

Alleviating Urban Loneliness

Designer's Handbook

## General principles



### Being alone vs. feeling alone

*You cannot "cure" loneliness simply by placing people in a room together. Loneliness is referential, and might prove harder to escape when trapped in the presence of others.*



### Platforms to "give back"

*You cannot "cure" lonely people simply by giving them sympathetic assistance. Instead we yearn for a quality, reciprocal bond: the opportunity to give something back.*



### Curating personal space

*Temporary periods of restorative isolation are actually beneficial, and are enhanced by an environment that reflects personality.*



### Avoiding over-designed space

*Over-designed spaces deny their occupants the opportunity to express their personal preferences, leaving them with the task of building a life amongst someone else's things.*



### Reducing exposure

*When you feel trapped and exposed you can feel incredibly lonely. Carefully designed spaces of privacy are therefore essential for alleviating loneliness.*



### Increasing control

*An exercisable control over where, when and who you are interacting with greatly reduces feelings of stress, crowding or the urge to withdraw.*



### Promoting unforced meetings

*Intuitive routing invites people to interact in a more controlled and relaxed environment: an unpretentious, non-obligating opportunity to see and hear city life.*



### Using technology wisely

*Technology is best-used to facilitate interaction, not to replace it. In the hyper-connected modern world, such a healthy distinction is increasingly difficult to manage.*



### Responsibility & trust

*Contrary to narratives promoted by convenience-oriented "co-living" schemes, taking responsibility can improve well-being, and higher levels of trust permit fewer rules.*



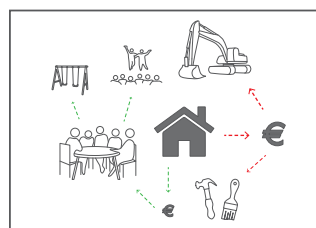
### Feeling part of society

*A perceived lack of companionship with wider society challenges our sense of belonging and compounds our sense of isolation.*



### Bottom-up conflict resolution

*Conflict resolution without an external authority encourages people to take responsibility for disagreements and to circumvent the dangers of social withdrawal.*



### Top-down finance

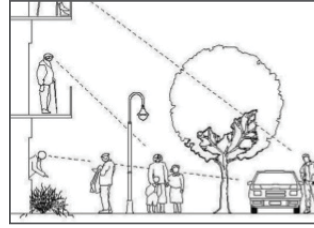
*When you do not rely on your neighbours financially, community interactions are likely to be more positive, but a lesser understanding of costs may be problematic.*

## Spatial principles



### Community with critical mass

*A critical mass of around 40% permanent residents allows a neighbourhood to feel more lively and for a stronger sense of community to develop.*



### Defensible space

*Increased feelings of communal control enhances the obligation of personal responsibility, enabling residents to feel safer in their local neighbourhood.*



### Reduced vehicular traffic

*Management of potentially dangerous traffic alleviates safety concerns. Improved air quality also improves health, and calmer streets facilitate more helpful behaviour.*



### Shared entrances

*Shared entrances promote passive social contacts, but need to be sufficiently small so that other users are perceived as fellow residents, and not as strangers.*



### Smaller streets and blocks

*Larger buildings provoke a greater sense of fear, lower social interaction, less control over external spaces and more problems with building management.*



### Opportunity to escape

*The (feeling of) opportunity to escape can provide a huge source of relief. Generally, when living above the 5th floor, this vital connection to the street is lost.*



### Green space

*Integration of nature improves both physical outlook and mental well-being. Diverse and less-organised (wilder) forms of nature are proven to be more calming and beneficial.*



### Controlling personal space

*Calming notions of privacy and control over our personal space is more important than its size. Smaller personal spaces might be described as cramped, but not crowded.*



### Promoting civilities

*Quality street infrastructure and plantings act as signs of civility, suggesting a degree of social cohesion: indicating that the area is well-cared for and a source of pride.*



### Neighbourhood densification

*A threshold density of residents is required to facilitate public transit and mixed-use amenities typical of (and essential to) walkable, interaction-friendly neighbourhoods.*



### Repairing incivilities

*Rapid repairs of hostile vandalism and signs of physical deterioration help to reduce their stressful association with more serious occurrences of crime.*



### Sense of enclosure

*A powerful sense of enclosure (physical or symbolic) fosters autonomy but also allows a group to develop its own norms, making it an ideal typology for places of meeting.*



## Additional principles



### Sensible group sizes

*Living in a house of non-kin (typically) comprised of more than five people tends to push occupants towards a more negative sense of crowding.*



### Controlling personal comfort

*Where you are able to exercise control, however small, over furniture and other objects your perceived level of comfort greatly improves.*



### Promoting meaningful tasks

*More meaningful forms of community engagement alleviate the dread of social exclusion. Where life is perceived as worthwhile, loneliness is reduced.*



### Co-operative spaces

*When a group is oriented towards a task involving cooperation instead of competition, the subjective experience of crowding is lessened.*



### Cultural expectations

*For instance in Hong Kong, it is believed that the adverse affects of high density on mental health are lessened by cultural expectations.*



### Reduced age-segregation

*Especially amongst the elderly, residents living in age-segregated accommodation tend to report higher levels of fear than those living in more mixed accommodation.*

## The city of comings and goings



### Permanence

*Often framed as a temporary "problem", migration is recognised as a permanent phenomenon, one that necessitates an adequately durable spatial response.*



### Free anonymity

*The freedom to roam safely and anonymously in the presence of strangers. Opportunities for social contact without commitment; social contact does not become "work".*



### Shared space

*Diminished by neoliberalism, accessible public space celebrates staying activities; where everyone is granted free access to a valuable place of meeting and sharing.*



### High density

*A prerequisite of cosmopolitan city life, the provision of high-density neighbourhoods allows for low-expectation social contacts associated with free anonymity.*



### Emancipation

*Both socially and economically, the city is an emancipatory environment, equipping its residents with a valuable capacity for social freedom and financial opportunity.*



## Loneliness: an essential behavioural prompt

### Hunger

- antonym: not-hungry
- warning: avoid malnutrition
- solution: eat food

### Pain

- antonym: not-in-pain
- warning: avoid further tissue damage
- solution: protect and heal the painful area

### Thirst

- antonym: not-thirsty
- warning: avoid dehydration
- solution: drink water

### Loneliness

- antonym: not-lonely [or 'normal']
- warning: avoid social exclusion
- solution: an incredibly complex balance of objective and subjective alterations

Source: John Cacioppo and William Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008)

## Understanding social-emotional pain as directly comparable to physical pain

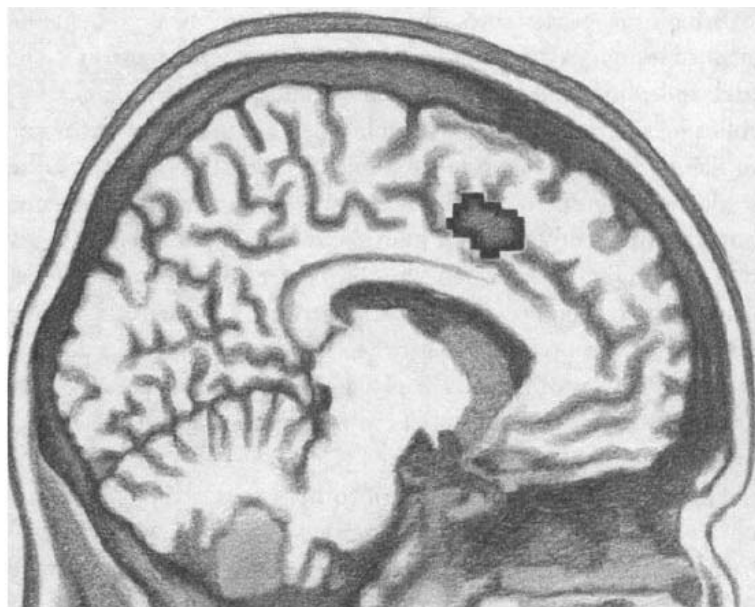
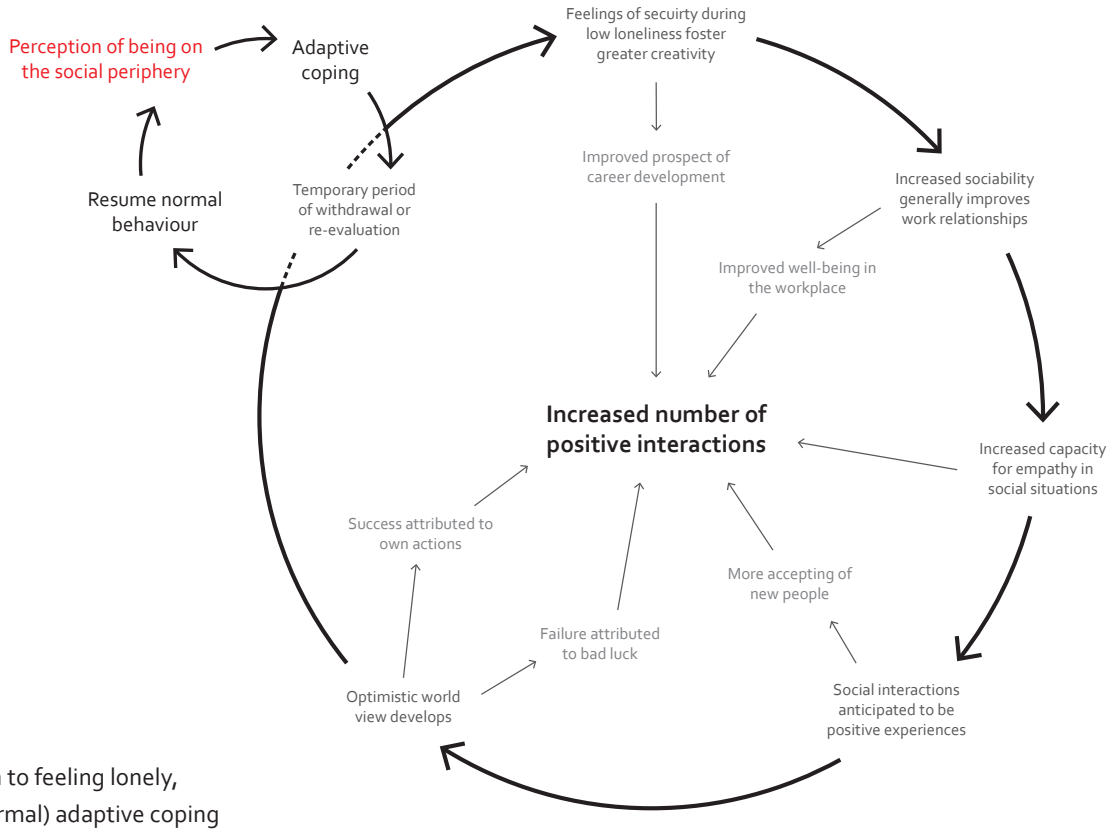
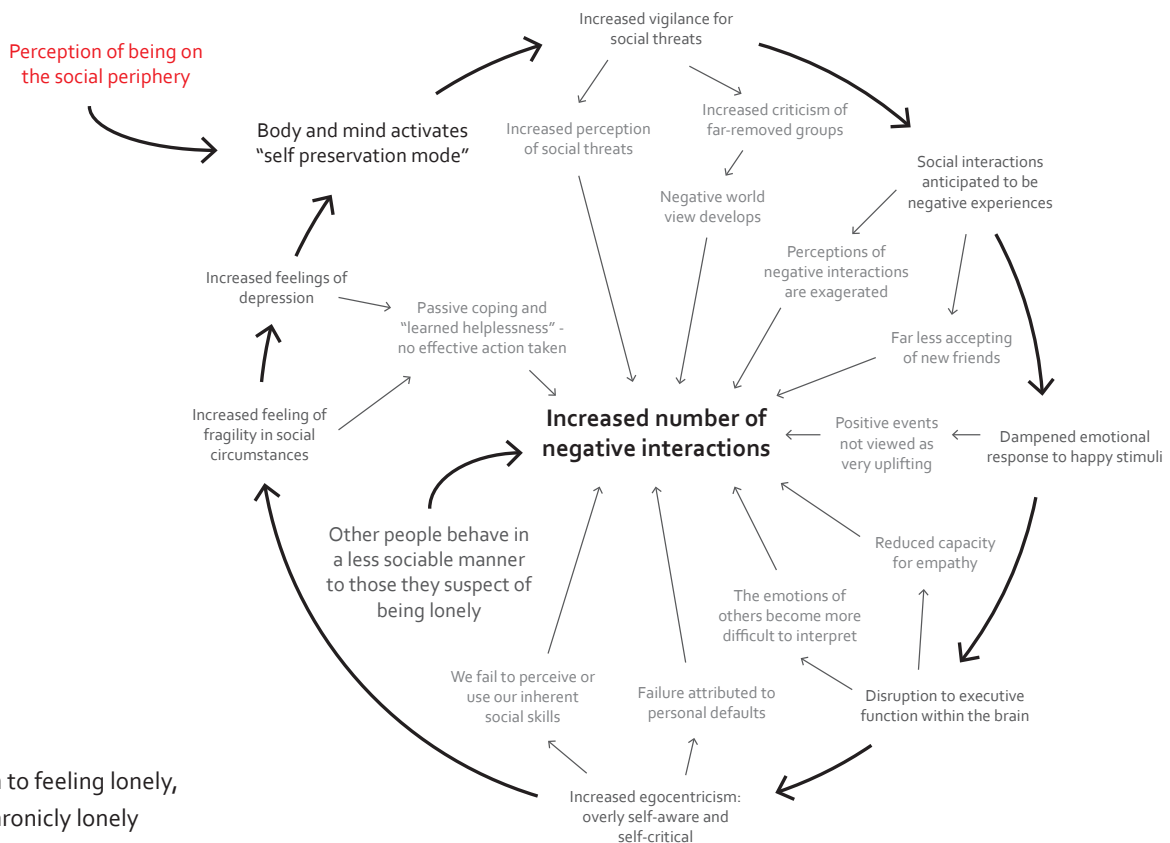


FIGURE 2. The human brain reacting to social pain. The dark rectangular blotch near the top of the brain represents the activation of the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex in response to social rejection. The brain responds similarly to physical pain. Adapted from N. I. Eisenberger, M. Lieberman, and K. D. Williams, "Does rejection hurt? An fMRI study of social exclusion," *Science* 302 (10 October 2003): 290–292.

