

BACK HOME

Architecture for Wellbeing

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Introduction.

A personal fascination

My proposal for the thesis project stemmed from a personal fascination and existential question regarding the fundamental importance of health and wellbeing for human beings.

I started off my graduation year with the following research question:

What is the role of architecture in favouring humans' health & wellbeing?

Deeply convinced that architecture should be human-centered, the aim of the project is, therefore, to explore the interrelation between architecture, senses and well-being.

Research.

Chapter 1.

Stories of Time & Places

Narrator:

"The intrigue can be told by three main characters: The Farmhouse, hard working and loyal; the Church, proud and outspoken; and the Guesthouse, caring and thorough.

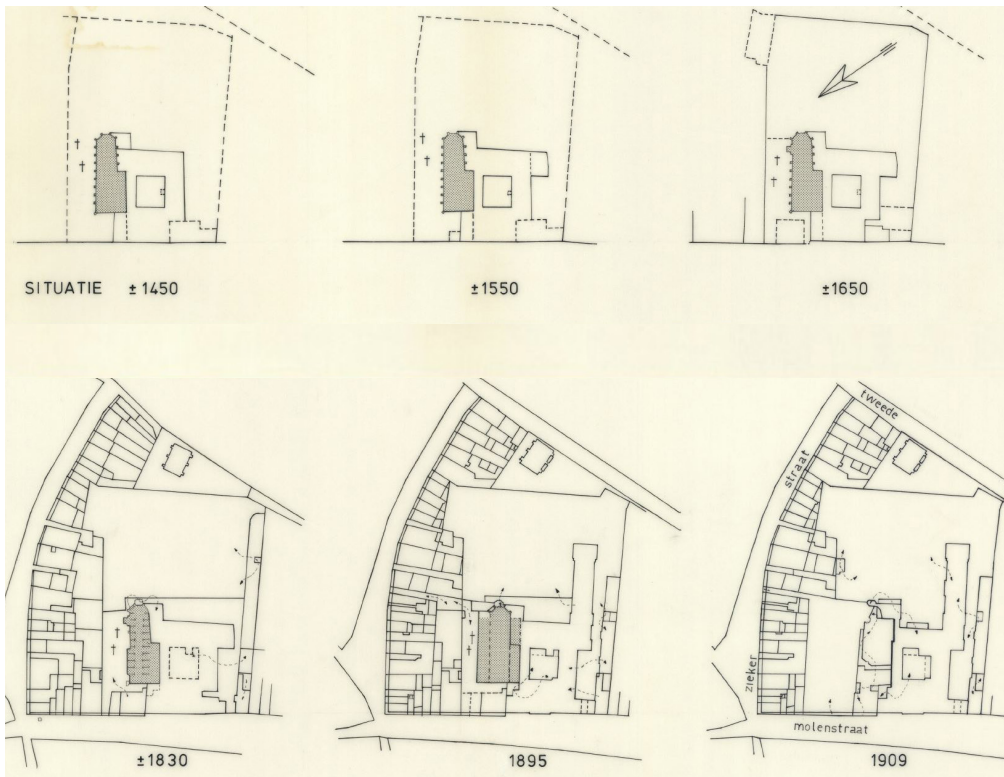
The Guesthouse and Church were conceived together as a monastery surrounded by a community, just south of Nijmegen's Waal."

from the movie "What Time is this Place?"



Religieuze Randzone
J. van Deventer
1554

A closer look to the history of the site might offer some helpful insights. The collective field study of historical layers lighted up a past when the site was occupied by a monastery. A religious building where its inhabitants were living following the rhythms of precise spiritual and physical rituals. A set of regulations determined the monastic life, interweaving spiritual and physical labor into a strict daily routine.



St. Pieter Canisius Church
Development over history

The monastery was *self-supporting* and a *place of retreat* from which the surrounding community could benefit. A place where nomads and passers-by could stop asking for some *help, refec-tion and cure*. The place was constituted by an ensemble of buildings and gardens within the protective walls. It was an enclosure, yet different in kind from what we experience today in the Molenpoort shopping mall that took its place, devoted to the authentic well-being of its inhabitants.

Which lesson is possible to learn from the past of this place? How to translate it as a meaningful architectural intervention for the future of Nijmegen?



Hortus Ludens & Hortus Catalogi in the city
Flemish illustration
15th century



The Church & the Guesthouse
Areal View



The Molenpoort Shopping Mall
Areal View

Narrator:

“That was the end of the unconditional provision of hospitality to all passers-by. The Beiert had been muted by bricking up its mouth directed to the street, extinguishing it and taking away its memory.”



Monastery / Guesthouse / Shopping Mall

The collective historical and contextual analysis of the site have contributed to understanding the shopping mall in the city centre of Nijmegen as an obsolete object of architecture where the activity of shopping is slowly dying. Born in 1972, from the collaboration of State, Market and Society, the Molenpoort represents the perfect specimen of the European mall. A building for shopping meant to "improve the well-being of the people of the city." Although, is the Molenpoort Passage truly ensuring the well-being of its visitors?

As perceived, the environment of the mall is artificial, controlled: sound, scent, light, air and even plants are all artificially manipulated. A completely detached environ-

ment from the exterior, as if not belonging to the lively coming and going of the outer streets.

Although, this controlled environment presents some positive aspects, such as the perception of a more protected and safer space, the soundscape (i.e. the music playing in the background) or the very peculiar scent permeating the air, people do not seem to be attracted by it. Moreover, also nature services the most artificial process, by becoming a mechanized manifestation of commercialism. Fake plants in big pots are spread throughout the mall. An unsuccessful, almost desperate, attempt to re-evoke the presence of nature in this place.



Screenshot from the movie
"Molenpoort: The Beauty or the Beast?"

Despite the efforts, the Molenpoort Passage fails in providing an appealing environment for the people of Nijmegen, resulting unattractive and - almost - forgotten. Probably, the problem lies at the base. The stark truth might be that the spaces of the Molenpoort are not so pleasant and do not guarantee the "so promised" well-being to its visitors.

The emptiness of these spaces is the demonstration that the visionary idea on shopping malls of the '70s is now dead. Shopping, as we knew it, is disappearing. As argued in the book *Mutations*, by Rem Koolhaas:

"Shopping revealed itself as one of the most unstable and short-lived activities, the most vulnerable to the threat of decline and obsolescence."



Screenshot from the movie
"Molenpoort: The Beauty or the Beast?"

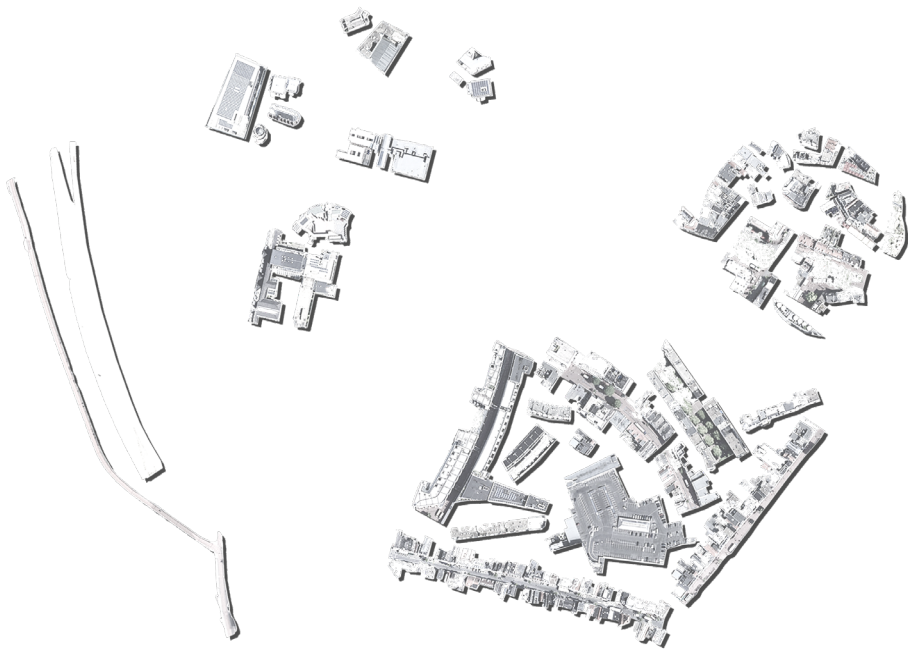
It is probably time to change direction. It is time to give a new value to the neighborhood by introducing new daily activities and valuable rituals for the inhabitants of the city.

Therefore, the following question: How the Molenpoort Passage, symbol of an architecture of consumerism and capitalism, could be changed, demolished or reused in order to become a fruitful place for the people of Nijmegen?



Molenpoort Passage
The blank spot of Nijmegen

The contextual analysis highlighted how, in the streets of Molenstraat and Ziekerstraat, "shopping" has become one of the last remaining forms of public activity. "Through a battery of increasingly predatory forms, shopping has been able to colonize - even replace - almost every aspect of urban life."



Footprint of consumerist activities

PROGRAM ZERO



PROGRAM FIRST



Over-presence of consumerist activities
in the city centre of Nijmegen

Chapter 2.

Stories about People



Bernard
Homeless because of divorce



Gabi & Kamil
Homeless because of love



Eva
Homeless because of depression
and anxiety



Ronald
Homeless because of alcohol
addiction

Interview with
Bernard



1. What is your story?

I became homeless after divorcing with my wife. I left the house and went to the station. There I stayed for the whole day trying to decide what to do. I decided to buy a tent. I like nature and decided to camp in the Ooijpolder, where I knew a nice spot.

I lived in a tent for 1 year and a half. My tent was tidy and dry. I made sure to keep in a safe locker the important documents.

Not everyone is like me. I had a job and my goal became 7 days out of 7 to find a house that I could afford.

Many others become homeless because of mental illnesses, drug and alcohol addictions. They are unable to look for a house, and their first preoccupations are to find the substances that will alleviate their malaise.

2. Do you believe there is a need for a new homeless shelter in the city centre of Nijmegen?

Our Vision is "Water free country, Sheltering people in very old fashion," Housing first".

Affordable housing for "normal people" and housing that can sustain people with mental health issues/addiction or living accommodation separate from care.

Nijmegen has 2 options in the city centre:

- MFC in the Scheephavenstraat 400m from the Molenpoort Passage. This centre is for drugs and alcohol addicted homeless people. Day and Night shelter for homeless people with complex problems like drug and alcohol abuse.

20 people in Dorm facility - 10 people on apartments

This shelter got a very bad reputation, if you don't have this kind of complex problems as these clients, you don't seek shelter there when you become homeless.

- The NuNN on Betouwe straat 600m from the Molenpoort Passage.

The NuNN (Night shelter from Noodzaak Nijmegen) is run by administrators and homeless people who work as volunteers. What is special about the NuNN is that the homeless people who use the facility manage the shelter themselves. By taking self-responsibility for the location, the guests are meaningful to their fellow sufferers and others who are vulnerable. This gives them more self-esteem and a sense of belonging again.

This shelter got a better reputation, downside is people stay too long, there is no follow up when you shelter there.

www.zelfredzaamheidmatrix.nl

When you are permitted for a shelter, there is third option:

De hulsen on the Nieuwe Dukenburgseweg, there is a night facility, where the less complex homeless people can sleep.

only bed, Bath, bread, you pay a small fee.

Positive side there are less problematic people, downside the care is very medium.

The rooms of the building are regulated to have certain square meters, you need to check the law about that.

4. Where do the funds/clothes/food come from?

The homeless get funded from the WMO - Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning) And the health assurance, food that is provided by the Iriszorg is catering (MFC and the hulsen) And the NUN they cook their own food.

Clothing there are depending on themselves or hand outs, homeless security check is around 600 euros.

There is for Rough sleepers Streetpeople for streetpeople they have certain days that they hand out food in the evening.

5. Is, in the shelters, counselling provided for people with mental issues for example?

MFC is FACT (Flexible Assertive Community Treatment) but with very poor results.

De hulsen All kind of help from Social work, groups guides and on and on. Also very poor result.

NUN, only financial support and post address.

6. Can you, please, list the main homeless shelters in Nijmegen?

Iriszorg: MFC, De hulsen, Crisis Shelter,

Ribw: De NUNN

Salvation Army: Domushuis

Moviera: for woman with domestic violence.

De dwarsweg: shelter apartments for 18-26

Vince: night and day shelter for 18 til 26 Berg en Dal

All facilities are 18 and up, for woman there only 2 night shelter beds in Nijmegen.

7. What is missing in the current homeless shelters present in Nijmegen?

There is lot improvement in the last ten year, the work more from a recovery based principle, there are experience expert worker, peer support. working daytime activities, sport.

If you have a homeless status, you walk very much, so good shoes are a must.

Negative side: Perspective is missing, people are too long in care. No available housing.

8. Are these people able to get a job after a while in the shelter?

Everything is possible, but you need to be very assertive, otherwise you will be in for a very long time in the shelter.

9. Did you, finally, find a house? How?

To be very assertive and patient, and help from housing provider. I slept in the Polder, in a tent for one year and a half.

10. While you were living in a tent, did you bring with you some objects/clothes/things that helped you to remember your "home"?

My phone gave me access to pictures of my children, could communicate, it gave me that strength that I needed to go on. My watch, my phone, were the life line, I could connect with the world by my phone, my watch gave me a sense of time.

11. What were the things you missed the most?

Most I missed was social contact, you get very lonely, missed decent meals and a toilet.

12. What was essential for your survival?

To survive you need to have a good mind set, perspective, endurance, good healthy food, stay dry, you need to have a sight on to manage your money, spend it wisely, making the right connections, beware of people who don't have good intentions. Stay out of the city centre by night, I always make sure I was back at the tent before night fall.

I had stored my stuff in storage facility, that is essential if you want to keep your important stuff, especially paperwork, bank pass, identification papers, because if you lose them, it takes a lot of time to fix that if you lose them, paperwork in the Netherlands is very bureaucratic.

Having a post address is a must, because if you don't have a post address, you don't get anything done, you lose your health insurance, and your problems will be getting bigger with in the month.

A stretcher was also a must, few nights sleeping on the rough ground , was not verry helpful for youre back. Also, I would always keep water and sugar at handy.

13. In the design of a new facility for former homeless people what would be, in your opinion, essential to include?

Design homes that can house people with mental or addiction issues, that would be my dream, or cheap housing so there will be available housing.

It need to be a warm and gentle place, where you feel wanted, you get that feelin that you're looking after you, it needs to be spacious, lots of room for the mental issues to outburst, with out being suspended from the shelter, rules in that shelter are an issue. A time out room would be nice.

14. Can you tell me what it would mean for you to create a place that feels like home: can you describe the feelings?

Home is where other people will like you and want you as their neighbor! Home is a feeling of belonging to this community, not seeing as a outcast, not be a shames what happend to you. That is what make a home a home.

Interview with
Gabi & Kamil



Gabi:

"I became homeless because I lived in a place where I didn't feel at home. I met a cute guy (still my boyfriend for almost 8 years now) he was homeless already but he had some sort of shed where he was sleeping with 2 other people. I spent most of my time with him and slept there almost every night.

So they kicked me out of the place I was living. I spend 8 months on the streets with my boyfriend. And to be honest I had a nice experience being homeless. But I know that most people don't have a good experience being homeless."

1. Do you believe there is a need for a new homeless facility in the city centre of Nijmegen?

I don't really know about Nijmegen because I live in Apeldoorn but I think there should be at least one in every city because there are so much more people homeless then you would think.

2. How are today's homeless shelters usually organized?

I don't know about the one in Nijmegen, but the one in Apeldoorn really sucks it's more a drugs hole then a homeless shelter they sleep with 10 to 15 people in one room and they have to be happy if they still have their shoes when they wake up. They can get food but they have to pay for it that can be a problem.

3. What is missing in the current homeless shelters of Nijmegen? Is there a typical "daily routine" for people living there?

In Apeldoorn it's nothing like that they can sleep over there but that's all and you also have to pay to sleep there unless it's -2 degrees outside.

The only thing happens during the day is selling drugs or using drugs it's really not a nice place to be. When I was homeless I always avoided that place.

4. Are these people able to get a job after a while in the shelter?

Most of them are not able to get a job because to be able to get a job you need an address and they can't register in the shelter so it's not possible to get a job.

5. Did you, finally, find a house? How?

I did find a room to live in because I had someone to help me/us. He arranged a room for us and from then on things started to go better.

6. While you were homeless, did you bring with you some objects/things that helped you to remember your "home"?

I didn't bring anything in particular I think the things you need the most are clothes, food, water and shower gel.

7. In the design of a new homeless accommodation and community what would be, in your opinion, essential to include?

There should be at least private rooms, a shower and guidance.

8. Can you tell me what it would mean for you to create a place that feels like home?

I think most people are already happy with a roof upon their heads but I think that a warm bed, food, shower and at least a couch to sit on are the most important.

Interview with
Eva



1. Can you tell me something about your story being homeless?

When I became homeless I was in a dark place, depression and anxiety. At first I was sort of denial and ashamed to go to a shelter, so I stayed with a friend until he told me that it is really time to go to the shelter because he also needed some space for himself.

At the time my daily routine was not much, I dropped out of school because of the depression and couldn't handle all the stress at the time. Most of the time I went to friends or met up with friends in the city. I also enjoyed taking long walks on my own and just think about how to solve the situation. (And Nijmegen also has beautiful nature and places to visit so I also went for the view)"

2. Do you believe there is a need for a new homeless facility in the city centre of Nijmegen?

I do, I always believe new is always better but I don't know how the homeless shelter in the centre of Nijmegen looks like.

3. How are today's homeless shelters usually organized?

I stayed in the youth shelter that is located on the Ubergseweg in Nijmegen. I only stayed at the night shelter where you had to share a room with two. We had a 'livingroom' but we didn't cook there. They provided breakfast, bread and toppings with something to drink and you could also make your lunch to take away. And at dinner we had microwaved meals.

4. Is, in the shelters, counselling provided for people with mental issues for example?

Not in the shelter, but I had someone to guide me who was in contact with the shelter. Also if you needed a chat you could go to one of the mentors.

5. What is missing in the current homeless shelters of Nijmegen? What should change?

At the night shelter they didn't really give you any routine besides from that you had to wake up at 7 am and be out on 8:30 am. You could come back at 5 pm till 9 pm. (If you did have a job and had a late shift there was no problem with coming in late)

What I think should change is the active search for a living space with the clients and more activities or 'safe places' to go during the day made for the homeless to keep them off the streets and off drugs.

6. Are these people able to get a job after a while in the shelter? Do they need training and/or education ?

The first night I went to the shelter I didn't have a job. But within 2 days I got a job because I didn't feel like sitting around in library or coffeeshops all day. But my fellow youths weren't so active in their search for work or education and I think that they should train and provide the service to help them look for a job.

7. Did you, finally, find a house? How?

Yes I have, first I found a room back in my hometown and after a 1.5 years of living there I got myself an apartment. I found it via costumers at the bar I always had a chat with and the room I found via marketplace.

8. While you were homeless, did you bring with you some objects/things that helped you to remember your "home"?

Funny thing is, I never felt home anywhere so I just brought the most important things to me. Like my laptop to work on, clothes and toiletries. The most essential thing for my survival were my friends at the time and my bike to get me places.

9. In the design of a new homeless accommodation and community what would be, in your opinion, essential to include?

A space to do activities helping people to get everything back on track.

Like helping them figure out what they would like to do etc.

Also a place to create positivity somewhere to meditate or do mindfulness.

10. Can you tell me what it would mean for you to create a place that feels like home: can you describe the feelings?

I think the feeling of being welcome somewhere is the best feeling to describe a home feeling for me. A place you can talk openly and be yourself. Have a good chat with your fellows.

Interview with
Ronald



1. Can you tell me something about your story, please?

I am 54 years old. I became homeless because I was addicted to alcohol and gambling. I had to leave the house August 2014, 31st of July. At first I stayed at the MFC from Iriszorg, another location for homeless people in the centre.

2. You are now living in De Hulsen. Can you tell me something about it, please?

De Hulsen is now closed. There are measures with receiving people from outside. You are not allowed to receive visits from outside. Now I live here.

There is a gate outside and a reception downstairs. You can make an appointment downstairs. You have to minimize your own risk. Your own responsibility. When you feel sick you have the responsibility to report it to the office.

3. Do you consider it as "your home"? Do you feel comfortable living there?

It's just a shelter, a roof above my head. I never say I live here. In my opinion when I say "I live here" I don't have the goal to improve my life, to have a house with a garden. But I live here temporarily.

No, I am not comfortable here (in De Hulsen) certainly. I have been drinking till last August last year. Since then I did not drink any drop.

Because all the people here have drugs and alcohol, weed, medicines, cannabis, etc., problems, together with all kinds of psychological problems.

I have enough of that. I try to walk the right way, the best way. Because I see the problems all the time. I am trying to do my best.

I don't have any mental problem. I am here since February 2015. I have to balance all day between all these kinds of people.

Before I was at the MFC. Part of Iriszorg, one of the institutions. In the middle of the centre there is an old gymnasium, there is a shelter for roofless people. I was there for August 2014, temporarily. I had to wait for a clinic close to Arhem. I went there for three months.

I worked until 2005. In 2005 I was disallowed to work because of my diabetes. I worked at nights. After that I couldn't work anymore.

