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Third Place &
Third Phase

Graduation Report

Graduation Report

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Foreword

This graduation report is the completion of my graduation project within the Master's program of Architecture at Delft University of Technology. The project was developed within the Designing for Health and Care graduation studio, in which I researched how architecture can contribute to well-being and social connection of younger and older people in Houtwijk, The Hague.

An important reason for choosing this design studio was the human-centered approach of it. In my opinion, conducting conversations with residents, experts, and stakeholders, organising workshops, and learning to understand a neighbourhood are essential parts of architecture. This process learned me that architecture is not just a spatial discipline, but also involves listening and responding to make suitable design choices.

Additionally, this process has made me aware that graduating is not only about developing a design. Graduating helped me better understand which parts of design process give me energy, and which do less. I found the continuous back-and-forth with the neighbourhood, and the translation of these insights into a context specific design concept the most interesting.

Therefore, I would like to thank all residents, experts, and stakeholders who participated in interviews, workshops, and conversations. Their input has been of great value to this research and its outcome.

Finally, I would like to thank my supervisors for their guidance, feedback, and support in this process.

Madelief Bergevoet

Abstract

This graduation research explores how architecture can contribute to the mental well-being and social connection of residents in Houtwijk, a neighbourhood in The Hague.

The research focuses on two groups: younger people in the emerging adulthood phase and older people in the third phase of life. Younger people in Houtwijk need third places outside of home and school/work where they can spend time, study, and meet others. Older people need places where they can be of significance to others and remain part of society. Despite the different life stages, both groups have overlapping spatial and social needs and can benefit from each other.

The experiences, needs, and perspectives of residents from Houtwijk form the basis of this study. Through a human-centered approach, including conversations, observations and working in the neighbourhood, the dynamics, opportunities, and challenges are analysed. These insights are combined and supplemented with existing literature.

The result is a design proposal for a public multifunctional building, a third place, that brings together a variety of functions and connects existing green structures. The design provides space for meeting, activities, and intergenerational contact, and focuses on how younger and older people can learn from and support each other. This ultimately supports the well-being and social connection of both age groups.

Reading Guide

This report brings together research, theory, and design and is structured as follows.

The first chapter introduces the context of Houtwijk and states the general problems. This leads to a specific problem statement that serves as a guideline for further research. This specific problem statement is translated into a main research question and four sub-questions. In Chapter 2, the methodology of the research and existing data on the topic are described, that will function as the foundation for the research.

The research questions are answered in Chapter 3 based on observations, conversations, and workshops with residents of Houtwijk, and are supplemented by relevant literature. The combination of local insights and theoretical knowledge forms the basis for the design proposal.

Chapter 4 presents the conclusion of the research and how this is translated into a design brief. Additionally, the chapter explains the design concept and presents the final outcome.

The report concludes with a discussion on the significance of the design and on the research and design process in Chapter 5.

This research uses quotes derived from interviews, workshops, and participatory meetings with residents of Houtwijk, as well as stakeholders and experts, conducted in 2025 and 2026. The interviews are transcribed in Dutch by the author. When a quote is used in the text it is identified by a corresponding letter and number, referring to an interview (I), a workshop (W), or a participatory meeting (P). All quotes used in the body of the text have been translated from Dutch by the author. Some details are changed or left out to keep the participants anonymous.

Note: *For privacy reasons, the interview transcripts are not included in the repository version of this graduation report. Consequently, the reference numbers attached to the quotes do not correspond to full interview transcripts. If access to a complete interview is required, please contact the author of this graduation report.*

1.	Introduction	10
1.0	General Introduction	11
1.1	Generic Problem Statement	12
1.2	Specific Problem Statement	14
1.3	Research Questions	16
1.4	Scope	17
2.	Approach	18
2.0	Methods	20
2.1	Theoretical Framework	22
3.	Results	28
3.0	Sub-Question 1.	30
3.1	Sub-Question 2.	34
3.2	Sub-Question 3.	38
3.3	Sub-Question 4.	42
4.	Design	46
4.0	Conclusion	48
4.1	Design Brief	50

4.2	Location	52
4.3	Concept	56
5.	Discussion	76
5.0	Implications & Recommendations	78
5.1	Reflection	79
6.	Extra	80
6.0	References	82

Introduction

- 1.0 General Introduction
- 1.1 Generic Problem Statement
- 1.2 Specific Problem Statement
- 1.3 Research Questions
- 1.4 Scope

1.

1.0 General Introduction

The Volksgezondheidstoekomstverkenning (2020) identifies mental health as one of the significant future health risks in the Netherlands. Mental health issues, such as stress, loneliness, and anxiety, occur across all age groups and have increased in recent years. However, mental well-being is crucial, when people feel mentally well, they generally stay healthier for longer and recover more quickly from illnesses (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2025). Because well-being is a growing societal concern, it serves as the overarching theme of this research, within the local context of Houtwijk.

Houtwijk is a 1980s Dutch neighbourhood in The Hague, characterised by single family houses, (high-rise) apartment buildings, and the strong presence of green and blue structures (Gemeente Den Haag, 2023). Its layout is primarily organised around housing and circulation, with limited places and facilities that support longer stays (Group Research Report Designing for Health & Care Graduation Studio, 2026, pp. 30-96).

The motivation for this research stems from societal concerns about mental well-being and the belief that the built environment plays a significant role in people's daily functioning and social experiences in neighbourhood environments. The objective of this research is to understand the contextual challenges in Houtwijk through fieldwork and research. It also explores how architectural design can react to these challenges and how this can contribute to the mental well-being of its residents.



Figure 1
Urban context map indicating the location of Houtwijk
source: Google Earth, author's visualisation

1.1 Generic Problem Statement

The Netherlands is facing an aging population. In 2025, 20.8% of the total population was 65 years or older, and will rise even further in the coming years (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2026). This national demographic trend is also visible at the neighbourhood level of Houtwijk, where the population of older people is higher than in the rest of The Hague (Lorenz, 2022, p.11), with 3,000 residents aged 65 and older, representing 25% of the neighbourhood's total population (Alle Cijfers, 2025). A significant portion of this group belongs to the 'young' older people (65–75 years), with approximately 14% of the total population.

Many of these older people have lived in Houtwijk since the building period of the single family homes in the 1980s. Nowadays, these houses are still often occupied by these (older) people. Due to their attachment to the neighbourhood and living environment, the willingness to move in this group is low (Lorenz, 2022, p. 11; I18, I19). This leads to limited 'doorstroming', with relatively large homes being occupied at low density. At the same time, many of these houses are not age-friendly and are therefore less suitable for this aging population group (P1).

In addition, the aging population leads to an increasing demand for care. More than 50% of the older people in Houtwijk suffer from one or more chronic conditions, and about 25% experience physical limitations (AlleCijfers, 2025). As a result, the demand for home care and

community nursing is growing (RIVM, 2026). The aging population also increases the risk of loneliness, sometimes due to the loss of their social networks. In Houtwijk, over 50% of the elderly experience loneliness, of which around 10% experience severe loneliness (AlleCijfers, 2025).

Furthermore, the neighbourhood is dealing with annoyance caused by youth groups in the form of graffiti, fireworks, scooter nuisance, and incidents such as stabbings. This leads to an increased sense of insecurity and reduced livability in the neighbourhood (Kooopen, 2024). As a result, residents report that they no longer feel safe in public spaces, such as in Bokkefort Park (Group Research Report Designing for Health & Care Graduation Studio, 2026). Bokkefort Park is an important meeting place for residents, but due to the sense of unsafety and incidents, it is losing its social function and residents avoid this area. The shopping center in Houtwijk also experiences these forms of nuisance (Uduba, 2024). The presence of loitering youths can point to a lack of suitable facilities and activities for younger people, that leads to boredom (I22).

Finally, Houtwijk faces a physical and social division. The Houtwijklaan cuts the neighbourhood into two parts, referred to as Houtwijk 1 (north) and Houtwijk 2 (south). This separation is not only spatial but is also experienced socially and mentally by residents (Lo-

renz, 2022, p. 11; Group Research Report Designing for Health & Care Graduation Studio, 2026). This perceived duality contributes to the absence of social cohesion within the neighbourhood:

“Houtwijklaan really feels like a boundary between Houtwijk 1 and 2.” (I13)

“The two parts (of the neighbourhood) are experienced very differently.” (P4)

“There is a clear duality between both parts of the neighbourhood.” (I5)

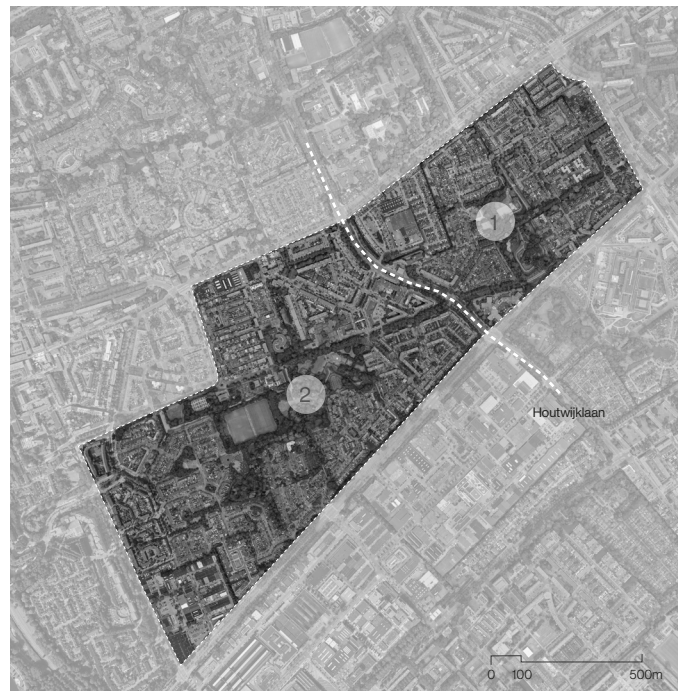


Figure 2
Urban map indicating the division of Houtwijk into Houtwijk 1 and Houtwijk 2 by the Houtwijklaan
source: Google Earth;
author's visualisation

1.2 Specific Problem Statement

Third Place & Third Phase 3²

In Houtwijk, there is a mismatch between the available facilities and the needs of younger people aged approximately 18 to 25 (Group Research Report Designing for Health & Care Graduation Studio, 2025, p.92). This age group represents around 10% of the total population of Houtwijk (Alle Cijfers, 2025). Interviews with local young people show that they experience a lack of so-called third places¹ (Oldenburg, 1989, p.16), such as meeting spaces, study spaces, and leisure facilities. They report that "there is nothing for young people to do in the neighbourhood" (I5) and therefore leave Houtwijk to other parts of the city for these facilities.

However, the presence of third places in neighbourhoods is important, because they stimulate social interaction and a sense of connection, which contributes to overall well-being (Littman, 2022, p. 438). Furthermore, these spaces strengthen feelings of attachment to a place and build social ties within neighbourhoods (Gehl, 2011).

Third places are especially important for younger people, because they are in a developmental phase in which they face physical, emotional, and social challenges. Access to public spaces contributes to their developmental processes, such as building self-esteem and self-identity, and supporting the development from youth to adult. Moreover, public spaces are often the only places where younger people can meet others

outside their homes and without supervision (Höglhammer et al., 2018, pp. 815-816). Therefore, the presence of public (youth) spaces is crucial for spending time together, engaging in leisure activities, and socialising (Ismael, 2024, p. 23). But, currently, Houtwijk does not function as a neighbourhood that stimulates these forms of engagement, but rather as an area where youth move through without it playing any meaningful role in their lives. This results in a neighbourhood where younger people feel less connected to.

Parallel to the issues faced by younger people, the population of older people in Houtwijk is relatively high (Lorenz, 2022, p.11). At the same time, the number of healthy life years after retirement is increasing. Nowadays, people have an average of 20 years in relatively good health, referred to as the 'third phase' (Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving, 2020, p. 12).

Older people in the third phase are no longer required to work, but they often still have the desire and the ability to engage in activities and to contribute to other and society. Yet, society offers too few opportunities for this, resulting in much of the potential of older people remaining unused. Many older people want to remain meaningful and socially engaged after retirement, which helps them maintain contact and prevents loneliness. Current policies and arrangements pay insufficient attention to the value of this phase of life and to

¹ Third places are places outside the home, work, and school place

what older people can and want to contribute (Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving, 2020; Zantinge et al., 2011, p. 7).

Importantly, social interaction, cognitive engagement, and physical activity of older people contribute significantly to overall well-being and the prevention of age-related conditions. Making it less likely for older people to enter the fourth phase of life, when intensive care and support is needed (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau 2024; Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving, 2020). But even older people who are ill are not necessarily limited in their functioning (Zantinge et al., 2011, p.71), and can therefore still contribute to society. Furthermore, the valuable knowledge and experience of older people, referred to as 'verzilvering' (Zantinge et al., 2011, p. 5), will be lost due to insufficient opportunities for participation.

In summary, there is a dual challenge, younger people in Houtwijk experience a lack of **third places** that support their development, sense of belonging, and overall well-being, while older people in the **third phase** of life lack opportunities to remain active, meaningful, and socially engaged. This results in reduced social cohesion and negatively affects the mental health of both groups within the neighbourhood.

“There is nothing for us young people in the neighbourhood [...] That is why I am never there.” (I5)

“I literally cannot think of anything I could do in the neighbourhood.” (I5)

1.3 Research Questions

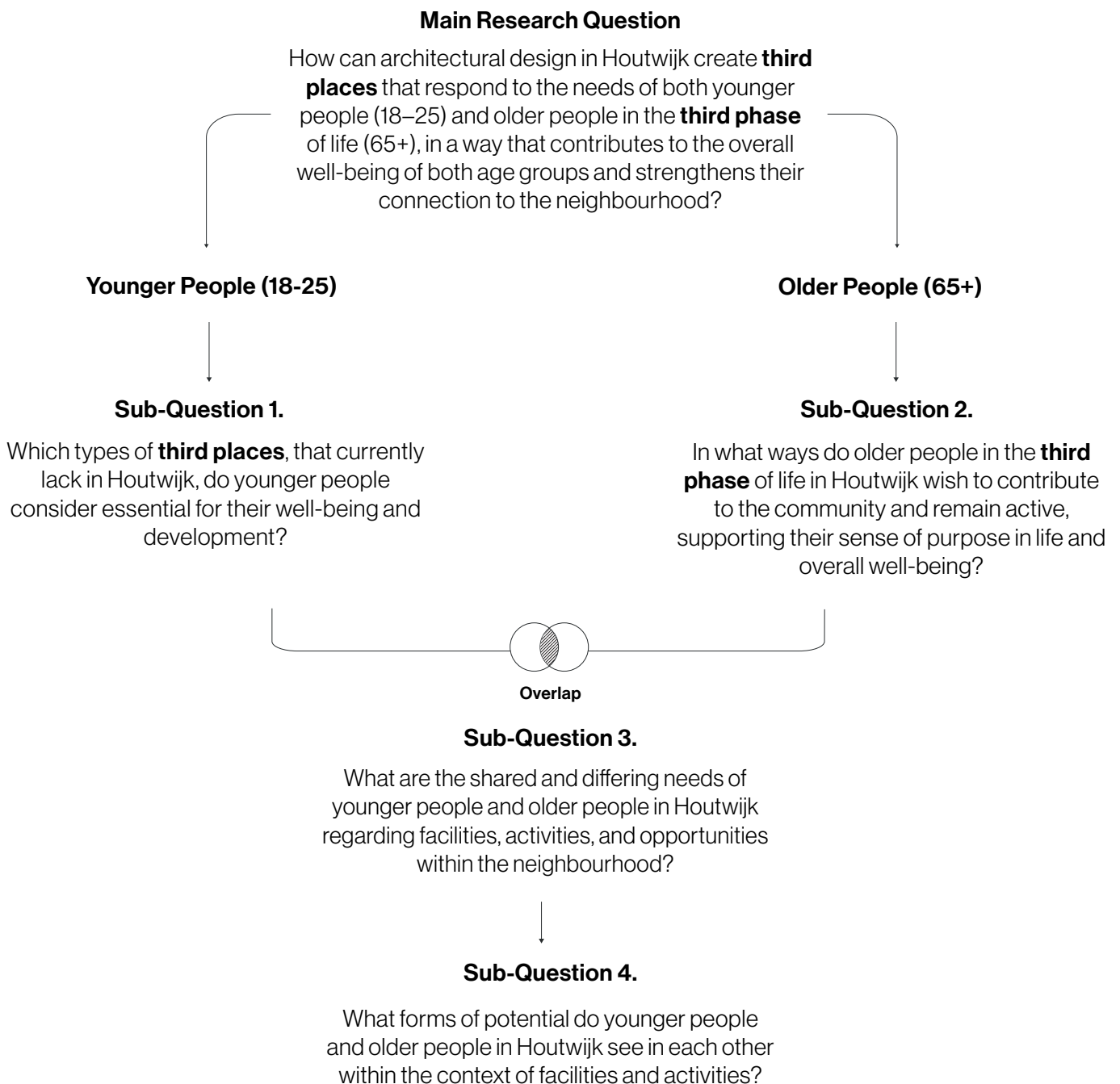


Figure 3
Main research question and four sub-questions

1.4 Scope

The geographical scope of this research is limited to Houtwijk. The objective is to develop context specific insights through research in Houtwijk and with its residents. Although the research focuses on this specific neighbourhood, existing literature and case studies from outside Houtwijk and the Netherlands are used to deepen this research and provide theoretical comparative data.

The target group for the research consists of two age groups:

- **Younger people** between the ages of 18 and 25
- **Older people** aged 65 and older

These age groups are selected because both groups receive relatively little attention in the provision of facilities and opportunities in Houtwijk or in broader society.

The 18–25 age group is defined because it includes younger people who have a certain level of autonomy and are building independent social lives, while often still living with their parents and therefore remaining (assigned) connected to Houtwijk. This life phase is also a crucial transitional period from adolescence to adulthood, known as emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000), during which younger people develop their identity, independence, and sense of belonging.

The 65+ age group is selected because many individuals in this age group are in the third phase of life and want to remain active and contribute to society and the community. But, they often encounter limited opportunities to do so.

While this research focuses on these two age groups, it does not exclude other age groups. They may also benefit from the insights and outcomes of this research. The selected age groups, therefore, function as a focus point, but not a strict boundary.

Approach

2.0 Methods

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.

2.0 Methods

This research uses a qualitative and exploratory research method, combining existing literature research with fieldwork data from Houtwijk. The goal is to gain an understanding of the experiences, needs, and perspectives of both younger and older residents in the neighbourhood.

Existing Data

The research starts with an analysis of existing literature, data, and relevant studies, which form the theoretical framework. Demographic data and neighbourhood numbers describe the context of Houtwijk.

Data from Houtwijk

To understand the local context, this research collects qualitative data in Houtwijk through interviews, workshops, and observations. These methods explore both the expressed needs and actual use of the neighbourhood.

Interviews

Interviews and conversations with younger people (18–25) and older people (65+), help to address the sub-questions. The conversations focus on daily use of the neighbourhood, perceived shortcomings in facilities, social needs, and participation.

Furthermore, interviews with stakeholders and experts of Houtwijk are used to gain an understanding of context specific topics, such as green structures, facilities and site specific data.

Observations

Observations at different times and locations in the

neighbourhood examine the use of public spaces, where encounters occur, and where they are lacking. The observations deepen the interview data and compare expressed needs with actual behaviour.

Participation

Participatory methods, such as workshops and drawing exercises engage younger and older people in the design process, allowing them to share needs, wishes, and ideas.

1.

Street interviews with younger and older residents in the neighbourhood, consisting of short voluntary conversations

2.

Pre-arranged interviews with younger and older residents and with experts and stakeholders in Houtwijk, recruited through personal contacts

3.

Workshops with older residents in Houtwijk, with participants recruited voluntarily through flyers distributed in the neighbourhood

4.

Participatory meeting with older residents and stakeholders in the neighbourhood, organised through personal contact

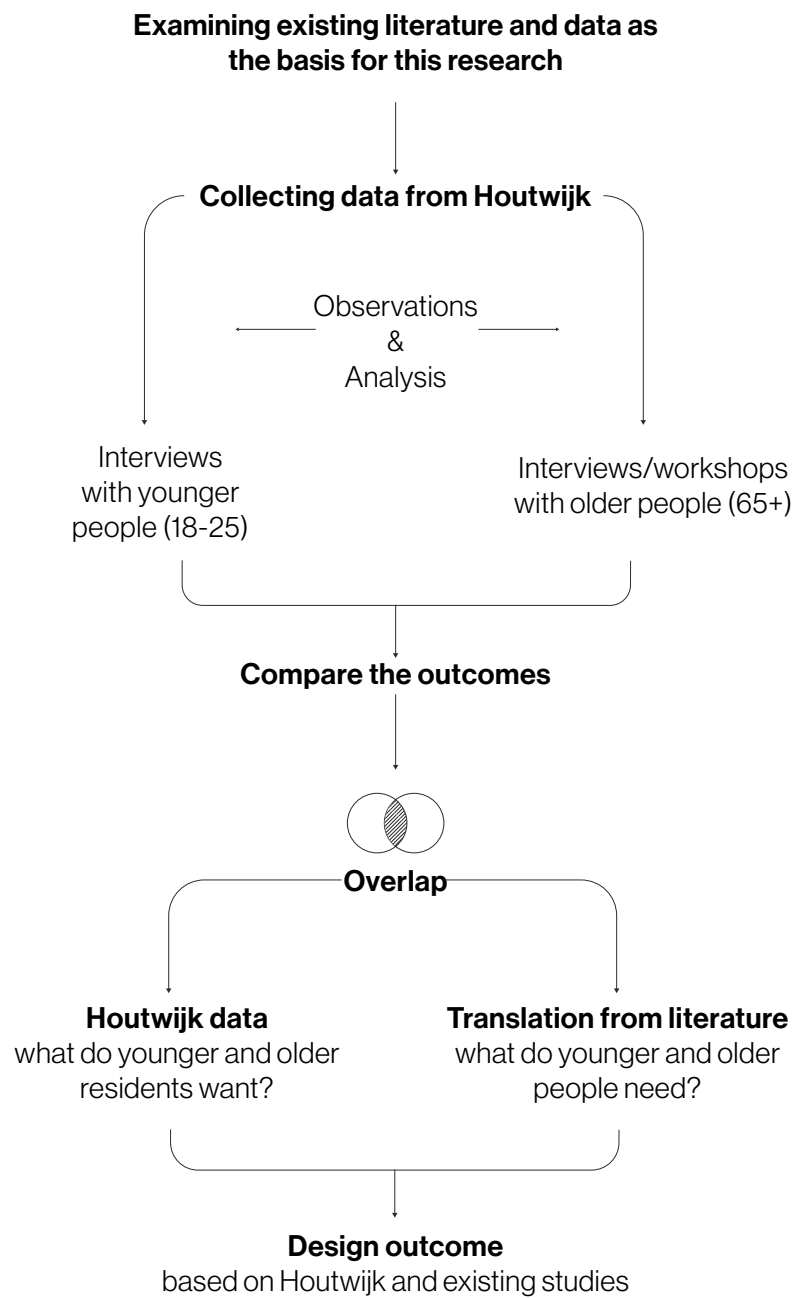


Figure 4
Method scheme

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Mental well-being

This research focuses on mental well-being of younger and older people in neighbourhood environments. In literature, various definitions are used to describe the concept well-being. In this study a combination of existing definitions is used.

