

Report Site Visit: **Groot IJsselmonde, Rotterdam (NL)**

In Search of Suburban Productive Landscapes
Vitalizing the Core of the Garden City of the Twenty-first Century



Site visit 'Groot IJsselmonde', with Joris Vermeiren as site representative

Photo: Frank Hanswijk

On Friday 26 April AIR and European NL organized a full day programme to introduce the five European sites in Rotterdam in depth. It was a unique opportunity to explore the five areas and meet representatives and stakeholders of each site.

SITE VISIT (morning)

EXPERTS ON SITE:

Joris Vermeiren (City of Rotterdam, landscape architect)

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

Q: How was this area developed?

A: Groot-IJsselmonde was developed as a garden city in the late 60s, on a budget, right after the development of Lombardijen. The layout of the plan was similar to the plan for Lombardijen, however architect Peter van Drimmelen scaled it up to the larger area that was present in the polder Oost-IJsselmonde. Van Drimmelen fused the principles of the neighbourhood-unit of Ebenezer Howard with his own anthroposophical vision. However, the high conceptual content of the primary design conceals the fact that the polder was not empty of existing dike structures. Cultural-historical elements had to be incorporated in the plan. That confused the creation of a coherent profiled inner ring. Also, during the planning, oil was found in the area. As many as 26 locations had to be reserved for oil field exploitation. Until the late 90s the area contained several pumpjacks. These locations are often still vacant. In the 70s the shopping mall was built as a central point in the concentric design; it was an open construction. In the 80s a roof was added. Now the area clearly has a lack of urbanity as the mall is oriented with its back toward the public space. Around 60,000 people live here, the mall and the central square function as the centre of this area. However, the density is low, the urban structure is messy and it lacks icons or real high-rise and ground floors are not well used or vacant. The area is strategically located in the urban fabric with potential connections to the river, to the Beverwaard, the core of Oud-IJsselmonde and toward the future Feyenoord City. It is known for its green structures which are an essential part of the structure of the garden city Groot-IJsselmonde.



New iconic housing tower with public facilities on the ground floor, bordering the central square next to shopping centre Keizerswaard

Photo: Frank Hanswijk

Q: How should this area develop, does the municipality own the land?

A: A strategy would focus on creating a clear focal point, new housing and amenities. The question to be answered is how to create a future-proof garden city. With higher densities and lively redevelopments. The municipality has power to redevelop in this area, we own some land and could negotiate to buy as well. You should not feel restricted by ownership when redesigning this area. We see the entire site as 'buildable'. The shopping mall is more difficult to redevelop because of the retailers association. Densification in this area is needed. We are looking to create functional green connections and still keep the garden city typology. Around 1,000 housing units could be added. You are free to make 'naive' plans.

Cars are quite dominant in the urban structure. Inhabitants use a care to go to work, often outside IJsselmonde. When introducing productive areas, this could be more mixed and other modes of transport could be introduced. Green lines could than become more dominant than roads for cars. Now people get lost here easily, because the area lacks a clear urban structure. One could say there are too many pragmatic urban layers, and too little quality carriers. Sometimes green is used to fill up areas, not for functions or quality.

► Read the site brief for the official assignment: <https://www.european-europe.eu/en/session/european-15/site/rotterdam-groot-ijsselmonde-nl>



Photo: Frank Hanswijk



Exploring the borders of the European project site

Photos: Frank Hanswijk

WORKSHOP (afternoon)

EXPERTS:

Stijnie Lohof (City of Rotterdam, designer)

Barbara Luns (moderator, AIR)

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

Q: How about the entrance of the Keizerswaard shopping centre; what are the opportunities of improvement? What can we do there?

A: First phase of the improvement of Keizerswaard has been completed. Second phase is not finished yet as a result of the complex situation. All the different shop owners need to participate to make a change possible. But improving Keizerswaard is not part of the European assignment. There is already a plan to enhance the entrances, so it is work in progress.

> Read the site brief for the official assignment: <https://www.european-europe.eu/en/session/european-15/site/rotterdam-groot-ijsselmonde-nl>

Q: How long does it take by tram to the city centre?

A: It will take you 23 minutes by tram from tram stop "Keizerswaard" to tram stop "Beurs".

Q: How much densification is possible at this site?

A: There is not a specific number of square meters that should be added. At this location it is not possible to build higher than 70 metres, since it is not part of the high-rise area. It is important to connect to the surroundings in terms of building height and density. Higher buildings could be added at specific points, strategic positioning. This was the chain of thoughts when the plan of the Tuinwijken was made. However, in the current situation it is not that clear anymore which buildings hold a strategic position according to their height.

Q: How does the community function?

A: People are fixated on their own area, there is a lack of proper connections between the different neighbourhoods. The shopping area is well used but mainly smaller shops are located here. The dynamics are not the same as in the city centre.

Q: If the schools are moving, are new ones coming? How does this work for the community?

A: Some locations will disappear, because they want to be more connected to public transport. It is not likely that these schools come back to this location. For example, the VMBO wants to link to specific facilities like sports. That is why they choose their new location next to Feyenoord City over this location. However, the municipality has property in this area which can be used for new developments, including new educational facilities.

Q: What is the percentage of rent versus owned housing?

A: These numbers can be found online at the "Wijkprofiel" en "Buurtprofiel" of this area. Also, "gisweb" might provide some relevant information.

> See for statistics of all Rotterdam neighbourhoods: <https://rotterdam.buurtmonitor.nl>

> See also: www.gis.rotterdam.nl

Q: Is it possible to get a property map?

A: Yes, this will be uploaded to the Complete Site Folder.

DOCUMENTS ADDED TO THE COMPLETE SITE FOLDER:

- Property map of the European project site

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

- Tour: 25
- Workshop: 30

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