

# Urban Homelessness

*Designing for the needs and recognition of the  
homeless population of Rotterdam*



# Colofon

## Urban homelessness

Designing for the needs and recognition of the homeless  
population of Rotterdam

MSc Graduation Thesis P5 Report  
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# Abstract

This urban design project addresses the critical issue of homelessness by bringing it to the forefront of societal discussion and professional design consideration. It asserts that homeless individuals should not be rendered invisible but actively included in urban planning. There is a growing and very pressing issue of homelessness in the Netherlands, specifically in Rotterdam, where homeless people are often ignored by the public and pushed into invisibility. The project focuses on the spatial and social dynamics of homelessness in Rotterdam, aiming to understand and visually depict these complexities. It seeks to answer the question: 'How can an urban transformation in Rotterdam promote recognition of the homeless population and create awareness of their presence and needs?' Through literature reviews, analytical research, and ethnographic fieldwork, particularly focusing on rough sleepers and women in shelters, the project identifies movement patterns and spatial dynamics of the homeless. It advocates for a network approach on the neighbourhood scale, specifically in Oude Westen, using two key squares to design spaces that meet daily needs while balancing privacy and exposure. By opening up a broader discussion through both its research and design outcomes, this project marks a significant step towards the spatial inclusion of the homeless population.

**Keywords:** homelessness, socio-spatial inclusion, ethnography, visibility, public space.

# 01 Introduction

- 1 Motivation
- 2 Problem field
- 3 Problem statement
- 4 Research question



*Photo by Sanne Donders (2021)*

This chapter will introduce the project on urban homelessness, outlining its motivations, problem field, and concluding with a problem statement. It explains how the research aim and question respond to this problem.



Image 1.1 - Me during the Manifestation Recht op Rust [Right to Rest] where I explain my project and invite people to come write and draw with me (photo taken by a friend).

# Motivation

My interest within urban design has been developing a lot in the recent years. Throughout my career I have always been concerned with how cities and their spatial characteristics affect the quality of life of their inhabitants. This interest encompasses the considerations of social, cultural, economic and psychological aspects of urban living. In essence, for me design is about creating cities that cater the diverse needs of their residents and foster a sense of community and inclusion. Inclusive design aims to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, ability, background, or socioeconomic status, can participate fully in urban life.

I am particularly interested in questions of whom the city serves, who influences its design, and who is welcome to live there. Currently, there is a prevailing sentiment that Rotterdam caters primarily to the wealthy, with the poor being implicitly encouraged to leave (image 1.2). This project will focus on the people who use the urban landscape the most while not being fully included. I believe that we as urban designers have some responsibility to respond to their needs as the most frequent users of the urban realm. In my perspective, the way we shape and design our urban environments has a profound impact on whether certain groups of people are either included or excluded from various aspects of (urban) life.

■ BACKGROUND

## The public bench as an indicator of our civilization

**Hostile design** Oh woe if you want or have to lie on a contemporary bench, as a homeless person for example, due to a lack of shelter. *Arjen van Veelen* tried, squeezing his legs through the railings. “It just hurts.”

January 23, 2023    Reading time 7 minutes

Image 1.2 - A news article in the NRC stating that the city of Rotterdam is only welcoming to people with money and uses 'hostile architecture' to exclude the people lacking money. “Such a society full of thorns and stings, no matter how subtle, ultimately forms a bed of nails for everyone”. (NRC, 2023)

# Problem field

## Urgency

Homelessness is a growing problem in the Netherlands (CBS, 2024). There is not a week that you do not stumble upon new articles about people living in tough situations. It is clear that the struggles of the homeless are getting more attention, highlighting the need for spatial solutions on their behalf.

The statistics also show an increase in people struggling with homelessness. According to the CBS (2024) the number of homeless people in the Netherlands has started to increase again, after some years of decline. On January 1st 2023, an estimated 30.6 thousand individuals were experiencing homelessness. One year earlier, this number was still 26.6 thousand.

Homeless (18 to 65 years) on January 1st x1000

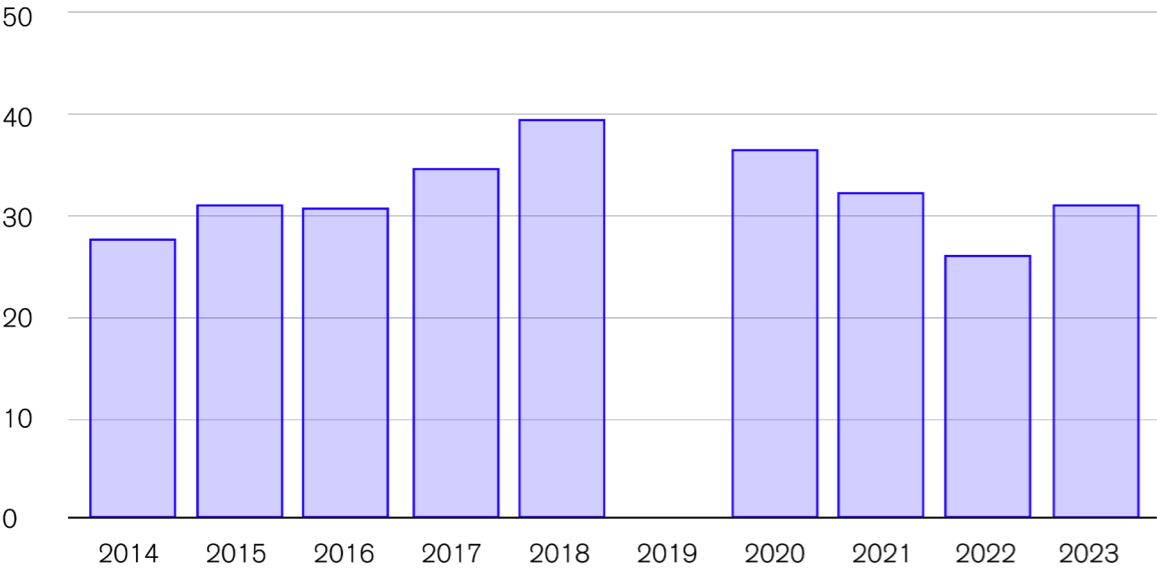


Image 1.3 - Information from CBS (2024). Edited by author

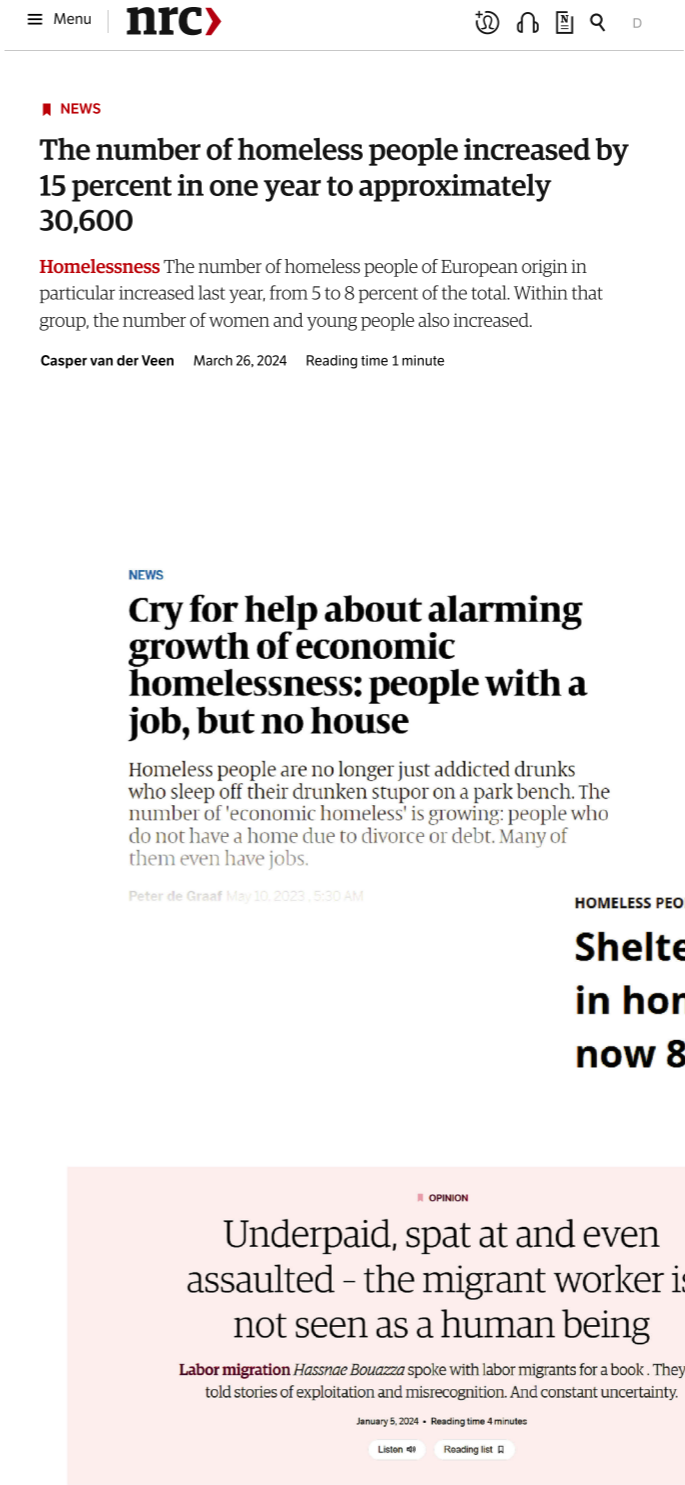


Image 1.4 - News articles about the growing homelessness in the Netherlands. All articles are from 2023 or 2024. From top to bottom: van der Veen, 2024. Al Ali, 2024. de Graaf, 2023. Open Rotterdam, 2023. Bouazza, 2024.



Presentation of the Action Plan with Van Ooijen (m) and De Jonge (r). Photo by Robin van Lonkhuijsen / ANP (2022)



Photo by Arie Kievit (2023)

The contradiction between plans and actions

In June 2022 the Dutch Ministry of Health, well-being and sports presented their new plans to tackle homelessness, called the “Action plan Homelessness 2023-2030”. The action plan encompasses the principle of “Housing First”, which means structural and stable housing solutions combined with support and care. The plan encompasses a long-term approach to homelessness from 2023 to 2030. Within the new approach, a strong emphasis will be placed on integrating care and support services with housing solutions (Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport, 2023). The responsibility for the execution of this plan lies with the municipalities.

During a city council meeting in Rotterdam in October 2023, a proposal was presented to initiate the Housing First principle in Rotterdam. Ronald Buijt, the councillor for Care, Elderly and Youth-care, representing Liveable Rotterdam [in Dutch: Leefbaar Rotterdam] responded by expressing concerns about Rotterdam’s limited capacity to adopt this approach, ultimately dismissing the proposal (Minnema, 2023). In response, the Paulus Church, in collaboration with several artists, organised a manifestation to draw attention to the issue of homelessness, where many experts, social workers, homeless and inhabitants of Rotterdam spend a night in front of the Central Station. This shows a reaction from the public and professionals on the culture of exclusion and repression by the municipality instead of prevention (Kemperman, 2023).

The repression of the homeless population often results in the criminalisation of homeless individuals. Ronald Buijt, together with the OM [Public prosecution service], the Immigration- and Naturalisation Service and social services, Buijt works on bringing back the safety in different areas of Rotterdam, with a focus on the Nieuwe Binnenweg. He aims at getting East-European homeless back to work, or back to their

country of origin. When an EU-citizen collects six registrations within one year, they can get deported (Bormans, 2023).

City Marine Siermans confirms that they are out for six registrations: “I tell boas: I want those registrations.”

(Bormans, 2023)

The pastor of the Paulus Church strongly opposes this culture of repression surrounding homelessness, asserting that homelessness is not an individual issue, but rather a systemic scandal, due to many years of systematically misguided policies. Therefore it should not be called a homelessness problem but a homelessness scandal (van Leerdam et al., 2023).

So on the one hand, the Dutch National Government is formulating strategies to tackle homelessness,with the ambitious goal of resolving the issue by 2030, entrusting municipalities with the responsibility for implementation. While at the same time, municipalities are aggravating the exclusion of a part of their population through measures such as criminalization, fines, and exclusion.

The stigma

Homelessness holds a strong negative stigma. The stigma is a pervasive social construct that often confines individuals to a narrow stereotype, based solely on their housing situation. As more people experience homelessness through diverse circumstances, it becomes increasingly crucial to break this prevalent image of the individual begging for money, or seeking refuge under a bridge. Highlighting this, Thamar Kemperman noted in a personal conversation on December 14, 2023, that homelessness encompasses a broad spectrum of situations and experiences, emphasising that it is not an identity but rather a multifaceted phenomenon. The term, homelessness, reduces people to their lack of a physical home. Hochstenbach (2022) identifies that this stigma is reinforced by a societal tendency to view success and failure through a meritocratic lens, further marginalising those experiencing homelessness.

*“It is common among the homeless population to be seen and heard, but still ignored”*  
*(Rennels & Purnell, 2015)*

Spatial exclusion

In Rotterdam’s urban environment, the socio-spatial exclusion of homeless individuals is evident, influenced by many factors. The earlier described stigma, prevailing portrayals in media and press, and the political discourse evoke images of filth, smell and disorder. These images are then projected onto the spaces used by the homeless people. Benches and other places where people might hang out, rest or sleep often serve as the physical embodiments of the stigma. Consequently, residents and the municipality develop a fear of homeless individuals using these

types of urban furniture. To deter use, these pieces are often removed or altered, a practice known as hostile architecture. This approach is increasingly prevalent in Rotterdam as the municipality strives to ‘clean’ the city (van Veelen, 2023). Even designated spaces such as night shelters and hostels, intended to provide refuge, become tainted by the societal prejudice against homelessness, as highlighted by Takahashi (1998). Consequently, residents resist having these facilities nearby, giving rise to the NIMBY (not in my backyard) effect.

Evicting homeless individuals doesn’t solve the issue of homelessness. Pushing them into invisibility only worsens their condition. At the outskirts of the city, finding a sheltered place to sleep, food, or money becomes significantly more challenging.

*Images from a visual essay by Michelle van Tongerloo on hostile architecture (photo's made by Desire van den Berg, 2023)*





**THESE HOMES ARE  
NOT FOR YOU**

**YOU CAN'T COME IN**

**YOU CAN'T FALL  
ASLEEP HERE**

**I CAN'T HELP YOU**

**GET AWAY FROM  
MY SHOP**

**PLEASE DON'T COME  
NEAR MY HOME**

## Problem statement

*‘Despite the often visible presence of homeless people in urban landscapes, they are often ignored by the public. In combination with a culture of repression, they are pushed into invisibility which only worsens the issue.’*



Image of a homeless man sleeping in a abandoned terrace. An image made in the Paulus Church Action Studio by Peter van Beek (2023)

## Research question

The presence of homeless individuals is often visible yet unrecognised. This study seeks to comprehend and illustrate the spatial dynamics of Rotterdam's homeless population. Employing mapping and other representational methods, the research serves as a form of activism, aiming to challenge public perceptions and dismantle the stigma. Through engagement with the homeless community, the research aims to go beyond literary and statistical research, seeking to understand the diverse narratives and individual stories. By visualising this group of urban users, the project aims to provoke

thoughtful discourse towards a more inclusive city for the homeless population. Additionally, the project endeavours to propose design interventions addressing the immediate needs of this marginalised group while raising awareness of the issue. Consequently, advocating for their integration into design and policy agendas.

This project does not aim at solving homelessness, but addresses the critical issue by bringing it to the forefront of societal discussion and professional design consideration, by answering the question(s):

**How can an urban transformation in Rotterdam promote recognition of the homeless population and create awareness on their presence and needs?**

SQ1. What are the social, societal and spatial dynamics of being homeless within an urban environment?

SQ2. What specific groups or individuals experience homelessness in Rotterdam?

SQ3. How does the current urban environment of Rotterdam fulfil the needs of its homeless population?

SQ4. What are the spatial needs of the homeless population of Rotterdam?

SQ5. What design interventions address the immediate needs of the homeless population of Rotterdam?

SQ6. How can urban design interventions serve as a catalysts for raising awareness on urban homelessness?

# 02 Methodology

- 1 Methodological approach
- 2 Theoretical framework
- 3 Analytical framework
- 4 Defining homelessness
- 5 Ethnographic research
- 6 Integrated research approach
- 7 Ethical considerations



*Homeless man selling the Straatkrant [street newspaper]  
(Photo by Dirk-Jan Visser, 2003)*

The following chapter lays out the varied methods and approaches used to answer the research questions. It begins with an outline of the chosen methodological approach and specific methods employed. Theoretical and analytical frameworks are then introduced to provide a foundation for the analysis. Furthermore, it elaborates on ethnographic research, including its approaches, interview questions and focus groups. Finally, the ethical considerations involved in working with this focus group are addressed.

# Methodological approach

The project adopts ethnography as its primary methodology to delve into the complexities of urban homelessness dynamics. The research starts with analysing existing data pertaining to homelessness, shedding light on how the city addresses the needs of the homeless population. Ethnographic research contributes an additional layer of human-centred inquiry, enriching the understanding of this complex issue. By creating a typology of homelessness, this research generates new insights and facilitates the development of comprehensive maps showcasing the entirety of Rotterdam’s network, including informal resources, in serving the homeless population.

Literature review

To grasp the social, societal and spatial dynamics inherent in the experience of homelessness, literature reviews are utilised to explore various theoretical frameworks. These reviews encompass a wide array of sources including scientific journals, Dutch literature, and reports from disciplines such as psychology and urban studies, offering insights not limited to a specific site.

Spatial analysis

GIS- mapping is employed to acquire comprehensive insights into the site and its different scales and to analyse the current distribution of essential facilities for homeless individuals. This approach illuminates how the existing data reflects the city of Rotterdam’s efforts in serving its homeless population.

Ethnography

With this methodology “the researcher studies an entire cultural or social group in its natural setting, closely examining customs and ways of life, with the aim of describing and interpreting cultural patterns of behaviour, values, and practices”. The main goal of ethnography is to provide rich and holistic insights into the focus group and their habitats. Ethnography uses visual methods to explore, understand and communicate social phenomena to a broader

audience (Barrantes-Elizondo, 2019). This research centres on homeless individuals, drawing on both their perspectives and insights from experts. Visual ethnography is employed to observe the habits and customs of homeless individuals and groups in Rotterdam, aiming to describe and interpret patterns in their use of the urban environment. Ethnography is not understood as a method, but as a methodology (Barrantes-Elizondo, 2019). Supporting methods include mapping, sketching, interviews, walk-and-talk sessions, participatory mapping, and media analysis.

Methods supporting the ethnographic research

Unstructured interviews, writing and sketching serve as foundational tools for ethnographic analysis, allowing for open and explorative information gathering. Documentation methods like photography and film are used less as they are deemed less respectful and more intrusive. Written notes are used retrospectively to reflect on and capture the essence of different interactions and experiences. Observational cartography involves the quantitative mapping of a population that exhibits fluidity in spatial distribution. This method employs systematic observation and data collection through fieldwork. Participatory mapping, conducted alongside homeless individuals, unveils stories and collects perspectives on inclusive urban design.

Typology development

Ethnographic results will inform the development of a typology of homelessness, enriching existing knowledge with new insights on the spatial dynamics of homeless individuals. This typology will facilitate the creation of new maps, adding depth to the understanding of urban homelessness dynamics.

Research by design

Ultimately, the synthesis of all findings will inform the design task, with its location and scale. With this design task a transformation design can be developed through multi-scalar design interventions.

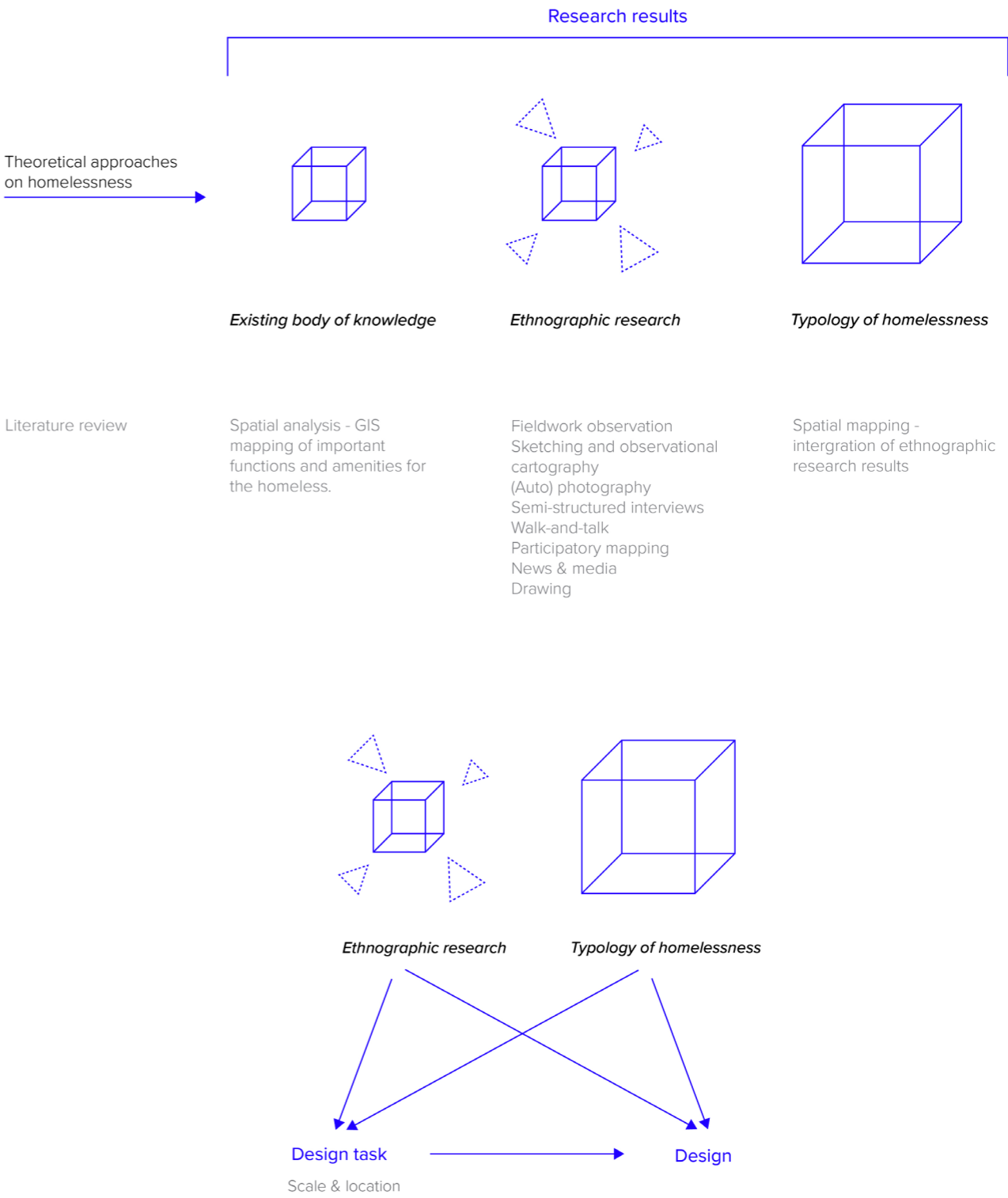


Figure 2.1 - Methodological framework

# Theoretical framework

Within the research on urban homelessness, the theoretical framework delves into various concepts in order to understand the role of the urban landscape in the lives of those experiencing homelessness. Delving into the dimensions of the concept of home, the research seeks to comprehend the elements homeless individuals might lack and how a sense of home can be experienced or found in alternative spaces. Secondly, societal dimensions reveal the stigma and exclusion homeless populations face,

emphasising the importance of fostering a sense of belonging. Furthermore, it explores the relation of homeless individuals with the public space inhabit. Theoretical approaches about a sense of place become relevant when examining how homeless individuals give meaning to places. Finally, theoretical approaches examine the notion of visibility, analysing how exposure impacts the well-being and experiences of homeless individuals.

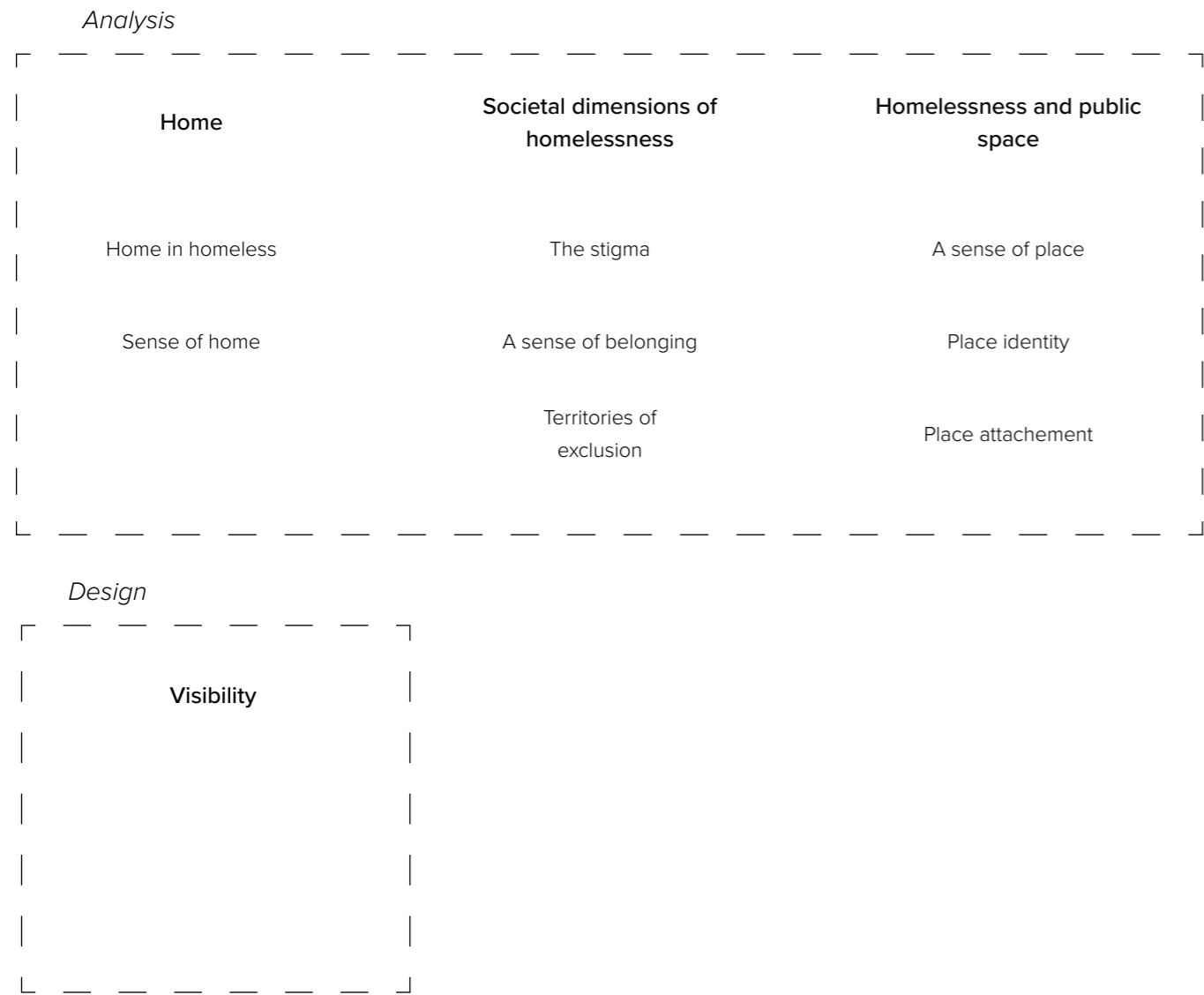


Figure 2.2 - Theoretical framework

# Analytical framework

## The city of Rotterdam

The project focusses on the city of Rotterdam, where the issue of homelessness is both pressing and visible. On the city scale, the research will analyse the overarching challenges of homelessness in Rotterdam and examine the distribution of social services and amenities available to the homeless population.

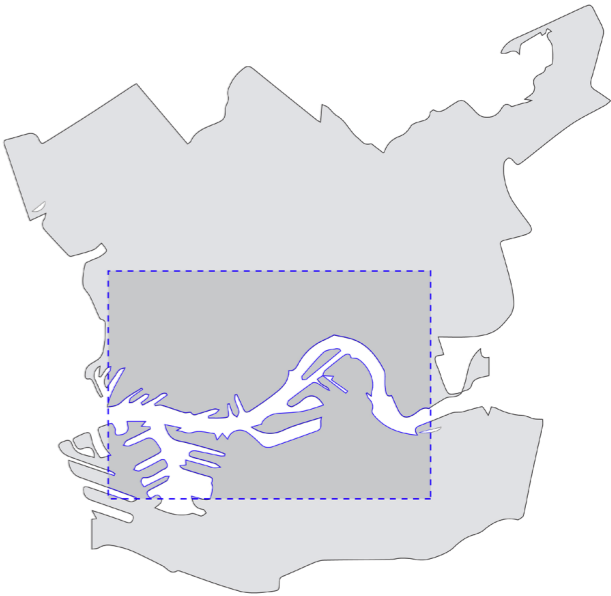


Figure 2.3 - City scale

## District Centrum-West

With a focused lens, the research will zoom into the central and west districts of Rotterdam, where homelessness is particularly prominent and widely discussed. This is also the scale where the two primary sources of contact with the focus group are situated. The majority of ethnographic research will be conducted within these districts.

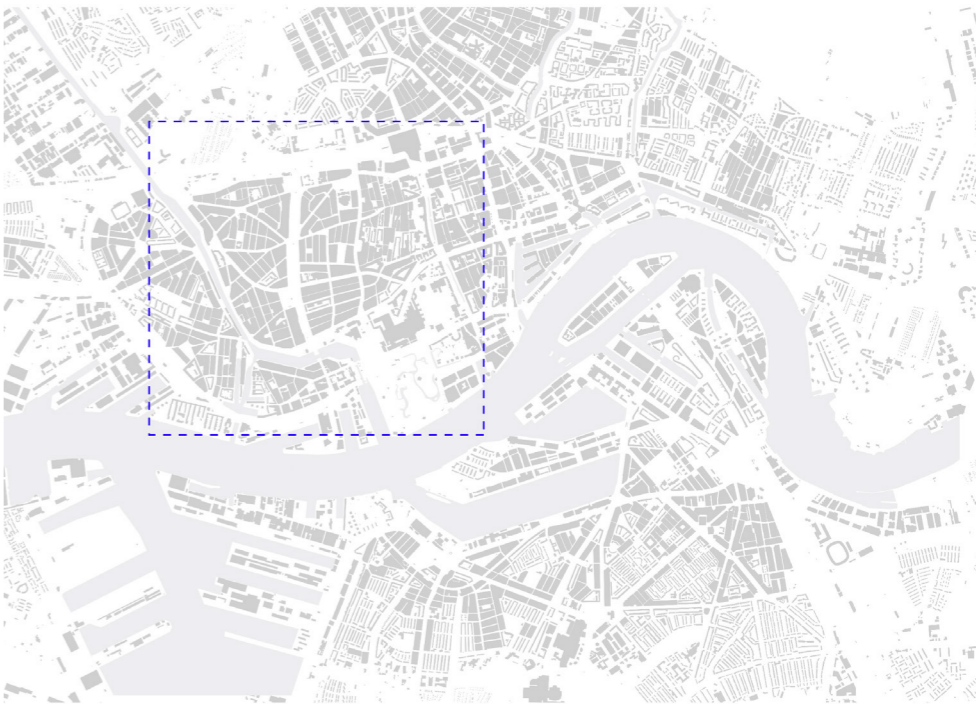


Figure 2.4 - District scale

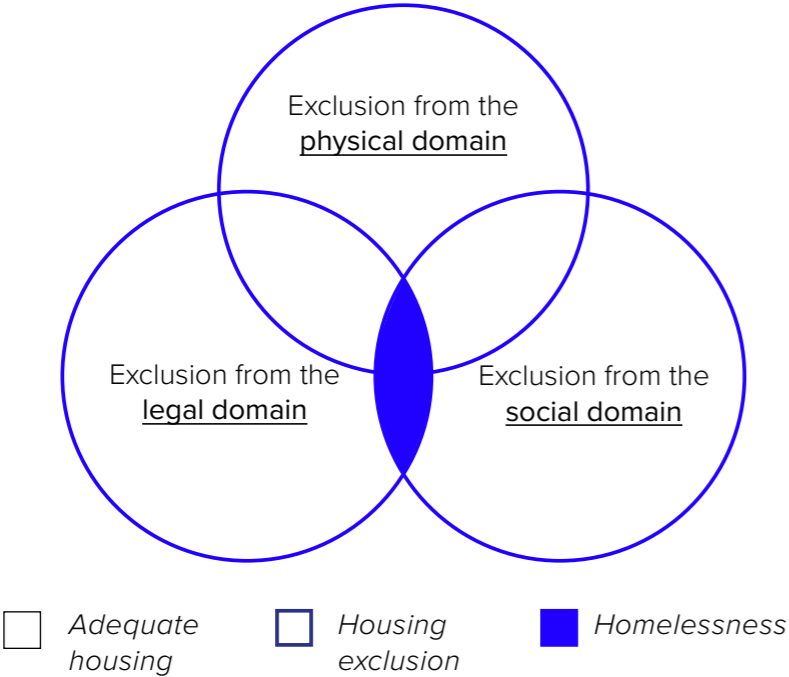
# Defining homelessness

Establishing a clear definition of homelessness is crucial for framing the research effectively, as it encompasses various groups with different situations.

The European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS), is both a definition and a typology. Figure 2.5 shows the conceptual model focussed on living situations. This model is based on stating that having ‘a home’ is an adequate living circumstance. The model identifies three domains: Exclusion from the legal domain (lacking security of occupation and having no legal title), the physical domain (not having a sufficient dwelling or other type of space) and exclusion from the social domain (unable to sustain social contacts and preserve privacy). This

model explains that the ETHOS definition defines homelessness as being excluded from the physical, legal and social domain (Amore et al., 2011).

The conceptual model discussed, can be translated into the ETHOS Typology. The Typology consists of a variety of categories that are clustered under four headings: roofless, houseless, insecure- and inadequate accommodation. Roofless and houseless together form the categories for homelessness. Roofless and houseless can again be dissected into multiple categories shown in figure 2.6. This research will use the ETHOS Typology when discussing the concept of homelessness.



Amore et al., 2011 (Edited by author)

Figure 2.5 - ETHOS conceptual model

Houseless					Roofless	
Receiving longer-term support	Leaving an institution	Accommodation for immigrants	Women's shelter	Homeless accommodation	Emergency accommodation	Rough sleepers

Figure 2.6 - Categories of homelessness

Information from Amore et al. (2011) edited by author



Made in the Paulus Church action studio by photographer Peter van Beek

# Ethnographic research

## Defining the research group

In order to get clear results from the ethnographic research the focus group should be clearly defined. As homelessness encompasses a wide range of categories its crucial to limit the amount of categories that will be researched. This research will focus on the two groups that have become visible to me through getting into contact with two organisations.

Beginning in December, I will embark on a volunteering endeavour at a women’s shelter situated in Rotterdam’s Delfshaven district. Every Monday, I will collaborate with the shelter’s residents to prepare dinner for approximately 40 women. This endeavour serves as a method of gradual information gathering. While the primary aim of these sessions is not to extract data for the project, they offer a valuable opportunity to deepen my understanding of the homelessness situation in Rotterdam. Additionally, I have established contact with the Pauluschurch. This connection provides me with access to both field experts and involvement in the Right to Rest manifestations. The Right to Rest movement advocates for the establishment of a permanent night shelter in Rotterdam, open to all individuals in need. While awaiting action from the municipality of Rotterdam to realise this shelter, the Pauluschurch, together with residents, the action group Oude Westen and other organisations, will continue to organise manifestation to raise awareness about the homelessness crisis and stand in solidarity with the homeless population.

To ensure clear and nuanced outcomes in ethnographic research, it is crucial to precisely define the focus group. Within these two groups—women in



Figure 2.7 - focus group distinction

shelters and rough sleepers—a meaningful distinction can be drawn when examining how individuals in these groups utilize the urban environment and public spaces of Rotterdam. The presence of employment significantly alters one’s use of public space, thereby leading to the categorisation of the groups based on the intersection of work and home. This results in four distinct groups: unemployed individuals living in a shelter, employed individuals living in a shelter, unemployed street sleepers, and the notably small subset of employed street sleepers, shown in figure 2.7.



## Position of the researcher

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the two focus groups, it is essential to gather information from various perspectives and angles. Figure 2.8 is used to structure the methods along two axis: distant-close and outside-inside, based on a diagram constructed by Leeke Reinders (2023). The distant-close axis

pertains to the researcher’s proximity to the subject. Meanwhile, the outside-inside axis involves the location or the objective standpoint of the researcher. Achieving in-depth research necessitates employing fieldwork strategies that encompass various positions across this diagram.

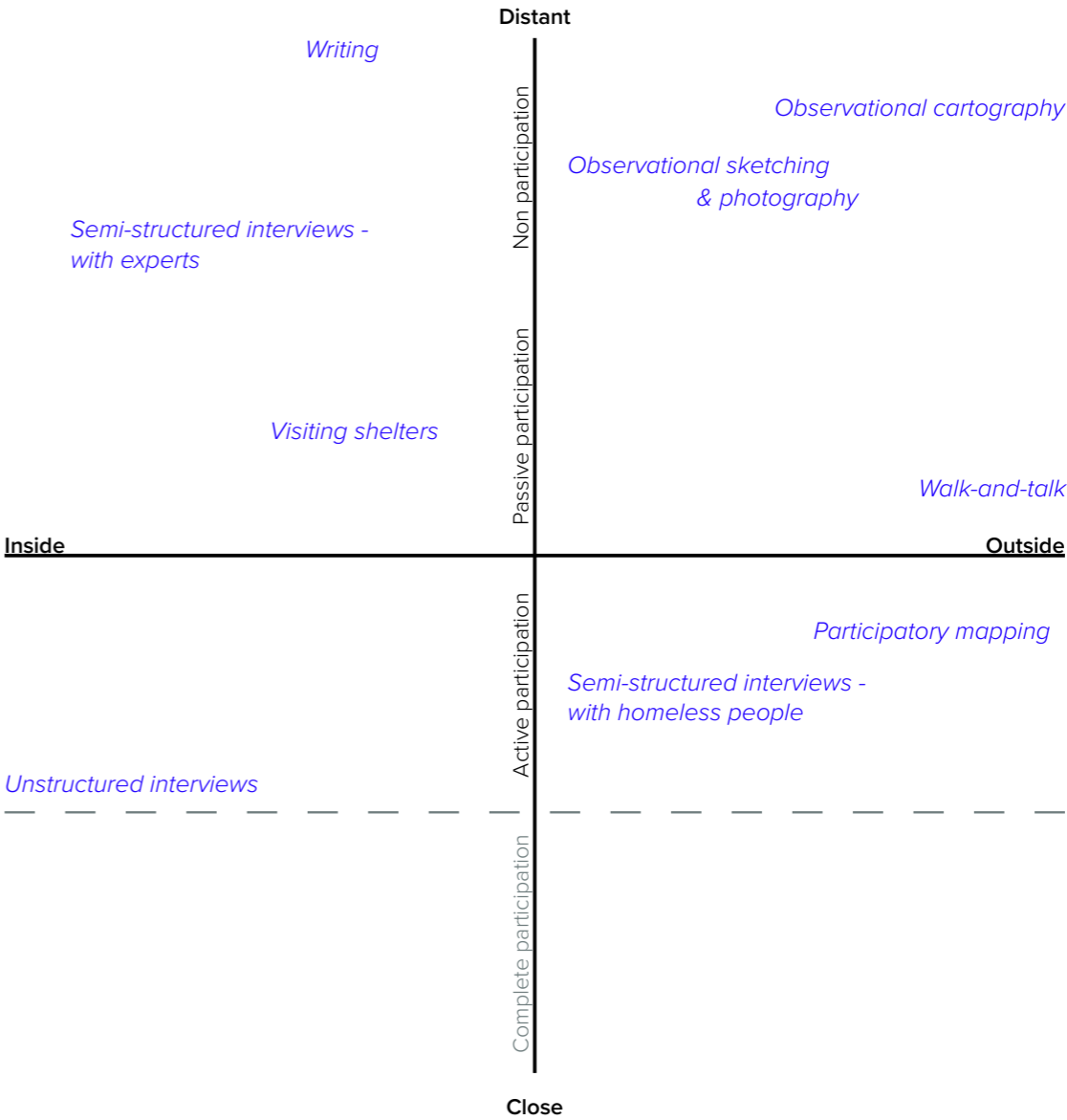
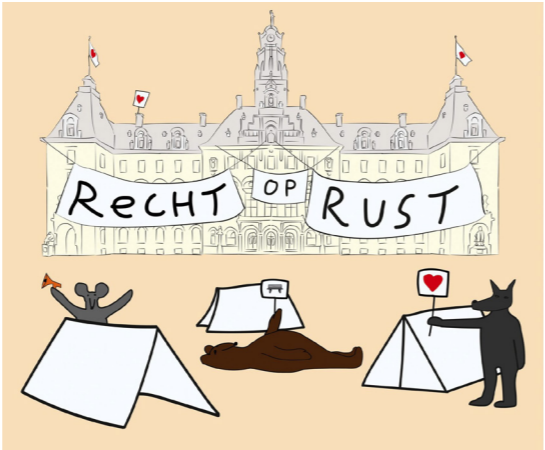


Figure 2.8 - Axis diagram from presentation Leeke Reinders December 13, 2023

Approaches

Delving into two distinct groups experiencing different forms of housing insecurity, it becomes evident that both populations require tailored approaches in doing research. Rough sleepers, facing the immediate challenge of lacking shelter, often find themselves overlooked in public spaces while carrying profound stories and challenges. Engaging with them requires patience and empathy, as a simple question can unveil layers of their experiences and extensive stories, demanding genuine listening and understanding. Open-ended questions serve as effective catalysts for meaningful conversations, while trust-building is essential, particularly with more reserved individuals. Encouragement and reassurance play pivotal roles in fostering rapport and facilitating dialogue.

