

GRADUATION PLAN

BRIDGING THE GAP

CONNECTED BY MEETING

Designing for Care - Towards an inclusive living environment

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

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PERSONAL INFORMATION

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Studio:

Designing for care - Towards an inclusive living environment

Main mentor : Birgit Jürgehake
Second mentor : Third
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Exam commission: Reinout Kleinhans
External partner: Peter Boerenfijn (director of Habion, housing ass.
for elderly housing)

ARGUMENTATION OF CHOICE OF THE STUDIO

The Studio 'Designing for Care – towards an Inclusive Living Environment' focuses on the topic the aging society within the field of Architecture. With the main question in the studio "How do we want to live when we are old?".

In today's society, not only in the Netherlands but worldwide, the topic of care becomes more important every year. Due to demographic transitions such as the growing population of elderly and increase in life expectancy, which led to rising care costs and eventually unacceptable living and care conditions. This is why it is necessary to look into the needs for the aging society and to rethink what kind of buildings and neighbourhoods do we need to make that possible for elderly to live at home independently longer.

While my grandparents got the luck of a culture difference where they are taken care of by my family and still living in the family house. My parents are the first generation that are growing old in the Netherlands. Imagining that they, and after that I, have to grow old in the current housing situation is challenging me to rethink the idea of how I want to live when I'm older.

While reflecting on myself I have become aware that my interest in architecture are more in a human-centered approach. Where I find it important to look at the desires and wishes from the target group I'm designing for as a starting point for a design. As an upcoming architect I see this as my part of giving back to society. This became more clear for me while participating in the Msc2 studio Towards an Inclusive Living Environment - The Architecture of Slow Cities which motivated me to choose this graduation studio to develop myself more in the subject of designing for elderly.

The fieldwork week

To get a better understanding of the topic of elderly and to see how their daily life looks like, what their perception is on life and their needs are, I got the opportunity to stay in an elderly home for three days. This gave me the chance to conduct a more thorough fieldwork research and to not only research but also **experience** their living conditions.

The fieldwork week opened my eyes to the problems elderly are facing such as **segregation** which is leading to elderly living in current circumstances where they **feel written off by society** and are left in an elderly home to die. There is a prejudice about elderly when leaving the working force and retire. That they are limited in what they can do and dependent on health care organizations and slowly over the years they lose the control over their lives.

The fieldwork week consisted of observations, participatory observations, interviews and questionnaires. The findings from this fieldwork week helped finding a topic in which I want to focus my in-depth research on.

The posed problem

The government in the Netherlands implemented a long-term care system reform to ensure that healthcare costs remain affordable in the future. Which means that the current elderly homes in the Netherlands are not getting subsidized anymore, this which led to elderly living at home longer (Verbeek-Oudijk & Campen, 2017). Looking at the demographics of the Netherlands, the number of elderly over 80 years old is expected to increase with 50% from 2019 till 2030 and will rise even more until 2053. Which is the result of the post-war baby boom. Next to that the life expectancy of elderly above 65 is increasing in the coming years.

When people age they get more physically limited and restricted. Study has shown that people get less active when they age, which is also due to decreasing muscle strength, endurance etc. (Milanovic et al., 2013). They tend to sit more at home with less physical interaction with the world outside of their house. Which leads to social isolation, decrease in social contact and activity. **Segregation** between elders and society is making the **barrier** to

interact with the world outside even bigger. These problems are related to the subject of **livability** and should be taken seriously, because people are social creatures and interaction is an important part for the well-being of people. As elderly are likely to be alone more often and seeking less interaction due to barriers they are facing, they are more vulnerable for **social isolation**.

