

**/A disquisition of the
transition space**
thesis

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Walking in the drizzling rain, accompanied.
Unconsciously searching for that moment of arriving.
surrounded by compositions of architectural elements,
some distracting, some attracting.
Played by the displacement.

/The beginning of the journey

09-10-2019

/Foreword

The last months, this research developed itself over time and took different shapes. These changes and alterations are for me an example on how I became even more critical about this practice and created the possibility to be critical. I have practiced to develop a critical and sensitive approach towards the discipline of architecture, as well, practiced thinking about the ordinary in architecture, being even more sensitive towards the environment and documenting this different methodologies and journey of research into a documentation. This all came together this past months on this graduation journey.

This document, consists of five small booklets, which represent my explorations, reflections and results. As I thought a lot about the process and its different aspects and side steps, which always had felt as a process with no ending. This also refers to the title of this documentation “A disquisition of the transition space”, an open-ended process which will continue in my design project and my future career. I am not about to stop, exploring, learning and being sensitive towards this appealing world.

As well I learned to give things time, see where my thoughts are going, trust on them and sometimes conclude on it and make decisions. Doing Explore-lab and having the opportunity to express my interest in a personal project hasn't been easy, but I always worked on it with passion. As I would like to express some words of gratitude to those who believed in me and give me the strength and comfort to finish this graduation journey successful. Firstly, to my mentors, who supported me through this journey and give me the space to develop, place and form my ideas. To Martijn, for the inspiring enthusiastic discussions, your passion, interest and knowledge about this topic. — and for our critical and personal conversations, they gave me lots of confidence

about myself as well towards this project. To Roel, for always being cheer-full, having critical notes and of providing such inspiring projects and little stories. To Pierre, for the fruitfull conversations, critical comments and small talks.

Furthurmore to my beloved friends, and especially to Federico, Pien, Carlijn, Bernice and Tessie and Veerle for all the small talks, your positivity, inspiration and lots of (needed) coffee breaks online and offline—thanks for being there.

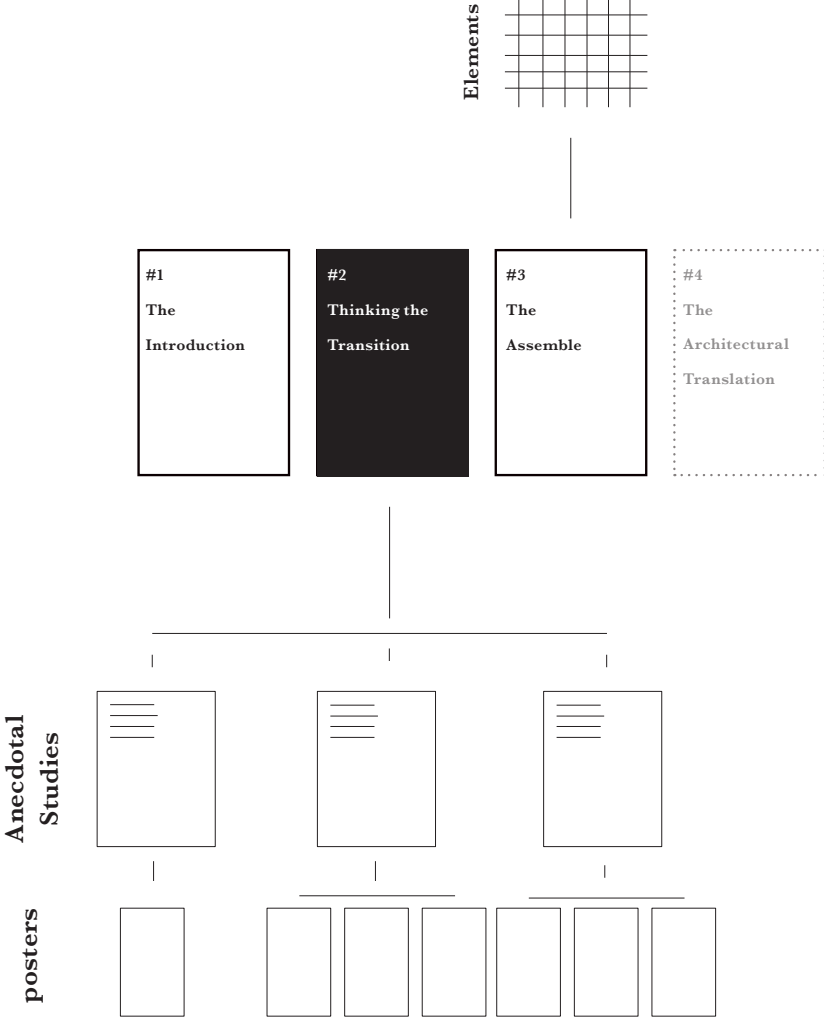
To my parents, sister and brother, who supported me since 2011 on this big journey—thanks for your unconditional support and positivity.

And Finally, to Pieter for being such loving, caring and patient—and for our deep conversations and your interest and involvement in this project.

