Reflection

AR3AD110- Dwelling Graduation Studio
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The relationship between research and design

The research has had input on the design in various ways. The fieldwork gave us the opportunity to have a better view of the current living situation of the elderly and what their daily life looks like. This perspective of another life phase has given us more insight into the physical capabilities and limitations of the elderly. This in both a physical and social context. The observations during the fieldwork and the results of the research that was conducted here, have therefore provided decisive results for the design.

In my design it was important to focus on the social contacts within the living environment of the elderly and also focus on an intergenerational neighbourhood. This is mainly because I realized a social 'gap' between young and old during my fieldwork, but also my own personal experience within the community. This was a trigger for me to focus on a solution to create a living environment for the elderly where they can grow old within society instead of isolated from the younger generations.

With my research I focused on social interaction and intergenerational living. I found it important to find out how social interaction works and at what levels it takes place. After this I looked at how this can be implemented in architecture. I also looked at the concept of intergenerational living. This concept appealed to me from the start of the studio, because I think that young and old can mean a lot for each other. Looking at various projects on intergenerational living, gave me insight into the various options and thus to make a choice which shape would be best suited for my design and its location.

I quickly realized that when the elderly and young people live within the same location with enough attributes for social interaction, it will create a vibrant neighbourhood for the elderly where they can grow old within a familiar environment.

To get to know the design location and its residents better, we conducted a survey together with my group members. This has given us a lot of insight into the neighbourhood (residents), its qualities and wishes. I have retained the qualities and emphasized them as much as possible in the design, while also supplementing the shortcomings in the neighbourhood (such as facilities). Not only will this maintain the familiar appearance of the neighbourhood, but it will also be enhanced with the additions within the design. This ensures that the design merges with its environment.

The natural appearance of Tanthof, the greenery, has been taken into account, which is one of the most important qualities here. This also includes the public spaces, which give residents in this neighbourhood the opportunity to seek out nature and enjoy the surroundings. A neighbourhood not only to live in, but also to enjoy the public space together with others.

The TOY ensemble merges the existing structure of Tanthof and offers more public spaces varying from semi-private to public zones. This ensures a fusion of residents within the ensemble itself, but also with residents from outside.

The results of the survey in the neighbourhood clearly showed that the majority of residents want to live together with different generations.

This worked out well with my goal to bring young and old together. Because residents are still very fond of their privacy, I have opted for a dwelling concept that offers the opportunity to be together with others but also to withdraw yourself. The design offers different homes that are suitable for different living preferences.

The requirements and wishes with regard to urban design have also been taken into account. For example, it has been indicated that green space is essential and that there are also shortcomings with regard to facilities. These have therefore been supplemented with, among other things, public functions such as; a library, nursery, various collective spaces and also care functions. All in all, we can say that the design reflects the relationship between research and design, by translating the guidelines obtained from the research into the design.

The relationship between project topic, studio topic, master track of Architecture and the master program (MSc AUBS)

The studio "Designing for Care - Towards an inclusive living environment" focuses on the subject of the daily living environment for the elderly. How do we want to grow old? was the central question in this studio.

The housing options for seniors nowadays no longer match the lifestyle and wishes of the current and future elderly. Self-reliance and being able to stay in society are important aspects for them. The current care buildings do not match the changing living and working styles of the care sector. The health care system tends to shift to more informal care support, which

means that the environment must be adapted accordingly. Therefore, new architectural concepts and designs are needed.

The subject of this studio matched my interest in designing something for someone. I was and always am interested in working with people, and actually being able to design something in the social context really appealed to me. As we will all grow old, I was interested in designing a living space that is not only dedicated to a particular generation but is open to all ages. My goal was to find an architectural concept that brings young and old together.

In my opinion, architecture describes not only the design of a building, but also the relationship with its environment and users. It is therefore important to take into account the characteristics of the environment and the user group of the design. The knowledge and skills I gained during my architecture studies helped me to analyse, research and incorporate these factors into my design. By following this working method I was able to fulfill in my graduation project.

