Towards A Strategic Integration Of The Weakest Social Groups

A Review of The Hague's Structural Vision Within a Strategic, Integrated, Regeneration Plan

Reflection Report

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P4 Reflection

Through this separate chapter of the graduation project, is provided a reflection towards the conducted research and followed design process, developed in the present graduation thesis. Furthermore it will be explained the relations between the chosen graduation studio and the graduation project, the studio's methodological line of approach and the chosen method and the relation of the graduation project itself and the wider social context. During this process it will be estimated and evaluated the success of the followed approach.

1. Relation between Research & Design

The incorporation of research into the design process was a non-stop and gradual process. Research through literature review, data collection, review of practice experience examples and case studies comparisons were the important tools that informed the design process at all the stages of this project. Thus, research was perceived as the "valuable assistant" that guided and helped the graduation process. However, in order to be more specific, the following have to be estimated.

The research involvement with the present thesis starts from the subject's definition, where a literature review was conducted, based on the author's personal interests within the context of strategic planning, local empowerment and integration into decision-making and planning/ design processes and ways to respond to nowadays contemporary challenges and demands. As the thesis main subject was taking shape, the theoretical research formulated and continuously informed the thesis main concept, guiding the further steps.

As earlier estimated, research was, if not is, a non-stop and progressive process. However, in respects to simplification, can be summed up in three stages: before design, during design and after design. The first stage regards the initial literature review, field research, case studies comparisons and the process of analysis. The "during design stage" has to do with the fact that multiple findings influenced the design concept generation process, its application to the site and even the spatial focus. As a result further research was conducted in order to confront the new born questions and arguments and finally built the design into solid ground. The last stage of the research deals with the evaluation and justification of the already conducted process and design outcomes. The above stages lead to reach and knowledge upon more aspects than the aforementioned initial fascination as the network theory, theories for successful urban places, examples and ways to create a market street, successful and not participatory models, new governance challenges etc.

2. Relation between Graduation Studio's Theme & Chosen Subject

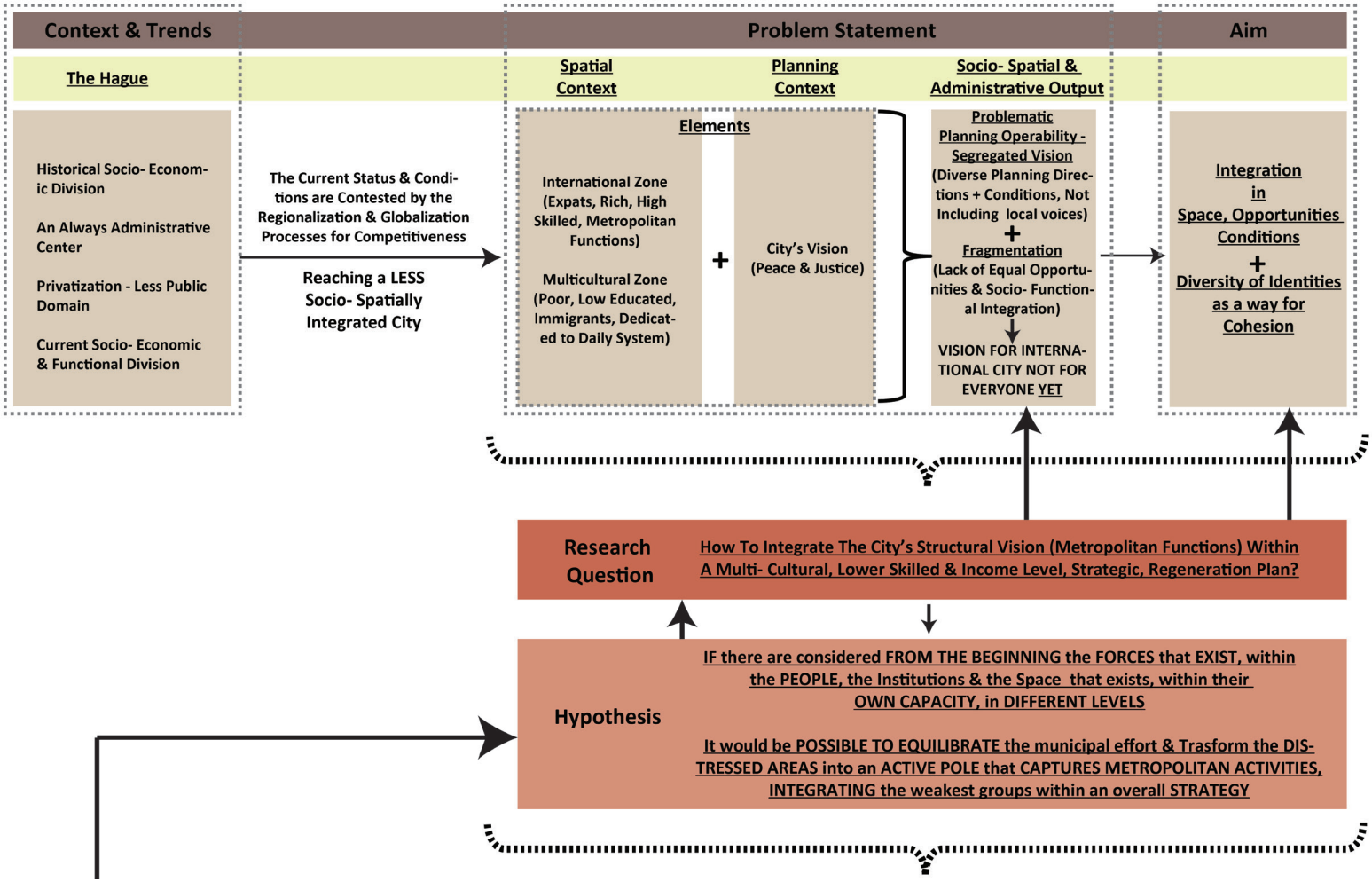
The studio of Complex Cities (and Regions in Transformation) deals with metropolitan structures and their definition, the way metropolization processes affect the urban tissue, the relation and interaction between metropolitan and local systems and the issue of social aspect's inclusion. Furthermore, through this studio, participants learn how to be participate as professional in decision-making processes, guiding and making easier the conversation and cooperation between multiple actors in planning and design processes.

