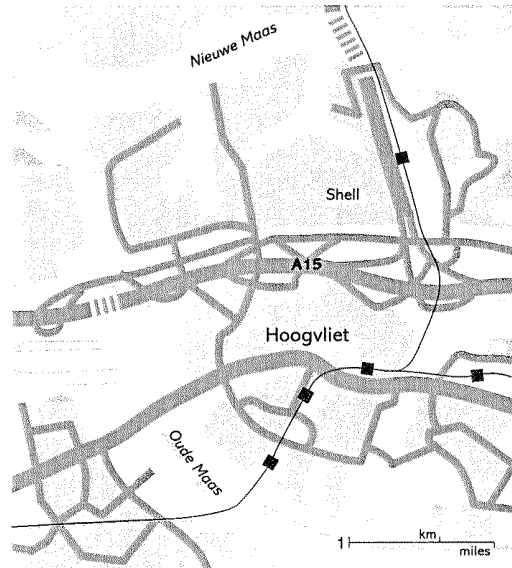


## Hoogvliet, February 9, 2004.

she wears her hair in braids and she is immaculately dressed. Her clothes look brand new and are lavishly decorated with all kinds of things. Next to her is parked a baby carriage with a small child. He is too big for



In the subway, opposite me, a girl from the Dutch Antilles is sitting. About 20 years old, she wears her hair in braids and she is immaculately dressed. Her clothes look brand new and are lavishly decorated with all kinds of things. Next to her is parked a baby carriage with a small child. He is too big for this contraption, a trendy tricycle; as he keeps on whining, his Nike cap falls to the floor. His mother gives him a bag of potato crisps and he quiets down. At the next stop on this early Monday morning, a scraggy-looking couple enters the train, quarreling about ten euros. It is difficult to understand what they are saying, as both of them are missing several teeth. Elaborately, they pile the contents of a plastic bag on their lap: a newspaper, a sheet of silver paper, a small tube, a lighter. Finally they stop nagging about their ten euros, lighting their 'sket'. The other passengers look slightly embarrassed as the smell of heroin, homeopathically small though the doses may be, drifts their way. Then the train enters Hoogvliet. Naturally, the escalator

is out of order. The entrance to the stairway is blocked by three cantankerous middle-aged Dutch ladies, dressed uniformly in beige and yellow. Although none of them is older than fifty, they nevertheless have a walker. Leaning against it, they smoke their cigarettes, refusing to step aside — after all, they are handicapped, aren't they? Outside the station, the steel-grey sky works like the natural setting for the row of dull single-family houses and the sad, disconsolate shops near the bus station. Luckily the crow that is always there isn't absent today, but is begging for something nice to eat, not afraid at all. I give him a piece of bread, but he prefers a tray of French fries with mayonnaise that has fallen out of the garbage can. He looks at me as if he wants to peck out my eyes, yelling: 'I want nothing of you, go away!' Typically Hoogvliet. M.P.



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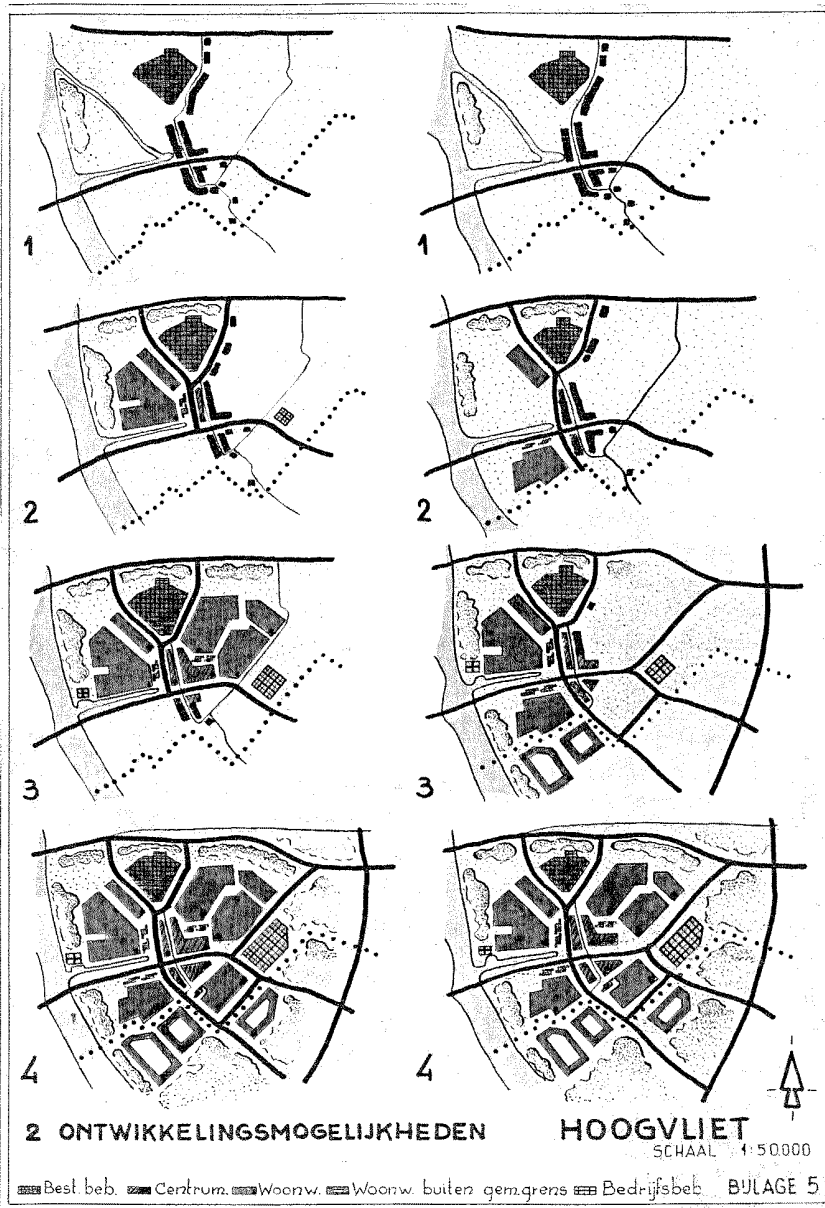
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Hoogvliet

