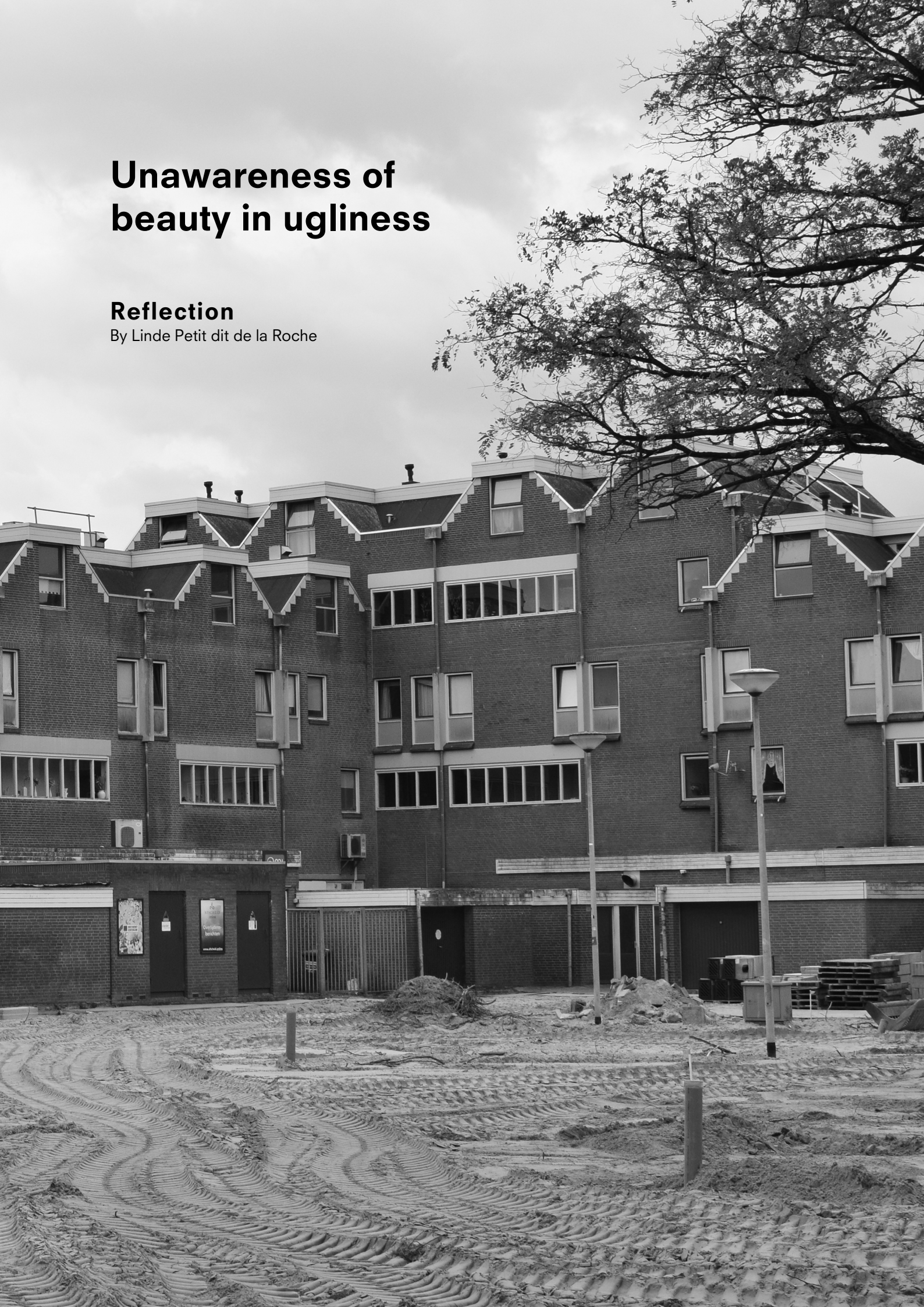


Unawareness of beauty in ugliness

Reflection

By Linde Petit dit de la Roche



Personal information

Name

Linde Petit dit de la Roche

Studentnumber

4289617

STUDIO

Name

Adapting 20C Heritage Heritage
and Architecture

Mentors

Lidwine Spoormans (design)
Wido Quist (building technology)
Nicholas Clarke (cultural value)
Dr. J.L. Heintz (delegate)

DATE

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Introduction

Almere Haven is the first core of a polynuclear system which has been created between 1974 and 1981 on the southern part of Flevoland. The main goal was to design it as characteristic Dutch and as hospitable as possible. The first complex of the centre is designed by Apon Van den Berg Ter Braak Tromp Architecten. Over the years the building, ABBT complex, has been through some changes and is dealing with vacancy and unattended backside spaces. This negative development in the heart of the centre means that there is a challenge to revitalize.

