

HPP Online Meeting about ‘the urban integration of stations locations’

14th September 2020

On Thursday, 10 September, we met for the 2nd online-webinar regarding the role of the station precinct within city development. Ute Schneider, partner at KCAP Architects&Planners and key speaker of the 1st webinar held on 28th of May 2020, introduced and moderated the three speakers. Each of them addressed different scales while presenting their work and experience on and around the topic.

“Station precincts are the vestibule and living room of their city and define their cities' position in a polycentric regional and national network. Therefore we need to carefully plan and curate their embedding in their urban as well as regional context. Constantly negotiating the relationship between accessibility, mobility, and services that need to go along with a high sojourn quality that attracts passengers and visitors to come and stay, meet others, and enjoy themselves.

Paul Gerretsen (Deltametropool) gave inspiring insights into the opportunities of strategic planning by integrating the research that he is doing with his team on systematic analysis in the correlation between accessibility by public transport and development integration programmatic and behavioral aspects. Besides focusing on the relation of the cities in the wider regional and national context, he underlined the relation between the quality of the transport node and the quality of its programmatic and urban integration, defining an attractive destination. The projects ‘Stedenbaan’ and ‘Zaancorridor’ projects show how important it is to address the question in a wider context and system.

Jeroen de Willigen (DeZwarteHond) presented the area development around the stations of Assen and Hilversum, showing the impact the transformation of the station precincts can have on the entire city development. The new and efficient public transport node focuses on the accessibility of slow traffic modes to and through the station and offers further potential. Looking beyond the perimeter of the station itself, a station precinct can reconnect the adjacent neighbouring city districts. Jeroen pointed out the enormous need to improve the sense of a place and offer a high sojourn quality. Both examples showed the importance of looking into the specific qualities and identities of the city. A station precinct is like the ‘business card’ one sees when arriving at the station.

Jeroen Diepemaat (Wethouder Enschede) introduced Enschede’s station precinct project ‘centrumkwadraat’ with its different development areas at the station showing the more comprehensive context a station location development should and can have. The visionary images

were presented with the annotation 'let op dit is een droombeeld', an 'ideal image', the visionary and optimistic but well steered view into Enschede's future station district. Jeroen showed the new entrance to the station connecting the north of the city generously to the platforms as well as to the southern city centre. In a series of various development areas around and adjacent to the station precinct, Jeroen pointed on Enschede's potentials and challenges with this operation.

Ute Schneider (KCAP Architects&Planners) chaired a discussion among speakers and participants about the challenge to address all different levels and especially the interface of the red line of the stations' perimeter and the public realm of the wider city context. Station location development needs to look continually further than this red line. As Paul Gerritsen's presentation has shown, it requires even looking beyond the city itself, integrating its role in a broader regional polycentric city and public transport network.

A station can be per se a 'connector' as it should be the vestibule of the city as a whole. Originally situated aside of the city, due to the emissions and fears at the time when railways were built, it often resulted in a situation of one front and one backside. Due to the cities evolving around the station it plays a different role as a vital centrality: it has become the living room of its city, a place to be.

Speakers concluded that the potential of the National Key Project (NSP) funds for the smaller stations meet the moment of wider acceptance and awareness that we need to combine forces to integrate the tasks on different scales of national, regional and local levels to achieve integrated and sustainable results. It is a collaboration with all institutions and stakeholders, including NS, the municipalities, and private developers, regarding the quality of spaces that provide a climate and post-COVID proven sojourn quality of the place and public realm of one of the most critical entrées into our cities.

Ute closed the webinar as follows: "We are at the right moment to combine forces. We are looking forward to the 3rd set of this series in February 2021, where we will speak with ministries, NS/ProRail, and bureau spoorbouwmeester how we can collaborate with them to get our high goals realized. With the extraordinary Dutch expertise in 'samenwerken', I see significant potential in this cooperation between all stakeholders, the government, cities, and all supporting organizations, theorists, and planners to achieve this integrated collaborative approach and set the trend, and be an example for other countries. A side effect will be an efficient use of government funds that all citizens can see and appreciate".

Ute Schneider

Partner KCAPArchitects&Planners