Reflection P4

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project: Local Space
studio: Complex Projects Graduation
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0. Introduction

The project is concerned with the district of Zuidoost, currently inhabited by mostly non-western immigrants and functioning as a sleeping district. As the area is missing defined local public space, the project aims to provide with space in which people of different backgrounds can meet and interact with each other, and therefore enable to form a local community. In order for such space to be successful in the 2100, times in which people would spend a lot of their free time in the virtual reality, it needs to utilize true qualities of the physical space and smartly develop its attractiveness. These are the goals for public space of the 2100:

- use the sensual and spiritual advantages of physical space
- be accessible to everyone
- encourage healthy lifestyle and promote face to face social interactions
- allow for celebration of the community's identity
- be compatible with space of augmented reality

1. The relationship between research and design.

The research was concerned with three main topics: the Zuid-Oost site in Amsterdam, the future of 2100 and the role of public spaces in the city.

The analysis of the Zuid-Oost site was conducted in order to define site's qualities, needs and faults. It provided with an answer to the research question of what the site's identity was. It was crucial in order to determine the program and site of an individual project, which emerged as a sub-product of the urban investigation - an answer to the question of what is needed, a solution to the problems encountered during the process of analysing. The design, too, was to be guided through the urban analysis defining the requirements of the site.

The research conducted simultaneously was the research of the future. To plan program and typology of the graduation project, as a group we had to understand not only the complexity of the area today, but also make predictions for the future. It was conducted by creating various scenarios - based on forecasted data and trends - and comparing them in order to establish their likelihood. The research provided the group with an insight on both opportunities and threats of the future. In case of my graduation topic, I have recognized main opportunities in the advancements of technology, and threats in treatment of nature in the urban environment and virtual reality emerging as an opposition to the physical reality. The design aims to counteract those threats.

The third, personal topic of my research concerned public spaces. By analyzing the examples of both successful and failing public spaces in the history I have reached an understanding on what their role is in the urban environment. Having them analysed once again through the lens of most possible scenario of the future allowed me to evaluate those roles in the year 2100. This has allowed me to formulate the main goals for my graduation project.
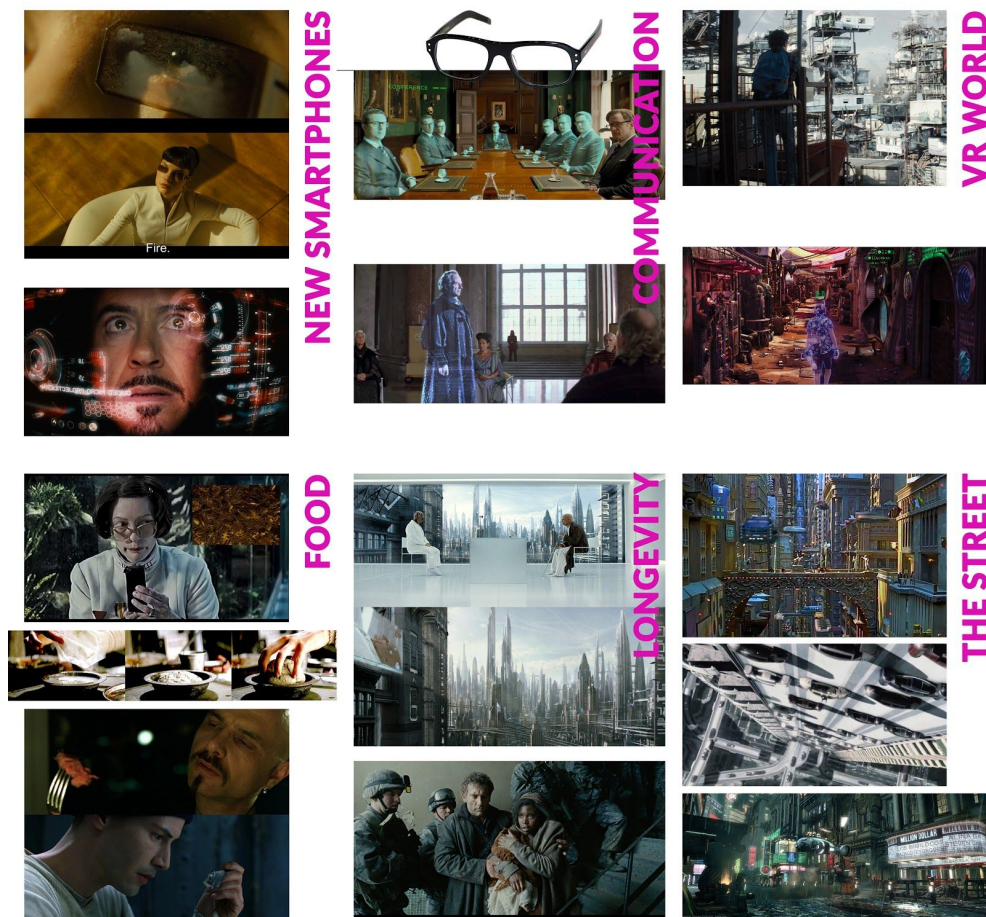
Figure 1 - The future scenarios
Selected dilemmas visualised in science-fiction movies

