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Kok, Matthijs

Publication date
2017

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published in
Integral Design of Multifunctional Flood Defenses

Citation (APA)

Important note
To cite this publication, please use the final published version (if applicable). Please check the document version above.
Matthijs Kok

A STEP TOWARDS FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION

REFLECTION PROGRAM CASE ‘ROTTERDAM ROOF PARK’

Many functions are combined in the Rotterdam Roof Park project. It is a shopping mall, a parking garage, a park on the roof, and last but not least, a flood defense. The research in our program was done after the buildings and structures had been built. So the research projects were not hampered by the conflicting interests of stakeholders during the design and implementation process, as might sometimes be the case in so-called ‘action research’. Still, the case study of the Roof Park clearly shows the pros and cons of Multifunctional Flood Defenses.

The flood defense is located in an urban area, where existing space is generally assumed to be used more intensively. Despite this, Van Veen, Vooren and Van der Zaast clearly showed that the Roof Park complex does not actually contain structural elements that are part of the flood defense. The building (shopping mall and garage) has a LAT (Living Apart Together) relation with the flood defense: the actual flood defense is not part of the Roof Park complex. From a technical point of view this could have been easily achieved, and Vooren explains various options for an integral design. He concludes that combining the functions would result in a more efficient design, but one in which the governance would be more complicated. In that case, a joint effort by the relevant stakeholders would be needed to manage and maintain multi-functional structure.

Raaphorst clearly shows how the visual rhetoric of the Roof Park is part of a bigger story: the increasing interest in design-based workshops in which the design process is used as a means to achieve a common future vision. A challenge to such visualization is that there are many possible images of the same alternative, and then the question arises how to visualize the alternatives and which perspectives to choose. Raaphorst answers that ‘...every aspect of a design representation, whether it be scale, perspective, technique, lighting, or color scheme, is an implicit or explicit choice. Design representations are thus political instruments, and should be treated and studied as such.’ This is an important observation, because if design representations are political instruments, politicians need to be involved in making these choices. However, that is not the complete story, since the designer has also the responsibility to visualize the alternatives as well as and fairly as possible.

Matos Castaño shows how frames influence the selection of functional combinations. Different stakeholders use different frames, and the intriguing question arises how a choice can then be made. Matos Castaño shows that the ‘...emergence of a predominant frame proved to be important not only for collective action, but also for individual ones’. This may seem obvious, but this insight can help to stimulate the emergence of predominant frames that help to achieve mutual benefits.

The Roof Park Rotterdam turned out to be an interesting case study in the MFFD program, because the final result was not the most efficient solution. However, as Simon (1997) showed more than 50 years ago, in decision-making processes people are not only interested in the most efficient solution (if a single solution existed), but also satisfying their minimal demands. To achieve this requires open communication between all concerned stakeholders. However, the stakeholders decide how they participate. As Matos Castaño says, ‘Actions might use their power of authority to make their frame resonate or vice versa to achieve their own self-interest without taking the consequences for the project as a whole into consideration’. Though this is less a scientific challenge than a sociological and political one, incentives might be developed to increase the trust between parties and their willingness to cooperate.