

FRIDAY 8 JUNE 2007

Capital learns about sustainability

AMSTERDAM | More than eighty green events took place across the capital from 1 June to 5 June in the framework of 'The Week of Sustainable Amsterdam'. Initiator Sustainable Amsterdam's aim was to educate Amsterdammers who lag behind in their knowledge of sustainable development.

By Lulo Ahrens
Amsterdam plans to reduce its CO2 emissions by 40% in 2025.

The Week of Sustainable Amsterdam is a joint initiative of the organisations 'Zinnige Zaken' (Sensible Matters) and the Amsterdam Innovation Motor. They follow the example of the London Sustainability Weeks, which were first organised four years ago and have currently attracted more than four million visitors in June.

More than eighty workshops, culinary events, demonstrations, debates and other activities took place across the city.

The gemeente announced last Friday that Amsterdam will be one of the forerunners of the Clinton Global Initiative, together with San Francisco and Seoul. This means that Amsterdam will serve as an example in the areas of ICT and sustainable projects for other cities around the world. ICT company Cisco Systems has joined the Clinton initiative to help the three cities, which company director John Chambers chose because they are 'innovative and ambitious', set up ICT related sustainable projects in the areas of transport, work and liveability. A congress on June 5 attended by 250 participants formed the kick-off of the project.

During the meeting some participated physically



Amsterdam Mayor Job Cohen opening the New Energy Docks during the 'Sustainable Amsterdam' days.
Photo: Philippe Testa / Duurzaam Amsterdam

while others were virtually present, from the other side of the world.

Logging onto your computer to attend a meeting thousands of kilometres away makes an environmentally harmful flight unnecessary. Thus, participants experienced an example of how ICT can help the environment. Sensible Matters

spokesperson Eiso Frederiks told *The Times* that from now on, The Week of Sustainable Amsterdam will be organized on a yearly basis. Next year, the organisation will try to attract significantly more visitors, "so that the average man in the street learns the importance of securing our quality of life for his children, 50 years from now".

'Centre turns into enclave for wealthy whites'

AMSTERDAM | The centre of Amsterdam seems to be rapidly turning into a white yuppie enclave. Growing demand for an insufficient amount of houses on the market is causing congestion in the Amsterdam housing market.

By Lulo Ahrens
Dutch media published alarming reports about the soaring house prices in the capital this week – again. They state that it has become almost impossible for people with an average income to buy even a tiny apartment within the A 10 that surrounds the city centre. It looks like it will be solely inhabited by wealthy locals and foreigners in the very near future. To a certain extent the process has already taken place, several media reported. Some fear that

Amsterdam is heading towards a white centre surrounded by poor, coloured immigrant 'ghettos'. The average price for an apartment in the old centre of Amsterdam is now €300,000. There are several factors that contribute to the rocketing of the housing prices, which according to a real estate agent quoted in *NRC* are currently rising by 17% on a yearly basis. One, the phenomenon of 'inschrijving' has returned, which offers possible buyers the opportunity to make a bid per e-mail. Officially, potential buyers are not allowed to bid against each other. But because the e-mails are sent to estate agents rather than notaries, the temptation to not keep to the rules proves to be irresistible. 'Inschrijving' always drives real estate prices up. Secondly, the Amsterdam rental market is very strictly regulated. This has its roots in national his-

tory, or as *NRC* puts it, 'in the days that the social democrat workers were freed from their draughty little cellar homes where he and his family died of tuberculosis. In those days, a government subsidised rental system was introduced that offered the poor reasonable housing for an affordable price. The policy survived the Second World War and it is still in place. Amsterdam has a huge amount of government subsidised housing. According to the *NRC*, only 24% of all houses in the capital are owned by its inhabitants. Housing corporations own more than half of them. Combined with a growing demand for owner-occupied houses, this is another important price boosting factor. *De Volkskrant* reports that on top of that, not enough new houses are being built due to a shortage of building contractors.

Cohen wants to intervene when families cause inconvenience

AMSTERDAM | Mayor Job Cohen wants to be able to personally intervene when families cause nuisance to their surroundings, *het Parool* reported. He wants the authority for situations calling for placing children in a boarding school, something that currently only youth care can do. He plans to talk about the issue soon with Minister André Rouvoet (Youth and Family, CDA). Rouvoet reacted by saying that he wants to discuss the idea with the

Football player behind murders

AMSTERDAM | The 33-year-old Turkish Amsterdam resident Ali A., who has been in prison since April for commissioning several murders, has been identified as a well known amateur football player. According to *Het Parool*, Ali A. used to be the team captain of the amateur football club *Türkivenspor*

manager and trainer of SC Voorland deny in every possible way. They say they do not pay their football players.

The murder of the then 40-year-old İmaç took place in February in front of a restaurant in Osdorp, where dozens of his family members had gathered to celebrate the 20th birthday of his eldest son. At the time, the police suspected the murder to be con-