THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL

LESSONS FOR STREET PLINTHS

Edited by Meredith Glaser, Mattijs van 't Hoff, Hans Karssenberg, Jeroen Laven and Jan van Teeffelen

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PREFACE

Meredith Glaser, Mattijs van ‘t Hoff, Hans Karssenberg, Jeroen Laven & Jan van Teeffelen

The English word “plinth” is the base or socle upon which a column, statue or structure rests. In Dutch “plint” means baseboard, but is also used as a term for the ground floor of a building or facade. According to the German architect Gottfried Semper (1803-1879) the plinth exists to negotiate between a structure and the ground (*The Four Elements of Architecture* (1851). This book is about the plinths in the city, the ground floors that negotiate between the inside and the outside, between the public and the private.

We strongly believe that in this urban age, we need to better plan for the ground floor, or ‘the city at eye level.’ As a pedestrian in the city, you ought to feel comfortable, safe, and captivated by the details of what your eyes see. While walking, you consciously and subconsciously examine the immediate eye-level surroundings and absorb any details. You look at the shop windows, smell coffee from the café or freshly baked bread, and hear people talking and laughing. If the feelings from a street are good ones, you remember these places and want to return.

Some cities and streets have done it well: it’s easy to think of the cozy atmosphere of streets like the Rue Mouffetard in Paris, the Ramblas in Barcelona, or Greenwich Village in New York. We are interested in plinths that work and this book is a collage of them. Some have a strong history of working well, others may have been

forgotten or ignored for a while. We want to show these examples and tell their stories: how did the plinth “work” before and how does it work now? This could mean the design, the type of functions or land use, and the relation to the street, but also how various partners came together to produce a successful plinth, and the inspiration, strategies, and challenges involved.

The target group of this book are those professionals involved in improving cities - urban planners, architects, politicians, developers, etc. We hope this manual provides new lessons, methods, insights and inspiration to take on your own plinth challenges. In addition to many international examples, stories and case studies, the book highlights several (Dutch) examples, interviews and research from people in our own network and from around the world. We are very grateful for the hard work and dedicated time our contributors provided.

Rotterdam/Amsterdam, December 2012

Plinths are part of a vivid and vibrant city life and city spaces: providing comfort, social interaction and eyes on the street.

INTRO

DUCTION

THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL

Hans Karssenberg & Jeroen Laven

A plinth is the ground floor of a building. It is a building's most crucial part for the city at eye level. What do you as a pedestrian experience when you look around? Do the buildings, their use, and their design make an attractive urban environment where you feel at home? Do the plinths connect with pedestrian flows in the urban area? What are good functions for plinths? Which set of actions and partnerships are needed to transform dysfunctional plinths? The last few years, Stipo has worked on all kinds of plinth strategies: from the CityLounge programme in Rotterdam's inner city to the transformation of Amsterdam's ugliest street into a welcoming street; from fashion in Arnhem's Klarendal to better plinths in regeneration and residential areas.

The Haarlemmerdijk in Amsterdam

Antwerp

WHY PLINTHS?

The city is not only a functional environment, but also an environment of experience. Function has been fairly dominant in the past few decades, due to the combination

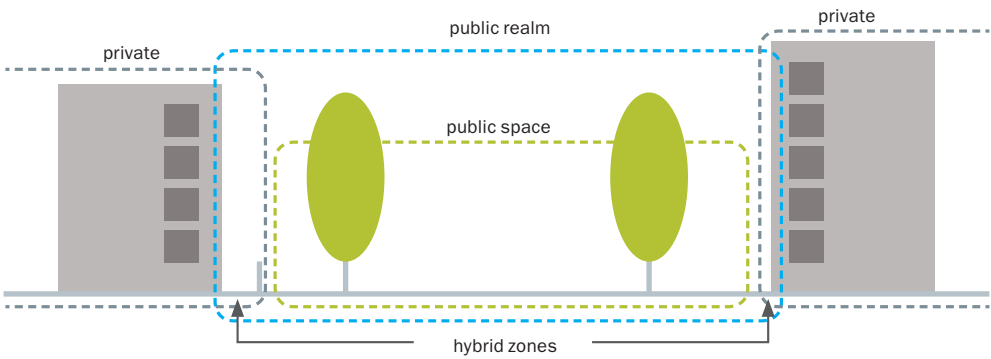
of a large post-war building production and the industrialisation of the construction process. However, now we experience, in western economies at least, the shift from ‘making the city’ to ‘being the city’. New construction and areas of growth will persist, but the reinvention of existing urban structures will become more dominant.

After the decades of functionalism, perhaps now a correction is necessary: more attention on the urban experience, or urban warmth as we call it from an urban psychological point of view. Besides, the knowledge economy, the ever larger interconnectivity on a global level, co-working, the increasing competition between shopping and residential areas, the growth of urban-oriented people with a higher education, and the growing number of single and double households not only cause a massive revaluation of the city as a whole, but also make the experience of that city ever more important. The squares, parks and terraces are the places where knowledge workers exchange their ideas. Places with retail and culture attract more people, and so do residential areas with an urban feel. It is all part of the larger movement of the urban renaissance caused by new interest in cities with mixed urban areas and great public spaces.

PLINTHS AND THE PUBLIC REALM

Urbanites experience their cities in what we call the ‘public realm’. It has a broader meaning than just ‘public space’; it includes facades of buildings and everything that can be seen at eye level. Plinths are therefore a very important part of buildings: the ground floor, the city at eye level. A building may be ugly, but with a vibrant plinth, the experience can be positive. The other way around is possible as well: a building can be very beautiful, but if the ground floor is a blind wall, the experience on the street level is hardly positive.

Plinths are crucial for the experience and attractiveness of the urban space, both in residential and commercial areas. Research shows that if the destination is safe, clean, relaxed and easily understood, and if visitors can wander around with their expectations met or exceeded,



Scheme Public Realm

The square Mr. Visserplein in the inner city of Amsterdam: no doors, a closed façade. Good plinths are not self-evident.

these visitors will remain three times longer and spend more money than in an unfriendly and confusing structure. Good plinths are in the interest of the urban economy, and not only because of consumer spending. A balanced labour market with enough people with a higher education demands a functional urban environment for living, shopping and playing. The knowledge and experience economy requires spaces with character, a good atmosphere, a place to meet and to interact. The entire urban environment shapes this atmosphere, but plinths play a key role. The ground floor may be only 10% of a building, but it determines 90% of the building's contribution to the experience of the environment.

GOOD PLINTHS ARE NOT INHERENT

However logical this all may seem, we do not experience good plinths everywhere in cities. Why is that? In the projects we have worked on, we have found all kinds of reasons why the combination of interventions by government and market parties do not necessarily lead to good plinths.

Many buildings of the past have been designed from a different design perspective and their plinths are simply not suitable for attractive public functions. Also the development of 'drawing functions inside' directs the attention more to the inside world rather than the urban environment: shopping malls, multifunctional complexes for leisure, care clusters and

Ypenburg, primary school in this child rich newly built area – in twenty years it can easily be used for other purposes

campuses often are bad examples of these. Monofunctional layouts and primary attention for car use worsen the situation, as do single-use office areas.

PLINTHS AND THE NEW ECONOMY

When a plinth is successfully created, retail, cafés and restaurants often provide the highest profits. As a cause of this, attention is directed at commercial functions for most (re)development projects. But is this sustainable? The last ten years the Netherlands saw a 50% increase in surface space dedicated to retail, while turnover in the sector remained the same. In the coming years the retail sector expects an additional 30% to disappear as a consequence of internet shopping. These trends require a new perspective for programming plinths with different functions, such as properly designed housing on the ground floor. We should stop clustering social functions such as primary schools in new multifunctional (and introvert) buildings, but create spaces in flexible plinths that can change to new uses every decade or so.

Many streets are under pressure; they have lost foot traffic and vacancy is increasing. Streets leading towards the city centres, streets around (public) transport junctions, streets in working areas and streets in residential areas are faced with vacancy or discrepancy (no suitable uses

Weesperstraat Amsterdam, offices often don't have attractive plinths

and/or a poor image). This trend can partly be seen as a natural urban life cycle, and partly by other influential causes, such as the focus of shifting inner cities, poor rental policies, or design failures.

As residential functions, co-working, shopping and leisure are more and more footloose, experience is becoming more and more important. New trends can improve the quality of plinths, such as small-scale shopping, the need for new co-working cafes, temporary creative functions, and pop-up stores. In any case, a good plinth strategy will have to embrace a wide range of functions, including social functions and houses on the ground floor.

KEY PLINTH PLAYERS

Besides these trends it is useful to look into some of the most important players' positions: developers, owners, entrepreneurs, and renters. For project developers, the plinth is most of all part of their building, rather than part of a street. On top of that, plinths are financially of secondary importance: when there is enough support for the offices or apartments on the higher floors, construction can start. A plinth in use is then a bonus but not a breakpoint for the investment decision.

Office owners are satisfied when they can rent 90% of their buildings. For them, the plinth is often an entirely different, difficult and fragmented market. In most single-user office buildings the ground floor is merely an entry or security point. From the user's viewpoint, as we can see in many office streets, these plinths contribute very little to the quality and attractiveness of the urban public realm.

Unfortunately, also many designs fail. Not all but many architects are focused more on designing buildings rather than creating good streets. And also in the design of the adjacent public realm all kinds of interests play a role, such as traffic, and experience and residential quality do not necessarily come first. Last but not least, private users who sometimes prefer (and are allowed) to close their shades towards the street.

Although we all realize their importance, good plinths are not in the least self-evident. The coming decades will ad more economic pressure to plinths, and local authorities and property owners will have to collaborate if they want good streets. To put it differently: attaining good plinths and a good urban experience requires an active government and an active market. A strategy is needed in which governments, developers, designers, owners, and renters each play their own parts. And because each neighbourhood and each street is different, they each require a different strategy.

Coolsingel Rotterdam, before and after the plinth strategy

CRITERIA FOR GOOD PLINTHS

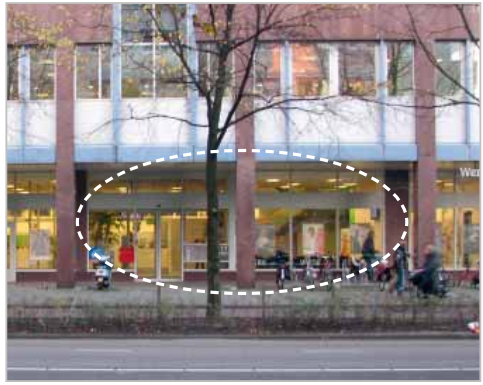
What then are good and bad plinths? In order to answer this, we developed a set of criteria together with the City of Rotterdam's Urban Planning and Economic Affairs Departments. And we found out it is necessary to research on three levels: building, street, and context.

In close cooperation with the City of Rotterdam, and referring to the previous works 'Close encounters with buildings'

Haarlem, simply good houses in the plinth

(Centre for Public Space Research/Realdania Research, Institute for Planning, School of Architecture, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, 2004), 'Towards a Fine City for People' (Jan Gehl, 2004), and Great Streets (Allan Jacobs, 1995), and using our own experience in practice, Stipo has developed a three-layer set of criteria that should be part of each analysis and strategy for plinths: building, street, and context.

1 The building
- small scale units
- variety of functions
- transparent façades
- special character of the architecture
- richness in material
- vertical orientation of the façade
- a well functioning 'hybrid zone' (the transition from private to public)
- appropriate signing
- flexibility in height (4m)
- flexibility in the land use plan (zoning)

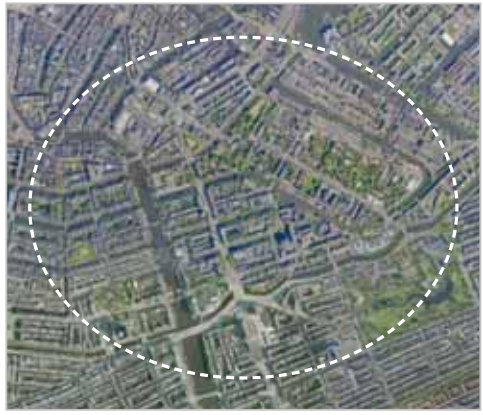


Criterium Building

2 The street
- pleasure to walk in
- physical comfort (wind, sound, sun, shadow, maintenance)
- definition (the height should at least be half the width)
- variation in buildings
- quality that binds the eye
- good tree canopy
- parking facilities
- clear beginning and ending of the street
- possibilities to sit
- density

Criterium Street

3 The context
- plinth-oriented consumer audience (pedestrian streams day and night, 5-20 passers-by per width meter per minute, economic and cultural capital in the surrounding neighbourhoods)
- special urban programme or a special cluster of economic or cultural functions
- good connections to the network of squares and parks
- partners who take initiative
- coherent urban design
- a good position in the urban fabric and in the city's walking and cycling routes



Criterium Context

Each of these levels provides ‘buttons’ to push for a plinth strategy. The levels cannot be separate from each other, they interact; without enough people living in the area, for instance, or lack of purchasing power, a shop can have a fantastic plinth, but still will find it hard to survive. A single building may be well-designed (from a street perspective), but if the rest of the street has blind façades it will not function on its own. A street may look great, but if it is not connected to the main streams of pedestrians in the city centre, it will be difficult.

By analysing the plinths along these levels Stipo built a joint vision, supported by the partners (owners, renters, government) and helped implement it, including temporary and new street concepts.

PLINTH TRENDS

In practice we not only see a new interest from both the users and the designers point of view, but we are also faced with massive changes on the programme side. Functions as retail, residential, commercial, and social functions face recent developments that provide threats and

Paris, a vibrant plinth

Plinth trends

Function	Plinth Threats	Plinth Opportunities
Retail	– Online shopping, (far) less retail space needed – Oversupply in retail in general – Larger scale shops, chains, caring less about plinths and causing uniformity – Introvert indoor shopping malls that draw all plinth functions to the inside – Scattered building ownership in shopping streets causing every owner to aim for the highest paying renter in each building	– Experience as the crucial factor for competition between urban and internet shopping – New specialised shop formulas such as oil and olive and authentic bread shops – New cultural entrepreneurs – Cultural industries – Temporary popup stores – Street management shifting from building logic to a street logic
Commercial	– Co-working: less office space needed, new vacancy, up to 35% fewer square meters needed – Car-oriented complexes with a 'dead' ground floor – Monofunctional working areas on one-sided office and business areas – Office functions on ground floor level with shut blinds and closed character after office hours	– Co-working: interaction and meeting in the plinth – Flexible work- and meeting-space near public transport junctions – Shared use of libraries, museums, government buildings, theatre foyers, sports – Temporary use of empty plinths – Crafts, studios and creative sector with service functions – Commercial functions that need a plinth: health, beauty care, food, construction, repair
Social	– Clusters of social functions in multifunctional accommodations and multifunctional schools that draw all functions to the inside – Clustering of education in introvert campuses – Introvert health complexes	– Social functions such as elementary schools in the plinth – Services in neighbourhoods for care, local police, housing providers, etc. – New broker organisations between users and vacant social property – Public parts of academies and high schools such as work experience spaces, incubators for starting businesses of students
Leisure	– Introvert leisure complexes – Too high levels of desirability in planning restaurants and cafés in urban development projects – Single focus on leisure in inner city areas	– Restaurants and cafés as traditionally good plinth functions – Temporary cafes and restaurants in vacant plinths – More public oriented design of museums, placing museum cafés and shops before the ticket gates with a street orientation – Temporary exhibitions in plinths
Residential	– Residential buildings and complexes withdrawing from the outside world, gated communities and measures caused by feelings of unsafety	– Urban living: a more plinth-oriented population, eyes on the street – New combinations of working and living – Revival of the urban perimeter block with flexible plinths

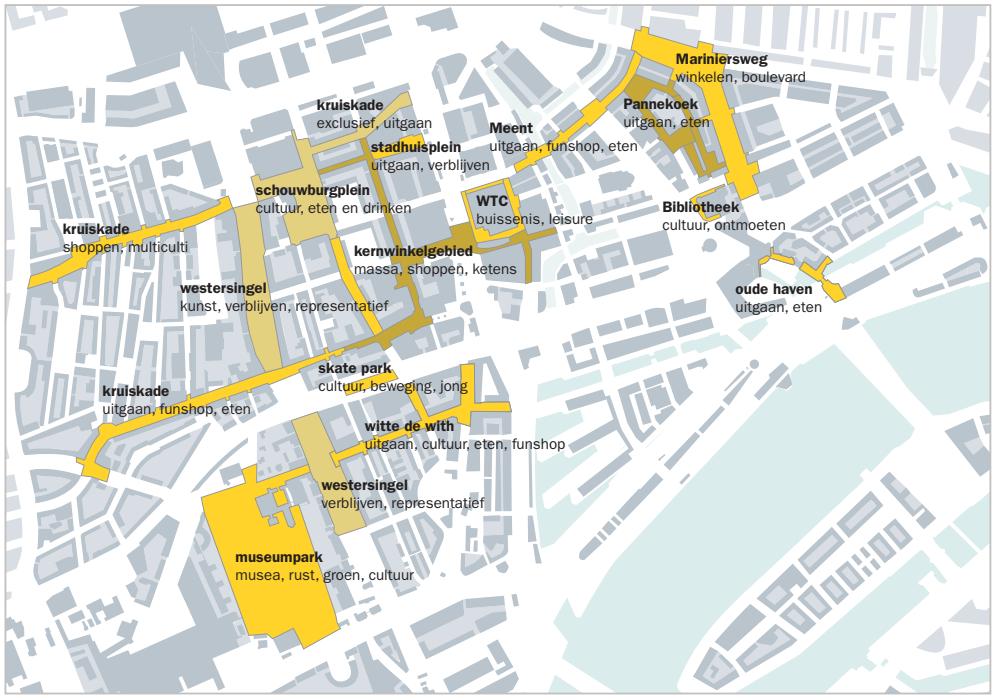
opportunities for plinths. The table on the left shows some of the most important plinth trends we encounter.

Seeing these trends, we find that good plinths cannot be made by retail only. According to some estimates, due to the combination of the oversupply created in the last ten years and the rise of internet shopping, half the current shops will disappear from our streets. Of course, new formulas will come up, but it is clear that we cannot solely rely on shops to create a better public realm. Therefore, in setting up plinth strategies, we also look at new economic functions such as co-working places, restaurants and cafés, social functions such as schools, and most of all residential space on the ground floor.

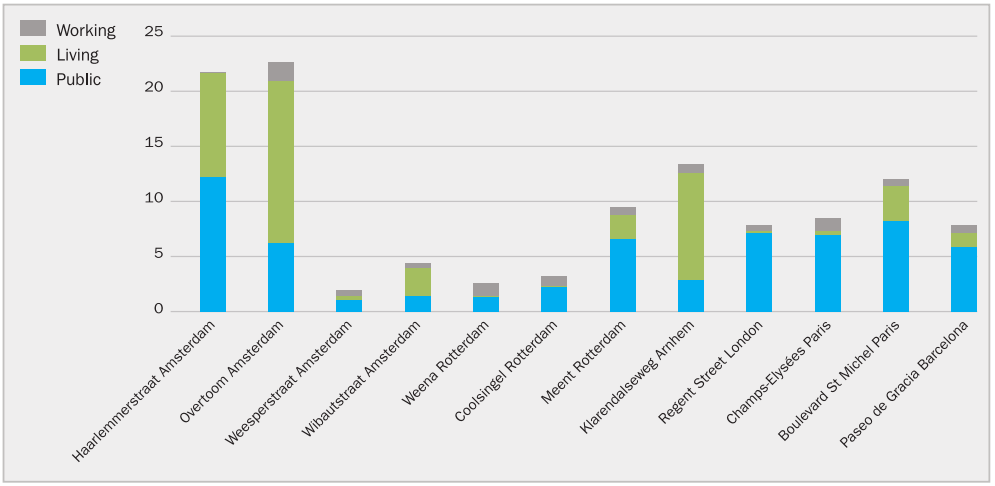
ROTTERDAM'S PLINTH STRATEGY

Rotterdam is a good example of what a plinth strategy can mean for a city. Rotterdam is looking for contemporary ways to improve the residential qualities of its inner city with methods that suit the post-war reconstruction character, realizing that the image of the city as a whole largely depends on the image of the inner city.

After a pilot on three streets, the urban planning department, the inner city project team, the economic department and Stipo analysed the situation in the city centre. This lead to a new analytic language examining pedestrian flows at different moments of the day, the



Rotterdam Plinth Strategy, new maps: "let's meet at…"



Number of units on each side of the street per 100 meters, accumulative

Plan South of Berlage in Amsterdam, well designed residential functions in the plinths

Inviting plinths at Botersloot Rotterdam

increase of property values and mapping places of “let’s meet at…”. We also made a function map for the city at eye level only. The map made clear how the inner city ground floors are made up of monofunctional islands of living, working, culture and shopping. By combining the layers of the analyses, we identified ten areas where intervention is needed, with distinct approaches on the short-, mid- and long-term.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

One aspect of good and varied streets is to have compact concentrations of different functions in the plinth. For Amsterdam's Weesperstraat we compared which kind of units are found at which distance. We compared some of the internationally renowned ‘Great Streets’ (Allan Jacobs): Regent Street in London, Les Champs-Elysées and Boulevard St. Michel in Paris, and Paseo de Gracia in Barcelona. In The Netherlands we analysed vibrant streets such as Amsterdam’s Haarlemmerdijk and Overtoom and Rotterdam’s Meent, and less lively streets such as Rotterdam’s Weena, and Amsterdam’s Wibautstraat and Weesperstraat.

Our main conclusions are:

– Great Streets have an average of a new unit every 10 meters with a house, a public function or an office (this means 8-10 units every 100 meters)
– Great Streets have a minimum of a new public function in every 15 meters (6-8 public functions every 100 meters)
– Offices are not important for Great Streets, living is possible if not too dominant as a single function. Mostly public functions create Great Streets: shops, cafés, restaurants, education.

Weesperstraat in Amsterdam has an average of one public function every 103 meters. Haarlemmerdijk, on the other side of the spectrum, has a public function every 8 meters. However, the Weesperstraat analysis showed that it is possible to adapt the existing buildings’ ground floors in such a way that the street would approach the Great Streets average. Combined with its good location in the city of Amsterdam, Weesperstraat could become a better street for pedestrians. This is a strategy we currently work on in close collaboration with the local authority and the property owners, creating a vision and a coalition to transform this car-oriented office street into a metropolitan street that combines traffic and space for pedestrians.

HISTORY OF THE CITY STREET AND PLINTH

Jouke van der Werf, Kim Zweerink & Jan van Teeffelen

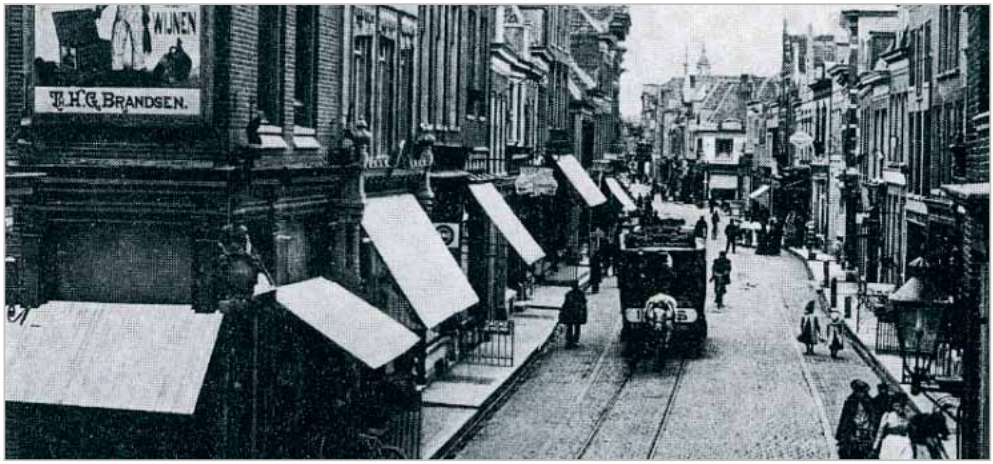
Cities are hubs for the exchange of goods, culture, knowledge and ideas. The city street is the stage where this exchange takes place: it is the access to the home and the company, and the passage to other places within and outside of the city. For centuries city streets had a natural vibrancy and dynamic, where various functions came together. Until mid 20th century the street was an integrated system of movement and social and economic life. This changed in the 1960s and 1970s when large-scale interventions in the urban fabric emphasized traffic, and put the importance for exchange in second place.

Precisely at that time of traffic breakthroughs, people like Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch and Gordon Cullen pointed out the importance of the human-scale of the street. They indicated that the city has to be considered from how people experience the city: at eye level. Their publications now seem more relevant than ever. Since the early 1980s we see a growing awareness that the viability of the city can be improved by linking the different scales of the city. The location of a street or square in the city as a whole, the connection with the various networks, and their social and economic characteristics, are crucial. And so is the plinth where the interaction between the street and the building takes place.

Every city street endures a process of rise and fall, and time leaves its traces on the city and the plinths. Technical innovations, traffic concepts, the economy, and public opinions change over time and influence the urban form and the public space. This chapter gives a general overview for each period of city transition from three perspectives: the city form, the street, and the plinth.

Shops and traffic in London, Cheapside (1831)

Paris, a strong connection between buildings, plinth and street creates an attractive city



Langestraat Amersfoort, streets used to have a dynamic of living, working and transport

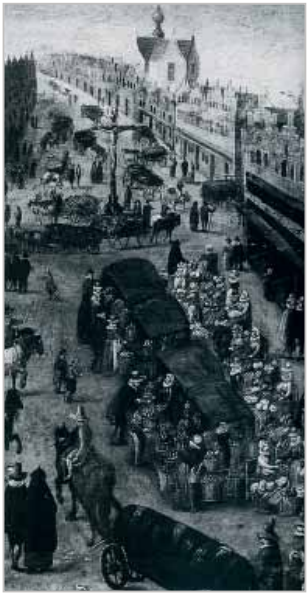
THE CITY OF INTERWOVEN LIVE AND WORK (UNTIL 1850)

City

Many cities were founded at intersections of roads or waterways, for example Berlin, Hamburg, Valencia, Seville, New York, London or Amsterdam. At these crossroads exchange of goods and ideas took place and an urban core was established with main urban functions as a harbour, market, bourse, weigh house, church, and town hall - often with a central square. Fortifications formed a delineation from the countryside. Due to growth of trade, also crafts and population increased. Initially this lead to growth within the city, but soon the urban area expanded around the main roads to the city. With these expansions, fortifications also shifted.

Street

The main streets coincided with natural roads and waterways and were the connections to the hinterland. Social and economic life took place on the squares, streets, quays and bridges, where the markets were held. In the 16th century the markets specialized in different types such as fish and fruit markets. Street names still remind us of the goods that were once traded, e.g. Butterbridge, Haymarket, etc. Until the 19th century, the majority of freight transport took place on the water. With the flourishing of the cities and increase of



Top left: Antwerp Market, around 1600
Top middle: Fabric Market in Bologna, 1411
Top right: The Jansstraat in Haarlem, painted by Gerrit Berckheyde in 1680, shows the alignment of the facades

traffic and activity, the number of streets and bridges grew and the busiest streets and squares were paved with cobblestones. Regulations for buildings increased: rules for facade alignment, bay windows and stalls allowed passage of traffic. Building height was also limited so sunlight can fall into the street.

Plinth

Specialized shopping streets as we know them now didn't exist in the cities before the 19th century. Living, working and trading took place in the same building and street, where craftsmen displayed merchandise in front of their homes. There was no clear separation between private and public, and merchandise was exposed on the street. Later these stalls became permanent and were incorporated in the facades. From the late Middle Ages the passage zone between the street and the home was marked by a stoop or porch. The stoop (a raised plate) ensured that carts did not come too close to the house and displayed goods. A street consisted of series of individual stoops and landings, divided by benches and fences. In northern Italian cities like Bologna, arcades formed this passage between the house and the street and provided shadow. The doors were open all day in the 15th and 16th century - anyone could look and walk inside. In the next centuries the unity in the streetscape of facades, plinths and public space increased.

Top Left: Medieval streetscape: public space as an extension of the house
Top Right: Street in London, 18th century: the houses follow a continuous line, the signs are back, and bollards separating the road from the sidewalks

THE LURE OF MODERNITY (1850-1940)

City

In the 19th century, new transportation modes arose. Railways became important next to waterways for the increasing transport of people and goods. Ports, industrial and residential areas were built outside the city or at the former fortifications. Also the new stations lay on the city boundary and became new core areas with a concentration of infrastructure, housing, industry and public space. More and more people moved out of the old inner city to this new areas and neighbouring municipalities, easily accessible by train or tram.

Characteristic of the city plans in this period were the monumental axes with a separation between the busy main streets with shops and businesses, and the more quiet residential streets behind. In residential areas shops only occurred on street corners, while in the inner-city a separation of functions took place: housing was less important and the number of (department) stores and offices increased, leading to a scaling in the block. Due to industrial production and stock storage, the first stores appeared in the 19th century, soon followed by department stores and grand bazaars. Skyscrapers were only constructed in US cities in this period, and in order to avoid dark streets New York adopted a zoning law for the height and the width of towers in 1916.

Street

With the separation of functions, new city areas and neighbourhoods increased traffic. City circulation improved by new breakthroughs and bridges. In Paris (under direction of Baron Haussmann) and in London (e.g. the construction of Regent Street) the modernization of the city is accompanied by new and wide

Budapest East Station and Square, 1912

Chicago street view, 1920s

Champs Elysées in Paris, around 1880

Vienna Ringstrasse, developed in the second half of the 19th century

boulevards through the historic city centre. From the 19th century onwards traffic flows are separated; since 1861 sidewalk were created important to give pedestrian their own place in the crowded streets. Also separate tramways and loading streets were installed, and trees were planted to provide a division. In Vienna the new tramlines on the former fortifications formed the Vienna Ring, connecting the main buildings of the city (town hall, parliament, royal palaces and theatres) to each other in a grandiose design.

Paris and New York were the prominent cities in the 19th and early 20th century. Department stores and shops were developed along the major routes and squares, around the stations, and on streets with trams running through. The Paris 'grands magasins' such as Le Bon Marché and Printemps, and New York office buildings were soon copied by other cities, creating new boulevards with shopping and office buildings.

Plinth

The emergence of shops and offices lead to an entirely different street. The facades were transformed into attractive storefronts to display the goods, with a purpose to entice the passerby. It was common to have the windows as full as possible. The carefully designed store fronts were constructed of a closed and decorated base with a large glass front. The entrance was set back, creating a small alcove. The street plinth thus existed as a series of different windows in shape, height, width and decorations. The shopping streets and facades were followed by a new phenomenon, first introduced in Paris, Brussels and Milan: the shopping galleria or passage, arcades with luxury shops, not only to shop but also to stroll.

New York, around 1900

Shop facades from ca. 1900 in The Hague

The first shopping mall in America: Cleveland, 1890

LEAVING THE INNER-CITY (1945-1970)

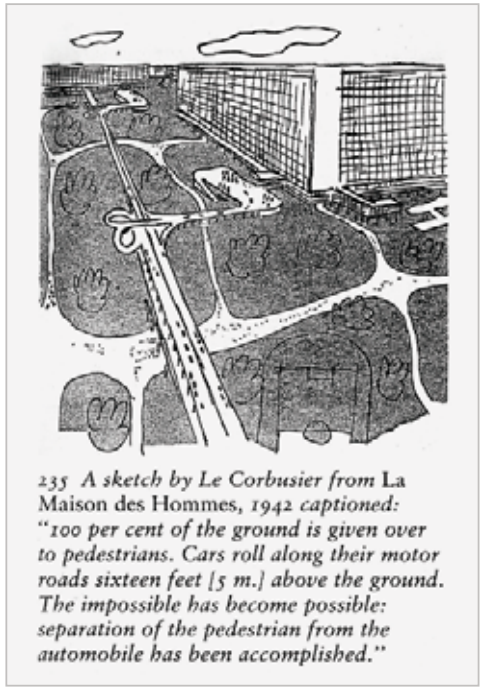
City

After World War II, the accessibility of the city centre for cars and the new urban expansions had a priority. The growth of car use in this period was enormous: the number of cars in the Netherlands for instance increased from 30 000 in 1945 to 4 000 000 in 1980. The main planning concept was a separation between living, working, amenities and traffic. The town centres developed into central locations for offices and amenities. The vacant areas in the during the war severely damaged cities, were now used to accommodate the increase of traffic. Other cities focus on traffic engineering to connect the inner-city with new ring roads, for example in Utrecht. This development of breakthroughs for car traffic and large-scale urban renewal was also criticised, among others by Jane Jacobs with her plea for mixed-use human-scale neighbourhood streets.

New neighbourhoods for living were developed outside the existing city in New Towns and Garden Cities, with in-between highways and railroad as major barriers. These plans were derived from the ideas of CIAM, such as the plan for the Ville Radieuse of Le Corbusier who had a great aversion to the 'rue corridor', the enclosed street. His ideas were implemented in many residential projects in Europe with elevated streets and high-rise buildings. Instead of closed urban blocks, the urban fabric consisted of an open allotment with a mix of low, medium and high-rise buildings in a green setting. In accordance with the prevailing planning concept in Europe, districts were divided into small neighbourhoods with small shopping areas and a central shopping centre in the district. In the 1960s and 1970s a deterioration of city centres occurred due

The muted Catharijnesingel-canal in Utrecht, built in the sixties

Large-scale new developments in New York



235 A sketch by Le Corbusier from La Maison des Hommes, *1942 captioned: "100 per cent of the ground is given over to pedestrians. Cars roll along their motor roads sixteen feet [5 m.] above the ground. The impossible has become possible: separation of the pedestrian from the automobile has been accomplished."*

La Ville Radieuse: Le Corbusier's portrayal of his ideal for free-standing housing in green spaces

to the move of residents to the suburbs, especially in the US where new shopping centres with large parking lots became the standard for the shopping.

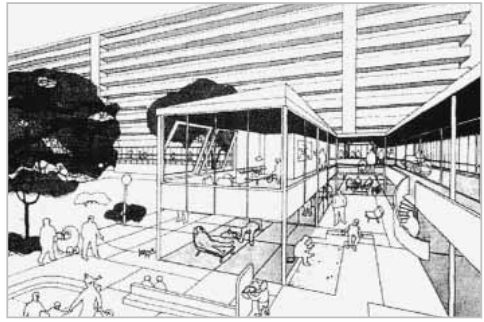
Street

To improve traffic safety new means were invented for the separation of traffic flows and control: zebra crossings, traffic lights, traffic hills, and roundabouts. The streets were further divided and the cohesive space disappears. In the suburbs appeared a strong hierarchy between main access roads, neighbourhood roads, and residential streets, often with an independent network of footpaths and cycle paths on a different level. The separation between traffic road and shopping street was complete when all functions were incorporated into a superstructure or, as in Minneapolis, when the pedestrian was led from one inner world to the other via 'skyways'.

