Imagining Amsterdam 2050 and beyond

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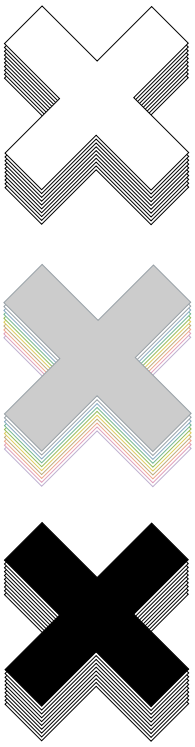

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Imagining Amsterdam 2050 and beyond

"Urban developments in Amsterdam are currently guided by the program 'Koers 2025', a densification strategy of 50.000 dwellings. We have asked our students to assume 2025 as the steppingstone and think beyond. The leading question is whether smart urban technologies and energy transition will allow us to live in cleaner and denser cities of higher quality, assuming radical transformation of the existing, towards 2050"

Kees Kaan

Ambition

Digital technology in the Information Age and all its offspring have a largely different effect on our lives than previous technological revolutions had. Next to the possibility to develop and produce differently and quicker, the new technology allows us to use what we already have in a completely different way. New technologies bear the promise of a more sustainable life.

The space that we move in will be aware of our presence and actions and the vehicles we drive and tools we use will be connected and communicate directly. This opens a perspective on new unimaginable possibilities of a different daily life to come true in the already existing urban space. The future will not only be made with new buildings and spaces but will also show an entirely different use of what is already there.

Architects are ultimately interested in urban change caused by new ways of living and working, new infrastructure and urban facilities and different uses and management of public spaces. To be able to design for an unknown future we need to develop a proper understanding or informed intuition of this change. To predict the future based on what we know and can imagine today is hardly possible. However, it is possible to get a better understanding of what is already there and from that point onwards to identify and understand what is likely to change and what not. Only then we can start to speculate on how to recover the future with architecture.

The studio

Cities will assume a different physical shape as a result of so called smart innovations and this future has to be defined and designed. The 'global city' will be creative rather than fully planned.

For planners/architects/designers, the challenge is to translate the impact of rapid changes – especially on energy, mobility, health and leisure - into planning and design questions. The question for tis studio was: 'how can the City of the Future be imagined? How can those smart innovations be introduced to the domain of architecture and urban design?'

By using Amsterdam as a living laboratory, graduate students, researchers and teachers of the architectural design chair of Complex Projects have been exploring how these changes might affect this city. The creative exploration presented in this publication aims to understand

today's structure of Amsterdam, to explore possible future scenarios and to speculate on new architectural types and new ways of living in this city.

In this research-by-design process urban planners and designers of the City of Amsterdam were involved through mutual presentations, reviews and debates with the students. All this to attempt to provide input for the decision making of the redevelopment plans 2025-2050. The work has been connected to the research themes running at the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions, AMS Institute. They are dealing with the concepts of Connected City (mobility, infrastructure, logistics and metropolitan development issues), Vital City (social interaction and urban spaces) and Circular City (local and regional networks, data and knowledge sharing, resource security and buildings as energy sources). A scenario analysis has been conducted by our work, involving substantial experts-stakeholder interactions, starting from the investigation of nine urban areas selected from the map "Space for the City 2025" and chosen in consultation with the City of Amsterdam, Department of Physical Planning and Sustainability. The aim of the work presented in this book is fourfold:

- to increase the awareness of current urban conditions and (shared) values for the development of Amsterdam, related to: density, housing, amenities, offices, public spaces, ways of living, uses of infrastructure, quality of the urban space and the buildings.

- to make a bridge between Research and Education through research-by-design and visualization tools (graphic design, parametric design, modelling) approachable and scalable.

- to map, comprehend and redefine the spatial problems of selected locations, understanding the spatial consequences of new technologies and big scale decisions and to speculate on their evolution.
-to use architectural design thinking as a tool to explore urban changes.

Landry, C. The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators Routledge (1995)

Research Focus

In the coming decennia Amsterdam Smart City will change. Propelled by economic growth, the application of new technologies and smart systems will drive this change. The City Council's objective is to reduce CO2 emissions by 40% by 2025, compared to the 1990 baseline. Next to this ambition, Amsterdam needs to overcome several challenges: maintaining a lead role in European innovation, overcoming the damaging effects of mass tourism, intelligent implementation of Schiphol airport's ambitious expansion plans, dominating the post Brexit race to be Europe's next financial centre, moderating the housing shortage and rapid increasing housing prices that leave first time buyers with no possibility to enter the market, and many other issues.

Change of the city is currently driven by strategic interventions and market forces, rather than large scale master planning. There is no clear long-term vision available with full political support. It seems also that there is a gap between the waves of city growth and technology development. The current economic boom came as a 'surprise' after a deep crisis. Under the current market pressure proven technology is favoured over innovation, there is simply no time for experiment. Only when the City-requirements demand certain specific innovations those will be implemented. In this context the question is: 'how can architects contribute to and anticipate the impact of the technology on cities, to expose the debates surrounding the technologies, speculate on their evolution, and project new realities at building and urban scale, highway and buffer zones, district, town, neighbourhood etc.? The work presented in this book is all done by Master students of Tu Delft Complex Projects. They have been asked to project an architectural project in 2050 Amsterdam against the backdrop of expected change on the scale of the region to neighbour-hoods and the building level by means of tangible locations in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area.

Kees Kaan
Professor of Complex Projects
& AMS Principal Investigator