

FAAC SEE S

SADC's Jeanet van Antwerpen:

‘Game changers are disruptions to be harnessed’

C-Creators:

‘Circularity? There's no avoiding it!’

Port of Amsterdam

Embraces the energy transition

Game changers

The barn at C-Bèta**Where:** Schiphol Trade Park**Municipality:** Haarlemmermeer**www.c-beta.nl**

-----> Just delivered: the completely renovated barn at C-Bèta. This is the place to be for innovative companies who want to be part of an inspiring circular community.

From ----> barn
-----> to
----> circulair
----> community

Thinking outside the box... the ambition to achieve things together... embracing creativity and customisation.

When it boils down to it, these phrases capture the essence of circular construction. And they were certainly at the heart of the circular renovation of a former farmyard barn on the C-Bèta site, the circular hotspot at the heart of Schiphol Trade Park in Hoofddorp.

C-Bèta was once a working farm, established in 1855. Today it's a sustainably renovated event and exhibition space, operated by Buildings that Matter. It also has workspaces – both office units and flexible workspaces – affording companies the space to experiment with circular practices.

From the outset, it was always the plan to make use of the former storage barn from 1973 that sits on this hotspot's site. By the end of 2020, the ambition had become reality and the sustainable renovation of the barn was complete. So now this really is the place for innovative companies involved in the circular development of buildings and areas, be they busy with building materials, energy or mobility.

Even with the 'new' barn, the principle of re-use has led us to choosing as



much circular or existing building materials as possible. Everyone involved considered ways in which to work in a truly circular way. The result: a building with a story. For example, Heembouw (see page 18) made a partition wall using floors from a warehouse at Schiphol, the canteen came from the Centre Court office building in The Hague, while some 80 windows from the Arsenaal building in Leiden made their way to the Rijnlanderweg to form the eye-catching 'new' façade.

The barn is an extraordinary work environment with all mod cons. There are flexible workspaces, office units, two well-equipped meeting rooms, free coffee and tea, and items of furniture that successfully manage to be comfortable, ergonomic and

circular. For instance, the meeting table in the communal area is made from plastic fished from Amsterdam's canals. It's just another way in which we use the barn to show how things can be done differently.

The businesses here each have their own workspace or unit, but the open-plan structure creates an inspiring community of like-minded people. And that undoubtedly stimulates new collaborations and innovations. SADC's Eelco Kienhuis says: "The first businesses have already moved in. And it's an interesting mix of entrepreneurs – precisely what we were hoping for. There's still space for a few companies that would be a good fit with this community, so that we can work together on the circular transition for the built environment."

Where do you want to go?



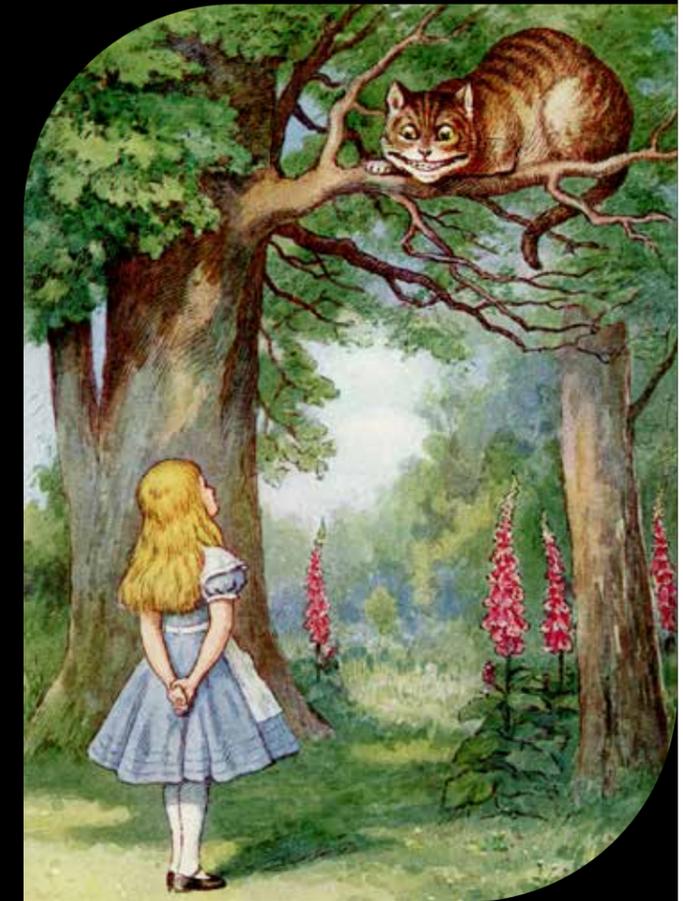
Jeanet van Antwerpen,
director of SADC

Photo: Michel ter Wolbeck

Disruptions that alter the rules of the game in one fell swoop. Game changers! We've had a lot of them to talk about in recent years. Management books about 'lean', 'agile' and 'futureproof' solutions were flying off the (digital) shelves. Training sessions and seminars came and went. The major warning underlying all of that: how do you prevent your business from experiencing a Kodak moment? Remember that well-run company, a world leader with its rolls of analogue film, which unfortunately saw no profitable future in digital photography?

We updated our long-term strategy at SADC in 2015. In doing so, we took inspiration from Alice in Wonderland and her conversation with the mysterious Cheshire Cat. "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" asks Alice. The cat replies, "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." "I don't much care where," says Alice. "Then it doesn't much matter which way you go," answers the cat.

But we did care about where we were going. We saw economic and societal developments that could change the



game. Firstly: the transition to a circular economy. We embraced that wholeheartedly. We chose a path of circular development for our business parks. And in doing so, we saw how digitalisation is changing the ways in which we live, work and spend our free time. So we made our company 'digitally fit' and set out on a course of research. How could we use digitalisation as a means to make our business parks more future-proof? And finally, how could we forge collaborations within business ecosystems? Nobody can go it alone these days. To remain competitive and relevant, you need to work with other companies – big and small – that have the expertise you do not.

Using the metaphor of a fast-flowing river, in which every now and again a rock changes the flow of the water, we called these three developments 'flow shifters'. The trick is to always go with the flow, avoiding the boulders that can trap or capsize you. Aim to make it around the bend and further downstream. This edition of Faces is filled with examples of expert paddlers, deftly avoiding dangerous waterfalls and other obstacles. Or sometimes they even use them to their advantage. Of course, that only works if you know precisely where you want to get to and can quickly change direction. Enjoy!

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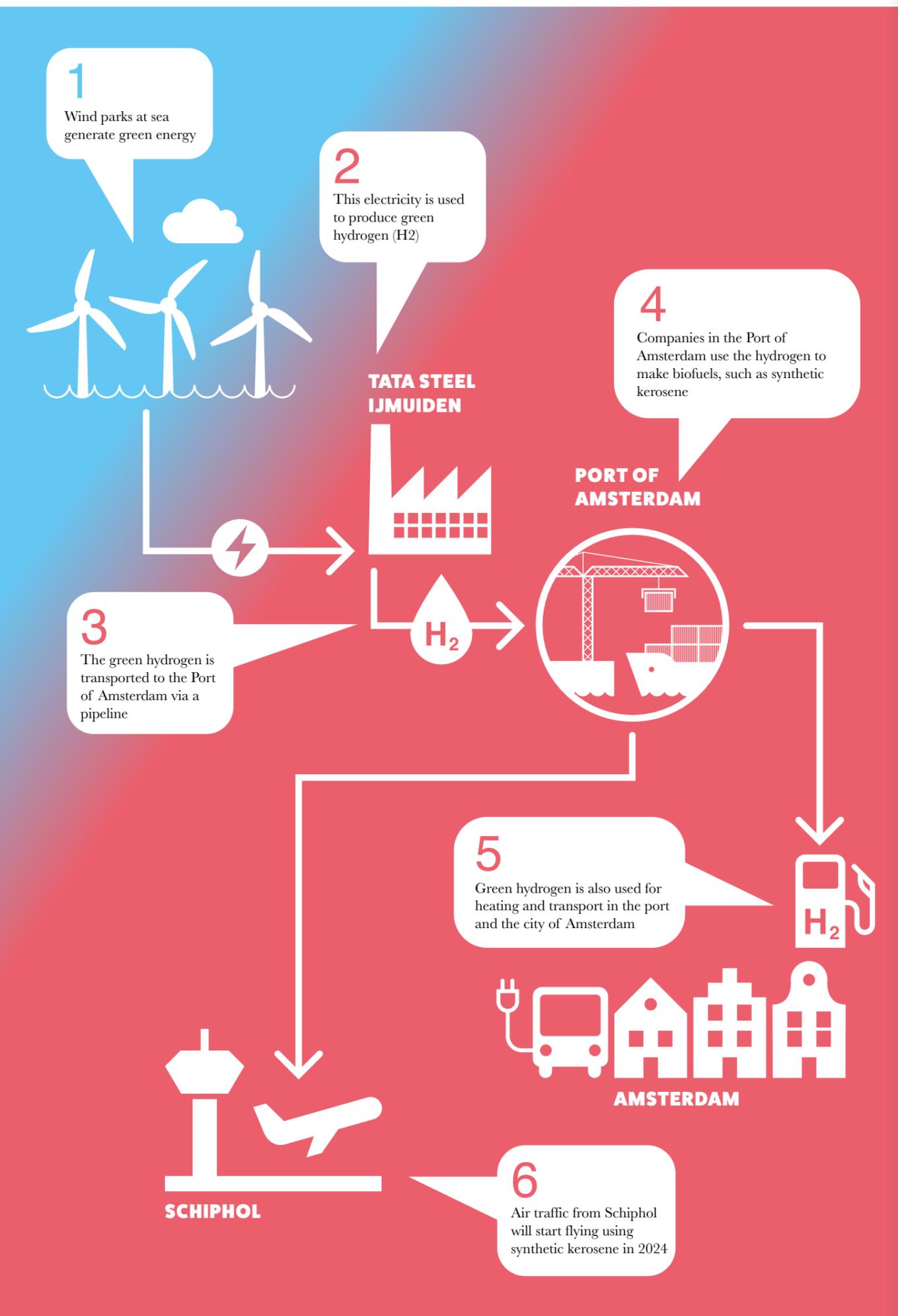
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The Port of Amsterdam is the only port in the world that has committed to stop handling coal by 2030. It's a radical move for the Netherlands' and Europe's second-biggest coal port. But Eduard de Visser, the director of Strategy & Innovation, sees it as a strategic step. 'By doing this, we can inspire and attract companies that are focused on clean energy.'



