

The New Social Fabric

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Introduction



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Subject Catalogue
Design studio Urban Architecture

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A journey into the fabric

This catalogue emerges from my research and design work at TU Delft's Urban Architecture design studio. The studio focuses on the area of Hoboken and Kiel, and the redevelopment of the Blikfabriek, a former can factory partially turned into a creative hub for the community. The area around it is home to a patchwork of ideologies, which is reflected in the design of the area. Hoboken sees a large amount of row houses, once built for the industrial workers. Kiel on the other hand was the focus of various experiments in social housing in the 20th century. The blikfabriek sits at the edge of these two distinct areas, and redeveloping the site means learning more about how people currently live, used to live and are going to live in the future. This is the story of the social fabric of Kiel and Hoboken.

Inventing the Fabric

The story begins with a bit of research titled "inventing the fabric". This research, which was performed in cooperation with Anton de Koning, Julia Schutten and Sohyun Won, explores how the area developed over time and what ideologies influenced this

development. The oldest parts of the area are found around the historical centers of Hoboken and Wilrijk, which were small communities centered around a central square and were connected to the rest of Antwerp through provincial roads. In the late 19th and early 20th century, Hoboken started developing along existing provincial roads.



Kiel also started its development, mainly in preparation for the 1920 Olympics.

In the 1920s, the first experiments with social housing started in Kiel with the construction of the Hennig, Thibaud and Eric Sasse complex. These buildings combined quality housing (they offered bathrooms and kitchens, which were still uncommon at the time) with outdoor space in the form of publicly accessible courtyards.

Renaat Braem took this a step further and introduced modernist high rises that were elevated on pilotes. By doing this, Braem argued that the ground floor belonged to no-one, thus offering a continuous public space.

Since the construction of these buildings, several changes have occurred. The courtyards from the interbellum have been closed off, the ground floors are often littered with garbage and the demography has changed. Instead of middle class workers, the buildings are now mostly occupied by

immigrants and other lower social classes of society, while the buildings themselves appear to be somewhat neglected in their maintenance.

Personal research ideas

My personal research began with an interest in designing a new center for Hoboken, with a focus on integrating mobility solutions into the design. This felt like an important and practical issue, especially in the context of urban development and the need for accessible spaces. However, as I delved deeper into the topic, I found myself questioning whether this was truly addressing a necessary or meaningful research question.

I decided to shift focus towards something more relevant, that would better connect with the previous research: beauty in architecture. Architectural designs often seem to focus on a concept: an idea that guides the design and explains why something is designed the way it is. That's what architectural education focuses on, but that's not what ordinary

people see. They don't see the concept, they see a visual representation of it, which they might like or dislike. I wanted to dive more into this concept of beauty, of making an attractive building. The buildings that we investigated during "inventing the fabric" were once considered high quality, desirable places to live, but today are seen as problem areas. I wanted to know how I could make a building that will be just as attractive today as 50, 100 or even 200 years from now.

Perhaps I was a bit naive. I quickly found out there is no universal standard of beauty. *De gustibus non est disputandum* (in matters of taste, there can be no dispute) seemed to ring true here: personal preferences, especially regarding things like architecture, are subjective, and everyone has their own unique tastes. A beloved building is about more than just how it looks. It's about fitting into a community. It's about creating a place that gives people a sense of belonging. It meant that the research had to be repositioned into the specific context of Hoboken and Kiel, to find out what the area is like and how people feel about living there.

The central question

At the P2, the main research question was as follows:

How can a new building design settle in the community of Hoboken and Kiel?

Subtopics included investigating the historical background of the area, talking to members of the community to find out what they think of their neighbourhood, analysing architectural styles and public spaces in the area and trying to see how people from the community can be involved in the design process.

The main problem was that the research question was still a bit general and vague. It doesn't specify the key factors, parameters, or objectives that should be considered. The phrase "settle in the community" is open to interpretation and there are no clear criteria to define it. It's also not defined what type of building is to be designed. It made it difficult to define a clear research direction that would make a strong argument for the design.

A more refined research question is:
How can housing design in Hoboken and Kiel reimagine boundaries between private and public domains to cultivate community ownership in Hoboken and Kiel?

The relationship between public and private spaces has been resolved differently throughout the history of the area: row houses emphasized privacy and individual ownership. Early social housing experiments like Hennig introduced more communal spaces in the form of courtyards but ended up struggling with vandalism. Modernist blocks prioritized collective space sometimes at the expense of human scale and safety and contemporary developments return to a more privacy focused approach.

My design for the Blikfabriek site, which will feature social housing in combination with a sports hall, engages directly with this challenge, seeking a balanced approach that learns from both the successes and failures of previous residential buildings and public spaces.

Methodology

To understand how architecture can successfully integrate with community life, I employed several complementary research methods:

Moving from row housing to a gallery apartment

a personal anecdote

I remember the house I grew up in. It was a fairly small row house built in 1923 out of concrete. There were 3 small bedrooms and a small bathroom with a separate toilet on the upper floor. On the ground floor was our living room with a separate kitchen and we also had a small garden. No, it wasn't big, but it was the place that I, my parents and my two older brothers called home.

I remember playing outside as a kid. We lived on a street that opened up into a small square or courtyard. It mostly provided space for greenery and cars, but it was also great for riding my bicycle. I would drive past the houses, even though I didn't know who lived in most of them. You would know your direct neighbours, maybe some people from the other side of the square, but that was it. Most of them I only saw driving by in their car.

I remember when I was 18, I moved to an apartment with gallery access built in 1975. This was very different than the row house I lived in before. Every room was on the same floor, which was convenient, but also reduced privacy a little. I had to walk down the stairs or take the elevator to get to the street which made me feel disconnected from it. But I also had to share spaces with everyone else in the building, such as the entrance or the elevator. It meant seeing more of my neighbours and being greeted a lot more often.

I remember never truly meeting any of my neighbours in that building. Many of them are very friendly and occasionally people tend to help each other. I might help someone repair their bicycle, someone might give away some leftover groceries or we help a neighbour move some furniture. It's nice, but it's never an actual community. It rarely goes beyond a simple "hi, how are you?" It could be so much more if only there was a space in or even next to the building to function as a common living room; a space where you can sit and have a chat with the people you share a building with, just so you can get to know them a little better.

Stories from some Hoboken & Kiel residents



"It's quite nice living here, considering I have everything I need nearby. There are several supermarkets and the center of Antwerp is never far away. You do hear some noise here, particularly from the school, which has almost exclusively foreigners in it, but it doesn't bother me. I think it makes the place feel more lively actually."



"I never really go to any community centers here in the area. When I walk in I always immediately feel seen, but not in a positive way. It's like I'm being watched. I wish they had some more spaces where I could section myself off and just be in my own zone. That would make me feel more comfortable."

"The buildings along the Weerstandlaan are not exactly beautiful and inviting. It's like they moved them away from the road to avoid being seen. It doesn't really resonate with me, but at the same time I do like their simplicity. They're not trying to be something they're not, like Henning. I feel like that building wants to be Paris, but just isn't. It feels a bit fake."

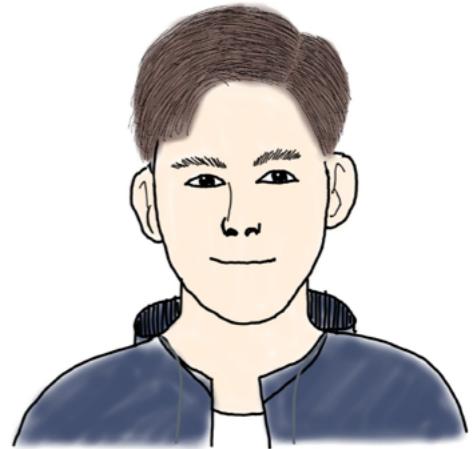


"The Blikvelden? Well, we never really go there, because there is nothing there. It's secluded, it's a backside, with a small path that leads nowhere. It's a dead end. It doesn't really feel like they want us to go there."



"I think I would prefer a house with a garden if I had the chance, but I can't afford that. Maybe a communal garden here would be nice, and of course if the Blikvelden were more accessible I could go there too. I'm really missing the outdoor feeling a bit. Right now I just have a small balcony on the street side, but it's so small I can barely sit there."

"I like the industrial heritage of the neighborhood. I think its heritage is what gives the area its character. The streets with the brick houses just have a certain warm feel to them. As for the white towers or the school, I think they still fit in the area. I see them as a bit of a nod to the white palaces from the past, such as Sorghvliedt."



Historical analysis

Examining the evolution of housing types and public spaces in Hoboken and Kiel to understand how architectural ideologies have shaped the built environment. Most of this work was already performed during "inventing the fabric".

Site observation

Mapping patterns of use around the Blikfabriek site, identifying active nodes and circulation patterns to understand what spaces people currently use in the area.

Architectural and urban analysis

Studying specific buildings and public spaces as case studies, focusing on how they negotiate the relationship between public and private, how materials contribute to identity, and how spaces adapt over time.

Community engagement

Conducting interviews with residents to gain insights into their experiences, preferences, and concerns regarding housing and public space in their neighborhood.

Case studies

This catalogue will mostly focus on the architectural and urban analysis, which will be studied through a selection of case studies to highlight specific examples of the different approaches to housing and public space design in Hoboken and Kiel. Each case study will be presented in its own booklet and offers specific insights relevant to my design project:

Row Housing

Represents the traditional housing fabric that is very characteristic of the area. This type of housing was focused on privacy and establishes a baseline for understanding how

later housing experiments departed from this model.

Hennig I

An early social housing experiment from the interbellum that attempted to bring palace-like aesthetics to working-class housing, with an interesting approach to communal courtyards. These have proven to not work as intended, and understanding why and how they could be improved can be vital information to the design project.

Eric Sasse Complex

The new Eric Sasse complex offers a contemporary model of social housing that also took lessons from the likes of Hennig I. It also faced the challenge of adapting to a historical context, which it has achieved with distinct approaches to materials, private space, and community facilities.

Kielplein

A significant public space that demonstrates how a plaza space can function within the urban fabric, and shows how even a simple space can function well due to external factors, such as the proximity of shopping activity.

Alfons de Cockplein

A recently renovated public space adjacent to social housing that provides insights into how residents use communal areas. Comparing the new design to the old one can prove helpful in the lessons the designers took from the past that I can apply to my courtyard design.

Together, these case studies (mapped on the next page) span different scales (from individual buildings to public spaces), different eras (from pre WWI to contemporary), and different approaches

to the central question of building a strong social urban living space that gives both residents and the rest of the community a sense of comfort and belonging.

Analytical framework

Each case study in this catalogue is examined through five analytical lenses:

Historical context & ideology

Understanding the social, economic, and political forces that shaped the design, and the ideological positions it represents.

Architectural expression

Analysing how ideologies were reflected in the architectural expression of spaces and buildings.

Patterns of use & adaptation

Observing how spaces and buildings are actually used, how they relate to the public space, how they have been modified over time, and how they accommodate or resist change.

Material use

Examining how material choices reflect cultural values, local traditions, and attitudes toward status and permanence.

From analysis to design

This catalog consists of a total of 7 booklets. The first one is the one you're reading right now. Number 2 to 6 analyse the different cases. The final booklet in this catalog presents my design for the Belmedis site next to the Blikfabriek, demonstrating how insights from these historical case studies have informed a new approach to social housing and community space. My design does not attempt to directly copy

historical forms or impose foreign concepts. Instead, it engages in a dialogue with the architectural heritage of the area, learning from both successes and failures of previous approaches to create spaces that are both contextually appropriate and forward-looking. The project aims to contribute positively to the evolving urban fabric of Hoboken and Kiel, adding another chapter to the ongoing story of how architecture shapes community life in this part of Antwerp.



*"What is social housing.
if not social?"*



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Row
housing

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Housing for factory workers

Row housing forms the backbone of Hoboken's urban fabric and can be found spread throughout the area. Hoboken evolved from a small village into an industrial hub in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This industrial growth triggered significant housing development to accommodate the influx of workers. The row houses that emerged during this period remain an essential typology in Hoboken's urban landscape, representing a crucial part of this district's architectural identity and social history. It shows off the local building traditions and the socioeconomic conditions that shaped the neighbourhood's development. Every façade looks slightly different, which gives the area a unique character. The neighbourhood is a collage of different houses that reflect the character of the people that built them.

Private homes, private spaces

Row housing in Hoboken primarily developed during the industrial expansion, as well as in the interwar period when social housing initiatives gained momentum. These narrow, adjoining residential units typically range from two to three stories in height, with widths between 4 and 6 meters. Originally built to house workers employed in Hoboken's shipyards, metalworks, and other industries, these buildings were designed to maximize density while providing adequate private indoor and outdoor living space.

The street pattern in Hoboken appears to be largely unplanned, with row houses on irregularly shaped and sized blocks dominating the area. The urban morphology creates well-defined distinctions between

public streets and private interiors. Traditional row houses in Hoboken typically feature a narrow front façade, deep plots (sometimes up to 50 metres), and spacious rear gardens that provide private outdoor space. Due to the immense size of many plots, many residents have expanded their house on the rear.

In Belgium, there is a strong tradition of prioritizing private ownership and clearly delineating boundaries between individual properties. This is mostly due to the political past, in which the christian democrats encouraged private ownership. The belief was that private ownership would keep workers away from communist political trends, and would also encourage people to take good care of their living environment.



Architectural expression

The architectural expression of Hoboken's row houses varies according to their construction period, but certain characteristics remain consistent. Workers housing from the late 19th and early 20th century tends to show some diversity and decorative elements in their architectural expression, featuring brick façades with door surrounds, window lintels, sometimes arched window tops, and cornice details, while creating rhythm through repetition along the street.

Some newer row houses show are more modest in their architectural expression. Their façades often lack ornamentation. These houses often display a rational organization with regularized window placement, though the exact layout, colour and materiality of the

façade might differ from house to house.

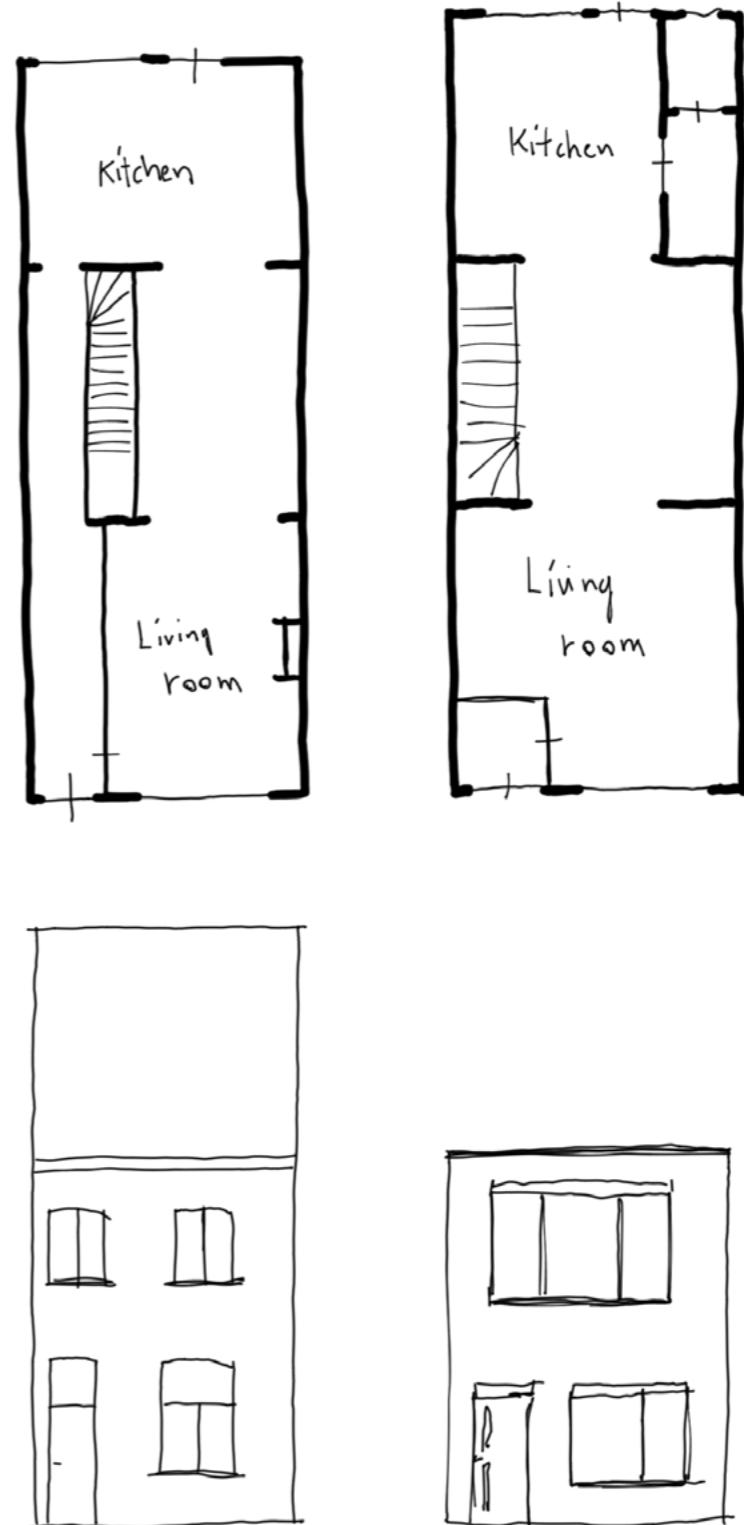
A distinctive characteristic of Hoboken's row housing is the individual expression within a coherent whole. While adhering to similar height, depth, and basic organizational principles, each house often displays subtle variations in façade treatment, window arrangements, and decorative elements. This creates streets with visual coherence while allowing for individual identity, though in a way it can also come over as cluttered.

The façade layout often expresses what happens behind it: houses with a very wide top window usually only have one bedroom on the front of the house, while houses with two windows usually have or used to have two bedrooms on the front.



I've enjoyed living here, but since the kids have all moved out, it's become too big for me alone. I'm selling my house in order to move to a smaller apartment in Luchtbal.

I'll miss my garden though. It was a lot of maintenance, but it was a nice little hideaway from the neighbourhood, a nice place to relax and just be me.



Floor plan & Elevation of two row houses

Usage patterns

The spatial organization of traditional row houses in Hoboken follows a consistent pattern that has proven remarkably adaptable to people's lifestyles over time. Typically, the ground floor contains the main living spaces, with the front room often serving as a formal "best room" or parlor in the original designs. The middle section commonly housed the staircase and potentially a small service space, while the rear contained kitchen facilities with direct access to the back garden or courtyard.

