

Polderknotspots

An urban strategy for new housing typologies in the Haarlemmermeer, (Europas 5, 2nd prize)



Client: European commission and municipality of the Haarlemmermeer
 Project: 2001 in collaboration with Machiel Spaan (M3H architects)
 Budget: unknown
 Status: competition study

Urbanisation and identity

After years of agricultural use the former lake has become the target of urban inundation. The Haarlemmermeer has a critical choice, to engage in the process of urbanisation by utilising the richness of the existing agricultural landscape to offer variation and diversity, or to opt for a blanket development of monotonous urban dwellings. This study demonstrates how urban development can be approached to reinforce identity and differentiation in the physical surroundings and to promote variation in housing types and different lifestyles.

From agricultural polder to urban polder

A large number of regional and national developments influence the Haarlemmermeer; such as the changes in agricultural policy, growing infrastructure (highways, public transport routes), and new water management requirements. These changes are inevitable. The important questions are: how is it possible to ensure that qualities of the landscape and its agricultural heritage are not lost in the new Haarlemmermeer? How can the existing characteristics offer a new quality for the future Haarlemmermeer.

Networks

At first glimpse the inverted (diapositive) topographical map of North Holland appears as a confusing mass of white lines. However at closer inspection it is possible to differentiate these lines into separate networks, with each network having its own specific characteristics. In the Haarlemmermeer four basic networks are distinguishable. Each network represents a specific system with its own visual, compositional and organisational qualities. The differences between the networks make different combinations of functions possible; living and working, living and recreation, living and nature. Each network develops its own urban form according to a development strategy with a unique set of rules, giving a distinctive visual expression. By exaggerating these urban forms it is possible to demonstrate that each network is more conducive to a particular type of lifestyle. The networks serve as the framework for the further development of the Haarlemmermeer. Existing characteristics of the landscape form the reference for specific housing typologies. These characteristics refer to both past and present, such as the re-establishment of bogland (past) for the 'tree towers' or the solving of surplus dredge (present) in combination with a new neighbourhood.

