

Reflection

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Graduation project

ExploreLab

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Challenging static and objective views on the design of technologies – be it architecture or other – and on the world in general has been the aim of this thesis and project since the outset. I have always been, since childhood, critical of objective truths, and in recent years this concern has connected to my passion for decolonial thinking. Inspired by fruits and animals, the project set itself to researching *formtaking* as a process embedded in complex relational ecologies that are constantly in modulating conversation with the form, and that are thus durational processes. Through this, the work engages with the architectural discipline as a spatial or formal design discipline in order to push its limits in the spatiotemporal realm.

From my experience, commercial architectural practice often operates widely binarily, with a disregard for uncontrolled change in micro and macro scales beyond the architectural one. Furthermore, the simplified images produced by the discipline – both in commercial practice and the university environment – reduce reality to selling-ability, which, in my view, does not differ significantly from current, past, and to-come simplified populist discourses in politics and beyond and is thus equally problematic. Confusing, challenging, and expanding the spatiotemporal realm within which the architectural discipline operates is therefore a fundamental endeavour which I believe should be central in university architectural education – incidentally, one that is currently increasingly at stake within TU Delft itself.

Throughout my project, researching and designing happened in a weaving parallel that did not pretend to be linear. It has been a continuous informational exchange between a research that designs and a design that researches. The main question that lead the research and design became: *how much does the design of technologies resemble a sympoietic individuating process?*<sup>2</sup> But began with questions like: *how is an architectural limit modulated and how does it, in turn, become an active modulator of its environment?*<sup>3</sup> and: *how can the architectural limit be understood as a dynamic modulable entity, capable of individuating through processes of modulation and remodulation in response to contextual change?*<sup>4</sup> The explorative research at the beginning of the graduation year was crucial for making programmatic and site decisions that allowed me to explore my personal and professional concerns. I decided to utilise an abandoned building in my home city to design a process of modulation that would be heavily historical. The present presence of the past is a foundational part of my research and fascination. The choice to design a process of programmatic changes in the past, dependent on global, national, and municipal changes, materialised my concern for ecologies and their complexities. Toward the end of the project, the design researched temporal implications of non-linear time by mixing moments, overlapping habitats, and challenging time-bounds.

The methodologies – both in research and design – have been incredibly informative, and reflecting back, I realise how much I have learned from them. I began the year with literature studies on ecological and durational concerns, assemblage thinking, and speculation. I learned a great deal about my problem of the modulation of limits through continuously synthesising it across diverse examples such as the growth of a pomegranate, territorial negotiations, and magnetic fields, and by dissecting the processes that make for the parts. On my site visit I reviewed extensive journalistic, architectural and photographic archives, which I found incredibly fascinating and inspiring for the project (i.e. with the study of maps and building archive drawings, I was able to connect architectural changes with particular events). I have also become increasingly connected to the site thanks to getting to know the past of the building and through visiting the 26-year-long

abandoned site itself. I do not think that I will ever forget the cold inside, the echoing sounds and the smell of humidity that certainly leaves a mark in my project but also in myself.

Reflecting specifically on the design methodology, I recognise how formative it has been. Initially, I was deeply interested in historical studies of the building and ecological contextual changes both before my design timeline (1400s to 2000) and within it (2000 to 2026). These studies led to the speculation of context-dependent habitualizations within the building. Had my methodology stopped there, however, it would have led to a designed materiality disconnected from my research – one from which I would have learned less, and one that would not reflect the creative response to ecological constraints that is central to the project. This realisation emerged around my P3 presentation, where-when I received simultaneous feedback from my three tutors something that overwhelmed me and brought me to some days of self-doubt. I believe this to have been the biggest challenge of my process: the starting to design and my tendency to design a solution as if I would be in my site and able to really start something beyond a design experiment.

The feedback from my tutors challenged me to use the design project not as a solution of problems or as the portraying of an ideal but as a research that pushes limits which can only be done within the academic field. This called for a change in design methodology to include a step of abstraction and learning from the habits and ecologies I had studied. I was recommended by my tutors to make “design principles”, words toward which I felt initial rejection. However, I found a moment when I was able to connect my work – the mapping of flows and the mapping of genealogical operational habits – with knowledge introduced in MSc2 Studio Technicities. Revisiting a workshop from that course and returning to Simondon’s image theory enabled me to approach habits becoming habitat through spatially decontextualized diagrams that singularize flows – like the design principles but with a more rigorous grounding on the habits and flows that I had investigated. Only after this step did I begin to materialise the design through pastel crayon sketching (which allowed the imprecision I needed in the start) and model making (which complexified the design problems).

The design set on overlapping times and that thinks limits otherwise, challenges the current bounds and limitations of the architectural discipline – both academic and commercial – but reflecting back, I realise that it is the methodologies I employed that have the greater potential. These methodologies challenge a scientific modus operandi rooted in binaries and strictly of colonial logic. Although I consider the project “results” valuable for myself and perhaps for my close friends and family as a challenging exercise, I believe the research/design methodology that I developed and employed holds transferable value. I would like to, in the future, continue researching such intuitive and attuning methodologies and their affects to architectural education.

I have occasionally wondered whether applying certain methodologies earlier would have led to results faster, being then able to design further, with more detail or in scales that are beyond the architectural discipline (e.g. 5:1 or 1: $\infty$ ); however, I believe that getting lost in research questions before fixing a site, as well as getting lost in the building’s history and in imaginative habitual speculations, is what ultimately contributed to the richness of the project. It also enabled a difficult but valuable personal inquiry that I now consider essential to a graduation year.