Nederlands Jeugdinstituut defines well-being as: the presence of positive emotions, quality of life, and a sense of purpose, influenced by an individual's ability to cope with problems in life. This definition is complemented by the Trimbos Instituut (2023), which states that: mental well-being also involves being able to function well in daily life. These two definitions form the overall definition used in this research:

Well-being: the presence of positive emotions, quality of life, and a sense of purpose, combined with the ability to function effectively in everyday life and to cope with life's problems.

Good mental well-being is essential for individuals, stated by Ministerie van Algemene Zaken (2025), people who feel mentally well generally stay healthy longer and recover more quickly when they become ill. At the same time, they report that an increasing number of people in the Netherlands are experiencing mental health problems, such as loneliness, stress, and a lack of energy. GGD GHOR (2025) adds to this that especially younger people are affected, with one in three experiencing mental health issues. Furthermore, data of Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (2022) show that younger people (aged 12-25) increasingly report feelings of sadness and low mood.

Mental well-being is highly important for older people,

stated by the Trimbos Instituut (2025), good mental health ensures that older people remain active longer, have greater life satisfaction, and are more able to participate in society, which improves their quality of life. However, data from RIVM (2024) indicate that feelings of anxiety and depression are significant among older people (65+), with 39% experiencing these mental issues. Furthermore, Zantinge et al. (2011) state that nearly a third of older people experience moderate to severe loneliness.

This research draws on the studies of Turnbull (2021) and Moore et al. (2023), that describe the impact of neighbourhood environment on people's well-being. Turnbull (2021) states that socially cohesive neighbourhoods increase levels of well-being and lower distress. Moore et al. (2023) note that social engagement and sense of community attachment are related with lower feelings of loneliness. Specifically for younger people (aged 16-24) who experience a lower sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, report feelings of loneliness more often. Additionally, a large distance to needed facilities is also linked to loneliness among younger people according to Moore et al. (2023).

Third Place

This thesis draws on the concept of third places because of their importance in supporting well-being, social bonds, and community feeling. The concept was introduced by urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1932), who describes third places as informal public meeting places outside the home and work place. He emphasises their importance in neighbourhoods, because they provide a counterbalance to stress, loneliness, alienation, and boredom. The presence of other people in these spaces plays a central role in this counterbalance

(Oldenburg, 1989, pp. 20–32). Oldenburg describes eight characteristics that define third places (Figure 5).

According to Oldenburg, types of third places could include bars, coffee shops, general stores, lounges, saloons, pool halls, bingo halls, and youth recreation centres. Due to the broad interpretation of third places, all public spaces where people can meet are considered third places within this research.

Third places: (informal) public places, where people can meet each other outside their home and work place.

Höglhammer et al. (2018) state that public spaces play a crucial role in leisure, recreation, and physical activity and thereby contributing to the overall quality of life in cities. For younger people, these are particularly important places to meet peers outside parental or school supervision. Moreover, activities in public spaces contribute to their developmental processes, such as building confidence, strengthening identity, and supporting the transition from youth to adulthood.

Jeffres et al. (2009) and Gehl (2011) further show that third places are also important for neighbourhoods. Third places contribute to a sense of community and connection, supporting better social relationships through informal interactions. According to Jeffers et al. (2009), this leads to stress relief and strengthening feelings of inclusion and belonging. Residents of neighbourhoods with third places experience a higher quality of life within their neighbourhood. Littman (2022) adds that the presence of third places in neighbourhoods contributes to the overall well-being of people.

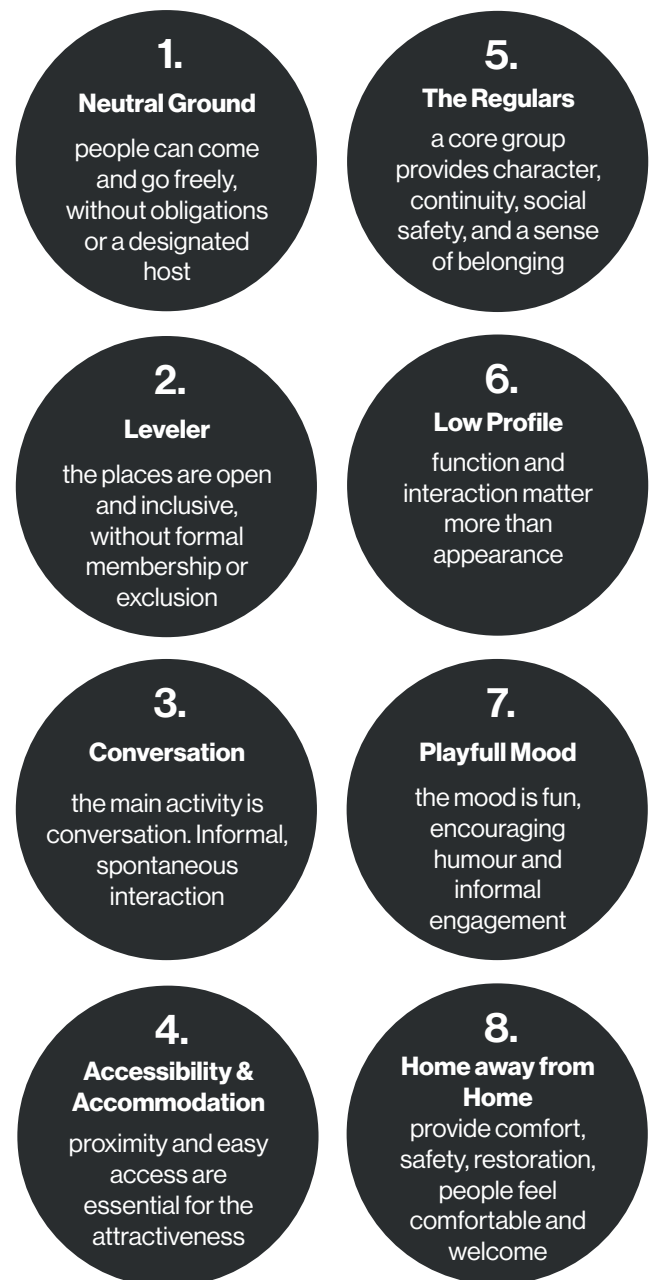


Figure 5
Eight characteristics of a third place based on Oldenburg (1989, pp. 21–41) author's visualisation

Third Phase

This research draws on the concept of the third phase of life and is based on the definition of Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving (2020):

Third phase: the period between active working and the stage of advanced old age and increasing frailty. This phase typically begins after retirement and gradually transitions into the fourth phase of life, when dependence on care and support increases.

Both Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving (2020) and Zantinge et al. (2011) state that the value of the third phase receives insufficient attention in current policies and arrangements. This results in the capacities and the potential of older people in this phase being underused.

Within this research, attention to the third phase of life is essential, as Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving (2020) and Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (2024) state that supporting autonomy, social interaction, and meaningful engagement of older people can delay care need and declining health. Lifestyle factors, such as physical exercise, social interaction, and cognitive activity, can contribute to preventing conditions later in life, such as dementia and loneliness.

Furthermore, this research focuses on the theory of 'verzilvering' given by Zantinge et al. (2011) which states that older people often have valuable knowledge and experience and contribute to society through participation. This research combines *verzilvering* to the third phase of life, with the following definition:

Verzilvering: The active use of older people's knowledge, experience, and capacities to contribute to society, particularly in the third phase of life

According to Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving (2020), three core values are important to all people in the third phase of life:

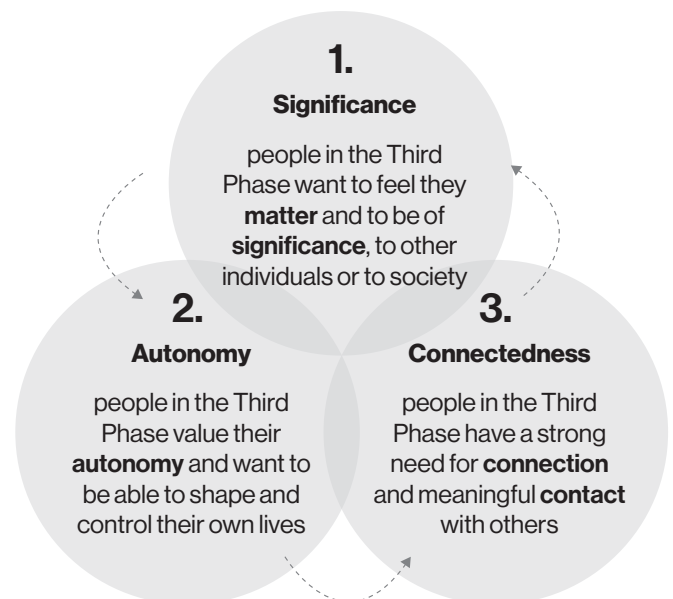


Figure 6
Three core values for people in the third phase based on Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving (2020) author's visualisation

Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a framework that provides insight into the factors that support young people's optimal development. This approach emphasises developmental opportunities that also contribute to their well-being. The model consists of five core components (5Cs): Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring (Figure 7). When a younger person develops each of these five Cs, they are considered 'thriving', and this leads to a sixth C: Contribution (Lerner et al., 2005).

This study links the 6C model to Arnett's theory of Emerging Adulthood (2005), which refers to the life stage from approximately 18 to 25 years.

Emerging Adulthood: Having left the dependency of childhood behind and not yet having entered the responsibilities that are normative in adulthood. It is a period where many different directions are still possible, the future is largely undecided, and the opportunity for independent exploration of life possibilities is greater than in any other life stage (Arnett, 2000, p. 469).

A key characteristic of emerging adulthood is that it is the life phase in which most identity exploration occurs. Furthermore, the focus gradually shifts to developing independency (autonomy). Younger people becoming self-sufficient, taking responsibility for their own lives and making independent decisions (Arnett, 2000, p.473).

This research combines identity exploration to competence (PYD) and autonomy to character (PYD), as these factors overlap.

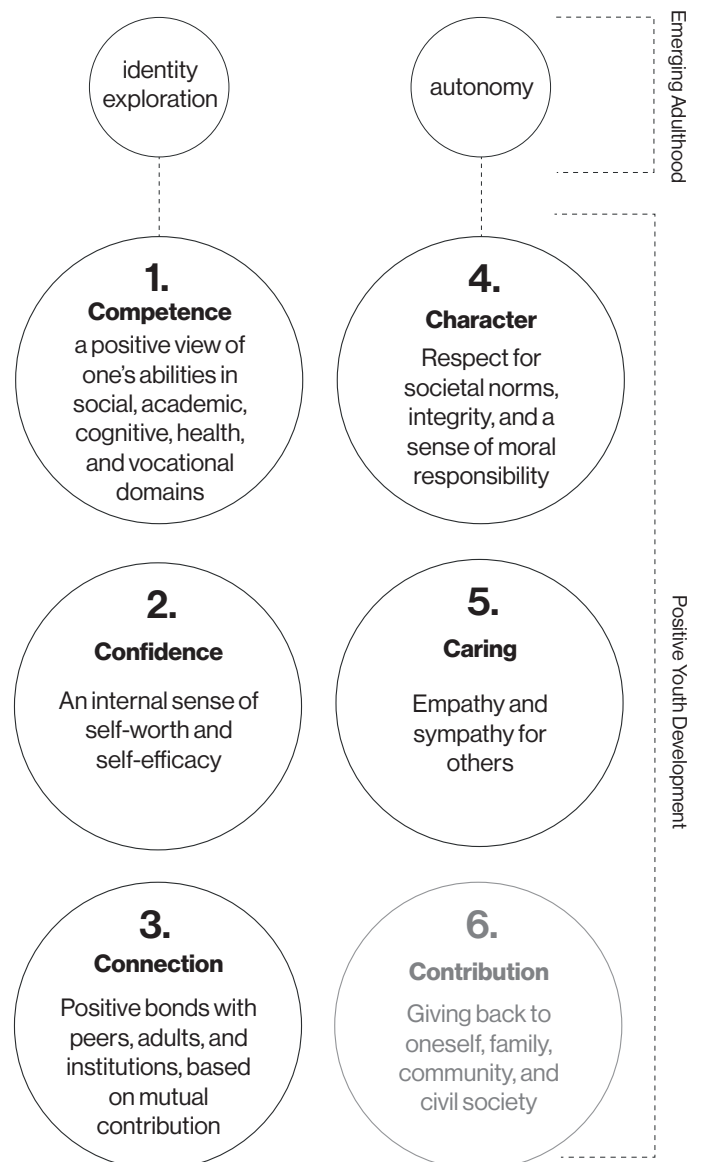


Figure 7
6 C's of positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2005), combined with emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) author's visualisation

Characteristics Third Place

3. Conversation
the main activity is conversation. Informal, spontaneous interaction

Significance emerges through exchange (conversations)

5. The Regulars
a core group provides character, continuity, social safety, and a sense of belonging

Being needed somewhere implies continuity

1. Neutral Ground
people can come and go freely, without obligations or a designated host

Autonomy exists when it is voluntary and not mandatory

4. Accessibility & Accommodation
proximity and easy access are essential for the attractiveness

Autonomy exists when access is easy

Core Values Third Phase

1. Significance
people in the Third Phase want to feel they **matter** and to be of **significance**, to other individuals or to society

2. Autonomy
people in Third Phase want to be able to control their own lives

Positive Youth Development

1. Competence
a positive view of one's abilities in social, academic, cognitive, health, and vocational domains

Applying skills allows a person to contribute meaningfully

6. Contribution
Giving back to oneself, family, community, and civil society

Active contribution directly fulfills the need to feel significant

2. Confidence
An internal sense of self-worth and self-efficacy

Self-confidence strengthens the ability to make self directed choices

Emerging Adulthood

identity exploration

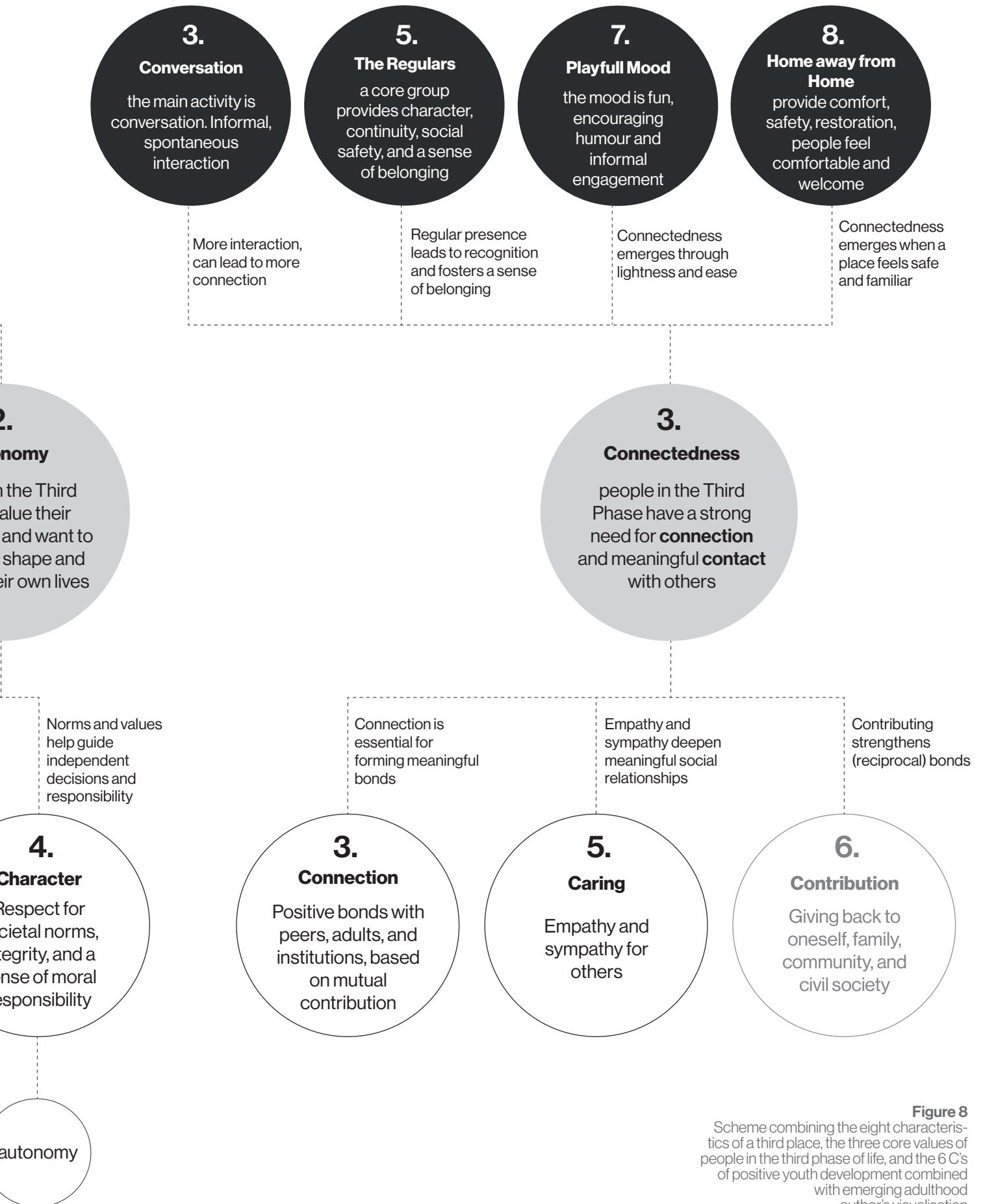


Figure 8
Scheme combining the eight characteristics of a third place, the three core values of people in the third phase of life, and the 6 C's of positive youth development combined with emerging adulthood author's visualisation

Results

3.0 Sub-Question 1.

3.1 Sub-Question 2.

3.2 Sub-Question 3.

3.3 Sub-Question 4.

3.

3.1 Sub-Question 1

Which types of third places, that currently lack in Houtwijk, do younger people consider essential for their well-being and development?

To answer this sub-question, this study combines two perspectives. On the one hand, it focuses on theoretical frameworks: the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework and the Emerging Adulthood theory. The factors described in these frameworks can be translated into specific third places that support the development and well-being of younger people. On the other hand, it builds on data from conversations with younger people in Houtwijk, in which they identify places they miss and consider essential for their daily lives and well-being.

Theoretical Basis

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework (Lerner et al., 2005) provides insight into the six factors that contribute to the positive development of younger people. The Emerging Adulthood theory (Arnett, 2000) describes this life phase as a period in which the majority of identity exploration takes place. This means trying out different roles, activities, and possibilities, leading to life decisions. Furthermore, younger people are becoming self-sufficient, taking responsibility for their own lives and making independent decisions (Arnett, 2000, p. 473). The factors of both frameworks are translated, by the author, into spatial principles that define what an effective third place for young people should offer and could be, as illustrated in Figure 9.

Needs of Younger People in Houtwijk

Conversations with younger people (n=10) do not specifically reveal a lack of facilities, but rather expose underlying needs that are insufficient within the neighbourhood. Younger people in Houtwijk want to spend time with friends and others. They indicate a strong need for social spaces outside the home, places where they can meet friends in a welcoming, lively, and vibrant environment that invites them to stay. Younger people specifically mention cafés, coffee places, or other (vibrant) indoor settings as places they miss.

“There is not really a nice, cozy place where you can have a drink.” (I2)

“I miss the sense of coziness and atmosphere in Houtwijk. I wish that on a Friday afternoon I could simply say: let’s go grab a drink nearby, and head out with friends or family in our own neighbourhood.” (I5)

“I would really like if Houtwijk had a small café or something, right now it just feels empty and boring.” (I4)

In addition, the importance of a central square or meeting point with a vibrant atmosphere is emphasised.

“If I could dream about Houtwijk, I would like there to be a kind of square with cafes and stores around it, a sort of heart of the neighbourhood. I want it to feel lively and welcoming.” (I5)

Furthermore, some younger people reported a lack of quiet study areas in the neighbourhood. Many young people between the ages of 18 and 25 are often still attached to schools and universities and need a place outside of school and home where they can concentrate. They describe the desire for a setting comparable to a library.

“I miss places where I can study, close to home.” (I3)

“There is not really anything in the neighbourhood where I can study, and I really miss that. It would be very convenient if there is something nearby, like study places or a library.” (I5)

At the same time, younger people emphasise the importance of green outdoor space, such as parks and sports fields. These places are highly valued and serve as important meeting places where they people encounter friends and others. However, they indicate that the current outdoor spaces lack a certain liveliness and vibrancy, which they consider important for actively using these environments.

Conversations reveal that the current community center is primarily used by younger people up to approximately 16-18 years old. Older young people feel less connected to it. However, a youth worker from the community center (I22) emphasises the importance of such places as a safe space, a place outside school and home where young people can ask for advice and meet others.

Overall, the conversations reveal that younger people in Houtwijk primarily wish for vibrant, lively, and welcoming spaces where they can meet others and spend their leisure time outside the home and other institutions. What appears most important is not only the physical availability of such places, but the atmosphere they offer. A strong sense of vibrancy and liveliness is therefore essential for these spaces to function as meaningful third places within the neighbourhood.

