

Reflection Paper

The Foyer of the City: The Roles of the Riverfront as a Festive Terrain

Interiors Buildings Cities 2017/2018

The Festive City | After the Party

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This paper serves as a reflection on my graduation project, *The Foyer of the City: The Roles of the Riverfront as a Festive Terrain*, conducted in the Chair of Interiors, Buildings and Cities. In this paper, five aspects will be clarified according to the approaches used within the studio and the relevance of the project towards a wider context.

The relationship between research and design

From the starting point of the project, the research serves as a tool which magnifies the relevance materials that are used as supporting grounds for the design. The research could be defined into two main parts which were carried out through the festive lens and through the lens of an anthropologist. The first part of the research resulted in the process of selecting the location of the project and designing the architecture which corresponding to an urban gesture while the second part was used as a supporting evidence for the planning of the programme.

The former stated part was processed by studying Maastricht through three major festivals; namely, the Heligdomsvaart, the Carnival, and the Fashionclash Festival. I did the research on the Fashionclash Festival and presented the essence of this festival through the drawings that show the relationship between the festival and the architecture. Four drawings portray different stages of SAM-decorfabriek, one of the festival venues, ranging from an everyday situation, when space is transformed into a workshop space, an exhibition space, and ultimately a catwalk. The drawings show that the festival is not merely about the actual moment of the event, but include the preparation, planning, and execution which happen almost all year round. Comparing to the other two festivals, the Fashionclash is more about showcasing rather than encouraging people to believe and behave in the same direction as appear in the Heligdomsvaart and the Carnival. These festivals have completely different origins and held for distinct purposes, but they have a common feature which is the act of procession. From the study, the procession route runs through the designated festival venues within the city and emphasizes the moment of festivity by creating an experience of entering.

For the second mentioned part of the research, it was done by learning from literature, case studies, an observation, an interview, and personal experience. In my perspective, the most apparent notice from this way of researching is that the river Maas and the riverfront area, a scenic location of the city, are not yet utilized to the fullest regardless of the efficient infrastructure along the riverfront of this city. These research findings raise the main questions which are: How to elicit the pleasure of entering the city? And How to correlate the design with the existing infrastructures of the city?

By designing a set of interventions spreading along the riverfront area, the project will be formulated according to the existing infrastructure of the city. The four bridges built across the river Maas are used as a boundary of the project, but the integrations are located between the ring road bridge and the pedestrian bridge with the distance of 450 meters. The buildings are situated on different locations based on the urban fabric of the city. They could be read as either a fragment or a family. Starting from the venue in front of the medieval city wall, the buildings are respectively functioned as a gate, an information center and a restaurant, a riverfront seating, an observation tower, a swimming pool, and a foyer which has the hostel on the second floor.

The relationship between the graduation topic, the studio topic, the master track, and the master programme

'The Foyer of the City' is the project which celebrates the festive sense of the city through the creations along the riverfront. In accordance with *'The Festive City'*, the year theme of the Chair of Interiors, Buildings and Cities, the project is carried out using a festive approach. In the research and analysis phase, Maastricht has been read and interpreted through the making of the diorama which based on Serlio's theatrical scenes. When scrutinizing the city by creating a frame to focus on a particular aspect, the scope of the project was narrowed down to the riverfront area.

For the theme of the studio which is *'After the Party'*, the direction of the studio is putting towards the question of: How is the ephemeral, the festive, represented in daily life? Metaphorically, the transformations of the moment before and after the party will be examined through the studies of the festival in different aspects and then represented through the form of architecture. The precedent study was made according to the individual theme of each student. It was analyzed and reinterpreted into a form of a diptych. In my case, the Entry of Henry III in 1574 was used as a case study. It was the occasion held for welcoming the new king of France. The Arch and the Loggia designed by Palladio were specifically fabricated for this event. The occasion was presented through two scenarios. The one portrays the festival architectures as if they were a stage set, using a projection from a front view. In comparison to the other scene which depicted the event in a more natural way with the surrounded context. The pair shows the moment of the festival and the moment after the party side-by-side. This making was executed for perceiving the true nature of the festive event in relation to the city and the people. The lesson I have learned from the precedent study is the strategy of selecting the venue.

In the precedent study, the festival location was not in the city center. The reason is that the selected venue is more prominent and convenient regarding the location that facing out to the lagoon and the space that is large enough for public gathering; accordingly, this strategy was implemented in my project. In total, the location of the project had been changed for three times. From the very starting point of the project, the selected site situated in front of the medieval city wall above the O.L. Vrouweparking. After I learned from the precedent study, I decided to move the site location further away from the city center to the location that provides a larger space for public gathering and also closer to the riverfront area. This site closes to the John F. Kennedybrug, part of the city road N278 and the Randweg-Zuid, which could be considered as one of the main entrance of Maastricht. Afterward, the project is spreading along the riverfront area starting from the first selected site to the second site.

