Patterns from Amsterdam
(Booklet 2)

Generic Patterns
by Basia van Rijt
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Where ambiguity interferes
An exploration of stress, in the city of Amsterdam.

Patterns in the category
Generic Patterns
for cities that encounter similar problems.

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INTRO

Generic Patterns

This booklet presents the patterns that are specific to the city Amsterdam and which are created from the graduation project: ‘Where ambiguity interferes, An exploration of stress, in the city of Amsterdam.’

These patterns are the spatial essence of the theoretical framework of the project. Derived from relevant sciences the spatial elements have been crystallized and merged into two booklets.

The generic patterns are all applicable in cities that face similar situations and problems like Amsterdam. These in the topics of stress in urban environment and a crowded city (due to several reasons). The instruction to use the patterns is explained below every pattern.
Pattern

Choice

Giving people choice of route, relieves the stress level of a person. This is related to the perceived control of the situation. If a person may perceive that there is a lack of control over the environment, he or she will experience stress as a result.

People follow people

People that are new in an environment naturally choose for the safe route and follow the ‘known’ paths. If the person doesn’t have any previous experience in that environment it will follow other people since these people will probably choose the safest route.

Instruction

Make the choice of routes more clear by activating underused streets and alleyways. Inviting people to take a different turn then before can be done with clear wayfinding signs, colors and lighting.

Give clear directions to available safe paths, give the people the choice of different options.
Overview

Overview of space results in predictability of the situation which eventually results into stress reduction. When a person can predict the outcome of his action or the outcome of a situation the stress level of the body will stay low.

Implement places of overview along popular routes where people have the moment to assess the situation.

Water reflection

Sounds and noise reflects well over water, but this noise can be an irritation factor. On large smooth surfaces sounds reflects very easily.

Water as a reflecting surface and should be considered like this while designing the soundscape.
Surprises
Unpredictable situations lead to a higher stress level in the human body. When something unexpected happens, like a roadblock, people tend to stress in that situation. To avoid this situation, a strategy is to make very clear what comes next in the public realm for example with clear way-finding sign and information distribution with apps or signs.

Pedestrians and cyclists vs. cars
The Netherlands is full of bikes, especially Amsterdam. Bikes and pedestrians will be prioritized in urban mobility. Also, socially. People should be able to meet in the streets, this is one of the most essential kinds of social ‘glue’.

Instruction
Pedestrians and cyclists should have space; they will be considered as the primary transport mean in the inner city of Amsterdam. The car will be on the secondary level. Way-finding elements to inform people of the upcoming situation and events. This with symbols as arrows, signs and colours.
Quiet backs

“Anyone who has to work in noise, in offices with people all round, needs to be able to pause and refresh himself with quite in a more natural situation.” (Alexander, 1977)

Give buildings a quiet back away from the fuss of the city. Make sure there is enough sunlight and people can take a walk along this quiet place. Quietness can be created by walls from the noise of enough distance from the noise.

Floorscapes

In streets, floorscape patterns can reinforce the linear character of streets and alleys by emphasizing its character as a ‘path’. This by providing a sense of direction. Floorscape patterns are able to guide people to take certain routes. Using different pavement materials set the basic character of the floorscape. The way the materials are arranged determines the way it is used.

Use different pavement materials to guide people in Amsterdam.
Functions attract people. A successful street with a lot of commercial functions is supposed to be lively and vibrant.

Shopping is an activity that some people even consider as a hobby. What makes an attractive shopping place is that there is enough choice, but the shops are in such a distance that it is still walk-able in one day.

Mobile (food) carts can stand wherever they have permission to put there cart. When settling on a busy road this could cause a hold-up. When people stand in front of the cart there is a queue created and because of this the passers-by are forced to walk on the road were also cars using the space. This is potentially dangerous.

Inform people that this street is very busy especially at certain days of the week and hours of the day.

Allow food carts or other functions on the bridges as long as there is enough space for pedestrians to pass.
People walk in circles

Walking behaviour of people has certain constant rules. One preference of people taking a walk is that the way back is different than the way the way people went before. This means that people prefer to walk in circles.

Parking lots

Parking lots for cars and car roads use a large amount of public space. The left-over space is for the people to walk and cycle. The public life is now restricted to the sidewalks. In the future, cars will be less and less dominant in the city. There for there will be less roads and parking-lots needed.

The space the will be available due to the new developments should be used as a high quality public space.

New routes should be well connected to existing routes so walking in circles is always an option.
Every person has a smart phone and is connected to the internet, almost 24/7. This device gives information. This information can be provided real-time and therefore play a role in Amsterdam getting more crowded.

