

Amsterdam, a former alternative metropolis in the global mainstream

Amsterdam has recently undergone major shifts in its spatial, economic and social fields. And many are still to come as a result of the global financial and economic crisis. In our map we try to show that Amsterdam is a liveable city organised at a relatively humane scale, with a mix of cultures and a still bustling creative sector, despite the odd flagship project and some growing socioeconomic segregation. But the map is only a snapshot, indicating where what is at this very moment. More important however is in which direction the city is moving: in terms of spatial restructuring, economic development, social life and culture.

The city administration supports a growth scenario in order to meet international competition. It involves the up-scaling of its tasks from the present city of 760.000 inhabitants into a metropolitan area of 2 millions, including the satellite towns and suburbs, especially the new town of Almere. The concept of the city centre changes with this metropolitan outlook. Until now the centre was defined as the historical part, but in the metropolitan region, the whole area within the ring road has been labelled as the centre of the Amsterdam region and should function as a city centre, with higher rents, scarce and expensive parking spaces (but more public transport) and selected commercial and cultural services

The Zuidas will not be the world financial centre the banks dreamed

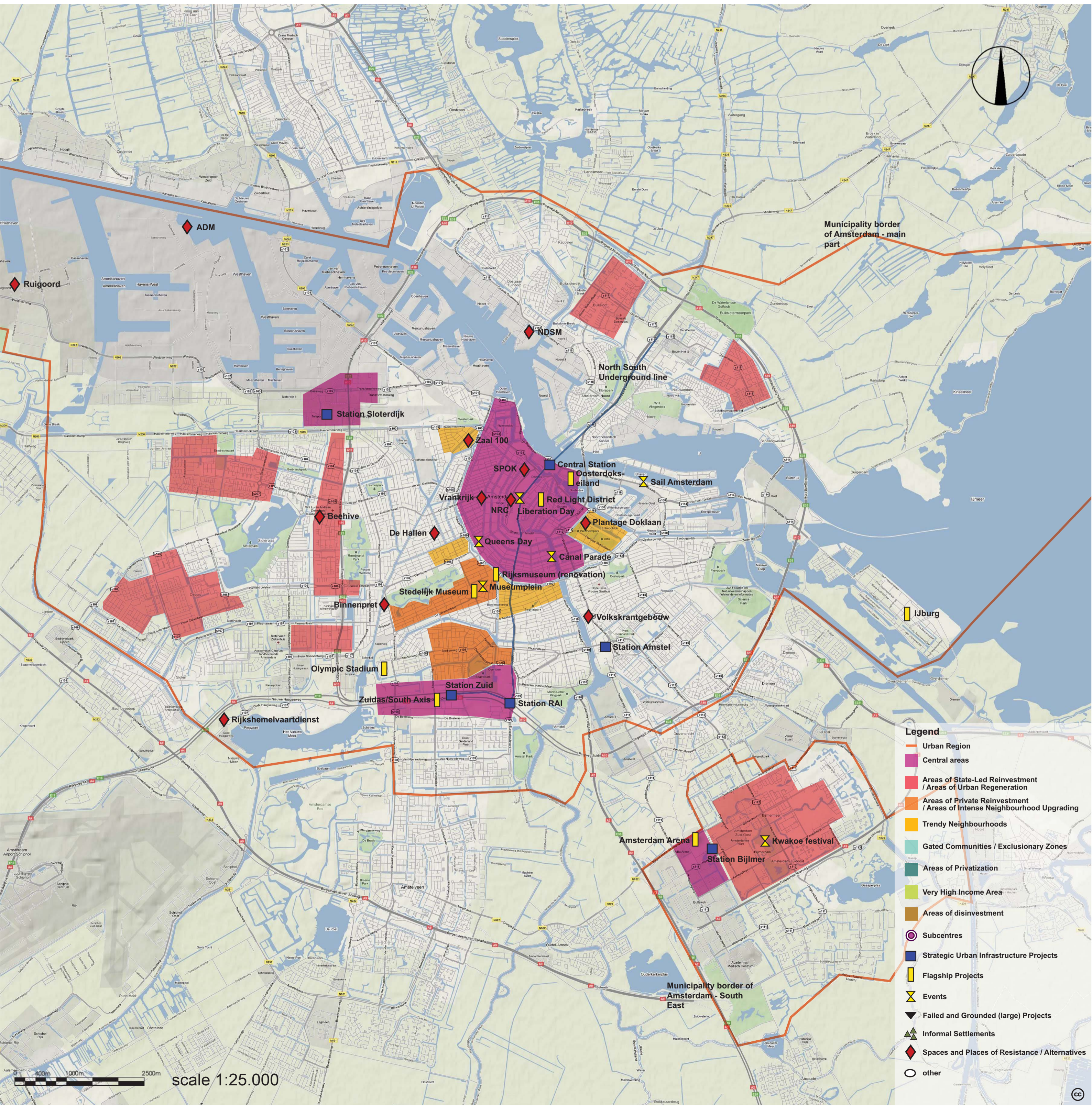
of. The dark clouds that hang over the Zuidas flagship project also affect any major investment project where private capital should be leading. In the whole city, a large share of the office buildings is vacant. The only feasible option for older office buildings is their reconversion into housing or lower grade workspace. Investors like pension funds, housing associations and private developers are cancelling many of their projects now because of financing problems.