4. Do you believe there is a need for a new homeless shelter / accommodation in the city centre of Nijmegen?

No, I don't think that's a good idea to have a new shelter that is organized the same as the already existing ones... Because of the nuisance, disturbance, theft and other criminality due to use of drugs, alcohol and all kinds of 'heavy' medicine

Till 15 years ago, systems were privatized and worked much better. Before we had specialized hospitals for the psychological problems. There were many kind of possibilities to cure them.

And now all the people, with different problems, are mixed. And that's not a good idea.

Each treatment has its own treatment. When you mix all kind of people there are a lot of problems.

It might be the case that if you put the people with much better facilities, they might reintegrate well in the society. Now the facilities are very little in the centre of Nijmegen. When you give the people better tools, and structure and discipline maybe people can stay there and be reintegrated, But right now... MFC is the hell on earth.

5. Can you tell me something about your experience at MFC?

At first I slept in a shared room with 4 people. I was placed in a room with one of the most criminal person I ever met. During the day there is no problem. I could stay there all day because they knew my health condition. There was a recreation room, where I stayed all day: watching TV and using computers.

6. What are the main problems of the MFC of Nijmegen?

The problem was at night. They stole from me all kind of things. They stole everything: also the insulin I needed for my diabetes. Later on they brought me to another sleeping room: it was very noisy. A dormitory with 12 people. That was not much better.

I met Frank, a friend of mine still today. He took care of me. He was long time roofless and knew how to survive. I did not know how to survive. It was the first time for myself. At that moment I drunk all day. To forget all the misery.

7. How is De Hulsen organized?

In De Hulsen there are approximately 200 people of mixed age. It's divided in departments:

- a clinic: with all kinds of people that help: psychiatrist, doctors

- in one department there are very small rooms, no facilities at all. The rooms are 2 by 2.5 meters big. Take the food from the dining room. Three moments per day to have your food. Bread and soup. All the day you have to keep up your hand to receive in it.

8. When did your situation improve and how?

Finally In august 2015, I had the occasion to do the next step: small flat building with separate apartment, with your own facilities, your own shower etc. There I stayed until last august.

In 2018-2019 the drinking problem came back. I drank so much. The addiction, they told me, it will stay with you the rest of life. You have to find the right way to that problem. In August I had to leave the flat and go back to the same room where I started. Goback to zero.

9. What caused the relapse to your addiction?

The main problem was that my son broke any telephone contact with me. He couldn't keep the contact going anymore, because of what he had seen and witness during me - his dad - being drunk. He has noticed many things of me. It was enough for him. My brother and my sister also told me: "If you go on, we stop the contact with you." That was the reason to think how to change! I had to do another way. This lead to nothing.

Beginning 2019: I carefully picked up again with a mail contact with my son. Everyone here has a personal mentor who tries to guide you outside. Now I have seen my son 6 times. He lives in Amsterdam.

5. In De Hulsen, is there perspective after the help received? Are people able to move on to the next step?

Many people are not ready for the next step. There is a great chance they will fall back. They need to be followed all the time. There is "following" and "following" but the kind of people at De Hulsen, you can not trust them on the blue eyes. The people that are mentors have not to believe everything. I see that many things are just believed. People who have a disturb lie a lot. Because of their addiction, they don't know what is true and what it real.

6. Do you have daily tasks linked to De Hulsen?

In this departement I am independent. I have my own kitchen, own toilet, own shower, living room. Here you are supposed to take

care to you own tings. If you don't do that, you are supposed to have work here or outside, at least three parts of the week. And when your are not reporting yourself at the working hall the person downstairs control of you have reported yourself. Daily shifts. There are possibilities to work here or outside.

8. You said that this place is only temporary for you. What's your plan?

Now I am in contact with a corporation they promise to bring me to a house within 6 months.

Chapter 3.

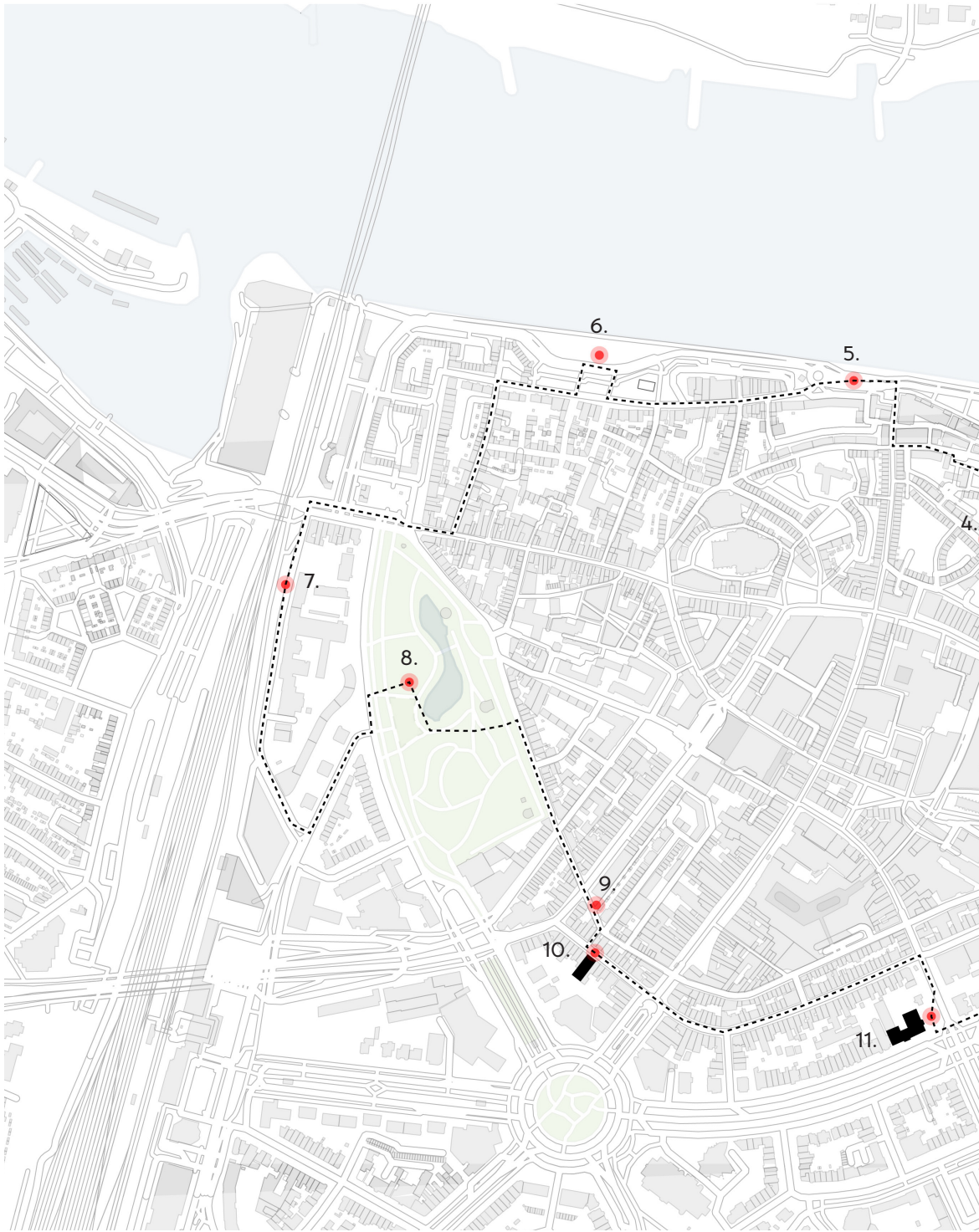
Mapping Homelessness

Thanks to the Vagabond guided tour, conducted by Bernard, a former homeless person from Nijmegen, I discovered the hidden side of the city, the worlds poverty, immigrants, drug and alcohol addicts and of prostitution.

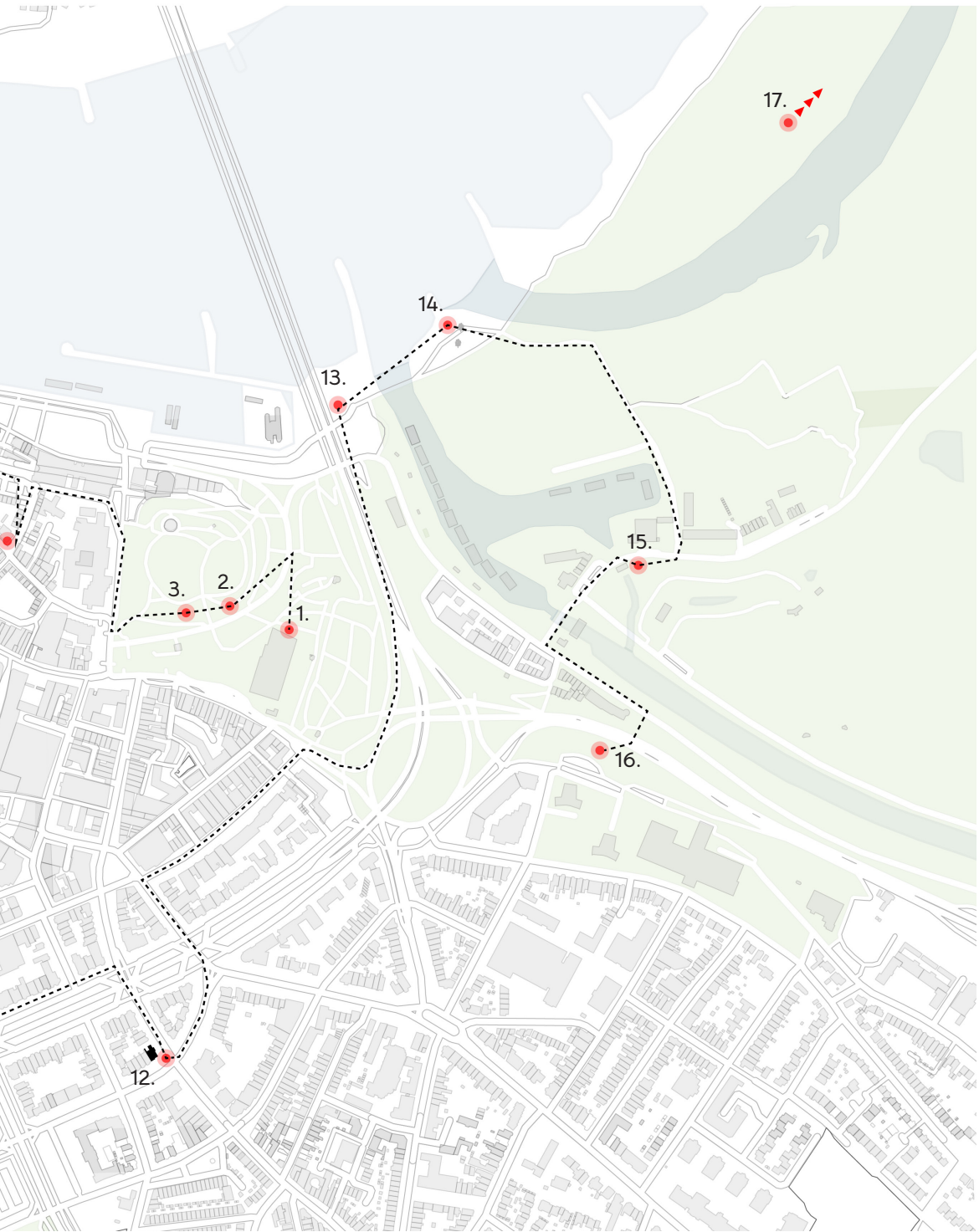
The world, not immediately evident, that during the group research had been slightly overlooked. Before this encounter, from the previous research, Nijmegen resulted as a very open city, politically left oriented, with multiple social organizations dedicated to help the ones in need. Nonetheless, I decided to dig in more and to interview the real protagonists: Bernard, Gabi and Kamil, Eva and Ronald. All of them, homeless / former homeless people that pitched me a completely different image of the city.

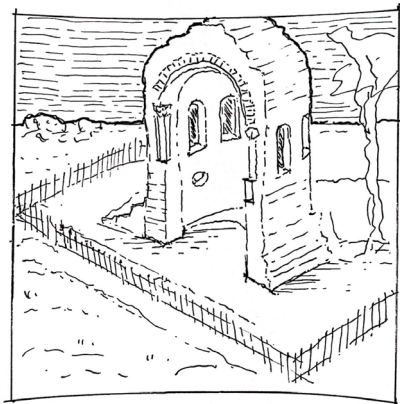
The Vagabond Tour





Nijmgene, NL

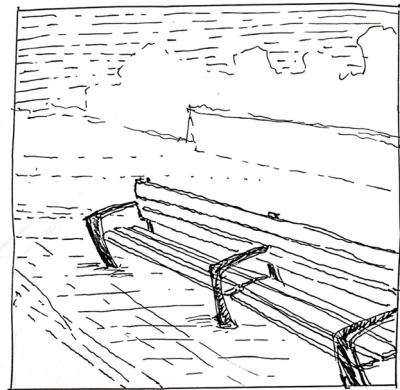




1. Starting Point

2. Tower

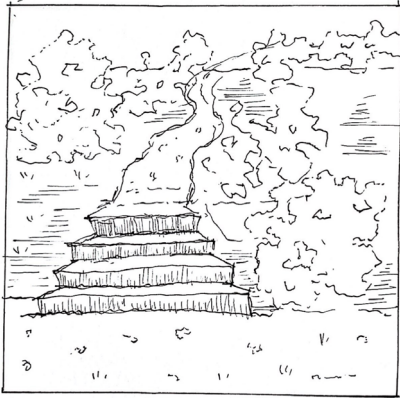
It was a shelter for many years. Nowadays the municipality has bolted the gate so that homeless people can not use the place anymore.



5. Defensive Architecture

The city of Nijmegen is taking measures to make sure homeless people do not sleep in public spaces in the city centre.

Such benches, divided by armrests in the middle, make it impossible to sleep comfortably on them. They generate a lot of distress in homeless people that feel totally unwelcomed and discouraged.

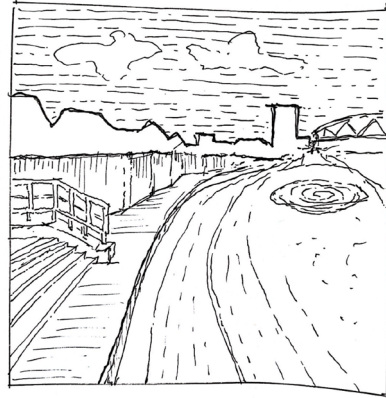


3. Bushes

4/5 people use this place to shelter for the night. If you are not distracted wondering in the park, you might notice the geers and stuff of someone hidden in the bushes.

4. First Homeless Shelter

located in Muchterstreet before the II World War.



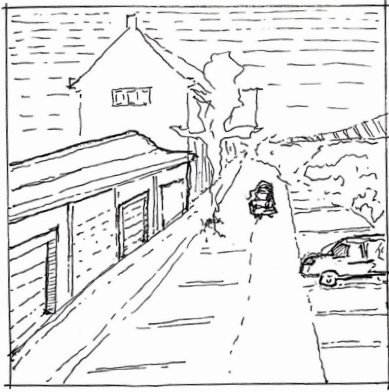
6. Drugs

the river side is known to be drug areas for local youth and from other countries.

Nowadays the municipality has a zero tolerance policy and police controls have become more and more insisting.

Toilet & Shower

the river has been used as toilet and shower by the ones in most critical conditions. Especially during Corona time it has become more difficult to find a public toilet accessible or an open swimming pool where some homeless us to pay a small fee in order to access the services.



7. Street Prostitution

close to this garages you might find homeless women that prostitute at night.

Cars drive in and can be covered with a bed sheet in order to achieve more privacy and a sense of safety.

8. Unwanted neighbors

drug and alcohol abusers monopolized Kronenburger park in the past, causing many sad and dangerous accidents.

Today the park is under strict surveillance.



9. Defensive Architecture

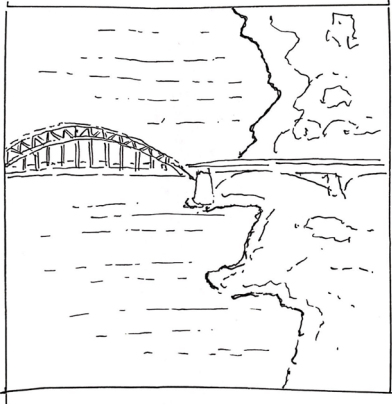
small alleys have been closed up with glasses and grids in order to discourage any homeless to linger there for too long.

10. Het Nunn

night shelter, 600m from the Molenpoort Passage, run by homeless people.

11. MFC

400mm from the Molenport Passage. The MFC is a centre for homeless people with drug and alcohol addictions.



12. Lutheran church

in the past, twice a week, people could come to the Lutheran Church where the pastor offered financial help to homeless people that needed some food or to pay sudden things. The pastor was helping everyone's, not only the homeless, yet also the ones suffering from other addictions.

Unfortunately, after a while, the pastor could not continue his charitable activity.

13. Bridge

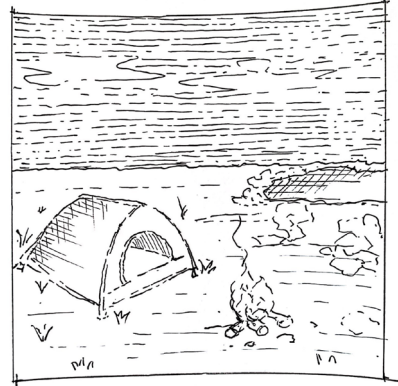
It is the closest to the city centre and many people rough sleep under it, trying to hide from the police.

14. Beach

people with mental illnesses wonder and sleep here. Lost and forgotten by society.

15. Season workers

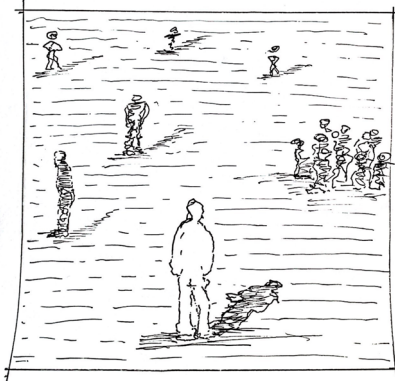
many Mid and East Europeans use this area to sleep in the rough.



17. Bernard

Homeless because of divorce, Bernard did not have any kind of problems related to alcohol and drugs, neither psychological. He intelligently decided to not sleep in the city centre, in order to avoid being fined multiple times.

He camped in a tent in the Ooij Polder for one year and a half. He was very dedicated finding a place where to live, looking for a house 24/7. Calling housing associations every day, waiting for an answer that came a long time after.



Loneliness

Bernard, as all the other people interviewed, many times referred to the period he did not have a place where to live as "The most lonely period of his life." He said: "Homeless people do not bond together. They steal from each other and are egoists."

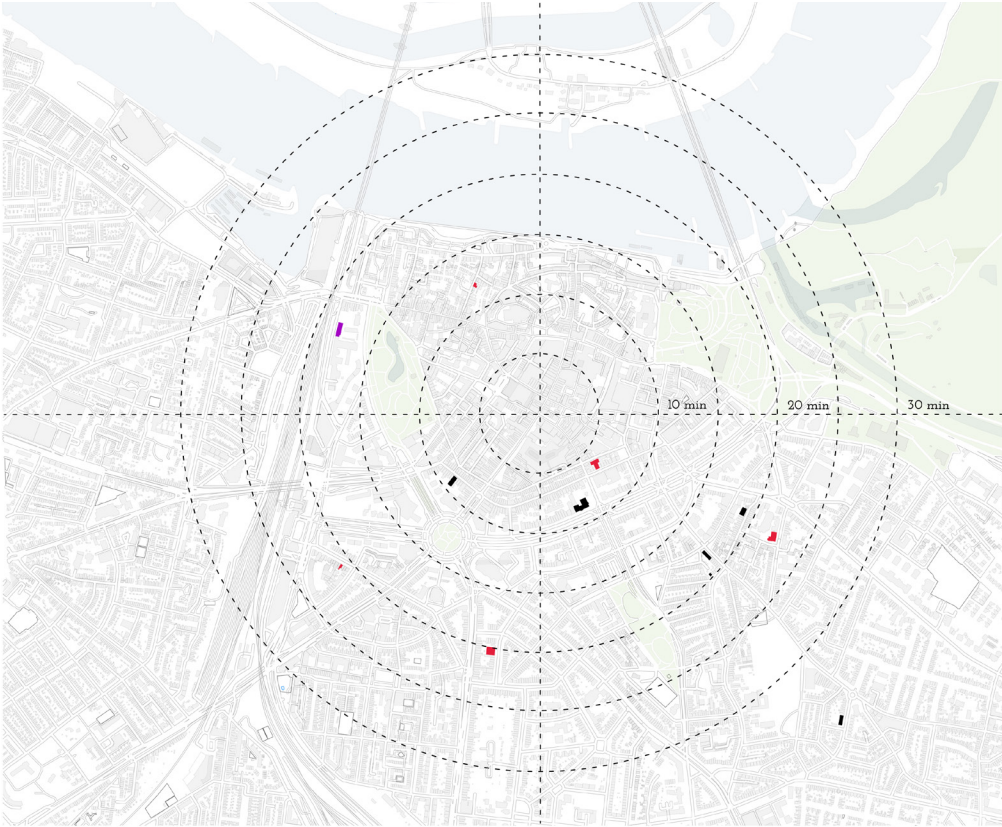
The only thing that would give him strength to move on and keep looking for better conditions, were his two children. Every two weeks, when it was the weekend he could see them, he did not want to host them in his tent. He felt ashamed about that. Therefore, he would try to get a spot in the shelter where, at least, there would have been some communal spaces where to spend some family time, for a chat and some food.

