

domus

INDIA

028

LA CITTÀ DELL' UOMO



Contributors
Apurva Bose Dutta

Photographs
Duccio Malagamba

Authors
Ashish Rajadhyaksha
Cultural theorist

Belinder Dhanoa
Author

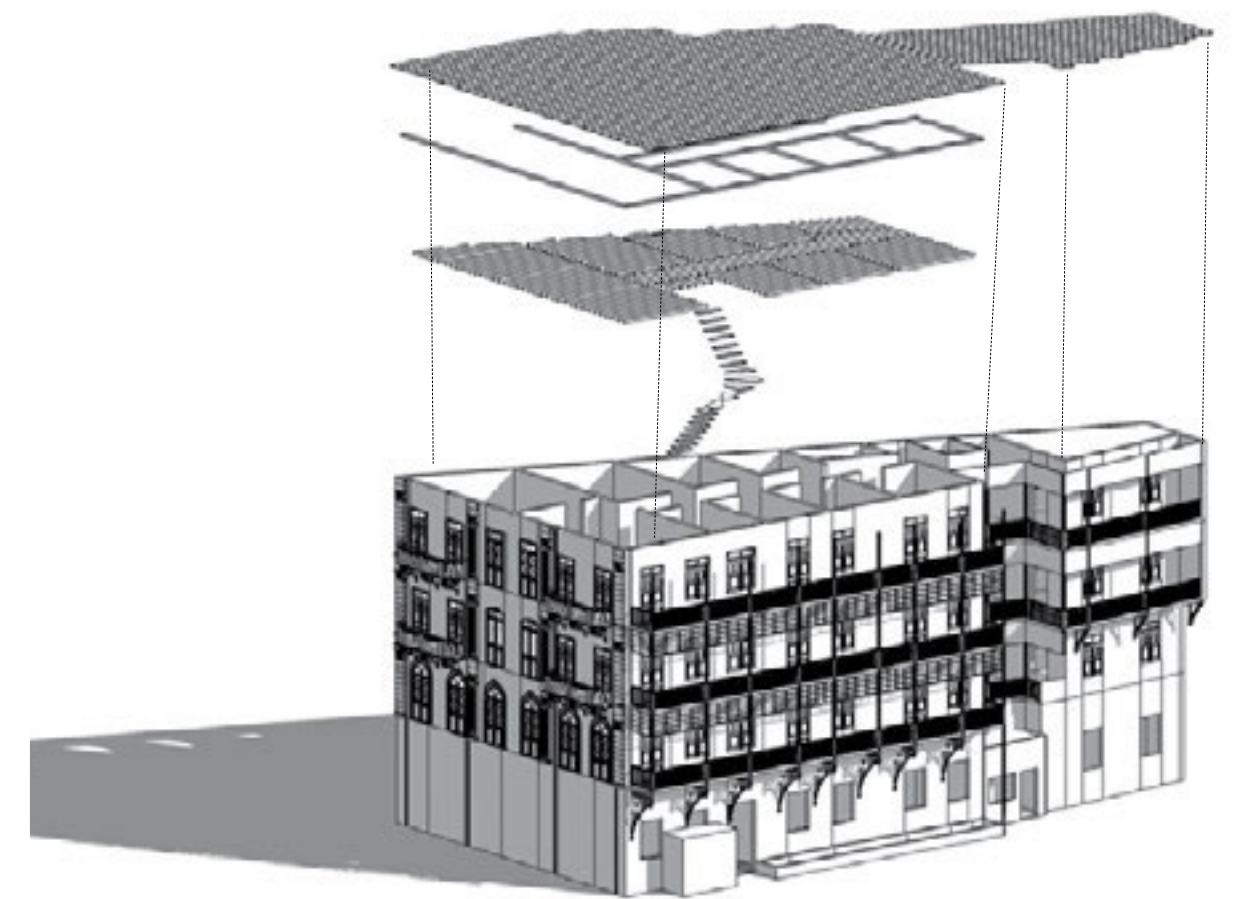
Rahoul Singh
Architect

Roobina Karode
Art historian and curator

Author	Design	Title
Editorial		
Kaiwan Mehta	24	Thoughtfulness and the measure of architecture
Confetti		
Fritz Neumeier	26	The benefits and downsides of theory for architects
Jean Nouvel	29	Floating in the air
Contemporary museum for architecture in India		
Salvaging the new		
Kaiwan Mehta	34	Project Boject
Roobina Karode Belinder Dhanoa	44	Sonia Khurana Oneiric House
Ashish Rajadhyaksha	50	Aesthetic binds
Projects		
Rahoul Singh Kaiwan Mehta	63	Raj Rewal Associates Spatial enclosures, visual encounters
Kaiwan Mehta	80	BDP.khandekar Our cities are surely talking
	88	Rafael Moneo The new Beirut souks
Rassegna		
Facades		
Feedback		
Jacques Sbriglio	107	Jacques Sbriglio's Marseille



Cover: The ascending staircase around the common activity cylinder of the Visual Arts Institutional Campus in Rohtak by Raj Rewal Associates is reminiscent of the Sanchi Stupa, encircling *parikrama*, while the circular wheel of the roof and its concentric circular beams resemble the wheel of the sun temple of Konark. The image was taken during the project's construction phase.



An isometric drawing showing the flooring and the staircase members of a building from Project Boject

OUR CITIES ARE SURELY TALKING

BDP.khandekar

Cities grow over long durations in human civilisation, establishing contexts and atmospheres for people to live, work and inhabit. What are the protocols of designing something that continues to grow and change, across time and space? In this conversation we explore the idea of 'liveable cities' and discuss three planning projects in detail

Interview with Shyam Khandekar by Kaiwan Mehta
Photos BDP.khandekar



Kaiwan Mehta The question of 'liveable cities' — at what level is the planning and design a humanist project that is achieved architecturally?

