Research Plan

The stories behind the stones

How the intangible aspects of architectural heritage can serve as a guiding theme within the design process

My memoirs of the Plague house

I remember
The feeling of walking inside
Your beautiful walls, pastel colours
And your outstanding height

I remember
Your smell, the warm atmosphere
Ever since I was a child
I loved coming here

I remember
My heart beating in my chest
You made me feel alive, connected to the present
Watching the past in peaceful rest

I remember
The mysterious inner garden, a spiritual place
You made me feel surrounded
By a vibrant embrace

I remember
Your spiral staircase, your ageing wood
The bridge with zebra pattern and sounds of joy
The memoirs of my childhood

I remember
Your original purpose, a place to quarantine
A building designed for the Black Death
Which you have fortunately never seen

I remember
That I was shocked to see that you were going up for sale
To this day I hope you will be in good hands
And the stories behind your stones will prevail

Contents

"… From a young age, I loved coming to the Plague house in Leiden, at the time the entrance building of Naturalis Biodiversity Center. I remember everything in great colour and detail; the high ceilings, the sounds and smells from the restaurant, the beautiful museum store, the mysterious inner garden and the bridge with zebra pattern that connected the Plague house to the museum building. Although it may sound contradictory to its original purpose, I always experienced this unique building as a beautiful, vibrant and dynamic place full of positive energy …"

- My personal memory of the Plague house, Leiden
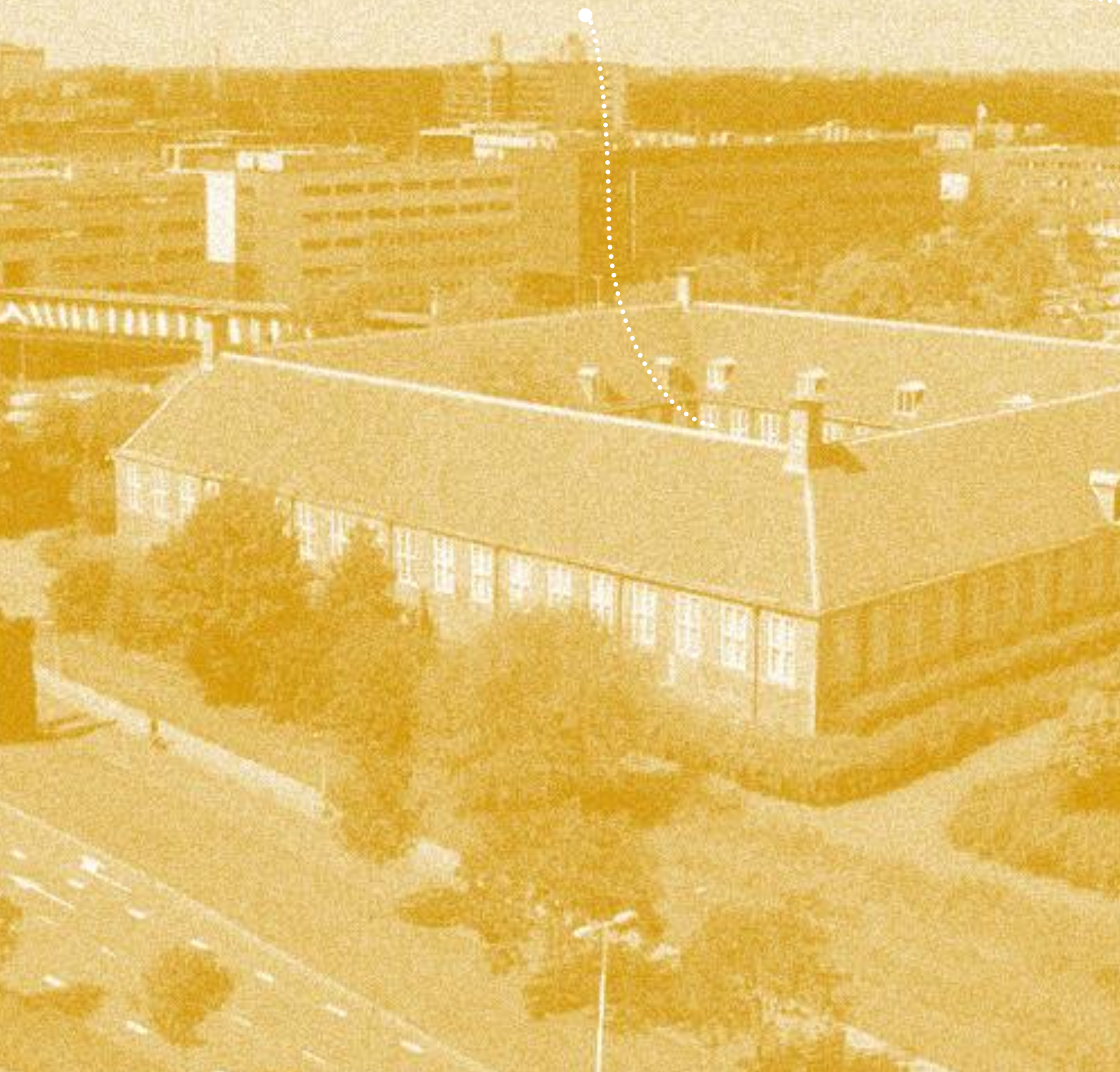
Introduction

