

Research plan

The social identity of a three hundred meter long building

2020 - 2021



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1. Introduction

If the majority of inhabitants in a building are facing social issues such as language barriers, loneliness or being too afraid to come out of their apartment during the night we should feel obliged to assess the building in question. The needs of the people living in the three hundred meter long mid-rise building on the street of Hoptille are simply not being met. Inhabitants have little to no contact with their neighbours and are happy to see a familiar face if they come to the community centre of Hoptille to try and solve any problems they have (volunteer De Handreiking, 2020). One of the architects of this long building in the Bijlmer, Sjoerd Soeters, understands now that the frequency of meeting neighbours in public spaces around your home are decisive for recognising one another, making acquaintance, and being part of a community (Sjoerd Soeters, 2020). However, since it was built, the building has been changed a lot due to social issues. A lack of visibility on the inner corridor has caused the access to the apartments to be changed drastically, resulting in the front of the building to be perceived as the back side. And an attempt to liven up the image of the building to be more individualistic by painting all the window frames in bright colours has left the building looking messy and unpleasant to look at according to the architect.

2. Problem statement

2.1 Social issues at Hoptille

The current situation is that the wall-like building of Hoptille, that was initially designed to be humanistic, failed to be what it was set out to be. Non-integrated solutions were rightfully used since the problems occurring were serious; shootings and other criminal activity were endangering the inhabitants at the time (government group, 2020). An overhaul of the Hoptille area is needed as the solutions that were put in place, e.g. the new housing access on the east side of the building and the colours that added to the west side of the building, are exactly the elements that have created the negative image of the building. The image of the building is in fact so poor that there are serious discussions being held about a potential total demolition of the building.

2.2 Identity

The identity of the Hoptille area seems very affected by wide and bare streets and sidewalks surrounding the buildings. One of the biggest contributions that journalist and well known urban planning criticus Jane Jacob's made to the field of urban planning is her understanding of the significance of streets and sidewalks. She argued that these elements of the built environment are the true public spaces of a city. This is in contrast with the idea that only public parks and plazas play this role in the city (Jay Wickersham, 2001). When looking at the east side of the three hundred meter long building of Hoptille you can clearly tell that the sidewalk has gained a very atypical identity due to the addition of the staircases on this side. Several interviewees mentioned the openness of the street, while at the same time mentioning how the staircases disturb this image. (interviews users group, 2020)

Heritage

Identity is one of the three main topics that Peter Howard discusses in his book "Heritage Management, Interpretation, Identity". The identity of an existing building, that could potentially be heritage, becomes important in this research as its main purpose is about feeling better, more rooted and more secure (2003, p. 147). We can instinctively tell that these feelings are beneficial for the social well-being of people. For a building to be considered heritage it does not need to be loved in the current situation as the identity of and attachment to the place is separate from the appreciation of it. As Howard explains, attachment to places may well be a complex mixture of love and dislike (2003, p. 152).

Small scale

As for the smaller scale of the neighbourhood, which fits the three hundred meter long building of Hoptille best, Howard (2003, p. 156) explains that the significance of the physical heritage tends to be negative. When a threat makes its entrance however, people start to take notice. Before the year 1800, old buildings were almost solely conserved when there was initially a threat of demolition. Current situation is that threats like these are being made to the wall-like building of Hoptille. According to a volunteer working and living at Hoptille there are two similar sized parties pledging to preserve as well as to demolish the Hoptille building. However, like Howard explains, the reasoning behind the people that wish to preserve the building, mainly the inhabitants, are not materialistic. Instead the reasoning tends to be about the small scale feeling and the social aspects that the block provides to the area (Volunteer De Handreiking, 2020).

