



Universiteit Utrecht

The data politics of state property regimes: A case-study of the Dutch Central Real Estate Agency

THE DATA POLITICS OF HOUSING AND PLANNING

2-3 SEPTEMBER, 2024

JH5, JOHN HUME BUILDING, NORTH CAMPUS

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

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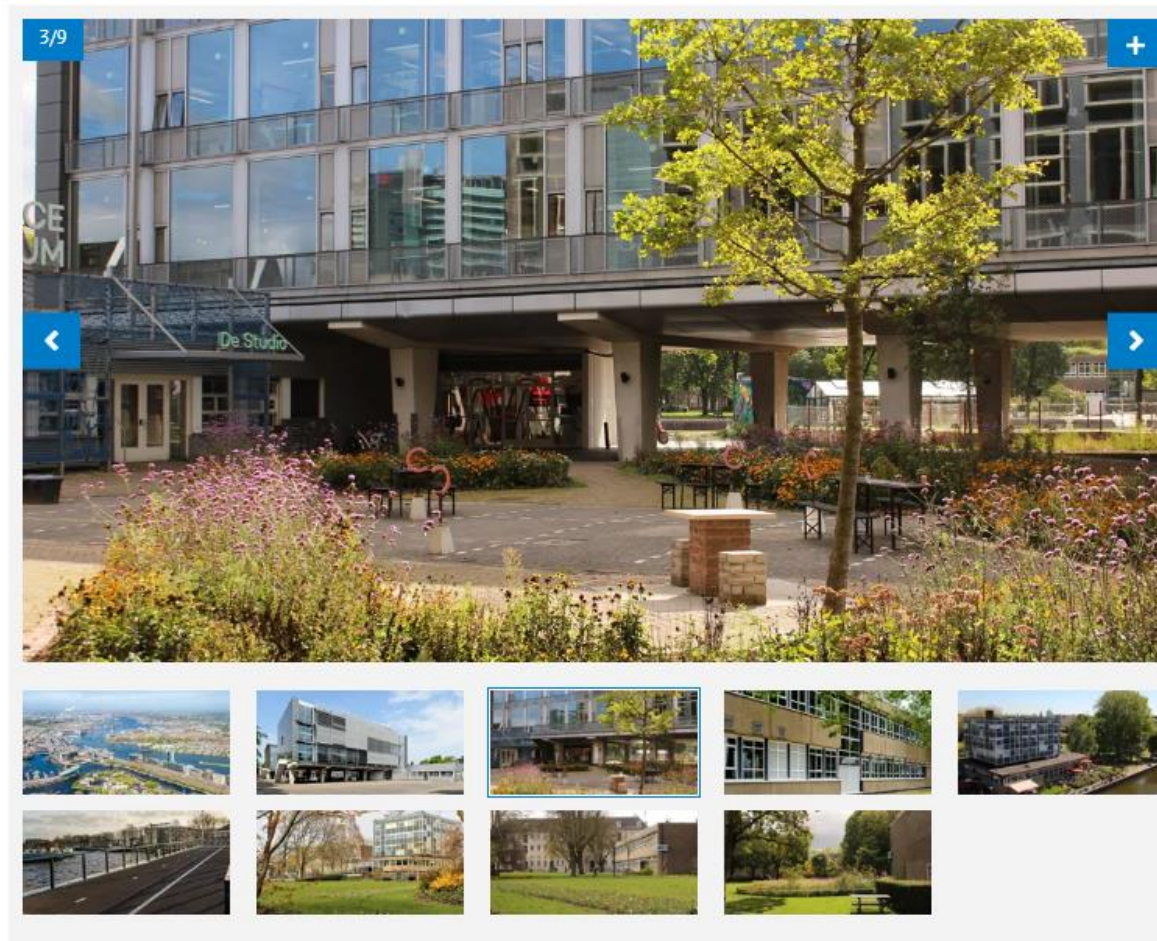
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- Digital market place for state-owned properties [in the Netherlands and abroad]
- Controlled by the Central Dutch Real Estate Agency [*Rijksvastgoedbedrijf*; RVB]

Aanbesteding tijdelijk beheer van het Marineterrein Kattenburgerstraat 5 te Amsterdam

Sluitingsdatum 2 september 2024, 9:00 uur.

