

Final Reflection

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Reflection on the results of the research and design during the graduation phase.

The research on how genius loci theory can serve as an adaptive reuse strategy was chosen at the start of the graduation year to achieve an interplay between research and the design project of the MSc Studio *Revitalising Heritage: Transforming De Biesboschhal*. The chosen method was the use of a theoretical framework, consisting of primarily *Genius Loci* by Christian Norberg-Schulz, and testing this on existing literature on adaptive reuse strategies as well as case study projects.

My hypothesis for this combination of methods consisted of two main outcomes. Firstly, I expected that the literature on adaptive reuse strategies would provide me with concrete subjects on how genius loci is treated during adaptive reuse and how I could implement this in my own strategy for De Biesboschhal. Secondly, I predicted that the case studies would result in concrete physical examples of how genius loci influences the design choices and how this is or is not retained in contemporary adaptive reuse projects. The final results of the research did match this hypothesis partly. During the apprehension of Genius Loci, concrete building and context aspects that influence genius loci were formulated (figure 1). Although Genius Loci served as a framework, this unexpectedly already provided valuable outcomes to inform the design.

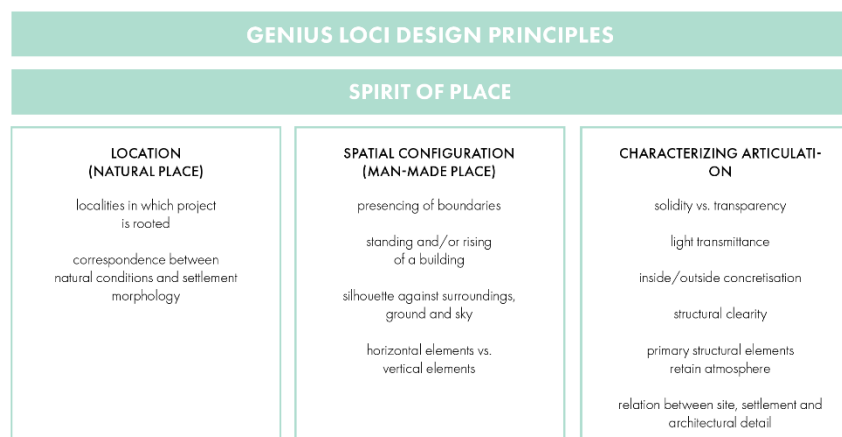


Figure 1

Design Principles

Furthermore, during the analysis of the adaptive reuse literature, a value matrix (figure 2) was constructed and used as a tool to analyse the different case study projects in a systematic way. This method was not planned but evolved as the research progressed. The combination of the preliminary methods and the ones that evolved resulted in valuable outcomes and starting points for the design in an attempt to transform De Biesboschhal while retaining its spirit of place.

BRAND +	REGI +	AGE value	HISTORICAL value	INTENTIONAL COMMEMORATIVE value	NON INTENDED COMMEMORATIVE value	USE value	NEW-NESS value	(relative) ART value	RARITY value [-]	OTHER relevant values [-]
SURROUNDINGS / SETTING [-]										
SITE										
SKIN (exterior)										
STRUCTURE										
SPACE PLAN										
SURFACES (interior) [-]										
SERVICES										
STUFF										
SPIRIT of PLACE [-]										

NORBERG-SCHULZ	REGI +	AGE value	HISTORICAL value	INTENTIONAL COMMEMORATIVE value	NON INTENDED COMMEMORATIVE value	USE value	NEW-NESS value	(relative) ART value	RARITY value [-]	OTHER relevant values [-]
LOCALITIES IN WHICH PROJECT IS ROOTED										
NATURAL CONDITIONS AND SETTLEMENT MORPHOLOGY										
PRECENSING OF BOUNDARIES										
STANDING AND/OR RISING										
SILHOUETTE AGAINST SURROUNDINGS										
HORIZONTAL ELEMENTS VS. VERTICAL ELEMENTS										
SOLIDITY VS. TRANSPARENCY										
LIGHT TRANSMITTANCE										
INSIDE/OUTSIDE CONCRETISATION										
PRIMARY STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS' ATMOSPHERE										
SITE, SETTLEMENT AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL RELATION										

Figure 2 Value Matrix

The feedback that I received after handing in the Draft version of the research was mainly focused on the broad approach and lack of focus on the Design Project of De Biesboschhal itself. Additionally, the text should try more to break away from the literature, giving my own input and interpretation on what was read. Lastly, I tried to combine too much theories and Charters from the Heritage and Conservation industry in an attempt to explain the problem statement and usefulness of the research in a wider context. This resulted in working counterproductive, only distracting the reader from the research its main subject, retaining genius loci during adaptive reuse of De Biesboschhal.

With the combined research and design I learned a new strategy in approaching a transformation project and how to develop and implement this. A critical note is that translating the theoretical outcomes into concrete tools to inform a design was quite challenging, resulting in my project steps sometimes being hard to follow for the teachers and even myself.

The graduation work could be significant because of the growing number of adaptive reuse projects and the pressing need to preserve existing structures with minimal loss of cultural values. By integrating a theoretical framework grounded in the preservation of the spirit of place and evaluating whether these principles are reflected in contemporary adaptive reuse strategies, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on preservation strategies, introducing an approach based on the unique genius loci tied to industrial heritage of the Waterdriehoek. This research could introduce an alternative adaptive reuse strategy than the commonly used principles generated by the conservation sector.