

Report Site Visit: **Visserijplein, Rotterdam (NL)**

Empowering the Productive City in an Urban Neighbourhood
Creating a Multifunctional ‘hub’ in the Heart of a Multicultural Vulnerable Neighbourhood



Site visit ‘Visserijplein’, with Marleen ter Vergert as site representative

Photo: Frank Hanswijk

On Friday 26 April AIR and Europan NL organized a full day programme to introduce the five Europan 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:

Marleen ter Vergert (City of Rotterdam, neighbourhood manager Bospolder & Tussendijken)

Robbert de Vrieze (independent city maker / Transformism / Delfshaven Coöperatie)

Jan Damman (tour guide Stichting Dakpark)

LOCAL INITIATIVES PART OF THE TOUR:

Dakpark (rooftop park):

See for more information the site brief.



The 'Dakpark' introduced by Jan Damman

Photos: Frank Hanswijk

Bouwkeet:

- Started in 2016, initiated by a Rotterdam philanthropic organization that got its wealth in the Rotterdam Ports.
- The aim is to empower disadvantaged children in the neighbourhood by educating them in basic maker skills (working with wood, metal, fabrics, etc. but also fixing a bike) and 21st century skills (robotics, 3d printing etc.).



The 'Bouwkeet' introduced by Robbert de Vrieze

Photos: Frank Hanswijk

Zelfregiehuus (empowerment house):

- Focuses on the neighbourhood's female residents.
- The objective is to empower the individual: economically and politically.
- In the neighbouring Park 1943 they host over 40 events a year.
- Where Pier 80 is the official municipal community centre, Zelfregiehuus is independent and self-sustaining.



The 'Zelfregiehuys' introduced by Robbert de Vrieze

Photos: Frank Hanswijk

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

Q: What is the main question at the Visserijplein?

A: The main function of Visserijplein is the market, but it is an ideal location for housing. How to combine the two programs in such a way that the current social economic situation will also benefit? We hope European 15 will offer integral solutions and economical possibilities.

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

Q: How is Pier 80 being used by the neighbourhood?

A: The community centre is meant for everybody, but currently there are mostly adult men present. They dominate the centre that is why the centre is not very inviting for women or teenagers. There is a separate community centre for women resides on the other end of the building with its own entrance: WMO Radar. Ideally the two are fused together, but without WMO Radar, the women would simply not come.



Marleen ter Vergert explains the separated entrance of WMO Radar

Photo: Frank Hanswijk

Q: What about the youth? Do they use Pier 80?

A: The youth that mostly come, make use of the sport facilities primarily, and not the arts and crafts section. Obesity is a health problem among the local youth. An important program of the library is to assist people that experience a language barrier and develop skills among residents.

Q: What other programs are present in Pier 80?

A: A floor plan will be added to the Complete Site Folder, including all the programmes of Pier 80.

Q: What is the difference between WMO Radar and the Zelfregiehuis?

A: WMO Radar helps women in their first steps to a social life. For example, there are handicrafts courses being offered, that allow women to do activities in groups. Zelfregiehuis is more about economic and political empowerment.

Q: Is there any collaboration between Pier 80 and the Zelfregiehuis?

A: Incidental, but this could be improved.

Q: How come it is one of the cheapest markets in Rotterdam?

A: The merchants get all the cheap deals at the distribution centres. They buy the cheapest of the cheapest, which also means they take all the products that are about to expire. As a consequence, after every market day all of these about the expire products are left at the Visserijplein. There is huge amount of waste after every market day.

Q: What are the sculptures on the square meant for?

A: These were early works of studio West 8; they hold electrical sockets for the market stands. These facilities need to be integrated in the new design, but the current infrastructure can be removed.

Q: How is the municipality staying in touch with the local dynamics and community?

A: The municipality moved all civil servants to the central municipality office, there are only a few 'boots on the ground', the so called "Stadsmariniers" (City Marines). Civil servants that hold office in the neighbourhoods they work in.

