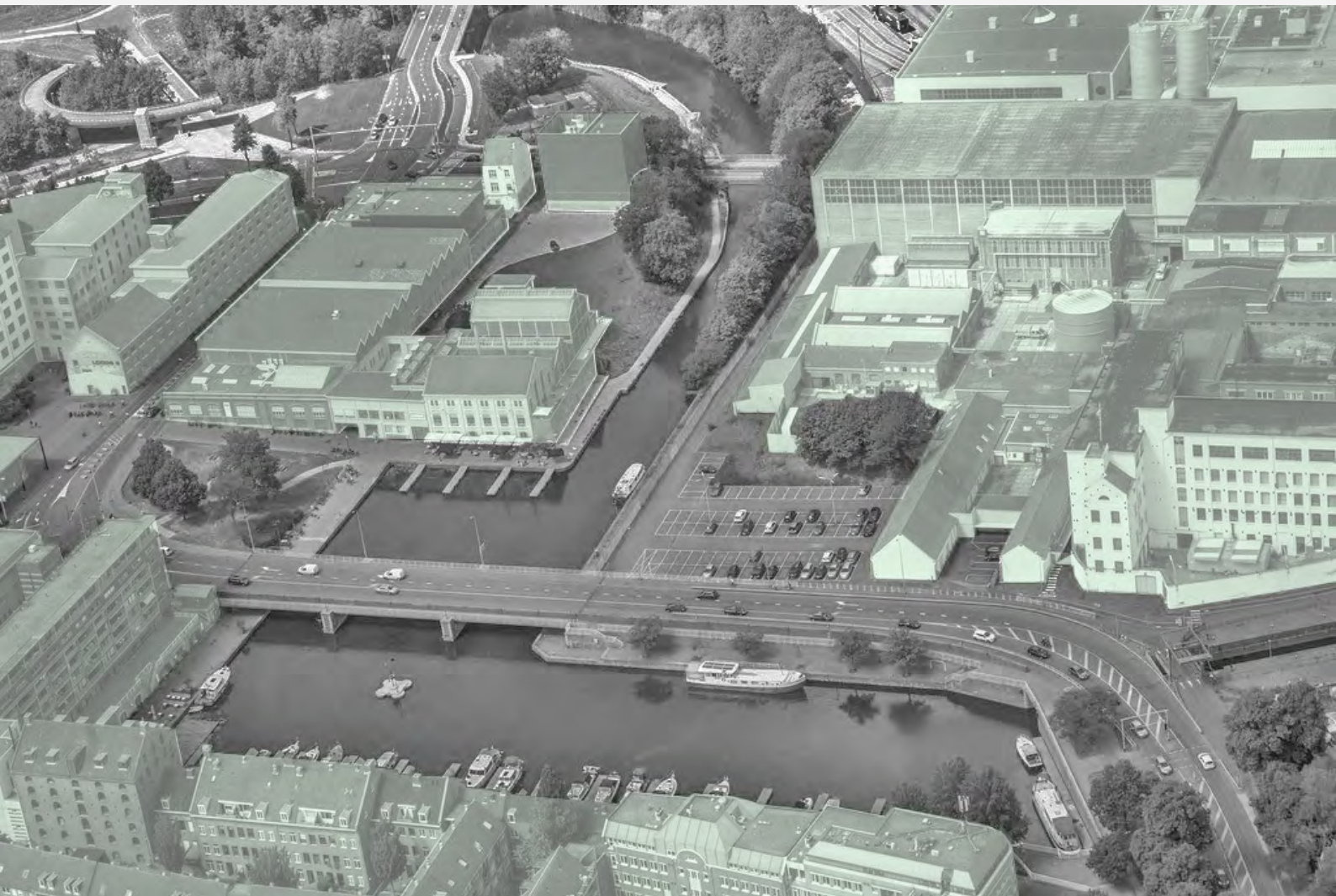


Upgrading socio-spatial characteristics to revitalize the post-industrial Sphinxkwartier in Maastricht

Urban Architecture



Research Plan
AR3UA100 Urban Architecture Graduation Studio

Annebel Formsma
5258529

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Table of content

Research in key words	3
Definitions	3
Field of interest	4
Studio site	5
Examples of negative urban spaces in Sphinxkwartier, Maastricht	6
Research aim	8
Methodology	9
Research structure	10
Bibliography	12