Conversely, women residing in the shelter are often less extensive in their responses, requiring more direct and concise questioning. Regular interactions with this group enable the establishment of trust, paving the way for more intimate discussions on personal matters. Both groups have shown to often answer questions with different responses than the question asked for. This creates results that need more analysis as the answers are often indirectly related to the themes addressed. Overall, the focus lies not solely on the objects brought into sessions but rather on the conversations they ignite, serving as vital bridges to connect with these marginalised groups and address their unique needs.



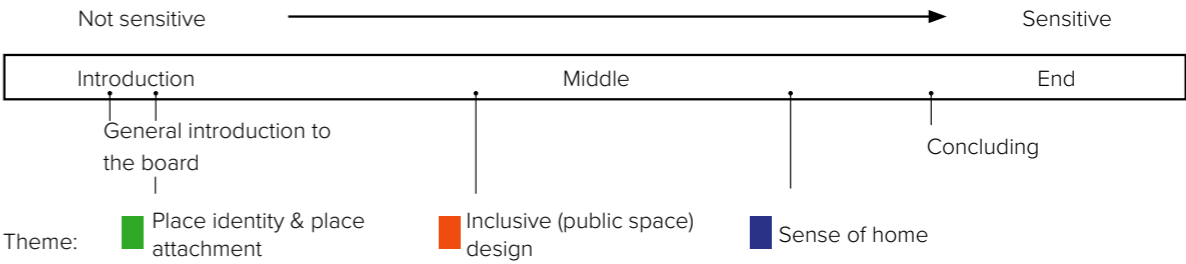
Flyers for two manifestations 'Recht op rust'. Top image: manifestation in front of City Hall. Bottom image: manifestation in the Wijkpark (Aktiegroep Oude Westen)



Semi-structured interviews

When interacting with the two focus groups, a set of questions will be introduced to guide semi-structured interviews. These conversation topics are grounded in theoretical approaches drawn from

the literature review. The topics are organised in a progression from less sensitive to more sensitive, designed to foster a sense of trust and rapport within the conversation.



Place attachment & identity

- Place identity:  
Do you like to come here?  
And why / why not?  
What do you usually do in this park?  
  
Are there any other public places (like this park) in the city that are very important for you?  
  
Do you feel welcome in this park?  
Are there other places in Rotterdam where you feel welcome/unwelcome?
- Place attachment:  
Do you in a way feel connected to this park?  
Are there any other places in Rotterdam that you feel strongly connected to?
- Do you ever feel excluded here?  
Are there other places where you feel excluded?
- Do you feel connected to other people in this area?  
Are there any other places in Rotterdam where you feel really connected to the people there?

Inclusive (public space) design

- Are there any things that you miss in this park / that you would like to see here?
- If there were activities here that you could take part in, would you participate?" (eg. gardening, community dinners)
- What could this park provide that you need in for day-to-day life?
- Are there specific things that the public space could provide for people living on the streets?
- If there would be areas here (in the park) where you would be allowed to sleep at night, would you do that?

Sense of home

- Are there places in the city where you feel at home?
- Do you feel at home in rotterdam?  
and in the neighbourhood?  
and in this park?

# Integrated research approach

	Sub-questions	Methods	Expected outcomes
Conceptual background	What are the social, societal and spatial dynamics of being homeless within an urban environment?	<div><div></div> Literature</div>	An overview of theoretical approaches that are relevant to understand the societal / social and spatial dynamics of urban homelessness.
	What specific groups or individuals experience homelessness in Rotterdam?	<div><div></div> News and media analysis</div> <div><div></div> Unstructured and Semi-structured interviews</div>	An understanding of the backgrounds and demography of the homeless population in Rotterdam and laying out their biggest issues.
	How does the current urban environment of Rotterdam fulfil the needs of its homeless population?	<div><div></div> GIS-mapping</div> <div><div></div> Spatial analysis</div> <div><div></div> Ethnographic research:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation: sketching, writing and mapping</li><li>• Interaction: semi-structured interviews, participatory mapping</li></ul></div>	Maps showing the distribution of social services and other amenities for the homeless population An ethnographic overview of the research results A typology of homelessness
Analytical	What are the spatial needs of the homeless population of Rotterdam?	<div><div></div> Ethnographic research:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interaction: semi-structured interviews, walk-and-talk</li></ul></div>	A conclusion on the potential of urban design in addressing homelessness A vision and task for the design
	What design interventions address the immediate needs of the homeless population of Rotterdam?	<div><div></div> Research by design</div> <div><div></div> Synthesising ethnographic research</div>	Multi-scalar design proposals
	How can urban design interventions serve as a catalysts for raising awareness on urban homelessness?	<div><div></div> Research by design</div> <div><div></div> Synthesising ethnographic research</div>	Multi-scalar design proposals
Design			

# Ethical considerations

It is crucial to be aware of the ethical considerations when working with such a vulnerable group like the homeless. Safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of participants is essential, by anonymizing data especially in cases where explicit consent may be lacking due to the often unstructured nature of information gathering. Furthermore, given its prevalent stigmatisation of the homeless population, the translations of the research findings should be handled carefully, considering potential stigmatisation and exploitation

Additionally, the project aims to ensure that research is not merely an information-gathering endeavour

but also beneficial for the participants. Providing a platform for their voices and opinions, and addressing matters beyond the research scope, is deemed crucial. It's essential to safeguard their deeper personal identities, not solely focusing on their homelessness during research.

By attending to these ethical considerations, the research project can uphold respect and ideally contribute positively to the well-being of the participants.



Image of a group of homeless people sleeping in a parking garage next to the Holland casino. An image made in the Paulus Church Action Studio by Peter van Beek (2023).

# 03 Theoretical approaches

- 1 Home(lessness)
- 2 Societal dimension of homelessness
- 3 Homelessness in public space
- 4 Visibility and exposure



*Photo by walter Herfst (2023)*

This chapter explores diverse theoretical approaches aimed at understanding the role of the urban environment, including its social, societal, and spatial dimensions, in the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness. We delve into the dimensions of the concept of home, societal dynamics, their relationship to public space, and the effects of visibility and exposure on the group. The theoretical approaches are important for the general understanding of the topic and serve as input for the ethnographic research.

# Home(lessness)

## Home

The word home can be a very meaningful and mostly powerful word as it is used so incredibly often in everyday life (Duncan & Lambert, 2004). The term homeless proves its importance by being a term often portraying a condition of neglect, as having a home is often seen as a social goal (Kellett & Moore, 2003). In order to fully understand the meanings and experiences of homelessness it is important to examine the meaning of home.

The Dutch word for home, thuis, comes from the Indo-European term kei which means “something close to your heart” [dierbaar]. In English the word home comes from the Anglo-Saxon ham which means village. Home mainly refers to a dwelling place or a “lived space of interaction between people, places and other things. Home is often the foundation of human existence, providing security and identity.” (Reinders, 2013). Many evaluations on the concept of home refer to the home as a physical entity; a house providing shelter and protection. Seeing home in its pure physical form makes it a possession, something that people own and that belongs to them. The difference between house and home is that the house is a property and the home an appropriated territory (Dovey, 1985). Home thus relates to its territorial core, the home being a place that people personalise and defend (Büttimer & Seamon, 1980). Furthermore, the home is often seen as an emotional environment, as a form of centrality, a place of stability and constancy or as a former of identities (Duncan & Lambert, 2004).

## A sense of home

This section focuses more specifically on the sense of home, which concerns feelings of belonging, attaching to and rooting in a place (Antonisch, 2010). It explores whether alternative spaces can provide feelings relating to home, when lacking a physical home, because being at home means much more than having a physical shelter (Kellett & Moore, 2003). Having a sense of home is often seen as a

fundamental sentiment, cultivated and preserved by everyday activities and concerns closeness and being in safe and trusted places (Reinders, 2013).

In dissecting the elements of a sense of home, Antonisch 2010 identifies various factors that may generate that feeling; auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic and legal. Auto-biographical factors are shaped by personal experiences and memories. Relational factors refer to the social relationships and interactions enriching life. Cultural factors concern cultural expressions like language, traditions, habits or, for instance, religion. Economic factors contribute to stability and safety. Legal factors, like residence permits or citizenship, are of great importance to feel like you belong (Antonisch, 2010)

Reinders (2013) explains the three elements of the feeling of home being socio-spatial (addressing the way people feel connected to a physical space), the psycho-spatial (how spaces can be places of relational interaction) and emotional (personal histories, stories and memories). The concepts of “rootedness” and “bonding” are integral to understanding the sense of belonging and connections within specific spaces. Rootedness, often synonymous with belonging, involves territorial associations, appropriation, ownership, and the establishment of boundaries. Conversely, bonding entails participation, relationship-building, community dynamics, and collective interactions within those spaces. Together, these concepts provide a comprehensive framework for exploring the intricate layers of home, encompassing the emotional, spatial, and relational dimensions that contribute to the profound sense of belonging and connection. People’s efforts to create homes in different kinds of ways can serve as a means of mitigating their relative exclusion in various ways. Therefore these concepts can be used in analysing how the current urban environment of Rotterdam offers a home for homeless individuals.

# Societal dimension of homelessness

## The stigma

The definition of normalcy and societal acceptance is frequently shaped by dominant groups, leading minorities to be perceived as different. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the harsh stigmatisation of the homeless population. This group of city dwellers is often stripped of their humanity and socially and morally seen as Others. Many homeless people are forced to perform their basic activities in public space, like eating, drinking, sleeping and going to the bathroom, which is unwanted by the public. These performances often create a sense of dis-ease (Martini, 2021). This causes restrictions to intensify, pushing homeless individuals away from public spaces, resulting in socio-spatial exclusion (Mitchell & Heynen, 2009).

The negative stigma or stereotype that is connected to homeless people are often created by a form of fear. Fear often stems from the unknown or the incomprehensible. A majority of people hold a fear of unfamiliar people and of what they could possibly do to us. The visibility of this group and their use of public spaces contribute significantly to the severity of their stigmatisation. Aesthetic differences, different or the lack of hygiene practices, and the prevalence of addiction or mental illness among some homeless individuals further fuels negative perceptions. Many dominant representations, like the media, political discourse and the news, strengthen the stigma on homeless individuals (Takahashi, 1996).

Their presence in public space creates a fear by the public that housing prices will fall (Sibley, 1995). Another example of such a cultural misinterpretation concerns the lack of owning a house. In societies where private property is highly valued, those who do not own a house are often despised as non-persons. This perspective is influenced by political ideologies, such as the Dutch ideology of homeownership, where owning a house is synonymous with being a fully-fledged citizen. Unfortunately this dominant image diminishes the collective potential of the

social rented sector as a solution to the housing crisis. Reducing the issue of homelessness to an individual failure or disgrace in the eyes of the public (Hochstenbach, 2023).

## A sense of belonging

Homelessness often creates a strong feeling of ‘outsiderness’, as described by Bell and Walsh (2015), where individuals feel unwanted in public space and have limited alternatives available to them. The lack of regard towards homeless individuals from the wider society makes the relationship between homeless people extremely important. These interpersonal relationships help to reduce isolation and create physical protection. People are always searching for affirmation from others that what they see, feel and understand is experienced in a similar way by others. Being among others also turns individual activities into a public statement, resulting in a recognition of your individual status. This theory suggests that our affiliations, whether they are social, professional or cultural, contribute to a collective image that reflects on our own identity. Shelters and other care facilities are examples that provide these kinds of social networks for homeless individuals. “To be a part of the shelter community is to be a part of something: to have a sense of place and source of affirmation in the world” (Bell & Walsh, 2015).

# Homelessness in public space

Sibley (1995), tries to formulate ways of social and spatial exclusion in his work 'Geographies of Exclusion'. His theory focuses on the tendency of dominant groups to try to 'purify' space and therefore seeing minorities as 'pollutants of what is pure' (Sibley, 1995). The widespread stigma and stereotypes attached to homelessness not only result in socio-spatial exclusion but also manifest in the physical spaces inhabited by homeless individuals. Negative images associated with homelessness, including notions of dirt, unpleasant smells, and noise, become symbolic representations projected onto the spaces they occupy, such as abandoned corners, porches, entrances to closed stores, and dedicated areas. In essence, these spaces end up embodying the stigma linked to homelessness, creating an ongoing cycle of marginalisation that directly ties the societal stigma to public spaces (Takahashi, 1996).

Takahashi (1996) reviewed homelessness research from a geographical perspective. She developed a theory on homeless stigmatisation, arguing that

homeless people tend to be located in harmful spaces, with high blameworthiness of their situation. Takahashi states that the stigma can only be challenged when research is focussed on those 'sites of representation' (DeVerteuil et al., 2009).

Kimberley Dovey (1985) already highlighted the decline in communally shared open space and increased state control, eradicating previously autonomous spaces beyond the state's influence. Politically, this dynamic not only strengthens the jurisdiction of prevailing power groups but also undermines the potential of shared spaces as spaces for political freedom. Socially, it imposes constraints on public behaviour, restricting it to a sanitised and rule-bound set of activities. As mentioned before, many homeless people lack a private place, a house or home, this means they have to use public space as their private space. For many people dealing with homelessness, the public space is a place in which the private is externalised and the public internalised (Meert et al., 2006)



Arie Kieviet (2023)

When researching homelessness in public space, the notion of a sense of place becomes relevant. The concept of a sense of place addresses the way in which people, individually or collectively, emotionally attach values to a particular location. People are emotionally attached to places, because places are "centres of human existence that can shape, maintain, and transform our individual or collective identities" (Rennels and Purnell, 2015). In contrast, space is described as abstract, amorphous, and disconnected from materiality and cultural interpretations. Reinders (2013) explains that shared images and conceptions of place are created through collective systems of representation and significance. This collective process contributes to the formation of spatial identities. However, homeless individuals, lacking a physical home to attach to, face unique challenges in forming place identities. Despite this, they can still develop attachments to other physical environments that hold significance to them.

Rennels and Purnell (2015) highlight how homeless individuals create a sense of place within public spaces through various means. This includes the re-appropriation of spaces, which can mean building a place to sleep, laying out a sleeping bag or piling up cartons. Additionally, homeless individuals may harness feelings of safety within certain public spaces, establishing a sense of belonging despite their transient lifestyle. Furthermore, interactions with others within these spaces play a crucial role in shaping their sense of place and connection to the urban environment. Through these mechanisms, homeless individuals are able to cultivate a semblance of place identity and attachment, even in the absence of a traditional home.

Homeless individuals can also impact the sense of place of others. Martini (2021) shows this by explaining that encountering an art which changes, for instance, a public square, into a place to sleep can challenge the conventional understanding of the

intended meaning and purpose of this place. In this way, the multifaceted concept of a sense of place involves both individual and collective emotional attachments, collective systems of representation, and the dynamic transformation of spaces through various influences.



Tenny Tenzer, 2023

# Visibility and exposure

In the context of urban spaces, homeless individuals often find themselves conspicuously present, yet socially invisible. This paradox highlights the distinction between being invisible as a homeless person and being visibly homeless. All the activities people perform in their private homes, homeless people have to perform in the public space, which makes them unavoidably, visibly homeless. Contranstringly, homeless people are often ignored and stuffed into invisibility (Langegger & Koester, 2016).

Exposure of the homeless population can reduce prejudice towards the group, but it also invites judgement and stereotyping. Langegger and Koester (2016) identify four types of exposure; information, observation, interaction and actual membership. Exposure to information about homelessness, whether through media or the news, often reinforces negative stereotypical attitudes. Observation of homeless individuals in daily life can evoke varying responses. The response and judgement is often very dependent on the appearances of the homeless person. Close interaction, meaning close proximity, face-to-face contact, may reveal personal narratives and challenge stereotypes. Despite the challenges, many homeless individuals navigate the urban landscape with resilience, adapting their identities to blend into different environments. They have the tendency to try to become a part of the urban flow, moving in anonymously (Langegger & Koester, 2016). Thus, managing exposure to homelessness involves navigating the complex dynamics of everyday encounters in urban settings.



Made in the Paulus Church action studio by photographer  
Peter van Beek

Research  
results

# 04 Geographical analysis

- 1 Social services
- 2 Not for everyone
- 3 Public amenities in the district



*Photo by walter Herfst (2023)*





This chapter delves into the spatial distribution and accessibility of social services and public amenities for Rotterdam's homeless population. A map shows disparities in shelter availability and access criteria, while another reveals gaps in public toilets and water points. Through this analysis, our aim is to comprehend how Rotterdam's current urban environment serves its homeless population and what would need improvement.

# Social services

This map shows a collection of social services tailored for (a segment of) Rotterdam's homeless population. The map addresses a notable gap by consolidating information scattered across various platforms. The process of creating this map was therefore a slow process of gathering names of social institutions and other guiding organisations. Categorised according to The European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (Amore et al., 2011), the map highlights the limited availability of shelters, with only one designated for women, a few accommodating all genders, and just a few scattered social services providing other help and do not offer places to sleep.






Legend

Functions



-  Social care
-  Night shelter
-  Day shelter
-  Centraal onthaal

Categories

Homeless

-  Receiving longer-term support
-  Leaving an institution
-  Accommodation for immigrants
-  Women's shelter
-  Homeless accommodation

Roofless

-  Emergency accommodation
-  Rough sleepers

Map showing the social services in Rotterdam





# Not for everyone



The previous map may give the impression that all depicted services are equally accessible to every homeless individual, but this is not the case. Access to social care institutions or permanent shelters is centralised through the “Centraal Onthaal,” managed by the municipality of Rotterdam. Unfortunately, individuals who don’t meet certain criteria, such as not having officially worked for more than three years or having lived in the country for less than five years, may not receive assistance. As indicated by the black-coloured icons, some shelters are specifically designated for refugees, further limiting access for certain homeless populations.

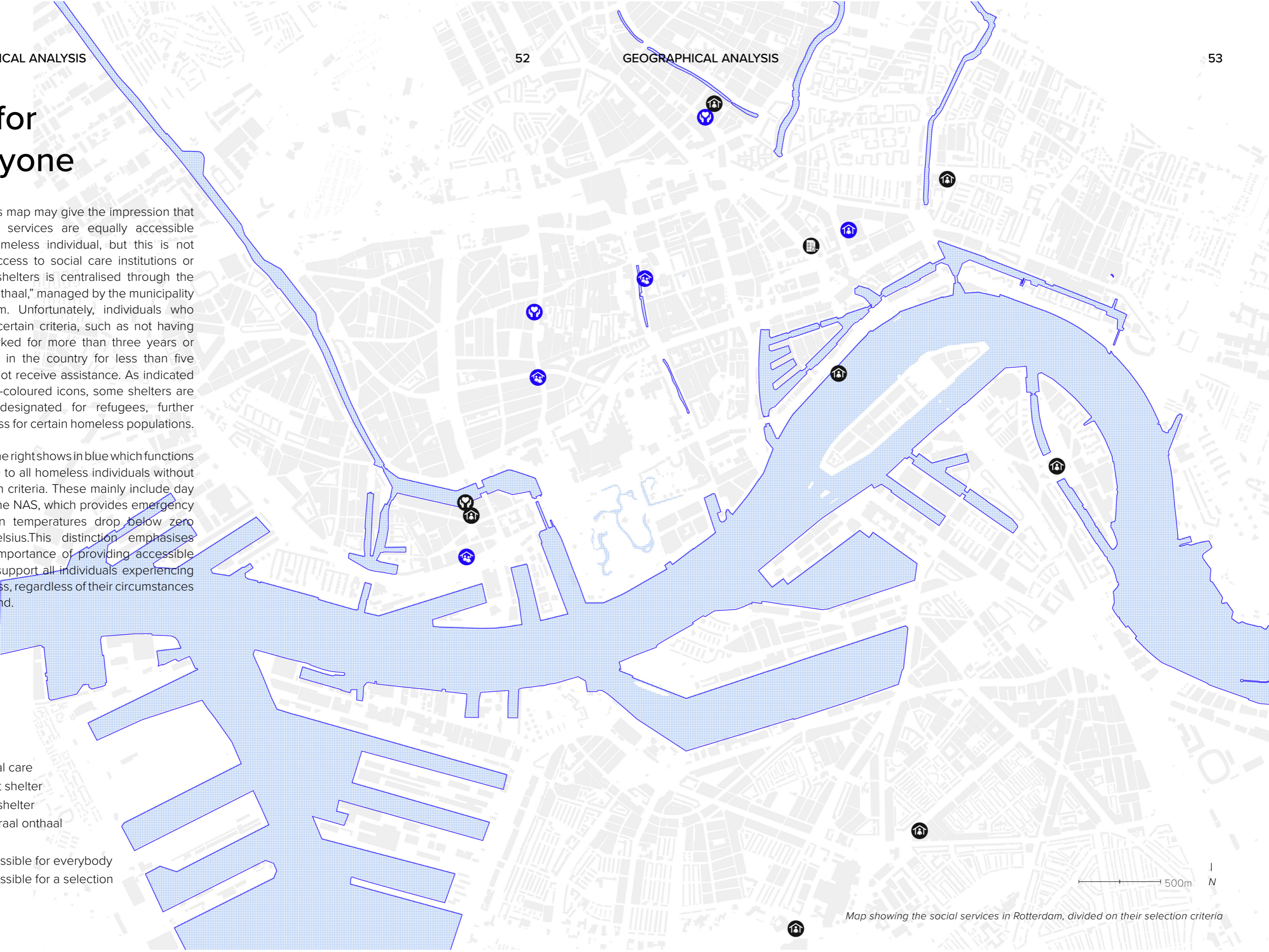
The map to the right shows in blue which functions are available to all homeless individuals without any selection criteria. These mainly include day shelters or the NAS, which provides emergency shelter when temperatures drop below zero degrees Celsius. This distinction emphasises the critical importance of providing accessible services to support all individuals experiencing homelessness, regardless of their circumstances or background.

Legend

Functions

-  Social care
-  Night shelter
-  Day shelter
-  Centraal onthaal

-  Accessible for everybody
-  Accessible for a selection



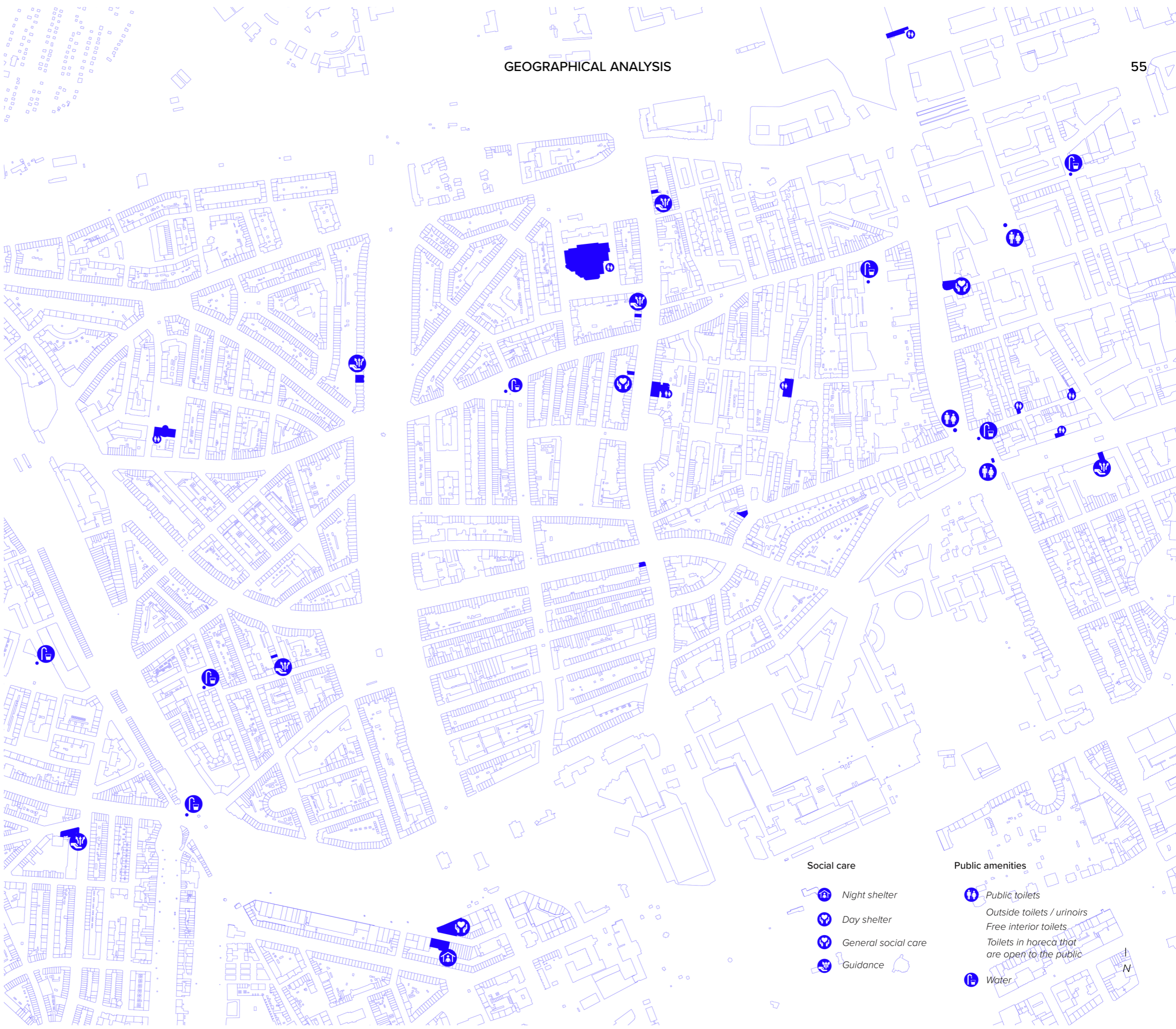
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Map showing the social services in Rotterdam, divided on their selection criteria

# Public amenities in the district

Zooming into the West/Centre district of Rotterdam, this map offers a comprehensive overview of amenities catering to the homeless population. It highlights the locations of public toilets, both indoor and outdoor, as well as water points, revealing the breadth of public services accessible throughout the city. Notably, the map indicates a scarcity of exterior public toilets, with indoor toilets often being less accessible to the homeless. Coupled with the limited availability of public water points, this revelation underscores a critical aspect of urban infrastructure deserving closer attention and intervention.

Map showing the social services and public amenities in Rotterdam



# 05 Ethnography

- 1 Structuring research findings
- 2 The homeless population of Rotterdam
- 3 Urban dynamics of homelessness
- 4 Getting around in the city
- 5 Spatial needs



*Photo by walter Herfst (2023)*

This chapter presents the findings from the ethnographic research, which serves as a cornerstone throughout the project. By structuring the analysis around the research sub-questions and integrating insights from the literature review, it creates a comprehensive understanding of the focus group.

# Structuring research findings

This chapter provides a structured overview of the research findings obtained through ethnographic inquiry into urban homelessness in Rotterdam. Organised into four distinct sections aligned with the sub-research questions and informed by the literature review.

## The homeless population of Rotterdam

This section addresses the sub-question: ‘What specific groups or individuals experience homelessness in Rotterdam?’. By examining demographic characteristics, socio-economic backgrounds and most of all, personal narratives, we gain an understanding of the diverse homeless population in Rotterdam.

## Urban dynamics of homelessness

‘A day in a life of ...’ introduces the urban dynamics of the two focus groups. Answering the sub-question: ‘What are the social, societal and spatial dynamics of being homeless within an urban environment?’, this section is divided based on theoretical approaches. Drawing on concepts such as a sense of home, societal stigmatisation and a sense of place, the results show experiences of homelessness and their implications for individuals navigating urban spaces.

## Getting around in the city

This section presents findings on how Rotterdam’s current environment meets the needs of its homeless population by answering: ‘How does the current urban environment of Rotterdam fulfil the needs of its homeless population?’. By using diverse research methods, it offers insights into how homeless individuals navigate the city.

## Spatial needs

Addressing the question: ‘What are the spatial needs

of the homeless population of Rotterdam?’, This section summarises the spatial wishes and needs of the homeless population, and explores how urban design can address their needs.



Images - Top left: breakfast during the second manifestation (photo made by friend), top right: city walk with women in the shelter (photo made by author), bottom: ‘Recht op rust’ manifestation (Pictures made by author)

# The homeless population of Rotterdam

The homeless population of Rotterdam is an extremely mixed population with individuals all having unique stories, experiences and backgrounds. Ethnographic research has unveiled a myriad of factors contributing to homelessness in the city. One prominent cause is eviction from one's residence, often triggered by circumstances such as job loss, overwhelming debts, or disruptive behaviour leading to expulsion. Additionally, a lack of support and guidance, particularly for those grappling with illnesses or addictions, can propel individuals into homelessness. Moreover, some individuals find themselves compelled to leave their homes due to familial or partner-related challenges, such as divorce or domestic strife.

After losing your house, people often end up on the streets because they can not get social help. The homeless people that have to spend nights on the streets often have no other choice because they fall outside of the dutch safety net. As mentioned in the problem statement, a large group of the rough sleepers of Rotterdam are migrant workers from eastern European countries. For many of these migrants, their housing situation is intricately linked to their employment. Losing their job means losing their place to stay. Often they work without an official contract which means that they can not prove their time of stay in the Netherlands, excluding them from many forms of support services. Once they fall through the cracks of the system and onto the streets, the path back to stability becomes extremely difficult. Paradoxically, accessing essential social support services often requires a fixed address, for instance for receiving allowance.

Within the women's shelter, another common narrative unfolds - that of women who have fled abusive relationships and therefore end up homeless. Many of them do not necessarily struggle with financial issues but solely lack a permanent and safe home. The residents of the shelter represent a diverse array of nationalities, with some being Dutch speakers, while others hail from different countries and may not speak Dutch. I have had the opportunity to cook multiple times with a woman who speaks neither Dutch, nor english. Getting the necessary help can become very difficult when you have trouble communicating.

In exploring the stories of the homeless population of Rotterdam, we encounter a spectrum of different experiences. While each story is unique, common threads of hardship and resilience weave through them all. From the challenge to rebuilding their lives and finding stability, to falling into a socially stigmatised population based on your housing situation. These narratives offer valuable insights into the needs and wishes of the focus group.

*Top picture: man during the manifestation "Right to Rest" (from OPEN Rotterdam)*  
*Bottom picture: one of the women that stays in the William Booth house (picture by Mona van den Berg ,2024).*



# Urban dynamics of homelessness

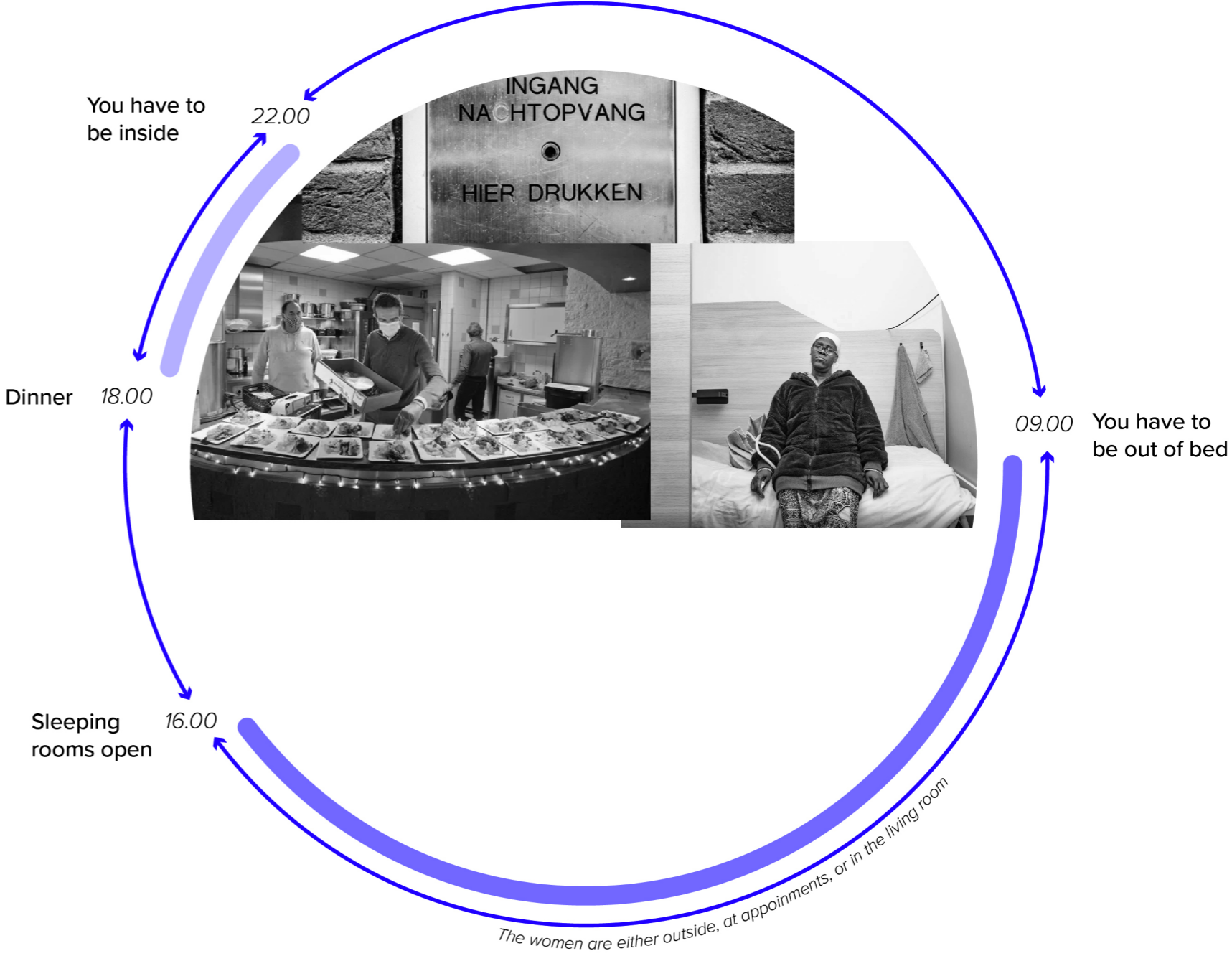
## A day in the life of women in a shelter

The women living at the WB-house sleep in shared bedrooms, each equipped with panels around their beds to afford them a degree of privacy. By nine o'clock in the morning, the women have to vacate the bedrooms and have the option to eat breakfast in the living room. From nine o'clock to four o'clock in the afternoon, access to the bedrooms is restricted. Staff members at the shelter emphasise the importance of this measure to discourage the women from staying in bed all day.

During this timeframe, many of the women engage in scheduled appointments for legal or housing assistance, mental and physical healthcare, and various other forms of support. On some days the staff organises day activities, which can be cultural, artistic or sometimes therapeutic. These may range from culinary cooking of hometown cuisines to arts and crafts sessions, as well as group discussions on important topics such as family or men.

Every evening at 18:00, dinner is served. Following dinner, many women choose to stay indoors while some go out. However, all residents are required to be back inside by 22:00. Repeatedly returning after curfew could lead to expulsion from the facility.

Illustrated by diagram ... the women are mostly out, using the city of Rotterdam and its public space in the time frames between 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM.



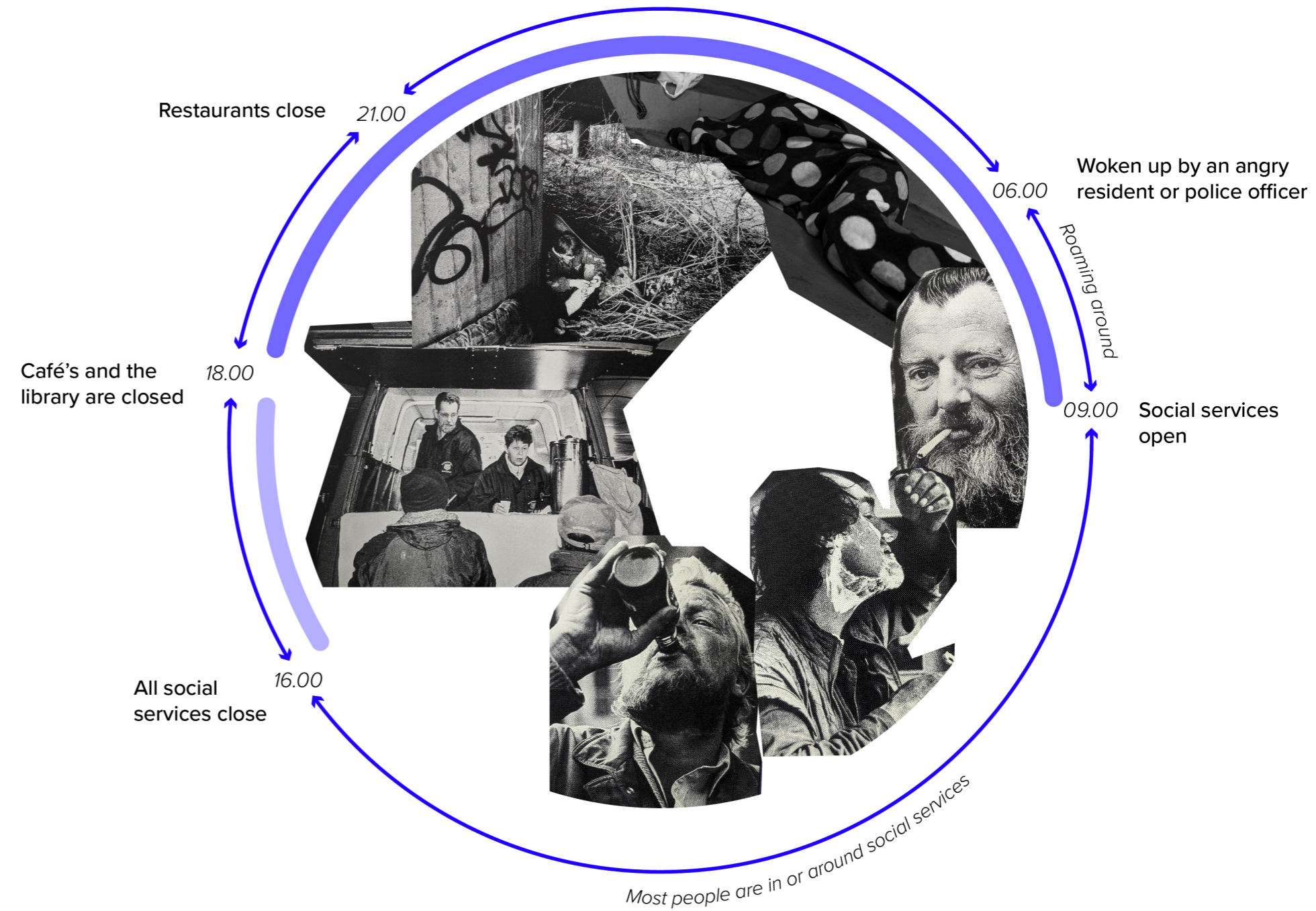
A day in the life of rough sleepers

Rough sleepers often encounter disruptions early in the morning, around 6:00 AM, from passing residents or police patrols. Following this, they typically spend their mornings roaming the city until social services open at 9:00 AM.

From 9:00 AM most of the rough sleepers of Rotterdam are in or around the day shelter of Rotterdam, like the Pauluschurch, designated locations of the Leger Des Heils, and the Sisters Therasa. Here, they can access amenities such as showers, sometimes get clean clothes, and free coffee and tea. During this timeframe, rough sleepers often engage in various activities to secure resources for their basic needs. One common practice is searching for money, often through begging in public spaces, such as street corners or busy intersections, hoping for the kindness of passersby. Additionally, collecting returnable bottles and cans becomes a means of getting money. Furthermore, some rough sleepers may explore alternative avenues for financial support, such as participating in temporary labour or seeking assistance from charitable organisations and outreach programs operating during the daytime hours.

Between 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM, many of the social services close, when another round of roaming starts. Some locations may still offer warm meals during this time. By 6:00 PM, interiors like Starbucks, cafes, and libraries also close, reducing options for warmth, rest and charging your phone. From 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM, some homeless individuals may wait near restaurants until they close around 9:00 PM, hoping to receive leftover food.

While rough sleepers may utilise public spaces throughout the entire day, their presence is most pronounced during the specified timeframes when social services and welcoming interiors are closed, typically from 4PM/6PM to 9AM.



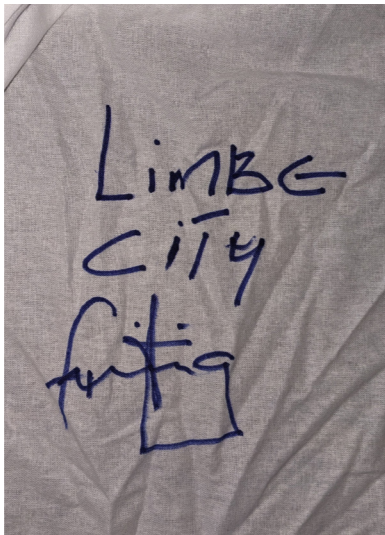
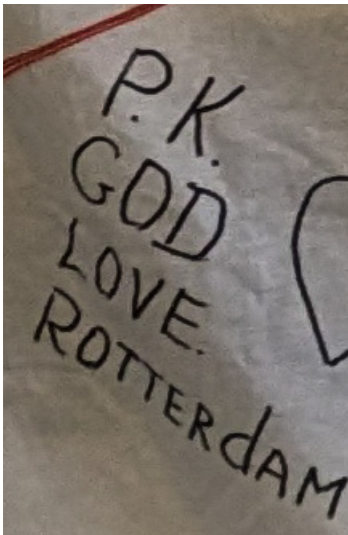
A sense of home

Through unstructured interviews, with both focus groups, insights into the concept of home among individuals struggling with homelessness emerged. During the first participatory mapping session, with rough sleepers invited through the Pauluschurch it became evident that the Paulus Church serves as an important home for a large part of the homeless population of Rotterdam. The soft map shown on image ... shows multiple signs of love and god around the Paulus Church.

Furthermore, narratives shared during this session delved into various facets of the sense of home, including personal experiences and the social networks they've forged, underscoring the importance of connection and familiarity in their lives. Furthermore, the research highlighted the enduring influence of language, culture, and religion in shaping individuals' perceptions of home. Despite their current circumstances, many homeless individuals maintained strong ties to their cultural and religious backgrounds, which provided a sense of continuity and identity amidst instability. This sentiment was further exemplified by image x, which depicts the city of origin of one participant, highlighting the

poignant dislocation between their current physical surroundings and the emotional ties to their distant homeland.

