

Reflection on Thesis Project

Project Data:

STUDIO : Architecture & Dwelling | MSc3/4 studio 2012-2013 At Home In The City | Amsterdam AR3AD130-1

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THESIS RESEARCH : Dwelling at the station
(in co-operation with Roel van der Klaauw & Shirly Omanette)

THESIS PROJECT : Living at the hub

TUTORS : Olv Klijn, Ype Cuperus

Project details:

Site: Teleport O, Amsterdam

Programme : Family apartments, apartments with studios, sport and culture centre, hotel, supermarket, nursery school/kindergarten

Description of Thesis Project

The site of the project -Teleport O, is situated in strategic position for the whole Amsterdam: at the transport hub – Sloterdijk station, and in one of the “green fingers” of Amsterdam, reaching the city centre. The qualities of the location are not efficiently used. The “green finger” is interrupted with the office area, where a lot of building are vacant because of the crisis. The location does not have good conditions for dwelling, because of noise, mono-functionality and isolation. For these reasons, the challenges posed to the design are: incorporation of housing in mono-functional district and definition of the program with activities for the new coming dwellers, which will make the area pleasant to live. In this way, the Teleport can be potentially transformed from the mono-functional district into a new self-sufficient city centre, strongly related to whole Amsterdam town, located in its “green finger”.

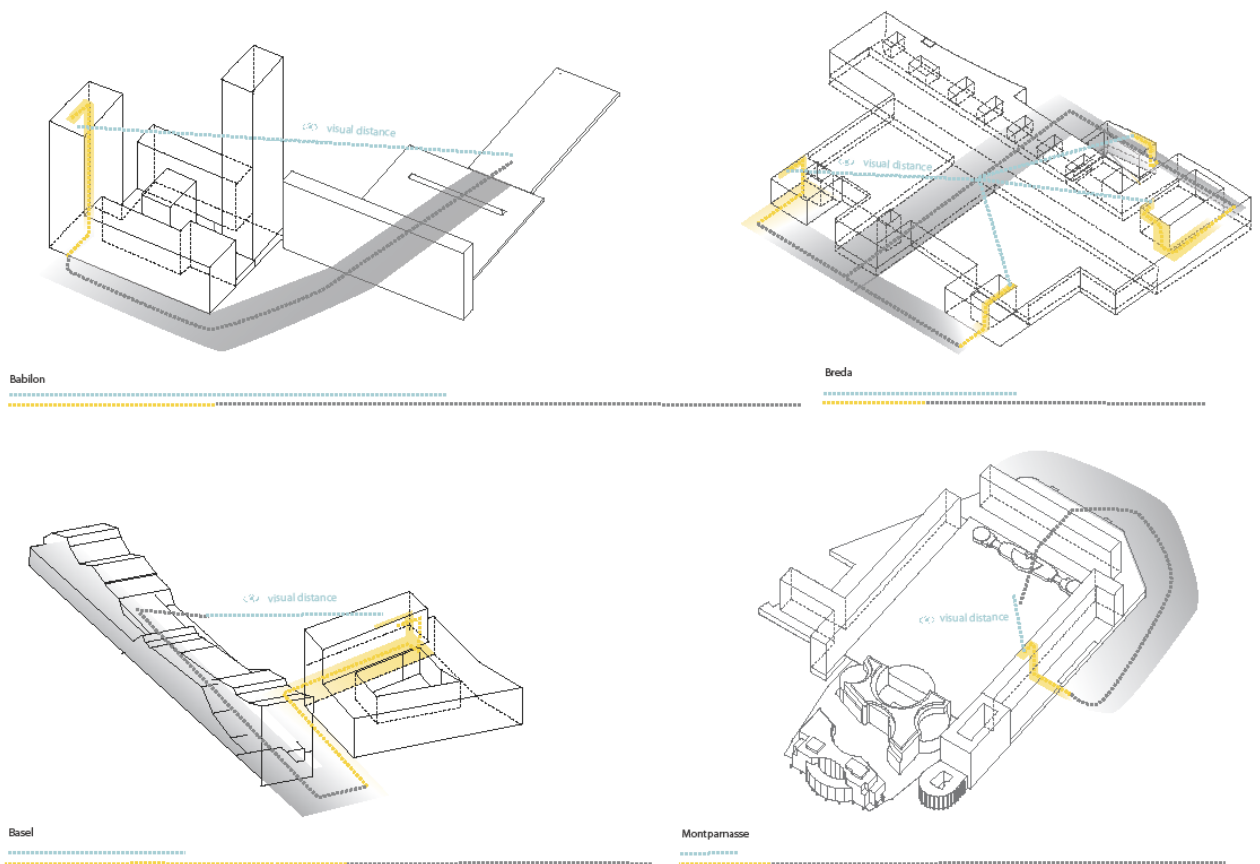
Relationship between research and design

This particular location in well-developed communication hub, became a departure point of theme research dealing with “Dwelling at the station”.

The public transport influenced strongly on human behaviour and their perception of time in travelling. Modern mobile society wants to be well-connected to public transport, especially in overpopulated city, trying to find solution for easy and sustainable way of communication. Therefore, we started our research from reflecting the French philosopher –

M. Augé's theory of layers of "places" and "non-place" in mobile society. Another useful theoretical reference was Lucas Bertolini's: "node-place value model" comparing the stations area in terms of their accessibility and transportation hub level (node value) and identity, history, recognition of the location (place value). The dominance of node value is easily recognizable in case of Sloterdijk Station, where the area in the surrounding remains mono-functional, thus we can notice, that there is a non-balance of these two values and lack of integration of the station (non-place layer) with its location (place layer).

