REFLECTION PAPER
On the Graduation Project
The Pleasure Mall.
From pressure to pleasure
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Pleasure Mall stands for a new type of entertainment condenser, community center or “shopping” mall of the future. As a base, it takes the concept of a suburban shopping mall and transforms it according to a happening shift from materialism and consumer culture to experience economy. Hence, the Pleasure Mall does not sell the products anymore. Instead, it offers a wide range of new experiences, enriching our everyday life and helping us to better cope with the occurring (occupational) pressure. By doing so, the Pleasure Mall temporarily transforms the feeling of pressure into a pleasure.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT

As early as in the end of the 19th century, Karl Marx argued that technology will free human from harsh labour and lead to a “reduction of a working time”. In fact, Marx was not the only one who thought this way. Cedric Pride, the architect of the Fun Palace, shared the similar point of view, additionally seeing the leisure time as one of the challenges of the future society. The economist John Maynard Keynes even assumed that automation could enable a shorter working week of less than 15 hours. But that is not all. Claims that robotics will wipe out millions of jobs, from car manufacturing to banking are relatively common. Even the 2018 Dutch Pavilion for the Venice Biennale with the title WORK, BODY, LEISURE, takes up on the theme of automation and its implication on human body, living conditions and spatial configurations. Referring to the work of architect and artist Constant Nieuwenhuys, it anticipates that emerging automation will lead to more leisure time, hence influence the society to devote its energy to creativity and play.

However it sounds optimistic, the freelance-based work, lack of financial stability as well as the need to consistently educate in order to keep up-to-date with the latest technological progress may lead to growing pressure, as you need to constantly prove that you are “good enough”.

3 https://www.theguardian.com/careers/2016/oct/13/will-jobs-exist-in-2050
The other point in the discussion comes from the generation of Millenials, who are more interested in the career than the former generations used to be. That can be explained among others by high life and rental costs as well as the tuition fees needed to be paid back. Because of that, there is an enormous pressure on them leading to the increased concentration of work and delay in setting up the family.

Last but not least, work is perceived as not only providing an income but giving social legitimacy to our lives. Thereby, for many people it constitutes for the principal source of personal identity, providing us the sense of being a valued person, which is necessary for self-esteem.

Likewise, particular job gives us an identity – as a teacher, a doctor, a salesman, a manager, a work-team leader but also from being a worker, a participant, and contributor. That is why resigning from a job and having a leisure-based life would mean losing the self-confidence and certain social identity – if you are not a doctor, lawyer, etc., who are you then?

Based on above-mentioned examples, the resulting conclusion is that the automation of work will most probably lead to the social polarisation, where part of the society will stay inactive and financially reliant of the Universal Basic Income, whereas the other part is foreseen to work more than before and under greater pressure. But is it really a thing to worry?

According to World Health Organization (WHO), the occupational stress became the epidemic of the 21st century. Increased levels of job stress, comprehended by having little control but many demands are associated with increased rates of heart attack, hypertension, obesity, addiction, anxiety, depression and other mental and physical health disorders. In this sense, the already happening automation of work and coming forth industrial revolution are expected to increase the job stress even more, as the average employee will be required to be more flexible, adjustable and constantly retrained.

We can’t stop the ongoing automation. Instead, humans have to start thinking and finding ways to stay healthy in the automated world with high-stress levels in check.

The current young generation more and more value experiences and is increasingly spending time and money on them: from concerts, social events, cultural experiences, new challenges and so on. For them, the happiness is not anymore connected with possessions or career status. What matters, instead, is the meaningful life based on creating, sharing and capturing memories earned through experiences that span the spectrum of life’s opportunities.

Directly happening experience revolution is thought to be as important as the materialism revolution in the 20th century in terms of changing the quality of life. For instance, it is visible in the sharing and experience economy - to name a few: Uber, Airbnb, Couchsurfing, Eataway, Sofar concerts, car sharing, reviving community gardens and so on. The importance of buying and exchanging experiences among others lies in the fact that they enhance social relations more effectively than material goods. Experiential purchases form the bigger part of a person’s identity and obviously are more sustainable than material ones.
As Rem Koolhaas in his book “The Harvard Guide to Shopping” wrote: “Shopping is arguably the last remaining form of public activity”. According to him, it has “infiltrated, colonized, and even replaced, almost every aspect of urban life. Town centers, suburbs, streets, and now airports, train stations, museums, hospitals, schools, the Internet, and the military are shaped by the mechanisms and spaces of shopping.” That is one of the reasons for investigating the typology of a shopping mall as a starting point for the research. As argued, the shopping malls have undeniably become the entertainment hubs of the suburbs and the unofficial town centers, seemingly connected with the consumerism culture. Thereby their role in the times of the economic shift from market to experience economy should be reconsidered. Especially in relation to growing demands of the consumers, an increased interest in online shopping and mentioned preference of experiencing over possessing material things.

Amsterdam is one of the most dynamic European cities with many ongoing projects, aiming to densify significantly in the coming years. At the same time, it is a city of the touristic importance with Red Light District as one of the most renowned city areas. That is why, it can be said that Amsterdam is a multifaceted city - dynamic, developing but at the same time of cultural significance, open and tolerant one. Because of that, it can become a testing ground for the research in the field of sex entertainment, investigating this topic according to the safety, law protection and improving the working conditions of the sex workers.

