

REFLECTION FOR THE P4 MOMENT

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The chosen graduation topic with the title 'Living with the others. Spatial transformations towards liveability of socially diverse environments; the case of the Schilderswijk' is part of the Research Theme which is called 'Urban fabrics' and belongs to the Urbanism Department of TU Delft.

The relationship between research and design

In order to provide a linkage between the theoretical - analytical stage of the present thesis project and the design, patterns were used as a main tool. By patterns we not only mean a set of empirical rules that represent regularities of behavior, but a powerful tool that eliminate possibilities and at the same time allow alternative possibilities of design. Through the provision of a pattern language; a framework that permits a coherent combination among patterns, a methodological linkage between the theory and design was possible.

Main aim of the project in general is the rehabilitation of the notion of liveability in the Schilderswijk, The Hague. The multicultural neighborhood comprised by 110 different nationalities is part of the city center but lacks attention due to the image it has in a city context. It is the area that suffers from several incidents of anti-social behavior and limited possibilities mainly for the youth. As derived from the theoretical research, the rehabilitation of liveability is possible by creating conditions for selective control over the social environment. At the same time though, the analysis showed that the most vulnerable group of the neighborhood either because it is associated with conflicting situations or lack of amenities are the children.

As a result, the defined patterns provided the tools for setting a ground for a flexible design able to absorb conflicts among different social groups and thus they were developed under the framework of territorial control. A separation according to scales happened in order to secure a desired level of interaction in all territorial crossings; from people that walk at the street and meet neighbors to the level that people enter a public territory and meet strangers. At the same time though, some of the solutions suggested by patterns are developed in a way that they have an added value for the most vulnerable user of the neighborhood; children.

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

There are many reasons that explain the relevance of the topic in relation to this graduation theme and thus the reason why this case was selected. First of all, the location of the project is a distinctive part of the urban fabric of The Hague; as a result, we are talking about neighborhood scale. Additionally, the topic requires an understanding on dynamics and variables like the dynamics coming from the city center (since the area is actually part of it). Additionally, a more psychological-driven analysis was necessary as we are talking about a multicultural environment with several conflicts and various scales in terms of human behavior. Finally, main aim of the topic is the sustainable liveability that takes into account the current and future needs of people in order to transform the built environment according to certain principles. All the previous characteristics are main concerns of the research group 'Urban Fabric'.

Regarding the selection of the exact location of the case, even if a lot of similar neighborhoods could be chosen instead, Schilderswijk was considered more suitable for certain reasons. Firstly, the fact that The Hague is a reachable city from the city of Delft, gave me the possibility for very frequent site visits, an important condition for a more in depth social analysis, a significant analysis for this kind of projects. Finally, the fact that the neighborhood is part of the city center with all the contrasts it may mean, made the problematic really challenging.

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

The study of the Urban Fabric Research group suggests a various methods to approach any possible issue. In my research I combined several of those methods. As the topic is a topic with a social dimension, both a deep social and spatial analysis were considered important so as to examine where social and spatial problematics meet. For the social analysis, fieldwork was an important tool under the form of personal observations of people' behavior, interviews of locals and key players at the area and also snapshot analysis for understanding people' movements. For the spatial analysis morphological analysis regarding the way the formation of the built environment promote social interaction was conducted. The map shows where actually privacy zoning were an important element which means the actual relationship between the entrances and

the street. Additionally, typological analysis of the street network and the building conditions highlighted problem areas that need certain attention.

Several interactive methods used during other stages of the research. First of all, a workshop with students of the neighborhood were organized in order to understand the way the most vulnerable group do perceive their living environment. Secondly, a meeting with representatives of the formal control of the neighborhood evaluated the findings of the social analysis. Police more than anybody else do know well what is going on at the area. Finally, at the certain moment that the patterns were defined, a pattern workshop were organized by students having as its main purpose to evaluate the pattern language.

The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The rehabilitation of the notion of liveability in the Schilderswijk is a topic that is totally relevant in a wider social context than that of the city of The Hague. First of all we can state that the topic is relevant for the Dutch society. For one, there have been many discussions for a long time regarding the low liveability of various Dutch neighborhoods mainly comprised by a high concentration of public housing and high share of mixed population. The problem though, still remains unsolved. For another, the situation is not stable; according to estimations the most urbanized areas in the Netherlands, where the problem mainly exists, are going to experience a continuous influx of newcomers until 2040. This estimation should function as an alert for action from the side of the urban planners and designers in order to plan for this growth in advance. In such a way, fast and short-term solutions which as history has proved, lead to unsustainable solutions, might be avoided. As a result, such anew research on the topic was considered necessary for exploring new sustainable possibilities for the wellbeing of people living in diverse urban environments.

At the same time though, the issue is relevant in the European context, as the effective regeneration of urban areas is one of the major challenges for societies across Europe. These are mainly the largest Western European cities that are closely connected to the world economy, something which provide a great environment for economic activity and thus high concentration of less qualified immigrants. Like the Dutch case, such cities experienced the same population forces at the past as it has already been mentioned. Such multicultural cities face decaying processes with similarities in factors leading to deterioration, are not considered an attractive place to live, express low levels of competitiveness and are socially, economically, ethnically fragmented and sometimes racially ghettoized. As a result, an effective regeneration approach for the Schilderswijk can be considered relevant in a certain level, as the general context is quite similar.