As Bernard, also Ronald and Eva struggled a lot with loneliness. Being rejected or feeling abandoned from friends and family is a shared feeling among people that lost their home. Moreover, the decisions taken by the Municipality of implementing defensive measures increase their distress by making them escape the city centre and make them feel unwanted by the entire society.

The importance of ...

The interviewed people witnessed how the shelters and affordable accommodations are inhospitable places, where people with alcohol, drug and any sort of mental problems are not truly followed towards the way of recovery and re-introduction in the society. The few shelters present not only do not provide enough spaces for the amount homeless in the city – which keeps increasing exponentially – yet are the worst places where to seek refuge. Places where people with many kinds of problems, addictions and mental illnesses are mixed and are unable to co-live peacefully. Theft and crime become normality in dormitories that host 10 to 15 people. Nights become the “hell of earth”. It is difficult to survive till the morning after, still with all the personal belongings and a good sleep is impossible to achieve. Places that should provide help, recovery, and refuge, are, instead, places that make people more and more sick, aggravating their traumas. Finally, homeless people that do not have any kind of illness, avoid frequenting these spots and the majority ends up sleeping in nature. For months or even years, they remain waiting for a response from housing associations that should provide them a roof.

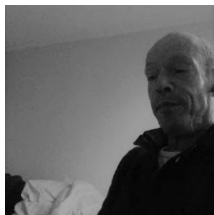
... the walking distance.



- Former homeless shelters
- Current homeless shelters
- Homeless women prostitution

De Hulsen is a nursing unit where a home is created for approximately 25 homeless people who not only suffer from neglect, eviction, psychiatric problems and / or addiction problems, but also (serious) physical problems and illnesses. De Hulsen is located on the Iris Zorg site in Nijmegen.

Ronald:



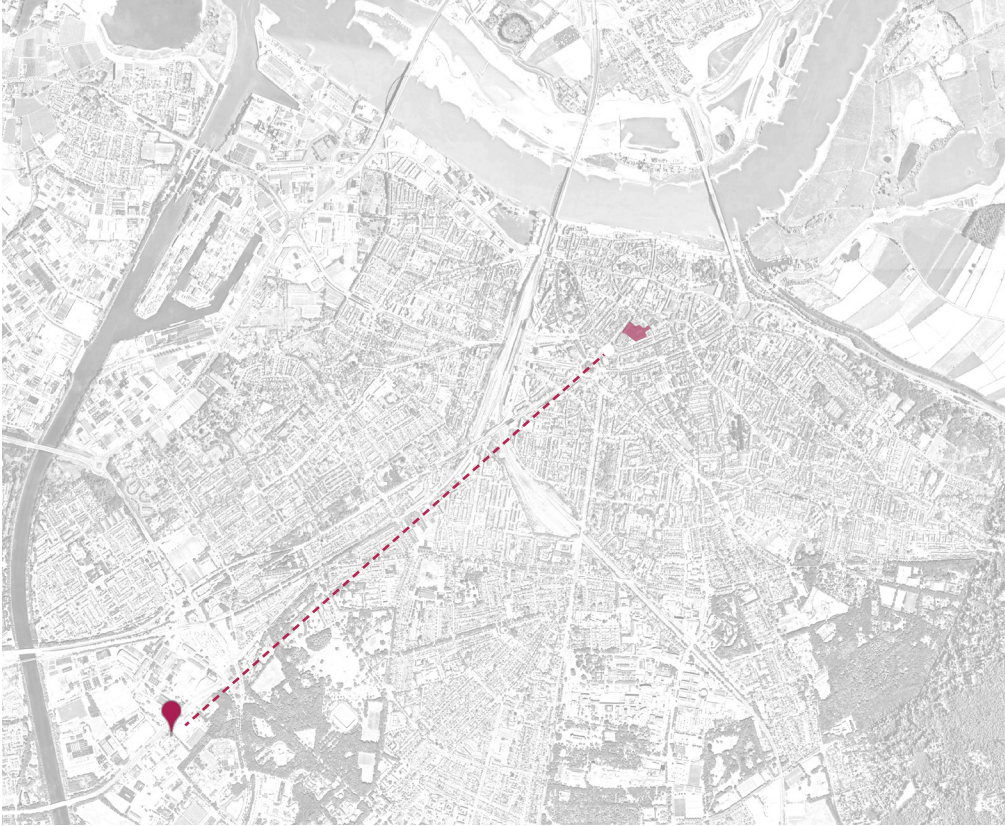
"No, I am not comfortable here, at De Hulsen, certainly. It's just a shelter, a roof above my head. I never say I live here. In my opinion when I say "I live here" I don't have the goal to improve my life, to have a house with a garden. But I live here temporarily."

Bernard:



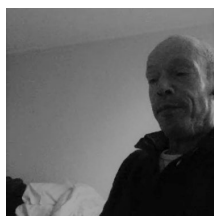
"De Hulsen, on the Nieuwe Dukenburgseweg, 4.5 km from the Molenpoort Passage. There is a night facility, where the less complex homeless people can sleep. Positive side there are less problematic people, downside the care is very medium. And is too far from the city centre."

De Hulslen.



De Hulslen: 4,5 km from the Molenpoort

The MFC is a centre for homeless people with drug and alcohol addictions. It hosts 20 people in dorm facilities and 10 people in apartments.



This shelter got a very bad reputation because people with any kind of problem are mixed in a place that do not help them separately. Therefore, "ordinary" people that become homeless do not, usually, seek refuge in this kind of place.

Ronald, the homeless man I interviewed, spent some months at the MFC and he defined as "the hell on earth". He said:

"In those collective dormitories, they stole from me all kind of things. They stole everything, also the insulin I needed for my diabetes.

For me, it was the first time to be homeless in such a situation. At the moment I drunk all day. To forget all the misery."

A place, that should provide for **care and security** to its inhabitants, not only does not provide such things, yet it contributes even more to theirs downfall and problems.

MFC.



Night shelter, 600m from the Molenpoort Passage, run by homeless people. This give them more self-esteem, responsabilize them and arouses a sense of belonging again.

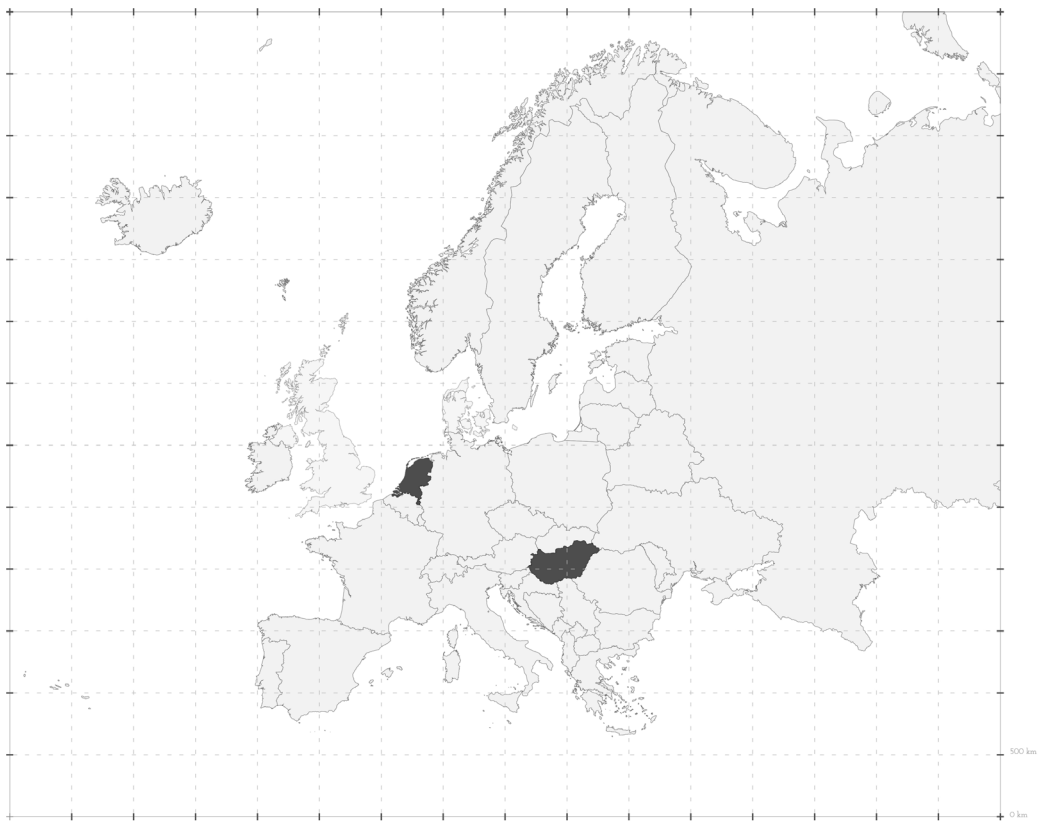
Per se the shelter fuction really properly and can be seen as a successful example. Nevertheless, the downside is that people remain for too long and a place that should be a temporary stay becomes indeterminate. Therefore there is no follow up due to the scarcity of affordable housing and new people can not be sheltered.

Het NUNN.



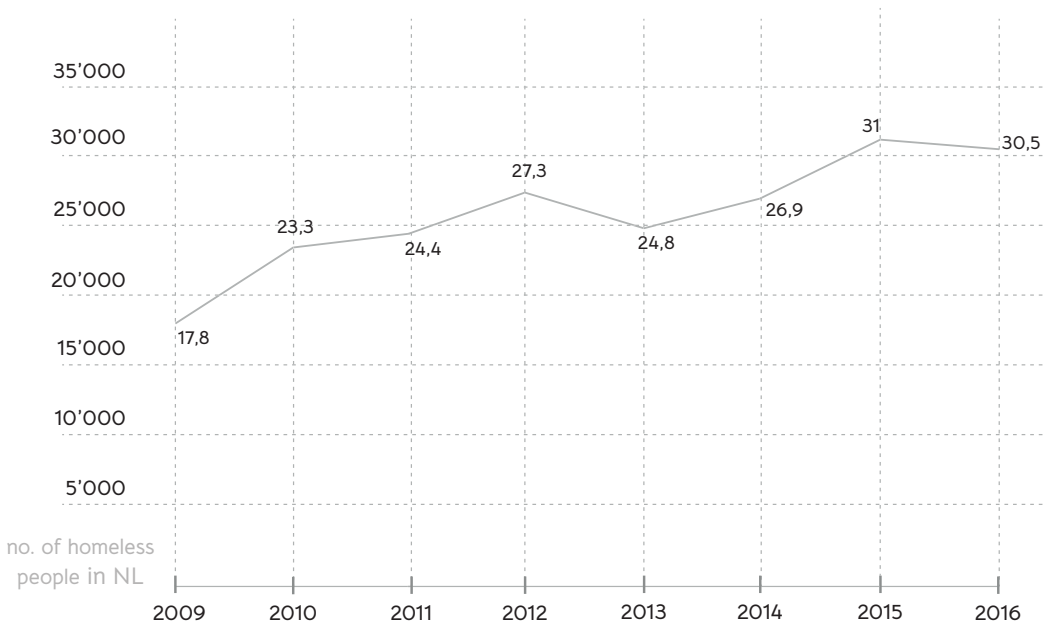
Where rough sleeping is illegal ...

... in Europe.

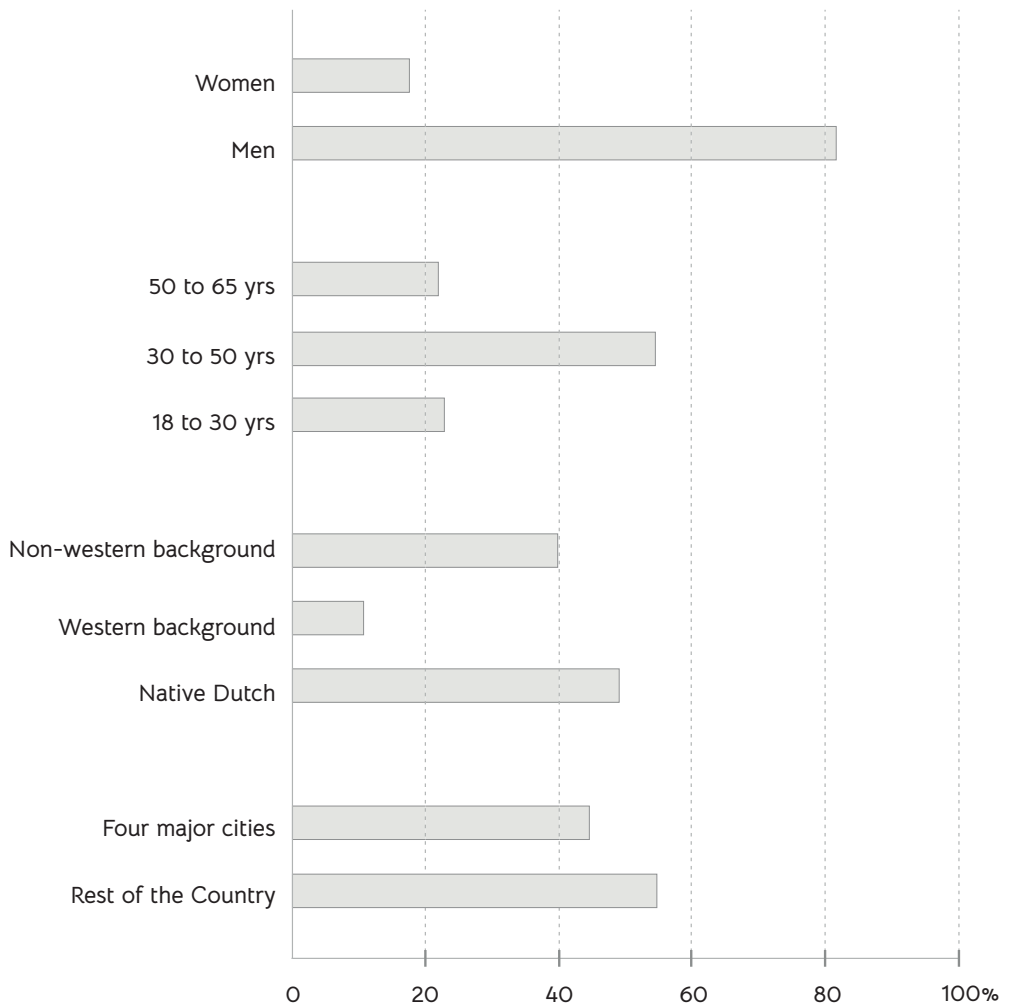


The Netherlands and Hungary are the only two European countries where sleeping outside is illegal.

Homelessness in numbers ...



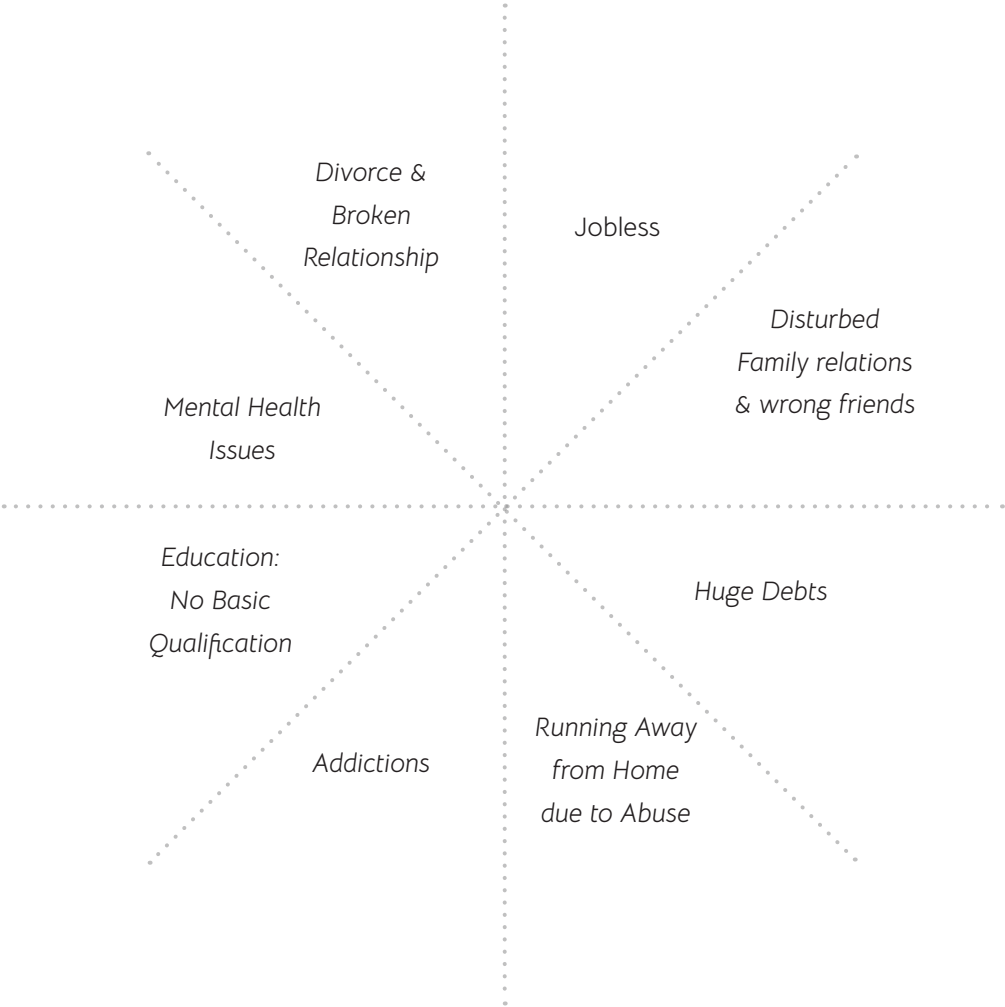
... in the Netherlands.



To a large extent, the Dutch rental housing market is a nonprofit system, funded by the national government and aimed at the socially fair distribution of available housing. Rents are controlled by the national government. Nevertheless, in the 1980s housing rents increased almost twice as much as the general price index (47 percent versus 25 percent) . Virtually all homeless people in Amsterdam are unemployed and receive some sort of social security benefit. In the Netherlands, the social security system has also changed in the last ten to 15 years (19). In the early 1980s, the national government tried to lower expenditures on social security by freezing the level of individual benefits. However, mainly because of rising unemployment and the growing number of people

eligible for disability benefits, the costs of the social security system still rapidly increased. Therefore, the national government changed its policy in the late 1980s and early 1990s—instead of lowering the level of benefits again, it restricted eligibility for unemployment benefits, disability benefits, and early-retirement settlements. As a result of this volume policy, relatively more people became dependent on the lower general assistance payments from their municipality. The level of general assistance payments, which is slightly lower than the legal minimum wage, is considered the social minimum in the Netherlands. Every legal resident in the Netherlands who has no income is eligible for general assistance.

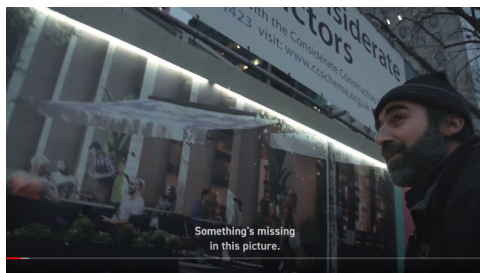
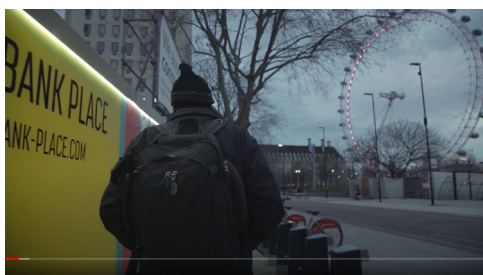
Why are they homeless?



For those who need ...

There seem to be a **lack of responsibility** by architecture that tends to address and support the typical users, forgetting the ones that need it the most... the homeless.

... architecture the most.



from TU Delft, Berlage Keynotes Lecture with Beka & Lemoine

Domus 1046. David Chipperfield: “We have normalised an emergency where the temporary is permanently”

After the isolation in their own homes that many have faced, in the editorial in *Domus* issue 1046, David Chipperfield focuses attention on the homeless drama, a problem pushed to the margins during the pandemic.

The conclusions I have drawn from the research showed that homelessness is still badly addressed in the city and that many improvements could be done. First of all, the municipality, as in the rest of the Netherlands, is adopting multiple measures of defensive architecture, such as benches with arm rests in the middle to avoid homeless people to sleep on them, grids to close alleyways, spikes in order to keep the homeless out of the city centre.

The project has become an occasion to propose an alternative answer to the issue.

Design.

Chapter 4.

The Urban Hidden Landscape

The “suffocated” Courtyard

In the Urban Plan design phase it was helpful to look at the rest of the city and recognize a certain recurrence in the typology of blocks with inner courtyards.

