

Research Report and Reflection: Muiderpoort Station Renewed

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Summary of the project

Large infrastructural works dominate the area around Muiderpoort station and the adjacent Oosterspoorplein. The area was re-designed in 1930's as an elegant ensemble in style with the Amsterdam Amstel Station, but as it was cut off from the urban fabric by railway dikes, never contributed much to the public life in the adjacent neighborhoods. The development of Muiderpoort station made it as one of the most important infrastructural nodes in the Amsterdam region and led to many practical adjustments in the station area. These alterations did not solve the initial problem (spatial segregation among urban neighborhoods in East Amsterdam), but rather weakened the urban and architectural quality.

In and around Muiderpoort station, there is potential to improve the situation. First of all, the recent mixed-use development in Oostpoort, located south of the station area, could bring urban diversity to East Amsterdam. Secondly, the daily Dappermarkt (market) and the main shopping street (Javastraat) are attractive aspects for both locals and visitors. Thirdly, Muiderpoort station and the square, Oosterspoorsplein, have a potential to become the local heart of East Amsterdam as they form the connection between these activities.

In order to transform Muiderpoort station area from an unfavorable place to the heart of local neighborhoods in East Amsterdam, I propose the modification of dikes into buildings. These buildings will contain various public facilities: a public library, music school, rentable workshops and retail spaces. Also new entrances to the station platforms alongside the street and Oosterspoorplein are taken into account. To provide a better connection between the Dapperbuurt and the Indischebuurt the existing viaduct will be broadened and improved by skylights and new internal facades. The plan must be seen as a generator for the area, a first step, leaving space for new developments on the south side of the Oosterspoorplein in the future.

Aspect 1: the relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject chosen by student

The Hybrid Building Studio, 'Renewal of the City Renewal' focuses on two things: one aspect is how architectural interventions can activate and contribute to the process to the urban transformation'. Another is how transportation infrastructure in dense urban areas gives impact to urban fabrics. In order to study these aspects the Hybrid Studio suggested three areas in Dutch historical cities belonging to Randstad: Muiderpoort station and its around of East Amsterdam, Rotterdam Zuid station including its vicinity and Den Haag's outskirts around Moerwijk station are the chosen areas.

As I already mentioned above, I selected East Amsterdam as my study area. In this area, railway tracks which are raised on dikes and pass through the whole area of East Amsterdam seem to be a problematic element which causes urban fragmentation and segregation in this region.

Therefore, how railway infrastructure gave influences to dense East Amsterdam spontaneously became my research topic.

Aspect 2: the relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework.

In order to invest relationship between railway infrastructure and urban fragmentation in East Amsterdam, I used both morphological and phenomenological methods as a research methodology: the morphological research is based on literature and mapping techniques for trace the relationship between railway infrastructures and urban blocks in East Amsterdam from the middle of the 19th century till the present. The phenomenological research complements the morphological method which fits into diachronic and wide scope research. This research method which is based on literatures, and photographs and paintings aims for a microscope research. Additionally, literature based researches helps to make better understanding to East Amsterdam. These three research methods belong to five research methodologies that the Hybrid Buildings Studio provides.

Aspect 3: the relationship between research and design

Based on my research, I extracted several conclusions:

- Railway tracks on dikes play a role as urban obstacles from the middle of the 19th century
- Large-scale renewal plan of railway infrastructure in East Amsterdam in 1930s could not solve the problem of urban fragmentation.
- Poor quality of via-ducts and retain walls create negative images toward railway infrastructures.
- Several positive and potential aspects: new development in Oostpoort, Cultural and Educational feature (Montessori school), Oosterspoorsplein as a public square

Under the results of the research, I established **four guiding principles** for the following urban strategy and architectural design proposal.

Firstly, railway infrastructure raised on dike is a problematic object which is needed architectural intervention in order to improve urban connectivity among local neighborhoods in East Amsterdam.

Secondly, an architectural intervention for renewal of railway infrastructure should be applied in a limited boundary. East Amsterdam already had one experience of renewal of railway infrastructure in this area and this renewal in 1930s showed that the plan on a large scale successfully re-built railway traffic system but, at the same time, failed to solve an initial problem,

urban segregation. Furthermore, large scale planning based on rationalism and functionalism led to easily ignore spatial quality in a perceptual level and spend a lot of public expenditure.

Thirdly, negative perceptions toward railway infrastructure should be improved. For instance, dikes for railway tracks block visual connection among local neighborhoods and poor spatial quality of via-ducts which aimed more for transportations such as cars, buses and trams than for pedestrians give influences to citizens to consider transportation infrastructure as excluded part from urban area. Improving spatial quality of these areas through brighter and enlarged pedestrian path, and intimate architectural expression can help people to turn negative to positive perception.

Fourthly, lands occupied by railway infrastructure in dense urban areas, especially via-ducts and the surroundings, should become more multi-functional. Modernistic planning approach based on functionalism and rationalism brought about mono-functional urban blocks and the plan for renewal of railway infrastructure in East Amsterdam in 1930s had been executed. As the result, areas around the railway tracks on dikes became more mono-functional, monolithic and relatively less intimate. In order to bring 'urban continuity' among local neighborhoods in East Amsterdam, functional diversity by inserting public and private programs in and around the railway infrastructure is very essential.

Under results of research and four guiding principles I could establish an urban strategy and an architectural design.

In an urban scale, I chose Muiderpoort station and its surrounding as the target site for urban intervention. Because the location of Muiderpoort station is placed in the middle of three local neighborhoods and seized by two railway tracks, it is the very important node for improving urban connection among local neighborhoods. Secondly, Oosterspoorplein and considerable part of Muiderpoort station hall will be preserved. In dense East Amsterdam preserved Muiderpoort station hall would help to create Oosterspoorplein to public square. Thirdly, selection and arrangement of programs are based on the research. Around Oosterspoorplein public programs such as public library and music school, and workshop would be arranged. Alongside the main street between Dapper-buurt and Indischebuurt a book-store, an art gallery and retail shops which can help the street to make friendly are placed.

In an architectural scale, firstly, I decided to reconstruct railway infrastructures partly around Muiderpoort station. On a ground level, public and private programs will be occupied under the railway tracks. Secondly, enlarged via-ducts and voids are introduced for improving spatial quality of railway infrastructures. Thirdly, Light-boxes are located on the railway tracks. Light-boxes work not only for getting natural light into the interior spaces but also as a sculptural symbol. Light-box as a symbol would also help for citizen to break the negative perception toward railway infrastructures.

Aspect 4: the relationship between the project and the wider social context

This project is basically relevant to relationship between railway infrastructure and urban segregation. Because transportation infrastructures such as high-way, metro line, or train tracks is mono-functionally designed, those infrastructures play a role as a wall. Therefore, the proposal that reconstructs the railway tracks around Muiderpoort station can be one of example how to deal with transportation infrastructure in order to make it as a part of urban fabrics. Furthermore, this fundamental idea can be applied into similar situations in the contemporary cities.