Michelle Provoost

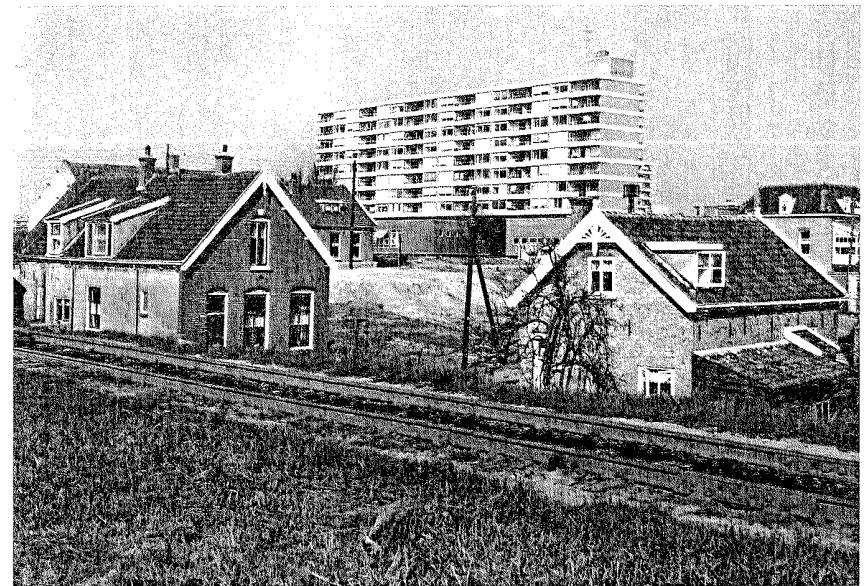
Only six kilometers long, Rotterdam's subway line was the shortest in the world when it opened in 1968, but, not surprisingly, the city still took great pride in having built the Netherlands' first subway. It was yet another sign of the city's agility in re-inventing itself after the devastating air raid that had destroyed its historic core in 1940. It showcased the two pillars of Rotterdam's carefully cultivated image: modernity and progress. A new urban core, dominated by buildings designed for business and spacious new housing estates, fostered the city's self-esteem. The subway was welcomed as a technical improvement that strengthened this new image. Starting in the rebuilt center, the line crosses the river, revealing the old working-class estates on the southern bank. It continues to the postwar housing estates, which are composed of an endlessly repeated series of identical or very similar units (which were appropriately labeled 'stamps'). For the time being, the line ended at Slinge station, located in one of the world's most famous housing estates: Pendrecht, which is a major highlight of Dutch urban planning. The initial designs for Pendrecht had been prepared by a team in the vanguard of modern architects associated with CIAM: Van den Broek & Bakema and Lotte Stam-Beese. The purity of the design and its widely praised spatial concept had turned it into a model for similar experiments all over Europe. The subway line was soon extended beyond the city's municipal borders, starting with the stations in Rhoon and Poortugaal. Even though at this point we have barely left Rotterdam behind us, the city looks light-years away. Small villages line the dikes, and there are small shops, churches, and quite a number of farms: a typical Dutch pastoral scene. Green pastures show up on both sides of the subway line, willows mark the course of narrow country roads, and sheep graze the banks. Then, all of a sudden, one of the new housing estates appears and we are back in Rotterdam. Station Hoogvliet is lined with towers and large apartment buildings. It is the city's farthest outpost, 12 kilometers away from the center. Hoogvliet is a veritable New Town, an autonomous urban unit designed in the late 1940s according to the principles of the English New Towns near London.

The motivation for building Hoogvliet this far from the existing city was the passionate desire to do more than simply repair the destruction caused by the war: the port of Rotterdam was to become the largest in the world. To achieve this ambitious goal, huge new harbor

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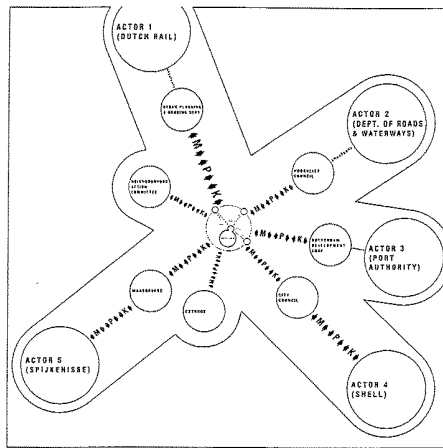
Development strategies for Hoogvliet



The old village giving way to the New Town

basins were created in the Botlek and Europoort areas and complemented by new industrial complexes. The small medieval village of Hoogvliet, situated in the immediate vicinity of the Shell refinery, was singled out as a 'nucleus of growth', suitable for housing the labor force required by the expanding port. Gradually, the old village was to be replaced by a completely new Hoogvliet. The historic port was filled in, historic farms and the characteristic small houses along the dikes were demolished. As a prelude to these grand ideas, the old core near the seventeenth-century church (which itself escaped demolition) was destroyed to make place for the New Town's shopping center. The scale of this shopping mall was quite large: the plan envisaged shops, high-rise apartment buildings, cultural buildings including a musical center, and a sports stadium. Hoogvliet was to become a regional center, a sparkling magnet attracting people from the neighboring villages. Lotte Stam-Beese's drawings of Hoogvliet radiate a worldly, urbane atmosphere comparable to Harlow or Stevenage, quite different from that of the famous Pendrecht housing estate. Hoogvliet was to be a proud and independent urban core next to Rotterdam.