2. The relationship between graduation topic and the studio topic.

The main topic of AMS-Mid City Complex Project graduation studio is the question of how the city will function in the future. The three given sites represent neighbourhoods of different characteristic based on factors such as proximity to the centre, level or urbanisation and demographics. The studio therefore aims to analyze the impact of the future development in different urban conditions.

Understanding the challenges that public spaces might face in the future is in my opinion crucial to comprehend this impact. As Henry Shaftoe wrote in his book 'Convivial Urban Spaces': 'places where people can be sociable and festive are the essence of urbanity'.[1] The graduation topic for my project emerged as a result of individual fascination developed while working on a group research of the site concerning topics of culture and public space.
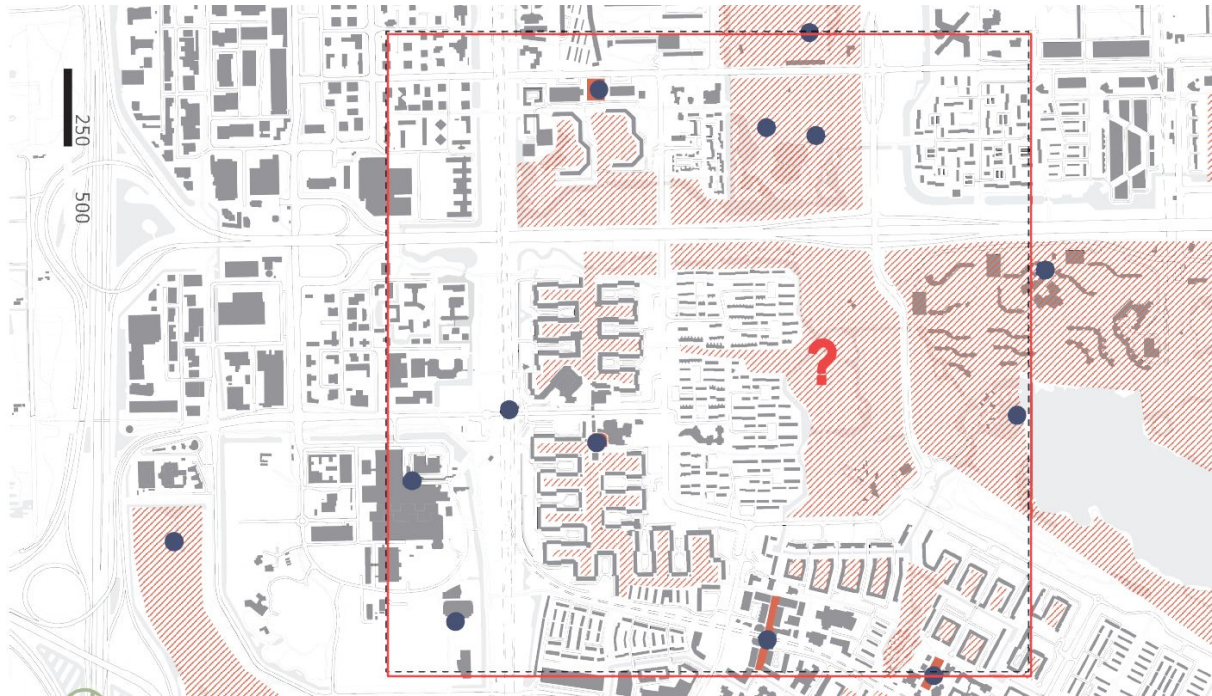
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[1] SHAFTOE H. (2008) Convivial Urban Spaces

Figure 2 - Group research leading to individual fascination
Analysis on voids: parks, squares and meeting spots

3. Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry.

Complex Project studio deals with different scales, from urban to detail, in order to guide an in-depth design. Our group research was conducted mainly in four scales: XL, L, M and S. The XL scale concerned site's relationship with Amsterdam and its connections, the L scale with the Amsterdam centre, while the M scale analyzed the relationship of the site with its border neighbourhoods. The S scale was concerned with the site and its most direct surroundings.

Although the research and approach for the graduation topic was concerning mostly smaller scales, conclusions reached by analyzing scales M, X and XL were crucial in the process of forming project's goals (Figure 3). By continuing the research concerning graduation topic within even smaller area surrounding individual site (XS), the process is simply a continuation of the studio methical approach. The approach and research methods applied during the individual work, although relying on approach and methods used in the earlier process (mappings, comparisons to other case studies, analysing data and literature), was centered around more praxeological aspects.

