



# A CITY IS TO MEET

Enhancing the city as a meeting place through urban design  
Marin Zeeman



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This thesis marks the end of a journey that would not have been possible without the support, inspiration, and encouragement of many people around me.

First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude to my mentors: Tess Broekmans. Thank you for all the guidance, feedback, and inspiration throughout this project; and Machiel van Dorst. Thank you for your critical thinking, valuable insights, and knowledge. Both of your insights have shaped my work and pushed me to grow as both a designer and a thinker.

To the wonderful group of girls from table 2.148.W, thank you for the mental support, laughter, and moments of joy.

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Finally, to my partner, thank you for your unwavering support, encouragement, and constant belief in me. Your compliments and presence have made all the difference.

To all of you: Thank you.

As of today, cities are becoming increasingly dense and diverse; thus, the quality of public meeting space is under pressure. This graduation project examines how urban design can enhance the city as a meeting place, thereby facilitating meetings among its residents, using the neighborhood Bospolder-Tussendijken in Rotterdam as a case study. The need for quality public meeting spaces is urgent in this neighborhood, characterized by superdiversity and spatial and social vulnerability. Through literature research, local observations, and design research, a pattern language has been developed that offers design principles to spatially facilitate informal meetings, ranging from anonymous to affectionate. Furthermore, a relationship has been observed between the use and type of meetings and the level of publicness of public space, resulting in three strategies. It was found that parochial places where amicable meetings occur contribute the most to a sense of public familiarity. The design concept focuses on strengthening existing social infrastructures, making levels of publicness more readable and balanced, and activating public spaces as stages for spontaneous interaction. The result is a context-specific design transformation that restores the role of the city as a meeting place.



The city has the potential to be a vibrant stage for social life, a place where meetings, daily routines, and spontaneous gatherings enrich our sense of belonging. When designed thoughtfully, urban public spaces can foster familiarity, build trust among strangers, and transform everyday environments into places of meaning and connection.

Yet, the image on the right (Figure 01), the shared space I walk through every day, starkly contrasts with this ideal. Instead of serving as a lively public stage, this shared space remains barren and uninviting. It fails to encourage lingering, interaction, or even a sense of passage. While physically accessible, the space remains a void between walls where daily life merely passes by. There is no invitation to pause, no layered publicness, and no sense of ownership. The potential for connection and communal life is lost.







This absence highlights everything that a well-designed shared space could be. A shared space blends the transition from public to private, creating a semi-public realm where boundaries soften and residents are encouraged to engage with their surroundings. It supports informal encounters by offering a human scale, greenery, and opportunities for shared use. It is a space that feels both open and intimate, where design elements encourage lingering rather than passing and conversation rather than isolation.

The difference between these two spaces is not merely aesthetic; it is fundamentally social. One illustrates missed opportunities, while the other creates possibilities. This stark contrast reinforces my belief that urban design must move beyond mere functionalism. Public spaces should be intentionally designed to invite, engage, and nurture a sense of shared ownership, transforming passive gaps into active places and ensuring the city fulfills its role as a meeting place.

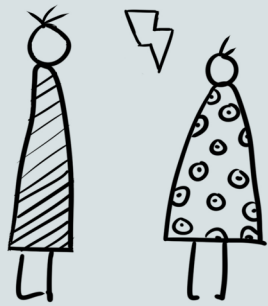
This observation continuously motivates me to seek out and design urban spaces that are not just corridors of movement but catalysts for meetings, use, and connection.



Figure 01: Shared space in flat centre Rotterdam  
Source: Made by author, 2025

					
EXPPOSE	UNDERSTAND	EXPLORE	DEVELOP	PROPOSE	REFLECT
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## PUBLIC MEETING SPACE IS UNDER PRESSURE

### Introducing the problem field and research aim and questions

This chapter outlines the problem field. It starts by explaining the issue of the lack of qualitative meeting space, the social risks it poses, and the effects on contemporary society. Furthermore, it introduces the selected case study: Bospolder-Tussendijken. The chapter will end with the problem statement and an introduction to the thesis aim and research questions.

CITIES ARE BECOMING MORE DENSE AND DIVERSE

As of January 1, 2025, the Netherlands’ population is estimated to be 18 million (CBS, 2025), with 27.8% of its residents having a migration background (CBS, 2024). According to CBS (2019), this is expected to grow even bigger. In 2060, 60% of the society will have some form of a migration background. This makes the Netherlands a very diverse society in terms of cultures, beliefs, and values.