Thank you all

/The organisation of the Journey

This documentation consists of four parts and will all be exhibited as a whole at the p5. The first part (introduction #1), frames the used methodology, explanation of the used terms and different views on the transition space. Secondly, the detailed anecdotal studies (thinking the transition #2). These are explained in a narrative manner to include the reader, all supported by drawings and words of the participants. The third part (the assemble #3) assumes the concluding role and presents the findings and possibilities for architecture and the design phase of the project. Here the base elements will also be discussed individually and the resulting framework of elements will be displayed and substantiated. Finally, the research will be translated into architectural projects (#4) which will be the last part of this journey and added around p4/p5.



/The Introduction.

Towards a more experimental Architecture

Table of Content

/Prelude <i>The framework</i>	4
/Methodology	6
/Glossary	10
/Formalization as limitation <i>The ground of understanding the limits</i>	12
/Public vs Private <i>Transition, the hierarchy and the Heart</i>	14
/The phenomenon of Liminal space <i>The philosophy behind the potential</i>	24

Buildings are used as a popular stage. They are divided into innumerable, simultaneously animated theatres. Balcony, courtyard, window, gateway, staircase and the roof are at the same time the stages and boxes
- Walter Benjamin (1924)

/Prelude

The framework and methodology

In our contemporary culture, we as society have the tendency to structure everything around us by several systems, relations, situations, actions and ideas. Pretending that the abstractive concept of the structure acts as a manifest as well as acting in material forms. We deprive this moments of temporal interpretations and possibilities by accepting the fact that structure is ubiquitous. These spaces, which are found mostly in-between two statics and are experienced unconsciously, could manifest in daily life; including objects that trigger thoughts, movements and desires. Environments where structured spaces, besides being statics, they also perform.

As a result of structure and repetition in daily life we became accustomed to our surroundings. Objects and environment feel standardized, this has over years formalized our conception and perception of space. Formalization ensures that we go through life without being surrounded by boundaries, obstacles and moments of curiosity, speculation and exploration, distraction.

This is a thesis on the subject of transition and formalization in the daily rite of passage. This raises the issue of understanding these spaces not only physically (the object) but also mentally (the subject). In daily life, architecture plays a major role. Architecture is not solely the autonomous production of objects, it is integrated with the structures created by the discipline and its users. A fundamental assumption is that the architectural object is in most cases recognized as a fulfilled whole. In this way architecture performs and frames the way we live, how we act, mediate and define the world around us.

Architecture as well as a discipline has strengthen formalization, it accomplishes new ways of understanding the different frames around us. This culture of formalization and framing is well visible in the architecture that is designed for a specific function. In these buildings or environments often standard functions where added to simplify the use and control of these spaces, to afford use among organized events.

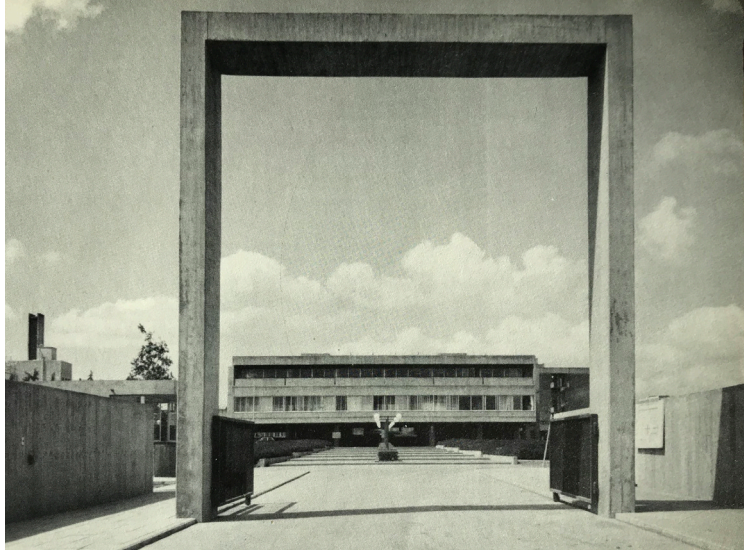
Due to the orientation to the function, the surrounding spaces are mostly forgotten and remain unseen as functional space while these play a major role in the experience and have a lot of potential towards a more experimental architecture. This prevents the quality of architecture to perform as a mediator between the user and its surroundings.

Walter Benjamin describes in his book the ‘One Way Street’ the theatrical nature of the street, which also reflects on the need of the experience, engagement and social interaction with our surroundings. Architecture needs to give us the possibility to be the actor or spectator in daily life.

During the day each individual is part of different events, relations and situations, being the actor or spectator without realising. The architectural elements gives us the possibilities to be part of these different events, create relations and ensures situations. Without us noticing we are in this moment of transition while shifting between different activities. This can be perceived as actions that we have become unaware of through formalisation



Playtime | Jacques Tati | 1967



/Methodology

To get a better understanding of the separating and connecting properties of transition spaces and objects, the term 'liminal spaces' is used. This is used to keep the research structured and will acts as a relapse core. Literary research is used in order to get a better understanding of the separating and connecting properties of transition and is accompanied by anecdotal- and element studies, to understand the phenomenon spatially.

The first state of research consists mainly of the analysis of the phenomenon of liminal spaces in architecture and the urban commas. liminal space is understood as the place in-between two statics, a static being a place of being. Liminal spaces come in different forms but can be seen as prolonging, blurring and ambiguous thresholds. These first findings resulted in the translation towards anecdotal studies, whom resulted in stratification drawings of the ordinary in architecture. The method of drawing helped to understand the transition moments and their architectural elements and compositions. The decomposition of these spatial situations helped, in collaboration with literary research, to analyse the elements separately and de-construct its properties and evolution.

