Towards a stronger relationship with the inner city of Amsterdam

A Creative Centre on the Binnengasthuis complex
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Introduction - Motivation, Location and Problem statement

Motivation Heritage and Architecture

The reuse of buildings is the reality of today's building practice. The huge vacancy in the Netherlands is a big challenge we have to deal with. I have a preference for reuse projects, because the buildings already have a history and are embedded in an existing context. The former life of the building and the characteristics it contains, intrigue me and is way more interesting as tabula rasa projects. Dealing with monuments require another way of designing; working from the context and I appreciate this approach.

Motivation Studio Heritage and Amsterdam

I have a strong fascination for the history of Architecture, the evolution of buildings and the shifting attitudes regarding the built environment over time. The starting point of a design is in my opinion the context, which can incorporate important values inherent with an identity. This studio offers me a challenging context (buffer zone Unesco World Heritage) for my design and has a strong focus on the cultural identity, which I will project on the Binnengasthuis terrain.

The Binnengasthuis complex

The first important function of the current Binnengasthuis area was religious; two nunneries (Founded in 1389 & 1403) were situated here on the border of the city of Amsterdam. On the terrain of the monasteries were houses and warehouses surrounding the courtyards which served for multiple purposes, including: gardens, shooting range, carpenter workspace and orchards.

In 1578 the Alteration took place, which was the transition from a Catholic towards a protestant city council. The monastery buildings were annexed by the new city council and became a hospital. Although the complex shifted from function it remained to have a closed character. The plot is characterized by the structure of buildings with courtyards behind the entrance gates and the tranquil atmosphere. In 1635 the complex acquires the official name of ‘Binnengasthuis’ after the completion of the hospital complex ‘Buitengasthuis’ located outside the city centre.\(^1\) The Binnengasthuis complex had one main entrance on the Grimburgwal, all the minor entrances were introduced by a gate. In 1883 the city council made the decision that the Binnengasthuis would become an academic hospital. Between 1870 and 1913 there were numerous renewals and extensions on the complex, big hospital buildings were introduced. The goal was an improvement of the hygiene of the facilities and an expansion of the capacity. New techniques in the field of healthcare were introduced, including the pavilion layout in the new clinical hospital from 1889. The complex remained to have an introvert character after these big renewals and extensions; the relation with the city of Amsterdam was hardly present. In 1981 the Binnengasthuis hospital left this location and the University of Amsterdam entered the buildings.

Problem Statement

In the current situation the Binnengasthuis complex is fragmented; it tries to connect with the city but this location mainly contains an introvert character. The bicycle lanes and the accompanied bicycles are dominating the location even on the central public square, resulting in a disturbance of experiencing of the urban spaces. On the contrary there are also beautiful places on the Binnengasthuis with a strong historic identity.

The Eighties are crucial for the Binnengasthuis complex, because many important influences on the character of this area occurred in this period. The hospital left the Binnengasthuis and the University of Amsterdam entered the complex buildings. The University had great plans for new buildings and the demolition of the old hospital buildings, however there was much resistance to their radical ideas. As a result a task force is created to devise an appropriate masterplan for this location. The goal of the masterplan is a stronger connection of the Binnengasthuis terrain with the city of Amsterdam; however this quiet enclave must be preserved. In the Eighties there was a huge demand for social housing in the inner city, which needed to be incorporated on this location as well. To house both the university and other functions such as social housing numerous additions and extensions on the built environment of the Binnengasthuis complex were required.

Given today’s situation the interventions of the Eighties are appearing to be rigorously, however the exact conceptions and conditions of the intervention in the Eighties remain unclear at this moment, which are essential for an objective valuing of these occurrences.

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1 Zanden 1999, p. 3
The Research - Influence Eighties on the built environment and cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis

Research question:

What were the influences of the Eighties on the built environment and the cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis complex when the prevailing conceptions and conditions of this period are taken into account?

Sub-questions:

- How can cultural identity be defined and what can be said about cultural identity in case of the Binnengasthuis area?
- What were the prevailing conceptions and conditions regarding the built environment of the Binnengasthuis complex as part of the inner city Centre of Amsterdam in the Eighties?
- What is the difference in conceptions and conditions regarding the built environment of the inner city in the Eighties in comparison with nowadays?

Relevance

This research aims to understand the conceptions and conditions of the Eighties in which all the ideas and visions were formulated regarding the built environment on the inner city of Amsterdam, projected on the Binnengasthuis area. Since the impact on this location is fundamentally in this decade. The focus on city centers continues to be a hot debate, especially nowadays regarding monuments in protected heritage areas. Especially in Amsterdam because of the Unesco World Heritage site of the canal district and the surrounding buffer zone which has to deal with the regulations. The Binnengasthuis is part of this buffer zone and this will be an exciting challenge, dealing with all these restrictions. However it should be approached as an opportunity and can be an example for future interventions on these inner city locations.

At this moment the reuse practice is constantly growing and the inner cities are an important aspect, in which the additions from the eighties will certainly play an important role. Those buildings are relatively young and it is difficult to value their qualities and potential, because the attention on this timeframe is limited. This research is trying to acquire a better insight in the position towards the building environment of an inner city location like the Binnengasthuis, so the valuing of these structures on this location will be more profound.

Goal

The goal is to understand the conceptions and conditions resulting in the interventions in the built environment performed in the Eighties on the Binnengasthuis complex. Getting insight in the background and circumstances in which these actions took place. The result of the research will be the valuing and the impact of these interventions, in order to determine their potential for my future design, this is the main goal. The output should be considered as a valid value assessment, so a clear choice with strong arguments can be made for the design assignment.

Method description

A literature research will be performed to improve the knowledge on the subject, get insight and understanding of the background information. The literature needs to be specific about the chosen subject and partly originate from the Eighties to get an accurate image of all the conceptions and conditions of this time frame. An analysis on the history of the Binnengasthuis complex is made with special attention to the cultural identity of this location. There will be a study to determine what has actually been done in the Eighties: who were the architects, what the prevailing conceptions were and most important why did they performed the interventions on the Binnengasthuis terrain. What was the relation with the conditions of the inner city of Amsterdam, are there similar responses? The conceptions of the built environment of the Eighties will be reflected by comparison with the attitudes of nowadays. The conclusions of this research are elaborated into two matrices, one on the impact of the Eighties on the cultural identity. The other is a value assessment of the interventions performed in the Eighties. The output of both will be used as starting points for my design assignment.
Structure of the Research

Introduction

The time frame of the Eighties is chosen for this research because it is assumed to be the most influential decade for the Binnengasthuis complex. The first reason is the change of function, from a hospital complex towards a university location. Moreover in the new situation the Binnengasthuis complex also incorporate 40% non-university related program, including social housing, which was in line with the new policies regarding the inner cities. In the Eighties the focus of the urban renewal was on the inner city, especially on vacant or deserted areas. Since there were numerous changes in the built environment of the Binnengasthuis complex in the Eighties this could have had an influence on the Cultural identity. The time frame of 1980-1989 is the starting point of this research. However some processes started before this period, including: the ideas about the urban transformation of the Binnengasthuis, the influences on the social and political situation and the policies regarding the urban renewal. Since these events had an important influence on the conceptions of the Eighties in relation with the Binnengasthuis, they are incorporated in the research for a better insight. In the last part of this research the situation of the Eighties is put in retrospective with the situation of today, for comparison and reflection.

Fig. 9 - The Gasthuispoort as entrance of the Binnengasthuis (Archive Amsterdam - Beeldbank)

1. The Cultural Identity of the Binnengasthuis complex
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2. The conceptions and conditions regarding the built environment of the Binnengasthuis complex in the Eighties
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Fig. 15 - A typical green courtyard of the Binnengasthuis complex (Archive Amsterdam - Beeldbank)
1. The Cultural Identity of the Binnengasthuis complex

1.1 Definition of Cultural identity in Architecture

In Architecture the cultural identity is rooted in the context, in both a tangible and intangible way. The tangible is expressed in the built environment and the intangible forms the counterpart, which is conveyed for example in stories and memories of a place. There is no predetermined importance for the valuing of these elements in which the cultural identity is captured. This is context specific and especially the intangible component is less objective.