The Pleasure Mall concentrates on the generation of Millennials and the following Generation Z, which are to become the prevailing workforce by 2050 as the direct target groups. Thereby its offer responds their lifestyle, based among others on the reliance on the internet access and social media, preference of experiencing over possessing, the fear of missing out and focus on the career over starting a family. That is why the idea of the pleasure mall focuses on three main aspects, namely: experience, and indulgence used to in order to attract the future customers.

To conclude, the Pleasure Mall answers the research question:

What will be the future of entertainment in relation to growing working pressure in Amsterdam 2050 ? by introducing an institution that supplies the citizens of Amsterdam with new experiences in the field of sex, food, and workout, acknowledging them as fundamental human needs, which once satisfied allow to better cope with everyday life pressure, turning the feeling of pressure into a pleasure. Likewise, the Pleasure Mall focuses on responding to the demands and lifestyle trends of Generation Y, commonly known as Millennials and Generation Z, which are soon to become the predominant workforce. That is why the mall does not sell the products anymore. Instead, it is a complex “organism” that offers services and unforgettable experiences through tangible and digital happenings, intimate and social situations, incidental and planned encounters and not to be missed out events. It is a place to be. It is a place to escape the efforts of everyday life and it is a place to immerse yourself

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in the world of fantasies, dreams, and desires. The Pleasure Mall allows executing the personal longings in collective facilities. That is why it is an entertainment condenser for the society in 2050.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THEME OF GRADUATION LAB AND THE SUBJECT

The problem of the occupational stress, being the epidemic of the 21st century, as named by WHO has a significant influence on our health, understood as the combination of physical and mental wellbeing. That is why coping with stress through the provision of entertainment facilities stands for one of the possible solutions for dealing with the problem. Especially, in the times of automation and 4th industrial revolution, it seems urgent to supply the citizens of Amsterdam 2050 with quick and easy access to the entertainment sources that might help them to better cope with occurring work pressure and introduce more pleasure into their lives. In this way, the project relates to the renewal of the cities and the possible solutions for Amsterdam 2050, which stand for the main themes of the Graduation Studio of Complex Projects. In particular, because of the global, local and contextual range of the problem.

METHODOLOGY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH ONGOING RESEARCH

There is a lot of ongoing research on the ongoing automation, 4th industrial revolution, stress importance, and consequences as well as the direct context of Amsterdam. The Institute of AMS, with whom we had an occasion to collaborate investigates this themes as well. Likewise, as already mentioned, the WHO (World Health Organization) named the problem of occupational stress- the epidemic of the 21st century and called for the actions aiming to decrease the scale of the issue, bearing in mind the possible mental and physical health consequences. Additionally, the Dutch pavilion for the Venice Biennale 2018 with the title WORK, BODY, LEISURE, takes up on the theme of automation and its implication on a human body, living conditions, and spatial configurations. That is why the research in the theme of: How to respond to the growing occupational pressure through the architectural intervention seems to be relevant. Because of that, in order to properly investigate the topic and propose the right solution for Amsterdam 2050, the following topics were researched and implemented in a design: the lifestyle changes and challenges, the Generation of Millennials, the development and challenges of Amsterdam, the cities of the future and the smart cities.

The method of research based on the active participation in the studio meetings, seminars, and lectures, especially in relation to the future of the global cities and Amsterdam as a test case. The design process based on the multiple studies, physical models and the constant interlace of research and design, following the main method of the Graduation Studio of the Complex Projects: learning by doing.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN

Based on conducted research on the themes of: growing occupational pressure, the importance of pleasure in our lives, the idea of the shopping mall as entertainment hub as
well as the contextual reference to Amsterdam 2050, in my design I tried to respond the initial research question: What will be the future of entertainment in relation to growing working pressure in Amsterdam 2050? Moreover, the project has a direct contextual relevance. Being located in the close proximity to Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, Zuidas District and Nieuwe Meer Lake with Het Amsterdamse Bos, it answers to the ongoing urban development, densification and happening large scale projects of Schiphol expansion and an upgrade of Zuidas Station. That is why the project stands for one of the activators of the area influencing and being the result of the residential and office development along the Airport Corridor. The resulting architectural form responds to the context of Schiphol Corridor in consideration with happening changes and challenges of Amsterdam 2050.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

In the project of the Pleasure Mall, I attempted to create an entertainment condenser that would ultimately combine three fundamental human pleasure sources: food, sport, and sex into one building. That is why, referring to the idea of a shopping mall, understood by many as a contemporary entertainment hub, I tried to combine this three distinguished compartments within one envelope, allowing them to function separately and introducing possible connections in between. By doing, so I managed to create the place, where everyone can satisfy their current needs, hence temporarily transform the feeling of pressure into the pleasure. At the same time, I reinvestigated the concept of a shopping mall and reconsidered its role and transformation in the times of economic shift from market to experience and service economy, by introducing the new concept of an “experience mall” which can replace or complement the retail function of the malls. Moreover, the concept of entertainment and pleasure has been examined and adjusted to the future lifestyle trends. Because of that, the Pleasure Mall stands for the reflection on the generation of Millenials who values more experiences than possessing and leads the nomad way of life. That is why, it is a flexible, ever-changing place, where presumably everyone can find a pleasure, through socialization, indulgence, and experience.