Solo in Merwehaven

Find the similarities, cherish the differences

Graduation Studio

Research Plan

Merwehavens
Rotterdam, The
Netherlands

Single-person households
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4591488

Tutors:
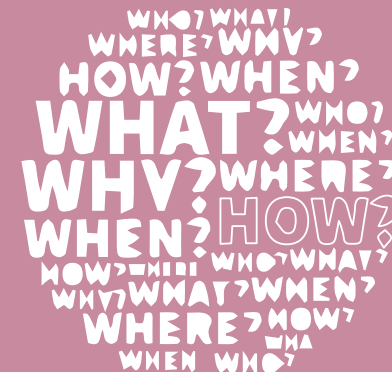Theo Kupers
Heidi Sohn
Anne Kockelkorn

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Preface

There is a big need for new homes in The Netherlands. This need contains of one million new homes between now and 2030 of which 54.000 are to be realized in Rotterdam (NOS, 2020). Adding new homes is an immense task in every imaginable way: logistics, policy making, financing and sheer building volume.

The one million homes challenge is a matter of quality. 'How do we, as architects, provide suitable and affordable housing for a diverse population? To answer that question we need to know more about the people who inhabit - or want to inhabit - our cities. Who are the modern households? What do they aspire to? Where do they live now and more pertinent to us, as architecture students: where and how do they want to live?

The composition of households has changed significantly in recent decades, the married couple with children is no longer the norm. This change is characterized, among other things, by the sharp decrease in the average number of persons per household. Households in the Netherlands are getting smaller and single is increasingly the norm (Lansbergen, 2018, p. 9).

This research report focuses on the modern household group single-person households. Who are the single-person households, what is the reason for the household decline and what is the reason for the need of less living space? Is singularization also a problem of impoverishment?

Feeling at home is the main topic of this research report and is investigated by the use of the concepts comfort, safety, social interaction and identity. I link feeling at home to the different groups within the single-person households to investigate how single-person households of all ages and income groups can feel at home.

Topic

The housing market is locked

There is a limited supply of housing, very high prices and a lot of competition. The housing supply in the Netherlands is lagging far behind in demand. In 2020 there was a shortage of 331,000 housing units (Rijksoverheid, 2020). The limited supply has an effect on the housing price. The housing demand is driving the prices. The price of an average home increased in the fourth quarter of 2020 compared to the previous year by 11.6% to € 365,000 (NVM, 2020-a). The average rent also increased in the fourth quarter of 2020 as a result of the shortage in the supply, combined with a high demand, by 4.1% for houses and 7.1% for apartments (NVM, 2020-b).

More and more single households

In addition, the composition of households has changed significantly in recent decades, the married couple with children is no longer the norm. There are more and more people who live alone. The people who live alone are all in a different phase of life, all with different wishes and needs, different lifestyles and different living requirements. Young people who leave their parental home and live alone, without a partner. After a divorce, a household splits up into two new households and at least one of the partners has to look for a new home. If one partner dies, the other partner is left alone in the home (Emmery & Luyten, 2015, p 16).

In 1971, a household consisted of 3.2 persons on average; at the beginning of 2018 this had dropped to 2.2 (Lansbergen, 2018, p. 9). The prognosis is that the household dilution will continue and more and more people will live alone (van Duin, te Riele & Stoeldraijer, 2019, p. 4). At the beginning of 2018, single-person households made up 38 percent of all households; from 2045 this is expected to be 43 percent (van Duin, te Riele & Stoeldraijer, 2019, p. 3).

Increasing need for small homes

Household dilution leads to an increasing need for housing. A solution to meet this requirement is to add housing. In this context, it is necessary for the housing sector to respond to the increase in the number of single-person households and to construct a different type of housing and perhaps housing forms for this group rather than the model for the large, traditional family, which is one of the most frequent models today. Many existing homes are still built in a social context from the past. They are in line with old forms of housing (Lansbergen, 2018, p. 9).