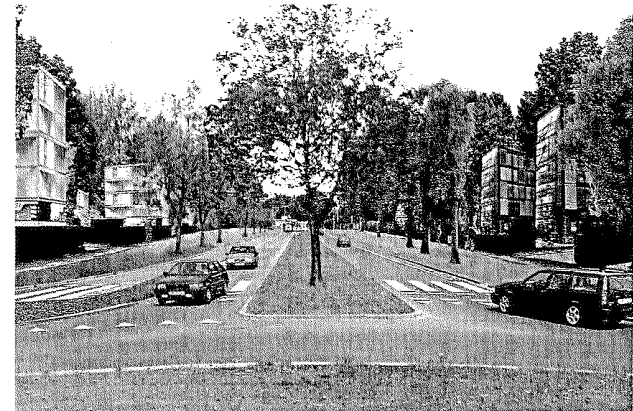
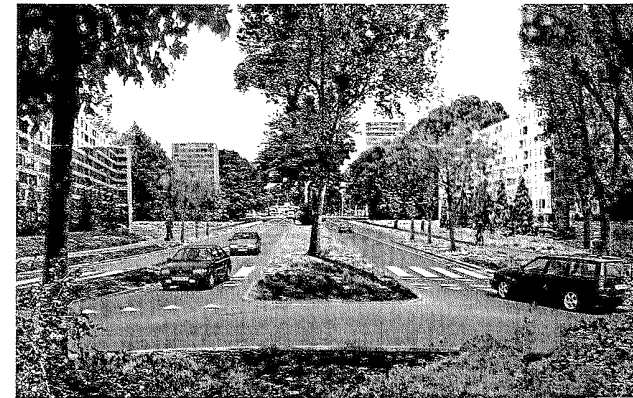
**Successes and failures** In its urban layout, Hoogvliet clearly reflected the ideals of the neighborhood unit. The social hierarchy of family, neighbors, the neighborhood community and the urban society was mirrored by the physical hierarchy of the individual house, the street, a group of streets with a small shopping center, the neighborhood and, finally, the city at large. All the housing units were designed as parts of a balanced community comprising



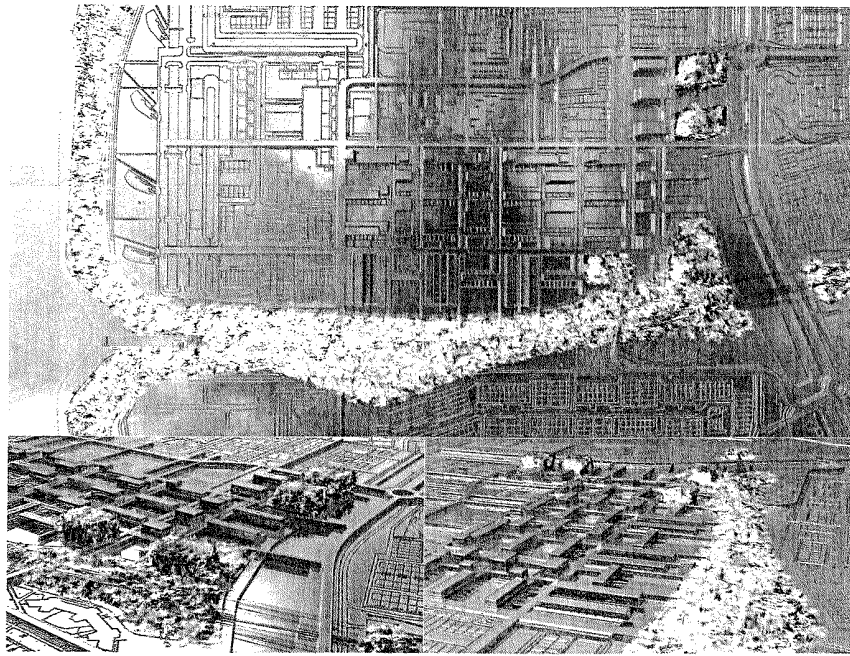
M = MONEY P = PEOPLE K = KNOWLEDGE  
 Organization Scheme

various types of houses. The architecture of the houses, schools, and shops was uniform and sober. This functionalist feeling was greatly enhanced by the industrial building methods that were applied in Hoogvliet. Apart from that, the town expressed one of the great ideals of the time: social equality. An abundance of open spaces and communal gardens compensated for the small houses; and the transparency and openness of the public greenery represented a new, open urban society. Naturally, traffic was organized according to the latest ideas on efficiency. Cars, bicycles and pedestrians were provided with their own dedicated lanes. These were combined to create wide traffic arteries provided with ample greenery, a modern version of the American parkways. All the components of the urban structure were endowed with the qualities of modernism and efficiency; but, at the same time, they can be said to embody an idealistic social model.

Like most postwar utopias, the ideal New Town of Hoogvliet soon experienced serious difficulties. Instead of fostering social cohesion, the neighborhood units promoted a feeling of alienation. In nearby Vlaardingen, sociologists discovered that inhabitants identified with their street and its immediate surroundings, but not with the social module of the neighborhood. To make things worse, the size of the houses was seen as too small. Lacking an extra room that could be used as a study, the houses offered in Hoogvliet were, they contended, bound to have a devastating effect on the development of the individual personality, at the same time hampering opportunities to enjoy a harmonious family life. This was all the more serious because the population of Hoogvliet was made up of a curious mix of dockworkers from Rotterdam and immigrants from the agrarian provinces of Drenthe and Zeeland. The latter had their own dialect, clung to their own lifestyles and were a source of continuous friction. Finally, the notion of transforming Hoogvliet into an autonomous New Town was questionable right from the start. Rotterdam was nearby, and after the construction of the subway line and



Logica



Campus ('toornend')

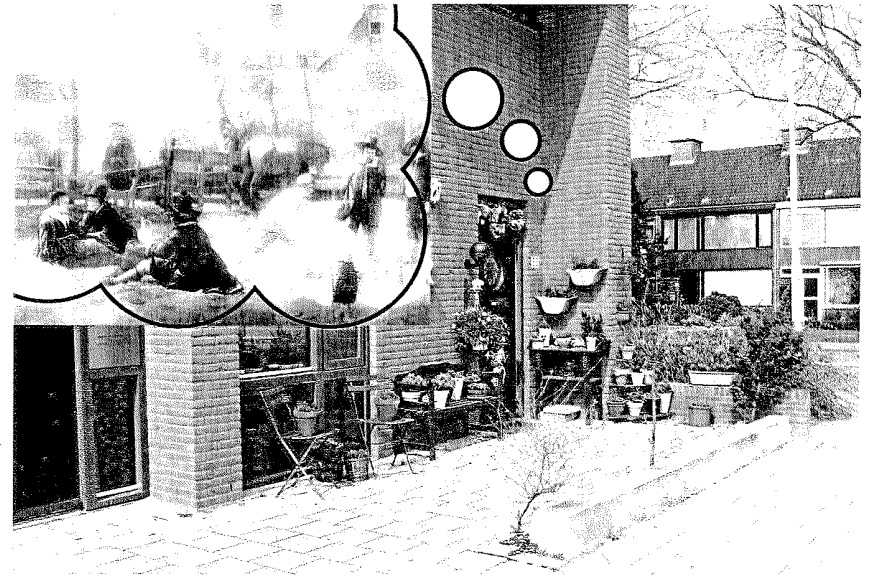
new highways in the 1960s, the inhabitants of Hoogvliet were no longer dependent on the amenities offered in Hoogvliet. In addition, what had been conceived of as one of the advantages of Hoogvliet, its situation at a stone's throw from the Shell refinery, turned out to be a major drawback, as a series of accidents and the continuously polluted air demonstrated. On January 20, 1968, an explosion shattered most of the windows in Hoogvliet, dramatically altering its image: a city once seen as friendly, efficient and modern suddenly bore the stigma of being the kind of place that one would do well to avoid.