Plinth

The new urban concept of open building allotments allowed a new design for stores with windows in the front, supply and storage via back streets, and separated entrances for the dwellings above. This allowed continuous shopping facades along the street, as can be seen on the Lijnbaan in Rotterdam, the first pedestrian shopping street in Europe. The transparent storefronts with lots of glass and showcases, and the glass kiosks give a strong interaction between interior and public space. Also historic city streets were modernized with display cases and new store fronts. The plinths had an open design to entice passersby to step inside whether it was in newly structured inner cities, or in historic inner cities. This contrasted to the suburbia where most buildings had closed plinths (if at all) and most shopping centres turned their back to the surroundings.

Northgate Mall in Seattle, 1950



The Bijlmer-district Amsterdam, as originally intended with internal pedestrian streets and green living

Skyways in Minneapolis dating from the 1960s and 1970s provide pedestrian connections between buildings

Lijnbaan Rotterdam, 1954: new pedestrian shopping street for renewal of the bombed city centre

IN SEARCH OF SMALL SCALE URBANITY (1970-1990)

City

After the decades of modernism, we saw a turn on the separation of functions, especially in traffic. The Buchanan Report '*Traffic in Towns*' in 1963 and the 1973 oil crisis questioned the dominance of car traffic. Cities started to ward off cars and improved the 'hospitality' of the city: instead of traffic breakthroughs, the historic urban fabric is used for urban renewal. Architects from the international Team X (among others Aldo van Eyck, Alison and Peter Smithson) emphasized human-scale buildings and streets, and a transition zone between private and public spaces. Terms like 'hospitality' were used within the architectural debate. In many inner cities old structures from the 19th century were demolished and replaced by new buildings characterised by human-scale architecture.

Small scale urban renewal in Zwolle (architects Aldo van Eyck and Theo Bosch)

Forum Les Halles, Paris: constructed in 1977, demolished in 2010 and to be replaced by a new Forum

Even the larger projects were small-scale oriented such as the Forum Les Halles in Paris, a new shopping centre that replaced the historic marketplace of Les Halles. Most new shops and supermarkets were developed in centrally located shopping malls close to the new residential areas, as already had been done in the US in the previous decade.

Street

With a new focus on human-scale cities, public space was rediscovered as an area to walk, meet and gather. People again visited the inner-city to stroll, go to the theatre and meet each other. An important milestone was the closure of shopping streets for car access, becoming pedestrian zones: in 1966 Germany had 63 pedestrian streets and in 1977 up to 370. In the inner-city of Utrecht a pedestrian area was developed and the wharves along the canals opened for cafés in the 1970s. The design of new residential streets were also influenced by the new ‘hospitality'-concept. This concept started as ‘Woonerf’ in the Netherlands, followed by other countries such as the 'Wohnstrasse' in Austria. By the introduction of the home zone street, the car is a guest and pedestrians are favoured in residential streets.

Plinth

Although the re-evaluation of the historical city halted large scale demolishing of old buildings and city fabric, inner city areas still were replaced with new but small-scale housing developments. Most new buildings were internal-oriented and the relationship between house and public space was part of the architectural form. The plinths however often focused only on housing and living and not on shops, services and restaurants - only few streets were designated as new shopping streets. In many urban renewal areas, the plinths were not designed with shops or public functions but instead with closed facades.

Stroget in Copenhagen was already partly closed for cars in 1962, at present being the longest pedestrian shopping street in Europe

Wohnstrasse in Austria: residential areas in the city

Urban renewal street: plinths lack public functions

THE CITY AS A MAGNET (1990 – PRESENT)

City

Renewed interest in inner cities in the 1980s carried on in the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century with a focus on public space. The rise of sidewalk bars and cafés and specialized retail signified the rediscovery of the centre as a place for meeting, amusement, and shopping as leisure activity. Barcelona was the first city stimulating the renewal of the cityscape by the redevelopment of public space in relation to the Olympic Games of 1992. Public realm was regarded as an important outdoor space for citizens, such as green parks and squares. The revitalization of the existing inner-city acquires lots of attention. Also in other cities beautification started with the improvement of the quality and coherence of the public space. An important motivation to city leaders for the renewal of the public space was the city's economy. The city was rigged to attract people with festivals and events in this postmodern age: a visit turned into an experience for which the city is the decor, sometimes focussed on a historical period. Also new cities tried to adapt the looks and feel of historical towns, even with small shops.

Besides the public realm, many new projects were developed in and around european city centres. Important key projects were the station areas as entrances to the city, due to a new High Speed Rail network in Europe. New stations and hubs were developed, and gave an economic boost to the city centres such as Euralille. Abandoned harbours and old industrial areas, close to the inner-cities, were redeveloped for housing, offices, leisure and places of culture. Large area developments included property, new infrastructure, public space and new landmarks. Well-known examples are Hafencity in Hamburg, the Eastern

In Barcelona the revitalization of the city is boosted by the investments in public space

New town Poundbury in England, designed by architect Krier according to principles of Prince Charles

Amsterdam Eastern Docklands, old harbours transformed in a new urban area

Shared space Exhibition Road, London

Shopping centre Beurstraverse in Rotterdam

Docklands in Amsterdam, the Kop van Zuid with the Erasmus-bridge in Rotterdam, the renewal of Bilbao and the new Guggenheim, and in London the banks of the Thames around the Tate Modern, housed in an old power station.

Paris, Promenade Plantée / Viaduc des Arts: abandoned elevated train line is transformed into a attractive walk with ateliers inside and a new park on top (1990)

Street

The reconquest of public space created more space for pedestrians and reduces the car in the city centre. In Lyon new underground parking spaces were built for a total of 12 000 cars. Paris redesigned the Champs Elysées without parking strips and widened the sidewalks so people can once again stroll along the shops and restaurants. As an alternative for separating traffic, the Shared Space approach created a common street for everyone: separation between car, bicycle and pedestrian is limited. In London, Exhibition Road was recently redeveloped according to this concept.

Plinth

The interaction between the street and the adjacent houses, shops and restaurants became stronger. Plinth and public space were designed as related and coherent spaces within the city shopping experience. New coffee bars and cafes scattered throughout the city centre and the 19th-century neighbourhoods where creative professionals can work and do business. Internet and social media increased the need of physical places where you can meet.

Today there's still a need to connect buildings to the street with a vibrant façade and plinth. This not only applies to new buildings and their ground floors, but also to the redevelopment of existing buildings and infrastructure. The transformation of many historic structures shows that the city always changes. The need to adapt and design good and attractive plinths is necessary for the city dweller and the city at eye level.

ICONIC THINKERS

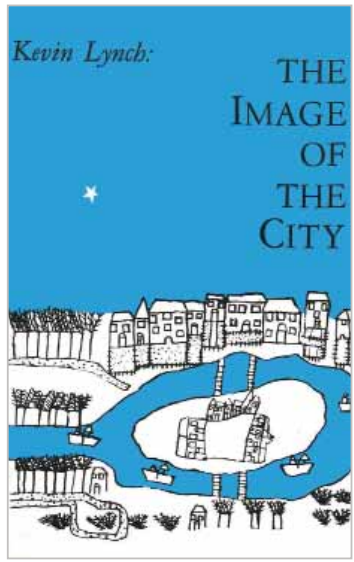
Meredith Glaser & Mattijs van 't Hoff

Prior to the advent of the automobile, active ‘main streets’ were the centre of many towns and neighbourhoods. These mains streets were filled with human-scale sensory experiences. The invention of the car in the 20th century and new ways of transporting goods altered the design and lay-out of cities. Many cities underwent massive infrastructure changes, transformations of downtowns, and proliferation of single-function land use. Modern building design and changes in the way we shop (e.g. the emergence of the supermarket) has weakened urban shopping streets and their plinths. “The City at Eye Level” is a plea for the return of human-scale streets and for diverse and active plinths of the buildings, in order to create a dynamic and safe urban realm.

The idea of “The City at Eye Level” however is not new: many iconic urban planning thinkers have been instrumental in influencing the development of a human-scale urban planning and design in our (inner) cities. Long-time principles set forth by Kevin Lynch, Gordon Cullen, Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl, and Allan Jacobs (among many others) are relevant to today’s planning. We want to give due credit to those iconic thinkers.

KEVIN LYNCH

Kevin Lynch (1918–1984) was an American urban planner who studied at Yale and at MIT, later teaching at MIT for 15 years. His most well-known works are *The Image of the City* (1960) and *Good City Form* (1984). The first book was a 5-year research project studying the ways in which people use, perceive, and absorb the city. This book organized the city into five image elements he called paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. He also invented the word "way finding" and many other vocabulary regularly used in planning today.

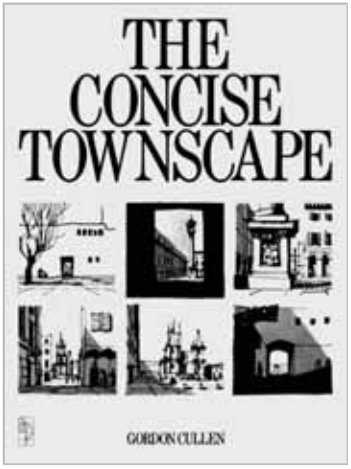


Kevin Lynch,
The Image of the City

"..., this study will look for physical qualities which relate to the attributes of identity and structure in the mental image. This leads to the definition of what might be called imageability: that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. [...] A highly imageable (apparent, legible, or visible) city in this peculiar sense would seem well formed, distinct, remarkable; it would invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation. The sensuous grasp upon such surroundings would not merely be simplified, but also extended and deepened. Such a city would be one that could be apprehended over time as a pattern of high continuity with many distinctive parts clearly interconnected. The perceptive and familiar observer could absorb new sensuous impacts without disruption of his basic image, and each new impact would touch upon many previous elements. He would be well oriented, and he could move easily. He would be highly aware of his environment."
– Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, pp. 9–10

GORDON CULLEN

Gordon Cullen (1914–1994) was an English architect and urban designer. He developed an eye for seeing the obvious qualities in British towns. He saw that places of great beauty and strong character have been created over the centuries and are developed from the point of view of a person. He started identifying and analysing these essences of the British town and developed them into lessons for architects and planners. Gordon Cullen is best known for his book *Townscape*, first published in 1961; later editions published under the title *The Concise Townscape* (1971).



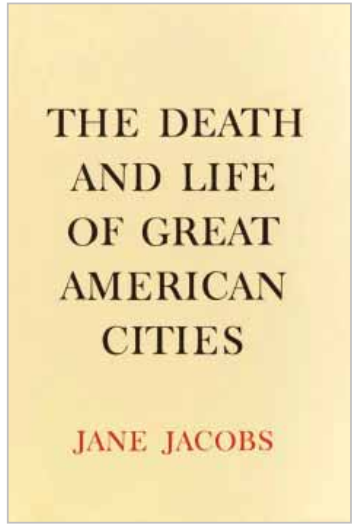
Gordon Cullen,
The Concise Townscape

"The significance of all this is that although the pedestrian walks through the town at a uniform speed, the scenery of towns is often revealed in a series of jerks or revelations. This we call SERIAL VISION. […] The human mind reacts to a contrast, to the difference between things, and when two pictures […] are in the mind at the same time, a vivid contrast is felt and the town becomes visible in a deeper sense. It comes alive through the drama of juxtaposition. Unless this happens the town will slip past us featureless and inert."

"In this […] category we turn to an examination of the fabric of towns: colour, texture, scale, style, character, personality and uniqueness. Accepting the fact that most towns are of old foundation, their fabric will show evidence of differing periods in its architectural styles and also in the various accidents of layout. Many towns do so display this mixture of styles, materials and scales."
– Gordon Cullen, *The Concise Townscape*, pp. 9–12

JANE JACOBS

Probably one of the most famous American writers on urban planning and city economy, Jane Jacobs (1916–2006) is best known for her contributions and harsh critiques of urban renewal policies and development in the 1950s and 60s and her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). During a time when American suburbanization reigned, she was one of the few promoters of the city and city life. She fervently opposed urban renewal and many planning models of her time. Jacobs is renowned for her concepts 'eyes on the street,' mixed use development, and bottom-up planning. Her detailed observations of city life and function influenced urban planning in many ways.



Jane Jacobs,
The Death and Life of Great American Cities

"A city street equipped to handle strangers, and to make a safety asset, in itself, our of the presence of strangers, as the streets of successful city neighborhoods always do, must have three main qualities:

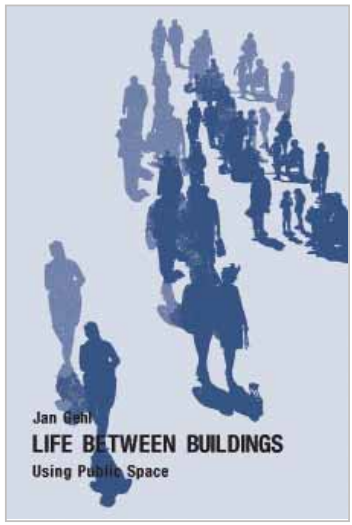
First, there must be a clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space. Public and private spaces cannot ooze into each other as they do typically in suburban settings or in projects.

Second, there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind.

And third, the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously, both to add to the number of effective eyes on the street and to induce the people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers. Nobody enjoys sitting on a stoop or looking out a window at an empty street. Almost nobody does such a thing. Large numbers of people entertain themselves, off and on, by watching street activity."
– Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, p. 35

JAN GEHL

Jan Gehl (1936) is a Danish architect and urban designer in Copenhagen. His career has focused on improving the public realm especially for pedestrians and cyclists. His influential work *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space* (1971, English translation 1987) documents human social interaction and perception, urban recreation, and sensory experience of public spaces. Gehl advocates gradual transformations of social and communal places and incorporation of pedestrian amenities and urban cycling. In 2006 Gehl published the article *Close encounters with buildings,* in which he and his team researched the interaction between street and the plinth of a building – considering experience, viewing distance, walking speed, and architecture of street, building and façade.



Jan Gehl,
Life Between Buildings:
Using Public Space

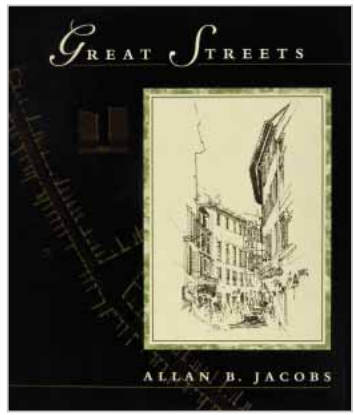
"In a Society becoming steadily more privatized with private homes, cars, computers, offices and shopping centers, the public component of our lives is disappearing. It is more and more important to make the cities inviting, so we can meet our fellow citizens face to face and experience directly through our senses. Public life in good quality public spaces is an important part of a democratic life and a full life."

"Living cities, therefore, one in which people can interact with one another, are always stimulating because they are rich in experiences. [….] Wherever there are people – in buildings, in neighborhoods, in city centers, in recreational areas, and so on – it is generally true that people and human activities attract other people. […] Life in buildings and between buildings seems in nearly all situations to rank as more essential and more relevant than the spaces and buildings themselves."
– Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space*, pp. 23–31

"*There is now a considerable confusion in the gap between large and small scales and between 'quick' and 'slow' architecture. Ground floor facades provide an important link between these scales and between buildings and people. For public space and buildings to be treated as a whole, the ground floor facades must have a special and welcoming design. This good, close encounter architecture is vital for good cities."*
– Jan Gehl et al., *Close encounters with buildings*, Urban Design International (2006) no 11, p. 29

ALLAN JACOBS

Allan Jacobs is an American urban planner and professor emeritus of the University of California, Berkeley. He is well-known for publications and research on urban design, as well as his contribution to the urban design manual for the City of San Francisco. He is an avid proponent of multi-modal streets that do not separate users. His comprehensive resource book, *Great Streets* (1995), illustrates the dynamic interaction between people and streets, and analyzes the specific attributes of these great streets.



Allan Jacobs,
Great Streets

"Great streets require physical characteristics that help the eyes do what they want to do, must do: move. […] Generally, it is many different surfaces over which light constantly moves that keeps the eyes engaged: separate buildings, many separate windows or doors, or surface changes. […] Visual complexity is what is required, but it must not be so complex as to become chaotic or disorienting. […] Beyond helping to define a street, separating the pedestrian realm from vehicles, and providing shade, what makes trees so special is their movement; the constant movement of their branches and leaves, and the ever-changing light that plays on, thorough, and around them."
– Allan Jacobs, *Great Streets*, p. 282

"Generally, more buildings along a given length of street contribute more than do fewer buildings. […] With more buildings there are likely to be more architects, and they will not all design alike. There are more contributors to the street, more and different participants, all of whom add interest. […] The different buildings can […] be designed for a mix of uses and destinations that attract mixes of people from all over a city or neighborhood, which therefore helps build community: movies, different-sized stores, libraries."
– Allan Jacobs, *Great Streets*, pp. 297–298

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The planning and design of cities, growing and transforming over time: changing functions of neighbourhoods, buildings and plinths and the need for flexible plans and ground floors.

THE PLANNED AND THE

ORGANIC CITY

A THIRTY-YEAR VISION FOR THE URBAN FABRIC

a conversation with Adriaan Geuze

Good plinths are a cornerstone of the European city. We need to go back to thinkers like Jane Jacobs and H.P. Berlage in The Netherlands for a conceptual framework for urban design:

– social diversity, a mix of poor and rich;
– marking the public realm, the collective;
– dignity for everyone;
– car traffic is never dominant but nicely fits into the urban fabric;
– a dense urban fabric with good streets.

A THIRTY-YEAR STREET VISION

Truly changing and improving plinths in an existing urban structure, especially one like the post-war reconstruction city centre of Rotterdam, takes at least three generations. The key here is to create the conditions for plinths to function by restoring a dense structure, the “tissue urbaine”. This requires a long-term vision and a deep understanding of how the city has developed over the centuries.

A city must have continuity of the historic east-west and north-south connections. These should, as Jane Jacobs says, be seen more from the point of view of the pedestrian and the cyclist. This needs to be done at a higher scale than the city centre only. For instance, in Rotterdam, the surrounding areas Kop van Zuid, Oude Westen, Crooswijk and Oostplein should be seen

as part of the centre. The post-war design of Van Traa has disrupted the connections between the historic inner city triangle and Crooswijk and Rotterdammers were cut off from the river. We need much more dense north-south connections, like Rotterdam had from the city to the river before the war, but which were eliminated by the large scale blocks of the modernist reconstruction plan. Such a long-term vision is needed so that each time a project takes place in the next decades, it is used to improve the density of the urban fabric (and bring back more north-south routes). We must understand the historic structures of the city.

THE URBAN FABRIC

Another part of this long-term vision is how the city treats its larger scale connecting streets. Boulevards must be understood at a higher level than the way they are treated now. The boulevards of Rotterdam are coherent for the length of about 400 to 500 meters. That is too short to truly function as a boulevard. They should be stretched much further on, and they should be designed based on one design regime for the whole boulevard. They should also carry one name.

Creating a dense urban fabric creates the conditions for success within the streets. This requires not only a practical approach in the streets, but also a long-term vision for using unknown urban interventions of the next 30 years to gradually improve the urban fabric.

TRAFFIC SPACE AND CAR STREETS

Traffic schemes can be awful. Too often, streets are designed from a functional perspective, rather than a more holistic, human scale approach. It leads to streets that are too wide. Lanes should have a width of 54 meters or maximum 60 meters. In the modern city, it is easy to find 100 m, sometimes even 200 m wide streets. That is simply too much space to function as an intimate fabric. Adding new building in those streets and thus narrowing it, will create exciting new streets for the city.

This should not be understood as a plea against the car, rather the contrary. Living, working, shopping, recreation and traffic should be mixed as much as possible, according to Jane Jacobs. The car belongs in the fabric, provided it is not too dominant. Streets where cars have been are completely dead at night and people avoid these streets. It is precisely allowing all flows through the city that creates urban bustle.

A NEW URBAN DESIGN TRADITION

Modernist inner cities are deserts. At night you walk through them and think: this city hates women, elderly, children, and disabled persons. Interventions in the city should take place with much more sense for these users. A well-functioning city centre needs a middle class of higher educated families with children. In too many cases city centres do not service these target group.

A city needs more than just good architecture; it needs good urban design as well, based on a historic understanding. In a city like Rotterdam, a lot has been destroyed after the War. New high-rise can be part of the city centre, but not if they have a poorly designed plinth that kills the area around them.

We need a new tradition in urban design, supported by designers who live and work in the city itself. The local authority must develop skills for the specific work on the inner city, and consider urban design a craft that needs an eye for decisive details.

ORGANISE RESISTANCE

If we change a street, talk with local entrepreneurs first. There is too much top-down thinking, thinking it is good to throw cars out of the streets. Streets will be open for construction for months and after some time you can see the special entrepreneurs disappear. They will never return, and by doing so, the street has been effectively destroyed.

It is not only the local authority’s organisation, of course.
A crucial role for the city centre is played by how the city’s elites and people's voices involve themselves in the development of the city. In Amsterdam, there is debate about each new building in the city centre. Sometimes it takes long, but resistance eventually leads to good urban design.

FRANS HALSSTRAAT: THE DYNAMIC EXPRESSION OF ITS PLINTH

Jos Gadet

THE NEW ECONOMY

Although migration to cities is as old as cities themselves (slightly distorted by the economic and social suburbanization of the seventies and eighties in the 19th century), the nowadays growth of the preindustrial cities in the western hemisphere is rather a specific one. It is based on knowledge and human interaction.

American economist Edward Glaeser would agree when we say that whereas the typical industrial city was located in a place where factories had an edge in production, the typical 21st century city is more likely a place where workers have an edge on consumption, interaction and a pleasant public realm. A century ago, companies were tied to spots like Liverpool or Pittsburgh because of natural attributes like harbours and coal mines; this is no longer the case for companies. The global decline in transport costs means that companies are now footloose: free to locate where people want to live. In most cases, attractive cities like Amsterdam, London, New York, Munich, Copenhagen and Barcelona entice enterprises and entrepreneurs by their quality of life and public amenities.

And there is more. Actual urbanisation of the cities mentioned above is the result of a recent structural change in the economy of the developed countries. This new, knowledge-based economy is founded on interaction and synergy—and therefore crucial for face-


HOFMANKAPPERS

to-face contact. Nowadays, face-to-face contact takes place in environments such as breakfast bars, lounge areas, libraries, galleries, pubs and Starbucks clones. The urban orientation of the new economy has also led to a preference of dwellings within the urban fabric, within the mixed urban areas that offer a variety of amenities. This strong demand leads to increased housing prices and even small(er) housing units. Smaller houses create urgency for the use of semi-public, casual meeting spaces, such as those mentioned above. The very fast development of smart phones and digital social networks has accelerated and strengthened these forces.

THE REVITALIZATION OF THE FRANS HALSSTRAAT

This specific re-urbanisation demands specific spatial arrangements in which diversity and proximity are of utmost importance. Hence, this means that there is growing need of *urban tissue in which diversity and proximity is possible*! And this, in turn, explains the visual and functional alteration of the 19th century neighbourhoods in Amsterdam, illustrated by the revitalization of the Frans Halsstraat in the famous Pijp District, immediately adjacent to Amsterdam's urban core.

The Pijp district was intended for the labour class, but because of rapidly growing land prices it became occupied by the middle class who were fleeing from the overcrowded and polluted 19th century inner city areas. Because of the commercial design of the building constructors and speculative construction in those pre-Housing Act days, small dwellings with relatively high rents were realized. Some of the inhabitants therefore rented a single room to artists, students or singles. Hence, the genesis of a lively and diverse neighbourhood took off; nowadays it's known as the Amsterdam Quartier Latin or Bohemian Amsterdam.

Poor maintenance during and after World War II and suburbanization of production and labour initiated the fall of the once-famous district in the 1960s and 1970s and it became a slum. However, because of its direct vicinity to the historical urban core, its then low rents and poor image, De Pijp remained inhabited by bohemians and students around 1980. From that time on low rents also attracted migrants from Spain, Turkey, Morocco, and Portugal. These ethnic communities enriched the neighbourhood with stores and facilities originally oriented towards their 'own' migrant population, and they were also immediately embraced by the student and bohemian residents. The neighbourhood became an attraction in itself!

Very important on this matter was the quality of the urban physical structure. The small scale, private investments and construction mode in the 19th century resulted in 'building on-demand'.

Residential space, retail space, shops, and working space were constructed in the same street, even in the same building. And more than that; the construction method made quick alterations of property functions possible in the easiest way, in order to meet the actual demand. This physical appearance is a necessary (spatial) condition for the revitalization of urban districts. The ground floors appear to be the ultimate example of this urban phenomenon: the plinth expresses the dynamic character of a city district.

This is also in the case for the Frans Halsstraat. The opening of the pub *Carels Café* in the 1980s initiated the start of more pubs and restaurants. The Frans Halsstraat became the first 'entertainment' zone outside the inner urban core of Amsterdam. With this success the fame of this area grew, resulting in increasing rents and land prices. Not only students and bohemians were attracted to this part of Amsterdam, but also the more wealthy Amsterdam inhabitants, migrants and ex-pats were (and still are) attracted to this diverse mixed-use part of the city.

The success of the Frans Halsstraat, due to its adjacency to the historical city and its specific physical structure, forced the local government to end the common policy of massive demolition of the old (traditional) urban tissue in these parts of Amsterdam. Therefore the municipality started to sanitize its public property on the one hand, and legally forced private owners to maintain and develop their property on the other hand. Additionally, the local authority introduced one-way traffic, and invested in street trees and other public space improvements. Now several creative and other knowledge-based firms have started their businesses on or near Frans Halsstraat.

In 25 years this street transformed from an anonymous residential area for low-income groups into a vivid urban area with mixed uses, completely absorbed by the urban fabric. The transformation process in and around the Frans Halsstraat and the Pijp District as a whole demonstrates an area coming into view of the new bourgeoisie and the emerging 'creative class' not only to use and visit the diverse mix of facilities and shops, but also to buy or rent a dwelling. The plinths in this case were not a *sufficient*, but a *necessary* condition. The transformation was made possible by the mixed character of the urban tissue, the 19th century construction method, and the numerous transferable retail spaces in the plinth. That is why the Frans Halsstraat easily and quickly adapted to changing demands in the new urban economy and society.

PLINTHS & URBAN DESIGN

a conversation with Ton Schaap

THE URBAN PUBLIC REALM

As humans we are focused on meeting other people, for which we need the urban public realm. In that domain the human scale is important as well as the vibrancy of the place – both are provided by plinths. The more a city has of the urban public realm, the more successful the city will be in the long run. This refers not solely to the plinth but to the whole design of the street and public spaces; street and plinth need each other.

Residential Plinth in Amsterdam

In many office areas, the buildings are positioned in a (parking) field and the public space is mainly determined by the car for access and parking. Where the car is dominant, it is usually not an attractive place where you want to be. There is a need for such areas, but they are not the lively streets and neighbourhoods that are part of the urban system. The Amsterdam-Zuidas is an example of a good office / mixed-use area. The design has been thought from the public domain, with the main entrances to the street and a not too dominant role for the car.

New urban housing with plinths in the Eastern Docklands Amsterdam

Van Baerlestraat: 19th century street with shops

URBAN RESIDENTIAL STREETS

My inspiration for urban design and plinths comes from the European city before the mass use of the car. Plinths are often assumed to be non-residential. But most of the high density urban areas in Amsterdam are residential. These attractive areas are to be found in the European city areas from before the 20th century. In the modernist architecture and urbanism this city of streets has been lost: the street was seen as vacant space between the buildings. However this is especially the place where urban life takes place and which need to be designed as a domain with attractive facades and plinths.

19th century Housing with “Geveltuintje”

Private zone Between Plinth and Sidewalk

Many of the attractive streets in the city are ordinary residential streets. You’ll find them in Amsterdam-South but also in Amsterdam-East and in Old-West. Those streets have a sophisticated plinth design between the ground floor of the house and the public space. The design of the plinth should be a combination of generous and reserved - a resident needs privacy. The size of the window is important: the residents should not hide behind blinds or curtains in a too big window, or behind a too small kitchen window. The hardest to design is a street with mutual satisfaction for both residents and people walking along or driving by. This needs a fine detailing of the plinth, and can be provided by small front gardens or private zones along the sidewalk.

IJburg is in this case an example where the housing and building blocks have a good design of the ground floor that relates to the public street. For the plan of IJburg we had a good look at the streets and canals of old Amsterdam. Also Borneo-Spoorenburg in the Eastern Docklands is in my opinion a good example; here the plinth of the houses has a patio or carport and makes a good balance between front and rear entrance, between formal and informal. The sidewalks there are wide enough to sit outside, so the residents are gradually occupying parts of this 3.5 meter wide zone with benches, planters and *geveltuintjes (*sidewalk gardens).

STREET PROFILE AND PLINTH DESIGN

The design attitude of the urbanist and architect is important: do you consider the street as the rest area or the heart of the matter. As

an architect you should be humble and start designing from the street, not from the building. You need to design good and pleasant entrances and ground floors. In suburbia different rules apply, there is more need for private enjoyment, but in urban areas you should make good streets. And good streets have a good profile, a good pavement and trees, in the Dutch context.

The plinth is important for the street profile but also the upper floors: the whole facade of the building contributes to the vibrancy of a street. The 19th century belt around the Amsterdam City centre is a good example, but should not be romanticized. In the years after construction these neighbourhoods were often overcrowded, and had a different use. These neighbourhoods where very different from the nowadays use, also because they are no longer peripheral but central located in the city. Therefor I plea to build generic buildings and plinths that can absorb many functions: not form follows function, but flexibility for different use.

The plinth design is an architectural challenge: the height of the floor, the size and position of the windows and the entrance, also the level of the ground floor is important. When the ground floor is slightly above street level, the privacy issue is secured. Then you have the same perspective and eye level seated inside as a passer-by. To arrange this well is difficult, because the house is built by a developer and the street is organized by the municipality. Then you have to come up with creative solutions, because the rules of the Dutch *Bouwbesluit* (Building Act) are made for houses in suburbia but are too oppressive for high density districts.

The height of the ground floor is important to have enough sunlight inside, as well for the flexibility for non-residential functions. Also for the street profile, the measure of the plinth is important: high ground floors give atmosphere. The height of the plinth is also a reflection of the city; in a chic city like Milan you have a plinth of up to 6 meters high, which fits the grandeur of the buildings and streets. In the case of Delft the plinth height is related to the cosy size of the canals and buildings. It is not the absolute size that matters, but the proportions of the building and its façade related to the profile of street.

NON-RESIDENTIAL PLINTHS

Most liveliness comes from the plinths with a special function such as a shop, office or other type of program other than living. Many urban neighbourhoods have these functions, often situated at a street corner or concentrated in the main street. Sometimes these streets are transformed in an extremity where the street is completely determined by shops and shopping, such as the Kalverstraat. Vibrant but too crowded during the day, deserted in

the evening. Success leads to monoculture, and is then vulnerable.

There are several trends that affect the non-residential functions of a plinth. Nowadays our food is mainly distributed and sold in supermarkets instead of the small-scale neighbourhood shops. Supermarkets are closed boxes with a pleasant entrance of 6 meters wide, but with a depressing facade of the remaining perimeter. The supermarket is a necessity for a residential district, so it's an urban issue you have to try to fit in the urban block. Either on the ground floor with supporting shops around them, underground such as the supermarket on the Museumplein, or on the first floor as has recently been done in Amsterdam-Zuidoost.

Wibautstraat: Shops and cofee bars at the street corner

Specialized and small scale shops, such as a bakery

What you see in Amsterdam is that there are many single households, who are biking to their favourite shops in different parts of the city to buy food specialities. For the large and heavy groceries they make use of the internet-supermarket with home delivery service. This will lead to a diversification of supply in the cities: the bulk order over the Internet and via the supermarket delivered to your door, and the personal shopping in the small shops, the Turkish bakery, Italian caterers, etc. These shops go back to the size and scale of the 19th century city, a size that people recognize and appreciate. The owners of these shops are independent, not part of big organisations like supermarket chains. The kind of city we are talking about is probably not generic. It is attractive for those who want to be as independent and self-supporting as possible. The city of Amsterdam cherishes this niche of society.

A PLEA FOR FLEMISH PARKING

Wies Sanders

All well and good, not all plinths are equipped with cosy storefronts and restaurant terraces. It would be irritating if every street, without end, enticed you to buy, drink and eat, especially if you are penniless. A city needs *some* boring facades, if only to be unseen in the midst of all these people. A city also needs garages, containers, service entrances, connections, and installation spaces and it is needed that they are not denied or hidden in a ludicrous way, but treated as equals in public space. Maybe it requires even more attention because the functioning of the city is increasingly dependent on installations and suppliers. Therefore, this is a pledge for more attention to the interaction between the plinth and the car and technical communication, with the Flemish parking as an example.

In the glorious days of the 50s, Flanders obtained an American profile with a real car culture. The car was not put in the street to show off, as is usual in the Netherlands, but neatly placed in the private parking lot, which was designed to integrate with the home. Already in the Art Nouveau times, the garage doors were often higher quality than the people's front doors and the modern 50s houses were equipped with even larger garages. Where the Dutch have their glass-curtains, a typical Flemish has a wide garage door. And unlike the Netherlands, drive-in houses are not a privilege for the suburban lifestyle, it is also an urban phenomenon that strongly shapes the appearance of the streets of a city like Antwerp.

Integrated private residential parking in Flanders is now usually not used as parking anymore: your own garage door with the sign *wegsleepregeling*

("cars will be towed away") is a guarantee to have a reserved parking space in front of your own door in the busy city street. The fact that the street is filled with parked cars is partly because every Antwerper is allotted two free parking permits from the city. And most of the people in Antwerp, despite the large bicycle facilities and ample public transport actually own two cars. Because even though you could do without, why would you? The garage is obviously used as an extra room and storage area for the expensive racing bike, the dog basket, and tools. The private garage is the urban version of the rural farm. On an average Saturday the garage door is open permanently, and brings a lively exchange with the street. It is a pleasure to peek secretly in the garages looking for collections of license plates, calendars, failed inventions, and lost toys. No shop window can beat that!

In the district Borgerhout, garages are often used as a workshop and start-up spot for entrepreneurs, or to trade for import and export, lot sales, repair spaces and rubbish caves, in where for decades no sweeper has been through. Maybe not everything is completely legal, but yes, Apple, Google, Amazon, Barbie and Microsoft also started in garages, why would a subsidized incubator be more successful than a garage in an urban district?