Under the master track and the master programme, the scope of my focus is from the scale of the interiors to the buildings and towards the city dealing with architecture in different scales. The result of my graduation project is not merely in a form of a building but in the process of researching, making, realizing, designing and all are aligned with the context of the city, the programme requirements, and the users. The building technology including the materialization is expressed through the spatial quality of the building. The relation of them reflects the design and the way they were put together.

Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work.

In this graduation studio, there is no fixed product of the project. The students could search for possibilities and directions of the project themselves, in both the location and the programme. Beginning with the location, Maastricht was assigned as the project location, but there is no specific site indicated. There was a set of possible sites provided, however, I decided to look for the location that suits the project and meets my ambition rather than follow the suggested plan. With the method of reading the city through the different lens and the approach of the studio that always open for possibilities, I found the relation of my project in different scales ranging from the fragments of the building to an urban scale.

This resulted in the choice of my research method from an interior scale through the building and the city scale. In the research phase, the diorama which based on Serlio's theatrical scene was made for the purpose of understanding the principle of stage setting and how the city was framed, therefore, the scale does not play a role in this reinterpretation of the city. For the precedent study, the assigned scale of model making was 1:50 but my precedent study deal with the presence of the festival architecture in relation to the context rather than the architecture itself, accordingly, the 1:100 scale suited with the intention of the making more than the suggestive scale.

The relationship of the scale and the direction of the project is directly related. The site models were made in the 1:500 and 1:200 scale respectively. The 1:500 model points out the relationship of the buildings and the city in an urban scale. It shows the basic structure of the project which are the crucial viewpoints, the accessibilities, and the relationship of the project to the landmarks of the city. The 1:200 model portrays how the building and the topography of the site react to each other. Moving to the smaller scale, there was the workshop which resulted in a stop-motion film. The aim of the workshop is to narrate the project in a more detail direction. The process of the workshop started with the making of the significant fragment of the building in a 1:20 model and then making the footage out of the model. By getting into a scale that needs more details, the design was improved in different aspects.

From the 1:20 model, I decided to make the same fragment of the building in a larger scale which is 1:50 in order to portray the relationship within the building from ground level to an upper level. Also, in the previous model, it was relatively harder to adjust and integrate architectural elements onto the model since it was made for photographing that the model was not completed, and it was clearly perceived only in a certain perspective. Therefore, the choice of selecting the scale in relation to the purpose really make a difference in the project.

Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results.

Maastricht is indeed a tourist city. It has more than 1977 monuments and has approximately 3 million visitors per annum. Throughout the year, there are festivals and activities that the visitors can participate. The statistic shows that the number of the visitors per annum keep increasing in every year. However, the architectures and infrastructure which specifically provided for the tourist still lacking in terms of scale and number whereas they should increase in a similar manner as the tourism trend.

In this project, the buildings situated in different locations of the city perform themselves as festive nodes connecting event venues together. The connection is formulated from the existing infrastructures of the city. There is no specific route formulated rather a suggestive route that based on the existing patterns of how the locals and the tourists wander around the city. Even though the Maas bridges are used as the boundary of the project, they not performed as a physical boundary but act as the infrastructures emphasizing the relationship between both banks of the river.

By treating this project as a starting point for enhancing and improving the tourist facilities, '*The Foyer of the City*' could be used as a framework for generating the new type of intervention that is not bounded by the location. The set of buildings can formulate an experience of entering the city.

Discuss the ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered in (i) doing the research, (ii, if applicable) elaborating the design and (iii) potential applications of the results in practice.

The hesitations regarding the scale of the project in terms of programme and site location were intense from the very beginning of the project towards the second transition of the site location. After moving further away from the city center, the project was formulated as a complex containing multiple programmes instead of having a specific programme. From this point on, the scale of the project had started to expand progressively.

There were several discussions regarding the site location in accordance with the programme of the project and the distance from the city center. Also, the buildings are not engaging with the existing infrastructures of the city as much as they could be. There were too many issues to handle and it was a risk expanding the trajectory of the project. However, all the materials gained from the research pointed out in the same direction that the project should be spreading along the riverfront instead of landing in a specific venue. Therefore, I had started to reconsider the relation between the programme, the site, and the users, and realized that it is more logical to locate the buildings along the riverfront according to the route which the people usually take and to the important landmarks of the city rather than gather them in an enclosed space.

By taking this decision, the research findings are used as a supporting material. One of the significant materials that directly affect the judgment is the research on the possession route of three festivals. The pattern of the routes suggests that the storyline has been formulated along the way. The starting point of the route stressed the sense of entering into the city. Then the participants walk through important venues of the city. Before landing into the main festival venues, there are several locations provided. These venues not merely act as a rest area but a public grandstand for people who want to witness the occurrence. They are nodes which were joined by the possession route. At the main festival location, the moment of arrival has been emphasized by both human gestures and festival architectures.

As the project develops, there are many turning points which need a sharp decision. It is important to take time to realize and reconsider all the possibilities of the project in order to get the most out of the gained materials. By doing so, the potential of the project will be formulated in a meaningful way.