

Reflection Paper

Urban Foyer

Date: 08-05-2017

Heritage & Architecture Disclosing the Military City Lisbon

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Entering the MMC via North gate (picture: H. Zijlstra)

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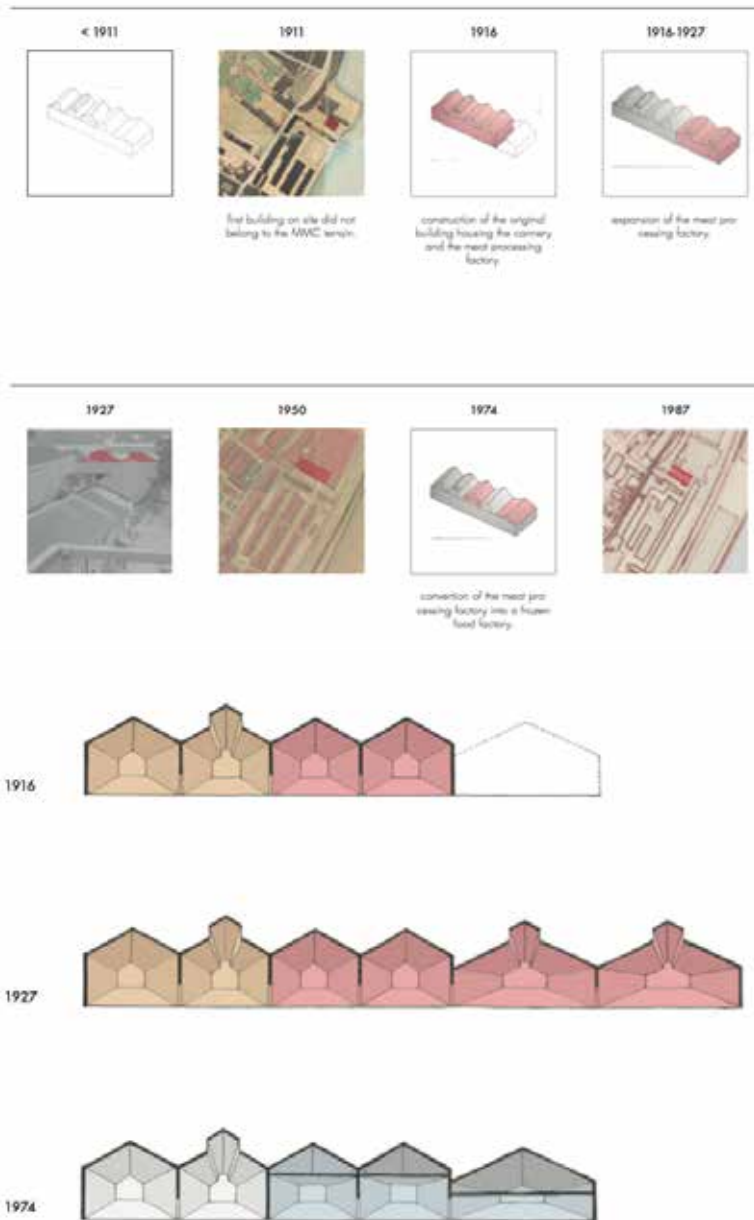


image 1: excerpt from corner analysis, cannery historical development (drawings: S. Lok)

The relationship between research and design

The two aspects research and design are ever present in any design studio. The Heritage and Architecture studio is no exception on this. In our studio there is a different focus in the preliminary stage of the design process. The heritage studio is organized and focused on the built heritage as a core, this core needs to be fully analysed and researched. This part of the research is very closely linked, and necessary, to design because it will provide the incentives that fuel the later design process.

The research done for the studio is connected to the assignment and to the location of the project, namely the city of Lisbon in Portugal. Group research is necessary to be able to design in the climate, culture and organization of Lisbon. For this phase research played a bigger role than in the period afterwards. This research into the history, culture and location is critical and gives you the incentives that will tie your design to the heritage. I wrote a position paper for a parallel course about dealing with big machines and mostly dealing with machines that are no longer there. This was tied to my old building choice, the powerhouse, so it was less useful after switching buildings to buildings that never housed machines.

The research was in a way important for my design because with it I found starting points for designing and values worth preserving or elaborating. For example research into the old cannery / frozen food building yielded the result that the building's development was actually hidden behind the facade. So a design solution was to expose this development by making a corridor. Also this intervention shows the way the facade deceives you from the street. Later in the design I changed some part of this corridor but the main idea still remains the same.