“I think Houtwijk is missing a certain vibrancy.” (I1)

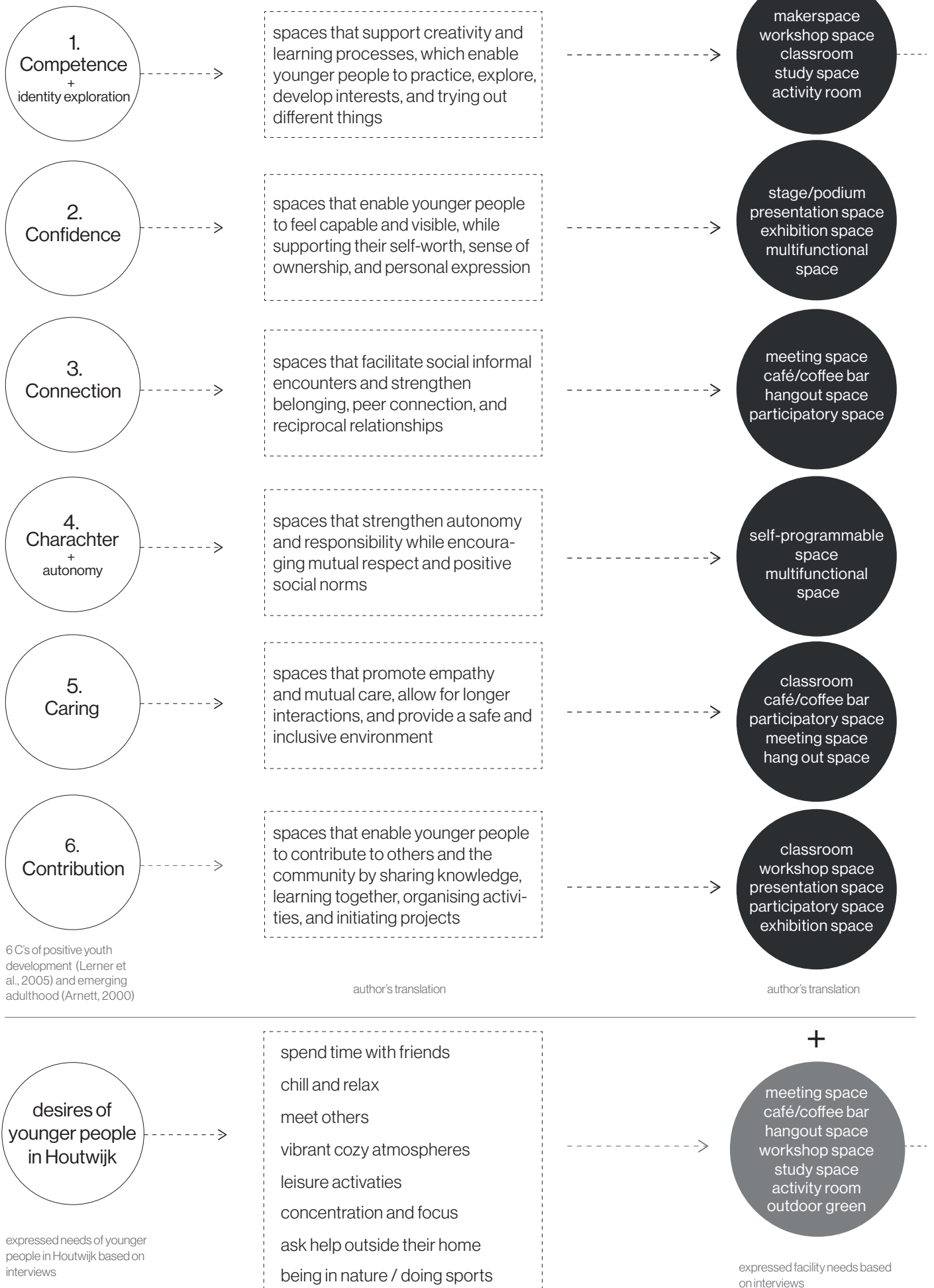


Figure 9
Author's interpretation and visualisation

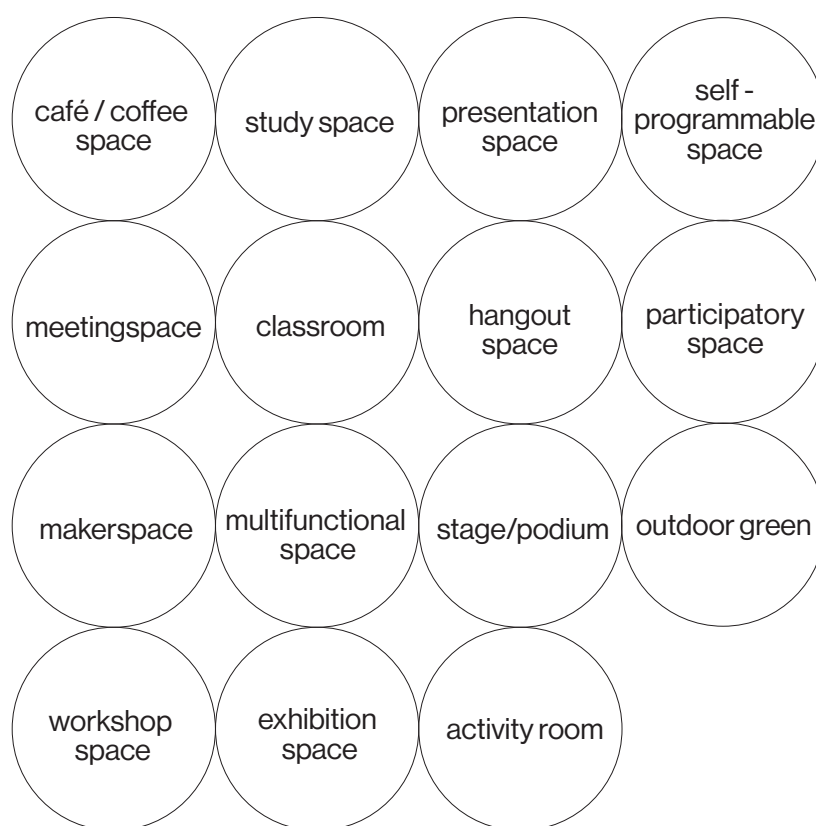


Figure 10
Overview of translated and expressed facilities of younger people
author's visualisation

3.2 Sub-Question 2

In what ways do older people in the third phase of life in Houtwijk wish to contribute to the community and remain active, supporting their sense of purpose in life and overall well-being?

This sub-question is based on interviews with 36 older people from Houtwijk who are in the third phase of life. These conversations reveal that this phase of life is a phase where people want to remain active, engaged, and meaningful to society and others.

Social Interaction

For some respondents (n=8), social interaction and meeting others are really important for their overall well-being. They indicate that being among people and maintaining social contacts is essential, also as a way to prevent loneliness. Older people, therefore, gather at social initiatives (such as BuurThuis) at the local football club, where they meet other (older) people, talk, and engage in activities. In addition, some participants (114), describe meeting daily in the park, which is not only about sitting together, but about talking, exchanging news, and staying informed about what is happening in the neighbourhood. Meeting people is therefore a way to stay socially active and connected with neighbours.

“I enjoy meeting other people in my free time and going to places where people come together.” (W1)

Activities and Hobbies

Older people (n=10) indicate that it is important to stay active through hobbies. They say that they use this stage of life to finally dedicate time to their hobbies, such

as painting, reading, sports, making music, singing, and creating. Some respondents indicate that they enjoy reading, but some add that they would also like to do so in a group setting, so that reading is not only an individual activity. Hobbies provide structure to the day, stimulate the mind, allow for expression, and contribute to social engagement.

Physical Activity

Older people (n=14) emphasise the importance of physical activity. They go to the gym, participate in senior fitness classes, dance, walk regularly, or cycle. Walking in the neighbourhood is mentioned as a regular activity by several respondents. Physical activity is an important part of their well-being and their active lifestyle.

Boards and Community Involvement

Besides personal and physical activity, there is also a strong need to contribute to the community. Nine older people indicate that they are active in boards or committees because they find it important to stay active and contribute. This also creates the opportunity to stay involved in the neighbourhood. As one recently retired man explains:

“I find it important to stay active and contribute, which is why I serve on three different boards. In

that way, I remain involved in the neighbourhood. I have only just retired, so I really want to keep doing things.” (I10)

Frequently mentioned is that older people are still eager to use the knowledge and experience they gained during their working lives in their current lives (n=5). Some of them indicate that they miss aspects of their working life and, therefore, would still like to use their skills and knowledge. For example, a former teacher now uses her organisational skills to coordinate neighbourhood activities, describing this engagement as both meaningful and fulfilling (W9). Another respondent explains that she draws on her background as a biologist in her work with neighbourhood associations and committees focused on nature (W4).

Volunteering

Volunteering is another important way to give back to society, stay active, and remain socially connected. As one respondent explains:

“I volunteer to stay in touch with people, especially young people. Maintaining social contact is a key motivation for me to volunteer.” (W2)

Helping and Sharing

A recurring theme in the conversations is the desire to share knowledge and experience. Nine older people explicitly emphasise that they have built knowledge and expertise throughout their lives and are eager to share it with others and help them. As one respondent with a technical background explains:

“I simply have that knowledge, and I know many people struggle with it, for example young people. I would like to teach them, otherwise that knowledge just gets lost.” (I11)

Others express:

“We older people have an enormous amount of knowledge.” (W4)

“It is wonderful that at the end of your life you can share knowledge with others. Learning and sharing knowledge is extremely important.” (W3)

The conversations show that older people in the third phase of life benefit from social connection, leisure/hobby-related activities, and physical activity. But most importantly, they value contributing to others and the community through helping and engagement. This provides them with a sense of significance and connectedness. Helping others and being needed gives them fulfilment and allows them to use their knowledge and experience, contributing to the feeling of being useful to society (Norouzi, 2016).

“I enjoy giving advice or tips about things I have knowledge of, it gives me a lot of fulfilment.” (W6)

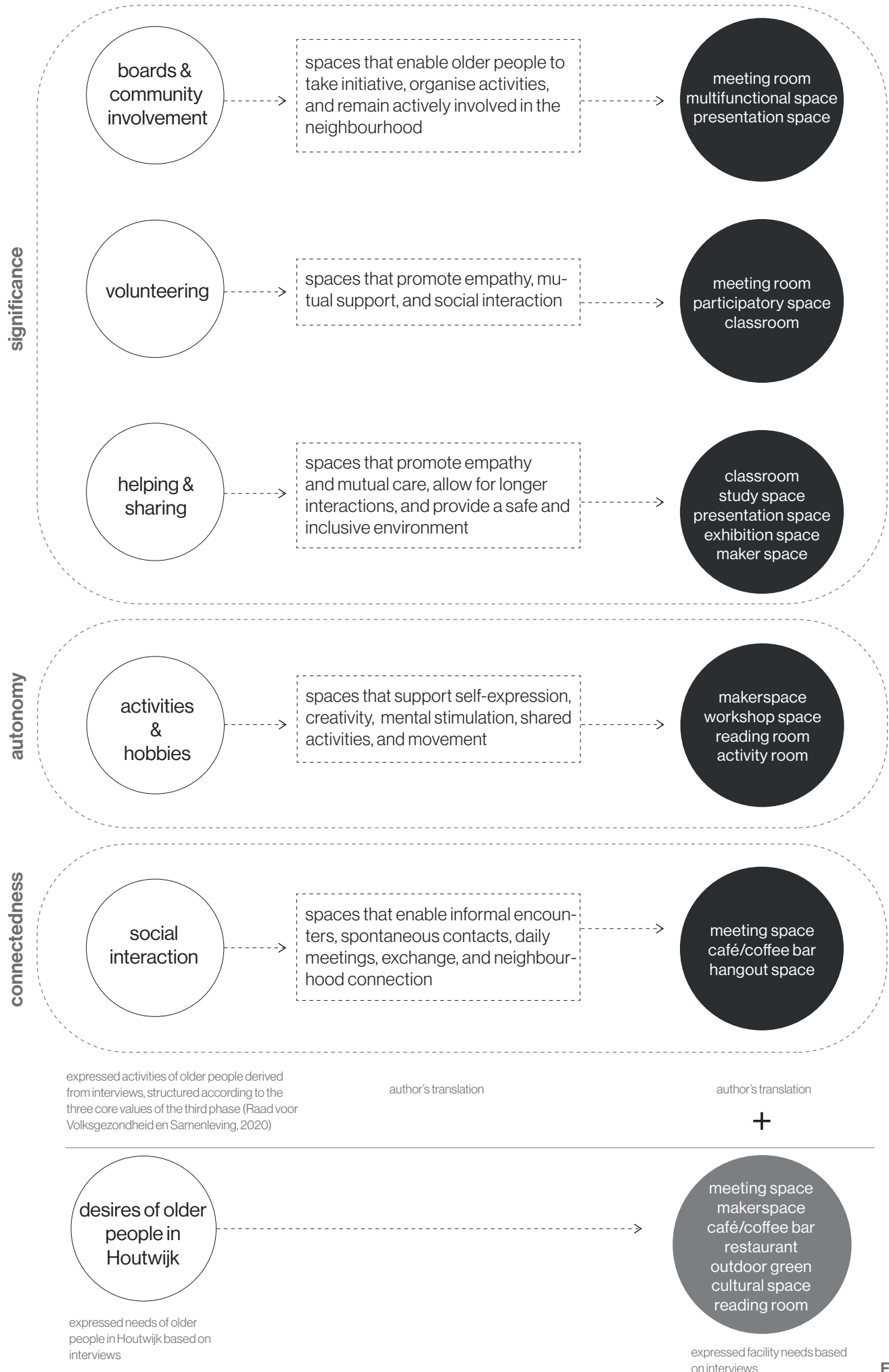


Figure 11
Author's interpretation and visualisation

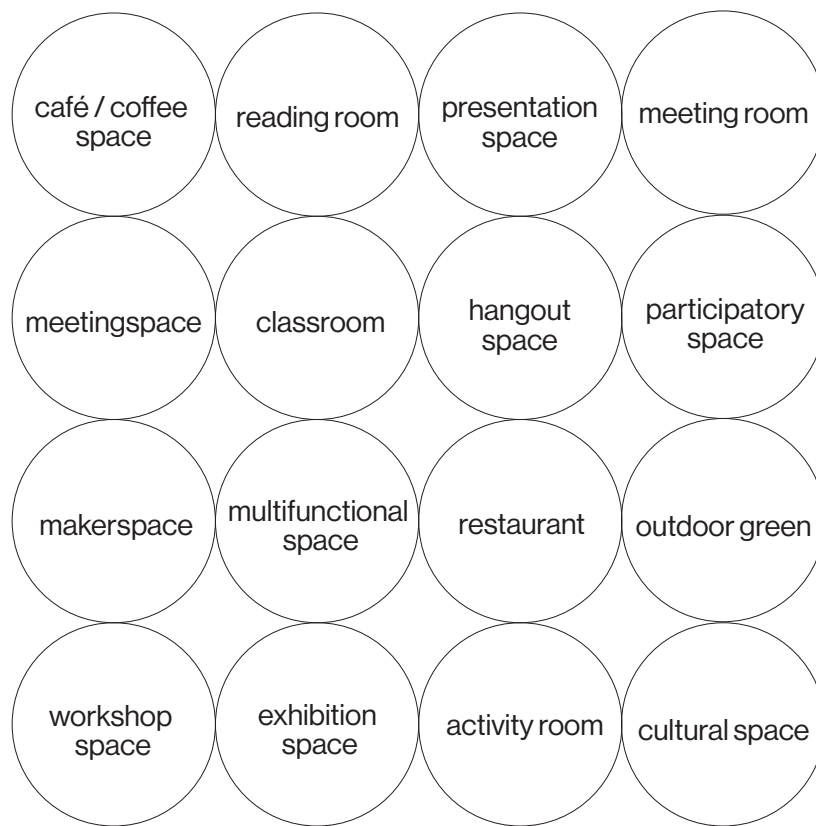


Figure 12
Overview of translated and expressed facilities of older people
author's visualisation

3.3 Sub-Question 3

What are the shared and differing needs of younger people and older people in Houtwijk regarding facilities, activities, and opportunities within the neighbourhood?

Connectedness

Connectedness, the need for social interaction and connection, is the main overlapping theme between the two age groups. Both younger and older people express the need for places where they can meet friends, neighbours, and others. This requires accessible meeting spaces, such as cafés, coffee places, or other informal places. For older people, social contact contributes to a sense of meaning and purpose and helps prevent loneliness. For younger people, meeting others is more connected with leisure and relaxation.

Vibrant Atmosphere

In addition, both age groups express a desire for lively, vibrant places where they can stay longer.

Younger people: **“I think Houtwijk is missing a certain vibrancy.” (I1)**

Older people: **“I miss the liveliness and vibrancy of people in the neighbourhood.” (P1)**

These statements suggest that both age groups miss a certain atmosphere and dynamics, not just facilities.

Autonomy

Autonomy is also a significant shared need. For younger people, this stems from their phase of life

(emerging adulthood), in which responsibility, independence, and making individual choices become central (Arnett, 2000). For older people, the need for autonomy stems primarily from a desire for freedom after working life. They want to have the freedom to decide for themselves how to spend their time, without obligations (Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving, 2020, p. 24). Therefore, places where people can come and go freely, with low thresholds and opportunities for independent and self-programmable activities, can be valuable for both groups.

Shared Spaces for Different Purposes

While there is an overlap in the (spatial) needs of both groups, the emphasis differs according to life stage. Younger people aged 18–25 are in the emerging adulthood phase, during which experimentation and identity formation are central. This requires spaces where they can experiment, express themselves, and develop their interests. However, many older people in the third phase of life have mainly moved beyond this experimental development phase, they see the third phase as a time to dedicate to (new) hobbies, resulting in creative, active activities. Spaces such as makerspaces, workshop spaces, and cultural activities can be useful. These same spaces are also valuable for younger people, who can use them to experiment and develop their interests. This demonstrates that both age groups may require

similar types of spaces, but for different purposes.

Furthermore, younger people are in a life stage that is focused on learning and developing, while older people want to help others and share their knowledge. This shows an overlap in spaces where learning is central, such as classrooms and makerspaces, where younger people can learn and explore, while older people can share their knowledge and mentor younger people.

Green Spaces

Another overlap between the needs of younger people and older people is the importance of green spaces. Houtwijk is a neighbourhood characterised by a large amount of green areas, which residents highly value. Conversations with both age groups indicate that green spaces are an important part of their living environment.

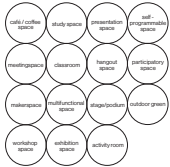
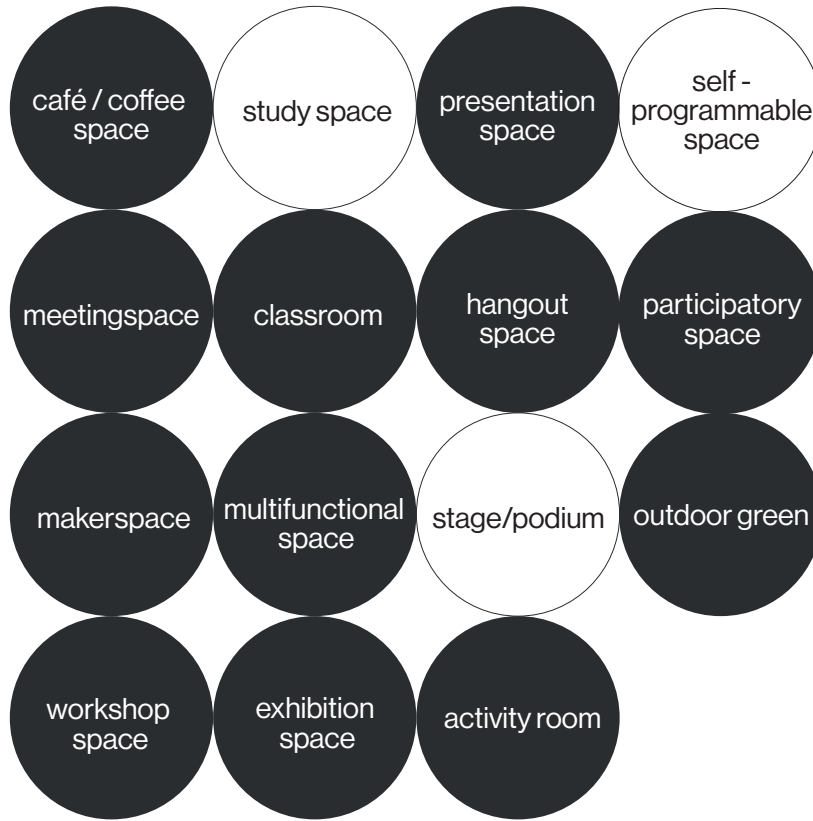
“I live in a green environment, which I really like and value.” (P1)

“I often go running through ‘T Kleine Hout park and then continue towards Bokkefort park. I follow a very green route through the neighbourhood because I want to be surrounded by nature.” (I5)

For younger people, being in nature has positive

effects on their well-being, brain function, creativity, and contributes to their physical, social, and emotional development. For older people, being in nature is also important for their well-being, as it supports their mental and physical health and their overall quality of life (Reyes Bernard et al., 2025). Access to green spaces is an important feature for environments for older people (World Health Organization, 2007). It allows older people to remain connected to their community and participate in activities, supporting intergenerational relationships (Reyes-Bernard et al., 2025). Nature plays an important role in strengthening connectivity and intergenerational interaction (Reyes-Bernard et al., 2025). This suggests that green spaces can help build and strengthen intergenerational contact between the two studied age groups.

younger people



older people

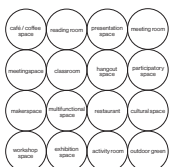


Figure 13
Overview of overlapping facilities for both age groups author's visualisation

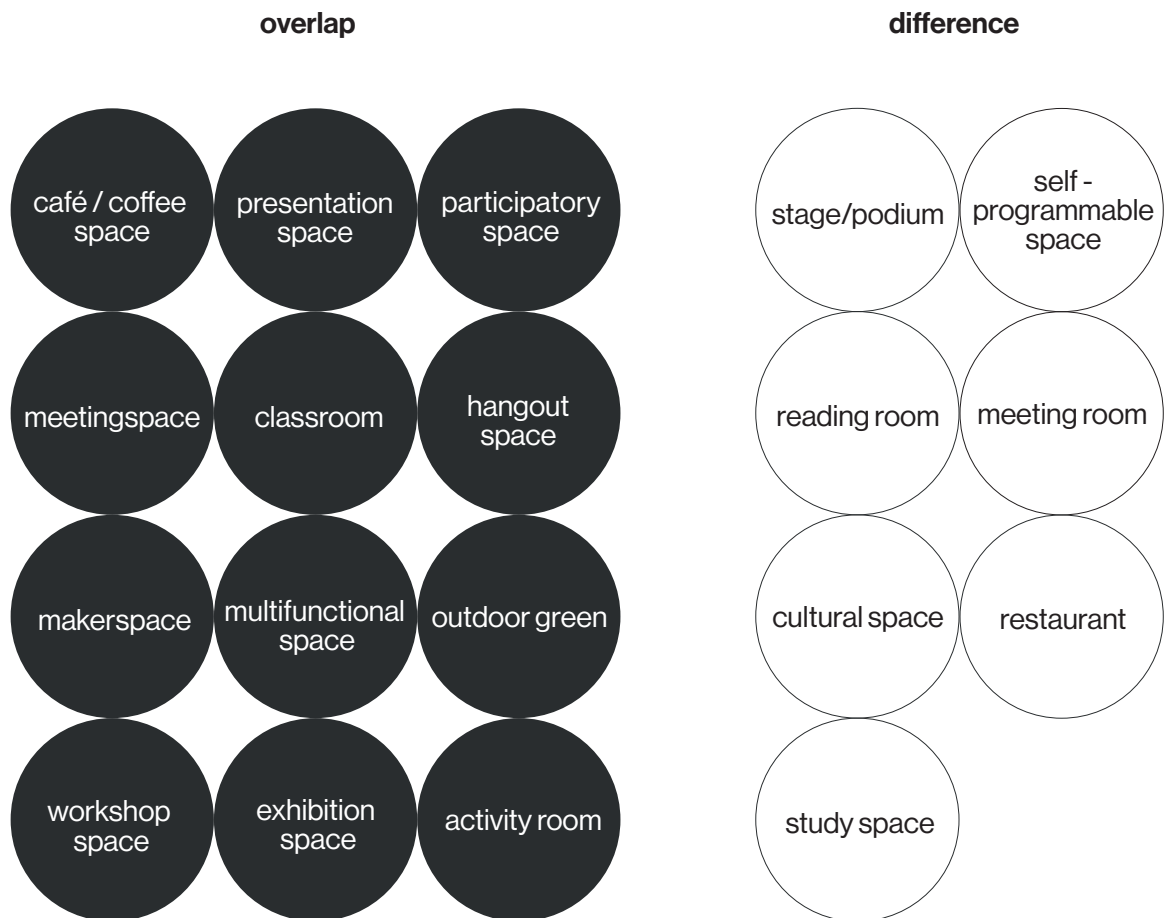


Figure 14
Overview of overlap and
difference of facilities
author's visualisation

3.4 Sub-Question 4

What forms of potential do younger people and older people in Houtwijk see in each other within the context of facilities and activities?

A significant potential that emerged from the conversations with residents lies in knowledge transfer between the two generations. Older people repeatedly indicated that they want to share the knowledge and experience they have gained throughout their (working) lives with others, particularly with younger people. For them, this contributes to a sense of purpose and usefulness. In this way, younger people act as recipients of knowledge and as confirmation of the usefulness of older people. Helping younger people gives them a sense of pride and satisfaction as meaningful interactions allow them to contribute to the development of younger generations. This positively contributes to their mental well-being (Webster et al., 2023).