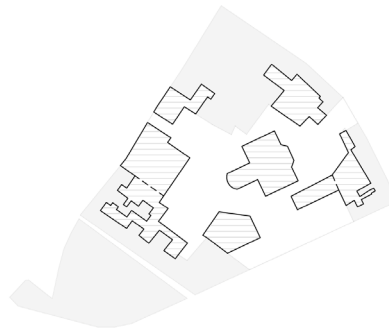
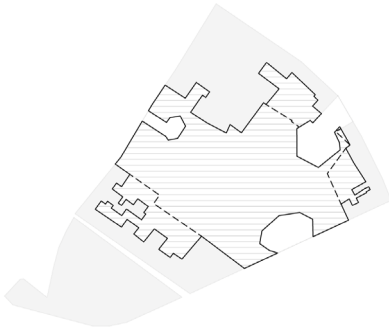
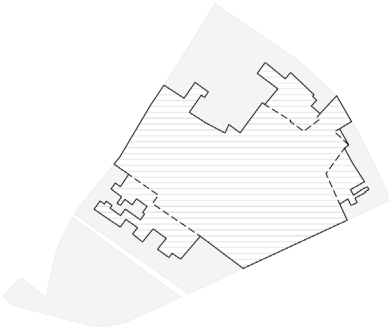
A characteristic that was missing were the Molenpoort Shopping Mall is located.



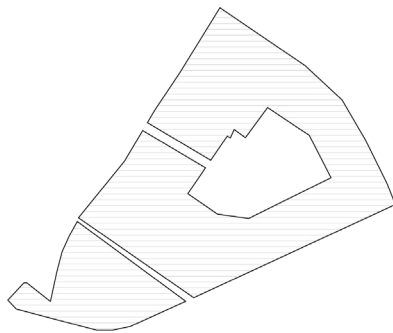
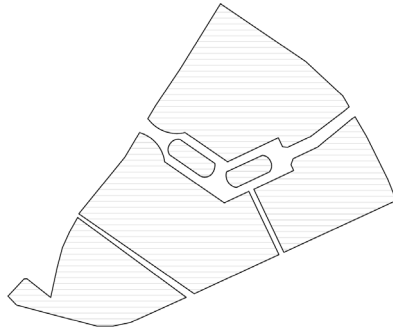
Courtyards study

Group work

Initial Concepts



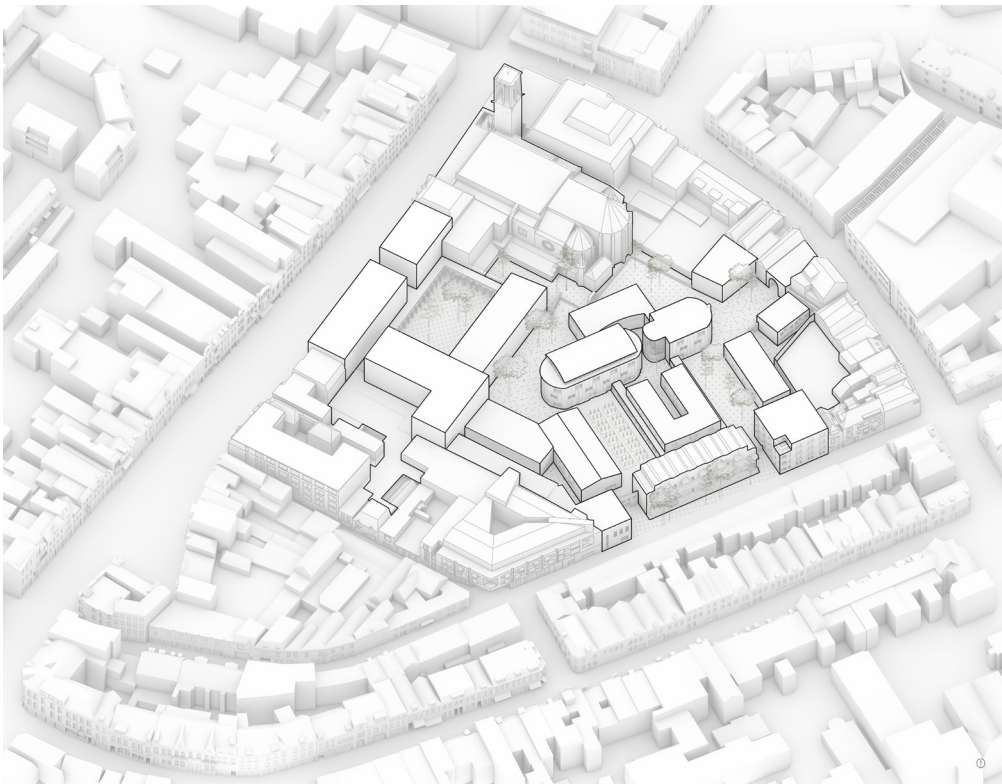
Erosion / Fragmentation



The Oasis & the Enclosed Hidden Landscape

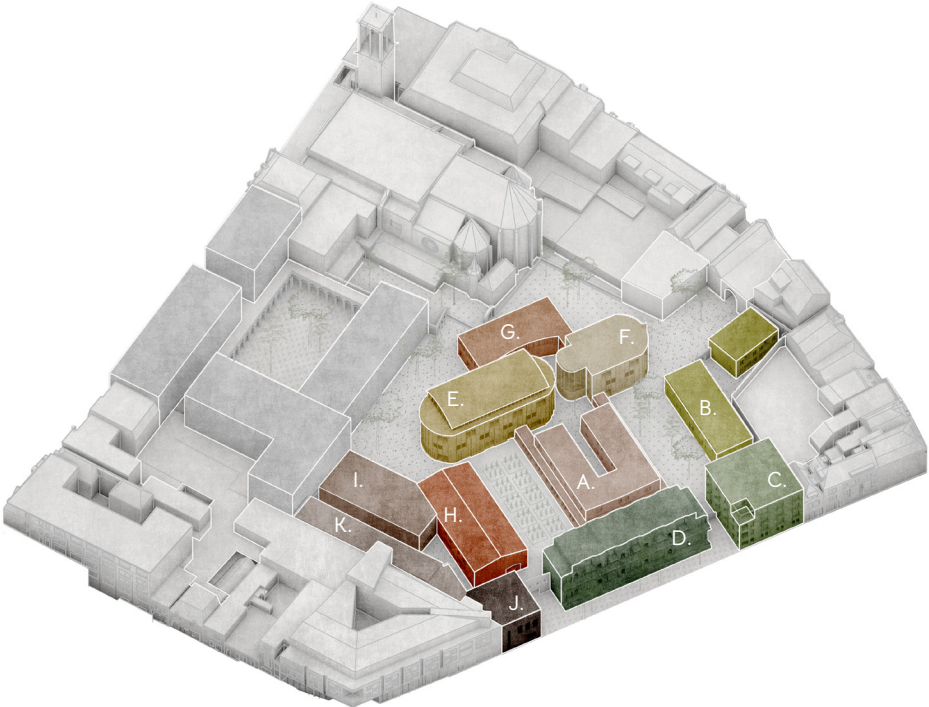
Footprint





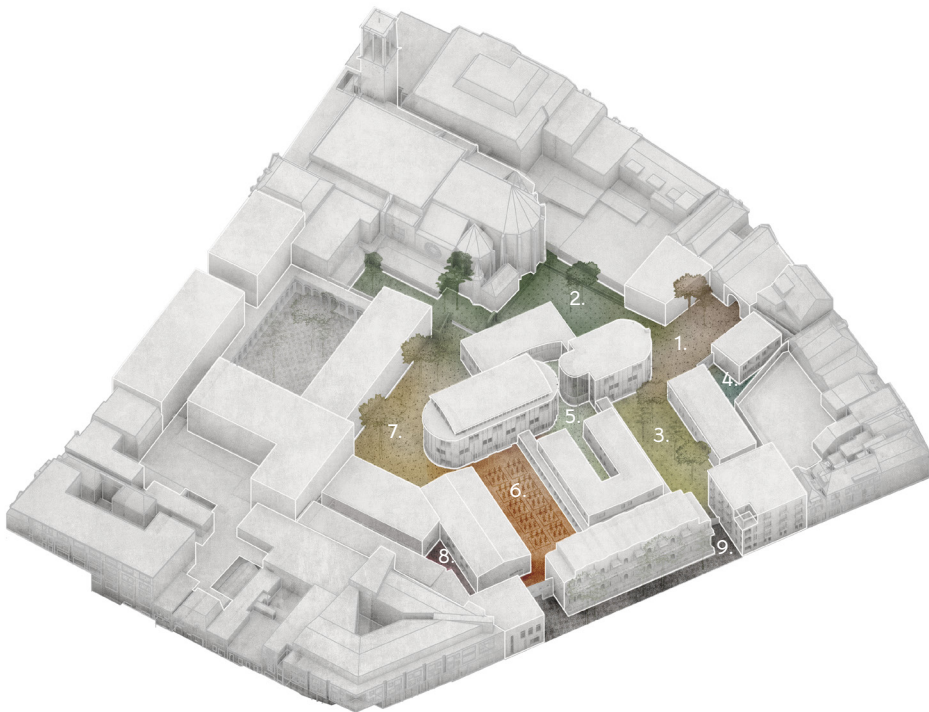
Areal View

Program



- A. Individual Rehab Units
- B. Shared Living Units
- C. Community Training House
- D. Social Housing
- E. Communal Facilities
- F. Doctors & Administration Offices

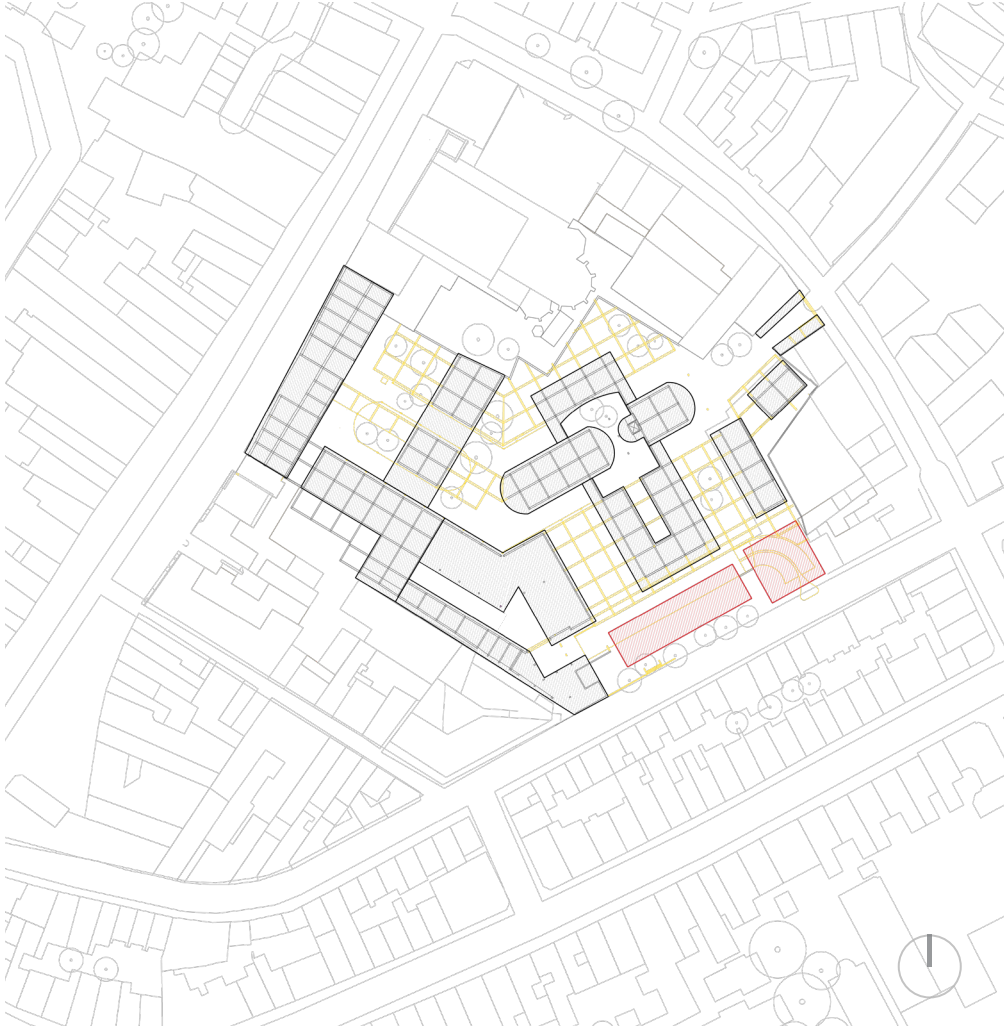
- G. De-escalation & Meditation Room
- H. Workshop & Market
- I. Kindergarden
- K. Evening School
- J. Bakery & Café



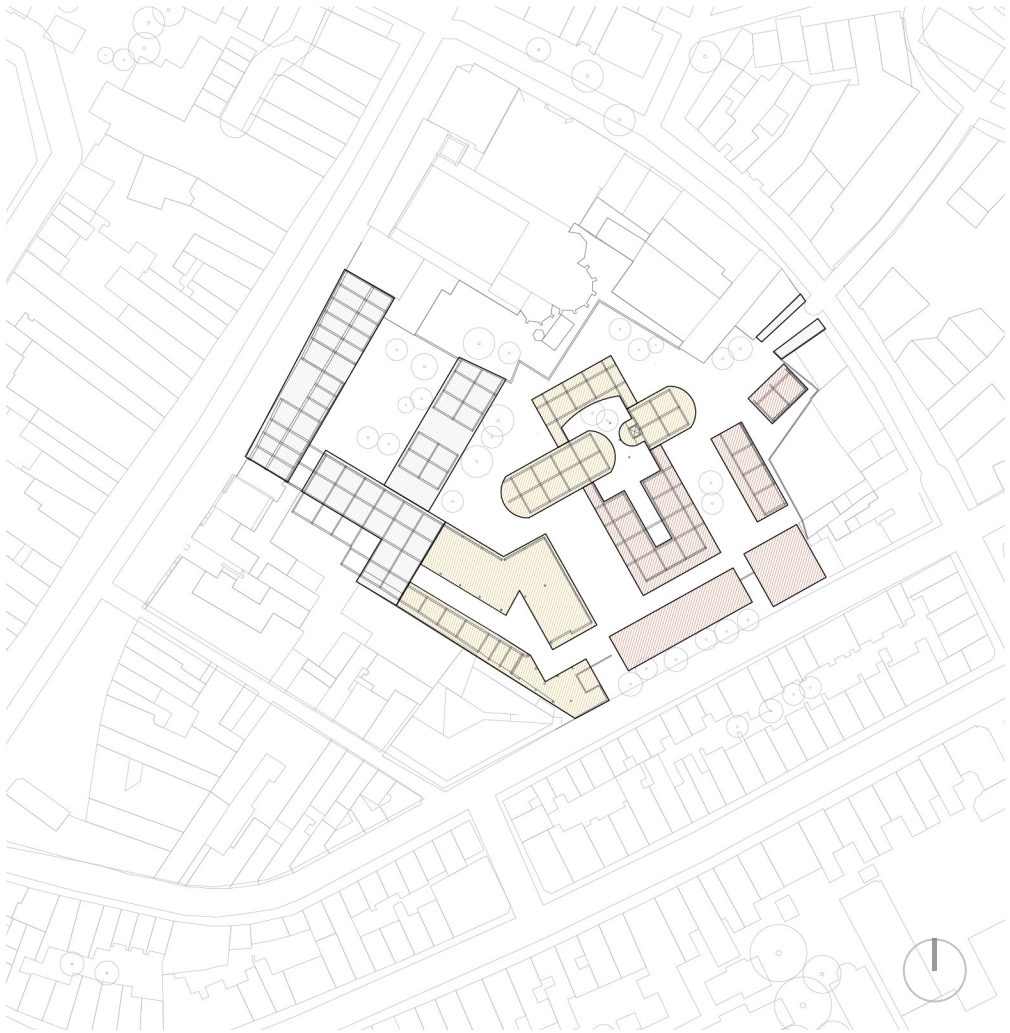
1. Welcome Square
2. Quite Garden
3. Residential Shared Garden
4. Private Patio
5. Communal Inner Patio



6. Vegetable Garden
7. Social Courtyard
8. Kids Patio
9. Threshold Square

Demolition Plan



- Demolish
- Re-Use
- New



-  Residential Space
-  Community Space

Chapter 5.

Stories of Meaningful Places

Social Organizations in Nijmegen

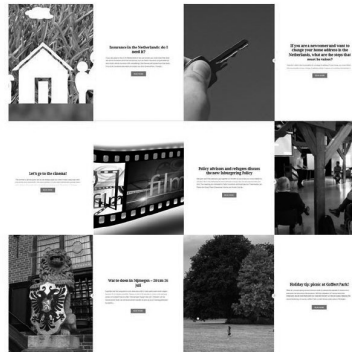
Guidance at home Nijmegen



About us
Guidance at home in Nijmegen

Address
Wheat Road 20
6534 AM
NIJMEGEN

IRISZORG



Guidance with living, daytime activities and work for people with a psychiatric condition

Need help? [RDW nearby](#) [Professionals](#) [Work at](#) [About us](#)

Speaking
The atmosphere at the IRISZORG is informal and relaxed, based on equality. That's what appeals to me.

[Need help?](#) [Guidance in recovery](#)

Organizations

Everything	volunteer work	Neighborhood and neighborhood work	Debate, Dialogue	Health and nutrition	Hobby and leisure
Art and culture	informal care	Human Rights	Nature and environment	Undertake	Education
		Organization	Sport	Peace	Wellbeing
					Meaning and spirituality

Amnesty Nijmegen
Amnesty International Nijmegen contributes by means of its own actions to raising awareness and compliance with human rights in Nijmegen. Amnesty Nijmegen is a volunteer organization with several dozen active ...

[read more...](#)

Attaste Rituali & Ceremonies
There are important moments in life that require extra attention: a birth, naming, relationship or breakup, goodbye to a loved one, from work or health, gender reassignment, a silver or golden marriage. I offer ...

[read more...](#)

BASTA
BASTA is an ideal thrift store in the center of Nijmegen. Our address is Begijnenvoerstraat 36 (corner street Lange Hezeestraat). In our shop you can find household goods, curiosities, paintings, clothing, toys, books and CDs ...

[read more...](#)




[Activities](#) | [The residents](#) | [In and around the house](#) | [Support](#) | [The coordination team](#)

The House
The Werdvrouwenhuis consists of a double house on one roof with a large garden. There is a private all-round terrace with BBQ area and a dining garden. The House has two bedrooms, two living rooms, two bathrooms and a large attic, where you can also get a massage.

[View this page](#)

Groceries
Every Friday a volunteer goes to the food bank to get food. The food that remains from the various branches there. This is super needed. The residents themselves do the shopping from the supermarket Werdvrouwenhuis.

Several times a year, we organize a collection campaign for perishable products and cleaning products at a supermarket. We then ask the shop for an extra product for us.

Here further research was conducted regarding the already existing methods of tackling the above-mentioned issues. The social association IRIS Zorg, on its website, illustrates the principles of the “Community Reinforcement Approach”: a scientifically proven treatment method, developed in the 1970s, that is very successful in helping people to overcome an addiction.

The method aims to guide the person through a path a small goals and successes with which he/she will regain completely his/her health, life, and independence back. The method needs to be sustained by adequate built structures: the detox period with “re-hab units”, where the patients are not yet able to reintegrate and socialize and need the most protection and privacy, a second phase includes living in a “co-living training house” where the people starts to share more and re-gain responsibilities over their own space. And, finally, affordable housing, to tackle the issue in the city centre of Nijmegen and to address those homeless people that do not need assistance and care, but just an economical place to inhabit.

All of this, together with the addition of communal facilities, doctors, counselling, and spaces for the community, such as a kindergarden, a bakery and a café, have become part of my proposal as graduation project.



Garden
There is a large garden around the house with terrace and cozy seating areas. There are trees, flowers and a vegetable garden. Volunteers look together with the women what can be grown in the vegetable garden. There is a shed with several bicycles.

Cook
In the two kitchens, the women who stay in the Wereldvrouwenhuis cook every day. They sometimes eat together, but also in small groups or alone. Usually dishes are cooked from home.

