

Reflection paper.



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Studio / Theme	Heritage & Architecture Zutphen: Sustainable City

Introduction.

The aim of this reflection is to provide a brief yet explanatory overview of the research approach and design positions I took during the process of my graduation studio, as well as communicate the most significant aspects related to the chosen methodology and design strategies that have been followed throughout this creative journey.

In an attempt to structure and approach the topic, I could state that the process of reflection consists out of four main subjects.

To begin with, I will address the complex relationship between research and design while shortly after I will comment and refer to the societal, research related and potentially scientifically relevant aspects of the explored project. Following that, I will try to touch on the connections between the overall theme of the graduation studio and the chosen subject, along with all of the likely related topics. Last but not least I will try to outline and describe the chosen methodological approach which structured the complete design and research process.

It is common secret that transformation and adoptive reuse of sites and buildings, especially of those with a considerable cultural significance, is one of the main themes in field of architecture.

This is definitely the reason why a plethora of architectural assignments deal with heritage related tasks, such as in the case of the Heritage & Architecture studio, where the focus lies on such tasks. To be more specific emphasis is given on the research and analysis of different scale levels; from urban level to cultural immaterial topic and values as well as aspects related and arising from a much broader context.

As a result, research and analysis of the history of the site and its buildings is integral part of the graduation studio in an attempt to formulate, outline and assess all the pre-mentioned aspects and relations.

The chosen graduation studio is entitled 'Zutphen - Sustainable City' and started with a one week workshop based in the Dutch city of Zutphen. The area under investigation is inarguably a city with glorious and rich past, fact which can be reflected and observed in its architectural fabric. However nowadays, especially when it comes to the area of Nieuwstad, it seems that it has to face a few difficulties, primarily related with the constantly reducing amount of youngsters choosing to study, work and built a family away from the area, factor causing further issues physically reflected in the growing rate of vacancy in the built envelope and the loss of vividness in the city life.

As response, the project was since the beginning having as its main aim, to primarily deal with this issues and propose a potential starting point for regeneration for the studied area. To be more specific when it comes to the content of my design brief as structured and formulated shortly after the investigation and broad analysis of the site, my task was the adoptive reuse of 3 old school structures, in the area of Klein Vaticaan, in order to meet the needs of a new academic environment and set an example for a broader regeneration strategy based on vocational education, factor related with the topic of sustainability and social regeneration as they are outlined not only by my personal design aims but also the nature and character of the of the broader design graduation studio.

Based on the aforementioned, I formulated the following research question:

- How can the (chosen) existing structures of the Klein Vaticaan in Zutphen, conceptually and physically be united in order to serve the needs of a new academic environment?
- How can the existing spatial characteristic be reinforced and enriched in order to provoke creative and educational interaction?

While when it comes to major design reference and models investigated:

- How can the archetype of Athenian Agora and the 1960s experimentation of the architect Frank van Klingeren on the topic, be reinvented and contextualized in order to serve the design aims?

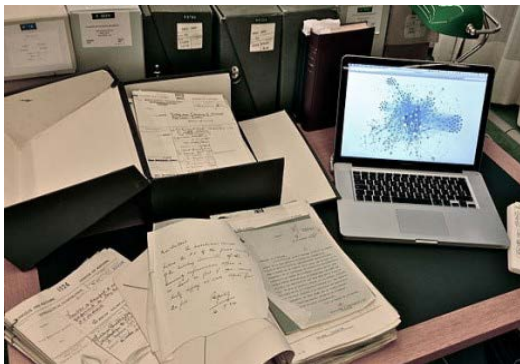
-The relationship between research and design.

In the field of Heritage & Architecture, which focuses on the preservation and transformation of sites and buildings, an appropriate balance between the old and the new layers is inarguably of significant importance. Within this framework, the research primarily focuses on defining the architectural and technical aspects of the given context, along with all the cultural values that are considered of certain relevance and importance for its overall historical and cultural identity.

The research by design conducted within this graduation studio is a process that reflects precedents and intentions, as regards the issues and values that can be addressed.

Many are the times that through the overall design process the designer has to refer to his preliminary findings or be in need of further enrichment of it, since adoption and transformation of multiple aspects and scales constantly request design ion making based on the pre-assessed historic, aesthetic, material etc. value of the elements in question.

In that way it is clear that within the context of heritage and adoptive reuse of historical structure the borders between scientific research and design process are definitely blurred, while there is no clear sequence of which procced which, since many are that the times that research fuels the design while other the design process itself enriches or sheds light to a previously untouched part of the contacted research.



