

REFLECTION PAPER

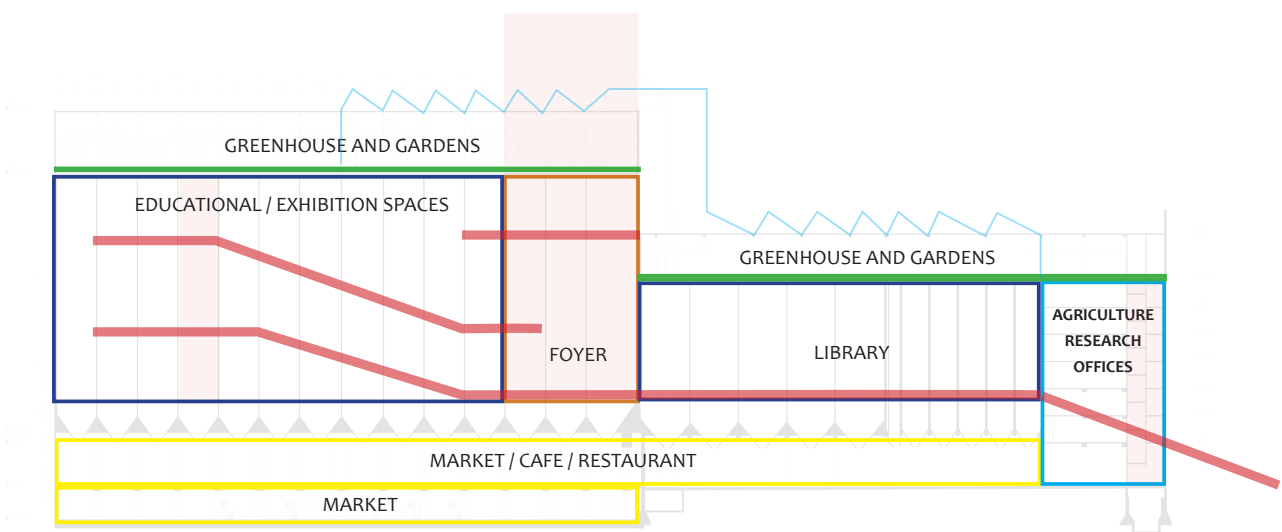
The Maassilo

In the graduation studio of Heritage & Architecture, the students were provided with a variety of buildings to choose from. These buildings are located in Rotterdam and are related to the Maas river. My choice was the Maassilo building, which is located on the south part of the Maashaven. As indicated by its name, the building is an old grain silo which lost its original function in 2003 and nowadays accommodates a club and offices. My personal choice of this building was derived by its strong presence in its environment due to its scale and position, in combination with its direct relation to the water through the steel structures (grain elevators).

The Maassilo is a complex building as it is a development of expansions and additions through time. More specifically, it is developed in three main stages and has a variety of installations and functional parts which were modified and transformed in order to adjust to the new requirements and the technological advancements. It is due to the transformation character and the addition of different components in different eras that the end result is characterized by lack of clarity of aspects such as orientation and navigation. These observations led me to my research question, "What are the elements that contribute to the legibility of the building, from the surrounding to the building and its interior?". The outcome of this question led to further sub-questions and a deeper understanding of the building.

During my design process I mainly followed the guidelines that were outlined by the studio. More specifically, this refers to the sequence of the process in the design which are analysis, evaluation, framework of intervention, definition of program and design. The first part consists of the research and analysis of all the different scales, from urban to architectural and technological aspects, of both tangible and intangible elements. This analysis is a combination of research in literature, archives and on site observations. This also includes the research question and combines research on additional literature, which would provide a strong theoretical foundation on the theme of legibility, and evaluation through the aspect of legibility of the information gathered by the aforementioned first part of the analysis. The second part, is the evaluation of the fundamental values of the building, in order to define its character and identity, so that the first starting points for the later design process can be formulated. The value assessment and the framework of transformation are the main guidelines in order to create the starting points for the design. It is there where the existing qualities and the inspiration for the new. However, this process is not linear, which means that even after the first development of analysis, value assessment and starting points, the designing process was used as a research tool to re-investigate and re-evaluate the building. It is not a linear but rather a rhythmic transition from analysis to research and vice versa. As such, the process that was followed is research by design.

In this project the building will be an agriculture and health education space with a market. The building is conceived as a learning process for the visitor, who is provided with the information (exhibition spaces and library) and the practical knowledge (roof community gardens). The market creates a cycle in this process of learning - producing - consuming, and promotes the healthy food. The program chosen for the building was the outcome of research on the area of Rotterdam, the future plans for the area and the future goals of the municipality of Rotterdam in combination with a tendency to find a new innovative function that will take the building to the future. This generated a process of research on the possibilities and innovations of this field in combination with design process of the potential and the capabilities of the building to accommodate the aforementioned function.



The design is a multi-layered understanding of the building with the aim to retain the building's character and identity while enhancing and reinterpreting some of its qualities. The design approach follows the initial value assessment and the framework of transformation, which shows the importance of these steps for the design. The main themes in the new design are the experience of the existing building and the connection between the different layers. In order to create these experiences, different elements were implemented in the three-level division of the building (ground floor, silos, attic). Openness and generosity of space are main intervention guidelines in all three spaces as the scale of the building needs these in order to be appreciated and fully experienced. Another important element, especially for the silo parts, is the introduction of light as the enhancing element of the silo experience. Similarly, materiality in combination with the scale and the light is a key aspect of the spatial quality. In order for these elements to create a coherent design, principles of intervention were implemented in order to define the atmosphere of each space and relate the different spaces in one concept.