Living in imaginary places: on the creation and consumption of themed residential architecture

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Preface

In this dissertation I have elaborated on my fascination for postmodern architecture and the way in which people (want to) dwell, experience and judge their residential space. This fascination was not only developed by reading academic literature but also by the work I did. In 1996 I started work as an architect at a Dutch architectural office. This office basically preferred a ‘modern’ style of architecture and their approach to design felt in keeping with what I had learned at the technical universities of Aachen and Zürich. At that time the Netherlands was a ‘Walhalla’ for architects from many countries because housing design was basically experimental and ‘supermodern’. However, things were changing. The first Vinex projects had been criticized as monofunctional and too uniform. As a consequence, more emphasis was being placed on diversity and thus, on the usage of decorative battens, ornaments and even classic columns at the front of houses. Personally, I experienced this shift when I changed office and found myself drawing decorative battens and ornaments and working on what became known as neotraditional housing. The shift toward a greater appreciation of neotraditional housing provided the subject for my Master’s thesis and later on for this dissertation.

Thanks to Ineke Teijmant and Jan Rath, I came into contact with Arnold Reijndorp and we worked together on a research project on the relationship between nostalgia and the emerging theming of housing schemes. As a follow-up, this thesis deals with the variety of reasons for creation and consumption of themed residential place and architecture. Basic information for my dissertation came from the interviews with 93 professionals and residents. I appreciated a lot their engagement and frankness.

I want to mention a few people who have actively supported or contributed to my dissertation. I am grateful to Sako Musterd, Len de Klerk and Joos Droogleever Fortuijn who have connected the PhD-project to the Urban Geographies programme group at the Amsterdam Institute of Social Science Research (AISSR) of the University of Amsterdam. I also thank Mendel Wemerman who helped me to transcript the interviews and Howard Turner who edited the text in this book. I am also grateful to Len ’t Hoen for turning this thesis into a beautiful book.

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A special thanks goes out to my friends and paranimfs Marjolijn and Ivan. Marjolijn not only gave valuable comments on my papers but our talks about all kinds of subjects also provided me with the sometimes much needed escape from research work. With Ivan I share the fascination for everyday residential life, for shopping malls and other themed places.

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