

Agents of the collective memory in the contemporary city

Research Plan

AR3UA100 Urban Architecture

Graduation Studio

Introduction

Gleaning¹ as the studio topic can be understood very broadly. Precisely as collecting second crops and obtaining information appropriated, contained in a given place - ideas, strategies, memory. For the need of the studio the term is appropriated as a tool for approaching the given context, a critical evaluation of what is already there, the life of the existing. Not only as a materialistic mean but also as an intangible value – the reuse of the current 'collective good,' the hidden potential of the place.

In the first part of the research, I intend to explore architectural theory of collective memory. This part of the research aims to question the city itself, what constitutes the city as a composition of forms and shapes². How are those forms and conditions present in Maastricht, and how have they evolved over time. The collective memory is the mental representation of past events that are common to members of a social group. Society has a memory, and it differs from individual memory. Individual memory is influenced by belonging to particular culture, doctrine, or community. In contrast, collective memory strengthens the bonds between people within a specific community, creating an individual identity within the community and belonging to one particular place.

Urban forms and shapes can be represented by a street, a building, a district, a fragment of landscape. They are agents and processes responsible for the transformation of the city over time.

¹ Lea, D., & Bradbery, J. (2012). Glean. In Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

² Ungers, O. M. (2009). Architecture of Collective Memory. The Infinite Catalogue of Urban Forms. In T. Avermaete, K. Havik, & H. Teerds (Eds.), *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity And The Public Sphere* (pp. 265–271). Sun Publishers.

A monument's persistence or permanence is a result of its capacity to constitute the city, its history, and art, its being and memory.³

'After entering the farm, the garden was always the first thing you would see. This idea of the open garden is still very present in the city of Maastricht.'⁴



[Image1] Typical Limburg Farm with a hidden garden.

The secondary step of the research would then be more focused on reading the site itself. If the city is the atlas of continuously changing shapes and forms, what are the shapes and forms that people what to engage with? What are the qualities of the site that can be used to strengthen the 'collective whole.'

³ Rossi, A., & Eisenman, P. (1984b). *The Architecture of the City* (Oppositions Books). In *The Complexity of Urban Artifacts* (Reprint ed., p. 60). The MIT Press.

⁴ part of the interview conducted via zoom with architect Fred Humble, one of the architects involved in the group research (F. Humble, personal communication, September 20, 2021).

Collective memory

The idea of collective memory as a tool for reading the city arose while reflecting on the subject of the study. What is gleaning concerning the city, how it can take place beyond existing materiality, in the city's already existing, latent qualities. The theme of collective memory in my research stands as a tool for reading the city. Collective memory as the topic has been discussed in several readings. Each of its authors introduces this idea slightly differently. Aldo Rossi sees the collective memory as a continuous city-forming process; the city is people's collective memory, becoming a product of shared consciousness. The city's reading is understanding the layers of the historical interaction between space and people in the specific time, culture, and circumstances. Reading the city is grasping how the collective created the city's image while adapting to the material reality of the space that it confronted.

O.M. Ungers sees the city more as the atlas of continuously changing shapes and forms, assembly of events, where elements compete, but the constant component seems to be less critical in the creation process. The process of the city is more related to the journey.

In *The City of Collective Memory*, Boyers states that the creators of the city, to understand it, have to accept contradictions, disturbances, and certain randomness, decomposed centers. It requires 'double reading' of its original patterns and new meanings and messages gained with time.



[Image 2] The spectacle of factory workers cooling horses after a working day.

