The Olympics Games have grown from being an innocent and idealistic tournament to the biggest (sport) event in the world. With the hosting of this event comes an enormous amount of highly specific development. The amount and size of the Olympic facilities have outgrown the needs of host cities. Most Olympic venues cannot be used after the event and maintenance is extremely expensive. Therefore cities cannot optimally benefit from the catalysing effect that mega-events such as the Olympics, can have on host cities. An over-production of sport venues causes bad physical legacy. This Graduation project addresses the spatial impact of the Olympic Games. A research is made that looks into how the Olympic Games and its development can contribute to the host region’s long-term desires and can act as a tool to guide and catalyse these desires. The research defines 3 levels of legacy planning for a host city: Legacy on city level, legacy on area level & legacy on building level. As a follow up to the research and its conclusions a design assignment was formulated on all of these levels: (1) A regional development strategy was formulated around the organization Øresund Olympics, (2) An aerial development strategy for the Brøndby commune in Copenhagen was defined & (3) a development strategy on architectural level was made for the Olympic stadium. All of these design assignments very much focused on the long-term qualities of these developments, where the Olympics would merely function as a kick-start and guiding element.

Composition of project and inter-relations
Graduating in the Explore Lab graduation studio meant a(n almost) total freedom of exploration. One starts with a fascination that can be anything which you shape to a more concrete and relevant research and design proposal. In this project the Olympic Games was the starting point and developed from this in a more concrete project that would address the spatial impact of the Olympic summer Games.

The MSc 3 semester consisted almost fully of conducting a research that formed the very basis of this project. Preceding Olympic Games were studied in depth in order to define the problems with this ‘Olympic planning’. The link between research and design was present throughout the whole process and moreover the research did fully shape the design conditions and parameters to test it to. Without the research conclusions the design project would not have any practical relevance. It would have ‘merely’ been a design for a sports campus and Athletic stadium and this is definitely not the case in this project: The research formulated conclusions made from preceding Olympics. These stated what caused good and bad physical legacy for a host city and what lessons could be learnt from these previous editions. This meant that with every design decision you had almost a checklist of parameters that should be taken into account with that decision. This gave the project a lot of relevance, but also made the design choices a lot harder. You are never reasoning from just a point of view of making a good stadium or sports campus. You have to think about how these projects would gradually develop over the coming decades and how possible changes in the economic, political or social climate of the host region could be incorporated in the different strategies.

Reflecting on the how project was set up a few things become clear: First of all, the fact that the design was totally dependent on the outcome of the research. This resulted in the fact that we were also not able to really get to the architectural design until everything before that was defined: a host region; a regional strategy; a distribution of venues; an aerial strategy for the Olympic area and a defined after-use for the stadium.

I personally didn’t experience this as a problem in our process, but it did slowed down the process a bit since we could only make decisions on certain levels after most decisions on the levels above/before were made. Another aspect that followed from the way this project was set up was...
that due to the fact that we have in Principe 3 levels on which we design, it was hard to really get to the refinement of any of those at the start of the design process. The project required thoughts and decisions on so many things and on so many different levels, that we were staying on a surface level for all of them. I think however that both in the urban and architectural part of the project we managed to get a proper depth and specific focus. The refinement was just established after a longer time then I normally experience in a design process.

Relevance
The research and design product are highly actual and relevant for the discussion of using mega-events as a planning tool. In the current planning around these major events there are still a lot of lessons to be learnt: There are many recent examples of mega-events that resulted major unexpected investments and bad legacy for the host city/country. By researching what factors contribute to improving this legacy and showcasing this in a design on different scales can be an inspiration for the planning of future mega-events. Although the strategies on different scales are made for a specific context there is a high level of transferability within these. On all levels you can say that the central thought is that with the Olympics you define a certain framework that is usable for both the short-term and long-term requirements. The event must really be seen as a moment in time of a long-term strategy that catalyses further development by providing essential conditions.

Especially on the stadium I believe this project really introduced something new and ‘game changing’. Where until now stadiums were seen as highly specific and moreover permanent structures, we suggest a more flexible and transformable structure that could be inhabited by the host region in many different ways after the Games have left the Øresund region. No qualities of the building in its ‘stadium-mode’ are compromised, but by thinking of this building as an ever-changing structure and designing it that way, the possible legacy scenario’s for this building increase enormously. What if the stadiums for the 2010 world cup in South Africa were now inhabited by the local communities? What if the bird’s nest in Beijing was not just a tourist attraction but a mix-use building, used and exploited fully throughout the whole year? Thinking of such mega-structures in this way will allow it to react and anticipate economic, political and social changes and there is no final form.

Bigness
The architectural design assignment of the Olympic stadium deals in essence with one very straightforward parameter: Bigness. How do you define and shape such immense structures in a both physical and functional context? And moreover: How do you built a structure of this size that in its functional presence is not suitable for its context?

Our answer to this question is to re-think how these mega-structures are designed, built and exploited. As mentioned earlier in this text, stadiums today are considered as permanent structures. Our answer to this paradigm is a flexible structure that is ever-changing through time: A building that can absorb changes in economics, technology and culture, while remaining its primary shape and identity. It is a physical framework that works almost as a piece of city. What we design are possibilities and potentials to happen inside the main structure and none of these fill-ins are considered totally permanent. This doesn’t mean however that we are not defining/designing architecture. Moreover, a place like this requires a clear physical identity. The way how this architecture is shaped and what it tries to establish is far for a regular building. The permanent components of this building are the public space and the primary structure. These components will
always fit the functional fill-in and even contribute to it in different ways. The structure is not reacting to, or neglecting its context. It is creating context. A highly specific context, that can utilized by the city. The Olympics Games is essential for establishing this context: By the extreme focus of the whole world on this place. The structure gets an immediate history and identity. This combined with the excellent accessibility of the place shape ideal conditions for a periphery located regional centre.

Limitations
The research and design is developed in an extensive and broad way. However, there are some limitations to what we have done.

The planning of such an event in reality is done by many thousands of people, with all different kind of expertise, over a time of 7 years. This means that being with 2 students; we cannot come close to a proposal that is realistic in actually taking into account the full scope of parameters.

Our focus has specifically been on the spatial impact of the event on a host region. This meant that economic and political parameters were considered but were not the very core of our decision-making.

I am convinced however, that it is not bad that not all restrictions and risks were realistically considered: By really looking at planning of this event from a pure spatial and social point of view, you are able to pose something that is radically changing on these levels.

Working together
This graduation project was from the start intended to be a joint graduation. There were different motives for this: Julius and I both had the ambition to do a graduation project where both the urban and architectural scale was addressed. We were both interested in the relations between these two fields if they are even distinctive. Next to this we had a similar fascination which resulted in this project. However, loose from the joint ambitions and interest, we also saw a joint graduation benefiting the process in general. When you are working together all the ideas and solutions produced are directly tested against your graduation partner, which allows you to speed up some of the decision-making in the project and thereby increasing the quality. This has worked well for us, where as we both have a quite different way of working. This created friction in a positive way, where disagreements were discussed until we were both convinced. I think this pushed the quality of the design further.

There are also certain risks in doing your ‘final’ project together. This of course relates to the dividing of the workload and making sure that both students have the skills & capabilities for graduating as a Master of Science in Architecture. This first risk has actually helped us during the process, where as one of us had a moment where he had less time to focus on the project the other could compensate this. We made sure that this was in general balanced.

The second risk we have consciously tried to ensure and make visible. During the whole process we switched between different tasks, so that the both of us had something to do with all elements of the project. Next to this we have tried to communicate & make this clear in the general design meetings with our tutors.

Jos Reinders, 13/04/2014