

LIZA
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REASEARCH PLAN.

Beyond Destinations: Exploring Memories
and Longing in Transience.

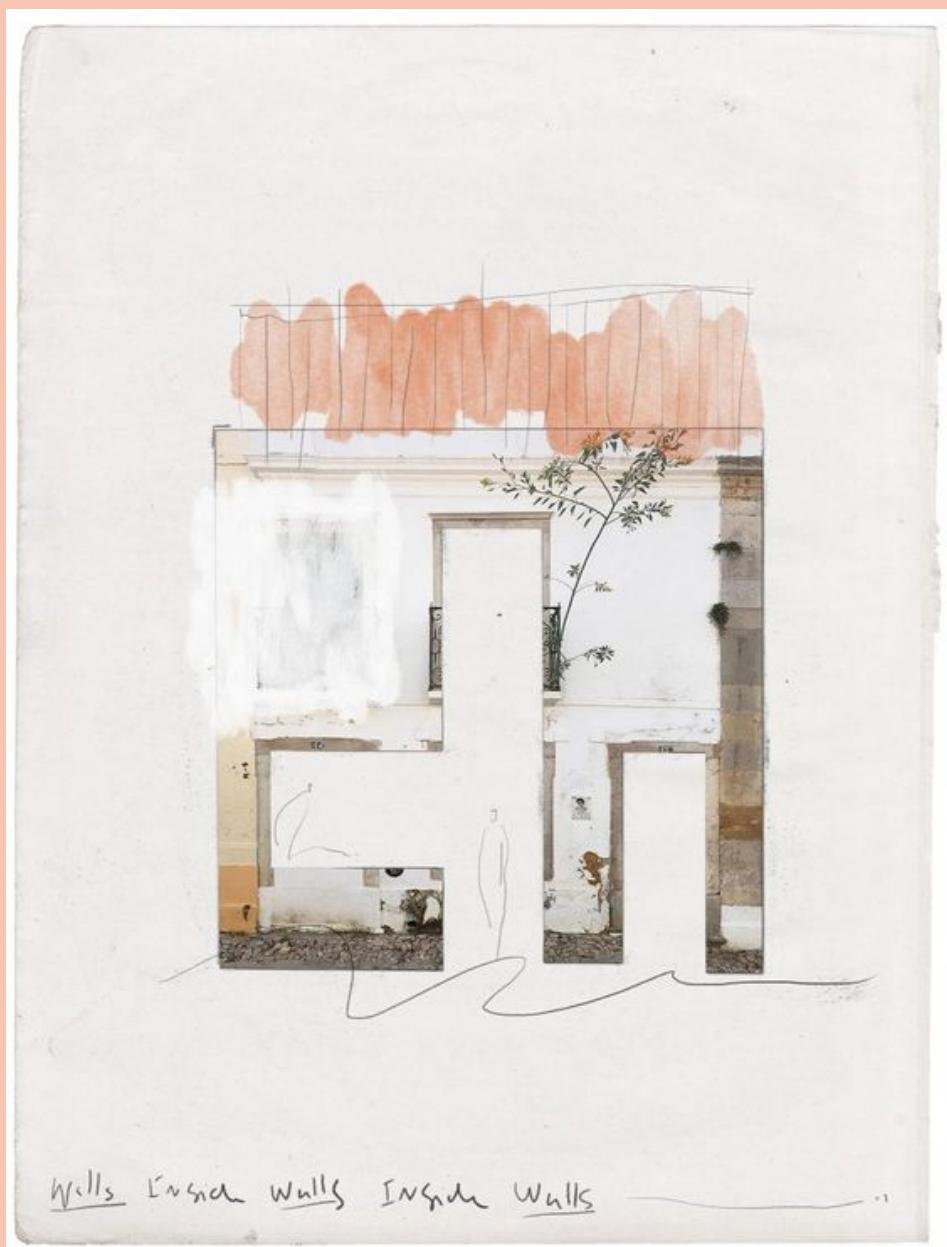


fig. 1 Abstract representation with varying scales of detail. From "Pinterest," by Yume Chiba, 2015, Pinterest.

2024/2025 Urban Architecture

LIZA ZAICEVA
Research Plan

2024–2025
Urban Architecture. TU Delft.