Singles face a number of bottlenecks in terms of housing. In addition to an enormous shortage of suitable housing, the income of single-person households is generally lower than that of two-person households and families. They cannot count on the financial benefits of living together. This means that they can pay less for their home. Because of its affordability, a small home is therefore popular within this group (Hoorn & Kotte, 2016, p.24). In addition, the need for a large home is disappearing due to the decreasing household size (Wolf, 2020, p. 7).

It can be seen that smaller housing has already been anticipated in recent years and that the number of small residential units has increased. Lansbergen (2019, p.13) indicates that at the time of her research, approximately 29,000 small residential units in the Netherlands had been realized in the past five years.

Adding smaller homes to the housing market can help solve the shortage of homes for single-person households, but what exactly are the needs and wishes of these future residents?
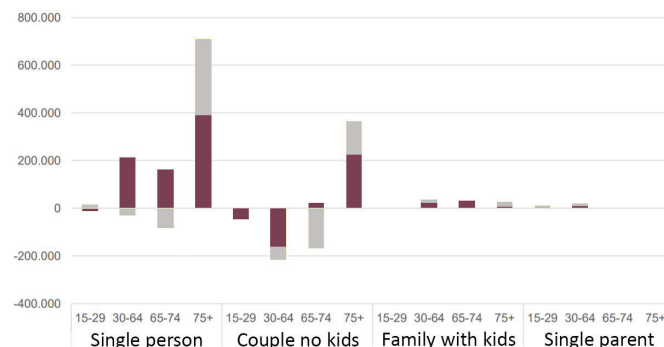
Expected percentage of household growth

Rotterdam
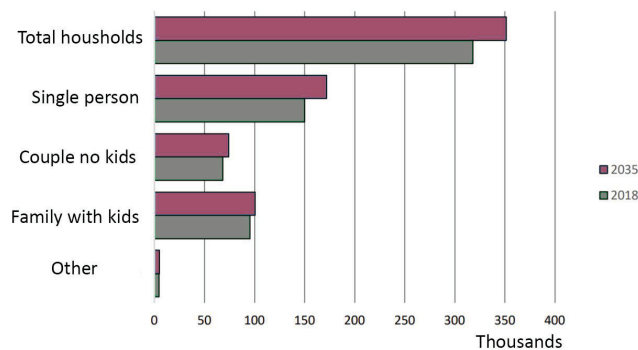
Source: Hoppesteyn, Permentier & Van der Zanden, 2018

Expected percentage of household growth

National

Source: CBS, 2019

Research

This research report forms the basis of the design of a building ensemble in Merwehaven for homes for single-person households. This research report focuses on the theme of the solo dweller's feeling at home. When and how will the different single-person households feel at home? What is feeling at home exactly?

Feeling at home has different meanings for everyone. It could be a house or a neighbourhood in which we live, the city in which we work or a country where we come from. Feeling at home can also be about something much smaller. Think of a bench in a park where you regularly sit down or a lunchroom, where you drink your coffee. What all these different feelings of home have in common is that there is always a connection with a place (Graaf van der & Duyvendak, 2009, p. 13). But why do we feel at home in a certain place. It is often difficult to put into words why we feel at home somewhere. Feeling at home is a feeling, an experience that we become especially aware of when we leave the place that is connected to this feeling or when this place changes (Graaf van der & Duyvendak, 2009, p. 13).

In various studies and literature on feeling at home (like 'Thuis voelen in de buurt', 'Thuisvoelen', 'Verzorgingsthuis' and 'De Hofmakerij van toen & nu' for example), various aspects are repeatedly mentioned that make people feel at home. In order to make the concept of feeling at home more concrete, regularly recurring aspects that contribute to a feeling at home are collected and classified. Based on these aspects, I investigate what contributes to feeling at home for the different single-person households.

This research report distinguishes the following four aspects of a feeling of home, each with two subgroups:

Comfort	Safety
User-friendliness	Freedom
Basic needs	Protection

Social interaction	Identity
Hospitality	Recognition
Encounter	Ownership

Comfort: user-friendliness and basic needs
Living means feeling comfortable. To feel comfortable, basic needs such as a house with its own bed and food must of course be met. To experience a feeling of home, it is important that the resident feels comfortable in his home (Duyvendak, 2009, p.258).

