

# **REFLECTION**

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## 1. The relationship between research and design in the graduation project

The aim of the graduation studio is to find a proper balance between old and new when transforming the existing buildings and urban context. The post-war mass housings in the Netherlands were built to ease the urgent housing shortage. The modern principle of those days can be found in all aspects, varying from spatial design to urban planning of the housing estate. The aspects of the post-war housing were neglected for many years, but I would like to research and document the value of the housing legacy in relation to its appropriate use for the future.

My starting point of the design was to bridge the gap between two different perspectives of modern and contemporary times. The modern principle of Light, Air and Space was applied to construct large-scale mass housings throughout the country, but the passion for establishing the ideal society has been eclipsed by individualistic ideology of contemporary world. Intervam housing in Overvecht area is a typical example that shows the conflict between private and public realm. For example, the ground floor was designed to provide basic facilities to the neighborhood and the spacious outdoor spaces are placed next to the dwellings for the residents to enjoy diverse activities. However, the large scale post-war building production regarded the city as a functional environment that does not seem to correspond well with today's situation. I believe the idea from the post-war period was not fully implemented and should be reinterpreted from today's viewpoint. I wanted to activate the Intervam housing as a mediator to intensify the relationship with surrounding environment, local community and also the passing of time.



Figure 1. View of the apartments in Taagdreef (Utrecht Archive)

A long strip of medium-rise Intervam flat implies the systematic building system of post-war period. Low-, medium-, and high-rise building show clear distinction of the skyline in Overvecht area

## **2. The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object).**

Heritage & Architecture studio is adopting a holistic approach that contains the field of cultural value, building technology and architectural design. Those aspects has been incorporated in the whole design process. The cultural value of Intervam housing and its location has motivated the design approach to add a new dimension to the existing condition. The aspect of building technology encouraged to realize the design idea according to the ascribed building system. During the first quarter, I focused on the analysis of Intervam building system and the history of urban construction in Overvecht. The Intervam housing design was strongly influenced by modern principle and industrialized construction method in post-war period. At the beginning of the design process, I was thinking about the quality of living in post-war housing estate. The spacious green outdoor space that located in-between the housing blocks and the flexible use of ground floor are the benefits that could enhance the quality of living in Overvecht. I was interested in the boundary between private living area and public outdoor space and the possibility to introduce public facilities in residential building. Those two themes will be the main subject of my design approach.

## **3. The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework.**

The cultural value of the Intervam housing was evaluated after the profound observation and analysis of the site and building system. Each group of students were responsible to make a booklet that includes the overall information and evaluation of chosen site and building system. The Value Assessment of the Intervam housing was developed by the Matrix system based on the idea of Brand and Riegl. The significance of each value is decided in this stage by using different color codes. By using the Cultural Value Matrix, I was able to understand the inherent value of the building that will be a driving force of my design process. The historical value of "Wijkgedachte" is deeply rooted in the whole area of Overvecht, which should be reinterpreted from the new angle. The rational way of thinking in those days determined the proper size of space, sufficient amount of daylight and efficient circulation that could fulfill the needs for contemporary housings as well. Those values will foster the sustainbal and economic use of Intervam housing. After the group work of analyzing the building system and location, our studio began to start individual design approach. The visiting professor Anne Lacaton guide us to proceed the design in our own viewpoint. The transformational approach of Lacaton & Vassal inspired me to test it on a post-war building system.

The next step of the design process was to depict the fragments of intervention by hand sketch. It helped me to think about the use of materials and spatial impression of interior and exterior design. I also explored the technolgical details for the new intervention. I was able to think about the reasonable way of adding new quality to the existing building. Working with exisiting buiding, in most cases, was about handling dilemmas from different perspectives. Design, Building Technology and Cultural Value were all related to each other when amplifying the idea further. In this way of design approach, I tried to simplify my idea from the bigger picture that embrace the whole design process.

#### 4. The relationship between the project and the wider social context.

The post-war mass housings in Netherlands are facing the similar problems nowadays. The discrepancy between the outdated housing blocks and the current requirements of living is also evident in Intervam housing estate. The modern principle of openness and transparency allowed to offer spacious outdoor environment, but the those spaces are remained empty and useless over time. The urban theory “Wijkgedachte” was used for the construction of modern cities after the Second World War, but the urban construction was mostly controlled by the government which mainly focused on the functional environment not the people who would actually live in. The idea was misused as an instrument for social segregation because of its divisive nature of the neighborhood unit.

The ambition of “Wijkgedachte” is explained in the brochure *Wij en de Wijkgedachte* (Us and the neighbourhood unit). The book emphasized the importance of the neighborhood that allows to feel safe and comfortable for the inhabitants and to take care of their own affairs. The idea was to build self-sufficient neighborhood where people from different background would harmonize together. I believe the idea is still relevant and worth to preserve in today’s society. The limited size of the neighborhood is suitable to make sustainable neighborhood as well as a close-knit community. The value of “Wijkgedachte” is reintroduced to establish sustainable community which will be inherited to the future generation.

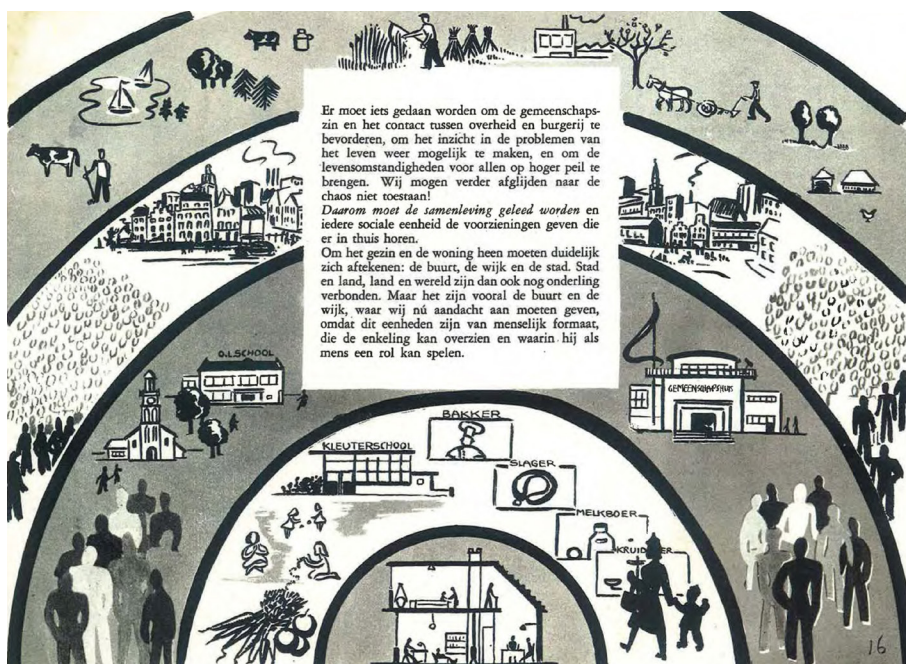


Figure 2. Scheme of the concept of the neighbourhood unit ( W.F. Geyl, *Wij En de Wijkgedachte*, 1948)