Research in key words

- what. Gleaning**
Leftover space, undefined space, negative urban spaces
- where. Maastricht**
Sphinx Quarter, post-industrial areas, urban fabric, urban structure of spaces
- why. Issue research**
Revitalizing urban spaces, upgrading socio-spatial practises, spatial characteristics, social characteristics
- how. Methods**
. Desk research of history and present (archives/photographs/books)
. Analyzing urban spaces in Maastricht and similar post-industrial areas
. Observations / ethnographic / interviews (perspective, behaviour and interactions)

Defintions

Gleaning Picking up physical objects and spatial concepts in the urban environment or part of the urban environment, investigating and analysing the existing ideas, principles, elements, materials and practices and using them for new purposes in order to give it a new and more meaningful purpose.

Negative urban spaces Leftover and undefined spaces that are the result of a lack in function, social meaning and ownership.

Post-industrial A mostly abandoned area in the city that has historically been industrialized and awaits redevelopment.

Private space A defined space based on spatial, physical and social dimensions, focussed on individuals, privacy and security.

Public space A defined space based on spatial, physical and social dimensions, focussed on society, interaction and exchange.

Revitalization The action or process of giving a certain area vitality and new life in order to become meaningful and successful again for the users of this area through developing, making and strengthening.

Social interaction An occasion of at least two people interacting or communicating with each other.

Socio-spatial The interconnection of how the built environment shapes social life and how the users socially create meaning in urban spaces.

Space An all-encompassing and intangible three-dimensional place in which we evolve, move and perceive.

Users The people who are in that specific area, by walking through it, living in it, or performing activities.

Introduction

Spaces can be divided into public spaces and private spaces based on their usability. Each space is distinguished by how we use these spaces and elicits a different type of behaviour derived from the contrast between security or privacy and exchange or interaction (Allies, n.d.). Borders are also part of the distinction in the type of space. Borders between public and private can be very clear, for instance by the use of fences or different materials, but can also be a fluent transition, where the border is determined by spatial features. Thus, borders can exist in visible or invisible form.

Moreover, spaces can be categorized regarding their physical, social or spatial characteristics (Hizlierkiliç & Ciravoglu, 2018). Physical characteristics are distinguished by the use of different textures, patterns and colours, spatial characteristics are altered through the features of a space, such as light, dimensions, scale and form, and social opportunities are expressed by the degree of accessibility, ownership and privacy.

Negative urban spaces

In Contemporary Public Space Part Two (2010), Cormona distinguished twenty urban areas from public to private spaces, derived from differences in function, perception and ownership. These urban areas are identified in four categories, namely positive spaces, negative spaces, ambiguous spaces and private spaces. Negative spaces contain leftover spaces and undefined spaces.

Approximately 35 years ago Roger Trancik (1986) researched, as one of the first, the notion of urban leftover space. He referred to leftover space as 'lost space', as these spaces had no clear boundaries, made no positive contribution to surrounded spaces and were poorly defined. He investigated the features of these spaces and saw that lost spaces caused division in use through zoning and policies. Leftover spaces are part of the urban system, often unnoticed and known as land set aside for development or no man's land.

According to Azhar J., Gjerde M. & Vale B. (2018) vacant urban undefined spaces often show signs of neglect by the owner of the property and form a threat to public safety. These spaces form the heterogeneous structure of the urban fabric. Each user of the city interprets and perceives undefined urban spaces differently (Hizlierkiliç, N. & Ciravoglu, A., 2018). Nevertheless, socio-spatial practises are important as sites of social interaction and sociability and capture "a sense of inclusive urban belonging" (King, 2019). In his research Loures (2014) shows that the perspective of public establishes a valuable support to the revitalization of urban change and redevelopment. For this reason, it is needed to also include the perspectives, behaviours and actions of the users of urban spaces in such research.

Studio theme

As the main theme of the studio, the concept of gleaning will form the basis of this research. Gleaning can be described as becoming aware of what is already there; the small things on the street or in nature, but also concepts in a greater presence, such as buildings, public and private and urban space. Picking the physical objects and spatial concepts up and becoming aware of the existing ideas, principles, elements, materials and uses of it and using them for new purposes to give it a new (and better) meaning after which it is, at some point, ready to be gleaned again. This can also be applied to the notion of 'negative urban spaces', which includes spaces left over after development and undefined spaces. For this research, gleaning means searching for these negative spaces within the city, re-value them, which means to investigate and analyse it and in some cases taking it out of its context, after which it can be improved, refurbished or kept intact, to be designated for a new and more meaningful purpose.