Shyam Khandekar Architects have too long thought that they can build good cities. But most architects are taught mainly to design buildings; and cities are much more than an amalgamation of buildings. In fact, I would support a hypothesis that the design of buildings plays only a minor part in making a city liveable. Of course buildings need to be reasonably well-designed so that its users can utilise them for the function for which they are built — a residential building must allow its user to live properly in it, and an office building, to work efficiently — but that is hardly a guarantee that the city where such

buildings are located will really be 'liveable'. When I talk of a 'liveable city', I refer to a city where it is a joy to live. Not only for the affluent few, but at least a large part of the population — a city related to the landscape context it has been built upon (so that it belongs authentically to that place), a city designed in response to the climate, a city where the air and water is not polluted and the noise levels low, with freedom and affordability of movement (walkability being an absolute must, and a great system of public transportation), with good interaction among the citizens in the form of equitable distribution and availability of civic amenities (leading often to urban festivals with participation by the citizens — young and old, men and women), etc. These, amongst many other such criteria, make a city truly liveable.

When you think about these criteria, you realise that most of these, if not all, need a network of public spaces. It is the public domain, the network of streets, squares, parks and roads, which contributes largely to making cities more liveable — not individual buildings. Buildings can make their contribution to making our cities liveable by interacting respectfully with the public domain. In our design for the Paleiskwartier in s'Hertogenbosch, it is the framework of public spaces that holds the project together; it is in development for about 25 years now. In this period, architectural styles have changed and developed, so trying to hold the project together with just similarly designed buildings would not have worked. Liveability of cities is partly the result of actual physical conditions, and partly the perception citizens have of their city because of their involvement in its development.

