ANOUCK VAN 'T SCHIP

A FEMALE PRACTICE

RE-DESIGNING

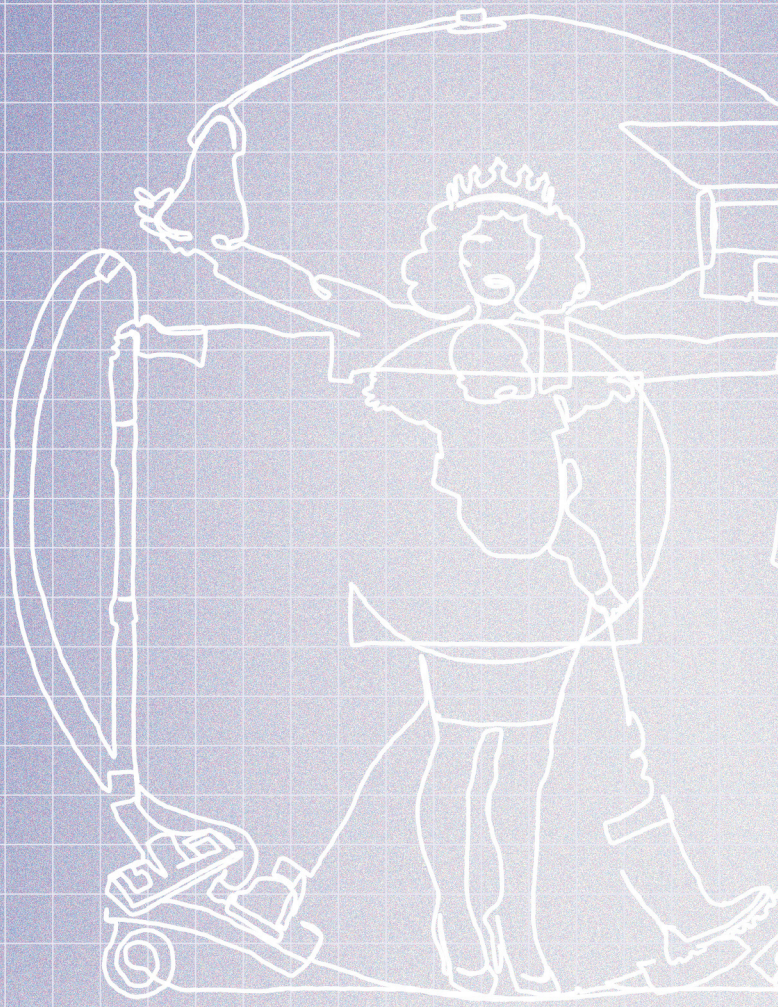
OPPORTUNITY

STRUCTURES

FOR

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL

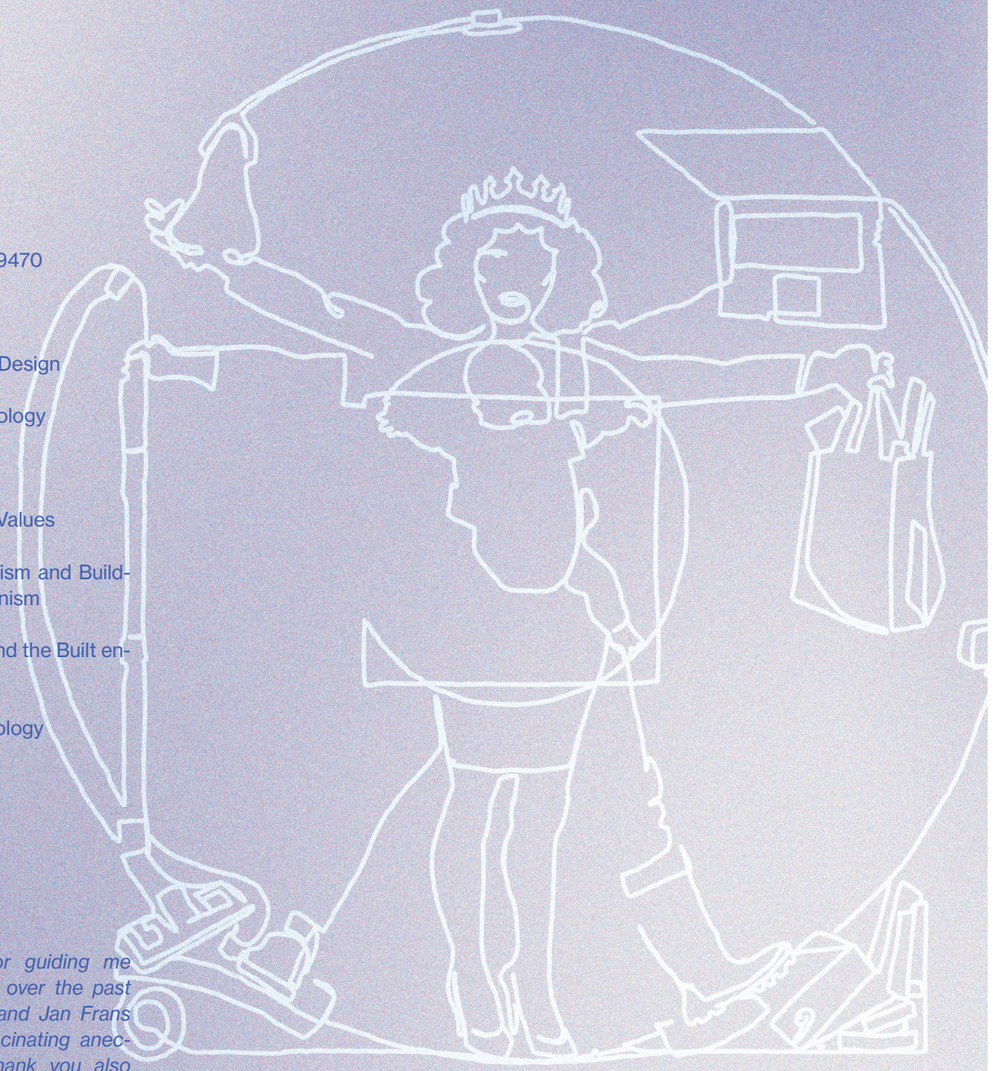
WOMEN IN ALMERE



COLOPHON

A FEMALE PRACTICE

Re-designing opportunity structures for young professional women in Almere



Master Thesis, A3 report

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Thank you

To Birgit and Leeke for guiding me through my explorations over the past months, Brans Stassen and Jan Frans den Hartog for their fascinating anecdotes about Almere. Thank you also to Liesl Vivier for discussing the city's future plans. Special thanks go to the women who walked through Almere with me and generously shared their daily experiences, this thesis would not exist without them. Finally, to my friends and partner: thank you for the motivation, and for the distractions when I needed them most.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how the urban form can be reconfigured to create more equal opportunities for women in Almere, one of the largest NewTowns in the Netherlands. Developed from the ambitious planning paradigms of the 1970s onwards, it prioritised efficiency, functional separation and normative household models. Almere's urban structure shapes everyday life in ways that limit or enable access to social, economic and spatial opportunities unevenly. In this context, this thesis addresses the following research question:

How can dominant urban design paradigms in Almere be transformed through the implementation of opportunity structures for young professional women in order to support a more just city?

This project takes a feminist approach while focusing on young professional women, combining critical urban theory with qualitative and spatial methods. First, it explores how opportunity structures are defined for women. Secondly, it situates Almere within the broader historical context of NewTown development and feminist critiques of urban form. Based on this theoretical foundation, the project examines women's lived experiences through a literature review, site visits, interviews and ethnographic go-along mapping. These methods reveal how urban design influences daily routines, mobility patterns, caregiving practices and perceptions of safety, highlighting the tensions between women's everyday realities and the city's dominant spatial design.

In the final phase, the identified socio-spatial constraints are reconfigured into a set of opportunity structures to better support young professional women's daily lives. Through research-by-design and spatial patterns, these structures connect theory, lived experience and spatial strategy. The resulting multi-scalar design demonstrates that feminist urban design is not a symbolic gesture, but a structural reorganisation of how the city distributes opportunity.

Key words: Opportunity Structures; NewTown; Pattern Language; Women's Lived Experience.

Figure 01 The Vitruvian women (Image based on illustration of HAJO, NRC, 2024)

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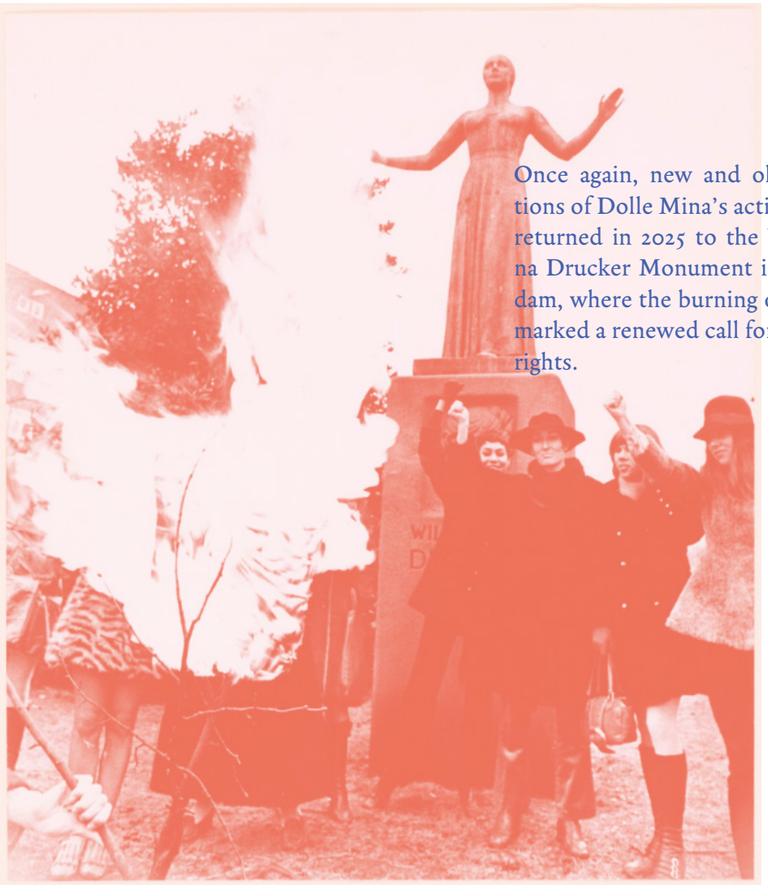
*The chapter titles 'The Planned, The Lived and The Dreamed' are borrowed from the exhibition 'Maak Stad Almere', organised by Stichting Polderblik at Kunstlinie Almere in 2022, which examined Almere's development through these three lenses on the occasion of the city's 50th anniversary.**



Once again, new and old generations of Dolle Mina's activist group returned in 2025 to the Wilhelmina Drucker Monument in Amsterdam, where the burning of a corset marked a renewed call for women's rights.

Wilhelmina Drucker (1847–1925) established the Free Women's Association to promote women's intellectual and political emancipation. Through lectures delivered throughout the country, she addressed issues such as the obligations of unmarried fathers and the systemic oppression of women. In 1894, she went on to found the Association for Women's Suffrage, later led by Aletta Jacobs from 1903 to 1919 (Tijdlijn Emancipatie van Vrouwen in Nederland | Design Museum Den Bosch, 2025).



Figure 02 Corset burning at the statue of Wilhelmina Drucker in 1970 (ANP, 1970)

Figure 03 Corset burning at the statue of Wilhelmina Drucker in 2025 (Joosten, 2025)

00

This chapter introduces the thematic scene, including my personal motivation, positionality including a timeline of women in the spatial design discipline and a glossary for understanding the definitions of key terms.

00
1. Motivation
2. Position
3. Glossary

00.1 Motivation

Was it their own choice?

A few years back I visited the saloon that was monthly organized for and by studying women around Delft. We came together to discuss interesting themes within a space full of women, not to exclude, but to find a place of care within a male dominated technical environment. This time the theme was ‘a century in women’s history’, hosted by Suzanna Jansen (writer of the Dutch book: De Omwenteling: De Eeuw Van De Vrouw, 2022). Her book and the discussions that went around the room opened my awareness of women’s history, that I before, was not strongly aware of.
As I invested myself more in the themes of women’s rights, feminism and its history, it also got me thinking about the lives of my own two grandmothers. Realising that their experiences of life were completely different of mine, but also from each other. One grandmother lived in the city-centre of Amsterdam, where she cared for two children while working at her husband’s company. Together they sold the first custom-made sports wheelchairs, making them real pioneers. Where my other grandmother had a completely different experience in the same time period. She lived and worked on a farm just outside of Amsterdam and, over time, cared for 17 children. Domestic activities filled her days.
With this knowledge also came the realization: was it their own choice? Their own choice to have 2 or 17 children, to stay home or not, to perform domestic and care taking tasks, to get out of the house and have a job on the side, or again: stay home? And were they limited or maybe motivated by their spatial surroundings?
With this project I want to explore how my role as urban designer can be part of the conversation. Exploring how women shaped the city and how they were shaped by it. How their patterns are inter-woven with the urban form. Discover the way women move through spaces, how that might have changed and what the future can do to create and enhance opportunities.

Anouck

As I progress in this thesis, I recognise that knowledge is situated and that research is never produced from a neutral position. The values that I carry with me through this project are **care**, **safety**, **autonomy** and **gender equality**. These are integrated in how I unfold this project, what elements are of importance for re-designing opportunities for women, and part of how I reflect on my strategy. This is combined with the lens of my being, the one of a cis-gendered white women of 24 years old. I was born in The Netherlands, and grew up in Hoofddorp, a NewTown developed as satellite city for Amsterdam located next to Schiphol. I completed my Bachelor's degree in Architecture at the TU Delft and I am writing this for my final Master thesis in Urban Design at the same institution. In relation to the case-study of this research, I position myself as an outsider. However, having grown up in a NewTown I am familiar with its spatial logics and environments. Although I was not interested in the planned city of Hoofddorp when I was young, my experiences of growing up there have taught me how the spatial layout of such a suburb informs daily routines, opportunities and constraints. While this familiarity supports an initial understanding, I am cautious not to project my own experiences onto others. Lastly, it is important to prevent falling into 'pink washing' within gender mainstreaming, where the differentiation between men and women and their gender assumptions are unintentionally reproduced through research and design practices (Zibell et al., 2019). By centering lived experience, adopting an intersectional lens and recognizing this risk I try to move beyond gender categories.

Within the Feminist week of 2026 at the faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, we produced a feminist timeline, based on the collective mapping session of the Feminist week of 2025. Done by different generations of feminists engaged in spatial practices, to explore and discuss the feminist history of the faculty and what has been happening in society. Our team consisted of Birgit Hausleitner, Fleur Daalderop, Nynke Krabbenburg and myself and produced this timeline physically to be shown in the hallway of the BK Library.
Because context is such an important element in understanding the current situation and future scenario's, I choose to reproduce the main body of the timeline in my project.

Publications:	Provide an overview of research and studies in feminist practices visualised, criticized and set the agendas.
Projects:	Introduces urban and architectural projects that changed spatial design practices.
Education and curriculum:	Presents important events or moments that impacted learning at the ABE-faculty and traces the introduction and presence of a gender-inclusive perspective in education.
Political and societal processes and events:	Form the contextualising foundation of the timeline.

1900 1st wave 2nd wave 1970 1980

PUBLICATIONS

1855.

Kivi rapport: report to the king on the requirements and construction of workers housing

1889.

National exhibition of women's labour

1946.

Stichting Goed Wonen.

1972.

The limits to growth | Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, William Behrens III.

1977.

**Het is altijd rustig in de nieuwbouwwijken.
Henriette van Eys, Hedy d'Ancona.**

Women in American architecture: a historic and contemorary perspective.

1980-97.

Tijdschrift voor vrouwen studies.

1980s.

Proloog tot zichtbaarheid 1 & 2.

1981.

**The grand domestic Revolution.
Doloris Hayden.**

**Van saamhorig ploeteren naar opgesloten koesteren; gemeenschappelijke voorzieningen en woningbouwverenigingen 1902-1939.
Susanne Komossa, Sjoukje de Jong.**

EDUCATION & PROJECTS

1904.

BK Faculty was founded

1917.

Grada Wolffsperger graduates as first women from the TH Delft.

1917.

Grada Wolffsperger graduates as first women from the TH Delft.

1974.

**Vrouwen Bouwen
Vrouwen Wonen
- Hedy d'Ancona**

1973.

The Mother school was established.

1977.

Henriette van Eys graduates and questions gender inequalities.

1978.

Vrouwenstudies is founded at the TU Delft.

1978.

**The first female professor at the BK TU Delft Faculty.
Dr. F. Bollerey**

1981.

**Women's studies seminar: female housing supervisors.
By Anna Vos**

SOCIETY

1919.

Women's suffrage



1957.

**Marriage bar.
The Tenderloo motion was passed by the House of Representatives in 1955. The motion was tabled by Corry Tenderloo and aimed to abolish the employment ban on married who were dismissed from governmental service or teaching positions.**

1957.

Married women became legally competent.

1969.

**Establishment of Dolle Mina.
On 23rd of January a small group of women and men launched a series of playful actions to draw attention to the unequal position of women in society (figure 02).**

1990 3rd wave

2000

2010 4th wave

PUBLICATIONS

1982.

Vrouwen in de stedebouw wat doen jullie nou?
Ellen van Kessel, Marga Kuperus.

Architectuur en vrouwen in de USA.
Afdeling der Bouwkunde. Sectie Vrouwenstudies.

1983.

Van Boschplan tot Bijlmerbasjes.
International Institute for social History Amsterdam.

1986.

Vrouwen in de stad 1 & 2.
Heidi de Mare, Anna Vos, Lisl Edhoffer.

1987.

Het vertrek.
Heide Hinterhür.

Normering in de bouw in relatie tot veranderende woon- en leefvormen.
Jenneke ter Horst, Karin Theunissen, Anna Vos.

1993.

Urban Rituals in Italy and the Netherlands.
Heidi de Mare, Anna Vos (eds.).

1995.

50/50 Vrouwen bouwen aan rotterdam 1945-1995.
Mieke de Wit.

1998.

The Architect. Reconstructing Her Practice.
Francesca Highes(edt.)

1999.

Gender, Space Architecture. An Interdisciplinary Introduction.
Iain Borden, Barbara Penner, Jane Rendell(eds.)

2001.

2x6 NL Architects. Conversations with 6 exoerienced and six young dutch women architects.
Stichting Vreemde Architecten.

2006.

Building passion: Sterke vrouwen in de bouw.
Laura Stevens

2015.

The Ni Una Menos campaign.
Reframing femicide in the quest for the socialisation of Roma.

EDUCATION & PROJECTS

1981.

Summer university: Women Studies.

1983.

Stichting Vrouwen Bouwen Wonen.

1989.

Letter to the architecture institute, the predecessor of the new institute (NAi).

1990.

Department of Women's studies Faculty of Arts, Amsterdam. Interdisciplinary lecture series on women's studies in the arts.

1993.

Frauen - Werk - Stadt.
A design competition in Vienna for an appartment complex designed for and by women.

1993.

Driebergen conference.

1994.

Kop van Zuid.
Urban development project in Rotterdam by, among others, urban planner Riet Bakker.

1995.

Beijing Conference.
The 4th World Conference on women action for equality, development and peace.

1996.

Course: Environmental aware building. At the BK Faculty,

1999.

Mandatory courses.
No room for experiment.

1999.

Introduction of the Bachelor's and Master's degree system.

2008.

BK Faculty burned down.
Many documents and books were lost in the fire.

2008.

Opening of the new BK Faculty. Originally as temporary solution, but would later remain permanent.

2012.

Urbanistas.
Starts in Londen on the initiative of Liane Hartley.

2013.

Het Nieuwe Instituut.
Created from fusion of the Dutch Architecture Institute, the Premsela Foundation and the Virtual Platform.

2015.

Introduction of the BEP.

SOCIETY

1984.

Abortion law.

1989.

Fall of the Berlin wall.

1989.

Intersectionalism
- Kimberlé Crenshaw

1996.

Government advisory body (1981 - 1996).

1996.

Government advisory body (1981 - 1996).

1996.

Shopping hours law
Shops may remain open until 10pm.

1997.

Treaty of Amsterdam
European union is committed to gender mainstreaming.

2000 - 2010.

Long Feminist winter

2000s.

Dismantling of social housing

2000.

Start of a gender mainstreaming politician in Vienna

2003.

Emancipation of native dutch women is decaired complete - Aart Jan de Geus.

2008.

Financial crisis.

2008.

Financial crisis.

2010.

Ministry of Housing, Spatial planning and the Environment (VROM) abolished.

2010.

Ban on squatting.

2010.

UN Women founded.

2013.

Black Lives Matter.

2020 2025 Future

PUBLICATIONS

2017.

The Ni Una Menos campaign.
Reframing femicide in the quest for the socialisation of Roma

2021.

Mevr. De Architect.
A.ZINE magazine

2021.

De BNA-kandidatuur van Joris Deur is niet meer van deze tijd.
Veerle Alkemade, Catherine Koekoek

Een plek om van te dromen. Infrastructuur voor activisme.
Veerle Alkemade, Catherine Koekoek

2023.

Compliments to our brave architect! The Netherlands' first Women Architects.
Erica M. Smeets-Klokgieters

2023.

Women in Architecture. Documents and histories.

Cardoso, F, Et al.

EDUCATION & PROJECTS

2017.

"Dear Peter Russell".
Open letter architecture affinity group of TU Delft Feminists.

2020.

Women's studies back in the spotlight.

2022.

Founding The Centre for the Just City.
Dedicated to pursuing social justice through the lens of urban development.

2022.

Feminist assembly month, Het Nieuwe Instituut.

2023.

IACG Conference.
"Transferring Otherwise" paper.

2024.

FEM.DES.
Network of committed to the principles of gender equality, advocating for equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for all individuals, regardless theri gender identity.

2024.

Feminist assembly at IABR practice place.

2024.

Launch website Gebouwen Door Vrouwen.

2025.

Graduation cluster: Designing With Feminist Values.

Men X Feminism.
Navigate discomfort, responsibility and growth in plural.
BK Feminist Week 2025.

2026.

BK Feminist Week 2026.

SOCIETY

2020.

COVID-19

2020.

COVID-19

2020.

Murder of Brianna Taylor "Say-her name"

2024.

Re-election of Donald Trump

2025.

Activist group 'Dolle Mina' was re-founded.

2025.

Wij Eisen De Nacht Op
In response to several femicides in a short period of time, the campaign We Claim The Night was founded.

2026.

Feminist march in Amsterdam

IMPACT TIMELINE

Reproducing this timeline in my thesis is a methodological and political choice. As the collective mapping process from 2025 made clear, a significant portion of feminist spatial history is hidden or only accessible to those who already know where to look, it is a wake-up call about how much has been erased from the mainstream narrative of urban design. For my project, the timeline exposes the gap between what has been designed and what has been known: that spatial practice has long operated through a particular lens, while resistance and contestation were always present, just rarely made visible.

As a designer, this timeline grounds my own position. It reminds me that I do not enter this project from a neutral standpoint, and that the strategies I develop are built upon a lineage of feminist thought and action in the built environment. By including it here, I am situating myself within an ongoing, collective project of knowledge-building, one I hope this thesis contributes to in a meaningful way.

Images of the full exhibiton in the BK faculty library corridor are found in the Appendix,

00.3 Glossary

Definitions

Division of Labour
Refers to the way each society divides work among men and women, boys and girls, according to socially-established gender roles or what is considered suitable and valuable for each sex (United Nations, n.d.).

Gender
Gender as social category tries to overcome the individual and essentialist perspective while emphasising the social construction and societal embeddedness of gender. Gender perspectives address gender relations in their historical, societal and cultural context (Zibell. Et al, 2019).

Gender mainstreaming
The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." (UN Women, n.d.)

Intersectional feminism
Intersectional feminism is a form of feminism based on the premise that everyone experiences differences based on factors such as skin colour, age and class, and that the combination of these differences creates structural advantages or disadvantages (Happel & Willems, 2021).

NewTown
Cities or towns that are designed from scratch and built in a short period of time. They are designed by professionals according to a Master Plan on a site where there was no city before. This distuinguishes a New Town from a 'normal' city that gradually grows and evolves over time. Also, New Towns are mostly the result of a political (top-down) decision (INTI, n.d.).

Opportunity structures
The framework of socially structured means and rules available for a social group to achieve its aims and interests, which are culturally defined and oriented toward social success (Latorre-Catalén, 2017).
Opportunity structures are manifested in urban morphology, where urban form influences who gets access to what opportunities and determine what an individual can realistically achieve (Galster and Sharkey, 2017).

Patriarchy
A social system in which men structurally have more power and privileges than women and gender-diverse individuals. This system operates at the political, economic, cultural and relational levels (Dolle Mina, 2026).

Hegemonic paradigm
Refers to the dominant, often unquestioned, intellectual and political frameworks that structure societal understanding and action, particularly concerning economic activity and resource use. These governing structures dictate acceptable limits of debate and policy, frequently prioritizing neoliberal growth models over ecological regeneration and social justice. They maintain the status quo by normalizing unsustainable practices (Sustainability directory n.d.).

In 1917, Grada Wolffensperger (1887–1965) became the first woman to complete a university degree in architecture at Delft University of Technology (named TH Delft back then). She was deputy architect at the Public Works Department of the municipality of Haarlem for several years. Nothing is known about her work there or in her later life, which is why she has been forgotten in history.



Figure 04 Grada Wolffensperger in 1917 (den Boer, 1917)


DE VEREENIGING
VOOR VOORTGEZET EN HOOGER BOUWKUNSTONDERRICHT
HEEFT AAN MEJUFFROUW J. F. KEEGSTRA, AMSTERDAM DIT

DIPLOMA

VAN HAREN CURSUS TOEGEKEND, ALS EEN ONDERSCHEIDING
AAN HET EINDE VAN DEN VIERJARIGEN STUDIETIJD 1931—1935
WELKE STUDIE DOOR HEM MET UITSTEKENDEN UITSLAG
IS GEVOLGD. DIT GETUIGSCHRIFT IS HEM OP DEN 15DEN FE-
BRUARI 1936 IN TEGENWOORDIGHEID VAN DEN RAAD VAN
TOEZICHT PLECHTIG UITGEREIKT.

DE RAAD VAN TOEZICHT

HET BESTUUR VAN DE VEREENIGING VOOR VOORTGEZET EN HOOGER BOUWKUNSTONDERRICHT

VOORZITTER SECRETARIS

Figure 05 VHBO-Diploma for Koos Keegstra (f) in 1927 (Collection Het nieuwe instituut, Rotterdam)

Unfortunately, in the first decades the diplomas had not yet been changed to be received by women.

01 A FEMALE CONTEXT

This chapter provides the context and framework for the research. It opens by situating urban form within gendered power relations, before examining how women's opportunities are constrained by spatial design and identifying young professional women in Almere as the focus group. The case study context is introduced at multiple scales, followed by an analysis of today's societal and academic challenges, the research aim and questions, and the methods used. The chapter concludes with the theoretical positioning that informs the analysis in the chapters that follow.

01 A FEMALE CONTEXT
.1 Setting the scene
.2 Constraining women's opportunities
.3 Young professional women in the city
.4 Case study Almere
.5 Challenge Today
.6 Reimagining strategies
.7 Research questions
.8 Methods
.9 Theoretical positioning

01.1 Setting the scene

The city as decor

Urban form is often presented as a relatively neutral technical outcome of rational decision-making. However, critical urban theory has long challenged this assumption, by arguing that space is socially produced and deeply embedded in power relations, including those related to gender (Massey, 1994).

As Massey (1994) emphasises, space is not a passive decor to the scenes of social life, but an active member of it, shaped by and shaping social relations.

Urban morphology, is the study of the form and structure of human settlements and their transformation over time. Which provides the spatial framework for reading these power relations, revealing how past decisions and norms become embedded in the built environment (Moudon, 1997). Similarly, Zibell et al. (2019) describes space as the physical and social framework for all human action and existence, highlighting that the spatial layout structures everyday practices, opportunities, and constraints. Meaning that decisions about who is able to act as a decision-maker and who must accept decisions made by others about spatial dimensions are therefore inseparable from cultural norms, political structures, economic hierarchies, and gender relations (Zibell et al., 2019). With this lens, it becomes clear that urban form does not merely reflect society, but actively participates in the reproduction of social norms and inequalities (figure 06). And cities cannot be understood as neutral environments.

Priority shapes the city of a male world

These figures are not incidental, they reflect a discipline that has historically centred the male body and experience as its default, producing cities that prioritise certain bodies, movements and ways of life over others. Central to this is the body, inseparable from urban form, is the physical dimension where designed spaces express how they operate, where lived experience unfolds, and where identity, history and space come together. Cities matter for social change because their material forms (housing layouts, buildings, streets, networks) shape the range of possibilities available to individuals and groups. Although stone, brick, glass and concrete are not consciously designed to uphold patriarchal systems, their configurations influence how people move, behave and interact (Boys et al., 1984).



Figure 06 Effects of the patriarchal built environment (Boys et al., 1984)

Over time, repeated engagement with urban environments shapes embodied practices, including posture, movement, gestures and emotional responses, reinforcing certain patterns of behaviour (Kern, 2020). This prioritisation is unsurprising given the persistent inequality within the spatial design discipline itself.

Cities are still predominantly designed and built by men. In 2021, only 32% of urban planners and 23% of registered architects were women (Architectenregister, 2021).

The built environment is therefore not only a product of gendered assumptions about how life is lived, but also of a profession that has yet to fully include the people most affected by its decisions.

An intersectional lens

Understanding why some women experience more spatial limitations than others requires an intersectional lens. This research draws on the theory of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), which builds on a longer tradition of Black feminism.

''Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects'' (Crenshaw, 2017).

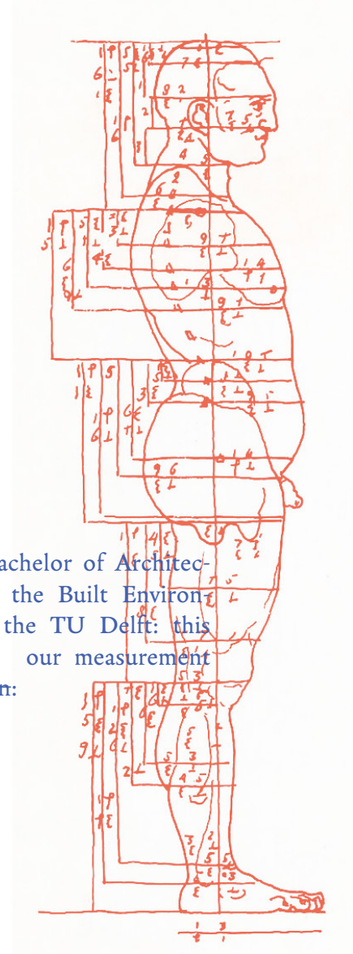
Intersectionality refers to the interaction and combined effects of different forms of discrimination in daily life, especially in relation to women of colour. It provides a framework for understanding how dimensions of identity (such as race, gender, class and sexuality) interrelate to shape unequal experiences of privilege and disadvantage, in ways that could not be understood through traditional understandings of discrimination alone (Crenshaw, 1989). Today, intersectionality shows how different forms of inequality operate together and aggravate each other. Where we tend to separate inequalities from each other, some people are subject to more than one or to all – and the experience that comes along is not simply a combination of separate components (Steinmetz, 2020).

This is important because it helps to understand why some women experience more limitations than others (Crenshaw, 1989). It not only focuses on gender, but on all systems that cause inequality: racism, colonial inheritance, classism, ableism and transphobia. Within the spatial design discipline this makes it essential to reflect on our own position and listen to the experiences of those who face boundaries we may not (Dolle Mina, 2026), as spatial arrangements actively produce and reproduce oppression (Young, 1990).

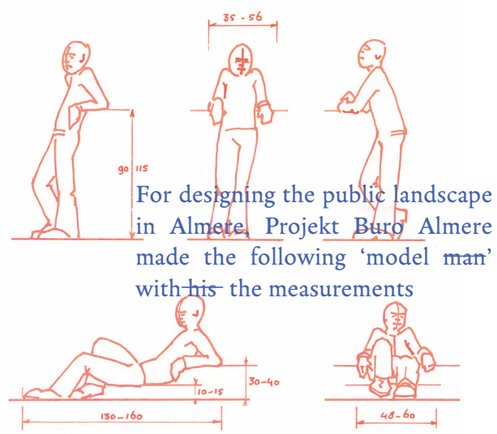
The male practice affects inequality for women disproportionally

Hayden (1980) argument relates to this, arguing that urban environments are shaped by an ideology centred on the 'ideal worker', who is assumed to be fully available for paid labour and almost free from caregiving responsibilities. This ideal figure implicitly informs decisions regarding public space, mobility infrastructure, workplace locations and housing design (figure 08). As the man in figure 07, who is the model for human scale within the design discipline from the book "De Menselijke Maat", that is still used as a baseline for human dimensions, also in the Architecture programme of the TU Delft. Kern (2020) adds to this critique, demonstrating how dominant urban design paradigms privilege certain bodies while marginalising those whose lives involve care work, part-time employment or complex daily routines. This manifests across both the qualities of urban space, its physical organisation, connectivity and density, and the qualities in urban space: the everyday experiences of safety, comfort and belonging that these configurations produce (Mehta, 2014). As a result, women's experiences of safety, harassment, caregiving and reproductive labour are systematically excluded from mainstream urban design practices. These spatial dynamics intersect with broader socio-economic inequalities affecting women. As Crenshaw observes, gender inequality frequently manifests as material differences in living conditions, including persistent wage gaps and unequal access to economic resources. Over time, these disparities build up, contributing to the feminisation of poverty, where by life circumstances such as childcare, divorce or illness affect women disproportionately.. These effects are intensified when combined with other inequality-producing structures, such as race or class (Steinmetz, 2020).

Urban space plays an important role in shaping these outcomes, as access to employment, services and support networks is determined by spatial organisation.



In the Bachelor of Architecture and the Built Environment at the TU Delft: this has been our measurement modelman:



For designing the public landscape in Almere, Projekt Buro Almere made the following 'model ~~man~~' with ~~his~~ the measurements

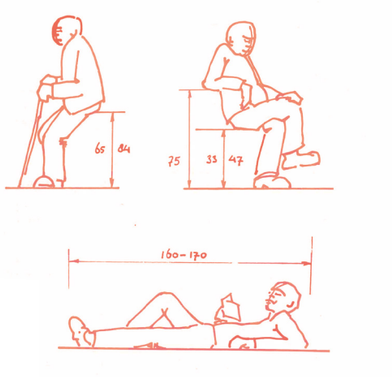


Figure 07 The male scale (Haak & Leever-van der Burg, 1980)

Figure 08 The huMAN scale, used for designing Almere's public space (Maakschalkerwaart, 1975)

Females are working part-time to care

In the Netherlands, these dynamics are reflected in persistent gender inequalities. Despite decades of change, policy efforts, equal opportunities and treatment for women remain far from achieved. The Netherlands currently ranks 43rd on the Global Gender Gap Index, and it is expected that it will take more than 150 years to close this gap at the current pace (WomenInc, 2025). This also shows in the numbers of women's participation in the working population, as shown in figure 08, women are working more part-time than men, although they do want to work more.

Figure 10 shows the most important reasons for women to work part-time. Which are performing domestic tasks and/including grocery shopping (important 36%, plays a role 47%). Right behind are care-taking tasks for (grand)children (important 35%, plays a role 15%), time for themselves (important 28%, plays a role 50%) and informal care (important 7%, plays a role 24%) (SCP, 2020)

Research shows that women's ability to participate in paid work is significantly shaped by domestic and caregiving responsibilities (figure 10 & 11). A substantial proportion of women work part-time due to household tasks, childcare, informal care, and the need to balance multiple roles (SCP, 2020) (figure 11). This indicates that spatial and temporal structures of daily life continue to contribute to constrain women's opportunities for full participation in society.

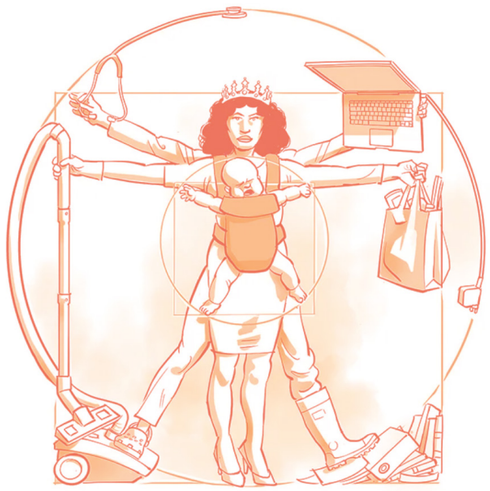
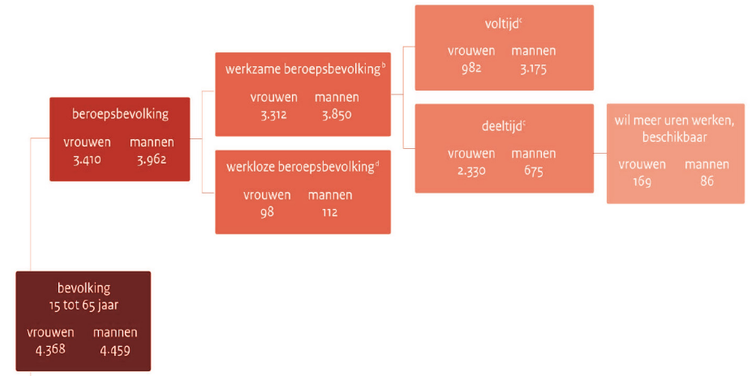
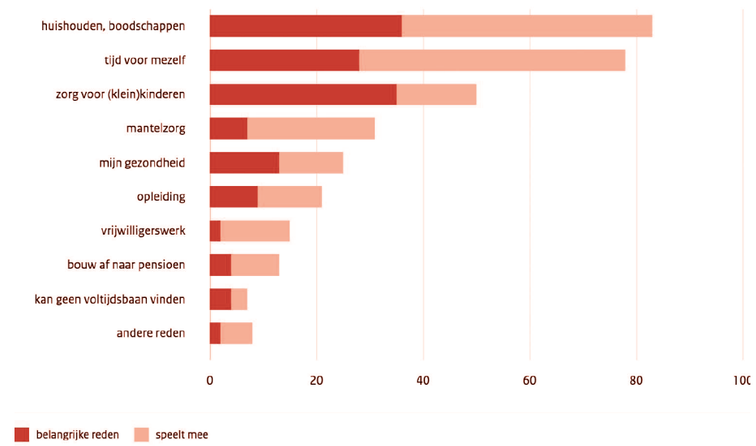
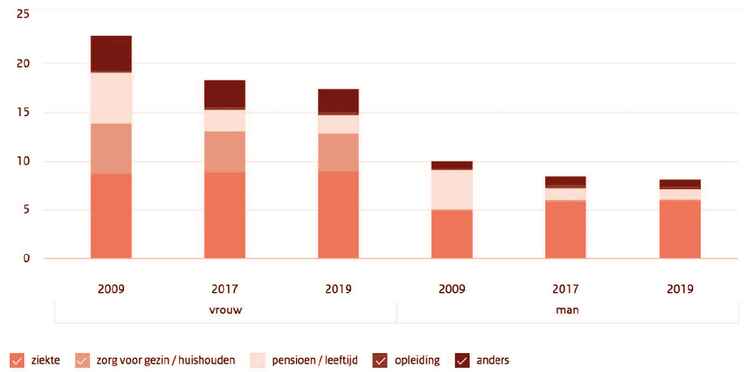


Figure 11 Reasons not to work, people not in education of 15-64 years, 2009, 2017, 2019 (percentages) (CBS, 2009, 2017, 2019; van den Brakel et al., 2020)

Figure 12 Women working part-time have an important role in society, 'The Part-Time Princess' (Merens, A. Et all, 2024)





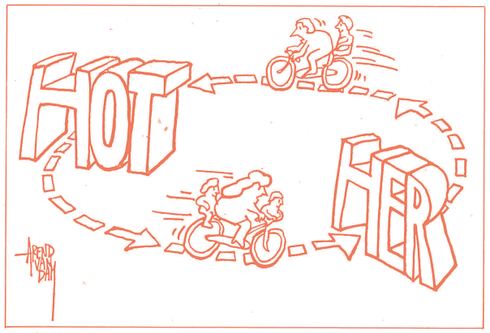


Enabling women with urban design

Urban form plays a key role in these constraints. Studies have shown that when housing is spatially separated from employment and services, environments reinforce women's unpaid labour and limit their mobility (Hayden, 1980; figure 13 & 15). The spatial logic of the city reinforces social hierarchy and inequality, including gender inequality. As it prioritizes certain ways of living while marginalising others (Massey, 1994). While urban design alone cannot change the broader social systems, it is able to influence the distribution of opportunities and the degree to which cities enable or constrain more just and equal participation.
Alternative approaches to urbanism have long emphasised the value of everyday life, care networks, and social interaction. For example, Jane Jacobs (1961) promoted the idea of dense, mixed-use neighbourhoods that promote diversity, safety, and social cohesion through everyday street-level activity. And today, James (2021) argues that girls are the indicators of the public space, where girls and women are playing and staying, it is a liveable and safe place. By creating a more broad view on public space, involving and listening more to females and including the social layer in the physical design, bringing accompanied amenities and property, it can become a space where more people experience a sense of belonging (figure 14).

Women have different mobility patterns

Beyond the role of public space itself, the daily networks that connect these spaces are equally significant. According to the World Economic Forum (2020) and shown in figure 16, female mobility is characterised by patterns that differ substantially from those upon which mainstream transport systems have been built. Women tend to cover a smaller geographic range than their male peers within the same travel time, more frequently they travel with others, and are more likely to carry luggage. They rely more heavily on public transport, with the private car less often serving as their default mode of travel. These differences are further compounded by the tendency to make multiple stops throughout the day, such as grocery shopping, commuting to work, or dropping off children, while facing greater time constraints than their male counterparts. As a result, women's mobility is distinctly characterised by trip-chaining and time poverty. Women also travel more frequently during off-peak hours and place a higher value on flexibility, convenience, and safety, which influences both their choice of route and their travel behaviour across different times of day and night. As Bellmann, Ypma, and Polack (2020) argue, better aligning mobility systems with women's travel patterns (integrating both paid and unpaid labour) would ultimately lead to broader benefits for all users.



Het combineren van taken moet eenvoudiger worden.





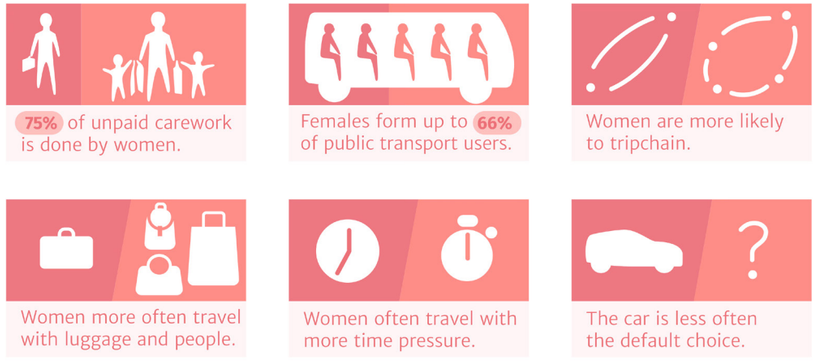


Figure 13 Always rushing 'from one thing to another' (Provincie Zuid-Holland, 1998)

Figure 14 'Prefer to be involved at an early stage of the planning process' (Provincie Zuid-Holland, 1998)

Figure 15 An exhausted woman: 'Can we keep it central?!' (Provincie Zuid-Holland, 1998)

Figure 16 Different mobility patterns (Bellmann, Ypma, and Polack, 2020)

Safety

In the Netherlands, 45% of women feel unsafe after dark and structurally adapt their behaviour as a result. Avoiding certain places, changing routes and limiting their presence in public space. 73% of women have experienced some form of sexual intimidation or violence in public (WomenInc, n.d.). These figures reflect how urban environments have been designed without accounting for women's safety as a baseline condition.
The spatial dimensions of safety in Almere specifically will be examined in chapter 03.

Spatial manifestation of prioritizing males in Almere

The issues discussed above become visible in the context of Dutch New Towns, developed during the brief period of left-leaning, progressive politics of the 1970s in response to the housing shortage. The New Towns were supposed to become bundled decentralisations alongside their 'mother cities', and were allowed to grow rapidly (figure 17; INTI, n.d.). While they emerged during a period of progressive ideologies and women's emancipation, their planning and design remained largely grounded in gendered assumptions about household structures and daily life (Hayden, 1980).
Almere, one of the largest Dutch New Towns, exemplifies these tensions. Initially conceived within an experimental environment, made possible by the blank canvas of the Flevopolder, the city was primarily developed to provide the single-family homes Amsterdam needed. But New Towns lost political attention quickly with the renewed interest in historical cities, and by the 1990s Almere was increasingly characterised as mono-functional, low-density: a "sleeping city" with limited employment and housing differentiation (Provoost, 2022).
After fifty years, Almere remains an unfinished urban project: a city that began as an experiment but continues to prioritise traditional household models and standard working patterns. Today it also faces new challenges, including demographic change, ageing populations, shifting household structures, and demands for improved infrastructure and social services (INTI, n.d.).

Yet its origins as a city of experimentation offer a unique opportunity, to rethink urban form and imagine spatial configurations that better support opportunities for women.

Almere and its current context will be further explained in 1.6 'Casestudy Almere' and its historic image with her political context will be deepened in chapter 02.1 'Historic design values of Almere'.

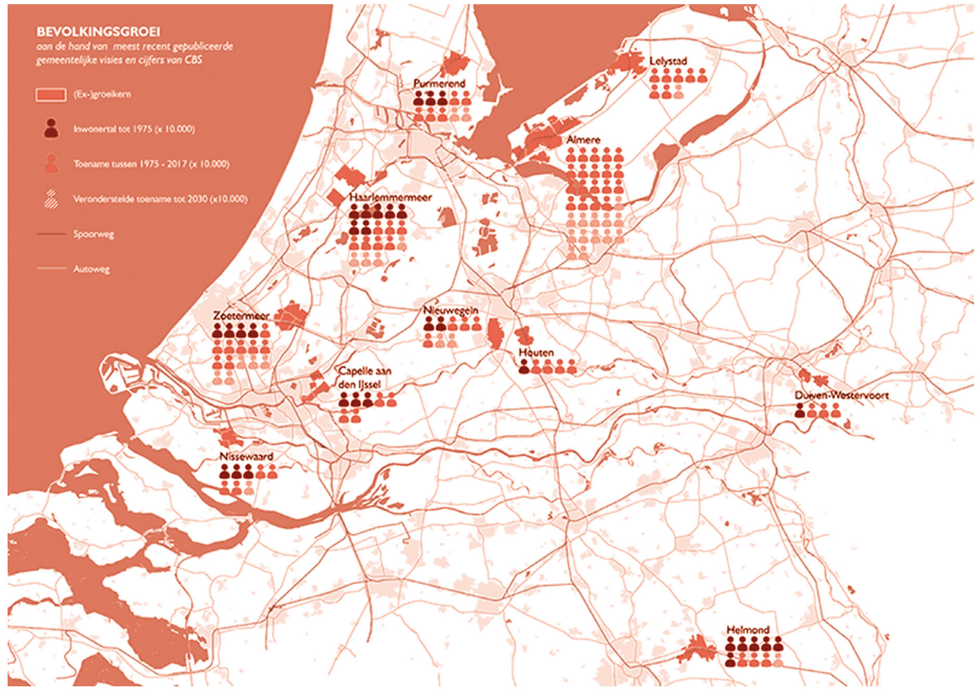


Figure 17 Groeikernsteden (INTI, n.d.;CBS)

Urban form is not a neutral outcome of planning and design, but is shaped by social norms and power relations that privilege certain bodies, behaviours and ways of life over others (Massey, 1994). Feminist urban studies have shown that the most common urban design approaches are still based on assumptions about traditional gender roles, particularly the idea of a working man supported by a woman acting as the main caregiver within a nuclear family structure (Hayden, 1980; Kern, 2020). These assumptions are embedded in housing layouts, typologies, zoning practices and mobility systems, thereby supporting the separation between public and private spaces, and reinforcing unequal access to work, care and public life. Consequently, urban environments tend to prioritise linear work patterns and uninterrupted mobility, marginalising the everyday spatial requirements associated with caregiving, part-time employment, and various household configurations (Kern, 2020).

Although women's emancipation movements gained momentum during the period in which Dutch New Towns were developed, the planning and design of these cities resulted in mono-functional, low-density environments dependent on commuting and unpaid domestic labour – spatial conditions that continue to constrain women's access to work, care and public life today. The result is a city that not only fails to support the everyday realities of young professional women, but actively reproduces the inequalities embedded in its founding planning principles. Almere has yet to evolve into a city designed to increase women's opportunities.

"Almere has yet to evolve into a city
designed to increase women's opportunities."

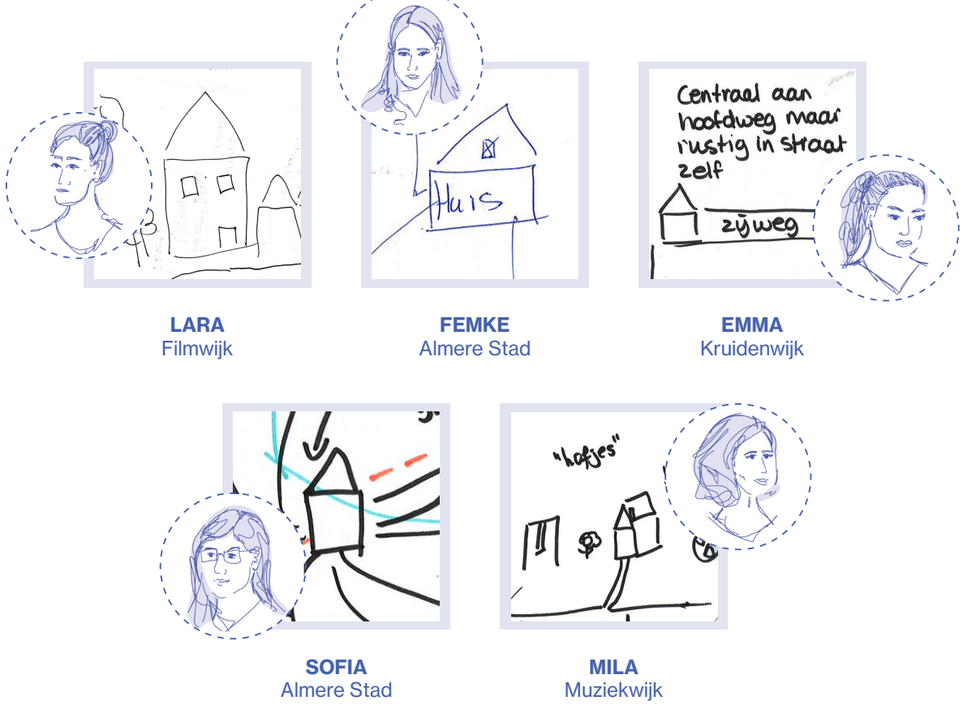
Within this project the focus will be on the group of **young professional women in Almere**, a group whose spatial conditions this research is directly positioned within. Women are defined here as people who identify themselves as women.

Focus group
The focus group targets women aged approximately 20 to 35 who have completed a professional education and are at the beginning of their careers. According to CBS 2024 data, Almere is home to approximately 114,197 women, of whom an estimated 47,488 (around 41.6%) fall within the 15 to 45 age category, representing the primary working-age group. Within this group, the 25 to 45 year age category alone accounts for approximately 33,509 women, making it the single largest age category in the city and confirming that young professional women form a substantial and demographically significant group within Almere's population.

Life phase
During this life phase, women are navigating a period of significant transitions and decision-making. They may be searching for their first job or moving into a second, living alone, with roommates or with a partner, renting or buying their first home, starting a family or following a completely different life path.

Spatial concentration
The neighbourhood comparison data from this research shows that this age group is particularly concentrated in Centrum Almere Stad, where approximately 56% of residents fall within the 15 to 45 age category, significantly higher than in residential neighbourhoods like Stedenwijk and Filmwijk where the same group is found at around 40%. This spatial concentration of young women near the city centre, where commercial amenities and scaled businesses are most available, suggests that proximity to opportunity already shapes where young professional women choose to live within the city.
This research aims to cover a range of opportunities, backgrounds and life paths within the focus group, avoiding a singular or normative definition of what a young professional woman's life looks like. This group is particularly relevant in terms of future urban scenarios, standing at the beginning of multiple life phases. Their needs, constraints and aspirations will evolve significantly over time, making them a valuable lens through which to evaluate both current urban conditions and the long-term consequences of planning decisions for women's spatial, social and economic participation in Almere.

Five young professional women
To ground this research in lived experience, five young professional women living in different neighbourhoods across Almere are introduced (figure 18). Lara, Femke, Emma, Sofia and Mila each represent a different life situation, household configuration and daily routine. Together they illustrate a range of diverse experiences that shape women's relationship to the city. Their stories will return throughout the research as a lens through which spatial conditions are evaluated.



LARA
Filmwijk

FEMKE
Almere Stad

EMMA
Kruidenwijk

SOFIA
Almere Stad

MILA
Muziekwijk

Figure 18 5 Young professional women living in Almere

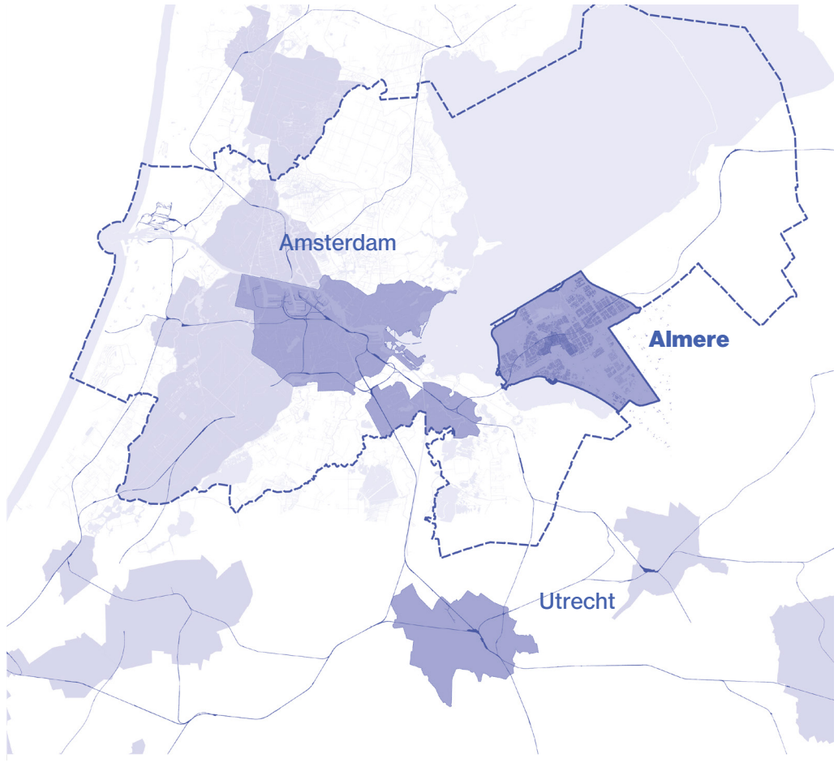
Almere is a city built on new land in the center of The Netherlands, reclaimed from the IJsselmeer roughly fifty years ago (figure 20). Its different neighbourhoods were designed at different times, by different designers, each carrying their own values, ideals and spatial approaches. This makes Almere an exceptional case study: a city where the relationship between time, spatial form and societal conditions is uniquely legible (figure 19).

