

DOMESTIC SPACE

Living	Sleeping	Kitchen	Storage	Home Industry	Hygiene
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KITCHEN

Preparation of food	Cooking	Dishing up	Dining	Washing up	Drying
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PUBLIC DOMAIN

Public Condenser: KØKKEN +

+ Meeting	+ Working	+ Performing	+ Listening	+ Displaying	+ Healing

Final Reflection

AR3AP100 | Public Building Graduation Studio
Public Condenser | Copenhagen

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Introduction

This graduation project, Public Condenser: KØKKEN+, addresses the urgent need for a “Common Ground” in Haraldsgade-kvarteret, Copenhagen, by proposing a public building that acts as a social condenser. The project is rooted in the Architecture track and the MSc Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences (AUBS) programme at TU Delft, reflecting the studio’s focus on multiplicity and the commons. The aim is to bridge generational, cultural, and social divides in a neighborhood challenged by limited green spaces, scarce community facilities, and social fragmentation. By leveraging the universal act of communal cooking and dining, the project positions the kitchen as a catalyst for intergenerational dialogue, social inclusion, and urban resilience.

This project harnesses the unifying power of communal dining and cooking to bridge generational divides. The kitchen table is a timeless symbol of family and community which becomes, at the scale of the public realm, a crucible for dialogue and negotiation. Here, opposing viewpoints can converge, wisdom meets innovation, and shared meals foster understanding. By transforming cooking and dining into shared public experiences, the project aims to create a platform for intergenerational exchange, turning the act of preparing and enjoying food into a catalyst for social cohesion and cultural appreciation. In this way, the simple act of dining is reimagined as a cornerstone of community building in Haraldsgade-kvarteret.

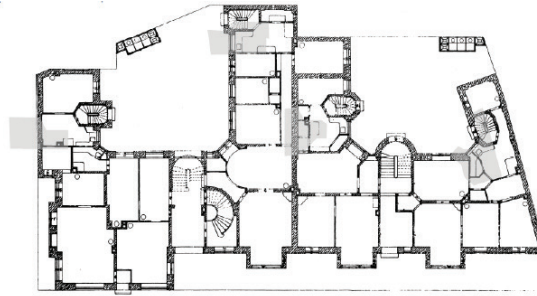
Research & Design

The project synthesizes the essential ambitions of the Architecture track and the MSc AUBS programme by integrating spatial analysis, academic research, and technical design through a research-by-design methodology. It builds on prior studio work in urban architecture and community engagement, and incorporates principles from building technology (timber and bio-based materials), urbanism (site and stakeholder analysis), and social sciences (actor-network theory). The design brief aligns with the studio’s commons theme, reimagining the domestic kitchen as public infrastructure for collective well-being.

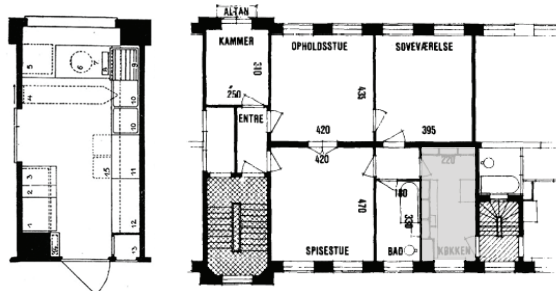
At the start of the project, I reviewed literature on kitchen evolution, such as *The Kitchen: An Architectural Mirror of Everyday Life and Societal Development* by Claus Bech-Danielsen (Danish Building Research Institute, Aalborg University). This research into domestic kitchens enabled me to map the evolution of kitchen layouts and understand how the kitchen has introduced the informal socializing and became a central space of the domestic use within the Danish context. This insight shaped my thinking about how kitchens can support diverse activities and social interactions in a public context.

Communal dining-fællesspisning-has become a defining trend in Copenhagen, offering affordable, community-driven meals and fostering social connections in a city known for its high cost of living. Spaces like Absalon, a former church now serving as a vibrant community center, host daily shared dinners that bring together people of all ages and backgrounds at long tables, making communal cooking and dining a popular and accessible part of urban life. This widespread embrace of communal activities reflects a growing demand for spaces where residents can connect through food, share experiences, and build a sense of belonging.