This research investigates the personal experiences, memories, and desires of individuals who live transient lives, shaped by the forces of globalization and frequent relocation. With a focus on capturing the poetic and narrative aspects of place and movement, this study aims to deepen understanding of how individuals remember their previous homes and identify the elements that help them form attachments to spaces in a constantly changing world. The study is linked to a later application in the design phase of a mixed-use building complex in Antwerp. Employing a method of portraying the memories of people who live or have lived in Antwerp through architectural drawings, this research will visualize and document personal stories, offering a new approach to the emotional and experiential dimensions of transience. By exploring these narratives, the study aims to broaden understanding of human relationships with place, memory, and identity in times of transience. Findings are expected to highlight recurring themes of longing, adaptation, and the search for stability, offering valuable insights into the ways people navigate and emotionally anchor themselves within transient environments.

CONTENTS

	TITLE PAGE
3—	ABSTRACT
6—	INTRODUCTION
10—	RESEARCH QUESTION(S)
12—	METHODOLOGY
20—	DISCUSSION
22—	BIBLIOGRAPHY
24—	ANNEX 1

INTRODUCTION

Transient Homes and Lasting Memories: Understanding the Impact of Frequent Relocation on Personal and Architectural Perception

These are the 3 starting points. Their levels of importance may vary throughout the research process.

Globalization has reshaped the dynamics of modern life, resulting in increased global mobility as individuals and families relocate more frequently than in past decades. According to research, global migration and frequent relocations have become common due to factors such as economic pressures, company transfers, family circumstances, or conflicts (Czaika & de Haas, 2014). While some embrace this mobility as a conscious nomadic lifestyle, this research is focused on those who have been compelled to move due to external factors rather than personal choice. For these individuals, relocation can be both a positive and negative experience, impacting their sense of identity and attachment to "home." The selective nature of memory raises interesting questions: how do people perceive the architecture of spaces that were once home? Which aspects of these spaces remain vivid in memory? Furthermore, are these memories influenced by strong emotions, and are these emotions typically positive or negative?

The topic holds personal significance, shaped by an extensive history of relocations. Having moved 13 times due to family changes and academic pursuits, the experience of adapting to new spaces has been a constant. This frequent movement, spurred initially by family circumstances such as parental divorce and a new growing family, later continued with relocations to the Netherlands and the shifting environments of student life. The result is an ongoing reflection on what "home" means. These experiences prompt questions about the formation of personal preferences and whether they stem from academic background in architecture or the transient lifestyle itself. The internal dialogue surrounding a "final destination"

highlights a blend of personal and professional curiosity that moves this study.

As an architect, this research also seeks to deepen understanding of the client-architect relationship by exploring subjective perspectives on desire and preference. The study aims to explore whether individuals know what they truly want in a space and to what extent architects can or should shape these desires. This understanding of the client's unarticulated needs has potential implications for architectural practice, where balancing client desires with professional insight is often becomes a challenge. Through a subjective lens, the research will examine the agency architects possess in translating clients' often unexpressed expectations into tangible design outcomes.

Although this study begins from a personal narrative, it broadens to address a pressing societal issue as frequent relocations increasingly influence the built environment (King, 2010). As mobility reshapes how individuals experience and form attachments to spaces, this research offers insights that are valuable to both theory and practice. The timeless question persists: should architects merely fulfill known desires, or should they anticipate and create experiences that clients may not yet know they want? This inquiry provides an opportunity to re-evaluate how architectural practice aligns with the evolving needs of a mobile society.

**Portraying memories**

One of the references how to portray architectural memories.

Fig.2 Minimalist workspace with wooden textures and natural light.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central research question:

How do individuals with transient lifestyles perceive and form emotional connections to spaces, and what elements of these environments are most strongly retained in memory?

Subthemes and subquestions:

1. Memory and Emotional Attachment to Space

Focus: This theme explores how individuals **remember** spaces they've left behind and the role of emotion in these memories.

Subquestions:

1. What elements of a space are most vividly retained in memory, and are these memories tied to specific emotions?
2. Which sensory details (like sounds, smells, or textures) contribute significantly to spatial memory?
3. How do positive and negative experiences in a place influence the way it's remembered?
4. Are negative experiences more likely to be remembered than positive ones in past spaces?
5. How are memories of a place affected by the length of time spent there?

2. Identity and Perception of "Home"

Focus: This theme examines how frequent relocation affects one's sense of "home" and personal identity in relation to place, .