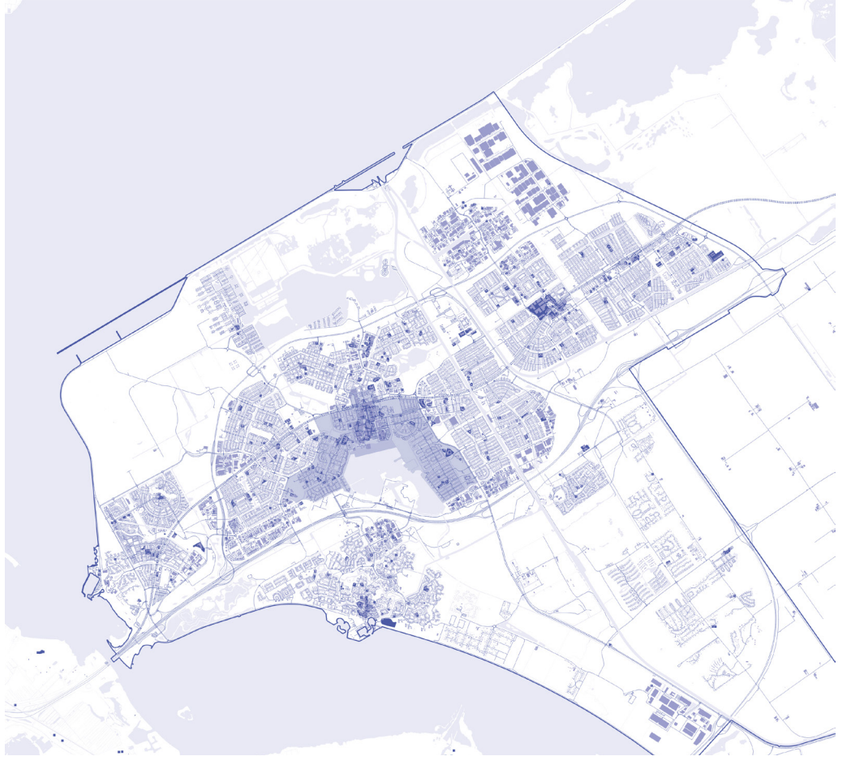


Figure 19 Postcard from Almere with its complex identity (lecanard, 2023)



Figure 20 Almere in the Netherlands (OSM, 2026)





Geographically positioned at the heart of the Netherlands and within the Metropoolregio Amsterdam, Almere's location is central to understanding its identity as a commuter city, closely connected to Amsterdam and Utrecht, yet spatially and socially distinct from them (figure 21).

Almere in the MRA
- Boundaries of the MRA
- Municipality of Amsterdam and Utrecht
- Municipalities with + 100 000 inh
- Municipality of Almere
- Traintracks
- Built environment
- Water

1:300 000

Moving from the national scale to the metropolitan region and down to the city itself, the following maps trace Almere's position and connections before zooming into the neighbourhoods of Stedenwijk, Filmwijk and the city centre (figure 22). These neighbourhoods form the focus area within which this research is grounded.

Almere and focus areas
- Municipality of Almere
- Built environment
- Focus area (Stedenwijk, Almere Stad Centre, Filmwijk)
- Water
- Car infrastructure
- Train infrastructure
- Busnetwork
- Amenities

1: 50 000

Figure 21 Almere in the MRA (OSM, 2026)

Figure 22 Almere and focus areas (OSM, 2026)

Societal relevance

The integrated gender roles in urban form continue to shape contemporary urban life, creating spatial and social barriers for women while maintaining unequal access to work, care and public spaces (Kern, 2020). Although there has been significant emancipation and change of social norms, gender equality remains far from being achieved. In the Netherlands, women still earn less while doing the same job as men, experience discrimination on the job market and work part-time far more often, largely due to unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, despite the fact that many of them would like to work more (figure 27, 28; FNV, n.d.; WomenInc, n.d.). These patterns are normalised through persistent elements of the 'breadwinner' model embedded in today's work culture and the organisation of urban form. Movements such as the 'Recht op de Nacht' (figure 26) protests of 2025 demonstrate that women's right to fully inhabit the city, day and night, remains unresolved.

Academic relevance

Beyond its societal urgency, this project addresses a gap in academic research. The feminist agenda is increasingly being co-opted through 'carewashing', where gender-sensitive language is used for branding purposes rather than as a commitment to structural change (figure 29; Bassam, 2025). More broadly, the application of intersectionality and gendered power relations to the practice of urban design is frequently superficial. Feminist principles are often simplified into technical solutions, such as increased lighting or extra surveillance, which fail to address fundamental issues of power, decision-making processes, and the experiences that shape urban spaces. Together forming a gap between critical feminist theory and spatial design methodologies (Koekoek & Bassam, 2025).

This thesis addresses these issues by critically examining how the urban form of Almere can be reimagined through lived experience, opportunity structures and spatial strategies for women, rather than as a symbolic gesture of inclusion and safety.

> ''The future of feminist cities that we have been working towards for years now lies not in surface-level fixes, but in reclaiming feminist urbanism as a collective, political, and justice-driven movement–one that challenges capitalism, patriarchy, and all forms of domination embedded in the built environment.'' (Bassam, 2025)

Figure 23 'The city is built by and for the man - the women feels safer with a busstop next to the cafe' (Vié, 2025)

Figure 24 'The street is from everyone' (Goes, 1988)

Figure 25 Budget cuts of the government (Rutgers, 2025)

Figure 26 'We claim the night' (Wij eisen de Nacht op, n.d.)

Figure 27 'Work and care equally divided' (WomenInc, n.d.)

Figure 28 'Do we want more babies? Then then we need to offer mothers better prospects' (Zwiers, 2024)

Figure 29 Selling the gendered city (Bassam, 2025)


10 Info PvdA Rotterdam

'Sociale veiligheid' steeds meer in de belangstelling

De straat is van iedereen

Als we het hebben over Openbare Orde, kunnen we sociale veiligheid niet over het hoofd zien. Op het gebied van Ruimtelijke Ordening kunnen er maatregelen worden genomen die preventief werken op een veilige omgeving, zegt Marion Goes, lid van het bestuur van de Rooie Vrouwen Rotterdam.

De stad is gebouwd voor en door de man - de vrouw voelt zich met een bushalte naast het café een stuk veiliger

Veilige steden Steden in Nederland zijn vooral gebouwd met mannen in het achterhoofd, zeggen deskundigen al decennia. Hoe (on)veilig vrouwen en minderheden zich voelen, telt vaak niet mee. Oplossingen zijn relatief simpel, toont een rondje rond Utrecht Centraal met stedenbouwkundige Nourhan Bassam.





Willen we meer baby's? Dan moeten we moeders betere carrièrevooruitzichten bieden

Geboortepolitiek Er worden steeds minder kinderen geboren. Data tonen dat de kosten van kinderen krijgen voor vrouwen vaak te hoog zijn, stelt *Esmée Zwiers*.



01.6 Reimagining strategies

This research aims to develop spatial strategies that reconfigure the dominant urban design paradigms in Almere, with the goal of achieving greater gender equality. Central to this project is recognising that existing urban design approaches do not properly reflect the everyday lives of women. By combining feminist and opportunity theory with women's lived experiences, the project aims to identify opportunity structures that can be translated into spatial patterns. The intended outcome is a set of design principles and spatial strategies that will contribute towards more inclusive urban environments in Almere.





Figure 30 A feminist group, de Dolle Mina's demonstrate for the right to birth control and the right to abortion 'Boss of my own belly' (Herschel, 1970)

Main research question:

How can dominant urban design paradigms in Almere be transformed through the implementation of opportunity structures for young professional women in order to contribute to greater gender equality?

Subquestion 1 Opportunity structures
What are opportunity structures for young professional women within a feminist framework?

Subquestion 2 Historical influence on spatial design
How are the dominant urban paradigms embedded within Almere's multi-scalar urban design?

Subquestion 3 Impact on women
How do existing urban design paradigms in Almere impact young professional women's access to social, economic and spatial opportunities?

Subquestion 4 Translation into spatial strategies
Through what spatial strategies and design interventions can Almere embed opportunity structures for young professional women?

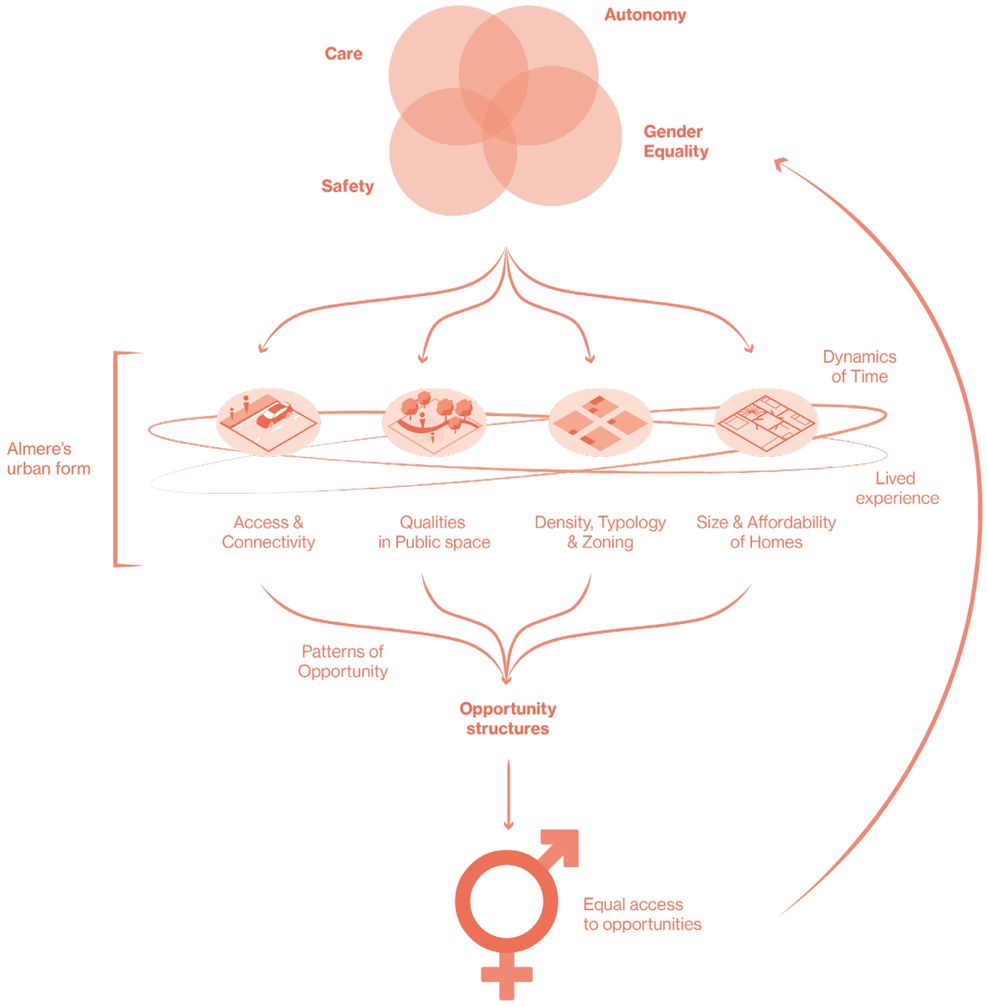
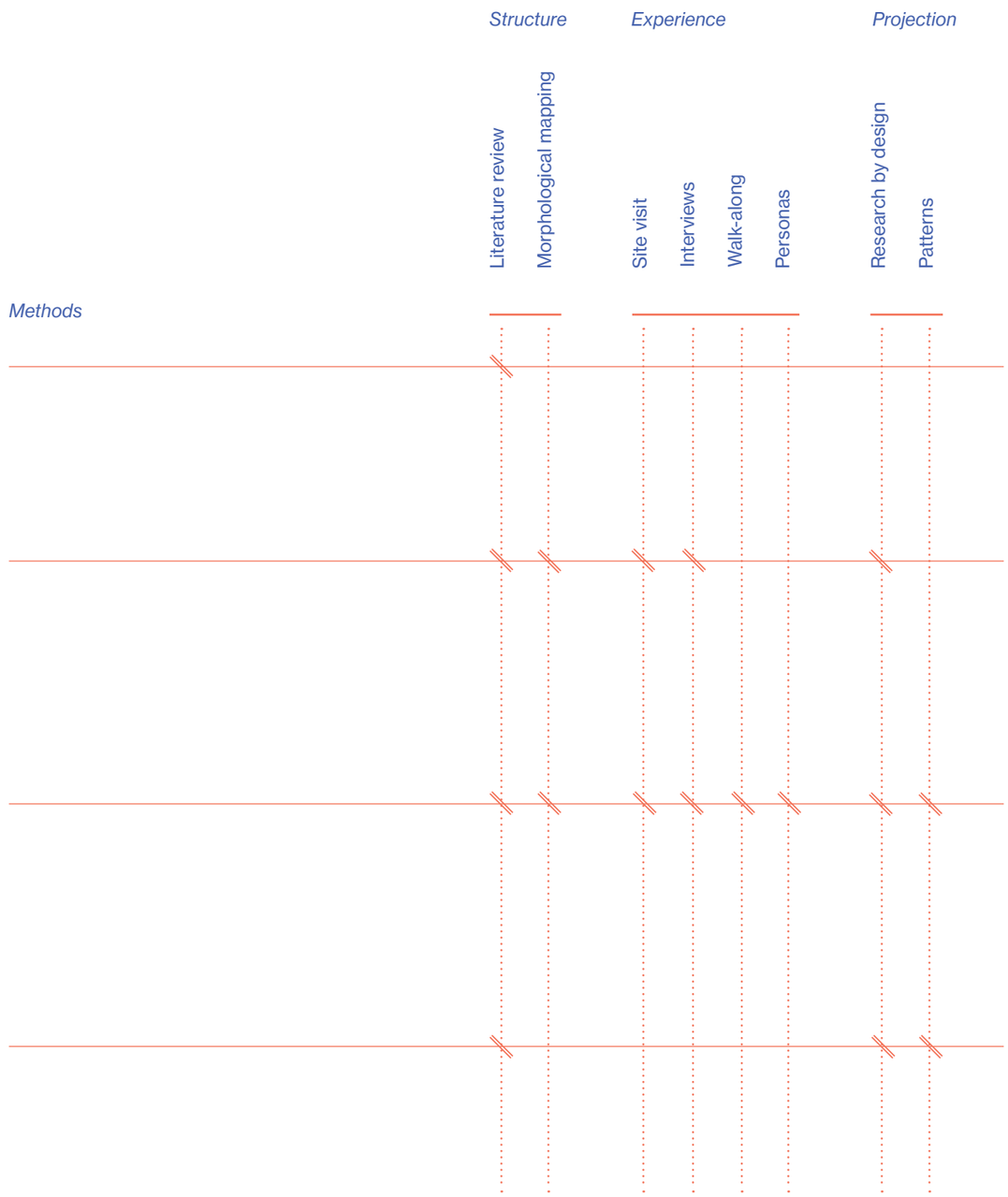


Figure 31 Conceptual framework (Made by Author, 2026)

Main research question:

How can dominant urban design paradigms in Almere be transformed through the implementation of opportunity structures for young professional women in order to contribute to greater gender equality?



Subquestions	*Aim*	*Intended outcome*
1 Opportunity structures What are opportunity structures for young professional women within a feminist framework?	To understand what structures create opportunities for women within an intersectional framework.	An overview of spatial and intersectional elements that enable opportunities for women within the urban form.
2 Historical influence on spatial design How are the dominant urban paradigms embedded within Almere's multi-scalar urban design?	To understand the growth structures and choices of Almere's urban design, the rhythm of the planning over the years, combined with the zeitgeist.	An overview of maps from the beginning of Almere's planning until their future plans, which highlight important design values, principles, and female practices at various times and at different scales. Additionally, main structural elements within the plans that were important for or during the development of Almere are highlighted.
3 Impact on women How do existing urban design paradigms in Almere impact young professional women's access to social, economic and spatial opportunities?	To understand the influence of the urban design paradigm in Almere on women's access to opportunities within the social, economic and spatial domain.	A combination of theoretical research and empirical data that illustrates how women's lived experiences shape their daily routines. This is explored through go-along mapping with female residents, integrating spatial routes with personal narratives about neighbourhoods, everyday destinations, and places perceived as welcoming or unsafe.
4 Translation into spatial strategies Through what spatial strategies and design interventions can Almere embed opportunity structures for young professional women?	To understand how the intersectional opportunity structures can be translated into spatial strategies and how they can be applied to the situation in Almere.	A research-by-design exploration that demonstrates how spatial patterns can be applied to different situations and scales in Almere. The different spatial patterns will be combined in a pattern-book.

Structure
These methods provide a framework of socio-political and spatial context, forming the theoretical and historical foundation of the research.

Literature review
This thesis is based on an analysis of literature that provides the necessary theoretical and scientific context for understanding opportunity structures and gendered urban form. Used throughout the project, it directly informs the feminist and spatial theoretical framework developed in chapter 01 and grounds the analysis of Almere's urban development in chapter 02. APA7 citation style will be used for referencing.

Diachronic mapping
This involves analysing Almere's historic planning maps at different scales and approximately ten-year intervals, starting earlier than Almere's founding year, with plans from 1949, 1958–1961 and 1968. Applied in chapter 02, this method reveals how shifts in planning ideologies and spatial priorities over time have embedded gendered assumptions into Almere's urban structure.

Morphological mapping
Drawing on James Corner's mapping theory (1999), morphological mapping is used to analyse the spatial structure of Almere by revealing patterns, relationships and potential within the urban form. Applied across chapters 02 and 03, mapping functions as a tool for interpretation and projection, connecting historical spatial analysis to the lived experiences of women in Almere today.

Experience
These methods are subjectively based and grounded in human experience, forming the empirical core of chapter 03.

Site visit
Site visits involve repeated observations and informal participation in Almere's neighbourhoods, with the aim of developing a contextual understanding of spatial identities, amenities, mobility hierarchies, typologies and everyday flows. As the research narrows its focus, regular visits provide insight into how urban spaces are actually used, supporting both the spatial analysis in chapter 02 and the lived experience research in chapter 03.

Structured interviews
Used in chapter 03, this method explores how stakeholders are involved in the hegemonic design paradigm and what their future plans are. The interviews complement spatial analysis and mapping, helping to reveal how urban form influences women's opportunities and constraints from an institutional perspective.

Walk-along
The walk-along method is used in chapter 03 to explore how urban space shapes everyday life for women aged 18–35 from diverse backgrounds and living situations. As a combination of participant observation and in-depth interviewing, it captures how places in their own neighbourhood influence daily routines, opportunities and constraints through personal interpretation. During the walk-alongs, participants are also asked to produce mental maps (sketched representations of their spatial experience and perception of the neighbourhood) which reveal how women mentally navigate, prioritise and avoid certain spaces in their daily lives. The full walk-along documentation and mental maps are compiled in the separate fieldwork logbook. Together these methods complement spatial analysis and mapping by revealing how urban form is experienced and negotiated in practice, directly addressing how existing urban design paradigms impact women's access to opportunities.

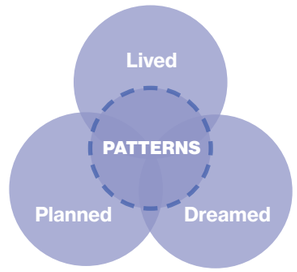
Personas
Personas are used across chapters 03 and 04 to illustrate the diverse experiences of young professional women. Based on empirical data, they use lived experiences to create profiles while ensuring anonymity, supporting both the translation of qualitative insights into design strategies and the evaluation of spatial interventions against real patterns of daily life.

Projection
These methods are used to combine findings from across the research and translate them into spatial strategies in chapter 04.

Space syntax
Used in chapters 02 and 03, this method analyses the spatial structure of Almere by examining the influence of street networks, connectivity and accessibility on movement and social behaviour patterns. It reveals how urban form shapes opportunities and constraints, as well as the distribution of activity within the city, providing an analytical spatial foundation for the design proposals in chapter 04.

Research-by-design
Applied in chapter 04, this approach analyses the historic plans of Almere in combination with their ideologies, and explores how spatial strategies and opportunity structures can be translated into the urban fabric. Through iterative design experiments, insights from theory, mapping and lived experience are realised, evaluated and refined in order to propose context-specific, tangible interventions.

Pattern language
Regularities identified across the research are defined as patterns and used in chapter 04 to develop recurring spatial strategies that translate lived experiences and opportunity structures into context-specific, transferable design tools. These patterns bring together the planned, lived and dreamed dimensions of the research, and may be combined into a larger pattern language.



Theoretical framework

To understand how urban form can be reconfigured to better support young professional women in Almere, this research builds on three interconnected bodies of knowledge. The first is spatial opportunity theory, drawing on Galster and Sharkey (2017) to understand how the physical organisation of the city determines what individuals can realistically achieve. The second is feminist urban theory, drawing on Hayden (1980), Kern (2020), Massey (1994), Young (1990) and Jacobs (1961) to understand how urban form has historically been shaped by gendered assumptions, and how it reproduces or can challenge social inequality. The third is urban morphology, drawing on Moudon (1997), Hillier and Hanson (1984) and Mehta (2014) to understand how spatial form, street networks and public space qualities shape everyday experience. These three bodies of knowledge are connected through an intersectional lens, informed by Crenshaw (1989), which ensures that the analysis attends to the overlapping and compounding inequalities that shape different women's relationships to urban space differently. Together they form the conceptual foundation from which the spatial analysis of Almere and the design proposals that follow are developed.

Spatial opportunity structures manifested in urban morphology

Spatial opportunity theory provides the first framework. Galster and Sharkey (2017) argue that the physical organisation of the city operates through two mechanisms: the 'mediator' and the 'modifier', each determining what individuals can realistically achieve.
Therefore, decisions about the location of a school, the width of a street, land use mix or the design of transportation networks have a structural influence on who gets access to what opportunity and determine what an individual can realistically achieve. Galster and Sharkey (2017) argue that spatial opportunity structures operate through two mechanisms: the 'mediator' and the 'modifier' (figure 32).
A spatial opportunity structure as mediator works between who you are and what you can achieve. An individual can have the same skills, qualifications and ambitions as any other, but when surrounded by different urban environments, this leads to different opportunities. For example, when an individual lives far from employment nodes and has limited access to transportation, their labour market prospects are lowered regardless of their qualifications. This is a direct outcome of the separation of functions that characterised twentieth-century planning. Where employment zones are not integrated within residential areas but occupy their own separated clusters, and where urban design organised around the private car systematically disadvantaged those without one. In Almere, these patterns remain embedded in the urban structure today.
A spatial opportunity structure as modifier actively shapes people's attributes, aspirations and behaviours through three elements. The first is environmental exposure, where the physical conditions of the built environment can directly impact one's cognitive and physical state. The second is the shaping of aspirations and perceived possibilities. The built environment shapes not just what people can do, but what they perceive as desirable or feasible. Social networks affect the quantity and quality of information available to an individual, and when those networks share similarly limited opportunity experiences, perceived possibilities shrink accordingly. The social environment of a neighbourhood is itself partly produced by its physical design and economic geography, shaping what residents aspire to and how they evaluate their options.
The third is the effect on caregivers and parents, which ultimately impacts children most directly. Caregivers adjust their parenting in response to their perceptions of the social and spatial context around them. In a neighbourhood perceived as unsafe, for example, boundaries are placed on children's outdoor activity, with consequences for social development, physical health and independence. Early disadvantage limits access to better spatial opportunity structures; limited spatial opportunity produces weaker attributes and credentials; and weaker credentials reduce future access to better spaces. A cycle that compounds across lifetimes and generations (Galster and Sharkey, 2017).

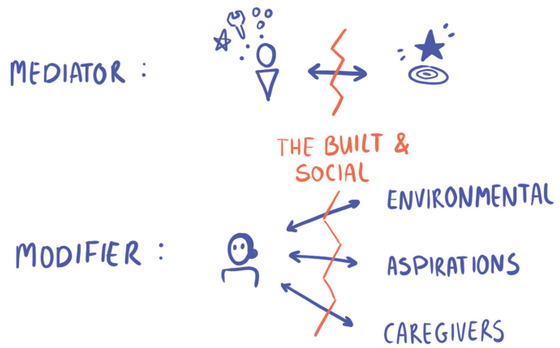


Figure 32 Mediator, modifier drawing (Made by Author, 2026)

Relational operation of urban morphology

Understanding how these opportunity structures manifest spatially requires examining the socio-spatial workings of urban morphology. This can be achieved by drawing on the theories of Jane Jacobs (1961), Dolores Hayden (1980), Iris Marion Young (1990), Doreen Massey (1994), Vikas Mehta (2014) and Leslie Kern (2020). Rather than viewing urban form as a neutral physical outcome of design and planning, this research considers it to be a manifestation of social power relations, including gendered norms and assumptions. The five sub-paragraphs that follow examine how urban morphology produces and reproduces unequal opportunity structures, with particular attention to the experiences of women:

1. Access and Connectivity;
2. Qualities in Public Space;
3. Density, Typology and Zoning;
4. Size and Affordability of Homes;
5. Dynamics of Time.

1. Access and Connectivity

The relationship between connectivity and social vitality is foundational to urban design theory, but it is not experienced equally across social groups (Jacobs, 1961; Hillier & Hanson, 1984). Massey (1994) introduces her concept of power geometry to explain that different social groups have radically different relationships to movement and to the flows that structure contemporary space. Different social groups initiate and control movement, others are on the receiving end of flows they did not shape, and others are effectively immobilised. Building on this, Kern (2020) argues that dominant urban design prioritises efficiency, speed, and productivity, norms aligned with masculine ideals, while women's experiences of care, safety, and vulnerability remain largely excluded from mainstream planning and design. This produces greater daily spatial constraints for women than for men, shaped by concerns about personal safety and the local availability of **part-time employment**. Occupational segregation is a central element of these day-to-day space-time constraints, implying that the **proximity of employment, childcare, retail, and public transport to residential areas** is a gender justice issue as much as a planning convenience (Pratt and Hanson, 1991).

These arguments demonstrate that connectivity does not automatically result in equal access for all users. However, Mehta's (2014) empirical research shows that when streets are embedded in **well-connected, mixed-use environments**, they can generate sustained social activity that makes public space safe and welcoming for the widest range of users , including those whose mobility is most constrained. This is supported by Jacobs' (1961) argument that **short city blocks** are essential to diverse and vital street life, generating the **pedestrian traffic** that sustains both social vitality and informal safety. These spatial qualities can be measured and applied through the methodology of space syntax, developed by Hillier and Hanson (1984), which analyses how the configurational properties of street networks (integration, connectivity, and depth) shape patterns of natural movement. High integration values correspond to streets most accessible from the widest range of other points in the network, and these tend to attract the greatest concentrations of **pedestrian activity** (Hillier, 1996). For women navigating the city with constrained mobility and heightened safety concerns, the degree of integration in their immediate environment directly conditions the range of opportunities available to them.

2. Qualities in public space

Access, as described above, is also one of Mehta's (2014) five interconnected dimensions of public space quality, referring to the ease with which diverse users can enter a space and make use of it. It is closely linked to the second dimension, **sociability**, which describes the degree to which a space enables and encourages interaction. Together, access and sociability can facilitate environments where people from different social backgrounds encounter one another without prior relationship and without having to adapt to a dominant norm (Young, 1990). This stimulates the third dimension, **activities**, defined by the range and intensity of uses that attract people to linger. The fourth dimension, **comfort**, encompasses the physical and psychological ease of occupying a space, and is closely connected to the **feeling of safety**. The fifth dimension, **meaningfulness**, describes the degree to which people feel a public space is theirs, significant to them, and reflective of their identity.

However, these dimensions are not experienced equally. Kern (2020) argues that public space has historically been designed around masculine norms of movement, **visibility, and behaviour,** which means that women, and particularly women whose identities intersect across race, class, sexuality, and disability, frequently encounter public space as exclusionary rather than welcoming. This gendered dimension runs through all five of Mehta's qualities: access is constrained by safety concerns that fall disproportionately on women; sociability is inhibited when certain bodies are made to feel unwelcome; activities reflect whose uses are considered legitimate; comfort is undermined by harassment and surveillance; and meaningfulness is denied when the space does not reflect the identities and histories of its most marginalised users. As Massey (1994) argues, the formal qualities of well-designed public space do not automatically translate into the **experience of welcome, belonging, or safety**. Design practice must therefore attend not to an abstract average user, but to those for whom the quality of the public realm is most consequential and most unevenly distributed, in this research, the young professional women of Almere.

3. Density, Typology and Zoning

The typology and density of urban form directly shape the quality of public space and the opportunities available within it. Jacobs (1961) and Young (1990) both argue that a critical mass of population within **accessible distances** is necessary to sustain **pedestrian traffic, social vitality, and economic viability,** creating the conditions for **variety, social diversity**, and the **presence of different communities**. Jacobs (1961) further demonstrates that **buildings of varied heights and ages**, with **active ground-floor frontages**, at a scale that relates to pedestrians and generates **movement across the full daily cycle**, are more conducive to these conditions than uniform high-rise development. Where tower blocks reduce street-level activity and erode the informal social life that makes neighbourhoods feel lived-in and safe.

Young (1990) extends this argument by demonstrating that the low-density, dispersed suburban development characteristic of Almere cannot sustain the **range of uses and activities** that diverse urban life requires. Kern (2020) deepens this critique by arguing that suburban typologies were designed around the assumption of a car-owning, domestically supported professional, an implicitly gendered model that embeds masculine norms into the spatial organisation of everyday life. Combined with the functional separation of land uses, where residential areas, employment, retail, and childcare occupy separate zones, this imposes a significant spatial burden on those with complex and constrained daily geographies (Massey, 1994). This burden falls disproportionately on those who bear responsibility for domestic and caregiving tasks, which in the Netherlands remain predominantly women in heteronormative relationships (CBS, 2024). The **dense, mixed-use typology** most effectively reduces this spatial friction by placing these activities in **close proximity**, making the **built environment responsive** to the full **complexity of women's daily lives** rather than to a singular, implicitly male model of urban mobility.

4. Size and Affordability of Homes

Planning decisions, zoning regulations, and infrastructure investments shape not only the daily flows and activities that are possible in a given space, but also who can afford to inhabit it. **Independent and community-oriented** uses generate the **richest social texture in public space**, but are simultaneously the most vulnerable to displacement when commercial rents rise (Mehta, 2014). At the residential scale, the availability of affordable housing in well-located, central, and diverse urban areas is equally at stake: gentrification operates as a structural mechanism through which lower income residents are redistributed to peripheral locations, concentrating **access to well-located urban space** among the already privileged and denying the city's openness and accessibility to those who need it most (Young, 1990). Jacobs (1961) argues that older buildings play an essential role in **sustaining this diversity**. Their **lower rents** make them **accessible to independent businesses**, **community organisations and lower-income residents** who could not afford newly developed space, making the preservation of existing building stock a matter of spatial justice as much as heritage.

This process of displacement is not gender-neutral. Displacement through gentrification disproportionately affects women, and particularly low-income women and women of colour, whose intersecting vulnerabilities, such as lower average incomes, greater dependence on local services and social networks, and higher exposure to housing insecurity, are compounded by spatial displacement (Crenshaw, 1989). Hayden (1980) adds a further dimension: the economic value of urban space has historically been calculated in ways that make women's domestic labour and community-building invisible, meaning that the spaces women have shaped and depended upon are systematically undervalued and therefore more easily cleared or redeveloped. The production of **affordability** in urban space is therefore not a market-driven inevitability but a political and policy-driven question, and a matter of **spatial justice** (Massey, 1994).

5. Dynamics of Time

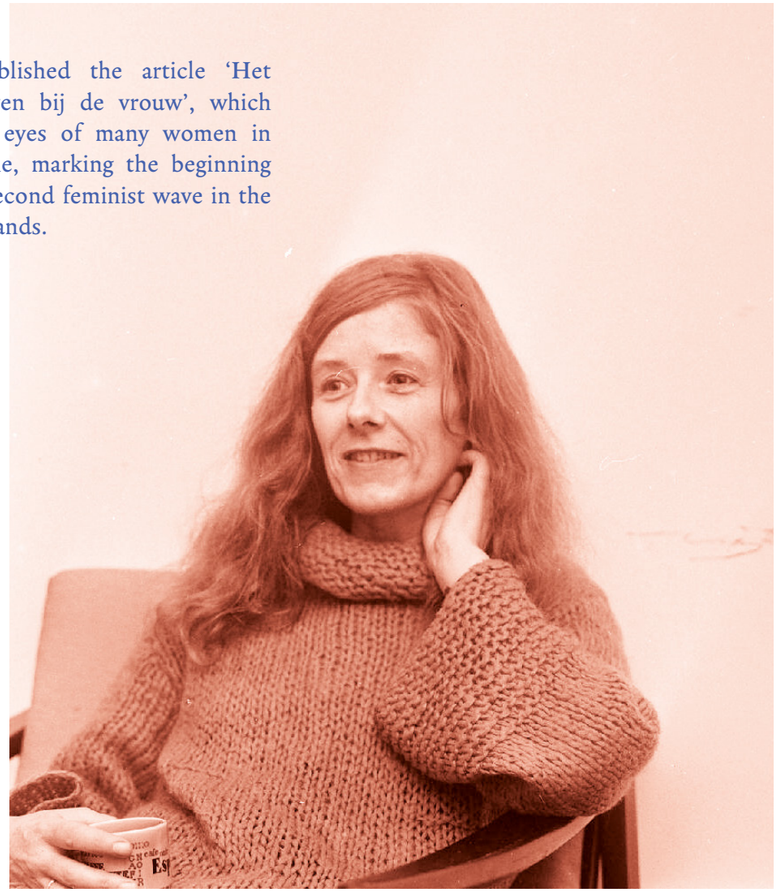
These political and power-driven forces do not only operate in the present, but are embedded in the built environment across time, shaping urban form at multiple temporal scales simultaneously. From the **rhythms of daily street life** to the long-durée structures that guide development across generations. At the scale of the everyday, Jacobs (1961) demonstrated that the temporal richness of a street, shown in the overlapping presence of **different users across the full daily and weekly cycle**, is inseparable from its **social vitality and safety. Mixed-use zoning** generates this richness, sustaining **natural surveillance** and **social life** across day and night. Conversely, zoning concentrates temporal power in the hands of those who control planning and development, as municipal zoning plans determine which functions are permitted where and therefore which rhythms of life a neighbourhood can sustain.
At a deeper scale, every building, street, and public space is the materialisation of a particular moment in the social history of a place. For Massey (1994), the demolition of existing built fabric is never a neutral act: it erases the spatial traces of particular social histories, typically those of communities with the least power to resist. Jacobs (1961) extends this by arguing that older buildings are not merely a heritage question but an economic one. Their **lower rents sustain the diversity of uses and communities** that newer development cannot support, making the **preservation of existing building stock** a matter of both **temporal justice** and **spatial vitality**. Hayden (1980) deepens this further by arguing that whose histories are made visible through conservation and naming is a deeply political question. One that has systematically erased the presence of women and marginalised communities in the urban landscape.

This temporal dimension is particularly concrete in the case of Almere. Designed from the 1970s onwards, the city's urban morphology encodes the gender assumptions of its era: the separation of residential and employment zones, the prioritisation of the private car, and the organisation of domestic and public life into distinct spatial spheres all reflect a model of society in which women's primary role was located in their home. These assumptions have been built into infrastructure and zoning structures with their lifecycles of sixty to eighty years (Rietveld, 2023; TNO, 2026), functioning as spatial path dependencies that constrain future development long after the social conditions that produced them have changed. Long-durée structures such as highways, railways, water structures, and dikes reinforce these dependencies, embedding the power relations of one era into the spatial possibilities of the next.

Synthesis

Across these five dimensions, a coherent argument emerges: urban morphology is not a neutral physical condition but a socially and politically produced arrangement that systematically shapes opportunity structures differently for different groups. For women, and particularly for women whose experiences are shaped by the compounding of gender with race, class, sexuality, and other axes of inequality, the built environment produces constrained access, reduced safety, unequal comfort, and diminished belonging. These conditions are not incidental but structural, encoded in the connectivity of street networks, the typology of buildings, the affordability of space, and the temporal depth of the built fabric.
Existing urban morphology analysis rarely centres women's lived experience as its primary analytical lens. This research addresses that gap by treating the five dimensions outlined above as the analytical framework through which the **spatial opportunity structures** of Almere will be examined. Together, they form the conceptual foundation that guides the analysis in the following chapters, connecting the theoretical arguments developed here to the specific spatial conditions of Almere, and ultimately to the identification of opportunity structures that can be translated into spatial strategies for young professional women.

She published the article ‘Het onbehagen bij de vrouw’, which opened eyes of many women in that time, marking the beginning of the second feminist wave in the Netherlands.



In 1967, Joke Smit (1933–1981) published the article ‘Het onbehagen bij de vrouw’, which marked the beginning of the second feminist wave in the Netherlands. In the article, she articulated the frustrations of married women who sought roles beyond motherhood and domestic life. Smit drew on her own experiences as a mother of two who also worked outside the home, at a time when combining paid work and childcare was particularly challenging due to the lack of institutional support (Tijdlijn Emancipatie van Vrouwen in Nederland | Design Museum Den Bosch, 2025).

Figure 33 Joke Smit (Croes, n.d.)

Er is een land waar vrouwen willen wonen

Er is een land waar vrouwen willen wonen
Waar vrouw-zijn niet betekent: tweederangs en bang en klein
Waar vrouwen niet om mannen concurreren
Maar zusters en gelieven kunnen zijn
Waar rimpels niet de eenzaamheid voorspellen
Maar paspoort zijn naar wijsheid, aanzien, ‘s werelds raadsvrouw zijn
Waar jonge vrouwen dus een leven voorbereiden
Waarin zij veertig, zestig, tachtig zullen zijn
Er is een land waar vrouwen willen wonen
Waar onrecht niet als een natuurgegeven wordt beschouwd
Waar dienstbaarheid niet toevalt aan één sekse
En niet vanzelf een man de leiding houdt
Waar moeder niet hetzelfde is als huisvrouw
Waar steeds opnieuw wordt nagegaan wie zwak zijn en wie sterk
Waar allen zorgen voor wie hulp behoeven
En ‘t brood verdienen met maar vijf uur werk
Er is een land waar mannen willen wonen
Waar jongens van de plicht tot flink en stoer doen zijn bevrijd
Waar niemand wint ten koste van een ander
En man-zijn ook betekent: zorgzaamheid
Waar angst en rouw niet weggemoffeld worden
Waar mannen zonder baan niet denken dat ze minder zijn
Waar vrouw en man elkaar niet hoeven haten
Maar eindelijk bondgenoten kunnen zijn
Er is een land waar mensen willen wonen
Waar jong zijn niet betekent dat je steeds wordt genegeerd
Waar zwakken met respect benaderd worden
En vreemdelingen niet meer gekleineerd
Waarin geweld door niemand meer geduld wordt
Waar allen kunnen troosten als een mens ten onder gaat

Dat is het land waar mensen willen wonen
Het land waar de saamhorigheid bestaat

There is a country where women want to live

There is a country where women want to live
Where being a woman does not mean being second-class, afraid and small
Where women do not compete for men
But can be sisters and lovers
Where wrinkles do not predict loneliness
But are a passport to wisdom, prestige, being the world’s counsellor
Where young women prepare for a life
In which they will be forty, sixty, eighty
There is a country where women want to live
Where injustice is not considered a fact of nature
Where service is not the preserve of one sex
And men do not automatically take the lead
Where mother is not the same as housewife
Where it is constantly re-examined who is weak and who is strong
Where everyone cares for those who need help
And earns a living with only five hours of work
There is a country where men want to live
Where boys are freed from the obligation to be tough and macho
Where no one wins at the expense of another
And being a man also means being caring
Where fear and grief are not hidden away
Where men without jobs do not think they are inferior
Where women and men do not have to hate each other
But can finally be allies
There is a country where people want to live
Where being young does not mean you are constantly ignored
Where the weak are treated with respect
And strangers are no longer belittled
Where violence is no longer tolerated by anyone
Where everyone can comfort a person who is suffering

That is the country where people want to live
The country where solidarity exists

Text: Joke Smit, Music: Ruud Bos, 1981
(Joke Smit Feministe | (1933- 1981), n.d.)

02 THE PLANNED

This chapter explores how Almere's current spatial landscape was established, examining historic planning decisions, dominant design values, and influential focus groups that have shaped the city over time and how the limited involvement of women in both the discipline and the decision-making process is reflected in the built environment of today. Closing with an analysis of how the city functions spatially in the present.

02 THE PLANNED
.1 Historic design values of Almere
.2 Almere today
.3 Subconclusion

02.1 Historic design values of Almere

02.1.1 Introduction

The Netherlands is famous for its land reclamation projects, and in 1918 the decision to undertake another one was finally made. After seventy years of research and exploration, the largest reclamation project to date would become a reality (De gemeente Almere & Feddes, 2008). The project resulted in the region now known as Flevoland, providing an unique opportunity for urban design. Almere emerged from a blank canvas, a city built entirely from deliberate decisions, without historical constraints, and without the accumulated local knowledge, existing communities or diverse voices that shape cities grown organically over time.
Every decade has left its mark on the city. The first neighbourhood was a conscious reaction to the modernist principles of the 1960s, forming what became known as the Bloemkoolwijk, streets designed to facilitate social interaction, building heights reduced to human scale, and a deliberate effort to avoid repeating the failures of the Bijlmer (NRC, 2025). In the following decades, ideals changed, and with them the design principles for each new neighbourhood. What resulted is a city that is simultaneously a product of its time and layered evidence of shifting paradigms. Each neighbourhood as an expression of the dominant spatial values of the moment in which it was built.
Understanding these layers is central to this research. The spatial experience of young professional women in Almere today is not the result of a single vision, but these different layers of decisions made by specific groups over time, with specific priorities and blind spots. To understand why the city is experienced by these women in the way it is, it is necessary to understand who made those decisions, what their vision was and what values guided them. Therefor every plan has a section with a short highlight of the involved values. Additionally, the plans will be analysed through five lenses derived from the theoretical framework in chapter 01, which are the following:

- **Access and connectivity**
- **Qualities in public space**
- **Density, typology and zoning**
- **Size and affordability of homes**
- **Dynamics of longevity**

02.1.2 Female influence in spatial discipline in Almere

Before exploring the successive plans that have shaped Almere, the timeline in the following pages provides context on women in Almere's spatial design discipline and significant events in the city's history. Three parallel threads are traced: the gradual involvement of women in Almere's spatial design discipline, from Anita Lantermans, the city's first female urban designer in the 1970s, to the female architects and planners who made their mark in the following decades; significant moments in Almere's development as a city; and the moments when the five women whose lived experiences are discussed in chapter 03 The lived, arrived in Almere as residents.

1950

FEMALE INFLUENCE



1970s | Anita Lantermans

Anita was the first female urban designer in Almere and first urban designer of Projektburo Almere. She was committed to important structural themes such as density, public transportation, accessibility and green structures. Anita Lantermans is one of the city's godparents and and was involved in the founding of Vrouwen Bouwen Wonen, a network dedicated to improving the status and influence of women in the construction and architecture sectors. (Thomas, 2022; Kunstlinie Almere Flevoland, 2022).

1978 | De Vrouwen Advies Commissie

In 1978 the Vrouwen Advies Commissie was established in Almere. This independent committee of female volunteers reviewed building plans before construction began, advising on practical liveability from a female perspective (from bathroom layouts to stair widths) carrying the same formal weight as other statutory approvals (Stadsarchief Almere, n.d.).

1980 | Dimpty Aarts

Since 1980 Dimpty Aarts worked in and on the planning of Almere. She initially worked as a planner at the National Agency for the IJsselmeer Polders and, starting in 1984, at the City of Almere. Beginning in 2008, she served as a program manager in various departments of the city, and concluded her career in 2021 as a team leader at City Cleaning (..., 2022).

ALMERE

1968

In 1968, the Southern IJsselmeerpolder was fully drained.

1971

In 1971, Projektburo Almere is established and draw a sattelite city with separate urban areas with a large amount of green in between.

1975

In 1975, the building process starts of the first residential buildings in Almere Haven.

1975

1990 | Lucia Hartsuyker

Lucia Hartsuyker designed two women-friendly homes in Almere, in the Muziekwijk neighbourhood (1990) and on Zwitserlandstraat in IJsselstein (1995).
Her "women-friendly architecture" was characterized by spaces that were more equal to one another, for example by using the same floor area throughout, rather than the traditional layout based on the existing unequal, hierarchical family model. Her objections to existing housing construction and her ideas about new developments in architecture led Hartsuyker-Curjel to make a significant contribution to the Stichting Vrouwen Bouwen en Wonen (1983–1995) (Moraal, 2018; Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.)

~2000 | Ria van Dijk

With over 25 years at the municipality, Ria van Dijk is one of Almere's most experienced urban planners. Having worked alongside the city's founding designers early in her career, she has since shaped major projects including the Floriade legacy neighbourhood and the ongoing development of Almere's city centre (Blue Zone Festival, n.d.).



Figure 34 'Peetouders' van Almere, Anita as the only women at the table (fotoarchief Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders, 2011)

Figure 35 Lucia Hartsuyker-Curjel (Bogaerts, Rob / Anefo; Nationaal Archief, 1987)

2000



1998 | Liesbeth van der Pol

Liesbeth and her firm, Dok Architects, designed three bright red residential buildings. These are situated along the Lage Vaart, the canal that separates the residential neighborhood on one side from the polder on the other. Instead of traditional low-rise housing, the designers chose to build upward.
She later became the Netherlands' first female Chief Government Architect, serving from 2008 to 2011 (Gebouwen door Vrouwen, 2026).



2007 | Kazuyo Sejima

In Almere, Kazuyo Sejima, together with Ryue Nishizawa and their firm SANAA, designed De Kunstlinie. The large, striking building is located on the Weerwater and serves as a multifunctional cultural facility in the heart of Almere. The building is used for theater productions, music performances, exhibitions, and other cultural activities (Gebouwen door Vrouwen, 2026).



2018 | Ana Rocha

The project is called Slim Fit, and according to Ana Rocha, it is a "small experiment." The typology is specifically aimed at the "growing group of working singles who want to live in compact yet comfortable, sustainable, distinctive, and above all centrally located urban settings." Slim Fit is an initial prototype that can be scaled up further to address the demand for urban densification. It won the Dutch Design Award in the Habitat category in 2018 (Gebouwen door Vrouwen, 2026).

Figure 36 Project in Almere of Liesbeth van der Pol (Dirk Verwoed Architectuur fotografie, 2025)

Figure 37 De Kunstlinie of Kazuyo Sejima (De Kunstlinie, 2023)

Figure 38 Micro housing in Almere by Ana Rocha (Archdaily, 2018)

FEMALES LIVING IN ALMERE



1999
LARA
Filmwijk



2001
FEMKE
Almere Stad

1976

In 1976, the first key is presented to family de Clerk.

1980 - 83 - 05

In 1980, people lived in Almere Stad, from 1983 onwards in Almere Buiten, and from 2005 onwards in Poort.

1980

In 1980, Almere only officially became a municipality

1984

In 1994, the 100,000th resident is born.

2026 FUTURE?

2022

Exposition ‘Women of Almere’ in the ‘Stadsarchief Almere’. Putting 50 portraits forward of women that came to Almere from all over the world (Stadsarchief Almere, 2022).





2022

Exposition ‘Vormgevers van Almere’ (Designers of Almere) in the ‘Stadsarchief Almere’. A selection of 22 portraits and short videos of people who have made a special contribution to the founding of Almere. (Stadsarchief Almere, 2022).



2019

EMMA
Kruidenwijk



2022

MILA
Muziekwijk



2025

SOFIA
Almere Stad

2008

In 2008, the Almere Principles were drawn up, with the seventh principle being: ‘People make the city’.

2023

In 2023, Hein van der Loo will be installed as the new mayor.

2026

In 2026, Almere celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Figure 39. Vormgevers van Almere (Stadsarchief Almere, 2022)

Figure 40. Women of Almere (Stadsarchief Almere, 2022)

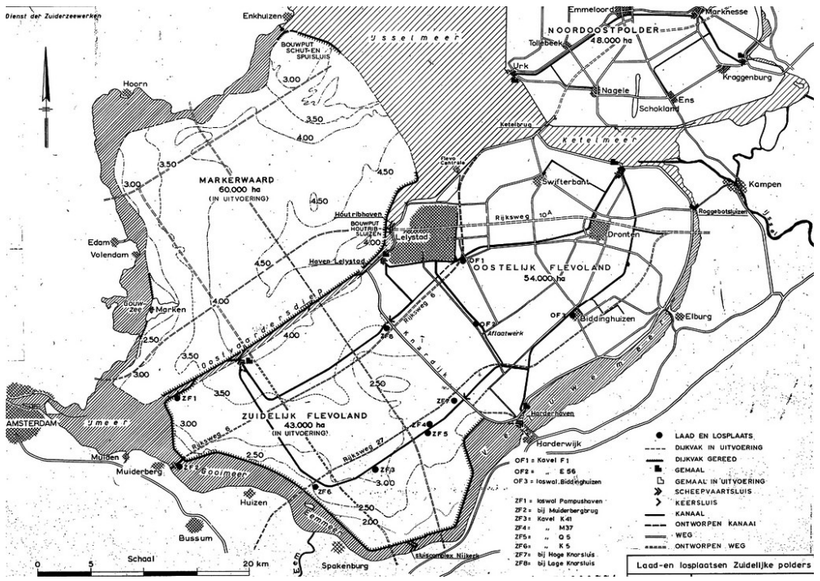
02.1.3 General outline of the Flevopolder

Within one of the first outlines of the Flevopolder, the relationship between the new polder and the Randstad is not yet considered (figure 41). The plan focuses inward, proposing a main urban centre surrounded by smaller satellite cores, primarily oriented around housing farmers and facilitating agricultural production. Alongside, a suburban housing typology was introduced, offering wealthy city-dwellers a comfortable rural retreat within easy reach of the city. The polder was conceived as a 'lustprieel', a pleasure pavilion, integrated into the virgin landscape. In later designs, this ambition was reframed: Almere would become the twentieth-century version of this pleasure pavilion, but this time not for the elite, rather for the emerging middle class (De gemeente Almere & Feddes, 2008).

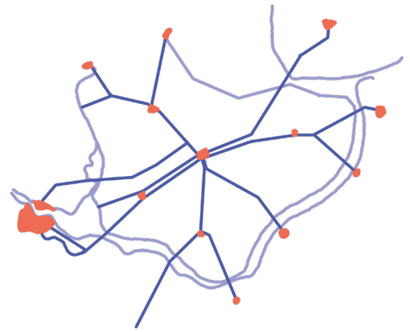
The focus group for this first outline was implicitly male, the farmer and the wealthy townsperson, with no consideration of women as independent users or decision-makers in the planning process. This absence of a female perspective, is embedded from the very first outline.

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Pleasure pavilion*	-	-	-	-
Spatial design	*Self-centred polder*	-	*Nuclear development*		-
Focus group	-	-	-	*Wealthy & agricultural sector*	-
Female involvement	-	-	-	*Not a consideration*	-

Figure 41 Loading and unloading areas in the southern polders, showing urban development (European Roads, Flickr, 1960)



General outline of the project, southern polder
- Loading and unloading area
- Dike section under construction
- Dike section complete
- Pumping station
- Pumping station under construction
- ship lock
- Sluice gate
- Canal
- planned canal
- Road
- planned road
- Urban area



02.1.4 Urbanity in the Flevopolder

In the documents of 'De Ontwikkelingen van het Westen des Lands' (Developments in the West of the Country) of 1958, 'Nota Inzake de Ruimtelijke Ordening in Nederland' (Memorandum on Spatial Planning in the Netherlands) of 1960 and 'Een Structuurplan voor de Zuiderlijke IJsselmeerpolders' (A Structural Plan for the Southern IJsselmeer Polders) of 1961, the development of the southwest corner of the IJsselmeer was mentioned, though only the details were still missing. In 1961, urbanisation within the polder is shown for the first time. This area would be connected to Amsterdam by two networks, one crossing the Markerwaard polder. The Flevopolder would be connecting the rest of the Netherlands, working as a figuratively new heart of the country (figure 43).
Ir. L. Wijers was the designer of these plans, showing a large amount of green and forests within these urbanised areas, as seen by the green dots on the map. However, the realisation of the Markerwaard polder was eventually scrapped, which had significant consequences for the urban development of the Flevopolder and Almere.
Planning at this scale operated entirely at the level of national infrastructure and economic geography, with no consideration of household composition, gender or the social differentiation of future residents.

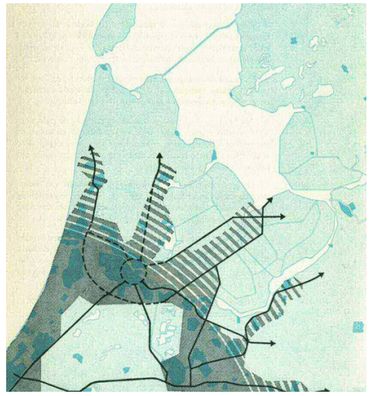
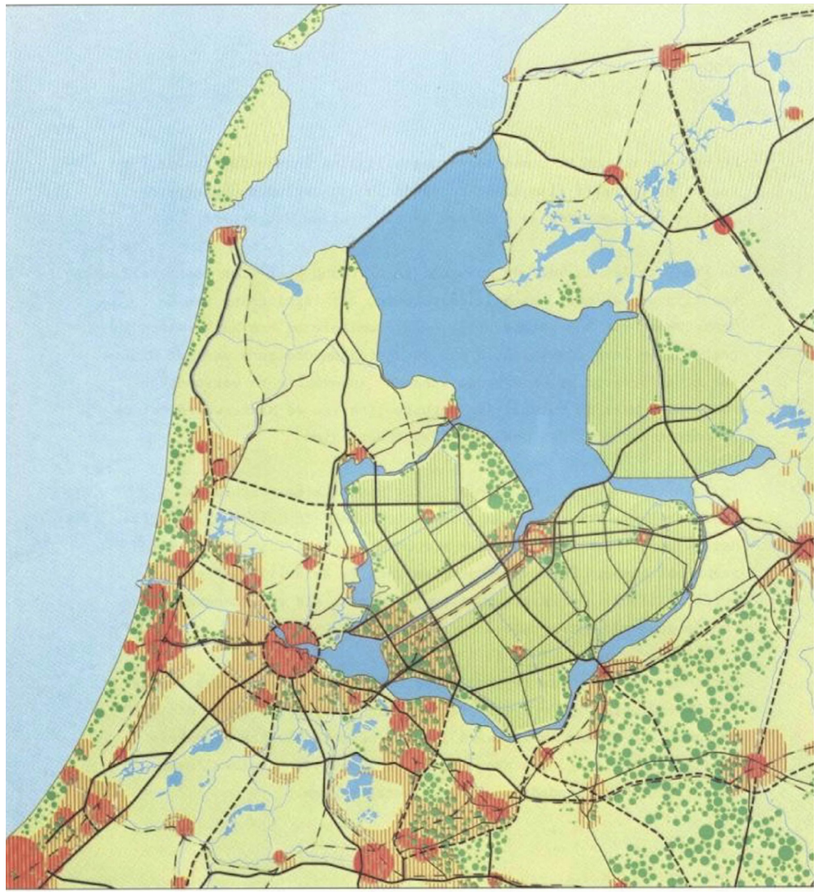


Figure 42 The expansion principles were inspired by the 'fingers' of Copenhagen (Stadsarchief Almere, 1961)

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*New heart of the country*	-	*Large urban development*	-	*Long-term national framework*
Spatial design	*Two road networks connecting to Amsterdam*	*Green and forest structures within urban areas*	*Large urban clusters*	-	*Primary road and water infrastructure*
Focus group	-	-	-	-	-
Female involvement	-	-	-	-	*Not present at national planning level*

Figure 43 (Archief Rijkswaterstaat, 1961)



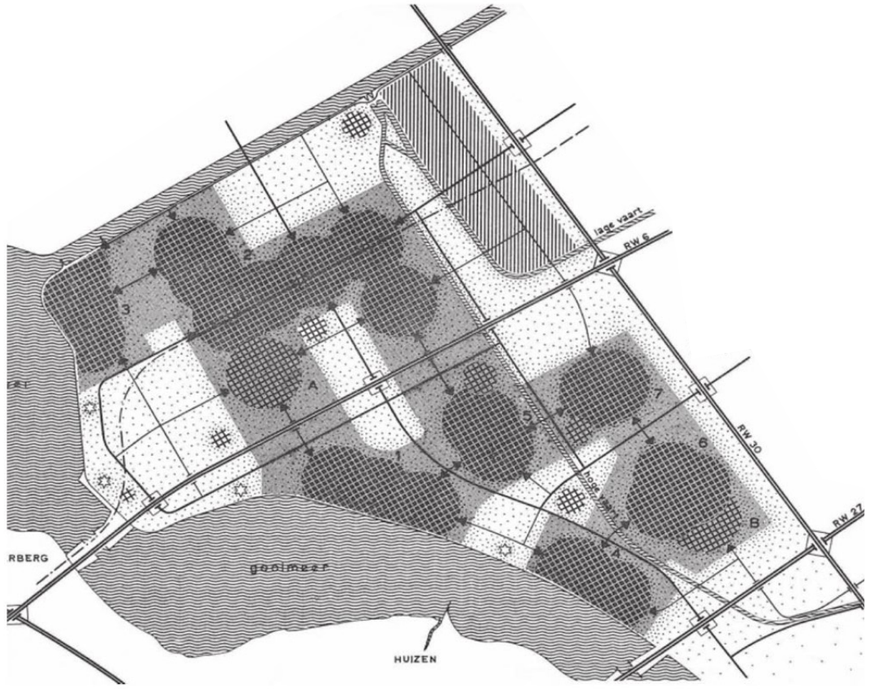
A structural plan for the southern IJsselmeerpolders
- Main roads (national- or province roads)
- Connecting roads
- Train tracks
- Water
- Urban ares (partially agricultural)
- Transition zone
- Agricultural area
- Existing cities
- Future cities, placement has been determined
- Forest, wild ground, etc.