Maastricht

For me Maastricht is a complex and heterogeneous city that exists of different layers in time and appearance. Layers from the past until the future describing the chronological change and growth of the urban fabric and layers in the identity and diversity of the districts focussing on the different functions, target groups and potentials. For the group research into the architectural histories of urban renewal in Maastricht, we decided to focus on three representative renewed districts, which all offer a different approach of the impact of urban renewal. Subsequently, we analysed different housing blocks within these urban renewals, to search for the language of architecture in Maastricht. In this case language is expressed in social stories of the citizens, our own experience, the perspective and intentions of the 'creators' of these building blocks, such as the municipality, architects and urban planners, the physical appearance of the buildings and the connection to their context. The group research made me think of the connection between public and private, the transition between them and the use of these spaces.

Sphinxkwartier

The Sphinxkwartier is a post-industrial area in the north of Maastricht, where currently only the paper factory 'Sappi' is still producing. The factory occupies a large part of the designated site. Over the course of 150 years the factory site has expanded significantly, which led to a range of buildings designed based on their function, instead of focussing on a design that fits in its context. The enlargement of the site, the scale and appearance of the factory buildings and the footprint of the industrial district have resulted in many isolated urban spaces due to both social and spatial shortcomings. During the site visit in the Sphinxkwartier, I identified several spaces as 'negative urban spaces', spaces in between buildings, abandoned spaces, spaces at edges or dead-ends. These type of spaces felt isolated due to the lack of visual accessibility and thus the minimal degree of surveillance. Although the location of the site has a lot to offer, close to the city centre and within the fortifications, it felt to me that these urban spaces are not fully utilized and it seemed that locals do not come here often or walk through these urban spaces. This experience is captured in the photos on the next page.



Image 1 | The urban fabric of Maastricht (author's own image).

Image 2 | The site of the studio (author's own image).

Examples of negative urban spaces in Sphinxkwartier, Maastricht

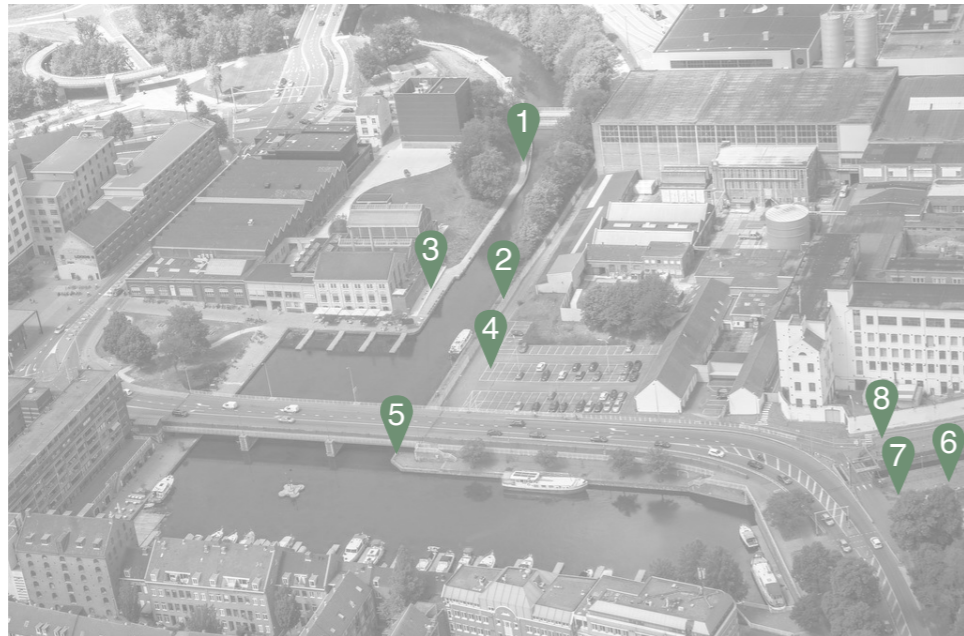


Image 3 | Negative urban spaces in Sphinxkwartier 1-4 (author's own image).