Subquestions:

1. How do individuals define "home" when frequently relocating, and how do these definitions shift over time?
2. How do transient individuals prioritize elements of a space when determining comfort?
3. Do transient individuals tend to be more resilient in new environments?

3. Expectations and Desires in Space Use. Final destination.

Focus: This cluster investigates what transient individuals desire or expect from spaces, both consciously and subconsciously.

Subquestions:

1. Do people with transient experiences have specific spatial preferences or expectations when moving to a new place?
2. How clearly can transient individuals articulate their needs in a space, and to what extent are these desires shaped by past environments?
3. Should architects merely fulfill known desires, or should they anticipate and create experiences that clients may not yet know they want?

METHODOLOGY

To investigate how transient lifestyles shape individuals' perceptions and memories of space, this study employs a mixed-method approach, including a **literature review, architectural drawings, and interviews**, to capture and interpret participants' experiences.

*Abore nos invelestis destios simoluptae porectur
abo. Quas aut vitiunt ut veliatem*

This study employs three primary methods—literature review, interviews, and architectural drawings—to explore how transient lifestyles shape individuals' memories and emotional connections to spaces. The literature review provides theoretical grounding, while the interviews offer firsthand insights and narratives from participants. Finally, architectural drawings allow for a visual representation of these narratives, capturing memories through a structured yet imaginative lens. Together, these methods enable a deeper, empathetic approach to understanding the complexities of memory and space for transient individuals.

Method 1: Interviews

Selection of Participants

The interview process will involve 3 participants who have experienced significant transience, specifically those who have relocated at least 10 times, either within a single city or across different countries. The number of participants is assumed according to the project's timeframe and might change depending on the workload. Participants must have lived or currently live in Antwerp, Belgium, where the subsequent design phase of this research will take place. This criterion ensures both a common experience of frequent movement and a geographical connection to the intended site for further practical application.

Criteria for Participation

The selection criteria focus on both common denominators and notable differences between participants. Common denominators include the number of

relocations (10 or more) and a connection to Antwerp. These shared factors provide a foundation for understanding collective themes. Differences in personal backgrounds, age, or reasons for relocation will also be considered, allowing for diverse perspectives that can enrich the study's findings.

Interview Structure and Process

The interviews will be conducted in two parts to capture a full spectrum of participants' experiences. In Part 1, participants will narrate their life stories, focusing on significant relocations, memories associated with different places, and emotional experiences tied to these moves. In Part 2, structured questions aligned with the research questions will guide the conversation toward specific themes related to memory and space attachment. This dual structure offers flexibility, allowing participants to express themselves freely while ensuring key research themes are addressed.

To foster a comfortable, empathetic environment, the interview process is designed to be open and adaptable. Participants are encouraged to bring personal materials—such as photos, videos, or diaries—that may aid in recalling past spaces and memories. These materials will help facilitate deeper reflection, though the goal remains to evoke memories that participants can narrate personally. In some cases, visual aids may prompt additional recollections, yet the primary focus is on verbal storytelling, which can then be translated into architectural drawings. Throughout the interview, participants and the researcher may collaboratively sketch memories on paper or search for reference images online. While actual photos can be referenced, they will not be directly reproduced in the final

drawings, ensuring that the visualizations remain interpretive rather than literal.