02.1.5 Explorations for the new city

The 1970 ‘Verkenningen’ proposal established Almere as a satellite city, structured around differentiated cores within a road grid. Each core, as shown in figure 44, was envisioned to house around 20,000 new inhabitants, though their precise order and placement remained undetermined.
This exploration happened within a progressive political period in the Netherlands, in which leisure, recreation and individual emancipation were gaining prominence in both policy and public discourse. These ideological shifts had a direct impact on urban planning, introducing themes of self-development, wellbeing, social interaction and social cohesion into the spatial agenda. Combined with a widespread housing crisis, this produced a strong desire for low-rise typologies, variety and proximity to greenery. Large areas were left unplanned, preserving spatial flexibility and providing open spaces that could later accommodate public functions as the city grew (De gemeente Almere & Feddes, 2008).
Despite the progressive political climate and explicit focus on emancipation and social cohesion, the planning team was almost entirely male. The themes of the period had yet to be reflected in the discipline itself.

Figure 44 Explorations of density (Stadsarchief Almere , 1970)



	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Flexible satellite city*	*Social interaction and cohesion*	-	*Emancipation and self-development*	*Urban flexibility*
Spatial design	*Road grid structure*	*Planned open spaces for future public functions*	-	*Low-rise, close to greenery*	*Left-over space for variety*
Focus group	-	-	-	-	-
Female involvement	-	-	-	-	*Absent despite progressive political climate*

Explorations of density in Almere (inhabiants +/- 250 000)
- Urban area
- Urban concentration (+/- 20 000 inhabitants)
- Special amenities
- Industries
- Green area
- Recreational support point
- Road
- Canal
- Train track



02.1.6 Projektburo Almere

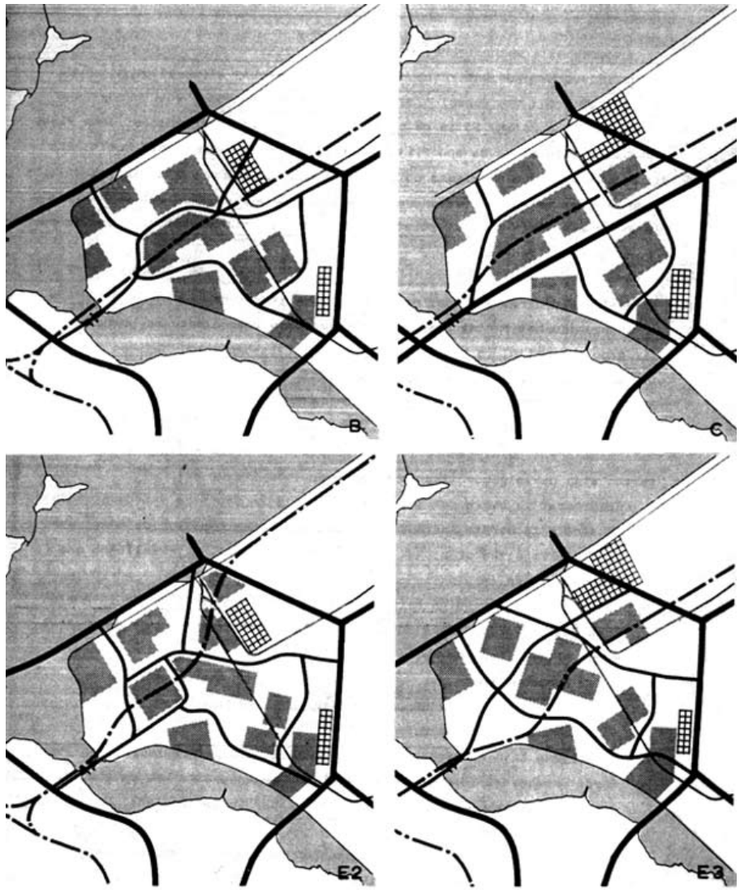
The early 1970s were an uncertain period across Western societies. An oil crisis, declining birth rates following the wider adoption of contraception, and growing concerns around economic development, energy consumption, environmental pollution and resource supply created a climate of instability and recalibration (Salewski, 2010). It was within this context that Projektburo Almere was founded in 1971, the office that would be responsible for the first concrete designs of the city. The bureau hired around 25 men, working under the guidance of Dirk Frieling.
During this period, future residents were invited to contribute feedback and ideas for the city's development, a participatory ambition captured in slogans such as "I build my house in Almere" and "People make the city." The challenge, however, was that the most important stakeholder group, the future residents, did not yet exist.

In 1974, the report Almere 1985 formalised the city's ambitions for the coming decade across six goals: contributing to regional problem-solving, keeping options open for future development, providing space for everyone, stimulating individual development, supporting a healthy natural environment, and sustaining current and future urban growth (De gemeente Almere & Feddes, 2008).
In 1973 Anita Lantermans joined the Projektburo as the only female urban designer in the team. Her arrival introduced a female perspective into a planning process that had until then been shaped exclusively by men. She argued for the practical dimensions of city-making: public transport, walkability, residential density and the everyday usability of urban space (Thomas, 2022).

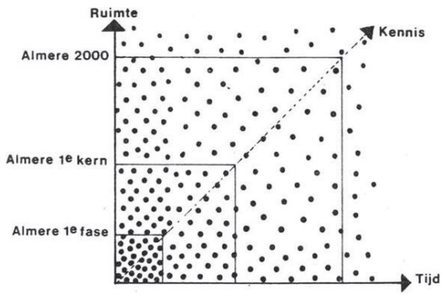
	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*People make the city*	-	-	-	*Urban flexibility*
Spatial design	*Exploration of Almere Haven, Stad and Buiten*	*Healthy and natural environment*	-	*Stimulate individual development*	*Urban flexibility*
Focus group	*"Everyone"*	-	-	-	-
Female involvement	*Lantermans joins as first female urban designer*	-	*Lantermans worked on the density cores*	-	*First female voice in the planning process*

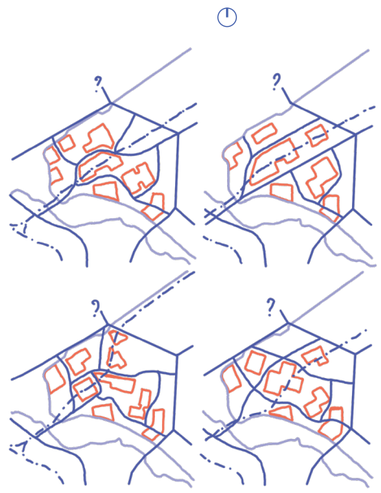
Figure 45 Density and principle explorations of Almere (National Planning Agency for the IJsselmeer Polders ,1974)

Figure 46 Growth strategy of Almere (National Planning Agency for the IJsselmeer Polders, Relation knowledge, space, time, in 'Explorations 2 Almere urban area', 1972)



Principle sketches of main infrastructure
- Residential (25-75 inhabitants per hectare bruto)
- Heavy/extensive industries
- National traintrack
- Government roads
- City car roads/local access roads





02.1.7 The preliminary design strategy of a polynuclear city

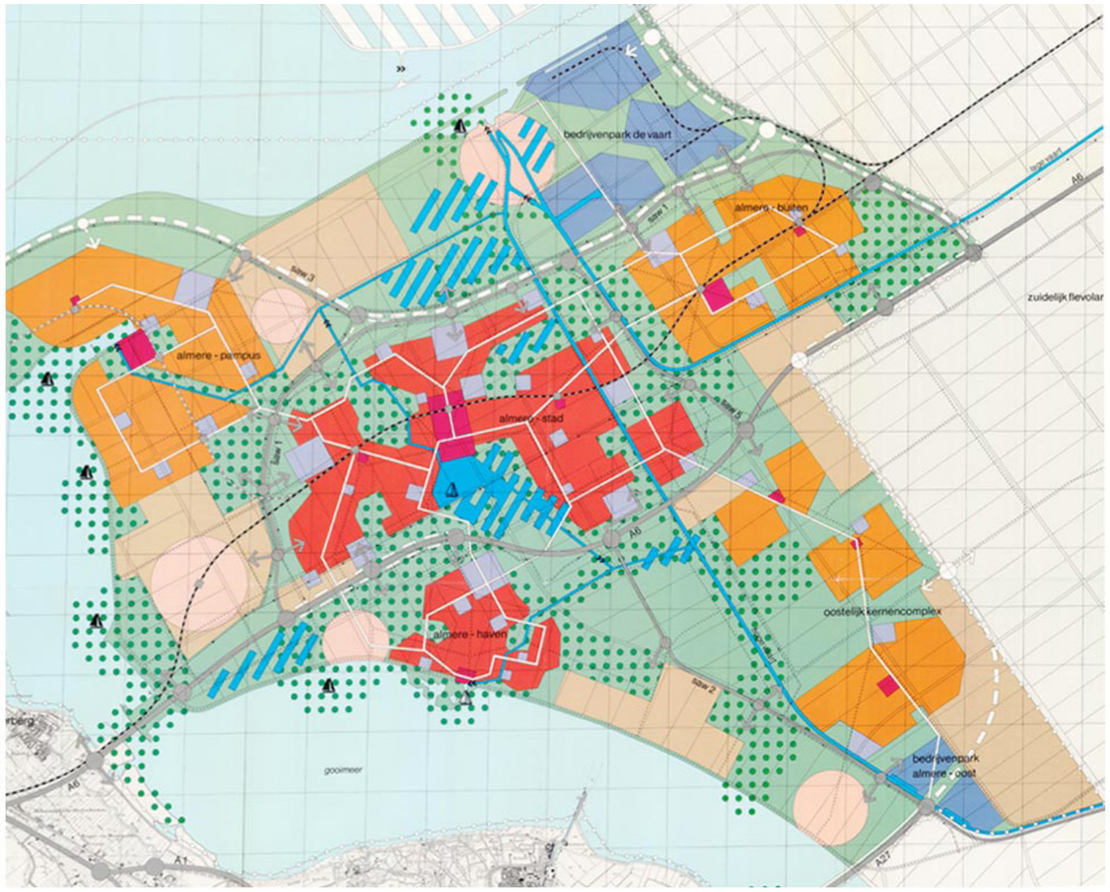
Almere's spatial structure is fundamentally grounded in its landscape. Although built on reclaimed land, the underlying soil and topography provided somewhat of a framework for design rather than a blank slate to be overwritten (figure 47). In Almere Buiten, the straight canal and drainage system, dug to drain and maintain the polder, formed the basis for a squared, agricultural landscape. In Almere Haven, by contrast, the hidden layers of sand dunes, ancient valleys and riverbeds beneath the Holocene clay informed a more organic, curved spatial structure. These differences were not incidental but intentional: each core of the city was to develop its own distinct identity, rooted in the specific landscape conditions of its location (Stassen, 2013).

Within this plan, the Weerwater is introduced as the central element of the development area, a structuring landscape feature that would become one of Almere's most enduring spatial assets. A second connection to Amsterdam, running through the Almere Pampus area outside the dykes, was also proposed, made more urgent by growing uncertainty around the construction of the Markerwaard. As Almere had emerged primarily in response to the national housing shortage, family housing dominated the programme, comprising 90% of the housing integrated into the first plans for the city (De gemeente Almere & Feddes, 2008).

The focus on the 'family' concept as the primary housing unit reflected the dominant social model of the time, one in which the needs of women were subsumed within the household rather than considered independently. The near-exclusive focus on family typologies left little room for the diverse household compositions and individual spatial needs.

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Second link to Amsterdam*	*Weerwater as central element*	*Polynuclear city with various identities*	*Family housing dominant*	*Urban flexibility*
Spatial design	-	*Large green structures*	*Integration of agricultural design*	*90% family housing*	*Guided by landscape structures*
Focus group	-	-	-	*Families*	-
Female involvement	-	-	-	*Women's needs subordinated to the family model*	-

Figure 47 First spatial structure of Almere 1978 (Stadsarchief Almere, 1978)



02.1.8 Almere 1985 and the municipality

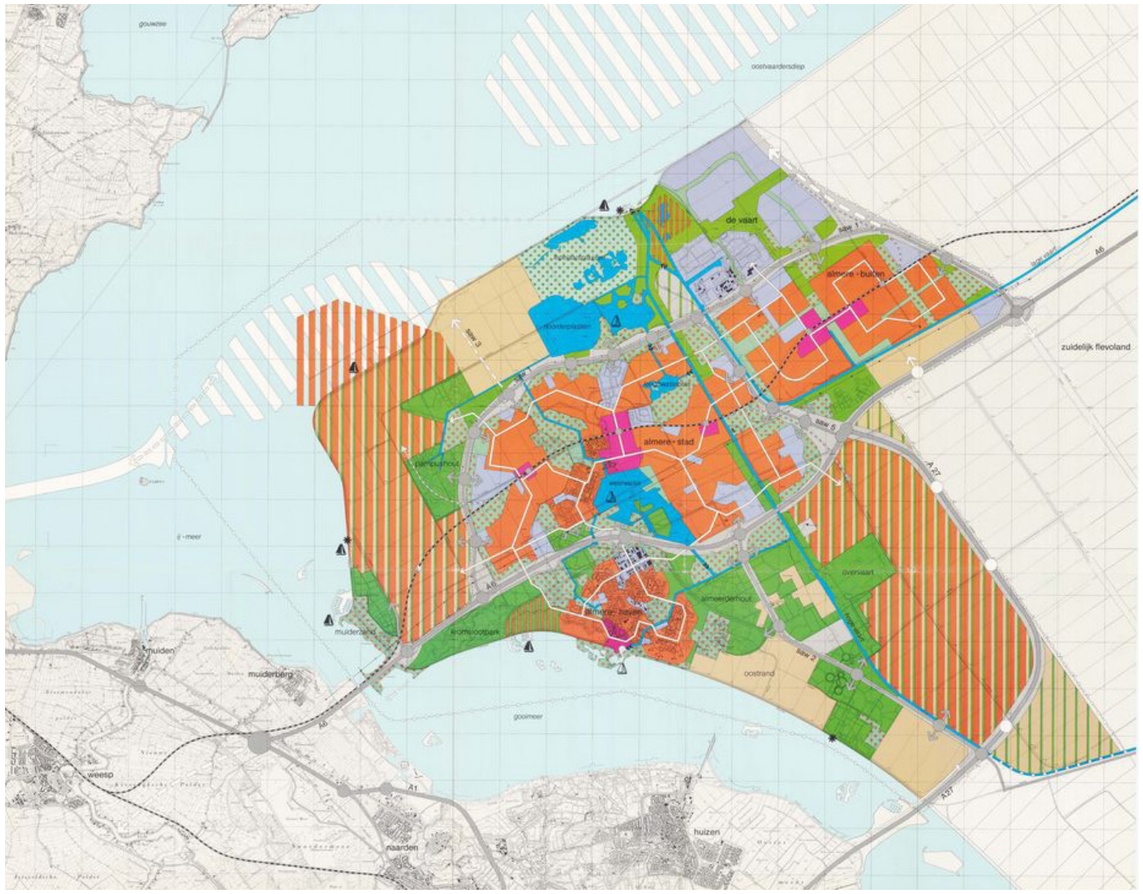
Almere has frequently been compared to Ebenezer Howard's Garden City concept, developed around 1900 (figure 48). In Howard's ideal city, seven garden cities together form an urban landscape of 250,000 inhabitants where town and country coexist in harmony. The parallels were explicit enough that Howard's diagram was included directly in Almere's structural plan of 1983 (figure 49)(De gemeente Almere & Feddes, 2008).

Compared to the 1978 structural map as seen in figure 47 on the previous page, this plan shows less detail for the eastern and western development areas, alongside a reduction in the green buffer between Almere Stad and Almere Buiten. Construction in Almere Buiten began in this period. A few years later, on 1 January 1987, the municipality of Almere was formally established, introducing service infrastructure, regulations and spatial constraints that brought the experimental freedom of the Projektburo era to an end. In Almere Haven, all courtyards had been provided with communal spaces, but questions of funding and maintenance now arose for other neighbourhoods (NRC, 2025).

Howard's Garden City principles were further explored in the 1989 vision, which foregrounded Almere's green dominance, its accessible public transport network, and its dense cycle infrastructure. Wherever you chose to live, a bus stop had to be reachable within five minutes on foot. Cycling routes ran through greenery between centres, with car crossings deliberately minimised (NRC, 2025). The vision prioritised living, working and a centres-based lifestyle, yet its primary user remained implicitly the family household, with little differentiation in how different residents might experience or navigate these systems differently. Women managing complex daily trip chains, when combining work, childcare and errands, were not yet a named consideration in the spatial programme.

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Bus stop within 5 min walk, dense cycle network*	*Living, working and centres-lifestyle*	-	-	*Urban flexibility*
Spatial design	*Minimised car crossings of busnetwork*	*Large green structures*	*Agricultural, forest and urban reservation spaces*	-	*Integration of agricultural design*
Focus group	-	-	-	*Families*	-
Female involvement	-	-	-	*Women's complex trip chains not yet a spatial consideration*	-

Figure 48 Almere's structural plan 1983 (Stadsarchief Almere, 1983)



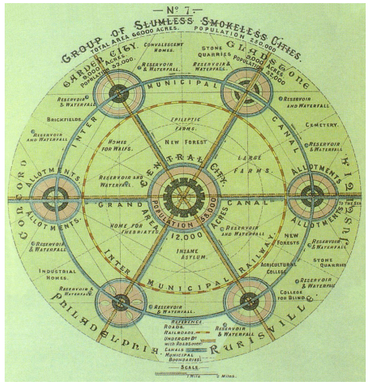


Figure 49 Slumless Smokeless cities (University of Amsterdam, 2026)

Urban area
- Living
- Working
- Center
- Utility works

Reservations
- Agriculture
- Special purpose

Forest, vegetation
- Forest
- Park (public)
- Swamp forest
- Agriculture
- Agriculture and forest
- Utility works and forest
- Forest and recreation

Infrastructure
- Highway with exit
- Connection under study
- City road with exit
- Traintrack with station
- Traintrack under study
- Public transport lane
- Infrastructure under study

Water
- Water outside the dikes
- Water inside the dikes

Diverse
- High-voltage line
- Regional pipeline corridor
- Border plan
- Marina large/small scale
- Special recreational purpose
- Lock

02.1.9 Housing policy shift of the 90s

In 1989, the first steps towards the liberalisation and professionalisation of the rental market were set in motion, driven by political concern over the share of the national budget allocated to housing (Priemus, 2017; DeWilde, 2022). The sector was undergoing a fundamental transformation, moving away from state dependency towards market-oriented thinking. In 1994, housing associations were privatised through the 'Bruteringsoperatie', redefining them as social enterprises. Government subsidies were largely withdrawn, oversight became increasingly hands-off, and the following year the subsidised owner-occupied housing programme was brought to a close.

The Vinex Neighbourhood | 1991

Policy attention shifted towards land use, urban density and the mix of housing functions. Cities were to become more compact, with higher densities per hectare and strong connections to public transport, but increased car relience. These principles were formalised in the 'Vierde Nota Extra' (known as Vinex) drawn up in 1991.

The resulting Vinex neighbourhoods were built to a minimum of 30 homes per hectare, positioned close to existing cities and infrastructure. A deliberate mix of property types and price ranges was pursued, with social housing capped at 30 per cent. The primary ambition was to build owner-occupied homes for the middle class, enabling residents to move on from social housing. Across all designated Vinex locations, a total of 400,000 homes were constructed nationwide (Utrecht City Council, 2025).

The shift towards owner-occupation and middle-class housing consolidation had particular consequences for women. As financial independence and access to credit remained structurally unequal, the assumption of a dual-income household embedded in owner-occupied housing models implicitly disadvantaged women, particularly single women, single parents and those in lower-income employment.

02.1.10 Introduction of The Almere Principles

In 2007, Adri Duivesteijn was urban designer and alderman for housing and spatial planning in Almere and advocated for self-build and citizen-driven urban development. He was inspired by the American architect and sustainability thinker William McDonough and invited him to the city. The collaboration between the municipality and McDonough's office proved fruitful, resulting in the presentation of The Almere Principles in 2008: seven guiding principles for an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable future for Almere through to 2030 (Stassen, 2026).

1. Cherish diversity: ecological, social, economic;
2. Connect place and context: identity, versatility, accessibility;
3. Combine city and nature: preserve, utilise, combine;
4. Anticipate change: lasting spatial redundancy, changing impact, mental redundancy;
5. Continue to innovate: sustainability, concentration of knowledge, institutional innovation;
6. Design healthy systems: mindset, hardware, steadfastness;
7. People make the city planning, self-organisation, knowledge and care.

In this new century, the municipality recognised that Almere needed a more urban character. The reaction against the car-dependent Vinex model is expressed most clearly in Almere Poort, where multi-storey apartment blocks replaced low-rise typologies and a private parking space is no longer a standard provision (NRC, 2025).

The Almere Principles represent that the city's planning values needed to evolve, embracing diversity, health and social cohesion as spatial ambitions. Principle seven, People make the city, showed the participatory ideals of the early Projektburo era, but now within a more structured and inclusive framework. Yet despite the principles' emphasis on diversity and social sustainability, gender remained absent as an explicit category, a missed opportunity to formally embed the female perspective into the city's long-term spatial agenda.

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Public transport connectivity*	-	*Increasing density and the compact city*	*Mix of housing functions*	-
Spatial design	*Increased car reliance*	-	*Min. 30 homes per hectare*	*Mix of property types and price ranges*	-
Focus group	-	-	-	*Owner-occupants, middle class*	-
Female involvement	-	-	-	*Single women and female-headed households structurally excluded*	-

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Connect place and context*	*Combine city and nature*	*More urban character*	*Cherish diversity*	*Anticipate change*
Spatial design	*Accessibility*	*Green integration*	*Multi-storey typologies, no standard parking*	*Mix of typologies*	*Continue to innovate*
Focus group	-	-	-	*Broader than middle class*	*"Everyone"*
Female involvement	-	-	-	-	*Gender absent as explicit category despite diversity agenda*

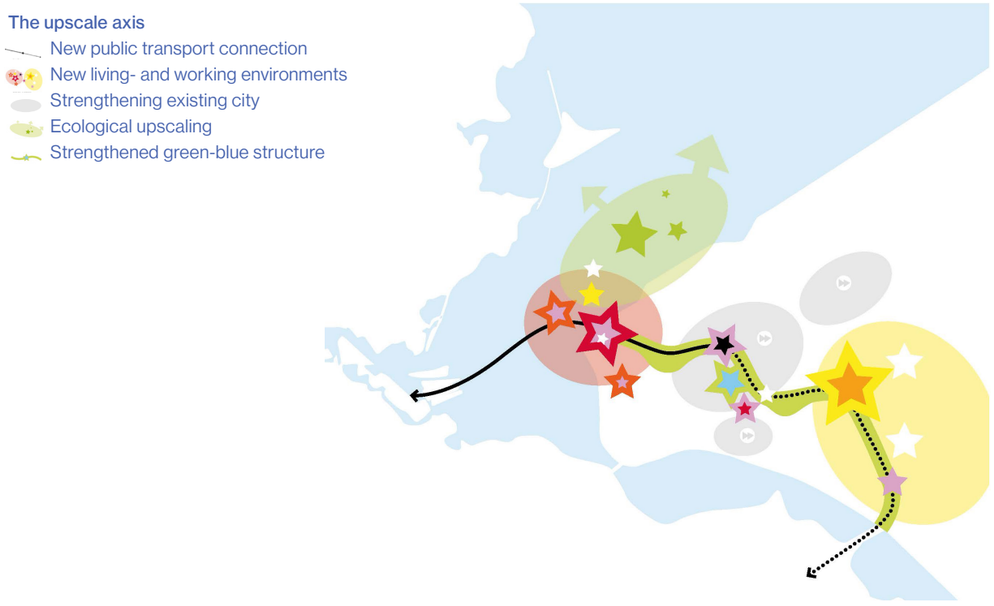
02.1.11 Almere 2.0

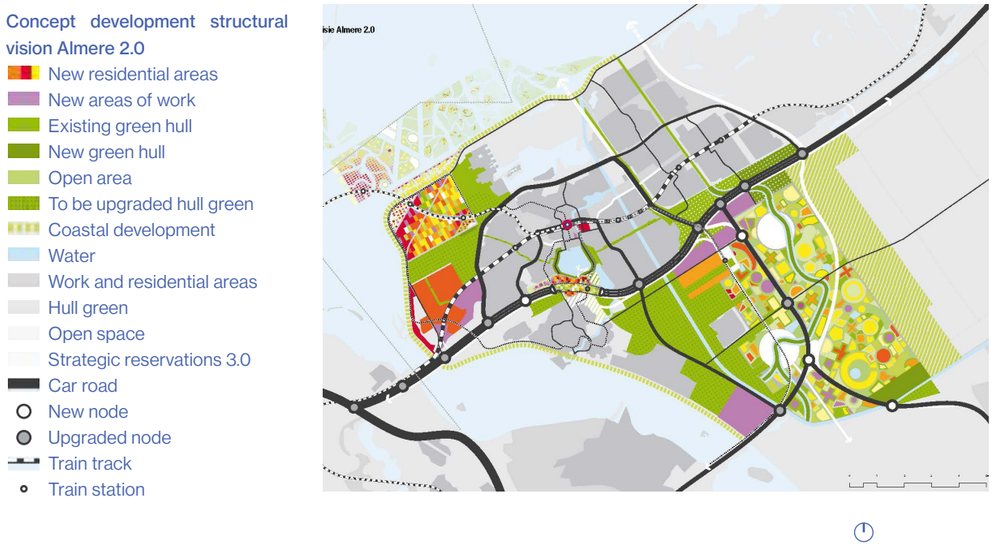
With the international competitiveness of the Randstad and space for growth increasingly scarce, Almere (with its available land and multi-centred suburban structure) was identified as the answer. The vision set out in 'Almere 2.0' positioned the city as an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable urban centre contributing to the development of the Northern Randstad and the MRA. By 2030, Almere was projected to grow into a metropolitan centre of 350,000 inhabitants, supported by two economic axes: Amsterdam–Almere and Utrecht–Almere as seen in figure 50 (Duivesteijn, 2009).
The central instrument was the 'Schaalsprong', a major expansion conceived not to disrupt the existing city but to enrich and strengthen it. Almere 2.0 was to become a public transport city, with the IJmeerlijn (a new rail connection across the IJ-lake) as its backbone. Running west to east, this would connect a series of large-scale development areas: IJland, Pampus, Centrum, Weerwater and Oosterwold as seen in figure 51, each with its own orientation and programme. The plan was not a blueprint but a framework, deliberately leaving room for initiative and adaptation, and framing the Schaalsprong as a national challenge requiring commitment beyond the city itself (Duivesteijn, 2009).
Despite its ambition and the continued application of the Almere Principles, gender remained absent as an explicit planning consideration. The focus group, employees and residents of the broader MRA, was defined in economic and demographic terms, with no differentiation for the specific spatial needs of women within that population.

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Connection to MRA via IJmeerlijn*	-	*Expansion in scale and inhabitants*	*Room for initiative and adaptation*	*Use of Almere Principles*
Spatial design	*Orientation towards Amsterdam*	-	*Increased density along cores*	-	*Phased approach*
Focus group	*MRA employees and residents*	-	-	-	-
Female involvement	-	-	-	-	*Gender absent despite diversity agenda*

Figure 50 Almere 2.0 regional axis (Duivesteijn, 2009)

Figure 51 Almere 2.0 city concept (Duivesteijn, 2009)





02.1.12 Almere 2050, The city with future

As a young city still in formation, Almere looks firmly towards the future. Six urgent challenges structure its long-term vision: a persistent housing shortage, a lag in employment and facilities, socio-economic vulnerability, growing pressure on infrastructure, the importance of landscape and ecology, and the demands of energy transition and climate adaptation (Gemeente Almere, 2050).
Between 2020 and 2030, nearly 25,000 homes are planned as seen in figure 53, with a further 35,000 to 60,000 in the period to 2050, predominantly in Oosterwold, Almere Centraal and Pampus. Alongside this, the city's economic profile requires urgent attention, Almere holds the lowest ratio of jobs to homes in the Northern Randstad, and its cultural and educational provision falls short of what a city of its size would typically offer. Socially, the risk of division is real: many residents remain relatively vulnerable in terms of income, education and health, making investment in liveability and opportunity essential to the inclusive society Almere aspires to be.

Almere's most distinctive quality, the deep integration of green and water into the urban fabric needs to be protected and continued as the city grows. This green-blue framework, rooted in the original garden city principles, remains inseparable from Almere's spatial identity. The city also enters the energy transition from a comparatively strong position, with a young housing stock, extensive rooftop solar capacity and a well-developed district heating network (Gemeente Almere, 2050).
For the first time in Almere's planning history, the vision explicitly names socioeconomic vulnerability and social resilience as spatial priorities, creating an opening through which the needs of women, and particularly young professional women navigating housing affordability, employment access and urban liveability, could finally be addressed.

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Excellent accessibility*	*High-quality landscapes with allure*	*Sufficient housing and varied living environment*	*Sufficient housing and varied living environment*	*Climate-proof, energy-neutral and circular*
Spatial design	*Infrastructure investment*	*Green-blue framework protected*	*25,000–60,000 new homes*	*Varied typologies across Oosterwold, Centraal and Pampus*	*Energy transition and retrofitting*
Focus group	-	-	-	*Broad (inclusive society)*	-
Female involvement	-	-	-	*Socioeconomic vulnerability named*	-

Figure 52 Possibilites for the region: e.g. perspective Bay from the MRA(Urhahn Stedenbouw & strategie, 2021)

Figure 53 Almere City with Future overview (Urhahn Stedenbouw & strategie, 2021)

Sufficient housing and a varied living environment



A strong and resilient society



High-quality landscapes with allure



A healthy business climate with amenities

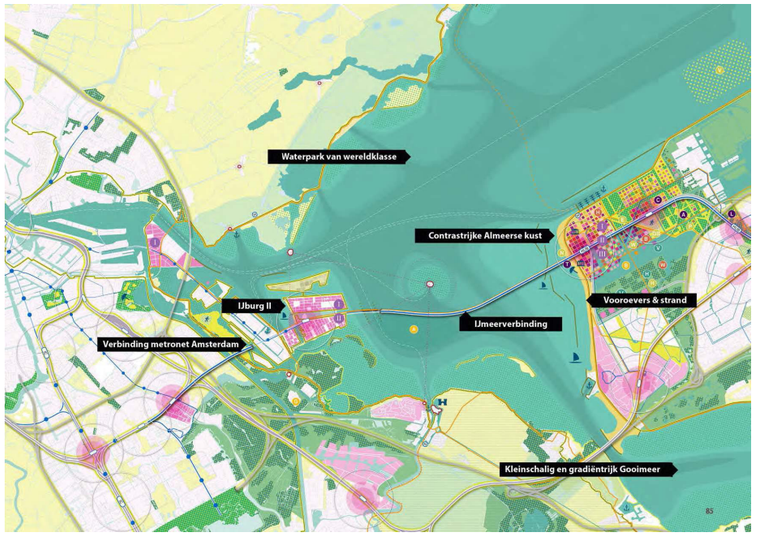


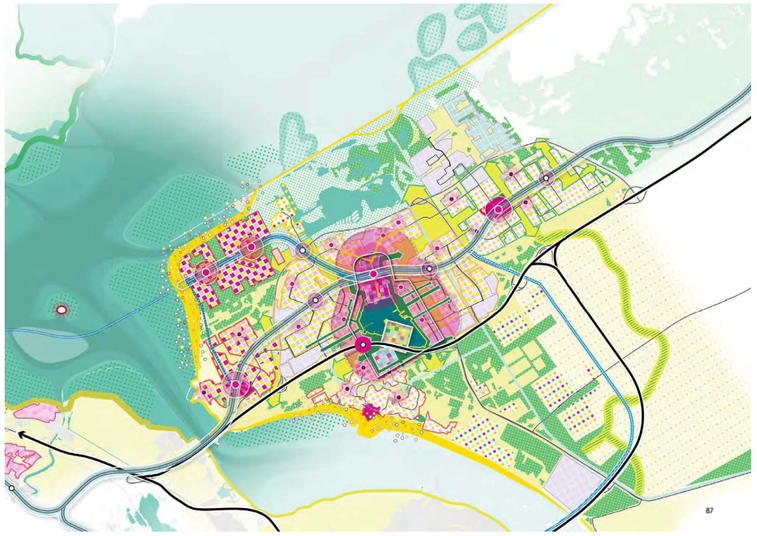
Excellent accessibility



Climate-proof, energy-neutral and circular





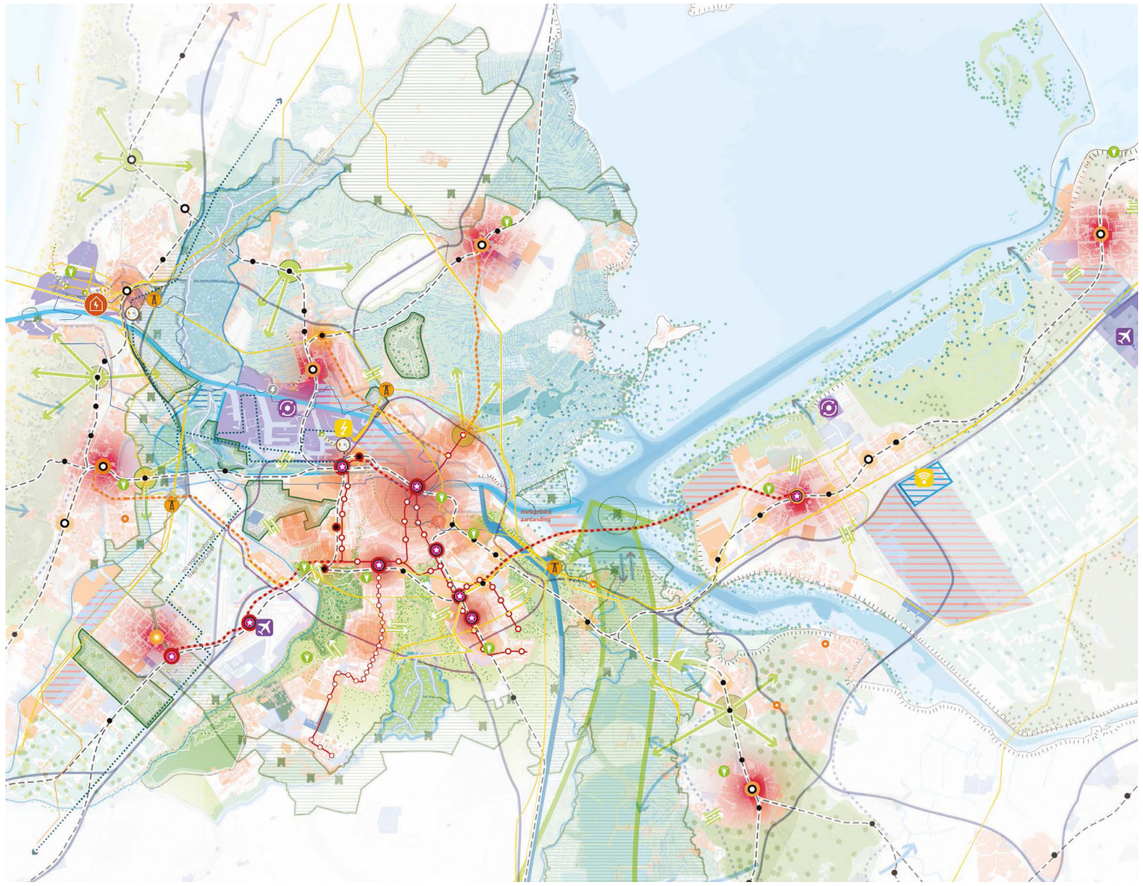


02.1.13 Urbanization of the MRA 2050

The Amsterdam Metropolitan Region faces an immense housing challenge, but the ambition of the 'Verstedelijkingsconcept' extends beyond housing alone. As figure 54 shows it is a vision for complete, sustainable cities and societies, developing the region as a polycentric metropolis with balanced economic growth across all constituent cities. The emphasis is on opportunity for every resident and every part of the region: sufficient homes, facilities and jobs, a healthy living environment and ease of movement (MRA, 2050).
Growth must benefit the entire metropolitan region, with a diverse and well-connected economy and a greater balance between living and working. The landscape is central to this vision, the continuous, varied and water-rich surroundings of the MRA are considered an indispensable asset, inseparable from the urban fabric. Landscape structures extend into the city of Almere, and the functions of nature, recreation and water are woven into the fabric of everyday neighbourhoods. Climate adaptation, biodiversity and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions run as threads through every spatial decision, with urban development treated as an opportunity to make the region more resilient and nature-inclusive (MRA, 2050).
For Almere specifically, this regional vision reinforces the 'Schaalsprong' ambition and positions the city as a vital node in the metropolitan network, not anymore as a satellite but a fully functioning urban centre on its own. The explicit attention to human-scale development, balance between living and working, and accessibility across the region creates the conditions under which the spatial needs of young professional women (commuting, care, housing affordability, urban liveability) could be meaningfully addressed.

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Accessibility and mobility within MRA*	*Metropolitan landscape development*	*Multi-core development*	*Balance of living and working*	*Climate-resilient region*
Spatial design	*Increased MRA connectivity*	*Increase biodiversity*	*Human-scale development*	*Qualitative and quantitative housing demand*	*Climate adaptive*
Focus group	*Travellers through MRA*	-	-	*Current and future MRA residents*	-
Female involvement	-	-	-	*Conditions created but gender not explicitly named*	-

Figure 54 Urbanisation concept 2050 (Bossink et al., 2021)



02.1.14 Almere 2040, Heart of the City

Almere's city centre holds the distinction of being the least inhabited inner city in the Netherlands. Between 2020 and 2030, at least 5,000 new homes will be added to the 'Hart van de Stad', rising to as many as 15,000 by 2050 (figure 55). Yet the ambition reaches beyond housing numbers alone, the aim is to create a centre where people genuinely want to live, work, study and spend time, distinguished by its urban density, architecture and quality of public space (Gemeente Almere, 2023).

This vision is rooted in the 'Uitvoeringsagenda' accompanying 'Almere, stad met toekomst' from 2021, adopted by the city council. Five core ambitions guide the development: a mixed-use programme combining housing, work, education and facilities to support a 16-hour economy; the positioning of culture, arts and creative industries at the heart of the city's identity; a pedestrian-first approach to accessibility and inclusion, reachable for all regardless of income, background or ability; contribution to a fully energy-neutral Almere by 2050; and the creation of one of the greenest central urban areas in the Netherlands, with green routes, public spaces and places of rest woven into the urban fabric (Gemeente Almere, 2023).

Of all the plans examined in this chapter, the Hart van de Stad vision comes closest to addressing the spatial conditions that the lived experience research in chapter 03 will identify as most urgently needed. The explicit emphasis on pedestrian priority, mixed use, a 16-hour economy, inclusive access regardless of income, and high-quality green public space aligns directly with the daily needs and wishes of young professional women in Almere. Yet, this plan only focuses on the existing heart and the new large development of the Floriade in the south, neglecting existing neighbourhoods (figure 56).

	Access	Public space	Density	Homes	Longevity
Main vision	*Pedestrian-first, accessible for all*	*Greenest inner city in the Netherlands*	*Densify*	*Increase liveliness*	*Mixed-use 16-hour economy*
Spatial design	*Green routes and public space*	*Creative industries embedded in public space*	*Mixed-use densification in center and Floriade*	*5,000–15,000 new homes*	*Energy-neutral development*
Focus group	*All residents regardless of income or background*	-	-	*Current and future residents*	-
Female involvement	*Pedestrian priority and inclusion align with female spatial needs*	-	-	*Affordable and diverse housing ambition relevant to young professional women*	-

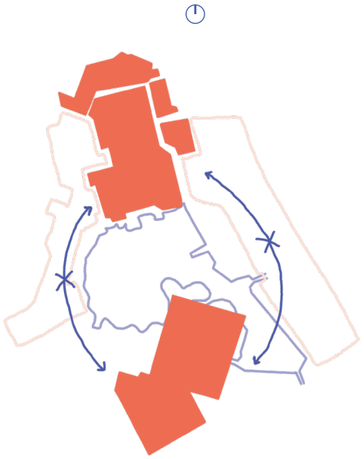
Figure 55 Development vision 2040 (Posad-Maxwan, 2023)

Figure 56 Neglecting existing neighbourhoods



Development guidelines for the heart of the city
- Function mix of living, working and amenities
- Development arts and culture
- Accessibility, connectedness and inclusive
- Sufficient and sustainable energy
- Attractive and natural landscape





02.1.15 Subconclusion

Tracing Almere's planning history from the first outline of the Flevopolder in 1949 to the Hart van de Stad vision of 2023 reveals a consistent pattern: the city has been shaped by successive waves of dominant spatial paradigms, each leaving a structural imprint on the built environment, and each produced by decision-making processes in which women were largely absent, as practitioners and as a named focus group.

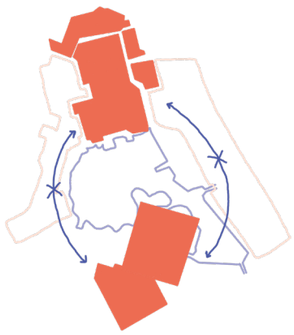
Structural decisions
The earliest plans were oriented around the farmer, the wealthy townsperson and the agricultural landscape. As the city took shape in the 1970s, progressive ideals of emancipation, social cohesion and wellbeing entered the planning language, yet the teams making spatial decisions remained almost exclusively male. Anita Lantermans, who joined the Projektburo in 1973 as its only female urban designer, represents both the exception and the rule: a single female voice in a room of hundreds, whose contributions to densities, walkability, public transport and everyday usability were foundational yet long unrecognised.

The family framework
The family household 'type' dominated the housing programme from the outset, with 90% of early housing designed around this typology. The liberalisation of the housing market in the 1990s and the Vinex ambition of owner-occupation for the middle class further entrenched assumptions of dual-income households and financial equality that structurally disadvantaged women, in particular single women, single parents and those in lower-income employment. Despite the progressive language of diversity and inclusion in the Almere Principles of 2008 and the metropolitan visions of 2021, gender remained absent as an explicit planning category throughout.

Five themes
The five analytical lenses applied across this chapter reveal where these paradigms have left their mark the most:

- **Access and connectivity** has consistently prioritised car-based mobility and efficient point-to-point travel, undervaluing the complex, multi-stop daily patterns that characterise women's movement through the city.
- **Qualities in public space** have been shaped by green structure principles and landscape-led design, producing generous open spaces that nonetheless lack the neighbourhood-scale social infrastructure. Where the café, the square, the informal meeting place are the ones that generate everyday attachment.
- **Density, typology and zoning** have favoured low-rise suburban typologies and functional separation, producing a city that is comfortable but rarely vibrant, and that concentrates social life in a single central zone
- **Size and affordability of homes** have been provided around the family household and the middle-class owner-occupant, with little provision for the diverse household compositions and income levels that characterise young professional women today
- **Longevity** reveals that the larger structural decisions made in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the road network, the separation of functions and suburban densities. While also being the hardest to reverse, and continue to shape the daily experience of the city.

The Hart van de Stad vision of 2023 represents the most promising shift to date, but neglects extisting neighbourhood structures and only focuses on the newer and larger developments.



02.2.1 Introduction

Today, Almere is home to 232,650 residents, with an almost equal gender split of 50.4% female and 49.6% male (CBS, 2025). Women aged 15 to 25 account for around 14% of the total population, while those aged 25 to 45 represent approximately 33.5%, making them one of the city's largest demographic groups. Within this research, the target group of young professional women is focused on the ages 18 to 35, a group that sits at the intersection of these categories and represents a significant share of the city's inhabitants. It is this group whose spatial experience is most directly shaped by the planning decisions in section 02.1. The historic plans examined in the previous section did not remain on paper, they physically unfolded in the city today.

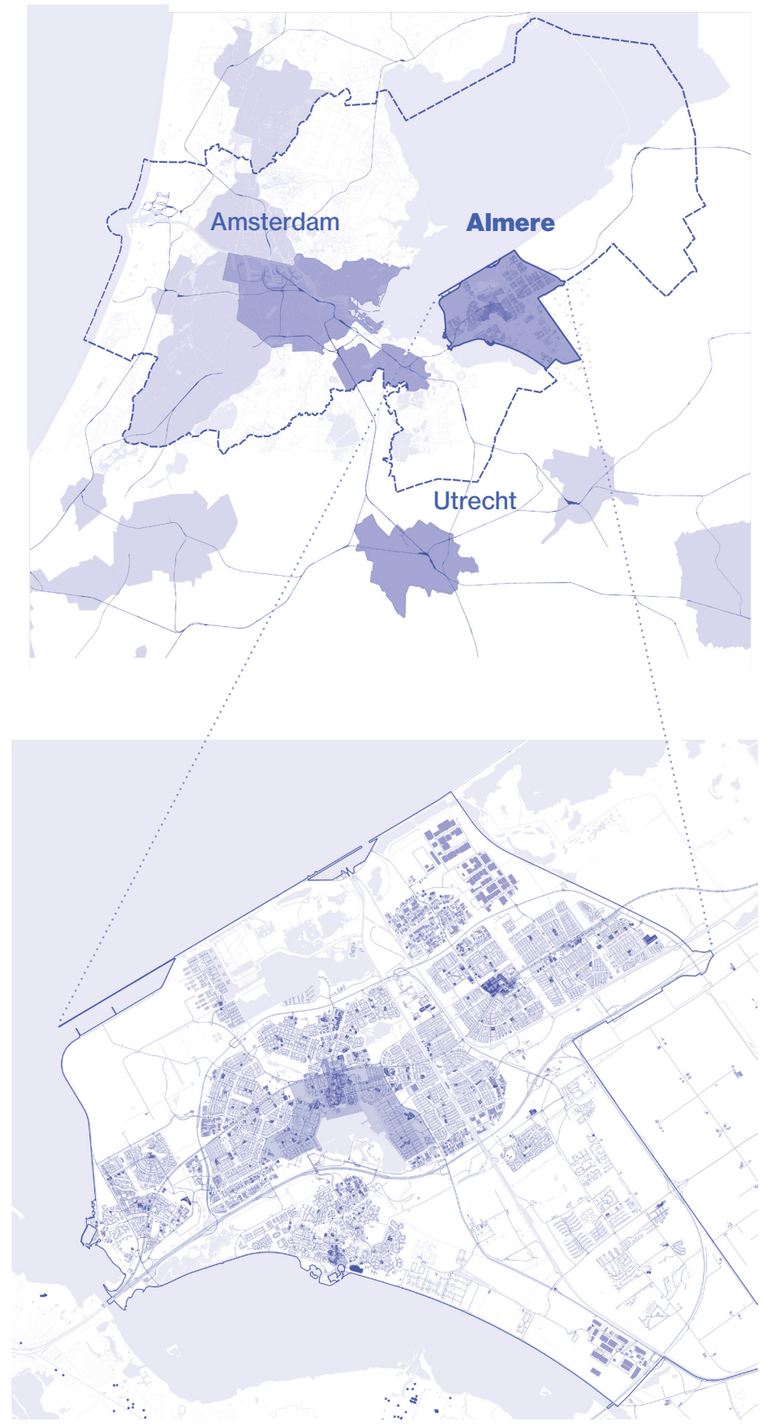
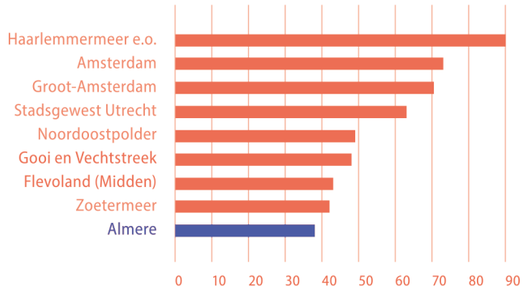


Figure 57 Almere in the MRA (OSM, 2026)
Figure 58 Almere and fcus areas (OSM, 2026)

Access and connectivity

Almere's spatial and economic structure remains shaped by its origin as a commuter city. With a very unbalanced ratio of jobs to population as seen in figure 59, a significant share of its working population commutes daily to Amsterdam or Utrecht for well-paid employment (Gemeente Almere, 2021). This has direct gendered consequences. Four out of ten parents of hetero couples would prefer to divide work and domestic tasks equally, yet in practice this is the case for fewer than one in ten couples. In almost half of these households, the male partner works more while the female partner takes on a larger share of domestic tasks (CBS, 2023). In a commuter city like Almere, where one partner must regularly travel to access higher-paid employment, it is disproportionately the female partner who reorganises her working life around care and domestic responsibilities. The structural maps reveal how this logic is spatially inscribed. The railway line fragments the city's structure as much as it connects it to the region (figure 60). The primary road network shows the implementation of car-based movement, producing a built environment oriented around efficient transit (figure 61).



Unbalanced ratio of jobs to population

Figure 59 Ratio of jobs as percentage of population per region (Gemeente Almere, 2021 | origin: CBS NEO Observatory)

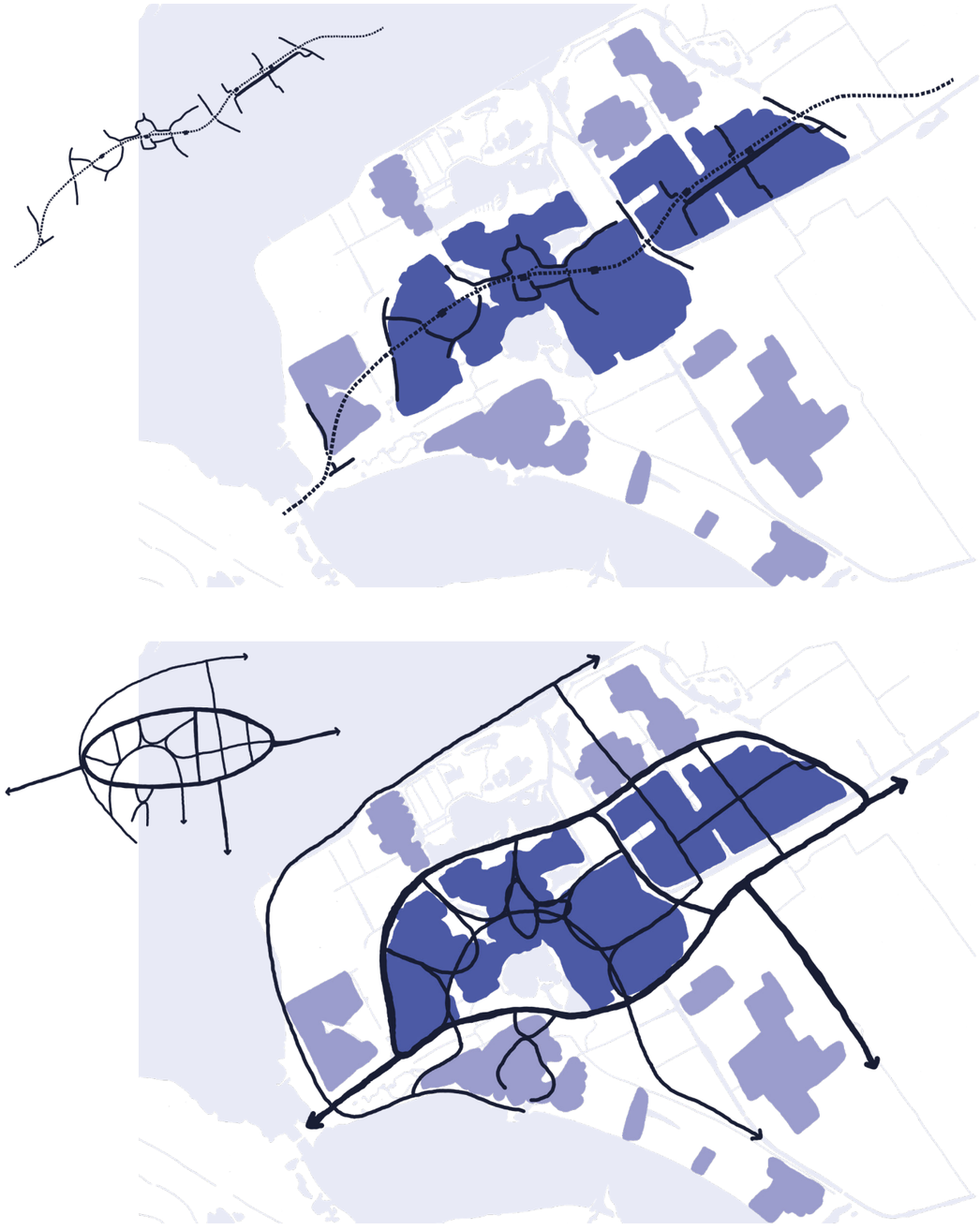
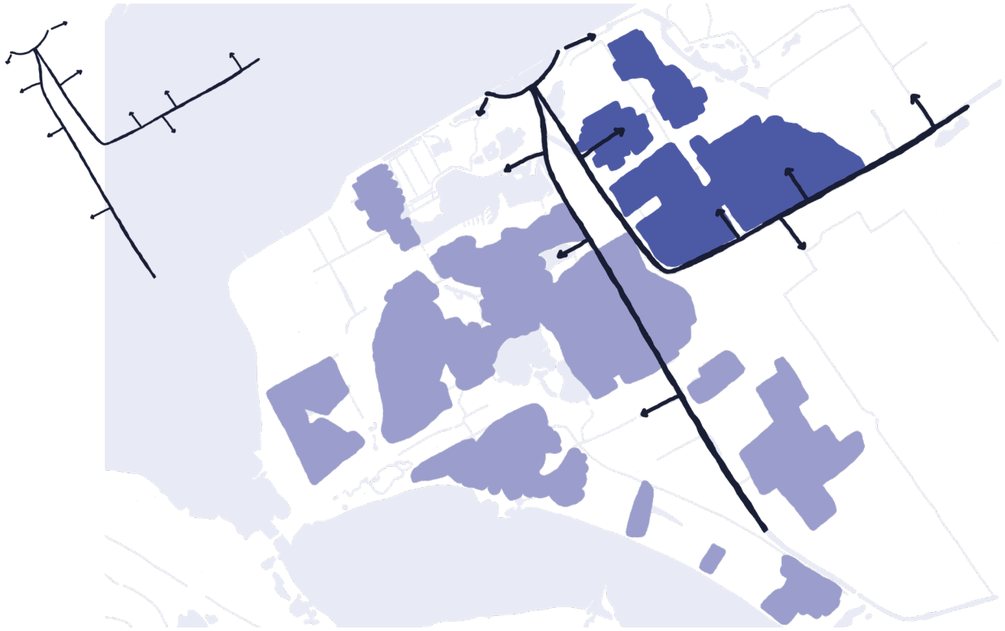


Figure 60 Dividing traintrack (Topotijdreis)
Figure 61 Dividing car infrastructure (Topotijdreis)



Differentiated water networks
- Built along straight water structure
- Built along flower-water structure
- Differentiated water structures
- Water

1:50 000



Splitting canal
- Built east-side canal
- Built west-side canal
- Dividing canal structure
- Entrances canal in water-system
- Water

1:50 000

Figure 62 Differentiated water networks (Topotijdreis)

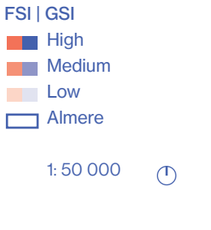
Figure 63 Splitting canal (Topotijdreis)

Qualities in public space

Almere's public space is characterised by its green generosity and its social limitations. The integration of water structures, various parks and landscapes into the built fabric remains one of the city's most distinctive qualities. Yet water structures are largely disconnected between Almere Stad and Almere Buiten, limiting their potential as continuous social and recreational routes (figure 62). The north-south canal reinforces this fragmentation as seen in figure 63, functioning as a barrier rather than a connector. At the neighbourhood scale, public space is oriented around movement rather than dwelling, streets designed for passing through rather than slowing down, meeting or spending time.