In our development plan for the historic city of Coevorden, right from the beginning we involved more than a dozen citizen-interest groups in the process of design and creation of vision. You could see that these citizens, initially focussed only on their own special interest, started thinking integrally about the liveability of their city as they got more exposed to the many issues which could make their city more liveable. The rich history of the city was a great unifier. By informing and inspiring citizens about the historic qualities of their city — what makes their city unique and

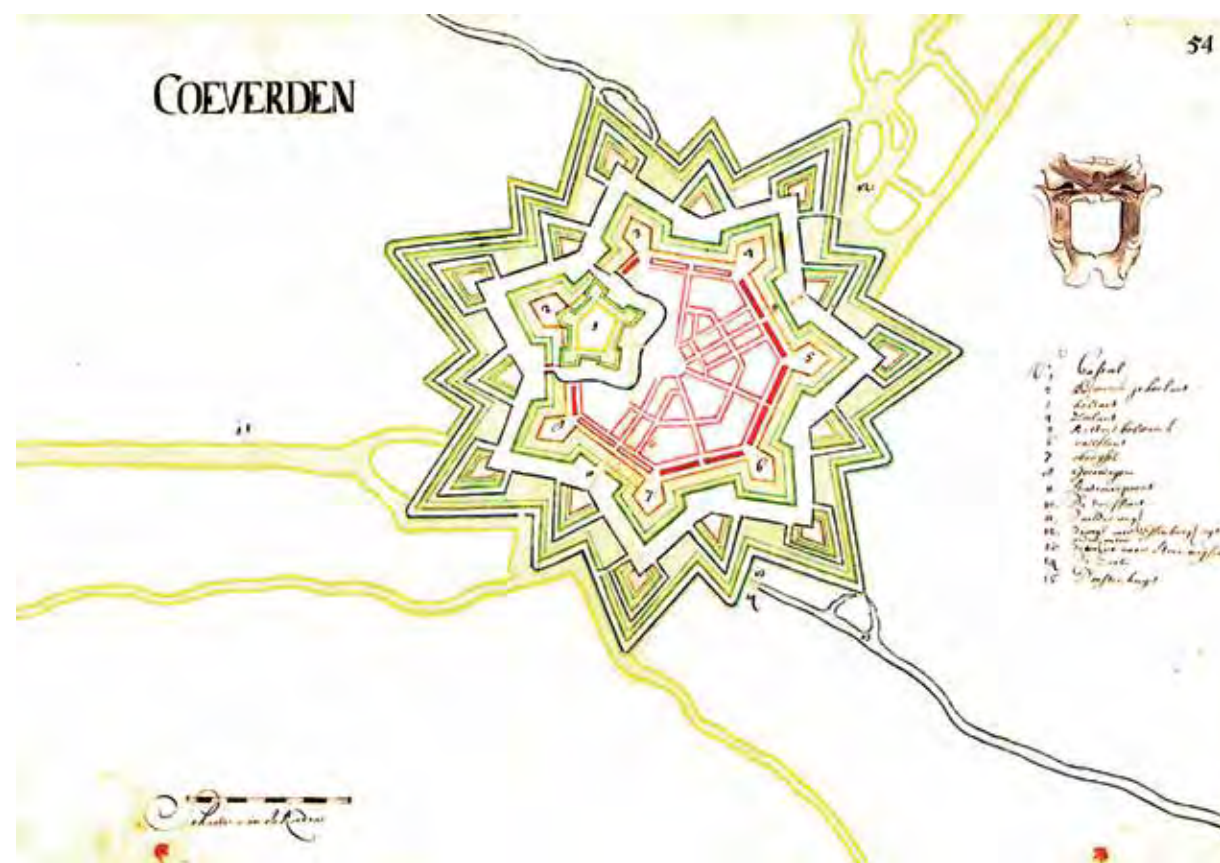
gives it its authentic quality — citizens got a sense of ownership for 'their' Coevorden. I think these two potent forces of citizen involvement and history as the inspiration need to be used more often in India.

KM How is the vision of a project developed into a design idea and process? How are processes developed as design methodologies — where the idea you wish to achieve, its value, and the nurturing of that, is expanded through a process-development approach?

