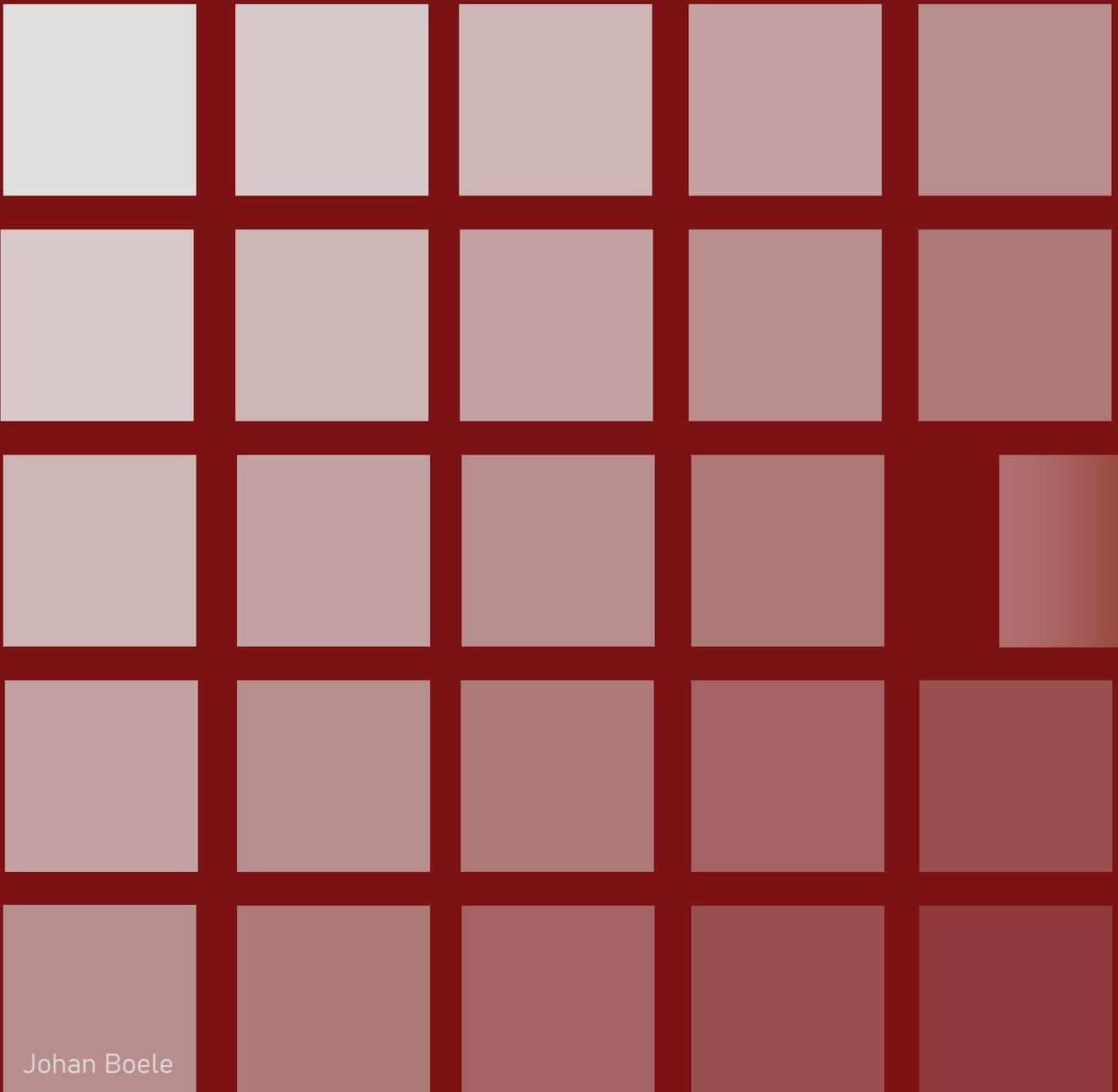


UNITING ALL AGES IN OUTDOOR SPACES



Johan Boele

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Maximizing Social Encounters in Public Spaces within a Community

INTRODUCTION

In 2050 one in six people will be 65 years or older. The United Nations (UN) estimates that the world's population will comprise 16% of the elderly by then. This will be caused by increased life expectancy at birth, improvements in survival at an older age, and a decline in fertility.¹

