

From the rise to demise

Lessons Detroit Michigan didn't learn from the downfall of Enkhuizen, The Netherlands



Photo 1: two lonely 17th century warehouses on the wharf just before they too would disappear as taken by A.C.M. van Rossem around 1950 (courtesy of Vereniging Oud Enkhuizen) (corresponds to number 5).

By Daniël Hoenderdos (3699390), Utrecht University, 2014

"It is an honorable thought,
And makes one lift one's hat,
As one encountered gentlefolk
Upon a daily street,

That we've immortal place,
Though pyramids decay,
And kingdoms, like the orchard,
Flit russetly away."
~ Emily Dickinson

Introduction

The Canadian urban geographer Brian Doucet (2014) recently pointed out that: "While Detroit may be an extreme case, the issues it is dealing with are not unique, and the city offers powerful lessons for other places around the world dealing with economic and population decline."

This is indeed an interesting thought. In 2013, Detroit became the largest city in the USA ever to declare bankruptcy, but it certainly wasn't the first city to experience a spectacular downfall. And it will most certainly not be the last.

This paper aims to compare the spectacular rise and equally momentous fall of the Motor city in the 20th century to the rise and fall of 17th century Enkhuizen, The Netherlands. This paper

will show that although both cases are thousands of miles and centuries apart, the historical parallels are uncannily similar. First, a description of Enkhuizen is given, relative to the historical context of its heyday. Secondly, this paper illustrates the similarities in the spatial effects of these processes on the urban form of Enkhuizen which are in turn compared to Detroit.

A city on the rise

Not many international urban geographers have ever heard of the Dutch provincial town of Enkhuizen (see map 1). Why would they? With a population of only 18,395 (CBS, 2014) living together on only 12.42 square kilometers the sleepy historical town can hardly be described as an urban laboratory. All of that lies in the past.

Not unlike Detroit in the fifties of the 20th century, which by then rivaled Los Angeles as

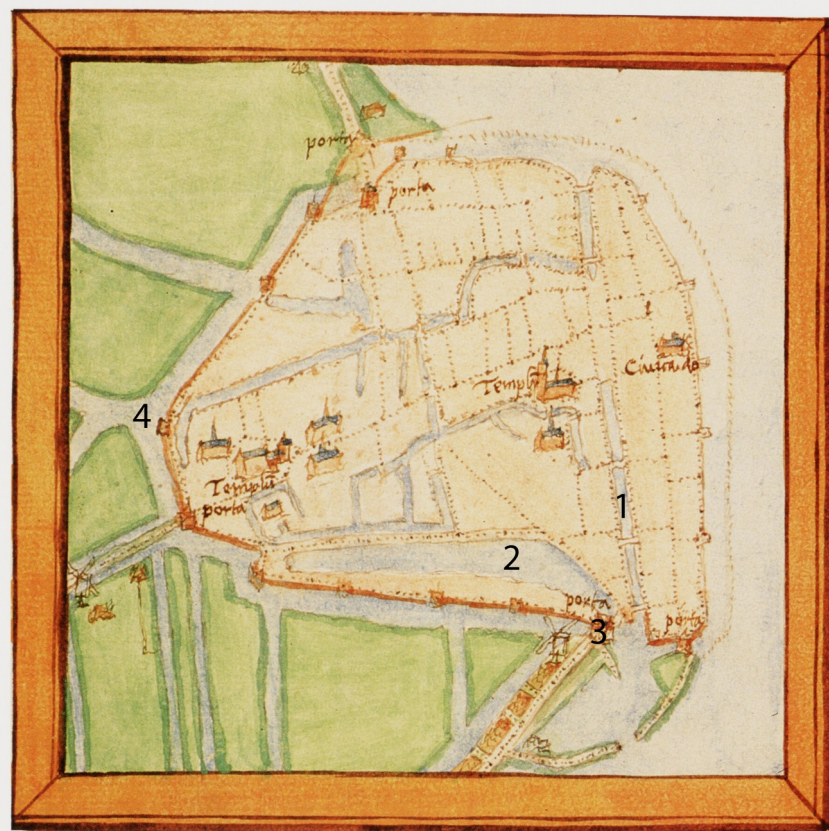


Map 1: Modern day Enkhuizen is located in the Western part of the Netherlands at 52° 42' latitude and 5° 18' longitude.

