

interiors
buildings
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research plan

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Introduction

The cityscape has tremendously changed over the last fifty years. We live in an epoch where globalisation, urbanification and digitalisation shape our everyday ways, degenerating the natural order of life as we have known it for so long. The image in every respected city is similar: crowds of boys and girls, men and women glued to their mobile devices, the overly densified streets, vibrant, loud and never stopping. There is no space to take a breath, nor an opportunity to connect. We, humankind, have become isolated from each other, among each other. Over the course of the recent pandemic, this effect has naturally been bolstered. Restricted to the confines of our homes, our primal source of contact is now even more bound to screens. It should however not be neglected that it also offers upsides.

Now the city center of Amsterdam, usually overcrowded with tourists, has come to a rest and remarkable qualities suddenly come to light. Quiet streets allow gentle strolling and the soundtrack of everyday life hums at all corners. No longer dominated by the economical models of out-of-towners, the municipality can shift its focus towards serving the needs of its permanent residents, adapting the

ideology of the Doughnut Economy as set out by Kate Raworth. Rethinking current constructs, it reconsiders the city's social and ecological policies and denounces its position as the ultimate citytrip destination.

This raises the question what the future perspective of the City Hotel in Amsterdam could be. Is the essential of travel the exploring of new places, like the model Amsterdam has served for so long, or does its significance lie in the exchange of cultures, languages, rituals, beliefs and stories? And if so, can this exchange happen among the 179 nationalities that live in Amsterdam currently? Presuming that it can, I deem it worthy to study the new architectural model that can accommodate such experiences. Regarding the City Hotel as a place that provides shelter, that allows to breath and that connects people locally, it will have a place in Amsterdam's future cityscape. As a reinvented residential hotel, it will be home to a number of refugees, mitigating the process of their integration into a new environment. Besides its residential units, it shall host a series of public interiors that mediate the social differences of local and foreign cultures, strengthening the social fabric of the city.

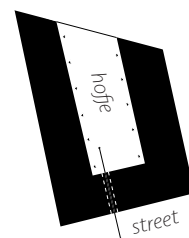
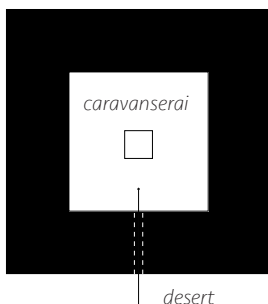
Theoretical Framework

*To construct such a new model, the study of exemplars is of utter importance. The research collectively conducted and compiled in the book *Hotels; Models & Precedents* draws on many hotel typologies that in varying ways deal with forms of accommodation, hospitality and publicness.*

The Caravanserai, possibly the first hotel typology of its kind, resembles the idea of hosting refugees and sharing cultures. Originated from the merchants' need for safe overnight stay during their long travels along the Silk Road, the structure creates a protected space in the midst of the hostile desert. The building consists of an exterior central courtyard surrounded by the overnight sleeping facilities. The public courtyard has a Mosque in its midst but other than that has an open layout, allowing the merchants to adopt the space as desired. Filled with the camels, trading goods and merchants, the courtyard becomes a spirited place where conversation happens. Within

the confines of the building, secluded rooms enclosed by heavy walls offer security and privacy. The careful consideration of the thresholds between the public and private quarters allow the typology to work specifically well, providing comfort to the vulnerable man in a hostile environment.

*More recently a similar model was developed with *Het Hofje*, a foremost Dutch urban archetype that consists of a central courtyard surrounded by few small residential units, reserved for a specific audience. Introduced in the 1300's for widowed women of religion, *Hofjes* have since set out to provide a safe living environment for vulnerable people in the city. Always built within the confines of a city block, they are usually accessed by a single portal from the street. Like the Caravanserai, the courtyard here acts as a mediating space between the hostile exterior and the private quarters of the interior, allowing its users to collectively gather and share.*





The courtyard of the Caravanserai (American Colony Photo Dept., Prints and Photographs division, Aleppo, 1900)



The courtyard of a Hofje (Hofje Willem Vroesenhuis Spieringstraat, Couda, unknown)

Theoretical Framework

To establish a symbiotic relation between the refugees and local residents of the City Hotel neighbourhood, the public interiors that mediate the cultural differences are just as important. These themes have a strong notion of individualism and I therefore argue to recollect on personal experiences in my travels, working abroad and growing interest in exploring cultural differences, rather than to subject to a metaphysical framework.

The one thing that learns us to overcome the barrier of language is without a doubt the sharing of food. I have experienced it during the Georgian feast Supra, in illegal living room restaurants in Vietnam and in traditional Kebab houses in rural Turkey. Our nations their traditional foods are embodied in our pride and we are happy to share them. In such unfamiliar places

one enters as a stranger, lost and without the means to communicate and leaves as a friend with a belly filled. Drawing on the ideals of the Kitchenless City in which several apartments share a communal kitchen, as introduced by architect Anna Puigjaner, one can start to imagine how the sharing of food can happen in the refugee hotel, rich of differing cultures. Other models that accommodates such ideologies include the preliminary architectural project by Douwe de Vries in which the kitchen and table become one, dissecting the difference between the serving and served, or the typology of the illegal living room restaurants, in which customers eat at the same table as the building owner and cook. Such models all share the notion of togetherness and I believe a careful consideration could combine the ideals into an informal restaurant-like typology suited for the City Hotel.



