the ice age and the real estate

start slide logolengte

Good afternoon. I am Irene Janze, an artist in Amsterdam. Thank you for inviting me to tell you a story about the ice and the real estate on the Zuidas in Amsterdam.
Slide 1 See map

It is a story taken from the artistic research project called logolength Zuidas in Amsterdam. You need not bother to read the whole project. I have it here in handouts if you are interested. For the afternoon I will stay at the first part of the project starting with a brief description of the Zuidas and give an example of a logostorie. The zuidas (South Axis in translation) is a recent city development area situated in the south of Amsterdam. It stores a dike with a highway, rail and subway. **See map slide 1. Here is the historical centre (point). Note that the map is slightly turned around the north**

Apart form the free university and the art academy at its west, the zuidas consist mainly out of towers of lucrative International Business services for whom generally speaking the users and the surroundings of the buildings are not of primary concern. As long as the new built skyscrapers generate addresses for tax advantages it serves its main purpose.

Slide 2 towers

At best the towers provide for new company icons, "long" lasting landmarks as if they are autonomous sculptures that has nothing to do with where they are erected. They certainly do not provide for local employment or other basic local needs, although they do generate better infrastructure. Logos connects the owners to the towers and provide for a strong image about the place.
The general view on the district is that it is an anonymous, corporate taxheaven without locus or roots. A place that could easily be picked up and put down elsewhere in the world.

Slide 3 direction logos.
But is this the only way (slide) we can look at the Zuidas? As we all know appearances can be deceiving. What will happen if we look closer into a logo and explore what it has in store? Could it change the radiation of the logo and hence the place where it dwells.

In 2009 we conducted a pilot research for the faculty of Arts of the Free University, which as I mentioned before is situated on the Zuidas. We dissected its logo: a griffin into stories. The survey surprisingly revealed that the griffin roots the logo and construct a geomorphological place.

Slide 4 VU logo and john griffin.

What was the case? (3 min 14)
Although the designers of the logo of the Free University were not aware of it in 1989, the griffin is situated right on the spot where the dark and handsome John Griffin was a farmer servant in 1900.

He married in the Zorgmeer farm, which was located where the current science building now stands. His son, also handsome, expanded the family estates by marrying his neighbor daughter. Their farm know thyself marks the current University hospital.

The farmers Griffin had cattle, which did well on the green meadows.

Slide polder

The grasslands took shape through draining of peat , situated between the Schinkel and Amstel river. The Schinkel river marks a high, long strip of peat that stretched all the way from the South to the North in Amsterdam. The peat formed a natural dam **(show on slide**) and sheltered at its east against the West Winds. The peat landscape here grew in hills over four meter in altitude and the whole area grew about 10 meters above sea level. The water running down from the peat-sponges formed over time a stream that became the Amstel.

East of the Amstel river the area consisted out of peat marches. At its east side the sea washed away the peat, resulting in floating islands. (**show on the slide the sea and the watergraafsmeer and bijlmermeer**)
As a consequence that area could only be reached by boot. Men and cows were put on a boot and dropped on the peat.

West of the Schinkel the peat could hardly flourish and the propelling southwest wind created a lot of damage and blew pieces of the peat marches away. The Haarlemmermeer emerged, a lake where it tended to be very spooky. The differences in the peat landscapes still shimmer trough in urban development:

Slide 6 city planners

The east side of Amsterdam developed into marginal small island-like, cheap residential areas. There are no big main roads and the streets are running dead end to the Amstel river.
Show on next slide: islands and infrastructure

slide 7: islands and infrastructure

The sandy and salty soils of the drained Haarlemmermeer polder turned out to be less suited for farming. However by the persistent southwest wind, the polder became an excellent spot for airplane traffic. The airport Schiphol expanded in a little less than a century from a small military airbase in 1916 in an international airport. **Show position on slide 7**

In the area of the Zuidas Griffin, between the Schinkel and the Amstel the high raised bog was reachable on land. On it a fine network of streets and roads running to the southwest and the west of Amsterdam developed, that produced a lucrative moneymaking living and working space.
Show on slide 7

The rich trade part of Amsterdam has therefore been located in the NE/SW for centuries now, running roughly in between the Schinkel and the Amstel.

Why did this difference in peat landscapes with in their wake the difference in city development occur? After all we are talking about short distances of a few miles . 3min22

Slide 8 glacier

150000 years ago ice slid over the weak soil and fanned out in lobes shaped like tongues.
See slide 8

Using GIS, we drew the Zuidas and Schinkel and Amstel river on the ice basin map of the geological survey , 1978

See slide 9.
slide glacier

The contours of the Schinkel and the Amstel still tell the outlines and shape of the glacier basin underneath the surface.
slide
This becomes even more apparent when we consider the fact that the Amstel has been dugged out . Originally the Amstel) started as two little streams in a forerunner of the Watergraafsmeer and ran south. The Free University is at the edge of the basin.

When the ice withdrew, a lagoon emerged that got filled by clay deposits and eolic sands in the warmer and colder spells that followed.

The clay basin was great ground for the peat to settle and pile up. The negative shape in the underground enacted a positive form in the landscape at the surface: a dome of peat/ the so called peat at the Amstel.
The tongue shaped rich trade part of Amsterdam has followed the old trace of the ice.

Slide airport

West of the Schinkel***, the ice ridge pushes the subterranean up***. The old salt marsh landscape lies close under the current surface. On the slide you can see the expansion of the airport over a hundred years ice pushed ridge.

Let us summurize here; we have the international schiphol airport on the ice pushed ridge and the great infrastructure and lucrative moneymaking living and working area on the highraised bog on the glacial basin. It was only a matter of time- about 150 000 years- for an international business district to rise to the occasion. The Zuidas was born.

Now what about the shape? **Next slide** the Zuidas, was originally designed as a kind of city wall, a dike with a kept free zone for traffic(in 1938). We can see on this slide that the dike follows the east/west orientation of the polder structure, its lots and ditches.

Dia polderkaart small

It explains for its east /west orientation and slightly bend shape at the east.

But does the Zuidas just lay there randomly. We drew the geological ice map of 1986 on the altitude map of Amsterdam.

Slide altitude map boulder clay.

The most expensive piece of land in the Netherlands, the Zuidas, borders the boulder clay in the soil: the footprint of the glacier. It is the locus of the terminal moraine!

The ice is important for the great circumstance for the peat to grow, that created over years a lucrative, open area: a polder landscape with dikes, ditches and meadows, which in turn created the long shape and position of the Zuidas. The ice pushed ridge together with the west winds produced an international airport and with that the maximum height of the buildings on the Zuidas. The towers are not allowed to be higher than 105 meters (in altitude).

That’s how the Amsterdam glacier co-produced deep in the ground, along with the ever chilly and persistent west wind, it has to be said, the materialization of a global ideology, in this case capitalism in Amsterdam.
Profitable soils and profitable real estate produce each other![i]

And the griffin? It marks high in the sky as a checkpoint Charlie, the point of return for the ice sheet.

I thank you all for your attention.

[i] This way a piece of land during a time of international, servicing industry gets pulled up from a muddy, swamp Drained the salty soil was not fit for agriculture. By the persistent west winds, the Haarlemmermeerpolder became an excellent spot for airplane traffic. Schiphol expanded in a little less than a century from a military flightbase in 1916 to an international airport.
y and windy 'frayed fringe'.