

Reflection
Urban Food System Amstel III
AMSTELGÄRD

Stan van Stralen 4655087

In our cities, we are dependent on food coming from other places. We live in a global food system which is extorting the places where food and the resources to produce it comes from and has a negative effect on the places food is consumed. According to the United Nations, 68% of the people live in urban areas by 2050. Right now, this is already 55% globally. In the Netherlands this trend is seen in the growth of cities and satellite cities, especially Amsterdam which is according to CBS expected to house another 150.000 people by 2035 which is a growth of 20%.

At the same time, the biggest challenges of the 21st century are related to the average individual footprint, especially western countries, and the management of shared resources. Therefore to deal with these issues, it is important to redesign the urban metabolism of cities to keep its flows circular and contained within its manageable boundaries. Long material flow chains result in a lack of responsibility or unclear outcome due to a lack of oversight. Now cities are growing they should strive to shorten their flows and to make their metabolism less depended on external sources.

With my research, I wanted to make a bridge between our food system and the our urban context to find how we can get a better grip on our food-system and manage our resources better. It is getting increasingly important to be able to work with analytic data and a more science-based approach for the basis of our design as issues are getting more complicated. From the research I derived a set of necessary additions to make Amstel III into a local urban food system. These necessary additions let to a program and design challenge. This I combined with further analysis of the needs of the area and existing building, such as social, urban and architectural aspects.

The research and topic are relevant to the assignment of Second Life of the Architectural Engineering studio, as the studio focuses on transforming existing office building stock built in last half of last century. Amstel III is an area with lots of vacancy of this type of stock and is about to be transformed on an urban scale. The graduation topic looks for a repurposing of this area on and its stock fitting to warts the topic of urban farming on an urban scale. Secondly, an existing building is to be repurposed as key-element for the working of the larger scheme.

This research and design are of importance to a broader field. Due to that it is essential that we relate our urban context with it is metabolism in order to become truly sustainable. With this work a relation is made between our food system and city which has not often been explored, but is an underlying problem for nearly all modern cities. From this approach of combining scientific research on the topic of urban farming and urban metabolism, with the researching on the lay-out of a city (district) and an analysis of its underlying data, a methodology can be derived usable for the development of configurations for other cities and districts.

During the design I was challenged by integrating multiple aspects of the project, which are the more technical functionality as it had to become a central point for functions such as food distribution and biodigester and the social integration such as relating the building to the context of Amstel III and Amsterdam Zuid-Oost. It has been challenging to find a balance between aspects as they. How does the Amstelgärd project become inclusive socially and urbanely functional? The problem this let to was the identity of the complex, it does not fit into the category of a single typology but was rather a combinations of two opposites. I had to define this in during my p3 phase. Eventually, I came to realize that story telling of the food system in Amstel III should become the guiding theme throughout the project. Our traditional global food system lacks transparency, that is why I wanted to include this transparency. First I tried to reach this transparency by keeping the buildings ground floor as open as

possible and publicly accessible. Reflecting on this, it was a miss interpretation of what I wanted to achieve with transparency, the project and my design process were effected by this choice as I lost focus on what the building was meant to be. I could not clearly define how it should work, why it would be a connecting social factor and if it was urban space or building space. This was the feedback I had gotten during my initial p4. Eventually, by getting inspired by the World of Food in combination with park planned around the project I solved this issue. The concept of this cluster of small foodstands fitted well in the scale urban to building scale of the project. Looking back at this, I might be necessary for me to start to define earlier what the needs of the building are from a user perspective. I got blind sighted in system thinking on a larger scale due to my halve year of research seeing the building as utility. I tried to work from large to small, but could not define the narrative of the users by doing this. I rather should work from both ends and meet somewhere in the middle. Asking the questions earlier; who are the users? And what should they experience?