

P4 Reflection

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In this reflection, I will shortly discuss the results of the research and design that has been done during this graduation project. I will reflect on four different aspects, firstly on the relations between the research and the design, secondly on the work-live theme of this studio, thirdly on the methods that have been used and lastly on the position of this project in a wider social context.

The research that has been done next to the design project was about borders and boundaries in urban design and architecture. More specifically: walls on different scales that function as membranes as described by Richard Sennett in his text *The Open City*. The goal of the research was to bridge the gap between the theories of Sennett about an open city and concrete architectural means. The implementation of the conclusions drawn from this research wasn't always easy. Many factors influenced the design, especially the need for efficient and clear plans. That limited the latitude in creating exceptional 'liminal' spaces – as Sennett calls them. The results of the research are mostly visible in the urban composition and the design of the facades that have a certain thickness that mediates between the dwellings and the public spaces.

One of the main topics in this graduation studio has been the combination of working and living. The given location made it difficult to convincingly incorporate working spaces in the buildings because an expensive inner-city location asks for small and affordable housing. A solution to this has been searched in open plans that provide opportunities to inhabitants that might want to work at home. Next to this, one of the buildings has shared work spaces and a coffee bar at the ground floor. During the project, the combination of working and living lost a bit of its importance and plays quite a small role in the design.

Before the start of this project, my experience with housing was limited. On all aspects of the design I have tried to find clear and simple solutions. The process was cyclic iterative: on every revision of the design I tried to make the design simpler. Especially during the first months of the project, this approach sometimes led to insecurely asking the question whether not just anybody could design such simple buildings. Housing is mostly about designing structures. For an unexperienced designer, this means that many revisions are needed before a clear and logical structure is obtained.

This graduation project takes a position in the discussion on what the city of Amsterdam should be. Despite its successful appearance, Amsterdam has many problems to deal with. Rising housing prices and a large shortage of houses for young, talented people are threats to the diverse and open culture of the city. This graduation project tries to set an example of high density, large public spaces and plans that give people freedom to use their house as they wish. The design can be seen as a small patch in a big city. But to solve the problems of Amsterdam is more than a matter of good architecture. The municipality and the national government should create policies to solve the problems and first of all ask the question: what should a city be like?