Major cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague are evolving into ‘meerderheid-minderheid’ cities, where no one population group holds the majority (WRR, 2018). Rotterdam exemplifies this concept of a minority/majority city (Vertovec, 2007). Housing a super-diversity extends beyond migration backgrounds to include differences in length of stay, living situations, housing status, gender, age, beliefs, social positions, and interpersonal interactions (KIS, 2023, p. 3).

However, this increasing diversity can present challenges for social cohesion. Due to the great diversity, people often feel less at home in their neighborhood and with their neighbors (WRR, 2018). They tend to feel less connected to their neighborhoods. This densification and diversity ask for a new way to live together harmoniously in a shared society.

The trend toward urbanization is also reshaping the way we inhabit spaces. According to the United Nations’ (2022) projections, two-thirds of the world’s population is expected to live in cities by 2050. This concentration of people living in cities will make the design of urban public spaces that consider public health even more important (McCay et al., 2017).

As cities become more diverse and densely populated, the demands on public spaces increase, reflecting a broader spectrum of values and needs. This creates tension over how such spaces are shared and utilized. Consequently, when the quantity of public space decreases, the focus shifts to enhancing its quality to effectively accommodate and serve the community (Schinkel, 2014).

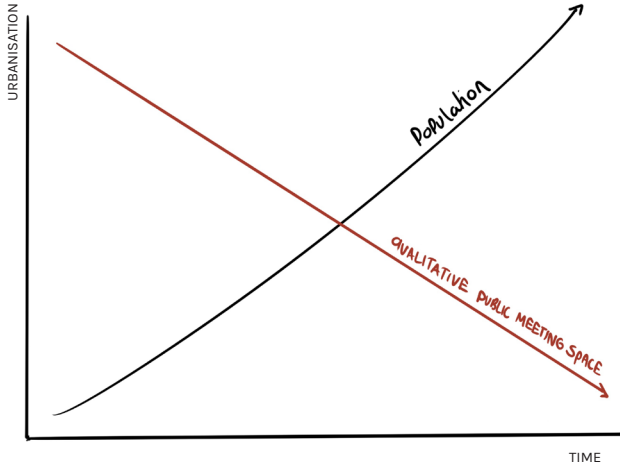


Figure 02: Population rise and decline of qualitative meeting space  
Source: Made by author 2024