# What happens when we feel lonely?

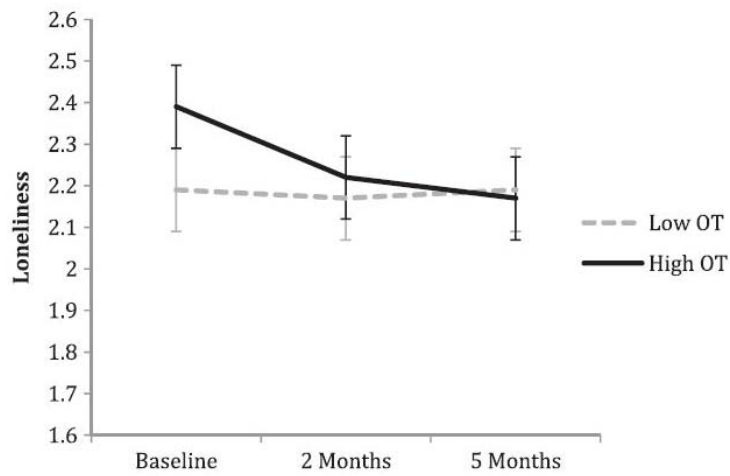


Reaction to feeling lonely, with (normal) adaptive coping



Reaction to feeling lonely, whilst chronically lonely

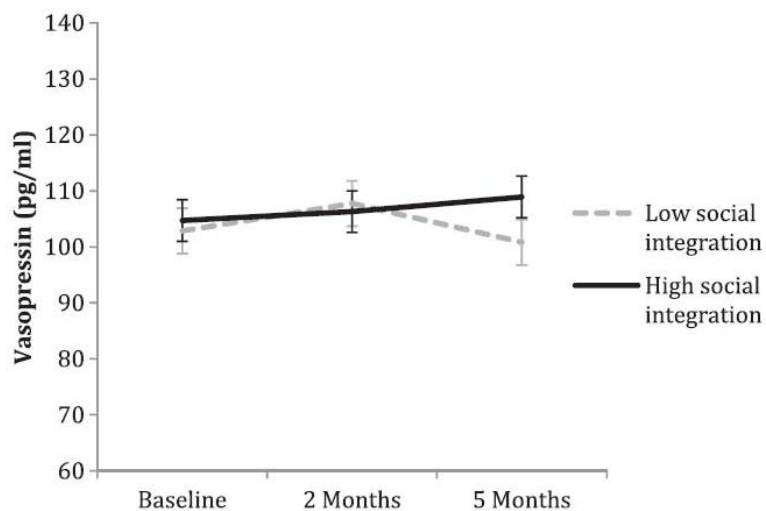
Plasma oxytocin - *predicts* changes in social relationship satisfaction, social support and loneliness



**Fig. 4.** Trajectories of change in loneliness as a function of baseline plasma oxytocin levels. For illustration purposes, a median split of the baseline oxytocin was used to create groups and high and low baseline oxytocin. Errors bars represent standard error of the mean.

Source: Gouin, Jean-Philippe, Hossein Purnajafi-Nazarloo, and C. Sue Carter, "Changes in Social Functioning and Circulating Oxytocin and Vasopressin Following the Migration to a New Country", *Psychology & Behaviour*, 139 (2014), 67-72

Arginine vasopressin - *reacts* to changes in social relationship satisfaction, social support and loneliness



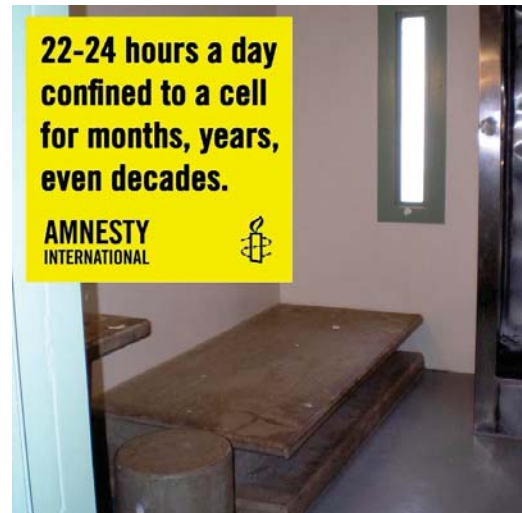
**Fig. 1.** Trajectories of change in plasma AVP as a function of social Integration. For illustration purposes, a median split of the aggregated social integration variable was used to create groups of high and low social integration. Error bars represent standard error of the mean.



# History: Loneliness as the ultimate punishment



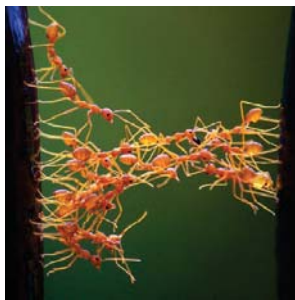
Napoleon in Exile on St. Helena, c. 1815



A solitary confinement cell at the Federal Supermax Prison in Florence, Colorado, USA, c. 2015

## Anthropology: what does loneliness remind us?

### Social insects



Cooperation is inflexible



Social systems are fixed and cannot be reinvented; inability to adapt to new threats

### Social mammals

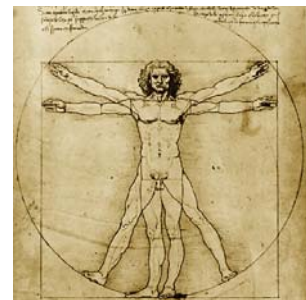


Cooperation is limited



Flexible cooperation exists but only between friends and family; inability to trust strangers limits the scale of cooperation

### Homo Sapiens



Cooperation is flexible & unlimited



Capacity to rapidly reinvent social systems and cooperate in large groups with countless numbers of strangers enables world domination



## Groups most affected by loneliness



### Groups cut off from society

*Those suffering from poverty, unemployment, or mental illness.*



### Minority groups

*Especially asylum seekers and refugees, or ethnic minorities, guest workers and seasonal workers.*



### Groups who require support

*The disabled, those addicted to drugs or alcohol, lone parents, or stay-at-home individuals caring for relatives.*



### The elderly

*Especially those who live alone as a result of bereavement, or those who are without adequate social care.*



### Young people

*Recent changes in the way we live and work are having a huge impact on the social and mental well-being of younger generations.*



### Groups undergoing life events

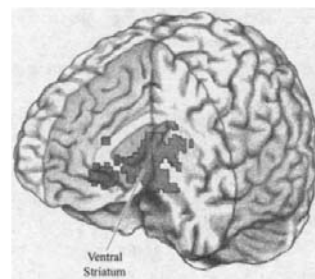
*Moving to a new town, losing a loved one, getting a divorce, having a new baby, or adapting to the departure of a child from the family home.*

## Factors affecting loneliness: nature, nurture and perception



### Genetically inherited vulnerabilities (52%)

*Different people are more/less sensitive to the pain of social exclusion.*



### Social cognition

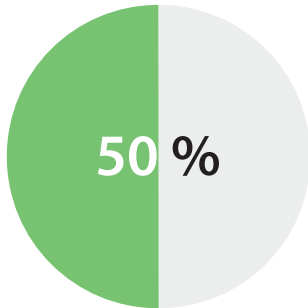
*The way we perceive our social interactions determines the response in our brains; we are the architects of our own reality.*



### Our environment (48%)

*Genes interacting with the environment determine the expression of basic personality aspects; whether or not people become lonely is largely due to their environment.*

## The urgency of preventing loneliness

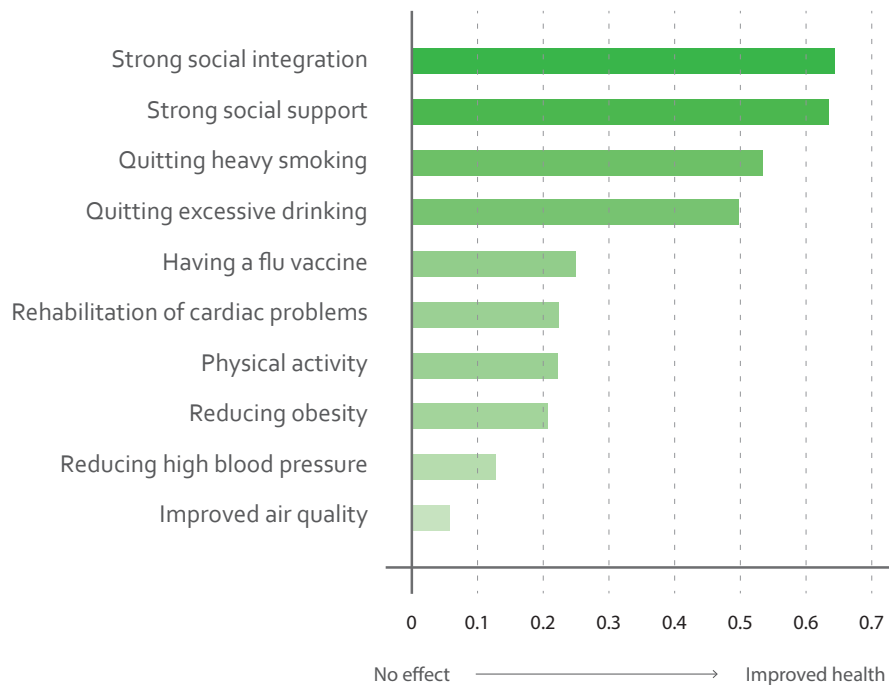


General increased likelihood of survival for participants with stronger social relationships

*Meta-Analysis of 148 studies, adjusted for error  
Over 300,000 participants followed for an average of 7.5 years  
Consistent across age, sex, initial health status and cause of death*

Source: Holt-Lunstad, Julianne, Timothy B. Smith, and J. Bradley Layton, 'Social Relationships and Mortality Risk: A Meta-Analytic Review', PLoS Med, 7 (2010)

## Probability of decreased mortality relating to various health conditions





## The three dimensions of well-being

*"Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."*

*The Constitution of the World Health Organization, 1948*

### Global cost of obesity-related illness to hit \$1.2tn a year from 2025

Health bill will be 'enormous burden' without more preventative measures to check worsening epidemic, say experts



In 2016, 36% of men and women in the US were obese, by 2022 that is predicted to be 41%. In the UK, 27% were obese in 2014, a figure set to rise to 34% by 2025. Photograph: Getty Stock Photo

Physical

### 'Depression lost me my job': How mental health costs up to 300,000 jobs a year

By Katie Silver  
Health reporter, BBC News  
24 October 2017 Health 422



James Tillingham, who has bipolar disorder, explains that being at work has a "normalising effect"

Mental

### Loneliness twice as unhealthy as obesity for older people, study finds

Scientists found that the loneliest were nearly twice as likely to die during their six-year study than the least lonely



The findings point to a pending crisis in the UK as the population ages and people increasingly live alone or far from their families. Photograph: iStockphoto.com

Social

## The economic potential of preventing loneliness

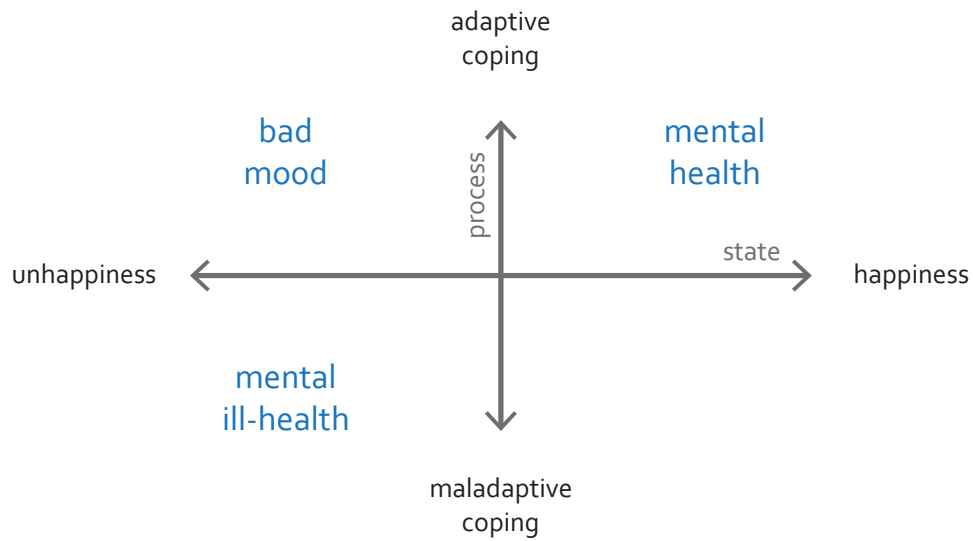
£ 6000

*Average medical costs relating to loneliness for one decade of an older person's life*

