

Reflection P5

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MSc 3/4 Urban Architecture

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- 1. What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (A, U, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?**

My project is a community theatre in the neighborhood of Hoboken. The building is located on the site of the old Blikfabriek and the design transforms one of the old warehouse halls into a new lively hub. It investigates how architecture can address social equity and community engagement. The focus is on creating inclusive spaces that serve all residents of Hoboken and its surroundings, especially often-overlooked groups such as teenage girls in Hoboken and Kiel. This theme operates on both the architectural and urban scales, making it highly relevant to the studio. As part of the Architecture (A) track, the project builds on core principles of architectural design, spatial thinking, and human-centered problem-solving. It aligns with the MSc AUBS programme by emphasizing how built environments can meaningfully shape social relationships and community well-being.

- 2. How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?**

During the process we started with collectively researching the site of Hoboken. I was personally involved with gathering information about the people living around the Blikfabriek in Hoboken and Kiel. This early focus on people and social interaction and connection made me interested in the aspect early on and made me want to continue touching upon this in my architectural design. During the design phase I kept going back and forth between analysing places that fostered diverse social interactions and implementing what I noted in my design.

- 3. How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?**

The way I worked is by combining research and design, linking them. This is heavily influenced by the way the studio is set up. As students, we were encouraged to keep researching next to our design phase to come to a well-rounded design. I think this approach, while difficult sometimes, led to a richer, more context-sensitive project. The methods for my research changed a bit through my process. At the beginning of the year, I focused mostly on interviews and trying to connect with people in the neighborhood. I wanted to extract their tacit knowledge of the area and the Blikfabriek to inform my design. My main focus group at this point were teenage girls, as this demographic was often forgotten in urban planning. However, due to limited access and engagement, this method proved insufficient for developing concrete architectural strategies. Thus, I changed my methods from a very personal approach to a more observational one. From then on, I changed my demographic to include many different people. I knew that for my design, I was very eager to create a theater that would attract a diverse group and would encourage different people to mingle. So, for my research, I started visiting places that successfully facilitated social interaction and connection. At these places I made drawings of how I viewed these spaces and what I personally found important architectural elements. I drew floor plans and analysed where in the space social interactions took place and between who. This observational shift became a key strength in my process, allowing me to combine abstract social goals with tangible architectural solutions.

4. How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

I think my project is about architecture that facilitates social interactions and tries to connect people. Especially in today's world with globalisation and populations becoming ever more diverse, it is important that we have spaces in which we can all come together and find understanding and companionship. I believe that architecture has a responsibility to create spaces where people from different backgrounds can meet, interact, and build mutual understanding. Academically, the project contributes to discourse around inclusive and socially responsive design. Societally, it proposes a model for how underused urban structures like warehouses can be reimagined as communal spaces that support cohesion and cultural exchange. Ethically, the project acknowledges the need to represent marginalized voices, even when it's difficult to directly engage with them, and strives to design inclusively despite those challenges.

5. How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

The core ideas of my project, which are adaptive reuse, social inclusivity, and spatial facilitation of interaction, are highly transferable. While my design responds specifically to the context of Hoboken and the Blikfabriek, the methods and architectural principles I applied could be adapted to similar underutilized urban areas and abandoned buildings. The combination of human-centered research and spatial observation offers a replicable framework for architects aiming to design community spaces that truly reflect and support the people they serve. Additionally, the focus on inclusivity, particularly of often-overlooked groups, adds a valuable lens that can inform urban projects beyond this specific site.