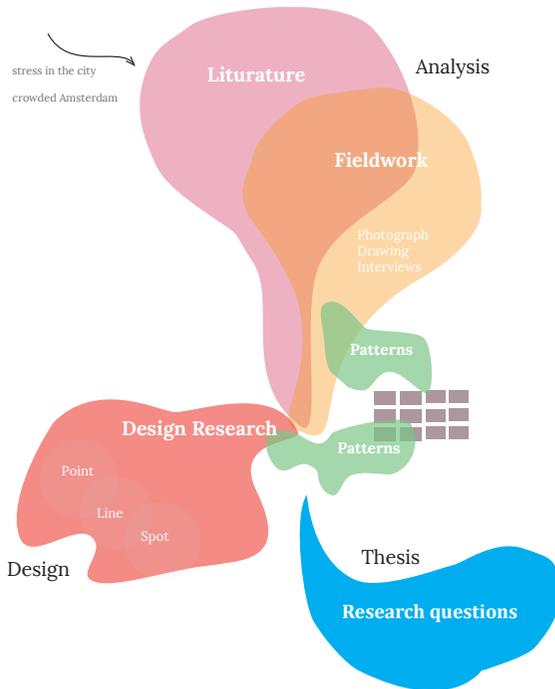


# CHAPTER 15

## REFLECTION

Basia van Rijt  
Graduation project, 'Where ambiguity collides, an exploration of stress in the city of Amsterdam'



As creative processes are never linear, this image shows the flowy process of this project.

### Reflection P4

Reflecting back on this graduation project there are a lot of challenges faced and lessons learned in this process.

The biggest challenge was to adapt the problem into a spatial solution and let it result into a design task. The problem is one of a soft science and one where policy and management of the city is a big part of the solution. Approaching this from a Urban background, like I have, the challenge appeared quite clearly. Also, this is just a part of the whole solution. The research on the field gave a lot of confirmation of the problem. More cities like Barcelona and Venice face the downside of an excess of touristic. These two cities are most likely a few steps ahead of Amsterdam but a good reference of what possible future is also there.

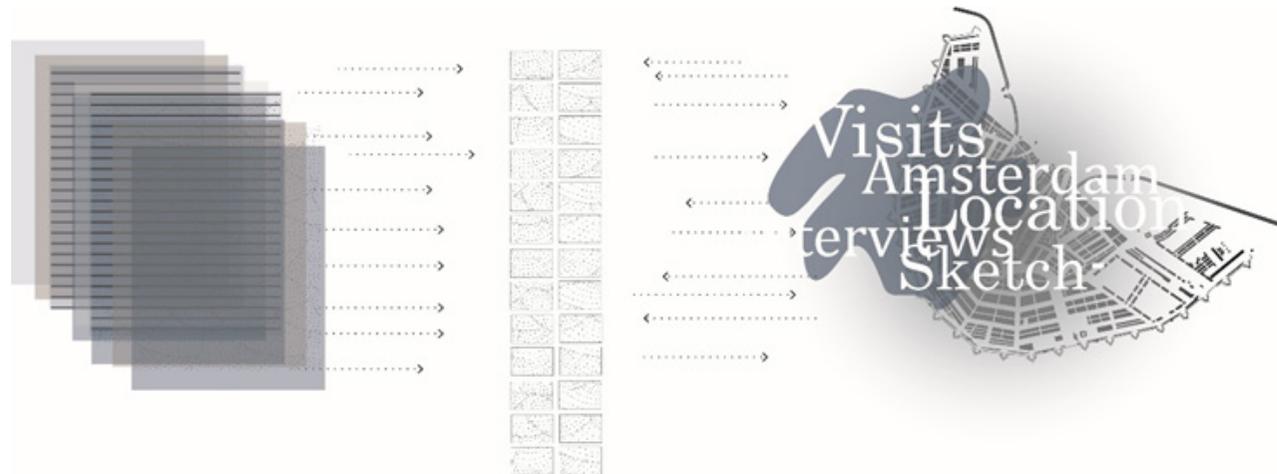
Focusing on the spatial aspects from the beginning of the research turned out to give a lot of useful tools that later in the design phase were good tools to get a grip on the spatial problem. These were translated into patterns. By using design patterns regularities in the urban fabric can be made operational for design purposes ([urbanfabrics weblog.tudelft.nl](http://urbanfabrics weblog.tudelft.nl)). The concept derived from the literature as well as the field work gave a base to build on. This also worked in two ways especially in the soft analysis. Here the concept 'Research by Design' also played a big part. By already designing certain spatial aspects new patterns could be concluded.

