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■ ALBERTO MARCHIORETTO

NDSM, or the resurrection of the shipbuilding industry leftovers

The Noord participants explore Amsterdam Noord

Our guests discussed Amsterdam's cultural life with Eva De Klerk. They talked about gentrification and the future of Amsterdam Noord.



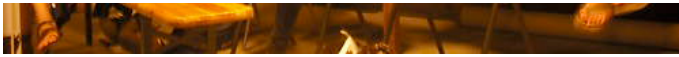
Noord participants, NDSM area - The participants in the NDSM surrounding area

with:

■ AHMED KAMEL, ■ AYMAN RAMADAN, ■ LYNN AMHAZ, ■ ENGY ALY, ■ MALAK HELMY

Dealing with the vagaries of a modern city in the contemporary world is not easy. Untangling economic streams, political phases and processes of gentrification involves commitment and creativity. That is what Eva De Klerk told our group of artists this Friday morning. Eva is a "project booster, concept developer, network amplifier, fundraiser, and key motivator behind new creative and urban developments in Amsterdam". She is one of the minds behind the transformation of the old NDSM wharf. The unused residue of the shipbuilding industry has been transformed into one of the most important havens for the artistic souls and creative enterprises that call Amsterdam their home.





Eva De Klerk and the Noord participants

Eva shows us her "creatures", quickly guiding us around the NDSM building where over 120 creative agencies have found cheap residence, and a creative environment in which they are able to run their studios.

Her enthusiasm was infectious. She showed us how a space that had been wasting away for years, has been converted into a successful, internationally-admired complex for art and culture. Thanks to the oodles of open space, and its rough industrial appearance, the building has become a continuous festival location. Its 20,000 m2 include an indoor skate park and several theater stages. Eva gave us a quick historical, economical and cultural presentation on the movements of the various counter cultures operating in Amsterdam during the last three decades. She focused on their interactions with real estate developers, the changing political climate, and international financial flux.



Noord participants with Eva de Klerk - Wandering around Ndsm

Cultural centers were initially spread out all over the city. They were an integral part of everyday city life, and were closely connected to the squatting movement, which for decades has helped maintain a certain vitality and activity in Amsterdam. Amsterdam now seems to be heading towards lock-down, caught in the tight parameters of capitalist development and speculative logic. Certainly not the best allies when trying to preserve a genuine and vibrant cultural sphere.

Due to economic, political and developmental dynamics, however, many of those cultural centers did not survive for long in the city center. Many so-called 'open spaces' have been forced either to close or to move towards more peripheral areas. Eva de Klerk and her friends decided to move to the Silodam. But 90s economic euphoria hit the city, and the city council decided that the west side of the IJ should become the Dutch Wall Street. A majestic, overconfident project followed, transforming the river's skyline into a group of skyscrapers - theoretically. The attempt to give the port of Amsterdam an international economic vibrancy, eventually clashed with the economic crisis.

Eva, once again 'homeless', joined forces with other artists, theater-makers and skaters, and started Kinetisch Noord. They started to plan the redevelopment of the NDSM wharf area, which was in a state of complete abandonment. In less than a decade they managed to restore the building, convince the city of Amsterdam of the validity of the development plan, and finally create one of the most important cultural meeting points in the city.



Inside the NDSM building, with guide Eva de Klerk - Inside of the Ndsm building.

Obviously, all this growth is not without risk. Success implies popularity which implies gentrification. The area, once completely

ignored by investors, has rapidly become attractive and fashionable. MTV The Netherlands moved to the urban hot-spot, and bars opened their doors. A complete restyling of the area was planned, aimed at making it hipper and more appealing to the yuppie. Thankfully, international financial collapse ruined the plan. At least for now, NDSM and its surrounding area are safe.



Ayman Ramadan reflects on the tour around the NDSM wharf

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