
High street regeneration in Rotterdam: How a local alliance turned an inner-city commercial street from no-go to must-visit

Received (in revised form): 15th July, 2022

Ad Hereijgers

Director, RITTERWALD Consulting B.V., The Netherlands

Ad Hereijgers is Business Development Director at RITTERWALD, a pan-European real estate consultancy with offices in Berlin, Frankfurt, Amsterdam and London. He is a housing economist and urban planner and studied at the University of Amsterdam and City University of New York. He has extensive experience in urban regeneration and affordable housing in the Netherlands, Europe and the US. Ad's professional career spans over 35 years. Prior to joining RITTERWALD he was a partner in a boutique consultancy companies for housing and urban planning in Amsterdam, New York and Rotterdam. He serves as trusted boardroom adviser, project director for public-private partnerships and joint ventures. Ad teaches masterclasses on sustainable housing finance and place-based investment strategies for professionals, is author of several books and numerous articles, and a regular speaker at conferences.

RITTERWALD Consulting, B.V., Beurs van Berlage, Damrak 353, 1012 ZJ Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Tel: +31 (0)20 208 2174; Mob: +31 (0)6531 38744; E-mail: ad.hereijgers@ritterwald.nl

Abstract Dedicated leadership from local businesspeople and long-term commitment of resources by major stakeholders such as social landlords and municipalities can best solve persistent social and economic problems in high streets, even if the problems originate in wider urban society. Rotterdam, Europe's port city, is a case in point and the regeneration approach developed in the area of West-Kruiskade in Rotterdam is an interesting case to study and learn from. This urban regeneration project demonstrates that success takes time (think decades, not years), requires a comprehensive contract at the start (trust is good, a binding contract is better), dedicated leadership (personal commitment as a crucial skill set), businesslike decision making (acting from the heart) and finally aiming for the best (no compromises, better safe than sorry). The project also demonstrates that urban regeneration requires continuous attention to remain successful after everyone considers the project completed. This last observation is important to enable local businesspeople to keep up the good work if the major stakeholders dial back their resources.

Keywords: *urban regeneration, urban policy, business improvement districts, public-private partnerships, social impact assessment, sustainable finance, local economic development, urban governance, gentrification, public space*

INTRODUCTION

From our childhood we all remember streets to avoid — at least if you followed your parents' advice. This paper is about West-Kruiskade, for a long time such a street in the inner city of Rotterdam,

Europe's port city. West-Kruiskade today is a vibrant 1km commercial pedestrian-friendly street with primarily authentic multi-ethnic stores and restaurants. It is in the 19th-century residential neighbourhood of Old West Side, just a

few minutes' walk from the Central train station that connects Rotterdam with London, Brussels and Paris.

The situation was totally different in 2009. It was then a no-go area. It felt unsafe because of drug dealers and drug users on almost every street corner. Properties looked dilapidated. In bars and 'specialist' independent stores the main business model was selling drugs. Many storefronts did not invite customers to come in. The unique multigenerational family-owned stores (hardware, butcher, baker, seafood, among others) were struggling because their city-wide customers no longer wanted to visit them.

In 2009 the major stakeholders, the municipality, property owners (majority of properties owned by housing association Woonstad Rotterdam) and the local business association decided that the situation was no longer tenable, and that the area needed to be radically transformed. Other old neighbourhoods across Rotterdam were booming and Rotterdam was working on a major make-over of its downtown, especially its welcoming area for international visitors, the Central train station district, around two minutes' walk from the entrance of West-Kruiskade. This sense of urgency resulted in a dedicated and unique urban regeneration effort which still reverberates today.¹

As a housing economist and urban planner, I had the honour to work on this urban regeneration for eight years (2009–17). Today I am still an ambassador, together with all the people who made this project a success. More importantly, 13 years on, it remains successful, in part due to additional efforts in street management by dedicated people. Those involved from the beginning to the present time have been willing to share their latest insights with me in preparing this paper.

To make this urban regeneration case study accessible and understandable for

the international readership, this paper is divided into five sections: from start to finish (what happened in chronological order, also shown in a timeline with milestones), the implementation scheme itself (how it happened, how funds were deployed and how the long-term commitment was agreed upon) and — most importantly — the *Alliantie West-Kruiskade* (hereafter 'the Alliance', the dedicated team who made it happen). The fourth section looks at the impact assessment of the implementation scheme (did it work). The paper concludes with lessons learned and the unique opportunities to leverage the UK Levelling Up Agenda.

FROM START TO FINISH: EIGHT YEARS OF DEDICATION IN A NUTSHELL

Timeline

The timeline in Table 1 shows a selection of annual strategic milestones and key outcomes that are elaborated in this paper.²

Project groundwork and launch: Public safety as the highest priority (2008–10)

Quirky neighbourhood

Old West Side is a residential neighbourhood, developed by private investors in the 19th century. In the 1970s and 1980s, it underwent intense urban renewal with a mix of demolition, new construction and renovations almost exclusively as social housing. Next in the neighbourhood's life cycle was the 2002 publication of the neighbourhood vision 2030, which significantly acknowledged the multi-ethnic population.³

This resulted in 2009 in an updated vision prepared by the City of Rotterdam, the inner-city community board, Woonstad Rotterdam (housing

Table 1: The timeline for the urban regeneration of West Kruiskade

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
STRATEGIC MILESTONES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood Vision Implementation scheme West-Kruiskade 2010 – 2013 10-year agreement Municipality and housing association 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First evaluation of 10-year agreement Market analysis for properties around squares. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City starts Tiendplein and Kruisplein project teams for the redevelopment of public spaces. Woonstad's investment decision to renovate commercial properties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal proceeding Alliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome evaluation that Alliance should proceed in 2014 and 2015. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final transfer agreement the Alliance to BID. The Alliance reassigned the management to both BID of property owners and users, whereby the municipality and Woonstad showed commitment with financial contributions.
KEY IMPLEMENTATIONS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic acquisitions finalised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SME recognition through the Shopping Street of the Year award. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start of 39 (!) episodes of the television series "The secret of West-Kruiskade". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive review in Lonely Planet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision making process squares; Tiendplein and Kruisplein: for the renovation of commercial properties, as well as the refurbishment of the public spaces and the long anticipated crowdpullers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BID applicable to West-Kruiskade Launch of pilot project: <i>Anders Geregeld</i> in which regulatory pressure was reduced for retailers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refurbishment of Tiendplein and Kruisplein completed. 	

association) in consultation with residents and activist community organisations. This vision showed the ambition to make the neighbourhood more attractive for current and new residents who prefer a cosmopolitan lifestyle. One of the main principles was to cherish and strengthen authenticity, both in 'hardware' (urban design and architectural style), 'software' (avoiding retail chains, local cultural venues) and 'orgware' (engagement in and by local community).