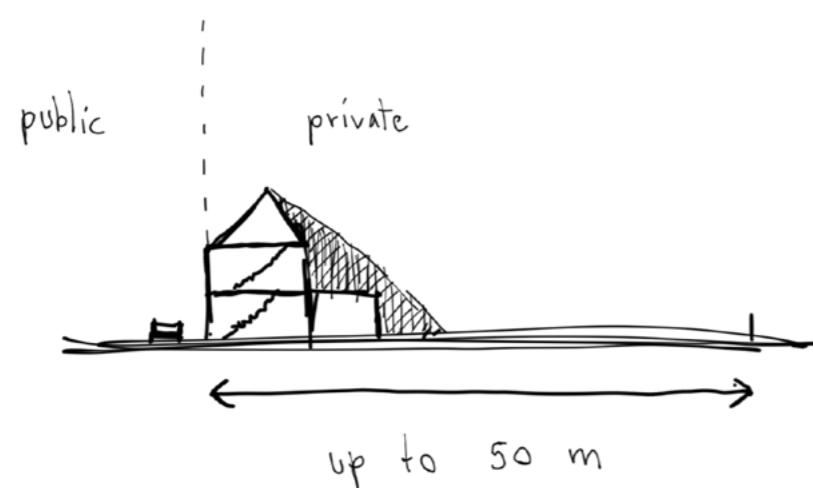
Upper floors traditionally contain bedrooms and, nowadays, a small bathroom, though in the past many only had outdoor sanitation facilities. Attic spaces, if applicable, were often used for storage or as additional sleeping areas for larger families. This vertical stratification of functions, from public to private as one moves upward through the house, remains a defining characteristic.

Contemporary usage patterns have evolved while respecting this basic structure. Many houses have undergone renovation to create

more open living arrangements on the ground floor, connecting front and rear spaces to improve light penetration and create more flexible living environments. Rear extensions are common, often creating enhanced kitchen/dining spaces that connect more directly with garden areas. Upper floors frequently maintain their private character but with updated bathroom facilities and, in some cases, home office spaces reflecting contemporary work patterns.

The relationship between these houses and the street is one of practicality. The streets are occupied with cars and are often not an inviting space to spend time. The close proximity of front doors to the street means many people close their curtains to gain privacy. Some houses have small front areas, which create semi-private transition zones that residents often personalize with planters or seating.

Residents seem to value their privacy a lot, but at the same time there appears to be a sense of loneliness. As if people want to meet their neighbours, but don't quite know how or where to do it.



The transition from public to private is often a harsh and sudden one. People tend to spend their outdoor time more around the back of the house. Some gardens are oriented north, but with how much depth there often is, there's always some unshaded place.



On the street side, many people have their façade closed off. This is because the living rooms are usually on this side, where people prefer privacy. Some have renovated their house to put the kitchen on the street side instead, creating a more privacy focused back living area with direct connection to the garden.

Material use

Brick is undoubtedly the dominant material in Hoboken's row housing, reflecting both regional building traditions and practical considerations. The predominant use of red and orange-toned brick creates visual warmth and cohesion throughout the neighborhood. These load-bearing brick structures typically feature solid masonry walls.

Window frames were traditionally made of painted wood, with earlier examples featuring divided panes and later ones larger, more modern glazing. Roof materials typically include ceramic tiles in various shades of red and brown on houses featuring mansard roofs, while houses with flat roofs are often covered with bitumen. Decorative elements often incorporate contrasting materials or colours: stone belts and lintels, ornamental

brickwork, and sometimes decorative ceramic tiles as façade accents.

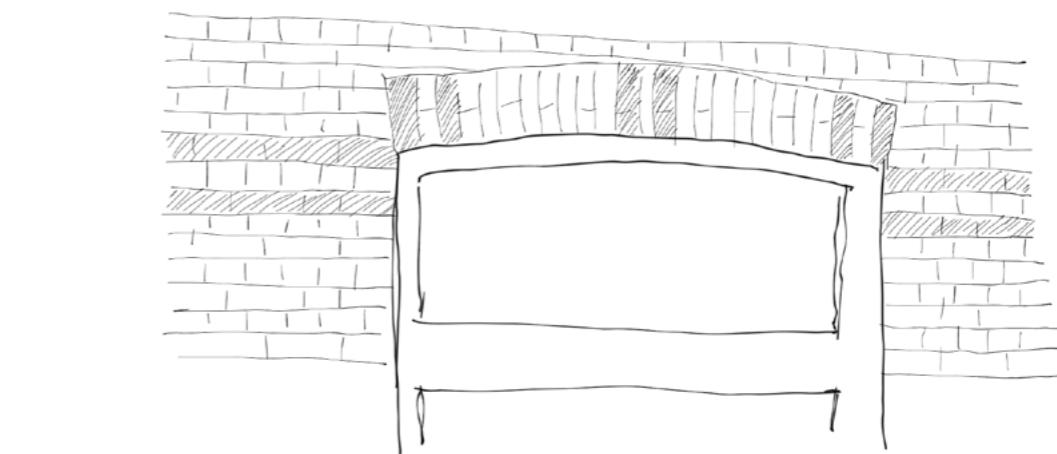
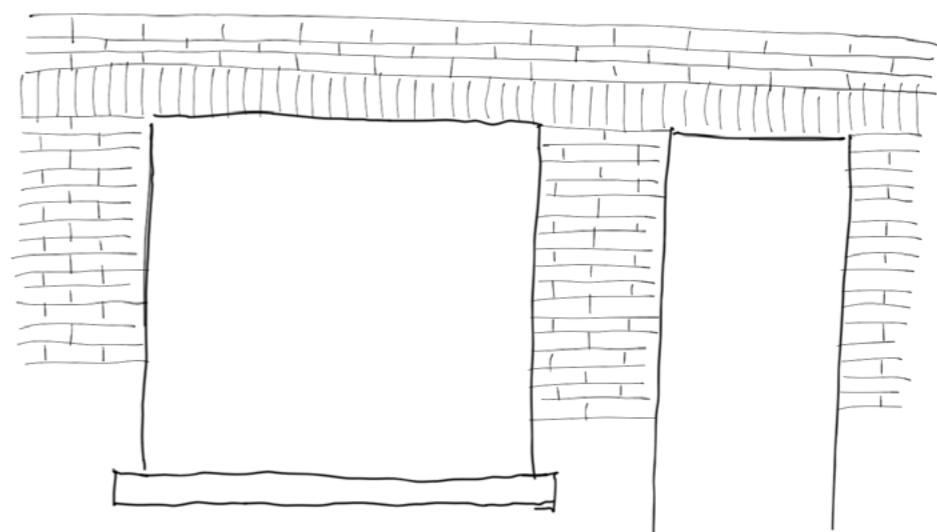
Contemporary renovations often maintain and restore these traditional materials while introducing modern elements like steel for extensions, larger glass surfaces for improved daylighting, and insulation to improve energy performance. This material dialogue between traditional and contemporary elements characterizes the evolution of Hoboken's row housing, demonstrating how this adaptable typology continues to meet changing needs while maintaining connection to the past.

The material palette of Hoboken's row houses contributes significantly to the district's distinctive sense of place, creating streetscapes with textural richness, human scale, and a warm, lived-in character.



The houses all have a slightly different façade layout and colour, making each one unique.

Most façades are made of brick, some are plastered.



Most of the simple brick façades use running bond, with a horizontal masonry lintel above the windows that sometimes continues over the entire length of the façade. Some of the more decorated façades use a different brick bond, like Flemish bond, and create lines and accents through different coloured bricks.

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Hennig I



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Pioneer in social housing

After the First World War, Antwerp was suffering from a severe housing shortage. Many buildings had been damaged or destroyed, especially after the siege of 1914. Antwerp's city government became actively involved in housing policy, recognizing that private markets alone couldn't solve the crisis. Like in many other European countries, there was a growing advocacy for affordable worker housing during this period. New architectural and urban planning ideas emerged that emphasized affordable, hygienic housing for working class people. Hennig I was one of the earliest examples of this interbellum reconstruction effort, that attempted to create a more communal living environment. Investigating how these social spaces evolved over time can give insights into the positive and negative aspects of these spaces.

Palace for the workers

This subtitle is a direct quote of the first words that came to mind when I approached the Hennig complexes. Hennig I, located just east of the Blikfabriek, was constructed between 1922 and 1924 after a design from Edward Craeye. The complex consists of 23 separate but connected buildings with 235 apartments in various sizes, spread over 5 stories. Inside the block there are three courtyards, one of which is currently accessible. With its white-plastered and

decorated facades, the building seems to borrow aesthetic elements from upper-class architecture, such as the palaces and castles that (used to) stand in Hoboken. It strongly reminded me of the Haussmann style in Paris, and having something with such monumentality forming the façade of affordable housing is quite unique.

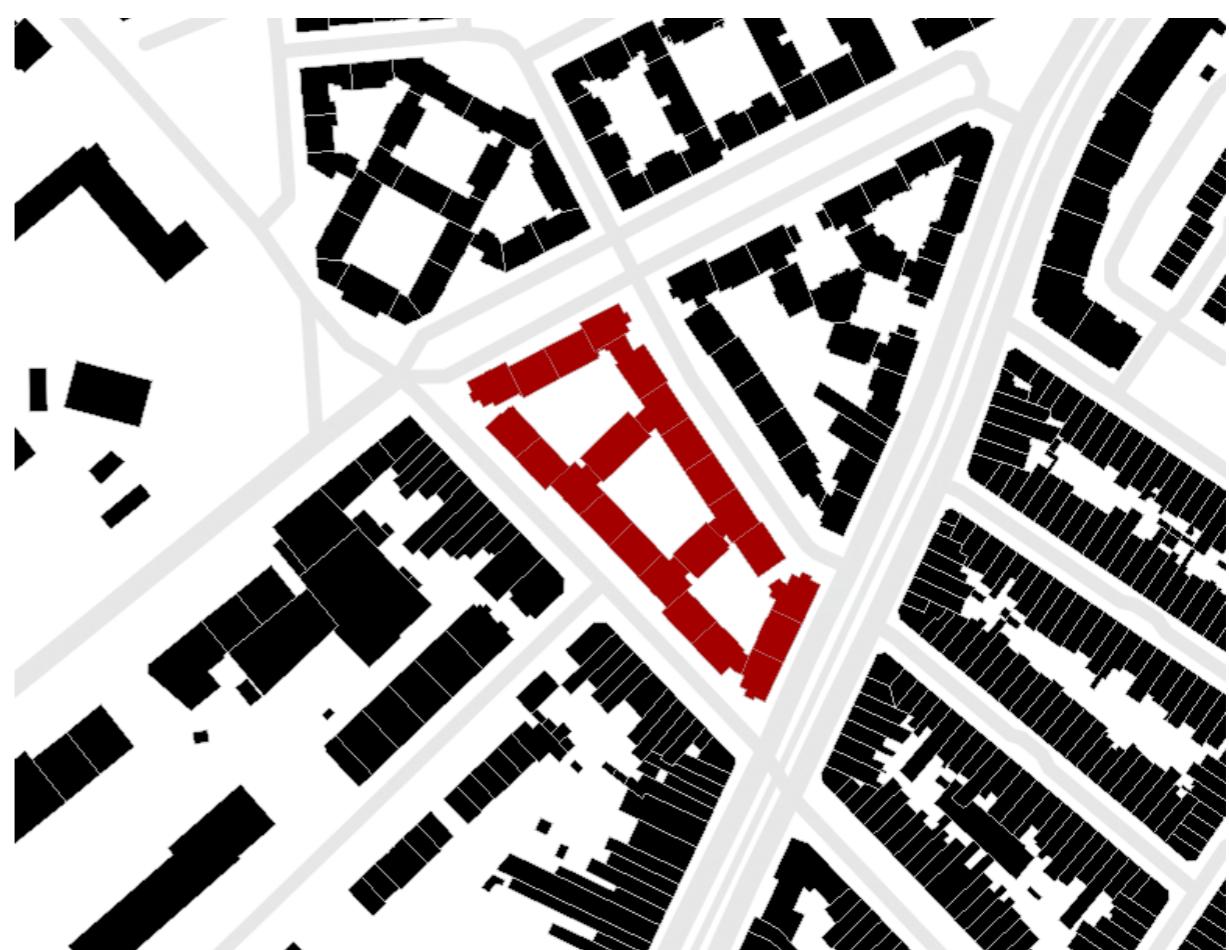
An interesting aspect of the building, beside its appearance, is its layout around three courtyards. These were once designed as a common space for the residents. Some were



One of the courtyards before the renovation (undated)



The only accessible courtyard in 2024





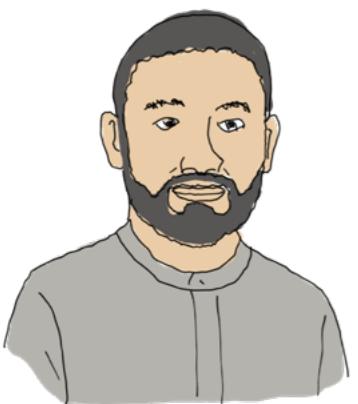
Courtyard during the renovation of 1996. Only the outer façades were kept.

designed as playing spaces and featured sandpits and fountains. Others were more designed as gardens and included greenery and benches. The courtyards were accessible from the street and were connected with each other through passages.

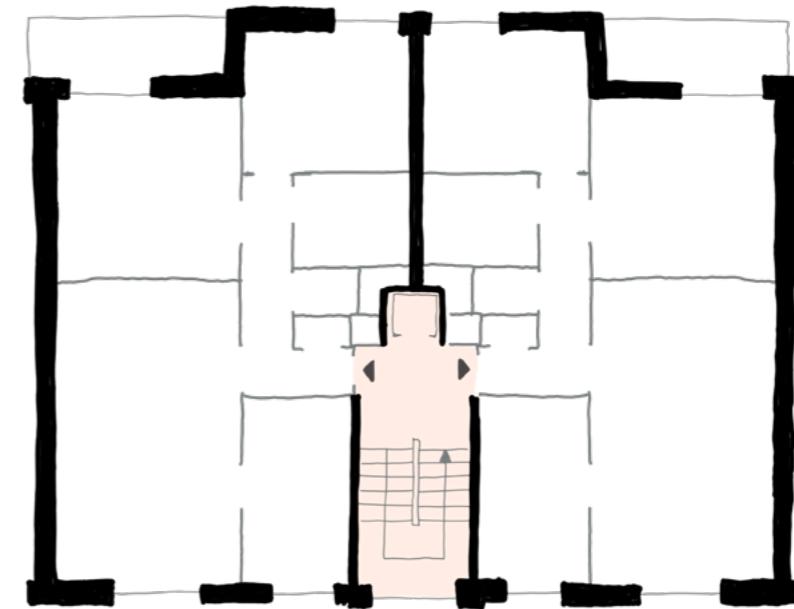
The building was designed as a communal living environment for the workers, where private homes and communal courtyards balanced each other out. Nowadays the

courtyards are lost spaces: there are only some patches of grass, they are littered with trash and two of the courtyards are no longer accessible. Residents also don't really use the space, meaning that there is not much of a community feeling in the building anymore.

The building was renovated in 1996, which involved demolishing almost everything except for the outer façades that gave the building its distinctive appearance.



The elevators and front doors are often broken and maintenance can be slow. At least rent is not too expensive. I appreciate that we have other Muslim families nearby, it helps to not feel isolated. I also like Abdijstraat being close-by a lot. I don't know my neighbours that well. I sometimes see them in the hallways or the street, and it's mostly polite nods or maybe a brief conversations, but the mosque is where I usually meet other people.



(Partial) floor plan & Elevation

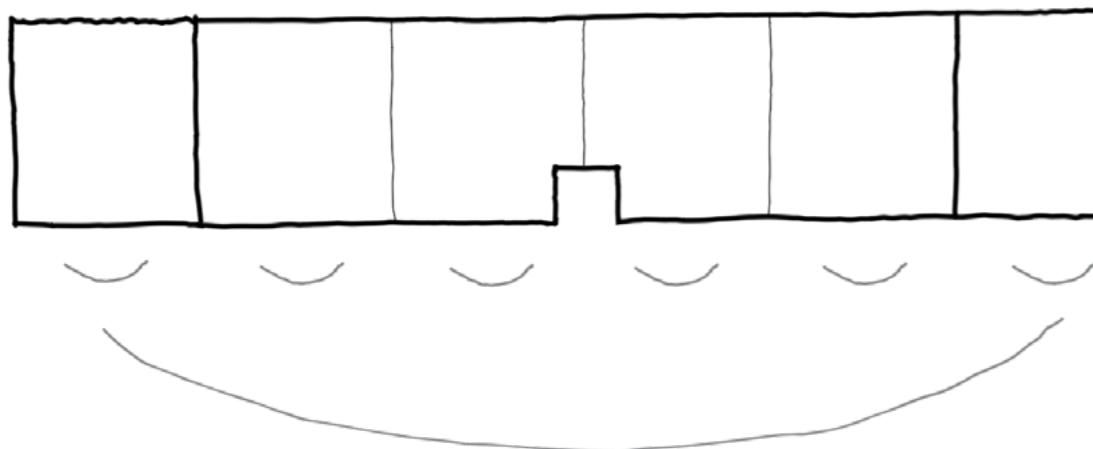
Architectural expression

Hennig I's architectural expression deliberately evokes a sense of dignity and monumentality. The complex's white-plastered facades present a striking visual statement that distinguishes the building from typical working-class housing of the era. This aesthetic choice reflects a conscious decision to appropriate the visual language of upper-class architecture, such as palaces and castles, and apply it to affordable housing. It creates an immediate association with Parisian grandeur, suggesting that workers deserve spaces of beauty and distinction traditionally reserved for the elite.

The formal arrangement around three courtyards establishes a clear organizational principle that structures the complex. This arrangement provides natural light, ventilation, and communal space within

the dense urban block, even though some outdoor spaces are oriented towards the north. The monumentality of the facade treatment, with its consistent rhythm and proportions around the block, creates a unified urban presence that transforms the housing units into a coherent architectural statement.

The buildings have a high heritage value due to their urbanism resembling Viennese courts, and due to the monumental façades with rich decoration. Unlike later modernist housing that often emphasized machine aesthetics and industrial production, Hennig I occupies a transitional space in architectural history that "hesitates between the best of the nineteenth century and emerging modernism." This makes Hennig I particularly valuable as a symbol of evolving architectural attitudes toward social housing.

