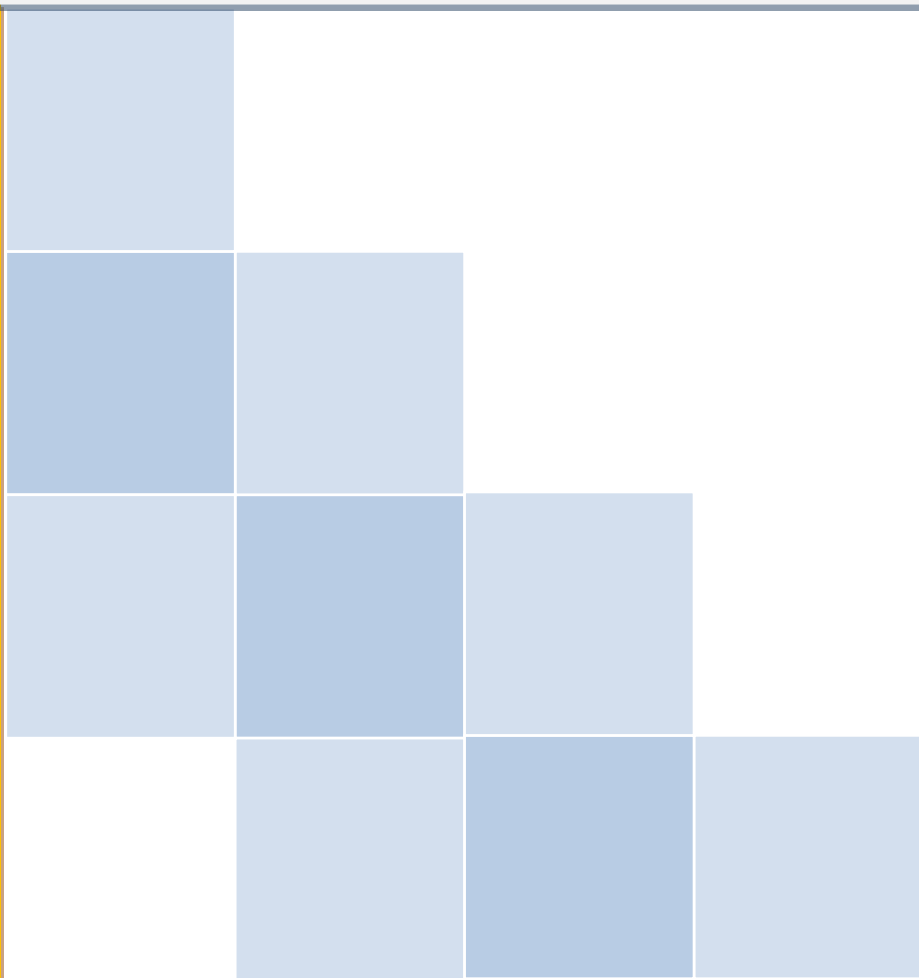




Amsterdam



Profile **Amsterdam**

Functions and territorial coverage

Amsterdam is the capital city and most populous municipality of the Netherlands. The city council and the district committees together form the Amsterdam City Government. The city council determines the general policies within the boundaries of the municipality.

Together with the provinces of Noord-Holland and Flevoland, and 32 surrounding smaller municipalities, Amsterdam is part of the Metropolitan Region Amsterdam (MRA). The Region has two airports, seaports, and is the financial center of the Netherlands. One of the goals of the MRA is to play a pioneering role in the knowledge and circular economy.

When it comes to the implementation of the European Regional Development Fund's (ERDF) Operational Programme Kansen voor West the city of Amsterdam has a shared responsibility and works closely in a partnership with the responsible regional authority, the Province of Noord-Holland.

Policy instrument

Kansen voor West 2014-2020, the ERDF Operational Programme for the Western Netherlands.

Territorial Context and Major Challenges for Amsterdam

Amsterdam is the capital city and most populous municipality of the Netherlands. The city has a population of ca. 854,000 million people within the city proper, and 2,4 million in the Metropolitan Region. There are 1.1 million homes, 1.5 million jobs and 230,000 businesses established here. Tourists account for 14.1 million overnight stays in hotels per annum.