Port of Amsterdam
Where: Port of Amsterdam
Municipality: Amsterdam
Who: Eduard de Visser, Director of Strategy & Innovation
Interviewer: Jozien van der Wal, SADC
www.portofamsterdam.com

'The energy transition impacts almost everything at the port'

Gamechanger: The energy transition

What does the energy transition mean for the Port of Amsterdam?

"Switching over to alternative energy sources that are not harmful is much more than just an energy transition. As our focus shifts to other energy resources, almost everything at the port will change. Existing companies will adapt to be part of the energy transition. But there will also be new companies, and from other sectors, too. For example, recycling, circular chemicals and synthetic fuels."

How is the port being changed by the transition to renewable energy?

"The port is still a gateway for goods to and from the EU and the Netherlands. Think aluminium, paper, wood and roll-on, roll-off

[vehicle transports]. That's where the bulk of the changes will occur. Coal-fired power stations are closing, the number of electric cars is increasing, new, cleaner fuels are hitting the market, and transport is becoming more efficient, resulting in more efficient use of fuel. These are factors that will influence the demand for the types of fuel that are prevalent in the port."

Does that mean that some of the port's business will be lost?

"Trade is changing, but that's been happening since a port was first established here some 750 years ago. Some trade will disappear, but new trade will replace it. That's a very positive development. The Port of Amsterdam has been busy with the

energy transition for a long time already. A few years ago, we decided to stop all activities with coal by 2030. We were the first and, till now, the only port in the world to make that call. It was a strategic step, because it's inspired companies that are focused on clean energy to set up here. The more of those companies are present here, the better the chance of a successful energy transition in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. It could even accelerate a reduction in CO₂ throughout the Netherlands. That requires specialist expertise – and we no longer need to rely on talent from far afield for that now. And we want our port to continue to play a leading role with the next generation of energy resources too."



How does that translate to the Port of Amsterdam's focus on sustainability?

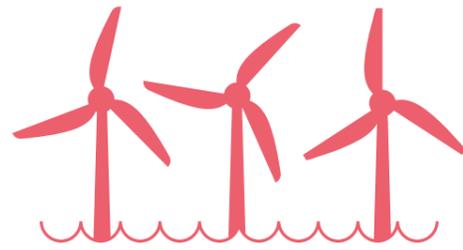
"Firstly, with a focus on green electricity: wind turbines at sea and solar parks. The largest offshore wind farm in the Netherlands is being built on the coast by IJmuiden. The second focus is to scale up production of green fuel. We're building a green hydrogen plant on the Tata Steel site in partnership with Nouryon. It will use green electricity from the offshore wind farm. And the hydrogen will be transported to the Port of Amsterdam by a pipeline that we are laying in collaboration with Gasunie."

'What we decide in the port can impact the CO2 reduction in all of the Netherlands.'

Amongst others, this green hydrogen will be used by a company that produces synthetic kerosene. That's kerosene that isn't derived from petroleum but rather from hydrogen. The company is an initiative of the Port of Amsterdam in collaboration with Schiphol, and the first batches of synthetic kerosene will be available in 2024. It will be a sustainable alternative to regular kerosene, the current fuel of choice in civil aviation."

Then another game changer: COVID-19. How has the coronavirus impacted the Port?

"On the positive side, it certainly laid bare our essential role in supplying vital goods and services to the Netherlands. Probably the greatest impact of coronavirus was on the transshipment of coal, which dropped dramatically in 2020. Demand from the steel industry in Germany was suddenly at a standstill. Fortunately, there is also recovery, thanks to our focus on other sectors, such as sustainable energy and the shipping container market."



What is green hydrogen?

Hydrogen is a gas. Although it's sustainable in itself, its production is not always environmentally friendly. Grey hydrogen is currently used on a massive scale. In its production, steam reacts with natural gas, resulting in hydrogen. However, the CO2 that is released in the process is vented into the atmosphere. Blue hydrogen is created in a similar way, only the CO2 by-product is captured and stored underground. With green hydrogen, green electricity replaces natural gas. Water is split into hydrogen and oxygen via electrolysis.

'Some trade will disappear, but new trade will replace it'

Working from home has caught on. Is that a positive development?

"A personal advantage for me is that I can often enjoy a nice walk during meetings. But it also has disadvantages. For example, it's tougher to get new partnerships off the ground when you cannot meet each other. With something as big as the energy transition, you need to forge alliances that transcend sectors, be it aviation or the port. It still boils down to being a people's business: it goes more smoothly with face-to-face contact. People make the difference and that will continue to be the case."

GAME CHANGER:
SMART TECHNOLOGY

'We never follow developments, we prefer to be the developers'



Joey Simmerman can indulge his passion for marketing at Somfy, where he is responsible for the Northern Europe region. This French company, which originally made its name with electrically controlled roller shutters, is now a leader in the smart control market.





→ **Let's start by talking about what you do with Somfy.**

"I've been working as Somfy's marketing director for Northern Europe since July 2020. It's the perfect job for me: I really am a passionate marketer. I work with my team to optimise the Somfy product range and brand experience. Our starting point is always to make people's lives better by offering the right solutions. Our innovative, tech-savvy products can control everything related to sunlight and artificial light in homes and buildings. Think automated sunscreens, window blinds and roller shutters. Alongside this we offer a range of security products and alarm systems."

Somfy makes products that take care of things so we don't have to?

"Exactly! Making people's lives easier is in our DNA. Somfy was established in 1969, in Cluses, a commune in the French Alps. We actually started out as a supplier to the Swiss watch industry. The technical precision needed for that was actually the basis for the development of the first tubular motor. An electrical motor in a tubular housing is perfect for operating roller shutters, so it immediately found its place in the market. After that innovation, Somfy did so well that we were able to open our first offices abroad. We grew into the multinational company that you see today in no time at all."

All that thanks to a tubular motor. Would you say that Somfy has a knack for sensing market demand before it arrives?

"Somfy has actually always been

working on smart homes. The first tubular motor was designed to make something easier – namely operating roller shutters. With every innovation we take things one step further in making it easier to control and automate motors. By the time smart technology was emerging, we were already entrenched in the development. We were smart before smart technology even existed. That's why we have this enormous wealth of knowledge. We never follow developments; we prefer to be the developers."

A game changer avant la lettre! What game changers are now in your sights?

"We serve Scandinavia, the Benelux and the UK. This region here is actually one of the fastest growing smart home markets. That's partly because broadband penetration is so high here. And as soon as we can all leave home more often, security will become a higher priority again. Because of the strong growth in the smart home market, we are increasingly faced with the needs of end users to manage everything in their home with one system. The smart home market has come a long way in the past 10 years, so there are lots of new players. Each player has their own specialism, but in reality, the user only wants one solution. That's why we believe in the value of partnerships, merging all products into one solution that is accessible to everyone. An excellent example of this is the Apple HomeKit certification for our smart home solutions. It means that all smart home devices in your home can talk to each other – regardless of brand – and be controlled via your iPhone, iPad or



Apple Watch. It all goes through one app. Good cooperation results in one big ecosystem."

What innovations or new products is Somfy currently busy with?

"We're always developing new products to make your home smarter and safer, looking at the latest trends and considering the needs of the market. What you can certainly look forward to in the near future are ways to make your entire house react with just the touch of a button or with a single voice command."

What's been the impact of the coronavirus crisis and the lockdowns on Somfy?

"It's been a very busy period for us. With people spending much more time at home, they're much more focused on life in and around their

house. As our solutions cater perfectly to this, the demand for our products has sharply risen. With that increase in demand in mind, combined with an unstable supply of components, we've decided to store more stock at our Northern European warehouse in Hoofddorp. We're also investing in new production lines at our various facilities around the world.

Our product development department in France hasn't really been disrupted by the pandemic. And here too, work continues as normal. Where possible, employees

work from home. For those who do have to work on site, we've taken measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

I work in the office if necessary. And if an employee is unable to work at home, we try to offer them a safe working environment at the office. For example, those who couldn't work from home because their children were out of school, or if they simply didn't have enough space to work at home."

Somfy is based at Business Park De President in Hoofddorp. What do you like most about the location and building? Does it meet Somfy's smart credentials?

"De President is easily accessible and we have a beautiful view with lots of greenery. Of course, our office is fully

'This region is actually one of the fastest growing smart home markets'

Somfy

Where: De President, Hoofddorp

Municipality: Haarlemmermeer

Who: Joey Simmerman, Marketing

Director Northern Europe

Interviewer: Isaac Roeterink,

SADC

www.somfy.nl



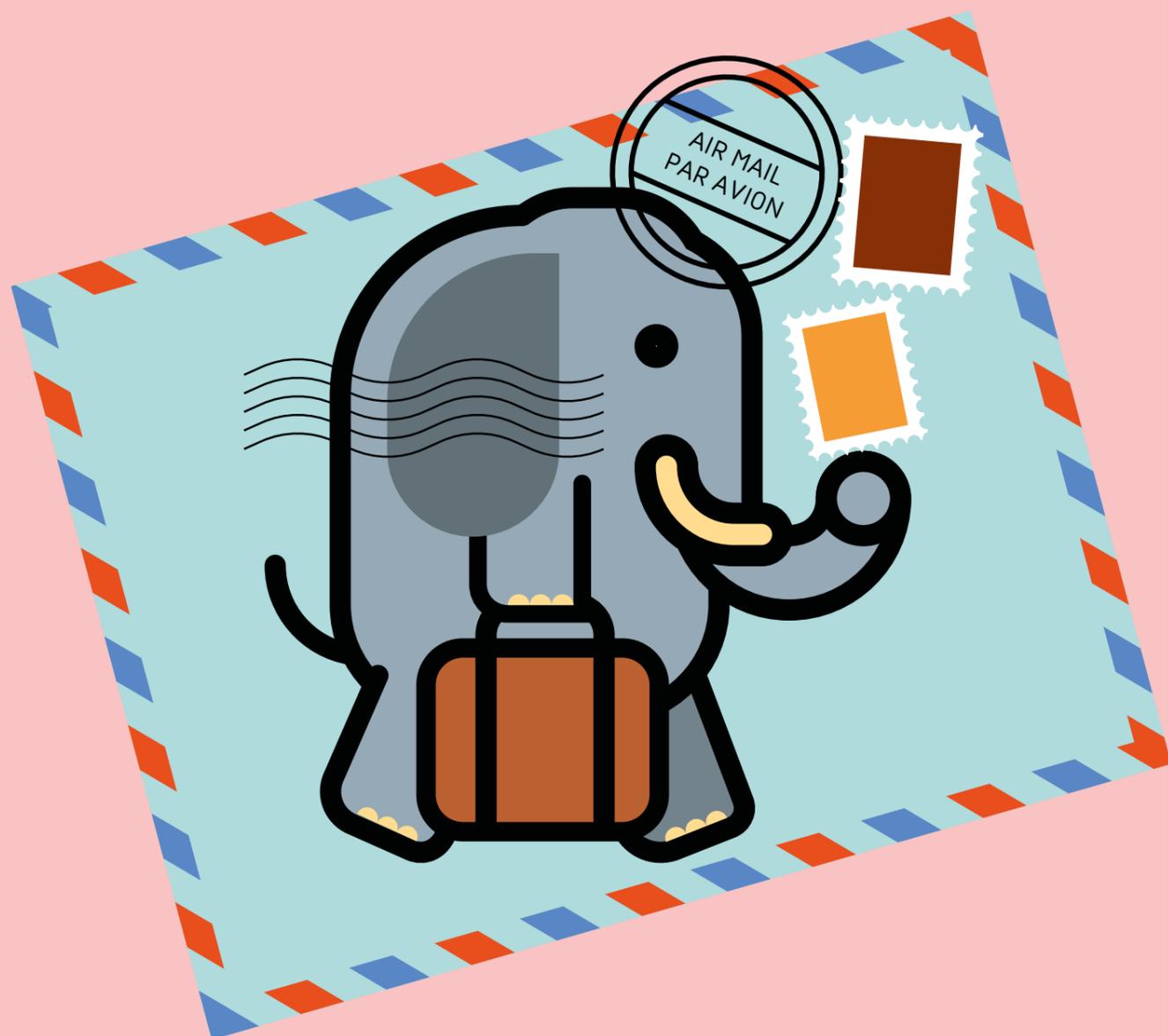
Rapid Logistics is undoubtedly a shining star at Schiphol Logistics Park. The company was established in 1989 and director Michiel Rodermond was right there in the beginning. “What was important then is just as important now: there’s no such thing as ‘no’.”

