

REFLECTION

Graduation lab: Design of the urban fabric and Veldacademie

Within the graduation lab ‘Design of the Urban Fabric’ both the physical urban environment and the psychological, socio-cultural, ecological, managerial and economic structures are researched from a design perspective. Both the tangible and the intangible structures are part of the context for the projects, which have an impact on different scale levels. The relations between these structures and the scale levels are one of the focus points for the research of this graduation lab. From the position of this project for the municipality, I would like to show how these decisions on city scale are having an influence on the local scale of the quays and neighbourhoods. In the policies by the municipality, most decisions are based on conclusions conducted from research and analysis on the city scale and based on infrastructural arguments. But especially on the scale of the quays and the neighbouring areas, a new shore connection will have a major local impact. The goal of this project is to show this impact and show a design for combining the necessity of a shore connection on city scale with the impact on a local scale level. Besides the influence on different scale levels, the project is an investigation of the added value of a bridge. Not only is a bridge influencing the infrastructural networks of a city. On the local scale, the bridge is a spatial intervention, with impacts on the cultural activities of inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhoods. The impact a bridge has is also on to local social structures of the city district. It can affect the population. Basically, the statement ‘A bridge is more’ is a reference to the impact on both the tangible and intangible structures of the project.

One of the themes of the graduation lab is the research to urban growth and transformation. The reason for the municipality to construct a new city bridge is the growing population in combination with the attractivity of the city. To enhance attractivity, mobility demands should be fulfilled and cars should be spread over the city. A changing city and a changing and growing population are causing a transformation of the city, which results, among other things, in a new bridge over the river. Per definition, a bridge is made out of the human desire to cross the water (barrier). This new bridge is a representation of the urban growth and transformation of a dynamic city.

To explore the position and interests of the stakeholders (the intangible structure), a collaboration with the Veldacademie is started. With interview The condition for a collaboration with this academy is a relevant project within the context of Rotterdam. The relevance of the project is proved by the number of news items and articles on the bridge, in the past year.

Research and design

Research in the graduation project is the foundation to refer to during the design phase. Decisions for the design are based on conclusions from the research. To be able to develop a grounded design, the research methods should fit the desired outcome and should cover the complete context for the project. The project of a new shore connection in Rotterdam is located within a context of political discussions in a period of financial resistance. The topic of the new city bridge is one of the daily discussions of the municipality of Rotterdam. Many other stakeholders are interested in the outcomes of the discussion.

The municipality has done much research about the impacts on the infrastructural network and possible outcomes for a new city bridge. Their conclusions and visions are presented in many policies. But, as was written in the newspaper (Rubio & Kooyman, 2016), inhabitants are having fear for the possible landing of the bridge in their neighbourhood. To show the possible added values of a bridge, a added research is done. To test the design possibilities, this research of the project is translated into a design. This is done by setting ambitions from the research. These ambitions can be used as criteria or principles for the design. The final design is an example of a bridge as added value for the inhabitants.

Methods

The collaboration with the Veldacademie has resulted in interviews with stakeholders. During these interviews, their interests are explored to use as input and assessment for the design. Other methods used which are linked to the graduation studio are historical analysis to explore the characteristics of the city, the bridges and the location. Also the fieldwork with its photos and observations has been very important for the outcome of the local scale ambitions for the design.

During the design, I have used different tools such as sketching, mapping and 3d models (conceptual form model and Sketchup model for the 3d design). Per tool, the focus differs. This results in a combination of different perspectives in the final design.

Wider context

The supposed final products are possibly impacting the wider social context. The design of the bridge is part

of a new typology in the history of the development of bridges. In the past, bridges were seen as part of the city and as an extension of a city over the river. Because of mobility and technological (material) developments, this starting point and definition of a bridge is lost. By designing a bridge with the combination of urban programme, constructive form, architectural form and connections in networks, I hope to show the possibility to change the known typology of a bridge in the current context. This new typology is tested in the context of Rotterdam and can be implemented in other projects for new shore connections. One of the examples of comparable projects is the desire for a bridge over the IJ in Amsterdam, to possible replace the ferries between the north and south district.



Fig. 111. Facebook post (A bridge over the IJ is a natural development, but it should not be too steep). Article about the challenges of a new shore connection in Amsterdam (Facebook, 2017)