

Reflection Paper

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Problem Statement

City-making and urban redevelopment of small and big parts of towns may have happened all at once at the desk of master planner like Jan Gehl, Daniel Burnham, and many others. Intervening in centuries old towns of Europe, pregnant of history and culture, is not nearly comparable to doing so in newly born ones e.g. in the US or Saudi Arabia.

Political and societal pressures as well as historical and cultural ones, slowness and intricateness of bureaucracy are few of the many causes, which undermine the responsiveness of definitive architectural and urban projects in this particular environment.

No single master plan can anticipate the evolving and varied needs of an increasingly diverse population or achieve the resiliency, responsiveness and flexibility that shorter term, experimental endeavors can.

Objective

Starting from the premises that all buildings shouldn't aspire to permanence, the objective is set to propose a temporary architectural solution for Marineterrein area in Amsterdam, to create a valuable and appealing space, in order to give new life to this area.

I believe that reusable, recyclable and sustainable temporary architecture could better solve seemingly unsolvable problems and succeed in creating a genius loci, adapting to unpredictable demands, encouraging innovation and helping facilitate emerging micro economies: in a sentence "apt response to a civilization in flux".

The Project's goal is to propose a temporary architectural solution for the unused outdoor space of the Marineterrein Area in Amsterdam, which recent events had made property of both government and city hall, previously of the Dutch Navy. The aim is to define a new temporary identity for the Area, mindful of its historical and social role, providing indoor and outdoor spaces for the public, as well as sheltered and pleasant walkways through it.

The project will be making use of the knowledge embedded in a 19th century temporary architecture construction system using wood, iron wire and lights (invented in Baroque Italy for celebrating change in politics, society, religious festivities, and regal guests visits by transforming for a brief period the urban environment's architectural appearance) of which durability and resistance have been improved by the findings of the technical research done. Moreover this system, which by its inherent nature does not provide shelter, will be adapted to do so.

Overall design question

How can temporary architecture determine the direction and character of change in Marineterrein Area by providing indoor, outdoor and transitional flexible spaces for the public?

Thematic Research Question

What are the most efficient, resilient, weatherproof devices, for improving the use of a wood temporary construction system with no foundations, when exposed to prolonged and/or harsh weather stresses?

Relevance

The relevance of this research and its results is to be found in the direct application of the findings in an ongoing business realizing these structures. Moreover these improvements could facilitate the application of the inherent construction system principles for different uses than the current: emergency settlements, camping facilities, pop up structures, pavilions, of which temporariness calls for low (no) footprint, quick construction, dismantling and reusability.

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Reflection

The reason why I chose the Architectural Engineering studio is because I believe in the figure of the architect as the master builder of construction, a knowledgeable person that has an overview on all the aspects regarding the practice, if not in an all-inclusive way, at least in a comprehensive one.

The studio is about the integration of technology in architecture, and this is exactly what I tried to do with my project: innovate a temporary construction system by introducing new solutions that would improve it under different aspects.

The context of Marineterrein is a suitable ground for testing purposes, due to its urbanity, recent and not so recent history, conformation, source of inspiration and embedded beauty.

Regarding the methodology of the studio, I can say that I was very sceptical in the beginning and also found it very destabilizing, probably because of my educational background, the bachelor in Politecnico di Milano, where the integration of technology was an ending of the design, not a starting point.

But in the end, I think that it starting from a technical problem and fascination really opened my mind, giving me great insights in my inner architectural self, and what I really like and enjoy dealing with and doing.

I think that my project, despite being very technical, has many social implications, especially if contextualized in the Marineterrein story of change and transformation.