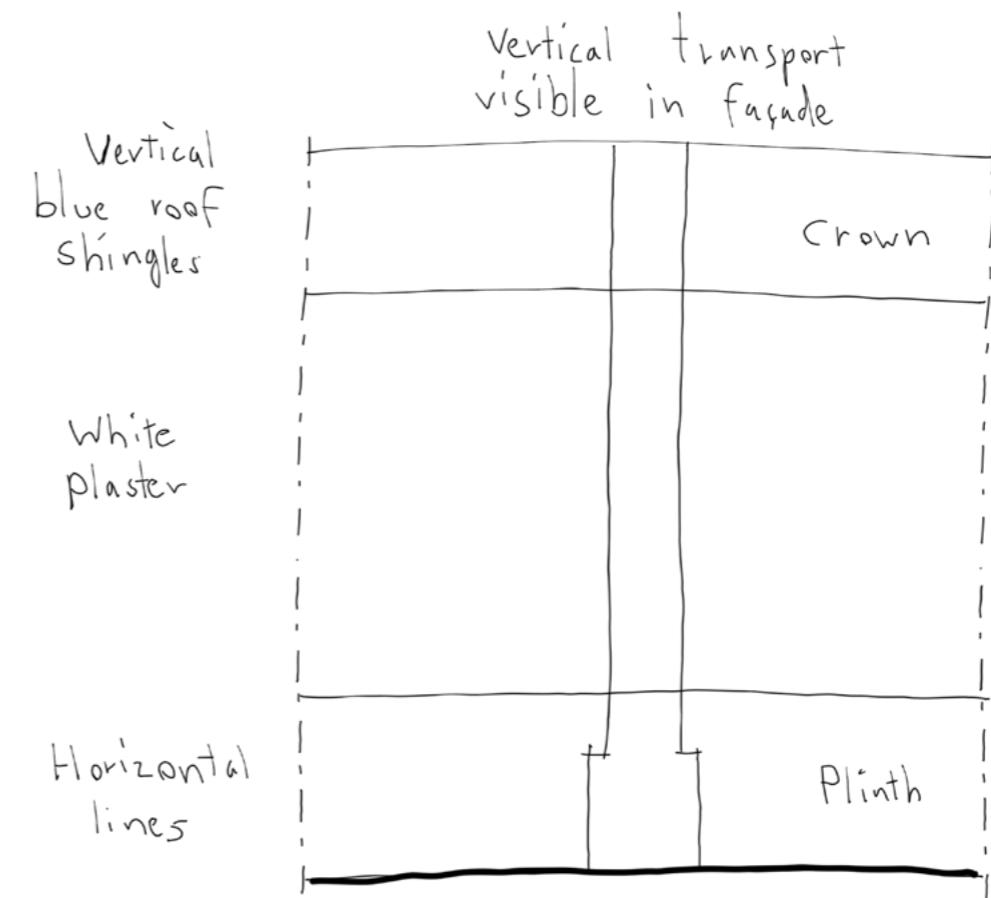


Each façade section is symmetrical, and the façade as a whole is also symmetrical

The house is pretty noisy, I hear everything from my neighbors, and they hear me. Maintenance is always behind schedule, it took them three weeks to fix our heating last winter.

It's "home" for now, but I want to move elsewhere. This place wasn't built for community, it was built to stack people who can't afford better options, just with a pretty coat of paint. Security is an issue, packages disappear and there's been break-ins.

I've got a solid relationship with the other family on my floor. The square nearby is where I connect with some of the younger guys from the building. There's also this small café a few streets away where a few of us meet sometimes.



The façade has a traditional buildup, with a plinth and a crown. In the middle façade sections, the crown is clad in blue shingles, making it look like an angled roof even though the façade is still vertical.

Usage patterns

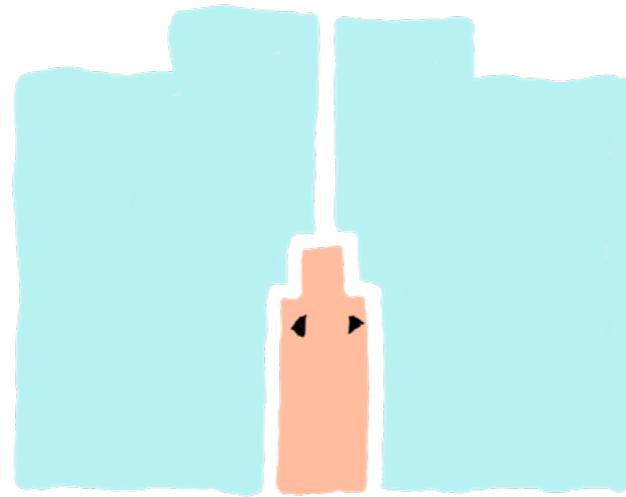
The Hennig I complex's Viennese Court typology with three interior courtyards used to function as semi-public spaces when they were accessible from the street, and would mediate between the fully public street and the private dwellings, creating a spatial hierarchy that supports community formation while preserving individual privacy. This permeability invited interaction between residents and the broader community, positioning the complex as an integrated part of the urban fabric rather than a segregated enclave. The accessibility of the outer courtyards was handled by a single narrow entryway, which is currently fenced off, while the centre courtyard is accessed through a small tunnel in the middle of the long façades.

The arrangement of buildings around courtyards seems to create natural surveillance opportunities, with apartments overlooking the shared spaces. However, most of the living spaces are pointed at the street outside the block, while the bedrooms face the courtyard, meaning that throughout

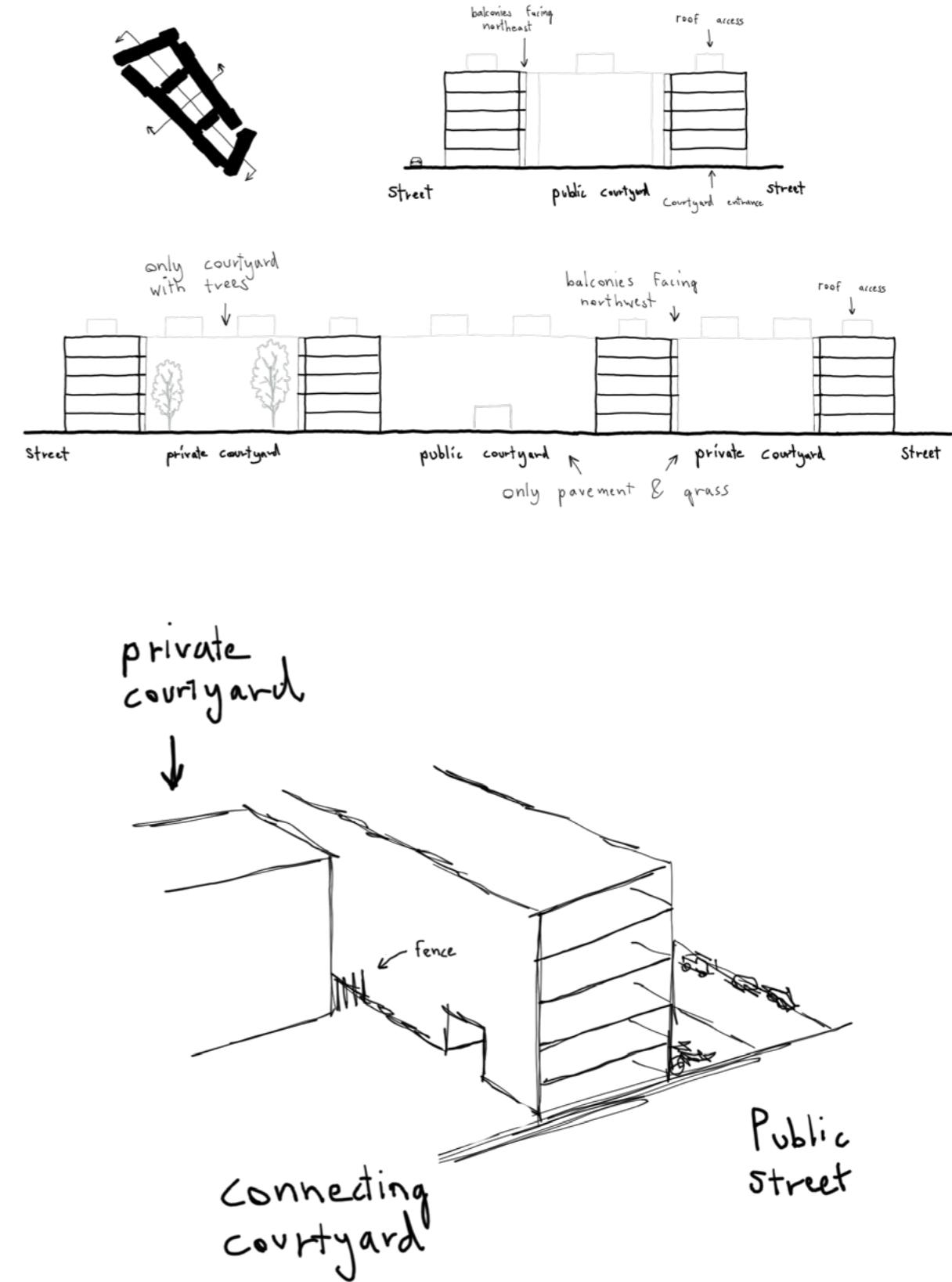
the day there are only a limited number of eyes on the courtyards. Vandalism eventually led to two of them being closed off.

The Hennig I complex accommodates diverse household types within a unified architectural framework, due to featuring a variety of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments. This variety was a progressive housing approach for the early 1920s, but only incorporated apartments and not duplexes to relate more to the row housing of the area. Due to there being 23 entrances spread around the complex, each staircase only provides access to 2 dwellings per floor, and many people rarely speak with neighbours who don't use the same entrance as them.

The complex's location is in close proximity to nearby employment centers, which would have facilitated walking commutes for residents to their workplace. It adds on to the vision for a new type of communal living environment that dignified workers through architectural quality while encouraging community formation through thoughtful spatial organization.



Per staircase, there are only two entrances per floor, meaning that due to the large amount of staircases required, a lot of space is lost in the floor plan.



There are three courtyards, two of which are currently closed off. Only one of them has a few trees in it, the others just some grass and paving. The orientation of the outdoor spaces seems to have been subordinate to the architectural expression, due to some being oriented to the northeast or northwest.



On garbage collection day, people throw their trashbag next to the building for collection.
There is no dedicated spot where garbage is collected.

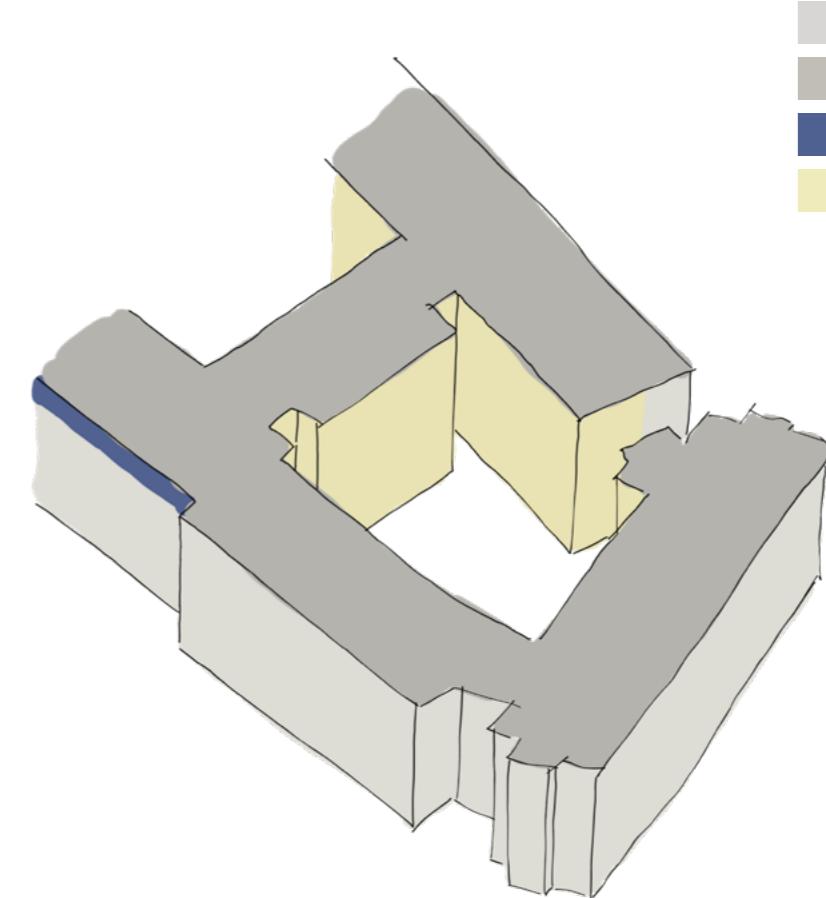


Between the façade and the street, there is a small zone that belongs to the building. Most of this space is filled in with plants, but in some places people use it to park their bicycles instead.

Material use

The white-plastered facades of Hennig I represent a significant material choice that distinguished the complex from conventional brick construction typical of working-class housing in the region. The façades featured repeating patterns with lots of decorative elements and depth, each being symmetrical, while the façade as a whole is also symmetrical. These techniques created smooth, clean and orderly surfaces that associated the building with more prestigious architectural traditions.

The courtyard side of the buildings also featured plastered façades in the past, albeit with less decorative elements, mirroring some of the quality and expression of the outer façade. After the renovation works the courtyard side has been constructed with cream coloured brick. As a result, the courtyard side doesn't feel as premium, which can especially be noticed in the currently accessible courtyard: the building that has its entrance here features a white plaster façade, while the facades around it are in brick, and in a slightly different colour too.



Plaster
Roofing
Shingles
Bricks

Critical commentary

Hennig I's white-plastered "palace for workers" approach makes a powerful social statement, but suffers from contradictions. The complex succeeds brilliantly in democratizing architectural grandeur, challenging the notion that monumental design belongs exclusively to the elite. Its courtyards created breathing space in a dense and developing urban context, while connecting the complex to the wider neighborhood.

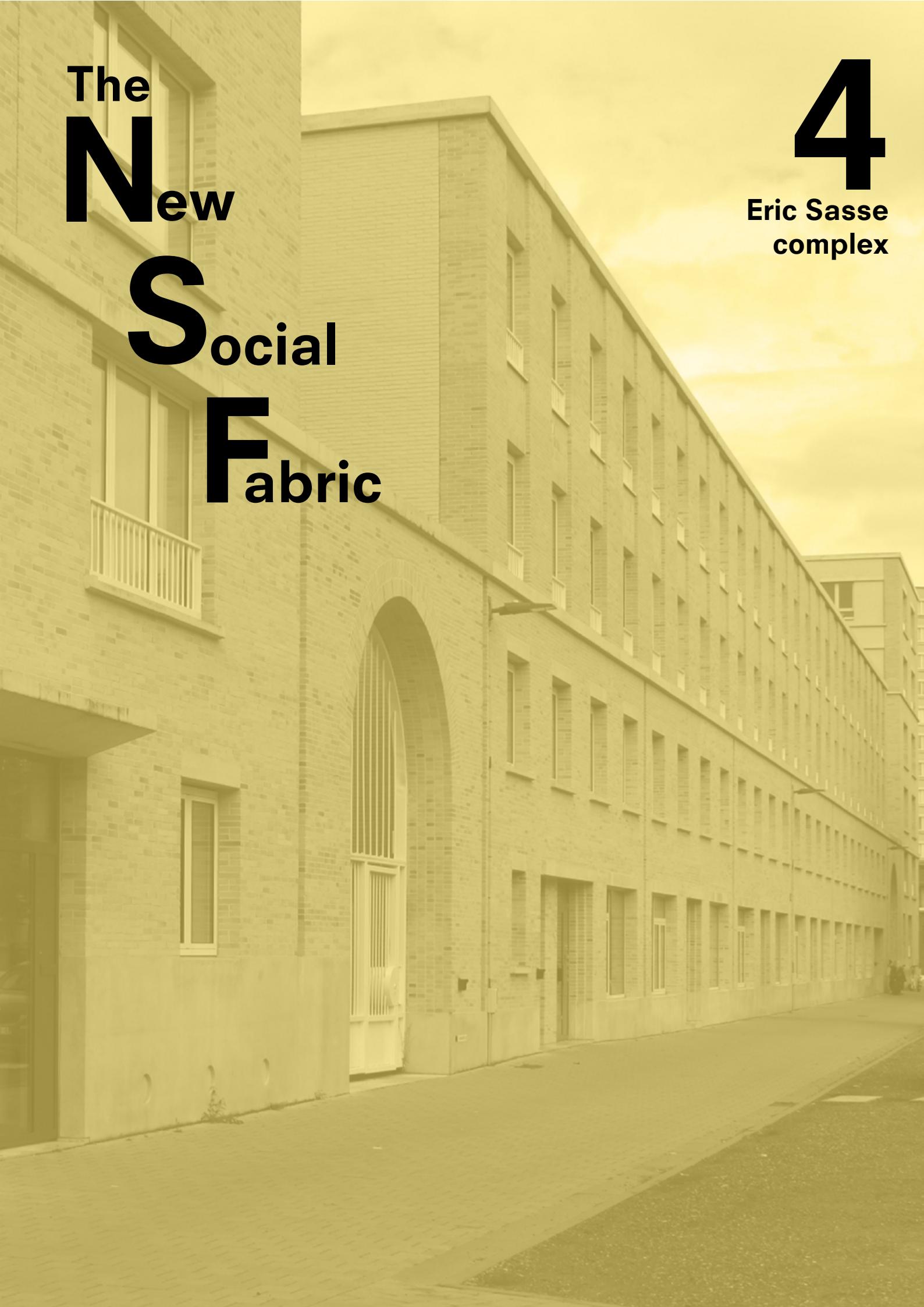
However, the borrowed aristocratic language feels somewhat disingenuous. Does dressing working-class housing in bourgeois costume truly address underlying social inequalities, or merely mask them? The complex sits uncomfortably between symbolism and substance. While visually striking, the white plaster finish requires maintenance that social housing budgets usually don't have.

The rigid structural system meant that the renovation of the building was a very

impactful one in which nearly everything had to be demolished and rebuilt. The result appears to be of lesser quality than the original, using cheap materials that don't seamlessly integrate with the plastered façades.

