

Project Proposal maHKU MA Design pathway Public Space Design

#1

Location: Utrecht, urban Strip between Central Station / trackyard, Catharijnesingel, Moreelsepark and Paardenveld.

Railway-stations, like airport-buildings, hotel-lobbies and other locations where travellers come and go, are often of a neutral character. They look alike and tend to lack a genius locus. These type of places can also be called non-places.

Knowing that travellers perceive stations as a part of their destination, to some extent stations should have their own character. They should reassure people that they have arrived in the city of their destination. Stations should be places where people can land, where you can arrive and recover from your journey.

Not only do travellers switch from the interior of a public transport to the place of destination, they also change from a fast movement to a slow pace. The paradox of this phase in a journey is that the state of mind during the travel time in the train is one of rest, contemplation, preparation of what is going to happen, whereas the slow pace during the transfer to the destination is characterised by high mental activity. People try to identify the place in which they have arrived, need energy for wayfinding and probably have an appointment to meet someone or need to do some purchases.

Proposal

I would like to make a proposal for the location mentioned above, which is a part of the station area of Utrecht. The small urban strip is owned by the local authority and is literally stuck between the private owned shopping centre Hoog Catharijne and Utrecht Central Station owned by Dutch Railways, with its main stakeholder the Ministry of Transport and Public Works.

In the near future the station and its surroundings will be redeveloped. In this strip part of the facilities for local and regional public transport need to be accommodated and a proper reception of travellers in the public transport hub has to be realised. A major part of the pedestrians will leave the station on the plus one level through the shopping centre. The ground level of the strip must be a public alternative to guide people between the station and the historic city centre. Only in a relatively late moment on this walk to the city centre people will get a glimpse of it. It lacks the feeling of a redundant route to the centre. The strip will nevertheless gain importance for pedestrians after the waterway of the Catharijnesingel is restored. Public functions like retail and catering will descent to the ground floor.

The main goal for this strip is to facilitate people to switch from the relative non-place Central Station to the city centre, which is completely defined by the location and location based history. That includes getting people out of their travelling mood into the relax (stay and rest) mood. Make them land. Slow down for a moment and then move on. At the same time it is a farewell place for people leaving the city and must be stimulating to get focussed on travelling.

I would like to investigate the conditions for landing ' and taking off ' by designing pedestrian routes through the strip. The location of the local bus station, the draft for the new railway-station by Benthem Crouwel and the other necessary infrastructure facilities form essential starting points.

#2 Recall for water

It is easy to understand how most buildings are developed as separate units that with the growth of cities could find themselves excluded or absorbed by their surroundings instead of being integrated with them. It is true this architectural integration is not always possible but with the opportunity of manipulating open spaces and using available resources it is possible to enhance specific elements in the city and at the same time increase the value of the scenery.

The use of hard, soft or transparent surfaces that make up public open areas accomplish specific goals, to indicate, guide, delimitate or entertain users and, in this case, recall for elements that are important in the general landscape. Water is in The Netherlands a key element that is manipulated in a very particular and interesting way. Because of the importance water has reached the fact of giving form in open public areas can be decisive for the goals to be achieved by the government regarding the environment.

My purpose will be employ water as the spinal cord of the design. A guide line not only because it calls for room/space but also because, used conveniently, attracts attention and can contribute to enhance

and/or lease users in a particular way to specific points and at the same time create a consciousness of its importance for the environment. The fact that lots of cities in The Netherlands are dominated by the presence of water is also a matter to take into account. Water is usually found around or next to the city centres or nearby public open areas. Therefore, linking these open areas to the canals to rivers running close by will extend the scenery beyond its physical limits to that of the whole landscape.

To consider how water will be present one needs to regard the scale of the area to design. Water can be used in canals, as open currents and as 'game' fountains with the purpose of recreation. Recycling is also a main issue and here rainwater can easily be used for entertainment. But water would not only be taken in to account at the surface but also on its way to the underground. The use of different sorts of pavements will define and alleviate conflicts between traffic levels (pedestrians, bicycles, automobiles) but at the same time will improve the draining of water to the underground. Water-draining pavements and green areas work towards a sustainable environment.

Water transmits a relaxing and fresh feeling; it is ideal for recreating and basic for our everyday needs. Water because of its properties and importance is interesting to be employed as a structuring element for open public areas.