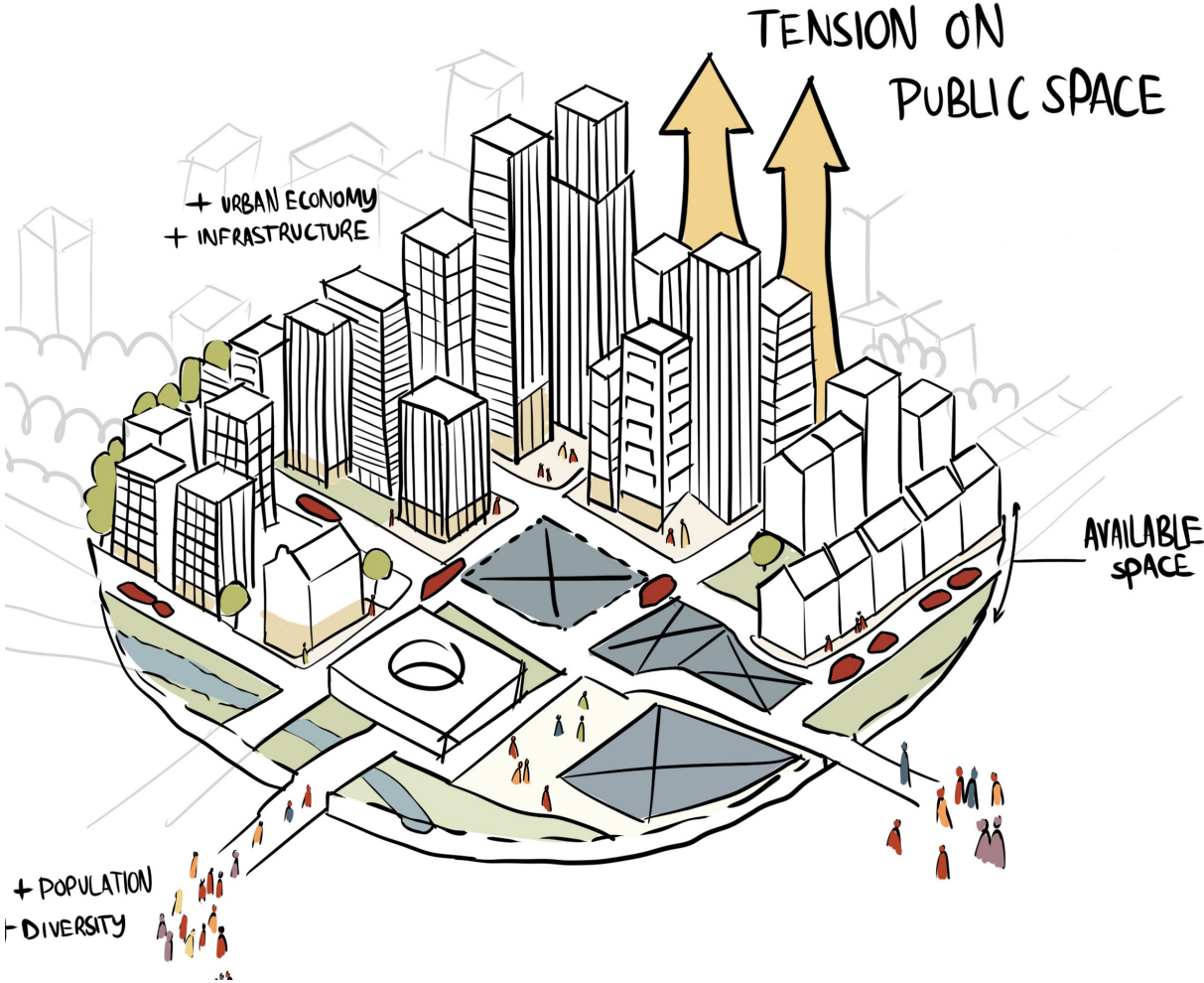


Figure 03: Urbanisation and public space  
Source: Made by author 2024



A key element of a good city is the collective public character (Klinenberg, 2018). Eric Klinenberg (2018) argues that the physical connections between places and institutions are crucial to maintaining or developing social connections within a neighborhood, thereby implying the importance of social infrastructure.

Social infrastructure can be defined as things that play a significant role in people's daily lives (Kim, 2024). It is public spaces that invite people into the public realm, such as libraries, schools, playgrounds, churches, and other spaces (Klinenberg, 2018). Furthermore, spaces that are part of social infrastructure are where people socialize and make connections with others. However, it is often not their essential component, as they also manage to provide other primary functions (Latham, 2019).

In the book "Palaces for the People," Klinenberg (2018) argues that social infrastructure is crucial for people to develop cooperation and trust among themselves. He states that when social infrastructure fails, the effects are not immediately visible. People reduce their time spent in public spaces, and as Putnam (2000) states, they want to 'hunker down' in their safe haven, which he compares to people hiding in their homes, much like turtles. The first effects of a failure in the social infrastructure are not visible, but they are felt. Residents lose their connection to their surroundings and neighbors because people spend less time in public spaces, which have the potential to serve as meeting places. This will further weaken the social infrastructure (Klinenberg, 2018). Over time, this will lead to crime, the isolation of vulnerable people, a sense of distance between individuals, and a decline in civic participation (Klinenberg, 2018).

Furthermore, generating a working social infrastructure that produces social ties (Putnam, 2000) has been linked to decreases in ethnic tensions (Varshney, 2002) and political polarization (Klinenberg, 2018). It also improves the chances of resilience and recovery after a crisis (Klinenberg, 2018).