Then there is of course the issue of vandalism. Simply closing down all the courtyards might resolve that issue, but has the added effect of taking away the life out of the courtyards. The residents don't have easy access to them anymore either and the result is a space that nobody feels responsible for.

Despite all of these shortcomings though, Hennig I's endurance testifies to its fundamental architectural and urbanist quality. It has stood for over 100 years now and even after an almost complete rebuild these qualities were kept. Its ambitious scale and material presence once challenged the low expectations of social housing, a provocation that remains relevant in today's housing challenges.



The New Social Fabric

4

Eric Sasse
complex

Author Benjamin Beurs
Student number 5926300
Date 13 / 05 / 2025

Subject Catalogue
Design studio Urban Architecture

University Delft University of Technology

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Past and present in harmony

The old Eric Sasse building, designed by architect Edward Craeye and constructed between 1949-1952, was somewhat of a latecomer compared to its interbellum neighbors like Hennig. While part of the urban ensemble, it originally functioned as an addition that didn't quite match the quality of the earlier buildings. The complex featured one large courtyard as a shared space. When the decision was made to renovate the buildings Hennig and Thibaud, it was decided to demolish and replace the Sasse building. The decision was based on practical necessities: the building had reached the end of its lifespan and pieces started to fall off the façade. Its outdated layout, low ceiling heights, and excessive volume (eight floors above ground) created suboptimal living conditions and cast too much shadow on the courtyard and nearby square. A design for a new building was made by BULK architects, and analysing it reveals what considerations in terms of context, community, privacy and architectural expression were made in its design process to make the building fit into the historical fabric.

Contemporary renewal

During the design process of the new building, the architects approached the redesign with careful attention to the surrounding historical context. The new design is made up of two taller apartment buildings on the short sides and two lower rows of stacked duplex homes on the long

"Coherence and equivalence between old and new were our goals. The allure and character of the architectural design of the existing building blocks and the relationship with the (semi)public space were important inspirations."

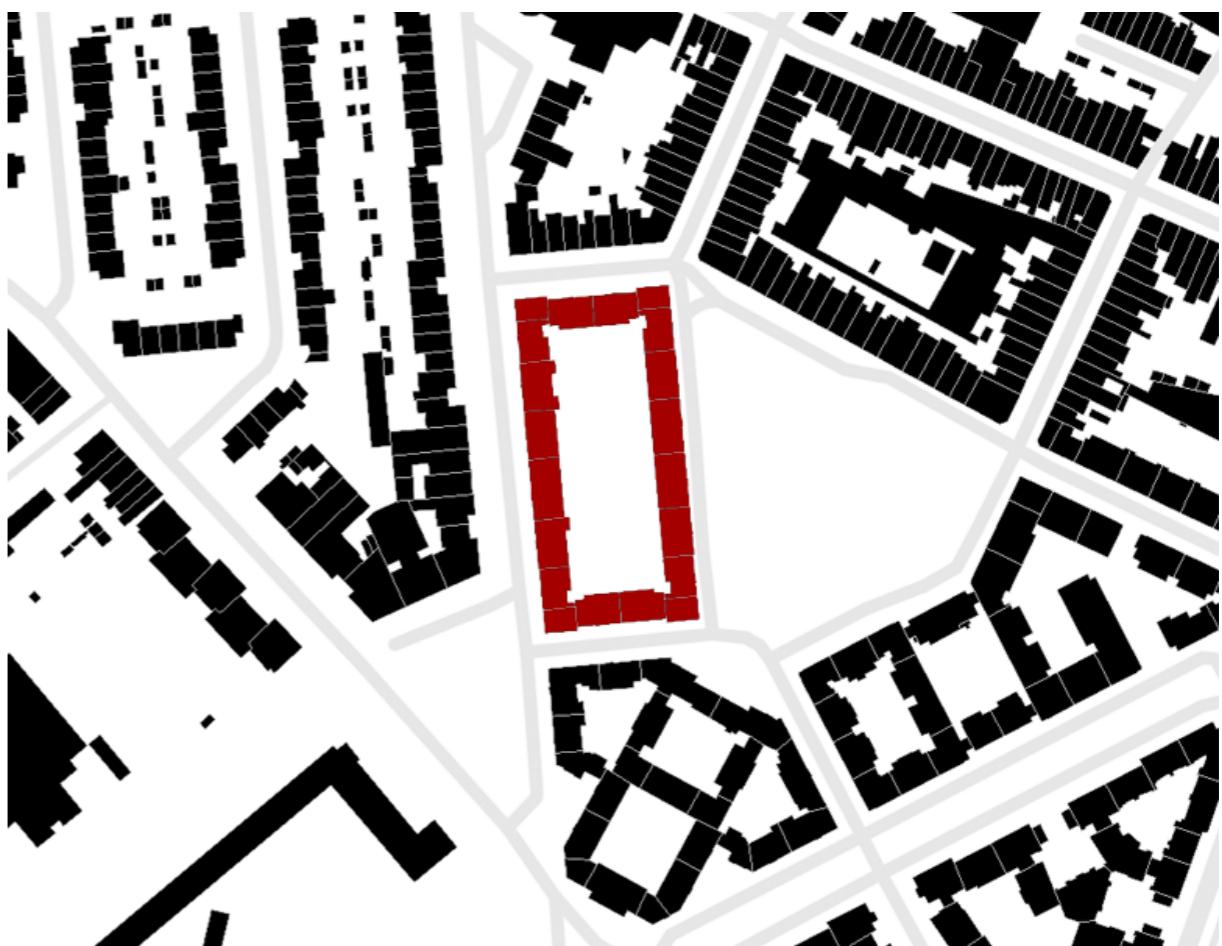
sides of the block. Four gates connect the buildings together to form a harmonious whole and provide access to the zones between the duplexes and apartments, adopting the formal language of the surrounding interbellum buildings.

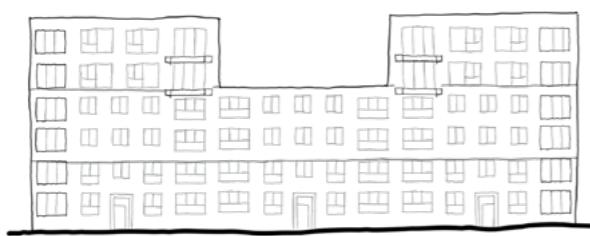
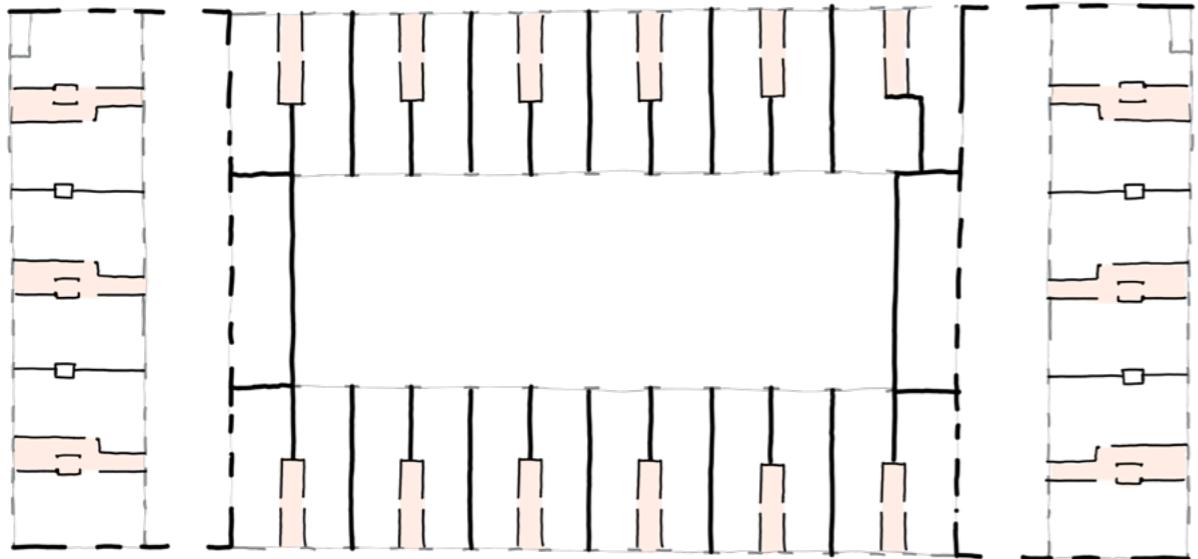
The new complex houses 119 dwellings



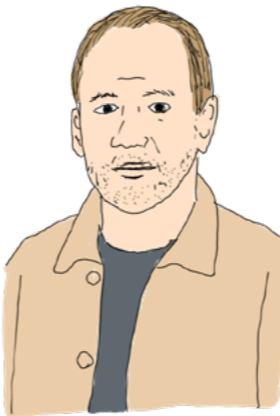
The old Eric Sasse complex

spread around 18 entrances, with a varied mix of apartment sizes to accommodate different household compositions. The ground-floor homes benefit from raised first floors that limit visibility from passersby, while the private gardens of the ground-floor duplexes together form an inner courtyard that is supposed to be an outdoor living room for residents. Careful attention was paid to height and orientation, with most dwellings featuring east-west orientation and the larger apartments having living rooms that allow sunlight to penetrate from both sides. The split-level north-south homes are designed so that southern sunlight can reach deep into the living spaces.





Typical floor plan & elevations



The house is great, it's like a row house, but then affordable for me. The square right next to it is great, the kids can play there. The small private garden area is perfect for some relaxation without the burden of too much yard work. I don't really feel deep connections with neighbours. We exchange pleasantries and occasionally have brief conversations about neighborhood concerns. This usually happens in and around the building, but sometimes in the square too. Most of them seem to prefer their privacy though.

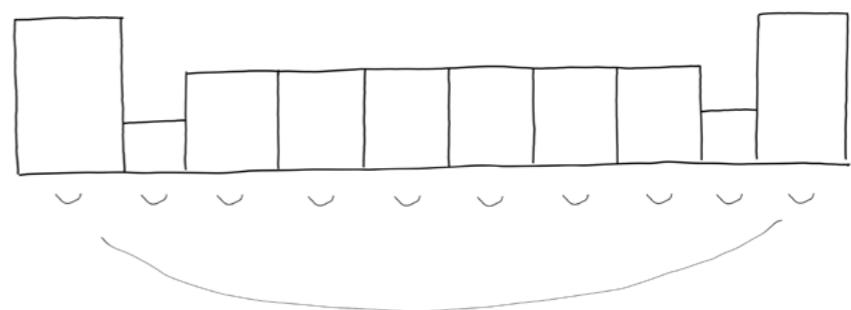
Architectural expression

The architectural expression of the new Eric Sasse complex establishes a dialogue with its historical context while asserting its contemporary identity. The architects consciously avoided creating a massive single volume that would dominate the neighborhood, instead opting for a harmonious composition of varying building heights that respects the urban fabric.

The façade articulation employs a rhythmic pattern of balconies and bay windows that visually break down the building's length, making its scale more comprehensible, similar to Hennig I without becoming a direct

copy. The urban plinth extends across two levels, establishing a strong connection between the building and its urban context. As architect Tom Vermeylen states, "Recognizability increases the chance of cherished buildings. And cherishing forms the basis for (emotional) sustainability."

The variation in building heights of six layers at the corners and four layers in between demonstrates a subtle contextual awareness. This graduated profile creates a natural transition to surrounding buildings while ensuring the square remains defined by buildings of consistent height. The setback on the courtyard side contributes to a smaller-scale experience and human dimension in the inner courtyard, carefully balancing monumentality with livability.



The building has a façade rhythm similar to Hennig I, consisting of repeating, symmetrical facade sections, with the whole façade also being symmetrical. Different are the height accents on the corners. The differentiation between different façade sections is also less profound, partially due to the vertical traffic space not being visible in the façade.

Usage patterns

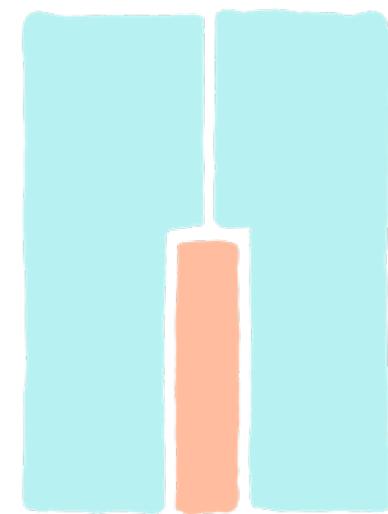
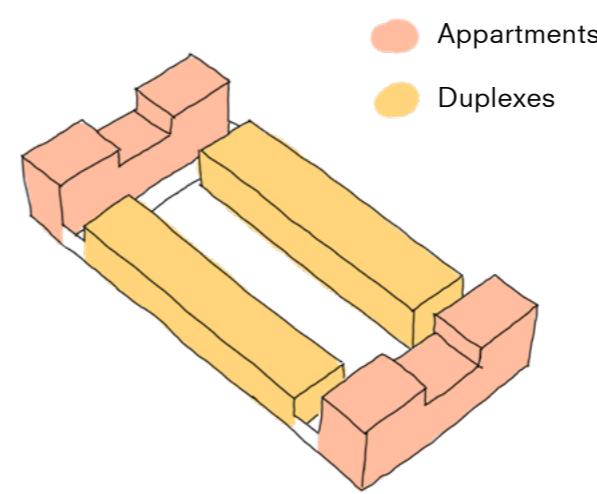
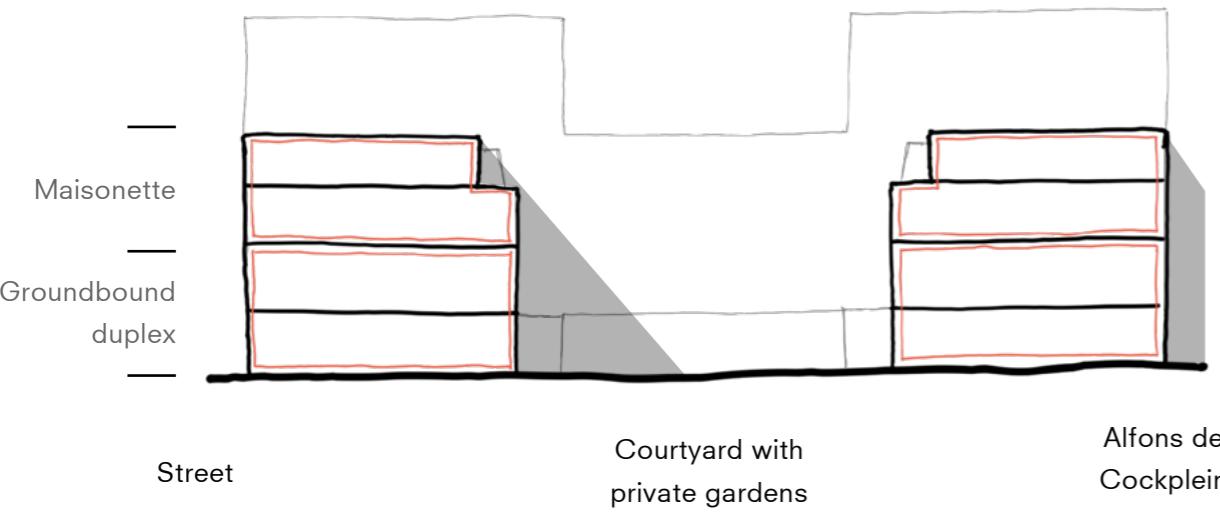
The building was conceived with the idea that diverse households live differently and how their needs might evolve over time. The mix of housing types ranging from one to four bedroom apartments accommodates various family configurations and life stages within a single development. The ground floor's emphasis on larger family units with private gardens responds to the specific needs of households with children, providing direct outdoor access that supports play and family activities. As architect Vermeylen explains, "By placing duplex homes with their own front door and a spacious loggia on the first floor, the entire plinth offers space for larger families."

The building's four entrance gates function as transitional zones between the public realm and the semi-private inner areas. These portals express "a modest ambition regarding collectivity," according to the architects. They

serve as entrances to the communal bike parking areas.

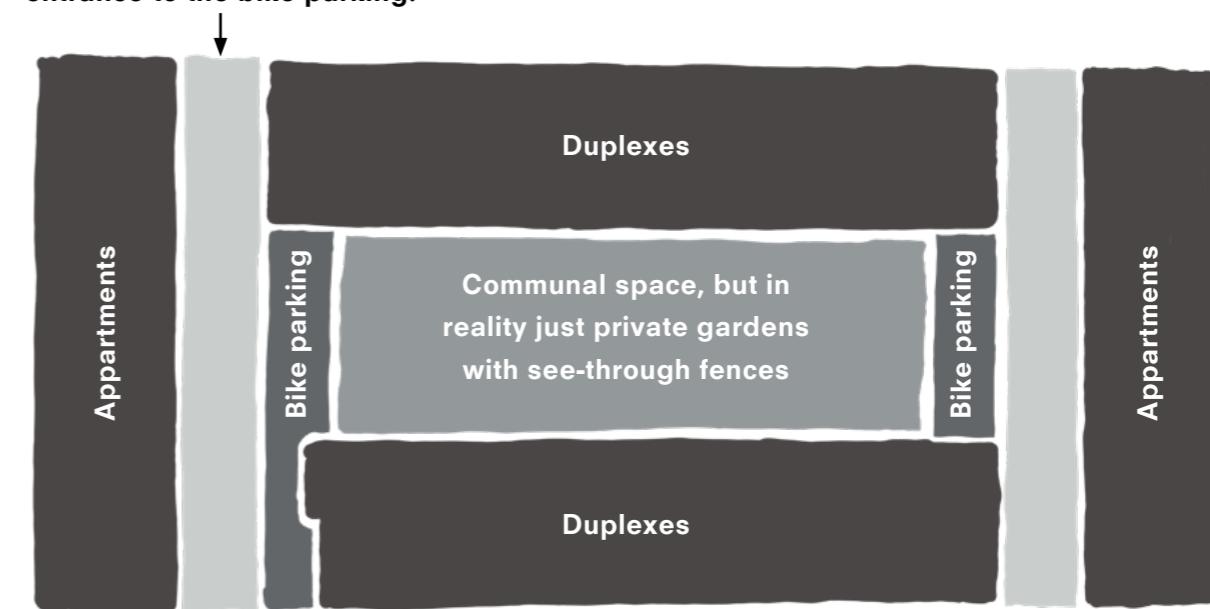
For ground-floor dwellings, the architects implemented a raised ground floor that limits views from passersby into private spaces. The street side features the kitchens to preserve privacy without closing off the façade. The units reveal careful consideration of ensuring safety by having eyes on the street, with living spaces positioned to face the courtyard on the ground floor and facing the street on the upper floors. The duplex homes feature spacious terraces on the upper floor allowing more light to enter the courtyard.