Green

According to the results of the interviews on the streets in October this year the most controversial topic of the Hoptille area is the presence of greenery (interviews users group, 2020). Several people mentioned that they liked the fact that there was greenery placed in the central part of Hoptille where others complained that there was a lack of greenery in Hoptille. One of the inhabitants of Hoptille pointed out that she was especially disappointed in the variety of the green, a grass field with just a couple of trees did not offer enough variety according to her. The reasoning behind these wants came from her youth where she used to live outside of the city, the green identity of the village is much more appealing to her than the grey identity of the city. She did however mention that the Huntum neighbourhood in the H-Buurt, does offer this green identity in the city (interviews users group, 2020). In the work of Vaeztavakoli the identity of urban blue and green elements are discussed. They mention how recent health literature specifies that these urban green and blue elements offer therapeutic landscapes to their residents and visitors. Their paper discusses the identity of the Niasarm canal that can be found in the city of Isfahan, Iran. Their conclusions are that this urban element, that adds both green as blue to the city, has improved the sense of identity of the inhabitants as it has become a symbol for the city. The canal brought a sense of pride to the inhabitants and gave inhabitants a sense of belonging, feelings like these have the potential to improve the health of people (Vaeztavakoli et al., 2018).

2.3 Community

Creating a sense of community is an integrate part of the humanistic ideal that the architect tried to achieve with the design of the Hoptille area. A reason a social topic like this should be a big part of architectural design practice is that the physicality of buildings themselves can literally stand in the way for daily social activities to occur according to Jan Gehl (2011, p. 54). Now that a large portion of people living in Hoptille are dealing with poverty and presumably with loneliness, an opportunity for neighbourly contact that goes beyond a superficial level arises. As Jan Gehl explains mutual problems can help with creating more meaningful contact among neighbours (2011, p. 53).

Visibility

When designing the wall-like building of Hoptille the architect, Sjoerd Soeters, understood that having ground floor apartments meant that there should be a direct visual relation to the public area in front of these apartments. Reason being that a visual connection like this would keep the area safer. The first floor should be able to do the same, thought the architect at the time, which is why the first floor of the building features apartment-wide balconies on the west side of the building. What we know now however, as the architect confirms, is that these balconies are in fact hindering the visual connection from the apartment to the public space. For this reason Soeters believes now that if you design an apartment with balconies addressing the public area the designer should make sure that the balcony is not directly in front of the living room area (Sjoerd Soeters, 2020). In order to keep an area safer using high visibility on the public space Jane Jacob argues the importance of having mixed use areas. By having more than one primary functions in an area she claimed that a wider range of people would be attracted. Because of the different functions these visitors would be spread over longer moments during the day and night, keeping the area more active, save and less congested at peak periods. She believed that this mix of use would be best if it was implemented at all scales of the city resulting in a fine-grained mix of functions (Jay Wickersham, 2001).

Inclusivity

Just as she is in favour of a mix in functions, Jane Jacobs is in favour of a rich mix of housing types. She understands that encouraging higher densities by implementing lower rise housing units means that there will be a higher percentage of ground area will be built resulting in less open space. However Jacobs thinks this is worth it as the mix of housing types brings in more diverse social structures (Jay Wickersham, 2001). Consequently this means that an area will be more inclusive as it offers not only the housing types with the highest demands but also types that could enrich the neighbourhood with other household types. Bringing in more types of people could potentially result in a need of clear hierarchy of social divisions of the public space. Jan Gehl (2011, p. 57) points out that single architectural projects can clearly reflect these social divisions by a hierarchy in the use of social spaces, from the living room up until the outdoor squares. One of the motivations for these physical divisions is that they can strengthen the community and democratic processes in individual housing groups as well as in the whole architectural project.

Accessibility

The access to the long building of Hoptille has been altered multiple times over the years turning the original back side of the block into the front side. The architect of the building points out that the entirety of the building was in fact schemed in a way to have the entrances on the other side of the block (Sjoerd Soeters, 2020). Besides this issue it is not too difficult to notice that the staircases on the east side are not accessible for people that simply cannot use stairs. Apart from people that are physically unable to do so, it also hinders people that use strollers and elderly who are afraid of using stairs.



Figure 1. West side of the building with original staircase in the distance. From "Stadsarchief Amsterdam", by Archief van de Gemeentelijke Dienst Volkshuisvesting, n.d.

