

Over the past fifteen years, the northern bank of the IJ – the body of water separating Amsterdam's centre from its northern counterpart – has been transformed from an abandoned industrial area into a bustling hub. Once dominated by industry, **Amsterdam-Noord** (Amsterdam-North) is now a place to dine, party, and make innovative strategies and creative discoveries. But the transformation is not yet complete: big plans are in the works that will change this borough for good.

An evolution under way

NETHERLANDS — TEXT: KIM HOEFNAGELS, ILLUSTRATION: SYLVAIN TEGROEG

Exploring a city, region, or theme

Amsterdam-Noord is hot. Although just a kilometre from Dam Square, a whole new world seems to be materializing on the IJ's opposite bank, a world that is eccentric, unrefined, and evolving at breakneck speed. Old halls and hangars are being transformed into creative breeding grounds, innovative offices, and trendy cafés and restaurants. Vacant lots abound, where old buildings have been torn down or new ones are being built. In the new suburb of Overhoeks, located opposite the Central Station and on the water, the municipality and several partners plan to build 2200 new homes, reserving 130,000 square metres for offices, businesses and services.

It took a while for Amsterdam locals to embrace Noord. In the late 19th century, after the construction of the North Sea Canal, the borough was considered an ideal spot for shipyards and other industries. Shell Oil Company formed a veritable fortress on

the northern bank of the IJ lasting some 60 years, with those trying to get to the other side forced to cycle around its fences. Amsterdam-Noord did not start when you set foot ashore, but when you passed the Shell site and a web of villages, neighbourhoods and open polders unfolded before you.

By the late 1980s, very little remained of the once-booming industrial strip along the IJ. It was around this time that the first pioneers began transforming the old factories and shipyards into studios, theatre venues and workshops. They were soon followed by the first commercial risk-takers, mainly creative companies such as media producers, advertising agencies, architecture firms and designers. Both the municipality and major property developers saw Amsterdam-Noord as a potential spot for developing an urban work and residential area on the water. The onset of the financial crisis, however, forced them to put many of their plans on hold, among them

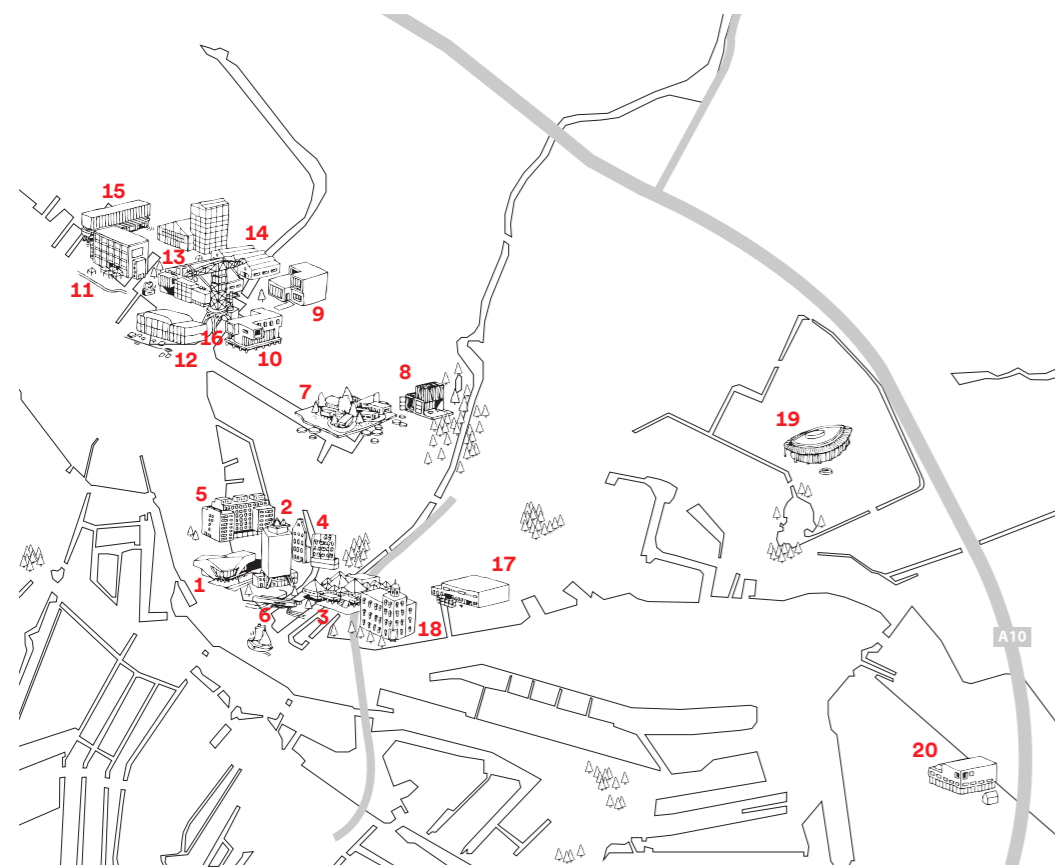
several large-scale housing developments including social housing. As a result, a private market opened up for those interested in building their own homes. While this initially involved individual plots and the occasional construction company, it is now possible to build apartment buildings through collective private commissioning.