Exploring the concept of home through unstructured interviews in ethnographic engagements presented challenges, given its sensitivity as a conversation topic. Attempts to steer the conversation toward the concept home were often met with responses such as: "Oh but I don't have a home", hindering further exploration. Consequently, drawing definitive conclusions about the significance of home for homeless individuals proved difficult. However, recurring themes emerged, showing the importance of community, spirituality and personal history and culture. These elements were consistently emphasised as sources of support, identity, and belonging amidst the instability of homelessness.



Pictures made by author (2023)



The bedrooms in the women's shelter, picture from NRC, made by Mona van den Berg (2024)

Observations within the women's shelter shed light on the complex dynamics of finding home in these kinds of environments. Many of the women have mentioned the strong sense of solidarity within the shelter. Being able to share the same struggles with the opportunity for mutual support can strengthen a feeling of home. While at the same time, the many different kinds of issues, background and personalities can lead to occasional conflicts and discord between the women.

*“Without these women around me, I would be lost. They get me through the day”*

Moreover, the experience of sleeping in shared rooms poses its own set of challenges. Many women find it difficult to rest peacefully due to disruptions such as sleep talking or distressing nightmares experienced by fellow residents. These disturbances can contribute to a sense of unease and discomfort, further complicating the notion of “home” within the shelter setting.

Despite these challenges, for many women, the shelter serves as a temporary refugee, providing safety and stability. However, it is also a transient stop on their journey to a stable house. This temporality is clearly visible in their actions and performances within the shelter, often marked by a lack of initiative and effort.

## Societal dynamics

Lacking a physical or permanent home in one way or another means often being exposed to societal dynamics, public opinions, and interactions with strangers. The ethnographic research conducted on homelessness revealed striking dynamics between homeless individuals and the broader public of Rotterdam. Participants showed a profound sense of exclusion and alienation, often recounting experiences of being overlooked or mistreated by members of the public.

*“Sometimes when I ask someone for some money they look at me with dirty eyes. Sometimes they even tell me to get lost and call me a filthy bitch.”*

During interactions with homeless individuals, a common theme emerged: the need to disassociate themselves from negative stereotypes. Many homeless individuals felt obligated to prove that they do not fit the typical image of a homeless person, emphasising that they do not use drugs or alcohol and are simply seeking assistance for basic needs, such as a place to sleep. This underscores the internalised stigma and the constant struggle to combat societal prejudices faced by those experiencing homelessness in Rotterdam.

*“I’m not like that, I just have no home. I am also a person, just like you right...”*

*“Of course you are just like me, and you should be treated the same.”*

*“Yes, and with respect, I just want respect.”*



Made in the Paulus Church action studio by photographer Peter van Beek



OPEN Rotterdam, 2023

The manifestation held at Wijkpark Oude Westen shed light on the role of public spaces in perpetuating stigmatisation. The park, while serving as a gathering place for diverse groups, became unfairly associated with negative activities and behaviours, leading to the blaming of the homeless population. Some of the participants at the manifestation, both homeless and not homeless individuals, shared their reluctance to visit the park, due to the negative associations attached to it. The homeless participants expressed feelings of unwelcomeness and discomfort. They explained that nuisance and news about the park resulted in them being unfairly put together with other groups, such as drug dealers and addicts.

Ethnographic research also gave insights into the relation to the homeless population and municipal politics. The repressive measures employed by the municipality have a large impact on the well-being of the homeless population of Rotterdam. Tamar Kemperman, who works at the Paulus Church, highlighted a noticeable shift in the behaviour and demeanour of individuals seeking support. Staff members of the Paulus Church observed an increase in the use of alcohol and drugs and aggression, due to growing feelings of hopelessness and desperation (personal conversation with T. Kemperman on December 14, 2023).

Belonging

Despite these experiences, of disrespect, stigmatisation and exclusion there is a longing for connection and acceptance within the community. This aspiration was exemplified by their visions for inclusive communal activities in public spaces, such as group workouts and collaborative neighbourhood clean-up initiatives, which underscored a shared desire for belonging and purpose. One participant’s narrative provided extensive insight into the longing for connection, respect and belonging. A homeless woman showed a deep-seated desire to reclaim her dignity and assert her worth beyond societal stereotypes. She proposed collective cleaning sessions within the neighbourhood and was open to other collective activities she would be allowed to participate in.

*“Maybe we could clean the park together, you know, with the people living here and us”*

This sentiment underscores the desire of homeless individuals to reclaim their dignity and be recognised for their inherent worth beyond social labels.

Some stories highlighted how being part of a neighbourhood where you are known can provide crucial support for homeless individuals. For instance, one man found both work and occasional shelter from a local store owner who knew him. This connection offered him a form of stability amidst his struggles.

*“Without that man, I would be lost...”*

Another homeless individual was able to use a neighbour’s address to receive his payments, ensuring he maintained access to essential financial resources. These examples demonstrate that having a sense of belonging in a community where others are more stable can offer significant assistance. The practical help provided by ‘neighbours’, whether through employment opportunities, temporary

shelter, or the use of a mailing address, illustrates the profound impact that community support can have. This sense of belonging not only meets immediate needs but also fosters a supportive environment that can improve the overall well-being and prospects of homeless individuals, emphasising the importance of inclusive and solidary neighbourhoods.

A sense of place

In delving into the spatial dynamics of Rotterdam’s homeless population, a notable difference becomes apparent between the sense of place of on the one hand, the women residing in a shelter and those who find themselves sleeping rough. The women housed in shelters often show a disconnection from public spaces, opting instead for the comfort and security offered within the shelter’s confines. Their interaction with the cityscape is very limited, and they express minimal familiarity with their immediate surroundings indicating a lack of attachment to their neighbourhood. During a walk-and-talk session it became evident that there was little motivation to explore beyond the necessities of daily life. However, various individual conversations with the women revealed the often temporality of their stay in the shelter, and also they find themselves sometimes sleeping rough. This means that the two groups researched can also change and become the other group.

*“There is nothing to do for us there. I just cross the bridge immediately.”*

*“Well there is the Sahan (Turkish supermarket) and the Albert Heijn, we do go there.”*

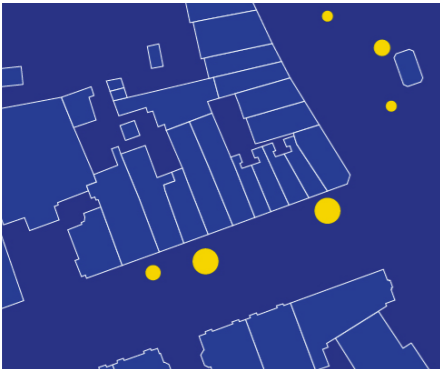
In contrast to the women, individuals who find themselves sleeping rough in Rotterdam exhibit a remarkable familiarity to their environment. These individuals possess an intimate knowledge of the

city streets, navigating every corner with ease and precision. During the participatory mapping session, it became evident that they have a deep understanding of their surroundings, effortlessly identifying landmarks and points of interest. This participatory session showed places they attach to, like the Pauluschurch, as mentioned before. One participant explained having a strong connection with a certain bench, serving as a daily refuge where they would patiently wait for the Pauluschurch to open its doors. While some find solace and familiarity in certain landmarks or types of urban furniture, many also view the cityscape through a lens of necessity, prioritising access to vital resources over emotional connections to specific places.

# Getting around in the city

## Observing

Zooming into the area around the Pauluschurch, being an area that many rough sleepers use, the research took a quantitative approach, employing observation and mapping to document the presence of homeless individuals. The resulting map highlights specific hotspots, like supermarkets, cafes, bars, and popular squares such as Rijnhoutplein and Schouwburgplein. It also pinpoints areas just around the corner of the main streets and the Wijkpark as places where many homeless people congregate. Moreover, the research noted that homeless individuals often seek refuge under porches, canopies, and overhangs. These spots provide some shelter from the weather and are commonly used by those experiencing homelessness. This analysis provides a clearer picture of how public spaces are utilised by homeless individuals in the area around the Pauluschurch.



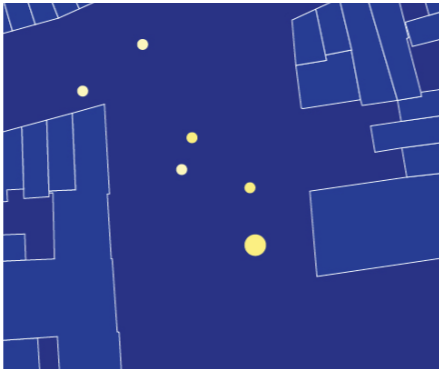
*Around bars and nightclubs*

In the evening and night, homeless people are often around bars, café's and nightclubs. These are places where there is the possibility for interaction. It is mostly used to gain resources; money, food or cigarettes.



*Around the supermarket*

The supermarket, in this case the albert Heijn on Schouwburgplein, is a place where a steady stream of people pass through. It is a place where someone might offer you cash or food. This space sees its peak usage during the daytime, from morning till afternoon.



*The Wijkpark*

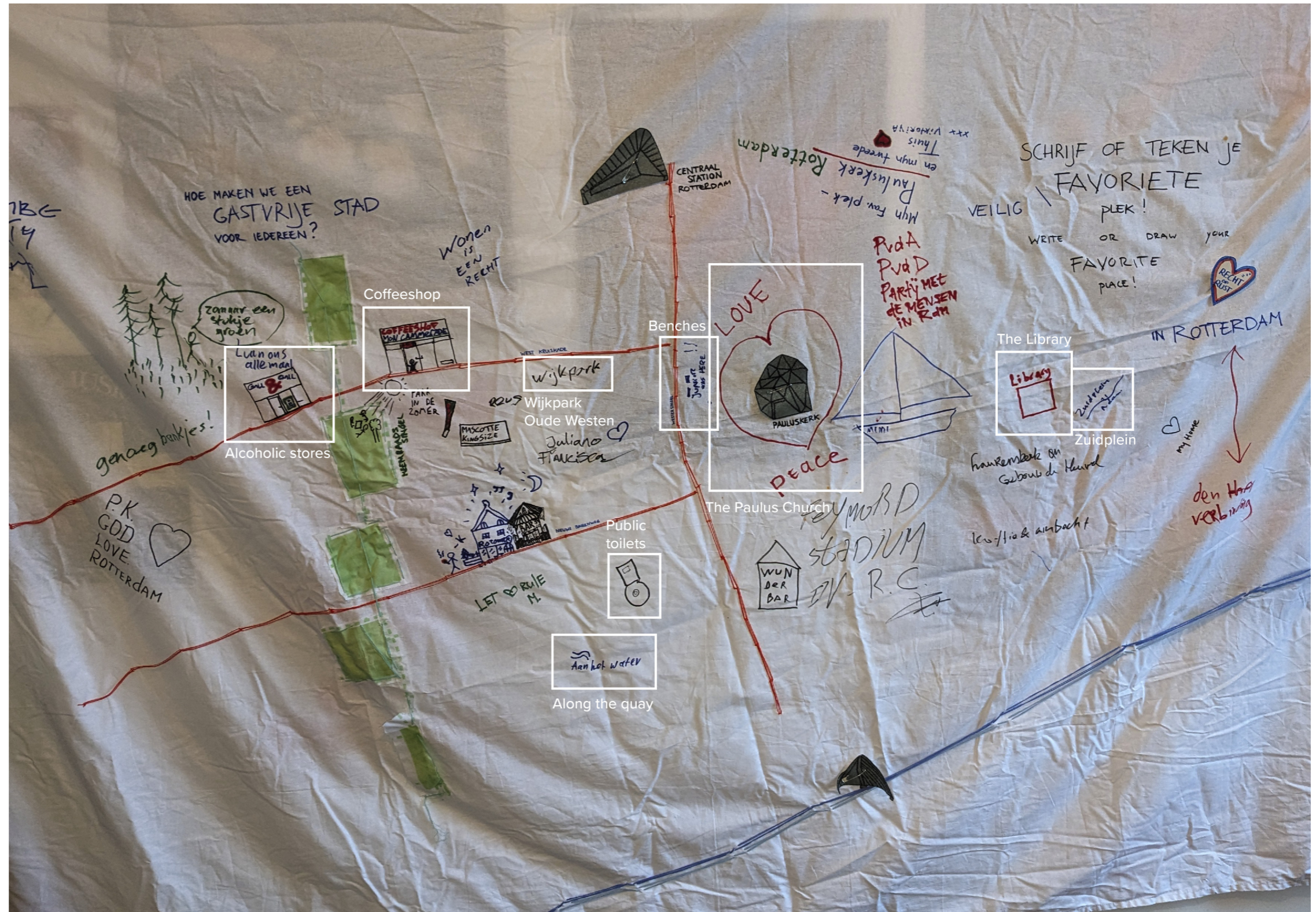
In and around the Wijkpark, there is always a lot of activity. Mornings see a group of homeless individuals waiting for Paulus Church to open. Throughout the day, people gather, chatting and relaxing on the benches. At the start of the evening, the park closes until morning.



## Participating

This image shows the complete result of a participatory mapping session during a manifestation Right to Rest on December 20, 2023, also previously mentioned in earlier chapters. To avoid perpetuating an “us versus them” mindset, all participants, regardless of their housing status, were encouraged to contribute to the map.

The map highlights specific parks, benches, and buildings that hold significance for the homeless community. Notably, it includes a depiction of a public toilet, accompanied by the story of a man who regularly seeks shelter in such facilities. Similar to previous findings, the map underscores the importance of the Wijkpark as a key location for those experiencing homelessness.

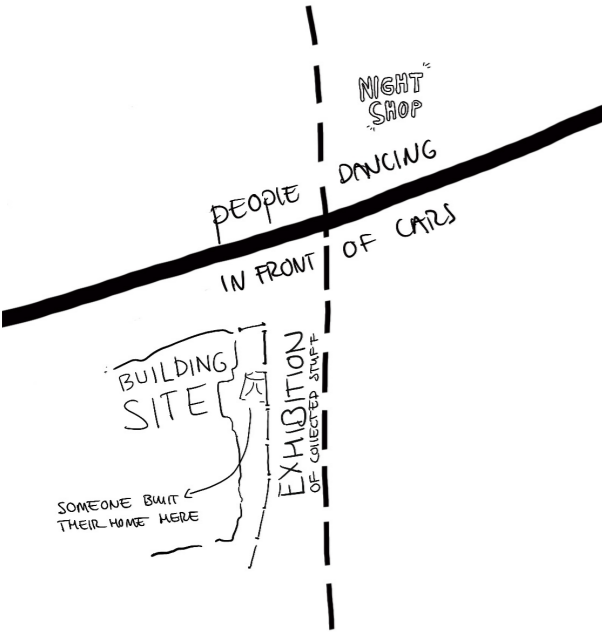


*These images show the result of a participatory mapping session during a manifestation about the right to rest on a soft map created by the author (Pictures made by the author)*

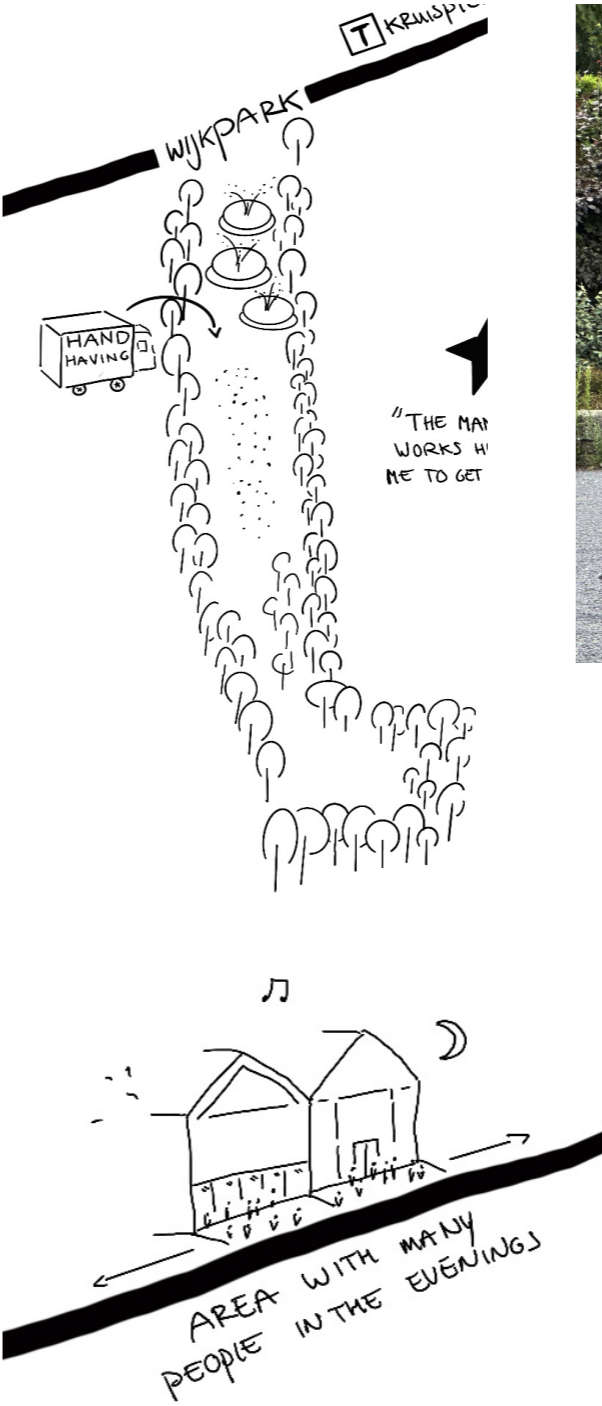
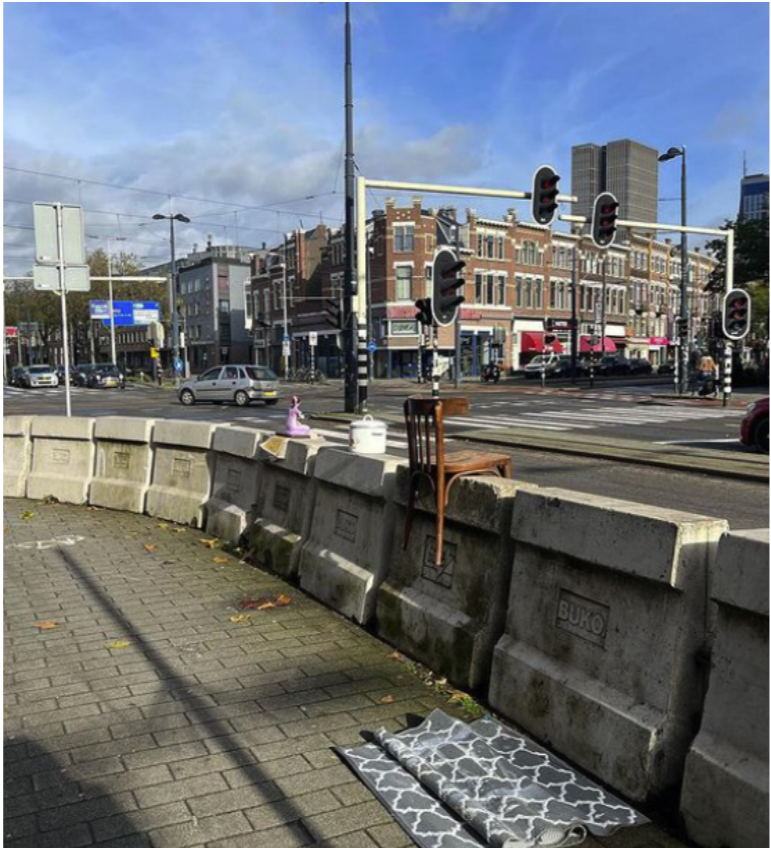
Media

Throughout the ethnographic research, the media emerged as a significant source of information regarding homelessness in Rotterdam. Instagram accounts like Crackcity010 provided valuable insights into homeless behaviours, documenting experiences and activities within Rotterdam. Additionally, the news, including Rotterdam based news channels such as Vers Beton, played a crucial role in showing how the city is used by homeless people.

OPEN Rotterdam following a homeless man for a day (2023)



Art exhibition by a homeless man (Crackcity010 instagram account, 2022)



OPEN Rotterdam, 2023



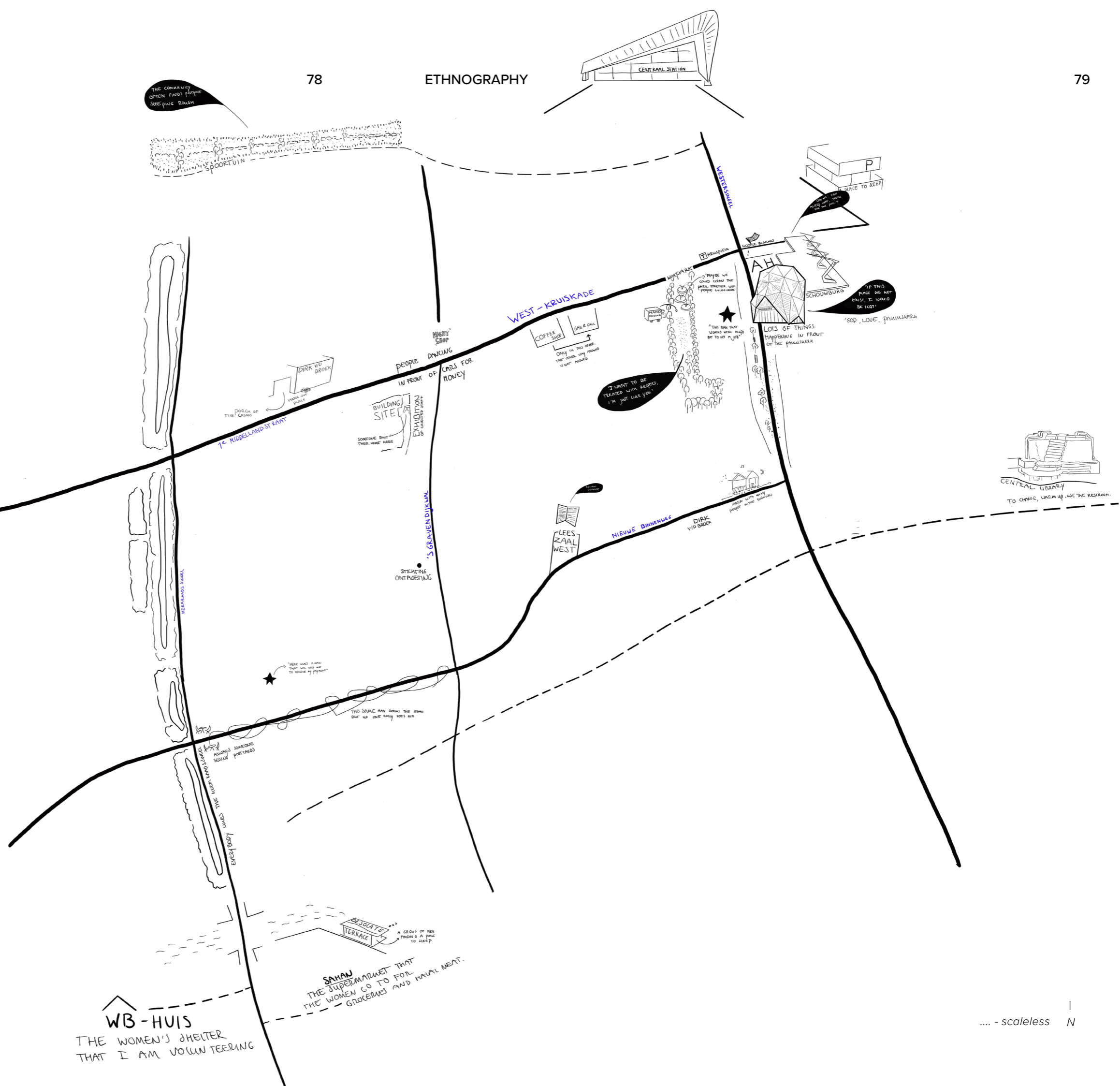
OPEN Rotterdam, 2023

## Mapping

This map shows a collection of many stories and experiences during ethnographic research. The map has collected important insights from the participatory sessions, observations and media, offering a nuanced perspective on how the urban fabric of Rotterdam intersects with the lives of its homeless population.

It highlights significant interiors mentioned by homeless individuals, where they find solace and a sense of belonging. Places like the Pauluschurch emerge as vital places, where individuals can seek refuge and support amidst the challenges of homelessness. Moreover, the map captures narratives recounting acts of kindness and assistance received from residents in specific neighbourhoods. This underscores the importance of community solidarity in helping out people in need.

In conclusion, the map sheds light on the importance of solidary interiors to individuals grappling with homelessness. The Pauluschurch serves as a key sanctuary, while supermarkets and cafes provide spaces for respite and social interaction. Additionally, neighbourhoods offer potential sources of support, with residents not experiencing homelessness extending a helping hand. Parks and squares emerge as vital spaces where individuals can find temporary refuge without facing the threat of eviction.



# Spatial needs

In the exploration of homelessness within urban landscapes, understanding the spatial needs of the homeless population is paramount for designing effective interventions. While the past chapters already give insight into the spatial needs and wishes of the homeless population, this chapter specifically focuses on the direct responses obtained from individuals, both homeless and not homeless, regarding the spatial requirements of the homeless population.

### Basic needs

Conversations with homeless individuals shed light on their basic needs, such as sleeping, washing, shaving. However, the current provision of these services falls short, leaving individuals dependent on, often crowded, indoor facilities. The scarcity of amenities further hinders their appearance and therefore exacerbates their challenges. Moreover, homeless individuals are heavily reliant on these indoor social services, highlighting the potential benefits of locating such amenities in public spaces or making them more accessible to those in need. By enhancing the availability and accessibility of essential services in public areas, we can better support the well-being and dignity of homeless individuals in our communities.

### Safety

Through talking with people working for Straatconsulaat in Rotterdam we collectively concluded that favourite might not be the right word to add to the question. They explained that feeling safe is often the most important thing for homeless people, they don't want their stuff to be stolen or to be found, sent away or even arrested by the police. Therefore it might be most important to ensure their safety in public spaces.

### Calmness

During conversations with women residing in shelters, a recurring theme emerged surrounding the desire

for tranquillity in their surroundings. They expressed a longing for green spaces, peaceful strolls in parks, and the opportunity to encounter beauty in their environment. For these individuals, places that offer solace and calmness can be very important. Their preference for serene environments was further evidenced by their admiration for aesthetically pleasing features in the city, such as vibrant furniture or adaptable seating arrangements.

### Interaction

As mentioned before, homeless individuals, including the women in shelters, have expressed a keen interest in engaging with the broader community. They aspire to be active participants rather than passive observers of urban life. Suggestions put forth by homeless individuals include initiatives such as collective cleaning sessions and the establishment of outdoor workout spaces or gyms. These proposals not only fulfil practical needs but also foster a sense of community engagement and integration within public spaces. Women living in the shelter often perceive barriers to accessing gathering spaces meant for homeless people, feeling excluded or unwelcome in certain environments. For instance, some recounted being discouraged from visiting places like the Pauluschurch, which they perceived as primarily catering to non-Dutch individuals with addiction issues. This perception highlights the need for inclusive spaces that welcome individuals from diverse backgrounds and circumstances.

Another significant finding from ethnographic research is the positive impact that a supportive neighbourhood, or interaction with more privileged individuals, can have on the well-being of homeless individuals. Integrating homeless individuals into such communities could therefore be very beneficial.



*Pictures taken by the women living in the WB house shelter during a city walk through the Oude Westen. I had asked them to take pictures of places they like to come.*

# 06 Typology of homelessness

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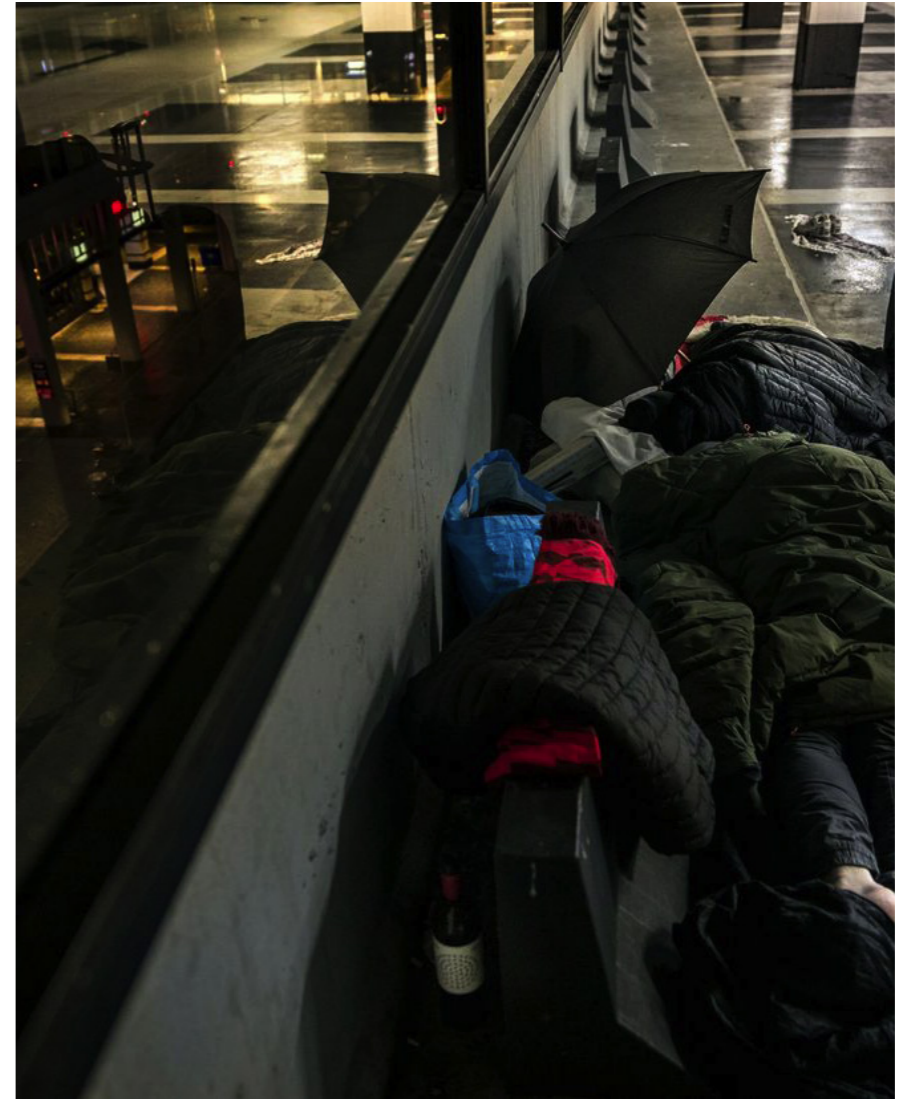
*The typology explained*

*The types*

*Typology projection: city scale*

*Typology projection: district scale*

*Urban mobility of the homeless*



*image made in the Paulus Church Action Studio by Peter van Beek (2023).*

Through thorough ethnographic research various spaces have been identified as important for the homeless population, all serving different purposes. These spaces are collected in a typology of homelessness. This chapter delves into this typology, by first explaining the means and structure of the typology, followed by an introduction to its various types. By projecting the types onto maps of the city, an intricate network of spaces utilised by the homeless population in Rotterdam is unveiled.

# The typology explained

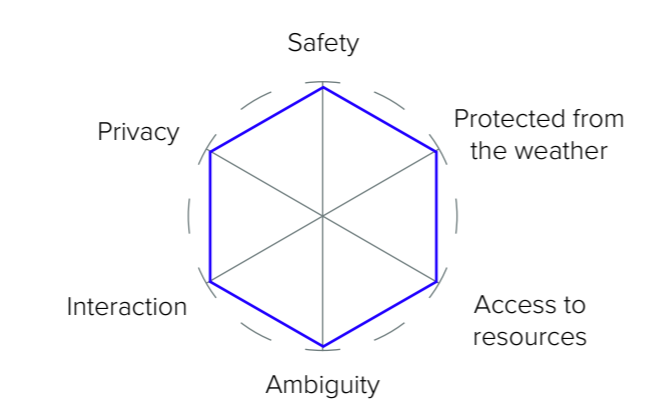
Spaces in the built environment often have an intended audience such as residents, pedestrians, car users or shoppers. However, urban spaces inevitably attract unintended users like neighbours, youth, cyclists or homeless individuals (Kaplan et al., 2019). This typology of homelessness lays out the spaces utilised by the homeless population, identified through ethnographic research. These spaces serve various purposes for the homeless, including areas where they can maintain a semblance of a non-homeless identity while seeking shelter, hidden spaces like alleyways where identities are formed, locations essential for daily survival, and places for accessing necessary resources.

As explained in the methodology section, typology making is used to link research and design.

The typology is sub-divided in three categories: places gained from geographical analysis, places of stay and places of activity. Places of stay can be places where homeless individuals seek for shelter from the weather, a place to rest or a place to spend the night. The activities can be related to finding resources, like food or economic sources or movements.

- The typology cards display;
- A title describing the type;
  - The type of activity the type serves;
  - The source of the type (literature, observation or interviews);
  - The user of the type;
  - The scale;
  - A diagram visualising the type
  - An explanation of the type;
  - And a radar diagram measuring the type

The radar diagrams make it possible to compare different types within the typology. The six categories are based on literature research and preliminary ethnographic research.



**Safety**  
 In the article “Accomplishing place in public space: auto-ethnographic accounts of homelessness” by Rennels and Purnell (2015) auto-ethnography is used to show how homeless people can create homelike places within public spaces. One of the ways to create a sense of home in public space is to harness feelings of safety. As discussed before, conversations with people from the Straatconsultaat resulted in the conclusion that safety might be one of the most important things for people without a permanent home, safety from people trying to steal from them, harm them and safety from the police.

**Privacy - Anonymity**  
 Langegger and Koester (2016) write about the ban on camping in all open space, causing homeless individuals to expose themselves in the public space and having to private refuge. They state that this ban “deprives them of a fundamental right to the city: anonymity” (Langegger and Koester, 2016). For homeless individuals public space is a place in which the private is externalized, being exposed and visible eliminates chances at privacy (Meert et al., 2006). Besides rough sleeping homeless shelter may also lack privacy and anonymity and have to be found somewhere else.

**Access to resources**  
 The search from primary resources one of the primary,

day-to-day challenges, that homeless people face. (Rennels & Purnell, 2015). “Homeless people’s quality of life suffers if they cannot find easy shelter near services needed for basic functioning”. (Kaplan et al., 2019). For those that are addicted to drugs or alcohol night shops and coffee shops are important places. For others that dumpster dive, wasteful supermarkets might be essential. (Kaplan et al., 2019). Sheltered homeless often have security for food but might look for money in the public space.

**Protected from the weather**  
 Prior ethnographic researched showed that roofless individuals mostly look for places protected from the weather. For many roofless people, “shelters are seen as a last resort in cases of severe weather or sickness” (Langegger and Koester, 2016). They will often search for places to hide from the weather on the borders of public space.

**Interaction:**  
 Another way to create a sense of home in public space described by Rennels and Purnell (2015) is interacting with others. Meaningful interactions with others contribute to a stronger place attachment. Stories about being homeless describe that “interaction with others was key to feeling as safe and comfortable as I would in a traditional home” (Rennels and Purnell (2015). Ethnographic research also showed that areas around supermarkets, bars, where the flow of people is relatively high are places where homeless people can often be found.

**Signs of care - ambiguity**  
 “A homeless person may look at the same neglected, broken down building with interest, noting that the chances of being bothered are smaller in that space than somewhere showing signs of regular care.” (Kaplan et al., 2019). Ethnographic research showed that places that lack signs of care, like desolate buildings, closed-off front door or construction site are often appropriated by homeless individuals.

## Around a bench

Activity:	Place to interact
Source:	Observation
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Street/place



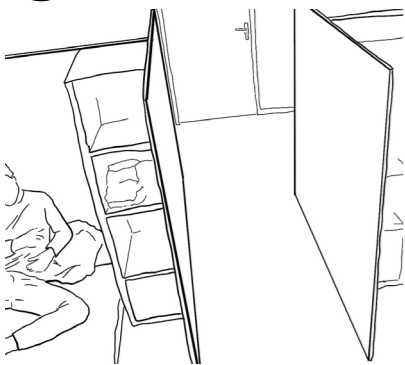
A bench can strongly define the place around it. Benches often become larger places of interaction and group forming...



# The types

## From geographical analysis

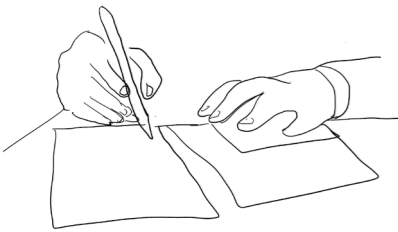
Geographical analysis identified spaces tailored for the homeless population of Rotterdam as well as essential public amenities, specifically public toilets and drinking water points, that are important for them.



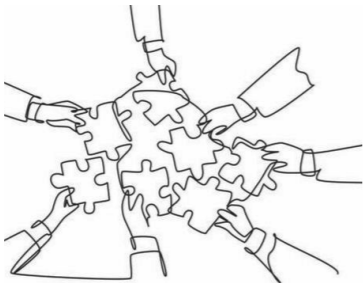
Night shelter



Day shelter

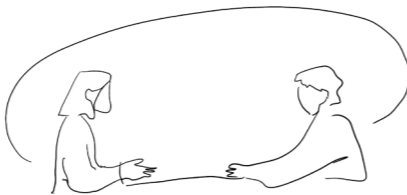


Legal help - centraal onthaal

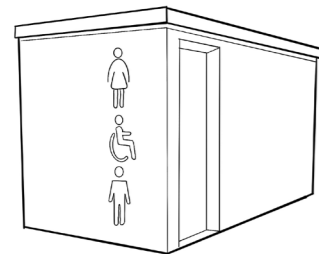


Places of hospitality

Vecteezy



Guidance



Public toilets



Public drinking water points

Freepik



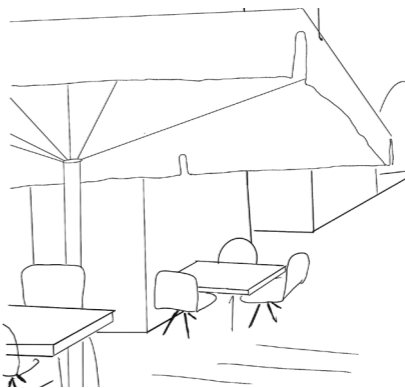
Health care

## Activity types

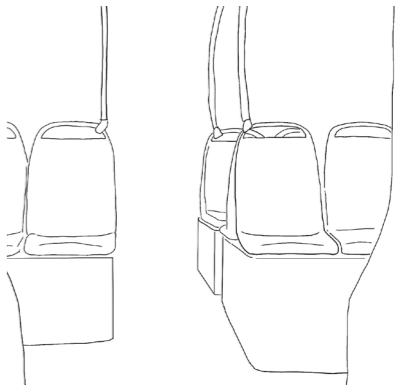
The activity types are based on ethnographic observations, interviews and interactions with either the homeless or experts in the field.



In front of the supermarket



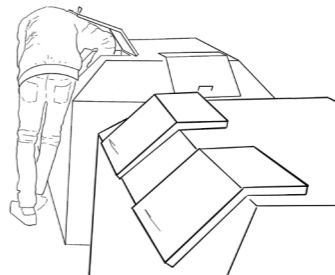
Around bars and nightclubs



Public transport



Inside the supermarket



Bins



Night shops

fiverr



Around a bench

The complete typology can be found in the Appendix

Stay types

Stay types derived from ethnographic research revealed both temporary and long-term places where homeless individuals reside.

 Welcoming interiors



Central station hall

Library



Mc donalds

Mei architecten



Starbucks

Tripadvisor

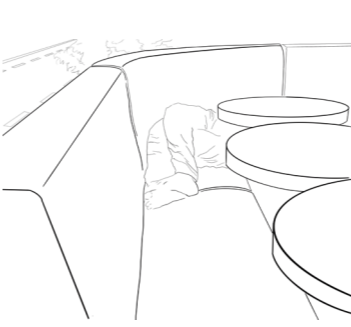
Very public spaces



 Parks

 Public squares

 Desolate areas



Closed terraces



Parking garage

Peter van Beek



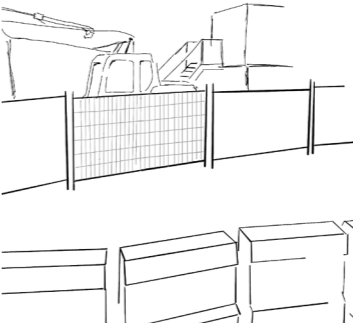
Under a bridge

Caveman010



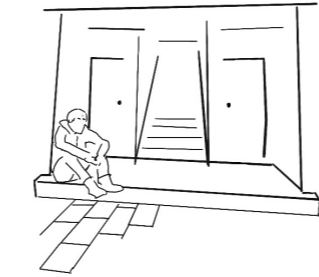
Desolate areas

BN de stem

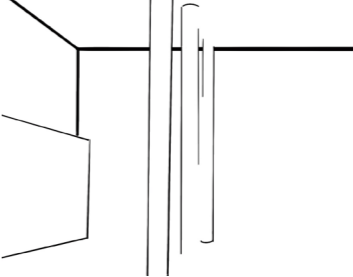


In the unfinished

Ambiguous areas



Porch



Under an overhang / canopy

The complete typology can be found in the Appendix

# Typology projection: City scale

The movement of the homeless population within the city unfolds across various scales and temporal dimensions. On the scale of the city, mobility is driven by the imperative need for access to critical services and resources. Homeless individuals traverse the urban landscape in search of shelters offering refuge for the night, as well as support centres providing essential services such as medical care, mental health assistance, and legal aid. These facilities are scattered across the city, forcing homeless individuals to navigate through various neighbourhoods and districts in their quest for assistance.