However, there was one huge obstacle before one could start implementing this vision: the lack of community safety. In 2009 the Old West Side was the most unsafe neighbourhood in Rotterdam with a score of 3.5 (out of 10) on the

city-wide safety index — an absolute low point.⁴ The municipality was aiming for a minimum score of 5.5 in 2010. It became obvious that the hardcore problems were concentrated at West-Kruiskade, also called the 'axis of evil', referring to the nuisance suffered by residents and retailers associated with long-time drug dealing in the whole neighbourhood.

Low point created the sense of urgency

The persistent low score of the safety index was the wake-up call for all major stakeholders: the municipality, including the police, largest property owner Woonstad Rotterdam, retailers

and residents. Moreover, the municipality was regenerating the Central train station district and could simply not allow West-Kruiskade to remain the rotten apple. The 2009 neighbourhood vision aimed to attract more affluent residents to the inner city, which still showed features of a traditional central business district (CBD): primarily commercial land use, minority residential land use with subsequent inbound and outbound daily commutes. West-Kruiskade's crime record and how it was perceived was blocking progress to delivering city-wide policies. The latter also motivated housing association Woonstad Rotterdam; falling property values at West-Kruiskade were negatively affecting values of their residential portfolio in the Old West Side. The city's law enforcement felt frustrated; with extra capacity the police could temporarily reduce the nuisance from drug dealing, but the dealers were constantly returning. Retailers and residents were increasingly negatively affected by the bad image. Customers from other parts of the city stayed away because they felt unsafe. As a consequence, the shopping area was in rapid decline, also lacking basic neighbourhood amenities such as a supermarket within walking distance.

Implementation scheme West-Kruiskade 2010–13

The low point in the safety index and the tailwind of the robust and broadly supported 2009 neighbourhood vision resulted in a comprehensive implementation scheme for West-Kruiskade, prepared and immediately decided upon in spring 2009.⁵ The scheme addressed three specific goals: improving public safety, creating a better shopping area, and making West-Kruiskade a destination again through refurbishing public spaces and attractive restaurants. The rationale was simple: a

safe and viable commercial street with high-quality public space would increase the satisfaction rate among residents and therefore would also attract more visitors from outside, some of whom would return as loyal customers. Ultimately West-Kruiskade (see Figure 1) would contribute to the upgrade of Rotterdam's inner city.

Alliantie West-Kruiskade (hereafter: Alliance) was born

The sense of urgency and the implementation scheme was endorsed in a ten-year agreement between the municipality and the housing association with active endorsement of the local business association. In January 2010, the Alliance was formally established. It is a street management organisation governed by the City of Rotterdam as well as Woonstad Rotterdam, with the mission to implement the scheme according to time and budgetary capacities. The most urgent focus was on improving public safety, thereby working in close cooperation with the different law enforcement departments (police, taxes, permits, etc.). At the same time, the Alliance started physical improvements of retail spaces (defined in the city-sponsored Economic Action Plan as part of the Implementation Scheme), followed in later years by investments in the public space.

One of the first successful achievements of the Alliance was the strategic acquisition of four bars that had been causing a nuisance for a long time. This confronted the drug-dealing business and was an important signal to the outside world that this time the stakeholders were very serious and determined. In another signal to the drug-dealing community, the Alliance established its own field office in one of the 'conquered' bars centrally at the heart of the community, sending the message: 'we are watching you 24/7'. This

also improved the comfort level of the retailers, who still faced hard economic times but were determined to survive. A key role was played by a handful of ‘old timers’ — very experienced family businesses that had already been trading in ‘survival mode’ for quite a long time.

Renovation: The first new retailers move in (2011–13)

The Alliance made an energetic start with the execution of the city-sponsored Economic Action Plan.⁶ This plan had to accommodate a better shopping area (one of the three goals of the Implementation Scheme). The Economic Action Plan was built on four pillars: interior

improvements, diversifying retail, image building, and enhancing the quality of entrepreneurship.

In 2009, all storefronts were assessed on their appearance by an appointed architect.⁷ The outcome was a priority list of improvements related to burglar proofing, attractive windows, awnings, façade advertising and lighting and open shutters — very important for pedestrians to feel safe at night (see Figure 2).

About the same time, the Alliance commissioned a new plan to diversify retail (via branching).⁸ The result can be summarised in four geographical ‘taste clusters/shopping spheres’: international food (close to the Central station), body and soul (across main street),

