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HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS
IN
THE NETHERLANDS

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*Text by the Information
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INTRODUCTION

IN MANY COUNTRIES, THE FIELD OF HOUSING EMBRACES IN ADDITION TO profitseeking private initiative and local authority housing, a form of private initiative which may truly be described as non-profit-making. This initiative has found expression in the Netherlands in the so-called housing associations.

These associations are not cooperative societies although the two have many points in common. Neither are they authoritative organisations. The form chosen is a combination that can perhaps be best expressed by the term "Public-cooperative housing".

Certain differences of type may be distinguished among the associations. For instance, a certain number exhibit a predominant cooperative characteristic; these are the workers' associations in which the tenants are the members. In others, the public character is thrown more into the foreground; the members of these associations are interested parties who do not themselves rent the houses. Legally speaking both types are the same, they must comply with the same regulations and they enjoy the same rights.

The significance of these associations for housing in the Netherlands springs to mind when the distribution of housing accommodation is considered. The housing census of first May 1947 totalled 2.050.003 dwellings. The total was distributed as follows:

Occupied by owner	573.871	28,0 %
Service dwellings	35.594	1,7
Private tenanted houses	1.178.365	57,5
Local authority housing.	67.000	3,3
Housing associations	189.282	9,2
Charitable institutions	5.891	0,3
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	2.050.003	100 %

It can be seen that the housing associations control almost 10 % of the total dwellings. This alone would make them an important factor in the field of housing. The influence emanating from their work renders their significance still greater.

THE FIRST PERIOD

About the middle of the 19th century, when dwelling conditions were extremely dismal, we can discern the beginnings of the first housing



*One of the first
groups of asso-
ciation houses.
Arnhem
1854/55.
Pulled down in
1938.*

associations. The first was established in Amsterdam in 1852 and used what had preceded it in England as an example. The lead of Amsterdam was soon followed by other towns. These first associations were set up by socially conscious well-to-do people. They assembled a share capital, rented what were in those times good dwellings to lower income groups, and enjoyed in general a very moderate dividend from the capital they invested.

Later, associations were also established by the working classes. They were generally cooperative in character and their object was to make their members house owners in the course of time by dint of their common savings. Experience was varied. Some were successful, but others came to nothing and lapsed into a simple letting of the dwellings for rent.

The work of these 19th century associations has not had a great deal of influence. Their number and extent were in those days too small. They first began to gain in significance when the government took the step of legally regulating their position and holding out the possibility of financial support. This happened in 1901 with the promulgation of the Housing Act.

LEGAL REGULATIONS

The Housing Act of 1901 legally established the conception of a Corporate Institute exclusively devoted to the improvement of housing, or in other words the housing association. Such associations were accorded

special recognition by the Government. To qualify for this recognition, they had to comply with certain demands of which the foremost were:

- a. that the association strives to attain no other object than the improvement of housing;
- b. that members are excluded from all financial advantage, with the exception of a possible modest dividend on the shares (at present restricted to 4 %);
- c. that disposal and mortgaging of real property can only be entered into with the approval of the local authority;
- d. that in case of liquidation, property and possessions are to be offered to the local authority, together with any charges or liabilities appertaining thereto.

FINANCING

In general, the housing associations themselves are not in possession of large sums of money. They are almost completely financed by the Government and for this reason enjoy the same facilities as local authorities so far as building is concerned.

The following regulations are in force as regards the provision of capital. The local authorities are empowered to issue advances to recognized associations, both for the purchase of land and for the construction

Association-houses at Bois-le-Duc 1934.



of dwellings. These advances may be, and generally are, equal to the total actual costs. An advance for building construction must be repaid in 50 years, and an advance for land-purchase in 75 years. The interest is normally the same as the local authority itself must pay, and varies at the moment from $3\frac{1}{4}$ % to 4 %.

The local authority in its turn, can obtain an advance from the State under similar conditions. The State never issues advances directly to associations; the local authority invariably acts as a risk-bearing intermediary.

Apart from the issue of advances, the Act permits the issue of yearly contributions to offset losses on management account. According to changing circumstances, advantage is taken of this opportunity in various ways. Generally speaking, when circumstances and the cost of building are normal, the issue of these contributions is restricted to dwellings built in connection with slum-clearance schemes. All other types of dwellings must be self-supporting.