The form of this thesis in relation to its topic raises some questions. Talking about being in between two statics and the separation and incorporation properties toward the "new", for this reason, the thesis is structured around a selection of themes to understand the different concepts of transition. Therefore, each part of this research is selected and will be discussed with their potential in relation to the concept of transition and potential relevance for a more experimental architecture. The topics are not delimited clearly, they will have some overlap in their discussion considering the norm.

This is based on the different methodologies, as explained above. It is a research with open-ending. This is because of the endlessness of perception and conception. Therefore, this research begins with a list of terms which are clarified visually.

/Glossary

The following terms, interpretations and concepts are used to conceptualize and understand transition spaces. The glossary is a declaration, not representing the absolute truths of the definition, but aiming to explain the relevant assumptions which will be helpful for the understanding. Besides the given definitions and forms it also aims to give a different perspective of understanding and what some things can or cannot accomplish.

Affordance

The possible actions, relations and interactions that the environment physically affords to the user (human being/the animal). The affordance of the individual depends on the capabilities of the individual (J. Gibson, 1979). This is formed by the social cultural background.

Affect

A situation in which there is stimulation from an object/body to one another. This can be emotional and perceived by the individual. Affecting can stimulate and be a potential to act.

Boundary

Perceived as a linear edge, the separator of flows and interaction as parallel to it.

Border

Functioning as a membrane, it is perceived porous yet resistant.

Context

A setting of circumstances that engage in different degrees with the surroundings (the architectural objects). This combined with materials and immaterials

Conception

The interpretation of the sensory information received. And the response of the individual related to the given information.

De-construct

To break things down into separated parts, towards their origin to understand its meaning. Specially to understand it separately and in different relations.

Formalisation

Formalisation, originates from the verb to formalize; give (something) a defined structure or shape. (Cambridge Dictionary). Formalised structures define the world around us and give us hold and control in unknown situations.

In-between

Physically being in a space or place that is separated by two specified things. Perceiving the inside and the outside cannot be at the same time which leads to the “in-between”. (Arnheim et al., 1966)

Inside

seen as the opposite of the outside, defined as “being in or to the interior of something, the inner side, surface, of part of something” (Collins, 2003)

Liminal

Liminality refers to the word “limen” which is derived from the Latin Language, as the word for ‘threshold’, which has the meaning “being on a threshold” (Alexander, 1991). “the realm of speculation and questioning, conscious- and unconsciously — the ‘zone’ where things concrete and ideas are intermingled, taken apart and reassembled — where memorised values, and intentions collide. Liminal is a situation we define mentally.

Perception

The individual ability to see, hear and becoming aware of something by using the senses. It is important to mention, that the perception of an individual never fully matches that of another.

Threshold

The architectural element or composition that guarantees transition between two situations, functions or locations.

Transition Space

The physical space that creates the possibility to move from one space or situation to another.

Outside

being outside of a place, thing, situation, out of the doors. This can also relate to the external side of the surface and of something. mostly related to the outdoors, the external environment.

Private

A closed of situation for a person or defined groups which they regard as theirs.

Public

A generally open and accessible space to all people. Where mostly shared, social-activities take place.

“The perception of what a thing is and the perception of what it means are not separate either” (Gibson, 1976)

/Formalization as limitation in Architecture

The ground of understanding the limits

The theme of formalisation seems to be a relevant topic in the built environment because of its ubiquity in the community and its adopted patterns, systems and situations that are applied in our daily lives. Over time, we limited architecture to serve efficiency, comfort and a formal language. Although, the mental task of architecture is as important, it structures our behaviour. In the following phase tree different influences on formalisation will be discussed in relation to the affect on the individual. Ubiquity is not the only representation of formalisation, it can be seen as an inevitable totality. Formalisation in this concept can be considered as a wide range of limits that influence and define the behaviours of people. As limitation, it can arise from physical elements as well as from the mental memories. The below text attempts to find different perspectives of what the ingredients towards formalisation are in daily lives; how do they manifest in daily life and what are their effects on our behaviour?

Affordances (learned)

Formalisation, a phenomenon that gradually crept in our daily life and help us define the world around us and gives the opportunity to form imagination during conversations.

Unconsciously we talk a lot about the spaces and the elements we move over and through, in these spaces, in these towns, in these parks, on this element and in this room (George Perec, 1974). The naming of things seems obvious, it should be. But in daily life it is not obvious, not just a matter. It is reality, and as an effect it becomes rational. We are able of touching, dreaming, wondering and experiencing. It allows us to imagine metro corridors as being a public parks. (George Perec, 1974). Our memory helps us to rethink and recognize spaces around us, but we will never remote towards the world where we can't imagine, neither the corridor, nor walls, nor the park. Like, George Perec (1974, p.5) mentioned there isn't one specific space nor place, there are a big amount of small bits of spaces and one of them is our



Playground | Aldo van Eyck | Amsterdam

hallway, one the park in the city centre and we can't compare them. We formalised these spaces, it has been multiplied, it was broken and has been diversified. Nowadays, we have defined everything and for every activity with different measurements. To be part of these activities we move from one to the other while looking out for not bumping into things or others.

