Overlapping lives in co-habitation

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Architecture & Dwelling MSc graduation Studio: "At Home in the City"
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‘Diversity’ and ‘Increasing of elderly’ are prominent characteristics in this chosen site. However, diversity from mixed functions disturbs building blocks to be integrated to each other and turns into introverted blocks. Moreover, lack of interaction caused by not enough intermediate space threatens coexistence between increasing numbers of senior, single and family households here.

From these problems in the site, we reason out our theme of the research that ‘When do spatial elements enhance contact between dwellers in collective housing in the city of Amsterdam?’

The aim of the research is to find out various spatial compositions, which make different contacts, for reflecting on the design. So, it begins to define different types of contacts, and I try to relate those contacts with ‘activities’ that happen from there. And I can notice that from which architectural elements, those activities will happen. Therefore, by recognizing the composition of architectural elements, I can assume what activities will happen from there, and as a result, what kind of contact dweller can have. That result from the research, I used for my individual design to offer more chances to have contacts.

Especially, my main target group is ‘Senior’, after retirement. For them, interaction is a quite important issue in social aspect. That is to say, ‘contact’ is to take care of each other. From the project, I suggest Co-housing with other age groups, for example, starters(nuclear family group). And I try to design the ‘communal life’ as a part of their lives. In that process, I need to arrange different types of contacts from the research to increase their chances to meet.

At the outside collective area, I used the conclusion about ‘Material’ from the research. By using different material, pavement, and height difference, I set the boarder of semi-private area, for example outside terrace. Because, It gives influence on people to perceive different territory. And it supports different activities, in the end, it can enhance contact between dwellers.

In case of the communal area in the building, I used conclusion about ‘Vertical composition’ from the research. By the different depth of space between 2 floors, it can provide passive contact between upstairs and downstairs. Because, when the elements are overlapped on different levels, or in different directions, the passive contact usually happens in a wider range of space. Thereby, ‘Starters’ from upstairs can visually check what happens to ‘Seniors’ at downstairs. And then, they can participate in the ‘communal lives’ selectively, when they want to do.
The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

The theme of the Dwelling studio is ‘At home in the city’. So it is the first step to distinguish which element is significant to let the residents in the city to perceive ‘to be at Home’. And which element is lack for the dwellers in the city nowadays.

From my chosen site, it was matter of ‘interaction’. Physically, introverted dwelling blocks and insufficient intermediate area in my location caused lack of interaction between neighbors. Socially, it is also general problem in these days, as individualism develops and overflows, society becomes bleak. Moreover, increasing number of seniors and nuclear family from chosen site is crucial issue for living too.

Consequently, my project has focused on how to suggest new living style to improve chances of interaction. In other words, it means how I can, as an architect, provide various opportunities between neighbors, or between different age group of dwellers through architectural ways to have more contacts. In accordance with this idea, I chose several reference buildings in Amsterdam. (Because the location of project is also in Amsterdam)

Main criteria to select those references is ‘collective housing which have rich contacts between residents in the collective area’. Then, 6 different projects are chosen, and re-categorized into ‘contact within building’, ‘contact between semi-public and private’, and ‘contact between building blocks’.

Through the analysis, we make conclusions from each category in terms of architectural(or spatial) compositions which enhance the contacts of dwellers. Then, those compositions are used to my individual design in the end.

In my project, there are different aspects of collective spaces where ‘communal lives’ are integrated into. There are collective outdoor areas at different level in the block scale, resident supporting programs on ground floor in the building scale, and inside communal space between 2 or 4 households in unit scale. Depending on the contact that happens from each space, I reflect my research results to design of those areas.
Aspect 3 | The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

We approach to the research from the big scale to the small scale, with different methods. It means, from spatial organization of the reference building to dimension, material, and atmosphere that affect to dweller’s behavior.

For ‘spatial organization’, we use axonometric drawing to analyze overall building block and put our focus on the collective space. Then, we select ‘Fragment’, where rich composition of elements enhances contact, or where there is negative collective space without contact. And we try to find the relation between ‘Element / activity / contact’. We make architectural drawings for the fragments as the background for analysis. First, we analyse elements according to the activities, which are sitting, standing and walking. Then, we draw different signs to make it clear what type of contact happens in the fragment. For deeper study about fragment in terms of ‘Composition, Dimension, Material and Atmosphere’, which indicates how the space really functions due to elements composed together with their architectural qualities. Lastly, We develope our ‘Synthesis’ for each case study based on the analysis process. We try to summarize it as reduction drawing and make a table. Through these diagrams, they deliver two informations. One for composition of spatial elements and activities on it. The other for contacts from them.

In this way, the research was done one step further, even about subsidiary elements that contribute to make the quality of architectural element, which eventually have influence on the behavior of residents.

At my individual design, this zoom-in process is worthwhile and helpful to organize living area in a human friendly scale. And I realize that good living quality can be achieved when all the factors from small to big are handled at the same time.
Aspect 4 | The relationship between the project and the wider social context

Physically, one of my goals within this chosen site is to design a residential neighborhood that provides a gradual and soft transition to find balance between public, collective, and private for interaction with surroundings. And I try to solve it by proposing elevated collective area between the dwelling blocks. It offers intermediate zone before entering to private building inside. Even in that collective area, the area surrounded by the buildings is more privatized zone for dwellers, which is distinguished by different height and different pavement material. On this wise, this contributes to make gradual connection between dwelling blocks (private) and the periphery (public and context). They are linked physically and visually, but separated by the gentle border at the same time.

Moreover, concerning social issue with ‘Senior’, designing dwelling complex with supporting programs for different resident groups (senior, family, and single) is another goal to promote chance to interact each other. In terms of this issue, I suggest new life style by Co-housing. And combining different age groups through the communal area, they can interact and take care of each other. The conclusion from theme research is used at this moment to design that communal space to let them have various contacts. That is the difference compared to existing Co-housing for senior.