Studio's main theme is directly responding to the chosen subject and site. The project's location is The Hague, in Netherlands, focusing in the absence of interaction be-

tween two important, for different reasons spatial zones. The first one is called the International Zone, reflecting upon a part of the urban tissue which concentrates most, if not all, the city's high-end activities and services, high quality urban environment, more than one hundred and twenty national and international organisation and the city's higher educated and income-level people. On the other hand the second zone is called Multicultural Zone and reflects upon a neglected area of the city, in terms of urban environment and quality, which is a mainly residential area, with activities that cover only the local, daily needs and it concentrates the weakest (low educated and low income) parts of city's human capital. By choice the project's area location, it can be understood that we are dealing with a growing urban system with metropolitan impact and a local system, which is affected by the contemporary metropolization processes. The result is the constant growing and enhancement in multiple levels, social, economic, environmental, administrative, of the first zone, with the parallel shrinkage in terms of potential growth assets of the second zone. This situation is getting worse through municipality's inability to reinforce and include in the growth process that area. Such a statement is verifying by the identified lack of planning operability and city's segregated vision. However, in the multicultural zone is living around the one third of city's population, which due to the aforementioned reasons is characterised by lack of equal opportunities, diverse development conditions, socio-functional fragmentation and exclusion from the planning and decision making process. As a result, the city is getting less socio-spatially integrated, having a development vision which does not respond to the whole of its inhabitants. Concluding, and again illustrating the direct relation of the project with studio's theme, the project's scope is the enhancement of an active, development pole in the southern part of The Hague (where multicultural zone lies on), using the local forces and dynamics and evaluating and rethinking on the current planning processes.