The Plague house in Leiden is one example out of many (national) monuments that can be found throughout the Netherlands. These buildings often have a rich history full of stories and memories, an unique 'spirit' that has developed over time. The Dutch Minister of Education, Culture and Science even states that [architectural] heritage places do not only 'appeal to people's emotions', but actually 'tell us stories about where we come from, who we are and how we are developing'.[1] This quote clearly illustrates what fascinates me most about architectural heritage; I see heritage not only as a physical or 'tangible' construct, but rather as a representation of its more socio-cultural or 'intangible' aspects such as (collective) memories, (shared) experiences or people's sense of identity. My personal memory of the Plague house can be seen as a clear example of this phenomenon.

Recently, these socio-cultural or 'intangible' aspects have also become more visible in Dutch heritage care; the focus is no longer just on the object itself, but 'on the story the object tells or what experience it generates'.[2] However, although this calls for a more 'integral, broad and participative form of valuation'[3], existing valuation guidelines generally 'do not speak to the non-tangible aspects, such as spatial qualities, spirit of place or other (socio-)cultural associations'.[4] Unfortunately, in some cases this can even lead to large differences in value; 'buildings that mean nothing to the experts can be regarded locally as essential monuments'.[5] Although several initiatives have been launched to involve residents and communities in the heritage valuation process, little is currently known about the possibilities to *systematically include* the socio-cultural or 'intangible' aspects in both the heritage valuation and design processes.

During my own design education at the Heritage & Architecture Studio at TU Delft, I also experienced the same problematique – the socio-cultural or 'intangible' aspects of the monuments were hardly discussed. For example, as part of the method, the so-called 'Heritage Value Matrix' tool was used to include all the different heritage values within the architectural design process.[6] However, although this HV-Matrix *assessment tool* was useful for getting a clear overview of the different values, in my opinion it was not an appropriate *research method* to get a deeper understanding of aspects such as the aforementioned socio-cultural or 'intangible' values of heritage.

Nevertheless, my aim is not to change this particular HV-Matrix *assessment tool*, but rather to expand the current 'rigid' *system/methodology* of the adaptive reuse of architectural heritage by approaching it from a more social and human perspective that fits the recent shift in values. According to literature, there may be potential in methods such as 'mental mapping'[7] or 'collaborative or counter-mapping'[8] to get a better grip on the socio-cultural or 'intangible' values of heritage. This latter mapping technique involves 'the integration of archival evidence, such as maps and aerial photographs, with other qualitative research methods such as

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[1] Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2018, p. 3

[2] Bazelmans, 2013a, p. 89

[3] Bazelmans, 2013a, p. 92

[4] Clarke, Kuipers & Stroux, 2020, p. 871

[5] Meurs, 2016, p. 43

[6] Clarke, Kuipers & Stroux, 2020

[7] Van Leeuwen, 2014, p. 27

[8] Jones, 2017, p. 28

place-based oral history interviews, site walks with community members and audio-visual recordings'.[9] I personally aim for a more *inclusive and people-centred* way of dealing with heritage, and would like to explore how I can strategically use certain elements of this 'mapping' methodology to give the socio-cultural or 'intangible' aspects of heritage a more prominent place in both the evaluation and the design process. Therefore, my project addresses the following research question:

How can 'collaborative or counter-mapping' contribute to a more systematic and participatory approach to make the 'intangible' aspects of architectural heritage (such as collective memories and social meaning) 'tangible', in order to serve as a guiding theme within the design process?