During the fieldwork week where research and observations have been done into the daily lives of residents in a senior apartment complex and “-aanleunwoningen”, has shown that the elderly that live their varying from 60 to 90 years old are very independent but still face problems like **social isolation and lack of interaction**. The interviews with the residents has shown that this is due to aging, combined with a **lack of activities and a purpose to go outside**. The elderly from 80 and above tend to spend the whole day inside their house in front of their window. Also, a lack of attractive public spaces and meeting places where a diversity of people can come is forming a **barrier** for elders to go outside, as all of them stressed the importance of meeting people but that they prefer interacting with diversity of people instead of only elderly. The current environment is not meeting the needs of elders as they **feel separated from society but are still very willing and vital to participate in society**.

Research question:

To what extent could the **world** beyond the **threshold** be designed to lower the **barrier** through the lens of **elderly** to **participate** in this world?

For a more comprehensive overview see p. .

Design assignment:

During my three days stay in an elderly home I got to see how the living circumstances are of elderly and how major the problem of segregation is within our society. Elders are getting the feeling of being neglected and written off but one thing they all mentioned was the importance of interaction for them. Especially elders from 80 and older are staying more inside than elders from 65 and older but for all of them the view from their apartment or threshold into the public space played an important role in their daily interaction with neighbours. In some cases, this space beyond their threshold was a lost potential as they looked into a dead space and in some cases, it was working in a good way as they saw neighbours walking by their balcony every day which created opportunities for them to interact.

To rephrase : The current environment is not meeting the needs of elders as they feel separated from society but are still very willing and vital to participate in society and with my design I want to **bridge this gap** for elders feel included in society (again).

My goal is to develop a housing concept and create an environment, which is more open and engaged with the neighbourhood where elderly who can live independently and are vital can live after they retire. An environment where the world beyond the threshold is designed in a way to meet their needs for social contact, interaction and to participate in society. A more inclusive living environment where elders can feel valuable in our society and not written off, as I believe that architecture can influence the perception of aging.

GOAL



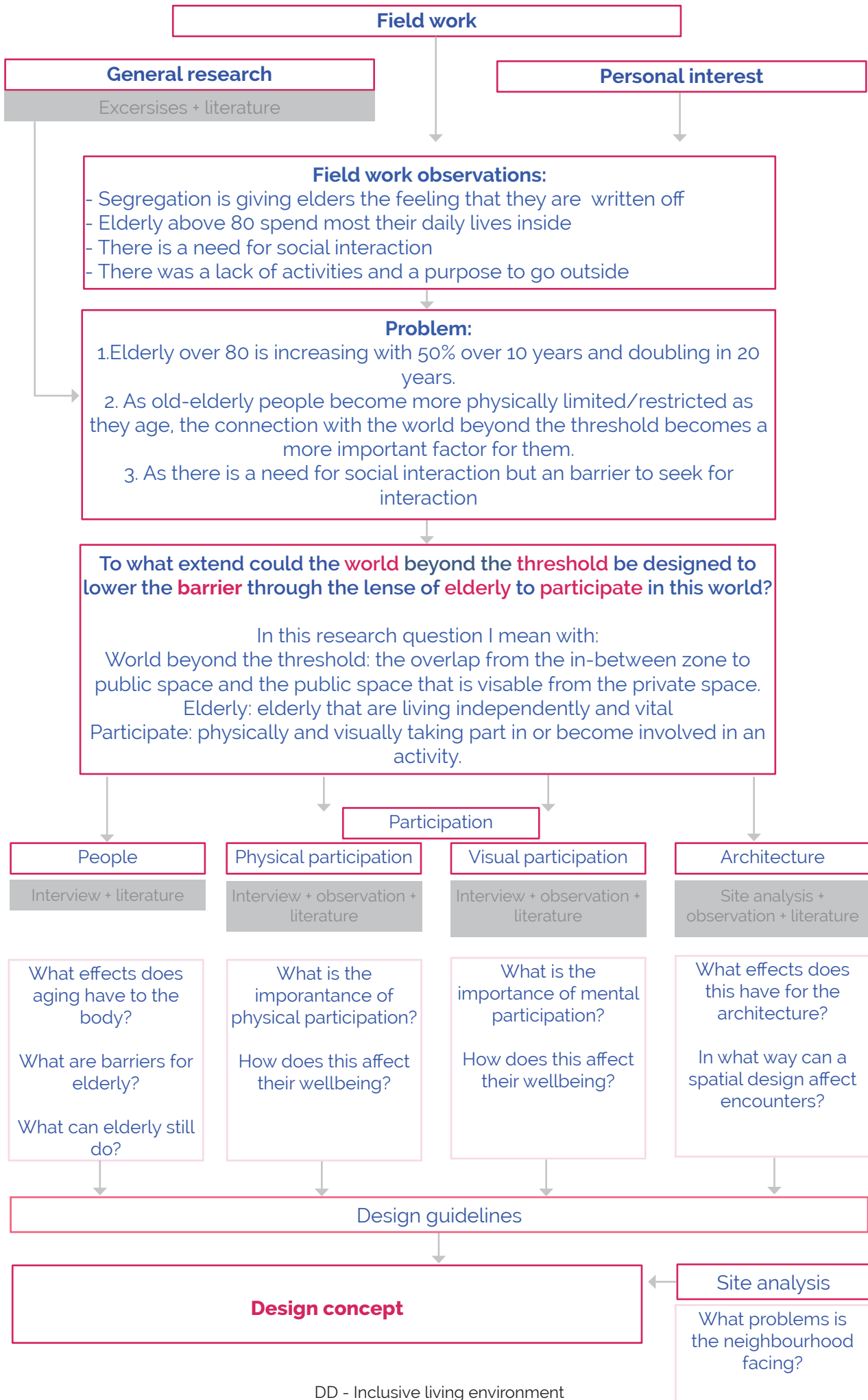
Location:

The location I have chosen for my project is located in Delft, Tanthof. On the project location are three primary schools located which form a school community in Tanthof-East. Due to a shift in population demographics in Tanthof the primary schools are being relocated to another part of the neighbourhood which opens up this plot for densification.

Tanthof is a typical cauliflower neighbourhood which was built up from 1970 to 1990. The neighbourhood is a low-rise area with slow pace traffic and a strong greenery and water ways.

The neighbourhood is currently dealing with the problem of housing shortage and first signs of decline. The old vision of the neighbourhood is not corresponding to the current ideas and need of society, where shortage of houses suitable for elderly is one of them. So, interventions are necessary. So, the main questions within this project location is: How can elders be tempted to move out of their single-family houses for new families to move in? How can the public space be designed to open up the cauliflower structure to meet the current needs of society and elderly?

“BRIDGING THE GAP - CONNECTED BY MEETING”



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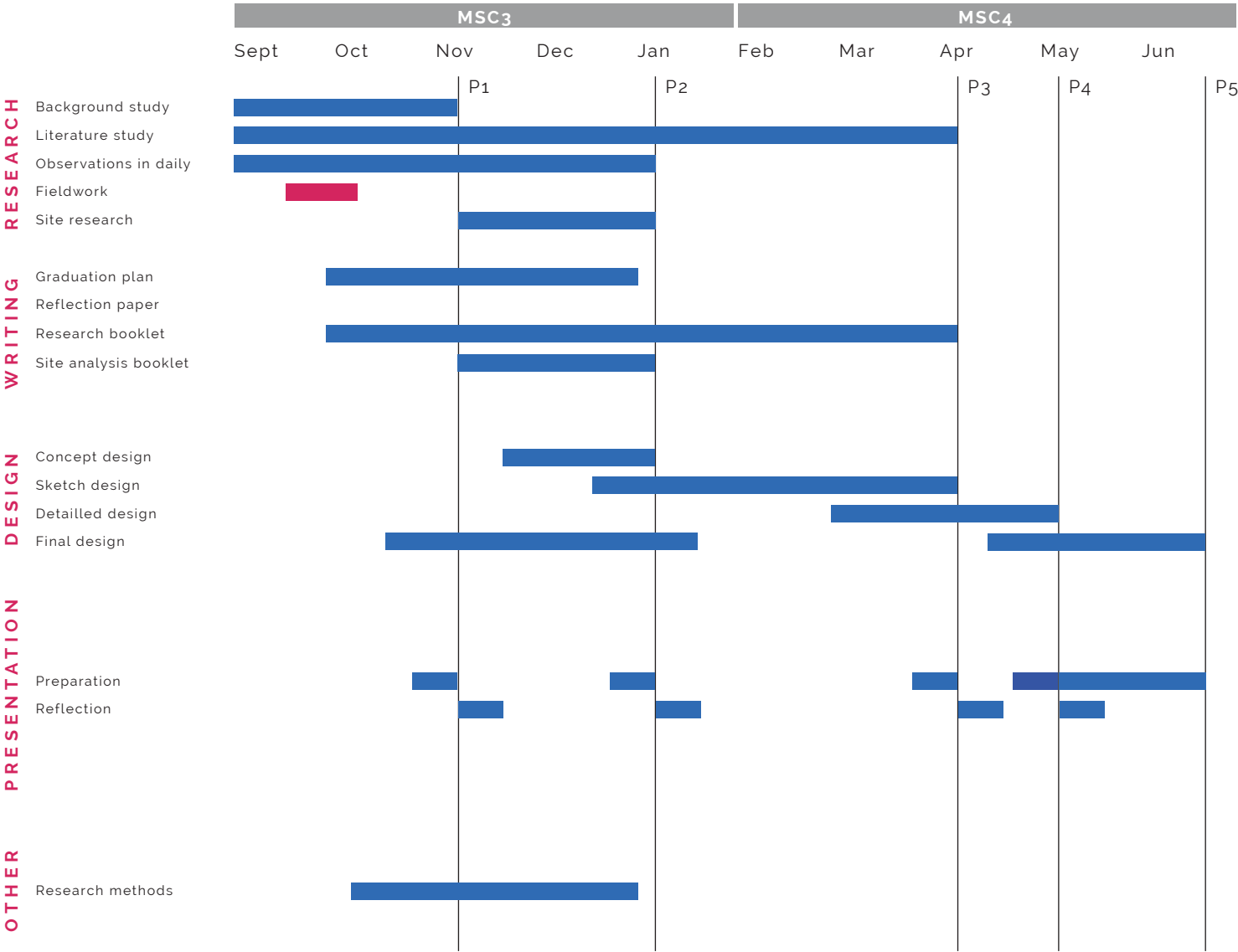
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TIME PLANNING



RELEVANCE

The growing population of elderly is not only in the Netherlands, but it is world-wide problem. The aging population is bringing a lot of challenges and it goes beyond policies and healthcare. A lot has changed over the years and so should the outdated story about aging. The problem of (age) segregation should be taken more seriously and as we are getting older ourselves, this topic will eventually affect us as well.

The studio "Designing for Care" focusses on the question "how do you want to live when you're old?". This question is challenging us (the students) to really understand the target group we are designing for. The studio is a multidisciplinary studio as it has a more human-centred approach with the usage of sociology and anthropology next to architecture. The use of sociology and anthropology is not a commonly used within the field of Architecture but is very crucial especially when designing for elderly. The perception of elders is different from other people as they become more vulnerable, have a different perception with senses, become more immobile as they age and have different needs in life. And therefore, highly relevant within the architecture chair of dwelling because it creates more thorough knowledge on how elderly behave, live and their needs are.

For the graduation project I will focus on the elderly who are retired and vital and can still live independently, just as the residents I have talked to during my stay in an elderly home. Elders are facing the problem of segregation and lack of interaction; these problems affect their well-being and the liveability of a place and eventually can lead to social isolation. There are a lot of lost potentials within the current elderly homes where they are closed off from the neighbourhoods and they are not designed to encourage interaction while it is so important for them. Interaction can take place on different levels. Interaction on a lower level can be a start of creating opportunities for informal care and creating the feeling of belonging.