The MRA covers a large and highly varied area which encompasses the North Sea beaches and dunes, the

historical polder landscape of Waterland and the 20th-century Flevoland polders, the IJmeer lake, the forests of the Utrecht Hill Ridge (which is in part a National Park), and numerous historical towns as well as growth centres accommodating new urban development.

The MRA is the most robust economic region in the Netherlands and is a strong international competitor. Amsterdam is a magnet for international young professionals and as a result experiences a high

housing demand and growth in the establishment of businesses. In this sense the urban-rural exchange in the MRA may be different when compared to other regions, which have a clear division between highly innovative urban areas and less developed surrounding rural areas.



*The Amsterdam Metropolitan Region (MRA),
© metropoolregioamsterdam.nl*

The MRA does not have a 'less developed' rural area, but none the less, urban-rural exchange (between the city of Amsterdam and the surrounding area) is limited. The limitation is not due to lack of accessibility to innovation, education or infrastructure, but instead is a result of different orientations. Amsterdam as a city is gentrifying (its growing population becoming richer, more demanding, highly educated), having a generally more inward focus, where the surrounding area exists of large-scale businesses having a more global reach, with a focus on export. To these businesses the city is important because it provides skilled labour, an international airport and harbour, and state of the art ICT services, but as a market for

their products, Amsterdam is not significant for them. The city area on the other hand provides space for innovative start-ups and research and education institutions, but few of them have a strong connection to the surrounding area.

So there is in fact an untapped potential for collaboration between city and Region on innovative projects in different fields. Special attention could be given by the municipality to start-ups that connect to the area around the city in an active way. More urban-rural collaboration could prevent rural areas from losing people, work and landscape.

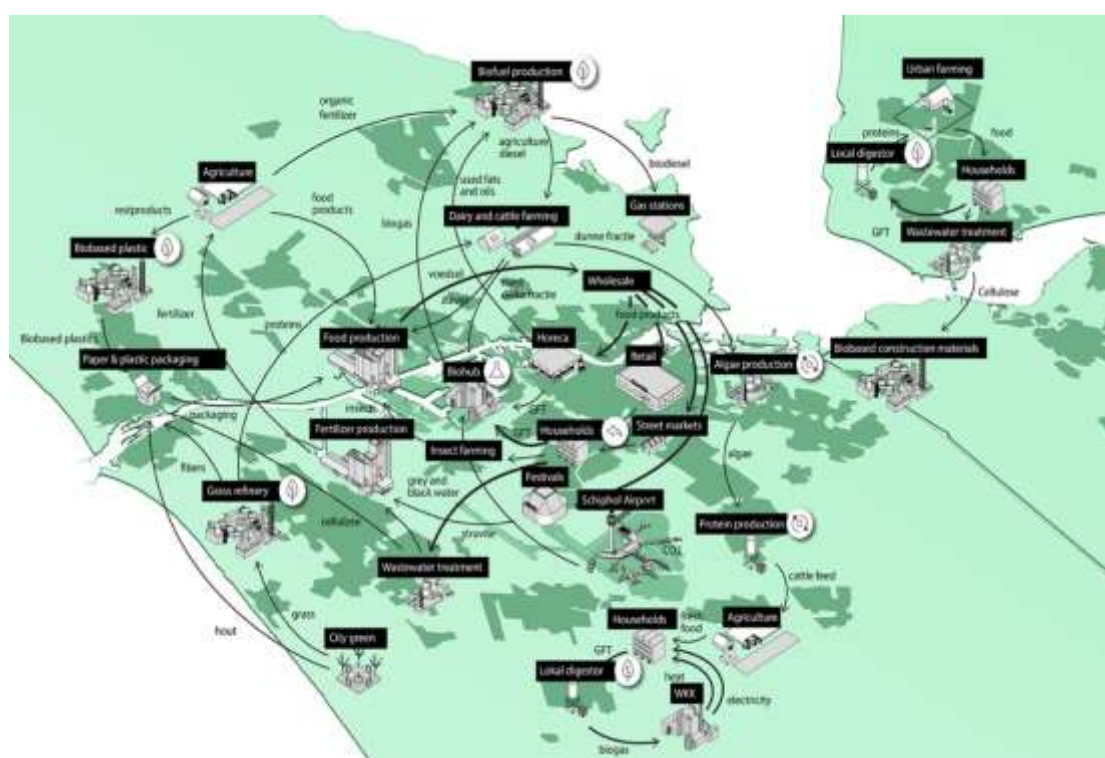
The large scale agriculture (mostly dairy) and export-oriented companies in the region have in fact some less favourable impact on landscape, soil life, insects and birds. Especially biodiversity loss has become so concerning that strategies have been effected to bring back 'the birds and the bees'. Also, soil compaction and subsidence due to the current land use – in an area that is already below sea level – has been additionally problematic. In response, several 'wet crops' pilot projects have been undertaken in the area to try out alternatives to the current land use.

