Once upon a time there was a square

‘Hey, nice idea, but let’s do it together!’
Sustainability the Rotterdam way

Colophon

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Preface

It's a remarkable initiative, '7 Square Endeavour': a fine example of a project in which all partners roll up their sleeves together in order to invest in their surroundings. What is also remarkable is that two cultural institutions took the initiative: Theater Rotterdam and de Doelen ICC. And that they stuck to their guns. Because there were a lot of uncertainties during the first few years, as can be gathered from this report. And that is what I've come to value so much: the hands-on mentality that characterizes Rotterdam. Working against the current, defying the sceptics and the 'can't-do mentality'. Just getting on with it. Sustainably, in this case!

I welcome the contribution made by the parties involved towards a healthy, smart and sustainable city. With green roofs, clean energy and smart innovations there is a world to be won, literally. The big issue of this century: climate change, with consequences such as heat stress and flooding, relevant for Rotterdam as well, makes this initiative all the more valuable.

The special quality of this project is that the participants do not confine themselves to their own building. They collaborate, share knowledge, and take joint initiatives. Because, working together, more can be achieved. The ambition to make the square energy and climate neutral shows determination and creativity and can only be achieved if the parties collaborate.

Besides just getting down to work, it is also important to learn from experience, evaluating what went smoothly and what could be improved. This report shows that, over the past 3 years, many a mountain has been climbed and many a valley traversed. What makes this evaluation all the more interesting is that it shows that beautiful results don't just happen by themselves.

The road towards a society and economy in which we tackle climate change, adapt to its consequences, apply clean forms of energy, establish circular material flows and switch to sustainable forms of mobility, is not only a road of trial and error, but mostly a matter of perseverance and just getting on with it.

This is definitely true for a local project with international ambitions such as 7SE. And it also holds for our national programs such as the Smart and Healthy City, in which we also review and share our experiences. Even when this proves to be tough going. This is why I appreciate this evaluation so much. Because the local lessons learnt by the participants are also very relevant for initiators working in other municipalities. And for our national climate efforts!

I wholeheartedly recommend this evaluation to all those who are dedicated to working towards a healthy and safe future.

Mrs. S. van Veldhoven
State Secretary of Infrastructure and Water Management

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1. Introduction – about 7 Square Endeavour

7 Square Endeavour (7SE) is a cooperation and sustainable development initiative with the mission to prepare cities for the future. Seven cultural squares in various world cities are to be its testing ground. The goal is to make them thoroughly climate-proof, energy neutral, and healthy and attractive for residents and visitors. Starting with the Schouwburgplein (Theatre Square) in Rotterdam.

Hand in hand

The ambitious and inspiring character of 7SE has motivated cultural institutions, businesses, property owners, academia and local authorities to collaborate enthusiastically. Convinced of its merits, they all embrace the idea that none of them could do this on their own. Together, and in liaison with residents and users, they set out to identify what it would take to make the square sustainable, healthy and attractive. And which of the partners could do what in order to achieve that goal. With that shared vision they inspired one another to add extra features and ideas to existing and new plans, with added value for all as the intended result.

From Words to Deeds

There are no beaten tracks for innovative and ambitious initiatives. Not only the measures, but also the planning process, collaboration and organization had to be reinvented. All the time the voluntary character of the cooperation remained intact. No need of a carrot or a stick, their own motivation drove people on. Adding their own limited means to the knowledge and capacities of the diverse partners, possibilities were explored, ideas worked out and plans drawn up. At times, this seemed to stretch the bounds of possibility, and at other times these bounds were overreached. Some partners had trouble keeping up with the pace of the project, whereas others felt it was going too slowly. Things picked up pace when professional support became available.

This booklet

And this is how, over the first three years of the 7SE initiative, the parties learned by trial and error how to transform an idea into concrete sustainable-development plans. Their idea and plans are unique in a sense, because they arose from their own inspiration and focus on a square of which there is only one in the world: the Rotterdam Schouwburgplein. This booklet describes how these exceptional plans developed.

In addition, the lessons learned may also be applicable in other cities. It is to be hoped that in other places in the Netherlands and abroad (e.g. other 7SE squares), parties will also join forces in order to make their environment more sustainable through voluntary cooperation. They stand to benefit from the lessons learned in Rotterdam.

