

# Art, an Instrument for Spatial and Social Quality in Rapid Urban Developments

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## 1. Introduction

When the municipalities of Barendrecht (with 25.000 inhabitants) and Albrandswaard, quick growing villages south of Rotterdam in the Netherlands, got in 1993 the task of the central government to build 10.000 houses and an industrial estate of 45 hectares they were not happy. However, they had little choice. If the Barendrecht municipality did not develop the plan, their neighbor Rotterdam would, after a border correction. Barendrecht therefore developed a plan for this area, named Carnisselande. Carnisselande is situated west of the A29, south of the A15 and north of the river Maas. The plan for Carnisselande uses existing landscape elements such as dikes and watercourses. Barendrecht also produces an art plan using art to give the area an identity, something very necessary with fast development. Reinforcing the existing urban design and social process.

Barendrecht desired to perform well in all respects and to avoid the cliché of 'grey monotony'. One of the resources used was art in public space. This presentation looks at the possibilities, threats and the importance of art in rapid urban development.

In section 2 the design of the Carnisselande neighborhood is elaborated, section 3 presents the arts plan 'The Elastic Perspective (TEP)' (plan and process), section 4 discusses, per aspect of the arts plan, what has been achieved and section 5 draws conclusions and recommendations.

## 2. Carnisselande

Together with his colleagues, Gijs van den Boomen of bureau Wissing produced the design for the Barendrecht part of the location (7.600 houses, 45 hectares of industrial area). The regional authorities prepared an outline plan, which included a tramway connection with the center of Rotterdam, and an industrial area between the motorway and the residential area. A park was also created between the motorway in the north and the residential area. Existing dikes were integrated into the plan. On the south side a big lake was constructed to mark the border of the urban development. South of Carnisselande is an important nature reserve, and a tidal river, the Old Maas. The plan includes three different urban areas, each with its own atmosphere and character related to its location, housing density, services and traffic. The character is enhanced by different architecture, materials, design of public space, colors, street furniture etc. These three different residential areas are:

**Urban rectangle:** an area of rectangular shape, with a relatively high housing density. The tramline forms the center of this area and provides a good connection with Rotterdam city centre. On the south side, the urban rectangle has a balcony on the water. A shopping center, nursing home, outpatients clinic, secondary school and other facilities are located in this most urbanized part of the area. These facilities make it possible for the area to be 'urban' in a positive sense; that is, urban housing, stately avenues and urban streets. The designer wanted to create an urban area, not a residential dormitory. Public life is bundled in a central zone: along the Avenue Carnisse with the Centre area as its centre of gravity. For the Avenue a building type was developed that is flexible and allows for future changes of function.

**Rural triangle:** this area is located around the rural centre Smitshoek on the western side of the development. It has the lowest housing density, less high rise buildings, and a green, rural character. It contrasts with the urban rectangle. The rural architecture is characterized by horizontal elements, large roofs and yellow colors. The gardens on the front side are larger and bordered by hedges.

**Waterfringes:** the waterfringes are islands on the south side of the development, in the waters of the Koedood, next to open landscape. This will be a very special residential area with panoramic views. Buildings will have bright colors and the houses in Barendrecht refer to boats.

In addition to the residential areas, an industrial development is planned.

**Industrial area:** one of the aims of Barendrecht is to achieve a good balance between living and working. There is space for an industrial estate of 45 hectares next to the A29 motorway. The industrial area, between the motorway and the Carnisser Baan, will provide space for a variety of companies. Most do not originate in Barendrecht; an example being the Barendrecht IKEA store. This type of development provides an injection to the employment potential and also a more cosmopolitan feel. The area that borders residential areas consists of small islands with representative buildings including a new swimming pool. The area bordering the motorway has a more industrial character with, lots of service industries. Public space is important to giving the area some quality.



Image 1: sketch Carnisselande by Gijs van den Boomen, Wissing

### 3. The Art Plan 'The Elastic Perspective'

#### 3.1 Introduction

The local government's view is that art in public spaces is an important means of giving them an identity. The local government gave the commission to two Rotterdam artists, Joost van Hezewijk and Albert Kliest, to make a plan for art in Carnisselande. Society is, at that moment dominated by economy, dynamics, information-technology and individualism. Modern art functions on the outside and is not an integral part of society. Their art plan 'The flexible perspective' (TEP) is so-called because it has to react to changes in the urban situation. Producing an arts plan for a yet to be built neighborhood with un-identified inhabitants is a challenge.