Also, gasoline stations and repair garages in Flemish cities are logically integrated in the construction line. Chances are that at an Antwerp crossroads you'll find a café, a shop and a garage, all on the same corner, all flourishing for years. The plinth of the building where the garage sits is set back a few feet to receive the car in a covered spot. The garage-owner sits next door in a beautifully designed glass box and maybe lives above. The entrance to a public car park or the repair garage is adjacent and commonly occupies the entire inner area of the city block.

All access to a parking lot does not need to exceed a 2.5 meters wide to unlock a new world and a wide range of functions. No wonder it is immensely popular in Belgium! But like elsewhere in European cities the fun is over. Due to changing security conditions, the gasoline (LPG) stations shut down one by one in the mid- 90's. And the small garages find it difficult to compete with the major car dealerships. In the better neighbourhoods, the released square footage from the closures are now filled with a glass facade and occupied by restaurants or offices. The less profitable locations remain in decline, endlessly waiting for a new proposal. Meanwhile, motorists are increasingly obliged to drive far outside the city to refuel or repair his car.

However, if we look a little further into the future, then the private car park and the local gas station could face a glorious future. A future where there is a need for an insured and nearby space for charging point for electric car, bicycle, tricycle, the fuel cells, delivery service and the necessary technical area for modern forms of working like co-working. In due time we'll have to transform these polished windows with geraniums all back to garages!

Area Development

STUDIES 1

HAFENCITY: QUARTER AM SANDTORKAI/DALMANNKAI

Hamburg

INTERVIEW WITH
Tanja Karg
commercial utilization development and coordination, HafenCity Hamburg GmbH

"HafenCity's ground floor has an extremely high value, and it´s essential to create urbanity—it's something we must pay attention to. We must connect all the people to each other to make the ground floor work really well."

FACT 1
746 new homes

FACT 2
2700 new jobs

FACT 3
6500 m^2 commercial ground floor space

TIMELINE

1997 The parliament of Hamburg approves the HafenCity project
2000 Master plan approved and adopted by Hamburg Senate
2001 Construction begins
2003 First building completed (SAP) – Begin construction of Dalmannkai/Sandtorkai
2007 Introduction of HafenCity Ecolabel – Begin construction of northern Überseequartier
2008 HafenCity becomes an individual city district
2009 Completion of first neighbourhood, Am Sandtorkai / Dalmannkai
2010 Revision of Masterplan for eastern HafenCity complete

CONTEXT

Hamburg, the second largest city of Germany and located in the northern-most part of the country, is home to 1.8 million residents. Situated on the River Elbe, Hamburg benefits from its large port and is one of the wealthiest cities in Europe. A portion of the port's land, located in the heart of Hamburg, was consolidated and left vacant for decades. In 1997, the City designated this large, 157-hectare (388-acre) site as HafenCity and begun the complex planning process of creating a new city. Because of its prime, central location in Hamburg, HafenCity has the opportunity to become an ideal hub for residential, commercial, cultural, and business uses. Am Sandtorkai/Dalmannkai was the first completed neighbourhood in HafenCity (2009) and piece-by-piece the rest of HafenCity will finish in 2025.

CHALLENGE

HafenCity Hamburg GmbH, a 100% subsidiary of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, is developing HafenCity at Hamburg's behest. HafenCity Hamburg GmbH is responsible for administration of the "special city and port fund" under public law. Sales of HafenCity land, mostly owned by the City of Hamburg, finance the majority of public infrastructure, which HafenCity Hamburg GmbH builds. In addition to this planning, building, and financing responsibilities, HafenCity Hamburg GmbH must produce a new downtown and is intent on creating an active community with prosperous commercial and business uses as well as residential and leisure facilities. On top of that goal, the city should be sustainable, designed well, and most importantly, lively on the ground level—past regular business hours.

SOLUTION

HafenCity Hamburg GmbH set up a one-of-a-kind system for ensuring success. From the very beginning, HafenCity set the ground level development as a high priority. With this in mind, HafenCity Hamburg GmbH established a unique land-purchasing and -developing strategy. For each plot, HafenCity Hamburg GmbH produces a set of criteria that spells out the specific demands for the site, also particularly related to the ground level – land usage, design, etc. For example, a common demand is that the ground floors of all buildings are at least 5m (16') high, to accommodate for potential commercial, retail, or other business which will eventually locate in all ground floor areas. The land price of ground floor space is also set rather low, below offices, sometimes at the level of residential space, allowing for commercial diversity. Investors then come to HafenCity with their designs, and developers and engineers bid for single plots. During the entire process, HafenCity works closely with the developers, investors, engineers, and potential tenants. The aim is to create fine-grained, unique, and active ground floors.

SECRETS

Create one complete concept. The set of requirements HafenCity Hamburg GmbH produces for each available plot are not just

detailed demands investors must fulfil in order to purchase the plot. Each set varies from plot to plot and includes site-specific demands for land use specifically related to the ground floor - all with the aim to provide investors with new ideas and inspiration. Together, the requirements add up to create a whole ground-floor concept for the whole of HafenCity. The GmbH also hosts round-tables for investor and architects of adjacent plots to get together, provide information, inspire and challenge, and make the best out of every ground floor.

See the common goal as 'urbanity.' The GmbH infused a solid mix of fine-grained land uses in each neighbourhood, guaranteeing high frequency of ground floor activity. Next, they founded a set of associations made up of community residents and retailers to keep communication lines open, honest, and working well. They hold regular community meetings and ensure proper dissemination of information to residents, businesses, and retailers. Together, they solve problems and find solutions.

Provide information. A fundamental part of the process is to provide information about neighbourhood developments and technical assistance to other interested parties of HafenCity. To integrate newcomers and start ups especially on the ground floors, HafenCity Hamburg GmbH launched and continues to support social networks in form of clubs or associations. Two staff persons handle social relationships with the residents and commercial affairs for the ground floor tenants, respectively.

LESSONS

Set objectives. The requirement set for each plot helped the GmbH maintain certain goals and objectives for land use, design, and sustainability of the ground floor's public realm—the plinths. They demanded the investors meet those objectives and set the bar very high. But the system is flexible, far more flexible then a long-term fixed development plan and the market can react with innovative ideas.

Think outside the box. The GmbH forced the investors to think of ground floor utilization; even residential-focused investors must think about ground floor from the beginning. The process of learning for both the GmbH and the investors was challenging and time-consuming, but earned success in the end.

Form a network. Community associations, round-tables for investors and developers, and public meetings helped create networks, which in turn prevented potential problems and made it easier to solve problems that did arise. For example, to create unconventional solutions to handle on-going construction work, which aggravate ground floor tenants, the GmbH discussed the issue with the community and together they created a solution: a small village of temporary units (tents) in another part of the neighbourhood, away from construction dust and noise.

IMPACT

Tanja Karg, from HafenCity Hamburg GmbH, explained that Am Sandtorkai/Dalmannkai was even more successful than they anticipated. The neighbourhood has a good mix of residential and office uses and the ground floor has a diverse mix of retailers and restaurants and is active both during the day and on the weekend. The network between retailers and residents remains strong as well. Since Am Sandtorkai/Dalmannkai was the first completed neighbourhood, naturally the GmbH and the investors learned a few things for the next neighbourhoods. Issues concerning the configuration of open spaces, accessibility, and orientation systems for customers brought about adjustment. The requirements have been altered and made even more explicit.

DO

- provide explicit information and transparency
- consider the diversity of determining factors to create an active ground floor
- launch networks and communities
- ease possible tension with sensitive responses
- create solutions with the major players and the community

IN CONCLUSION

Through lots of learning, patience, and collaboration, HafenCity's first neighbourhood was completed in 2009. Am Sandtorkai/Dalmannkai is now home to about 1,500 people and 2,700 new jobs. The cityscape in this neighbourhood is quite diverse; 27 developers and 26 architecture firms were involved in the 15 buildings of the neighbourhood. The ground level is a public place, open to everyone—it is the most important part of the city for residents, retailers, and for the planners at HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. Together with the investors, developers, and architects, HafenCity Hamburg GmbH advocated for a well-designed and thoughtful ground floor through their site-specific demands. They set clear objectives and pushed investors to think outside their comfort zone—and ended up with a complete neighbourhood that works. Although some changes must be made with the final product, their continued cooperation with all partners and especially the community network shows a real investment and dedication to HafenCity, qualities that will carry on to the next phases of the city.

SLUSEHOLMEN NORD

Copenhagen

INTERVIEW WITH
Lars Korn
architect/project manager, Center for Bydesign, municipality of Copenhagen

"Rules are important...but there must be exceptions!"

FACT 1
1300 new dwellings

FACT 2
15% subsidized housing

FACT 3
25 different architecture firms

TIMELINE

1999 Started conversation for a mixed-use neighbourhood in the industrial harbour

1999 Cooperation between municipality (CPH) and harbour
– Hired Dutch architecture firm, Sjoerd Soeters, to complete the masterplan for the whole area, including 9000 new dwellings and 20 000 new office jobs
– 3 developers were chosen to complete the neighbourhood

2002 Plan for Sluseholmen Nord completed

2003 By-law established requiring ground level windows and transparency
– Design Manual written and approved
– Construction begins

2009 Project completed
– 1300 dwellings (½ unsubsidized rental, ½ owned; 15% subsidized)
– shops and 1 kindergarten added

CONTEXT

Copenhagen is a dense and growing Scandinavian city with a demand for well-designed, environmentally friendly housing in close proximity to the city centre. The Sluseholmen industrial area in the south harbour of Copenhagen had been in decline and absent of commercial use for decades when the municipality and the harbour corporation started a dialogue about renewing the area in 1999. The partner organizations had a vision of creating a new, liveable, mixed-use neighbourhood on this prime waterfront real estate.

PROBLEM

Several challenges arose from the beginning. The industrial land use of the site was toxic and needed major environmental mitigation before people could safely live there. Water systems were another major challenge to tackle. Another issue was how to construct an entirely new neighbourhood with architecture and urban design that maintains diversity, exhibits progressive Danish design, and preserves the walking and cycling culture of the Danes.

SOLUTION

With inspiration from Amsterdam's IJburg development, the redevelopment team created a mixed-use neighbourhood based on a canal system that forms eight small islands. Each block and home are different from one another, yet all together they form a cohesive collection—and of course each building group has their own protected courtyard, in true Danish style. About 25 Danish architecture firms contributed to the façade variety.

The ground level of the neighbourhood is already lively, and is outfitted for future flexibility. With the help of a project Design Manual and an urban design by-law, the plinths are required to have windows for transparency and every corner plinth is equipped with high ceilings and zoned as mixed-use—this way, each corner is or *could become* a small café or restaurant, or remain a dwelling or office space. In the end, the team created an urban design that demonstrates a close knit yet urban atmosphere, promotes social cohesiveness, yet also respects privacy and family values.

SECRETS

Exceptions to the rule. In the case of the facades and architectural diversity, rules are important, but there must be exceptions. In order to create an effective ground floor and activity-producing urban design, the exceptions to the rules were very important. It was necessary to interpret the Design Manual "with a grain of salt" in order to balance the demands of the ground level and obtain the desired results.

Plan for future change. The design by-law was a success and the team of experts were proud of this achievement. The by-law has been helpful for establishing flexibility

in the land uses on the ground level. The corner spaces are fully prepared for legitimate cafés and restaurants, which allows businesses to easily open in those spaces and promotes active street life in future. For the moment, the shops and the restaurants are placed along the main street, aptly named "Sluseholmen."

LESSONS

Cooperation and commitment. From the beginning, the team of professionals—including the City, Harbour Corporation, developers, and architecture firm—all had a fairly good relationship but with different ideas and opinions on the priorities and goals of Sluseholmen, which created tension among the group. It took a concerted effort for all parties to be very clear about objectives from the start. In the early discussions, the team came together to write a statement to the municipalities stating their goals and objections. This process made it easier to find a common language and reach consensus. The Masterplan and Design Manual processes added to the team's harmony. In the end, as Lars Korn described, "there were a lot of thank-you's and good feelings."

Preserve traditions in new development. The Danish courtyard is a typical asset in any urban residential building. It can be easy to sidestep or want to change traditions for the sake of design or adventure, but this team knew from the get-go that the courtyard was staying. In this development, each courtyard is a special gathering place for the surrounding residents and families.

IMPACT

At the moment, all of the residences in Sluseholmen are completely at capacity. Because of the unique canal and island system, each home has a view of either a canal or the harbour. Every aspect of the ground floor of the neighbourhood fits together seamlessly. The bridges and waterways create a lively atmosphere and a distinct Copenhagen neighbourhood. The corners of the main streets are prepared for commercial/flex-space activity with accessible entrances, high ceilings, and optional housing above. The Design Manual gave developers and architects inspiration and in the end, the facades work very well together and contribute to a sense of variety.

DO

- develop flexible rules
- prevent group tension by setting objectives
- use historic traditions to your advantage

IN CONCLUSION

Through enduring partnership and coordination this decade-long project was finally a success. By building consensus, writing a formal statement of project goals and objectives, and creating new devices the multiagency team tackled each challenge as it came. The site was properly mitigated of environmental damage. The canal system was soundly engineered and designed as the community's principle gathering and interactive spaces. The Design Manual had a favourable outcome, though its interpretation still required flexibility especially to promote an active ground level and ensure a varied architectural identity.

From the beginning, the team's goal was a desire for a high quality project and to grant a high quality of life to the future residents. A main component of this was a good and successful ground floor—canal side interaction with cafés and benches. This also meant passing the by-law, requiring windows and transparency of the main street plinths and flexible, mixed-use corner lots. Multiple strategies ensured both a successful project in the present and for the future.

HET EILANDJE

Antwerp

INTERVIEW WITH
Filip Smits
program manager, City of Antwerp Urban Planning Department

"The revival of this neighbourhood is like wine, it's getting better over the years."

FACT 1
170 hectares

FACT 2
1,500 current residents, expecting 7000

FACT 3
1/3 public space (water + quaysides)

TIMELINE

1795-1814 Docklands established by Napoleon as a military base
1990s City at the Stream contest for plans for international harbours
1993 First master plan for Docklands created
2000 Master plan recreated by Rene Daniels
2000 First project on the water
2002 Architectural contest
2006 Quaysides renewed, historical warehouse renovated
2011 Museum on the Stream opens
2012 Water decontamination project finishes and floating swimming pool opens in August
2013 People on the Move museum will open in historical warehouses

CONTEXT

With roots dating back to the 16th century and a strong military presence during the Napoleonic era, Antwerp's Het Eilandje area has undergone massive changes. This 170-hectare neighbourhood held a prominent role in 17th and 18th century urban life, but in the 20th century it became a derelict barrier between port and city. The 1990s master planning propelled excitement over the neighbourhood's revival and, after the plan was complete, an architectural contest in 2002 paved the way for Het Eilandje's new beginnings as a sustainable, transit-oriented, and mixed-use waterfront neighbourhood.

CHALLENGES

The project leaders were confronted with several challenges from the beginning. First, the main parcels of land within Het Eilandje were owned by the harbour authority, which was keen on profit from the imminent renewal of the area. This conflict thwarted partnership and an overall strategy for the neighbourhood. Additionally, the project area contained historical buildings in need of preservation, brown-field land demanding mitigation, and water requiring decontamination. Non-automotive transportation to and from the neighbourhood to the rest of the city was a key concern for increasing foot traffic. Finally, the planners had to address the image of the neighbourhood—how to get people down to Het Eilandje and coming back for more.

SOLUTION

The master plan completed in 2000 focused almost entirely on the ground floor—including the water surfaces and quaysides. The plan regulated ground floor ceiling heights of 3.5m and taller than other floors. The six residential towers were also preconceived with conditions of functional plinths; each tower must provide commercial or public space on the ground floor. Although the master plan provided the project leaders and developers with some inspiration, most of the inspiration came from the site itself: the fluidity of the port and the idea of people and goods moving in and out of harbour. They wanted to translate this historical ebb and flow into interaction with Het Eilandje's plinths.

Over the past decade, the project leaders at the City of Antwerp joined forces with the harbour authorities and the Flemish government to create a new investment scheme that combines private and public financing. The harbour authorities, who direct the water surfaces developments and decontamination, are in the process of transferring the land to city, which will allow the city to focus on sustainability and an overall strategy for the neighbourhood. The Flemish government has provided subsidies for public realm improvements, monuments, and financing a new tram route. Together, and in accordance with the master plan, the partnership created a new mixed-use neighbourhood with historic identity and a primary focus on high-quality, active ground floor spaces.

SECRETS

Break even. The Het Eilandje neighbourhood revitalization is a not-for-profit project. The City of Antwerp uses one strategy of private investment with specific developers and a second market- and public-driven investment strategy to produce a stand-alone financial programme with the goal of breaking even. One of the main attractions of Het Eilandje, the Museum on the Stream, is a free public museum with an open plinth (and top floor terrace) available to the public until midnight.

Divide and conquer. The developers showed more interest in developing smaller renewal projects over a longer period of time. Slowing down the revitalization process allowed for "periods of quiet" for all partners, especially for the existing residents who tolerated the construction. This "slow urbanism" also ensured lots of flexibility and energy among the partners, as well as a steady stream of financial investment staving off the impacts of the crisis.

LESSONS

Not everything must be new. Because of its historic importance, the planners and architects made sure that, through design, people could still recognize the neighbourhood from the past and feel connected to it. Adaptive reusing warehouses and older buildings, repairing missing connections, and restoring dilapidated details maintained the "rough" identity of the neighbourhood.

No silent walls. The master plan called for all ground levels as areas with public or semi-public functions so that people can easily interact with the plinths, streets, and quaysides—seamlessly, but emphasizing a distinction between land and water. As such, there are no "silent walls" in the neighbourhood.

Keep in touch. In addition to maintaining solid communication and good contracts with all the key project partners, discussions with people who live in Het Eilandje (or interested to live there) are held every year. All the plans are communicated to the residents and the residents provide feedback and participate in the design process. The city council confirms these meetings and ensures impact of their participation.

IMPACT

The revitalization of Het Eilandje has created an extension of Antwerp's city centre through brown-field redevelopment. Currently, 1500 people are residing in the neighbourhood and this is expected to increase almost five-fold to 7000. The Museum on the Stream continues to demonstrate a successful ground floor and destination for the neighbourhood and provides a culturally significant destination for newcomers. The partnership between the harbour authorities and the City of Antwerp has grown and, despite the current crisis, both parties maintain energy, excitement, and dynamic passion for the project.

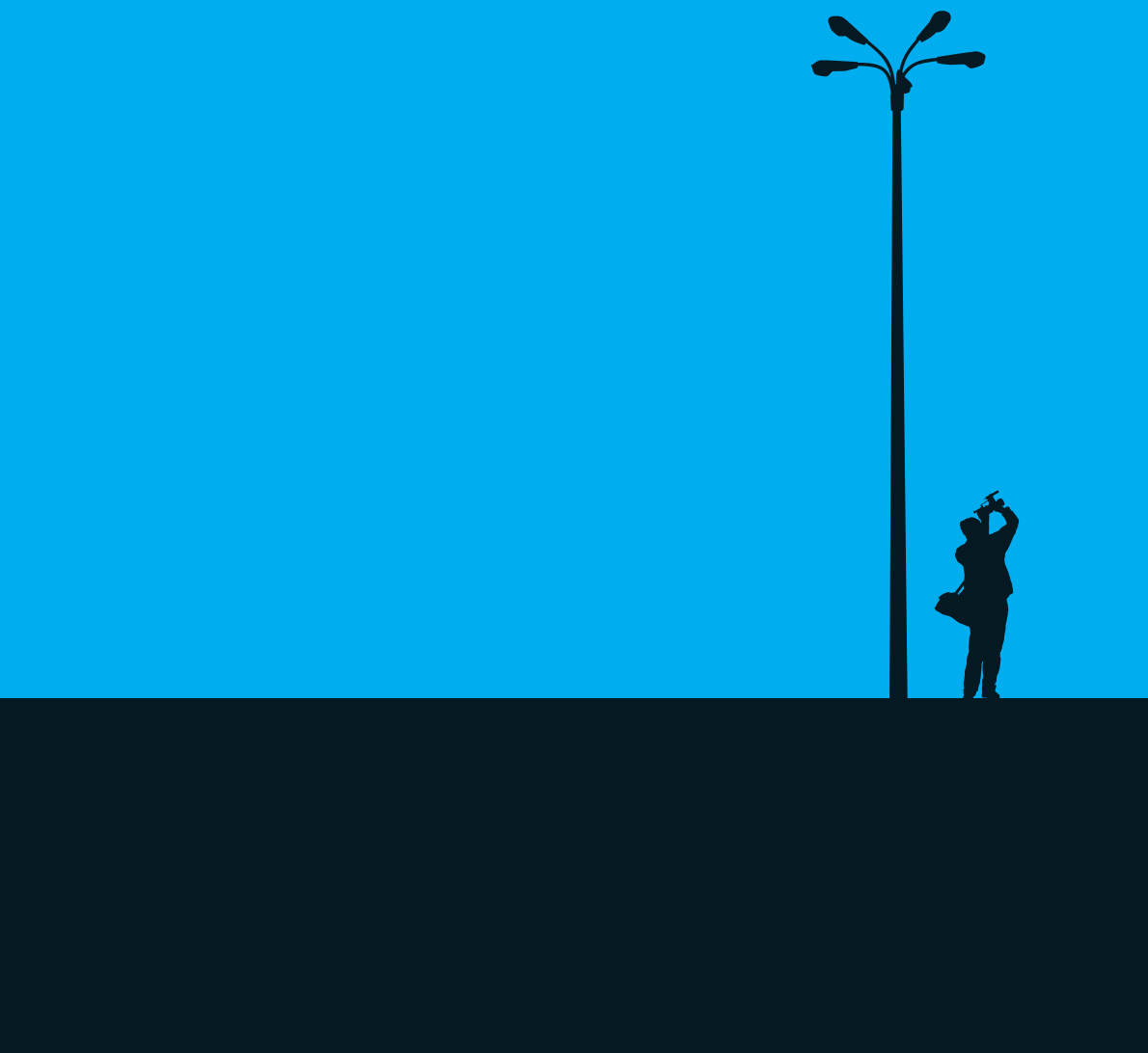
DO

- maintain a "rough" urban identity when appropriate
- reuse and repair historic details
- consider slowing down a potentially fast-paced development
- keep cultural institutions open late, past regular business hours

IN CONCLUSION

The project's approach to prioritize a dense, high-quality, and sustainable neighbourhood brought new life and excitement to the area. These priorities coupled with the new financial strategy, ground floor requirements for public and semi-public spaces, a true mix of land uses and functions, and seamless transportation options all safeguard successful and active plinths. Although the neighbourhood is developing over a long amount time, this "slow urbanism" allows the project leaders to fully consider their strategy for an important live, work, and play environment.

Finding your way through a city, choosing a route guided by plinths. The plinth as the interaction between public and private, between the inside (ground floor) and the outside (the street).



PUBLIC REALM AND THE USER

THE PLINTHS OF THE WARM CITY

Thaddeus Muller

The Warm City exists at the intersection of observable physical and social aspects of city life. Our perceptions of people who use public space are one of the cornerstones of the warm city. For some people, the crowd in the inner city is just a nuisance because it blocks their way going from A to B. For these people, the city should be functional, a means of transport, from their office to their homes. For many others, the people in public space form a huge reservoir of diverse cognitive, tactile, emotional, esthetic, sensational, erotic, and relational experiences. In my book, *The Warm City*, I mainly focus on interactions between strangers (Goffman 1963, Lofland 1973), and what they experience, feel, and think during a diverse range of encounters, including fleeting interactions – quick eye-contact and the exchange of a few words or sentences – as well as more enduring interactions, such as intense discussions about sports, politics and flirting. In urban sociology, public city life generally tends to be described as cold, anonymous, and impersonal (Wirth 1938). With my research, I show a radically different perspective on urban public life. I listen to the voices of those who feel at home among strangers in the streets and squares of the city and analyze how this is related to a diverse range of interactions in the public realm.

I am especially inspired by Whyte's work of public space in Manhattan (1988) and Lofland's second book on the public realm (1998), where she states that mega-structures destroy vibrant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public life and turn it into a bleak, sanitized version. In both studies, the plinths are considered to be an essential quality of a vibrant public space. Streets with accessible, transparent plinths, mostly related to the open façade of small stores, attract more people than streets without plinths with those qualities. To give a typical Dutch example from my book: in biking through the city, my respondents usually choose the busiest streets, because that was more fun. They wanted to watch the people walking and biking, and/or were just attracted to the lively atmosphere. They wanted to escape the dullness of streets with mega-structures. Even on their bike they would engulf themselves in the diversions of urban life.

Cityscape matters, especially through small shops with an open character. One can see people shop, sit, drink, eat, argue, try on clothes, show off, be together as bored and frustrated couples, or as happy as one can be with one another. Because of the plinths, we have access to people and their presentation of self. It is not only the human comedy one can experience in these places. Seeing others is seeing oneself and thus becomes part of our ongoing identity-project (Giddens 1996). We compare ourselves to others, reject others with disdain, admire their impression, and even feel inspired to reproduce parts of the way others look, behave, and relate to another. One urbanite told me that she saw a couple

walking hand in hand in such an intimate way that she thought of her own relationship and wondered if she could walk like that – so close – with her partner. It is not that we experience urban life from outside, but we are also part of it. People look at us, see us, talk to us, touch us, and smell us. It goes both ways. We are objects and subjects at the same time. We are connecting, interacting, sometimes strategically and sometimes without any conscious effort.

Plinths not only create a distinctive social experience but also a unique physical one. For instance because of open plinths we are penetrated by the smell of products that are sold, such as fresh bread, vegetables, flowers, coffee, and food from all corners of the world. And we also have the sensation of touching tomatoes, apples, shoes, clothes, books and so on. Another typical aspect of the physical experience of plinths is locomotion. In a street with small shops and open façades one can wander out of a shop into the street and vice versa. This goes with the sensation of choice, freedom, and individuality. One can follow the attraction one feels when passing a store. And there is also the autonomy of the quick escape; it is just a few steps away. A small shop with an open façade makes one feel connected to the city, the street, where one can experience the freedom of diversity, breathe fresh air and feel the sunshine.

Public life is also about observing objects. It is the joy of looking at products we desire – beautiful, delicious, funny, remarkable, exotic goods. Looking at products through the window of a plinth can also become a collective experience; we want to share our findings with our friends. We talk about the music we like, the movies we want to see, people advice us, sometime strangers. In the interviews for *The Warm City*, and in related studies of semi-public places (such as corner shops, hairdressers, cafes and laundromats), another important aspect of these places comes to the foreground. These places are the breeding grounds of small transient communities, which connect us to the city and make us feel at home.

The fundamental quality which is added to urban public life by small shops with open facades is its permeability, the partial integration of public (street) and private (shop). Small shops with open facades not only create the context for the *warm* city, but allow for movement between the public and private. Public life makes it possible to traverse these borders and go from one experience into the other. This oscillation, this movement, creates an experience opposite of the cold, fixed, and static urban situation, where one feels stuck in non-involvement and estrangement. This movement creates interaction, meaning, histories, and narratives through which we become attached to the city, its possibilities, and its transformations.

THE SEMI-PUBLIC PLINTH

an interview with John Worthington

WHAT ARE SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES?

I think of 'public realm' as open 24-hours a day; space which is owned, governed and managed by the community. 'Semi-public space,' on the other hand, is generally located on the ground floor and available to the public at the owner's discretion; the space is owned and managed by the landlord. You can think of a department store—an original semi-public space. You only go in if you're interested to go in, but then you're not really required to purchase anything. Effective semi-public spaces are permeable with multiple entrances to allow through routes, which allow users to navigate the footprints of these often very large buildings.

WHERE IS THIS MOVEMENT COMING FROM?

If you draw the footprint of buildings today, they've gotten bigger and bigger, limiting pedestrian permeability and the connection between the building and the street life. Let's start with the European model of a city: 8-storey buildings with often a generous ground floor height and lower floors above. With these 8-storey buildings - I call them "ground-scrapers" - there is a sense of connection between the top and ground below: from that top floor you can recognise the features of someone's face, hear the noises, and see your neighbours across the way. Then we started to build the American dream: a tower or slab

King's Place, London (architect: Dixon Jones)

with a solid ground floor or plinth that comes to the edge of the street. Most often the tall element of the building is set back, retaining the sense of the city, street, and activity. Then came the even taller tower without the set-back and a huge plaza or parking forecourt that explicitly separates the street from the building. As buildings got bigger and bigger, more and more of the ground floor was taken up by service and security related to the building or companies within it. And with that came big blank walls. Today we're trying to get back to a direct connection between the building and life in the street.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SEMI PUBLIC SPACES TO THE PLINTH?

To me, the word *plinth* suggests that there's something inside and something above it. If cities are about activity and diversity, then great big blank walls hardly offer diversity or activity. Can we have a plinth without diversity and activity? Permeable and transparent semi-public space blurs the edges and creates borders not boundaries. Semi-public space gives reason to enter the plinth, interact with it, and give it activity and diversity. There's not a clear distinction between public and private city—which is good! The city blurs definitions of inside or out and activities flow across ownership boundaries.

King's Place, London (architect: Dixon Jones)

WHY SHOULD BUILDINGS INCORPORATE SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES?

Work is not 9-to-5 anymore and there's just as much work going on outside the building as there is inside. The world of work is changing and we're starting to see the breakdown of barriers. We now see companies giving up some of their lavish service-oriented ground floors and let in a cafés, exhibition space and specialist merchandising both for the users of the buildings and those outside.

HOW DO BUSINESSES BENEFIT FROM SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES?

I'd guess about a quarter or a third of the space businesses use nowadays is what I call "showcase space"—another form of semi-public space. As we move from a hard-product society to a soft-product, or knowledge-based society, we need places where we can both show off an ever more complicated product and how people use it. It's no longer a window with a poster—it's a space to support the knowledge product. It's a centre with necessary technology and room for people to communicate and exhibit their ideas. Showcase space shows off products and also opens the plinth. Companies recognise the opportunity of greater transparency and access to semi-public spaces, to represent their brand, and showcase their products and culture.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF SEMI-PUBLIC SPACES?

Security is often thought of as a major issue. A strong tradition in central business district (CBD) centres is the presence of large institutions, like banks, and that they should look impenetrable, safe and secure. The model you can imagine is the great Italian commercial palace which is very much about displaying power and substantiality. These institutions demonstrated security through design—massive columns, grand entrances, windowless plinths. With semi-public space, security is not an issue because it's self-regulated. Instead of demonstrating security with a lavish foyer armed with guards, doormen, and cameras, these entrances strategically layer security by zoning space and discreet surveillance.

WHY AREN'T MORE BUILDINGS OPENING UP THEIR GROUND LEVELS FOR SEMI-PUBLIC SPACE?

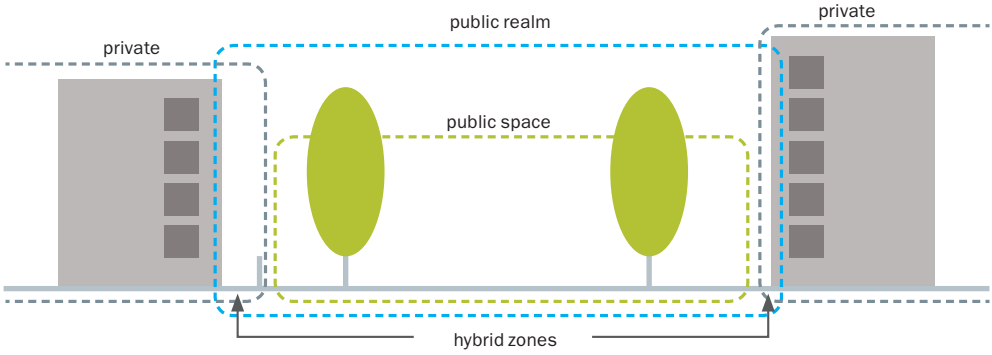
Have we created sufficient expectation that it would be a good thing to do? Is the average person concerned about it? The answers to these questions are *probably not*. We know we have to use space more effectively; we know we have to intensify our use of urban land. The conversation has started, there are enough exemplars to show how places can be enhanced—change is afoot!

HYBRID ZONES

Sander van der Ham

HYBRID ZONES DEFINED

A hybrid zone is the space between the private and the public domain and is characterized by a transition between these two domains. This transition makes the zone semi-private and is therefore called a hybrid zone. Front yards are good examples of hybrid zones because they start at the front door or the façade of the house and end at the sidewalk or road. The front yard - no matter how large or small - in is the hybrid zone, which is usually privately owned. Despite the private character of the hybrid zone it's actually not as private as one might



Scheme Public Realm

expect. Although it's very unusual to enter or use someone else's front yard, it's still accessible in many ways: mostly by sight and by smell. Hybrid zones are therefore a special part of the public domain. And they are, together with the plinths, an important contributor to the experience of the street.

OBSERVING HYBRID ZONES

The research on hybrid zones aims to gain insight into the motivations of homeowners to use their own hybrid zones and contribute successfully to the appearance, experience, and social connectedness of the street. Our research team consists of an urban sociologist (Gwen van Eijk, University of Leiden), architects and urban planners (Daniel Heussen & Eric van Ulden, DE Ecotecten), an architectural historian (Wijnand Galema), and an urban psychologist (Sander van der Ham). The research is commissioned by Woonstad, Woonbron en ERA Contour and made possible by the SfA Fund.

Through observation, our research team noticed the influence of hybrid zones on the perception and experience of the street as a whole. Streets with well-defined hybrid zones, such as front yards, appeared more pleasant. Not only were these streets more pleasant to the eye, they actually made us feel better in general. Besides the street experience the hybrid zones have another important effect. Research shows that nearly 80% of the informal contacts between neighbours is initiated from the hybrid zone demonstrating that the hybrid zone must invite owners to actually use it (Skjaeveland, O. & Gärling, T. (1997) *Effects of Interactional Space on Neighbouring*. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 17, pp. 181-198). A functional hybrid zone, then, creates the condition to have social contact with neighbours, passers-by, and other people from the neighbourhood.

And it was mostly in the streets with better-defined hybrid zones, where people were actually using these spaces. In many of the yards, residents placed all kinds of identifiable, personal touches—a bench, a fountain, plants and pots, or even a garden gnome. These objects not only give away some information about their owner's identity, but they also show that someone cares for the space. One respondent on the survey remarked, "I just love my front yard. It's a place where I can sit in front of my home and catch the last bits of sunlight on summer evenings." Without passing any personal judgment these hybrid zones were beautiful because they had a very personal character. And that's exactly what they added to the street. They made it feel personal and intimate. People who had actually gone through the trouble to design and decorate their front yard contributed greatly to the experience of the street. It felt as if the living room was being pulled through the window right onto the street, for everyone to see.

