

Foresight is not
the essence of
government

Jan van den Noort

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Nineteenth-century Rotterdam was a city of drastic changes.¹ Demographic, geographical and economic factors put immense strains on the City Council. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century Rotterdam faced a growth of the city population of almost 170 per cent. Due to annexations the territory of the city, in the same period, increased to eight times its original size. Moreover, the digging of the Nieuwe Waterweg, a new mouth for the river Rhine, improved the geographical position of Rotterdam and made it very sensitive to signals from the industrializing Ruhr region.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the City Council of Rotterdam took several decisions concerning the extension of the city on Feijenoord on the south bank of the river (Figure 1). The construction of a bridge was considered but the cost involved created an effective barrier. The involvement of private and state capital supplied sufficient pressure to proceed with the plans. Three contracts, one with the Dutch state, signed in 1869, the other two, concluded in 1872 and 1882, with the private Rotterdamsche Handelsvereniging (RHV), will be analysed to show the interaction between these three parties and the division of labour that resulted.

Cart or bark

Whether an open bridge is open to ships or to land traffic is a confusing question. Whatever the answer, bridges can be a time-consuming barrier to water and land traffic. To W.N. Rose, former surveyor of Rotterdam Public Works and influential adviser to the City Council, the bridge connecting Rotterdam with Feijenoord should form a permanent link with the other side. In his view the successful development of the new territory on the left bank depended to a great extent on the sort of bridge that was built. He stressed the need for a fixed bridge, because a bridge that had to be lifted to let tall ships pass would hamper road traffic too much. The large number of ships which had to pass would cause the bridge to be open too often. This way Feijenoord could turn into a separate city. Some day the merchants and manufacturers on Feijenoord might even like to have their own exchange as well, Rose argued, and then separation would be complete.²

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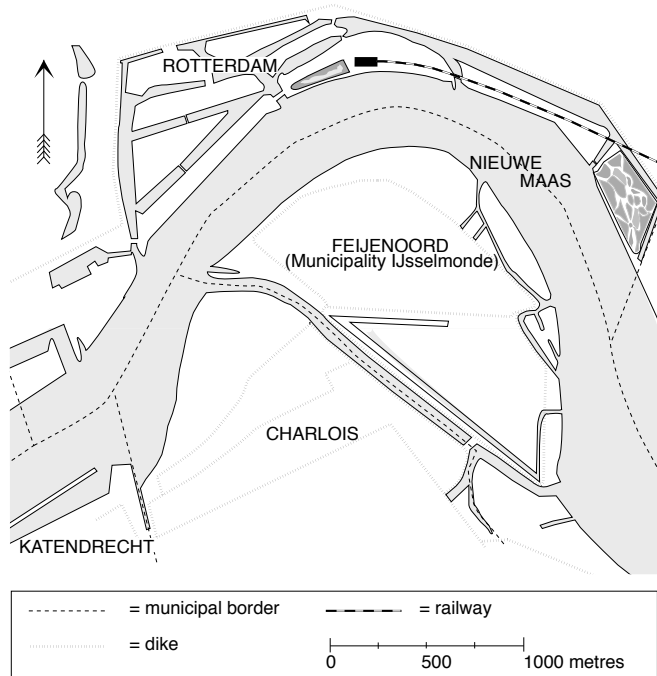


Figure 1 Feijenoord in 1869. The Meuse forms a part of the Dutch river delta. Rhine and Meuse merge east of Rotterdam and its combined waters are called Nieuwe Maas as they pass the city. For the extension of Rotterdam on the island Feijenoord a bridge crossing the Nieuwe Maas was considered indispensable. In 1870 Feijenoord and parts of the villages Katendrecht and Charlois were annexed. Source: GAR, Library, XII B 36.

However, a fixed bridge is a barrier to water traffic and without an alternative route the drastic plans of Rose had no chance of being accepted. Although his Feijenoord plan of 1862/3 provided for two canals, the Oosterkanaal and the Westerkanaal, and two docks, the Noorderhaven and the Zuiderhaven, his plan was in essence meant to fulfil Rotterdam's need for building land (Figure 2). By digging the canals and the docks he provided sufficient material to elevate the ground above the highest flood level.³ The interests of road traffic were well looked after by Rose. On the basis of his plan the Council decided in 1863 to extend Rotterdam on the other bank of the river and to that end to annex the villages in that area.⁴

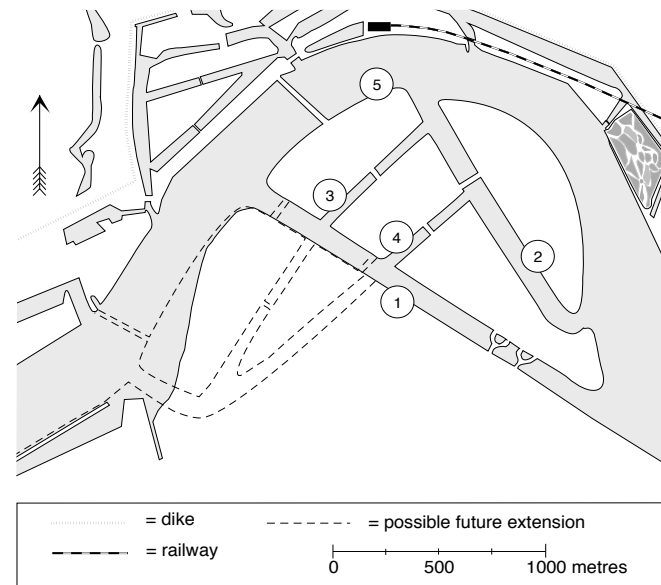


Figure 2 The Rose Plan for the extension of Rotterdam on Feijenoord (1862/3). 1. Westerkanaal 2. Oosterkanaal 3. Noorderhaven 4. Zuiderhaven 5. The south bank of the river was projected northward to increase the velocity of the river and thereby its depth. The second bridge and the part west of the Westerkanaal were intended as a possible future extension of the project. Source: GAR, Library, XII B 35.

