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RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY AND URBAN CHANGE IN THE RANDSTAD: Some (dis)similarities between Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague¹

Sako Musterd, Rein B. Jobse and Helen M. Kruythoff

1 Introduction

During the past two decades the population and its composition, and therefore the pattern of urbanization, in the Dutch Randstad has been far from stable. After a period of urbanization (until about 1960), unplanned suburbanization (1960-75) and planned suburbanization (1975-1980/85), a new phase seems to have begun. The rate of population decline in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, the three largest cities in the Netherlands, fell during the 1980s, and there was even some evidence of population growth.

One may suppose that this indicates the beginning of a new episode of urbanization in which the major cities will benefit most, an era in which significant migration flows will be reversed and so-called compact cities develop. Some observers argue that the growth figures prove that an increasing number of people prefer to live in large cities. Dieleman *et al.* (1989) have referred to the emergence of a "new urban *élan*", and others have suggested the possibility of re-urbanization (Van den Berg, 1987). If such a development is indeed taking place, there will be important social, cultural and economic consequences for society (involving, for example, a reduction in travelling distances, new opportunities for specialized shops, personal services and cultural events, etc.).

One reason to be cautious in assessing the structural character of processes of mobility is the fact that these processes are very difficult to explain. In the literature at least four explanations are often given: housing demand factors, housing supply factors, economic processes - structural as well as conjunctural - and the effects of policy (e.g. Bourne, 1981; Marcuse, 1989; and Ottens, 1990). In the case of the Netherlands, policy effects are thought to be of considerable importance. Reference has often been made to the successful growth centre policy of the mid-1970s and early 1980s to illustrate the potential importance of urban policy and housing policy. Success is (correctly or incorrectly) indicated by the number of people housed in the planned growth centres. It is probably this very confidence concerning the effects of policy instruments which has fuelled recent ideas about re-urbanization. During the 1980s new policies were

introduced by central government. They all aimed to strengthen the position of the larger cities; some observers expect mobility patterns to change accordingly. If these policies are effective, the result should be a reversal of the prevailing pattern of suburbanization.

The other factors mentioned may be even more important, however, and, because of this, even the most powerful policy instruments may not always have significant effects on the process of urbanization. It is well-known, for example, that demand factors cannot be neglected without risking a disruption in the housing market, and rising prices, or - in case of oversupply - without risking high vacancy rates. Such mechanisms can therefore frustrate policy goals.

In order to understand the situation better, it is necessary to describe the mobility processes and to analyse the background to these processes. Drawing on our earlier report, published as part of the Urban Networks Research Programme (Jobse *et al.*, 1990), we shall discuss a number of observations relevant to the issue of the potential for re-urbanization. The questions on which we have focused are:

- Which processes of migration and related urbanization can be identified in the case of The Hague, Amsterdam and Rotterdam (section 3)?
- What kind of changes occurred in the relationship between each of the three cities and their surrounding residential areas (section 4)?
- How should we interpret the processes described (section 5)?

2 Data

Our analyses are based on two data sets. The first contains data relating to the migration of individuals between Dutch municipalities. This data set, drawn up by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), also contains important demographic data. An advantage of this data set is the quality and range of the data available. The data are drawn from the official municipal population registers, which cover all migration between all (about 700) municipalities in the Netherlands. We analysed the data for 1975, 1980 and 1985.

