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**Architecture & Heritage**  
**ReHousing**

**P4 REFLECTION**

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## **1. The relation between the research and design.**

The chair Heritage & Architecture deals with existing architecture and is focussed on finding balance between the old and the new. Within this realm, the studio had three focus points that were addressed throughout the design process; architecture, building technology and cultural value. This the graduation studio was specifically focussed on post-war mass housing. In groups we started off by doing research to several case projects that were built using different systemised construction systems. In my case it concerned the Airey-strip (1952) in Amsterdam that was built using the Nemavo-Airey system.

The research phase posed two qualities that in my opinion needed to be preserved. The first is the rational image of the building strips that is characteristic for post-war architecture. While it is part of an important part of Dutch housing history, large parts of housing stock from this period are being demolished. Therefore, I believe that the preservation of this rational character is needed. Secondly, the green and spacious character of the neighbourhood is unique for Amsterdam. The philosophy of the modernists is still visible and shows qualities that are still praised by the residents. These two findings set the constraints for the design.

## **2. The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the case study chosen by the student within this framework.**

While doing research to the project, I found that the project was initially built for young middle-class families. Most of those households left during the 80's, as they expanded and the apartments became too small. Ever since, the neighbourhood has changed a lot: from a popular neighbourhood among young families in the 50's to a decaying neighbourhood dominated by former guest workers. Nowadays, the contemporary middle-class is struggling again with finding good quality housing. With this in mind, it was my aim to explore the feasibility to transform the Airey-strip into good quality housing for a contemporary middle-class.

Within this framework, I explored different types of housing: from adding extensions, to designing single-family housing to 'DIY' apartments for middle-class households. It turned into a struggling path that is related to not doing in-depth research to the social context and the opportunities/limitations of the system itself. For instance: over the period of time I started to understand the real meaning of a middle-class household. This type of household in Amsterdam is different from other regions in the Netherlands. Therefore, the drastic changes could have been prevented in an much earlier stage.

Eventually, I applied the concept of 'collective private commissioning' or in which the residents are involved in the design process. It concerns an approach which was promoted by John Habraken in the 70's as counter-movement towards the monotonous post-war mass housing. Known as 'Support and Infill', Habraken described the methodology as means for new construction and not for transformation heritage. However, since recent years the approach is also applied for housing transformations including Wallisblok in Rotterdam (2007) and U.J. Klarenstraat in Amsterdam (2015). Both reference projects showed unique qualities and successfully '*rehoused*' a decaying housing block. For this graduation project I aimed to explore the feasibility of collective private commissioning in relation to the Nemavo-Airey system.

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

Within the chair of Heritage & Architecture the topics of architectural design, building technology and cultural value should constantly be valued. Since we are dealing with existing architecture, I was bound to the existing capabilities of the project. The Airey-strip turned out to be a delicate case as it is located within an area that was assigned as protected town-scape. It shows the historic relevance of this post-war fabric but also provided my starting point for the project: to preserve its rational appearance while transforming it into a contemporary manner.

The second part of the project looked into how the Airey-system can facilitate in contemporary middle-class apartments. As mentioned before, the perspective of the project has changed several times. Partly due limited research to the limitations/opportunities of the building system itself. Compared to other post-war systems, the Airey-system is limited in its transformation options. The Airey-system aimed to save as much construction material as possible - it was only composed by light-weight elements - while later post-war construction systems were often over-sized structures.

Probably in light of doing a graduation project, it was my unintended feeling to put as much personal expression in the project as possible. However, the three different angles of the chair let me realise in what way the Airey-strip is able to facilitate in creating middle-class housing. Reflecting upon this process, I am convinced the Airey-strip calls for a much smaller scale interventions.

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

The relevance of the project lies in facilitating new dwellings for the overheated housing market in Amsterdam. Mainly the middle-class is affected by this since good quality housing got too expensive. On the other hand, they also earn too much for social-housing and are therefore forced to leave the city. This is unfortunate since it involves teachers, policemen and nurses that are needed for a well functioning city. On the other hand, a middle-class target group consists of a wide range of households that differ in size and income. The DIY (klushuizen) approach offers a new perspective on how different configurations fit within the boundaries of the existing envelope of the Airey-strip. Therefore, I explored with different types of floorplans that differ in size and configuration. These can be used as guideline for future residents but also for other Airey transformations as its grid is always the same.

Moreover, since post-war architecture is part of a crucial period in Dutch housing history it deserves to be preserved. The value of post-war architecture is also reflected by the fact the Airey-strip is part of the 'Van Eastern Open-Air museum'. However, to extend its lifetime for the next generations to come its necessary to transform into attractive housing that meet the demands of contemporary middle-class society. I choose to analyse several key-characteristics that contribute to the rational identity the buildings are known for, and redesign them in a contemporary manner. By doing so, the identity of the buildings will be preserved, while its lifetime will be extended.