the third city of the USA, in the year 1620 Enkhuizen was the Dutch Republic's second city. Both cities were in the top of their urban hierarchy, and both withered like a plant that is not given enough water.

If at first glance you presume that the first similarity between Enkhuizen and Detroit Michigan is a characteristic of site – both cities are on the shores of a lake – you are mistaken. First of all, the IJsselmeer hasn't always been a lake but used to be the Zuiderzee ('Southern sea', the lake was created by building the 32 kilometer long Afsluitdijk in 1932 by Cornelis Lely to prevent future floods). What is also interesting to note is that the Zuiderzee had little to do with the founding of Enkhuizen in the first place. As Willemsen (1988) notes: "Crossings of land- or waterways and natural harbors [...] are common locations where villages can grow into cities. Enkhuizen is not situated on such a place. The city arose – perhaps only possible in The Netherlands – on a crossing of dikes." In fact, there is no natural harbor in Enkhuizen – all of the infrastructure is man made.

A lot can be written about Enkhuizen in the late medieval period, and a lot is outside of the scope of this

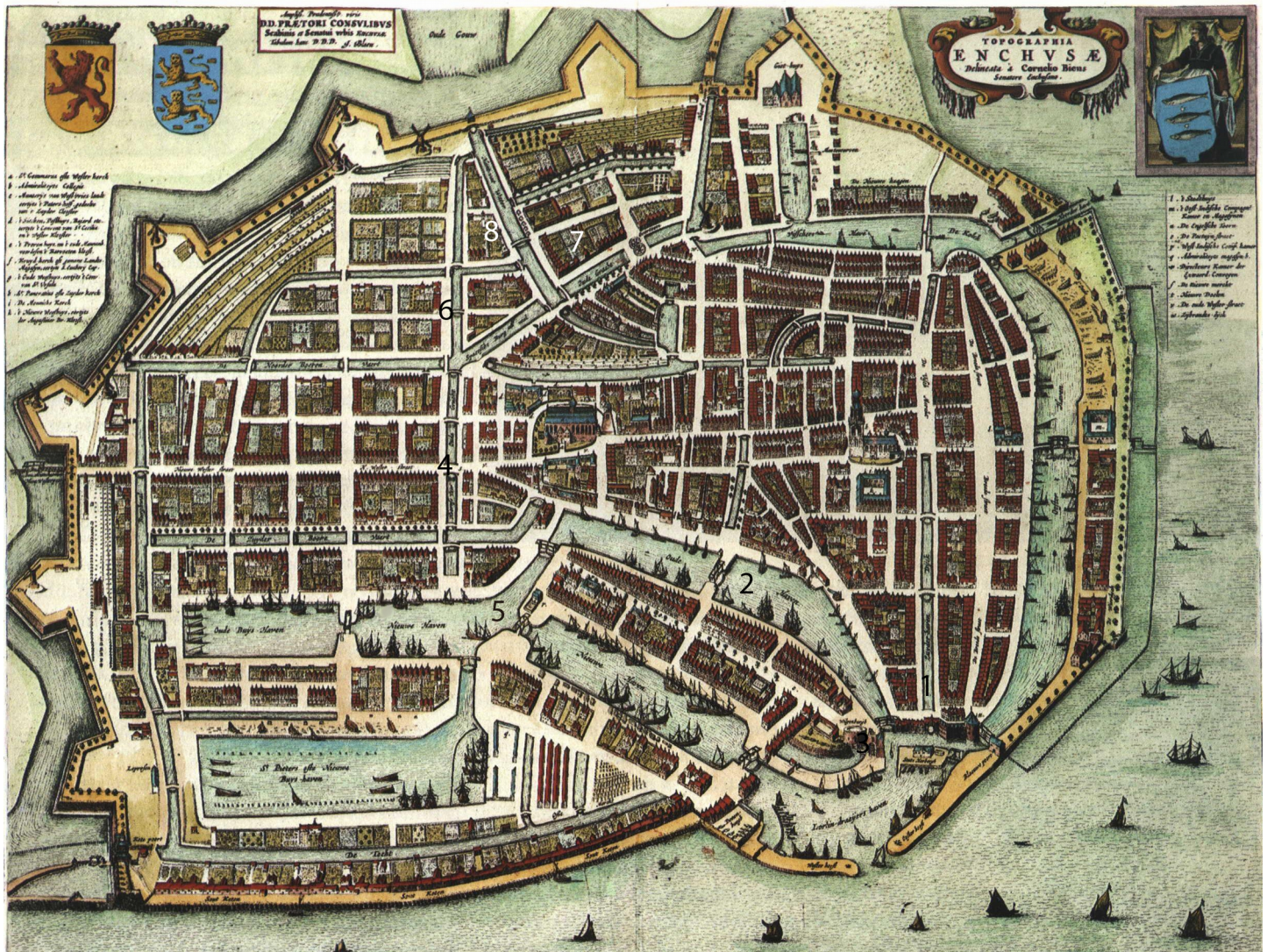


Map 2: Enkhuizen \pm 1560 by Jacob van Deventer, showing the inner city with the already partly closed old harbor (1) and the freshly dug herring harbor (2) near the famous Drommedaris defense tower (3). Number 4 is the nowadays 'Oude Gracht' which separates the medieval part of Enkhuizen with the renaissance part in map 3.

