

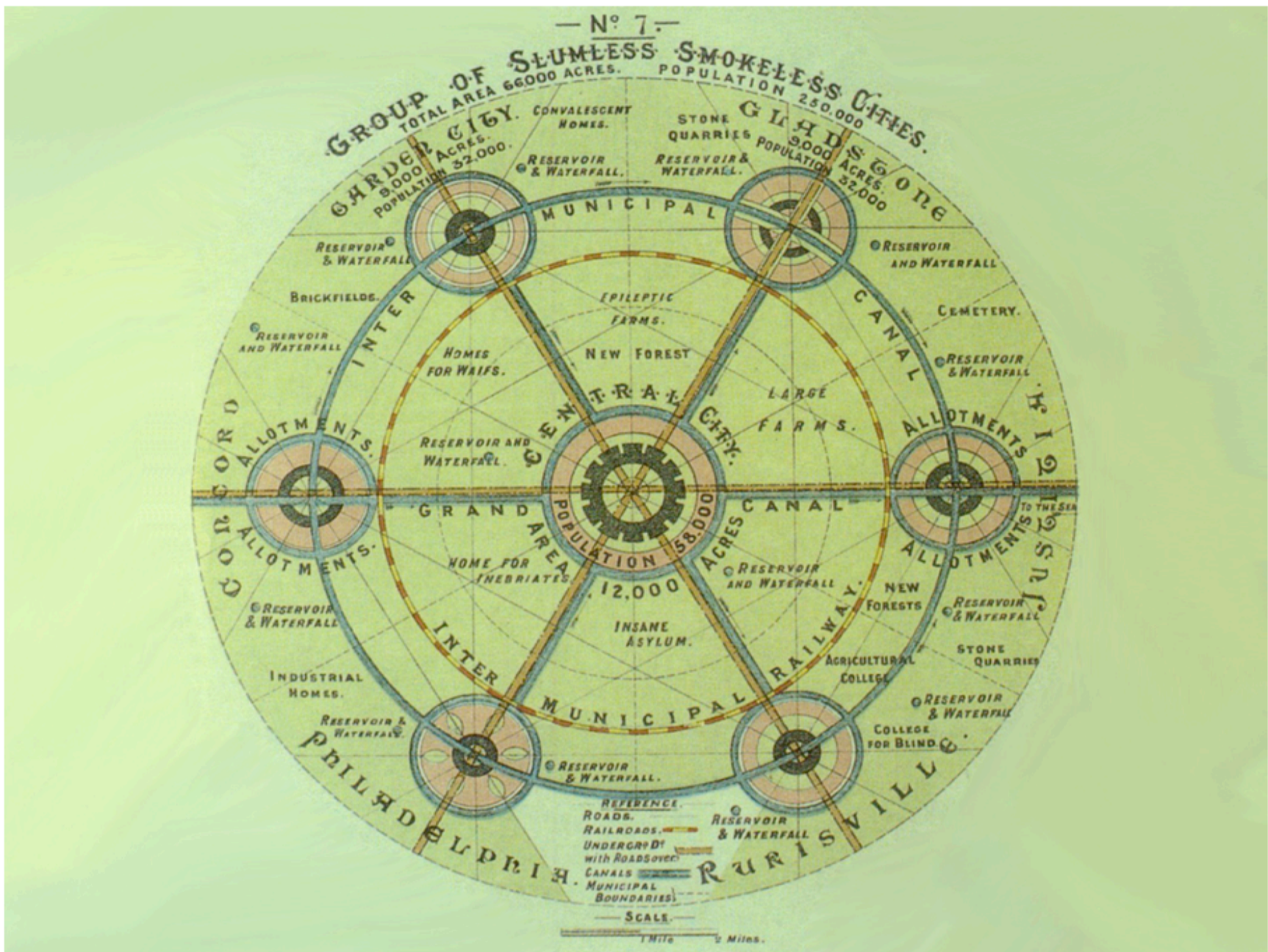
MAKEABLE AMSTERDAM

Makeable Amsterdam

In his contribution, [Bart Stuart](#) discusses the case of Amsterdam North and its long history of being part of a continuous strand of renovations and developments in the Amsterdam area.

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Garden City plans

Amsterdam North is a patchwork of isolated yet adjacent urban plans. With 90,000 inhabitants, this neighborhood consists of many insular neighborhoods and areas. Old North is mainly Garden Villages in the tradition of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City movement.

- 1 Garden City: Planned, self-contained communities surrounded by "greenbelts" containing proportionate areas of residences, industry and agriculture - is to produce relatively economically independent cities with short commute times and the preservation of the countryside. It complements garden suburbs, which arguably do the exact opposite. Garden suburbs are built on the outskirts of large cities with no sections of industry. They are therefore dependent on reliable transport allowing workers to commute into the city.

