



Cultural Heritage Agency  
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

# Reuse, redevelop and design

How the Dutch deal with heritage in  
the Netherlands and abroad



Eindhoven, in the Netherlands, is the city where the electronics multinational company Philips became the large company it continues to be today. During the twentieth century, large factory sites and laboratories were built in the city. From the 1970s onwards, however, industrial production was increasingly transferred to countries with lower labour and production costs. In 1990, the company announced it was going to leave Eindhoven, which left the provincial city in shock. For almost a century, the electronics giant had determined the city's development and fate. But then, from one moment to the other, people would lose their steady jobs and livelihoods, and large parts of the city would become empty. Quite remarkably however, after the departure of Philips, Eindhoven managed to reinvent itself in a very short period of time. Today, the area known as Strijp-S, the former production site made up of approximately 66 hectares, has been transformed into a vital city quarter. It has become an attractive neighbourhood for living, working and leisure activities. Since then, Eindhoven has become the icon of the Dutch creative industry, where many new ideas are being produced in the old Philips buildings.



Examples of reuse in the Strijp-S area – the Restaurant Radio Royaal (left) and an example of a building designed to accommodate housing, offices, nurseries and other functions (right) (photos: Igor Vermeer).



Cover of the book 'Reuse, Redevelop and Design. How the Dutch Deal with Heritage', published in 2017 by nai010 (image: nai010 Publishers).

The transformation Eindhoven underwent is one of the examples presented in the book 'Reuse, Redevelop and Design. How the Dutch Deal with Heritage' (2017) and the travelling exhibition with the same name. Both book and exhibition, developed as a collaboration between SteenhuisMeurs and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, contain 20 examples of the Dutch experience with adaptive reuse, i.e., the adaptation of outdated structures to current needs. Other examples show, for example, how a secular society found a new meaning for a church that no longer attracted parishioners in large enough numbers for the upkeep of the sacred space; how the search for workspaces that could accommodate the urge for connectivity between young creative start-ups was found in a former office block; and how a former warehouse in the city of Rotterdam was turned into an apartment block, thus supporting the transition of a harbour area into a residential quarter.

The book and the exhibition also look beyond Dutch borders. Five examples of Dutch endeavours abroad are included: Zeche Zollverein in Essen (Germany), the Fundaco dei Tedeschi in Venice

<sup>1</sup> The book can be purchased at [www.nai010.com/nl/publicaties/reuse-redevelop-and-design/129069](http://www.nai010.com/nl/publicaties/reuse-redevelop-and-design/129069)

(Italy), the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building in Boston (USA), the New Holland Island in Saint Petersburg (Russia) and the Guangdong Float Glass Factory in Shenzhen (China).



*The island of New Holland (Russia) was built in 1719. It was the naval dockyard of Tsar Peter the Great and, later, the centre of the Russian Navy with warehouses, offices and a prison. This was an inaccessible area of the city, until the Navy left the island. In 2010, following years during which the area fell under increasing neglect, the city carried out a redevelopment competition, with the idea that the plans for this site would include new construction. The winner and developer Millhouse entered into a partnership with the non-commercial Iris Foundation for contemporary art and culture. Their plan was to restore the monumental buildings, but also to find a new purpose for the area as a multifunctional public place. The idea of new construction faded into the background after the area opened during the summer months, by way of an experiment, and attracted as many as 700.000 visitors with a cultural programme. As a consequence, the new meaning of the site for the city became immediately apparent (photo: Leonid Leontev).*

Adaptive reuse is not a new phenomenon and it probably exists since humans started building relatively stable and durable structures. The city of Rome, for example, consists of many buildings, dating back several millennia, that have been utilised and re-utilised for new purposes over and over again, across different periods of time. Yet the way people deal with these transformations differs according to time and place. Both the book 'Reuse, Redevelop and Design. How the Dutch Deal with Heritage' and the exhibition aim to share the recent experiences of the Netherlands with adaptive reuse. The motivation behind this project is to engage in debates about this form of redevelopment. The way the Dutch deal with heritage is not necessarily the best one and certainly not the only way. By exposing and sharing our experiences through the travelling exhibition, we hope to further develop the practise of adaptive reuse.

