FROM INTERSPACE TO INTERFACE
SHAPING PUBLIC LIFE

Martina Karner
The battle for neighbourhood quality is won or lost at the small scale and that it is important to focus on the relationship between the built environment and people’s quality.
PUBLIC SPACES FAILURES!!
PUBLIC SPACE FAILURES IN OUDE NOORDEN!
≈ 50% of people moving away are from Oude Noorden!
EMPTY PUBLIC SPACES
PROBLEM - REFLECTED BY MEDIA & WIJKPROFIEL

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Wijkprofiel Rotterdam 2014
All different culture groups need to interact better with each other."

"Oude Noorden is one of the most diverse neighbourhoods in Rotterdam."

"Oude Noorden is not safe enough."

"Noordplein has nice cafés, but the square itself is nothing special."

"There should be more space for activities."
"Good cities know that streets are for people, not just cars. Great cities know that streets are places to linger & live, not just move through."

- Brent Toderian

Sydney, AU

@TODUrbanWORKS
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main research question

► How can spatial interventions in public and private spaces facilitate quality in Oude Noorden?

Sub research questions

► How can spatial interventions improve the quality of public spaces in Oude Noorden in order to increase the use of public spaces?

- literature
- design concept

► How does the interrelation of public and private spaces affect and encourage people’s activities (public life)?

- literature
- observations
- interviews
- behaviour research

► How do social activities and public quality relate to physical features of the transition zone between public and private spaces?

- literature
- design interventions
DEFINITION

PUBLIC SPACE

PHYSICAL ASPECTS
- FORMS OF PUBLIC SPACE
  - sidewalks
  - streets
  - squares
  - plazas
  - other forms of gathering spaces

- MEETING POSSIBILITIES
  - friends
  - neighbours
  - big groups
  - different cultures
  - strangers

- SEATING POSSIBILITIES

- WATER FEATURES

- ACCESSIBILITY

- FOOD / RETAIL ACTIVITIES

SOCIAL ASPECTS
- RELIEF FROM STRESS
- PARTICIPATION
  - passive engagement
  - active engagement

- SENSE OF SECURITY

- ATTRACTION PEOPLE

- PUBLIC LIFE

INTERFACE

- CONTROL

- OWNERSHIP

- ACTIVITIES

- SENSE OF BELONGING
  - connecting people and increase the sense of belonging

- FEATURES
  - courtyard
  - front garden
  - entrance
  - thresholds

PRIVATE SPACE

- FEELING HOME

- COMFORT

- PROTECTION PRIVATE SPACE

ENCOURAGE / INFLUENCE

PLACE

IDENTITY

PEOPLE

USAGE

SOCIAL

PHYSICAL

PUBLIC SPACE

PUBLIC

USAGE

IDENTITY

PEOPLE

USAGE

PHYSICAL

PUBLIC SPACE
"The interface is the area for life between buildings, the daily unplanned activities - pedestrian traffic, short stays, play, and simple social activities from which additional communal life can develop."
SOFT EDGE
social
permeable

VS

HARD EDGE
anti-social
impermeable
EXAMPLES OF INTERFACES

The building setback creates an interface between public and private spaces by a front yard.

The Interface (balcony) is adding another layer of interface to the street.

Large front yard and a stoop entrance for more social interaction.

No interface between public and private spaces.

Small interface by putting a bench outside and having floral decorations.

The building setback creates a surface that can be used as a green space and seating possibilities to interact better with the street.

The porch as an interface will increase the social interaction between building and street.
Public spaces generate a realm that connects people to each other by allowing social interaction and communication!

The interface between public and private spaces becomes a significant part for social interaction and public life!
METHODOLOGY

HUMAN SCALE
- perception at eye-level and integrating human beings into the design

PUBLIC SPACES
- definition, identity, ownership, safety

USE OF SPACE
- activities, social interaction, behaviour related to physical and social environment

TRANSITION ZONE
- interface between public and private spaces, transparency

PRIVATE SPACES
- protection of private space, safety

LITERATURE RESEARCH

LOCATION ANALYSIS

BEHAVIOUR RESEARCH

INTERVIEWS

FIELD OBSERVATIONS / INTERVIEWS

FIELD OBSERVATIONS / INTERVIEWS

MAPS & DRAWINGS

MODEL

DESIGN

SOCIAL ANALYSIS
- population, households, social index, safety index, liveability index

PHYSICAL ANALYSIS
- built area, history, open spaces, interface: public private

URBAN FABRIC
- buffer zones, building heights, building façades, building typologies

TRANSITION
- movements, street life, use of public space, activity nodes

GEHL JACOBS WHYTE LYNCH MADANIPOUR HALL

THEORY

RESEARCH

DESIGN

PUBLIC SPACES

PRIVATE SPACES

TRANSITION ZONE

USE OF SPACE

HUMAN SCALE
DESIGN CRITERIA - FOCUS ON HUMAN SCALE

Life in all its diversity unfolds before us when we are on foot.