Even before Hoogvliet lost its utopian image, the town planners had understood that its location was far from ideal. At the beginning of the 1960s, when new housing estates were still being added and the population of the New Town was growing rapidly, the planners decided that the original vision of a city inhabited by some 60,000 people had become problematic. They decided to extend the subway line, adding one more stop to create Spijkenisse, at a safe distance from the industrial complexes. Spijkenisse was to develop into a New Town of approximately 80,000 people. The housing estates originally intended to be part of Hoogvliet were transferred to Spijkenisse, and, as a result, Hoogvliet definitively lost its image as an optimistic, desirable housing estate. Hoogvliet never had more than 37,000 inhabitants, and just a limited number of shops were built, the only vestiges of the ambitious plans for a shopping mall with numerous cultural and recreational facilities. Decades later, rows of terraced

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houses were built on the area that was left open. Even today, the area near the church gives the impression of a suburban wasteland and is only used for parking. Instead of the urban, even semi-metropolitan character originally meant to distinguish Hoogvliet's housing estates, the last ones that were built display a typically suburban character, defined by small, meandering streets lined with single-family houses. Lost within one of these estates and stuck between the remnants of old dikes, the subway station is a far cry from offering direct access to a truly urban center, as was originally planned. The entrance to the city is marked by a vast, desolate square that is used as a bus station, where, in a surreal scene, 10 bus stops all serve the same line: no. 78. Whoever enters Hoogvliet at this point cannot help but remember the feelings of the town planners in the late 1960s. Hoogvliet is a town planning accident. It has become a mutant: half New Town, half suburb.

**Ghetto** It may be true that Hoogvliet failed to live up to its promises as a New Town, and it is hard to deny that the dream of the modernist city became discredited here even before half of the project had been realized. Even so, Hoogvliet does exist and is here to stay. In the mid-1990s, over 30,000 people lived there, some of them the middle-aged 'pioneers' of the 1950s and 1960s. They liked Hoogvliet because to them it was a quiet place at a comfortable distance from the increasingly problem-ridden metropolis of Rotterdam. Many of the former inhabitants of Hoogvliet – those who could afford to move – left the tiny, noisy homes and settled in the bigger houses of the surrounding cities. The inexpensive houses of Hoogvliet attracted new



The Estate Hoogvliet, brick house

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inhabitants, as Hoogvliet became a refuge for immigrants, many of them from the Dutch Antilles. They took up residence in the northern parts of Hoogvliet, where their different lifestyles soon caused trouble. It did not take long for a real schism to develop between the suburban, white, well-to-do southern parts, which were mainly inhabited by native Dutch people, and the northern parts that were increasingly dominated by socially weaker groups. 'Nieuw Engeland', the 'oil' estate, epitomized this new trend. In 1951, so-called fan-shaped apartment buildings had been erected here, lining streets named after regions rich in oil: Caracas Street, Texas Street, etc. The homes in this area were especially small, built in somber brick and located in the least desirable part of Hoogvliet, close to the oil refinery alongside the highway. In the 1990s, these streets changed into what soon became known as a ghetto. Junkies, drug dealers, and vandalism made Nieuw Engeland an ideal topic for a documentary on Dutch television that further strengthened the image of Hoogvliet as a sad, lost neighborhood.

**Revitalizing Hoogvliet** To stop the downward trend, Hoogvliet proclaimed itself a disaster area in the mid-1990s. First of all, the fan-shaped apartment buildings were raided by the combined forces of the police, the public health service, tax collectors and bailiffs, who combed through every apartment in an attempt to stop all illegal activities. Drug dealers were imprisoned, defaulters indicted, and illegal tenants chased away. Subsequently, the remaining inhabitants were offered better houses elsewhere in Hoogvliet, and apartment buildings were in a manner that was meant to set an example for the other projects. The local authorities and the two housing corporations that had recently been privatized and owned most of the housing stock in Hoogvliet cooperated in an attempt to improve housing conditions. No less than 5,000 houses, 30% of the housing stock, were to be demolished, mainly apartments of 56 square meters or smaller that could no longer satisfy the expectations of the inhabitants of the 1990s. Likewise, the 'maisonette' apartments and the homes for the elderly that in the 1960s had been built around small courtyards – all of them miniature houses with only one small living room and an even smaller bedroom – were marked for demolition. Marketable homes were to take their place. The authorities hope that by creating a more diverse palette of housing types and reducing the proportion of subsidized tenement housing (which used to be 70%), they could coax a more diverse, well-to-do population to move to Hoogvliet.

The revitalization campaign for Hoogvliet was clearly an answer to specific needs, but it also reflected fundamental changes in the Dutch Welfare State. The state withdrew from public life, a move that led public housing to become almost completely privatized. The housing corporations shed their traditional role as social organizations and started to be run as semi-commercial companies. This happened not only in Hoogvliet; in almost all the postwar housing estates that have undergone revitalization, strategies have been adopted that are determined more by administrative and commercial concerns than by social ideas. As Jacqueline Tellinga puts it in a recent publication on "The Big Make-Over": 'Since their privatization in 1995, the corporations have turned into real estate companies in which decisions on investments are taken at the highest level. They evaluate their possessions as part of their complete holdings,

