P4 reflection

The project "Uncovering Threshold Spaces" started with theoretical framework and an existing site. During the P4, the reason and logics behind the research question and problem have been developed more thoroughly.

The purpose of the project is quite clear and establishes a need to reconnect a failed space to its immediate surroundings to be activated once again. To be more precise, using the space of what was supposed to be an underground shopping centre, for a university library that provides different study spaces for the students of the near faculties and schools as well as the continuation of the park into a sunken square, located next to a main metro station. This project is not only a building but an urban intervention and makes this once forgotten and hidden space, a central point in the city.

The "why" being clear, it is more the "how" that I struggled with. The project had to reconnect to its surroundings but how, with what methods? Finding a clear direction and letting go of a few logics I had was probably my biggest difficulty. As it was an urban intervention, I thought I needed to solve more, so I expanded my project 3 times the size of the initial and already big site. I knew I had to connect with the surrounding, so I drew what I called "strong lines" that went through the site. From them, I tried to have shapes or rather zones where empty and full would make sense. There were so many options, and I could not find one that made sense for me. Maybe I should have stuck to one option and go deeper to it faster, however this is not what happened, and it slowed down my process. Falling sick for a whole month did not help either. My tutors pushed me to focus on one direction, which was the one I developed the most. It was the idea to uncover what was above the existing underground. The goal was to reconnect to the surrounding functions so uncovering and have a visible connection helped. It had a logic and would fulfill the "why" I established.

Since I am in the studio called "methods of analysis and imagination" I continued trying to connect to the theory and was under the impression the tutors were pushing me to go away from it. They were not wrong, and I should have let go sooner of some aspects I was clinging on, however it made me question how I perceived the principles of the studio and whether theory and design were as imbedded together as I imagined. Probably they still are but will happen later in the process.

The feedback received were mixed. Sometimes it made me question my architectural process and I realised at some point; I was not working for my project but for the tutoring sessions. This slowed down the project even more and I was stuck, changing directions almost every week. I then changed my perspective and decided to still enjoy designing and do a project I would like to go to. I like to think, this was a turning point and my project improved drastically. Probably a bit late but still very much needed. As a student I could relate to the design, and I started studying in different libraries around delft to see the differences, measuring and taking notes of what was efficient and what was missing.

When the feedbacks were about the design, they were very fruitful and contributed to the project. It was also interesting because the tutors had different opinions on the same topic which, even if frustrating to not have everyone agree, still good because it forced me to take my own position and have my own opinion.

When I take a step back and look at my project, I have decided to tackle many new elements for me. As I mainly worked on housing throughout my academic years, it was the first time I was working on a large public square and park. My notions on them were quite basic and I had to, and I am still, learning about their configuration. It was a question of changing approach and having one linked more to landscape architecture. I also introduced notions I heard of but

never implemented such as stack ventilation, venturi effect and waffle slabs, where I learned more about them and the different possibilities and solutions.

Maybe was I too ambitious? I was trying to handle everything at the same time and introducing fewer elements would allow me to deepen my knowledge on them more. Either way, I have learned a lot and still am and for that I am happy with my project. It would be a library I would go to study and enjoy breaks in the square.

To be more critical with myself, I do not think I have gone as deep as I wished, not only because of lack of time but also because of lack of knowledge. This would be something I would like to continue working on. Such as, continue working on the core of the library or the back of the classrooms for the following P5 and improve their implementation.

Hopefully, the project will continue and besides improving the graphics of the drawings and the general presentation. A better connection to the theory made earlier in the academic year will be established. It would happen through the elaboration of the story of the presentation. This would make clearer the position taken and why it is relevant to reconnect an existing space that has failed through an urban intervention. The design will also continue as I wished to be more precise in the detailing and configuration of the different spaces.

Something I appreciate a lot with the studio is how they made us find our own site. All of us have a clear purpose and logics behind each project, making it even stronger. There is a reason and even a need in the project that is not refutable. This also connects the graduation project to the studio direction that asks us to position ourselves as architects. Having a position and a critical mind when looking at the built environment.

Reflecting, I think theory and design are still mixed but not the way I initially thought it would be. It is not as literal. It is through the methods used, I started the process of the project, and it is at the core of it. I see the studio being more about teaching us to have our own critical position and giving us the tool for to do so. It is something I have realised later in the year.