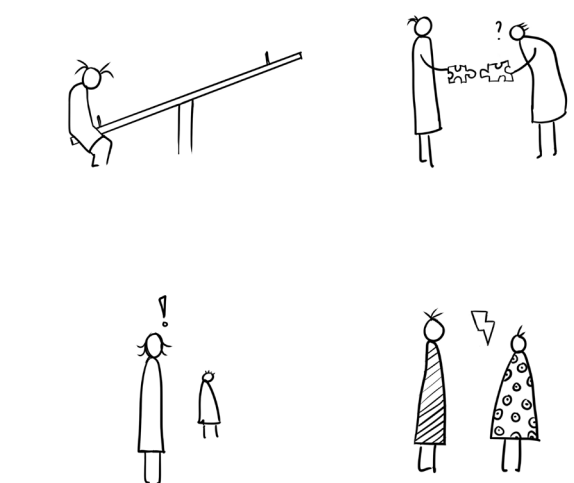


Figure 04: Social risks  
Source: Made by author, 2024

Metropolitan areas are at higher risk of vulnerability to social isolation. Warner and Andrews (2019) found in recent research that as urban high-rises increase, residents encounter more physical and social barriers that prevent them from forming deeper social connections (Kim, 2024). The research showed that spaces, such as outdoor common areas and indoor access walkways, were not conducive to new relationships (Warner, 2019). Therefore, it proves the importance of the physical environment as a factor in experiencing social isolation (Kim, 2024).

In this light, a recent CBS study (2024) examined the perceived coziness (gezelligheid in Dutch) of a city as experienced by its residents. The level of coziness was assessed through a series of questions regarding social cohesion. Some of the questions focused on getting to know your neighbors, the level of trust, and the sense of belonging. The findings revealed that people in rural areas experience the highest social cohesion, whereas densely urbanized areas report lower levels. Rotterdam is characterized as the least gezellig neighborhood in the Netherlands. Forty-six percent of residents claim they live in a cozy area, meaning that more than half believe their neighborhood lacks coziness (CBS, 2024).

Together, these studies underscore the importance of both the physical environment and social connections in addressing social isolation, particularly in urban areas.

"Residents of Rotterdam are the least likely to describe their neighborhood as cozy" -(CBS, 2024)



Figure 05: Trends timeline  
Source: Made by author 2024

In the ever-evolving urban landscape, the concepts of densification and diversity influence how we approach urban development. These concepts shape not only the physical environment but also the social dynamics. Several other trends shape how we live together in public spaces, influencing how residents use social interactions and the infrastructure that facilitates them. These influences are further explained in the following text, which reflects on their impact.

HOUSEHOLDS SIZES

The average household size has become smaller (CBS, 2024). Also called ‘household shrinkage’, which means the number of households has risen faster than the population. The average household in the Netherlands consists of 2.11 people as of January 1, 2025. This also influences how we design public spaces, as smaller households need to find their social life outside. This highlights the importance of shared amenities and well-designed public spaces that enable people to meet others.

DIGITALISATION

As early as 2001, Reijndorp (2001) noted that mobile phones would alter the use and perception of the concept of public space. It will enable individuals to connect and coordinate regardless of their physical location. Mobile phones also influence the publicness of places, as digital tools can both foster openness by attracting diverse groups or limit accessibility by reinforcing private or commercial interests. Furthermore, digital tools have a profound impact on social infrastructure, as we can now shop, date, and socialize online. Therefore, digital tools make us less independent of our immediate surroundings (Boys et al., 2023).

MOBILITY

In the Netherlands, mobility has significantly reshaped public space, reflecting broader global trends. Reijndorp (2001) notes that the rise of car dominance was prioritized in the design of public spaces, leading to a decrease in public spaces available to the community.

Sennet (2019) connected the change to fast traffic to the way we experience the city’s urban fabric. He observes a relation between speed and the abundance of perception. He states: the faster one moves, the fewer objects and details are perceived, with less depth and context. Which eventually disconnects us from our environment due to our limited understanding of the city’s shape. The modernist approach, which prioritizes traffic flow, reduces opportunities for social interaction and weakens social connections in neighborhoods (McKay et al., 2017).

INDIVIDUALISM

The rise in individualistic behavior in urban environments results from a larger societal trend, where personal and particularly economic advancement has fostered a strong sense of self-reliance. This change is evident in the design of our public spaces, which increasingly emphasize privatization and individual activities. While collective interaction was once taken for granted in shared areas, they are now yielding to segmented environments that place the individual at the forefront. However, this pursuit of autonomy is frequently built on a misguided self-image; complete self-sufficiency does not exist (Van Dorst, 2025); we remain fundamentally dependent on one another and our environment as humans.