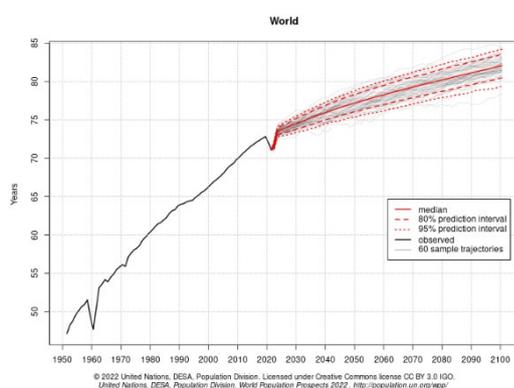


Figure 1: Life expectancy worldwide
(Source: United Nations)

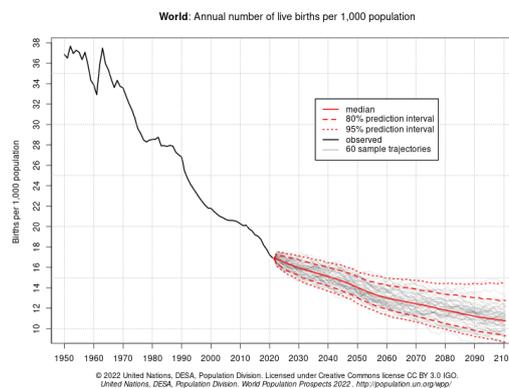


Figure 2: Prediction of births worldwide
(Source: United Nations)

While the number of older aged increases, the number of retirement homes declines, and governments in many countries promote self-support as long as possible. So there are challenges at hand to come up with solutions for the aged.

But first, we need to identify who is meant by the aged. The cut-off age of 65 that the UN uses as the dividing line between young and old came about during the Industrial Revolution, when a limit was placed on working, and a retirement age was set.² The age of 65 became the age limit in many countries at which older people ceased to be part of the labor force. This was caused by the fact that it was often physically impossible to continue working any longer. Being aged from then on was linked to the chronological division of time, and ageism emerged.³ The concept of ageism was first formally described by Dr. Robert N. Butler in 1969.⁴ He advocated for recognizing and combating the process of systematically stereotyping people for being old. The World Health Organization (WHO) shares Butler's view, defining ageism quite clearly: "Ageism refers to the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and

¹ "Ageing | United Nations," United Nations, 2019, accessed October 22, 2023.

² R. C. Atchley, "Retirement as a Social Institution," *Annual Review of Sociology* 8, no. 1 (1982): 269, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.08.080182.001403>.

³ John R. Gillis, "The Case against Chronologization," *1987* 17, no. 2 (1987): 98, <https://doi.org/10.16995/ee.1373>.

⁴ Thomas Nicolaj Iversen, Lars Larsen, and Per Erik Solem, "A conceptual analysis of Ageism," *Nordic Psychology* 61, no. 3 (2009): 6, <https://doi.org/10.1027/1901-2276.61.3.4>.

discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself based on age.”⁵ Ageist thinking still shapes society through the spatial design of our public spaces, despite new ways of thinking that have emerged since the late 20th century.⁶ This new way of thinking included gerontological and psychological shifts in science in the concept of age. Gerontological science found out that the process of aging is influenced by not just biological factors, but also by the social and material transformations that take place throughout an individual's life.⁷ In psychology, the research shifted towards focusing on personal development, like education and experiences in life.⁸ It became clear that developing yourself and staying active socially and physically helps you stay healthy.

Following the results of these studies the World Health Organization (WHO) has identified five functional abilities for healthy aging.⁹ →

Out of these five abilities, the fourth ability of building and maintaining relationships will be the focus of this research plan. Building a relationship can only be initiated by social encounters. When these social encounters occur regularly a relationship can be built. This is where architecture can contribute to. Architecture is the enclosure of space, the distinction between what is inside and outside. Architecture can divide and unite people. Architecture can bring people together, enabling social encounters to take place.

Besides the fact that social encounters are essential for everyone, benefits have also been found between social encounters between different age groups, or what is commonly called intergenerational connections. Research shows that intergenerational connections increase self-esteem and feelings of well-being for older and younger participants. At the same time, intergenerational connections can also help both older and younger people feel cared for and valued.¹⁰

While research on intergenerational communities focuses primarily on older residents, the purpose of this study is to look more broadly. While research focusing specifically on the elderly population in intergenerational communities is important, it should be part of a more inclusive approach considering the entire community's well-being and dynamics. This approach ensures that intergenerational communities are not only supportive of older adults but also benefit the entire community. Research that exclusively focuses on the elderly population might miss the potential

The World Health Organization (WHO) abilities for healthy aging:

- meet their basic needs;
- learn, grow, and make decisions;
- be mobile;
- build and maintain relationships; and
- contribute to society.