These new developments seemed to shrink the physical distance between Amsterdam-Noord and the rest of the city. Now, city dwellers are taking the plunge and crossing the IJ in increasing numbers. This is only expected to intensify in the future, with the new Noord / Zuid (North / South) metro line planned to be up and running by 2017, bringing better access to the area. Those wanting to experience the vitality of these new urban developments before the big boom should leave Central Station from the IJ side and hop on one of the three ferries. Northward!

During the ferry crossing, two buildings immediately catch the eye: the **EYE Film Institute (1)** and **Toren Overhoeks (2)**. The first is futuristic and blindingly white, with multidirectional cantilevers; the second is monumental and symmetrical, towering above its surroundings. The film museum has been a hit since its opening in 2012. In the summertime, the large waterfront terrace is packed. The public lobby – which is surrounded by four film projection rooms, an exhibition room, a restaurant and a shop – are also popular meeting places. The stately tower beside it, commissioned by Shell, was not exactly welcomed with open arms. On the contrary: the locals found it inelegant, too tall, too elitist, and frighteningly alienating due to its reflective glass.

Nevertheless, the building has played a pivotal role over the years in the development of the new Noord. Since the relocation of Shell, several proposals have been made to open the building to the public. As it stands, the structure (renamed the A'DAM Tower) will be reopened in 2016 as a trendy nightspot with a revolving restaurant, an observation deck, two nightclubs and a hotel.

'The municipality and major property developers saw it as a potential spot for developing an urban work and residential area.'



1 EYE Film Institute Netherlands (2012)
Architect: Delugan Meissl Associated Architects
Address: IJpromenade 1
Info: www.dmaa.at



2 TOREN OVERHOEKS (1971, 2016)
Architect: Arthur Staal
Conversion: Claus en Kaan Architecten, OeverZaaijer
Address: Overhoeksplein 1
Info: www.adamtoren.nl



3 TOLHUISTUIN (1971, 2014)
Architect: Arthur Staal
Conversion: VASD
Address: Tolhuisweg 5
Info: www.vasd.nl



4 3D PRINT CANAL HOUSE (2014)
Architect: DUS architects
Address: Badhuiskade 11
Info: www.houseofdus.com, www.3dprintcanalhouse.com



5 DE EUROPA (2011)
Architect: Álvaro Siza
Address: Overhoeksparklaan
Info: www.alvarosizavieira.com



6 OVERHOEKS BRIDGE (2009)
Architect: korth tielens architecten
Address: Buiksloterkanaal
Info: www.korthtielens.nl



7 DE CEUVEL (2014)
Architect: space&matter, Smeelarchitecture, Delva Landscape Architects and Metabolic
Address: Korte Papaverweg 2-6
Info: www.deceuvvel.nl



8 NOORDERPARKBAR (2012)
Architect: bureau SLA, Overtreders W
Address: Wingerdweg 185
Info: www.bureausla.nl



9 BSH5 (2014)
Architect: Zondag CS architecten, among others
Address: Bosrankstraat (Klapprozenweg)
Info: www.zondagcs.nl



10 WATERNET FLOATING OFFICES (2010)
Architect: Attika Architekten
Address: Papaverweg 54
Info: Johan van Hasseltweg 27
www.attika.nl



11 IJ-KANTINE (1957, 2005)
Architect: A.G. Postma, J.D. Postma
Conversion: Erik Hehenkamp, Ontwerpers Adam
Address: Mt. Ondinaweg 15-17
Info: www.ontwerpersadam.wix.com/2013



12 PLLEK (2012)
Architect: Sjoerd Steenbeek
Address: Tt. Neveritaweg 59
Info: www.basta-urbanism.nl



13 MTV NETWORKS BENELUX HEADQUARTERS (1927, 2007)
Architect: G.J. Langhout, A.G. Postma, J.D. Postma
Conversion: Max van Aerschot Architect
Address: Tt. Neveritaweg 6
Info: www.vanaerschot.nl



