

HET PLATFORM

UTRECHT (NL), 2015–2020

Nature-Inclusive Design



Introduction

From the very start in 1995, designing sustainable, healthy and inclusive living environments has been the main focus of VenhoevenCS. Through trial and error, research and knowledge development - often in close cooperation with other experts – our design approach is constantly evolving.

One of the themes that has become more important in this design approach, is nature-inclusive design. With nature-inclusive design we aim to strengthen existing local ecosystems and improve local ecosystem resilience. Besides strengthening and improving biodiversity, this approach has many other positive effects.

Ecosystems

VenhoevenCS likes to look at nature-inclusive design holistically. It is not just about planting some plants on the roof of a building. We like our designs to strengthen existing local ecosystems and improve local ecosystem resilience. This means we have to look closely at the ecological qualities of the context to connect our project with nearby parks and even the larger geological and ecological situation.

Choosing the right trees and plants for specific locations on building features will automatically attract a whole chain of animals, from insects, birds, small mammals to larger predators. In order to establish this, we always work with ecologists, landscape architects and planting experts – both in our urban planning projects as in our architectural projects.

Plants, shrubs and trees on roofs and balconies in densely built-up cities reduce the temperature in hot summers, provide shade, improve acoustics in the outdoor areas, help with rainwater collection, reduce energy use, improve air quality, and invite people to go outside. Even just looking at green contributes to our physical and mental health, as is underlined by sound scientific research.

Greenery in and around buildings thus ensures a pleasant and healthy living environment, enhances biodiversity and contributes to climate adaptation.

Nature-Inclusive Design in Het Platform

When the Municipality of Utrecht decided on a new building at the eastern end of the Central Station area, it wanted the new project to contribute to a healthy urban life in this stony environment. *Het Platform* won the commission in 2015 with a comprehensive, holistic design concept by VenhoevenCS.

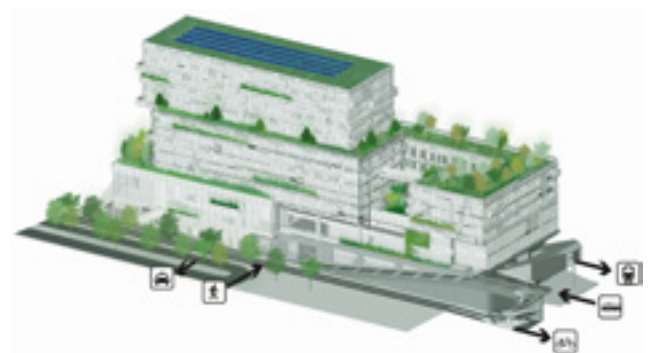
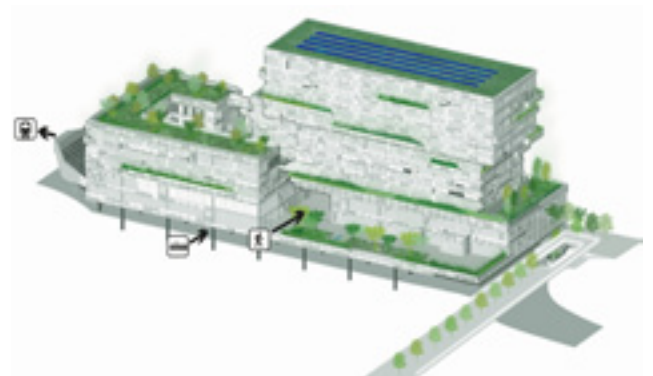
One of the features of the design concept was to create the building as a green “springboard” for plants, animals and people, from the city centre green belt to the other side of the train tracks, where the municipality is also striving for high nature-inclusive ambitions. The Platform thus makes abundant use of roof gardens, terraces and balcony boxes. These are not only intended for users of The Platform, but also provide an attractive view for users and residents of the buildings around it.



