

From wounded city to healing environment

Rotterdam, seriously wounded by war. Roads slice it up into isolated islands of development. Erasmus MC was one such island, nothing more than a collection of unrelated buildings. Today city and medical district pride themselves on *new and meaningful places of all sizes*. Public, semi-public and private areas. The medical district's duet with the city has benefitted both tremendously, transforming the whole into more than the sum of its parts.

In 2014 Rotterdam was crowned *the best city in Europe*. Where will the city and Erasmus MC stand in 2018?

From the frenzy of technology to a natural sense of calm

Rotterdam, some 450 million tons of goods pass through Europe's biggest port on their way to 350 million consumers. Excellent transshipment in the world's most sustainable port is the ambition. Similar smart logistics are in evidence at Erasmus MC, with 530,000 outpatient consultations a year, 13,000 employees and 4,500 students. They all require smooth wayfinding and efficient organisation. At the same time, the biggest care project in the country is rising. A challenging puzzle on limited space, next to the vast hospital complex that continues as an ongoing concern.

For all activities Erasmus MC offers a *natural sense of calm*, combining hospital processes with new technologies and sustainability. R&D led to smart architectural answers to complex questions: separate logistics for people and goods, clear orientation by views, greenery and art in public areas, and stress-reducing waiting spaces. Supporting all of this is clear wayfinding via attractive points of vertical circulation. It's impossible to get lost.

Meaningful architecture, an attractive symphony in Rotterdam and Erasmus MC.

Space for body and mind

The city council values Erasmus MC as "a very important place, where internationally renowned museums, green oases and the medical district create '*space for body and mind*'. Enhancing connections between the city and hospital, create attractive and easy access to neighbouring parks and museums, offering positive diversion for patients, staff and students alike.

New connections are also established within the complex. Public zones with retail areas interlock seamlessly the realms of care, learning and research. Magnificent vistas of a stunning skyline, even from your bed, stress-reducing daylight and greenery in the radiotherapy and emergency department create a positive atmosphere.

It is an art to perform perfectly on all levels, in all phases. Transforming a wounded Rotterdam into a healing environment.

Rotterdam gets better.

Research Focus

The redevelopment of an inner city hospital site is based on major long-term investment choices that overlap and support urban renewal and transformation projects planned by the city. Will a renewed medical district at the heart of the second largest city in this western European country enhance its ranking on the architectural and Lonely Planet lists? What did we do? How does it show?

Objective and Methodology

In this case study we looked back (2003-2016) at the parallel process of campus and city transformation, where more focus is given to the quality of public spaces, accessibility, safety and security in promoting the health and recuperation for both patients and staff. The new university medical centre was designed when this part of town was recognized as a prime location not only for economic development but also for the enhancement of 'space for body and mind'. Seemingly independently, but occurring at the same time and increasingly together, city and hospital worked on creating compassionate places and environments with easy access to nature and art.

Results

We will present and illustrate common denominators from the study period. To create compassionate, sustainable and safe environments that contribute to the internationally recognised quality of city and medical campus alike. Comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness play an important role. The city's revitalization and campus redevelopment take a long time. A clear conceptual framework, for both city and campus transformation, is helpful in convincing board members, city aldermen and other parties to continue in a chosen direction. Strong leadership and expertise is needed to support guardianship throughout the process. In this case the economic crisis was of influence, as well as challenges in public-private partnership.

'Designing with one hand' for a range of private, semi-public and public spaces is key, inside and outside.

Conclusions and implications

Contemporary city transformation and a contemporary hospital development share important characteristics, both in design and process. Improving the quality of (public) spaces is key in aligning efforts for the well-being of patients and visitors, staff, students and residents.

Key words

- 1) Erasmus MC's duet with Rotterdam towards 2018
- 2) The art of performing perfectly on all levels, in all phases
- 3) Rotterdam consolidates position as 'best city in Europe'

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