

Rotterdam: City of Architecture

**Architecture
Memorandum**

Rotterdam, 2019
English Edition



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Making the City Together

Architecture is the art of building: a definition as solid as a rock. And yet as far as we are concerned, architecture is not about buildings alone. It is also about the people who live, work, learn, play sports, improve and enjoy themselves in those buildings.

The previous architecture policy dates from 2010, which was at the height of the financial crisis. Now, almost ten years later, the future looks completely different. Not all of the 2010 ambitions, opportunities, problems and frameworks apply anymore. That is why we have updated our architecture policy.

With this document we present our new Architecture Memorandum, *Rotterdam Architectuurstad (Rotterdam: City of Architecture)*. It describes how we want to optimally use the strength and expertise of architecture and design to meet the social challenges Rotterdam faces. We are connecting cultural activities – thinking – and urban development – doing. Hence *Rotterdam Architectuurstad* is about the living environment, Rotterdam locals, the strength of design, the public, commissioning, the design sector, experimentation and innovation.

However, drawing up a new Architecture Memorandum is not enough. Together with the people who live in Rotterdam and with private and public partners, we want to set out an action agenda, a document that includes action points that will help us get the job done in a professional and enthusiastic way.

We would like to invite you to contribute to this action agenda. After all, we are making the city together: a future-proof and inclusive city in which everyone wants to live, work, study and recreate; a city of which we and all Rotterdam's inhabitants can be proud. A city that was, is and always will be a City of Architecture!

Said Kasmi

Alderman for Education, Culture and Tourism

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October, 2019



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Creating *Rotterdam Architectuurstad*

Introduction - What will Rotterdam look like in thirty years' time? How do we want Rotterdam to develop architecturally? And what, therefore, are the challenges we face today? What are the conditions for Rotterdam's continued development as a City of Architecture? And how do we create a living environment that suits the needs of Rotterdam's residents? Which parties do we need for this and how do we optimize collaborations to meet urgent challenges without losing sight of quality?

For all this, *Rotterdam Architectuurstad* provides starting points and broad outlines.

Rotterdam has always had room for new ideas, imaginations and progress. It is an advanced port city that boasts high-profile architecture and a long history of experimentation and innovation. It is a diverse city that has captured different layers of time in stone. And it includes places and buildings of great experiential value at the level of the city, the district and the neighbourhood. Rotterdam is a creative and experimental city, too, with a great variety of residents and stories. Together, these create the identity and personality of the city in which architecture plays such an exceptional part. Together citizens, entrepreneurs, administrators and designers make sure that Rotterdam continues to develop as an attractive city with pleasant neighbourhoods and comfortable work spaces.

More Than Buildings

'Architecture' is the collective designation of the various design disciplines that are active in the spatial domain, from architecture, urban design, interior design and landscape architecture to the design of the public space. Together they shape our living environment and influence the way the city is perceived and experienced. Architecture is about more than buildings and space. It has public and social aspects as well and it is a building block in the story of the city. Moreover, architecture is always about people and the way they relate to their environment: to the city and its buildings, but also to the public space in between. Everyone, locals as well as visitors, has a relationship with the (built) environment and makes use of it.

Architecture boosts local pride and connects the city's inhabitants. It makes the city recognizable and preserves memories. Rotterdam's attractive living environment strengthens its business climate, drawing new residents and businesses. Hence, architecture is also important socially and economically. In addition, the presence of various design offices and all kinds of cultural organizations involved with architecture enriches Rotterdam's cultural life. The cultural and economic activities of Rotterdam's design sector do not only cater to the city's inhabitants or Rotterdam challenges: the sector is active worldwide and its design assignments and cultural programmes cater to an international audience. The size and scale of Rotterdam's architecture climate are exceptional. The city accommodates universities, academies and knowledge institutes that focus on architecture as well as

various cultural organizations that offer annual programmes or projects in the field of architecture and the city, and is home to many designers and design offices.

Rotterdam Architectuurstad will make Rotterdam a better city. The Architecture Memorandum puts spatial quality on the agenda and promotes it. Spatial quality is not measurable, but it can be experienced: in buildings, streets, squares, bridges, parks, neighbourhoods and in the city as a spatially coherent whole. It also involves tackling social issues such as housing stock, the energy transition, migration or inclusiveness and their significance to the outward appearance of the city.

Relevance of Local Architecture Policy

Architecture policy has been an administrative subject in Rotterdam for a long time. After all, architecture contributes to its goal of creating an attractive, sustainable and resilient city for everyone. It is the city's ambition to make room for initiatives by Rotterdam locals; the city often takes the initiative itself as well. The city establishes frameworks on the basis of a more general spatial perspective. It aims to guarantee a high-quality living environment every time. The attention to architecture policy is not only initiated by initiatives from the city. With the central government of the Netherlands increasingly withdrawing from the domain of spatial planning, the municipality bears more responsibility for the quality of the living environment. Rotterdam takes up this responsibility by its architecture policy, among other things.

Connection with the Strategy on Spatial Planning

The Architecture Memorandum is connected to the Strategy on Spatial Planning, an integrated strategy document about Rotterdam's physical living environment.¹ The living environment includes all of the elements that determine the quality of the space, such as buildings, infrastructure, water systems, soil, air, landscapes, nature, cultural heritage and world heritage. The Strategy on Spatial Planning includes five so-called perspectives – Compact City, Healthy City, Inclusive City, Circular City and Productive City – and can therefore be used as a compass for making choices and plans that involve the physical living environment. The Architecture Memorandum, which focuses on

the creation and promotion of quality in the living environment, contributes to and is informed by the Environment Act.

