

Individual Research

Research Plan

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Community-Oriented Design for a Sustainable Development

Research Introduction

After getting to know the project of the Leeszaal in Rotterdam, I became aware of how architecture created and maintained by a community can have a great social impact on the livelihood of the neighborhood. The presentation given by the coordinator of the Leeszaal inspired me to research further on the potential of a community-oriented design.

In the site research for P1 of the Urban Architecture studio we explored the city of Liège through multiple lenses uncovering the history and hidden stories the place has to tell. There, I became particularly intrigued by the multitude of ethnic groups who co-existed in the district of Bressoux - Droixhe with little interaction between them.

Relevance of the Research: Context of Liège

The district of Bressoux-Droixhe was wealthy and prosperous, an area full of hope. In 1930 it hosted the International Exposition, focusing on industry and science.

Shortly after the end of the works, in the early 1980s, a series of regulatory and legal provisions established a more intimate link between the income of tenants and the amount of the price of the rent. This caused the district to steer off from the “social mix” of its beginnings, welcoming above all people that fall under the umbrellas of social housing, low incomes, pensioners and unemployed.

In the research by Frankignoulle and Stevens, they point out that in 1962 the socio-professional composition of Droixhe was quite varied. The composition at the time consisted of: workers in the private sector: 19.3%, workers in the public sector: 5.4 %, retired workers: 6.2%, employees in the private sector: 36.8%, public sector employees 19.5%, retired employees: 10.6%, liberal professions: 2.2% (2002). Statistics from the late 1980s show that only 15% of the head of households had earned an income. Today not being much better, with 54,5% of working people being unemployed in the area of Droixhe (Mandin & Martiniello, 2013).

As a consequence, the income of La Maison Liégeoise, the Belgian social housing company that organized the competition for Droixhe in 1950, gradually decreased to the point that there were no longer resources to maintain the buildings. This led to the deterioration of the building throughout the years and overcrowding tarnished image of the district.

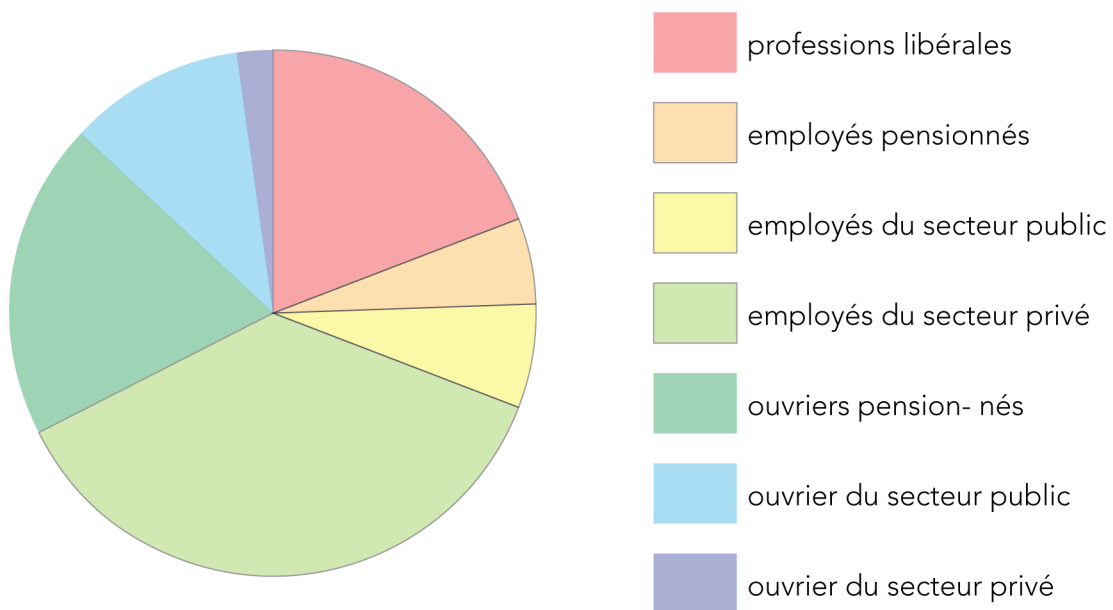
Despite of that, the district of Droixhe is still inhabited by circa 2500 people of 63 different nationalities, making it multicultural and contrasting, rich in people. With this high multiculturality, there are several independent cultural centers for a variety of ethnicities and religions. However, these different communities co-exist rather than mixing, leading to social connections between the different communities weakening.