“From my profession as a Dutch teacher, I can help young people write a good email, for example.” (I11)

“I would like to tutor young people. I was a teacher myself, so I would like to continue doing that and teach people something.” (W7)

It is evident that younger people can benefit from guidance, knowledge, experience, and support from older people. In study spaces, makerspaces, or project rooms, older people can for example act as mentors. Also, intergenerational contact with older people can help younger people develop confidence, life skills, and personal growth (Webster et al., 2023).

This points to the potential for reciprocity between both groups. Older people also indicate that younger people can teach them certain skills, like digital skills, practical tasks, and their open-mindedness and playfulness (Raad voor Volksgezondheid en Samenleving, 2020, p. 34). In addition, several older respondents indicate that it is important for them to spend time in places where younger people are also present, as this keeps them feeling young and engaged: “otherwise, you can become disconnected from the world if you only interact with older people.” (W10)

“We (older people) can learn something from them (younger people), but they can also learn something from us. I really like how open young people are.” (W8)

“I would like to teach young people something, for example about electricity, but I also think I could learn things from them, for example about phones and computers. I would really enjoy that exchange.” (I11)

“Ideally, there would be a place where young and old can do or learn something together.” (P3)

“Younger people can teach older people something and older people can contribute something to the younger people.” (P2)

Workshops with older people in Houtwijk revealed which facilities they would like to share with younger people. Interestingly, they would primarily want to share cultural activities with younger people aged around 16/20 years old.

“I think that, especially when it comes to cultural activities, bringing younger and older people together is important.” (W9)

“For example cultural activities, I think it would be nice to see what others make and what moves others.” (W2)

Conversations, particularly with older people, show the importance of spontaneous contact rather than forced programmes. Informal encounters allow both groups to maintain their sense of autonomy and make the interaction feel more natural.

“I think that interaction between young and old is incredibly valuable, especially when it can happen spontaneously and is not necessarily forced.” (I12)

“I also think it is important to be in contact with younger people. But they have to want it as well.” (W5)

The greatest potential in the connection between younger and older people lies in the reciprocity between them. Younger people can contribute to the core values of older people in the third phase of life, while older people can contribute to the positive development of younger people. In this way, the connection between both age groups allows them to support and learn from each other, as visualised in Figures 15 and 16.

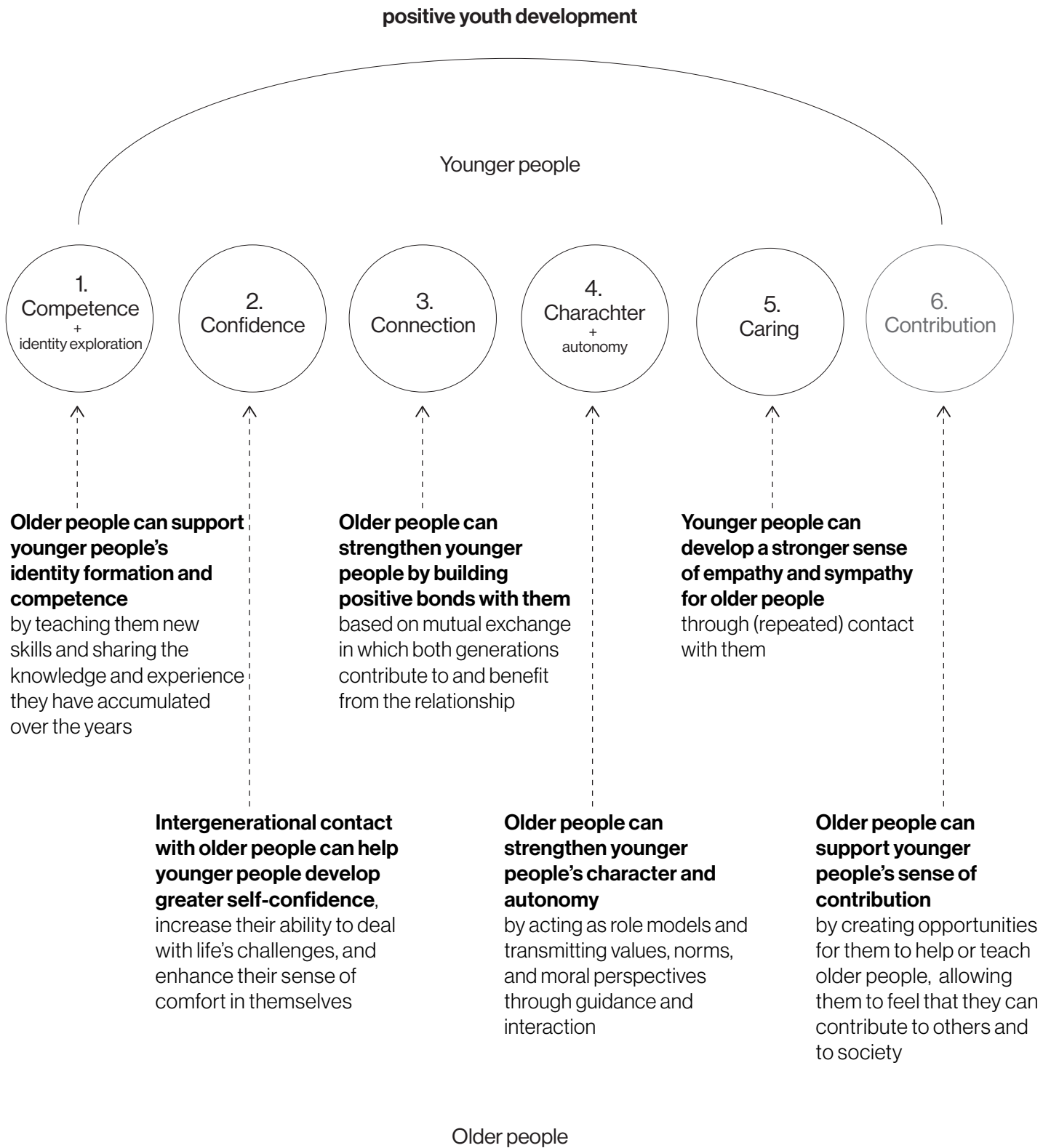


Figure 15
Role of older people in strengthening the factors of positive youth development in younger people
author's interpretation and visualisation

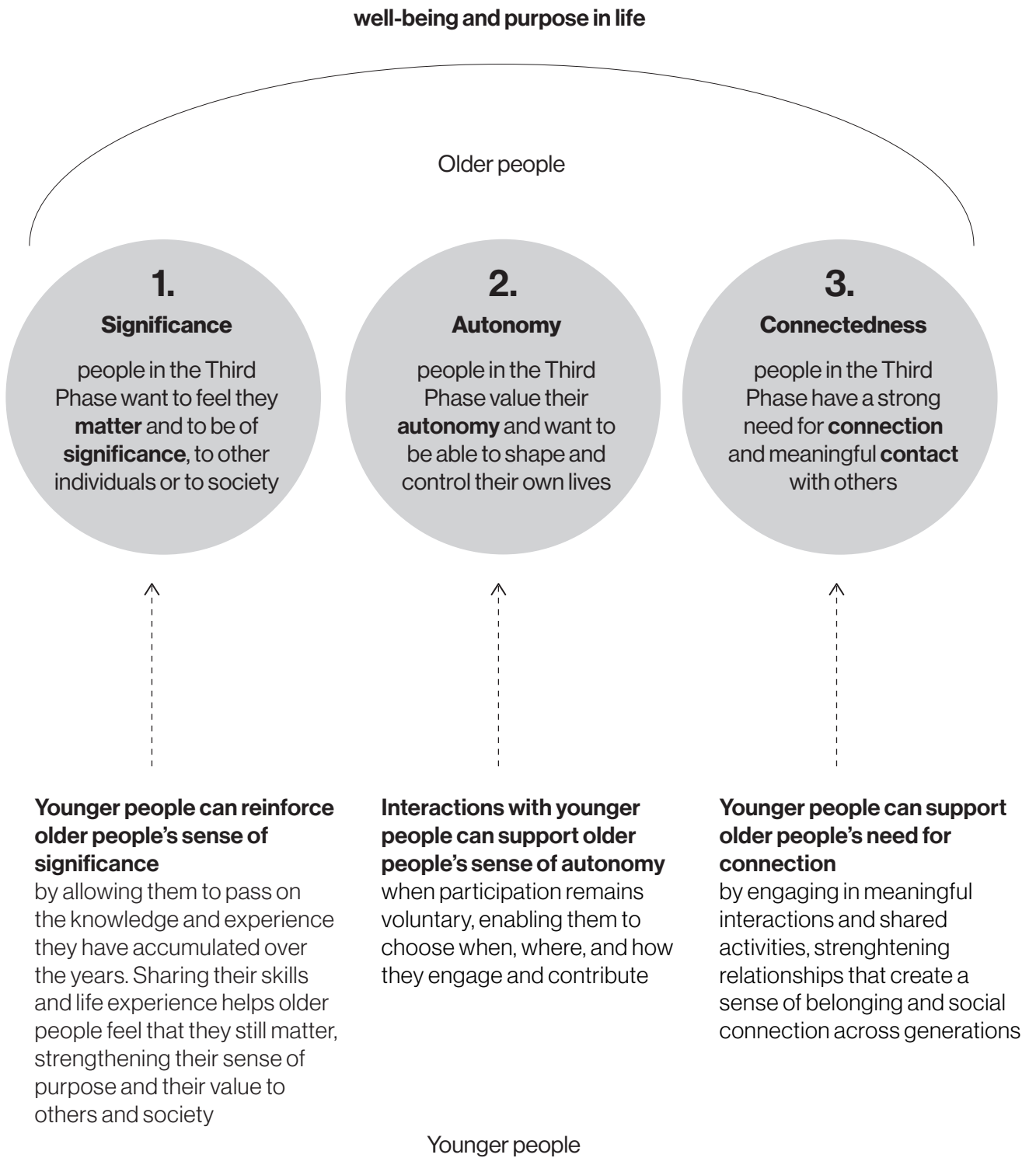


Figure 16
Role of younger people in strengthening the core values of people in the third phase of life
author's interpretation and visualisation

Design

- 4.0 Conclusion
- 4.1 Design Brief
- 4.2 Location
- 4.3 Concept

4.

4.0 Conclusion

How can architectural design in Houtwijk create third places that respond to the needs of both younger people (18-25) and older people in the third phase of life (65+), in a way that contributes to the overall well-being of both age groups and strengthens their connection to the neighbourhood?

Sub-question 1 shows that younger people need social spaces outside their home and school/work environment. They lack places in the neighbourhood where they can meet others and stay longer. Most important is that these spaces must offer a lively and vibrant atmosphere. The PYD framework and the Emerging Adulthood Theory point out that younger people are in a life stage in which identity development, experimentation, learning, and building confidence are central. Therefore, autonomy, self-expression, and the connection with others are important needs for them.

Sub-question 2 reveals that older people in the third phase of life have a need for social interaction and want to remain active in the community. After retirement they want to spend their time meaningfully, pursue their hobbies, and stay connected to others. For them it is important to share their knowledge, experience, and skills, especially with younger generations, which gives them a feeling of significance. At the same time, autonomy is also important for older people, they want to have the freedom to decide for themselves how to spend their time, which activities to participate in, and how to interact with others.

Sub-question 3 demonstrates that the needs of younger and older people overlap in several ways, although they come from different emphases. Both groups have a need for social interaction, especially in a lively and vibrant environment. Both groups also have a need for autonomy, having the freedom to make their own choices and experiment with responsibility. Furthermore, they need places where they can develop

or pursue their interests, and where helping each other is possible. For younger people this is primarily linked to identity development and experimentation. For older people it is connected to staying active, pursuing hobbies, and being of significance to others. Additionally, both groups highly value green spaces. Green outdoor spaces contribute to the well-being of both younger and older people and stimulate intergenerational contact.

Sub-question 4 shows that there is great potential in reciprocity between the two age groups, as they can learn from each other and support each other. Older people can help younger people with knowledge, experience, and guidance, aligning with the needs of emerging adults. Younger people can support older people with new skills, energy, and perspectives. This reciprocal exchange can contribute to the well-being of both groups and is needed by the residents of Houtwijk. Most importantly, this contact should not be forced. Encounters should be able to happen spontaneously and both groups should have the opportunity to choose for themselves whether and how they participate.

Architectural design can contribute to the needs and well-being of both groups by on the one hand creating a third place based on shared spatial needs in the form of facilities (Figure 14). And on the other hand by focusing on the shared social needs, such as social interaction, vibrancy, autonomy, experimentation, learning from each other, and contact with green spaces. Therefore, the design of a third place in Houtwijk must be more than just a building with facilities. It must function as a flexible, low-threshold, and meaningful environment where social connection and intergenerational exchange can happen spontaneously, in a vibrant atmosphere and in the presence of nature.

The research outcomes are translated into architectural guidelines in Figure 17.



Figure 17
Architectural guidelines
author's visualisation

4.1 Design Brief

The research findings form the basis for the design of a **public building**, a third place, that brings together various facilities and programs. The needed and expressed facilities by both age groups (younger people Figure 9, older people Figure 11) together form the brief for the building. By including these facilities in the building, both age groups will make use of the same spaces. This creates opportunities for them to encounter each other, learn from each other, and offer help in an informal and natural way. The design of the third place also follows the architectural guidelines derived from the shared social needs of both age groups, shown in Figure 17.

The third place will be a **multifunctional building**, with various functions and programmes, as this responds to the needs of the residents of Houtwijk:

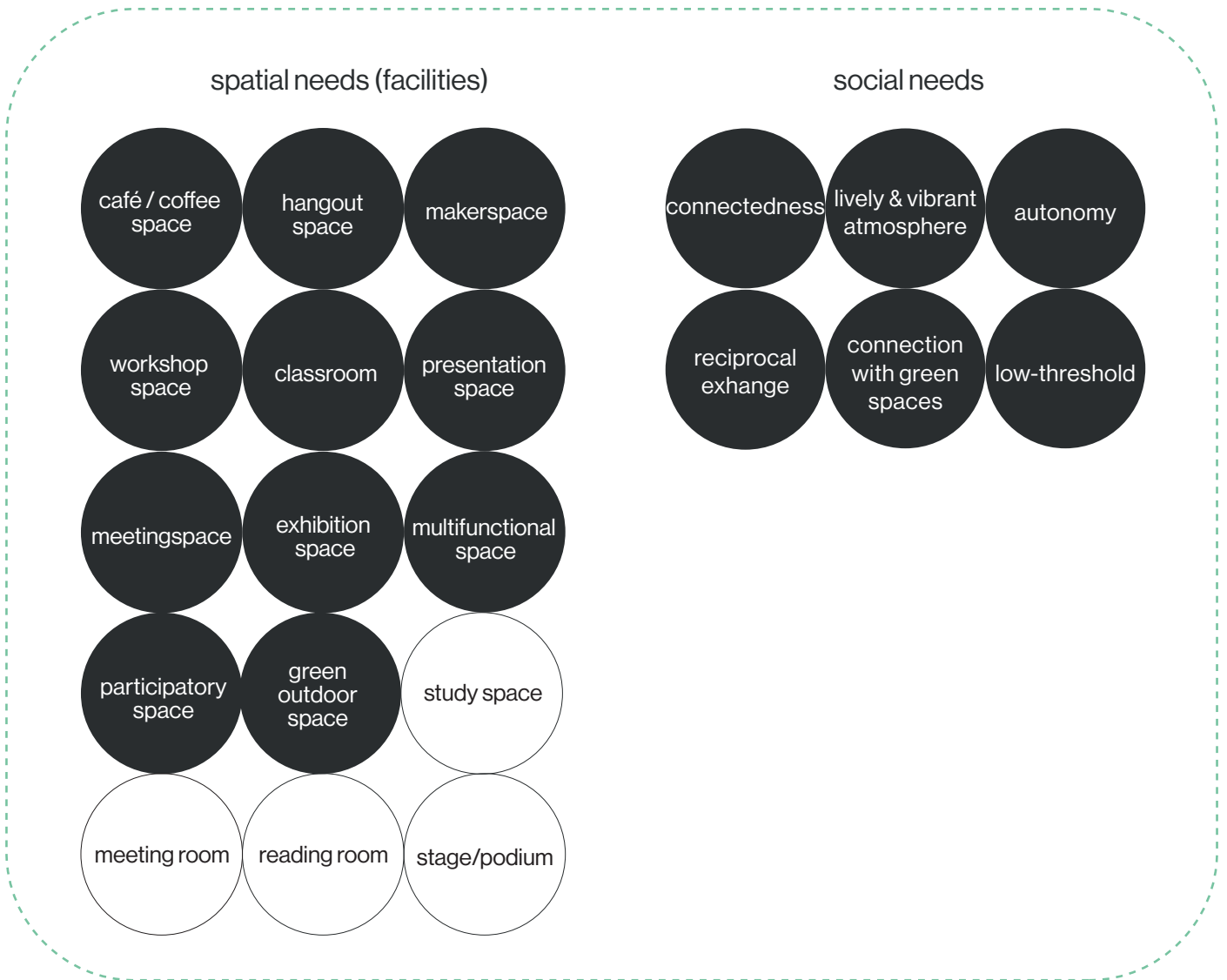
“The most valuable building would be a multifunctional area [...] where young and old can meet, learn, and do activities together [...] that mix of functions and generations is important.” (P3)

“I would like to see a community centre with facilities for various activities [...] such as playing cards, doing crafts, and attending courses [...] A place where you can have a cup of coffee, meet others, and where different multifunctional spaces are available.” (P4)

The building will be closely connected to nature, which forms the key principle in the design. The design concept is based on the idea that the design site can function as an important green route that connects the green structures within the neighbourhood. The presence of nature also acts as a catalyst for intergenerational contact.

In summary, the design brief proposes a multifunctional public building that serves as a third place for Houtwijk and is closely linked to green outdoor spaces. The building acts as a connector between facilities, generations, and existing green structures in the neighbourhood.

Multifunctional public building



Green outdoor space

Figure 18
Building's design brief
author's visualisation

4.2 Location

The site selected for the design project is the current HWW care facility at Architect Duikerstraat 19. This location is chosen as the site for a community building for three reasons: its role as a **green connector**, its function as a **social connecting factor** within the neighbourhood, and its position as a **key node**.

Figure 19
Urban context map indicating the location of the site
source: Google Earth, author's visualisation

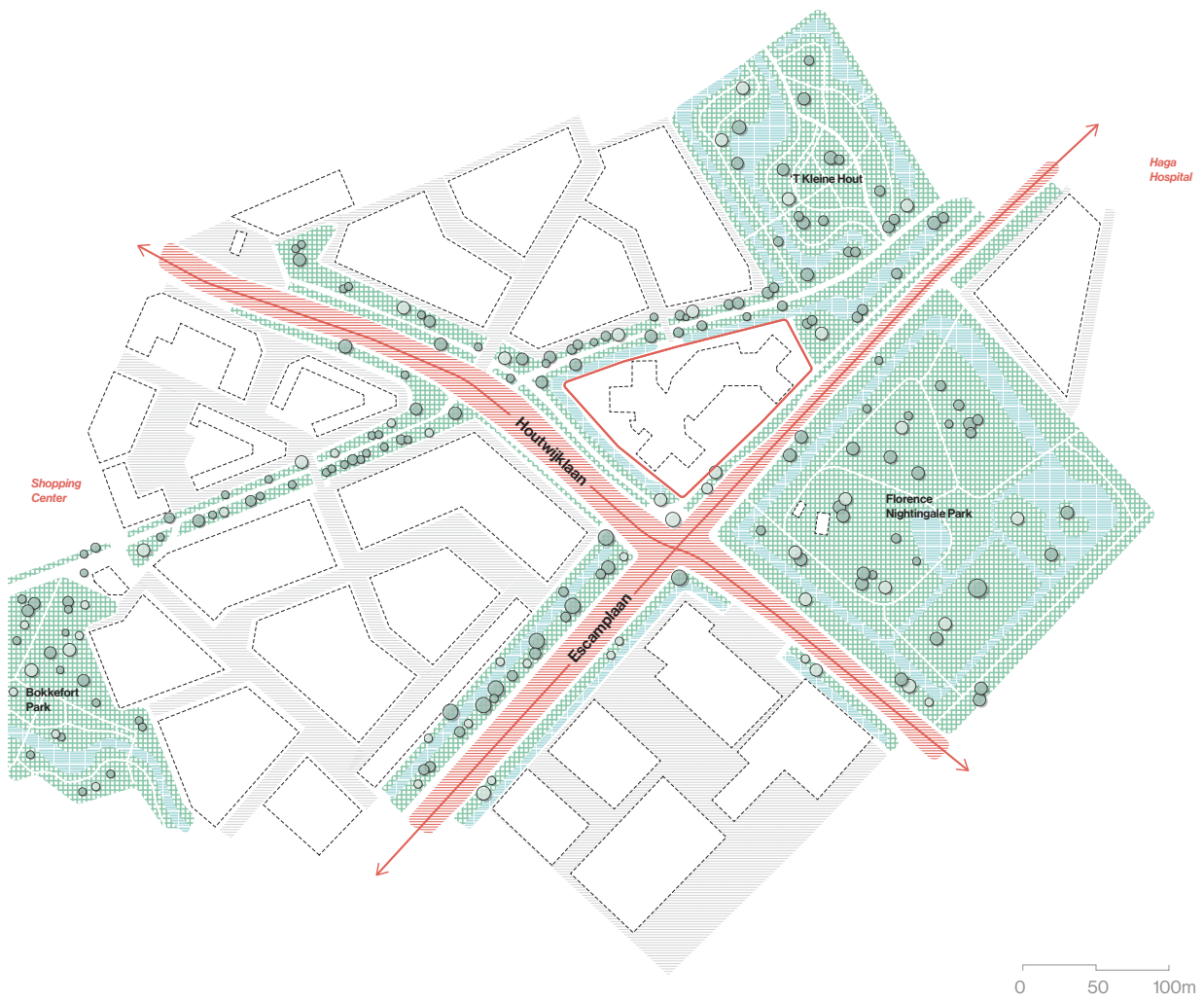
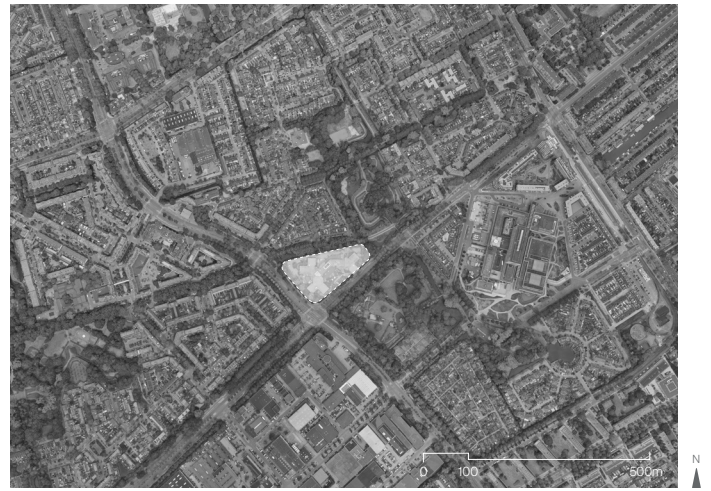


Figure 20
Current state of the site
author's illustration

The site is located between three main green structures: Bokkefort Park, 't Kleine Hout Park, and Florence Nightingale Park. A green cycling/walking route (the green corridor) connects Bokkefort Park and 't Kleine Hout Park. However, Florence Nightingale Park is not connected to this route, which interrupts the continuity of the green structure. The Escamplaan forms a barrier between the green areas, as stated by residents. The site can potentially play a prominent role in strengthening the connection between these green structures.

