

Reflection paper

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Introduction

This reflection paper describes the research and design process of the graduation project in graduation studio Heritage and Architecture, with the sub theme, Tolerance for change. In this assignment a small area of the city centre of Amsterdam will be dealt with. This area is called the 'Binnengasthuisterrein'. This location was first developed as a convent for nuns, until 1578 when the alteration took place. After that it became a hospital and stayed that way until 1982. Now the site is occupied by the University of Amsterdam. This location has a long history with several functions during the ages, so the cultural identity is found in several time layers. Although the University of Amsterdam moved into the buildings almost thirty years ago, they have not found the optimal use for the area. The interiors look dated and are lacking maintenance. The assignment for this studio is to find a suitable function for the area and develop one of the buildings with the new program, so that it will be a functional, comfortable and attractive building again that fits in its surroundings.

Research

The research report structured into different subjects. Research of the area of the Binnengasthuis, the main research focus described below with problem statement and research question, Architectural analysis of the building chosen to redesign and an essay written on tolerance for change. At the end of the report the different parts are brought together in a conclusion.

Problem Statement and Research question

The Binnengasthuisterrein was the location of the Binnengasthuis-hospital. In 1982 the hospital left the area for a new location. The University of Amsterdam was given the vacant buildings to use for different functions of the university. The configuration of the area is based on the hospital-pavilion system and most of the buildings are monuments.

In the current situation the University has a large number of buildings located all over Amsterdam. These scattered buildings are costing a lot of money and prohibit the employees to cooperate between disciplines. For some time the University of Amsterdam has been making plans to relocate their functions into clusters, based on subject of the different disciplines. The university has devised four clusters: an alpha-cluster, a beta-cluster, a gamma-cluster and a medicine-cluster.

The grouping of several monumental buildings on the Binnengasthuisterrein has shown to the university to have potential to house one of the clusters, the alpha-cluster.

The University of Amsterdam has stated a couple of ambitions for the location:

- Create a place that acts as a base for students and employees.
- Create a place where it is easy for students, teachers and researchers to meet each other.
- Create a place that is inviting for the public, so the academic world and society can encounter and mingle.
- Have a residence that contributes to high esteem of the university national and international.
- Have buildings that are flexible enough to house the rising and falling numbers of students of the different faculties each year.

Although the University of Amsterdam created those ambitions, they have not created a vision about how to achieve those goals and what the consequences are for the Binnengasthuisterrein and the city.

With the problems of the current situation and the interesting ambitions of the University of Amsterdam, the research question is formulated:

What is the spatial impact of the plans of the University of Amsterdam, to create an open city campus, on the Binnengasthuisterrein and the surrounding neighbourhoods in the city centre of Amsterdam?

With the sub questions:

- What are the goals and plans for the Binnengasthuisterrein exactly and which terms are used?
- How are those terms defined in the literature?
- How does the Binnengasthuisterrein relate to the goals and to the terms that are used?
- Are the reference projects based on the same goals as the university has stated and how are they functioning?

The architectural themes of the research

The terms that were found in the UvA statements and discussed in this report are:

Campus, Ensemble/Cluster/Complex, Interaction, Open/welcoming, Representative, Community, Flexibility.

Conclusion

The area has had a number of functions through the centuries, but has always had a greener and quieter inner world. Because of the many changes a lot of different identities and atmospheres have been created. This characteristic is interesting, because it shows the layers of time. But in the current situation it has no coherence. The UvA might be afraid to make big plans, because of the history with the inhabitants and several law suits. Coherence can be created with a clearer routing and identity. The themes campus, ensemble, social interaction, open and representative are the ingredients of creating a community.

Starting points for design

Going further with the statement of the conclusion that the themes campus, ensemble, social interaction, open and representative are the ingredients of creating a community. The focus of the design was on designing a plan to create a community feeling through architecture. From the research some architectural approaches gave direction to the following interventions for the masterplan.