paper. Something that has to be considered if we want to describe the spectacular rise of Enkhuizen during the Dutch golden age however, is the population. An estimate of the population in 1398 is given by Ramaer (1921) who presumes it to be around 1,900 souls based on the 150 men who had to serve duke Albrecht in his war against the Friezen. By 1514 this is estimated to be 3,300 (Brouwer, 1938). This is before the old fisherman's harbor (1 in the maps) is built. The oldest map of Enkhuizen is drawn by Jacob van Deventer somewhere between 1557 – 1560 (see map 2) which is considered a reliable map of this period. By 1560, Enkhuizen is already a prosperous town, fruitfully trading with the cities around the Baltic sea. But not by a long shot is it as prosperous as six decades later (see map 3 by Joan Blaeu), where it even has its own chamber of the VOC and WIC – the two most influential chambers of commerce with both the East- and the West Indies.

Estimates of the population in Enkhuizen

vary from at least 20,000 to 80,000, however this last figure is referred to the realm of fable by most reliable scholars. Even if we take the reasonably conservative Westfrisian census of 1622 which counted 20,967 (Van Dillen, 1940) people as our main source, the growth comes to a spectacular 635.4%. (By comparison: in 1900 Detroit measured 285,704 people, and at its zenith 1,849,569 (Gibson, Campbell; Kay, Jung, 2005) a staggering growth of 647.4%.) Map 3 shows Enkhuizen at the zenith of its economic might.