Reader's Guide

In Chapter 1, we briefly look back at the Architecture Memorandum 2010. What have we achieved and what is still to be done? Next, in Chapter 2, we discuss the conditions of a successful architecture policy for the coming years. In Chapter 3, then, we list *Rotterdam Architectuurstad's* five programme lines. They create a solid foundation for an innovative and goal-oriented architecture policy. The action agenda of both the past and the coming years is listed at the end of each programme line. For this English edition, each programme line is accompanied by a specially commissioned illustration by a Rotterdam-based illustrator.

1. *Op weg naar een Omgevingsvisie (Towards an a Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment)*, situation 2019.

Reflection on the Architecture Memorandum 2010 – Rotterdam

Architectuurstad builds on the Architecture Memorandum 2010. Its spearheads were expressive architecture and a strong architecture climate. This chapter will briefly touch on the many positive developments that the Architecture Memorandum 2010 set in motion.

The Architecture Memorandum 2010 was based on the City Vision 2030 (2007) and builds on the so-called *kernbeslissing* (core decision) 10: 'Rotterdam uses the strength of cultural heritage and architecture for development.' Architecture and built heritage are explicitly linked to the development of an attractive city and a strong economy.

Spearheads and Impact

The Architecture Memorandum 2010 had two spearheads. The first of these, expressive architecture, focused on cultural-historical stratification, coherent urban development and future-oriented design. The second spearhead, a strong architecture climate, focused on three themes: the promotion of good commissioning, the gathering and sharing of knowledge, and retaining and stimulating design talent.

The Architecture Memorandum 2010 ensured that expressive architecture and a strong architecture climate, which are conditions for an attractive city, began to play a more active part in the development of the city, by paying more attention to:

- the city at eye level, asking what we can do to make the city look attractive at eye level,
- the 'small but tough', using architectural design to fill in small residual spaces to increase the coherence of the city,
- the reuse and transformation of important historical buildings and spaces.

The architecture climate has also been strengthened thanks to the guidelines for designer selection that the city began to implement when commissioning projects that have a lot of impact on the public space. The Architects Platform and the Architecture Prize also make positive contributions to the architecture climate; the Architecture Prize boosts the quality of the built city and marks the celebration of architecture in Rotterdam.

Continuity and Actuality

The strength of an effective architecture policy is in its continuity. After all, architecture is a slow discipline in which planning and completion are often separated by several years. On average, the period between the design and the realization of a building is five years. Between an urban development plan and its realization lie 15 to sometimes 30 years. In the meantime, legislation

will have been renewed and technological possibilities will have increased, which can also impact the layout of the city. In addition, complex social issues increasingly and explicitly call upon the imagination and ability of designers. This has also changed the traditional role of the designer.

The previous Architecture Memorandum set positive developments in motion. The reassessment of the city's architecture policy means that the starting points and themes of the 2010 policy document will be maintained, but accentuated on the basis of current developments and future expectations. The city's ambitions are expressed in a concrete, topical action agenda.



Illustration: Melcher Oosterman

Conditions for Spatial Development and a Strong Architecture Climate -

The challenge is to ensure that residents, visitors and businesses experience Rotterdam as an attractive city to live and work in and to create a high-quality, sustainable and safe living environment. The city, its buildings and networks of places, as an environment for life, are an inspiration: this is what the Architecture Memorandum wants to achieve. This chapter lists the conditions that need to be fulfilled.

The architecture climate springs from a mutually empowering network of many different parties, from grassroots ones to established institutions. For Rotterdam to be a City of Architecture requires the active collaboration of many of these parties.

Goal of the Architecture Memorandum

Rotterdam's architecture policy aims to provide optimal conditions for the improvement of the quality of the city's spatial development and to stimulate an intelligent architecture climate in Rotterdam.

A Vital and Dynamic Architecture Climate

Rotterdam is an excellent breeding ground for a vital and dynamic architecture climate. In addition to national institutions, there are also various local establishments that may or may not operate internationally, and young as well as established design offices, from small to large, that work at all design levels. Clients, too, contribute to the architecture climate: their activities are aimed at the development, construction and management of projects and buildings. Other institutions and parties focus on the experience of architecture, often through city marketing and communication, attracting visitors and organizing public debates and award ceremonies.

Ecosystem

The various parties shape the architecture climate together and flesh it out on the basis of different interests and perspectives. The ecosystem includes all parties involved as well as the interaction between their activities. It is an ecosystem that benefits from diversity and inclusiveness. It creates new perspectives, target groups and challenges. That means it generates a future-oriented playing field. In this playing field, individual players and actions together form a powerful and dynamic whole.

Local Identity

It is not only mediagenic icons that determine whether a living environment is attractive, aspects such as the public space, the urban fabric and the existing buildings are also of major impact.

Local architecture at the level of the neighbourhood or district adds colour and identity to the daily living situation. New stories and memories are made in this immediate environment as well. They add an extra layer to the existing city. Its stratification and diversity make Rotterdam an exciting city that is home to many people. However, icons such as the Cube Houses, the Erasmus Bridge, the Van Nelle Factory and the Markthal do contribute to the image of the city. And besides adding spatial value, they often also have economic significance. The Erasmus Bridge is not only the physical connection between the north and south sides of the city, it has also boosted the development of Rotterdam-Zuid. Small projects can also become icons, such as De Zwarte Parel (The Black Pearl) in the Oud-Charlois neighbourhood, a former fixer-upper that has stimulated architecture tourism in Rotterdam-Zuid.

