

THE FLAGSHIP DEVELOPMENTS

Large scale urban developments in
national urbanisation strategies.

NATIONAL

OBJECTIVES

tIP 03 | 07

DVA | PAUL LECROART

REPORT 03/04 11 11

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Deltametropolis Association is a broad public organisation that focuses on shaping sustainable development in Randstad Holland. The association brings together businesses, public interest groups, research institutions and governments. Deltametropolis Association enables and works towards creating a socially supported design of the Randstad metropolitan area, focused on welfare, prosperity and strengthening its international competitiveness.

Deltametropolis Association offers a platform for discussion: it creates the space to develop new ideas and critically discuss Randstad Holland outside the usual frameworks. It is a laboratory for prioritising innovative issues and for promoting the debate on the future of Randstad Holland. In this way, the association aims to promote new ideas on the development of Randstad Holland and to help apply these in everyday practice.

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REPORT tIP 03|07

17.11.2011

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The International Perspectives

Deltametropolis Association, in collaboration with the universities of Randstad Holland, has initiated several projects with the central theme: the Metropolitan Functions. In this programme, Deltametropolis Association researches how facilities and urban environments can help define the metropolitan atmosphere of the city.

The International Perspectives (tIP) forms part of this programme on metropolitan functions. In this series, Deltametropolis Associations explores the importance of an international perspective when (re)developing facilities and urban environments in Randstad Holland. tIP is a public series of events which reflects on how facilities or activities transform an urban area into a metropolis. It consists of a series of 7 public lectures with inspirational international speakers, and 7 private expert meetings. The tIP results will lead to a final debate and a publication in the spring of 2012.

The series take place from September 2011 to March 2012. Each of the 7 lectures will take place on a Thursday evening, starting at 19.30. Every university in Randstad Holland will host a tIP, each focussing on a different specific theme. These themes are: Cultural Clusters, Social Network City, Flagship Developments, Self Organising City, Knowledge Clusters, International Organisations and Attractive City.

In each of the 7 lectures, an international speaker will present how facilities or activities that are important for the development of a city or urban area. Following the lecture, representatives from the hosting University will give a reflection, applying its content to the Dutch context.

An expert meeting with selected academic, entrepreneurial and governmental guests will take place on the Friday following the lecture. The expert meeting will take a more in-depth look at the theme of the lecture, applying it to the case study. The guest speaker will then reflect on the research presented by the hosting university.

This is the report of the third lecture and expert meeting held at the University of Amsterdam on the 3th and 4th of November, 2011. The theme for this tIP was Flagship Developments and the guest speaker was Paul Lecroart.

www.theInternationalPerspectives.nl

Introduction

Paul Gerretsen

This series of lectures, initiated by Deltametropolis Association, aims to answer a broad question on urbanity, namely: what produces it? Besides the presence of the needed hardware, infrastructures, visitors, parks, and open spaces, we believe there is ‘something else’.

These lectures hope to kick start the process of formulating the question on how the future of metropolitan Randstad Holland should be developed. The question is particularly relevant for the Netherlands as, although it is very internationally oriented, it lacks a strong, dense, central metropolitan area, which many other comparable economies do possess. Our search thus asks: can the Netherlands build on a metropolitan identity to create such a central metropolitan area? And what is needed to produce it? What functions, dimensions, collaborative formulations and elements are necessary to improve the existing centres? And where do all these functions come together? In short: how can large scale urban developments be constructed and put forward?

This third lecture of the series was held at the University of Amsterdam (UVA) on the 3th and 4th of November, 2011, it was hosted by Willem Salet, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning (UVA). The guest speaker was Paul Lecroart, Senior Urban Planner at the Urban Planning and Development Institute in the Paris Ile-de-France region, a free body of advice which stimulates ideas and quality improvement in a formal setting. He is also an advisor at the Association ‘Paris Metropole’. Paul Lecroart has studied the impacts of major events on world cities and currently researches large scale urban developments in 15 European cities. His input is therefore based on both a theoretical and practical point of view.

As our guest speaker, we asked him to reflect on the potential of flagship projects and major events as a stimulus for producing urbanity. How can these assign value to a city? How do they correspond to the larger surroundings and environments? And can major events be part of these types of developments?

The expert meeting will look more specifically at the meaning of flagship developments and large scale events in cities, with emphasis on the Zuidas and its potential as the new centre of Amsterdam.

WILLEM SALET



PAUL LECROART



Lecture

Stories and questions about: Flagship projects

Paul Lecroart

According to Paul Lecroart, flagship projects induce transformation. They are drivers of change in the sense that they **pose new methods, concepts and visions for cities, which can, in some cases, present a new turning point for urban development.** Flagship projects can therefore have real structural impacts on cities, by creating or stimulating the growth of new centres and functions through new concentrations and intensities of infrastructural developments. Besides their structural impact, **they also demonstrate a big symbolic capacity: not just through huge icons and mega events, but also as strong symbols which relate to urban histories.** It is therefore important to take the individual identity of cities into account when implementing these type of projects.

Flagship projects also act as important international attractors, especially in terms

of pulling in major players and important global networks. For this reason, the priorities of these types of developments play a key role: whether they are local or national, the priorities are interlinked with their international allure. And above all, flagship projects exist due to the public debate surrounding them: **public participation, at the right scale, combined with media, cultural and social organisations, is what keeps them alive.**

In order to give a reflection of the potentials of flagship developments on different urban settings, Paul Lecroart demonstrated 6 stories of development that could possibly influence or stimulate ideas for Randstad Holland and its context. The examples consisted of 3 projects in the Paris region: Plaine Saint-Denis, La Défense and the Grand Paris Express; and 3 from abroad, namely: Hamburg, Seoul and a reflection on the winner

and losers of the Olympics 2012.

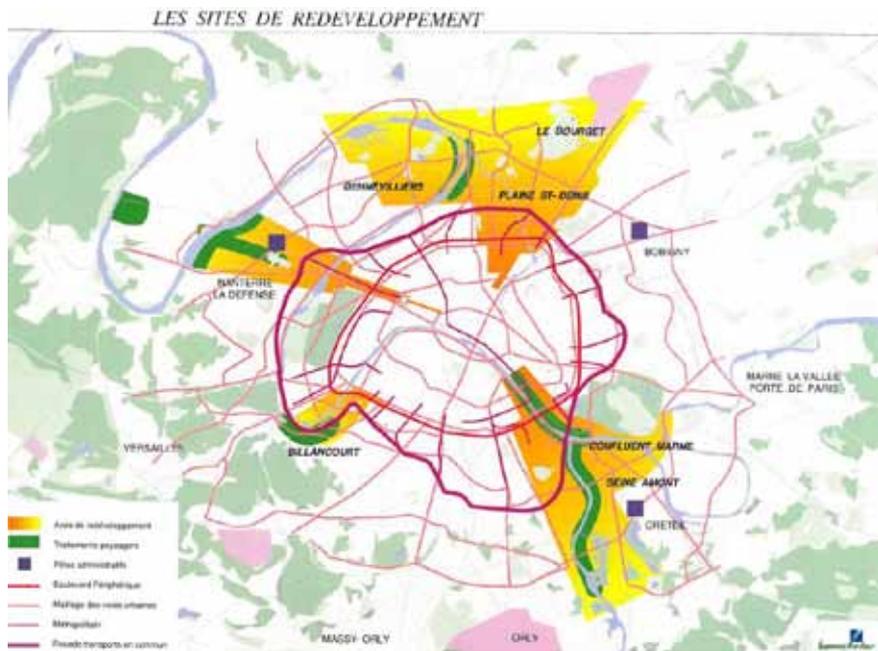
**Project #1:
Plaine Saint-Denis (Paris North-East): Local regeneration initiatives in a strategic area.**

The Plaine Saint-Denis area has had a long history of abandonment. In 1990, it had a population of 30,000 people, a decrease from 50,000 people following the Second World War. Many businesses in the area were going bankrupt or relocating, leaving Plaine Saint-Denis behind as a deprived area with poor amenities and housing conditions. In 1985 however, the city started a renaissance process, resulting in many redevelopment, restructuring and regeneration activities having taken place in the past 20 years. The effects produced have been very apparent, especially when Plaine Saint-Denis became the site of the 1998 World Cup championships.

PARIS: A FLAGSHIP PROJECT?



'STRATEGIC AREAS' IN THE 1994 REGION MASTERPLAN



In 1992, a regional Masterplan was designed by 4 architects in collaboration with the 2 municipalities of Saint-Denis, to transform the area from an industrial to a mixed-use space through public oriented developments. The flexible Masterplan designated various sites as potential redevelopment areas, focussing on an area of 800 hectares which would be redesigned in order to connect the area with its surrounding environment. The area was initially predominantly industrial land, with few streets and public life.