Legend

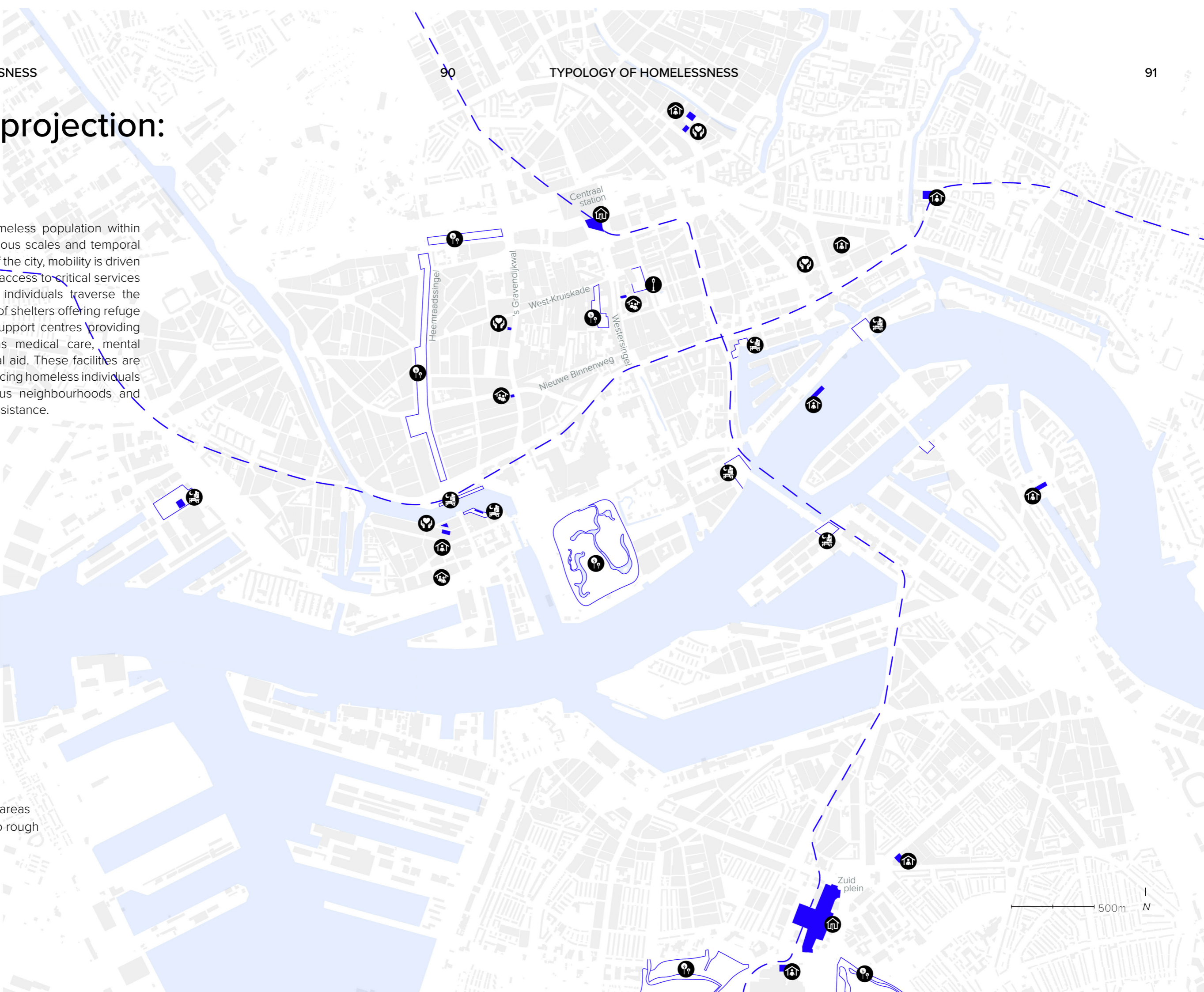
- Types from data analysis
- Night- & dayshelter
  - Social care

- Welcoming interiors
- Station hall

- Very public spaces
- Squares
  - Parks

- Desolate areas
- Desolate or closed areas where people sleep rough

- Public transport



Mapping the urban network

This map depicts the network connecting the types illustrated on the previous page. It reveals that numerous social services and rough sleeping areas are situated along the main roads and routes of the city. Predominantly, the network is concentrated on the northern side of Rotterdam. However, the southern area is notable for Zuidplein, which features a shelter, and Zuiderpark, a popular location for rough sleeping.

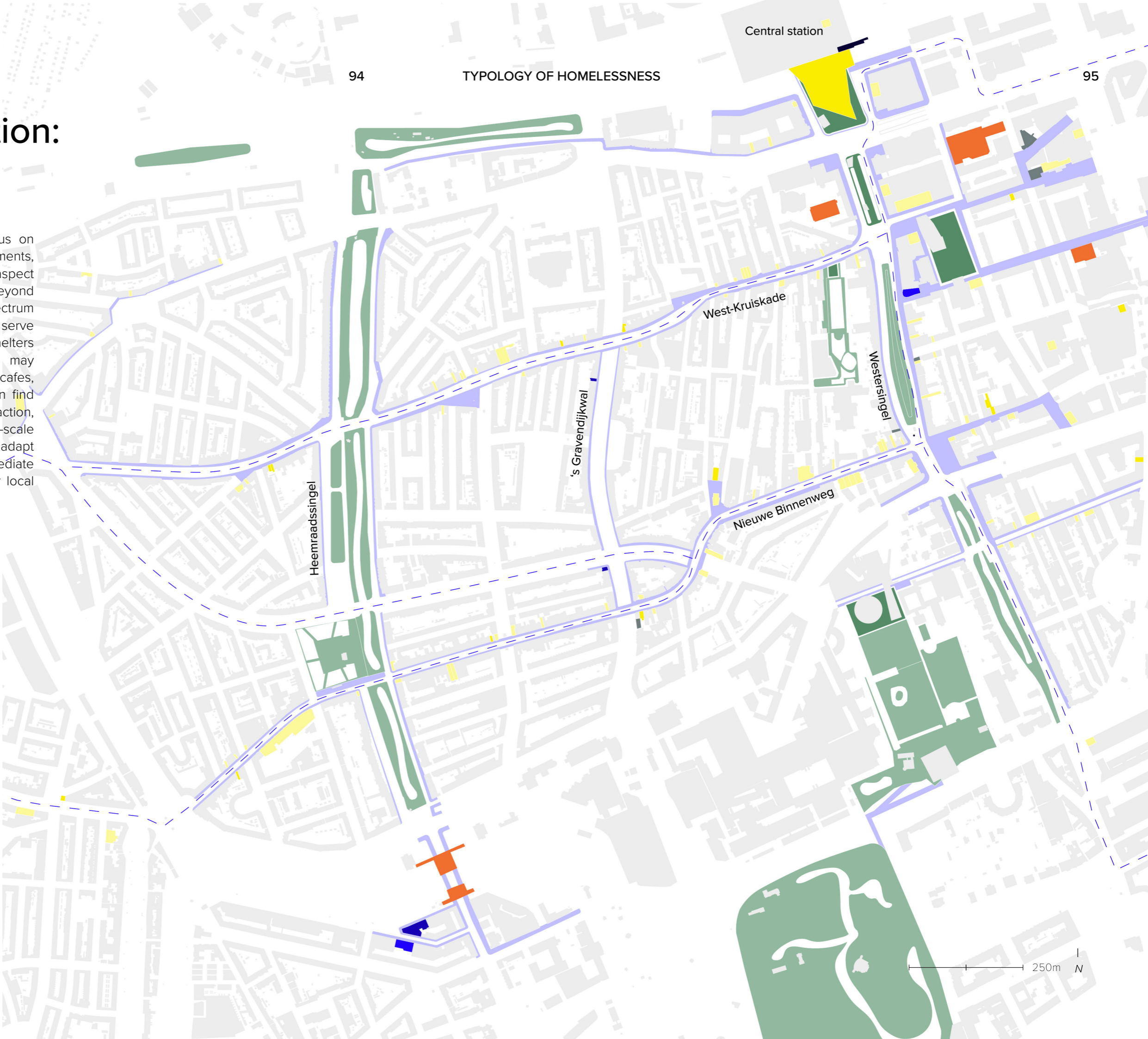


# Typology projection: District scale

On the district scale, mobility tends to focus on short-term needs and resource requirements, reflecting a more immediate and localised aspect of their movement. Here, the focus extends beyond essential services to include a broader spectrum of requirements and informal spaces that serve daily necessities. In addition to seeking out shelters and support centres, homeless individuals may frequent more informal locations such as bars, cafes, and other communal spaces where they can find temporary respite, resources, social interaction, and support networks. Understanding district-scale mobility offers insights into how the homeless adapt and navigate their surroundings to fulfil immediate needs and establish connections within their local community.

Legend

- Types from data analysis
  - Night- & dayshelter
  - Social care
  - Public toilets & drinking water
- Welcoming interiors
  - Starbucks, Mcdonalds, library, station hall and nightshop
- Interiors to be around...
  - Around bars, café's and supermarkets
- Very public spaces
  - Squares
  - Parks
- Desolate areas
- The sidewalk
- Public transport



Mapping the urban network

This map shows the network connecting the types mapped on the district scale. It reveals that movement remains predominantly concentrated along main thoroughfares such as Westersingel, West-Kruiskade, Nieuwe Binnenweg, 'S Gravendijkwal, and the Heemraadssingel. Along these routes, numerous interior functions frequently utilised or passed by homeless individuals are situated. Additionally, parking garages, often utilised as sleeping areas, are predominantly found within working areas or on the edge of shopping areas.

Legend

- Sidewalks connecting the types
- Exterior
- Interior
- Café's, bars and nightclubs
- Buildings with porches or overhangs
- Connected to commerce
- Connected to house
- Public transport
- Buildings



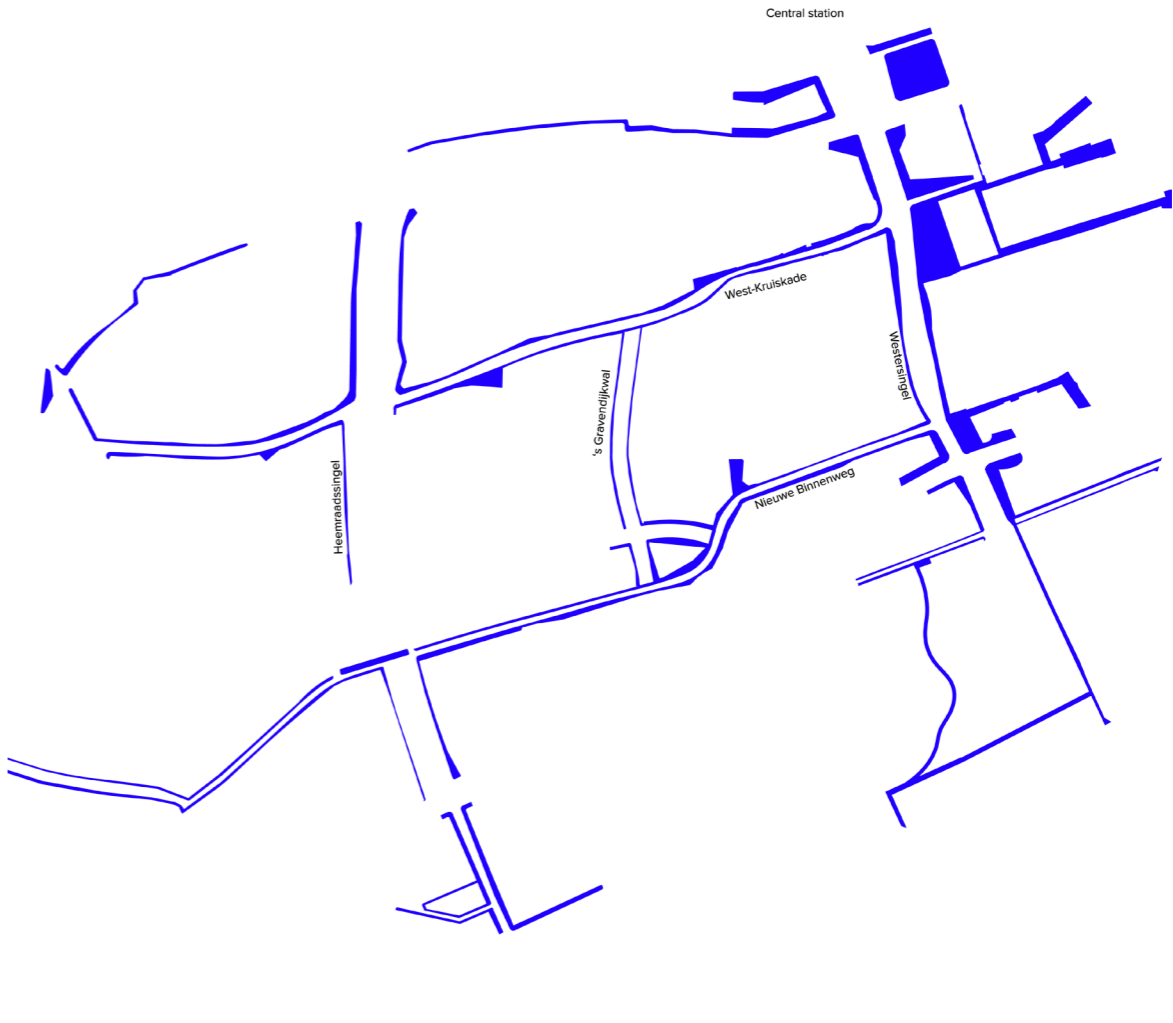
# Urban mobility of the homeless



Mobility network on the city scale, scaleless

These two maps illustrate the mobility network of the homeless population across two analysed scales. The left map emphasises primary functions such as shelters and rough sleeping areas situated along main routes, indicative of the more anonymous and neutral mobility routes typically taken by the homeless.

In contrast, the right map provides a closer examination, revealing finer details of neighbourhood-level interactions and pathways. This suggests that at the neighbourhood scale, while still mainly moving along main lines, homeless individuals may sometimes navigate into the neighbourhoods themselves, rather than remaining solely along the more anonymous, and neutral lines.

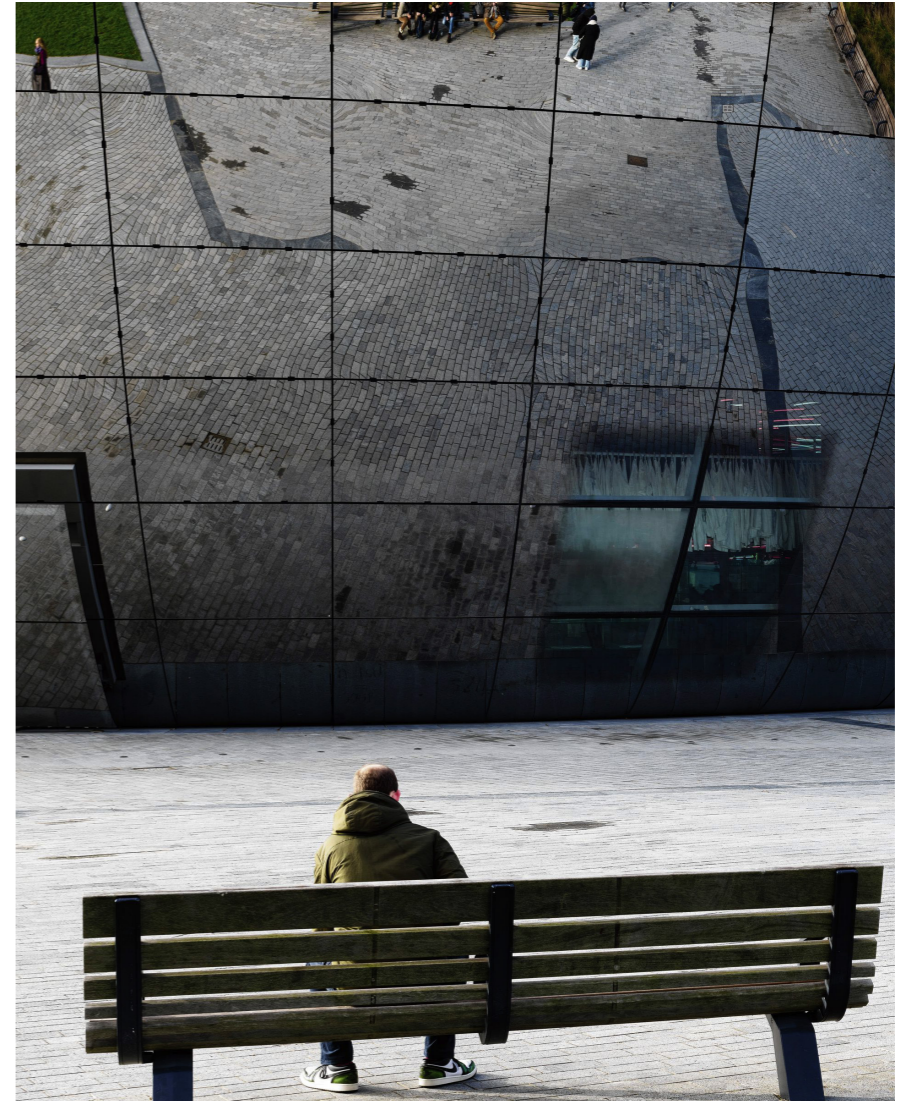


Mobility network on the district scale, scaleless

# 07 Research synthesis

1  
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*Design task*  
*Design location*  
*Design input*



*(photo's made by Desire van den Berg, 2023)*

This chapter synthesises key research findings that will inform the design task, including the vision, scale, and location of the project. Through this synthesis, a clear goal for the design is established, providing a focused direction for the project's development.

# Design task

## Informal uses of the city

Ethnographic research highlights the urgency of addressing homelessness and reveals how homeless individuals interact with the city’s urban fabric. The typology analysis shows that homeless individuals use urban spaces in ways that diverge from their intended design, engaging in informal activities to meet their immediate needs for shelter, social interaction, and resource access. These informal uses underscore the adaptive nature of urban environments and the importance of recognizing diverse user needs.

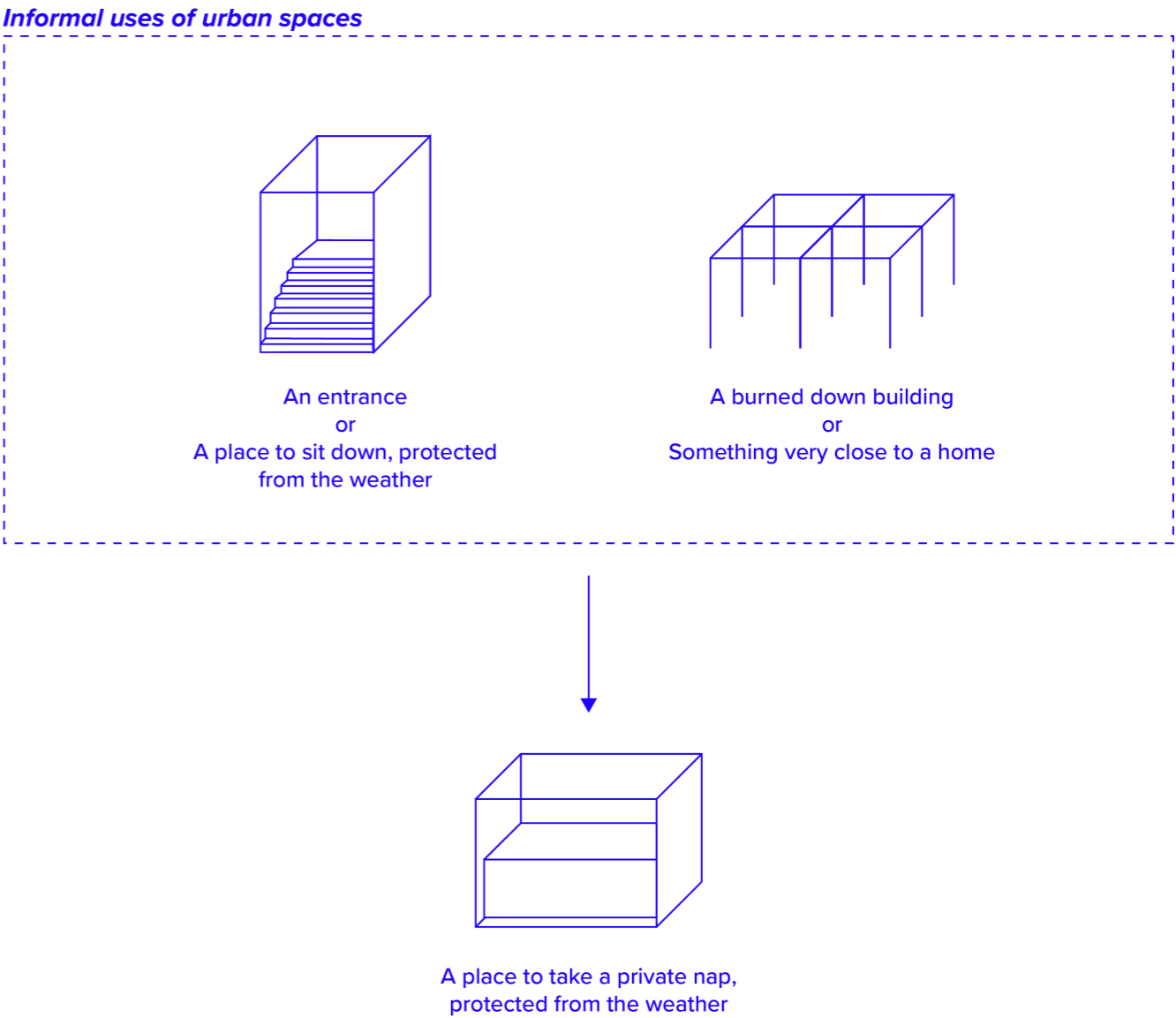
*Instead of continuing the trend of sanitising and homogenising urban landscapes with hostile architecture, it is important to embrace the inherent complexity and many layers of city life.*

By allowing flexible use of urban spaces and supporting the informal practices of marginalised populations like the homeless, cities can foster inclusivity, resilience, and social cohesion, enriching the urban experience for all residents.

In addition to preserving the informal uses of the city, it is crucial to proactively create public spaces and amenities specifically tailored to the needs of the homeless population.

*To achieve recognition, we must design for the homeless, acknowledging that this population has specific needs and wishes and deserves to be seen and heard.*

While the informal utilisation of urban spaces demonstrates resilience and adaptability, dedicated spaces offer targeted support to this marginalised group. These public amenities should address their basic needs, providing shelter, sanitation facilities, and other fundamental necessities.



The intimate scale

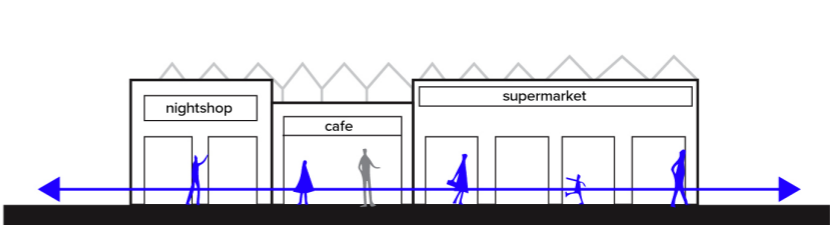
*Creating inclusive cities requires more than just spatial interventions, it involves visualising and addressing the conflicts and contradictions our spatial projects would tackle (Dodd, 2019).*

The design task, therefore, is not solely about meeting the needs of the homeless but also about making the issue visible by intervening on a strategic location. Typology analysis and ethnographic research show that many homeless individuals roam the main streets of the city—neutral, anonymous spaces that render them invisible.

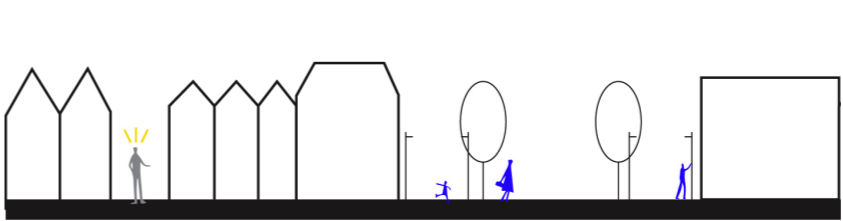
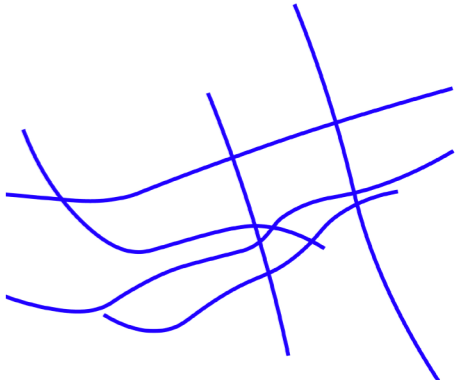
To promote recognition, awareness, and solidarity, we should design at a more intimate, neighbourhood scale, where people are more aware of their surroundings and likely to notice homelessness. By visibly acknowledging the distinct challenges faced by those experiencing homelessness and providing specialised facilities and services, we can combat the tendency to render homelessness invisible within our cities.



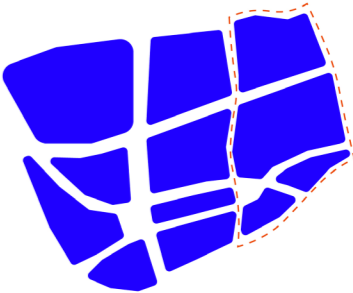
SLAAP KID by Michaël bloos together with Cascoland. A performance art project where Michaël sleeps on the street in a neighbourhood one night (Cascoland)



The neutral, anonymous arteries of the city



The intricate, intimate neighbourhoods



# Design location

## The Oude Westen

Building upon the understanding that strategic exposure can drive recognition and awareness of homelessness, the following exploration narrows its focus to a specific neighbourhood suitable for implementing such design interventions; the Oude Westen. This neighbourhood, nestled within the analysed district, struggles with significant homelessness issues. There are many individuals sleeping rough and seeking shelter in various makeshift locations. The Oude Westen attracts considerable media attention, partly due to the urgency of its homelessness crisis and partly because of its proactive resident community. Residents advocate for visibility of the issue, seeking municipal support (personal conversation with T. Kemperman

on December 14, 2023). This underscores the existing solidarity within the community, which makes it suitable for exposure-driven design interventions.

Moreover, the neighbourhood's central location adds to its suitability, with key urban landmarks such as the central station and the Lijnbaan located nearby. The neighbourhood is characterised by a network of narrow streets, squares, and worker houses. Despite its central positioning, Oude Westen has maintained its residential charm throughout the years (van Es, 2010). Thus, the Oude Westen encompasses not only solidarity but also an intricate and intimate urban network, abundant public spaces, and an inner-city audience.



Immaterieel erfgoed, 2023

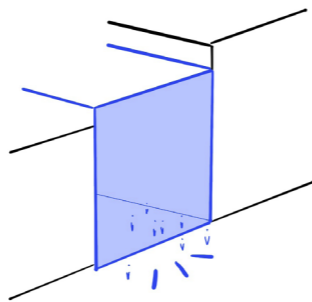


Wijkkrant Aktiegroep oude westen, 2024

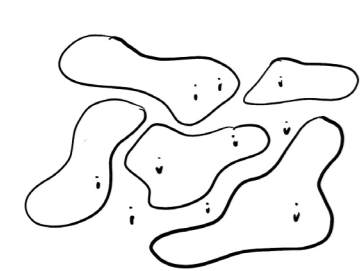
# Design input

## Design guidelines from typology

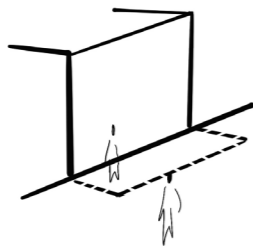
By delving into the typology of homelessness, we can discern common spatial elements that emerge across various types. These elements include forms of shelter, types of spaces and architectural edges, which are recurrent places in the usage of spaces by individuals grappling with homelessness. Through analysis, these spatial patterns are extracted and translated into conceptual drawings. Subsequently, these conceptual drawings can inform the design process.



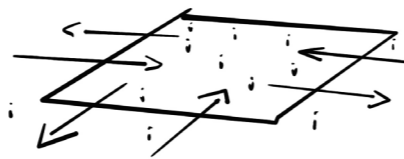
Functions of solidarity



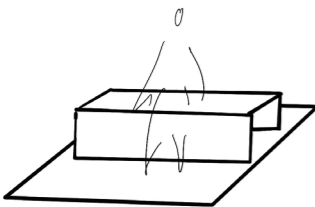
Zoning and privacy



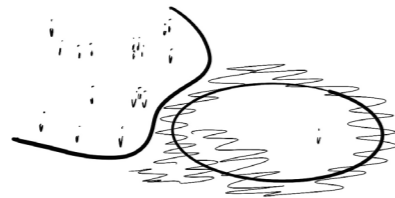
Edges



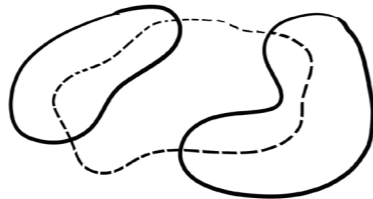
Openness and accessibility



Places to sit and stay



Desolate areas



Ambiguous zones

## Basic needs

Drawing from ethnographic research and personal insights, the fundamental needs of homeless individuals have been identified. These needs encompass essential aspects such as shelter, hygiene, sustenance, and safety. To depict these elements visually, they have been represented through icons, which serve as visual cues throughout the design process.



Shelter



Food



Rest



Drinking water



Health care



Public toilets



Hygiene



Clothes



(Social) care



Electricity



Return bottles



Hot beverages



Belief



Lockers

Design  
interventions

# 08 Neighbourhood network

- 1 *Neighbourhood analysis*
- 2 *Designing for a network of places*
- 3 *Focus areas*
- 4 *Wijkpark Oude Westen*
- 5 *Rijnhoutplein*



*The Environment of Man is the Fellow Man by Jules Deelder  
(From Archined, photo by Monique Benthin)*

The design analysis delves deeper into the Oude Westen neighbourhood, offering additional insights that informed the selection of two specific zoom-in locations. Subsequently, it introduces these focal points and outlines the primary analyses conducted within each area.

# Neighbourhood analysis

## An intricate network

The Oude Westen features a unique urban fabric characterised by its intricate layout. The neighbourhood had narrow streets, low-rise housing, and small public pockets dispersed throughout the neighbourhood, creating a distinctive and intimate urban environment.



Figure 8.1 - Analysis of the urban fabric of the Oude Westen

Typology

Delving into the scale of the Oude Westen neighbourhood, the initial focus was on understanding how the typology manifests in this neighbourhood, examining public spaces, interior functions and architectural features in detail. The map on the right shows how the Oude Westen contains many small-scale types: from terraces along the main

streets, which become deserted in the evenings or nights, to houses with porches, and overhangs and canopies serving as makeshift shelters. Image ... highlights some of these characteristic types within the neighbourhood.

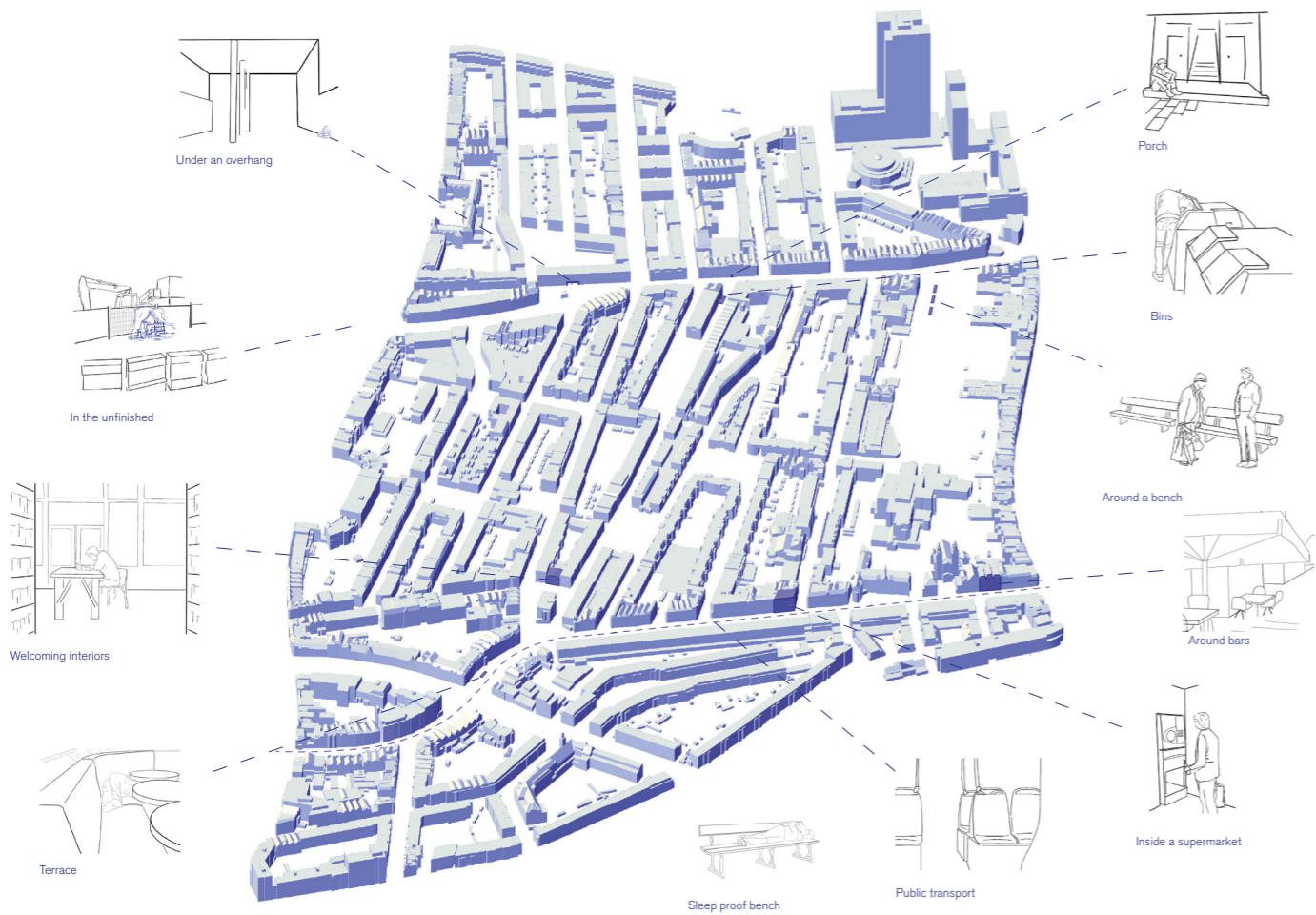


Figure 8.2 - 3D examples of types in the neighbourhood

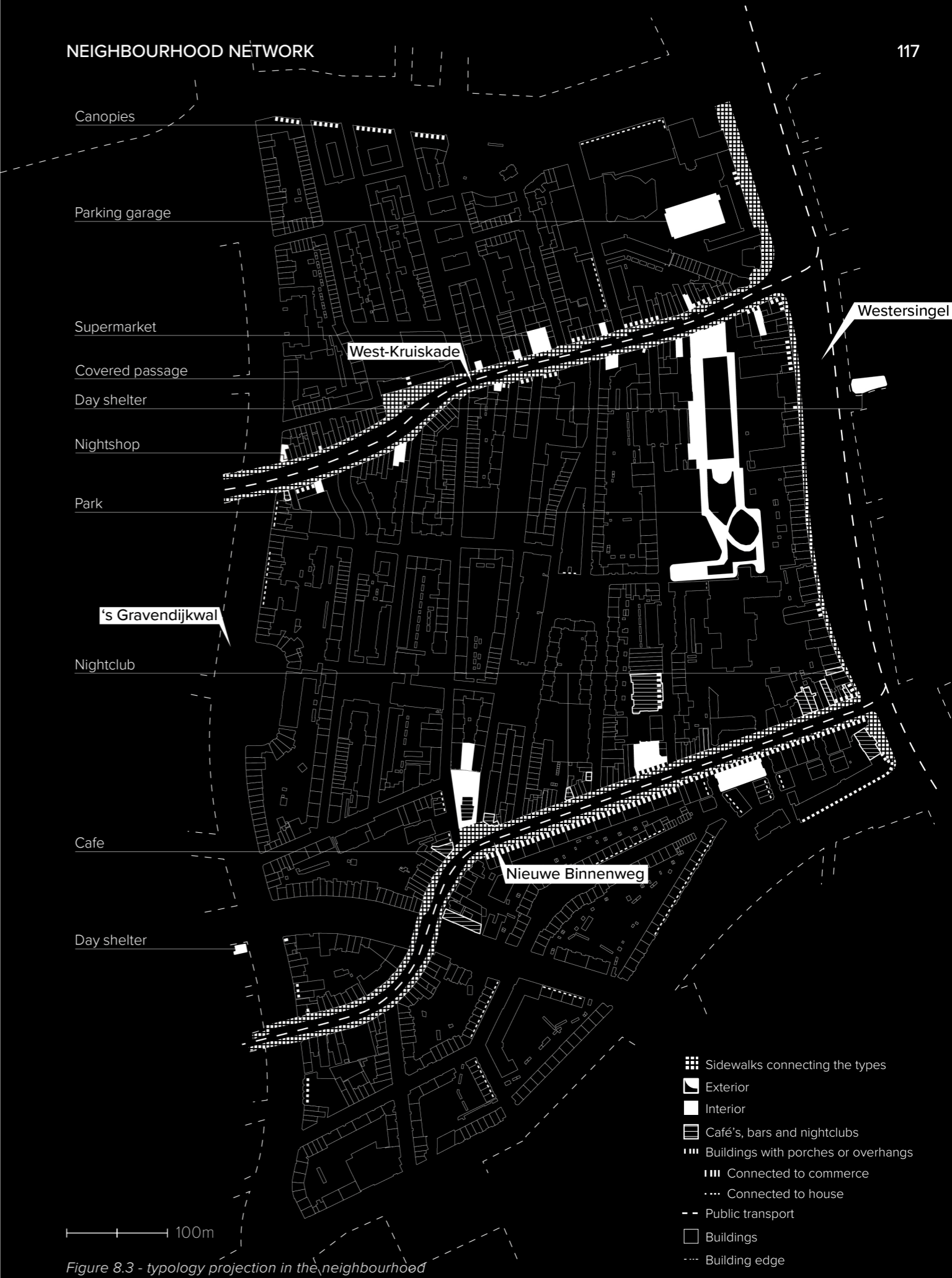


Figure 8.3 - typology projection in the neighbourhood

Potentials

These two maps illustrate multiple analysis encompassing porosity, spatial ownership and the typology projection. Image 8.4 shows analysis on the porosity of the neighbourhood, highlighting spaces that hold some kind of solidarity, such as a community centre or a clothing exchange corner. Furthermore, it identifies areas with current or future potential for urban transformation.