£ 1 → £ 3

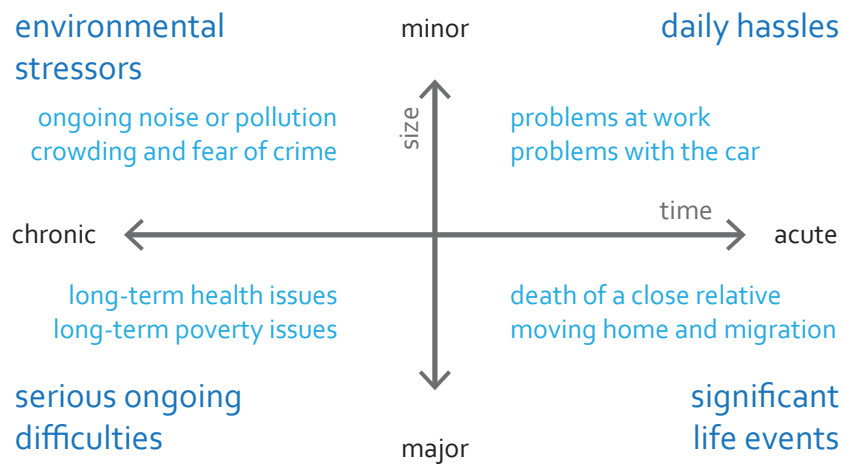
*An evaluation of "navigation schemes" (services connecting people with similar interests) found that for every pound spent preventing loneliness, there were two-to-three pounds of savings in medical costs*

## The spectrum of mental health



Source: Halpern, David, *Mental Health and the Built Environment: More than Bricks and Mortar?* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995)

## Migration as a major, acute stressor



## Extended consequences

### Increased exposure to stressors

*Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, lonely people report more social stressors and are more likely to feel trapped in unfulfilling employment*

### Worsened health behaviours

*The wear-and-tear of loneliness in middle-age leads to bad diet, less exercise and addictive tendencies in an attempt to alleviate mood*

### Domino-effect of psychological issues

- Depression
- Paranoia
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Increased sense of threat

### Increased difficulty coping with stressors

*With feelings of helplessness and threat, everyday stresses are perceived as being worse than they actually are, and social uplifts are reported as less-gratifying. The sympathetic nervous system's 'fight-or-flight' evolutionary response is also over-activated*

### Depleted rest and recuperation

*Loneliness reduces the quality (not quantity) of sleep and leads to increased daytime fatigue*

### Domino-effect of physical issues

- Dementia
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease and strokes
- Lowered resistance to viruses
- Higher rate of accidents
- Increased vulnerability in cases of extreme weather

Sources: George Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage: A New Politics for an Age of Crisis* (Verso, 2017), pg. 17  
Cacioppo, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*

## Debunking the myths of loneliness

### Social skills

*"People are lonely because they have poor social skills"*

Everybody has good social skills to begin with, but the experience of loneliness leads to self-preservation and the under-using of our inherent social skills

### Social support

*"Lonely people can be 'cured' with the support of people around them"*

Dispelling the feeling of loneliness relies upon mutual aided protection and reciprocal connections; simply 'getting help' from others is not enough

### Social Engagement

*"Take lonely people and put them in a room together"*

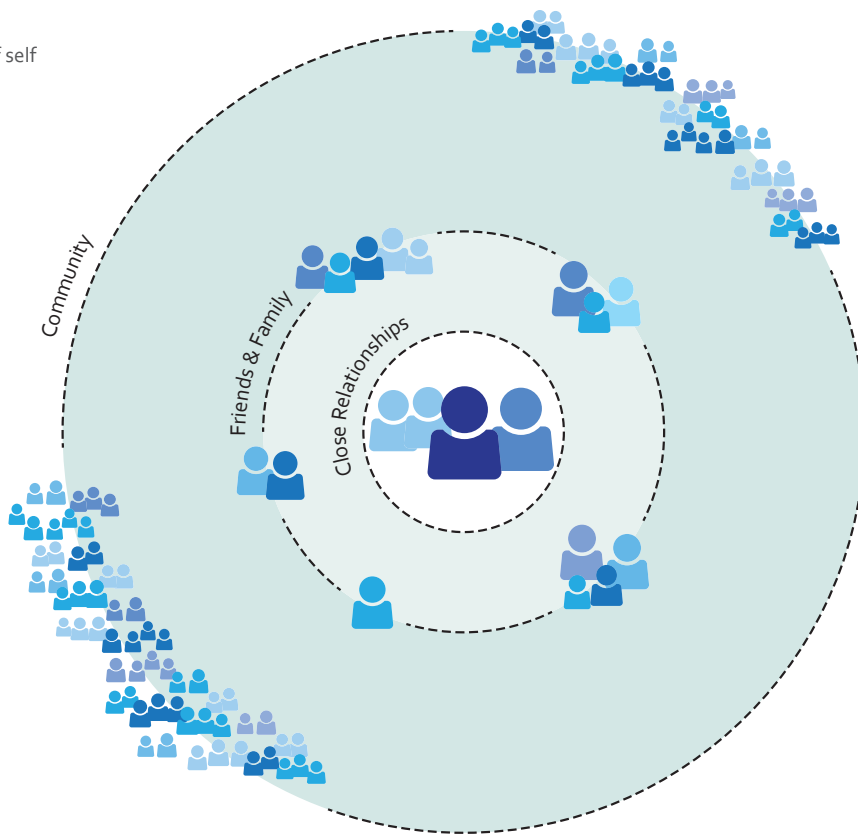
This conflates the idea of *being* alone with *feeling* alone



## Social circles

Sense of self

Needs



## Close relationships

Personal or intimate self

*The need for personal affirmation*

## Friends & Family

Social or relational self

*The need for a wider circle of friends and family*

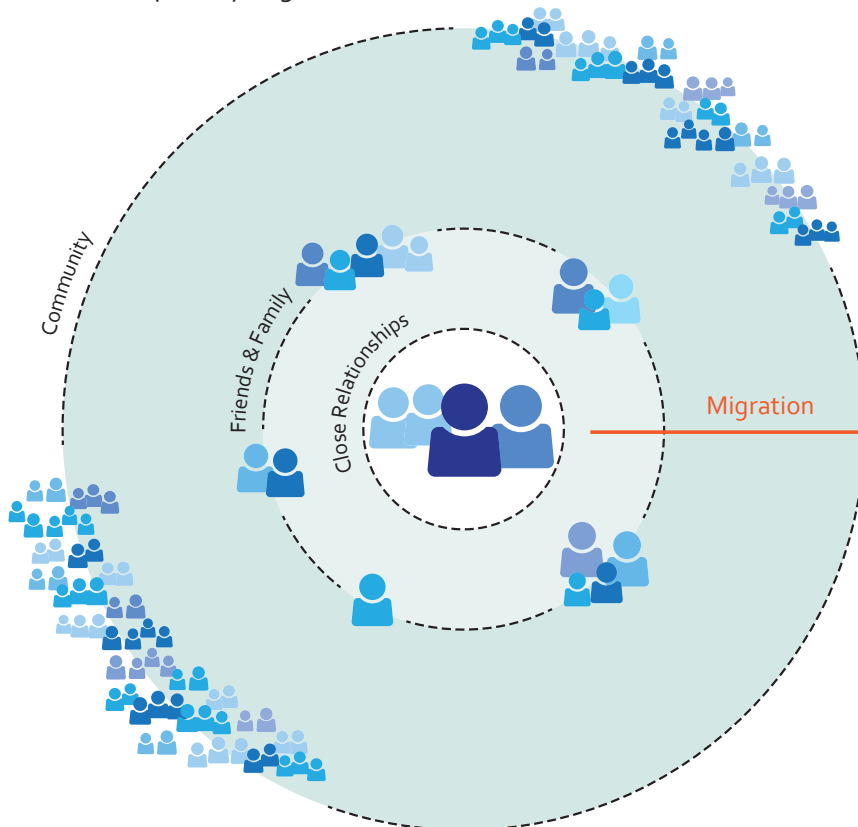
## Community

*The need to feel as though we belong to certain collectives*

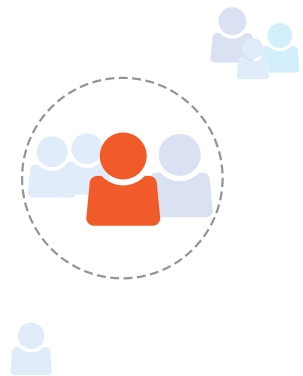
Collective self

Source: León and Rebeca Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*, 1989

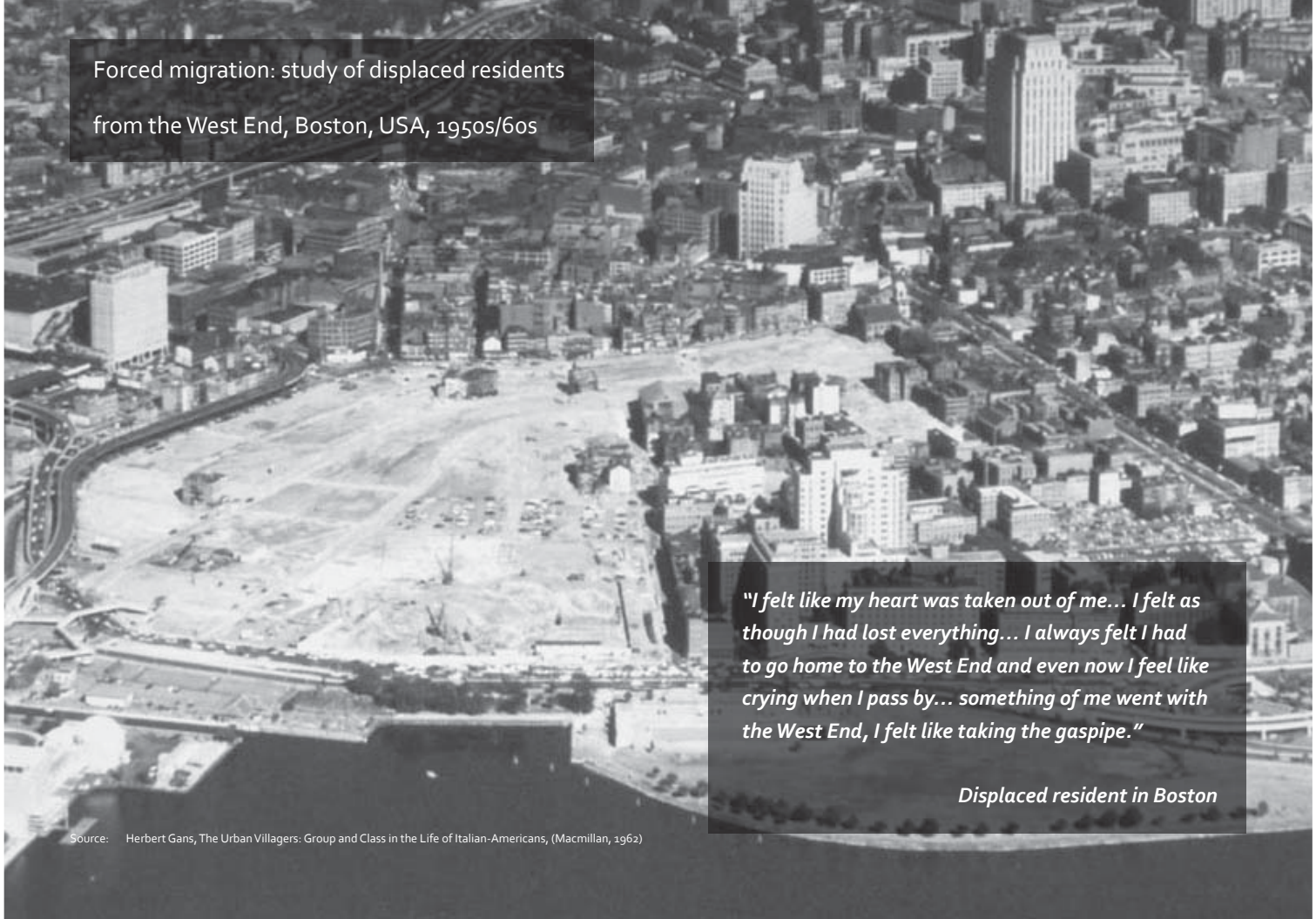
## Social circles - disrupted by migration



*"[In migration] one ceases to belong to the world one left behind, and does not yet belong to the world in which one has nearly arrived."*