Everyone experiences living comfort differently. What makes a home pleasant or pleasant to stay? The user-friendliness of the living space and immediate living environment also plays a role in feeling at home. It may concern visible elements such as modern sanitary facilities, a large garden or a house without barriers. What people's needs are and what someone experiences as comfortable is often personal. For example, living on the ground floor can be pleasant for the elderly, while young people often attach less value to this. Living comfort can also concern non-visible characteristics of a home, in the form of a feeling. You can think of temperature, fresh air, humidity, smell, light, noise and draft. In short, a healthy living environment (Dutch, 2020).
Duijvendak (2009, p. 258) introduces the concepts of

familiarity, haven and heaven that can be distinguished by feeling at home:
- Haven: to feel at home, people need a safe, comfortable and predictable place - "a haven in a heartless world" - where people can feel at ease.
- Heaven: heaven refers to the situation where you can be "yourself".
- Familiarity: to feel at home you must feel familiar.

Safety: protection and freedom
To experience a feeling of home, it is important that the resident feels safe in his or her home. This sense of security determines the degree of privacy the resident has. Safety is about the protection of the resident, but at the same time also about the freedom of the resident (Verhees, 2014, p. 37). Feeling safe is in line with the current trend towards individualization. Individualization means that people are increasingly taking the freedom to determine their own path and to enjoy life indefinitely. Freedom, independence and shaping your life are normal concepts nowadays. Having a home where you feel safe and secure and from which you can shape your life contributes to feeling at home (Populier, 2017, p. 6).

Social interaction: hospitality and meeting
The individualization of society may have continued to increase, but this does not mean that people no longer want to meet each other. It does not mean that everyone prefers to live on their own and withdrawn to their perfect home. In order to experience a feeling of home, it is important that the resident can engage in social interactions. This concerns the possibility to receive guests at home, but also to meet people in their homes and in the neighbourhood.
Blokland (2008, p. 3) states that meeting is one of the primary

necessities of life for humans. People do not like to live in an environment where they have no idea who the neighbours are. There is a need to meet. Meeting is essential to feel at home.

Identity: recognition and ownership
Partly as a result of individualization, residential consumers increasingly want to distinguish themselves by the products they buy, but also by the place or the way in which they live. Living becomes an expression of their lifestyles. Many people find it important to be able to distinguish themselves in the way or through the place where they live. The home and living environment are increasingly linked to identity. That is why households are increasingly opting for a particular home, in a particular living environment, as an expression of their lifestyle. When it comes to stacked housing, for many people, for example, uniform housing complexes, in which every apartment looks the same, do not capture the imagination. People often want to be able to designate their home. Residents can distinguish themselves more by means of variation in design, use of colour and materials of the facade. By combining different housing typologies in a building, residents have access to a unique home within a complex, and there is much more choice to find a home that exactly matches their own individual housing requirements. In addition is adaptability of floor plans also highly desirable to strengthen your own identity. In order to feel at home, it is important that a user can process his own identity in the house and can customize their own home (Jonker, 2016, p. 70). This also works well for elderly who like to decorate their home with stuff they gathered over the years. Stuff equals memories and gives their home it's own identity.

Single-person households
Besides feeling at home, this research report focuses on single-person households. People who live alone are all in a different phase of life, all with different wishes and needs, different lifestyles and different living requirements. This heterogeneous group can be divided into five subgroups according to Buijs (2018, p. 39):
- Widowed: single people who were previously part of a couple and whose partner has died.
- Divorced: single people who were previously part of a couple and whose ex-partner has not died.
- Empty nests: single people who were single-parent households, where the (last) child left the household.
- New households: single people who were not yet a reference person and not a partner in other households. This mainly concerns young adults living at home who have started living independently including those leaving institutions.
- Happy singles: single people who never form a couple and never get children.

