

# A VIVID PORTRAIT OF VERSATILE AMSTERDAM ZUIDOOST

Research Group Cities & Visitors  
Field Labs Amsterdam Zuidoost

16 June 2017

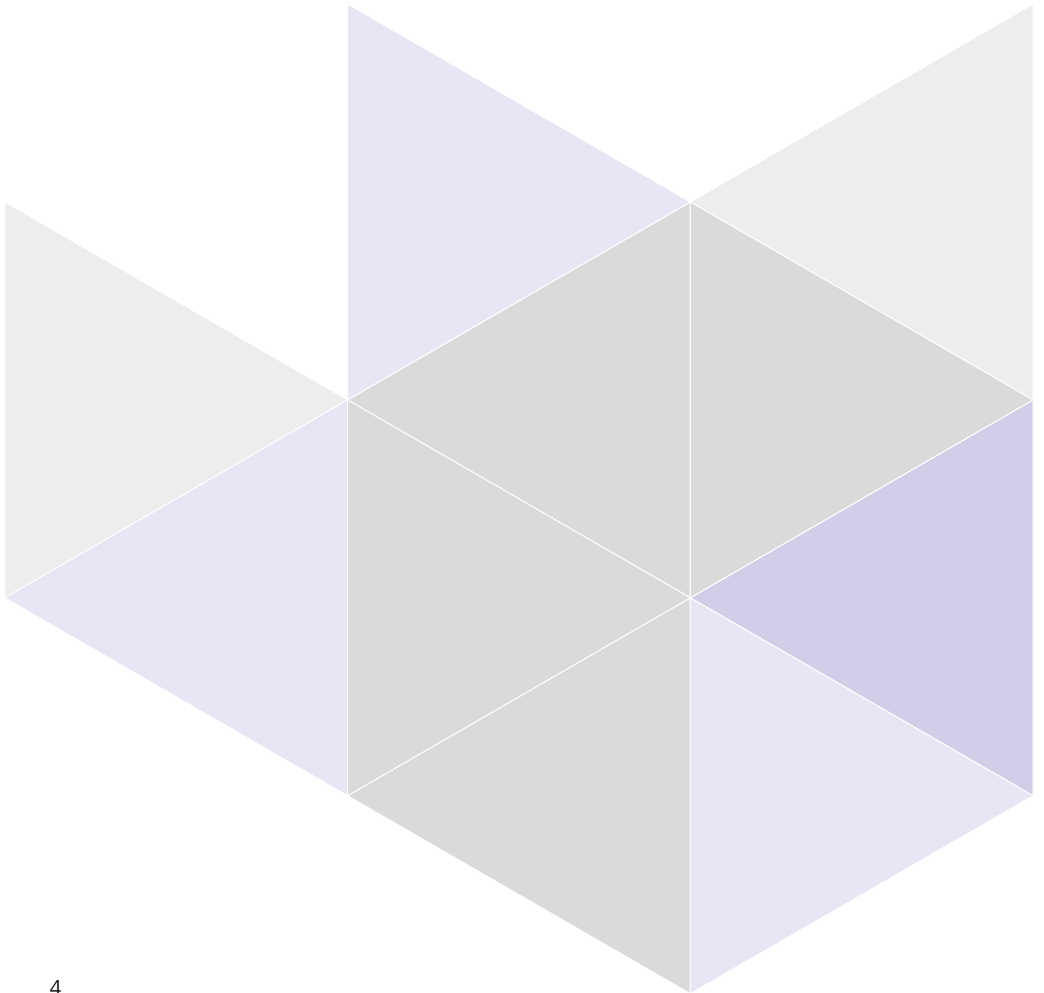




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# FOREWORD

The Urban Management Symposium Cities and Visitors' aimed at contributing to generate attention for Amsterdam Zuidoost. We think that the adjective 'versatile' applies to Amsterdam (and other international cities), with their mixed and heterogeneous populations and flows of visitors, that engage with a large variety of activities and ideas. And in particular to Amsterdam Zuidoost.

The city is so much more than its well-known must-sees, and visitors increasingly look beyond them. Therefore, our Symposium, held at the doorstep of the summer of 2016, offered a view on a Versatile Amsterdam Zuidoost in which functions, ambiances and life styles become more and more multiple and intertwined in daily urban rhythms. We heard a variety of stories and perspectives on this dynamic and thrilling part of the city. And also, we discussed future perspectives, directions, and policy implications. Not only with the usual suspects – policy makers, politicians – but with people who live and work in the area, and are attached and committed to it.

The Symposium was part of the Field Lab Zuidoost of the Urban Management programme of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. As university, we are engaged with the city, and in particular with this part of the city; we have a large presence in the area, and a growing number of our

students live here. Projects like these help us to research and understand the current urban condition, while being fully part of it. Our students, with fresh, open and bright minds, contribute to the generation and realisation of new ideas. We hope to continue our journey in the coming years!

Willem van Winden,  
Professor of Urban Economic  
Innovation, Member of Field Lab  
Zuidoost Management Team

*Ps. Also on behalf of Núria Arbonés Aran I would like to thank again all speakers who contributed to the Symposium celebrated on 16 Juni 2016, exactly one year ago now. We would also like to express our thanks and acknowledgement to the co-organizers of the Symposium Zita Ingen-Housz and Anna Groentjes, and to Maarten van der Burg and Vanessa Catalano for their extra support. And last but certainly not least, we are also very thankful to Carla Hoffschulte. This present publication would have not been possible without her.*





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# 1 DEVELOPING A RESEARCH APPROACH FOR AMSTERDAM ZUIDOOST

**Núria Arbonés Aran**

## THE REVALORISATION OF CITIES

Since the 1980s, the revalorisation of post-industrial cities as the best places to live and visit has become a general phenomenon in the Western world. And, if the course does not change, all pointers indicate to this process continuing. We are therefore in the privileged position of being able to pay testimony to these processes of revalorisation, and even of being able to influence them through gaining an understanding of their mechanisms.

Amsterdam's ambition during the last two decades to keep growing and become more densely populated is a reflection of a broader, international vision on cities and their nature. Edward Glaeser is one of the urban scientists who popularised this vision, by describing successful and sustainable urban environments as places with a high density and a variety of activities and facilities.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps one of most salient characteristics in this revival of cities has been the appraisal of urban spaces as versatile places par excellence. Cities actually become liveable once they are able to

host diversity, tap into a large array of different activities and provide for all kinds of people and stages of life. This also means that 'densification' has become a key term in spatial planning policy – a concern also identified by Amsterdam urbanists in a manifesto.<sup>2</sup> Put briefly, one could argue that the ideal has become to achieve a city landscape characterised by what we could call a 'versatile density'.

In Amsterdam, the phrase 'rollout of the city centre' was used to define new plans for new areas in which – in contrast to the typical residential areas of prior decades – 'there are not only houses and a shopping centre but also businesses, small-scale shops and other amenities, such as facilities providing sports, culture and hospitality services'. With this vision, new governmental organisations such as Top Amsterdam envisaged achieving an 'attractive, bustling atmosphere on the streets', typical for inner-cities. This also applied to new developments. They planned to create a pleasant environment for both residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds to spend time in.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edward Glaeser, *Triumph of the City. How Urban Spaces Makes Us Human* (Basingstok and Oxford: Pan Books, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Zef Hemel, 'De Stad Als Brein', Inaugural Lecture. FMG: Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, 2012 <<http://academienvandestad.nl/files/achtergronden/intreeredezeffhemel.pdf>>.

<sup>3</sup> Both quotations have been translated by UvA Talen and are originally in Dutch André Buys and Marlien Oderkerk, *Studeren in de Topstad. Visiedocument Op Studentenhuisvesting 2010-2014* (Amsterdam, 2010).

During the process of becoming more compact, prosperous cities tend to improve their infrastructure, especially in terms of cultural offerings and public transportation. In some cases, they also find ways of physically erasing – or at least, mitigating – some of their more robust internal barriers, such as ring roads and railways. For example, by conceiving methods of covering or converting them. In this sense, peripheral areas are getting assimilated by, and integrated into, the city’s urban fabric.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, these kinds of urban spaces – rehabilitated, clean and featuring a broad offering – have become increasingly appealing to visitors.<sup>5</sup> All the more since the liberalisation of European flying regulations and the emergence of low-cost airlines brought city trip experiences to the masses.<sup>6</sup> Amsterdam is one of the many cities that started to recognise the growth of the tourism sector as an important factor for its economy. The Amsterdam Economic Board (AEB) subsequently identified tourism as one of the eight important economic clusters that



*Núria Arbonés Aran*

contribute to making Amsterdam an interesting place for residents and visitors.<sup>7</sup>

However, the Amsterdam local government is now becoming increasingly aware of the fact that the growth of tourism can present a threat to liveability in the city centre (which is by far the most frequently visited part of the city). As early as 2013, the local government noted that (the centre of) Amsterdam was already approaching maximum touristic capacity. An ever-

<sup>4</sup> Gordon Price, ‘Why Is Vancouver Number 1?’ (Amsterdam: MRA Congress EYE on the Future, February 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Paul Claval, ‘The Cultural Dimension in Restructuring Metropolises: The Amsterdam Example’, in *Understanding Amsterdam*, ed. by Léon Deben, Willem Heinemeyer, and Dick van der Vaart (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2007), pp. 59–92.

<sup>6</sup> Tobias Rapp, ‘Lost and Sound: Berlin, Techno and the Easyjet Set’, *Innervations*, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> See manifesto in *Amsterdam Partners, The Making of ... the City Marketing of Amsterdam*. *Het Ontstaan van de City Marketing van Amsterdam*, ed. by City of Amsterdam Gemeente Amsterdam (Amsterdam, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Esther Jakobs and Jannes ten Berge, ‘Druk in de Binnenstad 2012’, *Bureau Onderzoek En Statistiek*, 2013 <[http://www.ois.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2013\\_druk\\_in\\_de\\_binnenstad.pdf](http://www.ois.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2013_druk_in_de_binnenstad.pdf)>.

increasing number of visitors, residents and business owners are experiencing 'pressure' or crowdedness in the inner city, which is why it is important that means are developed to distribute tourism throughout the year and urban space.<sup>8</sup>

In order to reduce the burden on the city centre, alternative (and more peripheral) parts of the city, such as Amsterdam Zuidoost, should be made more attractive and promoted. In principle, this idea can only be advanced once there is sufficient evidence that the interest of visitors to see places is also a reflection of their appeal, and that this interest can be a stimulating source of civil empowerment and self-pride.<sup>9</sup>

However, the crux of the question can be found in a more complex matter. The main objection expressed by Amsterdam Zuidoost is that the district should not only become an attractive place for visitors purely because the city centre is too crowded. Or, as Group Chairman Roy Ristie put it: 'We love progress, but we do not want to once again become "the wrong side of the tracks" of Amsterdam'.