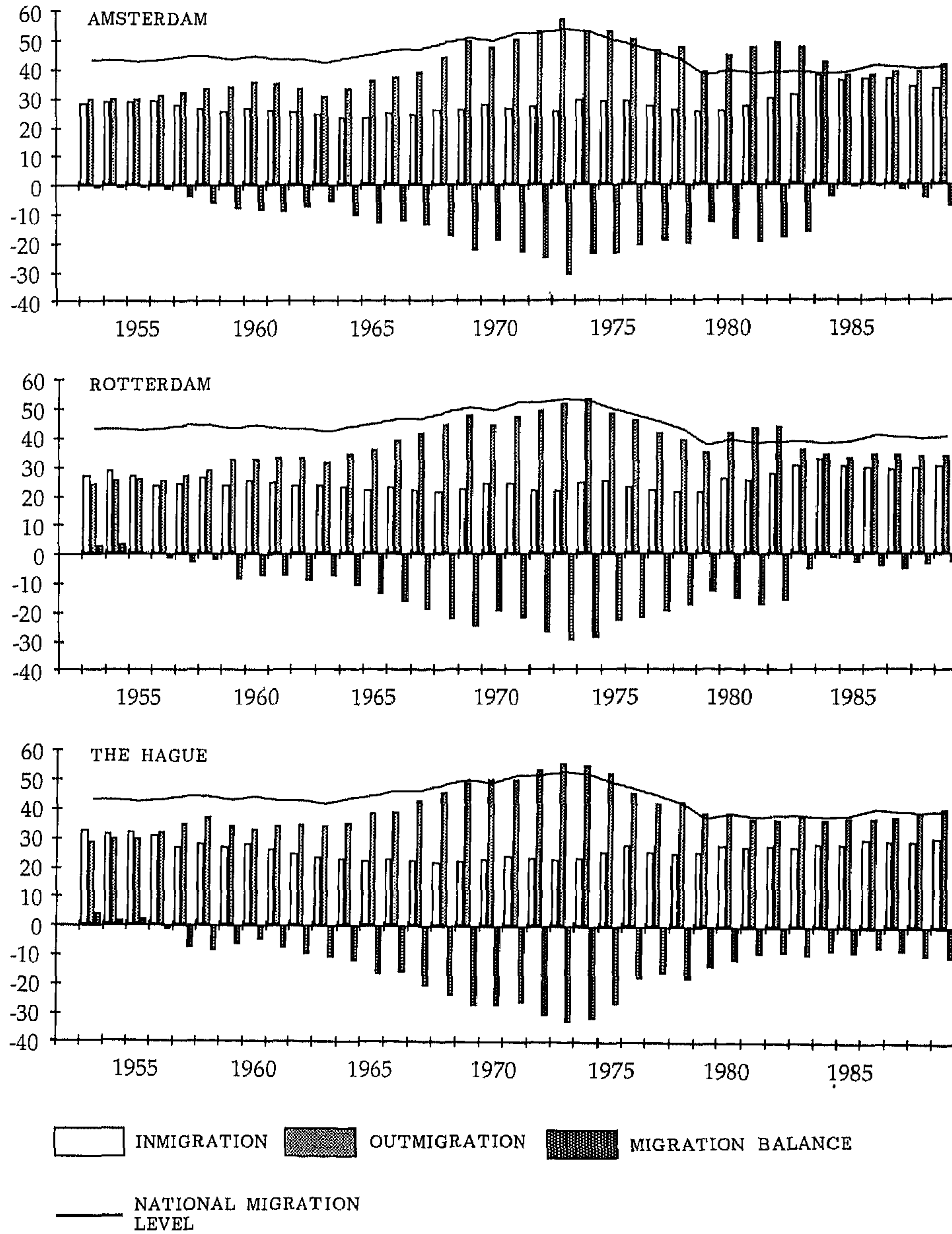
In this article we stress the demographic characteristics of migration; the data source just mentioned is thus the most important one for our study. Some socio-economic data were also required however. For these we used the 1985/86 *Woningbehoefteonderzoek 1985/86* (WBO) (Housing Needs Survey), which is a one per cent sample survey of households (CBS, 1987).

3 Migration processes

The pattern of migration to and from the municipalities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague shows us the general character of the various stages of urbanization (Figure 1).

The rate of outmigration from each city is more variable than the rate of

Figure 1 Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague: immigration, outmigration and net migration, per '000 inhabitants, 1953-88



immigration. Only in the early 1980s did the rate of immigration rise slightly, especially in Amsterdam.

A long-term trend of significant and increasing population decline due to suburbanization, which started in the late 1950s, came to an end by 1973, the beginning of the first oil crisis. Between 1975 and 1985 the rate of outmigration decreased by 35-37 per cent in each of the three cities analysed in this study (the corresponding average for the Netherlands as a whole was less than 18 per cent). The migration rate was highest in 1979.

It is evident that in the 1980s the rate of net migration was extremely low in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague. In particular, if international migration is added to the flows described, these cities currently appear to have a stable or even growing population. It should be noted here that there are only slight differences between Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague in this respect, although the rate of outmigration in The Hague continues to exceed the rate of immigration to a greater extent than is the case in either Amsterdam or Rotterdam.

Apart from the size of the population, the population composition of these cities has changed drastically. Because of a lengthy period of selective migration (during which families with children have been moving out of the large cities and single persons moving in), and because of changes in the process of household formation, the household composition of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague has changed; these cities now contain many more households consisting of solitaires or two persons, more single-parent households, and more double-income households.