A CITY IS TO MEET

A VISION FOR THE CITY AS A MEETING PLACE

In today's world where people increasingly live alongside each other, cities must become a stage for renewed social interactions and shared experiences. Everyday spontaneous interactions are not just incidental, they are the basis of trust, solidarity and connection of neighbors and their surroundings. The ideal city fosters these interactions, engaging people to weave social networks that form the backbone of vibrant urban environments.

Guided by the sustainable development goal 10: Equality and inclusion, the city must ensure that everyone has equal opportunities to participate in its social and physical infrastructure (SDG Nederland, n.d.). This requires us to design, experience and manage cities differently. The city must be seen as a place where cultures, communities and individuals intersect and engage.

The public domain must be reclaimed as a space where diverse groups not only coexist but actively exchange ideas and confront differing perspectives. As Arnold Reijndorp (2001) suggests, public spaces must allow people to step out of their familiar worlds or bubbles and experience new ones. Experiencing the play of people, by observing, conversation or just being in proximity, will help their understanding and challenge their assumptions. The city should act as a theater, where complexity and societal narratives unfold, which fosters empathy, societal knowledge and collective judgement.

Our cities are becoming increasingly denser and more diverse. But instead of seeing this as a treat. Density and diversity bring life to the city, Jane Jacobs (1961) explained, and bring disorder. This inherent chaos is embraced by the ideal city as a source of innovation and adaptability,

which will make the city more sustainable. As Richard Sennet (2006) argues, overly controlled and overly structured spaces stifle openness and limit freedom. Instead, cities should invite the unexpected, allowing people and places to evolve organically. This means designing spaces that are flexible and incomplete, spaces that adapt to the rhythms of daily life and the evolving needs of the community.



Figure 06: A city is to meet  
Source: Made by author 2025

CASE STUDY: BOSPOLDER-TUSSENDIJKEN

As concluded, the city of Rotterdam exemplifies this concept of a minority/majority city (Vertovec, 2007). Housing a super-diversity extends beyond migration backgrounds to include differences in length of stay, living situations, housing status, gender, age, beliefs, social positions, and interpersonal interactions (KIS, 2023, p. 3).

Shown in the figure on the right is a comparison of the Netherlands, the city of Rotterdam, and the neighborhood of Bospolder-Tussendijken.

The neighborhood is characterized as very dense, diverse, and dynamic (Bospoldertussendijken.nl, n.d.), housing 14,000 people on one square kilometer. However, the neighborhood has been identified as one of the vulnerable areas in the Netherlands, facing numerous challenges, including poverty, unemployment, poor health, and loneliness (RIVM, 2020).