The plan comprises 3 parts, namely the urban plan (1), the vision (2) and the arts plan (3). The urban plan and the aforementioned vision produces six approaches that form the building blocks for the arts plan. These approaches, angles, - called dimension - each describe a particular aspect of public life in a modern expansion district. Per dimension a number of locations are sought where those dimensions clearly come to the fore. An art commission is formulated for each location. The result is an abstract command description and not yet in the concrete conditions for that location.

Chapter 2 concludes that cities continue to develop themselves far into the future. Their population is constantly changing and increasingly places new demands on the environment. Bureau Wissing therefore plan to create a 'vital suburb'.

Art in public space differs from art in a museum. In a museum, art has a certain status and the space is limited and neutral. A public space is characterized by dynamism, diversity and audiovisual noise. Moreover vulnerable to influences of the weather and vandalism. Modern art relates more to itself or to the history of the Visual Arts. She knows no longer a certified arsenal of stories, nor a recognizable General language use. In the plan, two different purposes are distinguished for the art, a service and a reflective function. The service function is aimed at a public stance and improvement of public space. She knows a certain selflessness and seeks cooperation with other disciplines. The reflective function questions the conditions of social life. Both functions have the aim to add cultural value to the public space.

Everyone, even those indifferent to their cultural background, needs images and ideas about the surrounding world, that give orientation, or identification one can relate to. Art can generate these meanings.

The meaning that Visual Arts grant to the public domain depends, among other things on its location. Each situation has a specific combination of factors specific to the location. Also the vision of the artist and the views of the client determine the result. Visual art can respond in several ways on the emergence of the new community that will inhabit Carnisselande.

The flexible perspective has defined six different points of views, called dimensions, as follows:

1. The historical dimension in which history occupies an important place;
2. The planning dimension with its emphasis on the organization of social action;
3. The architectural dimension that emphasizes the relationship between art and architecture;
4. The landscape dimension where the eye focuses on Carnisselande and its relationship with the surrounding landscape;
5. The quality of the nature in the environmental dimension;
6. The social dimension where the social aspect in its forms the starting point.

In every dimension, the plan defines projects (see image 1). In 1998 the council proposed the art plan. The realization of the plan was scheduled for the period between 1998 and 2006. In reality, the development lasted much longer and the project The Elastic Perspective was completed in 2012 with a closing event, when the suburb Carnisselande was completely developed.

