

MICROADMIRATION

Research Plan

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microcosm

(noun) a small place, society, or situation that has the same characteristics as something much larger.

Cambridge Dictionary

Introduction

The project starts as a piece of urban furniture, that was used as a kind of a resource to escape from the world. It is a kind of intermediary that becomes a kind of a guest house itself. From my observations, it came to me that it provides shelter, food, and pleasure just for the different kinds of livings than I had in the premise. From the very first beginning, I thought that my design would be very much focused on human beings, but it evolved into something much smaller.



Garden. Individual work
(Swida S., 10.11.2020, Delft)

The “garden” became a microcosm and the miniature that includes other creatures and living things, like birds, insects, etc. While animals started to treat it as a home, I’ve noticed that people who were using it (me, my neighbor, my flatmate) become more and more like temporary guests, who are more like observant or visitors. By making the world in microcosm I started to look more into the balance of the natural resources in the world. That brought me to the question of essential motives of being conscious of humans’ carbon footprint and struggles that the world is facing now and how we, as architects, could possibly contribute?

That sows the seed of the idea of things in miniature that somehow are encapsulated. From the idea of shelter connected with the pleasure, I’ve started to notice that the microcosm which I’m translating through the piece of the furniture that happened to be a garden is also starting to becoming a *microadmiration* for the things that are happening within the small universe that has been under its own control and living with its own time.

The lesson that I look at from the reading of Doughnut Economics is that Collective behavior is a microcosm of the future's economic system and only by preserving natural capital we would be ever safe from whatever is left. That is something that I am struggling with a lot when it comes to questioning my future career as an architect. In my translation of Kate Raworth's warning (Raworth, 2013), the way one could ever contribute is only by a holistic approach not only to economic and ecological issues but also sociological. From a rather simple question of why did people stop to cherish moments and the environment they are being surrounded by, I started to wonder how my ideology of *microadmiration* could possibly change that?

It is still not very clear how the form of my design proposal would look physically but in theory, one could imagine a place that might be appropriated by nature where architecture doesn't deny it but is more like a frame where wildlife could take over. That could be a microcosm where one is a visitor who learns again how to admire and appreciate it.

This kind of feeling accompanied me while visiting Het Stenen Hoofd, where it felt that nature has a priority of the space, while humans were guests. The site is an example of something that has been returned to its origins, which is nature. Once constructed and occupied for the transfer of goods, now the place where a large number of protected plants are reserved. The quay walls are at the same time a microcosm for smaller livings that took a place on something abandoned by humans, but also a frame that creates a coastline of the most important part of Amsterdam.

There were plans for the vacant land but Stichting (foundation or establishment) protects the site to stay as a natural landmark. They allow different art installations to be built but all the projects that are happening are rather temporary. People who are using the site are very attached to its natural appearance. It's also the only nearby place where Amsterdammers can let their dogs out and have some peaceful moment with the nature that surrounds the docks. How can one be sensitive to detail and to things that are happening on the site? Maybe the site should be left as a natural 'park' and the building proposal should take a place next to it?



View of the site.
The first photo: The Closed IJ with the remains of the Stenen Hoofd. In the background the grain silo on the Westerdoksdijk (Van Gool H., 1991, Amsterdam from Stadsarchief Amsterdam).

The second photo: Westerdoksdijk 44 on the Stenenhoofd and on the left the concrete grain silo (Arsath Ro'is, JM, 1959, Amsterdam, from Stadsarchief Amsterdam)

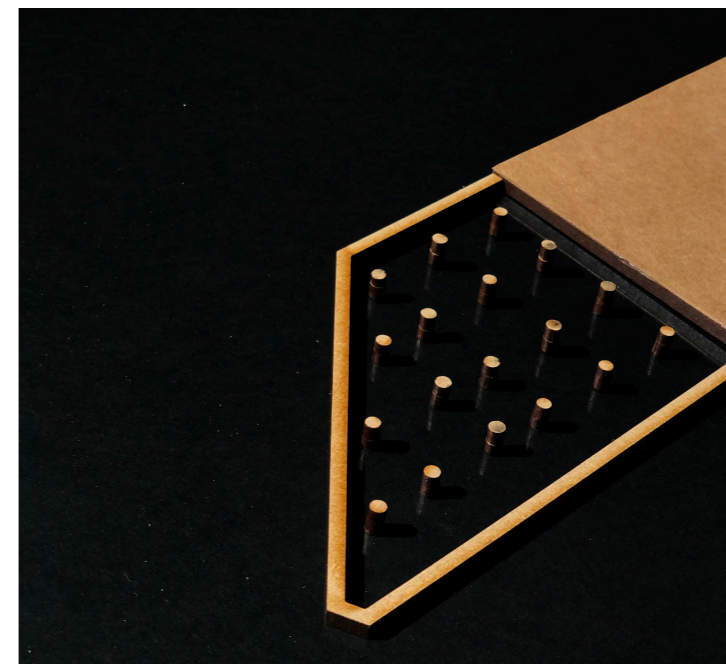
Once I was told that design is a very complex process that is not necessarily elegant. Rather disorderly, very often rough and messy. That is how I saw all my thoughts that I have collected together on one piece of the paper roll. That helped me a lot to connect the thoughts and made it easier to go back to certain reflections that I had at the beginning of the semester. As I continued doing so, I have realised that this map of thoughts has become my project journal.