Young people especially seem to be attracted to the largest cities. No less than 65 per cent of those migrating to Amsterdam in 1985 were aged 15-29. The elderly were also attracted to these cities. The number of elderly persons leaving Amsterdam and The Hague, in particular, fell significantly, while the rate of immigration rose. In the country as a whole, the migration rate of those aged 65 and over was 9 per cent less in 1985 than in 1975, while in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague the rate of immigration rose by 26, 29 and 58 per cent respectively.

Those migrating to Rotterdam and The Hague appear to be relatively well-off. The average income and educational level of those (non-students) moving to these cities was higher than the corresponding levels for those residents already living in these cities (Jobse *et al.*, 1990).

4 Changes in the relationship between the cities and their surrounding residential areas

In our analyses we studied the changing relationship between Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague and their surrounding suburbs, other municipalities in the Randstad, growth centres, and - to gain some insight into long-distance

migration - the changing relationship between these cities and regions beyond the Randstad.

Apart from being able to demonstrate a general reduction in the numbers migrating (Figure 1), it was also evident that there was a locational specificity in the direction of the migration flows. In particular, migration to areas outside the Randstad declined in the 1980s (Figure 2a). Most interestingly, from the early 1980s onwards the rate of migration to the suburbs around Amsterdam and The Hague recovered somewhat; this was true of migration to other municipalities in the Randstad too (Figures 2b and 2c). Migration from Rotterdam to the surrounding suburbs was an exception, however; it continued to decline significantly between 1980 and 1985. This development is associated with the greater level of outmigration from Rotterdam to growth centres (although there was, at the same time, a partly compensating flow of migrants from these growth centres to the city).

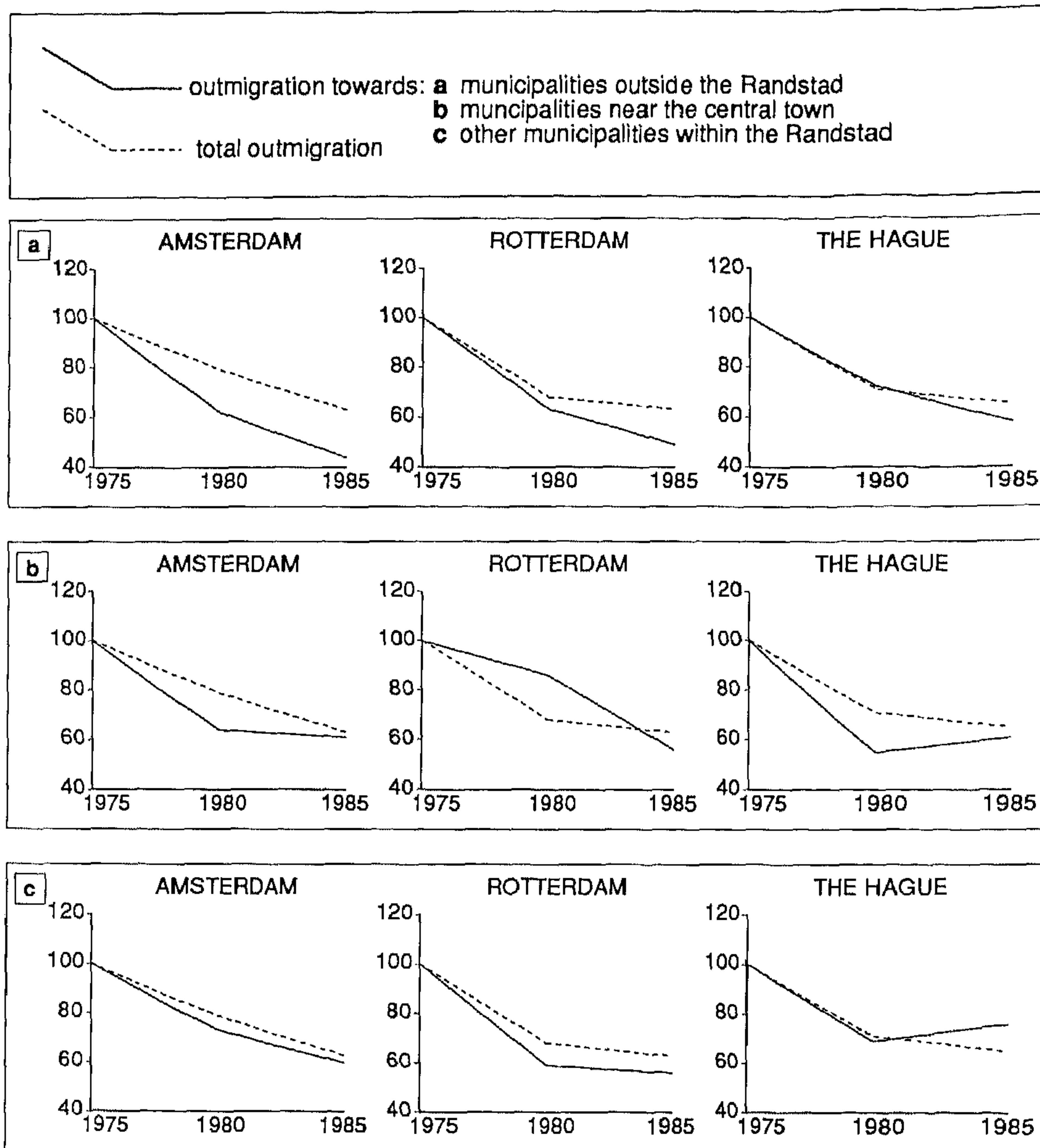
Because of the number of people moving from The Hague to the suburbs, and the decrease in the number moving from the suburbs to the Hague, there was significant net migration from the city to the suburbs in 1985, after a period in which the level of net migration had fallen (Figure 3). In the case of Amsterdam, net migration from the city to the suburbs was less significant. It should not be forgotten, however, that in addition to migration between these cities and their suburbs, indirect migration flows are important. Jansen and Van Noortwijk (1987) have shown the significance of two-stage migration from the cities to growth centres and then subsequently to the suburbs.