While growing up we learn from our caregivers how to behave and deal with the environment around us. The theory of affordance by Gibson represents the understanding and relation between the individual and the object. We believe that in contemporary architecture the relation of the individual and the build environment is fluid and strongly interlinked. Obviously, most of the objects and buildings around us in daily life are seen as statics which create tension between the subject and object. The theory of affordance is invented by psychologist Gibson. He uses this theory to get a better understanding of the relation of the individual and the object. Gibson explains the theory of affordance in his book *the ecological approach to visual perception*, by the hand of the behaviour of the child and the animal (Gibson 1977; 1979). To develop their behaviour, children start by trying artefacts and mimic behaviour of their surroundings. The surrounded objects and environments and situations, such as playing outside can stimulate the process of understanding their direct environment. In relation to the formalization of our daily routine we apply the recognized situations and behaviours on our own perception and conception of space.

The integration of affordances can create challenges, and give state to a more experimental life, leaving the possibilities open of a space, place and function so there is more room for interpretation and exploration.



Commenground | Mirosław Balka | Voorlinden

Imagination of the Affordances

Balka designed the artwork called “Common Ground”, made of old doormats. Collected by a colleague offering the people of city replacement doormats of the same sort. The Artwork is a collection of doormats of the city, therefore the name “Common ground” which can almost be taken literally. The unit of these doormats also represents the history of the neighbourhood and the traditional values, which were shared by the owners and are representing the amounts of use. The name “ground” can be interpreted in different ways, but in all cases refers to the attachment of a person.

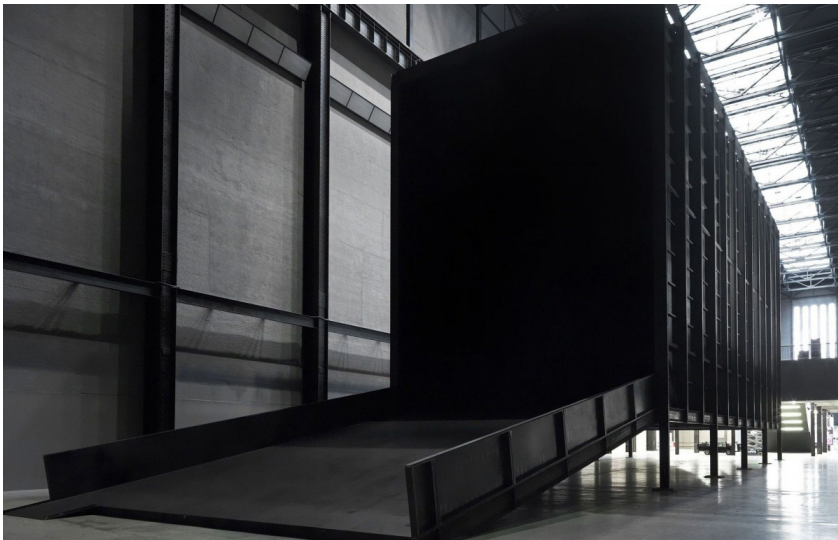
The Artwork has the intention to invite the user on the artwork to wonder around and talk with each other as the collected doormats create a collection of welcomes. We have been taught from an early age that art is something special, something we are not allowed to touch. Independent from any culture around the world the common learned-affordance of art. The artwork of Balka, as situated in the exhibition space of Voorlinden Museum, does not invite for use but implies by the compositions of elements of the space and the learned affordances to not touch the object.



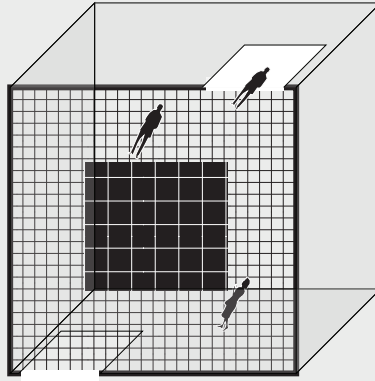
Adolf Loos | Villa Moller | Praag, Tsjechië

Composition

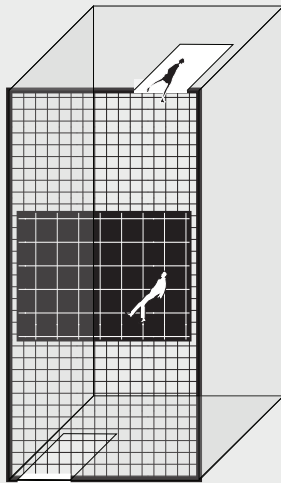
Related to the theory of affordance, the composition of architectural elements plays a primary role in the perception of a place and the behaviour of the individual. The use of elements in architectural composition can trigger a certain behaviour, these are crucial decisions in architecture for future use. By expanding the limitation in the form of the architectural elements; roofs, walls, stairs, columns, and corridors, together they create the compositions that make us use these separate elements. These compositions create certain behaviours and affect daily life. As architecture is part of our daily routine, it frames within and outside their walls. The composition of the elements in this case does not refer to the structural conditions of elements. Rather, the composition are the fundamental altitude performers in architecture, and thus influencing our perception. The wall and the floor communicate a limitation in use. Although, the wall has the competence to create beside indicating the end, but shows with it's ambiguity the start of something new, something behind. A small crack in the wall, allowing light into the room can influence with it's small signal something new. The composition of the elements can activate the user to experiment and wonder around.



