

THE AUTOMOTIVE FOYER

A Personal Reflection on the Graduation project - P5 Revision

Delft University of Technology

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ABSTRACT

This essay offers a personal reflection upon the graduation process, and describes its academic relevance within a broader urban discussion. The structure of this paper is in answering the given questions, found in the graduation manual. It focusses mostly on the scientific value of the proposal and describes the relationship between the individual and ground work, the graduation studio's method and wider architectural discourse. The project on which this paper offers a reflection, tries to formulate a solution to the parking problem in the inner city centre of Amsterdam. I does so by creating a transitional space just within the city periphery, where motorists can transfer from a regional mobility form to a local one.

INTRODUCTION

"Today it would be unimaginable to think of a world without cars. It was this very invention that since its introduction in 1885 brought societies together, gave people freedom, and brought prosperity to economies. After more than one hundred thirty years, the car has become an integral component of modern life, to such an extent that it is part of the urban fabric. Cities have been reimagined to facilitate this means of transport. Tremendous road networks have been constructed. New building typologies were designed. As a result, there are now an estimated 600 million cars on this planet, with numerous projections, suggesting this will increase to a billion by 2030. However the car and its physical by-products, such as infrastructure and parking facilities, have become increasingly unpopular due to the polluting effect on our environment and experience of the city. Nowadays we are told, we must abandon the car and break ourselves of decades of dependency. But despite all protests against the car and its effects, people still love to drive. To condemn the car from the road, denies most people of their everyday amusement. Hence a more thought out solution is needed"¹.

The aforementioned text could be seen as the project's manifesto, and explains the importance of car mobility and its vast influence on the modern society. It is widely proven that the high level of mobility within a civilisation, translates to

prosperity and economical vitality. In the Netherlands people rely for over seventy percent on car mobility, and therefore the automobile is of key essence to the Dutch. However, increasing environmental consequences are restraining the use of automotive mobility. Like so in Amsterdam, the chosen site for this graduation studio, where the car is restricted in a continuous manner. Particularly the city's parking policies are becoming increasingly restrictive. Combine this with Amsterdam's inadequate public transit system, and as a result the city has become gridlocked. Knowing that the Dutch mobility system relies heavily on car transport, the broader social aim of this graduation project is to develop an alternative proposal to counter this restrictive culture. Therefore the the claim with this project is that the car should not be largely restricted, but facilitated in a more efficient manner. To visualise this thought, the decision is made to research and design a substitute solution to the city's parking problem. As a consequence, the project will incorporate a large amount of parking supply, to relief the inner city, and due to its strategic positioning offers a pleasant transition between regional and local forms of transport. All in favour to assist the motorist in its journey, by supplementing comfort and elegance, which will result in "The Automotive Foyer".

¹. van Heeswijk, W. (2018). The Rise and Evolution of Carchitecture: How the Automobile changed our Profession and Environment. Delft, The Netherlands. p. 3



Fig. 1: Initial Collage "A New Foyer" (p0.5)



Fig. 2: Collage "An Urban Foyer" (p1.0)