Architecture and the Future-Proof City

Rotterdam is actively working on a future-proof city: spatially and socially. Its architecture policy gets this moving in the right direction by listing ambitions, opportunities, problems and frameworks, by involving the strength of design, designers and clients and by creating and stimulating development opportunities. In addition, good policy makes room for the necessary experimentation and innovation. Free space is important to the development of the city, first and foremost in terms of the innovation and improvement of processes, such as new forms of commissioning. At the same time, it also involves innovations in design practice, for example in the shape of new technologies, materials, working methods and ways of thinking.

Connection to Social Challenges

Today, challenges connected to sustainability, the energy transition and the circular economy are of as great importance as the social challenge of providing new housing to accommodate present-day and future residents. These are all challenges that have a spatial component as well. Thanks to its architecture policy, Rotterdam continues to develop into a model city that has put an integrated design approach high on the agenda and uses this as a tool for its approach to social challenges.

*Good policy
makes room for
the necessary
experimentation
and innovation*

Five Programme Lines – *Rotterdam Architectuurstad* is about the strength of design, the public, commissioning, the design sector itself and innovation. These themes are developed into five programme lines. Each line represents a specific theme or problem and provides a starting point for a working method or solution, including concrete tasks or collaboration partners. This way, the programme lines connect policy to actual activity.

THE PROGRAMME LINES ARE

1 – Rotterdam's Personality as Reflected by the Living Environment

This programme line addresses the quality of the living environment. It connects the character and identity of the existing city with the spatial translation of current challenges.

2 – Architecture for All Rotterdam Citizens

This programme line boosts the relationship between intrinsically professional discourse and activities for a wider, interested audience and thus stimulates public interest in architecture.

3 – Active Commissioning

Good design is created by the combined actions of parties such as clients, designers, users and builders. These combined actions benefit from room for the strength of design. The strength of design enriches the city with qualitative and sometimes exceptional solutions.

4 – Rotterdam's Strong Design Sector

The design sector is economically and socially important to Rotterdam and makes the city stand out in an international perspective. Talent development requires targeted policy as well.

5 – Rotterdam's Innovations and Experiments

We encourage experiment and innovation, especially around three specific challenges: housing, the energy transition and migration.



Rotterdam's Personality as Reflected by the Living Environment - **Rotterdam will continue to offer an attractive living environment if the city can connect the character and identity of the existing city and its proven qualities to the spatial translation of new challenges involving climate, housing and the circular economy.**

The appeal of a city is largely determined by the quality of the physical living environment, by the urban fabric of buildings and public spaces and its layout, green and cultural-historical heritage.

Interplay of Spaces and Functions

Spatial quality is about the interplay of public spaces and buildings that are a pleasure to use, that are robust and flexible enough to have various functions and that will keep well. Quality is mainly the result of the balance between space and function. And space also involves different scales: from the level of the urban fabric and the public space to that of art in the public space and that of the building. In addition, the different functions in an area – that is: local programming – also require attention. This means there has to be enough room for community facilities, for example. The city at eye level requires attention, too: the connection between the level of the city and that of the building plays an important part in a pleasant urban environment (City Lounge). The increase of the amount of high-rise buildings requires the reconsideration of roofs as the 'fifth facade'.

This involves the functioning and experience of space in the wider sense. These require an integrated approach to all the different elements that make up the living environment and therefore the commitment of all parties that work on the city. The connecting principle is pride in what Rotterdam has achieved by investing in an attractive city already; anyone who wants to share in that result is expected to contribute to its spatial quality.

Stratification as Part of Rotterdam's Identity

In a city that values international competitiveness, it is important to pay attention to the small scale, local identity and the characteristics of neighbourhoods. The local identity of places and neighbourhoods colours the identity of the city as a whole and thus makes a major contribution to the identity of Rotterdam. Who people are is always connected to where they live, work, play and grow up. Architecture and cultural history are carriers of local identity. Rotterdam is known for its expansive port, with striking harbour basins and harbour buildings, nineteenth-century residential areas with characteristic housing, remarkable urban design and reconstruction architecture, a temporal layer that is now part of the historical city. The result is a layered and rich city. It is therefore important to take Rotterdam's personality and people's pride in the city and its history as starting points for new developments, especially now that the number of

transformation and integration challenges is growing and now that building increasingly takes place inside the existing city, in a historical and often layered context.

Made-to-Measure

How do you tie in the new with the existing? First of all: by looking at the city from a cultural-historical point of view, by mapping historical time layers and characteristics. It also involves encouraging the reuse and transformation of buildings. Encouraging reuse and transformation requires the balancing of new use and original building characteristics. The redeveloped and transformed existing buildings, especially heritage, are often made-to-measure. That also makes them unique. An understanding of the characteristics and unique points of such buildings is required, because these will serve as the basis for a design strategy. New plans for such buildings have to set out from an interpretation of their historical significance to the city and of their existing user value. Spatial quality and stratification grow once buildings or places' historical value and complexity are involved and used in future developments.

Following the post-war reconstruction, the passage of time also reveals the historicity of more recent temporal layers. Today we ask ourselves questions about the cultural-historical value of architecture and urbanism from the 1970s and 1980s. This era produced an entirely different type and way of building than the reconstruction period. Historical research and interpretation of this temporal layer in the city is necessary, for example with regard to the backgrounds of urban renewal, the ideas of designers and the characteristics of the architecture. This historicity can subsequently become significant to the management and redevelopment of the architecture of this typical time. Mapping out cultural-historical values at an early stage saves time and streamlines processes.