‘I deal in solutions’



Rapid Logistics B.V.
Where: Schiphol Logistics Park
Municipality: Haarlemmermeer
Who: Michiel Rodermond, owner/director
Interviewer: Joep Schroeders, SADC
www.rapidlogistics.nl

Game changer: **Thinking big**



“I left school at 16 and immediately ended up working in logistics. Okay, we didn’t call it that then, and the way things were done was very basic compared to now. But I brought things from A to B and we still do that. An air courier... that’s what it was called when I did it in the ’80s. I flew all over the world every day, from place to place, with courier shipments. It’s a shame that airmiles weren’t really a thing then, because I covered huge distances. And I did this for a long time, only taking a breather for a few years in the early ’90s. I ended up in Bali, where I started a business in beach chairs and parasols. I met my wife there and our first child was born there. But by 1995 the itch had returned. I brought my family back to the Netherlands so I could return to working happily in logistics.”

Complete service

“Rapid was just a small office at that time, just the three of us. But we were instantly thinking big: we didn’t just sell transport; it was a complete service. We were available 24/7, on standby to transport anything abroad in no time at all. We even had a pool of people who were packed and could be at Schiphol within 45 minutes, ready, for example, to jump on the first flight to Karachi to deliver a computer component. That complete service paid off. Customers eagerly embraced the creative and endless solutions we came up with. One thing was important to me then and it still is now: there’s no such thing as ‘no’! Everything is possible but you need to be ready and willing!”

‘I was already busy delivering things around the world in the ’80s’

Springboard

“By everything, I literally mean everything. Nothing was too crazy. In less than 15 hours we collected 150,000 windscreen wipers from GE in France and flew them to Detroit by courier. We’ve flown baby elephants from Tanzania to zoos around the world. The crazier the better. But the craziness wasn’t simply about achieving that extraordinary transport; it was a way to create a springboard and being able to bring in other, less urgent shipments, be it by air or sea. Less spectacular shipments, but still important shipments. A means to generate mass, or rather volume.”

‘Nothing is too crazy and everything is possible – you just need to be willing’

Partners

“In 2007 we changed our name from Rapid Air Couriers to Rapid Logistics. In that year we were able to take on logistics for a real tech giant. We already knew the customer. He’d come to us before for emergency transports. But now we also got to take care of their air and sea freight. That’s the springboard effect I was talking about! In comparison to how things had gone with their previous carrier, the customer had different ideas about how the operations and processes should be run. He was wanting something a bit more ‘Rapid’. We really learned a lot from that collaboration. And the relationship with this customer – in fact, all of our customers – is much more of a partnership than the old-fashioned customer-supplier relationship. As a company, we’ve grown substantially because of this attitude. In 2007 we just had a small hall of 4,000 square metres; today we have more than 35,000 square metres.”

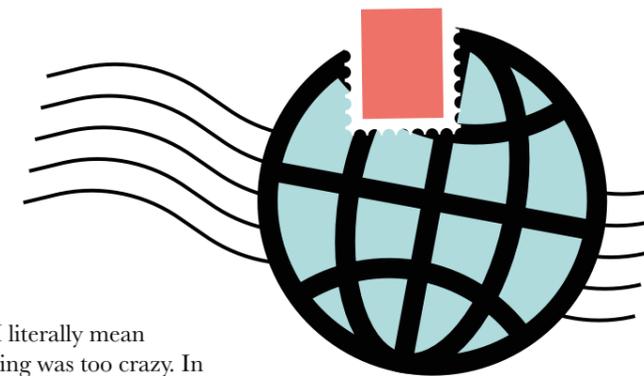
Electric scooters

“Somewhat by chance, Rapid became a player in e-mobility, electric bikes and scooters, and other market players were quick to find us. My business partner René Hendricks had been in talks with Uber and Lime for some time. They wanted to roll out shared scooters in European cities. Once that was sorted, we’d take the scooters to the various locations and even take care of the return logistics. We even carry out maintenance of the scooters and bikes at Schiphol.”

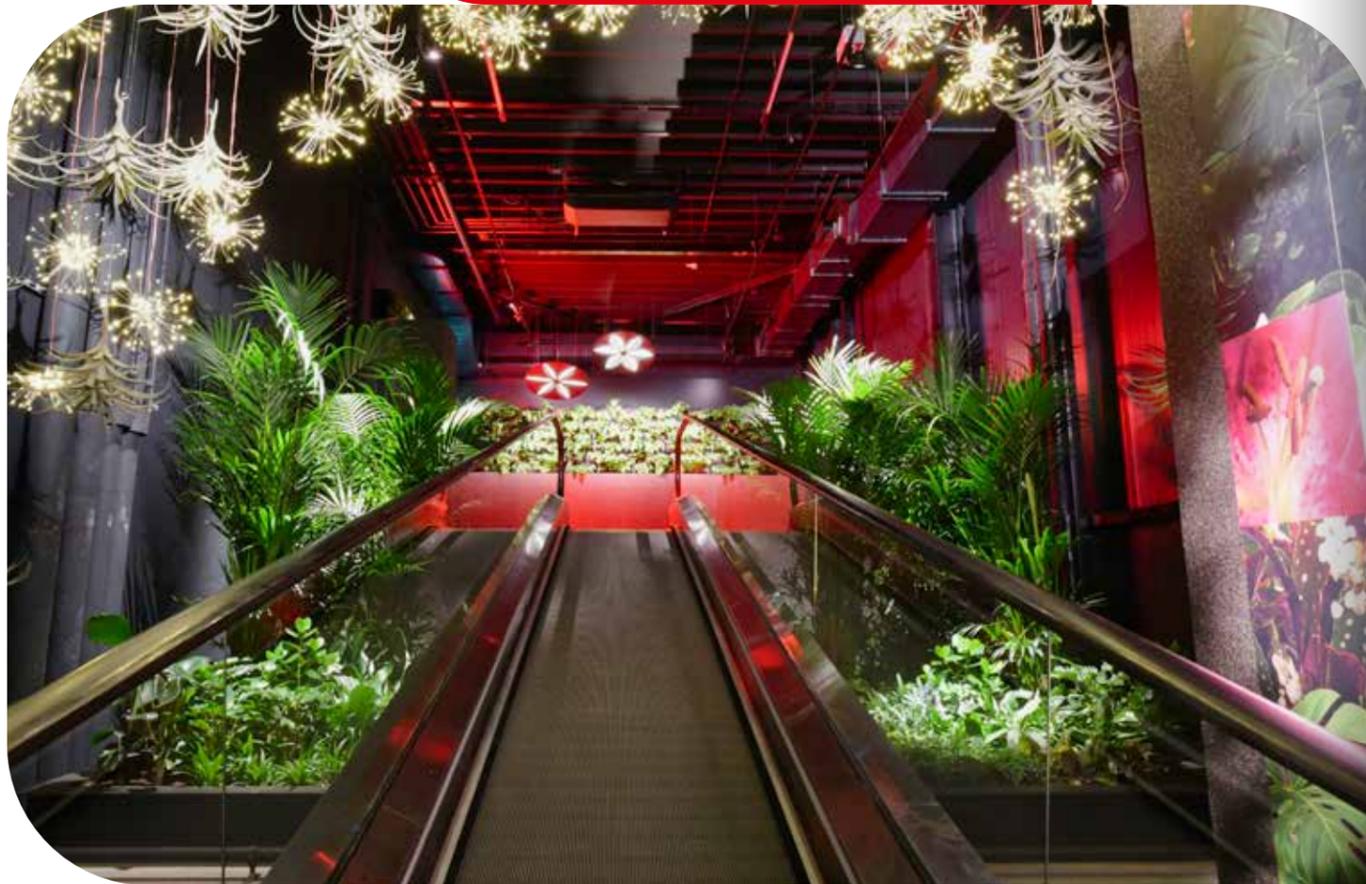
Solutions

“We’re also looking at solutions for urban distribution using e-vehicles. There’s scope for enormous growth there, partly due to the growth of e-commerce. Central warehouses are needed around the city, where the carriers can deliver goods and collect returns. From there, Rapid can take care of the final mile and spread out across the city to collect returns. We always think in terms of solutions. For example, there’s a problem with flows around the Schiphol region – everyone who knows Schiphol will know what I mean. I’m busy thinking up creative solutions to tackle this. There are already some plans on the table to put this problem behind us once and for all.”

‘From 4,000 m2 in 2007 to 35,000 m2 in 2020’



Game changer: FloriWorld itself. It's the first attraction in the world where people can experience the magic of flowers and plants throughout the entire year.



'THERE IS NOTHING LIKE FLORIWORLD ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD'

An interactive indoor tourist attraction dedicated to plants and flowers, FloriWorld was set to open its doors on 11 May 2020. Then the coronavirus hit and everything changed. Nonetheless, MT members Jet Brinkman and Silvia van den Aardweg weren't phased. "This is such a good concept. Everything is right!"

