P5 REFLECTION

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Studio
Hybrid buildings
Theme: Urban Regeneration, what’s next?
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Title
Title of graduation project: Cityception
Subtitle: Starting point for urban redevelopment
Zaanstad is part of the metropolitan area of Amsterdam, located to the north-west of the city centre of Amsterdam. Zaanstad as part of this metropolitan area offers all the good things of being close to the capital but also offers a different living environment as Amsterdam does. Zaanstad has cheaper and more affordable housing for starters and is more rural and quieter compared to Amsterdam.

Within its borders Zaanstad has a lot of outdated industry. For the city to grow it has to redevelop these industrial sites. Most of the industry that is now outdated is situated close to the Zaan and to the train stations of Zaanstad. The assignment of the studio is to develop and design a catalyst for an area in Zaanstad that can initiate the redevelop of industrial areas into living areas. The emphasis of redevelopment and design is put on 800 meter circles around these train stations. The 800 meter circles indicate a 10 minute walking distance from the station. These 10 minutes is a comfortable range where people are more easily considering taking public transport over the car.

Most of the stations of Zaanstad are located along the Zaandam, a train track connecting Amsterdam through Zaandam to Uitgeest, however one station is located to the east on the train track to Hoorn.

When the first stations were built along this Zaandam, they showed a certain kind of monumentality. They had a symmetrical layout, a square in front and housed different public functions. Nowadays the stations are demoted to mere tram stops. Hardly any functions are left in the stations, and the building itself is now nothing more but a roof.

With the functions and monumentality, also the position of the station within the urban fabric disappeared or changed. Stations where build just outside the city borders and used to be an catalyst of city growth. Converging the city growth toward its vicinity. Now the station is framed by busy roads and the public space disappeared. The station building itself is now more comparable with a tram stop than a building, though the numbers of passengers and trains passing through it have increased in time.

As one of the stations in Zaanstad, Kogerveld is a little different. Kogerveld station build in 1989 is the latest addition to the network of stations in Zaanstad. Kogerveld is also the only station located on the eastside of the Zaan. The station was added on the line from Zaandam to Hoorn to accommodate the neighbourhood of Kogerveld. The train track had to cross the Zaan river and was therefore raised and kept raised to cross the Heijemansstraat, an important access road to the A7 and A8. Because of the raised track, the station is also raised. The station now is situated along the dike supporting the tracks at 3.5 meters above the ground.

Because of the raised track the neighbourhood is cut in to two parts, north and south. The connections between both are limited to two streets accessible by car. Of which only one is mainly used and forms a major traffic road, the Heijemansstraat, that later continues into the Doctor HG Scholtenstraat. Here the Heijemansstraat and the Doctor HG Scholtenstraat cuts the area into east and west, cutting the entire area into four quadrants. The current station is on the east part of this intersection, left out of the context, not helping in facilitating any connections between tracks and streets or any of the these quadrants.
The design tries to overcome these boundaries created by the already existing infrastructure. The new station is placed at the same intersection as the old station, but is repositioned to create connections between the four parts and giving easy transfer to one or the other side of track or road without hindrance.

With this design the monumentality of the old stations is not quite brought back into the new station. The station is now designed more as a tram stop and to accommodate the current and future usage of the train as a fast, high interval public transport. Though the qualities and characteristics are reinterpreted and redesigned, not in the station building but in its surrounding ensemble.

By the placement of the ensemble around the station and the placement of the station and its ensemble in its structural and infrastructural context is making the entire design part of this city structure. Because the direct surroundings of the station are now unstructured or none existent the ensemble is influencing these surroundings by its structure, appearance and size. Also because of the placement of the ensemble around the station it makes the project part of the existing city structures, like the Zaan river, which can offer new qualities and opportunities, but also help in structuring and guiding new developments around the station. On the inside the project strengthens the connection between the ensemble and the infrastructure, by making a public space connecting roads and rails with the ensemble and its surroundings.

By creating a transferium the train station on the intersection of train, cars and public transport, the station becomes a transport hub, connecting Kogerveld even more to Amsterdam. Around the station there will be an increase of traffic, but especially in commuters and travellers switching transport. People switching from train to bus, to car, from bike to train etc. These people create viability for functions supporting their daily routine like shops, supermarkets, day care centres and more.

With the placement of housing on top of these functions the station area sees an enormous increase in density, as well as these people will use the functions around the station giving the functions even more viability and costumers. These functions on their turn are interesting for developers and future residents to develop or live close to the station and the station ensemble.