With this in mind, our research group is keen to contribute to more authentic and diverse means of developing and improving the image of Amsterdam Zuidoost as a more attractive place for

residents and visitors, as well as of what the district has to offer. The following sections outline how we have been building on these foundations.

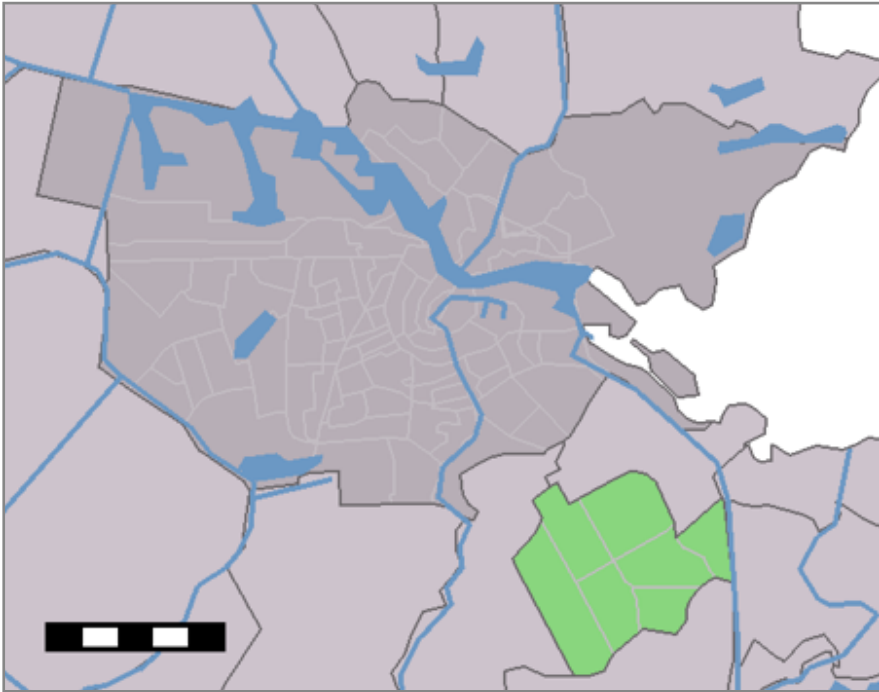
### ZUIDOOST: A BRIEF HISTORY

The unique location of Amsterdam Zuidoost, especially of the Bijlmermeer, has played a significant role in the collective imagination of the area: it is isolated from the rest of Amsterdam and made of a different substance. From this perspective, Amsterdam Zuidoost may not initially appear to be an interesting destination for visitors.

In a geographical sense, Amsterdam Zuidoost is an exclave of Amsterdam, as it does not border any of the official Amsterdam districts. Instead, it borders the smaller municipalities of Duivendrecht and Diemen. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Zuidoost is therefore also not included in the city maps provided to visitors by the official Amsterdam Tourist Information Office.

The district of Amsterdam Zuidoost consists of an agglomeration of four residential areas – Bijlmermeer, Venserpolder, Gaasperdam and Driemond – as well as the Amstel III - Bullewijk Business Park and the Amsterdam ArenA entertainment and shopping district. It is home to a total of approximately 84,000 inhabitants.

<sup>9</sup> Cities and Visitors. Regulating People, Markets and City Space, ed. by Lily M. Hoffman, Susan Fainstein, and Dennis R. Judd (Blackwell Publishing, 2003).



For many years, Amsterdam Zuidoost has been metonymically called the Bijlmer, referring to the high-rise neighbourhood that arose from 1966 to 1975 in the area of the 'Bijlmer Lake' (Bijlmermeer in Dutch). These high-rise buildings ultimately became emblematic for the district.

At the time, the plans for the new neighbourhood reflected the ideals of a makeable society.<sup>10</sup> The modern Bijlmer apartments were legitimised as

a means of meeting the expectations of a large population increase and to house Amsterdam's middle-class residents (who were abandoning the deteriorating, old buildings of the city centre in favour of more comfortable housing). The area was to feature spacious parks and offer car and train connections that would transport the new residents to their workplaces at offices in the vicinity of motorways and transport nodes.

<sup>10</sup> Evert van Voskuilen, *Ridders in de Bijlmer. Een Wandeling Door de Geschiedenis van Amsterdam Zuidoost* (Amsterdam: Stadsdeel Zuidoost Gemeente Amsterdam, 2014).

However, as has been well-documented, reality differed enormously from the envisaged plans. The population increased less dramatically than expected, and those moving out of the city centre opted for alternative locations such as Purmerend and Lelystad, where the more traditional low-rise housing was comparatively more affordable and featured its own garden. Consequently, the municipality experienced great difficulties finding occupants for the housing in the Bijlmermeer.

In the late 1970s, the area became the place where naturalised immigrants from the former Dutch colonies in Suriname and the Antilles settled. Residents from other immigration flows followed, principally from Africa. In this way – as has also been the case in other European cities – districts with specific ‘ethnicities’ started to emerge in Amsterdam.

The Bijlmer became a mainly black district, and started to acquire the characteristics associated with relative poverty, deterioration and lack of investment in public spaces and infrastructure, including drugs and crime. By 1985, a quarter of the high-rise buildings in the Bijlmermeer area was unoccupied.

During these years, various measures were taken to improve the quality of the area. However, these measures had insufficient and too limited effect. For many, the Bijlmer Disaster involving El Al flight 1862 on 4 October 1992 was a wake-up call. It became clear that the living conditions in some areas of the Bijlmer were extremely precarious, with numerous illegal immigrants living together in small apartments. The disaster witnessed the beginning of a sweeping restructuring plan. One of the objectives of the plan was to create a layout representing a more human scale, in which residents would feel safer than in the large, often solitary, areas typical to the Bijlmer. Since then, a substantial part of the Bijlmermeer neighbourhood has been remodelled. It now features lower-rise housing, fewer corridors cutting through the open spaces and improved infrastructure.

But these were not the only changes in Amsterdam Zuidoost. With a new railway station (Bijlmer ArenA), the Amsterdam ArenA football stadium (home of AFC Ajax) an A-brand entertainment area on the ArenA Boulevard (including a Pathé cinema, the Heineken Music Hall – now AFAS Live – and later, the Ziggo Dome), and the Amsterdamse Poort shopping area, Zuidoost started to attract visitors.

## IMAGES AS A STARTING POINT FOR RESEARCH

In our research into Amsterdam Zuidoost to date, we have attempted to grasp some of the district's most visibly attractive and appealing images. Through our research, we also aim to contribute to the development of Amsterdam Zuidoost that is not merely the product of a top-down master plan, but that is anchored in the combination of different identities, which have been taking shape in the area during recent decades.

Saying that our aim is to grasp attractive and appealing images can arouse suspicion. After all, who can legitimately judge what is attractive and appealing and what is not? These are indeed complicated concerns. In fact, many different languages seem to have expressions arguing that the appreciation of beauty is something that depends on the eyes of the beholder. Nowadays, the relevance of notions such as perception and point of view is broadly acknowledged, and these notions have become a focus of scientific research: aptly illustrated by Imagology (the study of images) being a great aid to us as we gave shape to our own research into images and the attractiveness of Zuidoost. According to Imagology, images are

discursive representations of places and people that, most importantly, always include a judgement.<sup>11</sup> Underlying argumentations about matters such as attractiveness, appeal and beauty are always inherent in these judgements.

The study of images therefore offers us a means of exploring these underlying argumentations through the eyes of the beholder. It makes us aware of the fact that images always have a history and a tradition, and that they can also transform and change. A positive image such as that of Paris being the fashion capital of the world, for instance, is anchored in robust historical traditions including those of couture and etiquette. However, this image also has a downside: associations with negative values such as superficiality or vanity. On the other hand, one should also remember that places with a negative image (of being dangerous or criminal, for example), can benefit from positive associations as being places of excitement and seduction. In this sense, Zukin's referential study on the increasing appeal of places such as Harlem in New York provides indispensable reading.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of Zuidoost, Doug Saunders was perhaps one of the first authors to achieve international recognition with

<sup>11</sup> Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Sharon Zukin, *Naked City. The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Spaces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

his interpretation of the Bijlmer and its ethnic diversity as something that should be celebrated instead of feared. Books such as his *Arrival City* have been key to spreading the perception of immigration as something positive and even necessary for cities to prosper. In this light, arrival city neighbourhoods should be viewed as places of hope and prosperity, as hotspots of entrepreneurship and innovation.<sup>13</sup> Such dynamics show that images and judgements on places can be reinterpreted, dependent on who, when and where they are being examined. Places are therefore offered new opportunities to flourish, overcoming the effects of having been burdened with a bad reputation.

We would like to draw attention to one approach to accelerating these processes of improving the image and reputation of a place such as Zuidoost: that of reframing them in a broader urban context in which versatility is celebrated. In this light, we are once again linking to the current revalorisation of urban spaces, as mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. In short: attractive urban places are places with a diversity of dimensions.

The emphasis on versatility allows us to take account of the personalities

of a significant number of current residents of, and visitors to, cities such as Amsterdam. Rather than only being interested in major events, urban residents and visitors engage with a wide variety of activities and ideas. There is a clear emphasis on seeking out authenticity, quality and personal and collective fulfilment. Food, fashion, music, sport, history and knowledge therefore become the expression of appealing values such as craftsmanship, creativity, quality, empowerment and intellectual freedom.

#### THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Our research into images of Amsterdam Zuidoost started by identifying visible discursive representations of the area that could be appealing and match with existing (urban) international imaginaries such as those mentioned above. We used a variety of sources, ranging from communication materials, development plans and reports from different Zuidoost initiatives to texts from performances and less formal information such as opinions on forums and other mediums. This allowed us to formulate several, sometimes complementary, image alternatives for a more versatile image of Zuidoost.

Following the logic of imagology, we linked the various images to various existing traditions and references.

<sup>13</sup> Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History Is Reshaping Our World* (London: Windmill, 2011).

With regard to the description of different images, we were also looking to stimulate and engage in a dialogue, connecting with real people and existing collectives in Amsterdam Zuidoost. In many cases, these people and collectives were involved in producing the material that we had collected in advance. A next step was therefore to invite a diverse representation of these people and collectives to a so-called Research Design Session, organised by Eric Reiman, Madeline Hageman and Peik Suyling. During this session, we shared and discussed the different images that we had described, and subsequently formulated overarching insights. These insights served as a guideline for the Symposium: the boundaries, hidden treasures and connectivity.

The sessions enabled us to gain improved insights, and to tap into the genius and expertise that is already active in the field. Participants included the alliance of Zuidoost Partners and a large array of initiatives such as Imagine IC, World of Food, World of Talent and ZO!, to name but a few. The comments made by the participants during the session have now been placed in the different frames complementing the different image descriptions below.

