Patterns of Amsterdam
(Booklet 1)

Specific Patterns
by Basia van Rijt
Patterns of Amsterdam
(Booklet 1)

Where ambiguity interferes
An exploration of stress, in the city of Amsterdam.

Patterns in the category
Specific Patterns
for design solutions in the city of Amsterdam.

by Basia van Rijt
INDEX

5 Intro

6 Specific patterns
   Made in Amsterdam
      The Blue of Amsterdam
      Trolleys
      Bikes
      Bike storage
      Events in the inner city
      Hotspots and locals
      Complaints
      Reclaim public space

7 General patterns
   Applied on Amsterdam
      Shopping-street
      Choice
      People follow people
      Overview
      Pedestrians and cyclists vs. cars
      Surprises
      Nightlife
      Exterior as interior
      Bikes and benches

15 Note/references
Specific 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 specific patterns in this booklet are patterns that are specifically designed for Amsterdam together with fine-tuned General patterns (from booklet 2) that are applicable specifically to the city Amsterdam. The instruction to use the patterns is explained below every pattern.

All patterns in the Graduation Report can be used generic, but just a few are specific. Some patterns that are created are only suitable for Amsterdam. That is why these patterns are divided into two booklets which both can be used as a manuals for future urban design interventions.
A glimpse of green from a window already reduces daily stress. Nature’s impact on the mental functioning, social relationships and even physical well-being of people is proven to be positive. Water plays a fundamental role in our psychology according to Alexander (1977). Amsterdam: The great potential in this area is that Amsterdam is full of water of the canals. Alongside the canals there are trees which also play a role in stress reduction.

Specific patterns
Made in Amsterdam.

Pattern of Amsterdam
The Blue of Amsterdam

A very large number of visitors that come to Amsterdam have trolleys. These small suitcases on wheels make a very specific noise when rolling on the pavement of the street. This sound is a big part of the soundscape of the streets. A trolley also enlarges the personal space of a person. A trolley is low and people easily overlook it. This noise is characteristic for newly arrived visitors of Amsterdam. When using a trolley in a big group of people, it can also be an obstacle for people passing by.

Instruction
Water of the canals is Amsterdam must be accessible, trees and green must be visible at all times.

Consider the soundscape of the street that include different sounds of different target groups. Different materials of paving give different sound effects with the wheels of the trolley,
**Bikes**

The tradition of riding bikes is a standard in Dutch cites. Every person has at least one bike. A bike needs space be able to be driven on and a place to be stored.

In Amsterdam the difference between bike riding skills is very big. The biggest difference is between the local and the visitor. People that have a lot of experience versus people that have none. This sometimes clashes in the public space and therefor causes stress.

**Bike storage**

The second aspect of bikes is storage. Every ledge available in public space is used for bikes storage and there always seem to be much more bikes that storage space. In Dutch cities bikes are located everywhere. In Amsterdam this is a fact, the bike parking at the main train station is even a very popular place for visitors to make pictures. Storage of bike is possible in a lot of different ways, it is always important to save enough space for this. There are more bikes than people. Locking happens with a lock on the wheel or with a padlock attached to a element on the street.

Always take in consideration that bikes in Amsterdam are not for everyone. By giving more space, different routes and clear way-finding the advanced cyclists should not be able to interfere with the beginners and therefor create a safe cycling environment.

Adding a certain amount of bike storage racks in all designs for public space in Amsterdam, so that it is stored in an organized way, and not just bikes put on every ledge.
Events in the inner city

When organising an event in a place that is centrally located in a city, the amount of people that will come to the event will effect the surrounding public space. Not only the event is going on, also the organisation of it, around the place.

Events in the inner city of Amsterdam attract many people and cause a lively vibrant atmosphere which is healthy and positive for a global city like Amsterdam. But Amsterdam is growing and getting more pressure due to the number of people using the same public space.

Hotspots and locals

People that are locals usually don’t go to the visitors hotspots, these places are known to be crowded and full of tourists. The locals pick other locations to hang out. Other neighborhoods than the inner city are more popular with locals. These neighborhoods are: Westerpark, Bos en Lommer de baarsjes, Oud West, Oud Zuid, de Pijp, de Plantage, Oostelijke Eilanden, Oosterpark, NDSM en de Noordelijke IJsoever. Apps like “The Little Black Book” give a good indication of where the local hotspots are.

Instruction

Events that attract a lot of people should be removed from the inner city and spread out to other locations around the inner city to ease the pressure of crowding in the inner city. This other locations could be the Bijlmer, the Noordelijke IJsoever or the harbour area.

