in close proximity to their membership. Whereas only 40 such organizations existed in 1890, by 1913 there were 301, and by 1922 there were 1341 such organizations.¹⁸ Pre-war production peak was between 1916 and 1925. During this time, the Housing

¹⁶ Prak, Niels & Priemus, Hugo “The Netherlands,” Housing Strategies in Europe: 1880-1930 Edited by: Pooley, Colin, Leicester University Press, 1992, p.174

¹⁷ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p 10

¹⁸ AEDES “Dutch Social Housing in a Nutshell” Hilversum, 1999, p.8

Associations built 96,600 dwellings, mostly of excellent quality.¹⁹ On average, the Housing Associations were small: each owned less than 60 dwellings. In 1913, the Nationale Woningraad (National Housing Council) was set up as the first organization to provide professional support to housing associations and to promote their interests.²⁰ The Nationale Woningraad convened a conference in 1918 urging vigorous tacking of house building by authorities and extension of subsidies. The Central Government swiftly replied to the plea.²¹

The leap in quality standards because of the Housing Act cannot be overstated. The wife of a worker remarked on the early social housing architect De Klerk,

*“How can we wives of workers thank this sturdy worker for what he has done for our men and children? Is it not glorious to come home after a tiring day to a house built for pure joy and domestic happiness? Is it not true that each stone calls out to you: come all you workers and rest in your house, which has been built especially for you. Isn’t the Spaarndammerplein like a fairly tale which you have dreamt about when you were a child because it did not exist then?”*²²

For city planning, the Act affirmed powers of the municipalities to disallow development where roads were planned, and established the concept of ‘extension plans’ for municipalities to revise every ten years. The extension plans changed the role of the architect – working on a different scale, like the Dutch architect Berlage who was instrumental in making housing a basic concern of city planners. Since his youth, Berlage saw the need to reform society, and saw “social democracy as a remedy to allow the architect to serve a society of equals who participated in a unified, commonly held culture.”²³

¹⁹ AEDES “Dutch Social Housing in a Nutshell” Hilversum, 1999, p.8

²⁰ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p 10

²¹ Prak, Niels & Priemus, Hugo “The Netherlands,” Housing Strategies in Europe: 1880-1930 Edited by: Pooley, Colin, Leicester University Press, 1992, p.177

²² Grinburg, Donald, Housing in the Netherlands 1900-1940, Nijgh-Wolters-Noordhoff Universiteit Rotterdam, 1977, p.50

²³ *ibid*, p.46

When Ebenezer Howard's book *A Peaceful Path Towards Real Reform* was published promoting the garden city, in Holland reform efforts were being directed at the Housing Act. In the Netherlands there was a wider acceptance of the city and town as the context for improvement, and belief in the cure for city ills. In England, the Utopian tradition led to proposals for *alternatives* to the city in the form of new towns, whereas the Dutch Housing Act insisted on reform from within.

Dutch passed their Housing Act relatively early – its considerable scope was, in part at least, due to long religious and humanitarian tradition. In addition, no doubt politicians saw the neighboring revolutionary development in Russia in 1917 and Germany 1918, and sought a pro-active response to the new influence of an organized working class. These early neighboring socialist movements, coupled with universal male suffrage in 1917 and female in 1919, certainly created a climate sympathetic to social reforms, though the Dutch response was (characteristically) very pragmatic and effective: re-distribution of wealth through taxation and providing decent housing through third-party, civic players.

Partnering with Government to Meet the Post-War Demand

Like many European countries, the Netherlands experienced an acute housing shortage after WWII. During the war, hundreds of thousands of dwellings were destroyed or damaged and almost no new construction took place. To help with re-construction, a shift in policy expanded the Housing Association's purview from a focus on the poor to also including the middle class. The fear was that the private market would not be able to satisfy the heavy demand, so the government collaborated with the Housing Associations to dramatically increase the quantity of units, meeting national planning goals. In 1958, the annual production reached 89,000²⁴ and at its height in 1972 it exceeded 150,000.²⁵ In the post-war era, Housing Associations became the most important category of landlord in the Netherlands.

