

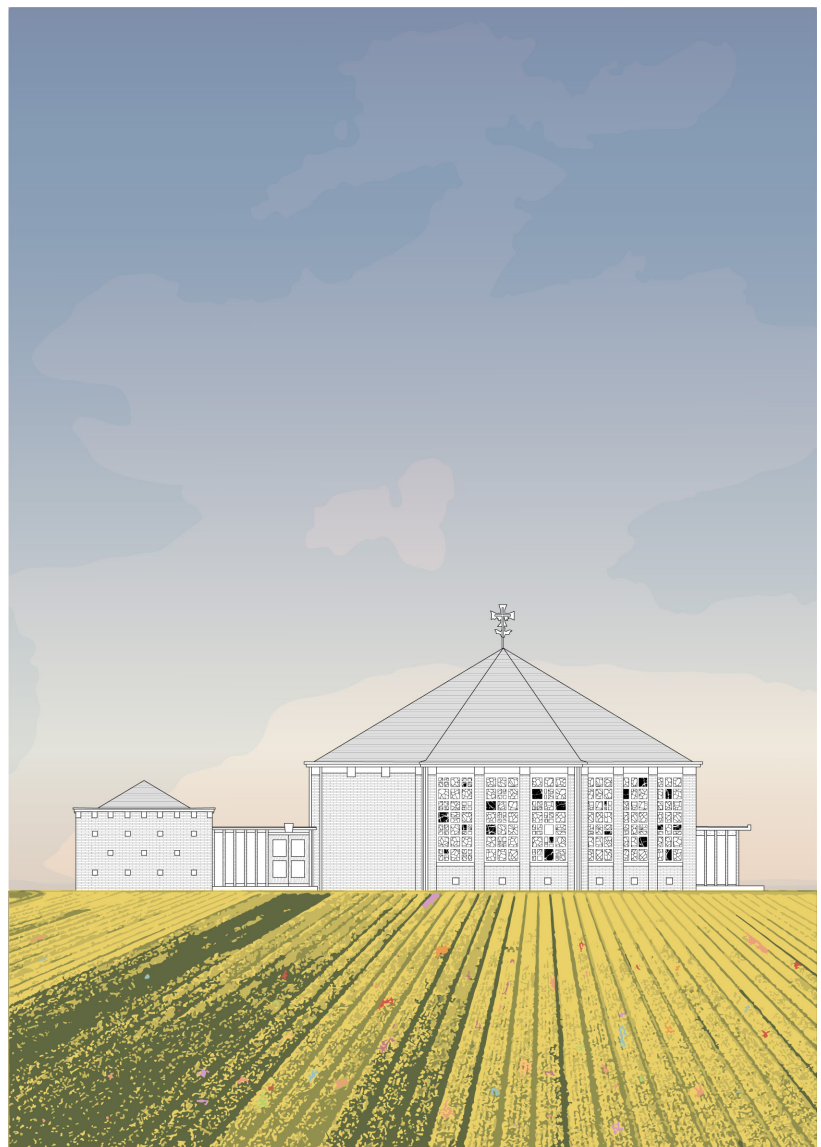
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GRADUATION STUDIO
VACANT HERITAGE
RESEARCH PLAN 2022

**From Fragmented Heritage to
Palimpsest of Meanings:**
*Formulating a Palimpsestic
Approach to Revitalising
Maranathakerk, Castricum*



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Fig. 1 (Cover)

Northern elevation of Hindrik Eldering's original Maranathakerk. When completed the 1950s, a tulip field could still be found adjacent to the church. The former church looked over the town's growth and transformation into a city. (author's drawing)

Cultural heritage is everywhere in our society. In our museums, historic city centres and in the countryside. But also, in the soil and under water. And as intangible heritage in our traditions, rituals, and stories. It tells about where we come from, who we are and how we develop.

Rijksoverheid [Dutch Government], on "Erfgoed"
(Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2021a)

Background:

Vacant Heritage

Heritage, and its appreciation, represent one of the hallmarks of modern civilisation. It can be defined broadly as encompassing any remnants from the past which have come to carry significance, whether through age, fragility, uniqueness, or even personal values. In the Netherlands, where this thesis draws its case study from, the government considers both tangible, natural, and intangible artefacts to be heritage. A complex network of local, national, and international laws has been adopted to safeguard these precious connections with the past. (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2021b) Nevertheless, despite this apparent pervasiveness of heritage and elevation of heritage matters, there remain instances in which the practical reality of operating a heritage building outstrips the perceived values. I will henceforth refer to this phenomenon as ***heritage obsolescence***.

In the Netherlands, an ongoing and escalating arena of heritage obsolescence is in sacred spaces. Dutch religiosity currently faces growing pressure from multiple demographic fronts. Over the past decades, the percentage of the churchgoing population has steadily shrunk in the Netherlands. (CBS, 2021) The issues are further compounded by an expanding generational rift, where younger generations increasingly distance themselves from religion. In the decade between 2010 and 2020, the share of the non-religious population increased from 45% to 55%. For the age group 18-25, the non-religious section stands at 72%. (CBS, 2022) In the sacred realm, this has translated into increasing difficulty for congregations to maintain their membership and accordingly leads to economic woes. Smaller, local parishes are particularly affected. A 2021 report estimated that of the 7110 recorded places of worship in the Netherlands, 1530 no longer have religious functions and a further 295 are in transition. (Hannema, 2021) This number is expected to rise in the coming years, as recent global events including Covid-19 and economic recession are expected to intensify social and demographic shifts. (Walsum, 2020)

The General Problem:

Heritage Obsolescence

In terms of heritage architecture, the decline of religiosity means that religious heritage across the Netherlands is becoming vacant at an alarming rate. Beyond the social ramifications for local communities, the growing vacancy of former sacred spaces also presents exceptional architectural and heritage questions of how to mend the divide between past 'sacredness' and newer, likely profane uses. Given the severe shortage of housing stock in the Netherlands and the urgency to de-carbonise its construction sector, the obvious solution might be to retrofit vacant churches as housing. Yet, in practice, the re-use ¹ of former religious heritage remains a difficult and controversial task. Congregations, particularly those of Roman Catholic affiliation, are often reluctant to allow non-religious functions even after a church ceases operation, since Catholic doctrine holds that consecrated ground may not be used for profane purposes. (Schulte, 1908) Whilst Protestant doctrine attaches less significance on church ground itself, churches often come to represent an important spiritual pillar for local communities. Beyond regular masses, churches also host key life event such as baptism, wedding, and funeral. Local churches thus frequently act as significant site of personal or familial heritage for their users, adding to the challenge of transforming such spaces. For stakeholders seeking to adapt vacant or former churches for other functions, these sacred particularities represent increased regulatory obstacles, local resistance, or financial costs. For architects and planners, they raise questions of navigating a complex sacred-profane dichotomy and placating hesitant stakeholders who may hold such heritage site in high emotional regard.