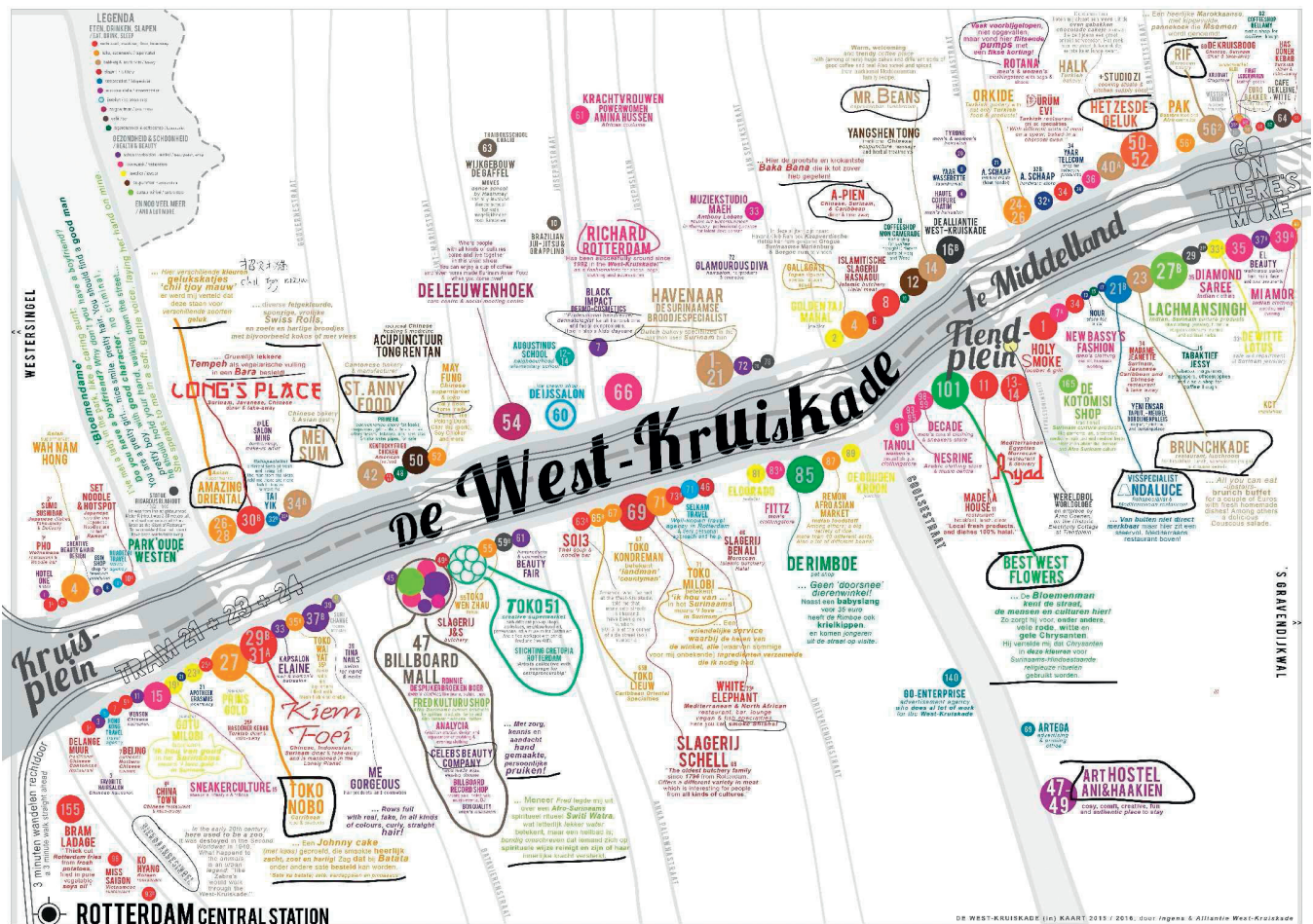


Figure 1: Artist impression of West-Kruiskade

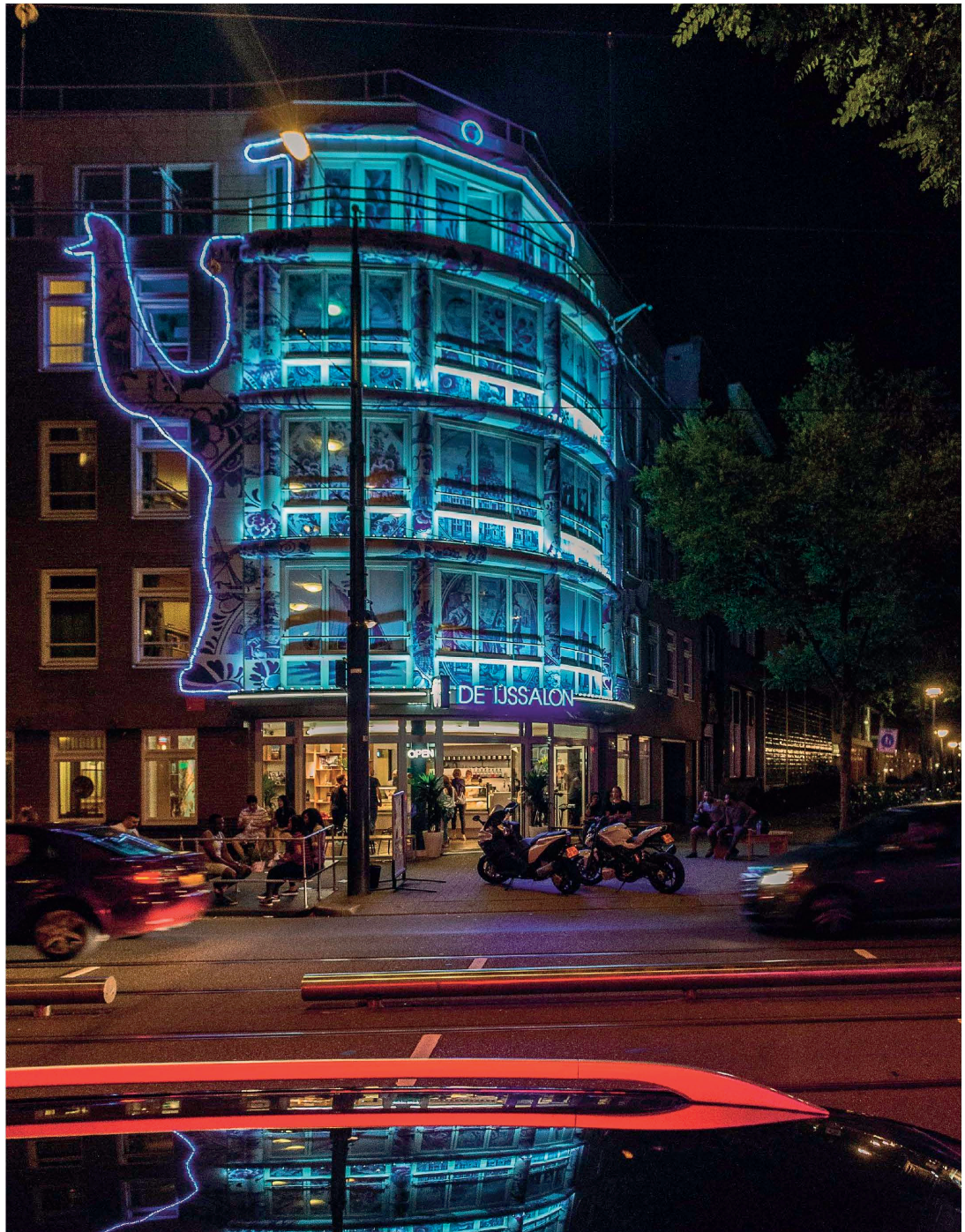


Figure 2: Ice cream parlour by night

daily convenience and specials (across main street), and 'lounge' (cafes and restaurants located around squares). This plan provided guidance in attracting new retailers to vacant stores and

(voluntary) relocations. The guidance and selection were managed by an Alliance-led commission with current retailers represented by the local business association.

