Reflection graduation project Urbanism
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Reflection project
Relevance
This project focusses of is on the impact of automated mobility on urban health in residential neighbourhoods. Two test locations in Almere were selected for this. The project responds to roughly 2 knowledge gaps. On the one hand, the gap in knowledge of the impact of the city and its elements on various aspects of health. Not enough research has been done to show how many and which elements support health. It is therefore important that a clear evidence-based framework is developed for different urban environments. This framework can provide insight into the impact of the various elements of the urban environment on different aspects of urban health, which can help urban planners to make decisions (Koohsari, Badland, & Giles-Corti, 2013).

This project seeks to respond to this knowledge gap by using case studies, existing literature and "research by design" to figure out which urban elements can contribute to improving urban health.

The second knowledge gap revolves around the impact of automated mobility on cities. The development and implementation of automated mobility is currently is still at an early stage. It is not possible to predict exactly what will happen on the long term and how automated mobility will influence our lives and our cities. This is partly determined by the speed in which the technology will develop and the response of the market.

This project attempted to use case studies to understand the impact of automated mobility on the city. However, because there are only very small scale examples it was not always easy to learn from them. Therefore, the scenario construction played a very important role in this project. They are partly based on case studies but mainly based on a range of predictions. Three scenarios have been developed based on a number of scenario factors. These formed the basis for designing with the uncertainty of the development of automated mobility. However, the scenarios themselves are an interpretation of the future, so it is very likely that the ‘real’ future will manifest differently. Strategies and design interventions will be based on scenario’s which will be created. The design outcomes are therefore not applicable to all futures. Because, it is possible and highly probable that the automated mobility industry will develop in another way than predicted. This does not mean the research and design is completely useless. Depending on the evolution of the future some aspects of the
design can be used in other scenarios. Also, this project provides guidelines in steering automated mobility and cities to later come to the favourable result.

**Limitations**
Public health researchers share the opinion that the built environment will probably have more effect on urban health than policies that influences health behaviour might have. With a redesign of residential areas and with the opportunities that arise through the introduction of automated mobility, the urban design is able to (partly) support and improve urban health. On a macro scale this is done by reduced air and noise pollution due to new introduced technologies in the automated vehicles. Also, due to the extra obtained space by disentangling the mobility networks, more space can be attributed to green and blue infrastructures, which can strengthen ecosystems. On a micro scale, urban design can support physical activity by designing inviting and safe public spaces. The accessibility of facilities by active modes of transport can also be improved in the redesign of the neighbourhood. However, despite the major role of urban design and planning in influencing urban health, there are several more factors that influence human health. This is mainly about providing care and teaching people. In this context, urban planning can provide the handles by facilitating facilities in the urban environment but cannot steer this. The scope of this project will therefore be limited to the urban design/planning discipline and the possibilities within it. This means that there are, in all likelihood, several more components that could improve urban health, to which this project cannot respond.

**Reflection process**
*Start of the project – reflect critically*
At the start of the studio and thus the project, the Amsterdam Metropolitan Region and the city of Amsterdam were appointed as main locations. For this reason, I started researching the city of Amsterdam. As the process progressed, and the main question of the process became clearer, the focus shifted more and more to residential areas. That is why I chose two residential areas within Amsterdam that could fit in well with the project for different reasons. However, after having worked with these locations for a few weeks, the city of Amsterdam turned out to be a too large city with too many facilities to use the two neighbourhoods as exemplary projects. The neighbourhoods were not comparable with other neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. The story about the suburbs (isolated neighbourhoods with a limited number of facilities) would not be supported by these two neighbourhoods. On the advice of my first mentor, I started looking further than only Amsterdam, and then came to Almere.
This situation illustrates that reflecting critically on your own decisions is of great importance. The project changes day by day and so does the focus and scope of the project. You must review decisions that you have made earlier. In addition, sometimes decisions are based on assumptions or because you are dragged into a certain direction (studio location). It is important to reflect critically on what you have put down and how this may have changed through new decisions that you have made gradually. An important learning moment in the process. At that moment in the process, this may have been missing. I focused too much on the decisions I had already made, until I was told. A point of attention that I continued to work with during the rest of the project.

**Be precise - what do I want to know**

During the process you gain a lot of knowledge and information. All equally interesting, but what exactly do you want to know. It is therefore also important to be sharp and precise. At the start of the process this sharpness is still lacking (logically because this is part of the initial phase), you investigate broadly and step by step it becomes clearer what you want to know and want to research (and design). This, making your mindset clear was not always easy in the process. For example, in defining the questions about the health aspect in the project. Many different approaches preceded the final definition of the research question and the project. Matrices and diagrams helped me to make my own thinking clear for myself and for others. I have noticed that it is easier to discuss it with others in this way. A method that I started using more and more throughout the project. I did not only create this sharpness in theories. Applying sharpness and precision to your design allows you to think about how systems work. When you have given this sharpness to a situation, you can again look critically and test whether this has been the right solution/direction/step. If this is not the case, you can revise it.

However, sticking too strongly to the created matrices does not always lead to a desired result. I noticed this when I started designing more. For example, I made a scheme with a number of possible interventions for improving health in residential areas. I firmly adhered to this at the beginning of the design. However, this often did not lead me further into the design steps. Waiving the created toolboxes again gave me the freedom to continue in the design process.

In conclusion, there is nothing wrong in sharpening your project. In fact, it helps you further. Matrices and schemes can be very useful for this and work in an accompanying manner. However, fully adhering to created toolboxes deprives the freedom in the design process. Once the design phase has been completed, it is possible to refine the matrices again.
Dream
The third learning moment builds on the above. Dare to dream. Sometimes it is necessary in a (creative) process to let go of everything that you have researched. At times in the process, I did not do this enough. I often try to base decisions on earlier research, which is also valuable. However, taking a step back and thinking what I want with, for example, a design is just as important. By daring to dream big, the best ideas can arise. A step that I sometimes have to commit myself to but is very valuable for the process.

Turning point
The final learning moment was one of the last weeks of the project. At the fourth presentation I got some feedback and advise from my mentors. One of these advises was to start focussing on the recommendations as 'end' product instead of focussing too much on the design. A hard step to make, but these turning points in processes can be very valuable. At first it seems maybe as going into the wrong direction, but it can also bring the project a step further. Turning points in a process gives the opportunity to reflect critically on what you did before and what is needed for the 'new' 'end' product. The turning point in the last weeks of the project helped me finalise and conclude all the structures I put together in the whole project. And it led to a stronger message and image in the end.