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## *Hilversum – green interior of the media*

### *City of the media*

Hilversum is a town with a population of 85 thousand people and now it is the 35<sup>th</sup> biggest town in Holland. It is located circa 30 kilometres south-east of Amsterdam with which it has connections by railway, road and canal network. Historic origins of the town date back to the Bronze Era as the first documented traces of culture flourishing in these areas come from that period. Its further development was connected with gaining the independence status in mediaeval times in 1424. The first period of turbulent development of the city took place in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when thanks to a network of canal connections with Amsterdam textile industry expanded there. The city owes its another period of development to the expansion of railways in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when rich people from Amsterdam started to settle down in villas surrounded by woods, thus forming the city's present character and its spatial shape.

At present Hilversum is mainly known as the Dutch capital of the radio and TV industry. It became the location of seats, studios and archives of several stations, national and commercial ones, what is worth emphasising, in a way that does not interfere with the identity of the town and its special villa character. It was made possible due to situating the buildings connected with radio and TV technology in a park area in the northern part of the city. The buildings erected with respecting the existing townscape were blended in with natural topography and flora of the terrain. Thanks to the size limitations and the respect towards the environment so characteristic of Dutch architecture as well as the use of sustainable solutions in designing, even the large-sized structures were successfully given the character referring to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century city tissue.

### *Pop culture and sustainable designing*

Buildings situated in the area of *the Media Park* as a comprehensive complex have become a part of the panorama of city which surrounds it. Nevertheless, each of them retains its own unique character which is visible in the structural shape, façade design as well as the way of interacting with the surroundings, according to James Wines who once said: 'potential variations of green architecture are infinite [...]' [2, p. 70]. Each building constitutes an individual response of a designer to the problem of combining features characteristic of the media stylistics of the pop culture era in one structure with simultaneous atten-

tion to harmony with surroundings that is typical of contemporary trends of sustainable designing. Architecture created in accordance with such assumptions is an attempt to form a spatial sign – icon for a company represented in this way with simultaneous blending with the terrain, thus co-creating the townscape of contemporary Hilversum. Relations with the surroundings are explicitly visible in each of the park buildings; nonetheless, it is interpreted in a specific manner characteristic of a given structure and its designer. The relation architecture – nature is realised through blending the building in with the terrain topography, using the roof panels as a continuation of the public space, transparency and permeating with the surroundings as well as introducing elements of nature into interiors – internal gardens.

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### *Blending with the terrain*

The building of RVU<sup>1</sup> station was one of the first which was constructed during the extension of the Media Park. The structure, which was realised in the years 1994–1997, became a reference to the subsequent realisations in this area [4]. The place selected for the construction of the seat of RVU station, according to the original land-use planning document, was intended to be an undeveloped ecological

corridor introduced between two intensively urbanised districts of Hilversum. However, the authors of the design – architects from MVRDV group – presented their vision of a building blended in with the natural inclination of the terrain, combined with the landscape and introducing nature into the urban tissue. In this way, the assumptions of the plan were satisfied by the unique character of the green roof covering the entire area of the building. At the same time, this area constitutes a continuation of the public space and serves as a viewing point for the area of the Media Park and from the side of the street it does not reveal the cubature hidden underneath. From the side of the green areas, the existence of the building is disclosed by the façade which was suspended above the ground on the network of slender steel posts. This arrangement makes the building look ‘wrapped up’ by the green area from underneath, from above and from side façades and thus it seems to be penetrated by the surroundings (Fig. 1).

<sup>1</sup> RVU – Radio Volks Universiteit (Folk University Radio) – the oldest Dutch radio station existing under this name in the years 1931–2010. This station, established in 1930 by the Dutch Association of Folk Universities, was given a license in 1931 and in 1932 it was transformed into a public media. In 1983 RVU also appeared on TV with some educational programmes broadcast by station Nederland 2, and later Nederland 3. Now, starting from 2010 RV is a part of NTR group (the name comes from the first letters of the broadcasters: NPS, Teleac and RVU). The mission of RVU remains unchanged since its beginnings – broadcasting informative and educational programmes as well as improving social relations.