At the same time, in the present circumstances with the cost of building about 350 % of the 1938/39 level, all housing must be subsidized. As regards housing construction by associations, this is covered by a fixed yearly contribution calculated at the time the dwelling is taken into management. It is equal to the difference between the costs of management and the rent. For these purposes, the rent is considered to be equal to the costs of management as they would have been at May 1940, the outbreak of war. These contributions are paid entirely by the State. The local authority and the association are considered to be jointly responsible for any further losses incurred in the future.

As is to be expected, this financial support is subject to a series of conditions, of which the principle ones now follow:

- a. that so long as the advance is not repaid, the local authority retains the right to take over the dwellings of the association at any time, together with the liabilities and charges appertaining thereto;
- b. that any surpluses that might ensue from the management may only remain in possession of the association concerned to the extent of 20 %. The remainder is to be devoted to the repayment of contributions received, or to the offsetting of expenses in the interest of housing in general, which expenses the local authority is to decide upon.

Year	Total number of built dwellings	Built by Housing-Associations and Municipalities			
		Number	of which built by Associations	Municipalities	% of the total number stated in column 1
1905	24.000	10	—	100	0,04
1906	25.000	23	9	91	0,1
1907	11.000	138	96	4	1,3
1908	20.000	467	84	16	2,3
1909	24.000	924	91	9	3,9
1910	20.000	977	94	6	4,9
1911	21.000	914	93	7	4,4
1912	25.000	1.370	90	10	5,5
1913	23.000	2.708	97	3	12
1914	17.000	2.413	94	6	14,5
1915	12.000	4.708	95	5	39,5
1916	10.000	4.955	96	4	49,5
1917	6.000	3.118	77	23	52
1918	10.000	7.478	80	20	75
1919	15.000	12.309	84	16	80
1920	25.000	21.659	62	38	87
1921	40.364	24.985	77	23	62,9
1922	45.496	20.430	67	33	45
1923	43.132	15.039	67	33	34,9
1924	46.712	12.310	71	29	26,4
1925	47.190	12.597	68	32	26,7
1926	48.833	7.665	62	38	15,7
1927	50.246	7.560	64	36	15,1
1928	47.335	6.733	82	18	14,2
1929	47.347	7.463	70	30	15,8
1930	51.501	7.379	68	32	14,4
1931	50.580	9.319	64	36	18,4
1932	41.341	5.165	72	28	12,5
1933	44.425	1.664	59	41	3,8
1934	52.591	4.875	85	15	9,3
1935	45.231	3.450	87	13	7,6
1936	30.285	2.579	89	11	8,5
1937	29.119	2.326	79	21	8
1938	38.375	2.862	73	27	7,5
1939	36.830	2.983	69	31	8
1940	17.661	2.638	74	26	15
1941	16.450	3.349	23	77	20,5
1942	8.355	2.570	75	25	31,3
1943	3.228	1.842	85	15	58,8
1944	675	179	50	50	30
1945	389	64	42	58	16,5
1946	1.593	369	44	56	27,3
1947	9.243	5.802	38	62	69,7
1948	36.391	29.423	41	59	80,8
1949	42.791	31.230	45	55	73

It can generally be said that the system of financing applied in the case of the housing associations rests on the basic principle that the authorities provide the monetary resources, that the authorities bear a great deal of the risks of management, but that the authorities, in their turn, are to have placed at their disposal any profits thrown up by future management. This system has enabled the housing association movement in the Netherlands to rise to its present height. There are of course disadvantages, particularly those resulting from the fact that the extensive State financial assistance may be said by some to sap the independence of the associations. They are restricted by a web of regulations and are only allowed to take relatively few decisions on their own. In practice, this disadvantage is strongly felt and has recently led to a certain amount of casting around for ways and means of putting them in their own funds and thereby strengthening their independence.

NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE ASSOCIATIONS

The terrain covered by a housing association is normally restricted to one local authority's area. Only very few associations indeed venture into wider fields. But the Netherlands possesses over 1.000 such areas, so there is room for a great number of associations.