SK When one 'designs' parts of a city where thousands will reside, work or recreate, it is too pretentious as a designer to think that one can have a blueprint for execution. The actual realisation of such projects — in fact, one should call them Processes more than Projects — can take many years, if not decades. I have been working on a large project in the Netherlands called Paleiskwartier which has received much acclaim for almost 25 years! And the Nirlon Knowledge Park in Mumbai, which I envisioned seven years back, will take another two-three years to complete. The plan for the revitalisation of the historic city of Coevorden is being effectuated now for more than a decade.

As a designer, therefore, one has to think of designing the project at different levels of abstraction. In the initial stages, the analysis of the site conditions and the requirements of the built and unbuilt programme should lead to a vision which defines the 'sense of place' one is trying to create. In this phase, it is more important to lay down the 'character' of the network of the open spaces and the buildings, more than the forms. This can be done by laying down a document that inspires and shows newcomers the process, the vision which we have in sight. This is done by illustrating the essentials and core-values of the design.

Over the next years, the network of open spaces should be defined further, so that the conditions within which the individual buildings are to be designed are established. Finally, the individual buildings can be designed, whereby they are designed not as solitary and selfish objects but as artefacts which contribute to the quality of the network of open spaces. While creating the original vision of the project, it is extremely important that the vision is developed taking into



consideration the inputs from several design and non-design disciplines, such as landscape, planning, urban design, transportation, climatology, sustainability, history, social structure and economics, to name but a few. This multi-disciplinarity is vital in creating a 'sense of place' which is unique to the specific location.

In our design approach to the Verde Vista project, we came up with a vision in which inputs from transportation and traffic, construction issues (of tunnelling), sustainability, landscape, urban planning and phasing, and urban design and architecture led to a powerful concept that has stood firm in the nearly ten years that the project is being developed.

KM Are there ways of extending this discussion into education or discursive platforms like research cells or publications?

SK While I grew up studying architecture and later urban design and city planning, wanting to be a hardcore designer — and indeed, I have been enjoying designing for almost four decades now and can still spend delightful periods designing and sketching — halfway through my career I became more and more aware that the quality to design needed to be complemented by the quality to engage and envision societal development in general, and to communicate with the urban population in particular. So as the founder of my own private practice in the Netherlands, and later as one of the Company Directors at BDP (and its Chairman for India), over three decades I started valuing, and therefore employing, not only 'designers', but also 'thinkers' and 'communicators'.

With the rapid growth of Indian cities — as it has taken place in the recent past, and as it will take place in the coming decades — we need many more young professionals who understand design, can think, envision and communicate not only to their clients but also to the urban population in general. Clearly to achieve this we need to have many more discursive platforms, research cells and publications which focus on the wonderful organisms which we call cities... because it is only through informing, engaging and educating our urban population that we will be able to make our cities more liveable. It is with this in mind that, together with a dedicated team, I am presently launching a quarterly publication called *My Liveable City*, which will hopefully inspire many in India to listen to what our cities are saying — because our cities are surely talking. The tragedy is that few of us are, as yet, listening. @

Top: Plan of the Public Realm, Coevorden
Above: historical drawing of the radial city of Coevorden, 1750

Above: the historic context of Coevorden town is the inspiration for the vision developed by the studio for revitalising the historic centre of Coevorden

This page, right: The new town hall and pedestrian access, Coevorden. Middle: view of one of the reinterpreted historic bastions. Bottom: view of the Coevorden Market Square. Opposite page, top: the development process. Below: the model of the revitalisation project



