

REFLECTION

Introduction

In recent years, train stations in the Netherlands have become more public because of the accumulation of more and more retail and catering functions, making the stations destinations all by themselves.. At the same time stations are also becoming more private because of the introduction of the OV-chipcard, which requires travelers to check in and out with their card at OV-chipcard gates. Not only does this development often block the access to the new functions, in many cities it also creates a barrier for people who just want to use the station to get from one side of the tracks to the other. These developments where the main focus of my research studies and have led to my research question: *In what way does the typology of the Dutch train station need to change in order to remain a connecting element in the city while at the same time accommodating more functions?*

Location

The location for my graduation project is the train- and metro station Amsterdam Zuid, which lies at the heart of the financial district known as the Zuidas. The plan of the municipality of Amsterdam for Amsterdam Zuid is to reconnect the inner A10 part of the city to the outer part by placing the train- and metro lines along with the highway in a 1 kilometer long tunnel called the Zuidasdok. However, due to financial reasons the complete dok cannot be built altogether so the municipality has decided to split the project up into two fases. The first fase consists of only placing the A10 ring road underground. After 20 or 30 years the train- and metrolines will also be placed underground.

In the time between now and 2030 the number of people that will use the station is expected to grow from 100.000 people a day to 300.000, making it the second largest station in the Netherlands. The current Amsterdam Zuid station is unable to handle this many people and will therefor need to be upgraded. The goal for my design project was to design a station which can handle the large amount of travelers and also serve as a central public space for the Zuidas whilst at the same time keeping in mind the plans of the future.

Research and design

The research I did as part of the course given by Irene Cieraad really helped me to shape the design so that it could (hypothetically) be of added value to its location. I investigated this by looking at the location and finding out what type of activities take place and what is needed by the people who work there now and will come to live there in the future. In order to find this out I interviewed four people who were in different ways related to the Zuidas. By looking at the subject from different angles I got a very wide perspective on how to deal with the issues at hand.

Another part of my research which taught me a lot on how to design a station was the analysis of case studies such as Rotterdam CS and Amsterdam Bijlmer-ArenA. Not only did this gave me an insight in how stations are used as public spaces nowadays but also on how they are built and what aspects make a good stations.

Theme of the Public Interior

One of the main reasons for choosing this studio was my interest in the station as a public space. Especially with its status of a public space recently being threatened by the introduction of the OV-chipcard gates. Instead of disregarding the OV-chipcard and gates because of the many problems they cause, I took them as a given fact and made the relation between the public and private realm of the main themes of my design.

By challenging the current typology of the station as a linear tunnel with added functions, I instead chose to design the station as an all-sided space underneath the tracks, which can be used for all kinds of activities. By doing this, it not only creates a connection between both sides of the tracks but also gives the Zuidas a new central public space.

Methods of design

My main methods of design were to model the design in the 3D in the computer and to make large scale models. This gave me the best insight in how the space worked and what the use of certain materials did with the atmosphere of the interior. Because the space is unlike any existing space I know, it really helped me to understand what the impact of the roof, floor and constructive columns had on the way it could be used.

My main challenge was to create the right kind of atmosphere, balancing between the almost subterranean feel of being underneath a heavy infrastructure and creating a space which is still inviting and attractive enough to enter and use. By using a render program which allowed me to see the design in a realistic way it helped me a lot in the making of my choices and finding the right balance.

Social context

Even though my design is quite radical and there are several aspects to it that are perhaps less practical, I do believe that it rethinks the way we use and build stations. In recent years the introduction of the new functions at stations and the OV-chipcard have taught us that the current typology of the station has a limited amount of flexibility but that the station itself has great potential to become something more than just a place where you go *through*. It could also be a place where you go *to*.

By disregarding the current conventions of how to build a station and thinking outside the box, I think my design gives an idea of what could happen if you design a station as a public space first and a transport hub second.

Conclusion

I started this studio with the idea to design a public space with a lot of functions. Instead I created an almost empty space which can be used for many (temporary) events. Although this proved to be much harder, I did really enjoy the challenge. By not designing a very strict arrangement of spaces and making it a much more multifunctional interior I got to focus much more on the materialization and atmosphere of the space. Creating a monumental yet informal interior which I think suits the idea of stations becoming the new 'living rooms of the city'