Foreword

This book presents knowledge gained over the last 15 years developing new sustainable housing projects in the Netherlands. This development could be said to have started with the opening of Ecolonia in 1993, the first large-scale housing project demonstrating sustainable building. Many lessons have been learned and a great deal of experience has been gained since then.

Colleagues abroad have often asked about the Dutch experience and knowledge, but until now there was no comprehensive overview available in English. Eleven Dutch specialists in sustainable building, both practitioners and researchers, occasionally working together advising foreign projects, decided to collect and document their experience in a compact and accessible form.

The main aim of this book is to show the importance of not thinking in measures, but taking a conceptual approach, which leaves room for different solutions within a clear context of targets. A second objective is to show that important decisions have to be taken at the very first moment, before the architect draws a line: The stakeholders should be aware of the targets and agree about them, thus avoiding making choices which could limit possibilities later, or only be changed at high cost and effort.

Some topics have not been fully addressed in this book. These include spatial (building) planning, land management (for competing uses such as food, materials, biomass, housing, etc), transport, and social sustainability. It is also currently recognised that the existing building/housing stock is the most important topic to address if we are to reduce the environmental burden in an absolute way. Though this is referred to in this book, it requires a separate approach.

This publication has been put together in the hope that many more people can gain a better understanding of how we have managed so far in the Netherlands, bearing in mind that there is still a great deal to be done before a real shift towards balanced sustainability takes place.

Ronald Rovers -- November 2007