



Reflection of Gasthuis in Schilderswijk

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The Gasthuis, The Healthy Environment
'The Architecture of the Interior'

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Introduction

The past few months I have been designing an apartment building for elderly. It is the Gasthuis located in the Schilderswijk of The Hague. The idea of the Gasthuis is that it is a home where the residents want to live. A place within their neighbourhood, whereby residents will receive customized care. The type and amount of care can change according to the need without moving to another Gasthuis. The design of the Gasthuis deals with the degree of openness versus enclosure in order to give the elderly a home with choice of privacy, whereby social contact between residents and their neighbourhood is being encouraged. As a result the building consists out of three different blocks of a hofje typology which all differ in size, program, relation with the context and the way to enter the functions and the courtyard of the blocks. The different courtyards get a connection to the existing green network of outdoor spaces which is present in the Schilderswijk.

In this report I will reflect on the project, the design and the design process during this graduation project. The following four aspects will be discussed:

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| Aspect 1 | Relationship between the project and the wider social context |
| Aspect 2 | Relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object) |
| Aspect 3 | Relationship between research and design |
| Aspect 4 | Relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework |

1. Relationship between the project and the wider social context

Over the years the care system in the Netherlands slowly changed. From the first Gasthuizen providing care to ill people for one day to today's institutional hospitals for cure and nursing homes providing care for long periods or permanently. Due to improvement in technology and care we can live longer, but in the last year we still need care and help with our daily life. After admission in a hospital, elderly stay longer because at home the needed care can't be given or there isn't a place in a nursing home for this type of care. Since 2014 the nursing homes focus more on patients who need severe or specific care. Elderly in need of light care won't always have family who can take care of them and thereby keep needed hospital beds occupied while another place would suit and improve their health more. The question is if and how a Gasthuis as the new nursing home could improve this issue. Thereby nursing homes don't always have a positive image by elderly and their family. When they have to move to a nursing home, they mostly have no choice. They have to move, because their surroundings can't give them sufficient care anymore. The obligation rehousing to an impersonal, even standard furnished room within an institutionally nursing home makes getting used to their new home, their new situation hard and takes more time.

By designing a Gasthuis as a common apartment building with a public ground floor, which provides care facilities and social connection with the neighbourhood due to meeting places and functions, and a more private first and second floor for the several types of dwellings, the building doesn't look like the prototype nursing home and makes the building flexible in use towards the future. Although the nurses and caretakers still will enter the homes, and the amount of privacy that will be reduced by for instance washing the residents, the atmosphere of the building and the several outdoor places give them a choice of how much privacy they like to have at that moment. The apartments have normal sizes for two residents and are adjusted to the needs of elderly, like a bathroom with openable from two sides and helping tools, as well as a smooth and hygienic as possible floor which still provides a home feeling. In the group dwelling the residents still get a small room like most nursing homes. These rooms with own bathroom is connected with a gallery sitting zone with view towards the courtyard. In the room a permanent closet along the wall provides a small kitchen block, storage space, a seat and nursing tool. Although this is permanent furniture, it can be personalised by adding paintings and posters, and the remaining space of the small room is free to furnish.

The existing nursing home in the Schilderswijk isn't that durable and it doesn't function well, but in the neighbourhood the given care is still needed. The location is situated close to the main shopping street of the area and park which make it easier for the Gasthuis to connect with the neighbourhood. However now the relation and social contact between the nursing home and neighbourhood isn't present. Improving the social contact will let the residents be independent as long as possible and connected with their environment. To make this possible the architecture as well as the type functions are important. The Gasthuis with its three hofjes makes the area opener and more accessible for passengers, visitors and residents. The block with the library and the main building are easily accessible from the park side for all type of visitors. The court with functions of the main building is accessible by two open gates and the library has a main entrance along the alley between the two building blocks. The day-care building at the railway side has an open courtyard, but the function inside is only accessible for users and their close family or friends. The gardens and the functions give the people a place to meet each other.

While doing the individual research I also gained information about how people would improve the neighbourhood. Noticeable were the missing indoor functions where youth and women can meet. In the design I tried to make the public ground floor with its function and gardens attractive not only for elderly but also for the neighbourhood. By providing the missing functions as a library, workshop and meeting spaces where also the youth and women feel at home, more social contact could be possible as well as the gardens being better connected in the outdoor spaces network of the area. The literature about park and its users groups show that changing green design is changing the ratio between groups. By providing new functions for the groups who now haven't a place to go and thereby use the park a lot could also change the way the park will be used. If the loiterers feel at home by the new functions, where they could get attention and be peaceful, the experience of the park will change and will attract more groups to use it.