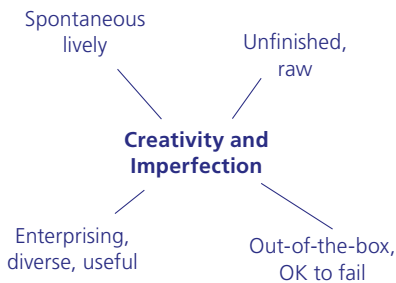
## THE DISCUSSED IMAGES FROM ZUIDOOST

1. The **Fantasy City** image can be defined as an international development that has taken place at the city's outskirts, particularly since the 1990s. Excellent car and railway transport is a significant aspect of the image. Hannigan notes that this model is 'depositing an infrastructure of casinos, megaplex cinemas, themed restaurants, simulation theatres, interactive theme rides and virtual reality arcades which collectively promise to change the face of leisure in the postmodern metro polis.'<sup>14</sup> Representative venues for business can be combined with leisure. This is the image linked to the area in the ArenA Boulevard, home to the Amsterdam ArenA, the Ziggo Dome, AFAS Live (formerly the Heineken Music Hall) and new hotels and restaurants. In its purest form, the advantage of these areas is that they are easy to acknowledge. Visitors know what they are required to do, it is relaxingly predictable. The excitement is found in the visited performances, films, simulations and virtual experiences.

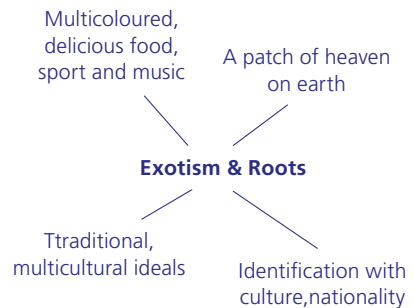


<sup>14</sup> John Hannigan, *Fantasy City. Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 1.

2. The **Creativity and Imperfection** image emerges from creative incubators and other related initiatives that are (temporally) located in abandoned offices and typical Bijlmer spots such as high-rise flats. This is the image of the creative industry, the recuperation and revalorisation of the original architecture of the Bijlmer and the charm of imperfection.<sup>15</sup> In Zuidoost, this has become visible through initiatives such as Heesterveld and No Limits; places with stories of pop-up activities that show synergy, improvisation and low-key connections between people with the same ideas.



3. The **Exoticism & Roots** image is related to activities that are associated with the roots of the original non-local residents of Zuidoost, such as the immigrants from Suriname, the Antilles and African countries. The image is often called 'colourful': the Kwaku Summer Festival, exotic food, the market with specific products, music and dance.



4. The **New Urban Post-white Society** image arises out of a civil anxiety. This interesting image only recently became visible in Amsterdam and has connections with movements in London, New York and Paris.<sup>17</sup> This is the story of black intellectuals with political awareness who are creating new references to challenge the racial

<sup>15</sup> Ellen Rutte, 'Vintage\_Russia: Wat Imperfectie Sexy Maakt' (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2013).  
<sup>16</sup> Gert Oostindie, 'Caribbean Migration to the Netherlands: A Journey to Disappointment?', in *Lost Illusions: Caribbean Minorities in Britain and The Netherlands*, ed. by I. M. Coss and H. Entzinger (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 54–72.  
<sup>17</sup> See origin of the topics in among other authors William Upski Wimsatt, *Bomb the Suburbs* (Berkeley: Publishers Group West, 2008).

## FROM THE RESEARCH DESIGN SESSION

### **Exoticism and Roots**

'One can always go to Zuidoost for a multicultural experience – and delicious food naturally forms part of this.

'The residents hail from all kinds of different backgrounds. Zuidoost radiates this multiculturalism, something that also adds to the visitor's experience.

'This gives Zuidoost its unique atmosphere and is a reason to come to Zuidoost. Zuidoost should be better known for its enormous diversity of cultures. This could be made much more visible. Showing off and marketing its exotic roots'.

'The huge diversity of cultures that live alongside one another in a limited space is special and creates a unique atmosphere' .

'This is what Zuidoost means to visitors from the outside – on the one hand, a positive cultural melting pot, on the other hand, visible, but not 'marketed'. One example is the Shopperhal with all its exotic products, which could be known for this mixing and local colour, but remains hidden and is hardly visible'.

'Visitors do not see enough of the residents' many cultural roots. World of Food is a jewel in the residential area that offers a shop-window to outsiders, inviting them to experience different cultures and cuisines'.

### **A New Urban Post-white Society**

'A nice description: to my mind, the reframing and renaming of an existing phenomenon and new developments constitutes one of the keys to creating a different image'.

'A mix of different cultures that nevertheless still live in relatively segregated fashion. Investment in urban renewal has led to a middle class of home-owners/ neighbourhoods where the post-white mix is clearly visible. However, in the renovated neighbourhoods with many high-rise buildings, one still sees a large number of relatively poor black families'.

'In relation to culture, catering and entertainment, there are great developments such as the Arena area, World of Food, Hoekenrodeplein and the Bijlmerpark theatre'.

'Many residents have the feeling that the Arena area and Hoekenrodeplein are not meant for them, but for tourists and the business market. The large-scale design of the area around the Arena makes an austere, bare impression, whilst the other side of the railway line is more representative of the traditional image and identity of Zuidoost. I visit all the areas, but I still consider a good post-white mix to be missing'.

### **Green Bijlmermeer**

'My perception behind the image of the 'Green Bijlmermeer' is an inspiring one. As I see it, green stands for (constant) growth (movement/dynamism) and flourishing (full of life, sustainable)'.

'Inspirational for investment'.

'These days, Bijlmermeer, once a lake, is much more than a home to fish. So much more happens here.

For this reason, the brand name 'Bijlmer' is sufficient.

The Bijlmer = more.

More of everything'.

Ajax Arena: 'If the Bijlmer will not come to the De Meer stadium, then the De Meer stadium will come to the Bijlmer.'

### **Miscellaneous**

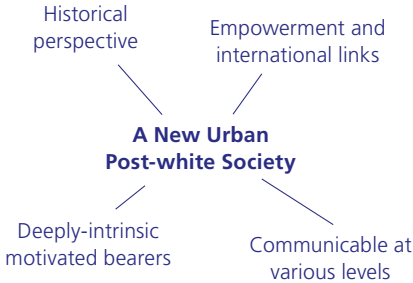
'There is lots of creativity, there are lots of initiatives, but there is a lack of professionalism, and insufficient attention is being paid to branding; in other words, how do I want to be seen and what do I want to achieve with this?'

'Much is happening, but there is a lack of focus on what is good enough for the national level. As a result of this, there is too little networking with other districts and/or cities (learning curve)'.

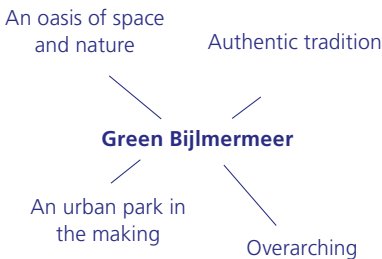
'Perception: it is there, but it is not being expressed well'.

Lacking: strategy and coaching -> long-term thinking for improved results.

structure of society. The Bijlmer as a breeding ground for new ideas, education and lifestyles.



5. The **Green Bijlmermeer** image brings forward associations with qualities that have been kept from the past, like the Bijlmermeer as an oasis of green, space and pleasure in a crowded city. In the past, these tangible signs resulted in ambitious projects such as the Floriade and the Gaasperplas. Such projects could connect the different authentic experiences and create attractive shared spaces, such as urban parks.



As you can see, the comments in this final section relate to a series of observations and statements regarding the challenges facing Zuidoost as it strives to develop its potential attractiveness in a more visible and upgraded fashion. In short, all participants recognised (and supported) the potential of Zuidoost actually becoming a truly attractive and alluring place. However, there was also a clear awareness of the fact that we still have a long way to go. We therefore started to draft the framework for the Cities and Visitors Symposium.

**STORYTELLING AT THE SYMPOSIUM: A JOURNEY**

The main goal was to link the different elements in a story that could be realistically followed during a two-and-a-half-hour session. The metaphor of a journey provided the glue: the audience were invited on a journey through Zuidoost from their seats, as if they were sitting in a tour bus. The framework also needed to take account of the international dimension of the different images of Amsterdam Zuidoost. We therefore involved our partners from Barcelona and Paris. The Symposium was also a milestone, representing the beginning of a new cycle not only with the involvement of Fieldlab Zuidoost, Zuidoost Partners and all the committed participants, but also

of our department at the Amsterdam School of International Business (AMSIB), located in the Fraijlemaborg building in Zuidoost.

Designed by Cristina Serra, the Symposium logo reflects the cosmopolitan feeling that many of the attendees had already detected in Zuidoost: gold and shine for a variety of smells, colours, languages and a wish of upgrading the qualification of what is on offer. All speakers were asked to relay their story in a 10-minute lecture. The journey was clustered into different topics. Dolores Heide started with a call for engagement from the city Amsterdam Zuidoost council, in which she shared the policies that had already been developed to contribute to achieving the desired more attractive image of Zuidoost.

During a second cluster, focused on what we called Boundaries in Zuidoost, there was time for lectures examining the physical and mental barriers that result in many still perceiving Zuidoost as something far away. Vanessa Catalano and Patrick Meershoek reflected on this topic.

A third cluster focused on unveiling some of what we described as the Hidden Treasures of Zuidoost: specific elements that appear to have all the ingredients required to become references in and from Zuidoost. Evelin-Pierre Dumfries, Gideon Everduim and Yvette Gorsiel discussed these hidden treasures, also appealing for attention and care: hidden treasures are both valuable and vulnerable.

A fourth and last cluster was called Connectivity. Featuring an account of different practices and approaches, this cluster was designed to illustrate how connection and interrelation could help to make attractiveness visible. Elise Stedenburg, Arno Gorissen and Enric Ordeix were the speakers for this cluster.

We brought the session to an end by asking all participants to make a personal contribution by writing a 'Postcard to the Future': a postcard upon which they could write best wishes and their vision of a prospective Zuidoost.

## When Dreams Come True: A Postcard to the Future

### Bounderies

'Be inclusive, break bounderies'

'Use the infrastructure corridor that presently forms a barrier for functions that have a positive effect'

### Hidden treasures

'Keep the past and add some future without removing the roots. That's the treasure of ZO'.

'A pearl in Amsterdam. Be authentic and develop yourself on the most unique and positive way'

'The variety and richness around you is an opportunity to grow!'