1. I will use 're-use' to broadly include both the potential to physically re-use the building elements, i.e. re- or up-cycling of salvage, and the various ways a former worship space, in whole or in part, could be returned to frequent usage following its vacancy or decline in use. This could be through organisational adaptations, architectural interventions, or a combination thereof.

2. Zero-waste
A social vision which strives to eliminate the present volume and toxicity of waste. Design and management of production processes are streamlined to form circular loops, whereby materials are recovered and re-used instead of buried or burned. See Mifflin et.al., 2017 Guide for NYC for an example of a comprehensive zero-waste vision plan.

As a part of the Revitalising Heritage studio at the Heritage & Architecture section at TU Delft, my thesis seeks to address some of questions related to re-using religious heritage. Specifically, I will examine the potential for adopting a palimpsestic approach in revitalising religious heritage. Given the frequently already palimpsestic nature of heritage spaces, I believe this to be a promising exploration. Furthermore, with this studio year's theme of the Zero Waste Church, I seek to position the issue of religious vacancy against the backdrop architecture's high environmental impact. (dos Santos Gonçalves et al., 2022) The 2019 Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction attributed 39% of the global energy and process-related carbon dioxide emissions to construction. (IEA, 2019) The re-use of all available buildings therefore constitute a crucial steps towards a zero-waste ² building sector and reaching the targets set forth in the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 2 degree Celsius. (UNFCCC, 2016)

Case Study:

Maranathakerk, Castricum

During the Wederopbouw ³ period following the Second World War, Dutch society experienced remarkable changes as high-paced urbanisation integrated former rural communities into the expanding Randstad ⁴. The town of Castricum is exemplary of this post-war suburbanisation. Located on the North Sea coast and geographically sandwiched between metropolitan Amsterdam and the regional capital of Alkmaar, the town underwent drastic population growth between the 1950s and 70s. (Zuurbier, 2022)

Amidst Castricum's explosive post-war growth arose the protestant congregation based in the newly erected Maranathakerk. Designed by the Frisian architect and fervent builder of Protestant churches Hindrik Eldering, Maranathakerk was completed in 1954. For the swiftly suburbanising town, the church became a pillar for both spiritual and social life and its development would come to mirror larger demographic trends of the town. When Castricum's population further rose in the 70s and the town grew into a sizable commuter settlement for the Randstad, Maranathakerk's facilities too grew. The original octagonal plan, considered by Cuypersgenootschap⁵ as characteristic of Eldering's more socially-oriented approach to Protestant architecture, was attached with additional annexes. (Wesselink, 2022) During these halcyon years, the church's role spanned across the sacred-profane spectrum, from church services to communal gatherings of residents.

After the turn of the century, however, the impetus could no longer be maintained. Mirroring the general decline of religiosity and the ageing of the post-war generation, Maranathakerk entered the murky waters of heritage obsolescence. Following a stark deterioration in membership numbers over the 1990s, the final church service was held in 2018 for an emotional grey-haired congregation. In 2019, the former church building was sold in an auction to the municipality. (Mooij, 2020) With its central location and lack of official heritage status, the former church presented an alluring target for redevelopment. With a basis in the need for additional housing and new civil amenities, the municipality motioned to demolish the former church by 2024. The plans, however, faced immediate opposition from heritage groups, including the Cuypersgenootschap and Bond Heemschut. Speaking for the two heritage associations, Herman Wesselink contended that Maranathakerk represents a distinctive example of post-war Protestant churches due its innovative use of reinforced concrete and unconventional plan. Wesselink further pointed to Maranathakerk's representative role within Wederopbouw heritage, one of the most vulnerable groups in the Netherlands due to their relatively young age and frequent lack of protected status. (2022)

3. Wederopbouw

[Dutch: reconstruction]

The period from 1945-65 in which war-damaged architecture and infrastructure was rebuilt. The fervent constructions also gave rise to new architectural and urbanistic experimentations. For an in-depth cartographic reading, consult Blom 2013.

4. Randstad

[Dutch: edge city]

a term referring to the roughly ring-shaped conurbation containing a sizable portion of the nation's population and economic output. Key cities include Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht.

5. Stichting Het

Cuypersgenootschap

[Dutch: The Cuypers Society]

A national organisation in the Netherlands founded in 1984 dedicated to the preservation of Dutch architectural heritage from the period 1850-1970. Named after famed Gothic Revival and Eclecticist architect Pierre Cuypers.



Fig. 2
Image of one of the last church services held in Maranathakerk. (Collectie Johan Streefland, 2018)

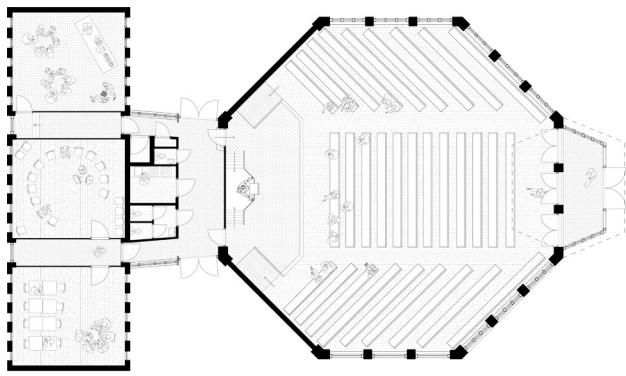


Fig. 3 (top)