Shocking was the contrast with other streets whose front yards had not been taken care of and others had apartment buildings or flats with

shared entrances with many blind plinths (such as walls without windows). In a way this sucked the hybrid zone right off the street into the building, which made it only accessible to people with a key to the shared entrance. The care and pride for the hybrid zones we saw in some streets didn't come naturally in others.

OUR INITIAL RESULTS

Our research is still on-going, but at this point we can share some results from the first phase, the surveys. We've asked people from certain streets in Rotterdam to fill out an online-survey about their hybrid zone. This leads to some first insights on how people perceive and use the hybrid zone.

Around 75% of the respondents use the hybrid zone for some activity. They use their hybrid zone all through the year (43%), only when the weather was good enough (35%), and only in spring and summer (23%). Around half of all the respondents use their hybrid zone at least a couple of times a week for social contacts (55%), gardening (53%), and to sit in (53%). A little over 25% of the respondents using their hybrid zone use it for bicycle storage.

Our research shows that the use of hybrid zones initiates more frequent contact between residents: 83% of respondents using their hybrid zone have more contact with their neighbours, and more frequently, compared to 57% of people who don't use their hybrid zone. We believe this stems from the hybrid zone's feeling of safety through its semi-private characteristic and implies that merely using the hybrid zone (physically being in it) creates more opportunities for people to meet their neighbours.

OWNERSHIP OF HYBRID ZONES

One of the main goals of the psychological perspective in this research is to find the

motivation behind ownership. Our initial observations of the streets already demonstrated that some people put a lot of energy and care into their hybrid zone. We wonder why some do put effort into it and others don't. Our detailed observations lead us to two thoughts: (1) people use the hybrid zone to increase the privacy, making the hybrid zone some sort of a barrier; and (2) the more rooms adjacent to the hybrid zone, the less privacy people feel. In some cases the hybrid zone, and especially the use of it, contributed to the feeling of privacy and displayed ownership over the hybrid zone.

Ownership is important when it comes to privacy and protection of the home. Research shows that homes with more territorial markings (such as name tags on the door, personalized mailboxes, attributes in the hybrid zone, etc.) are less prone to burglary than hybrid zones without these markings. Ownership therefore doesn't only increase privacy, when done right, it also contributes to the way others experience the street.

NEXT STEPS

More results are yet to come. Through in-depth interviews we hope to gain more insight regarding people's motivations to use and take care of their hybrid zones and the role design plays on the success of the hybrid zones. The research has demonstrated that hybrid zones can contribute to the experience of the street and can complement to the plinth.

WALKING STREAMS AND THE PLINTH

Tine van Langelaar & Stefan van der Spek

HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

If human behaviour in relation to its context is better understood, then governments can manage city centres in such a way that it will be more attractive for visitors and inhabitants. Pedestrians will feel more at ease, will be happier and will enjoy being in a city centre. Eventually, pedestrian models for urban environments might predict behaviour and guide it accordingly. Street life will flourish and city centres will become safer because there are more eyes on the street, as many famous urbanists have said. Urban economies will improve as longer visits mean more money spending. To give the streets back to the people, street activity and quality are critical for urban life in today's society.

Our research focuses on this link between human behaviour and our urban environments. More specifically we look at how pedestrians move through city centres, examining their routes, destinations, and time spent on the streets. Every environment has its own characteristics and people react individually to that structure in an interactive, passive, or avoiding way. Through our research, we map and measure people's behaviour in order to gain knowledge about their movements. In this vein, we can make evidence-based recommendations for change.

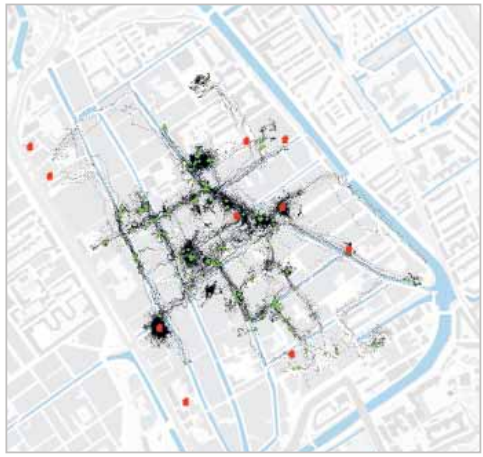
PEDESTRIANS IN THE CENTRE OF DELFT

For this research project, we specifically looked at pedestrian use of the city centre and the quality of the public space in order to provide spatial design interventions that would improve public space for pedestrians. We used GPS-tracking technology (temporal-geographical information), questionnaire surveys, and trip diaries (social-geographical information). With two research project pilots, one for visitors (like tourists) and the other for city centre and neighbourhood inhabitants, we followed 403 people throughout the city centre of Delft: a city with circa 100 000 residents, a picturesque city centre and a prominent university. We tracked participant's every movement and mode of transportation outside the house and then conducted a visual analysis of the streets that they chose—or rather, didn't choose—to travel.

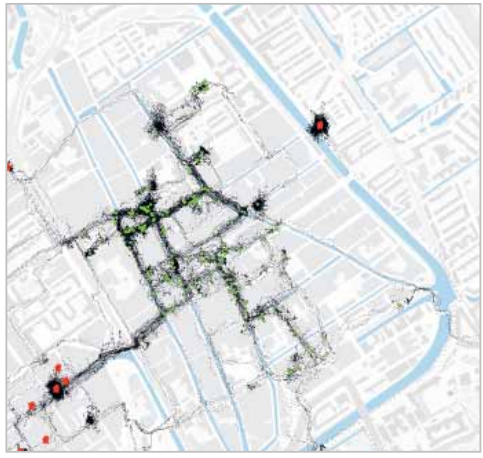
For the most part, participants chose to walk or bicycle to Delft's city centre, and their main purpose was for shopping activities. Movement concentrated on some streets over others. We found a particular pattern with the streets pedestrians chose to 'enter' the city centre: participants chose an entrance street with shopping functions before they continued their trip into the centre. More interestingly, pedestrians made little use of what we found to be well-connected streets according to the Three-Step analysis. Land use analysis demonstrated that these streets had few functions, or were solely residential. Since shopping is the main reason for visiting the centre, this analysis is logical—those streets will not attract people because they have little or no shopping function.

Most destinations can, logically, be found in streets that belong to the central shopping area. Consequently, streets which lack facilities, especially a linked

Pedestrian trips and destinations of visitors



Pedestrian trips and destinations of city centre inhabitants



Pedestrian trips and destinations of neighbourhood residents

chain with different programs, are not or much less visited by pedestrians. As previous research shows reasons to visit a city centre are mostly limited to shopping and leisure activities.

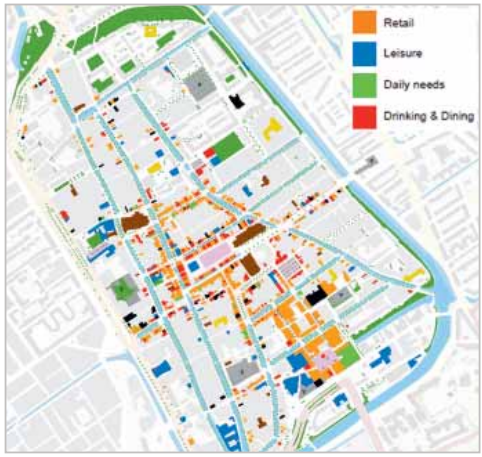
VISUAL QUALITY ANALYSIS

Once we analysed the movement of the participants, we focused on the visual quality analysis of the public space in the inner city of Delft. This investigation aimed to explain why certain streets were used frequently while others were neglected.

Critical positive factors we analysed were taken from past academic literature:
a. 5 km/h scale,
b. transparency of windows,
c. rich in sensory experience,
d. diversity of functions, and
e. vertical façade rhythms.

Critical negative factors were:
a. 50 km/h scale,
b. lack of transparency,
c. passive and not appealing to senses,
d. boring, not rich in sensory experience,
e. uniform functions,
f. horizontal façade rhythms.
(Gehl et al., 2006, p. 39).

We found many positive critical factors in the city centre of Delft. For example, the Grote Markt demonstrates a busy public square rich in sensory experience, transparent plinths, and vertical façade rhythms. It is a busy square, especially on market days every Thursday. Furthermore, different activities and functions such as shops and leisure can be found. In summertime a lot of terraces can be witnessed in front of the cafes. Events like fairs, military shows and weddings in the historic City Hall can be seen here as well (opposite page).



Urban functions and facilities in the city Centre of Delft


Synthesis map of used (green lines) and non-used (red lines) streets by all pedestrians


Destinations (green dots) and central shopping area with other streets that contain urban functions (black lines)

Positive factors of the Grote Markt square (top: market day; below: a wedding)

Positive examples of Delft plinths: Vrouwjuttenland (top) and Voldersgracht (below)

Positive examples of Delft plinths: Choorstraat

Other attractive streets can be seen here. Details are designed for a 5 km/h scale, windows are transparent, facades are interactive (appealing to many senses), streets are rich in sensory experience, there is a great diversity of functions and vertical façade rhythms appear.

The city centre of Delft has some bad quality streets and areas as well. Ezelsveldlaan (page 92) is the perfect example how a ground floor façade should not be designed: the façade is closed regarding transparency, passive and not appealing to any sense, boring and not rich in sensory experience, uniform functions and partly horizontal façade rhythms. There is no reason to enter this street unless you need groceries from the supermarket. The façade, which measures 90 meters, has only one entrance (the green circle on the photo) instead of every 7-9 meters to enhance urban life that is recommended by iconic urban thinkers. The other four non-transparent doors in the plinth are emergency exits. Images below show more examples of unattractive streets; closed walls, non-transparent windows, and passive facades. These streets are boring with uniform functions and horizontal façade rhythms.

Negative example of Delft city centre plinths: Ezelsveldlaan (picture by Google Earth)

Negative examples of Delft's city centre plinths: Kruisstraat (left) and Molslaan (right)

LESSONS

Historic city centres offer many attractive public spaces for pedestrians to enjoy. Yet, on a qualitative, observational level, many high-quality spaces are not enjoyed by pedestrians; maybe these places are too far to walk to or perhaps lack a mixed-use program. We concluded that compared to the street quality analysis, pedestrians linger in streets with high spatial quality for greater amounts of time while streets with lower spatial qualities are mostly used as a route and not a place to stay. The exception to this observation is when attractive, mixed-use programs invite people to the space. Important, high-quality streets with shopping and leisure activities, and meaningful, historic landmarks continue to be the main

attractors for today's visitors, although most of the original functions have been replaced by modern ones.

We drew three main conclusions from our analyses. First, city centre streets have many barriers, such as canals, on-going building blocks, and wide auto-oriented roads. These barriers block the natural walking routes for pedestrians. Second, alleys and some buildings exhibit poor maintenance and contribute to perceptions of danger. Finally, we observed the ground floor plinths in the shopping area are degraded and are in need of revitalisation. With these conclusions we offered a few different design interventions to strengthen the fragmented urban spaces. Based on our results, we advised the City to better match public space functions to their surrounding land uses, to focus on enhancing pedestrian movement within current city centre redevelopment projects, and to transform under-used parking spaces to pedestrian zones.

Patterns of use depend on land use (activities) and network (efficiency, accessibility). The choices people make are based on two things: first, their existing knowledge of the city, and second, chances for creating new knowledge of the city. Using the main shopping streets provides the opportunity to stop here and there. Sometimes these stops are not planned – they're impulsive. That's what the city should offer – impulses for the unintended. Without new encounters, we have no impulses. So then a real issue becomes the connection between old and new and intervention is essential. Extend the pedestrian area or shopping street network; open the façades; add shop windows; vertically orient buildings.

Design should not only focus on the section or profile of a building, but also the space between buildings. That's where city life exists and continues. Continuation is necessary to provide access to other places, other points of recognition, points for choosing a direction and returning there from somewhere else.

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DECIPHERING AND NAVIGATING THE PLINTH

Samar Héchaimé

THE MENTAL PUZZLE

While moving around the city we either move with intent or we meander, walking around aimlessly. We do so by following a certain reading of our surroundings. This reading has been dubbed as wayfinding. Wayfinding is not an isolated activity, but a piece of the urban puzzle. Signage, the defacto solution for wayfinding in the built environment, is an even more abstracted form of that activity. Through signage, we expect to abstract the city and all its plinths into a predetermined set of destinations or landmarks, which we assume are the main destinations any one person would need to go to in this particular city. Then we map them through a series of breadcrumb signs that are strategically placed at nodes and intersections allowing us to make the decision to go left, right or forward—or to retract our steps if we've lost our way. Nevertheless, our experience of the city, our experience of a plinth, is not through a preset system of signs, nor is it through reading a map, or even reading a tourist book if we are visiting the city for the first time. Our experience of the city is what happens in between, the moments along the way.

USER MEMORY AND THE POETICS OF PLACES

These in-between experiences occur from the reliance of our memory on spaces and places, sequences and hierarchies that we've grown accustomed to. We can only decipher something by using preconceived notions by comparing that thing to something similar we've encountered

State Street, Chicago

before. We don't all have similar backgrounds and similar memories of places, and the places themselves don't have similar stories and characters. The memory of the city stems from the memory of its users, its inhabitants whether they are inhabitants for a day or for a lifetime. The blending of those memories is what creates places with unique poetics.

Cairo, Khan el Khalili

The landmark is a secondary wayfinding cue in that city. When we look at the Haussmanian breakthrough which does the same on a much grander scale, it has transformed Paris into boulevards which connect its landmarks, with experiences taking you from one to the next, with activations along the way. The design allows you to form a clear cognitive reading of the city at eye level, navigating you through its streets in an intuitive manner and helping you to build a memory of it. Therefore anywhere we head to a new place, it unravels itself to our eyes through the same lens we have learned to read our city and its street level. Nevertheless not all cities are gridded or pierced, so in the distinctive manner from our culture, we perceive and decipher places through the cognitive method and landmarking we uniquely understand.

THE CONE OF OUR PERCEPTION AND OUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES

We perceive the surrounding through our cone of vision which allows us to navigate and understand what is around us. It is through this cone that we connect with the other and the built environment especially the plinth of the street level. But the cone of vision differs from one culture to the next. For example westerners walk looking at a point on the ground that is approximately 2 meters away and that defines the cone of perception through which we absorb what is around us.

But when walking around in Chinese cities (this also applies to other places I've travelled such as Japan, India, Egypt, and Africa) I have noticed that either people walk around looking straight down in front of them to make sure they avoid obstacles and thus completely missing the reading of the vertical built environment beyond that level, or people walk looking straight ahead and gauging obstacles by the way other people in front of them are moving and thus having a wider cone of vision but a lesser

perception since it is obstructed by heads and raised towards the distance.

NAVIGATION THROUGH OUR READING OF THE URBAN PLINTH

The reading of the plinth becomes even more important in that case in order to find your way and read our surrounding environment. Building name signage, identification poles, and large scale numbers are more and more necessary to identify one building from the next. Yet the more we add information the more the visual clutter is undecipherable. Signage is not a way to solve the wayfinding problematics of the city as it is quite an abstraction of the city fabric. It only works as a reinforcement of the user's circulation efforts. In order for circulation and directional signage to be effective the user has to first know where they are going in order to be able to find the trail of breadcrumbs left as guidance. If the user is lost it will not be signage that helps but a multitude of elements in the plinth that would help identify the location, identify the destination in relation to the location and then to gauge the best route to get there. Traditionally you would need a combination of landmarks, street name plaques, building numbering and street map, as they allow us to determine where we are, where we are going, how to head further, and if we are moving in the right direction.

Shanghai, Old Street

Shanghai, People's Square

Shanghai, Pudong

Building typologies are also a great wayfinding cue in the city as they act as identification and landmark. But designers and developers seem to think that buildings have to take on more and more unusual shapes in order to be a billboard and landmark that stands out from the crowd of buildings. Yet since when we are at ground level, we do not perceive the entire building: it does not fit within our cone of vision or we avoid looking at it if it is highly illuminated.

Nevertheless here is where cultural differentiation comes into major play. Even when a signage programme exists or is being designed in a certain location and environments the cues,

New York, intersection Lexington Ave and 40th Str

Paris, Centre Pompidou

the language, the conventions, and the perceptions all differ from one place to another, making it a more effective tool if designed properly for the locals but not for the visitors and foreigners (which is ironic since wayfinding systems need to accommodate both the first time visitors as well as the seasoned user). When working with a multinational team on a wayfinding project we even encountered differences in perceptions to norms that are taken for granted by designers and architects coming from the west. A question as simple as which street to identify on which side of a cross intersection stemmed so much debate it took studies into regulations and standards to make a decision which would work in the location we were designing for and won't go against the logic of traffic circulation that that specific culture is used to.

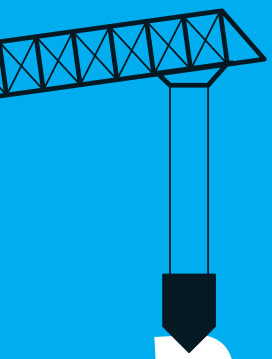
THE CITY INTERFACE: FROM STRUCTURE TO LIVING ECOSYSTEM

Taking all the aforementioned criteria and restrictions into consideration when we are designing the plinth and the street level of the city, the first thing we need to do is design its interface, the place where it interacts with its user. The city interface is what transforms it from being a structure into being a living ecosystem beating to the rhythm of its own poetics. The city or urban interface should be different from one place to another as it stems from the user experience of that culture and its way of perceiving their

places and spaces. The interface is what allows these users to rely on their perceptions, their memories, their understandings and their cognitive maps to move around and navigate through the built environment.

We should not approach designing plinths for a city the same way we have done for another. We need to study the way people interact with each other and with their city, how they read and decipher its built environment and through which tangible cues like building typology, wayfinding systems, language and street structure and through intangible cues like memory, culture, education and tradition in order to build up knowledge and design cities that retain unique.

About the development of plinths and the need for mixed-use neighbourhoods. Plinths give vibrancy to streets and neighbourhoods, but on which locations can they succesfully be developed?



PROPERTY AND DEVELOPMENT

THE DEVELOPER'S PERSPECTIVE ON PLINTHS

a conversation with Frank van Beek

PLINTHS AS AN INSTRUMENT

The vision of our company Lingotto is to realise good city districts. We do not have a specific strategy to apply every time: each project is customized. Plinths can be an instrument to realise good and pleasant streets wherever necessary. In the Netherlands we are often charmed by small and cosy shops in cities like Barcelona. These are high-density cities with small homes, lively streets, and a small-scale distribution system for goods and products. These situations cannot be translated one-for-one to new developments in other countries. Plinths are only possible at sites where they have potential and where it is appropriate: in city centres, along main routes or at street corners.ot on a back street as is sometimes required by municipal instructions.

PLINTHS IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

New developments differ from historic streets that always have been a shopping street such as the the busy Haarlemmerstraat in Amsterdam. These examples can serve as inspiration but it is very difficult to realise good plinths in new situations today. The municipality often requires plinths in a new development, in order to create a lively and attractive public realm. Realising a good plinth howver is expensive due to high construction costs and required pre-investments. As a developer, we always pay attention to the conditions and aspects of context, location, public space, program, form, and financial gains.

CONTEXT

To realise plinths you need a mixed urban district or areas with a high density; no homogenous office areas or suburbia. Especially downtown areas and districts close to the centre have potential for plinths, but within these areas different streets have different potentials. City centres contain and attract more people than other districts, so here plinths have a high opportunity of success. This central area of the city is growing to the adjacent neighbourhoods, as there is a demand for more urban city-life and thus for new plinths in those areas.

LOCATION

The important question in developing plinths is: which location has potential? There is not a way to calculate this; you need *fingerspitzengefühl*, or instinct. You have to look at walking routes, busy streets but not too busy; it must be a pleasant atmosphere to walk along. On the Van Eesterenlaan in the Amsterdam Eastern Docklands, the most successful plinths are on route to the supermarket; on IJburg they are near the shopping centre; and on the Wibautstraat most liveliness is around the supermarket, the subway exits, and the educational institutions.

PUBLIC SPACE

The significance of the kind of adjacent public space of the plinth is big: is it a square, a walking street, or a street with cars? The details and lay-out of the public space is important to create a pleasant street where people want to walk and shop. Besides a pleasant street for walking and biking, also a few (short-time) parking spaces should be available in front or along the street. These are needed for distribution and for picking up or delivering goods by car: a necessity for most kinds of shops.

PROGRAMME

The main part of a good plinth is in the programming and use: which functions are suitable for this space? Finding the right programme for the plinth is a task for the owner/landlord, not for us as developers. It is a special business of fine-tuning the different functions in a plinth, commercially and aesthetically. Especially the development phase is difficult for new shops, due to the needed financial support. Also non-commercial activities are good use for plinths, but you only need a certain amount of kindergartens, dry-cleaners, and doctors in a neighbourhood. Housing is often not a suitable function for main streets; most of these plinths are designed with large windows, which will be closed off by inhabitants because of privacy reasons. When a plinth is meant as a home, it should look like a home and not like a shop or an office.

RESTAURANT DAUPHINE
(Prins Bernhard-plein, Amsterdam)

This restaurant is at a particular spot next to a traffic circle, where an old Renault-garage was transformed into a restaurant. This site is near the centre but consists mainly of offices and houses. The restaurant changed this spot into a new destination. The owners have recognized the potential of the old garage and the area and transformed it into a special location.

It is both architecturally and functionally a good example of transforming a building and giving a new cosmopolitan feel to the place. The grand scale of the plinth is of course one of the success factors, but also the designing of the details is an important aspect such as the restaurant's name between the columns.

COFFEE COMPANY / FLINDERS
(Meester Treublaan, Amsterdam)

A good example of finding the right location and recognizing the programme potential is near the Amstel train station at the Meester Treublaan. Recently a new Coffee-Company along with furniture store Flinders has been established in a former retail shop that had been empty. The two share a single space, and you can try the furnitures while drinking your coffee.

This plinth had been a dull place, but is suddenly changed with a new entrance on the side facing the water and the bridge. The potential of this location, close to the station, is well seen and has been adapted smartly.

FORM AND SIZE

The plinth is not only part of the building but also the street. The form, the parcelling, and the appearance are thus related to the width of the street and the sidewalk, and the length and height of the building. Buildings consist of a plinth, a body, and the head/roof. The height and width of the plinth is a ratio of the total façade. The plinth is sometimes needed from an architectural perspective, but then lacks a special function. To create a flexible plinth for different purposes you need a necessary width and depth of the building, which also should be flexible and could be changed over time. When the structure is fixed, you lose this flexibility of the ground floor.

FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Plinths are important but are sometimes difficult and expensive to make and exploit, because of construction costs. Pre-investment is needed to create future value for the street and the city. This investment requires a corresponding land price to make it possible. Land prices sometimes are too high to realise a good plinth quality. The municipality must consider if they want to have good plinths or to make money; it is difficult to do both.

PARTNERS ARE ESSENTIAL

For the development of the plinth you need partners. First the municipality should not impose preconditions about the form of the plinth, but instead facilitate with supporting regulations: a flexible land use plan. The market is able to develop the places with potential and find the right use for each plinth. Although it is often easier to find a place for a particular user than to find a function for a particular place. In developing a particular street a plinth manager can help to realise this to full extent; in such case the different owners and landlords should work together as partners and not as competitors.

THE FUTURE OF PLINTHS

A final remark on two trends that will affect the way we use and develop plinths in the future. First we're seeing a shift in retail from physical shops to virtual shops on the internet. As the demand for shops will diminish, I predict that remaining shops will transform either into introvert supermarkets or as showcase stores for internet shops. Only in attractive streets the shops will survive as specialized image shops, mostly in food & beverages or design. The second trend is the growing demand for flexible spaces for the self-employed: more and more people in the Netherlands tend to be self-employed (ZZP-er) or work free-lance. They don’t need offices along the highway but require flexible work-spaces and meeting places in the city centre for contact and interaction: sometimes in a coffee- and sandwich-shop, sometimes in a rented office space. These new city professionals are interested in urban network spaces and are attracted by the image and the atmosphere of these places. That might be the new future of the plinths.

A CITY WITH DOUBLE PLINTHS

Max Jeleniewski

AN INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL

The city of The Hague, with its 500 000 inhabitants, is the International Capital of Peace and Justice, housing UN organisations (e.g. the international Peace Palace), Europol and Eurojust and a large number of other international organisations in the field of Peace and Justice. Moreover, even though it is not the country's capital, the Parliament, the Ministries, and Embassies of many countries are located in The Hague and not in Amsterdam.

This requires an international city profile, especially for the centre of the city, with top-notch leisure facilities and amenities to cater to an international clientele. A1-shopping streets that offer a wide range of retail, cafes, restaurants, services and leisure facilities, and are easy accessible by public transport, cyclists, pedestrians and cars, will have a future in the coming years in terms of visitors and investment.

The Grote Marktstraat has about 60 000 m^2 of retail floor area, contributing to 25% of the total retail area in the central business district. In the last ten years, the Grote Marktstraat has been transformed from a busy, noisy and dirty street filled with cars, trams, cyclists, pedestrians, and strollers into a main shopping boulevard and neighbourhood. The Grote Marktstraat is slowly becoming the A1-shopping street in The Hague.

Old situation on Grote Marktstraat (1970s)

Despite the real estate crisis, the new A1-shopping boulevard of Grote Marktstraat will have seven new building initiatives in the upcoming years. The total net floor area will increase by circa 20 000 m^2 and the current department stores will drastically increase their retail volume. The new building projects will attract international retail chains that will locate on Grote Marktstraat. There are a number of international chains looking for new markets in The Hague, such as Primark and Marks & Spencer.

Department store with single-storey plinth

GROTE MARKTSTRAAT'S DOUBLE PLINTHS

The street's transformation plans call for underground transit and parking, new public spaces, a revolutionary lighting system, and double plinths in all new developments. A double plinth indicates that multiple floors (at least two) are transparent from the outside. Some of the department stores on the Grote Marktstraat still have traditional design with retail on the ground

Department store with double plinths

New project under construction with double plinth: Nieuwe Haagse Passage (10 000 m2 retail and a hotel of 120 rooms. Architect: Bernard Tschumi. Development: MultiVastgoed / OMS).

floor only. Other department stores have multiple floors of retail, but they all have only single-storey plinths. Creating double plinths will contribute to the transformation of this street into the primary shopping street in The Hague. It will be different than elsewhere in the city centre, and other cities for that matter.

Monumental department store *de Bijenkorf*

The double plinth is a remarkable new development for many of these new buildings. They add to the feeling that you are in a shopping street that is more important than others: an international shopping boulevard experience. Double plinths add to the public space in the street, by widening sight lines. With functions in close proximity to each other, double plinths use more empty space by opening up the street view to higher building levels and increasing the integration with other functions at the higher levels.

Of course, there must be an exception to the rule. In the case of the Grote Marktstraat, the historic building of *de Bijenkorf* building will never change. As the first department store in The Hague, *de Bijenkorf* is a monumental building—with a single-storey plinth.

HOFBOGEN: A VISION FOR THE IN-BETWEEN PLINTH

Henk Ovink

The plinth is a strange concept, especially in a city. In a house it is the fig leaf: a cover up for the connection between the wall and the floor. However the plinth of the city is the swing door between wet and dry, between warm and cold, and between inside and outside. The plinth tells the story of the building as you enter it, or even before you go in. And at the same time the plinth reflects, sometimes literally, the city, the power of the urban space, the place, and in that way it connects architecture with the urban space. This is how the plinth makes urban design tangible. The plinth is a border and at the same time, the membrane of the city, the swap space to look at, touch, and pass through. Almost like some kind of time zone which you can slip through. The plinth is also container; you can use it for many purposes.

You could call the Hofbogen Rotterdam a building. A long and low-rise building close to the Central Station and the city centre, but in a slightly forgotten neighbourhood. It is the former elevated railway, the Hofplein line from The Hague to Rotterdam. With new rail lines and Rotterdam's new Central Station, the line became redundant and so did the building beneath the Hofplein line. What remained was a strange building: not a viaduct, not a bridge, not a high-rise building, but an elongated, slightly meandering building with a flat roof. The strength of this industrial heritage lies in its architecture, the construction, the appearance, the urban strength and impact, the continuity, and the story it tells. Once a railway line, carrier of trains, carriages, and people, it is now an object, container for commercial activities, and neighbourhood identity.

The unused rail lines draw a long trail through the city and although it connects, it separates at the same time. The Hofbogen is actually just plinth—there's nothing above it but the unused rail lines. It is not a building in the traditional sense. It is a kind of enormously long container wherein you can programme and organise all kinds of things. It is a public invitation, a catalyst for entrepreneurs and innovation, activity and action. At the same time the Hofbogen is one big in-between space where city meets city, a membrane for exchange and interaction between entrepreneurs, artists, and officials for an ever-changing use and meaning.

The Hofbogen as a building offers something special—a roof! In fact, this roof is nothing more than an elevated ground level. This is where the rails are and where the trains used to run. Lifted above the public space of the city, it forms a terrace for the city. It is also an in-between space for staying and leaving, and a place for experience. Up until now it is only a roof. The Hofbogen as a plinth with its roof as terrace is special for this forgotten part of Rotterdam. The neighbourhood gathers on the roof of the Hofbogen, people party, children play, climb and cycle. A greengrocer grows fruits and vegetables, and a new restaurant opened a terrace on the roof.

While also making room for leisure and laziness, Hofbogen is an effective use of space. Block by block, people are starting to fill up the plinths of the Hofbogen with different uses and designs in this container-like building. Once we have users in the plinths, we can invest more in the terrace above. Every new occupant will create a reaction with new development, new design, and new investments. Truly making space and giving meaning to every place starts with the many initiators and users; they all are the stakeholders. This process of creating value should run parallel to investing in the Hofbogen itself. With these investments the stakeholders should run a development agency that strengthens the connection between Hofbogen and the adjacent street, its inhabitants, and enterprises. The users and stakeholders could then make the Hofbogen into the development catalyst of the neighbourhood by exploiting its potential. That would turn the Hofbogen into a city inside a city, and in that sense a real plinth.

MIXED-USE OFFICE PARK DEVELOPMENTS FROM A PROPERTY PERSPECTIVE

Jeroen Jansen & Eri Mitsostergiou

About a year ago we were driving through the Papendorp business district in Utrecht on a weekday during lunch time and we felt that something was actually missing. We eyed the well-designed buildings, the neat avenues, the nicely landscaped surroundings and then it hit us: people! There were just no people walking around. But then again: why would they be walking around? Where would they need to go? No shops, no restaurants, no schools, nothing; just one beautiful office after another, without something connecting them. Without a heart and therefore without a soul…

THE IMPORTANCE OF MIXED-USE

The lack of a mix of uses combined with the lack of good public transport accessibility have turned Utrecht-Papendorp into a high-vacancy area and it will be very difficult for this area to change the tide. There are many more of these problematic offices areas, like the Fascinatio-Rivium area in Rotterdam/Capelle aan den IJssel, the Riekerpolder area in Amsterdam-West and the Schiphol-Rijk development. All provide high-quality offices and all have this seemingly toxic combination of being a single-use office location with poor public transport, resulting in very high vacancy.

On the other hand there are interesting examples of areas where adding new uses to the office element actually seems to improve the functioning of the location. We would like to highlight two of

them, both in Amsterdam. The first one is the Zuidas (South Axis), which is being transformed from an almost 100% office location in to a mixed-use area. Over the past years housing developments have been completed, new lunchrooms and restaurants added, along with two fitness centres, food and non-food stores, both in the plinth of the World Trade Centre (WTC) buildings and in the train station. Recently, an art gallery and even a temporary exhibition have been added to the amenities. And as a result the office vacancy is dropping in this area, contrary to the national trend and to the overall trend in Amsterdam.

A second example highlights Amsterdam-Zuidoost. Development in this area started in the late 60s and it shows a Le Corbusier-worthy complete separation of all major functions: working, living, shopping, and travelling. The area has been through a tough period, but over the past decade the actual mixing of functions has turned the tide and increased the attractiveness of this Amsterdam district, specifically for the Arena submarket. Here you can now find a mix of shops, bars, restaurants, a multiplex, a music theatre, and of course, the Ajax football stadium—although the individual buildings are still very much single-use, the overall programme is mixed-use. Over the past year, we have witnessed some large companies moving from other parts of Amsterdam to the Zuidoost submarket and the mixing of uses seems to pay off for this area.

VIEWPOINTS OF DEVELOPERS AND INVESTORS ON MIXED-USE PROPERTY

From a developer and investor point of view, mixing uses in one building in particular does add an element of complexity and risk, with higher levels of specialisation (design, promotion), more intensive management, and perceived diluting of investment value. The main considerations for the mix of offices and retail in a single building are:

- mixed-use contaminates image, brand;
- more management intensive (different access, shared facilities, security requirements);
- nuisance (noise, waste, odours);
- downward “drag” on investment value unless situated in established high-class retail locations;
- difficult to let retail if not in an established area;
- additional design/management/ leasing expertise required;
- less investor demand for mixed use buildings – harder to sell;
- easing structures may restrict redevelopment options.

So, on the one hand there are quite a number of (perceived) risks involved in mixed-use developments, but on the other hand the two examples of mixed-use areas, which function much better than single-use areas, demonstrate that the outcome may compensate for the additional ‘risk’.

Two examples, however, do not yet make a case. And, being researchers, we did want to know whether we could prove that mixed-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use office areas do generally perform better than single-use office areas. And we could. Our analysis of all four major agglomerations in the Netherlands has shown that the combined vacancy in mixed-use areas (11.1%) is considerably lower than in the single-use office locations (20.7%). We do realize that other factors play a role in the attractiveness of an office location. In 2010 we analysed which submarkets and which buildings in Amsterdam had the highest vacancy and we also identified the factors that most correlated with the vacancy rate. The results demonstrated that, within Amsterdam, three other factors correlate with vacancy rate: vicinity to a major train station, vicinity to the city centre, and the perceived safety of these office areas. Mixed-use was the number one deciding factor. Creating a lively public space by adding retail, restaurants, bars and other functions to plinths of office buildings does seem to pay off.

'THERE'S NOT A PROBLEM THAT I CAN'T FIX, 'CAUSE I CAN DO IT IN THE MIX'

All in all, the lyrics of the 1982 *Indeep* hit song seem to fit this subject in unmatched fashion. Adding public function to the plinths of office buildings is more likely to gain ground over the coming years, as it ensures the most efficient and sustainable use of land. Greater experience in developing mixed-use environments will provide the tools for improving the planning framework and overcoming the challenges. And at least for office locations, the mixing of functions seems to be very beneficial.