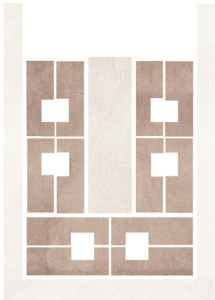


ereldvrouwenhuis can get complemented with what else is forces of the
able foodstuffs, care e customers if they want to

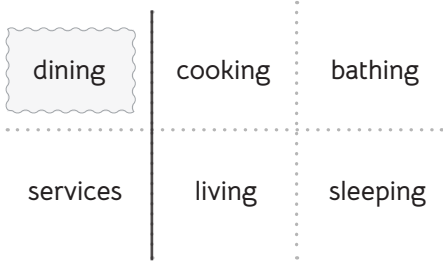
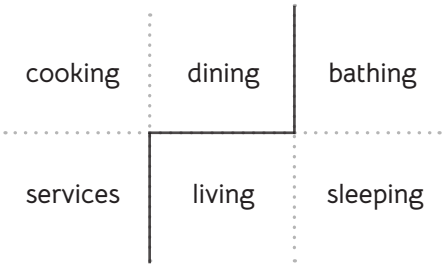
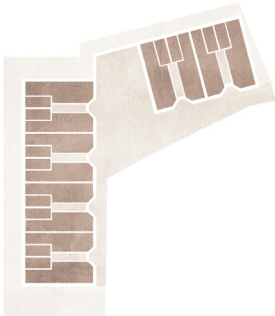




Community Reinforcement Approach

Individual Re-hab Units

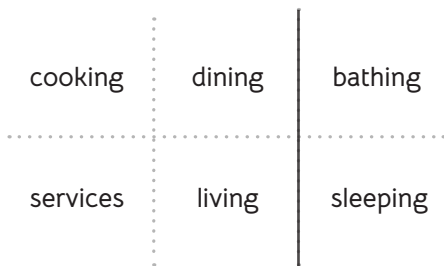
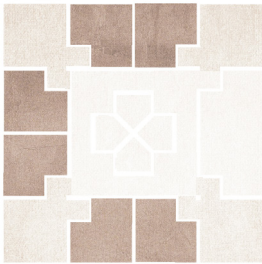


Shared Living Units

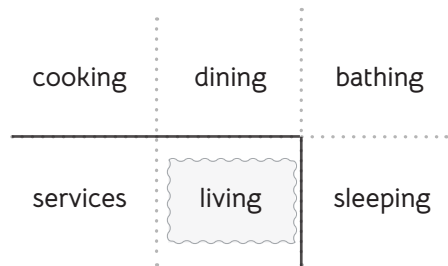


 Sharing Possibility
 Individual / Shared

Community Training House



Social Housing



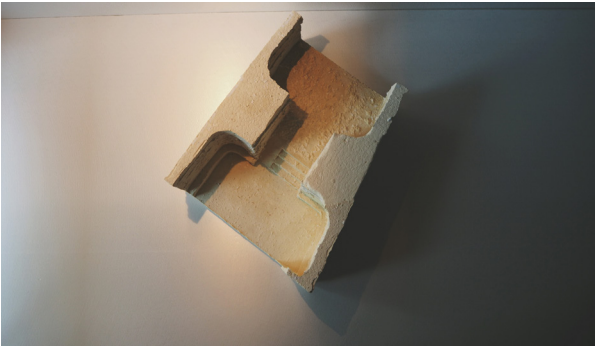
Ground Floor Plan

Molenstraat





P2 Vedute: Starting of the reflection: When is a place welcoming?



A story about...

Thresholds.



“The resulting relationship with nature would allow us to recognize our own nature, while also letting us discover and develop a broad range of possibilities for our actions.

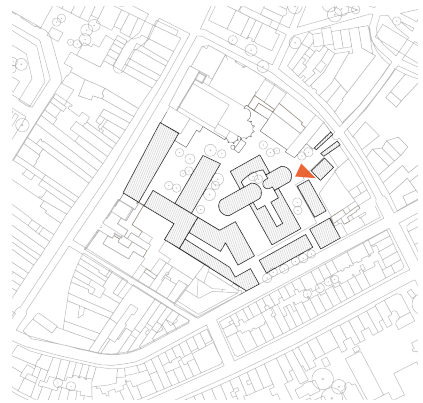
Our own ability, our qualities and those of what we encounter mutually affect each other in an active way. Such a transformation in the relationship between people and things, being open to being touched, allow us to enjoy further experiences. “

Gion A. Caminada

A story about...

gardens.

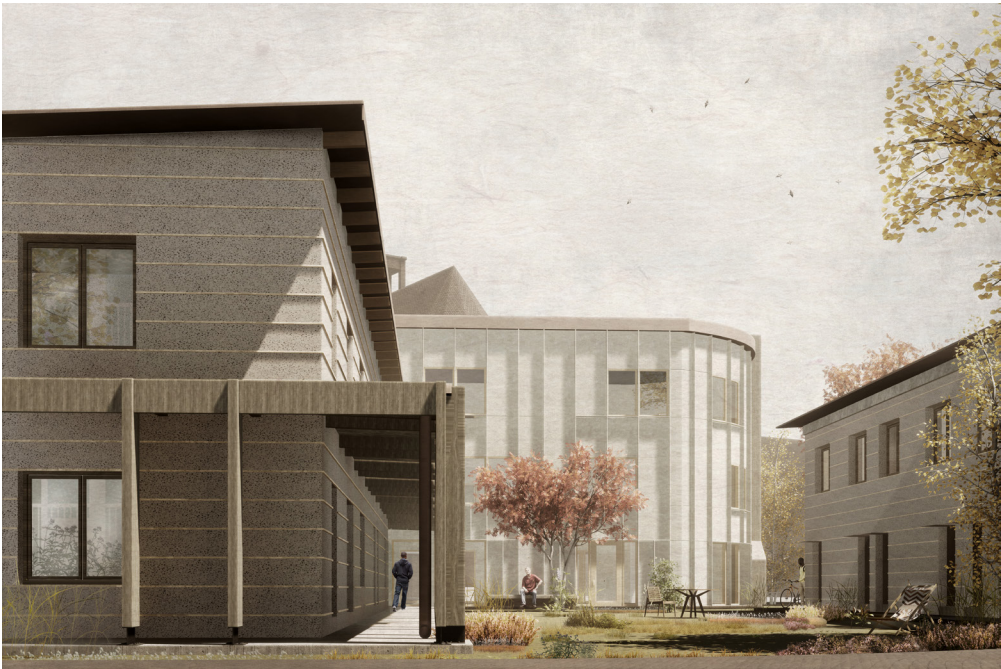






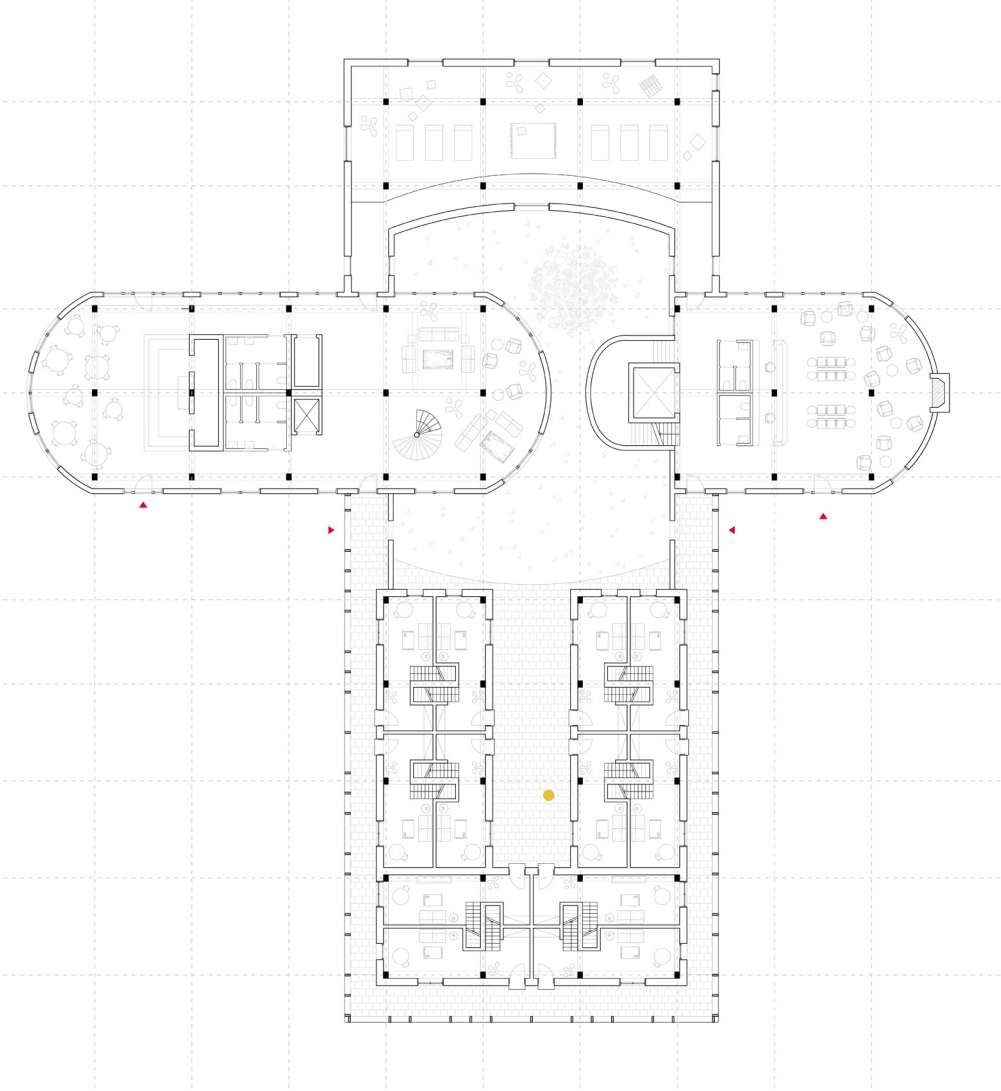
The Fireplace Square
welcoming the visitors