### Connections

'A food-route in ZO'

'Pop-up outdoor cafes'

'Meet, greet and eat in project . World of Food Amsterdam: the proud of Amsterdam Southeast'

'A culture community forum where everybody gather together'

'A dynamic, respectful melting pot offering a breeding ground for anyone ambitious enough to contribute'

'Dear future Bijlmermeer,  
By the time you read this, I hope you have become a landmark  
for the entirety of Amsterdam.  
An example for Europe, concerning successful multiculturalism.  
By the time you read this I'll be old and may you be established worldwide!'

## 2 THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT: VISION AND POLICY

***Dolores Heide** has been a key figure in the design of this research. During working sessions at her office, it becomes clear that she is a devoted supporter of an attractive Zuidoost being developed based on versatility, diversity, openness and dynamism. This means learning to look at Amsterdam Zuidoost from many different perspectives and interests, moving beyond clichés that are all too easy to fall into. Examining the many initiatives that have been already launched, one can comprehend the complexity – but also the desirability – of such an approach. This approach should result in a wide variety of upgraded facilities and offerings rooted in existing activities and landscapes: the markets, the food, the music, the culture, the industriousness and the green spaces. Dolores Heide's words are not simply an appraisal of Zuidoost, but also a call for support.*

'The focus of Amsterdam Zuidoost lies in efforts to ensure that the area is better equipped to attract visitors to enjoy the strong characteristics of this area; a thriving business area, a green heart and warm cultural diversity. Development of the area on this aspect entails heavy investment in our relationship with local and international businesses who successfully operate in this area. They all play a role, and are therefore also partly responsible for the identity and image of Amsterdam

Zuidoost. We encourage them to invest accordingly and to work towards the goals we try to set together.

We therefore want to make the most of our cooperation with partners, entrepreneurs and businesses in Zuidoost, the network and investors. Our aim is to draw attention to the area's attractiveness and its strong characteristics in order to generate unique results.

One ambition is to further develop the central area of Zuidoost, ArenAPoort (the ArenA area and the Amsterdamse Poort shopping area), as a 'metropolitan core area', a lively hub for shopping, entertainment, work and living. The development has been underway for a long time and is still progressing. ArenAPoort has already gained national and international reputation as a



place for larger-scale (indoor) sports and entertainment events, held in the Amsterdam ArenA, Ziggo Dome and AFAS Live. The area is also home to media companies with corresponding studio facilities (Endemol). The ambition for the area is to establish large-scale and peripheral retail trade, to strengthen the Amsterdamse Poort shopping area and to develop large-scale leisure facilities.

However, the focus on the development of a strong business area should not overshadow the area's other strong characteristic: its greenery and water. Located at the heart of Zuidooost, the Bijlmerpark features sports fields, a club building and the Bijlmer Parktheater. This park is already developing further into the city's definitive park, and hosts one of Amsterdam's most popular events: the Kwaku Summer Festival, which attracts visitors from all over the country and beyond.

Improvements to the park areas also bring to mind the focus on the Gaasperpark, located to the south of the Bijlmerpark. Focusing on this area would allow us to create a large green heart in the centre of Amsterdam Zuidooost.

The successful events that are already being organised in this park demonstrate that it is another location offering numerous opportunities for further development.

The Gaasperplas (lake) is located to the south of the Gaasperpark. This location could also support increased recreational development, such as through more water-based recreation and potentially an additional city beach near the Gaasperplas metro station. We believe that this combination of leisure within the green structure and water recreation will help to tempt tourists over the border of the shopping and business area of ArenAPoort and through the residential area to explore the uniqueness of this green heart at the centre of Zuidooost.

In addition, the unique nature of this area extends to its population, the origins of which are from all parts of the world. This diversity forms the basis of a range of artistic, cultural and culinary activities, which keep the area booming and buzzing. This is mirrored in the range of restaurants and the programming of art and cultural activities in the theatre and local neighbourhood facilities.

In our policy, we are keen to embrace this cultural diversity, combined with the strong traits of business and leisure, the green structure and green recreation in the area, as we strive to become an even more unique part of Amsterdam than we already are'.

### 3 ISOLATION AND PHYSICAL RESTRICTIONS

Architect and urbanist **Vanessa Catalano** is originally from Caracas, Venezuela. She observes how the presence of both nature and architectural elements changes the cities we live in. Vanessa used different modes of transportation to travel to Amsterdam Zuidoost from the city centre, observing the connections and the limitations. In Amsterdam Zuidoost itself, she conducted observations on the layout, and has worked on drawing potential routes uniting nodes such as the ArenA Boulevard and the World of Food. Observations such as this will hopefully contribute to discussions and plans regarding alternative means of transportation.

‘Caracas, where I grew up, lies in a valley and the mountain that forms the backdrop, the Avila, marks the northern edge of the city. For many years, it has also acted as the city limits. The foundation of Caracas in 1567, like that of all Spanish colonies, was regulated by the Laws of India. These laws outlined the social, political and economic patterns, as well as the urban trace in these areas, starting with a simple nine block plan. If we look at a map of Caracas today, it’s clear that from these blocks, the city just continued growing in a more organic way; as a lobster shaped by the urban settlement which goes on top of the mountains, without really minding the natural limits. When I studied architecture, I learned

about how cities grow. The Eixample (extension) of Barcelona in the 19th and 20th centuries was viewed as a demonstration of sound urban practice. As growing cities, Barcelona and Caracas display completely opposing behaviour. The Caracas settlement moved from orthogonal to organic. In Barcelona, the old medieval centre is organic, but once expansion beyond the defensive wall became a possibility, the city grew in a very orthogonal way. Connecting diagonals roads integrated the small towns around Barcelona with the new, growing city.

Architect Le Corbusier proposed another classical example of learning how cities grow and change, such as



Cité Radieuse (1947). This proposal was actually applied in Caracas, and today, its better-known example in Caracas is known as 23 de Enero (1950s). Looking at the neighbourhood nowadays, it would appear that the entire concept has failed. The blocks are known as ghettos, and while the city grew, citizens preferred to decide the course of their lives instead of being placed in huge buildings. A carpet of slums has sprung up amongst the buildings, conquering the hills of Caracas. They are known as dangerous places, but they are also the manifestation of the urban forces that transcend politics and natural barriers. The Le Corbusier concept also reached Amsterdam, as we see in the multi-family high-rise buildings in the Bijlmer.

I came to Amsterdam in 2012. The city is shaped like an onion, and each layer reveals how the city grew. In 2016, after getting a grip on the city, I was invited to 'understand the Bijlmer'. But where was the Bijlmer located in the huge onion? Studying a map of Amsterdam, I discovered that it is not easy to spot Zuidoost or the Bijlmermeer area. Like an island lost in a big sea, an extra quadrant is needed to show how Zuidoost relates to the rest of the city, indicative of its isolation.

On my first trip to the Bijlmer, I travelled by metro. From the metro, it is easy to spot this area's poles of attraction. The Amsterdam ArenA, for example, which dominates the skyline as a huge insect,

ready to host thousands of people. The Bijlmer is known for these buildings, which can attract huge numbers of visitors (to football matches, concerts, festivals and other events).

With attractions including the EYE Filmmuseum and the A'DAM Tower, Amsterdam Noord nowadays presents increasing appeal to visitors. People visit the north of the city on a daily basis, even though this entails crossing the River IJ on a public ferry. However, a ferry ride is not required to travel from the city centre to Zuidoost. One day, I embarked on a 45-minute bike ride to Zuidoost. The ride took in a rich variety of landscapes: from the inner city to the City Hall and out towards the east of Amsterdam, after which the density of people pleasingly reduced. From the hectic, busy city centre, to a peaceful, green landscape. However, the peace is unceremoniously ruptured by a huge piece of infrastructure. The A10 ring road, albeit elevated, behaves like a contemporary version of a defensive wall. On the outside of this motorway, we find the Bijlmer – like a satellite left outside of the contemporary defensive wall. It does not even seem to be Amsterdam – literally, as I had to pass through a small town called Duivendrecht before reaching my destination.

When I finally arrived in the Bijlmer, I noticed that the first buildings to welcome me were not linked to

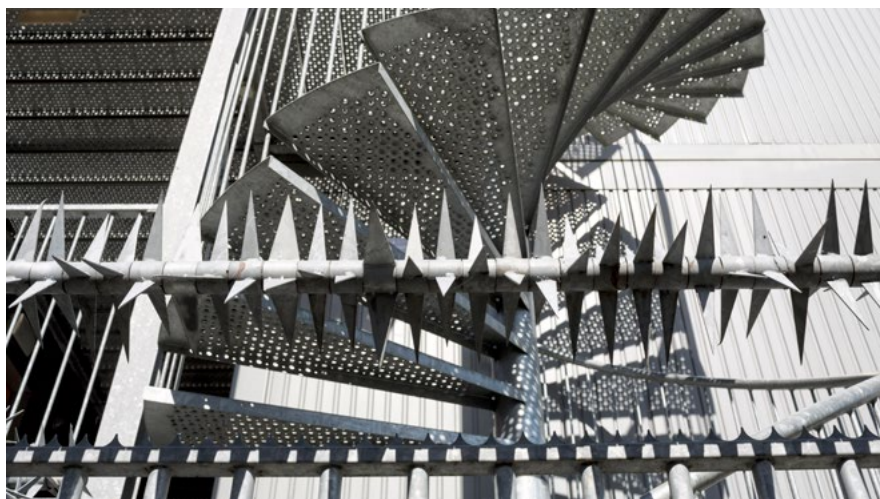
recreation or housing, but rather to major corporations that have their offices here. The boundaries between the buildings and the public space are clearly marked by fences.

That being said, the people of the Bijlmer were just trying to enjoy the urban space as any other citizen of Amsterdam; sitting under the shade of a tree, lounging on the same red brick pavement, minding their own business, just being normal citizens.

I grew up in a city of fences. In Caracas, fences always separate the marginal areas from the rest, isolating them. Thankfully, the new generation of

architects in Venezuela has stopped listening to the great masters of modern architecture. They actually listen to the people living in the peripheral areas, and are using the fences to create new spaces of encounter, instead of separation.

As I journey through different cities, I continue to observe architectural elements. My observations lead me to the conclusion that it is up to us, as city makers, to understand that the elements that we add to our urban landscape can change them by stimulating activities, integrating neighbourhoods, or isolating them'.





## 4 LOVING THE BIJLMER, EMBRACING THE PAST

**Patrick Meershoek** is a journalist at Amsterdam-based daily newspaper *Het Parool*. After examining the relationship between the media and the reputation of places, focusing on topics related to Zuidoost, he concludes that the media holds responsibility with regards to concerns of objectivity. However, he also believes that judgements and misrepresentations are impossible to avoid completely. Negative stereotypes attributed to others are especially persistent. If you have a bad image of a place, but that image has no influence on your own life, you will not try to alter your perception. Stereotypes are based on this very robust and inertial human condition. We are only prepared to adjust our image of something if that change positively affects our life in one way or another. This is what Simon Anholt refers to as the 'matter of relevance' (the 'what's in for me?').<sup>18</sup> Patrick offers his perspective on how this concept affected the Bijlmer in Zuidoost.

