Stimulating care environment for Seniors living in a nursing home to improve Quality of Life

Background
Seniors nowadays prefer to age at home, although many seniors will arrive at some point at a stage where living at home is no longer possible, due to severe physical and/or cognitive impairments, such as dementia. This group of seniors is very vulnerable. Loneliness, disorientation and lack of physical and mental activity are unfortunate common problems among seniors living in a nursing home. The design of the environment has a significant impact on the Quality of Life (QoL) and on the Feeling of Home. Therefore, it is essential that the environment fits the needs of its residents.

Goal
This results in the following research question: How can a nursing home (Sint Jozefoord) being transformed into a stimulating living environment, within the concept of 'just like home' to improve the Quality of Life?

The aim of the project is to develop design principles for cognitive, physical and social stimuli in architecture and technology to create a stimulating care environment for seniors with dementia and seniors with somatic problems living in a nursing home. The ultimate goal is creating a stimulating care environment which maximizes the Quality of Life and the feeling of home of the residents and advance durability happiness in the last phase of life.

Methods
Several literature reviews, interviews, spatial analysis and observations are used in this project to gain knowledge about the organization, target groups, location and state of the Art Smart Care. This data will finally be translated into design principles, which will be tested and measured in a living lab.

(expected) Results
By developing design principles for the common used spaces in a care home namely living room, corridor, main entrance and garden, this project aims to transform ordinary nursing homes into stimulating environments. There are several spatial, technological and care aspects explored which have a positive or negative influence on the Quality of Life and/or feeling of home. Design principles will be developed to enhance the positive aspects and mitigate the negative aspects.

For example, the impact of disorientation is an important reason for admission to a nursing home for people with dementia. However, disorientation increases by relocation, which can result in even more stress, anxiety, etc. Therefore, it is essential for a stimulating environment that it supports navigation and readability. What is exactly means for the design of the environment is part of this project.

Figure 1: Impression of the existing situation of the nursing home (Sint Jozefoord)

Figure 2: Design goal