REFLECTION

The Dwelling Graduation Studio 'Designing for Health and Care: Towards a Healthy and Inclusive Living Environment' aims to develop new architectural concepts that focus on health and/or care. At the beginning of the studio, I quickly realised that I was interested in designing for a young target group. I decided to research the development of small-scale living concepts for youth care since this is relatively new and therefore under-researched. I was able to pay visits to different types of small-scale group homes, run by different organisations. The conversations that I had with people in all layers of the organisation led to many insights. It allowed me to (start to) understand the users, what their needs and preferences are, what they struggle with and what is important to them, both on an architectural level and social level. I think this was the most interesting part of the research, and it motivated me to search for feasible architectural solutions.

Youth care organisations are currently dealing with financial shortages, and I realised that there is often a limited budget for real estate. As a result, I started thinking in limitations for my graduation design, instead of possibilities. My first ideas lacked ambition and vision. To solve this, I enlarged my scope and decided to include another target group in my design: students. In hindsight, I should have conducted more thorough research into the needs and preferences of this target group, such as additional functions and floor plan design.

The research led to many design guidelines. I spent much time trying to incorporate all outcomes into the design. This led to some problems at the beginning of the design process since I did not find a solution that fitted all design guidelines. In hindsight, I should have prioritised some design guidelines over others, which would have allowed me to define a strategy and concept earlier in the process. The first design phase lacked focus and direction. However, some design guidelines could have been better implemented into the design, such as flexibility and personalisation. Although flexible spaces were included in the design, the building could have been more flexible by enabling future users to make easy adaptations resulting in a building suitable for a larger range of user groups.

Reflecting on the second design phase, there are certain things that I would do differently. Some aspects should have been considered earlier in the design process, such as sustainability. The development of a sustainability concept at the start of the project would have brought the design to a higher level. This is also the case for technical solutions such as ventilation, ducting and technical spaces. Another aspect that should have been integrated better is landscaping. The main focus of my project is social integration and the public space. By including this in the design earlier, I would have been able to design indoor and outdoor spaces simultaneously, which would have improved the design. Leaving these fields to design later resulted in a higher threshold to start working on them. I have learned from this experience, since addressing these topics earlier on would have allowed me to improve my design, but also to become more skilled and comfortable with designing these components.

To reflect, I think the research and design are strongly correlated. The research outcomes are visible on all scales of the design. Sightlines to ensure safety are visible in the floorplans. Social integration is visible in the materialisation and organisation of the buildings. Personalisation is visible in the design of the bedrooms and studios. I believe that the outcomes of my research are valuable for youth care organisations, as it translates the needs of the users to design guidelines and specifically addresses the field of architecture. The design can be seen as an example of how to implement these guidelines.

In this graduation project, I aimed to find new ways to support the needs of young adults in youth care. Research into this field is highly relevant since youth care organisations are dealing with and will continue to deal with staff shortages and financial shortages. It is therefore important that research focuses on the innovation of this sector. In my opinion, innovation is what this project topic, studio topic and master track have in common. However, during my time in Delft, I was not only trained to develop new concepts and innovate. I also learned to be critical, to take a stand and to develop my opinion on architecture, technology and society. In my opinion, all these skills meet in this graduation project.