Archival research, November 2017.



Insurance contract of the examined building dating from 1918

-The relationship between the theme of the graduation studio and the subject chosen by the student within this framework.

The very nature of my graduation project is in line with the overall character of the Heritage and Architecture studio that it takes place in. As a result its aim is primarily to touch on topic of adoptive reuse and transformation of existing architectural structures, based on analysis and proposal capable to enrich this research/design based field.

The new structures part of my proposed design strategy form a dialogue with the old buildings, and together they form places of interaction, areas where people meet, interact, and socialize. These places of social interaction, the agora space and media center-platform or the leisure café, accessible to everyone not only to the academic students, is making the 'block' experienced through a crossing of different spatial sequence and of a definite varying character and action related possibilities. Within these spaces, different functions are arranged, all focusing on providing attractions and activities not only to the students of the vocational school and but also to the whole local community as well as the broader creative one.

Furthermore on the other hand, a path/aim not necessary formulated and within the sphere of the selected design studio is my personal intention to comment, through the project, on how an area of a certain decay can be regenerated through the potential revitalizing effect of education and presence of youth in an urban fabric.

However, a factor definitely in line with topic of Heritage and architecture is the exploration/investigation of potential solutions and design positions capable to touch on the topic of the introduction of sustainability as well as the possibility of developing evaluating resilience developing methods, when it comes to historic buildings and contexts in general. As that climatic scenario strategy, sustainable measures such as rain water collection system and solar panels are among the overall design strategies applied in the examined design, part and way of thinking I consider and experienced as being in absolute line with the broader design studio.

-The relationship between the methodological line of approach of the graduation studio and the method chosen by the student.

In an attempt to define the structure of the selected design process, in a way that fits to my needs and creative ambitions, I would say that it mainly consist out of 2 phases.

I consider that it is a methodological approach in line to the overall character of the selected graduation studio and program based process that at least in the case of the collaboration with my design mentor managed to structure the development of my project as well constantly enrich my research aim and targets.

First it is the stage of the analysis, comprehension and understanding of the selected heritage structures, intended for reuse. The analysis in this phase is done primarily in line with the guiding principles and tools as they are proposed and supported by the Graduation Design studio.

In this case I could say that the performed methodological research approach is closer to quantitative principles, in the sense that it seeks to record what is knowable and visible about a given phenomenon, in this case an architectural structure.

However, many are the times, when qualitative methods and approaches are used by me mainly in order to understand and record phenomena having to do with social and culture value related aspects. Given the nature of the design task and studio this phase in never really expected to finish, since questions and dilemmas constantly arose during the creative exploration, which require considerable further research.

When it comes to the second phase of the process, inarguably emphasis is given on the Design proposal itself.

To be more specific, primarily through a Trial and Error Technique my aim was and still is to test and develop potential options and different architectural scenarios for intervention on the existing structures. Study of relevant literature when it comes to heritage and transformation of existing buildings as well on topics related with my concept, is essential for this almost never ending part the process.

Finally when it comes to architectural exploration methods such as sketch model-making, diagrams creation, extensive sketching, and study of relevant references/case studies, site visits, and experimentation with further physical and digital tools do play the most important roles.



Cronomapping recording of the transformed building based on personal research, December 2017.



Design experimentation with multiple design tools and visual media, January-May 2018.

-Discuss the ethical issues and dilemmas a designer may encounter during research and design process.

Sometimes, the starting points caused conflict as regards the different values, as they are categorized and analyzed in the primary stage of the design research. These points are however which form the creative challenges, dilemmas and opportunities of the design which inarguably from my experience enrich the project and create dialogue between the multiple layers of the project. From this point, various stories and scenarios are developed, tested and evaluated, before they gain a position among the overall proposed transformation program.

In that way we can suggest that the process of designing within Heritage & Architecture is not a linear on, but rather a dynamic spiral process, in which physical elements, values, opportunities, feelings aesthetic taste and dilemmas constantly need to be re-evaluated and in many cases compared to one another. This is where the difficult position of the designer comes to relevance, since his responsibility and role is to decide and value higher one elements over the other, or decide to sacrifice one over the other, since this decision can be for the sake of the clarity and better coherence of the overall project. Long story short, compromises are definitely an essential part of the design process in every project of such nature, especially when performing among a culturally and historically empowered context.