2. 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 graduation project is Health care, and especially the Gasthuis. The assignment of the Gasthuis of designing a new Gasthuis on the location of the existing nursing home the Schildershoek in the Schilderswijk of the Hague is interesting. It gives an opportunity to see what currently won't work out for care and the neighbourhood, which should be solved or be better in the new design. Thereby the idea of doing research not only about the user and context, but also about a care typology which in the past was successful but disappeared in the healthcare architecture in the last decades was interesting and influenced the choice for the group. The location is connected to a park and close to the city area, although it feels like an urban village at its own with their own habits a traditions of all the cultures coming together. How to give those people a home within one building in this neighbourhood.

The assignment let us deal with the current problems of care and nursing homes. Nowadays more people need care, but due to the changes in the care system there is a gap in provided types of care, while there is mainly permanent severe care or light care for a short period. The middle light care and light care for longer period is almost not available but needed hardly by the largest group of elderly. The Gasthuis project wants to explore and design a building whereby this problem is dealt with. The program of the Bartholomeusgasthuis situated in Utrecht thereby formed an example for how to deal with care, nursing homes and its program nowadays. There the mix of several elderly care types was the solution.

In my design I also won't focus on one type of elderly, which makes the groups of residents brisk and the building flexible for the needed care at that moment. My project is focussed on making a home for elderly with a non-hospital atmosphere socially integrated in the neighbourhood, where the residents want to live, gain privacy and get customized care. Bringing the elderly in their neighbourhood together they stay at home. They don't have to move to another neighbourhood or city because of their care needs. Different dwelling types within the building give them a choice how they want to life, which partly is depending on their state of health. By making an urban apartment building as normal as possible with modest interventions in order to provide and improve the Gasthuis and its neighbourhood.

3. Relationship between research and design

Research in architecture is needed to investigate and understand where, wherefore or with what you are designing. Therefore during the first part of the project we did three researches. The main research was an individual research tutored by Leeke Reinders, focussing on the context. By doing this research the neighbourhood of the situated Gasthuis assignment should better be understandable. Therefore I focussed on the meaning, use of the park by its neighbours, situated next to the Gasthuis, in order to grasp the function of green and the thoughts and behaviour of the people living in their multicultural neighbourhood the Schilderswijk.

Next to the individual research, the project group did two hofje researches and went on a health care excursion in Belgium. The health care has a strong relationship with green. In the past Gasthuis often was designed as Hofje. This building typology of a small mass enclosing a courtyard as a green heart providing a peaceful and protective area for their residents while it still is accessible for visitors by a gate or hallway. For elderly, especially for demented elderly, such a green environment will not only give them a safe environment, but also offers a place for contemplation and exciting of the senses, which help them to accept their current situation and disease. Also elderly often stay inside, having a lack of fresh air and vitamin D. A good accessible green environment could improve this. The typology of hofjes not only offers information about the green is related with function and architecture of the building, it also gives options for people living together in a community.

The first hofjes research analysed the functioning and qualities of existing hofjes. The second hofje research analysed several hofje typologies and the possibility of these typologies in relation with the site and user. Along these two researches we went on a health care excursion in Belgium where we visited several nursing homes and other health care buildings to find out how these buildings look like, work and who our user and its needs will be. Here the spatial qualities, atmosphere and functions were judged from our own point of view as well as of the user and staff. Space, privacy and personalizing, hygienic and the function of window were topics which influenced my thought and vision on the Gasthuis.

People's perception of a multicultural neighbourhood park

During visits of the neighbourhood it became clear that the Jacob van Campen park is one of the first places along the site where people come together and meet. It is a large rectangular park enclosed by apartment blocks of four floors and a few smaller two floor rowing houses. The main shopping street Hoefkade as well as the walking route towards the tram and train station are just a small street away from the park and the site. That together with the way it is enclosed by buildings and the design of the park itself gives it a quite public character. The park probably functions (together with the Gasthuis Schildershoek) as an entrance to the neighbourhood for people walking and bicycling from the station towards the shopping street and their home. Another noticeable aspect is where the closed curtains. Especially on the ground floor all curtains are closed, which differs from Dutch neighborhoods with less cultural mix. This fact that the curtains are closed can be of influence on the relationship between the park and the living room, as well as how the residents experience the park. Being in the park, the closed windows show almost no interaction between the buildings and the park and thereby it feels like an island. Like an unwatched park enclosed by walls with a large pattern spread over it.

