# Reflection

The subject I have touched on throughout the whole graduation, mobility, is quite a complex and broad topic. It is at the intersection of urbanism, transportation science and architecture, which places it in a spot where it fits broadly in the MSc AUBS. The "crossovers" aspect in the project is about these disciplines.

At the start, I've focussed mostly on the public transport network of London, but later it slowly started to shift more in the direction of cycling, walking and mobility hubs. This shift has made the project more architectural, but also more complex. My approach was to in collect as much information from different sources and places, to get a as big as possible picture. I've read books, papers and watched videos about cycling infrastructure, the several concepts in my paper. The site visit has helped a lot in understanding and experiencing the way mobility in London works. To understand the topic better, I have also looked at precedent projects in a broad spectrum and mapped them cartographically with a custom set of categories.

It has been at the core of my research and design to make the project as representable as possible. The decision to place the site in Ilford is a direct result of it. During the site visit, I've looked at several places along the Elizabeth line to find the place that is the most representative

of all. I found it in Ilford, where there is a clear centre, however not too big, not too shifted to one (sub)culture, a typical set of surroundings and connections to public transport. This way, the project can be implemented in as many spots as possible within London (and even outside of it), with the least number of adjustments.
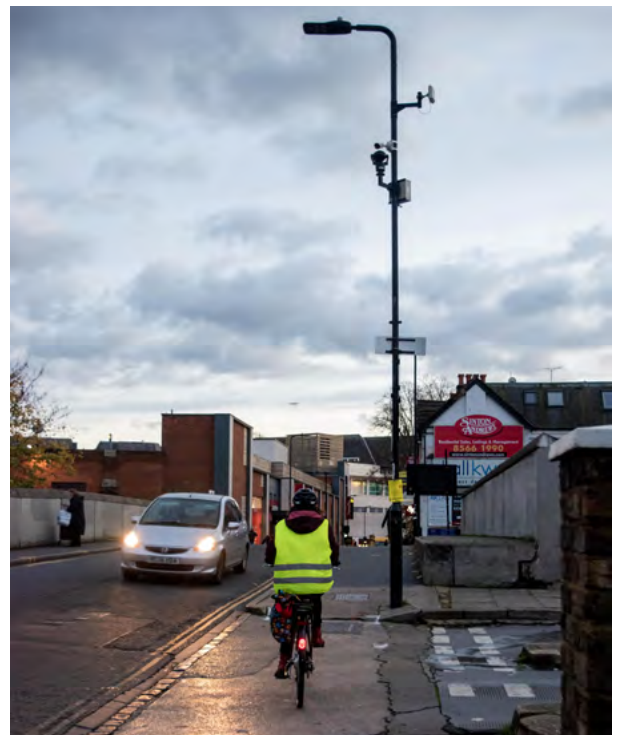
This photo I made during the site visit speaks 1000 words to me about the situation in London.

The candidate design sites I visited during the field trip, which I considered suitable.
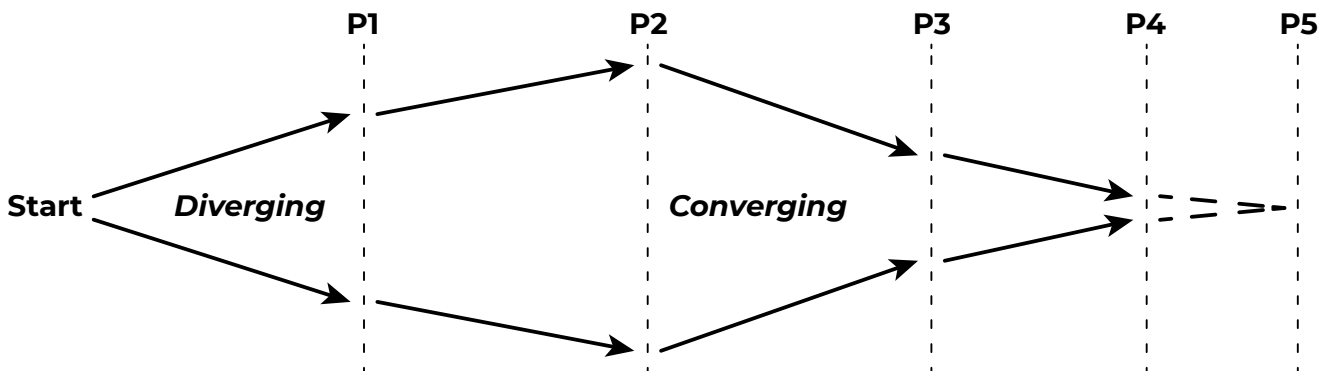
The process of diverging an converging during the graduation.