Existing City, New Challenges

Rotterdam is growing. More and more people are attracted to the city's dynamics. This calls for good growth. It is important to connect topical problems with the existing values and proven qualities of the city. This requires an integrated approach to spatial and social problems. The aim is for residents and visitors to feel comfortable and safe, to continue to recognize themselves in the city and for the city to facilitate encounters, sports, recreation and culture. The question is how the spatial translation of the new challenges will land in the

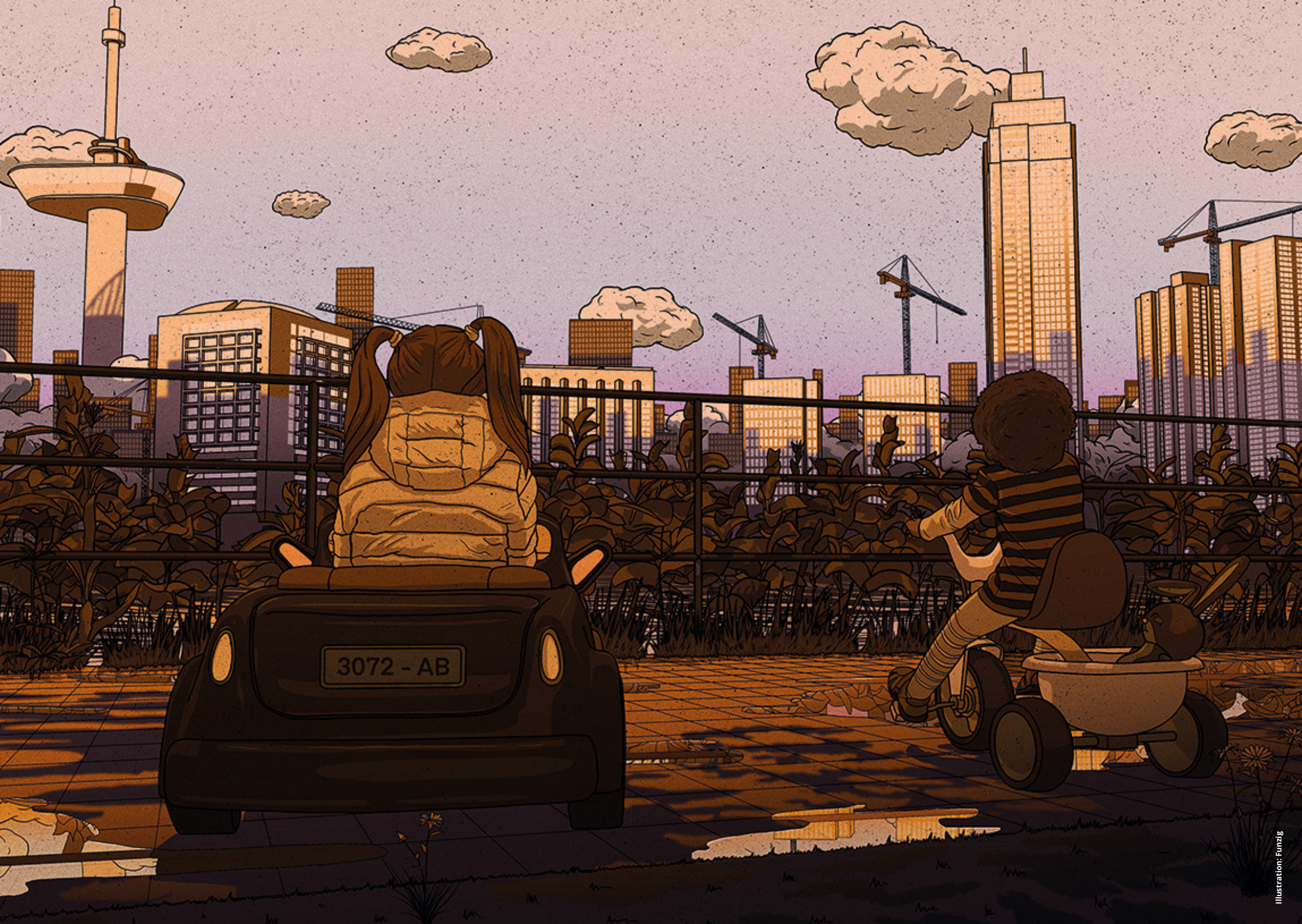
existing, layered city. Rotterdam faces a number of transitions, such as the energy transition. This will spatially impact the current cityscape, its buildings and the way they are experienced. Take, for example, the transformation of the existing housing stock to a sustainable housing stock. Adaptations have to ensure that the dwellings match their surroundings as well as the identity of Rotterdam's built environment. The whole has to look attractive. The transition into a circular economy is also touching on new building assignments. The reuse of buildings, which may or may not be protected heritage, fits perfectly within the concept of the circular economy. In addition, circularity in a wider sense is increasingly relevant to new challenges – think of buildings that can be used flexibly and of the reuse of materials.

Synergy

In the case of transitions and challenges, it is important to put spatial quality first. This is the only way an attractive living environment can continue to develop. Design is both a good means and a precondition for the embedding of transitions in the living environment, dwelling, workplace, neighbourhood and city. It is in keeping with Rotterdam's tradition to explicitly use spatial design to realize social and economic tasks such as the energy transition. The challenge is to link different tasks to create synergy that will improve the quality of the living environment. Spatial quality in a wider sense also requires the guarantee of municipal instruments and processes. All of this will therefore be developed further in conjunction with the development of the working methods of the Strategy on Spatial Planning.

THE AMBITION FOR THIS PROGRAMME LINE

Rotterdam Architectuurstad defines the quality of the living environment in a wider sense: its functioning and the way it is experienced are based on the interplay of space and programme; it pays attention to the small as well as the large scale. Rotterdam Architectuurstad focuses on the one feature from which Rotterdam derives its identity: the historical stratification that shows the unique history and idiosyncratic character of the city. Spatial design has traditionally been an important key in Rotterdam's approach to social challenges. Rotterdam Architectuurstad connects the existing values with the spatial translation of new challenges and uses design as the means and condition for embedding the transitions in the living environment and creating synergy.