In general, the level of migration to the growth centres peaked around 1980. Since then, the numbers moving from Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague to the growth centres have declined (Figure 4). This is reflected in the relative underrepresentation of higher-income groups moving from cities like Amsterdam and The Hague to their respective growth centres. One of the results is the decline in the importance of families with children in migration flows from the cities to the growth centres; the number of solitaires (old and young) moving has become a significant element in total migration flows.

In conclusion, the growth of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague during the 1980s can most clearly be related to developments in municipalities located outside the Randstad and those in the growth centres; migration from the cities to the suburbs continued to grow.

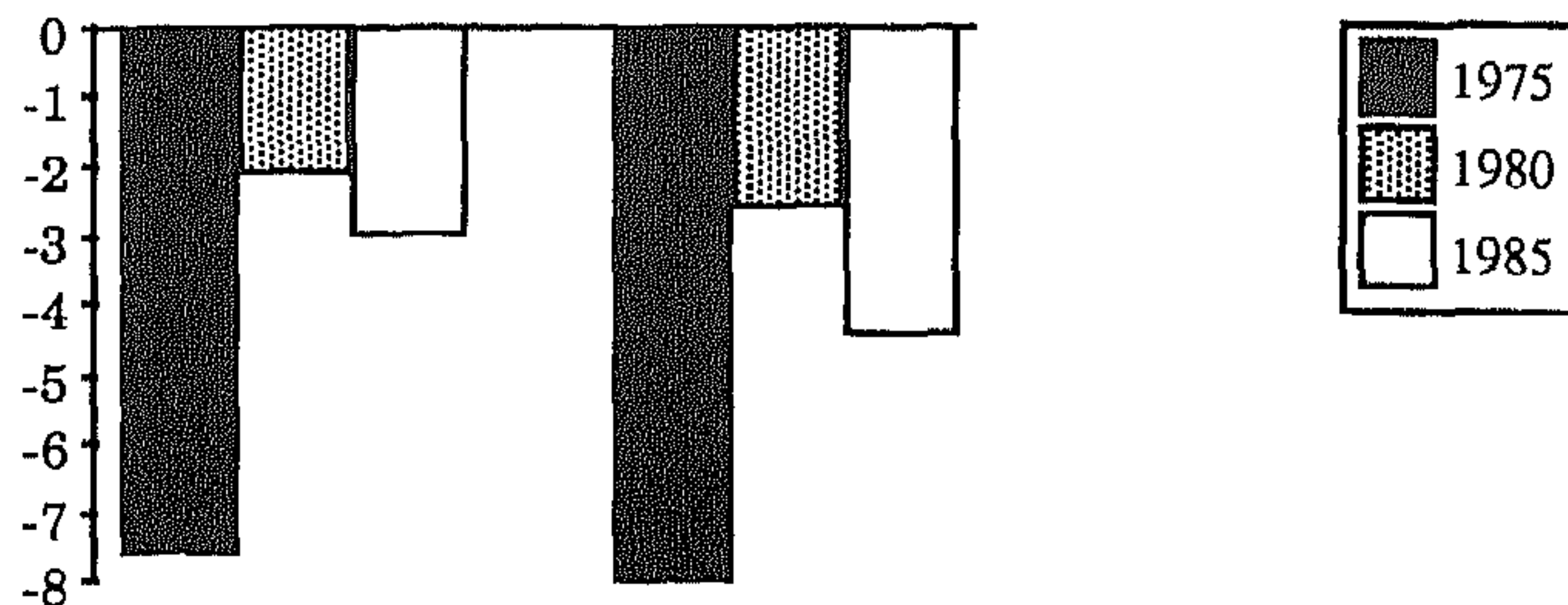
We have calculated the numbers of the elderly migrating from the three major cities of the Randstad. Growth centres associated with Amsterdam and Rotterdam are important destinations for those elderly who move. In general, the association between elderly people and cities is clear; if we focus on the relationship between these cities and growth centres, however, we see that in 40 per cent of cases where an elderly person moves from one of these cities, it is to a growth centre; no other age group shows such a propensity to move to growth areas (Jobse *et al.*, 1990).