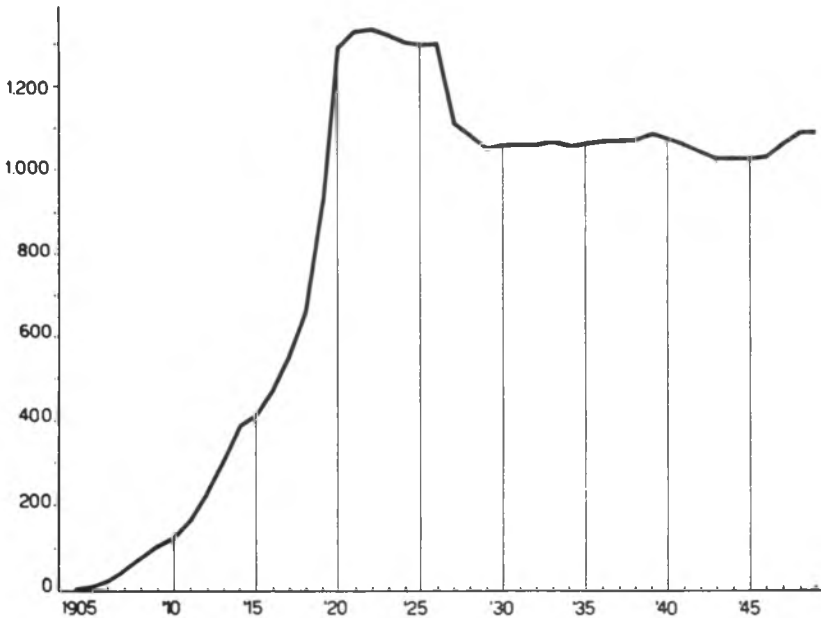
It was some years after the promulgation of the Housing Act, before the first association was recognized. This Act was a little before its time and a short period elapsed before the initiative that could call to life the provisions its legislation developed. The first three associations were recognized in 1904 and a round dozen followed in 1905. These were the associations set up by interested parties, and their number was too few to grasp the impending task with sufficient force.

Slowly but surely the conviction grew that nothing would come of the movement unless those who were most concerned, the working men themselves, put their shoulders to the wheel. In those times and circumstances, the first workers' housing association to be recognized as based on the provision of the Housing Act, was established in Amsterdam. The members were employees of the local authority. The recognition was the subject of considerable deliberation and debate since it was the first of its sort, but in the end it was accorded. Since those days the numbers have grown considerably. At the outbreak of the first world war in 1914 there were in existence about 350 recognized housing associations. There are now over 1.000, of which the majority are workers' associations,

The associations are distributed over the entire country. They are to be found in the city and the country districts, but their activity has been expressed to the greatest extent in the urban districts. One of the reasons for this, is that the associations are in practice devoted entirely to the construction of rented dwellings, whilst "a home of one's own" is particularly desired in the country districts. In fact 28 % of all the dwellings in the Netherlands are occupied by their owners, and in the case of farms the figure is 69 %.

The distribution of the associations does not always answer the purpose to the same extent. There are areas in which too many associations are at work alongside each other, thus cutting down the strength of each.

Number of recognized Housing-Associations.



The Government is attempting to combat to some extent this piece-meal utilization of the available strength, by the manner in which it is interpreting its powers to recognize or refuse an application.

DWELLINGS

The associations are now managing about 200.000 dwellings. The great majority of them have been built with support as provided for them in the Housing Act. From this total, we must subtract about 10.000 dwellings that were built before the Housing Act was put into force. During the period of the Housing Act quite a number of dwellings have been put up by the associations without the use of the provisions for legal support. This support is in practice still restricted to working class dwellings, although certain associations are also managing a number of middle class dwellings.

As a more detailed illustration of the part being played by housing associations in the provision of accommodation, some figures concerning 5 urban authorities' areas now follow. The examples have been chosen at random:

District	Number of inhabitants	Number of dwellings	Association-dwellings	Municipal dwellings
Almelo . . .	40.000	7.143	30 %	2 %
Amsterdam .	813.000	201.662	14 %	6 %
Enschede . .	102.000	17.852	30 %	— %
Groningue. .	133.000	27.206	22 %	4 %
Hilversum. .	85.000	15.916	14 %	6 %

BUILDING THE DWELLINGS

The normal course of events is that an association wishing to build consults the local authority. All negotiations following this are conducted generally in close consultation both with the local authority and the Government Department concerned. Very often the association must approach the local authority to obtain land ripe for development. A great deal of this land, particularly in the large towns and cities is in the ownership of the local authority, who sell it after all the demands of the extension plan have been complied with, or dispose of it in leasehold.

It is up to the association to chose its own architect. When agreement has been reached regarding plan and layout with the local authority, and in the case of State assistance, also with the governmental authorities, there then follows the official application for an advance and perhaps also a contribution, which are submitted to the local authority.

After tenders have been publicly solicited, the execution of the work is commissioned from a private building contractor. During construction, the association's architect is charged with the direction and supervision of the works.



Association-houses at Bloemendaal, destined for the staff of the Provincial Hospital.