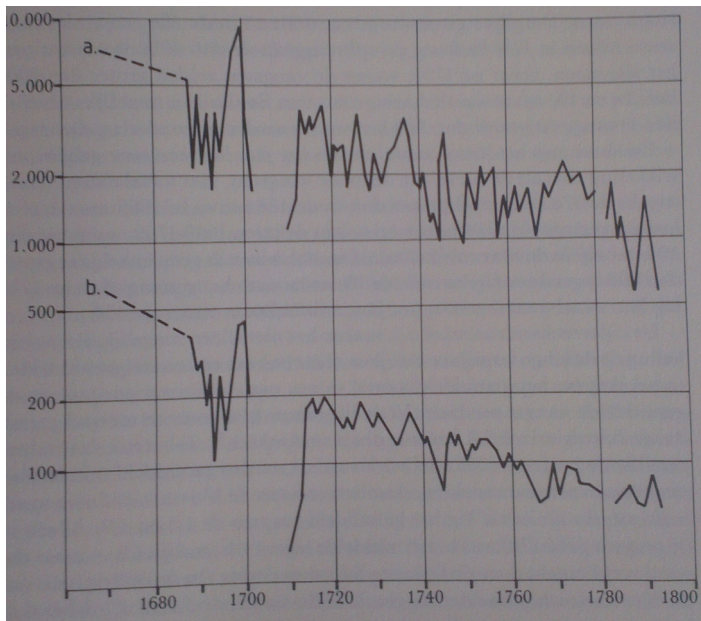
Map 3, Enkhuizen by Joan Blaeu in 1649. Numbers correspond to the respective positions in map 2: number one is the old harbor, number 2 the herring harbor, 3 is the renewed Drommedaris and 4 is the Oude Gracht. The other numbers correspond with the photographs that have been taken: 5 is the waigat, 6 is the Molenweg, 7 the only remaining 17th century house in de Boerenhoek and 8 corresponds with the urban farm.

Like the growth in Detroit that was obviously based on car manufacturing, the growth of Enkhuizen is also the result of one single product. It may not surprise the reader to find that in water rich North-Holland, fish had been a livelihood for centuries. During the 15th century however, the Dutch North Sea fishery changed due to four major changes (Boelmans Kranenburg, 1979): firstly a novel procedure of conservation called gibbing (which involves making a small incision under the herring's gills and so removing the animals intestines before putting it on salt) was invented. Now that it was possible to conserve the fish, it became possible to fish in the northernly waters on the recently developed herring busses. Herring fishery became known as 'the big fishery' in contrast to 'the little fishery' which was used to refer to fishing on the nearby waterways. The third factor was the invention of the large herring net in nearby Hoorn around 1416, and the final factor was the migration of the Swedish herring shoals which led to an economic devastation (a theme we will soon come back too).

A lot of literature has been written about the Enkhuizer herring industry, but unfortunately there is not a lot of hard data when it comes to the amount of busses, and fish loads that were produced. Thanks to Willemsen who studied primary sources in the Westfries Archive, graphs 1 and 2 (next page) show the importance of herring in Enkhuizen during the golden age. Especially graph 2 shows the importance: of the roughly 25,000 inhabitants, around 5,000 of them were directly employed as a fisherman. That comes to 20% of the entire population (mind you: this is not the labor force!). By comparison: according to Thomas J. Sugrue (2004) 'by mid-century 214,000 Detroit men worked as blue collar manufacturing jobs' – which comes to 11.6% of the population. This number includes however, all manufacturing jobs in Detroit. Suffice to say that if we include all jobs in Enkhuizen that were connected to fishery (shipyards, sailmakers, net makers, salt works and the like)

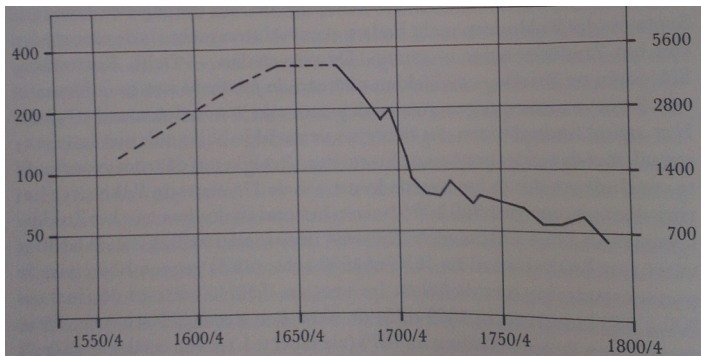
the number of 20% will be much higher.

