Reflection on the graduation project in the Architectural Engineering studio

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The relationship between research and design

To elaborate the relationship between my research and my design I will first explain more about the design. From the start of the graduation studio it was my intent to design some sort of canopy over a living or public area. But I also wanted to dive into a technical aspect of architecture and see how I can create architecture with this aspect. The aspect I always wanted to know more about is solar energy. I have seen a lot of documentaries about solar energy being the future of energy supply. But I have also heard and read a lot of opinions that it is too expensive and not efficient and beautiful enough. So I decided to look into this subject and combine it with my intention in making a canopy. This means that my research is based on two elements. How can I construct the canopy and how can I make architectural use of PV panels. Although my mission looked very clear, I still had a lot of trouble in making my research report. This was because I couldn’t define my project clearly in terms of an assignment. The where, when and for whom missed in my assignment. This caused my research report to be very shallow. I did lots of research in different techniques, materials and methods of constructing, but these were very different. I didn’t know what to use or what to deem relevant. My research was without (or little) aim. This is why I had trouble passing my p2 the first time. After my assignment became clear to me, the research followed fast.

The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework.

The Architecture Engineering studio is all about using and experimenting with different, old and new, techniques to create new architecture. With this in mind, I think my subject has a very clear relationship. It is about combining something existing with something new, and by doing this, creating new architecture. The existing part being the canopy construction and the new part being a new use in geometry and color for PV panels.

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

The Architectural Engineering has a different methodical approach then I am used to. The studio thinks a lot from the techniques you use, whereas I am used to think from a social or geographic problem and base my research on those aspects. I already described this a bit when addressing my problems with research. Before my p2 I had a lot of problems with creating my assignment. I think this relates to the different methodical approach I used in this studio (I tried to follow the methodical approach given by the studio). While this had a negative effect, it also has a positive effect. I found it very interesting to design in this methodical line of approach and I think it forced me into a different way of thinking about architecture, which was very positive on my design and also on me as a designer. To me, normally, architecture is about solving a problem by finding interesting techniques to do this. This time, I already had a technique (with a little background problem) and add a positive impulse to a location.
The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The location of my graduation project is the Sloterdijk area in the west of Amsterdam, close to the harbor and the A10 highway. It is a large office area around the Sloterdijk train station, the second largest in Amsterdam and the 9th largest in the Netherlands. The area is obviously very well connected and a good location for large companies. Despite this, there are many empty offices in Sloterdijk which make it very lifeless. The municipality of Amsterdam is planning on dealing with this problem by making Sloterdijk a multi-functional area, with new houses, facilities and public spaces. This transition takes a lot of time, around 5-10 years, and in this time Sloterdijk will remain a lifeless area where office employees flee when they are done with work.

My project intends to tackle problems that Sloterdijk and many other mono-functional office areas have by creating temporary functions to facilitate the area. These functional will bring different kinds of people to the area and also keep the current occupants inside the area. This will give life to mono-functional areas once again. By creating my design in a modular fashion, it can be applied to different kinds of areas, similar to Sloterdijk.