- Giving the area a green atmosphere
- Creating a recognizable entrance to the area
- Making the main route between the most important functions of the area
- Placing the heart of the area along the main route



The Masterplan has a number of consequences for the building of the Klinisch Ziekenhuis, which is the focus of the architectural design intervention of graduation project.

The routing through the building: The routing requires several entrances into the building, at the west-side through the waiting-room building, through the Oude Manhuispoort, and through the south-side through a new designed facade.

The Building as heart of the campus: There should be a place where larger gatherings can be organised, so a new designed covering of the courtyard is needed to create such a space.

Beside study spaces and education rooms the building also needs to house more social functions like a restaurant, a coffee bar and a exposition space, but also space for more informal interaction.

Tolerance for change

The Binnengasthuis area is in the historic centre of Amsterdam, in the buffer zone of an UNESCO-heritage side and area contains a number of protected monumental hospital buildings that are registered separately

and as an ensemble. So the area has been protected by many authorities and with new changes also the people who live on the area need to be taken into account, but also the area has been subject to a large number of changes, change has become part of the identity. Since the area became a hospital there was a separation between the outer borders of the area, where people lived, and an inner world where the hospital activities took place.

The design approach I took in this area is to enhance the use of the inner world by creating a route through buildings and make the outside public areas green and accessible for all people, inhabitants of the area, students and other people from the city, to use as a park. Physical changes to buildings seen from the outside will only take place at a few places and mostly to improve the less attractive parts of the area.

Methodical line

The Methodical line of approach of Heritage and Architecture was brought as a balance between design, technology and cultural value. In the beginning of this project the focus was on the user, aspects like routing and meeting places were very important. When designing the atrium, the cultural value and technology became also important aspects. The cultural value in the design is most apparent in highlighting some parts of the facade, using rhythms and proportions used in the building for the interventions. Technology is used as a design tool in the atrium, where the roof and walkways are an important feature. In the old part technology is more used as an solution to problems, like making double floors and new isolation. In this project balance was a bit off. If the technology and cultural value were implemented into the process earlier it would have sped up the design more.

Reflection of Architectural design

The concepts for the design originated from two different types of research, the research described above, about the university and adjacent themes, and the research of the existing building, historical, architectural and technical. From the research about the university concepts were developed that had to do with the use and user of the building. This concepts are a route through the building with functions along the route, creating space for interaction between people and designing a large multifunctional space in the courtyard. The research of the building provided knowledge for interaction between the existing building and the new design concepts.

The most invasive transformation of the design is the new atrium with the galleries around it. The rhythms and proportions of the columns and beams and other features of the new atrium are based on the rhythms and measurements of the original building. But the material and style of design are in contrast with the original building, it is made of wood and steel and uses lines and planes as tools for design.

A new building volume is made to create a closed courtyard shape instead of an U-shape. The facade of the volume also uses the rhythms and proportions of the original building and is also different in material and style.

Because of the galleries and the new routing on the ground floor some walls and window frames need to be broken through. The goal of this design is to keep the original building as intact as possible, but in some cases the use of the galleries and the entrances is preferred above that goal. In cases of needed breakthroughs the parts are analysed if it contains special features of the original building style and design. If it is a plain brick plain or has simple features a breakthrough is possible, if has special features like an arc or special ornamentation a new solution is found to keep that part intact.

The value of the graduation project in the wider social framework

When a large institution formulates plans and goals for their housing situation they do not always have a vision of how it will turn out in the end and what all the implications are on the buildings and the surroundings.

This project is also an investigation to what pleasant study and work place, while it is also a social meeting place and a representative building for an important institution. It has to be spatial interesting, but also pleasant to stay for a longer period of time.

When creating a larger volume in a historic city, there is an opportunity for sustainable solutions that will benefit a larger area than just the new built volume. The roof of this design will generate heat to be stored underground and used in winter by a number of buildings. And the roof will provide an area for solar panels.