All contacts start with seeing and hearing.

72 degree viewing angle
Eye level height
Ground speed 4.8 km/h
Smelling
Listening
Touching
DESIGN CRITERIA - TRANSLATING THEORY INTO DESIGN

PUBLIC SPACES
CITY CONNECTION
IDENTITY
unique qualities / characteristics memorable, recognized

TRANSITION ZONE
ACCESSIBILITY
easy accessible and readable

TRANSPARENCY
entrances, façades

DIVERSITY
diverse programme, facilities and surrounding

SENSORY CONTROL
opportunities to see positive sensory experiences opportunities to enjoy positive aspects of climate

COMFORT
opportunities to sit opportunities to stand/stay opportunities to walk

ACTIVITIES & SOCIABILITY
social interaction opportunities to talk and listen opportunities for passive see and hear contacts

SECURITY
perceived and subjective safety

FEELING AT HOME

INTERPERSONAL DISTANCES

PROTECTION OF PRIVATE SPACE
DESIGN CRITERIA - TRANSLATING USER REQUIREMENTS INTO DESIGN

**Legend:**
- Soft surface
- Hard surface
- High noise level
- Average noise level
- Little or no noise required
- Table
- Seating
- Space to relax
- Space to play
- Nature
- Water
- Highly used space
- Little used space
- Private space
- Space to park the car
- Shelter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User</th>
<th>(Physical) Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARKET VENDOR</strong></td>
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<td><strong>YOUNG SINGLES</strong></td>
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**User Requirements:**
- Market Vendor
- Market Visitor
- Child
- Commuter
- Shopper
- Office Worker
- Picnicker
- Book Reader
- Local Artist
- Local Resident
- Local Teenager
- Tourist
- Sportsmen
- Dog Owner
- Couple
- Local Elderly
- Young Singles

**Design Criteria:**
- Translating user requirements into design
- User (physical) requirements

**Design Elements:**
- Personal space
- Nature
- Water
- Private space
- Parking
- Seating
- Relaxation
- Noise level
- Surface type

**2nd Generation Migrant:**
- Turkish Migrant
- Moroccan Migrant

**1st Generation Migrant:**
- Family
- Local Artist
- Local Resident
- Local Teenager
- Local Elderly
- Young Singles
DESIGN CASES

> improvement of public space to increase the use of the space
> create a better social interaction between the residents

DESIGN CASE I NOORDPLEIN

> improvement of the transition zone between public and private spaces
> create a better social interaction between the residents

DESIGN CASE II ERASMUSKWARTIER

> example of how new housing projects could be developed
> creating a better community feeling between residents

DESIGN CASE III BLOKLAND

residential area
public space
urban renewal
new building construction
DESIGN CASE I NOORDPLEIN

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NOORDPLEIN ANALYSIS

- Lack of places to sit
- Not enough daily activities
- Not used with full potential
- People just pass through

NEW PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

- Offer more places to sit & meet
- Providing daily facilities
- Improving network
- Removing not-used parking lots
- Community space
connection to main network and important views
connection to main network and important views

connection to water network
INTERVENTIONS IN NOORDPLEIN

- Connection to main network and important views
- Connection to water network
- Improving outdoor uses
INTERVENTIONS IN NOORDPLEIN

- Connection to main network and important views
- Connection to water network
- Removing parking lots
- Improving outdoor uses
INTERVENTIONS IN NOORDPLEIN

connection to main network and important views

connection to water network

removing parking lots

adding facilities: outdoor uses

improving outdoor uses

adding facilities: water features
THEORY IMPLEMENTED PROVIDE REASONS TO GO THERE

- Meeting point
- Conversations
- Running
- Walk the dog
- Stroll
- Playing
- Family activities
- Playing
- Reading
- Social interaction
- Shopping
- Relaxing
- Meeting point
- Social interaction
- Relaxing
- Watching other people
- Playing
- Sport
- Relaxing
- Social interaction
- Relaxing
- Watching other people
- Playing
- Sport
**THEORY**

Give people a reason to stay once they’ve arrived.