The interests of water traffic were better looked after by central government and by the Rotterdam Chamber of Commerce. The latter hammered on the necessity to provide more docks,⁵ especially in deep water, not only for loading and unloading ships, but equally important, to protect the substantial capital invested in the vessels from severe winters. Nowadays ice hardly has a chance to influence river navigation on the Dutch section of the Rhine, and it is hard to imagine sliding and piling ice floes crushing everything that is in their way. Nineteenth-century shipping, however, was hazardous without protection from the elements.⁶ Yet the main concern of central government was not the construction of docks, but the control of the river. It kept the river free from obstacles like bridges and dams, and, more cautiously, it tried to relieve river traffic from the unnecessary burden of duties.⁷

Flood control was the basis for central government authority over the river. Up till then, however, the fight against the dangers of flooding rivers was in a way counterproductive. Vulnerable areas were protected by dikes, and if there was a surplus of water it was drained by overflows into less vulnerable areas. Through this system the main flow of the river decreased in velocity and as a consequence reduced its capacity to transport mud. The mud accumulated on the river bed and hindered the navigability of the river as well as its capacity to hold water. More flooding was the result. The authoritative report of L.J.A. van der Kun and J.H. Ferrand from 1850 reversed cause and consequence and supplied a new revolutionary concept to the control of rivers. Van der Kun and Ferrand stressed the importance of the normalization of the rivers. By damming up river arms the velocity of the mainstream could be increased. The depth of the rivers and their capacity to transport water would improve dramatically. Less flooding and a better navigability would result. It was indeed a radical, and what is more, a successful scheme for the control of Dutch rivers.⁸ The new scheme had its consequences. It was recognized that anything happening upstream had an immediate effect downstream. Central and provincial government therefore gradually took over control from the polder boards.⁹

Navigability, besides safety, was given a greater priority. The construction of the Nieuwe Waterweg, a new mouth for the Rhine Meuse delta that gave Rotterdam direct access to the North Sea, formed an extra impetus for centralization. The new canal to the sea was important for Rotterdam economically, but it also had some serious administrative drawbacks. The project could be successful only if several requirements were fulfilled upstream. Therefore the digging of docks and canals could not be left under the control of local governments any more.¹⁰ The wish to maintain good relations with the neighbours was a strong incentive for the Dutch government to put the River Rhine under central government control. Prussia and the other states on the Rhine watched closely to see that their umbilical cord was well cared for. In 1868 they agreed on the Deed of Mannheim,¹¹ an international treaty liberalizing the navigation on this important international transportation route. Among other things the treaty obliged the Dutch government to supply an alternative canal if it was to bridge the River Rhine at Rotterdam.

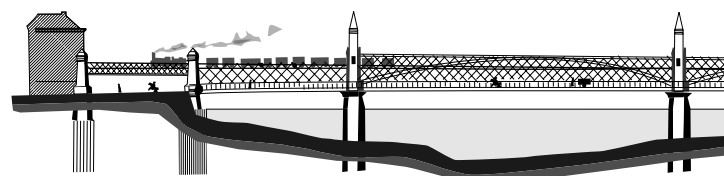
The Council of Rotterdam, eager to supply the city with new building land, hesitated to spend a lot of money on a bridge providing communications with the new territory. Furthermore, a city bridge was strongly opposed by the Chamber of Commerce and central government, which did not intend to give planning permission, unless a solution was found for the passage of ships. Rose's plan offered a bridge and an alternative canal, but the costs involved were too high to convince the City Council and execution of the plan seemed far away (Figure 2).

The arm or the head

The River Rhine divides the Netherlands into north and south. For most of the nineteenth century no bridges connected the banks, thus limiting nineteenth-century communication and condemning the two Netherlands to live separate lives. The construction of Dutch railroads faced the same problem, and two separate networks of railways emerged: the southern and northern systems. In 1860, however, central government decided to connect the two systems. One of the connections was planned near Rotterdam, but where exactly the bridge was to be constructed remained a matter of dispute.¹² Several plans were reviewed, from a low bridge west of the city to a very high bridge several miles east of Rotterdam. In the end the only acceptable solution was a bridge right in front of the city, passing through Feijenoord. This way, it was argued, the inland navigation and the sea-going vessels would be the least disrupted in their activities, because the boundary between their lines of traffic was located there.¹³

The City Council of Rotterdam did not easily agree on the railway bridge spoiling the look of its pretty quay. Together with the Chamber of Commerce they protested against this barrier for river navigation, but in the end gave way. The location in front of the city had too many advantages. It connected Feijenoord, where central government had planned the construction of a station and a railway dock, with the two local railway stations. In addition it was thought that the railway bridge could easily be extended to serve as a bridge for normal traffic as well. The cost of such an extension would be 'infinitely' lower than that of building a separate bridge.¹⁴

The Rotterdam Council offered their co-operation in a strange way, though. In their session of 21 January 1865 they voted against building a bridge over the



The combined rail and road bridge as designed by the surveyor of Rotterdam Public Works Van der Tak in 1865. Source: GAR, Library XII B 35.

river and suggested a terminal station on Feijenoord. Rotterdam would, however, co-operate if the connection was sought in the interest of the country. L. Pincoffs,¹⁵ member of the Council, explained this contradictory decision as follows:

When a stronger person came to a weaker person and wanted to take away his arm or head, and the answer of the weaker that he rather wanted to keep both, was not enough for him, in that case forced by superior power, the weaker person would most certainly rather have his arm chopped off than his head and to that end even very politely file a request.¹⁶

The Chamber of Commerce supported the idea of the terminal station on Feijenoord and suggested a horse tram connection with the city.¹⁷ The Rotterdam Council played a very clever game. They did not offend the Minister of the Interior and they improved their position in the negotiations. For what was constructed in the interest of the country could not be charged to the city, especially when it was not in the favour of Rotterdam. The Minister of the Interior, Heemskerk, however, managed to turn the situation to his advantage quite easily. The newly appointed mayor of Rotterdam, Joost van Vollenhoven, was informed about a sudden change of the railway plans in 1867. He had much trouble finding out that central government now planned to cross the river east of Rotterdam.¹⁸ For the time being the existing railway station east of Rotterdam served as the destination of the new line.¹⁹ The railway dock was projected north of that station instead of on Feijenoord. The Council was shocked by the plans, the Chamber of Commerce recorded their deep disappointment.²⁰

A delegation from Rotterdam headed by its mayor tried to convince the minister to reconsider his plans. Heemskerk showed his willingness to do so, but he also had a special request. He was prepared to take up the plans for a bridge in front of the city, connecting Rotterdam with Feijenoord, if Rotterdam granted him the building land he needed for the railway line through Rotterdam. The Council hastily consented, but Heemskerk wanted more. He suggested that he might reconsider the Feijenoord line if Rotterdam would build him a new post office. The old one would have to be pulled down if the Feijenoord line was chosen.²¹

This time Rotterdam was lucky. Before it could react to Heemskerk's second request, the minister had to abdicate. To the new Minister of the Interior, Thorbecke, Rotterdam stated that it could hardly imagine that Heemskerk's suggestions were to be taken serious.²² Again the Council pleaded for a terminal station at Feijenoord and objected to the Heemskerk agreement to supply the state with the necessary building land. Thorbecke agreed to the latter and in 1869 finally reached and signed an agreement with Rotterdam.²³ The state initiative to bridge the river was the main impulse for Rotterdam to start seriously the Feijenoord development.

Cart, bark and train

The contract signed was quite different from the original plan Rose made in 1863. Let us have a closer look at the changes and their causes. As discussed, central government was heavily involved with the development of Feijenoord and took part of the responsibility for it by appointing government engineers specially for that area, who took over control from city government. The engineers found themselves in the difficult position of having to consider the interests of both the inland navigation and of Rotterdam. The demands posed by the construction of the Nieuwe Waterweg did not make the job easier.