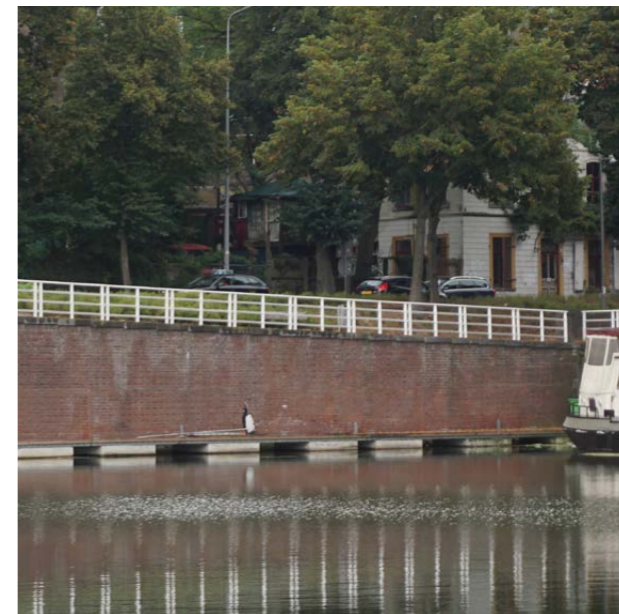


[Image 3] The spectacle of City residents relaxing in the river during summer

“The City of Collective Memory” introduces collective memory as the construct that can be continuous only by the existence of places that allow for collectivity. The presence of the ‘scenes’ where different ‘spectacles’ can take place. The spectacles are the moments of urban life where spontaneous celebrations happen, and those are gathering spaces, open-air markets, spaces that involve people. Boyers states that modern cities are undergoing a crisis of collective memory. Because of the culture of the mass media, we rather consume history instead of reading it. The urban fabric becomes generic, the result of well-designed algorithms. Meaning of collectivity and public space is being shifted to normalize acts of privatization that affects our collaboration in the perpetuation of public actions that hold the city narrations. Privatization of the cities sees people as passive spectators, where so-called ‘public spaces’ become enclaves for particular receivers, whereas others are marginalized.



[Image 4] Densifying above water



[Image 5] The river as infrastructural catalyst

Once again, in the last few decades, there has been a restructuring of concepts: the “public” has become a negative concept connoting unruly bureaucracies, corrupt officials, inefficient management, regulatory impositions, and burdensome taxations. Meanwhile, “private” has been refurbished with an exalted image: the freedom of the market and the freedom of choice and style of life that commodities and wealth can provide. As the importance of public space in the center of cities has waned-in part, the result of explosive privatization that both the rise of suburbs and the media revolution have engendered-then private space becomes more valued than public places. Most civic improvement schemes and inner-city spatial recyclings play on this inversion of values creating private preserves for the wealthy that are then transformed into “public amenities” by allowing a select group of people to stroll unimpeded along their corridors and spaces of power. Yet even this contemporary reference to the public is a universalizing construct that assumes there is a collective whole, while in reality, the city’s public is fragmented into marginalized groups, many of whom have no access to or voice and representation in the public spaces of our revitalized and gentrified cities.

In the city of collective memory, we are interested particularly in the creation of meaningful and imaginative public spaces.⁵

Main RQ: What are the forms and shapes that allow for collective memory creation in Maastricht?



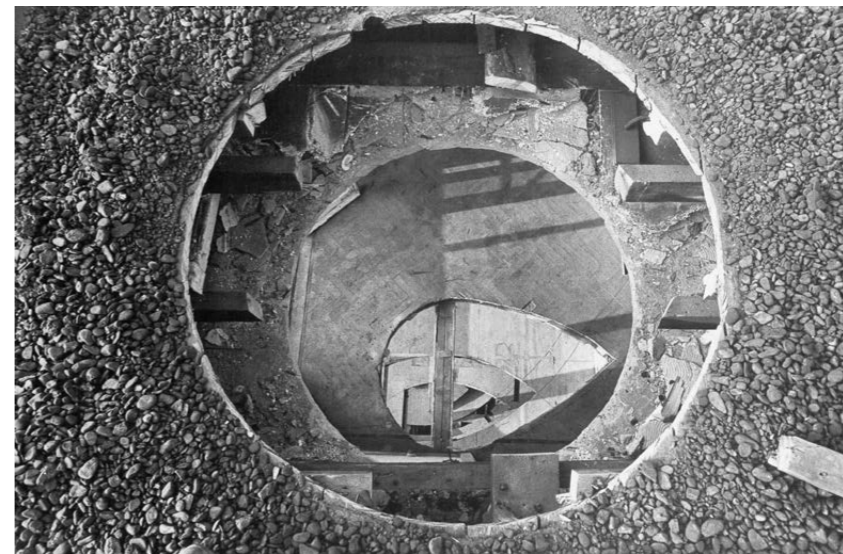
[Image 6] A hidden shopping center. The old fabric of the city with commercial program.