Architecture for All
Rotterdam Citizens -
**Like film in Los Angeles
and haute couture in Paris,
architecture is part of the
identity of Rotterdam. The
programme line 'Architecture
for All Rotterdam Citizens'
stimulates the public's
interest in architecture and
awareness of the quality of
the living environment.**

The involvement of Rotterdam locals in architecture is substantial and its architectural climate flourishes partly thanks to this public interest. Residents feel affinity for the city's architecture and show an extraordinary commitment that is visible and tangible throughout the city. The development and construction of new projects are followed and discussed attentively. The development of the Luchtsingel was made possible by an extensive publicity campaign. Once it had been selected as a Stadsinitiatief (City Project) a budget was made available to actually implement this plan. Initiatives for joint green space, community vegetable gardens and ideas for vacant buildings also show that more and more people feel a responsibility towards their surroundings, so much so that they want to help develop it either individually or collectively. Another example is the Groene Connectie (Green Connection), a hiking trail of about 8 km that connects green initiatives with each other and to care and welfare establishments. The public debate plays a part in this. It contributes to greater knowledge of architecture and greater awareness of the value of spatial quality.

Proud of Rotterdam

Architecture allows people to identify with their city. Architecture is about the experience, the stories and the meaning of places in the history of the city and about the personal history of residents. Many Rotterdam locals know the stories of the city's illustrious past. Once upon a time the port was located in the city centre; trains ran above-ground through the heart of the city and deer grazed on the Weena. Many people have a personal connection with a place or building, for example, they learned to swim in the swimming pool they see from the metro every day, or learned to play football in the courtyard of the building block in which they used to live. Stories, collective and personal, citywide and super local, provide a connection with the physical environment, with the city in which people live. When these stories are shared, they acquire a collective meaning and thus strengthen a collective pride in the city.

Committed to the Living Environment

In addition to high-profile buildings and places of iconic significance, the quality of the living environment is about the small-scale and the local and about the architecture and design of the everyday, in the inner city and in the neighbourhoods around it. Architecture thus touches the life of every Rotterdam inhabitant. Architecture is a topic of conversation for all Rotterdam's residents who, after all, all have a relationship to their surroundings. The more proud Rotterdam locals are of their living environment, the greater their commitment to it will be. And the greater that commitment is, the better they will take care of their environment. It is important to involve the people of Rotterdam in the spatial development of the city, for example by giving residents the opportunity to participate in public discussions about the development of the city. This can be done in several ways for different generations.

City Making

Nowadays, the verb 'city making' has general currency. This suits Rotterdam, the city of 'doers'. Residents are increasingly taking initiatives themselves. Citizen's initiatives are often modest, but they usually have a major effect on the living environment as they are developed with great dedication, attention and quality and have strong local roots. Initiators can be private individuals who want to build their own dwellings, neighbours setting up community vegetable gardens or entrepreneurs developing special business accommodations.

International Visitors

Many tourists wander the city to check out its architecture, cameras at the ready. Rotterdam has developed into an international architecture destination. Architecture thus has an economic effect on the city. Visitors include people who travel for pleasure as well as professionally interested delegations. Architecture tourists and delegations regularly combine a visit to Amsterdam with a visit to Rotterdam.

THE AMBITION FOR THIS PROGRAMME LINE

The City of Rotterdam wants to involve the general public and introduce it to architecture and the architecture climate. It organizes activities that are meant to arouse people's interest in the (design of the) living environment and encourage Rotterdam locals to join in the city making. The city and the people share an interest: the qualitative spatial development of the city is good for the city as well as good for its residents and visitors.



Active
Commissioning =
A good design does not stand alone. Good architecture is co-created and the result of the interaction between designer and client.

Active commissioning determines the architecture climate to a large extent. Clients have to formulate their assignments clearly, even visionary. Good commissioning can provide designers with elbow room, for example to conduct research and explore new perspectives. Whether projects are large or small, stimulating commissioning and good interaction between the parties involved makes for stronger designs. Confident that this is the case, the city deliberately awards its annual Architecture Award to a team consisting of a client, an architect and a builder. Good growth of the city requires a combination of urgency and quality. Active commissioning is meant to find the right balance in the pace of the work on current tasks in the city.

The Commissioning City

As a commissioner of community facilities such as sports halls, activity centres and school buildings, the City of Rotterdam contributes to the architecture climate of the city. It follows the so-called designer selection protocol, which, originating from the previous Architecture Memorandum, ensures transparent, efficient and accessible selection procedures. The city uses this protocol as a guideline for the selection of architects. Ever-changing circumstances continue to call for the further development of the instruments that already exist.

The following principles are central to active commissioning:

Using the Strength of Design at an Early Stage

A strong design often comprises an unambiguous, integrated answer to a variety of underlying questions and challenges. Such a design does not come about overnight, but is the result of a complex and interdisciplinary process. The design brings to light the consequences of different choices, helps to define challenges and examines relationships between problems and sectors. It explains how different wishes and ideas relate to each other and it creates an overview of the complexity and uncertainty that characterize contemporary spatial tasks.

The city aims to deploy the strength of design at an early stage in the case of social challenges, for example by having coalitions, labs and studios work on future tasks. The social challenges involved are:

- Education Accommodation

Education accommodation refers to the building stock, to other educational concepts and to the relationship between the two. This is a topical and urgent challenge that includes a number of upcoming, necessary and large-scale renovations. Research by design produces well-balanced, multi-scaled and integrated plans for one or more buildings. These should ultimately lead to user-friendly buildings that have longer lifespans thanks to smart combinations of their functions, good connections with their immediate surroundings, clear and flexible layouts and the sustainable use of materials and energy.

