

Reflection

Technical University Delft
MSc Architecture
Chair of Interiors Buildings Cities

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Title: House of Dance and assembly

In this reflection I look back and forth in my graduation project that started in the Chair of Interiors. Within this chair I decided to join the Independent Group, a studio that could provide me more freedom to develop my own project from a fascination. When collecting and reviewing all products and notes I made in the past months, it became clear how the intention and ambition of my project evolved from the idea of designing a dance school to a social and political related project.



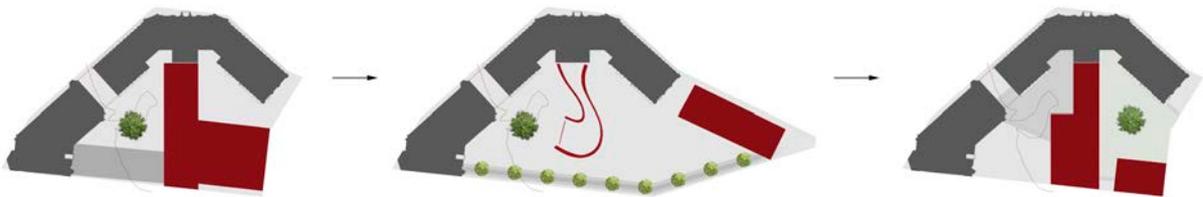
The picture which I started the project.

This project started with just an image that translated my fascination for architecture, photography and dance - in my opinion. Because this fascination did not yet have a direct focus, the research was also not defined and the research topics varied from the history of dance to dance theaters, from dance companies to dance movies. The freedom in this was a pitfall for me and I also had never worked this way. This made it difficult for me to translate the research results in a good way. Thanks to the cooperation of the Independent Group and Tom Weaver, I was given more tools to build up my archive and to present it in a certain way. A totally different, but interesting approach.

Through further research and discussion, I realized that the location I had chosen requires a programmatic content that not only meant something for the NDT, but also for the people in this neighborhood. The programmatic content then in itself requires a careful intervention in the chosen building. As Tony Fretton expressed it nicely in his book 'Buildings and Their Territories: cities become better if they provide spaces with the qualities that people can embrace responsibly

and with pleasure.¹ I also strongly believe that these qualities have a major effect on a 'disadvantaged neighborhoods'. In a neighborhood like this you have to look at the opportunities and how these opportunities can be converted into qualities that people - especially the people who use this neighborhood - embrace.

From this line of thought my first proposal arose, a schematic building with a number of interventions shown that could provide more quality. Gradually during the development of this proposal, I noticed that I was still looking to convert the created opportunities into qualities. The project also began to take on radical forms - something that ultimately did not fit within this neighborhood. The plan was totally out of the box, but also provided (in addition to some delay) a new insight that resulted in the current project. As a result, I did not keep thinking about the existing contours of the original building, but I realized more and more that it is more important to respond to an existing structure and give it the opportunity to develop further.²



A simplified scheme of the development of the project.

The existing structure resulted in, among other things, the height differences in all buildings and the surrounding space. While designing, I noticed that I was struggling with these different levels in the project. No area - which I started at the beginning - was the same height. I started to see this as a negative point of the project. Various design options have been attempted to tackle this problem, sometimes it happened a little too forcefully. Through further research and discussions, a design was created in which part of the ground level is lifted. This creates a square on the west side of the project, between the existing building and the new theater building. This square makes a new, direct connection with the spaces inside the building - something that was not possible before. In addition, the square invites to meet and stay, a new quality that is added to the neighborhood.

On the east side of the building, a semi-public space is created by the same increase in ground level. The stairs between this green place and the street create more distance and therefore more privacy. By also raising the ground floor of the "junior house" to the same level, the young dancers are protected from peeping eyes of passers-by.

¹ "Cities need rooms where people can socialise without having to perform or consume." in Fretton, T. (2014). Tony Fretton Architects: Buildings and Their Territories.

² "Design in this approach is no longer the construction of a new situation, nor is it literally a reading or complete rewriting of the place. The work of the architect is better compared to editing: responding to an existing structure and giving it a chance to evolve" in Havik, K. (2006). Lived Experience, Places Read: Toward an Urban Literacy in Oase #70.

The height differences ultimately prove to be a quality in the project. A point that I first saw as a major stumbling block has taken a positive turn and has therefore become the common thread in the design.

Returning to the research phase, I also tried to make contact with the NDT in order to gather more information about the dance company, but also to find out more about their position regarding the demolition of the Lucent Dance Theater and the arrival of the new cultural complex. Unfortunately, any form of communication was rejected by the NDT, which gave me room to speculate. Of course I gathered information from sources such as (old) newspaper articles, I followed the discussions about the demolition and I looked at YouTube videos in which Janine Dijkmeijer, former general director of NDT, together with three other users of the OCC, discussing the future cultural offerings.

Because there was no direct communication with the NDT, the focus on this dance company faded more into the background (while designing) and the use of opportunities in this 'disadvantaged neighborhood' became more prominent. The role of the different spaces and how they influence each other, became increasingly important.

I experience this development in the project as a positive point. Although the project has a link with the NDT, its main purpose is not to serve this dance company. This project can be seen more as a plea for the municipality of The Hague to actually convert the opportunities in the Rivierenbuurt-Zuid into qualities. By opening a closed building (which now forms a barrier), new qualities are created for the neighborhood and thus also a new future perspective for the neighborhood. In the future, the rugged area (the parking space between the building and the railway) has the opportunity to be involved in an artless way in the square of the project. With this a weakness of the area can be turned into an opportunity.

Looking into the future, I want to support the project with a scale model (1:50 or 1: 100, which is particularly focused on the new part) that offers the possibility to make a stop-motion movie, so that the use of this areas are clearly visible.