

Reflection on Graduation Process

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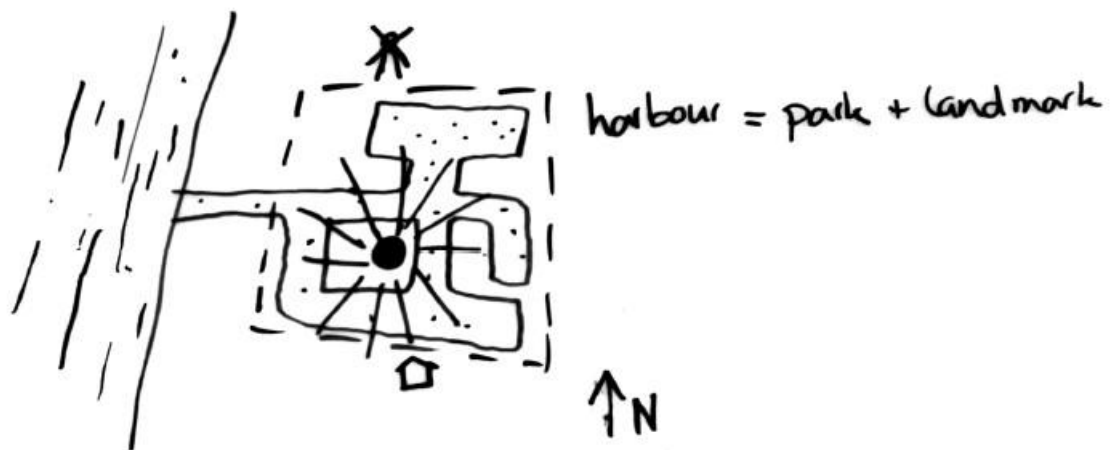
Introduction

This reflection serves to account for the preliminary results of my research and design in the graduation phase. It evaluates the process, product, and planning, with special attention to how my methodological approach (how) and argumentation (why) have influenced the outcomes of the research and design until this moment. It reflects critically on the choices made, addresses the feedback received and integrated, reflects on the lessons learned, and outlines the next steps for completing the graduation process. I will take the questions posed in the graduation manual as the framework, to make the reflection complete and structured. Starting with a brief overview of my project as part of the Heritage Studio *'Revitalising Maritime Heritage.'*

Initially, I was fascinated by the derelict factory halls along the waterfront. However, when we were asked to explore the southern part of the Water Triangle, I was drawn to another, less visible kind of maritime heritage. In the small village of 's-Gravendeel, I encountered the clear outline of a former harbour, now existing only as an empty space in the urban fabric. This sparked my interest in understanding the processes behind its development and disappearance, and that of other similar former harbours in the region.

Expanding my research, I discovered dozens more of these "hidden harbours" scattered across the region. Only subtle traces remain: voided spaces, disused structures, or even just reminiscent street names. Though hidden, these harbours are ever-present. They offer a unique opportunity to experiment with spatial and programmatic strategies to revitalise and reintroduce this significant, but largely invisible, layer of the landscape.

Further research revealed the regional significance and rich history of the Papegat harbour, a history that has largely faded from local memory. I felt a strong obligation to take this forgotten urban element, the hidden harbour, and use urban and architectural design to help people reconnect with their maritime heritage and, with that, their maritime identity. From this idea, my research topic developed: understanding strategies for revitalising maritime identity in small-scale 'hidden' harbours. These in turn could help shape the design towards a successful project, as will be discussed in the text to come. It was ambitious, sometimes hard and confrontational, but worthwhile and satisfying.



1. Site Diagram Hidden Harbour Papegat

1. Did My Approach Work?

The goal of my project is to revitalise the maritime identity of *hidden harbours* in the southern Water Triangle by spatially and programmatically reintroducing them into the urban fabric.

Overall, I believe my approach was effective though ambitious and complex, as will become apparent throughout the reflection. The main urban design intervention, the reintroduction of the outline of the *Papegat* harbour as a multifunctional park and connecting it to a line of heritage and new structures, successfully anchors the historical narrative into a contemporary urban setting. My research informed design strategies that could balance recreational use, climate adaptation, and historical storytelling.