⁵ Boyer, C. M. (1996). *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (1st tr pbk ed.).(p.60) The MIT Press.

The wiped out city

Following the gleaning as the main topic, one could think of privatization as the city's harvest, leading to a declination of publicness playing a significant role in creating the collective memory. Urbicide is a term referring to the widespread and deliberate destruction of the urban environment. With the conceptual and theoretical purpose, the example of city destruction can serve as a method of understanding the city's most vulnerable nodes and monuments. To turn the city into ruin is to target the spaces or buildings that make it possible for a plural public space. As an example, we could think of the reconstruction of Warsaw after WW II as a political game and an act of extraordinary willpower at the same time⁶. The reconstruction was a constant scuffle between communists who saw historic buildings as a source of keeping tradition and those for whom the ruins recalled the memory of the pre-war past. Urbicide can be compared to many processes present in modern cities, where without the formal use of violence, publicness becomes more a privilege than a right. What would be the targets in the city of Maastricht, the monuments that have the capacity to constitute the city, its history, and art? Urbicide becomes another tool for reading the city by imagining it being in ruins. What needs to be recreated? What would reconstitute the city at this very moment?

⁶ Gliński, M. (2015, March 4). Who rebuilt Warsaw? And why is that so? Culture.pl. <https://culture.pl/pl/artykul/kto-odbudowal-warszawe-i-dlaczego-tak>



[Image 7,8] Gordon Matta Clark - cutting through the surface of ideas and things in order to expose their essential structures.

The Site

Allocation of the collective to private can be related to the given context in the new developments in the neighborhood of the sphinx quartier. The transition space between the old town and the industrial site becomes a relatively wealthy neighborhood strip, which can be related to what Boyers calls the crisis of the collective memory. The newly built streets function more like the middle spaces between elegantly hidden underground garages and the highways. The gardens and courtyards stage the acts of the closed-up audience, where the city fabric's relations are relatively limited or absent.

The series of newly built dwellings creates a barrier, marginalizing the factory space, which already exists as a separate entity through a series of physical spatial barriers and the negative connotation of the pollution associated with the Sappi factory.

Based on the conversations with the residents during my visit to Maastricht, the identity of the industrial site of the former Sphinx factory is a rather negatively associated or almost unseen space of the city. Still, it undoubtedly formed and shaped the image of Maastricht today and became part of the memory of Maastrichteners. The site of the Sappi factory will soon be redeveloped to host the new spectacles off the city; the land will accommodate new policies and the new ownership systems. The site's transformation process will have many voices speaking, the investors, the municipality, the urban planners, the squatters occupying the Landbouwbelaag building. The question arises if the site's domestication process



[Image 9] new developments around the site

can be formulated on the ideas already embodied in the area. How do we approach the context concerning the places that could potentially strengthen the creation of the city of collective memories?

I could see how people find unexpected places for everyday life spectacles around the factory by visiting the site. They go fishing near the Bassin, drink beers under the bridge, party in the abandoned buildings. The neglected spaces, undeveloped parts of the site's land, are being found and given simple attention because they constitute democratic spaces, allowing the actors to be involved. Despite the site's rather complicated spatial and political arrangement, these activities can be an excellent inspiration for formulating the architectural brief for the site. By stepping into the shoes of the potential users, involving the actors, I aim to define the possible performances of the site. The collective good (knowledge and resources of residents or users of Sphinx Quartier) could draw up the space's latent program.

Sub question: What are the spaces of social interactions on the site of the Sappi factory? How can they formulate the architectural brief?



[Image 10] The spectacle of graffiti making.



[Image11] The spectacle of fishing.

The spectacle of the factory

The book *Vertical Urban Factory* by Nina Rappaport describes relationships between technology, architecture, and industry. The last chapter is the authors' thoughts on what the factories or the industrial sites might become in the nearest future. The book provides many examples of how the architecture of production spaces shifts in consumer culture and new economics. Rappaport introduces the idea of the hybrid and small urban factory.