The courtyard represents another gradation in the public/private spectrum. While technically private, it functions as a large outdoor living room where the boundary demarcations of see-through fences shape its form and scale. This green space creates opportunities for informal social encounters among neighbors.



The building features apartments on the short sides and duplexes on the long sides. There are 18 staircases, each giving access to 2 dwellings per floor, or 2 dwellings per 2 floors in the case of the duplexes.

Communal space, but in reality just a decorated entrance to the bike parking.



This plan shows the different variations of common spaces in the building. The architects sell it as a "modest ambition regarding collectivity", but the reality is more nuanced. The private gardens with see through fences allow for neighbour interaction, but reduces privacy. The area behind the gates functions mostly as entrance to the bike parking. There is some greenery, but for most residents the shade and lack of activities are reasons to not use the space.

Material use

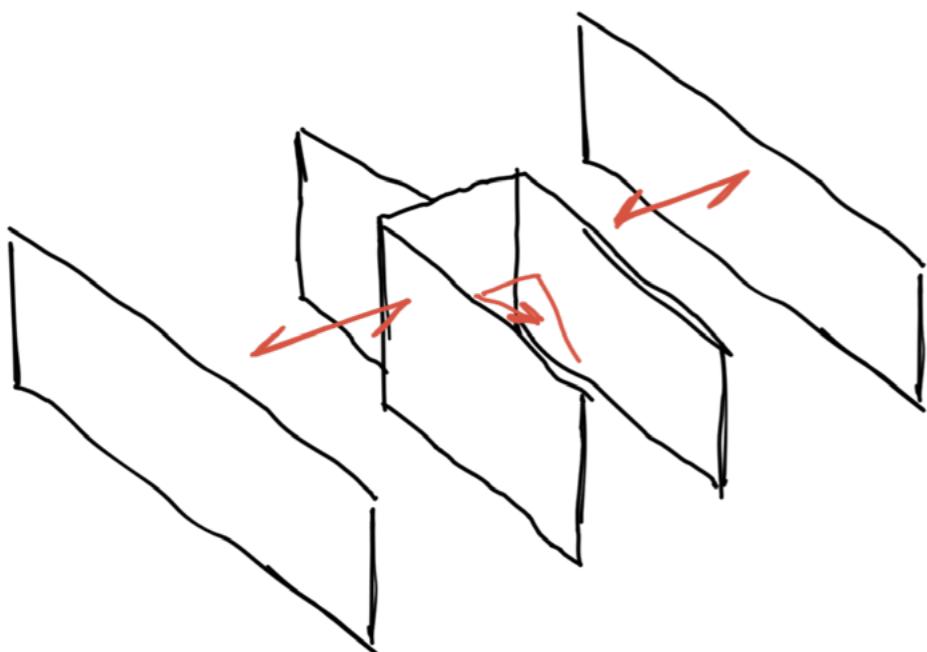
The material palette of the Eric Sasse complex demonstrates a balance between historical reference and contemporary construction methods. The design employs brick as its primary façade material, continuing the tradition of the row housing and Thibaud complex while interpreting this heritage material in a modern context.

Particularly notable is the differentiated use of brick in the building's plinth. Most of the brick are laid in running bond, but in the plinth the brick is laid in block bond on a concrete base, creating a subtle and affordable version of the natural stone plinths found in neighboring buildings. The building is divided every two floors by horizontal concrete belts. This approach achieves visual distinction without resorting to expensive materials, revealing the thoughtful approach to design within the

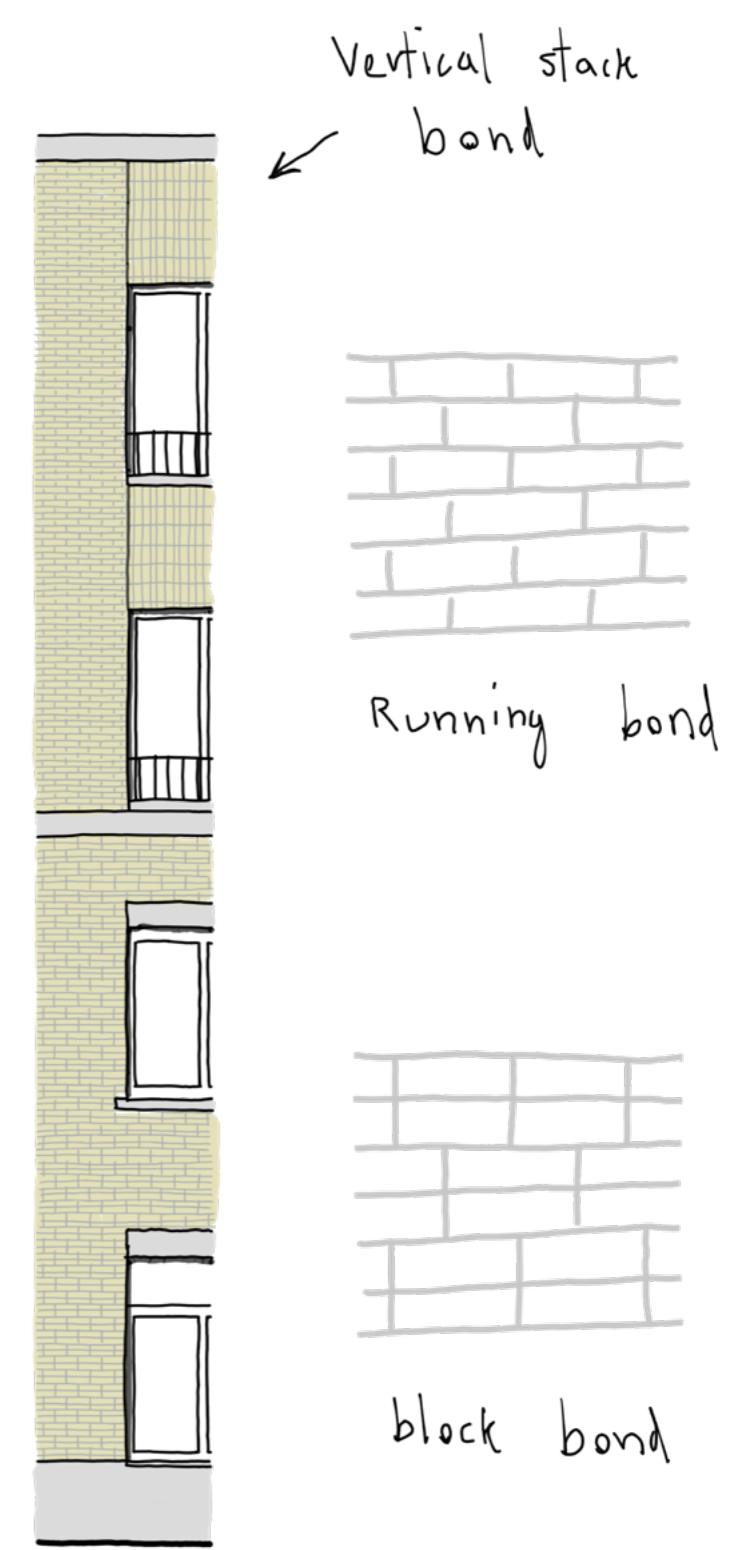
constraints of social housing budgets.

The construction incorporates prefabricated concrete elements, which is efficient while reducing waste and accelerating the construction process. As noted by Wouter Schuer of Frame Products, "The use of prefabricated concrete elements significantly increases productivity on the construction site. Not only because it saves time and is barely affected by weather conditions, but also because it generates much less waste."

Interior spaces employ materials selected for durability and maintenance considerations, acknowledging the building's function as social housing where lifecycle costs are a significant factor. The overall material strategy shows how thoughtful material selection can contribute to both aesthetic quality and practical performance in affordable housing.



The structure consists of prefab concrete walls, with floors spanning in between them. This makes the structure cheap and quick to build, but reduces flexibility.



The façade on the long side resembles two row houses being stacked on top of each other, separated by a concrete belt. The bottom one (the plinth) has its bricks in block bond, while the top one uses bricks in running bond. The top one has different windows too, with vertical stack bond bricks in between (a possible nod to the vertical window language of Hennig), but remains in the same language as the bottom.

Critical commentary

The renewed Eric Sasse complex skillfully avoids the expressive social rhetoric of its predecessors like Hennig I, instead pursuing quality through nuanced design moves. Its graduated building heights mediate between urban presence and neighborhood scale. The differentiated brick patterning at the plinth level achieves visual richness without resorting to expensive materials, demonstrating that dignified social housing doesn't need to mimic luxury.

It does mean that the building looks way less impressive at first glance. It doesn't seem that different from many other other new building developments. The "modest ambition regarding collectivity" sounds diplomatic but in reality the building moves away from the social ambitions that gave earlier social housing its collective nature. The courtyard could be a nice common space for residents living directly next to it, but has instead become private gardens with a lack of privacy. It's trying to be both private gardens and a communal courtyard, and as a result it's not particularly good at either of them.

The raised ground floors work well to create privacy, but connection to street life seems limited in reality, partially due to the smaller windows on the upper floors. The rigid separation between the private gardens, bike parking and public space suggests a diminished faith in truly collective space. Unlike Hennig I's bold vision of communal living, which ended up having its issues, the Eric Sasse complex sometimes feels like a conventional housing development that happens to be publicly funded. It desperately attempts to avoid the mistakes from the past, but in doing so it also loses some of its character. That isn't necessarily a bad thing, since it is positioned directly next to the Alfons the Cockplein.

The complex's careful attention to dwelling orientation and solar exposure demonstrates a technical competence missing from earlier social housing. Its material honesty and contextual sensitivity represent a mature approach that respects both residents and neighborhood context, including both social and private housing, and these achievements shouldn't be underestimated in judging its significance in the area.

The New Social Fabric

5
Kielplein



Author Benjamin Beurs
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Date 13 / 05 / 2025

Subject Catalogue
Design studio Urban Architecture

University Delft University of Technology

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Mixed-function balance

The Abdijstraat has been the beating heart of Kiel since the 1920s. At the end of this lively shopping street stands Den Tir. This building was once a practise space for the "gardecivic". After the First World War, this building has served as several schools, library, daycare and swimming pool. In 1999 the building, as well as the barren ground around it was sold to a project developer, who turned the complex into a shopping centre, apartments and family housing. Towards the back of the shopping centre, Kielplein was created as a plaza mainly for children. In an area where many young people don't live in a house with a garden, spaces like these are particularly important.

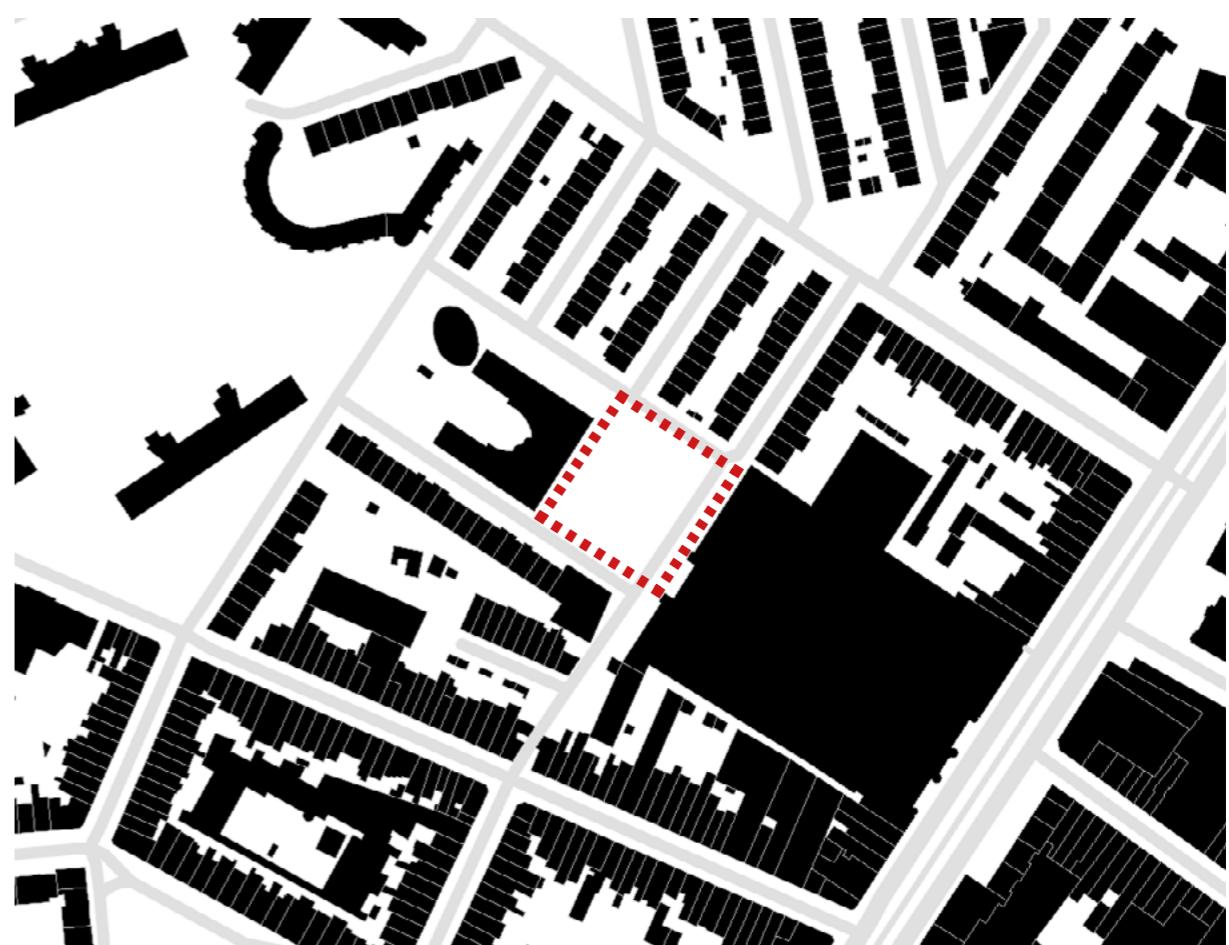
A space for (not just) the youth

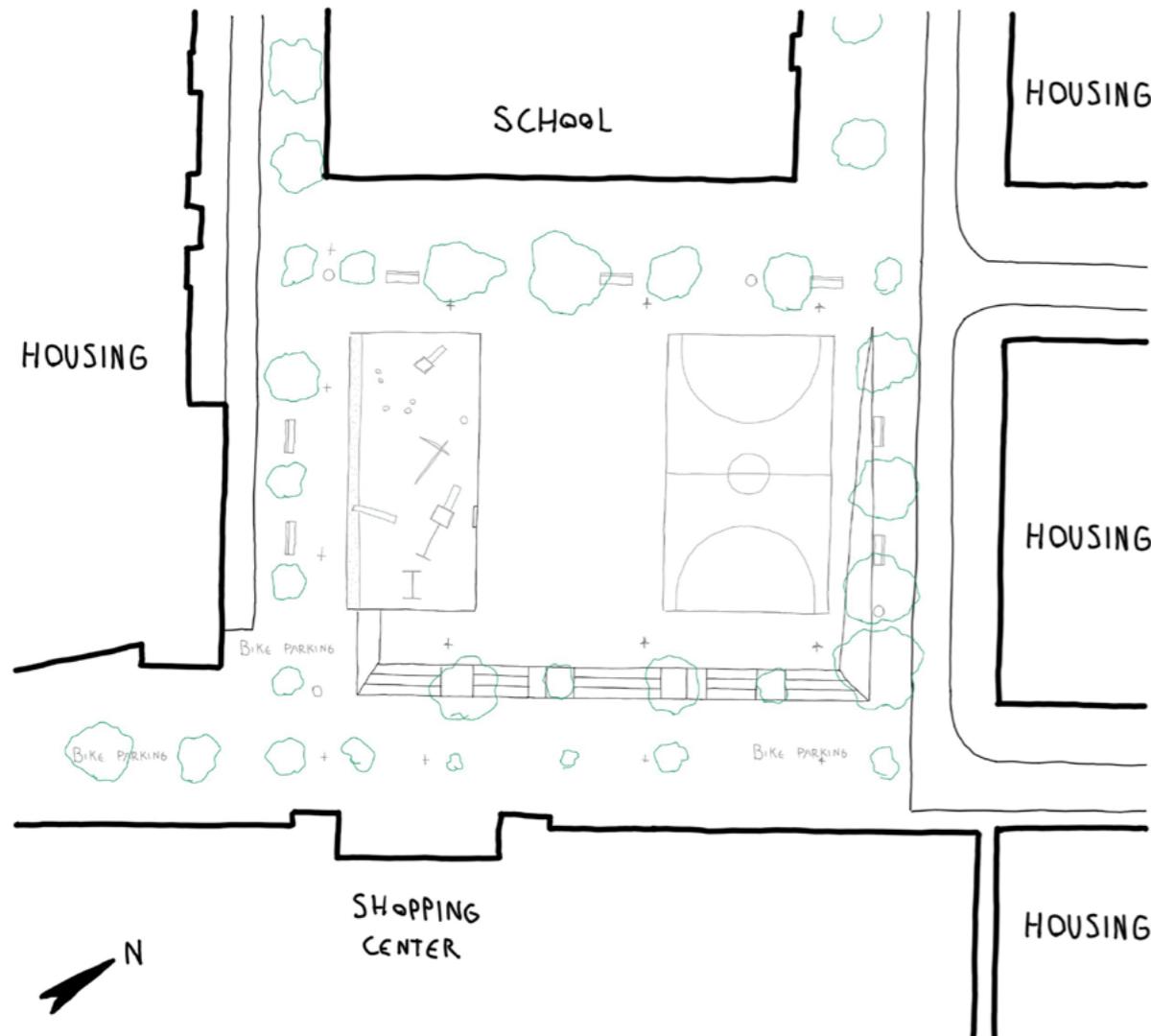
The Kielplein or Tirplein is characterized by a practical approach to urban gathering areas, with clearly defined zones for various activities. The space is primarily aimed at the youth. There is a zone for small children to play, a zone with a sports field for slightly older children and seating at the flange. The

square maintains a human scale despite its substantial dimensions (71 by 58 meters), creating an approachable environment that serves as an extension of the surrounding buildings. The subtle elevation changes and the integration with the adjacent shopping center, school, and housing blocks create a cohesive urban ensemble that reflects the neighborhood's mixed character.