Revitalisation of the historic centre, Coevorden, Netherlands

Project initiated in 2001, majority of points realised by now

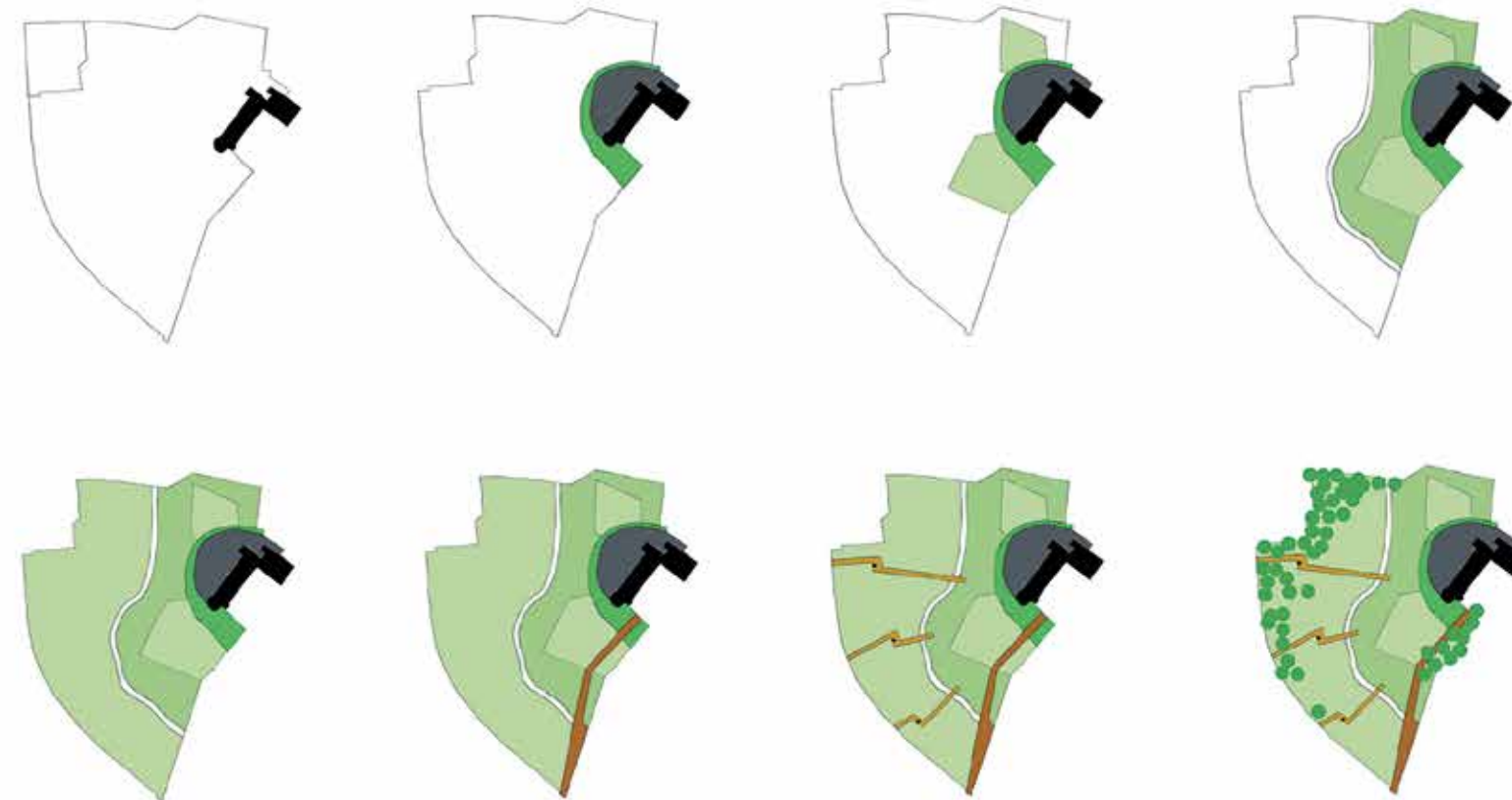
At the end of the 20th century, the city of Coevorden, established as a radial "ideal city" in the 17th century, had lost much of its character and was in economic decline. The historic context of the town is the inspiration for the vision developed by our studio for revitalising the historic centre of Coevorden.