Examples of negative urban spaces in Sphinxkwartier, Maastricht

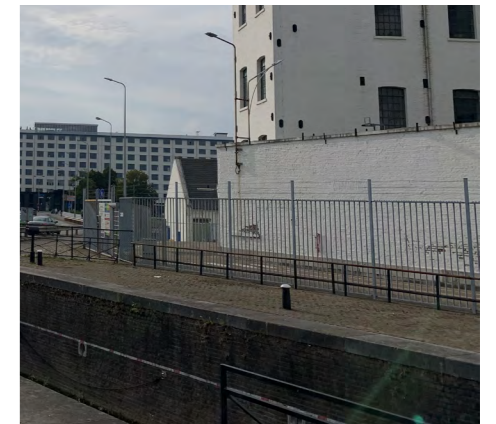
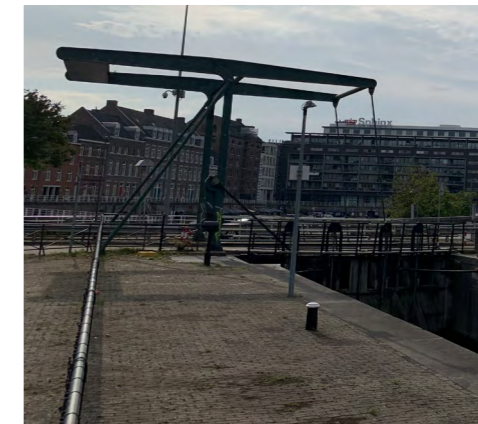
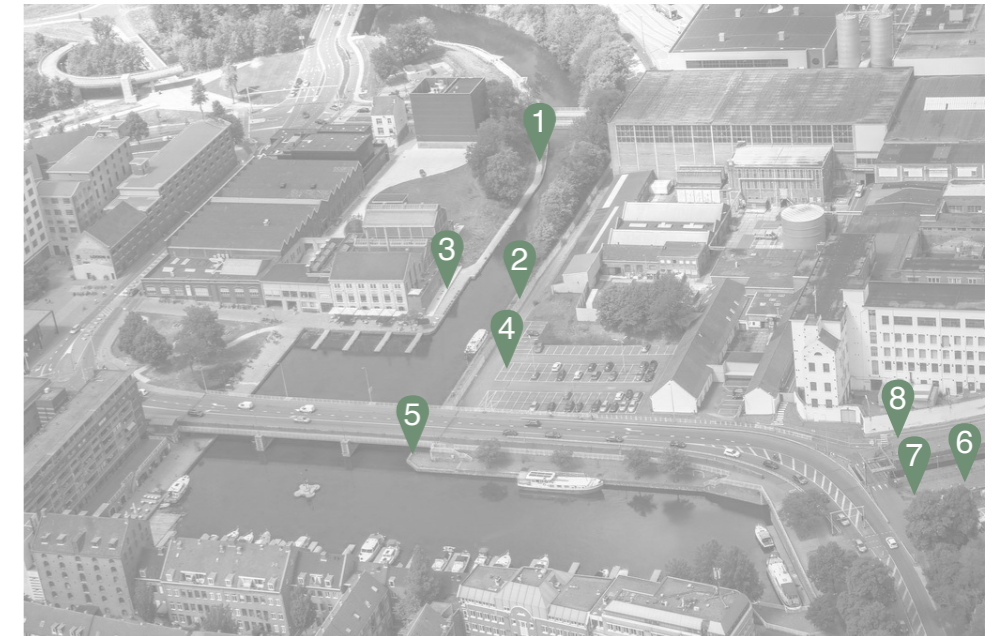


Image 4 | Negative urban spaces in Sphinxkwartier 5-8 (author's own image).

Research aim

The aforementioned lack of utilization and vibrancy of urban space in the Sphinxkwartier has led to the focus of my research. I would like to delve into the revitalization of post-industrial urban areas. The purpose of this research is to answer the following question: 'What is the image and identity of the Sphinxkwartier and how can negative urban spaces within this district be upgraded by socio-spatial characteristics to revitalize the Sphinxkwartier?'. To do so, this research will focus on the history of urban spaces in Maastricht in order to obtain information about the identity of Maastricht, the use of urban spaces in Maastricht in order to seek for the image of Maastricht according to the users of these urban spaces and the use of post-industrial areas in other cities in the world in order to understand the socio-spatial potential of such areas. The gathered information will help me finding socio-spatial solutions for revitalizing the Sphinxkwartier. This has led to the following sub-questions:

Urban spaces in Maastricht

- . What is the history of urban spaces in Maastricht?
- . How are urban spaces in Maastricht used and experienced and by whom?
- . What are the socio-spatial barriers and benefits of these urban spaces?

