



Almere Homeruskwarter, the largest self-building district in post-war Netherlands

PHOTO: ADRIENNE NORMAN

# No Choice over our Heads – Self-building in Almere

Phantom  
Urbanism –  
The Ghost  
Towns  
of Angola  
p 52

Impressions  
from Almere  
p 134

Better than  
It Was – The  
Remarkable  
Transformation  
of Tirana  
p 86

Make Architecture  
Great Again – The  
Architect as Developer  
p 66

# Jacqueline Tellinga

Simple  
Answers to  
Simple  
Questions –  
The Architect  
as Client  
p 118

The Land Belongs  
to the People – The  
Battle for Munich  
p 94

**Building one's own house may have become an exception in the West, but in the Netherlands this practice has made a serious comeback since the crisis of 2008. In the city of Almere, founded a mere forty years ago and currently the country's seventh largest city, self-building has come to represent a viable alternative within a developer-led market. Jacqueline Tellinga, board member of the Professional Association of Dutch Urban Designers and Planners (BNSP), argues the case for self-building.**

**I**n ancient times we did not know any better than that cities were built by citizens themselves. Most of the houses along Amsterdam's canals from the 17th century, for instance, were built by private individuals for private use. Today, prosperous cities like Amsterdam are firmly on the radar of international capital and the same houses primarily serve as investment opportunities for third parties. The phenomenon of buy-to-let, through which investors buy up existing homes with the aim to rent them out expensively – generally after having split them up into separate apartments – is firmly entrenched.

## Make Architecture Great Again – The Architect as Developer p 66

In 2017 one of every eight homes in Amsterdam was bought by investors! (The research into major property owners in Amsterdam is based on public information from the Land Registry). Amsterdam is not the only place affected by this trend. German cities too, with their comparatively cheap real estate, have been discovered as profitable piggy banks for capital-seeking yield, particularly because their real estate, compared to cities like London and Paris, is still rela-

tively cheap. Berlin is known amongst investors as the Aldi of the housing market and, as a result, home prices have come under serious pressure. The German situation is described clearly in the ARD report 'Ungleichland', which follows multi-millionaire investor and project developer Christoph Gröner, who trades in real estate with the sole purpose of 'making capital work' on behalf of the anonymous wealthy.

Developments such as those in Berlin and in Amsterdam imply fundamental changes in terms of the quality of life and general affordability of neighbourhoods in these cities. Neighbourhoods where the maximisation of rental income has become the prime motive generally suffer from a high turnover of inhabitants and therefore slowly lose their connection to the area. Buy-to-let leads to a housing stock owned by the wealthy, who do not live there themselves and push up prices in the meantime. Even more problematic is the 'buy-to-leave' phenomenon, where investors deliberately do not want to rent out and cause vacancy rates because tenants could be a difficult obstacle to a quick resale.

## Phantom Urbanism – The Ghost Towns of Angola p 52

In China, the point has been reached that the government not only finds it bad for the housing market, but also immoral to speculate with housing rather than living in it. President Xi Jinping is committed to a mandatory cooling of the housing market.

The Invisible Hand?

In the twenty-first century, private equity has become in-

creasingly concentrated in the hands of a few. Power is inevitably in the same hands. Nowhere is this felt more acutely than in the housing market, in which the energy of people who want to invest in their own homes and living environment is routinely supplanted by those better organised and more powerful, which in turn has led to pleas to open up the housing market to small-scale, individual participants. In this context, reference should be made to the book 'The Invisible Hand? How Market Economies Have Emerged and Declined Since AD 500' by economic historian Bas van Bavel.<sup>2</sup> In this book he argues that important market economies, after initial periods of emergence and prosperity are inevitably followed by a period of decay. He proves his point with three major, pre-industrial examples of successful market economies in western Eurasia: Iraq in the early Middle Ages, Italy in the high Middle Ages, and the Low Countries in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, and then draws parallels with England and the United States in the modern period.