The Shared residential Garden

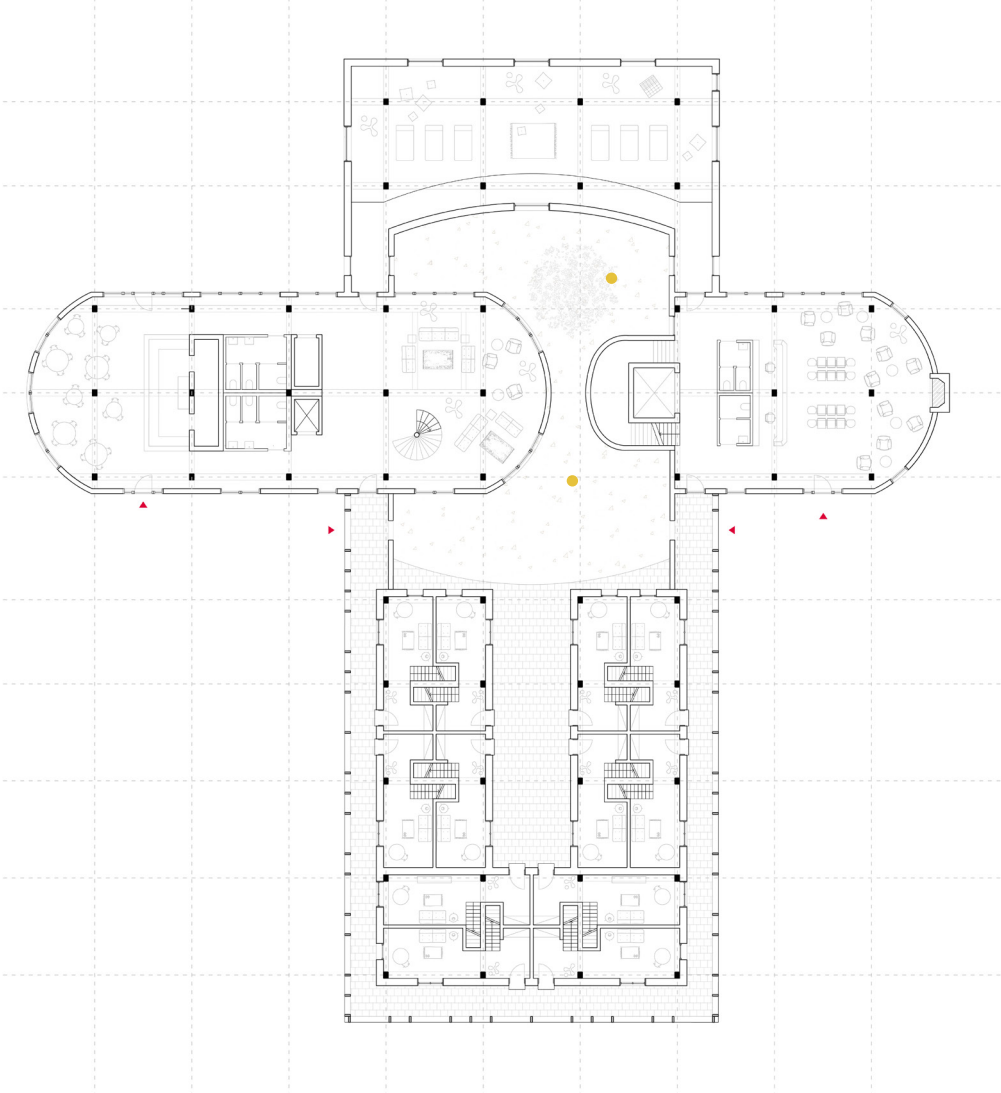
Ground Floor Plan





The inner courtyard

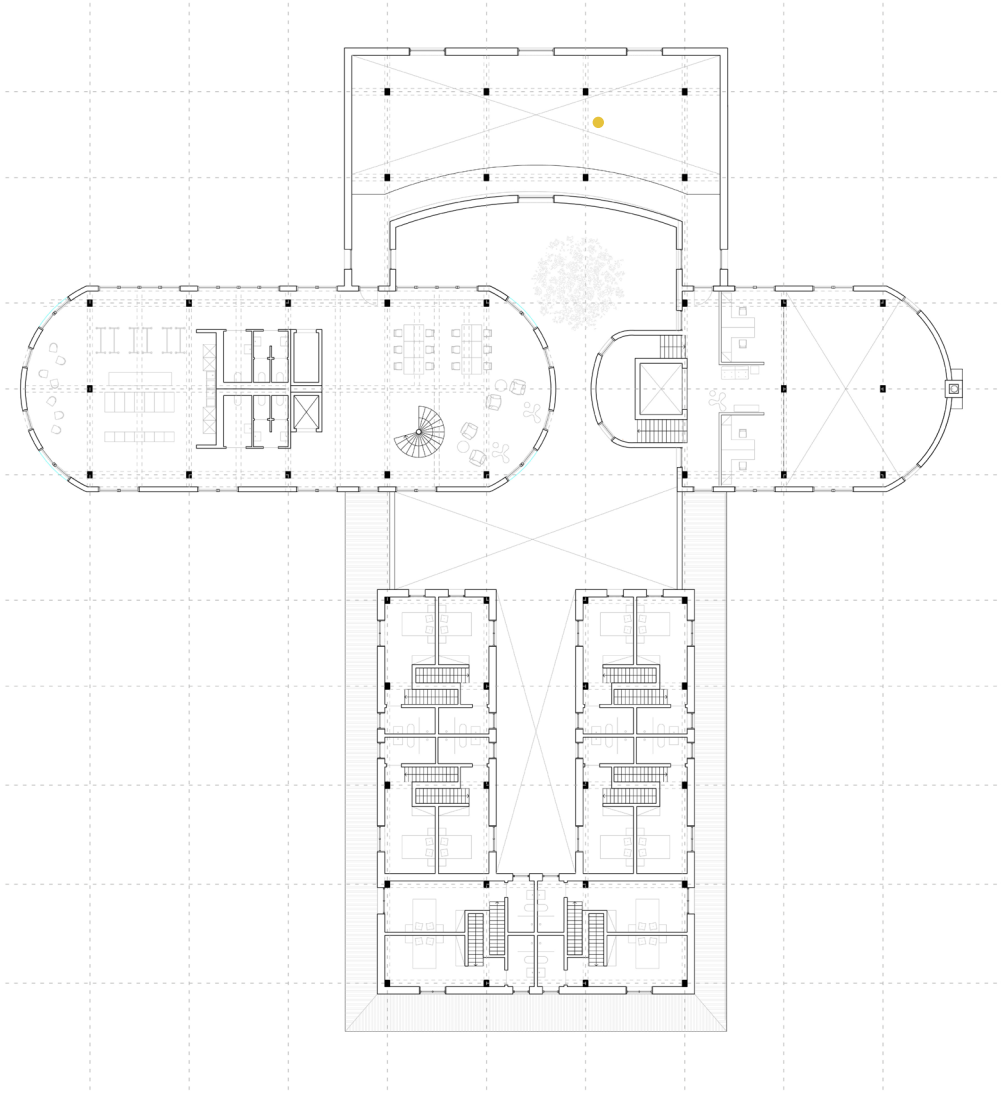
Ground Floor Plan





The inner courtyard

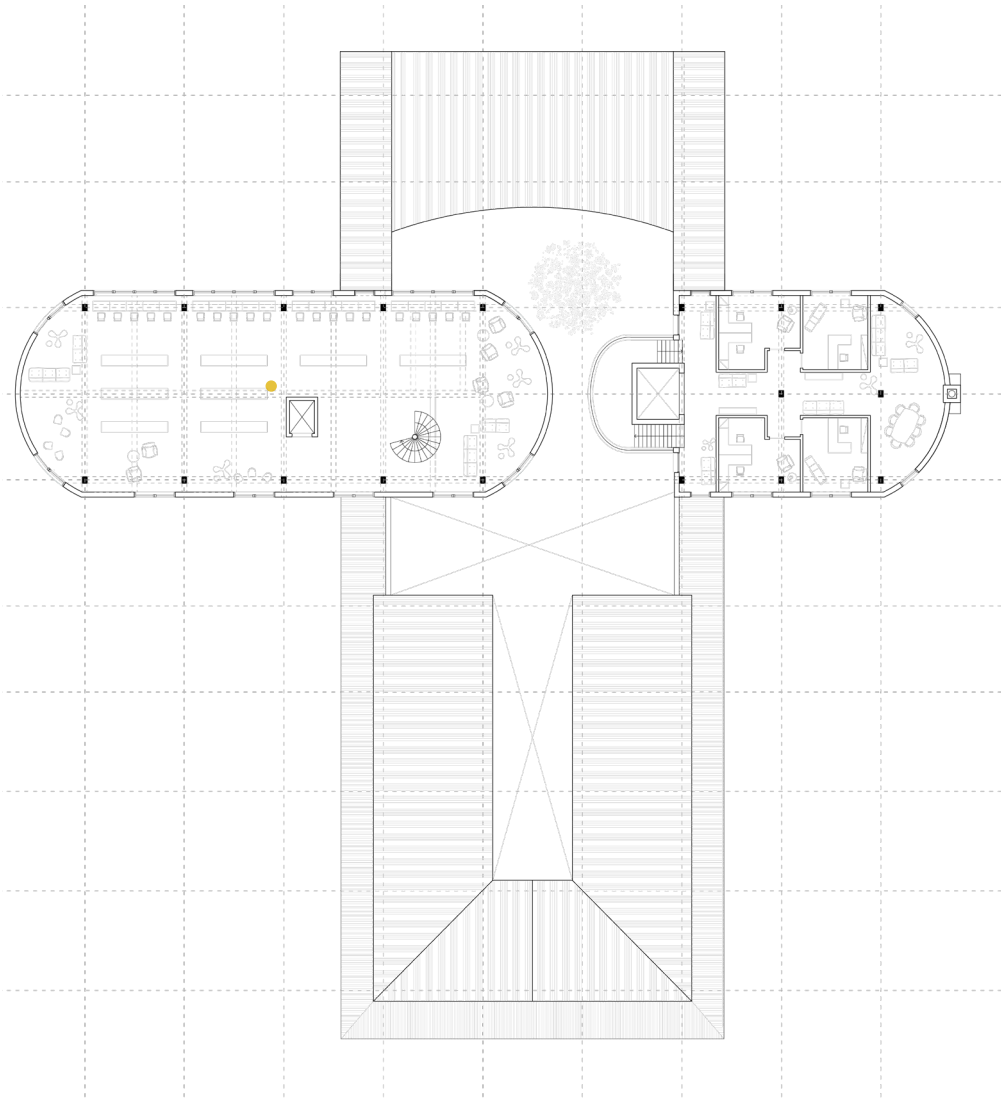
First Floor Plan





De-escalation & Meditation Room

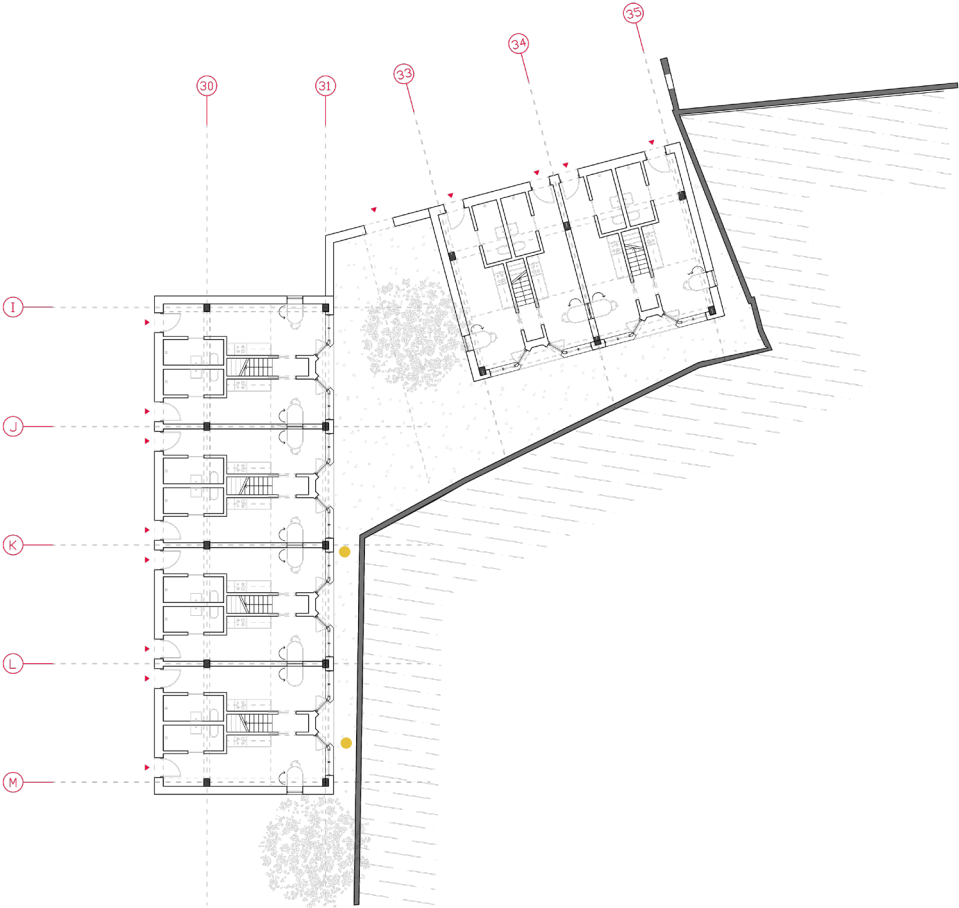
Second Floor Plan





Library & Reading Room

Ground Floor Plan



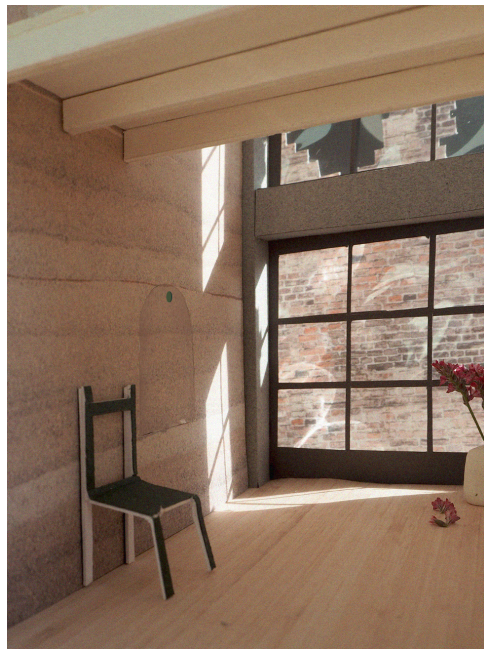


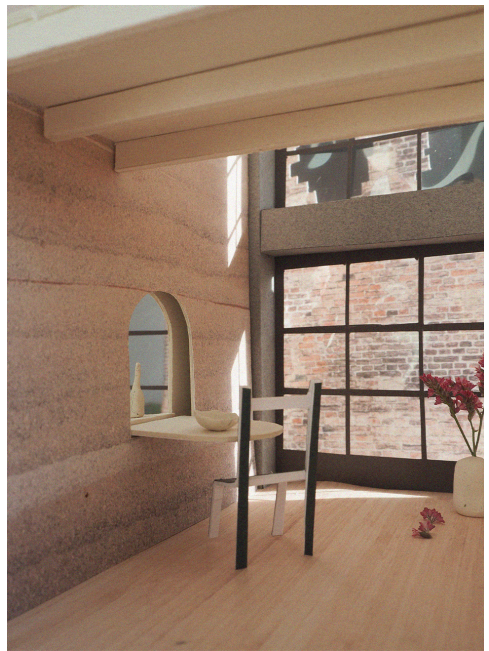
Living by the Molenpoort Wall

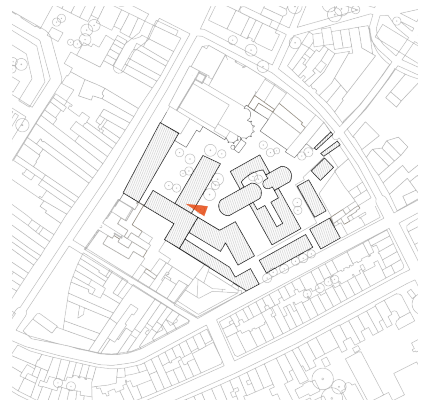
Living Together apart

Between two individual re-hab rooms within the rammed earth wall that separates them, an openable table hides a double panel.

Insulated to avoid any disturbance in the case no company is wanted. Yet, also, possible to slide and open to share a meal with the neighbor.



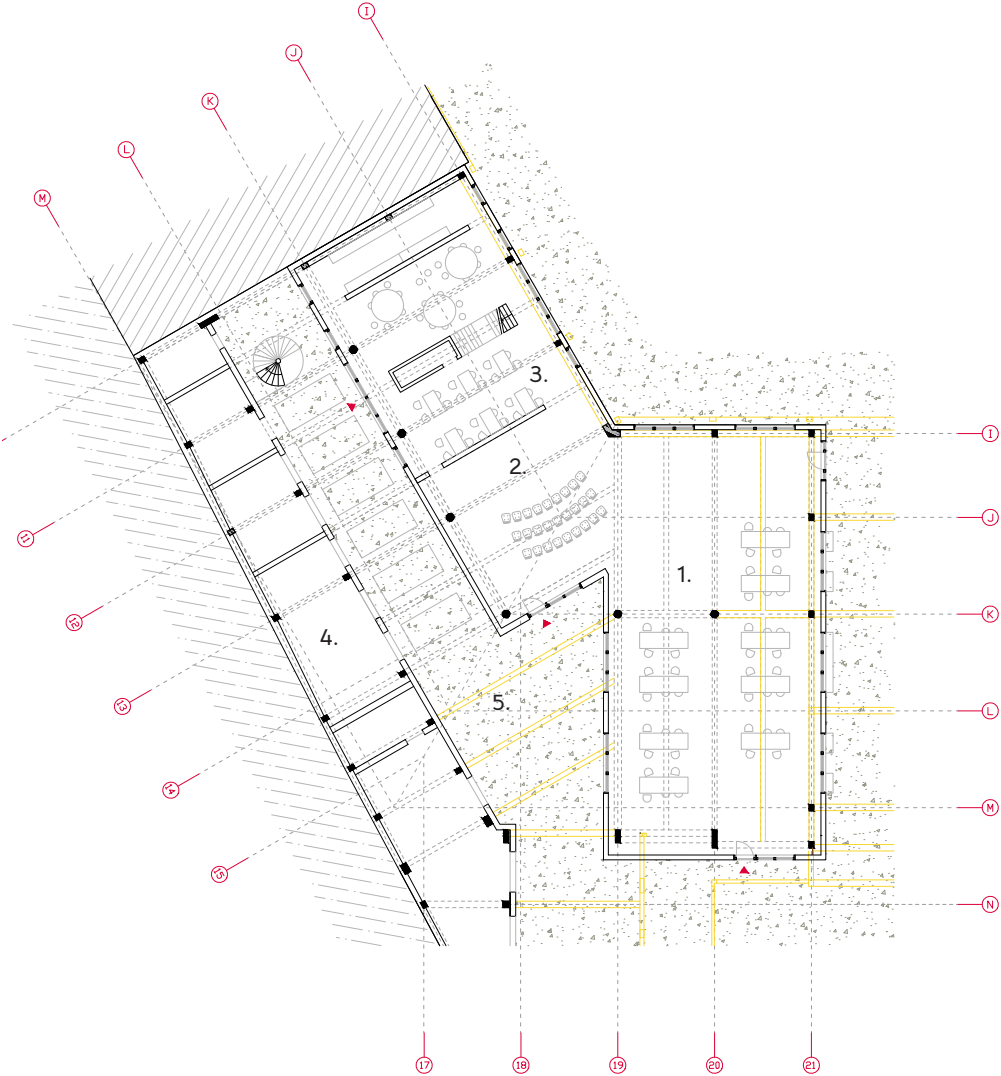






View of the Workshops and Kindergarden
towards the vegetable garden

Workshop & Kindergarden



- 1. Workshop & Market
- 2. Auditorium
- 3. Kindergarden
- 4. Service Rooms
- 5. Inner Patio



Kindergarden & Workshop Open Space

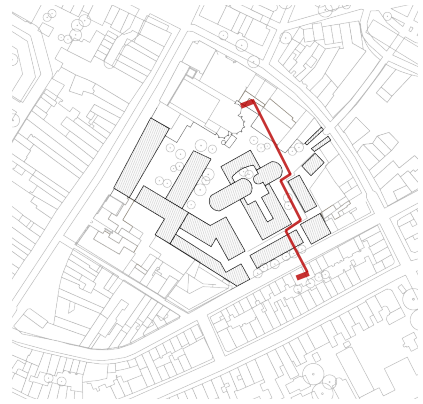




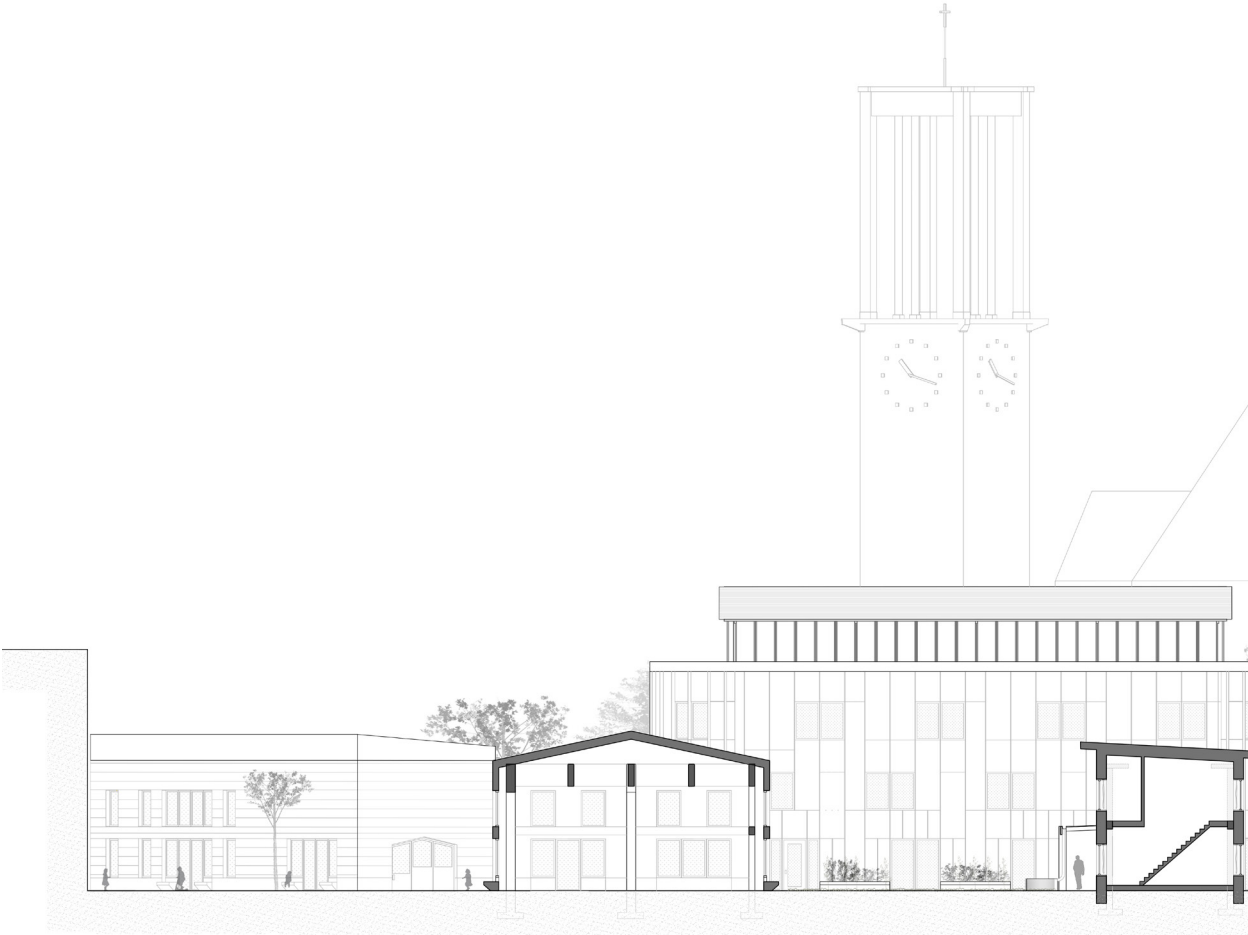
Protected Pocket Courtyard for Kids to Play

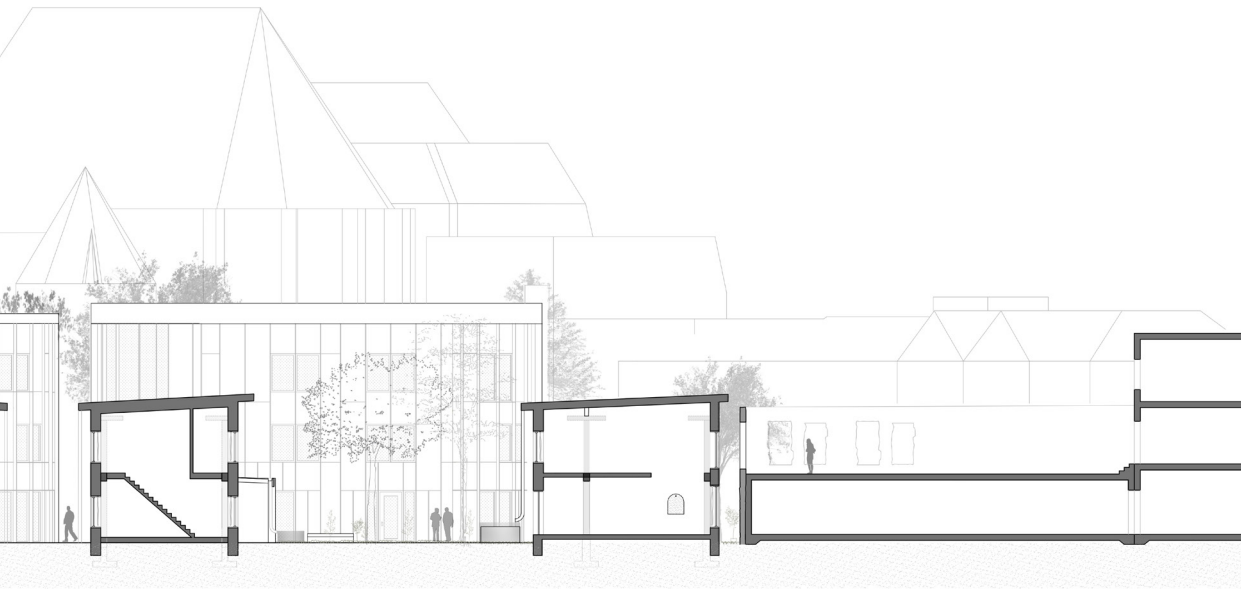
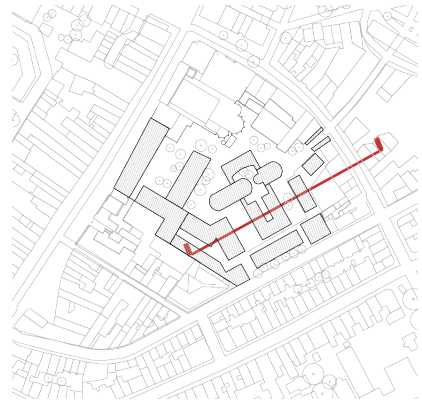
Elevation of the Communal Facilities & Rehab Units



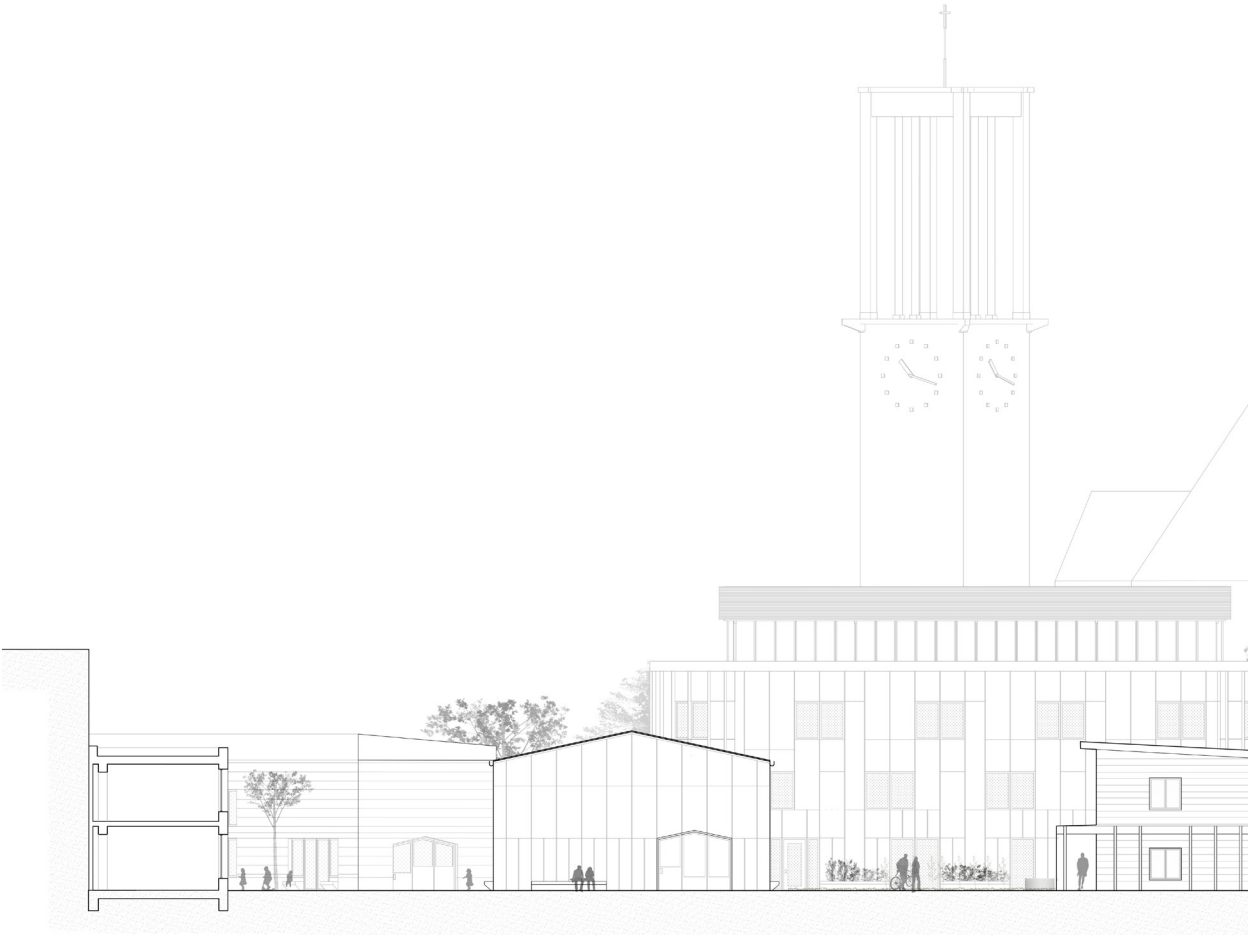


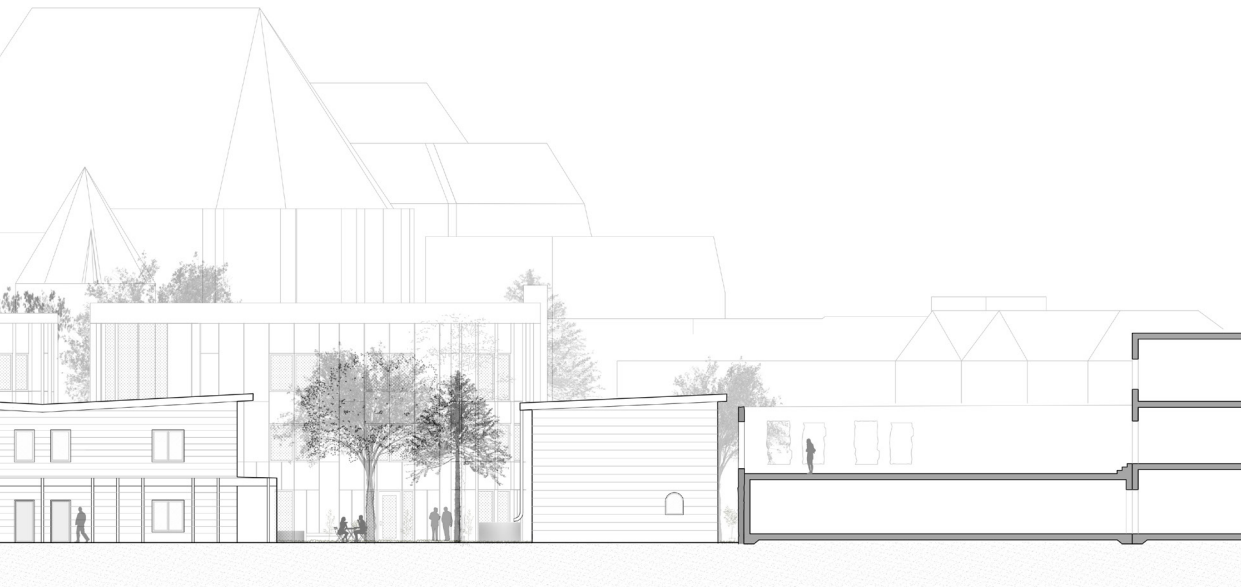
Section of the Workshops / Market / Rehab Units



