THE SHARED PLATFORM

ZAANSTAD 2050

Complex Projects
AMS Mid-City
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P4 Reflection Paper
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A MODEL OF COHABITATION AND SHARING RESOURCES IN ZAANSTAD
The Shared Platform

Derives from the emerging need to take advantage of the river as the new plot for Amsterdam; the ultimate locus to generate spaces for the city and its citizens.

Benefits from the extensive water network of Amsterdam.

Proposes a new model for occupying the water by creating an infrastructure with mixed-uses and gradients of public, shared and domestic spaces.

Questions the ownership status of housing and the 40-40-20 scheme and examines the alternative of cohabitation as the key to mixed-city with space for everyone.

Is the expression of the sharing economy model in which space is a resource; Rent everything, own nothing.

Claims that the future must be efficient, collective, flexible and not fully defined in order to be sustainable.
P4 reflection paper

Introduction - Project description
Amsterdam is a rapidly growing city where thousands of people move every year. However, the more the city is booming the more it is becoming unaffordable for middle incomes. The already high prices of housing will remain in the same or reach even higher levels in the future and thus, new alternatives should be developed to tackle the problem and prevent spatial segregation. Specific population groups are forced to move away from the city centre to the outskirts of Amsterdam in order to find affordable housing solutions. In this excluded groups appertain mostly families with children, professionals with middle to low incomes (teachers, nurses etc) and expats-starters. Simultaneously, the model of the sharing economy gains more ground and in the horizon of 2050 it is predicted to be extensively established and take also new forms of expression as for instance the exchange of services between groups of people -instead of payment. In this direction, the project tries to create a dialectic relation between the sharing economy model and the need for affordable -but not social- housing. It questions the ownership status of housing and the 40-40-20 scheme and examines the alternative of cohabitation as the key to the mixed-city with space for everyone. Cohabitation has been already examined in the past as a solution for affordable housing and in the future it is expected to be the solution to the housing shortage of booming cities as Amsterdam. The project, proposes a platform for sharing in which people will live as a community and they will use space as a resource, together with other possessions such as the bike or the boat or even services. The project also takes advantage of the river as the new plot for Amsterdam; the ultimate locus to generate spaces for the city and its citizens. It proposes a new model for occupying the water by creating a distinguishable piece of infrastructure, a watermark with mixed-uses and gradients of public, shared and domestic spaces.
Research and design relation

Architecture is a medium that can serve as a ground for debate and experimentation, in other words, a platform for discussion, since it is able to describe and illustrate a narrative of what happens or can happen around us in the built environment. It is a way to formulate a hypothesis and design scenarios that are able to be unravelled in the future. Design as a tool and medium can present the ways in which a possible future can become probable and desirable. In this direction, my decision to choose the Complex Projects Graduation Studio under the theme of Amsterdam Mid-City 2050 derived from my fascination to imagine, develop, and develop a narrative for the urban future of Amsterdam.

The Chair of Complex Projects (CP) is well-known for its research-based design approach; a fact that makes the choice of the studio and topic even more interesting for me, since research and its conclusions define the choice of the project’s ambition, programme and location. In contrast with most of the other Chairs of the Architecture Track that usually provide a brief with a specific site, building ambitions or even programme to the graduate students, CP triggers the students to define their own restrictions and ambitions based on the narrative that they develop as the result of their research conducted during MSc3 (until P2). Thus, research consists the millstone and starting point of the design process.

Each student has to become the architect, urban planner, and client all at the same time. Although this process was very rewarding and exciting as it gave us complete freedom to choose our own topic of interest towards the future of Amsterdam, sometimes it also felt as a burden as at some point we needed to push ourselves to draw conclusions in order to proceed to the next phase. Moreover, our given site, Zaanstad, was a difficult site that caused us more problems in the sense that it is an industrial area that will change completely in the next 20-30 years into a dense working and living district and so will be rebuilt from scratch. Thus the existing context will change drastically and so, we needed to speculate how the whole urban context will be in 2050 before starting with our own topics since there are only indications and not clear plans for the area at the moment. This process required a lot of time and consideration and sometimes I felt confused because of the non-existence of a context to define my own problematic-topic. The tight schedule of the graduation process forced me to take decisions that fortunately guided me towards my own topic of interest.

The feedback given from our tutor helped me in order to stay on track, since he always asked us to think critically and examine whether our research results and ambitions—that would define our design brief and afterwards the project—were indeed future proof for the horizon of 2050 and how they reflect on the specific characteristics of our site.

Relationship between graduation topic, studio topic and Master Track.

In my opinion, Complex Projects’ ambitions’ goes in hand with the ones of the Architecture Master Track since the educational intention of both is to encourage students to develop creative and innovative building projects that use design as a means to deal with the technical, social, and spatial challenges encountered in the built environment. Moreover, CP attempts through multidisciplinary research to examine ambiguous conditions and contexts. This research methodology aims to the systematic and critical interpretation of the context and its conditions in order to react and reflect on it. The theme of the studio as mentioned-above, Amsterdam Mid-City 2050, is a very challenging opportunity to research and speculate about the future and to try to design potential scenarios for the expanding built environment of Amsterdam. The last one consisted my starting point and aspiration; to propose a project that derives and responds to the future needs of the residents of the greater Amsterdam Metropolitan area and Zaanstad.