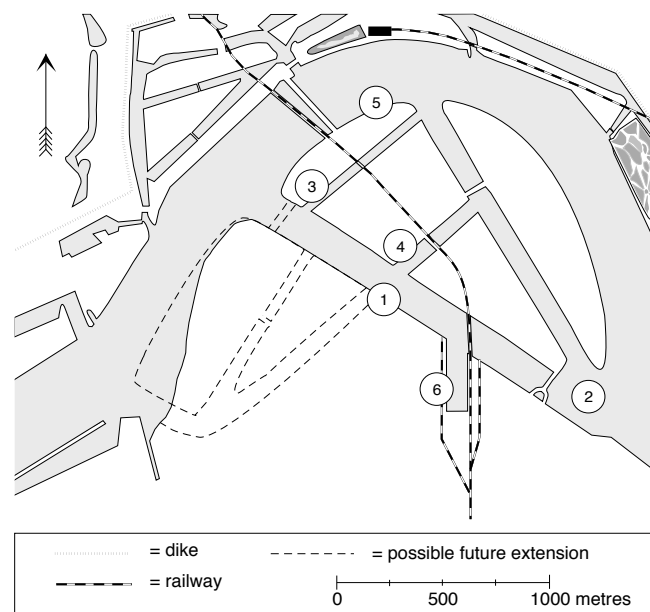


Figure 3 Amended Rose Plan (1865). 1. Westerkanal now 150 metres wide 2. Oosterkanal and Westerkanal united 3. Noorderhaven moved northward 4. Zuiderhaven now 100 metres wide 5. Width of the river maintained 6. Railway dock. Source: GAR, Library, XII B 35.

The shipping trade protested against the alternatives Rose offered to ships that could not pass under the bridge. Shipping experts considered Rose's canals through Feijenoord as a hindrance and to a certain extent dangerous. The width of Rose's main alternative, the 100 metres-wide *Westerkanaal* (Figure 2.1), should at least be 150 metres.²⁴ The Chamber of Commerce supported this view.²⁵ The engineers were prepared to accommodate the wishes of the shipping trade and widen the *Westerkanaal* to 150 metres (Figure 3.1) and the *Zuiderhaven* to 100 metres (Figure 3.4). However, to prevent the canals from drawing too much water from the river, the mouths of the *Westerkanaal* and the *Oosterkanaal* had to be combined and furnished with thresholds (Figure 3.2). In his plan Rose had moved the south bank forward, with the intention of increasing the velocity of the flow, thereby deepening the water in front of the city and making the city quay better suited for ocean-going vessels (Figure 2.5). His design was tackled by the engineers. A gradual widening of the river was considered better for the river as a whole (Figure 3.5).²⁶ A year later the engineers designed an improved passage through Feijenoord by moving the *Noorderhaven* further to the north (Figure 3.3). This way ships could cut their routes short and would avoid extra bridges.²⁷

Originally the railway dock was planned west of the *Westerkanaal* (Figure 3.6), but the surveyor of Rotterdam Public Works, Van der Tak, proposed another plan: a canal open on one side and closed on the other, almost at the same place as the *Westerkanaal* (Figure 4.1). The railway could then be constructed in a straight line and the expensive bridge over the *Westerkanaal* could be replaced with a smaller one, thus offering financial advantages for central government (Figure 4.2). The expensive *Westerkanaal* and the *Zuiderhaven* were abandoned as well, which meant a saving for local finance.²⁸ The *Noorderhaven* replaced the *Westerkanaal* as the main alternative to river navigation and, after protests by the Chamber of Commerce, was widened to 150 metres (Figure 4.3).²⁹ The westerly approaches of the *Noorderhaven* were extended to prevent a possible silting-up of its south bank.³⁰ The mouths of the *Noorderhaven* and the railway dock were combined to ease the navigation of sailing ships (Figure 4.4).

The combination of the mouths provided Rotterdam with another opportunity to cut expenses. Central government was invited to make a contribution to the excavation of the combined mouths. They were prepared to pay for their share of the construction, but accepted no responsibility for the maintenance of the *Noorderhaven*. Instead they limited their contribution to a single payment of Dfl. 100,000.³¹ Central government reconsidered their decision in 1878 after international protest over the insufficient depth of the *Noorderhaven*. Central government had often complained to Rotterdam about it, but with no success. As soon as they took over the maintenance, however, the tables were turned and the state now found Rotterdam complaining about insufficient maintenance.³²

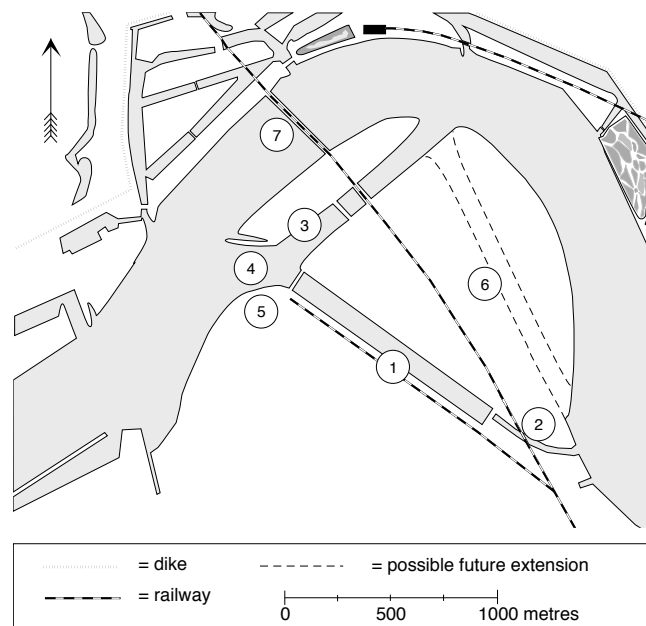


Figure 4 The Van der Tak Plan (1868). 1. The railway dock replaces the *Westerkanaal* 2. The railway line can be straightened and the expensive bridge over the *Westerkanaal* is no longer necessary 3. The *Noorderhaven* takes over the role of the *Westerkanaal* 4. The mouths of the railway dock and the *Noorderhaven* are combined 5. The western extension that Rose planned is no longer possible 6. The *Zuiderhaven* has been left out of the plan, the *Oosterkanaal* is a possible option 7. The railway bridge includes footbridges. Source: GAR, *Handelingen van de Raad 1868*, 122.

