

Modeling sustainable urban transformation at **SAIL Amsterdam 2025**

Capgemini partnered with SAIL Amsterdam organizers to develop new technology and support more sustainable behavior in pursuit of more livable and environmentally conscious cities

In 2025, SAIL Amsterdam took the opportunity to operate as a test site for sustainable innovation that could reduce the event's impact on livability. Capgemini supported the event by developing new tools and approaches to water management, production of sustainable goods, transportation, and energy use that could be applied in Amsterdam and other cities in addition to supporting SAIL Amsterdam's pursuit of a more sustainable event.

Client: SAIL Amsterdam

Region: Netherlands

Industry: Public sector

Client challenge: SAIL Amsterdam and its partners aimed to use the 2025 event as a real-world test bed for sustainability innovations, helping promote greener practices in events and cities while working towards carbon neutrality by 2030.

Solution: Capgemini collaborated with the event ecosystem on several focus areas to demonstrate how water management, material use, transportation, and energy could contribute to sustainable practices in urban environments.

The world's largest maritime event

When Amsterdam prepared to celebrate its 700-year anniversary in 1975, the city's port contributed to the festivities with a sailing event called SAIL Amsterdam. The success of this inaugural celebration resulted in the decision to repeat it every five years and the SAIL Amsterdam Foundation was established. Over time, SAIL Amsterdam has become the largest freely accessible event in Europe, leading to 2025, at which point multiple celebrations converged: the 750th anniversary of the city, the 50th anniversary of SAIL Amsterdam, and the 10th edition of the event.

With the unique nature of the impending celebration, the SAIL Amsterdam Foundation understood that such a substantial, free-access event has a substantial impact on the livability of the city. To avoid this disruption, the SAIL Amsterdam Foundation decided to use the event as a living laboratory for urban sustainability innovation. In this way, the event would minimize its impact on the city while simultaneously demonstrating the feasibility of environmentally-focused technology and tools more broadly in urban settings.

"Making such a large event sustainable is a major undertaking," explained Mitra van Raalten, Executive Director at the SAIL Amsterdam Foundation. "It means reducing water usage and making sure the materials that go into SAIL Amsterdam are circular or can be recycled easily. And we need to make sure that those who travel to join the festivities have access to and are encouraged to use sustainable transportation options while energy use is powered by clean sources."

So, the 2025 event represented an essential opportunity to innovate and test the methods that would enable the Foundation's 2030 goals. With their eyes on the future, SAIL Amsterdam leaders identified five key areas that would need to be addressed in order to fulfill the vision of a sustainable celebration: efficient water usage, sustainable materials, eco-friendly transportation, renewable energy, and environmentally conscious food sourcing.

Such a wide-ranging selection of topics to address and the substantial challenges each posed prompted event organizers to partner with Capgemini. A shared set of values and a considerable overlap between the targeted innovations and our experience with topics such as Smart Mobility, energy transition, and climate technology made this a natural fit.



Building and applying an innovation approach

After reviewing the objectives and relevant solutions, SAIL Amsterdam and Capgemini agreed to focus the partnership on the first four targeted subjects.

Across each of these focus areas, the partners set up Innovation Tables, ecosystems in which the challenges, goals, and innovation options were comprehensively examined. These were supported by Capgemini's Applied Innovation Exchange (AIE), which also helped bring together organizations that could ideate, initiate, and develop solutions that fit SAIL Amsterdam Foundation's vision. This effort also needed organizations that would enable extensive enough outreach.

Sustainable water management meant using the right kind of water for suitable purposes while minimizing the demand on clean sources. In response, Capgemini worked with MTD Water to design a sensor-based monitoring system that supported a circular network. This platform tracked water conditions throughout the SAIL Amsterdam site in order to provide real-time insight into the state of water in the city, enabling action to be taken as needed to drastically reduce the frequency of water system flushing.

Meanwhile, Capgemini created Litterlens, an AI-powered application that tracks waste in the city. With this tool, users could quickly scan litter, which was then analyzed by computer vision and machine learning to determine the material composition, producer, and origin. As a result, SAIL Amsterdam had a solution for identifying where waste could be found and the degree to which event-related products were recyclable and that was easy to get in the hands of a large user base. This information then offered guidance to producers on how they could make their materials more sustainable and help cities define their litter cleaning strategy.

Sustainable transportation and urban energy

Capgemini and SAIL Amsterdam wanted to provide 2.5 million visitors with the means to travel more sustainably, in large part by reducing their reliance on cars. In response, we collaborated with Hirsch to develop an effective mobility planner that offered personalized alternatives to driving based on the user's postal code. Bolstered by greater information, travelers will be able to find convenient options that will get them to the venue while minimizing the carbon footprint of doing so.

"Let's say that you have a visitor who has previously just driven to Amsterdam to join us at a SAIL. They might not have been aware of other viable and more sustainable travel options," Mitra van Raalten said. "We wanted them to give them options that might not have been evident before as part of a larger change in the visitor experience."

Finally, Capgemini worked with the Dutch innovation Knowledge Institute (TNO) to address energy concerns related to SAIL Amsterdam. New guidelines for the use of hydrogen in urban areas offered another avenue for using clean energy sources to power the event. We further supported this effort with guidance for loan connections.



Progressing towards more sustainable cities and events

SAIL Amsterdam 2025 proved to be a resounding success as a first step towards the event's substantial sustainability goals. This iteration of the celebration demonstrated the viability of new technology and behavior by individual visitors. The introduction of innovative tools and resources expanded awareness of opportunities to improve sustainable practices, both related to future SAIL Amsterdam events but also more broadly across urban settings.

"Following SAIL 2025, we've provided a blueprint for more sustainable events and urban management," explained Mitra van Raalten. ***"Working with Capgemini and other partners, such as MTD Water and Hirsch, we've made innovations possible in 2025 that can be replicated elsewhere in many different settings, leading to sustainable practices being adopted across society at large."***

Following the work done for SAIL Amsterdam 2025, Capgemini then helped to assemble an impact report that summarized what was done for the latest iteration of the event as well as the future implications. We provided a summary of best practices for the future, including how to organize urban mobility and new options for cleaning cities.

After already achieving substantial sustainability transformation, SAIL Amsterdam Foundation will continue to lead the charge in this field and demonstrate the potential of technology and change management to build a more eco-friendly future.

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Mitra van Raalten

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MACS_09102026_SB



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