In an article of De Architect the urban identity is discussed, according to the Tilburg councillor of spatial planning Van Eijkeren the identity of the city is equal to her functional specialization. The Architectural theorist Geert Bekaert strongly disagrees with this static conception of identity. In his view urban identity is not a goal that can be pursued, but the result of a profound commitment to the urban reality. According to Bekaert the big mistake about the concept of identity is that people believe it can be defined from its boundaries, from its particularity, its differential. As a result Identity becomes known as limited and being different.

Cultural identity is a far-reaching term, even when it is applied on Architecture. For the assessment of cultural identity projected on a context it is important to have an objective and broad view, which does not merely focus on the differences and particularities. Since the identity is rooted in the context a profound research should be done on the history of a location. What has to be determined is the question; what are the most striking features which characterize this location.

1.2 The Cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis complex

There have been three main functions for the area we now know as the Binnengasthuis complex: a monastery, a hospital and since the Eighties a university campus. The cultural identity mainly derives from these purposes and is rooted into this location. After an extensive historical research I have determined seven components that are representative for the cultural identity, which will be discussed. The university period of the Binnengasthuis started from the Eighties has not been taken into account yet. This will be discussed after the study on the Eighties, which generate more insight and will be dealt with in the conclusions.

Context
At the founding of the monastery the location was situated along the Amstel at the border of the city of Amsterdam. The city expanded enormously during the following centuries; however the Binnengasthuis complex remained situated at the border between the city and its historical inner city. (Fig. 10) The identity of the Binnengasthuis complex is characterized by the minimal relation with the city of Amsterdam.

Enclave
The Binnengasthuis complex has been functioning as a gated community. This location was an isolated enclave, focused on the life inside the complex.

Entrance
The Binnengasthuis complex was characterized by one main entrance on the end of the Grimburgwal. This entrance featured a bridge and was accompanied by a gate. (Fig. 11) The strong transition between outside and inside was experienced when entering the complex and this is exemplary for the introvert attitude of the Binnengasthuis.

Gates
An important feature of the cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis complex was the gates. They had a representative function expressed in their appearance; all the entrances were indicated by a gate. (Fig. 14) The gates are the most tangible components, although some are not original but added in a later period.

Atmosphere
Derived from the functions this location was a place of tranquility. The Binnengasthuis area was a quiet place to rest and cure. There was a big contrast between this complex and the dynamic inner city atmosphere outside the location.

Organization
The organization structure was characterized by one main function on the location and multiple minor functions. The minor functions had a certain relation with the main function, on a scale with a range from strong till weak.

Courtyards
A part of the identity of this location is caused by the courtyards. The courtyards consisted of a green setting and were linked together as networks of spaces. Moreover the courtyards were adjusted and optimized to the human scale, with the introduction of routing and urban furniture. (Fig. 15)

2. Cuveller 1989, p. 54
2. The conceptions and conditions regarding the built environment of the Binnengasthuis complex in the Eighties

2.1 Urban transformation of the Binnengasthuis complex in the Eighties

The decision to relocate the Hospital which was situated in the buildings of the Binnengasthuis complex to the south eastern border of Amsterdam was crucial for the future developments of this site. The University of Amsterdam would become the new user of the complex and the executive board of the university had rigorous plans for this location, including demolition and big new additions. The process of the urban transformation of the Binnengasthuis area started before the Eighties. The first building proposal by the University was rejected in 1975, because of the massive scale and the mono-functional thoughts. The local inhabitants were against this proposition and were in favour of housing on the location. As a solution for this conflict a task force is established in 1978 to generate a masterplan which is more embedded in this location and a better mixture of functions with 60% university related destinations and 40% non-university related destinations. 3 The task force consisted of both architects and urbanists including: van Eyck, Uytendraak, Visser, Meindersma and Yap. Furthermore a planologist, lawyer and a representative of the organisation which was focussed on the preservation of the city were complementing the team.

Fig. 16 - Final masterplan created by the task force Binnengasthuis in 1981 (Maas 1981)

The vision of this task force was to keep this quiet enclave, however make it more accessible. The main concept is the creation of a central square in the heart of the location, in relation with the city somewhat concealed, which will define the public domain on this location. The administration building by van der Mey from 1913 was envisioned to be demolished to make the square better visible and accessible. Other features of the masterplan were a new passageway from the Nieuwe Doelenstraat and a cycling route through the area which would connect the existing city cycling routes. Some parts of the former hospital buildings are demolished to create more space for the new routes, which all lead towards the central square.

3 Maas 1981, p. 50
2. The conceptions and conditions regarding the built environment of the Binnengasthuis complex in the Eighties

Moreover the masterplan by the task force focusses on the revaluing of the adjacent courtyards in a green setting; they will host different gradations of semi-public atmospheres, which will enhance the different functions. The existing buildings of the Binnengasthuis complex were studied on quality and usability. The placement of the envisioned housing has influenced the transformation of the inside area the most, according to Maas. The task force was well conscious of the subtle balance between public and private on this location and the related threats.

Director of the organization ‘construction and housing inner city’ Bentinck was not impressed by the transformations of the Binnengasthuis complex, she mainly knew the terrain as a convenient cycle routing. From the viewpoint of Bentinck the trusted privacy of the Binnengasthuis complex was interrupted by housing and business activity, the terrain was turned inside out and this was a dramatic intervention.

The Masterplan envisioned by the task force is way more subtle and appropriate for this location than interpreted by Bentinck. The cultural identity of this location is not completely ignored, considered the ideas about remaining this quiet enclave and the characterizing courtyards. However the main issue is the difference between the drawings and the final execution of the Masterplan. Parts of the envisioned masterplan are not realised, causing this area to function less well and affecting the quality of the urban spaces. An example is the prior mentioned administration building, which was planned to be demolished but in the end is only partly torn down, due to actions of the heritage conservation. The effect for the functioning of the central square as a result of this execution, remains unknown.

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4 Koster 1988, p. 49
5 Maas 1981, p. 53
6 Keulemans 2000, p. 5
2. The conceptions and conditions regarding the built environment of the Binnengasthuis complex in the Eighties

2.2 Building interventions of the Binnengasthuis complex in the Eighties

Where the first part focussed on the urban situation, this part will focus on the building scale. Two different projects erected on the Binnengasthuis complex in the Eighties will be discussed. The first project is the social housing by Architect Paul de Ley and the second project is the Faculty of Political Science by P.A.M Dirks.

Social Housing by Paul de Ley

The completion of this social housing building in 1986 could be seen as the symbolic triumph of the local inhabitants over the University of Amsterdam. Since the 40% non-university related destinations were established, there was an opportunity to create functions which were severely needed. Architect Paul de Ley was one of the leaders of the urban renewal in the Eighties and he had a special attention for social housing. The volume of this new building introduces a street (for pedestrians and cyclists) right through the existing building structure. This design breaks the strong contrast between inside and outside by opening up towards the surroundings. The layout of the new building creates a square that serves as the spatial centre, according to the analysis by Koster.

The pavilions of the former hospital are located here as well. The third element which is created by the building layout is an inner courtyard. Koster describes this social housing complex as very thoughtful, carefully detailed and a colourful housing complex that has a beneficial effect on its surroundings. Because the architectural style of de Ley is in contraposition with its surroundings, it is revaluing the old hospital buildings. The apartments, without an elevator, consists of glass staircases and according to Buch is the detailing one of the most convincing examples of the revival of the vocabulary from the thirties with glass blocks and plaster in pastel tones. The general reviews on the architecture of this social housing building were positive in the Eighties, according to Buch. On the ground floor of this building are two passageways towards to inner courtyard; however the idea of open entrances to the semi-public courtyard did not work out. Due to problems with criminality the entrances are provided with sealable gates. This social housing block embraces the difficult starting points for this location, in historic retrospective it is a good example.

Paul de Ley began his study at the Higher Technical School in Utrecht and follows an evening course at the Academic of Architecture in Amsterdam starting from 1964. During the day he works on multiple architectural offices, including the one of Aldo van Eyck and Theo Bosch. While he was studying he got involved in community actions in the city Centre of Amsterdam, including the Bickerseiland and Nieuwmarkt. Paul de Ley is one of the pioneers for social housing in the inner city of Amsterdam. Exemplary works are the social housing buildings on: Bickerseiland (1976), Westerdokseiland (1982), Binnengasthuis (1986) and Zwanenburgwal (1986). The work of Paul de ley is characterized by building for the human scale and the careful integration with the urban context of the old city. Another theme in his work is the relation between public and private on the ground level of the buildings; as a result he creates many passageways in his designs. In 1973 de Ley founded his own architectural office in Amsterdam, in later period along with Fenna Oorthuys, with urban renewal and social housing as top priority.