14 RED BULL AMSTERDAM HEADQUARTERS (2011)
Architect: Sid Lee Architecture
Address: Tt. Neveritaweg 26
Info: www.sidleearchitecture.com



15 CRANE TRACK OFFICE BUILDING (1952, 2007)
Architect: OTH architecten (Trude Hooikaas, Julian Wolse, Steven Reisinger, Gerald Lindner)
Address: Kraanspoor 12-58
Info: www.oth.nl



16 NDSM CRANE HOTEL (2014)
Architect: IAA Architecten
Address: NDSM-Plein 78
Info: www.iaa-architecten.nl



17 CAFÉ-RESTAURANT STORK (2010)
Architect: CUBE architecten, SOLUZ architecten, Interior Shock
Address: Gedempt Hamerkanaal 96
Info: www.cube-architecten.nl, www.soluz.nl, interiorshock.nl



18 EL MOUSHINE MOSQUE (2005)
Architect: Gerard Rijnsdorp
Address: Meeuwenlaan 33
Info: www.rijnsdorp.nl



19 PAVILION NOORDEROOG (2013)
Architect: Emiel Lamers Architectures
Address: Nieuw Waterlandplein
Info: www.architectures.nl



20 IKC ZEEBURGEREILAND (2013)
Architect: Studioninedots
Address: Faas Wilkesstraat 451
Info: www.studioninedots.nl

(An evolution under way)

‘Once one of the biggest shipyards in the world, NDSM is now an urban laboratory for art and culture.’

Just east of Toren Overhoeks is the **Tolhuistuin (3)**. This former Shell canteen with its distinctive pyramid roofs is part restaurant, part modern art exhibition hall, and part pop music venue. Its garden, the size of a small park, is located behind the building. Among the smaller Shell buildings, many of which have been transformed into offices, stands a white hangar inside which DUS Architects is busy ‘building’ a **3D Print Canal House (4)**. Inside, you can hear the 3D printer whirring back and forth as it constructs the various components, layer by layer, including bits of floor, walls and doors made entirely of plastic. Turning to the west, you will see a white, marble-clad building looming in front of you. The residential building **De Europa (5)**, designed by Álvaro Siza, has 79 luxury accommodations for sale and for lease. The building is undeniably lavish, and intended to attract those looking to live in the city centre (and with the budget to do so) to Noord. It is the first finished building in the brand new Overhoeks neighbourhood. To improve access to this neighbourhood, located on the former Shell site, a bridge was erected in 2006 over the Buiksloter Canal (next to the IJ). Korth Tielens Architecten designed the robust **Overhoeks Bridge (6)**, whose angled, light-grey girders are reminiscent of the architecture of Arthur Staal.

Another important step in opening up Noord is **De Ceuveel (7)**, a utopian business park made up of retrofitted houseboats developed by a team of architects on behalf of the municipality (see A10 #53). The latter was looking for a feasible plan to transform an old shipyard, with its heavily contaminated soil, for an entirely new purpose. The area now features sixteen houseboats connected by a long wooden boardwalk. The contaminated ground is dealt with through the use of vegetation capable of purifying toxins from the soil. Equally as idealistic is the **Noorderparkbar (8)**. The designers are also the initiators, builders and residents of this mini-catering pavilion made entirely of construction materials found on Marktplaats, the Dutch classified advertising website similar to eBay.

If you head due west, and are not scared off by the rather desolate mood of the industrial site on the Klaprozenweg, you will discover an unusual row of houses tucked behind a hardware store. Together, these eighteen plots form **BSH5 (9)** on which thirteen families built their homes. Some of the residents, mostly architects and designers, also contributed to the design of the street. The result is a small, quirky community that has clearly set itself apart from its large-scale residential counterparts.

Private sector procurement is nothing new in Amsterdam. The Canal District, for example, was entirely realized through private development. Another Amsterdam tradition inspired the development of the new **Waternet office building (10)**. This publicly owned company, the core business areas of which are drinking water, sewerage and water management, commissioned Attika Architecten to design a building that would float on the water. The structure is surrounded by jetties with mooring space for twenty boats belonging to Waternet’s floating garbage collectors and dredgers.

The NDSM wharf is located across the canal to the west. Once one of the biggest and most modern shipyards in the world, it is now a unique urban laboratory for art and culture. The success of the NDSM wharf began in the early 1990s, when the abandoned area was discovered by artists looking to use it for their creative endeavours. That same informal artistic

atmosphere still exists today, and it is now one of the trendiest and most unusual parts of Amsterdam. It boasts a haphazard collection of converted industrial structures that have been repurposed, such as **Pilek (12)**. Made from stacked shipping containers and industrial materials, Pilek houses a large bar and restaurant and an extra room for shows, meetings and parties. A little further down the road you will find the old NDSM canteen which, following renovations by Amsterdam-Noord, now serves a dual purpose. The ground floor houses the restaurant **IJ-Kantine (11)** and the top two floors have been transformed into offices.