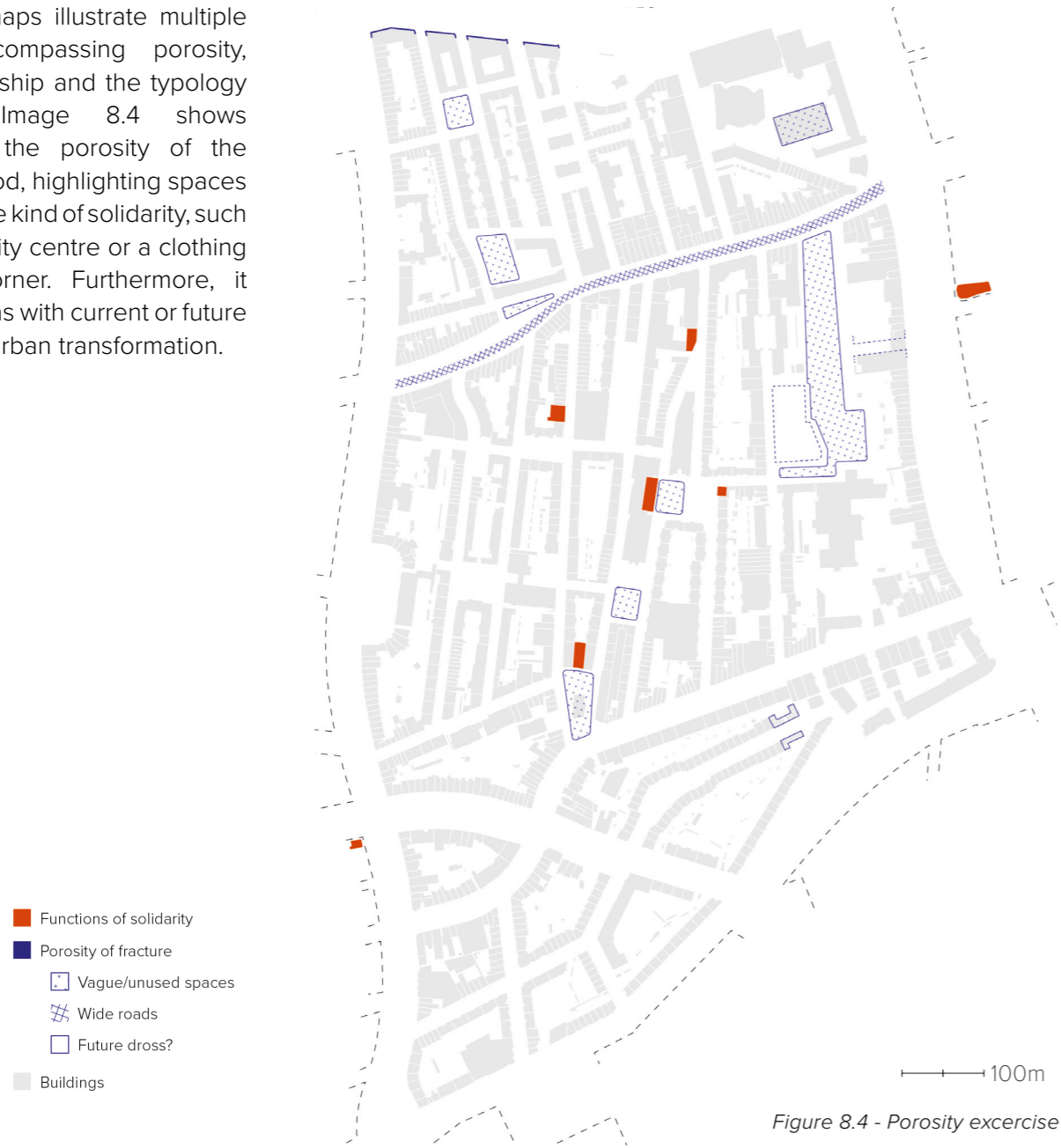
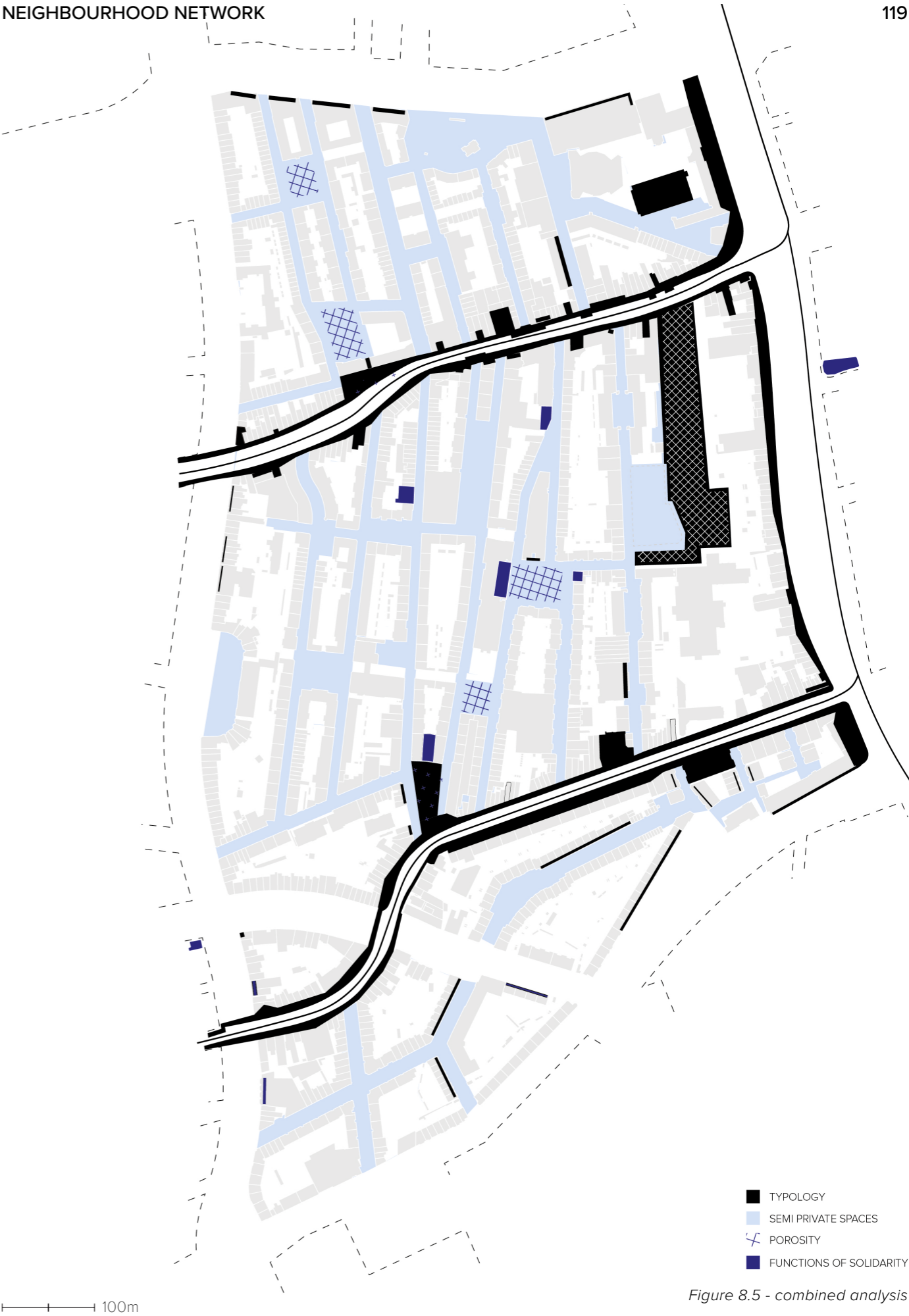


Image 8.5 builds upon this analysis by overlaying porosity findings with typology projections and spatial ownership assessments, showing semi-private spaces suitable for design interventions. By integrating these analyses, the Wijkpark and Rijnhoutplein emerge as promising locations for design interventions. These urban spaces straddle the boundary between intimate neighbourhood settings and the main street, offering unique in-between spaces appropriate for achieving the design goal.



# Designing for a network of places

Legend

Network of places for the homeless

Places of solidarityShelterFoodDrinking waterHealth carePublic toiletsHygieneClothes(Social) careReturn bottlesHot beveragesBelief

Stichting ontmoeting  
A social services centre  
for the homeless

The sisters  
Theresa

Figure 8.6 - showing the network of design interventions

# Focus areas

The Wijkpark and Rijnhoutplein have emerged through ethnographic research and spatial analysis. Both areas are situated on the periphery of the more anonymous, neutral public streets and the neighbourhood level. The homeless population makes use of both parks for different reasons. Both places have a socially active network and and possess the potential to foster solidarity toward the homeless community. The high accessibility and visibility of both spaces makes them suitable to promote awareness on the issue.



Figure 8.7 - aerial photos of the focus areas

# Wijkpark oude westen

## Location

Situated on the edge of the neighbourhood the Oude Westen, adjacent to the bustling West-Kruiskade, lies the Wijkpark. The Gouvernestraat connects the Wijkpark to the Nieuwe Binnenweg. In the midst of Rotterdam’s concrete centre, the Wijkpark is one of the only green spots within the

area. The park is accessible by public transport by a tram stop just outside the park and the central station located closeby. The park’s central location contributes to its popularity among a diverse range of urban users.



Figure 8.8 - Location of the Wijkpark



Image 8.9 - The Oude West neighborhood park in Rotterdam has been closed by local residents due to nuisance. Visitors stand in front of a gate with a chain lock. Photo by Arie Kievit (2023)

## Nuisance in the park

According to various media, the Wijkpark has faced significant challenges related to nuisance behaviours, particularly attributed to the presence of homeless individuals. The park’s central location, coupled with its inadequate design, has unfortunately made it an attractive space for drug dealers and other illicit activities. In response to escalating concerns and an incident with a volunteer on July 30th,, residents of the Oude Westen took decisive action by closing off the Wijkpark. Frustrated by the accident, they encircled the park with chains, effectively barricading it from public access. ‘Because the police and the

municipality failed to act, the volunteers from Aktiegroep het Oude Westen are now intervening themselves’.

Following a period of closure, the Wijkpark has since been reopened. However, the situation remains complex, with continued efforts to mitigate nuisance behaviours. Notably, a police van is now frequently stationed in the middle of the park, providing a sense of security for park visitors and residents alike (OPEN Rotterdam, 2023).

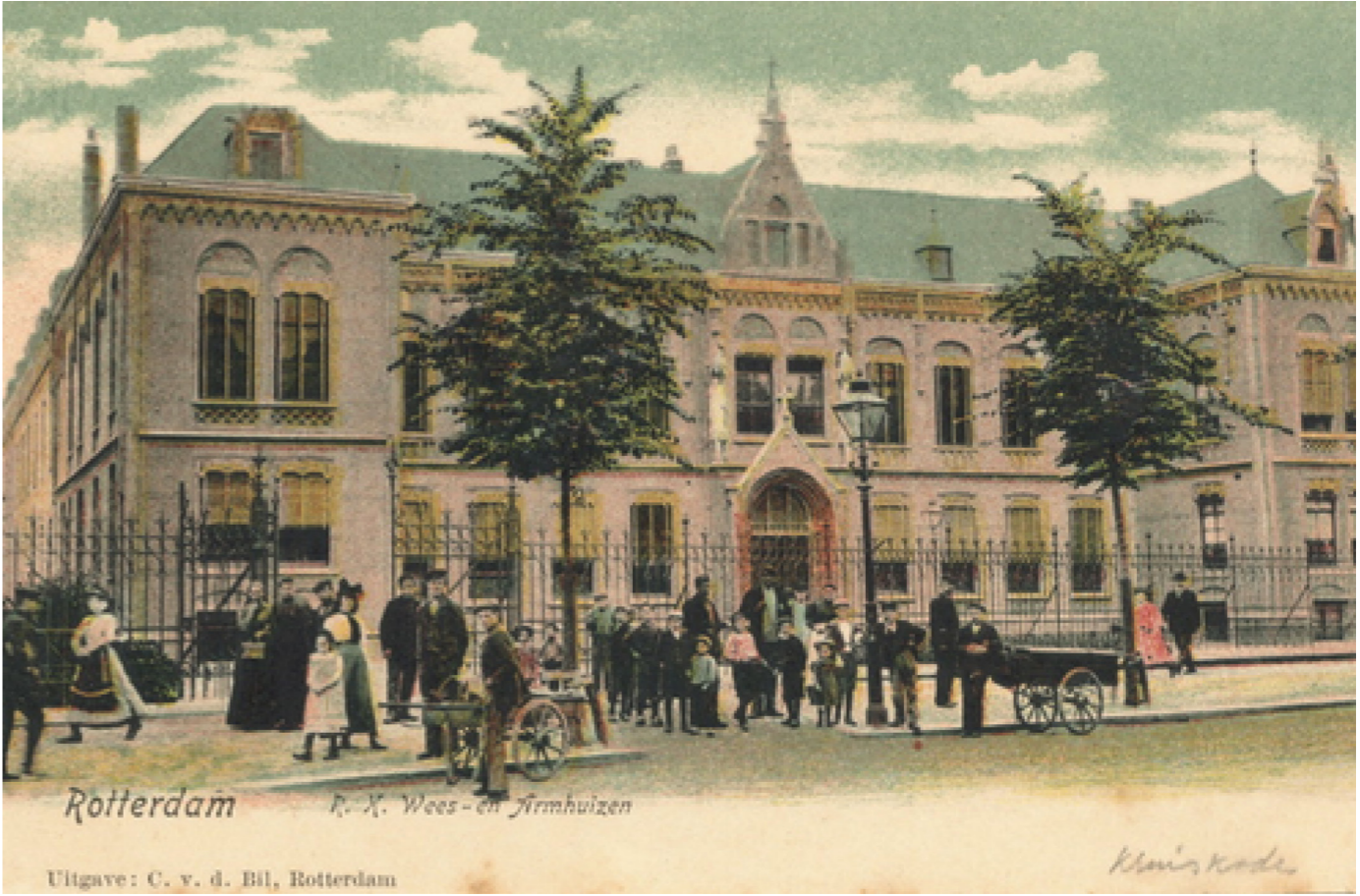
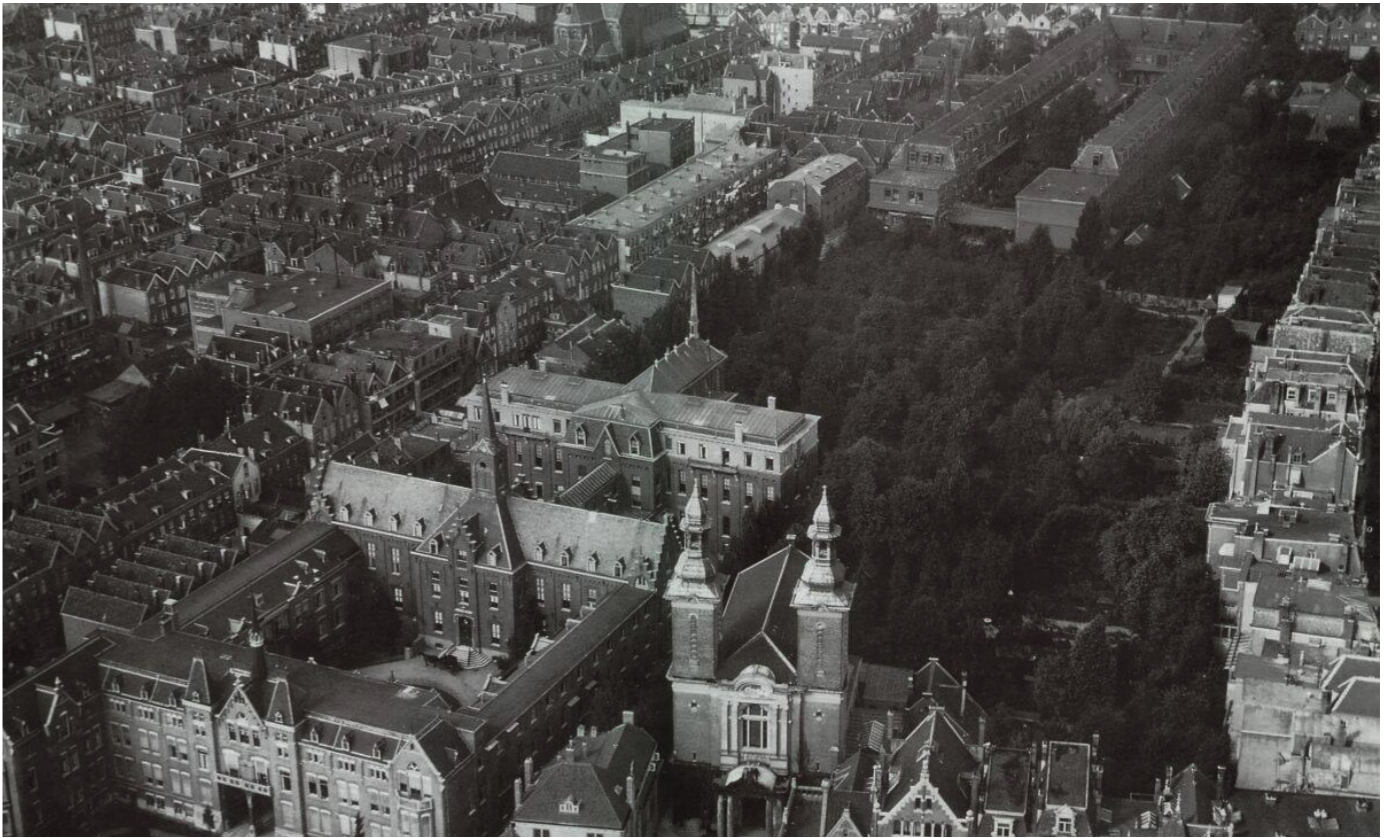
A place for the poor

Until the year of 1986 the Wijkpark was not a park yet, but a building: the poorhouse and orphanage Simeon & Anna. In 1986 it got demolished before it turned into a park a few years later. In 1988 the Wijkpark was developed. The garden, at the time meant for the patients of the care house, would later become a publicly accessible park (van Es, 2010).



Figure 8.10 - Historical analysis

Images from the Stadsarchief from the Gemeente Rotterdam. The top picture shows the Wijkpark in 1925, seen from the Nieuwe Binnenweg, with the former care house Simeon & Anna and the St. Antonius madhouse. The bottom picture shows the poorhouse and orphanage from the West-Kruiskade.



The original design

Developed in 1979 during a period of urban renewal, the park's creation was a collaborative effort involving residents. The northern side of the park is characterised by formal symmetry, while the southern side features more informal, winding paths. Initially conceived as a neighbourhood park with a local entrance, its central location also positions it as a welcoming gateway to the city (van Es, 2010).

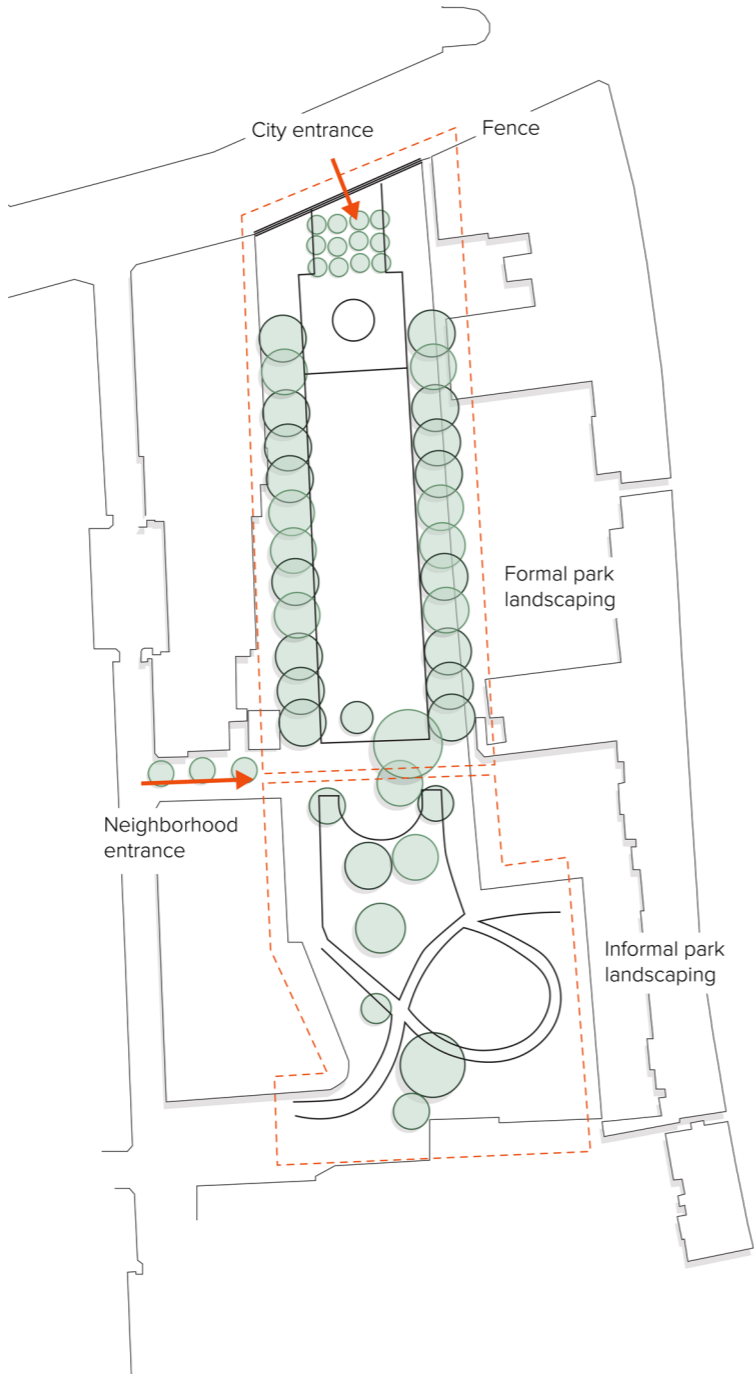


Figure 8.11 - Original design drawing

Images from the Stadsarchief from the Gemeente Rotterdam. The top picture shows the Wijkpark in 1988, looking towards the West-Kruiskade. Bottom two pictures show the Wijkpark in 1989.



The current wijkpark

As mentioned, the Wijkpark Oude Westen is facing significant challenges which are visible in the neglect of the park. The open green spaces lie unused. The petting zoo, once a family-friendly attraction, has sadly deteriorated into an ignored area. The presence of buildings backside covered in graffiti with disregarded greenery in front, further worsens the park’s appeal. The presence of a visible police van only serves to reinforce perceptions of the area’s insecurity.

Image 1 (top left) shows the blind facades that enclose the park. Image 2 (top right) shows the petting zoo and the row of benches. Image 3 (bottom) shows the new fountains and the police van. Pictures made by author (2023)



Figure 8.12 - analysis of current park



Potentials



The image depicts the park's potential for improvement. The Wijkpark was originally designed with green borders, these areas have unfortunately become neglected and are often frequented by drug dealers. Additionally, the large grass field remains largely unused, highlighting the need for revitalization. The ambiguous, neglected, or underutilised edges of the park contribute to an odd atmosphere within the public space

Figure 8.13 - axonometric analysis

# Rijnhoutplein

The selection of Rijnhoutplein as a zoom- in location emerged from a combination of ethnographic research and spatial analysis, identifying it as a gathering place for homeless individuals, notably due to the presence of Leeszaal West, a building serving a solidarity function. Similar to Wijkpark, the square grapples with issues of nuisance, primarily associated with drug and alcohol use by both homeless and non-homeless individuals.

The square, in contrast to the larger-scale Wijkpark, boasts a more intimate atmosphere. Surrounded by the front entrances of residences, shops, libraries, ateliers, and cafes, it holds a lot of activity. Currently, the square remains relatively open, with a few trees, benches, and a statue.

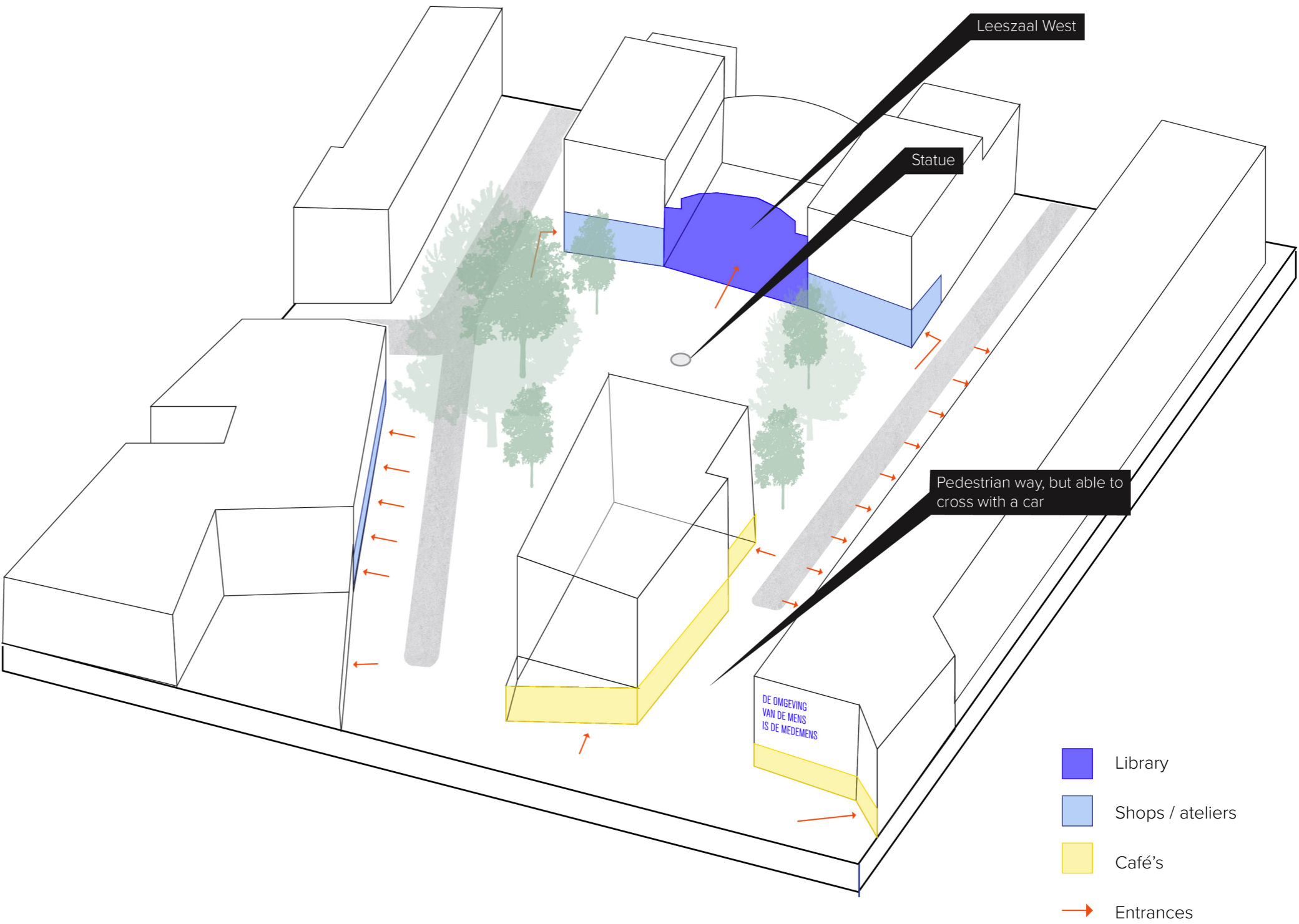


Photo by Otto Snoek



Photos from site visit (made by author)

Potentials



The Rijnhoutplein is a square enclosed by two roads and a building block located along the Nieuwe Binnenweg. The plinths of the surrounding buildings accommodate either shops, ateliers, houses or café's. Most of the entrances face the square.

Figure 8.14 - axonometric analysis

# 09 Design

## for urban homelessness

- 1 *Design concept*
- 2 *Design of the park*
- 3 *Zooming in*
- 4 *Design detailing*
- 5 *Designing for other needs*
- 6 *The inclusive neighbourhood*



*Stadsarchief Gemeente Rotterdam by Eva Flendrie (2013)*

This chapter shows the design of the two zoom-in locations presented in the previous chapter: the Wijkpark and the Rijnhoutplein. Through a multi-scale approach, the designs address the urgent needs of the homeless population in these areas. With a focus on fostering recognition and awareness of the issue, the design interventions aim to create inclusive and supportive environments that cater to the diverse needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

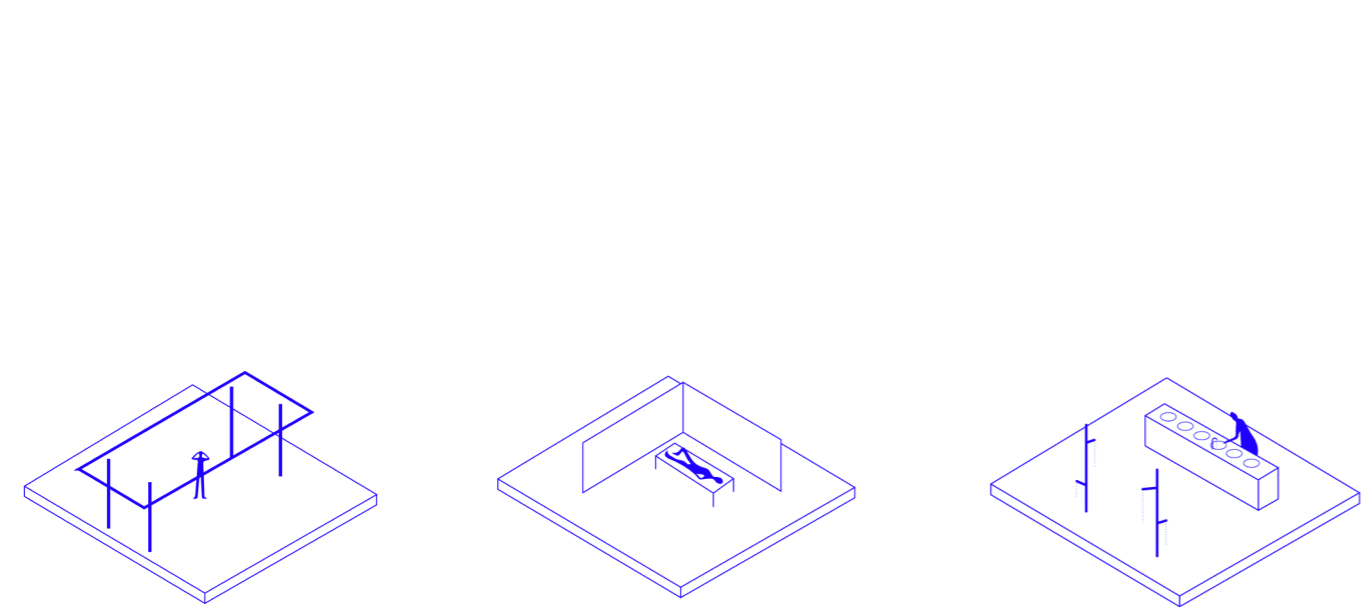
# Design concept

*This urban design project brings the critical issue of homelessness to the forefront of societal discussion and professional design consideration. It asserts that homeless individuals should not be rendered invisible but rather should be actively included in urban planning. This project advocates for redesigning public spaces that address and expose their needs. situated at the edge of the anonymous city and its intimate neighborhood(s).*



Design elements

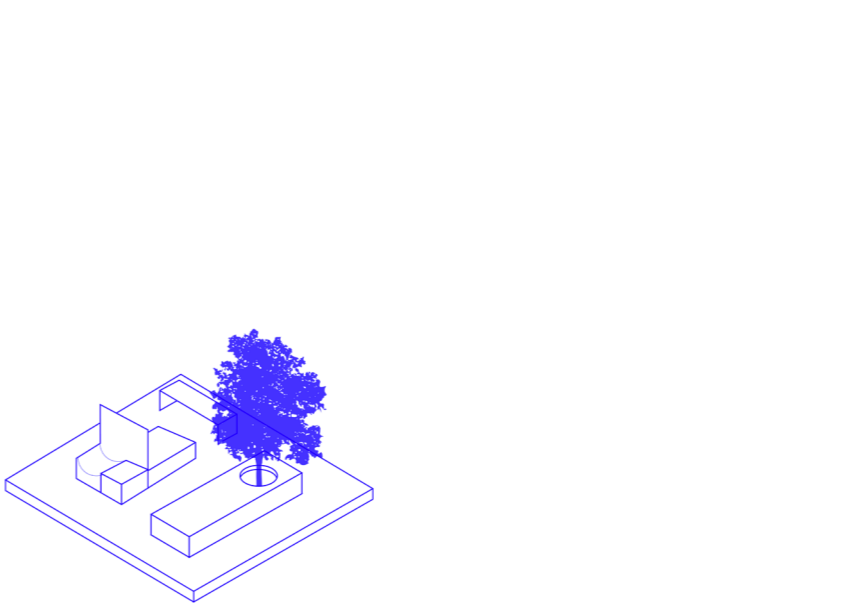
To address the fundamental needs of the homeless population and create a comprehensive approach to design multiple tiles are developed. This encompasses various design elements aimed at improving their quality of life and integrating them into the urban landscape.



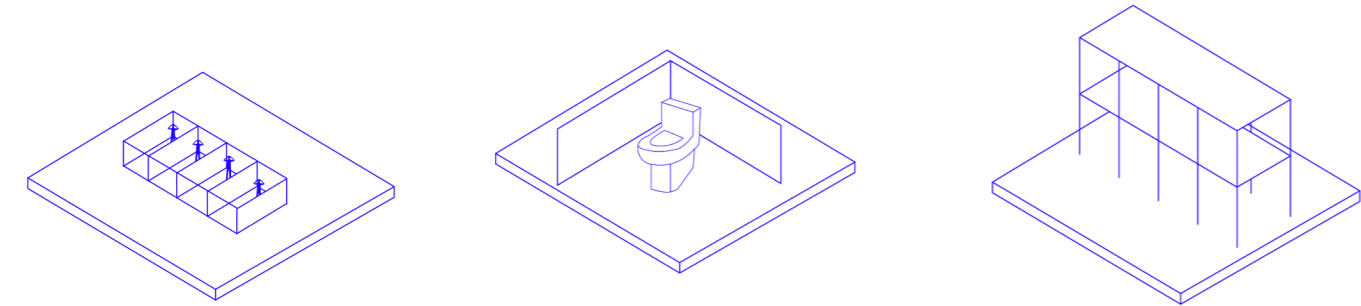
Urban canopy

Sleeping areas

Washing and drinking



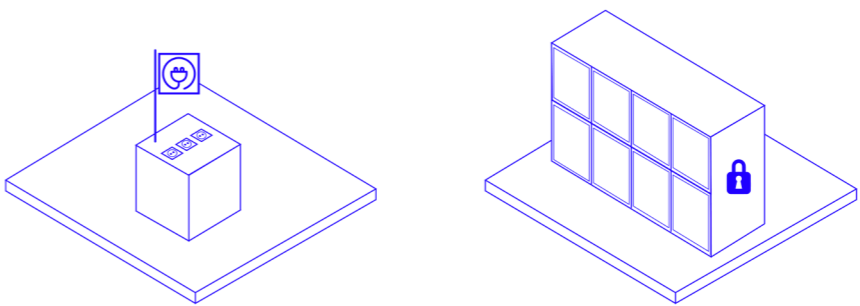
Flexible furniture



Personal hygiene

Toilets

Inviting for appropriation



Charging

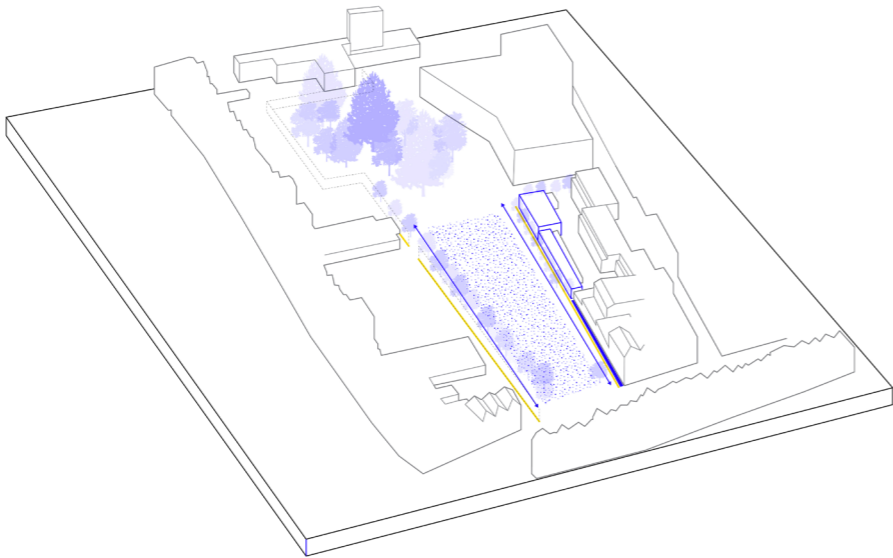
Protecting (lockers)

# Design of the park

## Design steps

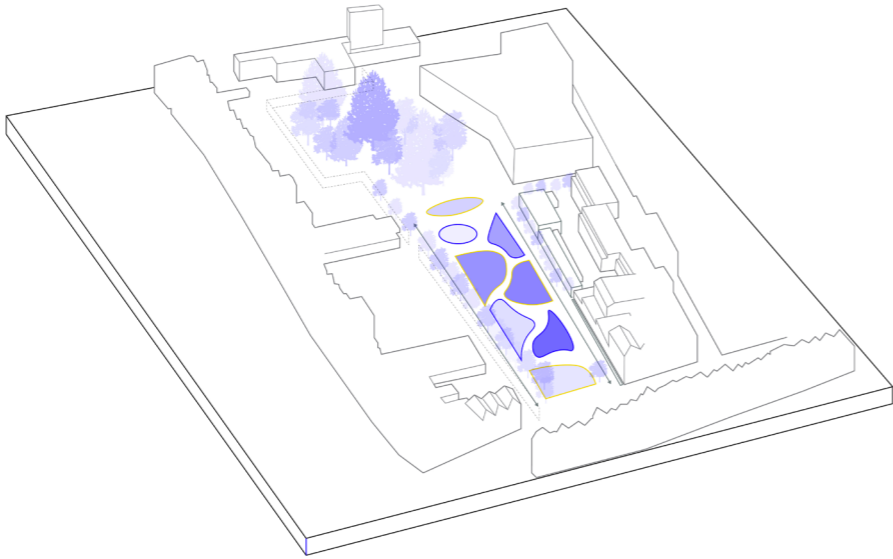
### Define boundaries and pathways

Enclose the public space with defined boundaries and clear pathways. This creates a continuous open public space through the centre.



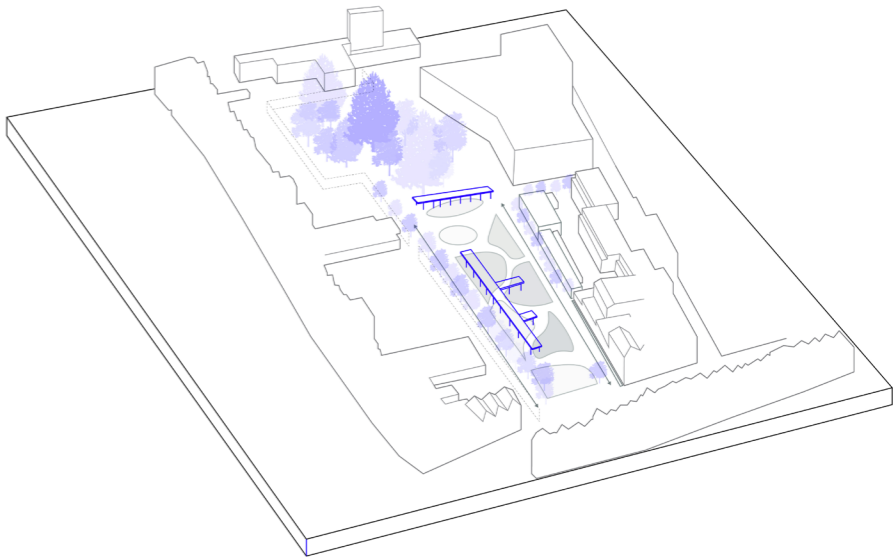
### Establish functional zones

Allocate space for various activities and needs by introducing different zones within the defined boundaries. Designate areas for sitting, sleeping, washing, as well as spaces for residents and passersby to engage in activities like sports and dining.

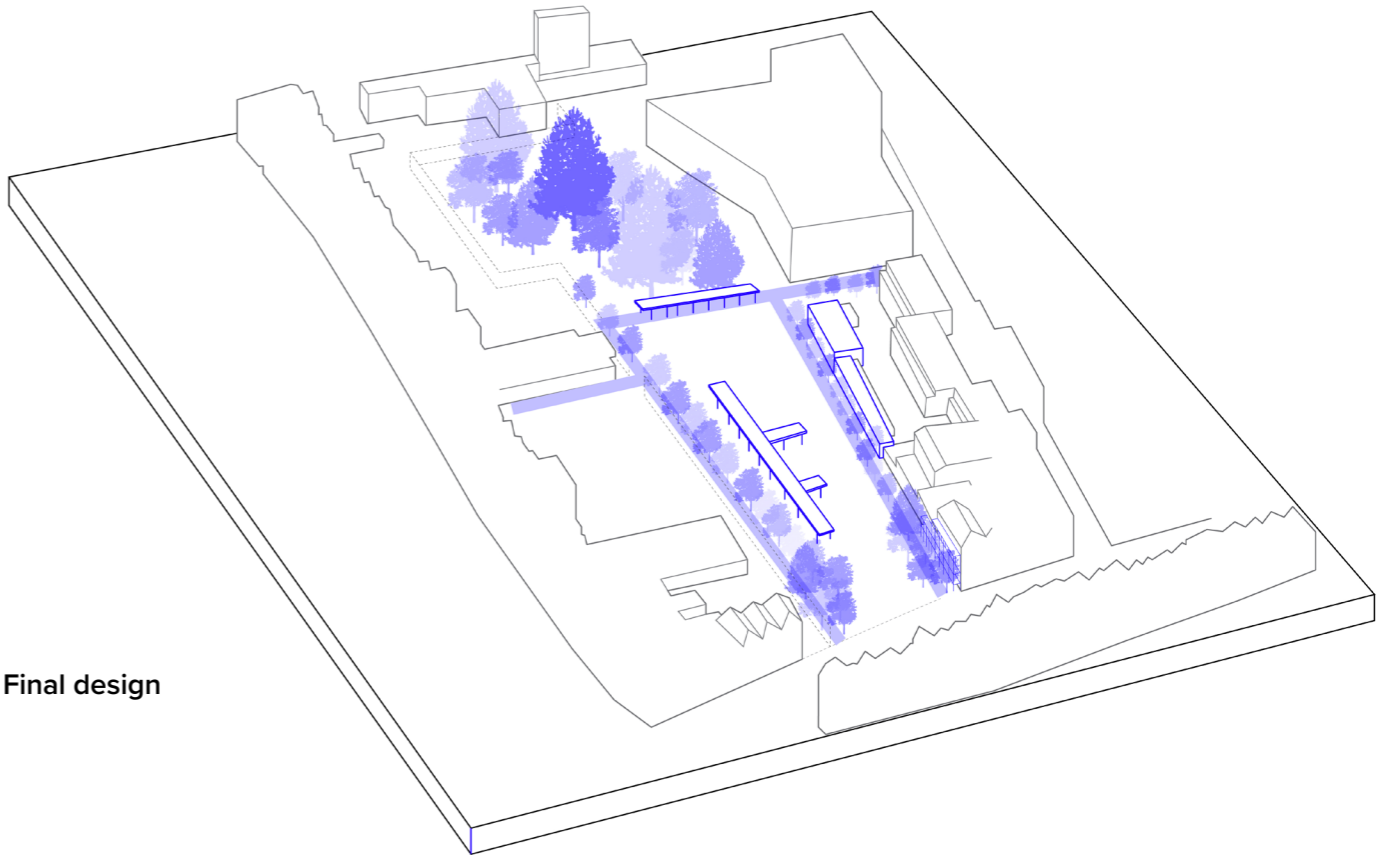


### Connection and focal points

Connect all the different zones by introducing a large overhang structure. This overhang serves to either add focus and draw attention to specific areas or remain subtly integrated into the space, providing a sense of cohesion and connectivity throughout the design.



### Final design



Plan for the park

The plan aims to transform the park into an inclusive space, catering to the needs of both the homeless population and the general public. It boldly removes most of its fences, retaining only those marking its identity as the “Wijkpark.” The design takes on a plan made by LOLA landscape architecture that introduces a new passage from the Westersingel, connecting the park with an important axis going through the centre of rotterdam. This passage also leads to the Pauluschurch. The design replaces a planned yoga studio with a bathhouse, operational during daytime hours, creating a place for both residents, visitors and homeless to visit.

On the northern side, the park features areas, facilities, and amenities designed to serve both residents and homeless individuals, with further elaboration provided in following chapters.

The south side maintains its existing character, with the petting zoo relocated towards the south, to better align with the area’s residential and informal character. To enhance recreational opportunities, additional play elements for children are proposed, complementing the petting zoo and encouraging outdoor activities.