7 Claassen 2007
8 Koster, p. 49
9 Buch, 1993, p. 320
10 Koster 1988, p. 52
11 Bergen 2012

Fig. 23 - The design of Paul de Ley creates: a street, a courtyard and a square (Koster 1988)

Fig 24 - View from the square towards the building (Koster 1988)

Fig 25 - Paul de Ley as one of the poineers for social housing in the inner city of Amsterdam in the Eighties (Ley, n.d.)

Fig. 26 - Westerdokseiland 1982, social housing building block with open corners, enlarge relation public & private (Ley, n.d.)
2. The conceptions and conditions regarding the built environment of the Binnengasthuis complex in the Eighties

Faculty of Political Science by P.A.M Dirks

The brief for this project was the rearrangement and extension of the First Clinic building by Leguyt from 1889. The faculty of Political Science would reside in the building as well as the central canteen for all the students on the Binnengasthuis location. The Architect of this project was P.A.M. Dirks, partner-director in the office of Abma+Dirks+Partners based in Amsterdam and Deventer. The main intervention is the covering of the inner courtyard and the new pyramid extension in front of it. This pyramid covers up the dreadful concrete structure situated between the former hospital wings from 1967 according to Campo. The pyramid is constructed by a steel space frame and is covered with solar protected and light transmittable Okapane glass. From the outside the pyramid looks rather unfriendly, because the glass has milky like color as stated by Haan. Although the color is unpleasant it is required to prevent the interior from being a greenhouse on sunny days. According to Haan the interior of this construction creates a spatial sensation. The steel space frame provides the interior of an excitation which is generated by the contrast with the old neo-renaissance facades from the First Clinic.

The Architectural style which is used for the Faculty of Political Science by P.A.M. Dirks can be classified as high tech. From the viewpoint of the amount of realized buildings, the biggest influence in the Netherlands of the Eighties was the recurrence to the mainstream of the modern architecture. Many projects are executed in the same high-tech style as found in England and all over the world, with the equal emphasis on a beautiful detailing in metal. The high-tech style is characterized by a constant awareness of industrial construction methods, including from modular built facades, prefabricated parts and systems.

In the opinion of architect P.A.M. Dirks the building should fit in the context, whether the building is ‘new’ or not. The importance is the historical continuity and the anticipation on this in the role as architect of your time. Dirks does not want to make a monument for himself, in which he has an aversion towards everyone. He mentions the example of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the building itself is a great example; however, the position in the city is disastrous.

In conclusion the quality of this intervention by Dirks is poor, the new architecture is in disharmony with the existing.

12 Campo 1987, p. 30
13 Haan 2000, p. 145
14 Buch 1993, p. 365
15 Buch 1993, p. 366
16 Steen 1991

Fig. 27 - The canteen in the covered inner courtyard of the First Clinic building (Pieterse 1988)

Fig. 28 - More floor space is generated with the extra level, however the spacious experience of the atrium has become less obvious

Fig. 29 - Interior dominated by the steel space frame

Fig. 30 - Pyramid extension between the two old wings
The Eighties were a decade of large economic turmoil and especially in Amsterdam the tension between the citizens and the municipality was strong. The municipality was in favor of demolition and rebuilding of neighborhoods located in or near the city Centre. The citizens united themselves and began to express their discontent about the architecture and the social conception of the late 1970’s. The climax of this protest was in the Nieuwmarkt neighborhood, which is strongly rooted in the city Centre of Amsterdam, where the construction of the new metro tunnel led to heavy conflicts. The protest led to a revision of the policy of the municipality from demolition towards a preservation of the neighborhoods, including: Haarlemmerbuurt, Dapperbuurt and the Bickers-and Realeneiland. The focus on these projects was on the suitability in the existing context and the revitalizing of the current structures.

The protest continued at the start of the Eighties, focusing on affordable housing in the inner city of Amsterdam. As a result of the ignorance towards the city Centre in the Sixties and Seventies the vacancy rates were high in the city Centre of Amsterdam in the Eighties. Squatters claimed those vacant properties and were living in them; the municipality did not appreciate these actions. On April 30 1980 the coronation of Beatrix was performed, on that day the climax of all the protest took place. During the coronation there was a big protest; the slogan of the protestors was: ‘No house, no coronation’. The final result of that day was a massive fight between the squatters and the police. This disruptive conflict also contributed to change the attitude of the municipality towards housing. The awareness of the notion to construct enough houses in Amsterdam was finally recognized and was dealt with appropriately.

3. The conceptions and conditions regarding the built environment of the city centre of Amsterdam in the Eighties

Fig. 31 - Demolition in the Nieuwmarkt neighbourhood due to the construction of the new metro (Archive Amsterdam - Beeldbank)

Fig. 32 - Protest actions of the disgruntled citizens (Archive Amsterdam - Beeldbank)

Fig. 33 - Amsterdam turned into a battlefield on the day of the coronation of Beatrix on April 30 1980 (Klinken 2010)
3. The conceptions and conditions regarding the built environment of the city centre of Amsterdam in the Eighties

In the decades before the Eighties the focus of the urban policy did not include the inner city. This approach resulted in a neglected city Centre, also in Amsterdam.\(^{20}\) The concept of the ‘compact city’ was introduced in 1985, which made an end to the strict segregation of functions and focused on living and working in the city Centre. The policy of the urban renewal of the inner city was in the beginning of the Eighties mainly focused on social housing.\(^{21}\) Half of all the new houses constructed in Amsterdam served for social housing. The starting point for social housing is the preservation of the continuity with the historic city, according to Buch.

As stated by Bosma a clear approach was missing; the scope of the urban renewal in the Eighties is being characterized by experiments. By trial and error it become clear where the threats and opportunities are of the various difficultly located sites. In the policy of the city council for urban renewal of Amsterdam in the Eighties; terms as spatial quality and identity were not incorporated in their structural visions for the city. Also the function for surveillance of the city fabric and unity of this structure is not yet know in the Eighties.\(^{22}\)

Similar to the development of the urban renewal in the Eighties, the heritage conservation was struggling with its policy and the execution as well. The focus on the preservation of protected city views remained on the urban structure, the street views and the building masses. The historic building itself remained out of sight and was not protected, because the knowledge was basically missing.\(^{23}\) The moment of understanding the possible threats for building historical values were evaluated too late in the building process of large-scale developments in the inner cities of the Eighties. As a result a lot of buildings were demolished; however the administration building on the Binnengasthuis could be partly saved.

The reuse of existing buildings was not something new in the Eighties, but the amount of projects continued to increase. The general conception about the reuse of a monument from the viewpoint of architects in the Eighties; is a new construction in a historic context.\(^{24}\)

4. The current attitudes regarding the built environment of the inner cities

The thoughts on dealing with the historic city centers are no longer influenced by city forming and breakthroughs in the city fabric. Nowadays the emphasis is on the preservation of area related functions, diversity and cultural identity, according to Van Tussenbroek, Van Drunen and Orsel. In this preservation the dynamics of sustainable development is centralized, in which the cultural-historic values are incorporated with the intensive use of the historic city fabric and the tangible heritage. Nevertheless, the historic function of the city Centre as the heart of the community and as carrier of identity cannot be taken for granted in the situation of today.\(^{25}\)

In comparison with the Eighties there has been an immense development on dealing with reuse projects. Moreover the policies from the heritage conservation are much more clear and systematic based. An example is the building-historic value map, which has the goal to give insight on the potential values to be expected in buildings or ensembles in an area.\(^{26}\) Nowadays there is an awareness of the need of a profound research and analysis before designing in a historic context. Whereas the use of contrast as the marking of the boundary between the past and the future was still accepted in the Eighties,\(^{27}\) at this moment the approach of contrast to make a contrast is no longer a valid argument. Design arguments at reuse projects are nowadays based on a proper value assessment.