Image building was addressed by the local business association (and later by the Business Improvement District [BID]). It was focused on raising awareness and promoting good news stories, starting with a small scope. People remember bad news longer than good news, and for this reason every piece of good news was well promoted. The sooner bad memories were replaced, the better.

Local entrepreneurship was encouraged by the Alliance by actively supporting the volunteer board of the local business association. With some help from a couple of loyal local retailers, the business association was rebuilt from scratch and was prepared for its future role in West-Kruiskade as a BID. This was a steep learning curve that took a lot of energy and perseverance. A diverse group of retailers with different cultural backgrounds had to build the BID after their stores closing hours.

Towards the tipping point: Public spaces returned to residents (2014–18)

Although the stakeholders' commitment was legally binding for ten years, in the first instance the mutual financial commitments had a duration of four years, reflecting the political cycle of local elections. This was beneficial for the intermediate evaluations and kept everyone aware of the measurable progress that should be made. The ten-year agreement stated that ultimately on 1st July, 2013, parties had to evaluate the first four-year period of the cooperation. Based on the outcome, the parties had to agree to proceed with the implementation scheme, organisational capacities and budget for the period 2014–17. This procedure was to be repeated from 2018 through to the end of 2019.

The outcome of the first evaluation was that all stakeholders were proud of the achievements after only three years.

However, the tipping point, the irreversible change for the better, had not yet been reached. Although the safety index had improved (5.3 in 2013), the public safety situation was still volatile. Several properties had been renovated, but the properties around the two public squares (Tiendplein and Kruisplein, the hotspots of drug dealing) were still on the to-do list. This was also the reason the new destination for visitors still had not materialised. The business association was still lacking sufficient capacities to consider taking over some tasks from the Alliance. The Alliance kept its mandate until at least the end of 2015. The stakeholders also decided to carry out another evaluation in 2015.

The outcome of the 2015 evaluation was that progress was still being made. However, the improvements in this phase were more difficult than expected. It was harder to attract new café/bars and restaurants due to strict city-wide licensing regulations. Also, the business association needed a lot of energy preparing the BID (much legal paperwork and many governance issues to be solved) and awaited new national legislation.^{9,10} The tipping point was now expected by the end of 2015. By this time the city would also finish the refurbishment of the Central station district which would support the regeneration of West-Kruiskade.¹¹

In 2016 and 2017, the Alliance could start working on the final major goal: making West-Kruiskade into a destination again. This would also represent a visible milestone for the outside world. Two public squares, Kruisplein near the Central station and Tiendplein in the centre, were not only being refurbished with unique artworks, but well-known and successful restaurant owners also opened new businesses around these squares.

Reaching the long-awaited tipping point was key, because that would allow the Alliance to make a shift from a very

intense method of street management to more regular management. It would also change the role of the Alliance, which could start to hand over selected roles and responsibilities to the BID. In all situations, public safety would remain the responsibility of local government.

In 2016 and 2017, the Alliance identified three tasks: permanent tasks (securing public safety and property management that, as of 2018, would be handed back to the City of Rotterdam, namely Woonstad Rotterdam); tasks that could be completed (final property renovations and refurbishment squares); and tasks that could be handed over to the BID (regular street management including marketing and promotion and selection new retailers, among others).

As of 2018, the Alliance handed over some of its tasks to the business association, which by then had officially organised itself into a BID and established three working committees (see Table 2). The most important goal was to retain the successes of the Alliance related to local economic development. The handover from the Alliance to the BID was arranged in an agreement with the BID, City of Rotterdam and Woonstad Rotterdam.

... and today

Feedback from active stakeholders from the start and those still involved today

was organised by the author at a working lunch in April 2022. During this small reunion, experiences were shared. The good news is that the city, the housing association and the retailers are still proud of what they have achieved over time. The critical success factor is the ten-year commitment upfront. However, West-Kruiskade is an ongoing project — a feature of regeneration in urban areas. This also highlights the challenges of today’s stakeholders: the exit after ten years came too early, even if it was introduced in several steps. Exit in this context refers to the phasing out of the local dedicated street management organisation. Stakeholders mention this as an important lesson for similar projects in the Netherlands and other countries: stipulating not only the long-term commitment upfront but also the timing and method of phasing out is key to the project’s success. And in all honesty, there can be no exit of major stakeholders: they have to remain on side, although may be required to contribute fewer resources and capacities.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEME 2010–13: HOW GOALS WERE ADDRESSED

Cost

Urban regeneration always commences with high costs in the short term and, if successful, exits with higher revenues in

Table 2: Changing roles of alliance over time

	2010–2013	2014–2015	2016–2017	2018 and beyond
Mission	Improving safety and spurring economic development	Wrap up active support to retailers	Alliance/Business Improvement District (BID)	BID
Focus	Safety	Economic development and safety	Economic development and safety	Economic development
Street management	Project-based	Intensive	Regular	Regular

Source: Ritterwald

the long term. Both costs and revenues must be seen in terms of financial return and social impact. This is also the case with West-Kruiskade. One makes a distinction between capital expenditures (Capex), the actual investments, and operational expenditures, in this case the cost of running the Alliance (Opex).

Capex

From 2010 through 2017, West-Kruiskade received total investments of approx. €10.0m. As Table 3 shows, the allocation between stakeholders is as follows: Woonstad Rotterdam circa 45 per cent, City of Rotterdam 30 per cent and retailers 25 per cent. Looking at the use of proceeds, 14 per cent was spent on strategic property acquisitions, 70 per cent on improving commercial properties and 15 per cent on refurbishing the two public spaces.