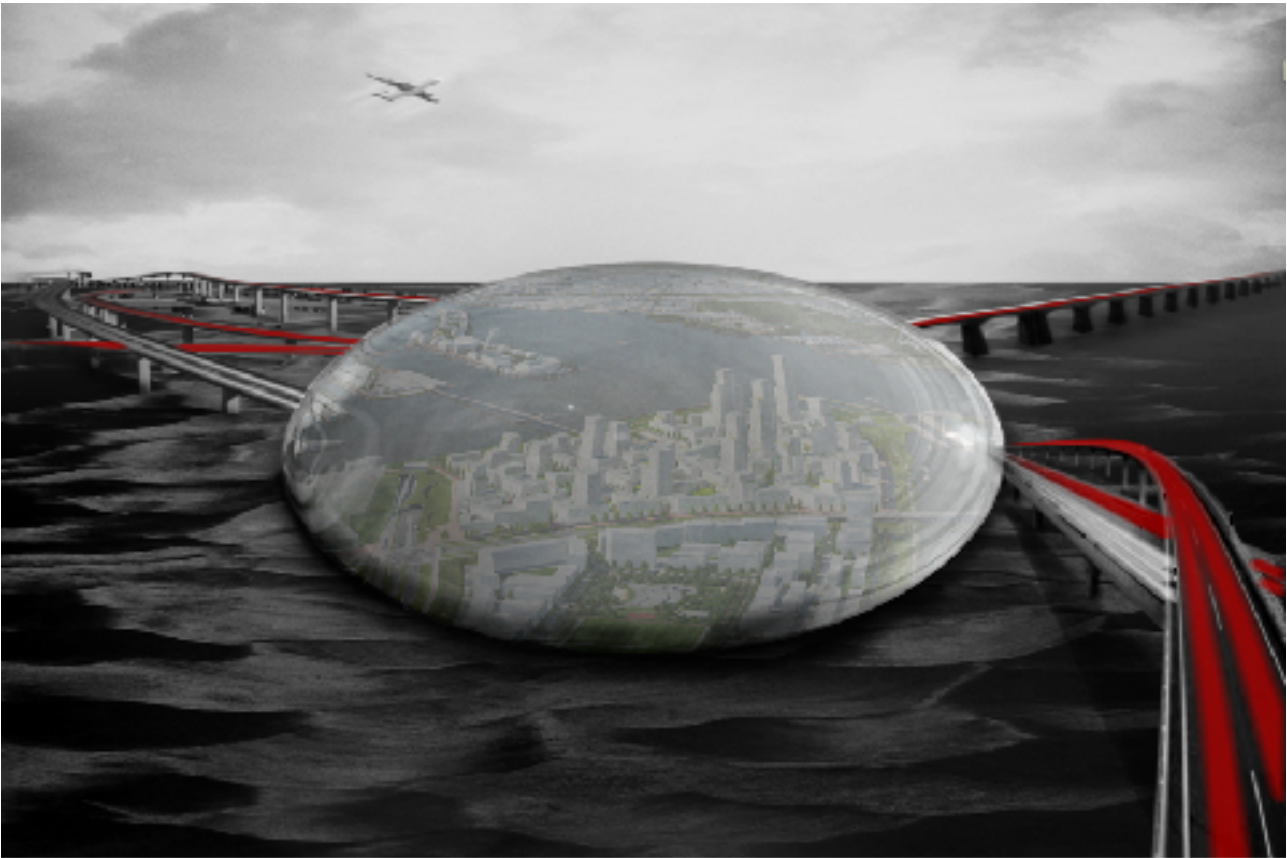


Fig. 3: Collage "An Automotive Foyer" (p1.5)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN.

The initial interest, on the topic of mobility, derived from the location of our group site. This location is situated mostly on the island of Zeeburgereiland and the river IJ. This island is one of the few places within the urban area which is not developed yet. In its current state it functions merely as a major infrastructural artery. Since this is its sole urban purpose, I made the decision to investigate it more deeply.

During this research it became apparent that the roads on the island are one of three primary enclosing traffic routes, and were therefore of pivotal importance to the city. When subsequently the research directed more toward larger urban development and mobility, the significance of this route was confirmed. During a twenty four hour cycle, more than 66.000 cars will pass these roads. This knowledge became the cradle for my overall topic and ambition, one of improving car mobility

within the city of Amsterdam, by enhancing the infrastructural function of the location.

In the process of researching this topic, essentially the local car related problem, is the city's historical urban morphology, which is not and will on no occasion be orientated to automotive mobility. This led me to the conclusion that if this problem could be tackled, it should be done at the border of the city. Therefore the island is the perfect location, thanks to its vicinity to the A10 Ring-road and 'blank sheet' status.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GRADUATION TOPIC, STUDIO TOPIC, AND MASTER TRACK.