RETAIL ISSUES AND SHOP RE-PARCELLING

Peter Nieland

In September 2011, my company Locatus organized two so-called `shopviews´, small and informative events for networking with our connections and clients. The presentations of the event discussed the retail developments in Rotterdam: the prediction of the number of shoppers and the emergence of international retail. When the final presentation started, an opportunity came to my mind, being chairman for the day - an opportunity that would solve two of the problems that had been discussed during both days:

PROBLEM 1: SHOP VACANCY

One of the major topics of discussion, especially for municipalities, was shop vacancy. This is a nation-wide problem, even though it bothers one municipality more than another due to regional variation. Generally, vacant shops further detoriate the economic performance of an area. Wherever stores are empty, fewer shoppers are attracted; and less is sold, where fewer shoppers are present. Where fewer goods are sold, other stores leave causing even more vacancy. This kind of cycle hurts everyone: retailers, shop-owners, employees, and the people living in the area.

PROBLEM 2: DEMAND FOR LARGE RETAIL SPACES

The topic of the last presentation of the day was the emergence of new international retail chains in the Netherlands, such as Primark,

Forever 21, Hollister, and Abercrombie & Fitch. These chains want to conquer the Dutch market and search for retail spaces in the cities. These are preferably in the large cities but not necessary in the A1-shopping areas: large enough but not expensive. The potential tenants need spaces of around 5 000 – 6 000 m^2 in the city centre or close by in the A2 or B-segment, but it is quite difficult to find that kind of large retail spaces in the centre.

OPPORTUNITY FOR A SOLUTION

Speaking my last words as chairman of the day, I proposed a solution to both problems: the one problem is the solution of the other. One problem is about vacant shops, the other is in search of it. The solution looks like a market for supply and demand, but not completely because the available vacant floors are spread throughout the city while the needed square meters should be concentrated. How can we make it work?

To create space for new large retail demands, we need to combine all vacant buildings in an area next to each other. That's when I knew: 're-parcelling' is the solution. As a former cadastre-partisan, I have worked on land re-parcelling for agricultural purposes. The problem was the same: spread out ownership which had to be concentrated and appointed per farm. The solution: re-parcelling.

WHAT IS RE-PARCELLING?

Re-parcelling, also called 'consolidation' or 'land exchange', is a process in which land-owners trade parcels with each other. One of the reasons to start the trade, is to prevent fragmentation of land and give the land-owner as much agricultural land around his farm as possible and thus having less traffic within the region. The goal for all land-owners is to be better off than they were before the trading. This requires a minimum amount of three participants. If all requirements are met, the costs of the trade can be reimbursed by the government. The usual order of events is to set up a re-parcelling plan by the provincial or municipality authorities. The land owners can then trade according to this plan.

ADVANTAGES OF SHOP RE-PARCELLING

Shop re-parcelling can help solve situations in which one out of three parties is stuck, without having to resolve to measures as purchasing land, giving one party more rights, or expropriation. Re-parcelling is a compromise between all parties involved, with the help of an expertise mediator. It accelerates the solving of the problem, saves costs, and decreases political risks. Private parties have the advantage of less financial problems because the purchase of land or the like is deferred to a later stadium.

For public and private cooperation in the development of certain areas, re-parcelling can help separate the 'ground-routing' (the transfer of land exploitation from the previous to the final owner, often through a third party) from other public-private deals.

DEVELOPING A PRACTICE OF SHOP RE-PARCELLING

At Locatus we looked for a team of partners who believe in this idea and want to see it progress to a more concrete plan. We are now collaborating with the Kadaster (Dutch Land Registry Office), the University of Maastricht, and Seinpost Consultancy to build a practice for shop re-parcelling. Furthermore, the municipality of Rotterdam has agreed to start a pilot for these ideas.

Meanwhile, we have found out about similar initiatives of urban re-parcelling in Germany and Valencia, Spain. In Germany the concept has received the name "Umlegung" and in Valencia there is the method of "Reparcelacion". For more information on these concepts, see the Dutch report "Herverkaveling op Ontwikkelingslocaties" by Arjan Bregman and Herman de Wolff (OTB TU Delft, 2011). Although we can learn a lot from these experiences, none of these initiatives and concepts refers specifically to shopping streets and stores.

Developing new methods to deal with vacancy and demand for large retail spaces is not easy and creating new approaches for shop re-parcelling is even more difficult. Of course there will not be space for every single party in a shopping area and some spaces must be transformed to other purposes or functions. Furthermore a role is reserved for the municipality authorities to accommodate these processes. The approach will also differ per shopping area due to the situation of the owners of the buildings. There can be many owners in one small area, or there can be only one owner for a large shopping area.

By discussing the subject with all parties engaged and convincing them of this solution, new possibilities will definitely arise. After all, good stores and plinths come from good ideas!

City Streets

STUDIES 2

MEENT

Rotterdam

INTERVIEW WITH
Robin von Weiler
Von Weiler Investments and owner of the Minerva-buildings at the Meent

"Be unbiased: do not automatically repeat what you've done before elsewhere – every street is unique."

FACT 1
600 m. shopping street

FACT 2
ca. 55 shops and galleries

FACT 3
ca. 16 restaurants and bars

TIMELINE

16th century The Meent is a common for the cattle market

1935–1940 The reconstructed Meent with new connection to the Coolsingel has become an important and lively central street

1940 German Airforces bomb Rotterdam, destroying nearly the entire city centre

1950–1955 Rotterdam city centre is partly rebuilt, including the Meent

1970–1980 The retailers on the Meent retire, and instead temporary employment agencies and travel agencies move in. The livelihood and atmosphere in the street vanishes.

2001 Robin von Weiler becomes 2nd owner of buildings Minervahuis I, II and III on the Meent: three central located blocks from the 1930s and 1940s with retail and offices.

2009 90% of temporary employment and travel agencies on the Meent have left; new appetizing shops, bars and restaurants have moved in.

CONTEXT

The Meent, a 600 m (.3 mile) east-west street, lies perpendicular to the historic Binnenrotte river route and in the heart of Rotterdam. Before the bombing of the city centre on 14 May 1940, the Meent was considered one of the primary mixed-use shopping, living, and leisure streets in Rotterdam. After the war, the Lijnbaan, a new pedestrianized single-use shopping street, overshadowed its central role. In the 1970s most of the retailers in the Meent retire without having successors for their shop; most of its plinths were filled with temporary employment and travel agencies. Also the big retail chains were at that time not interested in the Meent, a critical fact for the later revitalization of the street.

PROBLEM

Continuing well into the 80s and 90s, the Meent was forced into further decline. Although the decline was good for tenants (low rent), the street and the image of the neighbourhood suffered tremendously. The public realm had deteriorated, and there was no relation to the plinths and the street. The Meent had completely lost its role as a city centre destination.

SOLUTION

In 2000, Robin von Weiler saw the hidden historic quality in the buildings on the Meent and the street's existing potential: the street's position in the city as a vital east-west connection, solid foot traffic, cosy right-of-way, nice vista, a good tree canopy, available parking. Most of all, since it is part of the city where people live, activity could be maintained after regular business hours. He saw the opportunity to redefine this street with a complex and long-term strategy.

In 2001, when he purchased the Minervahuis, a large and central Meent building, Robin von Weiler had hopes of purchasing more buildings to fulfil his vision for the Meent and restore the street to its pre-World War II condition. From the start, Robin von Weiler's philosophy was to be different from the Lijnbaan; the Meent was not supposed to please the masses. With this intention, he shifted building management logic from a building-to-building method to a corridor planning method. With his first property purchase, he began to evacuate temporary employment agencies and the other under-performing tenants by finding loopholes in their rental contracts and starting court cases. Renovations were necessary to improve the condition and image of the buildings as well.

SECRETS

A coherent corridor vision with partnership of owners. As a building owner, Robin has strayed from traditional property-to-property leasing often seen with property developers. Although he owns no more than 10% of the buildings on the street, he partners with every building owner and proposes a gentlemen's agreement: he assists the owner and does everything needed to move an 'undesired' tenant out likewise his own property. If a tenant leaves a property on the ground floor, the owners come to Robin and he advises on accepting another suitable tenant when that fits the atmosphere of the street.

Technical assistance promotes situational success. Robin provides complimentary technical assistance to new and existing tenants who want to improve their plinth and façade.

LESSONS

Strict criteria for the ground level. In exchange for reasonable rents, businesses on the Meent must abide by certain rules - for example: no large chains**;** family businesses and Dutch designers are preferred. Uncompromising rules for advertisements and signage demand complementary adjacent plinths, dictate how the shops and windows look, and confirm opening hours to match the rest of the businesses.

Sustained enthusiasm. His persistent enthusiasm for revitalizing the street has aided success. Over the years, Robin has become an expert and gained a deep understanding of the street and of those who live and shop there. This knowledge and passion have transferred to the planning of the street and creating one coherent, lively, and diverse corridor.

Always keep your promises. To maintain high-quality partnerships with other building owners and the municipality and to demonstrate he cares about the tenants and their plinths, Robin does not fall back on commitments. Not only with others but with your own vision as well. Sticking to the original vision of a local street has been challenging, especially in the face of big-name retailers. His advice: "Act normal and convince, no bullying."

IMPACT

The street is active day and night and renown in Rotterdam for its high-end fashion, cosy cafés, and pedestrian-friendly character. Robin's corridor planning method and sincere passion to create a great street has motivated the other building owners to improve their plinths. For those owners uninterested in his plan, Robin has cordially stimulated transfers and reduced the number of buildings owners to 9 private owners, who now own about 80% of the buildings.

In 2009 the city council approved a plan to redesign the entire public realm of the Meent. Sometimes political goals conflicted with the interests of the retailers and building owners, like less car parking in the street. After two years Robin and other representatives of the stakeholders negotiated the best long-term compromise possible. Suggestions and alternatives how to improve the plan were incorporated, with a very high level of detail. The works are in progress now and are closely monitored by a team of representatives of the city, retailers and building owners.

DO

- no bullying
- keep your promises
- maintain the original vision

IN CONCLUSION

Robin's vision and sustained action on the Meent has created a successful, active street out of one that was forgotten and left behind. Although the Meent's story is full of inspiration, Robin admits it would be challenging—if not impossible—to replicate. His logic is situational and doesn't play by

the rules of the handbook. Plus, his strategy for strong partnerships, a unique contract with them, technical assistance, and a focus on long-term gain instead of short-term return is time-consuming, and unforced. His original vision was to give back the once-loved street to the Rotterdammers and he did. But now comes the challenge: to maintain the vision and keep the street local, different, and loved - especially when the demand for retail space outnumbers the demand.

VALENCIA STREET

San Francisco

INTERVIEW WITH
Kris Opbroek
project manager, Great Streets Program

"You have to take some chances, or things will stay the same forever."

FACT 1
76 000 ft^2 of added sidewalk (7 060 m^2)

FACT 2
69 added bike racks

FACT 3
$ 6.1 million project cost

TIMELINE

2005 Mayor Newsom passes Livable Streets Initiative
– Great Streets Program established
– Complete Street Policy adopted
– Better Streets Policy adopted
– Discussions begin with MTA about traffic calming on Valencia Street and identify the 4-block corridor as 1 of 7 of the priority corridors

2006 DPW & MTA form partnership for the Valencia Street transformation
– Series of community meetings lead to nomination of 16-17th Street block as most important commercial, pedestrian, and cyclist connector

2007 Applied for two additional grants from Federal government, which brought the total project limits from 1 to 4 blocks
– Extended project to include 15th-19th Streets

2008 Secured all grants and other funds
– Begin design process with multiple agencies, key stakeholders

2009 Begin construction
– Project is partnered with concurrent paving projects as recommended by Complete Streets Policy

2010 City of San Francisco adopts Better Street Plan
– Construction finished

2011 (Sept) Landscape complete
– (Current) maintenance

CONTEXT

Valencia Street is an active, highly populated corridor in the diverse "Mission" neighbourhood of San Francisco. Many shops, restaurants, and art galleries line the street and are heavily used by the residents and visitors. Cyclists frequently use Valencia and several bus routes traverse the corridor. One block away from the project site is a transit stop that serves the entire Bay Area region.

PROBLEM

The 4-block corridor of Valencia Street had a history of conflicts between cyclists, autos, and pedestrians. It is a major cycling thoroughfare, a popular commercial area, and a hub for local and regional transit connections. Traffic moved too fast on the streets; buses blocked cars and cyclists. The sidewalks were overcrowded with people and parked bicycles. The ground level of the street was so congested, merchants had little opportunity to claim space for outside seating.

SOLUTION

The bottom line was that cyclists and pedestrians needed more space and the cars needed to slow down. The Great Streets Program put together an interagency team of experts with their own program, MTA's Parking and Traffic Department, and the Department of City Planning. Collectively, their goals prioritized safety for all users, increasing sidewalk space, improving bicycle lanes, and maintaining the diversity of the neighbourhood.

SECRET

Obtaining balance. The interagency team worked very well together. They had the right people around the table whose skills and experience were balanced. The team saw the vision and felt optimistic about the results. Within the project itself, balancing the goals of the community with technical merit ensured its success. The community—including residents and merchant owners—wanted the neighbourhood to maintain its character and uniqueness while also supporting all modes of traffic, especially pedestrians. When the community had concerns over the corridor design models, the team had technical data to back up their rationale for the designs but was also flexible with community input.


GREEN WAVE
SIGNALS
SET FOR
13
M.P.H.

LESSONS

Be flexible. All involved parties allowed for plenty of discussion and cooperation, both from a departmental and individual standpoint, and everyone actually agreed on the design, traffic flow, and cross sections of the corridor. When dealing with the community, wherever they could devise a back-up plan or alternative in case the resulting design failed, they did. This maintained their credibility with the community and created an atmosphere of 'togetherness.'

Be efficient. The team made sure to meet goals of all current local policies: Livable Streets Initiative, Complete Streets Policy, Better Streets Policy and then Better Streets Plan. During construction and renovation phase, the Valencia project piggy-backed with another concurrent paving project, saving money on both sides.

Don't be afraid to push the envelope. With the solid support of hard traffic data, the non-engineers were able to convince the engineers of new and bold design elements that added to the ground level's public realm. Everyone celebrates these details today.

IMPACT

Not only is the street much more balanced (instead of a 70-30-ratio car space to pedestrian and cycling space, it's now 50-50), the street also represents a more pedestrian scale. With added lighting, street furniture, new trees, and artistic details on the cement, the physical space is a pleasure to walk and experience. As a pedestrian, you can see everything much better: you can see cyclists, people, and especially the store fronts much better. Because the sidewalk is much less cluttered, the merchants now have gained real estate with their plinths; outdoor seating permits have dramatically increased on the street and 'parklets' - small parks or table and chairs taking up two parking spaces - are becoming popular as well.

As a multidisciplinary team, the project impacted the way they thought about interagency collaboration. Everyone learned a lot throughout the process and everyone came out with a win. The experience was positive and their success will translate to future collaborations.

DO

- seek new partners
- pair your project with concurrent projects
- create back-up plans

IN CONCLUSION

Of course there were challenges from the start of the project. The corridor is extremely busy and the neighbourhood is diverse with people, land uses, and transportation needs. The community was very active in the design and comment processes. Despite the many challenges during the project—merchants upset during construction, technical issues underneath the street, and current maintenance challenges—the end result was a definite success. These four blocks of Valencia Street have been completely transformed into a pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly area. It's now a place where people are welcomed to linger and experience the community life.

Balance was an integral part of this ground floor transformation. The team balanced the needs of the community with their own expertise and experience with urban planning and traffic flow management. They also approached the design process with hard data to support their reasoning, but were flexible to the input of the community. Interagency collaboration was a success, and set a new bar for collaborative efforts in local and regional government.

KLARENDAL

Arnhem

INTERVIEW WITH
Berry Kessels
district developer Klarendal, housing corporation Volkshuisvesting Arnhem

"Residents contributed to a regeneration of the neighbourhood and to the developing of plans and by beautifying other parts of the district."

FACT 1
1500 m length of Klarendalseweg, Sonsbeeksingel and Hommelstraat

FACT 2
100 local artists in the area

FACT 3
50 shops, 4 bars/restaurants and 1 fashion hotel by 2012

TIMELINE

1905 Klarendal neighbourhood is the first extension of Arnhem outside the city walls

1960s Height of good times; 32 bakeries, 16 flower shops, 25 cafes are active on Klarendalseweg

1963 ArtEZ Institute of the Arts opens in Arnhem

1970s Larger industries relocate. Increase of unemployment, crime and drugs, causing riots

1989 Residents organize themselves and violently kick out drug lords. Start of crime prevention and neighbourhood revitalization plans

2005 Revitalization plan *Klarendal Gaat Door* launched to improve living quality, introducing *Mode Kwartier (Fashion District)*

2008 Historic post office from Arnhem city centre has been rebuilt in Klarendal as a new restaurant

2012 Fashion hotel *Modez* opens, with international renowned Dutch fashion designers designing the 20 rooms. 50 shops in the street filled.

2013 Planned opening of multifunctional centre

CONTEXT

The city of Arnhem is one of the larger cities in the Netherlands. Klarendal was the first neighbourhood in Arnhem outside the city wall, with its original uses almost entirely industrial. In the early 1900s a railway line bisected Arnhem, one side with the old city and the other side with industrial uses.
The 1960s and 1970s brought despair and unrest to the neighbourhood, spurred by the closing of factories. Unemployment sharply rose followed quickly by fervent crime, prostitution, and drug dealing. Klarendalseweg, the 1.6 km-long main street, saw many shop closures. Riots between the proud local residents and the police over the drug and crime problems persisted though the 1980s. Households shrank, support for the local shops decreased, and vacancy rose. Time and time again, drug lords were evacuated but shortly returned. The 1989 violent eviction of the drug lords vindicated the residents. After a decade of planning in the 1990s, Klarendal's revitalization plan finally launched in early 2000s. Since then, it has experienced positive changes.

PROBLEM

The mostly working-class residents were proud of their neighbourhood, the surrounding large industries, and the historic charm of Klarendalseweg. After the 1989 final riot, the major question remained: how can we turn give positive means to this neighbourhood? With nearly every shop on the main street closed, a high-unemployment rate, criminal behaviour and low incomes, what are the options? How can we make it a destination outside the historic city centre?

SOLUTION

In the beginning of the 21st century, a strong partnership formed between residents, the local housing corporation Volkshuisvesting Arnhem, Provincial Government of Gelderland, ArtEZ fashion school, and the City of Arnhem. Because of the relatively low rents, the neighbourhood was already developing as an alternative, artistic community with many students from ArtEZ living there. At the same time in Antwerp, the *haute couture* icons The Antwerp Six were sweeping the Flemish city and revitalizing the city with them. This success story inspired the partners of Klarendal to expose the connection between art, the neighbourhood, and ArtEZ. From this inspiration came the birth of the *Mode Kwartier* ("fashion district").
In 2005, renovations of the shops began paid by the housing corporation. A group of post-graduates from ArtEZ and other academies were invited to rent vacant shops along the Klarendalseweg. The artists kept studios on the ground floor and

lived in the space above. The post-graduates paid market-value rent and were required to design their shop.
In 2008, the reconstruction and relocation of Arnhem's historic post office from the old centre to Klarendal and the opening of a new restaurant in it, marked an image change for the neighbourhood.

SECRET

Acupuncture intervention. Beginning with the restaurant opening and the reconstruction of the historic post office, the partners applied a revitalization strategy that pinpointed a host of interventions at various locations along the Klarendalseweg corridor. The street was redesigned at certain segments to enhance the pedestrian atmosphere. And of course the post-graduates' art studio-lofts, not only played a key role in keeping the street alive at all times of the day but created a destination and walking route.

LESSONS

Creating a buzz. The 2008 reconstruction of the post office and the new restaurant Goed.Proeven ('Well Tasting') were huge image-builders for Klarendal's revitalization programme. This provided an official 'opening' for the street, especially for those unfamiliar with the neighbourhood and its recent improvements, and immediately made the street a buzz-worthy destination. In 2012 there is a second big opening because of three new additions: fashion hotel Modez & café Caspar, art space Kunstkazerne and gallery / workspace Plaatsmaken.
Develop consistency. Because of their unpredictable travel plans and general hectic lifestyle, a major challenge with the string of artists' studios is organizing common opening hours. A coalition or leadership team among the artists would be helpful in creating a consistently vibrant main street.
Acquire residents' buy-in. Over the years, some of the sceptical residents express dissatisfaction with the direction of the neighbourhood. They fear too much change. Prioritizing residents' satisfaction, buy-in, and input on upcoming long-term changes may have brought more collaboration, support, and positive impressions.

IMPACT

Of course the *Mode Kwartier* project has gained attention and international press but it has also helped the city of Arnhem by enhancing the image of the forgotten artist neighbourhood. The renovations, filled plinths, and street redesign have increased liveability in the neighbourhood.

DO

- gain community buy-in
- address challenges head-on
- exploit established neighbourhood characteristics
- strategically place neighbourhood improvements

IN CONCLUSION

With an action-packed and violent history, the group of partners and post-graduate artists came together to create a destination corridor outside the city centre of Arnhem. The diverse neighbourhood had a solid base for evolution with the original proud residents, a constantly changing immigrant population, and the creative class from ArtEZ taking advantage of the lower rents. An acupuncture intervention strategy guided the slow change and created a situation for people to visit. In the end, this project has given the trust back to the residents, reversed negative images of the neighbourhood, and contributed to a vital investment plan for the city of Arnhem.


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About the attractiveness of a plinth and the relation between owner, manager and user. And how to manage the 'meanwhile' plinth.

OWNERSHIP& MANAGEMENT

IMAGE-BUILDERS AND PLINTHS

an interview with Tony Wijntuin

BEFORE YOU STARTED WYNE, WHAT DID YOU DO FOR SCHIPHOL?

I was at Schiphol for 11 years, first in baggage and passenger services and then in commercial. When I transferred to commercial, my main task—to put it bluntly—was to increase profits and leverage possibilities among the retailers, food and beverage, and service providers (like banks). I carried over my interests and skills around the characteristics of traffic patterns and volume, and passenger profiles.

WHAT WAS YOUR VISION FOR SCHIPHOL?

Schiphol, at that time, was losing track as one of the most innovative airports in the world and like I said, I was brought on-board to increase revenues. I thought, if we solely focus on the money—the Euros—the best thing to do is to renegotiate contracts. But that's a quick fix. It's not sustainable in the long run. What about quality? I wanted to know how we performed on quality levels. Through data collection, we discovered that, even though we were increasing retail space for food and beverage, turn-over and revenues were relatively decreasing. At the same time, our customer satisfaction was also gradually decreasing, especially with food and beverage. The missing link was quality—and this was easy to convey to my superiors and quite easy to change.

The hard part was what came next: if the revenue is in place and the quality is in place, how do we still compare to other major airports? The answer to that was image. We needed image-builders. This approach makes sense. The image part of the equation takes into account the user's experience. And the idea behind a well-balanced portfolio is to create added value that can be measured in terms of revenue, quality, and image.

HOW MUCH CAN BE EARNED BY ADDING IMAGE?

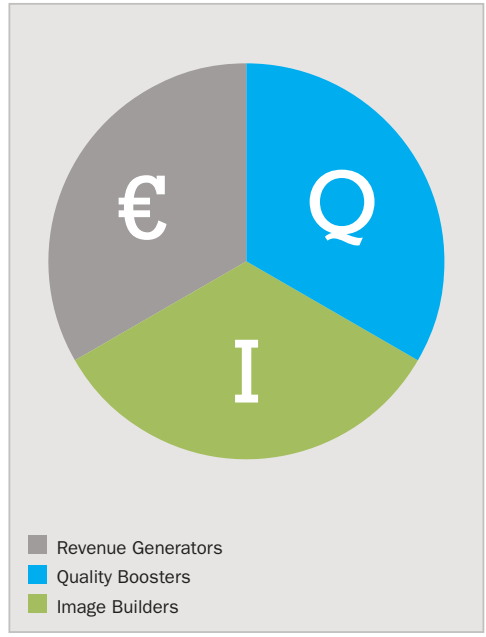
It's very difficult to measure image or the return of invest of an image-builder. In the beginning we tried to calculate this at Schiphol, but it was a lost cause. By building identity, the idea is to become more attractive and to entice users. Image-builders contribute to revenue as much as quality. If you want to be successful, it's more than revenue generators to build a solid and viable portfolio—it's image *and* quality.

One thing we did at Schiphol, for example, was create a dedicated baby-care lounge that generated no revenue what so ever, but contributed significantly to the airports exposure. Schiphol also recently opened the airport park. It was difficult to convince upper management of these image-builders but what it came down to was how we could create a portfolio that meets customer demands. We needed to be different than the others. And this was different.

HOW DO IMAGE-BUILDERS AND YOUR PORTFOLIO VALUE MODEL® IMPACT PLINTHS?

The work of WYNE Strategy & Innovation, the consultancy firm I established after I left Schiphol, focuses on what's inside the plinth. Not only can public space increase the quality and perception of the plinth, but also the uses within the plinth, whether that is retail, food or beverage, or living space.

Using the image-building approach, the idea is to create added value. If you look at my approach, I always start with the (sometimes latent) wants and needs of the customers. On one hand, the customer wants convenient and functional retail. They want their grocery store and somewhere to buy their everyday needs. On the other hand, customers also want to be surprised. They want to experience something.




I Love You
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WELCOME Home
aanbieding
Boeket in las
€ 13,50

HOW CAN WE TRANSLATE THIS APPROACH TO THE COMMUNITY LEVEL?

Shopping streets are very different from locations like Schiphol, mostly because places like this have only one owner while shopping streets have multiple owners with their own individual shops. People are becoming more aware of the need to bring in additional, unusual propositions to create an attractive, unique environment. In the end, it should be a mix of uses that contribute to revenue, quality, and image. Image builders are the local heros. Local heros play a significant role - small mom and pop stores, local creatives, characteristic start-ups. Why not have a small, nice local grocery store in the same street as a high fashion store? These kinds of shops will not bring in big bucks, but create the specific identity. Big chains can play a nice"need to be there" role, but it's the smaller shops and spaces that are the real image-builders. As maturing shopping streets which often started off like "no go areas" and in time matured into attractive off-high street dwell-shop-eat environments, become more attractive for property owners, big box retailers and investors, one should be cautious with new entrants in the street. Sure you can bring in a high-traffic money making retailer, but then use a scheme that takes part of the revenue from that location to facilitate a smaller scale conceptual store. This increases the quality level of your space.

HOW DO YOU EXECUTE THIS APPROACH?

We first use data from customer experience surveys, and then we experiment; it's trial and error. You need a creative team that can think conceptually. You also need your own personal experience, and create partnerships and coalitions. It's a viable approach and more sustainable than just looking at revenue-only methods. But it takes a strong backbone to stick to the concept and maintain the original identity.

SO WHAT'S NEXT?

We're not only seeing this approach in shopping streets, airports, and railway stations—we see this in our daily lives. How are public spaces and third places adding value to our lives? It's not necessarily money-based. With the economic situation, we have to come up with new business models and this is one of them: functional and emotional added value.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ‘LOCAL HEROES’ IN PLINTH IMPROVEMENT

a conversation with Hans Appelboom

OWNERSHIP AND LONG-TERM VISION

Our shop Duikelman is a renowned family-based enterprise in kitchen and cooking supply in the Pijp, a former blue collar quarter near the inner-city of Amsterdam which gentrified strongly since the late 1970s / early 1980s. Unlike many other specialized shops (with a large and wide spread amount of clients) that moved to the outskirts of the city in order to be optimally accessible by car, we decided not to move. Instead we associated and cooperated with colleagues in Rotterdam and The Hague. At the same time we committed ourselves with the direct neighbourhood being our first clients: events, street dinners, etc. We believed in the regeneration of the neighbourhood and the strengths of ownership and control over real estate. Not being dependant on project developers and landlords is a precondition to develop a long term business model and investment strategy. In doing so, we see a positive effect in the plinth of the rest of the streets.

MIXED URBAN AREAS

We strongly believe in diverse and mixed urban areas with a concentration of specialty shops, as you can see in the old quarters of Paris. Areas that are not depending on maximum car accessibility but that are beloved by people on foot and bike who like the buzz of an urban lifestyle and by visitors who enjoy this as a special experience.

The Pijp is now in the midst of a long lasting and major infrastructural project for the new subway-line. Not being a big fan of this type of city


DUIKELMAN


lid van de vereniging
AMBACHTELIJKE BEDRIJVEN IN DE PIJP
AMSTERDAMSE
www.ambachten-depijp.nl

improvement, we now see the advantages and chances for the next future: a greater catchment area, more tourists and a better connection with adjacent hotspots like the Museum quarter. Tourism is a growing market in cities, so it is in the Pijp - foreign magazines refer to it as a Quartier Latin. Attractions like the Heineken Brewery, the Albert Cuyp market, daytime restaurants and small shops have to be cherished while the tourist traps (souvenir shops, money change etc.) should be avoided.

The Ferdinand Bolstraat is developing as main retail axis, with a collection of strong and well known chain stores and restaurants, as a magnet for the mainstream public. This type of development and stores is a precondition for the shops on the adjacent small streets with a lower level of rent and/or private ownership: small scale, diverse, and specialized. And those shops are also service-oriented towards clients and people who live in this dense and urbanized world.

NEED FOR COOPERATION

I'd like to make a remark about the popular idea of a necessity for flexibility in (the use of) property and the levels of rent. Project developers and landlords on a speculative basis tend not to think on a long term. Often they aim for the highest return on their investments, resulting in tenants of the well-known kind. Real estate owners should be involved in an early stage in new plans and strategies in order to convince them that a long-term vision is better for everyone. Also cooperation with the authorities is important in order to let the small-scale production and service companies return, that are very important for an urban quarter like the Pijp. This requires a more liberal application of licenses; otherwise every available ground floor space on the adjacent streets will be transferred to housing.

So the point is to find a good mix and cooperation between entrepreneurs (chains and specialists, shopping and production, daytime and evening oriented, for locals as well for visitors), and people who live and work in the area. But cooperation and joining forces is very difficult, because everybody tends to go for their personal interests and hardly see the common challenges and goals. Entrepreneurs should be pro-active, take positions in the development process of a neighbourhood in advance, and cooperate in this development. An 'intermediate agency' or 'shopping street manager' can assisted of this.

These kinds of recommendations will lead to strengthen the 'soul' of the Pijp and will result in an interesting and distinguished image and performance at eye level in the street.

THE 'MEANWHILE' PLINTH

Emily Berwyn

STARTING MEANWHILE SPACE

In England, landlords of empty property have to pay 100% of business rates once the property has been vacant for 3 months, a policy that was introduced in 2009. This is often very costly for them, especially when the vacancy rate in the UK currently stands at 14.5%, in deprived areas this is over 20%, and occupancy of retail spaces is declining. However, it is not just shops; plenty of offices are vacant as well. While Eddie and I worked together at a regeneration agency, we had many conversations about empty buildings and development sites that sit empty and unused while something is waiting to happen. Empty ground floor spaces impact neighbouring businesses and contribute to blight and anti-social activity. It seemed to us that there was a great opportunity here—someone could do really interesting things with these spaces during these transition periods. If only we could get hold of the space!

I began to explore the potential for temporarily occupying vacant space with creative enterprise start-ups, but encountered so many bureaucratic barriers, including planning use classes, accessing landlord's contact details and extortionate business rates, that everything felt stacked against me. It was obvious to us that not just anyone could tackle this challenge: a support mechanism was badly needed. An agency or organization

Whitechapel: 89 days, 41 projects in the space, 7 projects from the local area, 2400 visitors on the Meanwhile at the fair day, 200 visitors per day, 1 new person employed, and 2 new social enterprises. Re-let as a bank.

that connects temporary occupancies to those who need them might solve this problem. So Eddie and I combined our broad backgrounds (regeneration, events, consultancy, urban design, the arts, networks) to form *Meanwhile Space*, a social enterprise and community interest company (CIC) in 2009.

OUR MISSION AND GOALS

Meanwhile Space is a full-service company for meanwhile use, from supporting projects to access space to running spaces of our own, to negotiating deals with landlords, to lobbying government. We have strong links with policy makers, property industry, creative industries, social enterprises, local government and we work with all of them to reduce the barriers to meanwhile activity. We are considered equal partners with all the three sectors and are able to converse with each on equal terms. We have a thorough understanding of the barriers both as a deliverer and instigator of meanwhile use and are able to articulate solutions to all stakeholders.

The vision of *Meanwhile Space CIC* is to be the first port of call for meanwhile activity for politicians, public/private sector, projects, and the media. Our goal is to advise, collaborate, and deliver innovative interim uses for empty space that give social profits to communities of interest.

THE FIRST PROJECT & BUSINESS MODEL

Our first big project came in 2009 when a minister was seeking a solution to help high streets - commercial or 'Main' streets - through

Exmouth Market: 7 months, 2 new social enterprises started, 1 conventional enterprise tested and a pop-up art school trialled. Re-let as a bicycle shop.

the recession. We proposed the *Meanwhile Project* and sought out people all over the country who were already doing interesting meanwhile activity in empty spaces. We found 24 projects in 17 places to directly support with the grant funding, allowing us to pay for anything apart from rent that may be hindering their project (i.e., business rates, utilities, broken windows).

Our goal was to pinpoint barriers of meanwhile activity for landlords, local authorities, and projects on the ground and then report back to central government with recommendations for ways around these barriers. From our data, we provided advice and guidance to a network of 'meanwhilers' with template leases, guides and toolkits. We also conducted research studies and lobbied government for policy changes.

Since March 2010, when the *Meanwhile Project* funding ended, our team at *Meanwhile Space* has developed a sustainable business model based around resources (continuing the advice and support of the Meanwhile Project) and directly delivers projects on behalf of local authorities who pay us to set up projects in their area. We also occupy spaces ourselves as incubation meanwhile centres for our growing network of 1200 meanwhilers, and invite proposals to use the spaces for anywhere between a few days and a few weeks.

For example, our 'Whitechapel' space consisted of 3000 ft^2 (279 m^2) of former wholesale space. The landlord, Workspace Group, one of the largest asset holders in London, approached us to occupy the space on a meanwhile basis (rent free, but covering insurance, utilities, and business rates). In 89 days, we hosted

Pallet Project by Christian Dillon

41 projects with uses ranging from theatre, arts exhibitions, consultation space for architects, workspace, DIY workshops, vintage clothing, kids clubs, and up-cycling projects. All of the projects were social enterprises, start-up businesses, or creative individuals seeking to make themselves a job. When a new tenant was secured, the landlord was so happy with our work, they moved us to another unit on Exmouth Market, where we stayed for seven months. All six of our occupied incubation spaces have been leased as a direct result of our occupancy—a good incentive for landlords to allow us to use the space. The most powerful incentive is that we cover their empty property rates while they are searching for a new tenant.