How people of different cultural backgrounds and ages experience the park and if there is a relation between the park and their homes are investigated in order to understand the situation within the park. Understanding this gives information about the neighbourhood and its residents as

well as the importance of outdoor spaces as a design tool. Tree themes with sub questions were researched, namely the user – what kind of people are visiting the park and why?, use and the experience of the people - who are visiting and using the park? and the relation between the park and the homes of the users, especially between the park and the direct surrounding buildings. The research was done by fieldwork and reading literature about parks and habits of groups using the park as that support and explain the findings. Interesting was the way groups can have their own place within the park and that the balance between the groups will be different when improving or changing the park design. To collect the information during fieldwork distinct methods such as observation with text and drawing notes as well chatting in combination with mapping by the users and custodians was used. The findings were collected in hairy drawing to get an overview of the situation. The hairy drawing is an isometric drawing of the park and the surrounding building blocks and was drawn on the scale one to hundred.

The most important outcome was that in a park people can explore and develop themselves consciously or unconsciously. The park is an important part within their home network, because it could be seen as the home garden of people living in the neighbourhood. In the park the people meet, eat, play, sport and find contemplation alone or together. Their own outdoor space such as a balcony or garden became more an extra living room to support the housekeeping. The park could also be seen as a transition zone between the private living room and the public functions. In the neighbourhood all the outdoor spaces together form a green network used in daily life. These findings influenced the idea of using green in and around the building. Together with the awareness of less privacy within an elderly home it formed my vision of home. It formed the idea to make a network of outdoor meeting spaces of different sizes connected to the existing network as well as a gradient in privacy of spaces.

By designing the for the Gasthuis tree public accessible hofjes whereby each the garden all have an own identity and function. The gardens are accessible from the park and homes. Between the gardens and the park sight axis are created to connect. Inside the largest courtyard different meeting zones were created. The open gallery connects the courtyard with the communal terraces and entrances. These terraces between the group dwellings on the second floor and the gallery can be and extension of the living spaces by good weather. In winter time, the gardens will be less attractive although the garden of the main hof still provides a walking route from park to tram stop. The social contact will take place more often inside the public functions than inside the garden. The main entrances of these functions are situated along the courtyard, which will take the visitors also in the garden in winter time.

Gasthuizen, places of care

For this research we first visited the existing hofjes of Utrecht and divided the Hofjes of several Dutch cities to research. By making precise drawing of the old and new situation the history, functioning, entering and quality of the Hofjes were made understandable. The Hofje I researched was the Venetia Hofje in Amsterdam. A medium size hofje which is extended over time and currently exist of square courtyard enclosed by two L-shape buildings two and three floor highs. The Hofje is situated inside a three till six floor high building block and can be entered via two buildings situated at two parallel streets. The entrances feel like a sequence of entrances having several gates and zones, inside and outside, to pass before entering the garden of oasis. In the garden wooden benches connected to the façade and higher green provide privacy for the houses.

How the different Hofjes functions, how they can be entered and how they deal with privacy versus openness within a community garden was interesting and useful while designing the Gasthuis. The idea of a building with one main green court where all

residents, neighbours and passengers will come together and can meet before entering public of private building parts, could improve the social contact. They could see each other and meet without being required to enter the building. Conversely a hofje typology with dwellings facing the courtyard, especially when the courtyard is small and easy accessible for passengers, this typology doesn't provide a lot of privacy. As Daan van den Briel, the regent of the Veneziahof, mentioned during an informative meeting at his hofje, after entering the gate the people will see each other within the garden, even when sitting behind the window. Having a bad day or wanting to be alone and unseen in the garden is almost impossible. The benches and green are the small elements trying to improve the privacy issue a bit.

The design for the new Gasthuis exist out of three building blocks with each a garden inside. The gardens are linked to each other by positioning on several place large window in order to make sight axis between the gardens. The main building functioning as an apartment building with a large social courtyard accessible for residents as well as neighbours and passengers. Although the garden of the main building will be almost double the amount of square meters of the Venetia Hof, still it doesn't guarantee privacy for dwellings. Therefor the public functions are all situated on the ground floor and the dwellings on the first and second. The public functions hereby are easier to access and will have a better connection with the existing functions within the neighbourhood. In the garden the idea of using green as boulder will be used. For the more private functions related to care and wellness shrubs, hedges and trees will be used, while along the social meeting points such as the restaurant and the cultural functions lower green and terraces are situated. The apartments of the first and second floor are connected by a gallery open to the courtyard. Here the benches are use not only as a border but they also will provide a small social meeting or rest point on strategic places. The sequence of gates and spaces when entering the Veneziahof is coming back as a sequence of gates along the gallery in order to divide the gallery in smaller spaces and making it feel less straight and long. This sequence doesn't come back in the gates to enter the main garden, but the streetlight or outstanding tree as view axis at the end of the gate is translated in attractive trees, changing during season.

