

# THE WORKING HOME

Reflection

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The Working Home Project seeks to create a social housing residential neighbourhood that affords opportunities for financial betterment through the use of integrated workspaces.

This project stems from an interest in people. How they live and interact with each other through exploring their likes and dislikes, their needs and wishes. To explore this notion of people and their interaction, the research undertaken looked at compiling people's stories and contextualising them within the city of Nijmegen.

Taking into account the context of Covid-19 and a pandemic aware society, this thesis explores the coexistence of live and work activities within the home. Prior to, but enhanced by the recent pandemic, we increasingly find more people living and working in the same spaces and therefore this thesis project looks at creating a solution to the issue of designing for the contemporary family lifestyle.

To adequately create design solutions for these current issues, the thesis relies heavily on the observation and study of the everyday mundane activities that take place within both the private and public realms.

### Bricolage

The studio theme Bricolage sparked several topics of interest within the working home thesis project. On a social scale, this thesis took the stories of the people of Nijmegen and began to stitch them together in order to create a broader picture of the essence of the city.

Architecturally, the existing building stock was a starting point for the design. With the knowledge that the majority of our cities are built to capacity, why don't we look at the current building stock for future use. Here we can create opportunities through interventions that repurpose and reimagine spaces within our cities by giving old buildings a new lease of life. Through the retention of the ramp and the structure of the Molenport Shopping Centre, my thesis project explores this avenue of repurposing. I find this project fitting with current issues such as sustainability and exploring new ways of repurposing materials.

Taking into consideration the context of the pandemic and my education, I was very keen to maintain the initial idea of exploring people's routines and rituals. Although there was less of an opportunity for intimate interviews and entering people's homes to record their living habits, there were still opportunities to explore from a distance how people used the transitional spaces that took them from their private homes to the public street. Technology played a key role in the gathering of data. With most people able to access a camera on their phones, I was able to retrieve recordings of people's routines and rituals. They had been asked to record their 'entry sequence' as they entered their private space which revealed moments relating to their routine and rituals during this process.

By asking people to film themselves carrying out these mundane activities, I was able to pick out certain moments that spoke to the design of their spaces and how it influenced the way they used space. Some of the footage was too staged as they had to set up the camera beforehand and then re-enact their entry sequence. However, it was nice to hear their commentary in some cases where each item that they thought was important was mentioned in the video.



### Looking Back

I chose the medium of filming because it spoke to the rhythm of the city that had been explored previously on first encounters with the site. It was also an opportunity to exercise virtual observation. There were certain routines that people felt were 'normal' and therefore if I had asked them about it, they may have disregarded it as boring or mundane. This medium was effective and with the opportunities to redraw and trace the movements through space, it created a real sense of movement within a still image.

The feedback I received over the course of the year really pushed the notion of research by design. The tutors highlighted aspects of materiality that I had not considered which opened a new horizon for which I could explore material cultures and how it tested the current themes in society regarding material logic. Their feedback also touched on the narrative of the design thesis and notions regarding what it actually means to design and how to tell a story of a building from the human perspective. Also, in terms of entry sequences, the feedback surrounded the notion of transitional spaces. How can I design the view of entering but also leaving a space? What role does the materiality play in ensuring the legibility of these transitions?

This feedback has shaped the way in which I have presented at each stage of the year, as I always attempted to focus on a specific element not just trying to fulfil the drawing set that in turn would describe the project but also trying to place the interventions and findings within the larger socio-political context. For instance, my research book shows an exploration of various timber materials aging over time and what this means architecturally but also considering the social impact this process of weathering may have on the inhabitants of the space.

This process of research by design has taught me the importance of taking in one's surroundings and using that as a starting point for design. Nothing is new but rather interventions are a chance to reimagine an object giving it a new lease of life. The architecture is important but the stories that dwell within architecture is what makes the experience of space so precious.

When designing, I have learnt to imagine myself in these spaces and the impact the height of a ceiling for instance, could have on the perception of the spaces. Designing from and for the human scale is one of the most profound things I have explored this year and I hope to take this with me into practice.

### Foward

Going forward, I hope my project conveys an element of community and questions the current circumstances found in the existing housing stock within Nijmegen. By creating a project that considers the contemporary family set up in Nijmegen, I believe I am exploring architectural notions that are pertinent in our current society. The final period of my graduation will look at modes of representation. How can my drawings and models clearly express the issues at hand that a residential neighbourhood attempts to question?