### *Intermingling, transparency, reflection*

The principle of architecture intermingling with the landscape – or permeating the landscape – was also used in the project of another building designed in Hilversum by the MVRDV group – Villa VPRO<sup>2</sup> from 1997 [6]. Along with the seat of RVU station, this building constitutes a type of a specific gate to the park. This time the structure was composed of several combined forms which, similarly to the historical development of this district, were situated among the green areas. The effect of permeating with the landscape was achieved due to the employment of trans-

parent, glassed façades. Surrounding nature permeates inside, can be observed from there and it constitutes a background for the transparent building. The building, similarly to RVU, blends with the terrain using its natural land form. Slabs of ferroconcrete ceilings that cut into the building on various heights crossing the façades constitute multi-layer connections with levels of its grassy foundation. The solution that was used here consisted in the effect of floating above the ground, as it was in the case of the RVU seat arrangement. However, here it was realized by curving and elevating the ceiling of the second floor over ground, thus freeing the space between the floors of the building and at the same time augmenting its lightness. This allowed for making this part of the building completely translucent by permitting the landscape to totally filter in its interiors. Also in this case the building was covered by a green roof, which makes its volume blend in with the surroundings and constitute their continuation (Fig. 3).

Another building of the Media Park is *Beeld en Geluid Instituut* (the Netherlands' Institute for Sound and Vision)<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 2, 3) designed by the studio Neutelings Riedijk Architects in 2003. The buildings discussed above constituted a continuation of the park as they were located at the meeting point of the green areas and the exclusive historical residential district. It was reflected in their simple form, in harmony with the surroundings. The Institute, which is an archive of the Dutch television achievements, was situated in the corner of the development quarter on the outskirts of the park. From the south it ends the line of halls of an industrial character used for film production purposes,



Fig. 1. RVU station group, MVRDV, Hilversum 1994–1997. Source: [7]

Il. 1. Siedziba radia RVU, MVRDV, Hilversum 1994–1997. Źródło: [7]

<sup>2</sup> VPRO – Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep (Liberal Protestant Radio Station) – started its activities in Holland in 1926 as a religious radio. In the 1950s and 1960s the religious character of this station was changed into a secular, social and liberal character and the station began to broadcast television programmes. At present its programmes are considered to be mostly connected with culture. Similarly to all the public media in Holland, it has no permanent channel.

<sup>3</sup> Beeld en Geluid Instituut (Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision) – it is one of the biggest European audio-visual archives. The building contains about 800 thousand hours of materials coming from the Dutch radio and television programmes, which constitutes over 80% of the national heritage in this domain.



Fig. 2. Institute for Sound and Vision, Neutelings Riedijk Architects, Hilversum, 2003 (photo by P. Haupt, 2011)

II. 2. Institute for Sound and Vision, Neutelings Riedijk Architects, Hilversum, 2003 (fot. P. Haupt, 2011)



Fig. 3. Institute for Sound and Vision, Neutelings Riedijk Architects, Hilversum, 2003 (photo by P. Haupt, 2011)

II. 3. Institute for Sound and Vision, Neutelings Riedijk Architects, Hilversum, 2003 (fot. P. Haupt, 2011)

whereas from the east it borders on the main thoroughfare leading to the central part of the town. Due to this location the building – from the side of the park – has the features which were observed earlier in the case of RVU and VPRO stations such as transparency and blending with the surroundings, whereas in the part which is closer to the intensively urbanized zone the building has a totally different appearance. Its cubic form, namely, a cube which is half-hidden in the terrain, is covered by three glass panels on three sides with a colourful inscription. They constitute elements of a two-coat climatic façade [2] the purpose

of which was to introduce a sustainable character into the realisation. At the same time, this way of arranging the façade contributed to the artistic expression of the building which is associated with a colourful stylistics of the media message. The wall situated on the side of green areas was shaped differently. It was glazed and it opens to the fragment of reconstructed natural landscape with a water reservoir. Thanks to this solution, which is augmented due to the gradually lowered floor of the auditorium zone, nature seems to filter in the building hall, thus constituting an element of its interior spatial composition [4].

### *Green interior of the media*

The building of Media Headquarters designed by team Ector Hoogstad Architecten, as the previous ones, serves the media – television stations AVRO<sup>4</sup>, KRO<sup>5</sup> and NCRV<sup>6</sup> being with harmony with the surroundings of Hilversum. The building erected in 2000, according to its designer, constitutes an attempt to blend in a large volume structure with the suburban park and villa zone of Hilversum [5]. About 35 thousand square metres of the building's usable area constitute a segmented four-storey structure divided by inner courtyards. Each of them opens to the park area by means of the glass façade and in this way the landscape filters inside the building. Additionally, each atrium has its

own inner garden designed by the group of WEST 8 landscape architects. In the geometrical cracks of the floor high bamboo trees were planted with tunnel passages through them – cosy spots of the interior of the building filled with its users. They constitute a continuation of nature that per-



Fig. 4. Media Headquarters, Ector Hoogstad Architecten, Hilversum, 2000. Source: [5]

II. 4. Media Headquarters, Ector Hoogstad Architecten, Hilversum, 2000. Źródło: [5]

<sup>4</sup> AVRO – Algemene Vereniging Radio Omroep (General Radio Broadcasting Association) – public association of stations, mainly radio stations. Within the framework of this organisation the Dutch stations such as Radio 1, Radio 2, 3 FM and Radio 5 broadcast their programmes. The association also deals with producing over 20 serial television programmes.

