





## INTRODUCTION

**This is a short story about a fresh adult that is wondering about the next step. A chapter is about to close and the next one is already waiting. She is about to find, her place in society. She has some concerns and questions how to make this next step. Next to the human story, a building will explain itself. Its search for flow, connection, intimacy and layeredness. The story should illustrate the conversation I tried to keep running. The conversation between the architecture, the inhabitant and the builder. The building wants to become home and tries to fit the needs and dreams of her.**



## I

It is a busy day in the city. It is Wednesday so there is a market going on. It is the first nice spring day without any rain. The pink blossom is making place for the lively green leaves. And it feels like a new day is starting. There is chatter on the terraces and the smell of coffee is coming towards me. In the trees birds are singing, welcoming the sun.

Every week I come across this market, but today everything looks a bit brighter. The market is a new place in the city. It is now open for a year. I never really came to this part of the city. It was mostly a shopping area, but now there are bars and restaurants. There is more green and they created a space for inhabitants of the city. The shops that are located in this area are local shops and fit the character of the city. This area has been revived and became included in the rest of the city.

During my walk through the city I see new things every day. The City is alive and changing. Even though I know that all is artificial it feels like something organic. The flow of people transforming the streets into veins or rivers. Hosting live on the squares and indoors.

I see an old man leaving a small bench that is right in the sun, get a coffee to go and take his place. Knowing that it will be hard to leave. I love to observe people. Seeing them passing by. Mostly walking but there are a few people that took the challenge of zigzagging through the stream of people. It would not have been a Dutch city if people didn't. A couple of kids that also have a break of school are running around with a ball in the small park that is surrounding the church. Endangering the people that are sitting in the grass. I cannot imagine that once this church was all obstructed from the public. I never knew that it was here, even though I lived in Nijmegen for quite some time. Six years and a couple of months to be exact. During these years I not only became a master of my profession, but also grew from an teenager into an adult. I learned to care for myself and became independent.



I have built a life around me with lots of friends. And with three of them I live in a small house just outside the city centre. It is not really big but it has worked for me the past years. We share the bathroom and the kitchen. Everybody has their own room. I have the biggest room with my 15m<sup>2</sup>. Enough space for a twin bed, a closet and a desk. I enjoy to live with a group of people that are in the same phase of their life. There is always someone to talk to, you don't have to clean the house all by yourself and you don't have to cook every night. My house mates are not only friends but we became a small family. Something I would really miss whenever I have to move out.

I am taking my phone out of my pocket and see that it is almost half past twelve and decide to stretch my lunch break for another ten minutes. Then I really have to go back to work, otherwise I will get behind on my schedule. I am currently working on my thesis and will be graduating this month. It is still a lot of work but it is almost done. Last week I had a job interview and this morning I received the message that I have gotten the job. I am so happy! It is crazy how fast it is going. Up till now my life revolved around studying. First high school, then a bachelor and now a master. It feels like only yesterday that I started my masters and now I am almost about to close this chapter.

The coming months will be all about change, graduating, starting a new job and also moving out of my current house... Because I am not a student anymore I am not allowed to stay in my room. I have to make place for the next student. Which is of course logical and in addition to that I am also ready for a new adventure. I want a bit more space for myself. Maybe a small apartment or studio. I already started looking for something months ago, but I didn't succeeded in my search. Because of the current housing crisis and my student loan, I am not able to buy a house and the private sector of rental homes is also crazy expensive. For a one bedroom apartment of 30m<sup>2</sup> you have pay around the 900 Euro's per month. I will get a pretty decent salary, but this will take almost half of my salary.

Leaving not a lot of money for savings. I will get paid above average income, so I don't have the right of social housing. To find an affordable home I also looked together with a friend. But to find a house that has two bedrooms under the 1500 Euros is also mission impossible. Next to this the owners are not fond of having two single people living in their apartment. They mostly want only one single person or a couple. They can be picky because the demand of housing is very high. So that all makes the search rather difficult.