This booklet is specifically meant for them, making information available to them, sharing it, and promoting it, and, by so doing, contributing to a broader movement. The 7SEinitiative is not just about the approach to one square, the Schouwburgplein. The number '7' stands for more, for higher ambition and achieving things together that seem impossible on your own. Beyond the limits of buildings, interests, squares and countries.

2. Inspiration

Sparks

The Schouwburgplein is an exciting place. How could it be otherwise, in the city centre, with such cultural institutions as De Doelen Concert and Congress Centre, and Rotterdam Theatre, a mega-cinema and the venue for the world's largest International Film Festival held there every year, with its adjacent offices, an art university, a wide variety of establishments and last but not least, a large number of residents?

Rotterdam Theater also sparks social engagement. The theatre offers a stage to artists who question everything, who challenge others and do not shun difficult issues. Issues that the personnel take to heart too.

From 'no wastage' to sustainability

It is the problem of 'exhausting the earth' which particularly strikes a chord. From its earliest days preventing waste has been imprinted in the theatre's DNA. This may have something to do with Rotterdam's wartime history and the character of the people. Legendary is the old caretaker of the building, who urged everyone to switch off the lights when leaving a room, and to copy documents double-sided.

The next generation wants to go ahead with the ideal of sustainability. "An evening out? An evening on!", it says on the theatre's facade. In Dutch, this has the following connotation: 'This is not a place to dream away in, but a living component of the square, the city, society. Every evening, after the show, inspired theatre staff discuss what can be done next, how things can be improved. Different lighting, higher-efficiency heating, better insulation; at some point all the obvious measures have been taken. For more substantial improvements, renovation is required, and this is in the hands of the building 's proprietor – the city council. How could one convince them? And: 'Think of the benefits if everyone used public transport to get here!'. The ambitions and enthusiasm keep growing.

From a building to 7SE

Those ambitions gain momentum when an architecture student from Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, maps all the options for improving the theatre's sustainability as part of his thesis. His conclusion: It cannot be done by only one party. Working on just one building has only a limited effect. Bigger steps towards sustainability require action on a different scale, and collaboration with other parties. Parties with whom one shares energy supply, drainage connections, and even heating and cooling systems, etc. He graduates with honours. And to the theatre staff it is clear: We are going to expand. From the building to the square!

Examples of 'thinking bigger' are found, not far away. The Art Hal, for instance, located elsewhere in the city, has succeeded in becoming more sustainable by establishing an 'Energy Saving Company' (ESCo) together with other parties. This co-operation allowed for higher investments. With partners, therefore. But how to attract them?

The final push is given by sustainability professor Jan Jonker, from the Radboud University, who is invited by the theatre to give his views. He challenges the enthusiasts: think outside the box! He tells them that sustainability is not a matter of a little bit more or less, it is a matter of completely new and different. See to it that you have a Wow factor. And expand it to a global level. Make yourself so special that others want to join.

This signals the birth of 7 Square Endeavour (in short: 7SE). There's no mistaking the enthusiasm. It is nothing less than a global initiative, aimed at seven cultural squares in world cities as the foci of efforts to make them climate proof, energy neutral and healthy and attractive for their residents and users. Who would not want to be part of that?

About the Schouwburgplein (source: www.schouwburgpleinrotterdam.nl)

The Schouwburgplein (Theatre Square) is a component of the Basic Reconstruction Plan of Rotterdam from 1946. Before the war, the Schouwburgplein was a densely populated city district. In the bombing of 14 May 1940, the district was burnt to the ground, with the exception of the houses at the Mauritsweg. During the war, a temporary theatre was built on the vacant site, using stone retrieved from ruins in the inner city. In 1962, concert building De Doelen appeared on the north side of the square. In 1966, a car park was opened underneath the Schouwburgplein. Since that time, the Schouwburgplein has been a car-less and tree-less site.

To the west of the Schouwburgplein, a residential complex was erected between 1980 and 1985, called Woondok. It consists of homes, shops, and offices at street level. In 1987, the temporary theatre was demolished to make way for a new one. In 1996, the square received a complete overhaul, on the basis of a design by Adrian Geuze. The square was raised slightly, in order to create a city stage, according to the architect. In the same year, a cinema opened on the square.