Graph 1: herring fishery in Enkhuizen, 1669 – 1795.
Source: Willemsen



line a: total catch of herring in loads
line b: total annual voyages made by the herring busses

Graph 2: Global employment trends in the Enkhuizer herring fleet, five yearly averages 1550 – 1800. Source: Willemsen



y-axis showing the amount of herring busses and the
z-axis showing the amount of jobs

Aside from herring, also trade and freight shipping were a large part of Enkhuizens economy. Until 1625, Enkhuizen was the most important city in Westfriesland on most trade routes (Boon, 2009). For a while, together with neighboring Hoorn it was even more important than Amsterdam. Just like Detroit, where Henry Ford raised wages to \$5 per hour, wages in Enkhuizen rose faster than prices. This leads to another interesting similarity between both cities: the economic growth that results from the industry sets a dramatic immigration in motion. In Detroit, a steady flow of (mostly African-American) workers from the south upsets the local social order – in Enkhuizen similar backwash effects can be analyzed.

Precise numbers for Enkhuizens immigration could not be retrieved, but it is known that in Amsterdam, for example, two thirds of the grooms were not born in the city (Knotter & Luiten van Zanden, 1987). This immigration was desperately needed by the city, since inner city mortality rates were high and definitely higher than the birth rate (Boon, 2009). A substantial group of immigrants were from Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein where people were Lutheran, which was a problem in the religious turmoil that swept the Republic ever since 1568. The religious nuances of Lutheranism and the Dutch Reformed are beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to point out that to the people involved, they were very important.¹ This religious divide became especially important after the quarrels between the remonstrants and the

counter remonstrant (which was basically about how strict people had to interpret the holy scriptures). In short: these religious quarrels were undoubtedly entwined with the political situation in the Republic. The Lutherans picked the side of the moderate remonstrant and influential political figure Johan van Oldebarneveltdt. (moderate), who lost and was decapitated. Suffice to say the counter remonstrants were strict. The interesting story on the (troubles with the) founding of the Enkhuizer Lutheran church (Broers & Broers, 1981) clearly shows that even though the Republic preached a formal freedom of religion, the everyday practice comprised of petty harassment. Also, like the blacks in fifties Detroit, immigrants in the Republic were second class citizens. In fact, in the Republic, it was very hard for immigrants to build a life because the Dutch guilds and citizensystems remain closed to them (Van der Linden, 2011). Of course, the comparison between the racial tensions in Detroit and the religious tensions in Enkhuizen is like comparing apples to custard. First, there is the matter of scale, and secondly there is the social-economic and spatial consequence of these immigration processes that have shaped Detroit to a far, far larger extent than the Lutherans ever did in Enkhuizen. Of course, the way car mobility and suburbanization further shaped Detroit into the vastly segregated city it remains today were simply not an issue in Enkhuizen. The point that this small paragraph aims to make, is that a city that grows by over 600% is due to attract minorities, be it

¹ The *Historica Ecclesiastica*, a 17th century book written by the Lutheran vicar and son of a Danish immigrant, mentions the wish by reformed christians to sue their 'develish' counterparts.

dissenters, or ethnic minorities. The way cities handle the import of diversity can either accelerate growth (Toronto for example), or become a precursor for problems.

A city in demise



Photo 2 (number 7 in the map) showing the only original 17th century house left in the Renaissance part of Enkhuizen. It is located on the Venuslaan.

In the 'renaissance part' of Enkhuizen (which hasn't been developed in van Deventer's time, but is mapped by, only one single house remains (photo 2, number 7). All of the other original houses have been teared down. The debris from the houses was worth more than the actual house itself, and for quite a while this trade in debris was the main source of income in Enkhuizen. Like we see in Detroit, where a lot of vacants are being deconstructed and old factories being scavanged for scrap metal or other valuable materials.

As a result, Enkhuizen shrunk quite substantially in size.