What is FloriWorld?

Jet: "An interactive indoor attraction dedicated to flowers and plants. It's the first in the world. It's for tourists, but it's also a new way for the sector to showcase this important Dutch export product to international representatives. As well as being a tourist attraction, FloriWorld is an event location and restaurant. You can break out your laptop to work, or have lunch with a colleague. It's situated in a business park for a reason. But the attraction is the principal focus."

So, the business park and building. What can you tell us about the FloriWorld premises?

Silvia: "The FloriWorld building has a positive effect on all of Green Park Aalsmeer. It's such a colourful building. The brightly coloured strips on the outside represent the Dutch flower fields. FloriWorld really catches your eye. The building can't help but attract attention. Next up: the visitors!"

FloriWorld

Where: Green Park Aalsmeer
Municipality: Aalsmeer
Who: Jet Brinkman, manager B2B, and Silvia van den Aardweg, manager marketing & sales B2C
Interviewer: Aleida Bos, SADC
www.floriworld.nl



Jet and Silvia

Well, it seems obvious why you chose Green Park Aalsmeer.

Silvia: "Yes, in terms of flowers, it all happens in Aalsmeer. It's the heart of the floriculture sector. Royal Flora-Holland's visitor centre is just on the corner, so international visitors can easily combine going there with a visit to FloriWorld. We're focusing on a variety of visitor types and we offer combi-tickets with a few other regional attractions, like the Flower Art Museum and other places of interest in Aalsmeer."

Who came up with the concept for FloriWorld?

Jet: "FloriWorld was originally an idea by Waterdrinker, a green wholesaler in Aalsmeer. At a certain point though, the concept simply became too big for them alone, so it became an initiative of the entire sector. As it stands now, FloriWorld is owned by Royal FloraHolland, Bloemenbureau Holland and the Dutch Experience Group. The latter actually manages the operation; they designed FloriWorld to look this way and devised the contents. They're the name behind the Heineken Experience and Afsluitdijk Wadden Center, so they're certainly good at it."

What makes FloriWorld a game changer?

Silvia: "Nothing else compares to it. It's completely new. There's nothing like it anywhere in the world. There are 14 experience rooms and each has a completely different character. You see real flowers and plants here, but the experience is also virtual. And it's interesting for all ages. Children can enjoy the projections in the halls, but there's also crafting and games to play."

'OUR BUILDING IS A JEWEL AT GREEN PARK AALSMEER'

Young audiences can marvel at the special effects and have some fun in the selfie spot attraction. As for adults, it's not only visually fantastic, they can gain a lot of information and insight into flowers and plants – aspects they probably didn't know about before. People leave here feeling happy and that makes me happy too. We don't need to wait months to see the fruits of our labour, we see it right away: happy visitors!"

Jet: "The building is 3,000 square metres. The attraction takes up the biggest part, but FloriWorld is also an event location. There is space for meetings, workshops, presentations... but also private dining, weddings, receptions and conferences. What's great is that a meeting can be combined with a visit to the attraction."

'WE SEE THE FRUITS OF OUR LABOUR IMMEDIATELY: HAPPY VISITORS!'

Of course, the coronavirus was a major and unwelcome game changer for FloriWorld.

Silvia: "We've both been employed here since February 2020, working really hard in the run-up the opening on 11 May 2020. Due to the coronavirus it couldn't happen. Instead we opened on 1 July. But so few people came, the concept couldn't yet fulfil its potential, so we closed again on 1 November. We'll hold a fantastic opening in 2021. And as soon as travel restrictions are lifted, buses packed with visitors will be back on our doorstep."

Jet: "Because the number of visitors was much lower than expected, we couldn't properly test the attraction. Although the term didn't exist yet at the beginning of 2020, our procedures were already coronavirus-proof. Visitors buy their ticket online or at the counter via a card payment. We already worked with time slots. Everything in the attraction is controlled by RFID bracelets or touch pens. Everything is continuously cleaned and there are plenty of disinfection points."

Silvia: "The setup here is so grand and spacious, so there's no need for visitors to get too close to each other."

What's your favourite flower?

Jet: "I've always liked the gloriosa because of its beautiful shape."



Silvia: "A lathyrus, because it smells so good. The biggest bunch possible, please."



Game changer: **Circularity**

‘One person’s
waste
is another’s
raw material’

There really is no better place for C-Creators than C-Bèta. The aim of this foundation is to help scale up the circular economy in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area’s construction sector. And circularity is exactly what the site on the Rijnlanderweg is all about. Construction specialist Merel Stolker offers her insights into the necessity for circular change.



C-Creators
Where: C-Bèta
Wie: Merel Stolker,
construction specialist
and architect
Interviewer: Eelco
Kienhuis, SADC
www.c-creators.org

As a construction specialist and architect, you combine your work for C-Creators with your own business. Firstly, tell us about that business. “I run my own architecture firm TransforMEER, together with Mirjam Schull. One project we are really proud of is UCo, which stands for Utrecht Community. We transformed an old warehouse owned by the NS [Dutch Railways] into a trendy, inspiring and – above all – sustainable place to work. I really thrive on projects like this.”

So, C-Creators. What does that ‘C’ stand for? “For circular. But it could just as easily stand for ‘change’. Because to focus on circularity requires change. The sector association Bouwend Nederland could still be better at considering how something can be built, taken apart and reused elsewhere. C-Creators is currently engaged as a ‘spinner’ in various Cirkelsteden (Circle Cities) projects in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area (AMA). Cirkelsteden is a platform for frontrunners in circular and inclusive construction, and its ‘spinners’ initiate and drive change. As part of our Building Programme AMA, we are focused on guiding and implementing both large and iconic circular projects, and scalable circular projects. A core value is to always share the knowledge gained in the process.”

Changing behaviour

Cirkelstad Amsterdam has existed for two years now; C-Creators too. Can we already see a change in the landscape? “Yes and no. Breaking habits is difficult, especially for companies. It starts with knowledge and awareness. Amongst individuals – and certainly the younger generation – you do see change and awareness. But it still takes time before that results in a change in behaviour. A good example: we’re all starting to live more consciously, but we’re actually eating more meat. Becoming aware and acting on it are two very different things.”

Not all progress is necessarily an improvement. Which changes weren’t necessary? “Innovation isn’t necessarily better. And cheaper production doesn’t always mean better or faster. Mechanised work saves time and maybe money, but craftsmanship may be lost. Often,

machine-made products or materials can’t be modified. So faster and cheaper doesn’t always equate to a top quality product. And there’s a lot to be said for the value of maintenance. Why throw away broken things – be it your toaster or your phone – when you can reuse, maintain and repair them? Better and easier maintenance leads to a longer product life, so that should be considered at the design stage. Even in buildings.”

Goals

Back to the theme of this edition... Why is circularity a game changer? “Because there’s no avoiding it. Raw materials are becoming scarce and so we have to get back to basics. ‘Have to’ is the key phrase really. We have to constrict, delay and close. By constricting, I mean prevention, using as little energy and raw materials as possible. By delaying, I mean using something for as long as possible, extending its lifespan. And by closing, I’m talking about recycling or biodegradability, ensuring that all components or parts of a building return to the start of the production chain when they’ve reached the end of their useful life. Our goal is that one person’s waste is another’s raw material.” **Noble goals, I think. I’m tempted to say, what are we waiting for? Do you hold such clearly defined goals on a personal level?** “To consider things more carefully and consciously: why do I want to buy this? Can I achieve that in another way? Be it clothes or toys, I want to consider things more before I buy them. I’m also busy with decluttering. It would be ideal if every product had a clear footprint, so that it’s obvious to everyone what it’s made of and what that actually means.” **Finally, do you have an inspirational closing message for the readers?** “That you can always change and contribute to something in a positive way, even if it’s just taking small steps. That there’s always room for improvement is exactly what’s so nice. That’s why you do it, right?”

Gabbiano attracts the customers, the shops are there for the experience. That's the fashion brand's philosophy. "We need to seduce the customers," says director Mansur Aksu.

Gabbiano

Where: Business Park Amsterdam Osdorp

Municipality: Amsterdam

Who: Mansur Aksu, managing director

Interviewer: Eelco Kienhuis, SADC
www.gabbianodenim.com



"It's all about the experience"

Game changer: From full inventory to a pre-order operation

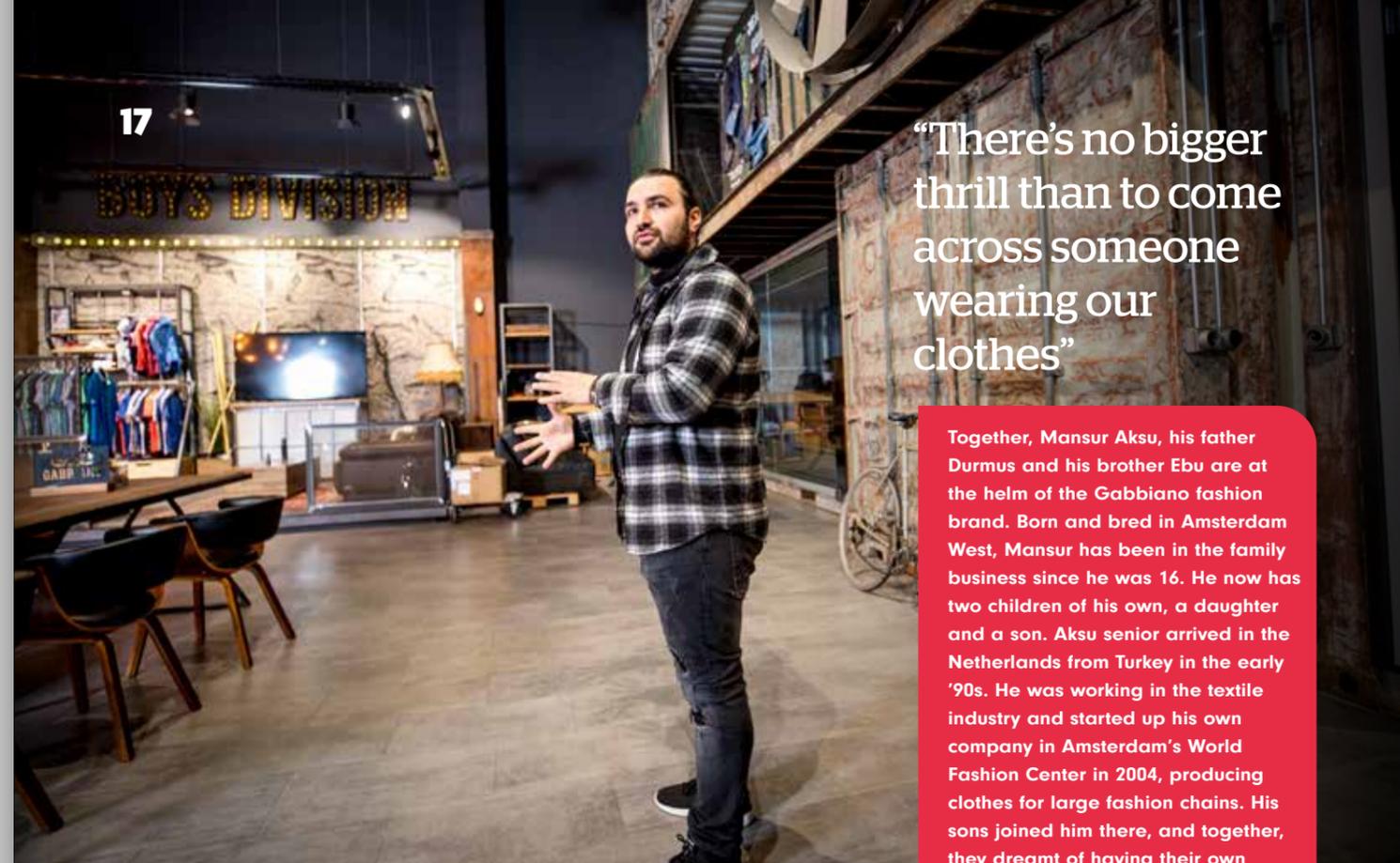
Gabbiano is all about the experience. You notice this as soon as you enter the showroom in the head office. It's the ultimate 'man cave' – it feels like you're on a film set. Slap bang in the middle of the room is a coffee-corner-cum-bar, plus a wall built from sea containers stacked three high and cleverly arranged to form meeting rooms as well as part of the storeroom. Then there's a motorcycle – café racer style – and other accents made from rough and raw materials. Surrounded by a décor dominated by steel, wood and stone, there are plenty of comfortable private seating areas. This is where Gabbiano's new collections are presented to business partners and clients. The perfect place to interview the brand's managing director Mansur Aksu.

