

## **Tidal horizon**

### Final Reflection

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## **1 Relationship between Research and Design**

The research started from the coastal erosion and the Grain tower fortification on the mudflat in Thames estuary. The research built a base for understanding of the project, about the fascination of the changing landscape in delicate tidal mudflat in Thames estuary, and the human war structure standing on the mudflat.

As one main focus of the studio is trying to research by design, the understanding towards this method became one of the fundamental questions in my graduation project. As the development of the work, the understand are also changing. As an architect, design progress is always developed with research actions, and research itself is kept as a way to collecting and understand of the background knowledge for specific design. But when researching by design, the design became a method, a tool for knowing more. In my project, the objective is no longer coming up with interventions, instead, interventions became experiments, the strategies I came up with are the source to be reflected more. When designing, doing is the first step, and the answer are also questions. As a result, the project is an experiment, the interventions are set up for more questions.

## **2 Relationship between my graduation project topic and the studio topic**

The studio provide chance and resources to research in territory scale (the North sea) issues caused by dynamically developing systems, and the territorial possibilities and crisis, the focus is not restricted by the topics, and for us architect the reflection will not restricted only in the site scale, which will help us building a macro, holistic thought process. Through the research and groupwork period, the studio gives me plenty of room to use my imagination and creativity to find the point of interest critically, which result in the fascination of my design project.

As the studio's theme is focusing on the dynamic change and uncertainty through the

interaction in different aspects in North Sea, when narrow down to an architectural scale, these focus aspects inspired my reflection to the changing situation and it's relationship with human architecture.

My graduation topic starts from the focus to the dynamic changes happened in landscape in Medway spit, Thames estuary. Initially, human's behaviors is limited by the nature power. The limitation created by artificial intervention and the limitation created by nature power and the possibilities they are able to interact, is the starting point. The changing landscape around the fortification in Thames estuary, the man-made structure lost their original function and surrounded by dynamic change of tidal mudflat landscape environment. The power of nature involves the expedition experience of man-made structures. This specific feature provide possibility to reflect on the interaction of human and nature in an architectural way.



The tide brings limitation, but also create chances. The way the architecture developed is a exploration to the possible relationship between people and environment happens in uncertainty, unknow and change. This intention is created by focusing on the dynamic

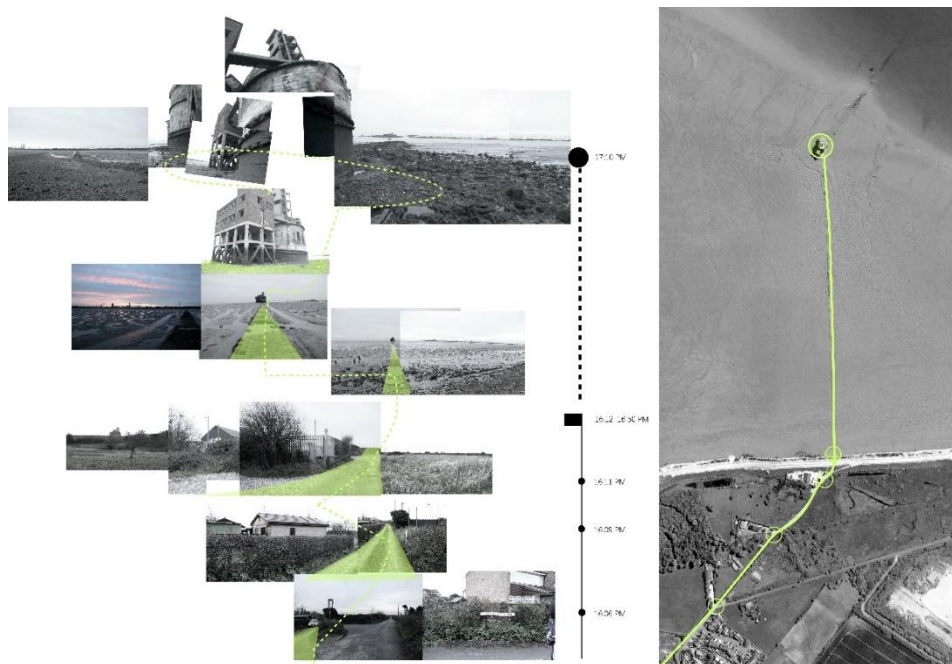
changing situation in North sea, and the development of the design is accompanied by define, create, and explore the undefine elements.