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\(^{20}\) Bosma 1990, p. 10
\(^{21}\) Kempen and Priemus 1999, p. 12
\(^{22}\) Tussenbroek, Drunen and Orsel 2012, p. 42
\(^{23}\) Provoost 1995, p. 24
\(^{24}\) Koster 1989, p. 34
\(^{25}\) Tussenbroek, Drunen and Orsel 2012, p. 49
\(^{26}\) Tussenbroek, Drunen and Orsel 2012, p. 40
\(^{27}\) Provoost 1995, p. 25
Conclusions - Research Report

Matrix cultural identity and influence Eighties

The period of the Binnengasthuis complex as the university campus which started from the 1980s is incorporated in the matrix. For each component regarding to the cultural identity a diagram is created for the three main time periods.

As a result it will become clear if a time period has an influence on the cultural identity. The vertical red line between the periods indicates a continuation of the component which is related to the cultural identity. The zigzagging horizontal line illustrates a break, the opacity of both lines indicates the severity.

Context
The strong border between the city and the Binnengasthuis is dissolving in the Eighties, due to the introduced bicycle routing through this location. A clear vision about the relation of the Binnengasthuis and the inner city of Amsterdam is still lacking, although it has been made better accessible.

Enclave
The task force that created the new Masterplan for the Binnengasthuis envisioned it as a quiet enclave, however in the execution this idea partly faded. This location was opened up towards its surroundings: realising a central square and a new routing through the location, influenced the isolated enclave it has been for centuries.

Entrance
A strong aspect of the cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis was the one main entrance at the Grimburgwal, in the 1980s new entrances were introduced which affected this situation.

Gates
This component that determines the cultural identity has the strongest continuation through all the time periods, in the Eighties new gates are introduced. Although their representative character has been dropped during time.

Atmosphere
The Binnengasthuis was known for its tranquility, this changed after the hospital was gone. The new functions in combination with the masterplan introduced more dynamics towards this area.

Organization
At the period of the monasteries all functions were dedicated to the main function, this already changed during the hospital era where functions as the bank building did not have any relation with the hospital. In the Eighties the role of the main function as university was limited to 60% of the Binnengasthuis.

Courtyards
The courtyards were a linked network in the previous periods. In the Eighties this was envisioned to be continued, however due to criminality this idea did not work out and the connection between the courtyards dissolved.

As a conclusion two matrixes have been made to clarify the influence of the Eighties on the built environment in the Binnengasthuis complex, based on the performed research. The first matrix is related to the cultural identity and the second one is a value assessment of all the interventions in the Eighties on this location.

Fig. 38 - The Matrix of the Cultural Identity with the time frame of the Eighties incorporated
Conclusions - Research Report

Based on the prior research a value assessment of the interventions of the Eighties on the Binnengasthuis complex is created. A general high valued building means a contribution for this location, however a general low valued building has no contribution or can even indicated a possible deterioration of the location. The layout of the matrix is based on the Guidelines for Building Archaeological Research by Hendriks (2009).

Social housing by Paul de Ley
This social housing building on the Binnengasthuis complex is a typical reflection of the situation in the Eighties, it is important as an expression of a social and cultural development. Furthermore this building is distinctive for the oeuvre of Paul de Ley. Both the architecture and the urban positioning of this building are contributing for the high overall value of this building.

Pyramid extension by Paul Dirks
The position, architectural style, detailing and many other aspects of this object are not noteworthy, at least not in a good way. This intervention is a plain Eighties example, where only the interior contains a limited spatial value.

Atrium by Paul Dirks
The covering of the building’s inner courtyard has a high ensemble value, because it is a rare example for this time frame. This object does not have more distinct parts that are of value.

Interior renewal Nieuw Klinikum by Paul Dirks
Basically the interior renewal of the Nieuw Klinikum is deteriorating the existing values. The lowered ceiling is hiding both the characterizing trough vaults as the wooden attic construction.

Gate at the Vendelstraat
This gate incorporates a high value on the basis of the historic use of the Binnengasthuis, since all the entrances were accompanied by a gate. This object also contributes to the ensemble value of the urban context of the location. The architecture or detailing is not authentic or rare, this does not enhance the general value.

The Binnengasthuisstraat
The construction of the Binnengasthuisstraat to increase the accessibility of the Binnengasthuis is in line with the other inner city developments in the Eighties.

All in all the impact of the interventions in the Eighties on the Binnengasthuis complex has been substantial. Especially the intervention of Dirks is basically deteriorating the building of Leguyt and gives a cause for me to choose this building for my design assignment.

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Fig. 39 - The Values assessment of the interventions of the 1980s
Masterplan
Urban Analysis - current situation

**Atmospheres** - three zones can be distinguished: The courtyards of the BG (tranquil) / The other BG spaces / The spaces outside of BG (dynamic). There is a big difference in experience of the tranquil courtyards in comparison with the dynamic urban areas outside of the BG.

**Materialization of the ground surface** - The green is dominating in the courtyards, while the other spaces are paved. The bicycle lane is lowered, this creates a higher border with the ground surface. In general the ground decor of the paved areas is poor, benches are lacking.

**Infrastructure** - The BG area is a car free location; pedestrians and cyclists dominate this area. There is an important bicycle route winding through this location. The main junction is on the end of the Grimburgwal along the main entrance, a confusing point for all the different traffic flows.

**The influence of the bicycles** - Bicycles are mainly placed in the public areas of the BG, closest to the faculty buildings. The bikes dominate the horizon and are negatively influencing the spatial experience of the BG.

**Relation of the buildings with the ground surface** - Most buildings of the BG have a weak connection with the ground surface, due to raised ground floor levels or focus on the inner courtyard instead of the outside spaces. Few windows or openings towards the ground surface are found.

**Entrances of the Binnengasthuis complex** - The main entrance is on the Grimburgwal, however this is not articulated clearly. Most entrances are represented by a gate.

Fig. 40 - Overview of the different conclusions on the urban scale of the Binnengasthuis
Starting points from urban analysis for the Masterplan

**Atmospheres** - Introducing a central square with a dynamic atmosphere corresponding with the surrounding inner city activities. The courtyards will remain a place of tranquility.

**Courtyards** - Each green courtyard has its own character, from a formal setting till a playful one. There will be a connection between all the courtyards, which links them together and creates a network. The courtyards have multiple access points.

**Infrastructure** - The BG area is a car free location; pedestrians and cyclists will dominate this area. To fix the junction on the Grimburgwal a new bridge will be introduced.

**Entrances of the Binnengasthuis complex** - The main entrance is from the new bridge on the Grimburgwal. The entrances will be accompanied by a gate, to articulate the entrances and to enhanced the cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis complex.

**Bicycles storage** - Under the central square will be the main storage for the bicycles of the Binnengasthuis.

**Relation of the buildings with the ground surface** - At the central square the ground level of the buildings will feature public functions. The ground level of the buildings around the courtyards will have a stronger relationship with the courtyard.

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Fig. 41 - The starting points from the urban context
Masterplan concept

An important goal of the Masterplan is increasing the relationship between the Binnengasthuis complex and the inner city of Amsterdam, this process which started in the Eighties should be strengthened. To achieve this, the central square must have a clear purpose as a vibrant meeting place and to ensure this goal, appropriate functions should be present on the location. Surrounded by public functions and building entrances the central square will be the beating heart of the Binnengasthuis complex. The Cultural Identity of this unique location needs to be expressed more. This will be visible in the revivification of the main entrance from the Grimburgwal. Also the courtyards will be revitalized and will be once more a linked network hosting a different gradations of tranquil atmospheres. The overall quality of the urban spaces have to be improved, the problem of bicycles will be dealt with by the introduction of a big parking space under the central square.

References

The references will be representative for my intentions for the Binnengasthuis complex. The lively central square should be the host of different possibilities: interaction is important, leisure activities, a place for small events, a place to relax and a place to play. As an example: there will be a terrace which can be transformed into a small ice skating ring in winter. The materialization is mainly paved with green influences and wooden benches.

The courtyards will feature a green setting and will have a own atmosphere generated by a difference in the landscape design. From a formal layout till a playful one, with different materialization of the urban furniture. In comparison with the dynamic square the courtyards will be a more quiet places.
Fig. 47 - Impression Masterplan central square

Fig. 48 - Masterplan
The Masterplan is a combination of layers referring to different subjects. The revitalisation of the entrance gates are based on the research on the cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis. The representative function of the gates are important to mark the old and new entrances of this location, since it is more open towards the people of Amsterdam.

The reintroduction of the central square was a incentive from the eighties, the envisioned square did not function in the end and it is crucial to work in my design. Public functions are located on the square and it will be the central meeting point of the Binnengasthuis area.