The process is invariably the same: in their early phases, these market economies tend to generate growth, reward initiative and entrepreneurship and increase labour productivity. During this early phase, major technological leaps take place. But then, with the emergence of new elites – inevitably a consequence of the initial success – the rules of the game change. The new elites become a self-serving political force, inequality increases and the earlier economic development stagnates. Once those elites get hold of two of the three factors of production – land and capital – the rest of the population is left with only the ability to provide work – the third factor of production – and falls behind. Van Bavel's observations clash with the neoliberal idea of the market as a neutral mechanism, which supposedly allows

everyone to participate and acquire wealth. In his view, non-freedom and inequality are the norm, which have only been successfully broken down in societies where people organised themselves from the bottom up. In such exceptionally equal societies, in which power is no longer exclusively in the hands of a king, nobility or any elite, a truly open market can flourish. Currently, however, he argues that we are in a time of declining freedom and equality. "We must preserve the good of markets, but we must counteract the dominance of the elites."

Utopian models and micro-societies

Having extensively worked on the development of self-built neighbourhoods, I see a tendency to increasingly push self-builders out of the 'so-called' market. Their legitimacy is still very much questioned.

For those interested in the correlation between self-reliance and social engagement, I would briefly like to discuss three examples of self-built developments: the projects of Walter Segal, 'Baugruppen', and allotment gardens.

During the 1970s and 1980s, two hundred families in the United Kingdom single-handedly built their homes, using the system of pioneering architect Walter Segal. What connected these people was that they were all entrepreneurial, but none of them had enough money for a private home. They opted for Segal's prototype design – a wooden frame, with insulation and a weatherproof shell – which was a quick and economical way of building. None of the people had technical skills, but they simply rolled up their sleeves, went to work in their own time and acquired the necessary knowledge along the way. Segal's construction system was a way to build affordably and led to extensive cooperation and a vibrant community spirit. Everybody

would work on their individual homes, but when it was time to erect the main frame for a single house, the whole group would come together and help. To date, no one has been able to come up with a good explanation why these designs never went mainstream – either as social housing or as private developments. The Baugruppen in Germany are a similar idea. In the 1990s,

Another form of community spirit and far-reaching self-regulation are the allotment gardens dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. These unique micro-societies are also organised as a collective. As a small community, the members adhere to an extensive code of conduct on a voluntarily basis. The management and accountability of the individual towards the

Houses and gardens are private; the property rights of which are not shared within the group. Self-building should not primarily be judged on the merit of creating closer social communities. The essence is in the economic logic it unleashes – in that it mobilises the means and the thinking power of tens or hundreds of thousands of which is inevitably a source of

rectly to its citizens, and was set in motion with the Ikbouw-mijnhuisinAlmere programme of 2006. The Homeruskwartier firmly calls into question the legitimacy of the collusion between cities and professional developers and indicates the keenness on the part of ordinary people to produce their own houses without the intermediaries. Here, people show how they want to live and build for themselves once they are really given the freedom to do so.

## Simple Answers to Simple Questions – The Architect as Client p 118

A rich mix of living ideas has been achieved on a variety of plots. Thanks to brochures and 'plot passports', those interested were able to make their choices – ranging from large to small plots, tall to low structures, and from terraced to detached homes. The sale of 350 plots started at the end of 2007 and continued in 2009 with the sale of another 300 plots. Ultimately, 1,400 plots were put on the market. Characteristic of the development plan is its great diversity in building alternatives, without any aesthetic control. We considered the aesthetics of the homes to be the choice of those who had commissioned them: the self-builders. If we had forced the future residents to work with one or more particular architects, a 'pseudo-variety' would have been the result. For each plot, a building envelope was devised that indicated the maximum width, depth and height of the structure to be erected on it. Within that envelope, people enjoyed complete freedom. The result is a per-



Homeruskwartier 2016. The first 350 plots came on the market just before the financial crisis. While private developers began to suffer a lack of equity, self-builders continued to invest and build. Jacqueline Tellinga has been 'concept en gebiedsontwikkelaar' Homeruskwartier 2006 – 2015.