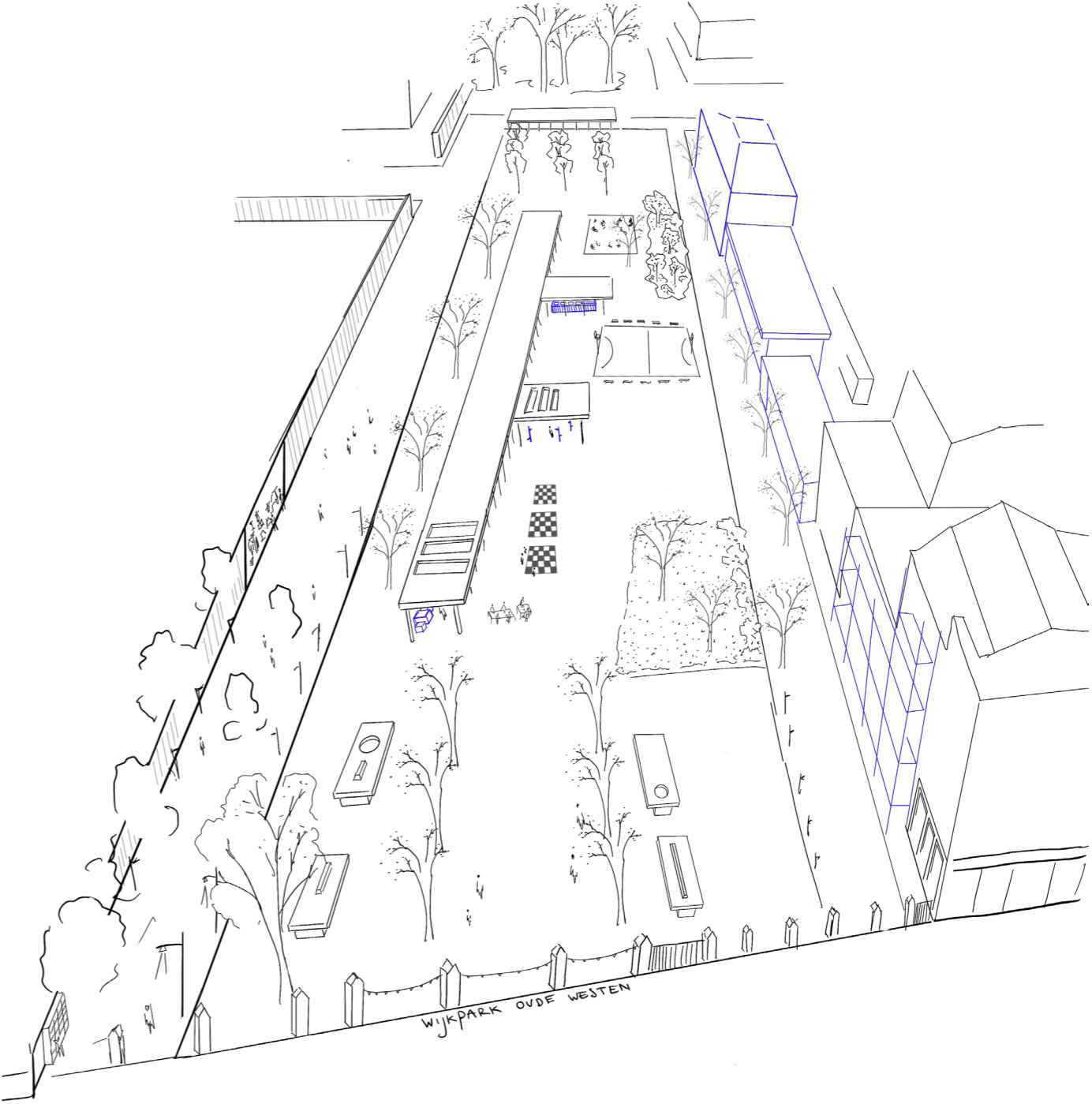
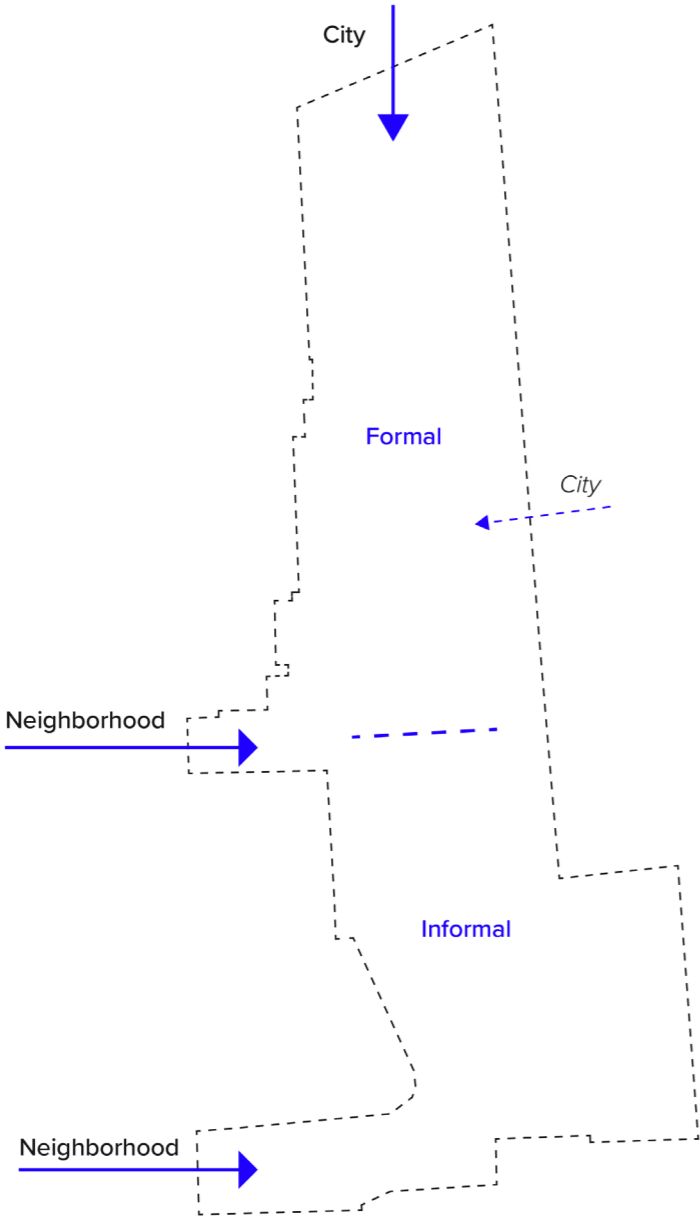


# Zooming in

## Design focus

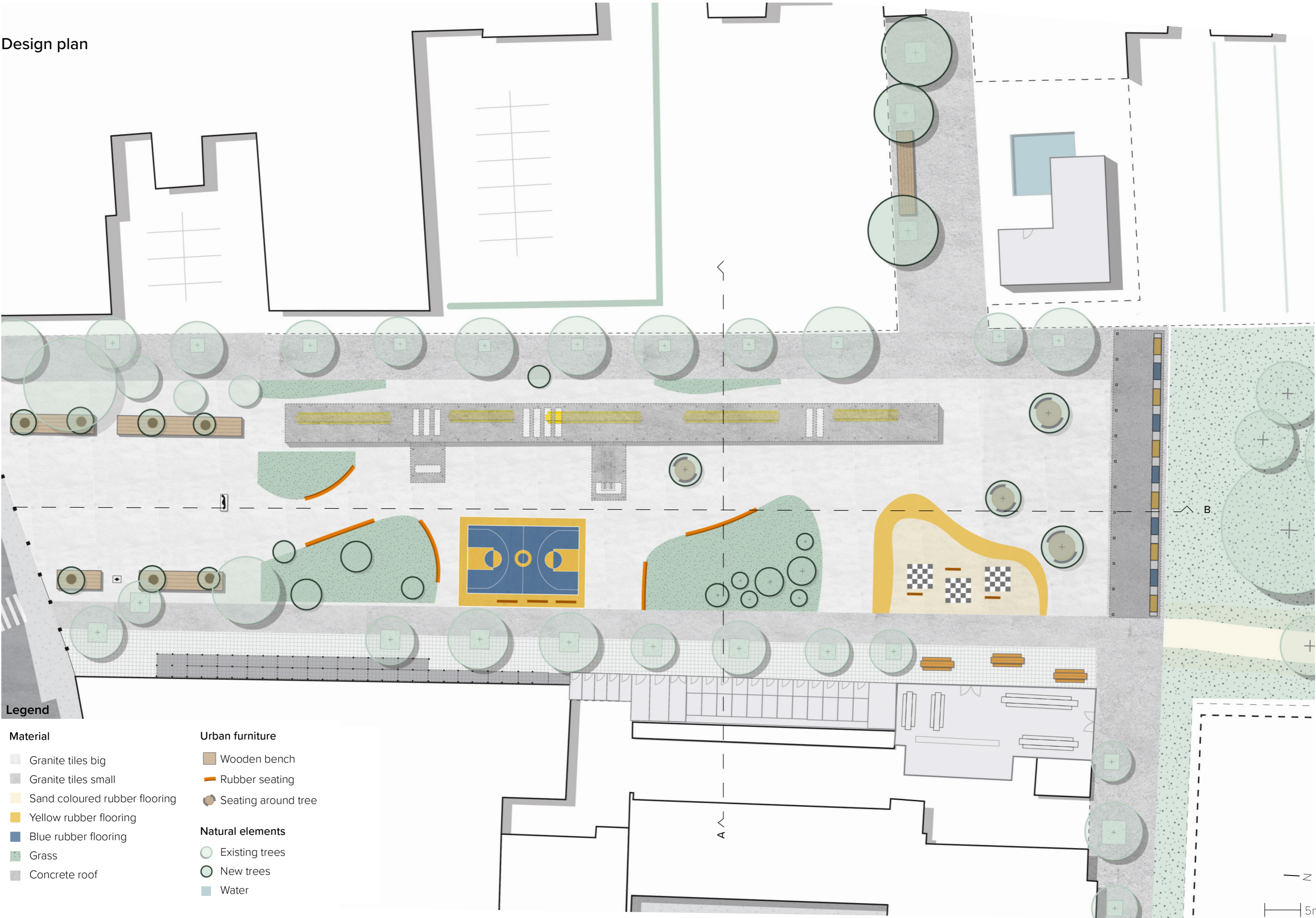
As described in the analysis, the Wijkpark is divided into two distinct sections. The northern part, accessible from the city centre via two routes, features a design that is more provocative and

unconventional, intended to attract attention to the issue at hand. In contrast, the southern part of the park offers a more relaxed and intimate environment, primarily intended for use by local residents.



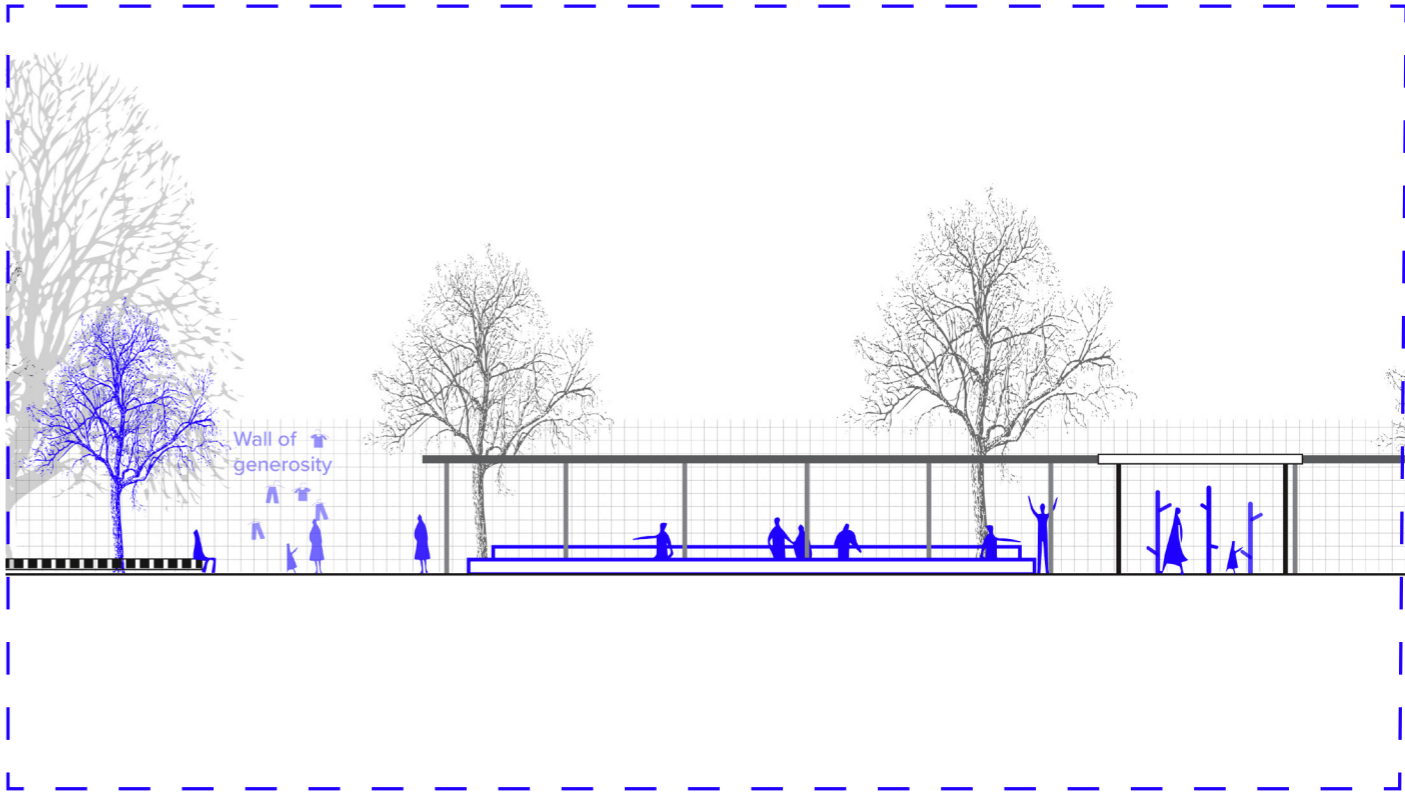
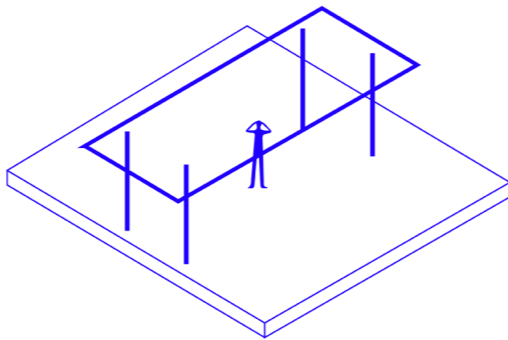
The following pages focus on the urban design within the northern part of the park, offering a closer look at specific details.

Design plan

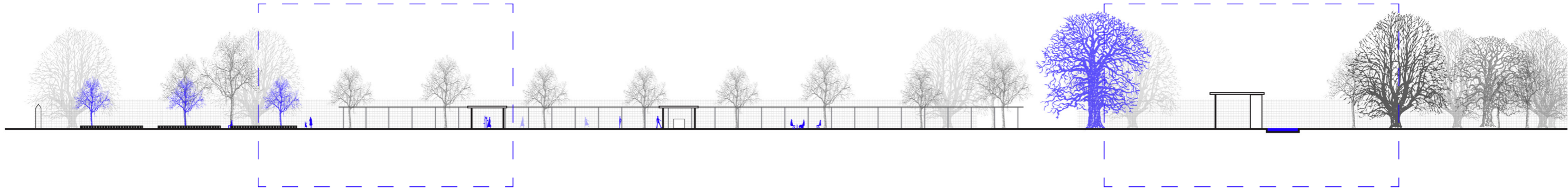


The canopy

The large canopy provides sheltered areas for various activities while still allowing enough space for pedestrian passage. This section illustrates the perspective when walking alongside the canopy, showcasing its design.



D.S.01



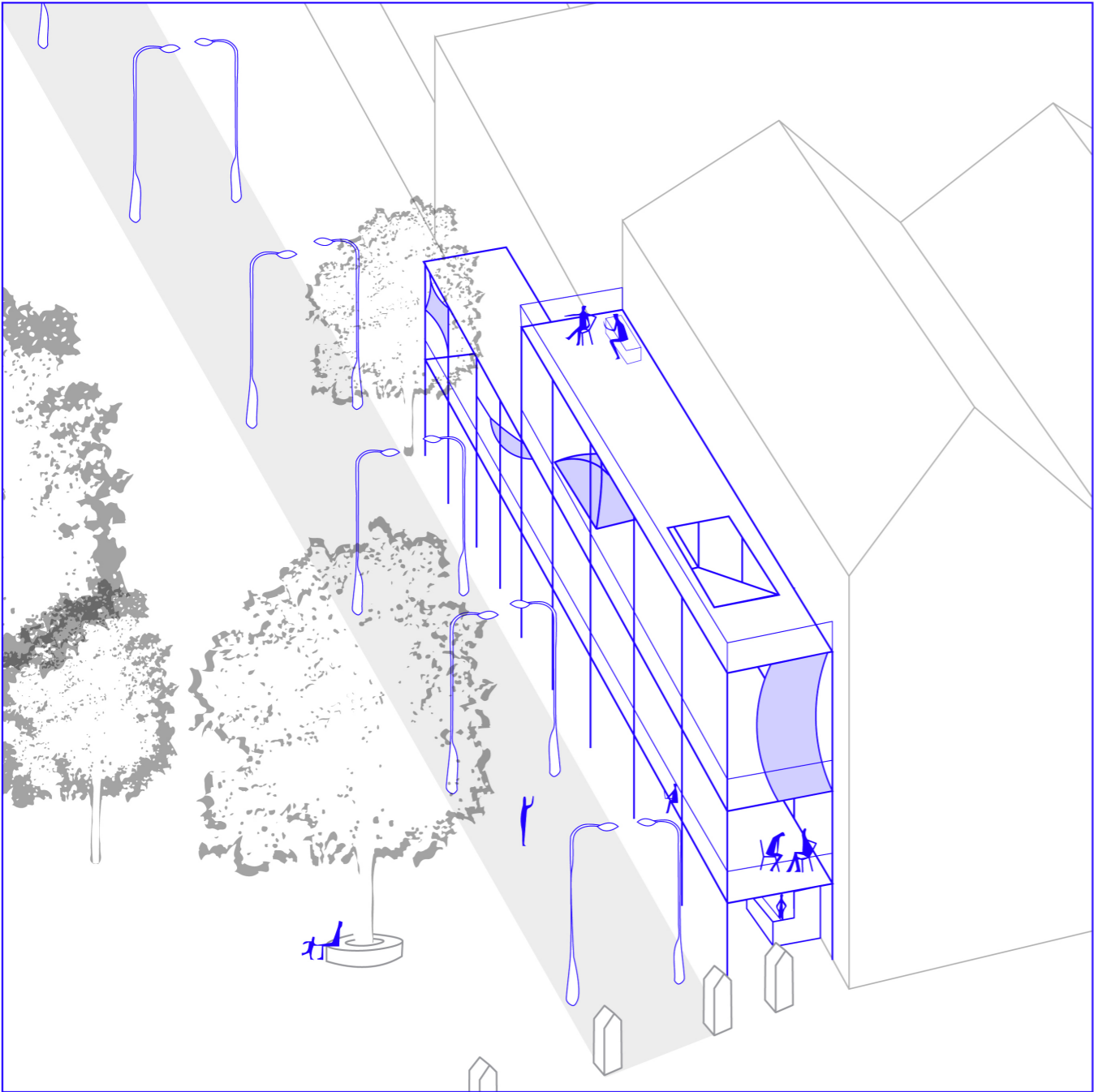
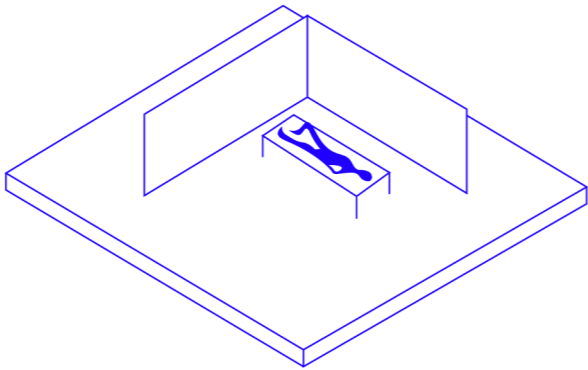
D.S.01

D.S.02



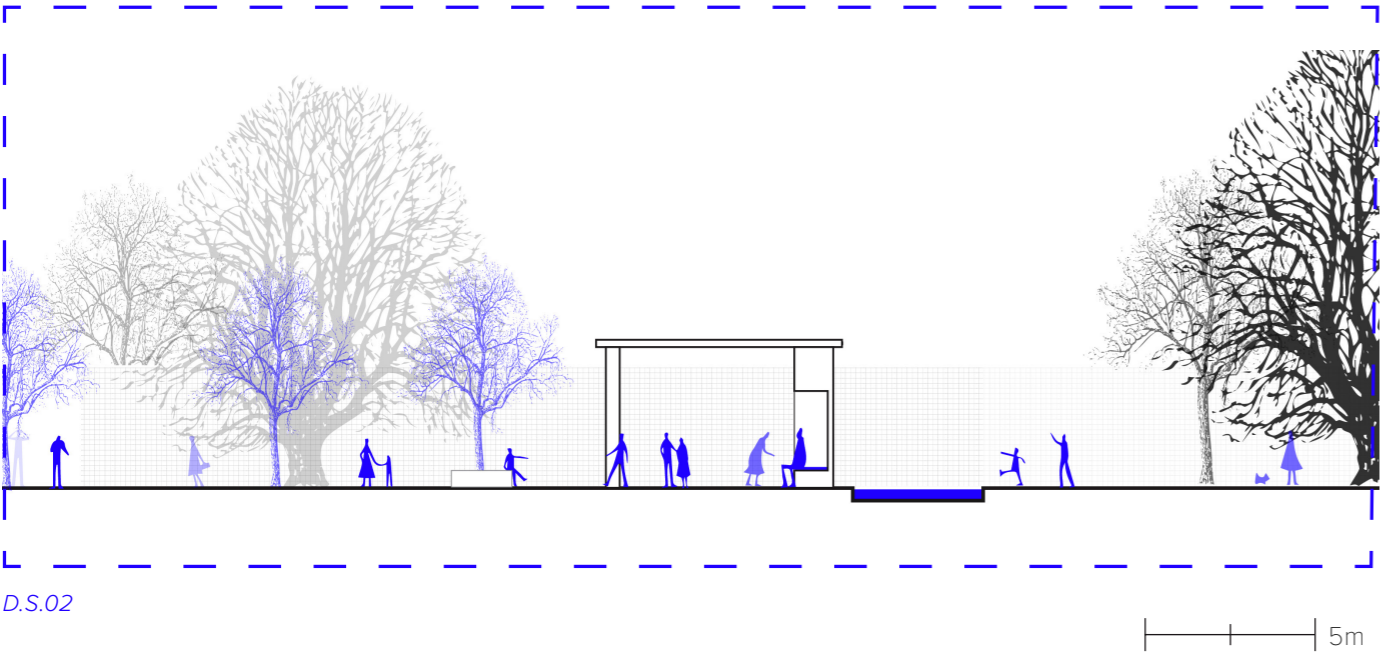
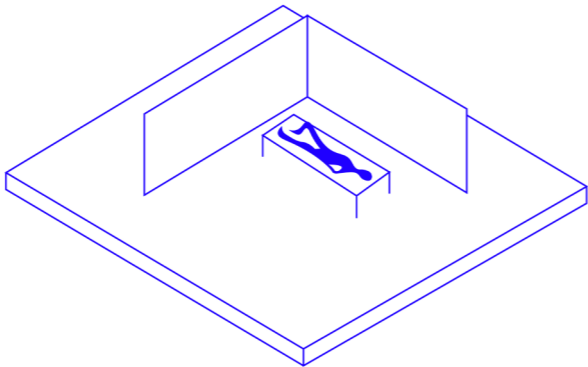
Sleeping in public space

This demountable, flexible and open construction marks the entrance of the park, showing that this is a place where people are allowed to sleep. Allowing and inviting homeless people to appropriate this construction, making the park their home.



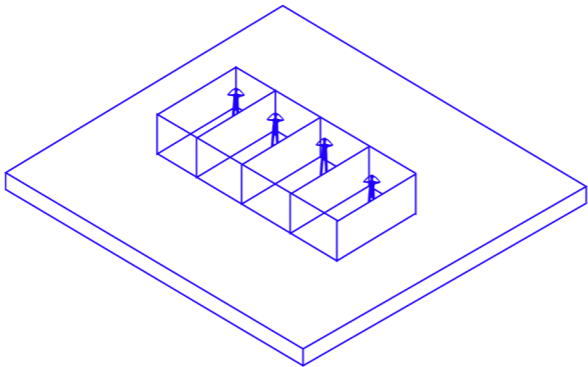
Arches as porous limits

The edge of the southern part is designed with an arch, serving as a passage connecting entrances from the Westersingel to the Gouvernestraat. It also accommodates places to sleep, with spaces cut out of the wall. Behind the wall is a water basin, serving as a more direct barrier, showing that it is until here, and no further (to sleep)



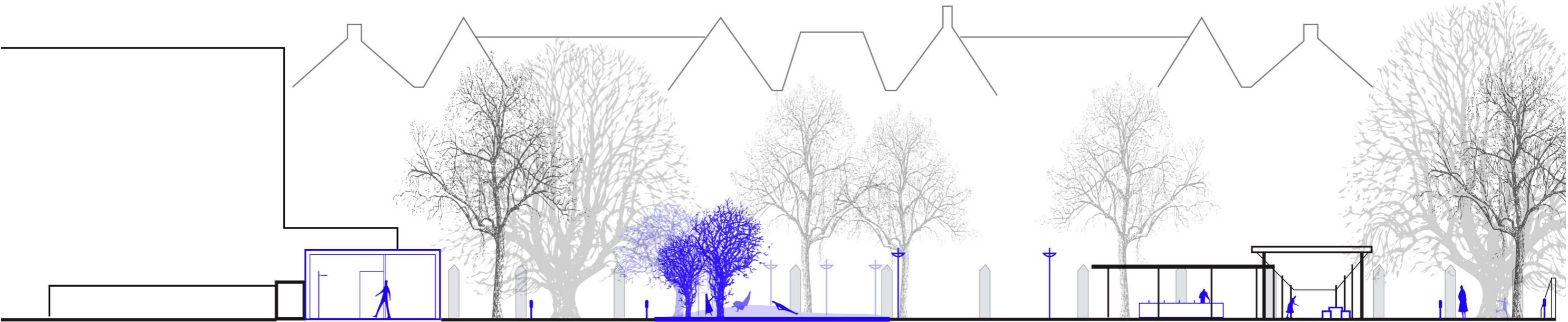
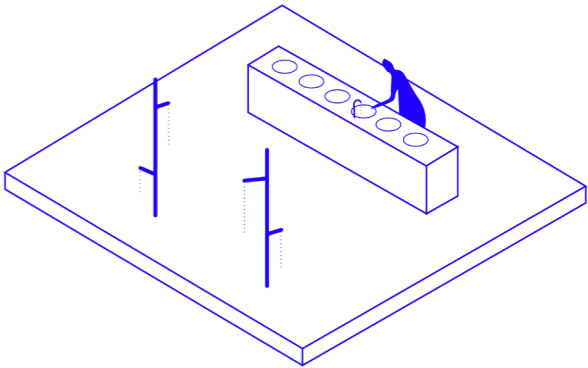
Personal hygiene

The park offers places to drink, use the restroom and shower.



Washing

The drinking and washing facilities are strategically situated within the diagonal canopies, designed to attract attention. The washing station serves multiple purposes, allowing individuals to clean their hands and face, as well as quickly wash out their clothes if needed.



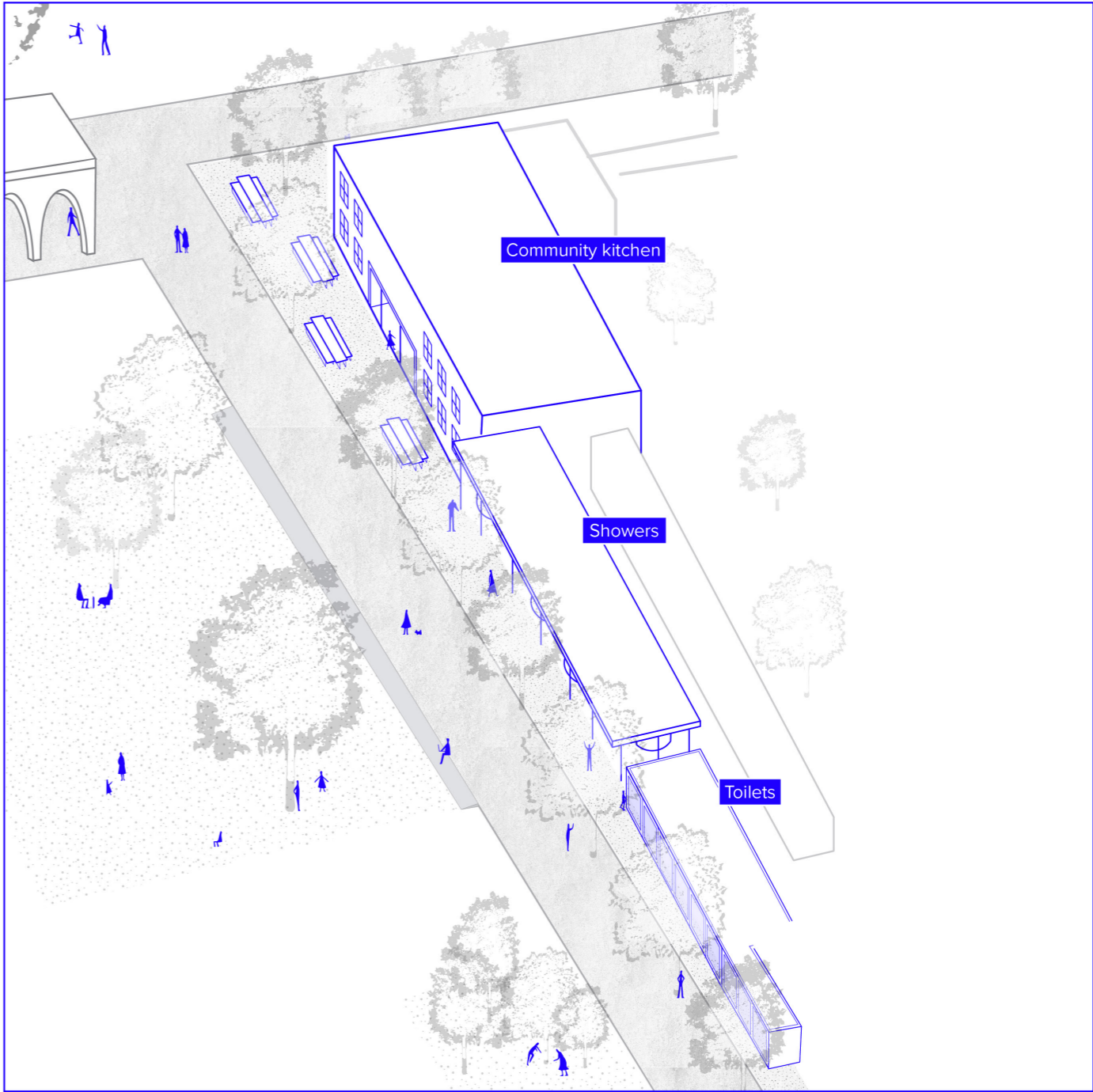
2.5m

Section A

Section A provides a comprehensive view of the park, stretching from the houses along the Gouvernestraat to the fence on the east side, showing the integration of the new functions on the left side and the washing station below the canopy.



Impression showing the washing station located under the canopy



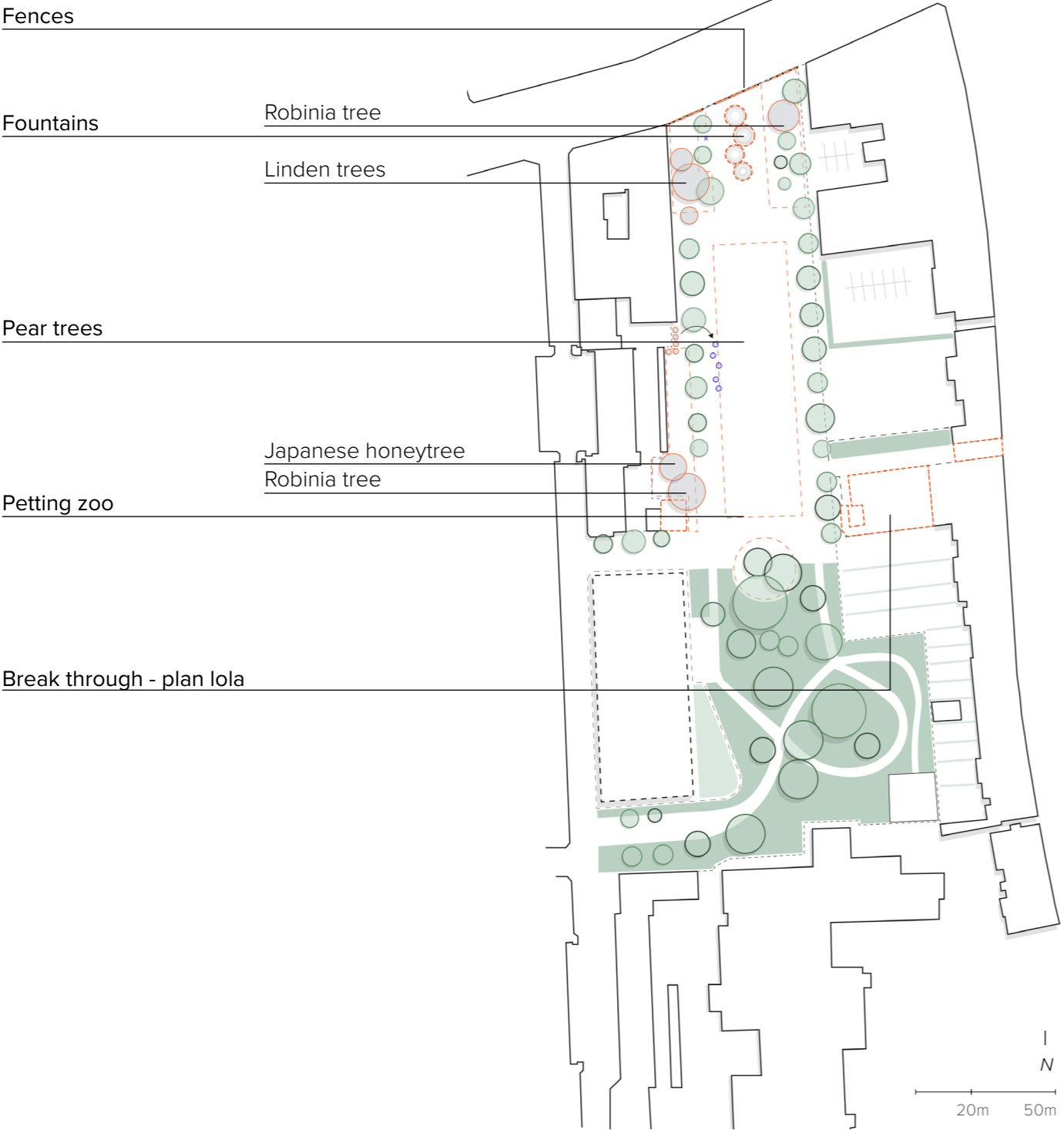
Axonometric view of the new functions along the edge of the park

This axonometry illustrates the integration of new functions that define the boundaries of the park. The buildings house public toilets designed with transparency in mind, drawing inspiration from the Japanese design of a public toilet by Shigeru Ban (Archdaily). When unoccupied, they appear see-through, maintaining a sense of openness and visibility. However, once in use, they become opaque,

ensuring privacy for users. Illuminated from within, they emit light outward, signalling to visitors that these facilities are both safe and hygienic. The next building is designed as individuals showers, in the same way as public toilets work. These are concrete, clean appearance, long term, nothing to damage. The last building, being on the ferge of the entrance to the neighbourhood serces as a community centre.

# Design detailing

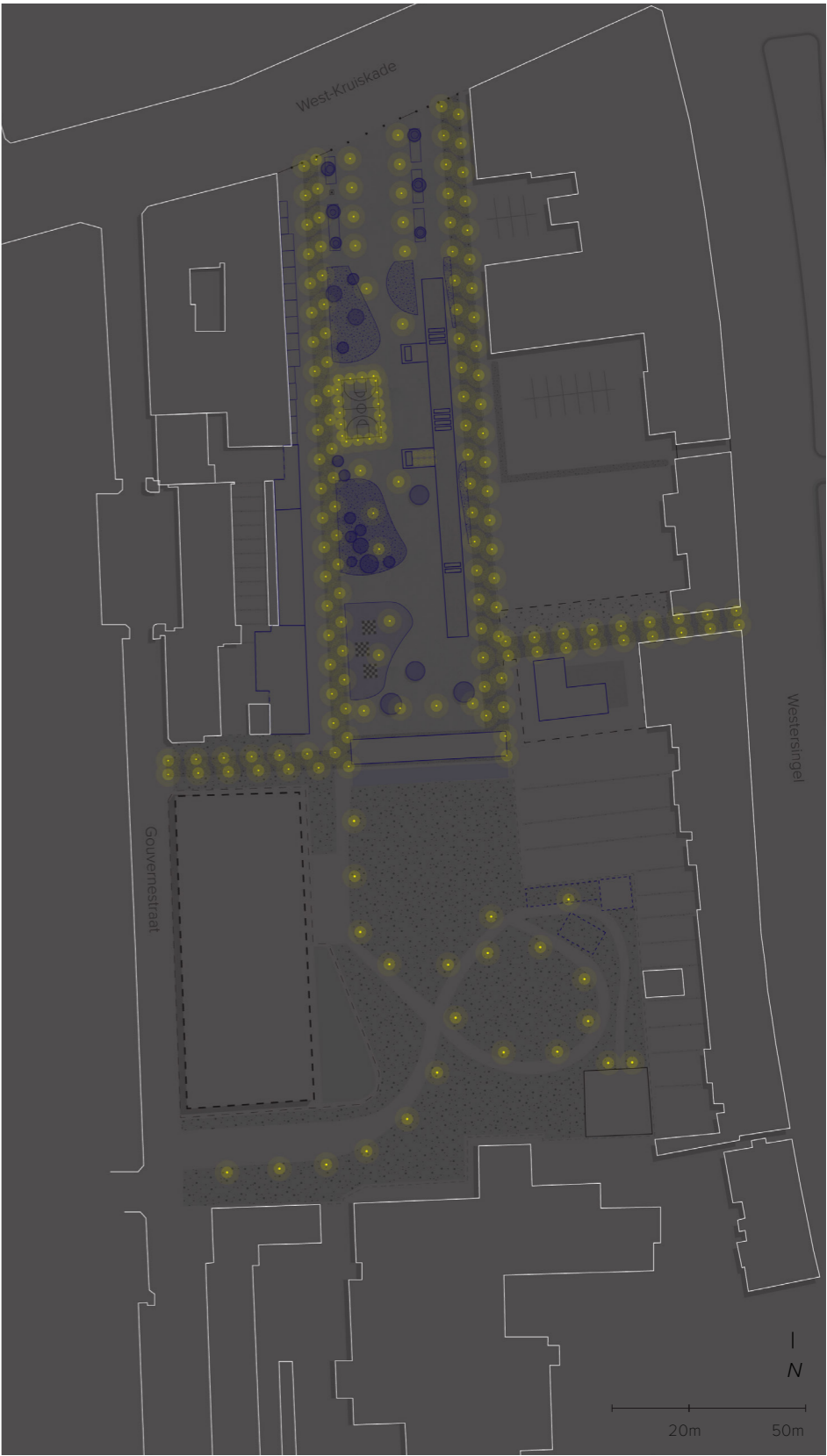
## Break down and keep



Map showing what stays and what is moved or broken down

## Lighting

The lighting plan shows well-lit main pathways along the park's edges for clear visibility and safety. Within the inner area of the park, lighting is strategically zoned, creating areas with varying illumination, including some darker zones.



The lighting plan

Green & water

The vegetation introduced in the park serves multiple purposes: offering shade, providing spaces for relaxation, enhancing visual appeal, and even providing edible options. Two grass fields provide flexible space for a wide range of activities. Additionally, there's a dedicated space with edible plants and trees, featuring pear trees relocated from the petting zoo, as well as newly introduced apple trees and fruit bushes.



Fruitbomen.net



Tenhoven bomen

Koningslinde, as one of the trees giving shade. This is a tree that already grows in the park at the moment.

The newly planted trees belong to similar families and species as the existing ones, including linden trees, and robinias.

Water within the park serves a multifaceted role: it provides hydration for visitors, facilitates cleanliness, offers a refreshing respite on hot days, and contributes to defining spatial boundaries, enhancing both functionality and aesthetics.

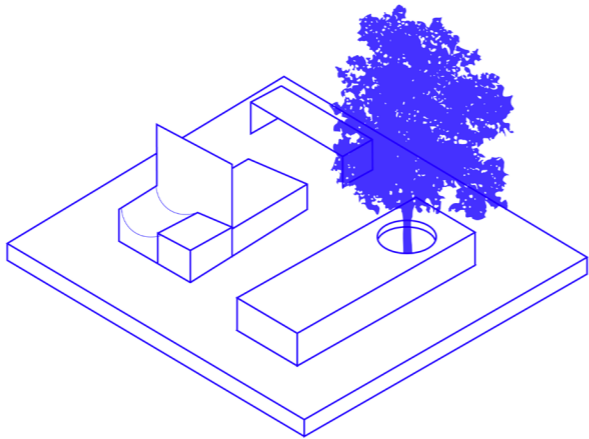


Regio West-Friesland



Urban furniture

The concept behind the urban furniture is flexibility and adaptability, aiming to accommodate a wide range of activities such as gathering, lounging, sitting upright, sleeping, and even resting your feet.



Warm but sturdy material



hardwood, upcycled (streetlife)

Bins that sepearate returnable bottles



Public bin in Copenhagen (Green bike tours)

Flexible furniture



Solid peano bench (Landezine)

Materials

The flooring of the park is designed so it defines two zones: one for movement and another for lingering. Along the main pathways, concrete tiles provide durability and cater to high foot traffic, ensuring smooth movement throughout the park. Areas designated for relaxation are paved with larger natural stone tiles in warm hues, inviting visitors to pause and enjoy their surroundings. These larger tiles subtly indicate a slower pace, encouraging leisurely strolls and moments of repose.

Concrete is chosen for the canopy due to its clean and durable nature offering resilience against damage.