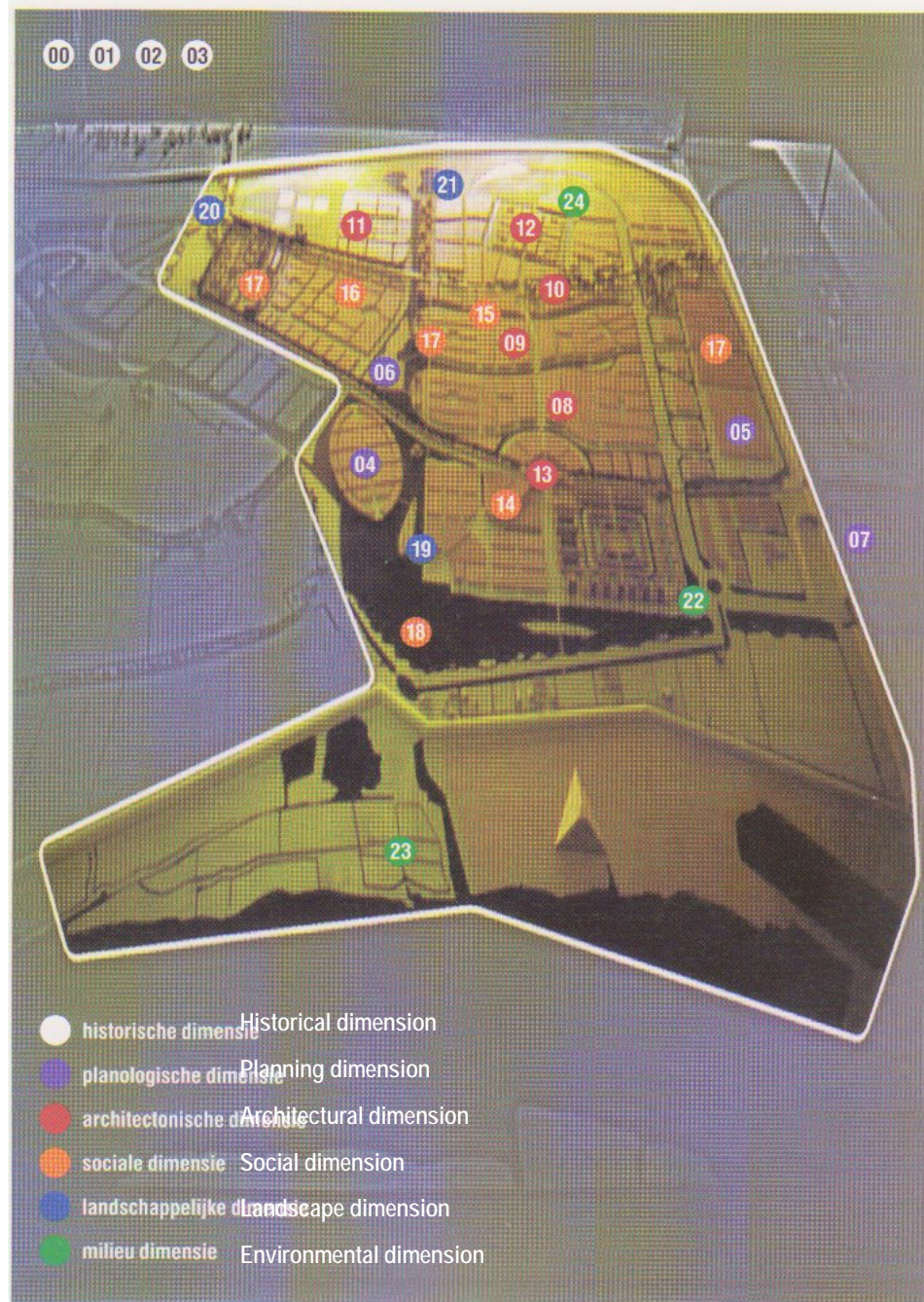


Image 2: model with art projects/commands:

### **3.2 Process**

The municipality of Barendrecht is advised by the so-called Cultural Council. The Cultural Council is an inspired advisory body on a voluntary basis, consisting of interested laymen and experts. In 1997 the Vinex-location is brought up to the Cultural Council. It seemed the Cultural Council better, in addition to their own contribution, to get external professional advice for this task. Joost van Hezewijk and Albert Kliet got the commission to make an art plan. They are both active in the field of visual art in public space. Then the municipality established a specific Arts Commission to execute the arts plan. The broad composition of this Arts Commission in which all necessary expertise was present, contributed to the success of the project. During the past 15 years the Art Commission was chaired by the successive councilmen with culture in their portfolio. In addition, the art Commission included the culture official, the urban designer of the municipality, the project leader of the district and a representative of the Cultural Council (a residents Advisory Board).

A cultural Council of local volunteers supported the artists. The money for the design and construct of the art comes from the land development. One % of the costs from the site preparation of the land and construction residential environment, 3 million euro is designated to art.

The art Commission was responsible for the plans of this art work, suggesting the places, selecting and inviting the artists and the guidance of the artists in the various stage of design to implementation.

In the period between 1999 and 2011 approximately twenty artists created work for the public space of Carnisselande in a broad sense. Also artists have made three films, accompanied a play and created photo's for the benefit of the final publication about Carnisselande and the realized works of art.

The Elastic Perspectives covers a total of some 25 works, which are based on the six dimensions.