the first German Baugruppe (also called Baugesellschaft) was organised in the German city of Freiburg. This model, for an alternative, more collective form of living, soon proved successful and was copied by other groups in Berlin, Hamburg and Tübingen, transforming itself into a mainstream form of urban development. During the financial crisis, building groups even gained a foothold in cities such as Amsterdam, Delft and Rotterdam. Their argument was rooted in valid economic logic: The sharing of both the land prices and costs of construction. The fact that residents have to make several decisions together in an early phase implies intensive cooperation almost by definition.

collective is arranged down to the last detail. Rules of conduct and building regulations are laid down in neat books. Committees from the members' own ranks enforce them. Hedges are maintained jointly, the selling prices of garden houses are determined by the attending commission upon termination of membership, ruling out the possibility of speculation. Walter Segal's projects, the Baugruppen and the allotments gardens are mini-societies. People consult with one another when necessary, common rules apply, and common aspects are maintained and paid for together. One might conclude that in these specific examples there is a greater social cohesion and sense of community.

well-being, pride and ownership for the hundreds or thousands of people who invest.

Homeruskwartier:  
1,400 plots for self-building

In terms of self-building that represents economic logic, the Homeruskwartier in Almere takes things to the next level and places the meaning of self-building in a broader social-economic context. With 1,400 plots, the Homeruskwartier is the largest self-building district of the post-war Dutch building era. It was not started by a core of comrades or a close social community. Instead, it was the fundamental choice of the political administration, in the person of alderman Adri Duivesteyn, to sell its land di-

sonal collection of canal houses, terraced houses, multi-generation homes and garden houses commissioned by hundreds of 21st century entrepreneurial citizens. The smallest house is less than 50 m<sup>2</sup>, while the largest is more than 1,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The money invested ranges from 100,000 to more than 1.5 million euros. One-third of the self-building plots have been built upon through the "I build affordably" scheme. The exceptional thing about the Homeruskwartier is that a cross-section of society has been actively involved: low, middle and higher incomes; singles, families, multi-generation families; young and elderly people; a mix of cultural backgrounds, with (hardly) any background in the construction industry or architecture. Many residents are employed in the service sector.

As soon as the plots came on the market, they bought land and built their houses. The identity of the neighbourhood is in its diversity. Sceptics might call it chaos, but the final judgement will be made by future generations.

Oosterwold,  
a 4,300-hectare development

Another example of self-building is Oosterwold, a new 4,300-hectare development, also located in Almere. Here, not only the construction of homes, but also the entire planning of the area is in the hands of the residents. People draw their desired plot on the map, build and manage the roads together with their neighbours, and arrange for the provision of their own water, sewage and energy. The main remaining municipal

activity is in the granting of building permits to guarantee the right measure of hygiene, construction standards, safety and sustainability. Oosterwold focuses on low-density urban agriculture: More than half of each plot must be used for urban agriculture, with only 12.5 per cent being used for construction of a building. The question Oosterwold raises is whether society still needs the safeguards provided by governments.

## Better than It Was – The Remarkable Transformation of Tirana p 86

Western societies are based on prevailing common sense, which dictates the qualities that ought to be protected by law, and how individual freedoms can be reined in for the collective good. Should citizens now be left to settle their own diverging interests? Oosterwold has tried to offer a framework to make this possible – be it in a model of consensus or in dispute, it is up to citizens to decide. The way the area has developed thus far reveals a creative energy that would otherwise never have seen the light of day. From experience, I must add that not everyone is able or willing to debate and cooperate at this level. The low density which inevitably seems to emerge from the approach hardly qualifies as an answer to global urbanisation. But, with 600 lots sold, and a long waiting list for 9,000 more,

Wir haben nachgefragt

Architekten, Ingenieure und Fachplaner haben Ihre Erfahrungen und Einschätzungen zu BIM mit uns geteilt.



Whitepaper: ORCA BIM Studie  
orca-software.com/bim-studie

13 Fragen - 291 Teilnehmer  
Alle Antworten und Fachwissen im Whitepaper - Jetzt anfordern!



The essence of self-building is in the economic logic it unleashes – in that it mobilises financial means and thinking power of an actively involved cross-section of society: low, middle and higher incomes; singles, families, multi-generation families; young and elderly people as well as a mix of cultural backgrounds.

people do have an impressive extent of freedom to determine their own living environment.