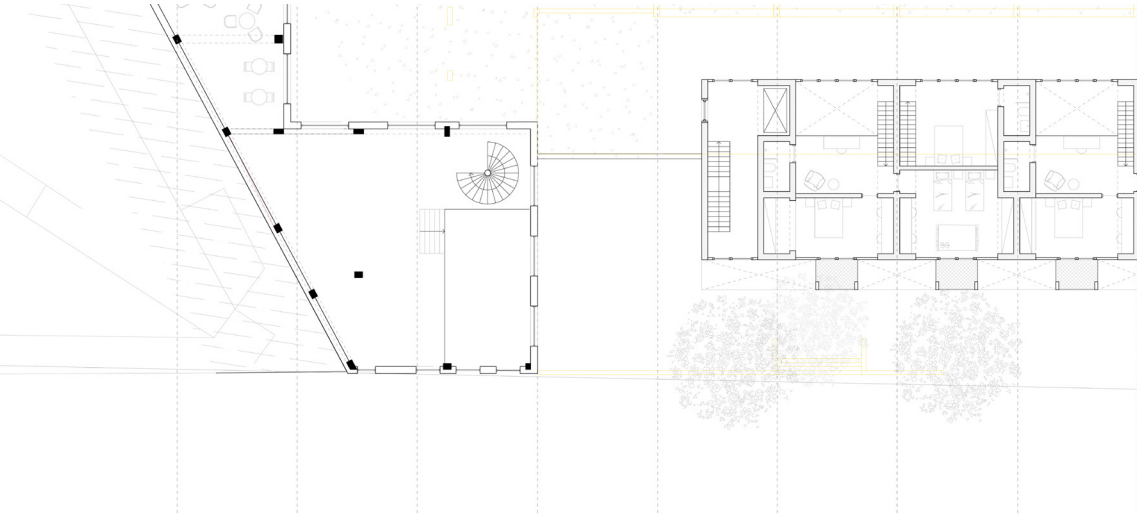


Elevation of the Workshops / Market / Rehab Units

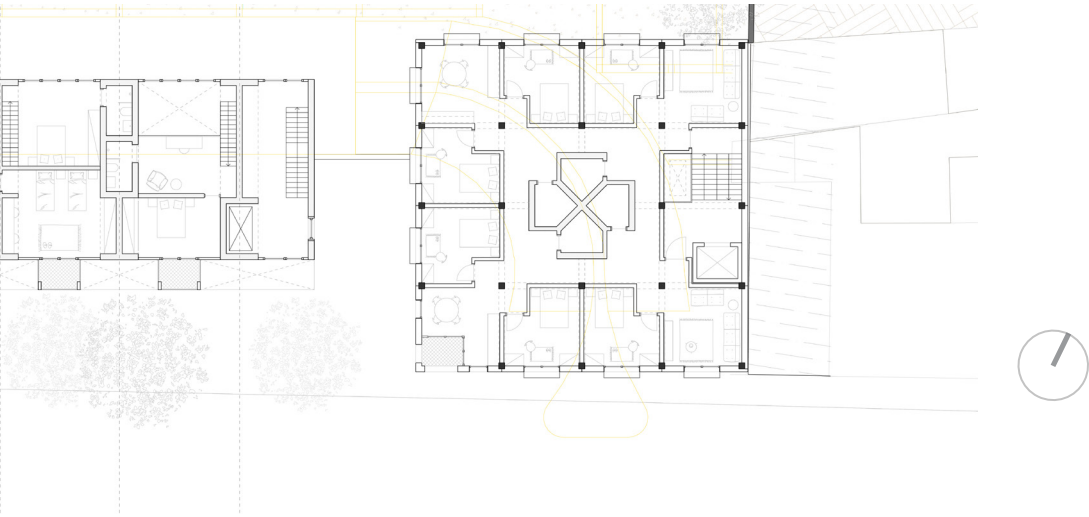




Tweede Walstraat
South Elevation - Typical Plan



Bakery-Café, Affordable Housing
& Communal Training House



Chapter 6.

Materiality, Senses & Time

From the perception of a person addicted to alcohol and drugs



Drug & Alcohol Goggles



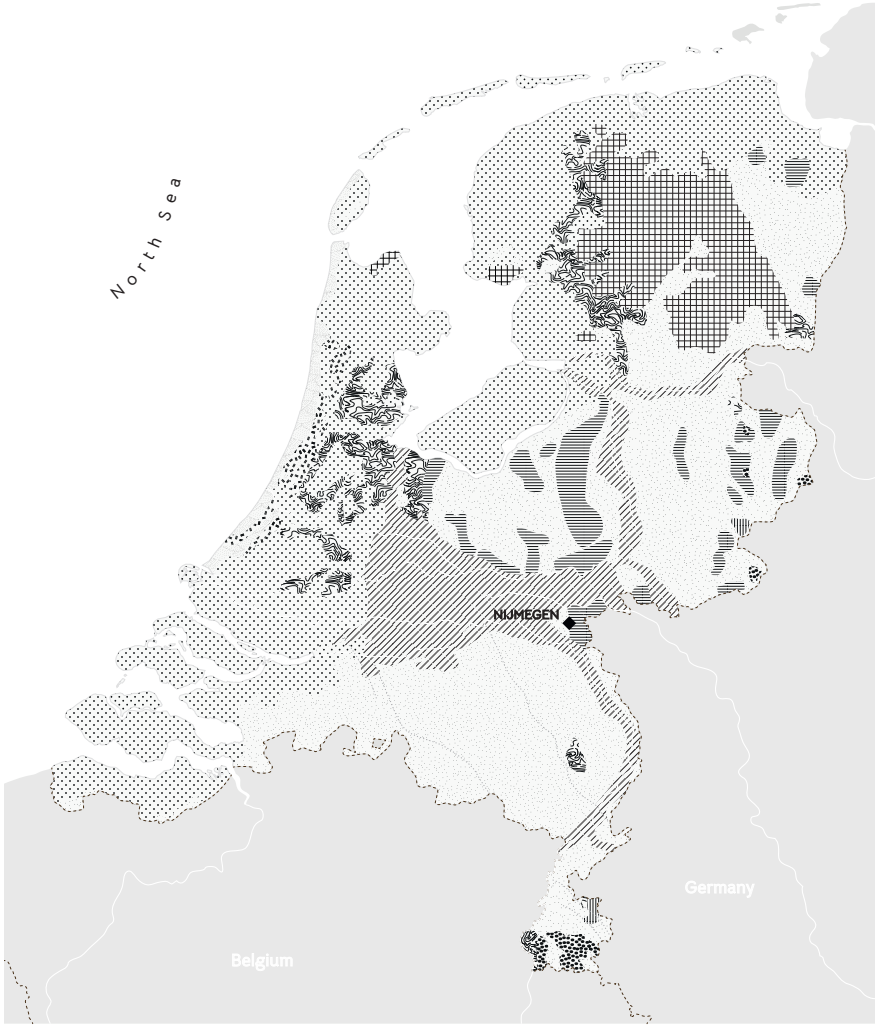
Loss of the sense of space and depth











Vision and the tactile sense are fused in the actual lived experience



Herbert Bayer, *Lonely Metropolitan*, 1932 (detail), Buhl Collection.

Netherlands: Geological Map



-  Dune and beach sand
-  Coastal barrier sands
-  Tidal flat and estuarine deposits (fine and clay)
-  Peat
-  Fluvial deposits (sand and clay)
-  Coversands and fluvial deposits (gravel, sand and clay)
-  Saalian till (boulder clay)
-  Tertiary deposits
-  Marine deposits (sand and clay)
-  Limestone

Large availability of ...

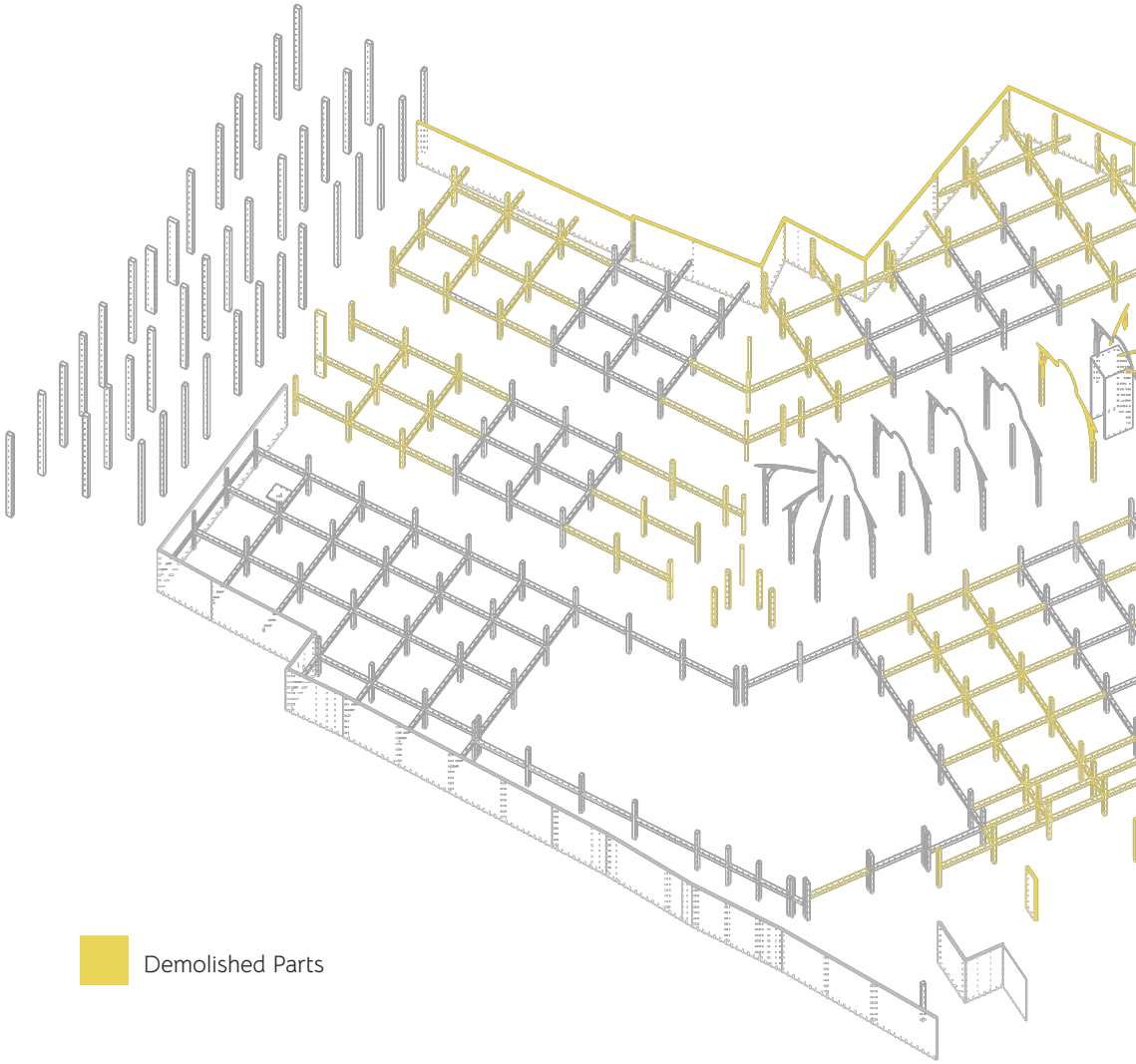


Clay

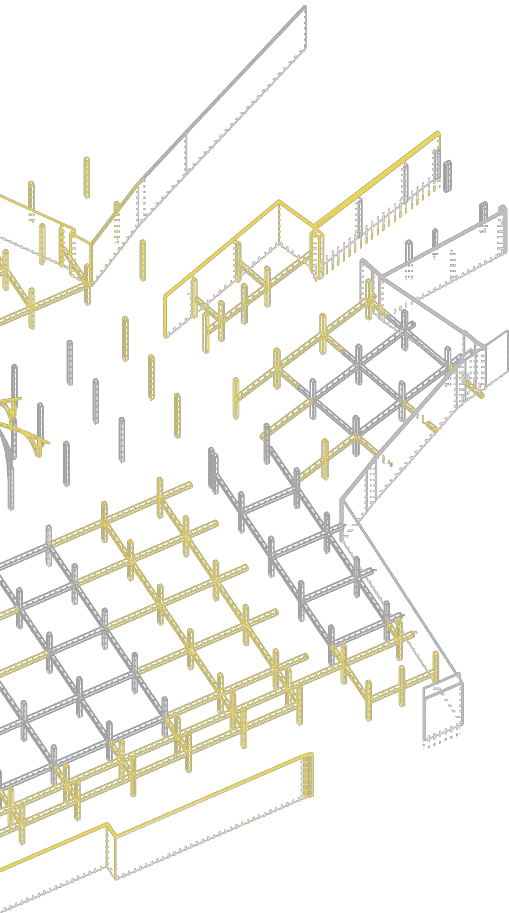


Sand

Molenpoort Shopping Mall



Little availability of ...



Gravel
Concrete waste from demolished parts
of the Molenpoort Shopping Mall



1. Gravel

2. Small Gravel

3. Sand

4. Fine Sand

5. Loam

6. Clay

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

Julie Moraca

has satisfactorily participated at the 6 hours
"Earth Discovery Workshop"
organized by BC materials,
at BC materials HQ, Brussels on May 7th 2021.

The workshop provided a general theoretical background and hands-on experience for
circular construction techniques with unfired earth.

for BC materials,
Jasper Van der Linden



ARCHITECTS & STUDIES
MATERIALS

Earth Discovery Workshop
with BC Architects
Brussels
7th May 2021

“And It’s important, you see, that you honour the material you use.”

Louis Kahn



"By touching a rough wall...we also feel our hands."

Juhani Pallasmaa

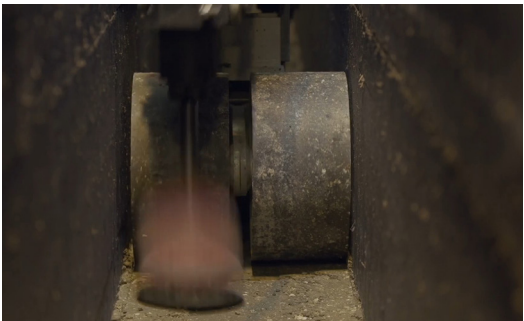
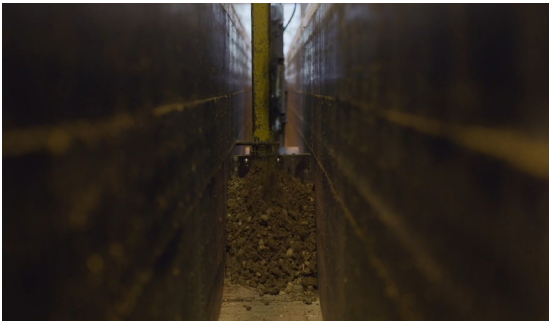




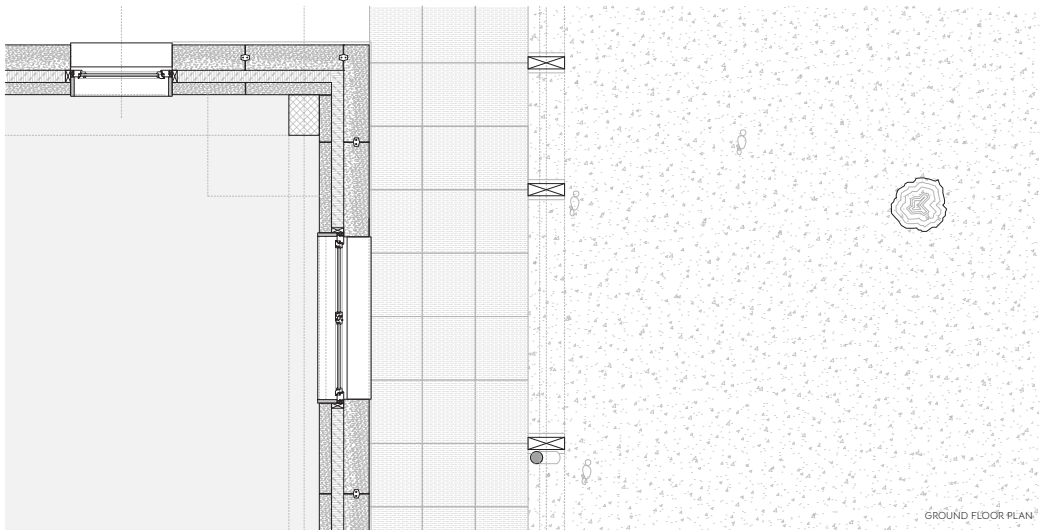
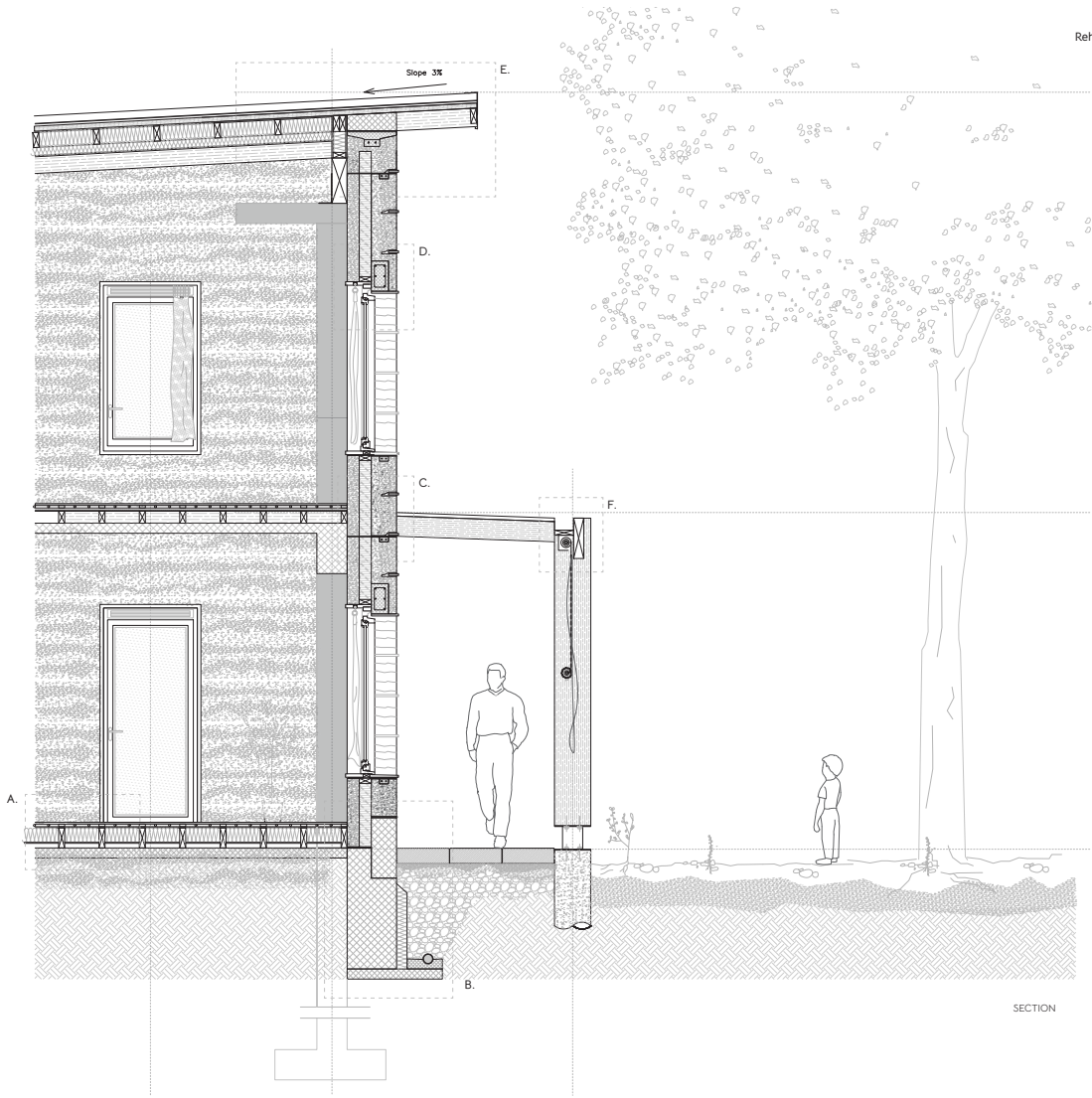