In the research report these group of singles are categorized into three groups by age: young professionals up to 35 years old, a middle group, ages thirty five till sixty five and elderly from sixty five and over. The subgroups from Buijs (2018) are entwined in these age categories.

The challenge as an architect is to create a home for every future resident, to create a design in which residents with different wishes, requirements and ideals will feel at home. How can you create a space that offers a worthy place to all different type of users?

Single-person households (own illustration)

Inclusivity and life-course proof
This research also includes the theme inclusivity and life-course proof housing for different age groups within the single-person households. Lansbergen (2019, p.14) indicated in her research that many solo dwellers move into a house temporarily. As a result, there is a danger that someone will only become a bypasser without bonding with the neighbourhood, which increases the chance of loneliness. Inclusivity and life-course proof housing gives solo dwellers the possibility of not having to move.

Inclusivity and life-course proof housings is also part of the development from the welfare state to a participatory society or inclusive society, from the Rijksoverheid. The Rijksoverheid (2020, p. 6) explains that an inclusive society is a society in which people can fully enjoy themselves participating. Participation can be divided into labour participation,

societal participation and social participation. Under societal participation the Rijksoverheid means voluntary work, informal care, attending education and daytime activities. By social participation the Rijksoverheid means participation in the social interaction through informal social contacts (with acquaintances, neighbours, friends and family) and through organized social participation (in sports, culture, associations, interest groups and religious organizations).

Part of the inclusive society is mixed living. The Rijksoverheid (2020, p. 16) proposes housing projects where different groups of people deliberately live together, maintain contact and also undertake joint activities. Under the heading of "magic mix", housing associations aim to accommodate vulnerable target groups such as the elderly between 'regular' tenants or students. Housing projects in the inclusive society often emphasize solidarity, interaction between the groups and self-management on a voluntary basis (Maaskant, 2018, p. 12).

The focus is on the group of single people living in a single-person household. Little can be found about a housing offer aimed at this group of single people as a whole. The housing supply is often aimed at only the starter or only the senior and is not aimed at the total group, from young to old. How nice would it be to move into a house that is flexible enough, that it is possible to live in your home for a longer period of time. A home that is life-course proof and can move with you if your life starts to look different because you get older, suddenly have to work at home, you have a (temporary) relationship or because your aging child stays with you and has different needs.

This research focuses on the question of what is needed to design a future-proof residential complex with homes of relatively small areas where single people of all ages and backgrounds will feel at home. This concerns affordable, high-quality homes that are future-proof, so that they are sufficiently adaptable to any future housing needs.

To learn about how to design for the future residents within the single-person households in relation to how they want to live and the theme feeling at home, an analysis of four residential projects in the form of an plan analysis will be conducted. At one of those projects and Knarrenhof (architectural project for independent elderly) ethographic drawings and interviews will be conducted as well.

Research question(s)

"How to design a future-proof residential complex where single people of all ages and backgrounds will feel at home?"

In order to provide structure, I divide this overarching question into the following sub-questions:

1. What is meant by a single-person household and which subgroups can be distinguished?
2. Single is increasingly becoming the norm, why is that and how do those singles live?
3. Why does the housing market not respond to the growing needs of solo dwellers?
4. What entails a feeling at home for different single-person households?
5. How will building with inclusive purpose help single-person households with different incomes and ages to feel at home?
6. How can the "feeling at home" be translated into design?

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Approach

The first part of the research focuses on literature studies into single-person households and the housing market regarding the single-person households. First the types of single-person households are distinguished and why there is a shift in the household compositions. Afterwards, the focus is on the current housing market and what influences the housing market has on the single-person households.

The second part of the research focuses on feeling at home and what it means to feel at home for the different single-person household. I'll explain how an architect can contribute to feeling at home for the future residents regarding the topics identity, safety, social interaction and comfort. To show the view of different single-person households on feeling at home, I include interviews with residents from my case studies. I combine feeling at home with the housing requirements of single-person households.