'When you speak to the pioneers of the Bijlmer, they tell you stories of birthday parties, of relatives and friends from outside of the city spending hours navigating their way between the huge buildings that all looked the same. They were left cursing the Bijlmer and vowing never to return.

As a housing concept, the Bijlmer was a disappointment. The middle-class families for whom the area was built preferred the traditional houses with a garden to the rear and a parking space to the front. The city council also turned its back on the Bijlmer. Jan Schaefer, the renowned Alderperson for Housing, stated that the Bijlmer was a mistake, and that the future lay in renovating the old parts of city.

Unwanted and unloved, the Bijlmer plodded forth. The empty buildings became the homes for thousands of Surinamese who, in the wake of independence, chose to live in the Netherlands. They were the first of thousands of migrants who set foot in the Bijlmer as the new pioneers, finding their way in a strange country.



Patrick Meershoek

<sup>18</sup> Simon Anholt, *Places, Identity, Image and Reputation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

In the early nineties, only a few decades after the Bijlmer was built, the city council and the housing corporations decided that there was no future for the district in its current form. In an understandable attempt to make a new start, buildings were demolished to make way for new houses – those more traditional houses with a garden to the rear and a parking space to the front. The name 'Bijlmer' and its history was erased, and replaced by 'Zuidoost'.

A terrible mistake, in my opinion. By renaming the place, it was as if the city council was officially acknowledging that it was better to forget everything that had come before. Instead of embracing the past, including the dramatic developments, the city council said: 'Past, what past? Zuidoost only has a future, and a beautiful future at that'. They promised a new paradise.

Things naturally did not go as planned. The image of the Bijlmer was much too strong to be wiped out. Outside of the Bijlmer, it still had a negative imago: it was a place that you could better avoid if you valued your safety. In the Bijlmer itself, people were proud of the unique place in which they lived. 'There's no place like the Bijlmer', and people were fine with that, both inside and outside the Bijlmer. The funny thing is that, in recent years, things are changing. Two projects in the Bijlmer drew a great deal of positive attention from outside. The so-called 'Klusflat' ('DIY flat') Kleiburg attracted

hundreds of buyers from other parts of Amsterdam and elsewhere in the country. The World of Food, located in a former car park, is visited and loved by foodies from all over town. It is good to keep in mind that neither of these projects would have existed if the city council and housing corporations had had their way: both buildings would have been demolished years ago.

So the old, unwanted and unloved Bijlmer is showing its strength in a new century. It might be wise to dust off the past and embrace the unique history of this place. It is a history of great expectations and major disappointment, upon which a new society was built with people from all over the world. Do not let a city marketing official tell you that it is paradise. It is the Bijlmer, nothing more and nothing less.

As a reporter working in the Bijlmer, I regularly have to deal with these powerful images. In my experience, the story itself is largely irrelevant. In our newspaper, we publish a lot of stories about the Bijlmer that have a positive tone. These positive stories are taken for granted. However, people living outside of the Bijlmer view a negative story as confirmation of their grim view of the area. And people living inside the Bijlmer view such stories as confirmation of their opinion that the newspaper likes to bash their (home) district'.

Whilst... (what are the positive aspects, what are the obstacles?)

**The unknowns (boundaries, connectivity)**

1. Bijlmer has more of everything whilst  
No one knows this (yet)
2. Zuidoost has everything/more to offer whilst  
It suffers from a negative image in people's minds
3. It has a great many unique selling points (automotive entertainment, health and live science) whilst  
These stories are not being told
4. Zuidoost has good connections to the city centre and Schiphol whilst  
People think that Zuidoost is far away

**Under-utilised (hidden treasures, boundaries)**

5. Zuidoost has a 'pot of gold' (much to offer) whilst  
Residents are scared of displaying this treasure because they are afraid that everything will become more expensive
6. We want to think big whilst  
We think small
7. There is lots of green space, this has a sporting function, but  
It is insufficiently inviting, the quality of the facilities is inadequate (the question is what is needed to strengthen the social function)
8. In the green space, we see opportunities to invest sustainably and create an attraction whilst  
Present investment is in buildings
9. There is lots of entertainment, shows/events, but  
It doesn't entice you to spend a spontaneous evening out there (is not reflected in the surroundings)
10. The investments that we are making in the urban surroundings have made Zuidoost into Amsterdam's second entertainment area, whilst  
We should invest more in the potential of the (young) residents and market the potential (of black culture)



## 5 IDENTIFYING HIDDEN TREASURES

*People living outside of Zuidoost are aware that the district (potentially) embodies a certain intrigue and find it seducing. Back in 2010, Elsbeth Etty (a leading Dutch literary critic) commented that she was convinced it was Amsterdam Zuidoost that was set for great things in the future, not 'the boring Canal Ring'.<sup>19</sup> In 2016, Hiske Versprille, food critic in the newspaper Het Parool, enthusiastically wrote that*

*the recently-opened World of Food had the sort of authenticity many people are looking for.<sup>20</sup>*

*Theatre productions such as the WijkSafari (Neighbourhood Safari) have also managed to capture some of these authentic feelings in Zuidoost: the true life stories of many newcomers and the memorable places they found in Amsterdam Zuidoost.<sup>21</sup>*

### **Small steps that make a difference**

The 'Wijksafari [Neighbourhood safari]' theatrical production that was held in early summer in 2015 and 2016 is worth analysing. On both occasions, this production by Toneelgroep Amsterdam, partly financed by the city district of Zuidoost, was a great success for people both within and beyond Zuidoost. It provided us with a number of important elements that give visitors better insight into Zuidoost, elements that we used during the 'Cities and Visitors' symposium.

A key message of the Wijksafari was accessibility. The production made use of a whole range of ways to break down as many barriers as possible during the performance. The performance was designed as a tour. Long, monotonous distances were transformed into fun trips on the back of the Vespas of young residents of Zuidoost, who transported the audience swiftly from one location to another. The performance also incorporated the various elements that make the Bijlmer interesting as an 'arrival city'. Members of the audience were invited to listen to residents' stories in the intimate setting of homes in the Bijlmer. Their personal stories thereby brought nuance to various (stereo)types.

<sup>19</sup> Geef Mij Maar Amsterdam, ed. by P. van Ojen, A. Pleizier, and P. van Trigt (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn Motief, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> Hiske Versprille, 'World of Food Is Een Onversneden Aanwinst Voor de Stad', Het Parool (Amsterdam, 22 December 2015).

<sup>21</sup> ToneelgroepAmsterdam, 'Wijksafari Amterdam Zuidoost' (Amsterdam, 2016).

The fact that this performance could function as a prototype for a good tour is indicated by the interest shown by businesses, which also wanted to book the production for company outings. Although this was not possible, of course, it does offer a good indication of how the attractive aspects of Zuidoost could be linked together by investing in routes, better connections and interesting, informative and enjoyable storytelling.

## RELIGION AND FAITH

***Evelin-Pierre Dumfries*** is entrepreneur at Business Summit, a Specialist in Health Care and a Matchmaker in business projects and investments. As a resident of Amsterdam Zuidoost she sees how much potential there is in the area and would like to see more people think of Zuidoost as a place they would like to know better. She is convinced that Zuidoost has a very unique appeal and is of a great value for the city of Amsterdam.

'I would now like to talk about my own hidden treasure. Have you ever have seen a gold mine?

Finding this rare and precious metal is sometimes an enormous effort, and you have to dig very deep to find it!

This is exactly how I would describe Amsterdam Zuidoost.

'Gold' is scattered in different layers throughout the district. And this 'gold' is certainly visible and accessible, so long as you make the extra effort to search for it.

Please allow me to go into more detail: The most precious and unidentified metals will be found in an equivalent form and recognisable as the churches in a specific area. And I believe that the Bible is the gold in Amsterdam Zuidoost. Today I would like to talk to you about multicoloured culture in Zuidoost. A grey area can be found within this multi-coloured melange, and this grey area can be divided into the state and the churches.



*Evelin-Pierre Dumfries*

Amsterdam Zuidoost is home to proud and happy communities, also reflected in the different types of churches of several denominations.

This community is extremely socially active in the municipality, offering spiritual guidance for those in need as they proclaim the gospel.

The main question remains: 'What is the relationship between tourism and churches?'

In order to explain this relationship, I would like to draw attention to two key points:

1. The well-known gospel concerts and events that can be attended by everybody from the city and beyond.

2. The less well-known gospel concerts, theatrical performances, poetry events and social talks that are held in the churches themselves.

Churches open their doors to the public (including tourists), inviting them to become acquainted with their social activities and spiritual architecture. This is an essential element that could be incorporated into visits and guided tours. This beautiful part of Amsterdam is not only home to modern architecture, but also to a wide range of social activities, waiting to be experienced by visitors to the area'.





## 6 WINDOWS TO THE WORLD

**Gideon Everduim** is a Dutch rapper. One of his first significant works was *Doofpot* ('cover-up' in English), which saw him denounce the double standards of society that were applied to the detriment of Bijlmer inhabitants. Alongside being a famous musician, Gideon is also a social entrepreneur and founder of the Bijlmer Style political party. As is evident in his music and his work as a political activist, Gideon also believes that the Bijlmer has great potential, and sees that people are happy living in the district. However, the negative image of the Bijlmer has influenced the lives of many of the young adults who call it home. They face fewer opportunities when looking for a job or an internship, even if they are academically gifted. Gideon believes that one of the causes of this discrimination is a lack of detailed historical knowledge in contemporary life (for example, of colonial history) – a standpoint shared by other young black intellectuals in modern-day Amsterdam. Overly positive auto-images, the notion that native white Dutch people are tolerant by definition, might also be hampering efforts by Dutch society to keep improving through self-reflection.

In his work, Gideon Everduim (aka Gikkels) proposes a change of attitude and calls upon his fellow city dwellers to look beyond city boundaries. European cities should become intellectually open to continents such as Africa and

be aware that, in many cases, these continents were at the roots of (and provided the inspiration for) what we nowadays call contemporary culture and art. Gideon notes that he became aware of his political engagement at a very young age, which perhaps explains why he was only young when he realised that his position in a city such as Amsterdam was contingent and marked by specific demarcations and hierarchies. When Gideon was growing up in the Bijlmer, the district was viewed as a ghetto, and he experienced the pressure of being seen as a suspicious person by police, who often stopped and searched him on the street.

