

Reflection

Master of Science in Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

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Approach and methodology

Initially, the goal was to approach this thesis from the farmers perspective by talking to locals and placing myself in their shoes, and create a participatory process. To do this, interviews were conducted with varying views, however they reflected either a historic view or future perspective, and neglected the current situation. This is visible in the end result of the thesis, which is focused on the future with historic inspirations, but does not always consider the current situation and the process a current farmer needs to go through in order to adjust.

However, with the feedback provided, I was steered further into a social approach of the thesis, thinking about cooperation between farmers, and connecting farmers to the landscape. In the end, this is what created the added value of the design. While the direct goals were to create a stronger, more climate robust system, the regional and local cooperation strengthens the bond between farmers, their landscape and nature.

Connection to the master track

Working through the scales brought the theme of Circular Water Stories with the historic background together with the overall master track of landscape architecture. While taking the water system as a central part of the design, other layers of the landscape were considered as being part of a larger system and their strengths and flaws surfaced. The understanding of the interrelation between the landscape layers helped to identify the larger issues at hand, and think from the regional scale all the way down to the human scale.

Reflecting the process

The research started for me without a clear goal, looking into historical sources based on personal interests, guided by the tutoring, see figure. With this large database of information i was eventually able to select a storyline, discarding almost half of the information gathered. Through further research the story could be refined, and a basis for the design formed. By designing, gaps in the research became visible and additional research was needed, but now with a much clearer goal.

This way of working can be time consuming, especially when you find it difficult to create a clear storyline in the pile of topics you have researched like I do, but it can help to broaden your interests when there is no clear initial goal or vision. In the end

it feels like you end up with a lot of unused research and wasted time. However, this is part of the process when starting from scratch. Personally, it has been difficult to adjust to this however, as I felt I was doing theoretical research for about 80% of the thesis. This has lead to a more developed

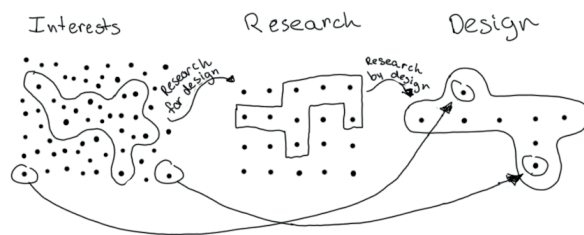


Figure 143: a messy design process

backstory and a lot of knowledge, but less development on the design itself. Mainly the implementation over time could have been a bigger aspect of the project, and its social developments as a result.

Assessment of Value and Transferability

Researching the historic aspects of the Achterhoek based on the water system and its connection to the people created a different storyline of the history in the region. It helped to bring light on nearly forgotten aspects of history, such as the flowing meadows and marken, and created valuable insights in how these historic features can be reapplied in the current landscape. The approach does lead to a radical change in the landscape, which can be considered as going back to the past. It requires significant changes to society and the agricultural system as we know it, and will have an impact to how farming is approached now. While this thesis is just a view on how the past and present can converge into a future perspective, it does make clear that something has to be done to change the way we approach farming today. This results in drastic changes for current farmers, and will have big societal impacts, but is necessary in the long run.

The concept was aimed to create a transferable design, but does require certain circumstances to be applied, such as the landscape typology and the issues it is attempting to solve. In a polder landscape, different issues and landscape characteristics make it less applicable in the situation. However, considering in and outside of the Netherlands there are a lot of similar agricultural sandy regions, with similar threats and opportunities, the concept could be applied elsewhere as well. It does still require a thorough research into the local characteristics and history to create the boundary conditions, but looking at the subsoil in order to adjust the landuse on top is a concept that can be applied anywhere.

Implementing the project

The implementation of this design does have an impact on society as well. It aims to bring farmers closer to the landscape, but also visitors closer to the farmer. In this way, people become less alienised from the agricultural practice, which can sometimes be the case with people spending their whole life in cities. Experiencing the relation between nature and agriculture can help with this.

The implementation does come with a lot of drawbacks, however. Firstly, the implications for a farmer are massive. The risk of transitioning to a system like this, which does not have any roots in practice yet, can be very challenging. At the same time, as this implementation has never been done to this scale in the current context, many flaws and teething problems can surface, leading to setbacks and demotivation. Therefore transitioning to this concept should be done gradually, slowly adjusting to the new approach, which can take years, decades or perhaps even generations. Just like the landscape elements, the system has to grow.

But naturally, this adjustment will not be for everyone. Not every farmer will agree to dedicating a large portion of its time to pruning trees or maintaining a water system. However, by creating a pilot area in a region such as Nettelhorst, with multiple farmers cooperating, an example can be made upon which future adjustments can be made, in order to convince more farmers to join the movement, becoming Landkeepers.