<sup>5</sup> KRO – Katholieke Radio Omroep (Catholic Radio Station) – it is a public station which started broadcasting on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1925. At present, it broadcasts mainly television programmes of a religious character propagating the image of the Catholic Church in Holland.

<sup>6</sup> NCRV – Nederlandse Christelijke Radio Vereniging (Dutch Christian Radio Association) – at present, since 1951 this public organisation mainly has dealt with producing and broadcasting television programmes which are shown on channels Nederland 1 and Nederland 2 for the general audience.

meates inside and also form parts of the system improving the quality of air in the entire building. The interior compositional effect turned out to be so attractive aesthetically

that some of the programmes are broadcast from the green courtyard interiors and the work of reporters can be observed from the first floor gallery (Fig. 4).

### Summary and conclusions

Analysing the spatial development of *the Media Park* in Hilversum, we can notice that sustainable solutions have been used there since the 1990s. The land-use planning document that introduced an ecological corridor into the town centre was respected by the subsequent investors and designers acting in this area. We can conclude that the philosophy of sustainable development is present at each stage of an investment – designing, building and using [1]. Thanks to this manner of thinking, it turns out that pro-ecological architecture and town planning are suitable for each domain of life, even the one that is associated with mass culture so much as the media. When we look at realisations of the buildings associated with the radio industry,

we can observe that introducing sustainable solutions in arranging buildings and urban interiors does not limit the designers, but it enriches their projects. Due to interacting with nature, architecture acquires a new aesthetic dimension. In the process, also the public space achieves a new expression because it is treated by users as a friendly place which is suitable for social contacts. The example of Hilversum also shows that, when pursuing a new character of architecture, it is possible to achieve an attractive modern spatial form simultaneously preserving the identity of the place with the image of the town, its development and its green areas.

Translated by  
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### Hilversum – zielone wnętrze mediów

Hilversum znane jest głównie jako holenderska stolica przemysłu radiofonicznego i telewizyjnego. Zlokalizowano tam siedziby, studia oraz archiwa kilkunastu stacji – państwowych i komercyjnych, a co warto podkreślić w sposób nie naruszający tożsamości miasta oraz jego szczególnego, willowego charakteru. Stało się to możliwe dzięki usytuowaniu budynków powiązanych z techniką radiowo-telewizyjną na terenie o charakterze parkowym wyznaczonym w północnej części miasta. Budowle powstałe w poszanowaniu istniejącego krajobrazu wpisano w naturalną topografię i roślinność terenu. Dzięki ograniczeniom gabarytowym, a także właściwemu dla współczesnej architektury holenderskiej poszanowaniu środowiska, dzięki stosowaniu rozwiązań zrównoważonych w projektowaniu, udało się nadać nawet dużym obiektom kubaturowy charakter nawiązujący do XIX-wiecznej tkanki miasta. Budynki na terenie Parku Mediów jako zespół stanowią całość wpisującą się w pejzaż otaczającego je miasta. Niemniej jednak każdy z nich prezentuje swój własny, unikalny charakter widoczny w kształcie bryły,

kompozycji elewacji, a także sposobu interakcji z otoczeniem. Każda z budowli stanowi indywidualną odpowiedź twórcy na problem połączenia w jednej strukturze cech charakterystycznych dla stylistyki mediów ery popkultury, przy równoczesnym zachowaniu harmonii z otoczeniem właściwej dla współczesnych trendów projektowania zrównoważonego. Architektura powstała zgodnie z takimi założeniami jest próbą stworzenia znaku przestrzennego – ikony dla reprezentowanej w ten sposób firmy, równocześnie współgrając z terenem, współtworząc miejski krajobraz współczesnego Hilversum. Powiązanie z otoczeniem odczuwalne jest w każdym z budynków Parku, niemniej jednak interpretowane jest ono w swoisty, charakterystyczny dla danego obiektu i jego twórcy sposób. Relacja architektura–natura realizowana jest poprzez wpisanie budynku w topografię terenu, wykorzystanie płaszczyzn dachu jako kontynuacji przestrzeni publicznej, transparentność i przenikanie z otoczeniem, a także poprzez wprowadzenie do wnętrza elementów przyrody – ogrodów wewnętrznych.

**Key words:** architecture of media, city park, sustainable architecture, sustainable interior

**Słowa kluczowe:** architektura mediów, park miejski, architektura zrównoważona, zrównoważone wnętrze