- Cultural Facilities

The city has to seize the opportunities the necessary renovation of cultural facilities offer to give these added social value. It can do this at various levels and as an integrated challenge involving use, financing, spatial models and programming.

- Care and Welfare

Care and welfare are affected by changes as a result of the increasing ageing of the population as well as by system changes. Research by design can contribute to new solutions and well-designed facilities for vulnerable groups.

- Sports

In Rotterdam, more and more people participate in sports. As the pressure on the city is increasing, living and working functions are also being reconsidered. Sports facilities are important to the quality of living. Given the lack of space, their use should be optimized. The challenge is to create a better connection between sports facilities and education and welfare establishments and to ensure that as many residents as possible can use them. Built sports facilities (gymnasiums, sports halls, swimming pools) are large in size and sometimes look inaccessible. As a result, they do not contribute enough to an attractive living environment. It is important for these buildings to look attractive and be practical to use. A good design can result in an icon at the neighbourhood level.

There are many sports clubs in Rotterdam and the popularity of informally organized sports is growing. The public space is being used more and more intensively, especially for the day to day practice of sports. A stretch of grass in a

park, for example, may be used as a football field, temporarily or on a more permanent basis. And a quay along the water can be used as a running track. The importance of the city as a backdrop for sports has increased.

- Green Recreation

The number of residences in Rotterdam will have to increase in the coming period. Dwellings need community facilities, leisure spaces and recreational green. Though these are available in the city and on its outskirts already, they represent a number of challenges. The spatial quality of the city needs to be improved, for example by adding hiking trails and publicly accessible green space, and the transition to the more intensive and inclusive use of spaces has to be addressed too. It is also important to examine what part these areas can play in the meeting of challenges involving climate adaptation and biodiversity.

Accessible and Transparent Designer Selection Protocol

Rotterdam honours its diversity. This is why *Rotterdam Architectuurstad* creates opportunities for all designers: young or old, from large and small offices. And this is why the city uses an open, accessible and transparent designer selection protocol. Rationality is the starting point. This means that a design office that has not previously designed a bridge is no longer automatically excluded from the tender for the design of a bridge. Instead, a design office can substantiate its competences by examples and references that show it can handle the complexity of the task.

This way, more design offices can compete for design commissions in Rotterdam. This creates space for unexpected solutions that can enrich the city. This in turn matches the spatial and cultural diversity of the city.

Stimulating Young Talent

Rotterdam functions as a launching pad for young talent and craftsmanship in the wider sense. Rotterdam cherishes the strength, energy and potential impact of the ideas of the talented and the skilled, whether they are active in film, dance, sports or architecture. This fits the character of the city and is a pow-

erful reflection of its age structure. Several now famous Dutch architects received their all-important first major commission in Rotterdam. Ben van Berkel designed the Erasmus Bridge when he was 34. Francine Houben was 30 when she was commissioned to design housing for young people on the Kruiskade. Huig Maaskant was 31 when he received the commission for the Plaslaanflat in Kralingen.

Today, there are not that many opportunities for young talent. When designers are being selected or concrete design commissions awarded, young designers often find they are not eligible. As a result, they sometimes linger in the early stages of their design practice for too long. The city can create opportunities for young talent in various ways, for example by paying attention to the accessibility of public or non-public tenders. The city can also encourage collaboration between young and experienced offices in the case of complex challenges. Rotterdam wants to keep creative talent in the city, attract it, give it elbow room and involve it in the development of the city.

Forms of Commissioning

Not only the city, but a wide range of other commissioners including housing associations and developers also shape Rotterdam. Many of these have strong local ties. Commissioning is quite common nowadays and has long ceased to be restricted to the city and housing associations or developers. Architects, active citizens, collectives and other broad coalitions increasingly take initiatives as well. This often leads to good and innovative projects and results in a wealth of different types of projects in the city.

Practising What We Preach

On the principle of 'Leading by Example', the city unlocks knowledge and experience about commissioning and encourages other parties. The use of accessible and transparent designer selection protocols by developing parties can contribute greatly to Rotterdam's architecture climate. Designers will be able to work on other types of commissions, there will be room for young talent and quality will be part and parcel of any new selection and contract forms.

Guaranteeing Quality in New Selection and Contract Forms

A more complex professional field also means more complex contract and tender forms. Integrated contract forms are increasingly being used in tenders. Design is often no longer a separate service or expertise, but part of a multidisciplinary offer in response to market demands. In that offer design, construction, financing, maintenance and management (DBFMO) and even redevelopment options are increasingly seen as a whole. These new allocation processes have to include good and clear quality criteria. In addition, the designer selection protocol has to be transparent and it has to be clear to which stages of the process the selected designer can contribute. This requires the further development of the guidelines for designer selection into these types of contracts.

THE AMBITION FOR THIS PROGRAMME LINE

Rotterdam Architectuurstad uses the strength of design at an early stage of commissioning on the conviction that a strong design provides an unambiguous and integrated answer to a variety of underlying questions. Rotterdam Architectuurstad contributes to active commissioning by guaranteeing roles, formulating clear commissions as well as creating accessible procedures that pay attention to the strength of design and talent development.



Rotterdam's Strong Design Sector = Which developments affect the sector? And what opportunities are there for new design talent? The design sector is of great economic and social importance to Rotterdam. Design offices work on complex spatial issues both locally, nationally and internationally. They are the city's ambassadors. In addition, they apply the knowledge and experience they have gained to address local issues and challenges.