(https://archief.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/3b27470f-f0e0-9cd3-472e-caecb321e7de/media/87c8f441-37ef-b85f-34eb-9f919e3bd8ba?mode=detail&view=horizontal&rows=1&page=13&fq%5B%5D=search_s_geografische_aanduiding_sk_geografische_naam:%22Hoptille%22&sort=order_i_sk_date%20desc&filterAction).



Figure 2. East side of the building with new staircases in front of the original back side of the building. From "Stadsarchief Amsterdam", by Archief van de Gemeentelijke Dienst Volkshuisvesting, n.d.

(https://archief.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/b3e89d90-ef7e-d922-1f8b-2bacd5373b64/media/7d0a08ac-f072-ca7f-8e70-91e9b6c38561?mode=detail&view=horizontal&rows=1&page=4&fq%5B%5D=search_s_geografische_aanduiding_sk_geografische_naam:%22Hoptille%22&sort=random%7B1608114363416%7D%20asc&filterAction).

2.4 Conclusion

The topics of identity and community described above form the totality of the problem statement. The complexity of bringing all the parts of these two topics together in the design proposal will be the challenge of this graduation process.

3. Research questions

The following research questions are based upon the problem statement in order to find the solutions to the stated problems. In the reflection of methodology the methods of the collective and individual research is explained. There it will be explained how these methods try to give answers to the research questions.

- *How can the social functioning of the mid-rise building in Hoptille be improved by amplifying the present green and small-scale identity?*

This is the first and main question that will be discussed in this individual design project.

- *What influence will the heritage values of Hoptille have on the identity of the design proposal?*
- *What can community oriented architectural projects tell about the mid-rise building of Hoptille?*
- *How can the identity and social functioning of the design proposal enhance one another?*

These questions are supplementary to the main question and are meant to give guidance to the research and design process.

4. Reflection on methodology

The entirety of the research can be classified in three stages, the pilot stage in Almere Haven, the collective research of the H-Buurt and the individual design process on one of the three locations of the H-Buurt. The methodology behind the first two collective parts is explained in the 'Methodology of the collective research' while the individual part is elaborated in the 'Methodology of the individual research'. As the scheme below illustrates the group of students was divided in two for the pilot in Almere Haven: the on-site group and the digital group. The result of this pilot was a tested selective methodology that has been used for the collective research of the H-Buurt. The students divided themselves in four groups to use this methodology on the four different stakeholders of the H-Buurt: the government, the makers, the owners and the users. Using a so called code book, a universal language was formed to describe the results of the four separate research groups. Using this code book the different groups independently researched the Bijlmerplein, the Hoptille and the Heesterveld location on three different scale levels: the urban, the building and the detail level. The results of these four research groups resulted in an extensive collection of information that can be considered a toolkit for each of the individual graduation projects. The vertical bar on the right side of the scheme illustrates how each of the parts that make up the collective research contribute to the development of the personal research and interests.

