

Reflection

Relation between research and design

During the earlier phases of the research process, the research method of 'fieldwork' has been of great value to determine the specific direction and subject within this project. It could have been a significant method to use during the later phases of the process as well, but the COVID-restrictions eliminated possible visits and fieldwork trips to any nursing arrangements due to the greater risks there are for the elderly. Next to that, because of the scarcity of multi-generational co-living projects in The Netherlands, it was near to impossible to get any personal information from within such a specific living environment (which, on the other hand, added to the relevance of the research). Usable examples needed to be found and selected beyond our borders, hence the case studies from Norway and Austria.

At the start of the process, multi-generational co-living as a type of housing was expected to be specific enough to narrow down the different topics that would be involved in the project. However, the variety of residents, building users, functions and spaces ended up to be too broad for all be explored to the same extent; choices had to be made. Eventually, because of the "scaling down"-structure of the research (from the users of the building, to the typology, interior spaces and private dwellings), the decision was made to tackle all the topics up until a certain level, resulting in a collection of findings that is usable for different phases in the following design process. As with all architectural projects, not every subject can be fully researched through knowledge from literature and case studies. The design process itself, including among others the context of the building site, forms a big part of the research as well. With that in mind, this research was set up to provide the foundation for the final design; a toolbox to use and build upon during the design phase of the project, during which more specific and detailed research will be done to make the fictional 'realisation' of the project possible (fig. A). The toolbox ended up being a big influence on the overall design of the project; from the concept to the

more interior design aspects of the created spaces. With the design becoming more detailed towards the end, the feedback and experienced perspective of both my Architecture and Building Technology tutor gave fresh feedback and points of attention during this later phase of the design process. Feedback on things like day-to-day use and specific scenarios in such a living environment for elderly and other age groups really helped to give the architecture more value and functionality.

Assuming that in the future people will grow old, (and therefore needing care and support) in their private living environment, more research needs to be done regarding the role architecture can play in facilitating formal and informal care. Multi-generational co-living needs to be included in this research, as this might as well become a main form of housing for elderly and other age groups in the coming decades.

Relation between graduation/studio topic and master track/programme

'Dwelling' or 'Housing' is a section within the larger field of 'Architecture' and its master track and programme. In this graduation project, a specific concept regarding the housing for elderly (and other generational groups) is researched and eventually designed. One of the project goals was to design an environment in which the elderly can receive care and live independently, integrated and connected with other groups from society; 'Designing for Care in an Inclusive Environment'.

Scientific relevance

While studies on intergenerational activity, interaction and their mutual benefits are done, the role this can play in the daily lives and living environment of the elderly is still neglected. Especially the positive impact of architecture and its facilitating role in this scenario is barely explored.

Although there are experiments done where, for example, a small amount of students live together among elderly in need of care, which shows positive

