

City Hall Rotterdam
att. Mr. A. Aboutaleb
PO box 70012
3000 KP Rotterdam

Highly esteemed Mayor Aboutaleb, dear Ahmed,

In this letter we address you as the spirited connector of all citizens of Rotterdam that you have proven to be in the past years. As a true mayor of Rotterdam, our beautiful city full of contrasts. A city in which we feel at home as residents and active professionals. A tough city that is vulnerable at the same time and a city that requires confidence for the future. We want to invite you to take the lead on two important themes for its future; social resilience and the sustainable economy of Rotterdam.

First, we see that social contrast in our city is increasing. Contemporary politics tend to enlarge these differences with tough media language, often lacking any nuance. This is a worrisome tendency which puts the cities public domain under pressure if we avoid, distrust or even threaten each other. Then safety becomes the sole issue and curiosity disappears. Accessibility will be under pressure when encountering strangers is seen as a potential risk.

As designers of the city, we care about its public domain. It is important to keep a focus on what connects us and to investigate how our differences can enrich us. This is an important condition for a vivid urban public domain; the will to play, sport and share together. The city is a public place where we encounter 'the other' and learn from them. That is why there always has been so much creativity in the city: it is the pre-eminent place of exchange.

This exchange does not happen by itself. Keeping people connected requires a continuous effort. Exactly that is something in which you have shown to excel in like no other. Not by telling everyone what they like to hear, on the contrary; by discussing shared values, by maintaining norms and by being curious about the other person. Please continue these efforts with the same commitment!

Secondly, Rotterdam like no other Dutch city, largely depends on a fossil (port) economy. Its energy transition moves ahead slowly, only making small steps forward. On one hand it is understandable, because many people have to be included and need time to get accustomed to the major changes that are taking place today. However on the other hand, our time is running out. Without bigger steps forward we will not be able to shape a prosperous future for generations to come. Currently the satisfaction of short term interests, unjustly prevails over the long term benefits for our children and grandchildren.

It is our concern that we do not respond adequately to the global challenges because we are not moving fast enough. As advocates of the climate-adaptive city, we see an opportunity in the climate challenges to bring together ecology, liveability and solidarity in public space. Yet, as no other, we also know that adaptation alone will not suffice. If we do not make choices now, do not anticipate and innovate, then we will soon be condemned to only being able to react on what has already happened. This will severely pressurize the cities future employment and it will increase the breeding ground for social tensions.

It would be wise if in the coming years, Rotterdam would give ample room to the circular economy and transforms its port into a focal point for this future economy. To discover how this can be done best, many experiments and test locations are needed. Fortunately, experiments are no stranger to Rotterdam. Partly the soul of our city lies in experimentation and also the port has already several times in the past undertaken bold steps to give way to a new economy. Much of her success is the excitement and amazement about what is possible in Rotterdam. Let us therefore prepare the way for large and small experimental projects that - in the spirit of Rose, De Jongh, Witteveen and Bakker - will truly shape a circular economy.

The necessary transition to a circular economy is not just a technical file and it requires more than only regulation. Beyond politics, it is a social challenge that requires major transitions. This will need vision and courage as big steps forward, just like experiments, have an uncertain outcome. They are tense and scary for most people. They require confidence in the future and trust in each other; something which is not possible without solidarity.

This, dear mayor, is how we return to your core quality of the inspired connector. Beyond the everyday political issues, we invoke you to use your social talents to significantly accelerate the implementation of a circular economy in the interest of all "Rotterdamers". Especially for those who are not yet able to vote.

We would like to end by sharing our dream of a RESILIENT ROTTERDAM. And we look forward to a social, adaptive, circular, innovative, sparkling, watersensitive and bright future for our city.



*We live in a delta
in a city of high and low tide,
of ups and downs
of giving and taking
and everyone is welcome.*

*We dream together
in a warm bath
fueled by the city.*

*Rotterdam will be round
where nothing is lost
And all that is left
is a source for the new.*

Yours sincerely and with warm regards,

Florian Boer & Dirk van Peijpe