



MAARTEN NYPELS

MSc (Biology) ·
MEBA
(Environmental Business
Administration)



Systems thinker · Keynote speaker · Consultant

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PROFILE

Strategist and systems thinker with more than thirty years of experience in complex questions of public interest: climate, transitions, polycrisis, sustainability, knowledge and innovation. Where challenges usually fragment into silos, I restore coherence: I bring the systems that carry a city or organisation into one picture and make visible how an intervention in one domain plays out in another. I developed that “coherence view” into workable frameworks (Vital Systems, Polycrisis and a four-part resilience model) and put it into practice during sixteen years at the City of Rotterdam and, before that, in international and private-sector contexts.

My strength lies in connecting people, knowledge and organisations, internally and externally, nationally and internationally; in keeping the overview under pressure; and in getting processes moving that others experience as stuck.

CORE EXPERTISE

Systems & transition thinking: vital systems, handling complexity, transition studies, organisational innovation

Resilience & polycrisis: robustness, bounce-back, capacity to learn and to change, coherence view, climate adaptation

Strategy & executive advice: vision development, administrative and political sensitivity, strategic processes

Connecting & facilitating: coalition building, stakeholder and network management, support at executive and operational level

Speaking, teaching & coaching: keynotes, masterclasses, process facilitation, coaching of teams and leaders

EXPERIENCE

Independent systems thinker, keynote speaker & advisor — Maarten Nypels 2026 – present
Keynote and masterclass “Navigating clearly in uncomfortable times”; advice on vital systems and resilience for public organisations; coaching of teams and leaders. Farewell to the City of Rotterdam on 3 September 2026 with a mini-symposium.

Programme, change & innovation manager — City of Rotterdam 2010 – 2026
Broad strategic and operational role from the Engineering Department and corporate strategy: vision development, area development, network building and value creation for Rotterdam society. Selection:
– Co-author of Rotterdam's first and second Resilience Strategy; ten years member of the Resilient Team Rotterdam (part of the global Resilient Cities Network).

- Founder and lead of the Vital Systems program: technical expertise refocused on the systems that carry the city: soil, water, air, ecology, energy, materials, information, mobility, buildings and public space.
- Founder and lead of the Polycrisis working group.
- Initiator of the transition of the Rotterdam Engineering Department; co-founder of the partnership Engineering Department – TU Delft – Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, and of the Erasmus University – City partnership around the UNIC network.
- Senior consultant Roadmap Next Economy; co-author of the Rotterdam Environmental Vision and the Stadshavens structural vision.
- Project manager Rijnhaven area development (multiple value streams); crisis management during the renovation of the Maastunnel (national monument).

Editor-in-Chief and Co-author — Plan Bèta

2021–2022

A book for physics, chemistry, and biology teachers on how to make sustainability an integral part of their teaching while strengthening the interconnections between the STEM subjects.

External PhD candidate — DRIFT – Erasmus University Rotterdam

2016 – 2023

Research on steering transitions towards “urban homeostasis”: the city as a living, self-regulating system.

Founder & director — Eye Locus Netherlands BV

2001 – 2009

Own company supporting governments (local, regional, provincial, national) in improving their business and investment climate: strategy, organisational development, information and knowledge management.

Business Development Consultant Sustainability — Grontmij (now Sweco)

1996 – 2001

New service-market combinations in environment, spatial planning and economy. Among others co-creator of INES Mainport Rotterdam, an early industrial-ecology programme in the Port Industrial Complex.

Senior consultant — Institute for Applied Environmental Economics (TME)

1994 – 1996

Strategic studies on sustainable development; research on sustainable forest use and trade chains; project lead of an international conference in the Amazon region.

Director — WISE International

1991 – 1993

Research on energy and sustainability questions, from the technical to the socio-political.

International lobbyist — Environmental and development organisations

1986 – 1992

Assignments for, among others, Greenpeace, WWF, Friends of the Earth, Oxfam/Novib and ICCO. Lived and worked in Malaysia, the Philippines and parts of Africa. Participant in the UN conference UNCED (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and the follow-up committees in New York.

SPEAKING & TEACHING

- More than 50 interactive lectures and workshops in five years on transitions, technology, learning and sustainability, for audiences ranging from operational teams to executive boards.
- Five years guest lecturer in the Erasmus University masterclass series “The Brain in the Boardroom”.

EDUCATION

Master of Environmental Business Administration (MEBA) — University of Twente

1995

Master of Science, Biology — Radboud University Nijmegen

1986

LANGUAGES & OTHER

Languages: Dutch (native), English (fluent), German (good).

Passions: new technology and AI, composing and playing music (guitar/bass), nature and running, gastronomic cooking, literature.