

A healing environment for children

Reflection

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AR3AD110 - Designing for Care in an Inclusive Environment

JULY 2024

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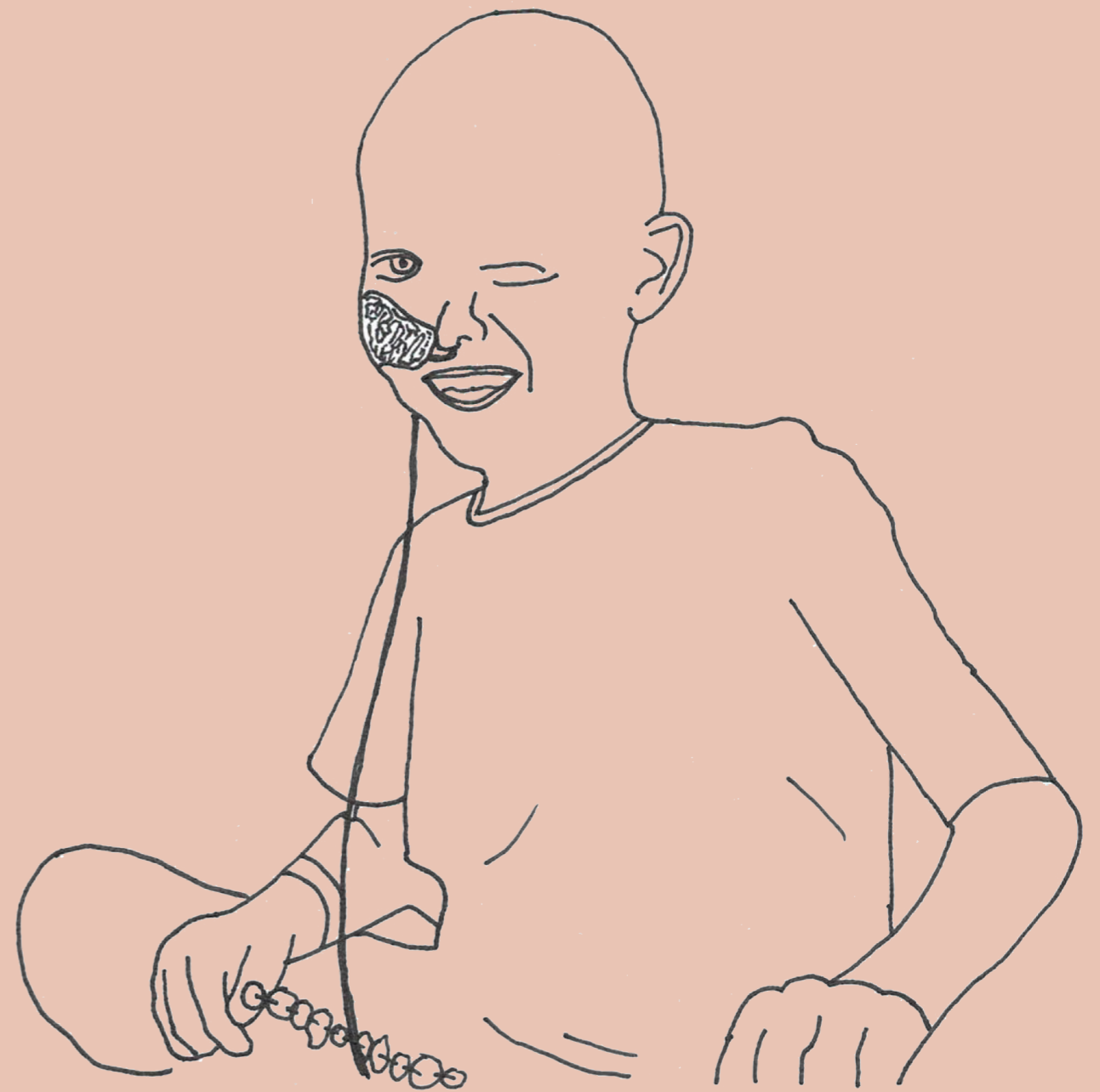
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AR3AD110 - Designing for Care in an Inclusive Environment

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QUESTION 1

What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

My graduation topic focuses on improving the quality of life of parents and their children who require long-term care. The outcome of this research will be design guidelines that will be utilized to design a building which will relieve the parents of the medical responsibilities they have to bear. Referring back to my problem statement; children are sometimes too sick to stay at home, however too well to stay in the hospital. It is nowadays common for parents to take their child home and take care of their child, without having any medical expertise. Because this can be a very distressing experience for the parents as well as for the child, a solution must be found to ensure that parents are relieved of their medical responsibilities. Since both the target group and the building I will design have a strong connection to the subject of healthcare, this theme fits well in the topic of the graduation studio I have chosen. Because I will mainly focus on developing design guidelines during my research and because I will design a building that ensures that parents are relieved of their medical responsibilities, this topic also fits into my master's programme and master track architecture.