By moving the mouth of the *Noorderhaven*, Rose's plans for the westward extension of Feijenoord had to be abandoned (Figure 4.5). In a later phase another approach was taken. The villages of IJsselmonde, Katendrecht and Charlois who were losing part of their territory to the expanding Rotterdam complained, but the power of Rotterdam, working closely together with central government to make the Feijenoord extension, was superior. In 1869 central government confirmed the annexation (Figure 1 and 5).³³

One of the advantages of planning the railway bridge in front of the city was the possibility to construct a cheaper city bridge suspended underneath for normal traffic to Feijenoord. This option was soon considered to be too

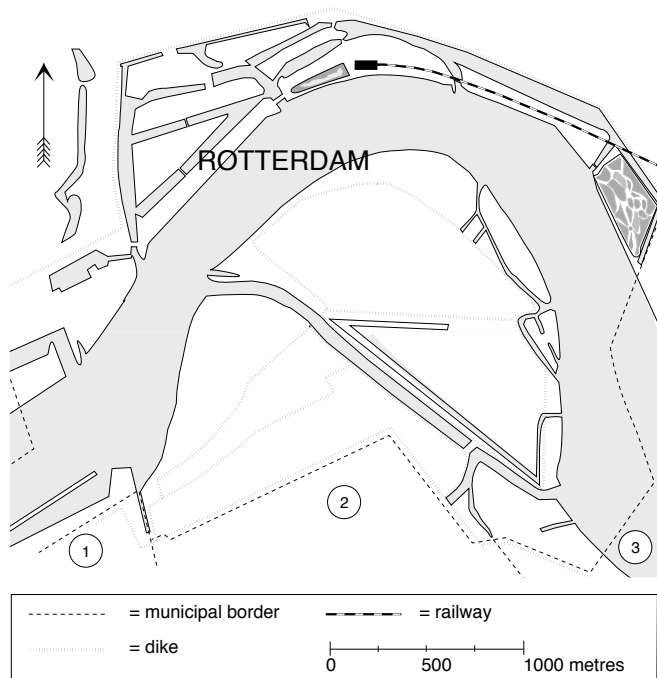


Figure 5 The borders of Rotterdam in 1870. Through the annexation of parts of the villages 1. Katendrecht 2. Charlois and 3. IJsselmonde, Rotterdam obtained the jurisdiction over the south bank of the river. Source: J. Kuyper, *Gemeenteatlas van de provincie Zuid-Holland naar officieele bronnen bewerkt* (Leeuwarden 1869).

expensive for Rotterdam as well.³⁴ Moreover, the engineers designing the railway bridge were not very happy with the appendix they had to construct. The necessary strengthening of the pillars would lessen the financial advantage over the building of a separate city bridge.³⁵ Rotterdam was not prepared to invest in a costly bridge over the river, and in 1868 confined the passage to two footbridges, each two metres wide, attached to the railway bridge (Figure 4.7). The future city bridge, it was hoped, could in this way be limited to 8 metres.³⁶

In 1870, however, Van der Tak advised the Council to forget about the footbridges and make a separate city bridge to the west of the railway bridge after all. Initially the city bridge was planned eastward of the railway bridge, but it soon became clear that the foundation of the pillars of the latter reached

too far and would hinder the construction of the city bridge. It therefore was decided to place the bridge to the west of the railway bridge, a location favoured by Van der Tak. In this way, Van der Tak argued, the bridge would be safer and better protected against water and ice than to the east of the railway bridge. The latter would serve as an ice-breaker.³⁷ The change of the position of the bridge had its consequences for Feijenoord, for with the bridge the centre of development was moved to the west as well.

Despite the high cost of constructing the bridge only two members of the Council voted against the long-awaited bridging of the river.³⁸ It is, however, doubtful if the city bridge would have materialized without pressure from outside. The pressure was put on by a consortium of private financiers interested in the extension of Rotterdam on Feijenoord. They were prepared to invest their capital in a well-connected Feijenoord and considered the city bridge as indispensable for a safe investment. In the actual decision to build the bridge the demands of private interest weighed heavily, as did the critical remarks made by the engineer of the consortium about the design of the bridge.³⁹

A change of scene

In 1868 the Council decided to finance the extension of Feijenoord by raising taxes and harbour duties. The returns were expected to cover most of the expenses: Dfl. 1 million for Feijenoord and another Dfl. 2 million to build the bridge.⁴⁰ It was not realized that the figures were very provisional and the 1870 estimate therefore caused quite a shock. Van der Tak estimated a requirement of just under Dfl. 9 million for the project. The first phase would cost Dfl. 4.6 million.⁴¹ The finance committee of the Council could not solve the problem, and feared for the health of city finance.⁴²

L. Pincoffs, member of the Council and the finance committee, came up with a solution. Thanks to his mediation three financiers, who called themselves the Combination, presented themselves to city government: the Rotterdamsche Bank, the Commanditaire Bankvereniging Rensburg & Van Witsen and a private person, Marten Mees, member of the finance firm R. Mees & Zoonen.⁴³

Their engineer, the well-known ir. Th.J. Stieltjes had made a plan for the arrangement of docks and building land, the latter taking a greater part than in the city plans.⁴⁴ Obviously the Combination saw a safer perspective in the exploitation of building land than in that of docks. There is another clear indication that the Combination initially had its eye mainly on the selling of building land and not on the exploitation of docks. Stieltjes had planned sluices in the canals to protect Feijenoord against high water. In so doing he could avoid the costly raising of the ground level, but undoubtedly hindered the shipping trade tremendously (Figure 6).

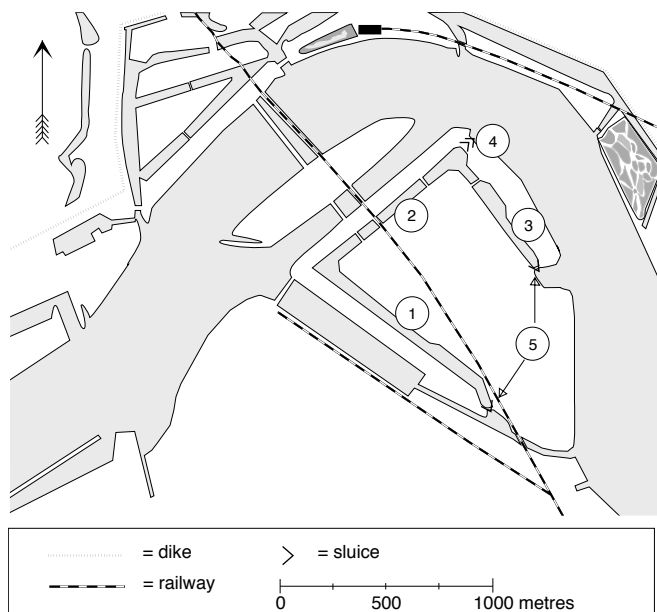


Figure 6 Second plan of Stieltjes (1871). In this plan some of the critical remarks of local government are reflected. More docks are planned: 1. Westerbinnenhaven 2. Kleine or Binnen Noorderhaven and 3. Oosterhaven. The sluices however remain: 4. Lift lock 5. Other sluices. Source: GAR, *Rotonde Port*. GIIE no. 58a.