The sequestering of the factory from daily life became a standard process of urban zoning, along with segregating the poor and the rich, taking away the vitality and diversity of city hybridity. Today, the manufacturing returns back to the city. Surprisingly Rappaport also uses the 'spectaculars' as an essential factory feature that can help in factory domestication. Rappaport describes several highlights that will characterize the factory of the future. One of the most relevant to the site is the hybrid factory, where the industry can be redeveloped into mixed-use, diverse, and playful neighborhoods. In that way, the factory could support symbiotic exchanges between individual workers, craftsmen's residents, workers, entrepreneurial companies. In the presence of ecological consciousness and the redefinition of industry, the idea of the hybrid factory can also serve as a tool for saving costs and land in city planning. Even though the Sappi factory, the paper mill, is reducing its production more and more, its presence is a sign, a trace of the site. With the growing interest in local enterprises, the former Sphinx

factory could keep the features of a small manufactory as part of the city ecosystem. The industry is the site's memory. The idea of hybrid and 'glocal' introduced by Rappaport can support the city and community as an essential city-forming element, keeping and continuing the history of the place, the features of what Rossi calls 'locus'.⁷

The new cottage industries of the future will be catalytic enterprises that target loyal and local customers. Making things locally for the local consumer and for global export supports the economy as well as reduces the supply chain. As companies are shrinking workforces, the future entrepreneur and local producer will move beyond long lines of product assembly into the realm of integrated small-scale processing in a networked spatial rather than isolated ex-urban space. Such With a growing interest in the locally made, "locavore," new industries, focused on flexibility and versatility, can supply goods to their immediate communities, but maintain broader appeal to a global market. What if each neighborhood had local production centers for individual needs, but those goods could also be sold globally?⁸

⁷ Rossi, A., & Eisenman, P. (1984b). *The Architecture of the City* (Oppositions Books). In *The Complexity of Urban Artifacts* (Reprint ed., p. 103). The MIT Press.

⁸ Rappaport, N. (2020). *Factory Futures*. In *Vertical Urban Factory* (2nd ed., pp. 434–457). Actar.

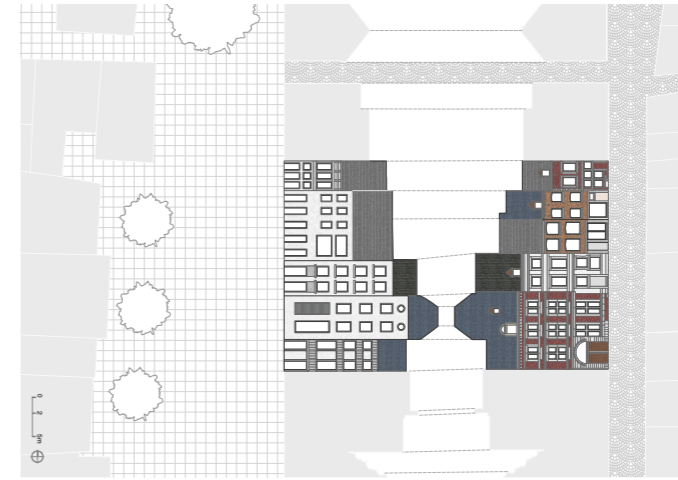
Architectural Histories of Urban Renewal

As part of the studio research, together with five other students, we worked on the subject of histories of urban renewals⁹. We were challenged to decide on specific locations within the city that would best represent the most significant changes in the city's urban tissue, but also the ones that would tell us more about the identity of Maastricht. Precedence studies of three dwellings and the movie realized as group research represent Maastricht urban renewals' ideas. This study aimed to understand what kind of policies shaped Maastricht in the past and how we can potentially learn from it for future actions. The individual dwelling/residential district analysis tells a lot about social and economic functions and how they correspond in the process of formation of the city,