I like this space, you know. It's our hood, so of course there's some attachment, it's a nice central place where we can hang. It's also nice that we can go and buy a drink right next to it. But real talk? It could be so much better. The place is pretty bare, with not much to do, we really have to make our own fun. Maybe some workout equipment would be nice too. The football field doesn't have a fence or anything, so for a serious game of football we usually play somewhere else. Otherwise someone constantly has to go get the ball.





Site plan

Usage patterns

trust in the space.

The Kielplein attracts significant activity, particularly from the neighborhood's younger population. Lots of youth from the neighbourhood use the space. Elderly children use the sports field, while younger children more often use the playground equipment on the other side. The central space serves as a flexible zone where different age groups interact and create their own games. Parents often accompany younger children or occasionally step into the shopping center while their children play, indicating a sense of safety and community

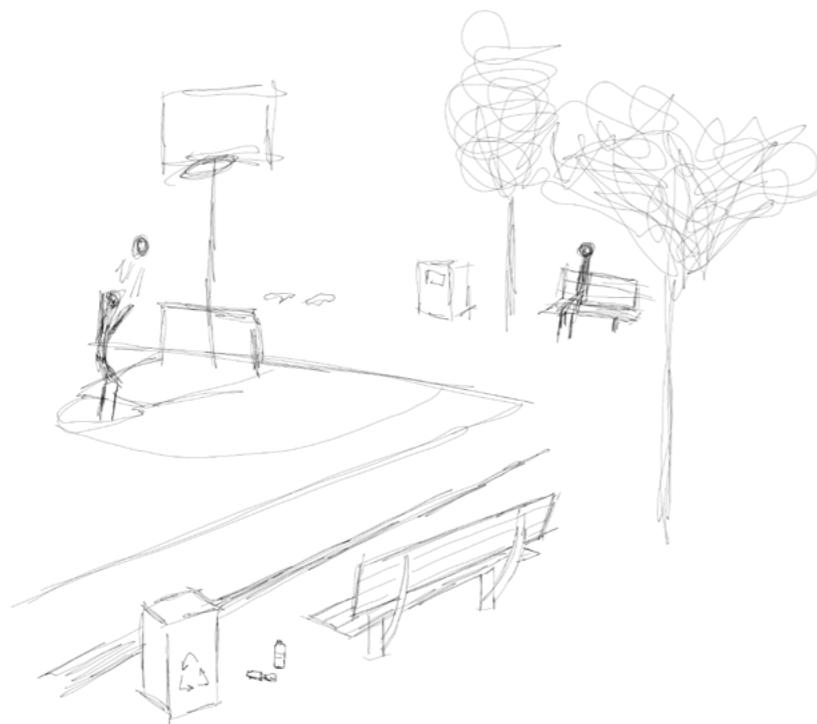
The square remains very active, even during cloudy or cold weather, which is largely attributed to its strategic positioning adjacent to the shopping center Den Tir, another very active space. This proximity to commercial activities creates natural foot traffic and extends the duration of use throughout the day. The bicycle parking facilities and Velo bike share hub further enhance accessibility and support sustainable transportation options for visitors. The square is also used for small events, like neighbourhood parties.



Usage patterns of the square over the course of half an hour. The shopping center acts as a catalyst for the activity of the plaza. The distinction between zones is visible in the usage.



When parents go inside to shop, children sometimes stay outside to play. This side has plenty of bike parking, but no car parking, making it a quiet, safe and active space.



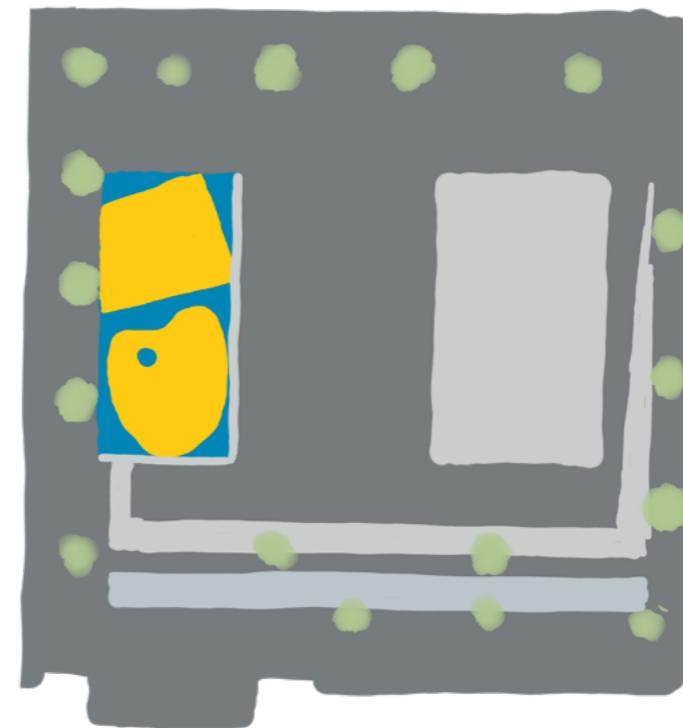
Despite there being plenty of trash cans, people still tend to litter the space.

Material use

visual interest through color.

The Kielplein employs a practical combination of materials that serve distinct functional purposes. The sports court is constructed from gray concrete, providing a durable surface for high-impact activities. The majority of the square features dark-grey pavement stones, creating a neutral backdrop that visually unifies the space. Within the playground area, the designers incorporated slightly softer and colorful rubber surfacing on a slightly elevated concrete base, prioritizing safety for children while adding

The square's slight incline facilitates natural drainage, with a small gutter on the lowest point. The height difference near the shopping center is managed through a thoughtful combination of ramps and stairs, interrupted by planters with trees, creating both accessibility and aesthetic appeal. Lighting is provided by six large lamp posts throughout the main square, with smaller lamp posts illuminating the surrounding traffic areas, ensuring the space remains functional, visible and safe during evening hours.



On the side of the shopping center, there is a zone with lighter tiles, indicating cautiousness for cyclists. The concrete stairs create a boundary for the space. The colourful ground is attractive for smaller children, while the concrete sports field is rougher to accommodate the more harsh playstyle of older kids.

Critical commentary

While visiting Kielplein, I was struck by how lively this space feels despite its relatively simple design. The combination of the sports court and playground creates a natural division that somehow manages to bring different age groups together rather than separate them. The central open area serves as a kind of social mixer where children can invent their own games and activities.

What works particularly well here is the square's relationship with the surrounding buildings. The shopping center provides a constant stream of visitors that keeps the space animated throughout the day. Even on cloudy days, there's a pulse to this place that many urban squares lack. The practical amenities like benches, trees and bike parking support this activity without dominating the space, rather encompassing it.

The materials used are a bit limiting. The expanse of dark-gray pavement, while

practical, lacks visual interest and warmth. The concrete sports court serves its purpose but feels stark. I wonder if more variety in paving patterns or materials might create a more inviting atmosphere while maintaining functionality. The slight incline and drainage system work effectively from a technical perspective, but they don't contribute much to the square's character or sense of place. For example, the stairs are not high enough to double as seating.

The relationship with the school seems like a missed opportunity. While physically adjacent, the school turns away from the square with its playground on the opposite side. A stronger connection between these spaces could extend the square's active hours and create more intergenerational interaction.

Despite these shortcomings, Kielplein succeeds where many urban spaces fail: it's actively used by the community it serves, which is perhaps the most important measure of success for any public space.

The New Social Fabric

6

Alfons de
Cockplein



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Date 13 / 05 / 2025

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University Delft University of Technology

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New (old) community space

Alongside the development of the social housing blocks Hennig, Thibaud and Sasse, a public space was integrated into the urban plan as well. This space is located in between Thiebaud, Hennig III, the Eric Sasse complex and some row housing. It acts as a common space for all of the housing blocks, even though Hennig I and II are not located directly adjacent to the space. There was a distinction in the levels of community of the social development: while the courtyards were publicly accessible, they were more meant as a common space for residents of that specific building, while the open square was designed as a public space that would bring the people from the different blocks together.

Redesigned with care

The Alfons de Cockplein represents a different type of public space compared to Kielplein. The square was recently redesigned, coinciding with the reconstruction of the Eric Sasse complex. The space is designed as more of a park-like environment within an urban setting. Its triangular shape, with sides measuring between 100 to 120 meters, creates a spatial experience that breaks from traditional rectangular urban blocks. The architectural expression is one of organic integration with surrounding housing developments.

Before the renovation, the square featured streets on all sides, with kinks in some of them to create more sidewalk space next to the buildings, which was then filled in with planters, tables and playground equipment. The square itself had some more playground equipment, like a swingset, climbing tower and a slide. There was also a football field.

The renovation added more grass on the southside of the square, which was initially

filled in with gravel and trees, mimicking the north side of the square. The streets around were straightened and even removed on the side of the Eric Sasse complex. More playground equipment was added, spread out over a few "activity islands". The square's original design, with paths radiating from a central roundabout, is still visible in the redesign.





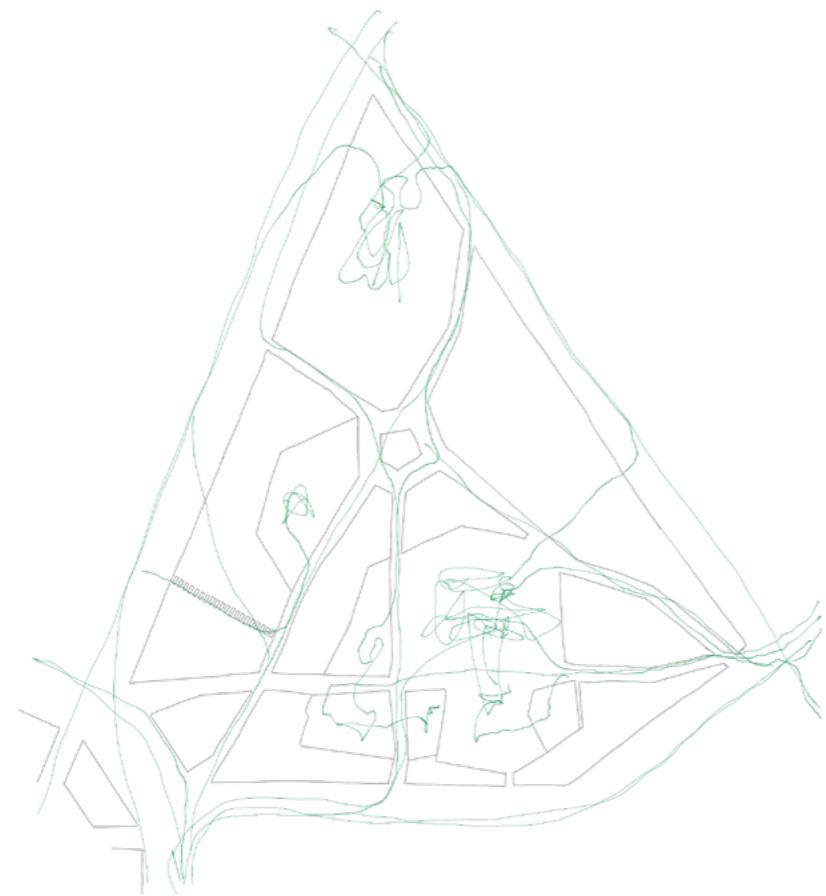
Pre renovation site plan



Current site plan

Usage patterns

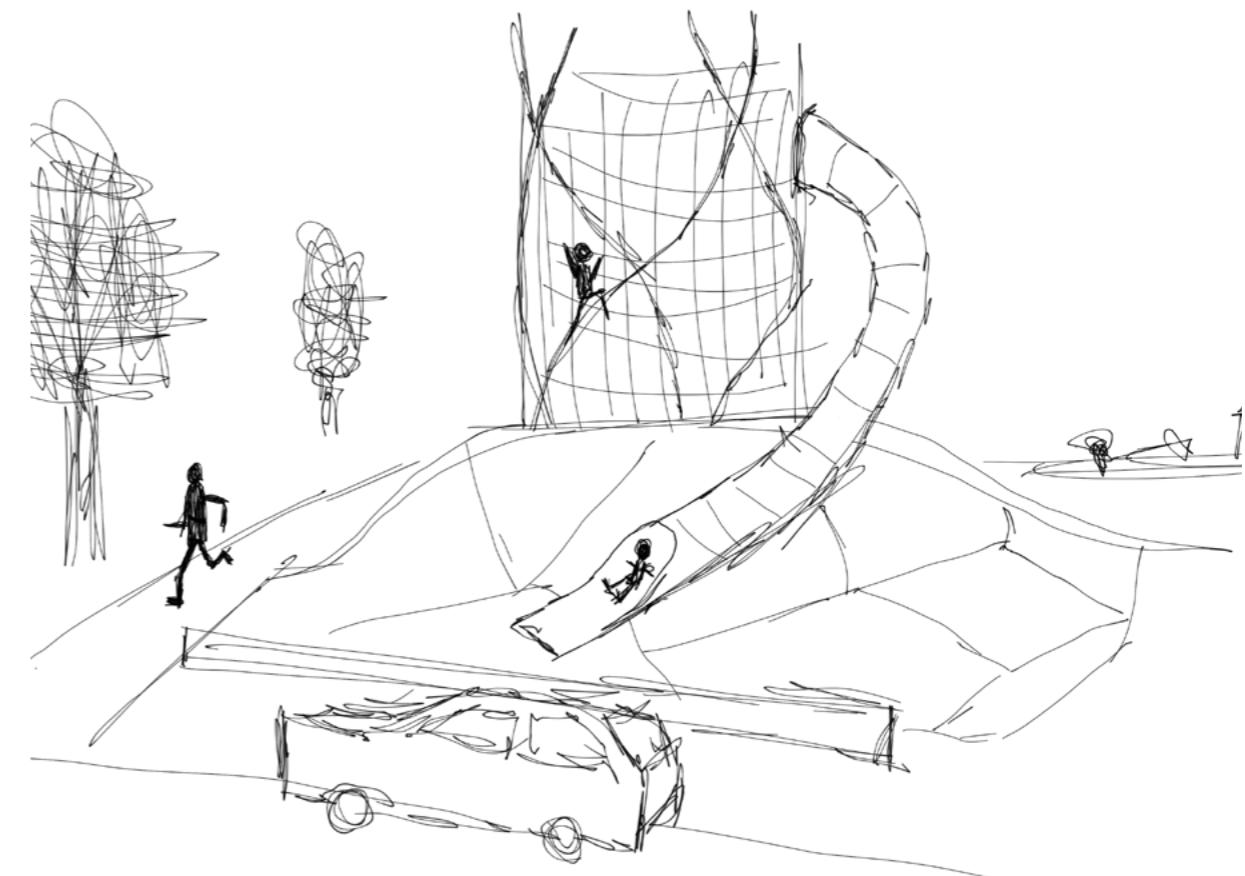
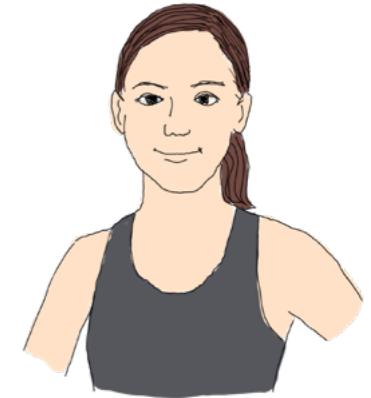
The Alfons de Cockplein serves diverse user groups, though with different activity patterns than the Kielplein. Children frequently visit this square, although it appears to be less active than the Kielplein. The space also attracts adults, particularly on sunny days, who use it for exercise or relaxation. During hot summer days, a dense cluster of trees on the northside provides shade and cooling. Dog owners utilise the dedicated fenced area to let their dog walk free, demonstrating how the space can accommodate specific user needs.



Usage patterns of the square over the course of half an hour. The paths were built in a way to accommodate how people visit the space. Most people naturally feel attracted to using the paths, though some (younger) people will still cut across the grass. The activity spaces are concentrated to the southeast, putting them partly in the shadow of the buildings. On the northwest side there is a fenced space for dogs.

The square has experienced social challenges, with residents reporting that it attracts older youth who end up 'terrorising' the space, including incidents with fireworks and harassment of passersby. However, according to housing corporation Woonhaven, vandalism was mostly caused by the empty buildings as a result of renovation works, and nuisance has been significantly reduced since renovations finished. This suggests that active occupancy and maintenance of surrounding buildings directly influence the safety perception and use patterns of public spaces.

I like coming here to excercise a bit. Some of the playground equipment works well for that, though I would like to see some more gym equipment. I usually come here during school hours though, when there is less youth around. It just gives me a bit of an uneasy feeling when there is a group of guys.

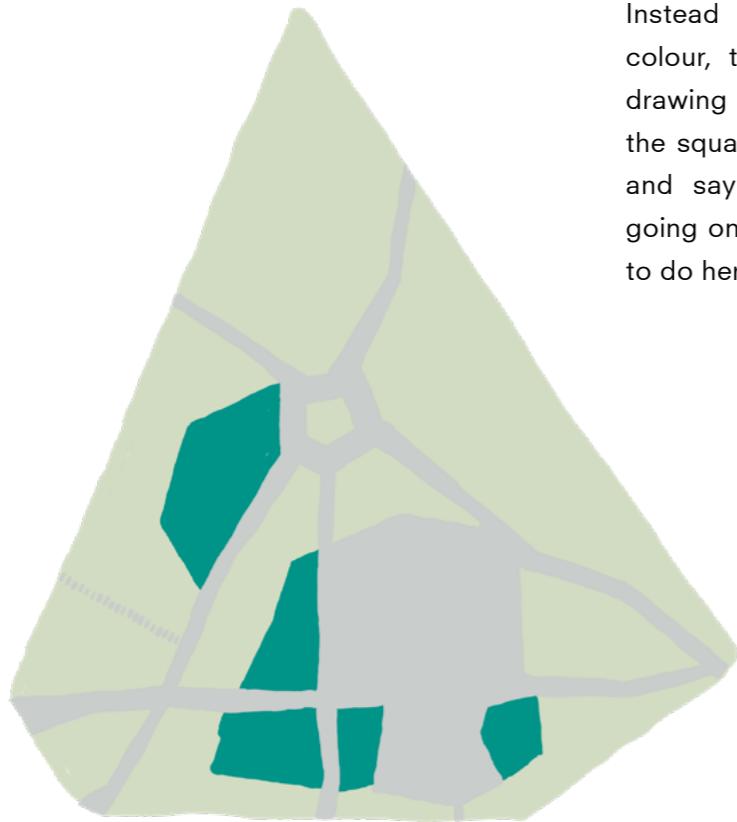


The activity zones are highlighted with coloured rubber groundcover. Small concrete barriers that double as seating divide the activity islands from the road.