Mirosław Balka | How it is 2009 | Entrance view.



1.a Voorlinden



1.b Galería Juana

Imagination of the Composition

To explain what architectural composition can bring about in daily situations again the “Common Ground” will be taken as an example. For this, the comparison of the position of the artwork is used in two different art galleries. Figure (1a) shows the spatial composition of a room in Museum Voorlinden, which is part of the main route through the museum. As is visible, the artwork is situated in the middle of the room, this allows the visitor to walk around the artwork. The way the artwork is situated indicates that you as visitor are not allowed to touch or interact with it. This has to do with several factors but mainly the combination of learned-affordances and the artwork’s position. Entering the room, walking around the artwork and leaving it, feels comfortable and as it always works. Visible in Figure (1b) one of the rooms of Galería Juana (Madrid), where the “Common Ground” was also exhibited. Here the artefact is placed differently in comparison to Museum Voorlinden, lined across the width of the room. The position of the artwork changes the interaction and intentions of the artwork with a small change. This change has a major influence on the perception and conception of the space and the connection and understanding of the artwork

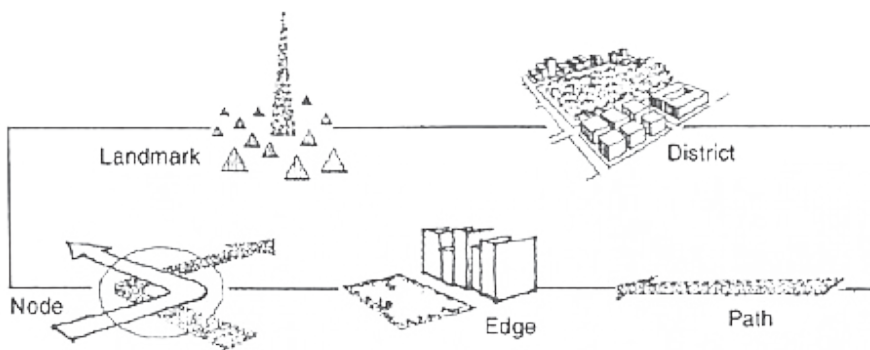
Frame of Reference

A building or object and the way it is perceived has always an appearance to its environment and to the special entity “the frame”. Each individual experiences an environment differently and notices other elements that frame their personal memories. During each visit or passing the memory will be adjusted and a new form or composition of elements will strengthen the existing memory. (eg. Misanin et al. 1968; Nader et al.2000). According to Lynch (1960), an urban planner and researcher, mentioning the importance of having an “environmental image” of the city, to recognize and to stir up the memory. According to this methodology, he named several situations and elements which reinforce these thoughts — a way, the edge, the strategic setting, the landmark and the dimensions of the city (scale)

“Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequence of events leading up to it, the memory of the past experience” (Lynch 1960)

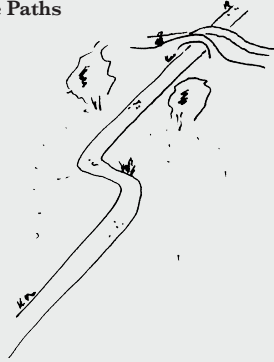
While reliving a space, the environmental image (frame of reference) reinforces. This will be sharpened with every new experience, lousy or satisfying. Also the importance of the appeal of the presenter to attract towards the spatial environment or setting sharpens it. According toward spaces in the city where we are not only looking for the final destination. During our transition we look around us and take these information to create different personal frames of the city (Otega-Andeane et al., 2005, p.12).v

As mentioned earlier, we recognize certain situation by the hand of our memory. we also make assumptions towards new situations while using our memory. Take for example the typology — Theater, where we have expectations — of the entrance, the foyer, the inner transition, the toilets, the wardrobe and such —. Architecture created these frames in our thoughts, which leaves no room for explorations. Going to a theater, should be a full experience, starting from getting of the train towards almost feeling of being on the stage.



Kevin Lynch | Frame of Reference | Key elements

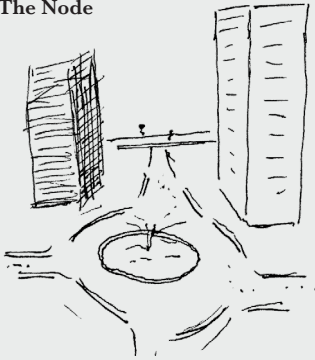
The Paths



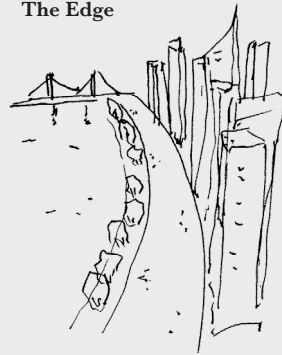
The Landmark



The Node



The Edge



The District



Drawing by Author

My personal Frame of Reference

According to Lynch, we all have our own frame of reference which translates in different frames (photographs of the mind). Applying this method, I drew the elements from my personal memory of the city of Rotterdam.