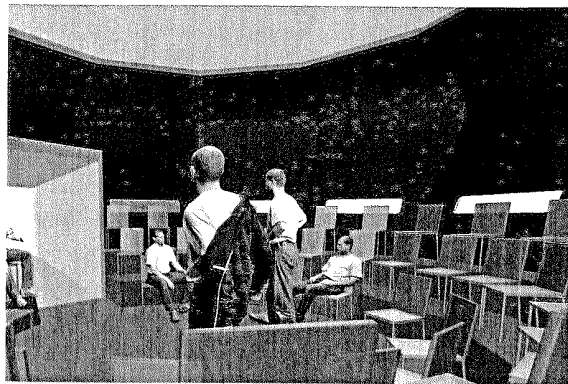
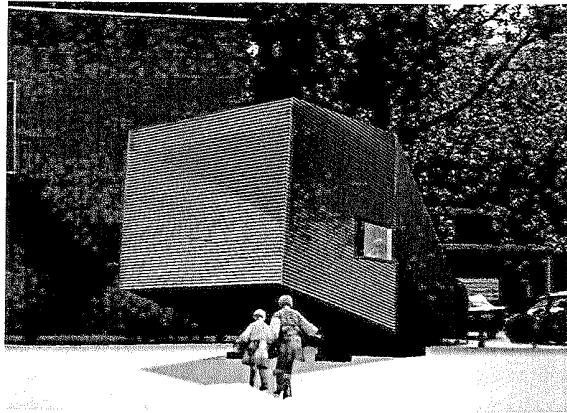
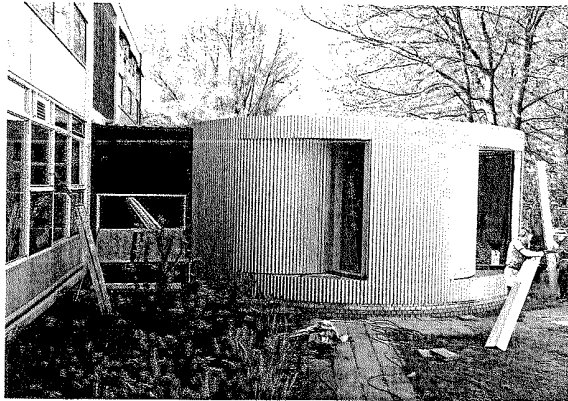
regardless of their specific setting.<sup>21</sup> This is why they choose a generic approach for all reconstruction projects, no matter how different the original situations might be. Everywhere, high-rise buildings and apartment buildings are substituted by low-rise, mostly single family homes; private gardens replace collective greenery, and small neighborhood shopping centers disappear, replaced by large, central shopping malls. Last but not least, low-cost tenement houses are eliminated, and expensive owner-occupied houses are strongly promoted.

1 Jacqueline Tellinga. 'Corporaties zijn sinds hun verzelfstandiging in 1995 vastgoedmaatschappijen geworden waarbij de investeringsbeslissingen op hoog niveau in de organisatie worden genomen. Ze beoordelen hun bezit vanuit hun complete vastgoedportefeuille, niet op buurtniveau.' in: J. Tellinga. *De Grote Verhouding. Verandering van naoorlogse woontijken*. Rotterdam 2004, 20.

The revitalization of Hoogvliet followed along similar lines. To overcome the negative image, it was decided to replace most of the urban structure, the public spaces and the housing stock by something with a more 'contemporary' look. The characteristic composition of basic building forms floating in space, so typical of the modern city, was considered out of date. They were replaced by enclosed spaces and traditional urban elements: the city street, the return of the building line as the main organizational principle, the square, the boulevard. The original concept of an introverted pedestrian shopping mall was to be turned inside out by moving the shops to the boulevard. The free-flowing public space that washed through Hoogvliet's urban tissue was to be framed by new blocks of houses, streets and cozy courtyards. Communal spaces, a fundamental principle in postwar town planning, had to make way for private gardens. Everything reminiscent of the original 'collective' ideals was banished. From now on, the individual and his personal lifestyle were to set the tone in Hoogvliet. In short, the most characteristic feature of the revitalization scheme was the urge to eradicate the modern model on which the original plan for Hoogvliet had been based. Everything associated with it was seen as negative. The town planners' main aspiration now was to reinvent Hoogvliet. Even though they returned to tested traditional models, their ambition to bulldoze most of the existing New Town out of the way is reminiscent of the tabula rasa mentality of their colleagues who built Hoogvliet in the 1950s. The new plan did not relate to the existing situation any better than the original concept had related to the historic village it was designed to replace.

**WiMBY!** In 1999, the alderman for city planning, at the time a representative of the Dutch green party, offered a motion urging that the municipal government mount an International Building Exhibition modeled on the German examples of the Internationale Bauausstellung (IBA) in Berlin and the Emscher Park exhibition. It was a brave attempt to counter the prevailing notions in urban politics and the town planning profession, which were entirely focused on spectacular and highly prestigious projects in Rotterdam's inner city. His goal was to direct attention to the slum-like conditions in many of the postwar housing estates, and his motion proved to be the starting point for the WiMBY! project: Welcome in My Backyard. Since 2000 the management team has been led by Felix Rottenberg, former chairman of the





SchoolParasites: Onix

Dutch Social-Democratic Party, and the contents of the enterprise have been defined by two architectural historians of Crimson, Michelle Provoost, author of this article, and Wouter Vanstiphout.

Even though the famous German undertakings inspired WiMBY!, it soon became clear that neither Berlin nor Emscher Park could provide a model for Hoogvliet. Not only was WiMBY! never more than a miniature version of these projects; the context was also very different. Whereas the Emscher Park project worked in a virtual vacuum – both industry and population tended to move away from the Ruhr region – Hoogvliet was bombarded with reconstruction proposals. There was more than enough money available, and revitalization had already begun. The local political board, the housing corporations and the commercial realtors were engaged in what they called the ‘Hoogvliet conspiracy,’ a conspiracy that promised to be very successful.

Then came WiMBY! What could WiMBY! possibly add to a planning apparatus that was already in full swing? Its special assignment was to improve the quality of the revitalization scheme, to introduce innovative concepts on various levels – social, economic, architectural, urban – and, most importantly, to make their proposals really happen. Visits to Emscher Park helped to give the participants some clues as to what was expected: industrial ruins turned into cultural attractions, the promotion of high tech industries that built striking modern offices, beautifully designed public spaces and magnificent lighting installations that attracted carloads of tourists from all over Europe. However, was this really what Hoogvliet needed? What kinds of projects were possible, feasible, and necessary here?

It soon became clear that it would be of no use to establish yet another, separate organization, a real WiMBY! institute, to join the already existing organizations. That would only have led to time-consuming, competitive strife. Deciding, instead, to concentrate on the existing planning mechanism’s weak points, we initiated a series of coordinated events that would, we hoped, have a marked effect on Hoogvliet. First and foremost, the projects that we embarked upon were to have a direct bearing on Hoogvliet and set an example for similar projects elsewhere.