Figure 2 Changes in total outmigration from Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, 1975-80 and 1975-85 (1975=100)
a. to municipalities outside the Randstad
b. to suburbs around the city
c. to suburbs located further away but within the Randstad



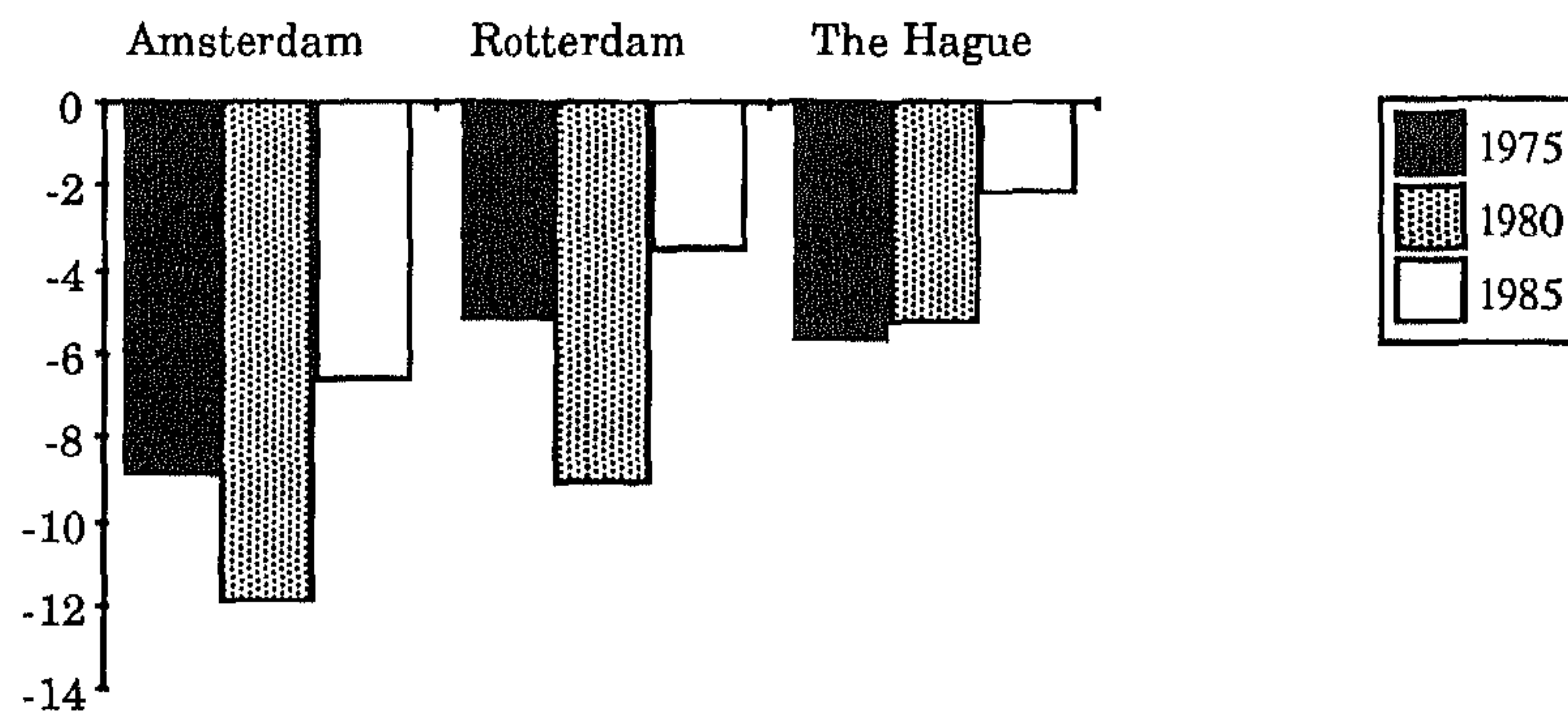
A growing number of people are moving from the growth centres to the major Randstad cities. These do not only include those who move to the cities for reasons of work or study. The number moving to the cities is increasing in all age groups.