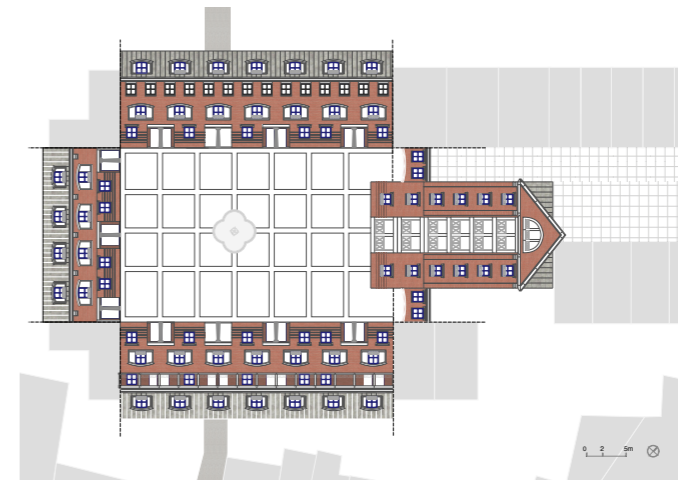
Three case studies that we decided to work on are unique when it comes to the time when they were executed, sometimes very contrasting when it comes to how the urban designers or architects reacted to the existing and how the collectivity was coming together. They examine long-standing habitats or industrial sites and project new ideas, resulting in more radical gestures or subtle approaches.

At first glance, these case studies are all portrayed as successful projects. However, with further research into the outcome of the projects, we realized that there was a social cost

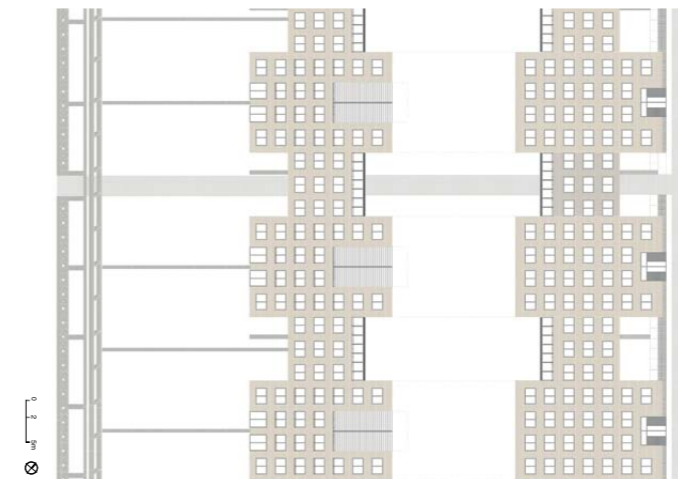
⁹ Tatara, O., van Vuure, F., Chamankar, P., Song, L., & Formsa, A. (2021, October 27). Architectural histories of Urban Renewal [Studio presentation]. 6 perspectives on Maastricht, Delft, Netherlands.



[Image12] Stookstraat, the oldest street of Maastricht.



[Image13] Hoogfrankrijk by Charles Vandenhove



[Image14] Stoa in Ceramique by Luigi Snozzi

for Stokstraat and Ceramique in particular. Although, in general opinion, all the case studies were successful in changing the city's image, these projects main intention was to create a shiny new idea of Maastricht.

Political ideas are highly influential, as demonstrated in Stokstraat, where the original residents were deemed 'anti-social' and 'unsightly' so were displaced to make way for a cleaner, prettier image of the city center. The historical image of the facades was appropriated for the commercialization of the district. On the other hand, Hoogfrankrijk was a social housing project that was subsidized by the municipality – with this investment, high-quality social housing was created, which is appreciated by the people of Maastricht. Hoogfrankrijk has a long waiting list of people who want to live there. Such a project may not be feasible in current times, where developers buy out plots, and the government has a lesser role in public housing.

During the interview with Ninke Happel, we discussed the three case studies and how the example of High France would be practically unachievable to complete nowadays. From her professional experience, we talked a lot about how architecture practices in the Netherlands must fit into spreadsheets when the architect is the executor of ideas generated by calculation. As a result, the architect knows what he needs to find instead of practicing the finding. Ninke states that we have to challenge ourselves to find new ways of living together. As her primary source

of inspiration in her work, she mentioned housing cooperatives in Zurich, Genossenschaften, where the relationship between citizens, government, financiers, and designers is much different from the Dutch model. That idea links to what Boyer sees as collective, which catalyzes the city's collective memory.



Imagine: so there was earth.

[Image15] Frame from the movie realized as the group research.

Voice: Ninke Happel



And then somebody thought: 'Hey lets sell a piece of land.'

[Image16] Frame from the movie realized as the group research.