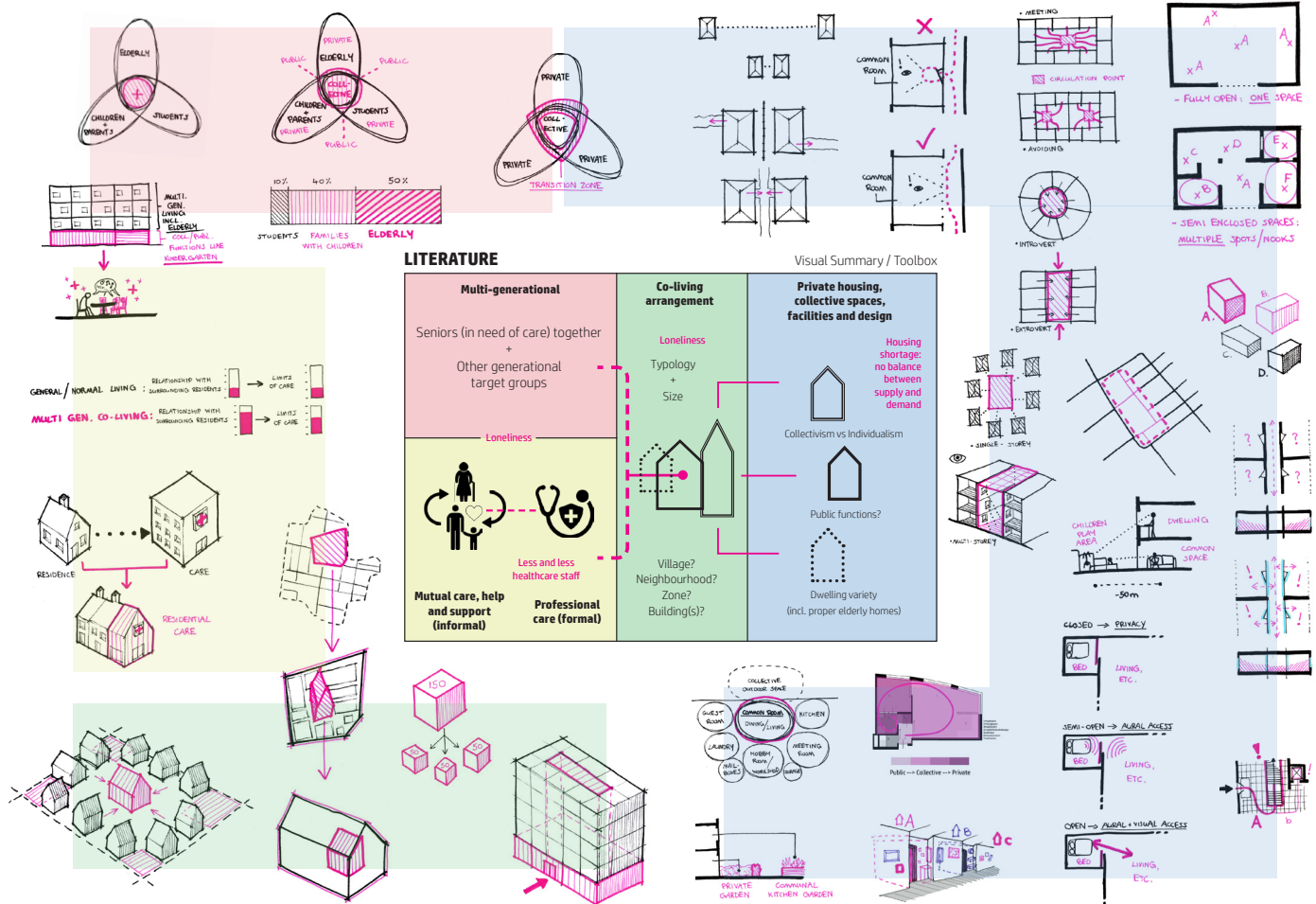


Fig. A: One of the two schematic sheets created as a design-toolbox for this Designing for Care project, including the research structure in the middle, surrounded by sketches, diagrams and schemes indicating the design tools per topic (colour coordinated) (by author)

outcomes for both groups, the possibilities for multiple, generational target groups are still largely undiscovered. Residential care is a housing concept for the elderly that we are already familiar with for a long time, but combining this with the urge and wish of the elderly to live integrated with society, surrounded by a variety of households, is something that deserves more attention.

This research and design has therefore aimed to discover how architectural design can create an environment in which the possible mutual benefits between different generations can add to the needs and wishes of the modern elderly (in need of care) and the role it can play in solving the problems our aging society is facing in the near future. Could multi-generational co-living be a “new product on the market” for people to choose as their way of housing and living? Could it form an appealing environment to both grow up and grow old in?

Relationship between project and wider social, professional and scientific framework

The combination of an aging society, an ever

improving health care system and a modern world in which autonomy, independence and freedom have great significance, results in a need for change in the built environment for the elderly. As mentioned in earlier chapters, many seniors who are living alone in a single family home (or with their partner) do not feel the necessity of living in such a relatively large house anymore. However, they are forced to stay there, because of the noticeable shortage of proper (and often smaller) elderly homes in the current Dutch housing market; a direct living environment which could contain economical, physical and social benefits for the elderly. Independent co-living for elderly with other generations currently forms a relatively new way of housing, but examples from countries like Sweden and Denmark show its opportunities for their residents and the surrounding community. As the biggest part of the design is conceptual and about providing a combination of spaces, functions, rooms and dwelling for multiple different generational groups, it can form a design which could be implemented and adapted within other urban contexts to meet their specific needs and wishes regarding use and programme.

Ethical issues and dilemmas during research and design

The role of care within the research and especially the design seemed to be the most problematic. Design in a residential environment on the smaller scale was something about which little information and specific design tools could be found, hence the wish for more focussed research on this subject.

A more general dilemma I experienced multiple times during the total process was the struggle of making choices or setting priorities. During the research, choices about on which topics to focus more on than others or to what degree a certain subject should be dove into caused some delay. However, the conversations with my Research tutor and fellow students about these struggles caused me to eventually figure out the right decisions to make.

Next to the research, the design process is full of moments of choice making, most of which has be to be done after research or 'trail and error', but some can be quite subjective as well. Most of the time, the input of others (tutors, students, friends, family) was needed to give me that last push to set the final step towards an important decision. This was a significant step I learned during the project; MAKE the choice, SEE what it brings you, REFLECT on the choice that is made and CHANGE the choice made if the reward is not meeting the expectations or goals.