Recording and Transcription

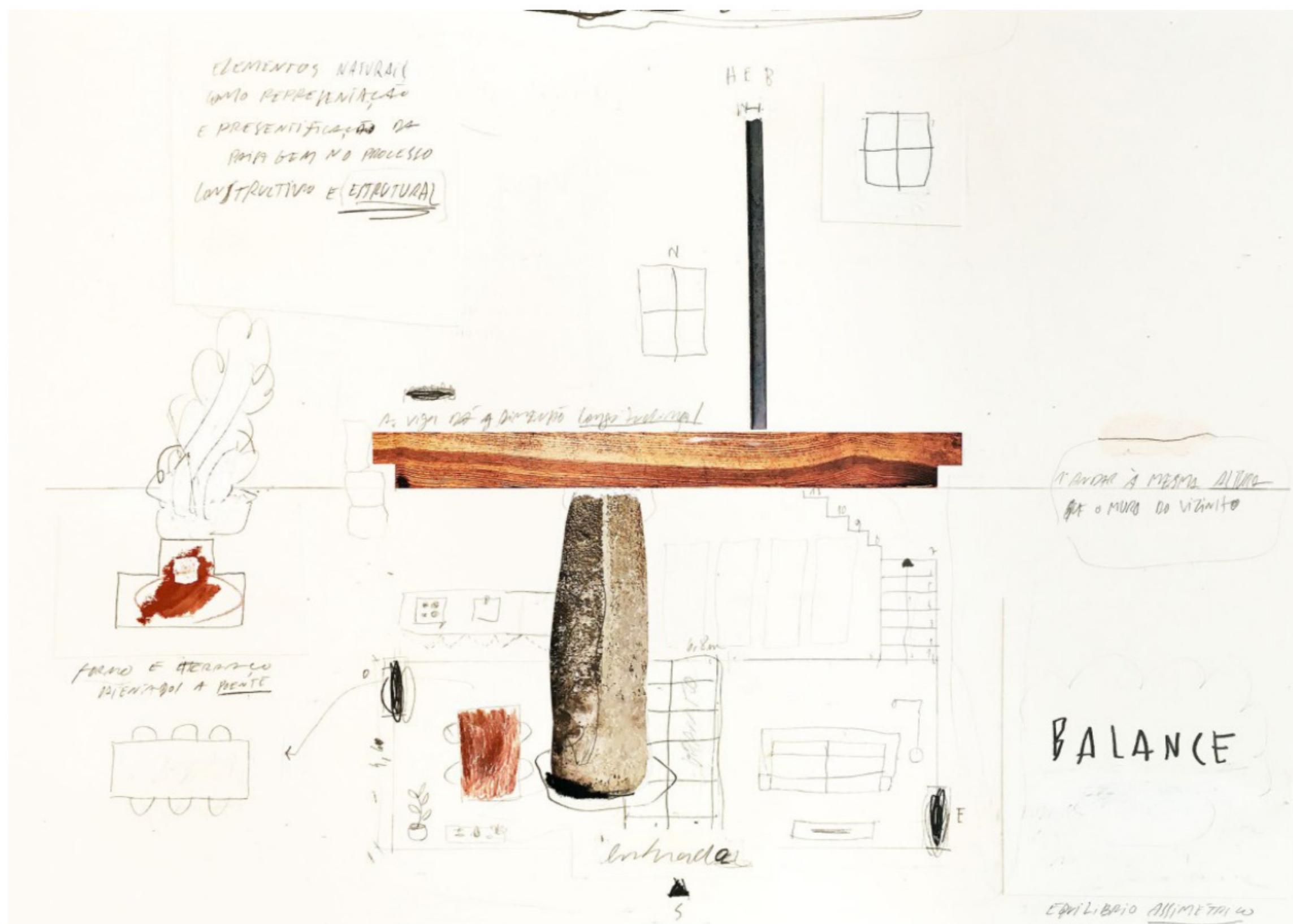
All interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy and enable a thorough analysis of participants' responses. The list of primary questions, developed from the Research Question section, will be provided in the Annex 1. As these are open interviews, additional questions may arise spontaneously to encourage a natural flow of dialogue.

Method 2: Architectural Drawings

Architectural drawings were chosen as a method to visually represent participants' memories, translating anthropological insights into an architectural format. Following the initial interviews and preliminary sketches, a "list of memories" will be compiled, serving as the basis for these drawings. This stage will involve interpreting participants' recollections with varying levels of detail, inspired by reference projects that integrate multiple scales within a single drawing. Once the initial drawings are complete, a second interview phase will take place, allowing participants to review and provide feedback on the representations. Participants will assess the drawings for alignment with their memories, offering suggestions for adjustments. The drawings will be refined iteratively based on this feedback, with details added or removed as needed to achieve closer fidelity to participants' recollections. This process will enable a collaborative visualization that respects the subjective and nuanced nature of memory.

Portraying memories

Fig 3. Architectural elements portrayed. Corpo Atelier. (2018).



Portraying memories

One of the references how to portray architectural memories.