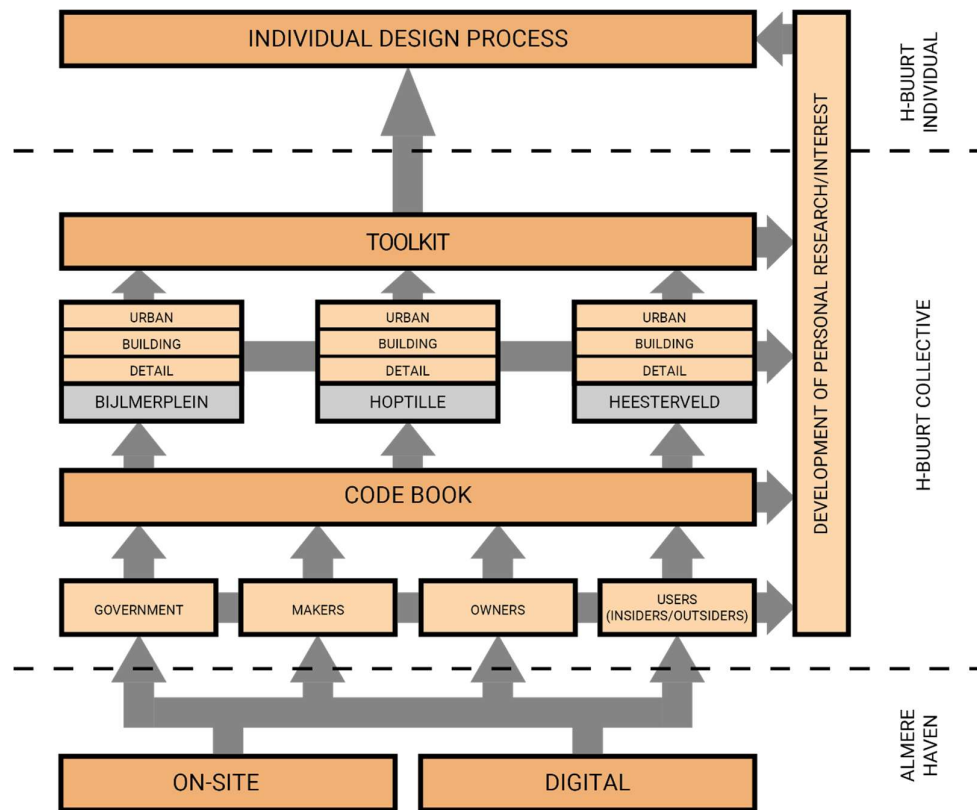


Figure 3. Collective code book scheme (own figure)

4.1 Methodology of the collective research

Almere Haven

The pilot research in Almere Haven is used as an experiment, before diving into the research in the H-Buurt. During this experiment, the goal is to test and adapt the research methods and to extract the attributes and values from the opinions of inhabitants. The pilot research consists of two approaches, a media one and an on-site one. After this pilot research, the methods were discussed and the best methods are used in the H-Buurt research.

Media

The first method being used in Almere Haven is the social media research. Several sources were being used for this method: Facebook, Instagram, Flickr and books about the vision. Hotspot maps were made to indicate the distribution of the locations where people took photos. Mind maps were made to provide information about the attributes at the various locations. Finally, a Sankey diagram is used to compare the different stakeholders and whether their values correspond or not.

On site

The second approach was on site. This involved street interviews of different kinds and several site visits. In total four different methods were used for the interviews: open conversation (A), drawings (B), pictures (C), and a questionnaire (D). Each method had its own goal and specifics.

Method A was used during the first site visit. The method is open and based on a conversation. Its goal was to gain a variety of information about the interviewees and their experiences, without leading them into specific directions. It was a suitable method to get a first impression of Almere Haven. However, it also resulted in non-comparable data.

The other three methods were prepared for the second site visit. Method B is also open, but visual instead of textual. The goal here was to obtain information about personal, intuitive, and specific attributes/opinions.

Method C and D are more specific. Method C is also visual and aims to direct and acquire specific information within a framework (images) without influence of personal interpretation. Method D is textual again. The goal of this method is to obtain comparable information and opinions about specific subjects of the research (question).

An overview of the four methods is shown below:

	TEXTUAL	VISUAL
OPEN	OPEN CONVERSATION (A)	DRAWINGS (B)
SPECIFIED	QUESTIONNAIRE (D)	PICTURES (C)

Figure 4. four methods Almere Haven Pilot

The data gathered using these methods was documented and analysed. The analysis consisted of colour coding the data in order to extract values, opportunities, and challenges (non-values). From these first interpretations of the data different graphs and maps were made to summarise the results.

Translation to H-Buurt

In order to learn from the Almere Haven research, the group reflected on all methods used.

For the media group, there were a few methods that worked quite well for gaining quantitative data. The sources Facebook, Instagram and Flickr were most useful for the research. The hotspot and tag maps show where photos were being taken and which tags were used. This combination resulted in a quantitative study with a qualitative map as well.

The on-site group decided on a top four of the tested methods and a list of recommendations. For each method, the main goal was established. Each method has its own reflection. This reflection was not just focused on the execution of the method but also on the documentation and the first analysis of the data.

