

# REFLECTION REPORT

LIGHTHOUSE

**Ásta María Þorsteinsdóttir**  
5620732

**AR3AD100**  
Advanced Housing Design Graduation studio 2022/2023

**Tutors:** Anne Kockelkorn, Olv Klijn, Ferry Adema, Ruurd Kuijlenburg

## **1 What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (Ar, Ur, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?**

The overarching topic of my graduation project: gender equity in co-housing, aligns with the focus of the *Ecologies of Inclusion* studio which addresses social and environmental issues through new collective housing concepts. The aim of my project is to develop an experimental approach to co-housing, shedding light on and challenging the patterns of patriarchal dominance that persist in conventional dwellings. The project addresses the issue of domestic violence and explores the potential of architecture to create environments that can aid healing processes. The project also deals with questions of affordability, sustainability, the crisis of care, and the disconnect between the domestic and productive spheres. My topic is therefore relevant to both the Architecture track and the MSc AUBS as it touches upon themes of social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

## **2 How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?**

The research played a critical role in informing the design decisions made in my project, and vice versa. The aim of the project is to design a gender-equitable housing solution for survivors of domestic violence, which could also accommodate other

diverse user groups. This required extensive research to understand the socio-economic and spatial needs of survivors and to explore feminist theory in architecture and the potential of co-housing in promoting gender equitable dwellings.

The research into the user group highlighted the common need for affordable housing, as well as access to care, employment opportunities, and social bonding. These findings influenced the programmatic concept of my project, which aims to provide affordable housing through cooperative tenure, along with providing employment opportunities, communal- and community driven spaces, and care facilities - giving added value to residents and the nearby community.

Through the research, it became apparent that combining living and working in one environment could provide numerous benefits for my target group. Investigating agricultural practices led to the discovery of its potential to serve as a productive, therapeutic, educational, and socially bonding program, making it a suitable productive addition to the project. The resulting programmatic concept integrates diverse care facilities and urban food production as essential elements of the design.

Additionally, research into healing architecture principles was crucial in formulating the design guidelines. Architecture can have an influence on physical and psychological well-being

and has the potential to aid healing processes. When designing healing environments, factors such as lighting, color, acoustics, air quality, privacy, and views of nature need to be considered. During the design development, all of these factors were considered and addressed at different scales, ranging from the urban context to detailed technical elaborations.

The case studies also played an important role in linking research and design. The case study of the women's shelter Ada and Tamar House provided insight into the spatial reality of designing for survivors of domestic violence. Kalkbreite is an excellent example of a work-live community with rich care facilities, which inspired the integration of diverse care programs within the project. Haus A provided an example of an alternative way of organizing domestic space and its potential influence on gender and social relations, leading to the development of my own version of a cluster typology -balancing privacy and community, and fostering a sense of belonging and support among residents.

As the design evolved, it also influenced the direction of the research. The design process generated questions and problems related to the specific needs and experiences of survivors, such as the need for privacy, security, and access to support services. These questions prompted further research into the social, economic, and political contexts in which survivors live, and how these contexts influence their

housing needs. The design process also served as a testing ground for theoretical concepts related to feminist approaches to architecture and housing design, which often lead to further research on certain aspects.

Overall, the research and design aspects of the project were mutually reinforcing, with each informing and enriching the other. The research provided a theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding the aspects of gender-equitable housing, while the design translated these concepts into practical strategies and solutions. The project also highlighted the potential for architecture and urban design to contribute to broader societal issues, such as gender equity and social justice, and demonstrated the value of interdisciplinary research and collaboration in addressing these challenges.

### **3 How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?**

The value of my approach to the project lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of the design task at hand and to develop a design solution that is informed by an understanding of the user group, their needs, and the broader social and political context. By using a multidisciplinary approach, the research draws on a wide range of fields, theories, and practices, synthesizing them into a coherent framework for gender-equitable housing design.

The research methods that I used are a combination of literature analysis/historical research and morphological analysis done through a series of case studies. The literature analysis provided a broad understanding of the topic of feminist theory in architecture and the socio-economic needs of the user group, while the case study analysis provided insights into how concepts and theories can be applied in practice.

One of the scientific merits of this approach is the integration of feminist theory in architecture. The research touches upon a range of feminist theories, such as social reproduction theory and feminist political economy, to critically examine the gendered dimensions of the built environment and to develop a design approach that challenges existing gender norms. In addition, the use of healing architecture principles in the design process is another important aspect of my work. The research draws on studies in environmental psychology to develop spatial principles that promote health and well-being.

Moreover, the use of case studies provided practical insights into how concepts and theories translate into practice. The case studies were carefully selected to illustrate different aspects of the design problem, such as the spatial needs of survivors of domestic violence, the potential of co-housing in promoting a gender-equitable dwelling, and the integration of living and working, questioning the

dichotomy between production and social reproduction.

#### **4 How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope, and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?**

My graduation work deals with pressing societal issues of systemic gender inequality and gender-based violence – pointing out their relevance in the field of architecture. The societal value of my graduation project lies in its potential to contribute to the ongoing struggle for gender equality and to promote inclusive living environments by challenging traditional notions of dwelling and promoting feminist approaches to housing design.

The scope of the project is significant, as it offers an example of how architecture and urban design can contribute to social change by addressing systemic inequalities. The project has implications beyond the specific context of gender equity, as it provides a framework for designing inclusive living environments that meet the needs of diverse communities.

The project addresses important ethical considerations such as the right to safe and secure housing, the right to privacy and autonomy, and the need for inclusive, collaborative living environments that promote social well-being. By prioritizing these ethical considerations in the design process, the project has the potential to create new, more equitable models of housing.

Overall, the academic and societal value of my graduation project lies in its potential to create new design approaches that challenge existing norms, promote social justice, and contribute to the broader discourse on gender equity and housing design.

### **5 How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?**

The potential benefits of implementing my project on a larger scale and in other contexts include the potential for broader impact and the opportunity to address similar challenges in other locations. The project's focus on feminist approaches to design, social justice, and inclusive housing models has relevance in many other contexts where housing and gender intersect. The design principles and strategies developed in my project could be adapted and applied to other projects and locations, helping to create more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable communities. The implementation of healing architecture design principles can prove beneficial for a variety of user groups.

However, there are also potential challenges to implementing my project at a larger scale. One challenge is the need to adapt the design strategies to suit the specific context and program of each project. While the principles and strategies developed in my project have broad applicability, each project and context are unique and will require

tailored design solutions. Additionally, the implementation of the project at a larger scale would require significant resources, both in terms of funding and expertise, to ensure the successful implementation of the design principles.

Another challenge is the potential resistance or lack of understanding from stakeholders who may not be familiar with feminist approaches to design and may be resistant to changing traditional models of housing. Overcoming this resistance will require ongoing education and advocacy to build awareness and understanding of the benefits of inclusive and equitable housing models.

In conclusion, while there are challenges to implementing my project at a larger scale, the potential benefits of applying the design principles and strategies developed in my graduation project to other contexts are significant. By addressing gender and social justice issues in housing design, the project has the potential to contribute to the creation of more inclusive and equitable living environments.