Density, typology and zoning
Almere's built environment is dominated by low-rise suburban typologies, coming from the family-housing programme at the start of the city and the Vinex densities of the 1990s (figure 64 & 65). The FSI and GSI mapping in figure 66 reveals a consistently low floor space index across most residential areas, with higher densities concentrated in Almere Stad centre and Almere Poort. Functional zoning remains relatively strict, with residential, commercial and employment areas largely separated, producing a city that is calm and green but rarely mixed.





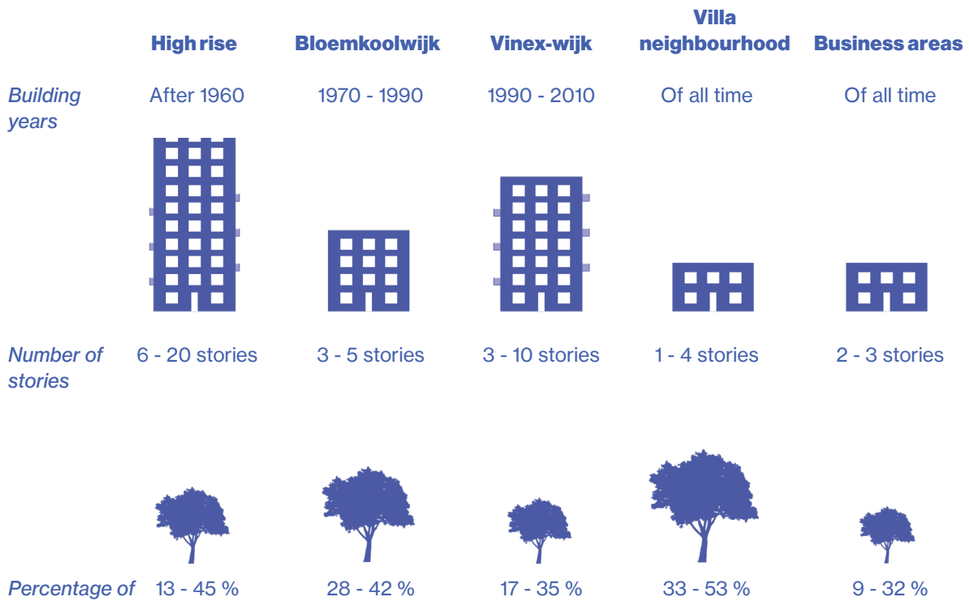
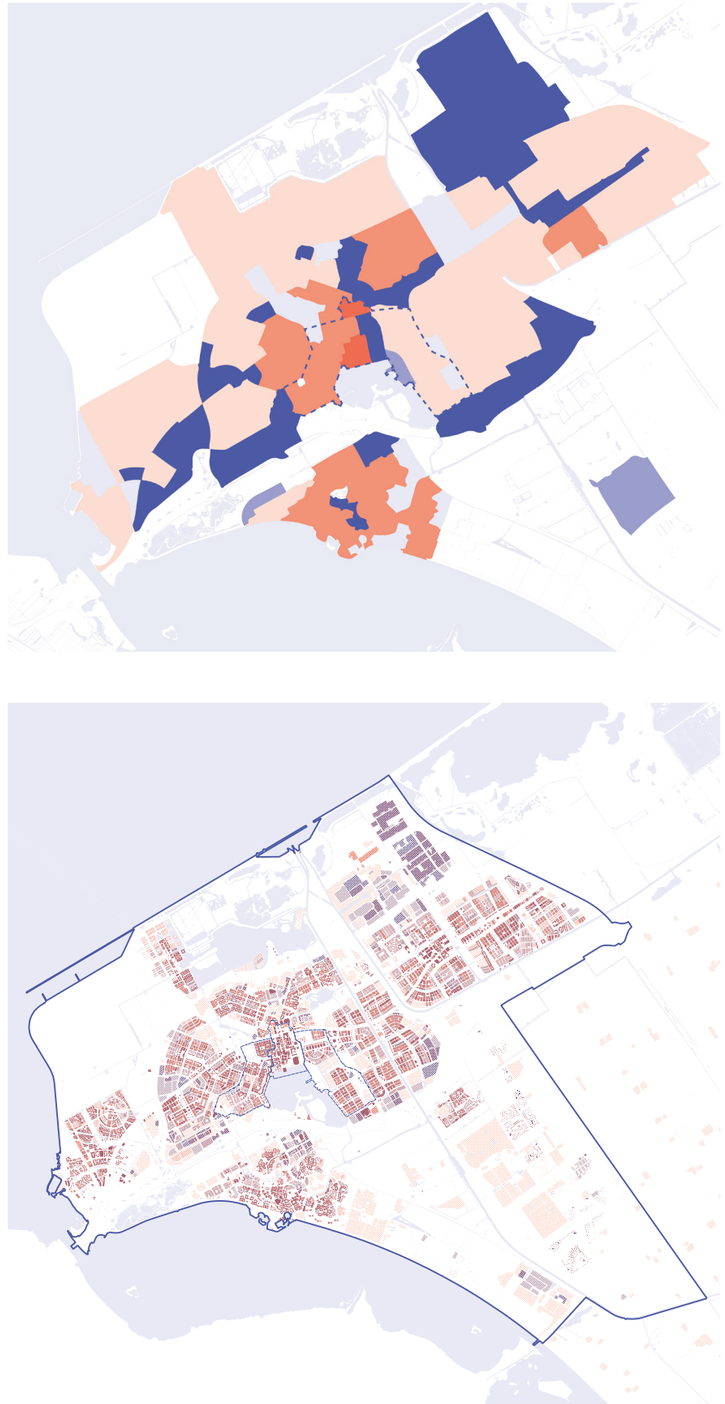


Figure 64 Typology characteristics (based on data from Klimaateffectatlas, 2023)

Figure 65 (Klimaateffectatlas, 2023; OSM, 2026)
Figure 66 FSI | GSI Almere (Rudifun, 2024)



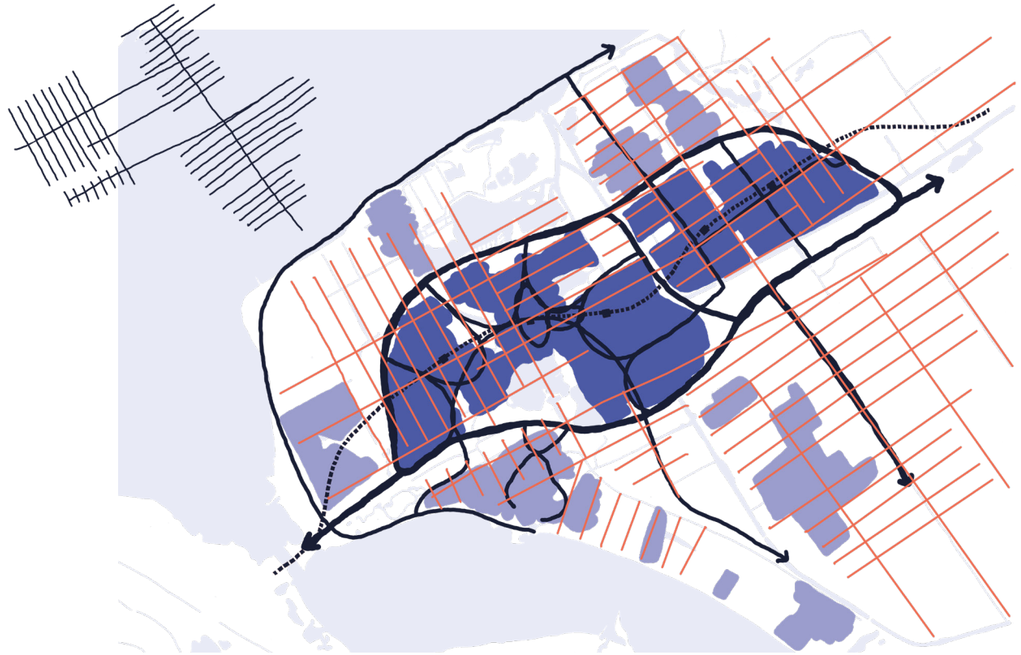
Size and affordability of homes
Almere has historically offered a more affordable housing stock than Amsterdam and Utrecht and still does. But the housing crisis is also affecting Almere's housing market. The average social housing waiting time now stands at ten years, with nearly 20,000 active housing seekers registered (1Almere, 2025). Social housing accounts for just 26.6% of the total stock, below the municipality's own target of 30% (NUL20, 2025). The mid-market rental segment is particularly strained, with limited supply and prices that have risen into the expensive rental category (1Almere, 2025). For young professional women, whom are more likely to be single-income, to work part-time due to care responsibilities, and seeking smaller, central and flexible homes, the gap in Almere's housing provision is structural.

	Average WOZ [€]
Amsterdam	518.000
Utrecht	490.000
Almere	397.000

Figure 67 Average housing prices Amsterdam, Utrecht and Almere (Allecijfers, 2026)

Longevity
The guidelines of the original polder landscape remain legible in Almere's urban structure today (figure 68). The large infrastructural lines, such as the railway and the primary road network, follow the same directional logic as the original landscape structure. Together with the built environment, which has been outlined and organised along these connections as well. Where the original lines were defined by landscape and water, they are now defined by infrastructure. What was once a natural framework has become a built one, yet its underlying landscape shows through, reminding that the spatial logic established in the earliest phases of the city's development continues to structure how Almere is organised today.

Figure 68 Polder structures influence today (Topotijdreis)



Spatial consequences for young professional women

Taken together, these five lenses reveal a city whose spatial structure was built around a user that was never explicitly named but consistently assumed: the male commuter in a dual-partner family household, moving efficiently between home and work. For young professional women aged 18 to 35, the consequences of this assumption are spatial and practical today.

Almere is not without its strengths, its high-speed bus network is well developed, and the older neighbourhoods such as the Bloemkoolwijken were explicitly designed around slow movement, pedestrian routes and social interaction. Yet these qualities are unevenly distributed across the city, and do not compensate for the structural gaps that remain. The emphasis on commuter logic limits local employment opportunities and reinforces gendered divisions of labour within households. The dominance of low-rise family typologies and the shortage of affordable, smaller and flexible homes leaves this group structurally underserved by the housing market. The separation of functions and the concentration of social life in a single central zone makes the city less legible, less safe and less socially rich for women navigating it at different times of day. And the persistence of the original landscape logic, generous but disconnected, green but not always safe or socially activated, means that the city's greatest spatial asset remains only partially available to those who could benefit from it most.

Figure 69 Stedenwijk (Made by author)
Figure 70 Almere Center (Made by author)
Figure 71 Filmwijk (Made by author)
Figure 72 Stedenwijk, Almere stad, Filmwijk (OSM, 2025)

3.2.2 Focus area within Almere

The city-wide analysis establishes the structural conditions that shape Almere as a whole. The following section narrows to the area that forms the primary site for both the lived experience research of chapter 03 and the design strategies of chapter 04: the Almere Stad centre, Stedenwijk and Filmwijk (figure 69-72). This area concentrates many of the tensions identified before, a central zone with the highest density of functions, but limited residential density, strictly bordered by residential neighbourhoods that reflect the suburban logic of successive planning eras.











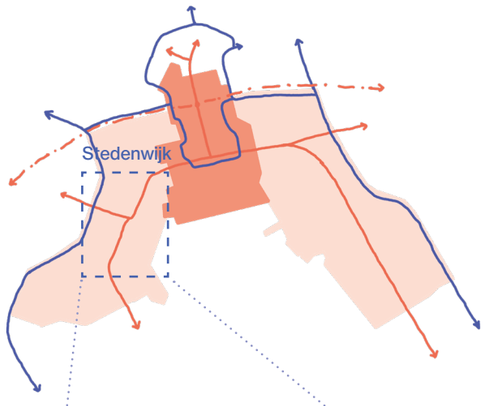


	Stedenwijk ***Bloemkoolwijk*** *Bicycle oriented*	**Almere Stad** ***High rise*** *Weekly market*	**Filmwijk** ***Vinex*** *Car-oriented*
Residents	10.330	6.290	10.360
(F / M %)	50,7 / 49,3%	48 / 52%	51,7 / 48,3%
15-25y, F	14%	13%	14%
25-45y, F	26%	43%	26%

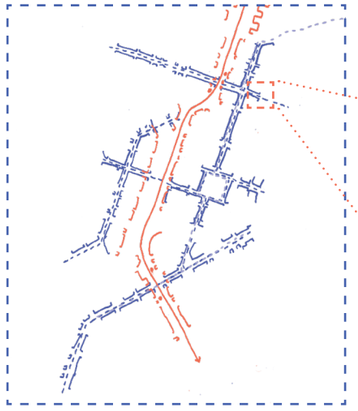
Movement and accessibility

The focus area is well connected at the metropolitan scale, direct rail, highway and fast-bus connections link Almere Stad to Amsterdam, Utrecht and Lelystad, making the area attractive for residents who commute beyond the city. The fast-bus network is notably well integrated, running through both residential and commercial areas and largely avoiding crossings with the car network to maintain speed and reliability (figure 73 & 75).

Within the focus area, however, the three neighbourhoods differ in how movement is structured. Stedenwijk has a more complex car network, where cycling and pedestrian routes carry equal if not greater importance (figure 74 & 75). The bicycle network is a continuous route through the neighbourhood, generating passive surveillance and activity along residential streets during the day and after dark.



Network as system
- Bicycle network
- Traintrack
- Car network
- Car parking
- Focus area



Bicycle network through the built
- Bicycle network and facades
- Bus network and facades



Figure 73 Network as system (Based on data from: OSM, 2026, handdrawn)

Figure 74 Bicycle network through the built

Figure 75 Relation to the facades

Figure 76 Train, bus, car and bicycle connection (OSM, 2026)

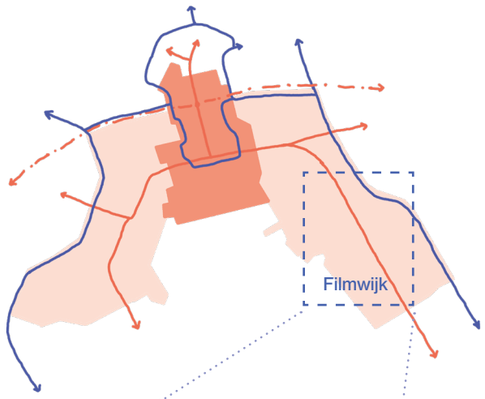


Connectivity witin the fabric
- Train network
- Bus network
- Bus stop
- Car network
- Bicycle network

1:15 000

Filmwijk, by contrast, is organised around a straightforward car network optimised for arrival and departure, with a more fragmented cycling infrastructure. Car accessibility across the focus area is good, yet this comes at a spatial cost a large part of the area is parking-related, meaning that a significant share of public space is dedicated to car storage rather than pedestrian life or social space (As seen in fugures 80 - 82).

For young professional women who rely primarily on cycling, walking and public transport for daily movement, the focus area offers genuine strengths in its bus and cycle network, alongside persistent tensions between car infrastructure and the quality of the pedestrian environment.



Network as system
- Bicycle network
- Traintrack
- Car network
- Car parking
- Focus area

Bicycle network through greenery
- Bicycle network and facades
- Large green structures and facades

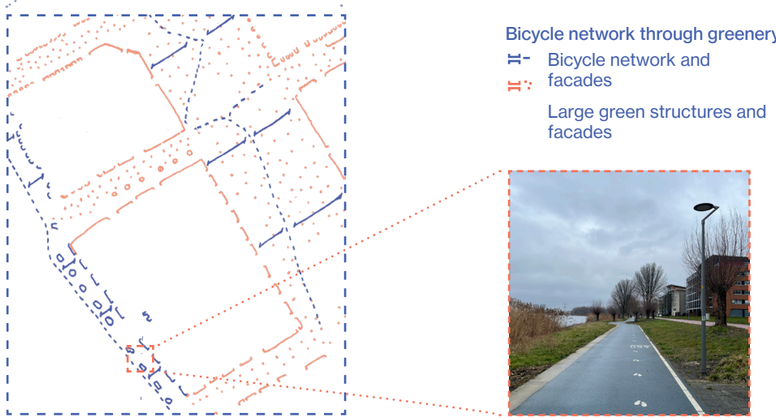
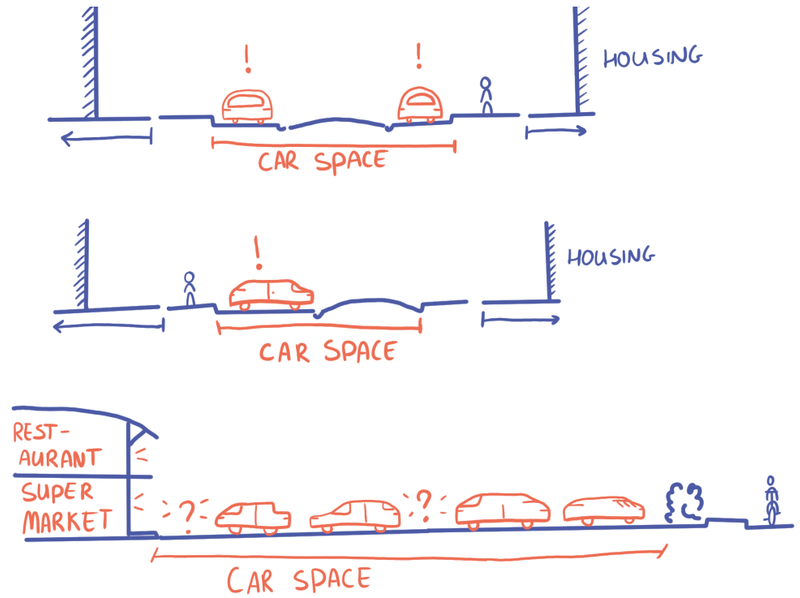
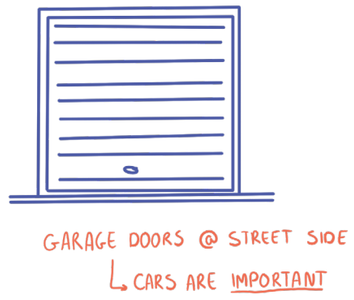


Figure 77 Network as system (Based on data from: OSM, 2026, handdrawn)
Figure 78 Bicycle network through greenery
Figure 79 Distance to facades
Figure 80 Cars dominate the public space in Filmwijk
Figure 81 Cars take-up space of facades
Figure 82 And eyes off the streets

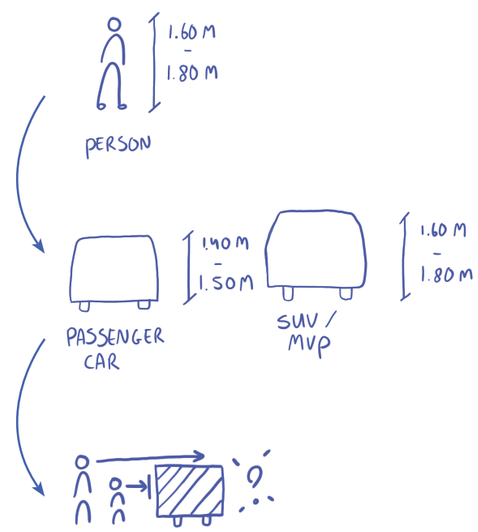
Cars dominate the public space in Filmwijk



Cars take-up space of facades



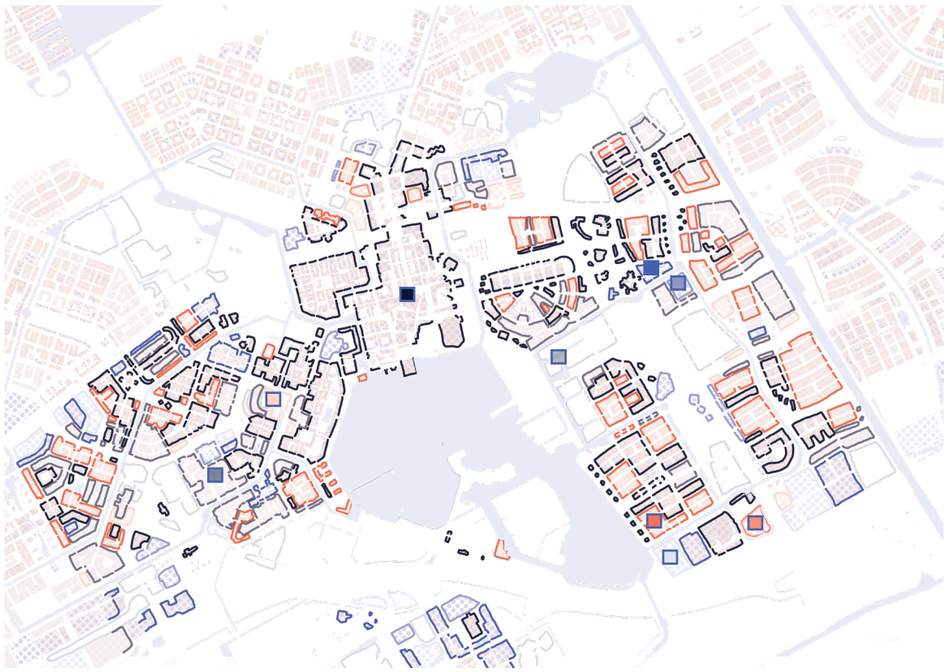
And eyes off the streets



The built environment

The FSI/GSI (Floor Space Index/Ground Space Index) mapping of the focus area reveals a highly fragmented density landscape across the three neighbourhoods shown in figure 83. Almere Stad centre concentrates the highest FSI values in the area, showing tall buildings on relatively small footprints. While Stedenwijk and Filmwijk are characterised by relatively low to medium GSI with medium FSI, the spatial signature of the Bloemkoolwijk and Vinex typologies: buildings spread across the plot, set back from the street, surrounded by green space. This produces generous private and semi-private outdoor space but limits the activation of the ground floor and the density of uses at street level.

For young professional women navigating the focus area daily, this density landscape has direct consequences: the centre offers the most functions but the least housing, while the residential neighbourhoods offer housing but little else within walking distance.



FSI/GSI focus area
- Selected areas
- Water structures

Further legend is explained on the right page.

1:15 000

Figure 83 FSI/GSI map (base: Rudifun, 2024)

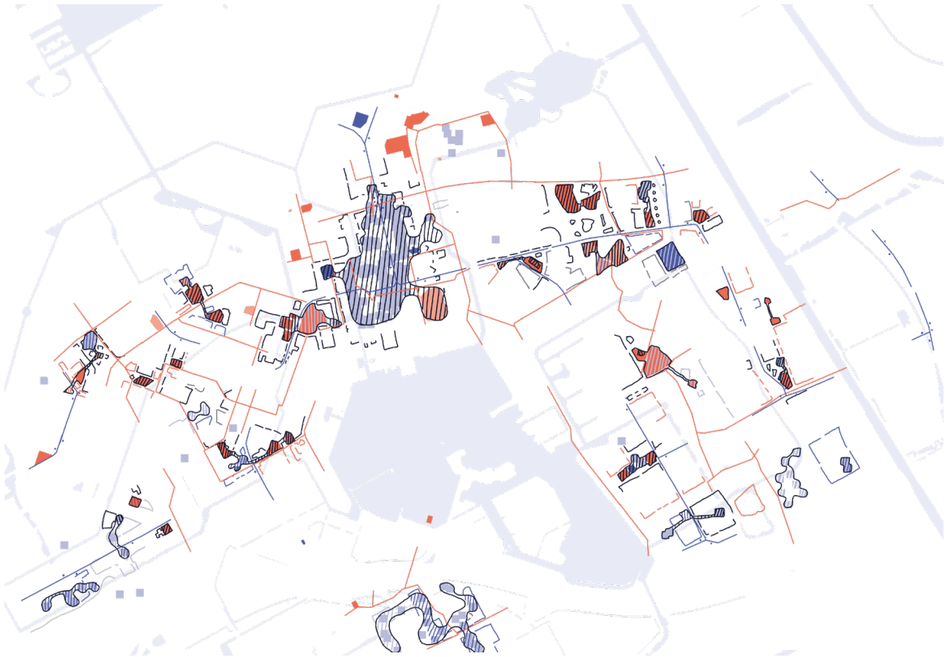
Figure 84 FSI/GSI impressions of Almere (Google Earth Pro, 2026)



Functions and daily life

The focus area benefits from a well-developed provision of education and care facilities. Across the municipality of Almere, there are 123 schools, 22 kindergartens and 11 childcare facilities (OSM, 2025), with childcare present at every scale from informal gastouder arrangements to institutional providers. Local amenity centres (wijkcentra) facilitate basic daily needs within cycling distance of most residential areas, forming a functional backbone for everyday life.

As shown in figure 85, the wijkcentra are distributed as distinct clusters, each serving its surrounding residential area. Their relationship to the movement network differs between neighbourhoods. In Stedenwijk, amenity clusters are served by both the bicycle network and the bus, creating continuous and overlapping connections to daily facilities. In Filmwijk, each cluster is reached by either the bicycle network or the bus, the other is always nearby, but the direct connection is absent, requiring more deliberate navigation.



Amenity clusters and their connections

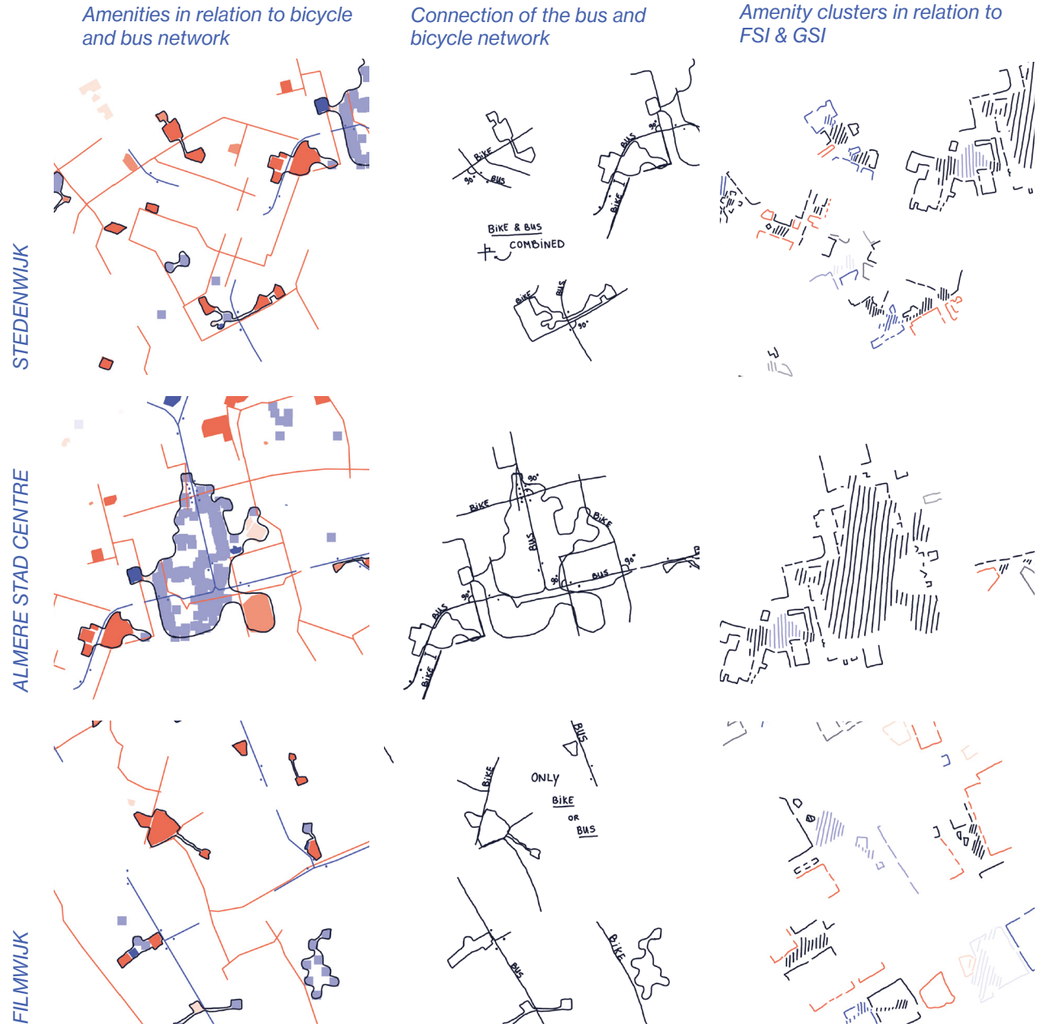
1:15 000

- Bicycle network
- Bus network

Amenities

- Childcare | Education
- Health
- City facilities
- Leisure
- Shop
- Mall
- Water

Figure 85 Amenity clusters and their connections (OSM, 2025)



Beyond the wijkcentra, strict functional zoning separates housing from commerce, affordable intermediate workspace is largely absent from residential neighbourhoods, and informal third spaces are in short supply. Continued municipal investment in planned amenity nodes rather than distributed neighbourhood provision (Gemeente Almere, 2021) risks deepening this functional gap. For young professional women navigating the focus area daily, the centre offers the most functions but the least housing, while the residential neighbourhoods offer housing but little else within walking distance.

Safety

Safety in the focus area is shaped by a combination of infrastructural conditions and social behaviour that disproportionately affects women's use of public space. According to the municipality, 42% of women in Almere experience street harassment annually, compared to 22% of men (Gemeente Almere, 2024). This is not evenly distributed across age groups: 58% of women aged 15 to 24 report experiences of street harassment, followed by 39% of those aged 25 to 34. The target group of this research is therefore the most exposed demographic in the city. Harassment concentrates in locations that form part of everyday movement: shopping areas (63%), public transport stops and stations (50%), women's own neighbourhoods (41%) and busy roads and squares (22%).

As illustrated in figure 86 and 87 infrastructural spaces including tunnels beneath the railway, bus stops across all three neighbourhoods, and parking garages in the centre create both perceived and real barriers to independent mobility.



Tunnels
Spoorbaanpad



Parkinglot
Almere Stad Center



Busstop
Filmwijk

Figure 86 Images of unsafe places (Google earth Pro, 2026)

Figure 87 Unsafety experienced map(based on data from: Pointer, 2025; Gubbels and Barten, 2025; OSM, 2026)



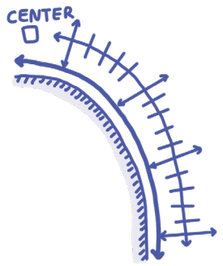
Experienced unsafety

1: 25 000

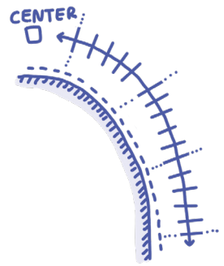
- Locations where women feel unsafe or/and change their behaviour in relation to unsafety
- Clustered locations
- Spoorpad and tunnels
- Parkinglot in centre
- Whole park

In Filmwijk, sections of the bicycle network traverse the Ebenezer Howard park and run alongside the Weerwater, through areas with limited sightlines and little passing traffic, producing a sense of vulnerability that is absent from the same routes during daylight hours (figure 88, 90, 91).
The spatial consequences are behavioural: women modify their routes, avoid certain spaces at certain times, and navigate the area with a level of deliberate calculation that is not equally demanded of male residents. This represents both a spatial problem and a design opportunity. Reconsidering flight routes, sightlines, lighting, a minimum of an open facade next to busstops (figure 89) and the activation of ground floors along bus stops, tunnels and parking structures could meaningfully reduce these barriers and extend women's independent use of the focus area beyond daylight hours.

Safe route availability during the day



Safe route availability after dark



Weerwater quay during the day

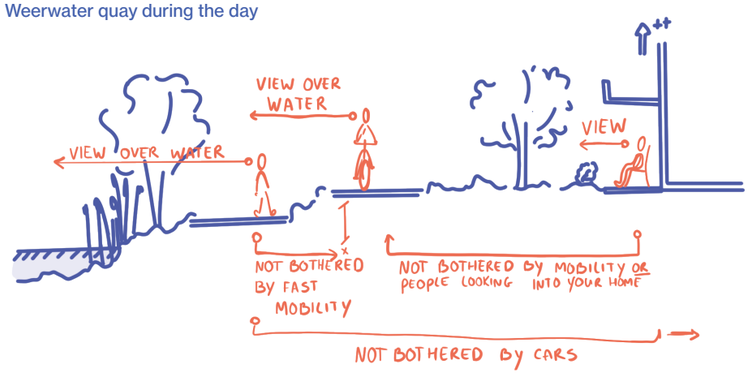
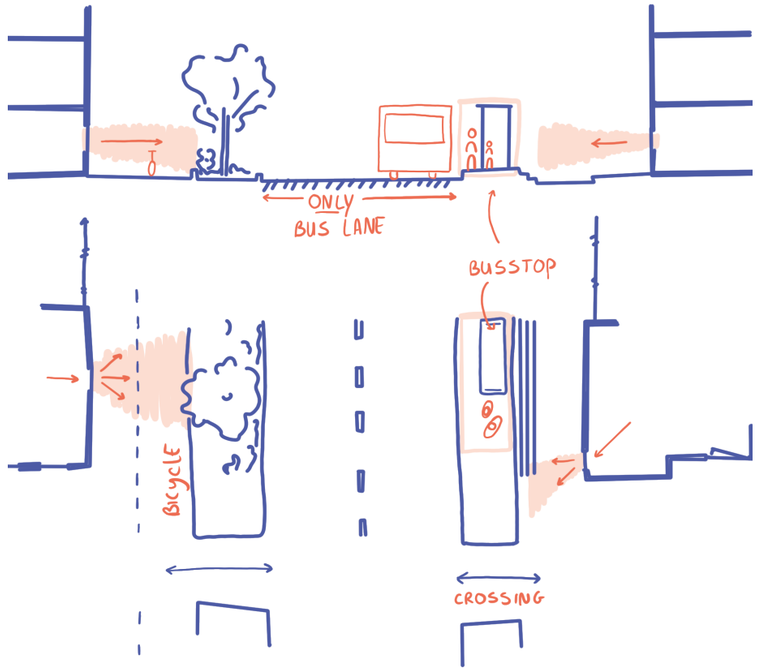
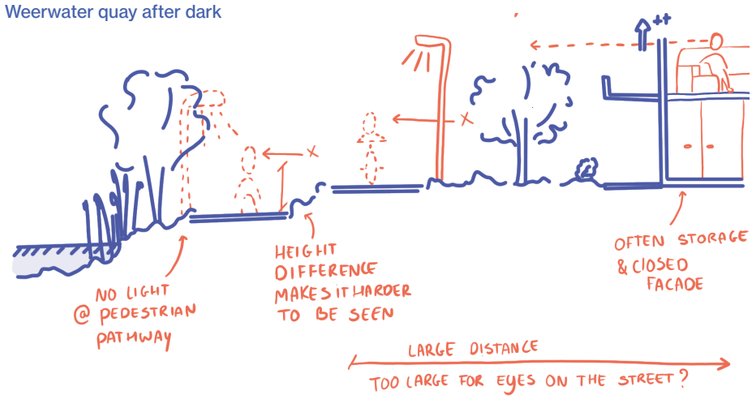


Figure 88 Safe routing availability
Figure 89 Busstops next to closed facades
Figure 90 Section of Weerwater quay during day
Figure 91 Section of Weerwater quay after dark

Busstops are often placed next to closed facades



Weerwater quay after dark



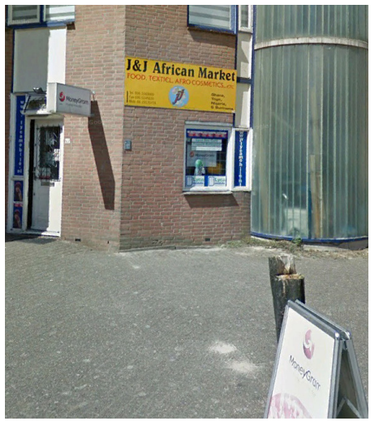
Female economic presence

The spatial distribution of female-run businesses in the focus area, as shown in figure 94, reveals a concentration in residential areas rather than amenity clusters. Drawing on LISA data (2024), this pattern appears to reflect not simply personal preference but a response to the combined constraints of strict functional zoning, a near-absence of affordable intermediate workspace, and unequal domestic responsibilities.

Care, personal services and education dominate across Almere as a whole. Home care (thuiszorg) accounts for 12% of female small businesses citywide, rising to nearly 16% in both Stedenwijk and Filmwijk. Notably, thuiszorg workers operate not from a fixed premises but by travelling to clients' homes, making the quality of cycling infrastructure, public transport and pedestrian routes directly relevant to their daily working conditions. The remaining dominant sectors citywide are paramedical practices (9.3%), beauty and personal care (6.5%), childcare (4.1%) and coaching and tutoring (2.8%). They are similarly either home-based by nature or involve visiting clients, consistent with a built environment that offers virtually no affordable workspace between the home and formal commercial areas. 64.5% of all female businesses across Almere are sole traders, and those who do scale tend to do so through online retail, while working around spatial constraints.

Despite sharing identical infrastructure, the two neighbourhoods produce different entrepreneurial profiles. Stedenwijk shows a stronger care orientation, consistent with its more socially diverse resident population, while Filmwijk shows a slightly more professionally diverse profile. This suggests demographic and social factors shape economic activity more powerfully than physical design alone.

Improving women's economic opportunities in the focus area is therefore unlikely to be achieved through infrastructure alterations and investment alone. Zoning flexibility, affordable intermediate workspace and a reconsideration of how residential neighbourhoods accommodate visible and scalable economic activity could be more structurally significant interventions.

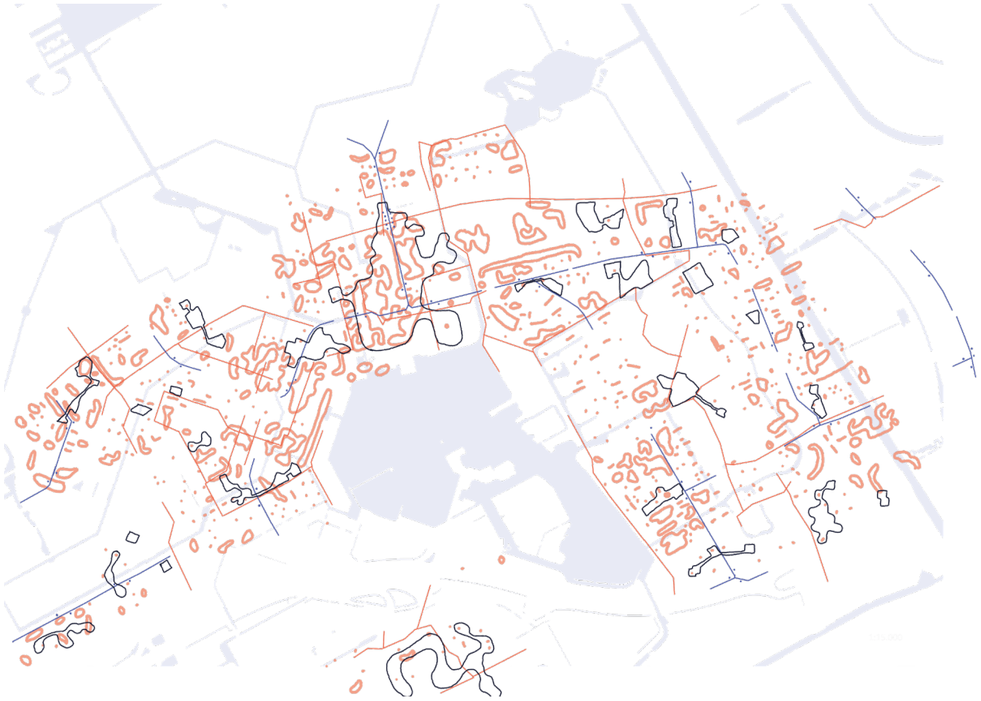


Flexible zoning
Being able to promote home based business



Strict zoning
Not being able to promote home based business, but the space is still used

Figure 92 Flexible zoning (Google Earth Pro,2026)
Figure 93 Strict zoning
Figure 94 Female run business clusters (based on data from: LISA, 2024; OSM, 2025)



Female run business clusters
Female driven businesses 1-4 employees
Existing amenity clusters
Bicycle network
Bus network

1:15 000

The following three maps read the focus area through the lens of what currently works, what constrains, and where the greatest spatial opportunities lie for young professional women. Together they form the direct spatial input for the patterns of opportunity and design strategies developed in chapter 04.

02.3.1 Strengths

Connected to the area
The focus area shows a number of genuine spatial strengths (figure 95). The metropolitan connectivity is strong with direct rail, highway and fast-bus connections linking the area to Amsterdam, Utrecht and Lelystad, and the bus network runs efficiently through both residential and commercial areas without significant delay from car crossings. Within the neighbourhoods, an extensive bicycle network provides well-connected routes to amenity nodes and the wider city, particularly in Stedenwijk where cycling infrastructure is continuous and generates eyes on the street along residential streets.

Basic amenities are available
Daily needs are overall well distributed through wijkcentra, bringing a supermarket, school, pharmacy, takeaway, within cycling distance of most residents. Additionally education and childcare are available at every scale from gastouder to institutional provider. The relative affordability of housing compared to Amsterdam and Utrecht remains a meaningful asset for the target group.

The Weerwater as quality
The integration of green and water structures into the urban fabric is one of the area's most distinctive qualities. The Weerwater and its surrounding route offer a continuous, high-quality recreational and active travel corridor that connects the focus area to the broader city. It is well used across age groups and seasons, and is consistently valued by residents as one of Almere's most appreciated public spaces. Direct connections from the residential neighbourhoods to this green corridor further reinforce its role as a shared spatial quality.

Figure 95 Strengths (OSM, 2024)

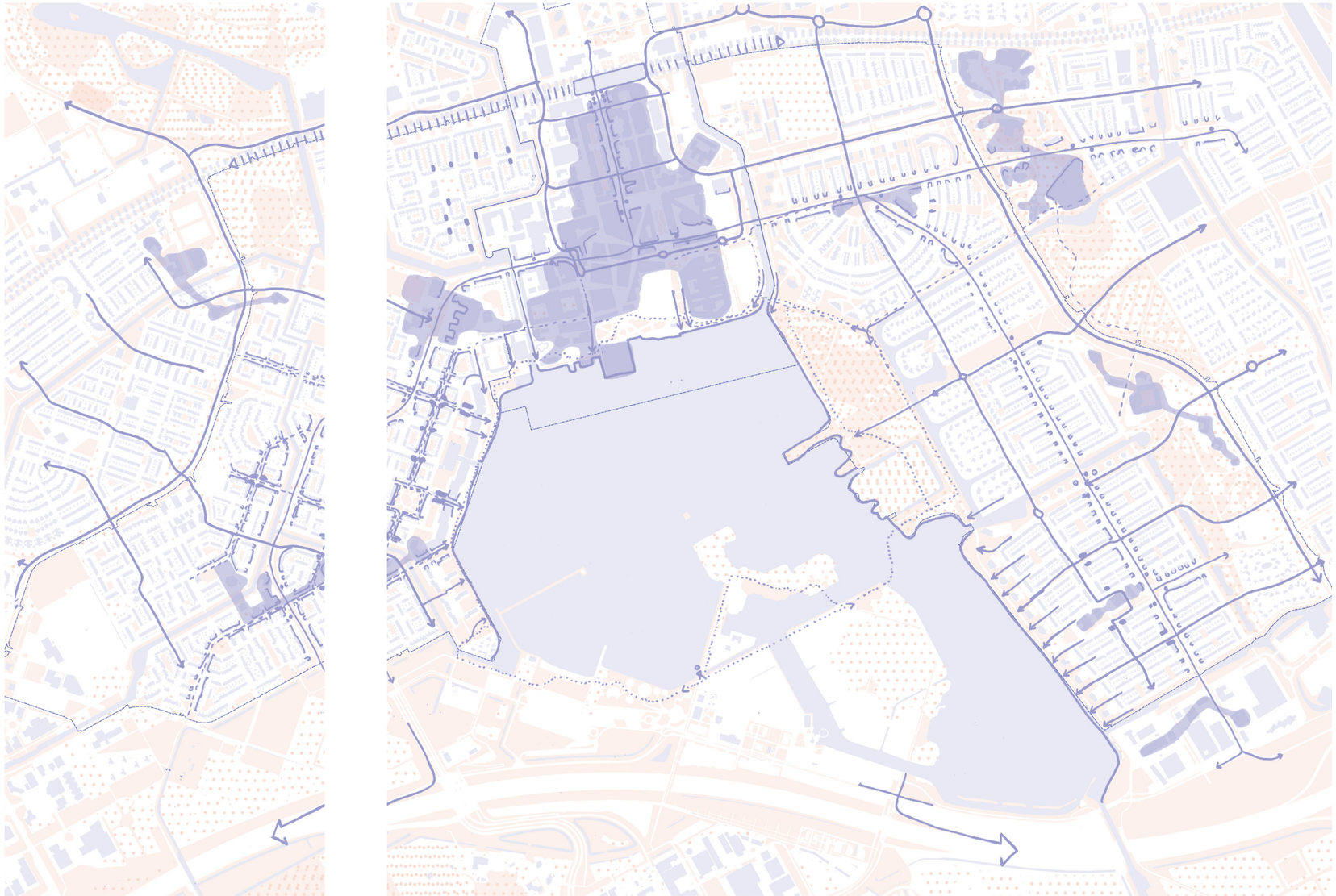


Figure 96 Weaknesses (OSM, 2024)

02.3.2 Weaknesses

The focus area's spatial weaknesses are concentrated around three interconnected conditions: the dominance of car infrastructure over pedestrian and social space, the functional separation of uses, and the safety barriers that limit women's independent use of the area after dark (figure 96).

Car dominance and strict functional zoning
Car infrastructure commands a disproportionate share of the public realm, leaving little room for the pedestrian life, informal encounter and ground-floor activation that generate urban vitality. Strict functional zoning reinforces this condition, separating housing from commerce and confining economic activity to planned nodes. The result is a residential fabric with limited mixed-use activity, an absence of affordable intermediate workspace. Together with a shortage of informal third spaces, for example the café, a studio or a flexible meeting place, which can support women's working and social lives at neighbourhood scale.

Spatial obstacles after dark
Safety barriers further constrain independent mobility. Tunnels beneath the railway, bus stops across all three neighbourhoods and parking garages in the centre create both perceived and real obstacles to movement, particularly after dark. In Filmwijk, bicycle routes through the park and alongside the Weerwater lack sightlines and passing traffic, making them feel exposed at night. These conditions have measurable consequences: 42% of women in Almere experience street harassment annually, with the 15 to 34 age group most affected.

Affordable housing and workspaces
The housing market compounds these spatial conditions. A social housing waiting time of ten years, a strained mid-market rental segment and a near-absence of student housing leave young professional women structurally underserved. Social life is concentrated in a single central zone, while female entrepreneurship remains confined to home-based models by zoning constraints and the absence of affordable workspaces. Together these conditions reflect a built environment that continues to channel women's activity in an economic, social and domestic way into the private sphere.

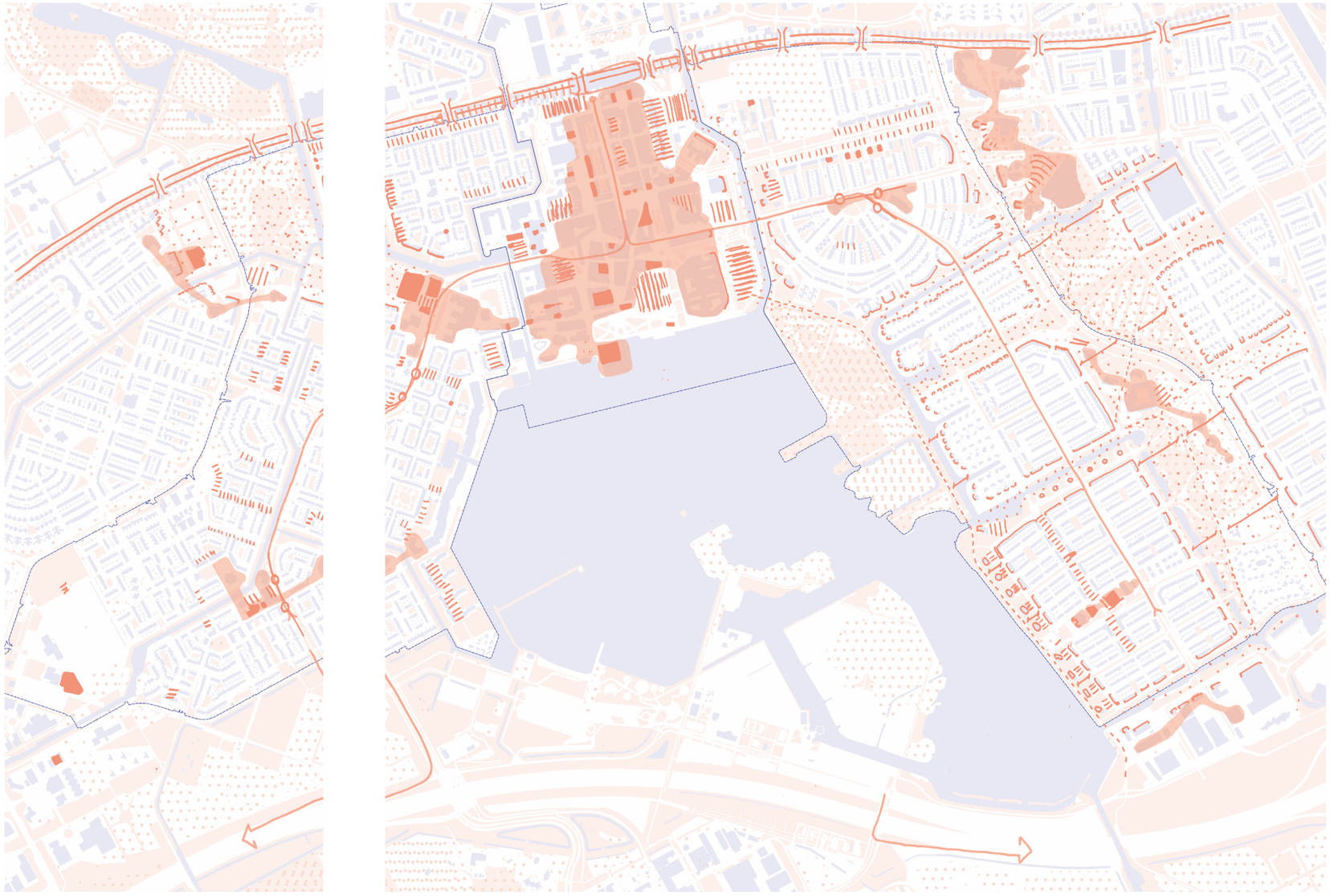


Figure 97 Opportunities (OSM, 2024)

02.3.3 Opportunities

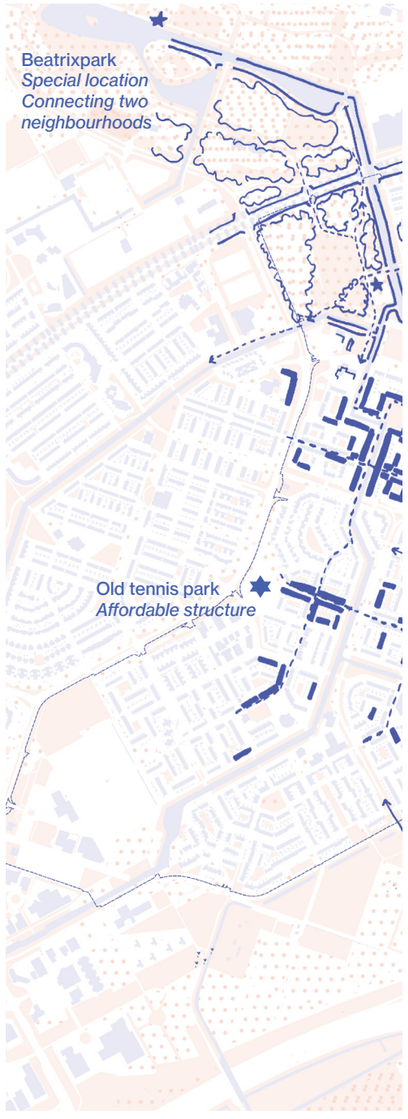
The focus area contains a number of underutilised spaces and structural conditions that represent genuine opportunities for improvement (figure 97).

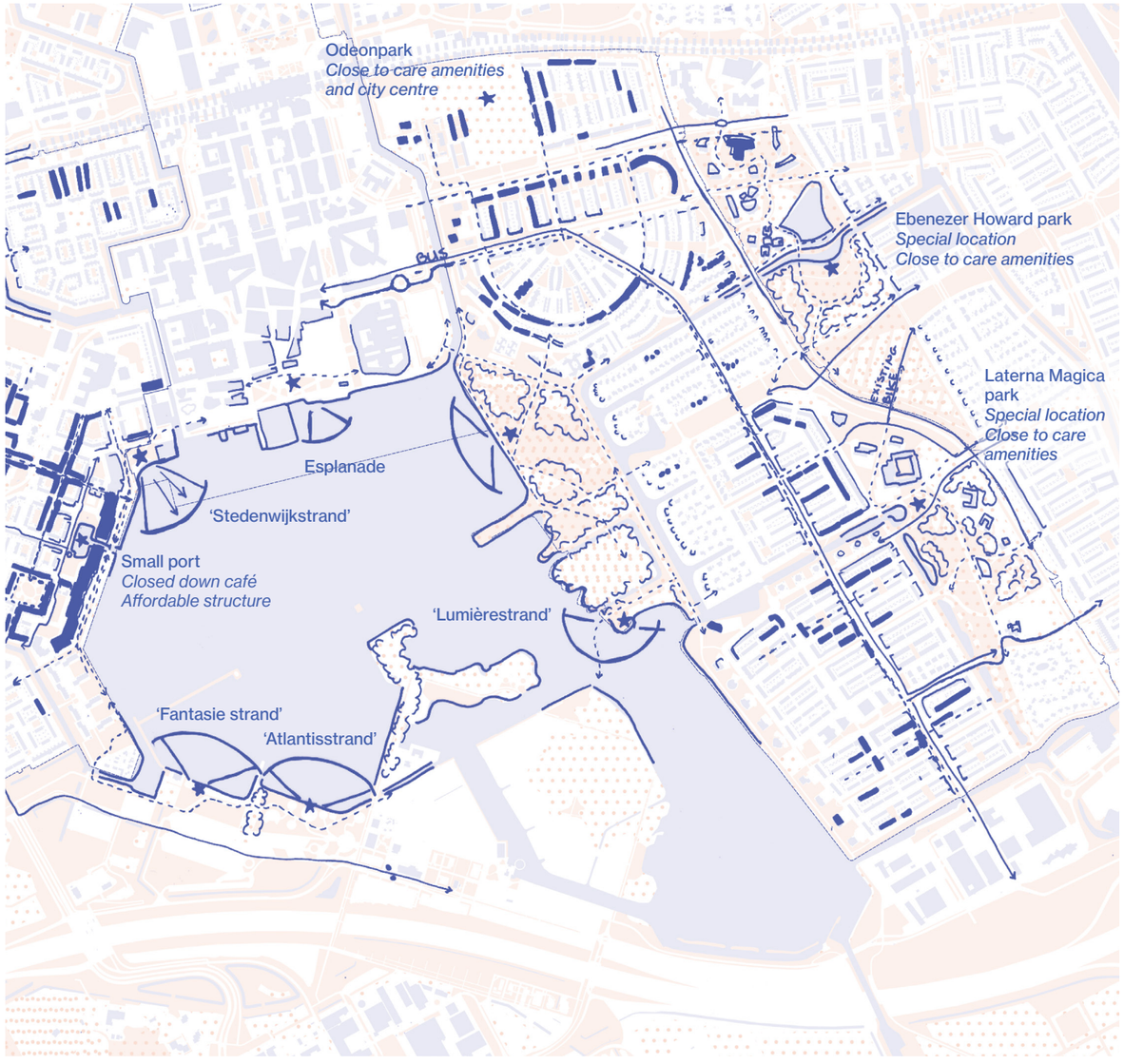
Mixing within the neighbourhood
At the city and neighbourhood scale, greater zoning flexibility could unlock the visibility and scalability of the female entrepreneurial activity that is already present but spatially constrained. Wijkcentra could be expanded as anchors for mixed-use activity, and collective and co-housing models could address both the housing shortage and the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities that compounds spatial constraints for women.

