

1200 waterborne homes

Rivers in the Netherlands are being given even more room to combat the rising water level and as a result the surface area covered by water is increasing, while the amount of land available for building on is decreasing. In a densely populated country like the Netherlands, innovative building solutions are therefore required – which is precisely what architect Koen Olthuis from Waterstudio.NL has to offer. His designs for floating buildings raised quite a fuss in the architectural world. However, the idea itself wasn't new, of course, because drilling platforms and houseboats had been around for some time. What was new was the way that Olthuis adapted the concept to make it suitable for large-scale housing construction: "Modules that are linked together can support entire neighborhoods." In the near future, Olthuis will probably have the chance to work on projects in his own country as well, and not a minute too soon, in his opinion: "We have to stop fighting against the water. Instead of pumping all the water away, we need to start removing polders." That is precisely what is due to happen in 2010 in the west of the Netherlands, where a former agricultural area will be flooded so that 1200 waterborne homes can be built. This new waterborne neighborhood will be called

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'The New Water'. Though it might seem like backwards logic, Olthuis sees only advantages: "The water can rise an additional thirty centimeters (1 foot) for sure, and the homes will simply rise with it. There will no longer be any need to pump the water away." In addition, the neighborhood will act as a water storage area – not only to absorb high water levels, but also to help in the event of water shortages. Furthermore, the residential area can be linked to surrounding inland waterways. Might this be a solution to the Netherlands' traffic congestion problem?

