Reflection Paper

Graduation studio Architectural Engineering
2022-2023

Faculty of Architecture & the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology
Julianalaan 134, 2628BL Delft.

Vibrant Spaces

Implementing the concept of vibrant places into a public building

Location: Juliana van Stolberglaan, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Saied Alhau

Studio Name/Theme	Architectural Engineering, Second life
Main mentor	Ir. Thijs Asselbergs
Second mentor	Ir. Elise van Dooren
Third mentor	Ir. Engbert van der Zaag

Problem statement and objective:

The primary objective of this project is to address the challenges arising from global climate change by fortifying the existing building with advanced and sustainable features. By doing so, I aim to combat climate change while also augmenting the role of public buildings in fostering social interaction among diverse segments of society within emerging urban areas. These areas, often lacking vital/vibrant spaces, need enhancements that elevate the quality of life for individuals and establish stronger connections between the building, and the surrounding context. The project is located in The Hague, and it is an existing office building called Bruggebouw Oost, designed since about 1990/93, at the present time the building is considered vacant and is located in an urban area under urban development, as it contains many government, office, educational and residential buildings. My project focuses on the establishment of a cultural centre that not only offers protection against weather changes but also provides vital social, educational, and recreational services and activities for public.

The relation between the graduation project topic, the master's track and the master's programme:

The Architectural Engineering Studio at Delft University offers an intriguing track called Second Life, which specifically focuses on repurposing and revitalizing vacant buildings constructed between 1960 and 2000 in the Netherlands. As a proponent of breathing new life into existing structures, I identified a range of functional, social, and climatic challenges within an urban area in The Hague. The selected building, Bruggebouw Oost, holds the potential to offer architectural solutions that serve the overall context of the area. The architecture studio encourages a technical and functional approach to resolving complex problems in cities, residential neighbourhoods, and public buildings. It grants students the freedom to select engineering and architectural challenges to be addressed throughout their graduation projects. Embracing the Second Life track aligns with my belief that every building deserves a second chance to thrive and provide benefits to the public. This serves as the core objective of the studio, where spatial solutions are sought for the diverse issues proposed by architectural students during the initial stages of their graduation projects.

Relation between research and design:

To acquire a comprehensive understanding of the essential requisites for creating vibrant spaces within public buildings, an in-depth analysis of acclaimed architectural projects was conducted. These projects were renowned for their excellence in sustainability and public engagement, having garnered various architectural and urban awards. By establishing criteria within two key categories, namely social and sustainable aspects, I was able to explore these study cases and unravel the architectural, functional, and social frameworks underpinning these successful buildings. The insights gained from this research aided me in formulating valuable tools and elements to guide the design process of the cultural centre for my graduation project.

The value of the way of working (approach, methods, methodology):

The Architecture Studio operates based on three fundamental themes: context, program, and technology. Nowadays, many architectural projects primarily focus on economic viability, sustainability concerns, and energy consumption, often overlooking the social and human aspects that should occupy a prominent place in the research and design processes. Consequently, my project thesis centres around the exploration of various trends and their interrelationships, aiming to elevate the coexistence between individuals and urban areas. My task involves creating vibrant, green, and sustainable spatial areas accessible to all segments of society, ensuring economic feasibility, meeting sustainability requirements, and optimizing energy consumption. To achieve this, I adopt a design approach that not only encompasses architectural functionality but also integrates socio-cultural and technical-scientific ideas. It is worth noting that the research conducted encompassed all the factors studied, influencing both the design and decision-making processes.

Academic and societal value, scope, and implications of the graduation project, including ethical aspects:

Within a broader framework, the graduation project explores the distinctive role that vibrant areas play within public buildings in contemporary urban areas. The selected vacant building represents one among several structures in the Netherlands that can be repurposed and utilized. By prioritizing long-term improvements in overall quality of life over immediate gains, our project presents architects, developers, and residents with alternative approaches to achieve sustainability, social interaction, and dynamic environments.