THE VISUALIZATION OF HISTORY AND STORIES BY INTERVENTION IN ARCHITECTURE
The transformation of the Prinses Julianakazerne and Seyss-Inquart bunker in The Hague

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There is an increasing need for professionals in the field of architecture to be able to handle transformations of existing (vacant) buildings throughout Europe. The opportunity and necessity of re-use is my motivation to study and participate in the RMIT studio at TU Delft.

The studio focusses on the continuity of change in society and the evolving or disappearing building needs, which makes transformation and intervention important for the well-being of cities.

Besides the transformation aspect the studio also focusses on heritage and restoration, which is a part of handling with this existing building stock. Also this knowledge is necessary to intervene with a spectrum of existing buildings in order to reveal and keep the history of the place and achieve harmony between intervention and existing.

Both aspects of the studio, ‘transformation for continuity and change’ and ‘the knowledge to intervene with valuable heritage to implement history’ are in my opinion of equal importance for my participation in this field.

The Project

The search for a project ended on the sales advertisement of WWII bunkers and a military building by the Empire Property Service (Rijksgebouwendienst) (Fig. 1).

My own requirements for the decision were the actuality of the future transformation of the site, the historical relevance and the uniqueness of a project that has not been extensively researched yet.

The aim for my graduation project is to focus on the two aspects, ‘transformation for continuity and change’ and ‘the knowledge to intervene with valuable heritage to implement history’, which is why I specifically choose for a historically relevant building, fitting into the framework of the studio ‘Mixed Projects The Hague’.

The history of WWII revealed itself through analysis of this place and its buildings. Stories became visible by archive research, location visits and donning of people’s memories. Every finding and step in this analysis makes the building and this place more interesting. It has been one of the most powerful places during the war, due to the residence of Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart, head and policymaker of the occupied Dutch land, at the allocated Clingendael estate. The site of the project is inextricably related to this estate, as well as its situation within the “Stülpunktgruppe Scheveningen-Clingendael” (the fortress) which was part of the Atlantic Wall (Hitler’s defense line on the European West coast). Many bunkers and anti-tank canals and walls were realized for the fortress as precaution for an attack of the allied forces. As the surrounding terrain has always been estates and recreation area, the remains of these structures are still, however invisible, present.
Even though the whole location is historically interesting the focus of my project will be the ensemble of the former Prinses Julianakazerne together with the adjacent Seys-Inquart bunker (Fig. 2), which were used after the war by the General Staff of the Land forces. They were simultaneously constructed during WWII by the German occupiers. The ‘Polizeikaserne’ was constructed for the Grüne Polizei, commissioned to control the citizens of The Hague. Whereas the major bunker next to the Kazerne was Seys-Inquart’s own safety refuge, a huge concrete construction meant to resemble a farm building as a camouflage (J.J. Van Hoof & M. Van Der Zee, 2006). Because of the cultural historical relation as well as a physical, underground connection between the two buildings I find it interesting and valuable to redevelop them simultaneously in my design process. The design task of coping with these contrary features of the buildings concerning construction, visualization, spaces and historical use, triggers my imagination and motivates me to study this question.

Research and methods

The main theme in the project will be the expression of the history and stories related to this site, which are invisible and camouflaged at the moment. My research question for the project includes this theme as well as the necessity of transformation for a new program intervening on different scales:

**How can both buildings be redeveloped simultaneously as recognizable and distinctive for their cultural historical value and at the same time spatial and programmatically contribute to the functional features of the district ‘het Uilennest’?**

The need for simultaneous development of both buildings derives from the value assessment, whereas the need for functional contribution to the district derives from the current transformation point of view. Current transformations demand a bottom-up approach to reach continuity and change in the city and its districts in order to make projects feasible.

This research will be developed within the episteme phenomenology in relation to the typology episteme.

The episteme phenomenology includes the integration of objectivity in the personal experience of space, through telling a story, visualizing a route or expressing relationships. This methodological approach is in line with the starting points of my own design as a narrative. The method to develop the design will be based on a process of research by design in order to develop and visualize a story. The expression of the story through design elements as hints and the formation of perceptible spaces will be researched through physical models and sequence sketches.

