

Story of **the Edges**

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'Glaneurs, Glaneuses'

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preface story of the edges

Many people see Maastricht as a city of beautiful facades. This is indeed also true for me, but there is something more to these facades that fascinates me other than their appearance or symbolic representations - the spaces they embody and the stories happened there.

Despite a facade being the border of a building that separates the interior and exterior, architects never drew it as a single line. A wall always has a thickness, and it, therefore, creates a space. These spaces could be easily forgotten or ignored as they might only have a thickness of a couple of centimeters.

Edges of an Italian shop

When we walked in the south part of the city center of Maastricht, away from the most touristic places, we discovered an Italian shop. It has a brick facade with a plinth made of stone and wood, which is quite common in its context. However, there is something that makes it very special. We met a group of Italian students as we stand in front of the store. After a short talk with them, we realized that this is where a lot of Italian people would meet up in Maastricht. The shop owner originated from Puglia, and the authentic food products in the store are what made this shop into a meeting place for the Italian community in Maastricht. The facade also contributes to the creation of such space. The plinth of the facade consists of the entrance door to the shop and a shop front window. Food products are placed behind the shopfront window, which becomes a display for the

passers-by. People would tend to stop in front of the window and hence more likely to step into the shop. The front door of the shop is more than just an entry point. The shop owner has two sons. They like to run around inside and as well outside the shop. Once they are tired, they will rest on the front door sill, even when customers walk in or out of the shop.

The edge that separates the interior and the exterior started to blur. The shop spills out onto the street and even to its neighbors. The door sill of the neighbor also becomes a sitting place for the customers. During lunch, the shop owner would grab a chair and join her customers outside on the street. The facade brings the customers into the shop while extending the interior onto the street. The story of the edges begins when the line becomes spaces.

Edges of the city

The building has facades, and so does a city. Maastricht, as a city built along a river, the waterfront naturally becomes the facade of the city. As most people enter the city center from the east, the west bank of river Maas could be seen as the main facade.

The facade of a building is an edge that separates the inside and outside. The waterfront is an edge that separates land and water. Similar to the facade of the Italian shop, the waterfront provides people the first impression of the city. Humans are naturally attracted to water. Water invites us to meditate while it moves, and its reflectiveness brings us into another world. Quentin

Stevens has associated the waterfront with the concept of escapism. He sees the waterfront as a place where people would go to escape from daily life in the conventional urban context.¹

The Maas riverbanks were used quite differently in the past. This main facade of the city was more connected to the water. The edge which separates land and water was softer and more informal. In the 17th century, the waterfront was where the trades took place and where people would arrive in the city by boat. In the 19th century, people of all age groups would go fishing on warm days. In the winter, the canal freezes, and people start ice skating. Nowadays, the most waterfront is planned, with designated uses - where we should sit and where we should walk. The Maas waterfront is also partially occupied by private enterprises such as coffee shops and boat tour services. People would still find places on the waterfront and use them in their way. Some people sit on the quay wall, reading books while moving with the setting sun. There are also still people who would walk along the water to find a place for fishing.

A city also has back facades. Different types of water bodies have partially defined the back facades of Maastricht. The Sphinx quarter, which lies within walking distance to the north of the city center, was an industrial area organized by a system of waterways that facilitates the logistics for the industries. This water system consists of the Bassin, an inner harbor; the Lage Fronten Park, the former moat of the fortification and the Zuid-Willemsvaart, a canal connecting the Bassin with Belgium. These water bodies have also shifted in their functions as the city went through a history of

fortification and industrialization. The Bassin made its way into a cultural hub with restaurants and cafes. At the Bassin, I met a Chinese man who came from Aachen for fishing because it is easier to obtain a fishing license in the Netherlands. The Lage Fronten Park is a preserved piece of nature within the built environment. The edges of the Zuid-Willemsvaart, a canal that was mainly used for industrial purposes, are now occupied by private boathouses, with the domestic life spilled out onto the banks of the canal, in the forms of terraces and extra storage spaces. The linearity of the canal also provides an ideal environment for rowers.

In the case of the Italian store, the edge is a transitional space that connects the interior and the exterior. The boundary which separates the two worlds is being blurred, by the occupation and appropriation of people. The waterfront, on the other hand, is a harder boundary. There is limited interaction between humans and water, and it usually also doesn't function as a transitional space between the water, the land, and the buildings. These observations invite me to wonder and to start potential discussions around the questions such as: Could the waterfront learn from the Italian store? And what could architecture contribute to the creation of space on the waterfront?

Chapter 1 edge of a shop

We were given the 'Expat city' as a topic of our group research, to get to know Maastricht from the perspective of people coming from outside of the city. However, it did not take long for us to start questioning the term 'expat', since it usually associates with the connotation of people from higher class. Therefore we have replaced the term with 'migrant', which also broadened the scope of our research theme.

