P4 Reflection

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Studio Public Realm
N. Marzot & S. Komossa
The transformation of the Lijnbaan
ASPECT ONE

The relationship between research and design.

The studio of public realm, which I am participating in, is concerned with how public buildings organize and structure the city as points of orientation, not only due to their physical presence but also because of their important social, cultural, economical, political and symbolic role.1 A building is more than just a building. It is a place where people come together and meet; it is a place for social interaction. This relation between the architecture and the society was leading for the research I did.

For me, architecture has an influence on the society since it is built for the people. The question is how is this interaction between the architecture and the society? And what architectural means does the architect have to create this? ‘The form of the city is always the form of a particular time of the city’.2 This quote of A. Rossi expresses the idea that the built fabric cannot be seen apart from the people, the society. In my research I tried to understand this relation. This means that I had to focus on the episteme of typology; the study of plans and section, and praxeology; the study of human action and conduct.

The design task is to build a public, hybrid building in the city centre of Rotterdam. The plot is located at the end part of Lijnbaan next to Binnenwegplein on the one hand, and the Coolsingel on the other. The block is build up out of three parts. One part is the monumental 1940’s ABN AMRO Bank. The second part is the Lijnbaan including the Donner bookshop, also a monument. And the third part is an addition to the ABN AMRO Bank that will be demolished.

The centre of Rotterdam is an interesting place where the different layers of time are clearly visible. On the plot we already see different expressions of different layers in times. After investigation I found out that all these different layers, the monumental boulevard of the Coolsingel, the small pavilions of the C’70 manifestation, the modernist rebuilding Rotterdam after the 2nd world war, the corporate buildings of the early 90’s, to name a few are all reactions on the previous time layer. The same counts for different societies, they also need a kind of space. ‘All new social relations demand a new space, and vice-versa.’3

But how to deal with the complex contemporary society? How to create a space for this society? That will be the task for the design.

ASPECT TWO

The relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object).

As said, one of the themes of the Public Realm studio is that a building is not just a building. It is a place where people come together and meet; it is a place for social interaction. To understand this phenomenon it is crucial to understand the society. I tried to do that by reading books about sociology but also to look at the past. By reading ancient societies I tried to understand how the relation between architecture vis-a-vis society evolved and became more and more complex until this moment. Next to that it is important as case studies to see how other contemporary architects think about society and then try to show that, manipulate or react on this society via architectural means. Examples of architects I studied are B. Tschumi, N. Foster, R. Koolhaas and L. Bo Bardi, to name a few.

What came forward from these case studies was the in-between space; a space that is well defined but has no set program. It can be used by all sorts of people in all kinds of ways.

http://www.tschumi.com/projects/14/

ASPECT THREE

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

The research was a search to understand the relation between architecture vis-a-vis society by switching between, and combining narrative and image. This is something which is in line with the approach of the studio. The studio is known for its research on the episteme of typology and praxeology. This is exactly what I have done for my research.

ASPECT FOUR

The relationship between the project and the wider social context.

The relevance of our project is evident. You make a public building for the people. And when you study the praxeology of the people and try to look at it critically and use this position as a starting point for the design I think it shows the value of such a project.

Our starting point for the design was that the building reflects the society. Our society now can be described as ‘liquid’⁴. We interpreted this theme liquidity as a place that has no specific use and thus can be used for and by everybody. An example is the space underneath the MASP by Lina Bo Bardi. This looks like a leftover space without any use, but look can be deceiving. The space is actually used very often for public affairs like markets and festivities.

These kinds of spaces are the spaces suited for the society. They can change, inhabit and use the spaces in whatever way they want. Interesting aspect of our design is that we copied these kinds of spaces within a tower. This can be seen as a new way of articulating the public space in the city. In architecture you can see the trend of the new Hybrid, ‘building as a city’. These are building that you do not have to leave. You can live, shop, dine, and relax there all under one roof. This sound promising but this means that the relation with the city is lost when these functions are just stacked together. If you look at a city you will understand the meaning of the open / unprogrammed spaces of for example squares. What we put forward as a statement is that these unprogrammed spaces should be repeated in the tower for the next generation of Hybrid Towers.