

Final Reflection

On Research

The research started with the fascination of the overall character of Sliedrecht. Statements such as: "Geef gang want, geen zand, geen vreten" and "Doe het zelf, doe het samen" were often used by its (previous) inhabitants and workers and a sense of pride and work ethic was omnipresent. Thus I sat out a journey on how these characteristics were translated into the urban environment and how the interplay might have helped in the prosperity of Sliedrecht. Early on in the research with the help of Dr. I. Nevzgodin my attention became focused on the work of Henri Lefebvre particularly his magnum opus *La Production de l'espace*. With his work, I hoped to gain a full scope of the built environment. Not only of its physical aspects but also of how it is perceived and acted upon. It was critical to crystallize and simplify the complex theory of Lefebvre to make it applicable for the short amount of time that was available for the research. This was creating a terminology of borders, networks and differences. For each of these concepts I made a separate map of Sliedrecht to distil certain centralities in Sliedrecht. These are areas within a city which hold a central or dominant role in terms of social and cultural importance. Consequently, centrality can be interpreted as a comprehensive amalgamation of diverse elements. This ended up influencing how it was I designed the building. To create a new centrality of the Baggerarea I had to be considerate of events and perceptions of elements within a comprehensive "reality." Furthermore to socially bring new life into the area it had to entail the convergence and amalgamation of assets, products, wealth, and activities. Through this research, it also became evident that architecture and urbanism are not self-contained fields that operate in a vacuum, but are part of larger interconnected spaces that work in multiple different scales and fields and are often produced by powerful stakeholders. In the case of Sliedrecht were the Church, the Municipality or the Government, and the Industry. In addition, the research helped me gain more understanding of the dredging industry in general which helped me weigh options on what the museum needed. This research offers insights into analysing how spaces are produced with the area of Sliedrecht as an example. This can help understand how specific representations of Sliedrecht have played a role in shaping the city. By understanding the history of how the spaces of Sliedrecht were actively produced through industrialization by different, economic, political, and cultural forces and how it is represented, it can be better understood what is valued. Furthermore, the mapping of the different spaces can help in designing in such a way that we as designers do not fall into the trap of unknowingly creating spaces that are not fit for spatial practices or destroying intangible heritages. The Research can be in general helpful in showing how the theoretical framework of Lefebvre can concretely be applied to understanding the characteristics of places.

On Studio

When discussing values and determining what is important to preserve and what is not, it is almost impossible to be objective. This proved also difficult in the studio. Often times this had to do with gut feeling. Fortunately, we had one brainstorming session with people from the museum and with employees of the Dredging Industry (IHC, Boskalis, and van Oord) this helped us gain insight into where the industry is at, where it came from, and where it is going. As I think that only through engagement with a lot of stakeholders a grounded discussion can be made on what is valuable and what is not. It is not a solo endeavour. Unfortunately, we had another brainstorming session planned with residents of Sliedrecht, but nobody showed up. Thus for the most part I had to decide for myself what I found valuable from the site.

On Design

In the end, because of practical reasons, the design was not a redesign of the old Dredging Museum or the Shipyard. As I expected to do in this studio, but, an amalgamation of Heritage elements in a new design which resulted in a unique building. The approach that I took was to bring together different elements and characteristics of the environment together in one Central building. Which resulted in a unique building, especially for the area of Sliedrecht. The interplay between these different characteristics was difficult to compose. As The combination was out of the ordinary. But I found it important that the building would have a sober, but proud appearance. As that is what I discovered the character of Sliedrecht to be. I could have chosen maybe a more straight forward design. Round corners and surfaces curved in more than one direction proved difficult especially in the development of the facade. But I also did it to challenge myself and to push my boundaries.

While certain design decisions may have compromised the sustainability of the project, mostly in the amount of Co2 it would take to make the brickcladding, I endeavoured to incorporate sustainable options wherever feasible.

On Myself

Navigating a long-term project like designing a dredging museum building was indeed challenging, especially when balancing the minutiae of individual elements with the overarching vision. In retrospect I could have engaged in more drawing which could have provided a tangible connection to the design process, allowing for greater fluidity and exploration of ideas. The tactile nature of pen on paper often facilitates a more intuitive creative flow than digital tools I think. The rigidity of digital tools became apparent when I found myself locked into decisions after creating a 3D model based on them. Unlike the fluidity of pen and paper, where adjustments are more intuitive, the digital realm often solidifies choices, making it challenging to backtrack or explore alternative paths.

Procrastination and time management are always perennial hurdles for me in any project, and overcoming them requires discipline and effective planning which I lack a bit. Establishing a structured timeline with clear milestones and deadlines could have helped maintain focus and productivity throughout the project, enabling me to explore multiple design alternatives and delve deeper into research on building technology.

In the end I'm proud of where I am and came from and I would have never expected to end up with this design when I started the project. I hope I can use the knowledge and experience that I gained in my future work.

