

2.2. Δημοσιεύσεις θεωρητικού έργου

- 2019 • Γαλανός Κάρολος, «Rediscovering Rotter-land», δημοσίευση στα πρακτικά του 4^{ου} διεθνούς συνεδρίου, «Changing cities: Spatial, Design, Landscape & Socio-economic Dimensions», τμήμα μηχανικών χωροταξίας, πολεοδομίας και περιφερειακής ανάπτυξης, πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας, Πολυτεχνική Σχολή, Ιούνιος, Χανιά, Ελλάδα.



Rediscovering Rotter-land

C. Galanos^{1,2}

¹ Dr. Architect D.P.L.G.

² Department of Architectural Engineering, Polytechnic School, University of Ioannina, 45110, Greece.

*Corresponding author: E-mail: carolosg@gmail.com Tel +30 24210 34424

Abstract

In an attempt to analyse the city of Rotterdam by comparing it with “Disneyland”, it could be said that “Castle of Snow” or “Peter Pan’s Tree”, is replaced here by “Schouwburgplein”, “Kunsthal” and the “Erasmusbrug”. Walking through streets of Rotterdam, visitors can be quickly located and recognise the area due to different toponyms, created by the architect Rem Koolhaas. These buildings-landmarks, which are of great architectural interest, at the same time, are used to prioritize city’s function and operations, ensuring the transition of users from one neighbourhood to another. The “Disney” site is the invention of a new type of urban planning for its time, featuring an ideal environment. This attitude has undoubtedly influenced the composition of the 19th century city. Disney, reusing an architectural and urban design from another era, created a musical nostalgia called “Disneyland”. Restructuring of various areas, for many years now, the city of Rotterdam is radically transformed and mutated, aiming to create its own musical nostalgia. The name “Rotterdam” is etymologically composed of the words “Rotter” and “Dam” respectively, which is explained by the concepts “the sea in front of the city” and “barrier”. In this way, city’s name was describing the old barrier used to protect the city from the sea during the construction of the polders. It doesn’t represent the city’s area but its borders. However, a city cannot only act as an obstacle or obstacle to something, because by its meaning is the space where citizens are acting and evolving during the everyday life. The meaning of the word “Land” inevitably is included in the concept of the name of Rotterdam as it is an important factor for city’s development and evolution. In this sense, and due to the present city’s morphology (Rotter-land), rightly Rem Koolhaas proposed here an XXL building, which is reflected through a powerful mixed-functions program and geographically located in city’s centre. His “MAB Tower” is the reflexion of this necessity of economy for space, land, and infrastructure that are endorsed in Rotterdam’s urban character.

Keywords: Monumentality, landmark and toponyms, urban morphology, locality, spatial organization.

1. INTRODUCTION

In his manifesto for Manhattan, “Delirious New York”, Rem Koolhaas puts at the beginning of his work the accent on the new techniques and the technologies of a time which can make possible the introduction of the fantastic on a daily basis. The “Coney Island” of 1905 - representing the result of the implication of the technology of the time in the existing trends in architecture - was intended for the entertainment of New Yorkers. The character of “Coney Island” provides an overview of the development that will be adopted for Manhattan. In the passage between the 19th century and the 20th, “Coney Island” is the hatchery for many solutions used later for the urbanization of Manhattan. “The strategies and mechanisms that will later form Manhattan have been tested in the Coney Island laboratory.

By imagining the atmosphere of “Coney Island” at the beginning of the century, is impossible to resist to compare it with “Disneyland”. As these two places are intended for the entertainment of the

inhabitants and the visitors of the city, their similarity is more present. But what marks these places is the internal organization. Both are presented as infrastructures created by other infrastructures of smaller scale, thus creating the notion of "the city in a city". The same reason that "Coney Island" existed thanks to its racetrack improved by the inventions of Tilyou, the "Steeplechase", the "Luna Park" realized by Thompson, the "canals of Venice", the "Leap Frog Railway" or the "Dreamland" by WH Reynolds, "Disneyland" exists today with its "Adventureland", "Pirates Island", "Space Mountain", "The Castle of Snow White" or "Peter Pan's tree". Each of its "spots" is a den for the user, marking with his own signage the organization of the space.



