Flexible Urbanism & Pragmatic design for the public realm
Portfolio
Wouter van Faassen, MSc.
URBANISM - LANDSCAPE DESIGN - RESEARCH

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2014  Freelance urban designer
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2014  MSc. Urbanism
       Delft University of Technology
       track: urban planning + urban design

2012  BSc. Bouwkunde (Architecture)
       Delft University of Technology

2011  Project employee
       Netherlands Architecture institute, UAR project: modeling in SketchUp for the augmented virtual reality app Layar.
vertical cities asia competition
Hanoi | Harvesting Cities

graduation project
VCA | Nam An Khanh

ideas competition
Poveglia: a public refuge

bridge and public space
Karitaatbridge

master plan
Binckhorst-Zuid

temporary use
Geertruidentuin 2.0

architecture
BK-city XL

GIS urban research
walkable city centre
Hanoi is a rapidly growing metropolis. Government and project developers have to ask the question how the city of the future will look like. The brief of the Vertical Cities Asia competition was to make a design for a new district of 1 square km with 100,000 inhabitants on a location at the edge of the city, far away from public transit or any urban centre.

Our entry criticized this location as unsuitable for such extremely high density development because of the lack of connectivity and high quality public transit. Therefore, we proposed other locations with strategically positioned clusters that, combined with a holistic strategy including infrastructure and local economy, would benefit the city as a whole: Hub city, Education city, Airport city and Agricultural city. The clusters are the seeds for new centres that guide the expected growth of Hanoi of a city of 3 million inhabitants to a megacity of 11 million in 2030. The design is detailed through all the scales and includes the local integration of existing settlements.

I have presented the entry of our team in Singapore for the international jury with amongst others: Allison Williams (president of Aecom) and Kazuyo Sejima, founder of SANAA.

During this research and design studio we regularly worked under supervision of project leader Mitesh Dixit, making this project more like a 6 months internship than a university project.
The urban area of Hanoi is exploding in recent years, but by fits and starts. Typical urban development is characterized by speculative nature and by purely profit driven investment. How can we make city in a sustainable, fair way, where everyone has a place? My graduation project is a proposal for an alternative development strategy for failed new towns.

During my graduation I further developed the notion of flexibility in urban development in Hanoi. The central hypothesis was that, the turbulent socio-economical context in Vietnam, will create a greater need for flexibility as an integral part of the urban planning and design.

The site, Nam An Khanh, in Hanoi serves as a test case for an alternative, more flexible strategy for development in New Urban Areas in Hanoi. The research explores the applicability of various design and planning tools within a strong framework. These tools foster adaptability and sustainability are based on research and experience in the western world, but adapted to the local context.

Flexibility is coined in this research as: the maneuverability that exists within policy, regulations and fixed structures, to make changes without big effort or investment. A set of construction regulations, structure maps and a strategic vision create clear boundaries, the limits of what is possible.

More information on the theoretical back ground and strategy is available on: http://issuu.com/w.vanfaassen/docs/wouter
Basics

openness
FAR derives from zoning law
Ground floor area:
R1 = 20%
R2 = 50%
R3 = 70%

building line
The building line of all plots neighborhood is set 6-meters from the street to
anticipate parking and future extensions towards the street.
(Non-residential uses on a public function set ignore this rule)

set back
Diagonal control by setbacks are used to ensure enough
daylight and ventilation.

Plot size

- 75 m² max.
- 2000 m² only for amenities and public buildings

Desirable program

- 30% GS (ground floor area)
- 5% FAR if garden is publically accessible

Desirable program

- 2 plots: 100% FAR
- 3 plots: 120% FAR
- 4 plots: 200% FAR

Relation to the street

Basic: walled plot
All detached residential buildings are surrounded by a brick or stone wall.
This rule does not apply for buildings with public functions.

view through wall
Openness of at least 40% of the wall
through windows, fences or openings
in brick work: + 5% FAR

greenery zone
1 meter of greenery facing the street
in front of the wall that can also
contain public reading or water elements: + 5% FAR

Parking

parking on the plot
Possession of a car is only allowed
when parking place is dedicated on
the plot or alternative parking is
facilitated in the direct vicinity.

+ 10% FAR

in case of public functions parking places can be built perpendicular to
the street.

+ 5% FAR for public charger for
electrical vehicles.

