

REFLECTION

THE KNOWLEDGE CENTER

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The graduation studio *Spaces of Collection* within the chair of *Interiors, Buildings and Cities* seeks to explore the relationship between an institution and the city that accommodates it. The assignment involves the design of an institution for the Delft University of Technology making a physical return in Delft's inner city. The institution; as a complex of spaces of collections fuelled by the various university collections the TU Delft University holds.

Within this reflection, the preliminary results of the research and design in the graduation phase are explained and reflected upon.

Research and design

As the technical university of Delft moved out of the city centre, the city and the university got disconnected spatially and socially. Literature research shows the presence of an economical relationship between the two, as the university is a main actor in providing the city knowledge and job possibilities. However, to reconnect the university and the city on a social level, one must look further than merely the engagement with the local government. Therefore, a research has been conducted within this graduation project on the possibility of engagement between the citizens of the city and the attenders of the university. How can the social relationship of the university and its city be improved? And how can the university collections and the architecture of this to be designed institution contribute to that? These questions have been addressed to get an understanding of what this new institution should be. With both parties having knowledge as a high common interest, the research followed into the topic of sharing knowledge and interdisciplinary collaboration. Research in precedent models of interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge transfer led to a better philosophical and programmatic understanding of the topic. One of the most important results out of this research; the understanding of the need of an informal meeting space within the project and the importance of determining a specific branch. Both resulted in leading actors within the design. The courtyard as an informal meeting space forms the heart of the building around which all activities within the building are taking place. Next to that the theme of knowledge chosen; environment and energy, caused for designing the building and all its aspects in a sustainable framework.

The Knowledge Center as Urban Institution

The theme of the graduation studio *Spaces of Collection* is The Urban Institution. This theme investigates the broader responsibilities of the contemporary institution to the city and its citizens and its potential for engagement with them.

Throughout the msc3 supported by both the workshop and the research seminar, an understanding of what an urban institution is was formed. In my personal understanding an institution is not merely a public building, but a building which has something to offer to the city and its citizens; a certain expertise. The kind of institution I am proposing; a knowledge center, offers the wider public the expertise of the TU Delft University on sustainability issues. The center will hold multiple tools to transfer its knowledge to the public; through lectures, exhibitions and by offering expertise during collaborations. Early in the research phase I came to the understanding that a simple move of one or more of the university collections to the city centre, would not suddenly give a collection more value or create a better social relationship with the city. As they constantly change in value and size, and new collections are conducted, a crucial point was how to address to them. The result is that the main goal of the exhibitions should be providing knowledge and that its collections should hold a certain flexibility. The university could improve its social relationship with the citizens of Delft by presenting their research topics and outcomes to the public, to give a better understanding of what happens inside the TU Delft in terms of sustainability. Next to that the exhibitions can provide knowledge of the past to help and encourage the university attenders to create new innovations. The relationship between the theme *The Urban Institution* and the architecture of the project is evident in the way the building presents itself towards the city. As the building is an important public building which offers a certain expertise, in my opinion the building should have a strong urban

presence and representation. Therefore, the building is designed in a strong singular shape which is slightly bigger than its surrounding context. The building plays therefore a dominant role in the street, as is also visible at the Armamentarium in Delft which served as an important reference in my graduation project.

Methods

Within the methodical line of approach of the graduation studio a great amount of time was spent on the individual research and fascination, but also on the study of precedents of different kind of urban institutions. These precedents, i.e. Bibliothèque Nationale Paris by Henri Labrouste, gave a better understanding of the responsibility of these buildings in providing places for the social interaction of the city. A thorough study in these precedents gave insight in these kind of gathering places for social interaction and what they could look like. The courtyard in the heart of my graduation project fulfils this responsibility and is a gift back to the city and its citizens. As creating more social interaction between the university and the city is a main goal of my graduation project, the courtyard plays an important role throughout the entire building. It does not only serve as a programmatic addition, but functions as a big collective room around which all activities are concentrated. This public interior is designed as a source of light to which the whole building is centralized. This is evident in the arrangement of the programme, the direction of the construction towards the middle and the arrangement of the infrastructure around this source of light.

The method of research before designing worked very well for me as it helped to construct my argumentation for my design decisions. It helped to understand the social context of the project and led to well thought conceptual scheme.

Social relevance

The relationship between the project and the wider social context lies within its function and its urban presence as urban institution. By reintroducing the university in the inner city through providing the city a platform for knowledge transfer and interdisciplinary collaboration between the attenders of the university and the citizens of Delft, a new and stronger social relationship between the university and the city is constructed. This is not only preferable but also encourages the development of the city, as research proved that innovation often occur when existing knowledge between different parties is mixed. Thus, the graduation project as knowledge center creates a social relationship between the Technical University of Delft and the city of Delft, and therefore functions as an incubator of sustainable development in the city.