MANAGEMENT

The general lines of the management of the dwellings is mainly dependent on two factors. The first is the size of the total real property, and the second is the nature of the association. There are for instance associations in country districts that administer 5 or 6 dwellings, and of which all the administrative work including the collection of rents, is carried out by the members without re-imbusement. Local artisans are commissioned for the execution of maintenance. On the other hand, the large towns are quite familiar with the association administering more than 3.000 dwellings. They possess a small skilled staff, which carries out the administration, and in many cases controls and executes the most important maintenance work itself. Administrative costs are generally low, in any case lower than those of private landlords or of the local authorities.

Apart from this the organisation of the administration is dependent of the type of association. In the case of a workers' association, the tenants will be generally able-bodied working class men with reasonable wages. They are as it were, the elite of the working class, they live in

good houses, regularly pay their rent and cause no tenant troubles. As an example of ideal housing management, an Amsterdam association administering almost 4.000 dwellings springs to mind. The members of the board come mostly from trade union circles and each is an expert in his own field. The estates themselves are spread over the city, in groups of 400 to 600 dwellings. In each of these groups, the tenants have chosen from amongst themselves a committee which assists the board, inspects the dwellings from time to time, arbitrates in neighbourly differences, organizes meetings and so forth. Furthermore in each group there lives an inspector of the association who collects the rents during the first two days of the week and spends the rest of his time carrying out small running repairs. Larger repair work is carried out by a central team of tradesmen.

The associations consisting of interested parties are more concerned with the care of lower paid workers, former slum-dwellers, and the socially weaker families. Their task is more difficult, supervision of the dwellings must be more intensively conducted and they must constantly be on the lookout against rents lapsing into arrears. If the number of dwellings is sufficiently large, an association of this type, will have a lady housing inspector on its staff, whose special task it is to organize the social education of the tenants.

THE TYPE OF DWELLINGS

Since the Housing Act came into force the type of dwellings built in our country has been enormously improved. This may be ascribed to more than one reason. Of these we may mention the increased standard of economic prosperity in general, regulations in the form of building bye-laws and the pioneer work of the housing associations and the local authorities. Whilst the bye-laws indicate the limits below which the authorities will not permit buildings to be set up, the housing associations, with the support of the provision of the Housing Act, show the country how the authorities wish building to be carried out.

Under the provisions of the Housing Act the architect was admitted for the first time to the field of designing houses for the working classes. Numerous well-known architects have found work for themselves in this field. In the course of time all this has led to the development of an architecture peculiar to working class housing.

A great many garden villages have to thank for their existence the possibilities created by the Housing Act.

A few years before World-war II, housing according to the Housing Act in the large cities commenced to be equipped with baths or showers. Up till that time this sort of equipment in working class housing was unknown.

About the same time, central heating and the central provision of hot water made its bow. They were applied in some association housing groups and council estates. As an interesting example of cooperation in this sort of service, it may be mentioned that a number of associations in Amsterdam have established a central organisation to run the whole question of the supply of hot water for their various groups and estates. Before the war more than 2.100 association houses were connected to this supply. We may conclude this paragraph with the remark that since the liberation practically no house has been built, even in the most out-of-the-way country district, without at least being provided with a shower cubicle.

In the matter of the division of land into parcels and plots, a number of new ideas found their first application in housing erected under the

Modern association-houses at Amsterdam. 1942.



Housing Act, and were later adopted also in the field of speculative building.

Some of the associations have constructed dwellings for elderly married couples. A preference for decentralisation in these dwellings is exercised. They are small but attractive houses, and they are built in small groups as an element in the scheme of normal dwellings. This form of achieving widespread distribution gives the elderly people a chance of choosing a house near their married children. This system of making these houses part of a large scheme permits a rather lower rent, and allows the resulting costs to be spread over the entire scheme without requiring a special subsidy. We may say that the decentralised system of housing elderly people has in practice proved most satisfactory.

In the same way that special houses are built for elderly people, other types are built specially for large families. The Netherlands' population with its high birthrate is prolific of such families. As with the elderly people, so with the large family. The principle is to let them live among normal families without concentrating them together. The latter method produces a concentration of children that can be particularly objectionable in buildings with many stories. There is no special regulation for the subsidizing of housing for large families, at any rate not yet. Rents are generally dependent upon the quality of the dwellings. There is in the Netherlands a general law concerning childrens' allowances in which the scale of allowances is not in any way connected with housing.

Finally, a few associations have established hostels for those living alone. As examples, there are: the Amsterdam workers hostel, 360 rooms, the hostel for single people in The Hague, 450 rooms, the hostel for elderly women in Rotterdam, and the "New House" in Amsterdam, containing 186 appartments for middle class people living alone.

