P4_P5 REFLECTION

Title of the graduation project:
INDEPENDENT LIVING (HOUSING) FOR ELDERLY, WITH A NEED FOR CARE, IN A PROTECTED ENVIRONMENT
WITHIN
THE BINNENGASTHUIS AREA IN DOWNTOWN AMSTERDAM

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2. The relationship between research and design

To clarify the relationship between my research and my design, I will first describe my research and then the design including the relationship between the two.

My problem statement

- related to the site:

Currently most buildings on the Binnengasthuis area are in use by the UvA (University of Amsterdam).

The UvA aims to concentrate its activities in Amsterdam in four areas with a campus character.

1. DOWNTOWN CAMPUS BINNENGAUTHUIS-AREA (ALPHA SCIENCES)
2. ROETERSEILAND (GAMMA SCIENCES)
3. SCIENCEPARK (BETA SCIENCES)
4. AMC-COMPLEX (MEDICAL SCIENCES)

The UvA is just beginning the work to realize the downtown campus according to the current long-range plan 2010. According to the plans of the UvA, the Binnengasthuis area will become a concentrated campus in downtown Amsterdam.

Motto UvA: ‘The connection with the city is essential to the attractiveness of both the UvA and Amsterdam.’

The idea behind this motto is that the University and the city of Amsterdam profit from each other. The concentration promotes interaction between students and staff. The location in downtown Amsterdam should stimulate students to interact with cultural life in Amsterdam.

(Source: De campusplannen van de UvA en de binnenstad, studiecommissie PvdA afd. Binnenstad Amsterdam, Hendrik Batjtes en Leon Deben, Amsterdam 8 november 2011)

But what is the real profit for the inhabitants of Amsterdam? It seems to me that the University becomes a more introvert system inside the city by concentrating its activities on one location, unless there will be a mix of activities on site for either the students and staff and the residents and other users of Amsterdam. Than there is a chance of a real coexistence between the UvA and the city of Amsterdam.

- related to my personal fascination:

The Dutch population is expected aging sharply in the coming decades. The number and proportion of elderly in the Dutch population is increasing.

In 2012 more than 16 percent of the Dutch population was older than 65 years. In 2040, around the peak of the aging population, more than a quarter of the Dutch population will be 65 years or older and approximately 14 percent over 75 (in 2012 that share was 7 percent).

In Amsterdam the percentage of elderly above 65 will increase lesser than the national average but the number of elderly will increase considerably (Amsterdam is a large city).

(Source for this alinea: Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) & pbl.nl)

Older people prefer to continue living independently as long as possible and therefore move hardly. There is no evidence that residential mobility is increasing among the elderly. On the contrary; in recent years the already sedentary elderly even became more sedentary, probably due to the increasing extramuralisation and homeownership among the elderly, which slows the residential mobility.

Older people not only move little, but when they move, they often do this over a short distance, preferably within their own neighborhood. Knowing that older people are so sedentary, especially modifications to existing homes are needed – next to additions to the housing stock of housing suitable for the elderly, preferably in existing residential neighborhoods.

Due to these adjustments elderly may be able to continue to live independently into old age even if their mobility decreases and the need for care increases. Due to the expected increasing homeownership among the elderly, the adaptation task shifts more and more from the housing associations to the homeowners.

However, research shows that the current generation of older homeowners is reluctant to invest in major home modifications.
Is there a match between existing and needed typologies?

My research method

The research method consists of literature study, research on precedents and current reference projects in downtown Amsterdam.

My research ‘body’

I learned that ‘hofjes’ are an early form (as build from the 17th century) of elderly care and social housing at the same time, an old age pension for poor, old people.

I asked myself the question: What are the main characteristics of the ‘hofjes’ and wich elements of these characteristics could be reused in current developments relating to housing with care for elderly people?

