

TOWARDS LIFECYCLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

"We want to move towards a society in which everybody questions themselves what they can add to that society and what they can do to help each other."

Ministry of Public Health, Wellbeing and Sports, 2014

Driven by an aging society, the healthcare system is changing. With decentralizing governmental policies – where care responsibilities are transferred to local governments and to health insurers – the welfare state is transforming to 'welfare cities'. This systematic change has far reaching consequences for elderly, and must be addressed at a strategic level. The most significant change is that elderly have to stay 'longer at home', in other words have to be more self-reliant. In this study, I have explored what 'living at home longer' means, with particular attention to the influence of spatial elements on the increase of self-reliance.

The study finds that a sufficient level of facilities and a supportive social network are key to an age-friendly city when corresponding to the mobility constraints of senior citizens. However, as neighbourhoods differ in their social and spatial structure, demography changes over time, and technologies evolve, a 'one size fits all' approach will not work. Instead, a number of tools are developed by which urban planners and architects can analyse the interventions required to make a neighbourhood age-friendly. The result is the provision of a good welfare system on a local level, and a supporting environment on the level of the home.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study posits that the living environment can have both positive and negative effects on the demand for care, and should therefore be related and integrated in the care system. It advocates that the urban environment is a good place to age. Since cities have a relatively high density of living there is a lot of endorsement for supportive networks, including welfare facilities and transport. The considerable convenience of living in a city could enable seniors to live longer at home, providing they have access to the care and support that is needed.

Integrating the care system in the spatial environment demands rethinking the neighbourhood unit and asks for a new kind of neighbourhood approach. In order to be able to live 'longer at home' there is a need to rethink what that 'home' is and investigate possibilities for new typologies, attuned to different scale levels.

The study has found that, in order to enable elderly to 'age at home' there is a need to focus on the level of the neighbourhood, to enable elderly to age in their own environment. This is the area where elderly – and especially the more vulnerable elderly – spend most of their time, and where elderly and seniors have their social networks. Secondly, there needs to be suitable housing with good accessibility both within the house and onto the street. Since seniors and elderly have a low tendency to move house, this should hold true for every neighbourhood so that elderly can age in their own environment. Thirdly, the neighbourhood needs to offer

facilities and services within walking distance to support elderly in their daily activities. This increases self-reliance and limits the care needed.

To support the aging population there is a need to move to neighbourhoods that are resilient, and that are able to adapt itself to the changing needs of its inhabitants: lifecycle neighbourhoods. A lifecycle neighbourhood can then be explained as a neighbourhood that 1) is a lively and liveable neighbourhood that facilitates and activates all inhabitants to participate in daily urban life, that 2) aims at good accessibility of facilities, services and care, that 3) has housing opportunities for inhabitants of all age groups, and that 4) encourages encounters. With that, lifecycle neighbourhoods can support seniors and elderly in their aging process, whilst benefitting all different age groups within that neighbourhood.

STRATEGY



ALTERNATIVES

Through the expansion of differentiated housing for seniors and elderly within the neighbourhood, moving to suitable housing to age in can become a more natural step in the housing career. Moving can then unlock the housing market whilst supporting seniors in their aging process.



ADAPTABILITY

Through the implementation of small-scale interventions, flexibility and adaptability can be accomplished on both the level of the neighbourhood (flexibility towards different population groups) and on the level of the home (flexibility towards the demand for care).



NEIGHBOURHOOD POINT

Through the establishment of a neighbourhood point, demand and supply of care can be matched on a local level. The neighbourhood point is easy accessible, coordinates and organises care by using smart technologies and is supported by a reliable network of caregivers.



ACTIVATING URBAN DESIGN

Through activating urban design, elderly are enabled to take part in daily urban life. Good design of houses, streets, neighbourhoods and even cities, can support elderly in the performance of daily urban activities. Better accessibility spatially as well as socially can promote self-reliance and enhance social welfare, well-being and health, eventually decreasing the demand for (health) care.