Material use

The redesigned Alfons de Cockplein employs a palette of materials that emphasize its park-like character. The square is mostly covered in grass, with an increased grass coverage on the south side following renovation. This soft landscaping creates a natural atmosphere that contrasts with more hardscaped urban spaces. Circulation is facilitated by several paths consisting of concrete slabs, providing durable surfaces for pedestrian movement while minimizing impermeable coverage.

Activity zones are distinguished through



The materiality is defined through the grass, paths and activity zones. The paths are exclusively made up of straight lines, which are angled to avoid completely straight paths. It gives the space a feeling of modernity and contrasts with the natural feel of a park aesthetic. On the southside there is a more informal path, where some space is left between the concrete slabs.

specialized materials, with playground areas recognizable by their blue and green rubber groundcover. This material choice combines safety with visual cuing to designate child-focused areas. The square includes a large football field that measures 27 by 15 meters, as well as a smaller field of 8 by 12 meters, both of which are slightly sunken to act as a small water storage during rainy periods. Throughout the square, functional elements including rubbish bins and small lamp posts (benches are absent) provide necessary amenities while maintaining the park-like aesthetic through their scale and distribution.

An interesting aspect in the colour palette of the square is the playground equipment. Instead of blending in and using a subtle colour, they instead use orange and black, drawing attention to them. It makes it so that the square is trying to attract people's gazes and say: "Hey, look here. There's activity going on. And for children there is something to do here."



The space is...fine I guess. I often come here with friends. Recently they added the small football field, which we like to play a more active game of football. I feel like there's not really a space to relax though. There are not even benches here, just the concrete for us to sit on. I can only really meet people here to do something active with. Like when you're done playing, there's not really a reason to stay.



Older youth will often come to use the football fields. To some, this might give an uneasy feeling. In the past, small football events have been held here for the youth, however it is a fairly rare occurrence.

Critical commentary

Walking through Alfons de Cockplein, I'm immediately aware of its more expansive, park-like quality. The old social housing block stand on the side, clearly visible and dominating the visual experience. The radial path system works well for circulation, providing clear routes while allowing for spontaneous movement across the grass. The blue rubber surfaces of the playground areas create intuitive zoning without the need for fences or barriers, using color to signal different uses. What I personally don't like is how artificial the ground surface feels. I'm more a fan of something natural, like grass or sand.

What doesn't work as well is the balance between openness and security. Despite the recent improvements, there remains an undercurrent of concern about safety, particularly regarding groups of older youth. The fact that a seating area was not included was probably a deliberate one, but also

takes away from giving people a sense of belonging. The vastness of the space, while visually appealing, might contribute to this feeling of vulnerability. While there are lots of eyes on the space, the architecture of the housing blocks, like Thibaud, comes over as very monumental. It makes it feel like there is some important function behind the façade instead of housing, and that contributes to giving the space a sense of anonymity. Luckily the new Sasse building improves on this.

The dog area demonstrates good intentions but raises questions about segregation versus integration of uses. While necessary for practical reasons, dedicated single-use zones can sometimes reduce the richness of urban life that comes from mixed activities.

Overall, Alfons de Cockplein has significant potential as a neighborhood asset, but its success seems contingent on continued stewardship and the active engagement of surrounding residents.

A high-angle, sepia-toned photograph of a cityscape. In the foreground, there's a large, modern industrial-style building with a flat roof and several small rectangular skylights. A parking lot with several cars is visible in front of the building. Bare trees are scattered across the ground in the immediate foreground. In the background, a dense urban area with numerous buildings, including high-rise apartment complexes, stretches towards a hazy horizon under a cloudy sky.

The New Social Fabric

7
Design
project

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Thoughtful social evolution

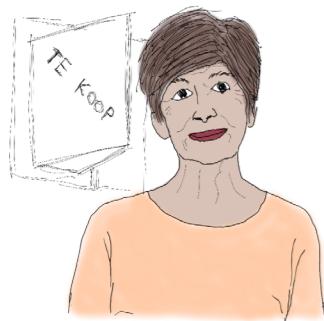
What is social housing, if not social? The New Social Fabric is an innovative architectural project that aims to address a disconnect between social housing and community building in urban environments. By reimagining how residential spaces and social connections can be enhanced while respecting privacy, this project draws inspiration from successful housing typologies like row houses, courtyard complexes, and community-oriented public spaces in Hoboken and Kiel. The design philosophy centers on creating a social fabric that weaves together diverse residents through thoughtful architectural interventions, transitional spaces, and communal areas that encourage spontaneous interaction without sacrificing the identity that signifies the area.

Distance becomes embrace

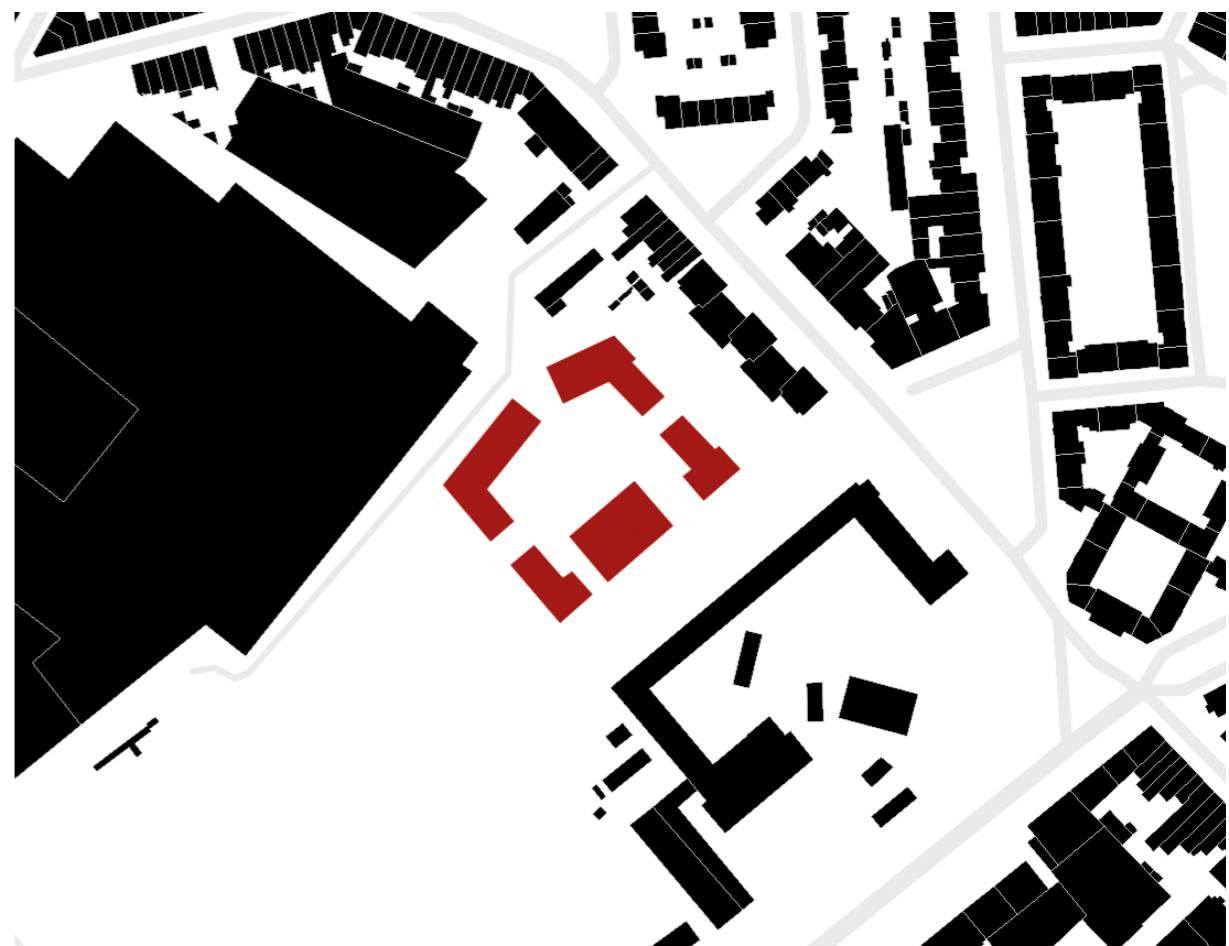
Located next to the Blikfabriek, Blikvelden, Go Atheneum Hoboken and some social housing stands a distribution centre for medical supplies. The site is hidden away from urban life and disconnected from the fabric. The users of the site don't appreciate visitors. There is only one entrance, a fence prevents you from accessing it any other way. It is by no means an inviting space.

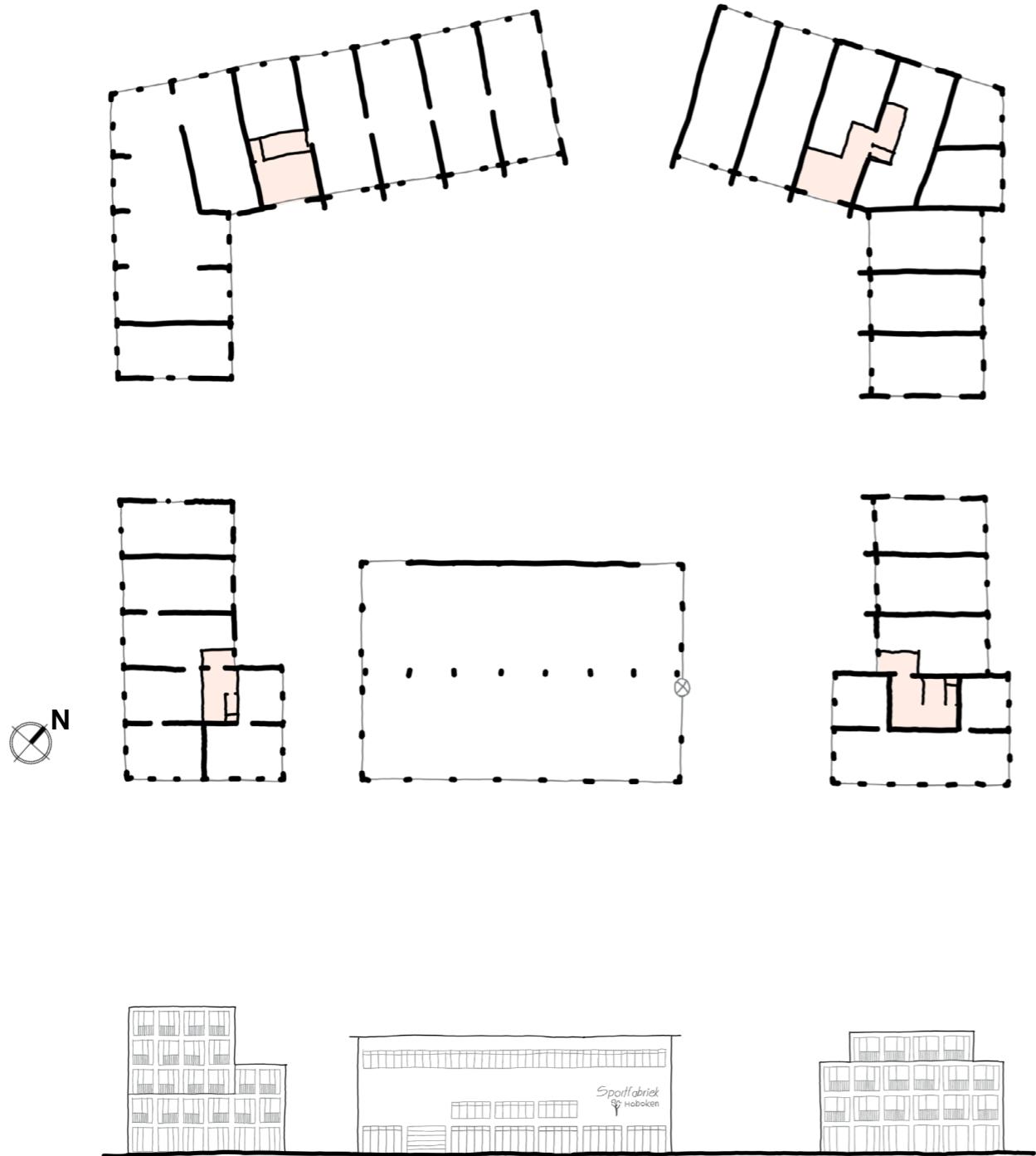
This proposal for redeveloping the site responds directly to the growing gap

between social housing availability and people on waiting lists, offering solutions that facilitate interactions between domestic and foreign neighbors to build a stronger community fabric. The project features a sports hall and several residential buildings incorporating social housing units of various sizes to accommodate different household compositions. It strikes a thoughtful balance between private residences and communal spaces with strategic integration of outdoor areas including terraces and a courtyard that offers room for a variety of activities.



I like the protected inner courtyard where children could play safely while parents can watch from the apartments. I'm not sure if it's for me, it doesn't have the level of privacy I'm used to.





Ground floor plan & southeast elevation

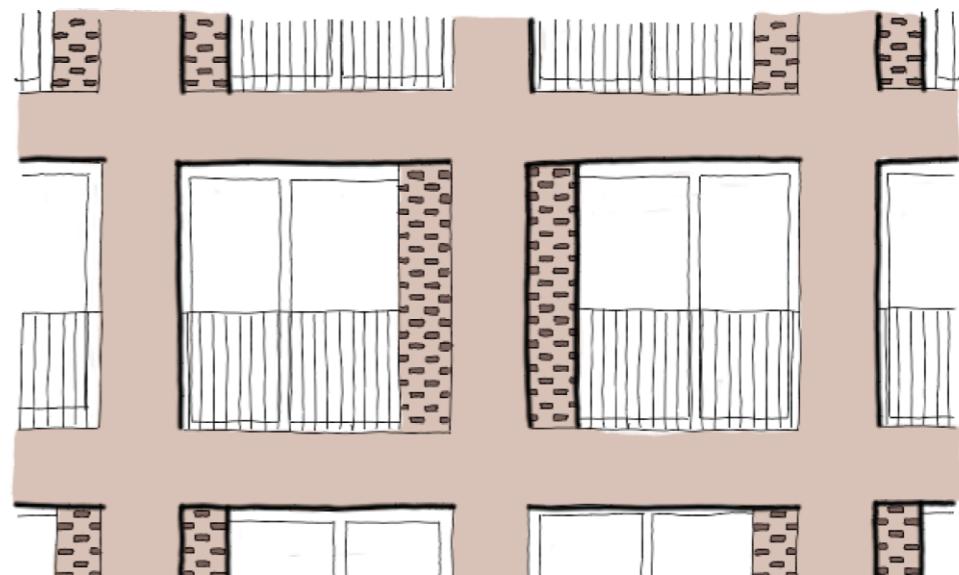
Architectural expression

The development is organized around an accessible courtyard that serves as a social connector, drawing from the positive and improving on the negative aspects of the Hennig I complex. Circulation paths are deliberately designed to increase the likelihood of neighbor interactions while still providing clear transitions between public and private spaces.

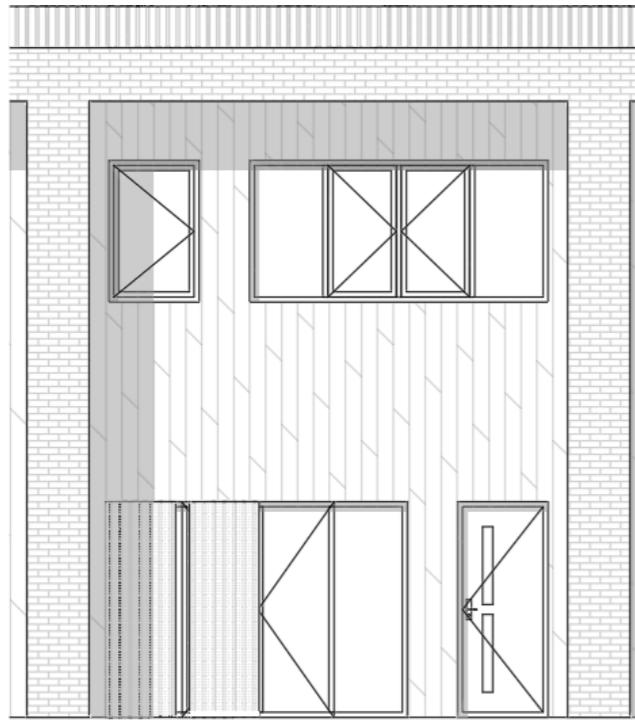
The building merges several successful design languages to create a cohesive yet dynamic residential environment. The courtyard-facing facades with setbacks utilize proportions reminiscent of traditional row houses, providing a familiar and human-scale aesthetic. Brick patterns highlight the structural parts of the building, with lighter materials determining the infill. Varying building heights create visual interest and

playfulness across the complex. The terraced facades reduce the imposing nature of larger building volumes, creating a more welcoming presence.