In the vision document, which was created with a great amount of public participation, three themes were named as the guiding themes for effectuating the resurgence of this historic town; namely water, its history, and "cosiness".

A 20-point action plan was the next step to translate the vision into reality — to deliver a contemporary and sustainable design for this city which would build on its historic character and identity.

The radial structure of the streets was redefined and the framework of the streets, squares and parks, and water was seen to be the main anchor of the revitalisation. Other projects included the design of a new town hall right in the middle of the historic centre, enlargement of the harbour, improvement of the railway-station area, and restructuring of an old and dilapidated industrial area. The old citadel structure was recreated, making this form an instantly recognisable part of Coevorden. Additionally, the new developments were connected to the routes along the historic moats which have been characteristic of this city. Three of the seven historic bastions (which had been destroyed) were partly reinterpreted to create places of rest in city-walks which can now be taken. Even in the new design of the bastion, the strong sense of history of Coevorden is accentuated by the rough granite walls that lean back at a slight angle, giving an impression of permanence and strength.

What is remarkable about this project is the extensive coordination and communication between residents, interested parties, politicians and community interest groups. While in the initial phases it demanded a lot of time, but the broad consensus achieved resulted later in an effective execution of many of the 20 action-points in phases. BDPkhandekar has been responsible for the development of the vision, the master plan and landscape architecture, and as design supervisors.





This page, above, left: aerial perspective drawing of the scheme. Far above: the inside block of Paleiskwartier. Above: view of the Paleiskwartier. Left and below: aerial view, and master plan of the Paleiskwartier project



