

Countdown to zero

Towards zero emissions from city logistics in 2020 in the inner city: **Pex Langenberg**, Rotterdam's Vice Mayor for Sustainability, Mobility and Culture, talks to Polis' **Merle Schroer** about that ambitious goal and facilitating the energy transition

In Rotterdam, the port and logistics play important roles for the economy. In this context, the approach to erase emissions created by city logistics is even more remarkable. With an exceptional concept of establishing electrical charging infrastructure, a new kind of business model is being applied in the city. What does a political strategy behind such a decision look like? According to Pex Langenberg, Vice Mayor of Rotterdam, priority to a healthy environment for the citizens with a good quality of life is key.

Thinking Cities (TC): The transport system of Rotterdam differs from the “romantic Dutch city”; roads are wider and vehicles larger. What is your vision how transport in Rotterdam should develop?

Pex Langenberg (PL): Mobility is not a goal on itself, but it is a condition for a city. Sustainable and efficient mobility is beneficial for a resilient and strong economy. The focus in Rotterdam lies on an improvement of (international) accessibility

and sustainability. We mainly focus on more walking, increasing the use of bikes, and improving public transport. In our urban development plans for the city centre we therefore give priority to these three areas. Therefore, we give for example priority to traffic lights, easy and attractive sidewalks for pedestrians, sufficient bicycle parking places, and fast high quality public transport in the city centre.

TC: Is Rotterdam a “smart city”? What is a smart city in terms of Rotterdam?

PL: In 2014 The New Economy rewarded Rotterdam with a Best Smart Cities Award of the World. The city is proud to work together in the triple helix to facilitate the energy transition. The actions vary from using wind energy, better resilience by means of green roofs and water squares, up to encouraging electric mobility.

TC: Rotterdam has one of the largest ports in the world and is implementing measurements to

Rotterdam's electric vehicle fleet includes service and delivery vehicles, such as this Heineken truck



Sustainable and efficient mobility is beneficial for a resilient and strong economy

make the related sustainable freight traffic more sustainable. Does the electrification of freight transport play a role in that context?

PL: In our city we give priority to a healthy environment for the citizens with a good quality of life. For the city logistics this means regulating and facilitating actively on this issue. This does not only mean we have to install and scale up environmental zones. But together with private organizations we stimulate companies which are investing to do this in a more sustainable manner in the field of logistics. Together we have an ambition to reach zero emission on city logistics in 2020 in the inner city. To reach this ambition the use of small and large electric vehicles is therefore necessary. One of the actions is to gather interest in larger electric freight vehicles as much as possible by the transport companies, so that manufactures can start to produce these vehicles on a larger scale.

TC: In 2011, the first charging station had been deployed in the Rotterdam area; your goal is to install 1000 extra charging poles by the end of 2018. Will all these be set up by public financing exclusively?

PL: We place a charging infrastructure where we expect electric cars the most. We extend our already well equipped network of more than 1.400 charging points with a European tender. We are financing the system in a public private partnership. Rotterdam is charging for the electricity, in this way the users pay for the infrastructure as well.


TC: What are important aspects when setting up charging infrastructure for alternative fuels in a city?

PL: People tend to charge at home or at work, so place the charging infrastructure there where it will be used. The charging points we place at strategic places as shopping centers, near facilities etc. are rarely used. The better the use of the infrastructure the sooner there will be a business case. By



discussing with the (potential) users, it will be made more clear which kind of charging infrastructures would be most beneficial on which locations.

TC: Rotterdam is presidential candidate for Polis: Can you tell us about your motivation to maintain networking connections in Europe as well as your goals during the upcoming time?

PL: Rotterdam as a port city is traditionally internationally orientated. For traffic and transport we proactively find the link with other cities beyond the borders of Rotterdam to discuss city specific problems and innovative solutions. Rotterdam is the front-runner on port transport mobility, cycling innovations, electric mobility concepts, and cooperation in the field of urban goods distribution. As president of Polis we would like to show these cases, and to organize discussions on how the cities can be positioned to make a leap forward for a more sustainable and attractive city. What can we learn from each other and where do we need others to actively engage in these subjects. 

The city is home to over 1400 EV charging points with plans to extend the network

FYI

Pex Langenberg is vice mayor of Rotterdam, particularly responsible for sustainability, mobility and culture

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