

# Rotterdam: Innovative City

Bryan Ottho and Deniz Olcay

The most prevalent creative industry in Rotterdam is in architecture. It has a progressive modern and post-modern history in architecture, and today there are many firms which establish it as a top city for innovation in design. Among these are the OMA, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, which is a major player in the creative design industry. In addition firms such as the OMA has provided offshoot companies such as MVRDV, which have pioneering visions for design and lifestyle. Talent also pools into Rotterdam from elsewhere; the UK has growing interest in and links to the city, and people such as Chris Kabel from the Amsterdam-based firm droog lives and works in Rotterdam.

Rotterdam has a steady agglomeration of companies and knowledge workers within it. This includes a well-established business sector, ING being one of the big names there. This business sector often provides funding for research to schools, such as the largest, the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. This institution's strengths lie in business and medical research, as well as all aspects of economic and social issues. The result is a pooling of knowledge and talent available for Rotterdam's industries to draw from.

In order to attract not only knowledge workers but also the innovation of the creative class, the industry and businesses must also have a concern for issues such as environmentalism, and the most successful companies have this outlook. In addition, the city holds a UN Rotterdam Convention, which establishes chemical regulations and pollution control.

As a forward city, Rotterdam also maintains its creative centres. It has many galleries and arts spaces, as well as an international art festival (Art Rotterdam) which exhibits young and up-and-coming artists, and MAMA, a showroom for Media and Moving Art. The city also has several venues for music and entertainment. Its club scene is well-known in Europe, and world-famous electro DJs are based in Rotterdam. The city has an abundance of ethnic restaurants, lounges and jazz cafes as

well, which all appeal to the lifestyle of the creative class.

Additionally there is the fact that Rotterdam is a socially tolerant city. It is hugely multicultural – other ethnicities make up almost half of its population, and there are festivities held year-round which celebrate the city's diversity. Rotterdam also has a strong gay community, and was the first city in the world to legalize same-sex marriages. This appeals much to today's creative individual, as it is non-discriminatory and supportive of different worldviews and alternative lifestyles.

The city has also put much into urban sustainable development, and this is evident in its accessible transportation system. It is well connected to the national rail network, and it has a good infrastructure which utilizes trams, buses, and a metro system. This makes it easy for people to move around relatively cheaply, as less is spent on cars and fuel. In addition, there is a city tax on cars and emissions. An easy-to-use, affordable, and green transportation system such as Rotterdam's helps to attract forward-thinking individuals.

All these elements interrelate and contribute to the fact that Rotterdam is a “fast city”, a city that is able to capture the interest of progressive talent and organizations and retain new and ongoing innovation. Not only is a vital creative class attracted to what it has to offer, but its business sector and municipal system also follow in the trend of providing alternative ways of thinking, and exciting opportunities.

## References

Office for Municipal Architecture <http://www.oma.eu>

MVRDV <http://www.mvrdv.nl>

Rotterdam Convention <http://www.pic.int>

Erasmus Institute of Rotterdam [www.eur.nl/english/](http://www.eur.nl/english/)

Art Rotterdam International Festival [www.artrotterdam.nl/](http://www.artrotterdam.nl/)

Showroom for Media and Moving Art Rotterdam <http://www.showroommama.nl/>