

Final reflection

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Mentors:

Robert Nottrot – 1st mentor & architecture

Hubert van der Meel – 2nd mentor & building technology

Peter Koorstra – 3rd mentor & research

Daan Vitner – delegate of the board of examiners

This reflection consists of two parts: 1) reflection on the work and 2) personal reflection.

Reflection on the work

The goal of my graduation project is to combine the master tracks Architecture and Science Communication in a double degree. Through the analogy of architecture and communication and the crossover of theory I hoped to learn and improve both fields.

The entire graduation project consists of three parts: (1) Architecture research, (2) Architecture design and (3) Science Communication research. The figure on the right shows how

these three parts are related.

It was intended that the research and design of the architecture graduation was done simultaneously with the research of Science Communication (SC). However, already before P2 it became clear that the architecture research became somewhat of a theoretical framework for the SC research and I choose to first finish this part of the research project. Later, due to personal circumstances which I will discuss further on in this reflection, both the SC research as the architectural design were put on hold for some while. This effected my intentional planning for the graduation project and resulted in quite some delay.

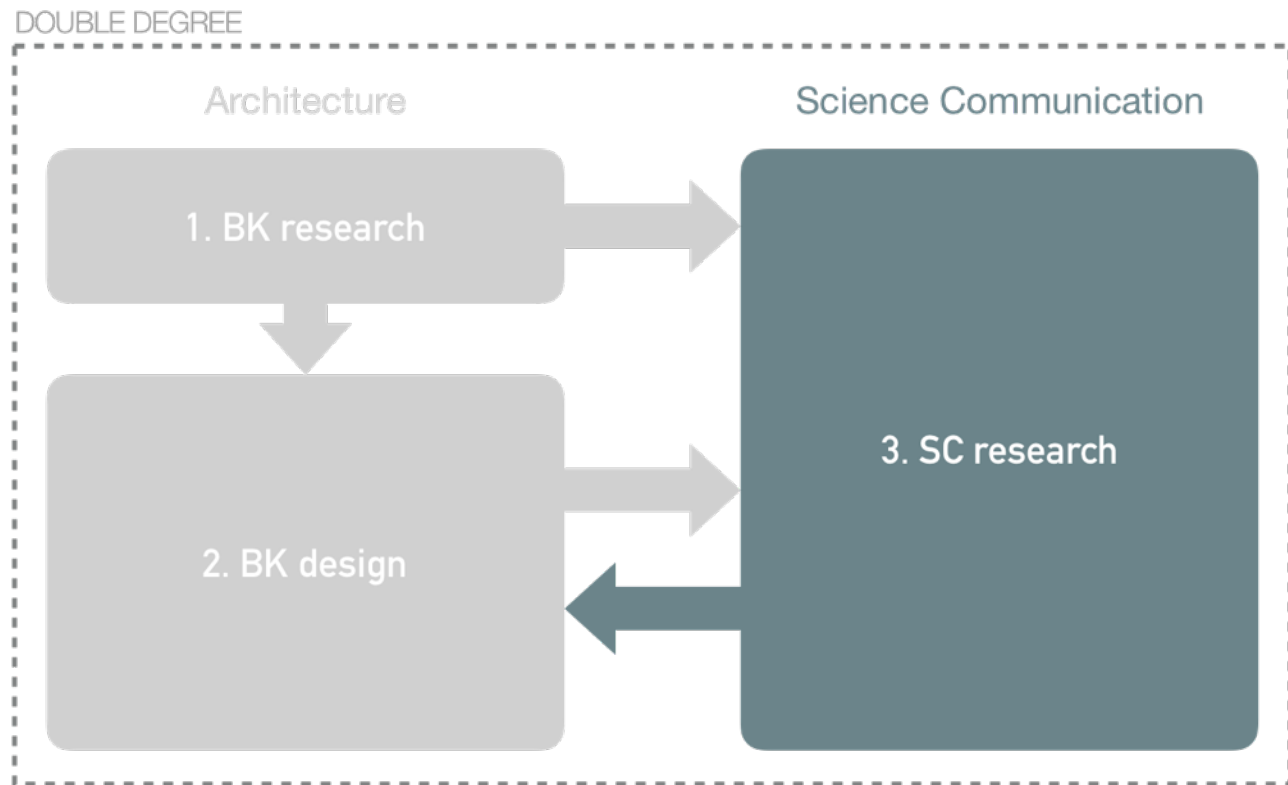


Figure 1. Graduation scope – double degree

The whole graduation project focusses on “form language” in architecture and communication. First, a semiotic study toward understanding visual communication in architecture was done. This concluded in a better understanding of the visual language of architecture. The principles deriving from this research are translated in the design of a flexible market and event location in Haarlem. Furthermore, these insights also form the foundation of my Science Communication research which intends to design a (four-dimensional) “form language” for communication based on the architectural language of my design.

