

# Reflection

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## Introduction

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*"In this reflection the student will try to explain the results of the research and design in the graduation phase (product, process, planning).*

*The aim of this reflection is to look back and see if the students approach worked, to understand the "how and why", and subsequently to learn from this. The choice of method (how) and argumentation (why), which preceded the research, was a part of the study plan – the reflection must contain an answer to the question of how and why the approach did or did not work, and to what extent.*

*Depending on the research and design, reflection on a number of the following aspects should be included.*

*Aspect 1: The relationship between research and design*

*Aspect 2: The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/ case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)*

*Aspect 3: The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework*

*Aspect 4: The relationship between the project and the wider social context"*

(Cited from the Graduation manual.)

## The relation between research and design

Prior to this graduation studio a couple of people close to me became sick with cancer, which pushed me towards the research I eventually did. A research on how Architecture could help the healing process of cancer patients. It only made sense to graduate at the Healthy environment studio of the Interior chair. However at the start of the graduation studio, it became clear the main tutor, Mechthild Stuhlmacher wanted us to focus on dementia patients and use the typology of the courtyard.

Since I already made up my mind about the subject of my research I didn't follow her preference and started a research on cancer patients, healing environments and courtyards. It turned out that this actually was a very fertile combination.

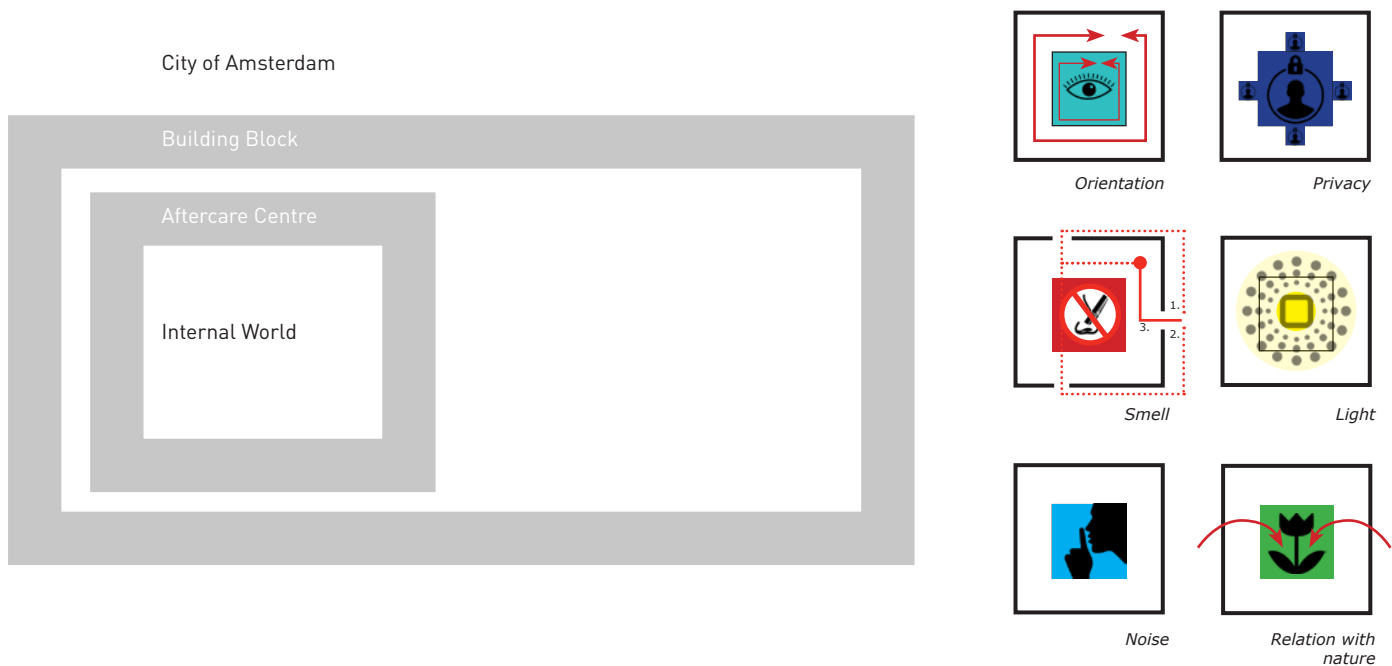
Irene Cieraad was my tutor in the process of my research. In the weeks before the P2 we had to divide our research in 3 reports. Report one was kind of a reading exercise to introduce us in the subject chosen. Report two was a research on the location chosen for the studio and the last report was the actual research considering the subject and the studio. These reports were made at the same time as the first design steps of the studio. It really helped the design process.

Where Irene helped us with the reports, Willemijn Wilms Floet helped us with the specific research on the Dutch typology: 't Hofje. This Courtyard typology turned out to be a great tool for all healthcare projects in our studio.

