

Inspiration

Gradually the Dutch population is ageing, a fact which I experience every day as an inhabitant of Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. For years people struggled against its effects, however, now it is time to embrace it. It is actually very positive that in general we live healthier and by that become older. As a designer I perceive strategies from the potential of people. Since I recognized a stigmatic mismatch between the social status of elderly people and their actual way of living, this became the starting point for my graduation project.

“The world is ageing. As populations rise, and life expectancy increases, we’re seeing a demographic shift never experienced before in history.”

In the Netherlands alone, the population of elderly will grow a 150%, from three million now to four and a half million in 2050. So, we live longer, a phenomenon that could potentially define our future cities. A major upcoming demographic shift that effects our environment to such extent, will become a big challenge for the future. One will no longer build for a young society, but for multiple generations.

How will an older population develop and engage to society? The potential of elder and active society has for me been clearly stated in the movie ‘The Intern’, wherein the main character, Robert de Niro as a widower has a ‘gap’ in his life. To overcome he joins an intern program of a young company. This stimulates his life enormously, but furthermore it gives a boost to the company through the enthusiasm and engagement of De Niro.

“Experience never gets old”

An empowering environment

“Current elderly society is institutionalized and focused on individualism. The elderly of the future will live longer, more aware and healthier. Hereby they change into pioneers who will embrace life and have the opportunity to live their dream. By combining young- and older generations, the pioneer of the future will have a better life: more social, more valuable, and happier.” - hypothesis of the research (by Anton van Hooft and Joeri Schutte)

Elderly housing and architecture should be less ruled by authorities and insurance companies, and instead be more self-sustainable and contribute more to the life of the users. Only then an empowering environment can be created by embracing the positive aspects of the new life of the pioneers.

The idea of combining different generations to create an empowering community led to the greatest discovery of the research. Tested with various stakeholders and target group members, it was very positive received. If different generations lived together, elderly people could become more socially involved, feel more appreciated and generally feel happier, whereas younger people could learn faster and would obtain more life experience.

Often I recognized projects in which through an urgent vacancy generations were put together. This was a smart short-term solution, however, only fundamental relationships between different generations create an empowering environment. So not people selected on availability but on interests or philosophy is one of the pillars that provide better synergy between the inhabitants.

New routines

People will flourish in an environment that provides an acceleration of life experience. New routines, like interacting with other generations are thereby essential. That is a mayor challenge in designing resilient and future proof residences.

However, nowadays we are still stuck in existing typologies. People are only familiar with the government ruled typologies such as the traditional nursing home, care institute and semi-independent homes. The potential of new or unknown typologies is actually underestimated.

Historically seen, the diversity of residences was for a long period very good, and focused on communal aspects. In recent times the shift was however made to an individualistic approach that creates much more social isolation. As the elderly population grows, the group of more active elderly people also emerges and they take more initiative for new routines.

The residence is on a turning point, from financed by care, towards a finance without care. Existing elderly homes are closed and people are more open to new initiatives. The initiative of Anton and me is a positive strategy. Not starting from care, but from potential. In a 24h day often no more than 2 hours of care are given. Isn't it strange to design our environments around these 2 hours of care a day? Hence, aligning people's mental state with their residence is one of the main focusses for designers today.

Scenarios

As I stated, the relatively new status of elderly should emerge in a more empowering or self-sustainable environment in order to become a success. Therefore different learning, cultural, social and health scenarios were tested trough a survey. What cached my eye in those reactions, was the willingness to be active in new forms of learning, living and working.

Most of the reactions were overwhelming and providing people a platform became an important aspect. We could think about an online community that finally will support the design by bringing people together with the same life attitude. Then almost automatically the gap between old and young will disappear, through common interests and activities. That can be seen as the motor of the final design.

Activating space and people with a right scenario was the biggest challenge. A new healthy environment on the right spot has to make a resilient and future proof design. In this case, new production environments were used to connect generations, goals, profit model etc.

By renewing the production model through interaction both, the final outcome and the persons working on it will profit. A product tested for all generations is ready to be used in the society. Furthermore if the products is presented and tested before release, the production process becomes much more efficient.

Potential of Delft

In search for the ideal test case different cities were researched regarding the concept of combining young- and older generations. As we wanted to create an ideal situation it was important to keep in mind the proportion of younger vs. older inhabitants. All figures focused on Delft, a city with the largest amount of students.

Delft becomes the city that fits best to multiple generations because of its walkable distances, infrastructure, environmental friendliness and atmosphere. The structure of Delft formed for year's barriers between different neighborhoods. Railway tracks, a highway and canals, made delft a kind of

a barcode, which has its barriers in the east-west section of the city. The recent reconstruction of the train zone, gave also new opportunities to combine and connect different neighborhoods.

The opportunity of the east-west section focuses on the combination of typical neighborhoods; east: older inhabitants, poorer and west: the center, typical terrain of students and more wealthy people. Based on these aspects a new initiative for working and living environment would needly fit. For young people a step towards a professional job, and for experienced people a way of socializing, rhythm, structure and goals in life. Thereby the project was recognized as a valuable intervention contributing to the social status and interests of the people from these neighborhoods.