Figure 1

2. THE CITY

If we try to analyse the city of Rotterdam with the same point of view, it seems that the castle of "Snow White" or the tree of "Peter Pan" are replaced here by the "Schouwburgplein", the "Kunsthal" or the Erasmusbrug. While walking in the streets of Rotterdam, the visitor can quickly identify the space marked by these haunts. These dens, which are of great architectural interest, serve to prioritize the functions of the city, ensuring the transition of users from one area to another. The space "Disney" is the invention of a new urbanism, characterizing an ideal environment. This attitude undoubtedly influences the composition of the city in the 19th century. Disney has recycled an architecture and urbanism of another era, turning them into a commercial nostalgia, called "Disneyland". Disney's desires boil down to the radical conversion of the city; from public space to private space, from commercial space to non-commercial space, from modern to "neo-traditional". With the restructuring of several neighbourhoods for many years now, the city of Rotterdam is also changing dramatically. The big investments in the reorganization of the districts of this city, aim at its revalorization by qualifying it as great European port.

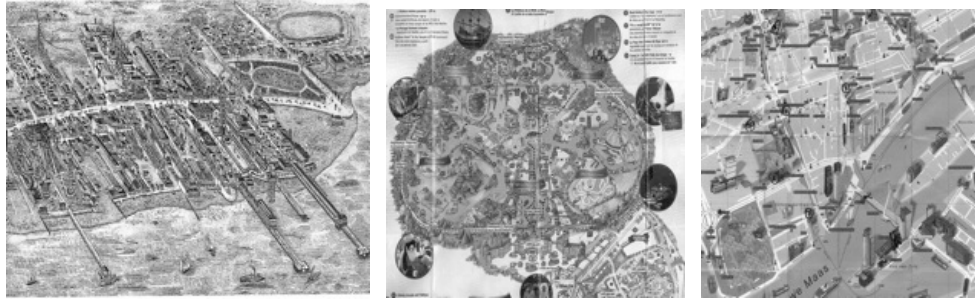


Figure 2: Parallel between "Coney Island": "Metropolis of the irrational", Disneyland and Rotterdam. The internal organization in the three cases is based on a system of benchmarks for a clearer reading of the plan of the city.

To arrive at this requalification of the site, the planners wanted to try to animate the city, by introducing the river Maas like a vital element and active in the organization of the city. This operation of the insertion of the river in the daily life of the inhabitants and the visitors, seems successful thanks to the construction of the bridge "Erasmus" allowing the connection of the city centre to the district of Kop van Zuid. The addition of this new space in the centre of the city clearly raised the question of public space, private space, housing and work directly related to water. To respond to the desire for Maas integration into the life of the city, the architects tried to adopt a scale of constructions corresponding to the size of the river. The choice of restructuring these maritime districts of Rotterdam, at the scale of the river, is an attitude that can be immediately recognizable by the passer-by as soon as he approaches the docks.

Kop van Zuid is a district located in front of the city centre of Rotterdam at the end of the Erasmus bridge. This former district of manufacturing and industrial activities is also changing. By its addition pragmatically to the existing centre of the city, Kop van Zuid is obliged to follow the development imposed by our time. This place plays an important role in the reorganization of the city. Kop van Zuid, known as the upscale district of Rotterdam, is enhanced by projects that reflect a great mix of programs. The policy of the city is therefore on the one hand to adapt the architecture to the scale of the river and on the other hand to mix housing and work.

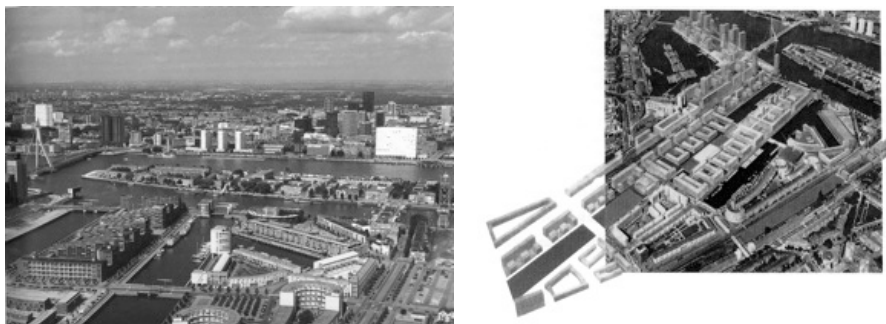


Figure 3: The main project of the urban development of Rotterdam is characterized by a variety of functions, it seems that it is the city itself that directs the operation; The directional plan, showing the main traffic arteries for the Kop van Zuid, (1991 version).

