



P4 REFLECTION

AMS-MID CITY 2100
COMPLEX PROJECTS
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Project description

The project Nomadic Hub will accommodate a new lifestyle, which will be an outcome of future challenges and opportunities. In the year 2100 a certain group of people, called nomads, will take the maximum advantage of the freedom of movement, advanced mobility and transportation, what will result in merging into one inhabiting and travelling.

The one certain thing about the future is that it is unpredictable. In the 1960s, many visionaries and architects tried to design for the future, none of them succeeded in predicting the times in which we live now. The aim of the Complex Projects graduation studio was not to predict the future, but rather to envision what challenges and circumstances the future will bring. In my case, the design emerged from researching two aspects of the future: housing and mobility.

The new, proposed typology consists of two parts. First is a contemporary, built on site structure which houses common spaces and all necessary facilities such as kitchens, living rooms, but also canteen and bike workshops etc. The other part of the project consists of movable units, pods which can travel between destinations and be attached to contemporary structures. The design assumes the presence of those contemporary structures in many places, connected by metro and hyperloop network. The private pods, which use this network to travel, are minimal housing units, for max 2 people, and offer the necessary amenities for each individual user.

This design strategy allowed me to create a dynamic living environment, with attractive shared spaces, which encourage users to interact with other inhabitants in the physical environment, as a way of overcoming the predicted risk of social isolation and digital introversion.

Research method in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry

The Complex Projects graduation studio is divided into the research phase and design phase. Research phase consists of P1 and P2 periods, and design phase of P3 and P4. Each period, P1, P2, P3, P4 ends with a presentation, which focuses on summarizing outcomes and findings, as well as drawing conclusions and setting goals for the next phase. In the first phase, P1, we mainly focused on establishing one, coherent future scenario, based on available predictions and trends. We looked back in the past, compared it with the current situation and projected it into the future. We researched mobility, transportation, housing, services, work and decided how those aspects will look in the year 2100. P1 presentation was about our group scenario for the future, and we also specified individual interests that we decided to research further during P2 phase. The main goal for P2 was to come up with specific typology, related program and the best location for the proposed project. In my case, I focused on researching mobility in combination with housing, which ended up with a new typology of mobile, minimal housing. The location that fits the best my interest was the Amsterdam Nord, on the border between residential area and lively business district. I also delivered specific requirements for my building, as access for both people and transportable pods, dimensions connected with metro and hyperloop network and the ratio between minimal private pods and communal spaces. At the same time, P2 was the final moment when we, as a group, presented our realistic, although futuristic scenario for Amsterdam 2100, and made sure that all our individual projects work together, enrich each other and create coherent vision. P2 marked the end of the research phase, and from that moment each student focused on developing their own design.

The relationship between research and design

The first semester of graduation studio at Complex Projects focused on the research part. Before the P1 presentation we worked mostly as a group, trying to establish a future scenario for Amsterdam in 2100. We started with general issues, such as climate change, lifestyle in the future, demographics, jobs, mobility and transportations etc. Between P1 and P2, each student chose a more specific direction to research further. In my case, I started to be really interested in the aspect of future living and lifestyle. Another topic that was important for me was increasing freedom of movement and mobility, connected with the digitalization of work. From analyzing trends and predictions I draw a few conclusions, which later influenced my design. First, I noticed the trend of minimal living, which is becoming dominant in city centers, such as Amsterdam. Another aspect was a growing number of short-term rentals, as people are frequently moving between cities. People are no longer attached to one place, as they can often work remotely, and the world becomes a connected network with Amsterdam as one of the important nodes. Moreover, travelling is getting cheaper and faster, which increases global migrations. Adding to that rising number of climate and war migrants, it is clear that future will bring a new way of living- for the purpose of this project I call it nomadic lifestyle. The research part ended with stating the research question: How the rise of nomadic lifestyle will influence the built environment in Amsterdam in the year 2100?

The research phase ended with P2 presentation, where I clearly stated my interest in designing Nomadic Hub – contemporary structure with communal spaces which serves as a plug-in spot for transportable pods. Pods are minimal living spaces for individuals, who travel the world, together with their pods and plug in at certain locations. During the design phase, I solved many issues which emerged from the research phase, such as transportation of pods, the ratio between private and shared spaces, customization of pods etc.

The relationship between graduation topic, the studio topic and MSc. Architecture program

The studio of Complex Projects always includes wide research from many fields. We analyzed economics, politics, technology and social circumstances. This very wide scope allows choosing the field of personal research, which is truly interesting for a student. The graduation topic was Amsterdam Centraal 2100, and the aim of graduation studio was to understand the processes which shape the future and outline the future challenges which Amsterdam must face.

In terms of choosing an individual graduation topic, there was no limitation, only the general location was chosen by the studio – Amsterdam Centraal. The most important requirement was that the topic and later the project has to be strongly connected with the future, which means that it cannot be built today, and it is only possible to develop such a project in year 2100. The topic has to use future opportunities and answer upcoming challenges. In my case, I took advantage of the growing mobility and advanced transportation. In the same time, I tried to answer a challenge of social isolation and desire to live dynamically, while and experiencing many different places.

Designing for the future circumstances seems to be more and more dominant at Architecture track at TU Delft, with previous Complex Projects graduation studios placed in the year 2050, as well as other Studios researching future of cities, urbanism and building technology. The year 2100 marks the near future, which is still possible to imagine, but will be truly different than the current situation, what makes research and design process very challenging.

Relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework

One of the things that are unquestionable about the future is that in the city centers we will live denser and higher than today. In my project, I focused on increasing the density of Amsterdam Nord, and at the same time keeping the attractiveness of living in Amsterdam. My project is an answer on how to deal with a growing population in Amsterdam Centraal and connecting it with communal living and optimization of usage of shared spaces.

The social aspect of the project is answering the rising demand for one-person households. From the current trends, it is clear that more and more people decided to live alone in the The Netherlands. This creates a risk of social isolation. With my project I designed according to current predictions, creating individual, small flats. However, I also tried to overcome the introverting nature of living alone and force people to use shared spaces, which has to be passed in order to reach an individual flat and also consist of necessary amenities such as kitchen, laundry etc.

The ethical issues and dilemmas

Designing for the future, for the reality placed in over 80 years from now resulted in many uncertainties and questions, that no one can really answer. My initial dilemma in the beginning of graduation studio was if it is even relevant to design for the year 2100 and how to answer the problems that do not exist yet. What helped me, was analyzing trends and predictions and establishing one version of the future, as a base for the project. In order to do that, I had to make some decisions about the year 2100, and what are the possibilities and limitations of the future. I did not feel comfortable with creating my own conditions for design, as usually, they are predominant and already specified. Designing for the year 2100 was entirely different than designing for the present situation, however, when we, as a group, agreed on one version of the future, it got easier to design in this upcoming reality. The other ethical issue emerged during the design phase when I had to ask what the acceptable minimal living space is, and where is the border between living small and living in a cage. Another issue for me was a necessary unification of pods, as they must fit into the metro and hyperloop system. Therefore, all the pods have the same sizes and dimensions, which was good for technical purposes but problematic in terms of personalization, as every user is different and need different space for life. Another question that I had to answer was what is private, what is shared, communal and what is public. How many people should share the living room, how many people share the kitchen, how the borders between private and communal looks like, what is the best ratio between those spaces. When answering those questions, I used a lot of references of existing communal housing, shared living and minimal spaces, and research how they work the best.

After solving all issues which emerged during the design phase, I am still left with my initial dilemma – how relevant it is to design for uncertain future, solving non-existing problems, in the reality that we cannot predict.