The studio The Urban Fabric is the studio my graduation project is in. The Urban fabrics refers to both the physical urban environment (elements, materialization, form, scales, density, networks), and to its psychological, socio-cultural, ecological, managerial and economical

structures. "The Urban Fabric Research Group studies the relations between these tangible and intangible structures in different contexts, grounded in the Dutch tradition of urbanism." This clearly relates to the concept of stress in the city. Defining stress as crowding, lack of choice and the ability of coping with the situation involves mostly intangible structures of the city. Where visitors of the city are present at a large part of the public space and influence the perception Amsterdam.

In the wider social context "The real Amsterdam is disappearing. The city is focusing on the tourists and their expenses."

This quote is from Els Iping from the Association of 'Vrienden van de Amsterdamse binnenstad. To say such a thing means something is very wrong. It is time for change. The people are calling it out on social media and in news papers. This is all happening during the past months. During the week van de Stad, organized by Stad Forum, last November



the theme was: 'Amsterdam too crowded? That brings opportunities! It's the talk of the town. Amsterdam is full. Does this mean: less, less, less? Or does this bring us opportunities to grow, qualitative and quantitative? During this week Stad-Forum explored the opportunities. The scale and location of the project is taking into account the eye-level perspective. The approach for the project, is an environmental psychology approach. Taking the role of target groups, other disciplines, and governance in account in order to gain an understanding of designing in a multi-actor setting. The actors in this project are the municipality of Amsterdam, the inhabitants of Amsterdam in and around the city center and the visitors. They are currently working on issues concerning the increasing number of people in Amsterdam. In the interview with project leader 'Stad in balans' department of Urban Planning and Sustainability at the municipality of Amsterdam: Eric van der Kooij the cur-

rent plans were clarified and their goals became clear. By taking an experimental approach the project City in Balance want to provide facilities for the inhabitants of the centre of Amsterdam. So they don't get overshadowed by all the events and initiatives for the visitors. With this project existing theories about stress in the city are related to with the current phenomenon of growing amount of visitors in Amsterdam. In the fields of sociology, psychology and anthropology there is a vast amount of knowledge existing on this subject. Graduating from the Technical University of Delft it is the challenge and opportunity linking these fields with the built environment. Amsterdam provides the perfect case for this. The municipality is currently working on the same issues. This personally gave me the opportunity to do an internship for five months at the municipality of Amsterdam. From this internship I took as much knowledge into this graduation project as possible. This will gave

me a insight in what the municipality is planning to do concerting the same issues I will tackle with my graduation project.

The design aim is a spatial design that will eventually reduce the stress of daily hassle in the lives of the inhabitants of Amsterdam city center. The ethical relevance is the impact on the social interactions between different people. The hypothesis states a negative impact between certain encounters. But a spatial design is not always the answer to questions related to sociology and environmental psychology. The built environment definitely has an impact on people's lives but there always will be exceptions. Since mental state is such a complex and fascinating concept, the built environment is just a small part of it. How much the built environment really can impact is mostly based on theory. The behavior is like animals, needs and requirements for a comfortable life are able to be designed for them. But the internal influence human organisms have on the mental state are from a whole different field and are outside of context in this project.

