

Looking back on the last months there are some points of improvement regarding my working method for the graduation studio. First of all I would like to point out the underestimated amount of research needed to design a fully integrated sustainable project. I fell short in following the research done by fellow students with which I had made an agreement to divide the necessary research. According to a made appointment, the research would have been split in a technical and social part. It was only after P2 when I found out that the research of the other student had gone into a different direction, resulting in absence of the social research. Nevertheless, it is only myself to blame for not keeping track every now and then on the other his work so I could find out earlier that my research would become bigger.

Apart from the massive amount of required research, the ambition to design a fully integrated sustainable project seemed to be more complex than expected in advance. In order to overcome this complexity — which limited my ability to design integrated — I came up with a tree based on my personal and the target group its interpretation of what sustainability should be (Fig. 1). The branches could be way more specific, but then again you would lose the overview. Next to that, the tree is meant as a guiding tool for the architect. Implemented are aspects to which the architect should pay attention while designing. Sadly, this tree is made very late in the design process which means that the design is not yet as sufficiently developed for this stadium as wished.

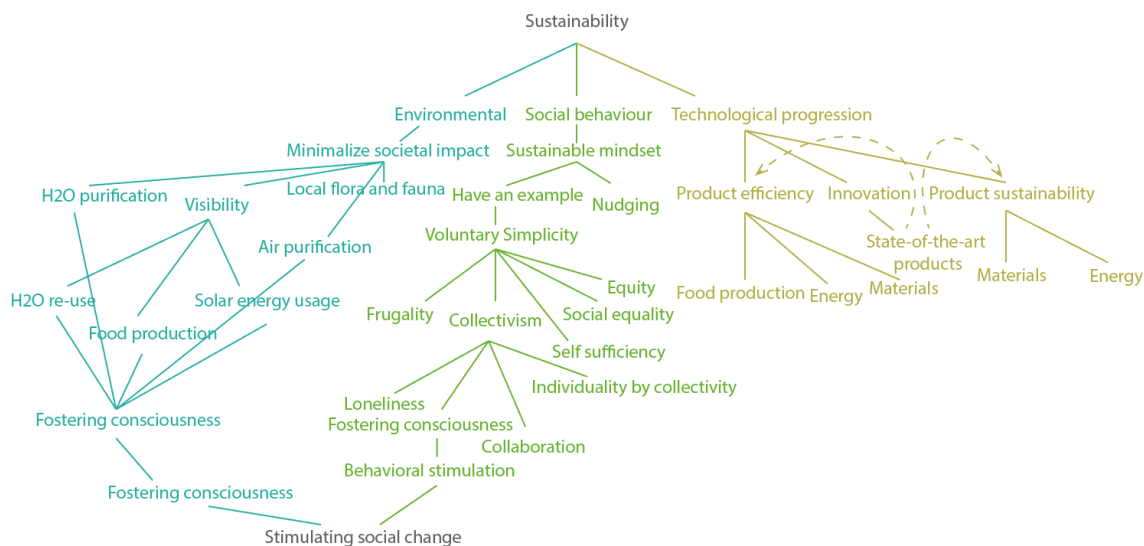


Figure 1: Aspects to which the architect should pay attention during desinging an integrated sustainable complex

Another aspect which delayed the graduation schedule is the lack of sociological knowledge in order to design for a community. Far more sociological theory is necessary when designing for an individual living collectively rather than designing for a collection of individuals. Sadly, we have not been educated in this topic during the architecture schooling. I believe that it should and will play a big role in our future career and that designing therefore as well should be approached scientifically rather than solely being a gut feeling. For this reason I find it hard to simply design on a gut feeling and have no assurance of its functioning. Despite the immense content of this discipline, I tried to comprehend some bits of it while not necessarily being of any use for the design.

On the other hand, I do believe that the relationship between the done research and the wider social context is very relevant. There is a clear transition taking place from a mainly economical driven society towards a sustainable conscience society. We are changing from an egocentric point of view towards a collective one in which we look more and care more for our surroundings, whether they are environmental, social, or materialistic. As architects we have the privilege to design ones living spaces and therefore nudge people in a desired direction. I, as well as the researched target group, believe

that a complex in which the community plays a central role in ones live results in a society in which people will start to better understand each others views, limits, and personal issues. I believe that by doing so, people will care and respect more and that they are able to accept more from each other, literally and figuratively. That materials can be shared in order to reduce our ecological footprint and that living necessities (such as eating) could be done communal if wished in order to reduce our daily obligations and thereby enlarge our much cherished and needed spare time.