Another aspect that I found very important in my methodology was simply asking people what they think about the site that I've chosen and on their methods and experience related to space. As soon as I interviewed people who were walking with their dogs I understood that it's not just an empty site that one can occupy but it's the space of all and none at the same time. Many materials that I managed to gather were from Gemeente Amsterdam Stadsarchief, but what I've found the most helpful in the development of my design is getting to know acquaintances who are visiting the site daily.

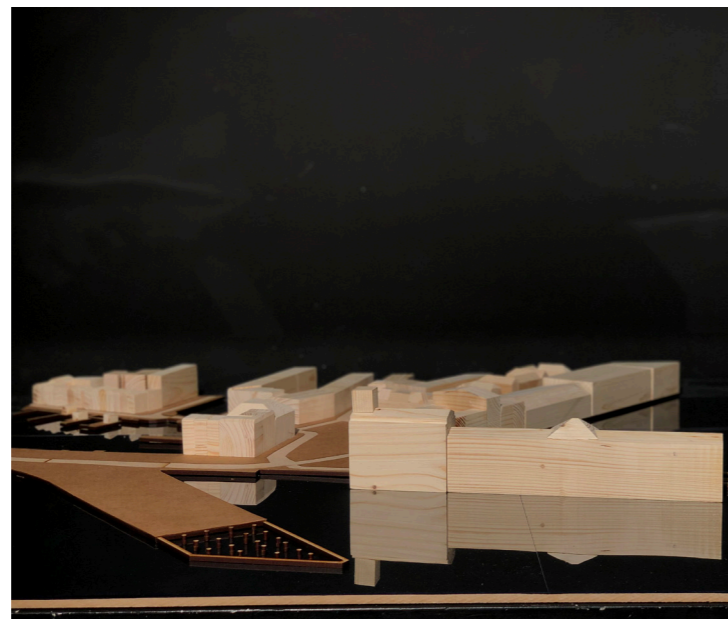
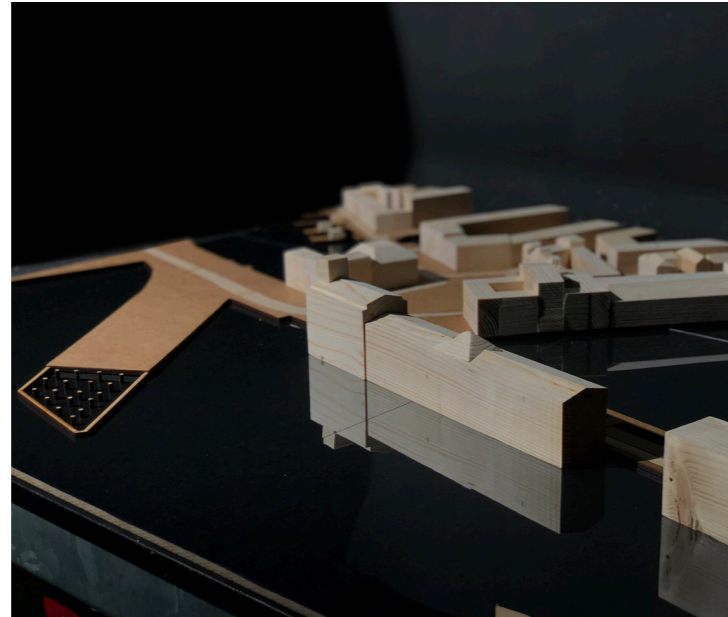


Map of thoughts, individual work.
(Swida S., 18.10.2020, Delft)

Model making is one of the most important parts of the architects' work. Whether these are analytical, intuitive or substantial they are the method that helps to formulate the project idea into an actual design. Even if we are doomed to live in very critical situations globally and locally, I found it important to use any kinds of materials possible to create physical forms that might help me to define what the building might look like.