Sand stones (Marshalls)



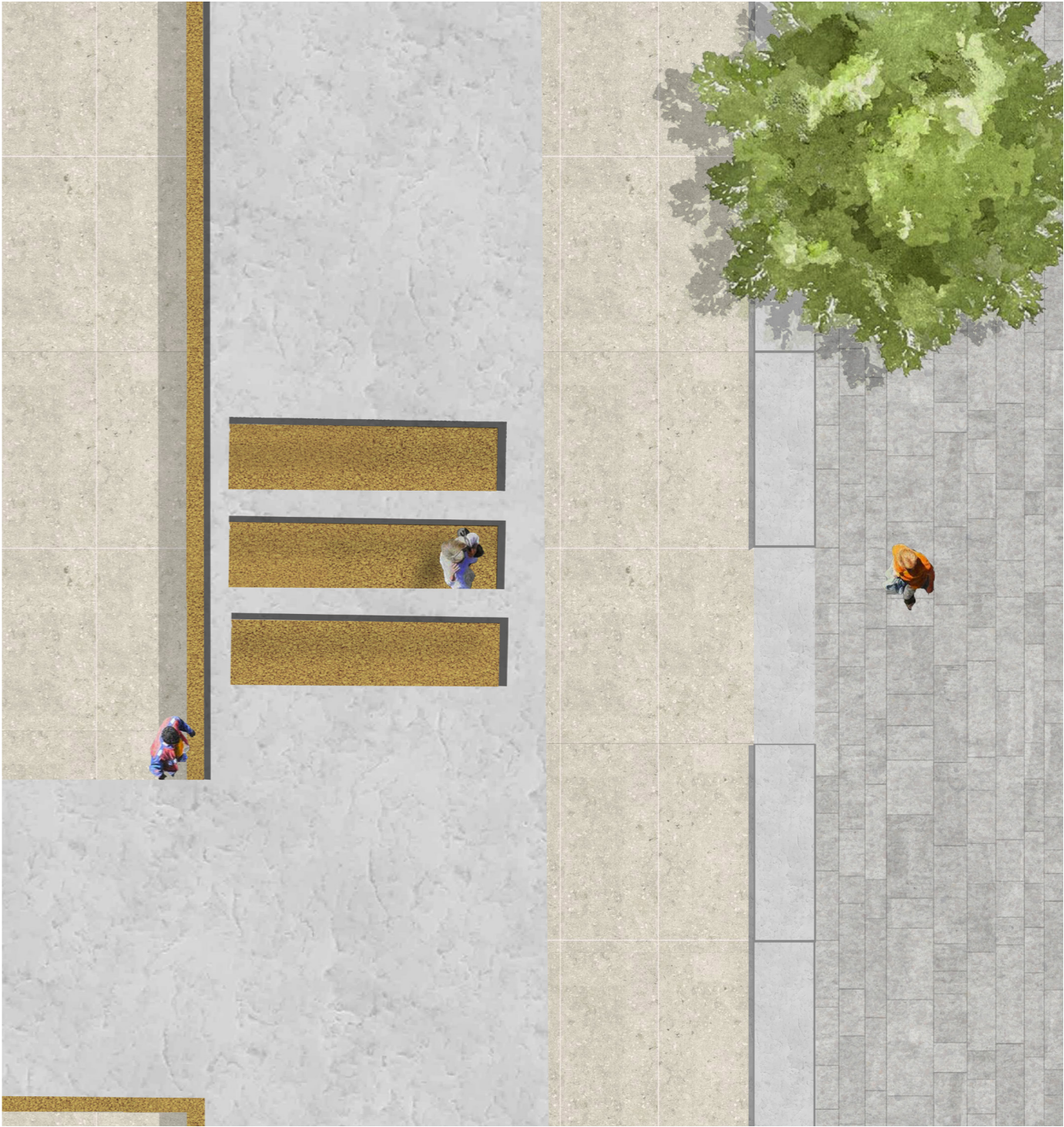
Poured rubber (Playgroundgrass)



Natural stone with an earth tone, used in public space design in Germany (Strauma)



Concrete (Architextures)



Detailing of a park of the square.

# Designing for other needs

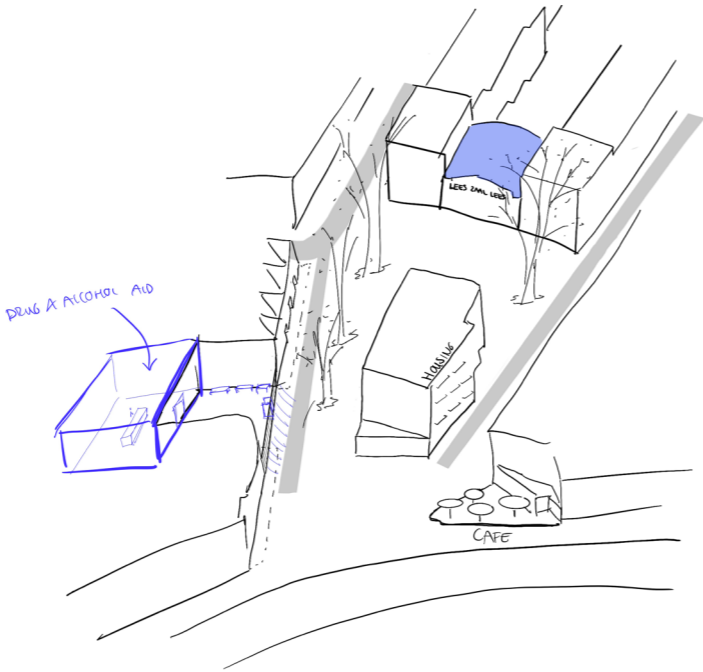
## Design concept Rijnhoutplein

As mentioned in the literature reviews, homeless people are obligated to perform their activities in public space. Drinking alcohol is one of those activities, due to limited alternatives. While non-homeless individuals typically socialise and consume alcohol in cafes or private residences, homeless individuals may resort to purchasing inexpensive alcohol from supermarkets and consuming it in public spaces, which is both prohibited by law enforcement

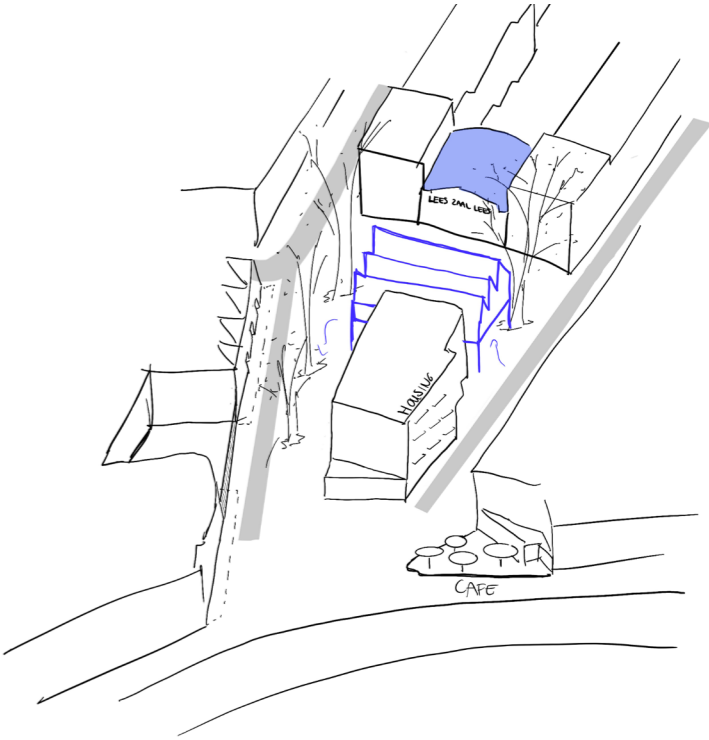
and unwelcome by the general public. This design proposal takes an unconventional approach by suggesting the integration of designated spaces within public areas to accommodate the needs of homeless individuals for alcohol consumption. By providing a designated area for this activity, the design seeks to address the lack of alternatives available to homeless individuals and mitigate the associated nuisance in a more humane and pragmatic manner.

## Design options

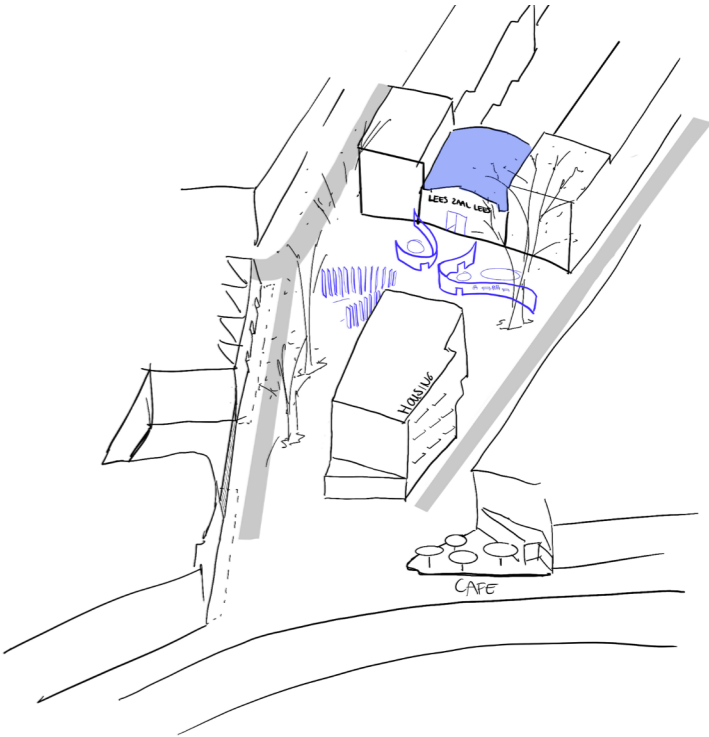
**Option 1** presents an interior designed to cater to the needs of the homeless community, providing them with a space to socialise and access support from dedicated social workers. Inspired by the pioneering concept of Perron 0, reminiscent of the former area adjacent to Rotterdam’s central station where homeless individuals could obtain clean needles and consume alcohol safely.



**Option 2** introduces an innovative open-roof design, offering an outdoor interior space shielded from the weather. This architectural feature not only provides shelter but also serves as a visible marker, clearly indicating the designated purpose of the area: a public space for communal drinking.

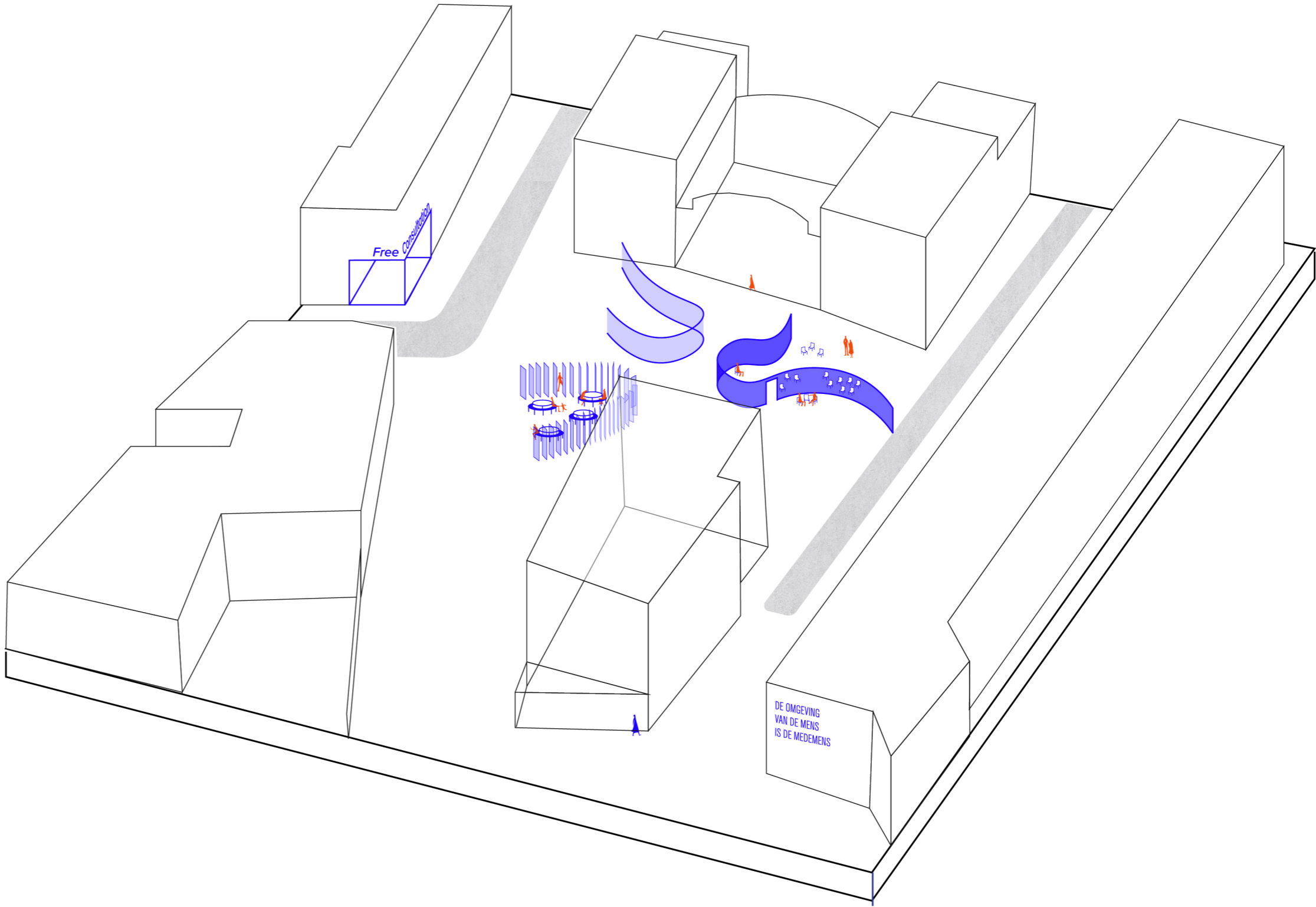


**Option 3** illustrates how the square is divided into different sections using walls or slats, offering a balance between privacy and visibility. In this option, the pedestrian movement routes are protected and accentuated. This design ensures that people can enjoy their space comfortably while still being aware of their surroundings.



The proposed design

The proposed design integrates elements from both Option 1 and Option 3. It features an interior space tailored to meet the needs of the homeless community, providing a welcoming environment for socialising and access to support services, inspired by the concept of Perron 0. Additionally, the square is divided into distinct areas using walls or slats, offering a sense of privacy while maintaining visibility. This thoughtful combination ensures both comfort and safety for individuals utilising the space.



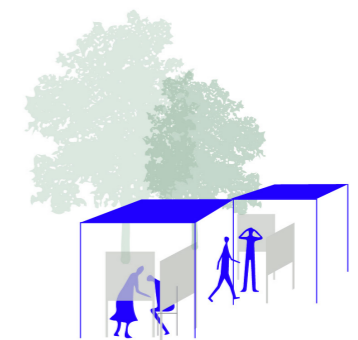
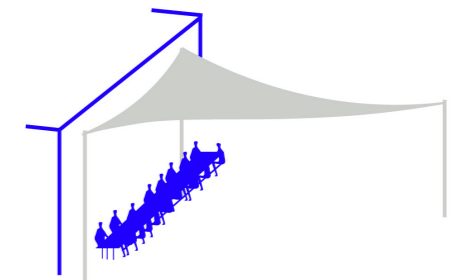
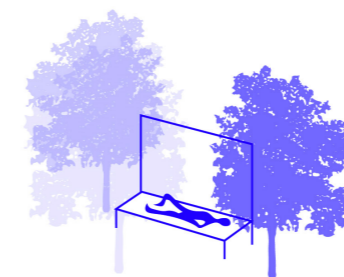
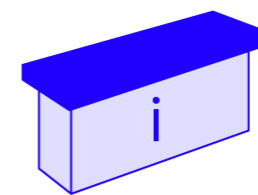
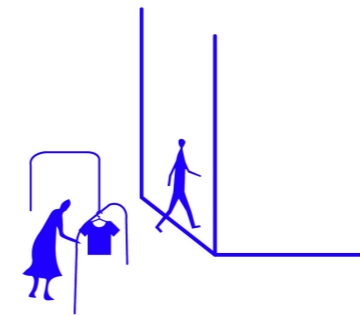


wikipedia

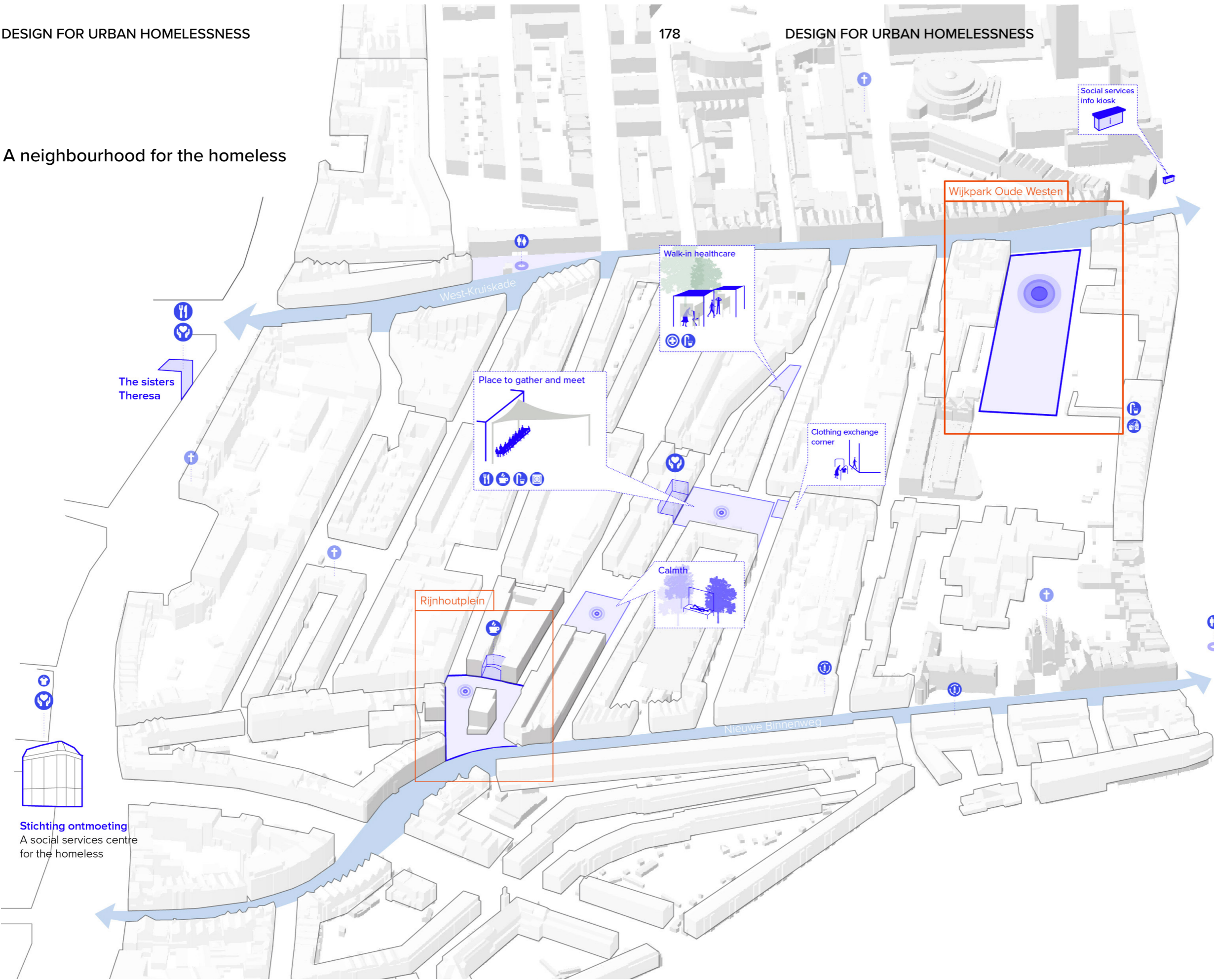
## The inclusive neighbourhood

The Wijkpark and Rijnhoutplein are beginning to serve the needs of the homeless populations, but the whole neighbourhood could play a role in including the homeless people. As stated in the synthesis the design should take place on this scale in order to promote recognition. While the park and square address some needs, like shelter,

others such as healthcare and information access remain unaddressed. Furthermore the design looks at potential areas that could serve the needs of the homeless, based on the design analysis of the neighbourhood. This results in places where gathering, clothes providence or places of calmth could take place.



A neighbourhood for the homeless



Legend

- Places of solidarity
- Shelter
- Food
- Rest
- Drinking water
- Health care
- Public toilets
- Hygiene
- Clothes
- (Social) care
- Electricity
- Return bottles
- Hot beverages
- Belief
- Lockers

# Policy recommendations

## From research

### 1. Improve data collection and research on homelessness.

Enhance research efforts to better understand homelessness, including accurate data collection on population numbers and demographics. This information is vital for informing policy decisions and allocating resources effectively.

### 2. Create help centres for the undocumented individuals experiencing homelessness.

Create dedicated help centres to provide support and assistance to undocumented individuals experiencing homelessness. These centres should offer or be able to refer you to essential services such as temporary shelter, healthcare, and legal assistance, regardless of immigration status.

### 3. Strengthen Social Services and Shelter Capacity.

Invest in the expansion and improvement of social services and shelter facilities to accommodate the growing needs of the homeless population. This includes increasing capacity, improving accessibility, and enhancing the quality of services provided.

### 4. Integrate shelters into urban neighbourhoods.

Ensure that shelters and support services are not located far outside of the city but are instead integrated into the urban fabric of neighbourhoods. Placing shelters within neighbourhoods fosters integration, reducing barriers to access for homeless individuals and fostering a sense of belonging within the community. It also promotes recognition and awareness with residents.

### 5. Foster Partnerships with Local Businesses.

Forge partnerships with local businesses to promote inclusion and employment opportunities for homeless individuals. Businesses can be encouraged to provide job opportunities, training programs, and support services, helping homeless individuals regain independence and stability.

## From design

### 1. Community engagement.

Encourage collective initiatives such as community gardens, art projects, or neighbourhood clean-up efforts to promote social cohesion and empowerment.

### 2. Designated spaces for basic activities.

Designate specific areas in public spaces where activities such as begging, sleeping, and drinking are tolerated within reasonable limits. These designated areas should be strategically located, well-lit, and equipped with basic amenities to ensure the safety and dignity of homeless individuals.

### 3. Positive safety measures.

Implement positive safety measures, where community members or social workers provide oversight and support in public spaces. This approach promotes safety and well-being while avoiding punitive measures or excessive policing.

# 10 Concluding

1  
2

*Conclusion*  
*Reflection*



*Sophie Mantel*

This chapter will conclude by addressing the main research question and discussing how the design sparks broader societal discussions. It will outline key topics of these discussions, explore the project's transferability, and reflect on its significance within a wider context.

# Conclusion

This section will conclude on the project by answering the main research question:

**How can an urban transformation in Rotterdam promote recognition of the homeless population and create awareness on their presence and needs?**

An urban transformation can promote recognition and create awareness by designing for their day-to-day needs within the neighbourhood or on the edges of neighbourhood, with mediated exposure of their needs and presence, giving both privacy and exposure. This will be further explained by answering the sub-questions.

**What are the social, societal and spatial dynamics of being homeless within an urban environment?**

Socially, the concept of home emerges as a complex notion intertwined with solidarity and struggle. Despite the absence of traditional housing, spaces like the Paulus Church and women’s shelters offer temporary refuge and a sense of belonging, with inherent challenges such as disturbances and transience. Societal interactions underscore pervasive stigmatisation and the constant struggle to disassociate from negative stereotypes. Homeless individuals express a longing for connection and acceptance within the broader community, highlighting the importance of inclusivity and respect. Public spaces like Wijkpark Oude Westen inadvertently perpetuate stigmatisation, unfairly associating homeless individuals with negative activities and behaviours. Moreover, repressive measures by municipal authorities exacerbate feelings of hopelessness and desperation among the homeless population, leading to increased substance use and aggression. Overall, these insights emphasise the urgent need for compassionate and inclusive approaches to address the complex

realities of homelessness within urban landscapes.

**How does the current urban environment of Rotterdam fulfil the needs of its homeless population?**

First of all, the urban environment of Rotterdam has too little amenities for the homeless population and some amenities are not open to everybody. This is why a large group of the homeless population of Rotterdam has to perform their needs out in public space.

One of the most interesting findings of the research was the discovery of an intricate network of informal functions and spaces used by the homeless throughout Rotterdam. These spaces serve as vital nodes within the urban fabric, providing essential resources and shelter to those experiencing homelessness. Importantly, the research highlighted the need to recognize and preserve these spaces rather than closing them off from their unintended users. By allowing for the flexible use of urban spaces and supporting the informal practices of marginalised populations like the homeless, cities can foster inclusivity, resilience, and social cohesion.

**What are the spatial needs of the homeless population?**

Safety, respect, integration, privacy, and fulfilment of their basic needs such as rest, shelter, drinking and washing. They have a strong longing for belonging and respect by the broader public. A supportive neighbourhood, or interaction with more privileged individuals, can have a strong positive impact on the well-being of homeless individuals. Integrating homeless individuals into such communities could therefore be very beneficial.

**What design interventions address the immediate needs of the homeless population of Rotterdam?**

In addressing the immediate needs of the homeless population in Rotterdam, several design interventions emerge. Firstly, providing a place to sleep and rest, that is not solely intended for the use of homeless people but is open to everyone. These spaces should be carefully designed to ensure comfort and security while also fostering a sense of dignity and belonging. On the other hand, to more boldly show the issue. Allowing and inviting for appropriation would clearly show how people have to live and make homes on the streets. A lighting plan can create both a safe feeling for residents and more private zones for homeless individuals. A clean, well-maintained appearance is essential to combatting stigmas associated with homelessness.

Additionally, integrating spaces that can be used by both homeless individuals and residents can help preserve a sense of community and belonging for all members of society.

**How can urban design interventions serve as a catalyst for raising awareness on urban homelessness?**

The research played a crucial role in shaping the design task by informing decisions regarding the scale and location of intervention. By starting with a comprehensive analysis of the entire city, the ethnographic research steered the project towards identifying the most suitable location for intervention—one that would effectively promote recognition and understanding within the broader community. This led to the conclusion that homeless people mainly move along the long lines which adds up to their invisibility within the city. Therefore aiming at recognition we should poke somewhere else, closer to people’s homes but not too close.

The resulting design reflects a bold and activist-oriented approach, aiming to provoke meaningful dialogue and engagement around the issue of homelessness in urban spaces. By challenging traditional notions of public space and advocating for the incorporation of more inclusive and accessible functions, the design serves as a catalyst for social change and urban transformation.

# Reflection

**Relation between the projects’ topic and the Urbanism Master track**

As designers, I believe we have a responsibility to respond to the needs of those who are frequent users of the urban realm: the homeless. In my perspective, the way we shape and design our urban environments has a profound impact on whether certain groups of people are either included or excluded from various aspects of (urban) life. This undoubtedly relates to the Master of Urbanism, which concerns the research and design of our urban environment. Homelessness is a layer of our urban environment that we have to include in future designs. Within the master track we learn to integrate different perspectives and disciplines. This project is highly interdisciplinary, drawing from fields such as sociology, psychology, urban studies, and urban design. By incorporating these diverse viewpoints, we can create more inclusive, equitable, and responsive urban spaces that cater to the needs of all residents, including the homeless.

**Relation between the projects’ topic and the studio: Design of the Urban Fabric**

This topic relates strongly to the focus of the graduation studio ‘Design of the Urban fabric’ which concerns the interplay between the physical urban environment and other processes like the psychological or socio-cultural. This project aims to connect the physical, tangible layers of the city (think of; functions, urban form, street profiles, public space furniture) to the more invisible processes of the psychological and socio-cultural layers of the homeless population, who utilise public spaces as their living environment. The theme of this year’s studio is: “Embracing Plurality, Growing Porosity”. My project adopts a strong socio-political perspective on plurality and porosity. Plurality means recognising and valuing diversity within the urban fabric. Homelessness is a critical aspect of urban diversity, as it represents a distinct and often

marginalised group that in a way strongly differs from the mainstream. Porosity refers to the permeability and flexibility of spaces. The design of this project integrates homeless needs into the urban fabric, creating spaces that cater to both the housed and the homeless population fostering interaction and inclusion.

**Reflection on research methodologies**

Using ethnography as a research method proved to be one of the most valuable decisions for this project. It offered various kinds of insides into urban homelessness. Despite its time-consuming nature, involving various methods and sources, ethnography was essential for achieving a comprehensive understanding of the topic. However, access to prior spatial research or more data could have accelerated the research process, affording more time for design development.

Despite the initial uncertainty of engaging with homeless individuals, and it being my first experience with such research, the process provided invaluable learning experiences. It often felt like stepping into the role of a psychologist as I navigated the complexities of understanding diverse responses from different homeless groups. Constant reflection and a willingness to learn from trial and error were key in strengthening the research.

The input from homeless individuals during the ethnographic research process often proved to be indirect, requiring translation into spatial elements for analysis. Discussions with homeless individuals often involved a process of seeking indirect information and discerning the desired answers. Insights provided by experts in the field offered a markedly different perspective. Engagements with these experts gave more direct input, characterised by clear and concise information. These contrasting approaches underscored the multifaceted nature of the research,

wherein understanding the experiences and needs of homeless individuals necessitated navigating between nuanced, indirect insights and more explicit input by experts.

**Reflection on research methods**

The research entailed many different methods, many within the methodology of ethnography. In my engagement with the women at the shelter, I mainly used unstructured interviews. While these conversations didn’t yield direct information initially, over time they provided a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the research group. Similarly, engaging with the rough sleepers posed challenges, particularly in steering conversations. However, despite the difficulty, these unstructured interviews compelled me to broach topics such as place attachment, ultimately enriching my understanding.

Employing observation was an unexpectedly useful method. Living in the city, in close proximity to the focal area, allowed for numerous observations throughout various times of the day, including evenings, which offered valuable insights into the dynamics of homelessness.

Typology making emerged as an incredibly useful method for this project. It initially helped to transition the project into a spatial context, providing a framework for exploring spatial solutions. The radar graphs developed for the typology were used in the initial research phase to compare types. They could again be applied in the design phase to test and evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed solutions. This makes them very effective for both research and design evaluation. The typology development was an evolving process throughout the project year, and it could continue to grow.

**Reflection on relation between research and design**

Design and research were strongly interconnected during the typology-making process, creating an iterative loop. Typology making wasn’t just about categorising spaces, but also about the nuances of spatial design and its impact on the homeless community. My research mainly informed the design task, guiding decisions on scale, location, and specific spatial elements. Initially searching for the right scope of the project, the research helped me to understand the nuanced needs and preferences of homeless individuals within urban environments. These insights were important in creating a design that resonated with the design aim: promoting recognition and awareness on urban homelessness. The research gave me a strong understanding of what kind of spaces homeless people use and for which reasons. Having this understanding significantly helped me to design the different spatial elements.

Moreover, the research journey was not solely academic, but I also developed personal connections within the homeless community, creating a deeper empathy for the issue. These connections gave the design authenticity and a sense of urgency, driving the commitment to advocacy and giving them a voice.

**Reflection on feedback and the learning process**

Throughout the process, I received valuable feedback from both an urban studies mentor and an urban design mentor. The urban studies guidance helped me with structuring and analysing my research to provide a solid foundation for the design phase. Urban design mentoring helped me navigate the transition from conceptualisation to tangible design implementation.

At P2 my plan was clear, and I had a solid understanding of my objectives. However, as Phase 3 approached, I faced the task of actual design

implementation. The feedback I received prompted me to refine my project’s direction and sharpen its overarching goals and aims and my personal positioning. As I was shaping my project’s direction, aim and scope throughout the year, starting with the design remained difficult. Because of this, the design process might have started relatively late.

From starting with the general concept of ‘home’ at P1, to advocating homeless needs at P4, evolved through a process of mentor meeting, own reflections and talking with people outside of our discipline.

**Societal relevance**

Homelessness is currently a pressing social issue that affects the well-being of both individuals and communities. Urban design is a discipline that holds the ability to include certain groups within society and contribute to addressing the issue. As described earlier, the design of our urban environment can strongly cause either inclusion or exclusion of people. Beyond the well-being of the homeless individuals themselves, the issue reverberates throughout a city and its communities. An urban design project addressing the issue of homelessness can contribute to creating a safer and more inclusive urban environment and cohesive communities by fostering empathy and understanding. Successful urban design projects have the ability to influence policy decisions, by demonstrating effective strategies. In this way, this project could contribute to the development of policies that address homelessness at a systemic level.

**Scientific relevance, scope and implications**

Homelessness is frequently discussed in academic discourse, but the spatial aspect of urban homelessness remains largely unexplored, representing a significant knowledge gap. This project helps bridge that gap by examining the social, societal, and urban dynamics

of homelessness. Through extensive ethnographic research, the project provides a human-centred approach to understanding homelessness within an urban context.

The research has been an important stage for the design, but by doing so it created new insights into homelessness, with a very human-centred approach. Given the current scarcity of data, the project enriches the existing knowledge base by creating new maps and shedding light on previously unexplored aspects. The project’s impact extends beyond urbanism, influencing policy-making, increasing resident awareness, and informing social services. It serves as a guide for various stakeholders on positively impacting the lives of homeless individuals and provides suggestions for further research on homelessness for researchers and municipal authorities. The relevance of this project therefore extends to various stakeholders:

The municipality: Both research and design can inform urban policy-making, as explained in the recommendations chapter. The stories, experiences and needs of the homeless can inform the municipality on tailoring their public services. For instance creating night shelters where people do feel safe, so homeless people will actually want to make use of them. The typology maps can guide locations of resources, the design of public spaces and the implementation of other supportive infrastructure for the homeless. Knowing the dynamics of homeless people is vital to create effective strategies to address their needs. I believe this design demonstrates to the municipality that proactively creating dedicated spaces for the homeless is far more effective than neglecting their needs. Without proper support, homeless individuals are forced to use public spaces in ways that may be undesirable for the broader community. Providing well-designed, inclusive spaces for the homeless can prevent such issues

Urban designers: The research shows the urgency

of the issue, hopefully encouraging designers to think about the homeless in future designs. The design shows how public spaces can be made multi-functional, catering to the needs of the homeless while remaining accessible and enjoyable for the general public.

Residents: Increasing resident awareness about the spatial challenges faced by the homeless can foster greater empathy and understanding within the community. The project encourages residents to recognize the informal uses of public spaces and the daily realities of their homeless neighbours. Additionally, designing urban spaces to accommodate the needs of the homeless enhances the overall urban fabric, avoiding undesirable activities in public spaces.

Homeless individuals: The project is relevant for the homeless themselves as it advocates for the design of urban spaces that address their specific needs. By creating inclusive and supportive environments, it improves their quality of life, offering safer and more dignified spaces within the city. Additionally, the project brings the issue of urban homelessness to the forefront, encouraging solutions that tackle the core issues underlying homelessness, promoting long-term social inclusion and stability.

**Ethical considerations**

Ethically, it has been a very challenging project. Delving into the sensitive topic of homelessness, which is heavily stigmatised, while simultaneously striving to combat that stigma, has been inherently contradictory. In my approach to design, I sometimes tended to categorise the homeless population as one homogenous, while during the research I strongly tried to recognise their individual differences.

Stigmatisation, I have come to realise, is somewhat inevitable when attempting to bring attention to a

marginalised group of people. Nevertheless, design does recognise the different groups by strategically creating different zones within the public space, allowing for groupings while also ensuring space for individuals to maintain distance. Recognizing the existence of strong sub-groups within the broader homeless population, the design aims to facilitate both cohesion and autonomy within these spaces.

By shining a light on this pressing issue and amplifying the voices of the homeless within urban design, the project ultimately contributes to fostering positive change.

**Transferability**

The theoretical approaches and methods utilised in this project possess a high degree of transferability, making them adaptable for application in diverse urban contexts. While the problem statement is specific to Rotterdam, it’s important to acknowledge that homelessness varies greatly across different countries and regions. Despite these differences, the mapping and visualisation techniques employed in this project can be adjusted to accommodate varying manifestations of homelessness.

Moreover, the success of the design intervention may depend on the existing potential for solidarity within a given area. Rotterdam’s unique character, characterised by both roughness and resilience, has fostered a strong sense of community solidarity, particularly in neighbourhoods like Oude Westen. Despite facing numerous challenges since the war, these areas have emerged stronger, equipped to address issues such as homelessness with a collective spirit. While this context may differ elsewhere, the principles of solidarity and community engagement remain universally applicable, underscoring the project’s potential for broader impact. Through employing ethnographic research and typology development, this project offers a robust framework

for comprehending the spatial dynamics and social intricacies of homelessness, with the aim of inspiring similar initiatives in other cities.

#### Influence on further research

I see this project as an intriguing starting point and a source of inspiration for further exploration into urban homelessness in a spatial context. While the design is this in its infancy, there is vast potential for additional urban design projects similar to this project. Throughout the research, the theme of solidarity came up. I believe that investigating solidarity in the context of the city would be highly valuable for future research, extending beyond homelessness to encompass solidarity towards all individuals in need. The urban fabric of our cities has the potential to profoundly influence our capacity for solidarity. Exploring this theme further could uncover new insights and avenues for fostering a more compassionate and inclusive urban environment.

#### Joining in on emerging discussions in urban design and planning

I would like to end the reflection by connecting the project to emerging topics within urban design. The theme of imperfection is gaining prominence in urban design and planning discussions. Books like *Smooth City* by Renee Boer, *Designing Disorder* by Pablo Sendra and Richard Sennett, and the recent *Paradise of Imperfection* by Violette Schönberger emphasise the value of a city's imperfections. These works critique contemporary trends of over-designing, controlling, and sanitising urban spaces, suggesting that it is in these imperfect, fringe areas where meaningful experiences occur. These 'imperfect spaces' are often areas where memories are created, individuals find the freedom to express themselves, and marginalised communities can find refuge.

This project on homelessness contributes significantly to this discourse, as it examines the fringes and informal areas of the city through the lens of a group for whom these places are crucial. By studying these areas, we can begin to integrate the concept of imperfection into design practice rather than limiting it to theoretical observation. This shift could lead to more inclusive and authentic urban environments that embrace rather than erase the imperfect.

*Pastor of the Pauluskerk giving a speech during the manifestation recht op rust - photo by author*



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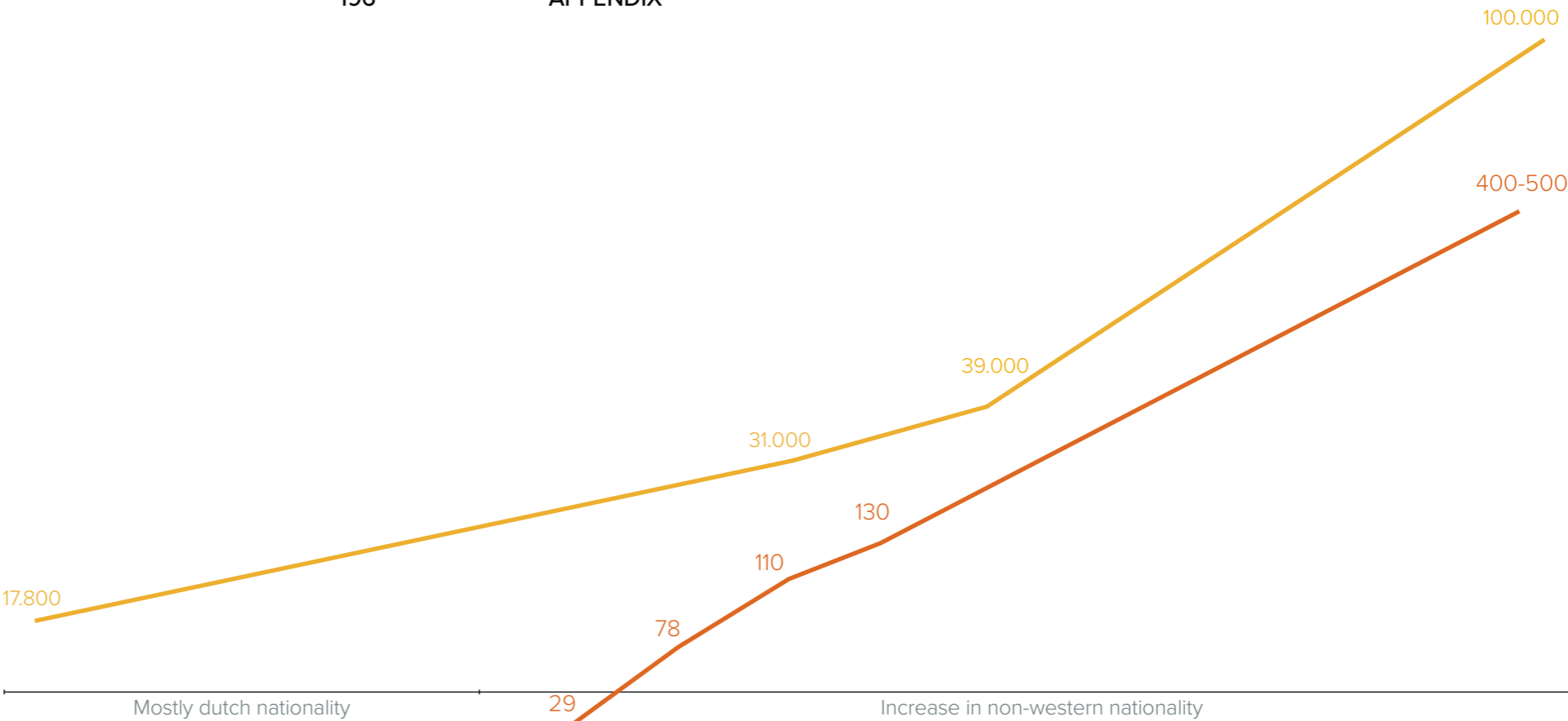
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# Appendix

# Historical overview

Cody Hochstenbach writes in his book “In schaamte kun je niet wonen” [You can’t live in shame] about how abstract housing politics can have an incredible impact on the personal lives of various people. Homelessness can of course have many causes, however it is always a housing problem. Therefore changes in policies such as making squatting illegal has an indirect effect on the number of people struggling to find a home (Hochstenbach, 2023). Other events like wars, collective actions and world viruses have an influence. To make the two graphs showing the number of homelessness other sources have been used in order to get a more realistic graph than shown in the problem focus.