Also the courtyards were not executed as proposed in the masterplan created by the task force. The green courtyards with their tranquil atmosphere have been an important characteristic of this location and need to be enhanced once again.

The new masterplan for the Binnengasthuis is a mix of functions as well. All the different residents of Amsterdam have a purpose on this site.
History of the First Clinic

Between 1888 and 1890 the first clinic was build. The building was built according to the pavilion system and has a Dutch Neo-Renaissance style. The architect was H. Leguyt. He was working at the Department of Public Works from 1873 till 1905, in the beginning as a first class engineer and from 1894 as head of the building department. A couple of years he was the architect of the hospices in Amsterdam.

The building of the first clinic was part of the modernisation of the Binnengasthuis terrain. After years of discussion about where the new hospital of Amsterdam should be located (on Binnengasthuis area or on the Buitengasthuis area and also other sites were discussed), it was finally decided to modernize the Binnengasthuis area step by step. Because the old monastery buildings were not usable for a modern hospital anymore, all medieval buildings were demolished.

First the Kraamkliniek and Vrouwenverband were build first in relation to this modernization. The new building of Leguyt consisted of a women’s wing and a men’s wing that was connected by a volume that accomodated the academic functions. The academic hospital had a characterizing round part which featured the lecture rooms. The two wings had a central core with the stairs, bathrooms and a room for the nurses.

In the 1980’s the building becomes part of the University of Amsterdam. The First Clinic is transformed into the Faculty of Political Science by a design of P.A.M. Dirks. The courtyard is covered by a glass structure and pyramid extension is added. The infirmaries are devided into smaller offices and lecture rooms. The central canteen is also located in this building, on the ground floor in the inner courtyard.

Fig. 76 - The building of Leguyt consists of three main building volumes: the rectangular infirmaries, the square cores, and the both rectangular and round academic part
Building analysis - Pavilions system for Hospital buildings

In the brochure by M.W.C. Gori called *A new Hospital in Amsterdam* the pavilion system is introduced. Pavilions were identical units which were placed on sufficient distance from each other to ensure the flow of air. The interior of the pavilions were characterized by big rooms, provided by windows on either sides, to supply enough outside air.

Architect Outshoorn was the exponent of this approach and he made an ideal layout for the pavilion system applied on hospitals in 1867. He made as well a sketch design for the Binnengasthuis hospital in the same year. The pavilions were connected in the middle, which created a courtyard on both sides. Each hospital wing functioned independently.

In 1887 Architect Leguyt designed the First Clinic which is inspired on the design of Outshoorn for a hospital building with the pavilion structure. The biggest difference in layout is the missing connecting volume between both wings. Leguyt introduced an academic hospital at the end of the wings, including a round volume used for lectures. This volume is not connecting the hospital wings, since they are functioning separately. The removal of the connecting volume in the middle in the design of Leguyt creates a bigger inner courtyard, however from the viewpoint of circulation this is less efficient. The main entrances for the hospital are now situated at the courtyard.

The size of the central core elements was bigger in the case of Outshoorn used for circulation, staff rooms, sanitary. The layout of the ward rooms is mainly the same, but the position of the beds has changed. In the design of Outshoorn the beds are in front of the windows, Leguyt placed them in the space between the windows to prevent them from draught. Twenty beds was frequently used, but Leguyt increased this by two.

The pavilion system is only executed in the Nieuw Klinikum building on the Binnengasthuis, most likely because it requires a lot of space, which was scarce at the dense Binnen-gasthuis.

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28 Moulin, D. de 1981, p. 121
29 Moulin, D. de 1981, p. 144
Functions: There is a clear contrast between the ground floor and the other floors, since the only purpose of the ground floor is storage. The first and second floor are used for the infirmaries and the academic hospital accompanied by the serving functions. Both wings are functioning separately and the same accounts for the academic hospital between both wings. The attic floor is mainly used for staff and space is reserved for extra infirmaries when required.

Routing: There is a clear distinction between the multiple entrances of this building. In the centre, the visitor entrance is positioned, which has the strongest articulation, followed by the entrance for the academic hospital. Most of the entrances on the ground floor are only used by staff. There are three elevation points which ensure the vertical routing. The pavilion layout applied by Lequyt generates a routing in the shape of a U, since the wings are functioning independently no continual routing is required.
This facade has a typical Renaissance structure, divided into a basement, middle and top part. The middle part of the facade is the most important.

The horizontal components are dominating this facade, which are the alternation of brick over the full width of the facade, the 'cordonlijsten' of natural or artificial stone and the cornice. The vertical expression generated by the windows are less dominant in this facade.

The windows are creating a strong rhythmicity, especially the combination of recessed window and the accompanied arc.

The middle part of the facade is articulated the most and has a rich decoration compared to the other parts of the facade, which are more plain.

The east facade facing the courtyard has the purest symmetry, however the left part is extended. The east facade is less symmetrical, due to the asymmetrical positioning of the entrance elements.
The building intervention by Dirks

The intervention by Dirks for the new political science faculty and canteen covers the inner courtyard of the building. Exterior facades become interior and the central place of the building has become the covered atrium. Before the intervention of Dirks the different building volumes of the old building by Leguyt were clearly identifiable. In the new situation this has dramatically decreased, resulting in a weaker orientation within the building. The round volume of the academic part is integrated within the atrium and lost its strong appearance as a freestanding volume in an open space. Inside of the pyramid part the relation with the old building vanquished and the spatial quality of the open inner courtyard disappeared.

Fig. 89 - New building volumes introduced by the design of Dirks
1. The Cultural Identity of the Binnengasthuis area

1.1 Definition of Cultural identity in Architecture

The definition of Cultural Identity according to Oxford references: The definition of groups or individuals (by them selves or others) in terms of cultural or subcultural categories, including: ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender. In stereotyping, this is framed in terms of difference or other-ness.

In Architecture the cultural identity is rooted in the context, in both a tangible and intangible way. The tangible is expressed in the built environment and the intangible forms the counterpart, which is conveyed for example in stories and memories of a place. There is no predetermined importance for the valuing of these elements in which the cultural identity is captured. This is context specific and especially the intangible component is less objective.

In an article of De Architect the urban identity is discussed, according to the Tilburg councillor of spatial planning Van Eijkeren the identity of the city is equal to her functional specialization. The Architectural theorist Geert Bekaert strongly disagrees with this static conception of identity. In his view urban identity is not a goal that can be pursued, but the result of a profound commitment to the urban reality. The big mistake about the concept of identity is that people believe it can be defined from its boundaries, from its particularity, its differential. As a result Identity becomes known as limitations and being different.

Cultural identity is a far-reaching term, even when it is applied on Architecture. For the assessment of cultural identity projected on a context it is important to have an objective and broad view, which does not merely focus on the differences and particularities.

Building Analysis - Design Dirks

Fig. 85 - Cross section, new atrium covers the inner courtyard

Fig. 86 - South elevation, the pyramid facade designed by Dirks

Fig. 87 - Longitudinal section

Fig. 88 - Floor plan, the open layout of the infirmaries is replaced by a corridor routing with separate small cabins
Building analysis - Evolution inner courtyard of the building

Situation 1889 (Leguyt) - The inner courtyard of the first clinic is characterized by its green atmosphere.

Situation 1967 - The extension splits the courtyard in two parts, whereas the front remains to have greenery, the back lost the green ambiance.

Situation 1989 (Dirks) - The intervention of Dirks covers the complete inner courtyard and the original character of the courtyard has vanquished.

Fig. 70 - The evolution from a big green courtyard towards an atrium
Building Analysis - Load bearing structure

The structure consists out of loadbearing brick walls. These brick walls transfer the forces to the ground. It is a construction system that consists out of slabs. The vertical slabs are the walls and the horizontal slabs are the trough vaults floors. The walls work in one direction and the floors transfer the forces to the walls and work in two directions. This slab system is shown in the diagram below.