H-Buurt

To start the H-Buurt research, the group divided into four groups. Each was appointed a “maker” according Howard (2003) in order to cover different perspectives in the area. The division was made as followed: users, owners, makers, and government.

In the second week since the group division one method was used by all groups, photo elicitation (Harper, 2002). Seven photos were selected and shown to all interviewees along with collective questions. These answers were then compared in week three. The fourth week was used to gather more in-depth information and/or the processing of the data.

The method for processing of the data was equal for all groups. The program Atlas.ti was used to code the data to be analysed later on. For coding, an inductive strategy is chosen. This approach requires reading the data and identifying codes throughout the process. It is not clear which codes will be included in the final code book beforehand. This ensures that the codes reflect the issues of importance from the interviewees, not the preconceived notions of the researchers (Hennink, 2020).

The specific method per subgroup is described below.

Government

The government group focused on the perspective of the government on the H-Buurt. This includes the municipality, the national service for cultural heritage, but also organizers on the neighbourhood scale. The research consists of two parts, both spread out over five weeks. The goal is to identify the values in the H-Buurt, from the perspective of the government.

The first part of this research is desk research. This provides an overview of the area, in the form of demographics and plans & policies. The demographics include topics such as income, population or migration background. Demographics reflect trends and how those trends developed over time. Through analysis of these statistics we can identify events and societal change (passive influences) and policy change (active influences).

Secondly, interviewing representatives from different government agencies contextualizes the desk research. The interviews are structured around a fixed set of photos.

Makers

The maker group looked into the makers and academics according to the table of Howard (2003). Makers are the original architects, urban planners and re-designers. Academics involved specialists from architectural heritage, urban and housing fields. The research was built up in several parts during five weeks to find out what attributes and values could be found from the maker and academic perspective.

The first part consisted of site visiting, studying literature and other secondary resources to get familiar with the architecture and context of the Bijlmer initial idea until now. As a result a summarized text of the literature and a timeline were made to provide a comprehensive overview. The following step was preparing and having interviews with the architects and academics themselves to find out attributes and values of each of them. Therefore a set of pictures was shown to each of the interviewees to react on, followed by more in-depth questions about their project/specialty.

Owners

The owners group focused on the real estate property within the five neighbourhoods of H-Buurt. There were five steps within the research phase, which built upon each other and could be combined in one in-depth research on the attributes and values out of the owner's perspective.

The gained knowledge of week one enabled the group to set up interviews with the stakeholders themselves. Interviewees have been asked to bring photos of the neighbourhood and explain their personal relation to them. A short personal introduction was followed by six of the collectively picked photos of different areas within the H-Buurt. Goal was to get a personal reaction to the photos shown. Those reactions allowed to gather valuable information of possible owner related focus points.

Users

The users group focused on the perspective of the people who live or work in the H-Buurt or visit the H-Buurt for a different reason. The aim is to understand the attributes current users value, so these can be taken into consideration for future designs. For the research three sources were used, which were approached in similar ways. Firstly, general research was done and secondly, more detailed information was gathered. Furthermore, all this research was coded and the data interpreted. Finally, conclusions were drawn and overviews of the information were made.

For the first source, interviews, four types of interviews were conducted. In the first week a basic set of questions was used to get a general idea of the opinions about the area. This information was used to create a more detailed set of questions and a collective set of photos, which were used for the online questionnaire in week two as well as the in-depth interviews. This photoset was simultaneously used for the street interviews.

For the second source, social media, information was gathered on Flickr, Instagram, and Facebook. The information consisted of pictures with hashtags and comments.

For the third source, research done by others, information was gathered from scientific sources on the users' perspectives specified to Bijlmerplein, Hoptille and Heesterveld.

4.2 Methodology of the individual research

The main focus in the individual research will be the interaction between the building analysis of the wall-like building of Hoptille and the analysis of own designs and existing architectural projects. In both types of analysis the topics discussed in the problem statement of this research plan will play an extensive role. However, due to the fact that this is a design studio that focusses around heritage, the technological building analysis will play a crucial role in this process as well. This technological analysis will be done on three levels as suggested by Frank Koopman, a 'Heritage & Technology' tutor on the TU Delft. Structure, materials and services are these three levels on which the building(s) will have to be analysed.