Desirable program

- stimulate functional mix in
- residential areas on ground floors
- eco friendly design

- water retention and split sewage system: + 5% FSI
- white roof: prevent urban heat island: + 2% FAR
- sustainable/gray infrastructure: + 2% FAR
- passive ventilation only: + 3% FAR
- art expressions in the building: + 3% FAR
- energy saving design: + 5% FAR

Public domain on plot

- outdoor space
- indoor space
- roof

- + 5% FAR
- + 200% open space
- + 160% roof area

Public domain inside buildings

- indoor space
- roof

- + 5% FAR
- + 200% roof area
- + 160% open space

Roof

- + 5% FAR
- + 200% roof area
- + 160% open space

Garden

- + 5% FAR
- + 200% roof area
- + 160% open space
Ideas competition
Poveglia: a public refuge

The tasks was to come up with new forms and strategies for housing and recreation of the abandoned island Poveglia. We perceive the island, so close to Venice, as a public refuge for the local people. The island as a subtle statue garden and nature park, the rampart as a place for art and creativity.

program
1 km² park landscape, restoration and re-development of old hospital complex and grounds, housing for approximately 750 inhabitants.

team
Wouter van Faassen & Elmer Verhaak

Venice is overrun by tourists, locals leave the area: the consequence of disneyfication of this unique world heritage. Nowadays, project development is highly speculative, corrupt and commercialized. What the local people of the lagoon of Venice crave for is a refuge. Quiet, local, fair and honest.

The concept of the ‘public refuge’ consists of a large publicly accessible park: part nature, part park, part land art, part statue garden. The old hospital complex within the walls can be further developed and densified with housing, studios and with ideas from the locals that fit the ideology of “Poveglia per Tutti”. In order to prevent serious speculation a system is proposed that financially combines new developments with the restoration of the old dilapidated buildings. New development also have to fund the upgrade of the public space.

To kick-start new activity, 3 catalysts are proposed: an arts center, the traditional Venetian rowing academy and a conference and debate center.
Flexible planning approach
The initiatives of the people of “Poveglia per tutti” are probably the only non-corrupt way of development for Venice. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance not to make a blue-print plan. The first initiatives are encouraging but need a more concrete planning framework. The restoration of the old buildings and the upgrade of the public space are too expensive for a small neighborhood organization. They need a financial model too.

Several contractors. Poveglia is developed by the people that care for the place!

Mix of typologies ranging from apartments to single family housing and temporary housing to workshops.

Collective responsibility of the developers for the restoration of one of the historic buildings.

Intricate network of small public and collective spaces that fit the scale of pedestrians.


Fabric with several plots creates diversity and density

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Design a bridge over the Karitaatmolen canal for bicyclists and pedestrians with a budget of 250,000 euro that becomes an icon for Delft but also the entrance to the Midden-Delfland recreational area. We chose for a subtle meeting place embedded in the landscape with an exposition of Delft’s innovations.

**stakeholders:** Gemeente Delft, Recreatieschap Midden-Delfland, TU Delft

**honorable mention!**

Jury chairman Wytze Patijn: “The jury was impressed by the integration of this design in the bigger landscape context. This was the only entry that did not stop at the edges of the Karitaat but went beyond with another bridge and aquatic landscape design along the shore. The bridge itself is characterized by its quiet eloquence and friendly details. Beautiful parapets and carefully integrated benches.”

A bridge, a connection between two sides. Separated shores, brought together by a work of art. The Karitaat bridge brings Delft a little closer to Midden-Delfland. It’s a start to re-connect a spatially fragmented area with various parks, meadow lands, pastures, into one regional recreational area. The Karitaat bridge will possible become the most important entrance for people from Delft. A long axis, starting the tower of the New Church at the Markt square in the old centre of Delft, continues in a route over the Sint Sebastiaansbridge and the Mekelpark to the south. This long entrance, a sequence of spaces, is the connection between city and countryside.

The Karitaat bridge is a demarcation: this is where the city stops, here starts the openness of Midden-Delfland. Runners, cyclists and other sporty people gather here. Employees of Technopolis drink a cup of coffee, or walk a short round during their lunch break. Dog owners park there car or bike to walk their four-footed friend. Ice skaters can easily ascent the ice after a some nights of frost. In other words, a place of connections, gathering and demarcation: a clear entrance, but also a place to stay and enjoy.
The current volatile market asks for urban plans that can be developed step by step. The re-development of Binckhorst-Zuid, an industrial area dating back to the 1930’s, is a proposal for a mixed district: dwelling, small scale production and office co-exist in a neighborhoods with local amenities.

