

Reflection Paper

Otherness

The preliminary results of the research and design in the graduation phase propose a strategy for the creation of inclusive living environments that facilitate the integration of newcomers in the long term. The centrally located semi-industrial area of Landlust is seen as an exemplary urban setting and is intended to explore and assess strategies for densification and renewal in order to overcome the current difficulties that cities experience in adapting to the needs of their current and future dwellers. The project aim was to develop a systematic to convert an exemplary urban setting (under the scenario of a high influx of newcomers as a result of the devastating effects of climate change).

The system is composed of a repetitive structure that interacts with the existing setting in various ways. This results in an urban hybrid: the interaction between old and new. The objective is to support gentle urban renewal: supporting local residents and strengthen the existing businesses and place identity, whilst opening up possibilities for new initiatives, varying from small factories, small businesses and places for gathering. As a result, the area can grow more organically. In each phase of the transformation of the area of Landlust opportunities are created for users to get involved in the program of demands. Within the transformation, diversity becomes the driver of change.

The 'city block' proposes a mix of working and living. The objective was to embrace and anticipate on the quality of openness. Rather than static, the building is seen as an ongoing dynamic process. Its purpose is to act as a supporting system, creating low threshold opportunities for users to get involved within the realization of their dwellings and businesses. And in doing so, facilitate alternative and diverse ways of living together.

The relationship between research and design:

My research has been two-fold.

- 1) Very influential was a literature study within social sciences, with regards to the history of migration in the Netherlands, the societal concept of integration and the Dutch integration support system. This literature study was combined with case studies. "The objective of the case study was to create a deeper understanding of the current conditions, the underlying (social) systems which influence these conditions, and how the socio-physical dynamics, in turn, shape the experience of newcomers. Therefore the case-study was both explanatory and exploratory." The case study involved photography, interviews (with employees and residents), an examination of the plan and program of demands. This way observations could be made from both 'outside the activity' (etic) as well as the 'inside the activity' (emic): in order to reveal its complexity.

The gained insights within the literature study and case study enabled me to position myself. It offered new perspectives -focused on opportunities- in the search for new approaches that could work within the current situation. "My position towards the accommodation of newcomers is that rather than encouraging conformity, newcomers should be regarded as agents with potential. This resulted in a quest for potential approaches to empowering newcomers to influence the conditions of their dwellings in order to meet their needs by making use of their full potential."

- 2) The overall research question of my paper was: *In what ways can a combination of open architecture principles and design strategies support current and future users in getting involved in the realization of their dwellings in order to reflect their needs and wants?* The objective of the research paper was to explore the several 'types' and strategies of user-involvement. "The cases revealed various strategies as well as a broad range of challenges

and practical aspects that come into play when involving users within the realization of dwellings.” The case study involved aspects related to the development process as well as aspects related to the building strategy.

Additional case studies have been conducted to explore the things various users hope to benefit from by their homes and the what the role of the architecture (of current housing projects concerning newcomers) is within the ‘homemaking’ process. Findings, combined with the necessary assumptions, were translated into a user-involvement strategy adjusted to the needs of the specific user groups.

The site has been carefully chosen based on a list of neighborhood characteristics, generated by a literature study.

The concepts of diversity and participation are developed through a series of models, drawings and diagrams in relation to the different project scales.

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

I have chosen the studio Architectural Engineering because of the subject ‘1 million homes’. This, because I strongly believe that diversity and inclusion will remain major challenges for the built environment. My design and research methods somewhat differed from the research methods generally used within the studio. Meaning that, although technical solutions for the housing demand within Amsterdam have been investigated within the design and research phase, I have addressed the housing issue from a somewhat different perspective. Rather than focusing primarily on innovative technical solutions, my approach has been aimed at holistic solutions. I have combined a global perspective on mobility, a neighborhood-based approach and user perspectives. Developing the project on different scales was crucial in order to place the project within the wider urban and societal context. The project was developed through series of models and drawings.

Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work.

The project explores an alternative role for users in the creation of their living and working environments. In doing so the project contributes to the discussion about the role of the architect. “Seeking to empower newcomers to take part in the formulation and realization of architecture, my position is related to what Avermaete (2010) addresses as the architect taking up a public role as ‘facilitator’. “ Due to the current ambiguity of the concept of user-involvement, architects often chose inappropriate methods or involve users at their convenience in practice.

Viewing the built environment as a set of social practices opens up opportunities to restructure these processes. The literature studies within social sciences and design science offered valuable perspectives on processes of commissioning, designing and occupancy.

The relationship between the project and the wider social context. (Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results.)

The project is inseparable from the wider social context. A future-proof migration system requires the development of an integrated, long-term vision, taking the complexity and global nature of migration as a starting point. This vision must cover the interaction between migration and other aspects of Dutch society (ACVZ, 2018).

Although the project is intended to serve an exemplary scenario on how things 'could be', a lot of attention has been given to making the design proposal realistic with regards to the dense and dynamic context of the city of Amsterdam as well as building time and costs. The project illustrates how cities can benefit from diversity as a resource for a vital urban life.

Secondly, due to the current lack of flexibility within the building stock current strategies of adapting the built environment to meet changing (user) requirements often involve demolition. As a result, waste is generated. Due to the large pressure on natural resources, it is necessary to move forward design that optimizes the productivity of resources (Durmisevic. 2010). The design of transformable buildings allows for the efficient functioning of the building, it can change faster and at lower costs. Additionally, it allows for coherence with social and cultural tendencies, whilst preserving the place identity.

Discuss the ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered in (i) doing the research, (ii, if applicable) elaborating the design and (iii) potential applications of the results in practice.

The ethical issues and dilemmas encountered within the research and design were numerous. How to deal with the different (polarized) views within society with regards to newcomers? How to deal with gentrification (as an economical process)? How to propose a participation strategy without being over deterministic? How to combine bottom-up development with (top-down) sustainability goals?

Adviescommissie voor Vreemdelingenzaken. (2019). *Migration: Onwards 2030*. Den Haag: uitgave van de ACVZ.

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Durmisevic, E., Beurskens, P. R., Adrosevic, R., & Westerdijk, R. (2017). *Systemic view on reuse potential of building elements, components and systems: Comprehensive framework for assessing reuse potential of building elements*. Retrieved from <http://resolver.tudelft.nl/uuid:ae80ac73-b8de-4040-94b9-ca555d89e559>