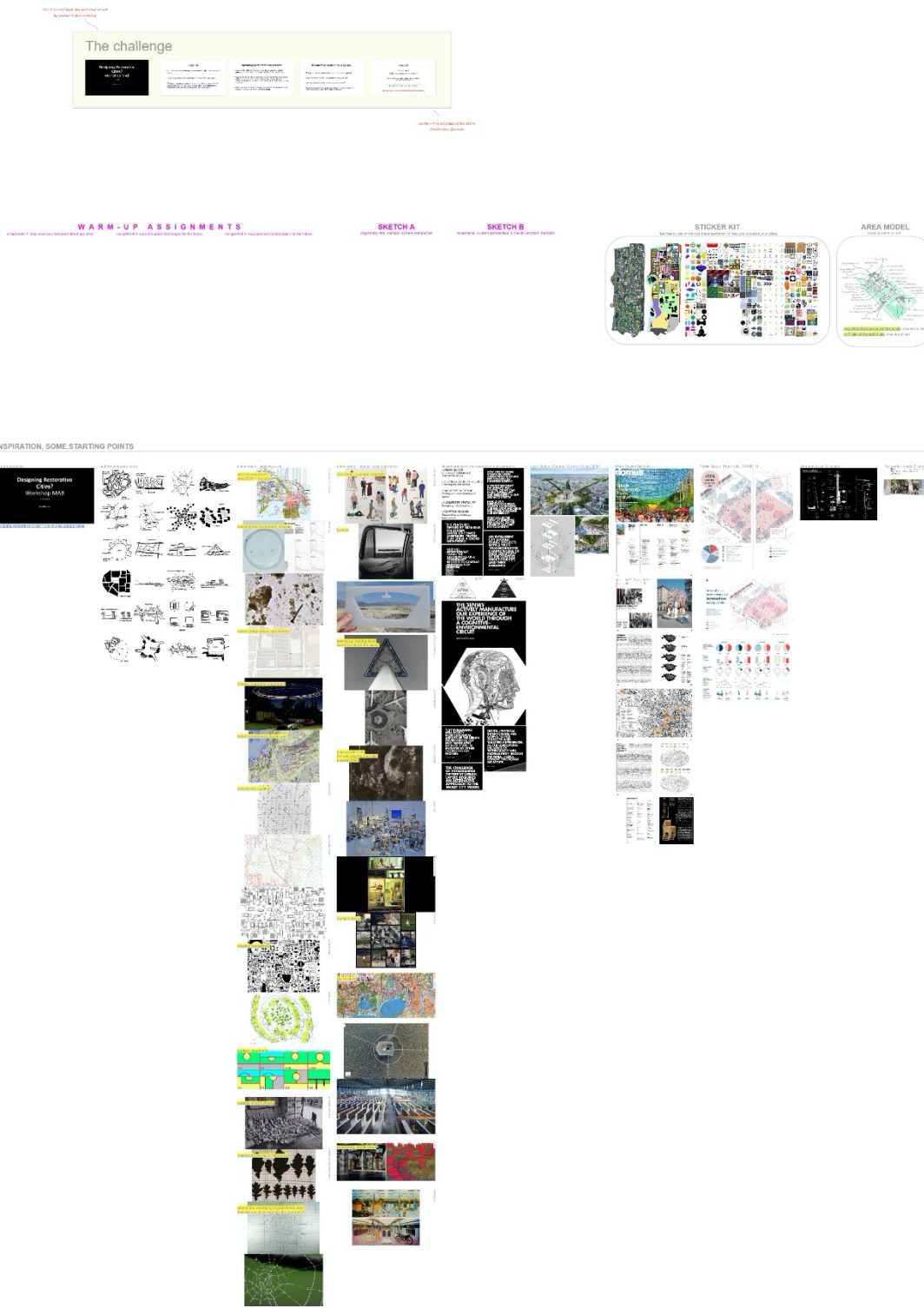WORKSHOP Designing Restorative Cities
Monday, June 28 | 16:00-19:00 CEST

'Every week, an area the size of Manhattan is built, somewhere on the globe.' With this alarming image, Frank Suurenbroek opened the workshop Designing Restorative Cities on Monday, June 28. He added: 'What are desired and possible futures for our cities? How do we develop restorative qualities in different levels of scale?'

