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## AMS MID-City Research

Triggianese, Manuela

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# AMS Mid-City Research

## Approach

The Chair of Complex Projects teamed up for almost two years with AMS Institute and the municipality of Amsterdam, to focus on the theme AMSTERDAM 2050, with also a support from the architectural office KAAAN Architecten. Almost 80 students re-imagined what nine different sites located along the 'fingers' of the metropolitan area of Amsterdam- would be in 2050, based on a critical analysis of current findings and practices in the city.

Complex Projects offered three graduation studios, called AMS Mid-City, and City of Innovations seminars from February 2017 until July 2018 to work on the future of Amsterdam. In AMS Mid-City, the focus has been on 'growth' and 'change': growth of numbers of inhabitants and tourists, and change of energy, mobility, health and leisure concepts. There is an extra demand for new housing and housing types, new workspaces, new infrastructure and urban facilities and for different uses and management of public spaces.

Assuming that big changes will happen in Mid-City of Amsterdam, the current fringe-belts located within the ring zones of Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, Complex Projects studied nine locations where strategic development projects are currently taking place. In Mid-City there is a room for 80.000 housing projects,

that should have impact on the city, in terms of energy efficiency, climate, noise and air pollution, waste water treatment and mobility.<sup>1</sup>

The investigations started with three areas located along the rail-metro Oostlijn (Eastern line), connecting Amsterdam Central station with Amstel station and Zuidoost area (South East). The next semester six more locations were added to the investigation. These new locations are situated along radial corridors that connect Amsterdam inner city with new sub-urban settlements in the metropolitan region (following the fingers' model of the City of Copenhagen). These are urban growth areas where the densification process will take place in the next 30 years. In the last graduation studio of AMS Mid-City we focused on Amsterdam Schiphol Airport and the topic of the urban development along infrastructure and infrastructural nodes. In total nine of the areas that were analysed by Complex Projects overlapped with the development strategy "Koers 2025"<sup>2</sup> (Space for the City) of the City of Amsterdam.

Main questions were: Who are we designing for? What period are we designing for? What are the future needs of the inhabitants? How can we prepare the City for innovative solutions (such as self-driving cars)? And more than that, in what ways will the city improve from these solutions? How will this change impact

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1 Stadsregio Amsterdam is responsible for planning and financing of local and regional infrastructure for road traffic, road safety including cycling and urban (light)rail, housing, sustainable economic development and tourism. In its Structural Vision Amsterdam 2040: Economically strong and sustainable, the Ring Zone (here named Mid-City) has been identified as the most suitable area to develop into an attractive new part of Amsterdam.

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2 City of Amsterdam, Interactive map of Koers 2025 - Ruimte voor de Stad, <https://www.amsterdam.nl/bestuur-organisatie/volg-beleid/koers-2025-amsterdam/>

on existing street profiles, parking facilities, use of space in general?<sup>3</sup>

AMS Mid-City aimed also at classify and compare urban axes, public spaces, blocks, buildings and details according to their current geometry, in order to understand the qualities of the Dutch model and to be able to speculate on their evolutions with the individual graduation projects. Researchers and tutors highlighted interesting cases that explain the acceleration process of the development of Amsterdam, and together with the students they examined examples of around the world to compare with the City of Amsterdam (Vienna, Paris, London, Singapore, Copenhagen).

They visited these examples during the research phase of the studio, in order to understand how to turn the cities challenges into design opportunities for a city to grow, thrive and set an example for others to follow.

### Locations

The investigations on the selected locations have considered the following themes as point of departure:

- 1. Zaanstad:** Post fossil port and the integration of new a city district
- 2. Amsterdam Centraal:** the redevelopment of the waterfront and the new city centre.
- 3. City Islands:** building on water, building high-rise and the new mobility connections
- 4. Over Amstel:** densification around infrastructural nodes and re-uses of the highway.

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<sup>3</sup> For a better understanding of the urban questions, see the recent research projects 'Smart streets' by MIT (and the publication *Reinventing The Automobile*) and the BNA Onderzoek ontwerpstudie 'Snelweg en Stad' about the reinterpretation and reinvention of the highways of the future.

**5. Sloterdijk:** the A10 as a physical barrier and the infrastructural node (within Havenstad)

**6. Oud Zuid:** Berlage area and the re-development of Amsterdam Zuid-as.

**7. Schiphol corridor:** the sustainable district with green- blue areas and leisure activities

**8. Zuidoost:** Integrating Amsterdam South-East with regional leisure activities.

**9. Schiphol Terminal:** Airport-City, new dynamics of Schiphol and urban potentials with proximity to the airport

**10. Amsterdam Totaal:** the impact of the future of mobility on the city development and logistics.

The investigations in the design studio and seminars are based on the following city ambitions:

- 1.Public Space:** redesign the inner city toward an increased density;
- 2.Densification:** along the airport corridor;
- 3.Urbanized Lagoon:** quality of the landscape;
- 4.Health care system:** discussion on hospitals;
- 5.Smart Urban Mobility:** Car free city centre and acupuncture connections; extension of the existing lines (focus on sprinter system); shared mobility and the concept of MaaS (Mobility as a Service).

### Preliminary conclusions

The strategic project of AMS Mid-City has developed some preliminary conclusions from the investigations within the studios and seminars, by asking the students to design urban scenarios and architectural interventions based on assumptions of the implications of technology development (i.e. new mobility, automated vehicles,

re-use of highways). The students' projects aimed to improve well-being and social cohesion, human health, air and water quality, to reduce energy demand by limiting temperature extremes (heat island effects), to provide natural cooling, to improve insulation in buildings and to reduce traffic congestions. Students' projects presented in this book propose new way of living and working by defining and experimenting innovative urban programs and architectural types.

The investigations emphasize the importance of getting a better understanding of the different 'waves' of urban innovation and its relationship between city growth and technological changes. There are forces in the city that

resist these changes and there are places that resist or accelerate the urban growth.

From the education project it becomes evident that urban changes are primarily dictated by (economically) strategic areas that grow more rapidly than others, such as areas around mobility infrastructure and nodes. Mobility – among other agents - becomes 'The' driver of urban changes.

**Manuela Triggianese**

Lecturer & Researcher Complex Projects Delft  
University of Technology & AMS Institute