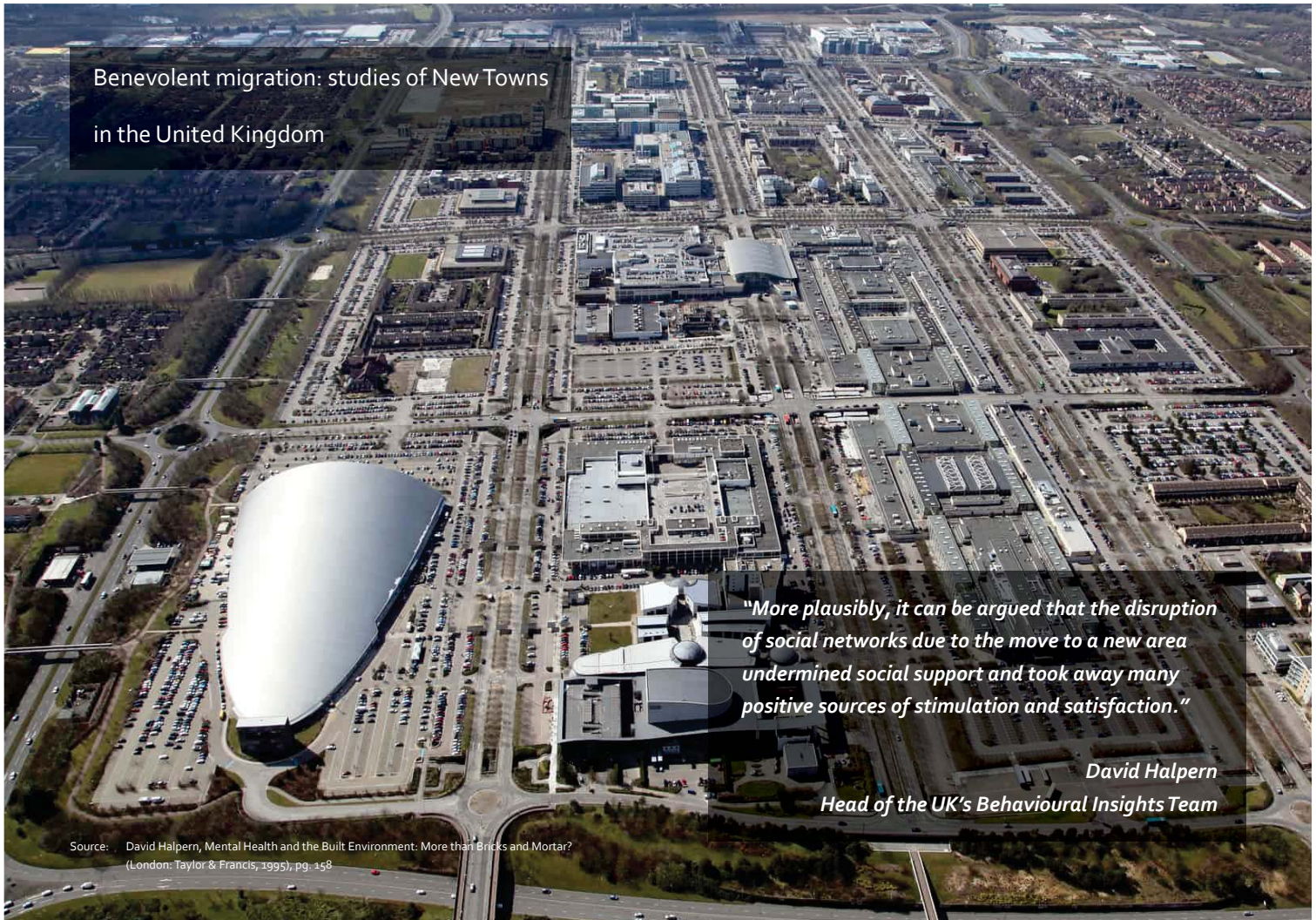


Forced migration: study of displaced residents  
from the West End, Boston, USA, 1950s/60s

*"I felt like my heart was taken out of me... I felt as though I had lost everything... I always felt I had to go home to the West End and even now I feel like crying when I pass by... something of me went with the West End, I felt like taking the gaspipe."*

*Displaced resident in Boston*

Source: Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans*, (Macmillan, 1962)



Benevolent migration: studies of New Towns  
in the United Kingdom

*"More plausibly, it can be argued that the disruption of social networks due to the move to a new area undermined social support and took away many positive sources of stimulation and satisfaction."*

*David Halpern  
Head of the UK's Behavioural Insights Team*

Source: David Halpern, *Mental Health and the Built Environment: More than Bricks and Mortar?* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995), pg. 158

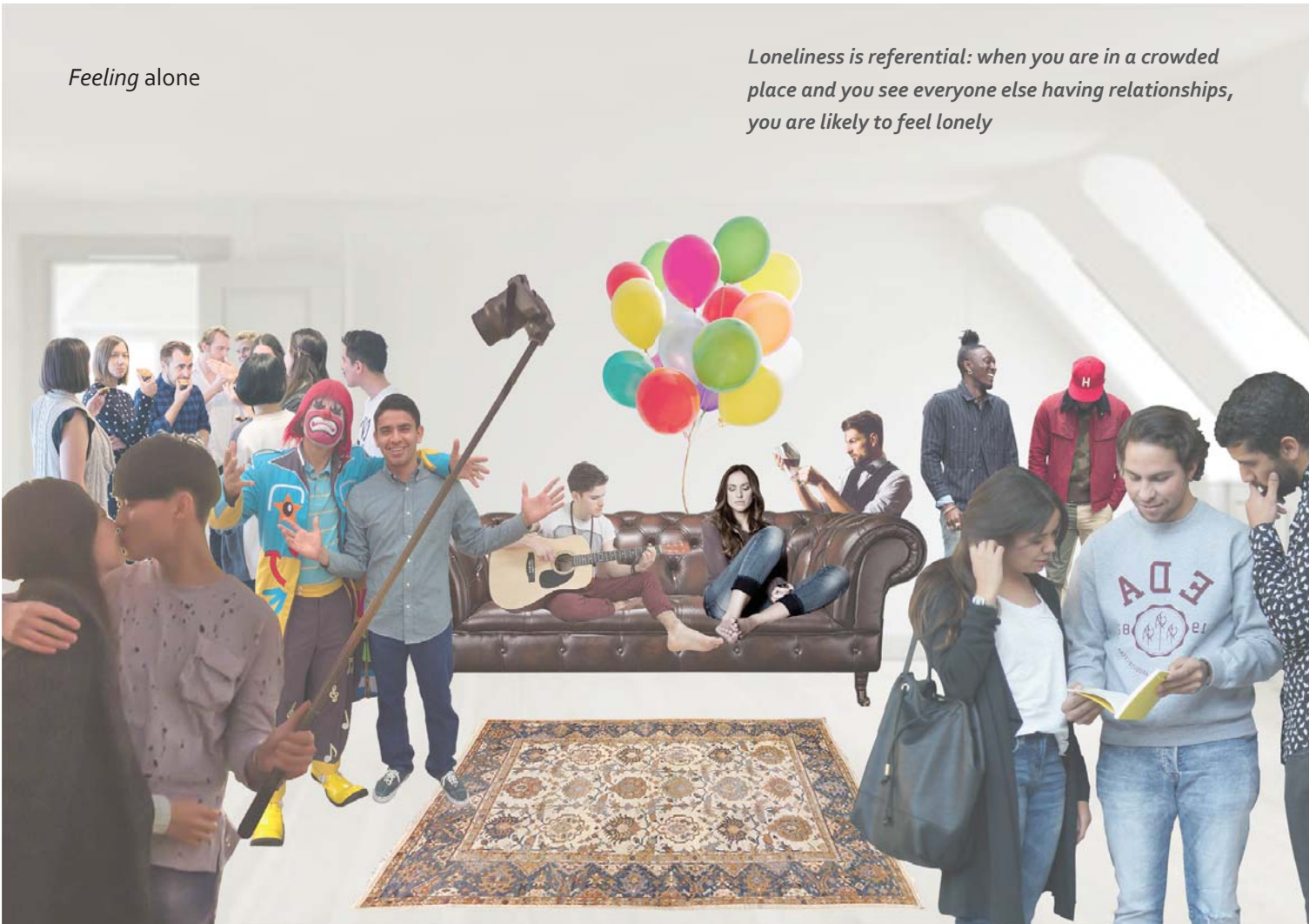


*Being alone*



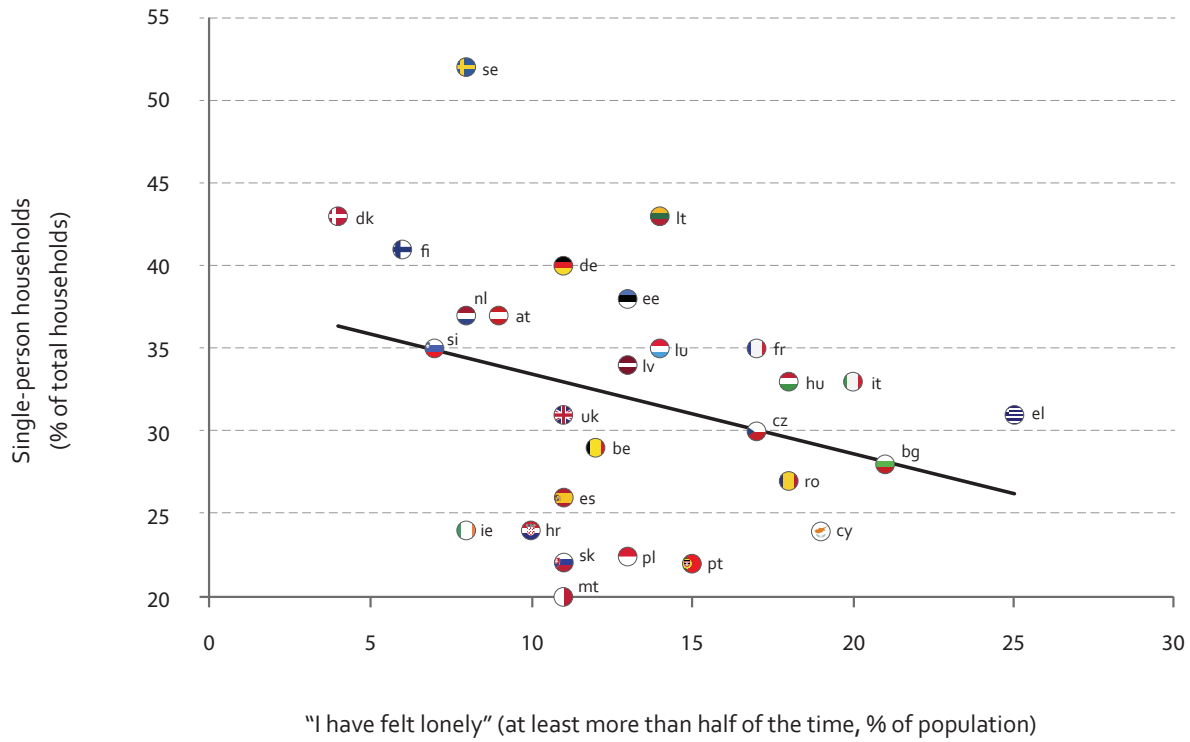
*Feeling alone*

*Loneliness is referential: when you are in a crowded place and you see everyone else having relationships, you are likely to feel lonely*



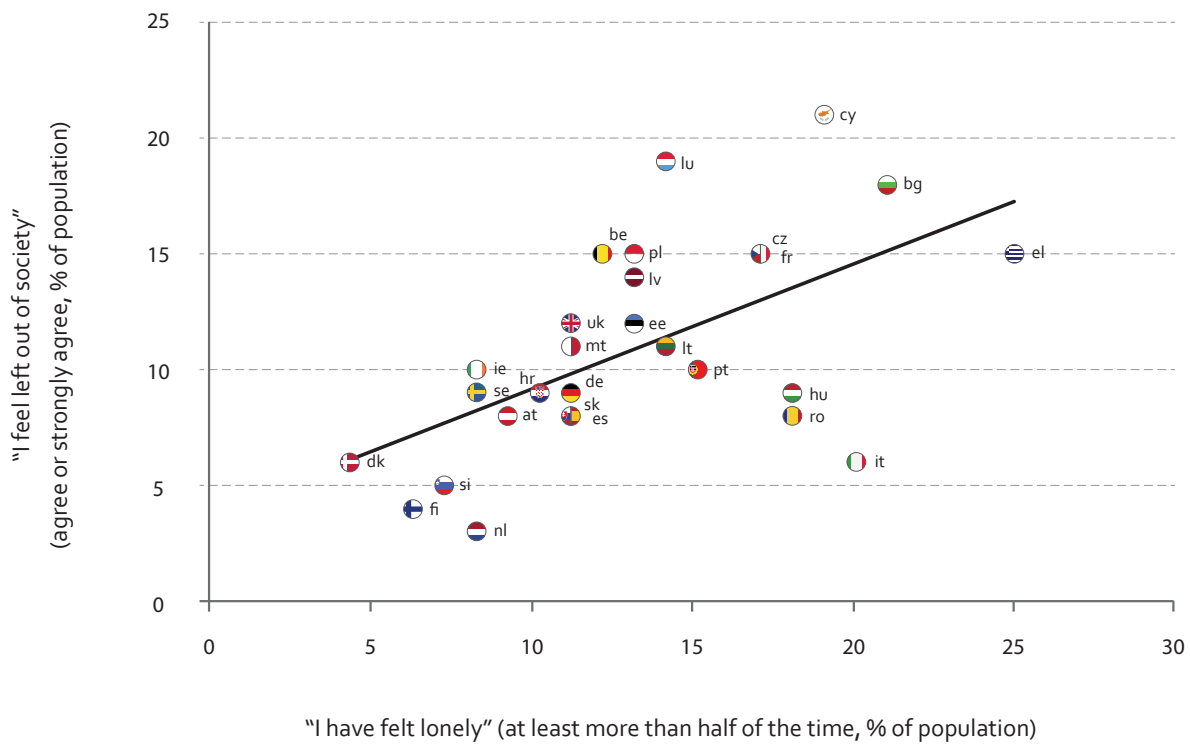


Social engagement: *Living alone vs. feeling alone* - comparing the EU 28



Sources: European Quality of Life Survey 2012, Eurostat Official Statistics 2015 & 2016

Social engagement: *Feeling alone vs. feeling left out of society* - comparing the EU 28



Which factors *correlate* with **feeling alone**?

"I have felt lonely"

> half of the time, % of tot. pop.

