

P4 REFLECTION

Eventbased interventions for the long term improvement
Designing the transformation of the Blokhuispoort catalyzed by LWD 2018

Delft University of Technology
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Relationship Research, Design and graduation studio

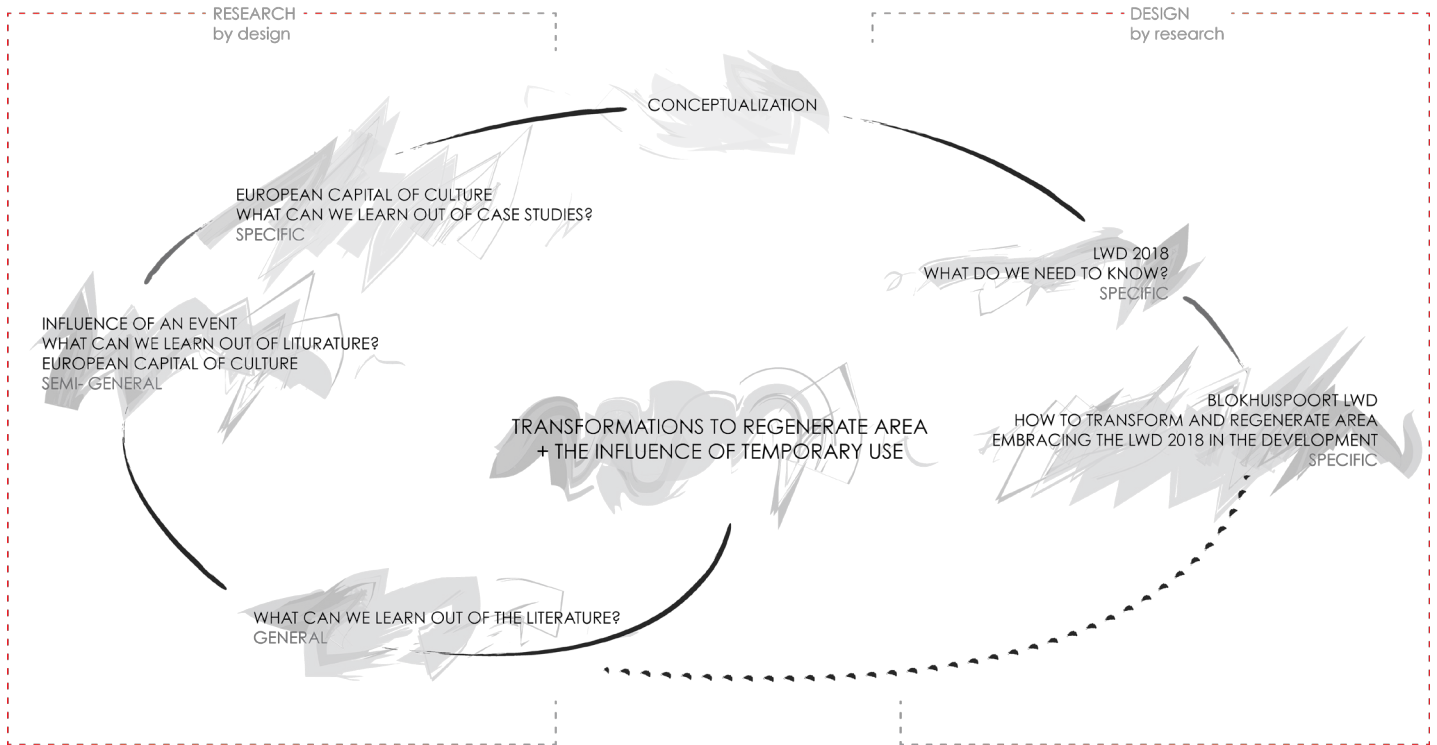
In february 2015 I started my graduation in the ExploreLab Studio. I choose to focus on eventbased interventions for the long term improvement, to be able to design the transformation of the Blokhuispoort, catalysed by Leeuwarden European Capital of Culture in 2018.