Connecting more to the Weerwater
The Weerwater route is perhaps the most significant spatial opportunity at the neighbourhood scale. Already valued and well-used, it has the potential to function as a continuous social and economic corridor. And could connect residential neighbourhoods, amenity nodes and the waterfront in a way that is currently only partially realised. Activating its edges, adding resting places and extending its programme beyond recreation would significantly strengthen its role in daily life. In Filmwijk, rerouting sections of the bicycle network along the bus corridor would increase eyes on the street and improve the experience of cycling after dark.

Re-use of places
At the scale of specific sites, several locations stand out as immediate candidates for activation. The old café by the small port in Stedenwijk and the former tennis centre offer existing structures that could accommodate community functions, flexible workspace or social infrastructure without requiring new construction. The Esplanade, Lumièrepark, Elinor Ostrom Park and spaces along Weerwater present opportunities for programming and activation that could extend the social offer of the focus area beyond the single central zone it currently relies on.

More eyes on the street
At street level, bus stops, tunnels and the station area could be redesigned with sightlines, lighting and ground-floor activation in mind, converting current safety barriers into safe and legible connections. The conditions for change are present, what is needed is the spatial and regulatory framework to activate them.





Opportunities
- Qualitative special spaces surrounded by greenery provide opportunities
- Adding residential fronts along the buslane and bicycle lane
- Enhance bicycle lane in Filmwijk facilitating a safer route through the built
- Facilitate flexible zoning and flexible workspaces for existing female business clusters
- Axes along female business clusters

1:10 000

02.3.4 Derived patterns

The spatial patterns extracted from this chapter are not independent of the theoretical framework established in Chapter 01 and the lived experiences documented in Chapter 03. The analysis, which is planned, will introduce a structural layer, thereby providing insight into which spatial conditions were deliberately designed by whom and for whom. It is important to note that the evidence is weighted towards the D and H themes, thus confirming that density, typology, zoning and housing are the dimensions of Almere's spatial structure most directly shaped by successive planning paradigms. These findings form the planned layer of the patterns of opportunity developed in Chapter 04, where theory, planning, and lived experience are integrated into spatial strategies for Almere.

A. 4 Last Mile



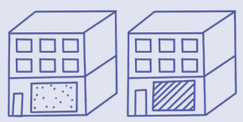
A. 5 Mobility zones within view



D. 9 Active ground floor use



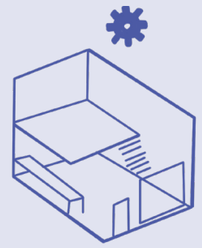
D. 10 Vertical mixed use



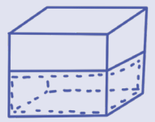
D. 11 Flexible zoning plan



D. 17 Flexible maker-spaces



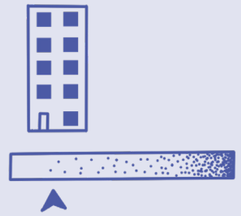
D. 18 Affordable structures



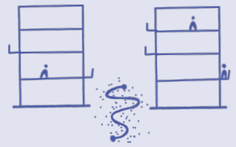
D. 19 Balance work-resident density



H. 1 Affordable housing



H. 4 Apartments along public street



“The individual must be able to live, enjoy, use and inhabit the city,”



“In your own home you can still change a lot yourself. But a city you cannot change as an individual, so it has to be done right.”

In 1973, Anita Lantermans joined the Projektburo Almere. She had studied urban design at TU Delft. At a office of around three hundred staff, eighty of whom were academics, Lantermans was the only female urban designer.

Figure 98 Anita Lantermans (Geertfotografeert.nl, n.d.)

“I was the only female urbanist, and then there was a secretary,” she recalls.

She experienced discrimination, yet describes her working environment as simultaneously stimulating, her male colleagues constantly challenging her to prove herself just a little more.

Working alongside Teun Koolhaas, she helped develop the foundational spatial structure of Almere. Where Koolhaas focused on the grand vision and architectural gestures, Lantermans championed the practical: public transport, walkability, distances, and residential density.

Despite being responsible for the positioning of Almere’s second and third urban cores, her contribution went largely unrecognised for decades. She was later involved in founding Vrouwen Bouwen Wonen, a network dedicated to improving the position of women in architecture and planning. Recognition, when it finally came, arrived late (Thomas, 2022; Kunstlinie Almere Flevoland, 2022).

03 THE LIVED

This chapter grounds the research in the everyday spatial experiences of young professional women living in Almere. Through five walk-alongs, five women at different stages of their lifes and living in different neighbourhoods navigate the city on their own terms. Their stories go from growing up, starting out, settling in, moving on and towards passing through . Revealing how Almere's urban form is actually inhabited, and where it enables or constrains the opportunities that matter most in their daily life.

03 THE LIVED
.1 Introduction
.2 Growing up | Lara
.3 Starting out | Femke
.4 Settling in | Emma
.5 Moving on | Sofia
.6 Passing through | Mila
.7 Subconclusion

03.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter established the spatial and historical conditions of Almere as a planned city, understanding how these conditions are experienced requires a different perspective, one grounded in the everyday lives of its female inhabitants. This chapter presents the findings of qualitative fieldwork conducted with five young professional women living in Almere (figure 99). It examines how the built environment shapes, constrains and enables their daily lives. These lived experiences form the empirical basis of this research, informing the spatial patterns discussed in Chapter 04.1.
The fieldwork was conducted through a combination of walk-along interviews, mental mapping, and in-depth conversations. These methods were specifically chosen for their capacity to unfold the relationship between personal experience and the spatial conditions of Almere today. Allowing spatial conditions, cherished views, important daily places and avoided routes to surface naturally within the flow of everyday movement. Detailed documentation of these sessions is included in the separate Fieldwork Logbook, which provides a more granular account of each walk-along interview, the mental maps produced, and the author's own spatial observations of the city.

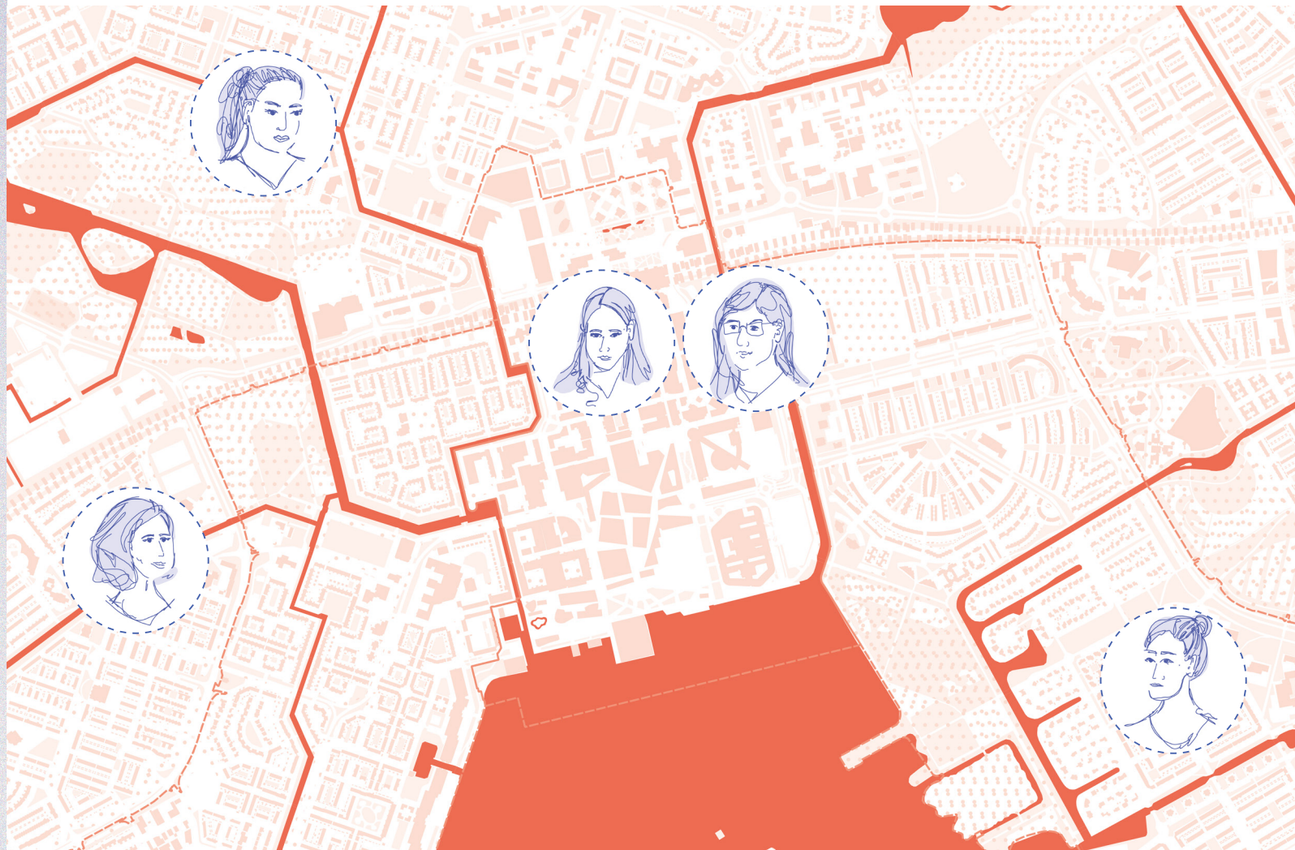


Figure 99 Residential areas of Lara, Femke, Emma, Sofia and Mila (OSM, 2025)

The five women were selected to represent a range of life stages and residential histories within the target group of young professional women aged 18–35, all living in or around Almere Stad's central ring area, recruited through personal networks and snowball sampling. Together they represent five distinct positions within that range, from growing up in the city, to starting out, settling in, moving on, and passing through, each offering a different lens through which Almere's spatial conditions come into view.

The chapter is structured around these individual portraits, following each section one woman through her daily routine, the places she finds meaningful, the safety strategies she employs, and the changes she wishes to see.

Routine
Meaningful places
Safety
Wishes for Almere



LARA
Filmwijk

GROWING UP

Lara is 25 years old and has lived her entire life in Filmwijk, on the eastern side of Almere Stad. Unlike the others, her relationship with the city is shaped less by recent arrival and more by long familiarity. She is currently job-seeking and spends much of her time at her boyfriend's place in Almere Buiten. For most activities beyond basic shopping, she gravitates towards Amsterdam or Utrecht, cities she finds more socially and culturally fulfilling than her own.

STARTING OUT

Femke is an 18-year-old student at Windesheim College in Almere city centre. She has lived in an apartment in the heart of the city with two other roommates for one year now. However, she often visits the other student houses in the same complex to eat and drink together. In addition to studying, she works part-time just north of the station.



FEMKE
Almere Stad



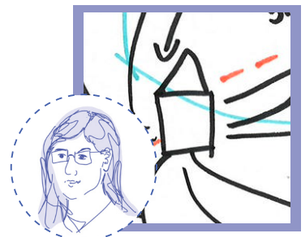
EMMA
Kruidenwijk

SETTLING IN

Emma is 30 years old and has lived in Almere for over seven years, first in the city centre during her student years, and now in Kruidenwijk, where she lives together with her partner. She is currently pregnant with her first child. Every working day she cycles to the station and takes the Sprinter to Utrecht, where she works in office management, this is a journey of around an hour each way that she has learned to navigate carefully, deliberately avoiding certain routes for reasons of safety.

MOVING ON

Sofia is 25 years old and has lived in a newly built apartment in Almere city centre for two years. She works as an HR professional at the provincial government in Lelystad, commuting by train each morning. She originally comes from Almere, having grown up in Kruidenwijk and later lived at Dichterhof as a student. Therefor she brings a layered familiarity with the city across different life stages. In her spare time she plays hockey in Lelystad, runs around the Weerwater or visits the gym in Stedenwijk.



SOFIA
Almere Stad



MILA
Muziekwijk

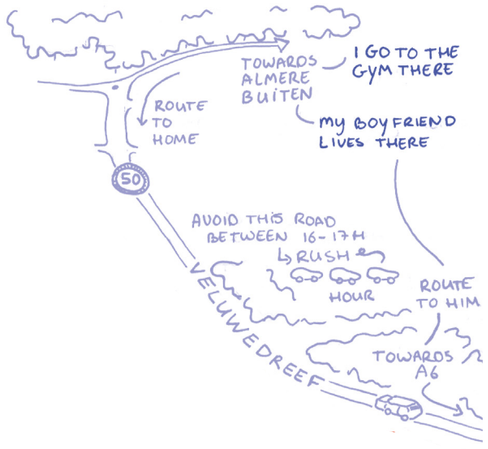
PASSING THROUGH

Mila is in her early twenties and lives in Muziekwijk with her parents, which is one of Almere's quieter residential neighbourhoods. She studies at the University of Amsterdam and travels there by train several times a week, cycling daily through Kruidenwijk and Stedenwijk to reach the intercity connection at Almere Centrum station. Despite having her social life in Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht, she remains rooted in Almere for now.

Figure 100 All images are from each female's mental map drawing (full maps are shown in Fieldwork Booklet)

Having lived in Filmwijk her entire life, Lara has an intimate knowledge of Almere that is simultaneously a source of comfort and frustration. She has the longest relationship with the city of all five women, yet paradoxically has the weakest attachment to it. Her experience reveals what it feels like to have only ever known one city.





Routine
Lara's daily routine is currently unstructured. She spends her days job-seeking from home and visiting her boyfriend in Almere Buiten. She also takes regular walks around the Weerwater and Lumièrepark with her mom. She primarily travels by car for convenience, though she also cycles and occasionally takes the bus.

Her social activities mostly take place at home or at other people's homes, and for larger outings, like going to the cinema, dining out, shopping or enjoying the nightlife, she almost always travels to Amsterdam or Utrecht. As she puts it:

'When I come back from Amsterdam or Utrecht, I get on the train or bus and think - what kind of people are these?'

Capturing her growing distance from the city in which she grew up.



Figure 101 All images are from Lara's Lived experience map (full map is shown in Fieldwork Booklet)

Meaningful places
The places Lara values most are personal rather than civic. She has a strong emotional attachment to her home, which is lived by family and long familiarity rather than the neighbourhood around it.

'It's really just the house,'. ''It's what's inside that matters, not necessarily the surroundings",

she says when asked what makes a place feel like home.





Wishes
Lara's wishes what the ordinary urban life that Almere currently fails to offer. More atmosphere, more greenery in the city and a neighbourhood café worth walking to. When asked what she would change, she hesitates – not because nothing comes to mind, but because her disconnection from the city runs deeper than any spatial solution:

'I don't think I would necessarily change anything... I don't really feel connected to the neighbourhood.'

Weerwater and Lumièrepark offer moments of calm, particularly in the warmer months. The restaurant above the local supermarket, where she worked for seven years, is one of the few places outside her home that she speaks about fondly. Significantly, she attributes this entirely to the people, not the place itself:

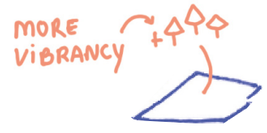
'It's mostly because of the people – not necessarily the place or the neighbourhood.'

Safety
In Lara's experience, safety is defined by a clear mental boundary: the bus lane near her home marks the divide between the familiar and the uncomfortable. The area beyond it is associated with some negative childhood experiences, such as verbal harassment and intimidation, which have left a lasting impression.

'When I was younger, I really felt unsafe at the supermarket – boys would call out to you',

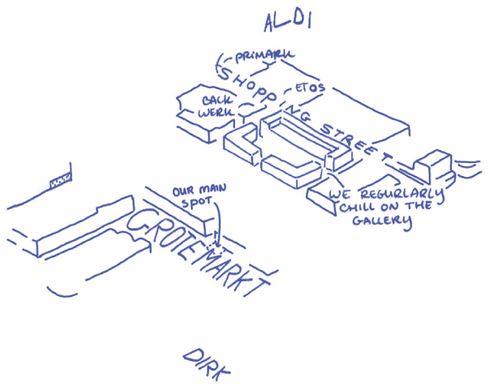
Which led her to change her daily route to the supermarket. She prefers cycling to walking in the evenings for both speed and a sense of safety.

If she moves, she expects to miss the house, not the city. This quiet resignation highlights the challenge Almere faces in holding on to its young professional population.



Eighteen-year-old Femke has lived in Almere city centre for just one year, yet in that time she has built an immediate and dense social world, meaning the city barely needs to extend beyond a five-hundred-metre radius. Her experience offers insight into what it means to arrive in Almere as a student and, contrary to initial expectations, find a sense of belonging. Not because of the city itself, but because of the people in it.





Routine
Femke's daily routine is centred almost entirely around the student association Enzjin and the cluster of places surrounding it. She attends school at Windesheim College on Monday and Friday, and works at a recruitment company on the twelfth floor of a building visible from her gallery on Tuesday and Thursday. Wednesday is her day off, which she spends washing, watching films and recovering. Her groceries come from the Aldi or Dirk, both of which are within walking distance. As she sketches her daily routes during the walk, she laughs, saying:

'I genuinely cannot go further than five hundred metres from my own front door.'

Meaningful places
For Femke, meaningful places are almost entirely social in nature. The bar of her association is at the heart of her weekly routine. Where home functions more as a node in a wider communal network spread across four student houses in the same complex than as a private apartment. In summer, the gallery outside her flat doubles as a living room, complete with folding chairs and drinks, while the Grote Markt terraces are where the group gathers at weekends.

'It's basically one big friend group, and the house itself doesn't really matter. Everything here is broken; everything has a story.'

She sees potential in the Esplanade, and experiences the city centre shopping street oddly repetitive, with the same chain stores appearing twice within a single block.

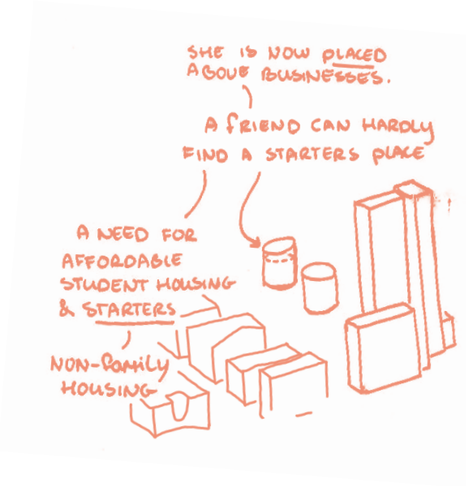
Safety
Femke's experience of safety is primarily shaped by the visible presence of homeless people around the station, Salvation Army and in the city centre. She clearly distinguishes discomfort and danger:

'It's not that I feel unsafe, but in the evening when the whole street is empty and there's just that one man standing there – it just doesn't need to be like that.'

When walking home late, her strategy is simple: she either asks someone to accompany her or calls someone on the way. The underpass next to the association, once a place where people slept rough, has largely been resolved thanks to a recently installed police camera, a small spatial intervention that she describes with quiet satisfaction.







Wishes
Femke is generally happy with her surroundings, she enjoys the compactness and convenience of a city-centre student life. However, she is clear about what is missing: more bars and nightlife for her age group, greater municipal support for student initiatives and more affordable housing after graduation. She already feels the last concern acutely, knowing that her student housing contract will end the moment she loses her student status.

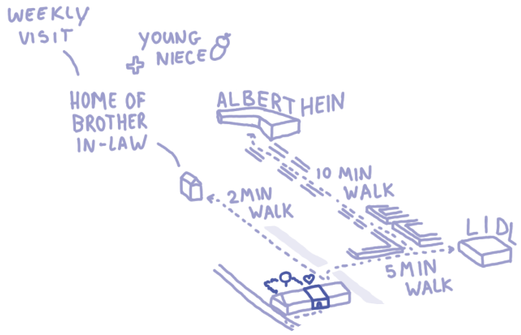
'There are no starter homes in Almere, everything is designed for couples buying together, and it's all incredibly expensive.'

Figure 102 All images are from Femke's Lived experience map (full map is shown in Fieldwork Booklet)

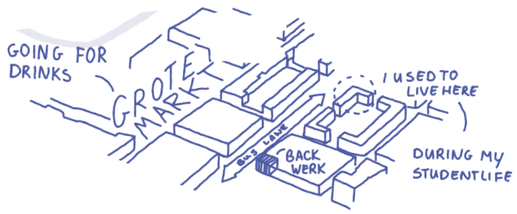
Thirty-year-old Emma has lived in Almere for over seven years. She first lived in the city centre as a student, and now lives with her partner in Kruidenwijk, where she is expecting her first child. More than any of the other women, she has a clear sense of what it means to build a life here deliberately. Her experience shows what Almere is like when it is chosen as a long-term home.



Routine
Emma's days follow a well-established routine: she cycles four to five minutes to the station each morning, before taking the Sprinter to Utrecht, where she works as a secretary at a consultancy firm. The entire journey takes around an hour. The route she cycles is not the most direct. A more efficient route runs past the Salvation Army centre, but she deliberately avoids it, opting for the slightly longer route through the business area instead. She shops for groceries at the Lidl five minutes away on foot and the Albert Heijn within ten minutes. The Enzjin student association evening once a month is one of the few occasions when she crosses the city rather than moving within her daily area.



Meaningful places
Emma's meaningful places are rooted in social life rather than urban infrastructure. Despite having long since graduated, the Grote Markt and the student association building remain central to her life, as friends still live nearby and old habits persist. She values her home in Kruidenwijk for its compactness, proximity to a small playground for her niece and future children, and the ease with which she can cycle to the station. She describes the neighbourhood itself with quiet appreciation: it is young and relatively affordable, and positioned just far enough from the bustle of the centre to feel like a place to rest.



Beatrixpark is a popular walking destination in good weather; she visits the Weerwater less often, noting that there is little reason to linger, there no café or seating area, just a route.

Safety
Emma's approach to safety is practical and carefully managed. Rather than being shaped by distance or speed, her daily cycle route is determined by a consistent risk assessment of each path's lighting, foot traffic and proximity to spaces she associates with discomfort. She would rather avoid the area around the Salvation Army. This is a space where the absence of oversight creates an unpleasant atmosphere. She has always found the city centre relatively safe, with a visible police presence on weekend evenings, and she experienced the genuinely fast response time first-hand during an incident near the bus lane. The cameras throughout the city give her a sense of social control that she finds reassuring.



Wishes
Emma's wishes for Almere are shaped by life circumstances of today. A direct train connection to Utrecht would make a real, practical difference to her daily commute. Better maintenance and lighting on the cycle path she currently avoids would enable her to take the most direct route. She also finds the vacant office buildings along her route to the station dispiriting (half-demolished and vacant for years) . These spaces drain street life from an otherwise functional neighbourhood. Emma doesn't want a different city; she wants the version of this one that already works for her to be extended a little further and maintained a little better.

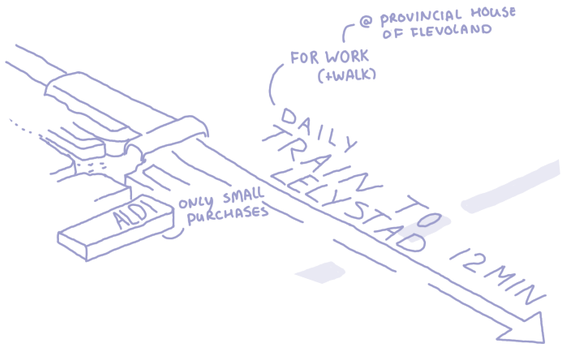


Figure 103 All images are from Emma's Lived experience map (full map is shown in Fieldwork Booklet)

Sofia is 25 years old and has lived in Almere all her life. She first lived with her parents in Literatuurwijk, then in a student house in the city centre, and now she is the first inhabitant of a new high-rise apartment complex. She neither idealises nor dismisses Almere. Her experience offers a unique perspective on what Almere looks like through the eyes of someone who has grown up with the city, knows its limitations, and is considering whether to stay.



Routine
Sofia's week is divided between Almere and Lelystad, where her workplace and partner are based. Every morning, she walks two minutes to the station, where she catches a train that takes her to the provincial government building in twelve minutes. There, she works as an HR business partner. On Wednesdays, when she works from home, the weekly market on the square outside her building is a highlight she rarely misses. The city centre's single supermarket frustrates her for groceries: two Etos and two Kruidvat, but no Albert Heijn, meaning she has to drive ten minutes for a proper weekly shop, due to her allergies.



Meaningful places
For Sofia, meaningful places are rooted in social connection rather than spatial quality. The Grote Markt, with its terraces and bars, is at the heart of her social life, as is the Baron at weekends. The Weerwater offers routes for running, skating and walking of around five and ten kilometres, although she notes with some surprise that there is genuinely nothing to stop and admire along the entire route, only the city at the beginning and end. The Esplanade has improved in recent years, gaining grass, seating, and a small city beach. She sits there in the summer. However, she feels that its potential is far from realised:

"You don't find a waterfront like this in the middle of every city centre, it has real potential."



Safety
Sofia's perception of safety is most directly shaped by her route to the gym in Stedenwijk, which passes the Salvation Army centre. She has memorised the faces of the people there and knows that if you don't engage with them, they will generally leave you alone. However, she prefers to cycle this route in the evenings rather than walk it. She is clear that there is no real alternative:

'You really can't go around it – it's right in the middle. There are two roads on either side, but they're always there.'

After dark, she simply always reaches for her bike out of habit and safety.



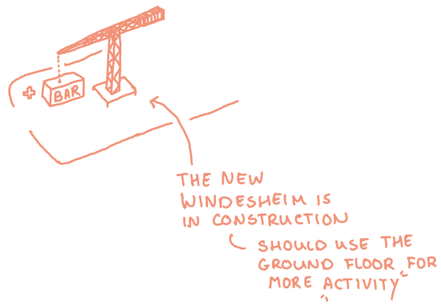




Figure 104 All images are from Sofia's Lived experience map (full map is shown in Fieldwork Booklet)

Wishes
Sofia's suggests to have a more vibrant nightlife for her age category, not a club for sixteen-year-olds and not a bar for people in their thirties, but somewhere in between. She would also love to see a real supermarket in the city centre. A terrace or coffee spot on the far side of the Weerwater where runners and cyclists gather. On the ground floor of the new Windesheim building, she would like to see a student café or an accessible bar.

'If they were smart, they'd put a student bar there, that would attract young people. Those are missed opportunities.'

She admits that if the next step takes her and her partner to Lelystad, it will be a loss she will have to accept rather than welcome.

Mila has lived in Almere for four years, having moved from Assen when her father took up a position at the local hospital. She studies at the University of Amsterdam and has friends spread across the country (Amsterdam, Den Haag, Leiden, Groningen). Of all five women she experiences the largest gap between where she lives and where her life actually takes place. Her experience reveals what Almere looks like to someone who inhabits it primarily as a base.



Routine

Mila's daily routine is centred almost entirely around movement. She cycles from Muziekwijk along the Spoorbaanpad (Almere's main east-west cycle route) through Kruidenwijk and Stedenwijk to Almere Centrum station, where she catches the intercity train to Amsterdam. Muziekwijk station only runs sprinters, so the longer cycle to the central station is saving her time. On her way, she passes through Stedenwijk, which she describes as a troubled area:

'There are weekly incidents, explosions, stabbings, and you can see it in the streets, too: more rubbish, less greenery and worse housing.'

Most of her meaningful encounters, as well as her social life and music-making, happen outside Almere. For her, the city primarily functions as an affordable, well-connected base from which she can reach everywhere else.

Meaningful places

Mila's meaningful places are mostly located in other cities. Within Almere, Weerwater is one of the few places she mentions with genuine appreciation, she has walked the loop several times and thinks it is well maintained and pleasant. Another is the city centre library: spacious, with a cinema, working areas, a café, and a lively mix of young people. She visits occasionally and can see why others go regularly, even though she tends to choose Amsterdam herself for studying. She shares the weekly market on the Stadhuisplein with her father on Saturday mornings. The arboretum near her home offers walking routes of up to forty-five minutes, quiet, green and close enough to visit spontaneously.

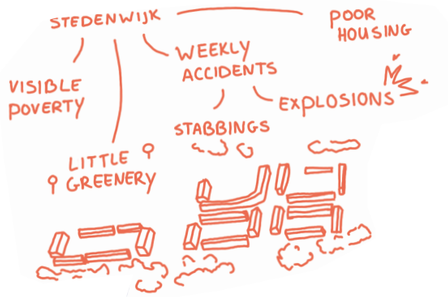




Safety

Mila's experience of safety is shaped by her daily cycle route and the areas she deliberately avoids. She never crosses Beatrixpark alone after dark, as it has a reputation for drug dealing and is a place where people hide from police surveillance underneath the bridges and water, making infrared detection difficult. The stories she has heard are enough to make her avoid the area automatically. She passes through Stedenwijk daily, but not comfortably. She notes that the physical state of the streets reflects the social conditions she observes. She finds the area around Almere Centrum station genuinely unpleasant, it's not something she dwells on, but it's not somewhere she wants to be alone.

'You don't want to be there on your own, the vibe is just not good.'



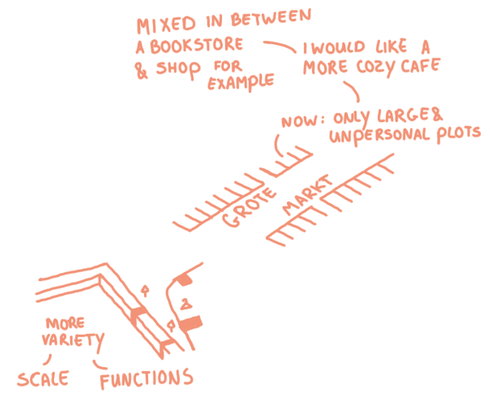


Figure 105 All images are from Mila's Lived experience map (full map is shown in Fieldwork Booklet)

Wishes

Mila's vision for Almere is not so much about specific spatial improvements, but rather about a fundamental quality that is missing: the kind of street-level intimacy that makes a city feel lived in, rather than just functional.

In Utrecht, you have a nice café, then a bookshop, then another café, then a clothes shop. Here, you have a block of shops and then four big, impersonal restaurants. That's it.'

While she acknowledges that Almere works well for families, with its schools, sports facilities, playgrounds and good public transport, she believes that the social and cultural infrastructure for her age group is simply not there. She stays because it is affordable to live with her parents and centrally located, not because it holds her.

3.7.1 Introduction

Although they differ in age, life stage and length of experience in Almere, the five women reveal an overlapping spatial experience. The same issues, absences and desires emerge across all five experiences.
Each of the four themes (routine, meaningful places, safety and wishes) will be discussed, with the spatial patterns derived from the empirical evidence forming the second layer of evidence for the pattern system developed in Chapter 04.

3.7.2 Routines

Moving through Almere

A tension between the city's infrastructural logic and how women actually move through it characterises daily life in Almere, as seen in the five different stories. Although the city is designed for efficient point-to-point travel by car or bus, the women rely primarily on cycling and walking for daily errands and use public transport for longer journeys. This mismatch results in daily inconveniences, such as journeys that are functional in terms of distance but uncomfortable in terms of experience, and a public transport network that, while available, is not tailored to the movement patterns that structure women's days.

Amenities

Proximity to amenities is highly valued where it exists and notably absent where it does not. Women living in or close to the city centre navigate a compact cluster of destinations within walking distance, while those living slightly further out must travel disproportionately far for basic provisions. The absence of a specific Dutch supermarket with a wide range of products in the city centre, which was mentioned by several of the women interviewed, is a small but telling example of how Almere's planned structure consistently prioritises residential-functional separation over the kind of mixed, walkable convenience that supports everyday life.

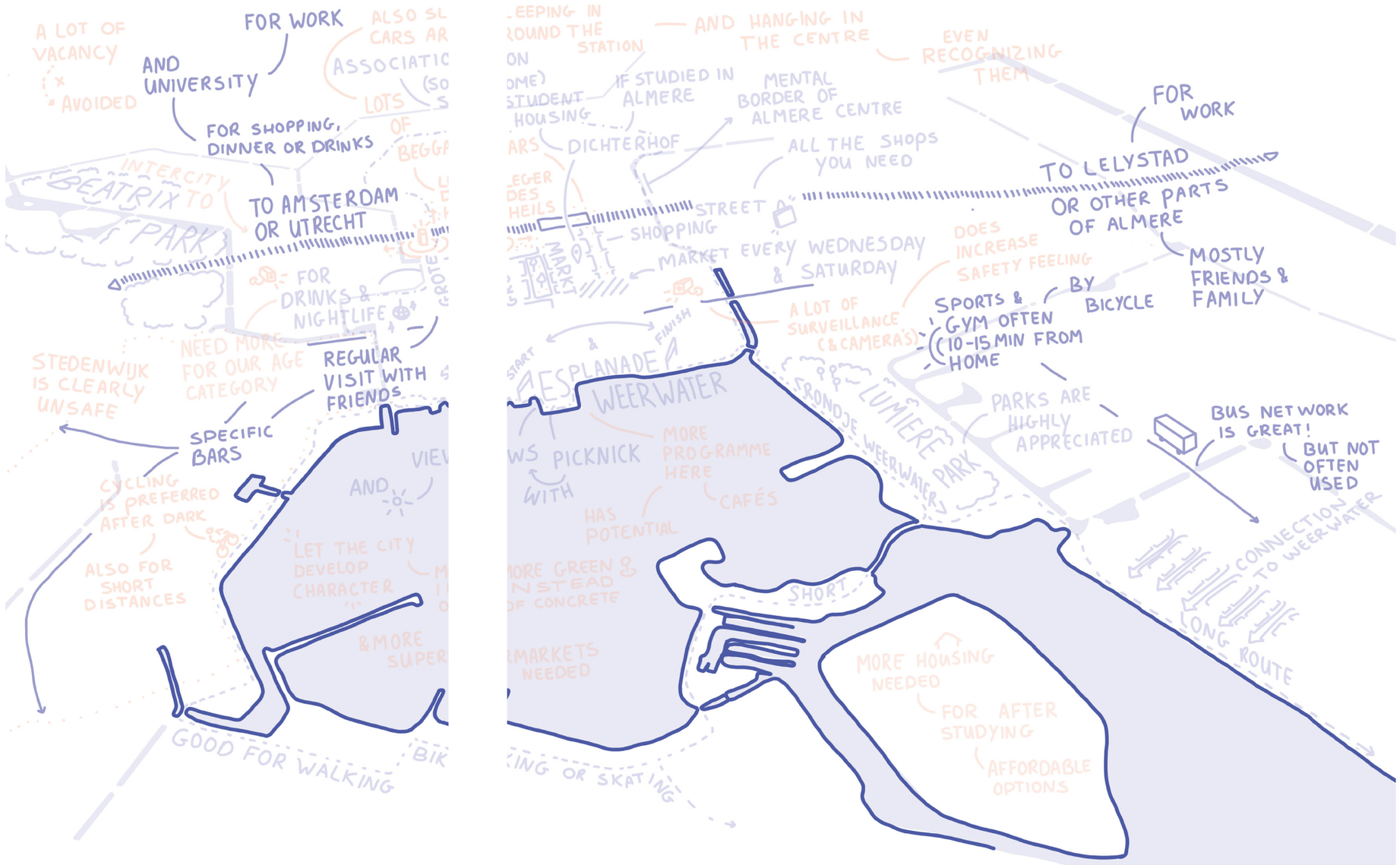


Figure 106 Combined 'Routines' map

Empirical patterns:
A.2 – Publicness is easily accessible;
A.3 – Close proximity of amenities;
A.4 – Last mile;
A.6 – Focus on medium to slow transport;
D.12 – Clustering care amenities;
D.19 – Balance work-resident density.

Routine
Meaningful places
Safety
Wishes for Almere

3.7.3 Meaningful places

Places of value
These five women have a strong emotional connection to the same places, despite having very different life stages and residential histories. The Weerwater and its surrounding areas feature in four of the accounts as valued spaces for walking, running, and quiet recreation. It is one of the few places in Almere where the females form an attachment to the environment itself rather than to a social occasion. Another shared place is the weekly market on the Stadhuisplein, which is highly valued. The Grote Markt is the main destination for evening socialising, although many describe the offerings as repetitive and limited for the eighteen-to-thirty-five age group.

Missing places
What is most revealing, however, is what is missing. None of the women mention a neighbourhood-scale place outside the city centre as somewhere they feel attached to or choose to return to. Meaningful places are either deeply personal and domestic or concentrated in a single central zone. The residential neighbourhoods in which these women live are mainly places to sleep and depart from. This absence of local identity and neighbourhood-level social infrastructure is one of the most consistent spatial findings across all five accounts and highlights the difference between Almere the planned and Almere the lived.

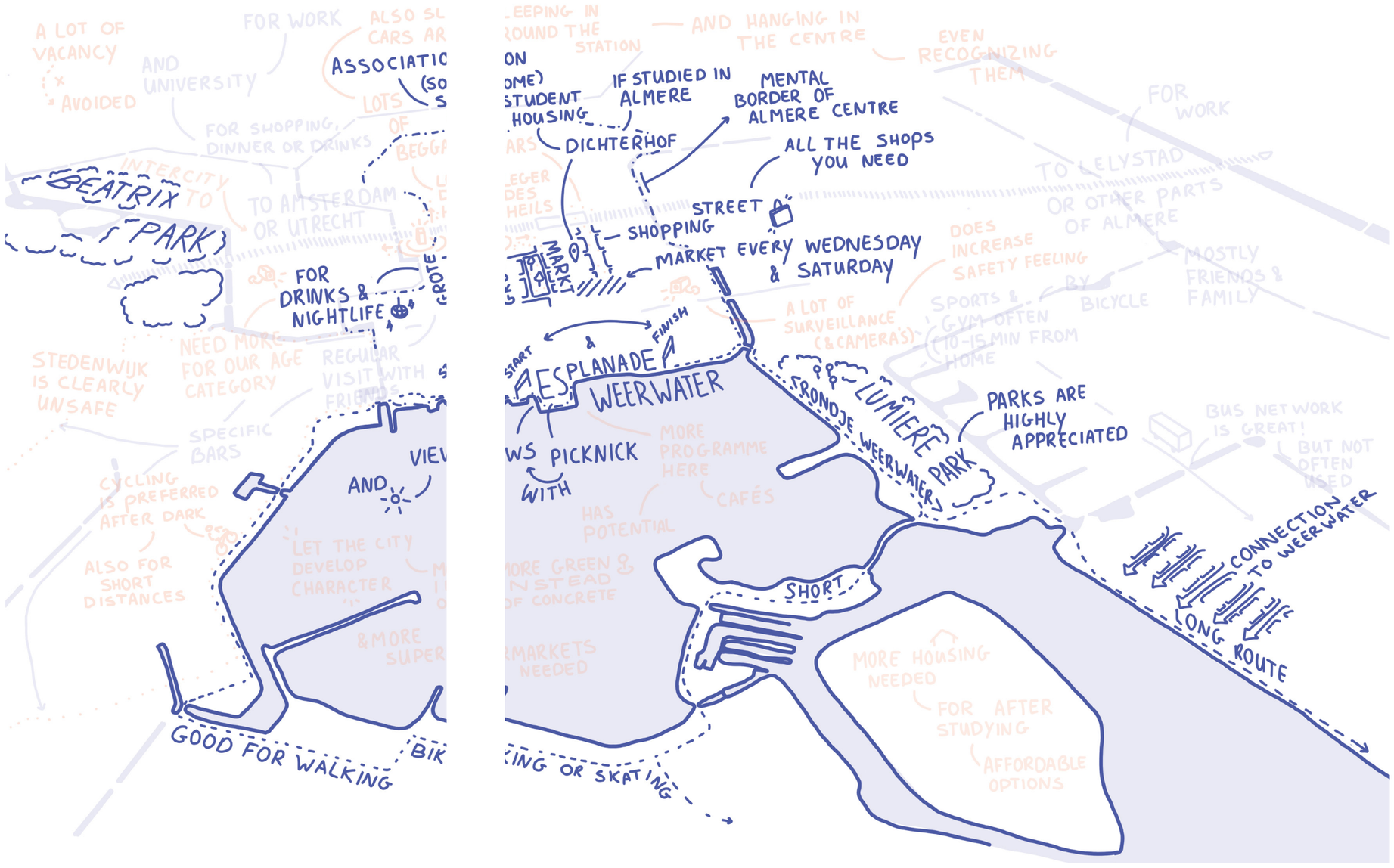


Figure 107 Combined 'Meaningful places' map

Empirical patterns:
A.1 – Main public street;
P.2 – Design views;
P.3 – Local identity;
P.5 – Integrating green structures;
P.6 – Links to recreational routes;
P.7 – Link to the waterfront;
D.13 – Third spaces.

Routine
Meaningful places
Safety
Wishes for Almere

3.7.4 Safety

Change of behaviour
For these five women, safety is not an abstract concept, it is a daily spatial practice. All five females describe how discomfort in the city leads to specific changes in how they move around: they take longer routes, change transport modes, plan their timing carefully, and use social strategies. Cycling is preferred to walking after dark, not primarily for speed, but for the sense of control and reduced vulnerability it provides.

Central areas as boundary
The area around the Salvation Army and Almere station is the zone of discomfort that is most consistently named, appearing in four of the five stories. Crucially, none of the women describe this as an area they can simply avoid, as it is located directly on the route between their homes, the station, and the city centre, meaning avoidance would require daily compromises. Both Lara and Emma explicitly acknowledge the gendered dimension of this experience: the same spaces and encounters are not experienced in the same way by their male counterparts.



Figure 108 Combined 'Safety' map

Empirical patterns:
A.5 – Mobility zones within view;
A.6 – Focus on medium to slow transport;
P.1 – Eyes on the street

Routine
Meaningful places
Safety
Wishes for Almere

3.7.5 Wishes

Ordinary urban life
The wishes expressed across the five stories are very similar, they are not seeking enormous transformation. They want the kind of ordinary urban life that is already offered in other Dutch cities of a similar size. Every female mentions a desire for more small, informal places, such as neighbourhood cafés and wine bars, and places to sit with a coffee that are not chains. Four of the five mention the desire for more greenery and less concrete in the city centre. And the need for more affordable housing to facilitate the transition from student life to independent professional life is repeatedly raised as a structural concern.

Building on todays city outlines
Underlying these individual desires is a shared spatial observation: Almere functions well as a system, but it lacks the atmosphere and local character that make a city worth inhabiting. The word 'sfeerloos', 'lacking atmosphere', appears consistently across multiple conversations, and often comparing to Amsterdam or Utrecht, but in contrast to the simple expectation that a city of Almere's size should offer more than one lively square and a handful of chain restaurants. These are wishes for the city of Almere, where the existing outlines are already in place.



Figure 109 Combined 'Wishes' map

Empirical patterns:
Empirical patterns:
P.3 – Local identity;
P.4 – Able to retrofit for future re-evaluation;
P.5 – Integrating green structures;
D.11 – Flexible zoning plan;
D.13 – Third spaces;
A.3 – Close proximity of amenities;
H.3 – Home based businesses

Routine
Meaningful places
Safety
Wishes for Almere

3.7.6 Derived patterns

The spatial patterns extracted from these four themes are not independent, they are directly related to the theoretical framework established in chapter 01 and the spatial conditions analysed in chapter 02. The lived experience adds a level of nuance, providing insight into what is experienced, by whom and where in the city of Almere. Notably, the empirical evidence is heavily weighted toward the A and P themes, confirming that access and public space are the dimensions of Almere's spatial structure most directly felt in women's daily lives. These findings form the empirical layer of the patterns of opportunity developed in chapter 04, where theory, the planned, and the lived are brought together into spatial strategies for Almere.

A. 1 Main public street



A. 2 Publicness is easily accessible



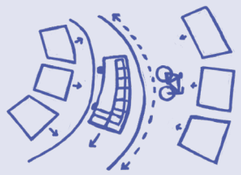
A. 3 Close proximity of amenities



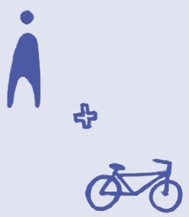
A. 4 Last mile



A. 5 Mobility zones within view



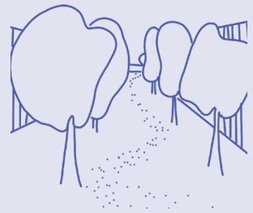
A. 6 Focus on medium to slow transport



P. 1 Eyes on the street



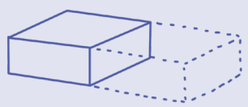
P. 2 Design views



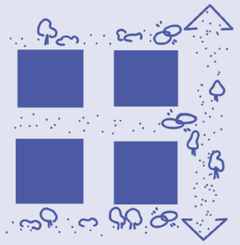
P. 3 Local identity



P. 4 Able to retrofit for future re-evaluation



P. 5 Integrating green structures



P. 6 Links to recreational routes



P. 7 Link to the waterfront



D. 11 Flexible zoning plan



H. 3 Home based businesses



D. 12 Clustering care amenities



D. 13 Third spaces



D. 19 Balance work-resident density



04 THE DREAMED

This chapter translates the findings of the planned and the lived into spatial strategies. It opens with the patterns of opportunity, which are tested and expanded through five international reference case studies, each contributing additional patterns to the toolkit. These patterns then inform a series of design explorations, through which spatial strategies are iteratively developed and refined. The chapter concludes with the design of A Female Practice, a multi-scalar design proposal for Stedenwijk, Filmwijk and Almere Stad Centre that demonstrates how opportunity structures can be embedded in the existing urban fabric.

04 THE DREAMED
1. Patterns of opportunity
2. Design exploration
3. A Female Practice

04.1 Patterns of opportunity

04.1.1 Introduction

The patterns of opportunity are spatial principles that translate the research findings from the previous chapters into concrete design strategies. Each pattern identifies a recurring spatial condition could actively support the daily lives of young professional women in Almere. Together, they form a pattern language, a toolkit of interconnected interventions that can be applied at multiple scales across the city.
The patterns sit at the intersection of three bodies of research that has been developed throughout this report. As illustrated in figure 110, the patterns of opportunity connect:

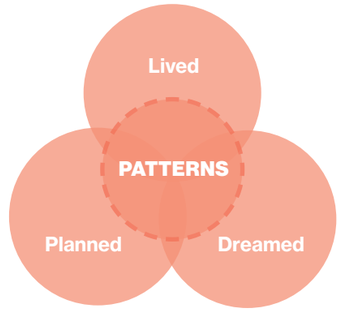


Figure 110 Patterns as intersection of the lived, planned and dreamed.

The Planned | the historic and contemporary spatial conditions of Almere, as analysed in chapter 02;
The Lived | the daily experiences, constraints, and desires of young professional women in Almere in chapter 03;
The Dreamed | the spatial ambitions and design strategies that this chapter develops.

Each pattern is a response to what was found in both the planned and the lived reality of Almere. Where chapter 02 revealed what exists, and chapter 03 revealed what is experienced, the patterns translate these findings into what could be.

Four themes
The patterns are organised into four thematic categories which are interconnected with each other, but address a distinct dimension of the urban environment:

- A | Access and connectivity in relation to social vitality;
- P | Qualities in Public Space;
- D | Density, typology and zoning;
- H | Size and Affordability of homes;

Evidence
Each pattern is grounded in one or more of three evidence types:

▲ **Theory** | drawn from the theoretical framework established in chapter 01, building on the work of Jacobs (1961), Massey (1995), Mehta (2014), and Young (1990)

● **Reference** | evidenced by built precedents, further developed in section 4.1.2

■ **Empirical** | derived from the interviews and walk-along research conducted in Almere, as discussed in chapter 03

The combination of these three sources strengthens the validity of each pattern. Where a pattern is supported by all three, it can be considered robustly evidenced. A small number of patterns emerge exclusively from built precedent and are therefore introduced in section 4.2.

Spatial and value dimensions
Each pattern is accompanied by two sets of sliders that indicate its spatial and value dimensions.
Spatial sliders describe the context in which a pattern is most relevant:

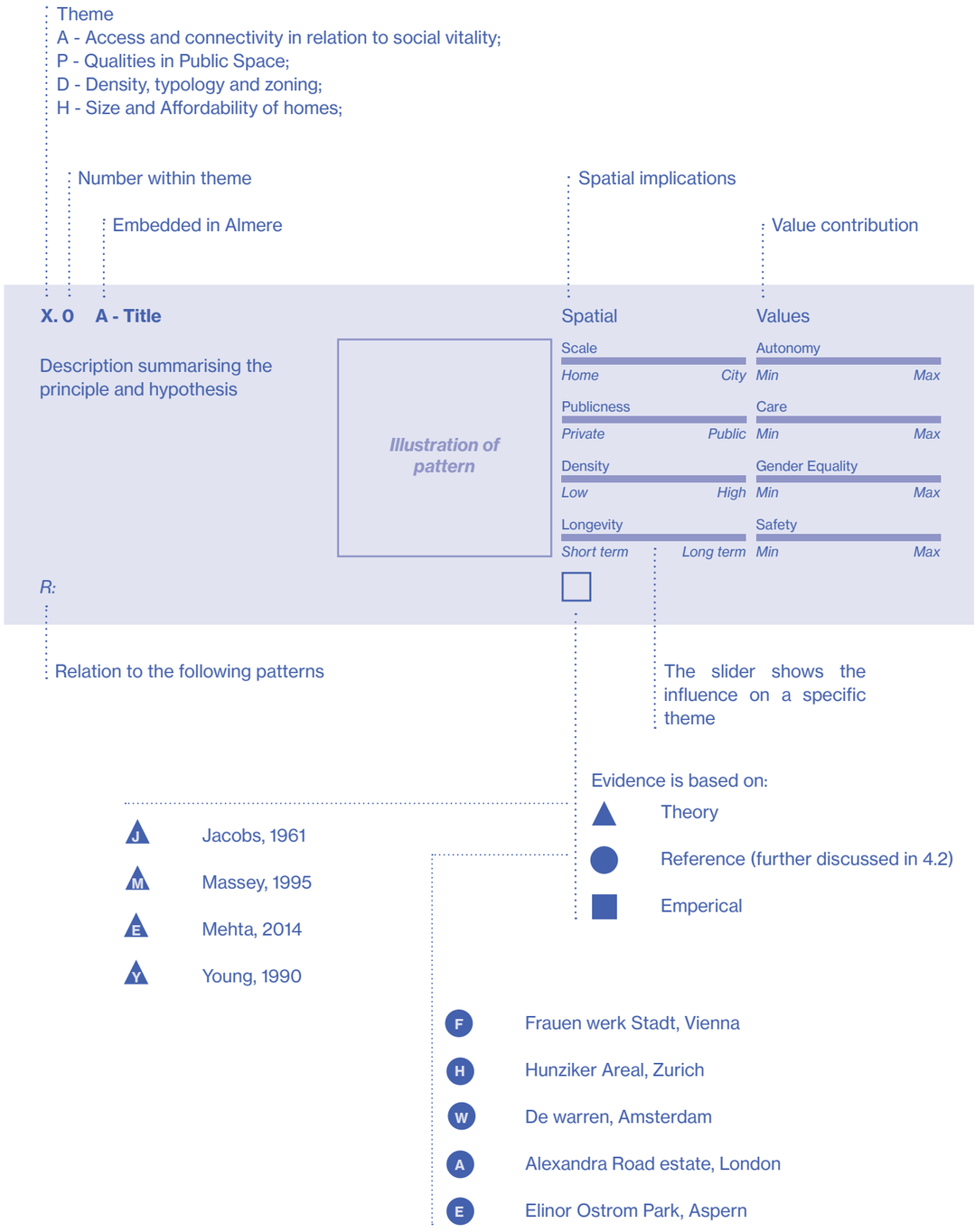
Scale | ranging from the home to the city level;
Publicness | from fully private to fully public space;
Density | from low to high density environments;
Longevity | from short-term interventions (zoning, programming) to long-term structural changes (built form).

Value sliders indicate the degree to which a pattern contributes to each of the four core ***values*** identified in the introduction of this report:

Autonomy | the ability of women to move through, appropriate space, work with less constraints and inhabit the city independently;
Care | the degree to which the pattern supports care-related tasks and responsibilities;
Gender equality | the extent to which the pattern addresses spatial gender imbalance;
Safety | the contribution to perceived and actual safety in the built environment.

All sliders operate on a scale of 0 (no impact) to 4 (maximum impact).

4.1.2 Pattern booklet



A. 1 Main public street

Connects and facilitates amenities and services for female needs. It is a qualitative structure with variety of activities for different users and provides space for interaction and leisure.



R: A2, P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11, P,12, D1, H2, H4, D5, D9, D10, D13

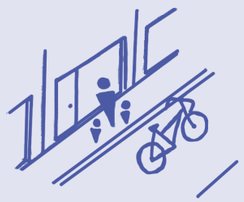
Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

H ■

A. 2 Publicness is easily accessible

Publicness is easily accessible: Public structures are easily accessible by public transport and for slow and medium-speed traffic, with those in mind who carry out care and domestic tasks.



R: A1, A3, A6, A7, P8, P9, P10, P11, D1, D2, D12

Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

F ■

A. 3 Close proximity of amenities

Close proximity of amenities: Locating amenities and services related to care and domestic tasks in close proximity to residential areas to save valuable time and limit trip chaining.



R: A2, A4, A6, A7, P6, D1, D2, D19, D20

Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

M F H ■

A. 4 Last mile

Facilitate safe and short public pedestrian travel from home or other locations, towards public transport nodes, or a medium to fast vehicle parking node.



R: A3, A5, A6, A7, P1, P9 P10, P11, D1, D5, D6, D7, D8, D9, H2, H4

Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

▲ ■ F

A. 5 Mobility zones within view

Clearly defined mobility zones and junctions within view, supported by building facades that overlook these zones and junctions, with a minimal amount of openness in the facade, thereby creating an 'eye on the street'.



R: A4, A6, P1, H2

Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

J ■

A. 6 Focus on medium to slow transport

Providing a safe, qualitative and accessible pedestrian and bicycle network within the neighbourhood, facilitating enough space, safe crossings, barrier freeness, with awareness and safety in mind.



R: A2, A3, A4, A5, A7, P9, P10, P11, D6, D7, D9

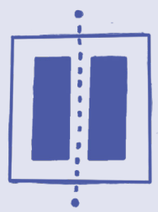
Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

J F ■

A. 7 Local permeability through the block

A communal focused route connecting building blocks for more proximity, last-mile safety and activity along communal spaces.



R: A2, A3, A4, A6, A8, A9, D1, D2,

Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

J

P. 1 Eyes on the street

This is facilitated by activity at different times of the day and on different levels, by creating more activity on the ground floor and making the facades more open and focused on the street, while directing the internal activity of buildings towards public life. This creates a safer experience of public and communal spaces.



Spatial
- Scale: Home — City
- Publicness: Private — Public
- Density: Low — High
- Longevity: Short term — Long term

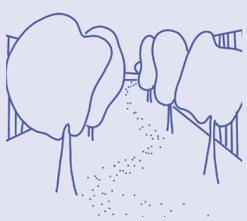
Values
- Autonomy: Min — Max
- Care: Min — Max
- Gender Equality: Min — Max
- Safety: Min — Max

R: A1, A4, A5, A9, P2, P10, P11, D4, D5, D9, D10, D13, H2, H3, H4

J

P. 2 Design views

Guide and preserve views towards qualitative spaces and desirable directions.



Spatial
- Scale: Home — City
- Publicness: Private — Public
- Density: Low — High
- Longevity: Short term — Long term

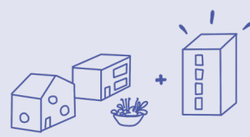
Values
- Autonomy: Min — Max
- Care: Min — Max
- Gender Equality: Min — Max
- Safety: Min — Max

R: A1, P1, P3, P5, P7

E

P. 3 Local identity

Stimulating local identity through meaningfulness on the smaller and larger scale. Residents feel that the (semi-) public space is theirs, significant to them and reflective of their identity. Using existing qualities of the landscape, buildings and spaces. While also facilitating space for forming a new local identity through different scales.



