Caught in the Network
Researching the relation between Amsterdam's city network and its direct environment

Introduction

The last decades a **technological revolution** has taken place, leading to globalisation all over the world. A **network society** has developed in which we challenge our societies in a process of structural change and a new perception of time and space. (Castells 1989: 1)
In the developments in a network society, and in network cities, the focus lies on the nodes and the links between them. The **nodes reinforce**, and the connections between them become only faster and faster. Every node seems to focus only on the other nodes, and not on the surrounding area. They are not well embedded in the urban surroundings.
How does the **direct environment** react upon new developments in nodes and connections? How can we make certain these **places benefit optimal from the surrounding network** and will not be left behind?

Hypotheses

The network strengthens, but the **neighbourhoods in between stay behind**
Nodes develop quickly and focus only on **surrounding nodes and not on the direct surroundings**
A border arises between the node itself and the direct environment, social coherence lacks
The city network is **not well embedded** in the urban surroundings and therefore misses opportunities

Research Question

How do the strongly evolving nodes and its connections react on their direct environment and vice versa?

Location

Different cases from the Netherlands and other parts of Western Europe will be studied. The focus point will be Amsterdam, the test case.
Amsterdam is the largest city of the Netherlands and therefore interesting to research on, regarding the topic of globalisation, which takes place significant in the larger cities. In the history of Amsterdam we can see the tendency towards a network society rising. The nodes and links become less and stronger.

Amsterdam North deals with **deprived areas**: Volewijck, Vogelbuurt, Nieuwendam-Noord and Banne Buiksloot. This urban district will be my focus point. **New developments** are ongoing in the North: the riverbanks become metropolitan nodes and the high way connections form severe seperations between neighbourhoods. What is likely to happen in the future? How do the **neighbourhoods of Amsterdam North fit in** this development?

Gemeente Amsterdam

research area
connections
nodes

Network of Amsterdam

Network of Amsterdam North

Assignment

Understanding globalisation as an ongoing process altering space and time, I will analyse the network society that is present in Amsterdam. Starting from a regional scale, I will look into its history and present form, I will define the most rapidly changing urban nodes and connections. By **understanding the transformation** of the network itself, I can take a look at the parts of the city that are *not* part of the nodes and the connections, and state desirable conditions for these places to benefit from and cooperate with the network, and not to be left behind.

The **deliverables** will be:
- A **strategic plan** on how Dutch neighbourhoods can react upon networks
- A **set of design principles** on how the nodes of a network can be embedded in the urban framework
- An **urban design** that shows what the previous points can look like **in Amsterdam North**

Planning

Week		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
Onderdeel	Sep			Oct					P1	Nov				Dec				Jan		P2	Feb			Mar				Apr				May				P4	June		P5		
Define topic+location																																									
Literature study																																									
Analysis A'dam																																									
Research on location																																									
Develop strategy																																									
Develop design																																									
Draw conclusions																																									
Write thesis																																									
Make presentation																																									

Glossary

Globalisation = The compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the global whole (Robertson, 1992: 8)
Network society = A society where the key social structures and activities are organized around electronically processed information networks (Castells 1996)
Centrality = A concentration of economic activities, people and connectivity

Literature

Boelens (ed.) - Nederland Netwerkenland 2000
Castells - The Information Age (trilogy) 1994-96
Riguelle et al - Measuring urban polycentrism: a European case study and its implications 2006
Salingaros - Principles of Urban Structure 2005
Sassen - Sociology of Globalization 2007
- The Global City 1991
Zilbeti - Saskia Sassen interview 2008

Relevance

When we look at this topic in a broader context, the relevance becomes clear. Globalisation is a topic that the world deals with since several decades. It is an ongoing process that stimulates the **strengthening of the network**, consisting of nodes and connections. The nodes seem to focus only on other nodes that are fast to reach, and not on the direct environment. A gap arises between the node and its environment.
Globalisation increases diversity. "The city's spaces are inscribed with the **dominant corporate culture** but also with a multiplicity of other cultures and identities, notably through immigration. While corporate power inscribes non-corporate cultures and identities with «otherness», thereby devaluing them, they are present everywhere." (Sassen 2008: 6)
The **role of the nodes** seems to **change from serving its environment, to serving other nodes**.

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Robin Boelsums
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