

ARRIVAL CITY - NADIA PEPELS

1960s as inspiration for city transformation (about my fascination for flexibility)

In our western world, space that used to be public is vanishing in the privatised ocean of the city. Instead of the people, big companies determine how our city functions, how it looks like and how we live. The result is a fixed and closed environment, while today's city asks to be adaptable and flexible in order to answer the needs of the (growing amount of) people. I believe a city should be an open system in which is space for participation and improvisation. The city is also a recurring cycle of decay and renewal. For me the *modern ruin* (vacancy) is an invitation to transform it.

I was fascinated by the visionaries from the 1960s. They were able to grasp the future by making **flexible megastructures that answer the unexpected**. Today we need flexible structures like that! My research contained an investigation in 5 megastructure-projects of the 1960s which gave me insight in flexible structures. I translated the conclusions from disassembling and reassembling the 1960s into a toolbox for transformation: how to renew? The toolbox helps to analyse the modern ruin to see opportunities for transformation.

Order Through Life (about my changing view on flexibility)

I am also critical towards the 1960s. Today we are able to fathom large structures and to transform these structures. Life will always transform the environment, changing the existing order. I call this: "Order Through Life". The architect created the conditions for life to establish a new order. This statement - which is opposite to the 1960s, where the megastructures are totalitarian - changes my view on my fascination for flexibility. **Flexibility is not the goal, it is a tool that can be used in the design process in order to achieve an open system**. I realised that my toolbox actually exists of flexibility principles (tools) that can be used for transforming the modern ruin.

A successful intervention within the thought of "Order Through Life" is the Luchtsingel, a bridge as an infusion to activate an area in decay. The bridge is the new condition for an large, organic development of the area. To understand organic developments like this is important in order to establish an open system with room for the unexpected. I designed a fictional structure that could grow infinitely in order to understand the conditions for organic growth: the need for a system that is structural, maintains circulation and maintains services.

Re-inventing the role of the architect (about taking responsibilities)

Since I live and know Rotterdam, I choose it as the test site. On the other side of the Luchtsingel, in Rotterdam Central District, I found a modern ruin: Hofplein 19. It is an old shell buildings from the 60s that are vacant for a long time now. So... time for Order Through Life! Let's develop it.

Migration has become a fact of life, a city should adapt to newcomers. Newcomers should be welcomed in a vital area where there are opportunities for integration and work. My design-assignment will be the transformation of the modern ruin into a transit place for all kinds of newcomers and I call it **Arrival City**. The basic necessities include a variety of housing with opportunity for business, arrival functions, social and cultural functions. Since we don't know the needs and desires of all the different newcomers, and since the temporary character (fast coming and going of people) of Arrival City, it is a perfect assignment to design for the unexpected and use my flexibility tools.

I analysed the building with the toolbox and saw different opportunities for handling the building. Since Arrival City needs larger spaces then the existing structure can facilitate, an expansion at one point in time would be necessary. I checked the existing structure, circulation system and facilities that I can use and defined where to extent this for the expansion. In the process of creating the conditions for the new function of the building, I started thinking about my role as an architect.

What is the responsibility of the architect in a design for needs and desires you don't know (yet)? Would flexibility be a tool to leave responsibility for the environment to the other? But I - as the architect - am the specialist so I could give architectural quality.. Re-inventing the role of the architect is a very important issue for the modern city of today - and in Arrival City I can address this role.

The design concept for Arrival City is a gradient (in time) of typologies from the generic to the specific. This represents a process in which the architect doesn't know the desires of the inhabitants in the beginning, offering a generic housing typology (implicit), but in time finds out what the specific needs are (explicit).

The corridor house: the architect delivers an anonymous envelop with only the possibility for services. Newcomers can have input in how the home should be. Together with the architect they define the home.

The urban villa: the architect delivers service cores and a system for the facade consisting of different panels. Inhabitants can play with the system.

The rowhouse: the architect delivers a large quality home, for a family. Inhabitants can claim control over the outside space.

The studio: the architect delivers a small quality home, for an individual/couple. Inhabitants can claim control over the outside space. Since it is a one floor apartment, there is little room for possible adaptations.

The garden house: the architect delivers a complete prefabricated house that is placed on the roof.

In the corridor house flexibility is maximum, while in the specific house flexibility is the underlying sustainable thought. Thereby the concept for Arrival City also represents my personal process in defining my role as an architect and the definition of flexibility. **In all cases the architect is the mediator between the inhabitant and the feasibility. As the architect I am the specialist and I take the responsibility to design the environment.** When I made the realisation that I have to take responsibility, I was able to develop and design part of Arrival City.

I am very happy that The Explore Lab Studio gave me the opportunity to explore my fascination for flexibility and my role as an architect in this process. In the studio I was also free to learn by drawing. Therefor I could develop my own method which is a cyclic process of intuitive drawing and reflecting my own work.