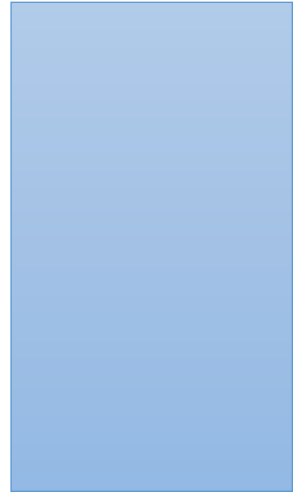# Layering of time

Police headquarters in Rotterdam

TU Delft

Heritage & Architecture Graduation Studio

Vacant Heritage Politie Bouwmeester (2021/22 Q1)

AR3A010 Research plan

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Content

Introduction

Since the formation of the National Police in the Netherlands in 2013, they are dealing with a big real estate challenge. The accommodations will have to adapt to the new organization and the changed structure of services, with larger teams, in fewer places and more services digitally. (Weessies, 2017) A part of the real estate owned by the police needs to be redeveloped. In this graduation studio we elaborate on this redevelopment through research and design. In collaboration with Atelier Politie Bouw Meester, ten locations in the Netherlands have been selected for this. (Heritage & Architecture, 2021)

There are several reasons why vacant heritage should be re-used instead of being demolished. For example, a vast amount of resources are being discarded, and a lot of embedded energy will be wasted. And in the case of buildings with historical significance, demolition is for cultural reasons even less acceptable. (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017, p. 29)

Heritage can also remind people of former times. A memory or sensation that people value can be a good reason to preserve heritage. Since this valuation is very personal and elusive, it is a challenge to stay objective. Kuipers writes that the idea that certain places have an individual spirit arises from ancient times and was often translated into a religious expression (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017, p. 61). This 'spirit' make a heritage building a place with a distinguished identity; it gives a place a soul (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017, p. 61).

There is also a lot of literature on how to re-use heritage properly. According to Job Roos, for example, redevelopment can serve both the past and the future without either being subservient to the other. An essential choice in redevelopment is harmony or contrast. But there must be room for more, like imperfection or the unexpected. (Roos, 2007, p. 12)

More specifically regarding police real estate, according to Weessies, Architectuur Lokaal reports "The aim is to achieve a good coherence between functional, technical, special, aesthetic and financial requirements." (Weessies, 2017)

The first time I visited the police headquarters building in Rotterdam I was fascinated by its size and the cacophony of shapes and materials. As a native of Rotterdam, I was surprised that I had never consciously seen this building. Standing in the heart of Rotterdam, directly behind the city hall with a gross floor area over 25,000 square meters.

This big building at this location in the heart of Rotterdam offers so many opportunities for the city that simply demolishing this building would be a shame. The remarkable appearance of the building makes it interesting. With every visit my opinion about the facades changes. The concept of beautiful versus ugly often comes into play here, but to really get a grip on this on this multitude of colors, textures and shapes, I wanted to find out more about the history of the building.

Almost the entire center of Rotterdam was bombed or burned to the ground during the bombing on May 14, 1940. My first thought when seeing this building from the 80s was: What a shame that the old building has been destroyed. But after doing some research, the old building appears to have survived the war. In the 1980s, Maarten Struijs, architect for Gemeentewerken Rotterdam at the time, made a redesign for this building. This facelift has rendered the old building unrecognizable.

This is where the story of the building became really interesting to me, and what was the deciding factor in choosing this building. A police building that survived the bombing of Rotterdam is still

present in the city, covered under a new facade. Are there people who still remember the old building? Did the old building conjure up bad memories of the war? Or was it the general opinion of that time about what Rotterdam should look like as a modern city that led to the redesign? This led me to the following research question:

How does the layering of time in the facades of the police headquarters of Rotterdam expresses itself, and how does it influence the perception of the building by passers-by?

In order to find an answer to this question, this research is split into four parts:

1. Layering of time

The layering of time in architecture became a concept, used by many. But what does it mean? In the first part of the research I will elaborate on the term and the meaning in this research.

2. The layering of time of the Police headquarters in Rotterdam

In this part of the research an attempt is made to get a grip on the layering in this specific building.

3. Valuation of layering

How does layering influence the value of the Police headquarters in Rotterdam?

4. Input for redesign

Since a new intervention could be seen as another layer to this building, understanding the values of the existing layers will help creating a new one.

Methodology

In the introduction the problem and my inspiration have been introduced and the following research question. In order to find the answer to this question the research is split into the earlier introduced four parts.

1. To find more background information about layering of time, a literature study is being done. his study will provide a theoretical framework as a base for the rest of the research.
2. The case study of the Police headquarter in Rotterdam will consist of an historical research into the history of the building and a design research/ analysis of the building. This will be done starting by finding literature. In the building of the city archive of Rotterdam we managed to find a very structured overview of all the available drawings and changes over time of the building at Oud Gemeentenwerken. These drawings will be the base for the analysis.
3. The case study also includes a value assessment of the building. The city archive of Rotterdam has provided not only drawings of the building over time, but also news articles from the architects. These articles together with the few books found about the original architect and the redesign architect, will form the basis for the value assessment since the building is no monument and nowhere has a text about the values of the building been found. Together with research on layering and the site analysis, this will provide some answers to the research questions.
4. The historical research shows the different phases of the building and the differences between the designs and the architects. Because the new intervention will again become a new layer on this building, it is important to consider how this new layer connects to the existing layers.

