

# TURNING HOUSEBOATS INTO A CREATIVE ECO-HUB



What's your workplace like? Though the buildings and spaces we work in can vary considerably, chances are you aren't working in an environmentally-friendly creative cluster made from discarded houseboats. But if that kind of thing floats your boat (so to speak), keep your eyes on De Ceuvel – “a planned workplace for creative and social enterprises adjacent to the van Hasselt kanaal in Amsterdam North.”

De Ceuvel is currently a work in progress, located on a heavily-polluted brownfield site leased from the City of Amsterdam for ten years. The project began as a competition to reimagine a former industrial plot, with the team responsible for the winning concept calling their vision “the most unique and sustainable urban development in Europe.”

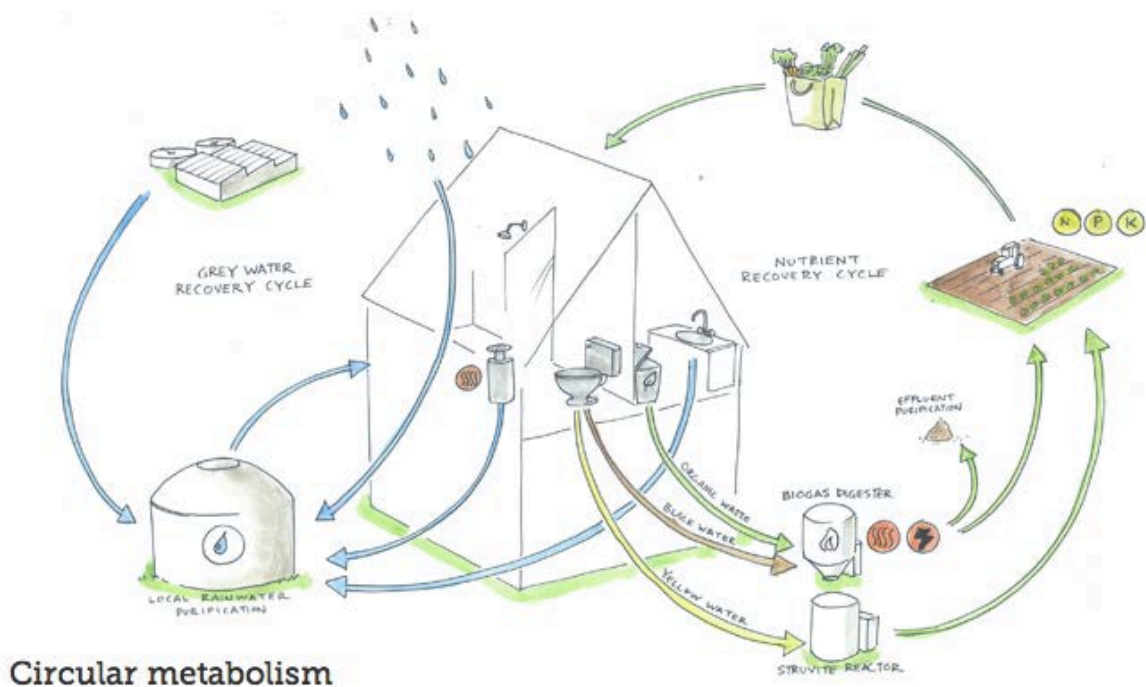
So what is so unique about De Ceuvel?



The project will be made up of retrofitted houseboats connected by a winding bamboo path. The boats will house offices and workshops for creative and social enterprises along with a bed and breakfast and the obligatory teahouse. Land surrounding the development will be home to soil-cleaning plants, working to cleanse the site of its toxic past; a process with some beneficial side effects:

*The heavily polluted soil will be purified by phytoremediation techniques, in which plants are used to clean the soil. A specially selected combination of plants is used to stabilize, break off and take up pollutants. This organic way of cleaning the soil will result in a working landscape, cleaning the soil while creating habitat and producing low-impact biomass. The biomass from the area will be used to develop products and energy. A small biomass gasifier at the site will convert the biomass into energy, which is used in the houseboats on site.*

Water is a defining force in Amsterdam, so reusing houseboats that would otherwise have been thrown away is both fitting and sustainable. This act of reuse is also partly driven by the temporary nature of the project. With a defined life of ten years, erecting a permanent structure was never on the agenda. The winding bamboo path that connects these houseboats is the result of the plot itself – the pollution resulting from its former industrial purpose means excessive direct contact with the site is best avoided.



In addition to the unusual built environment (or should that be boat environment?), De Ceuvel will also be home to an experimental system known as the Cleantech Playground, which will be responsible for the site's resources:

*The Cleantech Playground is both a decentralized cleantech utility and a demonstration and testing site for new technologies that can transform how we produce and consume resources and public services in cities. Throughout the site, solar technologies will convert energy from the sun into heat and electricity. Green roofs and water collection systems are designed to collect, purify, and store rainwater for when it's needed. Sanitation systems will extract energy, nutrients, and water from the waste produced for on-site food production. A network of sensors provide information on performance and user behavior.*

Indeed, the team behind the project believe it could demonstrate a new way forward for cities.

The houseboats may be stranded, but that doesn't mean De Ceuvel isn't going anywhere.

Source : <http://thisbigcity.net/turning-houseboats-into-a-creative-eco-hub/>