When asked what the game changer was for his business, Mansur replies without hesitation. "Two years ago, we radically reorganised our business model – that was the biggest game changer so far! Where we had previously produced and ordered in stock, we now operate a pre-ordering system. This switch was necessary to enable us to expand internationally.

While we were at it, we automated all our business processes. Now all you need to do is push one button and it's all done!"

No stock? How do the shops sell your clothes then? "Shops will always be there, but their role is changing. Consumers visit shops for the experience. To get customers into the shops, we as a brand need to be in direct contact with the consumers. We need to tempt them to come and take a look at our partners, the shops. It may sound strange, but we do this via the online store. Online, we can present the full collection. That's not possible in most brick-and-mortar shops. All our 250 retail partners have access to their own web-based B2B portal. This guarantees minimal risk for the retailer. One factor in this is keeping the inventory small. When a consumer visits the shop and an item is not in stock, the shop assistant accesses the portal. A few clicks later, we send it to the shop."

Did your retail partners see the benefits of this model straightaway? "No, not at all. When we launched our consumer



"There's no bigger thrill than to come across someone wearing our clothes"

Together, Mansur Aksu, his father Durmus and his brother Ebu are at the helm of the Gabbiano fashion brand. Born and bred in Amsterdam West, Mansur has been in the family business since he was 16. He now has two children of his own, a daughter and a son. Aksu senior arrived in the Netherlands from Turkey in the early '90s. He was working in the textile industry and started up his own company in Amsterdam's World Fashion Center in 2004, producing clothes for large fashion chains. His sons joined him there, and together, they dreamt of having their own brand, their own designs, offering a complete experience. In 2011, this dream became reality when they founded Gabbiano. Having started out with a five-strong workforce, the company now has a staff of 25 and operates in five countries. 95% of Gabbiano's goods are manufactured in Turkey, the remaining 5% in China. Almost all garments are made from sustainable BCI cotton. The company's philosophy is 'the urban way of life', geared towards city-dwellers constantly on the lookout for new challenges.

If you asked me what defines Gabbiano's success, I'd say 'maximum dedication.' "Yes, that's right! We are always discussing the business and all the steps we are taking. At home, we've been banned from talking about the subject. If the business comes up, my son immediately puts a stop to it. He's a really funny kid, so he always gets everyone laughing."

website six years ago, there was a lot of pushback from the retailers. They viewed the online presence as direct competition. It wasn't – it was part of our strategy to have closer ties to our consumers. Creating an experience strengthens not only the brand, but the retailers' position, too."

Gabbiano seems to be more like a lifestyle than a clothing brand. "Exactly! And that's what we want to project everywhere. In addition to the website, social media is very important for us. Facebook and Instagram are the ideal platforms for us to present the Gabbiano lifestyle. Influencers are becoming more and more important, too. Consumers can identify with them and we take that into account. It certainly doesn't hurt that some celebrities are being spotted in Gabbiano jeans. And it's been more than just a few!"

Has the fact that so many people have been working from home lately had an effect on the fashion industry? "Our interactions with each other have become more informal and this is reflected in the clothes we wear. The suit-and-tie combination has been

replaced by jeans worn with a shirt or sporty jacket. The businessman has become more modern and urban. You know, as early as 1998, Prince Claus set a good example by uttering the immortal words: 'Dare to free yourself by going on the journey to the paradise of the open collar.' In the end, we're all followers of fashion, but the differences are significant. Each country has its own style and needs. Even a country as small as the Netherlands has huge style differences. In the north, consumers tend to be more conservative and stick to traditional models. In the south, people are hipper and follow more trends."

You're expanding to four new countries soon. What else have you got in the pipeline? "The next step of our international expansion is pretty much ready to go. In addition, we're going to open up new shops at several prime locations. These shops will be completely geared towards providing the Gabbiano Denim experience, giving us even more opportunities for connecting with our customers. There's no bigger thrill than to come across someone wearing our clothes!"

'From demolition to supplier'

GAME CHANGER: CONSCIOUS LIVING



Heembouw is the construction company and designer behind the circular pavilion at C-Bèta (see page 2). Its commercial manager Martijn Icke says the focus on sustainability can be found across the whole industry. "At C-Bèta, we demonstrate what we think construction is going to look like in the future."

What are the current game changers and has the coronavirus pandemic had an effect on the industry?

"Health and wellbeing are gaining more traction as focus areas, and the pandemic has exacerbated that. In my experience, those topics then tend to touch on others, such as sustainability and circularity. It all comes back to one of the biggest

game changers: the desire for conscious living. For us as a construction business, sustainability is of great interest to us. For Heembouw it's key."

What does that mean for Heembouw's plans for the future?

"The awareness of the topic is only going to become greater and greater. It's certainly become an important



factor in how we run our own business. In early 2020, we moved to our new location, which is a sustainable building with an A+ energy label. Our complete vehicle fleet is becoming electric. And this is the direction we're taking in all our activities. We are committed to using Freement, circular concrete, whenever possible. Such commitments mean it's no longer an option to choose non-sustainable methods. The sustainability ideal is spreading out across all parts of the business. The challenge is to get everyone on board. For that you need inspiring key figures.

The switch to sustainable methods went pretty fast. Around five years ago, it wasn't an important topic for many construction businesses. Sound business management goes hand in hand with this new focus – it's not a

question of one or the other. I've noticed this across the whole supply chain. In some places, this is a quick process, some others need a bit longer to adjust, such as building services engineering."

But isn't that actually an area where there are many steps that can be taken to make it more sustainable?

"That's right. And there are some pioneers in that field, as well. But a lot of challenges remain, for example when it comes to reducing the materials used or reusing existing installations. In recent years we've been challenging our partners to reconsider their role in making projects more sustainable. What we need is to change the revenue model, particularly when it comes to reuse and ownership of materials. That's the biggest obstacle to overcome

'Sustainable construction is what Heembouw is all about'

right now. Because the way I see it, manufacturing and using new materials will become an outdated process. And that will change the entire sector. The demolition industry will turn into suppliers, with far-reaching consequences for everyone involved."

What sort of innovations are you witnessing in the construction sector and what effects do they have?

"Because the supply chain is going to change, we, as part of that chain, will need to change too. We'll continue to build and design, but we'll need to be more creative with those processes. There will be more focus, for example, on making sure materials can be removed and reused more easily."



“When you look at construction itself, craftsmanship will play a much bigger role again. We noticed this during the rebuild of the barn at C-Bèta. Material expertise and quality control have taken a step back in recent years, but they’re making a comeback. We’ve also seen a new role develop: that of material scouts. For the longest time, the thinking was that if something had an NEN certificate – i.e. was certified by the Royal Netherlands Standardisation Institute – that’s all you needed to know. But you can’t certify reused materials using the NEN rules. As a result, people have needed to re-learn how to recognise quality and estimate a certain material’s value. This requires expertise and new competencies. You need to be creative, open-minded, be able to look beyond the delivery date of a project, design with an eye on deconstructability...

A number of our recent projects, such as C-Bèta and our own offices in Roelofarendsveen and in Berkel en Rodenrijs, have taught us a lot, and we share these new insights. We also talk about what didn’t go well, or which aspects we’re unsure about. I really like this sharing of lessons learned. Another new development I expect is that we as a construction company are going to be thinking a lot more about maintenance, even prior to construction. And that we are going to talk to our clients about future maintenance and service costs. I expect that in the coming years, all these developments will lead to more integration within the

sector. I’m hoping that all us construction nerds will come together once more and build.”

How do sustainability certificates approach circularity?

“The main sustainability certifications in construction are BREEAM and WELL. Despite BREEAM being a well thought out method, it doesn’t reward the reuse of materials at all. That’s a bit strange. The same goes for WELL. We may need to add new ratings to them: ‘super-excellent’ for BREEAM and ‘five-stars-plus’ for WELL. The Dutch environmental standard, the MilieuPrestatie Gebouwen (MPG), which needs to be included with every application for planning permission, thankfully does take reuse into account. It lists the environmental impact of the proposed materials, and reused materials score well.”

Certificates, objectives, requirements: the construction industry has to reckon with a large body of rules.

“And we must constantly adapt these rules, too. We are frequently faced with new regulations. In principle I’m all for that. But sometimes, a change in rules means it’s cheaper to demolish an old building and put up a new one – not exactly a sustainable way of working, but often the only way that buildings can meet the requirements. What you really want to do is build something that you know can stand for at least 50 years. Or where you know you can change its use within its lifetime. Now that’s

I’m hoping that all us construction nerds will come together once more’

sustainable! So there is quite a lot happening and we need to find considered and innovative concepts to deal with that. Always looking to the future.”