The design profession is not unambiguous and static. New market conditions, social trends, technological developments and changing spatial and programmatic points of view all influence the way designers work and vice versa. Developments can lead to a new way of working for designers. In this respect architecture institutions make an important contribution as well.

Economic Significance

The presence of the design sector is of economic value to Rotterdam. The sector is extensive and diverse; Rotterdam is an attractive business location for independent designers and small, medium-sized and large international design offices. The businesses vary in size, type of commissions, scale and sphere of activity. The Netherlands is known internationally for its creativity and knowledge economy. Rotterdam's design sector and architecture in Rotterdam are concrete examples of this ambition. The offices are mostly internationally active and have employees of different nationalities. The fact that they work on international issues and attract international professionals strengthens Rotterdam's intelligent architecture climate. This makes the sector an important ambassador of Rotterdam, both at home and abroad.

The appeal of the city is not limited to professionals; visitors also praise Rotterdam's challenging and innovative architecture. Architecture is one of the city's tourist attractions. The design sector therefore also generates employment in other sectors. In addition, the sector itself contributes to the vibrancy of the city.

Social Significance

The design sector has innovative strength. It is a sector that is eminently capable of understanding complex social issues and coming up with unexpected solutions. Major examples of this are provided by the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR), which has had transition-related issues as its theme on several occasions: *The Missing Link* (2018-2020), *The Next Economy* (2016), *Urban by Nature* (2014), *Making City* (2012), *Open City* (2009), *Power* (2007), *The Flood* (2005) and *Mobility* (2003).

Cultural Infrastructure

Rotterdam's cultural infrastructure serves as an important link between the design sector and the general public, for example by organizing lectures, debates and thought-provoking exhibitions. The working language is not exclusively Dutch. Thanks to international staff and researchers, English is increasingly spoken at design offices and universities, or at least is the second language in use.

English-language cultural activities are in line with this development; they are popular with international visitors from other Dutch cities as well.

The cultural sector also regularly involves designers in important (social) issues by organizing competitions, events or research projects. The cultural infrastructure is relatively narrow and vulnerable; there are few opportunities to support architecture institutions or cultural projects. The city supports three architecture institutions on a structural basis. There is more potential, but organizations that depend on incidental subsidies find it hard to develop at all.

In addition, there is little coordination or long-term collaboration at this time. Strengthening the cultural infrastructure could strengthen relationships with national partners, for example. Together with national partners, the cultural infrastructure could set up and carry out research labs, competitions, presentations and other activities. At present, however, these take place on a project-by-project basis. For example, there are various initiatives in Rotterdam based on the national Action Agenda Architecture and Spatial Design. In the future the connection between these projects should be stronger, so that these projects and partners also strengthen each other. The city benefits from this and it also broadens and strengthens the basis of the cultural infrastructure.

Talent Development

A new generation comes up with new insights, puts different issues on the agenda and has a career to look forward too. To accommodate this, the city wants to pay attention to good settlement conditions and contribute to sufficient development prospects. Developing talent benefits from opportunities to gain work experience. Given the quality of Rotterdam's design offices,

there are plenty of opportunities for this. On an individual level, talented designers need an attractive business climate. The city can support this by offering accessible opportunities, for example for professionalization, artistic development and acquiring workspace.

AMBITION FOR THIS PROGRAMME LINE

Rotterdam wants to be an attractive place of business for designers. The city stimulates talent development and endeavours to create a good cultural infrastructure. This will strengthen the architecture climate, especially if there is mutual interaction. As a result, the design sector can be of social significance. And a strong design sector generates employment in other sectors and arouses public interest in architecture as well.



Rotterdam's
Innovations and
Experiments - This
programme line revolves
around three urban
challenges: the housing
challenge, the energy
transition and the inclusive
city. They are topical and
urgent. Identifying these
specific tasks provides
a focused framework
for innovation and
experimentation.

Rotterdam is known for its innovative instincts. The city has been a laboratory for experimentation and innovation in architecture for decades. This was motivated by the wish to create a pleasant living environment for its residents and an attractive climate and business licensing requirements.

Tradition of Experiment and Innovation

Rotterdam has a long tradition of experimentation and innovation. W.N. Rose's Singel Plan combined city beautification with the need for water management in the context of healthy living requirements. G.J. de Jongh laid the foundation for Rotterdam as a modern port city by linking the expansion of the port to urban development. The Van Nelle Factory is an architectural masterpiece as well as the result of the ambition to combine a healthy working environment for employees with optimized coffee and tea production processes. A last example is the Bergpolderflat; the first gallery flat built using standardization and prefabrication, which made affordable housing for workers available. Over the years, the city has generated many innovative architectural 'monuments' or icons. These could be built by the interplay of social and economic challenges or urgent issues, new technologies and materials, spatial possibilities of architecture and urban design and the use of designers' ideas and the strength of design. Combining design, technology and society is a tried and tested Rotterdam method of dealing with new challenges.

Good Growth

Rotterdam is reorganizing its experimentation and innovation tradition to address the current densification and urbanization challenges.² This is a qualitative and integrated challenge with quantitative ambitions. The goal is a complete, attractive and healthy city. The growth of the city is about more than just numbers. All of the functions that have to be realized in the existing city need space and quality. The core task of the city is to deal more intelligently with the limited space available and to unite conflicting aspects. This requires the strength of design as well as research by design. Designers can translate insights, knowledge and ideas into images that make possible futures imaginable. They can show things that do not yet exist, make complex and conflicting aspects visible and understandable, and reflect on physical consequences. In addition, the design process helps to facilitate collaboration between parties, connect interests, link developments at different levels and alternately focus on strategy and implementation.³

Challenges

The *Rotterdam Architectuurstad* programme line 'Rotterdam's Innovations and Experiments' focuses on three challenges, as this ensures greater effectiveness in promoting innovation and experimentation. The selection of three challenges makes it possible to investigate subjects in depth over a short period of time and to form coalitions with partners and relevant stakeholders.