The ABBT complex is a mixture between a closed building block and an expedition street from the 1920. This combination results in a semi-open block with a large inner courtyard, the expedition space. In the beginning of the 70's, when the retail space was in use and the delivery of supply went via the back, there was a purpose for this large inner space. With the vacancy rate getting higher and higher, the uproar that a shop's back life can bring, is fading away. What is left are dark corners and unattended spaces. Not only the ABBT complex is dealing with this, four other areas along the central spine of the centre are facing the same issues.

This graduation project answers the following question: "How can a seventies expedition area with a lack of spatial quality be improved and provide an answer to the current demand for densification?" Hereby, the ambition is to create a strategy on how to deal with this kind of back areas when an improvement or densification is required. Furthermore, the cultural values of the era of the 70's have been explored. With the found values an architectural translation has been made for; how to renovate and how to build next to it.



Backside off a retail space and entrance of housing

Aspect 1

The relation between research and design.

In the heritage studio three phases can be distinguished; the group research, the individual research and the design phase. Every phase has his own methods and provides a base for the next phase. The foremost goal is to research the main values of the new heritage, the 70's era. Not a lot of scientific research has been done in this era. Which makes it interesting to start the research and to find out the main values of this era. The sources for this study are the residents of the location, municipality, consultant of the municipality for the urban vision of 2040, the Archives of Flevoland, Batavialand and Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam. The research of phase one is focussed on the context. It is about getting familiar with the ins and outs of the location. Therefore, different methods have been used: fieldwork, observations, residential research and archives research. With the data found, the Value Matrix has been filled in. This is a tool that the chair of Heritage uses for researching and valuating a heritage project. The matrix is a combination of the theories of Riegl and Brand. A heritage design has to deal with future desires, values of the past, spirit of place (according to Riegl) and more. By filling in the matrix with text as well image, with different aspects, you gain an understanding of the values that a building has, intangible and tangible. It is a concluding step in the research process from where identification and classification (high, mid or low value) of typical features can be distinguished in and around the site and object.

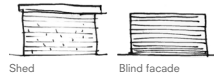
To reflected on the used methods, the residential research is very valuable. Analysing a new heritage era, which has a common negative association, can be challenging to see the value. With the preformed resident research an emic point of view has been integrated in the project. By combining the etic and the emic point of view, a more complete view of the area has been created. When asked about, residents do not mention the value of architecture as such. However, they do refer to everything being different and newly built, which is not well accepted in social cohesion. This social cohesion and architectural vision on new buildings is very important for them and therefore has been taken into account when transforming, renovating or developing a new building in this area. This has been the main starting point for the design phase. A side note by the residents' data is that the participants where, mainly, already involved in creating new visions on Almere Haven 2040. This indicated that they were already strongly opinionated. Consequently, the data is not completely objective. However, being aware of that, it is a very valuable way of getting to know how a location is viewed by his residents.

One of the other studies that has been a big influence on the outcome of the design is the densification study. Within a group the main values from the cultural value matrix, use value, social value, relative art value were distinguished into their attributes, such as diversity in typology, height, green etc. These values and attributes were differentiated between each other on what risks there were for them, when a kind of densification occurred. Such as filling in an empty spot, splitting or topping op. The options of densification have been tested quantitative and qualitative. The combination of testing the impact of a type of densification combined with the risks for the values is highly recommended for further heritage topics. The insight that you gain in what kind of values you can improve or the type of values you need to sacrifice to implement something is worthwhile. This case study gives me the results for the type of densification that can be done within the centre of Almere Haven. In the project it results in splitting a current building and filling in an empty spot by adding a low-rise building and gain a maximum densification with a low risk of harming the cultural values.