We have carried out an ethnographical study on three case studies which are representations of lives of migrants in Maastricht: an Italian grocery store, a Chinese restaurant and the living room of a Thai family. They differs not only in culture, but also in the level of privacy. We studied these places through a collection of cognitive maps, photographs, timelapse videos, graphical novel, detailed plan and section, and models. Among these three case studies, the Italian store fascinates me the most. It is a compact space filled with stories. The plinth of a conventional Dutch building becomes a meeting place for the Italian community in Maastricht.

The store is not only an interior space. It spills out through the facade onto the street. The shop window and the chalkboard are used as a device to attract the passerbys, while the doorsills become a sitting and resting space for the customers and the kids of the shop owner.

















Chapter 2 the history of the water edge

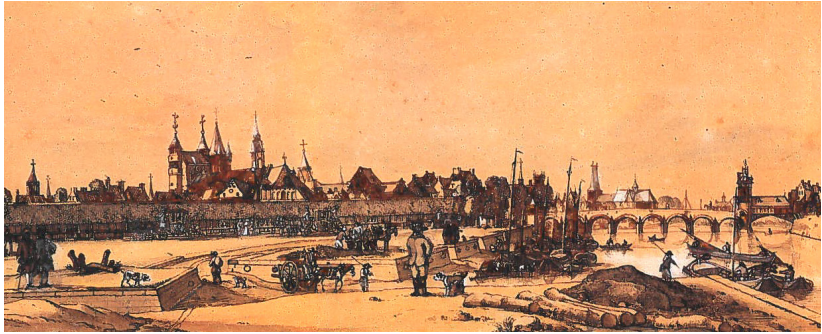
During the collaborative research, I was interested in the interaction between the human and the edge. When this theme is projected onto the scale of a city, the edge could take place in different forms.

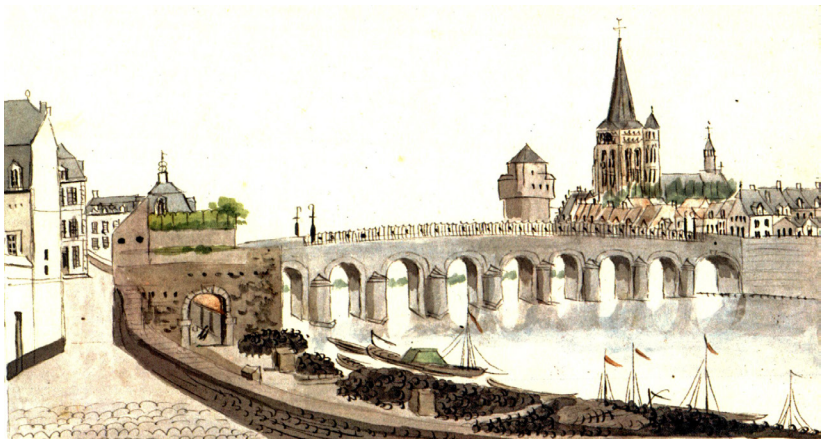
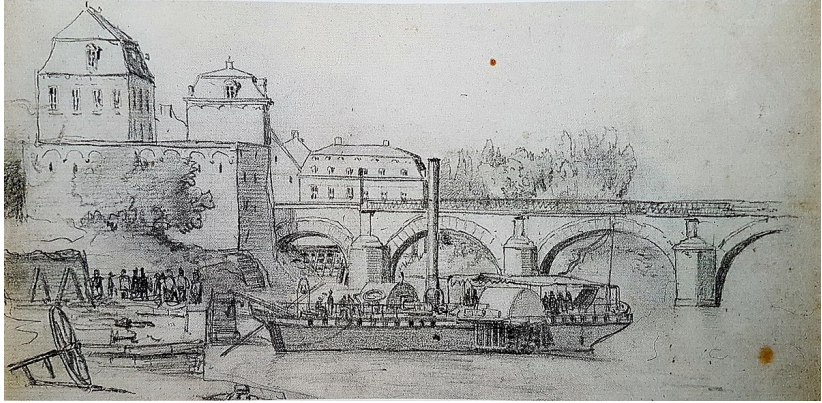
Just like each building has its front facade, so does a city. As most people enters the city center of Maastricht from the east side of the Maas river, the west bank of the river could be considered as the front facade of the city.