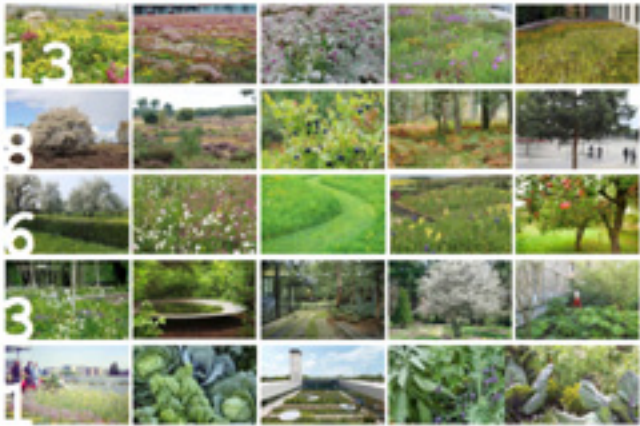
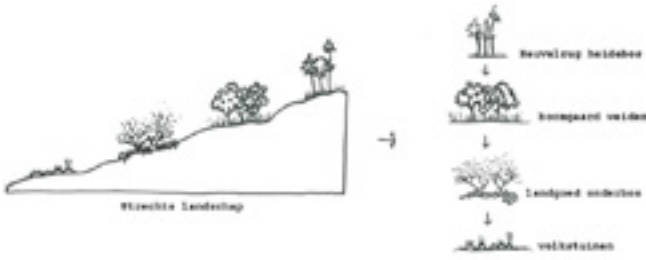
Het Platform as part of the greening ambitions in Utrecht



First trees planted on the roof - November 2019



Impression of the gardens on the roofs, terraces and balconies in and on Het Platform



Garden design

VenhoevenCS invited Bram Breedveld (landscape architect and co-founder of Landlab) for the garden designs. His planting concept is derived from the vegetation in the various landscapes of the Utrecht Province, with distinct vegetation on the different floors of the building: plants inspired by allotment gardens on the 1st floor, estate forest undergrowth on the 3rd floor, orchard meadows on the 6th and a hillside pine forest on the 8th floor. The plant species are very diverse and specially mixed to ensure optimum conditions for attracting insects. The extent to which birds will feel safe enough to reproduce here, is difficult to predict, but there is certainly enough food.

Some other examples of nature-inclusive design within the portfolio of VenhoevenCS

Below: *EVE - Pier 40 New York City: experimenting with all green façades in a competition design (1998)*



Above: *Blocks B&C, mixed-use project in Amsterdam with nature-inclusive design combined with climate adaptive design features. Expected realization 2022.*

Below: *Sportplaza Mercator in Amsterdam (commissioned 2001, realized 2006), with the first completely green façade in The Netherlands. Photo: Luuk Kramer*



Above: *Nekkerpool in Mechelen (BE). Integration of landscape and architecture contributes to the experience of seasons in this recreational area. Completion 2013.*

Below: *CIAM XXI - City of the Future: urban wetlands, stacked green parks and vertical agriculture. Research project commissioned by BNA Research et al. (2018)*



Above: *Biesbosch Station Area Analysis (2010-2011). Connecting the world of humans and nature.*

PROJECT DATA

Name	Het Platform
Location	Moreelsehoek, 3511 GC Utrecht
Programme	15.000 m2 gfa living: 201 apartments. Around 4.000 m2 facilities a.o. e-sports training facilities, a foodcourt (related to living, working and relaxing), fitness, wellness, bicycle parking.
Surface area	18.500 m2 gfa
Periode	Start design 2015 - Completion 2020
Client	Het Platform B.V. (ABC Planontwikkeling + Westplan Investors) and the Municipality of Utrecht

CREDITS

Team VenhoevenCS	<p><i>Competition design</i> Ton Venhoeven, Cécilia Gross, Jos-Willem van Oorschot, Danny Esselman, Piotr Gierek.</p> <p><i>Design development</i> Ton Venhoeven, Cécilia Gross, Danny Esselman, Tjeerd Hellinga, Piotr Gierek, Nerea Sáenz Compañón, Lorenzo de Navascués Y Lauzet, Maria Ángeles Reinales San Martín.</p> <p><i>(Pre) Construction and site work</i> Ton Venhoeven, Danny Esselman, Arjen Zaal, Tjeerd Hellinga, Max Fler, Eliza Mante, Mai Henriksen.</p> <p><i>Interior Design</i> Arjen Zaal, Eliza Mante.</p> <p><i>Technical design</i> Louis van Wamel, Arjan Pot, Peter Rugebregt, Robin Boenning, Natasja Cvetkovic.</p>
Landscape and planting	LandLab (landscape architect), BTL Realisatie (horizontal green), Sempergreen (vertical green), Mastop Totaaltechniek (watering systems), Zoontjens (roof paving), ZND dakbedekking (roofing and main green contractor).
Other Partners	ABC Nova (project management), IMd Raadgevende Ingenieurs (construction engineering), Bouw21 (contractor), VDNDP (technical drawings).
Images	All images by VenhoevenCS unless otherwise stated

VenhoevenCS is an innovative design office for architecture, urbanism and infrastructure. Ton Venhoeven started the office in 1995, which over the years has grown into international practice with 5 partners and more than 30 architects, urban planners, interior architects and technical engineers. The main focus of VenhoevenCS is creating sustainable, healthy and inclusive living environments.

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