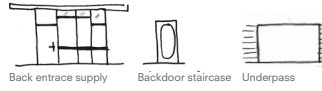
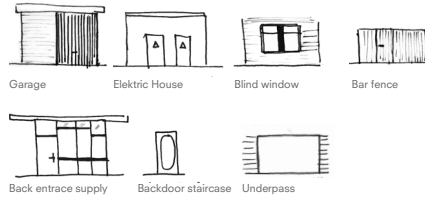
The research of phase two is based on an individual approach. The question regarding context and the densification of the area has been satisfied with a sufficient outcome. Beside these two subjects this graduation project started

plinth elements

blind



closed 'openings'



objects



urban elements

objects



materiality



private infill

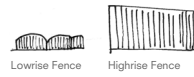


fig. 1 'ingredients' of the backsides

scenario's spatial quality



fig. 2 spatial quality - ten views

from a personal fascination for the backside area of a complex and what possibilities lie here. A short analysis to the ingredients of the backsides has been done, in Almere haven as well as in Rotterdam (fig. 1). Various generic solutions have been composed for these ingredients. This results in an overview of generic solutions on how to open up, improve or mask the backsides. The results only provided an overview, which is still interesting since the literature rarely mentions backsides. Lacking however, are specifics of the conditions when backsides are individual suitable for a specific location and when not. Very successfully, the generic solutions, densification possibilities and the desires of the residents were tested in six design scenarios. In final design a combination of six generic solutions was worked out. To judge the quality of these scenarios, there were compared to the quantitative and qualitative outcome.

The spatial qualities of the scenarios are compared via ten identical views from the perspective of the residents, users, passer-by's and the neighbours living across the street (fig 2). This research via these viewpoints provided interesting feedback on the difference between what looks good in plan and numbers and what feels good as a preserver, again making the link between the etic point of view and the emic point of view. This emic point of view can be tested by role playing, to see and interact as a child, adult or elderly. Since one would be the etic and emic point of view, there lies a contradiction here. People without any knowledge, can be asked to mark the image per scenario that appeals the most to them. This method of valuating strategies could be more interesting when applied on the streets with current residents as a starting point for discussion. This is something that could have strengthened the design in my case. Especially since one of the main drivers (in this design) is not to harm the social value and be aware of the impact on it.

In last phase, the design, the decision was made on the outcome from phase one and two. The method that was mainly used is making variation, research by design. But alongside research for the best possible views for the residents, the aim was to architecturally fit in the design, to not harm the social value. Therefore the architectural language of the neighbourhood has been researched. Projects directly located next to the project location have been analysed using photographs on the following themes: silhouette section, window frames, entrance and front doors (fig 3). With these results a small overview of the architectural articulation of the neighbourhood can be provided. By combining the main conditions, a 'summary' façade can be generated from it, which shows the architectural articulation of the neighbourhood, in this case a representation of the 70's articulation. From where a translation has been made towards a 20's façade based on the summary of the 70's (fig 4). Reflecting on the end result, I'm not sure if people would immediately recognise a derived 70's façade, and if, it would therefore be interesting for further development to enter into a dialogue with the residents. Also, to find out more cultural values within the architectural articulation of the 70's.

The final design shows four strategies on how to deal with back areas in combination with the desires of the residents of Almere Haven, not harming the social cohesion and gain more households. In addition, the architecture of the new building is harmonized with the collective architectural memory of the residents in order to strengthen social cohesion.