While thinking of Rotterdam and paths, I always think of the “euromast-park”, where the paths are leading me into the park and again pushing me back into the city, as well as the edge, walking along the water with on the other side the high façades and it’s small park “de boompjes”. Although most people will possibly draw the Euromast, for me the new central station is my point of reference in the city, it guides me in different directions in combination with the extending square in front. The different districts around Rotterdam are clearly visible because of it’s reorganisation after the world war 2 and its reconstruction. And finally, the Node; Hofplein” which is a clear reference and allows me to clearly move through the city by car, bike and tram. For me Hofplein is the main intersection and reference on a more regional scale.

While reading this, you possibly imagining your personal frame of reference, by the use of your memory, which is created over time and is related to the amounts and places of visit. We need this points and moments to sharpen our memory and to stay imagining and wonder around.

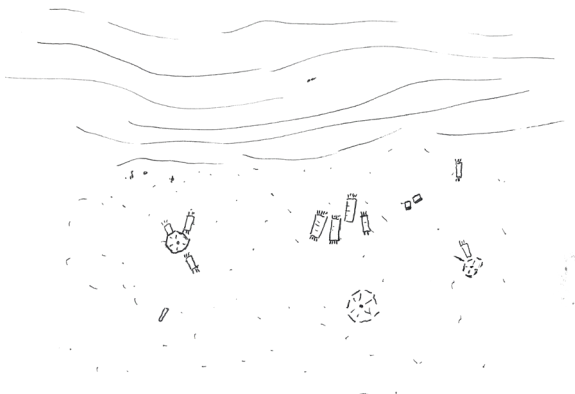


Neighbourhood Rotterdam | Photo by Author

Completion

During daily life, we are led by frames and formalization of space to optimize the daily use. The essence of architecture is to design not only for use or passing by but as well for the interaction of the body with the architecture, the relation it creates and the endlessness of opportunities. Realising the important influence of architecture on how we behave and became as we are now.

With this imaginations and use of space we create different architectural frames around us. Especially nowadays, where we see the world through different frameworks — The window, our Instagram feed, television and laptop screens. As well these elements of daily life frame our perception and conception of space. Creating a visual frame, instead of an experience, taking a photograph is then only showing a specific building as a object rather than being contained with the reality. As mentioned before, we create our own frames, which in some cases can be physical. Being on vacation and going to the beach, using our towel to frame ourselves or drawing an area of ground, is also framing.



Framing on the beach | Drawing by Author

However one regards the threshold, it is ubiquitous, it is the boundary to the liminal space, the place where words and meaning are lost to silence and shadow, and nothingness: the type of nothingness or emptiness (Benedikt M. L., 1987)

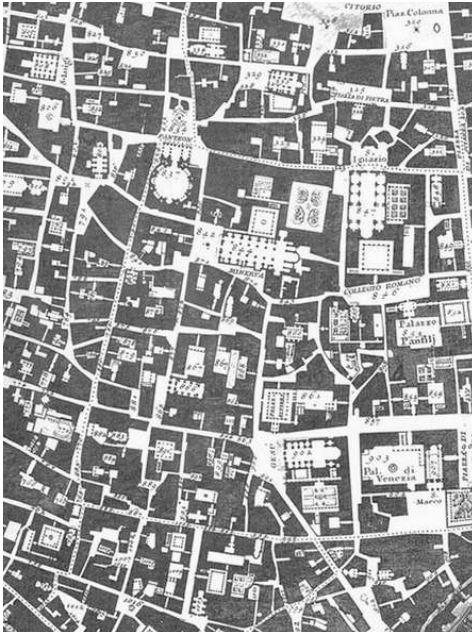
/Public vs. Private

Transition, the hierarchy and the Heart

We tend to define everything around us, including public and private spaces. This division from the public and private doesn't show the feeling and the perception of space someone has while sitting in the sun or having lunch at the public square, courtyard, balcony, reading a book at the kitchen table or lay in bed for some daily resting.

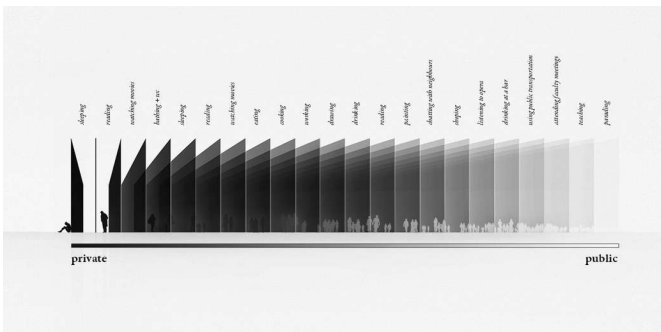
Calling something really private, is mostly including only one person. Although, really public includes an uncountable numbers of people. When redrawing the city map, it becomes apparent that many unreported spaces remain. The identification of the public and private moments in our daily life can be identified by using the architectural elements to frame this thresholds (e.g. walls, corridors, doors, partitions, stairs). (Un Studio's)

