

Reflection.

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Within my graduation project I studied how to design the shared home. The project is situated in the Binckhorst, The Hague. It is a transformation project in which industrial halls dating from the 1950s are turned into a collaborative housing complex.

The research phase // During the research I focussed on collaborative housing. The reason behind my study is the focus on privacy in housing design. For collaborative housing design there is a need for a collective perspective on the sense of home. Therefore, the research question of this study is: *how does sharing space influence the sense of home for residents in collaborative housing in the Netherlands?* The hypothesis is that sharing space has a positive effect on the sense of home for residents in collaborative housing projects.

By reading existing literature on collaborative housing design and the concept of home I was able to formulate the four concepts of home as most influential for the home feeling: privacy, mental ownership, social connection and safety. Within the existing literature can be noticed that there are already recurring design principles that mostly focus on creating more social connection. With the four concepts of home I was able to study a broader perspective of the sense of a shared home in collaborative housing case studies.

During visits of four collaborative housing projects, I got a deeper understanding of the resident experience of the shared home. The residents confirmed my findings from the literature but also exposed the complexity of social relations within the collective. The standard nuclear family home is designed for a family configuration within the borders of the home. There is a hierarchy between parents and children, and more clear expectations of contributing. In the collaborative housing projects I visited the residents showed me the difference in relations between a family and a collective. On the one hand they explained a lot about the importance of the relations they had with other residents for their feeling of home. But on the other hand explained that there was also struggle with other residents, mostly linked to their level of contribution and communication. Within these projects there is no clear hierarchy and expectations of contributing. This is what makes these projects complicated but also so important to exist. These visits showed me the complexity of inviting others outside of the family into your home. Although, the participants stated it takes a lot of contribution and communication they also all stated they would not want to live anywhere else because it gave them the sense of home they were looking for with sharing as part of their daily life.

My tutor, Darinka Czischke, helped me a lot with defining what it exactly was I wanted to research and wanted as an outcome of the research. The concept of home is a concept which is hard to question others about. On top of this, I wanted to know how their sense of home was spatially influenced by the collaborative housing project. Through writing, reading and discussing an operationalization was formed of the concept of home making it measurable for me during the research. The operationalization made it possible to study the sense of home but also made it clear that there was a limit of what I was able to research. During this my design tutor, Willemijn Wilms Floet guided me to start visiting projects and conduct more intuitive research to get a greater sense of the subject.

From the beginning, I hoped the research would result in clear design principles on how to create the shared sense of home. However, it resulted more in a description of many little things that are influential. They are however less influential than the underlying interconnection between private, collective and public. It is most important whether the project is designed for the level of sharing the resident is looking for. Only then, the spatial elements can play a role in creating their sense of home. The spatial features that resulted from my research describe a part of the story but there is a big part which is influenced by the complex social relations within the collective.

The design phase // During the design phase I mostly used sketching, analysing the existing context, model making and digital modelling as methods to make design choices. During the design process there were some crucial design choices which had to be overcome before I could go further in designing. My tutors supported me with overcoming these complications and helping me find the next focus point of my design.

In the beginning I was mostly focussing on building technology to find a way to create housing within the existing structure whilst also preserving most of the building. Eventually, I found an open building technique of creating a secondary construction in between the existing structure to ensure that the beautiful concrete construction would not be covert. To make this secondary construction I first had to make space within the existing and had to accept that a big part of the building would have to be demolished to make it liveable. I wanted to explore any option to work around the existing. However, not all building parts are as valuable, therefore it took a while to be able to make resolute decisions.

Besides this, I was mostly focussed on trying to find the right configuration of individual dwellings and collective spaces to facilitate all levels of sharing. However, it took me a long time to figure out that there is no one right way to design for all levels of sharing. This was also what limited me most during the design process before the first p4. After that, I experimented with multiple design scenarios in which different levels of sharing are facilitated. Now, I have selected four scenarios for this project that describe diverse levels of sharing but it could have been even more.

After this, it became clear to make a design strategy instead of trying to make one (or four) designs. Eventually, I have created a design strategy consisting of six steps that can be used as a guide to design a collaborative housing project together with residents. The steps describe the 1:400 scale of the project with the scenarios but it goes into 1:5 details explaining how the residents can use the secondary construction to create their own home within the individual space. This gives much freedom to the residents, but also creates a way to communicate their wishes to the designer and other residents. This is important because everyone has different needs to create a sense of home and all residents have different expectations of sharing within the home.

Lastly, the level of freedom that I wanted to give to the residents was an important theme throughout the design process. Because collaborative housing has many projects that derive from the squatting community, it was clear from the beginning I wanted to give them much freedom of choice within the project. However, the assignment revolves around making design choices. I noticed a constant tension between on the one hand creating something that was too restrictive and on the other hand having to make a choice as a designer. Eventually, in the project there are mostly elements of grip for residents to make the freedom in the project manageable.

The outcome // The methodology which I used during this study gives insight in how to discuss and spatially analyze the effect of the design on the home feeling for residents in collaborative housing. During the phase in between P4 and P5 I would like to test my design strategy. By designing with the people around me that are interested in shared housing I can design a hypothetical design for a collaborative housing project in the Binckhorst. By carrying out the design strategy, it will give me the opportunity to evaluate the proposal I have come up with. I am also eager to test whether the design strategy can be projected on other contexts and groups.

After my Master I want to go further in this field of work. There are many groups that are interested in introducing some sort of sharing within the home. Also the policy in the Netherlands is becoming more conducive towards shared housing and bottom up initiatives. In this next phase, I can use the knowledge that I acquired during my Bachelor and Master Track. Analytical thinking, communication skills and being able to translate ideas into a spatial design will be most important. For this cause, there is a need for a type of architect that is able to manage groups instead of creating top down designs. The collaborative and communicative skills I have gained throughout my studies will be useful for this.

Designing this shared home gave me a greater insight in general architectural topics as housing design, renovation and construction design. Besides this, it further develops my abilities to generate ideas, visualize them and detail them so they can work throughout the different scales in my design.