Opex

As Table 4 shows, over the ten-year period 2010–19, all stakeholders spent around €4.5m, of which €0.28m (6 per cent) in 2018–19 related to the BID costs. The latter was split between the City of Rotterdam (€0.155m) and the BID (€0.130m). Of the €4.2m (94 per

cent) of the Alliance-related costs, there was an almost equal split between City of Rotterdam (including the inner-city community board) and housing association Woonstad Rotterdam. The governance structure of the Alliance allowed it to build reserves if the annual budget could not be spent in the accounting year due to delays (permits, zoning) and/or change of plans. This vote of confidence was made possible by regular, detailed financial reporting to the major stakeholders and a conservative attitude towards expenses and revenues. Although the Alliance had high-level exposure, the finances were kept straightforward to maximise understanding and transparency, with no superfluous frills.

Public safety improvements

Improvement of public safety was spearheaded by intense and permanent law enforcement on the street. In addition, forced by the circumstances, the municipality made six strategic commercial property acquisitions: four bars, a laundry and a food store. In these properties, drug dealing had become the prevailing business model. These acquisitions were passed on to the balance sheet of Woonstad Rotterdam and property management was delivered by the Alliance.

Table 3: Investments in commercial properties and public space West-Kruiskade 2010–17 in EUR

	Woonstad Rotterdam	City of Rotterdam	Individual retailers	TOTAL
Strategic acquisitions commercial properties	820,000	600,000		1,420,000
Renovations of privately-owned commercial properties		1,000,000	2,500,000	3,500,000
Renovations commercial properties owned by Woonstad Rotterdam	3,100,000			3,100,000
Vacancy costs commercial properties owned by Woonstad Rotterdam	700,000			700,000
Refurbishment public space Tiendplein		1,350,000		1,350,000
Refurbishment public space Kruisplein		150,000		150,000
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	4,620,000	3,100,000	2,500,000	10,220,000

Source: Alliantie West-Kruiskade 2017

Table 4: Operating results of the alliance 2010–17 and budget BID 2018–19

Operating Results of the Alliance 2010–2017 in EUR										BID	BID
REVENUES	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL	2018	2019
City of Rotterdam	203.000	200.000	200.000	150.000	188.750	187.500	160.000	90.000	1,379,250	115.000	40.000
<i>Department of Public Safety</i>			50.000		85.000		35.000	35.000			
<i>EU-National Urban Renewal Grants</i>		150.000	150.000	150.000							
<i>Department of Economic Development</i>	203.000	50.000			103.750	187.500	125.000	55.000			
Community Board Downtown Rotterdam	150.000	150.000	150.000	150.000	93.750				693.750		
Woonstad Rotterdam (housing association)	248.043	450.000	342.000	322.000	275.000	225.000	160.000	90.000	2,112,043		
Businessmen Association/Business Improvement District										90.000	40.000
Additional contributions		13.525				66.700			80.225		
TOTAL REVENUES	601.043	813.525	692.000	622.000	557.500	479.200	320.000	180.000	4,265,268	205.000	80.000
TOTAL EXPENSES	601.043	791.930	576.259	609.289	586.394	526.837	317.455	256.061	4,265,268	205.000	80.000
OPERATING RESULT	0	21.595	115.741	12.711	-28.894	-47.637	2.545	-76.061			
		21.594	115.741	12.711	-28.894	-47.637	2.545				
End of year reserves	0	21.595	137.336	150.047	121.153	73.516	76.061				
	0	21.594	137.335	150.046	121.152	73.515	76.060				

Source: Alliantie West-Kruiskade 2017

Strategic acquisitions were a repressive measure as a last resort when all other enforcement turned out to be insufficient. It was supported by the mayor in a joint effort with numerous other law enforcement units (taxes, permits and social security, among others). Costs were also considered concerning the acquisition of the property and the operating business. The nature of some of the businesses resulted in higher valuations and compensation to owners. In these situations, the city proceeded to show the outside world that inside drug dealing was no longer tolerated. This had a deterrent effect. The decisive factor was ultimately the social added value. The uneconomic cost of these acquisitions was approx. €0.6m (see Table 3).

Other measures promoting safety were immediate response to all sorts of nuisance (illegal sublets, graffiti, vandalism), legal screening of new owners and operators of pubs with leases

stipulating a private person is always held responsible, and retailers being encouraged to apply for a store safety label. In addition to these defensive measures, the Alliance also started social empowerment projects for youth, providing internships at the local care centre, local stores and the Alliance itself.¹² The project also offered pocket money for carrying out small chores. The important goal was to keep youth away from the drug scene. What also turned out to be effective was playing classical music in public spaces, discouraging young people from lengthy loitering.

Creating a better shopping area

This goal was packaged in the city-sponsored Economic Action Plan as part of the Implementation Scheme 2010–13.

For interior improvements, 80 retailers used the grant programme of the Economic Action Plan (51 with a grant, 29 without because non-eligible).

The grant covered a maximum of 40 per cent of the eligible cost to a maximum of €40,000. Many retailers used the grant to replace closed ‘graffiti shutters’ with open shutters (see Figure 3). The Alliance supported the retailers in the application process and after the grant budget was exhausted, the Alliance opened a one-time grant opportunity with some extra funds (unlocked from their modest reserves).

As a private not-for-profit company, housing association Woonstad Rotterdam was not eligible for the publicly funded Economic Action Plan, therefore the association paid the total cost of the renovations. They completed 80 gut renovations of commercial properties, including the ones at the two squares: Kruisplein and Tiendplein (see Table 3).

For retail branching there was a new branching plan. Over the years many stores have been changed and contributed to more diversified and better-quality retail.

The Alliance and the business association worked actively on image building in several ways: newsletters and events that reflected the multi-ethnic character, such as celebrations of Chinese New Year, Keti Koti (Surinam independence of slavery), Summer

Carnival (Caribbean), Eid al-Fitr (Islam). They also organised a culinary route,¹³ designed a lighting plan for selected properties and playful signage to guide visitors to West-Kruiskade. This has drawn the attention of local and national media.

Further positive images of the area were generated by the iconic television series *Het Geheim van de West-Kruiskade* (The Secret of West-Kruiskade),¹⁴⁻¹⁶ featuring almost every individual store owner and many others. This encouraged many retailers to join the BID. It gave a good insight into how this urban regeneration project was affecting everyone’s daily life. It was broadcast on regional television with an average audience of 200,000 per episode.

To be ready for the future in which the street could be managed by the retailers themselves, enhancement of entrepreneurship was actively encouraged, initially through coaching by third parties, later by continuous learning from each other. Being an entrepreneur at West-Kruiskade was a roller coaster in an urban jungle and was perceived as a crash course in economic survival. By analogy with New York: if you can survive West-Kruiskade, you can survive anywhere (see Figure 4).

