

Speech Cees van 't Veen
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Dear colleagues, dear Kristín,

I would like to share with you the results of a quantitative study on the economic value of monumental heritage for the city. And secondly, I am eager to elaborate on Public-private-civic partnerships and the process of redevelopment and design. How the Dutch deal with heritage.

Let me start by asking you a specific question. *Who is living in a historical city centre? (fingers?)*

As you know, *monumental* cities of today are booming more than ever. It is a magnet for jobseekers, as it appeals to the need for (the sense of) authenticity. It also gives opportunities for tourists to spend their money on. In short, these days historically grown cities are the engine of our economy and of innovation.

A recent study in the Netherlands shows that monumental cities have significantly outperformed newer towns and cities. In the monumental city, population and potential labour supply are increasing, while many other cities are witnessing a decline. On average, the population is more open minded, highly educated, (and the ageing effect appears to be bypassing the older cities). Housing prices are rising faster and the monumental city offers more and better amenities. (The importance of monuments for the attractiveness of a city to its inhabitants turns out to be far greater than the importance of monuments for tourism in the city). The study shows that the contribution of monuments to the attractiveness of a city is measurable. It is due to the fact that people like to live and work in monumental buildings, as well as to the fact that monumental housing and monumental city centres increase the attractiveness of a city as a whole. An average occupier of a monumental building in the monumental city centre of Amsterdam is willing to pay € 125.000 euro more for a home. And that is entirely down to the monumental character of the home and the surrounding area, and on top of the wide range of amenities usually available on these locations.

In the Netherlands we distinguish 23 monumental cities. Meaning that such a Dutch historic city has to have 150 or more listed monuments within a radius of 500 meters from the historical centre. For example, Amsterdam is enriched with 1800 listed buildings. In Netherlands we distinguish old towns and new towns. If you look at modern architecture, Rotterdam is the top of the bill. You might be aware of the 'battle' between Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Rotterdam is often called: "the city of the future". Landmark buildings and experimental construction are transforming the Netherlands' second city into a world-class destination for architectural innovation, outstripping other European centres and turning Amsterdam into "the city of the past"...

Thirty-fourty years ago, in the seventies and eighties, 'Old Cities' had a bad image. Suburbanisation has hit inner cities quite hard in those years. City centres were dirty, unsafe, impoverished and lost a substantial part of their population. Amsterdam even 25%. Most of the time large-scale demolition was the easy way. Only step-by-step the revival of the old city began. In the late nineties the mass exodus to the suburbs was reversed.

How did this urban renewal take off? Mostly with the help of grants, generated by the process of city renovation, and within the framework of the Heritage Act. Also private Societies for Urban Generation, the squatters' movement and active individuals made this ambition to a success: *power to the people!* ('Civic participation', as Snenska Quadvlieg of Europa Nostra mentioned yesterday).

Last year about 6 million visitors and tourists dropped by in our capital city Amsterdam in search of places of interest - these figures are comparable to Venice or Barcelona. (If no monuments and canals were around in Amsterdam, more than 3 million tourists would not have shown up, this is

equal to almost 1 billion euro less income). In a cost and benefit analysis one can include the added value of the expenses of tourists. And of course, the enjoyment of the residents in the monumental living area is priceless. Moreover, dwellings in national listed monuments are now valued 70% above their non-monumental counterparts. By making these kinds of calculations, it is possible to measure the value of culture and heritage for society!

(Meanwhile, critical articles show up, telling us that the benefits of mass tourism in cities like Amsterdam are overrated and the costs underestimated. It is really hard to get the right figures nowadays. In the slipstream, prices of dwellings rise enormously and gentrification is omnipresent. It seems that balance is lost and actually the main question is: *Who owns the city? Who is in control?*)

(So far this study. I refer to the site...)

Another current subject in our business is the re-use of buildings. In the search for special historic places to live in, old warehouses, empty school buildings, churches, post-offices and abandoned factories entered the picture. As demolition was not self-evident for both Dutch politicians and the general public, adaptive re-use became mainstream. Over the last 10 years the demand for the repurpose of unoccupied buildings, especially at conveniently situated locations, rose to high proportions. It seems that a new function can be found for every building (*function follows form*). Adaptive re-use is also in line with a global need for sustainability.

I am convinced that the future of housing and office markets lies in the development of concepts, in which the story of the place and the qualities of a location are important assets. They offer an (extra) identity that comes with the history: a story if you like. (They appeal to people and ensure that they can enter into a relationship with the building). In the turbulent political and social era of today, large groups of people are getting more and more footloose. This might be what people increasingly need: no tabula rasa, but being part of a layered society.

As the urban visionary Jane Jacobs used to say in the early sixties: '*Cities are not about buildings, they're about people*' (...) and: '*New ideas occur in old buildings*'. Please, watch the documentary '*Citizen Jane: Battle for the city*', released two years ago, in which Jacobs is portrayed as the '*Darwin of urban studies*'. (I think she was right). Look at our global urban future. By the end of this century, nearly three-fourths of the world's population will live in cities! Therefore, I am convinced that a grass rooted, bottom-up approach is imperative to the social, economic, and ecological success of tomorrow's global cities.

In the past, initiatives for adaptive reuse often originated with the government. Most of the time, this involved large-scale interventions and long-term subsidies. These days an opposite route seems to be taken. Governments are trying not to get in the way - thus allowing maximum freedom.