In recent years, an increasing number of culture and media companies have relocated to the NDSM wharf. **MTV Networks Benelux (13)** moved into a renovated carpentry workshop, to which a stunning glass extension was added. The marketing group of the energy drink **Red Bull (14)** followed a few years later, relocating to one of the site’s old warehouses. The Canadian firm Sid Lee Architecture left much of the industrial space intact and expanded the interior with diamond-shaped ‘mountains’ of wood that conceal half-open meeting rooms, brainstorming spaces, and workstations. An old **crane track (15)**, a 270-metre-long concrete structure on the banks of one of the harbour basins, now serves as an office building. Or rather, as the foundation for a new building that will house various offices. The light steel construction of the new glass volume seems to float above the old track and the water. The **NDSM Crane Hotel (16)** is the newest addition to the NDSM wharf. Kraan 13, also known as the Faralda Crane, is the last of the countless cranes once used to build passenger ships and supertankers. IAA Architecten suspended three cubes 50 metres high between the steelwork of the horizontal studs, and transformed them into luxury hotel rooms.

The eastern half of Noord, the so-called Hamerstraat area, is a mixed bag of activity and undergoing rapid development. A massive 1100 m² warehouse, once part of the Stork machine factory, was transformed into the **Stork seafood restaurant (17)**. The hall still bears all the hallmarks of its industrial past: blue-grey concrete floor, rough walls and heavy pulleys hanging from thick steel beams.

In addition to its large industrial sites, Noord also boasts one of the largest residential areas in the city. In the early 20th century, the governors of Amsterdam noted that the area would be an ideal housing site. Inland homes were built for the workers, while their employers erected stately villas on the main connecting road (now the Meeuwenlaan). In 2005, a residential block dating from 1910–1920 was converted into the **El Mousshine Mosque (18)**, easily identified as such by its minaret and its blue-and-green tiled walls. The large gallery flats built in the 1960s and ’70s on Waterlandplein, which borders a national green belt to the north, were also recently renovated. Shops now line a rectangular square, which serves as a meeting place with several seating areas, a colourful artwork, and a restaurant pavilion in the shape of an eye, **Pavilion NoorderOOG (19)**. With its sleek wooden columns and panels, this modest construction is an elegant sight among the high, solid-looking volumes of dark red brick.

Just outside Noord’s periphery lies Zeeburger-eiland. The area has long been an industrial site, with typical facilities like a concrete factory and a sewage treatment plant. The area is now on the verge of a radical transformation from rugged wasteland to lively new borough. The **IKC Zeeburger-eiland (20)** was completed in 2013 as a school and extracurricular activity centre that can grow in pace with the number of pupils. The decision to build a school before the first houses were completed was a clear sign: ambitions run high, and Amsterdam-Noord is on its way to becoming a metropolitan borough that people on the opposite side of the IJ are eagerly anticipating. ◀

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

EUROVISION: ICELAND

A country of strong natural elements and a short history of urban living, Icelandic architecture is a mix of corrugated iron-clad timber houses, functionalism, concrete and modern lines. In our upcoming issue, we look into the plans for the future of the most northern capital in the world, Reykjavik, plus explore both the iconic landmarks and the up-and-coming talents stemming from the North Atlantic.



↑ Passive solar Hof House by Studio Granda, 2009

INTERCHANGE

ALA is an architectural firm based in Helsinki and led by its four founding partners, all in their late 30s. After winning the open competition for the Kilden Performing Arts Centre in Norway (see A10 #44) and the Kuopio Theatre in Finland (see p. 30), they received national and international recognition. With an office of 43 people, ALA takes a very hands-on approach, and works with numerous international collaborators. They are currently engaged with the Aalto Campus, the New Library and the Norwegian embassy, all in Helsinki. So what’s next?



↑ Helsinki central library by ALA, 2017

READY

In its design for the housing project CJ5, Caramel Architects tackles the question of sustainable urban density on the outskirts of Vienna. From the outside, one enters a relatively enclosed white spatial sculpture, which then continues to open up vertically as one proceeds from the studio with adjoining garage in the entrance area to the living area and atrium garden. Thus, an internal set of very spacious and interlocking rooms is developed, despite the site’s narrowness.



↑ Pilot housing project CJ5 by Caramel Architects, 2014

SECTION

Facades

...and much more. A10 #62 issue will be published 1 March 2015.