Fig.4 House elevation with block or brick textures and natural light with an abstract garden and other objects positioned around. From "Pinterest," by April Houssier,(2018)



Method 3: Literature Review

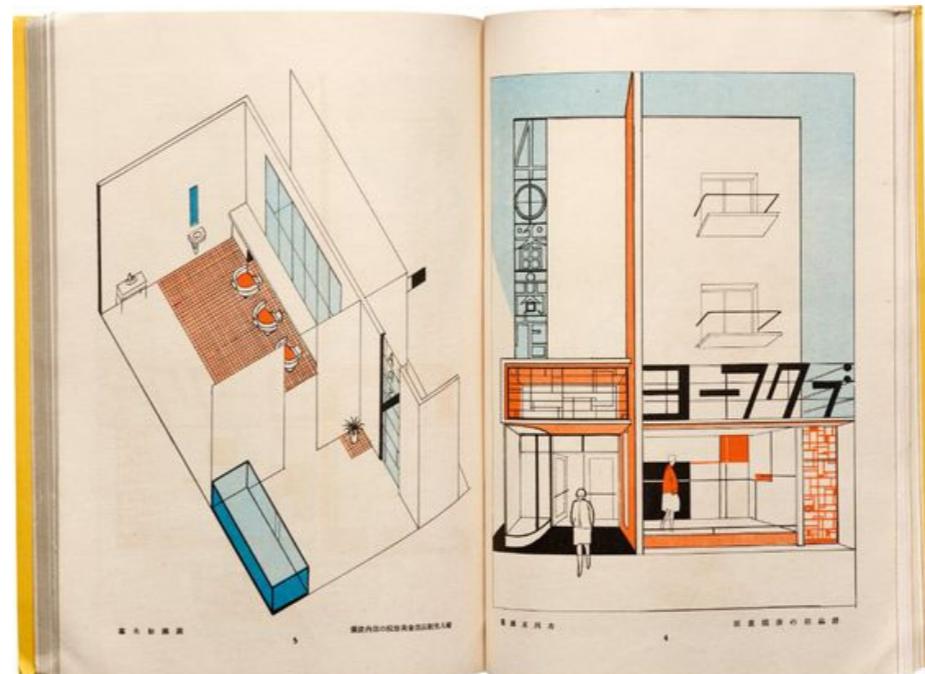
The literature review grounds this study in established theories and insights from interdisciplinary sources on memory, spatial perception, and displacement. Key texts include *The Urbanization of Forced Displacement* by Neil James Wilson Crawford, which explores the dynamics of forced relocation and its urban implications, and *A Pattern Language* by Christopher Alexander et al., which offers a foundational perspective on how built environments can influence human experience. Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* provides a philosophical lens on intimate spaces and memory, enriching the study's focus on emotional connections to place. Finally, Clara Chow's *Dream Storeys* captures personal narratives within architectural spaces, aligning closely with the study's emphasis on individual experiences and memories. These works collectively shape the framework for understanding how memory, place attachment, and transience intersect, informing both the interview and architectural drawing methodologies.

The integration of literature review, interviews, and architectural drawings allows for a comprehensive examination of transient experiences. Each method complements the others, enabling the study to balance theoretical insights, personal narratives, and visual representation, thereby capturing the complex relationship between memory and place attachment in a transient world.



Home depiction

Fig. 6 Axonometric explorations of rooms. (1933).



Portraying Isometries

Fig. 7

DISCUSSION

By delving into the deeply personal and often overlooked narratives of those who navigate transience, this research seeks to reveal the complex interplay between memory, identity, and spatial perception in a world where the notion of 'home' is increasingly fluid.

This research aims to offer an insight into the ways people with transient lifestyles perceive and connect to spaces, which will directly inform the design phase of a mixed-use masterplan and building complex in Antwerp, specifically between Kiel and Hoboken. By exploring personal memories and stories, this study hopes to deepen our understanding of the emotional and sensory elements that make spaces memorable, which can influence how architects approach design for people who frequently relocate.

However, there are challenges to consider. Gathering subjective memories and ensuring participants feel comfortable sharing personal stories may prove difficult. Additionally, translating these abstract memories into architectural drawings requires a sensitive approach, as the goal is to capture not just visuals, but the feeling and meaning attached to spaces.

The selected methods—literature review, interviews, and architectural drawings—allow for a fine exploration of these themes.

Ultimately, the findings have the potential to guide architects and urban planners in creating spaces that resonate with those who live transient lives. This research opens the door for future studies that further explore personal histories and memories can be approached in the built environment.

It is too early to draw the conclusions. However the discussion is already there.