Q: Do local residents fear current housing developments?

A: There is a fear their housing will become unaffordable. Residents do not want to leave BoTu. It is an asset that there is a strong relationship between the neighbourhood and the residents. One of the biggest challenges is how to improve current (social) housing in the area.

Q: Is there any feel for what is necessary in this area?

A: Existing housing should be improved; conditions for the current residents should be improved. There are no possibilities for the residents to resettle in a better house in the neighbourhood, because these are too expensive. Housing prices should be affordable. So, the focus of the European proposal should lie on affordability and the social plus housing sector.

Q: When people can afford to move to a new house, where do they go?

A: There are almost no possibilities; currently the Hudsons apartments are being built nearby. But these are not social plus housing, but for the middle segment.

Q: Are there, besides European, other initiatives that might improve the neighbourhood?

A: A campaign has just been launched: "Resilient BoTu", which aims to transform BoTu into a resilient neighbourhood. If you choose Visserijplein as your location, you might as well apply for this local competition.

> See for more information on "Resilient BoTU": www.gobotu.nl

WORKSHOP (afternoon)

EXPERTS:

Paulien Campagne (City of Rotterdam, project manager)

Martine Zoeteman (moderator session 1, European / AIR)

Barbara Luns (moderator session 2, AIR)

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS:

Q: What do you consider as the biggest challenge at the Visserijplein?

A: It's about finding a programmatic mix, including affordable housing, to empower people that are already living in this neighbourhood. Currently, it is an area with a lot of social housing. It is necessary to implement more housing for middle incomes, but there are not many spaces where you can build. The Visserijplein is one of the few places with opportunities for new developments. It is an area without green and a lot of tarmac. Twice a week there is a market. Make the market more compact and create space for green, housing and a public programme that empowers the local community.

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



Site representative Paulien Campagne explains the 'Visserijplein' assignment

Photo: Frank Hanswijk

Q: Is this a public space assignment?

A: Yes, but combined with housing and a programmatic mix. At the moment it is real public space, but it is not functioning well. The scale of the square allows new developments and still maintain parts as public space. Besides, there is a need of additional sports facilities for the schools nearby. The Visserijplein offers space to hold these gymnasia, which could be used after school as well.

Altogether, the main ambition is to develop the neighbourhood on the social index. People have to move up in life and work. Leading themes for new developments are: productivity,

health and inclusiveness. A strong ambition of Rotterdam is to improve the life of the children. So, schools get a rather large budget to achieve this. This is multicultural neighbourhood. Gymnasias are used in different ways especially by minorities and we are looking for new inside or outside sports concepts.

Q: How are the boundaries of the European project site determined?

A: The housing blocks bordering the square are partly included in the project site, because they enclose the square. They may not be demolished. So, the new building complex should relate to these buildings. The Pier 80 building, however, may be demolished or redeveloped, but only if the current programme is maintained in the new design.

Q: Connectivity and collectivity seems to be the leading themes. These are great ideals, but do the people living there really want that?

A: In short, the new generation yes, but the older no. But it is something we as a municipality are trying to achieve here. The main goal is not only to connect people, but also to empower people. Making new connections is a way to achieve that.

Q: Who are the key players in the neighbourhood?

A: The schools; there are nine elementary schools in the district. The Nicolaas School has over 900 children. The schools are the places where children and parents come together and are places where we can reach them. Currently, they have too much floor space for the number of children. That is why we merge and relocate some of the schools and redevelop or renovate the vacant buildings. (See more details on page 15 of the site brief.) Also, we are looking for new sports concept, both indoor and outdoor, so that kids can engage in physical activities after school as well.

Q: Where do they sport right now?

A: In Park 1943, at Pier 80 and the Dakpark (rooftop park). These informal sport activities in public space seems to be more important in this neighbourhood than memberships.