3. THE PROJECT

The name "Rotterdam" consists etymologically of the words "Rotter" and "Dam", and means respectively "the sea in front of the city" and "dam". The concept of Rotterdam used to describe the dam of the city at sea when the Polders were built. It does not represent the space of the city, but its borders. However, a city cannot only act as an obstacle or obstacle to something, because by its meaning is the space where citizens are acting and evolving during the everyday life. Thus we realize that the notion of the word "Land" is inevitably included in the meaning of the name of the city of Rotterdam, constituting one of the main factors of its development. In this sense, the use of the current morphology of the city for its restructuring, Rem Koolhaas offers a large XLL building, which reflects a great mixture of programmatic functions and located geographically in the middle of the city.

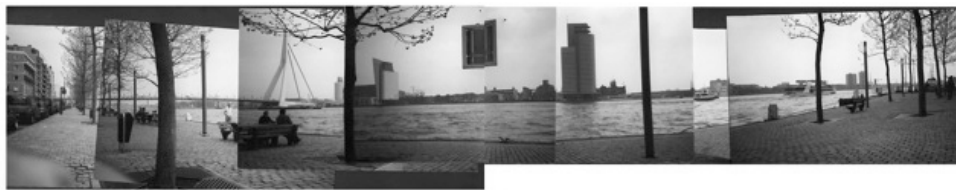


Figure 4: View of the Skyline from the Museumtheater De Evenaar to Kop van Zuid.



Figure 5: View of downtown Rotterdam from Kop van Zuid; High quality materials and street furniture adapted to the pedestrian scale have been used to dress the Maas River docks in some way.

This building is located at the end of the "Erasmus" bridge, in the district of Kop van Zuid and more precisely on the Wilhelminapier. It is a building commissioned by MAB, which is an investment company for urban development. MAB has been involved in the development of a parcel belonging to this site between the "KPN Tower" building of Renzo Piano and the "World Port Centre" (Wilhelminapier) of Sir Norman Foster. This company, in collaboration with the city of Rotterdam took the initiative to define a complex program for its site, located in the river Maas. The result is a mix of functions, offices, public facilities (hotel, cinema, catering, sports and fitness centre), apartments and parking. With this great mix of programs, for its project, MAB wanted to transform this expelled area of the city centre into a real urban centre with all kinds of facilities for the needs of users of a contemporary city. For example, they would like residents to be able to use food or fitness spaces, and office users to take advantage of conference or hotel spaces in the hotel or restaurant area, etc.

4. THE CONCEPT

By calling on Rem Koolhaas and his Rotterdam-based OMA agency, MAB knew that programmatic diversity was the conceptual basis for most of their projects. Koolhaas aimed to

reinterpret the issue of functional diversity, traditionally reserved for the city, by translating it to the scale of the building. Thus, he refers to the idea of the vertical city, which interests the author of "Delirious New York" for three decades now. The answer given to the question asked by MAB is therefore a building of approximately 135m in height, the ground floor of which is largely devoted to public facilities. Apartments and offices, as well as lobbies containing hotel and cinema activities, form the heart of the building. To interconnect these spaces, the architect used a large public hall that functions as a traffic hub for all functions and users of the building.

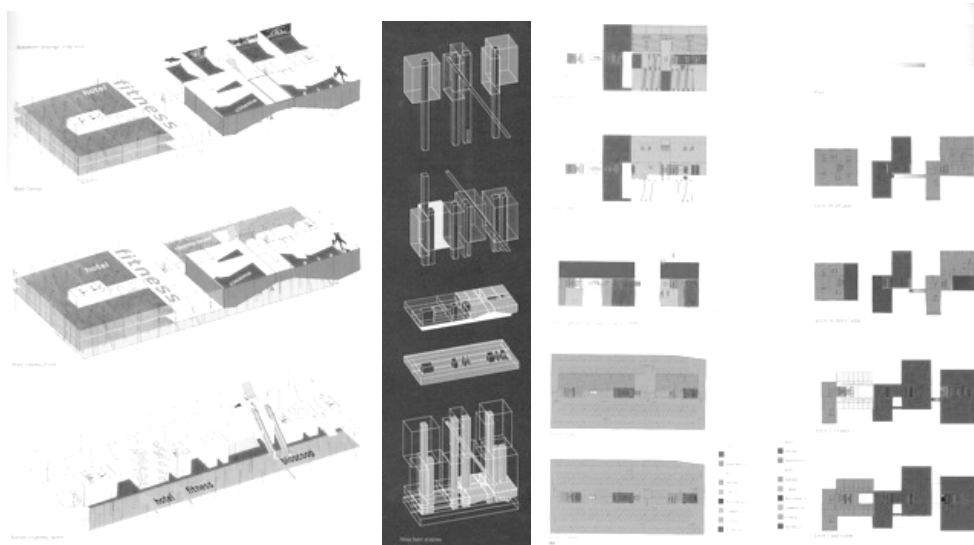


Figure 6: Diagrammatic drawings showing the programmatic mix of the project; Concept of the traffic hub as well as the entity of each function represented by different colors and an autonomous structure.