For the industry in the area itself the design is not imposing a radical new urban plan or redevelopment plan. By making a statement on the location and increasing the potential of the entire Kogerveld area the plan aims to be the catalyst for these redevelopments. Now with the economic crisis there is no more need for big master plans with a 50 year development time. Therefore it is good that the industry is not being redeveloped or designed by just one party but is gradually developed, in small parts to the needs of the people, inhabitants, future inhabitants, local entrepreneurs and shops. How these redevelopments of industry should be done is up to other developers, urbanist or architects. The design gives them a basis, with viable functions and supporting infrastructure to start with.
2 • the relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

The Hybrid building studio is part of the chair of Typology within the faculty of Architecture. The chair of typology focuses on the systematic classification of buildings by program and function, form, or common traits.

Hybrid building is a functional type that focuses on buildings with multiple performances, buildings that combine different functions and programs. The studio of hybrid buildings focuses on new ways of organising space. More so than combining different programmatic combinations and solutions. Hybrid buildings are always situated within the urban context and the ever changing urban environment and try to respond, fit in and create opportunities for the social and urban dynamics.

This studio within Hybrid buildings focuses specifically on the station areas and the redevelopment hereof.

In this framework the design fits perfect with the studio. The design uses old station typologies and works upon those, changes them to a station that fits in the present time with the demands of nowadays and the expected future changes. Changes not only for rails or platforms but also for the station buildings and especially its surrounding public space. For this design the focus is not only on the existing stations and the changes within those, but also to the future development of the station. The current station typology is therefore changed and evolved.

The station ensemble combines functions and program not only supporting the dwellings in the ensemble but also the station and the commuters who are passing through the station. As well the building creates a new public space, a place of connection on a site where now no public space exists. This new public space with its position between the ensemble and the station becomes an architectural exercise on itself.

The combination of dwellings, with the functions, the station and public square makes this building a good example of hybrid buildings.

In this design and design process there is a tight relationship between design and research, where the first basis of the project is made with research and analysis to understand the location and project. The design then tries to alter the situation, the outcome is then tested to the goals and aims of the project. But also sketches, models and drawings are used as research. By sketching and models the effects and implications of the design are tested on the site, by changing and altering these sketches or models in ways of design the most favourable outcome is searched for.

Prior to the P2 a lot of research was done and analysis made. In this way a better understanding of the assignment, location, the station and density was accomplished. From this research core values and aims were formulated which are eventually worked out until P4. Interestingly the most design by research was done before P2, where the design was solely based on the research. After P2 there was a lot more research by design.
4 • the relationship between the project and the wider social context

On a local and a wider scale the design shows how with one big alteration, one project, with the creation of good public space and supporting functions, it is no longer necessary to make enormous urban plans. In a way it is small scale urban acupuncture, but with a larger project than usually is associated with urban acupuncture. It shows that it is no longer needed to create these urban plans filled with small little blocks for the development of new living areas, but that it is also possible to give a free hand to the urban developments, to let certain areas develop on their own. The designed ensemble creates a framework that is placed based and placed upon the already existing structure. This framework allows further future developments to be elaborated on and freedom for local and private initiatives.

But also the design tackles the issue of urban and neighbourhood connectivity. Where city normally had hardly any connection between certain parts of the city, the design lifts the barriers and creates connections. In Kogerveld but also in other cities, especially with relatively newer stations at the edge of a city, between the different neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods already existed when the station was build or where already planned, now these neighbourhoods are situated with their backs towards the train tracks and the station. This limits the accessibility of the station enormously. But also the new neighbourhoods situated next to the station, which are from later developments, are being designed and developed from a different starting position or centre away from the station. Therefore even these neighbourhoods are located with the backs towards the station.

Where we nowadays are starting to see stations more as new centres for the city, places with a lot of potential due to the amount of people using public transport, these possibilities are not always recognised yet. The idea of stations as centres is emphasized by all the large scale station redevelopments and grand scale plans for new stations going on right now. This is happening in Zaandam, but in a wider context could also be used in lower density urban areas. Places where developments for shops and functions are difficult a station can be the starting point or the push for developments into the neighbourhood.

In a way by keeping the station simple and modest, but by creating an ensemble around it that now covers the extra station functionality, a new view upon station areas is developed, a view wherein the station itself, the train and the accompanying flows of travellers, commuters and visitors are no longer part of just the station but rather part of the city. A city which in this way stands a lot closer to the station en therefore making the station again part of the city itself.