The third and final part is about what building inclusive is and how it can be achieved. Why is it important to build with inclusive purpose? How will this help single-person households with different incomes and ages? Could building with inclusive purpose help designing a building complex for different single-person households? In this part I also compare five case studies for single-person households on the topics identity, safety, comfort and social interaction. I compare the housing wishes and feeling at home from the different single-person households and the interviews. The main goal is to find the similarities and cherish the differences between wishes, feeling at home and design interventions to create a future-proof residential complex with homes of relatively small areas where single people of all ages and backgrounds will feel at home.
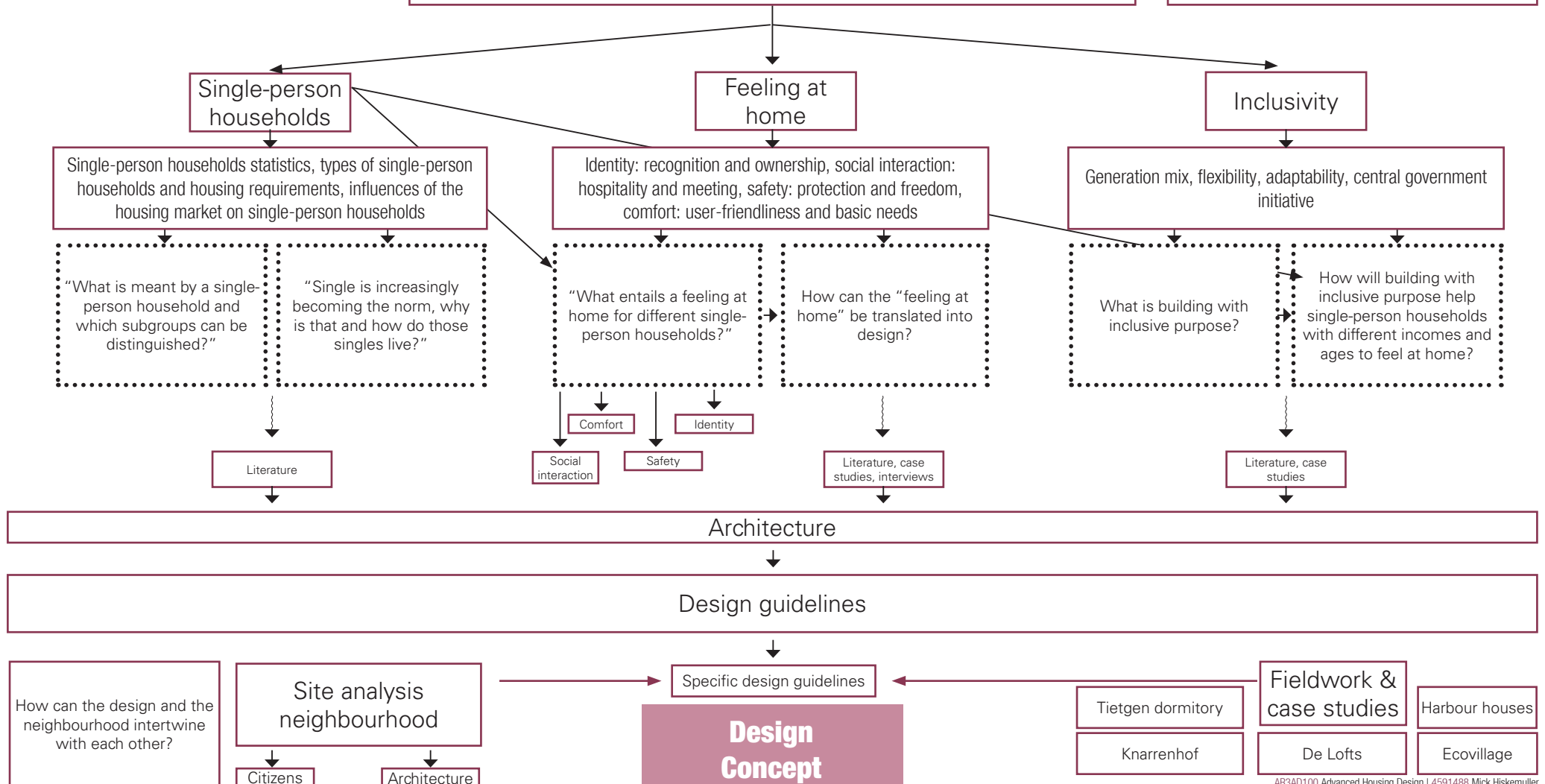
Feeling at home

