

Reflection

My graduation project could only be about this topic (regenerating the hydrologic cycle in industrial production landscapes) because of my master track, Landscape Architecture. I was trained as an architect, coming from a 5-year professional degree in Brazil. Even though that was a multidisciplinary formation, I did not have much knowledge about soils, vegetation, Landscape Ecology, or simply ecological processes. My research is a result of these two years being trained in Landscape Architecture at TU Delft, and the way that my project works with ecological processes [hopefully] attests that. As a straightforward proposal of placemaking, it perfectly fits within the Master Architecture, Urbanism and the Building Sciences.

It was absolutely necessary to undergo continuous research about the place and the topic, in order to understand its specificities but also its generalisms. On the one hand, there is so much to learn about a place's ecological, social and economic layers. On the other hand, the paradox in production landscapes is that they are also generic - and, in this sense, learning about the modus operandi that generates them was key to imagining any sort of intervention. In short, research was fundamental for my design, because it tried to reverse this process of degrading generalization through re-territorialization of fluxes, so knowledge on both ends is necessary. The influence of my design on my research was mostly that of asking questions, steering it. For example, once I had the contour planting strategy, the question would be what a good type of gradient is, so I would go back to research and learn about agroforestry.

I am satisfied with my way of working, because I consider it could cope with the complexity and scale of the issue, which can get very abstract. The study trip was essential, and it was very nice that I collected so many local items, soils, and plants, because they are powerful tools to "bring the landscape" to my audience. Back in Delft, I tried to design mostly by hand, which I found out to be a good method for Landscape Architecture, with which I can translate the ideas of gradients and spatial experience better. Model making started being relevant recently and will continue to be towards P5.

I believe projects on this theme are quite relevant at a global scale, as well as from a Global South perspective. There is a climate emergency going on, and the model of the Plantation has created very vulnerable landscapes all over the world, but especially in former colonies. My project explored how this particular one could be made more resilient. However, as a national from that country, I do know that there are so many barriers (private land ownership, land accumulation, political issues, industrial capitalist interests and lobbying), that I have to say I would not be optimistic about it having any societal impact outside of academia.

About the transferability, I believe that the method is transferable, but that the solutions are not, and should not be. Plantations simplified the world, but there are still specific and special ecosystems and processes happening everywhere, so every strategy and design should be thought of specifically for that place.

I would pose myself the question of what I learned from this graduation year. As an architect, I had already worked on the same topic for a whole year, but this experience was very different because Landscape Architecture is a quite different discipline. At first I really struggled with how to make the issue of drought a landscape architecture topic. Then I had to deal with a huge area, the second biggest basin in South America. I was constantly feeling overwhelmed. But having a case study made my research get more grounded, and the study trip was such a big input to that. Then, to start designing (translating the knowledge I gained into space) was a very solid step. I could say I learned a lot about landscape ecology, soils, hydrology, but I think I mostly learned how to go about with a complex, widespread issue and how to deal with it through design.