

Reflection Paper

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Aspect 1 • The relationship between research and design

My graduation research and architectural design were motivated by voices of those citizens fighting the destructive monster called gentrification. The project proposes responding to the culturally negative side effects of gentrification within Amsterdam's city centre via preserving and intensifying the city's creative and artistic scenery.

The designs for both the urban plan and the building are based on the research outcomes. The research topic was fairly wide and in fact encompassed two major subjects. The first chapters were based on an urban scale; it examined ways of creating a cultural venue in the city centre of Amsterdam, underscoring citizens' affinity for the project. This part of the research yielded indispensable input for the urban design.

Secondly, the research zoomed in on five building case studies. This part of the research was most important after the P2 presentation and provided the motivation and input for the dwelling typologies, social preferences, and technical conditions. For example, the framework for the four typologies in my design is based on the target groups linked to the four key elements that distinguish an atelier-dwelling from a traditional dwelling. Another example is the transport zones, all of which are based on the social preferences that emerged during the artist interviews.

As a result of the wide scope, both parts of the research were critical in accomplishing the project's goals.

Aspect 2 • The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

The Dutch housing graduation lab emphasises a new phase in Dutch residential architecture characterised by inner-city interventions and transformations. I believe my artist housing project does that by protecting a group of economically vulnerable citizens. The current transformation via gentrification is one that the municipality initially found to be positive. However, years of gentrification revealed its negative side effects, including on economically weak city dwellers, such as the city's many artists. This means that it is time for a change and a new approach to the city's developments and interventions. Social and cultural goods should be treated as equal to economic profits when investing in the city's development. This shift in terms of project focus could be the motivation for many other Dutch housing projects in addition to my own.

This project was located within the Single Belt of Amsterdam, a unique strip around the canals in the inner city characterised by its notably irregular urban typologies. The specific features of the Single Belt make it a remarkably suitable location for the artist housing project.

Nevertheless, this location is marked by an unexpected cause for concern: a large bank is currently situated on the plot. However, this institution, De Nederlandse Bank, is planning to move to the office district at Zuidas of Amsterdam, meaning that the plot will become vacant in the future. The most likely outcome in that case would be the reuse of the current structure, rather than the demolition of this massive building. Unfortunately, other students and I were not able to obtain the blueprints, as they are highly guarded. I considered measuring the building with my laser tool, but determined that doing so could put me in a rather unfortunate position. The only solution—and therefore, the one that I adopted—was to create an entirely new urban plan.

Aspect 3 • The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

I approach my own research with great enthusiasm. This passion is an appropriate way to start a research project, but working more precisely within a strict framework at later stages is not my strongest point. However, the practical approach used within the dwelling suited me well and helped with structuring the research, even though a wide range of information sources was available in the form of the literature, interviews, and case studies. I had to use many information sources to deal with the complexity of the urban and architectural conditions on different scales.

Aspect 4 • The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The motivation for this project was the voices of the citizens of Amsterdam. Prior to this project, I listened to citizens and read local newspapers to understand what the city wanted and needed. What I found was a deep frustration among the 'original' citizens of Amsterdam. These individuals not only have been forced to move due to rising real-estate prices, but also fear that the free and outspoken character of Amsterdam will fade away. These effects are related to the gentrification process that is occurring in wealthy cities all over the world; the wealthier the city, the wider is the growing gap between economic classes. Shifting the focus from economic profit to social and cultural profit could make a difference. Therefore, I believe this project ties in very well with the wider current social context.