P4 Reflection report

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Architecture of the Interior
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Introduction

This reflection report will highlight the relationship between research and the design project. In order to obtain my achievements I will explain in this document the four aspects as described in the graduation manual.

1 The relationship between research and design

The project assignment is to design a public interior in the area of Amsterdam Zuid station. A public interior is more than just a building. Public interiors are spaces where we come together, to be entertained and to consume. It is a place that we experienced together in public, as individuals or in a group. A railway station is an example of a public interior as a space through which we travel, as also the public spaces around the railway station acts as a network for movement and behaviour of the pedestrians who use this space. It is a place to come and go, arrival and departure. It is a spacious and well-organized functional link between the transportation network and the environment of the city.

Both a public interior and railway station provide a place for social interaction. The users of the public interior are therefore very important. The relation between the architecture of this public interior and social interaction between different user groups and ages is the main issue for the research of the graduation design.

My chosen site is an empty green space at the north side of Amsterdam Zuid station that is connected to the Strawinskylaan. The Strawinskylaan is an elevated road that now a day is in function as a border between the station area and the city. It separates the business district of the Zuidas with the dwelling area of the Prinses Irenebuurt. The low passage under the viaduct functions as the pedestrian path between these two areas.

To link the connection between my chosen site and its users, the research focuses on the users of this particular area. A research on how these existing public spaces of the Zuidplein and the green space of the Strawinskylaan are used is a starting point. Subsequently, a research on the users of these spaces will give inside on what they think of these spaces, and what they think about possible functions that are lacking on the site.

The existing site has certain qualities that can be used within the design of a new public interior. The outcome of the research is used to design this new public interior in such a way that the different user groups can (socially) interact with each other. In the design this is achieved by a design of a public concourse that connects different functions such as a grand café, shops and a library. It should be a central place in the Zuidas where people can gather.
2 The relationship between studio theme and research approach

The design assignment that follows from the problem statement and research questions focuses on the design of a public interior on the site of Amsterdam Zuid as a place to accommodate. It is important to add a function that brings people together of different user groups and ages.

Due to this reason an understanding of a public interior is important. This is the reason we started the graduation studio with a workshop of analysing different public interiors and railway stations within groups. It can be seen how different architectural elements improve people to gather in these spaces. Taking the results of this research in consideration, the issue of perception with understanding of space, structure, environment, light and material is the main design approach. By this method I work from a large scale to a small scale, including the aspects of the large-scale, complex public interior are place, terrain/domain, space, shelter, structure, light, interior ground, features, occupation, communication and intimacy.

The current scheme of the area around Amsterdam Zuid station provides a large flow of pedestrians who come and go to and from the station. The public space of the Zuidplein is mostly used for a pedestrian flow between the station and city transportation on the Strawinskiyalan. When focussing on the users of this area, I started my research with an observation on the site. During this observation, information could be gained of how this public space is actually used. How do people react on the public space? How does the individual relate to the masses? What is the relationship of the moving people related to the static people? On the other hand, a questionnaire provides insight into user opinions. Through a questionnaire the users were asked how they experience the area, how they think what is missing in the area, and at last their opinion for area improvements.

The conclusions of the research seminar created an idea about a function on the site and rules of how different users will use the pubic space. The most interesting function as a result of the questionnaire is a library combined with other public functions such as a restaurant/café. These are functions where people can gather in public space. The research provided information about the users but also made me think about a public interior. A second step is how the improvements can be adapted on the site of Amsterdam Zuid.

The chosen site will be more important when the bus and tram connection will be removed and situated on the other side of the station. The Strawinskiyalan can then have a new meaning for that specific area. It can function as the entrance of the station area, and therefore a new public interior can be in place.

During the design process I used some precedents and case studies to understand the elements of a public interior. To design a public interior as a concourse, I was inspired by the concourse of Liverpool Street Station. The public hall is the main room that connects all the different functions in the building and functions also as an important passage between the station area and the city.
3 The relationship between studio framework and chosen research and design methods

The graduation chair ‘The architecture of the Interior’ is concerned with the very large, complex interiors. These are the spaces that are central to the experience of the contemporary public realm. “The studio focuses on the interior spaces whose scale, complexity, positions and uses make them part of the public realm. These spaces can be sustainable, well functioning, user-oriented and beautiful”.

The graduation studio is concerned with a station area, an interior space in the city that people share. In these interior spaces, people are conscious of each other as a public and as individuals in public. Within the graduation studio I will consider spatial qualities, contextual conditions and social meaning where a public interior has to deal with. I will study users, their needs, desires and behaviour.

I think an interaction between the different scales of the project is important. During the design process it is clear that different scales also ask for a different approach. An urban scale, how the interior is connecting to its surrounding askes for a whole different approach than zooming in to the scale of the interior itself with all the detailed aspects of materiality and light.

Throughout the design process it is important not to lose the achievements of the design. In my case the achievement of designing a public interior is to enhance the social interaction between the different user groups and ages on the site. It creates a central place within the area where people can gather.

4 The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The Zuidas of Amsterdam is one of the major infrastructural nodes with various functions. By the growing trend of Amsterdam Zuid station through the new metro lines and international trains, an idea of a ‘station hall’ will be more important. A railway station is one of the most public spaces of the city. It is the place where people will gather. A public interior in the area of the railway station, that is becoming an international centre, is therefore essential.

Because there is a growing trend of privatization, more and more public spaces in the city are enclosed and privatized from the main public. Examples of these privatized spaces include corporate plazas, shopping malls, even railway stations and other places that are increasingly a popular destination for the public. An obsession with security and control allows this. However, these privately developed and managed public buildings can form an extension of the public space. This starts with the accessibility of these public buildings and public spaces. A station area should be accessible at all times for different types of users.
The public interior as created on Amsterdam Zuid can be an example of how a public building can contribute to a wider public in the city by its accessibility. This means that the public space around Amsterdam Zuid station can also contribute to more public significance in the area. It became clear that there is need for a public interior that connects the station with the city.

For this reason, the public interior must provide space for a good flow of people that are moving in a hurry from and towards the station. It should be a place that is accessible to everyone, and where visitors can stay without being obliged to consume. There must be space for temporary cultural events, such as festivals and exhibition. The new public interior on Amsterdam Zuid may be a place that features activities that attract people of different age groups. This all will create a clustering of different user groups and ages, and thus will offer more liveliness to the area.