

# **Reflection Graduation Project**

Danny de Weerd

4158059

**AR3AD130 Dwelling Graduation Studio**  
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Tutors:

Birgit Jurgenhake  
Paul Kuitenbrouwer  
Ype Cuperus

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**Architecture  
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# **1. Introduction of the graduation studio**

Due to the crisis, developers and housing associations are no longer willing to invest money in large scale dwelling projects. Collective Private Commissioning can be an answer to this problem. This concept is based on private investors, getting together in building groups which can finance a residential building that they will occupy when it's realized. Since we are designing dwellings for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is also relevant to investigate whether CPC is a good answer for the demands of contemporary and future housing. The goal for this graduation studio is to develop a structure that can cope with both topics. This could be the solution for the failing dwelling production of this time.

## **2.1 The relationship between research and design**

During the start of the graduation project, the focus was more on research. Site analysis is of course a vital part of the design, and therefore the starting point of the studio. By looking more closely to the sites, problems could be determined and thereby a corresponding research theme. Therefore I think this order was the right start of the project. In my case it was slightly different, because the location already had an interesting theme attached, namely Collective Private Commissioning (CPC). This was also a reason to pick the Houhavens site in Amsterdam. The research was thereby separated in two parts, site analysis and the research on CPC.

The site analysis was divided in several themes, which were explained from large scale to small scale. I still think this is a proper method, because this way you can easily zoom in and out, looking at one subject. What could have been better in my opinion is the overall comparison in the end between the different themes. It could have been a bit more coherent as a document on its own. Nevertheless it provided me a good overview of the location and starting points for my design, such as the view towards the city of Amsterdam and the site as a gateway to the whole master plan.

The research theme on Collective Private Commissioning was separated in two pieces. On one hand, the theoretical framework and on the other case study analysis. The theoretical research was divided in a part on CPC as a building model, the other on the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> century dwelling. This was a result of our research question whether CPC is a good answer to current or even future housing.

The research on CPC was very straight forward, just reading literature about the phenomenon and subtract the essence of the issue was the goal here. To get an overall view on the subject, it was good to start with. By comparing the concept of CPC to demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century housing, the research was put in a wider perspective. This was vital for the relevance of the research.

The third part consists of case study analysis. These reference projects were analysed according to a template, so all of them could be easily compared afterwards. The projects were also carefully selected, based on the location, the building and the inhabitants.

In my opinion the theme research has contributed to my design in a positive way. The overall investigation into CPC provided me with possible strengths and weaknesses of the concept. By comparing these with the current demands on dwelling I got a clear idea on what a modern CPC dwelling could look like. The case studies helped me to get a grip on the different options within this building model.

All in all I think that the research has been a good base for my design. The starting points that were subtracted from the research are implemented in the project, however I got a bit carried away during the design process. Half way the design I found myself having a design that had less relation with the distillations I got from the research. Therefore I took a step backwards at that time and looked into the conclusion of the investigation again. That gave me new clear directions to what the design is like in the end. The research has helped me in the design process as well, which shows the relationship between research and design in my graduation studio.

## **2.2 The relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject**

The theme of the studio is: At home in the city. The studio is focussed on contemporary and future urban lifestyles and their architecture on the scale of both the dwelling and the city. Collective Private Commissioning is an upcoming building concept in the Netherlands, so therefore it was interesting to see whether this model would fit the theme of the studio. Would it suit the Dutch city fabric as well as the contemporary and future ways of living? During the research it turned out that people nowadays would like to have influence on their own dwelling, options for different layouts. These features fit CPC like a glove and therefore indicate overlaps between CPC and the studio theme. In fact, CPC is in my opinion a very strong answer to housing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and thereby a relevant subject to elaborate in relation to the studio: At home in the city.

## **2.3 The relationship between the studios methodical line of approach and the students method**

As mentioned before, the beginning of the studio was mainly focused on research. After a few weeks, research and design were elaborated simultaneously. Half way the first semester, when the research was done, the focus went onto the design.

This method has resulted in a good process in my opinion. By starting with the research, a broad framework is offered which contributes to solid design statements. These statements lead to starting points which you can use in the design. By starting with the design half way the research, the investigation also gets a context. It gets clear how to use the knowledge from the research in the design, which makes it more interesting. You also come by subjects that are missing in the research by designing a project. Therefore I think that working on research and design simultaneously enhances both parts.

This method I used during the rest of the graduation studio. When I was designing, I found out that something needed to be investigated, so I did. This way the research became more and more complete, and my design problems could be solved by the results of this research. For instance the design of a public square. The urban plan contains a public square, but public spaces need some more attention, since it belongs to nobody, but you want people to use it. Therefore some extra research on public squares was necessary to supplement the design.

The studio also prescribed the analysis of reference projects. This has also helped me a lot during the design process. Looking at precedents is always useful, and especially the way we did by looking for corresponding themes among the different case studies. It offered me various insights in the components a building consists of.

## **2.4 The relationship between the project and the wider social context**

The research and the design are focussed on Collective Private Commissioning. Due to the crisis, developers and housing associations are no longer willing to invest money in large scale dwelling projects. Therefore there are many empty lots, waiting to be build. CPC, and therefore my design can be an answer to this problem. The design consists of an empty skin, where the inside is to be divided later on. It is therefore possible to be inhabited by small or large building groups. These groups can get together and finance the building together, so the large investors can be skipped. Within the structure they can design their own dwelling and floor plans. This open approach offers the people what they want nowadays, as many influence on their own dwelling as they would like.

So the design responds to the demands of contemporary and future urban lifestyles and it answers the failure of dwelling production in the current timeframe. Therefore the project and its theme are very relevant in the economical situation that we are in at this moment.

### **3. Reflection on the graduation studio**

The goal of the graduation studio was to design a structure that can deal with the demands of contemporary housing, as well as the features that come with the concept of CPC. I think I have managed to create a structure with lots of possibilities for the future inhabitants and therefore a structure that is very appropriate for Collective Private Commissioning. People would like to design their own floor plans nowadays, but my design even gives the building group the liberty to design their own dwelling configuration.

If I could do the whole project again, I would change some aspects of my overall design process. I would focus more on the urban plan in the beginning and try to get it right in an earlier stage. I was struggling with the building configuration on the site a long way after the P2 presentation. This also had influence on the design of my building and therefore on my dwelling design too. This wasn't really efficient, but by changing the urban plan up to a later stage, I do think that the overall organization of the island has improved though.

At the design of the structure, I was more focused on the diversity in dwellings, than the development of quality dwellings. I found myself, having a structure and dwelling configuration, but I still needed to test whether these dwellings would be worth living in. In the end it worked out well, but some other time I would have done some measurement investigation on dwelling plans, before I would develop the entire structure. Of course, I already had designed some dwellings during the first semester, so I was confident that it would work. Though it would have been nice to be absolutely sure that the structure works, before you put a lot of effort in it.

Another thing I might have done different is more a personal issue. I could have been a little less reserved in the beginning of the studio. Maybe I would have placed myself a bit more on the foreground, though it is more or less in my nature to be a bit restrained at first.

All in all I think I had a solid graduation studio process over the last year. Of course there were some ups and downs and sometimes I was stuck on a subject within my design or research. By focusing on another part of the project, I got new insights and inspiration to finish this graduation studio.