I would love to delve more deeply into this subject; what do these 'intangible' aspects or values actually mean? To what extent are these aspects currently taken into account, and why? How can these aspects, such as (collective) memories, (shared) experiences/values or people's sense of identity be made explicit by 'collaborative or counter-mapping'? And more importantly: how can these intangible aspects subsequently lead to a 'narrative' or 'guiding theme' for a redesign? Thereby, my investigation aims to generate an innovative and strategic mapping-based toolbox or methodology that will function as a new addition to the existing heritage valuation guidelines. * The Plague house in Leiden will serve as a canvas for my research.

* As my research is an integration of my two different Master programmes at Delft University of Technology (MSc Architecture and MSc Communication Design for Innovation), I aim to intertwine the two disciplines in order to come up with new and innovative insights that are relevant to both fields.

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[9] Jones, 2017, p. 28

Theoretical framework

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Key terms: architectural heritage, intangible aspects, (collective) memories, social meaning, spirit of the place, collaborative mapping, counter-mapping

Definition 'intangible aspects' of architectural heritage: In my research, the 'intangible' aspects will refer to the 'spatial qualities, spirit of place or other (socio-) cultural associations'[10] of architectural heritage, including (collective) memories, shared experiences/values or people's sense of identity.

Domain: literature, phenomenology, memory studies

I State-of-the-art: the valuation process of heritage buildings in the Netherlands
In the Netherlands, there are many guidelines to help professionals evaluate existing buildings. These guidelines cover the physical analysis of the building, but generally 'do not speak to the non-tangible aspects, such as spatial qualities, spirit of place or other (socio-)cultural associations'.[11] I find this remarkable, since I agree with Kuipers & De Jonge that it is, for example, precisely this 'spirit' that 'unites the essential qualities that make a heritage building a place with a distinguished identity; in short, the 'spirit' imbues a place with a soul'.[12]

The absence of these more socio-cultural or intangible values within heritage valuation processes can sometimes even cause dilemmas. For example, Meurs highlights the dilemma of the 'expert value' versus the 'community value' within this process. He mentions that 'we are used to the cultural heritage value being determined by someone who has studied the subject, often an architecture historian or a building archaeologist'.[13] In some cases, this can lead to a large difference in value between the expert and the community.[14] I see this as a missed opportunity – although the expert's cultural-historical valuation is of great importance, I am convinced that the intangible aspects of the community should not be a *mere consideration*, but rather should play a *key factor* in the adaptive reuse of heritage. Schofield summed this up beautifully: 'Heritage experts are good at dealing with the former, while it is local communities who are often expert in the places they care about most'.[15] It's time for a different way of understanding and constructing the methodology. After all, heritage belongs to everyone.

In order to approach both the heritage valuation and the design process more from a social and human perspective, it is important that I first delve deeper into the literature on both the socio-cultural or 'intangible' aspects as well as the current state of affairs regarding heritage evaluation processes in the Netherlands. This literature background will serve as a solid basis for my research.

II Social stream in heritage care and the need for an integral approach
Within the architectural discourse, there is a growing awareness that human understanding of its environment also derives from bodily experience and perception.[16] This shift towards the more socio-cultural or intangible aspects has recently also become visible in Dutch heritage care; these days 'much attention is

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[10] Clarke, Kuipers & Stroux, 2020, p. 871
[11] Clarke, Kuipers & Stroux, 2020, p. 871
[12] Kuipers & De Jonge, 2017, p. 61
[13] Meurs, 2016, p. 42
[14] Meurs, 2016, p. 43
[15] Schofield, 2016, p. xv
[16] Bazelmans, 2013b, p. 19

paid to social aspects, such as the heritage of 'ordinary people' and personal stories told about a building or a location'.[17] I agree with Bazelmans that this requires a more 'integral, broad and participative form of valuation'[18] that includes, for example, involving non-professional stakeholders [such as citizens] in the valuation process of heritage. I would therefore like to contribute to this movement by exploring how a more *strategic* and *inclusive* toolbox or method can be developed for both the evaluation and design process of architectural heritage. In order to achieve this, it is important that I delve deeper into both this social stream in (Dutch) heritage care as well as the various 'Dutch expert visions' [such as the aforementioned Bazelmans] regarding the desired situation.