Procedure gestart



Objectinformatie

Adres: Kattenburgerstraat 5, 1018 JA Amsterdam
Huidig gebruik: Gemengd
Perceelgrootte: ca. 13.000 m²

Locatie



New state property regimes and state restructuring

- Public real estate is sold or disposed as part of state restructuring, austerity and NPM ideology
- New state property regimes (Tapp 2023)
 - state-run real estate companies use land to generate fiscal rent (Hyötyläinen and Haila 2018)
 - Transforming state entities into tenants
 - Privatization of public land (Italy (Adisson & Halbert 2022), France, (Artioli 2016) or the UK (Christophers 2019).



Research gap

- Although we know a lot about the economic shifts as well as organizational and institutional mechanisms that result in states treating their landed assets as opportunities for the generation of fiscal rent....
- ..the processes and techniques resulting in privatization remain relatively underexplored.
- A subset of real estate literature focuses on the identification of corporate real estate management practices into the public sector (Dent, 1997; French, 1994; Kaganova & Amoils, 2020).

The role of data in the the governance of public real estate

To grasp how state restructuring transforms the management of public property, we should pay attention to how data-driven governance techniques are used by central real estate agencies.

Paying attention to data infrastructures can help us understand decisions on asset retention, disposal and redevelopment across urban space. This is important as to understand the different possible outcomes of new new state property regimes beyond privatization alone.

Research aim

1. Investigate the role of data in decision-making processes in the governance of public real estate management in the Netherlands
2. Understand how data infrastructures mediate the privatization of public real estate

Methodology

- Qualitative case study focusing on how Dutch Central Real Estate Agency (RVB) and the Ministry of Defense deal with public real estate
- Review of policy documents, reports and internal memos from the RVB and Ministry of Defense
- Expert interviews with civil servants [preparation for workshop series].
- Builds on an institutional analysis of the formation of the RVB, looking at how data collection, sharing, and use in decision-making through thematic content analysis



Case background

- Central Dutch Real Estate Agency [RVB] was formed in 2014 with the task of '*managing public real estate and land owned by the state efficiently and effectively*'
- All national real estate was transferred to the RVB, **except for military properties.**
- The Ministry of Defense retains economic ownership of its own portfolio, yet operational tasks such as maintenance and construction are carried out by RVB

Military real estate in the Netherlands

- Training grounds, barracks, depots, airfields, and office spaces. Over 11,000 buildings and 34,000 hectares of land (0.8% of NL).
- High age of building stock (average +/- 40 years) results in significant maintenance costs
- Shrinking public budgets since 1989, (up until recent invasion of Ukraine). Consistent diversion of funds to immediate repairs rather than structural maintenance (***“bottomless pit of 300 million euro’s”***)
- Deteriorating conditions of building stock has resulted reprimands from the Ministry of Finance and National Court of Audit.
- The Ministry of Defense pursues a 40% reduction of its portfolio (in m²) (Strategic Real Estate Plan 2022). (CVV)

The process of privatizing military real estate

- Identification of surplus and underuse.
 - The Ministry of Defense creates a surplus by identifying properties that are no longer needed, or it wishes to get rid of. Properties are offered to other government departments or municipalities.
- Valuation of public property.
 - Unsold properties are transferred to RVB. RVB pays Defense the market value of the property
- Disposal and privatization.
 - RVB manages the final sale of the property on through Bidboek. Upon sale, RVB retains 10% of the market price.