Fig. 94 - Horizontal forces in the structure (Kortbeek, 2014)
Fig. 95 - Vertical forces in the structure (Kortbeek, 2014)
Fig. 96 - Diagram of the forces in one wing (Kortbeek, 2014)
Building Analysis - Span of the floors

Fig. 97 - Span of the foundation (Kortbeek, 2014)

Fig. 98 - Span of the souterrain (Kortbeek, 2014)

Fig. 99 - Span of the first and second floor (Kortbeek, 2014)

Fig. 100 - Detail of the floor plan (Kortbeek, 2014)

T: Staircase

Span of the iron beam
Building Analysis - Type of roof structure and building dimensions

Fig. 101 - 'Makelaarspant' (Kortbeek, 2014)

Fig. 102 - Composite of different trusses, exact type unknown (Kortbeek, 2014)

Fig. 103 - Derivative of 'Hollandse spant', widened in the center with two 'makelaars' instead of one (Kortbeek, 2014)

Fig. 104 - Building dimensions and square meters of volumes (Kortbeek, 2014)

Total floor area per floor: +/- 1.426 m²
Total floor area old building: 5.704 m²
Floor area courtyard: 1160 m²

Fig. 101
Fig. 102
Fig. 103
Fig. 104
Ventilation and heating

The building had a 'calorifère' system, which provided ventilation and heating. It is a central heating system. Because of the size and U-form of the First Clinic there are two calorifères, one in the male wing and one in the female wing.

A wellknown 'calorifère' system in Holland was made by Boyer & Consorten. Their oven consisted of a round brick fireplace with smoke guide system (fig. 79). The cold outside air flowed along the annular enclosures that were heateden by the fireplace. The heated air was then distributed through channels in the exterior walls to the rooms. The poluted air was abducted through a chimney. The inlet vents in the rooms were provided with valves that could be regulated. The system also had its problems. Because of different air pressures in the rooms it was possible that opposite air movements could occur in the ventilation channels.

Van Hecke’s system, a variant of the ‘calorifère’ system, tried to avoid these opposite air movements. This system used other channels to abduct the poluted air. To extract the poluted air through the channels a ventilator was positioned in the attic. The ventilator was powered by a steam engine that stood in the basement. Later the steam engine was also used to lead the fresh air to the ‘calorifère’. According to researcher Logeman it did not matter if the ventilators were on or off, in both cases the same amount of air was refreshed.  

It is not exactly clear how the ‘calorifère’ system works in the First clinic. In the drawings of the First clinic there is no steam engine or ventilor indicated. This could mean that it was not there or it is not drawn. It is also possible that poluted air left the building by opening the windows.

Fig. 105 - Indication of the ventilation and heating system in the first clinic (Kortbeek, 2014)

35 Stokroos 2001, p. 45
Building Analysis - Ventilation and heating

Fig. 106 - Calorifère by Boyer & Consorten (Bouwkundige Bijdragen, 1870)

A. ashpit  B. stokehole  C. cervix  D. chimney  E. ring-shaped box
F. angled channels  G. second box  H. angled channels  I. third box  K. channels
L. chimney  M. holes for the favor of cleaning  N. output of the warm air

Fig. 107 - The Female infirmary of the first clinic (Archive Amsterdam - Beeldbank)
This elevation shows the materialisation of the windows at the first floor of the women’s wing. The windows are replaced and not original anymore. In the former windows the window panes were divided in smaller ones and were positioned further back.

Another remarkable element in the picture below (fig. 81) is the grate above the key stone. This could be a grate for extra ventilation or maybe the outlet of polluted air. Another possibility would be that this grate is part of the ventilation system in summer. In summer the ‘calorifère’ system does not have to be used, since the air does not need to be heated. The grates are only positioned underneath the windows of the first and second floor. These are the floors where the infirmaries were located.
Building Analysis - Details

Fig. 110 - detail B: basement floor with through vault (Kortbeek, 2014)

Fig. 111 - detail A: Amsterdam foundation (Kortbeek, 2014)

Fig. 112 - detail C: storey floor with trough vault (Kortbeek, 2014)
Building analysis - Current situation of the building

Fig. 113 - The Attic with all the separate cabins

Fig. 115 - Interior of the pyramid, missing relation old building

Fig. 114 - Lacking integrity towards the old building

Fig. 116 - Exterior of the pyramid by Dirks
Value Assessment - Essence of the building of Leguyt

Fig. 117 - Value components which determine the quality of the building
Restoring the essence of the Leguyt building
Design
The Creative Centre is a place which unites artists, creative entrepreneurs and the inhabitants of Amsterdam for inspiration, creation, expression and exposure. This lively building is situated in the inner city of Amsterdam on the unique location of the Binnengasthuis complex. The Creative Centre features: creative shops, exhibitions spaces, creative workplaces, course rooms in expression, dance, music, ateliers, a canteen and communal spaces, including a multi-use hall. These functions are positioned around the central hall, which serves as the heart of the building and the meeting point of this building. The shops are located in the ground floor of this building, as the entrance of the building and to attract people to enter. This building is mainly public, although some functions are more private orientated, there will not be a strong border between private and public. To stimulate the mingling between the different users of the building, there will be a strong focus on communal spaces and interaction of people. As a result the routing is orientated towards the central hall. The building of Leguyt houses a few particular spaces which characterize the building; appropriate parts of the new program will be positioned in these exclusive places.
Longitudinal section
Reference - the descent at the entrance

Jewish Museum (Berlin) - Daniel Libeskind
Basement floor
First floor
Attic floor
Materialization facade Auditorium

Appartements Patria - Adins van Looveren Architecten Gent

KME - TECU® Brass

Source: KME
Floor plan Auditorium
Appendix
Graduation plan

Problem Statement

In the current situation the Binnengasthuis complex is fragmented; it tries to connect with the city but this location mainly contains an introvert character. The bicycle lanes and the accompanied bicycles are dominating the location even on the central public square, which does not function well and the urban spaces are mainly unpleasant. On the contrary there are also beautiful places on the Binnengasthuis complex with a strong historic identity.

The Eighties are crucial for the Binnengasthuis complex, because many important events occurred in this period. The hospital left the Binnengasthuis and the University of Amsterdam entered the complex buildings. The University had great plans for new buildings and the demolition of the old hospital buildings, however there was much resistance to their radical ideas. As a result a task force is created to devise an appropriate masterplan for this location. The goal of the masterplan is a stronger connection of the Binnengasthuis terrain with the city of Amsterdam; however this quiet enclave must be preserved. In the Eighties there was a huge demand for social housing in the inner city, which needed to be incorporated on this location as well. To house both the university and other functions such as social housing numerous additions and extensions on the built environment of the Binnengasthuis complex were required.

Given today’s situation the interventions of the Eighties are appearing to be rigorously, however the exact conceptions and conditions of the intervention in the Eighties remain unclear at this moment, which are essential for an objective valuing of these occurrences.

Research question:

What were the influences of the Eighties on the built environment and the cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis complex when the prevailing conceptions and conditions of this period are taken into account?

Design Assignment

The design assignment will be based on the performed research, the conclusions of both the urban and building analysis and my strategy and vision for this location. The Masterplan of the task force in the Eighties was not fully implemented; this resulted in a not completely functioning Binnengasthuis complex. Many interventions of this period are slightly or not contributing towards the location. There was some attention for the cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis, however in comparison with the standards of today this was very limited.

Increasing the relationship between the Binnengasthuis complex and the inner city of Amsterdam is an important goal, this process which started in the Eighties should be strengthened. To achieve this, the central square must have a clear purpose as a vibrant meeting place and to ensure this goal, appropriate functions should be present on the location. Surrounded by public functions and building entrances the central square will be the beating heart of the Binnengasthuis complex. The Cultural Identity of this unique location needs to be expressed more.

Another boost for the purpose of this location is the Creative Centre in the building of Leguyt which was deteriorated in the Eighties by the interventions of Dirks. The Creative Centre is a place which unites artists, creative entrepreneurs and the inhabitants of Amsterdam for inspiration, creation, expression and exposure. Crucial for the redesign are the existing values and qualities and the connection between old and new. A new volume will be introduced to accommodate the new main entrance and communal spaces.

Method Description

A literature research will be performed to improve the knowledge on the subject, get insight and understanding of the background information. The literature needs to be specific about the chosen subject and partly originate from the Eighties to get an accurate image of all the conceptions and conditions of this time frame. An analysis on the history of the Binnengasthuis complex is made with special attention to the cultural identity of this location. There will be a study to determine what has actually been done in the Eighties: who were the architects, what the prevailing conceptions were and most important why did they performed the interventions on the Binnengasthuis terrain. What was the relation with the conditions of the inner city of Amsterdam, are there similar responses? The conceptions of the built environment of the Eighties will be reflected by comparison with the attitudes of nowadays.

