The complexity of the dwelling
Graduation Plan
P2

Hinke Majoer
June 17th, 2016
Personal information:

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Studio:

Theme: Transitions from nature – man and society – man
Title of the project: The complexity of the dwelling
Studio: ExploreLab
Teachers: Robert Nottrot (design 1)
Pierre Jennen (BTO)
Saskia de Wit (research)
I. Research Proposal:

I.a Problem Statement

In the past decades, it seems as though the dwelling, in our part of the world, has come to a point where it is merely a result of an average programme of the dwelling, together with its accompanying spatial organisation.¹

The design of the average type of dwelling no longer starts by questioning the needs and wishes of the future inhabitant, but instead limits itself by using an abstract and average programme of functions with its accompanying square meters. The complexity of the dwelling is thereby forgotten or possibly even denied completely.

In order to design meaningful and complex architectural projects we should again start from the beginning of architecture; that architecture provides a shelter for man to protect himself from the uninhabitable natural environment.

“The ground being too hard for our bare feet we make ourselves sandals of softer material than the ground, but tougher than our feet. […] For the foot the surface of the sandal represents a little piece of soft ground, whereas the underside acts as a toughened foot in relation to the ground.

[…]

In the same way the inside of the house is for man a piece of inhabitable environment, while on the outside, where it confronts nature, it stands for a fortified human existence.”

– Dom Hans Van Der Laan, Architectonic space, I.I

Apart from the most basic need for shelter the dwelling provides – which is the mediation between man and nature – it can also connect man to society. Architecture has the capacity to provide spaces that mediate between different people, needs and uses; through the definition of sequential spaces.

“[…] het huis […] verbonden met het leven zelf. Het staat midden in de labiele maatschappelijke condities die het leven sturen. Het beïnvloedt zowel de plaats van elk individu binnen deze condities als de omgang ermee. Het speelt een rol in de wijze waarop mannen en vrouwen, ouders en kinderen, bekenden en vreemden zichzelf en hun samenwonen definiëren.”

– Loeckx, André, Marie-José Van Hee Architect, 2002, p. 13

This mediating capacity of architecture can only be achieved when the architect takes all the needs and uses very seriously. In order to do so, the right balance of defined spaces with their uses and ‘open’ undefined spaces have to be designed. These ‘open’ spaces, can be the interstitial spaces that link the defined spaces.

An example of an interstitial space is the garden; it operates between man and the landscape.² It has no defined use to it and has therefore the great capacity to take many roles.
I.b Project goal

Research Goal
The goal for this graduation project will be to redefine the needs of the dwelling and the dweller. In order to define these needs and wishes we have to start from the use in the dwelling. What are the activities that (should/can) take place inside the dwelling? And what architectural means are at hand to support these uses? This investigation will lead to the documentation of both the uses of the dwelling as well as the documentation of the spaces that are part of the dwelling. From this latter it is important to note that it includes both spaces with a use as well as interstitial spaces. This documentation will not be a guideline of how to design a dwelling, on the contrary it is an investigation that helps understand the uses and therefore possibly introduces completely different ways of looking at the spaces that together form the dwelling.

Design Goal
The research performed will significantly influence the design during this graduation project. The design will consist of a cluster of dwellings in the urban fabric. This programme in itself poses the question of how the different users of the building relate to one another, and on the scale of the city, how they relate as a group to society. It can be seen as a test case in which the dwellings complexity is celebrated rather than ignored.

I.c Research Question

The main question for this research is:
1. What types of interstitial spaces can be applied in order to link the different activities of the dweller both inside and outside the dwelling?

Sub questions to this are:
2. What are the activities that are part of 'dwelling'?
3. What are the characteristics of the dweller?
4. How are the different activities related to one another?

I.d Research Methodology

Book 1. Catalogue on the use of the dwelling:
The first and second question (What types of interstitial spaces can be applied in order to link the different activities of the dweller both inside and outside the dwelling?) will be answered through observations and case studies. This will result in a catalogue of the activities in the dwelling. The catalogue includes small drawings, descriptions and reference projects.
Book 2: Description of the dweller

The third question (What are the characteristics of the dweller?) will lead to a visual and textual essay on what the dweller characterises. The visual essay will include photographs of natural and architectural space to show the character of the dweller through these images. The textual essay will explain the human being as a dweller.

Book 3: Catalogue on interstitial spaces in case studies

The fourth question (4. How are the different activities related to one another?) results in a similar catalogue as the first, only now focused on the spaces without use, the in-between spaces. These are spaces such as garden, gallery, porch and staircase. This catalogue will include small images, drawings and descriptions of four case studies. These projects all work in very different ways to connect the different activities to each other. Looking at the project as a whole is key to understanding the complete relations. The case studies will cover:

1. Villa Müller | Adolf Loos | Prague, Czech Republic | 1928-1930
2. Maison Carré | Alvar Aalto | Frankrijk | 1959

Le Research Project Planning

The three books are made side by side. By the second official presentation (P2) there will be a draft of all three documents. For more precise information on the schedule; see the attached document. The final version will be finished by P3.
II. Design proposal

The project will be a cluster of dwellings in an urban fabric. With this programme and location the findings following from the research can be tested and possibly applied. The design has to take into account the different needs of the inhabitants as well as visitors and passers-by. It should celebrate the complexity of the dwelling and perform as an active link between man and nature as well as between man and society. The in-between or interstitial spaces will be of significant importance with this type of programme.

II.a Design Brief

The cluster of dwellings, houses two families; one with 5 inhabitants, the other with 4 family members. Next to that the buildings provides space for three couples with a guest or childrens room. The ‘apartments’ should be on one floor, therefore being able to function both as a dwelling for a young family or an older couple. The programme has so far been defined by the use of the different houses, in order to start from the needs and not square meters or some abstract measurement. It are the interstitial spaces that will be the point of attention.

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II.b Design Location

The aim is to design a project in and with the city. Therefore a location in the old city center of Delft has been selected. The L-shaped plot consist currently of a few buildings. On the one side the plot connects to the busy Hippolytusbuurt, on the other side on a typical back street, the Papenstraat. The plot gives a complex starting point where interstitial spaces will be key to create the different dwellings and somehow connect them with the urban fabric around them.
The location in Delft

The location seen from above
Current situation

1. 6 x opslagplaats   nieuwe plek te voorzien
2. Ingang naar appartementen   (nieuwe) plek te voorzien
3. 3 x opslagplaats   nieuwe plek te voorzien
4. 2 x garage   afbrak
5. Woning ( twee lagen)   afbraak
6. Woning ( drie lagen)   afbraak
7. Winkel en appartementen   afbraak
II.c Design Project Planning

For more precise information on the schedule; see the attached document.

III. Organization

III.a Mentors

1st Design mentor: Robert Nottrot
2nd BTO mentor: Pierre Jennen
Research mentor: Saskia de Wit

III.b Travel Plans

During the research of the case studies the aim is to also physically visit the buildings. In the case of the Schindler house there will not be the opportunity during this year of graduation. Villa Müller and Maison Carré will be visited after the P2, in the summer of 2016.

1 Loeckx, André, Marie-José Van Hee Architect, 2002, p. 26
2 Rob Aben en Saskia de Wit, De onsloten tuin, p.10. Voor meer informatie: “De architectuurfistoricus Christian Norberg Schulz noemt de fundamentele kwaliteit van landschap uitgebreidheid en de fundamentele kwaliteit van een door de mens gecreëerde plek omslotenheid. Norberg-Schulz 1980, 32 en 58”