Apart from engaging in specific projects, we also wanted to change people’s mentality. Our focal point was the existing substance of Hoogvliet, both physically (the buildings) and socially (the people). As in so many reconstructed housing estates, there had hardly been any time to reflect upon the object of so much planning fervor: the original New Town of Hoogvliet. Nor had the results of research by sociologists, traffic experts, and town planning historians been properly assessed. WiMBY! identified the need to correct this as a prerequisite for reinterpreting the worn out New Town. It wanted to rediscover its now hidden qualities as an unknown, captivating new urban entity with its own peculiarities, and thus the reinterpretation and reuse of what was already there were to be the guiding principles in the reconstruction process. As a result, some projects – the Domain Hoogvliet, Hoogvliet inside out, the WiMBY! Week – bordered on engaging in communal social work. Sometimes initiatives that bore no direct relation to architecture were most effective in presenting alternative approaches

for sometimes overly ambitious, large-scale reconstruction projects. Temporary interventions, cultural reprogramming or a onetime event could help people to rediscover the New Town's hidden but positive qualities. Above all, such activities bring to light unexpected urban potentialities that can inspire future strategies. This potential is located both in the inhabitants and in the existing urban fabric. It remains an open question as to whether or not a program based on costly suburban houses can ever generate such vitality.

**Anti-tabula rasa** We were absolutely sure that if Hoogvliet was to become a new, vital and attractive city in ten years, nothing could be more counterproductive than to start from scratch. The tabula rasa mentality that wants to do away with everything it encounters, from buildings to the underground infrastructure, may have been useful in the era of postwar reconstruction, but in this case it was totally useless. Using existing qualities would help to prevent the New Town from becoming generic, something that could have developed anywhere, in a suburb near Leeuwarden as well as in Enschede or Amersfoort. While the planning machinery set in motion by the corporations went on preparing the demolition of thousands of homes, championing the values of the new, quiet, suburban middle-class Hoogvliet that was to be created in their place, WiMBY! worked on a totally different concept. Hoogvliet was to resemble itself and should not try to emulate other cities. It had to find ways to deal with its green, village-like character and the ethnic make-up of its inhabitants, and it should cherish whatever positive opportunities presented themselves. This approach called for a thorough analysis of Hoogvliet, focusing not only on problems and difficulties, but also on its positive aspects. By stressing the negative qualities, the large-scale reconstruction process that had been going on for some time ignored the positive characteristics. Nobody mentioned the profuse greenery – public gardens were only seen as wasteland waiting to be developed. Nobody drew attention to the potential of the large community of people from the Antilles; for the problems of recent years only left room for negative feelings. Thus, many qualities that could have inspired the revitalization process were simply discarded, an example of the approach that seems inherent in Rotterdam's 'progressive' tradition.

Our dissenting views on Hoogvliet were first published in 2000 in a book entitled *WiMBY! Welcome into My Backyard!* Its cover illustrated our intentions: Hoogvliet's historical church is shown adjacent to a vast expanse of Stelcon slabs, symbol of the failure of the New Town but at the same time conveying its own peculiar beauty.<sup>2</sup> This beauty is enhanced by Hoogvliet's unfinished character and can be seen in many places: the dike that had to make place for the subway line, but simply continues on the other side of it; farms that look out of place between the apartment buildings; geese and sheep grazing in a setting of 1950s architecture. The WiMBY! strategy demonstrates precisely these qualities by exaggerating even the tiniest specimens of it and by highlighting those aspects that the official planning machinery sees as problematic. This analysis had distinct therapeutic features because it showed the

inhabitants just how special their New Town really is, thereby attempting to heal their ingrained inferiority complex. We sought to promote a change of mentality that might help to reverse the purely negative way of dealing with the existing situation. One of the earliest urban projects carried out by WiMBY! seems to confirm that this strategy may be successful.

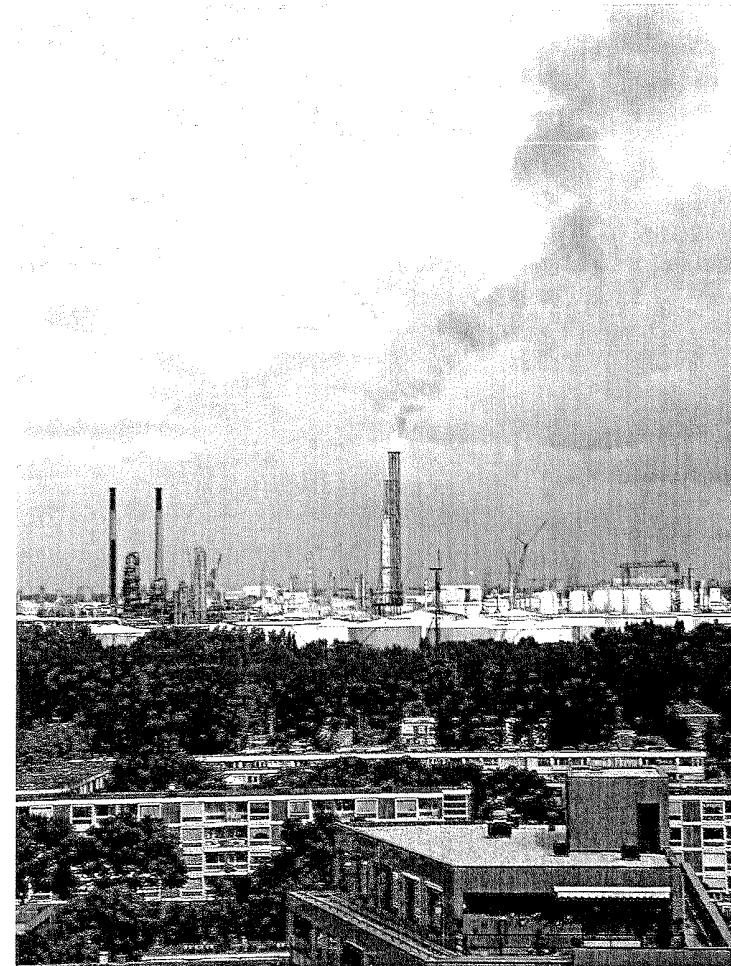
**Logica** Believing that Hoogvliet has many positive qualities, we sought a different type of town planning document than the all-encompassing master plan. What was required was a set of instruments that could help to guide the processes already at work, directing and channeling them into a coherent policy. The most pressing task was to create some logic in the often conflicting projects initiated by the many institutions working on Hoogvliet. This is the origin of Logica, a town planning manual for Hoogvliet, which was produced by the Rotterdam-based architectural firm of Maxwan Architects and Planners. Time and again, Logica emphasized the need for a joint approach to the 'Hoogvliet project'. Logica asserted that as long as a coherent vision was lacking, the revitalization campaigns could only result in a chaotic, unremarkable generic city in which the most important characteristics of the New Town would be lost. Accordingly, Logica identified the qualities that should be seen as Hoogvliet's main characteristics, singling out four urban elements that, it was believed, could yield a consistent structure: the green buffer surrounding the New Town, guaranteeing a rural setting on all sides; the isolated location of the neighborhoods, endowing each of them with its own particular values; the green areas between the neighborhoods containing the New Town's infrastructure; and, finally, the overall green quality of Hoogvliet, a result of the fully mature trees in the open spaces and communal gardens.