## **4 Intended Result and Reached Goals per Dimension of the Elastic Perspective**

### **4.1 Historical Dimension**

Because of the unprecedented high pace of these developments a moment of reflection is of crucial importance. The capture (in Word and Image) of this urbanisation is an interesting option for the arts plan. The plan provided herein by means of a modern Chronicle. The municipality of Barendrecht has commissioned not only to art in public space, but also to capture the change of the polder to new housing on film in a three-part chronicle. The filmmaker Gilles Frenken got the job to make a triptych.

Part one, the documentary 'Urbanisation in the polder' was made at the start of construction by filmmaker Gilles Frenken and artist, writer, photographer Hans Aarsman. The first part focused on the existing use and the ideas of the urban designer.

In 2003, the construction of Carnisselande is halfway. Sjaak Langenberg (visual artist) with Gilles Frenken made part two of the chronicle on behalf of the municipality of Barendrecht, a surreal documentary titled 'The Miracle of Carnisse'. Langenberg and Frenken met with small and big problems that are characteristic of a neighborhood under construction. To counterbalance to the complaining residents, they claimed the blind writer and comedian Vincent Bijlo in the film to be a well-known resident of Carnisselande. On a hot summer day Bijlo guides the viewer through his beloved neighborhood. There are only girls born in the district and in a street shines the Christmas decorations in the early morning light. Through the eyes of the seer Bijlo problems are mirrored in a particular perspective. Jan van Geffen,

who as chairman of the Residents Carnisselande situations regularly denounces, he said after the premiere: 'This is much better than a documentary. It takes a lick with things too seriously sometimes talked about. The film also looks through - sometimes unjustly - crying over'. (Delta Weekly, 12/23/2003). The movie 'The Miracle of Carnisse' (42 minutes, stereo) premiered on 16 December 2003 in The Theatre intersection in Barendrecht. On January 4, 2004 the film was broadcast by the regional broadcaster TV Rijnmond.

The third film 'Vinex' presents the neighbourhood Carnisselande anno 2011, when it is more or less finished. Many stakeholders in the development of the district, but also residents (including many youngsters), come to the word including some (old) employees of Wissing. In this movie is tested, whether the plans were successful and is explored what worked in practice. Most of it is successful. Young people, however, do not select the designated hangout but the center of the district. The nuisance is overcome by private initiative.

The capture (in Word and image) of this urbanisation is an interesting option for the arts plan. The plan provided for this by means of a modern Chronicle.

#### **4.2 Planning Dimension**

The planning dimension is about arranging four activities, living, working, recreation and transport. Every activity receives its own art-assignment. For the living dimension the island, as isolated residential location is chosen because of a special form of appropriation of public space by residents that may arise here. There is one access bridge for which Orgacom (cooperation of two artists) developed the plan. The bridge shows as a ferry. The poet Drs. P gave permission to engrave a few lines from his poem 'back and forth' on a wooden board what is confirmed at the bridge-pont. Orgacom (an amalgamation of the words organization and communication) focuses on devising and implementing new roles that art can have within business and non-profit organizations.

The opening of this bridge was a merry feast for the neighborhood.

For the working dimension the business park is chosen as a location where art should enlarge the awareness of the business park. This work is not realized.

The rosarium in the Riederpark is chosen for the recreation dimension. In the Riederpark two works of art were realized. The image/play equipment is created by Guido Geelen (2002). The Group of statues named 'strange plants and dropped clouds' in the Riederpark is designed by Hielke Luik.

The car-pool place is chosen in the TEP for the transportation dimension. In the plan is mentioned that carpooling is a new form of meeting. The social aspect must not remain unnamed. There is a remarkable social activity that adds something to the ever individualizing society. This work is not realized.

#### **4.3 Architectural Dimension**

Architecture is shaping destinations. The arts plan provides the architectural dimension as a role of significance for the Visual Arts. This part of the plan should not be considered as a corrective measure or incidental surgery afterwards but as a structural integrated factor in the outcome. Six commissions are formulated within this dimension, for the Avenue Carnisse (not realized), tram stops, and for three cluster facilities and for an urban Tower. On or next to the Middeldijkerplein they want to make a tower as part of the architectural dimension. A traditional monument for the solidarity of the location. It gives the location a better visibility from the motorways. A tower of 60 meters high is the beacon for the district.