Spatial
- Scale: Home — City
- Publicness: Private — Public
- Density: Low — High
- Longevity: Short term — Long term

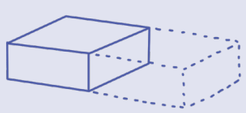
Values
- Autonomy: Min — Max
- Care: Min — Max
- Gender Equality: Min — Max
- Safety: Min — Max

R: A1, A8, A9, P2, P4, P5, P9, D1, D6, D7, D8, D11, D13, D18, D20, H3

E

P. 4 Able to retrofit for future re-evaluation

Incorporating flexible space and budget to accommodate changes in the housing, amenities or longer-term needs of female residents, ensuring the neighbourhood and its residents continue to be satisfied.



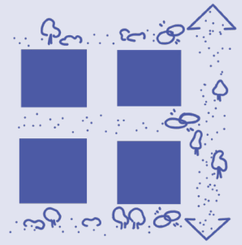
Spatial
- Scale: Home — City
- Publicness: Private — Public
- Density: Low — High
- Longevity: Short term — Long term

Values
- Autonomy: Min — Max
- Care: Min — Max
- Gender Equality: Min — Max
- Safety: Min — Max

R: A8, A9, P3, D11, H5, D16, D18

P. 5 A - Integrating green structures

Integrating green structures into the built environment. This involves connecting existing structures with and by new ones to create pleasant environments and climates in public and private spaces.



Spatial
- Scale: Home — City
- Publicness: Private — Public
- Density: Low — High
- Longevity: Short term — Long term

Values
- Autonomy: Min — Max
- Care: Min — Max
- Gender Equality: Min — Max
- Safety: Min — Max

R: A1, A9, P2, P3, P6, P8, D1, D2, D9, D17

P. 6 Links to recreational routes

Provide connections from communal and public spaces to green structures and recreational routes. Integrate qualitative, accessible and safe pedestrian lanes for walking, running, cycling and other activities. This will make the spaces available for different female users.



Spatial
- Scale: Home — City
- Publicness: Private — Public
- Density: Low — High
- Longevity: Short term — Long term

Values
- Autonomy: Min — Max
- Care: Min — Max
- Gender Equality: Min — Max
- Safety: Min — Max

R: A1, A3, P2, P5, P7

P. 7 A - Link to the waterfront

An active leisure route runs along the waterfront, offering beautiful views and places to rest, picknick or undertake other activity. The built environment opens up towards the waterfront, connecting the active route to the neighbourhood and providing pleasant views, while encouraging female residents to enjoy the route.



Spatial
- Scale: Home — City
- Publicness: Private — Public
- Density: Low — High
- Longevity: Short term — Long term

Values
- Autonomy: Min — Max
- Care: Min — Max
- Gender Equality: Min — Max
- Safety: Min — Max

R: A1, P2, P6, D17

P. 9 Wide pedestrian path

Providing a spacious pedestrian pathway on public and communal streets to enable safe and enjoyable walking, while appropriating space for residents and increasing safety and home privacy, and creating more public space in densely populated areas.



Spatial
- Scale: Home — City
- Publicness: Private — Public
- Density: Low — High
- Longevity: Short term — Long term

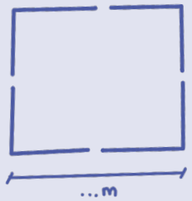
Values
- Autonomy: Min — Max
- Care: Min — Max
- Gender Equality: Min — Max
- Safety: Min — Max

R: A1, A2, A4, A6, P3, D7, P12, H3

J F

D. 1 Short blocks

Encourages interaction between female residents and visitors by stimulating more pedestrian activity and concentration in and along public structures. It creates permeability in the neighbourhood and facilitates proximity to amenities, making the neighbourhood more accessible and safe.



R: A1, A2, A3, A4, A7, P3, P5, D3, H1

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J H

D. 2 Open blocks

Providing a central communal outdoor space where residents can meet, play or rest. It encourages interaction and creates more permeability and proximity to amenities, while providing safety.



R: A2, A3, A7, A8, P5, D3

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

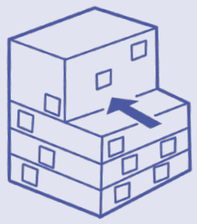
Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J H

D. 4 Setback

Human-scale building facades are introduced with a setback when buildings reach a certain height. This creates the perception of a lower height for female pedestrians and provides a degree of openness, while enabling higher densities.



R: P1, D3, D8, H1

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J A

D. 5 Densities focused on public street

Availability of affordable housing for women in well-located, central areas. Stimulating pedestrian and bicycle activity along public structures and facilitates proximity to amenities for a large number of residents.



R: A1, A4, P1, D10, D11, H1

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

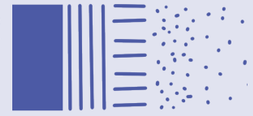
Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

Y J

D. 6 Gradients of privacy

Integrating a variety of kinds of privacy, within publicness, communal and more private areas. By using landscape elements and the built environment through different scales.



R: A4, A5, A8, A9, P3, D3, D7, D9, H1, H2

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

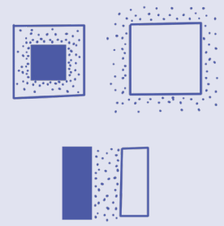
Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J ■ H

D. 7 Transition zones

Create transition zones for volumes, spaces and activities. With a soft fade between volumes, spaces and buildings where different functions and levels of publicness or privacy overlap. Instead of a harsh transition.



R: A4, A6, A8, A9, P3, P9, D6, D11, H1, H2

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

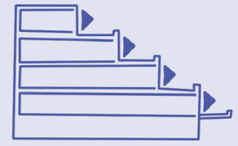
Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J

D. 8 A - Terraced apartments

Create high-quality private terraces for all types of apartments, regardless of price, that face out onto the public realm. This will strengthen the local identity and increase activity on the public street side, thereby improving safety.



R: A4, P3, D3, D4

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J A ■

D. 9 Active ground floor use

Activate the ground floor to encourage more public activity and create a safer environment by allowing more flexibility in zoning plans. This will make it easier for commercial, communal or home-based businesses to start up, expand and promote themselves.



R: A1, A4, A6, A9, P1, P5, D6, D10, D13, D11

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

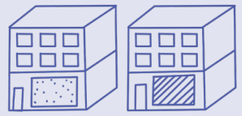
Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J H

D. 10 Vertical Mixed use

A vertical mix of functions creates active ground-level activity and stimulates plinths and streets. This mainly occurs with shops, services and amenities focused on care and domestic tasks. Activating public structures, creating better accessibility and clustering the amenities, primarily along public structures.



R: A1, P1, D3, D5, D9, D13

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J E H

D. 11 Flexible zoning plan

Providing support and flexibility to home-based businesses to promote, activate and expand. The flexible layout of homes and focus on the ground floor will also create more activity on the local street.



R: P3, P4, D5, D7, D9, H3, H5

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

H

D. 12 Clustering care amenities

Organise care amenities and businesses and their fronts around a public square or/and main streets to make use of shared public spaces. This saves women's valuable time and limit trip chaining.



R: A2, P10, P11, H3

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

M E F

D. 13 Third spaces

Existing qualitative spaces, as well as new ground-based spaces along the public structures, provide opportunities for the creation of new third spaces. The spaces vary in size and are located alongside public structures to encourage planned interaction and spontaneous encounters.



R: A1, P1, P2, P8, D9, P12, D10, D14, D15, D16, D18, D20, H3

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J

D. 15 Cafe for business meetings

A place where working women can meet business partners close to home to discuss business in a qualitative, accessible and central location with a local identity.



R: P5, P7, D13, D14, D16, D17, D20

Spatial

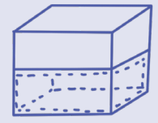
Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

D. 18 Affordable structures

Preserved buildings that have been paid off carry spatial traces of the local area and have a social history. Together with new affordable structures, they facilitate space for communities and other public functions in the neighbourhood.



R: A8, P3, P4, D13, D14, D16, D17, D20, H3

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

M

D. 19 Balance work - resident density

A balanced local availability of diverse employment options across educational levels and sectors, in proportion to the number of female residents.



R: A3, H1, H3 ,D14, D17, D20

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

D. 20 Flexible workspaces

Affordable and flexible workspaces where women can work at a desk or in a workshop, host small business meetings, and interact with others. Ideally, these spaces would be integrated into the layout of the home or located in close proximity to it, as well as to other care- or domestic-related functions.



R: A3, A8, P3, D13, D15, D18, D19

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*
Publicness — *Private* / *Public*
Density — *Low* / *High*
Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

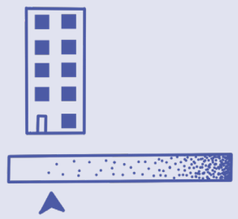
Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*
Care — *Min* / *Max*
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*
Safety — *Min* / *Max*

A H W

H. 1 Affordable housing

The availability of affordable housing in well-located, central areas provides housing options for females from diverse backgrounds and with different opportunities. This can be achieved by providing housing for diverse budgets and with varying styles, typologies, layouts and uses.



R: A8, A9, D1, D4,D5, D6, D7, D19

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*

Publicness — *Private* / *Public*

Density — *Low* / *High*

Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*

Care — *Min* / *Max*

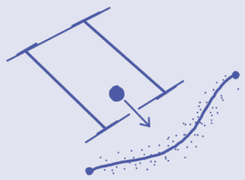
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*

Safety — *Min* / *Max*

Y F H W A

H. 2 Lay-out is focused on the public street side

The housing layout is focused on the public street side, with dining or living spaces facing outwards. This creates more activity and safety on the street by having more eyes on it, especially after dark.



R: A1, A5, P1, D6, D7

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*

Publicness — *Private* / *Public*

Density — *Low* / *High*

Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*

Care — *Min* / *Max*

Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*

Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J A

H. 3 Home based businesses

We facilitate and encourage home-based businesses for women, with flexible home layouts and easily adapting the zoning plans. This enables entrepreneurs to promote and activate home-based businesses, with a focus on the ground floor.



R: A8, P1, P3, P9, H1, H5, D19

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*

Publicness — *Private* / *Public*

Density — *Low* / *High*

Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*

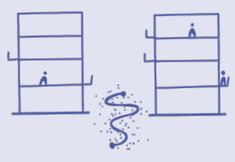
Care — *Min* / *Max*

Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*

Safety — *Min* / *Max*

H. 4 Apartments along public street

The availability of affordable housing in well-located, central areas provides housing opportunities for women from diverse backgrounds. The location on a public street combined with higher density encourages more activity and vibrancy on the street. These types of structures attract small households, first-time buyers or renters.



R: A1, A4, P1

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*

Publicness — *Private* / *Public*

Density — *Low* / *High*

Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*

Care — *Min* / *Max*

Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*

Safety — *Min* / *Max*

J Y

H. 5 Diverse housing options

Providing diverse and flexible housing options in terms of budget and typology for different family set-ups and stages of life, including alternative housing models.



R: A8, P4, D11, D16, H1, H3

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*

Publicness — *Private* / *Public*

Density — *Low* / *High*

Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*

Care — *Min* / *Max*

Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*

Safety — *Min* / *Max*

Y F W H A

04.1.3 References for opportunities

The five reference projects presented in the following section were selected as design precedents and as examples of the spatial patterns developed in the previous chapter. Each project has been mapped against the pattern system to demonstrate how the identified principles have been operationalised in realised projects across different urban contexts and scales. While the patterns of opportunity were based on theoretical frameworks and empirical research from Almere, these reference projects provide an additional layer of evidence, showing that the patterns are not only desirable from a spatial perspective, but also achievable in practice.

Beyond validating existing patterns, the projects collectively generate a number of patterns evidenced exclusively through built precedent with limited theoretical grounding. Coming from design practice rather than academic research, these patterns reinforce the argument that research by design produces knowledge that theory alone cannot generate.

The projects that will be discussed are the following:

F Frauen werk Stadt, Vienna

H Hunziker Areal, Zurich

W De warren, Amsterdam

A Alexandra Road estate, London

E Elinor Ostrom Park, Aspern

F **Frauen Werk Stadt | Vienna**
1993-1997 | 357 units
R: A2, A3, A4, A6, p9, d12, h1, h5

Commissioned by Vienna's Women's Office (Frauenbüro), Frauen werk Stadt stands as the first explicitly gender-sensitive housing development in Vienna, realised through the collaboration of eight female architects (Hunt, 2019). Who operationalised feminist spatial thinking at the neighbourhood scale (Palit, 2018). Their design is structured around five themes:

- Mobility,
- Land use,
- Housing design,
- Streetscape design,
- And safety

A key design driver was the acknowledgement that women's movement through the city tends to involve multiple interconnected destinations throughout the day, contrasting with more linear commuting patterns (Hunt, 2019). Rather than optimising for speed and distance, the project prioritised pedestrian accessibility and proximity to public transport (A2, A6), with the site selected specifically for its strong connections to existing transit infrastructure. Care-related amenities, including a childcare facility and medical practice, were embedded within the development, while everyday retail was located within comfortable walking distance, effectively concentrating essential services to reduce the burden of daily errand-making (A3, A4, D12, P9) (Palit, 2018).
At the dwelling scale, Figure 111 shows how floor plans were designed without fixed room designations, enabling residents to adapt their homes across different life stages and household arrangements (H5)(Palit, 2018). Combined with accessible tenure options accommodating a range of incomes (H1), the project demonstrated that gender-responsive design could produce environments that are simultaneously flexible, inclusive, and spatially coherent (figure 112)(Hunt, 2019).



Figure 111 Floorplans without fixed rooms, by architect Elsa Prochazka (Hunt, 2019)



Figure 112 Frauen Werk Stadt courtyard. WBV-GPA (n.d.)

H **Hunziker Areal | Zurich**
1992-2015 | 373 units
R: A1, A3, A9, P8, D1, D2, D3, D6, D9, D10, D11, D16, D17, D20, H1, H5

Developed by a consortium of five architecture firms the Hunziker Areal sought to create a fully integrated urban neighbourhood accommodating the diverse population of Zurich, from students and families to elderly residents and people with disabilities (Urbanitarian, n.d.).
Rather than treating the site as a single consolidated block, figure 113 shows how the spatial layout was fragmented into separate building volumes, producing an open and permeable urban structure that prioritises movement on foot and gradual transitions between public and private life (D1, D2, D6). Ground-level spaces throughout the development were programmed for active, publicly oriented uses, integrating commercial, civic, and workspace functions into the residential fabric rather than separating them (A1, D9, D10). Residents are additionally required to forego private car ownership as a condition of tenancy, a policy that simultaneously reduced construction costs and reinforced the pedestrian character of the neighbourhood (H1)(Architectuurwijzer, n.d.).
Social infrastructure was developed through an extensive participatory process with prospective residents, who collectively defined a programme of shared spaces distributed across the development (A3, A9, P8). These commons, varying in scale and function to serve different daily needs, are sustained through a modest collective contribution built into residents' rent, with tenant groups retaining agency over how resources are allocated (figure 114)(D16, D17, D20)(Urbanitarian, n.d.). Combined with diverse housing typologies accessible across income levels, the project demonstrated that density, affordability, and social cohesion can be achieved simultaneously (H5)(Architectuurwijzer, n.d.).



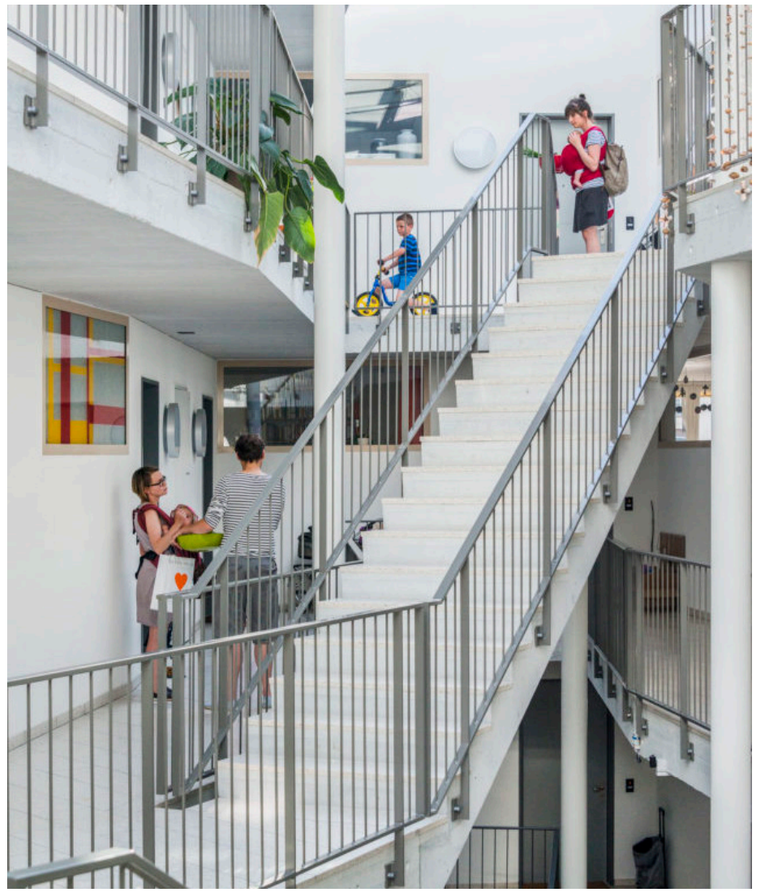


Figure 113 Housing cooperative Mehr als Wohnen, Hunziker area / team Futurafrosch en Duplex architecten

Figure 114 The light and wide stairwell in one of the complexes, by Duplex Architekten (Architectuurwijzer (n.d.)

W **De warren | Amsterdam**
2022 | 36 units
R: A8, A9, P12, D14, D16, D20, H1, H5

De Warren is a resident-initiated cooperative housing project in Amsterdam, in which future inhabitants collectively drove both the development process and the spatial brief (EU Mies Award, n.d.). The resulting 36-unit building accommodates a mix of studio and family dwellings across social and mid-market rental tenures, prioritising accessibility for a broad range of household types and income levels (H1, H5)(ARCAM, n.d.).
What distinguishes De Warren spatially is the deliberate allocation of a substantial share of the building's area – roughly 800m², or 30% of the total – to non-private, shared functions (figure 115)(A8, A9)(EU Mies Award, n.d.). Rather than treating communal space as residual, it is positioned as the organisational core of the building, physically integrated into circulation routes so that shared spaces become part of everyday life rather than optional additions (P12)(ARCAM, n.d.). The programme of these spaces reflects the diversity of resident needs, supporting work, care, leisure, and creative activities under one roof (D14, D16, D20).
The project illustrates how collective agency in the development process can produce housing that is simultaneously affordable, spatially generous, and socially embedded (EU Mies Award, n.d.).



Figure 115 De warren, communal space 'Wooden cathedral', fotograph by: Jeroen Musch (EU Mies Award, n.d.)

A **Alexandra Road estate | London**
1968–1978 | 500 units
R: A8, D4, D8, D16, D20, H1, H2, H5

Designed by Neave Brown for the London Borough of Camden, Alexandra Road Estate is a high-density public housing project that challenged conventional approaches to urban residential form (Whitemad, n.d.). Completed in 1978 after a decade of development, the 500-unit scheme was conceived as a self-contained urban environment in which the organisation of buildings, streets, and shared spaces would actively support community life (Architectuul, n.d.).
The site is structured around a sequence of parallel building rows of varying heights, with taller volumes positioned strategically to buffer residents from railway noise, while lower blocks define a series of continuous pedestrian routes running through the estate (figure 116)(H2)(Max Fordham, n.d.). This arrangement creates a legible gradient between more public and more intimate spaces without relying on vehicular infrastructure, reinforcing the pedestrian character of the neighbourhood (D4, D8). Individual dwellings are oriented outward toward these shared walkways, with generous glazing and private outdoor space at each unit contributing to an active relationship between interior life and the communal realm (H2)(Whitemad, n.d.).
A community centre accommodating a school, reception facilities, and building services anchors the western entrance to the estate, embedding civic functions within the residential fabric rather than locating them separately (A8, D16, D20). Across its range of unit types and its original brief as affordable public housing, the project illustrates how high-density development can accommodate diverse household needs without sacrificing spatial quality or communal coherence (H1, H5)(Architectuul, n.d.).



Figure 116 The communal entrance and connecting walkway of Alexandra Road Estate. (Sayhito Atlas, n.d.)

E **Elinor Ostrom Park | Aspern**
2018–2021
R: P2, P10, P11

Designed by Uniola, Elinor Ostrom Park serves as a central public green space within the newly built Aspern Seestadt district, positioned at the intersection of several distinct urban conditions including residential development, waterfront infrastructure, and an elevated railway (Landezine, n.d.).
A continuous row of trees runs along the park's perimeter, clearly marking it as a distinct public space within the surrounding urban fabric (P2)(Landezine, n.d.). Inside this defined edge, the centre of the park is kept deliberately open, creating unobstructed views toward the surrounding buildings and railway structure. The contrast between the dense planted boundary and the open interior gives the park a strong spatial identity, it is enclosed enough to feel like a room, yet open enough to remain visually connected to the city around it.
Infrastructure that might typically fragment public space is instead treated as an opportunity, the covered zone beneath the railway is programmed as an active as seen in figure 118, the shaded public area draws in a variety of users throughout the day (P10)(Landezine, n.d.). This principle of activating underutilised conditions extends to the broader park programme, where tree canopy shelters a range of recreational and contemplative spaces catering to diverse user groups and age ranges (P11). Connectivity throughout is prioritised through a dense arrangement of pedestrian routes linking the park to its surrounding neighbourhoods (Landezine, n.d.).





Figure 117 Programme of Elinor Ostrom Park. (Uniola, n.d.)

Figure 118 Programme and shelter combined. Photo by: Pascal Petignat (Landzine, n.d.)

A. 8 Communal indoor spaces

A variety of communal spaces that combine different functions for diverse types of users for organising activities and share domestic tasks. Facilitating activities like workspaces, spaces to play, undertake hobbies, a shared kitchen and dining space.



R: A7, A9, P3, P4, P12, D2, D6, D7, D14, D16, D18, D20, H1, H3, H5,

Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

W A

A. 9 Communal courtyard

Providing a central space within the building blocks for residents , connected to the communal indoor space. To undertake communal activities and facilitate a safe place for children to play.



R: a7, a8, p1, p3, p5, p12, d6, d7, d14

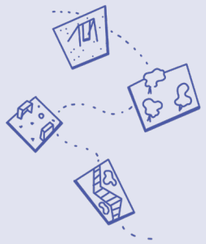
Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

W H

P. 8 Diversity and dispersion of public spaces

Smaller and medium sized communal and public spaces are located throughout the district. Providing spaces for females to meet, rest or play and to let children play within varying programme, costs and quality. A balance of planned interaction and movements for spontaneous exchange is needed.



R: A2, P5, D13

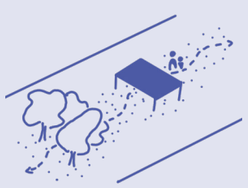
Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

H

P. 10 Facilitating public shelter

Provide spatial elements for shelter against weather conditions, combined with elements for resting, slowing down or watching children, along public and communal routes. These are located in clear view and with good lighting after dark.



R: A1, A2, A4, A6, P1, D12

Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

E

P. 11 Facilitating public seating

Provide spatial elements for resting, slowing down or watching children, along public and communal routes. These are located in clear view and with good lighting after dark.



R: A1, A2, , A4, A6, P1, P10, D12

Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

E

P. 12 Outside space for inside functions

Making and reserving space for publicness, connecting to communal indoor space, and providing outside space for along public structures for public functions to activate the ground floor. Providing space for female residents and busi nesses to meet, expand in good weather and for activities and play.



R: A1, A8, A9, P9, D13, D17

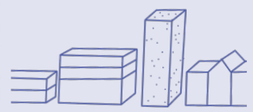
Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

W

D. 3 Diverse plots and volumes

Creating a diverse range of parcels, volumes and architecture, as well as FSI and GSI, in neighbourhoods while taking the current situation into account. This includes a variety of architectural styles, typologies, ages and property prices, as well as buy-to-let and rental properties. Stimulating affordability, flexibility and identity for women.



R: D1, D2, D4, D6, D8, D10

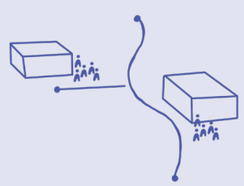
Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

H

D. 14 Space for meeting a large group

Qualitative and affordable indoor spaces, along a public or semi-public structure for various activities, including local initiatives, community-based activities, entrepreneurial activities, leisure, lessons and other business activities.



R: A8, A9, D13, D15, D16, D19, H3

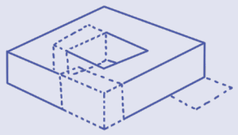
Spatial
- Scale: *Home* — *City*
- Publicness: *Private* — *Public*
- Density: *Low* — *High*
- Longevity: *Short term* — *Long term*

Values
- Autonomy: *Min* — *Max*
- Care: *Min* — *Max*
- Gender Equality: *Min* — *Max*
- Safety: *Min* — *Max*

W

D. 16 Flexible spaces

Various spaces of different sizes, located inside or outside. These spaces facilitate the current and future needs of women, mostly for temporary and neighbourhood-focused use.



R: A8, P4, H3, H5, D13, D14, D15, D17

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*

Publicness — *Private* / *Public*

Density — *Low* / *High*

Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*

Care — *Min* / *Max*

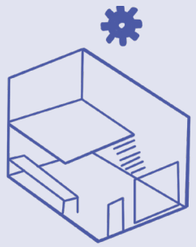
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*

Safety — *Min* / *Max*

H A W

D. 17 Flexible Maker-spaces

Makers space for temporary use with enough space for machines, craftwork, instruments or other larger items. These spaces are mainly organised within public or semi-public structures and can also be used for selling products or services.



R: P12, D13, D15, D16, D19

Spatial

Scale — *Home* / *City*

Publicness — *Private* / *Public*

Density — *Low* / *High*

Longevity — *Short term* / *Long term*

Values

Autonomy — *Min* / *Max*

Care — *Min* / *Max*

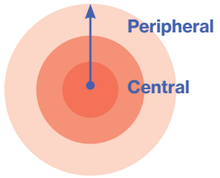
Gender Equality — *Min* / *Max*

Safety — *Min* / *Max*

H

04.1.4 Pattern network

The pattern network visualises the relational web between all 46 spatial principles, with the size of a node reflecting the number of connections each pattern holds within the system (figure 121). The map reveals a clear hierarchy, where highly connected and central placed patterns underpin the entire framework, and more peripheral patterns address specific spatial conditions.



Strategic patterns
The most connected patterns are A.1 (Main public street), A.4 (Last mile), P.1 (Eyes on the street), P.3 (Local identity), A.8 (Communal indoor spaces) and D.13 (Third spaces). These form the strategic backbone of the framework. Their centrality confirms that reconfiguring Almere's public street network and pedestrian connectivity is the most urgent spatial priority, directly responding to the car-dependent urban structure identified in chapter 02 and the complex daily mobility patterns uncovered in chapter 03.

Cross-theme bridges
Several patterns bridge multiple themes simultaneously. A.8 and A.9 connect access and connectivity directly to density and housing, revealing that communal space is a structural condition rather than a programmatic addition. H.3 (Home based businesses) sits centrally between housing and public space themes, reflecting the empirical finding that young professional women increasingly blur the boundaries between domestic and professional life.

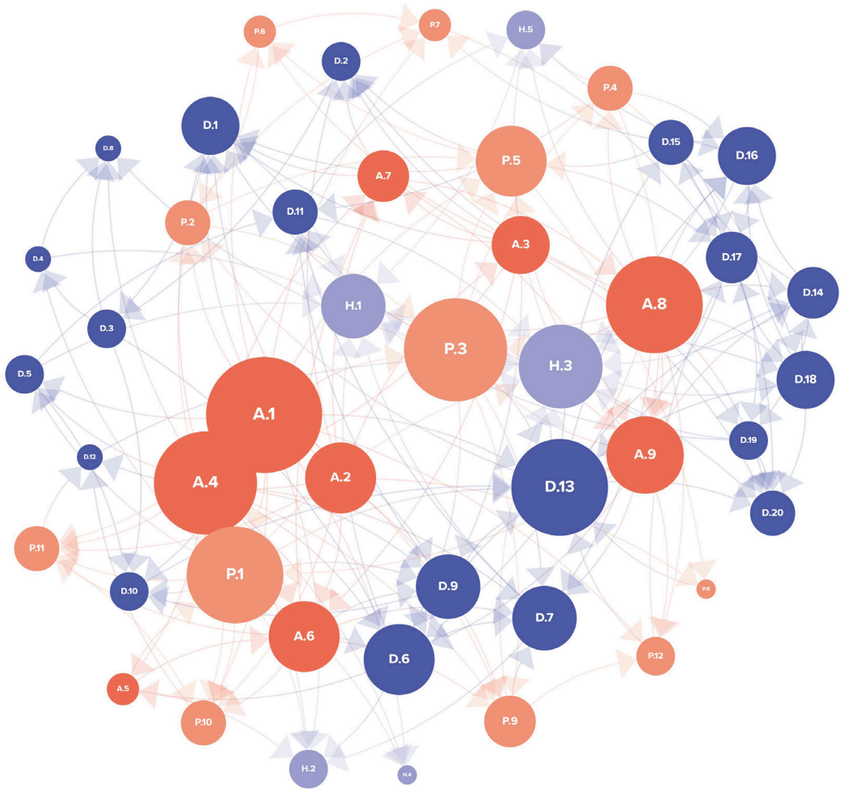
Takeaways for the design phase
Three principles emerge to guide the translation into spatial strategies in sections 04.2 and 04.3:

Start from the centre | strategically the most connected patterns will be used in the first steps, as peripheral patterns cannot function without this foundation;

Design for cross-theme coherence | the most effective interventions address multiple themes simultaneously rather than resolving one theme in isolation;

Layer from large to small scale | central patterns operate at neighbourhood and city scale, peripheral patterns at block and dwelling scale; the design proceeds accordingly.

To interact with the network and see the interlinks, this QR code leads to the network visualised in KUMU.io.



Pattern network of opportunities for young professional women in Almere

- Access and connectivity
- Qualities in Public Space
- Density, typology and zoning
- Size and Affordability of homes
- Most connected patterns
- Less connected patterns

Figure 119 Explanation hierarchy of network
Figure 120 QR code to live network (generated with Adobe Express)
Figure 121 Pattern network of opportunities for young professional women in Almere. (Created with KUMU.io)

04.2.1 Introduction

The patterns of opportunity established in section 04.1 provide a language grounded in theory, built precedent and lived experience. This chapter visualises the process of translating that vocabulary into spatial form: how the patterns were tested, combined and refined through design exploration before arriving at the design proposal presented in chapter 04.3.
The chapter proceeds in two steps. Section 04.2.2 presents a series of spatial explorations that test fundamental design questions on the area of Stedenwijk. Which buildings can be removed without losing what is valued? What would change if a publicness structure were positioned along the waterfront? And what would change if a publicness structure followed the mobility structure? Tested through drawing to understand what the site allows, what the patterns demand of each other, and which configuration best serves the daily lives of young professional women in this zoomed-in area in Almere.
Section 04.2.3 documents the step-by-step translation of patterns into the design proposal, moving from the large planned scale of the whole focus area down to the detailed scale of individual blocks and sections, again in Stedenwijk. It traces which patterns are applied where and why, what existing conditions are preserved, what requires transformation and what is introduced as new.

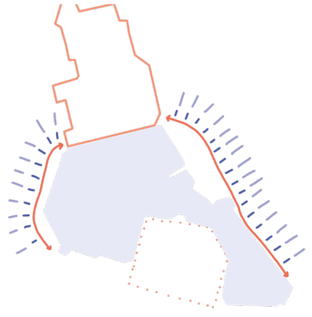
04.2.2 What if..?

Two spatial configurations are explored, each testing a different publicness logic, along the waterfront or along the mobility structure in Stedenwijk (figure 122 - 124). For each option, the consequences for density, resistance and connectivity are examined, alongside the question of what is of value and what could be more easily removed or transformed.

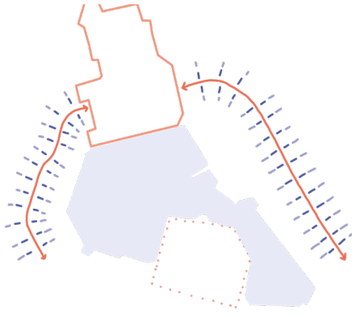
Existing center
New publicness structure
Highest density
Medium density

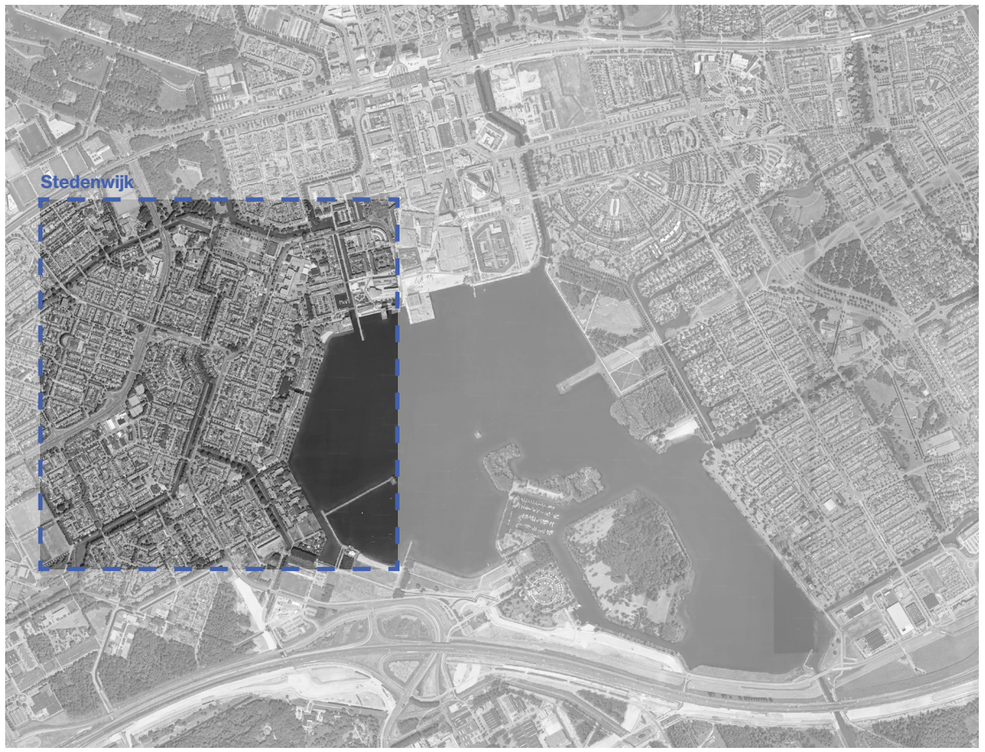
Figure 122 Publicness waterfront
Figure 123 Publicness mobility
Figure 124 Exploration area (Google satellite, n.d.)

*Publicness structure along the **waterfront***



*Publicness structure following the **mobility structure***





1:10 000

What can be removed and what is valued to be preserved?

Energy label <C



C
D

Energy labels are relatively good, there are some clusters that could use improvement. It should be noted that many labels are not known

Social housing corporation



Owned by a public housing association

Housing associations own a relatively large number of houses and flats in Stedenwijk and the rest of the focus area

1:5 000

Figure 125 Energy label (Energieatlas, 2022; Google satellite, n.d.)

Figure 126 Public housing (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024; Google satellite, n.d.)

Figure 127 FSI/GSI map (base: Rudifun, 2024)

FSI | GSI



Low | low
Medium | medium
Low | medium
Low | high
Medium | high
Medium | low
High | low
High | medium

Low and medium FSI and GSI create opportunities for adding stories or extending buildings.

1:5 000

Built before 1970

The whole neighbourhood has been built in the decade of 1979 to 1989, meaning that the oldest buildings in the area are around 50 years old.

Limitations and opportunities

The built fabric of Stedenwijk presents both limitations and opportunities. Sustainable energy performance is reasonable but uneven, FSI and GSI values are relatively low, and the entire neighbourhood dates from a single decade (figures 125-127). These conditions limit immediate radical transformation but open clear opportunities for densification, additional stories and targeted renewal. The significant share of housing association ownership is a structural opportunity, as it makes coordinated intervention possible without requiring plot-by-plot negotiation.

1:5 000

What would change if a publicness structure were positioned along the waterfront?

Publicness

What is the publicness distribution?

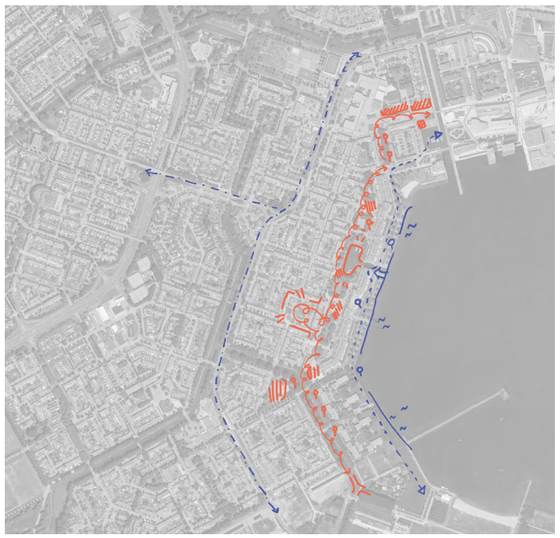


Publicness structure
Publicness facing facades
Waterfront

This would connect the city centre to the Floriade development along a high-quality waterfront edge, benefiting from the existing relatively high density and the spatial generosity of the water. However it would leave Stedenwijk and Filmwijk largely disconnected from the publicness backbone.

Networks

What is the flow distriibution?



Mobility network
Publicness network
Existing publicness
Qualities
Green network
Existing integration of green

The flow distribution would shift toward the water's edge, concentrating movement and activity along the Weerwater and connecting the city centre to the Floriade development. This route benefits from the existing green structures and the appreciated proximity of water in daily life.

1:5 000

Figure 128 Exploration areas (Google satellite, n.d.)

What would change if a publicness structure followed the mobility structure?

Publicness

What is the publicness distribution?



Publicness structure
Publicness facing facades
Waterfront

Running along the high-speed bus corridor, this option connects the city centre westward through Stedenwijk and up to Muziekwijk, activating an existing movement route and extending the publicness backbone into residential areas that the waterfront option does not reach.

Networks

What is the flow distriibution?



Mobility network
Publicness network
Existing publicness
New heart
Green network integration

This creates a strong connector between the surrounding neighbourhoods, establishing a new central heart along the high-speed bus corridor with a well-integrated publicness axis. Its limitation is a weaker relationship with the Weerwater.

1:5 000

What would change if a publicness structure were positioned along the waterfront?

Density

What could be the density distribution?

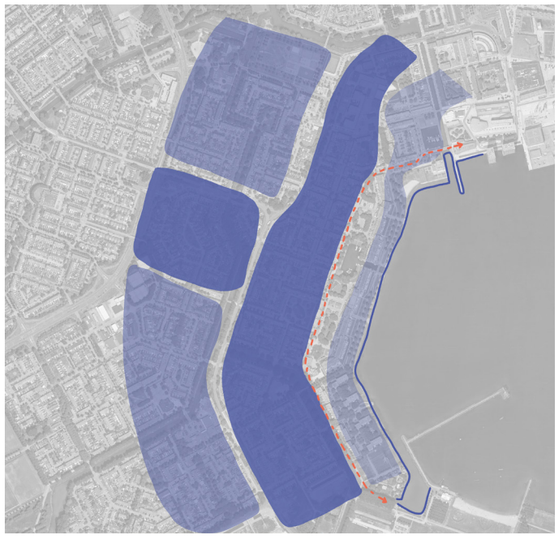


6 layers total
5 layers total
4 layers total
Removed blocks
Publicness structure
Waterfront

The highest densities would concentrate along the water's edge, creating an active and densely inhabited waterfront.

Resistance

Where would be the most and least resistance?



High
Medium
Low
Publicness structure

Resistance would be lowest along the water's edge where density is already relatively high and transformation requires limited intervention. Medium resistance characterises the areas of row housing where density is lower but the typology is adaptable. The highest resistance would be found in the villa neighbourhood to the west, where the introduction of a new publicness structure and increased density would have the greatest impact.
1:5 000

Figure 129 Exploration areas (Google satellite, n.d.)

What would change if a publicness structure followed the mobility structure?

Density

What could be the density distribution?

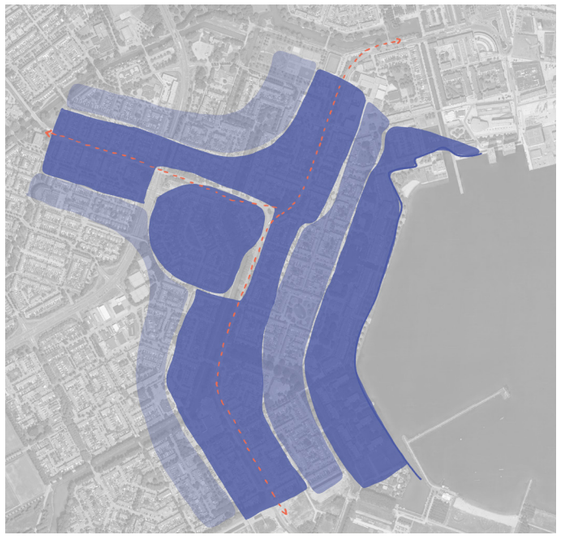


6 layers total
5 layers total
4 layers total
Removed blocks
Publicness structure
Waterfront

The highest densities would concentrate along the bus corridor, bringing more residents into direct proximity with the publicness backbone and activating the route throughout the day.

Resistence

Where would be the most and least resistance?



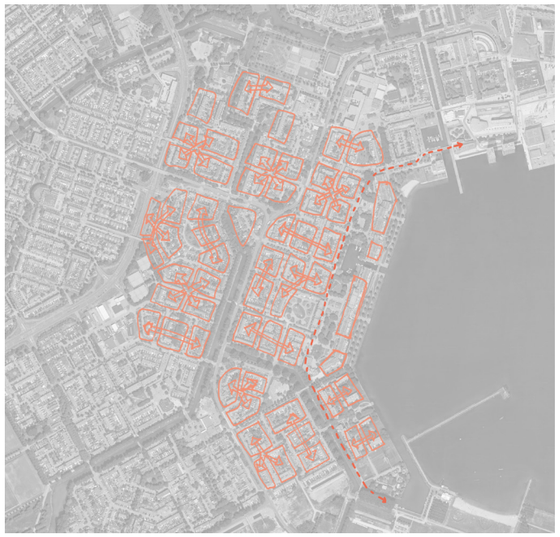
High
Medium
Low
Publicness structure

Resistance is lowest where existing buildings already reach three to four storeys. Medium resistance characterises the public housing areas, where housing association ownership enables coordinated intervention. Resistance is highest along the bus corridor itself. Where the ambition to reach five to six storeys is a significant step change, as for in the villa neighbourhood and row housing areas.
1:5 000

What would change if a publicness structure were positioned along the waterfront?

Community

How would the community be integrated?

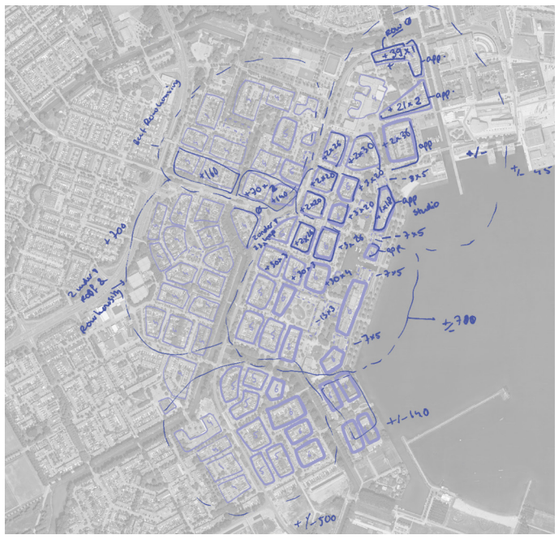


First degree comunity
Second degree community
Publicness structure

Community would be organised in two degrees: first within the individual block and then between blocks. Using the existing block structure as the spatial framework. Indoor communal spaces include playgrounds, shared kitchens, growing spaces for food and workspaces would activate the interior of blocks, while shared facilities between blocks would create a second degree of community at the neighbourhood scale.

Added housing

How many housing can approximately added?



Density
Added calculation

In this scenario approximately 3,000 units could be added across the focus area, concentrating new density along the waterfront edge. This represents an ambitious scenario in which density is increased wherever the earlier analysis identified opportunity, with apartments as the primary added typology.

1:5 000

Figure 130 Exploration areas (Google satellite, n.d.)

What would change if a publicness structure followed the mobility structure?

Community

How would the community be integrated?



First degree comunity
Communal structure
Publicness structure

The first degree of community is organised within the block, while the second degree is structured by the networks running between areas of higher and lower density. Building entrances are oriented toward this network, with neighbourhood amenities concentrated in the medium density zone. Making community spaces accessible from both the denser and quieter parts of the neighbourhood.

Added housing

How many housing can approximately added?



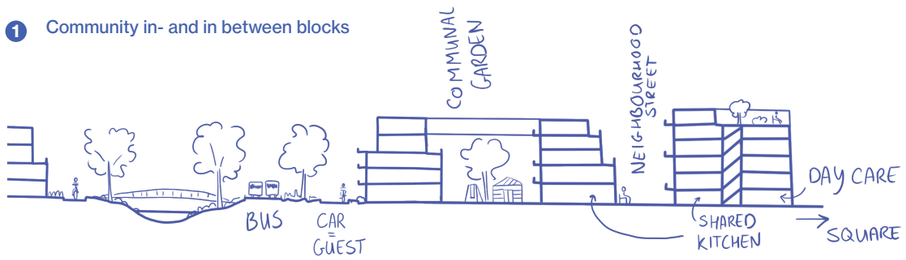
Density
Added calculation

In this scenario approximately 3,700 units could be added, more than the waterfront option, by concentrating significant new density along the publicness backbone while opening up and reducing density along the Weerwater edge. This produces a stronger contrast between the activated publicness corridor and the more open, green waterfront, with apartments as the primary added typology.

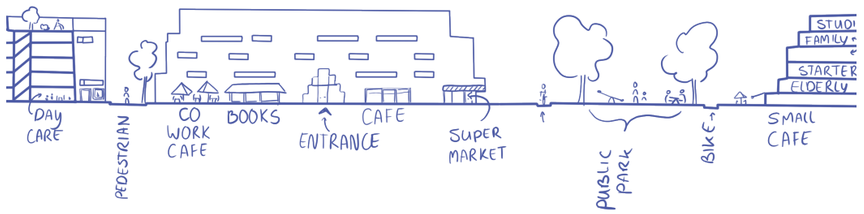
What would change if a publicness structure were positioned along the waterfront?

Vision
How would that look like?

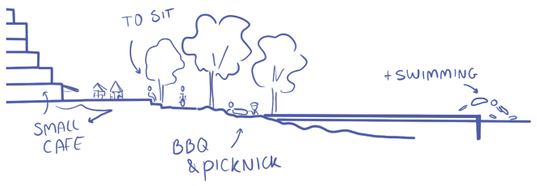
1 Community in- and in between blocks



2 Active square with clustered care-functions



3 Active relation to the waterside



Section

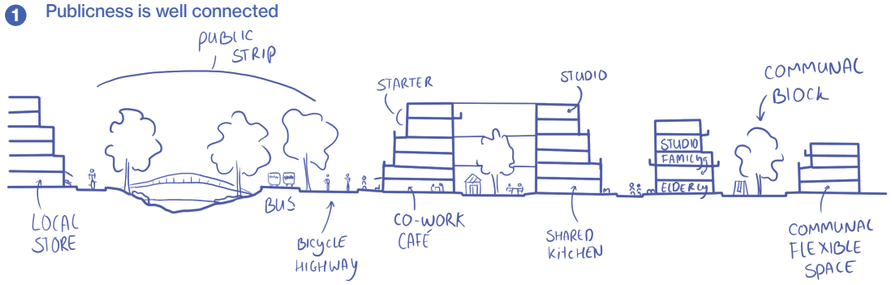


Figure 131 Exploration sections
Figure 132 Location section (Google satellite, n.d.)

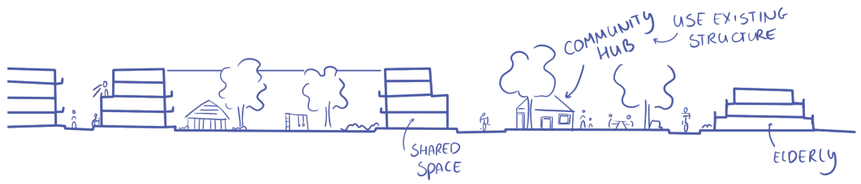
What would change if a publicness structure followed the mobility structure?

Vision
How would that look like?

1 Publicness is well connected



2 Community focused strip



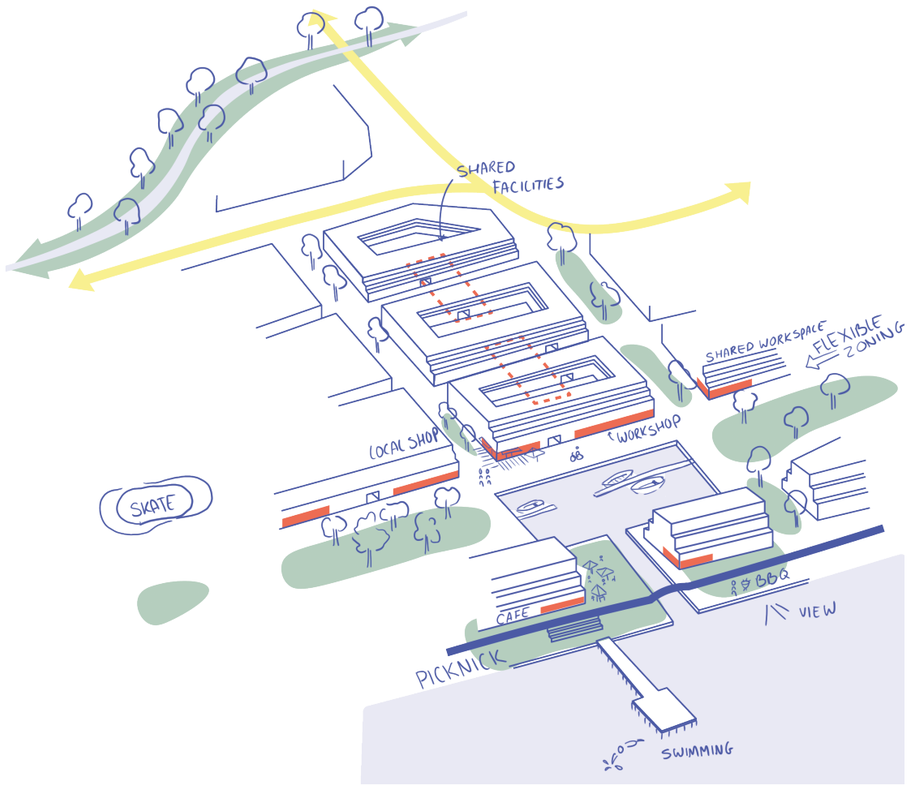
3 Calm and green



Figure 133 Exploration vision waterfront
Figure 134 Exploration vision mobility

What would change if a publicness structure were positioned along the waterfront?

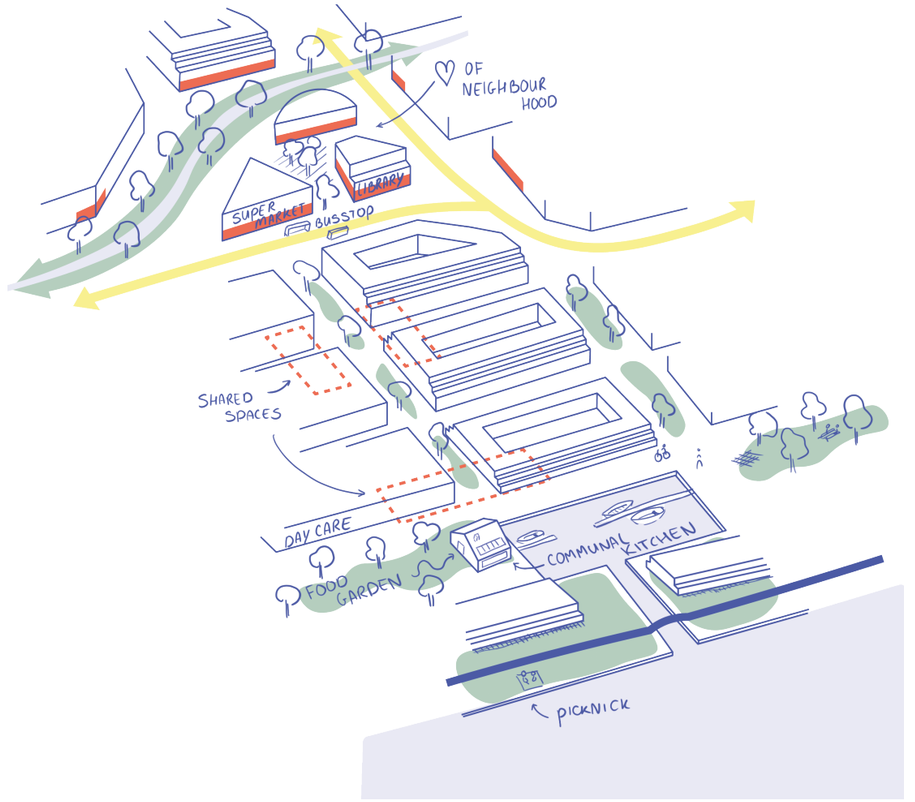
Vision
How would that look like?



Publicness along the waterfront
- Publicness
- Shared spaces
- Bus network
- Greenery
- Water

What would change if a publicness structure followed the mobility structure?

Vision
How would that look like?



Publicness along the waterfront
- Publicness
- Shared spaces
- Bus network
- Greenery
- Water

04.2.3 Subconclusion

The two spatial explorations reveal a clear design direction and the waterfront option is taken forward as the primary spatial structure for the design proposal. It shows less resistance in terms of density transformation, and its publicness logic connects more naturally to the existing flow of the city centre, building further on an existing publicness structure rather than introducing an entirely new one.
However, the mobility option contributes a valuable insight: the integration of mobility within the publicness system is important, which can be done through the placement of functions, bus stops and cycle routes. This is essential regardless of which structural logic is followed.

Several spatial take-aways emerge that directly inform the design proposal in section 04.2.4. Three criteria guide where the design will intervene: buildings with lower energy labels, public housing corporation ownership, and low FSI and GSI values. These conditions are found primarily along the waterfront publicness structure, where the current closed square blocks offer the greatest opportunity for transformation and the highest spatial impact. Through the explorations, the blocks modelled on the existing built structure were found to be too large for human scale and will need to be opened in further steps, making space for shared functions and facilities, communal courtyards and a greater proximity of uses. Terraced housing facing the public route, combined with setback, brings a human scale, activity to the street edge and creates the eyes on the street that safety and social vitality both require. The existing qualities of the neighbourhood are preserved as the foundation for local identity, rather than replaced.

These take-aways map directly onto the most central patterns in the network established in section 04.1. The patterns with the highest number of connection:

A.1 Main public street,
A.4 Last mile,
P.1 Eyes on the street,
P.3 Local identity,
A.8 Communal indoor spaces and
D.13 Third spaces,

are precisely the principles that the spatial explorations confirm as non-negotiable. The waterfront will be active, but the publicness strip along the existing urban structure is the primary spatial backbone. The design proposal that follows is built from this foundation outward.