Kitchens 100 years ago



Modern Kithcens



Shared Kithcens



Collectivity in Kithcens

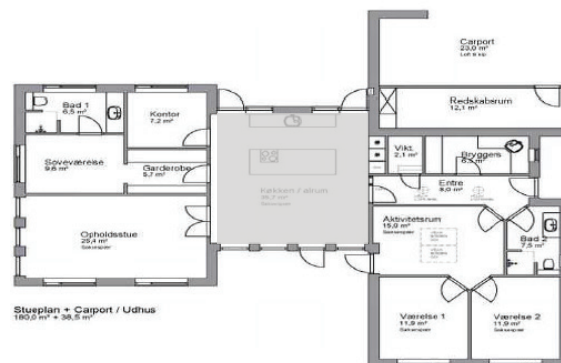


Fig. 1: The evolution of kitchen in domestic use

Field visits outside Denmark also informed my approach. The Community Kitchen at Kulturhaus Brotfabrik in Vienna offered practical insights into organizing participatory cooking activities and showed how the duration and structure of communal events can shape spatial design. These observations reinforced the value of designing flexible, inclusive kitchen spaces that support a range of social and cultural activities.

The research-by-design methodology proved effective in bridging theory and practice. Iterative modeling and stakeholder engagement ensured contextually relevant solutions, while interdisciplinary research enriched the design's social and technical dimensions. Challenges included balancing programmatic flexibility with architectural identity and addressing the diverse needs of the community. Feedback from mentors and peers was instrumental in refining the user focus, spatial strategies, and sustainability measures. This approach fostered a learning process rooted in adaptability, critical reflection, and responsiveness to feedback.

The S/M/L/XL framework used in the project offers a scalable and adaptable model for public condensers. At the Small (S) scale, the focus is on the heart of the building which is the central spine, an open sequence of timber-framed bays dedicated to growing and harvesting greenery for the public kitchen. Medium (M) and Large (L) scales introduce communal and interactive spaces, while the Extra-Large (XL) scale extends the concept into the public realm, integrating the building with its urban context. Adjustments would be needed to accommodate local cultural practices and demographic needs, but the underlying principles of inclusivity, flexibility, and sustainability remain robust.

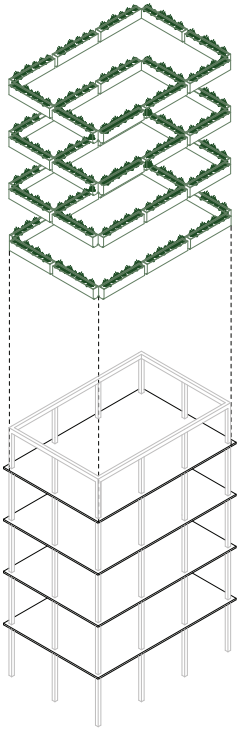
Academic & Societal Value

Through the design brief, this studio project advances the concept of a Public Condenser by exploring multiplicity in architecture-framing kitchens as socio-technical systems that mediate between private rituals and public life. By integrating research and design, the project contributes to academic discourse on the commons, social inclusion, and sustainable urbanism, and exemplifies the MSc AUBS programme's interdisciplinary and context-driven ethos. It offers a model for linking academic research with real-world impact, demonstrating how architectural interventions can be both theoretically robust and practically transformative.

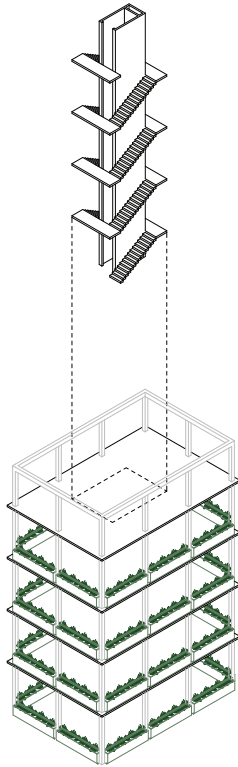
Academically, the project relates to multiplicity in several ways. The use of a grid structure with double beams enables a predominantly open plan, providing significant flexibility—especially on the ground floor. Standardized dimensions further enhance adaptability, allowing the building to transform and accommodate new uses over time. This inherent flexibility is not only an architectural strategy but also a key element of sustainability, as it lengthens the building's lifecycle and reduces the need for resource-intensive renovations. The project thus contributes to ongoing discussions about how spatial and programmatic adaptability can support resilient, future-proof public spaces.

Societally, Køkken+ addresses urgent challenges of social fragmentation, health, and sustainability in the Haraldsgade-kvarteret. By fostering intergenerational and intercultural exchange through communal cooking and dining, the project promotes social inclusion and community resilience.