### 3 Methods

The project starts from the research on the North Sea and various dynamics it consists of. Collecting scientific data in political, ecological, economical, and spatial aspects helps me to created a base to state which problem is the most interesting to investigate further. The research is presented by mapping and scenarios constructions, which present a complete and logical background story.

As for the choose of individual positions, the literature reading and enquiry of relevant information helps build the theoretical background and fascinations.

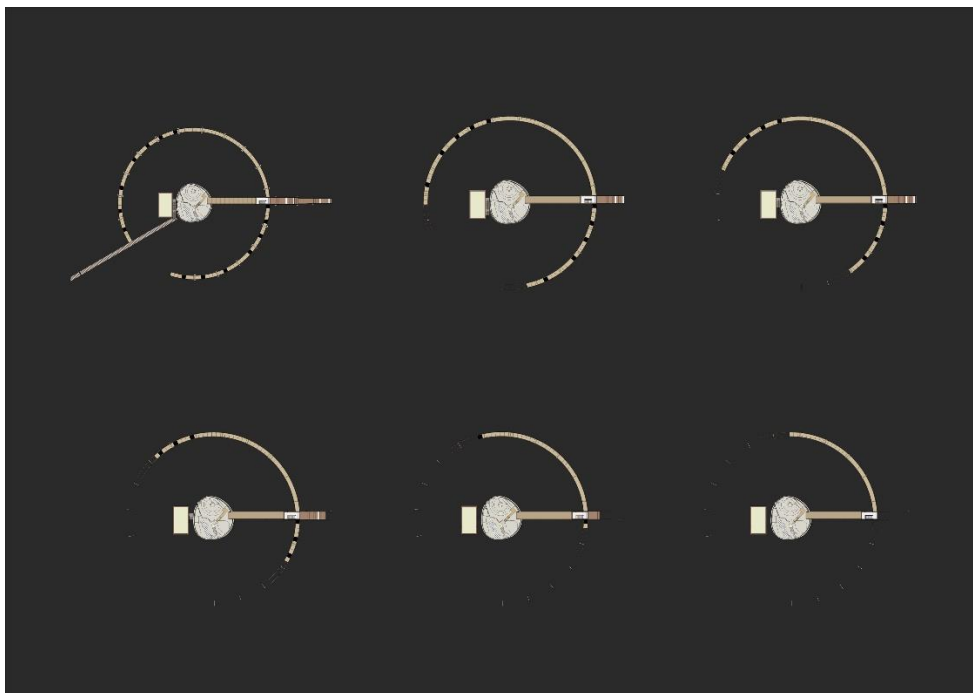
Through data collection, browsing, collation, and integration of the filtered information on the history and current status of the grain tower and the Thames estuary fortifications are aggregated into a targeted information framework.



As the Thames estuary is a complex of estuaries with delicate landscape situation as well as enormous culture background, the analysis to separate aspects are essential for project

development. As a result, a site visit is essential.

The project construction focus on enlarge and enrich visitor's perception experience, depending on the concept of the intention. "Time" is the base of the project, while the heritage, tide and horizon are the elements that gives the "time" multi-layered meaning in the project. The fascination starts from the relationship between time and tide, when the time change, the tide causes different environment around the Grain tower. How to grasp this phenomenon, and abstract the meaning of the phenomenon and translate it to an architectural form is my initial idea. So I thought about how to measure the changing landscape first, with formed my first idea, the tide clock.