²⁴ AEDES "Dutch Social Housing in a Nutshell" Hilversum, 1999, p.8

²⁵ Salet, Willem, lecture, University of Amsterdam, November 26, 2002

The question of “quality” during the post-war building boom has been questioned – especially the Le Corbusier-style buildings in neighborhoods like the Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam. Now consensus is that these “slabs of concrete” are poor design for community-well-being. However, it is important to note that, at the time, they were considered cutting-edge, good quality, large apartments, for a mix of incomes. While the criticism is justified on one level, I would argue that the limitations of the Bijlmermeer have more to do with urban design than actual “quality.” In reality, the apartments are spacious, and of good materials. Today, these neighborhoods are the focus of “urban renewal” and “urban revitalization” – rehabilitation of some buildings, and demolition and replacement of others, to create a more human-scaled, walkable environment. Overall, the post-war housing stock is in good condition.

Unfortunately, over the post-war decades, the bureaucracy of the government in relation to Housing Associations grew impossible to manage. The Central government micro-managed the Housing Associations – even to the level of specific site plans requiring approval in The Hague. Local city authorities were also intimately involved with the projects – such as the choice of architects, the way contracts were tendered and supervision during construction. This turned the Housing Associations into no more than government branch offices.²⁶ The micro-managing and over-regulation, while helping government shape development, also tampered with the historic creative entrepreneurship of Housing Associations.

With the layers of bureaucracy, also came a move away from a focus on Association-Tenant relationship to a focus on Association-Government relationships. Complaints emerged about the lack of responsiveness of the Housing Associations to tenant demands – calling into question the core goal of local accountability. Housing Association leadership knew more about how to qualify for national subsidies than what residents wanted.²⁷ In response to these developments, moves towards strengthening the position

²⁶ AEDES “Dutch Social Housing in a Nutshell” Hilversum, 1999, p.9

²⁷ Salet, Willem, lecture, University of Amsterdam, November 26, 2002

of the Housing Associations in relation to the government were initially discussed in the late 1950s. [See Figure 3] .

Figure 3.

1950's De Roos Commission advocated for: ²⁸

- Broad definition of the field of activity of the Housing Associations not only in terms of dwellings for the lowest incomes, but also for the middle groups;
- The abolition of the duty to repay the State contributions;
- Setting up a Central Fund, as an institution that would guarantee the financing of house building;
- An increase in the independence of the Housing Associations in management, with less detailed involvement by the State; and
- The Housing Associations to become more professional.

New Approaches: Less Bureaucracy, Less Subsidy, & More Entrepreneurship

In the 1980s, government's national debt forced cutbacks. Meanwhile, the Housing Associations had grown into wealthy institutions, having received considerable financial support from the State for nearly a century. The State Minister for Housing, Heerma, set about achieving key reforms, namely: decentralization and the further independence of the social-rental sector. His 1992 memorandum "Policy for Urban Renewal in the Future" called for moving the social housing sector from "government" to "governance."²⁹

It was determined that housing associations could invest their own resources in the interest of social housing.³⁰ The way this subsidy-ending proceeded was through a large financial operation so-called *brutering* or "balancing out." With this agreement, the money still owed to the associations by the State (subsidies) and the money that the associations owe to the State (loans) got settled all at once. In 1995, the law regulating

²⁸ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p. 12

²⁹ Salet, Willem, lecture, University of Amsterdam, November 26, 2002

³⁰ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p. 4

this operation was passed by Parliament and all accounts were settled.³¹ In this way, the bonds were loosened between the government and the Housing Associations. What this means on the ground, is that the Housing Associations have brought rents closer to the dwellings actual cost price.

