



Rencontres franco-néerlandaises du
Design Urbain



CCI FRANCE PAYS-BAS
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Day Programme

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10.00 Welcome Coffee

- 10.15 - 11.15 **Plénière**

The organization of public space planning in France and The Netherlands by **Brigitte Groenewald** of Lille urban & development agency and **Celine Kruisbrink** of The Hague municipality

- 11.30 – 13.00 **Peer-to-peer exchanges**

Group 1 Visual identity of a city: a beautiful, practical, long-lasting design

Group 2 Soft mobilities, greening of public space: the city center shared space and/or owned space

Lunch + short guided tour of the Floriade

- 14.30 – 16.00 **Study cases**

2 groups working on each other's submitted study cases

- 16.00 – 16.30 **Summaries of the exchanges**

- 16.30 – 17.30 **Individual meetings**

Cocktail

Visual identity of a city: a beautiful, practical, long-lasting design

Exchanges started with a short presentation of the municipalities of Paris and Amsterdam.

The handbooks as common ground:

Paris presented their [manifesto for the whole city of Paris](#). It has been put in place for the first time in July 2022: 4 handbooks to anticipate and harmonize future changes. It is important for Paris to preserve the quality and beauty of the city as well as to insure innovation in the future. The 4th book is the urban design of the projects.

Amsterdam has presented their [‘Puccini’ method](#). This handbook is used to standardize the identity of the city. Before this procedure was put in place, each part of the city had its own identity. With this handbook, Amsterdam aims to have one identity for the entire city.

Handbooks of both cities are similar, but interesting to see that there are different reasons to put in place such a handbook. In Paris, citizens asked for it and its goal is to preserve quality and stimulate innovation; for Amsterdam standardisation in order to have one identity and maintenance were the goals.

With the implementation of such a handbook, is there less creativity for designers? Husson International, a leading European manufacturer of sports and play equipment, works with handbooks on a regular basis. It is possible to create beautiful designs that take into account the specifications of the municipalities for the development of urban space. Today municipalities have more and more attention for sustainability and circularity in each part of the process.

A question raised during the workgroup was: What makes the identity of a city? This question led to a lot more questions like: how can you come to the identity of the city? Can you write it down? Is it consistent? Participants agreed that this question was too complex to be answered in one session.

[Handbook of Den Haag](#)





Soft mobilities, greening of public space: the city center shared and/or owned space

Presentation round, with a laughter triggered by the introduction of Francioli, specialist of public toilets, all municipalities agreeing that there is a need for public toilets accessible to all.

Participation:

Whether it is about greening of public space, soft mobilities and so forth, experts implementing the urban politics of a city are doing so in concertation with the public. In the decision making process, politics will decide whether to include the participatory proposals or not. The experts which are already working with participatory processes say it is a challenging process.

But all agree that nowadays participation is the model that allows the city users to go along with changes and to make the public space theirs.

Greening and social mixing:

Maastricht has covered the highway and now they have a park. This park fulfills the purpose of greening the city and creates a social link with rich and poor neighbourhoods.

Lille would love to be able to do that, but the cost of such a construction is high and not available to all cities.

Urban agriculture projects are also an effective way to create more connection between the inhabitants.

Dutch participants find the French parks concept interesting because you have furniture available to the public, this makes it an even more shared space. In Maastricht, they'd rather keep the public spaces empty because they are afraid of vandalism. Parks in the Netherlands are also open to public at night which makes it impossible, at present, to have the furniture you find in French parks.

Shared spaces; greening and mobility :

Breda wants a greener city, but they are confronted to the car users. It seems that they have for now reach their limits: they can't have less cars.

Urban Echo suggests one idea to have more green spaces: reduce front gardens because a lot of people don't green it. Then municipalities can use this space to green it. It has 2 benefits, the space made public becomes the green space the rest can be used for other needs like the mobility.

With the new soft mobilities, biking paths need to be wider to accommodate all. Limitation of the cars space help, all agree that you also can gain green, but it has not yet happened. This because the old urban objects need to be taken out which is very expensive, and because the underground is saturated with necessary commodities.

Groningen closed the centre to the cars in the 70ties, and since recently to buses, 1km square is now reserved to pedestrians and bikes only. The problem now in NL is the bike. The shared bike systems used in France might be a solution to the "too many bikes".

Study cases

What is the threshold limit for densification? To which extend can we transition to more shared space above and under the ground?

Each municipality has the challenge to deal with the density of its city. Several ideas were mentioned, like getting the cars out of the city, developing the outskirts or using rooftops. There will be more and more shared space of mobility needed for everyone to co-exist together.

There will be more and more combining underground and above.