In 1971, a household consisted of 3.2 persons on average; at the beginning of 2018 this had dropped to 2.2 (Lansbergen, 2018, p. 9). The prognosis is that the household dilution will continue and more and more people will live alone (van Duin, te Riele & Stoeldraijer, 2019, p. 4)

"How to design a future-proof residential complex where single people of all ages and backgrounds will feel at home?"

"Find the similarities, cherish the differences"

Single-person households

Single-person households statistics, types of single-person households and housing requirements, influences of the housing market on single-person households

"What is meant by a single-person household and which subgroups can be distinguished?"

"Single is increasingly becoming the norm, why is that and how do those singles live?"

Literature

Feeling at home

Identity: recognition and ownership, social interaction: hospitality and meeting, safety: protection and freedom, comfort: user-friendliness and basic needs

"What entails a feeling at home for different single-person households?"

How can the "feeling at home" be translated into design?

Comfort

Identity

Social interaction

Safety

Literature, case studies, interviews

Inclusivity

Generation mix, flexibility, adaptability, central government initiative

What is building with inclusive purpose?

How will building with inclusive purpose help single-person households with different incomes and ages to feel at home?

Literature, case studies

Architecture

Design guidelines

How can the design and the neighbourhood intertwine with each other?

Site analysis neighbourhood

Citizens

Architecture

Specific design guidelines

Design Concept

Fieldwork & case studies

Tietgen dormitory

Knarrenhof

De Lofts

Harbour houses

Ecovillage

AR3AD100 Advanced Housing Design I 4591488 Mick Hiskemuller

Research scheme (own illustration)

Introduction to the case studies
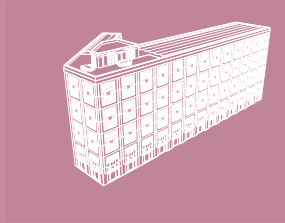
De Lofts, Amsterdam: **young professionals**
Interviews and plan analysis
Architect: Inbo
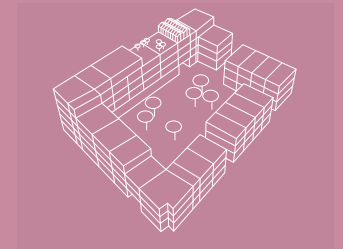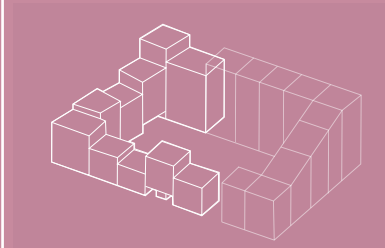Construction 2017
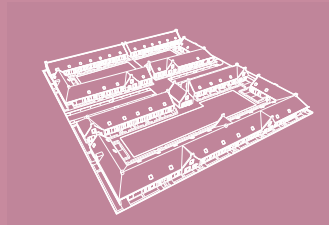Amount of dwellings: 212

Knarrenhof, Zwolle: **independent elderly**
Interviews
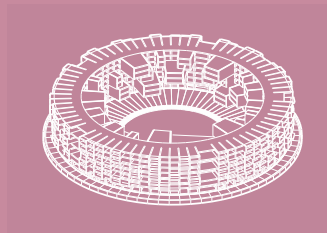Architect: Inbo
Construction: 2017
Amount of dwellings: 48

Tietgen dormitory, Copenhagen: **students**
Plan analysis
Architect: Lundgaard & Tranberg
Construction: 2005
Amount of dwellings: 360

Harbour houses, Aarhus: **students and independent elderly**
Plan analysis
Architect: Adept
Construction 2015
Amount of dwellings: 50

Ecovillage, Stigsborg: **single-person households**
Plan analysis
Architect: C.F. Møller
Construction: 2021
Amount of dwellings: 87

Case studies

De lofts in Amsterdam is a living concept aimed at young professionals. Small, but smartly arranged studios and two-room homes, combined with special facilities on the ground floor and a shared roof terrace. I'll analyze this project on the theme's from feeling at home. I'll also conduct interviews on location and interview the architect. In combination with the literature research this will give a good example of how the young professionals want to live.