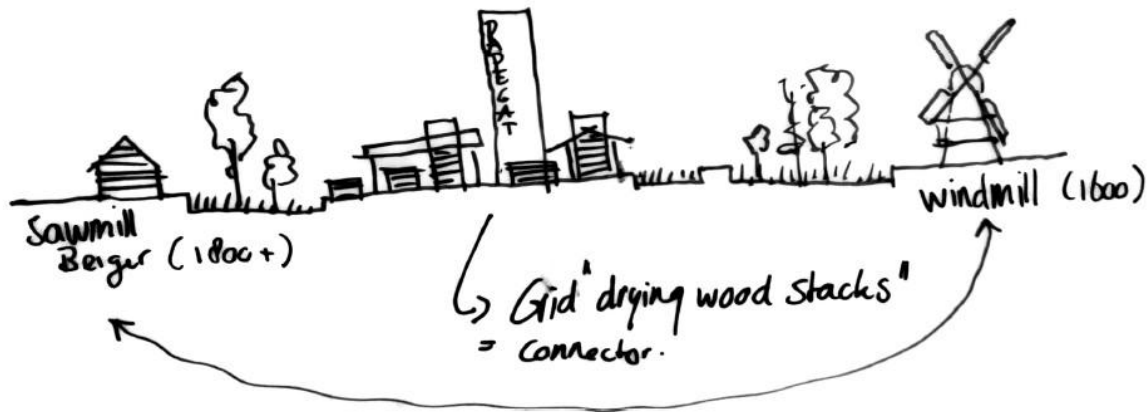
However, challenges remain, particularly regarding the legibility of these interventions for casual users. Making the maritime story understandable without heavy-handed signage or overly abstract gestures remains an ongoing task, and simplicity in design is a key focus going forward.

2. Understanding on the "How and Why"

How

Through spatial design, I reintroduce the physical outlines of the former *Papegat* harbour, transforming the space into a green, public park that serves multiple functions. It acts as a flood buffer, supports biodiversity, and provides opportunities for recreation. This layered public space reflects the historical footprint of the harbour, inviting visitors to experience its original scale and atmosphere. In addition to the park, I propose a new educational museum and the restoration of the existing sawmill hall. These elements anchor the site's rich maritime history and provide tangible, programmatic links to the past. Supporting functions

such as housing, local businesses, and restaurants help activate the area, while small-scale production at the locations of the former windmills ties back to the harbour's original productive role. This integrated approach ensures that the site is not only historically grounded, but also socially vibrant and economically sustainable.



2. Conceptual Design Cross-Section

Why

Although *hidden harbours* have disappeared physically, they continue to hold significant cultural and historical value. The gradual erasure of these spaces represents a broader loss of collective memory tied to maritime development, especially in regions like the Water Triangle. Revitalising these traces before they are completely forgotten offers an opportunity to reinforce local identity, foster education, and create meaningful urban spaces rooted in history. Specifically for *Papegat*, my project challenges the existing *Maasterras* development plan, which envisions a typical high-density residential neighbourhood that largely ignores the site's maritime heritage. By offering an alternative vision, I aim to show that urban development can be contemporary, livable, and economically viable, while also respecting and revitalising the historical layers in the landscape.

3. Reflection Upon the Feedback Given by Mentors

Throughout the graduation process, I received valuable feedback from various mentors.

Architecture

Early feedback during the masterplan phase encouraged me to explore a broader, urban-scaled intervention instead of focusing solely on a building. This shift allowed me to work with the wider spatial context and consider the relationship between architecture, landscape, and identity. As I later zoomed into the building scale, feedback became more critical, and I hit a conceptual wall. The monumental scale and strong axiality I initially introduced were considered out of place within the site's character. Although this feedback was not always directly articulated, it challenged me to reassess my concept more critically.

This eventually led to a major breakthrough shortly before P3, when I shifted towards a smaller-scale, grid-based structure, inspired by historical timber drying methods. This approach reflects all the historical layers of the site (it represents the harbour as a whole on the land) while allowing a clear design principle.

The grid did come with restrictions, which I stuck too much to as became clear from feedback. Over time I learned to become a bit more free with it, and allow programmatic and functional freedom over absolute grid-discipline.

Building Technology (BT)

In BT sessions, feedback highlighted the potential for integrating storytelling into the construction process. This insight strengthened the idea of reusing the 1900s sawmill hall as a production and education site, where traditional craftsmanship could be revived. The notion of gradually constructing the buildings, echoing historical practices, became a strong conceptual and technical component of the project.

Research

My research mentor provided constructive feedback while giving me significant autonomy to explore my own interests and hypotheses. When elaboration or clarification was needed, the feedback was clear and helpful. Although the research aimed to be context-specific, a lack of detailed information forced me to generalise certain findings. I addressed this explicitly in the research report, ensuring transparency. Despite this limitation, the generalised strategies remain valuable and adaptable, and their experimental application within *Papegat* demonstrates their potential relevance for similar *hidden harbours*.

4. How Feedback Was Translated Into My Work

Architecture & Building Technology

I translated the architectural feedback into a shift toward a more context-sensitive design approach. The museum is now organised around a timber grid layout, referencing the historical drying processes once present at *Papegat*. Both materials and construction methods are carefully selected to connect the new structure to local traditions while also integrating contemporary building techniques.

Building Technology feedback further shaped the project by reinforcing the role of the sawmill hall as a key node in the site's narrative. It became a place where local craftsmanship, education, and construction processes converge. In addition, feedback informed the technical development of several key structural, climatic, and detailing elements of the new structure(s).

Research

Research feedback prompted me to broaden and generalise the design strategies, ensuring they could be adaptable to other *hidden harbour* contexts. Despite this generalisation, *Papegat* remained the primary and detailed case study, serving as a concrete framework for testing and refining the broader strategies.