QUESTION 2

What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework?

My research is important because it addresses a topic that has never been addressed before. It is important that the topic will be addressed now, because in that way a very relevant and current problem can be solved. By implementing the set of design guidelines that have been compiled, a building can and will be designed that will help solve the problem. Next to the importance in a larger social framework, there is also an importance for the professionals, already working in the field of healthcare. The findings of my research could be used by architects (including myself in the future) to design and develop a building with a special focus on the healing environment for children. Since there is a lot of research done on the topic healing environment, it can be questioned whether there is sufficient scientific justification for the topic to be researched. The research, however, can be justified rather quickly. Research on healing environment is mainly conducted with adults as a target group. With that kept in mind it can be questioned if the healing environment for children is different. By researching the healing environment for children specifically, my research can be justified.

QUESTION 3

How do you assess the value of your way of working?

At the beginning of the studio, the focus was on researching. By choosing a good target group, also based on thorough research, I was able to get started with formulating my main research question and the related subquestions. After formulating the questions, I was able to start with the interviews and my fieldwork. I have used a total of five methods to be able to answer the main question:

- Interviews
- Fieldwork
- Documentaries
- Case studies
- Literature study

By using these methods, I was able to dive deeper into the subject and I was also able to get more familiar with my target group.

In my opinion this way of working made me able to eventually design a building which is user-orientated. The interviews gave me a good insight into what it is like for healthcare personnel to take care of children with cancer, however, they also gave me insight into what it is like for children to be in a facility where everything revolves around cancer. Watching documentaries, in addition to the knowledge already gathered about cancer through interviews, has given me much more clarity about what it is like to have a child with cancer and what it is like to have a sibling with cancer. Both with the overlapping theme of having cancer yourself.

To conclude this question, I can say that while my way of working may not always have been that structured, I have learned a lot from it. I have learned the basic principles of writing a research booklet, since I have never learned this anywhere else. I feel like I have undergone personal growth, and that makes me feel proud.

QUESTION 4

How do I assess the my personal progress and growth?

As I have briefly mentioned before, I am proud of the personal growth I have undergone. There were many ups and downs and I have thought of quitting many times. However, quitting is not an option for me. I have never done it and deep down inside I knew it was never going to happen.

This, however, also meant that I continuously had to motivate myself and push myself to be able to get this far. I have learnt that a person can get really far, if that person really wants to. By pushing myself to keep on working, I can now see the personal growth I have undergone. I am able to handle setbacks better and I am also able to put things into perspective better. This will help me in the future when I am working, because these skills are necessary for a professional to be able to finish the work without the accompanying stress and burn-outs.

Even though the end is near now, I do notice that my energy level is at its lowest point. I didn't expect graduation to take so much energy and that it would take much more time than the calculated 40 hours a week. I would have loved to get paid for this project, because the 50 to 60 hours I have worked each week, would have brought in quite a bit of money.

Just joking.

QUESTION 5

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

During my research it became clear that there is not a specific solution yet for parents who are not able to take care for a child with a severe illness, when this child is sent home by doctors. Nowadays, when children are too well to stay in the hospital, however too ill to stay at home, they are sent home anyway for the time being. The reason behind this is that a bed in the hospital is just too expensive. This means that a lot of pressure is put on parents, because they are then expected to take medical care of their child. However, not every parent is able to do this. This can either be because of personal reasons, the work they are doing or because of that there are siblings who also require attention.

There is a programme upcoming where the children's home care takes away the main responsibilities for parents who are not able to take care for their sick child, however, this programme does not work optimal yet either.

Therefore, my graduation project would be a solution for the parents who are not able to take care for their child at home.

QUESTION 6

What would I do differently if I could do the project again?

If I was able to do my research again, I would probably choose an other target group. I found out that a lot of parents are very reserved and cautious. This resulted in a research that was not quite what I had in mind. I would have loved to talk to more parents and children, on record of course. Now I have spoken to parents and children, however, I was not able to use the information in my research, because then it would be unsubstantiated. If I had chosen an other target group, for example elderly, the research questions I then would have compiled, could be answered much more easily in my opinion. Not that I wanted the research to be easy and simple, but this was something I often asked myself.

If I was able to do the design project again, I would have worked more structured. Although I have worked more structured than I have ever done before, there is always room for improvement. I would also choose a different approach, just to see what the result would be if a different approach was being taken. Let's say, for example, modular buildings or completely bio-based.

I must say that I am happy with the approach that I took. But I must also say that I am a person who wonders a lot and thus wonders what if?