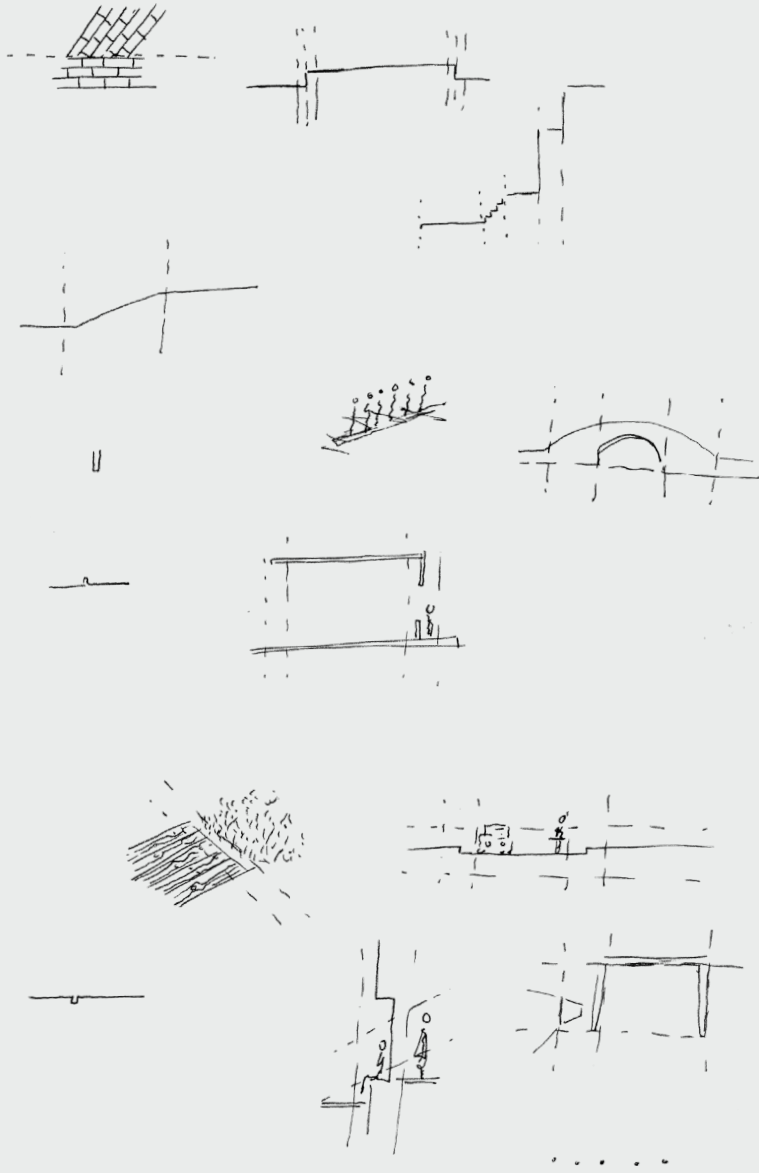
Elements in the built environment do more than just organizing the space or establish stability, they can be expressive too. The hierarchy of spaces, is in most cases related to the gradient towards a more private or public activity. These simple architectural elements are used to specify spaces. For example the walls of the house, is not only indicating a more private space but at the same time defines the paths, public squares and roads between and around them. The built environment is a set of spaces which are interrelated to each other, creating a web of spaces which form the in-between and transition spaces. The bed, a piece of ground, which is conceptually seen as a place which needs to secure place for sleep. The bed, is the most protected part of the house and maybe of the built environment. Over time the bed, became even more private, because of the development of the house over time, upstairs or hidden in the apartment. (S. Unwin, 2014) We privatised and defined these spaces. The architectural elements are the ones, who indicate and predict a certain transparency.



Map of Rome Fragment | Giambattista Nolli 1736-1748

Already in the earlier years, we tried to define spaces by mapping the use of public and private spaces. The Nolli map of Rome, showing in white the public spaces, or accessible public spaces and in black the privatised buildings and spaces. Beside being on a public square, we as individuals can still be in one of our most private moments, for example reading a book in the public park. This map gives a distorted image on the city and how it can be used and its possible accessibility. As cities are designed around several events, divided by other functions, they include this in between spaces which are currently invisible. Referring to the Nolli-map, now be marked as fully public. This in-between spaces, can be as well seen as thresholds, which separate the black and white with different shades of grey; The gradient.





Clarification of the Threshold

Thresholds are well known as physical elements, referring to the ones in the door-frames. Which indicates a new space, place or function.

Unfortunately, Thresholds appear in different scales and can also be almost invisible but still be perceived, but mostly unconsciously. Actually, we are constantly surrounded by thresholds, but we take them for granted.

“ That elevated area in the space”

“ The difference of flooring material”

“ The square in front of a building”

“ The change of brickwork”

“ A line of waiting people”

“ The low wall”

“ The steeped floor”

And so on..

Everyone sees and experience different thresholds during daily life, most of the time without noticing. We experience them less, as result of the formalised architecture and protected ourselves of obstacles. Which resulted in a less experimental architecture.

/The phenomenon of Liminal space

The philosophy behind the potential in architecture

The formalization, experienced as being a static, a defined function and meaning in architecture. Going from one place to the other consists of these in-between time, which architecturally refers to the threshold — the in-between two statics.