Logica presented clear choices: each of the four structuring elements were put to the test. Were they to be respected, or could one do without them? These issues were addressed in the so-called Logica committee, which was made up of representatives of all the parties involved: the municipal planning board, the local political board, two corporations and the development agency of Rotterdam. The same issues were put before the inhabitants on the WiMBY! website. Thus, Logica changed from a plan into a negotiating process, which concluded with a binding selection of one of the 24 models that could be composed by combining the variables offered in the process. Remarkably, the strategy selected was that of conserving and enhancing all the existing qualities. Hoogvliet's green neighborhoods were to retain their self-contained qualities, flanked by wide parkways and surrounded by a recreational zone alongside the Oude Maas River.

**New collectives** While Logica addressed Hoogvliet's urban and physical qualities, other aspects of WiMBY! focused on its social qualities. Like the physical qualities, these were being grossly neglected, no matter how many publicity campaigns and inquiries the official planning machinery organized. WiMBY! wanted more. We wanted to show what the inhabitants themselves had to offer. We wanted to exploit their creativity and make them responsible for projects we developed in consultation with them. In doing so, we discovered that the concept of

the collective was much more important than the official reconstruction campaign took it to be. Working with single mothers from the Antilles community, we found that they needed forms of houses that combined the individual home with collective amenities and collective public spaces. The reconstruction campaign's implicit mantra: 'collective spaces have become impossible to maintain because the contemporary New Town lacks a collective mentality' may be true for the average Dutch family commuting from one place to the other in an ever expanding network city, but it does not apply to other groups. Judging from the growing number of communes, even among native Dutch citizens, there appears to be a growing need for collective arrangements. These considerations fostered three projects that we organized with the support of the corporations. They are intended to accommodate new collective housing arrangements. In one of the 'maisonettes' – the most endangered type of house from the 1960s – a group of single mothers from the Antilles is provided with their own individual homes and a collective room that can be used as a crèche, a study or a café. Parts of the surrounding public spaces will also be brought under collective control and designated as safe places for children to play and mothers to eat or party together. In another maisonette flat in the same part of Hoogvliet, homes for young people are planned that follow the so-called 'Foyer' model which provides spaces for living, education and work. The third initiative attempts to attract categories of people that so far have avoided Hoogvliet. Even though Hoogvliet is easily accessible and has a lot to offer, its negative image puts off the more affluent and creative layers of Rotterdam's population. How can one make Hoogvliet more attractive to these categories, thereby increasing its social diversity? The usual type of single-family house with a garden can be found anywhere. In itself, it cannot induce anyone to move to Hoogvliet. We believed that a form of co-housing might do the trick. This is a form of housing that combines twenty individual homes and a collective amenity that is assigned to them and managed by the twenty households living there. The nature of this amenity is decided collectively. It can be either a day-care center, an ecological garden, a car repair hall, or a sports facility. Thus, a new meaning is given to the term 'collective housing.' The oppressive connotations associated with the collective arrangements of the 1950s are replaced by self-defined contemporary forms that combine individual homes with a wide variety of opportunities to use public space.

**Collective substance** Judging from the way Hoogvliet appears in its overall planning and in its architecture, one would be inclined to think that its population must be homogeneous. It is not. Behind the anonymous facades from the 1950s and 1960s, lives a rich palette of people. They differ in income, ethnicity, and lifestyle and express these differences in the way they dress and the way they decorate their homes. The photo project 'Hoogvliet inside out' asked dozens of people to have their pictures taken in a circulating photo tent. The elderly with their rollators, mothers with a perm, hip hop boys acting tough – all kinds of people showed up. These portraits were complemented by interior photographs taken by designers Gerard Hadders and Edith Gruson. Subsequently, the portraits and the interior photos were



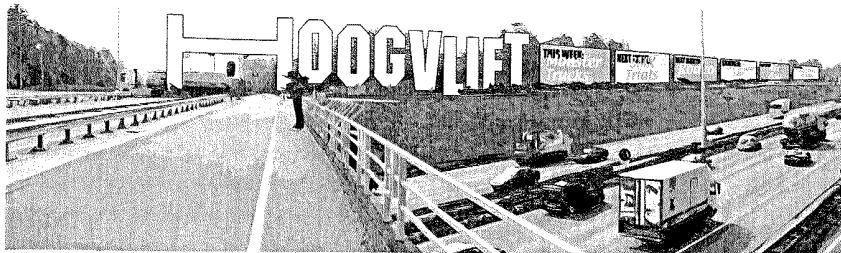
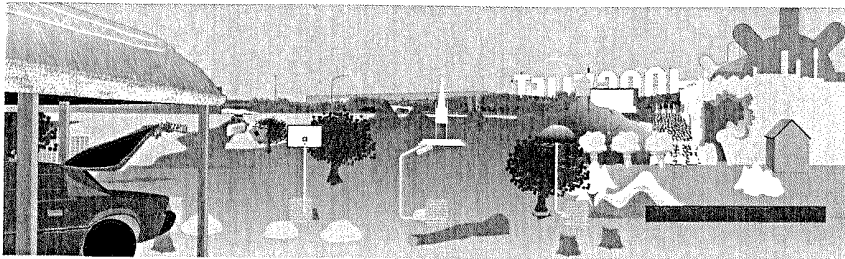
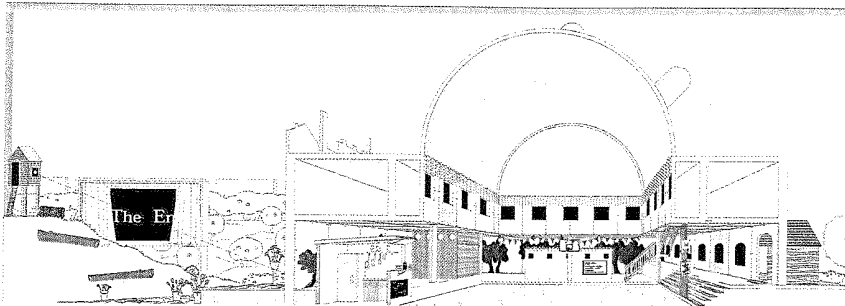
Nearby oil refinery