**lack of Employment**

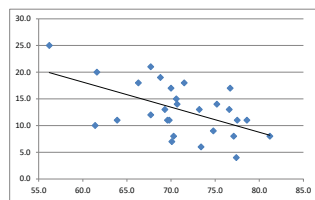
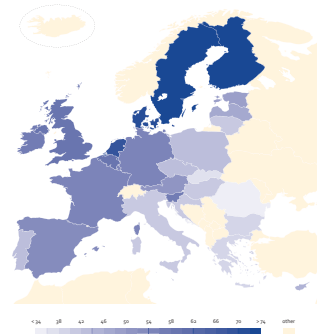
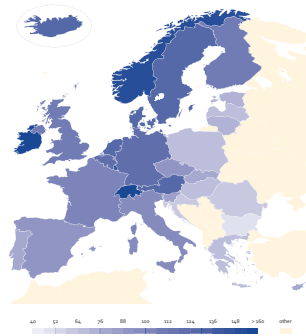
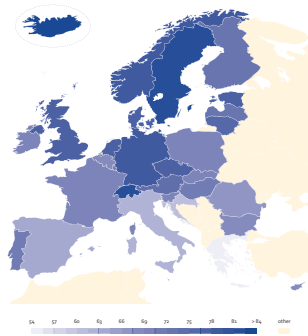
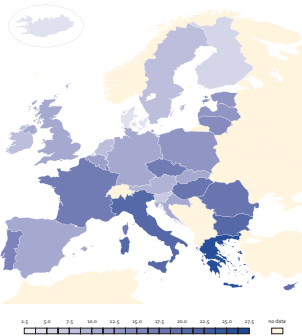
% of 20-64 year-olds

**lack of GDP per capita**

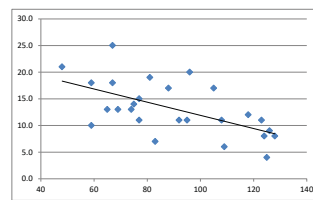
purchasing power parity

**lack of Gender equality**

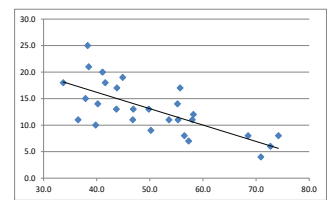
index score



Source: Eurostat 2016



Source: Eurostat 2016



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality 2012

Y axes: "I have felt lonely" (at least more than half of the time, % of population)

**lack of Access to green spaces**

easy or very easy, % of tot. pop

**lack of Volunteering**

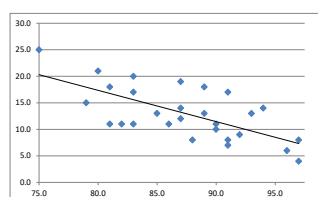
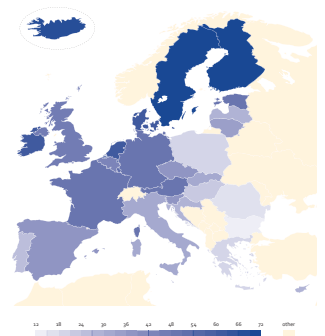
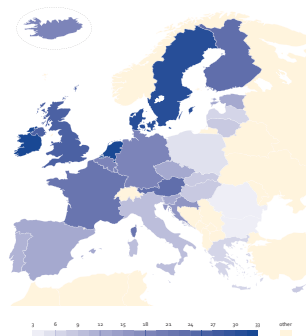
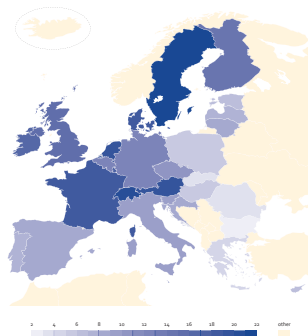
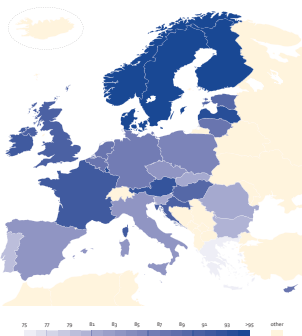
regularly, % of tot. pop

**lack of Participation in clubs**

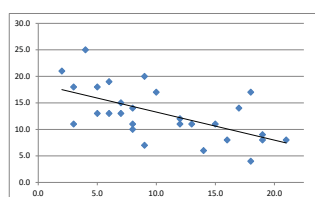
at least once per week, % of tot. pop

**lack of Sports & exercise**

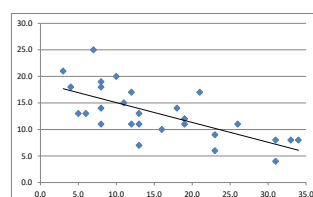
at least once per week, % of tot. pop



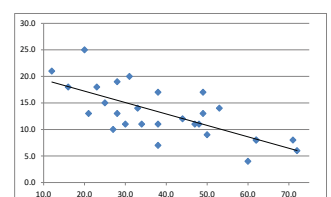
Source: European Quality of Life Survey 2012



Source: European Quality of Life Survey 2012



Source: European Quality of Life Survey 2012

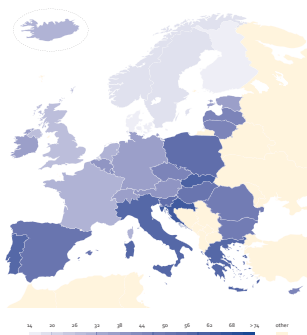


Source: European Quality of Life Survey 2012

Y axes: "I have felt lonely" (at least more than half of the time, % of population)

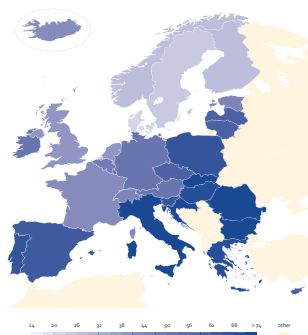
## Women living with parents

% of women aged 18-34



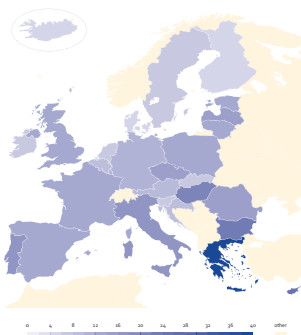
## Men living with parents

% of men aged 18-34



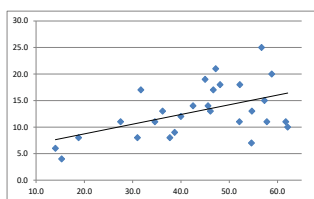
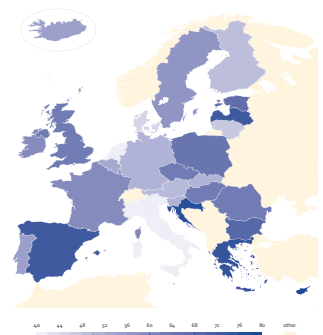
## Feeling depressed

> half of the time, % of tot. pop.

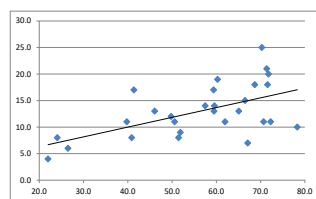


## Feeling stressed

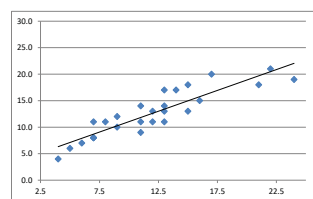
at work and/or home, % of tot. pop.



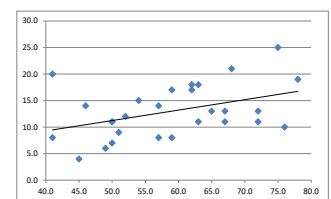
Source: Eurostat 2015



Source: Eurostat 2015



Source: European Quality of Life Survey 2012



Source: European Quality of Life Survey 2012

Y axes: "I have felt lonely" (at least more than half of the time, % of population)

## Social networks and mixed demographics

### Age-diverse neighbourhoods

A community of mixed age groups reduces the strains placed on the education sector (balanced mix of families) and the housing sector (balanced mix of persons per household). However, many residents actually prefer to live in homogenous areas (such as "family neighbourhoods") that appear more in tune with their needs. It is also more convenient to build for more homogenous populations who have a generally homogenous (repeatable) set of needs.

### Socially diverse neighbourhoods

Mixed-ethnicity neighbourhoods tend to alleviate the urgent problems of social segregation and flashpoints of racial conflict. However, social interactions with members of different racial groups tend to be treated with suspicion, so harmonious relations are not guaranteed by spatial proximity alone. Furthermore, people from similar backgrounds tend to have more things in common, and so neighbourhoods that are more socially homogenous might actually exhibit better neighbouring behaviour.

### Economically diverse neighbourhoods

As strong boundaries are inherently difficult to resolve, mixed communities alleviate the spike in crime (usually burglaries) observed where an affluent neighbourhood meets a poor neighbourhood. Mixed neighbourhoods also place better safeguards on the affordability of amenities, maintenance, and the fair distribution of (city) resources; the build-up of "good areas" and "bad areas" is also less likely to materialise.

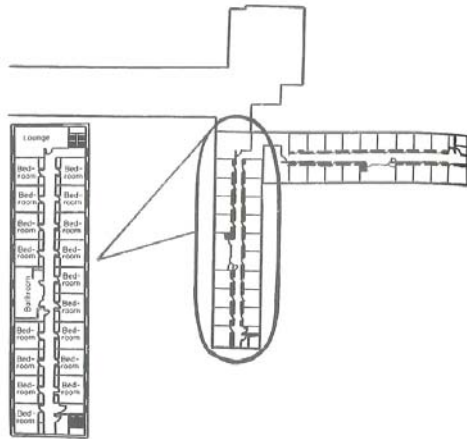
### Achieving a fine balance

When the population or neighbourhood density of a certain group (e.g. an ethnic or migrant group, local families, or factory workers) falls below a certain "critical mass" (usually around 40%), this leads to a reduced social cohesion and a higher prevalence of mental ill-health. With this in mind, a fine balance might best be achieved through pursuing urban mosaics of differences at neighbourhood level, whilst maintaining an essential balance of ages, social and economic backgrounds at larger scales.

# Study of crowding in Stony Brook University, Long Island, USA, 1977

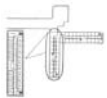
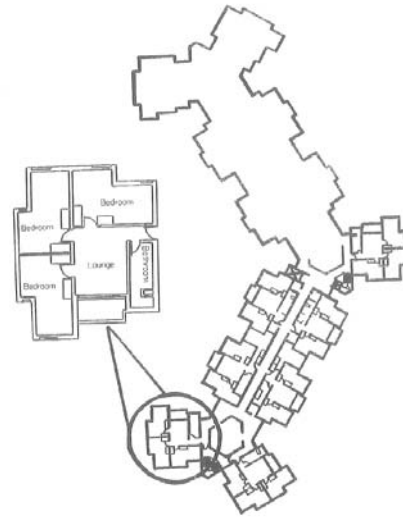
## Sociofugal: reducing interaction

- Double loaded corridor design
- 34 students per floor (two per bedroom)
- Bathroom and lounge shared between 34
- Hallway used by all 34 residents



## Sociopetal: increasing interaction

- Suite design
- 34 students per floor (two per bedroom)
- Shared spaces broken into smaller units, mostly between 6 people
- Hallway used by up to 24 residents, but not to access shared areas

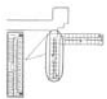


Less social



More social

*When waiting for the start of a group experiment, corridor residents sat further apart, were more likely to avoid eye contact and initiated fewer conversations*

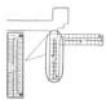


More stressed



Less stressed

*When joined by a confederate in the waiting room, suite residents felt less stressed whereas corridor residents felt more stressed*

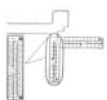


More competitive



Less competitive

*When involved in an experiment requiring competition, suite residents found the experience to be more stressful*



Less cooperative



More cooperative

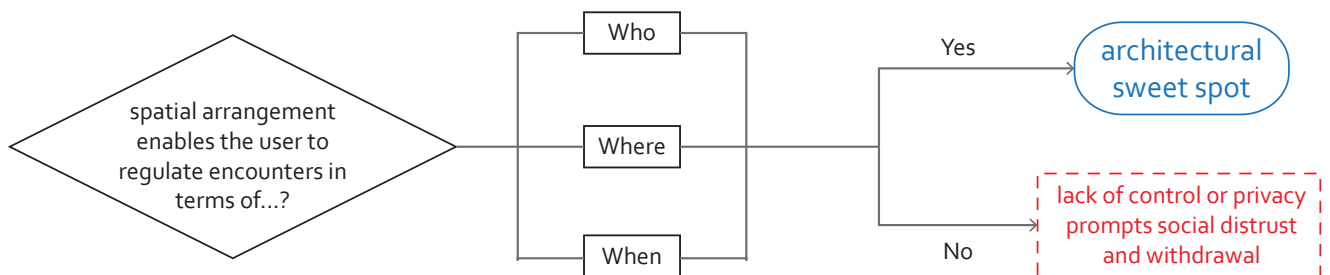
*When involved in an experiment requiring cooperation, corridor residents actually preferred to be ignored*