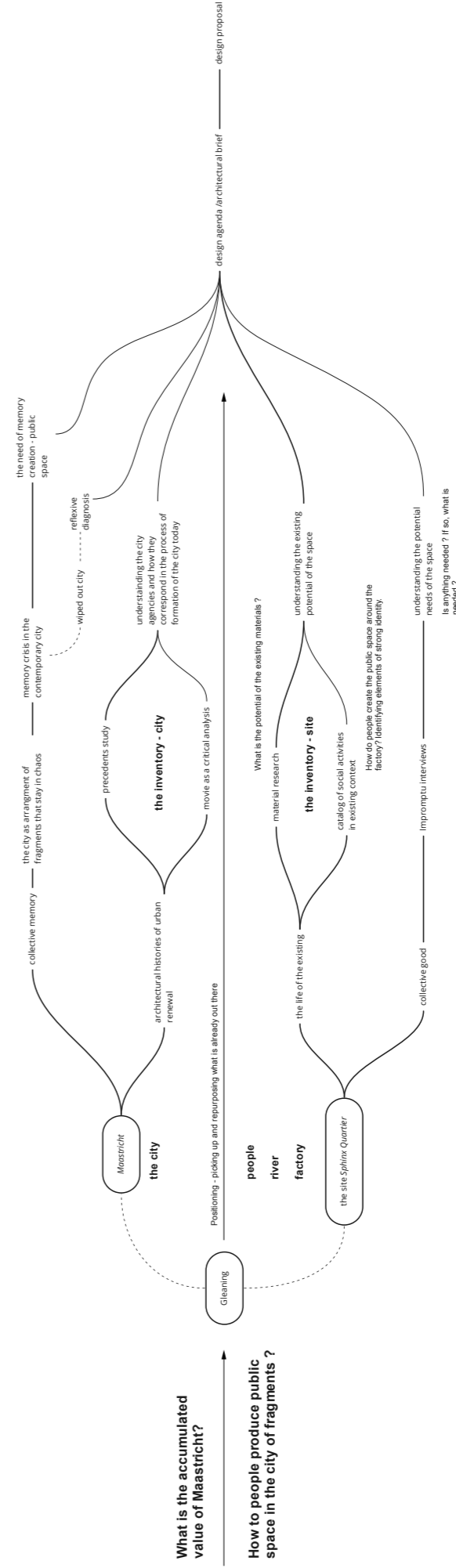
Voice: Ninke Happel

On methods

The research will be conducted through academic reading, precedence studies, and ethnographic fieldwork, including interviews. By talking to locals, I aim to understand the spaces of memories of the Maastricht, if there are any nodes of strong collective memory that overlap in certain communities. By bringing the idea of urbicide, the conversation with the specialists involved in the city planning of Maastricht could help me understand what contemporary city monuments that people, in particular, are engaged with are. Space syntax in the form of a drawing will serve as a method of spatial inventory of the site. What are the elements of the space: attempt to find the definitions of downsized 'components' of the site. Impromptu interviews with residents and users of Sphinxquartier could be collected to visualize the potentials of the space. That could, later on, be presented in a catalog of social activations of the existing context. Learning from the site - how people find opportunities for social activity around the factory.

[Image 17]

Research diagram



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Image references

Image 1 Retrieved from: <https://www.cultureelerfgoed.nl/onderwerpen/agrarisch-erfgoed/type-boerderijen>

Image 2 Retrieved from: https://www.omnia.ie/index.php?navigation_function=3&europeana_query=Soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9+Ceramique

Image 3 Retrieved from: https://www.omnia.ie/index.php?navigation_function=3&europeana_query=Soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9+Ceramique

Image 4-11 Author. (2021)

Image 12-14 Drawings realized for the purpose of the exhibition : Tatara, O., van Vuure, F., Chamankar, P., Song, L., & Formsma, A. (2021, October 27). *Architectural histories of Urban Renewal* [Studio presentation]. 6 perspectives on Maastricht, Delft, Netherlands.

Image 15-16 Frames from the movie realized for the purpose of the exhibition : Tatara, O., van Vuure, F., Chamankar, P., Song, L., & Formsma, A. (2021, October 27). *Architectural histories of Urban Renewal* [Studio presentation]. 6 perspectives on Maastricht, Delft, Netherlands.

Image 17: Author. (2021)