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Crawford, N. J. W. (2017). *The urbanization of forced displacement: UNHCR, urban refugees, and the dynamics of policy change*. Cambridge University Press. This book explores the urban impacts of forced displacement, examining how displaced populations adapt to new environments due to economic pressures, conflict, and policy shifts. Crawford provides a comprehensive look at the experiences of refugees and the complexities of urban integration, offering a foundation for understanding the social context of transience and displacement. This resource will inform the research's broader themes of mobility, memory, and the forces behind frequent relocation.

Alexander, C., Ishikawa, S., Silverstein, M., Jacobson, M., Fiksdahl-King, I., & Angel, S. (1977). *A pattern language: Towns, buildings, construction*. Oxford University Press. A Pattern Language presents a structured approach to creating human-centered spaces, organized around "patterns" that address various spatial needs and relationships. The book emphasizes designing spaces that feel intuitively familiar and supportive of human activities. Its insights into patterns that foster comfort and familiarity provide a valuable framework for examining how architectural elements influence memory and attachment in transient individuals.

Bachelard, G. (1994). *The poetics of space*. Beacon Press. Bachelard's The Poetics of Space is a philosophical exploration of how intimate spaces evoke memories and emotional connections. Focusing on the poetic aspects of places like rooms, corners, and shelters, Bachelard examines how these spaces linger in memory, shaping personal identity and attachment. This book's reflections on memory and the emotional resonance of spaces are foundational to this study's exploration of how transient individuals remember past places.

Chow, C. (2016). *Dream storeys*. Ethos Books. Dream Storeys by Clara Chow combines narrative with architectural illustrations to portray personal experiences within various spaces. Chow uses short stories alongside visuals to capture how people perceive and relate to the built environment. The book's narrative and visualization techniques offer valuable examples for representing memories and personal stories visually, supporting this research's architectural drawing method.

LIST OF FIGURES AND REFERENCES

List of Figures

Figure 1

Chiba, Y. (2015). Abstract representation with varying scales of detail. Pinterest. Available at <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/117726977749065597/>.

Figure 2

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Figure 3

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Figure 4

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Figure 5

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ANNEX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Personal and Background Questions

Can you tell me about the different places you've lived throughout your life?
What were some of the reasons behind your moves? (e.g., family, work, education)
How would you describe your feelings toward moving frequently?
Do you consider any of these places "home"? Why or why not?
How do you define "home," especially in the context of frequent relocations?

2. Emotional Connections and Memories

Are there any particular places you've lived that hold strong memories for you?
What kinds of emotions do you associate with these memories? Are they mostly positive, negative, or a mix?
Are there specific events or experiences that you remember vividly from any of these places?
What do you think triggers these memories? (e.g., certain objects, smells, sounds)
When you think back to a specific place, what comes to mind first—the layout, objects, people, or something else?

3. Sensory Details and Memory Retention

Are there certain sensory aspects (like a particular smell or sound) that stand out in your memories of past homes?
How much do you remember about the physical details of your previous homes? For instance, do you recall the layout or specific design features?
Do any of your memories of these places feel more vivid than others? Why do you think that is?
How do you feel about seeing photographs of these past places? Do they align with your memories?
Are there any places where you've lived that you barely remember? If so, why do you think that is?

4. Impact on Identity and Personal Preferences

How has moving frequently influenced your sense of identity?
Do you feel that your experiences with moving have shaped your personal preferences for spaces?

Are there specific features you seek in a living space now because of your previous experiences?

How would you say your relationship with "home" has changed over time?
Do you feel you have a better understanding of what you want in a living space due to your transient lifestyle?

5. Relationship with New Spaces

How do you approach adapting to a new place? Are there certain things you do to make it feel like "home"?
Are there objects or routines that help you settle into a new space?
How long does it typically take for a new place to start feeling familiar or comfortable to you?
When moving into a new space, what do you notice first, and how does it impact your impression of the place?
Do you feel more or less attached to places that you knew were temporary from the start?

6. Perceptions of Stability and Final Destination

Do you envision yourself settling down in one place eventually? Why or why not?
Do you feel that your frequent moves have affected your sense of stability? If so, in what ways?
What would an ideal "final destination" look like for you?
Is there anything you miss about a previous place, even if it was temporary?
If you could recreate any one space you've lived in, what would it look like, and why?