Responding to and denouncing this pressure, he and a number of young adults decided to fight back by promoting a wider knowledge of art,



culture, history, economics and politics. They objected to the many renovation plans in Zuidoost that were focused purely on real estate development, and advocated greater investment in people, education and small-scale entrepreneurship. To demonstrate that this was possible, they united in collectives and initiated the formation of communities such as Hesterveld, which is now one of most celebrated enclaves of creative Zuidoost. They also shared ideas purported by books such as *Arrival City*, the belief that newcomers who are offered room and space are very desirable windows to the world and prevent cities from becoming obsolete.

Hip hop was their catalyst. Hip hop culture appeared to link an international scene that was actively looking for ways of unveiling and expressing the value of black movements and their emancipatory character in contemporary cities. In fact, many hip hop artists comment that they discovered the work of black intellectuals through hip hop. The music was also spreading a feeling of empowerment that went beyond binaries such as black and white. If blues was the style of the dependent man, hip hop became the lifestyle of the empowered man. The latter also implies that hip hop creates a sort of self-sufficient world in which perspectives based on one's own values and works become solely dependent on skills acquired through personal effort and motivation, and that can only be

assessed by experts and insiders who know the codes.

And in this way, hip hop culture became a source of knowledge on contemporary urban life, a gateway to history and new perspectives. Through the sampling and multi-referential hip hop method, we were suddenly introduced to historical figures and pieces of history that now seem to have been forgotten. Slowly but surely, one comes to realise that names such as Anton de Kom, for instance, are definitely not merely the names of certain squares in Zuidoost, but the names of significant historical characters (in this case, that of a Surinamese resistance fighter during World War II and an anti-colonialist author). We then realised that even Dutch pre-university schoolbooks did not mention his name, and understood that this was a great shame for everyone. Reading his 1934 work *We Slaves of Suriname*, one cannot fail to appreciate his calibre and influence.

We later came to understand that Anton de Kom's memory, his physical representation, his (contested) statue and his work is alive in the Bijlmer. The Bijlmer constitutes an essential place of memory, a place to pay attention to, a place to visit, and a place that can stimulate learning and revitalisation. And as Gideon has also said, the Bijlmer should be also the location for an Anton de Kom University and become the home of respected hip hop studies.



*In the exhibition entitled Black Amsterdam, held at the Amsterdam Museum from 7 October to 20 November 2016, Jean Hellwig writes 'Anton de Kom was a trade unionist, resistance man, but I know little of him. There should be a whole exhibition about him'.*



## 7 THE MEANING OF FOOD

**Yvette Dorsiel** has many years of experience in food, catering and restaurant entrepreneurship and has also been the driving force behind numerous social projects and initiatives in Zuidoost. She has remained committed to the community throughout these years, organising cooking workshops, brunch and high tea events, often targeting Spanish-speaking and Caribbean communities. Yvette also contributes to a weekly radio programme broadcasted by Salto. She has built up an extensive network, and runs a stand at the World of Food under the name 'Yvette's Kitchen'.

The World of Food, a food court restaurant in a transformed car park typical of the Bijlmer, is championed by many parties, including the city council. Hidden in between motorways, it is difficult not to succumb to its

charm when you enter the doors. The World of Food opened to the public in the summer of 2015, after being transformed from a car park into an impressive food court by urban developer Lingotto, in collaboration with architects Ted Schulten and Harvey Otten.

This is just one of the many cooking projects initiated by Yvette Dorsiel over the years. She has always been involved in a distinctive array of activities, ranging from specific catering for groups to workshops and lectures on food. During the Symposium, Yvette spoke of her awareness of contributing to something of great importance to Amsterdam Zuidoost. The World of Food could certainly help attract people to the area. After all, as she says, 'good food is made with love and it engages and connects people'. The World of Food also offers a physical setting to experience the otherwise intangible image of good cooking in Amsterdam Zuidoost – something that many people mention when asked about positive associations with the area.

Indeed, up until now, the little restaurants in flats and the informal economy (that have the potential to draw in large numbers of visitors, as has been the case in many other cities) have not really been visible to outsiders. The World of Food is therefore seen as a vital first step towards achieving



visibility. It is also important that the initiative secures a unique image, different to that of other more mainstream food courts that are now emerging elsewhere in Amsterdam. The World of Food should be captivating, but also offer fair food for a fair price, and pay testimony to international authenticity and truly delicious food. Yvette is keen for many more people in Amsterdam to find out more about the World of Food, and has also noticed that she has already impressed visitors from outside of the Netherlands. After visiting during a stay in Amsterdam, a lady from New York specifically contacted her again to be sure that she would be able to come with her group of food lovers on their next trip to the city.

The World of Food has all the necessary ingredients to allow it to play along with current trends in urban cities. Connecting local retail, food and drinks with culture and entertainment has shown to stimulate entrepreneurship within local communities and to inspire residents and visitors. However, the World of Food is also vulnerable due to its distance from the mainstream. The location is surrounded by motorways, and discovering it takes a little time. Efforts clearly still need to be made to improve the visibility of this hidden treasure. The World of Food looks forward to offering you a warm welcome in the near future.





## From the research design session

Young black creative potential

Culinary, colourful

Environmental, educational

Unique, young

Diversity (market)

Tasteful

'The Bijlmer is dangerously hospitable!'

Colourful, green/blue

Rough diamond.

Pleasure, lively and unlimited

green & grandiose

Creative, undiscovered

Attraction, wonderful nature

'The Bijlmer is more'

ZO dangerous,  
ZO hospitable

Open

Dangerous (&) exciting!

African diaspora, arts & culture

Global

Talented

Booming and lively,  
illegal and unlimited



## 8 SMALL INSIGHTS MAKING A BIG DIFFERENCE

**Laurent Stomboli** is a lecturer at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Together with his students Taiki Ikeda and Joost de Groot, he has been trying to identify key factors that can contribute to a beneficial kind of tourism. In cities such as Amsterdam, visitors have become an intrinsic part of daily life. Nowadays, there is a tendency to see tourism as an annoying phenomenon for local life. And in some cases, it can be. However, it is also very important to emphasise the fact that, in many cases, tourism has contributed to a better understanding of the nature of cities. At its best, tourism contributes to a rediscovery and revalorisation of urban space: of its nature, value, history and cultural identity. The work of the students reveals that once the tourists are in Amsterdam Zuidoost, it is fairly easy to influence their interests and encourage them to explore the area (instead of just taking the metro to the city centre).

'Nowadays, Amsterdam Zuidoost benefits from the presence of large companies, of several education institutions, of a dynamic shopping activity, of an unmatched density of parks and natural landscapes in Amsterdam and, of iconic venues such the Amsterdam ArenA stadium or the Ziggo Dome concert hall. This said, the Amsterdam Zuidoost neighbourhood is still facing a challenge when it comes to its visibility and

attractiveness as a "place to visit". The neighbourhood remains largely ignored or avoided by tourists visiting Amsterdam. Like many multicultural neighbourhoods, Amsterdam Zuidoost still carries on, at least nationally, a "bad reputation" and some negative stereotypes.

Zuidoost Partners asked our International Programme International Virtual Consulting Firm to support its current efforts to promote the neighbourhood as an interesting 'place to visit'. Students therefore investigated how similar neighbourhoods in Amsterdam, in Barcelona and/or in Paris were currently handling their potential lack of visibility and attractiveness for tourists and visitors in general.



They focused on how the neighbourhood was presented in tourist information about Amsterdam and on the attractiveness of the neighbourhood's accommodation offer. Student teams generated an inventory of influential media of tourist information and collected data on visitor's perceptions. In order to access these perceptions, students were asked to focus on people having spent at least a night in Amsterdam Zuidooost and having published comments about their experience(s) on an influential media channel.

The assignment expected outcomes were:

1. A series of examples of how neighbourhoods similar to Amsterdam Zuidooost in Amsterdam, Barcelona and Paris were presented in tourist information media.
2. An inventory of influential tourist information media in Amsterdam and in Paris and an overall marketing and communication plan to draw those media attention on Amsterdam Zuidooost.
3. An investigation on the characteristics of the accommodation offer in both Amsterdam Zuidooost and similar neighbourhoods in Paris. The focus here was placed on how accommodation operators (hotels, hostels or individuals) presented the immediate surroundings and on what visitors significantly lack in the surroundings (amenities).'

**Taiki Ikeda and Joost de Groot contribution:**

'As we all know, while more hotels can improve the attractiveness and appreciation of an area, they can also have a negative effect. During our research for the IVCF City Marketing in Europe minor, we made some interesting discoveries. We started by conducting desk-based research to allow us to gain a basic understanding of the Zuidooost case. Our findings gave us an impression of the advice that the hotels in the Zuidooost area were offering their guests regarding entertainment and recreation in the direct vicinity of the hotel. As a research team, we wanted to know whether our ideas and impressions were feasible in the real-life situation. In order to gauge this, we visited the hotels in Zuidooost and interviewed the employees.

When you enter a hotel, you are commonly greeted by the front desk employee, who welcomes you to the hotel. Guests often ask this person for advice regarding where to go for entertainment or a meal out. The front desk employee is therefore a very important tool for promoting the direct area of the hotel and boosting the quality of the service offered to the guest. In other words: front desk employees hold the 'golden key' to the Zuidooost area. We found out that none of the hotels in the area offered their employees training in this field.

Also, many of the employees lived outside of Zuidoost, either elsewhere in Amsterdam or in another city. Due to the employees' lack of local knowledge, almost all guests were directed to the centre of Amsterdam to spend their money.

Based on this discovery, we advised the Zuidoost Board to create a special training module to inform front desk employees about the facilities in the direct vicinity of the hotels. This would

ultimately help to attract more tourists to the Zuidoost area.

Another interesting discovery revealed during our research was that none of the hotels in Zuidoost were actively collaborating to overcome this problem and attract more tourists to the area. Despite the individual efforts of the hotels to organise events, a collective initiative to attract more people to the area is still to be realised'.



## 9 TWO SIDES OF THE TRACKS

**Elise Stedenburg** is a student at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences who has been developing the idea of using the music formula of Hotel Jaz as a genuine tool for connection. When Elise joined our Research lab, Zuidoost, she noticed that a new hotel had been built next to the Ziggo Dome on the ArenA Boulevard. The Hotel had opened its doors only a few months earlier, and its director had expressed their intention and commitment to connecting with the 'other side of the railway', helping to make residents of Zuidoost feel at home in the bars of the hotels located on the ArenA Boulevard. Elise subsequently came up with the idea of making a case centred on this specific wish. Youth centres such as NoLIMIT have demonstrated that Zuidoost is home to a range of musical talent, people who need somewhere to express and manifest themselves. How can Amsterdam Zuidoost's lively music scene connect with Hotel Jaz, making the traditionally very 'managed' ArenA Boulevard area a place for more spontaneous encounters?