3. The partners

Associations and networks

Finding partners takes less time than expected. Within a few months, a good number of parties who have some kind of involvement in the Schouwburgplein join forces in 7SE.

There are some favourable circumstances at work too. Cultural institutions have been connected with other square-users for some time in the Association called 'Verenigd Schouwburgplein' (Associated Theatre Square), founded to ensure that users of the square make it more attractive and the inner city livelier by staging all kinds of outdoor activities, without getting in each other's way or causing a nuisance. Consequently, entrepreneurs, institutions, neighbours and the city council can get together; which also comes in handy for 7SE.

Then there is the example of the previously mentioned 'ESCo'; it illustrates that energy companies and engineering firms can be involved as well.

Furthermore, some of the parties involved have extensive networks, which proves to be highly valuable. People know each other via cultural exchanges, administrative connections, and even a cooking club. And through all these ways, suitable parties are connected.

Parties with an interest in adding value to the initiative, and without mutual competition disrupting relationships.

PPC with a 'wow'-factor

And they are successful. The outcome is publicprivate collaboration (PPC) between square-users, property owners, parties bringing expertise and means to promote sustainability, and authorities such as the municipality of Rotterdam and the water authorities.

The Wow factor proves its worth. Everyone is quick to take pride in their involvement in this imaginative, sustainable initiative. And more importantly, it offers some partners the opportunity to learn new techniques. And some are attracted by the international ambitions of 7SE. They regard the Schouwburgplein project as a springboard to other world cities. And then there is the club that they want to be part of: a powerful PPC with solid social status and political influence, and probably also purchasing power. An added bonus comes from the involvement of high-brow cultural institutions, which lends prestige to everything.

Partnerships are of course not always for ever. Shortly after kick-off, one of the partners – a consultancy and engineering firm – goes bankrupt. Remarkably enough, the PPC has proved to be remarkably stable during the three start-up years. This in spite of the fact that the experimental nature of it all is not always easy – as becomes clear in the following period.

7SE Partners

At the moment of writing (early 2018), the partners of 7SE are:

- **Amvest:** Fund manager of residential investment funds and developer of care-related real estate and residential districts throughout the Netherlands.
- **Arcadis:** Organization involved in consultancy on and design of natural and built environments.
- **Codarts:** International university for professional art education in the fields of music, dance and circus.
- **De Doelen:** Concert and Congress Building.
- **Dura Vermeer:** Construction firm involved in housing construction, non-residential construction, and infrastructure.
- **Municipality of Rotterdam:** Administrative body of Rotterdam, a metropolis in the Dutch province of Zuid-Holland.
- **Water Board Schieland en de Krimpenerwaard:** Water manager for the area between Rotterdam, Schoonhoven and Zoetermeer.
- **Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management:** National government body, responsible for quality of life and access and mobility in an efficiently structured, clean, safe environment.
- **Theater Rotterdam:** Theatre production, education and stagings, originating in the merger of Ro Theater, Rotterdamse Schouwburg, Productiehuis Rotterdam.
- **TNO:** Dutch Organization for applied scientific research.

In cooperation with Association Verenigd Schouwburgplein.

4. First explorations

Kickoff

The first initiatives in 7SE cooperation are impressive. At the end of 2014, dreams are articulated in a concise memorandum, a synopsis: "Our aim is to be 100% energy-neutral by 2030, and to reach 40% in 2020, and to achieve this on a local scale: together with all the stakeholders in the Schouwburgplein (Theatre Square)." The synopsis also outlines how these dreams are going to be realised. Everything will be organized in the form of a project, made up of a steering group chaired by an appealing chairperson, a process manager, an advisory board, a marketing team. To start with, a declaration of intent will be signed by the stakeholders. And then the projects will be launched, project A of which is: 'drawing up a plan for the next 5 years'.

Guided by the synopsis, future partners are recruited. In April 2015, they all attend a mini-conference in the Theatre. The purpose: to jointly sign a declaration of intent. There's a brief period of serious discussion, but finally everyone agrees with the fine intentions. All parties sign. Project A, the concrete planning, is launched.

