

SITUATION

Since the beginning of the 20th century the Carnisse neighbourhood has been subject to many migration flows. It started with the arrival of people from the provinces of Zeeland, Brabant and the northern parts of the Netherlands. They came here as workers in the port of Rotterdam. In the sixties a second large migration flow came up when migrant workers from Turkey, Morocco or Cape Verde came to the Netherlands. Migrants from Suriname and the Dutch Antilles form the third large group of people who came mostly here to work. ¹

Jo van den Broek designed - around 1940 - the dwellings in Carnisse Eilandenbuurt as minimal living areas. The portiek dwellings are small in floor area and not luxurious, hence not expensive. Most of the dwellings are vulnerable, a floor area of less than 60 m², a housing value of less than € 130.000 and poorly maintained facades. A common additional problem is noise, which is sometimes the cause of problems and arguments between neighbours. ²

The dwellings in the Eilandenbuurt are very suitable for starters on the housing market. For migrants who have just arrived in the Netherlands and have a small budget, but also for young people who are starting their housing career. To make a home career in Carnisse is almost impossible. Most dwellings are portiek flats and when the residents can afford a larger dwelling or when the family is expanding, the dwellings in the neighbourhood are no longer suitable. Many see Carnisse as a typical 'flow neighbourhood' (in Dutch: doorstroomwijk). Every year 20% of the residents relocate. ²

Most dwellings in the Carnisse Eilandenbuurt are owned privately. This has several consequences for the state of the neighbourhood. Dwellings in other neighbourhoods with comparable dwellings and problems are mostly owned by housing corporations. They will take care of maintenance or large-scale renovations. In the situation of private ownership in portiek flats those initiatives have to come from the homeowners association (in Dutch: VVE). The municipality of Rotterdam stated that most homeowner associations are not very well organised and do not put much effort in maintenance of the dwellings. Another consequence of the high rate of private ownership is that it is obligatory to develop a portiek flat in phases. Development in a single dwelling is dependable on when a dwelling comes on the market. ^{2,3}

In the past ten years a fourth flow of migrant workers has come to the Netherlands. This time the flow comes from Eastern European countries such as Poland, Bulgaria and Romania. In Dutch this group is mostly called 'MOE-landers' (Midden- en Oost Europa). Again Carnisse is a 'popular' neighbourhood for this group of migrants. History and recent development show that those flows of migrant workers are repeatedly dealing with the same problems, namely overcrowding, illegal housing and problems with slumlords. ¹

What is needed is a long-term vision for the Carnisse neighbourhood and its dwellings, including a vision for short-term action regarding the contemporary situation. It seems that Carnisse is having the same problems by every 'migrant flow' that arrives in the neighbourhood. An intervention on the dwellings and the neighbourhood might ensure that the portieks can have a long-term future. What is needed, therefore, is an intervention strategy to deal on a short term with this situation.^{1,2,3,4}

The design I made for the portiek flats in the Carnisse Eilandenbuurt is based on those recommendations stated above. The concept is that the design is divided into a long-term part and a short-term part. The target group for my design intervention is the migrant workers. In the contemporary situation these are mostly people from Eastern European countries. It is possible that in a few years' time this situation is no longer relevant. Therefore the dwellings should be prepared for long-term functioning even when the 'temporary migrant worker period' is over.

Jo van den Broek originally designed the dwellings in the Eilandenbuurt as minimal dwellings.⁵ And although the target group has changed in comparison to the situation around 1940, the theme of the 'minimum' is still valid. The current target group comes to the Netherlands primarily for work and earning money. The majority of the 'MOE-landers' come here on a temporary basis base in for example construction work or jobs in the agricultural sector. Their costs, including the housing, must be as cheap as possible in order to make as much money as possible.^{6,7,8}

The architecture is a reflection of what kind of intervention to the dwellings is requested. The facades, the skin of the building, is that part of the dwelling that should be refurbished so that it meets the latest requirements (heat loss, ventilation, insulation). This is called the 'fixed' part of the intervention. There is also a part of the intervention that should answer the requests on a temporary basis. This includes a 'solution' for the housing of migrant workers. This 'flexible' intervention is mostly reflected in the interior of the portiek flats. Related to the theme of the minimal dwelling and the wish of the target group to have as cheap housing as possible, the materials used should not be expensive and easy to maintain.

The temporary part of the design is a motivation to look in depth to sustainability and materialisation related to this. A term that comes up is 'cradle to cradle'. This principle is based on the idea that used (building) materials can be completely recycled and reused in the same or an other way.⁹ The ambition is to use 100% reusable materials for the (temporary) interior. The interior must be easy to assemble and demount.