From the P2 retake until the P3 actual research into literature made place for research by design. This made much improvement to the design and there was more visible progression. This is a method I feel more confident with and comes more natural, testing with sketching for example. It would be interesting to see what would be the result if I incorporate more theoretical research into my design.

I did for the first time use the method of model making more extensively as a tool for design, instead of only for presenting. I used different scale models to test certain ideas in 3D and use the models to get new ideas. These new ideas were sometimes born from just producing random ideas and sometimes worked out from sketches. By putting them side by side and reflecting on the aspects on which they differ or certain things that they address. The model making is just one of the tools available for an architect. For this assignment I felt that with more time I should try to utilize this tool better than before and start in an earlier phase with making them. In hindsight I am really pleased with the progress that this method brought and will certainly work more often like this.

A danger of this method is that it stays very abstract, which is visible in materialisation in my project. So a good improvement is to incorporate materials earlier also in models and realistic colours in sketches.

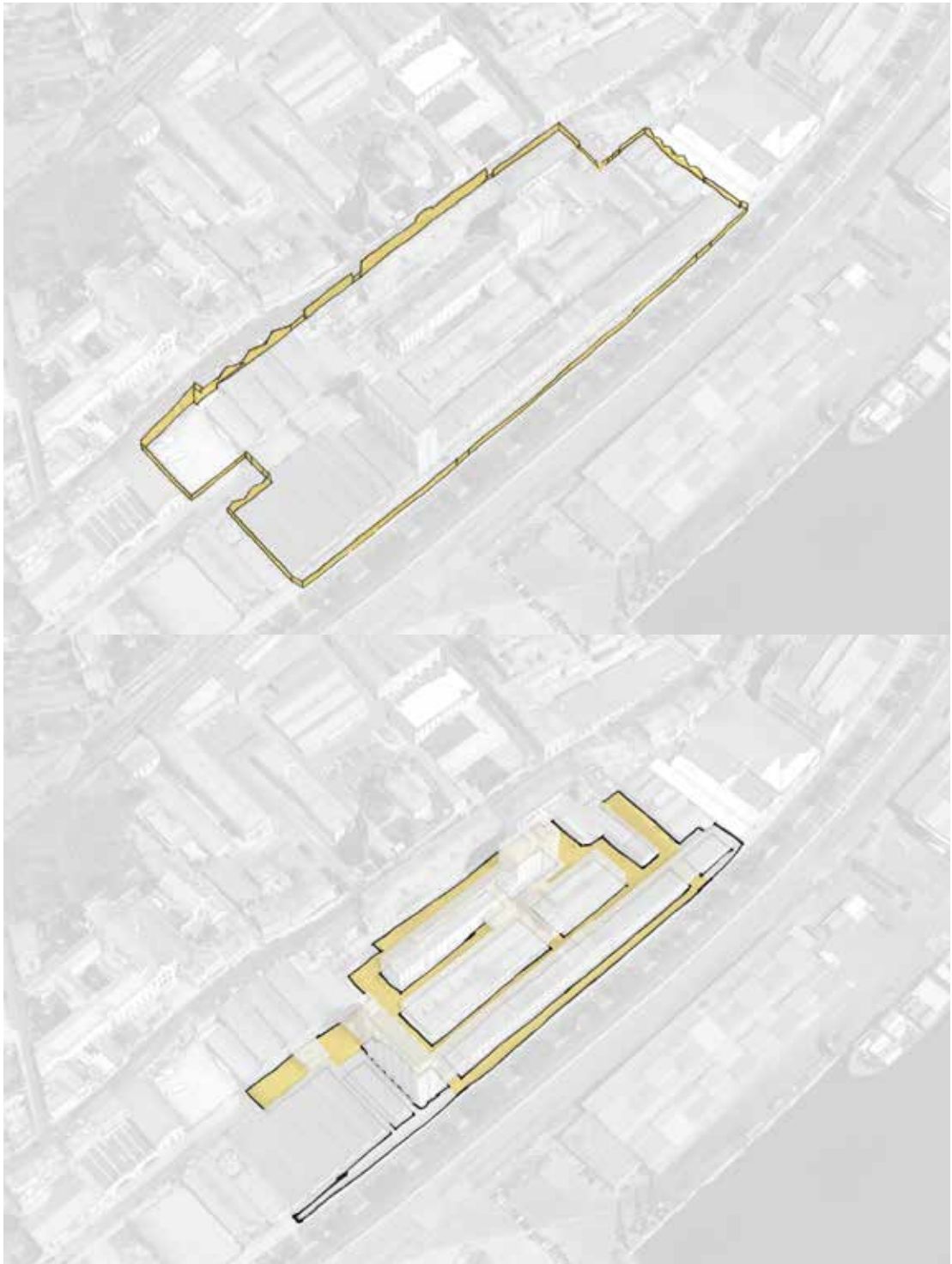


image 2: excerpt from corner group analysis, upper: perimeter enclosure, lower: infrastructure (own image)

The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

The graduation lab/studio, at its core, is themed around designing with build heritage. The assignment of disclosing the military city of MMC fits like a glove into the studio theme. The assignment asks us to disclose a vacant military factory site to the city. The challenges of today have shifted from prominent and important buildings that needed careful restoration to being more about buildings and structures that have lost their value or that are often not valuable in the eye of the general public, such as industrial sites, factories etc. Like our current chair professor mentions about the studio: 'the starting point for design is not just a functional brief and a blank sheet of paper but the challenge of an existing spatial setting and cultural-historical context'¹. With this in mind the general studio theme and our assignment not only match but the assignment is a good reflection of current practice.