Figure 3 Net migration to The Hague from (left) the suburbs and from (right) more distant suburbs within the Randstad, 1975, 1980, and 1985, per '000 inhabitants



Source: CBS

Figure 4 Net migration to Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague from their growth centres, in 1975, 1980 and 1985, per '000 inhabitants



Source: CBS

5 Interpretation

A number of factors often drawn on to explain the process of migration were outlined earlier (economic factors, policy factors, changing demand, changing supply). We have limited our empirical analyses of the relationship between these factors and migration. It is questionable, for example, whether it is even possible to isolate the effects of policy instruments and economic factors. The preliminary conclusions based on our analyses are presented below.

Economic factors

One of the clearest relationships is between economic conditions and residential mobility. Economic conditions are, of course, affected by a whole range of factors, including, for example, the housing construction programme. These

factors too, therefore, are related to the process of migration.

From 1973, the year which marked the beginning of the first oil crisis, there was clearly a great deal of uncertainty about the prospects for economic growth. Partly as a consequence, the national housing construction programme was cut back at the beginning of the 1970s. Both of these phenomena led to a decline in residential mobility. As a result of economic difficulties, the second oil crisis in 1978, increases in construction costs, a rapidly increasing rate of unemployment, and a considerable rise in interest rates, the housing market collapsed (Jobse and Musterd, 1989: 244). Because the owner-occupied sector was concentrated in the suburbs, the collapse of the housing market led to a decline in the numbers migrating to suburban municipalities from the major cities of the Randstad. Economic growth in the mid-1980s (Rutten, 1986) led to a corresponding increase in the numbers moving to the suburbs during this period.