To respond to these current challenges the municipality, in collaboration with other organizations launched a few projects which are currently under development in the Droixhe District. The key element throughout the projects is the clear focus on strengthening the social interaction and trust between inhabitants. In the Around the Pond project (Liege - Droixhe, Pound, 2018) works at an individual level by attempting to bring people together through the creation of events and workshops using the Parc de Droixhe as its base ground. On the other side of the spectrum, the municipality is working at an urban scale with the development of a masterplan for the area (La Requalification Du Quartier De Droixhe, n.d.) and with the inclusion of the tram rail. This allows there to be space for the construction of new buildings and hopefully new socio-economic opportunities as well as better connectivity between Droixhe and the inner city.

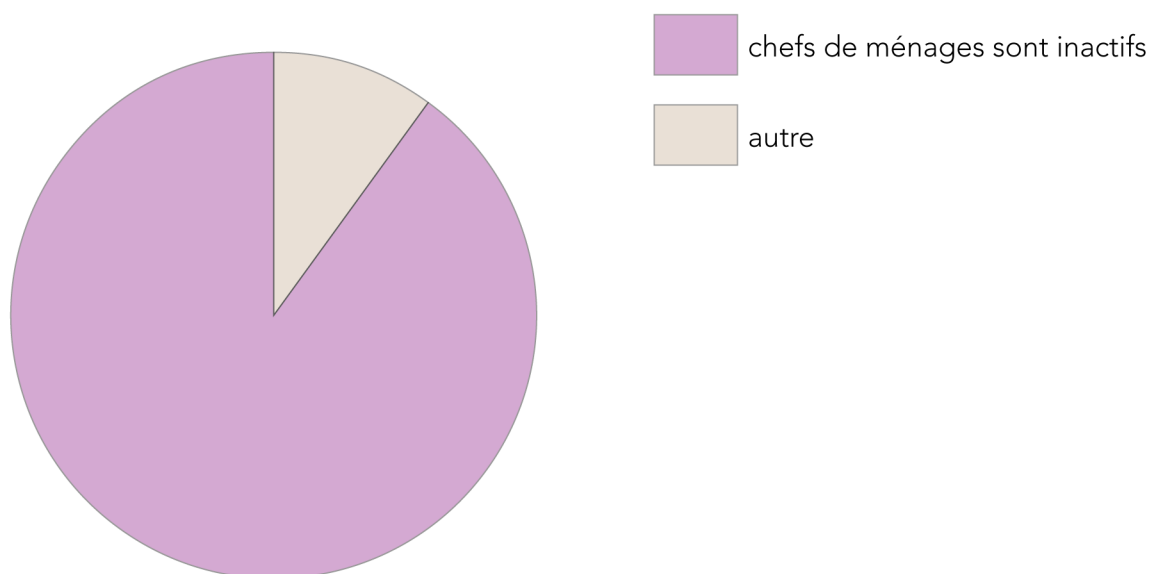
However, this leaves a gap in defining how can people be brought together on and feel connected with each other despite different belief systems among them at the architectural scale.

Socio-Professional Composition of Droixhe

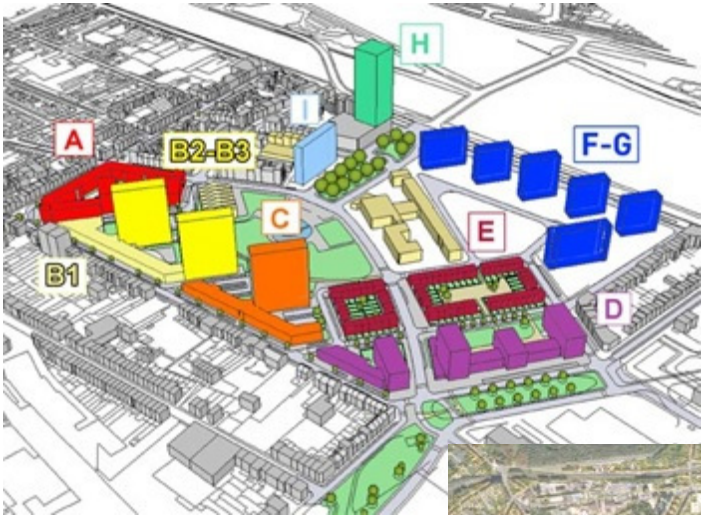
1962



end 1980s



Current Projects Under Development in Droixhe, Liège



(La Requalification Du Quartier De Droixhe, n.d.)



(Les Halles Des Foires De Liège Quittent Coronmeuse Pour Aller S'installer Sur Le Site De La Zone Multimodale De Bressoux, n.d.)