Beginning in 1916, Alderman Floor Wibaut and Arie Keppler built these garden villages because of the need for social housing for the lower- and middle-class. In 1901, the Housing Act was established; many slums in the city center were demolished. Since then, the government acted as both a legislator and a commissioner for new affordable homes. The Northern part of the city provided space and affordable ground.

I moved here in 2000 because I wanted to live in affordable housing. I wanted to experience the transformation of a place that is becoming an integral part of the city. The van der Pek neighborhood is a garden city of about 1500 houses. As of 2012, the district still consists of 100% social housing. Some residents have lived here for 70 years and have completely rebuilt their house into a small personal palace. The average house here is 40 square meters with a small garden. Larger houses are approximately 75 square meters with a small balcony.

Aerial view
Amsterdam
North



Past

The northern bank of the IJ River in Amsterdam did not exist. In Dutch tradition, through reclamation, the bank was filled around 1880. From 1916, massive shipyards were located on the shore because the water was too small in the eastern harbor area. In 1916, the council designated the Northern IJ-shore to be an industrial area for water-related activities. This led to the construction of enormous ship ramps for the National Dock and Shipbuilding Company (NDSM).

Some hundreds of meters away was another major shipyard, the so-called ADM wharf.

- 1 ADM wharf - shipbuilding area in the Western part of the harbor of Amsterdam which is now squatted.

The government designated the IJ banks as an industrial area. Just behind the wharfs were affordable and hygienic houses so that officials and workers could live relatively close to the factories and businesses where they were employed. There remained little to no space for relaxation since work seemed constant.

I have been living amongst the major shipyards around the van der Pek neighborhood for nine years now. When people began working there, they were young and uneducated, spending their lives climbing one company's ladder; going from young apprentice to workshop manager. There was no need to leave the company to build a career when you could just grow within the company.

In 1946, the NDSM wharf was spatially restructured to create a relatively small territory that facilitated extensive and innovative work. The ensemble of large hangars, ramps and cranes formed a process line that you can still follow through the rails in the pavement. This enabled the experimentation that finally led to the construction of the largest oil tankers in the world with exotic names like TT Neverita and TT Melania.

Beginning in the '60s, the government focused on rebuilding and modernizing the country. In turn, many Turkish and Moroccan workers migrated to the Netherlands. The Suez Crisis in 1967 increased the demand for large vessels that could transport crude oil, forcing the shipbuilding industry to become more innovative.

The shipyard increased employment for the migrant guest workers that ultimately had to do the dirty work up until the '80s.



NDSM Wharf Crane

In 1973, the global oil crisis changed employment for everyone for the worse. Shipbuilding was outsourced to countries where labor was cheaper and the yards eventually closed in the early eighties. Only a small area called Ship Repair Dock remained. Currently, this is where large ocean vessels get repaired. The mass terminations struck all of the neighborhoods hard. The blue collar Amsterdam North lost many of its residents.

Activity slowed and came to an end in 1984. The NDSM went into a period of relative silence. In 1993, the first squatters and artists re-opened the vacant spaces. Construction began for studios, workspaces and two ramps that used to guide large ships through the harbor.

Present

The NDSM wharf has been experiencing a complete redevelopment. The artists have to slowly start packing because their time has come. The rent prices are going up and the messy, wild character fleeting. Soon, it will become one of those dull business districts. We will have to clear out and make room for commerce like new restaurants and nautical retail.

The Eastern Docklands was a successful redevelopment project. Rows of apartments virtually dominate the area where the ships used to unload their cargo at the quays and cranes.

Aerial view
Eastern
Docklands



In 2012, the old neighborhoods in Amsterdam North are dynamic and vibrant. They house Amsterdam natives, students, immigrants, and entrepreneurs. The city is constantly changing, renewing, and reinventing itself. What is now part of the city center was once an industrial area or a working class neighborhood.

Future

In the mid '90s, housing associations in the Netherlands were privatized. Our garden village has become a part of a real estate file and the former housing association became a corporation. The houses are only a hundred years old and there are plans for demolition. The existing buildings will be demolished and built back as almost a replica of the original building, but with a modern level of quality. Our neighborhood will be manipulated for a new target group. Not that the current buildings are bad, but the corporation argues there is too little purchasing power in the district. The housing corporation's business strategy is to have a mixture of owner and renter occupied properties and more square meters per unit. Conversely, the residents of Amsterdam North feel they can manage their own neighborhood without demolition.