One of the main conditions of the municipality was that the new plan would cover the existing exposed motorway. The plan did so by introducing 28 meter wide avenues in the area, which would be used for mixed transportation modes: walking, cycling, driving,

buses, trams etc. At the time, this was a very unusual approach to redeveloping an area and the transformation was completed in 1997. The 1998 World Cup was especially organised around the pedestrian priority that the new environment enabled, with big public spaces and a new metro and regional railway line. It was an exemplary case on how changes in public spaces could transform an area.

Following the World Cup (in which France won, having beaten Brazil), the area attracted many businesses that wanted to be close to the 'magic stadium'. Plaine Saint-Denis was identified as a strategic development area for the Paris region and the whole development process was supported by the national and regional government.

After 2000, several drawbacks to the plan became apparent. Public developers were too

focussed on the 'acting' process, as opposed to the 'thinking' process. This resulted in less joint-up thinking and an area with much development, but little 'life'.

One way that the national government has tried to counteract this trend is by setting up a strategic joint-agency with the regional government. Besides this it has developed sites through a creative clusters concept, in combination with stimulating new public transportation modes. Another project, the 'Paris North East Project' tried to offset the trend by viewing public transportation (or infrastructure) as a connector of places: connecting the periphery to the centre of Paris. By focussing on fringe developments and increasing accessibility, it has aimed to create jobs and new housing, *introducing the development as a process, not a project*. The Paris North East Project is currently trying

to transform big logistic warehouses in the area as flagship developments.

The Plaine Saint-Denis case illustrates an interesting example of how changes in public spaces can transform an area. It also demonstrates how partnerships between the regional and national government can work together to counteract the physical and social problems in deprived areas.

The development of Plaine Saint-Denis does show, however, that such collaborations can be problematic, as the development agency primarily focussed on 'easier' developments, in areas such as Gonesse, as opposed to the more difficult developments, such as in Le Bourgette, where the sites are more constrained.

Project #2:**La Défense (Seine Arche): National strategies and municipal arrangements.**

La Défense has been hugely debated over in the last 20 years. Its first vision, developed in 1962, was a state-led plan and unfolded almost exactly from the initial plan: along the monumental axis leading from the historical Arc de Triomphe and with a clear separation of pedestrian and vehicle traffic. It was, in essence, designed as a citadel and the whole operation ran very smoothly. This was influenced partly by the fact that the 2 municipalities that worked with the national government were in favour of this development (the design offered them favourable tax breaks). By the 1990's, however, the area started to decline: it lacked space and the ring road was constantly congested.

The early 1990's saw plans for the reconstruction of the ringroad and the extension of the La Défense area, however this led to huge conflicts within the area. One of the main opponents, the communist municipality of Nanterre, objected to the private-led business development plans in the area. To gain supporters and offer an alternative, the municipality set up its own workshops with local people to imagine a different project for the area.

Between 1996-1999, the municipality managed to persuade the government to halt the extension of La Défense and to concentrate its developments to move inwards ('Seine Arche'), as opposed to outwards. The compromise made was thus on density: to decrease office spaces, and to instead improve the facilities, housing and green spaces.

The main features of the projects were fo-

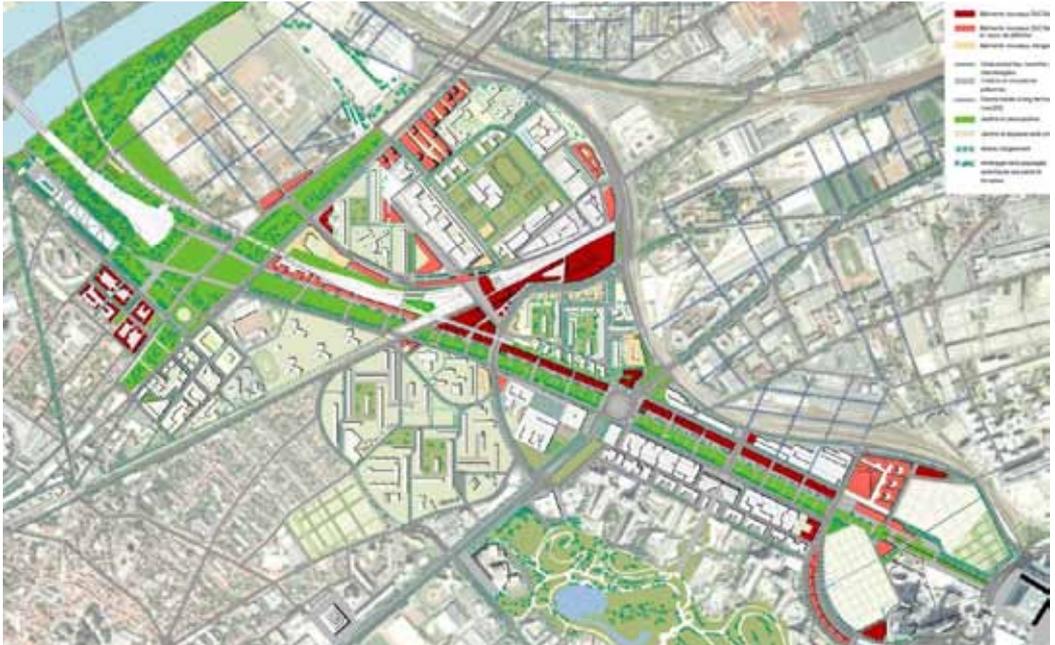
cussed on the University area, where 30,000 students resided in poor living conditions, with high densities of social housing. By focussing on these areas, the aim was to create a new centrality: a new active place in the city. The national government financed the project, paying for the repair of the urban fabric which lead to an underground urban motorway.

By the early 2000's, La Défense was starting to age again and, as before, resorted back to becoming an urban island of lacking amenities. In a second attempt to counteract this trend, President Sarkozy introduced the La Défense Renewal Plan in 2007, which focussed on building new tower blocks to transform La Défense into a global financial centre. Once again, however, the Nanterre municipality objected. In order to avoid these conflicts and to make the debate more bal-

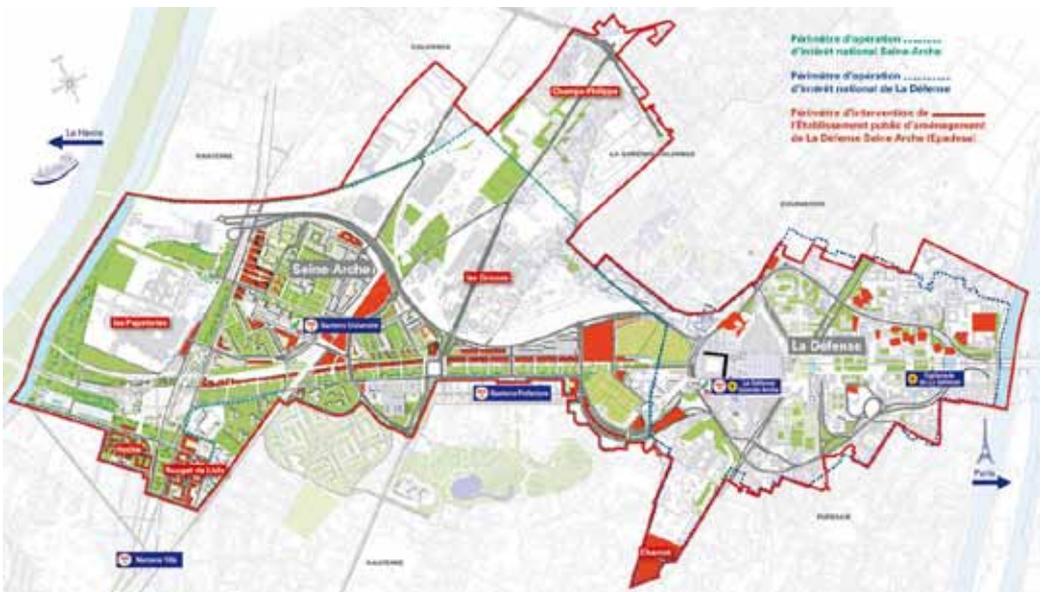
anced, the central government decided to increase the number of stakeholders, involving more municipalities in the process and effectively decreasing the dominance of the Nanterre municipality. The central government also decided to extend La Défense by setting up a state-led agency to work on new infrastructural developments, including a new metro ring and a new TGV line. This would improve local connections and facilities and the accessibility of the area as a whole.

