

Reflection

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Studio: At home in the city

The graduation studio 'At home in the city' in which I participate focuses on both contemporary and future urban architecture at the scale of both the city and district neighborhood and dwelling in the city of Amsterdam. This is mainly in response to the changes that are currently discussed in the field of urban development, social patterns, emerging technologies and the urgent need for sustainable solutions in housing. Developing spatial strategies, responding to a particular identity and lifestyle, and innovative building typologies. New architectural concepts are required here, so that one will feel at home in the city.

The location of the project is located in Amsterdam West, in the Kolenkit district. The Kolenkit district performs many years in the wrong lists: it is the blackest district, poorest district, highest unemployment, lowest score on the quality of life and worst performing schools. Due to the different bad lists of Kolenkit the neighborhood was the symbol of the Dutch disadvantaged area and is therefore stigmatized. There is much to talk about segregation in the Kolenkit. Do you accept it or fight against it? The open structure of the original AUP in the Kolenkit is replaced by an offensive urbanism based on the pre-war city. Not based on how the originally AUP plan was meant. Parks and gardens are fenced, open blocks structures are replaced by closed building blocks. The result is a fragmented public space, and closed indoor gardens. Leading to a decrease of the public space and leads to further segregation.

For this theme Research we were looking for a theme that includes preventing segregation and upgrading of deprived neighborhoods, where our project site is located. There are various urban restructuring strategies used in the Netherlands, one of them is gentripuncture. In 2005 the concept of gentripuncture introduced in the Netherlands, and served as a specific example of the government to introduce small-scale gentrification.¹ The word is a contraction of gentrification and acupuncture. They want the city healthier by giving puncture at certain places. These projects are handing out interesting puncture in disadvantage neighborhoods. Gentrification involves small-scale physical interventions in the district. The projects should involve contributing to a better quality of life, social cohesion, and upgrade of the neighborhood.

The investigated case studies have in common that they introduce a new class to the buildings and challenge to improve the existing area. Each case study use different strategies to accomplish that. The selected projects have major differences in building type, strategy and context. This is done to retrieve different architectonic tools to process in our research for our design. This research analyses the characteristics of different case studies through a typological analysis. A typological analysis in this research was considered valuable, while the characteristics of these, dwellings, access and context have been analyzed. There was very little or no study about gentripuncture. The effect of the small-scale case studies of gentripuncture on the long-term are still largely unknown. This is also because the gentripuncture strategy is a new urban phenomenon. De different case studies have been analyzed and categorized from several perspectives. These different views have count on the purposes that the analyses were expected to serve for the design. To understand how architectural tools can contribute to

¹ Crone, J. (2005). Gentrification in Spangen. sev-experiment Wallisblok. In: *Het experiment*, jg. 21, nr. 1, p. 4-6.

the social cohesion. These aspects gives us input in what tools are used to contribute to a social cohesion in the neighborhood. By looking at the context we tried to understand how the procedure infected the building block and it's relation to the area and public space, because of that we are able to distillate tools from that part. The housing type and access gives us information about in which way they are used to create social cohesion in the neighborhood. All projects have in common that the area lacks diversity in housing, all of the projects give answer to that problem. But the project areas have more problems than only the lack of diversity. In the field of architecture no one can solve social problems as these with one simple building, but try to give a neighborhood a boost and try to inspire people by creating social cohesion. So gentripuncture can only create social cohesion between different classes when the context of the project is seriously taken into consideration. The open structure of the original AUP in the Kolenkit has been adopted- This urban scheme is taken over by his many qualities, the green power, the inner garden and wide streets. However, the legacy of CIAM philosophy, namely the monofunctionality, is not accepted in my design. In order to avoid this segregation according to the conclusions of the research theme it is important that; creating common functions and places to encourage everyday movements and interaction between the two groups of residents. In the design, the various functions, housing, work, recreation, and routing come together to enrich the fabric.

I do not know if my way of working is in line with what the studio had in mind . I have used different studies in the design, sketches, diagrams and models. In my opinion it is not important if the design is inconsistent with the studio schedule, because designing is not a linear process. You simply cannot determine in advance how you should work, that depends entirely on the project and what you want to design. I think it is important to switch between different scales during the design process back and forth. Apart from switching between these different scales, it is important to ensure consistency between these scales in design, keeping the concept as a guideline.

The design is a response to the question how to improve an impoverished and segregated neighborhood and the surrounding open space This theme is not only applicable to the chosen design location, but may play an important role in many more neglected areas in the design. Therefore the project is about the upgrading of the impoverished neighborhoods in the Kolenkit, the aim is to not upgrade only the building with specific requirements but also to relate this building to the context, to give identity to this context and explore dynamic relations with its various users.