Jo Coenen 's former city hall

In the middle of this city section, the former city hall of Delft is located. This building, designed by Jo Coenen is a well-known building on a historic site. In history, the garden was a monastery garden. The design of Jo Coenen was initially designed in a way that takes this former monastery garden in consideration.

I am impressed the way the garden is connected in the design. Furthermore the use of material and symmetry are distinctive. The building on itself is in my opinion not so appealing or inviting. The initial designed connections with the former monastery garden do not function. The connection with the garage is an intriguing, tiny building in this green garden. Yet a site with so much potential once it is vacant, asks for a more applied design.

Until last week the building functioned as a typical nine to five implemented building, however, in the new situation it has much more potential to become a central point in Delft, attractive for a wide range of visitors and inhabitants. The construction is nonetheless very inward focused, towards the atrium. The very robust columns make it a monumental building. In contradiction, the extension of the city hall is build up from smaller, round columns and finished with a wooden cladding. In the design the materials and forms are a guide lines that direct trough the building and historic site. Outside a curved wall takes over this function.

Connective architecture

The design amplifies a fundamental relation between different generations by providing a platform for synergy. The revived city route creates a bridge between districts and people, by developing new working- and living environments of the future. This development unfolds itself in a civil oasis, an old monastery garden that provides a prototyping and production heaven where interaction comes alive.

A variety of programs, takes away old prejudgments about the different generations. This forms the basis for people to flourish in an environment of moving, staying, working and experience. People meet and interact as workers, product developers or visitors. Earning a small amount of money or getting new (working) experience, helps inhabitants to stand stronger in life and forms a basis for future development. The civil oasis provides the crucial interaction between people that is needed for this purpose.

The combination of production, expo, sales and short stay living makes the program ideal for the next step in an acceleration of life experience. As it is a center for meeting, a new typology for working and living it reveals the synergy between people. New production lines arise through 'natural' environments.

Public streams by boat, car, foot and train are intertwined through the new entrance. This creates an open access and passage towards the opened atrium. While strengthening the buildings monumental aspects, an open atrium is created that accommodates new perspectives. Finally all fundamental

principles of production unite in the inner city structure, where a production- and test garden is the scene of specific production spaces, an intimate outlet and cozy dining area.

Architecturally, this public area is a continuum of the signature of Jo Coenen, who meant to connect different parts of the city. The generation's production fits in this route, whereby openness, interaction and transparency and on the other hand functionality of the production line is embedded.

The design relates simple but resilient design interventions , to the buildings users. Through a functional translation of the user's needs, the building is enriched by an public route, open atrium, connection with the garage and transparent working environment. Thereby the main interventions are realized in glass, clear glass in the transparent extension and translucent glass bricks in the more private living units. Additionally wooden finished blocks are used to make functional space for the kitchen, technical area, closets and wet spaces.

Review

Finally, the design becomes a coherent enclosure by the public route that infiltrates the building, all design decisions relate to this public environment and focus on stimulating the users. That is in my opinion a typical example of social innovation. To make the project work, it is of essential value that the right people are linked to the project and, while being active in the building, regularly observations need to guard the quality of the synergies.

This is also related to its functionality, providing a next step by acceleration in life experience. Giving people a good basis and tools to realize their future. This fits the building and location of the design perfectly, integrated between people and city environment. Even more buildings in the environment can profit from this model and connect with the garden; the civil oasis.

Sources essay and external experts

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LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

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| Local inhabitants | Inhabitants of the city center and 1960s neighborhood, the target group of the design, during interviews. |
| Habion (Residence) | Provider of residences in the area and researching new possibilities of residences for elderly. Contact person; Ilona Timmermans |
| Municipality of Delft | Policy makers and real estate developers of the location. Contact person: Anne-Marie Reijnders |

CONSULTANTS

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Yvonne Witter | Aedes-Actiz Kenniscentrum Wonen-Zorg; expert on different elderly care projects. |
| Arie Voorburg | Arcadis; expert on new combinations of young and old, in projects with education and production involved. |
| Marcel van Heck | Rijksbouwmeester; Program leader 'Oog voor de buurt', a main reference project. |
| Maartje Kunen | Fontys Hogescholen, Expert on integration of people and public space |
| Joost van Hoof | Fontys Hogescholen/Tu/e, Fago; Building expert for new care environments |
| Bram Rolus | Rolus Bouwconsult; Building physicist |
| Kristoff de Wilde | ARCHIBURO Van Royen; construction advise |
| Luc Hermans | FMP Plus; glass expert (contractor) |
| Johan Foubert | Foubert glaswerken; glass expert (contractor) |

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Richard de Mulder | Political party 50+, Science office 50+ |
| Dort Spierings | Researcher and architect at HAN Civil Society Lab |
| Heine ten Hoeve | Chairman Young Democrats |