⁵ "Ageing: Ageism," World Health Organization, updated March 18, 2021, 2023, accessed November 1, 2023, <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/ageing-ageism>.

⁶ Dominique Hauderowicz and Kristian Ly Serena, *Age-inclusive public space* (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2020), 24-5.

⁷ Stephen Katz, *Cultural aging: Life course, lifestyle, and senior worlds* (University of Toronto Press, 2005).

⁸ Peter Coleman, John Bond, and Sheila Peace, "Ageing in the twentieth century," *Ageing in society: an introduction to social gerontology* (1993).

⁹ "Healthy Ageing and Functional Ability," World Health Organization, updated October 26, 2020, 2022, accessed October 22, 2023, <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/healthy-ageing-and-functional-ability>.

¹⁰ Sinan Zhong et al., "Intergenerational communities: A systematic literature review of intergenerational interactions and older adults' health-related outcomes," *Social Science & Medicine* 264 (2020/11/01/ 2020): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113374>.

benefits of intergenerational interactions and the impact on other age groups living in those communities. A community can be seen as a network of diverse social interactions, highlighting the interdependence among neighbors to produce well-being. Social relationships in the neighborhood can be an important resource that elders can rely on to help them in a community.

For this research, I aim for the public space of community housing as the architectural boundaries to promote social encounters. This can be an inner garden or a connecting street, but I want to focus on what Herman Hertzberger calls the habitable in-between. He defines it as: “everything that is in-between the official, all things that have a name, that have a significance. When you say “a house,” when you say “a shop,” it has a name, it is a clear thing. But everything that is still open for getting significance is what you would call in-between”.¹¹

This research aims to identify the key factors contributing to public social encounters. Further, to design an intergenerational outdoor space that promotes social encounters among its diverse users. Finally, to evaluate the impact of the designed outdoor space on the social encounters of its users.

Therefore, the main question that I want to address is:

To what extent do intergenerational programs and initiatives promote social inclusion for all ages in outdoor spaces, and what are the best practices for creating successful intergenerational interactions?

¹¹ Hauderowicz and Serena, *Age-inclusive public space*, 78.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This framework focuses on the spatial configuration of built environments and how they impact human behavior and interactions within them. This idea stems from the poststructuralist theories of Foucault and Bourdieu. Since Michel Foucault reasoned the power of architecture through Bentham's Panopticon¹² in a prison it became clear that architecture can influence the behavior of people.¹³

Bourdieu expanded on this idea with his concept of Habitus. This concept of Habitus is clearly defined by John Archer in his research on the social theory of space as: "each person's set of cognitive and motivating structures, according to which that person fashions knowledge and initiates activity, not least in regard to relations between self and built space."¹⁴ Archer further explains: "Built environment and habitus mutually sustain each other, but neither has absolute control over the other."¹⁵ I agree with these social thinkers in how they show the interconnectedness of the behavior of individuals with architecture. Thus, architecture can play a role in arranging social encounters.

Creating social encounters is not the goal in itself of this research. The reason for creating more social encounters is to create more interactions between people of different age groups within a community. This intergenerational community only works if everyone feels included. This feeling of inclusion, or social inclusion, is a multifaceted concept that encompasses a range of dimensions, including economic, cultural, political, and participating aspects.

The concept of social inclusion began in Europe with the recognition that groups in society are excluded. In 1974 it was the former French Secretary of State for Social Action, René Lenoir who acknowledged groups being excluded within the welfare state.¹⁶ Concerns about this social exclusion triggered a counter-reaction aimed at promoting social inclusion.

Today, major organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization are dealing with this issue.

The United Nations defined social inclusion as follows:

"The process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights."¹⁷

¹² Jeremy Bentham's design of a central tower within a circular prison allows guards to observe the prisoners, while the prisoners remain unaware of whether they are under surveillance

¹³ Rajiv Shah and Jay Kesan, "How Architecture Regulates," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 24 (12/01 2007): 11-2.

¹⁴ John Archer, "Social Theory of Space: Architecture and the Production of Self, Culture, and Society," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 64, no. 4 (2005): 431, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25068197>.

¹⁵ Archer, "Social Theory of Space: Architecture and the Production of Self, Culture, and Society," 431.

¹⁶ UNDESA, *Leaving No One Behind: The Imperative Of Inclusive Development*, United Nations (New York, 2016), 18.

¹⁷ UNDESA, *Leaving No One Behind: The Imperative Of Inclusive Development*, 20.

The key dimensions of social inclusion are:¹⁸

- Economical dimensions:

This involves access to employment, income, and economic resources while reducing income inequalities and poverty.