Thirteen students and young professionals with multiple backgrounds from three continents applied and were selected to investigate possibilities of integrating systems of resilience in the design of our rapidly densifying cities. The workshop offered a platform to discuss strategies to make our cities more restorative (i.e. being able to restore and reinvent in the face of change) and to test new narratives and pathways in an interdisciplinary approach. All this in three hours time. 'An impossible and therefore immensely challenging task' reacted Ben Hooker, one of the three workshop organizers, next to Frank and Stefano Andreani.

After Frank described the workshop as a constant oscillation between tangible 'know-how' and speculative 'what if', Ben emphasized the fact that everybody is qualified to enter the discussion about 'what a city is' and Stefano introduced the phenomenon of the 'urban glitch' (fractures leading to surprises), the participants were confronted with a warm-up assignment. In three groups, they mapped out a rich variety of urban fascinations, future challenges and possible technologies on MIRO-boards. By combining and prioritising elements of these three collections, the agenda and the strategy for the main assignment step were discussed.

In this step the participants were asked to create two sketches for Amstel III, an Amsterdam work-office-leisure area from the 90's, subjected to an island-by-island transformation in the years to come. The sketches should combine two perspectives on Amstel III: organizing ideas and concepts (system perspective) on the one hand and specific experiences and moments (user's perspective) on the other. In the transfer from 'collecting' to 'designing', the participants were able to use extensive data (images, bits of texts, references, stickers, cards, etc.) prepared by the organizers on the MIRO-boards and to discuss with the workshop coaches. At the end of the workshop, the three groups presented their work on the MIRO-boards, of which some fragments are presented below.

Group 1:

'Language grows with the city itself. Can scripts can play a role in rediscovering the now missing collectivity in the city? How can new technologies facilitate wayfinding in the city using scripts?'
Starting with the assumption that the city is always changing and a discussion about the accessibility of public spaces for women, this group investigated an algorithmic system, open and flexible. Does this system, legible by human and machine, make a step towards a smartness-made-transparent?
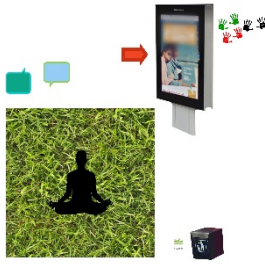
Group 2:

'How can cities become more restorative with the help of social interaction and diversity; and then… augmented with technology?
Public squares with digital boards for social interactions like debates and lectures, give social media a physical presence. People who aren't usually participating in city-making are given a voice.'
A system of hybrid collective spaces is woven in the existing urban fabric. They act as magnetic, nodal points following the logic of the city. Could their positioning inform the city as well – and even further, could they produce new shapes itself?

Group 3:
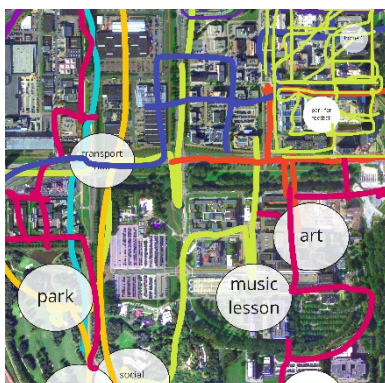
'The active city is bikeable, walkable and playful for all! Connections between important places are developed through clean mobility.'
The strategy focusses on patterns of use in Amstel III, searching for an infinite number of possible movements for an endless variety of personas. This grassroots/performative strategy, in combination with renaming, gradually gave shape to new configurations. Can the layering technique unfold unexpected crossing points for collective (restorative?) moments in the city?

corporate job, loves fitness, and has 4 children and a dog

Tobi (73 years old) is socially engaged in many different

Workshop Organizers:
Frank Suurenbroek (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam)
Stefano Andreani (Harvard, Graduate School of Design)
Ben Hooker (ArtCenter College of Design, Pasadena)

Workshop Coaches:
Frank Suurenbroek
Ben Hooker
Hugo Beschoor Plug

Group 1:
Federica Colombo
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Aleksandra Błęcka
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