THE 'MEANWHILE' VISION FOR AN IDEAL GROUND FLOOR

Ground floors should be diverse and should offer constantly changing, vibrant, engaging, and welcoming environments. High streets need to adapt or wither as shopping is no longer the sole desirable activity of a town centre. People want interesting things to see and do--that don't cost a fortune. And increasingly they want to do their shopping online, or in suburban retail hubs. We can't change that. But we feel meanwhile use is a good way to test new uses on the high street and through meanwhile, we can help our high streets to adapt to an uncertain future and to become places that people want to spend their time again.

Our vision for an ideal ground floor is one where vacant space does not exist; that vacant periods are foreseen and 'curated' to give people a chance to test an idea, even for a few days or a few weeks. This requires a transparency of ownership, a flexible approach to bureaucracies, and somewhere to store all the knowledge on an area so it is easily accessible.

SUCCESS STORIES

One of our best success stories is Christian Dillon from the East London Furniture project. While volunteering for a project in our Whitechapel space, and recovering from an injury, he started building furniture from discarded pallets. His unique creations soon received interest from the public. We encouraged him to try his idea in our Exmouth Market space for a few weeks over Design Week. He had a number of designs and worked with people off the street who showed interest in the furniture for retail space and even on the pavement! By the end of Design Week he had enough commissions for cafés, bars, and offices to take a risk and push his business into a meanwhile space of his own. Six months later he has a sustainable business looking for more commercial premises.

Communities socially benefit through activity at ground level in otherwise vacant property, which affords accessible community services and reduces blight and anti-social behaviour. Property owners benefit economically, through the security of active occupation, reduced costs to keep property empty and increased prospects for future uses.

THE SOUL PURPOSE OF MANAGING EMPTY REAL ESTATE

Willemijn de Boer

VACANCY MANAGEMENT AND THE LIVEABILITY OF A CITY

An empty building is a lifeless place in the city. These buildings require a meaningful use. Without human energy and creativity, these locations do not fruitfully contribute to the community. Temporary use is the answer and can make a positive contribution to the liveability of a city. In particular, use at street level—the plinths—buildings can give a very different meaning to a building and the area. My company, ANNA Vastgoed & Cultuur (ANNA Real estate & Culture), conducts creative vacancy management. From this field, I see an important role for property managers in the use of empty plinths.

From a temporarily unoccupied building, a common meeting place can be created. It is the temporality of the sites that provides a fascinating dynamic and a common ground. The projects that take place, come into existence during a transition, a continuum that in itself tells many stories. There is no reason to design the building for a project: the process of putting the building into use is the project. Within such a context, what can you do as an independent artist, designer, performer, researcher, or scientist? A building consists of different aspects: architecture, location, feeling, future, history—but the context of a building serves as inspiration for expression. The context creates an environment where people, visions, and manifestations connect, even if at first sight they had nothing in common.

THE PLINTH

The use of the plinth is an additional challenge in vacancy management. Indeed, there is a direct link with the environment: entrepreneurs, residents, and visitors. The plinths of buildings determine, to a large extent, the experience of a city. A properly completed ground floor 'finishes' the city. A storefront that is dark and empty or an office block that looks faded and barren, are places where you quickly want to pass by. But what is an appropriate use of the plinths, where an owner and a passer-by, neighbour or co-entrepreneur can all be happy?

MATCH BETWEEN OWNERS AND USERS

When choosing a temporary tenant, it is important to consider a number of factors, including the demands of the owner. For instance: should it be clear that the building is for rent? If so, it may not be an option to establish a professional gallery, because the message of the availability for potential tenants should have prominent presence. If an owner wants to show that he aims to give something to the neighbourhood, you can program projects that have a direct relationship with the surroundings.

Also each location brings its own challenges. For instance, what is and is not allowed by the fire brigade? Is it a shop, living, or entertainment area? You can obviously not have night events take place in a residential area.

And finally there are the end users, the people and initiatives that are full of energy and good ideas to fill empty spaces. They have desires and preferences. A good vacancy-manager considers these factors in every vacant building and tries to make a match between the demands of an owner and user preferences.

A PUSH FOR TEMPORARY USE

These examples of temporary uses exist only by the grace of the good will of an owner. More and more offices and shops are now vacant and their managers hope, often in vain, that they will be rented or sold in the near future. In times of crisis, the value of temporary socio-cultural interpretation is difficult to measure in monetary terms. ANNA, and other people and companies with similar new initiatives can convince owners to stay, to experiment, and to gain visibility. Temporary use serves many purposes: increasing liveability, management and security, experiment for future forms of conversion, build image for the parties involved, and enhance community cohesion. Temporary use should become part of policy and vision in order to be ahead on long-term plans. In this way temporary use will become a way to cherish and maintain the soul of property or even give it new meaning.

EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD: POP-UP STORES, THEATRES AND EXHIBITIONS

ANNA@BH139

In The Hague, ANNA Vastgoed en Cultuur now manages ANNA@BH139: an old phone shop in a large office building. The former shop is located in a derelict shopping street and now houses temporary projects including a theatre, exhibitions, and pop-up stores. The involvement with the neighbourhood will get a place such as the theatre 'Masterplan Geluk' (Master plan of Happiness) here to stand with and by entrepreneurs from the street.

ANNA@BH139 - exhibition 'Blutbad' from Berlin artist KoDiAk

ANNA@KV20

Not only store plinths, office buildings also have a large presence on the street level. The former AXA building at Korte Voorhout in The Hague acquired a temporary tenant after seven years of vacancy: ANNA@KV20. In a prominent position located at the entrance of the city, it is now a building that attracts people. The high windows ensure that users are clearly visible from the street. In addition, a variety of programmed public activities provide a constant outside-to-inside dynamic, and vice-versa. For the owner *Rijksgebouwendienst (*the Government Buildings Agency) the building is now welcoming and associated with good property management.

ANNA@KV20 - plinth during Theatre Instituut NL exhibition 'Wie is de Nar'

Plinths in revival: how to develop,
which stakeholders do you need, what approach,
and what key factors are important.

REVITALIZING &RENEWAL

HIDDEN TREASURES: THE PLINTHS OF THE NIEUWE BINNENWEG

Gerard Peet, Frank Belderbos & Joep Klabbers

One of the most iconic and authentic shopping streets of Rotterdam West, the Nieuwe Binnenweg, is under construction. Over the last few decades the street suffered from economic decline and physical degradation. With a vacancy rate much higher than other shopping streets and a rather low variety in shops, the Nieuwe Binnenweg was in need for an upgrade.

ORIGINS OF THE BINNENWEG

The Binnenweg, originally a country-road between the towns of Rotterdam and Delfshaven, dates back to the 13th century. The 1860's industrial boom of Rotterdam's harbour area marked the beginning of development along the Binnenweg as an urban street with a total length of over two kilometres (about 1½ miles). Originally, the developments were mostly dwellings. In 1900, only 57% of the buildings had shops on the ground floor. By 1940 this had increased up to 87%, making the Binnenweg an urban street with shops of all sorts, from groceries till luxury goods such as jewellery and fur.

The architecture of these 19th century developments was simple and effective. At a fast pace, relatively cheap and high-density housing was constructed, all with very similar characteristics. This so-called "revolution-construction" was the work of enterprising contractors who used catalogues with readymade

ornaments rather than the design service of architects. The result was a visually coherent streetscape with classic tripartite brick facades, horizontal lines, vertical windows, and stone ornaments. Whenever the original ground-floor dwelling had to be turned into a shop, the brick facade was simply cut away and replaced with a storefront.

During the World War II, when Rotterdam's city centre was bombed, the Nieuwe Binnenweg took over the entertainment function of the city centre with shops, cafés, restaurants, and cinema. During the fifties, sixties, and seventies the originally city centre slowly reclaimed its central function. Since then, the Nieuwe Binnenweg has seen a decline of economic activities. Although marginal shops, vacant spaces, and poor maintenance of the houses and shops are evident, the Nieuwe Binnenweg has retained some of its beautiful icons such as high quality furniture stores and fine food stores.

REVITALIZATION

Due to the economic decline of the street the local shopkeepers have since organized themselves and demanded action from the local government. In 2007, the local government and the stakeholders of the Nieuwe Binnenweg started a programme of revitalization. The question was how to finance an integrated approach of revitalization of the Nieuwe Binnenweg and how to involve the private owners in the program. To start the process, a wide range of stakeholders—major property owners at the Nieuwe Binnenweg, the housing corporations *Woonbron en Woonstad*, private property owner *Uvastgoed*, the entrepreneur association, and the borough of Delfshaven—were invited to participate and formulate their goals and objectives. So with a wide support of social and business participants the alderman Dominic Schrijer could create a political fact, that the local government should take the directing and a big part of the funding of the approach. The


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public transport authority RET, responsible for the almost worn-out tram lines, and the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRD) financed the project. The local government offered partial funding for housing rehabilitation and economic development. All together, about €20 million public funding was generated and about €15 million of private funding through the building improvements. Entrepreneurs could also invest in their shop. They could obtain 55% of their investment with a max of € 15 000,- subsidy per shop.

The revitalization program is organized around four objectives:
1. A safe and clean street
2. Restoration of ca. 100 shops and houses
3. Acquisition of ca. 40 new shops
4. Renewal and improvement of public space

FAÇADE RESTORATION

One of the priorities in the program was to restore the visual quality the shops and houses. In over a hundred years these facades, and especially the storefronts, had suffered from poor maintenance and low-quality home-improvement. Damaged facades, shoddy paint jobs, and inappropriate renovations with a DIY approach combined with an excessive use of advertisements contributed to an overall dilapidated appearance.

To restore the facades to their original historic quality, all facades were examined, following the criteria from the City of Rotterdam's Quality Assessment Committee (*'Commissie voor Welstand en Monumenten'*). The criteria state that the transition from public to private space needs special attention, especially on a small scale. For example, entrance doors and doorbells should be of high quality. Doors should complement the architecture of the facade and original ornaments should be preserved. Storefronts should always be designed to match the original facade and should relate to the adjacent architecture.

Although the situation was challenging, close observation of the storefronts demonstrated that not all had been lost; over the years, every new shop owner added a new layer to the storefront, avoiding the hassle of deconstructing the old one. Behind layers and layers of cheap cladding and billboards much of the old facades and ornaments were still there, and in great condition. Peeling off these layers exposed some remarkable findings, such as stained glass, tiled panels, and historic woodcarving. These hidden treasures only had to be unveiled to restore the facades to their original quality.

LESSONS FOR A HOPEFUL FUTURE

With the entry of new specialty shops, such as fine food and vintage apparel, the street is developing into an attractive city street. So when the revitalization-project is complete, the market and the

management of the neighbourhood government of Delfshaven can take over. The stakeholders will remain in control of 30% of the street in the future.

From this project and process the following lessons can be learned. First, when starting a project like this, do realize that it will last for at least four to six years. So all participants should be connected and understand the importance of a long-term contract. Second, organize social and business support to generate enough money. Third, a written order for renovating the buildings with a specific attention for the original quality is a good instrument to get private owners involved in the process. But a subsidy-instrument is necessary to work with private owners on integral improvement plans. Finally, you cannot stop a process of impoverishment over twenty to thirty years, in four years time. After eight or ten years from now, you can come and judge for yourself how this new Nieuwe Binnenweg will develop.

THE COMEBACK OF AN URBAN SHOPPING STREET

a conversation with Nel de Jager

In the historical centre of Amsterdam, the Haarlemmerstraat and Haarlemmerdijk are known as the “best shopping-street in the Netherlands” according to a national survey in 2012. The miscellaneous and original shops and pleasant plinth with shop windows define its attractiveness. The street also has a human scale by small-scale parcelling of buildings and the profile of the street. And most of the buildings are original with authentic plinths, details and layout.

Residents, tourists and day-trippers, and locals from the rest of the city frequent the street. The street is not overrun by tourists, as is the case elsewhere in the centre. There are several hotels and B&B’s but they are small-scale, like the bars and restaurants which attract a specific kind of tourists and visitors. This mix of visitors comes for the specialized shops but also for the cinema and the restaurants. The success and attractiveness lies in a mix of supply, appearance and quality of the street. That this is not obvious depicts the story of the transformation of the street. Nel de Jager has since the late 1980s been involved in the changes of the street and tells about the approach.

THE NEED FOR A CHANGE

The Haarlemmerstraat and -dijk were built early 17th century as part of the Canal district and Jordaan. The street was traditionally a shopping street, but reached a low point in the 1980s. In 1987 Nel de Jager went to work in the Haarlemmerbuurt district, and the street was totally

different than now. “I started there during the urban renewal as a volunteer in the workgroup Shop-management, because I felt that the neighbourhood a good vibe and had potential. But those were the bad years of the area: there were bricked houses and shops, coffee shops, junkies etc. There was also a lot of squatted building that all had a shop or cafe. Because of this the area had a very unique atmosphere.”

It was the time that the exodus from the city was high. Many people moved from the centre to the new housing areas out of the city, many urban neighbourhoods had vacancies in that time. During this period the railway through the Haarlemmerbuurt district also widened, so many houses in the area were demolished. That’s why part of the purchasing power was gone in the neighbourhood, which had an effect on the stores.

“I went to work with the entrepreneurs, because they also saw the degradation and were afraid that their property would soon be worth nothing. For those retailers the value of the store also was their old age provision. We started working to continue to attract customers, so we could keep the shop functions. “But at that moment there was little believe in preserving the shopping function - especially at the city departments. According to economic research at that time the shops had no right to exist, except maybe for a supermarket.”

Some of the buildings had already been purchased by the municipality - which had unclear plans for renovation or demolition: “Because the bricked buildings gave a feeling of discomfort, we then worked on temporary management of those properties: temporary businesses and shop windows. And local artists painted the really bad buildings in the streets, so the outside looked more appealing. “

“For the existing retail space but also the new premises on the ground floor of the building,


UNLIMITED DELICIOUS
CHOCOLATIERS


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we then searched for new entrepreneurs: at the Institute of Small and Medium Businesses in Amsterdam I was involved in the movement of entrepreneurs in the urban renewal areas throughout the city. I came across nice companies and stores, which I approached with the question whether they would move to the Haarlemmerbuurt district. By convincing them of the future of the neighbourhood and the street but also with funding and low rents, we pulled those shops to our street. "

THE TURNING POINT: THE REDISCOVERY OF URBAN QUALITY

"When urban renewal was already underway and new large homes were built in the area, we noticed that more and more people wanted to stay in the city and didn't want to leave. People got the opportunity of owning a larger home in the city and this meant the return of purchasing power and with it the retailers, and that again attracted new people to the street."

"Moreover, many historical buildings were preserved, partly by the squatters who showed that housing and services could be maintained without major demolition. But also due to the loss of faith in the survival of the shops: many existing buildings had not been changed and as a result, original details and parcelling were preserved. The Haarlemmerstraat has a wide variation in the plinth (high, low, wide, narrow) that gives a nice feeling to the street. As shops that are too wide, such as supermarkets and large retail chains, leads to closed windows. Small shops provide an attractive storefront, but the appreciation of this quality only occurred over time. Afterwards you can conclude that the previous lack of faith in the street as a shopping street, has given the space and time for this approach and thus for the success of the street nowadays."

PUBLIC SPACE

"Due to the new developments in Westerpark and the Westergasfabriek, the Haarlemmerstraat and –dijk are now part of the routing network of the city: people walking and cycling through from and to the station. The street has been refurbished with new street pavement in the second half of the 1990s. Initially, all parking spaces would disappear from the street, but we have managed to avoid that because it is important to have a few parking facilities along the street. Public space is not so much about the car versus other users, but the overall accessibility of the street: for delivering goods, for residents, and for those few visitors who want to come by car. The car is a guest in the street, the biggest problems are the cyclists and scooters racing down the street making it difficult for pedestrians to cross the street. We have to find a good balance between all these types of transport. The public space is important day and night. In the evening the street remains active and attractive, there are no closed shutters, people live there, there are restaurants – so the street is vivid and pleasant."

THE STREET AND THE APPROACH NOW

"My role as shopping street manager has become a lot harder over time, because the street became popular and the properties now yield profit for the owners driving up prices. At the same time we have to continue the positioning and the image of the street, and search for unique business and special industries. We have never focused on a specific segment as food or clothing, but wanted at least to preserve the shopping function for the neighbourhood."

"The main vision for the street is about craftsmanship and diversity. What do you have and what not, and what entrepreneurs do you want in order to have a larger range of shops for the customers. Changes in retail are of all times (we don't have a blacksmith any more) but it is the art to follow the dynamics, and to preserve the appearance of the street. There is no formula for how to do this, but my background as an urban sociologist teaches me to look at the small scale and the dynamics and respond to it - partly intuitive, you might say."

LESSONS FOR AN AUTHENTIC STREET

"Every street in a historic city has its own identity, you need to find the DNA and elaborate on that. Each street should have its own distinct character, I often hear people say they want a street like the Haarlemmerstraat but you cannot copy that; it must connect with to the DNA of their own street and city. A street or shop is not a museum, it remains dynamic and must fit the needs of the neighbourhood at first. If you can't attract visitors from your own district, then it will not work. You have to join the purchasing power of the area surroundings. And also the diversity of the neighbourhood is important."

"Authenticity, parcelling, and historic buildings are a given, but you have to work on the process. Organizing a good street is a process that takes time and effort - especially to connect people and entrepreneurs. Do not think of a final image or a blueprint, but of a process, steps, and the dynamics of the shops. You have to sense the bottom-up movement and facilitate it, not a top-down approach as the municipality often does. I never approach a street as a project with a beginning and an end, but always as an organism that grows over time and that needs your constant attention."

ZWAANSHALS: GENERATOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Mark van de Velde

THE OUDE NOORDEN

The 19th century Oude Noorden (Old North) neighbourhood in Rotterdam is characterized by its authentic architecture and mix of functions of living, working and recreation. The neighbourhood is located about one kilometre north-east from central station and the city centre of Rotterdam. The shopping area around Zwaanshals consists of a few local streets that follow a canal bordering the Oude Noorden and Crooswijk. The Oude Noorden and the Zwaanshals are something like a Jane Jacobs so-beloved lively neighbourhood: beautiful 3-storey brick homes with white ceramic trimming and cobblestone streets. On the other hand poverty, cheap housing, and social problems also persist in this neighbourhood.

In the Oude Noorden, the housing association *Havensteder* has a dominant position in the district. This is the result of the typical Dutch housing policy, where associations have a significant role in housing for relatively poor people. In this area it is a conscious strategy to work closely with partners such as the municipality, local bank Rabobank Rotterdam, entrepreneurs, local citizens, and social partners. The parties developed a shared vision on the neighbourhood development; they used an integrated approach to improve the whole neighbourhood where the ‘street economy’ occupies a central position and is a generator for this development.


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ROTTERDAM
OPEN


Van schilderij tot haarembe
uit eigen atelier

The first strategy Havensteder used to revive the street economy is to purchase poorly maintained houses from slumlords and renovate them in the old characteristic style, complementary to the other buildings on the street. The second strategy involves: To create an attractive, unique shopping street, we actively recruit entrepreneurs in the branches of food, fashion, and design. And third to attract more visitors and brand the food, fashion & design theme, we program activities and festivals. Together with interventions for public space and (online) communication efforts this leads to a more positive image and quality of life in the Oude Noorden.

THE INTERVENTIONS

The partners have established a combination of interventions to make the area more attractive. In the first stage Havensteder bought ramshackle houses, evacuated shady businesses, and renovated them to their original state. In the plinths, houses and storerooms were transformed into new retail space in order to improve the shopping route. People can now easily walk around and visit stores in a contiguous manner.

Second, following the identifiers of the Oude Noorden, entrepreneurs are actively recruited from the branches food, fashion, and design. This theme follows the existing attractive business scheme; the best example is ‘Kookpunt’ a high-end kitchen and appliance store that attracts visitors from all over the region. We hired a special shopping street agent to attract new businesses in the food, fashion, and design theme. The restaurants in Oude Noorden are now listed on the top 10 of restaurant ranking website Iens.nl. Now the Zwaanshals has a fine mix of authentic ethnic shops, small supermarkets, bakeries, unique design and fashion stores, cafés, and restaurants. Together with the programming of food markets, festivals and cultural activities, the quality and the image of the district is improving.

The partners are also improving Zwaanshals' public space by focusing on the quality of life and the vibrancy with relatively simple interventions: terraces were created by converting parking spaces, a walking path along the river was made, flowers and trees were planted, and empty windows of existing entrepreneurs were refurnished.

It is the combination of physical, socio-economic, and cultural interventions that makes the approach work. The commitment to the strategy and the partnership with the municipality has helped to achieve the improvements in public space. Most of the festivals and activities were co-funded by the partners. The food, fashion, and design theme is part of the existing identity and therefore fits the neighbourhood well. The physical investments in the plinths and buildings, financed by Havensteder, will most definitely pay themselves back in the current operation of rents.

The result of this approach is that a broader public now finds the Oude Noorden; it is a destination to shop and linger and is now on the mental map of the Rotterdam people. This has paved the way for a piece of differentiation of the housing and gentrification of the neighbourhood.

PLINTHS IN URBAN RENEWAL AREA LIENDERT

Willem van Laar & Arin van Zee

BACKGROUND

In the 1950s and 1960s many low-rise apartment buildings (‘*portiekflats*’) were built in the Netherlands: three floors high with small dwellings. Some of these buildings had a plinth with local shops like a supermarket, a bakery, or a hairdresser. Nowadays it is visible that this traditional function of the commercial plinth has vanished. Changing circumstances led to bankruptcy of many small shop owners. Commercial activities dissipated, and new not to the neighbourhood related activities (like phone shops) have taken their place. The plinth is poorly maintained and degradation of the plinth is visible.

A similar situation is seen at the storages and garages at the ground floor of many other *portiekflats*. Many of these have closed façade, which brings feelings of insecurity, and thus vitality decreases. This problematic situation was the departure point of a group of professionals working in real estate with different backgrounds in Pluk, an organization that focuses her work on complex social issues. How to bring back economic and social vitality in these neighbourhoods with relatively easy applicable solutions? A learning journey to Liendert in Amersfoort brought new insights.

LIENDERT

Liendert is a typical post-war neighbourhood in Amersfoort, a Dutch city with 150 000 inhabitants. The neighbourhood (7 000 inhabitants) can be characterized by: low incomes, relatively high rate of unemployment, over 50% social housing, perception of degradation by inhabitants and feelings of insecurity. A part of the neighbourhood called ‘De Horsten’ has a bad name in particular. Liendert is one of the neighbourhoods in Amersfoort that gets special attention from the government. A lot of social and physical investments have been planned. Emphasis in Liendert has consciously been on the qualities and strengths of the district and its residents, instead of only a focus on their problems. Potentially the neighbourhood ‘de Horsten’ is a top-location with its location adjacent to a large park. In addition the neighbourhood has a strong social network and lots of entrepreneurial residents.

NEW SPACES FOR ENTREPRENEURS

One initiative was taken up by de local housing corporation in association with the municipality of the city Amersfoort and Willem van Laar. They concluded that a lot of small entrepreneurs living in the neighbourhood are often less visible because they run their small businesses at home. Amongst them are starters with a need for a small space with a flexible contract and some basic facilities. To rent private space is expensive and contracts are often fixed for several years; a serious financial risk for starters. Based on research in the neighbourhood and amongst entrepreneurs the idea came to rebuild the storage and garage boxes into small spaces for entrepreneurs for a low rent. Thus combining the need for local entrepreneurial spaces with a more open and vivid plinth.

The local housing corporation started with turning seven garage boxes into commercial spaces (± 20 m^2 with one shared toilet). The corporation got over a hundred requests for space. A few criteria were used to select seven of them: relatively young people, already living in the neighbourhood and who are starters and a role model for others in the neighbourhood. Their business varies from graphic design and IT solution, hairdressing to a jewellery case with retail. It is also possible for students to subscribe and start a business during their study.

PARTICULARITIES OF THE RENT

The indicated price for renovation was € 20 000 per garage box and was subsidized by the Ministry of Social Housing. The rent for these spaces is low and comparable to the rents for a garage box: € 65 a month. The boxes are simple and therefore easy to adjust to the needs of the tenant. The contract is flexible: the term of notice is only one month, and the maximum duration of the rent is two years. In this way it really offers local starters an incentive to develop their businesses to maturity and after two years they can take new steps.

CONCLUSION

The plinth has become more vivid, open and friendly by turning it into commercial units for relatively low costs. It appears to provide in a need for payable basic units with a flexible contract. It enables entrepreneurs living in the neighbourhood to start a business with a smaller chance of debts by failure. In combination with additional measures like renovation, camera surveillance and free business advice from local businessman it is a boost for the liveability and neighbourhood economy at relatively low costs.

A GOOD PLINTH FOR A GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD

Arjan Gooijer, Gert Jan te Velde & Klaas Waarheid

A RATIONALE FOR GOOD RESIDENTIAL PLINTHS

An important cause of poor housing and living quality in the post-war Dutch residential areas is the unattractive appearance and mis-use of the plinths of many residential buildings. The post-war areas have been developed from abstract urban conceptions at a district level with merely programmatic targets. The daily use of the dwelling, surroundings, and streets were regarded as less important. But precisely in the everyday use a good plinth is of crucial importance. Fortunately, we can still change things that are 50 years overdue.

The plinth is the connection between building and surroundings. Design, programming (land use), and organisation of the ground level of a residential building determine not only the impact the building has on its passers-by. Those characteristics also determine the extent to which the area functions.

During the post-war reconstruction period there was much attention for the typology of the residential building. Architects and planners of the day sought an optimal organisation of floor plans, routing, and orientation of the dwellings. They paid also a lot of attention to new, open urban design. But in many cases the crucial link between the dwelling and the neighbourhood – the plinth – was not designed carefully enough. The ground floors of many residential buildings did not take advantage of the way they are allocated.

Today, these buildings and neighbourhoods struggle for a positive image. In order to revitalise them, we often have to focus on the plinths. In short, we can do this in three different ways:

a. strengthening and optimizing the original plinth setup;
b. adjusting the plinth setup to the existing allocation;
c. adjusting both the plinth and allocation.

Each way depends on the kind of problem that is to be resolved. The following examples are from the portfolio of *Van Schagen Architekten*:

A. OPTIMIZING THE ORIGINAL SETUP: VISSENKOMMEN PENDRECHT

The Vissenkommen ("Fishbowls", a nickname due to the form of the windows) in Rotterdam Pendrecht are characterised by an open ground floor, only used for small storage rooms and entrances to porches. The openness of the plinth is a fundamental element of the urban plan: permitting the connection between inner courtyard and the street, which in the original plan both were planned to be the playing field for the children from the residential buildings.

Rotterdam, Pendrecht (Vissenkommen): old and new situation

Due to the diminishing of households with children in these residential buildings the openness in and around the porch entrances turned into breeding grounds for trouble/nuisance. The refurbishment of the plinths in the year 2000 focused on preserving the connections and transparency of the ground floor. At the same time the introduction of new materials made the borders between public and private clear as glass, literally. The distinct architecture of the building, also created by a strong distinction between the plinth and the floors above, remains dominant to the modest adaption of the plinth.

B. ADJUSTING TO THE ALLOCATION: 3 EXAMPLES

In different projects we focus on benefitting from the chances that allocation offers to improve both the use of the environment and the residential programme of the building. Sometimes all what's needed are relatively simple interventions. Other times, it requires a stouter reorganisation of the plinths of the building.

In *Schuilenburg* (Amersfoort), green strips are located between the residential buildings. Originally they were not reachable from the

Amersfoort, Schuilenburg: old and new situation

building, so they were not used and had no meaning.
A reorganisation of the ground floor, in which garages were removed, offered the possibility of a two-sided entrance. The architectural principal plan (plinth and the floors above) were enriched with a high-quality use of the new plinth programme with open facades, good lighting, and aesthetic tiling. The apartments above were renovated while being inhabited.

In *Enschedelaan* (The Hague) the residential buildings were built in a row structure (front side faces back side) so all apartments are oriented towards the sun. The green inner yard is not accessible from the residential blocks and has no direct functional use. In the renovation of the complex the ground floor is merged with the first floor into plinth maisonettes with a front door to the street and a garden on the backside at the inner yard. The remaining part of this yard is used for a community playfield, reachable from the surrounding private gardens and from the lift hall. With this reorganization the residential building links better to its environment with direct entrances at the street. However the

The Hague, Enschedelaan: old and new situation

characteristic architecture of the buildings as distinct blocks has been preserved. The old balconies and galleries are turned into private verandas that function as intermediate between street and dwelling.

Complex 50 (Amsterdam Osdorp) is also built in a row structure ("strokenverkaveling"). The ground floor consisted of porch entrances, storerooms, garages, some small apartments, and a narrow and low underpass. The two lower floors are completely reorganised. The principal intervention is a maisonette with its own front door at the street and a garden at the sun side. Despite this notable programmatic intervention over two floors, the main setup in the architecture (a plinth of one floor with a different world above it) is still preserved, because of the good proportioning and characteristic image. The content obviously has been adapted to the new use.

C. ADJUSTING PLINTH AND ALLOCATION: FLORIJN BIJLMER

The urban plan of Amsterdam-Bijlmer was made for residential blocks on piles (the well-known Corbusian 'pilotis'), so that the green landscape could 'flow' underneath the buildings. Those piles have however never been built. The ground floor of the famous hexagonal 'honeycomb buildings' consisted of storages, at some places interrupted with an underpass. In the renewal plan of the F-neighbourhood, the remaining parts of the high-rise buildings have been included in a new allocation of streets and closed building blocks.

In order to include the high-rise in this urban set-up, a new programme and image has been developed for the plinth of the Florijn-building. By expanding the ground floor space has been created for a new programme of atelier dwellings, entrances, business space and patio dwelling in the 'plinth of the building. Within the volume, hardly visible from the street, space has been found for storages and parking. In the plan we focused on preserving the former inner-street. Here we situated the living rooms of the plinth apartments, allowing sufficient distance between living and the public domain while also creating openness and nearness in relation to the street.

CONCLUSIONS

- The plinth is a crucial link between the dwelling and the use and image of the neighbourhood.
- There are different ways in which the existing plinth can be transformed: by improvement of what is already there, by reorganisation, or by a complete transformation.
- Every situation asks for a unique solution - topics to take into account are: allocation, program and use, organization of entrances, and direct surroundings.
- Often it is possible to use the existing architectural image in the transformation.

Regeneration

CASE

STUDIES 3

ST. PANCRAS STATION

London

INTERVIEW WITH
Ben Ruse
director HS1

"We wanted people to fall back in love with this station. So we asked ourselves: If we make this station attractive enough, can we make it a destination in its own right? And the answer was: Yes."

FACT 1
7 seconds of average train delay

FACT 2
£ 800 million project cost

FACT 3
1 million passengers passing per week

TIMELINE

1996 HighSpeed1 (HS1) takes ownership of St. Pancras International Station

1998 Modernization team establishes. Study visits to major global transit stations including Madrid, Lisbon, New York, and Schiphol Airport

2001 Architectural and engineering plans drawn and approved.
– negotiations with Heritage First about building preservation techniques and agreements for ground level retail
– renovations begin

2003 First retailers sign lease contracts

2007 Renovation complete: 60 of 64 retail spaces on ground floor filled

2010 Hotel St. Pancras' historic renovation complete

CONTEXT

In the 1970s and 1980s, the British railway system experienced a period of steady decline. The once-grand St. Pancras Station was in poor condition, dirty and attracted crime and drug use. The 1990s brought discussion of renovating and modernizing the grade 1 historic building and renewing the surrounding neighbourhood, which is mostly inhabited by middle- and lower-income residents.

PROBLEM

The main issue was how to maintain this building and its function as a major transportation hub and make it a destination of its own. Preserving its architectural integrity was a high priority but few wanted to invest in a commercial case for the building. Creating a commercial district within the building seemed nearly impossible with the amount of space needed for passenger-related areas, especially with Eurostar as a preeminent client, such as international customs, lounges, security and ticket information.

SOLUTION

By opening the historic storage areas at the ground level, where beer, grain, and raw materials were once reserved, light and air was allowed into the ground level, providing an opportunity to position retail there and make the ground floor productive. Entrances to the station were placed on all sides, inviting the public into the space. Managers focused efforts on bringing in specialty stores and cafés into the ground level, not fast-food chains or other formula shops you can find all over London.

SECRET

Community buy-in. Being a good neighbour was a strict priority for HS1, the owner of St. Pancras Station, throughout the construction process and continuing today. They purchased double-glazed windows and dryers for all surrounding residents because of the noise and dust incurred by the restoration process. Now HS1 sponsors various events both within and outside the station and are active in the community.

LESSONS

Find inspiration. The restoration team travelled all over Europe searching for the best practices of passenger travel. Schiphol Airport (Amsterdam) turned out to be the leading example. Schiphol's ground level design, superb way-finding techniques, and pedestrian scale plan stood out to the St. Pancras team.

Create a shared vision. The partnership between English Heritage (preservation), HS1, and London Continental Railways began with a shared vision strategy that made them come together and contribute to the group's goal.

Aim high. Together the partners set a new bar for a travel hub. They aimed as high as possible by seeking Eurostar as a client. Without fear, they took risks on new brands & specialty stores that are not usually located in stations.


The Champagne Bar
Upstairs at
The Rendezvous
StP

IMPACT

It works! With an effective partnership, shared mission, and active participation in the community, St. Pancras is a place for lingering, relaxing, and people watching. The architectural details of the station were wonderfully preserved and accentuated on a human scale—at the eye level. Compared to other stations and pre-restoration, anti-social behaviour like violent crime and graffiti are not issues anymore. Also, St. Pancras continues to be a destination, even for those not travelling; about 25% of visitors come to the station without a transportation reason.

DO

- write a vision statement
- find international inspiration
- take calculated risks

IN CONCLUSION

The St. Pancras International Station restoration is an inspiring example for a public transportation node with a unique strategy for improving space at the eye level. The restoration team set a shared vision and created a destination, reinstating the building as an urban landmark, national transportation hub, and community asset. Now the station is again an active gathering place.

THE DISTILLERY DISTRICT

Toronto

INTERVIEW WITH
Willie Macrae
planner, City of Toronto Downtown Section

"We showed developers that you can preserve heritage buildings—and do it well!"