The RUMORE project for Amsterdam seeks to address some of the issues outlined, hoping to contribute to urban-rural challenges, and to better territorial cohesion in the region.

Towards a circular Agri-Food chain in the MRA

In the RUMORE Amsterdam project, to best address local objectives and current challenges of climate change, the focus is to improve and innovate the regional circular Agri-Food chain. The municipality's ambitious [Circular Economy Program](#) defines

'Food and Biomass' as one of the three leading value-chains. This Program strives for a more circular organic chain in the Region, where organic waste streams should become resources for new products, instead of residue to be burned.



Visualization of the circular Agri-Food chain in the Metropolitan Region Amsterdam
© Amsterdam Circulair, City of Amsterdam

The circular economy ambition connects well to the ambitions of the ERDF Operational Programme Kansen voor West, where one of the top sectors is Agri-Food. RUMORE aims to support the transition to more circular food chains in the Region, establishing more collaborations and connections between

production and local markets. It is estimated that approximately 3% of what is consumed in the city of Amsterdam comes from the Region. This low percentage relates to the fact that the Netherlands are one of the major Agri-Food export countries in the world, as a result of extreme efficiency, innovation,

logistics and increasing economics of scale. However, as mentioned before, this led at the same time to soil degradation and negative effects on biodiversity. Stimulating innovative small to medium scale businesses and helping them to increase their local market share, is relevant for many reasons. Establishing a short supply chain would catalyse a circular economy through SME employment, as well as strengthen innovations that protect the landscape; use residual flows in an optimal way and create a regional Agri-Food 'cycle' that is economically attractive and that respects the local natural environment.

The municipality is in the process of formulating a Food Strategy, and also a new Circular Economy Strategy, which is scheduled for implementation by the end of 2019. The development of this strategy is informed by the "[Doughnut-theory](#)" by Kate Raworth. This theory states that economic development should respect the carrying capacity of the system, and that economic growth should stay within our social and planetary boundaries. RUMORE Amsterdam aims at accelerating the desired transition to a more circular Agri-Food chain. Stakeholders need each other to create short supply chains, to valorise residual flows, for the sale of products, for knowledge sharing and the exchange of materials and goods.

The Operational Programme for the Western Netherlands explicitly

names the difficulty that small companies have in growing and scaling up. RUMORE Amsterdam wants to help circular Agri-Food start-ups and scale-ups to grow. To support this growth, several currently existing 'obstacles' were identified and discussed within the local stakeholder group:

- How the market's focus on the lowest price at the moment of investment is a barrier for smaller sized, sustainable SME's. Often circular products are actually less expensive when you take the whole life cycle of the product into account (or when a price or tax would be put on the environmental damage of regular products) but this rarely happens.
- In the Netherlands local food products are generally not regarded as better, or having more quality. It was great to experience how in the RUMORE partner regions of Lombardy and Thessaloniki/ Central-Macedonia people took pride in their local products.
- There is a lack of knowledge on organic residual flows: the types of flows, where to find them, the available amounts, how to create feasible mass when there are many small quantities that need to be gathered and distributed.
- The circular economy mantra "waste is a resource" is not yet recognised in legislation and regulations. For example when a residual flow is marked as

'waste' there are often rules that restrict re-use.

- Sustainability funding, loans and subsidies generally only focus on CO₂ reduction such as green energy, and rarely focus on circularity and re-using residual flows.



Circular economy best practices: 1) beer made from old bread (Instock) and 2) mushrooms growing on coffee grounds (GrowHolland). © 1. Instock, 2. Jordi Huisman

The RUMORE Amsterdam stakeholder group, as a result of the

discussion, launched the idea of a "Flywheel" cluster, as a 'successor' of the current stakeholder group. As the obstacles that were identified need a structural approach and cooperation to achieve the circular Agri-Food chain goal, the Flywheel will aim to accelerate this transition by facilitating knowledge transfers, providing assistance to circular entrepreneurs in finding funding, influencing instruments such as the ERDF Operational Programme that promotes circularity, and to stimulate regulation lobbying on a local, national and EU level.