Most hofjes had a regent room along the street and communal functions as toilets and storage directly along the court. The kitchen and living rooms of the dwellings are facing the peaceful communal court, which is closed off from the street by a gate or front garden. The bedroom as situated in a niche, back in the house or on the attic. In the design of the apartment and group dwelling the kitchen is seen as the heart of the house, which people first visit before entering the living room. The kitchen thereby face the gallery and court where social contact is possible. The living room and especially the bedroom are situated in the quiet part along the outside façade, having less contact but sight to the outside world.

Hofje typology on site, structuralism

The Hofjes typology research existed of translating the quality of the Hofjes in mass model study of possible options fitting the site and context. Together with Steven Hagen we researched the possibilities of a structuralistic design. Structuralism is interesting when wanting to design an equal grid of dwellings with their private garden. It also gives opportunity to make with a repeatable and connectable module (a room, or a dwelling with a garden) larger groups sharing communal spaces and gardens. Although its opportunities, it is hard to fit this typology in the context. By structuralism the modules introduce a smaller scale and the total building will have an more repeated but free shape which doesn't fit the clear building typologies of the Schilderswijk, namely the straight forward row houses, gallery-apartment buildings and apartment buildings with one larger courtyard existing. Thereby the small units in this enclosed site which isn't that large make it hard to design communal room and larger gardens as well as enough density. A structuralistic

building would be easier to design and fit better within a more free context, like an open spot within green, instead of the specific site in the middle of the Hague.

Other mass model topics which were studied were object building, village building, one courtyard, two courtyard and several courtyards. Although the village typology was interesting for my vision, to make a Gasthuis where people want to live and feel at home, I started with the several courtyard options. This would connect better with the idea of providing the residents several public and private places where they could choose from. During the design process the one building with several gardens changed into three separated building blocks with each a garden inside. The gardens are linked to each other by positioning on several place large window in order to make sight axis between the gardens. This improvement made the functioning of the project more clear and distinguish the lively main building with the main and most needed residents from the two smaller and more quiet functions with the care hotel and thuishuizen, where elderly who need almost no care live together.

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4. Relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

The studio of the Architecture of the Interior, differs from other studios by their focus point and methods. Along the research course the group did research and went on excursion, which was helpful in understanding the assignment and possibilities of it. Although the first semester of the project was focused on research, we also started to explore the site and connect the findings during the research with our vision, program and mass model study. By alternating theory and practice the research could directly be related with the design. Thereby it is made clear what should be investigate a bit more or not. Also in this way we had a good start for the next semester, where we not have to start translating the research into design, but were we start be reconsidering the first design thoughts to improve the design and to really make the building, by exploring materials, construction, climate and sustainability thoughts. In this way it can end up in a design where all thoughts and aspects as vision, program, architecture and construction can be one.

Although I appreciated this idea, it was sometimes a challenge being critical in the right way. By the p2 a first design proposal was there, where I worked on for a period. Afterwards, especially after the p3 I had to cast away some ideas, because by putting so many ideas in the design the main idea of the building almost get lost and wasn't clear anymore. Also there were moments I looked to critical and thought the design should be totally different, which remained in thoughts. In the end I luckily didn't change it after reminding the positive aspects of the design. Together with the investigation of the possibilities of a demountable concrete construction for public spaces and dwellings it took a lot of time and worries, whereby the design and the making of the facades and interior started rather late.

Another method of the studio is making models and photograph them in order to investigate design options and to make choices. Although in other studios I made some models too during the process, I wasn't used to make a quick study model. Therefore I often overestimate the time it took to make a model or the size of it. As a result the models weren't ready or photographed on time, but by making the model the mind was triggered and gave new ideas or attention points to deal with. When doing another project I should plan making the model better by being aware of how to make a model, for what reason, in what timeframe.

During the design process, I made fast sketchy impression for myself to check how something would look like and sketchy diagrams in order to make my vision and design principles clear again. Some samples of concrete and plaster were made in order to explore the use and expression of concrete walls and floors.

All in all during this project I learned more about interesting topics as healthcare architecture, research, design and presentation methods. Now I know the consequence of reusable prefabricated materials and the influence which a sustainable statement could have on the design. If knowing the statement in an earlier state of the project it can be better and totally integrated without taking the attention of the design. Although the design of a Gasthuis fitting my starting vision could have many appearing's, this design of the three hofjes will give answer to the question of how to integrate care within a home environment with attention to the human scale in the neighbourhood.