

## Reflection

*“It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.” (Harraway, 2016)*

To me, projects are stories. Build or not, they make our worlds. As spatial designers, it is essential that we are aware of how our worlds shape these stories and how we, as designers, make worlds in return.

I strongly believe that we are in need of a world that is different, a world that is more caring, more connected. A world in which we feel a part of our Earth's systems rather than a ruler over its environment. So I started this project with the intent to understand the role of architecture in humanity's relationship with nature, with the aim to understand how architecture, as a cultural and spatial practice, might connect rather than detach. This project, to me, however, became so much more than that.

It became a project centred around personal growth, around reshaping my own thinking and about understanding how I can use my experience and skills as a designer to help others question and re-imagine our status quo. Along the way I realised that a world not bound by canonical Western ways of thinking and knowing cannot be established from canonical Western ways of practice. Being raised and educated for the most part in the Netherlands and fully within Western contexts, this meant that a significant part of my project has consisted of decolonising my mind. Of learning to think and practice otherwise, of challenging everything I do and questioning everything I know. Of establishing a new lens, a new world to make stories.

As a guiding philosophy for this new world, I focused on ecofeminism, a philosophy that connects the exploitation of nature to wider systems of oppression and domination, such as colonialism, capitalism and the patriarchy. In my research I combined theoretical explorations in this field with a practice of Radical Spatial Imagination through which I worked on translating these theoretical concepts into spatial realities. Essential through this process was my active engagement with my positionality – which I documented in my positionality journal. This self-reflective practice not only ensured accountability for my personal perspective within the research process, but it also allowed me to be more open in my design approach and, in a way, freed me of the limiting illusion of trying to be objective.

I have presented my research in 18 insights, which explicitly are not named conclusions to emphasise the personal, dynamic and still-evolving nature of the study. And with these insights as a departing point, I have commenced on reimagining Amsterdam Central Station.

Looking back at my research, my insights and the graduation plan I handed in for my P2, I am amazed at how closely my final project aligns with everything I did before. Although, all things considered, maybe I shouldn't have to be. In this process of decolonising my mind, in a way, I became my research just as my research became a bit of me. Through my research I managed to craft an eco-feminist lens that was so strong that there was simply no way for me to design a project not shaped by the stories that I had internalised. The stories of ecofeminism reshaped my world, and in return this world has shaped the story my project shares now.

But I cannot take all the credit for myself. A huge part of this success should be attributed to my mentors and their guidance throughout this year. They have guided me with so much confidence and enthusiasm in this alternative approach that they never let me doubt where I was going and always gave me the trust that things would crystallise and come together when needed. A lot of their feedback was related to giving me the tools and approaches for the next steps I had to take, encouraging me to use different methods or materials and to continue approaching the project from various scales and angles at all times. Exploring how exactly things should be made, to then again reflect on how my design choices actually fit within the larger story of the station. I am incredibly grateful for this team that has not only helped make the project real and tangible but also prevented me from 'not being radical enough'.

Reflecting on the project within the larger scope of Explore Lab Studio, the faculty, and the world, I don't think much has shifted from my original graduation plan. The open and experimental framework of Explore Lab allowed me to critically engage with both myself and the architectural discipline. And although I have, at times, approached the design of the station as if it were a landscape, the final project ultimately operates across all architectural scales. It is this multi-scalar approach which allowed me to ground and navigate the complexities of the station as a whole.

The project's engagement with broader societal and environmental challenges – such as critical spatial practice, ecology, and questions of human–nature relationships – aligns closely with the ambitions of my master's track and the interdisciplinary, future-orientated goals of the MSc AUBS programme. Its relevance within today's larger social, professional and scientific context lies in its engagement with humanity's relationship to the natural world and response to the growing disconnection from nature in Western society. At the same time, the project challenges the conventional architectural practice by introducing alternative ways of knowing and designing, drawing on ecofeminist thought and pluriversal research methodologies. In doing so, I believe my project contributes to more inclusive, reflective and transformative architectural research and design.

Lastly, I find it important to, once again, acknowledge the subjectivity of this project, especially when reflecting on its transferability. Critical reflection and positionality form the core of my approach, and with that comes the understanding that the outcomes of this research cannot – and should not – be lifted out of their context. I believe this project holds significant value, and I hope it encourages others to question, to reflect, and to imagine differently. But my insights and results are not universal truths; they are situated, personal, and evolving. They may serve as inspiration, but they should never be digested uncritically.