EVERY DROP COUNTS IN MAKING NEW YORK RAINPROOF

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From the relative safety of Amsterdam, we watched in shock the devastation caused by Ida to properties and infrastructure, listened to the personal suffering, and were horrified by the number of deaths. While it is critical to have immediate action and funding to recover, such storms also underline the need for long-term planning. Cynically as it may sound, it is important to leverage this crisis into the funding necessary for "rainproofing" New York. Watching these events repeat again and again, not only in the US but all over the world, we feel that forward planning will bring justice to impacted communities and to the climate crisis we are in. With funding critical, we hope that by learning from each other we will also manage to use funds efficiently. This is necessary if we want to meet the scale of the challenge ahead. Rather than waiting for the cloud to burst over your city and pay for the damage, it is better to proactively make sure that all investment decisions in infrastructure and real-estate are made Rainproof. That is what we have experienced in Amsterdam.

Amsterdam Rainproof

Amsterdam learned from the cloudburst in Copenhagen in 2011 and recognized its own vulnerability to flash foods. The public water-cycle company, Waternet, launched "Amsterdam Rainproof," a semi-independent program for making the capital of The Netherlands "cloudburst resilient" by reducing damage from heavy rainfall while creating a healthier, greener city by investing in infrastructure that capture, detain, infiltrate, or transport stormwater, as well as projects that "harvest" rain for reuse or waterproof basement and metro entrances. Eight years later, successes can be seen on multiple scales in rainproof projects on public and private land. Rainproof enabled many policy changes and created an awareness that reached far beyond the more than 120 organizations participating in the still growing Rainproof network.

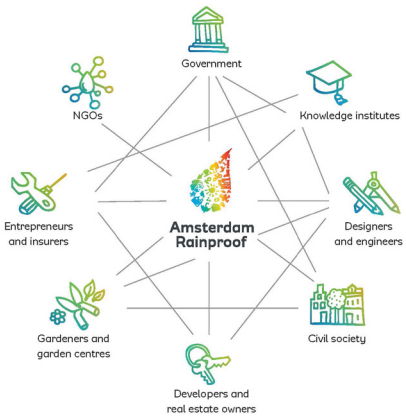
There are three important components that can be translated to New York: a network strategy is key, clear communication is essential, and capacity building in the public sector is required.

> **"THE MOTTO 'EVERY DROP COUNTS,' HELPS TO MAKE THE PEOPLE AWARE THAT THEY ARE CO-OWNERS OF BOTH THE PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTIONS"**

A network strategy is key

The most important lesson learned from Amsterdam Rainproof is that dealing with

cloudburst events demands a collaborative, comprehensive approach that can't be done by one agency alone. Rain falls everywhere. Therefore, the whole city – its streets, parks, private gardens and roofs – should act as a sponge. From the start, Rainproof was tasked with involving all stakeholders in rainproofing Amsterdam: this includes the municipality and water authority along with businesses, property owners, residents, consultants, and education institutions. Rainproof started as a network strategy to connect and activate all parties that can contribute. It incentivized private parties such as insurers, garden retail centers, and housing corporations structurally to act as middlemen for reaching larger groups, particularly home-owners. Additionally, it collaborated with existing government and non-government initiatives where the interests aligned to work together, broadening our reach.



Clear communication is essential

The motto "Every drop counts," helps to make the people aware that they are co-owners of both the problem and its solutions. Rainproof developed a tone that is accessible and inviting, utilizing drawn images so people want to take part. All communication demonstrates the variety of situations that are reflected in an online platform and folders with tips and tricks for the user's garden, street, or neighborhood and how they (as citizens, as investors, or as civil servants) can take actions to make it more rainproof over time.

Capacity building in the public sector is required

To be successful we need all departments and organizations of the public sector to be involved. We must ensure that they understand how Rainproof influences their own work, their policies, and their investment decisions within and across departments. Even though the sewer system plays a key role, cloudburst resilience can't be solved in technical pipes and pumps alone. Therefore, Amsterdam Rainproof has mainstreamed Rainproof into public policies and technical guidelines regarding streets, parks, procurement, and others. It has played a part in connecting different departments and has been training civil servants in all sectors involved so that when they do what they do, they do it Rainproof.

Every investment Rainproof

Whilst Amsterdam is different from New York, we can take a Rainproof approach. We can make New York rainproof by making sure that climate change is taken into account in every investment decision, by any actor made (from how to plant your garden to how to organize and maintain your street to how to build a new building), and that all these measures, taken over a period of time, taken during their natural investment cycles, will make communities rainproof. Every action counts, every step counts, every drop counts.