“It is quite inconvenient to reach Florence Nightingale Park, as it is separated by the Escamplaan. It does not feel like a whole, and it is unfortunate that there is no connection.” (P3)

“The site is basically a wall between the green of 't Kleine Hout and Florence Nightingale Park, and residents have already asked for a connection between them...” (I20/21)

1. Green Connector

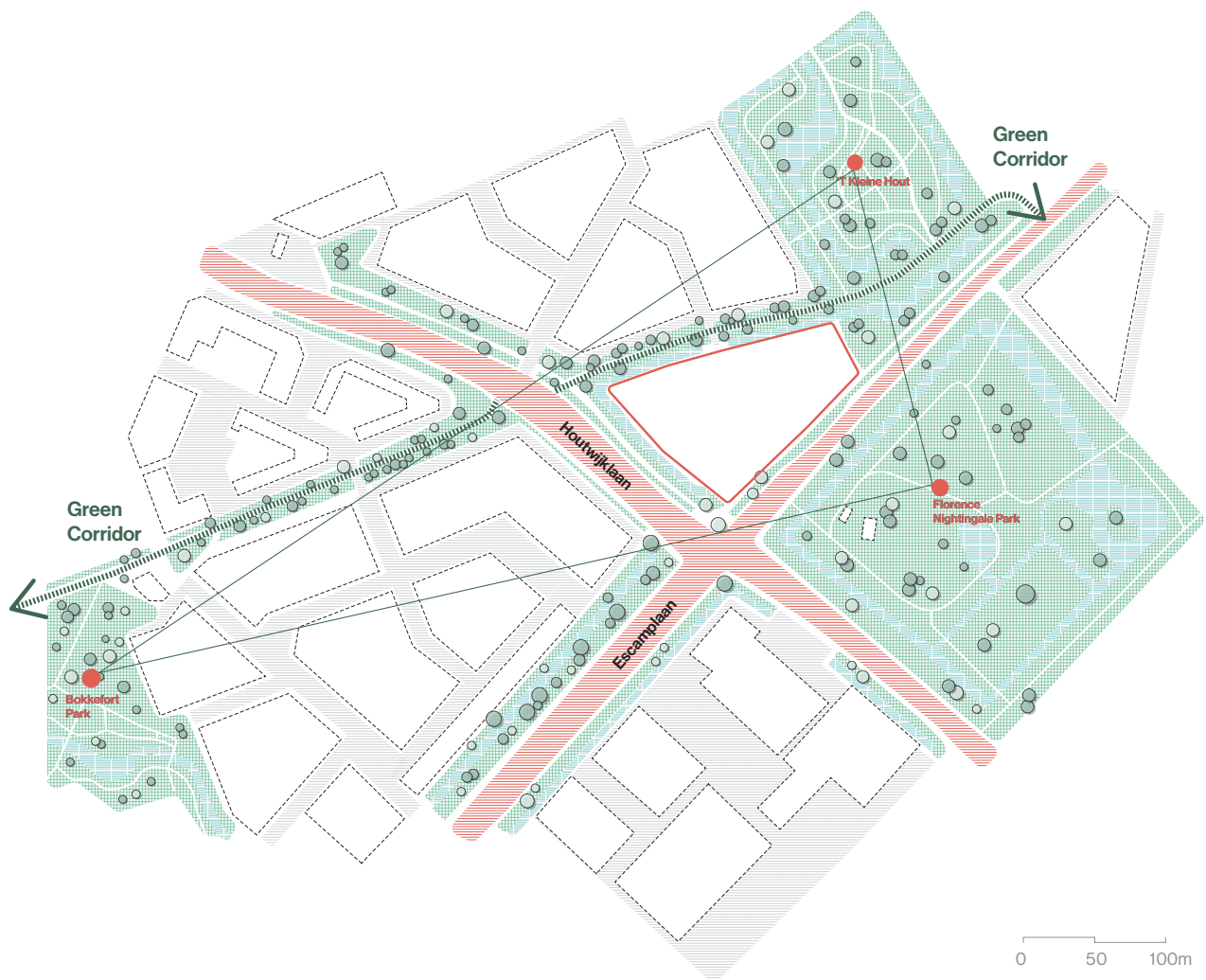


Figure 21
Green corridor
author's illustration

The site is located on the boundary between Houtwijk 1 (North) and Houtwijk 2 (South), with the Houtwijklaan forming both a physical and mental barrier between the two areas. Residents of Houtwijk also experience this boundary and perceive a fragmentation between people living in the different parts of the neighbourhood. As the site is located directly on this boundary, it can play an important role as a connecting factor.

“There is real division in the neighbourhood [...] the Houtwijklaan really feels like a boundary between Houtwijk 1 and 2.” (I13)

2. Social Connector

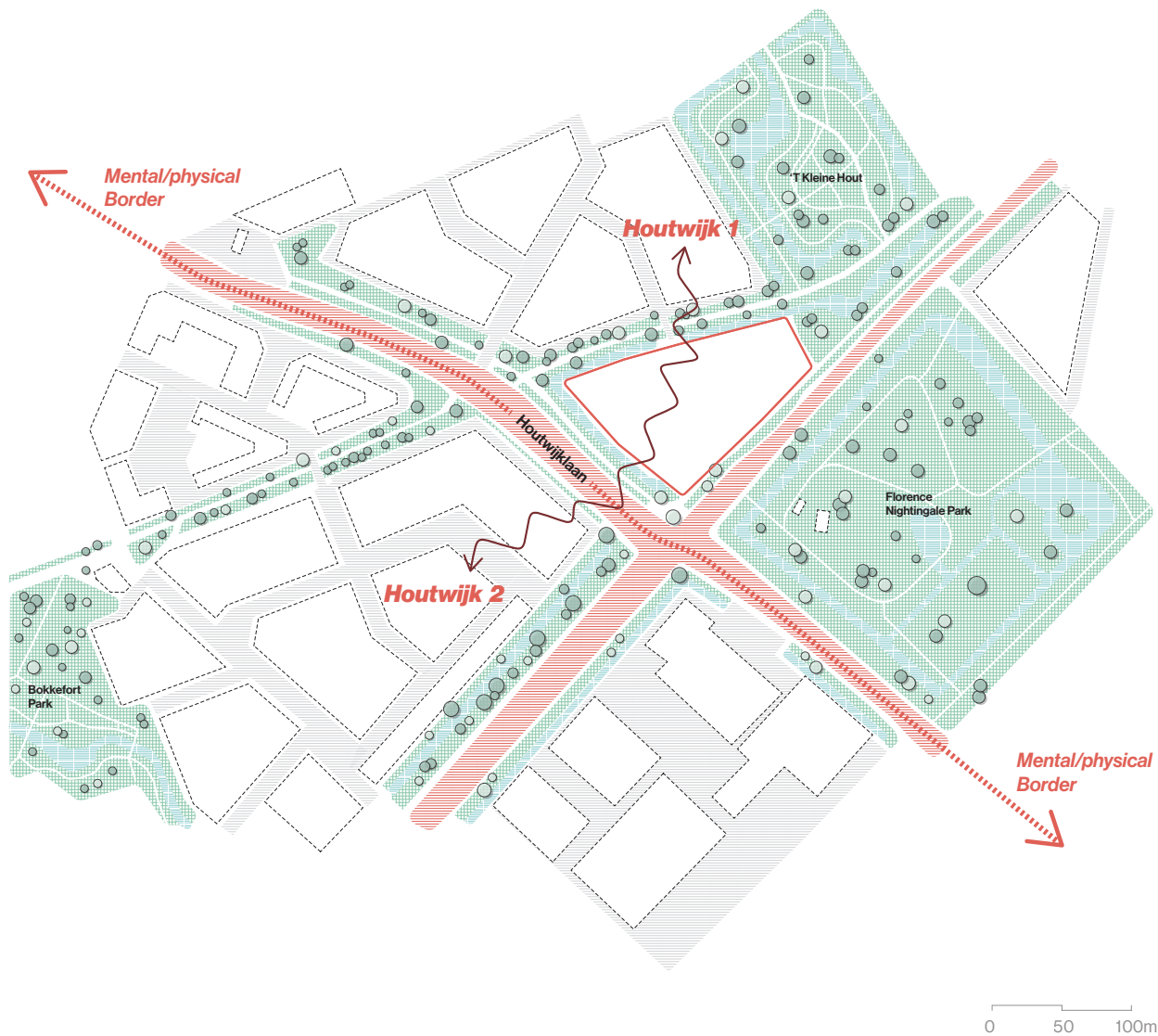


Figure 22
Social connector
author's illustration

The site is located on a prominent and highly visible position within the neighbourhood, embedded between the Houtwijklaan and the Escamplaan, while the green corridor also passes along the site. The location is visible and accessible from multiple directions. This gives the site, with a public function, a prominent role in serving the neighbourhood and wider surrounding areas.

3. Key Node

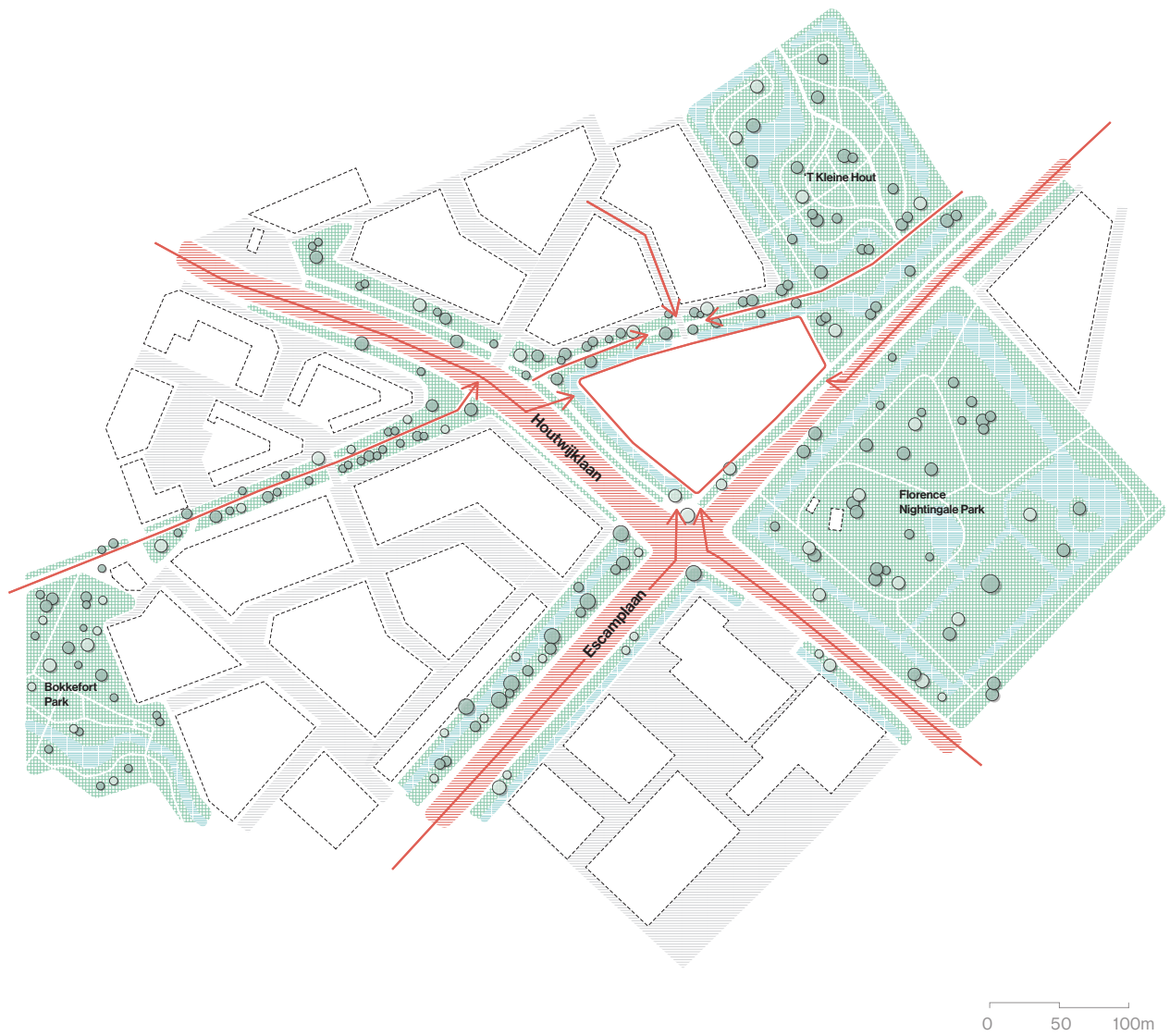


Figure 23
Key node
author's illustration

4.3 Concept

Site

The plot is arranged in an L-shape. The public function is located on the west side, parallel to Houtwijklaan, at the prominent corner of Houtwijklaan and Escamplaan, and faces the neighbourhood side. This gives the public building a visible and recognisable position within the neighbourhood.

On the side parallel to Escamplaan, space is reserved for apartment buildings. These are situated on the more urban side of the plot, allowing the public and residential functions to have a logical position on the site.

The heart of the L-shape creates a green inner area in which the landscape from 't Kleine Hout can infiltrate and become part of a continuous green structure. This aligns with the input of a biologist and urban planner, who emphasised an open character towards 't Kleine

Hout, in a way that the greenery is not cut off but can continue on the site.

“The most important thing that needs to happen on this plot is that new development has an open character towards the greenery, towards the side of 't Kleine Hout, this must not be closed off. The greenery from the park must be able to enter the plot so that it forms a continuous line of nature.” (I20/21)

The hinge point of the design lies at the corner of the L-shape, between the public building and the apartment building zone. At this point, the (green) connection towards Florence Nightingale Park is created. Moreover, this view extends along Architect Duikerstraat, making the route visible and recognisable from the neighbourhood.

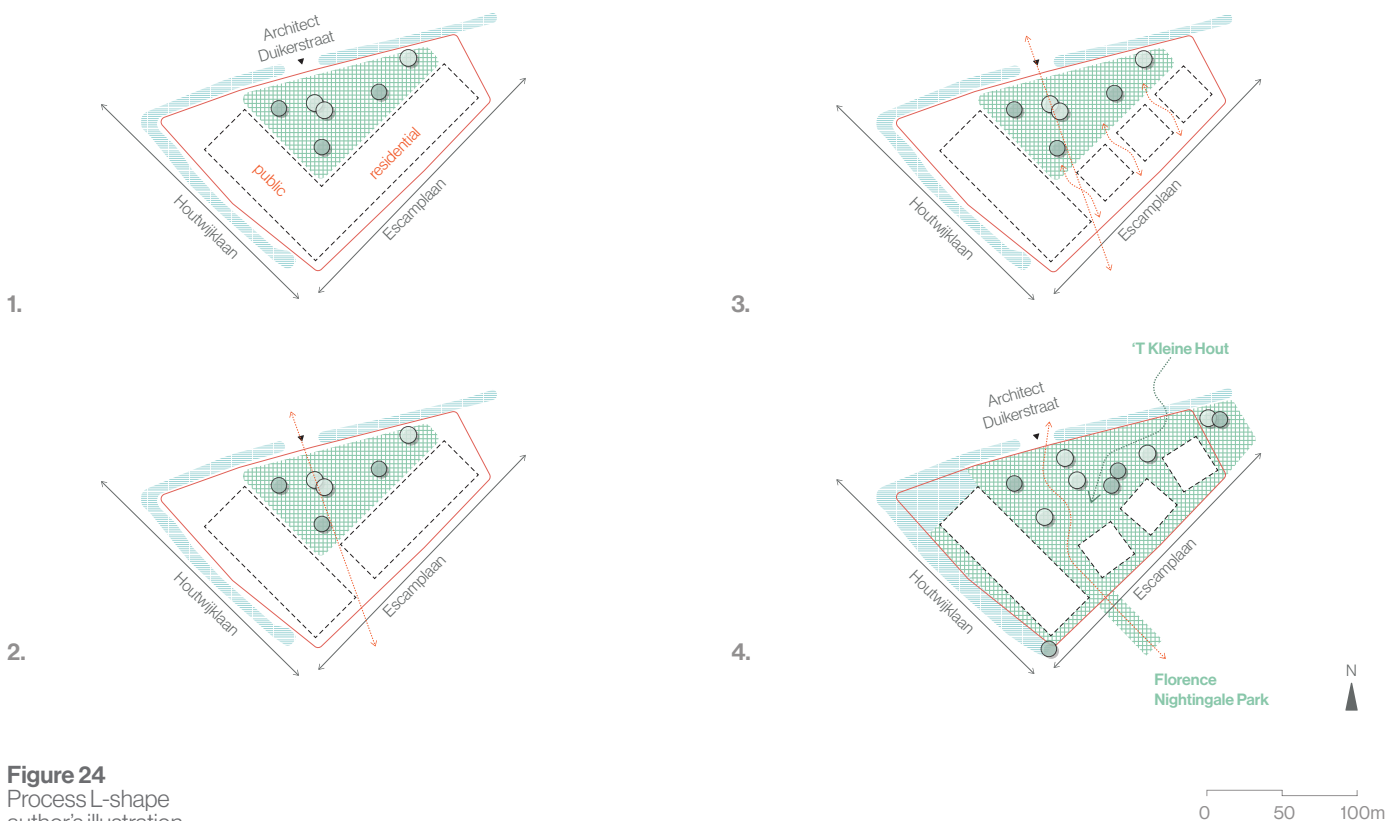


Figure 24
Process L-shape
author's illustration

Landscape

To connect the green structures of 't Kleine Hout and the Florence Nightingale Park, a green pedestrian bridge is designed from the site across the Escamplaan to the Florence Nightingale Park. This creates a direct and easy route for residents, as the current connection via the Escamplaan is perceived as a barrier.

A minimum clearance height of 4.60 meters is required for the bridge to allow buses and trucks to pass under (CROW Kennisbank, 2011). This height is achieved by gradually raising the landscape of the entire site. The site becomes a sloping park landscape that starts from ground level and continues towards the pedestrian bridge at the highest level to ultimately reach the Florence Nightingale Park.

On the north side, the terrain rises in a gentle and inviting way, a park character. At the highest point, a green plateau is created, after which the terrain ends in an earth berm on the Escamplaan and Houtwijklaan side. This earth berm forms a landscape transition and acts as a (sound) buffer and green screen towards the roads.

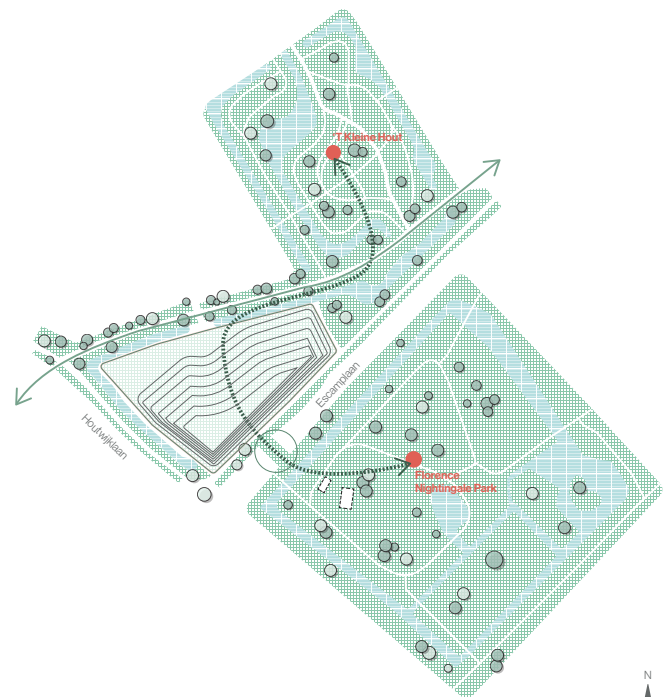


Figure 25
Green connector
author's illustration



Figure 26
Sloped landscape
1:1000
author's illustration

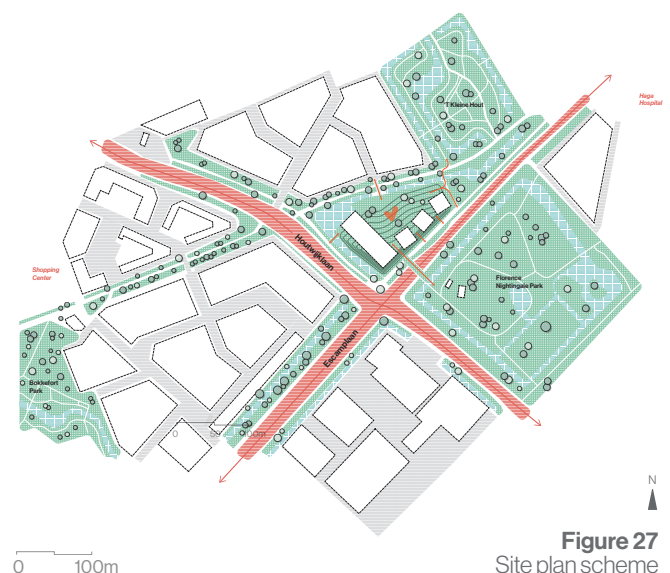


Figure 27
Site plan scheme
author's illustration

Sloped Building

To strengthen the connection between the landscape and the building's users, the building is placed on the sloping landscape and follows the same gradient. As a result the landscape and the building become one and the sloped landscape is experienced not only from the outside but also in the building itself. The building is fully surrounded by and embedded in greenery, bringing the users as close to nature as possible. This responds to the research findings (Conclusion 4.0), that showed that connection to nature is important for both groups, as it supports their well-being and stimulates intergenerational contact.

If the building did not follow the same landscape gradient, the two would be experienced as two separate parts and they would not strengthen one another or optimally benefit from each other's qualities.

Building as a Route

The building is designed as a broad circulation route leading to the highest point of the landscape, where the pedestrian bridge begins. On the sloping surface various spaces ('pods') with functions (Figure 18) are placed. This layout creates an open floor plan where people can move freely between, within, and on the pods, stimulation, discovery, and movement. There is no fixed route, visitors can choose for themselves how they move through the building and whether they want to enter a space and participate in activities taking place there, contributing the desired need of both age groups for autonomy. The route becomes more than just circulation, it is a spatial experience where visitors discover places and encounter people as they walk up. There is activity in multiple places at the same time, which contributes to the liveliness of the building.