architecture of the neighbourhood

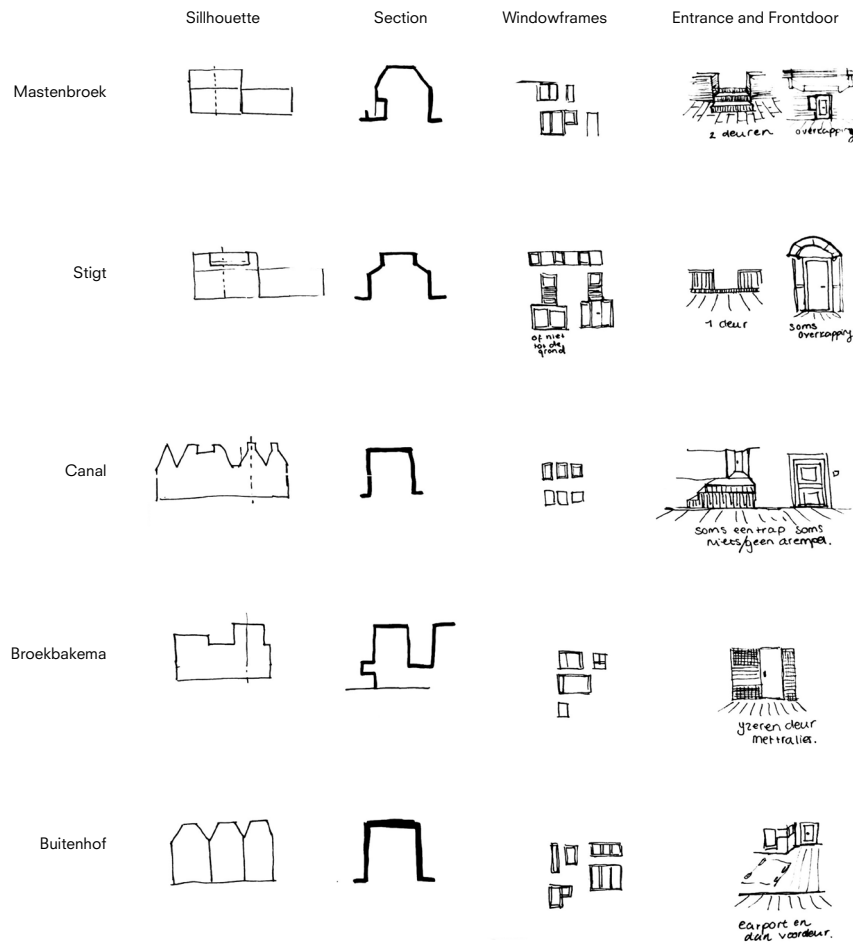


fig. 3 architecture of the neighbourhood



fig. 4 from the 70's to the 20's

Aspect 2

The relationship between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A, U, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS).

The chosen main subject of revitalizing a semi-open, mixed function, seventies complex with an unattended backspace in the heart of the centre, relates to different themes and different scales. There are three main themes; the backsides, the densification question in a city and the heritage of the 70's era. All of them are interwoven with architecture and the built environment and therefore related to the master track and -program. The main dilemma and question that arises in my design is: "How can a seventies expedition area with a lack of spatial quality be improved and provide an answer to the current demand for densification?" The relevance in this question is twofold, on the one side how to deal with (seventies) expedition areas and what are strategies to transform this area and on the other side how to densify in a low-rise village and not harm the current social cohesion. The unattended backsides are not only there because the architect has designed them, but are created by urbanists, managers, different stakeholders and investors etc. Furthermore, the new densification question is posed by all of them and the backside could be areas, when paid enough attention, where densification can be done. The transformation strategies for the backside can be applied to any complex, regardless of the architectural period. The increase of the density on an existing plot can be an example for all architecture tracks dealing with densification within the existing buildings and empty spaces in a (low-rise) city.

The relation between the 70's heritage and architecture poses an interesting point of view. Heritage is mainly seen as something focused on what to preserve, with a nine out of ten-positive fascination for the site. With a seventies sites however, the collective memory is not yet that positive. Thereupon it is highly important to explore the values of the 70's era to prevent it from being demolished. The 70's were an era in which experiments were carried out with housing typologies and lifestyles, which combines in cultural heritage. When there was a high demand for housing, they could have continued in the way of the 60's with the monolith residents' buildings. But the 70's excel at counteracting this monotonous residential environment. Research has shown that the social cohesion in the Groeikern as Almere Haven is extremely high and that people are very satisfied with living there. For a world that is changing into a digital and anonymous one, the 70's can be an inspiration for all scales in the build environment to find out what the built environment could do for the social interactions.