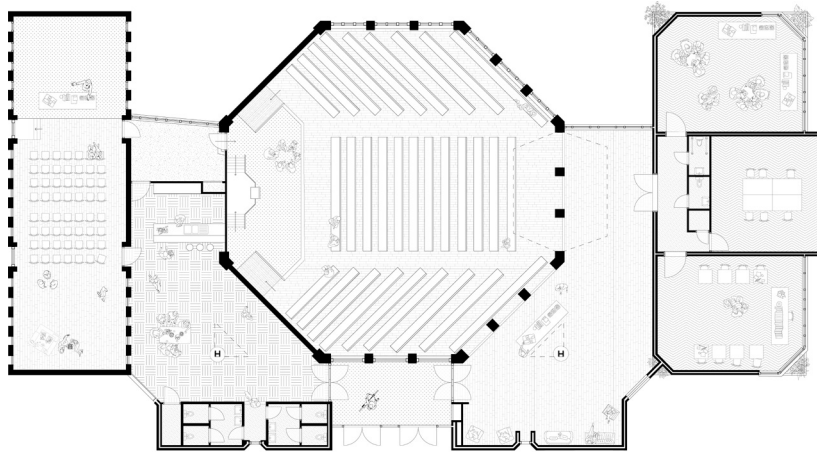
Maranathakerk in the 1950s, a vast tulip field adjoined the church plot.
(Collectie Oud-Castricum)

Fig. 4 (bottom)

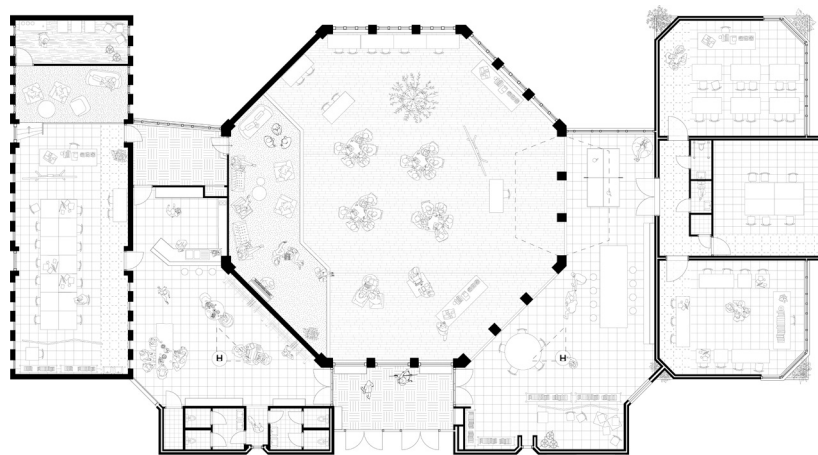
Maranathakerk in 2022, a suburban context now surrounds the building (author's image)



1954



1978



2022

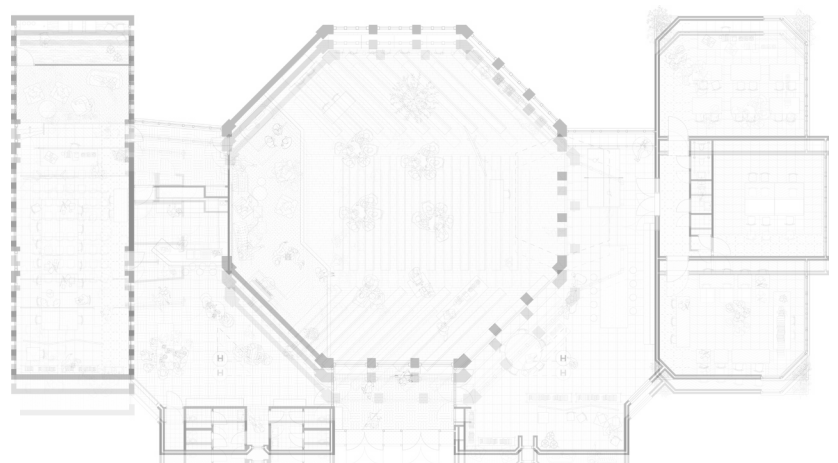


Fig. 5
Over the years and its multiple iterations, Maranathakerk has gathered a paplimpsestic patchwork of additions, subtractions, and adaptations which continues to influence how the people interact with the space today. (author's drawings)

The Specific Problem:

Fragmented Heritage

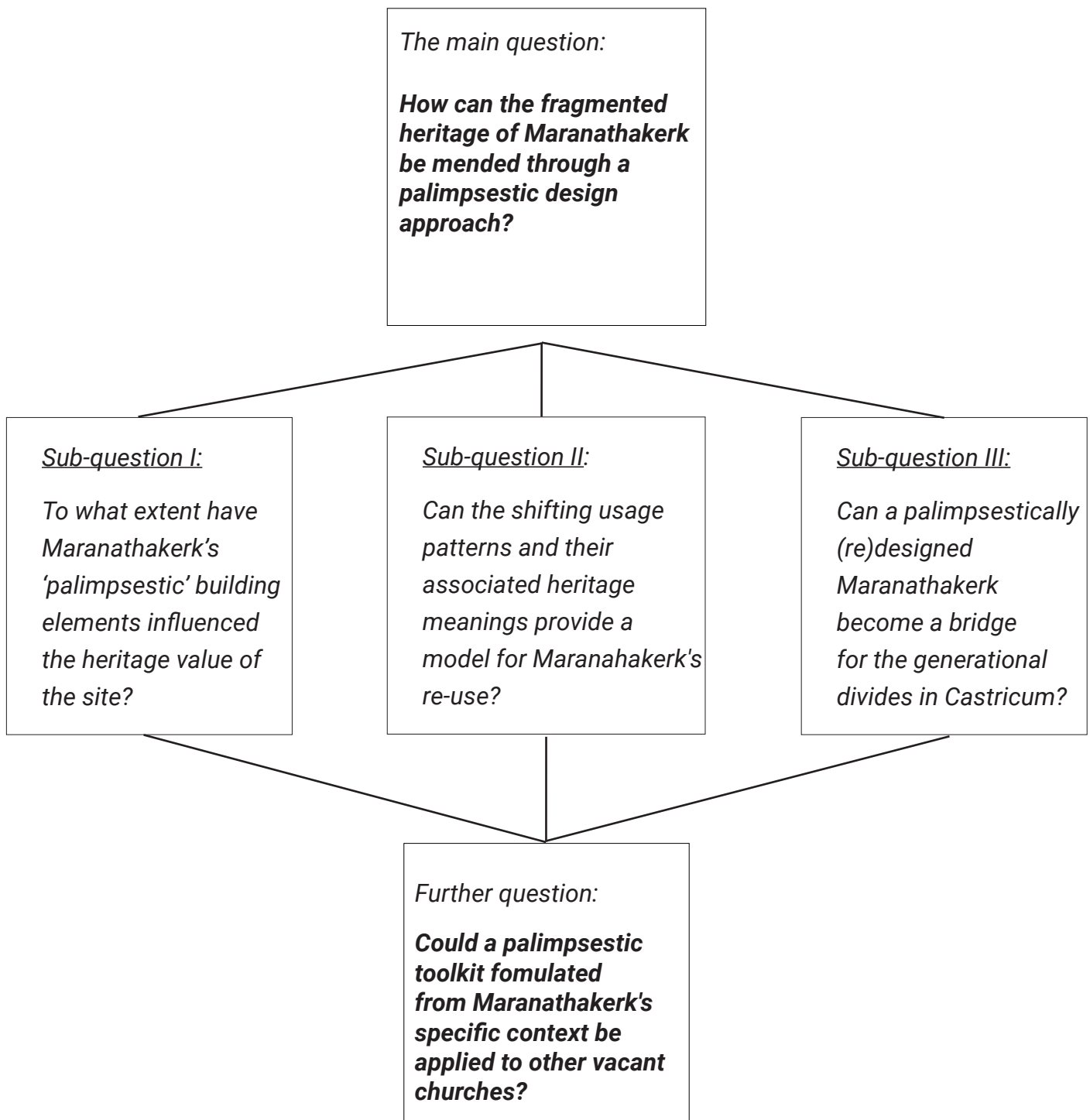
The Maranathakerk stages an archetypal case of heritage obsolescence, where shifting values and user-base means that the practical cost of maintaining the historic building outweighs its perceived benefit to the community. For the former congregation of Maranathakerk, the reality of declining religiosity and its membership ultimately resulted in the congregation merging with the larger Protestant community of Castricum and relocating service to the 13th Century Dorpskerk. (Protestantse Kerk Castricum, 2022)

The post-religious era of Maranathakerk, however, also brought about new complexities. In 2019, Supreme College, an experimental bi-lingual collaboration between two Castricum high schools was founded in the former Maranathakerk with a temporary four-year lease. The move likely stemmed equally from the municipality's promise towards the former congregation of maintaining a social role in the site and to allow the municipal bureaucracy time to consider a protected heritage application filed by Cuypergenootschap. (Redactie De Castricum, 2020)

Regardless of the initial intentions behind the school-founding, during the brief period of sacred-profane interchange, Maranathakerk has arguably gained the second layer in its palimpsest of heritage meanings. Since the establishment of Supreme College in 2019, the new teenage émigrés, most only vaguely aware of the building's former Calvinist life, adapted the space as their own. The octagonal hall of Eldering became an open-plan classroom lined with round tables and couches. Old Protestant seminar rooms became classrooms for economic studies and foreign languages. Within the formerly sacred walls, students left individual marks of memories. Post-it notes, comedic graffiti, doodles, and personal artefacts took position alongside remnants of Christian iconography. On the structural platform where the now-removed church organ once rested, a toy animal now stands to keep watch over the pupils. Parts of the grassy lawn surrounding the buildings, which during Eldering's time fielded a sizable tulip farm, now hosts a semi-dilapidated vegetable garden belonging to the students. These new memories and special meanings deviate from those of the former post-war generation of churchgoers. Consequently, when considering the heritage value and meaning for Maranathakerk today, multiple distinctive strands of memories exist superimposed in a temporal order. I call this condition *fragmented heritage*.

To discuss any potential revitalisation of Maranathakerk, one must thus inevitably appreciate the fragmentary condition of its heritage. Hence, beyond the general problems associated with heritage obsolescence discussed in earlier chapters, Maranathakerk also raises a question of how architects can navigate conflicting meanings and belonging within an architectural heritage.

The need to balance (potentially) conflicting strands of fragmentary heritage meanings forms the basis of my inquiry and to which I hypothesize a palimpsestic approach to be a solution:



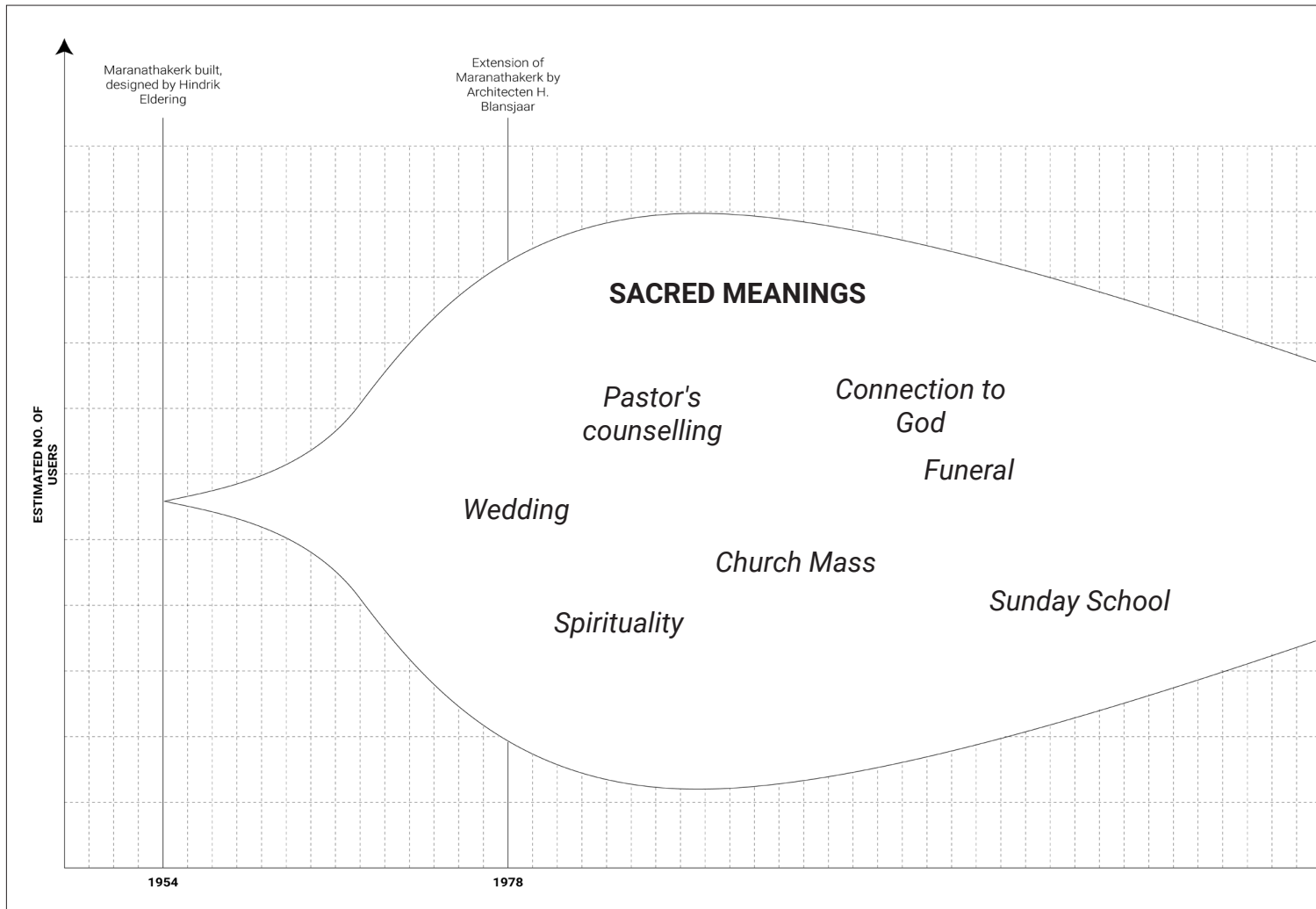


Fig. 6

Timeline exploring the development of maranathakerk. With the change in user base over time and associated shift of values, a fragmented heritage condition arose. (Author's drawing)

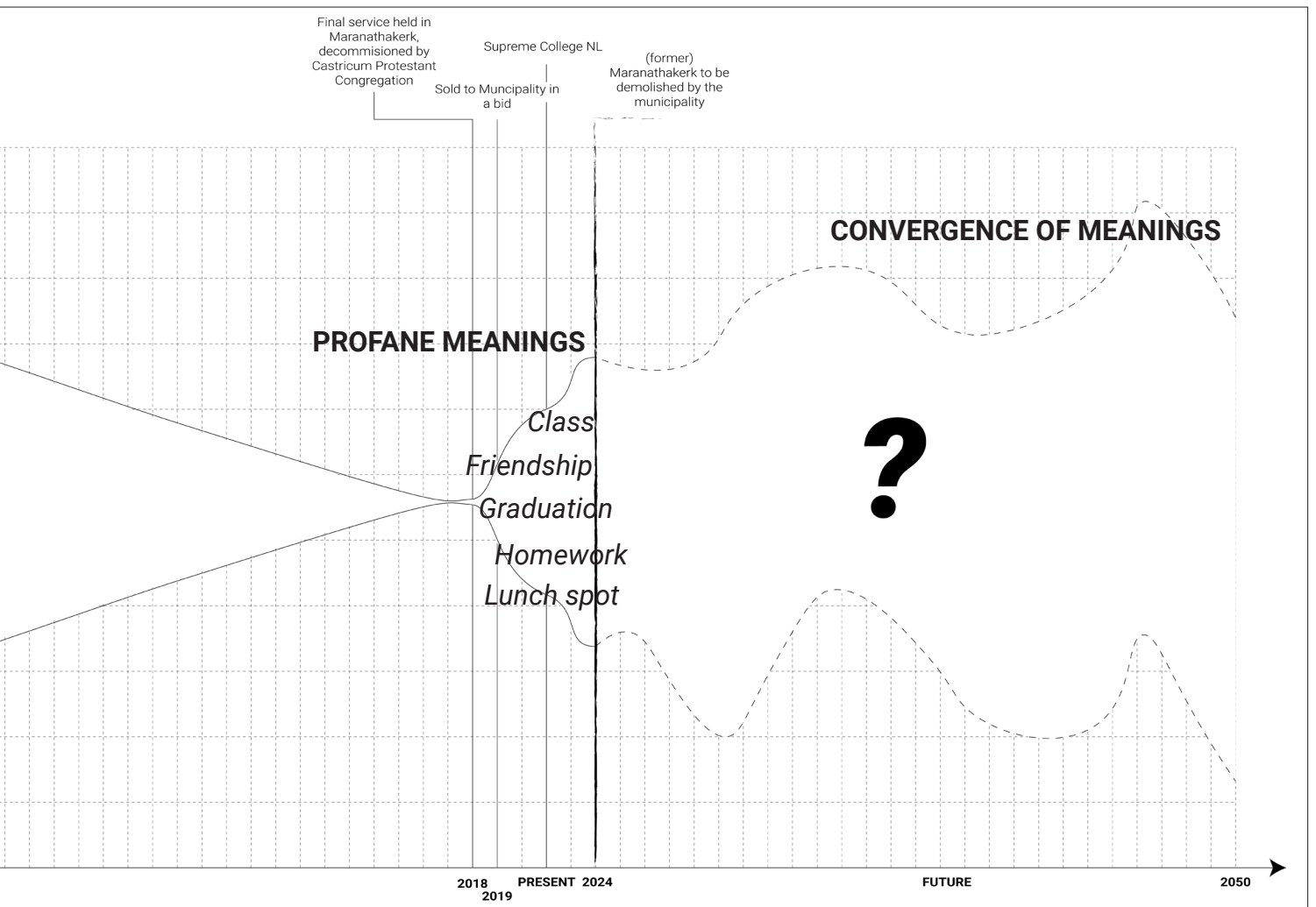




Fig. 7

Archimedes Palimpsest, ca. 1000 CE. The oldest known surviving example of Archimedes' manuscript. Believed to be a Byzantine copy of Archimedes' original Greek scripts, the scroll was written over by Christian monks in 1200s, burying the Archimedian manuscript beneath. (Rochester Institute of Technology and Johns Hopkins University, 2003)

Theoretical Framework:

This thesis centres around the design application of the palimpsest as a substantive ⁶ notion in the re-use of religious heritage. The research builds upon a long tradition of interdisciplinary exploration of palimpsests stretching back to the late 19th Century. The understanding of palimpsest has undergone rapid transformations over the past century, resulting in three movements of thoughts.

