Reflection

The relationship between research and design.

Research has been an essential tool during the graduation process. Since the beginning, literature research was done to obtain an initial grasp and to have a better overview about the topics climate change, declining neighborhoods and waterfront development in general, and in the location of Rotterdam, in particular.

After the trends and its problem were formulated, the main research question and sub questions have been shaped and re-shaped as many times needed. These has resulted in the methodology framework that has corresponded in different stages of the thesis project. The Research is done as research by design. After the trends and problem have been analyzed, further research has been a continues process of interaction between the different tools that are used to do answer the main and sub questions. The research has been done by implementing design principle on site, going back and forth between theory and practical knowledge. In the design is was needed to research how to encounter certain issues. In addition is was also needed how they were implemented in other context by doing an empirical study.

As been described, the development of this project has been a cyclical process, where a circular, rather messy, line can be followed in the research process. In this process a helpful tool was to do trial presentations in order to evaluate if the proposed strategy were being carried on the way toward the final product. The attended steps toward the end product have in some way been experienced by failure and reboot.

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

Living in Rotterdam and experience all its development has always made my realize that the case study of the graduation project would be in Rotterdam. Rotterdam is a dynamic world port and has a century long tradition of living with water. The tradition of protecting “against and living with water” contributed to the development of the city. With the transitions of the port to the Maasvlakte that left a lot of post industrial places abandoned and the topic of climate change rising, development around and with water became more important for Rotterdam. A lot of interest for waterfront redevelopment arise among planners and urban designers, however Rotterdam also faces the problem of declining neighborhoods which mostly is excluded from waterfront redevelopment where the quality of water contributes to its lively environment.

As a resident of Rotterdam, living in different parts of it, and urbanism student, I felt a personal an academic task to enhance these neighborhoods with planning that involves the low income group as well. With the importance of climate change and many declining neighborhoods in Rotterdam, I saw an opportunity using water adaptive solution to create a coherency between waterfront redevelopment en urban regeneration.

Due to a changing climate and changing insights concerning sustainable relations between cities and water-landscapes, new interventions will be needed to create a new urban delta-landscape. In addition
to safety and better water-systems, in urban delta’s there is a need for stronger spatial identities and new cohesion of cities and their water-landscapes. At this point it became very clear that the research studio “Delta urbanism” was fit to be chosen in for the thesis to make Rotterdam climate adaptive and a coherent city between waterfront redevelopment and declining neighborhood.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROJECT AND THE WIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT.

Someone once asked me how I experienced Rotterdam living there for many years. I directly told that Rotterdam was a growing cultural city which has a lot of everything with great accessibility to public functions. This was directly tackles by the fact it has so many migrants, low quality of housing and public space. But that is not how I experienced it, while others see the southern part as something that is defined with so many declining neighborhoods due to high amount of private housing that attract the low income group. I have seen a lot of development in Rotterdam that contributed to a larger system of network in Rotterdam. On the other side, strategies for the neighborhood has been to much aimed at local interventions like the policies of the Vogelaarwijken to enhance community, while these interventions could be involved in the larger network of Rotterdam instead of isolating it from attractive environments. By using attractive environments along the water to attract only the high income group is irresponsible and neglects growing opportunities for residents in the southern part of Rotterdam. Thats why I think it is mostly important to enhance the coherency between waterfront redevelopment and urban regeneration involving all income groups and specify growing opportunities for the low income group in order to change the image that the southern part of Rotterdam now has. If we do not consider growing opportunities for the low income group, neighborhoods will stay isolated en neglected by high moving mobility.