This reinterpretation of roles is relevant for all parties involved. Builders, architects, monument care and the general public have to abandon their traditional roles. Also for us, the Cultural Heritage Agency, reuse calls for flexible regulations, incentives and new ways to calculate the exploitation of projects. Often this has led to surprising combinations of functions. (It's not a question of merely generating output, but of customization). The design must be functional, remain affordable and comply with legal requirements and regulations. In the end specialists, policymakers and stakeholders take joint action, each with their own roles, responsibilities and knowledge.

I would like to mention three distinctive features of how the Dutch deal with heritage. We have published a book on this topic. In short, these are the headlines:

1. First, in the **transformation process**, today's architects make use of a wide range of design principles, adapted to the local challenges. A combination of cultural preservation and creativity that comes with the concept of a new culture is often the most successful.

For example the New Dutch Waterline, a 85 km long defence line dating from the nineteenth-

century for the protection of the western part of the Netherlands. Whenever war threatened, large areas of land were flooded. Dikes and higher parts of the cultural landscape were protected by forts. The defence line is nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

For the adaptive reuse of one of its many fortresses (Werk aan het Spool in Culemborg) a competition of ideas was organized, out of which a new concept came forth to design the complex as a stopover and cultural meeting point for people from the area. The historic form and meaning of the location were converted into a grass sculpture of platforms, pits, bumps and lines. This contemporary landscape is draped like a blanket over old and newly added buildings, such as an amphitheatre.

Also a nearby bunker was sawn in half and a footpath laid right through it. The wooden posts indicate how high the water will rise when the line is flooded. The intervention generated a new perspective on the other 700 bunkers (!) of this Waterline.

Another great example of a successful transformation process is Strijp S in Eindhoven, once the heart of the Philips factories and laboratories. From the 1970s onwards, industrial production was transferred to cheaper countries. In 2002, the 30-hectare site was sold to a contractor and since then it has been gradually developed. The municipality, public entities and the private sector work together in a development corporation. Because the buildings are so large, they are developed in stages: with events, temporary use, and inexpensive rentals of high-quality spaces. This has led to a great diversity of tenants, rents and levels of finishing. It is this mix that determines the success, and makes it nowadays the place to be.

2. A second characteristic of the Dutch Approach is that the **civil society has been emancipated** to become a full-fledged partner in the adaptive re-use assignment. Like chameleons, squatters have turned into project developers, people who objected first are now providers of frameworks, and demolishers changed into re-users (power to the people again). (As a result of this contribution, entirely new bottom-up projects have emerged).

We already know that this amazing Harpa building has won the important 'Mies van der Rohe Architecture Award' in 2013. This year, the winner is Dutch. It is an apartment block called Kleiburg (1971, architect Ottenhof), located in the Bijlmermeer, a CIAM inspired residential expansion of Amsterdam. DeFlat is one of the biggest apartment buildings in the Netherlands. It is a huge bend slab with 500 apartments, 400 meter long, and 11 stories high. A consortium rescued the building from the wrecking ball by turning it into a 'Klusflat', meaning that the people who buy an apartment over there, must renovate it by themselves. This example of civil participation minimizes the initial investments and creates a new business model for housing.

By the way, it is the first time that this European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture goes to the renovation of an existing building!

3. Finally, the third character of the Dutch Approach. At the time of the banking crisis **alternative forms of financing** were introduced. Committed to local needs, new credit providers popped-up and launched new opportunities. As you know, investors do not focus on calculating the profits (which should be between 6 and 8 per cent), but on calculating the risks. Lack of continuity is regarded as the greatest risk. Only the local government can solve this problem, as they are - in accordance to national legislation - responsible for drawing up urban development plans. A nice example of a new form of financing is visible in the revitalization of De Hallen, 7 huge halls of a former tramway depot in Amsterdam. The municipality awarded the purchase of the nineteenth-century building complex to a foundation with unconventional ideas. The process was remarkable, in which residents and entrepreneurs in the neighbourhood, and the potential tenants were closely involved. Also the contractor was selected early on in the process. Moreover, there was total transparency towards future tenants about the financial aspects of the project. They collected money from all quarters through monument low-interest loans, an adaptive reuse grant, bank loans and crowd funding. Private individuals were given the opportunity to invest in the project with the tax benefits of monument owners, so that they were given the prospect of high returns.

In dealing with heritage and adaptive reuse assignments, we think an *integrated approach* is key. This means close collaboration between public and private parties, and also a high degree of civic involvement.

Dear Heads,

Our Cultural Heritage Agency strongly supports and facilitates this abovementioned Dutch Approach. We consider it our task to create favourable conditions for the vital future of the heritage we cherish. We accept the adaptation of heritage to current needs, be it under the condition that the historical features are being respected, yet leaving room for added cultural value.

The examples of transformations I mentioned earlier are presented in a new book, titled: *Reuse, Redevelop and Design. How the Dutch Deal With Heritage*. I am eager to share this book with those of you who are interested. Not to teach, nor to preach, but for the reason of debate only. I want to stress that the Dutch way is *not* the only way and *not* necessarily the best way. But since the Netherlands developed a specific tradition in adaptive re-use, this book offers opportunity for exchange of knowledge (, for the good of both).

I am going to finish my speech by telling you, that this EHHF-meeting in Reykjavik will be my last. After nine years as a general director of the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency, it is time to give room to a new generation. I will step down.

So, I would like to thank you - from the bottom of my heart - for the good cooperation, information and inspiration during all the meetings we had together.