The main research question that I have for this assignment is: How can one design a strategy for reusing industrial resilient structure and utilize the character and history as an incentive in order to reconnect to the neighborhood? With this question I was being a little bit ambitious in the sense of finding a strategy on a more generic level, but the question connects with the core of heritage practice. The studio teaches us about valuing, finding the character and respecting the present fabric. With this question I was searching for the right incentives and trying to determine the strongest resilient parts of the site. This in the end led me to starting points for the masterplan, focused around the longitudinal street structure (image 2). Next to this, finding the right incentive for the masterplan also changed my elaboration part of the site. Although my preference lied with another building, following the information generated by analyzing, valuing and reflecting back to the bigger scale changed my plan to a different spot that was more in line with the discovered information. My subject changed to the one part of the site that was unaligned with the rest of the resilient site structure.

The subject / question is related to the theme of the studio, with the question I was hoping for finding an incentive or strategy that could be applied on a more generic level then only on the site. This is within our studio a though effort as in the quote just mentioned, the starting point lies in existing qualities and history. These are two points that are never the same in two different cases. This is why I tried to incorporate the understanding that large industrial sites are usually planned around a strong logistical system that is often kept the same and thus determine the rest of the expansion and construction on site. This resilience is what fuelled the formulation of my research question. This resilience is probably a factor, in any shape or form, that will help you deal with industrial heritage on a more generic level.