blown up to larger-than-life billboards that were placed near the highway and as traffic signs at street crossings. Apart from that, they were used as propaganda for the WiMBY! week that was organized in December 2002 in a now demolished row of homes for the elderly, where all the WiMBY! projects were presented, while half of the U-shaped row of houses were still occupied. The facades of the empty houses were used as huge billboards for the interior photos. Each of the empty houses was dedicated to one of the WiMBY! projects, while in others movies were shown. In one of the houses, people could have their portraits made while the elderly people living nearby provided them with coffee. In this way, WiMBY! week not only



displayed a variety of WiMBY! projects, but also revealed the broad diversity of people living in Hoogvliet.

**Education** What are the elements that make a city worth living in? The quality of the housing stock and the shops, the facilities one finds there, the surroundings, the population – all these things matter. In a depressed area, educational facilities are particularly important. A great deal needed to be done to bring Hoogvliet's schools up to date. Most of them had been built in the 1960s, many according to the standard types then designed by the municipal authorities. They are inconspicuous buildings in which the classrooms are connected by



The Estate Hoogvliet

long corridors. The special rooms needed in present-day educational programs are usually lacking. It is difficult to find a suitable place for teaching pupils on an individual basis, or for libraries, music performances, etc. The shabby concrete classrooms designed as temporary solutions when the schools became too small are hardly suitable for these purposes. The need for special classrooms is further increased by the changing make-up of Hoogvliet's population. More often than not, children from various groups arrive at school without having eaten breakfast. Provisions need to be made to help the parents, and after school or during holidays, pupils have to be taken care of. Improving the facilities for primary schools, WiMBY! developed the so-called 'SchoolParasites', which were designed in cooperation with the Parasite Foundation. For three schools, beautiful facilities were created where the pupils can cook, eat, work by themselves or rehearse plays. These facilities, built to plans developed by Barend Koolhaas, Onix and Christoph Seyferth, can be industrially produced, and, apart from educational purposes, they can serve to accommodate neighborhood celebrations, meetings and gatherings of parents.

For secondary schools a special initiative was already underway: the concentration of three schools on a single campus. This enabled them to share, among other things, sports facilities and an auditorium. WiMBY! urged the participating parties to build this campus near the subway station. This was seen as a remedy for the disadvantageous location of the subway station, adding thousands of potential passengers, contributing to make the station safer, and giving the campus a function for the entire region. The campus, we believe, will make Hoogvliet a more attractive place: nice houses can be found almost anywhere, a nice campus is something special. Urging the schools in Hoogvliet to cooperate far more intensely than they were accustomed to, the Campus project tried to improve Hoogvliet's educational system by encouraging pupils to move from one school to the other. This should reduce the terribly high dropout rate. The subway station is presently framed by apartment buildings that are scheduled for demolition, and the campus will be integrated into the housing program that is going to replace them. This will result in an ensemble of attractive, small-scale school buildings and communal facilities such as a library that can be used by both the schoolchildren and the neighborhood inhabitants.

To conclude: the Estate Hoogvliet What will happen to Hoogvliet once all our projects have been realized? Will the results differ fundamentally from the outcomes of revitalization schemes in other New Towns? Or will our efforts prove to be but incidents that are bound to disappear in the vast reconstruction work carried out by the official planning bureaucracies? Are they but romantic visions seeking to illustrate the merits of an old New Town? Is it at all possible for a small organization like ours to alter the course of these bureaucracies, as WiMBY! claimed it would? The Domain Hoogvliet will probably be the ultimate test case. Everything that WiMBY! has stood for the last four years culminates in this project. In conclusion, let us turn to the Hoogvliet Estate, a summer park intended to provide recreation and entertainment, situated in the green buffer between Hoogvliet and the highway in the periphery of the 'oil' neighborhood. Developed in close cooperation with various

groups of people in Hoogvliet, it comprises several components, including a tree collection, a graveyard for pets, a natural playground, sports fields and a villa. The local inhabitants not only initiated all these amenities; they will also be engaged in building, managing and maintaining them. In the park itself there are spaces for all kinds of activities, as well as picnic tables, barbecues, and a pond for paddling. In the center of the Estate the villa acts as a visual focus. It was designed by the London-based firm of FAT architects, which also planned the park. Purely narrative in character, the ornamental facades have elements that refer, for example, to the original village-like, green Hoogvliet, the chimney of the Shell refinery that triggered the idea of building Hoogvliet, and the geometrical facades of 1950s architecture. It is a Venturian decorated shed containing the symbols and signs of a popular and recognizable visual language that can be understood by everyone.

Even for fleeting passerby, the need for a facility like the Estate is easily grasped, for in Hoogvliet nothing ever happens. The shopping mall boasts of a brasserie where one can drink a cup of coffee, but for younger people there is absolutely nothing to do, least of all during evenings and nights. The villa is going to change this. There will be musical and theatrical performances, and family celebrations can take place there as well. Like the park, the Villa has something for everyone.

We believe that by keeping ourselves submerged in the wonderful world of Hoogvliet and engaging in a never-ending pursuit of the creative forces inherent in it, our WiMBY! Initiative can contribute to a renaissance of the old New Town. Hoogvliet's negative image of a city inhabited by a dull NiMBY! population will be transformed into the positive image of a city with an unusual and intriguing mix of young and older people, including many people from the Dutch Antilles, and of nature and industry—a place that makes its inhabitants proud and visitors eager to see more.