

URBAN DESIGN INTERVENTIONS FOR
**CREATIVE
NIGHTSCAPES**
IN ROTTERDAM

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Delft University of Technology
Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
MSc Urbanism 2022/23/24

January 19, 2024
P5 report

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Mentor team

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Section of Urban Design

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A homage to our
bleeding dancefloors,
where the melodies
of the night resonate
into silence.

8 / REFLECTION ON NIGHTTIME RESEARCH

1. What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (Ar, Ur, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

The exploration of creative nightscapes in urban planning reveals a multidisciplinary connection across different fields, that is needed to understand the nocturnal environment. At the architectural level, the research emphasizes the reuse of existing buildings, by enforcing the use of sound-isolating building technology, to realize mixed functions within buildings. Acoustics in club spaces and materialization for noise reduction an interdisciplinary approach that balances architectural design and technological solutions.

The connection between urbanism and landscape architecture is essential in understanding nightscapes and their relation to the broader urban fabric.

Understanding how creative nightscapes are managed in the built environment is crucial to understanding the need to minimize potential harm to creative nightscapes in redevelopment processes and policy making.

The research is an effort to overlap the problem of mismanagement of creative nightscapes, by tackling the topic from multiple scales: the regional scale, the local scale, the neighbourhood scale, and the building scale.

2. How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?

The interchange between design and research shows that the two are inseparable from one another in this graduation project. At the beginning of the research, it was clear that to create more knowledge on the topic of creative nightscapes, involvement in the field was necessary, due to the lack of data and site-specific information. This led to the approach of participatory action research. The participation design workshop has been a valuable source of research, as the collected user data has been translated as input for the design framework and was eventually used as a strict program of requirements for the outcome. The recommendations would have been significantly different from the current final product if the user perspective was not taken into account for the design.

3. How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?

This research topic and methods involve a wide range of knowledge about social studies, communication, and action research, that are not quite common in urban design studies. However, it led to a context-specific project that is deeply connected to current societal issues and more focused on short-term change, compared to common long-term urban design projects.

This research was also a personal multidimensional exploration, influenced by my role as an urban design researcher, but also by my role as a nocturnal entrepreneur, an active participant in nightlife, a Rotterdam inhabitant, a woman, and a person of color as shown in figure 1. This diversity in perspectives significantly influenced both my approach as well as my methodology throughout the process.

Actively engaging in Rotterdams' nightlife provided an intimate understanding of social dynamics. Since the research was approached from a position where involvement in the field and the nightlife community was already present, the trust and openness posed to be an advantage time-wise in the research process. This might have led to potential biases in the research methodologies on certain topics in the process of the analysis and processing of collected data. On the other hand, it might have led to a design that reflects the importance of embracing different identities in urban design.

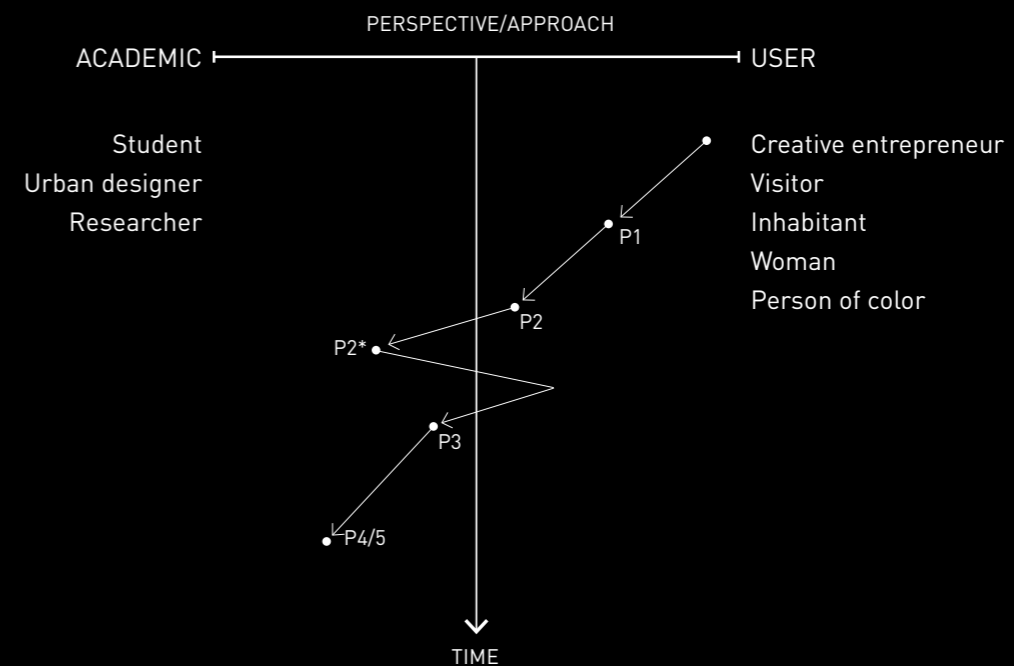


Figure 148: Changing perspectives throughout the process

4. How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

The research urges researchers and urban designers to include the nighttime in redevelopment projects in research and design. The long-term focus of urbanism has the potential to oversee current societal issues on a smaller scale, that need to be solved first, before focussing on change on a bigger scale.

The involvement as an active stakeholder in the research topic, can on one hand lead to research biases, but poses as an advantage in the otherwise time-consuming process of earning trust within a studied community.

5. How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

Since the research focussed on the design of a context and site-specific project, the results are not completely transferable, which makes it more challenging to replicate the research. To stimulate further research into other creative nightscapes, an effort has been made to generally describe the exact working method, to replicate the research approach. The project results have been translated into a design framework that can be used for future redevelopment plans for creative nightscapes.

6. What measures have been taken to reduce research bias in the participatory action research process?

The hosted workshop sessions were open walk-in sessions, to avoid self-selection bias. This has been done by promoting the workshops in public spaces, for everyone to see and feel welcome to participate.

The fact that the workshops were hosted by a group of students, also shows in the choice of the selected references. The students who organized Recht of Roffa had backgrounds in art, event management, architecture, urban design, and psychology. This can be seen in reoccurring themes, such as urban sports, gathering places, nightlife, street art, street furniture, smart design, etc. The references can be found in the appendix. Participants who saw the promotion online, also received the note to bring their own references and magazines.

In the participation workshop, references were used to trigger the creativity of the participants who were not familiar with spatial design as shown in figure 2. These have been selected by the team of Recht op Roffa and mainly focused on the variety of activities that can happen in public spaces.

Throughout the workshop, the researcher took the role of the host, focussed on a hospitable reception to attendees and explaining the available materials at their disposal, while refraining from active participation in the design process.

7. How does the project contribute and relate to sustainability?

Using the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to evaluate the sustainability of industries or development projects, shows that nightlife and the integration of nightlife in urban design can result in improvement on multiple sustainability facets that are focused on social sustainability as shown in figure 3. A side note could be made on the environmental sustainability of creative nightscapes and how this could also be included in creative nightscapes as shown in figure 4.

Figure 149: Reference Wall during Participation Workshop Schieblock



Figure 150: Current sustainability nightscapes



Figure 151: Potential sustainability nightscapes