The financial and the economic crisis have been met with policy proposals to cut public expenses, which might be good for the state budget, but have terribly negative effect on the social structure of the city. Rents will go up steeply. The rent increase will especially be high in the popular areas in the centre and south of the city, where access to social housing will be difficult for people with modest incomes. The pleasant mix of low and middle incomes in social housing estates will end with the new ruling of the European Commission which confines access only to the lower income households.

The Amsterdam squatting tradition limited vacancy and speculation with empty buildings and has facilitated many cultural initiatives. Sadly, despite the opposition of municipalities like Amsterdam, a recent legal reform in national law have changed squatting

from a (regulated) right into a criminal offence. The deal involves some possibilities to claim vacant buildings but municipalities have not the financial means to implement that part of the reform. This is likely to feed speculation and the further decrease of urbanity in the new city centre.

Netherlands 41'528Km2 * Inhabitants 16'587'551
Urban Region 1'377Km2 * Inhabitants 2'165'000



Urban Region: Amsterdam Metropolitan Region

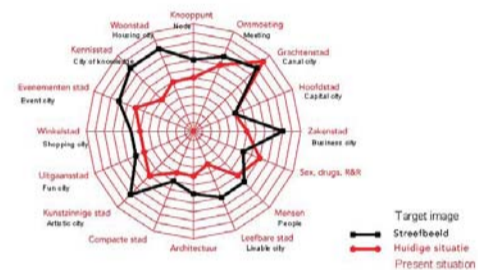
Purpose	Creation of a strong urban region which can compete internationally.
Dimensions	Amsterdam municipality - 770.000 inhabitants Amsterdam metropolitan region - 2 million Randstad - 7 million The Netherlands - 16 million



Description / Reason for this choice / Background / context

After earlier failures the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region started as a voluntary cooperation between Amsterdam and its surrounding municipalities. Its activities centred at first around public transport and housing distribution. The processes of financial internationalization and economic globalization started to have a strong effect on the spatial development of the emerging metropolitan region. Local authorities in the region joined forces in an informal and flexible way to create the Amsterdam Metropolitan region. Planning studies indicated that the north wing of the Randstad area had possibilities for a growth scenario.

Significance for New Metropolitan Mainstream Activities



Fields of activity are:

- Infrastructure :
Public transport and highway planning
- Housing :
Regional contracts on housing distribution give the city dwellers access to the housing market in suburban areas
- Employment/ investments :
The Amsterdam region presents itself abroad as one entity to lower the threshold for foreign investors.
- Landscape :
Protecting characteristic elements of the regional landscape.

Stakeholders and their interests

The stakeholder are the city of Amsterdam, about 35 other municipalities participate, Schiphol Airport, the Port of Amsterdam and the AMSIX Internet Exchange.

Deals

Examples of deals are: allocation of specific areas to specific sectors, like the financial sector (Zuidas), logistics (Schiphol), harbour related industry (Port of Amsterdam). Creative industries such as art, media advertising and entertainment go in urban centres.
Regarding housing, the municipalities are not dominant anymore. Housing corporations are independent and work and cooperate on a regional scale. This allows city dwellers to access suburban areas and vice versa.

Impacts

Until the financial crisis struck, the already strong investment poles in the region could profit together from the profile of the area as an European metropolitan area. Because of the crisis, the competition between municipalities within the region has increased. As the decisions are taken by consensus, it is likely the process will be paralysed in situations where there are not only winners.