What sort of concepts are you currently working on?

“One of our current projects is a circular distribution centre. When we built our office according to circular principles, we thought, ‘why aren’t we doing the same thing with a distribution centre?’ There are enough potential clients for that. As a construction company that also designs and that has circular credentials, we have all the expertise needed for such a project. We now have a proof of concept and we’re in discussion with a number of parties.

In addition, we’re building an office building that’s entirely constructed from wood. Sustainable, deconstructable and with a high residual value. The disadvantage is the initial cost. It’s still so much higher than standard construction, so this way of building is currently not competitive.”

What are your hopes and expectations for the circular pavilion at C-Bèta?

“It will be a place to meet interesting startups and scaleups who are active in the field of construction and the built environment. We want to learn from everyone there, gain some insights and inspiration, and hopefully also share our own experiences. On top of that, the pavilion is our own project and as such, it’s ideal for taking others to in order to demonstrate the quality of construction that Heembouw stands for. We want to take everyone along on our transition and share our vision of the future of construction. Furthermore, I’m hoping for some excellent food and drink at C-Bèta – that would make the place even nicer.”

Heembouw

Where: C-Bèta

Municipality: Haarlemmermeer

Who: Martijn Icke, Commercial Manager

Interviewer: Isaac Roeterink, SADC

www.heembouw.nl



**GAME CHANGER:
THINKING DIFFERENTLY**

‘The Amsterdam Metropolitan Area is a unique ecosystem’

23 amsterdam inbusiness guides an increasingly diverse portfolio of businesses to the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. Director Hilde van der Meer isn't surprised by its success. “Companies want to go where things are happening, because that's where they can attract talent.”

amsterdam inbusiness is a partnership of the municipalities of Amsterdam, Haarlemmermeer, Almere and Amstelveen. Its aim is to attract international companies to the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. amsterdam inbusiness then helps these companies and their employees find their way and take advantage of all the opportunities the region offers. Director Hilde van der Meer works from the City of Amsterdam's offices, where she keeps a close eye on the international economy and on international developments that could have an impact on business in the region. The amsterdam inbusiness team do lobby work, connect people, come up with creative solutions to a variety of issues and are forward-thinking in all they do.

Is the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area a popular business location for international companies?

“Yes, very much so. We had just reached a peak when the pandemic hit. Ten or 15 years ago, the region was not quite as high up on the international rankings for business locations, but now we're a real winner of globalisation! The region is popular among international logistics companies and for head offices, and it's a favourite destination for startups and scale-ups. Brexit and the arrival of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) have also made the region very attractive for the life sciences sector.”

Do you think the pandemic will change the business world?

“There had already been a shift in how we think about a number of things – just think of the sustainability issue. Now I'm noticing that as a result of the crisis, people, and therefore also companies, are even more open to change than usual. For myself, the crisis has also led to a big shift in how I approach things. It used to be: ‘What does the world want from us?’ Now it's: ‘What do we want from the world?’ It may seem like I think that everything is possible, but that's only partly true. It's more a question of how do you shape what you can get from the outside world?”

The great thing is that Amsterdam has a big startup community, which makes the region hugely attractive to international companies that want to grow. They love

amsterdam inbusiness
Where: Amsterdam
Who: Hilde van der Meer, Director
Interviewer: Jeanet van Antwerpen, SADC
www.iamsterdam.com/en/business

coming to Amsterdam. Look at the European headquarters of Netflix. Five years ago, they had 10 people working there, now it's hundreds. That has a positive effect on Amsterdam's global reputation. The same can be said about Amsterdam's status as a centre of innovation. This means that the city and the region are high up on the list of innovative international companies that are looking into opening a European location. Companies want to go where things are happening and where they can grow quickly, because that's where they can attract talent more easily. That means we must make the region as attractive as possible, on a global and on a local level. Our starting point is positioning the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area as a uniquely sustainable and innovative ecosystem. We now work in a really focused way, making lists with specific companies that we would like to have in our region, sketching the ideal scenario.”

Are these factors less important for companies that are already here?

“No, they are equally important, but there are also other factors at play when it comes to keeping the region attractive for the companies that are already here. It can be little things – like, can employees easily take a nice walk on their lunch break? My co-workers and I have started using an app called Ommetje [a Dutch term for a walk around the block]. We use it to take a walk with the whole team and have our meetings while we're walking. It really works. I discovered this when I was working from home. I already loved that I had a garden, while living in the middle of the city. But now I often walk through other green spaces in the city while having meetings. It's wonderful. Cities, but also business parks, need to become a lot greener, so that they can play a recreational role. I recently read an article by a brain surgeon, who recommends going on walks for at least 20 minutes each day. It's really good for you. For me, working from home has meant my routine has changed and I now have more variety between staring at screens and doing other things, such as gardening and walking. I'd like to work at the office for three days a week and from home for two. It's important to bring all the things that are important in life together. And the same could be said about the international economy in the Amsterdam Area. It's all about improving the quality of life and connecting economy with ecology.”

“So many innovative companies want an Amsterdam location”



Nippon Express Global Forwarding Nederland B.V.
Where: Schiphol Trade Park
Municipality: Haarlemmermeer
Who: Ruud Drijzen, Vice President
Interviewer: Olav Steffers, SADC
www.nipponexpress.com

‘Our customers want continuity, quality and flexibility’



Game changer: **flexibility**

Vice president Ruud Drijzen is proud: the logistics service company Nippon Express managed to keep its standards high throughout 2020, despite all that happened. The new challenge for 2021 is the company’s move to a new building at Schiphol Trade Park, which was built to the highest sustainability standards.

Nippon Express has had a location in the Netherlands since the 1970s. The large Japanese logistics service company works in the air and on water, and has locations both at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol and the Port of Rotterdam. We speak to Ruud via an online call: like many others, he too is forced to work from home as much as possible.

Let’s address the elephant in the room straightaway.

“Of course, it’s been a strange year for Nippon. For a number of our customers, these are tense times, as they work in sectors that have been affected. This has had an effect on us, too, but thankfully, we have a wide range of clients. In some sectors, things are going really well, for example in high-tech, medical and food. The increase in business from these sectors has absorbed the decrease we have seen in other sectors, such as aerospace and automotive. Ultimately, the business is going well, but the volumes have decreased. We have also had to react quickly to unforeseen circumstances, for example when the available spaces at the carriers at Schiphol were scarce and too expensive. In those cases, we needed to fall back on other options, such as Frankfurt.”

“Contracts used to run for a 10-year period, now it’s sometimes just one year”

What are you proud of when you look back on 2020?

“That we have managed to continue running the business in a safe and responsible way, despite COVID-19. This was partly thanks to our employees, who have been reliable as always. We have been able to deliver large volumes without delay. That’s something I look back on with pride. It’s been tense at times, but we always made it.”

And 2021 is the year of the big move!

“Yes, that’s right. In August last year, construction of our new building started at Schiphol Trade Park. Although there have been some delays, we still expect to be able to move in by late June. Schiphol Trade Park sets very high standards when it comes to the sustainability of the buildings that are being constructed there. At times, this led to some discussions with headquarters in Japan, but everyone will be happy with the end result. The new building is really of its time: sustainable, with solar panels, LED lighting and a special air circulation system. I wouldn’t be surprised if it became a leading example for other Nippon developments all over the world. In addition to the focus on sustainability, we’re looking into where we can automate and robotise certain processes. These are topics that Nippon Express has been familiar with for a long time now. In the near future, we’re going to take more steps towards digitalisation of paperwork. Forwarding is still very dependent on

paper, and there should be much less of that. That’s what we’re currently working hard to achieve.”

What’s your biggest game changer in the near future?

“Our customers want continuity, quality and, increasingly, flexibility. Flexibly responding to our clients will be our big game changer. We used to have contracts with a period of five to 10 years. Now these have a duration of three years, sometimes even two; once, when a contract was being renewed, it was only one. We need to get the entire organisation geared towards this unpredictable flexibility. What does that mean for the future? Well, I think we will switch from centrally controlled warehouses to decentral, satellite-like warehouses, which can respond instantly to client demand.”

“The future? Decentralised warehouses that can instantly respond to client demand”

In today’s market, to guarantee a maximum of flexibility, we might rent a new office building rather than develop a new one.”

Not taking into account the current uncertainties, how do you look to the future?

He laughs: “We are businesspeople, we always see new opportunities. Right now, we are witnessing the growth in the life sciences sector and at Schiphol we can react to that directly. At the moment just for transit, but soon maybe also for cold storage. Furthermore, we are obviously keeping a close eye on the consequences of Brexit. We think there are many new opportunities there, because supply chains will need to be organised completely differently. We’re going to play a role in that.”

The gym bag of...