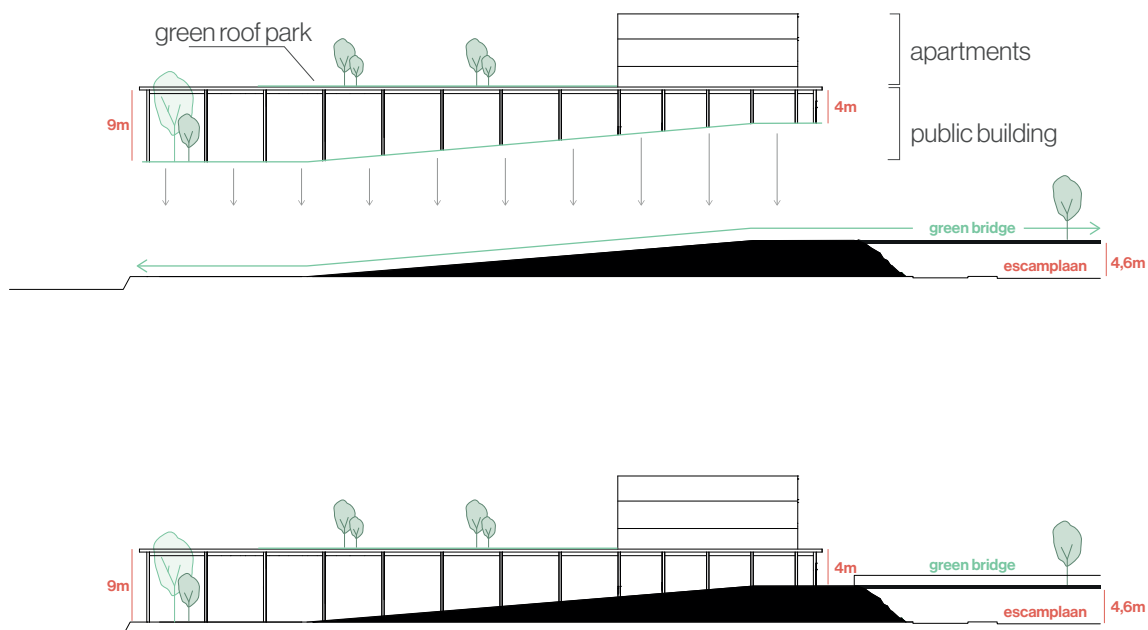


Figure 28
Sloped building
1:1000
author's illustration

The spaces are positioned on the route and therefore directly connected to it. The open and transparent character of the spaces allows visitors to look inside. As visitors walk up, they are naturally 'confronted' with the different activities and people in the spaces. They see what others are doing and can learn from each other even before entering or participating. This gives the visitor the autonomy to decide for themselves whether they want to enter or join.

The broad circulation route and transparency of the spaces make contact almost unavoidable while also focusing on people's autonomy.

Additionally, the route encourages meeting and interaction. Several open resting pods have been placed on the slope where people can pause, stay, and meet

others in an informal and spontaneous way. Due to its open character, interaction between people on the route and in the resting pods can happen easily and naturally. At the end of the route, visitors are rewarded with the building's 'diamond', a panoramic café and meeting point, one of the main desires of both age groups.

The space between the pods remains open, allowing visitors to choose their route but also to use this space in different ways and appropriate the building in their own way, which relates to autonomy.

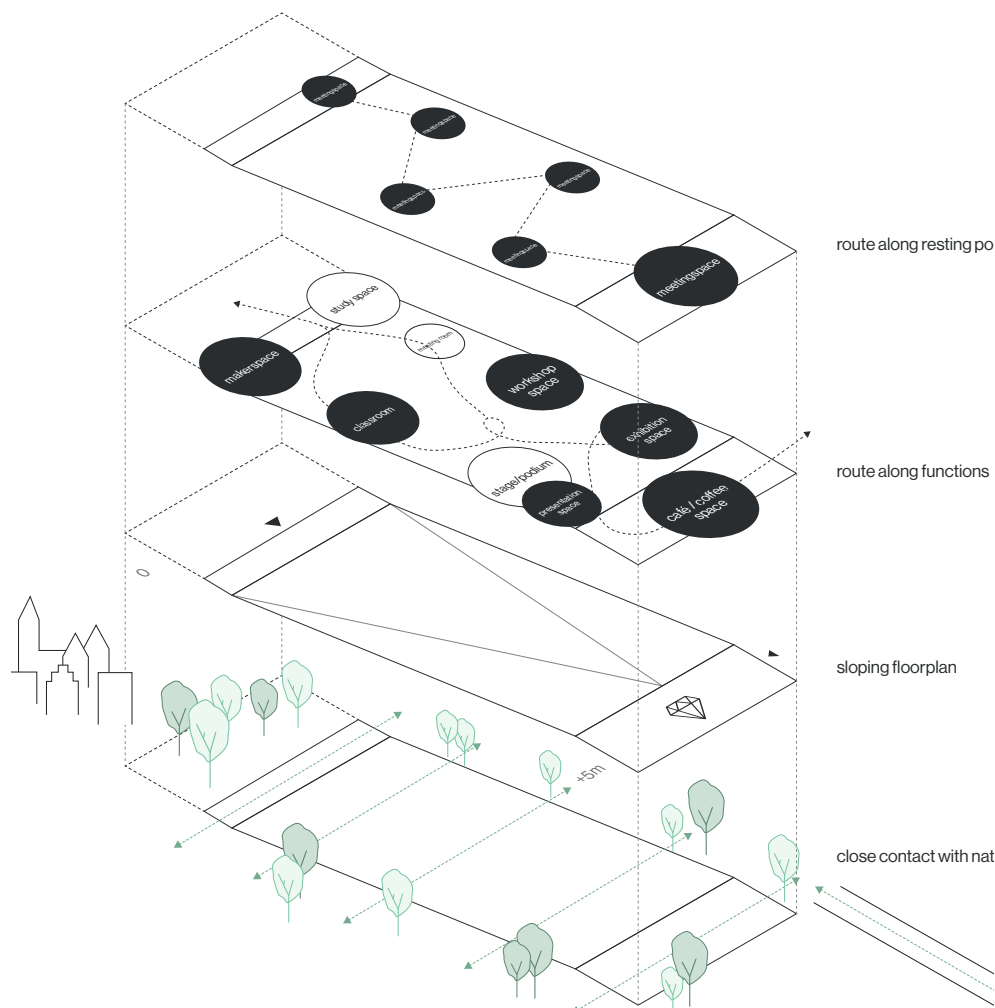


Figure 29
Functions on route
author's illustration

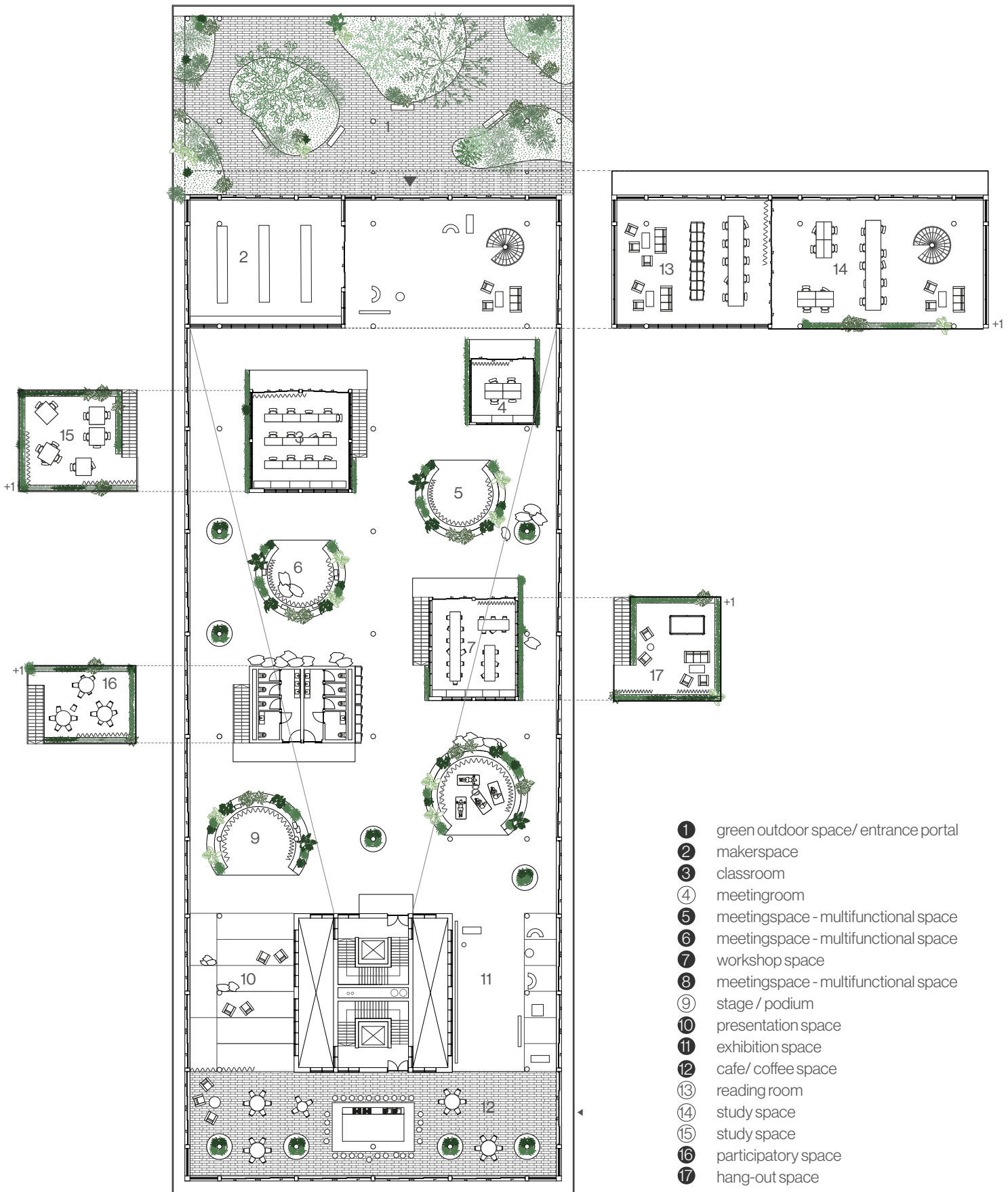


Figure 30
Floorplan 0/+1
1:500
author's illustration

Building's Layout

The layout of the building follows a functional logic. The entrance portal, at the start of the slope, focuses on meeting, welcoming, and arriving surrounded by nature. From there, the middle part of the building is characterised by making, doing and learning, with pods that support these activities.

The upper part of the building focuses on presenting and expressing. On the left side, a podium with a tribune offers space for performances and presentation. On the right, an exhibition space displays work made by younger and older people. Because these functions are placed along the main route, visitors naturally pass by the stage or exhibition area when they move to the top of the building. In this way, the route encourages people to engage with how others express themselves, which contributes to the feeling of confidence, a theme that is mainly important for younger people in the emerging adulthood phase (Sub-question 1, Figure 9).

At the same time, it allows younger and older people to see what others are doing and making, responding to their wish to see and experience the cultural and artistic activities of others (Sub-question 3.4).

The highest point of the building, the panoramic café, forms the final destination, where meeting and social interaction are central, one of the most desired needs by residents of Houtwijk. By placing this facility at the top and at the end of the route, people are encouraged to walk up the building, making it feel like a reward once they reach it. If the café had been placed at the beginning of the building, this effect would not have been achieved. Therefore this function is located at the top of the slope, having the best view and most prominent position. The space is connected to the surrounding paths of the landscape and to the pedestrian bridge and is a transition point between the building and the landscape.

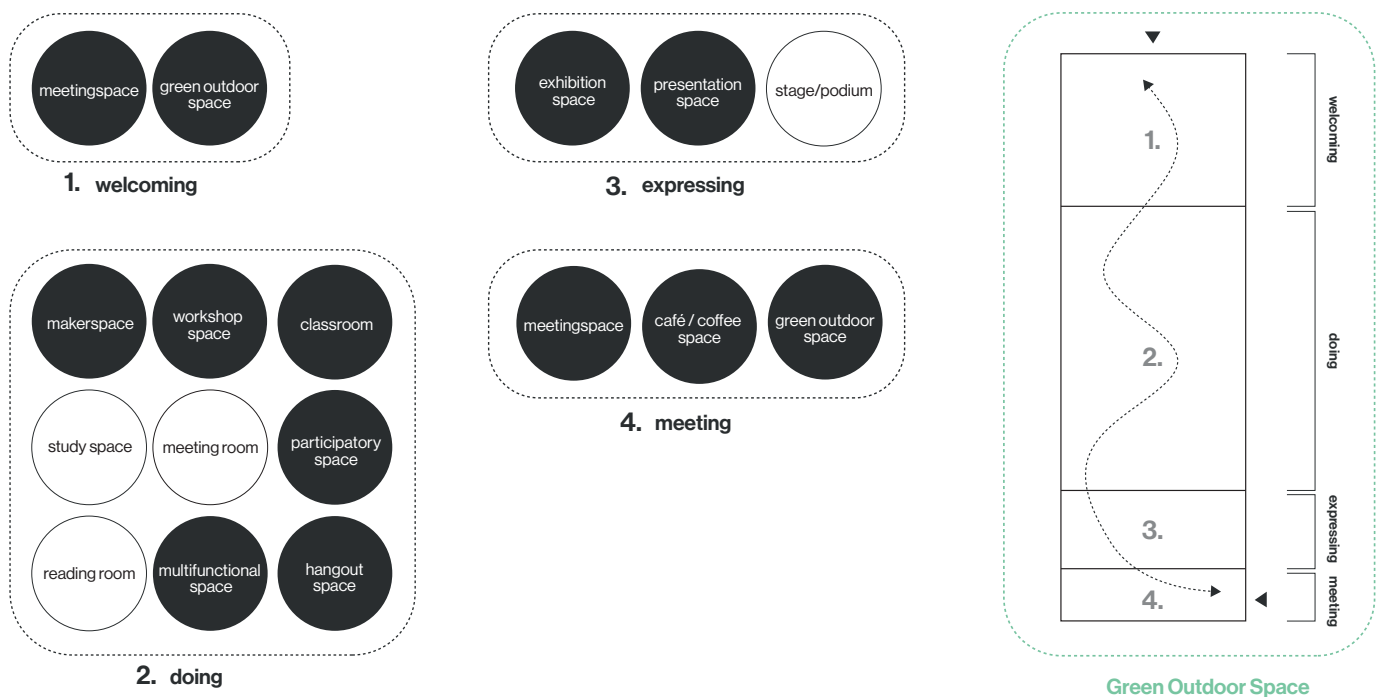
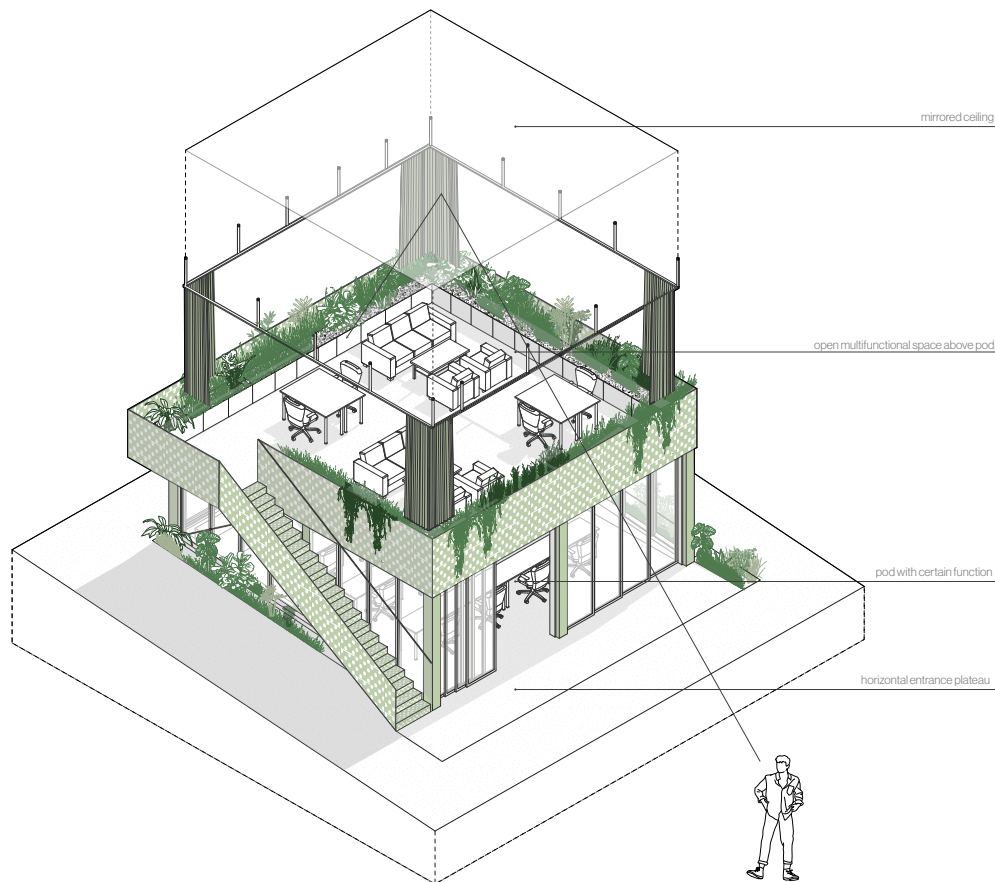


Figure 31
Functions in zones
author's illustration

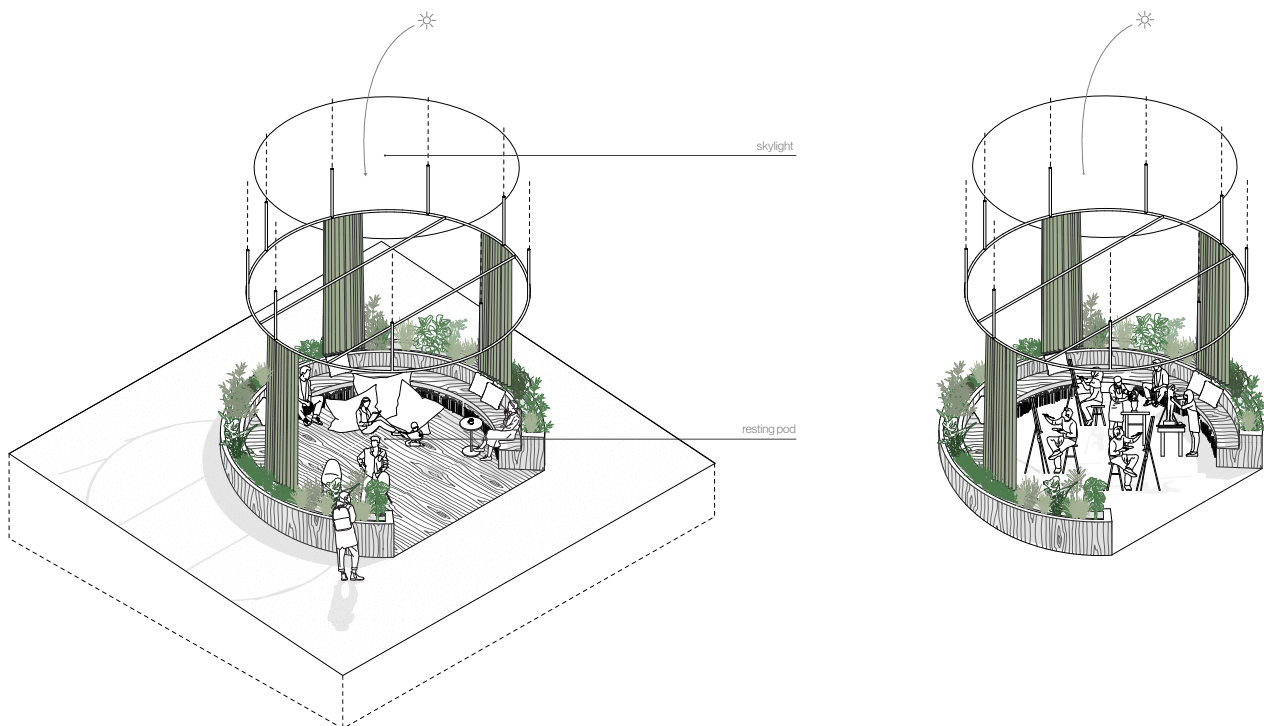


The rectangular pods are enclosed spaces and have a transparent character, allowing the activities inside to be visible from the building's route. For example, when visitors walk up the route and see people inside the makerspace creating something, they may become inspired by what they are doing and want to enter the space. They may also learn from others by observing how something is made, or feel motivated to help. This can encourage interaction and exchange between people.

Depending on the user and the activity, the pods can be closed off with curtains. This makes the spaces flexible and offers layers of openness and privacy, that contributes to a sense of autonomy.

On top of the pods is a second usable level that functions as a multifunctional area and can also be closed off with curtains. A mirrored ceiling above this space allows people on the slope below to view the pods and get an overview of activity on the pod, and decide if they want to enter this area.

Figure 32
Axonometry of a pod
1:200
author's illustration



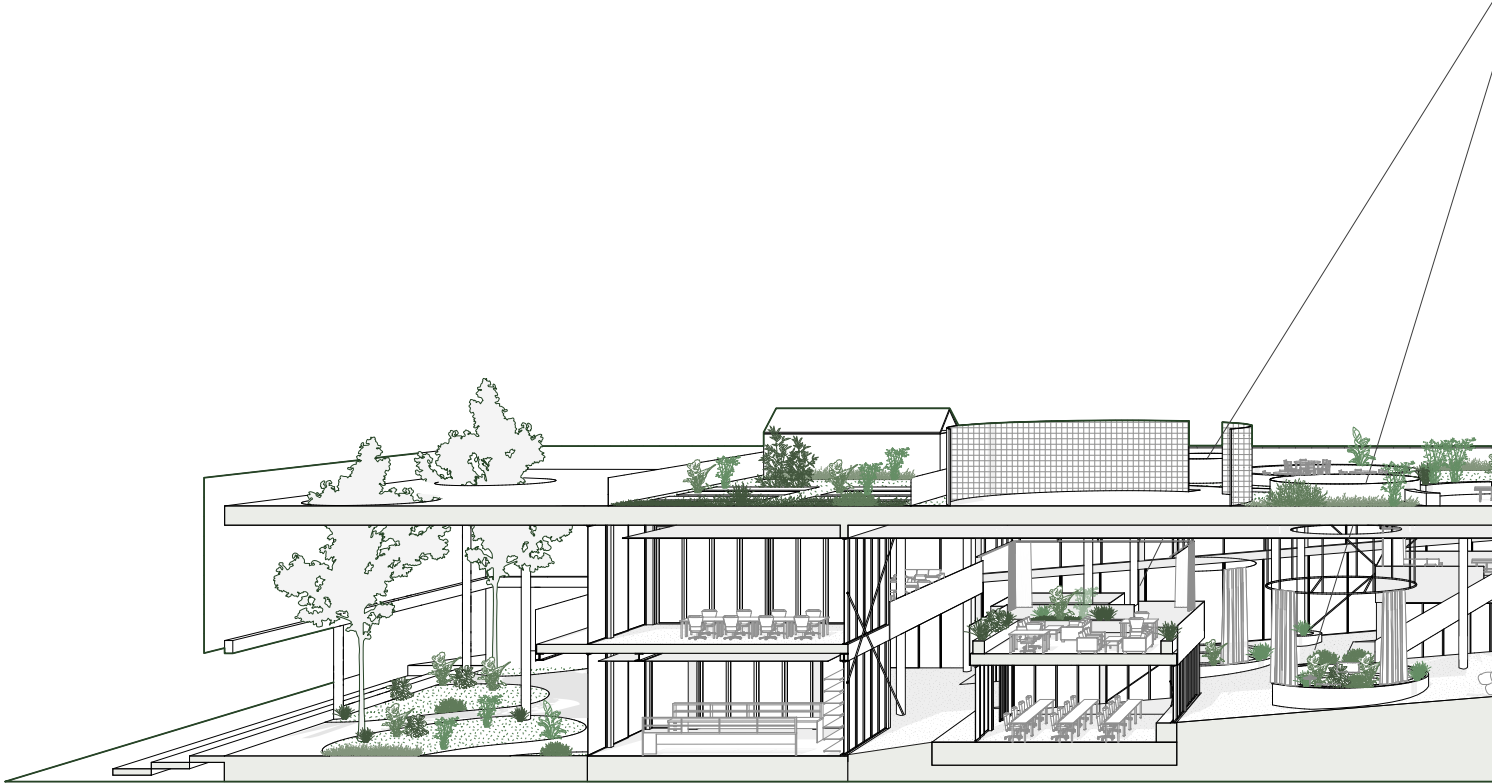
The resting pods have a round and open form, differing from the rectangular enclosed pods, creating an inviting character. People from on the route naturally walk past the resting pods and can see one another, which allows a low-threshold moment for contact. The sloping character of the building means that visitors sometimes need a pause before continuing the route. The resting pods provide places for this, while also encouraging spontaneous encounters as people naturally come together during these small moments of rest.