The La Défense story illustrates how, for first time ever, the working scale was altered. Unlike before, where developments were strictly run by the dominating axes, developments were now created through connections: connections between local centres of activity and between local drivers of development. For La Défense, this was a whole new

EXTENDING LA DEFENSE IN THE 1990: 120HA



EXTENDING THE OIN AREA (2010): 564HA



way of thinking about the area: its changed the scope and perspective of development and highlighted the importance of the interdependencies between people in the local area and Central Paris. The lesson thus shows that scale can change according to the work you plan to do.

Project #3:

Grand Paris Express and Paris Metropole: Conflicting Metropolitan visions and strategies in the Paris Region

The Paris Metropole is roughly twice the size of Randstad Holland, with 11,7 million inhabitants, whereof 2.1 million live in the city of Paris itself. Following a Metropolitan conference initiative by the city of Paris in 2006, the Paris region set up a regional Master Plan in 2008, involving the city of Paris,

the city region and the national government as the key players. The plan envisions a more compact city region, in which sustainability, the environment and housing are the prime focal points. New housing, for instance, is currently being built at an annual rate of 35,000, while there is demand for 60,000 new dwellings per year. The master plan provides a framework for the region which has the tools to set these changes into motion.

Arguably, however, different instruments are needed to implement the plan. Although the plan was adopted in 2008, the national government has still not approved it, on grounds that it “lacks ambition on the economic aspects”. A revision of the plan has already started, however, due to the process of recentralisation in France, it has become clear that the national government holds the real power.

In 2006, a regional proposal was also made to build a ring metro (the ‘Arc Express’) in the region which would connect the development areas with one another and to the centre of the urban region. It would facilitate the regeneration process in Paris’ suburbs and act as a major instrument for urban intensification, in correspondance with the densities in the area.

Once again, the national government displayed its power by using it as an opportunity to regain support in the city region: it took on its own interpretation of the project and used it to legitimise a project that they designed themselves “behind closed doors”.

They started a cultural process in which the ring road would not be very central, but would connect the edge cities as “economic hubs”. In effect, it was a new concept on infrastructure for connecting economic hubs, as

opposed to connecting the people who really needed the public transport options.

The tension between the region and national government therefore mainly lay in visions of the national government: the region wanted to focus on connecting and facilitating the regeneration process in the inner urban centres, while the national government wanted to focus on a more economic perspective, interconnecting the economic hubs in the periphery. **This tension generated a whole new debate on metropolitan visions and for the first time, it really triggered metropolitan awareness in everyone.**

This eventually led to an agreement in 2010, to built 150 km of new metro line, costing 30 billion euros. The plan would stimulate local businesses at station hubs and would partly be funded through taxes on businesses and the inhabitants living in those areas. It



NATIONAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR GRAND PARIS

«C'est un projet de loi conflictuel qui ne donne aucune garantie d'utilité publique s'il n'est pas relié à une stratégie urbaine précisée et située», poursuivit Nicolas Sarkozy dans *Le Monde*.

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La Défense à l'heure du Grand Paris
CNT - Paris la Défense - 30 juin 2009

La bataille du Grand Paris

C'est ce soir, à 21h30, que les députés sont invités à examiner en urgence, à l'Assemblée nationale, le projet de loi relatif au Grand Paris. L'objectif affiché du texte est d'ordonner la structure économique et urbaine de la Région capitale du XXI^e siècle. Idée phare : doter la région d'un nouveau moteur sous la forme d'un réseau de métro automatique, d'une grande rocade en 8 qui desservirait 60 stations sur un parcours d'environ 135 km d'ici à 2030. Ce nouveau transport reliera les potentiels de la région à la capitale. Le 19 novembre, Nicolas Sarkozy a rappelé ses propres ambitions pour la région. Il s'agit de la moderniser, de prolonger les lignes de RER B, C et D, de développer le tramway... Les patrons de la région ont aussi exprimé leur inquiétude quant à la réalisation de ce projet, et que le gouvernement ne soit pas prêt à le faire. En matière de métro, le ministre de l'Équipement, Medef, a déclaré que le projet est favorable à une croissance économique de la région.

“Le Grand Paris se résume pour l'instant à un métro automatique”

thus created a new framework to formulate and support local development projects within the station areas.

In 2009, the 'Paris Metropole' was established, which helped trigger and stimulate more collaboration between the national and local government levels, as it involved more parties. Although there is still reluctance from some municipalities, Paris Metropole now incorporates 200 local and regional authorities.

The overall idea is to build consensus on metropolitan issues by means of studying and working on different topics, such as: housing (particularly the improvement of *existing* stock), mobility flows, tax equity (ensuring a healthier balance between the municipalities that need money and those that have a surplus) and other metropolitan projects through the Metropolitan Projects Commission. This

commission launched a call for existing and planned projects that authorities in Paris deemed "interesting to discuss".

The projects had to be innovative, involving strong participation and cross-border thinking, so that the barriers within the city could be overlapped. This has accumulated to 74 projects at present, with a subdivision of 5 topics, namely:

1. **The livable metropolis:** projects regarding public space, amenities, facilities and services
2. **Metropolis 'back stage':** projects dealing with sustainability issues, such as water, energy and infrastructure
3. **Links to places, places to link:** projects focussing on the connections of centralities (i.e. mainly soft-planning)
4. **Economic growth for all:** projects ensuring that employment opportunities arise

from the large economic developments taken place in the city.

5. **Shared culture(s):** projects involving various forms of culture and artistic interventions.

From onset, these projects have received much technical and political support and they have been very successful. The challenge, however, is to retain the political support. Part of this problem is that the Paris Metropolis has annual presidential elections, making the political support unreliable at a long-term perspective.

Project #4:

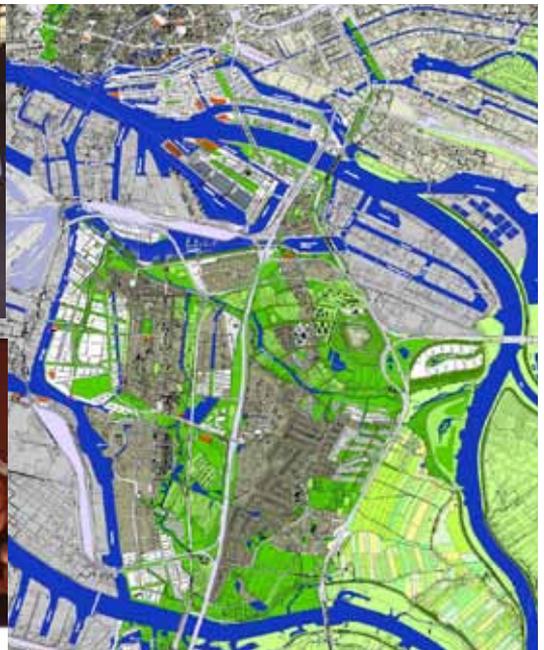
Hamburg: 'Leap across the Elbe' and IBA 2013: An innovative process as a strategic instrument

Hamburg, as a city state on the river Elbe, is a relatively powerful city in Germany. Urban growth in the area has formed in a finger-like pattern since the 1920's, traditionally forming along the transport corridors. In the 1990's however, the thinking changed. The city realised that **this type of growth was in fact dispersing development in the area, and leading to strong physical and social segregation in certain parts of the city.**

Developers therefore decided to develop the other side of the Elbe, which was mainly an industrial port area with much development potential. This led to Hamburg's most famous flagship project: 'HafenCity' 1998, which focussed on creating more public space and metropolitan functions by means of sustainable designs in a 157 hectare area along the water.



LEAP ACROSS THE ELBE, INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP 2003



Another project was ‘Leap across the Elbe’, which focussed on Wihelmsburg, a forgotten island in the heart of the city. In the 1960’s, Wihelmsburg suffered a major flood which led to many inhabitants leaving the area. Following this, Wihelmsburg suffered strong physical and social segregation, with a population of 55,000 involving 14 nationalities, many of which lived in large housing estates.

In 2003, an international workshop was held which highlighted the potentials of the area, i.e. the water, nature, its low density and the overall capacity of the space. With the identification of the potentials, a plan was produced to implement this strategy into a workable solution.

They adopted the IBA concept; a new development method which trigger innovation for a limited period of time. In this case, the

time frame was 2007 to 2013.

For ‘Leap across the Elbe’, an agency was set up to carry out the work. The agency followed the IBA concepts around 3 topics related to the local conditions, but with metropolitan dimensions. These are:

1. **Kosmopolis**: relates to different cultures and nationalities living together. Projects therefore focus on education, training and ways in which different cultures can participate in the urban planning process, e.g. Tor zult Welt: Gateway to the World Education Centre.