This indicates that people want to avoid the inner-city or explicitly choose to meet. The connectedness and accessibility of these neighbourhoods gives an indication on who will go there (locals or people outside of Amsterdam).
Complaints

Adjusting to change can cause a certain friction. Especially when it is unexpected or out of the persons own control. The more the person needs to adjust, the more it could cause complaints. The longer people live in Amsterdam, the more they complain about the crowdedness. A research of the municipality of Amsterdam (Stad in Balans) revealed that the longer a person had lived in Amsterdam, the more unsatisfied the person was with the current situation as regard to crowded Amsterdam.

This information must be taken into account when measuring crowdedness and the opinion of people. Only numbers do not indicate how much the phenomenon crowdedness plays a role.

Reclaim public space

Public space is for everyone, but the location of this space does give a difference in use. For example, when the public space is in front of a residence. The small space between the entrance of the residence and the public space is often in use but the inhabitants of the dwelling. With parked bikes, benches of flowerpots people tend to reclaim the public space for themselves. This happens in the grachtengordel. This is a special case because the unique aspect of Amsterdam is that still so many people live in the inner-city, next to the touristic hotspots.

Cherish and accept the reclaimed public space of the inhabitant of Amsterdam, this make a visible mark to the visitors that they are still visiting the city, not only consuming. And being a visitor it probably evokes a certain behavior that treat their surroundings with respect.
General patterns
Applied on Amsterdam.

Pattern in Amsterdam
Shopping-street

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. The most successful commercial street in Amsterdam is the Kalverstraat. This street is consisting of two parts. The first leads from the station the Dam, called Nieuwendijk. From the Dam until Muntplein its Kalverstraat.

Choice

Amsterdam is a very permeable city. The city has many streets and small alleyways that are used by the people. Because of this the choice of route can also be confusing, the possibility it there but it is still unknown for visitors, that is why some routes are more popular than others.

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

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.
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. At the Stationsplein new visitors follow each other to the Damrak and the Kalverstraat.

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. Points of overview like bridges where you can overlook the water or clear squares or maps of the city are point where this moment of overview could be realized.

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

Implement places of overview along popular routes where people have the moment to assess the situation.
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. Amsterdam is a city where a lot of events take place in the public realm. This means that there must be a very clear way of communicating this with the users of this space. Especially for visitors since they are new to everything in their built environment.

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’. From 1900 bikes outnumbered cars in Dutch cities. After the war, the Dutch economy began to boom, cars would be the travel mode of the future. Entire Amsterdam neighbourhoods were destroyed to make more room for motorized traffic. Nowadays this view is shifting. There will be room for new transportation means (ex. Electrical cars). Pedestrians, bikes and public transport will be the most used.

Pattern in Amsterdam

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’. From 1900 bikes outnumbered cars in Dutch cities. After the war, the Dutch economy began to boom, cars would be the travel mode of the future. Entire Amsterdam neighbourhoods were destroyed to make more room for motorized traffic. Nowadays this view is shifting. There will be room for new transportation means (ex. Electrical cars). Pedestrians, bikes and public transport will be the most used.

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. Amsterdam is a city where a lot of events take place in the public realm. This means that there must be a very clear way of communicating this with the users of this space. Especially for visitors since they are new to everything in their built environment.

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.
Nightlife

Every public space has a rhythm. The two most different rhythms of space are day and night, especially for a city like Amsterdam, which is famous for its nightlife reputation. Nightlife in a city has different requirements than daytime, mostly because of the change of behaviour of people. The nightlife of Amsterdam had quite a reputation and is also often a main reason to come and visit the city. This had up and down side. Behaviour of people changes and there is more nuisance than during the daytime. Also the fact that it is more dark with still a lot of people is an aspect to take in consideration.

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 nightlife of a city. Public space can be designed to facilitate this.

Life in the street of Amsterdam can be approached like the interior the area. Especially with the nightlife of Amsterdam, the outside of the building is often also a place to actively interact with friends.

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 plan or using projections and signs to guide people through the area.

Approach areas with active public life as interior by introducing typical interior elements (lights, materials) to evoke a certain kind of behaviour.
**Pattern in Amsterdam**

**Bikes and benches**

Bikes and Amsterdam is a love/hate relationship. Bike parking places are assigned at certain spots but cyclists are most likely to pick their own suitable spot. In front of benches bikes are not parked.

**Design for guide bike parking**

Guiding where to and where not to park bikes can be done by design. Some places in Amsterdam you don’t want bikes parked everywhere.

---

**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.

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). Rails of bridges van be designed in this way. Also elements around trees.
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.