III Collaborative or 'counter-mapping' as participatory approach
According to literature, there may be potential in methods such as 'mental mapping'[19] or 'collaborative or counter-mapping'[20] to get a better grip on the social and intangible values of heritage. With regard to this latter method, Jones states that 'social research methods are more suited to assessing social values', and can be 'best combined with community participatory practices, if we wish to capture the fluid processes of valuing the historic environment'.[21] However, many different forms and examples of 'collective, collaborative or counter-mapping' can be found in literature. Therefore, I would love to explore and experiment how I can strategically use certain elements of this broad 'counter-mapping' methodology to come up with an *innovative* and *strategic mapping-based toolbox or methodology* that will function as a new addition to the existing architectural heritage valuation guidelines.

IV Oral history and poetry as a mode of architectural investigation
According to literature, there might also be potential in oral history in architectural research 'as a way to listen anew to what has been unheard in architecture'.[22] I am inspired by Stead, Gosseye & Van der Plaat who state that oral history can 'revalue the undervalued and the unglorified, highlight the myriad activities that take place within buildings, and, more importantly, listen to the full diversity of people who design, make, work, and live within the built environment'.[23] I would like to discover how certain elements of this method can be linked to the aforementioned 'counter-mapping' methodology in order to arrive at an inclusive and people-centred way of dealing with heritage.

In addition, I would also love to delve more deeply into poetry as a mode of architectural investigation. For example, Havik states that 'a poetic way of writing as a mode of architectural investigation could help investigations into architectural themes such as sensory experience, atmosphere and memory'.[24] I agree with Havik that 'the poetic gaze enables us to cherish moments of perception, and thereby enables us to think more deeply about the way people experience their environment'.[25] I see a lot of potential in poetry as a method of expressing the 'intangible' aspects of architectural heritage – especially in combination with the oral history method mentioned above – and would like to experiment with it in order to come up with new insights.

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[17] Meurs, 2016, p. 35
[18] Bazelmans, 2013a, p. 92
[19] Van Leeuwen, 2014, p. 27
[20] Jones, 2017, p. 28
[21] Jones, 2017, p. 28
[22] Stead, Gosseye & Van der Plaat, 2019, p. 284
[23] Stead, Gosseye & Van der Plaat, 2019, p. 284
[24] Havik, 2018, p. 61
[25] Havik, 2018, p. 62

Methodological positioning

Research approaches: qualitative, experimental, historical
Episteme: phenomenology

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, I will use the research approach that can be seen in Figure 1. As already mentioned in the introduction, this figure also shows that my research is an integration of my two different Master programmes – I would like to intertwine my graduation year for Architecture with my other graduation project for the master CDI. For example, within this research I want to use my CDI master mainly for the strategical and phenomenological aspects (how can I reframe the current methodology, how do I get information out of people, how can I make them work together, how can I design a systematic approach, etc.). My aim is to intertwine the two disciplines in order to come up with *new and innovative insights that are relevant to both fields.* The step-by-step approach that I will use in this integrated graduation research is as follows:

I Literature framework
As described in the theoretical framework, I intend to first form a literature background that will serve as the basis for my research. For example, I will delve into literature on the socio-cultural or 'intangible' aspects, the current state of affairs regarding heritage evaluation processes, the social stream in (Dutch) heritage care and the various 'Dutch expert visions' [such as the aforementioned Bazelmans] regarding the desired situation. In addition, I also want to do literature research into the various possibilities of 'collaborative or counter-mapping' and oral history and poetry as a mode of architectural investigation. I will also conduct literature research from my CDI master into various collaboration processes and/or theories that may be important in this respect.

For this part of the research I would like to study, for example, the book 'This is not an Atlas: a global collection of counter-cartographies' by Kollektiv Orangotango+.[26] By using this book as a source of inspiration I hope to end up with innovative counter-maps. It gives a clear overview of different possibilities from all over the world.

II Counter-mapping the Present (Living Memory: social meaning now)
Based on the literature background and knowledge from my CDI master, I will investigate how I can arrive at a systematic, innovative and 'mapping'-based method to discover *the living memory* of architectural heritage (the social meaning in the present). For this part of the research, the 17th century Plague house in Leiden will be used as a case study. What does this building currently mean to the citizens of Leiden, former users and/or local residents? The new 'mapping'-based method will be tested to 'extract' their intangible aspects and will result in a counter-mapping of the current social meaning.

