Reflection

1. Relation Between Graduation Project, Master's Track, and Master's Programme

The graduation project explores the potential of using wood to design in dynamic natural environments. The research underlines the importance of the relationship between the material and weather, which is highly relevant to the field of architecture. The research part investigates in detail the topic of ‘Weathering of Untreated Timber Facades’ in the context of the North Netherlands. The research contributes to the positive perspective on timber weathering rather than being perceived as undesirable and problematic. As part of the Master of Science program, the graduation project underscores a scientific approach to understanding and utilising weathering effects, harmonising with the broader scientific goals of the program.

The design part of the project, however, deals with the dynamic environmental conditions in the broader term, such as water level fluctuations, accessibility of the building, vegetation growth, bird movement in the area etc. It explores how an unstable environment can serve as an inspiration and be naturally integrated into the design of a building. The topic of the project resonates with the Architecture’s masters track’s emphasis on advanced architectural concepts, including climate- and environmentally-responsive design and material innovation.

2. Influence of Research on Design and Vice Versa

The research consists of several parts which all contribute to the design development. The central part is the individual research on Wood Weathering, which informs the material component of the design project. The research serves as a base for understanding wood's technical and aesthetic qualities and general rules for timber usage in external applications. The design then proposes the possible integration of different wood types (poplar and oak) in various forms according to the requirements of different architectural elements. The design strategies proposed in the conclusion stage of the research have been partially integrated into the architectural proposal. Those include creating roof overhang along the whole perimeter of the building, offsetting the west and southwest facades, which are exposed to the most significant amount of wind-driven rain, and elevating the building, which minimises water back-spray and decay of the lower part of the cladding.

During the design process, some topics which were only slightly touched upon at the research stage became more relevant. For example, it was necessary to look further into the wooden species that could be grown and processed locally, as well as environmentally non-harmful treatment methods to increase wood durability.

The second part of the research conducted before P2 included a location visit and investigation of the area's future scenarios. It also studied the bird-watching-related infrastructure and architecture. Altogether, it informed the project's design principles and architectural language.

3. Assessment of Working Approach, Methods, and Methodology

The general approach can be characterised by separating research and design. First, research in several directions was carried out, including investigating wood and wood weathering, local climate, bird-watching, vegetation, and future flooding scenarios. Due to the time limitation and lack of case studies in the area, the research on wood weathering was primarily carried out through a literature review. The chosen methodology was beneficial, as it allowed for a structured overview of the topic within the time given.

The design stage employed more ‘hands-on’ methods, like physical and digital modelmaking and designing through painting and drawing. I found it very valuable to distance myself from the research and allow it to influence design decisions more intuitively, which was one of the mentors’ recommendations after P2. This approach allows for more holistic design development, giving importance to light and space design as well as routing and space composition. Although I revisited my research more in the final stages of the design, working on the facade solutions, I assume it would be beneficial to integrate practical research into the wood topic more by working with specific wood samples.

4. Academic and Societal Value, Scope, and Implications

The graduation project holds significant relevance within the broader context of societal, professional, and scientific frameworks. By exploring design in dynamic environments in the context of ever-changing future climate scenarios, the project directly contributes to the studio's overarching goal of examining the interplay between technical design innovations and the future language of architecture. Beyond the academic realm, the project addresses the challenges of the intricate relationship between humans and nature. The design of the Ornithology Research & Visitors Centre aims to allow human presence in the Lawersmeer National Park in a non-harmful way. It promotes the idea of learning through observation more than direct interaction. It also suggests strategies to integrate nature into the design, minimising the harmful impact on the local ecosystem.

5.*Value of Transferability of Project Results

The transferability of the project results is highly valuable. Although the project is uniquely tailored to the specific climate and landscape conditions of the Lawersmeer National Park and is inspired by the theme of birds, it incorporates several strategies and solutions that have broader applications. For instance, the use of building on poles offers a viable design approach for natural environments with fluctuating water levels and high precipitation, providing a model for resilience and adaptability in similar contexts. Additionally, the integration of natural lighting, materiality, and structural strategies within the project can be adapted to various other settings, enhancing sustainability and aesthetic appeal. Moreover, the exploration of designing an organic-shaped building using a set of repetitive portals showcases an approach to architecture that can inspire future projects aiming for fluid, dynamic forms. These elements collectively highlight the project's potential to influence and inform design practices beyond its immediate application, making it a valuable reference for architects and planners working in diverse environmental and functional scenarios.

6. Architectural Position

The architectural position of this project is deeply integrated with its environmental and contextual surroundings, emphasising sustainability, resilience, and respect for the

Lawersmeer National Park's ecosystem. It has been a challenge to create a time-sensitive design that fits the environment and the needs of the people interested in visiting this remote location. In this project, I tried to find a balance between defining the design and leaving space for nature to ‘take over’, for birds to nest, and time and weather to change the look of the building. It has also been challenging to look beyond the standard structural solutions and explore innovative design possibilities in wood.

7. Critical Feedback and Iterations

Throughout my graduation project, critical feedback played an important role in shaping and refining both the research and design aspects. Regular discussions with mentors and peers provided valuable insights that challenged my initial assumptions and encouraged further exploration in various directions. The critiques kept me challenged and motivated throughout the process to find fitting solutions for my structural, aesthetic, ethical, and other concerns. It contributed to the continuous process of iterations, which led me to the project's current stage.