LOCALITY

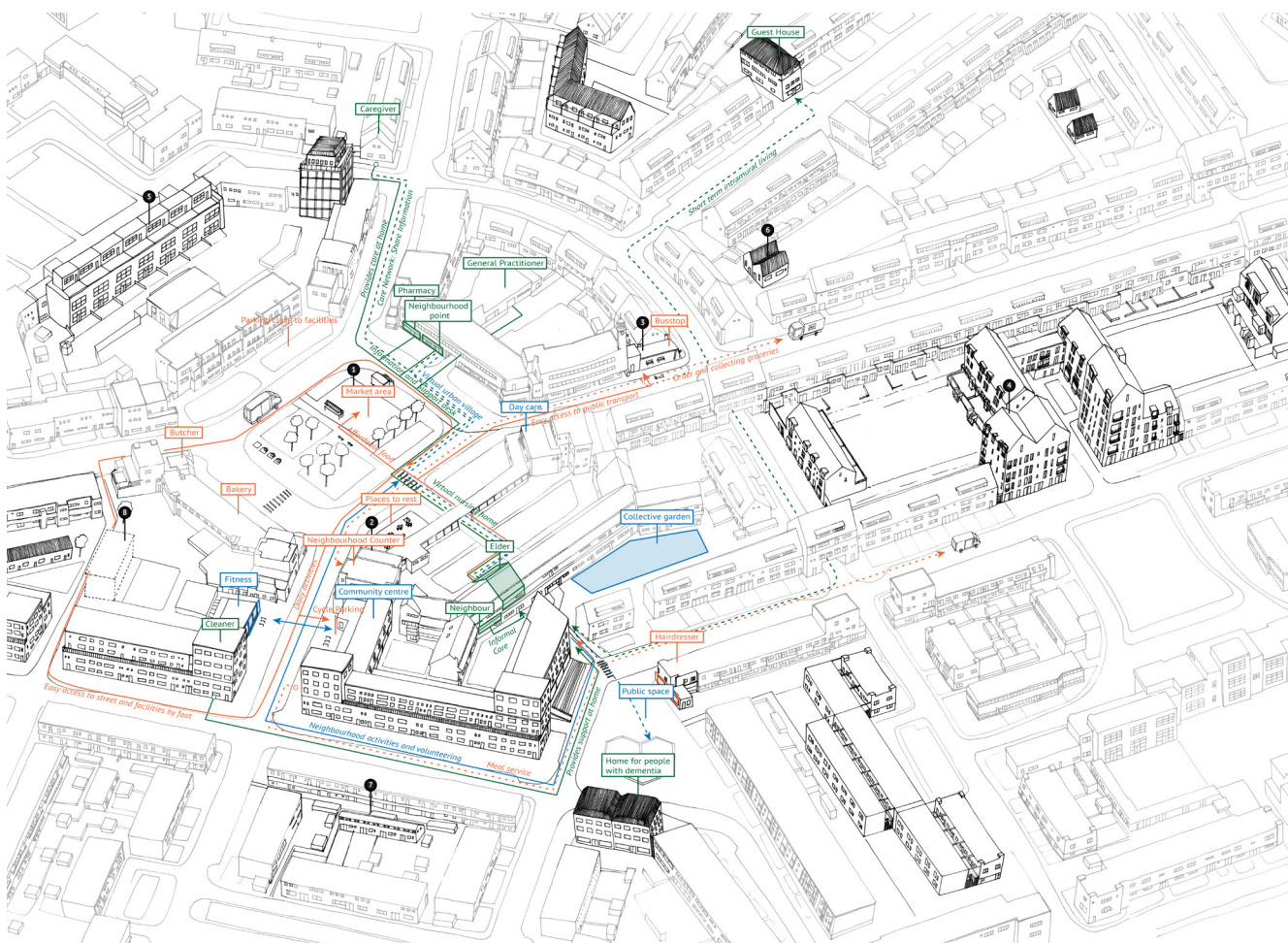
Possibilities and chances, as well as areas of improvement are neighbourhood specific. Embedding the lifecycle-neighbourhood concept should therefore correspond to the specific neighbourhood demand and its socio-spatial structure.