2. **Metrozones**: focuses on the middle spaces between infrastructures, which the market did not render ‘important’, e.g. the new Wihelmsburg centre, where a motorway will be displaced and relocated to make space for an urban planning building.

3. **City in Climate Change**: related to is-

sues of flooding, raising sea levels and on producing energy locally, e.g. Engergy Hill, where a heap of waste is used to produce methane.

Each project involved has a different origin, whether it is public, city-led, corporate, private or an initiative from the local people themselves. The party formation is therefore unimportant, as long as each party follows certain rules, e.g. the project has to be distinctive, multi-talented, structurally effective, presentable, feasible etc.

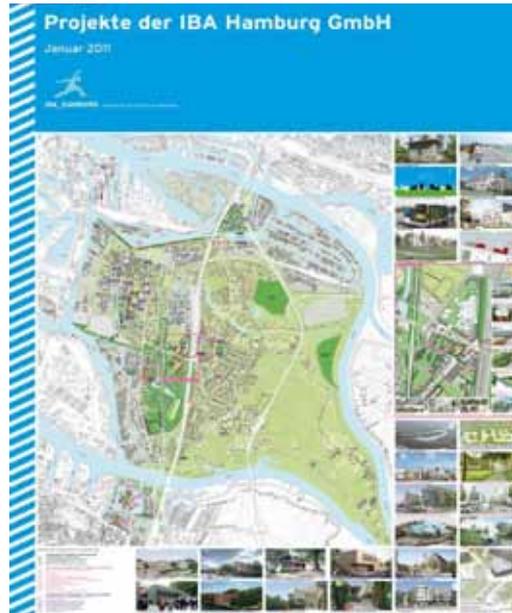
By doing so, ‘Leap across the Elbe’ has formed a bottom-up process which creates the demand and desire to get involved locally: it attracts developers to work on local projects, in order to make them stronger.

Project #5:

Seoul: Cheonggyecheon and Downtown Renaissance: Political audacity and paradigm changes

Following the Korean War in the 1950’s, Seoul grew very rapidly. Many new motor ways and large housing estates were built and there was little concern over environmental issues. In the beginning of the 1990’s, academics started discussing ways to change the city. The historical city centre was declining due to competition from cities like Gangnam and Yeouido, which were built in the 1970’s and were more attractive for business and living.

One of the ideas was to restore the river that was buried underneath a large 4-lane motorway and 10-lane boulevard in the historical centre of Seoul. The discussion trig-



BUSINESS ON CHEONGGYECHEON ROAD BEFORE/AFTER



gered interest from two important men, one of which was Lee Myung-bak, who was running for Mayorship and who is currently the President of South Korea.

The project was a big undertaking: at the time, the motorway carried 168,000 vehicles daily and the transformation to revitalise the 6km long river bed took 2 years to complete, (2003-2005). The project was very successful however: it has completely changed the face of central Seoul. Amongst the many positive impacts, the project has had a major effect on climate change, as this part of the city now experiences 4-5 degrees lower temperatures than other comparative streets.

It has also hugely impacted mobility in the city. **Although there is less traffic, there is now more mobility.** The city managed to achieve this primarily by working on their traffic management: they changed their bus

system and introduced a new rapid transit bus, improved parking and introduced incentives to walk or use the transit bus, such as taxing cars with less than 2 passengers.

This has been a highly successful project and was primarily achieved through the political support of a local initiative. The long term effects have been that the centre of Seoul now attracts much more development.

Project #6:

2012 Olympics: short stories from Hamburg, Paris & London

What do you gain when you lose an Olympic bid? As Hamburg and Paris have shown: a lot can be gained from losing.

When Hamburg lost the Olympic bid to Leipzig in 2002, **it helped the city recognise its potential.** The compact setting of the bid highlighted the possibilities of the Elbe and

helped launch the 'Leap across the Elbe' strategy mentioned in the previous example. It attracted the IBA event, which will be there till 2013, and which is much smaller, more manageable and participative compared to the Olympics. Arguably, the long-term impact of this event is much stronger and lasting than the Olympics may have been for Hamburg.

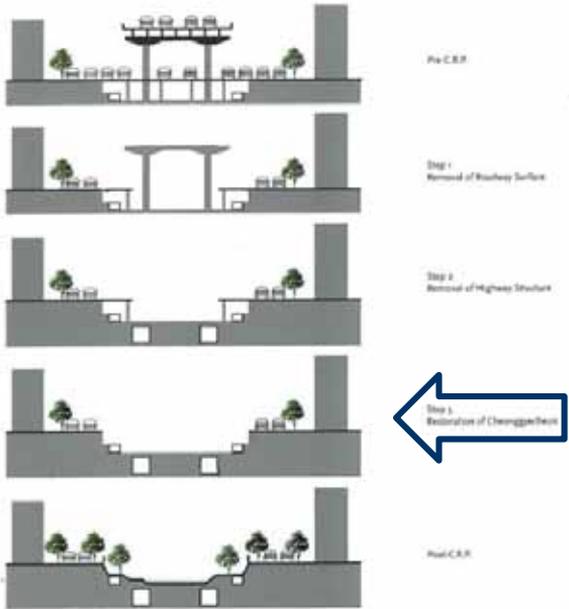
Similarly, when Paris lost the 2012 bid to London, it had the knock-on effect that it raised the expectations and requirements for building in the area. Through public planning, the intended Olympic village was transformed into a park, which has changed the way people think of the area. It is now much improved and ready to attract private developers to further develop the area.

Alternatively, what do you gain when you win the Olympic bid? In short: a lot. **It**

attracts media coverage, infrastructural investments and economic possibilities. On the other hand, however, winning the bid can also be a burden. The seductive London 2012 bid was initially designed as a strategy to regenerate the deprived East of London. In reality, however, the developments have become more focussed on the North-South London area, instead of East-West. The new developments have also relocated many businesses, some of which have been traditional businesses for years.

Residential areas have either seen no, or very few improvements in their neighbourhoods and catering for the needs of the local people (e.g. investing in education, refurbishing the existing housing stock, training and the East-West connections) seems to have been forgotten.

CHEONGGYEcheon RIVER RESTUARATION: WHAT THEY DID



WHAT DO YOU GAIN WHEN YOU LOSE? PARIS



Large scale events such as the Olympics therefore can also act as meagre structural projects, with large private developments aimed at foreign investors, as opposed to catering for the public and local residents. These new developments thus provoke questions about the audience: who do these games really cater for? Who will live in the new luxury properties? What about the local people? And how can you develop and work on the existing urban and social fabric when you have a major event like the Olympics?

Lessons learned

Having looked at these various flagship developments, the question now is: will we be able to act on these projects in the future? To use them as examples to follow? Or will they merely exist as remnants of our period now, becoming our so-called ‘future dinosaurs’?

Some lessons that have become clear are that we must be careful how we currently scale things: **scaling upwards is not always the answer, as downscaling or even splitting projects into smaller elements that can evolve by themselves can also offer solutions to further develop an area.** Besides this, it is also important to not forget the audience: many projects are not people-oriented or simply disregard the public realm where the inhabitants live, and this can lead to many social, cultural and political problems.

Projects are also often implemented too quickly: **it takes time to discuss issues and involve the people that the project will affect: this should not be overlooked.** In the Paris case, it also became clear that there are many missing links between the project developers, planning organisations and the sectoral policies regarding the (soft) policies that need to

be implemented for issues regarding mobility, water, the environment etc. Alongside the lack of coordination, **competition between the different sites and local authorities causes many problems, and there are too few instruments regulating this process.** The Regional Master Plan exemplifies this clearly. It can be said, therefore, that Paris may not be ‘mature’ enough or not to work on such projects.

The three case studies following the Paris examples may illustrate what is possible and what can be considered when working on flagship projects. **Hamburg shows how small-scale transversal approaches can be very effective and offer legitimate answers to developing places.** The questions that remains to be seen, however, is whether these projects will have a long-term added value for the area.

