

Reflection P4

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1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

In relation to the Dwelling Graduation Studio: Designing for Health and Care in an inclusive environment, the conducted research is aiming to identify and propose design solutions that cater the collective requirements of both the partner with dementia, and the 'healthy' partner as an informal caregiver. These guidelines can improve the well-being of both partners. The proposed design solution for healthy elderly and their partner with dementia implements these guidelines.

2. What is the relevance of your graduation work in the larger social, professional and scientific framework.

More than half of the caregivers for people with dementia in the Netherlands experience moderate to heavy levels of burden, and one in eight even admits to being severely overwhelmed (Dementiamonitor mantelzorg, 2022). New living solutions could make it possible for couples where one faces dementia to maintain their shared living arrangements and relieve the burden on the informal caregiver.

In terms of the scientific framework; although there is separate research on the unique living environmental needs of individuals with dementia, and the themes for maintaining a fulfilling life for both partners in the context of dementia, there is a research gap where these two are combined and overlapping themes are explored. There is also a lack of the perspective of the partner as an informal caregiver and the living environmental needs that are important for them. This research aims to add to this perspective and combine the collective needs of both partners.

The proposed architectural design proposes a new way of living with dementia, focussing on making it possible for couples to keep on living together while one of them experiences dementia. This environment should both cater the needs of the person with dementia, as well as the 'healthy' partner.

So far, I am satisfied with how the design has progressed; I have gained more and more control over the design, and I notice that it is becoming increasingly refined as a result. Some guidelines were easy to incorporate (safety measures within home; including communal spaces; using straight corridors) and were a starting point for the concept of my building. For example that the garden or outside space must be directly accessible for people with dementia. This is why the dementia living groups are on the ground floor.

One aspect of the design that I found difficult was the theme of wayfinding for people with dementia. I made some guidelines but sometimes it was still hard to place yourself into another person's shoes and to judge whether what you designed actually works and is understandable for them. Are people able to find their own front door? Are they able to

move through the building independently? I wished for more specific guidelines, especially regarding wayfinding. Something else that I found difficult was to decide on the scale of the building. According to the guidelines, it should not have an institutional character (how can people personalize space?), and the living environment must be small scale (when is it too big?). I successfully achieved this goal by making a distinction between large collective spaces (for example the atrium) and small scale areas (such as the collective living rooms) and by dedicating areas for people to personalize. One guideline that ended up being crucial for my design was to have safe wandering areas. I focussed on this both inside and outside the building, thinking about different levels of wandering areas someone encounters when they leave their apartment (the atrium, elevated walking path, and various communal spaces).