THE LIMITS OF THE TASK

There is a legal restriction on the function of housing associations by which they are only allowed to conduct activities concerned with the improvement of housing conditions. They are not allowed to pursue any other object, however praiseworthy. It seems that those who drafted the legal regulations wanted to prevent that sums of money earmarked by the authorities for housing, should in practice become mixed with sums intended for other purposes.

*Association-houses in
the gardencity
"Vreewijk" at Rotter-
dam. By this time
comprising 5.500
dwellings*



All this has led to the associations generally keeping clear of additional activities, and exclusively confining themselves to the building of houses and shops, and as an occasion alexception, a bath-house or a club-room.

This last type of amenity, of which there are many others, necessary to complete a neighbourhood, are generally left to the authorities or to social organisations specially interested in that field.

DIVISION OF THE TASK BETWEEN AUTHORITY AND ASSOCIATION

The spirit of the Housing Act gives association housing the priority and considers council estates supplementary. This does not mean to say that the authority may not build houses until it is sure that no association is going to do it, but it does imply that the centre of gravity is with the associations.

The practice has developed in line with this spirit. In the beginning, the authorities left housing construction supported by the Housing Act almost entirely to the associations. The share of the associations in this type of building was in fact over 90 % until the first world-war. The housing shortage during and after World-war I more or less forced the councils to more independent action. The compulsion of the times caused an increase in the share of the authorities to an average of 30 %. With the council's machinery once established and set in action, it has remained active ever since. It only reduced its activity to some extent



Modern association-houses at The Hague. 1949.

during the most serious years of the economic crisis, 1933 to 1936. The recent war having brought housing shortage once more to the fore, the construction of council houses is going ahead again. Since the liberation it may even be said to be in the majority. This is probably in the nature of a temporary situation, and once the unusual circumstances begin to disappear, the authorities will once more leave the field to the associations. At the same time it is not expected that they will be content to fall back quite into the modest position that they occupied in the earliest years of the Housing Law.

It will be gathered from the above that the borders between the territories of the associations and those of the authorities are not particularly sharply defined. So far as the towns are concerned, it can be said that the associations build for the able bodied working men, and the authorities more for the population groups at a lower social level,

poorly paid workers, former slum-dwellers and so-called undesirable families. In the country districts the associations also take a hand in looking after these latter groups. All this is applicable in normal times. When the times are not normal, and a high cost of building coupled with housing shortage is the order of the day, then it is a case of all hands to the pump to increase building activity as much as possible, and in such times the authorities also enter the field of the housing of able bodied working men. This is just another case of the general rule, permitting numerous exceptions in practice.

NATIONAL ORGANISATION

The great majority of associations and local authorities concerned in housing management, have banded themselves together into a national organisation called the "National Housing Council". The Council has 690 members managing a combined total of about 181,000 dwellings. It is a completely voluntary organisation, concerning itself with the furtherance of the general interests pursued by its members, and mainly serving as an advisory body. The question whether this organisation should be accorded a function in connection with the formulation and execution of legal measures has been under consideration for some time.

Next to the National Housing Council, which is non-confessional and non-political, there is a Roman Catholic Housing Federation in which a great many R.C. Housing Associations are incorporated.

*The "New House"
Amsterdam.
Hostel for middle
class people living
alone. Built by a
Housing Association.*



CONCLUSION

The institution known as a housing association, such as it has developed in the Netherlands, has extended itself into a social service that has received great appreciation. A fact that cannot be under-estimated is that a section of private initiative that would otherwise have been lost to housing, has been able to find expression in these associations. The educative value of these bodies appears to have been very great indeed, both to the members of the boards and tenants' committees, and to the tenants themselves who have been brought into the affairs of their own association as members.

It cannot of course be said that the system possesses no weak points. One such weak point has appeared to be that the associations lean too much on the authorities in the matter of finance, which has thrown them too much under all sorts of regulations and has rendered them insufficiently independent in their attitude. Furthermore, management can be made more efficient through a more purposeful organisation and particularly by closer concentration. Improvement is possible in these directions, and it is precisely with the object of achieving these improvements that the Government has now under consideration the question of a new set of regulations.

Should all this be successful, the housing associations will be able to play a most significant part in housing throughout the period just commenced, a period characterized by the difficult economic position in which the Netherlands has found itself since the war.

Association-houses at Arnhem, destined for elderly married couples. 1936



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