In its contact with central government Rotterdam defended territorial interests, but in its negotiations with the Combination it set itself up as a defender of the water interest. Local government insisted on extending the dock capacity and, to avoid sluices, stressed the necessity to raise the ground above flood level. The Combination agreed, as it did on many demands from city government, and planned the Binnenhaven (Figure 7.2). The prospects for mercantile docks were good. ToeWater, local inspector of taxes, presented himself as the first customer of the Combination. He saw possibilities for a bonded warehouse on Feijenoord and planned to rent dock facilities.⁴⁵

In the negotiations Rotterdam was obviously the stronger party, the Combination having to give in to many demands. They were prepared to change the location of the planned docks and accepted the preference of the government to sell the building land, they also agreed to a long lease for the dock

area. This way a double agreement was reached: one for the building land, some 160,000 m², and one for the dock area, 240,000 m². Furthermore, Rotterdam found the Combination prepared to share their profits with the city.⁴⁶

Although the three financiers were very willing they aborted negotiations in October 1872. The same company stayed at the conference table, but Pincoffs, who until then attended the meetings as a mediator, now became the leading man. His *Rotterdamsche Handelsvereniging* (RHV), founded seven weeks earlier, took over the role of the Combination as a financier and exploiter of Feijenoord. The Combination excused their withdrawal by pointing at the financial situation in Germany, but a look at the origin of the capital of the *Rotterdamsche Handelsvereniging*, predominantly Frankfurt am Main, makes this argument less convincing.⁴⁷ There is more reason to believe that the change of trade caused the change of scene. As long as the main aim was to buy and sell land - a reasonably easy and safe undertaking - the financial construction could be quite simple. The exploitation of docks, however, a risky and complicated affair, needed limited liability and an organization with a director at its head. The *Rotterdamsche Handelsvereniging* was that organization and Pincoffs acted as its president. The members of the Combination remained at the conference table but from that moment acted as commissioners of the RHV.

Pincoffs stressed the risk of the undertaking and demanded to give as much publicity as possible to the negotiations. Everyone able to offer better conditions should say so, he said, for the RHV would gladly leave the big risk to them. Local government would rather have Public Works construct the docks, quays and bridges and consequently charge the RHV for it, rather than letting the RHV construct the docks themselves. Pincoffs went a step further by asking Rotterdam to take care of all the works, including the raising of the ground level. Pincoffs considered the bridging of the railway dock as essential and therefore suggested a financial contribution from the RHV to let Public Works construct it, adding the condition that the share of Rotterdam in the RHV profits should then be expunged from the contract. Like the Combination he stressed the necessity to protect the RHV against possible competition and therefore claimed the lease of the southern quay of the Noorderhaven eastward from the projected railway (Figure 7.5). He also seized the opportunity to apply for local government support for his efforts to obtain a central government concession for a railway line parallel with and north of the *Nieuwe Waterweg* to *Hoek van Holland*. His main aim was not to exploit that line, but to prevent his competitor, the railway company *Rhijnspoorwegmaatschappij* (Figure 7.7), from doing so. Rotterdam feared the monopoly of the railway company as well and agreed to talk to the Minister of the Interior about this matter. The Minister's reassuring words were sufficient for Pincoffs to drop his reservations.⁴⁸

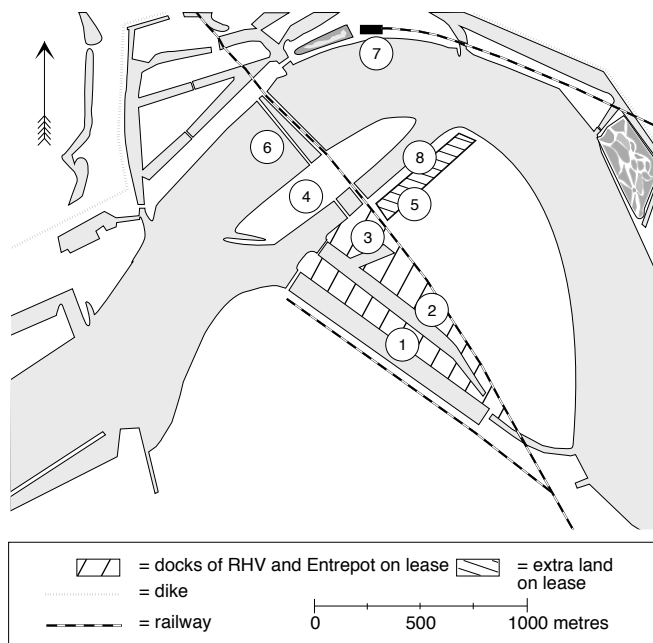


Figure 7 The extension of Rotterdam on Feijenoord according to the contracts with the RHV (1872 and 1873). 1. Railway dock 2. Binnenhaven 3. Entrepothaven 4. Noordereiland, main stretch of RHV building land 5. Location of the stretch of land the RHV leased to avoid competition 6. The city bridge is now projected west of the railway bridge 7. The railway station of the Nederlandsche Rijnspoor wegmaatschappij 8. The RHV landing-stages in the Noorderhaven. Source: GAR, Library, XII B 36.

One month after the change of scene the draft of the contract was presented to the City Council. Instead of a budgetary deficit of Dfl. 1 million the project had a surplus of Dfl. 500,000.— and had an even wider scope. Proudly mayor and aldermen stated that no loans were necessary.⁴⁹ On the other hand Rotterdam lost the possession of some 400,000 m² of land. Although private initiative was welcomed to lighten Rotterdam's financial burden, the involvement of the RHV did not contribute to a reduction of the deficit. The RHV invested in extra provisions and left the basic investment to Rotterdam. The RHV did meet the need for capital by advancing loans to Rotterdam,⁵⁰ but on the other hand local government had to accept extra obligations that exceeded the initial budget-

ary deficit. It had to construct extra quays for almost Dfl. 1 million and the figures for pavement, sewers and maintenance were higher as well. On balance the contract was no solution but gave extra financial problems. For Alderman Hoffmann this formed the stumbling-block. He therefore insisted on delaying the project for a number of years.⁵¹ The RHV, however, was in a hurry and gave the Council only fourteen days to decide about the contract.

The proposal of mayor and aldermen to lay the future of Feijenoord in the hands of the RHV caused some excitement inside as well as outside the Council. The political association Burgerpligt called for a special meeting to hear the pros and cons.⁵² Advocates and adversaries sent letters to the Council,⁵³ and articles in the local newspapers helped to provoke a public ferment. Feijenoord was given away for a trifle and would be exploited by a sheer monopoly.⁵⁴ In a number of crowded meetings, which despite the winter cold took place in a heated atmosphere, the contract was discussed point by point.⁵⁵ Besides a rather unfruitful discussion over the price level, the criticism centred on the attempts of the RHV to exclude future competition on the eastern part of Feijenoord by leasing a strip of land along the Noorderhaven (Figure 7.5). Though the RHV claimed that it leased the strip to protect its interests in the selling of building land on Feijenoord, critics saw it as an attempt to monopolize the RHV trading interests on the south bank.

