

## Introduction

### Continuously changing urban conditions

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Boston*

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	8
'Continuously changing urban conditions'	
<b>Fascinations</b>	14
Amsterdam	15
Boston	28
<b>Amsterdam</b>	40
Site analyses and personal projects	46
<b>Boston</b>	120
Site analyses and personal projects	126
<b>Final presentations shots</b>	206

# Introduction

## Continuously changing urban conditions

Roberto Cavallo  
Maurice Hartevelde  
Joran Kuijper

**Massive urbanization puts pressure on public space and demands new programs along with alternative gathering places such as public interior spaces and a variety of forms of collective spaces. Moreover, in the rapidly changing city, infrastructure and mobility remain of vital importance. A coevolving diversity of program cannot be planned, but interventions in the city need constantly to be grounded on sharp design approaches to respond adequately to the necessities of the time—while being environmentally sustainable, given the available resources.**

**In general, infrastructure, mobility, and public life manifest themselves in various forms as carriers of such urban development. Design experiments, as put forward in this book, show how to work with continuously changing urban conditions, with mobility transforming cities whilst with public spaces taking various forms, with programs which hybridize, and with new technologies to keep up with the urban dynamics. Given these themes, designs should carry awareness of the inclusiveness and accessibility of various systems and places, facilities, and technologies. Spatially this means questioning how to keep the city open and connected, attractive, and livable.**

**In the interdisciplinary MSc II Design Studio *Architecture & Urban Design*, students of the master tracks *Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture* of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment work closely together. The integrative approach of this graduate course setting allows the students to examine urban space as architectural space and architectural space as urban space. Through an experimental design method, developed during the 2018 na-**

**tional research project *Stad van de Toekomst*,<sup>1</sup> the studio is founded on the interest in the intervention in the built environment and its immediate effect on architecture and urban design. The global framework of the *Stad van de Toekomst* project is directly projected on Amsterdam Sloterdijk Station and Boston South Station areas, compressed and applied to this ten-week graduate course.**

**Taken from a wider angle, the project is motivated by urgent social as well as local tasks in the urban areas, varying from housing demand, social inclusiveness, new economy, climate adaptation, and the like, taking into account the transitions in energy, mobility, circularity, and digitization. This echoes through in the central question of the *Stad van de Toekomst* project: *How can we design and develop a transformation area in an integral way into an attractive and future-proof urban environment?* In addition particularly, the project is motivated by the major system transitions impacting on societal tasks effectively desiring progressive urbanization in the first place. On Sloterdijk Station, Amsterdam by resp. Roberto Cavallo, and Maurice Hartevelde:**

“Railways are by nature too often physically disconnected from their (urban) environment, forming an autonomous transport system that follows the logic of efficiency in performance and technique, even when they are located in central urban areas. According to this practice, many railways have been built in the past without considering their integration into the surrounding (urban) environment.”<sup>2</sup>

“In a shift of senses, particularly stations have become multi-modal hubs for commuters and office workers, and thus urban, architectural and infrastructural disciplines have come closer together. The development and design of the current Sloterdijk Station, replacing the first, exemplifies this. It is built on a cross-point of train tracks. While its architects Harry

Reijnders, Jan van Belkum, and Wienke Scheltens added subsequently new station halls in 1983, 1986, 1997, and 2008, a variety of other designers and engineers have responsibility for the plot-wise development in the proximity of the station. Each one adds a piece, closer and closer to each other. They do in multi-disciplinary teams more and more, hence professionals work increasingly synchronic. Nevertheless, disciplinary boundaries and plotlines are today as clear as they have been. The result is a fascinating clash of infrastructural and architectural presence. From an urban perspective, the area is highly connected by public transport, but poorly accessible by different means. From a human perspective, it is still not vital, hardly designed to remain, let alone livable.”<sup>3</sup>

## On South Station (South Station Air Right Project and the South Station Transportation Center), Boston by the City of Boston, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority the Boston Planning & Development Agency, and the South Station Air Rights project:

“South Station is an iconic Boston building, with its original façade harkening back to the history that makes our city what it is today. South Station was first constructed in 1899 and soon became the busiest railroad station in America. Following a nationwide decline of railroad use, South Station experienced a deterioration in use, service, and condition. In 1979, the BRA sold South Station to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The terms of this sale gave the MBTA ownership of South Station with the intent of transforming it into an intermodal transportation center containing bus, rail, and subway connections, while the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) would retain air rights above the station for future non-transportation development.

Progress on the South Station Transportation Center began in 1984 with the addition of new rail, the construction of a new concourse, and the creation of a Red Line connection. Foundations were placed between the tracks to support future construction in the air rights above. In 1995, a bus terminal was constructed containing 23 berths and 223 parking spaces. These improvements constitute the existing conditions

of the South Station Transportation Center; an improvement from its 1965 condition, but short of becoming a landmark intermodal facility.

The *South Station Air Rights* Project will see the completion of the long-awaited intermodal transportation center and the continuation of South Station’s history of being a regional transportation hub and destination. In 2016, the BPDA approved the air rights project, which will begin in late January 2020. The nearly 5-year project will deliver privately funded improvements to South Station’s rail and bus terminals.

The South Station Air Rights Project will include the long-awaited completion of the South Station Transportation Center. Currently, the South Station rail terminal and bus terminal are two separate buildings, making connections between them inconvenient. The completion of the South Station Transportation Center will create comfortable and convenient transfers to all modes of transit, with direct connections between the rail and bus terminal. Additionally, a mixed-use tower will be constructed to provide office and residential space adding 700,000 square feet of office space and 166 residential units.”<sup>4,5,6</sup>

**Infrastructure and mobility solutions in Amsterdam and Boston, combined with proper ways of urbanization and densification, are the main themes of this publication. The projects are not looking for classic area development solutions,**

**but for updated ways to consider the city as a whole, based on tuned relations between different transitions in mobility given urban areas. The close interrelation between urbanism and architecture is the main premise in this.**

**The design studio started with a study trip to the case cities, providing the participating students with comparative background and feeling of large metropolitan city developments and transformations. In addition, interactions with colleagues at MIT and Harvard universities and at the City Hall, including sessions on the urban challenges of Boston, enriched the knowledge on American urban strategies and operations in relation to the future of the city.**

**This book shows the results of the studio work done by 31 students from different nationalities.**

- 1 Berkers et al., *De Stad van de Toekomst*.
- 2 Cavallo, “Stations and Station Areas: Envisioning Spatial Integration with the City.”
- 3 Hartevelde, “Metropolitan Stations, Places for Change and Innovation.”
- 4 Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA). “South Station Air Rights”
- 5 Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). “South Station Transportation Center Improvements”
- 6 South Station Air Rights. “Project Overview and Benefits”

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