

P4 Reflection

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Studio: Revitalising Heritage

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Introduction

My reflection is organized with the timeline of the development of the project, starting with reviewing of my motivation, choice of the case-study church and research methods, and then finally the thoughts on design phases.

Motivation

Understanding and analyzing real objects has always been one of my fascinations, and that was a reason I chose zero-waste church as my graduation studio. Before the graduation project, the design projects I did were about redesigning an existing complex school, complex multi-disciplines urban high-rise, and reforming a deconstructed façade in detail as elective. During the process I found that I would like to improve the way I deal with the existing and the knowledge of making technical details that Zero-waste church studio focuses on medium scale buildings with its physical and value background that became my first choice of graduation studio. And the graduation process met my expectation that I was able to sink in understanding and dialoguing to a building and its cultural and technical background which I enjoyed it a lot. However, reflecting on my interest and attitude towards the existing and my motivation, would it be that I lack of the courage to start with more abstract and fundamental principles of creative thoughts so I kept the existing as a shield and strong support? And throughout the process, feelings of that I only digested the building and the knowledge behind, and that I have limited myself in a narrow presumption since the beginning have followed along.

Choice of the case-study church

The complexity and highly integrated but simple design of Drexhage's churches drew my eyes during the case-study choice. And it was a nice incident that Christus Triumphator church became my first choice church after knowing the Loosduinen meeting church as well by Drexhage was going to be demolished because that I was able to visit the existing church and its lively community and at the same time understand the cultural background and design clues behind. By choosing a richly structured context, I wished to change and to grow something new out of the existing by carefully examinations and integrations of different factors through research and design. Reflecting on my choice of the case-study almost covered and went before my personal research, it could be viewed as a mean of integrating and focusing graduation efforts but same was the question that where was the Arthur himself. At some points, I really felt like I was locked and disappeared in this well organized existing design.

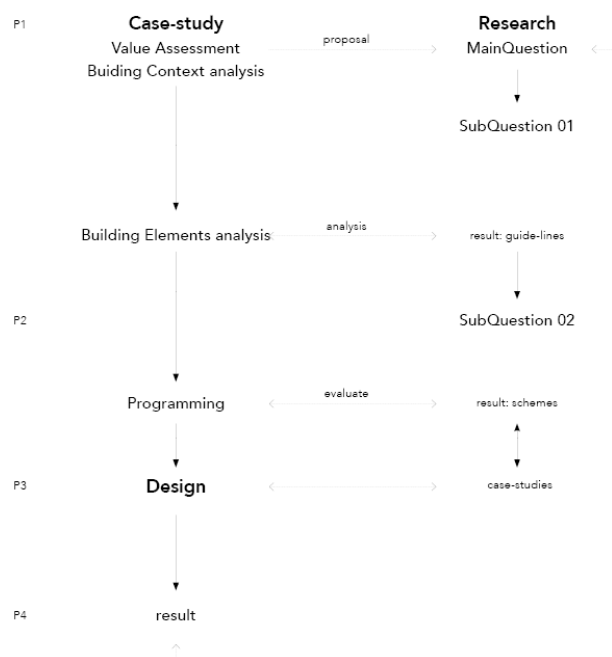
Research methods

My research questions were:

- How to find and describe the inner relationship between materiality, space, and urban form of Christus Triumphator Church that points out the possible future alternation visions for the building innated by the architect?
- How to test and magnify these possible relationships for future sustainable changes in materiality, space, and urban form?

I kept my research questions open and centered on the church case I chose for I wanted my outcome to be mainly from the ingredient of the church itself and be free from a linear design process. The left column followed the overall schedule of the studio and the right column opened for the research paper.

Theoretical framework



The research turned out was mingled with phases of design process as there were more unveiled along the process of dealing with the church. And there was an inner logic and theoretical background found that conducted the original design. Reflecting on my research and design process, I agree that research and design should have been a back and forth process rather than a linear relationship especially in a situation of treating existing heritages, otherwise there could be disasters or over adding to the existing, and there could not be innovation from depth.

Design phases

A turning design decision I had in my design phases were in the integrating phase of the use needs and the alternation in the existing form, helping me rethink the relationship between form and function in sustainable redesign. Originally my first design proposal neglected the capacity of the structural elements which were highly optimized in the original design that made the scenic using visions overpowered the capacity of the heritage. As Drexhage's churches were done closely with engineers for sophisticated solutions, by intervening it without an engineered examination would cost extra adding. I valued this characteristic in the church that I decided to redo a design with similar use needs minimally in the existing. Reflecting on the process, as designers dealing with a zero-waste environmental issue, the 'programming'-form process in design should be carefully re-examined, even the term 'program' itself that originated from a machine process should be carefully used, otherwise designers together with clients will consume the world.

Another turning point was the design decision of breaking the shell of the church volume which was led by former intervention threads. It happened along with the decisions made beforehand and with encouragements from tutors of finding a more personal statement in the existing. I think that breaking cell is my favorite part of the design so far; it is alien but also with a strange logical narrative. The detailed design will be on this part for a more solid and persistent design preventing from conjecturing and lingering around.

Working way

I felt alone with tutors because I insisted doing this church by my own at first. I should have interacted with other students more. Another thing I noticed is that I highly focused on drawings of plans to tell an overall story of an abstract scale (the 2d horizontal section) which consisted of half of the full year that I sometimes felt frustrated of it. Especially those plans were served under the means of functional terms and amount of area that I felt like I went back to the internship of mine in bachelor organizing months of mechanical rooms for underground subway station. It might be essential to learn how to programming and make everything aligned with it especially the AI era is coming but I wondered if that was the language of architecture. This also made me think about what should be a better tool for more solid designs when treating heritage for me. And what would be a design way to build bottom up from the existing by phrases of real force, thermal physics, elements, joints rather than top-down to the existing.

Conclusion

Throughout the graduation process, the motivation drove the project forward but also had become a limit as the project sphere was circled in a complex, self-closed case and framework. The choice of the case-study church was under a same logic of the motivation that it became the main theme of both research and design. Without referencing out, this close-loop could become a self-content dissolving process but a real creation was promised. However, the research together with design and technical aspect process along supported a constant re-examination of the design decisions and brought forth the result with a new narrative. The process shows that the usual function – form relationship could be observed, and a closer look into integration aspect of the existing for re-organization is essential to achieve sustainability.