The first group comprises the traditional definition of palimpsest. Having crossed into English via Greek, palimpsest originally existed as an obscure palaeographic jargon describing a medieval recycling method in which scribes would reuse parchments by scrapping the topmost layer off and writing over the rest. Much to the delight of modern researchers, these acts of historic stinginess sometimes resulted in superimposed layers of texts discernible under careful observation and helped preserve otherwise lost knowledge. (Toth, 2016) Professor of English Sarah Dillon attributed the first use of 'Palimpsest' in a substantive sense to Thomas De Quincey's 1845 essay 'The Palimpsest'. (2005, p. 243) Since De Quincey, the palimpsest has attracted growing traction in fields ranging from architecture to neuroscience as researchers looked to examine their respective subjects through successive layering.

The second palimpsestic movement thus arose with De Quincey's introduction of palimpsest to the popular imagination and comprises the mainstay of the existing research output. Successive writers of architecture and urbanism have looked to palimpsest to examine existing cities, which I will call 'palimpsestic readings'. An early and pertinent figure in this movement was the Swiss architectural historian André Corboz. In *'Le territoire comme palimpseste'* [The land as a palimpsest], Corboz popularised the palimpsest as a metaphor for understanding the human transformation of landscapes. (Visone *et al.*, 2020) A wealth of studies have followed this tradition of palimpsestic urban reading, covering cities from Berlin to Maputo. A brief selection of these includes Noppen and Morisset, 1999; Khirfan, 2010; Giacomo Bottà, 2012; Vâlceanu, Kosa and Tămârjan, 2014; Kroessler, 2015; Ramirez-Hinojosa, 2015; Avramidis, 2020; Declève, 2020; Maskineh, 2021; Noormahomed, 2021; Sağlam, 2021; Turgut, 2021; Evans, 2022.

The focus of this thesis is the third category, representing the least charted area of research – the translation of palimpsest readings into a methodology for design application. Despite there being a relatively small body of existing research in this section, I would argue that the palimpsest represents a potent conceptual framework to navigate the questions of authenticity and diversity of meanings posed by heritage obsolescence. As highlighted by the 1993 Nara Conference ⁷, these complexities represent not only challenges in

6. Substantive

A non-literal meaning of the word, i.e., as a philosophical or metaphorical concept

re-using vacant churches, but also ongoing debates within wider heritage doctrine.

With few precedents of palimpsest research in heritage architecture, I looked to adjacent fields to provide models for the creation of a palimpsestic tool-kit. In archaeology, Geoff Bailey's examination and categorisation of Palimpsest's cumulative and temporal relations with meaning provided both a template for further development and a parallel to the decades-long movement to re-examine the understanding of heritage as static object. (2007) In the 1994 Nara Document, the question of authenticity and how to appreciate cultural diversity in ascribing meaning to heritage took centre stage in the heritage discourse. As noted by former ICOMOS⁸ chief Jean-Louise Luxen, Nara was responsible for advancing the doctrinal discussion from "heritage diversity to cultural diversity" (2019, p. 196) The change of doctrinal language to focus on cultural diversity implied a recognition that heritage can be interpreted different by different cultures and generations. Luxen and Herb Stevel⁹, however, also addressed the shortcomings of Nara and existing doctrine: *"[relativism in appreciating authenticity] risks opening the door to fanciful recognitions of cultural properties and to savage conservation practices"*. (2019, p. 204) It is in this regard that palimpsests show potential. As art historian and de-colonial scholar, Sara Rossling argued: *"A palimpsestic approach to sites doesn't deny their past, nor does it treat history as a perpetual narration. Rather, it keeps history open to reformulations through active bodily engagement"*. (2022)

The understanding of palimpsest as a constant interplay between erasure and inscription mirrors ideals ingrained across successive heritage charters. A key conclusion of the 1931 Athens Charter, a progenitor for modern heritage doctrine, was for the use of all available resources in heritage restoration. Modern materials and techniques, particularly reinforced concrete, gained encouragement in restoration practice. (First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, 1931) While the charter's advocacy for the concealment of *"non-historical consolidations"* debatably perpetuated the notion of heritage being static characters, its recognition of time and decay as integral elements of heritage parallels the ideas embedded in Corboz's metaphorical palimpsest. Article 1 of the 1964 Venice Charter recognised the inadequacy of viewing heritage as isolated objects within history, not unlike Bailey's concept of cumulative and spatial palimpsests. A building's holistic context – the rural or urban settings in which it is found and its position within the fabric of cultural history – was recognised as essential components of its heritage character. (ICOMOS, 1965) Ensuant charters adopted in Amsterdam (1975), Burra (1979, 2013), and Québec (2008) further developed the understanding of heritage in terms of site contextuality, cultural diversity, and authenticity, respectively.

7. Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention, held 1-6 Nov 1993 in Nara, Japan

8. ICOMOS International Council on Monuments and Sites, an international NGO that works for the conservation of heritage

9. Herb Stevel was one of the architects behind the Nara Conference and Nara Document

The exploration of meaning and cultural perception hearkens back to Kevin Lynch and Amos Rapoport's urbanistic studies in the 60s and 70s and Jacques Derrida's philosophical concept of *Deconstruction*. Across multiple works, from *Of Grammatology* (1976) to *Letter to a Japanese Friend* (1985), Derrida explored the tension and interchange between language and meaning. In deconstructing the centrality of meaning (logocentrism) in Western philosophy, Derrida argued that meaning itself was less a result of absolute natural order than fluctuations in the negotiation of competing concepts. Derrida termed this phenomenon *Différance* ¹⁰. Whilst the primary purpose of language is to convey meaning, *Différance* argued that meaning itself derives from the use of language. Meaning is therefore a product of and is dependent on human perception and individual memories. (Turner, 2016) Bailey took a comparable stance with what he termed "palimpsest of meaning", referring to a palimpsest's ability to exist within a singular object imbued with a succession of meaning and memories. Within such superimpositions, the cumulated layers no longer exist as independent artefacts of history, but as constituents of a new whole. Akin to the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ¹¹ exalted by Wagner, Adam, and Pugin, the palimpsest represents a whole greater than its constituent parts. I would suggest that to think of heritage through the lens of the palimpsest is to acknowledge the nature of heritage itself as a non-static phenomenon.