Research method and approach chosen by the student

The aim of my research was to develop a housing concept that brings together the elderly and young people. The research focusses on the question how architecture can play a role in stimulating and facilitating social interaction between generations. Since the subject is aimed at a social context, it was essential to have a good grasp of the wishes and requirements and characteristics of the target group. Anthropology and praxeology were the

most important methodologies used within the research, which provided clarity about the specific target group. Since we did a fieldwork and various studies on human behaviour, we can say that there is also participatory design, since we have worked together with the target group for which we design and partly worked together with the municipality. By using these methods it was possible to adapt the design to the wishes and requirements of the users.

During the fieldwork we had the opportunity to have close contact with the elderly within a care institution. This enabled us to observe their lifestyle and living environment and to gather information about subjects we were curious about. For example, we tracked daily routines, analysed user behaviour of spaces and conducted interviews with residents. This together made it possible confirm assumptions and to draw conclusions about the lifestyle, user behaviour and the living environment of the elderly.

With the information and knowledge we have gained during the fieldwork, we made a survey for the residents of Tanthof. We asked the local residents about their wishes and requirements with regard to the qualities within their living environment and how they want to live when they are old. This also brought more knowledge and principles for the design.

In short, the methods used within this research phase have helped me to acquire information and knowledge about the needs, wishes and demands of the users. Which translated in different guidelines for the design.

The relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework

Aging is a major problem we face in society today. It is something we cannot avoid. One day the young generation we belong to today will be the older generation. How do we want to live then?

It seems that the current options for housing and care for the elderly do not really appeal to the future elderly. Why is that? and how else should it be done?
These were the questions we asked ourselves at the start of this project. A new way of life for the elderly was the main goal of the project and architecture had to offer a solution to this.

Within this graduation studio we had the opportunity to reflect on the living situation of not only the future generation of elderly, but also our own future aging phase. Not a temporary solution, but perhaps a solution that will be infinitely useful.

We had the opportunity to experience what it is like to live in a retirement home and relive the situation in which the elderly find themselves. This gave us a clear picture of what is already there and what could possibly be improved. I can therefore say that the fieldwork week and the experiences gained form a milestone in the design process. Together with the knowledge gained in literature and case studies, this formed the basis for the design. The knowledge gained in this graduation studio will therefore be valuable in all sectors dealing with aging and healthcare.

Ethical issues and dilemmas

Working with people can bring complications. Not everyone is always willing to help you. Privacy and the feeling of security are factors that play a role in this. During the research phase of this graduation project, I noticed that it is much more difficult to have a conversation with an elderly person on the street than in the care home where we stayed. During the fieldwork we were received much more friendly and we soon had a friendship with a number of residents. It is of course also important to take into account respect, attitude and use of language towards the elderly. From my culture and upbringing, I have always learned to respect the elderly and treat them like my own grandparents. Helping and showing respect is self-evident here. Therefore I had no trouble adjusting during my stay in the nursing home.

In connection with privacy, we have only taken photos of and with the elderly with permission. We also informed the home and the elderly about our stay and the research for our design. They also found this very interesting and were willing to help us with this. For example, some elderly showed their private living areas, and others told us their personal story in which they told how they became dependent on care and ended up here.

These conversations made me realize that as humans we will never know for sure where and in what condition we will end up in life. But despite all the misery, I found it amazing that these elderly people could laugh and have fun every day with the smallest things. A positive mind-set is a key factor here.

This also emerged in a conversation with one of the elderly in the nursing home. He indicated that he really liked to be with young people, because the elderly in the house only complain about their shortcomings and that makes him unhappy. I can imagine that it will be excruciating after a while to be constantly confronted with negative conversations and seeing friends back down. This formed the guiding principle in my project not to opt for a design concept aimed at a specific group of people, but rather for diversity within the living environment. A place where we embrace the elderly, so that we can grow old together in a familiar environment.