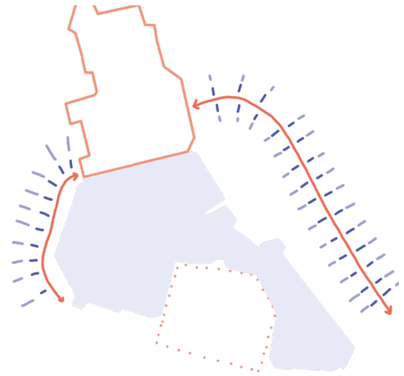


Figure 135 Implementing patterns of opportunity (OSM, 2025)

04.2.4 Implementing patterns of opportunity

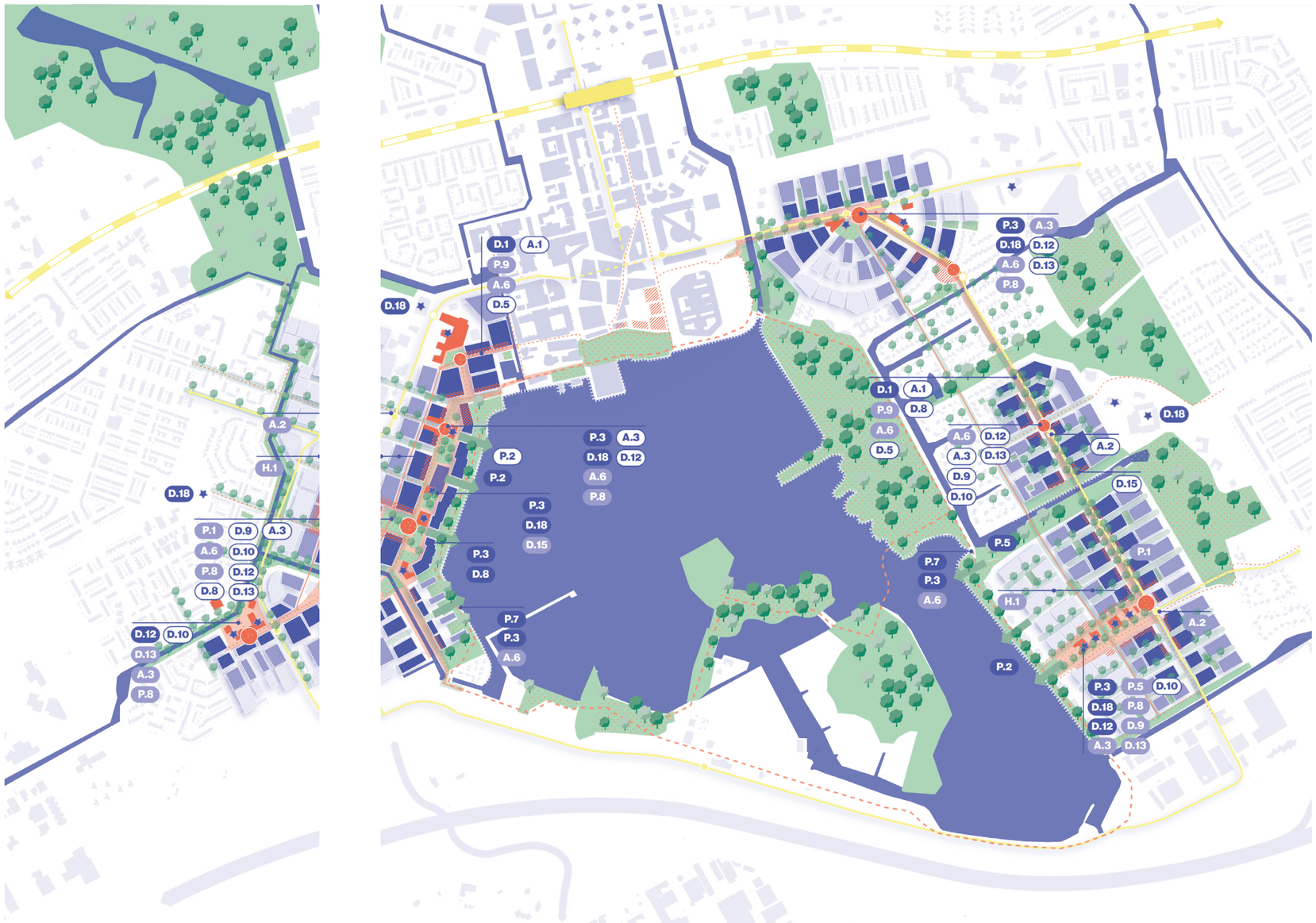
This section translates the take-aways of the design exploration and patterns of opportunity into a spatial proposal for the focus area within Stedenwijk, moving from the scale of the whole area down to the scale of individual blocks and sections.

A connecting publicness backbone

The plan translates the patterns of opportunity into a spatial proposal for the focus area, structured around a single organising principle: a new publicness backbone that connects the two residential neighbourhoods to the existing city center and the future Floriade center, using the Weerwater as the shared spatial hinge between them (figure 135).

In Stedenwijk, the publicness route runs through the built environment, threading through the existing residential fabric, activating ground floors, creating communal routes and introducing new density along its edges. In Filmwijk, the route follows the existing bus network corridor, bringing the bicycle network alongside it to increase passive surveillance, safety and activity along a route that is currently underactivated after dark. Together the two routes connect to the existing city centre through the shared green and water landscape of the Weerwater.

The plan distinguishes three types of intervention. Existing conditions that already work are preserved and reinforced. Existing conditions that require attention are identified for transformation: ground floors along key routes, bus stops, bicycle connections and care-amenity clusters that are present but underperforming. New interventions introduce what is currently absent: density along the publicness backbone, communal indoor and outdoor spaces, affordable housing typologies, new public spaces and enhanced connections to the waterfront.



Patterns
- D.18 Existing opportunities
- D.18 Existing but need transformation
- D.18 New opportunities

- New publicness route, in relation to public space
- Existing publicness
- Existing public city center of Almere
- New publicness
- Care-amenity cluster, in relation to public space
- Community centred route
- Recreational route
- Medium - slow network
- Existing built environment
- Density (high - low)
- Affordable structures
- Public space
- Existing green structures
- New or enhanced green structures
- Design views
- Water structures
- Connection to the waterfront
- Traintrack
- Train station
- High speed busnetwork
- Existing busstop
- Changed busstop

1: 13 000

Removing and preserving
The first step identifies which buildings and trees are removed to open the blocks along the publicness strip, and which existing structures and green elements are preserved as the spatial foundation of the neighbourhood's identity.

Publicness, community and mobility structure
The three overlapping structures: publicness, community and mobility, are laid over the cleared site, establishing the spatial logic that guides all following decisions: where people move, where they meet, and where new structures will be placed.

Increased density along publicness structure
Density is distributed in three gradients along the publicness structure, with the highest density closest to the public route stepping down to the lowest density at the edges. Integrating new housing typologies into the existing residential fabric.

Removing and preserving
- Buildings to remove
- Trees to remove
- Buildings to preserve
- Trees to preserve

1: 7 500

Publicness, community and mobility structure
- Publicness structure
- Community structure
- Mobility structure
- Newly built structures

1: 7 500

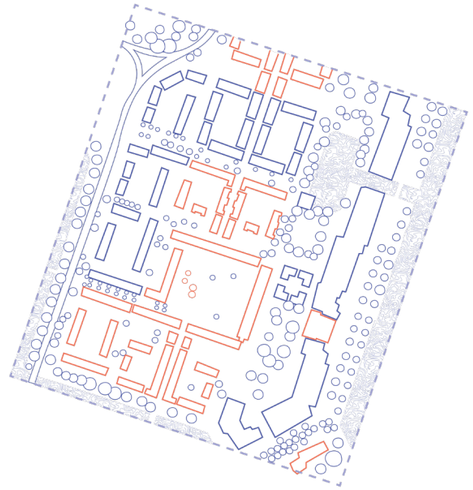
Area of focus within Stedenwijk



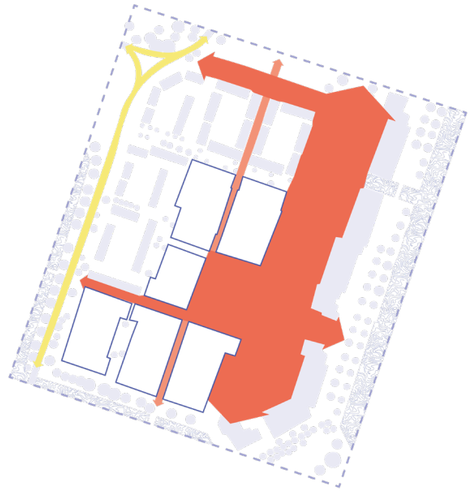
1: 13 000

Increased density along publicness structure
- Highest density
- Medium density
- Lowest density
- Publicness structure

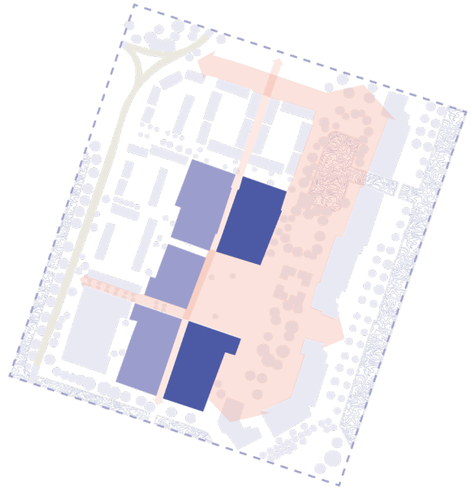
1: 7 500



Connected patterns
P.2 D.18
P.3
P.6
P.7



Connected patterns
A.1 D.9
A.2
A.3
A.6



Connected patterns
D.3 H.1
D.5 H.2
D.9 H.4
D.10 H.5

Figure 136 Patterns implemented in Stedenwijk (based on OSM, 2025)

Short blocks and set-back
These interventions are introduced to bring the new density to a human scale, by breaking down the oversized block structure as identified in the explorations and creating a legible, active street edge along the publicness route.

Communal in- and outside space and diverse blocks
Opening the blocks makes space for communal courtyards and shared outdoor areas, introducing diversity in block sizes and typologies. This creates the proximity of uses and shared facilities that support a range of residents and daily activities within the neighbourhood.

Publicness and communal spaces
The publicness plinth is introduced along the route, combining existing publicness with new active ground floors, communal indoor spaces and shared outdoor areas. Establishing the social infrastructure that activates the street and supports the daily life of young professional women at neighbourhood scale.

Short blocks and set-back
- Densities (high - low)
- Short blocks
- Set-back

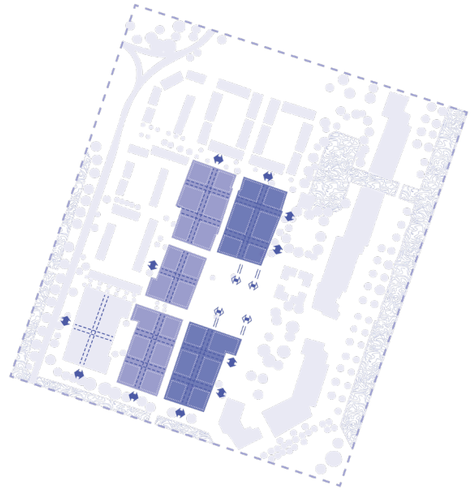
1: 7 500

Communal in- and outside space and diverse blocks
- Opening blocks

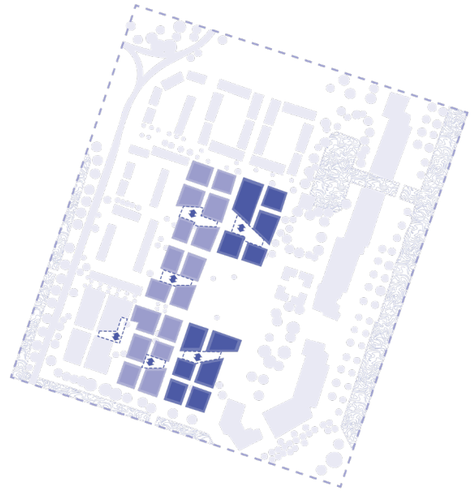
1: 7 500

Publicness and communal spaces
- Existing publicness
- New publicness plint
- Outdoor public space
- Communal indoor spaces
- Communal outdoor spaces

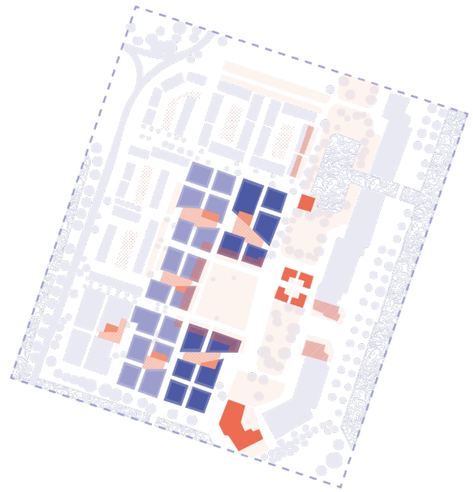
1: 7 500



Connected patterns
A.3 P.5 D.8 A.7 D.1 P.1 D.2 P.3 D.4



Connected patterns
A.8 P.8 D.2 D.14 A.9 P.10 D.3 D.16 P.1 P.11 D.6 D.17 P.3 P.12 D.13 D.20



Connected patterns
A.1 A.8 P.8 D.13 A.2 A.9 D.9 D.16 A.3 P.1 D.10 D.17 A.7 P.3 D.12 D.20

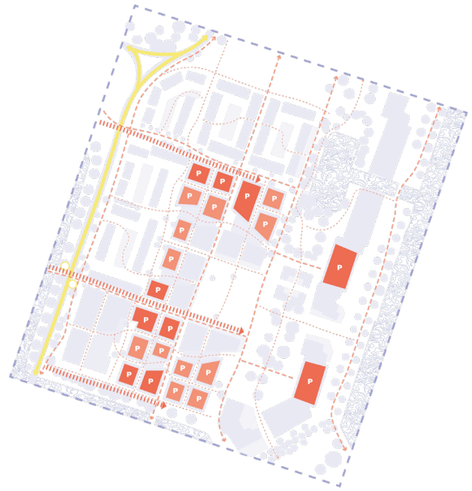
Figure 137 Patterns implemented in Stedenwijk (based on OSM, 2025)

Figure 138 Patterns implemented in Stedenwijk (based on OSM, 2025)

Mobility and parking
Car access is limited to the edges of the neighbourhood, with infiltration routes allowing cars to reach parking without dominating the interior. The high-speed bus network and redesigned bus stops anchor the publicness route, while bicycle and pedestrian roads take priority within the block structure. Thereby ensuring that slow movement and safety remain central to the daily experience of the neighbourhood.

Mobility and parking
- Highspeed bus network
- Busstops
- Car can infiltrate neighbourhood
- Bicycle road
- Pedestrian road

1: 7 500



Connected patterns

A.2 A.6
A.3 A.7 D.3
A.4 P.1 D.6
A.5 P.6 D.13

Business opportunities
The business opportunity map distributes functions according to their spatial logic, accessibility and rent category. The central square forms the primary business hub of the neighbourhood, concentrating a diverse mix of functions around a shared public space. Care-related amenities including a doctor, dentist and apothecary cluster here alongside a school, local small to medium businesses in affordable structures, a library and flexible meeting space, co-work cafés and a supermarket and drugstore. This concentration reduces trip chaining and places daily necessities within walking distance of the residential fabric. Flex-work spaces and meeting spaces for larger groups are positioned locally within the same area, at lower rent categories that support the home-based and small-scale female entrepreneurial activity identified in the focus area analysis.
At the small port to the northeast, a workshop, café and business meeting space take advantage of the special waterfront character and existing affordable structure, offering a more informal business destination at the edge of the neighbourhood. At the Weerwater edge, a café and restaurant activates the recreational route in an existing structure, extending the social and economic offer of the neighbourhood towards the water.

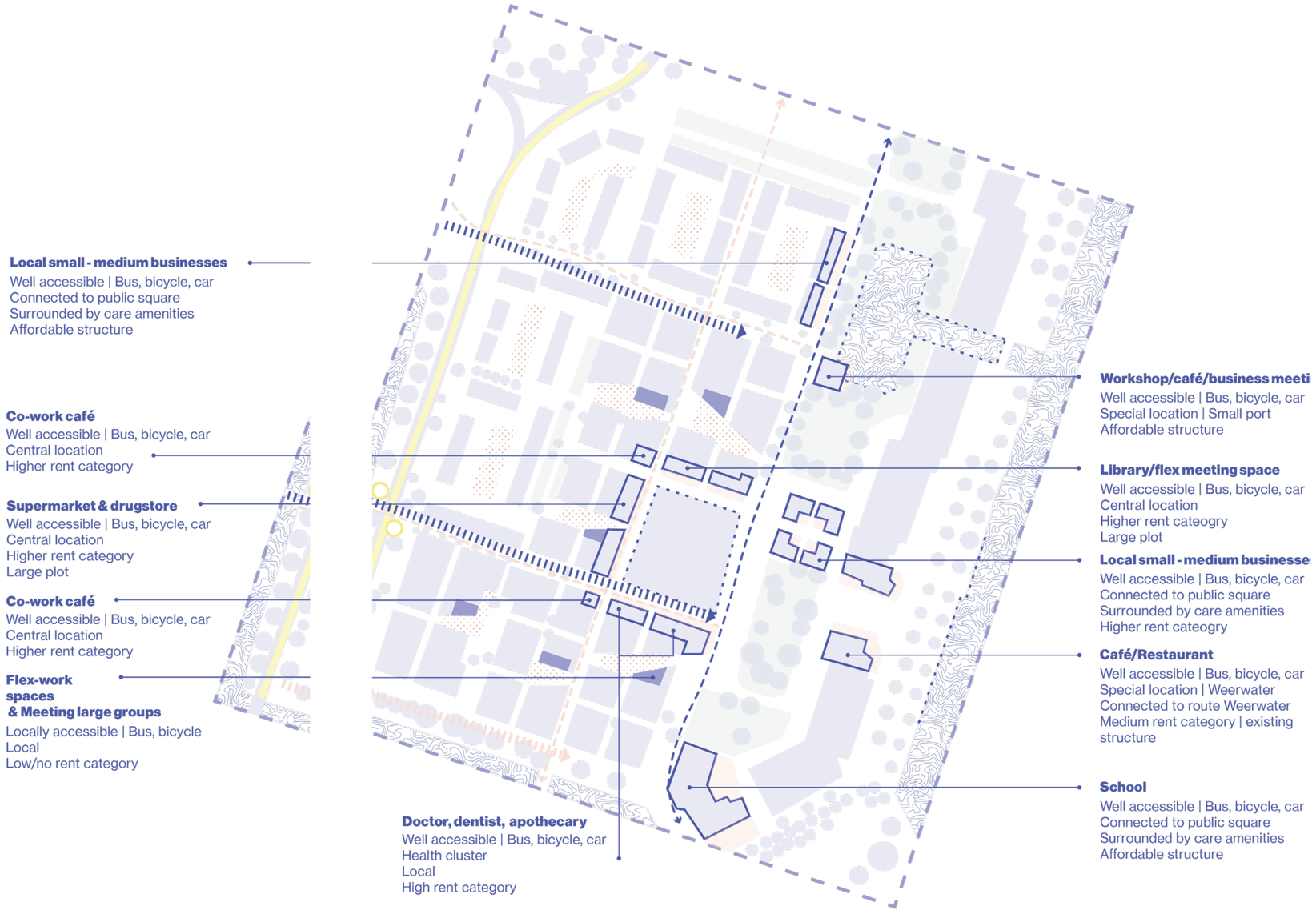


Figure 139 Business opportunities (based on OSM, 2025)

Care opportunities

The care opportunity map positions functions along the publicness route and within the communal structure of the neighbourhood, ensuring that care is embedded in daily movement rather than requiring separate trips. Along the public routing, local small to medium businesses in affordable structures provide care-related services within easy reach by bus, bicycle and car.

Within the communal block structure, communal outdoor spaces and communal kitchen and dining spaces are positioned locally, accessible by bus and bicycle at low to no rent, supporting the shared domestic activities that reduce the care burden on individual households.

Along the eastern publicness route, public shelter and seating with optional playground connections are placed at two points, providing safe and comfortable resting places along the route at all times of day. A childcare cluster combining kindergarten, before-school and after-school care is positioned centrally on this route, while a school is located close to care amenities in a central location. The health cluster with the doctor, dentist and apothecary is placed locally at higher rent, completing the daily care provision within the neighbourhood.

At the Weerwater edge, the active route of the Rondje Weerwater is reinforced with sufficient seating, programme and special views, transforming an existing recreational route into a care-supportive environment where walking, rest and social encounter are part of the same daily movement.

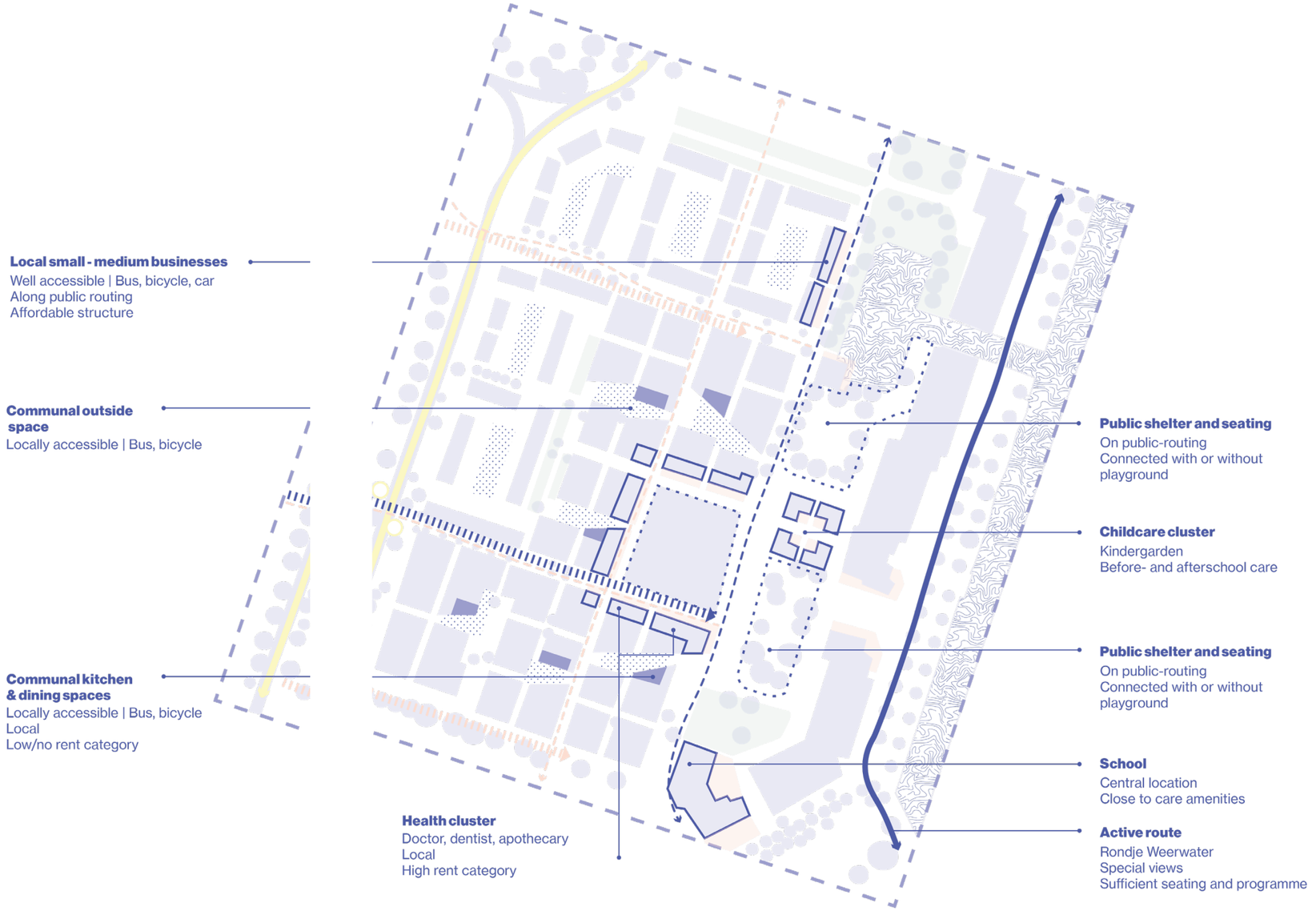


Figure 140 Care opportunities (based on OSM, 2025)

Safety opportunities

The safety opportunity map addresses the conditions identified in the focus area analysis through a layered approach, which combines active ground floors, open facades, programmed spaces and clear sightlines to create a neighbourhood that feels safe throughout the day and after dark.

Ground-based housing provides active ground floor presence along the whole neighbourhood, generating continuous passive surveillance at street level. Along the mobility zone, active ground floors and a minimum open facade ensure the street is well-lit and overlooked after dark. The active square offers programme for different age categories from 07:00 to 22:00, including weekends, creating a central location with sustained activity across the full day.

On the eastern side, housing on the ground floor ensures activity especially after working hours and on weekends, while the childcare cluster generates consistent movement to and from the location during drop-off and pick-up times. The open facade, programme and terrace along the Weerwater route and open blocks provide activity from 12:00 to 22:00, also on weekends. The school generates activity across a large part of the day, with movement concentrated before and after school hours.

he communal square and communal indoor space provide activity throughout the whole day, concentrated after working hours and on weekends, offering a safe space for playing and being. At the park edge, sightlines and openness are ensured through clear routes, sufficient escape routes and good lighting after dark.

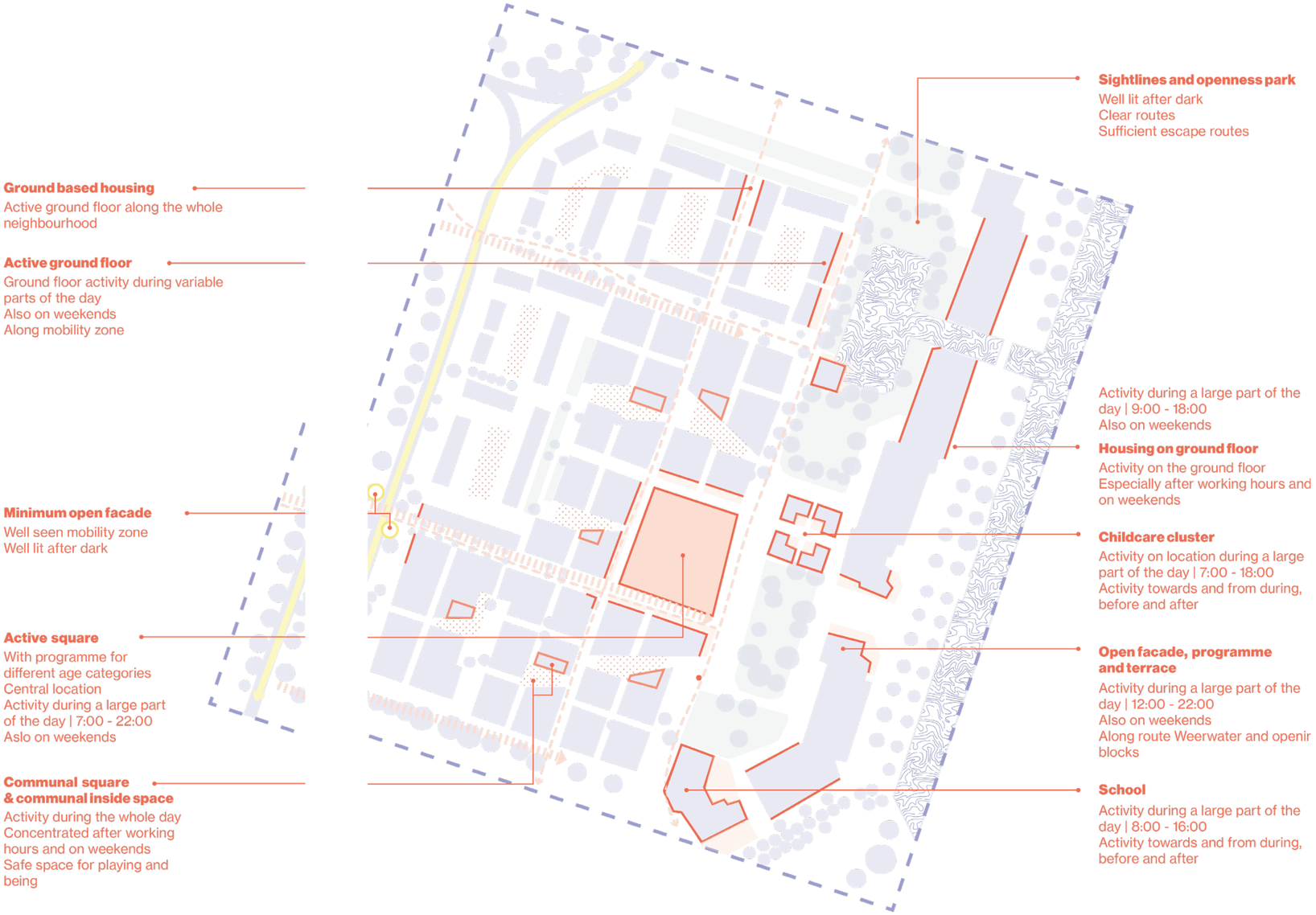


Figure 141 Safety opportunities (based on OSM, 2025)

Highest density block
The highest density block begins as a closed block of five to six layers, which is opened to create permeability and communal space within. A setback is introduced from 3 stories or higher, to bring the building height to a human scale at street level, ensuring that despite the higher density the street experience remains intimate and legible. The ground floor is activated through flexible zoning, dividing the plinth between communal and public functions that animate the street edge throughout the day. A wide pedestrian path runs along the block, with entrances oriented toward it. The last mile connection is resolved by integrating a bus stop, bicycle parking, walking routes and car parking in close proximity or inside the buildings. Transition zones and gradients of privacy mediate between the public street and the more private communal interior. Living and dining functions are placed on the street-facing side of the apartments, creating eyes on the street particularly after working hours and on weekends. Balconies provide private outdoor space for residents while further activating the facade and contributing to the sense of oversight and life along the public route.

Highest density block
- Built
- Commercial area
- Entrance
- Semi-private space
- Pedestrian path

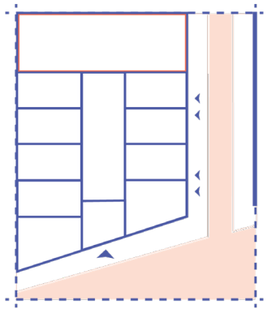
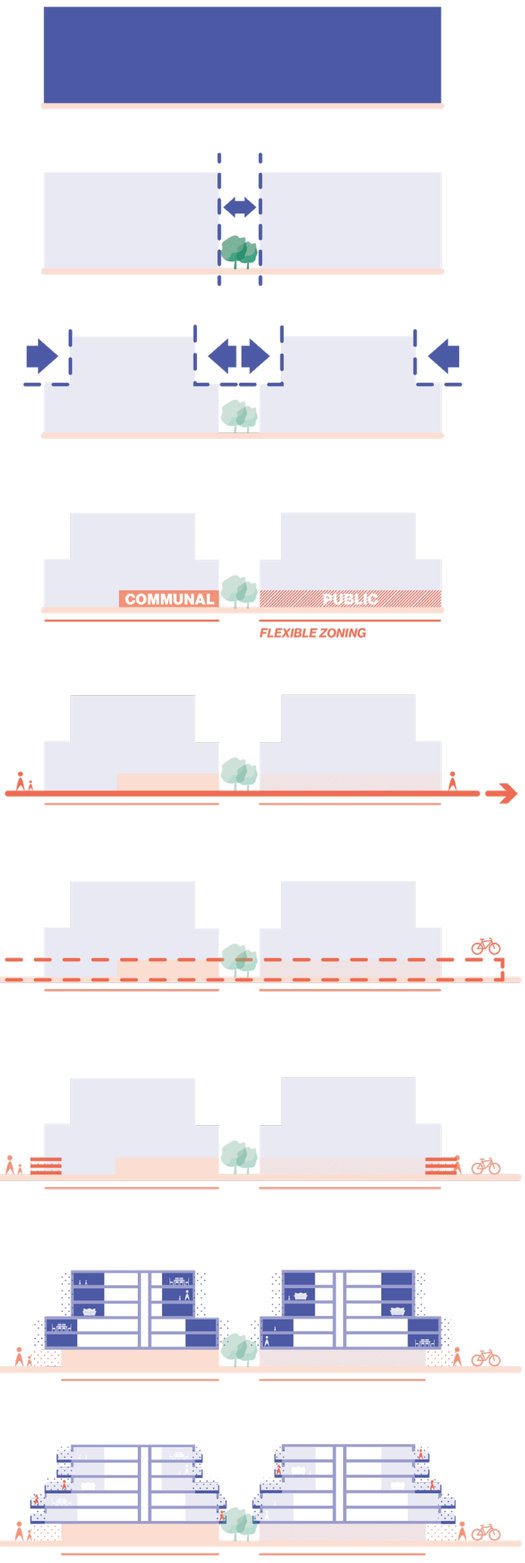


Figure 142 High density block section

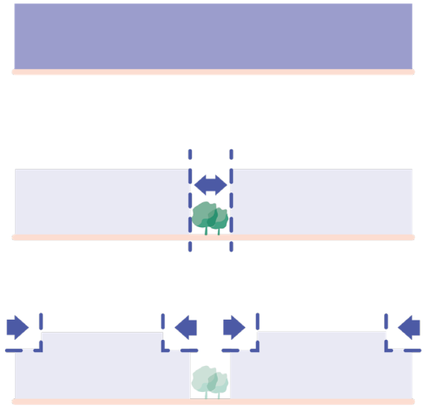


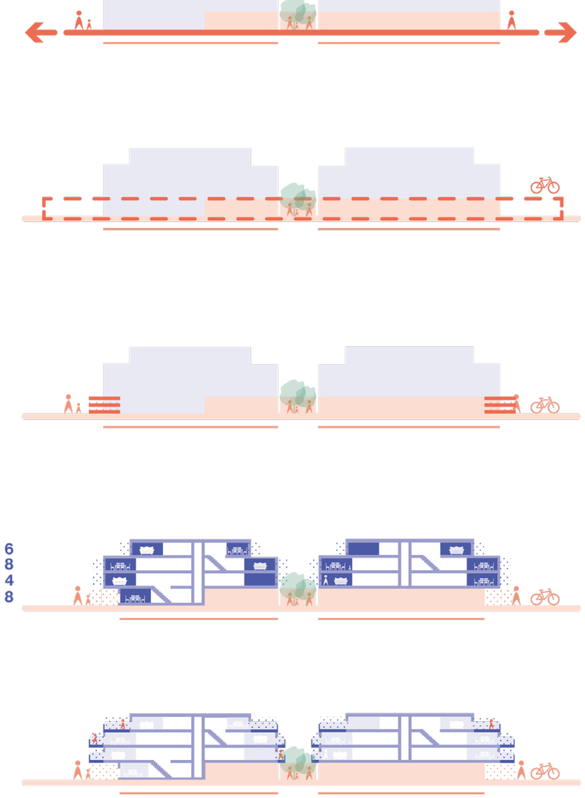
Connected patterns
D.5 H.1
A.7 P.6
A.9 D.1
P.3 D.2
P.5
P.3
D.4
D.8
A.1 D.9 D.13 H.3
A.3 D.10 D.15
P.1 D.11 D.17
P.3 D.12 D.20
A.2 D.9
A.6
P.9
P.12
A.4
A.5
A.6
P.9
A.4 D.6
P.3 D.7
P.9 D.9
P.10
A.4 H.4
A.5 H.5
P.1
H.2
A.4
A.5
P.3

Medium density block
The medium density block begins as a four-layer closed block, which is opened to introduce communal space and permeability at the heart of the block. A setback brings the building to a human scale at street level. The ground floor is activated through flexible zoning with a communal function, connecting the block interior to the public route. A wide pedestrian path with bicycle path and bicycle parking runs along the block, with entrances oriented toward it. The last mile connection integrates walking, cycling and car parking in close proximity at the street edge. Transition zones and gradients of privacy create a soft boundary between the public street and the communal interior. Living and dining functions face the street, generating eyes on the street particularly outside working hours. Balconies and terraces provide private outdoor space while activating the facade and contributing to the social life along the public route.

Medium density block
- Built
- Commercial area
- Entrance
- Semi-private space
- Pedestrian path
- Bicycle path
- Bicycle parking
- Car parking

Figure 143 Medium density block section





Connected patterns

D.5 H.1

A.7 P.6
A.9 D.1
P.3 D.2
P.5

P.3
D.4

D.9 D.14
A.3 D.10 D.17
P.1 D.11 D.20
P.3 D.13 H.3

A.2 D.9
A.6
P.9
P.12

A.4
A.5
A.6
P.9

A.4 D.6
P.3 D.7
P.9 D.9
P.10

A.4 H.5
A.5
P.1
H.2

A.4
A.5
P.3

Lowest density block
The lowest density block begins as a three-layer closed block, opened to create a communal green space at the heart of the block with trees and greenery. A small communal function with flexible zoning is introduced at the ground floor, connecting the block interior to the public route at a modest scale. A wide pedestrian path with bicycle path runs along the block, with entrances oriented toward the street. The last mile connection is simplified at this scale, integrating walking, cycling and limited car parking. Transition zones and gradients of privacy are established through green elements rather than built structures, creating a soft boundary between the public street and the communal interior. At this lowest density, the housing typology combines connected blocks with apartments and two to three storey housing, with living and dining functions facing the street for eyes on the street. Contributing to the calm and green character of the lower density areas within the neighbourhood.

Lowest density block
- Built
- Entrance
- Semi-private space
- Pedestrian path
- Bicycle path

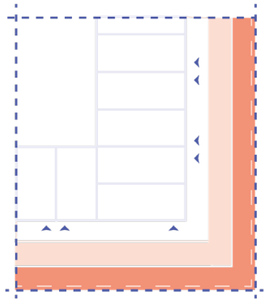
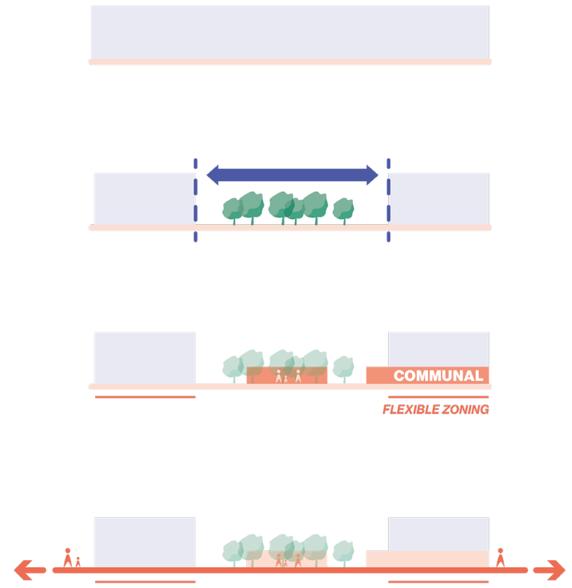


Figure 144 Low density block section











Connected patterns

D.5 H.1

A.7 P.6
A.9 D.1
P.3 D.2
P.5

D.9 D.14
A.3 D.10 D.17
P.1 D.11 D.20
P.3 D.13 H.3

A.2 D.9
A.6
P.9
P.12

A.4
A.5

A.6
P.9

A.4 D.6
P.3 D.7
P.9 D.9
P.10

A.4 H.5
A.5
P.1
H.2

With cornerblocks appartments
2-3 strorties housing

A.4
A.5
P.3

04.3.1 Introduction

A Female Practice is a spatial proposal that directly responds to the central research question of this study:

‘How can dominant urban design paradigms in Almere be transformed through the implementation of opportunity structures for young professional women in order to achieve gender equality?’

The proposal as seen in figure 145 does not reimagine the city from scratch, but it works with what exists. Identifying where targeted intervention can produce the greatest spatial and social impact. It is grounded in the spatial analysis in chapter 02, the lived experiences documented in chapter 03 and the patterns of opportunity developed in section 04.1. Together these three layers of evidence point to the same conclusion: what young professional women in Almere need is not a different city, but a more complete one.

04.3.2 A female practice plan

Large scale
The plan establishes a new publicness route connecting Stedenwijk and Filmwijk to the existing city centre, with the Weerwater as the shared spatial structure between them. New density is introduced along the publicness backbone, graduated from high to low as it moves away from the route. Care-amenity clusters, communal spaces and active ground floors are positioned along or in close proximity of the route to reduce trip chaining and activate the street throughout the day. Green connections are strengthened, the Weerwater recreational route is enhanced, and bus stops and cycle connections are improved across the full focus area.



Figure 145 A Female Practice Plan (OSM, 2025)



Figure 146 Overview (OSM, 2025)
Figure 147 Current situation (3DBAG, 2026)
Figure 148 New situation (3DBAG, 2026)

Housing

The spatial proposal replaces 230 existing low-rise dwellings, of which mainly single-family homes oriented around car access and private outdoor space. Introducing 828 new units structured across three distinct density layers, each calibrated to its position relative to the publicness route.

The high-density layer, located directly along the public backbone, consists of five- to six-storey blocks. The ground floor accommodates six apartments, stepping up to eight units per floor on the second and third storeys, before tapering to four units per floor on the upper three levels. This massing concentrates the greatest number of residents closest to amenities, employment access and public transport, the spatial conditions most critical to young professional women's daily routines.

The medium-density layer transitions the urban fabric toward the residential interior. Ground floors contain eight units, of which half extend vertically into the second storey as maisonette typologies, introducing section variety and accommodating a wider range of household configurations. The pattern repeats across the third and fourth floors, maintaining density while reducing the street-level scale.

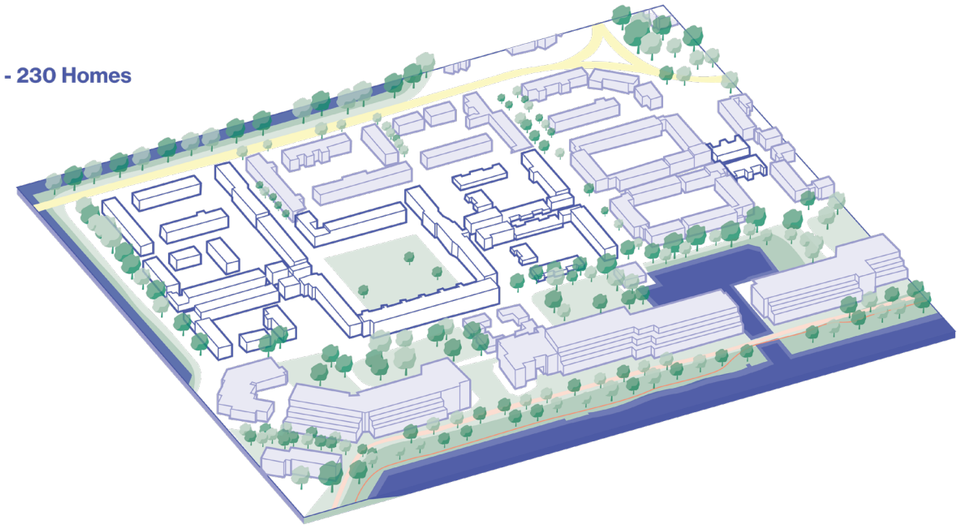
The low-density layer, at the edges, consists of row housing with corner blocks of three-storey apartment stacks, offering a typological continuity with the surrounding residential grain while still introducing affordability and tenure diversity into areas that currently lack it.

Social housing and free-sector rental units are distributed across all three layers rather than concentrated in a single zone.

Overview

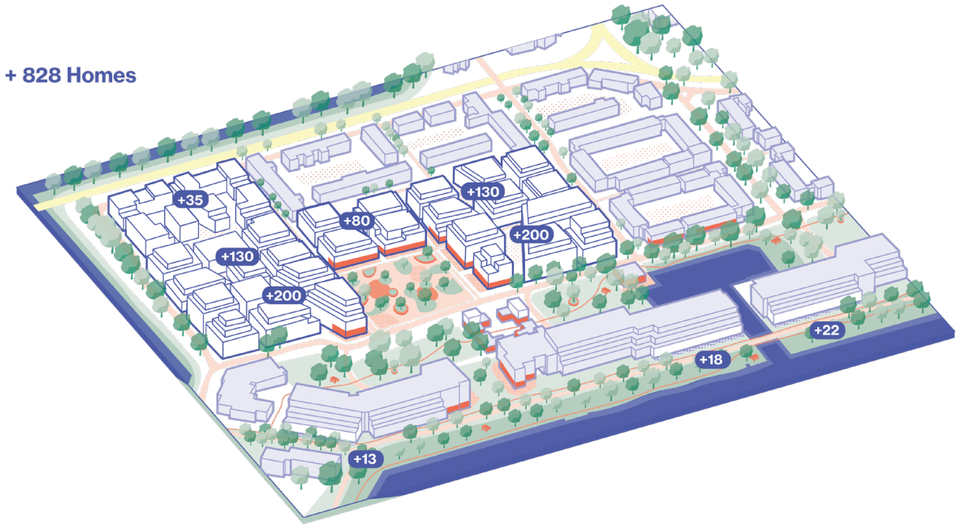


- 230 Homes



Current situation 1: 3 000
- Existing housing preserved
- Existing housing removed
- Existing green structures
- Existing water structures

+ 828 Homes



Estimated calculation:

1-Floor apartments	70%
2-Floor apartments	25 %
Row housing	5 %

As row housing is already dominating the area

Increased opportunities 1: 3 000
- New housing development
- Publicness in plint
- Active square
- Programme inside park structure
- Community space

From public to private
The distribution of functions across the focus area is structured around the publicness route as its primary organising spine. Public functions are concentrated along the route, ensuring visibility and pedestrian activation across the full daily cycle. Mobility is reorganised around a car-is-guest principle, with bicycle-first streets and wide pedestrian paths creating a network that prioritises the movement patterns most common among young professional women. Communal spaces are both in- and outdoor, they are embedded within each residential block, forming a gradient from fully public to semi-private that supports social encounter without requiring it.

De Maak-Haven
De Maak-Haven is a productive workspace located at the northern edge of the focus area, directly connected to the Weerwater waterfront. It offers flexible, affordable studio and workshop space for small-scale makers, freelancers and creative practitioners, responding to the finding in chapter 03 that young professional women in Almere have limited access to local, non-domestic workspaces. By situating productive activity within the residential neighbourhood and using existing affordable spaces, rather than in a separate employment zone, De Maak-Haven reduces the spatial distance between work, care and home.

Anita Lantermans plein
The square is named after Anita Lantermans, Almere's first female urban designer, whose contributions to the city's founding spatial structure were formative yet largely unacknowledged in the city's official histories. By naming the care-clustered square after her, women's contribution to Almere's urban development becomes visible in the public realm.

Figure 149 A Female Practice Plan
Stedenwijk (OSM, 2025)

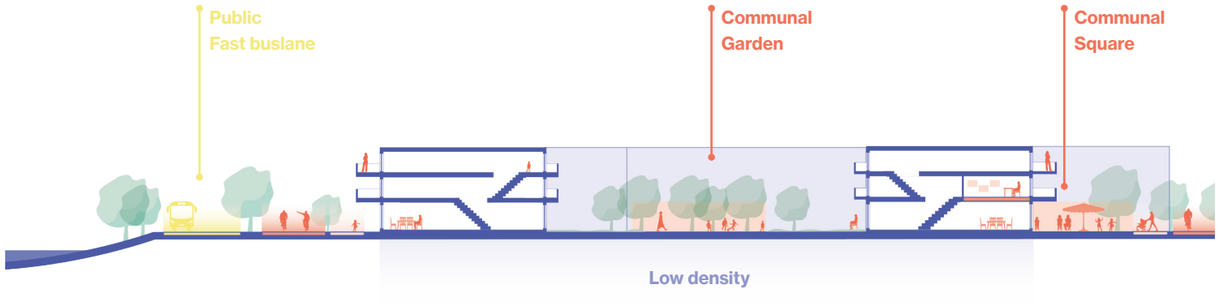


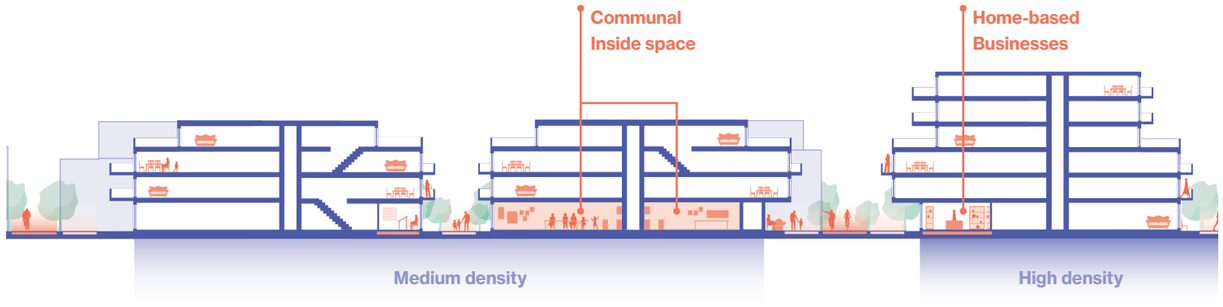
From mobility to waterfront

This section shows the spatial logic of the plan, reading from west to east. Beginning at the high speed bus corridor, connecting the neighbourhood to the wider city and metropolitain region. Moving on to the low-density residential area. Row housing with corner-apartment blocks create a calm entrance to the rest of the neighbourhood.

The density builds further with the medium typology towards the publicness backbone. Coming along communal in- and outside spaces focused on their surrounding building blocks. Facilitating space to meet, take care and activate the neighbourhood.

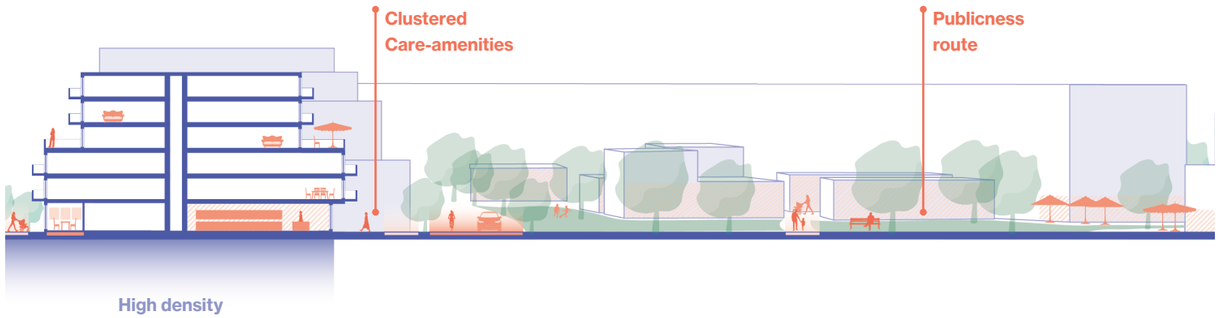
Figure 150 Section



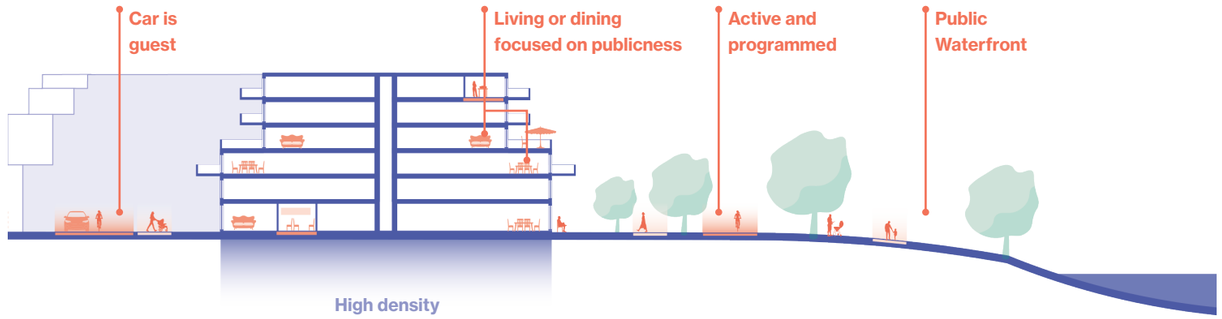




Active ground floors with care-clustered amenities make the spatial and social backbone of this plan. Where the opportunity structures are most concentrated and accessible.



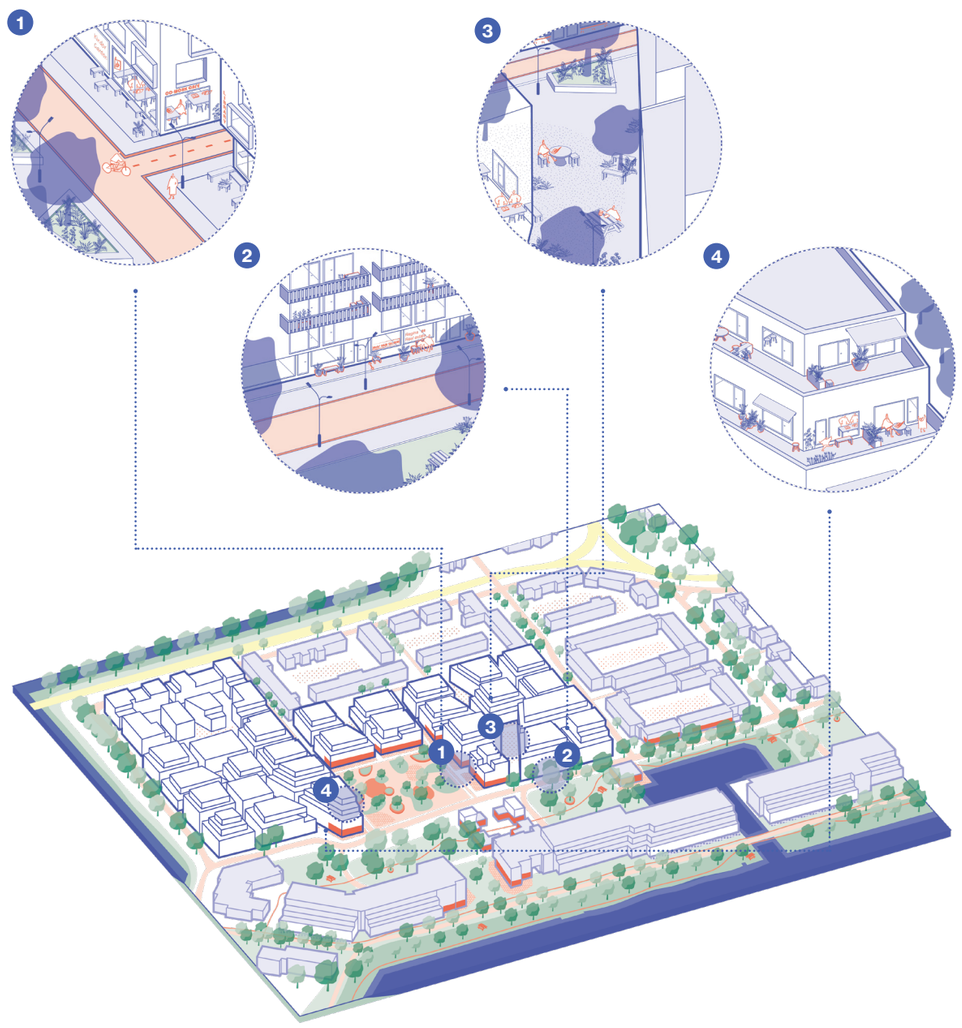
Moving towards the Weerwater front, where the urban intensity meets the openness and greenery of the recreational edge of the lake. The existing building blocks keep their density, although some blocks are removed to create a better connection. Ensuring that the waterfront remains an activated, overlooked and publicly accessible space rather than a residual green buffer.



04.3.3 Living in a female practice plan

Walking through the proposal, four spaces unfold from most public to most private: (1) Anita Lantermans' square and public plint, (2) the residential edge along the publicness structure, (3) the communal in- and outdoor space, and (4) the terraced housing. Each is read through three themes drawn from the lived experiences: autonomy, care and safety. Showing how opportunity structures are woven into the fabric of everyday life.