**program**
- 1200 dwellings
- 200 commercial units

**studio: bachelor final project**
Team: Eelco Herft, Wouter van Faassen
Tutors: Leo van der Burg, Gerdy Verschuure Stulp

The design of Binckhorst-Zuid features 4 distinct neighborhoods, each of them with a focus on a specific set of architectural typologies and target groups. The existing dilapidated industrial area, has to make place for a residential area that also accommodates home offices, amenities and small business. Four large industrial monuments, a former tobacco factory, the Fokker flight academy, a 1950’s warehouse and a large concrete harbour crane, add character to the environment. The existing harbour quays are used as pedestrian zones, while new canals are proposed in the southern most neighborhood.
Houses in the couryard ward have access via a central communal garden. There is a mix of large town houses and small apartment complexes. Parking is found underneath the block.

Estate park Oud-Binckhorst

The Binckhorstlaan is the central axe that gives access to the smaller streets only for local traffic. It is the through traffic boulevard with local shops and amenities.

In the mixed neighborhood (50 work, 50 dwelling), the plots give the possibility for a commercial unit or studio in the backgarden of your home.
Geertruidentuin 2.0 is a strategy for temporary use, but at the same time the framework for the definitive use of the Geertuidenziekenhuis grounds.

**program**

Strategy for re-use of a former hospital complex of 13,000 m².
Temporary function for 6 hectares in the middle of the city

**stakeholders**

Provincie Overijssel (initiator of the competition)
Synchroon project development (land owner)

**team**

Van Faassen & Verhaak + StudioPlots

Geertruidentuin 2.0 proposes a strategy for temporary use that is at the same time the framework for a definitive functions. Its unique quality within the city of Deventer is the mix of functions in a small scale park environment.

Previous plans have been on halt for many years now. We think that the reason lies in the large floor area in the plans that can only be realized at once in large blocks. Such a strategy is unsustainable in the current weak market. Therefore, we propose to downscale the plans and introduce a flexible framework for development based on the dimensions of the typology of the old hospital building.

We envision an diverse and functionally mixed environment. The existing temporary workspaces for small business in the creative sector are the first step towards many other initiatives related to small production and innovative housing solutions. In our research we made an inventory of possible corporations with various stakeholders that would benefit the lifelines and effectiveness of the area.

The 6 hectares of land around the hospital has to be downscaled to a grain size that fits the surroundings. The 500 m² plots can be adopted by neighborhood organizations.

The typology of the hospital can be adopted in the ‘tile’ of 25x25 meter. 3 floors with a gabled roof and gardens or a park on both sides. Or the tile just remains a park or a garden.

The advantage of the tile is the flexibility of its infill. In this way it fosters diversity in its temporary function and in future users.
New openings in the wall create accessibility in a secluded wilderness. Grass paths with flower beds border the 25x25 m plots. Later on the pattern might be adopted in future development. New routes though, dissect the original pattern.

The hospital has to be split in segments in order to reduce the scale of the building. The segments are easy to manage parts that can be programmed.

Each segment of the hospital has its own entrance, identity and users. This can be office, small production, but also apartments.
Why do people use certain parts of the city center and avoid others? What kind of shopping rounds do people make? And to what extent does the urban form of the city influence the behavior and experience of pedestrians?

**Task**
Understanding the performance (walkability, use, attractiveness) of the city center of Rotterdam with the use of GPS tracking and arcGIS analysis.

**Strategies for spatial improvement based on GIS analysis**

**Client**
municipality of Rotterdam

**Course**
1st year master, free choice project

Design team: Wouter van Faassen, Tess Stribos, Peter Nolten, Jiya Benni

Tutors: Dr. Ir. Stefan van der Spek, GIS urban research

This research is conducted in cooperation with the urban research department of the municipality of Rotterdam. The data was later used in the television program ‘Nederland van boven’.

