

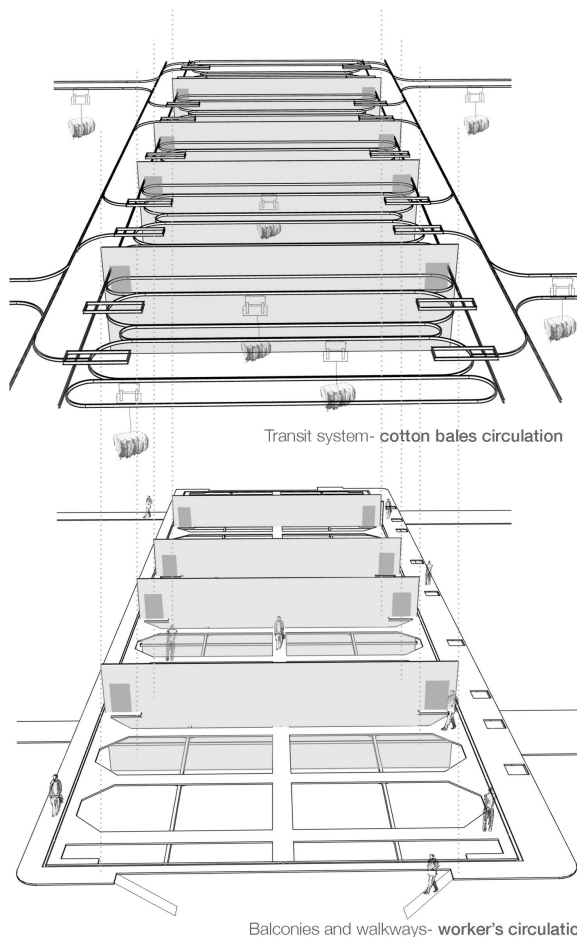
# Reflection Paper P3; draft version

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The subject of my graduation project in the "Heritage and Architecture" studio is the Katoenveem building. It is a highly deteriorated and derelict industrial building located at the Merwe Vierhaven area, on the edge of a quay at the borders of Rotterdam city harbour. Despite its abandoned appearance, the unique history of this structure and its connection with the **innovation** on transporting goods during the industrial period, makes it a special cotton warehouse that seeks today for a new character in its context.

My graduation research started with the analysis of both the tangible and intangible values of the existing structure throughout all the different scales, starting with the urban and ending with the building technology scale. The analysis part is quite substantial for every refurbished architectural project, as the main concept usually derives from the evaluation of the existing. Thus, the research and design acquire a relationship of cause and effect; all the questions arise in the analysis phase seek for an answer during the phase of the design.

To become more accurate, my research focuses on the functionality feature of the original design of the Katoenveem and even more on what I call its "tailor-made" aspect, which is highly valued throughout my analysis. Therefore, my research question is "what makes the Katoenveem a **"tailor-made"** building?" and whether this aspect is identifiable in every scale of the analysis or not. The innovative **transit system** that used to move the cotton bales in the interior and the exterior of the warehouse, is still hanging from the ceiling of the remaining structure and consists today the key to this "tailor-made" aspect of the initial design. All the beams, floors and openings are explained by the lines of the system and vice versa.(fig.1,2)