Since neighbourhoods differ in demographics and socio-spatial organization, the opportunities and constraints differ as does the process of establishing a lifecycle neighbourhood. To make a neighbourhood more age friendly, there is a need to look at specific location requirements. A Neighbourhood Plan specifies the neighbourhood specific requirements, defining how the neighbourhood can adapt itself to become a lifecycle neighbourhood. This can guide urban developers in the constitution of a lifecycle neighbourhood.

Since there is no good (best) practice of a single tool, a plurality of tools should be utilized when establishing a lifecycle

neighbourhood. That demands an integrated approach with urban planning practices, focusing on every aspect of the living environment in relation to care. By taking the Dapperbuurt and Betondorp as an example, the study shows that it is possible to successfully transform existing neighbourhoods into lifecycle neighbourhoods. With small interventions and infill a higher density can be achieved as well as a differentiation in the housing stock. It is posited that by taking the spatial and socio-economical context in account, the interventions can be embedded in the existing structure of the neighbourhood. The changes then create better environments for elderly but are beneficial for all inhabitants.

IMPLEMENTATION IN BETONDORP, AMSTERDAM



1. PUBLIC SPACE The revitalisation of the Brink by adding new facilities: the creation of a market place can add to the livelihood of the neighbourhood as well as propose temporary uses such as parking, a terrain for events and a market.

2. NEIGHBOURHOOD POINT When large-scale interventions are not realistic, new types of low-key facilities should be invented to fill in the gap. In Betondorp a 'Neighbourhood Point' is proposed, wherefrom informal and formal help as well as care are organized. The 'Neighbourhood Point' provides a central and physical point that is easy accessible for neighbourhoods' residents, and wherefrom they for example can order meals as well as their groceries.

3. PUBLIC TRANSPORT Through easy accessibility of public transport within the neighbourhood, elderly can be supported to go out.

4. URBAN LIVING Through the substitution of existing building blocks - while taking into consideration the existing (historic) qualities of the neighbourhood - new developments can provide new quality housing with good access for starters and elderly.