After two long days of debate the decision to sign the contract was taken, opponents gaining only minor victories: the RHV was kindly requested to reconsider the lease of land along the Noorderhaven. The RHV did not agree, but had to show its goodwill and officially stated that it was prepared to drop the lease if others were prepared to buy the RHV building land on Feijenoord. In this way the protection of that interest was no longer necessary.⁵⁶ A group of well-known citizens, with connections in the opposition, reacted immediately and, like the RHV, deposited an official statement at the office of a solicitor. They offered to take over the RHV building land for the same price that the RHV would pay for it. This, however, was not the intention of the RHV and they manoeuvred to reject the offer without losing face. In their letter to the Council the RHV juggled with figures to demonstrate that the price offered was unrealistic. To the regret of the potential buyers and the opposition in the Council the boldness of the RHV had no consequences. The Council did not revert to the subject and considered the case closed.⁵⁷

One could easily have the impression that the RHV were determined to gain as much as possible at the lowest possible price; the construction of the docks and the layout of the building land could, however, stand the test. Local government were consulted about the layout of the building land north of the Noorderhaven and the result of their co-operative effort had the approval of the City Council.⁵⁸ The construction of the docks is a fine example of

the willingness of the RHV to pay more and acquire the best. It designed a Binnenhaven with steep quays to facilitate the handling of cargo (Figure 7.2). Instead of putting cargo on the landing-stage first, the ship could be loaded directly from the trains. Local government constructed cheaper oblique quays, but were encouraged by the RHV to design steep quays as well, the RHV being prepared to pay two-thirds of the extra cost involved.

The quay of the eastern part of the railway dock was constructed under these conditions (Figure 7.1), but as far as the Noorderhaven was concerned the Council reached other conclusions. A recent collapse of the steep Entrepothaven quay (Figure 7.3) obviously contributed to the attitude of the Council.⁵⁹

Table 1 Prices for the construction of quays at Feijenoord (prices in Dfl. per metre run)

docks	oblique	steep
RHV docks		Dfl. 600.—
Railway dock		Dfl. 700.—
Noorderhaven	Dfl. 145.—	Dfl. 450.—

Source: **Directeur Gemeentewerken to Commissie Plaatselijke Werken 29 November 1874, GAR, NSA, Rb.1875:123.**

Municipal after all

On 24 October 1878 a procession of coaches carrying the mayor and his aldermen and the other members of the Council visited Feijenoord to celebrate the completion of the task of local government in the project. Rotterdam had kept its part of the bargain: a bridge connected Feijenoord with Rotterdam and the Noorderhaven was ready and bridged as well. The co-operative and flexible attitude of the RHV was a sufficient guarantee that they would keep their side of the bargain.

On 14 May 1879 the president of the RHV, Pincoffs, completely unexpectedly left the country in a hurry. Afraid that the administrative malpractice with one of his other companies, the Afrikaansche Handelsvereniging (AHV), would become known, and convinced that he could no longer count on the support of his colleagues, he fled to America. The AHV was a commercial disaster, which Pincoffs tried to camouflage by manipulating the books, thereby using funds from other companies, including the RHV. The relationship between local government and the RHV, which flourished during the project on Feijenoord was given a severe blow by Pincoffs' flight.⁶⁰ The president of

the Chamber of Commerce, together with a prominent Rotterdam businessman, formed the new board of the RHV. They were appointed to prevent the potentially profitable RHV from going bankrupt along with the AHV. Without the completion of the project on Feijenoord the RHV could not collect the fruits of their work, but the money to complete it was not available. Pincoffs' juggling of the AHV accounts had also cast a shadow over the RHV. Thanks to a loan from the Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM) and an agreement with the creditors to postpone payment on debts, the RHV, for the time being, survived and completed the project.⁶¹

The profitability of the RHV did not materialize, however, because the ultra-modern docks remained almost empty. To stay in the RHV docks ships were obliged to pay harbour dues to the RHV and to local government as well. The city harbour master considered this to be the main reason for the low performance of the RHV.⁶²

The greater activity on the river again stressed the need for protection from the elements in winter. In emergencies local government were forced to remit ships to the railway dock. The Binnenhaven was also regularly used for that purpose. In 1881 the RHV announced that ships seeking protection would be charged half the local harbour dues. On the outcry of indignation by local government the RHV stressed that it regarded the charge as legitimate, nevertheless it decided to postpone the introduction. The city obtained other landing-stages by cancelling the RHV concessions for landing-stages in the Noorderhaven and convinced the RHV of the necessity to take a more humble stand (Figure 7.8). The RHV management requested local government to continue the concession for the Noorderhaven landing-stages, which were important for the company. To their 'satisfaction' the commissioners of the RHV had authorized them to permit ships free of charge in the Binnenhaven.⁶³

The problematic relationship between Rotterdam and the RHV was not limited to the Binnenhaven. The railway dock also played a role in spoiling the atmosphere. From central government Rotterdam obtained the right to exploit the eastern side of the railway dock. Rotterdam agreed on the construction of modern quays there and its exploitation by the RHV from their adjacent territory. The RHV soon made agreements with the railway company that exploited the west side of the dock and together they ruled the railway dock, to the dissatisfaction of local government. Central government intervened, placed the railway dock under central government control and appointed a state harbour master.⁶⁴ Rotterdam could send ships to the railway dock, but without the permission of the RHV they were not allowed to use the RHV quay for loading and unloading goods. Using an anchor and loading onto other ships would be the solution, but central government regulations for the railway dock forbade the use of anchors.⁶⁵

The problems increased as central government came in conflict with the railway company. The latter exploited the western quay of the railway dock, and according to its contract with the state, it would be obliged only to the maintenance of the quay if the state did not impose harbour dues. Stopping the imposition of harbour dues would, however, create a strange anomaly, and was considered unacceptable.⁶⁶

The city was confronted with a shortage of landing-stages, while the ultra-modern docks on Feijenoord remained empty. Because its jurisdiction was limited, it couldn't solve the problem in an easy way. The number of ships visiting Rotterdam increased steadily and a solution had to be found. The new surveyor of Rotterdam Public Works, De Jongh, was asked to investigate the possibility of constructing a breakwater west of Feijenoord and using it as a landing-stage. De Jongh, however, conceived his task to be much wider and designed a 30-hectare dock, in which the construction of a breakwater was the first step to take.⁶⁷ The decision to build the dock gave local government room to breathe, but a solution for the inconvenient situation on Feijenoord still had to be found.