Sociale Housing

Purpose	Housing for people without access to the private market
Dimensions	Housing stock of Amsterdam Total: 390.000 Social housing: 50% Private rent: 25% Home ownership: 25%
Costs	Average value of existing dwelling: € 50.000 Average cost of new dwelling: € 160.000 of which 50% is covered by the rent



Description / Reason for this choice / Background / context

Social housing has a long tradition in the Netherlands. Different to other countries is that social housing is also open to middle income groups. After the Second World War a lot of governmental founding helped to build up a large social housing sector. In the 1990s housing associations became financially independent from the state and have to regenerate their own financial means by building expensive dwellings and selling a part of their social housing stock.
The basic motivation for social housing comes from the large post-war housing shortage and the income policy. Low rents allowed for low wages, and low wages resulted in competitively priced export goods.



Deals and stakeholders

The local government signs conventions with housing associations about:

- the percentage of social housing in their housing projects
- the amount of dwellings reserved for low income groups
- activities related to neighbourhood rehabilitation and development.

Tenant associations have some influence in the policy making of the housing associations.

In the past, housing associations had a lot of privileges like lower taxes and lower land prices. These privileges have nearly been lost. The corporations are treated more and more as ordinary developers (and some of them also behave more and more like them!).

Recently the European Union asked the Netherlands to restrict the accessibility of social housing to households with a yearly income of € 33.000 or less.

Financial crisis

In the past the production of social housing was hardly influenced by the ups and downs of the market due to the contra-conjunctural use of state investment. The present crisis is different as the investment margin of housing associations is getting smaller and there is less profit from the sale of dwellings and fewer opportunities to lend money from the commercial banks.

Impacts

As building in the city centre becomes more expensive and housing associations need to generate money by selling popular houses, the share of social housing declines in the inner city. On the other hand people with higher income do occupy cheap social housing in the city centre. Once they moved in as students with a low income, they never left and still pay a low rent.



Resistance

Resistance against the loss of social housing through demolition is limited, not at least because people who have to move get on top of the waiting list and have a broad choice for a new dwelling in the whole region.

The future

Is there a future for social housing in the Netherlands? What will be the role of the housing associations? Will these "dinosaurs" become a relic from the old times? Or will their old social role be rediscovered and will they be able to provide housing for those who have not the means to access housing on the commercial market? And what will happen to middle income groups not able to buy a house or rent on the private market?

Private Investment: Zuidas

Purpose	A new internationally orientated multifunctional business district and a new urban centre
Dimensions	1.000.000 m2 office space, 9.000 apartments 500.000 m2 facilities
Projets costs	Infrastructure € 2.000.000.000 Real estate € 4.000.000.000
Investors	Municipality of Amsterdam, province, state, ABN-Amro, Fortis, ING, Rabo, BNG

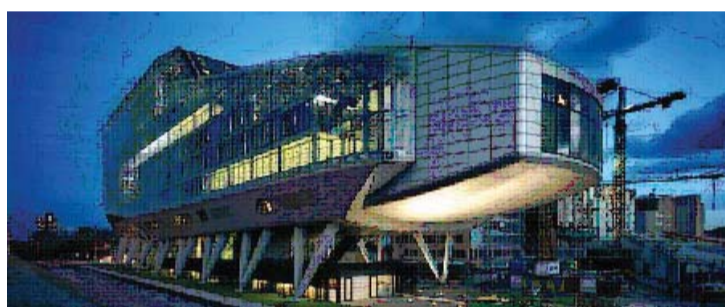


Description / Reason for this choice / Background / context

Zuidas is one of the most ambitious and complex contemporary urban projects in the Netherlands. Private companies put their attention on the accessible central area alongside the southern A 10 ring road. After ABN/Amro Bank build a new international headquarter here, the city municipality also changed its focus to this area.

The ambition of Zuidas is to become a mixed use area with 45% offices, 45% housing and 10% facilities. This requires the use of the space alongside and above the ring road requiring the construction of a tunnel. To finance the tunnel, building development will take place on the top of it.

The Zuidas project meant the beginning of a strategic move away from the philosophy that the inner city would be the main economic core of city and region.