The layout of the graduation studio of Complex Projects is that in the first part (Msc. 3) the main focus is on gathering information about the given site, in a group setup. By teaming up in the beginning phases of the project worked out quite well, because in the end you develop a broad

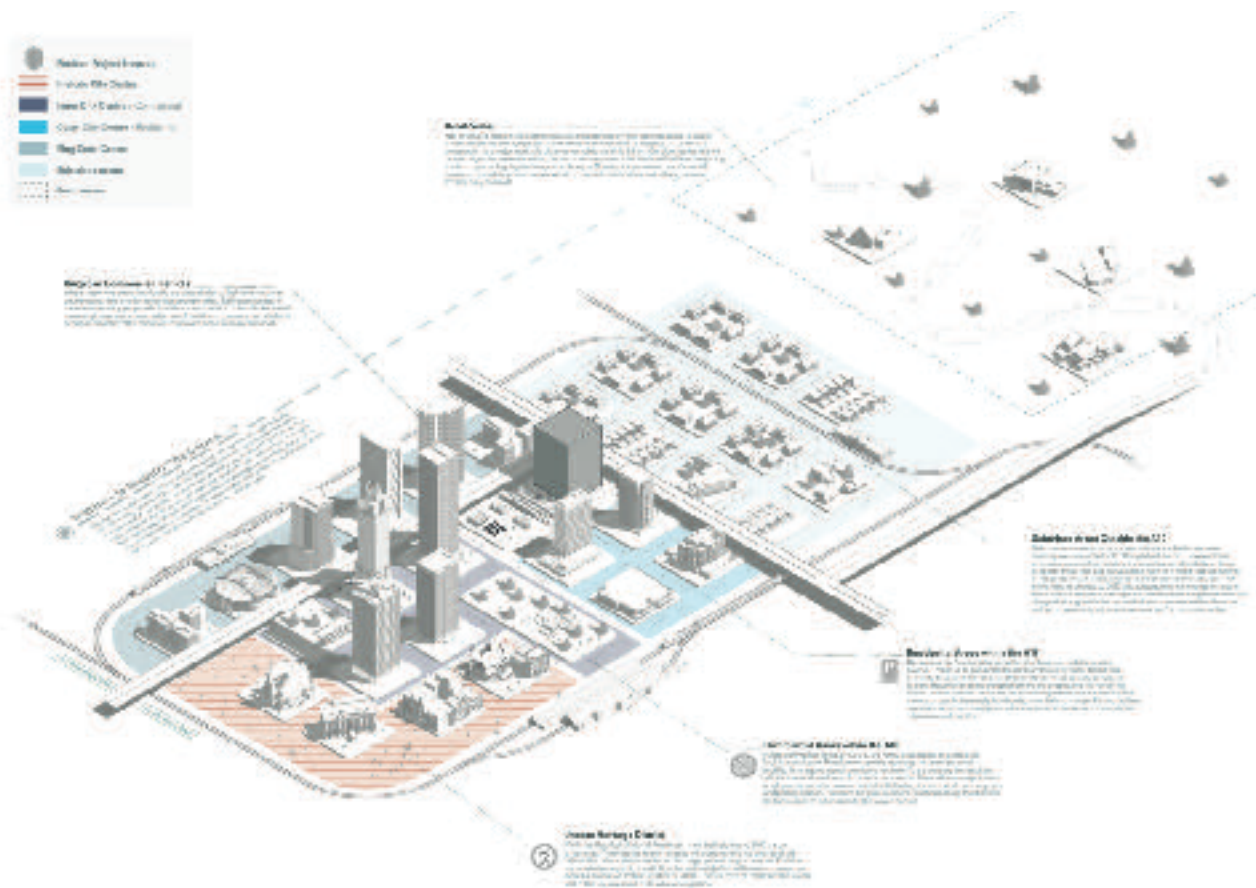


Fig. 4: Diagram proposing an alternative legislation on Urban Mobility (p2.0)

understanding about the site and its relation to the bigger urban system. In addition, by having multiple people focussing on one particular site, generates tonnes of data, what could be used in creating a justifiable proposal. By processing this information into a workable selection of non-architectural topics, it becomes fairly easy to develop a physical solution in the form of an architectural intervention.