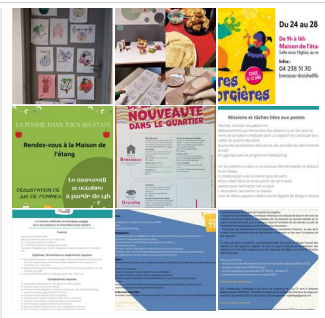
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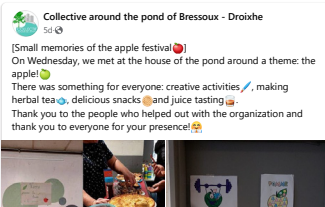


Collective around the pond of Bressoux - Droixhe

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(FACEBOOK PAGE: COLLECTIF AUTOUR DE L'ÉTANG DE BRESSOUX - DROIXHE)

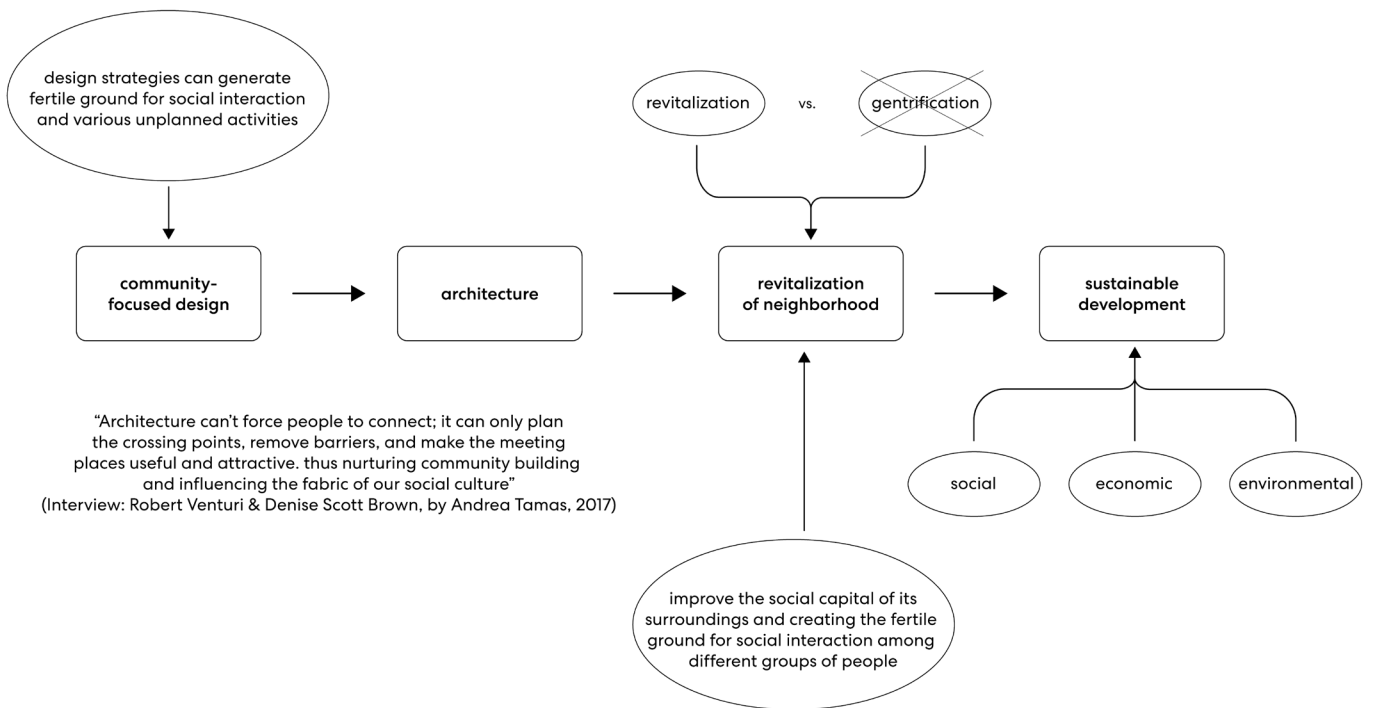
Research Aims

The research question of this paper is:

How can a community-focused design in architecture contribute to the revitalization of a neighborhood to aiming for sustainable future?

To answer this, this research aims to develop guidelines for architectural design that brings people together, thus revitalizing a community sustainably. For the scope of this research, I will be focusing on the district of Droixhe in Liège as it will contribute to the current municipality developments of the area (La Requalification Du Quartier De Droixhe, n.d.).