Seating is an explicit invitation to stay, either with others or by oneself.

People tend to sit the most where there are places to sit.
NOORDPLEIN THEORY IMPLEMENTED-GIVE PEOPLE A REASON TO STAY

visual “indirect” contact

“direct” contact (talking, playing etc.)
NOORDPLEIN VISUALISATION COMMUNITY SPACE
"If the edge fails, then the space never becomes lively!"
NOORDPLEIN THEORY IMPLEMENTED - IMPROVING MEETING POINTS

visual "indirect" contact

"direct" contact (talking, meeting points etc.)
Food attracts people, who attract more people.

"Very quickly, the space can became a great social interchange for pedestrians."
NOORDPLEIN THEORY IMPLEMENTED

visual “indirect” contact

“direct” contact (talking, meeting points etc.)
THEORY WATER AS ATTRACTION IN PUBLIC SPACES

THE SOUND OF WATER
"Another great thing about water is the sound of it. People find it quiet and restful."

"All forms of water features like fountains, pools, water walls, water mist etc. can add life to public space."

REACH OUT AND TOUCH
"One of the best things about water is the feel of it. People love to touch it: They stick their hands in it, stick in their toes and feet, and sometimes even splash about in it."
NOORDPLEIN THEORY IMPLEMENTED

visual “indirect” contact

“direct” contact (talking, playing etc.)
THEORY IMPORTANCE OF PLINTHS

Interface Types: visibility, access

- impermeable
  - BLANK
  - CAR BLANK
  - TRANSPARENT BLANK
- direct
  - DIRECT OPAQUE
  - DIRECT TRANSPARENT
- setback
  - PEDESTRIAN SETBACK
  - CAR SETBACK
  - SECONDARY INTERFACES

PUBLIC SPACE  IN-BETWEEN ZONE  PRIVATE
THEORY IMPLEMENTED ACTIVE FAÇADES AND OUTDOOR USES

concept

section shopping street
The sight of people attracts still other people!

What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people!

People come where people are - people are inspire and attracted by activity and the presence of other people.
drive lane
hedge as visual and hearing protection against car traffic
seating possibility for both sides for social interaction
green surface for all kind of different activities (playing, picnic etc.)
stand for spectators combined with water elements for playing and relaxation
water fountain in the pavement for amusement and playing
roofing construction for (food) market
outdoor seating space for the surrounding cafe
DESIGN CASE II  ERASMUSKWARTIER

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DESIGN CASE I  NOORDPLEIN

> improvement of the transition zone between public and private spaces
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DESIGN CASE III  BLOKLAND

> example of how new housing projects could be developed
> creating a better community feeling between residents
ERASMUSKWARTIER ANALYSIS

- EXAMPLE HOW STREETS CAN BE CHANGED
- LACK OF TRANSITION ZONES
- WIDE STREETS BUT NOT USED WELL
- OVERLOAD OF PARKING AREAS

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

- OFFER MORE PLACES TO SIT & MEET
- IMPROVING TRANSITION ZONE
- ACTIVE FUNCTION FACING THE STREET
- IMPROVING PASSIVE SEE&HEAR CONTACT
- IMPROVING VISUAL APPEARANCE
THEORY INTERFACE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

IN OUDEN NOORDEN INTERFACE MISSING OR WEAK

width of the sidewalks in Oude Noorden, related to closing the windows with curtains to protect private space
"The present of such front yards between dwelling and street can mean a lot for outdoor activities and street life!"

"The houses should be placed around 4-5 metres from the sidewalk, to ensure a certain measure of privacy for those sitting in front of the house, at the same time just close enough to the street to permit contact with events occurring in it."

"It is important that places for resting as all as opportunities for being engaged in an activity are present, directly in front of the house."

"When there are "soft edges" between private and public space, people can interact."
“Streets and their sidewalks, the main public spaces of a city, are its most vital organs.”

“We want to transform our sidewalks not only into places where you can walk, but where you can live.”