The episteme typology allows a more practical approach as it implements the research of precedents of the same type to reflect on and use these solutions in the design process. Besides the knowledge about the possibilities for functional transformation, it also allows me to take my own position in the way these buildings are valued and intervened with. Within this method of design by research, precedents are used to gain knowledge and review possibilities for the design. The analysis will be made of precedents in the carré typology with originally military function and the bunker typology, by using mapping techniques, sections, diagrams and photographs.
Narrative architecture

The expression of the site’s history through narrative architecture is a question which can be researched through literature review and the analysis of precedents. The concept of narrative architecture can be reached through different approaches. For my project I indicate three possible approaches which are in line with this concept. Story telling through symbolism, through the sense of spaces, or through a storyline, visible as scenes through the design.

Symbolism as approach for narrative architecture is visualized in many religious buildings as well as remembrance monuments. An architect I am inspired by is Tadao Ando. Good examples of symbolism in his work are the Church of the light in Osaka and the Church & Theatre on the water in Hokkaido (Baek, 2009). The expression of religion is visible through symbolism in the building elements instead of element gained from traditional churches. The simple, but strong composition of rough materials and daylight design makes the expression of spaces clear and poetic at the same time, which is the expression I will strive for in my own project as well.

Another example of symbolism in order to tell a story is the Jewish museum in Berlin by Daniel Libeskind (Libeskind & LeCuyer, 1995). His search for symbolism in the design of this building cannot be overseen. The connections to holocaust events and the former residences of the Jewish people murdered due to this, is expressed on the skin of the building as well as the plan layout. The windows and lines are symbolizing scars of the past. The building design carries a lot of dramatic history which it wants to express, however in my opinion this is being overdone in a way that there is too much information showed. Many different symbols and ideas to tell the story are visible in the design concept, but are not clearly visible or understandable for the greater public. With this I do not mean that one has to understand all the meanings of the architect, but does state that it can get too chaotic that it takes away the power of symbolism. While this is a good example of symbolism, the manner of use could have been more simplified in order to gain more importance and meaning in the design.

The design for the Jewish museum not only expresses itself through symbolism, but also through the sense of spaces to experience meaning and historical tension. An example is the enclosed, dark space with daylight falling in from the top, containing loose iron circular faces on the floor. This space is meant to express the darkness and cruelty of the Holocaust during WWII. When walking on these loose elements an intriguing and hollow sound fills the space as indirect screams of the past. This is the kind of expression of the story that stays in your mind and makes you think and wonder about. This expression of senses is an interesting way to tell a story through architectural spaces which I will aim for in my project.

The last approach I would like to clarify is the storyline through a design. This is done in many museums as they are often intended to tell stories. An example is the literal story through the human body in the design for the museum Corpus in Leiden. Storylines are also visible in the design for parks or city districts. Bernard Tschumi is one of the pioneers of this idea with his Manhattan Transcripts (Tschumi, 1994), in which he drew parallels between a sequence of events in the city. He expressed different stories in the urban space to understand the physical form of architecture and the activity that can take place within this space. His design for Parc de La Villette in Paris is based on this idea, by a route with sequences of different activities along the way (Coates, 2012).

Architects such as Daniel Libeskind, Bernard Tschumi and Tadao Ando, as well as others have incorporated the use of written narrative into their design process in various ways. They all result in buildings which express themselves on different levels and engage the user or passer to imagine and engage with the story or meaning of the design. My intention for the project is to express the history of the site through intervention in architecture. My idea is to visualize the story of the site from different perspectives through time. From the perspective of the German soldiers and ruling Reichskommissar to the one of The Hague’s citizens and the
story of a child living within the fortress during the war. My approach is based on further analysis of precedents concerning narrative architecture and the gathering and merging of local and military stories in order to make fictive characters.

Transformation and intervention

An important question for re-design is the approach of transformation and intervention of existing buildings. This subject is of concern for any architect or urban designer handling with existing fabric. The approach implemented in contemporary architecture is based on expressing the intervention as a change of this time (Provoost, 1995). Not purely conserving the history, but visibly intervening and showing change and continuity in the city. This perspective derives from the idea that contrast visualizes and intensifies the meaning of both historical and modern architecture.

I am agreeing with this position and the idea of contrast to a certain extent, as I also find it important to maintain historical values. A balance has to be reached between the historical values as well as the impact and meaning of the intervention. Even though a building does not have a monumental status, it can be valuable for the city or certain people.

A value assessment is an important tool in this process to create a considered re-design. Values can derive from different scales, from international importance to local perspectives. Besides the historical and social values also the architect can select personal values as a tool in the design process. This interpretation is rather personal and makes every designers vision different from the other.

In the case of my project, concerning WWII heritage and its (forgotten) meaning, it is of most importance to select values for the re-design. The buildings and site contain national cultural historical values through the events that took place during WWII. Both the bunker and the kazerne are unique on a national and regional scale.