10. Derrida deliberately misspelled the French word 'différence' to illustrate the potential for language and meaning to be disjointed.

11. Gesamtkunstwerk
[German: total work of art]
A term coined by Romantic composer Richard Wagner to describe the state in which all elements of performance combined to form an artistic whole. For further reading on its influence on architecture, see Munch, 2021.

Methodological Framework:

The overall research strategy for formulating a palimpsestic tool-kit is to draw from the discourse around palimpsest across the spectrum of adjacent disciplines and translate them into the specific context of Maranathakerk. This process takes place over three overlapping research phases.

I

In the investigatory phase, theoretical research on palimpsest and contextual research on the Maranathakerk progress simultaneously. The theoretical study, as outlined in this research plan, examines through existing literature the precedential use of palimpsest in academia and aligns these with conventional heritage doctrine.¹² Focus is placed on determining methods of categorising forms of palimpsests, as exemplified in Bailey, 2007. Concurrent with the theoretical study, the ABC-analysis¹³ will be conducted to understand the specific urban, political, social, and spatial context of Maranathakerk in Castricum. The primary research tools for this will be the redrawing and interpretation of original construction documents and historical photographs from the two archives, the local collection of Stichting Oud-Castricum and the governmental collection of Regionaal Archief Alkmaar. Field trips to Castricum will form another key segment of the ABC-analysis. As will interviews of relevant stakeholders, including Supreme College, the Castricum municipality and interest groups like Cuypersgenootschap. With this database of stakeholder testimonials and assessments, a Value Assessment will be made on the Maranathakerk based on the framework developed by the Heritage & Values Group at TU Delft.¹⁴

II

The theoretical and contextual findings will be consolidated in the generative phase, where the aim will be the formulation of a palimpsestic tool-kit that can act as a basis for a design intervention. The precedential views of palimpsest discussed in the previous chapter will be combined with an in-depth analysis of specific building elements within the Maranathakerk to create a catalogue of palimpsestic parts. By examining Maranathakerk's spatial qualities through the lens of cumulative palimpsest and Différance, the tool-kit I propose will link the present issues of generational shift and pending demolition to broader questions of meaning in heritage. Through these theoretical connections, I hope to compose a tool-kit transferable to similar situations of heritage obsolescence.

12. Meaning established charters or documents adopted by international organisations like ICOMOS

13. See dos Santos Gonçalves et al., 2022, p. 9

14. See Roders & Silver (2012), Roders & Veldpaus (2014), Roders & dos Santos Gonçalves (2020)

III

Finally, in the translational phase, the palimpsestic tool-kit will be implemented in the redesign of Maranathakerk, where a comprehensive intervention scheme will be proposed for its future post-2024. Of the multitude of issues faced by Maranathakerk today, the greatest is likely the mutually exclusive visions held by its stakeholders. Directly oppositional to each other are the development-oriented municipality and the conservationist Cuypersgenootschap. Whilst in the centre sits Supreme College, who believes the space to be a successful match for its educational experiment, but has a demand for a larger space and improved facilities. Given the contested nature of the site and conflicting intentions voiced by its stakeholders, I believe a palimpsestic approach represents a new middle-ground in the apparent dichotomy of either providing the Castricum with new amenities or preserving the heritage of Eldering's Maranathakerk.

Crucially, the translational or design stage will also serve as a testing ground for the palimpsestic tool-kit and examine its viability in providing a template for tackling future religious vacancies.