Streets need to be redefined as liveable places; as communities; as resident territory; as places for play, greenery, and local history.
ERASMUSKWARTIER THEORY IMPLEMENTED

AVOIDING HUGE PARKING LOTS

ACTIVE FUNCTION ON GROUND FLOOR

PLANTING STRIP

INTERMEDIATE SPACE

FRONT YARDS

DESIGN II
DESIGN CASE III BLOKLAND

- Improvement of public space to increase the use of the space
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BLOKLAND ANALYSIS

- Demolished Housing Block
- Poor Quality
- Currently Empty Site
- Not Used

NEW HOUSING BLOCK

- Reduce Parking
- Active Function Facing the Street
- Transparency
- Front Yards
- Community Space
current situation: empty site

adding new building block

adding community spaces and front gardens

changing the surrounding buildings by adding more greenery and decorations
BLOKLAND ACTIVE FUNCTION FACING THE STREET

seeing contracts residential-street

- few interaction with street
- high interaction with street

DESIGN III
Entrances of dwellings can contribute to safety and liveliness by giving opportunities for social interactions.

Minimum amount of entrances for increasing safety; more doors give the feeling that more movements from inside to outside and vice versa are possible.

Various entrance situations e.g., staircase, terrace, light well, porches.
The importance of building heights & balconies is significant for social interaction and passive see and hear contacts. Regarding building height for social interaction, studies of new Copenhagen residential areas in 2003 show that the activities in and around semipublic outdoor spaces in front of ground-floor units account for over half of all outdoor activities, even though residents on the ground floor comprise only 14% of the residents. Balconies for social interaction and passive see and hear contacts.
BLOKLAND THEORY IMPLEMENTED

► SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH FRONT GARDENS AND BALCONIES FACING THE STREET

► SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH BACK GARDENS AND BALCONIES FACING THE COMMUNITY SPACE
community space

big front gardens
decorations on street
BLOKLAND IMPACT ON STREET
BLOKLAND IMPACT ON COMMUNITY SPACE

VISUAL CONTACT

DIRECT CONTACT
visualisation: view from Raephorststraat at night

visualisation: street view Bloklandstraat at night
HOW CAN INTERFACE IN A RESIDENTIAL AREA CREATE MORE ACTIVITIES FOR EVERYONE, INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER AND INSPIRE INVITE THEM TO STAY LONGER?

> more points of entry and clearly accessible entries & windows and balconies fronting this edge
  > diversity programming the threshold zones
> safety and comfort - interaction: building and urban space + “eyes on the street”
  > community - to see and meet other users + eye contact
> flexibility - freedom to shape the surroundings and change functions
  > opportunities to sit, rest and stay longer
> the need for privacy - zoning the landscape (porch, threshold)
> well-used habitable room (kitchen, living room) adjacent to the front entrance to offer passive surveillance of the area by the occupants
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IMPACT ON THE WHOLE NEIGHBOURHOOD
IMPACT ON THE WHOLE NEIGHBOURHOOD

INTERVENTIONS IN THE SMALLER STREETS

INTERVENTIONS IN THE MEDIUM STREETS

INTERVENTIONS IN THE LARGE STREETS
IMPACT ON THE WHOLE NEIGHBOURHOOD

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IMPACT ON THE WHOLE NEIGHBOURHOOD

INTERVENTIONS IN THE SMALLER STREETS

INTERVENTIONS IN THE MEDIUM STREETS

INTERVENTIONS IN THE LARGE STREETS

large streets
medium streets
small streets
Oude Noorden
1,006 people settled, 1,159 left
-153 flow

Rotterdam
37,775 people settled, 38,057 left
-282 flow

**figure 4.69:** how many people leave Oude Noorden right now; by author based on (Rotterdam.buurtmonitor.nl, 2014)

**figure 3.69:** Oude Noorden now; population decreasing; by author

**figure 4.:** Oude Noorden in the future; population stable or increasing; by author

figure 3.69: Oude Noorden now; population decreasing; by author
MAKING PEDESTRIANS A PRIORITY

CONCLUSION

nowadays
PRIORITY

highest priority

highest priority

lowest priority

Pedestrians
Cyclists
Public transport
Cars
1. People’s activities relate to and are encouraged and affected by physical features of public spaces

2. Improving the transition zone between public and private spaces can increase social interaction, the use of space and public quality

3. The plinth interacts as a medium for connecting public and private spaces and a high transparency of the plinths should be provided (residential & retail)

5. Active ground floor functions and outdoor uses are improving the walking experience on the sidewalks and make an area more safe

6. Physical features of buildings (like entrances, building heights, balconies, transparency, front yards etc.) are increasing social activities and are adding more value

7. Human Scale needs to be considered while designing public spaces
THANK YOU
FOR YOUR ATTENTION!!