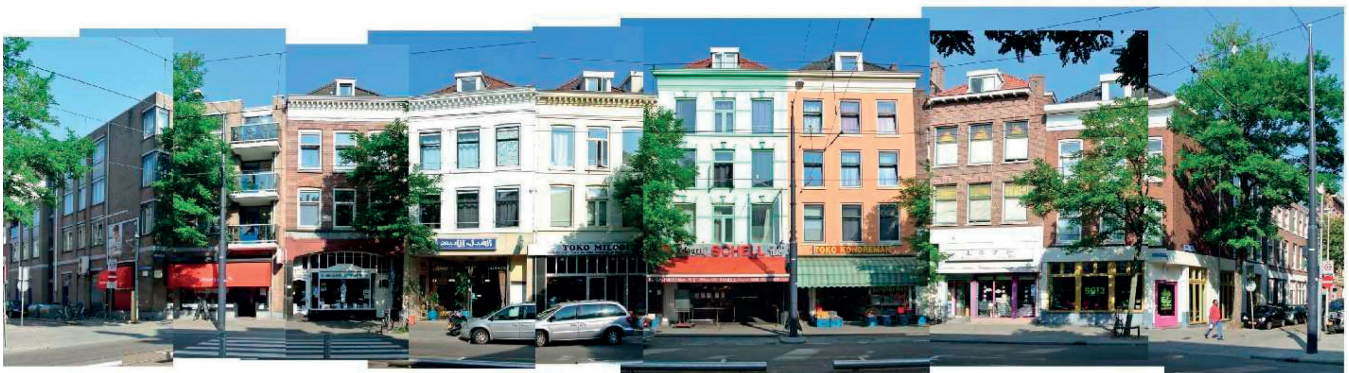


Figure 3: Typical store facades in West-Kruiskade



Figure 4: The downtown area adjacent to West-Kruiskade

ALLIANCE WEST-KRUISKADE: THE TEAM WHO MADE IT HAPPEN

Assignment

In the ten-year agreement, the City and housing association Woonstad Rotterdam decided that a dedicated management organisation for commercial properties was key to improve public safety and to spur local economic development. Woonstad Rotterdam handed over its local property management responsibilities to the Alliance; the legal title stayed with the owner. In the initial years, the Alliance communicated intensively with the retailers.

After one year, the first evaluation took place. The reason was the intentional

decision not to establish a separate legal entity for the Alliance until conditions supported this approach. The outcome of the evaluation was to continue as before, because the Alliance made very good progress and retailers were very satisfied with the support they received. However, the evaluation also identified that the Alliance was still fragile and vulnerable. Fragile because after the initial successes (strategic acquisitions, executing Economic Action Plan with first visible results), the actual works still needed to be delivered to stay in control of public safety and attracting and retaining better retailers. Also vulnerable because West-Kruiskade still needed to become a new destination for residents and visitors.

Business association

Although the Alliance was based on a formal agreement between the City of Rotterdam and Woonstad Rotterdam, from day one the local business association played a key role. In the first instance, it was very instrumental in the initial success of the Alliance. The Economic Action Plan also helped the business association to gain a more prominent and visible role among fellow retailers. The board was fully aware that the transformation into a BID — the ultimate goal — would be challenging for reasons already mentioned. However, new retailers moving in were committed to make the whole of West-Kruiskade a success, not just their single store. All retailers were aware that they strongly needed each other to develop an economically viable business. One of the success factors was also that the city's economic department, responsible for the implementation of the Economic Action Plan, was proactive and speaking the language of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This was also the reason why the BID received some extra financial support to make a jump start after the Alliance had to switch to 'back to normal' mode and the new board of the BID took charge (see Table 4).

Having explained the arduous road to the tipping point, I will describe the social impact based on the quantifiable goals that were set at the start and monitored through annual impact assessments.

Impact assessment

Over the eight years of operation, it was very important that the Alliance was able to report on evidence-based outcomes towards all stakeholders and to retain the financial and organisational capacities. For the City, this was a high-priority project

at the start. However, the municipality and housing association had to deal with multiple priorities at the same time. Therefore, the ten-year agreement also included specific key performance indicators to measure the progress on a bi-annual basis.

For public safety, this was the combination of crime statistics (objective) (see Table 5) and the safety index (subjective based on survey) (see Tables 6 and 7). Since 2014 the more comprehensive neighbourhood profile also became part of the equation.

The goal of creating a better shopping area was measured by three key performance indicators (KPIs):

KPI #1

Revitalising the local economy by turnover of a permanent anonymous panel of retailers (see Table 8).

The annual survey included 23 retailers (out of approximately 125). Food-related retail shows an increase in turnover; non-food, on the other hand, is struggling for quite a long time.

KPI #2

Benefitting from the downtown location and proximity to the Central station, measured by the volume of crowd flows expressed in passer-by counts (see Table 9), once a year (in June) over a course of one week.

In more recent years one can notice a slowdown in the crowd flows. These numbers must be interpreted carefully. It is only a snapshot (and weather conditions play a role, for example).

KPI #3

Accomplishing above-average increase in property values by 2 per cent by monitoring the property values in

Table 5: Crime rates 2009–15

CRIMES														
Theft	2009 INDEX		2010 INDEX		2011 INDEX		2012 INDEX		2013 INDEX		2014 INDEX		2015 INDEX	
Theft from cars	11	100	8	73	13	118	14	127	12	109	7	64	8	73
Theft of cars	2	100	5	250	2	100	3	150	4	200	1	50	2	100
Theft (motor)bikes	6	100	9	150	6	100	8	133	7	117	15	250	16	267
Pick-pocketing	11	100	14	127	6	55	7	64	6	55	15	136	13	118
Theft from other vehicles	0	100	3	-	1	-	1	-	2	-	1	-	3	-
Total	30	100	39	130	28	93	33	110	31	103	39	130	42	140

Burglary	2009 INDEX		2010 INDEX		2011 INDEX		2012 INDEX		2013 INDEX		2014 INDEX		2015 INDEX	
Burglary in homes	15	100	19	127	10	67	20	133	12	80	16	107	29	193
Burglary in garage/shed	9	100	3	33	2	22	4	44	2	22	4	44	14	156
Burglary office buildings	5	100	5	100	6	120	5	100	6	120	7	140	10	200
Shoplifting	28	100	33	118	24	86	19	68	18	64	15	54	15	54
Total	57	100	60	105	42	74	48	84	38	67	42	74	68	119

