

## **Learning process of Research plan**

Before looking into the learning process of the course Research Plan, I will start with an explanation of the graduation studio 'Designing for Care – Towards an inclusive living environment'. The studio focuses on making architectural designs for elderly while also taking the social, economic and environmental factors in account. Students are expected to use a Human-centred approach with the usage of sociology and anthropology. (Jürgenhake, 2020)

As Ray Lucas quoted in his book *Research Methods for Architecture: "How we build is informed by how we understand the world, and how we understand the world is framed by what we have built there."* (Lucas, 2016). I want to dive deeper in the first part of the quote where he states that 'how we build' is informed by how we understand the world. Which also describes my personal interest within architecture where the human is always the centre and starting point of my design. With this in mind, the design is coming from within the perception and understanding of the actual users of my design. The decisions that were made during the research process were based on this understanding of the actual users and led me through this process.

The lecture series gave me an insight of my position within all the disciplines that are woven into the field of architecture, which is describes as interdisciplinary (Havik, 2012). Architecture is not majorly design but design is the reciprocity between science and humanity and can never be seen on its own. The positioning is helping me to reflect on my current research trajectories and into the future as well. Since we are not considered social scientist nor philosophers, I am contributing to the field of Architecture where I can see myself as a generalist that is borrowing knowledge from other fields. As written above the graduation studio has a human centred approach with the use of knowledge from sociological and anthropological research. When bringing this into the field of Architecture it requires an act of composition, not only in design but also within the research.

Not to forget the importance of history which was pointed out in the second lecture from Carola Hein. By looking into the history, it is not primarily the tangible values but intangible values as well. We see that each person has their own interpretation of the world and how they perceive it. This has made me realise that when doing research with elderly as a starting point, their perception of the world has to be considered as well. This goes together with looking into the social history, how lifestyle has changed over the years and how technology came into play. To summarize this, every generation has different characteristics, and these should be taken into consideration when designing for a specific group of users. Next to that, buildings shape human beings too, as Winston Churchill stated "*We shape our buildings and afterwards, our buildings shape us*". (Churchill and the Commons Chamber, 2020) Where we are Architects that are in this position to design and where design decisions shape the environment and the actual users too.

While the first few lectures helped me to have a better understanding of my position as an architect in an interdisciplinary field and how I have influence on the users by the design decisions, the masterclass gave me a better understanding of my position as a researcher. As a researcher it is important to have a fully understanding of the scope you are conducting research in. As Michel Foucault has a master concept about problematization, to look beyond a problem not in a superficial way but why and how problems became a problem (Peters et al., 2014). It is necessary to have a deeper understanding of the whole scope and reflect on your way of thinking. This scheme is a way to summarize the relation between research and design. Starting from "what is there", the starting point of my graduation project is from a social view from architecture, the user's perspective. Where the transition to design is more about how these elements relate to architecture and space?

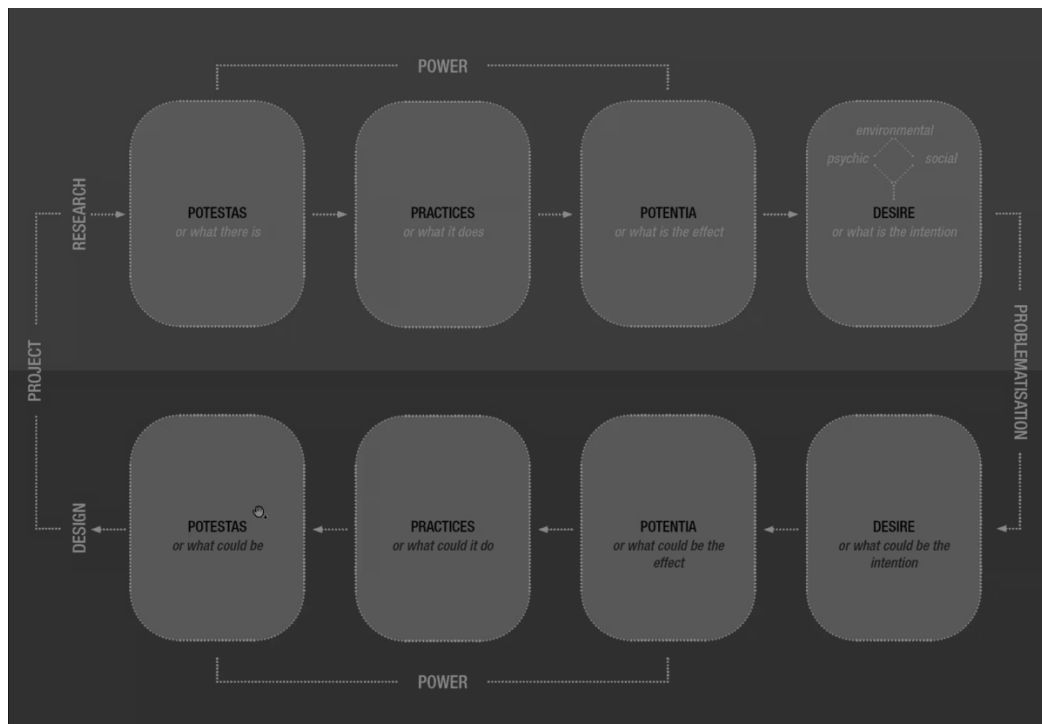


Image 01. Relation between reseach and design (Stravos Kousoulas)

The masterclass helped me to get a better understanding of the subconscious decisions that led to several methods that were used during my research. The awareness of the methods gave me an insight on which methods can be used in my further development. Next to that I gained knowledge about the other methods that can be used in architecture but weren't suitable I my personal research but broadened my scope of knowledge as an architect.