Despite the loan of the Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij and the creditor's restraint the future of the RHV was precarious. The completion of the Nieuwe Waterweg would certainly have contributed to a more optimistic outlook, but the project to connect Rotterdam with the sea was suffering some very severe setbacks and these cast a doubt on the viability of the RHV. Even its first customer had to face the facts. The result of the entrepôt remained poor, and it was thus unable to pay its rent.⁶⁸ The RHV management was fighting hard to survive and on several occasions asked local government for support. A consortium headed by the Banque Centrale Anversoise was prepared to supply the RHV a loan of Dfl. 6.5 million, but found it safer to use Rotterdam as an intermediary. Local government turned down the request.⁶⁹ M. Mainz jr from Frankfurt am Main on behalf of a number of banks offered to supply Dfl. 7 million to Rotterdam to buy out the RHV. This offer fitted in the RHV option to sell the docks and to rent them from Rotterdam, but city government again turned down the proposal. Wiser by experience they accepted only complete local control in the Feijenoord docks.⁷⁰

In the negotiations that followed the RHV agreed on selling its assets for Dfl. 4.5 million. Rotterdam, however, offered only Dfl. 3.5 million. At that moment eight members of the City Council intervened and proposed to offer Dfl. 4 million to prevent a probable stalemate.⁷¹ Council and RHV agreed to the price and signed an agreement (1882),⁷² thereby bringing a short but emotional private interlude in the history of the dock development of Rotterdam to a conclusion. The building land owned by the RHV was not included in the sale, but came under control of a new company. For every RHV share of Dfl. 250.— the shareholders received a share in the new company worth Dfl. 12.50.⁷³

The essence

For Rotterdam the extension of Feijenoord obviously was an increase in local government activities. We can hardly say that the City Council freely chose to do so, central government forced Rotterdam to start the project. Nor can we say that Rotterdam hesitated to extend the city on the left bank because of ideological, laissez-faire reasons. Rotterdam was reluctant to do so simply for financial reasons. Rotterdam put a lot of energy in finding someone else to pay the bill and central government were obviously candidate to finance the project. To a certain extent Rotterdam succeeded in doing so, for the construction of the railway dock - the Westerkanaal in Rose's plan - and the maintenance of the Noorderhaven were financed by the state and for the westerly extension of the Noorderhaven central government paid their share. The main expenditure however, the bridge, was to be paid by Rotterdam alone. A postponement of the construction was therefore agreed.

The second candidate to present the bill to was private enterprise. There is no reason to think that Rotterdam had noble, laissez-faire reasons to award private enterprise with the extension project. Again financial motives played the leading role. This time, however, Rotterdam did not succeed in its intentions. Pincoffs was an experienced negotiator profiting from his experience in the Council and in its finance committee. Besides, he had an outstanding reputation. He managed to reach a profitable agreement giving him a virtual monopoly on Feijenoord.

In the end, however, things turned out completely different. Pincoffs ran to avoid arrest. He left the Rotterdamsche Handelsvereniging in trouble, short of financial breath and generating a bad result, caused by double harbour duties and a blocked Nieuwe Waterweg. For three more years the Feijenoord apple was left on the tree. Once ripe it could easily be picked by Rotterdam. An investment of Dfl. 12 million was obtained with Dfl. 4 million, indeed a financial success. Yet this time the buying of the assets of the RHV was not motivated with financial arguments. The problems Rotterdam faced in dealing with the company and the irritation it caused, had taken away Rotterdam's desire to co-operate. Traditionally Rotterdam had been lord and master over the docks and only a few years under RHV rule were sufficient to convince it that this tradition should be maintained.

Rotterdam tried hard to balance the budget and to present the bill to someone else, but its opponents tried just as hard to reduce cost. The outcome was therefore hard to predict. The lack of foresight is obvious and it remained but a proverbial wish.

Notes

- 1 Ravesteyn 1924, passim, still serves as a good introduction. Also Nieuwenhuis 1955, passim. The archives used are all at the Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst Rotterdam (GAR).
- 2 W.N. Rose to Commissie Plaatselijke Werken 28 April 1861, Raadsbijlage (Rb.) 1861:421.
- 3 The Rose Plan, 4 February 1862, *Uitbreiding van de gemeente Rotterdam op Feijenoord en de daarmee verband houdende staatspoorwegverbinding: 1855-1873* (2 volumes) (GAR Library XII B 35). This was an elaborated version of the one he presented in 1847: Cie over stadsgebouwen, eigendommen enz. to Burgemeester & Wethouders (B & W) 15 March 1847, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1847:1315.
- 4 *Handelingen van de Raad* 12 November 1863, 79.
- 5 For instance 30 September 1840, 18 November 1841 and 6 September 1845, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1840:2175, 2821 and 2799.
- 6 Woud, van der 1987: 98.
- 7 The levying of tariffs is not discussed in detail.
- 8 Lintsen 1980: 282.
- 9 Woud, van der 1987: 100-105.
- 10 Minister of the Interior to B & W 8 January 1868, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1868:140.
- 11 *Staatsblad* 1869:75, pp. 45, 55 and 82.
- 12 Jonckers Nieboer 1938: 90-96.
- 13 Minister van Binnenlandsche Zaken to B & W 24 December 1863, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1863:4249.
- 14 Commissie Plaatselijke Werken to B & W 8 January 1864, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1864:74.
- 15 Oosterwijk 1979: passim.
- 16 *Handelingen* 20 January 1865, 7 (Pincoffs).
- 17 Kamer van Koophandel to Minister van Binnenlandsche Zaken 29 January 1864, *Uitbreiding Rotterdam op Feijenoord*.
- 18 Burgemeester to B & W 22 June 1867, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1867:2765.
- 19 A future connection with the station north of the city was aspired.
- 20 Kamer van Koophandel to Minister van Binnenlandsche Zaken 7 September 1867, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1867:3931.
- 21 Commissie voor de audiëntie to B & W 27 July 1867, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1867:3270. Besloten vergadering van de Raad 3 October 1867 and 10 October 1867, *Handelingen* 9 December 1868, 251-252. Minister van Binnenlandsche Zaken to B & W 7 February 1868, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1868:601. B & W to Gemeenteraad 17 August 1868, *Handelingen* 17 August 1868, 117-119.
- 22 B & W to Minister van Binnenlandsche Zaken 29 June 1868, NSA, Uitg.nr. B & W 1868:837.
- 23 *Handelingen* 3, 4, 8, 9, 10 and 11 December 1868, 229-276.
- 24 Dirk Visser to Commissie tot onderzoek der plannen van uitbreiding en verdere bebouwing der stad Rotterdam, April 1862, *Uitbreiding Rotterdam op Feijenoord*. Dirk Visser to Commissie Plaatselijke Werken 3 May 1864, *Ibidem*. Commissie voor de Rhijnvaart te Rotterdam to Minister van Financiën (copy to B & W Rotterdam) *ibidem*.
- 25 Kamer van Koophandel to B & W 28 August 1868, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1868:5.
- 26 Rapport van de commissie van onderzoek nopens den invloed op de Maas van eene uitbreiding der gemeente Rotterdam op Feijenoord, 19 February 1863, *Uitbreiding Rotterdam op Feijenoord*. Gewijzigd plan tot uitbreiding der gemeente Rotterdam op Feijenoord 13 September 1864, *Ibidem*.
- 27 Waterstaats-commissie voor de uitbreiding van Rotterdam op Feijenoord (Conrad, J.A. Beyerinck and P. Caland) to B & W 19 November 1864, *Uitbreiding Rotterdam op Feijenoord*.
- 28 Rose and Van der Tak to Commissie Plaatselijke Werken 30 November 1867, *Handelingen* 17 August 1868, 119-120.
- 29 Kamer van Koophandel to B & W 28 August 1868, Rb.1868:464. *Handelingen* 10 December 1868, 263.
- 30 In this Rotterdam followed the advice of the Minister of the Interior: Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken to B & W 7 February 1868, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1868:601. Commissie Plaatselijke Werken to B & W 27 March 1868, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1868:1440.
- 31 Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken to B & W 15 July 1868 and 22 January 1869, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1868:3222 and 351.
- 32 Minister van Binnenlandse zaken to B & W 14 February 1877, 31 May 1877, 6 August 1877, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1877:785, 2906, 3877. B & W to Minister van Binnenlandse zaken 13 August 1877, NSA, Uitg.nr. B & W 1877:1171. *Handelingen* 7 February 1879. Commissie Plaatselijke Werken to B & W, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1878:5381.
- 33 *Handelingen* 9 December 1868, 248. Law of 15 July 1869, *Staatsblad* no. 128.
- 34 Besloten vergadering van de raadscommissie Financiën 4 October 1867 and 30 November 1867.
- 35 Rose and Van der Tak to Commissie Plaatselijke Werken 31 August 1869, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1869:3679.
- 36 *Handelingen* 9 December 1868, 249. Geschreven Notulen v.d. Raad 25 November 1869.
- 37 V.d. Tak (co-signed by Rose) to Commissie Plaatselijke Werken 15 December 1870, *Uitbreiding Rotterdam op Feijenoord*.
- 38 *Handelingen* 27 October 1870, 111-113. *Ibidem* 1 February 1872.
- 39 T.J. Stieltjes to B & W 28 August 1876, appendix to *Handelingen* 21 September 1876, 81-82. *Ibidem* 21 March 1878.
- 40 B & W to Raad 18 November 1868, appendix to *Handelingen* 19 November 1868, 189-192.
- 41 V.d. Tak (co-signed by Rose) to Commissie Plaatselijke Werken 15 December 1870, *Uitbreiding Rotterdam op Feijenoord*. B & W to Commissie Plaatselijke Werken 17 March 1871, NSA, Uitg.nr. B & W 1871:348. Directeur Gemeentewerken to Commissie Plaatselijke Werken 29 March 1871, appendix to *Handelingen* 1 June 1871, 76.
- 42 Commissie voor de Financiën to B & W 17 May 1871, Rb.1871:2980. *Handelingen* 22 June 1871.
- 43 Mees 1946: passim.
- 44 Rose, Van der Tak and Stieltjes to B & W 28 July 1871, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1871:3679.
- 45 ToeWater to B & W 13 June 1871 and 20 November 1871, *Uitbreiding Rotterdam op Feijenoord*.
- 46 Commissie Plaatselijke Werken to B & W 4 May 1872, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1872:1964. Appendix 1a and 1b to Notulen B & W 1872-1875, NSA:1221.