Eating and cooking happens informally at the same table in Vietnam. (J. Santos, Hanoi, unknown)

Theoretical Framework

In a project called the Motown Movement, that aimed to make sustainable housing more accessible to households with a low income, I learned the prospect of gardening. In our case study house, which acted as a community- and learning centre, we found our community garden to work particularly well in engaging locals. Eager to temporarily escape the stressful day to day, many joined us cheerfully on saturday mornings among the crops and plants. It was remarkable to note that with dirty hands, age, ethnicity and social classes no longer mattered, as I found interesting couples to be in joyful chatter. Similar concepts have also proven to work on the larger scale in projects like the New York Community Gardens, that occupied empty lots since the 70's and

since improved the city's social fabric and greatly reduced crime rates in disadvantaged areas like Harlem and the Bronx. Such practices can also happen within the scale of the building, as the Red Roof project by TAA Design so exquisitely illustrates with its terraced roof garden, accurately creating green space within the densified city. The garden, whether communal or public, natural or with crops, offers a possibility for tranquility. It will allow the city and its people to breathe and connect, something that it so desperately needs. Models of these greeneries could, possibly combined with the courtyards of the Caravanserai and Het Hofje, potentially be of great significance for the development of the new City Hotel typology.





The terraced roof garden (TAA Design, Vietnam, 2019)



Model of the city garden, our early design project, illustrating a paused place where nature thrives and social interaction can happen

Theoretical Framework

At a point in life everyone must have found oneself awkwardly learning a foreign traditional dance, acted out a desired object because language was not forthcoming or ended up in passionate discussion about a nation's absurd tradition. Language, dance, song, spoken word, humor, they are part of the fundamentals of our cultural expression and are essential in understanding and respecting others. They can be joyful and hilarious to discover together, yet awfully painful when not treated delicately. Engaging in this cultural discourse should in my understanding happen in informal settings with certain degrees of intimacy and publicness, seemingly contradicting matters. The openness is required to not seclude, to not suggest the idea of secrecy, while intimacy allows us to express freely. A project that addresses

this tenderness in well defined architecture is the BMW Guggenheim Lab, a travelling structure that hosts public talks, workshops and surveys. Its flexible design allows to adjust the space according to the intimacy of its events, thereby safeguarding its will to host diverse acts. Similar acts can also happen with little or no architectural interventions but merely by a collective act, as happened in a pop-up street theatre in Vienna. The public interior is here occupied and adjusted to the demanded intimacy with the use of simple chairs, likely brought from people's homes. The cultural podium presents opportunities for the City Hotel to understand its neighbours more carefully, yet its delicacies in publicness, form and materiality should be attended to in detail to succeed.



The BMW Guggenheim Lab (DVDL DD, Mumbai, between 2010-'14)



A pop-up street theatre (H. Zhang, Vienna, 2020)

Methodological Positioning

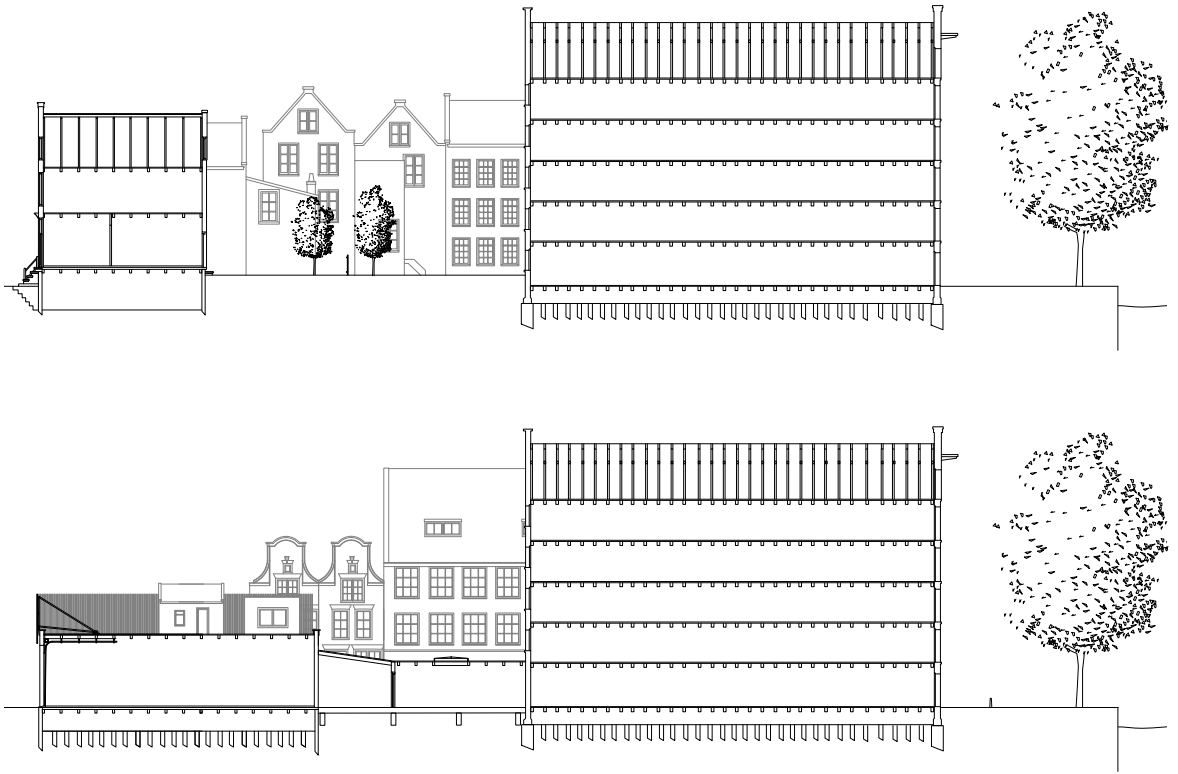
*With the theoretical framework in place it was possible to start the process selecting a site. The aspiration for a residential hotel accommodating refugees, in a Caravanserai/Hofjes like typology and allowing place for greeneries and intimate public interiors led to the apparent conclusion to choose for the Driehoekstraat, a 700 m² plot in the Jordaan. In the collective research of the first book *Amsterdam; Planning & Disruptions*, it had already become evident that the neighbourhood was once built for migrant workers moving to Amsterdam, had since its development known lots of Hofjes and has even one present adjacent to the site. The highly residential neighbourhood therefore ultimately suits the prospects of the new City Hotel in its pursuit to accommodate and integrate a vulnerable group of people. To succeed a thorough understanding of social conditions, historical context and architectural definition is essential of the site, the explored typologies and the persuaded interiors.*