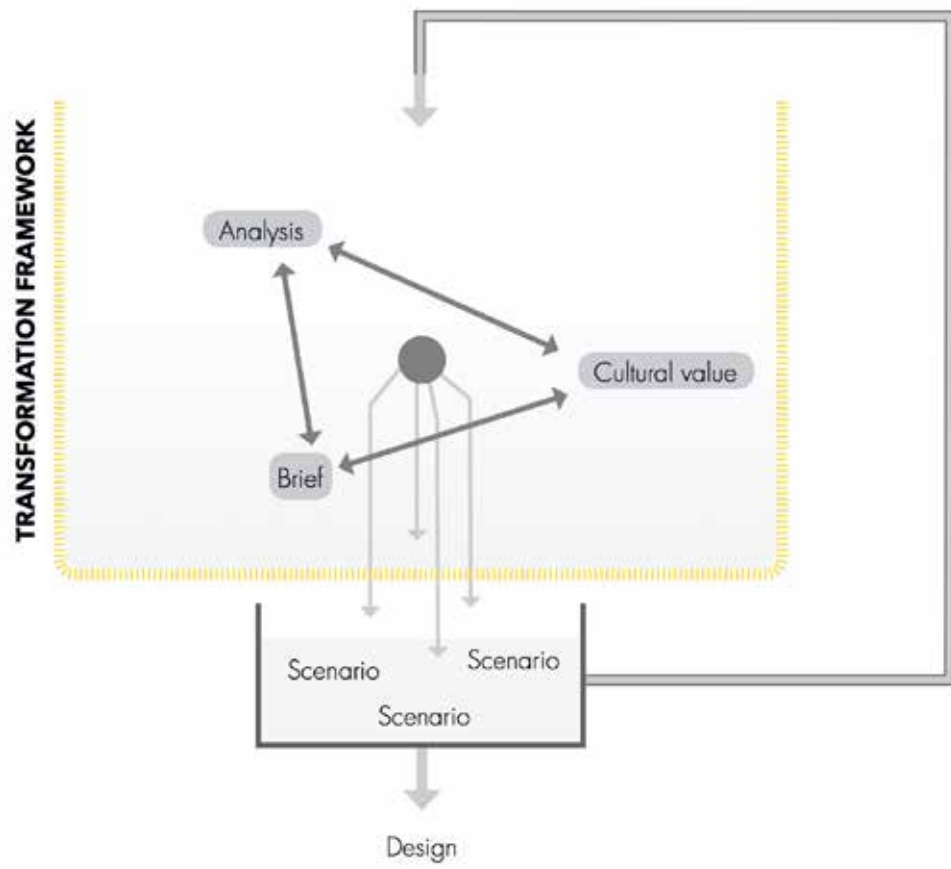


Image 3: Scheme of work method (own image)

The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

Heritage & Architecture brings together the fields of cultural history, technology, and architectural design; these three corner stones are often visualized by the familiar Heritage triangle. The triangle as a metaphor that stands for the fact that each of these cornerstones needs to be present in order to be a coherent and stable whole. The studios methodology is that of heritage and architecture, which in itself is a very rigid methodology (hence the triangle) and you are ought to take into account these three aspects because without them you are not in line with the studio.

My approach is very compatible with and derived from the studio. When I look at working in the field of Heritage and architecture I take the three cornerstones as permanent factors but their ratio and role compared to one another is not defined yet. The designing is a circular process, it requires a dynamic method in order to keep incorporating the cornerstones in to the design and to not lose track of them. At the start of the studio there was a request to visualize your own method into a scheme. My scheme is visible on this page and visualises the method as a process that is continuously enriching itself with the same ingredients. Ingredients consist of analysis, cultural value and the personal brief.

Because my method is visualized as a flow of the design, obtained from the ingredients supplied by the cornerstones filtered by the transformation framework, it becomes possible to reintroduce the design in this very system. In such a method the filter can be adjusted, which happened around the P2 in my case, to get a more clear and stronger result. Or a new ratio of ingredients can be introduced to the mix and change the composition. What for instance happened with a design step where I took cultural value of a street more serious, which resulted in a change of my design.

Sometimes you have to be pointed out that it necessary to look at a different ratio of ingredients, in a tutorial for instance, and sometimes you discover this by yourself by testing the design on the current framework filter.

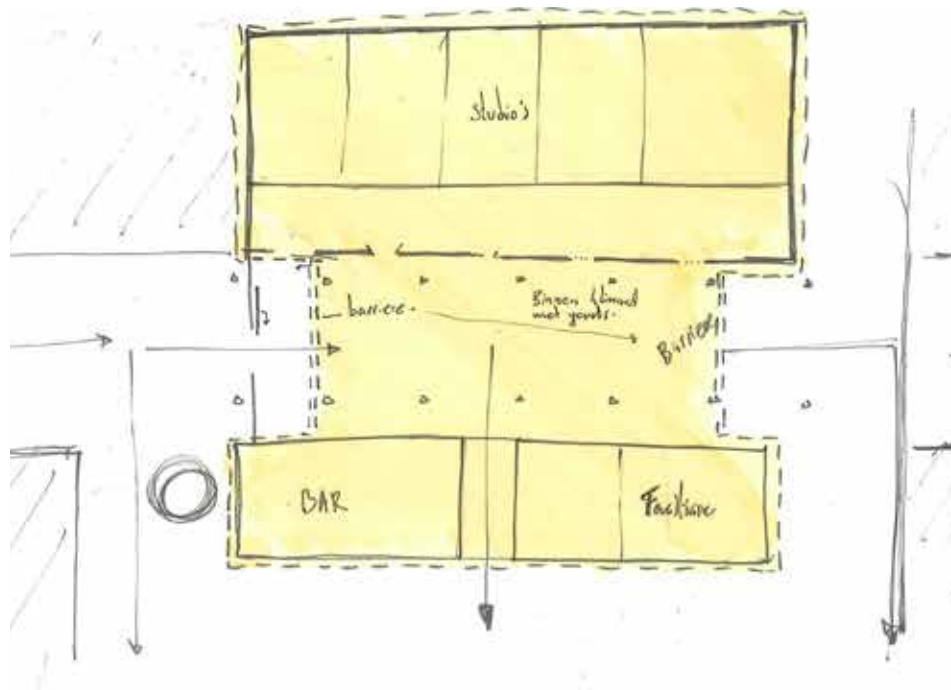


Image 4: ensemble plan situation around Pre-P4 (own image)