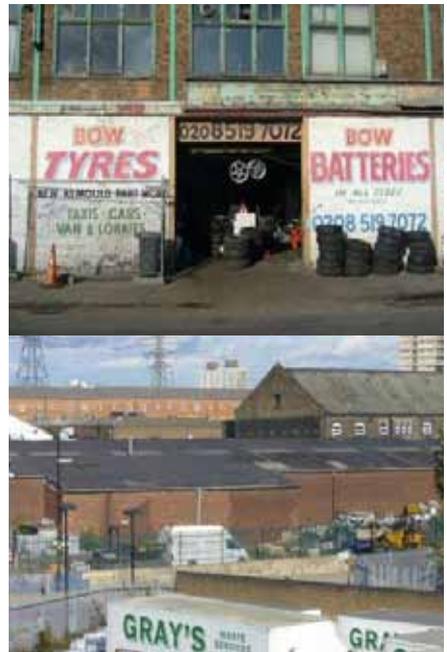
Seoul’s ‘downtown Renaissance’ of the Cheonggyecheon is also fascinating: **although it was arguably implemented far too quickly and was a very radical, politically-driven project, it opens up new ideas on traffic management and solutions for urban highways.** London, on the other hand, raises questions about how large-scale events such as the Olympics can be used in developing large areas of cities. Is it really regenerating London, or is it forming a more limited development, i.e. specialised gated communities?

The Olympics forms an interesting view on urban development as it follows different logics to creating city development than that of a city, region or national government. **The Olympics are more specialised, gated, commercially oriented and more ‘perfect’: after all, it is more of a short-lived ‘show’. Cities,**

LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC PARK, BUT FOR WHOM?



A LIVING, CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM



on the other hand, are more open, mixed, public and unfinished: their future is never really written as it is a long-term process. It is therefore interesting to see whether these two logics can be combined.

People should reflect on the performance of flagship projects from the view of the city as “a living, cultural ecosystem”. In this context, reversibility should be considered. Urban planning now is very focussed on hard-developments, but maybe this is not always the solution?

The future perspective is also very important therefore, as currently we are investing a lot in motorways for example, but maybe people will no longer use cars in the future. The search should therefore be to look for better, cheaper alternatives. For instance, is a more experimental approach, focussing on people-based soft planning methods and pro-

cesses also an option? Besides reversibility, the self-renewal capacity of cities is also important. Cities should look for projects which can evolve in small parts and independently from public developers in order to be successful. Furthermore, projects seem to lack social and cultural cohesion: this should not be overlooked, as the integration of the two forms an important backbone in determining the success of a project.

Lastly, a project can only be successful if the instruments and institutions are well coordinated. As the Paris case illustrated, if there are many instruments, but they lack coordination, then the project will face many problems. As long as there is a difference in the political and financial interests of each authority, and there is a reluctance to coordinate, then the project is destined for a difficult, if not failed, journey.

Reactions

The lecture was followed by a lively round of reactions from the room. Willem Salet, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Amsterdam opened the discussion with a reflection on the changing process of urban transformation. He argued that the new urban projects are changing their focus from a compact city to a regional city. European urban projects are now more focussed on the peripheral areas, effectively forming new centralities. Although this is changing the idea of cities, it has not yet filtered through to the public: “Our perception of a city is still influenced by the institutional maps in our mind: the main central city, as opposed to a peripheral city.” The central city therefore still has much power, or a ‘gravitational pull’, in the expansion of urban areas

and it can be said to be the “conservative factor in the process of urban transformation”.

The challenge is thus in changing our mindset beyond the singular, central city, to realising the potentials of the peripheral cities as real actors in a regional or metropolitan context. Sarkozy initiated this process for the first time by creating a real metropolitan identity for the area, but more can still be done.

The Parisian context highlights an interesting power struggle between two power houses: the central state and the city of Paris. Both are interested in something that is not their own namely: the development of the periphery. Maybe it is therefore important involved more local players at a metropolitan level, i.e. social and environmental lobby groups, housing organisations, action groups

etc. In this way, the projects will be more representative of the local people and their wants, effectively giving the power houses less dominance. Productive conflict can, in this sense, be a useful tool to develop cooperation and improve major metropolitan projects. This only works, however, if conditions are put in place to regulate the process. A neutral body needs to operate in such a system to lead the discussion and to ensure the strongest doesn't always win. It is the common interest that should be the focal point of collaboration: to find ways to please the majority and to see what commonalities can be found, worked on and enhanced in these partnerships.

Looking at Randstad Holland, many lessons can be learnt from the case studies. With reference to the negative implications that an

event such as the Olympics can entail, a suggestion for Randstad Holland was to “go for the bid, but to not win”. In this way, a metropolitan identity can be created in a rationalised way, and then be improved through discussion and collaboration when the bid is lost. Fuelled by local knowledge and different dynamics, the metropolitan character will become more wholesome. As the Paris case teaches us, all levels are interdependent and it is **thus important to work together, to discuss, negotiate and agree on strategies, in order to produce a worthy final product.**

Flagship developments and major events can be great instruments for instigating and facilitating collaboration between cities. Both forms are also increasingly becoming integrated and a method to make large flagship

projects more successful can be to turn it into an event (and visa versa). These new methods can be ways to convince the public to support the developments, as has been seen with Brabantstad in the Netherlands for example.

For Brabantstad, a corporation network between the five big cities in the Brabant province was set up ten years ago. The cities have had many problems agreeing on strategies, until they decided to apply for the 2018 European Capital of Culture title. This new approach enabled a whole new vision and suddenly cities were agreeing on developments they would previously not have approved. The municipalities have even started a joint vision in terms of focussing on the strengths of each individual city, as opposed to competing over the same possible functions and specialisations. This is similar for Maastricht, which

is collaborating with Belgium and Germany, in order to create the infrastructure to support and build a metropolitan area.

In Randstad Holland, however, the reverse is happening. Utrecht and The Hague are both contenders for the title and are effectively competing against each other, leaving no room for dialogue. The cities are therefore resorting back to a more inward, local approach, as opposed to extending it to make it a larger metropolitan event. Initiating this conversation now is too late however: there is a lack of platform for this kind of debate, but it is something to keep in mind for future collaborations. **The success of a project and willingness to work together can therefore change considerably depending on the approach that is adopted and how issues are addressed.**

Events such as the European Capital of Culture can provide new platforms for cooperative partnerships. Unlike the European Capital of Culture however, the Olympics arguably take on a more “inhumane character”. Its agenda is independent of planners and developers and the organisation therefore has no direct responsibilities to anyone: furthermore, it sets its own rules and cities pay a lot of money to host it. This does not necessarily have to be negative, but it does point to a different agenda that other city events may have. A strength of the Olympics is that with all the rules and requirements it entails, it really pushes cities to surpass themselves. **It pushes for the best quality of the latest infrastructures, facilities and amenities, giving cities the opportunity to really be the best.** Besides this, the Olympics are also initiated by the sporting world, giving it a non-polit-

ical agenda, which can be refreshing in urban development projects. The Netherlands is currently considering the 2028 bid, and till now, the planning process has already had positive implications: it has opened up opportunities for connecting all sorts of planning initiatives and structural projects. **The Olympics, in short, act as a platform to give various actors the opportunity to bring about new ideas in developing urban areas.**

All in all, it is also important to reflect on the instruments and goals of flagship projects and events, i.e. **do we need the Olympics as an instrument to gain a spatial planning perspective that we want to achieve in the future? Or do we need the spatial planning perspective to organise the Olympics?** From this point of view, it is important to keep the initial goal of the projects and events in mind

when carrying them out. These events are generally popular because they attract large investment flows to a city that it would otherwise not have. With the new capital, **cities should aim to achieve what they want to do anyway, whether the funding is there or not.** Events such as the Olympics should therefore act as instigators for achieving something that a city wants to achieve anyway, in order to be worthy and sustainable investments for the city.

In the future, **urban development strategies will be more people-driven.** Consequently, there will be more need for public debate about what it is that people want. Urban development strategies will therefore need to incorporate more public consultation. One way of doing so, as was the case in Paris, is

by triggering media attention. Through protests, a big public debate came about, which highlighted the local populations desire for discussing the issues at hand. Public consultation is thus very important when implementing these projects and events, but in the current practice, it is often neglected.

It is also important that cities do not become too greedy: **projects and events should be sought after that are relative to their capacity as a city. After all, urban areas are made for people, and you need to have a combination of density and diversity for some events and projects, which not all cities have.** Cities should thus really focus on their capabilities and capacities to host such projects, but not lose ambition in the process. As was pointed out, **“we need to have dreams and illusions that are unrealistic to get anywhere”.**



Expert meeting

Redefining the Zuidas

The International Perspectives (tIP) expert meeting forms the second part of the tIP series and aims to put the lecture from the previous day into practice through a select group of experts in the field. This article reflects on the third tIP expert meeting held on the 4th of November, in association with the University of Amsterdam (UvA).

The expert meeting follows the lecture given by Paul Lecroart the day before on Flagship Developments and how large scale urban developments influence and are reflected in national urbanisation strategies. This expert meeting looked more specifically at the meaning of flagship developments and large scale events in cities, with emphasis on the Zuidas and its potential as the new centre of Amsterdam.