Conclusions;
- Courtyards have a closed form, usually rectangular.
- Hofjes generally have one closable entrance to an adjacent street.
- The houses on the courtyards have an entrance in the courtyard.
- The houses on the courtyards usually enclose a beautifully landscaped garden.
- Courtyards in Amsterdam are an oasis of calm compared to the immediately surrounding public spaces, but are, by their location in town, yet part of it.
- The orientation of the houses to the enclosed courtyard provides a protected environment within the city.
- The houses on the courtyards are generally small and originally built for occupancy by one person.
- Courtyards stimulate, by the compact, oriented towards the communal garden, shape, social interactions between residents.

I asked myself the question; how is housing for elderly with care currently arranged in downtown Amsterdam and what is the current policy of the municipality of Amsterdam?

Conclusions:
In the center of Amsterdam are small and larger clusters of houses with care realized at nine locations.

Elderly houses with care (formerly often called Wibo homes) are independent residences located together in the immediate vicinity of a service center with all amenities.

Elderly houses are carefully designed for older people without children. The houses have two or three rooms, have one floor level accessible by an elevator if needed.

The Municipality of Amsterdam, housing associations, health care providers and insurers work together to ensure that there are adequate housing options for older people and people with a disability.

Extramuralisation and the separation of housing and care (due to political measures) lead to more older people and people with disabilities to continue living at home independently.

Recently (March, 2014), the municipality established the new note “Met Zorg Wonen (housing with care)”. In this note the need for housing for the elderly and people with disabilities in the future is formulated.

The note “Met Zorg Wonen” contains the actions that the municipality partners will carry out in the coming years. The emphasis is on adapting the existing housing, transforming healthcare real estate and other properties. The municipality also wants to respond better to collective initiatives related to housing and care in Amsterdam.

My research conclusions

There are good reasons to transform the buildings (or a part of it) surrounding inner courtyard C (see fig. 02, 03, 04) of the Binnengasthuis area into housing for elderly with care:

- The inner area of the Binnengasthuis is and was always a collections of inner courtyards.
- The inner courtyard surrounded by houses for elderly with care is a solution which was already used in the ‘hofjes’ and still is used in new and existing solutions for housing for elderly with care.
- There are no elderly houses in the neighborhood of the Binnengasthuis area while there will be a need for more housing for the elderly with care in the near future in downtown Amsterdam (preferably by transforming existing buildings).
- Inner courtyard A is currently in use by the University of Amsterdam and is also surrounded by buildings in use by the UvA. In my vision this situation remains as it is.
- Inner courtyard B is currently in use by the UvA and by residents of the adjacent houses at the side of the Kloveniersburgwal. On the other side the inner courtyard is enclosed by a building of the UvA. In my vision this situation remains as it is.
- Inner courtyard C is currently not in use and the surround-
The design contains collective facilities (including a care service facility) on the ground floor for both residents and service facility) on the ground floor for both residents and UvA functions. In my vision this situation remains as it is.

- By transforming the former Zusterhuis and Tweede Chirurgische Kliniek (Buildings surrounding courtyard C) into housing for elderly with care, there is also a possibility of creating a more connected ‘housing zone’ (See Fig. 03, 04).

From my research to my design

The conclusions of my research have been guiding my choice to transform the former Zusterhuis and the former Tweede Chirurgische Kliniek into housing for elderly with care. The design contains collective facilities (including a care service facility) on the ground floor for both residents and partly for the neighborhood and housing on the floors (except three apartments).

The design contains a variety of one floor dwellings, all accessible from street level by an elevator. The design of the housing is both a result of my research but also of design research itself. The characteristics of the existing buildings together with the conclusions of my research have yielded a variance quality of housing. Homes oriented to the street and the courtyard and houses which are primarily oriented to the street. These variations would probably not arise in an entire new building.

3. The relation between the theme of the graduation studio and the subject chosen by the student within this framework (location / object)

In 2010 a large part of the canal zone of Amsterdam became World Heritage and at the same time the buffer zone around it was defined. The consequences of this decision for the development and use of this area has impact on many levels.