The round shape is enclosed by a seating area with storage space and a backrest with integrated planting, giving visitors the feeling of resting in nature. The wooden material and the shape give the pods a warm, soft, and inviting appearance. The surface of the resting pods can also be used for other activities and can be closed off with curtains.

Skylights have been created in the ceiling above the pods, in a way that daylight falls on these spots. This points the resting pods out and makes them recognisable even from other parts of the building.

Figure 33
Axonometry of a resting pod
1:200
author's illustration

Figure 34
Section AA
1:300
author's illustration

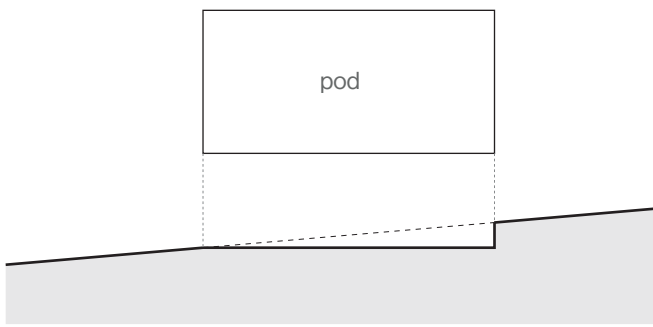
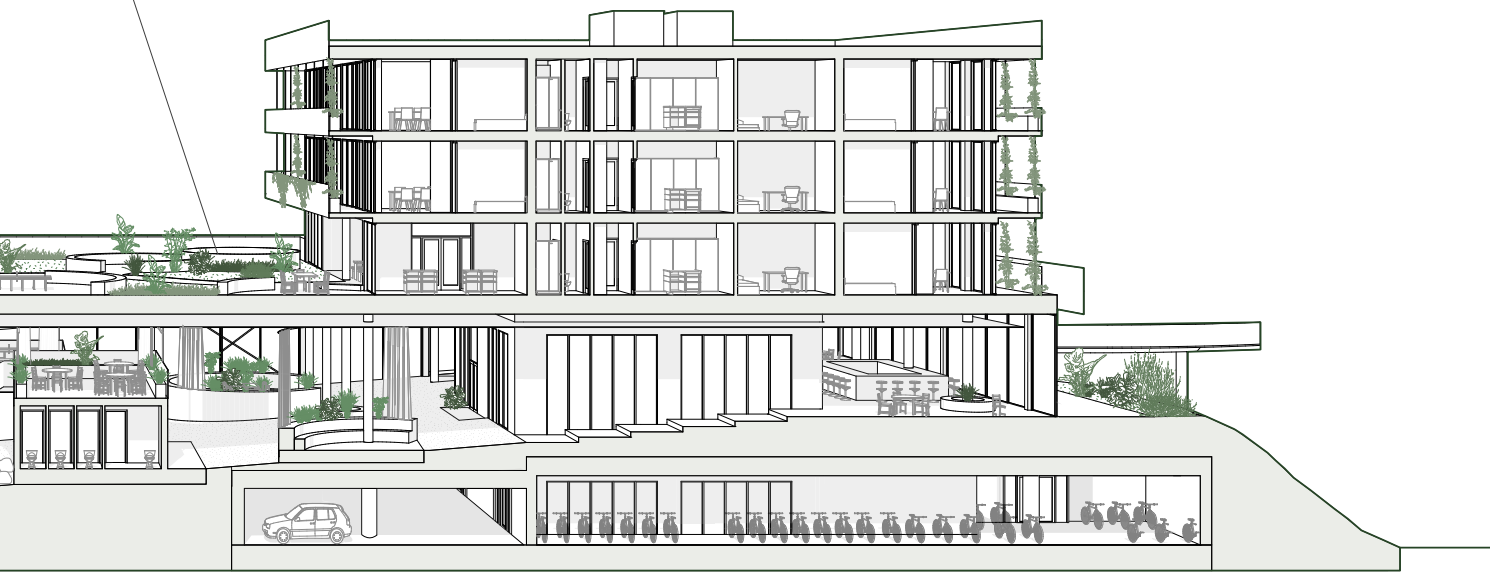


On the sloping ground floor, each pod has a horizontal floor that is placed on top or pushed into the slope. This creates a series of flat and usable surfaces. The slope also shapes the spatial character of the building. The building is higher and more open at the beginning of the slope and where the main entrance is located. As the slope gradually rises, the building becomes lower and more intimate towards the top, this creates a stronger focus on the end of the route, where the café is.

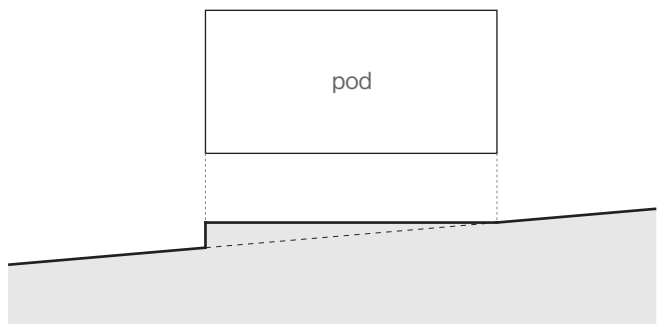
To make the building readable from the entrance onwards, skylights and mirrored ceiling elements above the pods are used as orientation points. This allows visitors to understand the organisation of the building through the ceiling while moving along the route.

Also, the sloped landscape naturally creates space in the slope for parking at the original ground level and is accessible from Escamplaan.

daylight enters via skylight
focusing on the resting pods



pushed into the slope



placed on the slope

Figure 35
Concept of pods on the slope
author's illustration

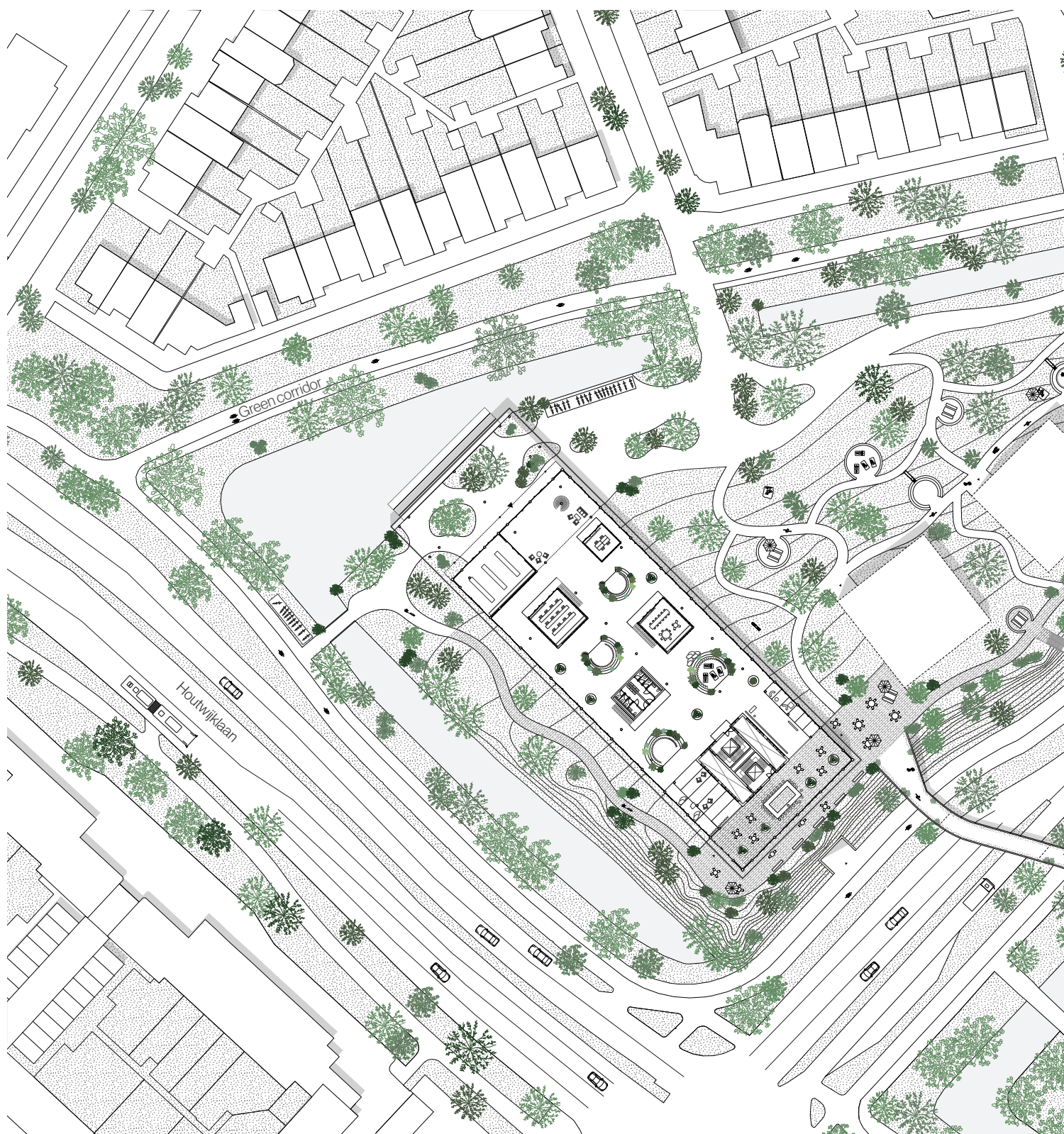
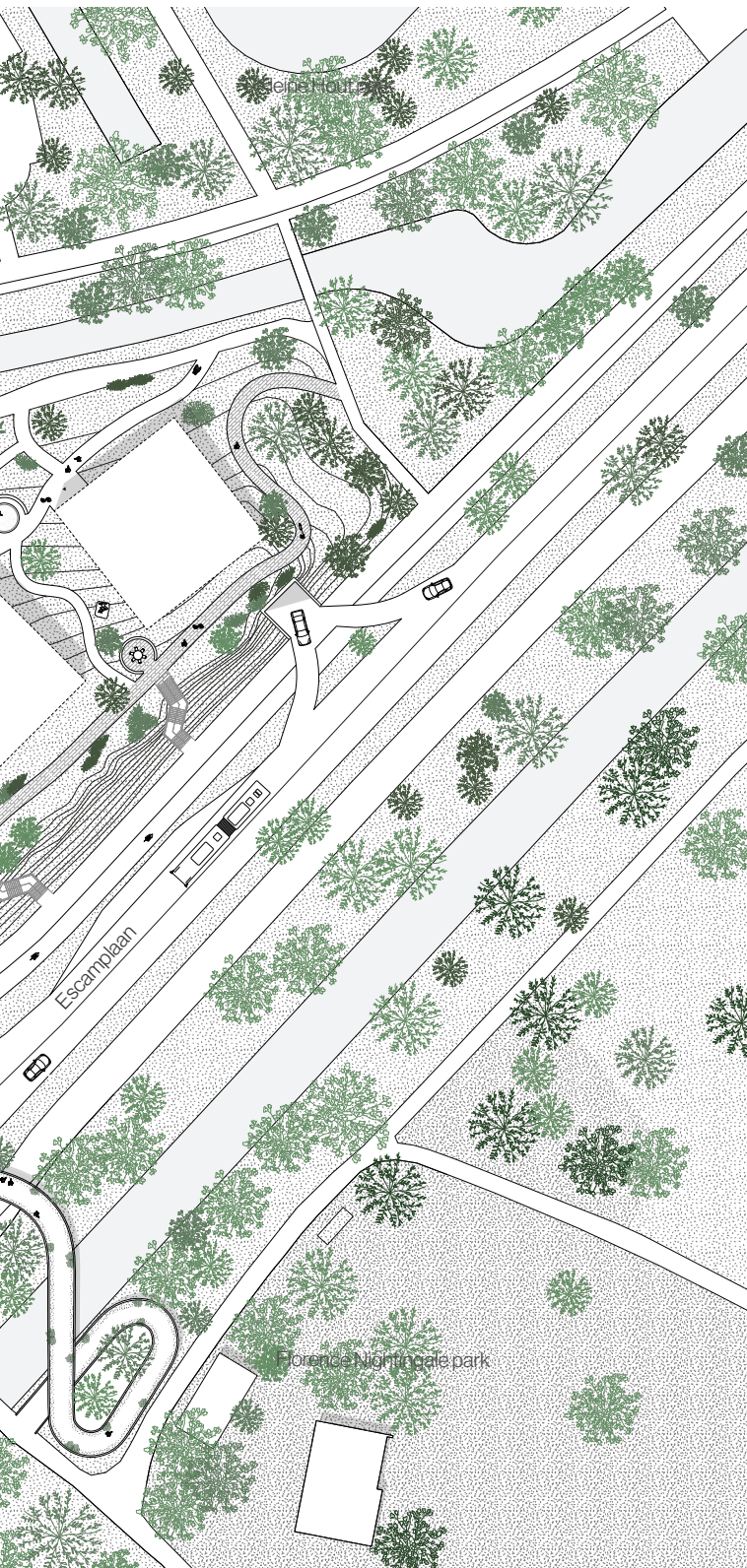
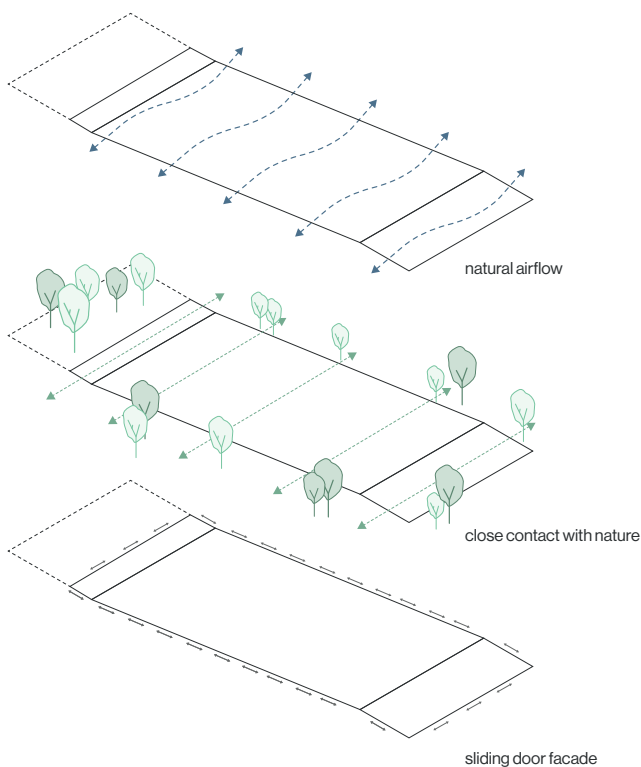


Figure 36
Site plan
1:1000
author's illustration



The landscape on the plot is designed as a park with various paths that guide people to the top of the landscape from where the pedestrian bridge starts. These paths also provide access to the entrances of the apartment blocks. At the top of the landscape, routes, functions, and sightlines come together. This point is designed as an enlarged plateau that extends the public panoramic café. From this plateau, the bridge meanders across the Escamplaan and lands in the Florence Nightingale Park.

The pedestrian bridge is a green route that connects the landscape of the site to the Florence Nightingale park. Therefore the bridge has a natural character with planting along the sides. The part directly above the road is covered, allowing climbing plants to create a green tunnel effect. The bridge slopes down into the park where it is surrounded by trees. In this way the bridge is experienced as an extension of the landscape, giving people a green route to reach the park, which was expressed as an important desire by residents of Houtwijk (Section 4.2).



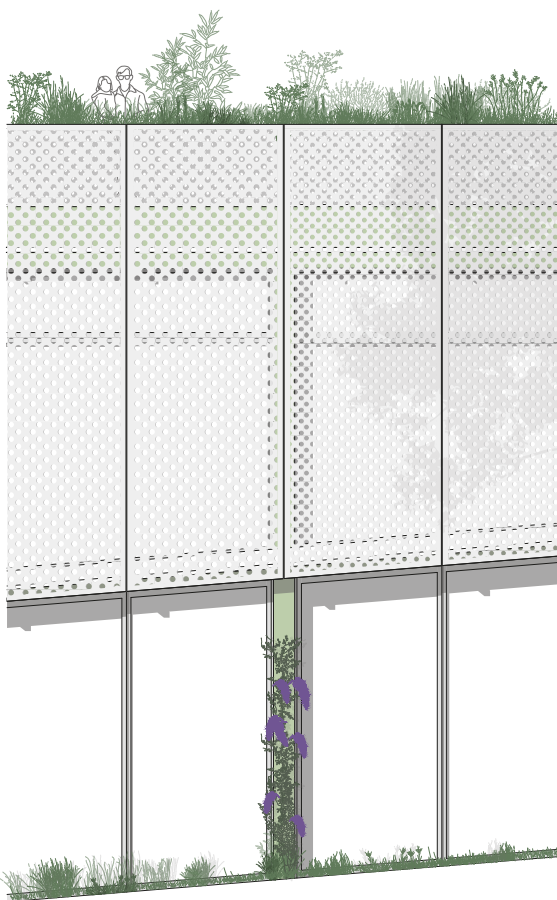
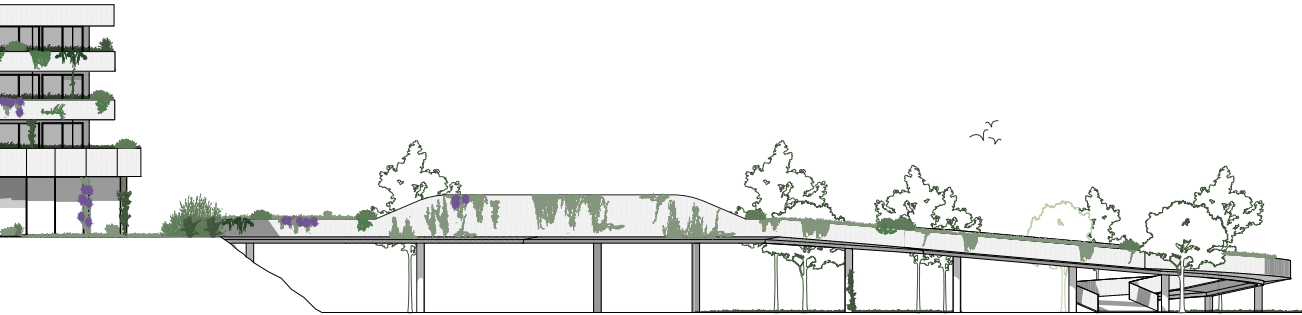
The building's facade has an open and transparent character, making the connection between visitors and nature as strong as possible, an important need showed by the research. The lower layer of the facade consists of automatic glass sliding doors. This allows the landscape to flow into the building, which blurs the boundary between inside and outside. It also allows people to move easily between inside and outside, and air to move naturally through the building. In this way, the building becomes part of the surrounding nature.

The upper part of the facade is finished with a second skin of perforated aluminum panels, set in front of the glass facade. The perforations in the panels follow and emphasise the building's slope. At the high entrance side, the perforations are larger. As the slope continues and the space becomes lower, the perforations become smaller. In this way, the slope is not only felt inside but also expressed in the facade.

The pedestrian bridge is finished with the same perforated aluminium panels. This creates a visual connection between the bridge and the building and makes the bridge feel like an extension of the building and the landscape.

Figure 37
Openable facade scheme
author's illustration

Figure 38
Elevation facade
1:500
author's illustration

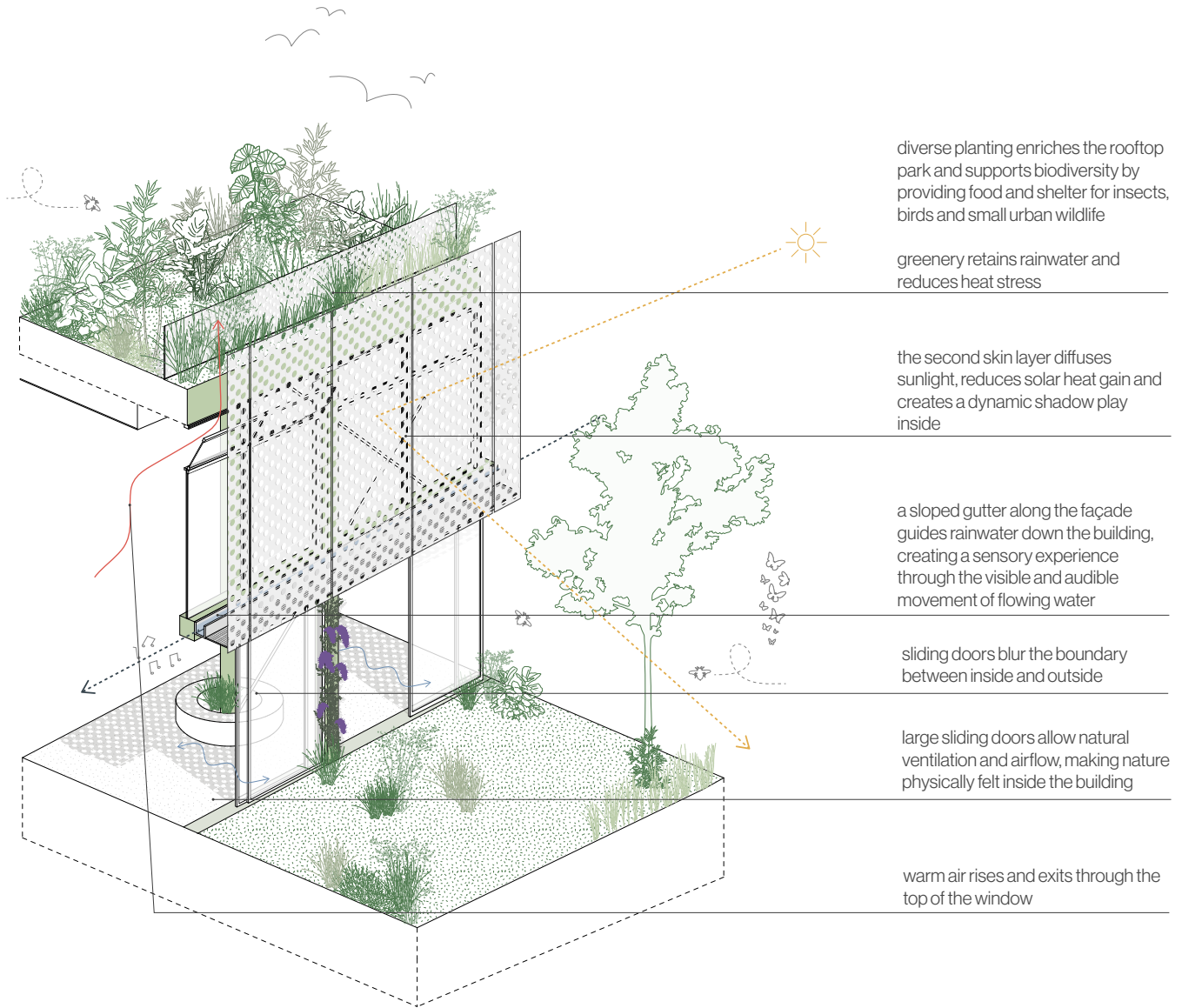


The perforated panels visually 'cut' the large transparent facade in two, covering almost half of it. These panels have a double function. On the one hand, they reduce direct sunlight that decreases heat gain inside the building, a problem that could arise in a large transparent building. On the other hand, the perforations create an interesting play of light and shadow in the interior.