Now that the design and main concepts of this XXL project have been completed, MAB was hoping to be able to start construction by the end of 2003 and that first users can move into the building by the end of 2006.

The Programmatic Dimension of the Project:

Location: Rotterdam, Netherlands. Type: Commission, with OMA Rotterdam.

Size: 160,000 M2 / 1,7 Mill SF.

Program: 240 Housing Units, Office, Retail, Hotel, Exhibition

Client: MAB Development.

The building is designed as a vertical city with individual volumes protruding and expanding to create a dynamic and iconic building outline. In a way to combine three interconnected towers with a total of 160.000 M2, in a hybrid design, the architecture of the building becomes an expression of contemporary density and diversity.

With its 150 Meters, the building is the tallest building in the Netherlands and is designed as a multifunctional piece of architecture. Its program includes 72.000 M2 of office area, 240 residential apartments occupying 35.000 M2 and a hotel with an area of 19.000 M2.

The building is located next to the Erasmus Bridge on the banks of the River Maas, and makes part of the continuous redevelopment undertaken at the old harbor district of Wilhelmina Pier. The

construction of the building was undertaken by MAB Development, OVG Project Development and the Office of the Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) and started in 2009 and is now completed.

In order to mix the activities, Koolhaas superimposes the activities instead of superimposing only trays and floors. It therefore creates a set of entities within the same building, as a neighbourhood in the building. This theme, that could be related to his Manifesto for Manhattan, *Delirious New York*, once again allows him to reinvent and transform a typology of tall buildings. The attitude adopted by R. Koolhaas for his project, will allow the port of Rotterdam to renew its "skyline", while adding some morphological characteristics to the new identity of Kop van Zuid.



Figure 7: The project representing elevation in the context of the neighborhood.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Between the various proposals, concerning the development of the traditional city and its transformation into the contemporary city of today, one can observe that high-rise buildings play an important role for its new organization. By participating in the development of the city, these buildings have their say. By upsetting the reading of the horizontal city in this way, they introduce the notion of the vertical city.



Figure 8: On the left the site with the completed R. Piano tower but without the slightest trace of building the "MAB" and on the right the R. Piano tower under construction and the "MAB Tower".

History shows that in the United States the skyscraper has always been placed at the heart of urban projects and that this architectural design has then won the metropolis of Southeast Asia. Since then, the European view of these constructions remains severe and critics think that this typology is the symbol of a capitalist mode of production. Today, there is a real interest of Europeans to participate in the race for "height".

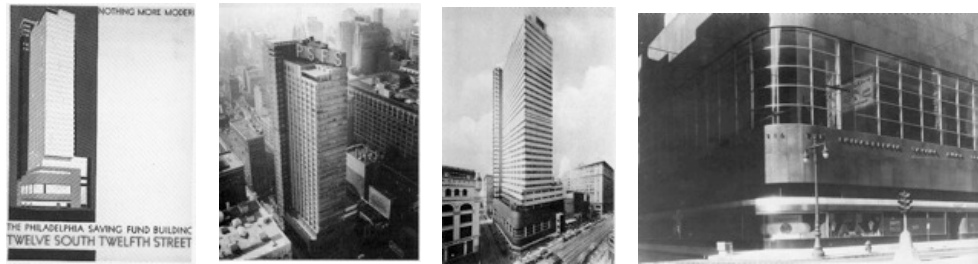


Figure 9: "Nothing more modern": The "PSFS Building" in the heart of Philadelphia; Photomontage of the model on the site, 1933; View of the curved corner of the bank.