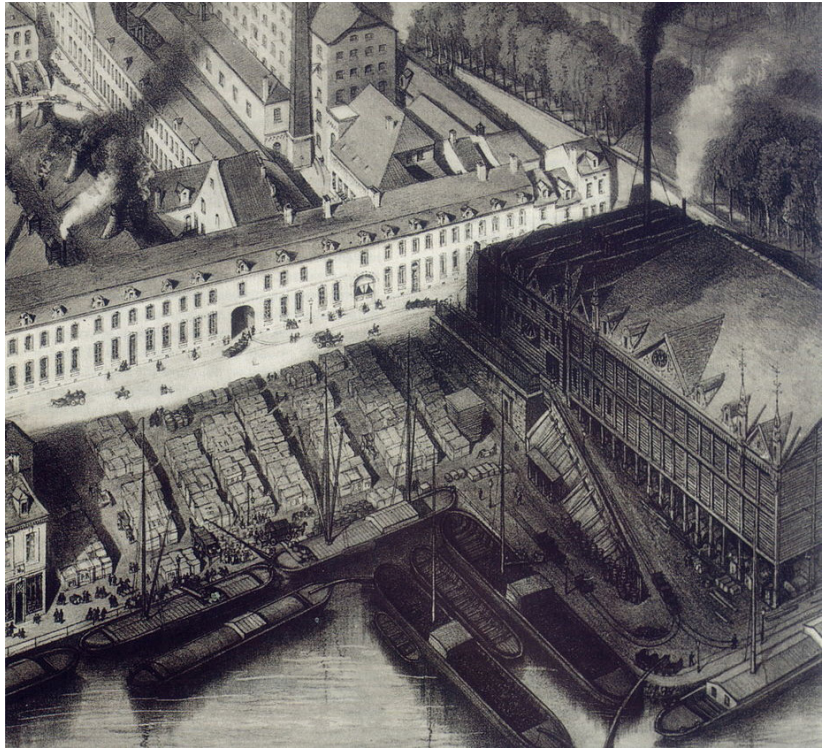
Water has been an important element to Maastricht. It has went through changes, and it has witness the development of the city. As a part of the research, I studied the history of Maastricht from the perspective of water through a collection of archival maps and archival photos and paintings. Up until the 18th century, Maastricht has been using water as a tool for fortification and also the main route for transportation of human and gooads. The waterfront is thus also where the most trade activities occur.

In the 19th century, a group of factories were built on the north part of the city, bring the city into the age of industrialization. A new canal was made for the connection to Belgium, in combination with a new inner harbour. Water becomes the main host of the industrial activities.

In the 20th century, the waterfront becomes a place of leisure. In the winter people would ice skate on the frozen canal, and in the summer they would swim or washing their horses in the river.









Chapter 3 the waterfront edge

Photography has been my largest hobby for years. As a part of this research I have also attempt to use photography as a research tool to study the edge of waterfronts.

Geographically, the edge that separates the land and the water is a line. In this series of photographs I have put this line in the middle of every image. This provides the potential for further manipulation.

The photo were folded through the middle along the edge and were placed next to a half of another photo. The photos could be then shifted up or down, or further apart from each other.

This experiment tends to question the edge as a single, harsh line.

















Chapter 4 the act of fishing

After studying the history of Maastricht in relation to water, I thought it would be interesting to compare how people used to use the waterfront and how do they use it now.

Activities has changed as the city transformed. What has not changed was the act of fishing. Fishing is an activity that is formal and informal at the same time. It is formal since it is regulated, you have to obtain a license to be able to go fishing. On the other hand, there is no restriction on the places that you can fish, or how you fish. The act of fishing, therefore, could be seen as an appropriation of the waterfront. Some people stand while fishing; some people sit on the quay; some people would bring there own stool, and some would even wait in their car after set up the fishing rod.

At the Bassin, I have met a Chinese fisher who came from Aachen for a day to fish. He said this is because that it is harder to get a fishing license in Germany than in the Netherlands.















Chapter 5 walking the edge

I spent a day walking from the northern border to the southern border between Maastricht and Belgium, with a fresh mind ready to be surprised.

The main discovery from this walk is the observation of informal spaces that are being appropriated and private spaces that are being controlled by fences and gates. These places, mainly lying on the outskirts of the city, has formed a contrast to the waterfront spaces in the city center, which are mostly controlled public spaces.

The Zuid-Willemsvaart, a canal connecting Maastricht with Belgium with an industrial importance, is now occupied by private boathouses. The residents of the boathouses have extended their property beyond the waterfront edge. The land was turned into terraces with plant pots and additional storage spaces. The property extended further on to the other side of the road, which has become parking spaces for vehicles.

Along the walk, fences and gates are elements that have been repeated for the most times. From a boat hotel with a regulated front gate, to a watersport club with its fenced off private harbor.

































Chapter 6 materiality of the waterfront edge

The water of Maastricht was a important medium for the transportation of goods and human. The large amount of boats and ships also requires many places to moor next to the quay. This has result in different types of mooring points which have 'decorated' the waterfront edge.







