

Rotterdam
18 December 2017

Dear Mayor Aboutaleb,

Rotterdam is traditionally known for its hard working people and its radical, and often dramatic, spatial dynamics. The freedom on the exercise of urban planning and architecture is hereby inevitably associated with the population's strong predisposition for experiment and deep resilience to ever changing conditions.

These are the qualities and identity traits that I miss in the recent urban awakening of Rotterdam. The population is being replaced by some other, wealthier and trendier and the innovation in spatial design is reduced to large scale toys for tourist amusement. I don't know what is being done with the famous Dutch typological experimentalism and with the extraordinary human resources of Rotterdam.

I would like to plea for a municipal agenda on working environments, safeguarded from the real-estate housing ravaging. Affordable (for all), flexible, innovative urban typologies that challenge traditional borders between working and living, between intellectual and industrial labour. It is important that room for innovative practices and relationships is provided in the city, regardless of people's financial capabilities or educational background. Great deal of what we now consider high education, and in principle essential for a knowledge economy, might be soon totally obsolete.

The deeply commercial nature of Rotterdam's development is turning neuralgic areas of the city into sterile consumption hubs. Nobody can deny that it looks prettier and safer, but we are using tools of urban enhancement that are decades old in a time that demands new solutions. A loungy city centre might give room to everything except to circular practices.

Rotterdam has the potential to become a world reference in sustainable urban development and productive innovation, turning its fossil hard working might into a green and circular one. Radical spatial design is an essential tool in this process, unleashing dynamics that can stretch the limits of what is imaginable. Urban inclusion is not something that one can manufacture with social policies, it is what naturally happens when everyone, in a given place, works together towards a common goal.

Yours sincerely,
Ana Luisa Moura