Policy:

Events:

1994

2006

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024


Closing of Perron 0

Squatting is made illegal

Action: 'Niemand op straat' [nobody on the streets]

COVID-19

War Ukraine



Leven in Schiebroek



Fromscratch

— National number of homeless  
— Street sleepers Rotterdam

Information from Hochstenbach (2022), Hochstenbach (2023), (Schoone, 2001), CBS (2018)

# Manifestation right to rest

A collage combining the experiences and stories shared during the manifestation ‘ Right to Rest’ on December 20th.



Collage about the stories and experiences during the manifestation, made by author

# Walk and talk

An invitation for a city walk with the women living in the shelter.

## Stadswandeling Rotterdam

Donderdag 14 Maart, 13.00



In gesprek over jullie gebruik van de stad, voor het afstudeerproject van Kiki.

Neem een opgeladen telefoon mee om foto's te maken en draag goed stevige schoenen.

We vertrekken om 13.00 vanaf het WB-huis en zullen voor 15.00 weer terug zijn.

Wie gaat er mee?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Semi - structured interviews - Manifestation 2

The names are made up for privacy reasons.

Introduction

The evening begins with an opening by the predikant of the Pauluskerk. He talks about the right to rest, that every person has. He also talks about the Wijkpark, that the park has been closed off for a while because of too many complaints/ too much disturbance. “Of course I understand that, you don’t want people to ‘relieve themselves’ on your porch, or see people who are incredibly drunk. But the solution is not pushing them away from these kinds of places. The solution is giving them a place to sleep”.

Conversations with the homeless

1. Fatmata & Kadiatu

I recognize Fatmata, as he was also at the last manifestation (from limba city, sierra leone). They are polite, calm but also insecure. Last time it took him the whole evening before he dared to write anything on my sheet.

“Do you ever visit this park”

“Yes, sometimes”

“Is there anything that you would like to have in this park?”

“No I don’t know”

“Is there anything that you would like to have in this park?” (I ask the woman who works at the Pauluskerk who stands besides the two men)

“Yes, it could use more colour”

2. Jerome

Jerome has not been in this park that often, he is new in Rotterdam.

“Is there something you could think of that you would like to have here?”

“Well... when I hear the word park, I think of nature, this is not nature.”

“So you would like more greenery, more trees maybe?”

“Yes, more trees and plants would be nice”

3. Claudia

“Hi, can I ask you a question. Yes. Do you come to

this park sometimes? “

“Yes, I’ve lived on the streets for years. So yeah I walk around here, and I come here sometimes. But, it’s not always nice.”

“Why not?”

“People come here to do drugs, deal drugs, they leave a mess.”

She explains that many homeless people are addicted or do things people don’t like. They disturb the neighbourhood, and then people put her in the same box...

“I’m not like that, I just have no home. I am also a person, just like you right.”

“Of course you are just like me, and you should be treated the same.”

“Yes, and with respect. You know, I just want respect. Sometimes people are really mean to me, and say things like: dirty woman...That’s not respectful.”

“Is there anything you think this park could mean in creating this respect?”

“Maybe we could clean together, you know with the people in the neighbourhood”

She explains that she would like to do things together with people living in the surroundings. She would also like the park to be cleaned of all the dirt that is lingering around.

4. Achmed

“Hi, can I ask you a question. Yes. Do you come to this park sometimes?”

“Yeah, sometimes.”

“Is there something that you would like in this park?”

“Oh I don’t know.”

“No nothing that you would really want here?”

“Nooo I don’t know...”

5. Alexander (Sasha)

Alexander delivers food to restaurants. He delivers food to the chinese restaurant on Westersingel 8. To deliver, he drives past the park. “Ja ik kom bijna elke dag door dat steegje daar”.

He stresses that he always sees people dealing drugs. It happens very often.

The conversation is steered towards his life story. He is from serbia but lived in Austria for a long time, in vienna. He tells me vienna is one of the best cities in the world and says: “If you study this ... (urban design) then you have to go there, really.”

He explains that he had to leave Austria because he hit a police officer. He smiles in a way that it looks like he’s not telling me the complete story.

6. Natasha Woman who works at the Pauluskerk

We look at a very tall man who is flirting with a Polish woman. He gets her drunks. She tells me he has been trying to take her with him for a while now. The friends of the polish woman whisper something in her ear and she puts away her beer and walks away from the guy. The woman I am talking to says: “See, without her friends she would be in a lot of trouble.”

# Navigating urban spaces

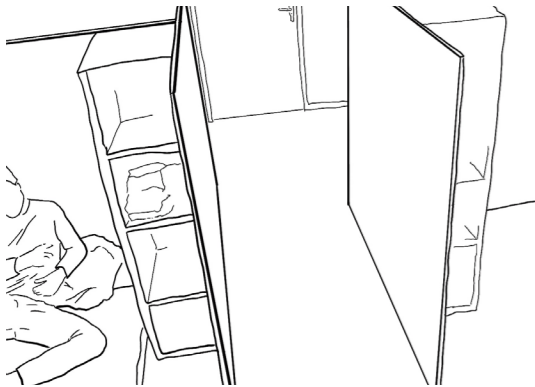
A typology of spaces used by the homeless population of Rotterdam

From geographical analysis

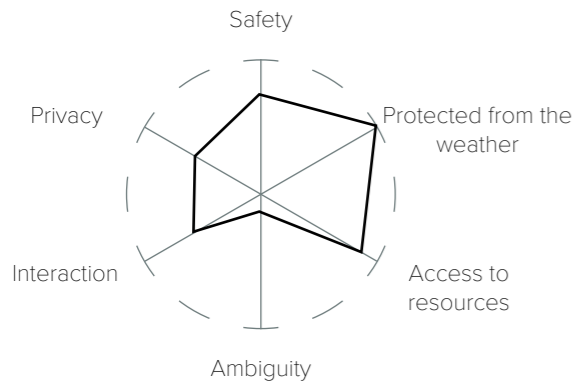
STAY:

Night shelter

Activity:	Temporal / permanent
Source:	Geo analysis
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Function / interior

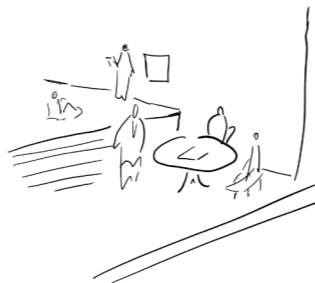


Night shelters exist in different forms. The more permanent ones are often perceived as safe, while the temporary shelters are described as unsafe, as you lie in one large room with many people. Many rough sleepers do not use these shelters as they can not find rest there. The more permanent shelters are often safe spaces where you can get many different forms of help.

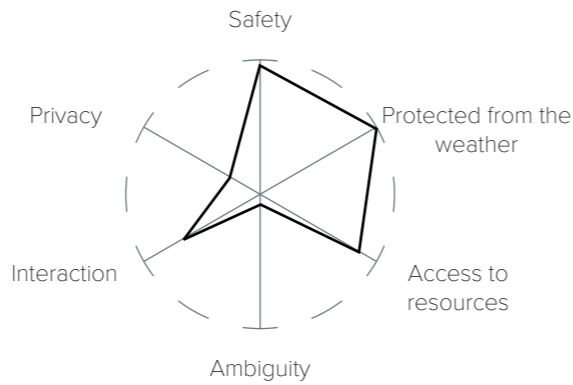


Day shelter

Activity:	Temporal
Source:	Geo analysis
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Function / interior



A day shelter offers a safe place during the day, offering the comfort of rest without fear of disturbance. It provides basic amenities like showers and affordable meals, as well as access to various forms of assistance such as legal advice, healthcare, and clothing. It also serves as a place for people in similar situations to connect and help each other out. The Pauluskerk is one of the popular day shelters in Rotterdam.



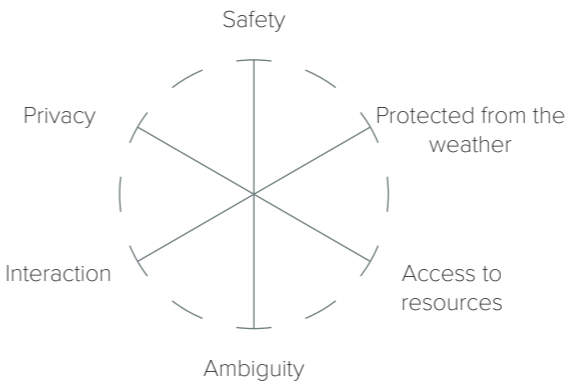
ACTIVITY:

Healthcare facilities

Activity:	Aid
Source:	Geo analysis
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Function?

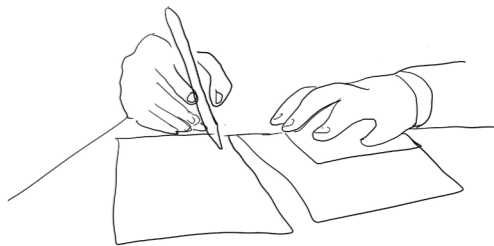


Healthcare for homeless people is often through institutions or the street doctor. Some people do not have the right insurance for other papers to get help in the hospital, which makes health care in day/night shelter very important.

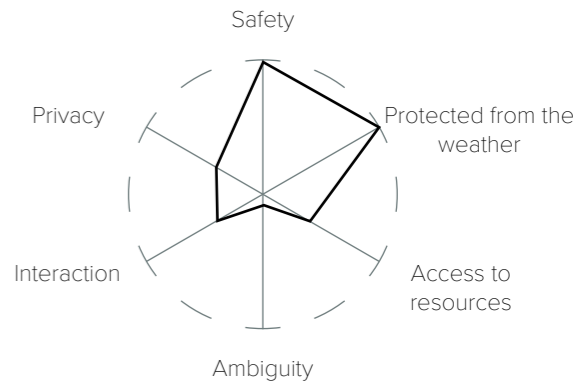


Legal help - Centraal Onthaal

Activity:	Aid
Source:	Geo analysis
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Function



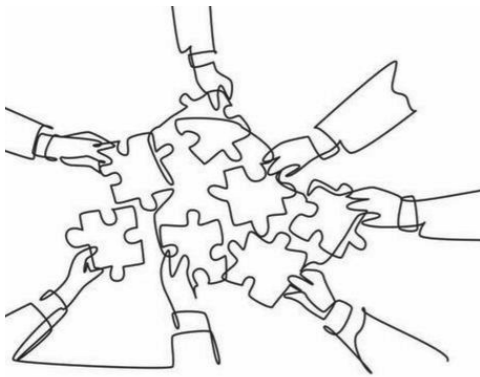
Centraal Onthaal is a central counter of the Municipality of Rotterdam. At Centraal Onthaal, access to social care and sheltered housing is assessed. Here you can get a CO pass which helps you get access to different forms of help.



ACTIVITY:

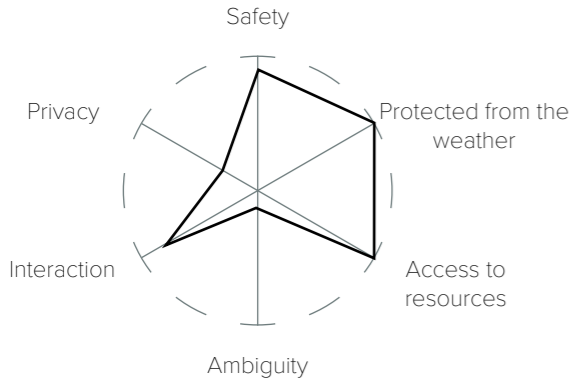
Places of hospitality

Activity:	Temporal / permanent
Source:	Geo analysis
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Function / interior



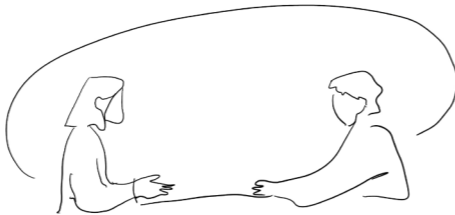
Vecteezy

Informal care centers, driven by a deep commitment to aid, play a significant role in supporting vulnerable populations. One such example is the Sisters of Theresa in Rotterdam, whose residence warmly welcomes those in need. They generously offer meals to homeless individuals several times a week, embodying their dedication to serving the community.

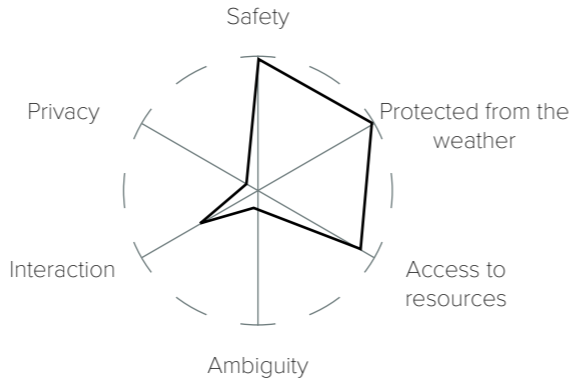


Guidance

Activity:	Temporal
Source:	Geo analysis
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Function / interior

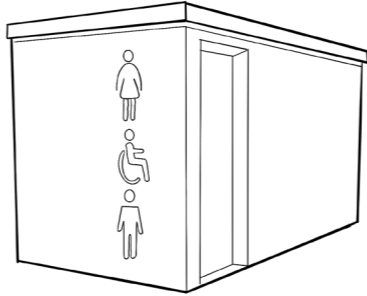


There are many social services important for people. Numerous social services are vital for individuals experiencing homelessness, offering crucial support to help them regain stability. For instance, organisations like CVD assist people in securing housing and establishing a sense of home. Access to such assistance is facilitated exclusively through Centraal Onthaal.

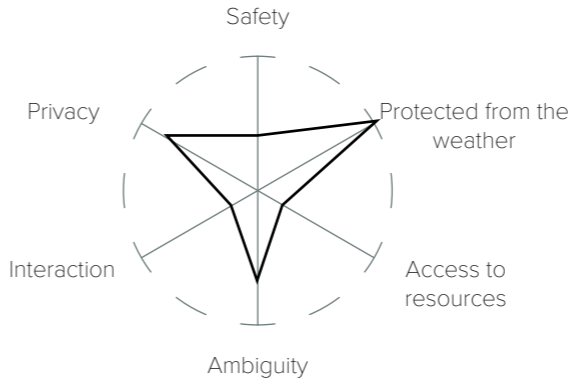


Public toilets

Activity:	Aid
Source:	Geo analysis
Users:	Mainly rough sleepers
Scale	Function



Public toilets come in two main types: standalone units accessible from public spaces, and those within establishments but open to all. The ones in public space are often more accessible to homeless people.



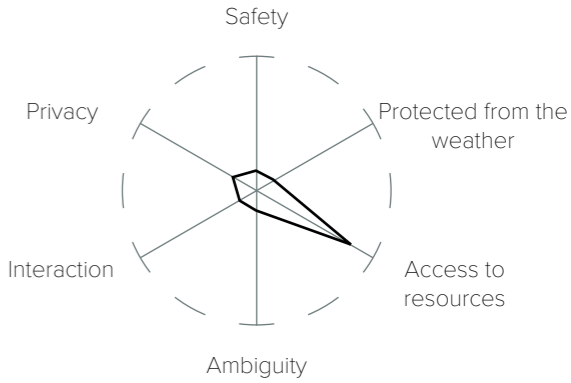
Public drinking water points

Activity:	Aid
Source:	Geo analysis
Users:	Mainly rough sleepers
Scale	Object



Freepik

Access to drinking water points is crucial for individuals experiencing homelessness, as it is one of the basic needs of every human being. These points can be, for instance, public fountains or designated water stations.

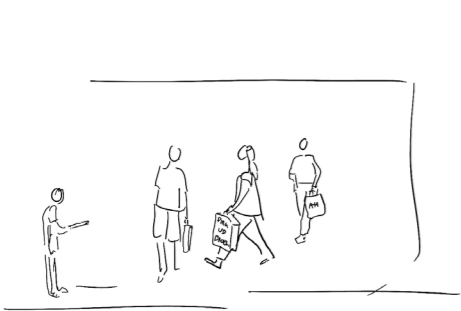


Activity

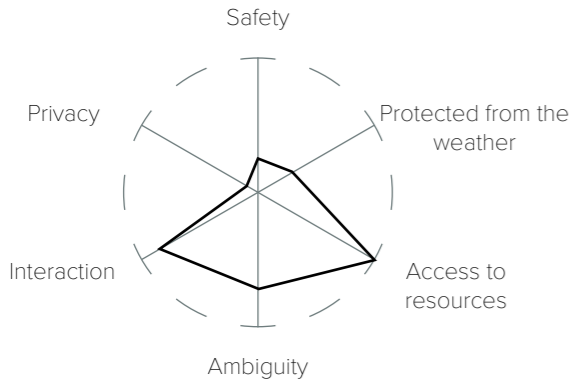
The activities can be related to finding resources, like food or economic sources or movements.

In front of the supermarket

Activity:	Economic
Source:	Observation
Users:	Homeless people without job
Scale	Street/place

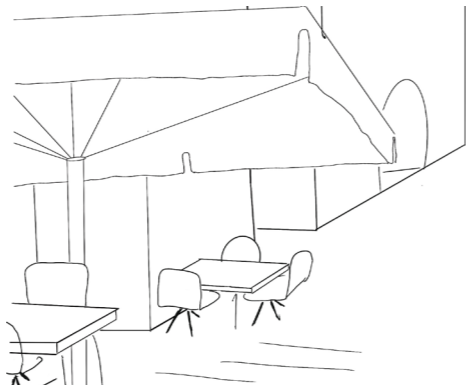


Ethnographical mapping indicates that the area around the supermarket is commonly utilized by homeless individuals. The high amount of people passing through makes it more likely for them to find some money, leftover food, or returnable bottles.

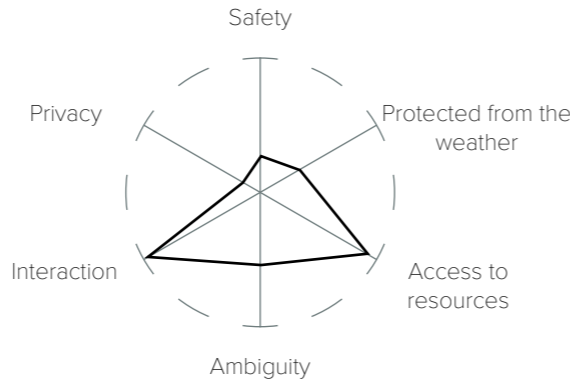


Around bars and nightclubs

Activity:	Economic & social
Source:	Observation
Users:	Homeless people without job
Scale	Street / place



The area around café's and bars serves a similar purpose as the area around the supermarket. Mostly in the evenings bars and café's are places where many people gather in public space, which offers the opportunities to ask for money, or find leftover food or returnable bottles.

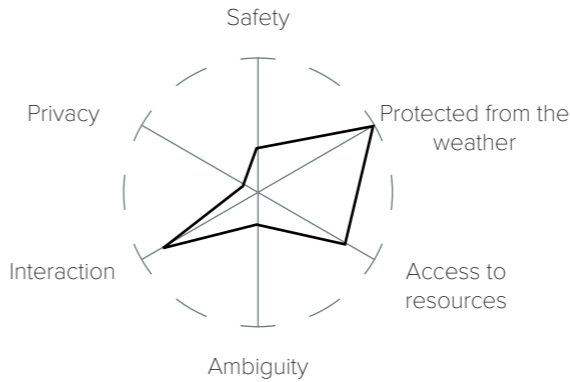


Inside the supermarket

Activity:	Economic
Source:	Observation
Users:	Homeless people without job
Scale	Interior

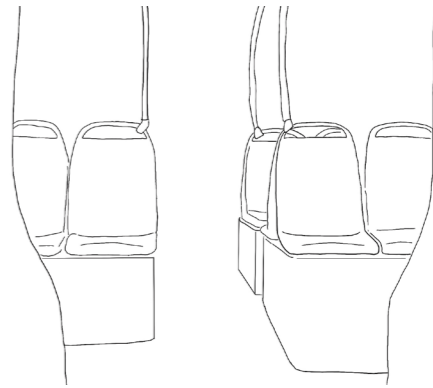


The machine to return bottles has gotten a more important role since returning plastic bottles also gives you money. In many supermarkets this area is often used by homeless people. Many supermarkets moved it to the entrance, to avoid homeless people from entering the store.

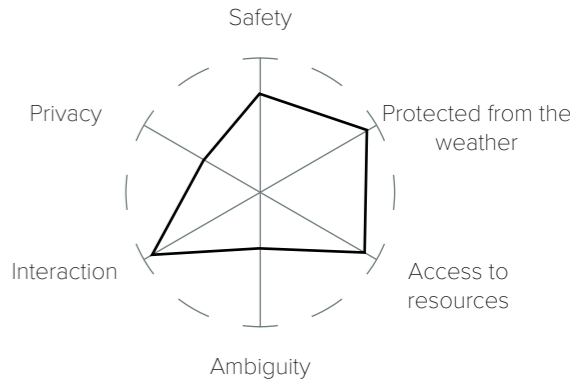


Public transport

Activity:	Movement
Source:	Interviews
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	City

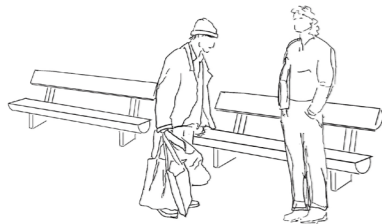


Public transport like the tram and metro are ways to get around in the city when you do not own a car. Some homeless people tend to fall asleep in the tram or metro and are then often fined and thrown out. Women in the shelter use public transport when they do not want to walk or when their destination is too far to walk.

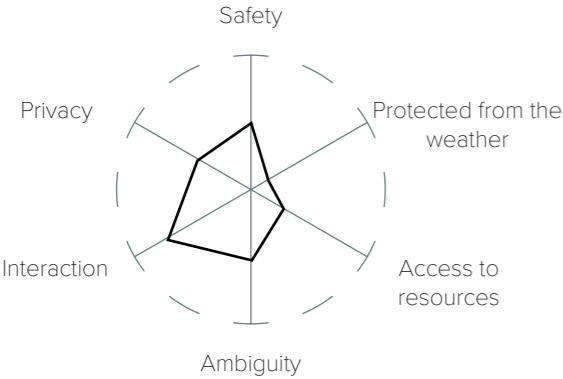


Around a bench

Activity:	Place to interact
Source:	Observation
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Street/place

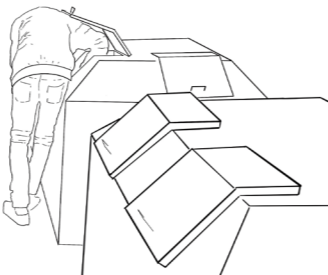


A bench can strongly define the place around it. Benches often become larger places of interaction and group forming.

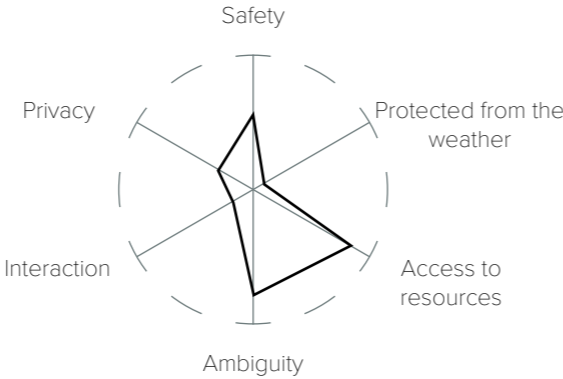


Bins

Activity:	Economic
Source:	Observation
Users:	Homeless people without job
Scale	Object



Main findings in bins are food or bottles. Since one year the bin also serves as a informal economy when returning bottles made you earn money.



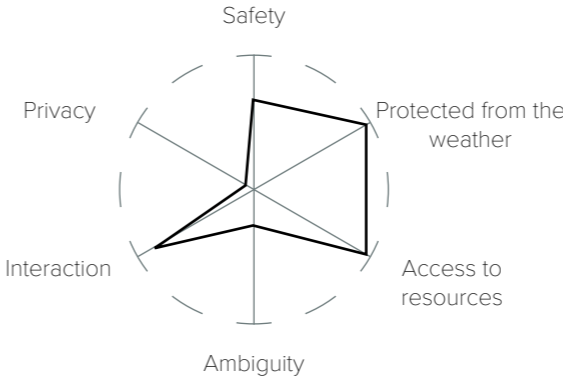
Night shops

Activity:	Resources
Source:	Interviews
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Function



Fiverr

Night shops are crucial for people living on the streets, being one of the few places open at night and often welcoming to them. However, many homeless individuals use these shops mainly to buy alcohol. Those in shelters have curfews, so they do not typically use night shops.

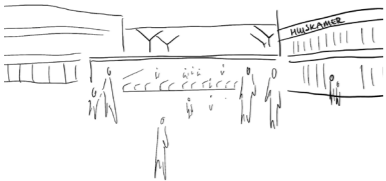


Stay

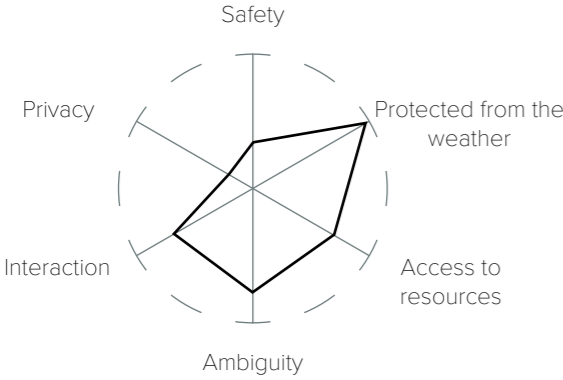
Places of stay can be places where homeless individuals seek for shelter from the weather, a place to rest or a place to spend the night.

Central station hall

Activity:	Temporal / rough sleeping
Source:	Interviews & news
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Interior



Interviews showed that the Central station hall is commonly used by rough sleepers to find shelter from the weather. The Central station of Rotterdam also has a ‘living room’ where they often stay. Falling asleep in the central hall also gets you a fine from the police or you risks your stuff getting stolen. This makes it a very unsafe space.

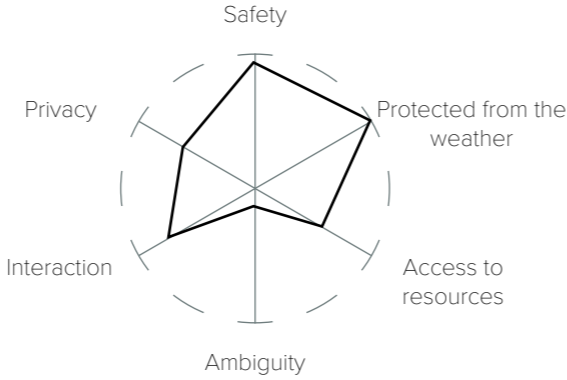


Library

Activity:	Temporal
Source:	Observation & Interviews
Users:	Homeless people without a job
Scale	Function



Libraries serve as invaluable havens for the homeless community. They provide a welcoming space for all, offering access to computers for those without their own, opportunities for reading, and a sense of privacy. Leeszaal west is an example where you can read and bring books home for free and buy coffee for 50cents. The readingroom is a warm interior that welcomes everybody.



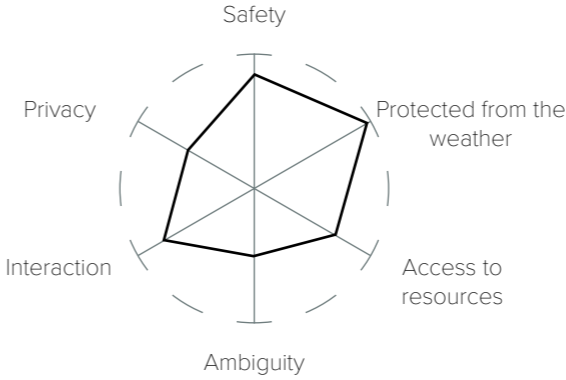
Starbucks

Activity:	Temporal
Source:	Interviews & news
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Functions



Tripadvisor

The Starbucks is often used by homeless people as a warm interior where you can stay without having to order something. It is also used to charge their phones.



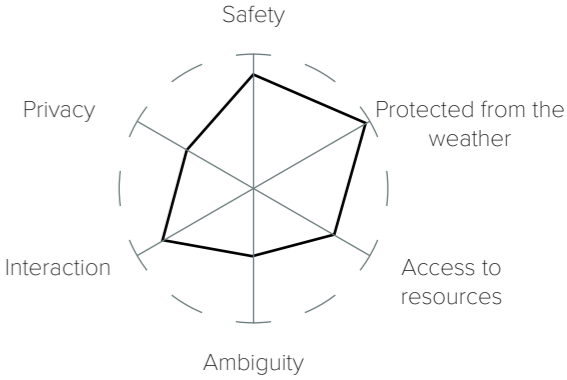
McDonalds

Activity:	Temporal
Source:	Observation & news
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Function



Mei architecten

The McDonalds is, just like the Starbucks, a place that holds a kind of anonymity. You can walk in, use the bathroom, charge your phone, enjoy the warmth without paying.



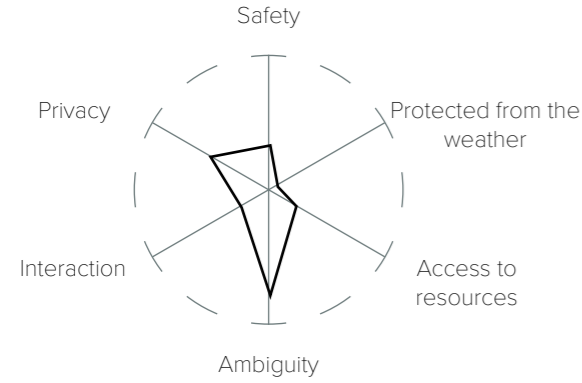
Desolate areas

Activity:	Rough sleeping
Source:	Literature & Interviews
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Place



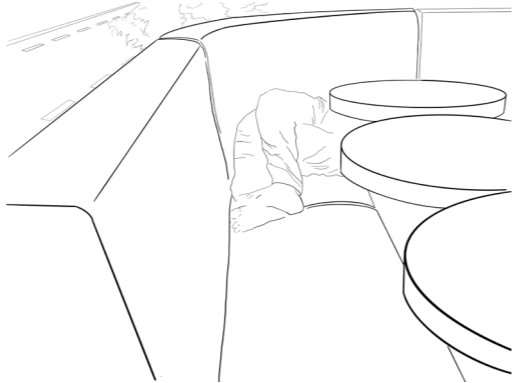
BN de stem

Homeless individuals sometimes seek shelter in abandoned places like desolate train stations, unused houses (through squatting), or burned-down buildings. While providing temporary refuge, these locations pose risks to safety and health due to lack of infrastructure and exposure to hazards. Additionally, using abandoned properties without permission can lead to legal issues.

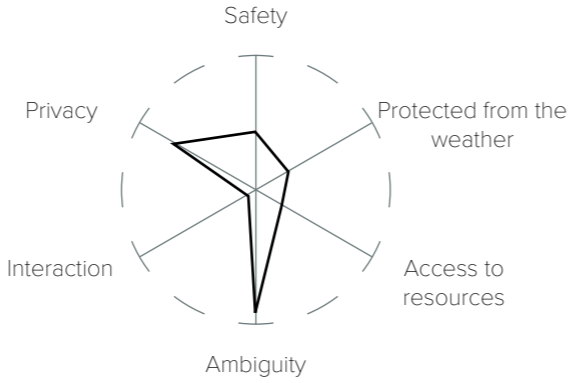


Closed terraces

Activity:	Rough sleeping / temporal
Source:	Interviews
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Object

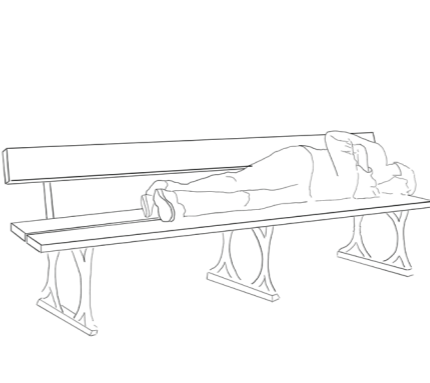


Interviews, observation and also news articles show that some rough sleepers use abandoned terraces as a place to sleep. They are often covered of have benches to sleep on.

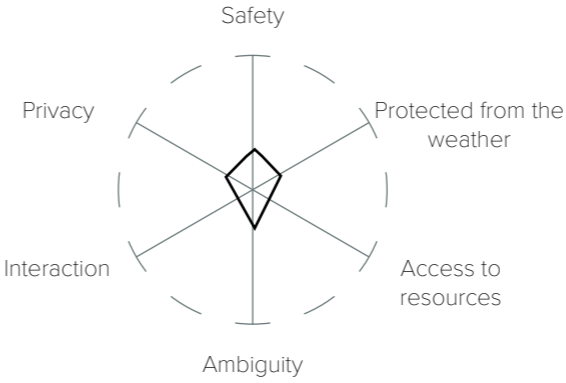


Sleeping proof bench

Activity:	Rough sleeping
Source:	Interviews & observation
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Object



A bench is a commonly known place for homeless people to sleep on. Currently many benches have however become 'hostile', with holes, weird shapes or steel bars to prevent people from sleeping on them.



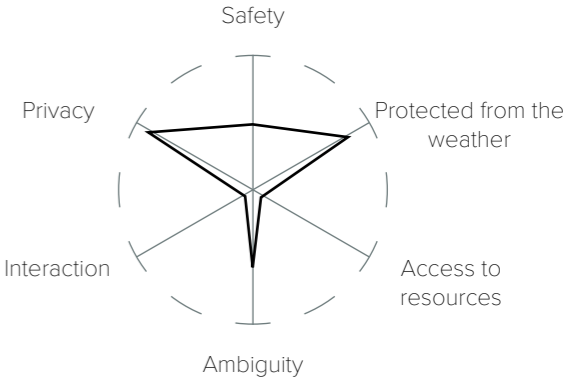
Under a bridge

Activity:	Rough sleeping
Source:	Observation & news
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Place



Caveman010

Bridges are commonly utilised by homeless individuals for shelter, offering some privacy and protection. However, they are less preferred during colder months due to their exposure to wind and cold. Nevertheless, their quiet and secluded nature still makes them appealing as hidden spots away from the urban hustle and bustle.



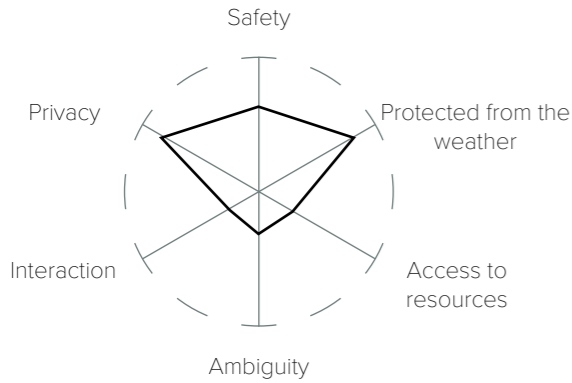
Parking garage

Activity:	Rough sleeping
Source:	Interviews & news
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Place



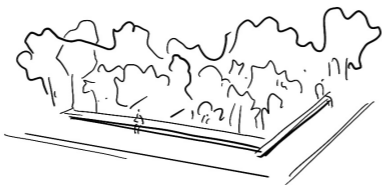
Peter van Beek

Interviews and news articles showed that some rough sleepers appropriated parking garages during the night to spend the night. Parking garages for offices and shops are often unused and empty in the night. The parking garages that are above the ground are easy to enter.

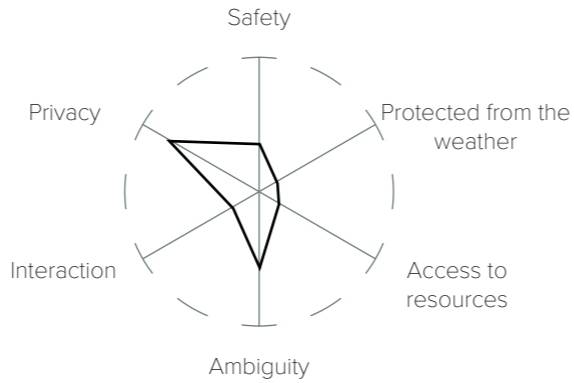


Parks

Activity:	Temporal / rough sleeping
Source:	Interviews & news
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Place

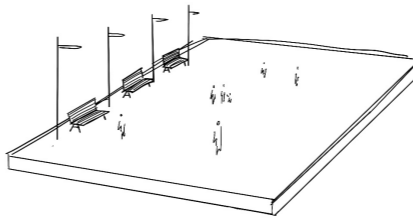


Parks serve as spaces for temporary stays, relaxation, and social gatherings for people from all walks of life. However, interviews have revealed that some parks also serve as overnight shelters for rough sleepers.

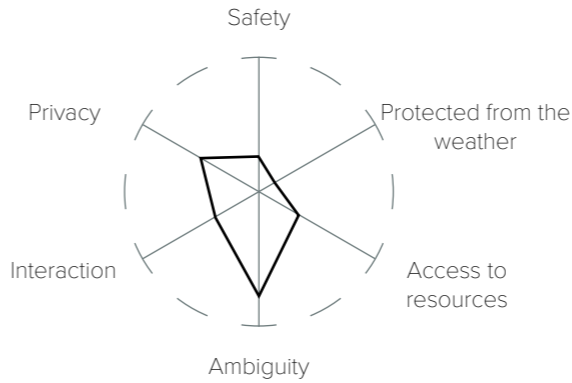


Public square

Activity:	Temporal stay
Source:	Observation & interviews
Users:	All types of homeless people
Scale	Place



Public squares, such as Schouwburgplein, are bustling places used by the public for various activities like socialising, leisure, and events. However, it is observed that homeless individuals sometimes find refuge in these spaces, congregating there for shelter and community.

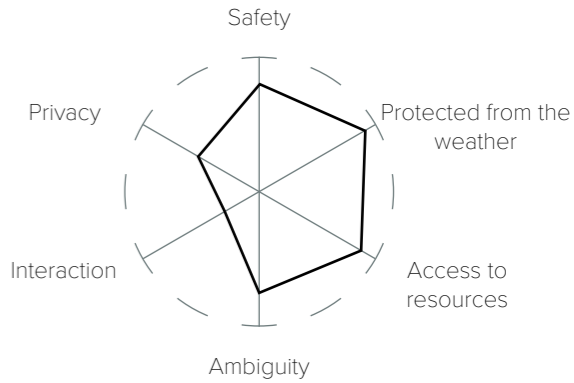


Porch

Activity:	Temporal / rough sleeping
Source:	Observation & news
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Edge

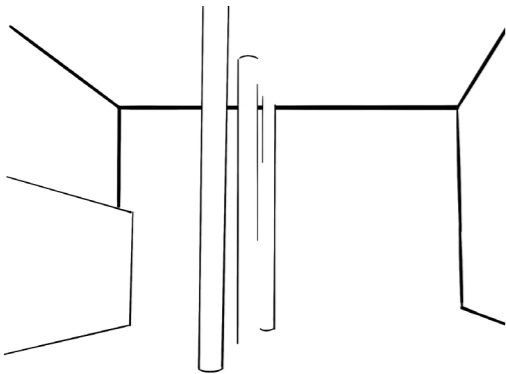


Porches (“portieken” in Dutch) can hold significance for homeless individuals within an urban environment. Porches, being transitional zones between public and private spaces, may lack a clear ownership. Porches also offer protection from weather conditions such as rain and wind.

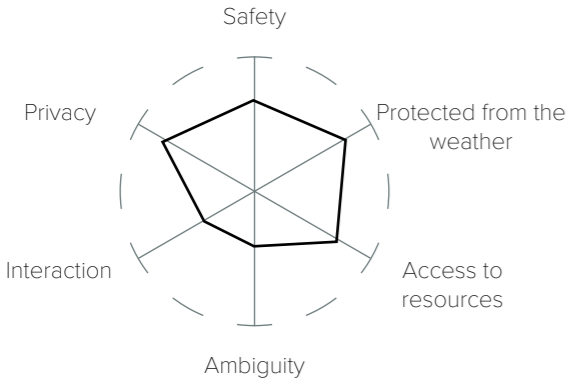


Under an overhang / canopy

Activity:	Temporal
Source:	Observation
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Edge

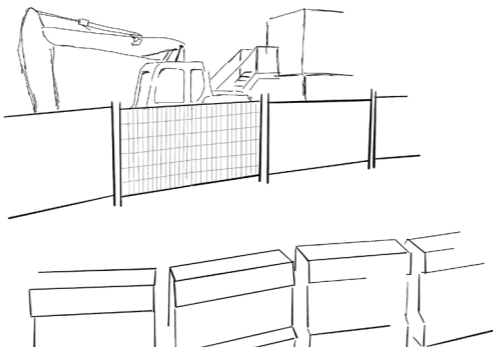


An overhang or canopy offers protection from the rain and gives a certain feeling of shelter. It is often used as a place of temporal rest while interactions can still take place. This is more commonly used by people without a place in a shelter.

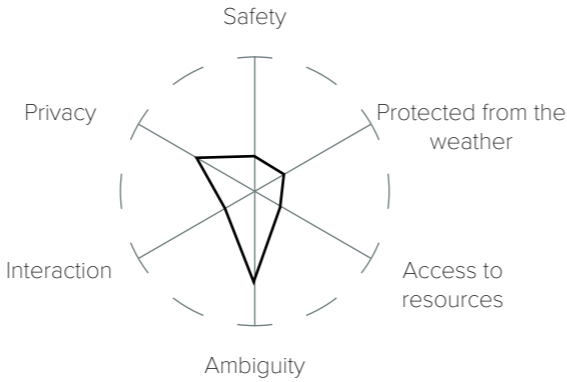


In the unfinished

Activity:	Rough sleeping
Source:	Observation
Users:	Rough sleepers
Scale	Place / building



Observing fieldwork showed that homeless people start appropriating space when there are little signs of care. Unfinished building site or renovation areas that are left are spots to sleep where nobody will bother you and tell you to leave as its ownership is ambiguous....



# Graduation timeline