The Blokhuispoort, a former prison set just inside the old city centre of Leeuwarden, is in urgent need of a significant change. The position of Capital of Culture (ECOC) that Leeuwarden will fulfill in 2018, brings opportunities to regenerate the Blokhuispoort and the direct surroundings. Hitherto, studies exist about the intangible impact of the position of ECOC on a city, but no research has been conducted yet on the tangible impact of such an event. To understand the opportunities and analyse what the right strategies are for the physical interventions of future ECOC cities, I have determined a literature study and a selection of case studies. The literature study examines both the importance of temporary use in city planning and the impact of the Event ECOC. The Case study has been performed to obtain insight in the physical interventions catalyzed by ECOC. In this way it is possible to understand which characteristics of the intervention regenerate and leave a lasting legacy in the built environment. This case study covers 75 interventions from different ECOC cities. Moreover, five projects are explored even more detailed to strengthen the conclusions out of the case study research.

From the case study can be concluded that ECOC can function as the catalyst for the progress of a city and in particular for a specific site in need of regeneration. The actors of this change need to have a clear vision of the city that they are modifying to understand what a specific intervention can mean for the long-term improvement. There are different ways to intervene in the built environment; firstly, an addition to the building stock (temporary or permanently) and secondly, adaption of an existing complex (either renovation or restoration). Out of these four categories aesthetic, functional, and technical characteristics are determined. The functional characteristics include an approachable, flexible and multi-layered programme. Technical characteristics focus on the visual and direct connections with the surroundings, the physical approachability, the innovative construction, program and appearance of the complex. Finally, the aesthetical aspects include the iconic design, the ability to identify the intervention. The accomplishment of reaching the community engagement (both neighbourhood, surrounding city and on a larger scale) by taking these characteristics into account with the transformation of the Blokhuispoort it enables the regeneration of the built environment with a long term improvement. This improvement will contribute to the long-term vision and process of Leeuwarden to become attractive, innovative and with an own identity. And above all, the Blokhuispoort can be again part of the public urban fabric.

Based on the gained knowledge in the research about the interventions made by previous European Capitals of culture I have given a recommendation and design proposal for the intervention/transformation in and around the Blokhuispoort complex. The intervention should generate the surroundings and leave a lasting impact in the city, using ECOC as a catalyst and as reason to enable the transformations of the Blokhuispoort.

As I mentioned before This graduation project is elaborated in ExplorLab since I would be able to work on my fascination of the transformation of the Blokhuispoort in combination with the interest of understanding the impact of this cultural (temporary event). Since the Blokhuispoort is an elaboration of the recommendations for all future ECOC cities out of the research it can be an example for future ECOC's and projects that can be catalyzed or set up by an event and have a positive influence on the transformation/regeneration of the area.



The methodology of the project

The methodology of the project is explained in the image above. As you can see the design project is interconnected with the research. The Methodology in the Design process was to use the recommendations as guidelines for the future interventions in the Blokhuispoort combined with a clear analyses of the city, neighborhood and complex. Discovering the potential of the BHP made me decide how to intervene. The project is constantly tested on the requirements of the research, findings out of the analyses and model studies to understand if the interventions were actually creating the wished effect. Since there is no strict methodology in ExploreLab I learned from other graduating students and used my own experience. The most importance element was the fact to zoom in, and be able to zoom out to check if it would fit again in the wider perspective of the research and urban structure.

Outcome and gained experience

Looking back the the whole process I know that it took me quite a lot of time to get the research clear and be able to start with the project because of a lack of knowledge in this field. On the other hand it made the research very exciting since other parties, such as the organization of Leeuwarden started to be interested too. This gave me a boost to finish and optimize the research even more, which is positive but made me also take more time since I was scared that it wouldn't be enough. Starting to design the transformation in the beginning was easy and the start went fluent, till the moment that I got out of my comfort zone. I am used to take the surroundings as guidelines for the appearance of the design, but by choosing a spot in the Blokhuispoort that missed its character and was not fuelled by the surroundings it took me a long while to figure out what could be the solution. Being pulled out of my comfort zone though made my project stronger and I learned a lot. Especially by "killing my darlings". This meant that I worked out a design and than zoomed out again, realizing that it was instable and able to be over-argumentaded by my teachers.

By doing a few steps backwards and starting over and over my design slowly became as strong and logic as it is now.

The final step will be to include the design of the Blokhuispoort again in my research report, because then the whole project is finished as intended and the project report can be shared with future ECOC cities and the developers of the Blokhuispoort.