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ARCHITECTURE SUMMER SCHOOL 2006 IN ROTTERDAM: “LIVING IN THE DOCKS” – COLONIZING THE PORT OF ROTTERDAM

Architecture Summer School 2006 in Rotterdam was already the second year of a very successful event which was organised by the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design and took place in the Head Offices of Rotterdam Stadshavens. The Summer School was open not only for students, already finished architects, but as well for young practitioners in the field of architecture, landscape architecture and design, urban design, town and spatial planning. How big this workshop was is documented by the number of attended participants. Altogether there have been 51 people from 17 countries from all around the world. Organisation of the Summer School was based on two main supervisors; Jacob van Rijs and Wouter Vanstiphout; and seven group tutors. Each tutor had its own group of students from different countries and different backgrounds.



Fig. 1: Brainstorming

The group, of which I was a part, was led by an architect from South Africa Duzan Doepel. The group members were full-time students as well as young practitioners from seven countries; Chris De Joode from The Netherlands, Anneleen Dhondt from Belgium, Pedro Frutuoso from Portugal, Hani Hert from Lebanon, Zuzana Ladzianska from Slovakia, Ekatarina Maleeva from Russia and Martin Navarro Lopez from Spain. Different professional and cultural backgrounds have helped us to create a stable working team from the early beginning. Unfortunately we were influenced by the political decisions made in different countries. The war in Lebanon started just few days after our arrival to Rotterdam what had a negative impact on Hani Hert, who was not able to return to his country for another 4 months. Despite of this he was a big support of the group.

The task of the Summer School 2006 was to propose ideas for Merwehavens in Rotterdam. Former dockland area was selected by the city as a new place for housing development. This decision influenced the Summer School organisers as well, so the overall task and challenge for participants was: “Living in the Docks - Colonizing the Port of Rotterdam”. Rotterdam port activities have been shifting towards the coast since the early 20th century resulting in large-scale vacant areas along river Maas banks. The last big transformation took place over the past 30 years. Today trade and industry opt for a more harmonious development

of port and city. Future residents and users have to be conscious of the area they will be living in. These areas contain a rich industrial heritage that to a large extent can form the background for a new urbanity with exceptional residential areas. The reinforcement of existing functions and possible addition of new program is desirable. Various port areas already have been more connected to the city. By doing so the river banks and various port basins have been more connected to the city. The renewal of Stadshavens seems to be a logical continuation of the strategy. The area, including the water surface, encloses 1400 hectares, which is comparable to a medium-size city. It gives the opportunity to create a unique urban area with housing, offices, facilities and recreational functions.

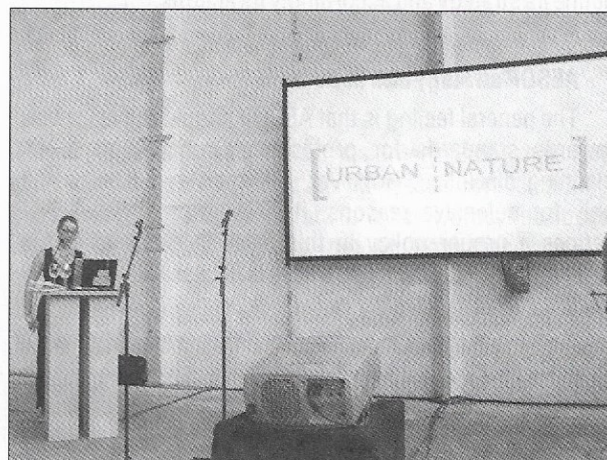


Fig. 2: Final group presentation by Zuzana Ladzianska

The Summer School took place in the historical building of RDM (Rotterdamsche Droogdok Maatschappij) in the CityPorts where workshops and offices were open from early morning till midnight. To get a clearer idea on what does it mean “living in the docks”, during our stay in Rotterdam, we were accommodated on the sailing ships/yachts. Thanks this we have gained an unforgettable experience of living on the water, nevertheless it had influenced our final Summer School designs. At the



Fig. 3: Group photo at the exhibition

beginning of the workshop we had attended several meetings with experts and architects involved in the project. Several excursions on the site of Merwehaven from three different perspectives (from the boat, walking, biking) have helped us to create an idea and to understand the feeling of the selected site. The description of the site was explained from the view of the city, investors, planners, architects and tenants of the Merwehaven. The waterfront development is going on in Rotterdam for several years now. We have visited one of the already newly rebuilt waterfront parts of Rotterdam, the Kop van Zuid, well known for its contemporary housing architecture. One of the challenges was to create design which would be able to compete this central development.