The main distinguishing feature identified in recent Dutch transformation projects is determined by creativity. Creativity does not only occur in architectural design, but also when organising the redevelopment of existing structures and in financing their new use. Architects no longer turn away from the

context, but rather find a new challenge in adapting to the building's existing character.

Another key element in successful redevelopment is the unconventional collaboration between different parties. Public and private parties no longer confine themselves to their traditional roles but tend to explore other parties' positions and search for far-reaching ways of collaborating. This occurs not only in the case of public-private partnerships – civil society and local communities are now acting more and more as initiating entrepreneurs. To understand this change, one must look back at the 2008 financial crisis, a time when traditional investors took a cautious stance towards unprecedented and unconventional uses of outdated structures. In this context, new investments were instead provided by involved individuals, committed to the cause, or by sympathising members of the general public. The heritage sector too, and especially governmental departments, initially against such redevelopment projects, gradually started changing their perspective. Today the heritage sector tends to stand along the redevelopment of heritage as a strategy for conservation and as a means to keep cultural heritage in use.



*Waanders is a family company that started a publishing, printing and bookselling business in Zwolle (the Netherlands), in 1836. In small cities like Zwolle, it is increasingly challenging for bookshops to survive, partly due to competition from online book sellers. For this reason, Waanders was looking for a new concept to keep the bookshop viable. In 2005, the company presented a plan to the city council to establish the new enterprise in the city's medieval Broeren church (see photo), which since 1983 no longer functioned as a church (photo: Joop van Putten).*

The book and especially the travelling exhibition aim to address the issue of adaptive reuse encountered in the partner countries of the Shared Cultural Heritage Programme of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. Since the revitalisation of historical inner cities is an issue of topical urgency in these countries, it has become a focal theme in the context of the programme's international collaboration. Cities such as Paramaribo, Jakarta or Pretoria are struggling to find a new base of existence for their





*The Dutch Dock and Shipbuilding Company (Nederlandse Dok en Scheepsbouw Maatschappij – NDSM) in Amsterdam was once the largest shipyard in the world (1937) but it closed down in 1984. A 90-hectare site became available and was acquired by the municipality. In 1999, a contest was set up to gather ideas for a new use of the site. The contest was won by artists, skaters, architects and former squatters, who joined forces in the Stichting Kinetisch Noord. Their plan was to develop a free city with studios and affordable working areas, in combination with cultural activities aimed at the general public. The photos show the shipbuilding shed (left) and office space inside the building (right) (photos: Ronald Tilleman).*

historical cores. For this reason, book and exhibition are used in many workshops and trainings organised by the Cultural Heritage Agency in Shared Cultural Heritage partner countries.

On 20 September 2018, the exhibition 'Reuse, Redevelop and Design' opened in Moscow, in a slightly altered version developed by curator Eva Radionova<sup>2</sup>. A documentary, featuring some of the key players within the Dutch redevelopment scene, was created for the occasion. It is part of a larger event meant to address the issue of adaptive reuse in the Russian Federation. The Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands is participating in several of

the debates and workshops organised in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. During previous years, the exhibition has travelled to Brazil, Japan, Sri Lanka and in upcoming years, more countries will follow. The Dutch partners of the Shared Cultural Heritage Programme can visit the exhibition during the conference 'Empowering Cities and Citizens. Learning and Co-creating in an Urbanizing World', to be held on 6 and 7 November in Rotterdam. The conference, located in the Maassilo, one of the most interesting examples of reuse of the harbour facilities, will feature sessions on heritage related issues in all thematic fields: people, places and know-how. One of the sessions will focus on the reuse potentials of the Maassilo itself. For more information please see: [www.ihs.nl/en/about/ihs-history/empowering-cities-and-citizens-conference](http://www.ihs.nl/en/about/ihs-history/empowering-cities-and-citizens-conference)

<sup>2</sup> The exhibition is located in the Russian Art Museum in Moscow and can be visited until 30 November 2018.

## Questions?

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