I always had the dream of traveling after finishing my studies. During my study I didn't have the time to work next to it, so therefore I didn't had a lot of money to spend. The money I had was from a loan and I didn't want to spend that on vacations. If I had the choice of living in a big house and not be able to travel or save money. I would rather live in a small house so that I have still some money left to spend otherwise. Only if I had the choice.. I hope to find something soon, otherwise I have to go back to live at my parents' house for a while. In that way I can save money to travel, pay off my debt and can eventually buy/rent a house that fits my needs. That sound like a good option and I really love my parents, but only the thought of living back there makes me sad. Feeling that I will make a step back and not a step forward.

## II

Flow, patterns and layers. A complex surrounding what is called Nijmegen. The river, the hills and the man-made culture. The history can be felt and seen. The city is for the people and is used by them. The people make the city like it is today. A part of the city did not contribute to this not that long ago. Disconnected with the inner city. Occupied by commercial space. I am located in this part. But when I came also my surrounding changed. Opening up the area, revealing the layers of history, nature and the man-made layers of the site. Reconnecting the flows. So that where once was water flowing down in to the river, people and space will flow and overflow. Occupying the space. Making space part of themselves and letting the space become part of their



identity. Creating a fertile ground that can be used for growth. Giving like the river gave us clay, the people will give their creativity and a part of themselves to the site. Building a character and let me become part of the genius loci and the collective memory of the inhabitants of the city.

The outer public space that is created is made for coming together and settle down. To have your lunch, sit in the sun and enjoy the theatre of the square. From this square where literally water is flowing you have the entrance of my ground floor. My façades explain my character. I have windows in multiple sizes and they are used in different rhythms and patterns, symbolising the layers within. The diversity divides my wide canvasses of brick. Brick that is rough and already had a live, having this warm colour. To emphasise and explain my self even better I have an extra layer on top of the brick. A touch of water. In patterns that are decorating my canvas even more.

I am created from multiple layers. My first is the public one. Having an opening and a welcoming character towards the square and the church. Behind this façade there is a restaurant which is meant for all the layers of society. Becoming a living room for the residents of the city of Nijmegen. A part of this living room is a study and work space. An open work space with facilities you can use for a small fee. For the more quite and creative atmospheres I have also workshop, ateliers and meeting rooms, that you can rent.

Above this layer my purpose becomes more clear. I want to create a living sphere, where people can enjoy living in an apartment building. A building where people find a connection with the people that live next to them. I am for everyone. Not for a particular person with a specific age. I try to be there for the people that want to live affordable, in the city, and with the advantages of being a part of a community.

I created small studios, for a couple or a single. Created apartments with two bedrooms, imagining that small





families or a single mom/dad can live there. There are also bigger apartments, for bigger families or for singles that want to live together. Like the well-known typology of the student house. To become a house for all those people I wanted to give them more than only a small box. I wanted to give them space where they can overflow in. This space should allow them to meet each other. To play with friends or do your morning yoga. To cook with each other or share a story over a cup of coffee. The shared space is shared not only with one floor, but voids and stairs connect floors with each other. Creating next to my core a second routing. Creating within the five floors of housing, two main families. Because of the shared spaces and the voids I could afford to not make a corridor or gallery. So the routing is part of the shared space and the other way around. The second and the third layer are the biggest floors and have three voids that are connecting them to each other. The three upper levels are connected with one void that is changing in shape. Ending with a roof of glass bring a lot of light in.

Next to the interior space, outside space is shared. The family of housing has a loggia on their floors. But because I am getting smaller on top there is enough space for a green roof. A garden on the fourth floor is covering the outside space with only a small path that is meandering around the upper levels. On the sixth floor I am at my smallest. Here also my roof is covert in green and there is a terrace on the south east side. With a lot of sun, but more covered from the wind. From here you have the option to go to my top. The upper roof, were you can become part of the skyline of Nijmegen. Here you have a clear overview of your surrounding and looking at the horizon you see the light reflecting of the surface of the river. The river that brought the clay were my bricks are made of and helped me understand how to make spaces flow.

