This document will reflect on the design project, my perception of the task and chosen strategies and methods. It will also elaborate on my ambitions as where my focus and heart in the project is, concluded with a reflection. These are aspects reached out by my tutors. I’m aware that the Graduation Manual highlights four aspects\(^1\). These aspects won’t be structure for this document, however: the notations [A1], [A2] etc. do refer to these items.

1. Design project & appreciation

The design project/ brief of the studio ‘The Place of Work’ is to redesign a governmental office: the former Ministry of VROM, Rijnstraat 8 in The Hague. This government building is set in the midst of a (poorly developed) public realm. The existing building doesn’t meet the current requirements and the new target group as two different ministries (Foreign Affairs and Infrastructure and Environment) will use the building. The redesign means an urban integration of the building, creating places for working and a rethinking (technological) issues as climate and – more important – a new way of moving through the building.

I appreciate this project because I think it is very important to be aware and highly conscious of the way the public realm is giving form and atmosphere. The research on public places [A1] was helpful to root this importance and to get some insights on important elements.

The fact that the project is not a new project on a blank sheet of paper is as relevant and honest to the current field of architecture as it is a pleasant way to work. [A4] Design and architecture is always building further on the existent built environment.

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\(^1\) [Aspect 1] The relationship between research and design; [Aspect 2] The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/ case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object); [Aspect 3] The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework; [Aspect 4] The relationship between the project and the wider social context.
2. Project strategy

The design aims to intervene in such a way that is rightly gives a place to the different users and to gives a fitting identity; that the design acknowledges the various degrees of publicness in the building (e.g. for the public, the visitors and the civil servants). This directive series of spaces is the first important aspect of the design. The second focal point is the place of work, its accessibility and identity. Of course there are other additional problems that had to be solved, as the different security levels, different departments, issues concerning building technology, a certain way of intervention, etc.

Shortly, the design consists of a superposition of a new system of voids or cavities onto, or cut into the existing fabric. These discrete connected spaces form a new system to find your way within the building.

![figure 1. Early sketch setting a new direction: cavities cutting through mass (existing building)](image)

These distinct spaces are the

I. Passage,
II. City Lobby,
III. Rijkslobby,
3. Ambition

The ambition is to create memorable spaces with fitting atmospheres. The aspect of the experience of the spaces is of high importance.

A sense of being at ease is important; I try to create attachment of the users to the design on various levels. Of course being in an office is different than being home, but the sense of place and belonging in the office should be more present in the offices than in in the lobbies or the passage. This is done by accessibility, understanding the building and the route, by its use and by the chosen tactile quality.

For the project there are a few references I’d like to mention, because of the way they describe architecture in a way that is close to my heart, and they set a framework. [A1]

**Gordon Cullen. (1961). The Concise Townscape.**

This book talks about urban aspects which are applied to the public interior. E.g, the deflections (vs. closed spaces), creating promising views, providing enclosure, etc.


Very pleasant book from which I learned about the very basic interventions in architecture with respect to solids and cavities.

**Zumthor, Pallasmaa, etc.**

Juhani Pallasmaa provided language to embrace the important and unforgettable aspect of feeling architecture, the haptic specificity of materials and architectural elements. Peter Zumthor’s ‘Atmospheres’ should also be referred to. How he describes the experience of sitting on a square is very close to me, and very essential. They provoke a certain awareness of place and atmosphere. In my designs I have idea’s, visions and feelings about places, and designing is a quest to make these dreams visible.

4. Reflection

In this part I will elaborate shortly on some aspects of the design product and process.

**Strategy**

Superimposing ideas onto an already existing reality may cause practical problems. For example: protruding a cavity through a part of the building with exception of the cores and other main constructive elements does make some part of the building impractical to construct or to use. In theory it might be a nice idea but realization result in a lot of less practical corners. Additionally, construction-wise a lot has to be done in order to make it possible.
Relevance

The last decade it more and more is the task for an architect to deal with existing structures; the graduation project is realistic in that sense. Architecture is building on the existing. [A4]

Although the public place is something I personally find important and interesting, the working space is at least equally important. It is good to be acquainted with the widespread and relevant typology of the office and to be able to understand the evolution of the workplace, in order to make a sensible choice for the new working environment.

Process & Planning

Managing such a huge design project is a difficult thing. In retrospection I think the project probably is too enormous for my taste. I chose the chair of Interiors, but I think that in previous projects there was more chance to dwell on the aspects of the chair of Interior more on a detailed level. Because the project is so complex a lot of minor issues can be improved, and it is quite unsatisfactory to just chose fragments and leave other parts unstudied. [A3]

![Diagram](image)

A lot can be said about the planning of the project. A rough planning is using for the project, accompanied with directions from the tutors. Illustrated above is the design process (drawn at the end of my bachelors, but still applicable). My concern and passion is in the development of the ideas, in research to gain knowledge and understanding, not intrinsic to make end products (the lower part of the illustration). Making the step to do so is always one which gives time pressure and hence re-planning.