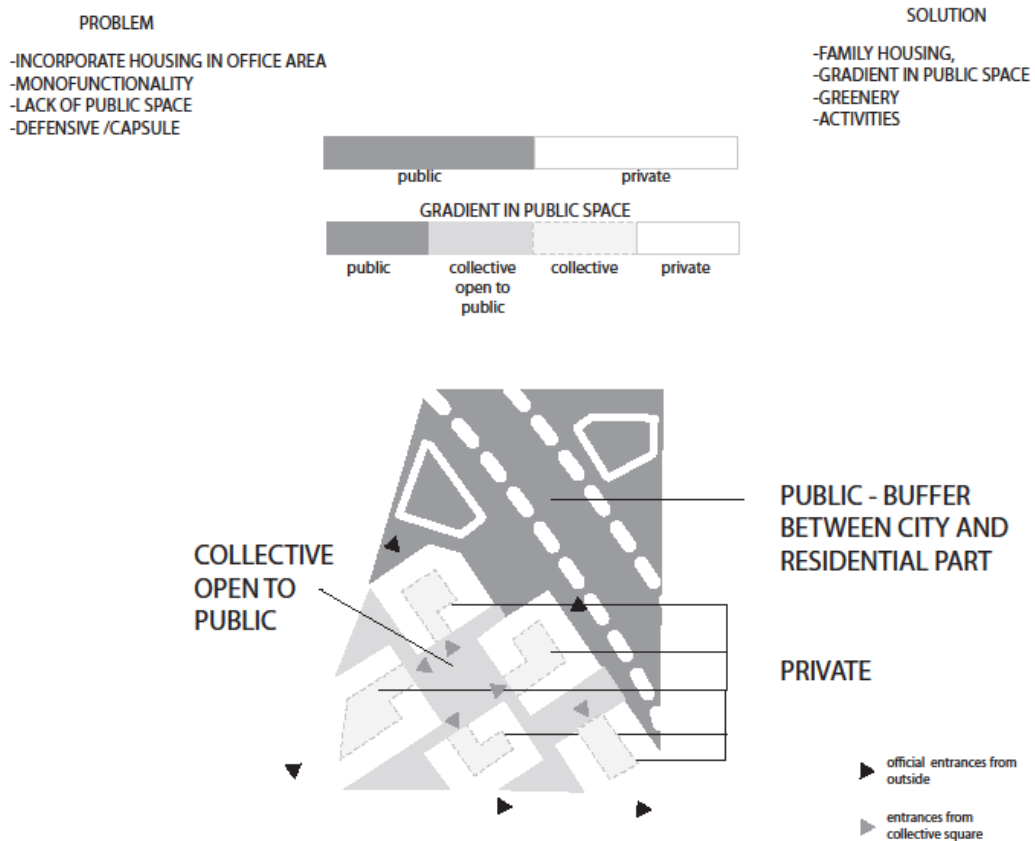
Then, we analysed four case studies of dwellings located next to railway station: Montparnasse in Paris (France), Sud Park in Basel (Switzerland), New Babylon in Den Haag, and the new project of Breda Station (The Netherlands). We focus on the typology of the buildings, programme and routing. Surprisingly, our analysis revealed that the dwelling parts have a character of a closed shelter, with little collective space, showing the defensive and protective approach in design. This is a kind of contradiction, because people want to live near the station to be more mobile, but at the same time they disconnect themselves from the surrounding.



Picture 1. Comparison of routing apartment-station and visual connection. The apartments are a sort of capsule, preventing people from outside environment.

The intention of my design was the integration of station with the residential part of the project. The aim was to break the border between the public and private and provide more gradient between these spaces. In this way, the dwellers reach their houses passing from the big public square in front

of the station, through the smaller square, then the collective, but open to public square and the closed collective space in the atriums. The typology of atrium also helps in achieving the gradient between public and private. The atrium balances the built and unbuilt space and provides shelter from noise, wind pollution and stimulates social interaction.



Picture 2. The scheme of the design showing the gradient between public and private spaces.

Theme and method of the studio

Public and collective spaces used in the thesis project work on different level of intimacy or openness. In a result, the public space becomes more domestic in comparison to case study projects from the theme research. The process of blurring the border between the public and private make people feel belonging to the outdoor space. This “gradient tool” makes the area liveable in a busy transportation hub and provide more domestic, home space in the city. In this way the design meets the expectations of the studio theme: At Home In The City.

The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework.

The comparative analysis of case studies in theme research and site analysis helped to define the problems related to the location. Another indispensable research method was making a possible scenario of the future of the district. The scenario became an important tool in searching for the

needs of the place and defining future target of the location. The definition of the target helps in prediction how the area may be transformed in the future and what steps are necessary in order to achieve the aim. The design project should play a role in this process of transformation. All these analysis has unveiled the opportunities and challenges of the site and helped in creating a programme for the new design project, which will influence positively on its surrounding.

The relationship between the project and the wider social context

Nowadays, densification of the cities has given the importance to public transport. In modern mobile society the hub is a very attractive place to live in, but still, usually the transport nodes do not meet living conditions. As it was mentioned above, there is still lack of integration between the sphere of “place” and “non-place”. The case studies analysed in theme research have a form of shelter protecting from the outside environment, usually deprived from the collective space stimulating people to meet. The project is an attempt to break this “defensive” approach in design, by providing the transition spaces from public to private, where people can feel belongingness to their environment. The redefined typology of atrium has occurred to be a successful in order to achieve the gradient of spaces.