Investigatory collaboration

What follows may well be called a quest. In practice, the planning proves to be far from concrete. It soon appears that none of the parties involved knows how to take the leap from idea to reality. Firstly, the nature of the challenge plays a role: no-one has a clue about what an energy-neutral square looks like. Secondly, the nature of the collaboration is an obstruction, as we have equal partners who 'are doing 7SE on the side', on top of their hectic daily activities. In addition, the budget for 7SE is unclear, quite an obstacle if one wants to seriously set to work on making the square sustainable. Money is available, but it is distributed among the parties, tied up in maintenance and renovation budgets, research funds, rural development funds, energy-saving subsidies, etc.

The crux is going to be to use the means in such a way that the greatest result is achieved for each purpose individually while simultaneously enhancing the larger-scale 7SE goals. And that is what none of the parties is really good at yet.

There are plenty of ideas, though. One of the early visionaries is renowned for generating ideas faster than anyone can write them down. But how to develop them?

One approach that is tried out is to divide the 7SE ideals into several aspects: energy, heat, water, waste, mobility, living environment, green spaces, air quality, and so on. Twelve themes are distinguished and assigned to the parties. It is now their task to develop a concrete plan for the assigned theme. It takes a long time before the results are produced, which are moreover somewhat disappointing: the parties lacked time, and/or did not have the required expertise. The results were not really properly worked out. The plans remained in the air.

Impatience is making itself felt in the steering group, which is driven by passion and enthusiasm. They feel that support from the individual parties might dwindle for lack of tangible progress.

5. Cooperation

Towards a professional approach

One of the issues hampering the process is that there are no financial means to 'free' people for 7SE. Hardly any money has been made available for the process itself. None of the parties' funds, budgets and subsidies can provide for that. As a make-shift solution everyone contributes small amounts of money besides contributing in kind.

The impatience felt in the steering group drives the process towards solving this problem. One of the parties makes an employee available for several hours per week, to streamline the process. Besides the steering group consisting of decision-makers, a program group is assembled, responsible for the preparatory and operational work. The employee who was granted leave from his regular job is appointed as the 'program manager'.

The next breakthrough happens after a national government partner joins 7SE. The ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management has a program called 'Smart and Healthy City'. Within that framework, it collaborates with other parties such as cities, businesses, academia and social organizations to find smart solutions for a healthy, sustainable, liveable city. The aims and organization of 7SE are fully in line with that. So it makes sense for the ministry to become a partner too; and their Smart and Healthy City program happens to have a fund from which the experiment can be backed up, to some extent. Now more time can be freed for the process people.

All this leads to the long-desired professionalization. Appointments are prepared for better and kept to. The steering group has more time to perform their main tasks of steering and decision-making.

Another little boost arrives when the ministry urges more equality when it comes to digging into pockets. This eventually stimulates the parties involved to contribute generously to the process fund (on top of what they are doing in kind). Now words can be turned into deeds.

Building relationships

The parties grow together and become attuned to each other. Steering group and program group find their respective roles. There is mutual adjustment between steering group members, and they make strategic phone calls every now and then. Program team members collaborate closely with each other and the various sectors of the organizations they work for. And when that collaboration can do with a little push, they tip off their steering group members.

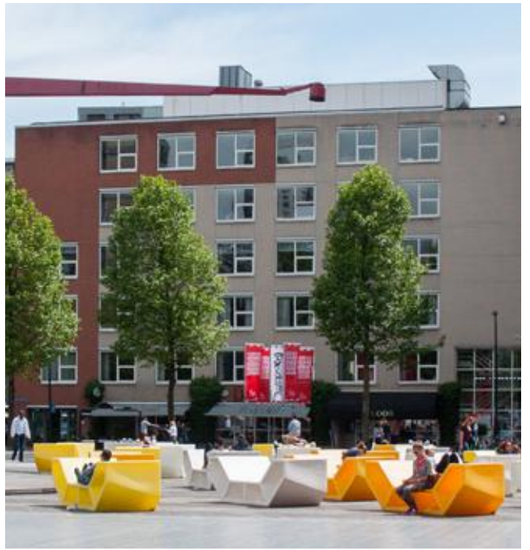
At times, the going is tough. Staff changes often require the cooperation to be redefined. Some parties are more active than others. Some are eager to get to work. Others are more hesitant. Some of the partners feel comfortable with the 'probing' search process, others long for projects with clear-cut goals and deadlines. And often, personal styles are the factors that bind people together or cause division.