- 47 Notulen B & W 1 November 1872, NSA:1221. Handschriften:3268-3272.
- 48 Notulen B & W 1 November 1872, NSA:1221. *Handelingen* 7 April 1873, 45-46.
- 49 *Handelingen* 11 December 1872, 116-120.
- 50 An advance in the form of a 5 per cent loan of Dfl. 1 million in the fourth and fifth year of construction.
- 51 *Handelingen* 27 December 1872, 138.
- 52 *Rotterdamsche Courant* 22 December 1872.
- 53 *Handelingen* 27 December 1872, 127.
- 54 *Rotterdamsche Courant* 22 and 27 December 1872. *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* 28 December 1872.
- 55 *Handelingen* 27 and 28 December 1872, 127-150.
- 56 RHV to B & W, appendix to *Handelingen* 2 January 1873.
- 57 *Handelingen* 16 January 1873, 5-8. *Ibidem* 23 January 1873, 10-12.
- 58 GAR Library *Verzamelingen* 1880:1. *Handelingen* 5 January 1880, 17-23. *Ibidem* 4 March 1880, 30-33.
- 59 *Handelingen* 20 August 1874, 64-65. *Ibidem* 27 August 1874, 72-75. *Ibidem* 25 March 1875, 31-33. *Ibidem* 8 April 1875, 35-38. B & W to Raad 4 March 1875, Rb.1875:123.
- 60 *Weekblad van het Regt* 12 January 1880 and 13 January 1880. Oosterwijk 1979: passim.
- 61 GAR Library *Verzamelingen* 1879:28. The city of Rotterdam was also a creditor of the RHV.
- 62 Havenmeester to Burgemeester 14 August 1880, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1880:4272.
- 63 RHV to B & W 26 April 1881, 28 April 1881 and 17 May 1881, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1881:2241, 2297 and 2647. B & W to RHV 27 April 1881, NSA, Uitg.nr. B & W 1881:0562.
- 64 *Handelingen* 30 December 1880, 226. B & W to Minister van Waterstaat Handel en Nijverheid 2 May 1881, 28 January 1882 and 23 February 1882, NSA, Uitg.nr. B & W 1881:591, 1882:152 and 298. Ministerie van Waterstaat Handel en Nijverheid to B & W 17 January 1882, 4 February 1882 and 3 March 1882, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1882:286, 636 and 1125.
- 65 Reglement voor de Spoorweghaven 8 December 1878, *Staatsblad* 1878:176.
- 66 B & W to Minister van Waterstaat Handel en Nijverheid 2 May 1881, NSA, Uitg.nr. B & W 1881:591.
- 67 Commissie Plaatselijke Werken to B & W 3 June 1881 and 17 February 1882, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1881:2992 and 927.
- 68 B & W to Raad 20 December 1880, *Verzamelingen* 1880:45, 322.
- 69 Rb.1880:730. *Verzamelingen* 1880:45. *Handelingen* 30 December 1880, 225-232. *Ibidem* 31 December 1880, 233-238.
- 70 M. Mainz jr to B & W 9 March 1881 and 24 April 1881, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1881:1535 and 2223. B & W to M. Mainz jr 24 April 1881, NSA, Ink.nr. B & W 1881:354.
- 71 *Handelingen* 25 April 1882, 45-51.
- 72 *Handelingen* 8 and 29 June 1882. GAR Library *Verz.*1882:19 and 20.
- 73 Final report of the RHV 1882, GAR Bedrijfsarchief Mees, 636. Maatschappij tot verkoop en bebouwing van gronden op Feijenoord te Rotterdam founded 1882, *Staatscourant* 11 November 1882.

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