The establishment of the Flywheel is one of five concrete Actions in the Amsterdam Action Plan. It also has the potential to provide a platform to the many enthusiastic Agri-Food entrepreneurs in the field. There is a lot of positive energy on the subject, reflected in the RUMORE local stakeholder gatherings. The group has also formulated four other projects, including a factory of 'residual organic streams' (Quisquiliae); a pilot wetland crop field (Lisdodde); a chef/ designer using organic waste to create tissue such as mango leather, and last but not least a cooperation of Instock, Dutch Cuisine and the research Institute HVA working on a foodwaste project (see [Interview Selma Seddik](#)).



Operational Programme

Kansen voor West 2014-2020

The Operational Programme “Kansen voor West 2014-2020” is financed by the ERDF by a contribution totalling 190.6€ million. The Programme has been open to project proposals since 2014 and until 2020. Kansen voor West covers the provinces of Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland, Utrecht and Flevoland. The four major cities in the Netherlands which include Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, are also partners in this Programme.

The Operational Programme selects four priorities: ‘Innovation among SMEs’, ‘Reduction of CO₂ emissions’, ‘Promoting employment, supporting labour mobility and labour potential’ and ‘Social inclusion/poverty reduction’.

Kansen voor West identifies the Agri-Food sector as one of the top sectors in the Western Netherlands. Within this specific sector, the biggest challenge in the Region is to develop the sector in a sustainable, circular way.

Until December 2018 about 90 projects were committed in Western Netherlands to the Programme, which comprised 71% of the ERDF-budget. In 2018, the Programme granted further 34 projects for

funding, 29 projects remain in the assessment-phase. RUMORE proposes five projects for Amsterdam related to the circular economy devised by the local stakeholder group.

When it comes to future improvement of the next Operational Programme (2021-2027), the major potential of the funding instrument with regard to the local rural-urban themes lies in ‘circular economy’ becoming a new topic for funding, and it should therefore be explicitly named as a new theme and focus for the MRA. Furthermore, more capacity for project development during the programme period would help generating more high-quality projects.

Preparations for the next ERDF-period 2021-2027 has commenced, focusing on the new Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) for innovation and the new Operational Programme. The new Programme will continue cooperation between four regions and four cities. There is great potential under this funding instrument to include ‘Circular economy’ as one of the 5 new objectives of the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 for the whole of the Western Netherlands



Policy Landscape in the Field of Regional Innovation

In the Western Netherlands' RIS3 2014-2020 the concept of 'innovation' is broadly defined and connected to available national and EU funds and instruments. The four municipalities and four cities all commit to funding for thematic objectives on "strengthening research, technological development and innovation" - as provided within the framework of the 'Kansen voor West' ERDF Operational Programme which aligns with RIS3 criteria.

The RIS3 West-Nederland aims to connect multiple initiatives by the regional economy with knowledge institutions. It focuses in particular, on innovation in SMEs, the low-carbon economy and city development. The RIS3 objective is the improvement of economic competitiveness by increasing research and development (R&D) investments and promoting innovation.

Agri-Food is one of the nine areas of smart specialisation for the Western Netherlands, the others are: Chemicals; Creative industry; Energy; High tech; Life sciences and health; Logistics; Horticulture and propagation materials; and Water.

The challenge the Western Netherlands would like to address with the 'Kansen voor West' is the

strengthening of research, technological development and innovation. Achieved through the encouragement of knowledge valorisation and leveraging possible cross-over opportunities, rather than choosing one or more economic clusters. This would improve urban-rural links between education, start-ups and regional investment strategies in all relevant economic clusters. The MRA has invested and experienced improvement in innovation, which resulted in the receipt of the European Capital of Innovation Award in 2016. By mobilising forces in the MRA and working together towards new solutions, Amsterdam will be better equipped to address new challenges with the typically Amsterdam bottom-up approach. This approach is modelled by the RUMORE stakeholder group which brings together city and Region based entrepreneurs, knowledge institutes and governments, all working on the transition to a circular economy, developing ideas for concrete projects, which are now in the process of becoming reality.