The bridges in the Avenue are designed as imaginary tramstops by Jeroen Doorenweerd. 9 concrete pillars, of which the outer 3 on either side wearing a wooden lean-to. Under these

lean-to's are always 4 lightspots. At the intersection with the South singel the color of the spots are white, crossing the Meerwede yellow and crossing the North singel blue.

For cluster facilities Vrijenhoek Mary Overtoom designed Sono, Twister & Catwalk in 2004. On the schoolyard are 3 groups of magnified dominoes. On these stones lights can blink and there is music. The control of this is located in the school.

Romy Finke designed nine viewers on the inside of a nursery. Looking through these one sees the world in different perspective, for example upside down. The work of art stimulates your way of looking. This work of art was too vulnerable and has been removed.

#### **4.4 Social dimension**

For the social dimension a artists will be asked to make the design for meeting places for the young, and for a big event when the shopping area will be opened.

Thoughtful urbanism tries as much as possible to identify and to create the necessary conditions for forms of future use. The extent to which the public space allows cultural activities is decisive for the success of the urban design. There are five locations/assignments, namely shopping arcade, youth meeting place (YMP), children meeting place (CMP), cycling route and an event.



*Image 3: entrance shopping area, work Ronald van Tienhoven*

The shopping arcade is the most outspoken node in the network (of people, money, goods and information). ' Fold after fold ' is a work of art by Ronald van Tienhoven. Huge coats, sweaters and skirts sparkle from the meters high walls (15 x 9 meter) that mark the entrance of the shopping centre..

The design of the YMP and CMP needs to relate to the requirements of the youth of today.

Three sittingbenches with a different seat height that have roughly the shape of an S is created by Jeroen Hoogstraten in front of the high school. On one side of the S sits a group which is focused inwards, on the other side one looks at the other direction, the square. Because the height of the highest bank is 95 cm, you usually feel slightly larger as someone who will walk past.



Image 4: pendulum bank of Jeroen Hoogstraten<sup>4</sup>

I think that the pendulum bank of Jeroen Hoogstraten is a success.

An important east-west cycle route intersects many different areas and connects the district with the Centre of Barendrecht. The artist Lilian Roosenboom created the work of art at the underpass of the A29. Above the water, the following text: ' ... and the glass began to melt away as if it were a really light silver mist was ... ' from Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass 1872 is engraved.

Located above the roadway and the cycling route are 2x9 lamps. In the pavement of the walkway are several RVS vowels processed. Above the roadway 9 round RVS plates are located with a diameter of 2 meters. The artist considers it important to give a location its own identity.

The delivery of the shop passage deserves an event. In the plan the adjacent water structure is the theater surface (a centuries old tradition). This event makes it possible that old and new residents meet.

The market square in Carnisselande is from 20 to 25 april 2009 the scene of music theatre Kapoen. About 250 participants, most of Barendrecht at work on the open-air spectacle about the future of Barendrecht. The recently placed statue (wife Carnisse) has become part of an amateur theater piece! And as highlight was the statue unveiled.

#### **4.5 Landscape Dimension**

The landscape dimension is about 'vista's'. The vista is used for centuries to get a good relationship with the surrounding landscape. The vista offers a sophisticated perspective with view on a staged world. There are three Vista's proposed, spread over Carnisselande. Vista Gaatkensplas, Vista Smitshoek and Vista Southern borderpark.

On the lookout Hill on the Oude Maas/Gaatkensplas a work of art is placed designed by DRFTWD/Arno van der Mark. The work of art ' Sky, Moon, Mirror, Environment' consists of a large round, concave mirror. Depending on the position the mirror reflects the surroundings. If you stay close you see yourself and the surrounding landscape in a normal view. As you get more distant from the mirror the image at some point shows the landscape and visitor upside down. The world is by the optical law of the mirror turned on its head. Heaven and Earth have swapped places. This game of reflection and light dissolves the trusted image of the environment and making it as an unknown celestial body hovering above the Hill. Due to the burning point of the mirror which caused problems, the mirror was transferred from concave to spherical shape. In addition to the artwork various seats are placed. This reflective circle sculpture on the high artificial Hill is used by the municipal pr as a logo.