In concrete terms, the three challenges are:

- meeting the housing challenge
- realizing the energy transition
- creating an inclusive city

The city is currently developing or has already adopted policy to this meet these challenges. At the same time, the design sector is working hard to explore, imagine and address these issues. Architecture policy endeavours to link the strength of design to the above challenges so that designers can contribute to possible scenarios and solutions on the basis of their knowledge and skills.

Housing Challenge

Rotterdam aspires to have built 50,000 more dwellings by 2040. Quality is a key word in this quantitative challenge. Quality is about more than dwellings. In addition to surface area, access and typology, it is also about the living environment and the way buildings upgrade the environment. This can involve minor interventions, restructurings, transformations and area development. In all cases, the aim is to strengthen the identity of residential environments. The architecture of houses and residential complexes is very important in this respect. Rotterdam's architecture policy aims to ensure that new dwellings establish a good relationship with the existing city, add meaning and strengthen the coherence of its urban design to create attractive residential environments. Striving for quality and future value through flexibility and diversity requires room for innovation and experimentation. The development of qualitative new ways to meet these challenges requires the contribution of the strength of design. Rotterdam's architecture policy is thus in line with its ideas about urban housing as laid down in the memorandum *Woonvisie*.⁴

Energy Transition

Rotterdam makes every effort to realize the energy transition and climate adaptations.⁵ The physical changes that these transitions bring with them comprise as many opportunities to make the city more attractive at the same time. The necessary interventions can boost the outdoor space (make it more beautiful and more multifunctional) and can be integrated into the existing buildings in such a way that the surroundings are always enhanced. That is why the architecture policy explicitly puts these transitions on the agenda as spatial design challenges. New buildings also have to live up to new technological requirements and seize every opportunity to add value to the cityscape.

Inclusive City

The way in which the living environment is designed and organized has a major influence on the functioning of society and vice versa. A residential area, for example, can be designed in such a way that there is plenty of room for encounters, which contributes to social cohesion in that area. Rotterdam wants to turn diversity into a strength, to overcome contrasts and work on new connections in the city.⁶ Architecture and design can make an essential contribution to this. The strength of design can be used to make this challenge more transparent and design studies can be launched to work on various scenarios. Cultural organizations can put the challenge on their agendas, place it in a broader cultural context and discuss the results of the design studies.

AMBITION FOR THIS PROGRAMME LINE

The ambition of Rotterdam's architecture policy is to approach three urgent social challenges – the housing challenge, the energy transition and the inclusive city – as integrated design challenges and to address them in the context of the qualitative spatial development of the city.

2. *Strategische verkenning verstedelijking (Strategic Exploration Urbanization)* June 2019.
3. *Samen Werken aan Ontwerpkracht, Actieagenda Ruimtelijk Ontwerp (Working Together on the Strength of Design, Action Agenda Spatial Design)* 2017-2020.
4. *Woonvisie Rotterdam (Housing Vision Rotterdam)*, December 2016, Addendum *Woonvisie (Addendum Housing Vision)*, May 2019.
5. *Rotterdams Weerwoord (Rotterdam Riposte)*, February 2019.
6. *Coalitieakkoord (Coalition Agreement)* 2018-2022, *Nieuwe Energie voor Rotterdam (New Energy for Rotterdam)*.



In Conclusion – Rotterdam Architectuurstad aims to promote the quality of the city’s spatial development and to stimulate Rotterdam’s intelligent architecture climate. In Rotterdam, architecture is about more than just the city’s image: architecture is interwoven with the identities of Rotterdam, the citizens of Rotterdam and visitors to the city. The ambition is to apply the architecture policy to social challenges, to make use of heritage and act in an inclusive manner. This way Rotterdam can continue to develop as a City of Architecture.

Creating Rotterdam Architectuurstad

Architecture policy is not only a matter of the Municipality of Rotterdam. Designers, developers, architects, residents and cultural organizations also contribute to a city in which spatial quality ranks first. Hence this policy and this action agenda were realized with the input of various parties in the city.

Citywide Meetings

- Sessions with designers and architects, sessions in May and October 2018, organized by AIR, Architecture Institute Rotterdam
- Sessions with cultural organizations, June and October 2018
- Presentation in the *Welstand en Monumentencommissie* (Building Aesthetics and Monuments Committee), May 2018
- Presentation in the *Van der Leeuwkring*, December 2018
- Talks with Dutch Government Architect Floris van Alkemade, February 2019.

Expert Group

The architecture policy expert group discussed and commented on the architecture policy in four sessions. The expert group included:

- Kristiaan Borret, Brussels Government Architect
- Ninke Happel, partner at Happel Cornelisse Verhoeven architects Rotterdam
- Michelle Provoost, partner at Crimson Architectural Historians Rotterdam
- Afaina de Jong, design studio AFARAI Amsterdam.

English Edition

The original 2019 Dutch version of the Architecture Memorandum has been drawn up on the responsibility of the department of Sports and Culture and that of Urban Development of the City of Rotterdam. This 2023 English edition was translated and commissioned under the supervision of AIR, Architecture Institute Rotterdam. This translation has been redesigned in terms of graphic design and visuals. Five Rotterdam-based illustrators were asked to each accompany one of the five programme lines and create an additional illustration.