'I have been coming to Amsterdam Zuidoost since I was a little girl, for several reasons. To visit my family (a lot of relatives live in the area), to do some groceries with my father for making an exotic meal, to go to the movies, a concert or festival and – my favourite thing to do in the area – to get some really good food. From Utrecht, where

I live, it only takes me 15 to 20 minutes to get to Zuidoost.

In addition to all of these reasons, I also study in Amsterdam Zuidoost. I am a student of International Business and Management at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. I am writing my thesis on Zuidoost, focusing on the ArenA Boulevard. The area is renowned for its many entertainment possibilities, including a cinema, megastores, restaurants, AFAS Live, the Ziggo Dome and the Amsterdam ArenA stadium – which not only hosts AFC Ajax's home matches and occasionally, national team matches, but also concerts and other music events. During my research, I visited the area on several occasions with Vanessa Catalano to make some observations. We were keen to see what happens during the day and how the boulevard operates.



Elise Stedenburg

During one of my visits, I took a photograph before Adele's concert in the Ziggo Dome and the concert by Pentatonix in the Heineken Music Hall. Together, a total of approximately 23,000 people attended these concerts. There were lots of people on the Boulevard, some already waiting in line to score a front row spot, some having dinner or just relaxing before the start of the concert. I took a second photograph just 30 minutes after both concerts had started. The Boulevard looked used, and the people who were there shortly before had left their mark. Besides a handful of people going from A to B, there was nobody to be found on the Boulevard. The megastores were still open, but most of the restaurants were closing and packing up their terraces.

I realised that the ArenA Boulevard was not really the place for a spontaneous night out. If you did not have a ticket for one of the concerts (incidentally, when they went on sale 6 months prior, tickets for the Adele concert sold out within 22 minutes), the Boulevard had little to offer. However, the fact that people were willing to travel from all over the country to Amsterdam Zuidoost, just to see one person, provided a promising starting point. After all, music can bring people together and connect them. Another music-themed venue on the Boulevard is the Jaz in the City Hotel Amsterdam. The hotel opened recently, and in my opinion, the concept is really

stylish and unique. The music theme can be found all over the building: it goes far beyond a picture of a guitar on the wall. Most of the staff members are themselves musicians; they have the opportunity to perform at the hotel and with their knowledge of the industry, can make recommendations to their guests about entertainment in Amsterdam. For guests, it is also a perfect place to stay after an event on the Boulevard – the hotel is located directly next to the Ziggo Dome, opposite the Amsterdam ArenA stadium and a stone's throw from AFAS Live. In addition, the hotel also organises performances by upcoming talent, and DJs perform every day.

I am exploring how the Jaz in the City Hotel Amsterdam can be a place where people can come together. Not only visitors, but also the residents of Amsterdam Zuidoost. And not only on days when there are events on the Boulevard, but also on other days. Music can help to achieve this objective, not only in performances, but also through giving upcoming talent a stage. In turn, these activities will make it a more attractive place for the people of the area.

To help figure out the next steps, I spoke to Gideon Everduim, an influencer and musician with a great deal of knowledge about the area. He is also working at Bindelmeer College, where he is organising a talent show

for the students. One fantastic concept would be if the winner of the contest had the opportunity to perform at the hotel, attracting other students, parents and teachers from the area. The event would therefore welcome a varied audience, also comprising people from the area. Gideon even suggested that other schools could also get involved, and that the hotel could perhaps host the entire show. This is just one means of connecting locals to the area, and I am convinced that there are plenty more.

My father always says that I am a dreamer, but I strongly believe that there are ways of successfully creating shared value: a win-win business model that benefits businesses – the Jaz in the City Hotel Amsterdam in this case – and society, in this case, the residents of Amsterdam Zuidoost and the hotel guests.

Working towards achieving this concept, the existing creative capital of Amsterdam Zuidoost can certainly contribute to making the Arena Boulevard a place for both residents of Amsterdam and visitors to the city’.



*Hotel Jaz*



# 10 GREEN AND BLUE ARE THE NEW GOLD

**Arno Gorissen** is a city marketing official for Zuidoost Partners. He does not only look for opportunities concerning economic development and growth; his overall focus is adding value and creating a sustainably better quality of life for people living, working and visiting Amsterdam Zuidoost. At times, economic development can conflict with this goal, and form a threat to the quality of life. As a recent example, Arno pointed towards the vast increase in tourism in the city centre of Amsterdam. This increase represents a genuine threat to the local population, who no longer feel at home in their own city. This development rapidly changes the authenticity of the city, as businesses spring up that are focused on making quick money instead of having an intrinsic attachment to the city and its values. However, Arno notes that densely populated cities are facing other threats: open spaces are scarce and becoming increasingly scarcer.

‘In times of economic prosperity, the city government and property developers are put into the category of “Very Hungry Caterpillars”. With the recent strong economic growth and rise in population in Amsterdam combining with a lack of space, remaining space becomes increasingly scarce. Such spaces become prime targets for property developers and the city government, both looking to make money quickly. They gnaw and

haggle over the scarce green spaces and open – often green or public – spaces in the city are not safe. The same even applies to areas of water. Consider project development and housing in green, public or industrial areas like the Westerpark, Olympia Plein, NDSM Wharf, Marine Terrain and ArenAPark, and even in blue (water-related) environments such as land reclamation and construction on the River IJ in the city centre or near IJburg, on the outskirts of Amsterdam. This is combined with an insatiable appetite for more tarmac roads and car parking spaces, which also impacts green and blue areas.

Commercial intentions rule over life quality values such as recreational needs. The remaining – often



Arno Gorissen

overcrowded – green and blue spaces in the city are under immense pressure. I am convinced that, when it comes to housing and recreation, places, boroughs and cities with open green and blue spaces will be the most attractive and sought after in the near future. Once they are gone, it will be very difficult to bring them back. The government has to acknowledge and take responsibility for the growing demand and the need for free, sustainable, empty spaces, and of their future value.

With the growing population, rapidly rising housing prices in Amsterdam (particular in the city centre) and the lack of space and recreational facilities, a bright future awaits Amsterdam Zuidoost in the years ahead. You see, Amsterdam Zuidoost is still home to plenty of green and blue spaces, it is affordable and it is accessible. Zuidoost is surrounded by the Diemberbos, the Gaasperpark and the Amstelscheg green buffer zone. It also boasts several fine parks of its own, such as the Nelson Mandela Park and Bijlmerweide, while residential areas themselves feature a great deal of green and blue (public) space. Zuidoost, originally a wetland area, also has many bodies of water, such as the Gein, Gaasp and Gaasperplas.

A truly interesting development in Zuidoost is a special park, twice the size of the Vondelpark, that will arise above

a new tunnel through which the A9 motorway will travel. Planned for the near future, the park will be physically connected to the Nelson Mandela Park and the Gaasperplas. While the amount of green space is diminishing in other parts of the city, Zuidoost is actually gaining green space. Ultimately, it could even become the garden and beach of Amsterdam.

The abundance of blue and green space in Amsterdam Zuidoost is set to bring the area a golden future. The increasing pressure on Amsterdam and the growing demands of its residents for space and recreation offer great opportunities for Amsterdam Zuidoost.

The challenge is to make everybody, including the government, aware of the importance of the growing value of green and blue spaces. It is vital that this remains a selling point for Amsterdam Zuidoost, and that the district profiles itself as a place where generations can bloom. The danger lies in making hasty economic decisions instead of adopting a qualitative and sustainable approach.

Potential future development and content that dovetails with the green and blue aspect (legacy of Floriade Plans) is a business-to-business and tourist outpost and showcase, which clearly illustrate what the Netherlands has to offer in the field of agribusiness and floriculture (Wageningen, North Holland seed cultivation, Royal

FloraHolland in Aalsmeer, etc.). This could provide interesting content, combined with an art, plant and flower pavilion of international stature: a 24/7 tourist attraction that offers the city

and its inhabitants both recreational and economic returns, while respecting the green and blue considerations. Amsterdam Zuidoost, going for gold!'





# 11 CULTURAL DIPLOMACY FOR CITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

**Enric Ordeix** is from the Ramon Llull University in Barcelona. He argues that cities undergo continuous transformation, while at the same time they must try to keep history and memory alive. In this sense, the DNA of prosperous cities is that which enables them to adjust and change while retaining their history and a certain level of pride and welfare for all its inhabitants.

During the last few decades, Amsterdam has paid a good deal of attention to the rehabilitation of its cultural heritage in the city centre. However, changes and transformations are also taking place in the outskirts of the city. In Barcelona, we have seen how the revalorisation of peripheral areas such as Collserola has increased the attractiveness of the city as a whole. Enric believes that it is important that the peripheries of cities are also given due consideration: they should not merely become accommodation for a city with too many tourists.

‘The statement that areas such as Zuidoost should not merely become accommodation for a city with too many tourists is certainly valid. Instead, these areas should become a means of recovering history and facilities, and of making the city more accessible and interesting for anyone.

This is where the concepts of cultural diplomacy and civic engagement emerge.

Cultural diplomacy is a bottom-up process in which the community plays a special role in representing the city. It is an effective way of attracting new visitors, because of the pure connection with the local culture.

Principles of cultural diplomacy state that the level of public engagement is higher when the community is able to create new ways to be represented by using culture as a tool. Consider music, the arts, cinema, food, sports and even cartoons. We have regularly witnessed this in other cultures, such as in Japan or Italy.

Cultural diplomacy is a new wave of public diplomacy, also known as soft power. When compared to traditional public diplomacy, this new way of understanding the field is extremely



effective in national and city branding. Public diplomacy is based purely on hard, vertical power, and solely on political and institutional representation. In terms of brand equity, Amsterdam and Barcelona enjoy success because they both leave the representation and leadership to citizens. This is reflected in commercials and public activities. Both cities pass what was traditionally represented by the institutions onto the community. This approach has been also successful in Iceland, which has become iconic in this field of cultural diplomacy.

Companies can also play a special role in this area. The last decade has seen an increase in the number of corporate foundations, and there have been a high number of activities related to corporate social responsibility in the majority of European cities. New Governmental Organisations are also playing an important role in this area, ensuring that celebrity involvement equates to active representation, as they

act as genuine diplomats for the cause. We have also witnessed how the traditional smart city moved towards the 'smart citizen's city': a valuable new perspective.

We are now observing how neighbourhoods are forming part of the real life of the city, being cultural actors and cultural diplomats as well as representing the real and authentic culture. Once a city's main attractions and symbols have been overly exploited, visitors need to enjoy and experience the culture from its core. And districts like Zuidoost have such culture in abundance.

In conclusion, we need the city's culture to be created by people living in the neighbourhoods, not only by the political institutions. In fact, this is what we are doing: creating a stronger community, in order to create a closer-knit society based on big and authentic cities with real lives and real cultures: food, arts, music, sports ... all in one'.