The discussion will be used as a first step in the preparation for a winter school that the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR) is organising with the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, the Architectural Association in London and Yale University in January 2012.

Set up expert meeting

1. Presentations:
 - Sebastiaan Dembski (UvA - AISSR) on Symbols as a way to mobilise new energy
 - Rick Vermeulen (UvA) on the RAI as a Culturalist Venue and inspiration from the past
 - Prof. Willem Salet (UvA) on Zuidas, Past and Future
2. Initial Responses: Paul Lecroart and Expert team.
3. Reflective discussion.
4. Conclusions.

tIP 03|07 Expert team

Sebastiaan Dembski – PhD Candidate (UvA – AISSR), Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR)

Robert Dijkmeester – Commercial Director, Municipality of Amsterdam (Zuidas Department)

David Dooghe – Project Leader at Deltametropolis Association

Paul Gerretsen – Director of the Deltametropolis Association

Douglas Grobbo – Managing Director, ABN AMRO NL

Inge Hartkoorn – Reporter/ coordinator at Deltametropolis Association and Stipo

Paul Lecroart – Senior Urban Planner, Urban Planning and Development Institute Ile-de-France

Hans van der Made – Senior Urban Designer, Municipality of Amsterdam (Department of Spatial Planning)

Merten Nefs – Researcher/ designer, Deltametropolis Association

Pero Puljiz – Owner, De Architecten Cie

Heymen Westerveld – Project Architect, Bethem Crowel

Willem Salet – Professor Urban and Regional Planning, University of Amsterdam (Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences)

Rick Vermeulen – PhD Candidate (UvA) and Planner, Municipality of Amsterdam (Department of Spatial Planning)

Presentation #1:

How can symbols mobilise new energy?

Sebastian Dembski, PhD candidate (UvA - AISSR), has been conducting research on the transformation of places that lie at the boundary between town and countryside in the Netherlands and Germany. In his research, he has found that symbols play a big role in reflecting the transformation of places and creating identity. In his view **symbols act as material or rhetoric markers that indicate change: “they carry a message in which a whole series of ideas can be materialised.”** In spatial planning, symbols are important as they can visualise an ongoing transformation and can mark, and even accelerate processes of change. The most famous symbolic marker is probably the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, which signals Bilbao’s change from an industrial to a cultural city. These physical or metaphorical interventions are important when carrying out (large scale) projects, as they give a name to a place: something which is now happening with the Zuidas.

By definition, symbols are not neutral: they are open to different interpretations and therefore also imply conflict. A project like the Zuidas can be interpreted very differently by someone in the financial world and by an anti-globalist for example. This is not necessarily a problem, as long as there are many against a few. It is also important to keep in mind that as symbols are not neutral, they mirror different power relations. They represent different asymmetries, synergies, vested interests, traits, traditions and identities.

For a symbol to work, it needs to be inculcated in people’s minds: it needs to be internalised. This is why heritage, for instance, often serves as a strategic anchor point: it addresses a shared history that is deeply engraved in the local culture. Without it, symbols can appear alien and face public resistance as they counter the established cultural traits.

Good and bad symbols

In attempt to form a good symbol, it is important that the identity of an area is not ignored. In Park Buytenland, the local communities south of Rotterdam were presented with a landscape park which should compensate for the extension of Rotterdam Seaport. The park would act as a symbolic marker: an icon that would turn the agricultural polder landscape upside down.

The ambition of the Province was to realise 600 hectares of new nature and recreation area and to increase the liveability and integration within the city-region. In practice, the plan was met with fierce resistance from the inhabitants. The reason: the symbolic marker as ‘landscape park’ was ignoring the identity of the area. It was disconnected and ignored local initiatives to change the area into ‘the green lung of Rotterdam’. By ignoring these aspects, the progress of the plan has been very limited in the last 5 years. The example therefore shows that using classical nature compensation interventions do not always work.

Another example where the chosen symbol did not work was with Chemtech in Wesseling, Germany. Regionale 2010, a policy initiative that stimulates regional co-operation (similar to the IBA), supported this plan. Wesseling wanted to reinvent its image, which was highly dominated by the chemical industry. The plan was to redress the negative image by portraying the chemical industry as a strength in stead of a problem: it would be Wesseling’s unique selling point.

The outcome was Forum Chemtech: a five-story glass tower, which would be used as a meeting point and exhibition space that would highlight the role that the chemical industry has played in Wesseling. Although the idea was good, much went wrong. Not only was the demand for such a meeting space unclear, it also had many funding problems. The municipality’s high ambitions never matched the potential contributions of the private chemical companies and the symbolic mark-

er, Forum Chemtech, clashed with the picturesque image of a Rhine village: it sought to transform the last historic remnants of Wesseling. By missing out societal actors and overestimating the willingness of the private sector to contribute, the municipality missed out on a lot. This project was therefore not deemed a success as **the symbolic marker was not rooted in the private and civic realms of the area**. The symbol clashed with the other identity of the village.

Another example from the Regionale 2010 is Terra Nova, to the west of Cologne. Here 3 municipalities in a lignite mining area wanted to present their ‘active Brownfield landscape’ in a different way. Up until then, the mining industry was hidden from view and the municipalities wanted to change this by creating a spectacular energy landscape for the future. This new landscape would highlight the ongoing mining activities and prepare the place for times that would follow. The Regionale 2010 programme provided the funding and several projects were set up, including a cycle path on a band transport line, a park along the progressing edge of the pit, a coal innovation centre at the power station and an energy agriculture technology park building.

Unlike the previous examples, the public and private sector created a joined-up symbol, as **it was in the interest of both that they would cooperate. Their mutual dependencies lay in the fact that the industry wanted to have a good relationship with the public**, as lignite mining is not a desired industry in general terms. Only the energy technology park became problematic, but by and large, the project was very successful. **The chosen symbolic markers helped enlarge the meaning and identity of the landscape and successfully transformed the past into a new future.**

Lessons learned: Symbols and the Zuidas.

The research and examples have emphasised 3 main points:

1. Symbolic markers need to represent

the real identity of a place. For this, the past should not be forgotten when planning for the future and the site-specific details should be taken into serious consideration when forming the symbol in order for it to successfully work as a transformation tool.

2. **The underlying message of the symbol needs to be embedded in the mental maps of the stakeholders** (i.e. the state, market and society), in order to effectively work symbols need to link with all actor domains.

3. **It is important to realise where the symbolic marker stems from**. In many cases, the state plays a central role in forming the process, and the public is ignored. Society, should be taken as the starting point when forming these symbols however. After all, they need to relate to the identity of the place.

Reflecting these findings on the Zuidas, some key questions should be looked at. As a business district with an ambition to become a quarter where ‘new urbanity’ can be experienced, the Zuidas is currently in a process of reorientation. This has opened it up to all sorts of initiatives, while the market is regaining its strength.

With this context in mind, Sebastiaan Dembsky asked for a more in-depth reflection of the whole Zuidas thought-process, to really consider the following questions:

1. What is the identity of Zuidas Amsterdam? What is it now, and what does it want to become?

2. Which physical or metaphorical symbols are needed to reflect this identity and it’s core ambitions? The ING building for example, but are there other ‘messages’ that need to be underpinned more strongly?

3. How can this be organised to ensure the symbol truly reflects the heart of the identity and society, as opposed to a symbol brought about from a planning perspective alone?

Dembsky’s tip for the Zuidas would be to invent less symbolic markers from the project organisation perspective and to, instead, try find them in society.

Presentation #2:

The RAI as a Culturalist Venue and inspiration from the past

Rick Vermeulen, PhD candidate (UvA), has been examining the role of exhibitions and large scale events in cities, with reference to Françoise Choay's framework of utopian mechanisms. These mechanisms depicts two currents: the 'culturalist' perspective, in which all functions are related, heterogeneous, intermingled and work as an organic collective; and the 'progressiste' perspective, in which functions are separated and emphasis lies in efficiency, technical relevance and a rational, modern, individual whole.

Rick Vermeulen used these two perspectives as a means to reflect on the development of exhibitions in cities: to look at how they are framed and used in reality and whether they follow a more culturalist or progressiste current of utopia.

The development of exhibition centres

Exhibition centres have, ever since the beginning, always taken place in cities. They initially catered as places to hold (religious) festive events and signified a place of celebration. The first real exhibition centres, in terms of incorporating a physical structure, came about in the mid-19th century, with some famous examples including London's Crystal Palace, Munich's Glaspalast, Frankfurt's Festhalle and Amsterdam's Paleis voor Volksvlijt. These centres provided the public with a space to hold celebrations, parties, concerts and even public lectures.