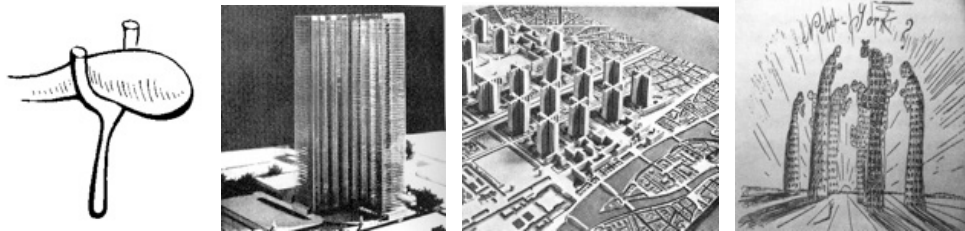


Figure 10: Starting from the left side to the right side, we find the diagram of the "Paranoid-Critical Method" of S. Dali: "limp, approvable conjectures generated through the deliberate simulation of paranoiac though process, supported by" crutches " of Cartesian rationality; then we find the Cartesian / horizontal skyscraper that multiplies, it is the radiant city: the anti-Manhattan Le Corbusier; and finally we find a more poetic approach to the skyscraper, which every night, it assumes its anthropomorphic form and passes to the sexual act.

6. PS:

« There is little hope for a believer who has fallen under the influence of Rem Koolhaas. It comes to appear self-evident that Koolhaas is the messiah who has come to save today's delirious society, the guru who has penetrated the secrets of contemporary architecture. When confronted by Koolhaas, even an editor conversant with architectural ideology becomes unsure of his footing. Incidents perpetrated by Koolhaas blithely deny ideas which formerly seemed obvious. There is no longer any need to debate. Our guru performs his unbiased analyses of societies and cities, and delivers the results to us. And we are convinced by what he says.» Nobuyuki Yoshida.

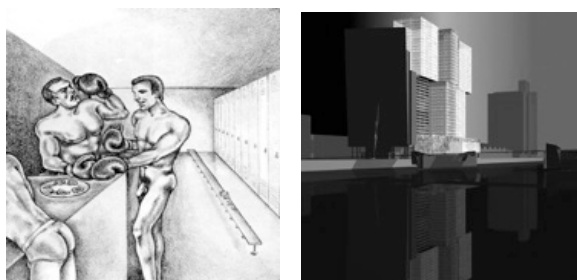


Figure 11: "Eating oysters with boxing gloves": A machine for metropolitan singles; the "MAB" tower representing the fiction of the vertical city and which will be fully understood and lived by its users.

References

1. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 1994, R.Koolhaas and Monacelli Press, New York, Coney Island: The Technology of The Fantastic, p. 29-80.
2. E. Porter Belden, *NY: Past, Present and Future*, 1849, Putman, New York.
"... Now, where is the glittering towers and minarets, graceful, stately and imposing. The morning sun looks down on these dreams of a magician ... At night, the radiance of millions of electric lights which glow at every point and line of the great play city's outlines lights up the sky and welcomes the home mariner 30 miles from the shore ... ",
3. R.Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, p. 30: "Coney is a fetal Manhattan. "
4. Reps, *The making of Urban America*, p.331-39. Tilyou speaking of "Coney Island," he says, "If Paris is France, Coney Island, between June and September is the World. "
5. R. Koolhaas, *Project On The City*, directed by R. Koolhaas, Taschen, 2001, Spain, p.271, "Disney Space", written by Chuihua Judy Chung.
6. The "Erasmus" bridge was completed in 1997 and its designer is an Amsterdam architect, Ben van Berkel.
7. While walking along the quays of Kop van Zuid and looking across the river from the opposite city, the visitor realizes that at the same time, he is at the heart of this city.
8. Dictionary of the French language, Micro Robert Plus: "city of the Netherlands, with the largest port in the world (by traffic) in the Rhine Delta and Maas (Meuse). Connect to the North Sea by a canal. 590000 inhabitants Petrochemicals, iron and steel industry. International Financial Center. "
9. Meaning proposed in the dictionary, Micro Robert, *The French Language More*:
"DAM" means a barrier, obstacle or hydraulic structure designed to raise the body of water or to accumulate or divert water from a river. "
10. OMA = Office for Metropolitan Architecture.
11. "Hub" means "center" in French, when it comes to computer language, is also the housing that allows the connection of multiple computers network thereby facilitating the flow of data.
12. "XXL", a term used in the sense explained in the book "SMLXL", R. Koolhaas and B. Mau, 1995, R. Koolhaas and Monacelli Press, New York.
13. See ref. (1).
14. This point of view is quite present, too, in Manhattan's manifesto, written by R.Koolhaas.