When looking at the theme of the graduation studio, densification, the target group seems to adress this topic very well. Densification is more than densifying the living environment. From an environmental point of view, densification results in less space for inhabitants and more space for the environment, less distance between living and work, and therefore less pollution. From a materialistic point of view, densification could result in the need of less space and thus less materials. Less trafic and therefore less vehicles. But perhaps most interesting, densification results in less private space and in more contact between inhabitants. Just as it is the case for creating a community, it is important to adress the conflict of public and private in order design a fully integrated sustainable and dense project. This is something for which I needed to spend a lot of time in designing in order to find out that most of the designflaws where part of the public-private matter. A clear distinction is necessary between the different scales of public and private. When one enters a space, it should be clear to which domain it belongs. At the same time, the transition between the different scales of public and private should be subtle and happen naturally, without entering ones private space. On the other hand, we have to acknowledge that what seems private or public to one, is not by definition private respectively public for others. This different perception of public and private is the most strong between the inhabitant and the visitor. In order to have a design guide for this matter, I made a scheme (Fig. 2) which adressess the different perceptions. This seemed and seems to be a very usefull tool in order to deal with the densification and communal topic.

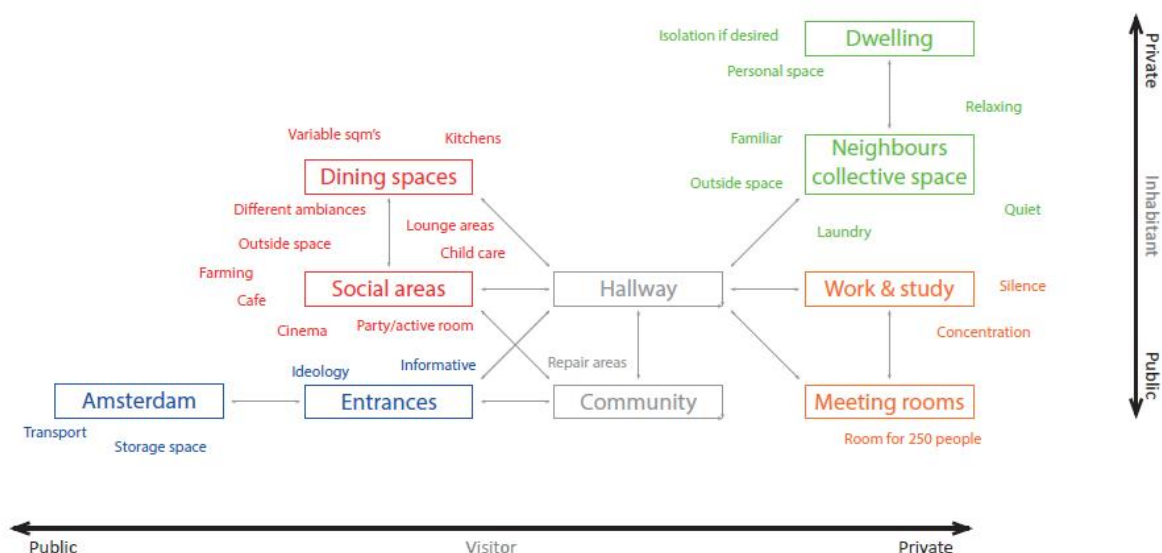


Figure 2: Different perceptions of private and public domains

To conclude, designing a fully integrated sustainable project, has proven to be far more complex than I expected in the beginning. I believe that the two design tools which originated through research by design are really usefull in designing a sustainable communal complex. The initial lack of the conscience about the three sustainability aspects (environmental, social behaviour, and technological progression) are for what I believe the reasons that I feel the need to invest more time in designing. I have spent more time in research than planned but believe that this has been necessary in order to finish the graduation project as wanted.

Since the last P4 period the decision making and progress on the project has improved significantly. Dividing the design tasks in ecological, social, and technological categories and continuously reflecting on those categories helped me a lot in order to make an integrated design. The overview which was often lost during the period before the previous P4 is mostly back since unfinished design parts in the project are narrowing down and reaching their final state.

The last few months I have worked mainly on implementing the research which was already done into the project. Writing a manifest (which can be found at the end of the reflection paper) gave me a thorough understanding of my own point of view on how I believe that the role of the architect should be (come). I surprised myself a bit with the extreme point of view that the manifest pronounces, but firmly believe that this should be the direction towards we should be heading. Whether this is achieved by my approach or a different one is irrelevant.

I am becoming more and more satisfied with the design that I am making. The means of the project (facilitate and expose/showcase a sustainable way of living) are implemented in the exterior and interior of the complex. Some parts — the infill of the tower, the main entrances of the complex, and the surrounding landscape— could be integrated better with the concept, but I decided to focus on the other parts due to the scale of the project. The upcoming few weeks will probably give me the opportunity to focus on those parts since the rest of the complex is almost done. Materialization, detailing, and technical features are as good as finished except from some minor parts.