When we compare Blaeu's map from 1649 with the map of the cadastre in 1832 (see map 4), we notice something spectacular. In 1840, the entire city is made up of only 1026 houses whilst at the time of Bleau's map, this was approximately 4200, a decrease of 409%. The population reached a minimum around 1840 when Enkhuizen was a home to 4988 people (De Vries, 1987), a decrease of 500% - a number that more than twice as high as the roughly 225% decrease that can be calculated for Detroit). The 'Guide to Enkhuizen and it's surroundings with a description of the monuments and sights' describes the inner city as having 'a village like character':

"It is intersected by canals, roads and avenues in the midst of fields, gardens and orchards. Some farmsteads elevate their high pointed roofs to Westfrisian likings above the trees." (Brouwer, 1903)

Photo's 3 and 4 illustrate this quote. In 1832, when map 4 was drawn, the inner city of Enkhuizen held over 19 acres of field, 8.8 acres of orchard and 4.5 acres of garden. Photo 5 and 6 show two of the farmsteads mentioned by Brouwer that were heavily used in the process of 'urban farming'.



Map 4: Cadastre map 1832. Between ± 1670 and 1830 Enkhuizen lost roughly two thirds of it's buildings.



Photo 3: Molenweg Enkhuizen, 1900 as taken by A. Dekema (courtesy of Vereniging Oud Enkhuizen)



Photo 4: Molenweg Enkhuizen, 2014.



Photo 5: An inner city farmstead (number 8 in the maps). The return of agricultural functions to inner city Enkhuizen has dubbed the renaissance part of Enkhuizen 'De Boerenhoek' – which literally translates into 'The farmers corner'. Certain street names are derived from these functions: Noorder Boerenvaart (Northern farmers canal), Exterpad (Magpie path) and Hoenderpad (Fowl path) for example.

The same process of reallocating vacant land by agricultural activities can be seen in Detroit, where all sorts of locally grown vegetables and flowers can be bought on the revived Eastern Market, and there is even a commercial forestry company (Hantz Woodlands) 'transforming blight to beauty as vacant, abandoned properties are converted to fields for new agricultural production' as they claim.

For agricultural functions to exist within cities is nothing new. In fact, farms have a long history of being within cities, most of the times because the city grew and encapsulated the farm. Another reason can be that the city has always had an agricultural function within its limits, and the urban and agricultural functions have always existed next to each other.

Both of these reasons can be rejected in the case of both Detroit and Enkhuizen. In both cities, the reason for the agricultural functions within the city limit, is the retreat of urban functions. Both cities have experienced a rapid growth and large sprawl. After the decline, large surfaces of uninhabited terrain became available for agricultural functions. In Enkhuizen, this was mostly cattle breeding, in Detroit, where we are dealing with a much, much bigger scale, even commercial forestry is involved.

In the 2010 BBC documentary 'Requiem for Detroit?', this massive desurbanisation, the low population density, the vacants, the ruins and the extensive land use gives the viewer a sense of distopia. It is weird to realise that a very similar process of urban undevelopment has taken place in Enkhuizen.

It was Karl Marx who said that history repeats itself 'first as tragedy, then as farce'. It is never a bad idea to learn lessons from historical events, and perhaps if Detroit had learned its history lessons – action might have been undertaken to avoid its own demise.

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Maps and photographs:

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Photo 1: taken by A.C.M. van Rossum, original found in the archive of Vereniging Oud Enkhuizen, Westerstraat 158, Enkhuizen

Photo 3: taken by A. Dekema, original found in the archive of Vereniging Oud Enkhuizen, Westerstraat 158, Enkhuizen

All maps are made by Daniël Hoenderdos, based on the original maps by Google Earth (map 1), Jacob van Deventer (map 2), Joan Blaeu (map 3). Map 4 is made by the Dutch Cadastre and is courtesy of the Vereniging Oud Enkhuizen, original can be found in the archive, Westerstraat 158.