*Image 5+6: Hill, Mirror, Environment of DRFTWD Office/Arno van der Mark*

The design 3 x 360 degrees of Tilmann Eberwein ensures that residents, even when there is firm wind, can enjoy the view. The sections are easy to rotate manually such that the glass plate acts as a useful wind screen. This artwork has been removed because of complaints from local residents about bothersome youngsters.

The artwork location Vista Southern borderpark, near the entrance of the tram plus line, must give commuters a welcome. NEXT architects has won the contest launched for artists and architects. Their design consists of a circular staircase which leads the visitor up to a height that allows an unhindered view of the horizon. The path makes a continuous movement and thereby draws on the context of the heavy infrastructural surroundings of ring road and tram track. While a tram stop presents the end or the start of a journey, the route of the stairway is endless. The continuity and endlessness have a double meaning, however. Because the stair is based on the principal of the Moebius ring, it has only one surface and can only exist as a three-dimensional object. Upside becomes underside becomes upside. The suggestion of a continuous route is therefore, in the end, an impossibility: Far away, so close. Because of its structure the shape of the object is hard to perceive; every perspective generates a new image with which the design is not only a contextual but also a very literal answer to the given context of the local art plan: an Elastic Perspective<sup>5</sup>.

#### **4.6 Environmental Dimension**

The environmental dimension contains three assignments, one to visualise the water-housekeeping (with the different flows of water), the nature reserve area Carnisse Grienden, and the Southside-Borderpark.

During the construction of Carnisselande is quality awareness of the environment on many possible scale levels is converted into actions. Water management, nature reserve Carnisse and Southern borderpark (Little Swiss because there is a tram and height differences).

The artwork on the roundabout was supposed to deal with the phenomenon of environmental consciousness. The roundabout is a kind of entrance of Carnisselande. It is a classic statement to place a character on such a place. Maarten de Reus designed the five huge botanical characters, five meters high, seven meters wide, and two meters deep, spell the word GROEN (green).

In 2007 it was decided to develop a waste delivery station (environmental Street). The artist Tanja Smeets made for this spot the art work 'Don't leave me this way', consisting of a series of sculptures that are placed to the entrance wall.

## 5. Conclusions

New housing estates have a strange relationship with time. They are fresh and smell the future. An irresistible scent that attracts young families. The freshness of this new housing is perishable. Art contributes to a better shelf life. In this new housing development areas have been chosen for a mix of styles to combat aging. Landscape elements are part of the design. The attempt to get a grip on history is also reflected in the increasing attention to cultural heritage and historic traces in the landscape.

The elastic nature of the process is proved by the fact that a dimension is added, the 'spiritual dimension'. There was need for a new church building (not usual) and the spiritual dimension was born.

In different studies Carnisselande is appreciated very high as a residential area. In this context, the influence of the arts plan is not examined. It certainly has contributed to the positive result.

What made the art plan 'The elastic perspective, art in public space' a success?

The following reasons contributed to this:

- a. tenacious commune council, more than 15 years of consistent policy;
- b. a flexible plan that can absorb changes;
- c. a lot of money (1% is not much but 3 million euro for art is a luxury)
- d. art is not added afterwards but integrated from the start. Art is not only destined to decorate and liven up the neighborhood, but also to provoke discussion, to comment on the surrounding;
- e. this is not just about physical art but also about social interaction (event, play) and social processes;
- f. good selection of artists by Art commission;
- g. art marks the space;
- h. art and culture makes residents proud of their neighborhood;
- i. art in public space should be firm, file against vandalism.

Not everything was a success. Three works of art have been taken away where there is for one wanted a new location. One artwork is removed due to inconvenience to local residents because of loitering, the local government is looking for a new spot. Two other works of art where to vulnerable.

Don't forget that people themselves are primarily responsible for the success of the district. and not the one who has designed him. To protest or to make music together, acting together see neighbors as best friends creates a good living environment. The conclusion so far is that residents got more aware of their surrounding and appreciate it more.

I hope this paper is an inspiration for other developers to give art a clear role in fast developments.

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