In their capacities as board member or director, most of the steering group members are capable of taking decisions. However, some are not in such a position, and need to submit decisions to the person who is ultimately responsible in their own organization – to the annoyance of other steering group members. Government parties in particular are in this position. Even the highest official is required to submit decisions to their political administrator for approval. And the administrators, in turn, need approval from Parliament, at some point. These are the typical characteristics of a PPC, which every one of its participants needs to get used to, and which may at times be inconvenient.

A particularly uncomfortable situation develops when one of the private parties involved unfolds a sustainability plan that requires government funding. The government partner is enthusiastic and willing to finance it. Then, however, it turns out that the contract cannot be awarded to the creator of the plan just like that. The government is required by law to put larger contracts out to public tender, which implies that the inventor of the idea will have to compete with many other contractors to win the contract. Moreover: as this private party possesses inside knowledge, it should probably be excluded from competition. Although the regulations on tendering contain a provision that exempts innovative projects, the authority involved judges that this case is politically too sensitive. This incident leaves a slight dent in the relationships and makes all the parties involved reconsider matters. On the whole, however, the partnership holds steady.

And there are other, smaller bumps in the road. The Energy Act, for instance, which stipulates that power may only be supplied by energy companies; a hindrance for the parties involved in the square when they are exploring ways of generating and distributing power that are profitable to everyone. Or the fact that half of all the properties on the Schouwburgplein have been given national monument status. As a consequence, there are all kinds of limitations on sustainability-improving renovations. But then again: No-one really expected it to be easy…

As there is some tension between the parties every now and then, the form of collaboration regularly comes up for discussion. Shouldn't they appoint a legal entity? Shouldn't the parties lay down mutual deals in contracts? These issues keep popping up, and the conclusion remains that there is no need for this, and that voluntary cooperation produces the best results. Everyone understands that – for now – this form of cooperation is most in keeping with their mission. It is maintained, partly thanks to the untiring enthusiasm of the initiative-takers, who passionately propagate the view that in 7SE, it is not business but ideals which lead the way – a principle capable of producing good results in the end.



6. Momentum and energy

Pragmatic strategies and plans
By now, the support is gaining momentum. A number of pragmatic choices are made, in order to focus activity. The range of twelve themes is abandoned. Instead, those themes that have the wind in their sails are addressed. One of them is 'water'. For one of the parties – the Water Board – this is the most urgent theme.

Moreover, this party has the financial means to commission another party in the group to develop a water plan for the square. And with plans becoming this concrete, things start rolling.

It is furthermore decided to develop an energy strategy along the same lines as the water plan.

About the Water Plan

The Water Plan takes the 7SE ambitions as its starting point, and connects those to a number of guiding principles, namely:

- No rainwater falling in the area will be discharged via the mixed sewer system. Flooding of the area is prevented.
- Clean water must remain clean. Clean and dirty water are never combined in mixed systems. Water is an important resource; no water will be wasted.
- Clean water within sight, as much as possible, to enhance the sensation of water and water education.
- Water belongs to us all, we jointly carry responsibility for it.
- Apply innovative techniques in order to deal with wastewater differently.

Next, the Water Plan is further outlined by providing a number of building blocks which are geared to the Schouwburgplein's site characteristics. Building blocks such as city brooks, green facades, polder roofs, urban water buffers, greening/de-paving, water retention, decentralised wastewater treatment and visible water.

In order to realise this, the expertise available within 7SE is efficiently mobilized. The writing tasks are performed by junior consultants of the engineering firm involved. More senior experts provide targeted input and feedback.

The threefold plan is complemented by a 'liveability strategy' (later redubbed 'Square Strategy'). The aim is to draw up a connective plan that outlines a total picture of a liveable, smart, functional, and attractive Schouwburgplein, and which indicates how to achieve this in collaboration with stakeholders and within a feasible participation model.

Roof-top view
The plans serve to inspire and offer a framework for concrete measures to be taken by the individual parties themselves. The measures themselves, however, are still up in the air. They become more tangible with the next pragmatic idea: to develop plans for the roofs.