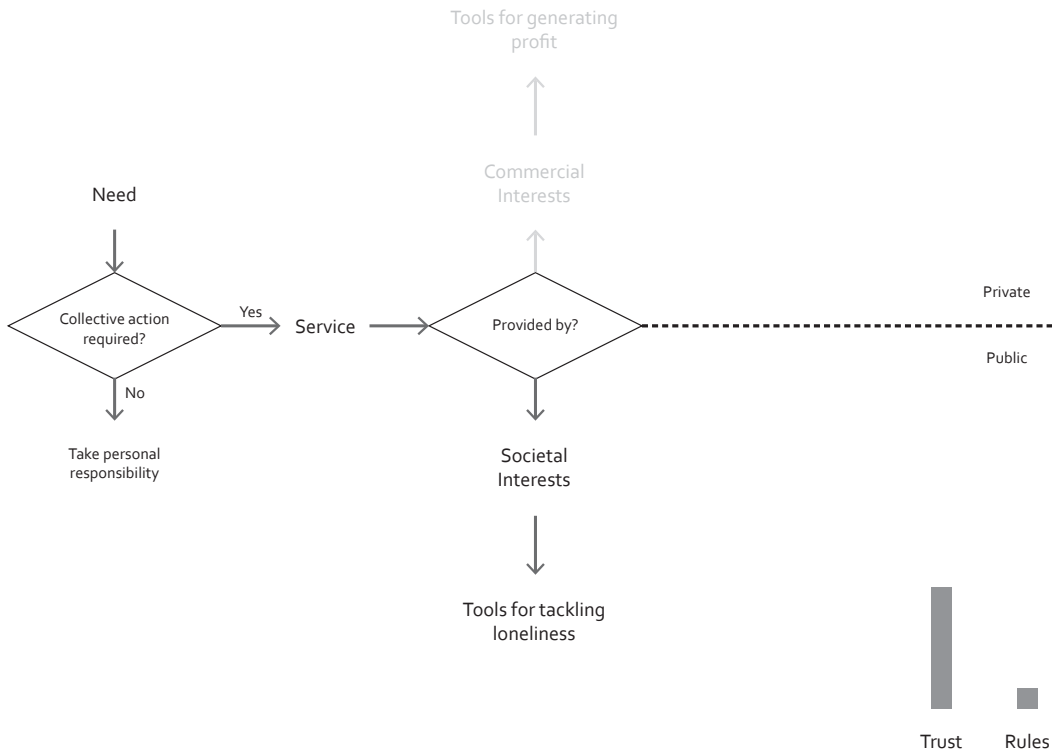
A common misconception in alleviating the sense of crowding



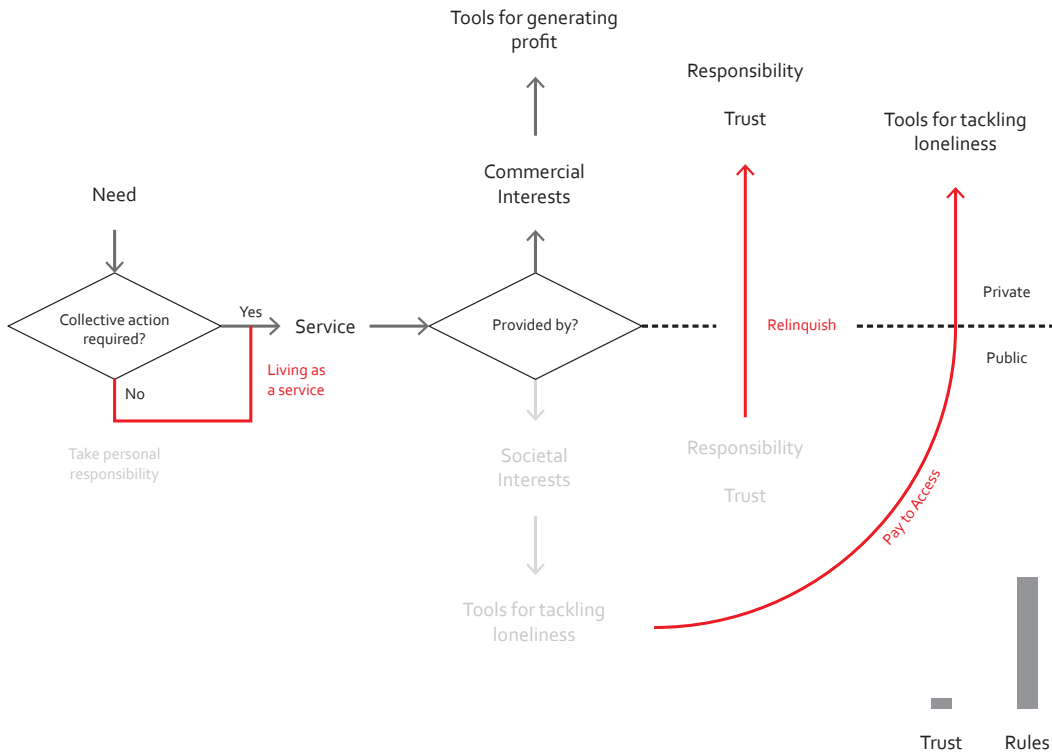
A more effective thought process for alleviating the sense of crowding



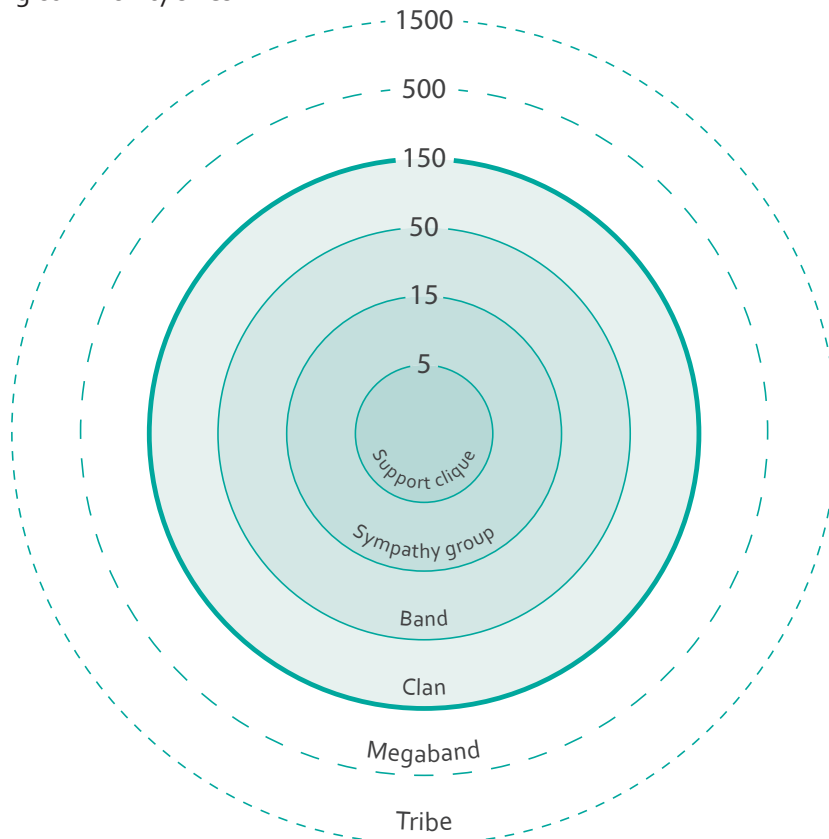
# Recognising trust and responsibility as important tools for alleviating loneliness



# Understanding that these tools as relinquished by the narrative of convenience-oriented co-living

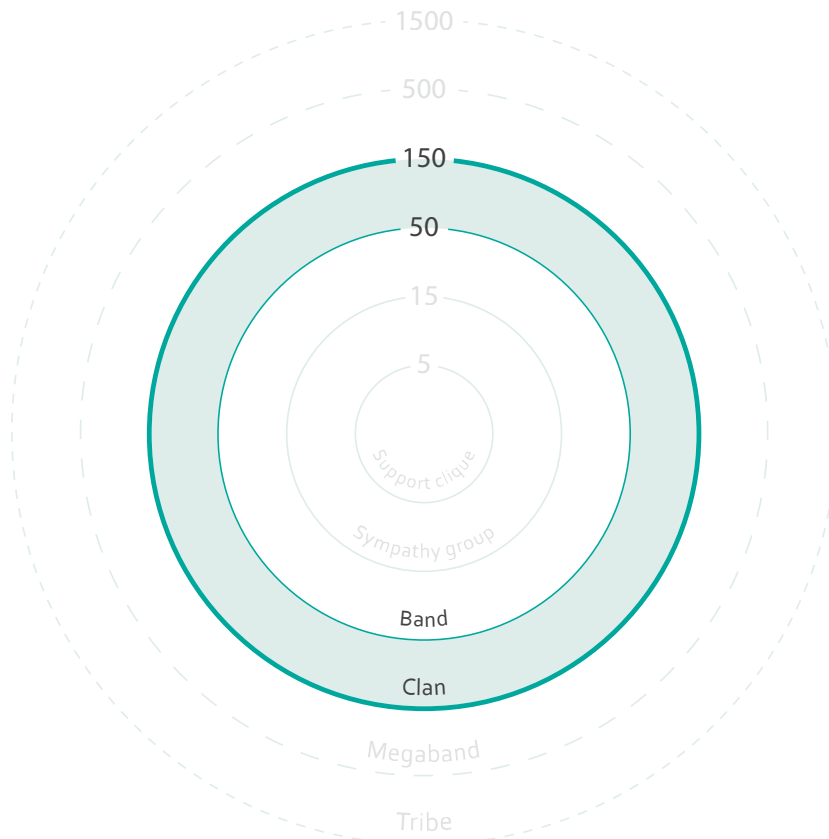


## Optimising community sizes



- Support clique ——  
High-level emotional support  
(affirmation of self-worth, etc.)
- Sympathy group ——  
High-level instrumental support  
(help with childcare, etc.)
- Band ——  
Personal connection is maintained  
between all members
- Clan ——  
Low-level instrumental support  
(provided via "weak ties")
- - - Megaband - - -  
People that we might consider  
"acquaintances"
- - - - Tribe - - - -  
People that we are able to recognise

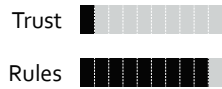
Source: Robin I. M. Dunbar and Richard Sosis, 'Optimising Human Community Sizes', *Evolution and Human Behaviour*, 39 (2018), 106–11.



- Support clique ——  
High-level emotional support  
(affirmation of self-worth, etc.)
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# Understanding passive surveillance as a valuable tool for improving well-being