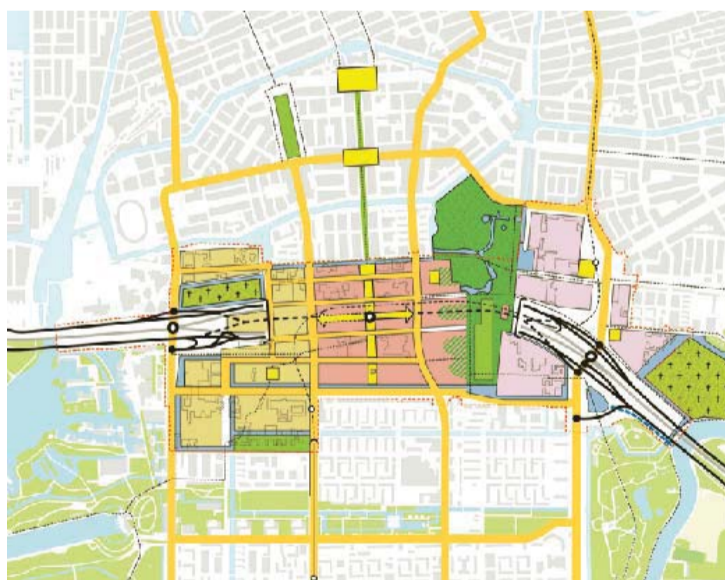


Deals

The project was market-led, supported by the local government. In 1995 Zuidas Coalition started with the municipality, the state and private companies. The Coalition promised 30 year of investment. To finance the infrastructure the municipality wanted to establish a public-private company, but in March 2009 the this was cancelled and potential private investors withdrew. The result of the financial crisis? Some people say yes, others think it was an easy excuse to step out of a questionable arrangement.
The social, civic and cultural domain is hardly connected in decision making and the operational domain. Since the first plan in 1998, public participation has become less important. Neighbourhood groups play a rather small role in the development, for example protecting a neighbouring park.

Impacts

At Zuidas jobs will be created for high educated people, coming from outside Amsterdam or even the Netherlands that will not identify themselves with the rest of the city. For the many lower educated people from Amsterdam only cleaning or guarding jobs will remain. A real World City indeed.
Since the private investors withdrew their share in the dock project, the future of Zuidas is very uncertain, especially when it comes to the ambition to create a mixed-used urban centre.



Alternative: Creative City and Squats

Purpose	use of empty buildings for housing or work space
Dimensions	now: 300 squatted buildings, more than 1500 users (self help) 42 broedplaatsen/art factories (with some subsidy)
Projets costs	Broedplaatsen: max rent for artists € 70/m2/year, others: cost price



Description / Reason for this choice / Background / context

Creativity forms an integral part of the economics and functioning of cities. Creative city policies are concerned with people, as creativity comes from them. The typical industrial city is the city where the added value in the economy consists of the production of manufactured goods. In the same way, you could also describe the creative city also in economic terms as the city in which intellectual capital is added to products, processes and services.

History

After a demographic and economic decline in the 1970s, the tide turned for Amsterdam in the early 1980s. In large part, the reversal of fortune was set in motion by an enterprising counterculture, finding new uses for run-down neighbourhoods and derelict buildings and led by an active and creative youth (students and unemployed on welfare). In doing so, it brought a new dynamism to the city. But when the real estate market recovered, activities that were financially less lucrative tended to be pushed out of the (inner) city.

Squatting

Early squatting in the 1960s was very much orientated towards housing space. Later in the 1970s and the 1980s the squatting of empty offices, schools and factories made it possible to combine living and working space, where a new generation of artistic and creative businesses emerged.

The change in the real estate market, where converting such buildings into luxury apartments became common practice, meant that less and less spaces were available for simple conversion activities. Many housing squats were legalised in the 1980s, when housing corporations bought the squatted buildings, while the squatters started to pay a rent.

In 2010 the conservative parties got a bill passed which put a ban on squatting. The municipality opposes this ban first because a new legal framework is not needed to deal with present problems with squats and second because its procedures about vacancy are impossible to maintain.

Broedplaatsen/Art Factories
As a response to the shortage of affordable work space for artists and nascent cultural entrepreneurs, the municipal Broedplaatsen policy was developed to finance and subsidise the purchase of empty buildings for use as works space for artists. The aim is to develop suitable workplaces, in the form of art factories, studios or studio housing for artists and creative groups. The city of Amsterdam considers the investment in the broedplaatsen programme as a factor in strengthening the city economy and the image of Amsterdam as a creative city.

Deals

The Art Factory programme is a municipal initiative. This is a form of regulation: you pay a (non-commercial) rent and the users of the building have to be formally organized in a certain way. Most regulations also include a clause that makes moving to other premises compulsory in case of commercial success of the artist or enterprise.

Impacts

Many old squats serve now only as co-op housing groups. A number is still involved in cultural or social activities, where regular and counter-culture are not easy to distinguish.



With much empty office space available now because of the economic crisis, the new art factories can thrive, but their position between market forces and municipal incorporation makes that spaces for truly alternative urbanity shrank to nothing.