FACT 1
13 acres

FACT 2
0 cars allowed within the neighbourhood

FACT 3
40 buildings

TIMELINE

1832 Gooderham & Worts Distillery founded

1990 Distillery operations ceased, creating an investment opportunity for most of the Victorian industrial buildings, all built between 1826-1927. Though not publicly accessible, the site was used for over 800 film and TV productions

1994 Toronto City approved a Heritage Master Plan for The Distillery District

1997 Three residential buildings begin development on the periphery of the district by a non-profit developer

2001 The site was sold to local developers (CityScape, Inc.) who partnered with Dundee Realty; the partnership took the Master Plan to reality

2001 Begin adaptive reuse and preservation of heritage buildings

2003 The Distillery District opened to public

2010 Two peripherally-built residential towers finished construction, one tower on its way, and developers have applied for 4th tower

CONTEXT

After 158 years of successful distillery production, the Gooderham & Worts distillery finally closed its doors in 1990. Its prime location, near the Lake Ontario waterfront and two kilometres from Toronto's CBD, and the site's historic buildings made the 13-acre site a top-choice redevelopment and investment venue. Toronto urban planners immediately began the Master Plan process, envisioning a new, fully equipped, vibrant mixed-use neighbourhood that focused on culture, arts, and entertainment.

PROBLEM

The planners and developers came across obstacles for planning the ground level from the very beginning. Issues regarding properly preserving and adaptively reusing the site's historic buildings, auto use and parking for residents and visitors to the area, maintaining affordable rental costs, keeping ground floor tenants happy during further construction, and just how to get people down there (and keep them coming back!) were all major challenges that needed careful, strategic planning. Regarding the plinths in particular, though, was the challenge of physical buildings. Since they were originally designed to produce and store alcohol, installing windows and maintaining transparency between the outside and inside space was a nightmare.

SOLUTION

A successful ground floor meant keeping it active, safe, and pleasant all day and into the evening. Placing a mix of uses centred around arts and entertainment venues (theatres, restaurants, cafes, and bars) ensured day-long, night-long, and year-round use in the district. The primary developer, Cityscape, Inc., insisted on creating a "3-hour experience" for residents and visitors out of this unique cultural hotspot and community, where all types of people live, work, and play together. For individual plinths, Cityscape chose creative retailers (absolutely no chains!) who invented original ways to display their goods and attract people inside their shops, in spite of the lack of windows and transparency.

SECRETS

Design to complement preservation. The King Parliament Secondary Plan identified each of the district's buildings and specifically addressed which components were necessary to maintain—essentially, a set of design guidelines. In 2001, when Cityscape took over the property, they were very committed to heritage preservation of all the buildings onsite, following the design guidelines, and creating a streetscape that prioritizes preservation. As a guiding principle, they wanted the restoration to recreate the historic feel of the neighbourhood. Moreover, the residential

towers were strategically designed to be slender and placed on the periphery of the District's border—so as to preserve the historic view corridors and to maintain as much sunlight as possible on the Distillery's centre.

Pedestrianize the street. A major component of success included maintaining the area as a car-free zone. With only pedestrians, it was important to use material that respected the surroundings and the era of the buildings, to design the entrances to attract and welcome customers, to introduce new and exciting streetscape elements, and to retain other design elements that engage the regular passers-by.

Devise a 3-hour experience. Public art, outdoor lighting, seating, transparent windows, and high ground floor ceiling heights all contributed to shaping the ground floor public realm. Although the uses within the District are diverse, they all fit under an umbrella of arts and entertainment and create an inviting space for people to wander, linger, and discover new things—all in about three hours.

LESSONS

Eliminate big chains. Cityscape demanded zero formula or chain commercial on the ground floor in order to maintain a local, neighbourhood feel. Though big box stores would bring in more revenue, Cityscape knew that would be detrimental to the vision of the neighbourhood.

Acquire unique partners. The developers recently partnered with Artscape, a non-profit organization that assists local artists, to subsidize the ground floor gallery spaces. This way, local and small-scale artists can afford, use, and remain in the ground level spaces.

Program events. Constant programming of festivals and events throughout the year has brought people down to the Distillery District. Since weather has been a consistent predictor of foot traffic, events have stymied the effects of cold winter weather and increased foot traffic while also strengthening the community and local economy.

IMPACT

Economically, the District's tenants are doing very well, especially the theatre. Artists have come and gone from the gallery spaces, as anticipated, and the ground level has experienced quite a bit of turn-over though the main establishments and office tenants have remained the same. Pedestrianizing the District has also made an impact on the rest of Toronto. As the city tries to embrace more pedestrian-oriented spaces and car-free zones and implement more pedestrian improvement projects, city planners look to the success of the District for key insights and strategies. Finally, in terms of heritage preservation, the Distillery District has shown the sceptics that it *can* be done, and it *can* work.

DO

- adaptive reuse and brownfield redevelopment of historic industrial sites
- partner with non-profits and unique organizations who can bring creativity to the table
- create design guidelines for the site that compliment the existing design
- think strategically about the potential users' experience

IN CONCLUSION

Since it's opening in 2003, the Distillery District has been a success story of brownfield and historic redevelopment, especially for the ground level. It's also demonstrated how the use of the arts can drastically improve an urban neighbourhood. Pedestrian-only streets and neighbourhoods are unique in the city of Toronto, and planners wanted to show the city that if it worked in the Distillery District, it could work elsewhere. By finding a unique partnership with Artscape, the Distillery

has been able to stabilize their tenants in the gallery spaces and support local and up-and-coming artists. Cityscapes' other partnerships with educational, cultural, and entertainment enterprises also lead the District in the right direction and solidify tenant occupancy in the buildings. Finally, those who live in the recently completed residential towers on the periphery of the District will continue to support and enhance an active ground level both in and surrounding the District—an important component to any successful ground floor. The major challenge for the years to come, as David Jackson from Cityscape explained, is to maintain the original artistic vibe of the neighbourhood.

NEUKÖLLN

Berlin

INTERVIEW WITH
Stefanie Raab
architect and owner of Coopolis

"In our shop vacancy projects, we are committed to new forms of cooperation between owners and space seekers to develop the site as needed for a stabile and sustainable future."

FACT 1
ca. 40% of inhabitants in North-Neukölln are immigrants, 37% live from social subsidies

FACT 2
30 – 50% of the plinth shops in North-Neukölln were empty

FACT 3
300 new interim spaces in 5 years

TIMELINE

1920 Neukölln, southeast of Berlin, is incorporated into the city
1945 Neukölln is part of the American sector in West Berlin
1961 start of the construction of the Berlin Wall by East Germany (DDR)
1989 Berlin Wall falls on 9 November
1999 German Parliament, the Bundestag, relocated to Berlin
2003 highest court of Germany removes zoning restrictions for Berlin
2005 Stefanie Raab and Maria Richarz start Zwischennutzungsagentur project in Neukölln
2010 Zwischennutzungsagentur becomes Coopolis and completes 150 new ground floor shops
2012 The Real estate Owner´s organisation of Neukölln honours Stefanie Raab with a Badge of Honour

CONTEXT

During the Cold War, West Berlin was desolate and unwanted to live there. The government offered men the opportunity to move there if they wanted to avoid enlisting in the army. This promotion attracted a certain population and created a hub for alternative lifestyles. When the Berlin wall fell in 1989 and the east and west of the city reunited over the next year, an enormous growth of the population was prognosticated. Many new flats, offices and shops were built in Berlin. In the following years, the number of inhabitants did not grow to the predicted level, which caused an overflood of empty space that was then filled by the creative sector. The creativity was there, but unfortunately the economy didn't follow. It's often said of this city—where no minimum wage exists—that no one has a job in Berlin, but everyone has a project.

PROBLEM

Neukölln, a district of West Berlin with 250 000 residents, is bisected by the S-bahn and split into two distinct parts: the south side is rich and the north side is poor. Stefanie Raab, long-time resident of North- Neukölln, has recognized the empty shops in the ground floors as a potential for the development of little local enterprises with a calculable investment risk for local entrepreneurs. She convinced the local Real estate owners of a new way of cooperation with local entrepreneurs to give them a chance to start their business without high shop-rents.

SOLUTION

Inspired by the idea of cooperative uses for vacant shops Stefanie Raab began the project Zwischennutzungsagentur (agency for temporary use) together with Maria Richarz in 2005. In a short time it became a planning office for temporary and sustainable use coordination, networking and participation focused specifically on Neukölln. In three years Coopolis coordinated the temporary use of 150 new fashion stores, sewing workshops, galleries, cafes, youth facilities, music clubs, and other venues, in four different neighbourhoods of North-Neukölln. The district's urban fabric was redefined from classic sales zone over emptiness into a colourful and attractive public zone for the creative industries and local initiatives, in various sized buildings and styles. The content of the spaces have changed from classical shop using (that no one could afford in a poor district like North-Neukölln) into a colourful mixed- use- zone. The expectations of the real estate owners which rents they could ask for this zone was brought down to a realistic level. The missing link was someone to connect the vendor with the space they needed. As a connector, Coopolis took government subsidies to organize the change process. No government subsidies were used for rents or investments into the spaces themselves: The goal was, from the beginning on, to moderate self bearing deals between real estate owner and vendor so that they are independent from subsidies.

SECRET

Investment. Coopolis maintains excellent vendor relationships with their tenants through their own investment—and the tenants give back as well. Often the shops were in a really bad state and there was no chance to renovate them by the vendors because no one could afford a high rent that would be caused by a professional renovation. Coopolis supported the contractual negotiations, listened to the owners and their needs on one side and supported the tenants in their starting phase with their enterprises or projects on the other side. The result was really fair contracts for both sides: the tenants invested by renovating the empty shops by themselves, the vendors got a new user for the empty shop that did not cost much, but made the place more attractive and liveable. In a short time, empty flats were also filled if the ground floor had a new use.

Hands-on approach. As residents of Neukölln themselves, Stefanie and Maria have every opportunity to see and meet their clients face-to-face. Their expert knowledge of the neighbourhood allows them the capacity to think *and* do.

LESSONS

Roles. Stefanie is the mediator between families/property owners and the entrepreneurs while Maria is coach for the new entrepreneurs. By sticking to their roles, they are experts in what they do.

Cluster planning. Coopolis works with clusters of shops and moderates the collaboration with a collective of the residents who co-create the spaces in an organic way. Once the tenants/entrepreneurs have invested in their spaces, Coopolis helps the cluster to get to know each other and to cooperate in the future e.g. with common exhibitions in all shops at a site or to organize a happening for the neighbourhood like “Körnerschnitzel” —creating a dramatic effect on the surrounding neighbourhood.

IMPACT

The neighbourhood rent subsidy means that tenants will stay longer and continue to invest in their space. The original 150 entrepreneurs have all stayed in business. The ground floors of Neukölln’s streets are active during the day and into the night. It will be a crucial aspect in the following years that the owners value the engagements of their new entrepreneurs. If they raise rents too fast, entrepreneurs will leave and the attractiveness that is here today will be destroyed. To prevent this, Coopolis started in a next step a local cooperation network between the local owners.

DO

– use local knowledge
– establish hybrid formulas
– promote tenant security for the long-term

IN CONCLUSION

Coopolis’ socially oriented project promotes long-term planning and high-quality gain for the plinths in Neukölln. By using the neighbourhood subsidy scheme, the entrepreneurs benefit from lower rent and at the same time are encouraged to invest in their space. This hybrid formula has revitalized the area and secured an active ground floor for the long run. The positive development is in danger if the owners who are not so in touch with the neighbourhood that they only see the results and not the way how this result could happen under the very special conditions of local understanding, cooperation and solidarity.


FRAGILE

Which lessons can be learned, what conclusions can be found, and how to develop this into a plinth strategy?

CONCLUSION & LESSONS

SEEING BEYOND THE BUILDINGS: ROTTERDAM AT EYE LEVEL

Emiel Arends & Gábor Everraert

INTRODUCTION

With the introduction of the city-centre plan “Towards a City Lounge” in 2008, the municipality of Rotterdam emphasized the role of the street level in the way we experience the city centre. As a result multiple projects were started concerning the improvement of streets and spaces. To do this effectively, a policy was developed on the plinths: “De plintenstrategie, Rotterdam op ooghoogte” (Plinth strategy, Rotterdam at eye level).

HISTORY

The history of the city-centre of Rotterdam is a-typical for Dutch cities. The desire to be a modern city, already visible in the pre-war transformation of the Coolsingel from a canal into a boulevard with European grandeur, was intensified after the bombing of the city centre in 1940 and has led to the post-war rational and robust city-centre. This resulted in a sturdy and photogenic (certainly from a distance) but not fully defined city centre, which is, because of this, experimental in its growth. This process was driven by planned interventions. At the beginning of this century there was a growing understanding that the city-centre was developing itself “despite” planning. Autonomous dynamics started to colour the centre, using energy from stakeholders within the centre itself. The transformation from “making city” into “being city” was a fact!

The municipality of Rotterdam invited over the years a number of specialists (such as Jan Gehl in 2007, Larry Beasley in 2009, and Allan Jacobs & Elizabeth Macdonald in 2010) to show what "being city" means. The overall result was the rediscovery of the city at street level. This needed to be emphasized in future plans. Spatial and conceptual planners added new insights in how people use the city-centre, and showed that the centre is an ever-changing domain over time. For Rotterdam this meant a correction of the basic concepts of dividing functions, traffic rationality and top down planning.

The latest city-centre plan "Towards a City Lounge" implements these new insights without making a final (top down) plan, but rather a strategy and a set of rules for projects and processes. The main idea of the "City Lounge" has further been developed in several policies and documents, such as the new high-rise policy, a new public-space plan, and the new plinth strategy.

Street view Rotterdam Schilderstraat

Rotterdam towards a City Lounge

A STRATEGY FOR A GOOD PLINTH

The domain of the municipality lies mainly in the public realm and, in accordance to the city-centre plan, there has been greatly invested in new materials for the public space. For some places these interventions had astonishing results, but other public spaces need more than just new materials and cosmetic work. The building (and program inside) influences the way we experience a place or street. While our perception of public space depends on viewpoint and distance, the speed at which we move is crucial. Rooted in biological history, the human sensory apparatus is designed to perceive and process sensory impressions while moving at about 5 km/h. On this scale, spaces can be small. Manoeuvring on foot is easy and pedestrians can get quite close to facades. Signals and signs are viewed at close range and thus can be small and refined (Jan Gehl et al, Centre for Public Space Research Copenhagen (2004) - *Close encounters with buildings*). Important criteria are the number of doors per 100 meter, transparency of the plinth, and variation in functions. The post-war buildings that were erected in the city-centre are not known for these elements. Even worse is that most buildings are build as long big elements which forms long stretches of streets or blocks, and in addition most facades are stretched in horizontal ways. This makes walking along these building

like an endless endeavour instead of enjoying the street or place. Also the number of ornaments and relief in the façades of post-war buildings is not as expressive as 19th century buildings (or older). To make a good plinth we needed a set of criteria that could adopt and adjust to post-war buildings without excessive measures. The knowledge of many national and international experts extracted the basic criteria and guidelines of a good plinth. This combined with research of the municipality how people use the city, resulted in a comprehensive study and a strategy. This strategy is set out in four complementary statements: regulation, stimulation, missing links, and communication campaign.

1. REGULATION

The strategy began with addressing the forms of regulation that guarantee (or at least should guarantee) the level of quality.
For example a new high-rise policy was enacted that combined several insights about wind, shading, but also functions in new high-rise buildings. Also new criteria for plinths (transparency, rollers, etc.) were adapted in the policy of the building quality council. These regulations should prevent new developments to create buildings with unattractive plinths and makes it possible for the municipality to penalize owners with unattractive plinths. This penalization has been tested as well and is a good starting point to actively force owners to improve their plinth. Although the new set of criteria and regulations offer an instrument to the municipality to improve plinths within the city-centre, the out coming results should not be overestimated.

Improvement of plinth facades

2. STIMULATION

One of the most important roles of the municipality is to stimulate owners/entrepreneurs to improvements without having to compel regulations. This stimulating role is not yet common to governmental bodies like the municipality and has to do with spreading out a long-term vision on the street and being consistent in the approach. Therefore the municipality offers knowledge but also small financial funds for study purposes.

3. MISSING-LINKS

Missing links are areas where both regulation and stimulation takes place. These areas form the highest potential spots where action is needed. Several studies on how people walk and use the city-centre resulted in a plan of the most important streets and places during the day and evening. Combined with existing maps en information this added up to twelve places that were labelled missing links. Since not all places have the same problems, four of those areas were chosen to be short-term actions. Not wholly accidental are those four areas the entry points to the main shopping area of the city. Those areas connect the main shopping area to specialized shopping/leisure neighbourhoods where you can find dedicated shops, bars, galleries and like.

For most of the missing links the processes started by drawing in detail the street with adjoining buildings. This located any obstacles in the public space (street furniture, street crossings, dark passages, etc.) but also program and quality of the plinth (vacant buildings, lack of transparency, etc.). Meetings were organized with entrepreneurs, owners and residents to explain the ambition for the plinth. Furthermore these meetings were held to familiarize with one another and to find out different values and goals from all stakeholders. Out of this several actions among the stakeholders took place when the process towards common goals has been set in motion.

4. COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN

The campaign is set up to address the importance of good quality plinths. Especially good examples of improvements are being plugged as a way to inspire. The campaign has been set up for three main groups; politicians (aldermen and the city council), the internal departments and directors of the municipality, and external parties like entrepreneurs and real-estate owners. Each group is approached with a different focus, e.g. politicians must be aware that results are depended on long term commitment while entrepreneurs are persuaded to take action immediately. Overall it is important to start a discussion on the quality of plinths and the

wide range of possibilities for improvement. Amongst other actions, the municipality holds web polls and provides a brochure with methods to highlight plinths.

FOUR YEARS OF IMPROVING PLINTHS

The experience of four years of improving plinths has been turned into a measuring scale for the impact of improvements, being: structural, program change, or window-dressing. The impact of structural improvements is bigger than program changes, of which the impact is bigger than window-dressing.

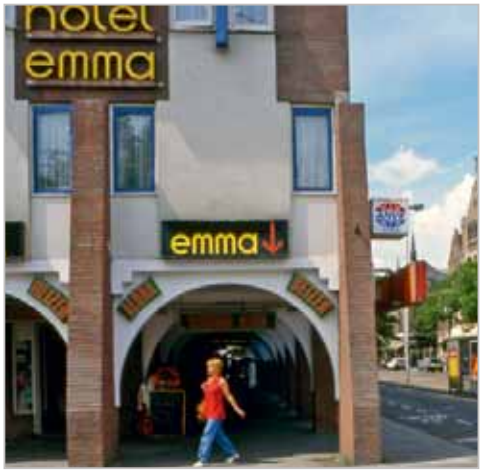
Structural improvement aims for changes on the design and lay-out of buildings, making it more transparent and better functioning. Options include the change of materials used in the façade, the change of dark corridors, and the outlining of entry points.

The second scale is the level of program. Changes in the program of a ground floor unit can affect the adjoining street visibly. Especially when vacancy occurs, it is important to prevent a negative image to take hold. This can be done with temporary functions like pop-up stores or cultural uses. Another way of making the connection between building and street is adding elements to the (semi) public space, most common as terraces. By creating a semi-public zone the boundary between building and street is softened.

With the least impact but still of importance is the scale of window-dressing. When both upper levels are not (or not yet) possible to execute, this level can still make a difference. Most common example is to cover windows (with less attractive functions) with designed stickers.

RESULTS

The day of subsidising by the municipality is behind us. There is a lack of funds and this means that there needs to be energy from stakeholders who are willing to make a change or see common goals with neighbour stakeholders. The municipality can add knowledge (such as plinth strategy, visitors walk charts, etc.) and facilitate processes. This is a fairly new way of collaboration between the involved parties and it has already some effects. The easiest ways are small things like removing shutters or placing planter in specific places. Also starting the dialog among stakeholders in a street or place and let them combine their wishes improved local business (for instance problems with parking is being tackled with “free” parking for shops around a garage in the same street) or at least taken away some of the irritations by understanding the needs and wishes of neighbour shops owners and stakeholders. By using the tools developed by the plinth strategy together with the municipality (as facilitator) there is a



An early example of structural imprevement of the Plinth: De Boogjes before and after

Programming: creation of semi-public spaces in the plinth

Window-dressing at the Lijnbaan and the Meent

Plinths and Public Realm create together the City Lounge

common goal to improve not just for their own business (short-term) but doing this with the bigger picture in mind (which (in mid-term) should result in a bigger return on investment). What needs to be mentioned is that certain private parties are beginning to see these advantages for themselves, for example the street Meent, or the New Fork in the Coolse Poort.

Some goals however are hard to measure. Structural improvements need time (and money) to take effect. It is too early to tell in what way improvements influence walking charts or “returns on investments” - this takes more time than just one year of implementing the plinth strategy. It means development of more knowledge, keeping up the dialogue between municipality and stakeholders, and renewal of research (like updating walking charts). Because the Plinth Strategy (and its origin, the city centre plan “Towards a City Lounge”) has been validated by the Rotterdam city council, this ensures a continuous attention for the coming years.

It is important to see the bigger picture: a changing municipality which *fully* adopts the transformation from “making city” to “being city”. This means facilitating processes and energy from within the city and trying to help developing it. In addition the “City Lounge” provides a flexible framework which gives room to interventions in an ever-changing city-centre without losing track of the (long-term) aims the city have committed to. The plinth strategy is an important tool to contribute to this aim.

THEMES, DIMENSIONS & CONTRIBUTING LESSONS

Jan van Teeffelen

TOWARDS THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL

When over viewing the contributions in this book, an interesting set of values comes to mind in relation to the different actors in the 'city at eye level'. First there is planning: the forward thinking into the future related to the way we build and develop our cities and streets now. Next is ownership: the balance between what is desirable and profitable in the point of view of the investors and entrepreneurs in the short- and the long-term. Another level is smart development: the art of managing the city in cooperation with stakeholders to enhance urban quality (research, experience, and exchange of knowledge as a shared goal). We also have the idea of a 'sense of place': an attitude and understanding of the context and dynamics of a street from all types of observers (the city watchers, researchers, insiders). Last is the force of design, shifting from aesthetics (how things look) to the experience of the city (how things work). These aspects are interwoven and should not be discussed separately. Last but not least people are living in the city: they use the city at eye level and give it certain shared meanings over time. Their appreciation is finally the proof of the pudding.

WHAT PLANNING CAN DO

City planning is an ever-changing field, due to a greater uncertainty and complexity in societies today. More than object-based developments, iconic architectural expressions, and slow-moving structural plans,

the dynamics, existing quality, and energy in the city are nowadays the focus for city improvement. What city dwellers experience on the streets and in their daily routines, influences social and economic assets and meanings of cities. Planning is becoming more about cooperation, exchanging knowledge, and defining roles in processes. An important reason for this shift is the dwindling financial resources of governments. Long term ambition and direction of city development should find new connections with a growing cloud of initiatives by people and businesses overseeing their domain of interest. In light of the current economic crisis and demanding environmental and quality concerns for urban areas, this new approach for planning is necessary.

Understanding the city at eye level is a relatively underdeveloped field in the shifting planning approach. A new body of knowledge can be gained from deliberate trial and error projects that are connected to different communities in the city: see what happens, see if it works, create new innovations, and set a new standard. This style of planning demands an exchange of long-term perspectives and short-term experiences. Planning should especially focus on transition and reset rather than addition and growth, because the amount of needed functions for good plinths (shops, restaurants, services etc.) is limited.

WHAT DEVELOPMENT CAN DO

There is a difference between city development in a spontaneous and organic way, and development along planning schemes and project development. From the point of view of the consumer, the people who use the city at eye level on a frequent basis, city streets should be developed and managed on the level between private interest and public exposure. This approach concerns vacancy management, temporary use, and community involvement. Past efforts prove that an added value can be gained that would not occur on a purely market driven basis. The mission is to convince participants and to fill the gap between the short horizon of entrepreneurs and the long term of possible profits.

WHAT OWNERSHIP CAN DO

Single or multiple ownership of real estate is an essential and qualifying characteristic for streets and plinths. A mix of businesses, operating at various hours throughout the day, evening, and night is what people expect from a vibrant city that they want to use all the time. What ownership can do is related (within the legal framework of contacts) to the rent and differentiations in turnover of shops. Single ownership of real estate and managing power in a street, can realise a long-term strategy and can adjust to changing circumstances. But this often lacks the spontaneous buzz and interventions in ‘real’ lively streets. On the other hand the task for multi-owned city streets is to provide safety, hospitality and comfort. Both models are important to learn from.

WHAT A GOOD 'SENSE OF PLACE' CAN DO

Initiatives, ideas, and ambitions of local and global businesses contribute to the quality of the city at eye level. On one hand unique, often small-scale shops and start-ups give a street a certain vibe, or '*couleur locale'*. They seek up-and-coming streets not too far from the city centre or 'edgy' neighbourhood core. On the other hand, there are the global brands, which require a certain amount of space to create a flagship store and emphasize a brand and a lifestyle experience. These brands look for prime locations that offer high consumer density and impact. We have to foster both types of businesses because they attract new people and keep people coming back for more. In between the local street shops and the global brand flagship stores, is the small scale, so called 'warm' city - fit for strolling around. Here is the creative and experience economy flourishing in breakfast bars, galleries, pubs and coffee corners, parks and streets.

Local as well as global players are thinking and investing from the perspective of the sense of place, an idea about location, position in the traffic patron, densities of the streets, and appeal on public. The struggle is to fit all the pieces of the puzzle into one city and attend to each neighbourhood's specific sense of place and identity. Historic cities with a 'warm' sense of place will have problems to fit in the modern large scale shopping- and entertainment formulas, while the cities with a 'modern' sense of place mostly lack the small-scale streets needed for small businesses and a couzy atmosphere .

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO

City planning and design has been driven by very different motives over time, shifting from supplying vast amounts of social housing to providing infrastructure for the automobile due to large-scale business parks, shopping malls and transit places. Now we see a new transition to network- and knowledge-based cities—the most complicated of urban forms yet.

Over the decades, design has contributed to the themes of city development: functionalism as a way of modern life, social issues in housing and public space, the image of the city in high rise and city icons, and recently to environmental issues and the quality of the existing city. The 'city at eye level' is a new theme that contributes to relationship between buildings and streets, and to the impact of high rise development on street level experience. It is a new and different 'commissioner' in urban design: ground level improvements, way-finding, public space green space, and temporary use. This encapsulates a design shift from a bird's-eye view to a street-level view, and from an impact-oriented perspective to a user-based perspective.

75 LESSONS FOR GOOD PLINTHS

Hans Karssenberg & Jeroen Laven

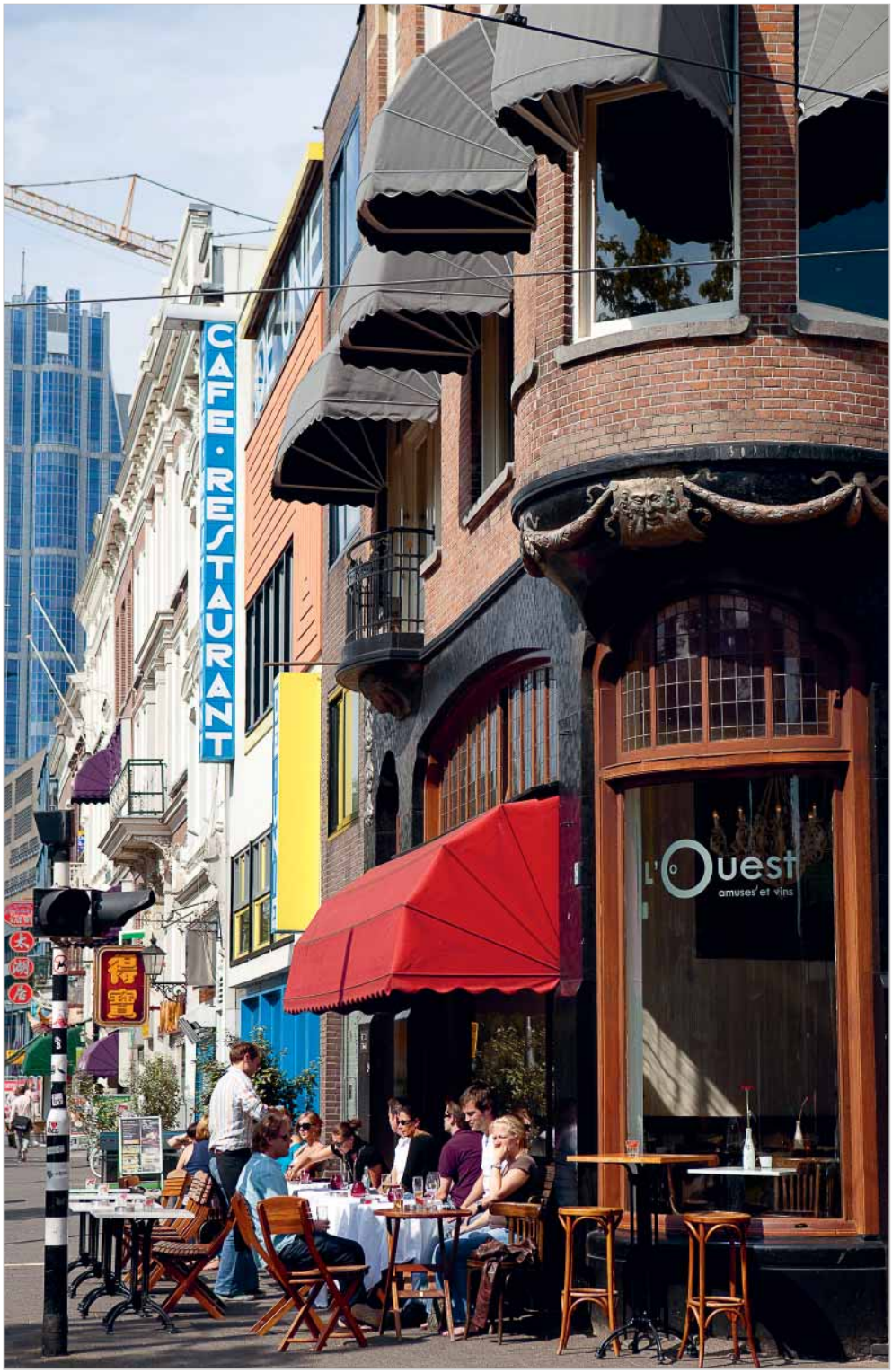
We have structured the main lessons throughout the experiences, insights and approaches from each chapter and cases within this collaborative book. From the interviews, case studies and stories we took seventy-five lessons applicable to your own city.

This book shows that good plinths require a smart strategy supported by many players: the city, the owners, the renters, and the users. A great city at eye level requires a strategy based on three domains: s*oftware* (use, the experience, the functions); *hardware* (design of plinths, buildings, streetscapes, hybrid zones and principles of sustainability) and *orgware* (costs and benefits, strategy). If you would like to read more, just follow the number behind each lesson to the list the chapters and cases.

SOFTWARE

The first part of the triangle is the software, the users, their movement patterns, the experience of the city at eye level and the programme, land use, or zoning.

Use patterns
"You can't build a snowman, unless it's snowing." We can design the best plinths, but it's no use without users. If human behaviour in relation to its context is better understood, city centres can be managed in a strategic way to optimize attractiveness and in turn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improve their economies. (06) Simply imagine: what would it take for women, elderly, children and disabled persons to feel at home here at night? (05)

1. Create accessible, transparent plinths, and attract more people and improve urban economies. (04 & 06)
2. Provide customers with convenience, but with surprise too. (21)
3. Create intimate streets for pedestrians with bold design elements, lighting, street furniture, trees, artistic details in the cement, *parklets*. (24)
4. Base your pedestrian movement strategy and plinth strategy on thorough data from costumer experience surveys. (06 & 21 & 24). At the same time, develop your *fingerspitzengefühl*, looking at walking routes and busy – but not too busy – streets. (12) Link new plinths to the urban route system. (07)
5. Size is not the solution. Make shopping streets attractive, not longer: a stretch of 1.6 km is already too long to function as one shopping street, especially outside the city centre. (30)
6. Solve the barriers that block the natural walking routes for pedestrians: traffic, canals, horizontally-oriented buildings, and wide auto-oriented buildings. (06)
7. Create good plinths by a 5 km/h scale, transparency of windows, richness in sensory experience, diversity in functions and vertical façade rhythms. (06)
8. Create a balance between pedestrians and car traffic to combine busy pedestrian inner cities with a through traffic function. (24) Do not allow the car to become dominant in important places. There is a need for such areas, but they are not the lively streets and neighbourhoods that are part of the urban system. (07)
9. Allow normal car traffic and street parking. Work on the overall accessibility of the street for delivering traffic, residents, and visitors by car. (33). Living, working, shopping, recreating and traffic, also the car, must be mixed as much as possible; streets where cars have been banned have the problem of being dead at night. (05)
10. Design bike routes to complement shopping streets; take into consideration that attractive streets attract people and that cyclists use the busiest streets because they are more fun. (04)
11. In order to create safer entrances, instead of guards, doormen, and cameras, strategically layer security by shuffling people in one direction or another. (08)
12. Focus on sites along a main route or at a corner of streets, not on back streets as is sometimes required by municipal instructions. (12)

Experience

We are not only rational beings, we need the emotions of the city's experience as well. Experience is important for pedestrians, but also for the local economy. Plinth strategy is crucial for this experience: the

ground floor may be only 10% of a building but it determines 90% of the building's contribution to the experience of the environment. (01)

13. Make your city well-formed, distinct, and remarkable; invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation. The sensuous grasp upon such surroundings must not merely be simplified, but also extended and deepened. (Kevin Lynch) (03)
14. Focus on life *in* buildings and *between* buildings, as it seems in nearly all situations to rank as more essential and more relevant than the spaces and buildings themselves. (Jan Gehl) (03)
15. Improve the fabric of your city through colour, texture, scale, style, character, personality and uniqueness. (Gordon Cullen) (03)
16. Let semi-public places such as corner shops, hairdressers, cafés and Laundromats connect users to the city and make users feel at home. Create small shops with open façades: they create a warm city and allow for movement between the public and private, which creates interaction, meaning, histories and narratives through which we become attached to the city. (04 & 10)

Programme

The software is made up of use patterns and the pedestrian's experience, and the programme (land use, function, zoning) we find inside the ground floor spaces. Shops, and their future, require a great deal of attention. We simply cannot plan retail everywhere anymore, we need to think about other functions as well, such as small businesses, fashion, leisure, care, food and last but certainly not least, housing.

