[research project]_ systematic documentation of 150 years housing development and future in Rotterdam

introduction_
The development of housing typologies is an emergent and testimony of the cultural, political, economical and technological context. New social behaviours, family structures, working routines and equipment needs are some of the factors that produce a continuous transformation in the collective and individual dwellings design during the 20th century.

Mapping the housing development requires a format with a systematic and methodological study – periods collecting equal housing developments, functional areas within the housing structure, growing population, mobility, etc. - to define the criteria for selection of the case studies. Building’s documentation essential research instruments are: plans, pictures, investments, regulations, owner types, quality and number of residents, among others. We have chosen to present the results using internet.

This webformat we started in Rotterdam, the second biggest city in the Netherlands. In 2007 a team of architects and historicans made a selection of 150 typical housing projects over 1,5 century and classify the selection in 5 periods in witch projects share the same developments. By the end of 2011 more than 200 housing projects and 30 short neighbourhood descriptions will be published on the website.

basics_ 1 city MAP_
During the 5 years of preparing the format the team reduced the information to a minimum for one visiting the website can understand the relevance of the information by a few clicks or movements with the mouse. Therefore the growing of the city shows a clear overview:

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basics_ 2 Timeline and Periods_
Rotterdam became a city in the 14th century and grew mainly from the 19th, due to the industrialisation and its renewed harbour. In this century the city employed the first urban engineer, Ir Rose, concerning the civil qualities of the extending city. For Rotterdam the year 1840 is chosen as the startpoint of the research. The other periods as follows:
• 1840_ urban engineer Rose
• 1901_ first national housing law
• 1940_ citycentre destroyed in WWII
• 1972_ renewal 19th century area’s
• 1990_ lowrise suburbs +highrise in citycentre
• 2010_ internet/social media?

basics_ 3 housing documentation_
For the documentation of every housing project the editors find the right form and scale to zoom in on the qualities of every project, due to the time the project was designed and built and rating it in the current state, describing the technical and social values through its connection with the public and collective space from urban scale to architectural details.
basics_ 4 housing database_
During the collection of all this information the research team made the decision to put the files in an
database with a search index. In the basic page of the database the projects are organised by the year of
construction. With the search index, projects can be filtered by typology, architect, period, area, etc. In June
2011 the database will be online. This database can be a tool for collaboration with house brokers.

|| first sketch of the database with search index

up to some Rotterdam conclusions_
The first results of the Rotterdam research show some interesting conclusions. The surface a social
house during the 20th century increased 4 times, while in 1900 approx. 7,2 persons lived in the
house and in 2010 approx 2,3. In the Rotterdam-case we can conclude that average person now uses
7 times more housing space than one century before. The opposite is shown in the average
area in wealthy housing where the surface per person decreased with factor 2,2. Housing for the
common wealth didn't grow or shrink at all. Actual government statistics shows that housing
nowadays became smaller than 5 years ago. In the far future we maybe can conclude that in
Rotterdam 2005 was the year people used the most housing space per person.

For the editors this hypothesis is the main drive in the research. In the 20th century the time
between changes of governmental regulations, communication between owner/architects/constructor,
transportation and technical possibilities of new construction systems, changes the real estate of urban live.
Experienced architect can tell about the changes in the
building business about the time they were practicing and till now the changes followed more and
more up in rapid tempo. With this research results we find the useful tools to predict the limit of
the changes for the future.

The future: It looks like that by the end of this year the editors of the Rotterdam research will
conclude that we are at the beginning of a new housing period where dwellers don’t care about the
quality of a physical house anymore, but choose for a neighbourhood and a place to practice their
own lifestyle. With the recent possibilities of internet and free social media for everyone,
developers can easily react on the consumers wishes. The Rotterdam team hopes that these
consumers will take a look at the free website with all round information they produced.

and now: comparing metropoles_
The Rotterdam research team choose the city Rotterdam because of its interesting historical and recent
architecture. After taking the first conclusions the team and different stakeholders like to know some
conclusions about other metropoles around the world. Considering to extend the 4 dimensions of the
Rotterdam research (3D-space and time) with a 5th dimensions, namely the location on Earth, made by its
cultural and economical environment. A young team of architects and historians from different countries
started to work out this ideas, and choose for two American cities; Buenos Aires in Argentina and New York
(Manhattan) in the USA.