However, at this point I may say that through my personal experience, the structure and the theoretical framework express by the Heritage & Architecture graduation studio, manages to scientifically reinforce and guide the student in cases of such dilemmas and decision making through a variety of tools and methods which as objectively as possible value, assess and categories the varying physical and immaterial aspects of each examined building structure.

Culture value matrixes, dilemma tables and extensive scientific research in archives, data bases and theoretical sources manage to guide you through the decision making process, making every student like me capable justify his position every time he has to position himself over a posed dilemma/conflict.

	Age Value	Historical Value	Commemorative Value	Social Value	Historical Use Value	Artistic Value	Economic Value
Surroundings/ Setting		The school complex of Klein Vatenen stands as a proud reminder of the operation of the Catholic Church in the area, especially after the key date of 1888 when catholic communities were officially allowed to build their own institutes. 		St Anna school as part of the whole catholic educational cluster of building, performs as symbol to all those families and individuals, who had relatives studying at the school or even themselves have an attachment to the area either as students or members of staff. 			
Building Site	Immediate connection of site to church of St Jan makes the topographic relation important, since form and church orientation influenced the position of the school. 						The site proximity to both elements of tourist interest (landmarks) and natural beauty such as St Jan church, Spanish gate and the park, makes building site particularly attractive and potentially financial profitable, since surrounding can perform as magnet for visitors and investments. 
Architectural Skin	Elements of the facade such as the windows and wooden door show marks of area which clearly show the passage of while reflect the marks of daily use by the energetic students. 	Facade articulation and overall composition especially of the southern facade stands as typical example of an architectural style used by Catholic community of the time it was created as well as of the very architectural design identity of its architect. 	The ceramic tile composition positioned above the main entrance of the school carrying the inscription St Anna school was inherited from the original design to commemorate the saint it was dedicated to but also the original name and function of the building, now changed. 		The two identical doors found at the southern facade of the building, is now just an expression (reminder) of the fact that the school used to have two separate entrances each leading to a different floor level, housing students of different social level. 	Overall facade composition reflects ideas about principles and architectural means. The balance, repetition and symmetry while the extensive materiality (mainly in the southern facade) creates an interesting and vivid aesthetic result of significant social interest. 	

Culture value matrix is an essential tool when it comes to consideration of dilemmas, October 2018.

-The relationship between the graduation project and the wider social and scientific framework.

One of the key features of my design strategy, both on urban and site level, was to 'bring to the surface the communal and social values of the examined social and physical context that of Klein Vaticaen.

As a result, my design choices were based on the idea of reintroducing the 'sharing spirit' on both urban and building scale. To be more specific my design proposal is about a fresh and sustainable way of looking at social interaction possibilities within the historic buildings and their surroundings. Spaces of distinguishing new architectural identity, now neighbor with elements and spatial aspects of a former era, bringing in that way to the surface a fruitful composition and rich visitor experience.

In the center of that notion what used to be the open-schoolyard hosting a plethora of practical and heavily socially related events when the surrounding school were active, now becomes internalized (new identity) yet preserves its spatial aspects and strengths making in that way able some those ex-activities to happen again, while it opens the door to loads of new functions and socially related activities, given its new climatic performance, enriching the former social programmatic agents and experiential capacity of the space.

In a broader scope the adaptive reuse of the selected structures, as reflected by the design proposal, aims not only to set an example on the way a cutting edge educational institute can be established in facilities housed in historic buildings, but also to propose mechanism and spatial aspects which will be also introducing a new character and identity in line with sustainability principles.

Although it is a topic heavily being investigated in the present architectural field in most cases in a much greater theoretical and physically tested base, it may be an aspect of my design project capable to pose a certain scientist relevance when it come to the topic of building fabric transformation.

The fact that the new function is an academic one, in a cultural level, aims in preserving and developing the notion of education which for over 100 years has been attached to site.

This is a position tightly in lines with the overall perspective and aim of the project, aiming to raise awareness and emphasis on significant social and cultural values that should be taken into consideration when dealing with heritage structures that used to host/ perform an active social role within a certain building context.

As in the case of Zutphen, many historical cities all around the world have undergone transformations over the past decades, which are related to cultural, economic and political developments. The regenerated urban fabric as well as the permanence and transformation of spatial order and functions, often result into problematic areas, which don't seem to be part of the city. However in the case of my graduation project is to ensure that cities like Zutphen transform into sustainable and social flourishing way, parameter which in a broader scope could reflect a potentially scientific relevance of the project in broader / different context than the one examined in this case study.