Reflection
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Synopsis Stadtbauhutte

The material form of the city is continuously in transition. The buildings that collectively compose the city are continuously subject to adjustments, replacements, improvements and transformations. In Delft, the Netherlands, this gradually developing evolution of the city has been taking place since the establishment of the city more than a 1000 years ago. The evolving city of Delft as a whole is conceived as an architectural artefact that will forever be in transition.

The yet existing built form of the city is increasingly conceived as something we want to preserve. The adjustments we make are taken carefully in order not to affect the value of the yet existing buildings. The execution of these architectural assignments demands a collaboration between multiple professionals, each with their unique body of knowledge and skills.

The Stadtbauhutte is the platform where a specialized network of professionals have a place to work collectively on the transformation of Delft. A well equipped workshop space will form the centre of the Stadtbauhutte. Specialist craftsmen, architects, city planners, historians and any other involved party will be invited to work collectively in the Stadtbauhutte.

Besides a professional workshop will the Stadtbauhutte be a regional education centre for building crafts specialized in transformation, an organ actively involved in the city development and an archive of both material and immaterial forms of knowledge.

Handout of presentation, see attachment.

Reflection on the project

First of all it is good to mention that the framework in which the project is being developed has been experimental and free. I have been given an opportunity to do a project within this framework, which means I have to develop my own parameters, design tools, research methods etc. Along the way I found out that one method has been proven to be more fruitful than the other, but this process of trail and error is part of the experimental framework. This reflection will specifically focus on some of the chosen methods and their outcome. The process will be reflected chronologically.

The project originated from an interest in the collaboration between the architect and craftsmen and an imaginary platform where they would collaborate. However, the initially proposed architectural assignment turned out to be unrealistic and gave me an immediate setback. I decided to focus fully on what a collaboration between the architect and craftsmen resulted in and what other questions came along. The research looking into relevant architects and literature on the current role of crafts was the kick-off of the subsequent project.

Several contemporary successful examples of the inclusion of a craftsmen in the architectural project were being analyzed. The range of architects and one of their relevant project were put together in a matrix. A range of questions were answered by analyzing the projects. The matrix allowed me to criticize the definition of craft and the contemporary definition of it. Also the architect's approach towards the inclusion of the craftsmen and his abilities has been a mayor part of this analysis. Other aspects of this research phase included a historical overview of the architect-craftsmen collaboration and a initial definition of what role crafts can play within the current building environment. This first period of research allowed me to generate an overview on the assets of the craftsmen and a concise set of questions that had to be answered during the remaining part of the project.

Looking back at the research methods used during this first phase, mainly the matrix filled with analytical drawings, I'd say that this certainly helped to find my personal goals for the project and it gave me a clear range of contemporary applications of crafts. Overall I would like to conclude that this research method has been successful, however, the first period has caused further delay of the project since it has never been looking into the architectural assignment itself. It was more of a preparation, a body of references, that kept coming back during the further process.

In the second phase an appropriate architectural assignment was the first thing to look for. The search for a fitting location, program and deriving user group has caused some struggle but talks with several people which are not directly involved in the project helped me to generate a fitting architectural assignment. Still the search for a good location turned out to be hard. Furthermore has the second phase mainly been feeding the architectural idea. The assigned research essays were the written explanation of the project until than. The used research methods were traditionalistic, think of literature research, analysis of the location, analysis of architectural precedents. The written texts forced me to write a compelling story. This phase was aiming to come to a design brief

and a preliminary design. However, I haven't managed to produce not more than a very limited design proposal in the end. The generated design brief has been a good follow up of the first phase but the failed attempts to find the right location and architectural assignment caused more delay. I cannot be too pessimistic about the failed attempts because they all gave me a better idea of what location I was actually looking for, of course along with the architectural infill of the location.

A third phase concentrated on developing the design along with a concrete definition of the design brief. Especially the latter turned out to be harder than it seemed like. Since the design brief isn't easily comparable to an existing building has a lot of effort been put in concretizing the brief. Conversations with relevant persons from the working field helped tremendously. The conversations allowed me to test the brief and develop it bit by bit. This research method has turned out to be one of the most fruitful for the project. It lead me to many interesting project going on in the country within this specific field of practice, I also met many interesting people who all were able to get the project a step further.

On the other hand has the design been developing gradually. I proposed a specific design method while presenting the design brief. Especially to personally experience the proces of making by building big scale mock-ups of fragments of the design would feed the architectural idea. The assignment to work on physical objects and experiencing how it is to work on the hands-on objects seemed to be harder that it initially felt like. It took long before I actually had an idea about how the design would turn out and this gave me the feeling that I wasn't able to work immediately on the physical object. Finally the attempts to make a large scale physical object were very fruitful, but I can certainly conclude that I haven't made enough use of this design tool. Looking back has the equation between developing the brief and working on physical design objects not been equally divided. Not having a clear brief has hold me down during the design proces, but having taken the opportunity to develop the design brief together with the professionals from the field has given much to the project as well. It would have been very helpful to have these conversations and subsequent brief development earlier in the process so I could have been more efficient in the design phase.

A last phase has been a continuation of the third phase. A combination of developing the design and the brief, with an additional look into the narrative have been the main concerns. In case of the brief was looking at yet existing operating buildings the most helpful. They also inspired the design. One could say that during this phase the design, the narrative and the brief all came together. The methods used have not been any different than the phase before. The addition of looking back at the narrative, along with the whole process to get to the point I'm at right now clarified a lot. The narrative is in line with the design , but the design is lacking detail.

I have not been able to give the design the attention it should get. However, I personally feel like I have focused on several aspects in a logical sequence. The lack of attention to the design can be explained by the lack of time caused by the experimental framework in which the project developed. Nevertheless has the open framework been extremely fruitful to develop a personal design process. This is something I have been wanting to experience, and this has been that opportunity to do so. The open framework also introduced me to new design and research methods. The process has certainly be a challenge, especially since I have been personally responsible for every step I have taken. Nonetheless, I don't regret taking on this challenge at all, I am very thankful for all that the process has learnt me.