For this part of the research, I plan to get in touch with +- 15 'real' citizens of Leiden, former users and/or local residents to (collaboratively) 'counter-map' their intangible aspects against the current 'rigid' valuation guidelines. By doing so, I hope to make previously invisible information/knowledge about this building visible and 'tangible'. In order to achieve this inclusive or 'crossed-history', I want to approach different kinds of people from different backgrounds. Because it will be about personal stories, values and memories, I will most likely anonymise the data.

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[26] Kollektiv Orangotango+, 2018

III Counter-mapping the Past (Lived Memory: social meaning past)

In order to get a grip on the 'intangible' aspects of the case study, I want to focus not only on the social meaning of the *present*, but also of the *past*. Therefore, I also want to investigate how I can 'extract' the intangible aspects of *the lived memory* (the social meaning in the past) by means of 'counter-mapping'. For this part of the research I also want to use the Plague House in Leiden as a case study. What did this building mean *in the past* for the inhabitants of Leiden and its former users? I do not want to do this together 'with' people, but on the basis of the information they left behind.

For this part of the research I want to dive into the (online) heritage archives of Leiden and research existing interviews, books and old newspaper articles. As this will not be 'together' with real people, I am aware that this will be my personal interpretation of existing information. However, in order to arrive at a 'crossed-history', I will investigate different viewpoints to make it as inclusive as possible.

IV Results counter-mapping: the first 'tangible translation' of the case study

Both investigations result in a joint counter-mapping of the social significance of the Plague House in both the *present* and the *past*. This can be seen as the first 'tangible' translation of the case study.

V Linking intangible aspects to physical elements

Next, I will investigate how I can link the results from the counter-mapping to the *physical elements* of the building with the help of knowledge from the CDI master. In this way I not only hope to form a spatial understanding and narrative of the Plague House (the guiding theme for my design phase), but I also hope that I can develop a more generalized method or step-by-step approach based on this information. In this way, this method can also be used in other architectural heritage projects of great socio-cultural value.

VI Relation between research and design

The discovered spatial understanding and narrative of the Plague house will function as the guiding theme for the design phase (see Figure 2). In this way, the output of the research is used as input for the design process. In fact, my final redesign of the Plague House (based on the guiding theme) can be seen as the implementation or 'outcome' of my own method. I will critically reflect on this 'outcome' for both masters.
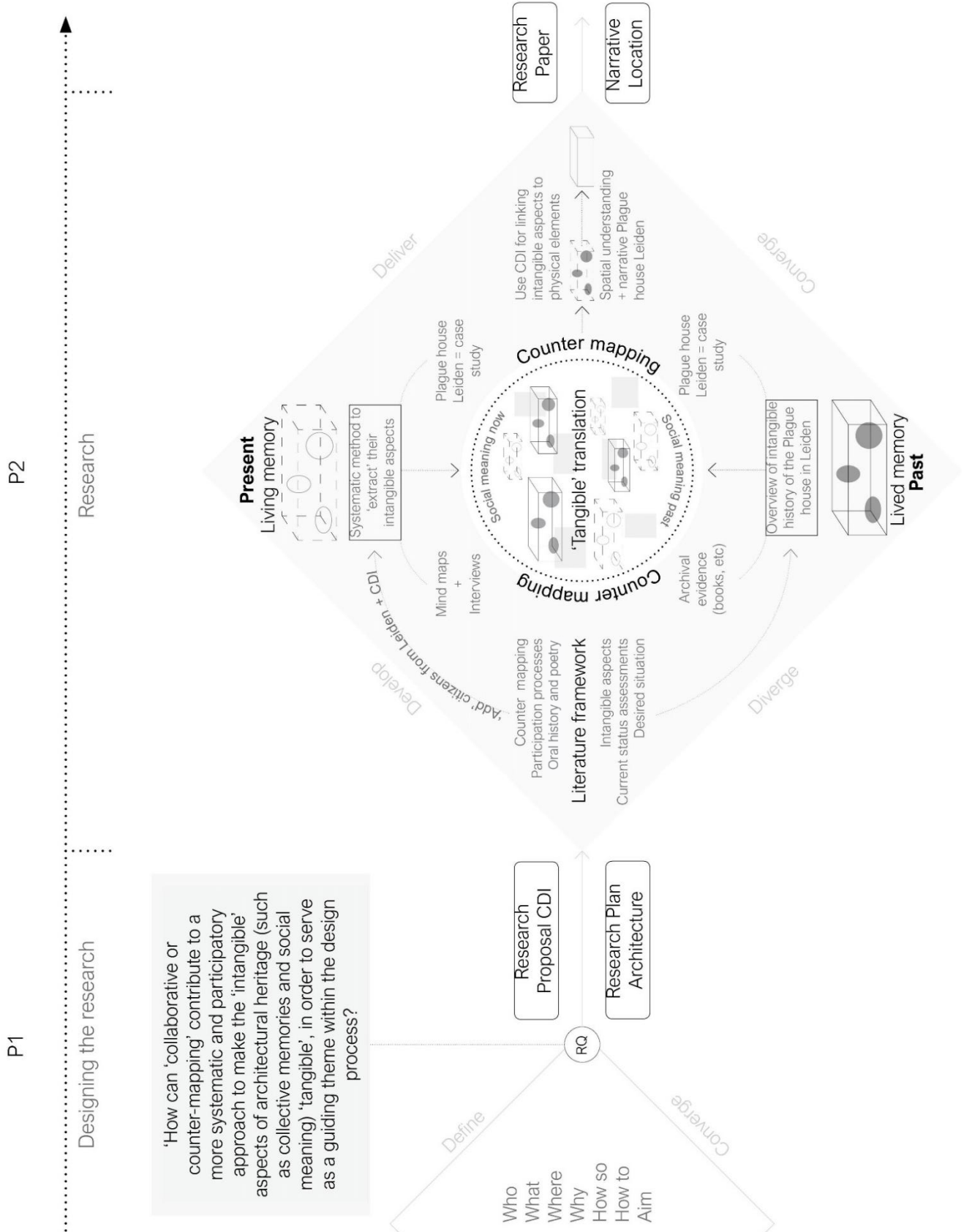
Figure 1: Research Diagram. Author's own diagram (Ela Sari, 2021).