Assault	2009 INDEX		2010 INDEX		2011 INDEX		2012 INDEX		2013 INDEX		2014 INDEX		2015 INDEX	
Sex offences	1	100	4	400	2	200	3	300	2	200	0	-	0	-
Public violence	4	100	6	150	2	50	3	75	2	50	3	75	3	75
Threat	35	100	29	83	9	26	15	33	26	74	9	26	13	37
Assault	39	100	29	74	20	51	19	49	17	44	13	33	24	62
Street robbery	12	100	7	58	5	42	11	92	10	83	3	25	6	50
Robbery	4	100	3	75	1	25	2	50	0	-	0	-	0	-
Wealth-related crimes	35	100	34	97	36	103	31	89	32	91	22	63	45	129
Property damage	29	100	11	38	16	55	10	34	19	66	24	83	20	69
Total	159	100	123	77	91	57	94	59	108	68	74	47	111	70

Source: Police reports

Table 6: Safety index in 2009, 2011 and 2013

	2009	2011	2013
Numbers	4,1	5,9	5,3
Ranking of unsafe neighbourhood city-wide	2,1	14,0	15,0

Source: Safety index City of Rotterdam 2009–13

Table 7: Safety index subdivided into categories 2014–16

Category	Robbery		Violence		Burglary		Vandalism		Nuisance	
	2014	2016	2014	2016	2014	2016	2014	2016	2014	2016
Objective	102	97	86	92	115	97	70	60	52	61
Subjective	109	67	81	82	134	140	87	98	56	51

Source: Neighbourhood profile Old West Side 2014–16

Table 8: Result and forecast turnover 2010–16 per sector

Research Sector	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Result 2009	Forecast 2010	Result 2010	Forecast 2011	Result 2011	Forecast 2012	Result 2012	Forecast 2013	Result 2013	Forecast 2014	Result 2014	Forecast 2015	Result 2015	Forecast 2016
Supermarket & Speciality shops	100	104	105	112	110	112	114	114	118	120	n/a	0%	-0,2%	1,4%
Food & Beverage	100	115	103	110	107	112	110	110	108	103	n/a	2,4%	2,4%	5,7%
Fashion & Luxury	100	109	91	98	94	92	89	81	81	79	n/a	4,0%	-0,1%	1,7%

Source: Annual surveys conducted by the Alliance

Table 9: Number of visitors per week 2010–16

Number of visitors West-Kruiskade	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Monday	7,000	6,000	7,000	8,000	8,000	7,000	7,000
Tuesday	8,000	7,000	8,000	9,000	9,000	8,000	8,000
Wednesday	8,000	8,000	8,000	9,000	9,000	8,000	8,000
Thursday	9,000	8,000	9,000	10,000	10,000	9,000	9,000
Friday	7,000	7,000	8,000	9,000	9,000	8,000	8,000
Saturday	10,000	9,000	10,000	11,000	11,000	10,000	10,000
Sunday							
Week total	48,000	46,000	50,000	56,000	53,000	50,000	48,000

Source: Annual survey of Locatus

Table 10: Property values 2010–14

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
Alliance Project Area (residential + business)	134,485	100	132,155	98,3	140,782	105	152,032	113	136,006	101
Old West Side (residential)	130,000	100	138,249	106	137,918	106	131,116	101	126,000	97
Rotterdam (residential)	162,853	100	162,816	100	162,716	100	153,968	95	148,000	91

Source: Annual Impact Assessment Reports Alliance

Table 11: Property values Woonstad Rotterdam

	2013	2014	21
Commercial real estate Woonstad Rotterdam	€130,689	€142,243	€138,3

Source: Annual Impact Assessment Reports Alliance

West-Kruiskade and adjacent streets (see Tables 10 and 11).

CONCLUSION: IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Reviewing the different goal-related KPIs from 2010 through 2016, we can draw some conclusions. Residents are satisfied with West-Kruiskade and their home (result from annual surveys among residents; for practical reasons these statistics are not included in this paper). From the retailer survey, most of the retailers have seen an increase in turnover compared with the previous year. Several new restaurants and bars have moved the

branching plan in the right direction, particularly around the two public spaces: Kruisplein next to Central rail station, from which most visitors enter West-Kruiskade; and Tiendplein in the centre, which has increasingly become the go-to destination for residents.¹⁷ However, public safety still needs attention. Although residents do not feel more unsafe, crime statistics are up again, although numbers on drug dealing and nuisance are down. Residents' complaints refer to waste, poor maintenance, noise and parking problems, particularly in adjacent streets — all serious issues, but also the usual suspects in densely populated urban neighbourhoods.

LESSONS LEARNED AND TO BE LEARNED

In Rotterdam, the West-Kruiskade urban regeneration model has also been applied in similar neighbourhoods. In residential

Middelpunt in Kralingen-West it has resulted in a successful economic impulse of commercial properties also primarily owned and managed by Woonstad Rotterdam. In Beijerlandse laan/Groene Hilledijk on Rotterdam's south side, the City is currently applying this model, until now also successfully. In these projects not only was the model transferred, but some of the leadership 'did it again'. It cannot be emphasised enough that long-term personal dedication is the key to success in this kind of urban regeneration.

If Rotterdam leverages on the practice of West-Kruiskade, others can also learn from this case study. Experience shows that one can learn more from bad practices than best practices. This is why I have also included selected risks that one must take into account before considering the Rotterdam approach.

Success factors (in random order):

- Securing public and private ambition in a binding agreement with support of retailers;
- Strong dedicated leadership support from municipality and housing association;
- Decisiveness through direct access to enforcement leadership through city marshall;
- Act and move quickly from the start: show the outside world that it is serious this time;
- Start with small visible interventions (renovate storefront) that can be easily scaled;
- Create visibility by locating Alliance office in former legally closed bar;
- Small very dedicated team that did the heavy lifting from the start;
- Housing association as powerful and dedicated partner that could make the difference;
- Local intelligence on the ground:

multi-ethnic businesses anchored in community;

- Creating goodwill among retailers;
- Share and celebrate successes;
- Learn from others, even a competitive city (Amsterdam).