The conclusions of this research are elaborated into two matrixes, one on the impact of the Eighties on the cultural identity. The other is a value assessment of the interventions performed in the Eighties. The output of both will be used as starting points for my design assignment. I will relate to the output of the research the design phase, as a solid base for my design arguments. For the design I am planning to use reference projects, which will be analysed. When the focus on the site shifts towards the building scale a technical study is required. On the building level I keep continuing using reference projects, as well as multiple design options for each problem I will be facing. Even for the detailing I proceed using this method. It is important to be critical on all the produced works, self-reflection during the whole process is required.
Graduation plan

Relevance

This research aims to understand the conceptions and conditions of the Eighties in which all the ideas and visions were formulated regarding the built environment on the inner city of Amsterdam, projected on the Binnengasthuis area. Since the impact on this location is fundamentally in this decade. The focus on city centers continues to be a hot debate, especially nowadays regarding monuments in protected heritage areas. Especially in Amsterdam because of the Unesco World Heritage site of the canal district and the surrounding buffer zone which has to deal with the regulations. The Binnengasthuis is part of this buffer zone and this will be an exciting challenge, dealing with all these restrictions. However it should be approached as an opportunity and can be an example for future interventions on these inner city locations. At this moment the reuse practice is constantly growing and the inner cities are an important aspect, in which the additions from the eighties will certainly play an important role. Those buildings are relatively young and it is difficult to value their qualities and potential, because the attention on this timeframe is limited.

This research is trying to acquire a better insight in the position towards the building environment of an inner city location like the Binnengasthuis, so the valuing of these structures on this location will be more profound.

Time Planning

In the Project planning below all the required activities for the graduation project are incorporated. It is indicated when an activity will start and end in the process. Important is the self-reflection, after the presentations there will be time for that, however also during the graduation to remain a critical attitude towards all the performed actions.
Reflection Paper

Introduction

This reflection paper is based on the graduation project of Yoran van Dalen. The project is situated in the inner city of Amsterdam on the Binnengasthuis complex. This location is characterized by the enclave of former hospital buildings and is nowadays inhabited by the University of Amsterdam. This central place in Amsterdam has a long history, which is still visible as of today. The project is part of the track Heritage & Cultural Identity.

The relationship between research and design

During the first part of the graduation project the focus is on a research, which will be generating starting points for the design. An important aspect of the research has been the creation of a value assessment that helped to determine the design conditions. A value assessment is considered as an important research tool in the track of Heritage & Architecture. The research gave a lot of useful insights and is a solid base for the design. The interaction between research and design during the graduation project could be improved. In the first semester the research dominated and the focus on the design was minimal. If the design phase started earlier during the period dedicated towards research, the relationship between research and design would have been improved. As a result it would have specified the scope of my research, which was too generic at the start. During the research phase the research question has been adjusted, although it remained a struggle to connect the research with the starting points for the design.

The research provided feedback and arguments for the design, although these starting points are only used at the start of the design process. The theme of the research was the impact of the 1980’s on the built environment and the cultural identity of the Binnengasthuis.

Based on the value assessment and the design strategy I demolished the Eighties intervention of the chosen building. This decision has been an important moment in the graduation project, because this approach did barely allow a continuing relationship between research and design.

In the design phase there was a lack of interaction with the performed research, resulting in a loss of direction for the design. Designing itself is researching on a predetermined topic; since I was missing an overall concept in the beginning the scope was too broad, just like the research. The design assignment was unclear, because the design conditions were not well-formulated enough. Reflection during the design process is essential to remain critical on all the proceedings. I realized the design direction was not correct and the interaction with the research needed dramatic improvement. In retrospective this moment may have been the most influential for the graduation project, because the design assignment was finally clear, the appropriate concept is found and the interaction with the research is restored and strengthened.

If I would redo this graduation project the approach would be different to allow more interaction between research and design and limited the barrier between the two. I would start designing in an earlier stage of the process and allow the research to continue during the design. Also there would be more emphasis on the research since I underestimate the impact of the research on the design.

The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

I have done all the projects provided by Heritage and Architecture in both the bachelor and the master phase during the study at the faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment. This made me well acquainted with the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab. The crucial theme of this graduation lab is the link between old and new with the inherent cultural values. The (RMIT) method is followed in which the value assessment is an important component, to help determine design conditions. To my opinion the relation between the value assessment and the design could be enhanced; this is also influenced by the attitude regarding intervening in an existing context. The design approach for this project is a clear distinction between old and new by the use of contrast for the new intervention on the one hand and a dialogue between old and new on the other. This approach generates a certain tension in the design. It has been a major struggle to find an adequate balance of the focus between new building volumes and interventions in the existing building context. In a way the Heritage and Architecture philosophy is neglected for a moment in the design process, by merely positioning the viewpoint on the new additions.
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I was able to restore this balance during the project; however some opportunities are missed.

The first aspect is the importance of the value assessment and the compliance of this tool to formulate design conditions. I believe a stronger interaction between the value assessment and the design can revitalize more additional qualities on every scale of the project. Also the tension between the old and new interventions is the main purpose of this graduation studio; the design approach could have been more related to this force field. During the process I became more aware of the consequences of the design decisions, on all the different scales.

The relationship between the project and the wider social context

An important component of the graduation project was the influence of the masterplan on this inner city location. The approach for this former enclave of hospital buildings was opening up the location towards the inner city of Amsterdam, by introducing a central meeting place surrounded by public functions. In retrospective the approach can be questioned, did this location which was characterized by its tranquil character require my strategy of increasing the relationship with the inner city? With the knowledge gathered during this graduation project I doubt my concept, it is partly neglecting the existing qualities of the location. Creating a central public meeting place in the dynamic inner city of Amsterdam is not a necessity nowadays, since there are a huge number of existing functioning examples. This location is more suitable to become a sanctuary of tranquillity within the busy inner city of Amsterdam, whereas it has functioned before in the history of this place.

It was a difficult process to create an appropriate public program for this location. It required an intensive study on possibilities and precedents, which took quite some time. The final program is a creative centre, a place for artists, creative entrepreneurs and the residents of Amsterdam. The goal is to make art and human expression better known and available for all the citizens of Amsterdam. In my opinion if a subject is understood better you can appreciate it more and relate yourself to it, the creative centre requires a wide public support to function well. A limited variety of target groups and usage of the building can decrease its impact, so the program is vulnerable.

The new masterplan and building program of the graduation project can have a strong social impact; however this is only the case if a wide amount of preconditions are met. Multiple different scenarios could have been created for the location to explore all the possibilities, although that would require a lot of time.

All in all I noticed that my process was turbulent. At the beginning I had difficulties with the scope of the research and the connection with the design assignment. Also the location was complicated and the strategy for this location remains questionable. The study for a fitting program has been fierce and if the building will function properly remains uncertain. Furthermore the design has enormously evolved; it took a lot of time and effort to find the appropriate concept and approach for the new intervention. All kinds of design tools are used; especially models helped a lot to improve the design, as well as the use of alternative solutions for a design problem. The focus during the process has been sometimes too much concentrated on one topic, instead of several at the time. This caused me to lose control over my time planning.

The P3 presentation has been a good wake-up call for me, from that moment I have been in control over both the time planning as my design. In the end there are a few design topics which have been studied intensively, which are the volume and position of the new auditorium, the logistics and routing through the building and the materialization of the different spaces.

I used this graduation project to explore all the possibilities and boundaries in a reuse project once more. All the freedom which was require to achieve this goal is used, sometimes it may have been exaggerated and crossed the line but the tutors helped to stay realistic in a certain way. After an astonishing year of graduation I must admit I have developed myself towards a better designer, which makes me very content after all the struggles the process inherited.
Sometimes when I see the historical precedents of an old city centre I get a nostalgic feeling. In my mind I picture myself in the corresponding time period and get all carried away in an idealized image of the past. After this small romantic excursion, I am glad to return in the world of today with its contemporary additions. The time frame in which I live will become a part of history in the end as well. I understand the necessity to be able to relate with the past, in my opinion this opportunity must be maintained. However a tunnel vision for the perfect simulation of the past should be discarded.