In my research on the influence of architecture on the healing process of cancer patients the courtyard typology offered a great starting point for the design. The research had shown me that there was already a big body of knowledge on the subject. There were projects that didn't work out as planned and there were projects that started very small but grew to a big international concept (Maggie Centres). Eventually the research resulted in a checklist/design tool, which helps in the process of designing an oncological aftercare centre. There are six points of interest. The orientation, privacy, light, smell, noise and the relation with the outside world.

Because I chose to start a design in Amsterdam, the Plantage, I had no choice but to redesign the concept of the existing aftercare facilities. Amsterdam is a very urban area and most of the existing care centres are located in very rural areas. The ones that are in an urban area didn't function correctly or were very small. This is where the courtyard typology helped a lot. By creating a double ring typology an excluded internal world appeared. This idea came after a research on two old courtyards, which are called 'Begijnhoven' in Dutch (Begijnhof Brugge/ Amsterdam). These courtyards create an internal world in a city by using this double ring structure.

As for the six points of interest when designing an oncological aftercare centre the courtyard typology offers a great starting point. It is a really clear structure, which makes it easy to read the plan of the centre. A central courtyard allows that there is an equal relation with this courtyard throughout the entire plan. The courtyard therefore becomes the focus point and offers light, privacy and a quiet place in an urban area.



The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

The theme of this graduation lab is the healthy environment, in other words, healthcare architecture. As said before the underlying focus of the studio is 't hofje and dementia. However I chose to design an aftercare centre for cancer patients.

The location chosen for this design is the Plantage area in Amsterdam. More specific, the plot of the St. Jacobs Elderly home and the green square next to it. The reason why I chose this location is because it offers a collaboration with the hospitals in and around Amsterdam, which already work together as it comes to cancer patients. I want to offer those people and their partners a nice and non-institutional centre to go to after their treatment in a hospital. It also allows people from far away to go to these hospitals and get their treatment. They could stay in the care centre during their stay in Amsterdam. In this way they know they will be taken care of in the best possible way and they could find a listening ear with the peers whom also stay in the care centre or just visit it freely.

The relation between the theme of the graduation studio and the chosen location and object is that one doesn't go without the other. In order for this location to be able to handle a care facility it needs a courtyard (double ring structure) to create an internal world. Also the care facility and thus the courtyard need a location, which allows healthcare. Next to the surrounding collaborating hospitals the Plantage has always been a place where there is a mix of healthcare and normal living. Therefore this is the ideal combination.

## The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

The interior studio at the TU Delft is well known for their hands-on approach. This means that we use a lot of physical models to get to our design. I personally really like using these model to a certain extend. However during this graduation studio I came to a point where using models did not go as fast as I would like it to go. Therefore I chose to stop making models and start using 3D models. This helped me a lot in making fast steps in designing.

There is another reason why I chose to differ from the methodical line of approach of the graduation. In the modern architecture world people use a lot of different techniques. Nowadays Revit seems to make its march into the world of BIM (Building Information Model). As a graduate student I want to use this in my design so that when I graduate I can show I'm able to use this program.

Looking back at the way the studio is set up; I think that it is a nice way of starting a design together with a research. Although not everything was executed perfectly and at some moments the approach only caused a lot of stress. I think with some good feedback of us as graduates these unnecessary stresses could be filtered out.

## The relationship between the project and the wider social context

As I stated in aspect one, the reason why I chose this specific research on cancer patients and architecture is because there are people close to me struggling with this illness and I felt the urge to do something about it. Since I am not a doctor I needed to find another way. I can't help them medically, but I can help them psychologically, by offering them the perfect place to heal.

During my research it became clear that there is a big increase of people fighting cancer. However the medical possibilities are getting closer to a treatment for cancer. This means we are looking at a change in the meaning of getting cancer. Nowadays it is a disease that will kill you. In the future it will be a chronic disease. This means people will have to learn to live with cancer. This is exactly what my project is meant for. A place where people who go through the same lengths to fight this disease. Besides the homely atmosphere the centre will offer all kinds of information to inform everybody who wants to learn about it. It offers psychological help for patients, patients and their partners and children etc. And, most importantly, it offers a safe place to heal. This could be through exercise, relaxation, gardening, cooking etc.

## Conclusion

Looking back on what I have learned during this graduation studio I can say I have learned that starting with doing research on the subject of a design makes the overall quality of the project better. It makes sense to do so, since it creates a tool that will help you sharpening your design to the things that really matter.

On a personal matter, it feels great to be able to do something for the people close to me. In the starting phase the personal interviews really let me listen to them and filter the things they found important. It also helped me understand what they were going through. This last part was really important to me since it scared me at first, but now I look passed the fear and only try to be helpfull.