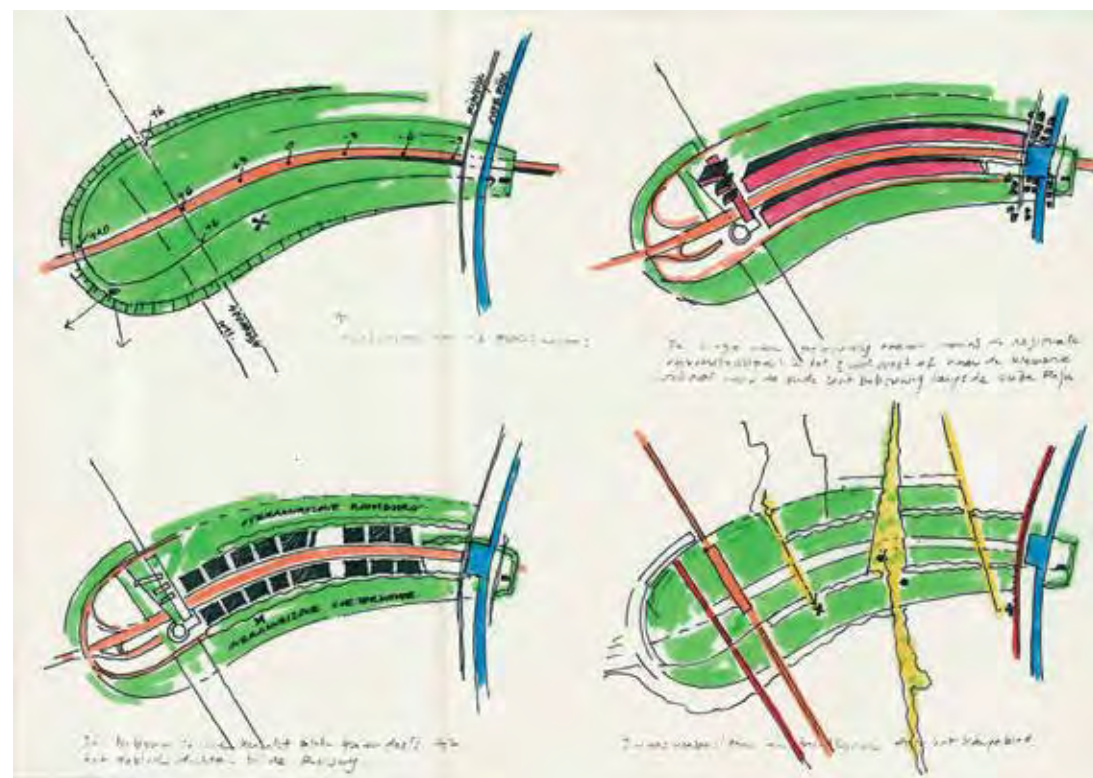
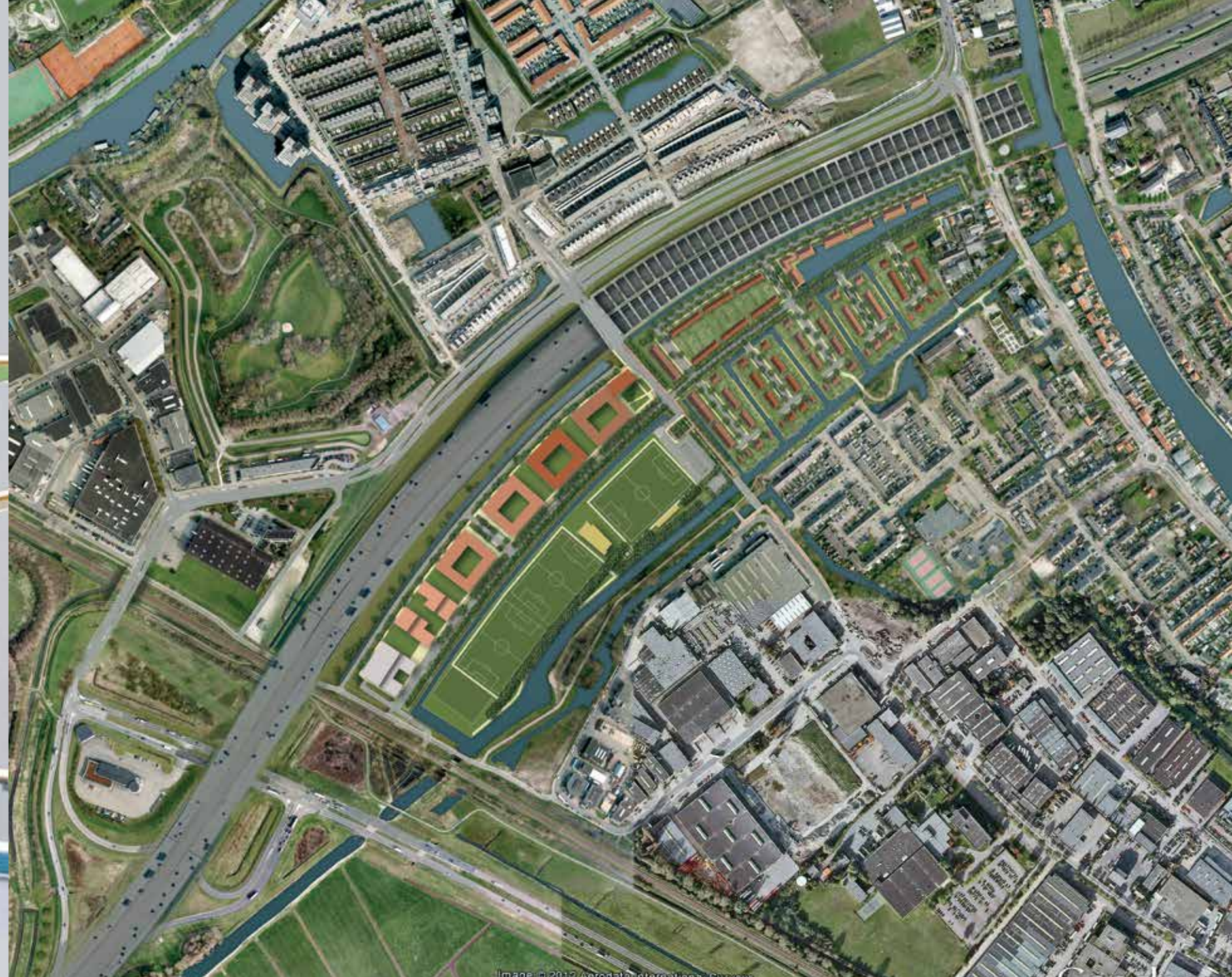
Creating a new area around a new railway station: the Paleiskwartier, s'Hertogenbosch, Netherlands
Project initiated in 1988, about 75 per cent realised in 2014