Research approach

In the beginning it proved difficult to come up with a clear research approach for the architecture research. I struggled with narrowing down the research for a long time. The research question, “*What architectural principles play a role in architectural communication and in what way,*” was very broad. However I felt that it was necessary to keep it extensive at that point and I tried to limit the scope of the research with the research method. The research became very exploratory and extensive. In retrospect it was probably better if I had limited the research a bit more beforehand. However, it seemed impossible at the time. Although it took a bit longer

to finish the research, it gave me a great understanding on the topic and it became a solid theoretical foundation of the SC research that has yet to come.

The same probably holds for the scope of the design project. In spite of the efforts of my main mentor, Robert Nottrot, to persuade me to choose one function for the building instead of a flexible programme with many options, I choose, stubborn as I am, to stick to my vision of not designing for one specific function. However, my efforts of convincing my mentors of my vision on the building's programme did help me to get more specific and translate the different levels of changeability into design requirements that I could work

with. In the end, I think we found a good middle ground to work with.

Research and design

As is show in Figure 1, the three components of this graduation project are very much interlined. During my design phase, I tried to constantly keep in mind the principles that derived from my research. I always had a copy of my results at hand to remind me of these design principles and their proposed effect on architectural meaning.

Being very much aware of these principles helped me to make decisions at various points in my design process. For

instance, the amount of “publicness” and flexibility of the different program components in my design is expressed in the height and openness of the conceptual spaces.

However, I think it is a pity that my architectural design phase did not run parallel to the SC research. There might have been some interesting new insights that could have affected my architectural design as well. I hope that I can still find some time on the way to P5 to make the crossover with my SC research in order to make my architectural design even stronger.

Outlook

N.B. Because of circumstances the academic counselor allowed me to postpone my P5 to the end of the semester.

The final graduation period towards P5 will be as follows.

First there is still one thing left to be further designed:

a market unit. This is the final cycle of changeability in my design and I want to propose a design for this unit to complete my whole story.

Second, I want to search and find my own style in presenting my design.

Third, is the Science Communication research. In relation

to the architectural design I will organise two focus groups.

The first focusses on the interpretation and meaning of my architectural design. This will help me connect my architectural research and design on a next level. The second will focus on the conceptual design of my (four-dimensional) form language for communication.

Personal reflection

This part describes how I handled the feedback given by my mentors and the personal circumstances that affected my graduation period.

Mentor feedback

The feedback sessions with my mentors had different characteristics during the different phases of my graduation project. At first, during the research phase of my graduation project and up to P2, I met with my research mentor, Peter Koorstra on a regular basis. During this sessions we had interesting discussions on the research topic. This phase was a challenging search for a research approach in which Peter really helped me to focus my research and get a grip on the research topic. The mutual discussions helped me to formulate what *I* meant by a “form language of architecture” and “architectural communication”. During this phase there

was always room for a broader perspective and outlook on the science communication thesis to come.

During the design phase of my graduation I found it more difficult to cope or interpret the feedback of my mentor team, especially early on. Later, I found a better way to deal with the feedback of my mentors. In the beginning I often met with all three of my mentors at the same time. These meetings were sometimes overwhelming. I found out that meeting with my mentors separately worked better for me. I also learned to soak in the feedback and not respond to everything right away. Later, after it had sunk in I tried to take the core of the feedback rather than the proposed

solutions by my mentors and looked at my design from that new perspective. When I finally found this way to deal with feedback I truly think my design improved. Talking to different mentors in a short time of period also helped put feedback in perspective. My BT mentor, Hubert van der Meel, for example always helped me to stay true to my own perception of the project and not take every bit of feedback too literal.

In the last month before my P4 this feedback really helped me to rediscover the central thread of my design. This is clearly visible in the final design of the market space and lofts, which improved greatly after a session with Robert in which

we tried to find symmetry and consistence in the design, that, over time, had become an accumulation of exceptions.

Personal circumstances

That my graduation project did not went as expected is known. In this section I want to elaborate a bit on the personal circumstances that effected my graduation.

After a head start in september 2016 I soon injured my back during a rowing practice. At first I did not think it was anything serious and I was convinced it would blow over in no time. However, it did not and after my P2 my doctor advised me to take it a bit more slow. I informed my mentors

that I would first focus on my research and I worked 4 hours a day with extensive breaks to minimise te pain. In the main time, doctors looked for an explanation to my back problems, but nothing was found. The pain however stayed and became worse when I tried to work longer days, entering the design phase of my graduation project. Unfortunately nothing has changed and in periods of stress, working towards deadlines, the pain makes it hard to concentrate and get work done properly.

My back injury also effects my state of mind. I have always been ambitious and looking for projects that challenge me. Most frustrating about my whole graduation project was

probably that, during a long period of time, I did not get any energy out of the challenges that came with it. I often felt out of control and not myself. I find it hard and unfortunate that you did not see the “true me” during my graduation project.

Finally, I want to thank you all for understanding the situation and being so supportive and patient with me.