

Amsterdam

Arhitectura contemporana

IJBURG - dezvoltare urbana

Est - Amsterdam

IJburg is a development area east of Amsterdam that is being built on a cluster of artificial islands in the IJ lake. Eventually some fifty thousand people will live here. The urban design for the first phase of 3,600 dwellings was made by Claus en Kaan in collaboration with Frits van Dongen of Architecten Cie. and Ton Schaap of Schaap & Stigter. As a guard against formal caprice, the plan is based on the most neutral configuration urban design has to offer: a non-hierarchical grid.

The neutrality of the grid is matched by the freedom allowed in the elaboration of the fields. There is a programme for the blocks and there are a (limited) number of building rules, but they prescribe neither form nor typology and are little more than 'zoning laws'. The idea was to provide 'the conditions ... for a balance between order and chaos, consistency and variation'.

The rules that must be observed in the development of the fields in the grid relate chiefly to the street frontage. In the plan for IJburg, the street is the 'agent of urbanity', and density an indispensable ingredient. With sixty dwellings per hectare the density will be twice that of the average new suburban development. And the addition of a substantial programme of office space and amenities makes it potentially much more than an ordinary suburb. An essential aspect of the grid plan is the contrast between street and block, between two worlds of inside and outside. The streets running on endlessly to the horizon and the enclosed space of the inner courts satisfy two universal human needs, to be part of the wider world and to enjoy the shelter of one's own private domain.

The main streets are 30 metres wide, the average street 22 metres. Precondition number one is a continuous street frontage. It is further stipulated that 'development along the streets is to be formal and at least three storeys high', that 'living should take place on the street side' and that dwellings abutting the street should also have their front door there. And, as in the historic canal zone, 'living on the street' is best served by placing the living room half a metre above street level. In addition, the blocks are to be bordered by a twenty-metre-wide margin to be used for a flight of steps or a small front garden that will act as a transition between public and private.

The rest - how the street elevations should look, how the programme is fitted into the block and what happens in the courtyards - is not laid down, and that is unusual in the Netherlands. Nearly every block is made up of sub-projects designed by different architects under the direction of a block supervisor. The fact that the programme for each block is much too large to be accommodated in a standard perimeter block, is intended to stimulate architects to come up with innovative solutions.

(Hans Ibelings)



Patterns of islands / 人工島の配置