When people choose to visit a hotspot, they can expect it to be crowded. And when people know what to expect, they are more accepting and more adapting. This does not count when people are just passing by.

Use smartphone apps to provide real-time information to users of public space. Give indications on the app of the amount of people and the choice of alternative routes or the events that are taking place.

Informing people of crowded places will adapt the expectation of crowdedness and then the people are more easy going.
Shared Space

Shared space is an urban design approach which seeks to minimize the segregation of pedestrians and vehicles. This is done by removing features such as kerbs, road surface markings, traffic signs, and traffic lights. By creating a sense of uncertainty, drivers will reduce their speed.

By carefully introducing shared space in thoughtfully chosen locations, the drivers will reduce their speed themselves without the need for more traffic signs.

Sight lines

Research in student housing resulted in the conclusion that long straight hallways are perceived as more crowded than clusters of rooms in short hallways. This is based on the fact that the chance of running into a person is much bigger in a long corridor than in a maze of rooms and short hallways.

To find a balance between overview and breaking sightlines is to make a combination between these two patterns. Accepting and creating overview and on the other hand breaking the long sightlines.
Pattern

Height

Spaces with high ceilings give the perception of less crowding. When people are able to look up on to a high point, the size of the ground surface is of less importance. Building heights also influence the direction people take. The more human scale a surrounding is, the more appealing it is to choose.

Bright colours

Sunlight, bright colors and graphic illustrations give the person the perception of less crowding. Graphic print can give illusions of walls being higher than they are, the same goes for bright colors. When this illusion is there, the phenomenon crowding will decline.

Instruction

In small passages make sure there is a high ceiling so the perception of the users is that it is less crowded.

Activating small passages with bright colours can give these places the illusion of height and make the more attractive.
Smell and sound

Sounds and smell play a role in the perception of crowding. Sounds can enhance crowding, but important in this aspect is that sound can just travel a certain distance. Smell spreads faster is the temperature is higher, when crowding takes place, more human bodies are on the same place at the same time. With higher temperatures people are more aware of each other because they can smell each other.

Places that are busy should have the possibility of have a good ventilation, this project is focused on public space so that is a benefit as regarding to this pattern.

Nightlife

Every public space has a rhythm. The two most different rhythms of space are day and night. Nightlife in a city has different requirement than daytime, mostly because of the change of behaviour of people.

Considering the public space of a nightlife area as a public space can cause change of behaviour. This can be done with an interesting light plain or using projections and signs to guide people through the area.
To escape crowding it is possible to make personal space smaller. This is possible by listening to music with headphones or reading a book. This is on a personal scale.

Crowding is not only about a lot of people, but also on a personal level this phenomenon can be adjusted.

Elements that give signals can guide people in certain directions. A gateway is a elements that invite people to go through it.

Place the elements on locations where people have the choice to take a turn. With a new inviting and well designed elements people will get curious and be guided by the element.
Lights in the street

Lights provide good sight and safe places in the city. When the sun is set, dark cities can have a unattractive atmosphere. Therefore lighting is essential.

Approach area’s with active public life as interior by introducing typical interior elements (lights, materials) to evoke a certain kind of behaviour.

Always take a lighting plan into account when designing for underused spaces in Amsterdam.

Exterior as interior

When the public space is used as the interior, it means that a certain behaviour is dominant in the public space. This phenomenon often appears during the night-life of a city. Public space can be designed to facilitate this.
Pattern in Amsterdam

**Bikes and benches**

Bikes are highly mobile objects and they are valuable property for the owner. Locking the bikes is done in such a way that bike thieves don’t stand a chance. Mostly around elements that are not mobile like trees, a fence or an bench. The only place where people don’t park their bike is in front of the bench, where the place is meant to sit.

**Instruction**

Place benches where bike parking currently blocks the road, place for walking by and sitting on the bench will become available. It can be used as an element to make sure bikes will not be parked at some spots.

**Design for guide bike parking**

Guiding where to and where not to park bikes can be done by design. As a attractive bike-storage needs to fulfill multiple criteria, anti bike storage elements can also have certain criteria.

Bikes that are locked to a street elements need to have a opening that is fixed to the ground. By designing elements that don’t have this opening but which do function as other street furniture can be used in this case (See image above).
Note/ References

The patterns are based on academic research for the graduation report ‘Where ambiguity interferes, An exploration of stress, in the city of Amsterdam’. In this report the references are noted with the patterns and literature used is listed in the bibliography.