With deeper thinking and communication with mentor, attention to a broad "changes" has become a development. The meaning of the Grain tower is also changing: Initially, as an abandoned fortification, the background monumental meaning and history record is the strongest feature it had. But with the particularity of the environment and the interaction between man-made structure and nature force inspired the evolution and transformation of

Grain tower, which formed another reflection.

In order to understand the tower more, and collect fascinations, site visiting plays a great role in inspirations. Through visiting experiences the multi-dimension perception are built automatically, while the starting point appeared with coherence. When actual investigating the site, the phenomenological method is used to record the research process, helping to establish the actual experience and emotional connection of the site, and verify and supplement the content of the previous analysis.

Site visiting strengthen the concept: the visiting experience of the tower creates the third "change": the horizon. As a result, the changing horizon are another main feature of the story. Through the visiting process to the Grain tower, the Psychological reaction is changing. It formed the strongest fascination. From now, the concept made one step forward by clarifying the main concept.

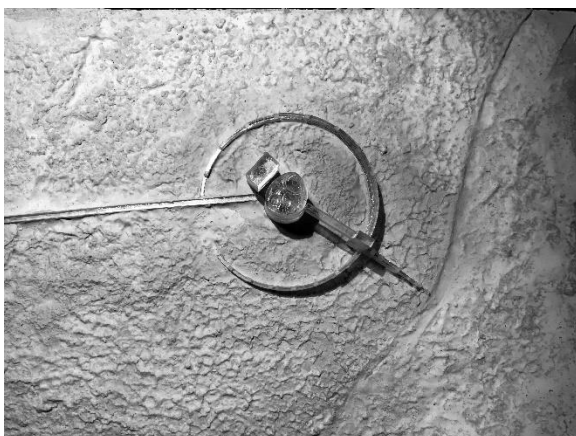
#### **4 Relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework**

As for the meaning of the project for wider social, the project itself is through building of the tension between human and architecture, human and nature, as well as nature and architecture, the intervention established for inspiring more reflections: the visiting experience of the project are combined with different ways to interact with the artificial limitation and unlimited environment, building of the experience is to create more possibilities, in order to inspire more unlimited thinking by this limited architecture. This experimental designing method is an example for creation of more experimental methods: the answer are changing, and the goal is to try more possibilities according to the existing elements in the site, the answer is unlimited, and questions are the result of the visiting experience of the project. This experiment is a

efficient way for architects to clarify their fascinations in different projects, also, by emphasizing exploring treasures from the existing environment, it facilitate the focus to the identity of regional landscape.

## 5 Dilemma

Regarding dilemmas, the switch from the design methods I utilized before to "research by design" is the strongest. In my mind, the design is always a reflecting process to face an issue, so at the beginning, finding a question is my first intention. Therefore, before P2, I struggled for a long time regarding finding my interest, as the intervention my want to dig more is for solving one specific problem. However, after talking with tutors, I found that finding an issue does not means finding a problem you want to solve, instead, it is only an aspect you want to reflect more, and, the project is not limited for solving a problem, but for framing the questions field. I really appreciate my tutors, who helped me to try to enjoy reflecting more in a positive way, instead of struggling in the problems in reactions. As a result, in my graduation project, the visiting experience is not only the base line of the story, but also the test of the possible relationships between body and architecture, architecture and landscape, limit and limitless.



In addition, find and lost the rules is another dilemma. As the method to develop my project is an experiment, I kept finding the rules of designing, but basicly exploring different ways is the

way. The step of the design is not linear and ordered, I need to try and changed all the time. Sometimes it is struggle, but when there is a new find, it strengthen my concept is an unique way. Finally, there is some methods I finalized, according to this specific project, so in general, the way is, find a specific testing strategy according to the feature of the context, which will be changed through development. It is also an echo to the " Research by Design".