#### Freedom of choice

Homeruskwartier and Oosterwold are about freedom of choice and honouring the creativity and energy of residents. Both developments offer compelling proof that a cross section of the population wants and can create a larger variation in housing stock. The fact that both are in Almere – a Dutch new town from the 1970s – is all the more remarkable, since until recently Almere was mainly known for its endless, identical row houses that have no diversity or any form of 'creative extravagance'.

With the addition of these new developments, the city has become a kaleidoscope of different ways to live: Elderly people build 'smart houses' in which they want to grow old and for whom not money, but 'security', 'well-being' and 'independence' is the overriding motive; people are prepared to travel throughout Europe just to find that specific stove; while others aim to build the perfect cardboard house, or a house without windows.

Seemingly irrational preferences are a matter of individual rationale and choice.

#### Access to land

The city of Almere has chosen to sell its land directly to its residents and not only to developers. In general, however, municipalities in the Netherlands possess little or no land. This makes it difficult to reach a political decision to make land available for self-building. After all, it is common sense that landowners are primarily the ones to develop the land which they possess. In other words, building rights are obtained through land ownership. Building opportunities are not a freely marketable commodity. Once one has acquired land, one is in an advantageous position. Once land ownership is obtained by private entities, there is a substantial hold over the housing market.

**The Land Belongs to the People – The Battle for Munich p 94**

In this way, production can be secured in advance. By contrast, no citizen, or group of citizens, would ever buy land prematurely. In Britain 4 per cent of housing is self-building, in the Netherlands it is 10 per cent, mostly in the rural areas, while i.e. in Amsterdam more than 50 per cent of prospective home-buyers are allegedly interested in a form of self-building<sup>3</sup>.

Imagine land for sale in a transparent property market for hundreds of thousands of individuals, collectives, architects, contractors, small custom-build companies and so on. Imagine a market that is truly free, in which anyone could participate. An unprecedented variety of housing production and costs would emerge that are in line with actual demand and needs.

When did government stop trusting its citizens' creativity? This basic democratic principle seems to have disappeared. In urban planning, it is widely accepted that, when it comes to the allocation of land, governments have a role as a fair-trade floor manager, and yet free access to land is by no means guaranteed.

There is alienation, or even frustration, because access to the housing market has been blocked. In the relationship between government and citizens, too many terms such as 'inclusive decision making' and the 'co-production of policy' have appeared, terms that cannot hold people's attention, let alone mobilise them as valuable agents in the production of cities.

In hindsight, the idea of the policies of neoliberalism was to accommodate the freedom of choice. And yet, little of that has actually materialised. The self-builder still mostly draws the short end of the stick when it comes to the allocation of development rights, leaving better-organised investors and developers in charge. When, as is presently the case, these rights are prematurely secured beforehand by just a handful of parties, the discussion should be

about the legitimacy of having authority over an owned tract or piece of land without using it oneself, as an end user. It calls to mind historical disputes.

- 1 Michiel Couzy, Maarten van Dun, Groelende ongelijkheid op de woningmarkt: van wie is deze stad eigenlijk? Parool, 4 november 2017.
- 2 Bas van Bavel, The Invisible Hand? How Market Economies Have Emerged and Declined Since AD 500, Oxford University Press, 2016.
- 3 Gemeente Amsterdam, Raadscommissie voor Bouwen, Wonen, Wijkplanpak en Dierenwelzijn, 17 Januari 2018, no. BD2017-013356.



# Die schönsten Restaurants & Bars gesucht

#### DER AWARD

Die erste deutschsprachige Innenarchitektur-Auszeichnung mit Schwerpunkt Gastronomie-Interior präsentiert sich in einem hochwertigen Jahrbuch, das Pflichtlektüre und Inspirationsquelle für Genussmenschen, (Innen-)Architekten, Designer und Entscheidungsträger der Gastronomie-Branche ist.

#### DIE PREISE

Die ausgewählten Projekte werden im März 2020 in einer hochwertigen Publikation präsentiert, die überall im Handel erhältlich sein wird. Die Sieger werden außerdem auf der Gala zur Preisverleihung im Rahmen der Messe Internorga 2020 geehrt und mit breitem Medienecho belohnt.