As the problem statement is directed towards social aspects the first of these levels, structure, will play the biggest role in the analysis. The reason being that the structure of a building has the biggest impact on its spatial qualities. These impacts are directly affecting the physical and visual connections, that both play a big role in the social qualities of a building, within the plot. The materiality of this analysis follows as the second most important as this will directly affect the identity of the building(s).

Themes for analysis

Within the collective research fourteen themes (excluding the sub-themes) were detected for the H-Buurt. Using these themes, comparisons between the different stakeholder groups could be made. In regards to this personal research a selection of these themes are used to digest the findings on these different themes. The themes that set up this selection are the following:

1. Diversity
 - a. in Public Space
 - b. in Dwelling scale
 - c. in Function
 - d. Cultural
2. Feeling of Safety
3. (In)formal economy
4. Lack of qualitative greenery
5. Low – mid – high-rise
6. Maintenance
 - a. Building
 - b. Urban
7. Mistrust
8. Sense of ownership
9. Three distinctive identities
10. Unintended use of public space

The ten selected themes all have something to do with the discussed issues of identity and community that are addressed in the problem statement. As the individual challenge of this design studio is set to improve on the social functioning and the enhancing of the existing identity of Hoptille the 'users' stakeholder is most important. The other three stakeholders, the makers, government and the owners, do however provide different perspectives on the variety of topics.

Explorations

After gaining a thorough understanding, gained by technical and thematic building analysis, of the wall-like building of Hoptille architectural explorations will be possible. The method for doing these explorations are both physical as digital since both of these offer different benefits. Physical explorations, such as drawings or the making of physical sketch models, are particularly useful in the early stages of designing. Reason for this is the speed in which mental images can be captured and evaluated. The biggest benefit of doing digital architectural explorations for me is the ability to change the perspective and scale of the drawing at any point. This flexibility allows for the maker and others to evaluate the spatial explorations in an effective way. Since both of these methods hold their own benefits an alteration of these methods will be used. By going back and forth between the methods the explorative process will be kept up to speed but also result in models that can be analysed on different scales and for different themes.

Concepts

Once an exploration starts to take shape as an architectural model it can be evaluated as a concept more specifically. An exploration will be seen as a concept once it is at least drawn out schematically in a site plan, floor plan and section or once a 3D-model has been made that covers all of these drawings. With a concept done a reflection to the problem statement can be made in detail, this can result in a variety of scenario's: the concept is fundamentally wrong and a new exploration needs to be made, the concept meets a majority of the requirements but still lacks in one or several parts, or, the concept meets the requirements and can be further worked out into the design proposal. In case of the second result new explorations need to be made, these can be several explorations based upon the exploration that was used to create the current concept.

The requirements

The requirements that have to be met are directly related to the problem statement and can be shortly formulated as follows:

- The identity of the concept is supported by the heritage values that were determined during the collective research of the Hoptille area.
- The small scale identity provided by the low-rise buildings of Hoptille is preserved.
- The identity of the Hoptille area will be greener than the current situation.
- The visibility for the inhabitants to one another and to the street will be improved.
- The concept offers housing for a high variety of people and types of households.
- The concept will offer accessibility for people with limited mobility.