Marketsquare of Almere Haven

Aspect 3

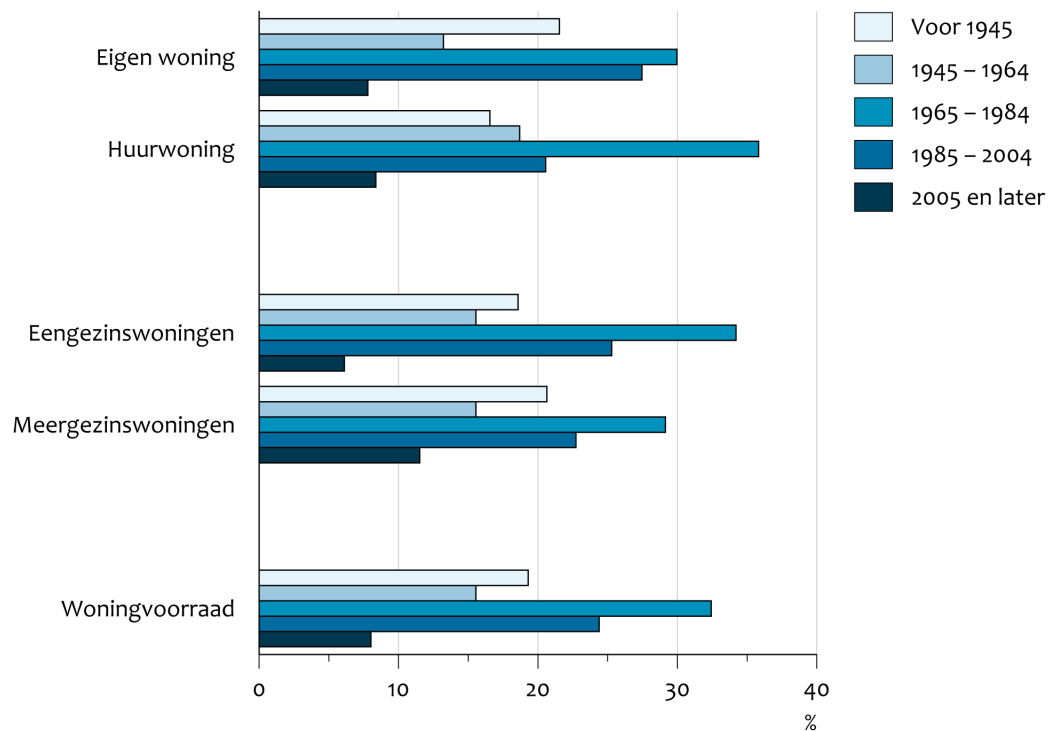
Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work.

The approach chosen towards the 70's architecture is based on the values that have been found via the cultural value matrix. These values are divided in to three scales, urban block and detail. For the implementation of these values, two project specific strategies have been conducted. Besides these value-based strategies, the projects decisions are also founded upon my own general vision on heritage. As for heritage, it might seem that I am a bit ambiguous towards the current architecture in this specific project, but this approach is well formulated by the Burra Charter 2013: *'Do as much as necessary to care for the place and to make it useable, but otherwise change it as little as possible so that its cultural significance is retained.'* It explains why I brought back some typical seventies' elements, such as the typical triangle windows and the sloped wooden panelling. In general, I think that these typical architectural expressions from a period of time need to be preserved. It shows that other articulations than the usual were investigated at the time. This already adds something of value. I'm not saying that if something is lost during an early renovation, it should always be brought back. Only if it serves the new form of use, in a way you can try to make the new use work with the lost element, or give it a new improvement, a form of translation. This has been the approach for the values found on the three scales.

The design is guided by two main implementation strategies. A functional strategy, in which the use value of the block can be improved and reinterpreted by adding a new function. On the scale of the block, the social value is enhanced by transforming and splitting the current program. But also, the typical articulation of the plinth on a block scale is repaired by the change of the program and bring back the articulation of the seventies. The programme strategy is mainly focused on improving the current programme in order to give the location its use value back. Elements from the 70's can be brought back, reinterpreted or reinvented, all for the sake of the new use value.

The second strategy is the social strategy, where the aim is to ensure that the interventions are accepted by the local community. It is ensured by creating the same architectural language in the renovation and the new building, based on their collective architectural memory. On a block scale, the social value that can be found in "knowing your neighbour and be known" is strengthened in the new program by diverse housing types, maximum building height and the architectural articulation of human scale details. These details are also a quality of the architectural language of the 70's, i.e. the ability to related to a façade as a human being. This quality of the 70's façade has been translated to a 20's façade. This translation shows indirectly the architectural values in the articulation of the 70's and makes for interesting further research, since this has been done on a specific location with this specific outcome. The social strategy behind it, to rely upon the collective architectural memory of the residents, is to accelerate the acceptance of the new residents in the new building, within the social cohesion. This will indirectly result in the densification to not affect the social cohesion but strengthen it, due to this recognizability. Subsequently, this is the overall aim of the social strategy.

Woningen naar eigendom, woningtype en bouwjaar



Bron: CBS.

CBS/jan16
www.clo.nl/nl216603

fig. 5 housing stock and building year

Aspect 4

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 graduation topic is twofold, with the strategies towards backside and how to densify within a seventies location. Both have their own relevance and a difference in the transferability of the projects results.