Figure 151 Living in a female practive plan (3DBAG, 2026)



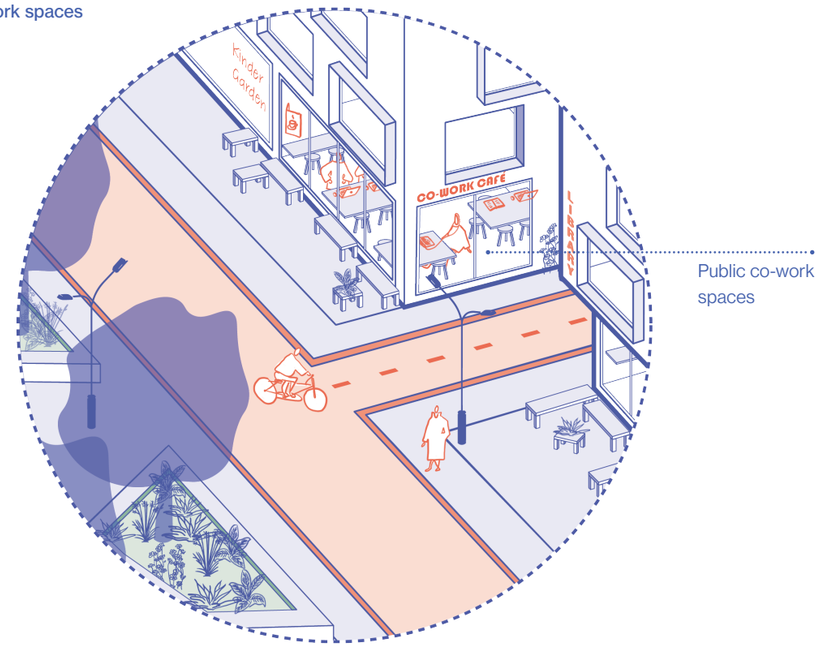
Living in a female practice plan

- Zoom-in area
- 1 Anita Lantermanssquare and plint
- 2 Residential connected to public structure
- 3 Communal in- and outside space
- 4 Terraced housing

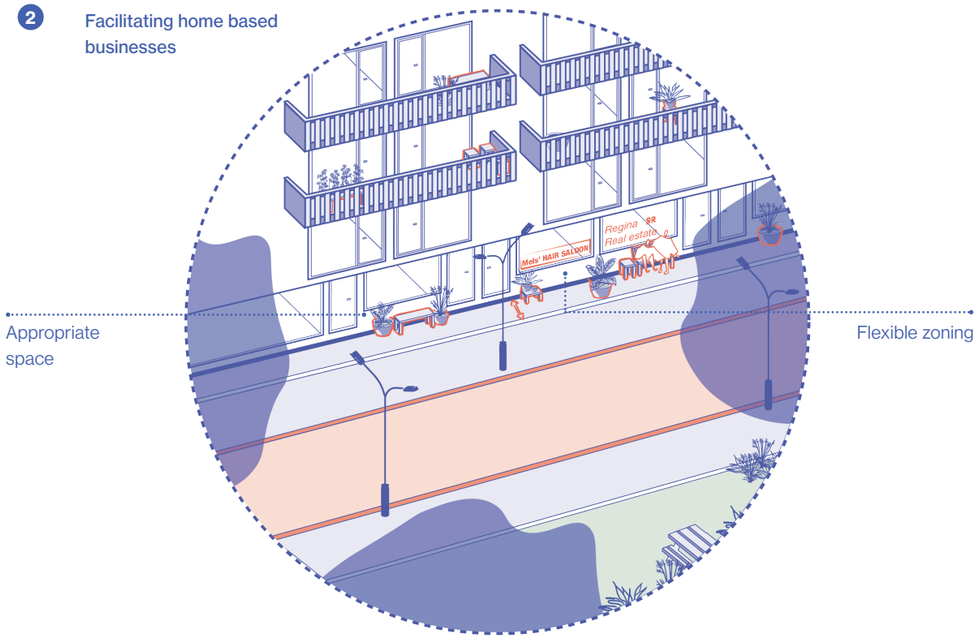
Figure 152 Autonomy zooms

Autonomy

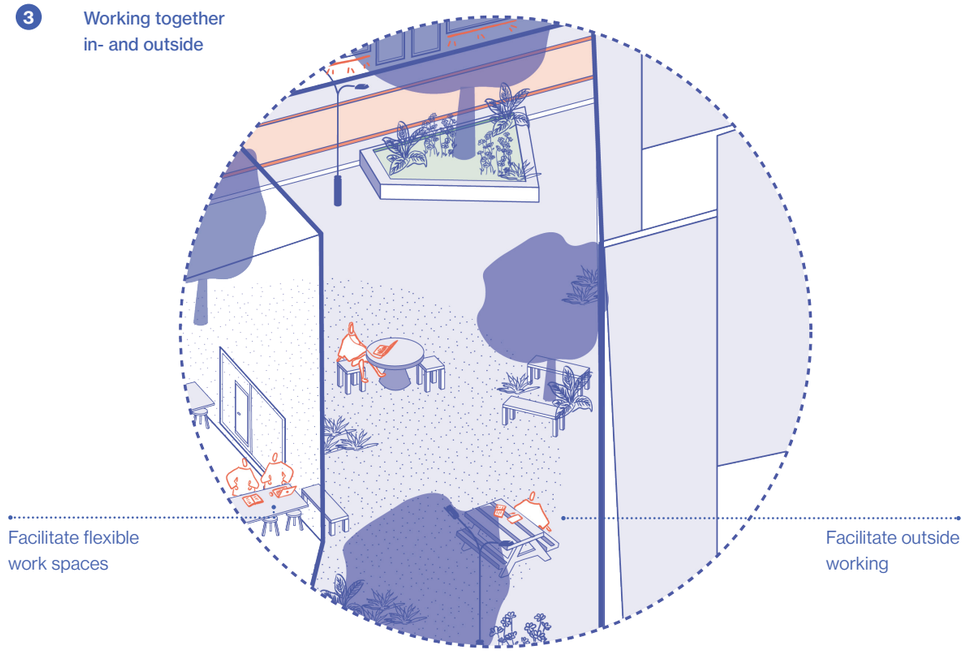
1 Public work spaces



2 Facilitating home based businesses



3 Working together in- and outside



4 Appropriating space

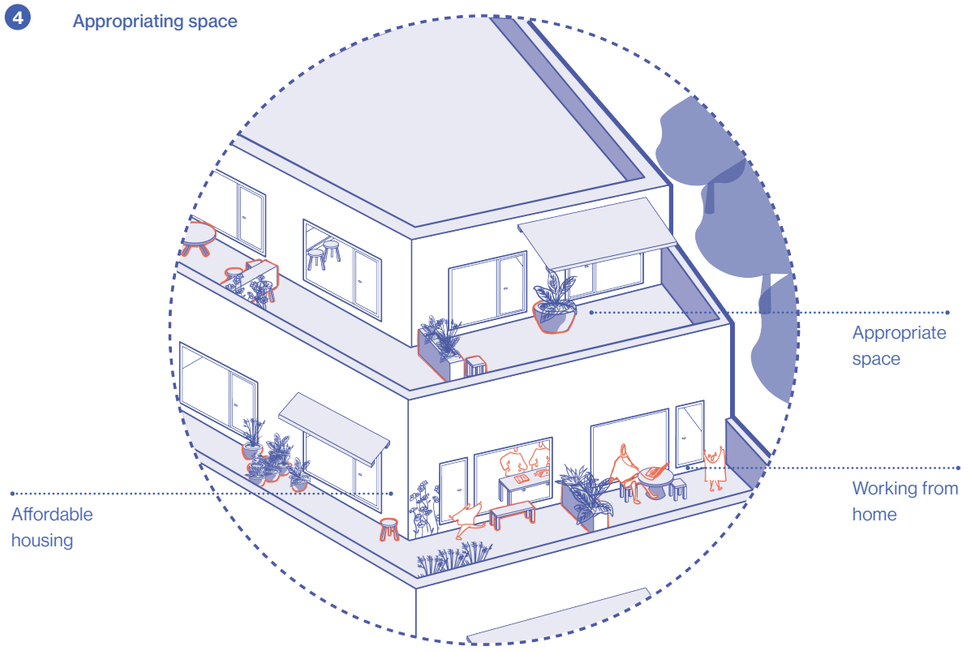
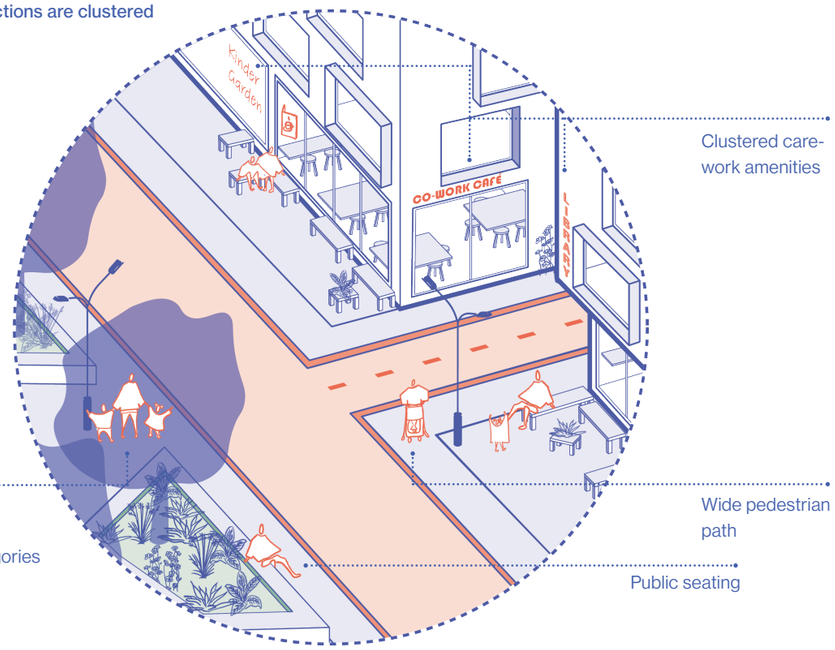


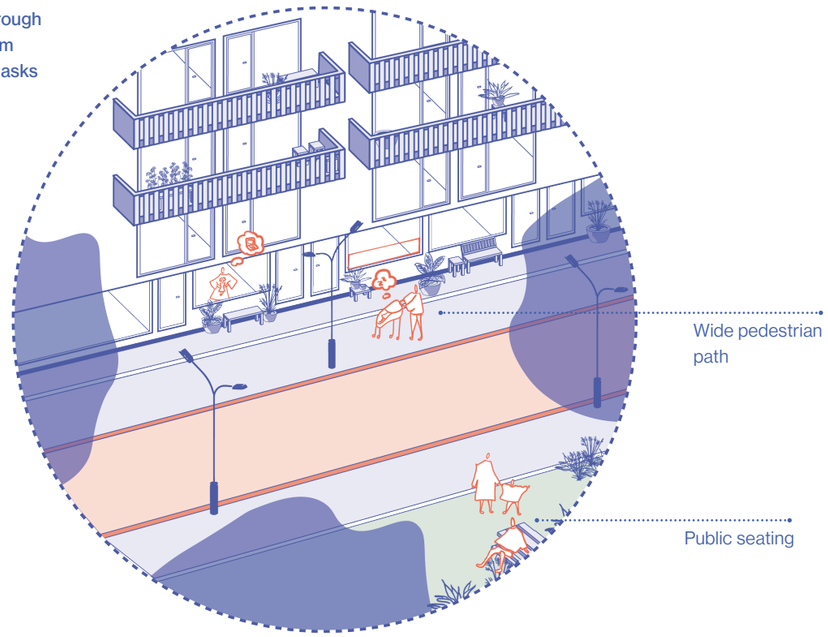
Figure 153 Care zooms

Care

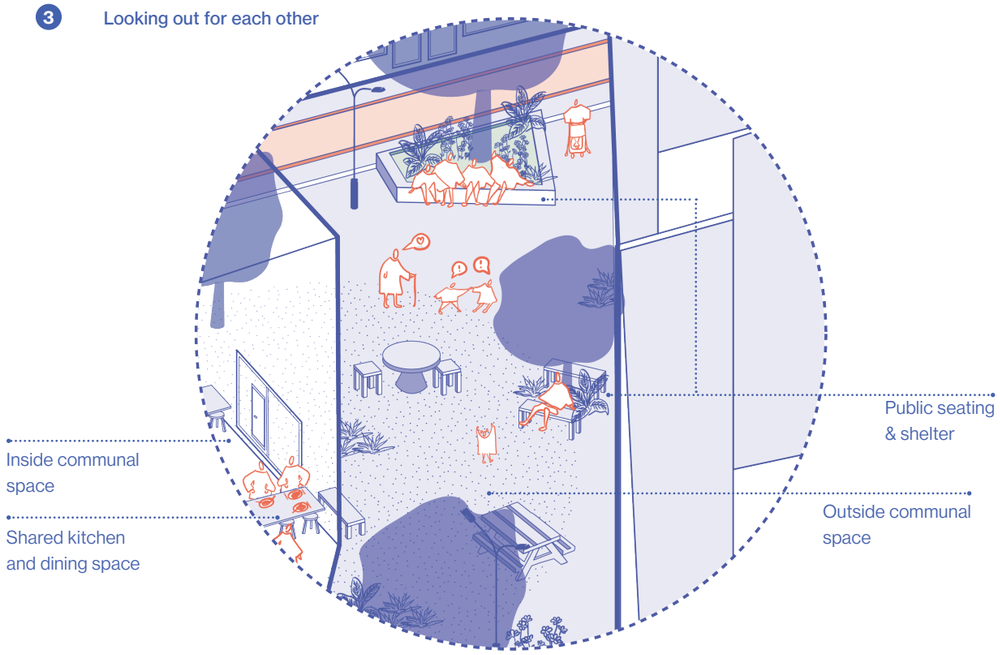
1 Care functions are clustered



2 Moving through public realm with care tasks



3 Looking out for each other



4 Living together

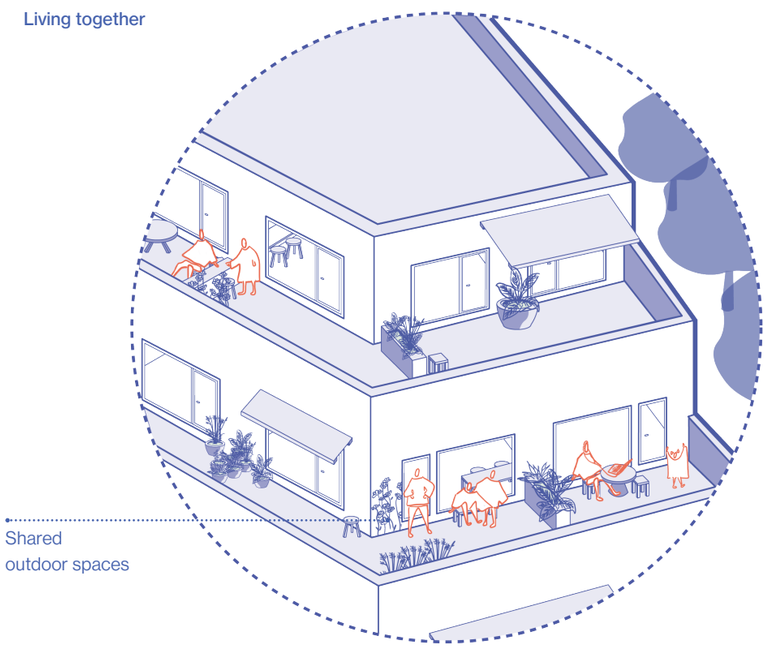
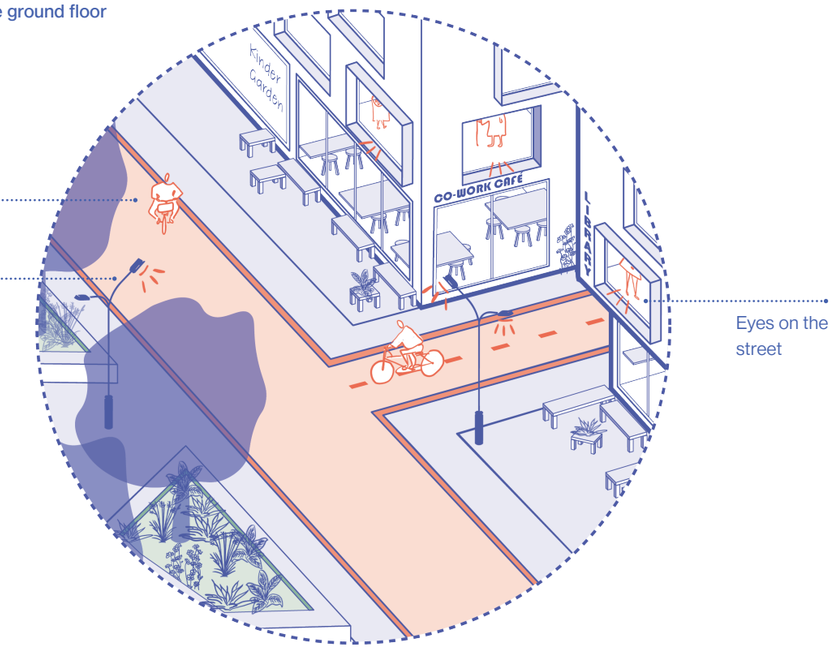


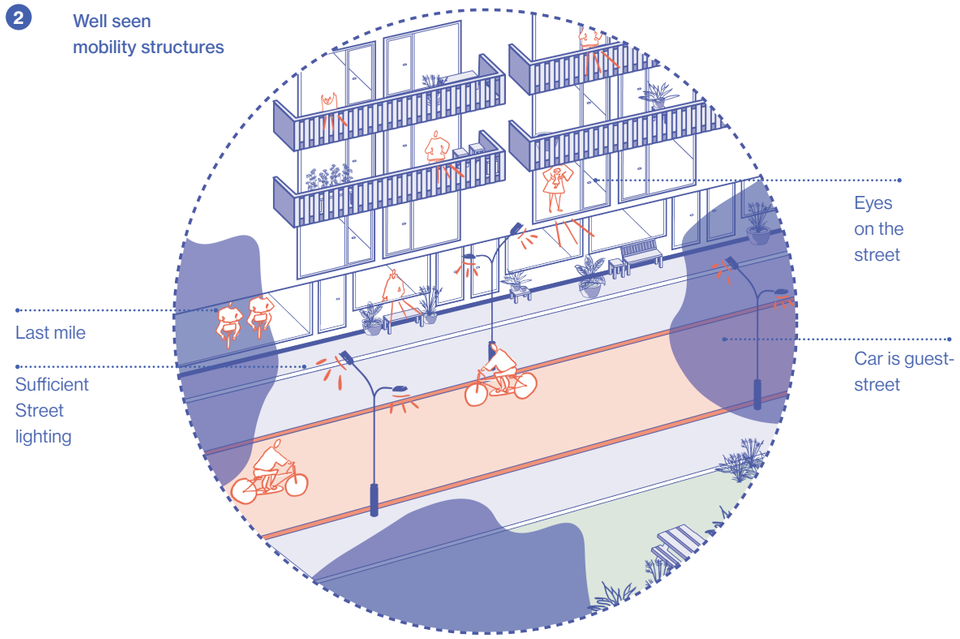
Figure 154 Safety zooms

Safety

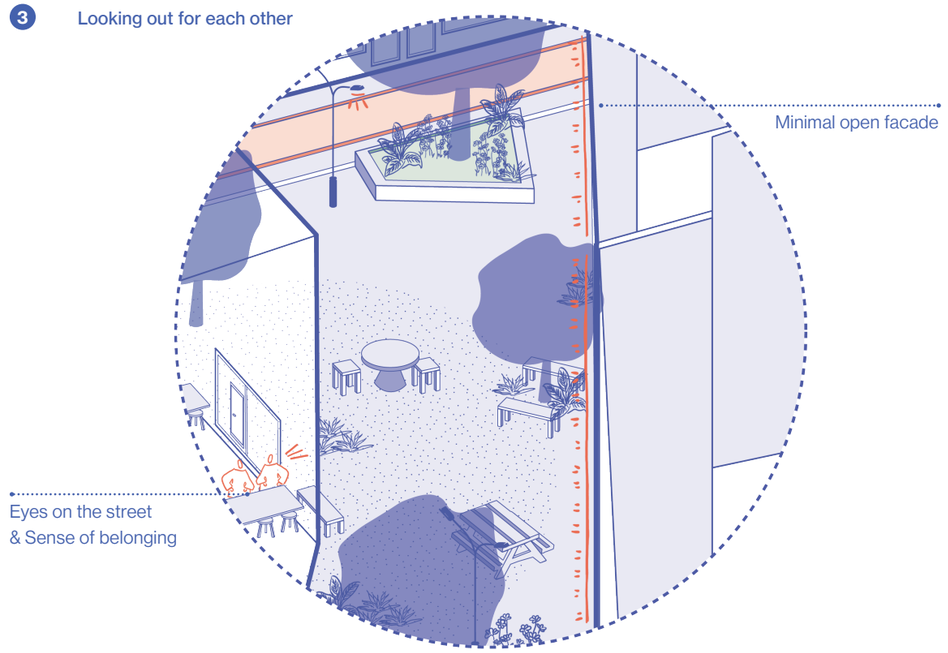
1 Active ground floor



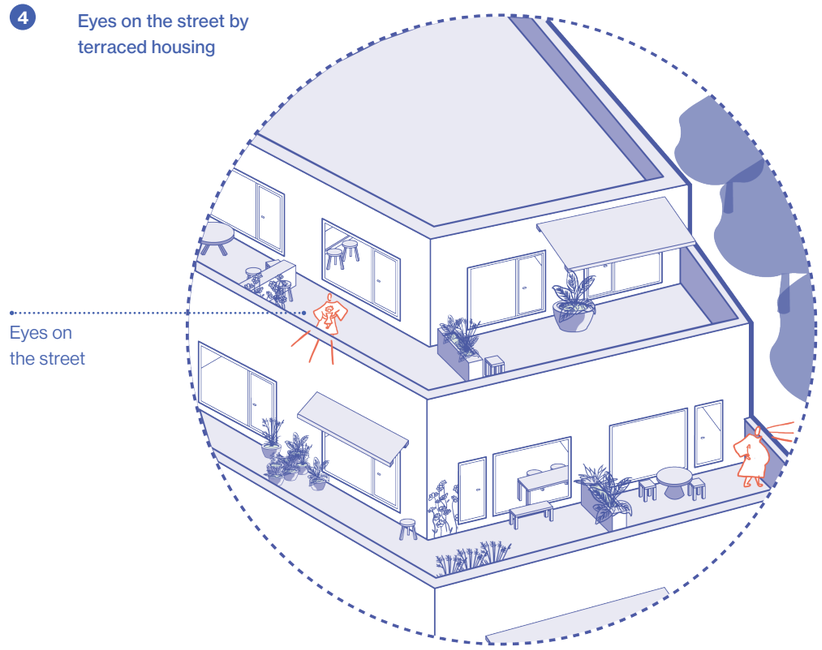
2 Well seen mobility structures



3 Looking out for each other



4 Eyes on the street by terraced housing



Walking along

With Lara, Femke, Emma, Sofia en Mila.



"My friends live here too, we often work together in the communal or cook for our neighbours"
- Emma



"I enjoy being so close to greenery, while still having a more ordinary urban life"
- Mila





"Now, my friends and I can stay in Almere after our studies!"
- Femke





"I love working from home and now I can expand my business!"
- Sofia

‘‘En als ik wakker word dan lijkt het wel de achttiende eeuw

De een heeft niets te zeggen, en de ander veel te veel

Weer een stap achteruit, is er nou niemand die schreeuwt:

Vrijheid, gelijkheid en zusterschap!’’

‘‘And when I wake up, it feels like the eighteenth century.

One person has nothing to say, and the other says far too much.

Another step backwards. Is there no one who will shout:

Freedom, equality and sisterhood!’’

Text: Vrijheid, gelijkheid, zusterschap
(Sophie straat, 2022)

05 CONCLUSION

This chapter brings together the findings of the three research phases into a conclusion. It opens with a reflection on the process, followed by answers to the four subquestions and the main research question. The chapter closes with a discussion of the nuances, limitations and broader implications of the research, and looks ahead to what remains to be investigated.

05 CONCLUSION
.1 Process
.2 Subquestions
.3 Research question
.4 The nuance

05.1 Process

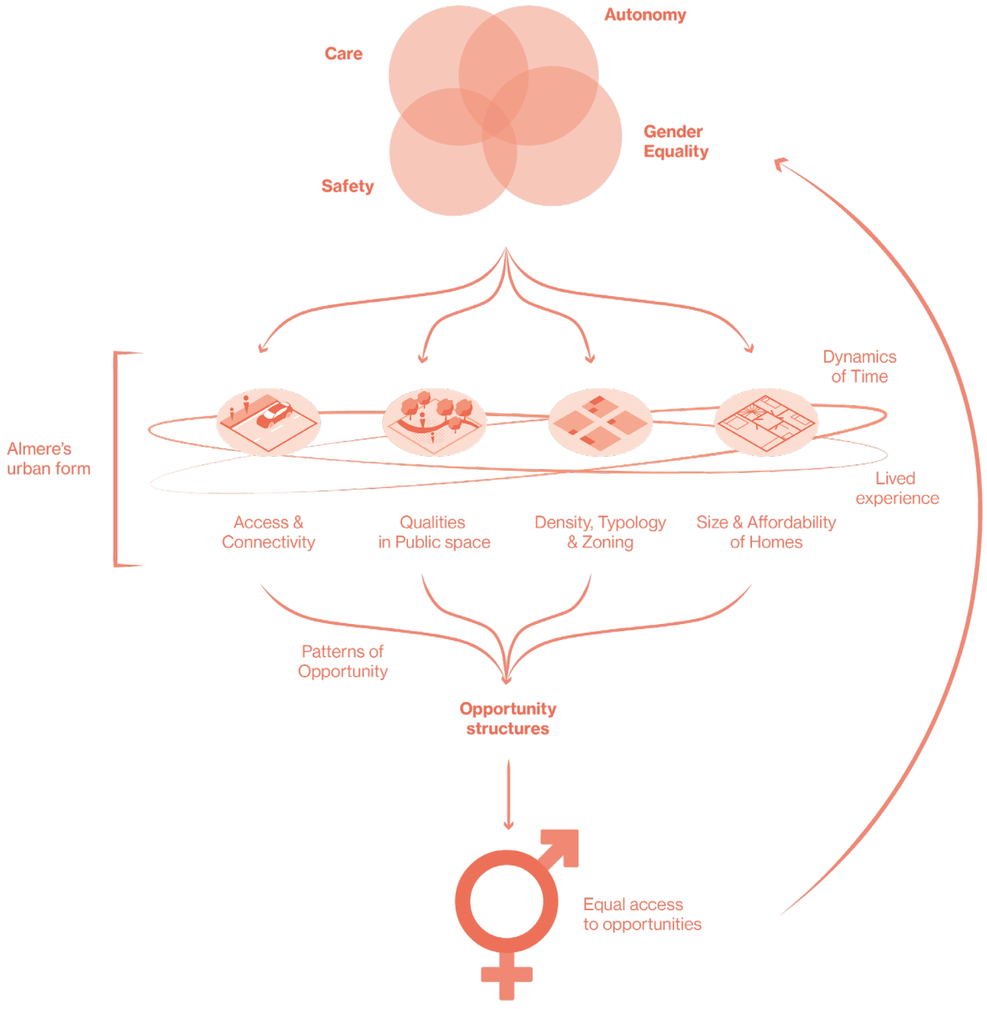
This thesis has explored how the urban form of Almere shapes the daily lives of young professional women, identifying the spatial conditions that constrain their opportunities, and the existing qualities that can be built upon. To reconfigure these constraints and build on existing opportunities, a three-phase approach was used: moving through the planned, the lived and the dreamed of Almere. Each phase required a different methodological lens, and each built further on what the previous one revealed.

The **planned** phase required a combination of diachronic mapping, morphological analysis and space syntax to read Almere's urban structure across time and scale. Working through historic plans at approximately ten-year intervals made it possible to trace not just what was built, but the values and assumptions embedded in each planning period. The five analytical themes – access and connectivity, qualities in public space, density and zoning, affordability and size of homes, and dynamics of time – provided a consistent framework. Together with how females were involved in the practice, these layers could be compared and evaluated.

The **lived** required a shift in method and in positionality. Walk-alongs, mental mapping and in-depth interviews with five young professional women grounded this thesis in embodied experience. This phase added a dimension that maps and plans cannot provide. The daily negotiations, emotional responses and behavioural adaptations that reveal how Almere's urban form is actually experienced. The personas developed from this fieldwork ensured that the findings remained connected to specific lives rather than abstracted into generalisations.

The **dreamed** brought both layers together through a pattern language and research-by-design. The patterns of opportunity function as a transferable toolkit. They provide spatial principles that emerge from the combination of theory, analysis and lived experience, and that can be applied across different scales and contexts throughout Almere. The use of reference case studies further tested and expanded these patterns before they were applied to the specific conditions of Almere.

What this process demonstrated is that the three phases are not sequential but interdependent. Although the report is written linearly, moving from the planned to the lived to the dreamed, the reasoning behind it is iterative: each phase continually informed and reframed the others. The conceptual framework illustrated in the figure on the right captures this relationship, showing how the five dimensions of urban form, being read through the lenses of care, autonomy and safety, with gender equality as the overarching aim, can be reconfigured through spatial patterns toward more equal access to opportunities.



Subquestion 1 Opportunity structures

What are opportunity structures for young professional women within a feminist framework?

Opportunity structures are the spatial, social and economic conditions that determine what an individual can realistically achieve, shaped not by personal capability alone but by the urban environment they inhabit. Drawing on Galster and Sharkey (2017), this research defined opportunity structures as operating through two mechanisms. Firstly, as a mediator between who you are and what you can achieve, and secondly as a modifier that actively shapes aspirations, behaviours and perceived possibilities over time. Read through a feminist lens, opportunity structures for young professional women are found across five dimensions of urban form: access and connectivity, qualities in public space, density and zoning, size and affordability of homes, and dynamics of time. These dimensions are not neutral, they express the values and priorities of the period in which they were produced. Consistently reflecting assumptions about household structure, mobility and domestic life that lack the diversity of women's lives today.

Following Crenshaw (1989), this thesis is also intersectional, it attends to how class, life stage, race and other axes of identity compound the way different women relate to urban space, rather than treating 'women' as a single, uniform category. Opportunity structures for young professional women are therefore defined as living within reach of employment, care and public transport; inhabiting public spaces that feel safe and welcoming across the full daily cycle; accessing affordable housing in well-located, mixed-use neighbourhoods; and finding the neighbourhood-scale social infrastructure that supports both professional and personal life.

Subquestion 2 Historical influence on spatial design

How are the dominant urban paradigms embedded within Almere's multi-scalar urban design?

Tracing Almere's planning history from 1949 to today reveals a consistent pattern: each successive planning period left a structural imprint on the built environment that prioritised car-based mobility, functional separation and the nuclear family household. Women were largely absent from the decision-making processes that shaped the city's foundational spatial structure, and gender was never established as an explicit planning category, even during periods of progressive political ideology. Today, these assumptions remain embedded in the city's infrastructure, zoning structures and housing typologies, with lifecycles of sixty to eighty years that make them resistant to change. The Hart van de Stad vision of 2023 represents the most promising shift to date, but continues to focus on new development rather than the reconfiguration of existing residential neighbourhoods where the spatial constraints are most acutely felt.

Subquestion 3 Impact on women

How do existing urban design paradigms in Almere impact young professional women's access to social, economic and spatial opportunities?

The lived experience research confirmed and deepened the central findings of the spatial analysis, while revealing what maps and plans cannot show. Across five walk-alongs with young professional women in Almere, both the strengths and the constraints of the city's urban form became tangible. The metropolitan connectivity is genuinely strong; with its direct rail and fast-bus connections it links the focus area to Amsterdam, Utrecht and Lelystad, and the local bus network runs frequently and reliably through the neighbourhoods. Yet cycling and walking remain the primary modes of daily movement for this group, with the bus used mainly for longer journeys rather than local errands. The Weerwater and its surrounding route emerged consistently as one of the city's most valued spatial qualities, offering a continuous, well-used recreational and active travel corridor that generates real attachment to place.

At the same time, the constraints are equally consistent. Amenity clusters serve those living centrally, but leave those in residential neighbourhoods underserved. Safety concerns cause daily behavioural adaptations: women change their routes, alter timing and modify transport choices, representing a constant and unacknowledged burden. And while social infrastructure exists in Almere, it does not serve this specific age group and life phase in the ways they need: the residential neighbourhoods remain places to sleep and depart from rather than to live in and enjoy. The word *sfeerloos* (lacking atmosphere) captured a shared spatial experience that reflects a structural condition of the city.

Subquestion 4 Translation into spatial strategies

Through what spatial strategies and design interventions can Almere embed opportunity structures for young professional women?

The patterns of opportunity developed in chapter 04 translate the findings from the planned and the lived into a transferable toolkit of spatial principles, organised across four dimensions: access, public space, density and housing. Five international reference projects – from Zurich, Amsterdam, London and Vienna, the last including the Aspern Seestadt district – were examined to ground these patterns in built examples before applying them to the specific conditions of Almere.

Applied through the design proposal *A Female Practice*, these patterns demonstrate how targeted interventions along a new publicness route, which connects Stedenwijk and Filmwijk to the existing city centre and Weerwater waterfront, can reconfigure the spatial conditions that most constrain women's daily lives. The proposal does not reimagine the city from scratch but works with what exists: introducing density for more life on the street, activating ground floors, clustering care amenities, and creating the neighbourhood-scale social infrastructure that the walk-alongs consistently identified as missing. Together these interventions show that feminist urban design operates at the level of the city's structure rather than its surface; it reorganises how opportunity is distributed, rather than adding isolated or symbolic features.

05.3 Research question

How can dominant urban design paradigms in Almere be transformed through the implementation of opportunity structures for young professional women in order to contribute to greater gender equality?

1. The city as a gendered structure
The findings of this research make one argument unavoidable: the spatial constraints experienced by young professional women in Almere are not incidental, individual or temporary. They are structural and encoded into the city's foundational planning decisions and reproduced across every scale of urban form. Transforming dominant urban design paradigms therefore cannot be achieved through isolated additions or surface-level improvements. It requires a deliberate reconsideration of the assumptions embedded in how the city is organised: who it is designed for, whose daily patterns it accommodates, and whose it does not.

2. Convergence as evidence
The methodological strength of this research lies in the convergence of its three phases. That the same conditions appear consistently through historical analysis, spatial mapping and lived experience is not a coincidence. It is evidence that the constraints are systemic rather than situational. This convergence also means that the opportunities are real: the spatial qualities that already work for young professional women in Almere point clearly towards what a reconfigured city could look like. The question is not whether change is possible, but whether the discipline is willing to treat women's spatial experience as a legitimate design brief.

3. Spatial reconfiguration as feminist practice
This thesis demonstrates that dominant urban design paradigms in Almere can be transformed, not by reimagining the city from scratch, but by working deliberately with what exists. The patterns of opportunity and the design proposal A Female Practice show that targeted spatial interventions, grounded in lived experience and translated into concrete strategies, can restructure how the city distributes opportunity, and in doing so create the spatial conditions for greater gender equality. *Feminist urban design is not a symbolic gesture. It is a structural practice, and Almere, with its experimental origins and unfinished character, is precisely the kind of city where that practice can begin.*

05.4 The nuance

Interpreting the results
The most significant outcome of this thesis is the convergence of findings across the three distinct methodological phases: historical spatial analysis, research based on lived experience, and research by design. The fact that the same spatial conditions appear consistently through diachronic mapping, space syntax, walk-alongs and design exploration is not just a validation of the individual methods.Rather, it suggests that the constraints experienced by young professional women in Almere are structural and embedded in the city's foundational organisation, being reproduced across scales. When considered alongside existing feminist urban theory (the work of Hayden (1980), Kern (2020) and Massey (1994)) these findings confirm that Almere is not an exception. It is rather an example of a broader pattern, where the New Town is a spatial manifestation of mid twentieth-century gendered assumptions that have outlived the ideology that produced them.

For women, or for everyone?
This research raises a central question: are the identified opportunity structures specific to young professional women, or would they benefit a wider range of people who use the city? The evidence suggests that both are true and it is important to make this distinction. James (2021) argues that girls and women act as indicators of the quality of public spaces. Where women can move freely and spend time are genuinely liveable and safe for everyone. Designing for more disadvantaged users produces better conditions for everyone.
Short blocks, mixed-use ground floors, neighbourhood-scale amenities, affordable housing and safe cycling infrastructure do not exclusively serve women. They will serve anyone whose daily life involves multiple stops, care responsibilities, and have limited mobility or financial constraints.

However, it is important to note that the target group does not dissolve into an universal user. The specific spatial needs of young professional women are real and require careful attention. Thinking of proximity to employment and childcare, safe routes after dark and affordable housing during a period of transition. The goal is not to create spaces exclusively for women, but rather to use women's spatial experience as the basis for designing spaces that could benefit everyone. As Zine (2021) argues: "social cohesion is only achieved by designing with the intended users, not by assuming that a universal solution exists".

What it means for Almere specifically

The findings of this research are in direct contrast to Almeres current planning strategy. The 2023 Hart van de Stad vision mainly focuses on new large-scale development in Almere Stad center and Floriade. Having limited attention for where spatial constraints are most accurately felt: within the existing residential fabric of neighbourhoods such as Stedenwijk and Filmwijk.

Why would the municipality not be using existing opportunities and reconfigure constraints to improve the urban experience of Almere?

This is partly because gender has never been established as an explicit planning category in Almere's decision-making processes, as found in the planning documents. Additionally, because the political and institutional conditions that would prioritise gender equity over development efficiency have not yet been met. And because working with the existing built environment is genuinely harder, more costly and takes more time than building new. It requires engaging with inhabited complexity rather than a blank canvas.

Yet this difficulty is also an advantage. Almere was originally designed for people who did not yet exist, it was built before its inhabitants lived there, shaped by assumptions about how they would live. Rather than replacing the existing structure, working with it is an opportunity to finally design with and for the people who are actually living there from day-to-day. The research demonstrates that the existing urban fabric has significantly more capacity than is currently recognised: housing density can be substantially increased within the existing neighbourhood structure. Doing so along a new publicness route would generate precisely the vitality and atmosphere that female residents consistently identified as missing, the remedy for 'sfeerloos'.

Limitations

This research has several limitations that should be acknowledged. In terms of scope, focusing on young professional women aged 18 to 35 necessarily excludes other groups. Such as older women, women with disabilities and women from migrant backgrounds, whose spatial experiences and needs may differ significantly from those who were included in this study. While intersectionality was present as a theoretical framework, it was not fully explored across all its axes in the empirical research.

In terms of methodology, the walk-alongs were primarily conducted in and around Almere Stad Centre, with limited coverage of Stedenwijk, and none were conducted independently within that neighbourhood. This means that the findings on lived experience are more strongly grounded in the central area than in the residential fabric that the design proposal primarily addresses. The qualitative nature of the walk-along data is another limitation. The findings are rich and grounded, but cannot be generalised statistically as there were only five conducted. Finally, the shortened graduation period compared to previous years meant that certain analyses, particularly the space syntax reading and the pattern evaluation with residents, could not be explored in further depth. The patterns of opportunity have not yet been assessed for feasibility or accessibility with residents, evaluating whether the proposed interventions are experienced as desirable and realistic by the women they are designed for remains an essential next step.

Alternative interpretations

The constraints identified in this research could be interpreted in different ways. One alternative interpretation is that the spatial conditions in Almere reflect the preferencess of its residents rather than imposed limitations: that the city's low-density, car-oriented suburban character is what its inhabitants chose and continue to choose. This interpretation is worthy of consideration. As the walk-along findings showed that women adapt to these conditions rather than choosing them. They change their routes, timing and behaviour in response to an environment that was not designed with their needs in mind. Preference and adaptation are not the same thing, pointing to a gap between what residents accept and what they actually want.

A second alternative interpretation is that the identified constraints are primarily economic rather than spatial, and that questions of affordability, employment access and care provision are matters of policy rather than design. This thesis does not propose that spatial design alone can resolve these structural issues. Rather, it argues that spatial organisation can either reproduce or challenge the conditions that produce inequality, meaning urban design has a role and responsibility in this proces.

Transferability

The findings of this research can be most directly translated to other Dutch New Towns, being developed during the same period. Thinking of Lelystad, Almere Buiten, Purmerend and Zoetermeer. These towns share similar planning histories, spatial structures and commuter city dynamics focused on their 'mother cities'.

However, beyond the Dutch New Town context, transferability depends on governance conditions, cultural context, and scale. Implementing the proposed design strategies requires political and institutional support, as well as an progressive planning culture that treats gender as an explicit planning category. At a larger metropolitan scale, certain elements of the pattern language, in particular those related to public transport integration, housing affordability, and mixed-use zoning, could be applied beyond the neighbourhood scale. However, this has not been tested in this thesis.

Gaps and recommendations

This research has revealed several gaps that need further investigation. The most obvious one is the need for participatory design, where spatial strategies are co-designed with young professional women in Almere. Rather than being designed for them based on observed and documented experience. Evaluating the pattern language with residents in terms of its feasibility, desirability and accessibility would significantly strengthen its foundation. Quantitative validation of the qualitative findings, particularly the walk-along data, would complement the empirical layer of this thesis. The question of how opportunity structures can be embedded in zoning plans, development briefs and housing programmes require further research. Additionally, testing the pattern language in other NewTown contexts would establish whether the findings are specific to Almere or more widely applicable.

06 REFLECTION

This chapter reflects on the research and design process that shaped this thesis. It examines the positionality and values that informed the work, the relationship between research and design, the methodology and its limits, and the academic and societal value of the project. It closes with a personal reflection on what it means to practice urbanism as a feminist practitioner.

06 REFLECTION
.1 Positionality
.2 Research and design in relation
.3 Methods
.4 Academic and societal value
.5 Transferability
.6 Personal process
.7 The urbanist as feminist practioner

06.1 Positionality

This research started with a question coming from my personal life. My grandmothers had such different lives from each other, but definitely compared to mine. What made me wonder if their spatial surroundings influenced their difference in opportunities, were they limited or maybe motivated by it? With this thesis I wanted to explore how women shaped the city and how they were shaped by it. How their movements and choices are interwoven with the urban form, and how urban form can influence the reach of opportunities for an individual.

Together with my choice of focus group within my own age category and lifecycle, and an experience of the NewTown structure that I grew up in, Hoofddorp, I tried to understand as much of the workings of Almere as I could. Finding myself navigating the same spatial conditions I was used to and which I was studying, the quiet residential streets, the limited neighbourhood-scale social life, the routes adjusted after dark, made the experiences relived during the walk-alongs immediately recognisable.

With this research I also carried values with me, ones that are close to myself and that I used as an assessment for the project. **Autonomy** is one that I would mention strongly , taking my knowledge of my grandmothers and how one might have had more autonomy over her life than the other, being able to steer where she did or did not want to go within the boundaries of society at the time. The second is **care**, about looking out for each other within this individualistic time, something that could use more attention now that people are so much on their own. And then **safety**, as diverse as it goes. A value that slipped my mind briefly at the beginning, as it is often addressed through superficial solutions like lighting, or so I thought. But it appeared as such a strong guiding force throughout every day for almost all the women around me, confirmed by data and again by the women I walked with. And finally **gender equality** as the overarching value and goal, what women a century ago probably thought would be achieved by 2026. But there is still such a long way to go.

As Irene Luque Martín mentioned at the start of this studio: every research and design choice is a form of filtering, a decision about what to see, what to prioritise and whose experience counts as evidence. Being explicit about that filtering, rather than concealing it behind a claim to objectivity, is itself a feminist methodological commitment.



Figure 155 Together at the Women's March of Amsterdam, 8th of March 2026

06.2 Research and design in relation

The relationship between research and design in this thesis was not linear. Research did not simply precede design, each phase of the work shaped and was shaped by the others in ways that were not always anticipated.

The research influenced the design most fundamentally by reframing the question. The project is not only about what a redesigned area of Almere could look like when designed through a female practice. It is about the process of looking differently at dominant spatial systems, questioning who designed Almere, with what values, what the context was, and why certain spatial decisions were made and maintained. This reframing meant approaching the existing fabric not as a problem to be replaced but as an accumulation of choices that can be understood, challenged and reconfigured. It also meant listening to the experts of the place, the women who inhabit it daily, as a primary source of spatial knowledge, even when that listening was limited by the constraints of the project.

The design, in turn, influenced the research by surfacing questions that the analysis alone had not raised. Translating findings into patterns required a precision about spatial conditions that pushed the empirical research further, making explicit what the walk-alongs had suggested but not fully articulated, and revealing gaps in the evidence that pointed toward further fieldwork.

The most unexpected insight of the process was the strength of the target group's attachment to Almere. I had expected to find women who tolerated the city as a practical compromise, affordable, accessible, but not chosen with enthusiasm. What the walk-alongs revealed was something more complex: a genuine sense of belonging, shaped for a large part by social networks and partly by the specific spatial qualities of the city, the Weerwater, the green structures. This attachment is significant. Young professional women in Almere are bound to the place in ways that make the quality of its spatial fabric a matter of real urgency, not just planning abstraction.

06.3 Methods

Research-by-design was the right methodological choice for this project, but it was not always used in the right way. The combination of data driven mapping, lived experience methods and spatial analysis produced a rich and layered body of evidence. The pattern language proved to be an effective tool for managing complexity and connecting social needs to spatial conditions across scales without oversimplifying either. And the walk-alongs generated a quality of spatial insight that no amount of laptop research could have produced.

However, the design phase became more systematic than it needed to be. After the richness and openness of the lived experience research, the move toward patterns and spatial strategies felt at times like a narrowing, a drive toward conclusions rather than an exploration of possibilities. More freedom in the design exploration phase, more time and a greater willingness to sit with ambiguity before translating findings into principles, might have produced more unexpected spatial proposals.

The walk-alongs were the methodological highlight of the project, but they also had real limitations. They were conducted primarily within existing social networks, which means the women I spoke with shared certain characteristics, educational background, social connections, degree of spatial confidence, that will not be representative of the full range of young professional women in Almere. The geographical coverage was also uneven: Stedenwijk was underrepresented, and the central area received disproportionate attention. If I were to conduct this research again, I would spend more time in the residential fabric, spending more time to find women living in the residential fabrics and walking with more within those neighbourhoods, rather than primarily in and around the city centre.

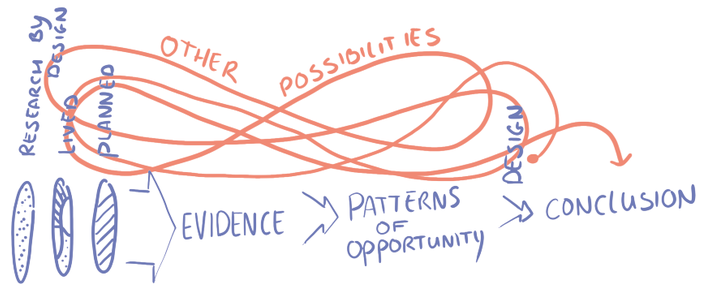


Figure 156 Other possibilities of outcomes when there was more time.

06.4 Academic and societal value

The academic value of this research lies in its contribution to the field of urban design. By treating women's spatial experience as the primary analytical lens through which urban morphology is evaluated, this thesis demonstrates that the five dimensions of urban form : access and connectivity, qualities in public space, density and zoning, size and affordability of homes, and dynamics of time, reveal patterns of inequality that conventional spatial analysis tends to overlook. The developed pattern language offers a tool for other researchers and practitioners to apply this lens in comparable contexts, with adaptations for local conditions.

The societal value extends beyond the target group. As the discussion chapter argues, designing for the most constrained urban user produces better spatial conditions for everyone. But it is important to be honest about the ethical dimensions of this claim. Focusing on young professional women also marginalises other groups whose spatial experiences are equally or more constrained, but differently shaped. Intersectionality was present as a framework throughout this research, but it was not fully operationalised in the empirical work, as the walk-alongs did not reach women whose experiences are shaped by the compounding of gender with race, class, disability or migration background. This is a gap that future research must address.

Perhaps most importantly, this project is not about providing a solution. It is about bringing other situations and options to the table, demonstrating that the current spatial organisation of Almeere is a choice, not an inevitability, and that different choices are possible. As Birgit Hausleitner noted during the process: with our discipline we can design pathways that are already being set. The responsibility is to set them deliberately, with full awareness of whose lives they shape.

06.5 Transferability

The pattern language is designed to be transferable, and I believe it is. But transferability is not the same as universality. The patterns emerged from a specific city, a specific target group and a specific moment in time. Their value in other contexts depends on how carefully they are tested against the conditions of those contexts.

What I believe is most transferable is not the patterns themselves but the approach: the combination of historical spatial analysis shaping an understanding of the context, lived experience research to understand how it is experienced today and research-by-design as a method for identifying and reconfiguring gendered opportunity structures in the built environment. This combination could be productively applied in other Dutch NewTowns, in comparable suburban contexts across Europe, and in any planning process that takes gender equality seriously as a spatial question rather than a policy aspiration.

06.6 Personal process

This thesis taught me to make choices independently, and to trust them. The research process required constant decisions about what to prioritise, what to leave out, and when a line of inquiry had reached its limit. Learning to make those decisions without certainty, and to stand behind them in front of mentors, peers and critics, was one of the most challenging and significant forms of growth the process produced.

Before entering the city I had my assumptions about Almere, a sleepy city, an ugly city, and maybe unsafe. But definitely interesting: a city made from scratch in such a short time, and not far from my own lifetime. Speaking with the people who were involved in shaping the city from the beginning was inspiring and at times felt unreal. It showed a city that has consistently made certain choices about whose life it is designed for.

The change in graduation system, a shortened period with fewer in-depth workshops and limited studio contact, was a genuine constraint. Certain analyses that would have benefited from more time, a broader range of methods and more collective feedback were necessarily compressed. The absence of extended design workshops, in particular, limited the iterative development of the spatial proposals in ways I would have liked to address. At the same time, the constraints of the process pushed me toward independence and efficiency in ways that I think ultimately also brought its strengths to the process.

06.7 The urbanist as feminist practitioner

Urban design cannot resolve gender inequality alone. But it can make it spatially visible, call it by it's name, and propose concrete spatial alternatives. What this research reinforced, through its findings and through the experience of conducting it, is that the spatial dimensions of inequality are too often treated as secondary to social, economic or political explanations. But I think they are not so secondary. The built environment actively reproduces the conditions that constrain women's lives, and the discipline that produces it has both the tools and the responsibility to intervene.

Conducting this research changed my understanding of what iit means to practice urbanism. I came to see design not as a definitive act that produces a final spatial outcome, but as a tool for opening up possibilities, making visible what could be different, and proposing pathways and tools toward it. The feminist practitioner is not someone who adds a gender dimension to an otherwise neutral process. It is someone who understands that no process is neutral, and who uses that understanding to design with more honesty, care and a greater attention to whose lives are shaped by the decisions they make.

Almere has yet to evolve into a city designed to increase women's opportunities. This thesis is an argument, a demonstration, spatial and methodological, of how that evolution might begin.

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08 APPENDIX

1. Short AI statement
2. Graduation planning
3. DMP documents
4. BK Feminist timeline 2026 images

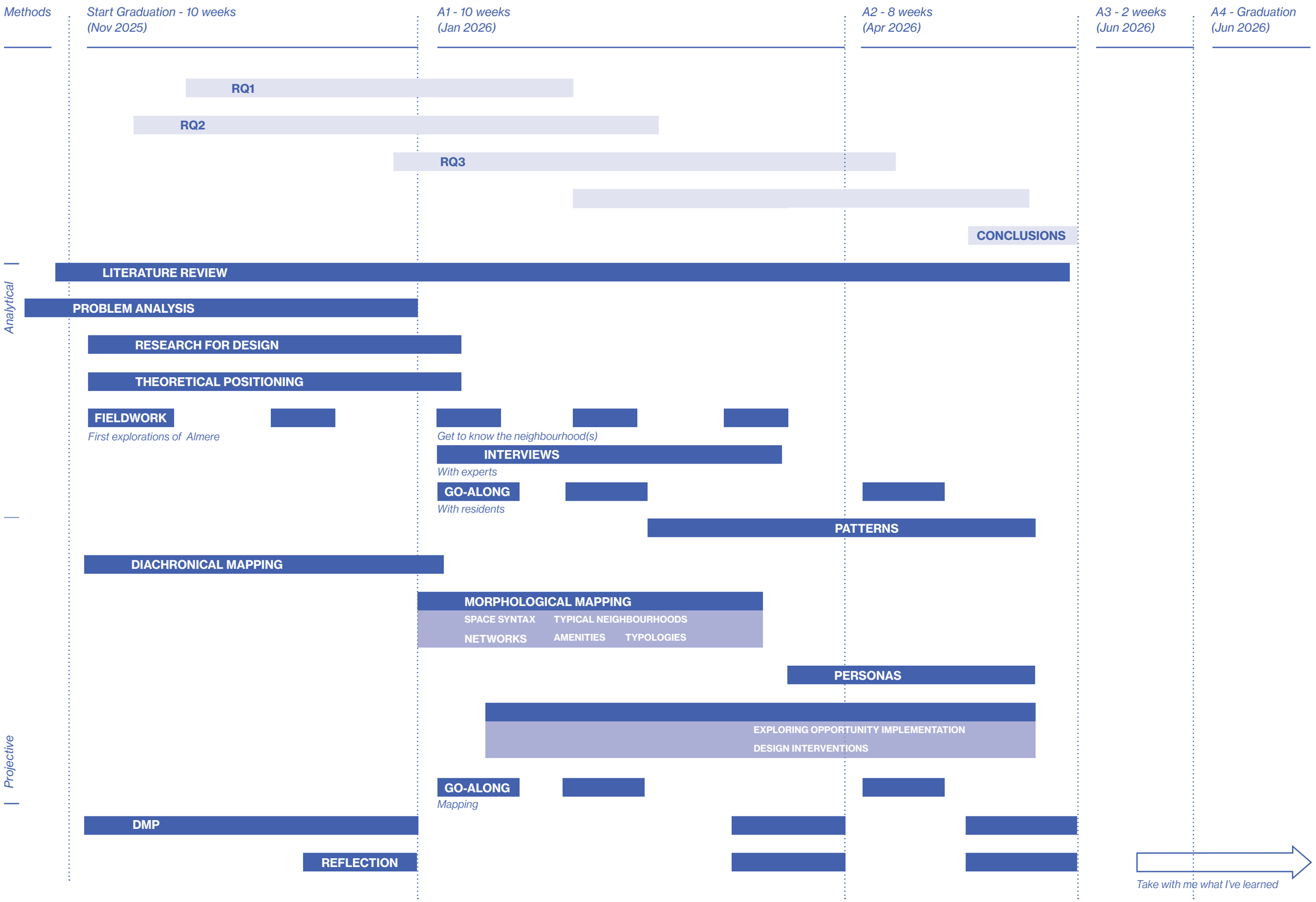
.1 Short AI Statement

For this project, artificial intelligence was used for the following tasks:

DeepL Translate and DeepL Write for translation, grammar and spelling checks;

Claude.ai for brainstorming, analysing and discussing results.

Claude.ai was also used to generate an Excel spreadsheet for kumu.io.


Methods
Start Graduation - 10 weeks
(Nov 2025)
A1 - 10 weeks
(Jan 2026)
A2 - 8 weeks
(Apr 2026)
A3 - 2 weeks
(Jun 2026)
A4 - Graduation
(Jun 2026)
RQ1
RQ2
RQ3
CONCLUSIONS
Analytical
LITERATURE REVIEW
PROBLEM ANALYSIS
RESEARCH FOR DESIGN
THEORETICAL POSITIONING
FIELDWORK
First explorations of Almere
Get to know the neighbourhood(s)
INTERVIEWS
With experts
GO-ALONG
With residents
PATTERNS
DIACHRONICAL MAPPING
MORPHOLOGICAL MAPPING
SPACE SYNTAX
TYPICAL NEIGHBOURHOODS
NETWORKS
AMENITIES
TYPOLOGIES
PERSONAS
EXPLORING OPPORTUNITY IMPLEMENTATION
DESIGN INTERVENTIONS
Projective
GO-ALONG
Mapping
DMP
REFLECTION
Take with me what I've learned





< Work in progress!




1990
2000
2000
2010
Buildings by Women
URBANISTAS
BLACK LIVES MATTER


2020
WOMEN
ARCHI-
TECTURE
WOMEN
WOMEN
URBANISTAS
RDAM
Centre
JustCity


2025
women in polycrisis
fem
ini
st
DE
DOLLE MINA'S
ZIJN
TERUG!
WIJ
EISEN
DE
NACHT
OP

A FEMALE PRACTICE