5. Individual research structure

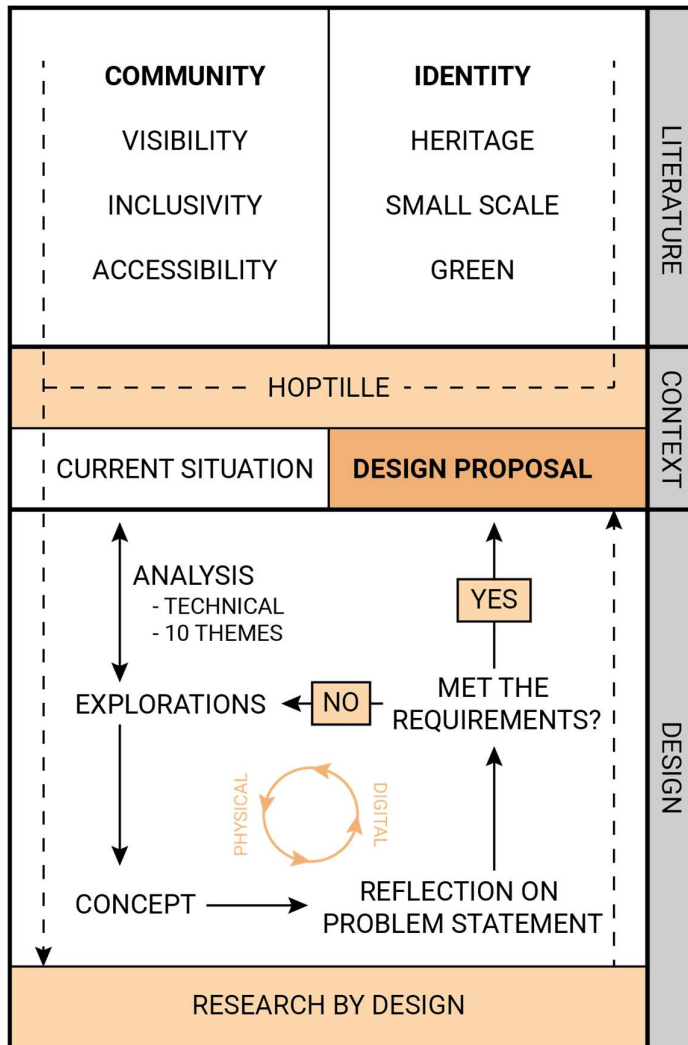


Figure 5. diagram research structure (own figure)

The research structure is made in order to form a clear direction to the research and design process. In this case the end product will have to be a well-argued design proposal for the mid-rise Hoptille building. As shown in figure 3 the structure is divided into three rows: literature, context and design. By placing the context, the Hoptille area and its current situation, in the middle of this structure it is secured that the research is done site specific and does not become too general. Just as how the problem statement is divided into the two topics of community and identity so is the theoretical framework of my research. Both of these topics have three sub-topics that are always related to one of the two main topics.

If this literature can help with the understanding of the flaws in the current situation of Hoptille it will be part of the problem statement. When this is the case the row of design in this diagram will be applicable. By analysing the current building, the collective research and the literature that forms the problem statement it will be possible to start the process of research by design. The method for the research by design has been elaborated in the previous chapter under the 'Methodology of the individual research'.

6. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this report is a dialogue between literature and the research that has been done by the different stakeholder groups, mainly that of the users and the makers group. The books of Jan Gehl (2011) (*Life Between Buildings Using Public Space*) and of Peter Howard (2003) (*Heritage Management, Interpretation, Identity*) were used together with the scientific paper of Jay Wickersham (2001) (*Jane Jacob's Critique of Zoning: From Euclid to Portland and Beyond*) to form the pre-existing theoretical framework. The 'new' sources of information used in this report were the interviews conducted by the users and the makers group.

Architect Jan Gehl mainly discusses the interaction between people in public urban areas. He focusses on the improvement of city life for pedestrians as well as for cyclists. Therefore his work has proven to be very insightful for the topic of community as this discusses the connection between people in front of their homes.

The work of Howard is directed to heritage and the values attached to them. One of the chapters in his book is focussed on the identity of heritage and what identity means to the people living in and around buildings that could be considered heritage.

Jay Wickersham discussed the work of Jane Jacobs with a focus on her views on the zoning of cities. The reasoning behind the stances that Jacobs takes in urban planning are often social. Therefore her views on urban space were both useful for the identity as well as the community part of the problem statement.

7. Reflection on the relevance of the graduation project

The main goal of the graduation studio of 'New Heritage' is to do research on how to deal with potential new heritage projects. This research plan discusses this issue through the scope of social issues and identity. The topic of sustainability is bigger than ever and therefore the demolition of buildings is getting more controversial. Since the wall-like building of Hoptille is potentially up for demolition the discussion on the future of the building in question should be conducted. The main problematics in and around the buildings seem to revolve around its image and the present social issues, thus the topics of identity and community are relevant to discuss.