The diverging research and city and site analysis has led to a broad understanding of the topic and the area, but also created a complex mesh of information. After this period of diverging which was up to halfway in between the P1 and P2, I had to converge, to start understanding the "why". The fact is that scientific research does not give a clear answer to that. I've slowly but surely got this understanding from architectural precedents and concepts and books from urbanists. In short, the main goal is not only to work on climate change and health, but the day-to-day experience of the users of the city, quite a shift in my initial thoughts about the topic.

This way the research and design have constantly influenced each other. A good anecdote is the book "Het recht van de snelste" (Verkade, 2020), which has drifted my view of mobility hubs and mobility as an efficiency machine, to a more human-based approach of experience and desire. Of course, my knowledge of Ilford is not endless, and even though I have researched the surroundings quite a bit, it will most likely still have some shortcomings which I cannot solve within the time frame of the graduation.

The step from the research to the design at P2 was also a complex one. It was sure I wanted to design the place where the different modes of transport meet and people change between them. This hub must be designed, but this much more than only transportation. Suddenly a topic outside of my research paper came up: which functions to add to this hub, to make it a pleasant and good functioning one. Of course, there are lots of precedents and there is architectural research about it. Some functions were obvious, other were debatable. In the end, the essential functions such as the bike garage were all added, and the less logical ones were decided on the base of comparison to other precedents, literature and a bit of intuition.

Throughout most of the process, it has mostly been a process of diverging. The feedback of the tutors was mostly to narrow down the topic. This is true for both the research paper and the design. Though it is easier said than done. For the research this has led to a critical review of the research I had done, to focus on the essence of my vies and interests. This has led me to decide to exclude the architectural research from the paper and move it to a separate entity to be used in the design. For the design it was more difficult, as the precedent projects are quite

diverse and do not give a clear direction of mobility hubs, they are all in all locally perfected in a unique way. This was the eventual answer to the problem, to look what is needed at the design sites area specifically. I will not claim to have found the answer, I think it is the biggest pitfall when designing a mobility hub and most things TOD oriented to think that there is one true answer of perfection.

The final part of the design after the P3 was themed to further narrow down the project I had till that moment. Questions I asked myself are: Is it really needed to have these functions at the specific places? Are they well connected to each other and the neighbourhood, so that they contribute? Still, I have the feeling that some aspects of my project are 'shopped', although it was already discussed to be an inevitable result of designing for mobility. The resulting process was a zoom in in all scales, the functions were left intact, but the specificness was increased. So, for instance, the entrance hall needs not only a reception, but also a place where passers-by can store their stuff and look for information to continue their travels.

Overall, the topic is quite political, with the topic having a big impact on people's lives if it is implemented. Although it broadly accepted by the academic community as the right way to go, not everybody in society thinks that way. Although architects are not scared to make bold political statements, I want to look out for my project being politicalised too much. My goal is to create a city and building in favour of people, not protests.

The rest of the project until the P5 will mostly focus on perfecting the design and the presentation projects. The important research and design questions are already answered, so it will mostly be revolving around finding mistakes and improving them, finding better ways to present the design and getting into more detail in important areas of the design.

Photo: Colville-Andersen (2018)
The right to cycle has already been protested on, such as here in Copenhagen. The subject of the project gains momentum in such cases, but I do not want my project to be a place of protest, but rather a place of experimentation.

Two additional reflecting questions

How is it possible to know that London will shift to the bike in the coming years, making the project relevant?

In short: it is not. During my research I have found people stating how they think the future of mobility will look like, but maybe even more that state you cannot predict it. I have given it a try in my research paper (chapter: Future of mobility), but also there I say that it will almost certainly happen differently. I have a clear vision on the future of mobility, I really want other countries to have a cycling culture at the same level my home country has it. For that reason, that is the direction I am heading with my project. It is an assumption that it will happen that way. If it would be implemented, my project is also a way to increase awareness of the topic, maybe people will give the bike a try if a new project with infrastructure is constructed. But also, maybe they do not, it is not as if one project will convert the whole country to using bikes, it is a process that needs cultural change, political will and financial support. All of which are out of my reach as an architect.

How do you know if the chosen functions are the right ones?

This question has been the most pursuing of all during the process of designing. I have thought long about it. I've tried answering the question in different way. First, reading literature, such as Onder weg! : Vijftien ontwerpen voor transit oriented development aan de Zaancorridor. (BNA, 2014) and Mobility Hubs of the Future (RISE & Arup, 2020), which give a wide range of possible functions to add to a mobility hub, including examples of real-life TOD implementations. Second, comparison to precedents, however most of them are so different to each other they do not provide an answer. Third,

own experience, but this way is inherently subjective, and I am not designing a mobility hub only for myself. Last, asking other people including the tutors, again with differentiating answers. However, all four have slowly gave me the inside that there is no real right answer. Different things might work and will have to be tried out before you can be certain they will work or not in a specific location. This has eventually given me peace with the matter, as my project is a way to try out functions, to look whether it catches on. The project is an experiment to find a clue to the answer.

Deciding on which functions to add has led me to make a lot of notes like this.