Following the 1920's, industrialisation really started to take off, leading to a growth in the production and demand of new products. Exhibition centres thus changed into spaces to hold shows and exhibitions, attracting many visitors, which also led to the extension of existing centres and the building of new pavilions. This happened all across Europe, including the expansion of Amsterdam's Old RAI, Munich's Theresienhohe and

Vienna's Prater Amusementpark. These centres were not only used for exhibitions, but also as theme parks. They would often be linked with amusement and entertainment, including ferris wheels, restaurants, café's and ghost rides. The exhibition centre therefore acted as part of a bigger theme: **it was a place for citizens to go, enjoy culturalist facilities and to be educated and entertained.** The centres would attract people from all over the city and would be a space for civic pleasure and for learning. **The early exhibition centres therefore took on a culturalist perspective: they grew organically, allowed for close spatial and functional integration within the city and offered a diverse range of activities.**

The second World War marked a whole new turning point. With the expectations that the industrial sector would re-expand, many new showcasing facilities were built. These facilities, such as the new RAI in Amsterdam, were mainly built in the centre of cities and were much larger than previous centres. This did have a consequence however: it became a huge architectural challenge to manage these places. The new structures required rationality: organising the visitor flows, designing functional layouts, catering for the accessibility and infrastructure of large volumes of people, activities and products, e.g. the vehicles coming in and out of the premise, the building of parking lots, ship loading docks, stations, motorways, railways etc.

This formed a huge challenge, especially as these centres were mainly built in the city centres. Besides these difficulties, the exhibition centres were consuming large parts of the urban fabric and the events also changed in character: they were moving away from the civic, celebratory events, and becoming more focussed on large scale public events. In effect, this diminished the integration with the city: more visitors were coming from outside the city, as opposed to inside the city, and the events increasing took place indoors.

Arguably, the shift in character led to many exhibition centres being underused and

bringing in problems to the city, such as traffic congestion, overused parking spaces and the overconsumption of territory.

To counter the growing problems with these new centres, a more separatist approach was adopted to disconnect the event from the city. This resulted in new (re)developments, including Greenfield development in Milan, where an old refinery was transformed into a new venue, and the alteration of an old airport site in Munich into a large event facility. These changes marked a shift from culturalist, embedded exhibition facilities to functionalist, separated ‘progressiste’ facilities, and also now marks a point at which we can change again.

Whether looking from the perspective of an exhibition centre (such as the RAI) or the perspective of the Zuidas, a large scale development project, the current trend is posing a huge design challenge for the future. Returning to a culturalist perspective may be the solution to developing these projects further, however, how can this be realised?

The shift from a progressiste to culturalist perspective entails that there needs to be a change from isolated to integrated functions: the programme needs to enrol itself into different parts of the city. Additionally, a polynuclear structure should be adopted so that the location of events can occur in different parts of the city. Emphasis should also be placed on quality, not to quantity, as large events or locations do not necessarily reflect the quality of a development or event: **sometimes less is more**. Finally, the events should diversify and move away from a homogeneity: the focus should be on more varied activities and locations, which form synergies amongst themselves.

Potentials for a culturalist Zuidas

These changes are already being introduced with regard to the RAI. The RAI has made much effort to ‘return to the city’ through various initiatives, e.g. the Water Week in Amsterdam is now taking place in

various venues as opposed to just one, the International Dance Event in Amsterdam has diversified its activities, the RAI has created new synergies with the VU University and uses its lecture halls to host some events. The car RAI has also been ‘rolled out’ into the streets and a new square has been created in front of the RAI in order to bring events, such as its furniture exhibition, to the public.

The Zuidas could use these ideas as a springboard to kick-start new developments and partnerships. It could, for example, make more use of linking various parts of the Zuidas, or by exploiting the potential of the Olympic stadium to form synergies with other institutions in the area. Partnerships can be formed with the VU University, for example, to create value for temporal use, e.g. using the lecture halls as meeting place or conference halls. Besides this, more can also be done with the buildings located in-between the large, important infrastructures (like the Olympic stadium and the VU University). The gap between these buildings, i.e. the banks, accountancy and law firms, needs to be bridged to create a collective, relational whole. Although the Zuidas is well on its way to achieving this, it can be good to sometimes boldly state these ideas and to really push the creative thinking process further. **These changes may entail practical problems, but the ideas may also form creative, successful solutions for the Zuidas.**

Presentation #3:

Zuidas: Past and Future

Willem Salet, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Amsterdam, gave a brief reflection on the history and future needs of the Zuidas. As a concept, the Zuidas has always had an image problem. When the University started to investigate it 8 years ago, the Zuidas was seen as a new Fordist project. In reality, however, it was part of a new entrepreneurial epoch: cities all over the world were undergoing a process of urban transformation, internationally competing to build new economic centres.

In the Netherlands, the Zuidas, along with the development of the Schiphol area, signalled the reorganisation of the urban fabric at this international level. It was initially the product of the merges of the national banks in the Netherlands, who decided to move to this peripheral space. This move signalled the ambition of Amsterdam to become a major international economy, at least in the eyes of planners. The inhabitants of Amsterdam, however, viewed this development differently: they perceived the Zuidas as the *periphery* of Amsterdam, not as a new important centre. The varying perspectives indicated that it was unclear what the strategic and symbolic function of the Zuidas was within the process of urban transformation. After all, the Zuidas was created by the private sector, and has a clear ambition to become a new prestigious economic space. The Zuidas therefore became the emblematic new economic district of the Netherlands. In the research process, the University of Amsterdam looked at 7 other international cities which were undergoing a similar process, and it **became clear that the Zuidas was extremely successful in terms of the economic aspect. It reflected the first ever hierarchal economic space in the Netherlands: the first real economic district.**

Although the meaning of the Zuidas was clearly successful in international and economic terms, it wasn't kicking off in Amsterdam. Partly due to its geography, its specialist function and its peripheral perception, the creative class of Amsterdam turned its back to the Zuidas: they simply forgot about it. The municipality therefore decided that the area needed to change: it needed to become more than just a prestigious economic centre in Amsterdam: it needed to become a new centre of urban diversity.

This posed a big challenge in the planning process, which was mainly focussed on developing the centre of the Zuidas, not on finding ways to integrate the different parts in the urban fabric. With such a centre-focussed, central government-backed plan in place, suggesting new alternatives is difficult. The

idea is now completely directed at placing the motorway underground, and suggesting alternative options for diversity when the central government has positive expectations with the current plan, is complex. The current process has led to many negotiations, that take up much time and are constantly being postponed. The Zuidas centre has become part of this 'tunnelled' process and it is important that this changes.

Although the Masterplan itself is diverse and focussed on housing, facility and urban variation, not much of this has been realised in practice. **The Zuidas needs to come up with a more flexible, incremental design for the area and to make decisions here and now.** Although the management has already made a major step in deciding to focus on putting the motorway underground (the final decision is still up to the central government), **it is important to always have a plan B and C in such a process.**

One idea to consider is that the Zuidas has, from offset, been promoted and implemented as a new, exclusive space. The question now, however, is: do we really want to be exclusive? The peripheral areas of the Zuidas offer much potential for development, e.g. the areas around the Olympic stadium and the VU University. These can be further developed, so that they become more embedded and incorporated in the surrounding urban fabric. The current economic crisis has forced some changes in the economic aspects of the developments: there was no choice but to diversify some parts of the financial sector for instance. This can have beneficial consequences for the Zuidas as it can attract more people to the area.

Other sectors that can be improved include the retail sector (which needs to diversify), the creation of an attractive, over ground railway station (if the central government approves the underground motorway) and cultural facilities, which needs to include more cultural functions. The latter can cater for the sub-cultures of Amsterdam, for example, as they also form an important part of

the Zuidas. Besides this, it is also important to think of housing: it is currently not very active in this area, but it forms a crucial part to creating 'life' in the Zuidas. Social housing associations should play a far bigger role in the area, to make it a vibrant, attractive urban space to live in.

Lastly, a suggestion may be to look at the potentials of privatised space. The Zuidas currently contains the best restaurant and best studio in the country, has much office space and the ABN AMRO theatre for example: can these spaces be used differently or more effectively? Can the top floor of an office be transformed into a trendy bar or club for example? Would private companies be open to thinking about this? After all, using these types of spaces could completely transform the Zuidas... so why not give it a try?

The economic crisis is calling for a new perspective on urban planning and for the Zuidas, new types of development can bring about positive changes. Moving towards a more diverse model can contribute to making the Zuidas a clearer, visible centrality and this can help link the different parts together to form a more complete and lively whole.