- Cultural dimensions:

This relates to the recognition and respect for cultural diversity, identity, and expressions. It involves combating discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes.

- Political dimensions:

This encompasses participation in decision-making processes and governance. Compliance with the protection of civil and political rights is paramount.

- Participating dimensions:

This aims to provide access to education, health care, and social services as well as the opportunity to build social networks and relationships.

Factors that can influence social inclusion are:

- Individual Factors, such as skills, education, health, self-esteem, agency, and motivation.
- Structural Factors, such as income, employment opportunities, and legal and policy frameworks (e.g. anti-discrimination laws).
- Social Factors, such as social networks, and cultural norms.

This theoretical framework provides a basis for understanding, analyzing, and promoting social inclusion. It recognizes the multidimensionality of the concept and the interplay of various factors that influence individuals' and communities' social inclusion. It also emphasizes the importance of policy and programmatic interventions in promoting a more inclusive community.

By using the mapping method in my research to analyze and represent in a systematic way spatial and contextual relationships within a given site I follow the steps of Bernard Tschumi, Daniel Libeskind, and Aldo Rossi.¹⁹ This method employs various tools, such as diagrams, charts, and maps, to visually communicate and organize information. This research will use maps as a visualization tool.

¹⁸ UNDESA, *Leaving No One Behind: The Imperative Of Inclusive Development*, 18.

¹⁹ Marc Schoonderbeek, *Mapping in Architectural Discourse: Place-Time Discontinuities* (2021), 6.

METHODOLOGY

I start this research with a comprehensive literature review to gather existing knowledge and theories related to intergenerational programs, social inclusion, and successful intergenerational interactions. This will help to build a strong foundation for this research. To learn more about the concept of the in-between spaces, I will further analyze Herman Hertzberger's vision.²⁰ In addition, I will also analyze the vision of Aldo van Eyck's in-between realm.²¹ And two Japanese architects deal with this topic more philosophically, like the intermediate spaces of Kisho Kurokawa,²² and the negative spaces of Yoshinobu Ashihara.²³



Haarlemmer-Houttuinen architect Herman Hertzberger (photo by Osip van Duivenbode)



Amsterdam City Orphanage architect Aldo van Eyck (photo by CCA Melon Lectures)

Case studies ultimately provide a further basis for understanding my topic. By exploring Herman Hertzberger's Haarlemmer-Houttuinen and Aldo van Eyck's Amsterdam City Orphanage I gain a comprehensive understanding of context-specific issues. This allows for a comprehensive comparison between what they wrote and how they implemented it in practice.

I apply the qualitative research method of interviewing to gain in-depth insights into people's experiences with intergenerational programs of outdoor spaces in particular. This can help to understand the qualitative aspects of social inclusion and identify best practices from the participants' perspective.

Next, I will gather information using the quantitative interview method to obtain participants' daily routines, which can then be organized using the mapping method. Overlaying the public space of the case studies with layers of routines from each participant on a map facilitates the exploration of social encounters and temporal changes. This approach can be useful in representing diverse scenarios. Using maps allows me to think about the spatial complexity of these scenarios and might give me new ideas or questions.

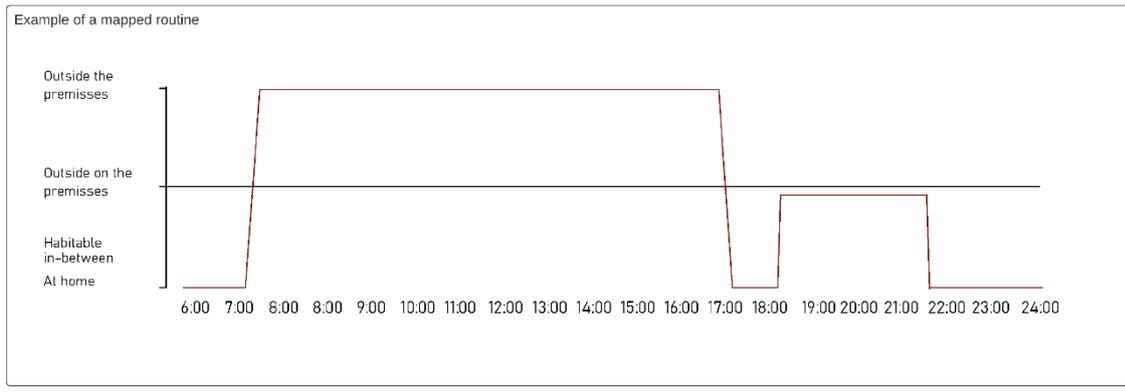
²⁰ Herman Hertzberger, Jop Voorn, and John vert English ed Kirkpatrick, *Space and the architect : lessons in architecture 2* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2000).