Part of the Summer School was a trip to Germany, where we have seen a different approach of the port redevelopment. Duisburg, a former industrial city, has taken the advantage of its waterfront to bring the life into the suffering city. The newly reconstructed modern waterfront area includes a park dedicated to the holocaust, office court with a promenade around the death end of the river protected against the tides and floods, and a new housing development based on the PPP in the form of partially-closed communities connected to the river. In the part of this area several high quality restaurants and bars, as well as a gallery of modern arts in the newly restored former storage building are situated. The Duisburg waterfront is still under construction, but since it was firstly opened to the public, it has already attracted many visitors. Part of the trip was a visit to the coal mining site and the visit of the landscape park, former coal mining heavy industry factory.

During the two weeks, seven original and distinct designs had been created. Our group, led by Duzan Doepel, had created a design called "UrbanNature" based on the quotation: "...90% of city dwellers with the intention of moving, dream of re-locating to a rural area..." (Heins, S., 2002 University of Utrecht). The Merwehaven has a unique location. The design is based on the integration of two very specific goals. The task is to make the space Super

Connected on one hand and at the same time to reach diverse feelings of Splendid Isolation. The major question is how much urban and how much nature should be involved. The way how to reach high urbanity and at the same time to keep as much nature as possible is to design a skyscraper with the height of 600m. As the site is related to the water, our challenge was to design a waterscraper which can be introduced in three basic forms. The WATERFRONT project is based on living directly connected to the water, the PROGRAMMATIC POOLS project is based on creation of pools out of the existing buildings and building up the area not being used now, and the idea of the CASCADE CITY is to enlarge the catchment area to increase the surface for keeping water on the place. "Splendid Isolation" can be perceived on several levels, from collective to very private related to the personal view. "Super Connectivity" is achieved by "bridging" of the piers. The idea is to provide direct car access, even to the farrest parts of the buildings on the pier. Pedestrian access is provided everywhere, except private buildings. Due to the "bridging" effect, several feelings of the space have been created. One of them is the so called "Water Rooms". These are created when water is falling down from the roofs. Water is then kept in drainage pools which can be afterward used for watering. The other effect is so called "Windows". It is based on framing and opening the views on site from the position of pedestrians on the first, sometimes even on higher levels. The strategy was to create an "UrbanNature" design which will use techniques of material re-use.

The final presentation was open not only for professionals who were leading us throughout the whole Summer School, but it was open to the public as well. Each group presented its own work not only verbally in front of the public, but in the form of final exhibition of the posters and models as well. Short video shots have been taken during the whole final presentations. All seven designs have been discussed among attended professionals and students. At the end of the Summer School 2006 - "Living in the docks", all participants had received certificates by the dean of the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design, Lucas Verweij.

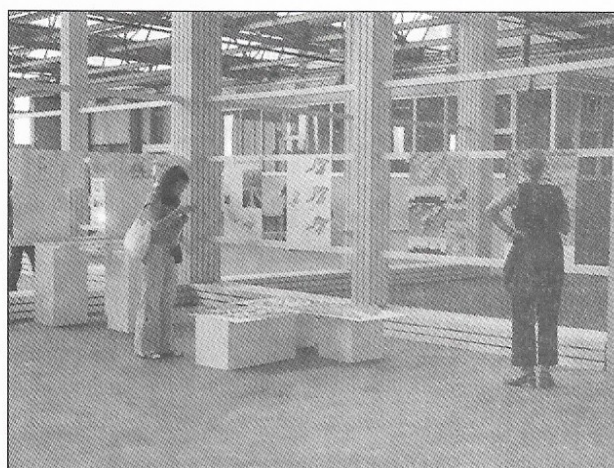


Fig. 4: final Summer School Exhibition