Firstly, the backside, I'm looking at what those backsides are and what we can do with it. The fascination for the areas didn't started only in Almere, but they are also in Rotterdam. To me, this shows that it is a wider problem. In my project I defined possible strategies for the backside area, of which just six are elaborated on in the project for the block in Almere. For every area, another program is requested, and different strategies can be selected from the one that I have defined. For further development, it would be interesting to choose different areas in different cities to make it more explicit when a strategy works and when it does not.

This way, it can be determined not only when a strategy works, but also under which specific conditions. In this project, the strategies were assessed based on the residents' wishes as to whether or not apply a certain strategy. I can imagine that an overall summary of which conditions are needed to apply a certain strategy can provide a more extensive 'backside strategy'. The question, "what is your approach towards backside" might be not a real heritage question, but more a general question within the architecture, how we could deal with it. The provided strategies are on its own not a new invention, but combining them and making it debatable, how and if we could deal with these area's when densification is requested, is. Finding the balance between the need for such spaces in our environment and the desirability of redesigning the back of our urban landscape in a changing society is something that other people will hopefully explore further.

Where the relevance of the backward strategy is evident, its transferability onto practical frameworks should be further examined. The relevance of knowledge on densifying a seventies location is even more evident. The heritage position in the world of architecture of the Netherlands is growing every year. Cities are getting bigger and bigger, in height and hectare. Eventually there is a limited possible grow and there is need to look for other solutions to densify. In times where the demand for new homes is reminiscent of the 'Volkshuisvesting' of the 70's and 80's and where a sustainable solution is needed, we are obliged to look creatively at our current housing stock. Our current housing stock exist for 33% (CBS 2016, fig 5) out of houses between the 70's and the 80's. The findings in the qualities of these urban areas and architectural articulation is consequently extremely relevant. Not only the qualities, but also how these qualities can be translated into a renovation or to building 'next' to this type of architecture. The main finding that the social value in an area of the 1970s is very important and should not be harmed in order not to unbalance the current social cohesion, is something that has to be taken into account when densification is requested in such an area. The social strategy, where the aim is to ensure that the interventions on different scale are accepted by the community, led to a decision on the acceptable amount of densification. It needs to be found in low-rise new density, in splitting and transforming the current housing stock. For the acceptance in the social cohesion, the same architectural language is created in the renovation and the new building such as material, aesthetics and housing typologies. The translation from the aesthetics of the 70's in to a 20's articulation is the start of a further development. For this further development, it may be necessary to assess whether this translation can be further elaborated with professionals in the field of architecture who worked in the seventies and the current residents, to gain more insight.



Backentrace of a housing complex

Aspect 5

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 final design intervenes on detail, block and urban scale. The interventions on an urban scale address the general question of how to deal with the individual versus the collective, when densification is a necessity. In the current situation, the courtyard offers the privilege of parking your own car and having your own parking space for your bike. When densification occurs, there is an increase of inhabitants, bikes and cars. By adding a new building on a parking lot, the privilege of having your own car etc. comes into play. With densification in a city, desires to shift from an individual perspective towards a collective; the shared economy. This manifest itself in providing shared car parking places and upgrading the public transport on city and national scale. Besides that, to provide high-end spatial quality, people should use more common and public green in the city. The question is how far you, as an architect, can go in making decisions about how people should live. These are issues that need to be further considered on an urban and national level. To make this shift from an individual to a more collective life in the city, not only as a spatial quality question, but also in the form of sustainability on how to reduce the consumption economy.

For the potential application of the results in practice, a challenge lies ahead. On a design level, the starting point is that the renovation should be applicable while the residents are still living in their houses. This and my general approach towards heritage, as mentioned before, kept me from making huge changes to the existing appearance. Decisions about things such as insulation from the inside and adding a new front façade are measurements that are applicable. For the implementation of this project different management questions arise as; How are we going to split apartments when residents are still living there? How are we going to rearrange the retail in the plinth and transform a part into housing? For the implementation of this the housing cooperation, owners, residents, municipality need to be involved to execute this project. The applicability for the backside strategy is something that is not directly workable in every city. It has the same type of management issues as for the implementation of the projects in Almere. The backside strategy is something that can be the start for a discussion within a municipality to discuss their strategy towards backsides, when spatial quality is asked for.