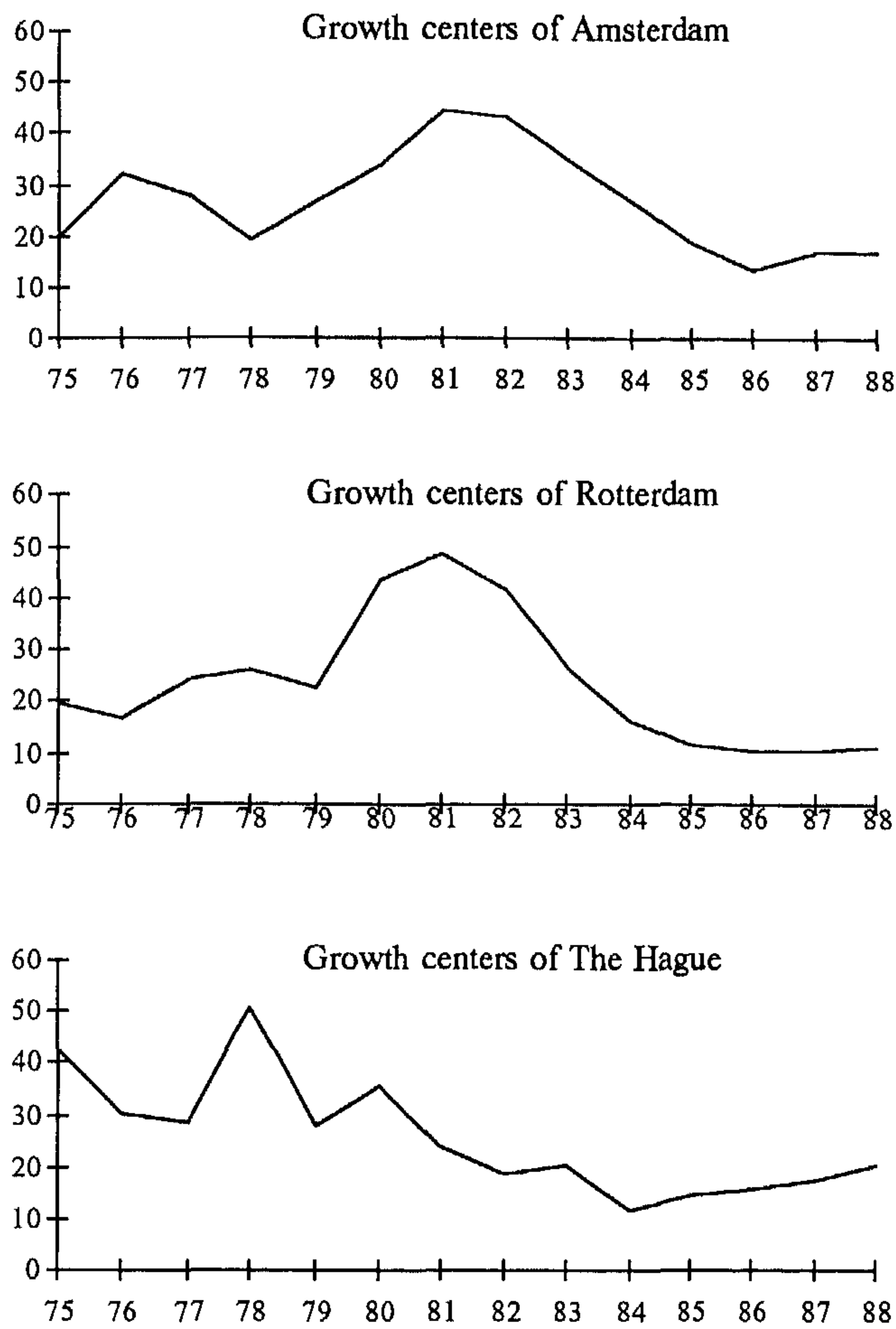
Policy effects

Other factors were also important. Environmental policy, for instance, can affect the level and direction of migration flows. Government policy was eventually committed to promoting growth centres as a way of stemming unplanned suburbanization. The cities themselves encouraged people to move to these growth centres. Around 1980 the development of these growth centres peaked. During the first half of the 1980s, however, faced with the prospect of the significant decline of the major Randstad cities, the government shifted resources away from the growth centres to the traditional urban centres as part of its compact-city policy (Constandse, 1989). This implied a reduction in the number of new houses being built in the growth centres (Figure 5) and an increase in the number being built in the cities. The growth centres in fact grew rapidly for a period of only a few years.

The effects of government policy are not always so clear though. For example, in all the growth centres in which the government deemed continued growth to be desirable, the rate of net migration to these areas declined, just as it did in those growth areas where growth was no longer a priority (Jobse *et al.*, 1990). Further, the compact-city policy was introduced after net migration from the major cities had begun to decline, as a result, among other things, of economic factors and changing patterns of housing demand - a case of "the policy following the trend".

Recent policies of local authorities in the major cities have been less concerned with stimulating population growth as such, and more with promoting the urban economy. As part of this, they have shifted the emphasis in house building towards the construction of housing for higher-income groups, and they have begun to promote the gentrification of parts of their cities, a process which had already begun in the private housing sector in the 1970s. Rotterdam has been particularly successful in providing a significant proportion of its new housing for sale.

Figure 5 Rate of new housing construction in the growth centres associated with Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, 1975-88, per '000 inhabitants



Supply-side factors

In theory, one of the most direct stimuli to urban growth could be an increase in the supply of housing by the building of new houses. There was, for example, a boom in house building in Amsterdam in the early 1980s. This may be one reason for the greater numbers migrating to the Dutch capital during that period. In cities like The Hague, where the lack of suitable land precluded large-scale housing construction, there was no comparable increase in the numbers migrating to the city.

Though the construction of new dwellings may have some effect, it is not the main cause of urban growth. A substantial proportion of new housing is replacement housing for those dwellings which have been demolished, or is absorbed by the fall in household sizes. The larger cities in particular have a relatively old housing stock and therefore a relatively high rate of demolition. In Amsterdam, for example, in 1989 57 per cent of dwellings were pre-war (in the Netherlands the corresponding figure was 29 per cent). In Amsterdam it is necessary to build the equivalent of 1 per cent of the total housing stock in order just to replace those dwellings demolished and to offset the effects of declining household sizes. The average rate of new construction in the three major cities is only around 1 to 1.5 per cent of the total housing stock.