The academic discussions on community as well as on identity in correlation with heritage are already being held. However, the combination of these two are not. The building that's discussed in this report is a social housing project which has been designed by, among with others, architect Sjoerd Soeters who has built a big reputation in the architecture scene during the last decennia. Therefore the correlation of potential heritage and that of the present social issues is most definitely worth discussing.

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8.1 Literature

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Wickersham, J. (2001). Jane Jacob's Critique of Zoning: From Euclid to Portland and Beyond. *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review*(28:547), 550-552

8.2 Own research

Volunteer De Handreiking (2020). Interview conducted by Marije de Ruijter & Stefan Lichtenveldt (of the users group)

Sjoerd Soeters (2020). Interview conducted by Rolf Oosterhuis, Nurhadi Nugraha, Karry Li and Martinas Sacevičius (makers group)

Government group (2020). Collective research done by Thijs Blom, Jonathan Verhoef and Rebwar Obeid

Interviews users group (2020). Street interviews conducted by Sophie Vrisekoop, Cornee Louwerens, Min Ju Cha, Yuting Hu, Julie Megens, Marije de Ruijter & Stefan Lichtenveldt (users group)

8.3 Figures

Figure 1. Archief van de Gemeentelijke Dienst Volkshuisvesting. (n.d.) West side of the building with original staircase in the distance [Photograph].

https://archieff.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/3b27470f-f0e0-9cd3-472e-caecb321e7de/media/87c8f441-37ef-b85f-34eb-9f919e3bd8ba?mode=detail&view=horizontal&rows=1&page=13&fq%5B%5D=search_s_geografische_aanduiding_sk_geografische_naam:%22Hoptille%22&sort=order_l_sk_date%20desc&filterAction

Figure 2. Archief van de Gemeentelijke Dienst Volkshuisvesting. (n.d.) East side of the building with new staircases in front of the original back side of the building [Photograph].

(https://archieff.amsterdam/beeldbank/detail/b3e89d90-ef7e-d922-1f8b-2bacd5373b64/media/7d0a08ac-f072-ca7f-8e70-91e9b6c38561?mode=detail&view=horizontal&rows=1&page=4&fq%5B%5D=search_s_geografische_aanduiding_sk_geografische_naam:%22Hoptille%22&sort=random%7B1608114363416%7D%20asc&filterAction).

Self-assessment

The lectures and how-to sessions that were given in the beginning of this academic year were re-occurring for me as I did the similar course, Research Methods, last year. I thought the process of writing the report was more difficult, but also more rewarding this year as the tutor giving the feedback is also involved in the research and design process of the graduation project. Because of this, the report did feel a lot more connected to the design process than it did for me last year when this was not the case.

However, the structure of the course did not seem to be improved from last year. As a student that finds assignments that involve a lot of reading and writing especially challenging I could not gain a lot of benefits from the lectures and how-to sessions that were given. Reason for this is that these are presented and planned in the beginning of the academic year and not around the time that the students are actually actively working on the drafts of their research plans. By the time I started working on the research plan the overload of information from the lectures and how-to sessions were no longer fresh in my mind. Because of this, it is needed to watch these lectures over again which can be difficult as these are generally very time-consuming and not straight to the point.

Personally, I would have preferred it if, instead of a planned lecture series, there would have been a collection of videos divided into the different elements that would form a well-written research plan. This way the students could go through these parts themselves when they are working on the assignment making the content of the lectures translate smoother into the assignment.

Last year it already became clear to me that there is an understanding with the tutors of the lectures and the how-to sessions that a lot of architecture students struggle with academic reading and writing due to being dyslexic. This acknowledgment is helpful however I still cannot help but feel that it is not taken into account that students who face problems with reading and writing simply need more time to meet the same criteria that is being used to grade with.

This year however the assignment taught me a lot more than the Research Methods course that was given last year. Having the assignment more closely related to the graduation project was the reason for this.