Aluminium is chosen because its low weight, the relatively large panels have minimal additional load on the structure. This allows the structure to be light and slender. Although the negative environmental impact of the production of aluminium, the material is highly circular as it can be recycled infinitely. In this project, only recycled aluminium is therefore used. Another important reason is its ease of disassembly. The panels can be attached separately from the main structure and easily removed, replaced, or reused later. This contributes to the flexibility and sustainability of the building.

Figure 39
Facade fragment 1:100
author's illustration

Figure 40
Axonometry facade 1:150
author's illustration



The sloping effect of the building is also highlighted by a gutter system that is positioned in between the glass facade and the second skin. The gutter also follows the slope, and flows rainwater down the facade. The structural support of the second skin functions as a deflector plate that slows the rainwater down as it runs down the facade, creating a sound of moving water. This reinforces the idea of nature as a sensory experience in and around the building.

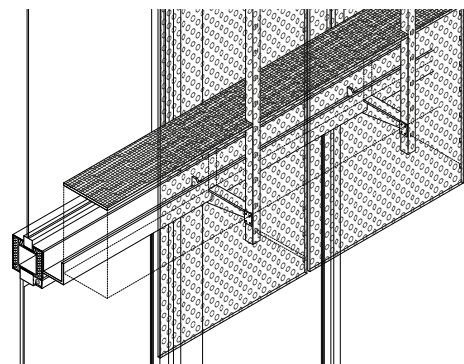


Figure 41
Axonometry structural support of facade
author's illustration

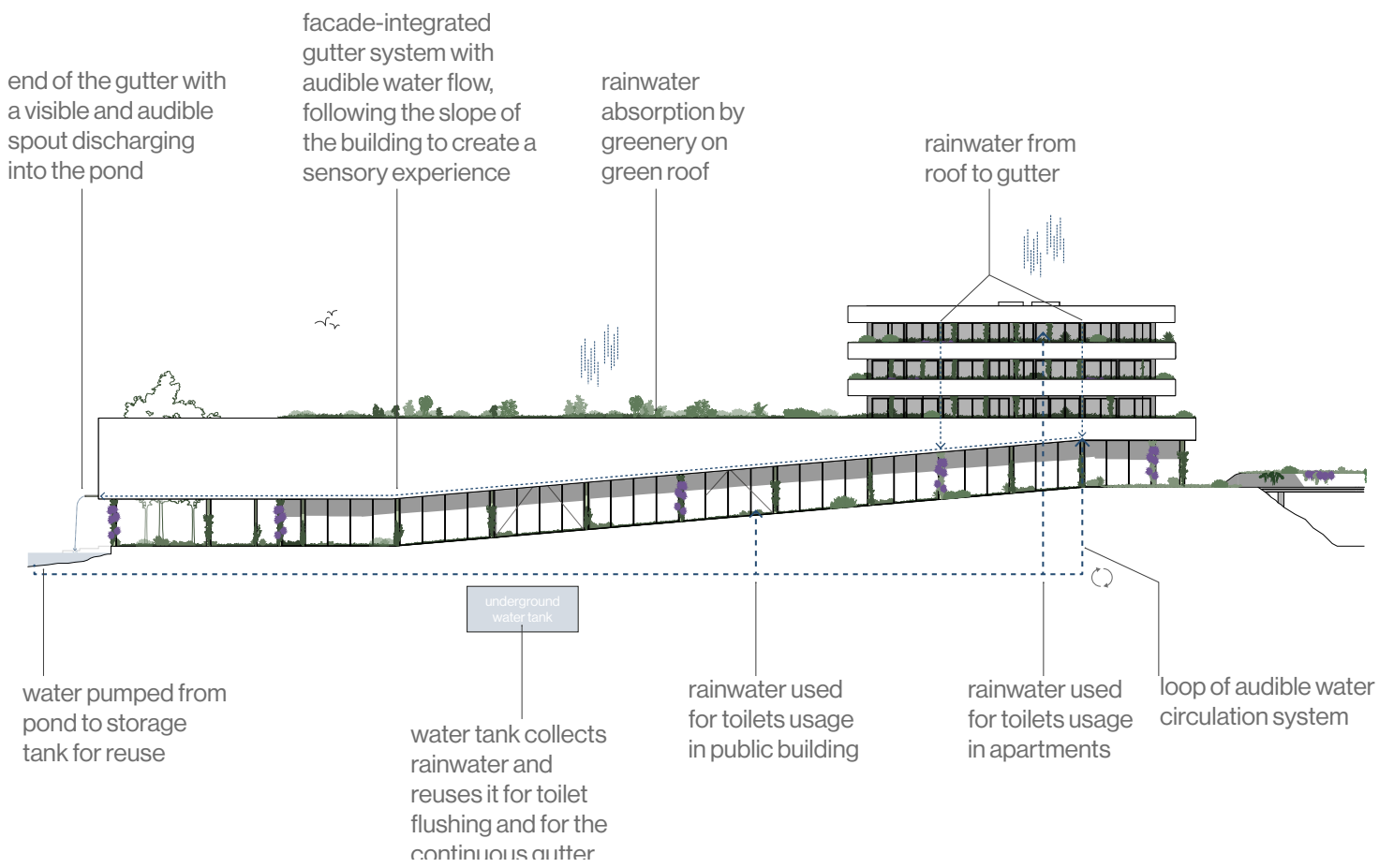
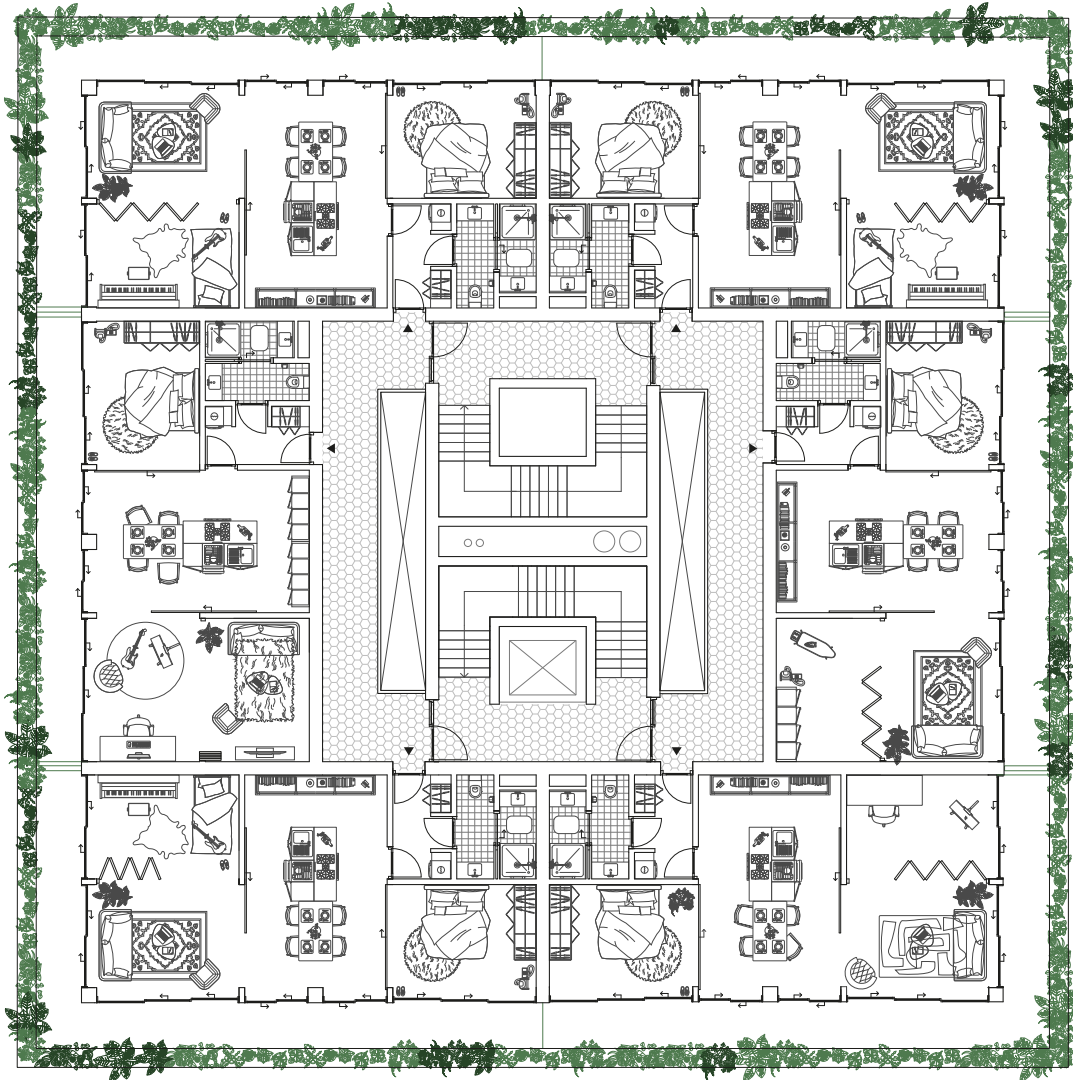
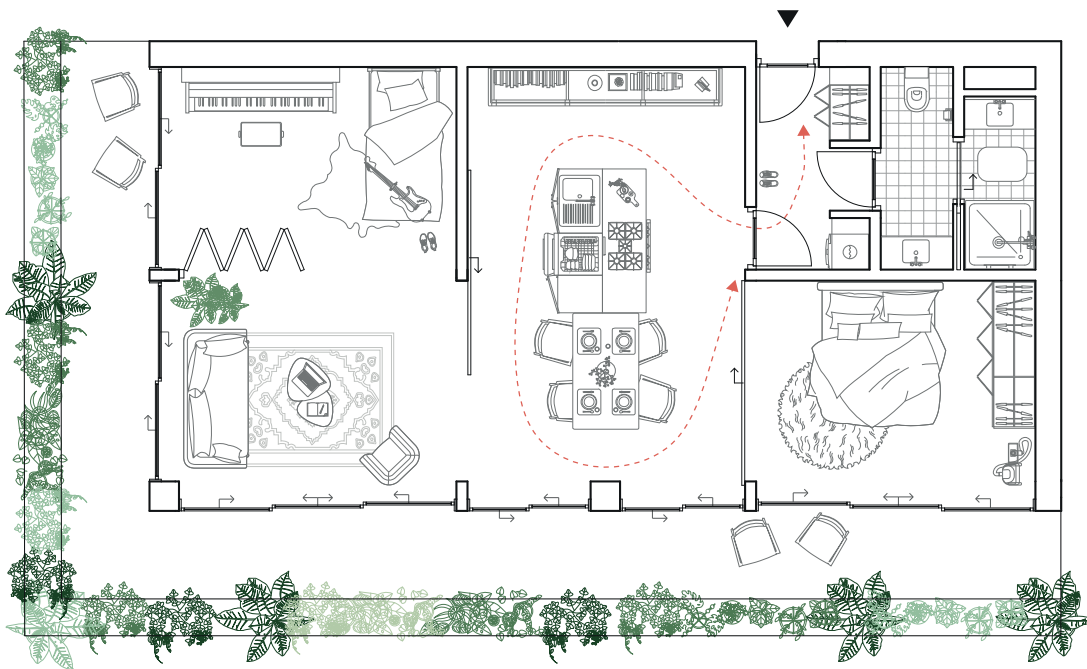


Figure 42
Rainwater scheme
author's illustration



The apartment building on top of the public building consists of three layers with a total of 16 residential units, each 65 m². All units are designed according to the same layout principle.

Figure 43
Floorplan +3/+4
1:200
author's illustration



The apartment units follow the same concept principle as the pods in the public building. Each dwelling is designed as an open space with a central (kitchen) element in the middle, around which residents can move freely. Other spaces can be closed off with sliding doors, creating a flexible floor plan that can change between openness and privacy.

Figure 44
Floorplan apartment unit
1:100
author's illustration

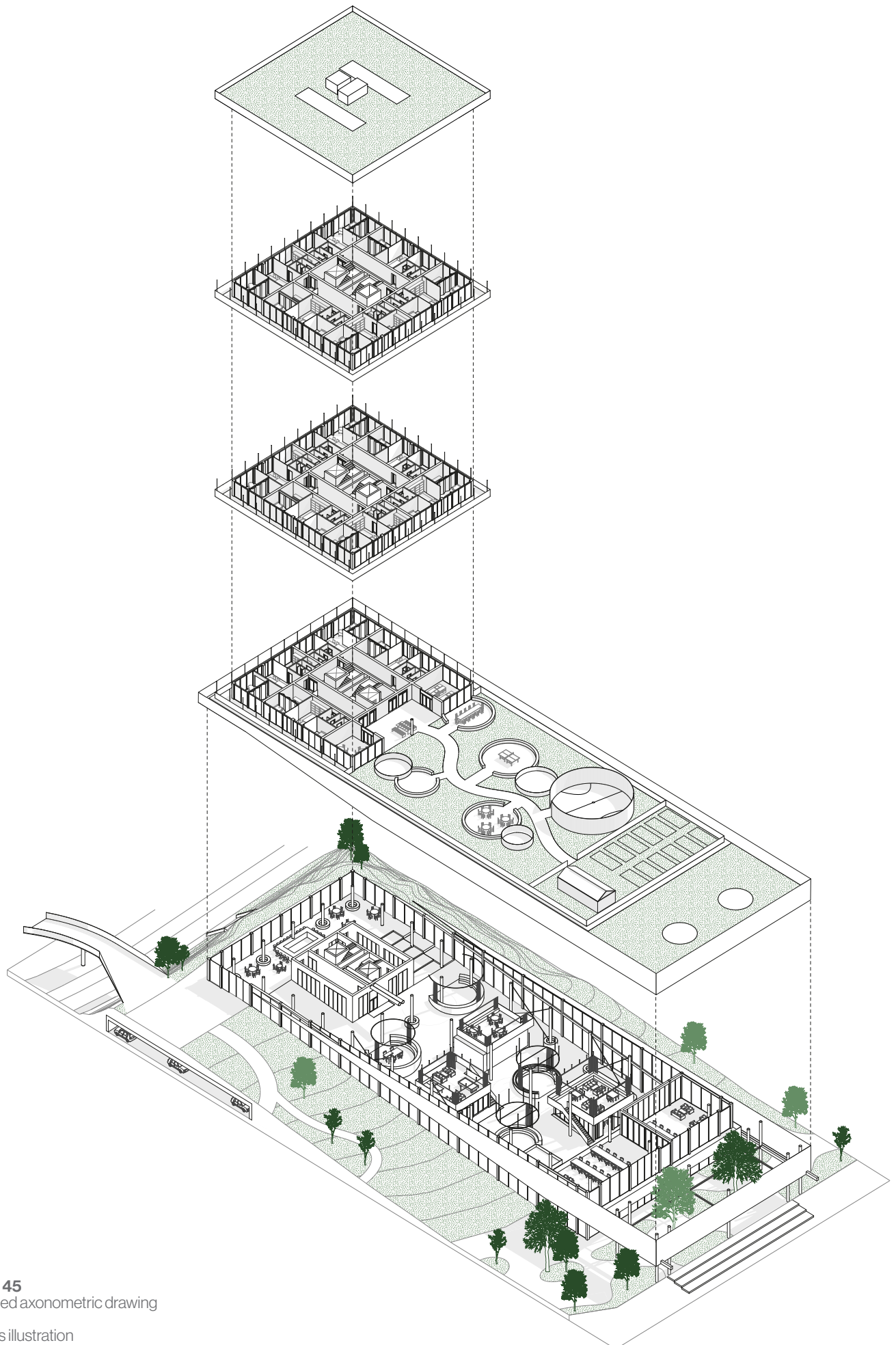
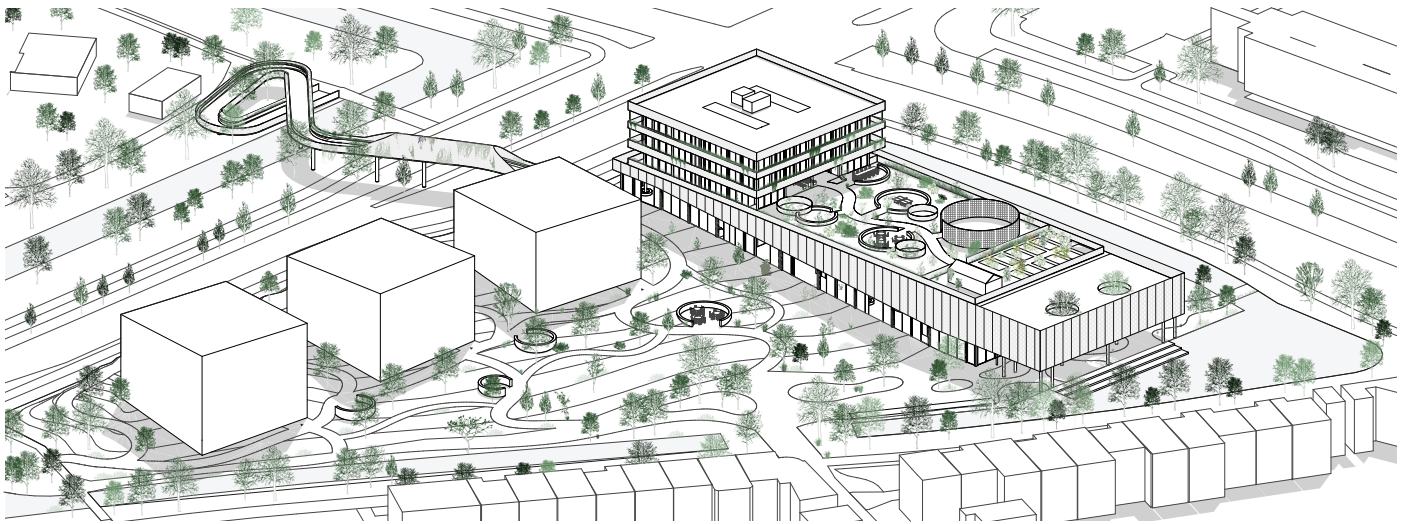


Figure 45
Exploded axonometric drawing
1:1000
author's illustration

Figure 46
Axonometric site view
1:1200
author's illustration



The building, landscape and pedestrian bridge are designed as one whole, and strengthening each other in a spatial and functional way. However, this continuity could make the building feel too monumental or refined. Therefore, the materialisation of the building focuses on variation and dynamic. The large sliding door facade allows the building to open up, creating a changeable dynamic facade, that could change every moment. The perforated second skin filters daylight and creates changing patterns of light and shadow inside the building. Greenery on, around, and in the building changes throughout the seasons and decorate the building and its surrounding. In this way, the building is dynamic rather than static and never has the same appearance.

Ultimately, the public building has an open and inviting character, encouraging visitors to come inside, stay, and experience the activities within. The building functions as a landmark in Houtwijk while serving its residents based on their expressed needs.

The original care location, which was closed off from the neighbourhood and the public, is now opened up and transformed into a place for the whole neighbourhood. At the same time, the design continues the green structures of Houtwijk and connects them to the building.

In this way, the design aims to connect residents, generations and green structures, while strengthening people's well-being and their connection to the neighbourhood.

Discussion

5.0 Implications & Recommendations

5.1 Reflection

5.

5.0 Implications & Recommendations

This design demonstrates that a public community building does not have to be approached only as a collection of functions, but also as a spatial connector between people, programmes, and the surrounding landscape. The building is more than a functional facility, it is an architectural route, an experience, that guides visitors through different activities, atmospheres, and places of meeting.

The project treats public buildings not as isolated objects, but as part of a larger integral neighbourhood and green system. By connecting the building to existing routes, green structures, and public spaces, it contributes to social and ecological connections in the neighbourhood.

Additionally, the design suggests an intergenerational approach to (public) buildings. Younger and older people may have different needs, but they can benefit from shared and overlapping spaces. Therefore, architects should not translate age specific needs into separate facilities. Instead, they can design inclusive public buildings where different generations use the same building in different ways and support one another.

Finally, the project highlights the importance of local fieldwork and participation as a starting point for a design process. Local research should play a central role at the start of the design to understand the local context, its users, and their daily routines. Designing based on experiences from residents, rather than just designing for them, can lead to a design that is context specific and is therefore unique.

In summary, this research recommends a more **integral** design approach. On the one hand, by designing public buildings not only as isolated objects, but as part of a larger social, spatial, and ecological system. On the other hand, by making the design process itself integral, in which residents, users, and local needs are included from the beginning. This results in context specific design outcomes.

5.1 Reflection

This research started with fieldwork in Houtwijk and the formulation of a problem statement. This was followed by theoretical research into third places, the third phase of life, and the overlap in needs of younger and older people. Interviews, workshops, and conversations with residents were an important part of the process, because they provided insight into the local needs, allowing the design to be grounded in the specific context of Houtwijk.

At the same time, the research process also had limitations. Initially, I wanted to base the research primarily on the input of residents in order to stay as close to the neighbourhood as possible. However, during the process, I noticed that this was insufficient to answer all the research questions. Therefore, the local data had to be supplemented with literature. This makes the research both context specific and theoretically grounded. Besides this, it was more difficult to reach younger people than older residents. The perspective of younger people could therefore have been studied more. Furthermore, most conversations with residents took place at the beginning of the design phase. More feedback sessions during the process could have helped to test whether the final proposal is in line with their needs.

Also, during the design process I encountered challenges. The scale of the design site was difficult to grasp at the beginning and took up time. Looking back, using 3D models earlier could have helped me with this. Normally, this is a medium in which I can express myself well, but I made relatively little use of it during this process. In general, I think the use of models could have helped me deal with more design challenges.

On a personal level, the graduation process also taught me a lot. I noticed that I wanted to include too many themes, ideas, and design intentions within one project. This made the process more complicated and stressful. But, the graduation process helped me to better understand my interests and qualities. Doing research in the neighbourhood, speaking with residents, and translating this into a design concept were to me the most valuable parts of the process. Working on a concept gave me the most energy, as local input and design were directly connected. When the design concept became more detailed and technical, the feeling of freedom disappeared as more choices had to be made. This period was the most challenging for me.

As a result, I view graduating not only about designing a building, but also about understanding what my strengths are, which aspects of the design process give me energy, and which areas I need to further develop.

Extra

6.0 References

6.

6.0 References

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3²

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AR4AD300
MSc3 Graduation Studio
Fall 2025/26

Responsible Supervisor: Kobe Macco
Supervisor: Birgit Jürgehake

Graduation Report
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