The design and research processes are running at the same time and often interfere. The design research focusses more on the corners of the building and the facades as transition zones in between. Starting from my personal fascination during site visits, this approach to the analysis will correspond in many ways with the historical analysis.
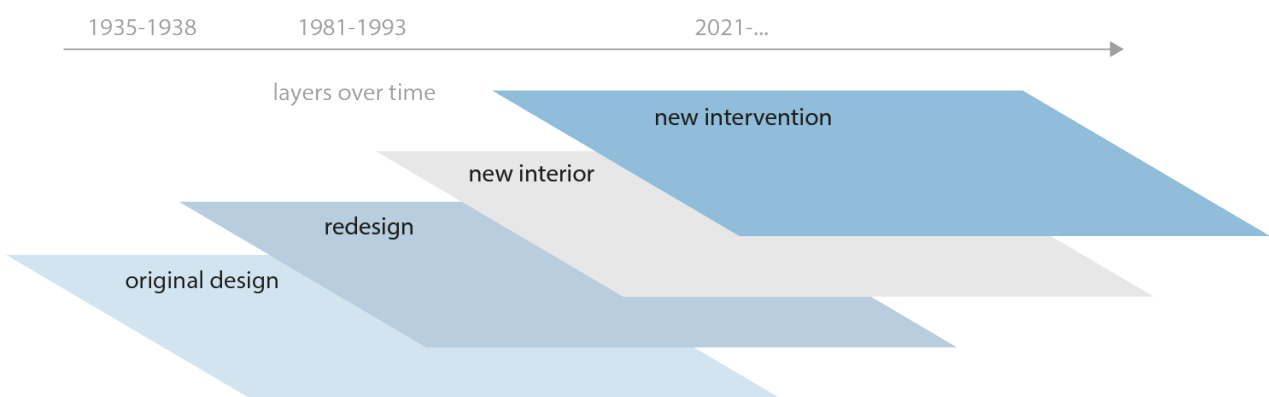
Figure 1: layers of time in the Police headquarters in Rotterdam

