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.

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

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 en 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.
**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 facade planters. 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 birch 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)

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

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

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

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

**PROJECT DATA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Het Platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Moreelsehoek, 3511 GC Utrecht</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surface area</td>
<td>18.500 m² gfa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Periode</td>
<td>Start design 2015 - Completion 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client</td>
<td>Het Platform B.V. (ABC Planontwikkeling + Westplan Investors) and the Municipality of Utrecht</td>
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**CREDITS**

Team VenhoevenCS

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*Interior Design*
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*Technical design*
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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.

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