Moreover, my research was further supported by participation in seminars of Complex Projects. The papers written as final assignments for those courses broadened my research by exploring issues such as effect of full automatization of cars on streets and other public spaces (City of Innovations seminar) and effect of cyberspace on the expectations of the physical space (New Urban Questions or Minor Infractions lectures).
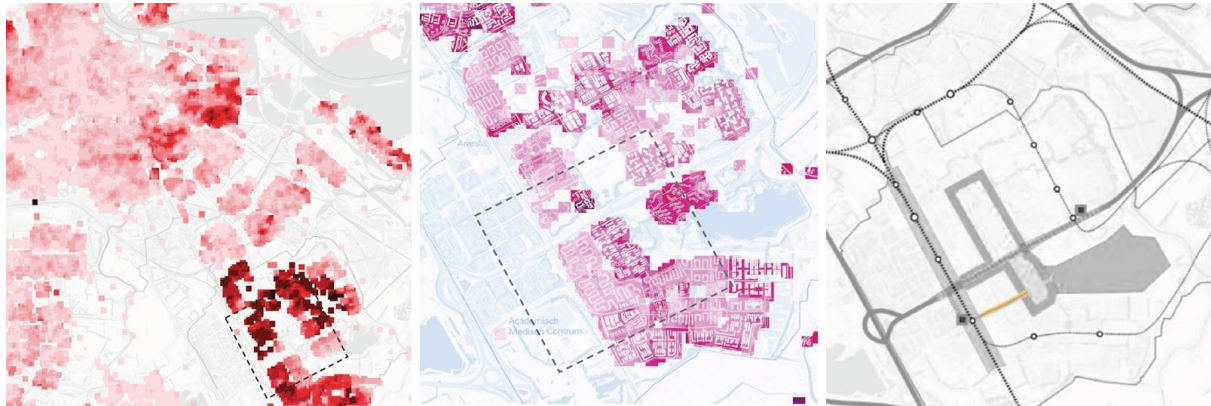
Figure 3 - The importance of scales L, M and S in the approach for the individual project
Share of population with non-western background | Annual income | Group masterplan

4. Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework.

The site of Zuid-Oost, nowadays working as a sleeping district, represents future problems of such neighbourhoods. Analyzing opportunities and threats that it is facing can provide with better understanding of similar sites and preparing their public spaces for the future.

The perception of space of a member of the Information Society has been augmented by the technology they use. Further development of virtual reality, augmented reality and artificial intelligence will change the way in which we perceive the public space. It will become place of possible multiple and individualized interactions. In order to understand how (and why) the public space has to develop in order to remain relevant, I have analysed the benefits of public space, translated those benefits to goals for my graduation project, and further translated that to means by which these goals could be achieved (examples in Chart 1).

benefit	goal	means
improved physical and mental health	create a space that encourages a healthy lifestyle by attracting people outside and promoting face-to-face interactions	create a space that is a balanced mix between open and closed spaces
strengthen democracy	create a space that enables to express solidarity or concerns and reflects the values of local people	create a space that enables people to occasionally gather in large numbers

Chart 1 - Translating research conclusions into guidelines

The graduation project is also concerned with the practise of use of the nature within urban environment. It aims to set abroach of the meaning of 'green district' or 'green building' in the future, after decades of aggressive exploration of nature. Following the concept of the group masterplan the project promotes approach in which the nature is not used as opposition to architecture and urban design, but rather constitutes equally crucial part of it. The project exhibits this approach by being a hybrid between an urban square and a park and using landscape as floors, walls and part of the building's insulation system.

5. The ethical issues and dilemmas encountered in doing the research, elaborating the design and potential applications of the results in practice.

During the process of design I have not encountered strong ethical dilemmas. I have however encountered topics understanding of which required sensitivity.

The architecture on the site supports the segregation of people based on their income and ethnic background. Non-western immigrants with income lower than the Dutch residents live in housing of visibly different typology (Figure 3). This has caused for a need to investigate whether this seclusion is based on only economical factors, or if it is deliberate and coming from the immigrants' desire to remain isolated from the rest of the society. The latter, as I have learned while analyzing similar case studies, often happens in such neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, the isolation of the district from the rest of Amsterdam, apart from economical reasons, has proven to be driven also by its bad reputation of an unsafe district. The research on the history of the Zuid-Oost concluded that lack of visible, active public spaces has largely contributed to it. While the spaces changed for the better, the reputation remained despite the site's development. A decision of creating public space of explicit identity in order to make a strong statement was a decision that also required some ethical consideration.