Data positivism and public real estate

- The creation of central real estate agency demands the centralization of property and integrated data infrastructures on the performance public real estate
- Widely shared belief in "***Meten = weten***" – data on building characteristics, use patterns and costs should allow public organisations to increase the performance of their portfolio

Data fragmentation and the identification of surplus

- Fragmented data infrastructures prohibit integrated assessment of use, condition and value of military real estate
 - RVB and Defense have their own multiple data systems tracking real estate (SAP, ORACLE, OMS)
 - Different quarterly reports, depending on the operational task, are the main method of data exchange (*Opdrachtgeversconvenant*)
 - Maintenance data is often lacking,

Differences in logics of data collection between RVB and the Ministry of Defense

- RVB has a market mandate, focuses primarily on financial data, maintenance records, usage patterns, next to basic spatial characteristics
- Ministry of Defense is oriented towards operational readiness and costs.
- RVB carries out maintenance tasks for Defense, which matters for updating data on physical upkeep and building characteristics

Databases in use by the Ministry of Defense

Data infrastructure	Description	Possible Indicators
Basis Registratie Vastgoed (BRV)	Object and building data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gross floor area - Built area - Number of floors - Space usage categories - CAD drawings for planning
Vastgoed Informatie Systeem - Geo (VIS-Geo)	Geographic data of works and terrains, including topographical and environmental information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land use - Surface area - Topographical maps - (Underground) infrastructure details
Registratie Bouwdelen en Installaties (RBI)	Data on building parts and installations, focusing on inspection-required installations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inspection status of installations - Associated spaces - Specific installation details - Installation types

Tracking the 'performance' of public real estate

- **Ministry of Defense:** Focus on 'cost metrics [kostenkengetal]' and 'replacement value [vervangingswaarde].
 - This leads to a strategy focusing on immediate short-term and avoiding high maintenance costs.
- **RVB:** residual value [end of life-cycle worth, taking into account resale] or book value [according to accrual accounting value]
 - Directed towards future value of properties. This results in an inclination towards assetization and market-making capacity of public real estate.

Resistance to the integration consolidation of data infrastructures – ‘broodje speciaal’

- The Ministry of Defense recognizes that standardized, harmonized and real-time real estate data is desirable and an effective precondition for asset management.
- At the same time, Defensie expresses strong resistance to the integration of data infrastructures
 - *‘Broodje Speciaal’* [special sandwich]
 - Data sovereignty [*our buildings, our data*].

Everyday valuation practices to fill the gaps

- Integrated data across the portfolio would facilitate the valorization and commensuration of different public assets
- With military real estate, access to maintenance records are distributed, saved locally, or only accessible through one employee
- The lack of accurate real-time data across the portfolio means civil servants undertake single object assessments, which are then generalized for the entire portfolio (-> data cooking ?)

Resistance to integrated data infrastructures

Data ownership and infrastructural sovereignty:

- Defense insists that as the owner of the buildings, it should also control the data on its own infrastructures.

Operational and security concerns.

- Defense argues that critical information about personnel and assets is sensitive and must be protected. This clashes with RVB efforts to centralize data infrastructures on public real estate

-> Data infrastructures are an object of political contestation in processes of state restructuring

How is data used in decision-making over public real estate

- Attempted active portfolio management by central real estate agencies runs up against the operational demands of the military
- A lack of data means Defense often defaults to maintenance costs as primary input for disposal decision
- Object size, regulatory 'space', vicinity of other facilities and labor/mobility aspects could count as considerations
(Interview with DG AVB)

Concluding reflections (2)

- State restructuring and public real estate
 - State restructuring involves the implementation of corporate real estate management; performance benchmarking needs integrated data infrastructures.
 - Data informs processes of evaluation [*what is this object worth?*] and valorization [*what is it worth on the market?*] with respect to a highly heterogeneous real estate portfolio (95% classified internally as 'incourant', meaning no reference market transactions exist)
- Fragmented data infrastructures
 - New state property regimes require integrated data systems for effective asset management. These infrastructures are fragmented and incomplete because of intra-state conflict over data control.

Concluding reflections (2)

- Financialization of state real-estate
 - The Ministry of Defense's disposal decisions are primarily influenced by operational considerations [given data fragmentation] rather than fiscal rent (Haila 2018). However, public austerity may still result in an overall pattern of privatization.
- Opaque disposal strategies
 - The rationale behind public real estate disposal strategies remains opaque to the wider public. Public contention regarding the consequences of changing military real estate strategies is growing. Planning scholarship and practice should be more attentive to how states deal with their own real-state.