Redeveloped post-industrial areas

- . How are urban spaces in redeveloped post-industrial areas used and experienced and by whom?
- . What are the socio-spatial barriers and benefits of these urban spaces?

Sphinxkwartier

- . For whom will the Sphinxkwartier be renewed?
- . How do local residents use and experience these negative urban spaces?
- . What are the socio-spatial barriers and benefits of the undefined and leftover spaces of the Sphinxkwartier?

In my opinion it is important to study how the built environment shapes social life and also how users socially create meaning in their urban spaces. Negative urban spaces are the result of a lack on social meaning. To increase the vibrancy of such an area, socio-spatial qualities have to be added or improved. By conducting this research, I will gain a better understanding in the identity of the city and subsequently, the identity and image of the Sphinxkwartier. The identity of the Sphinxkwartier is mainly focussed on the spatial qualities, while the image of the Sphinxkwartier is aimed at the human behaviour and actions of the users. Together, these qualities will give me tools during the design to understand which architectural elements are necessary to improve the socio-spatial qualities of the Sphinxkwartier and thus to create a revitalized post-industrial urban area.

Methodology

Undefined and leftover spaces are often a consequence of urban redevelopment, which is why different approaches are useful in studying urban areas and understanding how to transform negative spaces into positive spaces. In this research different research methods will be used to achieve this goal, namely desk research, comparative research, field research and ethnographic research.

Socio-spatial qualities are rooted in the urban history. This is why it is important to figure out what the urban fabric is but also what the 'zeitgeist' of Maastricht was in these specific areas. Therefore, I would like to start this research with focussing on the history of urban spaces in Maastricht by studying literature on the history in terms of documentaries, books and archival documents.