Reflection on the method for CDI

Design = outcome (implementation of this method)

Reflection on the method for Architecture

Deliver

Converge

Develop

Diverge

Implement/use narrative as guiding theme

P4/5

Finalizing

P3

Design
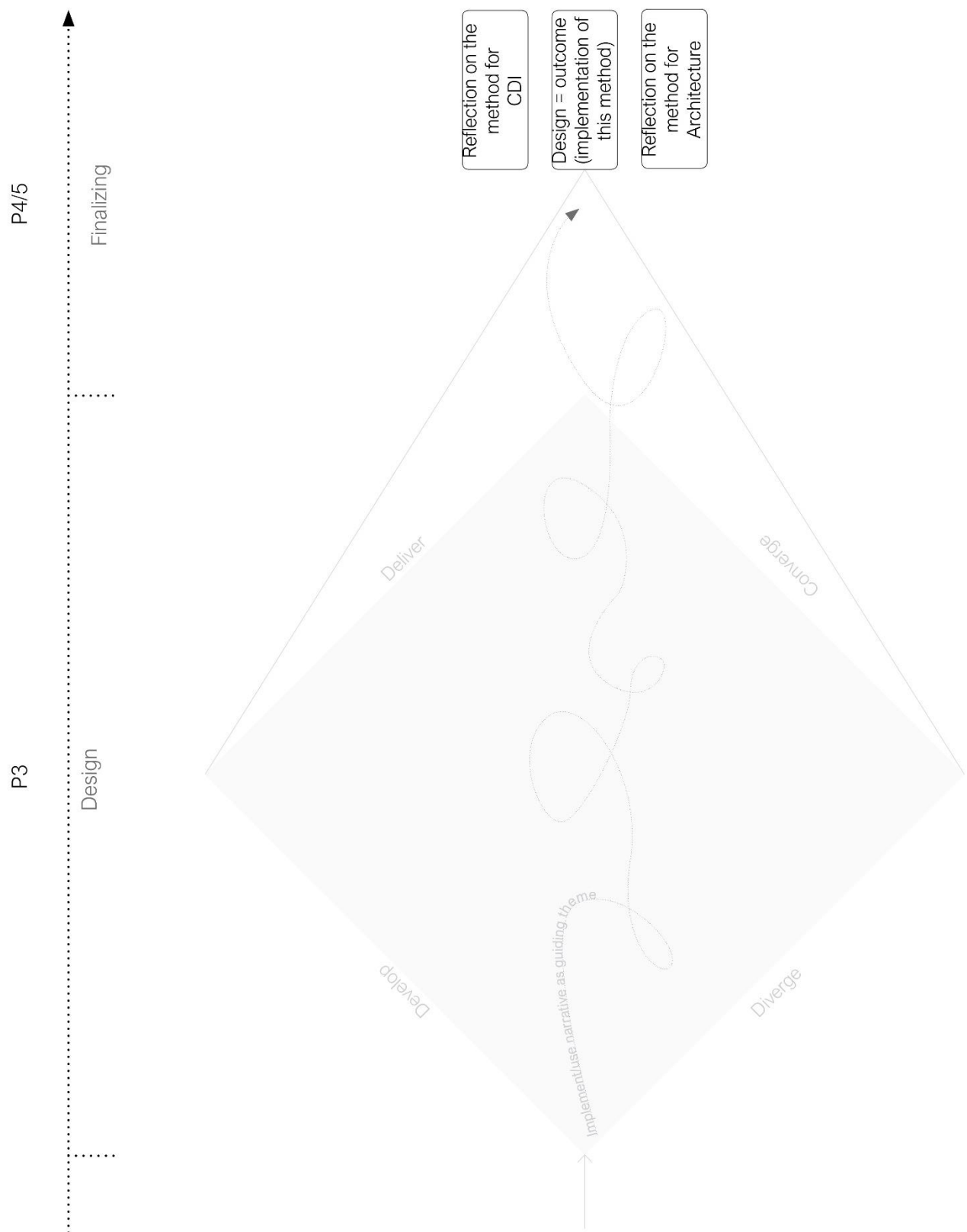
Figure 2: Research Diagram. Author's own diagram (Ela Sari, 2021).