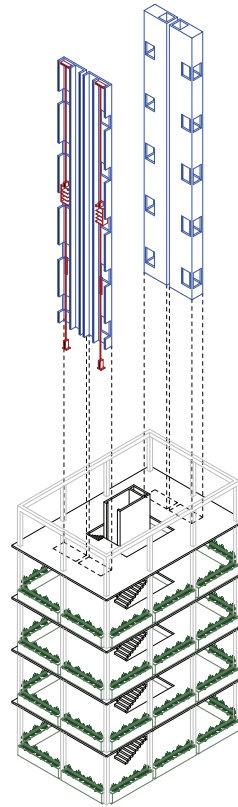
Edible Greenery



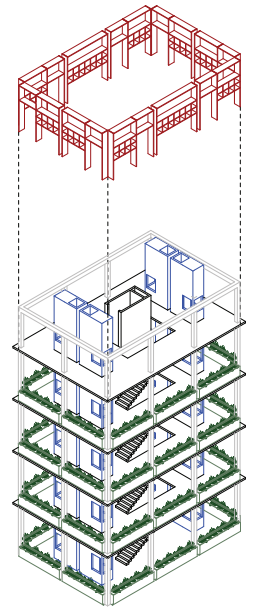
Circulation



Food Lift + Shaft



Furniture + Storage



Central Spine

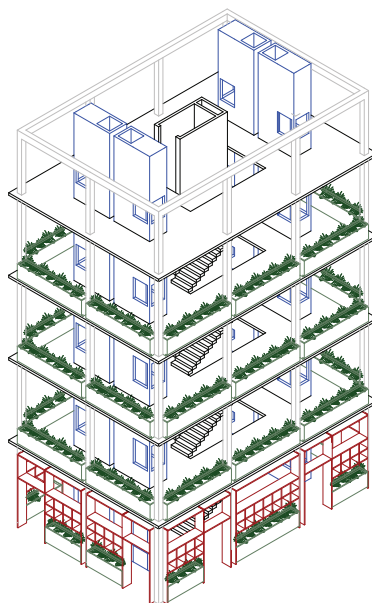


Fig. 2: Organization of the Central Spine

Ethical considerations-such as mitigating gentrification, supporting community autonomy, and promoting environmental stewardship-are embedded in both the design and stakeholder engagement process.

A distinctive feature of Køkken+ is its approach to sustainability, inspired by leading examples in the restaurant and university sectors. The integration of greenery throughout the building not only enhances the indoor and outdoor environment but also provides a sustainable source of herbs and edible plants directly for the public kitchen. This system is supported by the presence of “non-human users”-composting machines installed within the building-which collect leftover food and organic waste, rapidly converting it into nutrient-rich compost. This compost is then used to fertilize the on-site gardens and planters, creating a circular (closed-loop) system where food production, consumption, and waste management are interconnected. Such systems have been shown to significantly reduce waste, lower CO₂ emissions, and improve soil health, while also serving as educational tools and community role models for sustainable living.

In addition to its environmental initiatives, Køkken+ also encourages a healthy lifestyle by supporting plant-based, organic food choices. This focus aligns with Copenhagen’s broader public food service strategy, which emphasizes high-quality, nutritious meals with a strong preference for vegetables and seasonal ingredients. By encouraging plant-based options and food literacy, Køkken+ not only supports individual well-being but also helps reduce its ecological footprint, as plant-based diets are typically associated with lower resource use and emissions.

This approach not only minimizes the environmental footprint of the building but also reinforces the project’s educational and social aims. By making the processes of food production and waste recycling visible and accessible, Køkken+ encourages users to adopt more sustainable behaviors and fosters a deeper understanding of ecological cycles. The project’s focus on on-site food production, composting, green infrastructure, and healthy, plant-based meals thus contributes to urban sustainability, healthy living, and a sense of shared responsibility among users.

Køkken+ is both a response to the specific needs of Haraldsgade-kvarteret and a prototype for similar interventions elsewhere. Its strategies-ranging from flexible spatial organization to closed-loop resource systems-are transferable to other urban contexts facing issues of social fragmentation and environmental sustainability. The project demonstrates how thoughtful architectural design can mediate social inclusion, environmental stewardship, and cultural exchange, contributing to broader goals of urban regeneration and sustainable community building. As cities worldwide grapple with fragmentation and exclusion, the principles and methods developed here offer valuable guidance for future public architecture.

Reflection Questions

How might the circular resource strategies implemented in Køkken+ be adapted for neighborhoods with different cultural or economic contexts?

How might the design and spatial organization of the building be informed or transformed by the integration and display of these ecological processes?