## Methodology & methods

As mentioned above the starting point of the graduation project from a user's perspective. The fieldwork trip to Hilversum has given me the chance to gain a deeper understanding of praxeology, phenomenology and ethnography. Where praxeology and ethnography is directly linked to the research that is conducted during the fieldwork trip and phenomenology has an overlap in that together with the exercise of how it is to be blind. To look more specific into the users, elderly is a wide group of users and aging is linked with age-related diseases and impairments, such as visual impairments. Visual impairments are directly related to sensory and embodied experiences.

Prior to the fieldwork week I made some preparations for the research I wanted to conduct during the fieldwork week, which were interviews and questionnaires. The interviews I conducted were in a form in-depth interview where the wording and questions were not predetermined. During the interview I consciously gave them the lead in the interview to have the interviewee to be at ease and tell the stories and problems they wanted to talk about. This led to a very interesting set of data with complex information and a higher proportion of opinion-based information. With this I made my own version of coding a qualitative transcript. After reading the transcript I arranged the underlying problems and statements into different categories. Every sentence or subject in the interview that is referring to one of these categories were seen as codes. After this I analysed the major categories and looked if there was a connection between them and rephrased them into a statement which was used as a problem statement.

Secondly, I also used the method of questionnaires in the form of a rating and comparative scale. The cards had different images on them from people, living space, building, neighbourhood and city and were asked to arrange them in order from most important factor for them to the least. With this I wanted to measure the inhabitants psychological disposition within these topics but also to have a starting point for in-depth questions about the topics. Knowing that the cards were categorised by myself narrowed the answers directly in each category and allowed me to collect both subjective and objective data.

Next to that I also did observations in a way of sketches, notes and photos to get a better understanding of the building, inhabitants and their way of living. The outcome of the interviews, questionnaires and observations led to the research question: To what extend could the world beyond the threshold be designed to lower the barrier through the lense of elderly to participate in this world?

After this I reflected on the information that I gained from the fieldwork week to see what kind of research was still missing to substantiate the research question even more. I made use of the observations notes and pictures to analyse one of the categories that came out of the interviews even more (image 03). By drawing the section of the dwellings in a schematic way I could analyse the relation between the private space and public space and with the information from the interviews what the importance is of a window view and what type of encounters occur between the inhabitants.



Image 02:  
Questionnaire (own  
image)

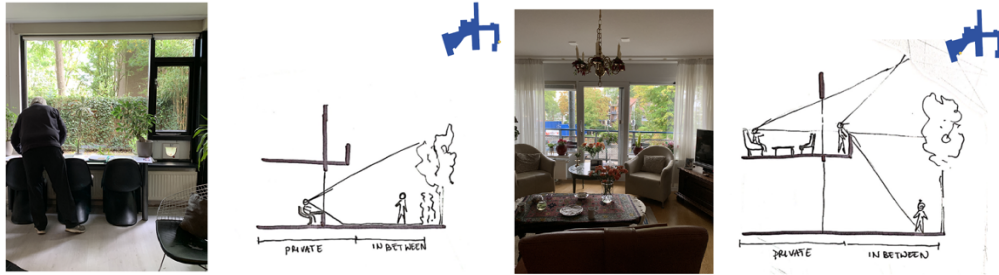


Image 03: Analysis between private space and public (own image)

### Positioning within the existing academic debates

- Definition of theoretical framework. This is a **reflection on your topic and a positioning it within existing academic debates**. (In key words)
- *Positioning within the existing academic debates:*
- *You're not the first researchers using a similar methodology or (related method). You should be able to sketch an academic field of similar approaches and position yourself in this debate. That requires some knowledge of the origins and historical and contemporary use of research methods and methodologies you work with. In Master 1 you've been given introductory lectures related to the POSITIONS book. Try to start thinking about the research approach of the studio – neutral observation, interviewing user groups – and its origins (in which discipline and why). Look at your literature list and see if you can position the books of for example Jan Gehl, Christopher Alexander and other sources. Reflect on the ways you study your cases. From what point of view; for example a combination of typology and use (praxeology) and try to see of architects who worked in similar ways. How did you approach architecture in former projects in a different way. Why is your particular way of doing research in this project relevant?*

*Churchill and the Commons Chamber*. (2020). <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/palace/architecture/palacestructure/churchill/>

Havik, K. (2012). Bridging: The Spatial Construction of Knowledge in Architectural Research. *FOOTPRINT*, 59-68 Pages. <https://doi.org/10.7480/FOOTPRINT.6.1-2.749>

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