interior



semi outside

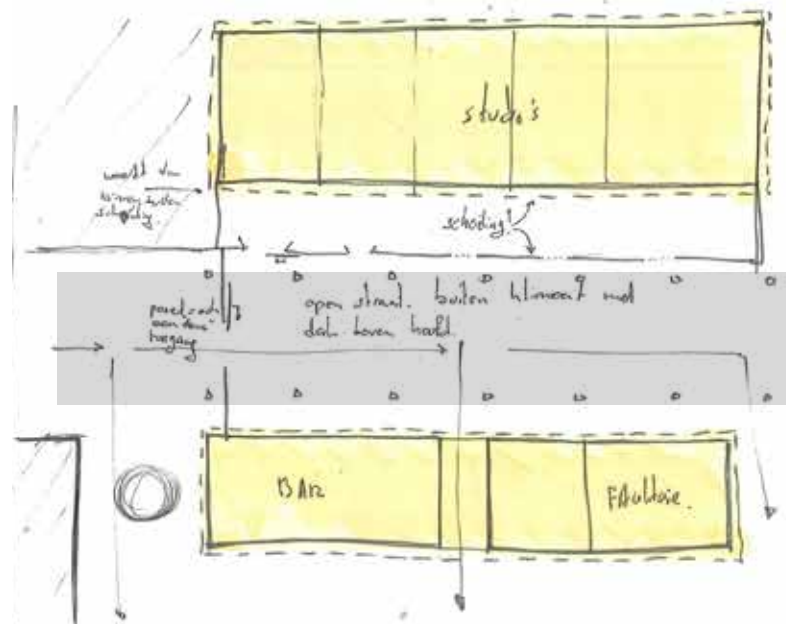


Image 5: ensemble plan situation around P4 (own image)

The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The MMC site lies in a very difficult part of the city of Lisbon. This was already clear at the very start of our graduation project during the DoCo-MoMo workshop in Lisbon. Later when doing the analysis of the context it became even more evident that the MMC had a complicated context. The complicated and declining situation in the neighborhood Beato was also, partly, the result of a empty and not functioning MMC. The scale of this site alone is a challenge by itself and to re-incorporate the further social context of the surroundings a big challenge. Personally I am not fond of this large scale and tend to not easily deal with the problems. Therefore I started with keeping my focus on the site itself and incorporated the social context only in the form of the new program I am introducing.

When working on the program for the MMC it became clear that the social context already needed to be further incorporated. I chose to introduce program that was going to be tied more to the neighborhood in one 'anchor' and program tied to the city in another. The city program would supply the municipality in its requirements of a silicon vally in Lisbon. Next to this wish it became evident to also give a part of the MMC back to the surrounding neighborhood in the shape of a cultural program for them to enjoy and a economical platform for them to profile the neighborhood to the city.

During the process this idea developed and my design changed from being an actual building into an open urban structure. Dealing much more with a bigger scale then initially envisioned upfront. The design developed from a foyer for a small scale neighborhood theatre to being an foyer for the whole of the site, as seen form the neighborhood. The foyer function was actually the catalyst in this development. Calling it a foyer/street gave way for me to interpret this in different ways, which resulted in scaling the foyer structure up to an urban structure and using it functionally to connect the site and neighborhood. After this discovery the design was much more aligned with the masterplan story of an neighborhood anchor, functionally and architecturally. A structure like this can become a beautiful place for the people of the neighborhood to enjoy and utilize for the typical southern European outdoor life. Although the real life use must prove its viability.

In hindsight the social context had a bigger influence in the design then initially thought. The biggest change happened between the Pre-P4 and the P4 where actual climatized interior space made way for public space in a roofed outdoor foyer. This development is visible in the two sketches.