Subsequently this research phase every individual student will come up with a graduation proposal, what is strictly connected to their investigation. In my case this was on the subject of mobility, what ultimately translated into the creation of "The Automotive Foyer".

Frankly, I favour this method strongly, due to its rational underpinning to develop architectural designs. In many ways, the global and broad

understanding about the setting in which the project is located, assisted me in convincing my audience.

ELABORATION ON THE RESEARCH METHOD AND APPROACH USED IN RELATION TO THE GRADUATION STUDIO METHODOLOGICAL LINE OF INQUIRY, REFLECTING UPON THE SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE.

Due to the aforementioned methodical process of this graduation project, it applies to the general approach of the studio, which motivates its students to preform numerous cross-disciplinary investigations, to gain a broad database about the environment the design problem is set. As a student which is associated with the Complex Projects studio for some semesters now, I feel quite comfortable with its research approach. By having this broad knowledge about the research environment, designing in it becomes more easy



Fig. 5: Mobility as Leisure activity (p2.0)

and effective. And by applying a strong rationale throughout the design process, the proposal becomes readable and clear, which helps in presenting it.

On the matter of this particular project, which is strongly related to its urban environment, it lends itself for multiplication throughout the city, and possibly other comparable places. I strongly believe this proposal will help Amsterdam, be more open to motorists, what eventually increases the accessibility of the city. Having mentioned this, hopefully the project could contribute to the academic debate on urban mobility.

ELABORATION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GRADUATION PROJECT AND THE WIDER SOCIAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC FRAMEWORK.

It is fairly easy to say, that this research subject has a wider social meaning. Car mobility, as mentioned in the manifesto, has immensely changed society since its emergence. Nowadays we live in a highly connected world, physically and digitally, which completely depends on its distinct infrastructure. Mobility is so deeply

connected with our civilisation, that for example every minute of lost travel time, due to congested roads, could be expressed in economical losses. In addition this highly connected world has a severe impact on the environment, in the form of pollution and stressful conditions. As a result there are a lot of ongoing discussions about this topic, with restricting consequences. These restriction subsequently have a regressive effect, and thus in my opinion are not the appropriate solution. Personally I think that we, especially as architects and urban planners, should think of new methods to facilitate the necessary amount of mobility more efficiently, instead of actively removing it from the future scenario.

DISCUSS THE ETHICAL ISSUES AND DILEMMAS ENCOUNTERED DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS.

Following this question, about ethical issues which were encountered during this process, one strongly comes to mind. Throughout the beginning phases of the research, there was a collective idealistic perception within the studio, that automobiles were outdated, and should be



Fig. 6: Research Site: City Islands (Zeeburgereiland)

dropped as soon as possible. People were under the impression that new transport systems, such as Hyper Loops, Rockets, or even flying cars, would completely replace current private mobility options.

As a car enthusiast and owner, I frankly had some trouble with these ideas, due to my knowledge of the qualities of owning a private form of mobility. Besides the fact it transports you to your destination, such as other means of transport, the car delivers a lot more, especially when one has an affinity with it. Therefore I made a strong argument that we should not treat car mobility the same as others, because it is not. It was this

argument which led me mostly to my end product, almost as a sort of protest to the before mentioned ideals. Personally, I found it a quite learning experience, to stand for my own values, even when most are opposing it. Luckily, in the course of the studio, people became more open to the idea that cars are not obsolete (yet), and that there are solutions to the complications related to this machine. On which I hopefully have given an initial suggestion, by designing this parking facility.