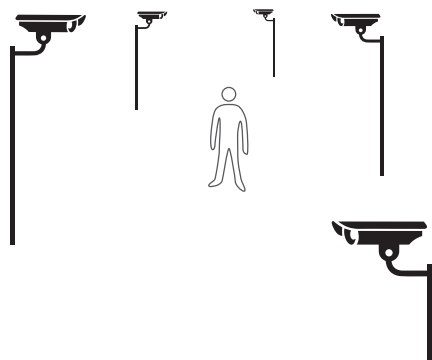
Mechanical surveillance



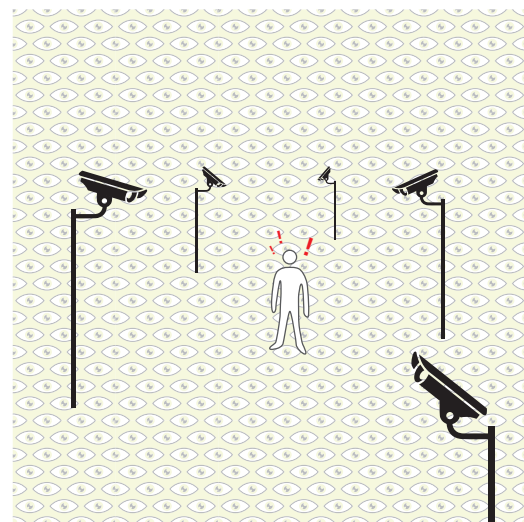
Passive surveillance



# Understanding the smart city as a potential stressor; the intimidating effect of too much surveillance

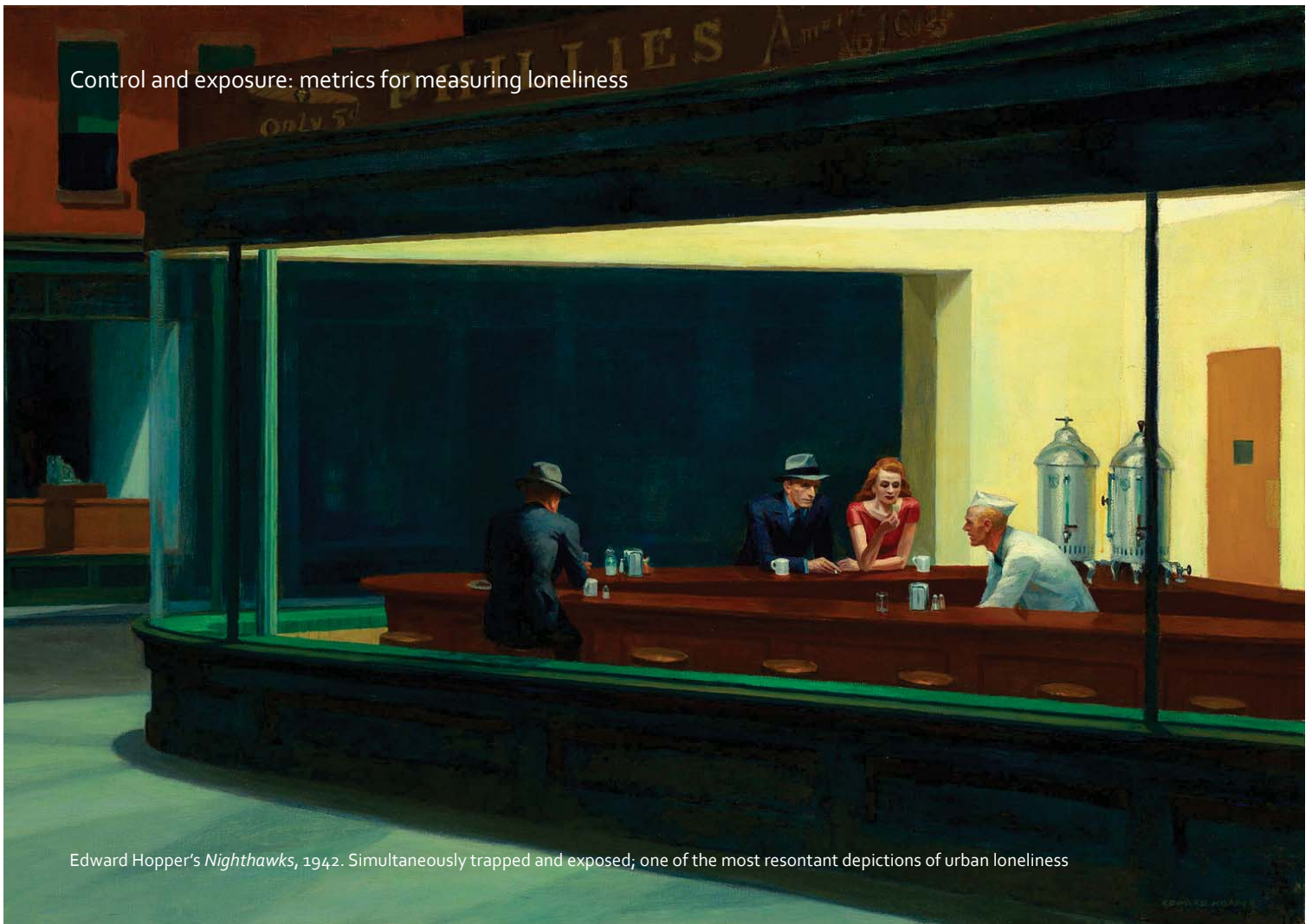


Perception of exposure when not lonely



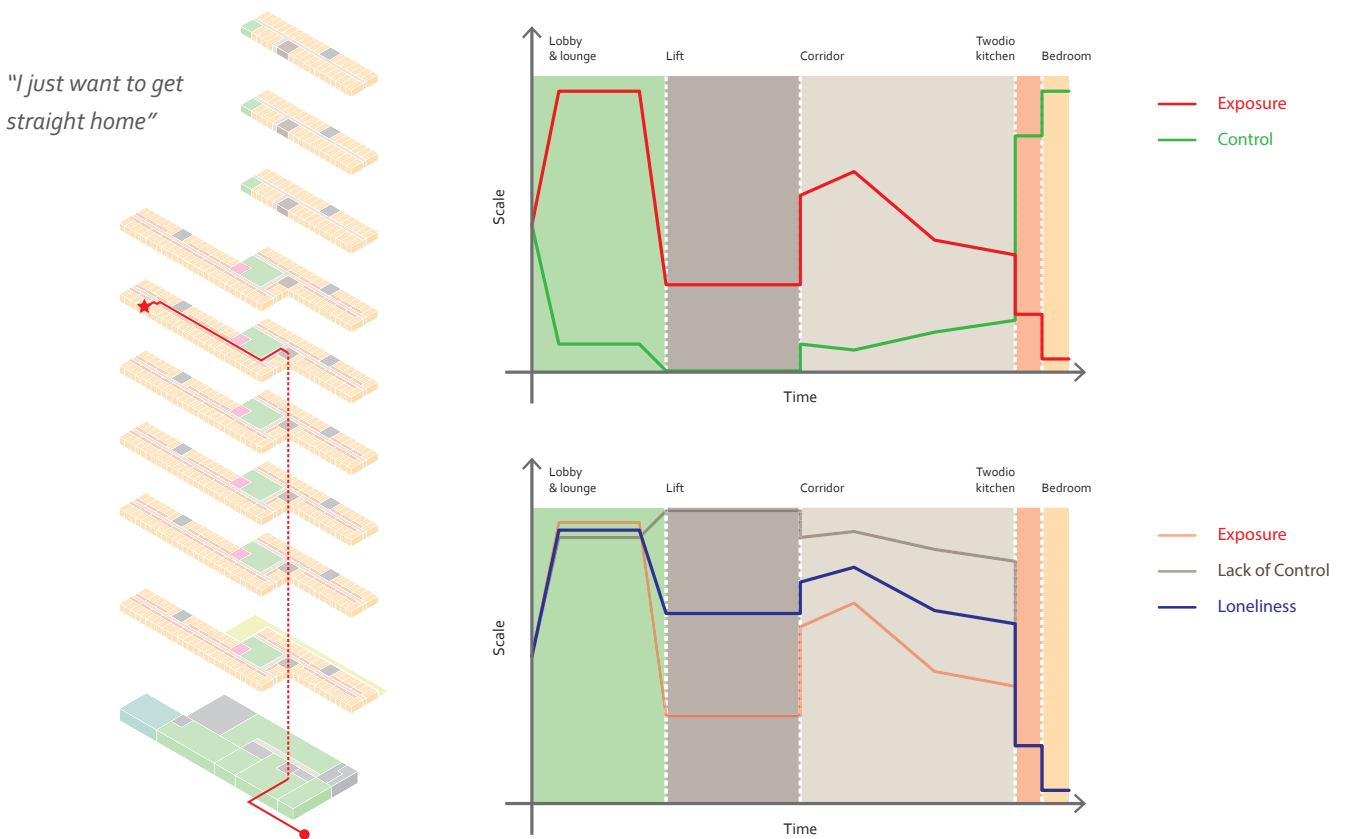
Perception of exposure when lonely

Control and exposure: metrics for measuring loneliness



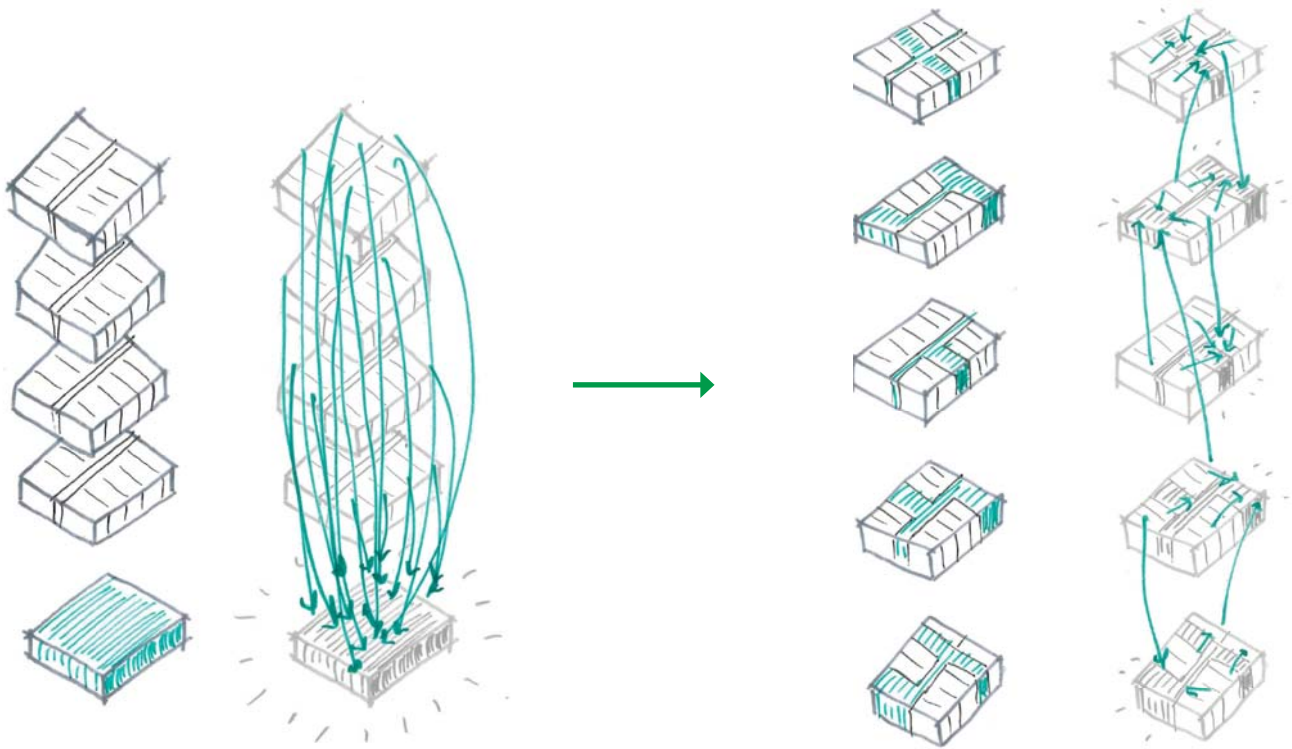
Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*, 1942. Simultaneously trapped and exposed; one of the most resonant depictions of urban loneliness

Control and exposure applied as an analytical tools for routing within a co-living scheme





Subsequent call for decentralised, varied social spaces



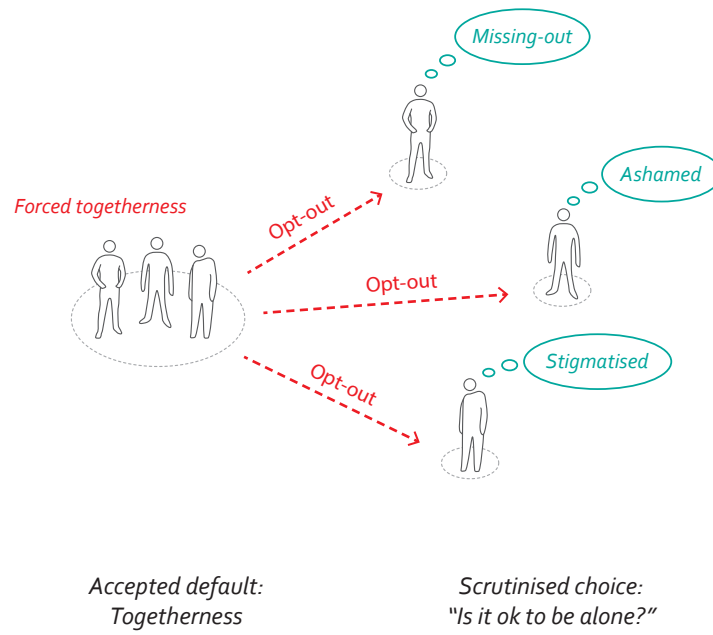
Subsequent call to design spaces for a range of relateable scenarios, not just the glamorous and pro-social



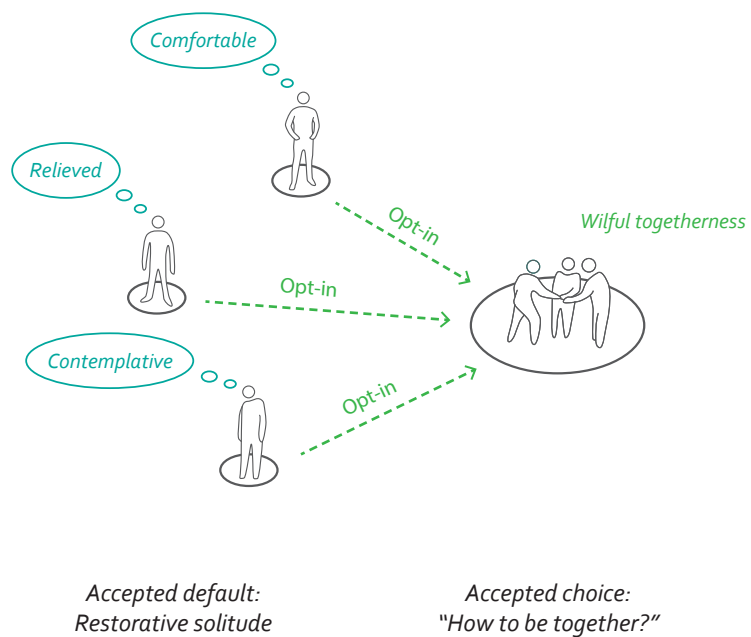
Scope of conventional design

Scope of nuanced project

Commonly accepted narrative: social interactions framed as part of an opt-out system



Healthier narrative: social interactions understood as part of an opt-in system



## Study of social decline in Pruitt Igoe, St. Louis, USA, 1971

Opening in 1954, Pruitt Igoe comprised 43 11-storey buildings, housing a total of 2762 apartments. The design originally won significant praise for its efficiency, however 16 years after opening 27 of the 43 buildings were vacant. The project was completely demolished in 1972, an event described by postmodern architectural historian Charles Jencks as "the day Modern architecture died."