3. Relation between Graduation Studio's Methodological Line of Approach& Chosen Method

Complex Cities Studio introduces and works with two main approaches: the layer approach and the multi-scalar approach. Both of them, together with a third one (actor-related approach), were the instruments that were strictly followed and they shaped the graduation project's approach and process. The layer approach can be clearly identified in the project through the establishment of four variables; the functional, the morphological, the socio-economic and the planning/administrative one. Those established variables, acted as the layers through which the research and design process was conducted. As it is illustrated in the following diagram, they were used in order to build both the analysis and the proposal, dividing the proposal (design process) into different outputs that directly reflect on the specified variables. As far as the multi-scalar approach is concerned, its application to this graduation project was illustrated by the project's involvement with four different scales: the city scale, the corridor's scale (an intermediate level between the city and the neighbourhood level), the neighbourhood scale and the local scale. According to research in all layers an analysis was conducted, whereas the proposal (design process) is applied as following. In the city level responds the revision and evaluation of the city's existing vision. The proposed spatial strategy responds to the corridor's scale, which involves a stripe of the city following the


Context & Trends
Problem Statement
Aim
The Hague
Spatial Context
Planning Context
Socio- Spatial & Administrative Output
Historical Socio- Economic Division
An Always Administrative Center
Privatization - Less Public Domain
Current Socio- Economic & Functional Division
The Current Status & Conditions are Contested by the Regionalization & Globalization Processes for Competitiveness
Reaching a LESS Socio- Spatially Integrated City
Elements
International Zone (Expats, Rich, High Skilled, Metropolitan Functions)
Multicultural Zone (Poor, Low Educated, Immigrants, Dedicated to Daily System)
+
City's Vision (Peace & Justice)
Problematic Planning Operability - Segregated Vision (Diverse Planning Directions + Conditions, Not Including local voices)
+
Fragmentation (Lack of Equal Opportunities & Socio- Functional Integration)
VISION FOR INTERNATIONAL CITY NOT FOR EVERYONE YET
Integration in Space, Opportunities Conditions
+
Diversity of Identities as a way for Cohesion
Research Question
How To Integrate The City's Structural Vision (Metropolitan Functions) Within A Multi- Cultural, Lower Skilled & Income Level, Strategic, Regeneration Plan?
Hypothesis
IF there are considered FROM THE BEGINNING the FORCES that EXIST, within the PEOPLE, the Institutions & the Space that exists, within their OWN CAPACITY, in DIFFERENT LEVELS
It would be POSSIBLE TO EQUILIBRATE the municipal effort & Trasform the DISTRESSED AREAS into an ACTIVE POLE that CAPTURES METROPOLITAN ACTIVITIES, INTEGRATING the weakest groups within an overall STRATEGY