### III

Yes! Finally, station Nijmegen. I had a meeting with a client today all the way in Delft. I don't have a car so I took the train. When I am almost arriving at

the station, I take a look outside my window. We are driving on the bridge and the water of the Waal is reflecting the orange sunlight. It has rained a lot these past few weeks and because of that the water level is very high. So high I could maybe see it from my house. On the beach I see people sitting in the late summer sun. Looking in the other direction I see a postcard worthy view. The sun is lighting up the roofs and the towers of the churches. Because the city is build on multiple hills there is a beautiful play with shadows.

I let the view pas by and arrive at the station. It is Friday so I have a whole weekend to do nothing but reading my book, Robbinson Crusoe, and meeting with my friends. My house is a 15 minute walk from the station, but today I went by bike. It's a warm September day and even though the shadows are becoming longer, the streets are getting noisier. People are on their way to get a drink at one of the many terraces. I will just go to my house and with a couple of neighbours I will have a barbeque on the roof, that will eventually result I an evening of games, wine and music.

When I finally have crossed the Keizerkarel Plein, the most dangerous crossroad you can find in the east of the Netherlands, I drive through the Molenstraat. Because I have the bike with me I don't take the first Right, but the second. Time wise it doesn't really matter, but I like this way of entering. A couple of months ago I didn't know that this would become the location of my house, but I am really happy that it is. I am going around the corner and the square is opening up to me. With the building I live in as a background of the stage.

The façade is under an orange cloak, that is making the shadows even darker. The fountain that is still splattering, making a reflection on the square in which I can see part of the façade. Like small mirrors. I stepped off my bike to enter the gate that leads me to the storage facility for my bike. As I stored my bike I start my journey to my house. My room is on the fifth floor, but first I will meet a friend on the third. To get there I have to pass through the





restaurant, go to the first level and there I can enter the levels above. Normally I would enter the building from the other side and enter right away at the circulation core. When I walk outside the bike storage I enter the garden. The heart of the building. Almost totally enclosed by the brick. Only one small passage that is connected with the square. The sound of the fountain is a welcome addition to the chatter of the people that are sitting on the terrace. The restaurant, that is connected to this garden, is fully packed with people and the doors are wide open. To allow people but also a fresh breeze of air to come in.

When entering, the concrete columns are catching my eye. It is a high and spacious restaurant. That even with all those people still feels comfortable to be in. I have heard that the concrete columns were from the mall that once was here. Going up the first stairs I enter the co-working area. Here are the ceilings low, and it is a bit darker. The concrete is even more prominent in this space. With the furniture, shelves, plants and rugs they managed to make it into a cosy work environment. Sometimes when I work from home I come down here to work. And once a week I have a painting course in one of the workshop spaces. The area is empty, everybody must have already went home, except for a small group I can see in the corner of my eye.