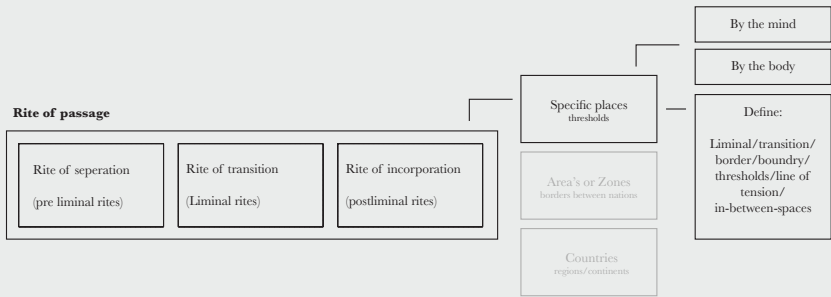
The following text defines the phenomenon Liminal space, related to the field of architecture. An exploration of the potential relationship that begins and ends at the boundaries and borders of the thresholds. Searching for the psychological boundaries and borders between the here and there. As these moments created architectural compositions such as – corridors, paths, entrances, verandas, balconies –, which are integrated in our landscapes; the built environment.



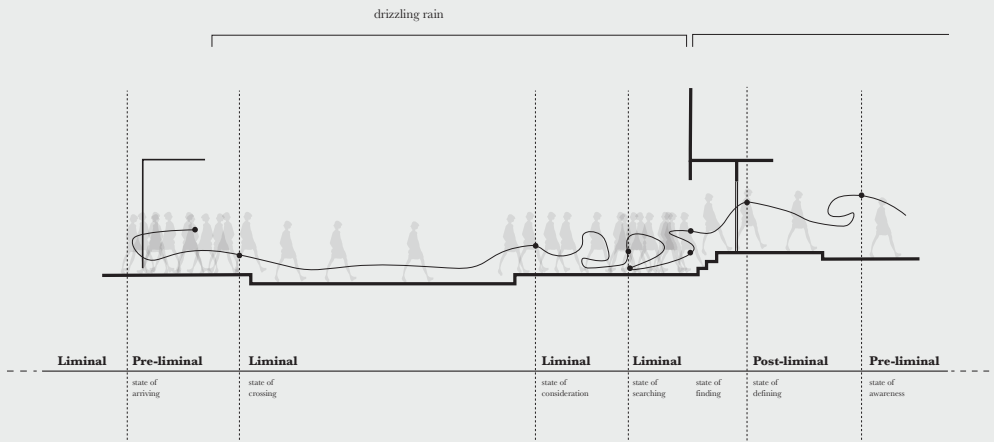
Spatial Short Circuit | Aslak Vibæk and Peter Døssing | Copenhagen



Curtain passage | Naoshima Island | Japan | Photo by Author



(Van Gennep, 1908)



Phases on liminal space | drawing by author

The Phenomenon of Liminal

Liminal refers to the word “limen” which is derived from the Latin Language, as ‘threshold’. Which completely means “being on a threshold. (Alexander, 1991), or the passage between two statics (Van Gennep, 1908). Van Gennep, in his book the “*Rites of passage*” besides the theoretical background he also displays the process of being in transition. According to Van Gennep, the “*rite of Passage*” can be seen in all types of transition, not only physically but as a obligatory feature, which is the existence between the statics. The transition can be divided in three different phases — 1. The rite of separation (pre-liminal), 2. The rite of transition (liminal), 3. The rite of incorporation (post-liminal). This separation, refers to the formalized situations, a static and fixed cultural and social structure. Changing from several situation, includes the intermediate phase of transition, the social zone, as well called “limbo” (Van Gennep, 1908). The return into the social statics, referring to the phase of incorporation.

The liminal phase forces us to unconsciously go through different social environments, this shows the value and potential and dynamic conditions of the in-between (the liminal space). The pre liminal phase implies the isolation of previous activities, the fixed states. Related to architecture, the liminal phase strongly relates to the transition phase, the movement.

This moment of “nothingness” can also be seen as the spatial temporal quality of the threshold. “Liminality, the spatial temporal quality of threshold experience, is a condition that gives people the opportunity to share a common world-in-the-making, in which differences appear as pre-social or even anti-social”- (Stravos, common space as threshold space, p. 9)

As individual we occupy the physical as well the mental gap between the two different worlds of “liminal” and becomes the conceptual medium and space of opportunity in neither here or there but “in-between”. In this in-between moment, the individual is less influenced by the “previous” or the “to become” status, it is the moment of the undefined position, unconsciously awaiting for the new static, the constructed world.

Fred Koetter (1980), explains the zone of in-between as the Liminal phase—“the realm of speculation and questioning, consciously and unconsciously — the ‘zone’ where concrete things and ideas are intermingled, taken apart and reassemble — where memory values, and intentions collide (Koetter, P.69). This space is essentially ambiguous and is, by its definition, temporary; the moment between two statics, **the transitional space**. Though, the Liminal phase seems not only related to transitional form but can potentially be. In the architectural design process the use and understanding of the phenomenon “Liminal”, can create an alternative and create awareness of the transition spaces in architecture. It creates the opportunity to open up the creative and experimental imagination of these spaces. The understanding can create different views on the importance of these transition spaces and influence the behaviour of the user physically and mentally.



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