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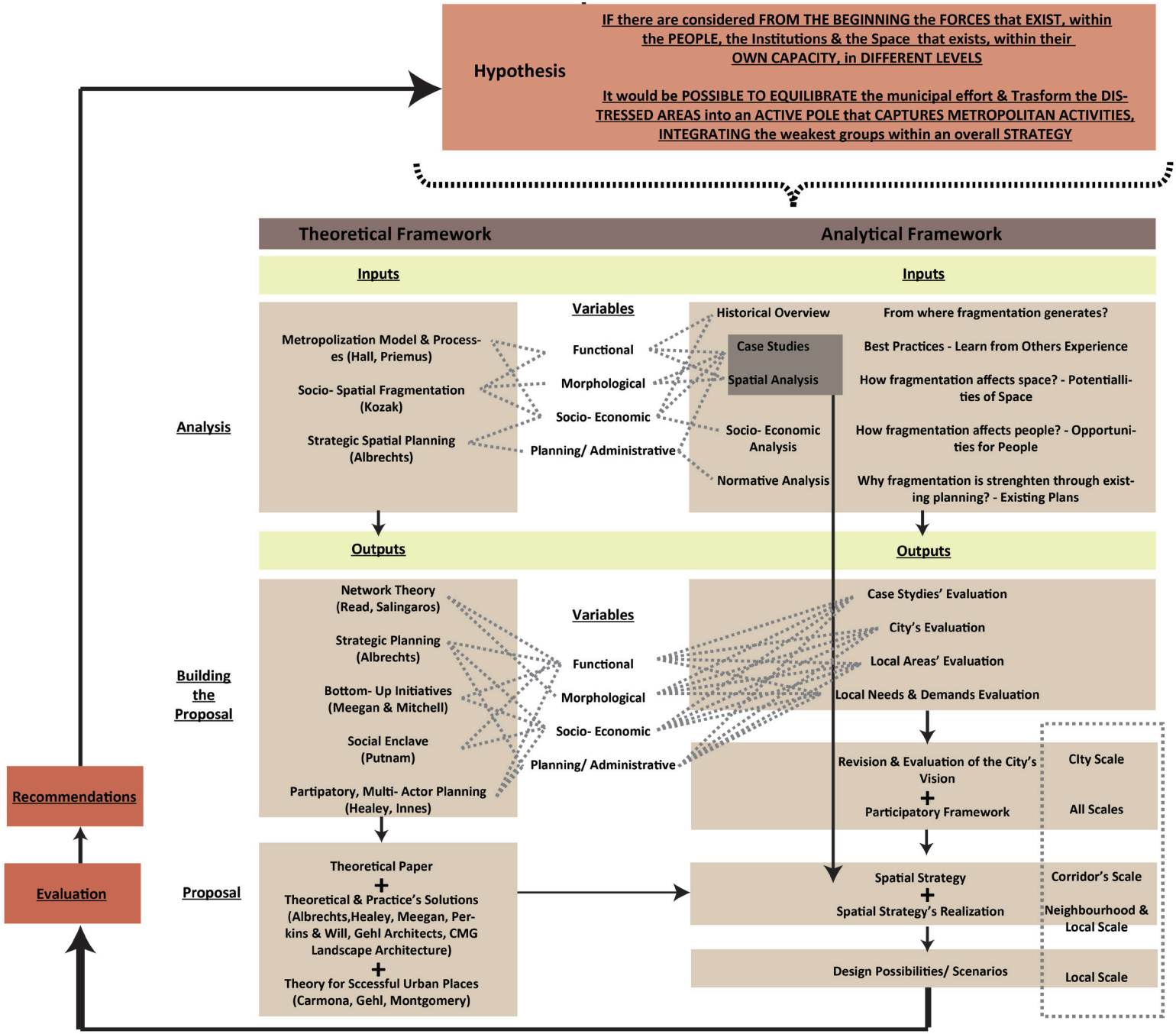
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Theoretical Framework
Analytical Framework
Inputs
Inputs
Variables
Metropolization Model & Processes (Hall, Priemus)
Socio- Spatial Fragmentation (Kozak)
Strategic Spatial Planning (Albrechts)
Functional
Morphological
Socio- Economic
Planning/ Administrative
Historical Overview
Case Studies
Spatial Analysis
Socio- Economic Analysis
Normative Analysis
From where fragmentation generates?
Best Practices - Learn from Others Experience
How fragmentation affects space? - Potentialities of Space
How fragmentation affects people? - Opportunities for People
Why fragmentation is strenghten through existing planning? - Existing Plans
Analysis
Outputs
Outputs
Network Theory (Read, Salingaros)
Strategic Planning (Albrechts)
Bottom- Up Initiatives (Meegan & Mitchell)
Social Enclave (Putnam)
Partipatory, Multi- Actor Planning (Healey, Innes)
Variables
Functional
Morphological
Socio- Economic
Planning/ Administrative
Case Stydies' Evaluation
City's Evaluation
Local Areas' Evaluation
Local Needs & Demands Evaluation
Building the Proposal
Revision & Evaluation of the City's Vision
+
Participatory Framework
CIty Scale
All Scales
Recommendations
Evaluation
Proposal
Theoretical Paper
+
Theoretical & Practice's Solutions (Albrechts,Healey, Meegan, Perkins & Will, Gehl Architects, CMG Landscape Architecture)
+
Theory for Sccessful Urban Places (Carmona, Gehl, Montgomery)
Spatial Strategy
+
Spatial Strategy's Realization
Corridor's Scale
Neighbourhood & Local Scale
Design Possibilities/ Scenarios
Local Scale

route of the tram line 11. The proposed program and the proposed rules and norms for the program's implementation apply both to neighbourhood and local level. Furthermore, the given design possibilities-scenarios apply to local level. Last but not least, the administrative proposal, concerning the formation of a participatory framework, applies to all scales.

4. Relation between the Project & the Wider Social Context

Societies tend to neglect the weakest, not privileged groups of people. Despite the various social policies that might be part of a country's policy, disadvantaged groups of people usually remain marginalized and most importantly not understood. Through history but especially in the current economic situation, they are the most vulnerable target groups that experience a different reality than the other inhabitants of a city. They usually live in not appropriate conditions, experiencing financial problems, not having access to all offered amenities, having bad or low quality of education and most importantly less chances for better education and job acquisition, experiencing marginalization and even social racism.