Furthermore, another important factor is the number of people leaving the cities to settle elsewhere; this is clearly related to the number of dwellings being built outside these cities. In an analysis of this relationship during the period 1970 and 1987, the correlation coefficient, r , was calculated to be .91. The correlation between migration from the large cities and the number of dwellings built within these cities was much weaker: $r = -.51$ (Jobse and Musterd, 1989: 249).

Demand-side factors

The evidence is growing that many (young) new urban households are likely to stay in the major cities because the residential urban environment accords with their urban lifestyles (Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars and Vijgen, 1990). These new households are responsible particularly for increasing demand in the inner-city areas. Part of the growth of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, and the "new *élan*" noted by some commentators, can be ascribed to this phenomenon. These households may be expected to have a lower propensity to move to the suburbs.

In addition, there is evidence that the elderly are tending to re-evaluate the cities as a residential environment, perhaps because of the availability and quality of cultural, recreational and other facilities (De Wijs-Mulkens *et al.*, 1989), and perhaps also because of the pressure on housing demand elsewhere.

When the elderly do move from the major cities, it is mainly to the growth centres. The fact that housing in growth centres is generally cheaper than in other suburban towns and the fact that it enables them to preserve a degree of geographical proximity to their relatives are two possible reasons why the elderly migrate to these growth centres.

6 Conclusion

Theoretically, four scenarios are possible in the near future: re-urbanization, as a result of which the major cities will grow; unplanned suburbanization, as a result of which the suburbs will grow most rapidly; planned suburbanization, in which

new growth centres will have to be developed, possibly close to the major cities of the Randstad, and (for environmental reasons) with good rail connections to economic centres in the country; or some combination of these.

Our findings suggest that it is the fourth scenario which is the most likely, and that there will be a degree of suburbanization and re-urbanization in the 1990s. We believe that economic development and the rise of new urban-oriented households will be the principal factors accounting for future changes in migration flows.

Economic conditions were relatively prosperous during the second half of the 1980s, so a necessary condition for suburbanization seems to have been fulfilled. The close relationship between rising incomes and the desire to own a home in the suburbs (which parallels the situation during the 1950s and 1960s) will be a major factor in the process of suburbanization.

Suburbanization, especially in those areas on the periphery of the major cities and in municipalities with a high degree of owner-occupied housing, will still be dependent on economic growth. Because of this, changes in environmental policy, like the switch from an emphasis on growth centres to one on compact cities, do not only benefit the major cities; they may also influence the relationship between the older suburban municipalities around the major cities and the smaller suburban municipalities further away. In other words, economic processes may "disturb" policy goals. It is therefore not surprising that Conijn (1989: 26-29) and Boelhouwer and Van der Heijden (1989) recently noted that the suburbs were once again growing, despite government attempts to restrict suburban growth.

The 1990s should also see the growth of the major cities in the Randstad, as a result of the rise of new urban households and their preference for urban lifestyles. There should therefore be a growth in the size of the population in the central parts of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague on account of the growing number of diversified small households and their preference for centrally-located dwellings.

The direction of the migration flows resulting from economic growth and the housing demands of the new urban households is identical during times of economic recession; in times of economic growth, however, these two factors will lead to opposing migration flows. This leads one to question the effectiveness of government policy. Ottens has noted in this respect that "It has also become clear that an urban policy which creates spatial opportunities for urban growth is able to guide urban development. However, this seems to be more true in periods of stagnation than during times of abundant growth" (Ottens, 1990: 61).

We suggest that in the early 1990s there will be a new (temporary) phase characterized by less planned suburbanization and a growing demand for inner-city housing. A substantial degree of re-urbanization involving the major cities in their entirety cannot be expected. A huge number of dwellings have to be built over the next two decades (485,000 dwellings have to be built in the Randstad in the period 1995-2015 (Alders, 1990: 25)). These dwellings cannot all be located in the major cities of the Randstad. New attractive growth centres will therefore

have to be developed soon if the return to unplanned suburbanization is to be avoided.

Note

- (1) Based on an analysis by the same authors, the results of which were published in: *Stadsgewesten in beweging; migratie naar en uit de vier grote steden* (Dynamic daily urban systems; residential mobility to and from the four large cities), a project of the Dutch Urban Networks Research Program (Stedelijke Netwerken) 1990.

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