1. Circulation diagram

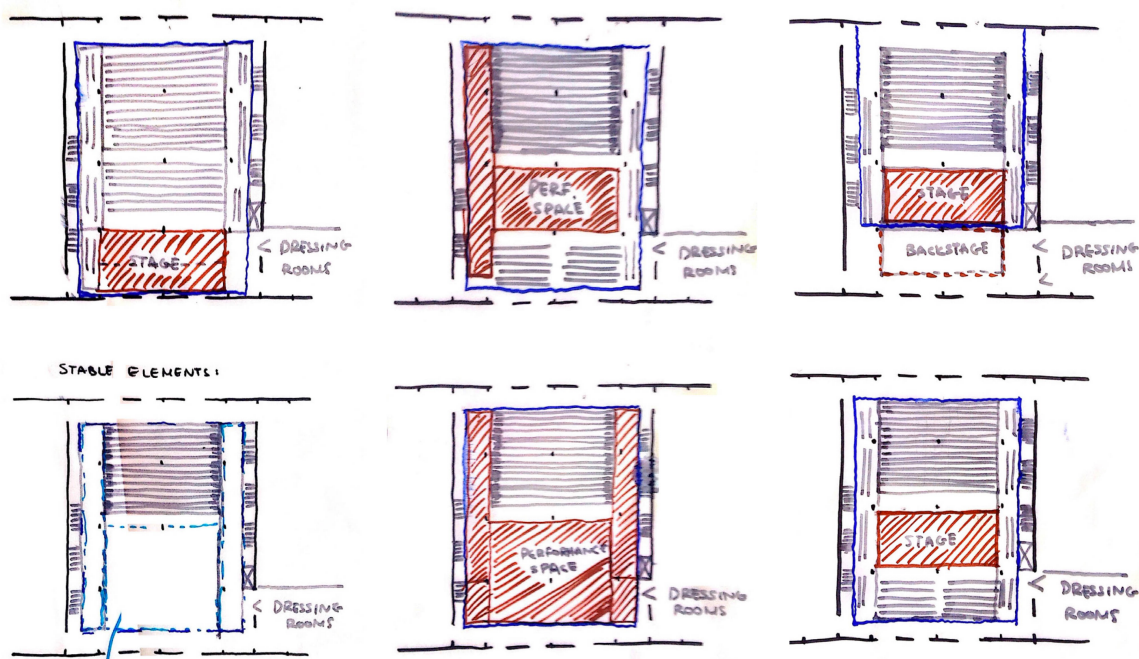


2. Interior of the Katoenveem | control of cotton bales Stadsarchief Rotterdam

In extend to my research, the main question for my design proposal was "how to maintain and highlight the transit system?" and more precisely, "how to give back its former significance on a new design?". How to utilize the "tailor-made" feature of this building in order to create "tailor- made" experiences for its future users. Through my design, I aim to keep, highlight and reuse this special system, which is the main reason why, I decided to transform the building into an innovative type of Theater. The theater as a space demands a large amount of movable elements, such as curtains, lights, sceneries and settings or even the performers. The transit system used to offer the possibility to transfer the cotton bales in every corner of the interior of the building. Therefore, being transformed and redesigned properly, it could now serve the new needs of the introduced Theater and regain its former central functional role.

The methodology I followed so far includes an extended analysis of the existing building and context, in all the different scales, both as a group and individually. This whole process resulted to my value assessment, forming the **framework of transformation** and my starting points for the design. According to my fascination about the building, I also decided on my research question that is quite related to the architectural discourse of post-modernism movements, about the relationship between form and function and the users.

Therefore, my goal is to introduce innovative aspects in my Performing Arts Centre, where the audience and the performers will be able to interact differently with each other and with the space itself, where there will be less limits of what is possible. In this framework, some of my main design problems / conflicts are related to the given height above the stages, the lighting conditions, the acoustics' provision, the audience's gaze, the spatial setting of the seats, the adjustments of the floors, the walls and the roof and they are all influenced by all the valuable features of the existing building. I aim to design a theatrical space with less stable elements and **more possibilities** for different spatial arrangements of the performance space in relation to the space of the audience. (fig.3) I do consider the theater as a field of research, where changes and experimentations are made constantly, so designing adaptive spaces and offering various possibilities could be more convenient and useful to the contemporary needs. So, the functional aspect of the design is now considered differently than in the past, taking into account the **tolerance of change**.



3. Alternative arrangements of theatrical space

A re-use architectural project that deals with a monument should be as compatible as possible and respectful towards the values of the existing structure. Such a concept reacts to the reversibility one, mentioned in the Venice Chapter. This is what I aim to achieve through my proposal, to intervene respectfully and utilize compatible solutions for the existing building.

Re-using buildings such as the Katoenveem, that forms the industrial heritage of a place and especially of Rotterdam, a harbor city by definition is quite significant for the local community, as well as for the wider social context. This building still stands in the harbor as a reminder of the industrial growth in the cotton trade of the Netherlands, while it represents the innovation in the mechanical transit of goods, during the age of industrialization.

Moreover, the project aims to address the contemporary discourses in architecture about innovative spaces, where people will be able to adjust, modify or even abolish them according to their will. The users are, therefore, in the center of the design, while the theatrical spaces in conjunction with the revitalization of the transit system, will create different experiences both for the performers and the audience. Such a need derives from the tendency of contemporary performances to be organized in a different way than being restricted to a stage with clear distance and borders from the seating area. The conventional arrangement of a theater will be explored and reformed in an innovative way, in order for the space to be able to become "tailor- made" for each particular performance.

Last but not least, I aim to focus on the functional aspect of my design proposal and bring it in balance with all the valuable existing elements of the monument. Find the way to intervene without disturbing the story of the old structure, but instead consider ways to enhance this story, by bringing back some old connections and relationships between the building, the people and its surrounding context. Overall, this summarizes my position towards projects related with heritage.