The bunker is one of the biggest structures part of the Dutch Atlantic Wall as it was meant to function as the command center for the fortress Scheveningen-Clingendael, as well as the personal safety refuge of Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart. This shows the importance of the building and site at that time.

The location of the kazerne is valued accordingly, as an ensemble with the bunker. This building is also valuable for its construction in the Stuttgarter Schule style commonly used by the Germans to represent the less prominent but representative buildings, based on the regional character. The architect is Karl Gonser, who also designed a residential district for the German supervisors of the mines in Limburg during the war. This style has been implemented on few buildings constructed in the Netherlands by the Germans in WWII, whereby the effort and design quality are remarkable. Building materials were scarce during the war, which highlights the buildings important status.

Besides the style and location also typological and characteristic values can be selected, reviewing the original function of both buildings.

The construction time and the original layout of the kazerne as a carré shape are typical. It was not as common in the time of construction to choose this typology, which reveals the reason to make the building look like a farm. This was necessary for protective reasons, but also typical for the German traditional visualization of residential projects and other informal buildings during WWII (Bosma & Wagenaar, 1995). However it is interesting to reveal these original design considerations, little information is available about other intentions of the architect. Research through the Dutch Military archive (Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie) as well as the analysis of the incomplete original drawings gave more information about the original function and its use. Besides this specific information of spaces, research has proven that three characteristics are of important value for the transformation of a kazerne function in general (Finaly, 1999). The characteristic of a gated community (through fences, water and often the situation within the city); the
appelplatz with a flag pole as the heart and gathering of the military; and the accommodation function, usually with visual relation to the appelplatz. These characteristics will also receive special meaning in my re-design.

Interesting precedents to analyze the functional and programmatic aspect of this type and character are the Prins Frederikkazerne in Leeuwarden (Mens, Cooperative Architektenwerkplaats, & Stichting Moderne Architectuur Friesland, 1984) and the Kloosterkazerne in Breda (Hof, 2001). They can both be categorized as a carré type with an original military function and were transformed to allow a new program.

Also bunkers are categorized and researched as a typology in the book ‘Atlantic Wall Typology’ (Rolf, 1988). However the Seyss-Inquart bunker is not yet analyzed in this literature, relations and typological connections and intentions can be revealed. To intervene with the technical and spatial feature of the bunker a whole other strategy needs to be implemented in order to make the building useable. Characteristics of a bunker in general are its structure of concrete; the invisibility in the landscape; and the defense elements, like shooting holes, plateaus and turning space for canons and guns. These characteristics will remain visible in the re-design as they are important for the historical meaning.

One of the buildings interesting as a precedent is ‘Sammlung Borros’, a bunker transformed into an exhibition space in Berlin. The outside of this massive, concrete building has been conserved and the intervention takes place on top and inside. The rough walls and structure of the bunker are displayed as part of the exhibition where (big) artefacts are also intervening with the building. In some cases walls are adapted or drilled for the position of artefacts in space. Floors are carved out to create a spacious effect of voids to enable visual connections for visitors and the visualization of the art by different angles and perspectives. I appreciate the intervention which can be interpreted as a big décor for the art. The concept of décor obviously fits to the program in this case, but might be a useful concept to explore in my own re-design as well.

Conclusion

For my graduation project, the transformation of the Prinses Julianaakazerne and Seyss-Inquart bunker, I take position in the approach for the intervention. My interpretation of the site as cultural historical memorable on national and regional level makes me excited to tell its story and visualize its importance for the public by architectural intervention. My research therefor focusses on telling this story by using the concept of narrative architecture while visualizing and conserving the values of the original design and intentions.

Narrative architecture can be created through different approaches. The approach depends on the project and the architect’s position. So far there is not a straight forward definition which I consider as a solution, instead it will be a combination of approaches in order to find my own position. Analyzing precedents and their approach will help in this search.

The personal, historical and social value assessments are in my opinion of great importance in the design process to achieve a redesign with a balance between the existing and the intervention. History, location and stories can help the designer to create a meaningful place, which interests and intervenes with users, visitors or passers. The approach for this is to gather historical facts by analyzing the site, buildings and its creators and users. The actual interpretation and dealing with these facts will be different for every designer, but also for every project.
Literature


J.J. Van Hoof, & M. Van Der Zee. (2006). *De Prinses Julianakazerne*. Amsterdam: Boom Uitgevers