Legend Amsterdam

Short version

Strategic Urban Infrastructure

1. Central Station
2. Station Sloterdijk
3. Station Zuid
4. Station Amstel
5. Station Bijlmer
6. Station RAI

Flagship Projects

1. IJburg
2. Zuidas/South Axis
3. Oosterdokseiland
4. Olympic Stadium
5. Rijksmuseum (renovation)
6. Amsterdam Arena
7. Stedelijk Museum
8. Red Light District

Important Events and Festivals

1. Canal Parade
2. Sail Amsterdam
3. Kwakoe festival
4. Queens Day
5. Liberation Day
6. Museumplein marks the start of the new cultural season

Central Areas

1. Centrum
2. Zuidas
3. Sloterdijk
4. Arena / Amstel III

Areas of Private Reinvestment Areas of Intense Neighbourhood Upgrading

1. Concertgebouwbuurt
2. Zuid

Trendy Neighbourhoods

1. De Pijp (North)
2. Westerpark
3. Plantage
4. WG terrain

Areas of State-Led Reinvestment Areas of Urban Regeneration

1. Banne regeneration area
2. Nieuwendam regeneration area
3. Slotermeer regeneration area
4. Kolenkit regeneration area
5. Slotervaart regeneration area
6. Osdorp regeneration area
7. Bijlmermeer regeneration area

State-led gentrification: City Centre

Purpose	create a heart of the new Metropolis Amsterdam
Dimensions	old centre surrounded by canals, new centre surrounded by ringroad



Description / Reason for this choice / Background / context

The city centre is at stake for decades in most urban struggles in Amsterdam: is the city centre the reserve of the happy few that can offer its market price or is it for every Amsterdamer?

History

In 1965 the anarchist movement Provo reclaimed symbolically the Royal Palace (before 1808 and the Napoleonic occupation the City Hall) for housing for young people. More seriously, Provo fought against the transformation of the historical inner city into a central business district, the modernist functional segregation and the displacement of inner city residents to the periphery (Bijlmer) and new suburbs (Purmerend, Almere, Hoofddorp).

Tenant's movements in the 1970s and squatters in the 1980s and the 1990s also resisted the destruction of cheap housing in the poorer neighbourhoods of the inner city (Jordaan) and the 19th century belt (de Pijp) for offices, hotels and other non-residential uses. Thanks to them many urban neighbourhoods prospered since the 1980s. Often this improvement of the quality of life went hand in hand with a process of gentrification, although that was originally hampered by the social housing policy of the Dutch state and the Amsterdam municipality. Unfortunately ideological changes from the 1990s onwards brought about a liberalization of the Amsterdam housing system. Home ownership was stimulated through the sale of (social and private) rented housing. Strict rent control was abolished. As a result, housing has become more and more expensive in and around the inner city: "in accordance with market prices".

Structuurvisie 2040:

The municipal Structural Plan for Amsterdam was presented in 2009 by the leading coalition of Labour and the Green Left. It was entitled "Economically strong and sustainable" and goes one step further. It rolls out the central area, reframing the conception of the centre: not the historical city of Amsterdam, but the heart of the new Metropolis Amsterdam! In the North the ring road marks the separation between the urban and the rural landscapes; in the other directions it separates the first 20th century extensions from post WW II suburban residential neighbourhoods.

Impacts

There are two main impacts to this state-led gentrification policy. First it implies the exclusion of low income and lower middle class groups (teachers, nurses, bus drivers, civil servants...) and their "deportation" to the peripheral neighbourhoods and the suburbs in the Metropolis Amsterdam.

Second the up scaling of the centre affects the transport regime in the city and consequently the use of public space. The inner city is a space that can be walked and biked around. In the new expanded centre, walking is no option any more. The restrictive policies regarding car parking in the (expanded) inner city implies a high reliance on public transportation to make the new heart of the metropolis work. The delayed completion of the new underground line and the expected removal of the fine-meshed tramlines make this option less attractive. Overall the new centre ideology will have a strong impact on the city by reducing its urban (= mixed) character.



- Municipal boarder of Amsterdam
- North South Underground line
- ◆ Spaces and Places of Resistance / Alternatives
 1. Ruigoord
 2. ADM
 3. Volkskrantgebouw
 4. Plantage Doklaan
 5. De Hallen
 6. NRC
 7. Rijkshemelvaartdienst
 8. NDSM
 9. Vrankrijk
 10. SPOK
 11. Binnenpret
 12. Beehive
 13. Zaal 100