Theme of the studio Design & Heritage:

The University of Amsterdam has the strategy to make four sites for campuses, and the cluster of humanities will be in the heart of the historic inner city. The ‘city as a campus’ will have a certain effect in the future. The tolerance for change of the building complexes of the UvA is the main theme of the studio. For the campus of the University of Amsterdam two discussions are relevant within this theme; the first one is the challenge of change in historic inner cities and the second is the user and program.

1. “The City of Amsterdam believes that the area’s inclusion on the World Heritage List will mean a boost in tourism.” Yet, the vibrant centre of Amsterdam is much more than tourism. It is a place where people live, work and relax. What does the UNESCO status spatially mean for the area? Disneyfication or a dynamic urban context for all kind of program and users?

What is the tolerance for change when it comes to building activities in listed buildings and ensembles? Aesthetically, scale- and material wise?

2. The national and international tendency of universities is to withdraw from the historic inner cities and to cluster at the borders of town. In historical perspective and for contemporary developments it happens for the campus of Delft, Zurich, Heidelberg, and so on. What can the case of Amsterdam – with her approach of ‘the city as campus’ – teach us in this sense?

The presence of the university in the city and its identity in relation to the city will be questions, and also the relation towards the new educational developments in institutes like centres of excellence (AMS) or university colleges, or to disclose collections. Which program and use is preferable (mix of function, tourism, accessibility for all social classes…)? What are the current societal circumstances in relation to the historical context for the development of the UvA Binnenstadscampus? The different building complexes of the UvA have certain typologies and what program is suitable within this discussion?


My subject; Housing for elderly with care and the chosen buildings on site (The former Zusterhuis en former Tweede Chirurgische Kliniek within the Binnengasthuis area) has a relation with the theme of the studio as described. My project deals with issues related to the challenge of change in the historic inner city of Amsterdam and deals with users (elderly with a need for care and other users of the neighborhood; students, residents) and related program.
4. The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

Working method/approach of the studio Design & Heritage:

Assignment:
Exploring the tolerance for change is the main theme of the studio. The assignment is an architectural design developed individually by research by design based on typology, relevant societal program and use for the buildings of the Binnenstadscampus of the University of Amsterdam.

From research to design:
Research questions and architectural theory give a sound basis for the architectural design. Answers or architectonic solutions will be found by questioning relevant issues in the analyses. The analyses are a joint work. It will be the basis for interpretation and conclusion of the individual research and design questions.
The studio debate will be the platform to discuss the student’s position within the academic field of reuse and cultural heritage and towards the individual assignment. We will discuss theoretical work as well as best practises to take up a position. Furthermore we aim to translate outcomes into design approaches.


The above method and approach works well for me and I did not deviate from it.
The studio debates, in particular, help to get the individual approach clear.

5. The relationship between the project and the wider social context

Part of my problem statement, as previously described, is about the relationship between the project and the wider social context:

The Dutch population is expected aging sharply in the coming decades. The number and proportion of elderly in the Dutch population is increasing. In 2012 more than 16 percent of the Dutch population was older than 65 years. In 2040, around the peak of the aging population, more than a quarter of the Dutch population will be 65 years or older and approximately 14 percent over 75 (in 2012 that share was 7 percent).

Elderly prefer to live independently as long as possible. However, until 2040, a large increase of elderly people will be expected. Not all older people in the center of Amsterdam have opportunities to adapt their existing home to their needs. Some will probably want or need to move to a smaller (one floor level) house in their current neighborhood. For those people sufficient ‘independent housing for the elderly with a need for care’ should be present.

My project has the intention to add value in the current debate about how to deal with housing for elderly in the existing building stock (from the viewpoint of an architect) in downtown Amsterdam and (maybe) on a larger scale; the Netherlands.
Buildings on the Binnengasthuis area.

Inner courtyard.

Buildings which define the inner courtyard.

A Inner courtyard Oudemanhuispoort
B Inner courtyard between the Vendelstraat & Oudemanhuispoort
C Inner courtyard between the Vendelstraat & the Binnengasthuisstraat
D Inner courtyard between the Binnengasthuisstraat & Oude Turfmarkt

(Source: Own drawings (all on this page))