*IWG's
Ewout Holst*

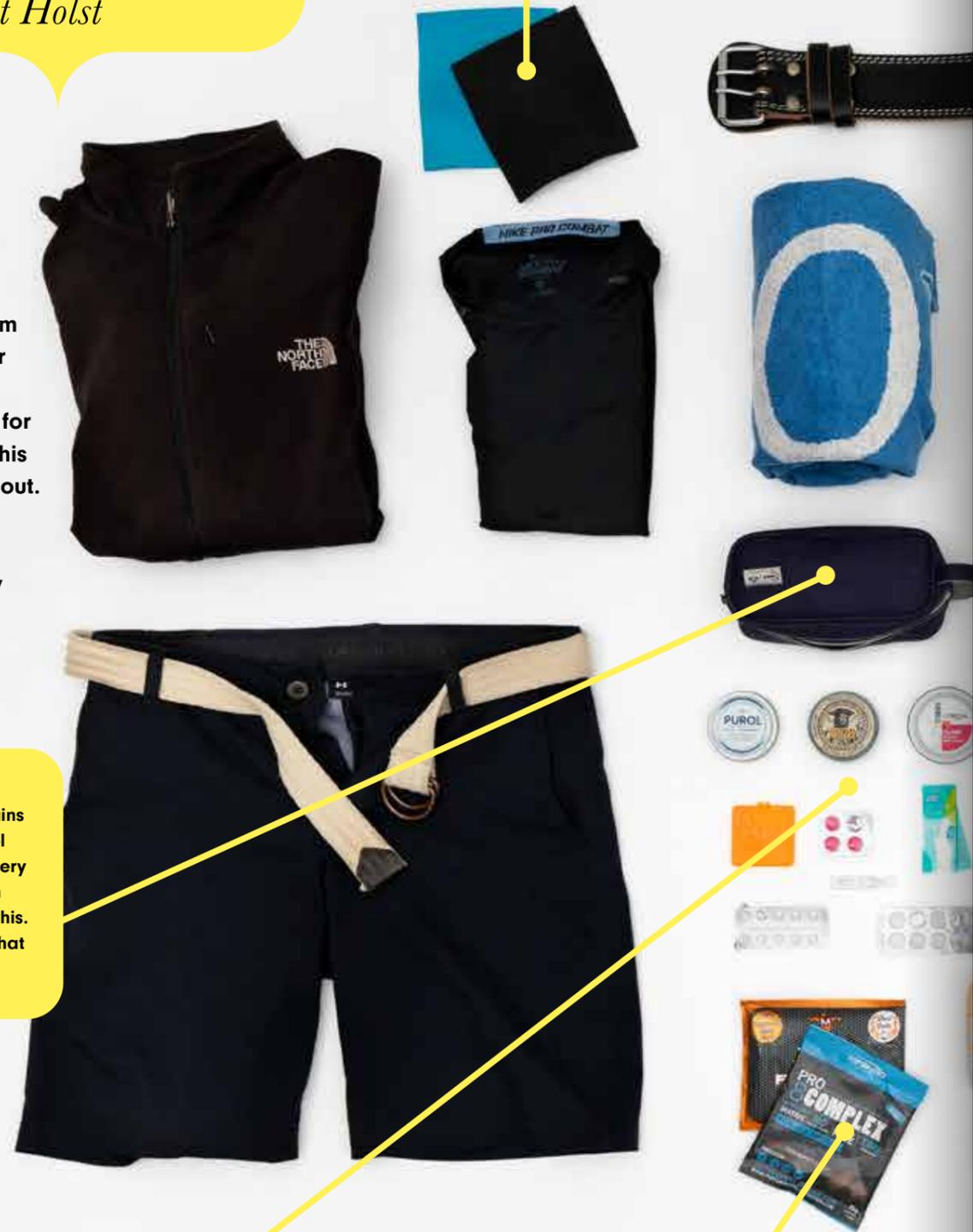
I used to be an Olympic swimmer. Sport is part of my life, and I exercise five to six times a week. The fitter I am physically, the fitter I am mentally. I'm usually at the gym for about an hour. In this time, I'm going all out. Totally going for it – that's what I do. In sports, but in my work, too.

I always carry this little pouch with me. It contains ibuprofen, paracetamol and hay fever relief – very important. Especially in spring, I really rely on this. Just like the eyedrops that help with itchy eyes.

Reuzel is for keeping my beard in check. The name [Dutch for lard] is misleading – it's really wax by Schorem, a great barber in Rotterdam.

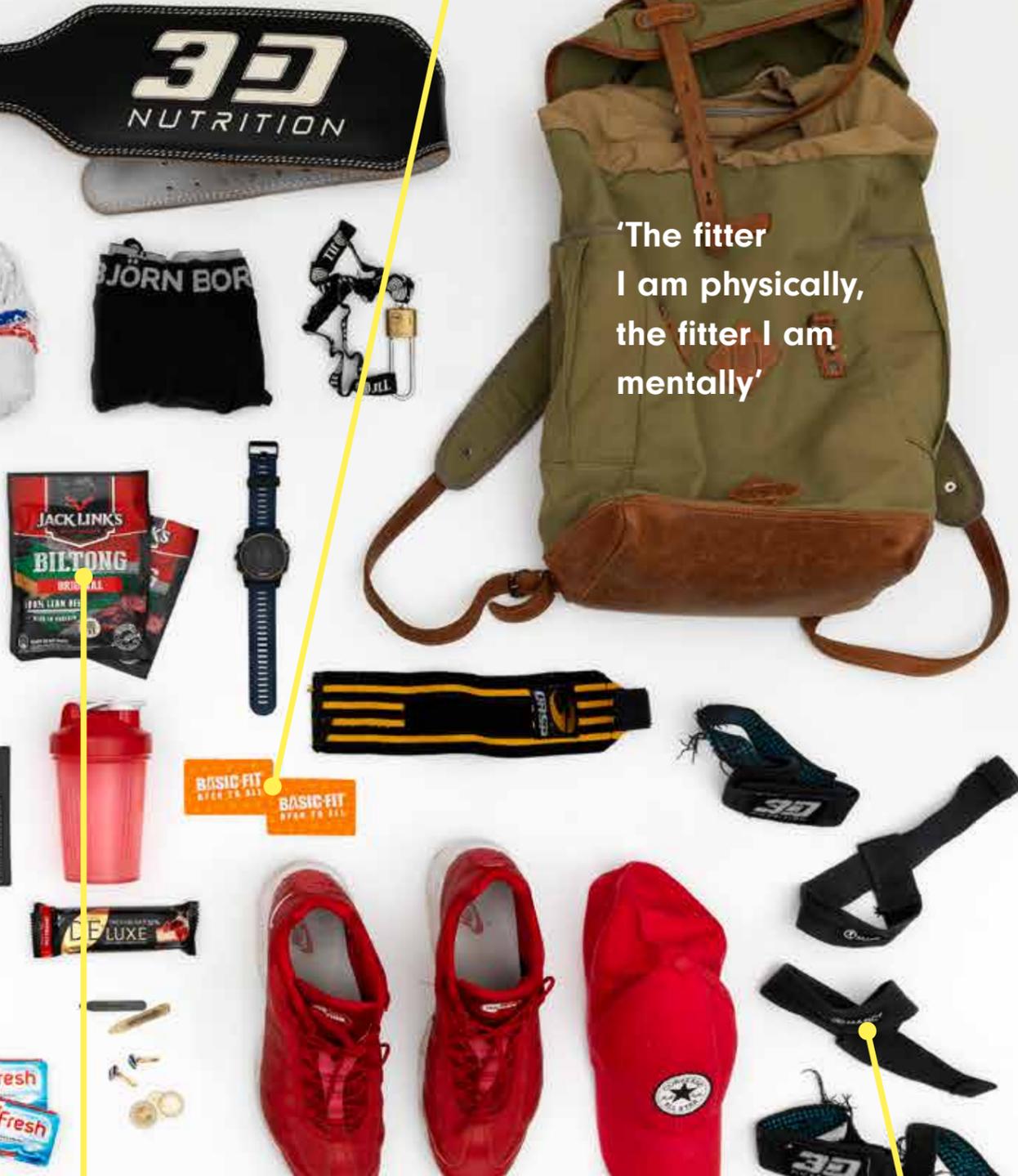
The protein drinks are for days where I have too little energy. I have them before exercising.

These are foam pads. When I benchpress particularly heavy weights, they offer additional damping and grip. Good for your hands!



I train at Basic-Fit, a gym chain that has branches all over the country. It's really handy: I can exercise wherever I am. It's the same concept as IWG's flex offices.

'The fitter I am physically, the fitter I am mentally'



Eating Biltong is a habit I've kept from my time in South Africa. It's dried beef: super healthy and rich in protein.

I usually do high-impact strength training. These are wrist straps. If a weight is very heavy, you can use them to relieve the pressure from your hands. They help you hold on to the weight.



Always 100 percent

On 1 September, **Marco Pos** became managing director at Focus Amsterdam and Chain at Business Park Amsterdam Osdorp. COVID-19 has mainly affected his personal life: he's had to cancel his much-needed sports trips. Thankfully, he deals well with setbacks: "I just change the goal, so I can still reach it."

Marco Pos started his career in corrugated cardboard boxes but has now been working in equipment and tech rental services for events for more than 15 years. Married with two teenage kids and living in Hilversum, he's always on the lookout for new experiences and ways to broaden his horizons. As

such, switching jobs in the middle of a pandemic was not stressful for him. Instead, he saw it as an exciting new challenge.

Do you like challenges?

"Yes, absolutely. I am very ambitious, and I won't settle for second place. Whether I'm taking part in a cycle race, running or doing a triathlon. I always have a goal in my sights, but now that I'm older, I'm better at putting things in perspective. I had the same when I first became company director. For a long time, this had been the ultimate goal. Almost since I'd been a child – my mother always said I should become director. Ten years ago, the moment finally came, and it turned

out to be not all that exciting. These things help you to put matters into perspective."

When you do sports, is that quite solitary?

"No, not necessarily. I do like doing sports on my own, but it's even better to go with others. Every year, me and some friends go for a cycle race in the mountains; I really look forward to that. Of course, I want to be the first one to reach the top of the mountain – I remain competitive! I train the whole year so that I can be the best of the group at that weekend. But once we've reached the top and we're having some wine, I can really switch off. This year, the trip sadly didn't happen because of the coronavirus."

So what happened with your training sessions?

"Of course it was a disappointment that the trip had to be cancelled, but I'm quite good at dealing with setbacks. I just adapt – I change the goal, so that I can still reach it. I always make sure there's something on the horizon to strive for. Now I'm training out in nature, and my goal is to run a marathon."

Are all your vacations centred around sport?

"Yes, if possible. We go skiing together as a family every year, and for about 15 years, we've been going to Lanzarote in the Christmas holidays. Many friends of ours live there and I can really relax and reset when I'm there. Cycling in the mountains, enjoying life. For a moment, I can really let go of work. Another trip that sadly had to be cancelled – shortly before we were supposed to go, it was designated a risk area. I really hope we will be able to go this year. The plan is to move to Lanzarote in a few years' time and become a bicycle tour guide."

Is it important for you to clear your head every once in a while?
"Yes, sometimes I need to take a step back and get some peace. I once took three-quarters of a year off before starting a new job, travelling with the family through Europe with a folding caravan. In that time, I started up an old hobby again: restoring old bicycles. I find that really fulfilling. Sometimes it's good to get back to basics. I always put 100% of my energy into my work. By taking a step back, I can regain some of that energy. I need that. I can only work at full speed ahead – I give my all to my work and the people I work with."

How did lockdown go in the offices of Chain and Focus?

"Better than at some other companies. Our building at Business Park Amsterdam Osdorp is spacious, which means that most employees could come to the office to work there. I think that was ideal. Social contact is really important to me. You need to have a bit of a family feel at a company, that's imperative. You can create this in a number of ways. At my previous company, for example, I set up a cycling club. Separating work and private life is not something I feel I need to do. The two can go together very well."

'Separating work and private life isn't something I need to do'

Chain en Focus Amsterdam

Where: Business Park Amsterdam Osdorp

Municipality: Amsterdam

Who: Marco Pos, Managing Director

Interviewer: Yasha Schadee en Sheila van Vliet, SADC

www.focusamsterdam.com

As a company, we have adapted to the current situation in a very flexible manner. We don't need to downscale. Much the opposite – we're buying struggling companies, such as Van der Veen in Rijswijk, which caters to events and fairs. They had gone bankrupt and we acquired it. On 1 October, we started it up again with a part of the workforce."