Rotterdam is a city with many high-rise buildings and flat roofs, and this is also true of the Schouwburgplein. Partly as a consequence of the war and subsequent reconstruction. Inspired by a company called 'Dakdokters' ('Roof Doctors'), 7SE decides to focus on the roofs.

About the Energy Strategy

The Energy Strategy is based on the 7SE principles and connects them to a number of guiding principles, namely:

- Save energy as much as possible.
- Generate as much sustainable energy as possible.
- Energy waste flows are exchanged as efficiently as possible, and therefore not lost.
- Maximal transparency. Everyone can check their energy use and find out whether savings can be made.
- Energy generated here is used here, as much as possible. It should be for the benefit of the area, we try to store surplus energy as much as possible.
- We consider current economically feasible projects.
- Ambitions, projects and solutions are shared among the partners.
- The energy that we cannot generate by ourselves is purchased sustainably and jointly.

Next, a number of implementation options are described: saving energy, thermal power generation, storage and exchange, electrical generation, storage and exchange, energy management and joint purchasing.

This company holds a patent for the so-called ‘polder roof’, a concept that basically turns ordinary roofs into water reservoirs. In addition, the roofs are turned into green spaces which beautify the surrounding area, reduce heat stress, improve air quality, and turn roofs into pleasant dwelling spaces. This is all combined with power generation. 7SE decides to offer property owners on the Schouwburgplein a free quick-scan of their roofs, in order to assess the possibilities (a so-called ‘business case’) for installing polder roofs during the next renovation round. Several proprietors accept the offer. Every business case is followed up by a consultation, not only to discuss the option itself, but also the possibility of it being subsidized by the city council and Water Board.

The subsidies are not high enough to completely cover the costs, but substantial enough to make a polder roof very attractive – and even more so when other roofs around the square are turned into beautiful and sustainable green spaces.

Peak moment

The initiators receive a great boost when the European Commission and the Dutch Government organize a symposium on air quality and ask 7SE to present itself as ‘the little pearl of Rotterdam’. “...And to have all these foreign officials come up to you and explain why they think this project is very special.” It brings home to the parties involved how far they’ve come with inspiration and drive.

7. Time for deeds, not words, while keeping up the momentum

Time of talking is over

For some of the parties, after almost three years, the time for talking and planning is done. (Incidentally, it had taken longer than all the partners had expected). It is now time for action. The strategies are mapped out, more or less, and there is a vision with regard to the roofs. One private party – the proprietor of a block of flats on the square – decides to put his money where his mouth is. He announces that renovation activities will start in 2018, aimed at making the building the most sustainable monument in the city. He involves several 7SE partners in the building team.

Other partners – even including a few who are not in the 7SE partnership – announce that they plan, or at least seriously consider, having a polder roof installed when renovation of their roofs is due, including water storage, solar cells, vegetation, and a dwelling function. Now an actual project plan is ready for 2018 and 2019.

These developments bring about a turnaround by the end of 2017. The execution phase starts. The partners decide to adjust the organization accordingly. The program group is converted into smaller project groups, to facilitate the execution of the individual projects. Together, the project groups still prepare the steering group meetings. The steering group remains intact, because after all, the shop remains open, also during the renovation works, as there is more thinking to be done, new plans to be developed, and inspiration to be nurtured.

Continuous learning process

The parties are regularly confronted with the importance of learning from experiences made. It happens, for instance, that a branch of a partner organization develops plans within a different context that are very relevant to developments on the Schouwburgplein and fails to notice the link with 7SE. Finding this out at a later stage means there is now more work involved, as plans need to be readjusted. This not only causes delay and irritation; it is clear that opportunities have also been missed.

Just before the start of the execution phase, one of the partners drops out. There are various business reasons for this, and in hindsight, some of the partners realise that none of them

contacted the departing steering group member, which they feel they should have done. Co-operation is about working with people.

Looking ahead

The first concrete results of 7SE should become visible during the course of 2018. Rotterdam's most sustainable building, for instance. The roofs surrounding the square will be green, they will retain water and have solar cells. And more is to come, for instance with regard to the use of the car park, and water discharge and reuse. These achievements in themselves might just be enough to fulfil the aim of making the Schouwburgplein 40% climate neutral within 3 years (i.e. in 2020). The development of the square does not stop here. The enthusiasm must be maintained if we are to succeed in making it 100% climate neutral by 2030. So far, the city on the Maas has shown that it has this enthusiasm in spades. And there are further ambitions. It won't be long before attention is directed towards the next cultural square, somewhere else in the world.