The thorough investigation of all the parameters regarding the future lifestyle and trends as well as the socio-economic
First location and preliminary massing model studies in the context.

Physical model of our site: the blue foam represents the new development.
tendencies in relation to living and working led me to the conclusion that my project should be a new hybrid building-typology that will express the sharing economy model relationship that categorizes space as a resource. To do so, I am introducing a building as a platform/infrastructure that presents new relationships amongst workspace, domestic and public spheres.

**Relationship between the methodology of the studio and the chosen method**

During the process of graduation the methodology that the CP proposes was a great help to approach not only the research but also the design part of the project. I claim so, because the different phases of the graduation process divided in five-weeks periods that concluded with presentations, accomplished not only to help us schedule well the deliverables of every phase but also acted as the stepping stones to guide us through the whole procedure of researching, deciding, and finally designing the project. Apart from that, this structure of the multiple presentations prepared us well in order to be able to resonate and structure our hypothesis and scenarios on a strong basis of arguments and critical revising of our choices.

More analytically, the first phases (from P0.5 to P2) consisted of a twofold research: one that focused on the collection, arranging and selection of data regarding the future of Amsterdam and Zaanstad in the horizon of 2050 and another one that was orientated more towards the personal topic of interest, as well as the preferred location, possible program and ambition of the project. The next phase (from P2 to P4) focused on the development of the project and the building itself in all scales and in relation to the context, ambitions and program already defined from the previous phases. This specific sequence of the phases contributed to the deeper understanding of all the parameters that would influence the design decisions and also resulted in a project with a solid argumentation.

For me, the most crucial methods used during the above-mentioned phases were making models and collages.

Final location and other massing model studies in the context.
On the one hand, models were the tool to understand the context and interpret its current and future conditions, while the creation of multiple collage images contributed to the creation of a vision for the project and the desired qualities that I wanted to propose. The site visits gave me the fullest overview of the existing condition of the area and helped me to understand mostly the scale of the IJ at this specific location, the harbours and the buildings. However, as already mentioned, since the area will change completely in the future, the only means to reflect on the built context was basically the model with the future speculations.

Location and reasoning for the project

Already from the research phases, I had made up my mind that my project will be placed on the river IJ. My position derived from the fact that the plans of the
Municipality show that the whole area of our site will be densely built by 2050. Therefore, water will be the new plot for the future developments and this fact will be strengthened further by the extensive water mobility network that will be developed in Amsterdam greater area.

Although this decision was clear to me from an early phase, I have to admit that I faced a great difficulty to define the exact, appropriate location for my project. This became a big problem since it took me some time to recognise the indicators in the context that led my decision for positioning my project as a pier in the entrance from the IJ to the Coenhaven. To come up with possible locations and different massings of the project, I made a plethora of model studies to test various possibilities and relations with the projected surroundings of 2050. At the end, the key moment for my choice was when I took a closer look to the scale of the area and the “artefacts” of the IJ (ships, marinas and piers). The new relations that I wanted to introduce regarding water, my projects and the surroundings guided the process of defining the final massing and shape of my project.

**Relationship between the project and the wider social context**

Amsterdam, similarly to almost all the major European cities, has an increasing population which forces the city to expand. In order to cover the needs of these increasing fluxes, new potential strategic locations of urban development appear in the greater area of Amsterdam Metropolitan City. One of these areas is Zaanstad, which in the horizon of 2050 will be fully developed into a new dense district of working and living. However as stated already, the housing market with its high prices will be still a great problem and models such as the sharing economy will emerge as an opportunity to rent instead of buying an apartment, a car, a boat, machinery etc. The relevance of the proposal of the shared platform regarding the wider social context can be found in the fact that it manifests a new probable living model. The project derives from the principles of the sharing economy as it functions as a platform for interaction between the community that shares its resources and remains sustainable. The connection of this platform with its urban context via a public program (plaza, agora, floating leisure spaces etc) helps to the promotion of such a model of sharing to the other residents of the area and brings people together in a dialectic way. The use of water mobility as a key feature of the platform shows that there are alternative and more efficient ways of transportation when the era of the massive car use will become past. A new relationship with the IJ will initiate and re-interpret the strong relation of Zaanstad and also Amsterdam with the river.

**Conclusion and potential applications of the results in practice**

Design is the way to control the conditions that can affect if something possible can become probable and desirable. In that sense, my project attempts to illustrate a possible future of people living together and sharing the resource of space and community. The architectural interpretation of this scenario into space and its introduced qualities (connected strongly with the relation with the river) attempt to show that this future is probable and can be desirable. The proposed building and model of living-working-sharing tries to tackle the future problem of spatial segregation while taking into account all the projected future conditions, possibilities and restrictions of living in order to propose an architectural solution that could be potentially used in practice.