#### DIE TEILNAHME

Teilnahmeberechtigt sind (Innen-)Architekten und Gastronomen aus dem deutschsprachigen Raum, die Urheber von Restaurant- und Barinterieurs sind. Die Projekte sollen nach dem 1. Januar 2014 fertig gestellt und noch nicht in einer Buchpublikation veröffentlicht worden sein. Die Teilnahmegebühr beträgt 290,- Euro pro Projekt. Mitglieder des bdia bund deutscher innenarchitekten können für eine vergünstigte Gebühr von 230,- Euro teilnehmen.



**EINSENDE-SCHLUSS 30.07.2019**

**JETZT ANMELDEN: [HTTPS://TEILNAHME.RB-DESIGNAWARD.COM](https://teilnahme.rb-designaward.com)**

DEHOGA

b d i a bund deutscher innenarchitekten

AHGZ Allgemeine Hotel- und Gastronomie-Zeitung

BAU MEISTER

B EAT

# IK WIL ZELF BOUWEN

# IK WIL ZELF BOUWEN

**TE KOOP**

BOUWKAVEL 608 m<sup>2</sup>  
JUVENTASTRAAT HKO 496  
€ 209.760

**TE KOOP**

BOUWKAVEL 641 m<sup>2</sup>  
DAMOCLESSTRAAT HKO 411  
€ 243.580

**TE KOOP / IN OPTIE**

BOUWKAVELS 665 m<sup>2</sup> (bouw, in optie) & 751 m<sup>2</sup> (brecht)  
TANTALUSSTRAAT HKO 825 & 824  
€ 275.000 (bouw) / € 350.000 (brecht)

**FAMILIEKAVELS**

Heeft u wel eens gedacht aan een familiekaavel? Een stuk grond waarop u samen met familieleden uw woning bouwt? Bijvoorbeeld een groot huis waar u met meer generaties onder één dak woont? Of u splitst de kaavel en bouwt tegen elkaar aan of naast een groot zwembad dat de huizen verbindt? In Almere Poort zijn familiekaavels te koop voor elke woonsmaak. De wijk is klaar voor een nieuwe vorm van samenwonen. Dichter bij familie. Zodat je er ook voor elkaar kunt zijn.

DE GOEDKOOPSTE KAVEL  
AAN DE ZEUSSINGEL KOST € 25.990.

HET GROTE EILAND IS HET DUURST  
EN KOST € 495.000.

VANAF € 100.000

**BRIEDSKANTOOR**

**ALMER**

**TE KOOP**

BOUWKAVEL 45 m<sup>2</sup>  
LUFAXSTRAAT HKO 1270  
€ 103.000

**TE KOOP**

BOUWKAVEL 314 m<sup>2</sup>  
TANTALUSSTRAAT HKO 830  
€ 125.600

**TE KOOP**

BOUWKAVEL 414 m<sup>2</sup>  
DIANASTRAAT HKO 733  
€ 149.040

VANAF € 100.000

**TE KOOP**

BOUWKAVEL 140 m<sup>2</sup>  
HELENUSSTRAAT HKW248  
€ 52.500

**TE KOOP**

BOUWKAVEL 175 m<sup>2</sup>  
POLLUXSTRAAT HKW271  
€ 65.625

**TE KOOP**

BOUWKAVEL 249 m<sup>2</sup>  
DAMOCLESSTRAAT HKO 453  
€ 88.395

VANAF € 50.000

**GA**

**GIORGIO ARMANI**

LA PORTA ROSSA 25/R  
FIRENZE  
TELEFONO 2033

\*Plot-shop' in Almere Homeruskwartier, 2015

PHOTO: ADRIENNE NOORMAN



Aressstraat and Hermestraat under construction, Almere Homeruskwartier 2010

PHOTO: TOP-SHOP.NL



138

139

The house without windows. Almere Homezukunft

PHOTO: ADRIENNE NOOMAN



140

141

Kaatje in her living room, Almere Homeruskwartier

PHOTO: ADRIENNE NORMAN