## 12 AFTER THE SYMPOSIUM. A FOLLOW UP

**Núria Arbonés Aran**

### THE VALUES OF AMSTERDAM ZUIDOOST

As mentioned earlier, this symposium was thematically organised to represent a journey through Amsterdam Zuidoost. This journey referenced three key topics that arose during the research activities conducted in the run-up to the symposium. These topics – boundaries, hidden treasures and connectivity – were both interrelated and overarching. For example, physical boundaries seemed to still impede a sense of connectivity when approaching Zuidoost on foot or by bicycle.

Indeed, many people echoed the sentiments of our speaker Vanessa Catalano when she noted that travelling by bicycle to Zuidoost from the city centre of Amsterdam becomes uninviting (what is often referred to as ‘ongezellig’ in Dutch) once you encounter the motorway and ride past the many high-rise offices joining Diemen and the Bijlmer. Almost without exception, these buildings are enclosed by the typical gated community fences with signs warning against unauthorised access. There is a distinct lack of connectivity or a welcoming atmosphere.

One could therefore say that Amsterdam Zuidoost is not immediately an attractive place to enter or somewhere

where you would enjoy wandering the streets. It is also not a place that is conducive to improvisation, as there is simply not something to do at every corner. The large distances, the interruption of path-and-node functions and the incomplete internal transportation network – to name but a few factors – make the whole area a slow, for many ‘boring’ and uncomfortable place to approach and navigate through.

However, admitting this as a reality has a liberating effect. Instead of continuing to insist on a solely positive sales discourse to attract visitors to Zuidoost, the ‘promise of paradise’ to which Patrick Meershoek refers in his talk, many of us have meanwhile agreed that it is necessary to keep unveiling and improving what Simon Anholt would call the ‘real substance of a place’.<sup>22</sup> Masterplans such as Koers 2025, aimed at addressing issues including the physical disconnection of Amsterdam Zuidoost from the rest of Amsterdam, offer proof that the matter has been broadly acknowledged as a problem facing the envisaged inclusive city, and that improvements need to be made.<sup>23</sup> But at the same time, there is also an awareness that more than simply masterplans will be needed to reach a solution. Some people are even concerned that the multiple masterplans will keep erasing footprints, depriving

<sup>22</sup> Simon Anholt, *Places, Identity, Image and Reputation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Gemeente Amsterdam, ‘Koers 2025. Ruimte Voor de Stad’, 2016.

Zuidoost of the time it needs to build its own history. What is therefore required is a better and more nuanced understanding of the value of places seen from different perspectives.

What we have also seen in the Cities and Visitors Symposium is that once in Zuidoost, it is easy to come into contact with the kind of committed people who have the capacity to transmit and unveil the core values embodied in the area. They reveal how attractive places – places worth visiting – have a plural and layered significance which is referential to both residents and visitors. They are multi-dimensional and embody memory, heritage, evocation and symbols. They are carried by concepts such as greenness, hip hop, intellectual challenges, food, religion and spirituality, progress, history, a sense of beauty and commitment to the community. These people helped us to understand that Amsterdam Zuidoost can be experienced as a stimulating place that enables different audiences to engage in a process of empowerment and improvement. Some might call this ‘the emancipation of the peripheral areas’.<sup>24</sup>

## THE NEXT STEPS: GETTING THINGS TOGETHER

Slowly but surely, new contours for future research began to emerge. Our research group was captivated by the topic, and continued to prepare during part of the summer. However, once the new academic year arrived, there was uncertainty about the viability of the follow-up. New policies at the City of Amsterdam meant that plans and finances were to be readjusted. To our regret, Zita Ingen-Housz, our colleague with whom we had worked closely in the previous year, left the group to pursue an interesting opportunity elsewhere. That being said, our work had already been fruitful, and we had already been bitten by the engaging Zuidoost bug.

In the summer of 2016, a group of new graduating students from Amsterdam School of International Business (AMSIB) enthusiastically registered for our Amsterdam Zuidoost Cities & Visitors research track and began to work on their theses. And the same happened in January 2017. Students also registered for the so-called ‘International Virtual Consulting Firm’, our international cooperative research programme with partner cities Paris and Barcelona, hosted at AMSIB. These students worked in intercity teams to develop ideas on how to increase the liveability

<sup>24</sup> Floris Alkemade, ‘De Emancipatie van de Periferie’ (Den Dolder: Atelier Rijksbouwmeester, 2016).

of the campuses and student life around Fraijlemaborg, our AUAS home location in Zuidoost. Arno Gorissen provided us with the case and offered his cooperation. And last but not least, colleague Ronald Pes Brouwer joined the group as a senior co-researcher. Within a couple of months, things started to consolidate. We took the next steps and found support.

The commitment of our graduate students at AMSIB, many of them also living in Zuidoost, has been inspiring. These students have been driving towards a common goal of contributing to improve the visibility of the values of Zuidoost. To this end, they have been talking with many people in the area and have conducted observations. They confirm the impression shared by many residents: Zuidoost should be treated as a very special part of Amsterdam, home for people from all around the world, an example of cosmopolitan tolerance and a place in which all sort of visitors could learn and acquire new insights.

Most of those residents know and applaud initiatives such as the World of Food, ('quality for an honest price; 'something that Amsterdam should do more often'), and see connectivity and upgrading all of the area's offerings as key. Amsterdam Zuidoost should be home to more distinctive and special shops and a more varied market, better and higher-profile cultural facilities and museums, all reflecting Zuidoost's

multiculturalism and repositioning the Bijlmer as a place that has recreated itself, where you can find nightclubs and lounges with music, good higher education and learning environments and interesting local offerings. Our graduates recommend continued efforts to strengthen the links between all involved parties, a time-consuming but indispensable long-term strategy, and offer their help to contribute to the development of a discourse that can facilitate these efforts.

The extraordinarily convincing work of our International Virtual Consulting Firm students has also been key, and has been a true eye-opener. They have made it clear to us that the public space and the facilities around our Fraijlemaborg building are in need of care, attention and an urgent update. Thanks to them, we realised that we could genuinely contribute to the work of so many in Zuidoost, and that we could directly influence and improve the part of the students' lives in Zuidoost with which we are closely involved.

We understood that we could help and support students in their quest to improve and upgrade campus facilities, promoting the creation of working spaces and linking them to the existing 'hidden treasures' of Zuidoost. We also realised that our Fraijlemaborg building was in need of some adjustments when it came to hospitality and openness to the neighbourhood. Despite its various

qualities, the building is in fact designed as a kind of fortification, partly surrounded by water (and by fences) and isolated from the surrounding environment. You would certainly struggle to find a Fraijlemaborg student living outside of Zuidoost who would spontaneously come up with the idea of taking a walk outside the building to explore the area.

In our current research design, we therefore consistently emphasise the idea of connecting the different cores of interest that have been brought up on numerous occasions by different actors during the symposium, during design sessions or during the many conversations and observations that we have shared. We are committed to using our presence in the area to contribute to this connection by a) continuing to promote interest in, and acquiring knowledge of, Zuidoost; b) respecting and embracing its versatility and c) eliminating barriers in its layout.

In all three elements, we adopt the metaphor of a guided tour that provides a physical and mental map to share. We relate such a map to an existing tradition of what we like to call 'translators' of the area, people such as guide Jenny van Dalen, or architect Peter Dautzenberg. These are people who recognised the beauty of places such as the Bijlmer before others, and

who taught many to appreciate (and conserve) them. In this sense, their work has contributed to a revalorisation of Bijlmer heritage and to a more widespread awareness of its value. However, there are also concerns that this revalorisation could result in excessively lucrative operations that may be detrimental to the current residents of Zuidoost. The renovation of the Amsterdamse Poort and the transformation of the emblematic 'Zandkasteel' (Sand Castle) building into luxury apartments has been met with mixed feelings, as these works could affect accessibility and increase prices throughout the area. More than ever, especially in relation to point 'b' above, concerted efforts need to be made to ensure that investments will improve collective public spaces and will build on an inclusive and diverse cultural and historical awareness.

More specifically, our joint plans to improve the liveability of our students' environment should take all of those prior considerations into account. Physical improvements to the campuses and access, including lighting and signage, will need to be combined with opening up new student facilities to all kinds of residents and visitors. In their thesis, our graduate students convincingly recommend literally connecting with the many initiatives under the name 'World of Talent',<sup>25</sup> and

<sup>25</sup> 'Southeast World of Talent' <<https://www.facebook.com/aworldoftalent/>>.

view this connection as a means for new students in the area to accelerate the process of getting to know and interact with local talent and their productions in the fields of fashion, music, literature, photography and film

Finally, we are keen to develop the idea of eliminating boundaries in the layout of Zuidoost by meeting with involved parties to study and discuss the options regarding physically removing fences from outside offices and educational buildings, including our own building. In doing so, we hope to provide an illustration of a freer and more natural relationship between public, semi-public and private space in Zuidoost.

## THE GOLDEN JUBILEE

Preparations for the golden jubilee of the Bijlmer, currently becoming a joint aspiration for various parties, ultimately appears to offer an apt moment for reflection and understanding. During the symposium, Alies Veul outlined plans for the celebrations in 2018 and introduced an interesting concept. In the life of a building, turning 50 means reaching adulthood, becoming a respectable adult. The Bijlmer has now acquired legitimacy and cannot simply be demolished. Its history is also linked to the many newcomers that brought new rhythms to the city of Amsterdam. We are convinced that Zuidoost's sustainable plans and metropolitan ambitions will only succeed if they also include, reflect upon and safeguard this versatility.

## THE STORYTELLERS AND THEIR BACKGROUND

### **Núria Arbonés Aran**

Programme leader at IVCF City Marketing in Europe and Research Cities and Visitors Urban Field Lab Amsterdam Zuidoost AUAS

### **Vanessa Catalano**

Architect, creative and design thinker

### **Yvette Dorsiel**

Owner of Yvette's Kitchen, World of Food

### **Evelin-Pierre Dumfries**

Cultural entrepreneur and consultant

### **Gideon Everduim**

Creative entrepreneur in Amsterdam Zuidoost

### **Arno Gorissen**

Director of City Marketing Zuidoost, Zuidoost Partners

### **Joost de Groot**

Student at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, City Marketing in Europe alumnus

### **Dolores Heide**

Coordinator and Commissioner of Economics, Art, Culture, Events and Tourism for Amsterdam Zuidoost

### **Taiki Ikeda**

Exchange student at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, alumni City Marketing in Europe

### **Patrick Meershoek**

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### **Enric Ordeix**

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**Willem van Winden**

Professor of Urban Knowledge Economy, Member of the Field Lab Zuidoost Management Team

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*The storytellers at the Symposium and part of the audience*

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