Of course all successes have a downside. That is why the risk factors should also be mentioned:

- The Alliance was not always in control. An example is the licencing for bars and outdoor terraces. In the first years both the Alliance and the City were very reluctant to issue permits, since everyone was aware of what could go wrong. However, after a couple of years the Alliance wanted to lift the restrictions step-by-step. This was not allowed by the municipality. After intervention of the city marshall (working directly with the mayor's office) a special programme was introduced (*Anders Geregeld: 'differently regulated'*) and the Alliance could start with a pilot project;
- The Alliance also had its limitations. Some plans turned out to be overambitious (exclusive Chinese Cultural Centre) or met with opposition (demolition of transformer box in middle of Tiendplein blocked by historic preservationists)¹⁸;
- What happens if the situation reverts to normal? An exit is not an option. This was not only an actual concern in 2017 but still is today in 2022.

NO ONE SIZE FITS ALL

Cities across Europe are becoming more popular to live in. Also residential and mixed-use areas around city centres are more appealing to young (family) households. These urbanites usually

have spending power and impose conditions and expectations on their living environment: public safety, quality of schools, shops and amenities, including accessible high-quality public spaces within walking distance. The new urbanites are also often more tolerant of alternative lifestyles. This requires various urban regeneration approaches depending on the neighbourhood's position. One can roughly distinguish four approaches, the first two driven by threats, the others driven by opportunities:

- Urgent public safety-led regeneration like West-Kruiskade;
- Multiple social issues in already vulnerable neighbourhoods — what one often came across in neighbourhoods of the 1960s and 1970s: one-sided population, poor condition housing stock and dilapidated public space;
- Multiple opportunities that need a comprehensive approach with temporary interventions — what one often came across in neighbourhoods of the 1920s and 1930s, architecturally mixed;
- Market opportunities that need temporary economic incentives.

References

1. Nederveen, T. (2014), 'Methodiekbeschrijving van de aanpak veiligheid West-Kruiskade in de periode 2008–2012', Rotterdamse School voor Stadsmariniers, Rotterdam.
2. West-Kruiskade: Genuine Rotterdam (October 2017), Eight years of dedicated work with heart and mind. From no go to must see', Alliance West-Kruiskade.
3. Woonstad Rotterdam (August 2020), 'Nét even anders: Het Oude Westen', available at <https://adoc.pub/net-even-anders-het-oude-westen.html> (accessed 4th May, 2022).
4. Ruiters, E. de (October 2010), 'Nulmeting West-Kruiskade', Docplayer, available at <http://docplayer.nl/23225854-Nulmeting-west-kruiskade.html> (accessed 4th May, 2022).
5. NADC (December 2009), 'Uitvoeringsprogramma West-Kruiskade 2010–2011', Rotterdam.
6. Poppegaai, M., Minkjan, M., Berends, D. and Rozema, N. (March 2015), 'Analyse West-Kruiskade: Rotterdam', Platform 31, available at <https://www.platform31.nl/thema-s/thema-landelijk-gebied-en-regio/wijk-en-dorpseconomie/analyses/analyse-westkruiskade-rotterdam> (accessed 4th May, 2022).
7. KOW Architecten, 'Stand van de beeldkwaliteit 2009–2014', West-Kruiskade e.o., Den Haag.
8. Bosmans, R. (December 2009), 'Brancheplan West-Kruiskade Rotterdam', CityWorks, available at https://docplayer.nl/14239124-Brancheplan-westkruiskade-rotterdam.html#show_full_text (accessed 04.05.2022).
9. Stichting eigenaren BIZ West-Kruiskade e.o (October 2014), 'BIZ-plan West-Kruiskade Eigenaren', Docplayer, available at <https://docplayer.nl/10056007-Biz-plan-west-kruiskadegebruikers.html> (accessed 4th May, 2022).
10. Jaarplan 2015 (October 2014), 'BIZ Gebruikers West-Kruiskade', Docplayer, available at <https://docplayer.nl/amp/3511063-Jaarplan-2015-biz-gebruikers-westkruiskade.html> (accessed 4th May, 2022).
11. Gemeente Rotterdam (2012), 'Gebiedsprofiel detailhandel binnenstad 2012 West-Kruiskade'.
12. Frank, M. and Woltman, P. (2014), 'Het geheim van Thaiboksschool Oude Westen', deelgemeente Rotterdam Centrum en Stichting Radar Wmo diensten, Rotterdam, available at <https://www.slideshare.net/marafrank/boekje-het-geheim-vanthaiboksschool-oude-westen>, (accessed 4th May, 2022).
13. De Vette, I. and Laupman, M. (2016), *Spicy – de West-Kruiskade kookt, extra hot*, Trichis Publishing, Rotterdam.
14. Brouwer R. J. and Aertgeerts, A., 'Het Geheim van de West-Kruiskade: Episodes 1 to 13', MediaWerkplaats Rotterdam/RTV Rijnmond, Rotterdam.
15. Brouwer R. J. and Aertgeerts, A., 'Het Geheim van de West-Kruiskade: Episodes 14 to 26', MediaWerkplaats Rotterdam/RTV Rijnmond, Rotterdam.
16. Brouwer, R. J. and Aertgeerts, A., 'Het Geheim van de West-Kruiskade: Episodes 27 to 39', MediaWerkplaats Rotterdam/RTV Rijnmond, Rotterdam.
17. Sour, A. (2013), *Metropool op één km2: West-Kruiskade. Gids voor kosmopolitische geluksmomenten*, Robbert de Groot, Dordrecht.
18. Van Es, E. (2011), 'Tiendplein: schakelhuisje

met kiosk: motivering cultuurhistorische waarde in het kader van het GMSP', Gemeentelijk Monumenten Selectie Project, Rotterdam, available at [https://www.](https://www.yumpu.com/nl/document/read/20147199/tiendplein-schakelhuisje-met-kiosk-aktiegroep-oude-westen)

[yumpu.com/nl/document/read/20147199/tiendplein-schakelhuisje-met-kiosk-aktiegroep-oude-westen](https://www.yumpu.com/nl/document/read/20147199/tiendplein-schakelhuisje-met-kiosk-aktiegroep-oude-westen) (accessed 9th May, 2022).