Earth Discovery Workshop
with BC Architects
Brussels
7th May 2021

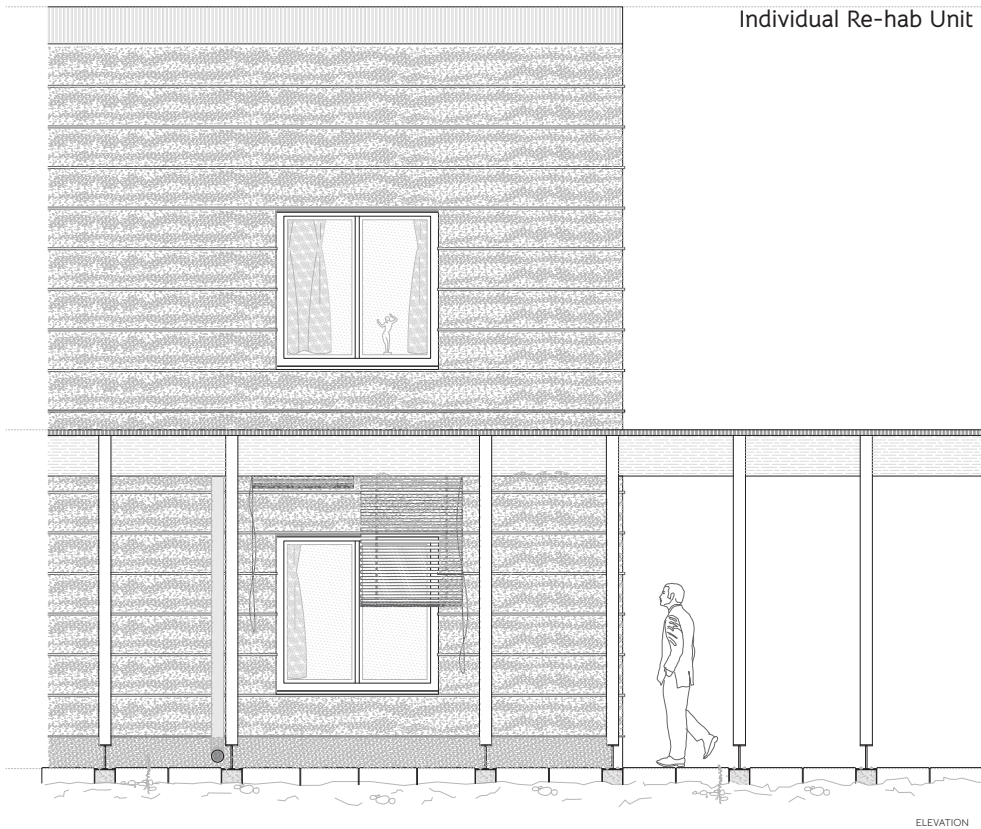
Prefabricated Rammed Earth Walls







Individual Re-hab Unit - Detail



0 20 50 100 cm

A. Floor

1. Existing concrete subfloor
2. Damp proof membrane
3. Wooden post 60x200 mm
4. Cellulose Insulation 140 mm
5. Sterling board 12 mm
6. 25 x 60 mm Spacer battens
7. Clay mortar
8. Heating pipes clipped to Ply
9. Wooden flooring

B. Foundation

10. Subsoil drain
11. Blinding Concrete
12. Stone pavers
13. Cellulose Insulation 120 mm
14. Gravel Drainage
15. Plint made of insulating concrete
16. Bitumen coating and clay mortar

C. Prefabricated Insulated Rammed Earth Wall

1. Trass-lime check 20 mm
2. Clay mortar
3. Rammed Earth 250 mm
4. Cellulose Insulation 120 mm
5. Rammed Earth 120 mm
6. Bitumen Coating
7. Clay mortar 12 mm
8. Connection Brackets
9. Reinforcement Rebars
10. Existing Concrete Structure

D. Window

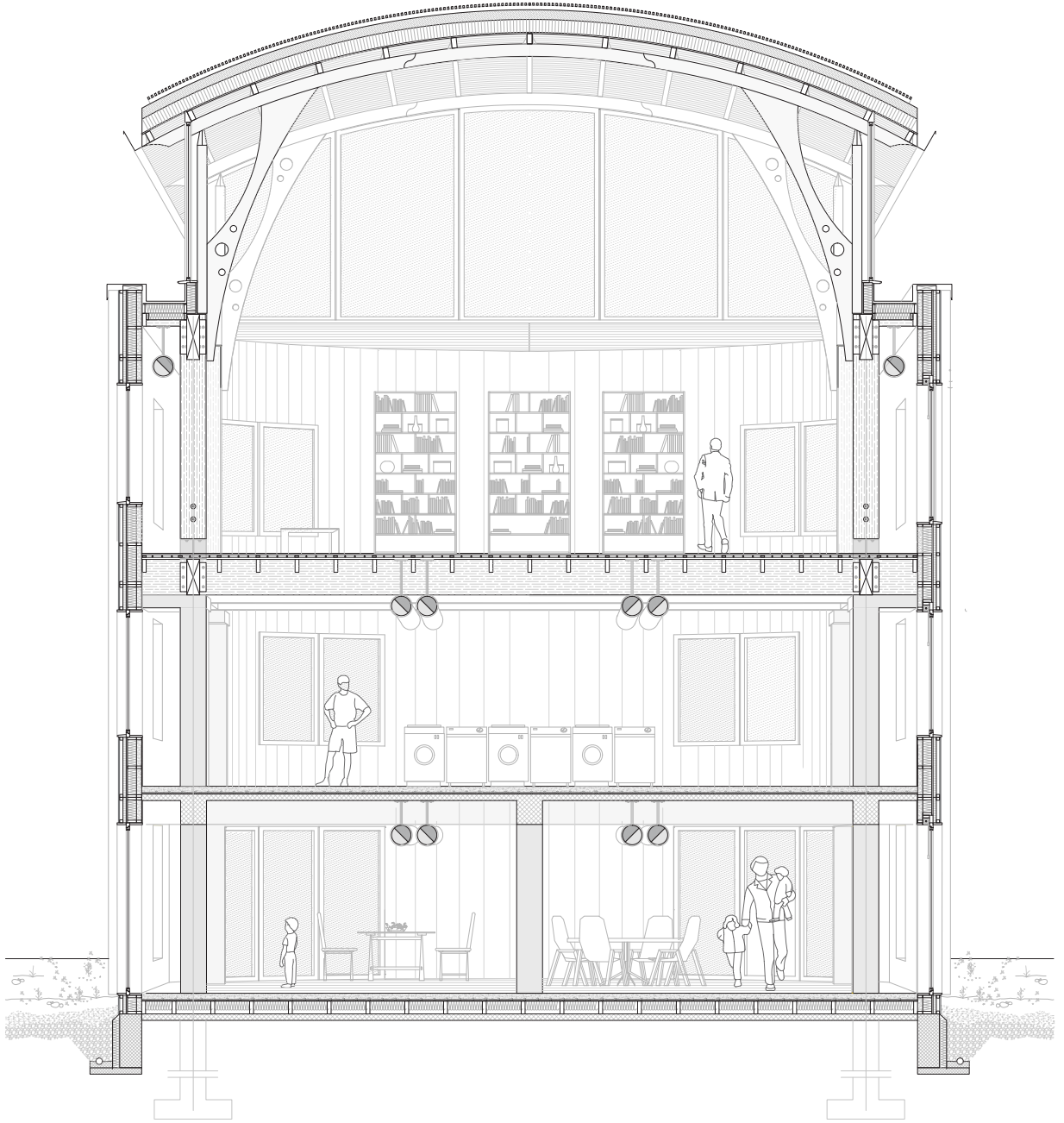
1. Reinforced Trass-lime mortar lintel 170x300 mm
2. Damp proof membrane
3. Vent DucoFit-EasyFit 50
4. Recessed Curtain slider
5. Wooden Frame Window

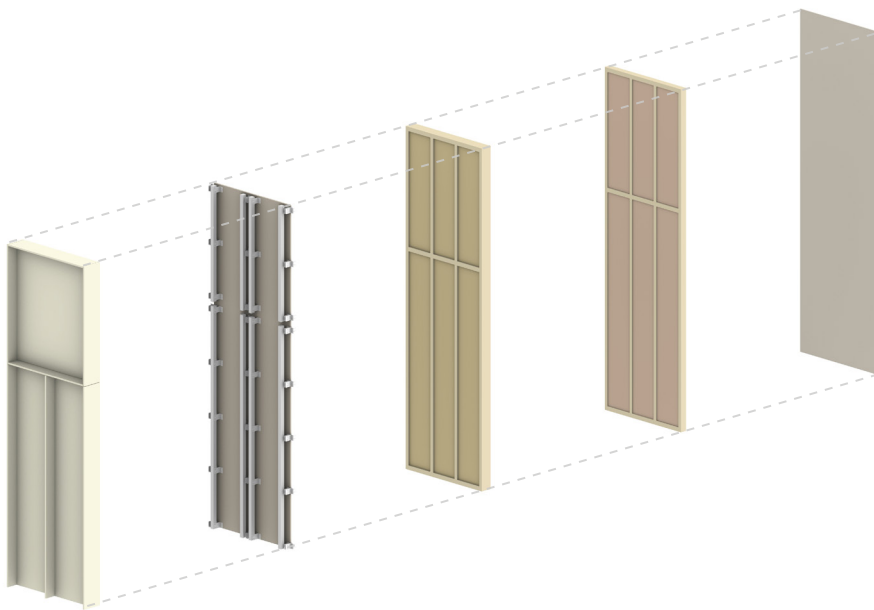
E. Roof

1. Corrugated metal sheet covering
2. Damp proof membrane
3. Footfall sound Insulation 20 mm
4. Metal Flashing
5. Rigid Insulation 60 mm
6. Concrete wall coping
7. Reinforced trass-limering beam
8. Bitumen Damp Proof coating
9. Cellulose Insulation 200 mm
10. Timber beam 150x450 mm
11. Connection Steel Brackets
12. Existing concrete mushroom column
13. Prefabricated Rammed Earth Wall 500 mm

F. Portico

1. Timber Posts 120x300mm
2. Concrete Plint
3. Steel Connector
4. Outdoor Roll Curtain
5. Gutter
6. Metal Covering Sheeting





Prefabricated Wood Frame Wall

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. 18 mm Viroc rainscreen | 7. 140 Cellulose Insulation |
| Fibercement cladding panel | 8. 40x140mm timber posts |
| 2. Ventilation cavity 40 mm | 9. 60 mm Light weight Earth Panels |
| 3. Alluminium fixing for rainscreen | 10. 30x60mm timber frame posts |
| 4. 50 mm Cellulose Insulation | 11. 10 mm clay plaster |
| 5. Breather membrane | |
| 6. 18mm Softwood fiberboard | |

How Bricolage ... can save a life.



Sicilian Homeless Man

Letter.

To Bernard, Gabi, Kamil, Eva & Ronald

PROLOGUE

This letter is intended to be a piece of reflection regarding my graduation project at the Faculty of Architecture of TU Delft. The letter is addressed to some homeless and former homeless people of Nijmegen, in the Netherlands. Their names are Bernard, Gabi, Kamil, Eva and Ronald. When I will write "you" in the text I will therefore refer to all of them. Even if they might not know each other and belong to the same background.

This letter is for me the occasion to observe and to come to terms with the results of my graduation year. To be more critical towards some of my design choices and to appreciate and validate others. It is an opportunity to write down my reflections not always verbally clear.

Dear Bernard, Gabi, Kamil, Eva and Ronald,

maybe you do not remember me, yet our “virtual” encounter, few months ago, was truly unexpected and offered me the chance to undertake a path that oriented my graduation year towards a direction that I had never explored before. As you might recall, in some interviews conducted via smartphones due to COVID restrictions, you made me part of your experiences of being homeless in the city of Nijmegen. Your words became not only the starting point of my research, yet they were source of inspiration that fed the project. Your witnessing guided my choices while designing. During the design process, in fact, I often found myself reflecting on your perception of the city and on my role, as a designer, to try to empathize with your experiences in order to create better, more inclusive urban spaces.

A lot could be told, but I will reflect upon few of the aspects that characterize it.

The city centre: place of disagreement

“When my research tutor, Leeke Reinders, who helped me all along the course of this graduation year, asked me if I truly believed in the real feasibility of my project within the commercial city centre of Nijmegen, my answer, at the time, was a short cut “YES”. It was the outcome of the internalized words and thoughts that came from all of you. It was the straightforward answer that spontaneously arises after listening to your witnessing, after a day walking with Bernard as if I were wearing your shoes around Nijmegen and looking at it through a different lens.

In retrospective, I would like to reflect one more time on the importance of the decision of placing such a program in the centre of the city. Almost randomly, few months ago, I found myself reading again a piece of *Madness & Civilization* by Michel Foucault. More precisely, I found relevant to answer the question, the part regarding the “Great Confinement”, or else, that period of history during the 17th century when insane people started to be segregated at the margins of society. The so-called Age of Reason brought along the physical separation of mentally instable people with other anti-social people, such as prostitutes, vagrants, and blasphemers within the walls of new built structures. New typologies called “mental hospitals” or “madhouses”.

New legal authorities became entitled of deciding which individuals “deserved” to be secluded in such places, to make the distinction between the mentally insane and the mentally sane they separated human beings from free society to institutional confinement, where they were supposed to change their unscrupulous lives, their defective minds and repent for their inadequate moral errors.

During the Modern Era, the fact that these places were so segregated from the rest of society became a necessity for the sake of “protecting” the latter from the socially undesirable ones. Observing nowadays society, this attitude appears to not have changed much, rather it rooted in us as the “normal” and, probably, “correct” way to deal with the issue.

In the preface of the 1961 edition, Foucault wrote:

“Modern man no longer communicates with the madman . . . There is no common language, or rather, it no longer exists; the constitution of madness as mental illness, at the end of the eighteenth century, bears witness to a rupture in a dialogue, gives the separation as already enacted (...)”

While reflecting upon these words, I asked myself if, nowadays, the dialogue’s gap between “normal” and “mentally ill” people has been truly filled. It is evident that notable progress has been achieved in the realm of psychiatry and psychology, so that, today, “being in therapy” has become the “new normality”. Yet still I notice a gap. And probably a gap that is still present in the realm of Architecture. And this gap is again between “ordinary people” and people that probably require more than the weekly session with their therapist and therefore they are not conform to that “normality” accepted by society.

Moreover, as demonstrated by the research on the field, the tendency to exclude and to chase away unwanted subjects still is present in the current times. When thinking about the works of defensive architecture promoted by the Municipality, in this case of Nijmegen, I personally wonder if not only the pragmatic implications of avoiding disturbance in the city centre have been considered, yet also the psychological traumas and consequences that such decisions can engrave in the minds of the homeless. How does it feel to

be rejected from the public space? Is that space still considerable public? Or are homeless people excluded from the “public”?

Re-use & Demolition - Gardens & Co-habitation

Reflecting upon the project, I do recognize that the attempt of placing such program of a rehab centre, with a communal training house and social housing within the commercial city centre might generate some friction among the different people living there. Although, this is done trying to distribute different subjects within separated buildings and to promote their interaction in the open-air spaces among them. I attempted to imagine a community of people with different backgrounds coming together, meeting, discussing, passing by, or maybe, just observing and avoiding each other. I imagined it happening in the gardens, courtyards and patios that perforate the structure fabric of the Molenpoort Shopping Mall. These spaces do not have the ambition of solving every conflict yet provide a common ground where such encounters can happen, and not be avoided. I consider them, places of possibilities that provide the medium through which a new kind of communication between “normal” and “problematic” can be established.

Regarding the topic of re-use and demolition, my approach has been driven by the specific program the project needed to host. The grid of the existing concrete structure was not considered as a constrain yet it was seen as an opportunity to imagine a unique conformation of volumes that would address the different functions. Some elements were enhanced other demolished. Creating an interplay of voids and solids of various heights. The resulting design tries to make the most of:

- Existing double heights: dedicated to spaces for the community.
- Narrowness: as intimate access to outdoor patios.
- Outer walls: enclosing and protecting.
- Steel canopy: light source for the library and reading space.
- Back entrance: as a new bakery for the community.
- Car Ramp Wall: that now serves as pedestrian entrance.
- Demolished concrete gravel: precious aggregate for building the prefabricated rammed earth blocks.

On the contrary, what the project aimed to contrast is the lack of void within the plot where the Molenpoort building did not allow for gashes of fresh air and for glimpses of the surrounding. Therefore, the structure of the mall does not remain fully untouched, yet it is tackled where too enclosing and introverted. It is demolished where appropriate. Creating the void, volume is given to new buildings that can begin to interrelate to each other.

"It is as if we had once again become aware that the open and communal urban space, after being swamped by monofunctional systems, is an essential component of urbanity (the void in proportion to the fullness of buildings), and that the urban condition can only develop an attain expression in this space (the urban scene). It as though urban growth and the subsequent loss of contact with the rural landscape around impels the city to seek its own opposition within itself. This tendency, which is becoming more and more sharply pronounced these days, adds to our appreciation of urban public space as an open, free space and as a landscape."

Sébastien Marot 1996
The Enclosed Garden, Urban Transformation

The figure of the urban garden is re-introduced within the new created voids of the plot. The garden becomes the middle ground that allows for a dialogue to happen between the buildings around it. Its presence is the condition of existence of the buildings. It allows their expression through new façade envelopes that, finally, can explicit themselves and glance at each other.

The changeover from the busy and noisy shopping street of Ziekerstraat and from the dull and trafficated one of Tweede Walstraat to the openness, light and tranquility of the inner gardens is utterly unexpected.

"I have had the idea, for some time now, that we should start thinking about the park altogether differently. " Seeing and being seen" and strolling have shifted to the shopping malls. Shouldn't we be returning to "gardens" in the city? To courts that belong to a building, to courts that you can discover in the bend in your street, perhaps with a fence round, (...).

Flowering places but also places without green."

Hans Warnau, 1990

In the case of this project gardens become spaces of mediation between the two worlds mentioned before: the normal and not normal. The study of the history of the plot also influenced the realization of such a plan. The site, where today the Molenpoort Shopping Mall is situated, was once occupied by Monastery constituted by an ensemble of buildings and gardens within a protective enclosure. A religious building where its inhabitants were living following the rhythms of precise spiritual and physical rituals. A set of regulations determined the monastic life, interweaving spiritual and physical labor into a strict daily routine. Inevitably history influences the present and as it evident in this project that aims to re-establish other values, other than the one of consumerism and capitalism. The monastery was self-supporting and a place of retreat from which the surrounding community could benefit. A place where nomads and passers-by could stop asking for some help, refection, and cure. It was an enclosure, yet different in kind from what we experience today in the Molenpoort Shopping mall.

The proposed garden, or the contemporary "hortus conclusus", offers to the residents in cure, "gardening" as a physical and spiritual therapeutic activity. They provide both intimacy and cohabitation with other people.

"The Hortus Conclusus is a veritable stage where "the immeasurable wealth of relationships between things is enacted".

Gerrit Komrij, 1991

The Enclosed Garden, Urban Transformation, p. 22

Feeling Welcome - Feeling at Home

"The key seems to be in the personalization of space: ..It is the movable objects in the home, rather than the physical fabric itself, that are the symbol of self."

House as Mirror of Self, p.11

The designed individual rehab units aim to provide a framework, an intimate and private space within which the occupant has minimal yet enough space to inhabit and appropriate. A space that allows him/her to find or build again his/her individuality.

In this regard, I clearly remember the words of Bernard suffering from the fact that he was embarrassed to invite his kids to visit him in a shelter bedroom where there was not enough space for a sitting or sofa different from the bed. That space did not allow him any freedom of choice. Moreover, it was not a happy and welcoming place for his children.

"We do concede that the personalization of place is an inalienable right. Conversely, when society wishes to mold a group of individuals into a whole, or the attention of the group is deliberately focused away from personal needs, the personalization of space is consistently precluded."

House as Mirror of Self, p.11

In this regard, I would make a parallelism with the collective dormitories of the MFC of Nijmegen, the night shelter for homeless people that suffer from an alcohol or drug addiction. In this shelter, people are accommodated in groups of 10 or 15 within the same room, according to the witnessing of Ronald, who spent there few months of his life. Such a space precludes any kind of personal need, yet the boundaries of "properties" becomes blurred and personal belongings are not respected by the other. In places where people with many kinds of problems, addictions and mental illnesses are mixed and are unable to co-live peacefully, theft and crime become normality. Nights become the "hell of earth". It is difficult to survive till the morning after, still with all the personal belongings and a good sleep is impossible to achieve.

Places that should provide help, recovery, and refuge, are, instead, places that make people more and more sick, aggravating their traumas. Moreover, homeless people that do not have any kind of illness, such as Bernard, Gabi & Kamil, avoid frequenting these spots and the majority ends up sleeping in nature. For months or even years, they remain waiting for a response from housing associations that should provide them a roof.

"Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home and, by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost"

The Poetics of Space, p.28

I consider your (of the interviewed homeless people) emotions as the poem you could not write. When I asked you the question: "What makes for you a home? What are the objects or people that remembers it?".

Your answers were all about feelings, especially the feeling of being welcome in a place. I have to admit that my first understanding of this related only to a specific social behavior of people that characterize a home. At the start I did not immediately understand how much the physical configuration of space could express welcoming or rejection. And I thought the role of a designer had little to do with it. Only later on, I came to the realization that those feelings had as well an architectural repercussion. They associated the idea of "home" to a place that is not hostile to , that allows you to settle and appropriate it. A space that does not wear the mask of rejection and intolerance.

In order to design a space that focuses on the wellbeing of its inhabitants, multiple factors had to be taken into account: not only the spatial configuration was critically important, yet also the rooms' orientation, the availability of daylight, the contact to nature and the materialization of the building. These aspects all together contribute to the creation of a space that can have a positive impact on the physical and psychological wellbeing of its user.

"In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world."

The Poetics of Space, p.38

Gaston Bachelard

Coming to the end of this messy and, maybe not so complete, letter and of this study path, I find myself reflecting on how I envision myself operating as an architect in the coming future. And bringing back the interdisciplinary question I posed at the beginning of my graduation year: "What is the role of architecture in favoring human's wellbeing?" I do realize that even though, the topic of wellbeing in relation with the one of architecture might appear intangible at some points, it offered me the unique chance to see this

world through a different lens. Since the group research, the interviews with homeless people till the imagination, materialization, and perception of spaces of the project, this word: “wellbeing” remained always as the stable background of my design process.

Concluding, I cannot define, yet which kind of architect I am, or I will be, but I would like to take the opportunity to say that I really appreciate the tools that Architecture provided me with. A way to observe and operate in the world that considers all aspects of human life and all subjects. A discipline that pushes to be curious and to never be banal, or hasty even when the end solutions are simple.

Warm Regards,
Julie

Some inspiring readings...

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Notes for future explorations...

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

