

P4 REFLECTION

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INTRODUCTION

This reflection gives an answer to the following questions.

1. What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (A, U, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?
2. How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?
3. How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?
4. How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?
5. How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?
6. To what extent can a permanent monument enable future change without being altered itself?
7. How can user-led adaptability remain architecturally coherent across time and users?

I. Reflection

1. Relation to the track and programme

This graduation project is rooted in the Architecture track of the MSc programme and explores the intersection of adaptive reuse, architectural heritage, and Open Building systems. A monumental steel-framed industrial building is transformed into a future-oriented mixed. The project investigates how a permanent structure can support changing spatial needs over time, bridging long-term permanence with user-led adaptability.

2. Mutual influence of design and research

From the start, research and design went hand in hand. Early literature studies helped me identify a core set of Open Building principles, drawn from three foundational texts in the field. This not only deepened my understanding of Open Building but also allowed me to define a clear framework of design criteria. These criteria were then used to analyse a series of case studies, which directly informed design strategies for Open Building. These strategies really set the basis for implementing open building within my own design. When it came to designing the general floorplan but also when it came to detailing the partition elements and the façade for example. They set the basic principles for these separate design studies.

3. Evaluation of the chosen approach and methods

The approach was structured around three main phases: a literature review, a case study analysis, and journal-based design development. The journaling helped me reflect on each step, and to quickly test and adapt new ideas. The mix of intuitive sketching and structured technical research worked well for me. One challenge, however, was that the many layers and systems in the project made it quite complex. At times this slowed things down. Still, by sticking to clear design principles and testing options through variants, I managed to keep a good overview and stay on track. Overall, I believe this way of working fit well with my goals.

Paddy's feedback encouraged me to embrace quick variation studies and let go of perfectionism, which accelerated progress and opened up new ideas. Thomas helped me translate abstract strategies into tangible architectural solutions, ensuring the design remained grounded and coherent. Pieter's ongoing questioning of the 'why', 'how', and 'what' of each decision helped tie my work back consistently to the theory of Open Building. Altogether, this way of working gave me structure without limiting creativity, and helped align research, design, and reflection into one integrated process.

4. Societal and ethical value

From a societal point of view, the project explores a new model for transforming industrial heritage into adaptable living environments. It puts users first, offering them the tools to adapt their space rather than controlling every detail as an architect. This reflects a wider shift in architecture: from designing fixed outcomes to creating adaptable frameworks.

5. Transferability and future planning

Many of the developed systems, such as the demountable partition floor, modular façade grid, and flexible infill strategy, could be adapted to other projects working within the Open Building framework. While the structural reuse of the existing monument is highly site-specific, the logics of subdivision, dry construction, and material selection are broadly applicable.

Own Questions.

6. To what extent can a permanent monument enable future change without being altered itself?

This question has been central throughout the project. The building's steel skeleton remains untouched, yet every new layer added around and within it has been designed to be flexible. This balance between permanence and adaptability helped me rethink the role of architecture, not as a fixed outcome, but as a framework for ongoing transformation. In this specific case, the steel structure offered a wide range of possibilities for making the interior space more adaptable. It didn't just define the architectural rhythm and spatial quality of the design, it also became an active component in the environmental strategy of the building. Within the Open Building concept, this permanent element adds real value to a system focused on change. It anchors the identity of the architecture while supporting a flexible and evolving use of space. It proves that permanence doesn't stand in the way of change, it can actively enable it.

7. How can user-led adaptability remain architecturally coherent across time and users?

A key challenge has been designing systems that are open enough for personalisation, yet defined enough to retain an architectural identity. The use of grids, detailing rules, and material families offers a balance between freedom and consistency. This raises a new awareness: openness is not the absence of design, it is a carefully structured framework for change.