That is also the case of the people living in the multicultural zone of The Hague, which are segregated both in socio-spatial terms and through their exclusion planning and decision making processes. By not having a voice in the planning and decision making processes, are created the conditions for their socio-spatial segregation. The present project responds to the empowerment of the local forces and to the creation of the socio-spatial conditions for the integration of the local forces. Furthermore, people's empowerment benefits also the municipality of the city and consequently the state government, since local forces (both people and space) that used to act as drawback for the total and coherent city's development, now they can be turned into an important asset.

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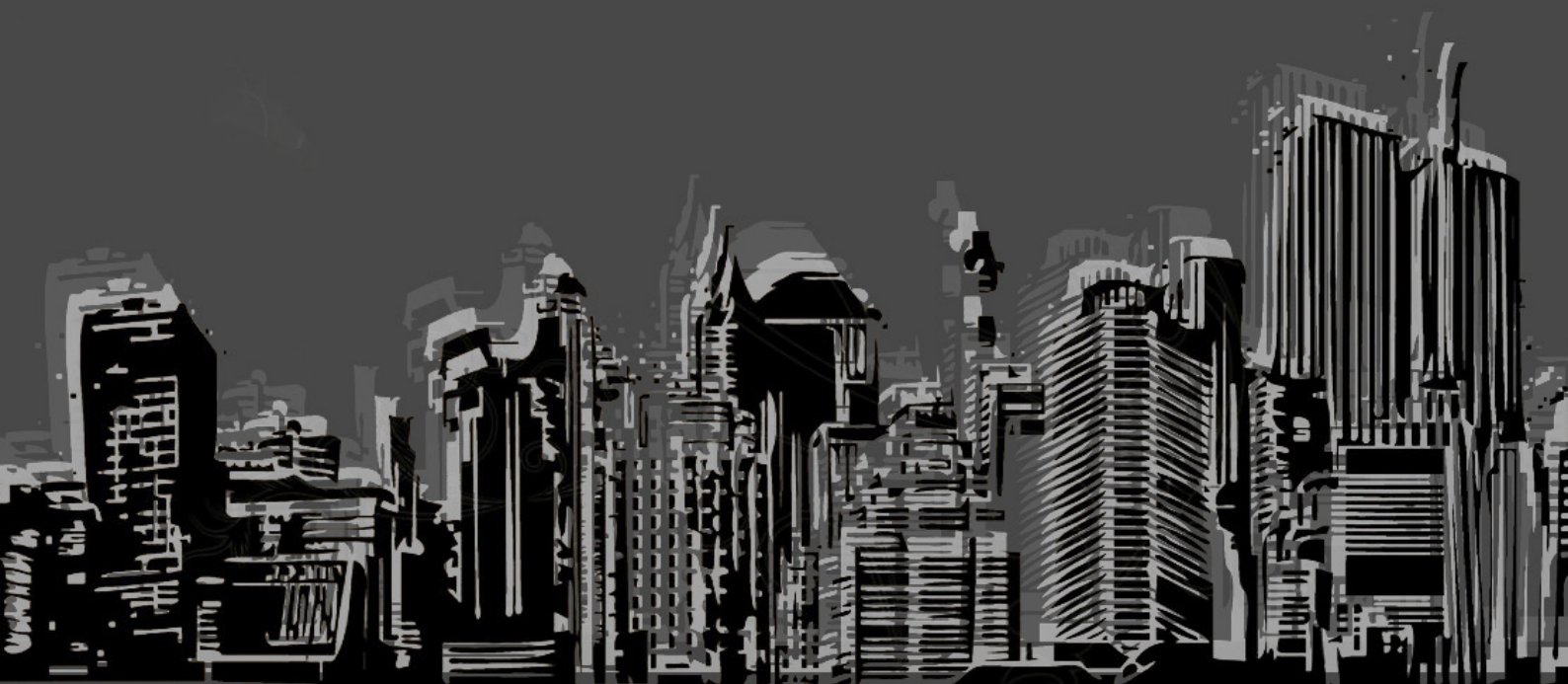
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