We can actually create new spaces on top of buildings. This can be a solution to the lack of space. In Paris, this means for example, more and more vegetable gardens on rooftops, or spaces like the Opera where beehives are installed. If we are able to use roof tops as public space, it is clearly a nice meeting place to bring people together and create green spaces. A key example brought by Koen de Boo is the ZOHO project, 6 meters high parc linking several buildings. But several points are at stake if it is a public/private space: who is responsible if something happens and for maintenance?

Are we asking too much, and do we need to switch our way of living?

But also making choices: not everything is possible.

How to integrate (structural) climate adaption in a monumental, dense inner-city environment?

Developing (green) space does not necessarily have to be done in the inner-city, it can be done outside.

In city centers, rivers and canals have been buried and today they can be opened up to create corridors for renaturation, for combating heat islands and for soft mobility. The south of the country suffered from floods; a solution could be to restore the canals in Maastricht.





How to reinforce urban aesthetics culture via design taking into account the multifunctional goals and the lack of space?

In the Netherlands, there is an independent committee to check if the project is viable.

Consequently, the project is less dependent on the politics because there is an external voice to validate the project.

The challenge is more how to include each stakeholder at every step of the project, specially in the city center. Maintenance services can be a strong limitation to aesthetics. But it is also a strength: more knowledge can be shared. And it paves the way to look for solutions nobody thought about, to combine ideas to bring an innovation. Walking around the place of the project to concretely visualize it, is essential.

Besides, it can be interesting to work on principles in order to structure the project.

However, we always try to make a space multifunctional, but at the end it is not black or white but grey: it is still multifunctional but with less functionalities, giving that it is necessary to make some choices.

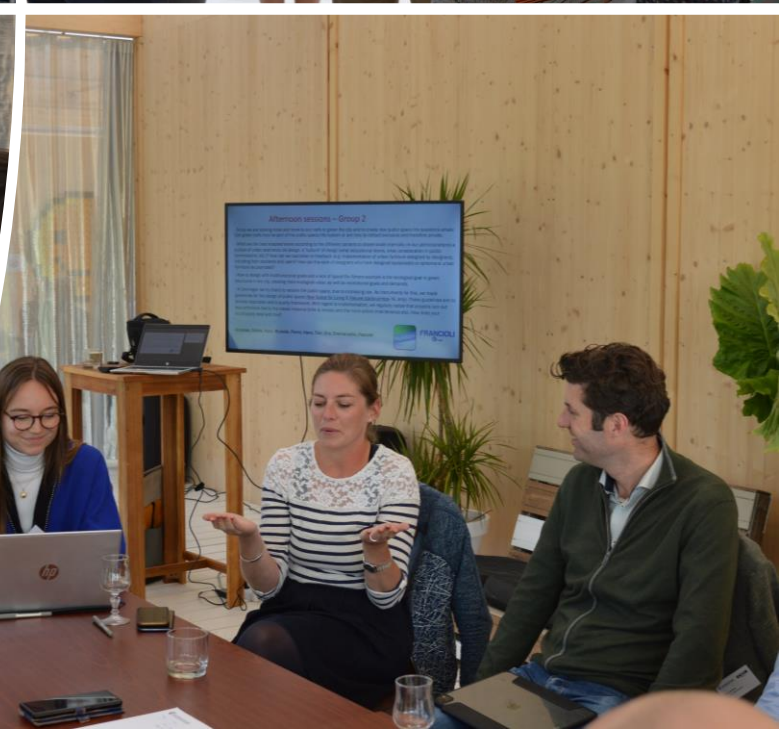
Exclusive monofunctional spaces are also at stake: we need them. For example, in the Vondelpark in Amsterdam, there is a little island that is not accessible to humans, and a new species was surprisingly discovered.

How to deal with parking spaces in suburb areas?

People want an attractive neighborhood but also their car. A solution can be to put cars on zero level and garden on first level (garage at the level under or pergola), or to have one street with a lot of parking spaces, but with the surrounding streets parkingless.

A reminder is to always bring people to the projects.

Impression of the day



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What they say about it

- “Perfect, very good for learning from each other and exchanging ideas and habits. Very refreshing.”
- “It was an awesome idea and I found working in small groups very interesting to pinpoint issues from the different cities and to get advice from others.”
- “2 groups with around ten persons/experts = easy to discuss”
- “Great, the topics and possibility to choose in front makes that you can determine for your municipality (or organization) what you want to focus on. Speaking with people with the same interest makes the discussion interesting.”
- “The format was good, the time spent on the discussion was also good.”
- “The theme of climate adaptation is big and requires a broad approach and an in-depth study. I think that a concrete case study would be effective for a study and discussion.”
- “I will be nice to further elaborate the ideas and discussions on paper, for example in workshops, sketch sessions at a location.”
- “The organization was very well. The balanced schedule between presentations and discussions were interesting. The moments to meet personal gave some valuable contacts. I would suggest to keep this and strengthen it. Besides, it's interesting to work in the small group.”