²¹ Aldo van Eyck, Vincent Ligtelijn, and Francis Strauven, *The child, the city and the artist : an essay on architecture : the in-between realm*, Writings, (Amsterdam: SUN, 2008).

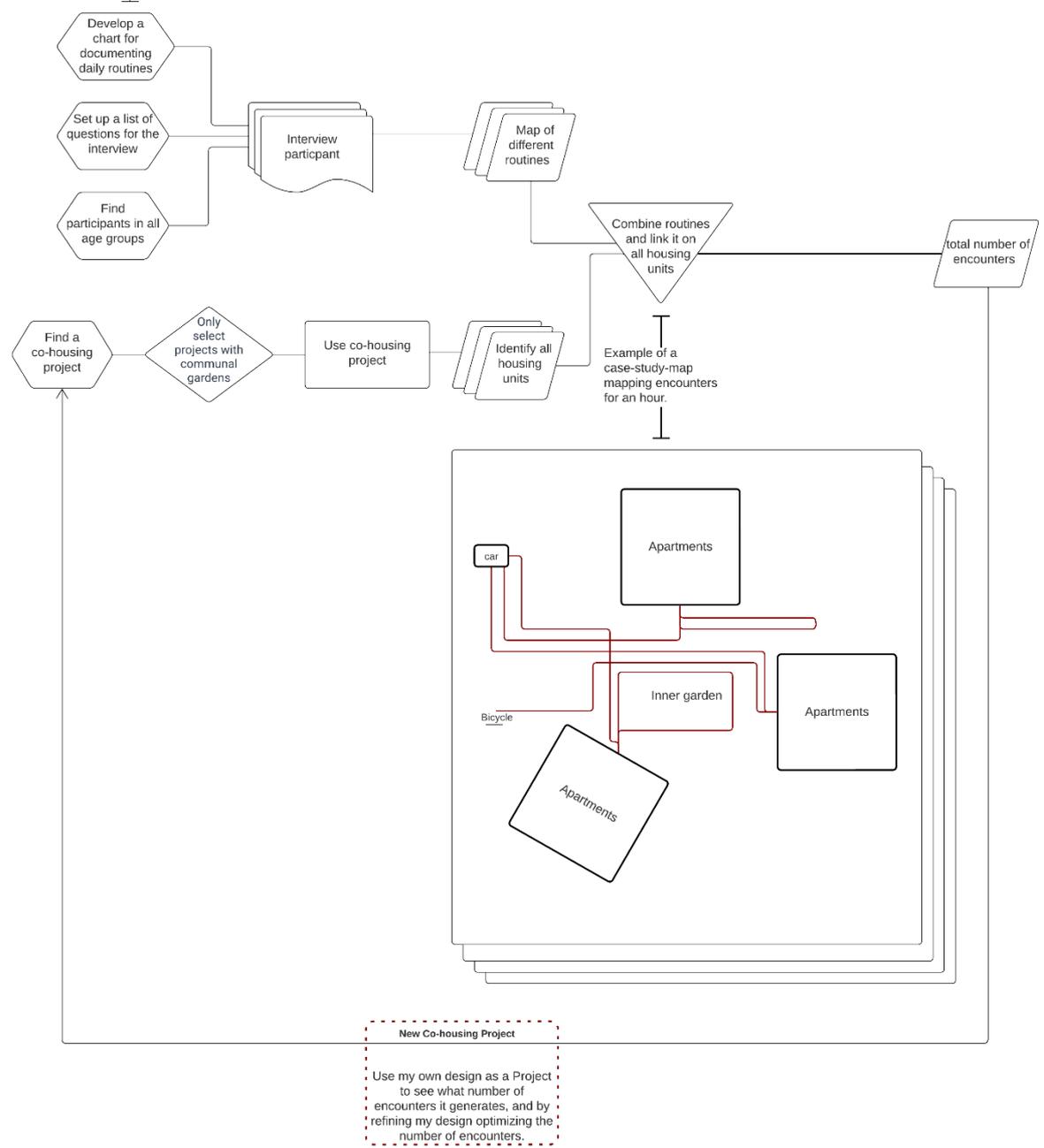
²² Kishō Kurokawa, *The philosophy of symbiosis* (London, New York, NY: Academy Editions; Distributed to the trade in the U.S.A. by St. Martin's Press, 1994).

²³ Yoshinobu Ashihara, *Exterior design in architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970).

DIAGRAM



Example of a routines during the day



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