Key findings:

- Although 78% of residents were satisfied with the quality of their new apartments, only 49% were satisfied with actually living on the project, largely due to the increased incidence of social atomisation
- Reliance upon the police for conflict resolution further exacerbated tensions between residents
- With only strict divisions between private and public space, the response to fear of crime was often one of social withdrawal
- Around the same time, a public housing project in Baltimore housed a similar population (heavily reliant on welfare) but did not induce similar levels of social atomisation due to its integration of semi-public common play areas overseen by each block
- The importance of "defensible space" is therefore integral to social cohesion: areas shared by small groups of neighbours who use the space regularly, control it and regulate its use

Source: William Yancey, 'Architecture, interaction, and social control: The case of a large-scale public housing project', 1971, *Environment and Behaviour*, pp. 3-21

*"They are selfish. I've got no friends here. There's none of this door-to-door coffee business of being friends here or anything like that. Down here, if you are sick you just go to the hospital. There are no friends to help you. I don't think my neighbours would help me and I wouldn't ask them to anyway. I don't have trouble with my neighbours because I never visit them. The rule of the game down here is go for yourself."*

*Pruitt-Igoe resident, speaking about his neighbours*



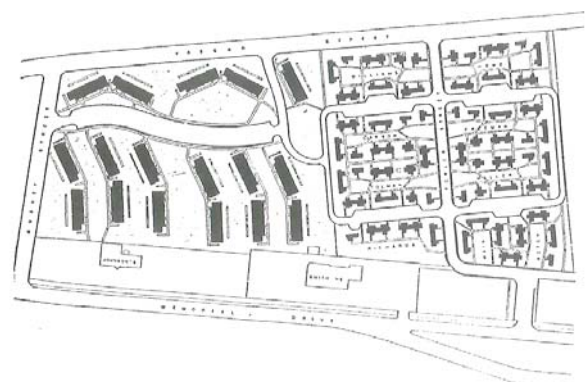
*At one stage in the life of the project, a construction fence provided a valuable degree of security to residents of one block, where keys were only given to residents. Crime was thereafter reduced by 80% in comparison to the Pruitt norm, and after six months the residents petitioned for the fence to remain.*

## Study of neighbouring patterns in Westgate West and Westgate, USA, 1950

This study documents how the physical environment altered the social behaviour of a relatively homogenous community; where rates of group conformity varied depending (solely) upon architectural circumstance. At Westgate, residents lived in prefabricated bungalows arranged into a set of u-shaped courts. At Westgate West, residents lived in the two-storey blocks of a converted navy barracks.

Key findings:

- In the u-shaped courts of Westgate, group pressures were not as strong and so consistent social attitudes were more uncommon
- Houses that faced outwards from the u-shaped courts were less likely to form groups due to less passive contacts
- The routing (functional distance of each scheme) better predicted friendship encounters than (only) the proximity between residents
- In the blocks of Westgate West, there was a consistency of social attitudes observed within, but not between, each block
- Group conformity may have helped to reduce vandalism and social deviancy, but the associated pressure to conform also acted as a source of stress



Source: Festinger, Schacter and Back, *Social Pressures in Informal Groups: A Study of Human Factors in Housing*, (1950 New York, Harper Bros)



## Study of neighbouring patterns in Dagenham, England, 1963

Between 1921 and 1932 over 22,000 houses were built on the estate, housing around 90,000 working class people.

Key findings:

- Shorter streets and cul-de-sacs had a much greater sense of community
- On wider and longer roads, fewer people knew their neighbours or described them as friendly
- The absence of traffic in shorter/quiter streets was perhaps the largest factor in promoting helpful neighbouring behaviour

*"They are all very nice in this turning. If anybody wants anything done we'll all sort of muck in and help. If people want the gas man let in, or if anybody's ill and wants some shopping done, or anything like that, we all sort of help one another."*

*Mrs. Farley, living at the end of a cul-de-sac*

*"Apart from people on either side of you, you're only on good-morning terms with the rest. But when we lived in Poplar it was a small turning. There were only about 40 houses in the turning and everybody knew each other."*

*Mrs. Salmon, living along a long avenue*



Source: Peter Willmott, *The Evolution of a Community*, (1963 London: Routledge & Kegan Paul)

## Study of social labelling at the Wine Alley 'problem estate', Glasgow, Scotland, 1976

In this semi-vacant working class area of Glasgow, residents resented the fact that people from the nearby slum (the Gorbals) were being rehoused in their neighbourhood, instead of local residents. This resentment was reflected in the press, who sensationalised any misdemeanours committed by the new residents.

Key findings:

- Residents of the estate began to blame their problems on each other, on the 'riff raff' of fellow residents housed there
- However, people from outside the estate did not make the same distinction between residents, instead viewing all of them as deviant
- Residents thereafter came not only to accept but to internalise the deviant image of the estate, withdrawing from public space and viewing the outside world with suspicion
- Rates of objective economic deprivation did little to alleviate perceptions of the estate after it was given such a resonant social label



Source: Sean Damer, *Wine Alley: The sociology of a dreadful enclosure*, (1976) in Wiles, *The Sociology of Crime and Delinquency in Britain*, pg. 2

## Dutch “stoops”

A stoop is a small staircase or porch ending in a platform, leading to the entrance of a building, usually an apartment building. A typology derived from “stoep” (step), originally brought to New York by Dutch settlers. Traditionally, the stoop served as a spot for brief or incidental social encounters, helping to reaffirm casual relationships. Children would also congregate nearby to play “Stoopball”. Stoops also served as a surrogate for front yards in urban areas, with residents holding “stoop sales” instead of “yard sales”. Jane Jacobs argued that the presence of stoops help to prevent street crime via “eyes on the street”, without intervention from authority figures.



## Eyes on the street - the perspective of the resident

From the perspective of the resident, there is little empirical evidence to support the idea that increasing pedestrian traffic reduces fear of crime

Only those who are socially well-integrated (typically cited by Jane Jacobs) benefit from an increased presence of strangers

In general, observing increased pedestrian flows outside the given dwelling makes residents more fearful

An increased flow of strangers increases the chance of unpredictable or indeed strange behaviour



## Eyes on the street - the perspective of the visitor

When perceiving the safety of areas in which they don't live, people are most fearful of quiet, deserted and poorly lit areas

Being in an unfamiliar part of town with lots of other strangers makes you feel safer

The dense concentration of individuals acts as a behavioural setting; providing a shared consensus of how one should behave

Improved lighting, the perception that help is on hand, and good maintenance of the environment makes both residents and strangers feel safer



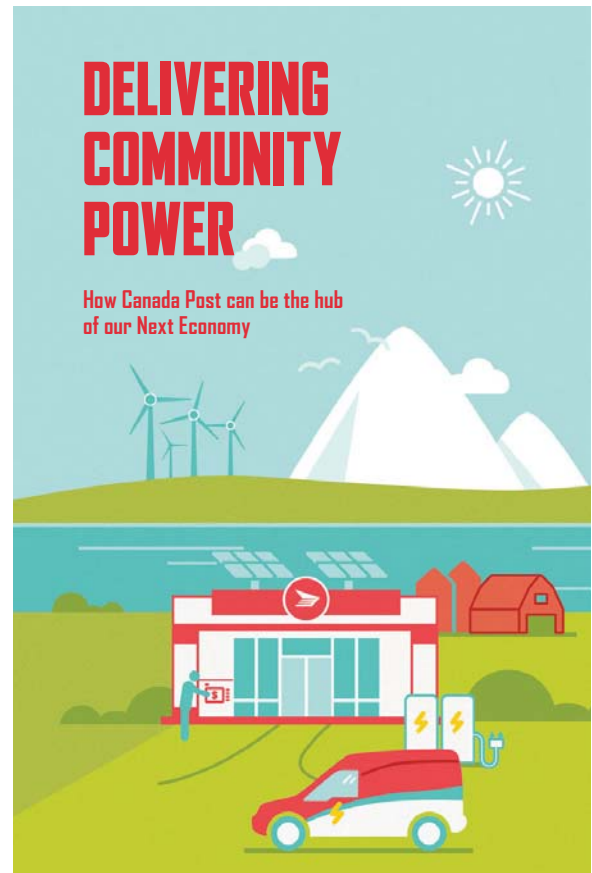
## “Delivering Community Power”

*“Like postal employees around the world, these workers have been coping with a push to shut down their workplaces, restrict mail delivery, and maybe even sell off the public postal service to FedEx. In other words, austerity and privatisation as usual. But instead of fighting for the best deal they can get under this failed logic, they worked with The Leap team and a group called Friends of Public Services to put together a visionary plan for every post office in the country to become a local hub for the green transition.”*

*Naomi Klein, No Is Not Enough, pg. 251*

Postal workers become care workers and climate workers, involving:

- Postal banking - a publicly-owned bank
- Maintaining a hub for recharging electric vehicles
- Delivering locally-grown produce: connecting farms directly to consumers
- Check-in services on the elderly and those with limited mobility



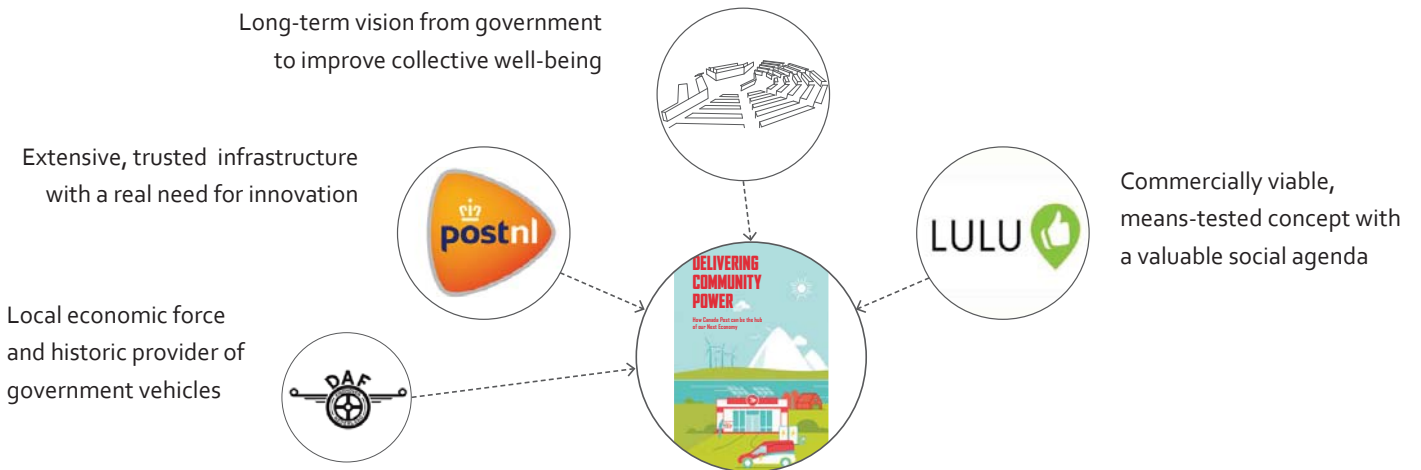
## Lulu Dans Ma Rue: “on-street concierges”, Paris

Lulu Dans Ma Rue recognises that cities are filled with many people who have time, knowledge, skills, a real desire to be useful and are in need of money. We have reached the limits of depersonalised services. Lulu Dans Ma Rue is founded on the conviction that society will benefit from a re-integration of the human element in service provision.

The first neighbourhood concierge was established in Saint-Paul in April 2015. The project was later adapted in the 4th district, and three further kiosks have since been established in Villiers, Commerce, and Gambetta.



Example proposal for the city of Eindhoven



## Summary of potential solutions to loneliness

### Improved understanding

*An improved understanding of the triggers and processes involved with loneliness empowers the individual to exercise greater control over their behaviour*

### Medical treatment

*There is no chemical fix to loneliness, although some medication might first bring depression or anxiety under control*

*Seeing a psychiatrist is better than nothing, but dealing with loneliness requires more than just 'getting help'*

### Helping other lonely people

*As counterintuitive as it might seem, when feeding the 'hunger' of your own loneliness, you might first need to feed the 'hunger' felt by someone else*

### Altruism & volunteering

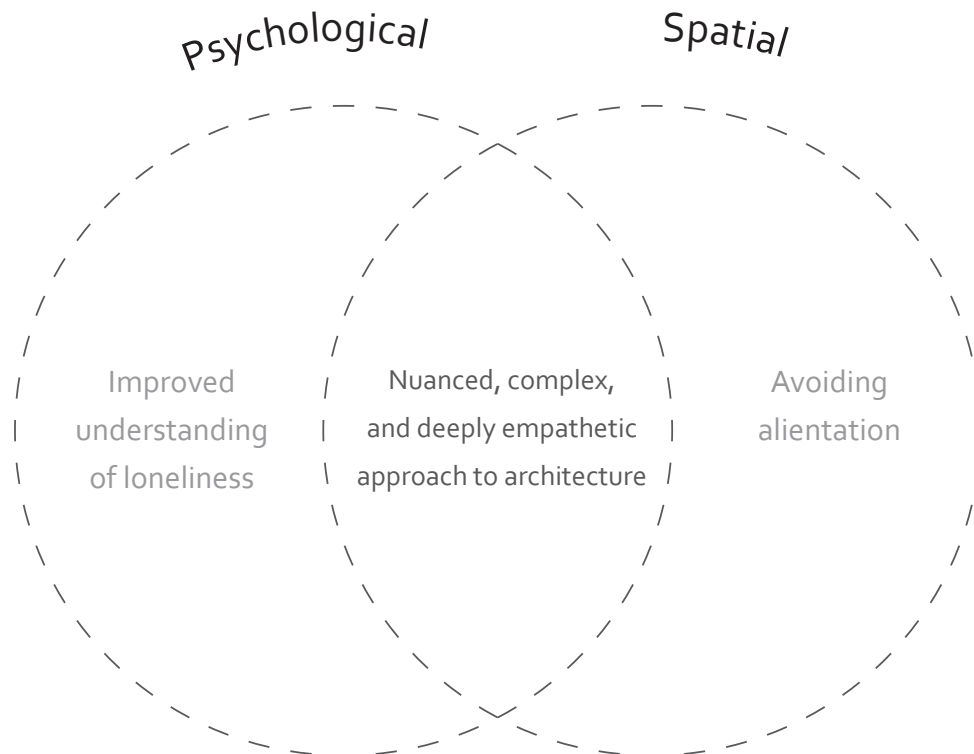
*Altruistic gestures increase the sense of meaning in life and offer an immediate psychological reward, esp. where volunteering opportunities benefit both parties*

### Building quality relationships

*It is the quality, not the quantity of our relationships that matters the most; people wish to have a rich, reciprocal bond with others*

### Avoiding alientation

*Unwanted physical alienation can act as a major, chronic stressor*









## Primary sources

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