Reflection P4: Architecture

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Studio:
Interiors: Care for Cure
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Title:
Daycare- and education center with residence for the cognitively challenged people
“The Green Lane: visibility and opportunities to participate in the society”

Reflection:

1) The relationship between research and design

The theme of the graduation studio Interiors is to design a healthcare center, with a free choice of program and location in Rotterdam by the students itself. I have decided to design a daycare- and education center with residence for the cognitively challenged people. These three programs are usually separated from each other, but I decided to put them together in one building with several (semi) public functions in it. The user group exists of young adults with non-syndromic and syndromic intellectual disability that are light mental disabled (IQ 50-70, slow and difficult learners). And the building site will be at the Baan in the city centre of Rotterdam. This location is not only nearby the centre of Rotterdam, but it is situated close to several healthcare institutions like the Erasmus Medical Center, Revalidation center: Rijndam and the Eye hospital. Furthermore it is easy to reach the location by car and public transport.

The first question raised by the given theme for this studio is: What is a healthcare center? A healthcare center is an institution where (sick) people are taken care of, depending of the health problem. A daycare center is to give my user group activities to do during the day, socializing and treatments. While the education center is to learn them a vocational profession and having workshops, so they can participate in the society among the people. The objectives of these centers are to let my user group be part of the society and do ‘normal’ things like we do. But on the other hand, daycare- and education center and the residences are usually conceived as highly protected healthcare fortresses which tend to protect my user group from the society. My design itself had to not only operates as a care center, to be efficient and rational as one single entity, but it should also be at the first place, a place where my user group feels safe.

In general, there exists some research on (daily) activities that my user group can do and that stimulus them and little research on education center. Little is known about how they feel in daycare- and education centers and the arrangement of these centers. Though, more literature research is there about dwelling typology, their living situation and daily life. Therefore I did volunteer work in a daycare center (Willem Felsoord, Delft) during the summer and visit some education/work spaces for my user group, “De smaak van Byuten” in Rhoon and “Lunchroom Bijzonder” in Lier to gain more information. I did an interview with the owner of the lunchroom and a cognitively challenged girl, Jacqueline that works there.
So we can find very little about architecture of these buildings and spatial organization in relation with daily activities-, learning- and living process. Therefore, the graduation design offers a renewed interpretation of theses center and its relation within the city.
II) The relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework (location/object)

As mentioned above the theme of the studio is to design a healthcare center situated in Rotterdam. The goal of the studio was not only examining new trends and possibilities in healthcare facility design, but also investigate the opportunity of decentralization and integration of these institutions into the given context and public life of the city – blur the borders between the clinic and the city.

The object of research of the study can be described by the term ‘green as a healing environment’. From research, green has a positive effect on people during the healing process. Therefore it is important to incorporate green in the design. Especially while all the locations are situated in the urban context with less green in the neighbourhood. Also here, little public green is present in the Baan, but in combination with my design theme (shelter and meeting), different form of ‘green’ (winter garden, roof terraces and balconies) are incorporate in the design.

Another term is the ‘public interior’. Public interior are spaces where people operates, including environments, the inside and outside of buildings. It is used by the public, either individually or collectively for entertainment, culture, education, leisure, commerce or care. With this in mind, I explored whether a part of my center could operate as a public interior. The center contains a number of more or less public facilities, which are not exclusively for the user group, but also can be used by visitors from the neighbourhood as well. The pool, the gym, the auditorium, the study center, the restaurant/café are among these.

My graduation design can be read as a small city in general, as a small urban block with semi-public functions and the centers and dwellings in the tower blocks. The plinth serves as an organizing element around which more public functions are organized. The spatial organization of this plateau reinforces the ‘publicness’ of the building while not endangering the safety of the user group.

III) The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

The graduation studio generally works on several levels: the city, the building and the interior. The studio not only operates through a process of theoretical reflection, but also proposing buildings and ensembles that recognize and build on the existing conditions, seeking to make culturally charged spaces inside, outside and between buildings.

A public interior has to be accomplished in the care center, without endangering the privacy and protection of the user group. The understanding and designing the various degrees of both privacy and publicness and the way they relate to each other, is one of the key elements in the design.

Further the graduation studio consisted of three parts. First, as group we investigated and analyses the architecture of several existing centers from various part of the world and the program of the interested healthcare program. These examples not only showed a variety in architectural interpretation of the program, but also illustrated the variety in ideas and opinions regarding care and treatment. The second part is a workshop were the students researched about the need and dislikes of the current building that they are using. And at last, I conducted research by design, investigating the urban conditions of the site and the architectural potential of the building program. Important was the understanding of the design with three programs together and the public interiors connected. The research by design was performed with use of different working tools, especially physical models and 3D drawings program like Sketch up.
IV) The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The goal of the project is to design a daycare- and education center with residences and its relation within the city.

The relevance of the results of my project could lie in helping to define how this healthcare institution can become an integrated part of the city at all levels; spatial, economical, political and social. Especially the social part is put forward in my project. Nowadays the cognitively challenged people aren’t that visible in the society. This applies for their living as for their daily activities. My user group usually still lives at home and been taken care by family or they live in care center in small groups in a suburb place.

With my design I want to bring them among the people in the city and give them more visibility and opportunities. So, although the condition of the cognitively challenged cannot be cured, the other functions of the brain can still be stimulated to enable the person to reach his or her maximum potential. Yes, they have difficulties and are slower to adapt and learn things, but it doesn’t mean that they can’t participate in the society.