This is where the issue of reconstruction comes in matter. In the architectural debate this theme creates a clear distinction between the several approaches, from exact replica buildings on one hand till contemporary interpretations and additions by the reconstruction architect. This position paper deals with the approaches of reconstruction in architecture. The definition of reconstruction and the guidelines will be covered to get more insight; the most influential charters for reconstruction (Venice 1964 & Burra from both 1979 and the revision from 2013) have been used. Example projects will be used to show the different approaches and they will be evaluated on the guidelines for reconstruction of the charters. In the end, I will react on them, from the viewpoint of an architect and underpin my own position for reconstruction.

In the Venice Charter from 1964 the term reconstruction is hardly mentioned, a clear definition is lacking. The charter states that reconstruction should not be admitted, however the structure and authenticity of materials must be respected. According to the Burra Charter of 1979 reconstruction is defined as returning a place as nearly as possible to a known earlier state and is distinguished by the introduction of materials (new or old) into the fabric.

The charters provide guidelines for reconstruction; they are strongly advisory but not legally obligated.

According to the Burra Charter (1979) reconstruction is appropriate where a place is incomplete through damage or alteration and where it is necessary for its survival, or where it recovers the cultural significance of the place as a whole. Furthermore the Burra Charter from 2013 states; places with social or spiritual value may warrant reconstruction, even though very little may remain (e.g. only building footings or tree stumps following fire, flood or storm). Values can relate to: social, spiritual, cultural, historical, design, age, object, etc. They can be the occasion for a possible reconstruction. Another important precondition for reconstruction is sufficient evidence to reproduce an earlier state of the fabric. The Venice Charter (1964) is distinct about new elements, they should be clearly identifiable. The Burra Charter (2013) contributes about the visibility of reconstruction, that it should be distinguishable on close inspection or through additional interpretation. New materials from reconstruction have their own appearance to prevent a falsification of the authentic fabric. The last guideline is about the use of new technology, according to the Venice Charter (1964) this is allowed when traditional techniques prove to be inadequate and the new techniques have been well-tried.
An important reconstruction example is the Barcelona pavilion by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969). It was originally designed as the German pavilion for the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona. The pavilion consisted of expensive materials, the German government decided to sell these components after the demolishing in 1930 when the international exposition finished. As an example of the modern movement the pavilion was fundamentally influential for multiple generations of architects, landscape architects, painters and sculptors. (Dodds, 2005) The decision to reconstruct the pavilion on the same site in 1986 was merely based on the design value it incorporated. The reconstruction is executed with ultimate precision by a group of Spanish architects, based on a proper research on documentation. (Dodds, 2005) The argumentation for the reconstruction is based on the design value and the cultural significance of the building; the design has inspired numerous persons, including myself when I visited the site.

For the reconstruction in 1986 new construction techniques are used, however the characteristic details are restored. The Barcelona pavilion is completely reconstructed there is no doubt between old and new materials, since all the materials date back from the reconstruction of 1986. For me it was clear the material is not authentic, the condition of the pavilion does not suggest it has been there since the 1929 International Exposition. This illustrates the importance of the readability of new materials by reconstruction, so there is no dubiety about the authenticity and this prevents falsification.

A more recent example of a reconstruction project is Sanatorium Zonnestraal. This Sanatorium was designed for tuberculosis patients, which was built between 1926 and 1931 on the edge of the Loosdrechtse Bos in Hilversum. The design is from Johannes Duiker, in collaboration with his partner Bernard Bijvoet and the engineer Jan Gerko Wiebenga. This building is the textbook example of the ‘Nieuwe Bouwen’, the Dutch section of the Modern Movement. (Meurs & Van Thoor, 2010)

The resulting starting points for this reconstruction were the revitalization of the conceptual and material conceptions of the original architects, the design and object value of this complex can be found in these aspects. (Meurs & Van Thoor 2010)

An important aspect of reconstruction is the historical continuity, which is linked with the progress in technology. According to the Venice charter (1964) the use of new techniques are allowed when traditional techniques prove to be inadequate and the new techniques have been well-tried. The challenge in the case of Sanatorium Zonnestraal was the translation of the applied innovative construction techniques. A reconstruction of this complex would affect the authenticity of the original materials, because the technical requirements have dramatically changed over time. However in this example the authenticity of the overall appearance, the shape, the detailing and the perception of space in time is much more important. (De Jonge, 2003) I think the guidelines of the charters needs to be addressed as much as possible; however it is important to make a hierarchy in the directives. In the end the essence of this reconstruction was the revitalization of the conceptual and material conceptions of the original architects.

This style is characterized by straight lines, geometric and abstract shapes, light constructions of steel and concrete, large windows, a free façade layout and an open floor plan. The indoor and outdoor spaces were linked together; which created light, air and space. The slender construction as a requisite of the architects was so strongly implemented, that the demands on the used materials is pushed to the limit. Furthermore the architects Duiker and Bijvoet took a limited life span of the building for granted, because they were convinced that tuberculosis would be conquered in no more than fifty years. (Tins & Griffioen, 2009)

As a result the complex strongly decayed and in the early sixties it could be characterized as a ruin, to guarantee the historic continuity action was required. In 1982 the reconstruction process started and was finished in 2010. Architects Hubert-Jan Henket and Wessel de Jonge performed the main reconstruction between 2000 and 2003, after an extensive research on documentation of the Zonnestraal complex.
The examples above are all single buildings or complexes in a freestanding context. The next example covers a reconstruction in an ensemble of buildings; the single object is part of a greater network. This example features the houses on the canal district in Amsterdam. The Canal district is constructed in the seventeenth century in different phases; it becomes an area with merchant houses and city palaces along the canals. It represents the urban extension in combination with the wealth of the population of the Golden Age in the Netherlands. The houses are characterized by a small width, are relatively high, have many window openings and have a variety of gables; such as step, clock and neck gables. The facades of the houses have been transformed during the centuries according to the corresponding architectural styles, resulting in a mixture of styles. (Bakker, 2009)

The overall value of the canal district is not incorporated in one object of a particular time frame; it is the sum of all the components from different time layers, the whole ensemble. The cultural significance and the values are in the end related to the unity of buildings around the canals; however each building makes a contribution to the whole structure. Most of the canal houses have additions from different time layers, so authenticity plays an important role in a reconstruction in this context. As a result new reconstructions have to be clearly identifiable, to prevent falsification of the authentic material, according to the charters.

According to De Swaan (2004) we are just one generation in the long chain of city-dwellers, we are no less than our predecessors, not even those of the Golden Age and we are certainly no better. Furthermore we are indebted to our ancestors, are responsible to our contemporaries and we must leave the best we can to those who come after us. I agree with De Swaan about the importance of the historical continuity, an important goal of a reconstruction in the canal district. There should not be a predetermined reconstruction approach for this location; this depends on the single objects. Nevertheless the guidelines of the charters recommend a contemporary interpretation for this location, based on new construction methods and identifiable additions. I agree with their vision, since there will be a big chance that the reconstruction of an authentic canal house will result in a fake reflection of the past. Though I think it should be possible to make a ‘perfect authentic’ (Meurs, 2013), based on a proper documentation and with valid arguments which are in correspondence with the guidelines of the charter. Nonetheless a reconstruction based on the ideal image of an authentic merchant house should not be the general starting point.

Conclusions

Although the guidelines for reconstruction are continuously improved, there is no universal approach, each project is unique and have to be treaded accordingly. The context plays a role in the approach for reconstruction, clarified in the examples. To my opinion the cultural significance and the values are the leading elements in a reconstruction. It is crucial to make a hierarchy in the importance of all the aspects listed in the guidelines. A good reconstruction project should address as many as possible, but has the focus on the essence. New materials from reconstruction should have their own appearance to prevent a falsification of the authentic fabric. Another notable component is the importance of an evidence based approach, a reconstruction executed on a proper documentation. The conceptions and visions of the original architects need to be interpreted well in a reconstruction. New Techniques should be used if the consequences are clear and well thought out.

The fetish for authenticity as the only approach should be discarded, the time frame in which we live will become a part of history in the end as well. We have to be proud of our contemporary additions, but this accounts as well for the historic examples of the past. It is not authentic or contemporary all the way, there is a certain balance for the general approach used for reconstruction. All in all I think the overall attitude should be more related to a contemporary interpretation.
Position Paper

Literature


Charters:

The Venice Charter 1964, ICOMOS

The Burra Charter 1979, ICOMOS (Australia)

The Burra Charter 2013, ICOMOS (Australia)

Illustrations:


Image 2: Own illustration.