Preliminary conclusion(s)

The expected outcome and generalizing the approach

As mentioned before, my investigation aims to generate an *innovative and strategic mapping-based toolbox or methodology* that will function as a new addition to the existing heritage valuation guidelines. In this way, I hope to be able to contribute to research into the possibilities of systematically including the socio-cultural or 'intangible' aspects in both the heritage valuation and design process. *

Although I am using the Plague House in Leiden as the canvas of my research, the intention is to subsequently make the tested method more 'generic'; with the help of my CDI master I want to investigate how I can come to a generic toolbox or methodology for the heritage sector in the Netherlands. I expect and hope that these outcomes can lead to a discussion for a more inclusive, collaborative and people-oriented way of dealing with our architectural heritage.

* Due to time constraints, my research will only look at certain elements of 'mapping' methodology. Although this demarcation of my research is necessary, I am, however, aware that there may be possibilities to arrive at a new approach by means of other experiments and methods.

Possible outcome of the mapping-based toolbox or methodology

My investigation particularly touches on architectural, socio-cultural, communicative and collaborative issues. I therefore expect that the actual 'toolbox or methodology' might result in a kind of roadmap for the creation of interactive counter-maps; think of an analogue serious game, a (continuous) event in an online whiteboarding platform like Miro or a combination of analogue and digital techniques. All *'stories behind the stones'* are important; inclusiveness is key.

Reflection on 'designing' the research

One of the most important lessons I learned during this course is that it is not feasible or necessary to 'save the whole heritage sector' during my research. The research must be feasible and relevant within the time available. Therefore, my aim is *to add something 'positive'* by expanding the current 'rigid' system/methodology of the adaptive re-use of architectural heritage from a more social and human perspective that suits the recent shift in values. In addition, the results of the research will also serve as a basis for my design.

Furthermore, during Carola Hein's lecture I learned that there is no such thing as 'the history'. She made me realise that I might already be influenced by my own history, and that I have to check carefully where I get my information from. As described in the methodological positioning, the 'counter-mapping' of the past can therefore best be seen as my personal interpretation of the existing information. I am now more aware of this subjectivity and intend to investigate a 'diverse' history. In addition, my research also focuses on the stories and insights of other people, so I will also take ethical issues into account.

In the last and more philosophical lecture called 'The Problem with Problem Solving', I learned that I should not deal with my problem statement platonically, but rather see it as a 'journey of questioning and problematizing'. This made me more passionate about my problem statement and taught me to keep asking myself questions. Thanks to this lecture, I was better able to 'surrender' to the problem and dared to follow my own path – designing the research is a complicated quest that ultimately also leads to more insights about yourself and your own position.

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