

REFLECTION

TU Delft, Delft, Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences | Landscape Architecture R. Gridelli

This research started by investigating the Netherlands, the place I'm most familiar with. Analyzing its low location, its dense use of land and its characteristic polder landscape. The polder landscape became a point of interest, as there is a lot to do around this topic. Problems in the polder have increased over the last decades and will continue to aggravate. This led to my problems statement of finding an alternative water management for the polder.

The next phase of the research was to look at available research regarding this topic. This provided inspiring solutions, but most solutions focused on a problem/solution approach.

Being part of Inge Bobbink's Circular Water Stories lab meant researching a traditional water system. This helped looking at the history of my research problems statement before the beginning, in times when dikes did not exist. The terp came into the picture and provided my design assignment: can the concept of the terp be implemented in the polder to solve current problems occurring in the lower parts of the Netherlands.

By extracting elements of the terp and translating them to current times, a set of elements came about, providing steppingstones for the design. These elements were illustrated by an animation showing how the concept of the terp could be implemented in the polder.

After analyzing low-lying Dutch peat polders, a suitable location was selected to test the concept of the terp in the polder. A landscape analysis gave guidance for design interventions. The discovery of creek ridges which consisted of stable ground compared to the surrounding soft marshy soil, provided a solid base on which the design could be rolled out on. A hydrological analysis of the area created a deeper understanding of the water system in play. By setting a higher water level, the design was further demarcated as consequences of the raised water level provided points of contact for implementing elements of the terp.

This resulted in the first phase of the design. As an addition to the master plan, zoom ins showed the polder in a more extended way, giving a more complete overview through the scales of the design. Since the first phase did not provide a full overview of implementation of the concept of the terp in the polder, a second design phase resulted in a clear understanding of its implications. Illustrated by a masterplan, zoom ins and additional visualizations providing a general understanding of the design.

The final phase of this research was linking the design back to the bigger picture. Comparing this thesis to existing research and positioning it in the context of current work field. The main outcome of fitting in the 'adapt' strategy of the Delta Program and providing a landscape based solution for the polder that insists on an anticipative way of working with the landscape.

The main approach of connecting a traditional water system as the terp to a modern problem worked extremely well. The compulsory part of the lab: the Traditional Water Story, provided a solid base to use in the design. Since my research abilities are less elaborated, compared to my fellow students, this lab approach suited me well. The structure of research methodology could have been improved, to give a better overview on this research. On the contrary a less systemic approach works well for me, as a too strict framework constrains my creativity.

Interaction between Inge Bobbink (first mentor) and Luca Iorio (second mentor) evolved naturally. Regular meetings provided feedback on products made for this research. The feedback given was always reasonable and most of the time in line with my thoughts. My main comment received was to be more precise, showing my understanding of the system. This conflicted with my approach to simplify gained knowledge, which was often lacking depth, justifiably mentioned by my mentors. Reviewing sessions and gaining knowledge from similar research, resulted in more precise products.

This thesis can be divided in multiple parts: The initial problem statement of the polder, which was part of choosing my topic to work on for the rest of the academic year. The terp as a solution to the problems opposed in the polder. A strength of me of finding landscape-based solutions from the past/another field. Then, gaining more insight/researching both topics, my least favorite part as research seems endless. This obstructed the process for a while as it did not get off the ground. The next part was to create a toolbox of ideas, the animation helped visualizing the implementations of the terp in the polder. The design: a sticking point which costed me the first round of P4. Being decisive in the design was scary, but a breakthrough was found after some time off during the summer break. The next presentations forced me to position myself in the work field and describe the relevance of this research.

Within this year I made a few important steps regarding the design. To be less hesitant when it comes to the final design. Speak with people about your design, as it clarifies your train of thought.

Scope and relevance

The graduation year provided the chance to work one full academic year on a topic of your fascination. Joining a lab created a link with the master track. My research of surmounting the polder is in line with the master track of Landscape Architecture and MSc program, as the design focused on a landscape-based intervention. Studying Landscape Architecture during my BSc in Wageningen and MSc in Delft has taught me it's a way of combining knowledge from different disciplines to create an integral design. Within my research, it has not been different as the design is built on knowledge from water and waste management, architecture, agriculture, and ecology.

Research as a pile-up

All elements of the research have contributed to the outcome of the design, similar to a sum of numbers. The research by design approach resulted in going back and forth between research and design to create a coherent story. As mentioned early, this research by design method can be done in a structured way, keeping track of all steps to have a more coherent story. In my research less the case, as keeping track of all steps slows down my creative process. Keeping momentum throughout my process is important for the outcome of my design.

As mentioned in the conclusion of this research, a change in mentality is needed to implement this design. This change in mentality needs to be implemented on a different scale top down or bottom up as forcing inhabitants to change their way of living would not fit Dutch democratic standards.

To conclude: I'm happy with the outcome of my research as it provides enough points of contact for future research and sparks the future of the polder. Something which I'm willing to continue working on.

Personal Growth

The year brought me in different mind states, spending hours analyzing and developing myself. With mental and a little economic support from my parents Daniëlle and Sergio, advice from friends, roommates, and fellow students and my ever seeming enthusiastic and supporting girlfriend Yamila, I conclude this thesis. I'm thanking my main mentor, Inge Bobbink, for being flexible and allowing me to leave the beaten track and pulling me back in time. I also want to thank Luca luorio for his involvement, giving friendly but severe comments only to support me and extract the best out of me. The freedom university gives will be missed, but I'm looking forward to the next steps in life.