Mismatch

After such high production of social housing over a century, and strict tenant protection laws, many middle-class – and even some wealthy – families have been living in social housing. Recognition of this “mismatch” over the past two decades, has led policy to focus on new owner-occupied sector. The intent, with some hopeful results, is to entice upper-income residents out of their social housing units and into homeownership or commercial rented dwellings – leaving social housing primarily for lower income and lower-middle-income. The gradual rising of rents in the social housing sector has also aided in addressing this mismatch. At the same time, to help those at the lowest end of the income scale, the government has shifted resources to individual subsidies (based on income), which can be requested from local authorities or from the Housing Association to cover the gap between the new rent and what the tenant can afford. One million families in the Netherlands presently benefit from these individual subsidies.³²

Mergers

While as a whole, Housing Associations have enough funding to be financially self-sufficient, there are ‘poor’ Associations and ‘rich’ Associations.³³ This has led to mergers. With wealthier housing associations merging with less prosperous ones, harmonization has been brought about of resources and expenditures. Mergers have also brought more capable management, a more efficient back office, improvement in financial continuity, and strengthening of the position with the region.³⁴ The reduction in the number of Housing Associations as a result of mergers has been dramatic: in 1988

³¹ AEDES “Dutch Social Housing in a Nutshell” Hilversum, 1999, p.9

³² van Eyk, Hubert, Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, Interview, November 25, 2002

³³ AEDES “Dutch Social Housing in a Nutshell” Hilversum, 1999, p.14

³⁴ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p.14

there were 1076, in 1996 there were 826, and today less than 750.³⁵ Merging naturally calls into question the issue of local accountability. To address this, a Housing Association is required to justify how it will continue to serve local interests before qualifying for a merger.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

Because now the Housing Associations bear the risks of investment decision themselves, they are increasingly having to behave as self-supporting social entrepreneurs. New activities and approaches have been introduced, such as:

- *Selling Property for Private Ownership*: In the coming 15 years it is expected that 200,000 rental dwellings will be sold.³⁶ This is consistent with government focus (based on citizen surveys) that more people would like to embark on home ownership. By selling dwellings to the sitting tenants, an attempt has been made to strengthen the bond with the neighborhood.³⁷ The revenue from sales must be retained to be spent within the housing sector – differing greatly from the English selling of public housing where revenue went back to the general government funds.
- *New Mixed-Income Projects*: While traditionally, Housing Associations have been built primarily for lower income (though no one can be evicted if their income exceeds the cap), a new financially-generating approach is building combination projects, where expensive dwellings are placed on the private owner-occupied market where prices are high. The returns from the sale of these dwellings are used to realize affordable housing for the Association's target group: lower income residents.³⁸

While most higher-level Housing Association staff and Tenant leadership agree with the shift in policies away from government-dependency, there is opposition among the

³⁵ City of Hilversum, "Social Housing Organisations: Partners in Social Housing", Aedes Publicaties, 1999, p.5

³⁶ AEDES "Dutch Social Housing in a Nutshell" Hilversum, 1999, p.14

³⁷ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p 22

³⁸ AEDES "Dutch Social Housing in a Nutshell" Hilversum, 1999, p.14

lower-level staff and leadership.³⁹ Over the next several years, the Housing Associations' challenge will be to build greater consensus around market-oriented approaches among all levels of leadership.

Birth of New financial institutions

Out of the need to self-finance (instead of depend on government), new financial institutions have emerged:

- *Social Housing Guarantee Fund* was established in 1993 to take over the security of Housing Association's loans, allowing them to borrow money against the lowest possible interest. Other Housing Associations and government secure this.
- *Central Housing Fund* was established in 1988 by government to help assess Housing Association's financial position, and assist organizations in trouble.⁴⁰ It is fed privately by annual contributions from all housing associations.⁴¹

Slow-Down in Production

Unfortunately, the late 1990's revealed a drop-off in housing production nationwide. The reasons for this drop-off are varied: a government-appointed task force came up with a list of 80 causes. A central theme in the findings was bureaucracy, and a need to streamline the building process for all parts of the housing sector. Another phenomenon is that with the loosening of ties, it is difficult for the government to force Housing Associations to produce what they should. They are not punished if they don't. Certainly the Housing Associations have the capacity to build much more than they are; at one time, Amsterdam Housing Associations were building 8,000 units a year – now less than 2,000.⁴² With more autonomy, the government has a challenge to ensure Housing Associations still meet national planning goals.