In general, the focus points are to improve the dwellings on technical and liveable aspects; to ensure that the dwellings have a sustainable future; to address attention to the design of the public space; and to keep in mind the existing values of the portiek flats in the Eilandenbuurt.

VALUES

*"The ultimate aim of conservation is not to conserve material for its own sake but, rather, to maintain (and shape) the values embodied by the heritage - with physical intervention or treatment being one of many means toward that end. To achieve that end, such that the heritage is meaningful to those whom it is intended to benefit (i.e. future generations), it is necessary to examine why and how heritage is valued, and by whom."*¹

It's not only the physical conditions of the building, which affects the valuation, but also the context this building is in. This not only means the surroundings the buildings is in, also the age, historical value and an aspect which is often forgotten: the people who are involved, for example the users. Especially in a situation where intervention is the subject, the focus is mostly on the physical aspects.^{1,2,3}

Building history

The design of the dwellings in the Eilandenbuurt can be seen as a next step in the oeuvre of architect Jo van den Broek. The built projects 'De Voornsche Vliet' and 'De Eendracht', and the competition entry 'Plan Optimum' are precursors to the design in 1938 for the Eilandenbuurt, which is called 'Algemeen Belang'. In those designs Van den Broek tried to find to best solution for an optimal use of the floor plan. In his design for the Algemeen Belang the focus is shifted to finding a solution for the optimal orientation of the dwellings. Van den Broek looked for a standardisation of the floor plan. The solution was found in the 'switch bay', which ensured that the plan could be used in almost any urban situation.⁴

The difference with other projects is the general applicability of the plan. These dwellings could be placed in multiple urban situations. The same dwellings that are built in the Eilandenbuurt are also constructed in Mathenesse and Blijdorp, two neighbourhoods in the north of Rotterdam.⁴

Alois Riegl (1903) said about this: "The historical value of a monument is based on the very specific yet individual stage the monument represents in the development of human creations in a particular field." The general applicability of the design of Van den Broek can be seen as a value. The generic character of the plan ensures that eventual interventions could be applied more easily (on different locations).

Urban context

The urban layout of the Eilandenbuurt is a break-up with the previous designs by Van den Broek. The architect already broke with the traditional closed building block by opening them. In 'Plan Optimum' it was shown for the first time: strip buildings, an urban design strategy influenced by CIAM. Plan Optimum was only paper based, in the Eilandenbuurt the idea was applied for the first time in an actual building.⁴

The *Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed* developed a model for the validation of architecture. One of the criteria of the model is 'the special meaning of the object because of the parcelling/layout/facilities. As said before, the strip building parcelling is a break with previous developed urban layouts. Although it was not the first strip-building layout in the Netherlands and it is not unique, it is characteristic for the image of the Carnisse Eilandenbuurt.³

Architecture

As mentioned above, the switch bay ensures flexibility in placing a building (block) in the urban situation. But that is not all; the switch bay also ensures that within one floor level in a portiek two different dwelling types can be constructed. The room, which mirrors the central stairway, is either part of the dwelling on the left or on the right. This means that there is one 2-bedroom apartment and one 3-room apartment.⁴

Through time the dwellings in the Eilandenbuurt has undergone several changes, this differs from replacement of the window frames to changes on the interior, like enlarging the living room, kitchen and bathroom replacement or converting the basement into a living space. Riegl: "..the monument's original form as a work of man. A monument's historical value increases the more it remains uncorrupted and reveals its original state of creation: distortions and partial disintegrations are disturbing, unwelcome ingredients for historical value."¹ The original floor plan is not often intact anymore, due to changes in family structure for example. The switch bay however is still functioning and ensures dwelling differentiation. There have been also some changes on the exterior of the portiek flats. The original window frames are replaced by newer ones with mostly different materials, from timber to plastics.

People

The Getty Conservation Institute distinct three fields from where cultural heritages can be watched: the physical condition, management context, and cultural significance and social value (meaningful for whom, impact of intervention, how its perceived). As mentioned before in the first part of this paper, the Eilandenbuurt has the characteristic of a 'starters' and 'flow' neighbourhood. The dwellings might be not having the best quality, but they are suitable for certain groups, and are thereby valuable in a certain way. The Getty Conservation Institute names this social value. "Conservation should be framed as a social activity, not only as a technical one, bound up with and shaped by myriad social processes (..), as are all aspects of culture and the visual arts.

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