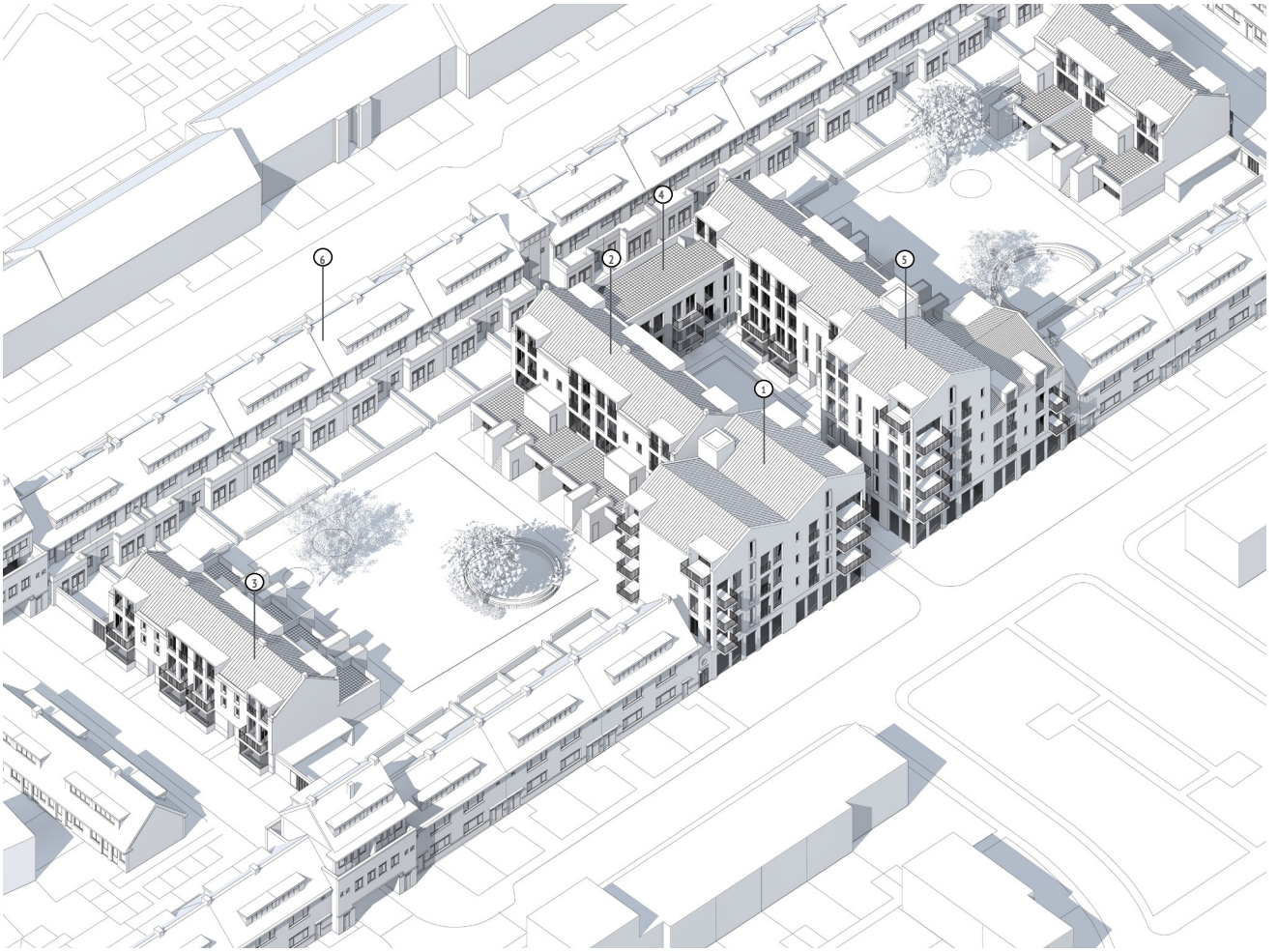
5. TRANSFORMATION Through the transformation of existing building blocks and individual dwellings, the existing housing stock is adapted to modern living standards and can provide a more diverse public with suitable housing opportunities.

6 ASSISTED LIVING Under the condition that the neighbourhood is age friendly, providing space for your elders in your own house becomes again a viable option.

7 MEWS The communal strategy of mutating the existing parceling in order to create a new housing condition at the back of the garden. This type of garden living is both individual as well as collective through the use of a communal 'back street' that gives private access to the individual dwelling.

8 COMMUNITY SELF-BUILD The local Amsterdam authority should provide land for cooperations of residents to build their own housing, making home ownership in Betondorp better accessible through better affordability. Since home ownership increases the sense of belonging, these types of ownership could be beneficial for the neighbourhood.

ARCHITECTURAL INTERVENTION



1. COURTYARD (SHELTERED) HOUSING The courtyard senior housing provides elderly with one-level private housing. Privacy is guaranteed, but with an overflow of the private space into the semi-private and public space also contact with the outside world is secured.

2. FAMILY HOUSING (DUPLEX) The family housing provides families with spacious housing within the city. The village structure and village character as well as the private entrance to the inner courtyard provide a safe playing area for children. Here they benefit from social security, provided by the elderly on the ground floor level.

3. STARTERS HOUSING (DUPLEX) The two level apartments above the elderly housing offer nice and affordable opportunities for starters on the housing market. Spacious apartments with private access present nice housing opportunities within the city for young couples and small families.

4. STARTERS HOUSING (STUDIO) One level apartments provide housing opportunities for young professionals. One bedroom apartments with a flexible living unit offer flexible opportunities for living and working.

5. SHELTERED HOUSING Affordable and qualitative apartments provide good and attractive alternatives for elderly within their own environment. The apartments differ in size, and offer opportunities for both couples and single elderly, with or without demanding care. Living together offers benefits in sharing costs for care and help at home.

6. FAMILY HOUSING (RENOVATED) The existing housing stock provides good opportunities for refurbishment. Uniting the single household apartments vertically results in more spacious family dwellings that live up to modern living standards.