The design also covers other subjects useful in other places in other contexts. So tries the design to create a sense of community within an otherwise very public and accessible building. This sense of community is normally found in tightly knit living areas and on streets that form places of meeting, interaction and are able to bound people to them. By placing these elements and spaces inside the ensemble and making them accessible by any of the residents, the sense of unity together enhances as well as the anonymity of a large block is reduced because people meet and interact more often at these places. These places also offer perfect opportunities for organised neighbourhood gatherings.

Another aspect is the relationship between use and size. In Zaanstad they are already used to living next to large scale blocks, though these buildings and complexes have always been closed to public life, and never added anything substantial to public quality of the city. The design however is open en accessible, it adds value and quality to the neighbourhood from the beginning onward.
5 • Discussion

Within the studio theme of: Urban regeneration, what next? I designed and developed my train station with transferium, dwellings and supporting functions. The location of the project didn’t have much context to work with, and the context it did have was going to be demolished and redeveloped. Therefore the design was going to stand in a tabula rasa between characteristic sites, areas and locations. For me it was important that the design had to connect those places and with it also structure the redevelopments, the empty areas of neglected and old industrial buildings.

There are several ways to do this. I choose to opt for a basic geometrical shape, keeping it relatively simple. The basic geometrical shape is very autonomous in plan and the surrounding redevelopments make it recognisable as the centre of this regenerated area. Due to the strong autonomous shape the alignment for the restructuring of the areas with the building itself is logical and almost effortless. A disadvantage of such a strong shape is the shape itself. Especially when the program is very complex and demanding on a minimum areas of spaces. The basic square shape of the building is strongest when it stays square and not when its cut open or into smaller pieces to fit the larger program entities. To make it all fit was a struggle but by using different heights and repositioning of the block over the train tracks the program fitted perfectly. It could be said that even though the building has many open spaces, passages and openings the building perceives as a solid object and closed to the outside.

For the design it is very important to not only house all the functionalities but also provide structure and help redevelop the surrounding areas. Not only by means of providing these functionalities and opportunities but also provide guiding lines for alignment and direction for these redevelopments. Model studies showed that when the building should be recognisable as one building and also provide this structure other shapes don’t live up. Especially the combination of recognisability and structuring ability is hard to find in other shapes.

The building itself is on the outside designed as one single mass, only articulated where the mass stops or where there are large openings in the building. These openings on the ground floor are connections and passages through to the building, on the upper floors these are communal areas where the people can gather and children can play. Due to size and location these openings they have an irrevocable connection with each other, even though they have different functionality. To perceive the outside of the building as one mass, as a single entity it is important that these openings also have the same appearance. One could say that the openings on the ground floor, those providing connection are different in function, are situated on another level between the commercial and public functions, should be treated and designed differently opposed to those on the upper floors on the galleries of the dwellings. By doing so you will disseminate the mass and the edges will become diffused. Therefore by treating the openings differently another design strategy should be invoked. The chosen strategy to keep the mass together and represent the building as one solid object as one entity works best. Besides all the two story high openings for connections or communal relaxation there is also a train track running through the block. At these points the openings on ground floor of two stories high aren’t enough. At these points the openings become 4 stories high, intertwining the openings on the functional levels with the dwellings on the upper levels. Choosing a design strategy to treat the openings and the functional levels differently than those above would have given enormous conflicts.

The train tracks, and with it the station, are running through the building. One of the main goals in the design was to integrate the station platforms with the city, to make the platforms and the station part of the urban fabric. The idea was to make the train work and function more as a tram does, easy accessible and part of the public space. Though they might have a lot of similar traits they are both designed for different circumstances. In contrary to the tram, a train is build for higher speeds and longer distances. The new sprinter trains however are more like trams. Still the train has a different image and has to uphold to different regulations within the Netherlands as within the European union. For instance the train platforms should all be the same height all over Europe for easy travelling between countries. Where platform height is actually one of the main reasons why it’s difficult to integrate a train and train platforms with the public city space. Other difficulties lie with other regulations, speed and noise. However technology can solve some of them, public opinion and politics should solve the other and that will take more time with so many countries involved. So the
idea might work, and is not a bad idea, the realisation and possibility of making this happen is not there yet. The train station now is made very accessible, open and visible within the public space, but is not part of it. The regulations and other factors could maybe have been avoided and a station could be integrated within the public space, the possibilities are certainly there, however within the time span of the project and the type of building ensemble surrounding the station this was not possible