problem

inspiration

→ vacancy

→ square meters

→ materials

research question

survey/ interview

feedback

feedback

research on layering

historical research

design research

input for redesign

final design

paper

reflection

research answers

process keeps repeating itself

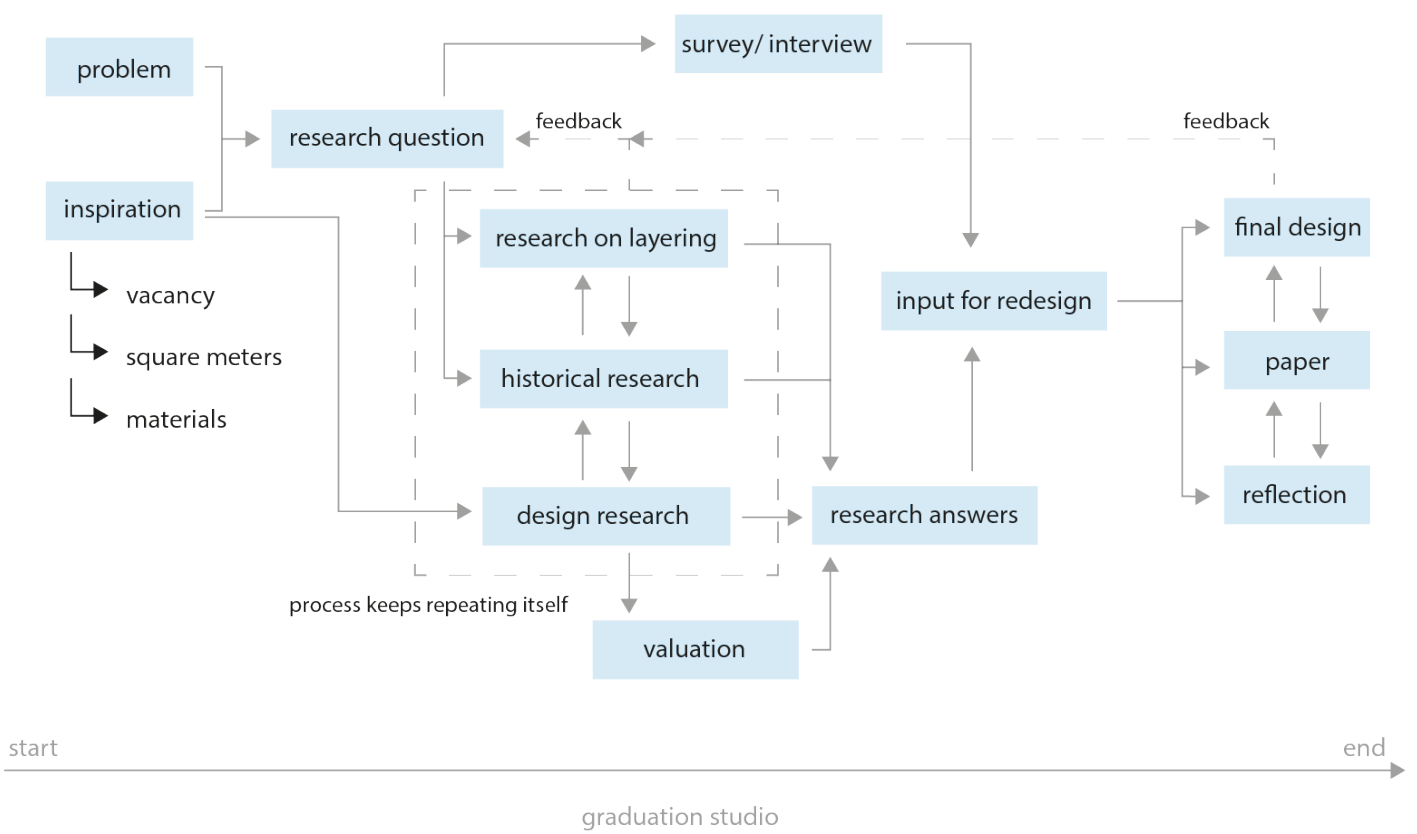valuation

start

end

graduation studio

Figure 2: structure scheme

Theoretical framework

Layering of time

The concept of layering is the main topic to this research. In his book 'Heritage Based design' Meurs says "each intervention adds a new 'layer' of history to the building" (Meurs, 2016, p. 36). This 'layer' is a concept worth elaborating on since it is used often in architectural literature. Especially when talking about heritage.

Meurs also explains that Alois Riegl already introduced 'Älterswart'- age value- a hundred years ago in his book 'Der modern Denkmalkultus, Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung' in 1903. A value that manifests itself, for example, in the patina (the traces of time). (Meurs, 2016, p. 36)

Restoring a building back to the state in which it was once built can sometimes lead to a less authentic building than when the various modifications over time are visible. Restoring it to its original state often requires copying parts and what is the historical value of something new and represents the old? In the book "temp, mo. mo." they recognize the added value of layering over time, saying that it is a well-established opinion within the conservation of monuments to attribute cultural-historical value to changes over time (Quist, Stroux, & Bierman, 2012, p. 21). If a building has been drastically changed several times, it will have had a different appearance in each time phase. The discussion about which atmosphere should then be restored during restoration is very interesting.

Riegl's value set demonstrates that any act of conservation is somehow a compromise between the ideal of maintaining the historical 'truth' of material authenticity of the historic form and fabric as far as possible, and the inevitable need to adapt technical and/or aesthetical performance to current needs to keep a building in daily use. (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017, p. 70). I believe that the right balance between modern technologies and the historical 'truth' in re-design will contribute positively to the experience of a building when it works well together.

An example of a building in which I believe this balance is tangible is the Monastery Predikheren in Mechelen, where they renovated the building but without making it perfectly new. By showing the old in its imperfect state and literally adding a new layer to contrast the old. In the church they even decided not to add anything at all.

The many building traces that are visible from the various renovations are part of the charm of this building part. (Korteknie Stuhlmacher Architecten, sd) Showing these layers gives a historic educational value to the interior.

The layering of time of the Police headquarters in Rotterdam

The original police station 1935-1938

The original architect of the police headquarters in Rotterdam was Ad van der Steur. He tried to fit the building in its surroundings as well as possible, meaning the building should not trump the town hall where the municipal authority resided. The building also had to radiate dignity and fit in scale with the then old part of Rotterdam. (Gielen, 2002, p. 90)

The subordination to the town hall was made visible by the choice of materials and smaller scale of the building. At the same time, the different colored brick made a connection with the old city. The officers' quarters on the ground floor had wide, not high windows and the building had to radiate the maintenance of authority. (Gielen, 2002, p. 90)

This led to the building of red hand-moulded stone with sills, some decorations of Oberu-Kirchner sandstone and a high plinth of Scandinavian granite. With grey roof tiles on the roof. (Gielen, 2002, p. 90)

The redesign 1981-1993

The design for the new police building on the Haagse Veer was one of Struijs' first assignments. Partly because Carel Weeber served as supervisor during the construction of this new police building. Weeber had designed a residential building on Hofplein with which he already gave a clear direction to the design of the new police station to be built. Struis was one of the few who had no problems with that supervision. (Galema & Tijhuis, 2006, p. 107)

In de redesign a big part of the old building remained. In that respect, the redesign was a sustainable design. Instead of demolishing the old building, it was reused.

The fact that it has become unrecognizable is another aspect, but that is the focus of this research. The possibly that values of the old building are still present, related to the visible. For passers-by, this is mainly about the experience of the facades, since the outside of the building is what they see or saw. Now that these facades have been completely covered, the question arises whether there are still values in the old part underneath.

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