Q: In the site brief the lack of facilities in the schools are mentioned. Gymnasiums do not meet the current standards, and clustering the schools provides a solution to facilitate them better. What current standards and facilitations are we talking about?

A: We are looking for locations with high quality facilities that can accommodate different activities. Find ways to serve the different schools in the area. We are very interested in the possibilities of outdoor spaces.

Q: Who is running the market?

A: The municipality is coordinating the market. There is one department that coordinates all the markets in Rotterdam. On the market itself there is a "marktmeester". This person makes sure all the merchants pay for their spot.

Q: The two community centres organize over 40 events per year in Park 1943. What kinds of events?

A: Mainly food festivals and cultural activities. These activities should stay in the park, and should not be moved to the Visserijplein plot.

Q: In the site brief BoTu is considered as an experimental neighbourhood for the energy transition, and it is suggested to make this tangible on the European project site with prototypes. What is meant with 'prototypes'?

A: Our goal is to connect 2,000 houses to the residual heat network in the period of 2022-2032. The municipality is in search of a way to make a business case for the energy company. In the case of BoTu it is interesting how we can incorporate both housing corporations and the local

community in this transition. Small scale test projects could engage residents. For example, on the Dakpark (rooftop park) there is a self-sustaining pavilion being built together with local residents. People learn and act together, and share their experiences with others. Visserijplein could offer room for such experiments as well.

Q: Why did the municipality choose BoTu for this energy transition project?

A: We chose different locations in Rotterdam where we can learn different things. In the case of BoTu, there is a high amount of corporation ownership. Besides, a hot water network is already present in the neighbourhood. These two elements make it an interesting test case.

Q: Is there any budget the municipality prepared for the development of Visserijplein?

A: At this moment there is no budget. However, the schools do have a budget to renovate or build new sports facilities. Also, the aim is to set things in motion with the European competition.

Q: Does the "Omgevingsvisie" (Environmental Strategy) have a role in this development?

A: Omgevingsvisie in itself is not relevant for this assignment. However, the integral approach of different themes, addressing spatial and socio-economic issues at the same time – which is core of the Omgevingsvisie – is an important starting point.



Photo: Frank Hanswijk

Q: The site brief refers to a 'Library of the Future'. What does this mean?

A: The programme of Pier 80 is already there, but could use an update. For example the library: in the future, books will have a lesser role, so new ideas for the library are necessary.

Q: What are the demographics of the neighbourhood?

A: Yes, see the urls below.

> See for specific statistics of Bospolder-Tussendijken: www.gobotu.nl

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

Q: Is there a timeframe for the development of the area?

A: We hope European can accelerate this process. We know we want to add middle income

housing in this area and we know the issues regarding the school gymnasia and the markets. Besides, similar problems arise elsewhere in the city. So, in case the project does not go through at Visserijplein, proposals could be applied elsewhere in Rotterdam.

Q: Are there already private parties involved at the Visserijplein?

A: Not yet, but it is a matter of time.

Q: Is there connection to the Makers District?

A: We hope that people that live here, will be able to work at the makers district. Entrepreneurship and self-empowerment are at stake here. It is very important that the people that live here get good education to prepare them for working in the 21st century.

Q: Is there a maximum footprint for the new building block on the square?

A: No, we leave it open to the competitors. But we do like to maintain public space and introduce green. We do not have any previous studies for this site, so it's really an invitation for new ideas and concepts.

Q: Is there a parking area?

A: On the street sides.

Q: The European competition rules imply a strict format for our proposal submission. What if you want to submit a different format than requested (e.g. model, video, sound recording)?

A: The European format is mandatory for all entries.

Q: Is there any limit of offset from the street?

A: There is a zoning plan (Bestemmingsplan) active, but if you have good reasons to go against the zoning plan we challenge you to propose it.

DOCUMENTS ADDED TO THE COMPLETE SITE FOLDER:

- Floor plan Pier 80, including the names and locations of the parties housed in the building

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

- Tour: 60
- Workshop: 60

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