The study of the site will foremost occur as collective work, with the other students that chose the same location. With the small scale of the site we acknowledge the attention to detail that it demands. So far this has resulted in two site visits, photographing its context, measuring all the facades of the buildings in the street, modelling these buildings and their facades in 2D drawings and a 3D computer model, analysing the textures, materiality and ornaments, mapping its historical changes in sections and surveying the neighbourhood's functions, demographics and typologies. As further analysis I regard it important

to start modelling the site, especially the street, in physical models. This should happen on a scale of 1:100 or 1:200 for the entire block, providing information on massing and morphology and on an interior scale of 1:33 for all the facades with its textures and details, enabling intrinsic studies of materiality, openings and details. Furthermore the intangible character of the site needs to be logged by means of inquiries with locals, workers and passers-by.

*On grounds of the typologies my studies should focus on Het Hofje. In particular Het Raepenhofje, which is adjacent to the site, but also in a broader context. A thorough understanding will enable me to translate its fundamentals precisely into a contemporary architectural model. The reading of Wilms Vloet named Hofjes of *Liefdadigheid* will offer great insights in the importance of its thresholds, its relation to the street and its morphologies. Learning from her means of analysis drawings I aim to apply similar methods to analyse Het Raepenhofje and my own model.*

The design of the public interiors shall mainly be conducted among the lines of case studies of precedents and models similar to the ones explored in the theoretical framework. Focus will be put on form, morphology, materiality, detail and furniture. These elements should all carefully be drawn in 2D en 3D illustrations, in a way that allows careful comparison. The resulting design proposal will thereafter be tested by precise physical interior models on 1:33 scale.



Section over the site in historically (top) and current (bottom)



The former building at the site (Beeldbank Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 1937)

Reflection on architectural relevance

In an era where social isolation, gentrification and ethnic dilemmas are on the rise, it is of utmost importance to get into the ecological and social safe space of the Doughnut model defined by Raworth. As the book merely provides a framework of questions for the renewed thinking needed to get into that sweet spot, it is up to society to put its ideas into practice. For the architectural field this means we need to disregard the idea that architects are puppets, answering to the demands of their masters called clients, investors and institutions who aim for profitable and machine based buildings. Instead architects should take a stand and initiate gentle, people based buildings

that respectfully consider our planet's finite resources and stressed levels of toxics. We need to focus on developing new biomaterials and finding more upgradables, adapting gentle constructing methods and reconsider the needs of fancy installations and polluting materials. Most importantly, we must design for our most vulnerable actors of society and consider not only humans but also regard all other living organisms. If we as architects allow ourselves to consciously reconsider the fundamental decision making of our buildings and cities, then we will build architecture that is relevant for a safe and just future for all living things.

References

The Doughnut Economy: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist; Kate Raworth.

Het Hofje 1400-2000, (on)Zichtbare Bouwstenen van de Hollandse Stad; Wilms Floet.

The Kitchenless City: Comfort as a Cultural Construction; Anna Puigjaner.

An Equal Table for Homeless People; Douwe de Vries.

The New York Community Gardens; the people of New York.

Red Roof house; TAA Design.

The BMW Guggenheim Lab; DVDL DD.