Knarrenhof in Zwolle is a living concept aimed at independent elderly. Changes in health care, a retreating government and the separation of housing and care are an incentive for many people to arrange something themselves for their old age. People want to keep control of their lives and look for a place to live pleasantly and safely even in old age, with accessible care just around the corner. I'll conduct interviews on location and interview the architect, which will give a good example of how the independent elderly want to live.

Ecovillage is located in Aalborg's new Stigsborg suburb, which was created for EcoVillage, a specialist in sustainable housing communities in Denmark. Ecovillage is aimad at multiple types of households including single-person households. The buildings vary in height and include a multi-storey building and townhouses. Together they form a block around an open courtyard. The courtyard is the heart of the community, helping to strengthen its social aspect. On the ground floor are communal areas which include guest rooms, a workshop, fitness room, shared office space, plus a kitchen and dining area for communal dining. The active ground floor helps create life for the new urban area. I'll work on a plan analysis of this

project. How is the courtyard situated and how does it relate to the circulation space? What communal spaces and what housing typologies for single-person households are apparent?

Harbour Houses is a single-person household residential complex overlooking the bay of Aarhus, which breaks with both the port's massive scale and its iconic building tendencies. The simple design is characterized by its roof greenhouses and varied building heights. The building adapts to its complex context reflecting both a large building scale and a smaller and more intimate maritime atmosphere. The housing is meant for middle and high income single-person households. It's interesting to see how the courtyard relates to the harbour and what type of single-person household types are apparent. Sightlines are important in this projects to keep a strong relation to the harbour.

The Tietgen dormitory has a dynamic, sculptural expression that is created by the contrast of the building's overall form with the honest expression of the individual programmatic elements. The principle inspiration for the project is the meeting of the collective and the individual, a characteristic inherent to the dormitory building type. It will be interesting to see the relation to the courtyard, circulation space and the student dwelling types.

Relevance

Most design assignments for architects about single-person households are about a particular group, like students, starters or elderly. To create inclusiveness within the single-person households, it is important to keep in mind that everyone is different. There is not a 'consumer'. From the architectural perspective, the focus is on the wishes and housing requirements of different groups within the single-person household segment, creating a building complex. As the group of singles grows, there is a need for forms of housing that suit their living situation, budget and housing requirements. In the light of the inclusive society, housing concepts in which residents can mean something for each other are in the spotlight. I want to design a complex where young and old can help and meet each other, exchange knowledge or even something simple as taking the dog for a walk or having social control over each other.

In support of this goal, worldwide attention has been increasingly focused on the added value of bringing generations together and mutual solidarity. The European Union put the subject on the map with the launch of 'the European year of active aging and intergenerational solidarity' in 2012 (European Parliament, 2011), and in the Netherlands, too, attention is being paid to initiatives that connect the generations (Aedes-Actiz, 2016). A residential complex that is suitable for young and old, with a focus on mutual interaction and participation, can offer an helpful solution for social and housing issues to counter loneliness and the need to move. For example, younger solo's can help elderly with moving stuff around their home, while elderly can help with watering the plants, when the younger solo's are on holiday.

Methodology

To assure the validity and reliability of the data, I use triangulation. "Triangulation is a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings. Credibility refers to trustworthiness and how believable a study is; validity is concerned with the extent to which a study accurately reflects or evaluates the concept or ideas being investigated. Triangulation, by combining theories, methods or observers in a research study, can help ensure that fundamental biases arising from the use of a single method or a single observer are overcome (Noble & Heale, 2019, p. 1)." I'll explain how I used triangulation in my literature research, fieldwork and case studies.