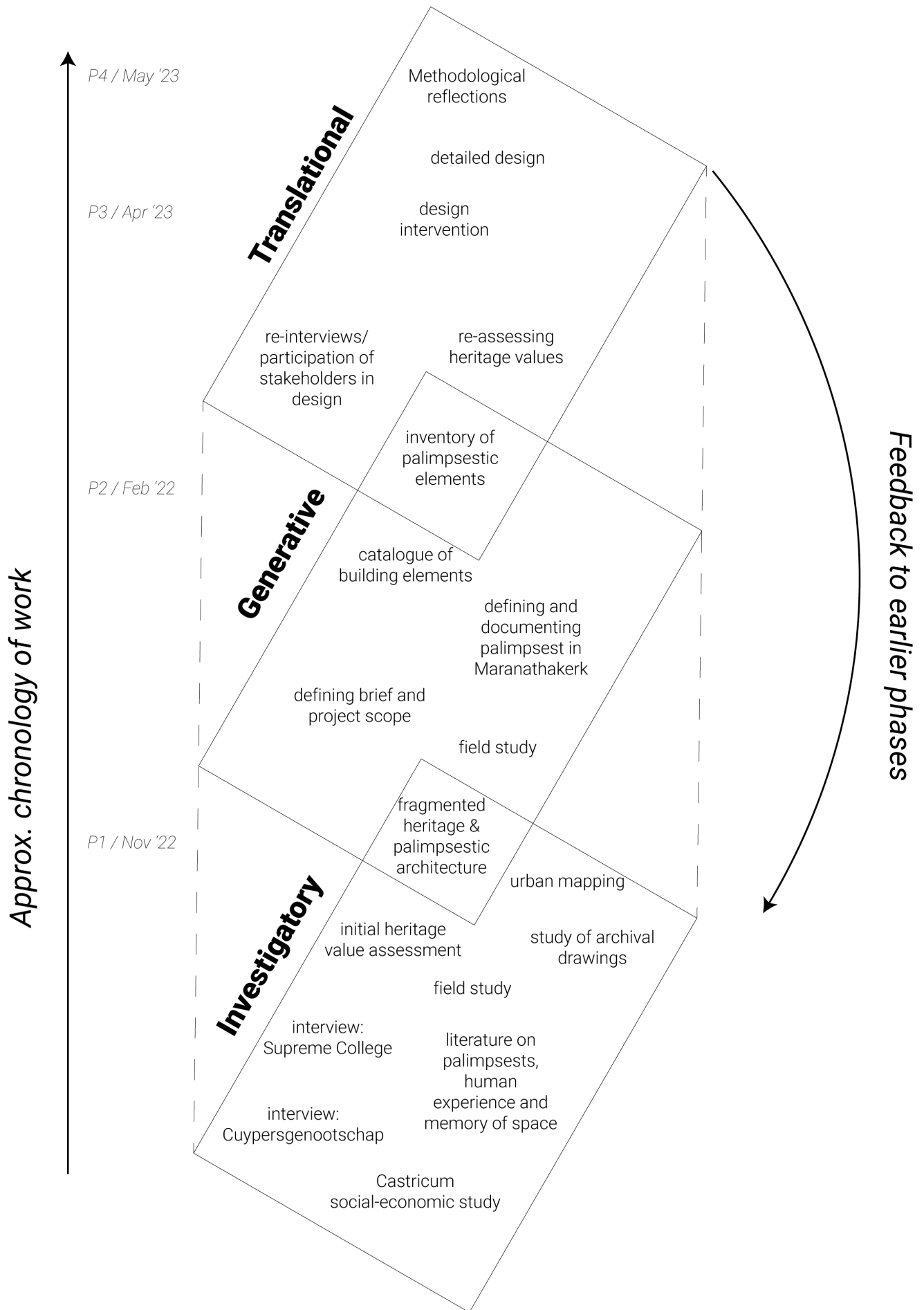


Fig. 8

The presentation of my research plan as palimpsestic layers. Phases are built atop their predecessor, and new objectives are directly based previous finding. However, newer reflections are constantly fed back into the loop, with the potential to alter or overrule earlier works. The resulting thesis thus progresses along a general direction, but its details may shift over time. (author's drawing)

Relevance:

Beyond Maranathakerk

In describing the origins of palimpsests, Dillon touched upon a point which evokes clear parallels to the issue of heritage obsolescence:

"[the] recycling of vellum arose due to a combination of factors: scarcity and expense of writing materials; physical deterioration of existing manuscripts from which reusable vellum was then sourced; and changing historical and cultural factors which rendered some texts obsolete either because the language in which they were written could no longer be read, or because their content was no longer valued." (2005, p. 244)

Dillon's rendering illustrates that the historic rationale for 'palimpsestisation' was at times one of material reuse and cost-efficiency. For Maranathakerk and similar cases of heritage obsolescence, elements of this certainly ring true. If applied to a true palimpsest, as defined by Bailey, *tabula rasa*¹⁵ may thus appear as a rational choice. By clearing away the obsolete layers, newer functions can arise, better suited for contemporary needs. Indeed, this was ostensibly the logic adopted by the municipality. However, as Bailey cautioned his archaeological colleagues, palimpsests are rarely 'true palimpsests'. As Rossling argued: *"To call something palimpsestic points to it having the ability to be altered; to its purpose being able to extend to one other than its original intent."* (2022) For heritage architecture, the reality is that heritage likely approach what Bailey described as cumulations, whether this involves cumulation of physical alterations or memorial meanings.

A palimpsestic approach to place-making, therefore, returns, incidentally, to the studio's theme of zero-waste. Whilst in true palimpsests, the topmost layer represents the only discernible one, in cumulative palimpsests, each addition builds atop the old. Successive layers may acquire differing opacities, but never erases the past. As demonstrated by the Nara Conference, this too represent the ideal in heritage management.

The primary focus of this thesis is to investigate the palimpsestic conditions of Castricum's former Maranathakerk, and through it imagine an intervention towards its pending destruction. Even so, it is also the ambition of this project and the larger H&A studio that the imaginations in Castricum and elsewhere could in tandem become a small generative start towards propagating a zero-waste attitude in heritage design. For I consider the zero-waste not merely a vision for a more sustainable built environment, but equally an appreciation of the palimpsestic nature of heritage. My personal upbringing, divided between Shenzhen, China, and Stavanger, Norway, attested to this

¹⁵. tabula rasa
[Latin: blank slate]

belief. Beyond the obvious spatial contrast between a megapolis of 12 million and a minor Scandinavian city, a greater rift in heritage understanding existed between the two. Shenzhen, which was little more than a vast coastal plain when Maranathakerk received its expansion in the 1970s, should by logic have no heritage to speak of. Yet, within the concrete jungle, Shenzheners dwell within structures rooted in all manners of heritage. From the re-arrangement of open-plan flats in line with optimal Fengshui ¹⁶ to the erection of follies imitating Euro-American traditions. Individual and collective interpretations of heritage inseminated every level of place-making.

Oppositionally, Norwegian heritage appears more stoic than the fast-paced and artificial Chinese urban model. Norwegian timber dwellings regularly exceed a century of service and a rigid conservation policy ensures cities like Stavanger maintain predetermined sight-lines and uniform architectural materiality. Nevertheless, with closer examination, Stavanger's heritage is equally palimpsestic and dynamic as Shenzhen. I recall an incident in which my parents' decision to cut down an overgrown pine tree and re-paint the living room walls left the house's previous owner with sombre sadness, as the man rued the loss of his familial heritage. For the tree had been planting with the birth of his daughter and their move into a newly constructed home.

It is therefore in this regard I consider Rosslings' take on the palimpsestic approach particularly poignant, as I see this understanding forming an integral first step in the urgent need we have now to change our views of construction, and human cities at large from exercises of *tabula rasa* towards additive layering atop vibrant and organic histories. Is it by moving towards viewing heritage as the rich palimpsest they are and (re)designing them accordingly, that Corboz's quote from some four decades ago may finally ring true.

"The land, so heavily charged with traces and with past readings, seems very similar to a palimpsest."

André Corboz, *'The Land as Palimpsest'* (1983)

16. Fengshui
[Chinese: wind-water]
A loosely defined set of traditional folk practices with the shared aim of harmonising an individual with their built or natural environment.

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