The research method was based on GPS tracking with small devices, interviews and in depth spatial analyses. A mixed group (age, family composition, living location) of people was selected to participate during 4 different days of the week within 3 weeks. In four crucial parking garages in the center, people received a gps-device when they left the parking. A 10 minute questionnaire was taken when the participants returned that included questions about the purpose of the visit and the quality of the shopping experience.

Borders and edges of neighborhoods are found based on cumulative results and on the dominant walking patterns of the participants. Closer research into specific road crossings has been conducted to better understand the reasons for the behavior of pedestrians. Is a street easy to cross, are there reasons to stay, is there enough program for our shoppers?

Even more interesting was the analysis of the areas that were underused, even while it could provide a logical route between the Meent and the Lijnbaan. If this route would function well it would create the possibility to walk a round in the center. It could seriously improve the economic potential of the shopping heart.

**Cumulative results**
On the left 99% density, it clearly shows the importance of the Lijnbaan and the Koopgoot.
On the right the map of all the way points.

**Edges and borders**
On the left the edges and borders that were found based on questionnaires, GIS analysis and spatial analysis.
On the right, the small islands that seem to exist.
Meent
The Meent became a real shopping street in the past decade and a popular destination for specialty shops. The Meent is located on the north edge of the shopping area. Many pedestrians don’t use the east part of the Meent and stop at the Binnenrotte. Probably because of the 60 meter crossing of the square and the lack of great attractors on the east part of the street. The areas north of the Meent are not used at all. The main activities there; living, city hall, police station, offices and construction sites are not interesting for our target group. The former post office is now vacant so pedestrians prefer to walk on the south side of the street.

Aert van Nesstraat
The Aert van Nesstraat feels like an urban canyon. The sidewalks are quite small and there are no trees at all! The road functions as an entrance to at least two major parking garages, but is not extremely busy. The road feels over-dimensioned with this in mind. In fact the whole environment is out of scale for pedestrians. But this side street of the Coolsingel could be an important link between Coolsingel and Lijnbaan and provide a new shopping circuit. As a first step we suggest to widen and upgrade the sidewalks to improve the walkability. Trees could provide a sense of shelter and protection and make the place feel less out of scale. A second step could be to change some of the functions of the building in this street. The bank building on the right of the visualization (another ABN-Amro!) could be changed into high end shopping.

Coolsingel
The Coolsingel is the main boulevard in the middle of the city center and divides the west and east shopping area. This clearly shows in the GPS tracks: Few pedestrians use the street in the North-South direction. There are only a few places of interest to stay in the Northern part. The grand, monumental facades of the City hall and the former post office seem to be avoided by the visitors of Rotterdam city center. The Coolsingel acts as a edge that gives definition to the different neighborhoods, but also as a barrier that is hardly crossed by pedestrians. It is a shopping street, but not used as such. The cause may lay in the spacial conditions of the Coolsingel; low quality of public space, difficult crossings and large gaps in rows of shops.

Coolsingel
Many pavements at the Coolsingel are too wide for serendipity. Again there is a pavilion that prevents visitors to see the shops from the west side of the Coolsingel. This part of the sidewalk has some good activities at the edges but there is a need for more imageability. Improvements can be made by reducing the width of the sidewalk and by improving the continuity of the shopping experience by straightening the building lines.
The faculteit of Architecture and the Built Environment of the TU Delft has a lack of space. In this design I have chosen to relocate the library and add 2 lecture halls in a new extension in between two existing wings at the west side.

**program**
extension of faculty building, 2 lecture halls, faculty library, 500 work places.

**project**
2nd year Bachelor

The design aims to reduce the amount of facade to reduce energy usage, and at the same time to create space to work and learn. The west wing serves particularly well for this goal. The new extension is seen as an infill of the footprint of the existing building.

The facade of the extension is humble and transparent. It conforms to the architecture of the 1920’s building. From the inside it is a window on the route to the campus. Everybody may see what happens inside. The lecture halls face their backs towards the streets, leaving space underneath for workspace.

The architecture library is positioned directly next to the new west entrance, in the continuation of the ‘street’ that go’s accross the whole building. The main entrance of both the library and the lecture halls is on the first floor. The library is distributed over four floors, hiding the size of it, and ensuring a quiet place to work.

Huble architecture, set back from the street, respects the monumental architecture of the 1920’s building.

Concept visualizations of the interior spaces.
For more examples of flexible urbanism and pragmatic design for the public realm.

Looking forward to work with you!