Literature research
The literature research is the base of my research report and is the most important source of information in my research. The literature research is apparent in the whole research rapport. To answer the research question "How to design a future-proof residential complex where single people of all ages and backgrounds will feel at home?" I did an elaborate literature research with multiple scientific sources. Six subquestions are drawn up with each it's own theme. I applied triangulation in each part of the research by using multiple scientific sources to establish validity and reliability. The use of multiple sources to approach these topics from different perspectives gives me a broader and more elaborate research.

Fieldwork
The main goal of the research is how single-person households live and want to live and how they can feel at home. This relates to the observation of human action which can be

described as praxeology. To design truly to the wishes of the future users, an in depth research is needed, which also involves fieldwork. The fieldwork is apparent in the second part of the research in the form of interviews and ethnographic drawings. This is valuable information for being able to design more accurately to the wishes and needs of the single-person households and can confirm or debunk the literature research, hence it is the second most important source of information for my research rapport.

During the research, I visited Knarrenhof in Zwolle and Lofts in Amsterdam. The residents from Knarrenhof are single-person households consisting of independent elderly. The residents from the Lofts in Amsterdam are single-person households consisting of young professionals. On both locations I held interviews with residents about their apartment, circulation space, communal spaces, public spaces/plinth and their feeling of home. These type of questions belong to phenomenology. How do they experience and see things from their perspective?

Besides the interviews, I also made drawings of noticeable things on location, like their transition zones, to capture how they transferred their identity into their own spaces. By the use of praxeology and semiology, I looked at how the residents decorated their apartment or shaped their private gardens. I wanted to see how the residents used the space around their homes. I transfered this information into ethnographic graphics.

I did interviews with the architect from the locations to compare the three different types of observations/collected data. I did these interviews to see if their original ideas for the residents were realized.

During the research, I interviewed three students, who are living alone, so most future residents are represented in the eventual design for Merwehaven.

To finalize the fieldwork triangulation, all interviews and observations are compared to see which final guidelines could be drawn up fort the eventual design for Merwehaven.

Case studies
I used the case studies in the final part of the research. The case studies are used to look at existing housing projects for single-person households. I used the literature research and fieldwork to see if the aspects of feeling at home and housing requirements of different single-person households are apparent in the case studies. I used this information to look at how the wishes were translated into an architectural design. This information is the third most important source of information for my research rapport.

For every case study, the morphology is important. What is the organization and what makes it characteristic. By looking at the morphology of the build structures the layout of the building plot can be seen. Architects most of the time look first at the building which is shown by the morphology. But equally important are the surroundings.

Another methodology used during the case study analysis is to capture the characteristics of the typologies. What type of dwellings are in the building? How are they used and what is the circulation?

Finally the methodology topology is used to see the dimensions of the spaces within the building.

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own interviews with young professionals:

Apartment

"The size of the apartment is just big enough, it should not be smaller."

"The cool thing is that I have a large windowsill, I usually use it as a bench when I read. It saves me a lot of space"

"The only think I don't like is that my bedroom is in my living room. I prefer it to be a separate room."

"I would like an extra room for work."

"I like that the kitchen is part of the living room."

"I got to choose my apartment layout, which was pretty nice"

Circulation space

"The corridor is a bit dark sometimes. I would prefer more light."

"A friend of mine lives next to the gallery, I would prefer that more. The corridor sometimes feels like entering a hotel."

"I like that the staircase has a connection to the library and cafe. I can always see if I know people, after a long day at work and join them."

Communal spaces

"It's not always busy, the roof terrace however is used quiet often when the weather is nice."

"I really like the communal spaces, especially since covid. I used to work in office or in my apartment, but now that I have to work from home, I like to sit in the library with some people I know in the building."

"The bar and library are great places to meet people, the first week I immediately knew some people from the building"

Public space/plinth

"Sometimes it gets busy, so I like looking outside my window, while I read. I like there to be some commotion."

"There are not really functions I use, but I know some people who do. I think it's primarily for people who aren't living here."

"There isn't much green around, that is the only thing I'm missing. The rest is fine, we live next to the metro station."

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