



2013 Remaking Cities Congress

Urban Systems, Infrastructure, and the Post-Industrial City

Case Study Summary

Rotterdam, Netherlands

Remaking Rotterdam

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Rotterdam is a city on the waterfront. Situated in the Rhine-Meuse Delta, it is home to over 615.000 people and no less than 173 different nationalities. The Rotterdam-Den Haag metropolitan region counts about 3 million inhabitants. 1,000 foreign companies from all over the world have chosen Rotterdam as their base for European and worldwide business. Being the “Gateway to Europe”, Rotterdam has a hinterland of 500 million inhabitants. The port facility along the riverfront is more than 40 kilometres long and stretches between the city and North Sea.

As a world port city and lowest-lying delta in Europe, Rotterdam deals with challenges often unknown to other cities. Rotterdam is a global and European hub for logistics, (chemical) industry and energy production. For centuries the city adapts to changing conditions ranging from social issues in 1900s, bombing of the city center in 1940, air, water and soil pollution with it's peak in the 60s/70s, the collapse of shipping industries 70s/80s, rising sea levels now and for the energy port which Rotterdam is, the ongoing shift from a fossil fuel based economy to a clean tech and more biobased economy in future.

As a result of this continuous adaptation, Rotterdam has many urban innovations often setting examples for other cities; such as Waterplan Rose in 1854, which combined improvements in water quality with the creation of an attractive green living environment along the city's canals. Also the Garden village Vreewijk in 1911, which provided high quality housing in a green environment for workers in the port, which is still an attractive area. The groothandelsgebouw, Rotterdam's first multifunctional building for offices and retail space 1951. Also worth mentioning are: Lijnbaan shopping center in 1953 which was the first European shopping center and best practice for many cities. The Kop van Zuid port and neighborhood transitions with waterfront development which started in 1985. In 2005, the water squares and underground water storage facilities were designed and built later on for climate adaptation which is a result from Watercity strategy to link climate adaptation solutions directly to improvements in public space, housing and transport. Not to forget the successful DIY houses, renovation projects still ongoing since 2007 which gave young people the opportunity to invest in run down houses in the city to realize their dreams and at the same time sparkle the gentrification of problematic neighborhoods. The strength of Rotterdam most certainly lies in its ability to convert problems into opportunities.

Rotterdam is constantly re-inventing itself. The expected doubling of industrial and port activities by 2030, the expansion of the port in the sea by 2,000 hectares, densification of the city centre, 1,600 hectares of inner city dockland

restructuring and pressing socio-economic issues make it crucial that sustainability is a high priority and that social, ecological and economic interests are balanced when making decisions and carrying out activities now and in the future.

The Rotterdam Climate Initiative (RCI), started in 2007 by the Port Authority, City of Rotterdam, the employers' organisation Deltalinqs and DCMR Environmental Protection Agency, has created a movement in which government, companies, knowledge institutions and citizens collaborate to achieve a fifty percent CO2 reduction by 2025, fully adapt to climate change by 2025 whilst stimulating the economy and Quality of life! Now this approach is integrated in the Rotterdam planning, policymaking and actions.

Over the past few years "making the city" has come to be seen in a new light. The global financial crisis has not only led to the demise of "blueprint", top-down thinking. In particular, the growing scarcity of fossil-derived and other raw materials and fuels increasingly demands the creation of sustainable cities that offer high levels of liveability. Cities that are resilient with respect to climate change and energy supply. Cities that offer new means of generating economic activity and income, and of providing food. Rotterdam has already begun a new journey of discovery to meet these immense challenges. Many of these issues are to be found in plans for the densification and greening of Rotterdam's inner city. Which strategy should be followed if the aim is to increase the number of inner-city dwellers by 30,000 people? And will that strategy improve the quality and sustainability of inner-city living?

The Fifth international architecture Biennale Rotterdam 2012 created a platform for exploration, for demonstrating new roles and for inhabitants and businesses to illustrate what an attractive, sustainable inner city in Rotterdam would be like. The exploration of inner-city design shows that densification and greenification can deliver an attractive, sustainable inner city in Rotterdam. This is an exploration that sets out to concentrate the city's energy, energy of the people, and display a breeding ground for initiatives. The potentials for the future are based on strategies and projects that have already been implemented by Rotterdam's inhabitants as they make their city – as they make it "the place to be". In reality, the future is well and truly underway.

A next step is to apply this to the whole of the city, looking at the environment, health issues, flows of materials, energy and people. In fact our living environment. How can we provide a medium in which an optimal urban metabolism can evolve which at the same time is a high quality of life living environment. To us, the city as an Urban Ecosystem is this goal! Which we will present at the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam 2014 called Urban by nature, and you are very welcome to join in.