

Housing an ageing population: How are our neighbours doing it?

The demographic of Scotland's population is changing and architecture must react to cope with it. The Scottish Parliament predicts that by 2035, the number of citizens aged over 75 will increase by 82% (2010 figures). Governments across Western Europe are currently experiencing the same phenomenon and pressures associated with an ageing population including increased welfare costs, economic change and provision of adequate and appropriate housing. Many older citizens wish to remain at home as they age, however this isn't always possible due to varying degrees of care and supervision required. Loneliness is also a recognised issue facing the elderly in Scotland with research by Age UK concluding that more than 80,000 people aged over 65 felt lonely 'always' or 'often' which shows that drastic improvements are needed in the way architects and governments deal with the situation. Across the North Sea in Denmark and The Netherlands, new schemes and architectural proposals are challenging the way we typically view housing for the elderly and showing how architecture is pivotal in shaping social relationships and conditions. Denmark and The Netherlands have strong diplomatic relations with the UK and Scotland and share cultural similarities. Climatic, welfare and economic conditions in these countries are also similar to Scotland and are widely regarded as beacons of progressive design and politics. We can learn a great deal from these countries and I intend to visit several schemes and to interview people involved.

Humanitas Deventer, The Netherlands

Humanitas is a major community building organisation which made the headlines a few months ago with a new scheme at their nursing home in Deventer. Humanitas offers students free accommodation at the home in exchange for spending time with the elderly each month, encouraging new social relationships from otherwise distanced citizens. I want to visit this scheme to speak to the students, staff and elderly about the successes and negatives of such a scheme to analyse how a scheme that mixes different social groups could work in Scotland where students are under increasing financial pressure and vast swathes of elderly people feel lonely.



85%

rise in citizens aged
over 75 by 2035.

Source: The Scottish Government



80,000

of citizens aged over
65 felt lonely 'always'
or 'often.'

Source: Age UK



Source: Jurrien Mentink, Huffington Post

Middelwijck Middenbeemster, The Netherlands

Middelwijck is a complex which has an interesting programme of recreational facilities, independent housing, day care support centre and group homes for elderly residents with mental health needs. The design of combining various programmes and varying needs at Middelwijck is interesting and I'd like to speak to staff and residents to see what can be learned from



Middelwijck Middenbeemster. Source: BLANCA architecten

Fælledgården Nursing Home Copenhagen, Denmark

Fælledgården is a renovated, sustainable assisted living facility in northern Copenhagen by JJW Arkitekter. It is Denmark's largest nursing home with increased living space for residents in a 70's building that was previously rundown. I intend to visit Fælledgården to see how architects have transformed an existing structure in to something less impersonal and institutional. The nursing home is part of the urban fabric of the neighbourhood and was designed to feel connected to the community.

Henning Larsen Architects Copenhagen, Denmark

Henning Larsen Architects are a major Danish architecture firm with a variety of new projects and proposals to house the ageing population of Denmark. A proposal for Sølund Retirement community from 2012 is particularly interesting and won second prize in an international competition. I wish to interview someone from Henning Larsen Architects in Copenhagen who worked on the project to go through designs that intend to create non-institutional communities.

Flintholm Care Home Fredriksberg, Copenhagen, Denmark

Flintholm Care Home, Fredriksberg, Copenhagen is in a neighbourhood undergoing major transformations from industrial to residential and commercial use. Fredriksen and Knudsen Architects again put focus on community with an elliptical form promoting neighbourly activity. The architects have designed out hallways for large communal spaces next to independent housing units. I want to visit Flintholm to see how retirement homes can be included in major regeneration areas.



Fælledgården Nursing Home. Source: Panaramio

Using the grant

A grant would be used towards travel to Denmark and the Netherlands as well as accommodation and general high living costs. The grant would go towards creating a publication based on my experiences and research. I intend to produce a series of interviews, photographs and architectural details of the projects I wish to visit. I also seek to produce a short essay on the projects and how these ideas can be of benefit to Scotland with a view to developing the subject for an eventual dissertation on housing for the elderly in 4th year of architecture school.