So you haven't experienced a decline in profits?

"Focus has, because events such as Tomorrowland and Mysteryland have been cancelled. But Chain mainly does lights and audio for the broadcasters in Hilversum, and that sector is really busy, as more programmes are being made in the studio. Beau, Jinek, Veronica Inside – these are all programmes where we do the lights and audio. The profits at Chain help keep the rest going. In addition, the holding, Rent-All, is a healthy business. While other companies have had to let many people go, we invest in retaining people. Some employees have a reduced workload due to COVID-19 measures. I talk to them to try to find out more about their skills and areas of interest, so we can find other work for them temporarily. I always try to put myself in the position of whoever I'm talking to. The thing is, they may well have another interpretation of the conversation. I graduated in economics, but in hindsight, I would have preferred to study psychology. I find it so interesting to discover what motivates people and where their talents lie."

GAME CHANGERS:
Digitalisation,
Brexit and
COVID-19

A sixth sense for new opportunities

Werkgeversservicepunt Groot-Amsterdam has one goal: help jobseekers currently relying on benefits to find work. Three game changers in a row mean they have their work cut out. Manager Quinta van Boetzelaer and advisor Tymen van Dijk explain how they approach this challenge.

Just this week, Tymen van Dijk visited one of the affected companies at Schiphol: until a year ago, things were going great, but the pandemic has meant that now they are struggling to keep their head above water and need to let go of three quarters of their employees. Tymen is an advisor for employers at the Werkgeversservicepunt Groot-Amsterdam (WSP). The WSP is an initiative of the City of Amsterdam, the UWV (the Dutch Employee Insurance Agency) and other parties, and aims to bring together jobseekers and employers

from the region. The goal: helping jobseekers find work. His role includes assisting companies to, for example, find out if there are available subsidies.

Why is digitalisation your first game changer?

Tymen: "Because of the way it's taken off. More and more processes are being automated. Where the production line was once a huge step forward, we now have many companies where robots do the entire process of order picking. This means there is a shift in the role of the staff: employees become operators rather than warehouse workers. And that requires a different skill set, more IT skills, for example."

And in what way is that a game changer for you?

Quinta: "We're dealing with the fallout of digitalisation. Take aircraft handling: it's increasingly automated. The luggage belt, the clearing of goods... it's all done digitally. A part of the staff can't catch up with these developments. We need to create new opportunities or utilise existing ones for these people."

Tymen: "And this is where we come

in. In a number of sectors there's still a labour shortage. Companies have an interest in investing in training to get good staff. And the government is willing to pay them subsidies if they employ jobseekers who stop relying on benefits as a result. These are opportunities that we utilise for people in the region."

The second game changer you name is Brexit. Tell me more!

Tymen: "Now that Britain is no longer a member of the European customs union, many more goods have to be cleared at customs. As a result, lots of people are needed in a relatively short timeframe. WSP has been involved in this: we introduced suitable people to the customs authorities, many of whom are now going to get trained in the coming months."

And the coronavirus pandemic: has that been such a game changer, too?

Tymen: "Yes, very much so! In early March 2020 I organised a job fair at Schiphol. A useful and much needed event: all sectors that are represented at Schiphol were dealing with labour shortages. We had



Werkgeversservicepunt
Groot-Amsterdam

Where: Amsterdam

Who: Quinta van Boetzelaer, manager, and Tymen van Dijk, employer services advisor at UWV (the Dutch Employee Insurance Agency)

Interviewer: Joep Schroeders, SADC
www.wspgrootamsterdam.nl

record numbers of visitors from the employer side. But after lockdown began on 15 March, everything changed. Logistics and aviation companies suddenly needed to start letting people go."

Quinta: "The number of employment opportunities has declined as a result of the huge decrease in passengers. The logistics sector has seen layoffs, too, but elsewhere in the sector there is actually much more work. Once you receive benefits, it can be difficult to enter the job market again, which is why the Regionaal Werkcentrum Groot-Amsterdam (Regional Job Centre Amsterdam Area, RWC) was launched last summer. This is a public-private networking organisation, in which WSP is one of the partners. It focuses on guiding people whose job is in danger as a result of coronavirus restrictions into other work. If there is a surplus of taxi drivers, we can utilise them as couriers. And even KLM ground staff have taken up roles in an e-commerce business."

What are the biggest challenges you face in the near future?

Tymen: "The demand for flexibility: due to the speed of digitalisation, people can't stay in the same job forever without continuing to learn and grow. We won't see decades-long employment at one place as much as we used to. There is a stronger focus on lifelong learning and on guiding people into new work when there is a chance that they may be losing their current jobs."

Quinta: "WSP works a lot with 'employers with a warm heart': companies that focus on inclusivity, that want to ensure everyone who can participate does participate. Unfortunately, those companies too have suffered as a result of the pandemic. We've noticed that it has become more difficult to utilise the talents of people who've been unemployed for a long time or have particular needs. I definitely see a challenge there, now even more so than before the coronavirus pandemic. There is an online platform called Hallowerk, run by municipalities in the Rijnmond, Haaglanden, Utrecht and Amsterdam regions, which matches jobseekers who receive benefits to available work. They can specify what their skills are and what work

they are looking for exactly. If needed, they get help with this from their municipality. This encourages jobseekers' self-determination and direction, and it gives employers from the region the option to do targeted searches for employees."

And where do you see opportunities?

Tymen: "In e-commerce. More and more people do their shopping online. Big online supermarkets such as Picnic and Albert Heijn are working with distribution centres at the edge of towns and cities; couriers then deliver the goods to the customers. So we immediately got the idea that people who have lost their jobs in hospitality because of the pandemic can start working as delivery drivers. We have a sixth sense for these sorts of opportunities."

Are you looking for staff?
Contact the
Werkgeversservicepunt
Groot-Amsterdam at
www.wspgrootamsterdam.nl

'The past decade has brought about a flexible workspace revolution'

International Workplace Group (IWG)

Where: Schiphol and globally

Who: Ewout Holst, Vice President Enterprise and Sales EMEA and UK

Interviewer: Jozien van der Wal, SADC

www.iwgplc.com

Game changer: Flexible office space

Being chained to an office rental contract for years is a thing of the past – these days, companies can rent offices on an hourly basis. The International Workplace Group (IWG) is a market leader in the field of flexible offices. Ewout Holst looks after Dutch and international businesses for them. “Soon, we may be able to include home offices in our portfolio.”

‘Soon, employees will be able to hire a desk space anywhere in the world’

I'm meeting Ewout at Spaces Zuidas, one of IWG's roughly 130 locations in the Netherlands. He has been working for IWG as vice president enterprise sales for the EMEA and the UK for a little over two years now. The company offers solutions for companies with a large-scale global real-estate portfolio, providing various products and services such as flexible offices, meeting rooms and memberships. Its best-known brands are Regus, Signature by Regus, HQ, No18 and Spaces, all of which have their own separate brand identity. While Regus offices, for example, tend to be structured in a classic office layout, Spaces offers modern, trendy layouts with a focus on co-working.

From long-term office rentals to one-hour workspaces - how did that happen?

“Everything has become more flexible. The past decade has brought about a flexible workspace revolution. This applies to office rentals, too: clients used to have little choice when it came to the duration of the contracts. Now this is a lot more flexible. At IWG, we take into account that businesses grow and change quickly. While a multinational business may have taken 75 years to grow to its current size, these days you get tech companies that gain millions of customers in a matter of months. We distinguish three types of businesses: fast-growing companies, which are flexible from the start; national companies, which have a domestic real-estate portfolio; and

multinational companies, which have an international, mixed portfolio that has grown alongside the company itself, through mergers and acquisitions. This makes them complex clients.”

Has COVID-19 increased the demand for flexible solutions?

“It's too early to say, but it does look like it. Lockdown and working from home has forced companies to accept the fact that things can be done differently. 2020 has been a year of learning, analysing and preparing for revised office requirements and real-estate strategies. Many companies are in a phase of reorientation. There is a new awareness of the possibility of flexible solutions. And when I say flexible, I don't necessarily mean 'temporary' – flexibility can

also be a long-term solution. In terms of real estate, companies will need to adapt more to individuals – to their employees. This will lead to more choice in workspace solutions that can be customised by the employees. It's something that IWG had already been working on, not least because of all the different concepts that we offer. In addition, we're looking into the different typologies of working that you find at more traditional companies, and what the needs are there. This means we can offer a product that suits the employees of those particular companies. We are also looking into whether we can include employees' home offices in our product. Technology will play a big role in this: soon, employees will be able to rent on-demand workspaces at all times and all over the world."

"In Africa I learnt how to be flexible in my work"

Which typology do you belong to, do you think?

"I see myself as a highly mobile independent worker. I love the flexibility that you get when you start the day at home and have some meetings scheduled elsewhere later in the day. In a previous job I was working in Africa, where the infrastructure could be quite poor at times, also digitally. That's where I learnt to be able to work everywhere and deal with a variety of situations – well, being flexible! I really value having a good work-life balance. Our work and our life experiences are intertwined: losing time on things like being stuck in traffic will have an effect on both."



"In real estate, there is a growing focus on individual employees"

How do you achieve this balance?

"By being flexible and goal-oriented. I think it's important to be mentally and physically fit. I exercise five to six times a week, whenever I get time: be it in the morning, the afternoon or between two meetings. I'm a member of a gym that has the same flexibility as IWG, meaning I can go to any branch across the Netherlands, and so I always have my gym bag with me."

Do you envision more game changers for the future?

"Digitalisation is an important topic – it's the biggest and fastest revolution we have experienced. We live in an economy of choice, which will also influence how and where we work. This will have the most far-reaching effects. I hope that the fact that there are ever-smarter ways of working will have a positive effect on our quality of life. Partnerships between

companies are another gamechanger, I think. Spaces at Schiphol, for example, has a partnership with a big tech company. This opens up opportunities and new partnerships for both sides. A campus or innovation district could grow in and around Spaces' Schiphol location, which would further improve how companies and people work together."

IWG's work typologies

Home worker

works from home most of the time, with infrequent appointments elsewhere



Business traveller



works from home or a central office, but mainly travels for business

Occasional office user

travels for business, works from home and comes to the office two days a week



Office user

works mainly in the office, sometimes travels or has an out-of-office appointment



Project team



needs space for solitary and team work and for meeting clients

'It's important to connect all aspects in life that matter.'

Hilde van der Meer, amsterdam inbusiness (p. 23)

About SADC

SADC (Schiphol Area Development Company) develops a coherent portfolio of high-quality, easy-to-access working environments in the Amsterdam Airport Area, which are competitive both nationally and internationally.

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Inside SADC's business parks...
and more to explore