View of the site, model, collective work with Weronika Lenzion.
(Swida S., 2020, Delft)

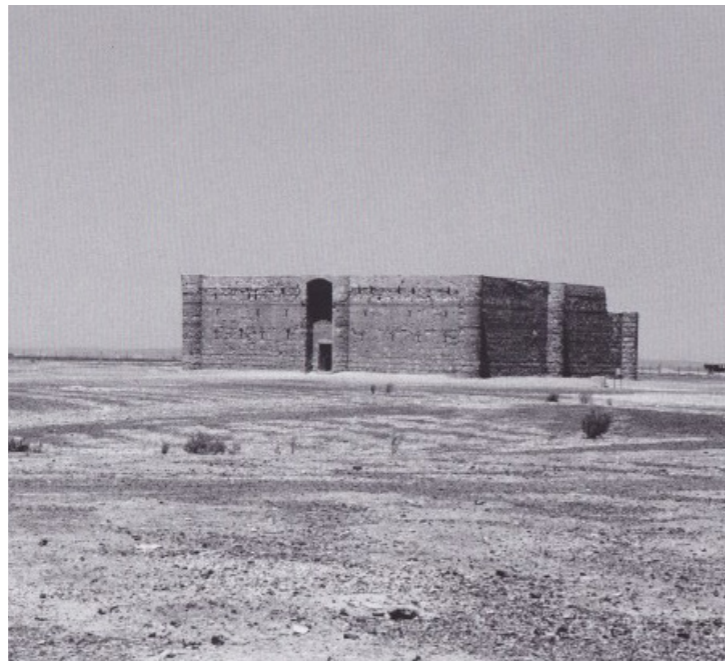


View of the site, model, collective work with Weronika Lenzion.
(Swida S., 2020, Delft)

From the research on the history of Amsterdam into more intimate conversations with local organisations working within the city, collective research that I have done as the part of the studio gave me the idea that we all work collectively. First, I was questioning if we actually want to share the space and activities with people around but now I am more and more convinced that the project proposal should be something that contains people's need but also take into consideration other livings than just humans.

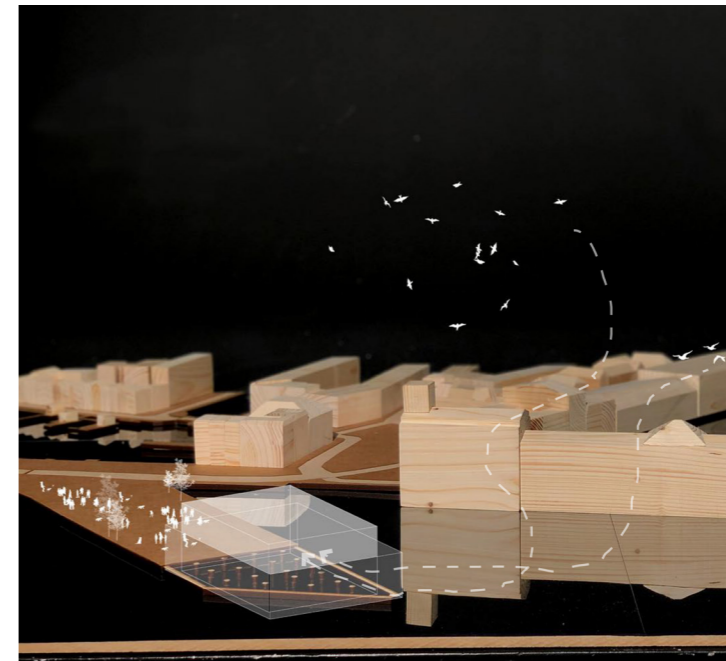
There are different types of hotels but what I have observed is that very often hospitality models are based on utopian ideology. Hotels might be indeed perceived as the lonely islands which are self-sufficient, almost fully cut off from the rest of the city. One of these examples is a Grand Hotel in Lausanne, which bases on individualism which very much defined the appearance of the space and led to rather a capitalistic idea of society (Dascalu, 2013). Other examples like Caravanserai even if focused on collective living, could be seen as a lonely oasis-like island for people who are looking for a shelter in the middle of nowhere (Dagnino, 2019). By researching about all the hotel models I questioned what kind of a hotel I will design.

I believe that Amsterdam has already become one big hotel as the city and it's living in its utopia as a lonely island for those who are looking for shelter, whether it's for a night for longer. As an architect, I would like to contribute to this kind of a city by creating a space that would not exclude any social group.



Caravanserai in the midst of nowhere.
(Author unknown, <https://misfitsarchitecture.com/2017/12/09/caravanserai/>)

As I removed myself from the model that I did which helped me to understand what might happen without the intervention of the designer, as the same happened to the site I've chosen for my graduation project proposal. Somehow things gain life on their own. Therefore, there is a moment when the design as the product doesn't belong anymore to the architect. That brings another question which is how much of the stewardship some things require to have, and at what point it is appropriate to let things be?



Fist sketch of the idea on the site.

Questions

What is my role as an architect and to what extent you are 'in charge' on the project?

How do you see the role of the architect and how do you define it?

What is the notion of stewardship in the process of designing and when can one let things go to live their own life?

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