The guidelines that this research strives to develop cannot be considered as the all-encompassing solution to developing community focused architecture and be applied in all contexts. It is merely tool which I hope to assist in architectural design primarily focused on the context of Droixhe. Nevertheless, the methodology on how to discover such guidelines may be used by other researchers and designers to assist in projects with highly different physical, historical and social contexts.



Methodology

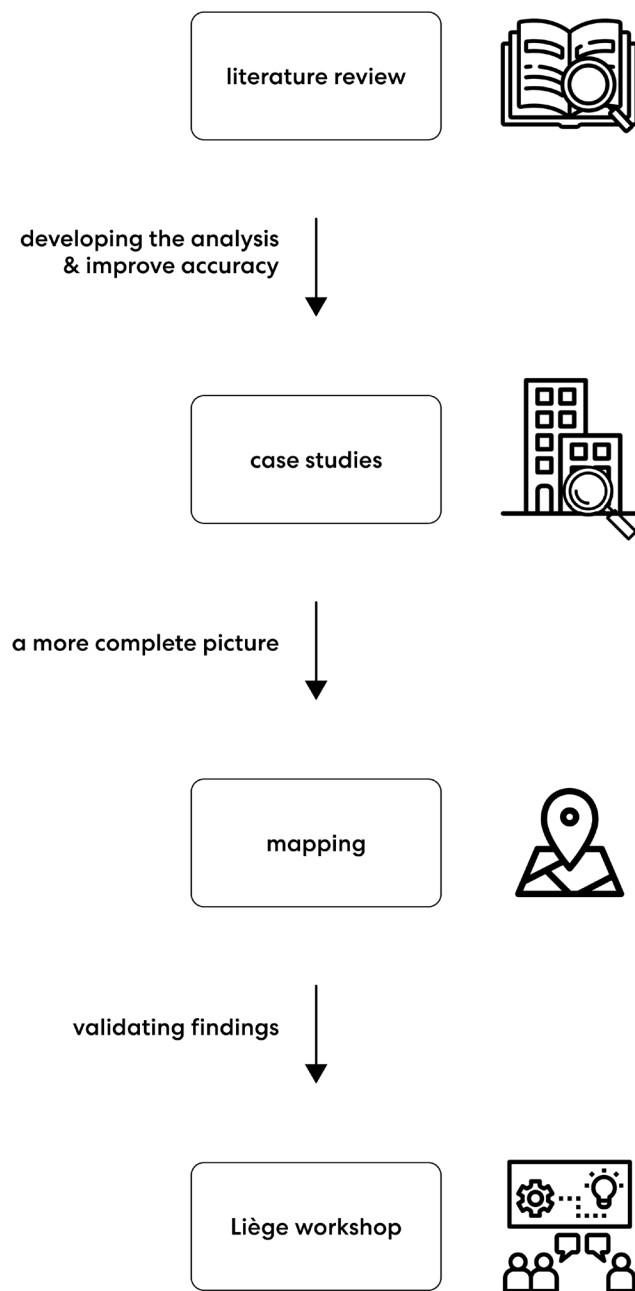
Considering the research question at hand a mixed methods approach (Denscombe, 2017) can provide a comprehensive account on the matter. Following a sequential study, each of which will help develop the previous study.

By starting with a literature review of existing research that has been done on architecture's role to strengthen a community, community-centered development, and sustainable community design and practices, I will hope to extrapolate key architectural guidelines or principles that will serve as a base for my further research.

After that, case studies will be used to get improve accuracy as well develop the analysis (Denscombe, 2017) from the literature review. By using case studies, I will be able to derive possibly other community-focused architectural guidelines that were not found before while evaluating the validity of the previously found knowledge.

Considering that the case studies all have different physical, historical and social contexts, it is important to be able to compare them to have a complete understanding of the guideline's efficacy in the specific case and understand if such guidelines have the potential to be implemented in the case study of Droixhe, Liège. For that mapping can assist with in comparing these attributes that form the context of the case studies.

Lastly, the objective of the research is to find community-oriented architectural guidelines and principles that I can later apply to the design project of the graduation. For that it is essential to validate the findings within the context and community of Droixhe. For that a workshop(s) can be set up where these guidelines can be presented, discussed and reviewed in collaboration with the inhabitants of the neighborhood, the people who have been directly affected by the restructuring of the housing situation in the 1980s and now by the requalification project of the district.



Potential Case Studies

For the case studies chosen, they relate to Liege based on their neighborhoods' social classes which Denscombe explains is a valuable parameter of comparison (2017).

- Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa, DesignersVPUU (Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading)
- LeesZaal Rotterdam West (Community Unifications through social collaboration and co-creation)
- Urban Rehabilitation in Cape Verde (Architecture as a transforming agent)

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