The central railway station of s'Hertogenbosch, the capital of the province of Brabant, was scheduled for reconstruction following a decision to upgrade the railway infrastructure around 1990. Following this, the city (in public-private collaboration with private parties) decided to redevelop the nearly 40-hectare, old industrial site to the west of the railway line into a mixed-use urban area. The vision document which was created for this development around 1990 defined the essentials of urban design quality as it was envisaged to be developed in phases and over decades. The guiding principle was to create a sense of big-town urbanity. Once again it was the framework of public domain spaces which formed the main anchor of the development — designed to accentuate the urban quality we strived for. It was this framework of public domain which in turn dictated the conditions and guidelines which each of the buildings had to address. Additional guidelines on the use of materials and colours ensured that a strong 'sense of place' was created. As the development progressed towards the south, there was a chance to establish a new pedestrian bridge connection from Paleiskwartier to the historic city across the railway line. This is turned led to an adjustment of the master plan, but the guiding principles of design laid out in the vision documents are still retained more than 25 years later. Sustainability has been a key issue throughout the design process for this project which, being a transit-oriented design, promotes the use of public transportation. Additionally, the 400-metre-long water basin at the centre of the site — with two levels of car-parking under it — works as solar heat collector to heat the buildings in winter. The heat so captured in summer, together with excess heat from the offices is stored in geothermal tanks and used to heat the buildings in the neighbourhood in winter. Rubble from demolished buildings has been used to raise the level of the streets and squares, creating steps, ramps and retaining walls which have given the project a unique identity. Paleiskwartier is often quoted as an example of a great European mixed-use neighbourhood that has won many design awards. Since 1990, BDP.khandekar has been responsible for the regeneration as principle designers, as master planners, landscape architects and design supervisors.



This page, above: the central water basin which doubles up as a solar heat collector. Below, left: the Paleiskwartier Riva tower at night. Left, right: the model of the scheme





**This page, far above:
the Verde Vista model.
Above: rendering of the
Verde Vista boulevard.
Left: concept drawings of
the design process**



**This page, far above: the
Verde Vista plan. Above:
rendering of the Verde
Vista highway**

**Designing a new neighbourhood around transport infrastructure:
Project Verde Vista, Zoeterwoude-Leiden**

Project envisioned in 2001. Traffic infrastructure realised, urban development in progress

The National Highway A4 connects Amsterdam to The Hague. In a stretch where it traverses the city of Leiden and Zoeterwoude, the highway was proposed to be broadened and the bridge over river Leidse Rijn was proposed to be replaced by a new tunnel. The cities of Leiden and Zoeterwoude held a competition for envisioning a neighbourhood together with the infrastructural plans in order to so be able to finance the new highway and the tunnel. Over a stretch of 1 km, the National Highway follows a gentle curve and rises about 20 metres from the new tunnel in the north to the south. The vision formulated about ten years ago, used the gentle curve and rise in the level of the highway to create a unique design in which issues of traffic design — including the possibility of a new railway station and a transport interchange — landscape and urban design were addressed. The vision for Verde Vista forms the basis for a landscaped layout for the infrastructure while at the same time providing views overlooking the landscape. Due to this integral approach in design existing problems of noise pollution have also been tackled.