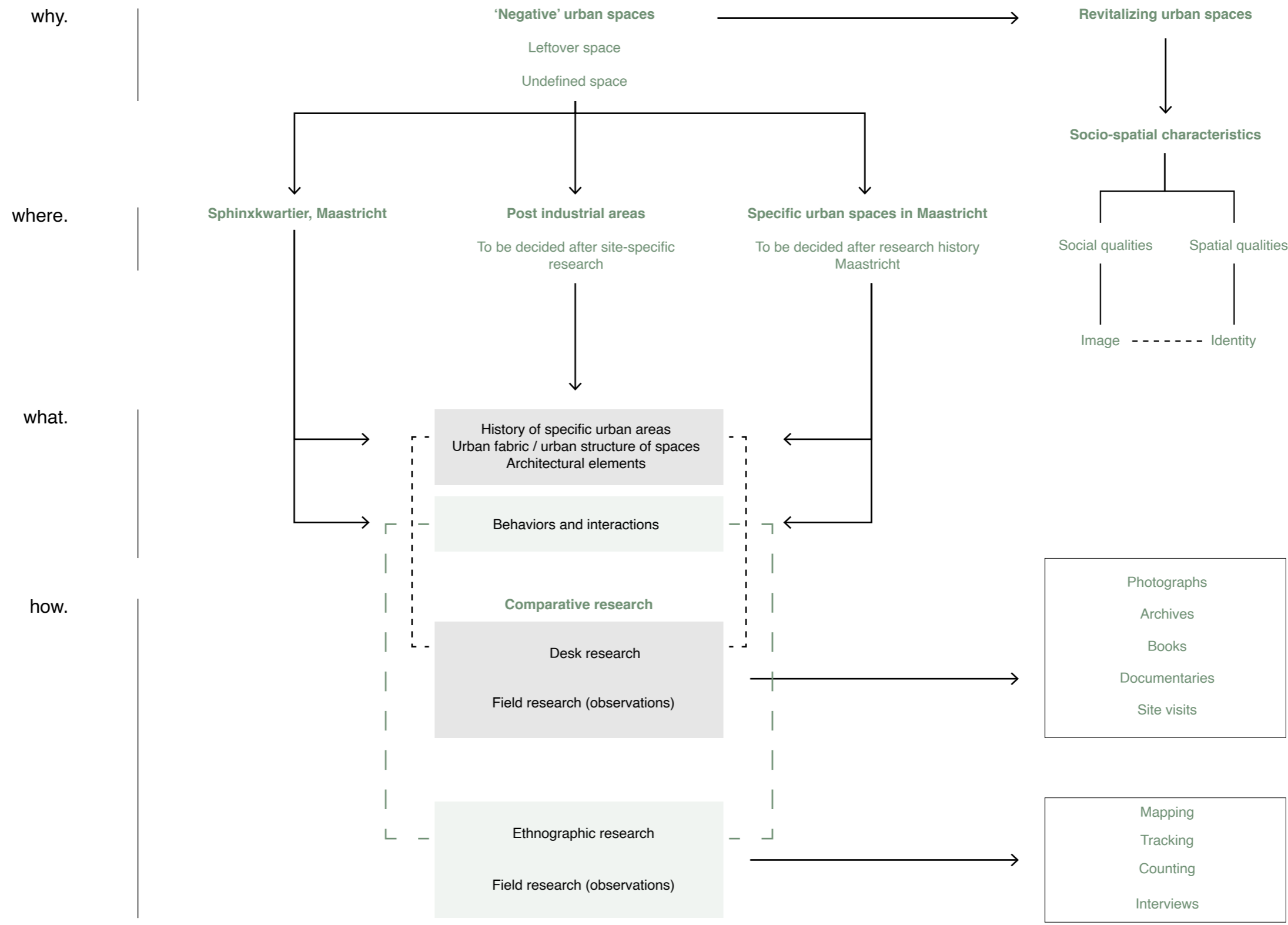
The comparative research of the different urban spaces in Maastricht will focus on analysing photographs and observing the physical qualities to get an overview of the interconnections between actions and behaviour of the users and the physical architectural elements of urban spaces. This can be found in less formal urban areas which will be specified based on the previously acquired knowledge. Less formal urban areas can be small streets, alleyways, entrances, vacant lots and public spaces. These areas all have their own characteristics which represent the city of Maastricht. I will therefore explore the existing and search for the potential to extract practical design solutions. The information will be collected and processed through socio-spatial mapping. The findings of this part of the research will allow me to identify specific case studies of different redeveloped post-industrial urban areas in different cities in the world. This comparative study will be executed to analyse urban space in redeveloped post-industrial urban areas and their related meaningful elements within these areas by studying literature of specific redeveloped post-industrial urban areas and analysing photographs of the architectural elements. Extracting the elements in urban public space and the urban form of these spaces allows me to assess the socio-spatial characteristics from an area with a similar history as the studio site.

The comparative study of both urban spaces in Maastricht as post-industrial urban areas worldwide will be conducted according to the concept of gleaning by analysing similar urban spaces or urban spaces in a comparable setting in order to gain a better understanding of how to improve the socio-spatial characteristics of the post-industrial Sphinxkwartier.

The ethnographic research and participant observation will contain interviews, mapping, counting and tracking. Similar as the drawings made in Borrowed City I will collect different architectural elements of the designated urban spaces as it provides a certain setting. These meaningful elements are connected to the actions and behaviours of the users, which I will observe and show in a graphical analysis. This will be done for both urban spaces in the Sphinxkwartier and the selected urban spaces in Maastricht. In this way the social and spatial qualities serve as a source for the catalogue to eventually recognize the socio-spatial characteristics. To understand the effect of this type of research and to seek for the most effective way of observing the users of the urban spaces and to capture their perspectives, behaviours and actions, I will use the following references:

- . 'The social life of small urban spaces' by Whyte (1980);
- . 'Borrowed city' by Bruno, Carena & Kim (2013);
- . 'How to study public life' by Gehl & Svarre (2013);
- . 'Participant observation' by Spradley (1980);
- . 'Finding opportunity in leftover urban spaces' by Davidsen (2017).

With the desk research, comparative research, field research and ethnographic research, a catalogue will be obtained which includes the architectural elements that provide an opportunity for social interaction, vibrancy and attraction and also ensure the identity and image of the urban space in a redeveloped post-industrial area in Maastricht.



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Books I want to borrow from the library:

- . Everyday urbanism
- . The image of the city
- . The social life of small urban spaces
- . Public space design and social cohesion: an international comparison
- . Borrowed city
- . Public and private spaces in the city
- . Naked city: The death and life of authentic urban places
- . Human Aspects of Urban Form: Towards a Man-Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design