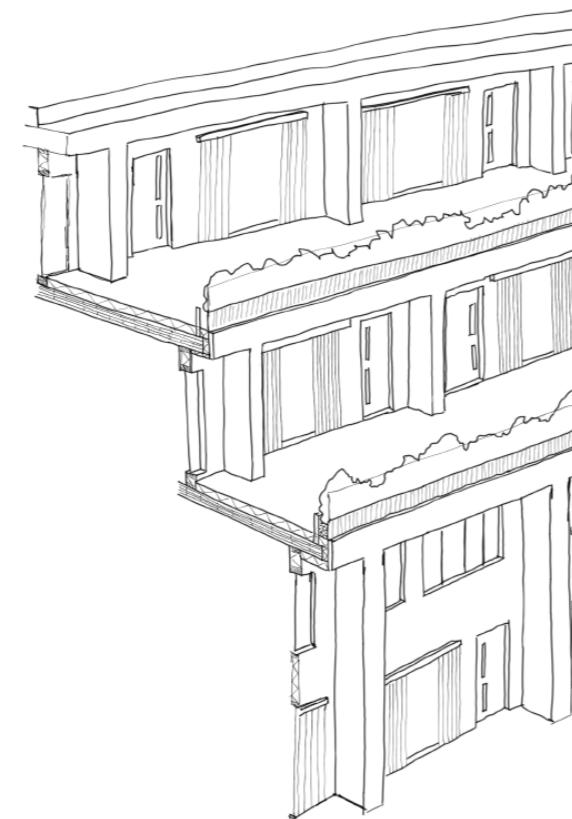
The outer façade is made up of brick in a grid pattern, with each block featuring a slightly different brick colour. This relates the building to the industrial heritage of the area, where simple structures and repetitive façades determine the language of the factory. On some of the higher parts, brick gets replaced by green sheet metal, giving the façade a more playful, but still industrial look. It gives the impression of a different volume being inserted in the block, with the connection between the two being in unexpected places. Street-facing facades also feature increased transparency to connect interior life with the surrounding community, avoiding the isolation observed in some precedent projects.



The outer façade finds a balance between abstractness, structural definition and playfulness. There is also a permeable part, behind which the window can be opened to cool the building at night.



On the courtyard side, the duplex houses resemble the row houses of the area in their design language. The extending brick provides a structural and repeating character (also seen on some other buildings in the area), that creates a distinction between different units.



The courtyard façade reduce the imposing nature of larger building volumes. They balance community and privacy through their design. Movable perforated screens allow residents to gain some more privacy when desired, without fully covering the façade.

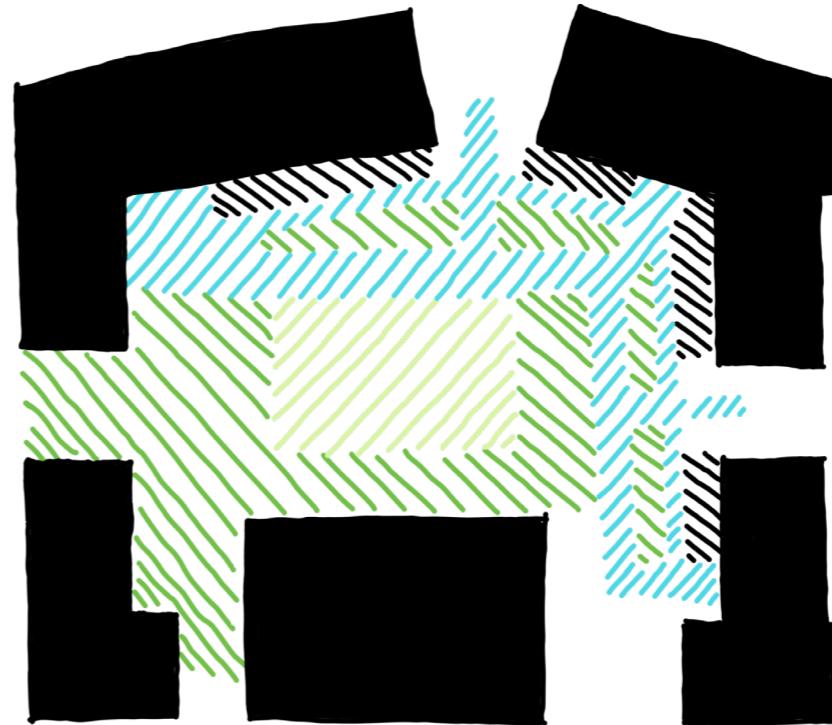
Usage patterns

The design carefully considers how residents will use both private and communal spaces. The courtyard serves as the primary social hub, with thoughtfully designed zones for different activities and age groups. Small private gardens act as transitional spaces between fully private homes and communal areas, creating a gradient of privacy that encourages residents to venture outside.

Public spaces feature defined activity clusters organized around a central sports field, with different pathways and paving patterns delineating various functional zones. Practical amenities like seating areas support passive use and observation throughout the development. Multi-use activity zones ensure

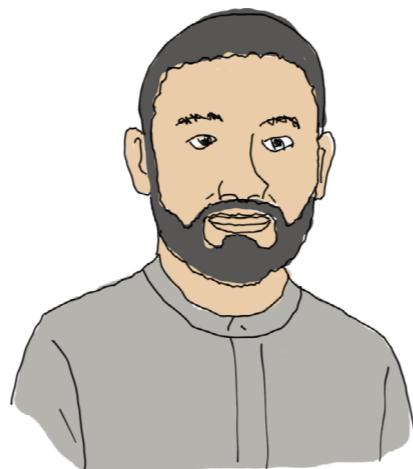
the space serves residents of all generations, while visual connectivity between buildings and public spaces enhances safety perception, addressing concerns observed in spaces like the Alfons de Cockplein.

Building circulation is strategically planned to increase casual encounters between residents, counteracting the isolation seen with buildings that have a lot of staircases. Instead, each building has a central entrance, with galleries on the stepped parts providing access to dwellings further away from the staircase. Some of the terraces feature greenhouses for residents to grow their own food, while planters in front of the different houses provide a nature inclusive living environment.

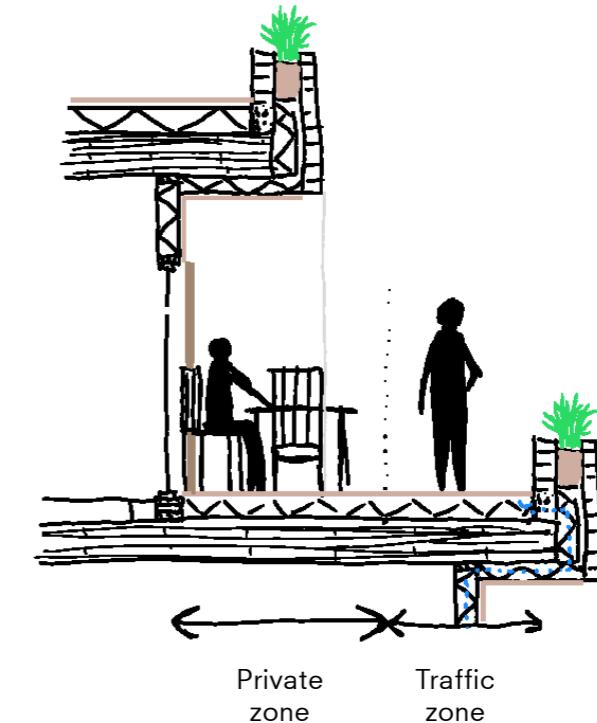


	Private zone
	Activity zone
	Court
	Traffic zone

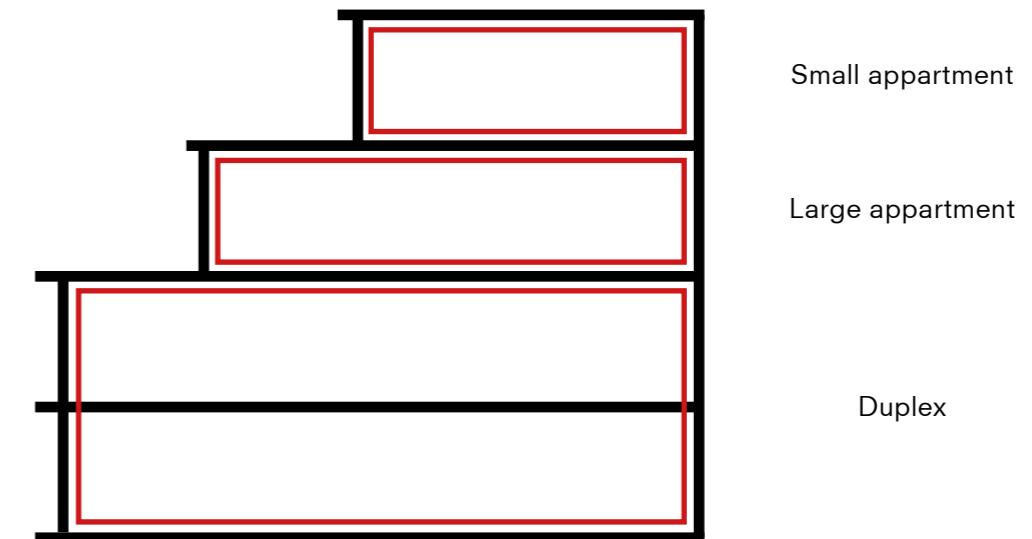
The stepped design with green terraces is much better than our current block. It looks a lot more friendly than what we have. You just have to avoid them getting neglected.



The courtyard is made accessible from different directions and allows for various activities, such as sports, play and leisure. The façades around the courtyard give the space a sense of being a village square.



The gallery terraces function as an interactive space between residents and can be seen as a "street in the air". There is a private zone, a traffic zone and planters for residents.



There are different housing types and sizes in the different blocks. The living spaces are along the terraces and face the courtyard and where necessary the street.

Material use

The project employs a material palette that balances recognisability, durability, aesthetics, and environmental considerations. Primary structural elements include CLT floors and walls, while the sports hall utilises steel columns reused from the existing building. The outer façade and parts of the inner façade are made up of brick in varying shades of brown, red and yellow. Infills on the courtyard side are made up of reused timber, providing a softer and more inviting feeling to the courtyard.

On some of the higher portions, green sheet

metal, reused from the existing building, replaces the brick, lending the façade a more playful yet still industrial aesthetic, with unconventional connection points between the two elements. The green colour is inspired by colours found in the Blikfabriek.

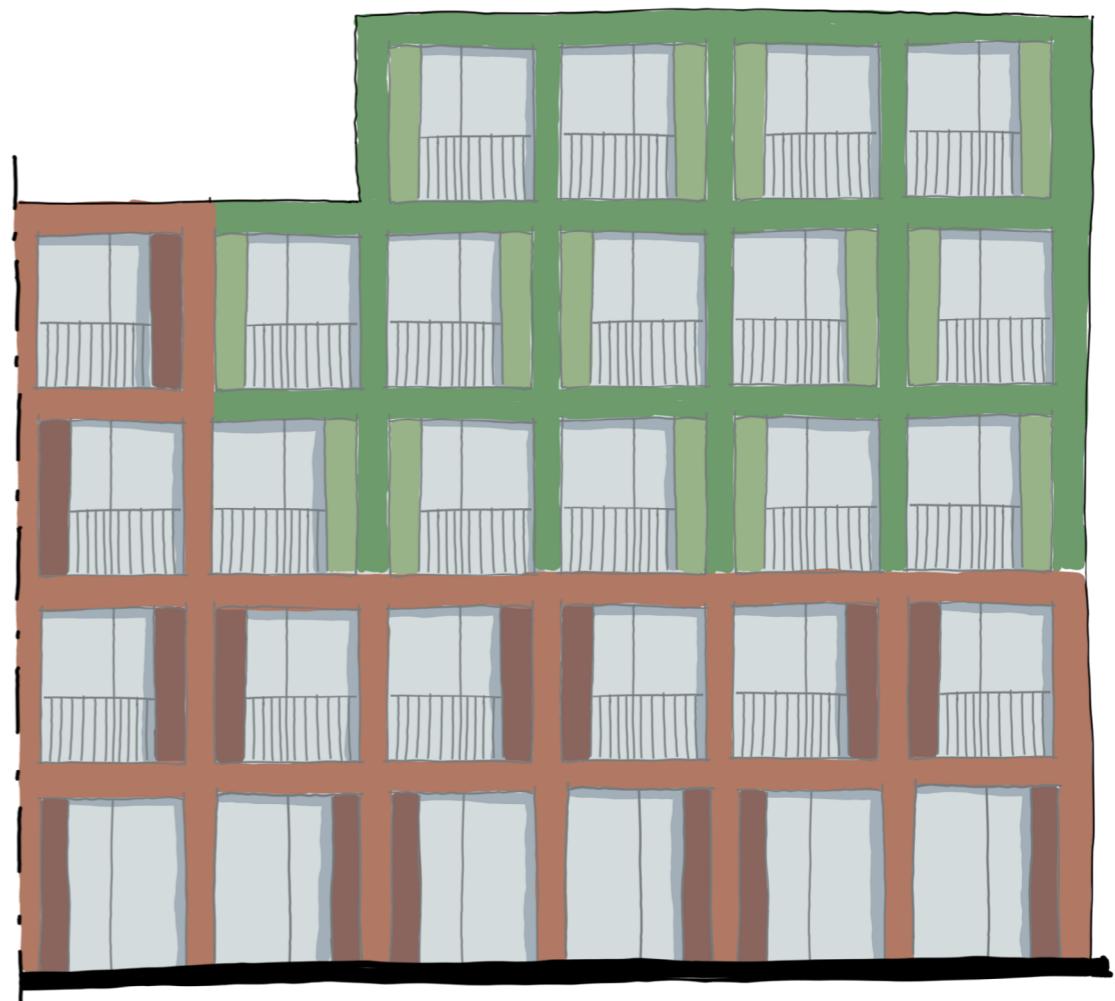
The material palette draws inspiration from the contextual harmony of the Eric Sasse complex while incorporating more contemporary and industrial elements to create a distinctive yet contextually appropriate aesthetic that respects the surrounding urban fabric and site heritage while establishing its own identity.



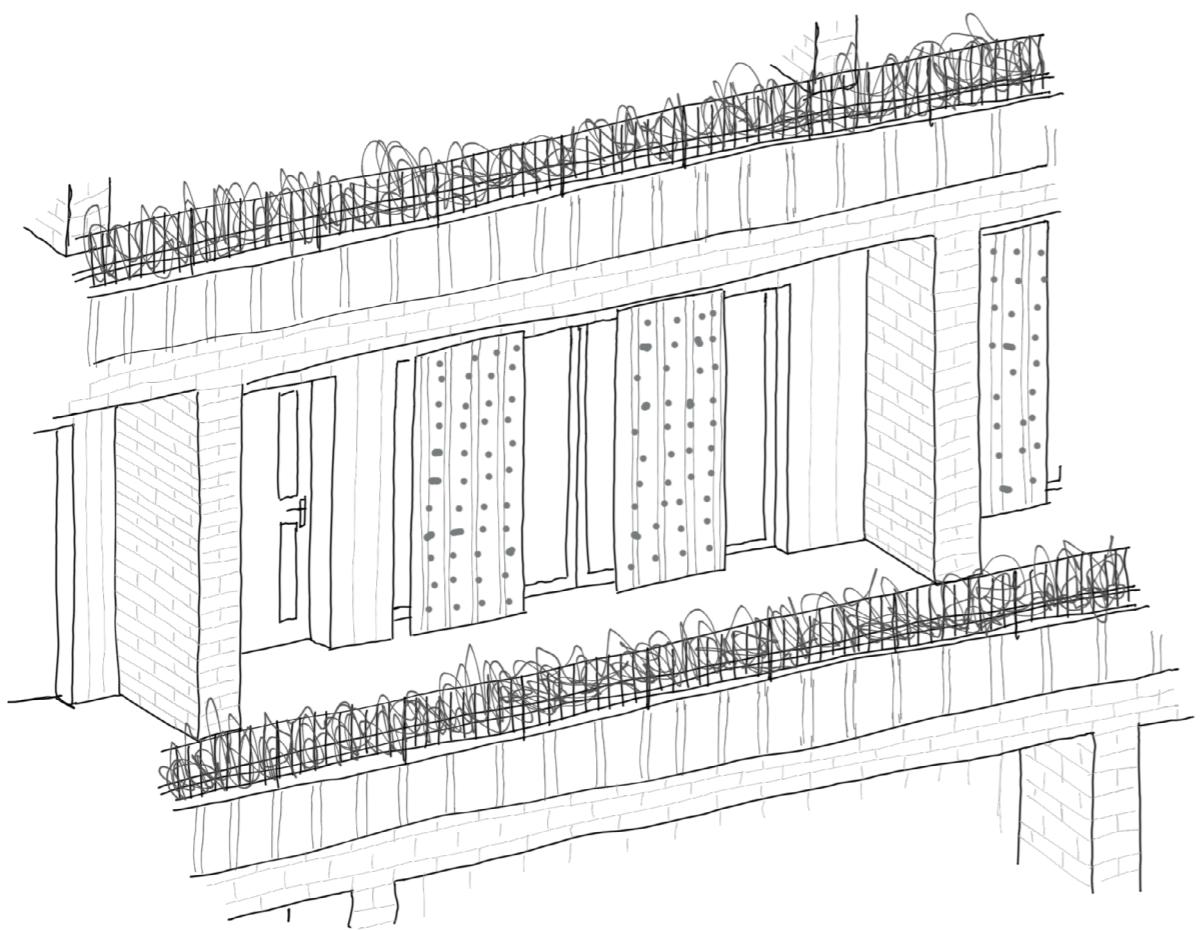
Those stepped terraces should be connected somehow, maybe with external staircases, so everyone can use them as community spaces. They could have barbecue spots, small gardens, and places to sit.



The buildings shouldn't all be the same. Make sure there is some colour to the façades and make each section slightly different so people can feel like their part of the building has its own identity.



The primary material is brick, but on some of the higher portions, green sheet metal, reused from the existing building, replaces the brick, lending the façade a more playful yet still industrial aesthetic



The façade infill on the courtyard side uses a lighter material (reused timber with metal privacy screens), that makes this side look sustainable, softer and more inviting.

Critical commentary

Looking back at the design, there are both strengths and areas for potential improvement. What works particularly well is how the project directly addresses the social housing shortage with a design that doesn't just provide housing units but creates genuine community connections. The courtyard concept balances privacy with community needs, and provides people from the community with various activities to take part in. The varying building heights with the contrasting green sheet metal against brick create visual interest that avoids the monotony often associated with social housing developments.

However, there are aspects that could be further refined. While I've designed circulation paths to encourage interaction, I wonder if I've fully solved the challenge faced by the Hennig I complex, where vandalism and

underutilized communal spaces were issues. I've tried my best to give these spaces significance in the design, but the success of them will ultimately depend on residents' sense of ownership and investment in them.

The terraced facades successfully reduce the imposing feel of larger building volumes, but Designing them proved to be quite a challenge that resulted in floor plans that are not always ideal. Additionally, I should further consider how winter conditions might affect the usability and purpose of outdoor spaces.

Overall, I believe The New Social Fabric successfully reinterprets traditional housing typologies for contemporary social needs, but like any design, it represents a set of compromises and decisions that could continue to evolve with further iteration and eventually, input from the community it aims to serve. Only if it were to be applied in a real situation would it prove to work well or not.