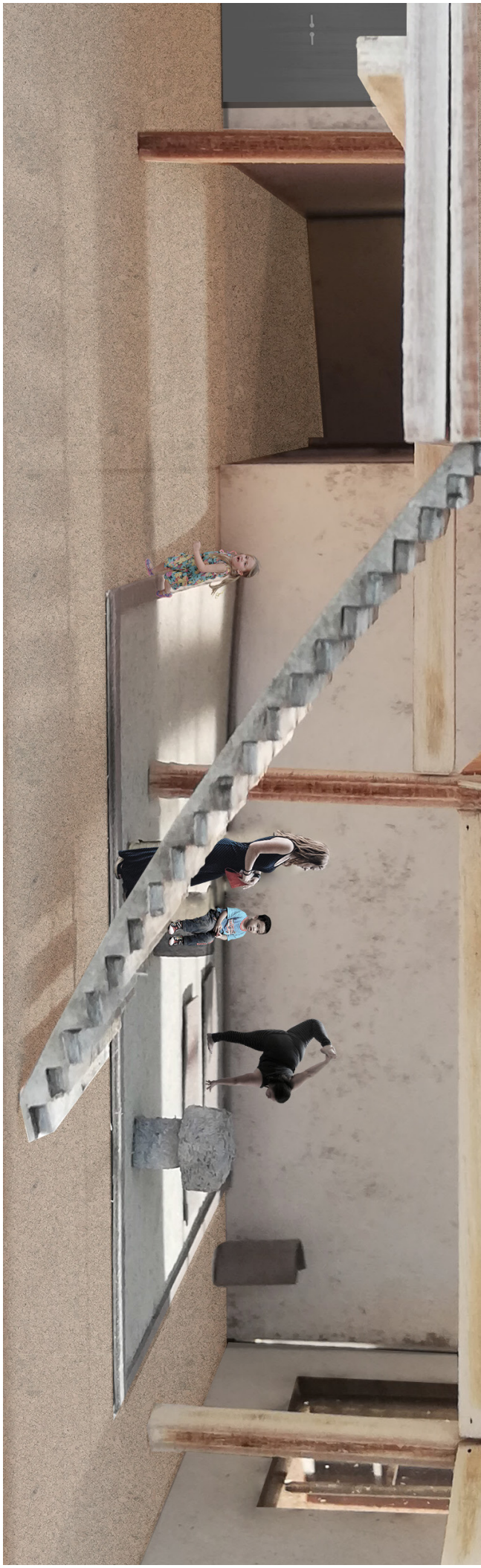
I walk a bit further and enter the circulation core with my key. I could go with the elevator but I will just take the stairs. The core is a bit boring so I leave it at the second level. The interior has changed completely. The more industrial ground and first level are in contrast with the light and wooden interior of the upper floors. I don't enter a hallway or something, but enter an open area. A shared space. This is the biggest of them all. I feel a breeze of air, because of all the open windows and hear cooking sounds from just around the corner. I cannot really figure out what they are cooking, but it smells amazing. Some children are playing on the soft floor and are making what looks like a fortress from a couple of chairs and a table. My friend lives on



the level above, so I am taking the stairs that are right in front of me. To not disturb the fortress I have to push a movable wall just a bit aside so I can pass. By walking up the stairs I turn my head, so I can have a look at the playing children, the wooden construction and the double height windows that are lighting up the room.

The space is just continuing and I see my friend with his kid, chatting to one of the neighbours. I walk towards them and give him and his daughter a hug. We chat for a short time and then decide get going, because other friends are already waiting on the roof. We walk towards the core. There we take the stairs to the fifth floor. My floor is a lot smaller than the second and the third one. Our shared space is a also lot smaller, but we still have a big kitchen we share. And we have on these floors a guest room. So whenever my parents are visiting they can rent this room for one or two nights. The shared space is formed by the void that is connecting the upper three floors. It ends with a sky light so because of that it is nice and bright. The kitchen is around the corner and is the place where I mostly eat together. Only if I am really tired I go to my own room. There I have a small functional kitchen. But it is much nicer to cook at the bigger shared kitchen.

All the front doors are reclaimed and not one is totally the same, but they have the same colour. We are standing in front of my door and when I am searching in my bag for my keys, my friend is already wiping his shoes on my doormat. I enter first, and see that the orange glow is now also covering my floor. My house is small but very efficient. I place my bag in the closet. We collect all the food and drinks from the fridge and continue our way up to the top. Literally. We don't need to use the core anymore, and use the stair that is in the void. On the sixed floor we go outside to the terrace that is surrounded by flowers. When it is very windy this spot is better to sit, but there is almost no wind so we are going to the roof. From the terrace you can enter the roof with an outside staircase. When Climbing the stairs the tower of the church slowly appears.







The rest of my friends are already waiting. They already have lit the barbeque and are sitting in a circle around it. They welcome us and pour us a drink. I grab the glass and before sitting down I make a full turn. Taking the view in. Seeing the bridges, that cross the Waal and indeed I can see the sparkling of the river. For a moment I let myself become part of the sky. Seeing all the different churches guarding the city like beacons. When I look to the west I see the sun setting and I draw myself back to the present. I turn around and go to my friends. While sitting down, I realise that this is the place I call home.