17. To make your street a 'Great Street', make sure you have a new public function in every 15 meters. Offices are not important. Housing, if not too dominant, adds some activity and safety at night. Mostly public functions create Great Streets: shops, cafés, restaurants, school functions. (01)
18. Use remnants from the past as identity carriers. (18) Learn from examples such as well-designed buildings, photos, historical events, famous people, old shopping fronts, public art or historical elements in the streetscape.
19. Carefully consider mega-successful shopping streets. They may lead to monoculture and make the street vulnerable--vibrant but too crowded during the day, and deserted in the evening. (07)
20. Due to online shopping, it is clear that we cannot solely rely on shops to create a good public realm. Look at new functions such as co-working spaces, temporary "meanwhile spaces, restaurants and cafés, social functions such as elementary schools, and most of all residential living on the ground floor. (01 & 13)
21. Select creative retailers – no chains! – and they will invent original ways to display their goods and attract people inside their shops. (28)

22. On multiple-user streets, let the big chains play a role, but it's the smaller shops and spaces that are the real image builders. (21)
23. Adapt the size of shops. The shift from physical to virtual shops is diminishing retail space demand; remaining shops will grow either as introverted supermarkets or as large showcase/showroom; small shops can remain in specialized streets or as specialized image shops, mostly in food and beverages or design. (12)
24. A quarter or a third of the space businesses use nowadays is "showcase space". Create places to show off ever more complicated products. (08)
25. Create spaces for small entrepreneurs living in the neighbourhood who are often less visible because they run their small businesses at home. Start-up operations need a basic space with a flexible contract and some basic facilities. (34) The future of plinths lies in the economic increase of more self-employed people, creating a need for small meeting places in the city centre. (12)
26. Make space for fashion (workshops, studios + dwellings) in vacant plinths, they are great new image builders. (30)
27. Single-use office locations with poor public transport are a toxic combination resulting in very high office vacancy. Add new uses to the office element to improve the functioning of the location, such as housing, lunchrooms and restaurants, fitness centres, food and non-food stores, art exhibitions and leisure. (17)
28. For the first floor of a double plinth, aim for leisure functions such as cinema, fitness, casinos and swimming pools. (20)
29. Consider food, fashion, design and authentic ethnic shops to provide interesting plinths in urban regeneration areas. They also draw positive new attention to these areas. (22)

HARDWARE

The second part of the triangle is the hardware, the design of buildings and streets. (01)

Non-plinths

Many post-war areas have been developed from abstract urban design conceptions and housing requirements rather than the everyday goal of good plinths. (19) As buildings get bigger and bigger, more and more ground floor is taken up by service and security related to the companies inside, and with that come big, blank walls. (08) Non-plinths harm the functioning of a good street. If non-plinths are necessary in buildings, thought should be given to good design to minimize negative effects. Empty ground floor spaces impact neighbouring businesses and contribute to blight and anti-social activity. (13) The lack of good plinths, as intermediate

between a good typology of houses and the attention for open urban design patterns, causes a negative image. (19)

30. Supermarkets are a necessity for a residential district, so fit them in the urban block: either on the ground floor with supporting shops around them, underground, or on the first floor. (07)

Design

The design of shops and storefronts, of buildings and of entire streets impacts high quality, effective plinths.

31. Approach the design process from the outside to the inside, from the street to transition zone to the building; in designing, the street must be considered as a place to be. (07)
32. First, create a clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space. Second, there must be eyes upon the street. And third, the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously. (Jane Jacobs) (03)
33. Create many different surfaces over which light constantly moves to keep the eyes engaged. More buildings along a given length of street create a better pedestrian atmosphere than fewer buildings. […] With more buildings there are likely to be more architects, and they will not all design alike. There are more contributors to the street, more and different participants, all of whom add interest. (Allan Jacobs) (03)
34. Create high ground floors. The height of the ground floor is important for adequate indoor atmosphere and sunlight, and for the flexibility of non-residential functions. The proportions of the building and its façade related to the profile of street matter considerably. (07) Demand that the ground floors of all buildings are at least 5 m (16,4 feet) high, to accommodate for commercial, retail, or other business. (27)
35. Learn from the 19th century method of transferable retail spaces in the plinths. The small scale, private investments and construction mode of 'building on demand' enable urban neighbourhoods to adapt easily and quickly to changing demands in economy and society. (10)
36. Create a mixed urban district or areas with an urban density; no homogenous office areas or suburbia. (12) Make ground floors diverse and offer constantly changing, vibrant, engaging, and welcoming environments. (13)
37. For an attractive storefront, create small shops; if shops are too broad, such as supermarkets and large retail chains, this leads to closed windows. (33)
38. In inner city areas, create double plinths (2-storey) to add a new typology between single plinth buildings and multi-storey warehouses with one plinth. (20)

Sustainability and flexibility

We must think of what makes a plinth sustainable for the next decades, as the demand for ground floor functions will differ in time and good plinths can allow the city to 'breathe'.

39. Design and build mixed-use, multi-purpose, non-specific buildings and plinths that can absorb many functions over time. (07) Adopt a lay-out in which residential space, retail space, shops, and working space were constructed in the same street, even in the same building. The construction method must make quick alterations of property functions in the easiest way possible, in order to meet actual demand. (10)
40. Allow spaces like the Flemish garages to stay a part of the street, as they generate flexibility for unexpected use such as cafes, shops, car repair garages, start-up spaces for entrepreneurs, workshops, lot sales, parking, import and export--in short, urban life. (14)
41. Require corner plinths to have high ceilings and transparent windows, and provide them with mixed-use zoning, to allow corners to become a café, restaurant, a dwelling or office space. (25)

The Hybrid Zone

The hybrid zone is the space between the private and the public realm, or perhaps better said, the place where these two meet. Hybrid zones are important contributors to the experience of the street, perhaps not accessible to enter, but still accessible by sight and smell. They make streets feel personal and intimate, as if the living room were pulled through the window to the street. People use the hybrid zone to increase their privacy, making the hybrid zone some sort of a barrier. Nearly 80% of the informal contacts between neighbours are initiated from the hybrid zone; hybrid zones lead to more social contacts. Homes with more territorial markings, such as benches in the hybrid zone in front of the house, are less prone to burglary. (09)

42. Avoid a clear-cut distinction between public and private in favour of semi-public space: the city is about the blurring of edges. (08) Pedestrians feel more at home if this hybrid zone shows signs of human activity, instead of just hard blank walls. (09)
43. When we are designing the plinth and the street level of the city, the first thing we need to do is design its interface, the place where it interacts with its user, its hybrid zone. (11)
44. On a residential level, people use the hybrid zone to increase their privacy, making the hybrid zone some sort of a barrier. (09)

45. It is difficult to design a street with mutual satisfaction for both residents and passersby. Design the plinth so that it offers something to the passer-by and reserves a bit for the resident, such as small front gardens or private zones along the sidewalk. (07)

ORGWARE

The key to good plinths is neither only in design, nor only in an economic approach. Good plinths are obtained when both are linked. Then, the third crucial element is the *orgware*: the organisation of functions; the daily management of shops, plinths and streets; and the portfolio maintenance of plinths.

Long Term Strategy and Quick Wins

46. Plinth Strategy requires a combination of short-term, hands-on action and a long-term strategy and perseverance over the years. Quick wins are a guide for the long-term strategy, and are needed to demark the new approach and win trust among property owners and tenants. However, without a long-term change policy these quick wins remain window-dressing. The combination involves four elements: regulation, stimulation, changing missing links and a network campaign. (36)
47. Make your strategy long lasting: changing and improving plinths in an existing urban structure takes at least three generations and requires a long-term vision for restoring the urban fabric, based on a deep historic understanding of how the city developed. (05)
48. Be modest: we must realize that we only deliver small contributions to centuries old systems. (07)

Costs and Benefits

Good plinths may come with higher upfront costs, but they also lead to greater benefits. Good plinths are in the best interest of the urban economy, and not only because of consumer spending: those involved in the knowledge and experience economy require spaces with character, a good atmosphere, a place to meet and to interact. (01) The knowledge-based economy is founded on face-to-face contact in breakfast bars, lounge areas, libraries, galleries, pubs and coffee corners. (10) Understanding the underlying financial patterns reveals why good plinths do not come about by themselves and the actual interests of different parties involved: the consumers, the citizens more in general, developers, owners of the building, land owners, tenants and designers.

49. Develop an investment strategy based on pre-investment or involve partners who can help. Making a good plinth is expensive due to high construction costs and required pre-

investments. Pre-investments are needed to create future value for the street and the city. (12)

50. Involve partners that allow a mixed-use strategy in your approach. From a developer and investor point of view, mixing uses in one building in particular adds an element of complexity and risk, with higher levels of specialisation required (design, promotion), more intensive management requirements and perceived diluting of investment value. Nonetheless, mixed-use office areas do generally perform better than single-use office areas: the combined vacancy in mixed-use areas (11.1% in the Netherlands) is considerably lower than in the single-use office locations (20.7% in the Netherlands). Vicinity to a major train station and the city centre, and the perceived safety of these office areas, correlate with vacancy rate (17)
51. Make it clear that good plinths are in the owners' interest. Property owners benefit economically, through the security of active tenancy, reduced costs to keep property empty, and increased prospects for future uses. (13)
52. Keep properties safe, clean, relaxed and easily understood. If visitors' expectations are met or exceeded, they will remain three times longer and spend more money than in an unfriendly and confusing structure. (01)
53. Set the land price of ground floor space rather low, at the level of residential space, to allow for commercial diversity. (27)

Portfolio management

Portfolio management of larger plinth areas is a key to successful ground floor spaces, shifting from single buildings to blocks or entire city streets.

54. Create added value by a well-balanced portfolio through a three-point strategy based on revenue, quality and image. (21)
55. Finding the right programme for the plinth is a task for the landlord or for specialised experts, not for developers – it is a special business. (12) Landlords usually are very unfamiliar with the special market of plinth functions and are satisfied most of the time if they have contractors for the upper 90% of the building.
56. Where programming plinths leads to value creation of neighbouring property, larger landlords, residents and entrepreneurs can be the shareholders for re-development. (18)
57. Project developers and landlords on a speculative base tend not to think in the long term. Often they set for the highest return on their investments, resulting in well-known, run-of-the-mill tenants. Involve real estate owners at an early stage in new plans and strategies in order to convince them that a long-term vision is better for everyone. (32)

58. Shift from a *building logic* to a *street logic* to enable a true plinth strategy. (31) Single ownership, like at airports, enables smart portfolio strategies, exceeding single unit strategies and creating a holistic experience which costumers will not forget. (21)
59. The municipality must consider if they either want to have good plinths or to make money; it is difficult to do both. (12). Short term financial gain and good plinths are often not easy to mix, but good plinths can be part of a sound long term financial strategy.
60. Independence from project developers and landlords is a precondition to develop a long-term business model and investment strategy. (32)
61. How the city's (political?) elite involves itself in the development of the city is crucial; debate and resistance sometimes take a long time, but eventually lead to better urban design. (05)
62. Think in terms of a process, not a final image or a blueprint. You have to observe bottom-up movement and facilitate it. Never approach a street as a project with a beginning and an end, but always as an organism that grows over time and that requires constant attention. (33)

Revitalisation

In areas that need revitalisation, reinventing plinths can be one of the new instruments. We have seen many forms of this throughout the book: from changing the image of entire shopping streets to turning garages into small businesses.

63. There are three ways to improve plinths in post war areas: improve and optimize the original plinths, change the plinths of an existing allotment, or change both plinths and allotment. (19)
64. A lot can be achieved simply by convincing people, and carefully looking for formulas that a street does not have yet. (33)
65. A daring portfolio strategy can make people fall in love with a transportation hub and turn an avoided space into a destination; about 25% of visitors come to Schiphol station without transportation reason. (23)
66. When changing the plinths in regeneration areas to improve the quality of the public realm, respect the original neighbourhood character. (19)
67. Generate sustainable entrepreneurship by striking deals for tenants to pay 1€ less rent for each 1€ invested and letting them invest in themselves. (29)
68. To increase impact, cluster plinth initiatives together and launch them at the same time. (29)
69. Shop re-parcelling could create new opportunities to an imbalance of shop vacancy and the demand for large retail space. (35)
70. Rebuild vacant garages into small, low-rent spaces for entrepreneurs as a way to develop their businesses. (34)

Vacant plinths

Vacancy of plinths is an important new theme to address. This book covered several examples of business models that address this issue. Temporary use, if organized and managed well, has been a successful strategy. Temporary use can improve the financial and social value of a plinth, a building and its surroundings, and can be a useful regeneration tool.

71. Learn from the vacancy legislation in the United Kingdom where landlords of empty property have to pay 100% of business rates once the property has been vacant for three months. (13)
72. Acquire close contacts with policy makers, property industry, creative industries, social enterprises and local government to reuse vacant plinths. (13)
73. Meanwhile use is a good way to test new uses on a high street (15) and through meanwhile use we can help our high streets to adapt to an uncertain future. (13) If a building is for rent, the temporary plinth function should cast the message of availability. (15)
74. Slowing down the revitalisation process allows for 'periods of quiet' for all partners, especially existing residents, 'slow urbanism' ensures flexibility and energy among the partners, as well as a steady stream of investment, staving off impacts of the crisis. (26)
75. Without proper policy, temporary use is delivered to the good will of the property owner. (15) Good vacancy management is knowing the property owner's strategy, seeing the building's unique possibilities and limitations, and knowing many end-users and initiatives with a good idea to fill a plinth. (15)

CRITERIA

Last but not least. Throughout our projects, we have made use of iconic thinkers and their studies (Centre for Public Space Research Copenhagen, Jan Gehl, and Allan Jacobs), and combined it with our own experience in practice. We found a three-layer set of criteria that should be part of each analysis and strategy for plinths: building, street, and context: (01)

1 The building

– small scale units
– variety of functions
– transparent façades
– special character of the architecture
– richness in material
– vertical orientation of the façade
– a well-functioning 'hybrid zone' (the transition from private to public)
– appropriate signing
– flexibility in height (4m)
– flexibility in the land use plan (zoning)

2 The street

– pleasant to walk
– physical comfort (wind, sound, sun, shadow, maintenance)
– definition (the height should at least be half the width)
– variation in buildings
– quality that catches the eye
– good tree canopy
– parking facilities
– clear beginning and ending of the street
– possibilities to sit
– density

3 The context

– plinth-oriented consumer audience (pedestrian streams day and night, 5-20 passers-by per width meter per minute, economic and cultural capital in the surrounding neighbourhoods)
– special urban programme or a special cluster of economic or cultural functions
– good connections to the network of squares and parks
– partners who take initiative
– coherent urban design
– a good position in the urban fabric and in the city's walking and cycling routes

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APPENDIX

BIOGRAPHIES

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Emiel Arends *studied Urban Planning at the Rijkshogeschool IJsselland in Deventer, and Urban Design at the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design. Since 2001 he works for the municipality of Rotterdam as an urban planner/designer and worked on projects such as the Kop van Zuid, Parkstad and the Central District. He also worked on several strategies and policies, which includes the latest city-centre master plan, the plinth strategy, the high-rise vision, the sustainable agenda, and the residential policy for the entire city. Emiel wrote several articles for (inter)national magazines.*

Hans Appelboom *is the owner of Duikelman, a shop specialized in kitchen and cooking supplies, located in the Ferdinand Bolstraat in the 19th century Amsterdam quarter De Pijp.*
www.duikelman.nl

Frank van Beek *is since 2000 director and co-owner of Lingotto in Amsterdam. Lingotto is specialized in transformation and redevelopment of existing buildings and sites in an urban context. Their strength lies in inventing and realizing effective concepts. Lingotto develops projects at own account and risk, and as managing developer on behalf of a client.*
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Frank Belderbos *studied Town Planning and Political Sciences at the University of Amsterdam. He worked for the city of The Hague in Urban Renewal, and specialized in the programme Urban renewal as cultural activity. In 1987 Frank became project manager Urban Renewal Oude Noorden for the city of Rotterdam. Since then he picked up a variety of functions in Rotterdam, among others: project manager Social Return at the development of Kop van Zuid, and responsible for economic projects in Delfshaven in the nineties. At the moment Frank is project manager Revitalisering Nieuwe Binnenweg, financed with European EFRO-money.*

Emily Berwyn *has a broad background in the creative industries and the built environment. She is founder Director of Meanwhile Space - a Community Interest Company specialising in 'Meanwhile use' of vacant buildings or land for social gain until they can be brought back into commercial use again - breaking new ground, generating a zeitgeist to re-imagine commercial use of property and the untapped opportunities that vacant spaces present in the UK.*
www.meanwhilespace.com

Willemijn de Boer *is owner of ANNA Vastgoed & Cultuur (ANNA Real Estate & Culture), a company that manages vacant real estate. ANNA reactivates locations and buildings for short periods of time with functions that complement the different needs of the surrounding neighbourhood.*
www.annavastgoedencultuur.nl

Gábor Everraert *studied Human Geography at the University of Amsterdam with a major in Urban Geography. His field of interest lies in place-making and acupunctural development of city streets and neighbourhoods. He is currently a project-manager at the department of urban development in Rotterdam and over the last 4 years HE has been involved in many projects to embellish the city-centre. Recently he combined this experience with the theoretical background to roll out the plinth strategy in Rotterdam.*

Jos Gadet *is an urban geographer. He works for the Urban Planning Department of the municipality of Amsterdam. Gadet wrote on the rise of successful Amsterdam neighbourhoods in the collection of essays "De levende stad" (2009), which accompanied the first Dutch translation of Jane Jacobs' masterpiece 'The Death and Life of Great American Cities'. In 2011 his book "Terug naar de Stad" was published, in which he describes the development of various districts of Amsterdam.*

Adriaan Geuze *is one of the founders and partner of West 8 urban design & landscape architecture in Rotterdam, a leading urban design practice that has won various international competitions. Amongst numerous design awards, Geuze and West 8 recently received the prestigious American Society of Landscape Architecture Honor Award 2009 and the Lifetime Achievement Award 2011 from the BKVB. Internationally respected as a professor in Architecture and Urban Design, he frequently lectures and teaches at universities worldwide.*
www.west8.nl

Arjan Gooijer *is educated as architect at Delft University of Technology. Since 1998 he has been working at Van Schagen Architekten. Arjan is a researcher involved in studies and publications and he is project architect of a number of larger projects, from design to realisation.*
www.vanschagenarchitekten.com

Sander van der Ham *works as an urban psychologist. In his works he explores the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment. Behaviour, thoughts and feelings of each person are affected by his environment, and vice versa everyone affects his surroundings with his behaviour, thoughts and feelings. One of these themes is the transition between public and private domains and especially the way city users appropriate the public space for themselves and to what extend this contributes for people to feel at home.*
www.stipo.nl

Samar Héchaimé *is user experience strategist, planner, brand strategist, designer, ethnographer and wayfinder, and she has worked and lived in the USA, China, across Europe and the Middle East. These experiences have enhanced her appreciation of different cultures, and allow her to create unique places that relate to the people and the spaces they inhabit. Her expertise spans a range of users in a broad spectrum of environments (including urban, retail, healthcare, airports), building experience frameworks through which the users write their own, personalized and ever changing, stories and experiences.*
www.definingfactors.com

Nel de Jager *educated as an urban sociologist, works with a passion for the city. Since 1987 she has been shopping street manager of the Haarlemmerbuurt in Amsterdam, and since 2005 operates as an independent adviser on shopping streets and management. She regularly gives lectures at schools, and advices organizations with solicited and unsolicited comments.*

Jeroen Jansen *graduated as urban planner and is currently head of Research and Consultancy in the Netherlands for Savills, a global real estate services provider. He has previously worked for residential investor Vesteda and for Dutch leading retailer Ahold, for which he worked in the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Poland.*
www.savills.com

Max Jeleniewski *is manager of the Inner-city in The Hague, and advisor for local governments in Russia (e.g. Moscow) on issues of restructuring, implementing and managing Urban Development Programs. Beside this he lectures on the subject of Urban and Inner-city Development in a number of academic institutions in the Netherlands and abroad.*

Tanja Karg *is responsible for trade and commerce development and coordination at HafenCity Hamburg GmbH since May 2011. She coordinates all ground floor activities including strategies for usages, business development and networking. Formerly Tanja Karg advised real estate developers and investors as a member of the Shopping Center Development Team at Jones Lang LaSalle and as a Retail Consultant at GMA, Gesellschaft für Markt- und Absatzforschung, Ludwigsburg.*
www.hafencity.com

Berry Kessels *is manager Housing at housing corporation Volkshuisvesting Arnhem. He is as district developer responsible for the development of the fashion quarter Klarendal.*

Joep Klabbers *is founder of zoarchitecten. He is a lover of places: places in the city and inside buildings. Places with meaning, beautifull places, atmospheric places, captivating places, carefully designed places and coincidental places - but also abandoned places, leftover space, and backsides. It is always about the love for the place. His open minded, enthusiastic and concerned approach transfers his love of simple architecture and details. The name of the office is like the design result: to the point, simple but not banal.*
www.zoarchitecten.nl

Lars Korn *is an architect and planner and works as project manager for the South Harbour area, at the Municipality of Copenhagen. He has been working with the South Harbour area since 1999.*

Willem van Laar *is a developer specialized in issues of neighbourhoods and districts. His passion and expertise is about working together with residents and professionals on a new opportunity or development. In recent years local economy, social neighbourhood teams and self-management of public space has been main topics in his field of work. Willem has a technical and business background, has extensive experience as a district manager. The last three years he worked as an independent adviser and district developer (wijkontwikkeLAAR).*
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Tine van Langelaar *studied urbanism at TU Delft and is now researcher at the Chair of Innovation Sustainable Design and Construction Process at the Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Solutions, Rotterdam University of Applied Science. Tine is project leader for the preparations of a benchmark and of a measurement program in the "White Village" district in Rotterdam. Currently, she works on a worldwide identification of existing measurement systems for vegetated roofs; this research focuses on technical specifications such as the amount of water storage on roofs, runoff and peak flow reduction.*

Willie Macrae *is an urban planner in the Community Planning Division at the City of Toronto. He is responsible for new development applications and planning studies in the King-Parliament area of downtown Toronto, which includes the historic Distillery District. Prior to working in Toronto, Willie was a land use planner in Whistler, British Columbia.*

Eri Mitsostergiou *is a qualified Architect and in 1999 joined Savills, a global real estate services provider. After working from and within both Greece and the UK, she is currently based in the Netherlands. Here she coordinates Savills' European research and gives direct external advice to Savills clients with their European projects, especially in the South East region.*
www.savills.com

Thaddeus Muller *got his PhD-degree in 2002 at the University of Amsterdam with the thesis 'The Warm City', which deals with interactions between strangers in public space. After his research at the UvA, he worked as an urban sociologist at de Architekten Cie and has his own research office since 2007 called "De Warme Stad", which focuses on social conflict, cooperation and transformation in an urban context. In 2009 he joined the Criminology section of the Erasmus University Rotterdam, where he does research on youth, public space, fear and entertainment in the city, ethnic cooperation and neighbourhood conflicts.*

Peter Nieland *has worked his entire career in the real estate data; over thirty years ago he started at the Dutch Kadaster (Land Registry). In 2007 he joined Locatus as commercial director, and in 2011 he became managing director of Locatus Netherlands. Peter is a man of geographic information systems (GIS) and maps. He regularly talks with retailers and real estate companies, and thus has a good knowledge of what is going on in the retail market.*
www.locatus.com

Kris Opbroek *is the Project Manager for the Great Streets Program for the City of San Francisco, Department of Public Works. She is a landscape architect with 12+ years of experience in urban and transportation planning, habitat restoration and sustainable design. Creating opportunities within the streetscape realm to not only improve the quality of life for all street users, but also establishing a green network that enhances the City's long-term ecological functioning and people's connection to the natural environment is fundamental to her work.*

Henk Ovink *is the director of National Spatial Planning for the Netherlands Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, and is curator for the 5th International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam in 2012, entitled "Making City". He regularly teaches, lectures, and writes on new ways of planning, the position of politics and design, and the exchange between governance and planning. He is also the co-editor of the Design and Politics book series, published by 010 Publishers.*

Gerard Peet *is a lecturer at the department of urban and regional planning of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences. Among other things he specializes in the history of urban development. In this field he has published a book on the history of the Heemraadssingel, a street in Rotterdam (2000), and will publish a similar book about the Nieuwe Binnenweg, also in Rotterdam (2013). He is also preparing a book about the development of skyscrapers outside the USA.*

Stefanie Raab *is an architect and has a long term experience in conception and moderation of participative neighbourhood development processes. She invented the concept of the 'Zwischennutzungsagentur' and realized it together with Maria Richarz from 2005 - 2011. Since 2010 the aspect of cooperation became more relevant, so the office was renamed as coopolis, which today is active in a wide range of public and private cooperative neighbourhood development projects.*
www.coopolis.de

Ben Ruse *has been Director of Media & PR for HS1 Ltd since 2007. HS1 Ltd own and operate the UK's first and only high speed railway, High Speed 1, as well as St Pancras International and other international railway stations.*

Wies Sanders *is urban planner and since 2000 partner in Urban Unlimited, consultancy in urban development within the network society. Spatial development is never addressed by her from land development, but always from relationships between people, space, time and mobility. In addition, Wies is managing director of the Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam and publishes irregularly in various media and on the web.*
www.urbanunlimited.nl | www.affr.nl | www.urbantvguide.nl

Ton Schaap *is urbanist at the city of Amsterdam. He worked on projects such as the Eastern Docklands, the IJ-banks and he designed the plan for the Houthavens in Amsterdam. With Jaap van den Bout, he designed the plan for Overhoeks in Amsterdam North, and with Frits van Dongen and Felix Claus the plan for the Haveneiland, part of IJburg. He is also lector 'Design in Urbanism' at the Academy of Architecture in Amsterdam.*

Filip Smits *graduated as an architect-spatial planner in the late 90s at the University of Ghent, and started his career working on the spatial structure in the province of Antwerp. Since 2004 he is involved in the design and implementing of the strategic spatial structure plan for Antwerp and the masterplan of Het Eilandje. In 2006 he took up the role of project manager for Het Eilandje at the AG City Planning of the Municipality of Antwerp.*

Stefan van der Spek *studied architecture at TU Delft followed by a PhD thesis called 'Connectors the Way beyond Transferring'. Today he is Assistant Professor for the Chair of Urban Design: lecturer in the MSc and BSc for the Departments of Urbanism and Architecture and researcher in the field of Urban Design in 'Activity Patterns in Public Space'. In 2007 he initiated an international expert network on the application of tracking technologies called 'Urbanism on Track'.*
www.bk.tudelft.nl/uot

Gert Jan te Velde *is educated as architect at Delft University of Technology. In 1993 he joined Van Schagen Architekten, and he is director since 2001. Gert Jan is involved in advising clients in the often diffuse initial phase of a project and leads the firm's research team.*
www.vanschagenarchitekten.com

Mark van de Velde *is an (urban) sociologist. In his career he has worked from various perspectives on the development of the city, among others within cultural organizations, the government and consulting firms. He is now member of the management of housing corporation Havensteder (Rotterdam) where he works on tactic policies and area development.*

Jouke van der Werf *is an architectural historian and works part-time at the Office for Monuments and Archaeology in Amsterdam. In addition, he publishes on architecture and urbanism in the last two centuries. In recent years his research is particularly related to the cultural and historical aspects of the public space.*

Klaas Waarheid *joined Van Schagen Architekten in 1996, and he is director since 2001. Klaas is supervisor of several projects within the office, and has a decisive voice in the firm's design decisions and in monitoring the project realisations. He received his education at the HTS, Academy of Architecture, and the Delft University of Technology.*
www.vanschagenarchitekten.com

Robin von Weiler *is an independent Rotterdam real estate investor within family connection. He uses his enthusiasm, network, knowledge and experience of the city with its history, architecture and atmosphere to motivate and inspire others, and thus to let changes take place. The revival of the shopping street Meent and its side streets is a good example of this approach.*

Tony Wijntuin *is the founder of WYNE Strategy & Innovation, a consultancy firm which specializes in the commercial development of high traffic locations. Putting the customer first, WYNE Strategy & Innovation focuses on how to add value through development and implementation of retail, food & beverages and other customer services.*
www.wyne.nl

John Worthington *is architect and co-founder of DEGW in 1973. Since then John has pioneered methods of adapting urban and space planning techniques to meet the needs of the emerging knowledge economy. Recent assignments include high building strategies for the cities of Rotterdam and Dublin, where he continues to advise both cities on managing the process of innovation and change. He has held a number of academic posts and is currently a visiting Professor at the University of Sheffield and Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg.*
www.degw.com

Arin van Zee *works as a consultant in the field of housing, welfare, care and durability at Pluk and at Viatore. He is project leader of the Plinth Project at Pluk for Woonbedrijf Ieder1 (Deventer) in collaboration with local stakeholders.*
www.pluk-web.nl | www.viatore.nl

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Meredith Glaser *is originally from San Francisco, California, and has extensive experience in urban planning, liveability, and sustainable urban transportation. She received her master's in city planning from UC Berkeley and while working for Stipo, she has lead the company's international projects that focus on the topic "urban development after the crisis". With partners in the UK and northern Europe, she's helped plan several knowledge exchange conferences addressing this topic, exploring innovative economic development and revitalization initiatives. Meredith coordinated the research, interviews, analyses, and production for this work.*

Mattijs van 't Hoff *is an urbanist, graduated at the Delft University of Technology. He has worked for the planning and development department of the municipality of Rotterdam on various projects in urban design and transformation. Since 2011 he has joined Stipo team for urban strategy. In addition he has been a guest lecturer in urbanism.*

Hans Karssenberg *is founding partner of Stipo, team for urban strategy and development, and board member of the international network Inspiring Cities. He advises cities, housing providers, developers and NGOs in the Netherlands and internationally. Hans works on complex urban (re)development and co-creation processes and was project manager for the Rotterdam Plinth Strategy.*

Jeroen Laven *is partner at Stipo. He was project manager for the three plinths pilots Stipo worked on in Rotterdam. He is an urban planner, working on diverse projects in the Netherlands and abroad. In addition he is board member of Inspiring Cities and the Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam.*

Jan van Teeffelen *is former senior urbanist at the Urban Planning department of the Municipality of Rotterdam. He is co author of the book 'Sense of Place: Atlas of Cultural Ecology of Rotterdam' (2004), that was the inspiration to 'The City at Eye level'. Currently he works as initiator for sustainable neighbourhood development.*

ABOUT STIPO

Stipo is a multi-disciplinary consultancy team for urban strategy and city development. Its operating area consists of spatial planning and strategy with economic development, culture, urban anthropology, and community planning. Stipo, based in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, is affiliated with the international network Inspiring Cities and has extensive experience in international exchange settings. Stipo works for cities, housing providers, regions, ministries, private developers, knowledge and innovation centres, international networks and universities.

Stipo stands for Strategy, Innovation, Process development and Open-source. Stipo started at the University of Amsterdam in 1995, and is based on the principle to create stronger cities and stronger societies. Stipo's core values are the breathing city (long lasting quality), the public city (public realm quality) and the soul city (identity). Stipo approaches the city as a whole with connecting spatial, social, economic, and cultural components. The Stipo team works by the innovative and strategic Stipo approach on urban development. Stipo works in collaborative networks, involving partners and co-makers from both the 'planned city' and the 'lived city'. The Stipo approach ensures that results are not shelved, but used. It is only by integrating content, process, and management that we can safeguard real innovation, improvement, and production - and this is the ultimate objective.

Stipo has an extensive experience in innovative projects, both in The Netherlands and internationally. Stipo shares its knowledge through training programmes, concept development, complex project management in urban practice, knowledge exchange, and social media. The Stipo Academy shares knowledge and insights in the what and how of urban development. Recent themes are the shift from making to being a city, new investment strategies, smart cities, urban development after the crisis, collaborative urban development, co-creation, incubator strategy, organic renewal, urban anthropology and urban psychology, cultural clusters, social enterprise, public squares, area coalitions, child-friendly areas, co-working, vacant buildings, temporary use, the future role of housing providers, synchronicity, soul and plinth strategy.

www.stipo.nl | *www.stipo.info*

www.thecityateyelevel.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The history of this book lies in Rotterdam. After the bombing in World War II, Rotterdam has been busy reinventing the city ever since. The focus has been on rebuilding the inner city. High-quality and successful buildings, plinths and public spaces can be found side-by-side to places and buildings with little quality and little success. The building production was sometimes more important than the quality of the buildings and streets. From the mid-90s, the emphasis in Rotterdam shifted from quantity to quality. The expertise of international experts like John Worthington inspired civil servants and market forces. Driven professionals such as Jan van Teeffelen embraced the inspiration, and made the lessons applicable.

In 2011, the inner city planning department of Rotterdam asked Stipo to help invent a plinth approach. We started with three pilots, and ended up developing a plinth strategy for the whole inner city. The great plinth team we created made it all possible: Renate Veerkamp, Gábor Everraert and Emiel Arends still play an important role in implementing and further developing the strategy. We were privileged to have support from the Economic Development Board Rotterdam, who stressed the urgency of good plinths.

The development of Rotterdam's plinth strategy led to a mild form of professional deformation. Suddenly we saw bad plinths everywhere, and complex and simple ways to improve them. At the same time, by looking around, we discovered many inspiring examples of good plinths from around the world. This was good enough reason for us to compile this book, as an inspiration for all those people working on good plinths and for those who would like to.

We are extremely grateful for the dozens professionals from around the world who selflessly contributed to the book, by writing an article, partaking in an interview, or developing content. We are indebted to the multitalented designer and architect Paola Faora who helped us with the beautiful design of this book. We are most of all grateful to Meredith Glaser and Mattijs van 't Hoff, for all their work in both the interviewing of people, editing texts, their ideas of the product, and their positive energy and approach.

Finally, we are grateful to those organisations, willing to help us with the last step, the production and promotion of the book: AIR, the EDBR, the municipality of Rotterdam, the Delta Metropolis Association, the EFL Stichting, and Locatus.

Stipo 2012

ECONOMICS OF BEAUTY

The Economic Development Board Rotterdam (EDBR) underlines the importance of attractive plinths in the city. Beautiful streets are an important ingredient for the economic functioning of the (inner) city. This publication connects seamlessly with the advice "Economics of Beauty" that the EDBR in April 2010 gave to the city of Rotterdam. This advice emphasizes the profit and necessity of investments in the quality of the inner-city and shows the return on investments. The development of a good plinth eventually returns profits to the city, the user and the owner.

EDBR 2012

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The city at eye level
Lessons for street plinths

The plinths of the city are the ground floors that negotiate between the inside and the outside, between the public and the private: this is the city at eye level. Plinths are extremely important for the urban experience, which in turn is an important driver for the urban economy. The plinths might cover only 10% of the building, but determine 90% of the experience. While walking, you consciously and subconsciously examine the immediate eye-level surroundings and absorb any details.

The book shows you how a good plinth "works" for a better street at eye level. It contains concrete and inspiring examples of strategies for design, land use, the relation to the street, passenger flows and the collaboration of partners. The book is a collection of stories of over 25 experts from all over the world: a collective product with lessons from planners, owners, managers and designers. In addition to many international examples and case studies, the book contains several interviews and research articles. It concludes with practical lessons for the reader to put into practice in their own cities.

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www.eburon.nl