5. What I Learned from My Own Work

This project has provided key lessons on several levels:

- **Content Knowledge:**
I discovered the hidden histories of former harbours, an aspect of maritime heritage that I previously knew little about, and developed a deep commitment to preserving and interpreting these traces meaningfully.
- **Architectural Heritage Skills:**
Learning how to assess heritage values and integrate them thoughtfully into new urban interventions was a steep but rewarding learning curve.
- **Professional Development:**
I learned to open up more to constructive criticism, to allow myself creative freedom without seeking perfection too early, to manage deadlines better (with varying success), and to maintain a healthier balance between study, work, and personal life.

These lessons span content, process, and personal growth, which I believe a graduation studio should foster.

6. Looking Ahead: Final Phase of Graduation

The final part of the graduation process will focus on:

- **Refining architectural detailing**
The final part of the graduation process will focus on translating the conceptual building ideas into clear, technically realistic, and representative architectural drawings and models. The current focus is put on Block 1, which is representative, but the other blocks should meet a similar level of detailing. I need to make sure that I finish all relevant drawings and models in time. I aim high and hope to pull out as much as possible from within myself to create appealing work that elevates my skills.
- **Strengthening the narrative**
Through both text and visuals, I must ensure that the story of *Papegat* is accessible, compelling, and understandable to a wide audience. I realise that parts of my story can be hard to decipher. While this is partly intentional and valuable because it forces people to think and reflect like I did, the overwhelming ideas should be clear to successfully convey the site's value and allow people to re-engage with their maritime identity.
- **Presentation preparation**
I aim to create an engaging and clear P4 and P5 presentation that communicates both the emotional and technical aspects of the project.

ADDITIONAL ASPECTS

What is the Relation Between My Project Topic, My Master Track, and My Master Programme?

My project focuses on *hidden harbours*; maritime traces that often survive only in spatial memory. This aligns with the Architecture track (A) of the MSc AUBS programme through its emphasis on designing with an awareness of context, history, and identity. The project's urban-architectural scale connects directly to the themes of architecture within broader urban systems, allowing me to explore how historical elements can be reinterpreted in contemporary design.

How Did Research Influence Design (and Vice Versa)?

The research into *hidden harbours* deeply shaped my design approach by providing spatial strategies and historical context. While the masterplan design began before the research was fully developed, the findings subsequently strengthened the interventions. The relationship between design and research led to a more rooted, context-sensitive proposal, where each informed and refined the other, resulting in a more cohesive final outcome.

- ① Urban harbour traces
↓
- ② Research
 - locations
 - development
 - design strategies
- ③ location design : Papegat
- ④ Design based on Research strategies
 - park = former harbour
 - central landmark.
- ⑤ exploring landmark options
 - ↳ small scale
- ⑥ Grid + timber drying stacks
Timeline connector.
- ⑦ stacks → volumes + symbolism & heritage connections.
 - 1600's
 - industrial age
 - current hidden state
 - Future

How Do I Assess the Value of My Methodology?

My methodology combined spatial analysis, historical research, and design exploration. While effective, it was also ambitious, leading to struggles with time management and prioritisation. Despite these challenges, the layered approach ultimately resulted in a stronger project, allowing me to connect various elements into a unified narrative that transcends individual design aspects.

How Do I Assess the Academic and Societal Value?

Academically, the project opens pathways for further exploration of design strategies for lost maritime spaces, contributing to a deeper understanding of how to integrate heritage into urban planning. Societally, it reconnects communities to their hidden histories, fostering identity, education, and new uses for forgotten spaces. Ethical considerations include the limitations imposed by tight deadlines, which sometimes necessitated simplifications in order to present a feasible, tangible proposal.

How Do I Assess the Transferability of My Results?

The general design strategies, identifying, amplifying, and reinterpreting *hidden harbour* traces, can be adapted to other contexts facing similar loss of maritime identity. However, detailed interventions must always be site-specific to remain meaningful and impactful, ensuring that each approach respects the local context and its unique heritage.

Additional question 1: How can spatial design interventions narrate historical loss without relying solely on textual explanation?

Spatial design can communicate historical loss through form, materiality, and layout by creating an immersive experience. In *Papegat*, the park layout subtly traces the former harbour, while materials like timber, historically present, evoke the site's past. The design encourages visitors to connect with history intuitively, guiding them through a space that embodies the memory of the lost harbour. This non-verbal storytelling allows history to be felt rather than read, making the past come alive in the present.

Additional question 2: What role can education through architecture play in reconnecting residents with hidden or lost elements of their local history?

Architecture can reconnect residents with lost history by incorporating educational elements into the design. At *Papegat*, the museum and restored sawmill hall serve as interactive spaces where residents can engage with the site's history through workshops and live demonstrations. These spaces not only inform but also foster a personal connection to the past, encouraging active participation. By embedding educational opportunities within the space, architecture becomes a tool to strengthen residents' attachment to their local heritage.