The crisis therefore presents an opportunity for change: this new epoch can bring about much more urban activity than the first epoch did, and although such a process can take 30-40 years to realise, we should view this opportunity as a turning point for the Zuidas. The current economic conditions demand the active involvement of this turning point and therefore we should be focussed on changing the image of the Zuidas: **from an economic district to a new, vibrant urban cen-**

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tre that the people of Amsterdam recognise and can identify with.

Reflections on the 3 presentations

After the presentations, a discussion followed which looked at the issues and questions that should be considered for the winter school in January 2012. Paul Lecroart opened with a reflection on the opportunity that the Zuidas project provides for rethinking the centre. He noted that **the unique and challenging situation for the Zuidas now is that the business community is taking a step back, which allows the civic milieu to re-invest in the Zuidas.** In order to give it meaning and develop its identity, the historical and geographical dimensions form an important part of the story. After all, **if you want people to relate to it, it must be identifiable and speak to people.** For this reason, it is important to reflect on the overall needs of the entire area: not just the needs of the people in Zuidas, but also those in neighbouring Amstelveen and Amsterdam-Zuid. Their insight may provide new ideas and opportunities for the Zuidas.

The nature of the Zuidas is that it is primarily a functional project. By definition, it is related to mobility and the fact that it is a hub. But, these two elements do not make it a city. **It is therefore important to look at the Zuidas from the perspective of the users, i.e. the commuters, and from the perspective of mobility as an experience.** In terms of commuters, their needs and wants should be catered for: e.g. what services do they need from stations? Plugs to charge phones? Wifi? Quiet seating areas? The next step is to then look at their relationship with mobility: how can this be made into a real, enjoyable experience? Can the different mobility flows produce something visible for instance? An option may be using movement as a way to activate lighting around the station. **Creative ideas to make mobility flows visible, combined with the historical and geographic character of the area, are crucial aspects to keep in mind when thinking of the story that the Zui-**

das wants to convey.

Another way to attract people to the Zuidas is by creating incentives through events. These can help 'make' a place, whether these are small-scaled public events, informal processes, special events on particular dates or free standing facilities that open up when opportunities arise. **A city centre management team should be established which responds to people's needs and ensures that the public realm is active at all times.** In this sense, the huge available public space can be used more effectively. **Our perception of public space should therefore also change: from seeing it as bricks and mortar, to looking at it as opportunities for programmable space.** This may be the future of urban development, where instead of focussing on flagships, we focus on cargo, flexible buildings and flexible urbanity.

It is clear that, for now, the Zuidas may be using the wrong symbols to profile itself. It wants to move away from an image dominated by business, to one which is more diverse and varied. The challenge is thus to adopt an image which reflects and attracts new 'life' to the Zuidas, especially after standard 9-5 working hours. In this sense, the Zuidas has moved from a planning strategy to a place-making strategy.

In order to achieve these ambitions, the housing industry and cultural facilities in the Zuidas need to be stimulated. This can be done, for instance, by using the spectacular views as a strength it can promote: high rise buildings should use this to their advantage and rent out their top floors for example. **Renting out the top floors will not only make the Zuidas buildings more transparent, but it will also increase the visibility of the abundance of businesses in the area.**

Although this can offer many solutions, in practice this may be problematic. Many banks and office spaces simply do not want to rent out their top floors for other functions. This may be due to maintenance costs, contract problems or merely the fact that they simply do not want this combination of func-

tions. In this sense, **urban planning will always lie at the boundary between organising territory and politics.**

In terms of the expectations, it is important to realise that the density of the Zuidas is (currently) not high enough to create a real thriving urban centre. The station, on the other hand, does have the needed density and maybe this is where the potential of the Zuidas lies. Not only is the station significant for the larger region in Amsterdam, but it's also important for Randstad Holland. **With the rail and transport improvements currently being developed, the Zuidas will be at arms length of many cities and this will make a significant change to its accessibility, and therefore its attractiveness as a whole.**

As it currently stands, however, the Zuidas may not be big enough to compete with the historical centre of Amsterdam. Amsterdam, after all, has an abundance of beautiful places on offer. Additionally, there is much competition for the same creative energy, investments and functions from all the municipalities in the region, all trying to develop different locations. Without this competition, these functions may have been placed in the Zuidas. **The location of the Zuidas may be a determinant for its bad destiny in this sense: its geography means it will always be competing with Amsterdam.**

One argument, or controversial method, may be to do absolutely nothing for the next few years: freeze the situation and preserve what is already there. This may be a solution if an identity cannot be decided on, as freezing it can help install a local culture or society in the area. If no new investments are introduced in the Zuidas, then **this can be a method to consider, as it can create a sense of permanence.** Some buildings may currently be on hold for demolition, renovation or relocation, and freezing the situation (or at least the buildings and functions that are worthwhile) can be an incentive for them to anchor themselves properly in the area.

On the other hand, a combined identity where too many factors play a role will also

not work, as it will just form a blurred 'grey' character, and thus no clear identity. Arguably, however, the Zuidas does have enough strong symbolic and distinguishing characteristics which do give its own identity. Besides its status as a business district and its clear mobility flows, the Zuidas has a crucial link with Schiphol. **Although Schiphol could survive without the Zuidas, the Zuidas is dependant on Schiphol for its existence:** this connection should therefore really be fostered and celebrated as part of its identity. With the two other large banks in the Netherlands being in Zuid-Oost (Deutsche Bank and ING), the Zuidas (with ABN AMRO and RBS) should **form closer bonds with Zuid-Oost and Schiphol, as a way to strengthen the international identity of the area as a whole.**

The relocation of the ABN AMRO Bank to the Zuidas acted as a huge magnet for law and accountancy firms to also move there. This has been a real success, but **the Zuidas now needs a new magnet, as new financial institutions will not come to the area.** The new magnet may come from the creative sector, for instance: e.g. advertising agencies or other brands which will attract investments and new businesses to the area. The current economic climate calls for a new approach, in which more flexible use of space and (each others) facilities will be required.

Our way of working, living and learning is changing and this has a significant effect on the way we use our buildings. The question is thus: how can this be accommodated? Can the VU University do more to stimulate the use of its campus for example? Can the ABN AMRO Bank provide empty office space to other businesses or conferences? Can the World Trade Centre be used as a catalyst to promote and attract the creation of a larger knowledge quarter? And can the Olympic stadium, or empty office spaces, be used more effectively to accommodate for the demand? Life in the Zuidas is definitely there, we just need to learn how to find it.

The current economic climate may have a positive influence on the development of

the Zuidas. After all, people respond to constraints by changing their behaviour. Maybe the solution could be to create a vibrant avenue for the Zuidas? Other urban avenues, such as the Champs-Élysées and Lake Shore Drive in Chicago have been very successful, both in terms of creating a vibrant atmosphere and dealing with traffic problems. Both still experience large daily traffic flows (100,000 and 140,000 vehicles respectively), but do not constrain the attractiveness and liveliness of the area. Changing traffic management may therefore be an important aspect to keep in mind. Maybe Seoul's Cheonggyecheon project can be viewed as an exemplary method to adopt? This may seem like a crazy idea now, but ambitious ideas can also breed creative solutions. Much can also be achieved at a smaller scale: Club11 in Amsterdam was hugely successful for example, even though it just a singular, small-scale activity.

On a final note, it is important to keep in mind that in order to have and maintain a flourishing international dimension, it is essential to have a strong local element to support it. The whole area should be taken into account, not just the Zuidas. If the Zuidas wants to profile itself as a centre in its hinterland, then this can only be achieved if it is recognised at an enlarged Zuidas scale, a North wing scale and at the bigger Randstad Holland scale. For this reason, urban developments such as the Zuidas, should always accommodate for the people it will affect, whether they are commuters, local inhabitants or visitors. The power of the Zuidas, after all, lies in these people.

Agenda

Zuidas is now in a challenging situation in which it is unlikely that new head quarters or their affiliates will move to the area. This makes way for new sorts of businesses (attracted by its connection with Schiphol) and the civic milieu to re-invest in the Zuidas.

For this to happen, more knowledge is needed on flexible and temporary buildings use and the effective utilisation of public space. More specifically, we need more inspirational design projects at the building, public space and collective spaces level to show the new possibilities for a mixed and temporary use.

But just as important as the design projects, more knowledge is needed on how this mixture and temporary use can be implemented in the development process and what their specific advantages are for stakeholders and the users of the area.

By doing so, Zuidas, (as the flagship development of the Netherlands) could become the flagship for a new way of developing large-scale urban areas which encompasses a mixed milieu of different businesses and civic institutions.

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