³⁹ Schilling, Richard, University of Amsterdam, Interview, November 26, 2002

⁴⁰ City of Hilversum, "Social Housing Organisations: Partners in Social Housing", Aedes Publicaties, 1999, p.26

⁴¹ Salet, Willem "Regime Shifts in Dutch Housing Policy" *Housing Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1999, p.554

⁴² Schilling, Richard, University of Amsterdam, Interview, November 26, 2002

Conclusion: Producing Housing through Socially-Minded Entrepreneurship

The Dutch Housing Associations have witnessed remarkable evolution over the past century, but basic ideology has remained constant. They remain independent, private organizations, but with a public responsibility.⁴³ While housing production has struggled with bureaucracy and many efforts to reform, it cannot be denied what an essential role Housing Associations have played in housing production over the last century – especially for lower incomes, but also for the middle class. While in the most recent decades, they have been encouraged to become more entrepreneurial, they must remain *social* entrepreneurs: bound in obligation to work exclusively for the good of social housing. Presently, special attention is given to: asylum seekers, mentally and physically disabled, ex-psychiatric patients, ex-prisoners, abused women, young vagrants, students, and elderly.⁴⁴

Parliament has recently given its assent to the government proposal to leave the position of the housing associations as it is for the next ten years. Though the ties are loosened, government still has a strong role in governing the Housing Associations through annual Performance Agreements put together jointly by Housing Associations and local authorities. The State checks that the Housing Associations function efficiently and continue to operate within the legal framework. At the end of each year, Associations must indicate their annual reports what they have achieved in these performance areas. These achievements must be justified to the central government.⁴⁵

Close relationships with local authorities ensure that Housing Associations meet local planning goals. A symbiotic relationship exists where Housing Associations provide financial means and development expertise; and local authorities provide a vision of

⁴³ Ouwehand, Andre & van Daalen, Gelske Dutch Housing Associations, DUP Satellite, 2002, p 26

⁴⁴ City of Hilversum, “Social Housing Organisations: Partners in Social Housing”, Aedes Publicaties, 1999, p.10

⁴⁵ AEDES “Dutch Social Housing in a Nutshell” Hilversum, 1999, p.11

development in regional planning, manage the housing environment and infrastructure, and ensure a good climate for investment.

Re-instating underlying ideology, mission and goals of the Housing Associations, the present performance areas for Housing Associations are:

- to assure good quality in all dwellings
- to guarantee the financial continuity of the enterprise
- to rent on a priority basis to the ‘special attention groups intended in policy’
- to involve tenants in the policy and management of the organization
- to make a construction to the quality of life in neighborhoods and districts.

Source: Besluit Beheer Sociale Huursektors (Decree on Management of Social Rental Sector)

While welfare reform and housing reform has proceeded like other European countries, the strong role of Housing Association in the Netherlands provides an opportunity to mitigate the negative effects of such reforms that has struck places like England, where the number of homeless is striking. The Housing Associations’ strong position allows the core ideology of equity to continue to be embodied. The unique role of “Third Party” players in housing production was recognized as far back as the 1901 Housing Act – which assured that local authorities themselves would undertake house building only if every other strategy had failed.⁴⁶ Priority has always been given to Housing Associations over municipalities in the Netherlands. Most recently, the remaining municipally-owned housing stock have all but moved to Housing Association hands.

As the recent government report “What People Want, Where People Live: Housing in the 21st Century”⁴⁷ shows, the Dutch government is taking advantage of this unique asset of the Housing Associations. If they can meet the challenge of recent reforms, Housing Associations will be able to continue to live up to their core ideology and meet their goals – perhaps more efficiently and effectively. Finding the balance between social goals,

⁴⁶ Prak, Niels & Priemus, Hugo “The Netherlands,” Housing Strategies in Europe: 1880-1930 Edited by: Pooley, Colin, Leicester University Press, 1992, p 183

⁴⁷ Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment, “What People Want, Where People Live: Housing in the 21st Century Summary” english section of the VROM website, April 2001, p.44-48

government regulation, and entrepreneurship will continue to be the continuing challenge of both the Housing Associations and government.