8. Lessons learned from 7SE

Valuable lessons can be distilled from the experiences outlined in this brochure. Lessons with regard to the organization and incorporation of voluntary cooperation aimed at making a shared environment climate-proof, energy neutral, healthy and attractive. The lessons learned by some of the parties involved have been further discussed and are listed below, for the benefit of similar initiatives taking place elsewhere.

The idea

1. Excite, motivate and bind the parties involved in the area by inspiring them with an ambitious view.
2. Extend the view beyond the existing and the known, think bigger and think in systems. On their own, the parties cannot do that; together you can.
3. Give it a 'wow factor', something that makes parties eager to join the initiative (for instance: cultural and/or international appeal, noteworthy partners in a publicprivate cooperation (PPC)).
4. A few permanent, supporting parties or persons are needed throughout the process, who embody the vision and inspiration. Recognize and foster them.
5. Stay away from the technology trap. Sustainability is not (only) a matter of calculation. Turn it into a narrative that you tell each other and the outside world, and which grows richer with the telling.

The partners

6. Build on existing relations and forms of collaboration, where-ever possible.
7. Partners should understand that others are engaged in their own ways, with their own backgrounds, interests, motives, means, and expectations. At the beginning, take the time and space to share that aspect with each other.
8. For instance: Realise that certain principles are important in the public domain, for instance those of democratic governance and proper administration (including checks) – which may limit the decision-making and mandate of the government partners, as well as their freedom to cross boundaries.
9. For the same reasons, it is important to involve government partners (and to some extent politics too) in all aspects of the visionary plan (inform and convince them).
10. And: It is important to understand that the private domain wants investments – also those made within a PPC – to pay off, eventually (so does the public domain, usually).

Collaboration

11. Do not set too much store by all the arrangements being recorded. Inspired collaboration and a joining of forces thrive on a basis of voluntary engagement: a 'consortium of willing parties'
12. In the same context: Do not over-emphasize the legal aspects of the cooperation; this leads to the wrong discussions.
13. Ensure that decisions by the PCC are made and kept, in as far as possible.
14. Secure the commitment of people with direct access to the responsible authorities.
15. Talk with each other about the willingness to explore and push boundaries.
16. Respect other partners' positions when it proves to be impossible for them to cross a certain boundary; after all, this is a consequence of voluntary cooperation.
17. Inconvenient rules will be encountered that prove hard to circumvent. Procurement rules, for instance, may seriously obstruct public-private cooperation. Identify such issues in good time and find out what can be gained by knowledge-sharing, timing, and smart alliances. The challenge is to realise added value (incl. business) for private parties too.
18. Be creative in finding feasible business cases, also for highly innovative projects.

Momentum and energy

19. Do not be surprised if things take longer than expected and accept the process of trial and error. Getting used to the idea and taking up their roles takes time for each of the partners. It takes time to get to know and trust each other. And it takes time to elaborate plans. A few years, probably. Make sure you all understand that.
20. At a certain point, professionalisation is required to drive and assist the process. A shared vision alone is not enough. Organise that in time. Tackling things professionally also steps up the pace.
21. Professionalisation requires dedicated manpower, time, and therefore money. Arrange that together. Make sure that everything that needs to be done can be done properly. And see to it that decision-makers can take clear decisions.
22. Be aware that larger parties usually determine their plans, budgets, investments and subsidies long in advance, in annual or multi-yearly cycles. Take that into account. If you don't, this may cause several years' delays.
23. It is not a given that parties recognize opportunities when their (other) running affairs or business touch upon the joint plans. Opportunities may be missed, or the development of a plan could even be obstructed. It is important to keep a keen eye on that and point it out to each other.
24. In case of staff changes, make sure that new people are quickly and fully informed and brought up to speed with everyone else in the group.
25. People are the key in this. Keep investing in commitment, information levels, and provide backing, if necessary. The work is never done. Keep up the momentum. Keep the inspiration alive and vivid.

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