P5 Reflection

PERSONAL INFORMATION
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At Home In The City | Amsterdam | Gentripuncture
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Problem statement: PUBLIC SPACE
Because of the monotone character of the Zuidas the outdoor space in the highly dense area is not functioning as a city center, but there is the ambition to become the second center of Amsterdam. The people that come to the area are mainly coming to work in one of the located firms. The public space in the area is of such that it’s not an attractive public space where people will meet each other and spend their time in the area throughout the day or weekend.

We can relate Zuidas to the developments that are detected by culture philosophers such as Hans Paul Bahrdt, Louis Wirth, Michael Sorkin, Mike Davis and Lieven de Cauter. They reason that an increasing privatization of public space "urban culture" is affected. A new architectural and urbanistic paradigm generated by this phenomenon. There is even talk of big introverted ensembles on urban level. These are called "capsules", which stands for location independent and self-sufficient, a term that is used in space. The culture philosopher De Cauter speaks in this context of the emergence of a 'capsular architecture' in a capsular civilization. The Zuidas as it is now could be regarded as such a development. The plints of the buildings are filled with functions that connect to the employees of the firms located there. The residents of the neighborhoods surrounding the Zuidas hardly connect with the area. According to Jan Gehl "city life does not happen by itself, or develop automatically simply in response to high density."1

LANDSCAPE
THE RELATION BETWEEN NATURE AND BUILDING STRUCTURE IS UNSTABLE.
The nature in the area contributes rarely to any structuring of the area. The nature usually following slavishly the infrastructure, or function as residual space, they strengthen the vagueness. The green strip along the station square is used as introduction and filler element that represent the fakeness of the green in the area. Both ditches and the lawns and the trees are represented and form a green carpet without remarkable qualities for the public spaces. The rest of the green qualities are hidden on the tops of the towers or behind the thick walls of a building block and is not publicly accessible. This development strengthens the introvert character of the area. Through this planning strategy the possibility of the involvement of nature in

public spaces and thereby increasing the quality of spaces is largely unused. It mostly remains with the potting of green in oversized vases. Rudy Uytenhaak argues that “densification causes the automatic loss of natural quality”.

This research and design will show however, how to create an integrated environment between public green spaces, working and living, where people can gather and meet each other.

Goal

I will research how density affect the natural quality of the public and private outdoor space in Zuidas. After my research I will be able to come up with a building typology that is able to integrate public spaces, natural qualities and working and housing in to an integrated environment, and so try to contribute to a working example for the development of the rest of Zuidas.

Reflection

Main problem in Zuidas is the expensive ground. This effects the quality of the public space by using traditional planning where the buildings are a fabric of 2 dimensional facades and don’t relate to its surroundings.

My design tries to break with this phenomenon by fading the boundaries of a typical closed block by turning the contemporary building typology that is much used in Zuidas upside down. By doing that the building captures a new type of public space within the block that contributes to the urbanity of the environment by introducing a programmable space.

The design also introduces a new layer that results in a 3 dimensional urban fabric where the public space invades the building block not only on ground level but also the roof becomes part of the urban fabric giving the visitor a different perspective of the city. The roof creates also a space for the dwellers in a dense city where they enjoy qualities of a residential area. This give the dwellers an opportunity to withdraw from the city center. Where children can play, grow up and dwellers can meet on a more private level.

The most important element that is new for me is the switch in different scales; switching from urban level to the level of a house and back.

On the subject sustainability this project learned me to not only think in matters of sustainability in forms of installation with heat recovery and thick insulation and material; sustainability of the level of an engineer. That’s how I learned about sustainability at De Hogeschool van Amsterdam; you put something in the basement, and that takes care about it. Sustainability is everywhere now. When you as an architect don’t think about it. It’s basically the engineers taking it over, because it is so technical. So sustainability becomes invisible in the architecture.

For a long time sustainability was about doing less; don’t take long warm showers (for instance). Like a protestant way of thinking it has to hurt when you do good.

In this project I tried to give visibility to sustainability within the architecture by trying to improve the quality of life within the city center by using

UYTENHAAK, R. 2008. Steden vol ruimte: kwaliteiten van dichtheid, Rotterdam, Uitgeverij 010, p. 8
elements that adds to that value but also adds to the sustainability of the project; financial and environmental.

The rooftop of the building functions as a park and is divided into two parts; one public part and semi-public part. “Parks provide intrinsic environmental, aesthetic, and recreational benefits. Parks are also a source of positive economic benefits. They enhance property values by 8% till 15% and thereby increase municipal revenue.”

The roof introduces greenery, plant life and biodiversity in the city center. In particular these plants can be chosen for their air purification/filtering properties. It also enhances quality life in the city by creating beautiful views and improve public space. The roof park has a positive effect on real estate values of the surrounding and underlying property for dwelling, shops as offices.

Some facades are clad with moss to enhance quality of life and realize a healthier living and working environment. And helping contributing to the ‘2000 trees law’ realized by the municipality under the pressure of the surrounding residents. Because of the thousands of trees that had to be cut down in the Zuidas. In total the cladded amount of moss is 19928m². This has the same air purifiers capacity of 2847 trees.

It is important for an urban center to focus on functions that attract people who do not live or work in the area. The square in combination with the shopping mall guarantees that small and large public activities that accidentally occurred on the site because of the economic crisis and where not officially planned keep their space, functioning as a public attraction that provides centrality to the city center. Contributing to an increase of property value in the area till 17.8%.

The square in combination with the roof park contribute to the city water household by (temporarily) harvesting rain water. According to the report of Water Retention Problem Zuidas there is “insufficiently open water applied to compensate for the increased hardening”. And therefore a 25,000 m³ of alternative water storage has to be applied underground in the Zuidas. Per 12,000 m³, the cost are € 12,000,000,- The square and the roof can together store 12,000 m³ of water. This costs are approximately € 3,840,000,- 68% less than underground storage. The project captures 48% of the needed alternative water storage in the Zuidas and reduce costs.

These interventions realizes a sustainability that is visible in the architecture and adds quality of life to the city center.

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5 http://www.commissiemen.nl/docs/mer/p24/p2425/2425-011waterbergingsopgave.pdf