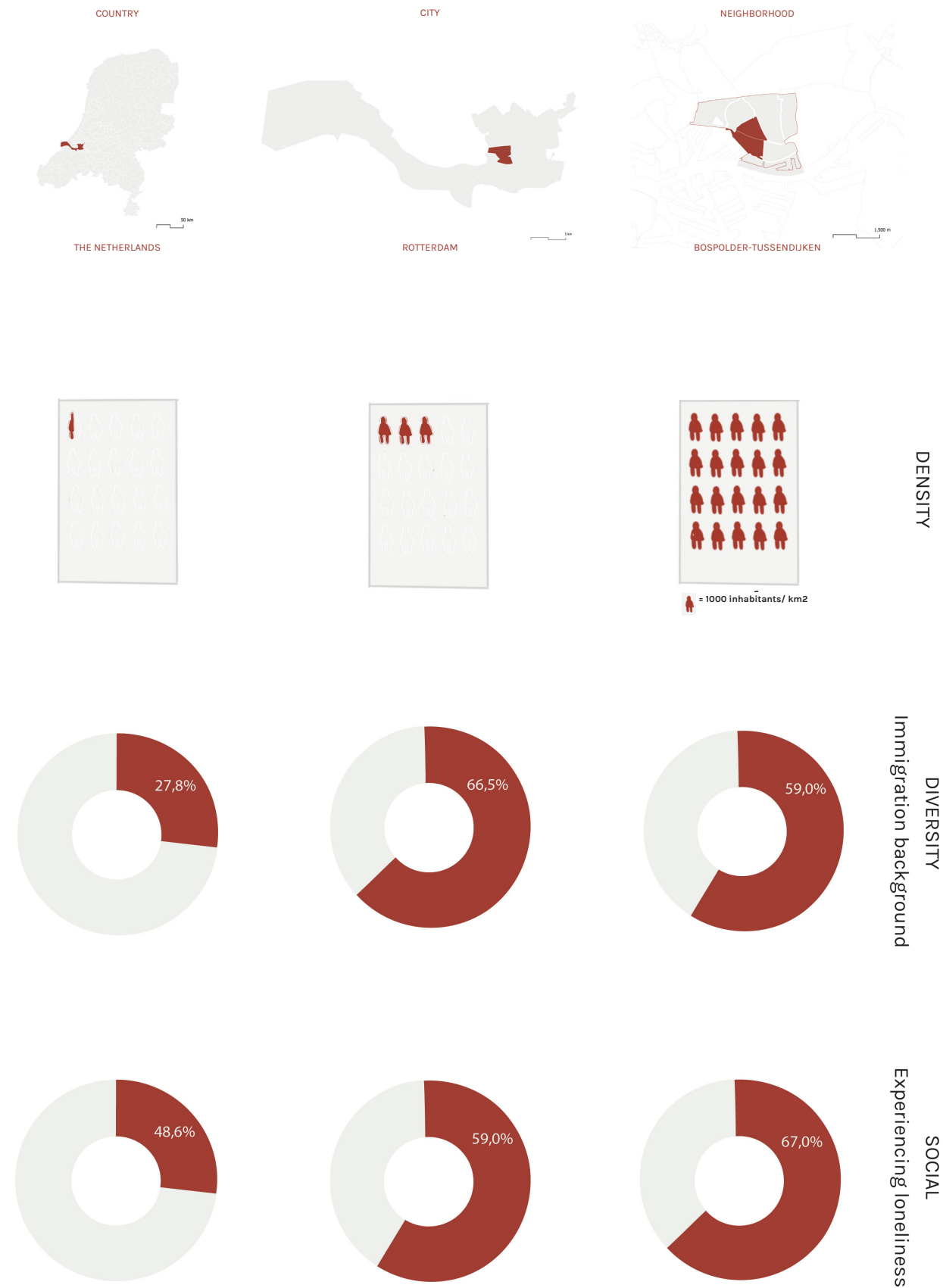


Figure 07: Casestudy selection  
Source: Made by author 2025

The neighborhood index is used by the municipality of Rotterdam to monitor the physical, safety, and social status. It rates the three domains with an objective, a subjective, and a general focus on different themes.

The ‘horseshoe’, figure 08, shows a glance at the status of the neighborhood, with a range from strong (green) to weak (red) points relative to the average score of Rotterdam.

The subjective score has dropped considerably in recent years, from 89.75 to 74.84 in Bospolder and from 91.1 to 74.08 in Tussendijken between 2020 and 2022 (Veldacademie, 2024). According to the measured years, this is the lowest score since 2014. Compared to the average in Rotterdam, the subjective scores of the two neighborhoods are below average. According to the monitor of



Figure 08: Wijkprofiel Bospolder & Tussendijken  
Source: Altered by Author, Gemeente Rotterdam (2024) Wijkprofiel Delfshaven. <https://wijkprofiel.rotterdam.nl/2024/rotterdam/delfshaven/delfshaven-wijk?toon=alles>.

In 2018, the municipality of Rotterdam launched the Resilient 2028 program. This programme is focusing on making Bospolder-Tussendijken the first resilient neighborhood by 2028.

The goal of the programme is to increase the social index to an urban average and increase the neighborhood’s self-reliance, social cohesion, participation, and sense of belonging.

The program’s approach focuses on three pillars: work, language, and debts; youth and education; and energy, housing, and public space.

A monitor was taken during the first 5 years. Recently, they published the results (Veldacademie, 2024). These results showed that the network of initiatives grew slightly stronger over the past years. Although it did not show a significant change in the social index. The monitor explains that this is due to the many crises that occurred during the programme, including the coronavirus crisis, the benefits crisis or ‘toeslagen affair’, and the energy crisis.

The monitoring results also showed that the community had grown. Local residents feel more attached and take more initiative for the neighborhood. They evolved a more prominent voice in decision-making processes.

Nevertheless, the report emphasizes the importance of further investments in neighborhood development to develop sustainable improvements. They conclude that the focus must be on making the social infrastructure stronger and improving the physical environment. They also suggest making the social infrastructure stronger by making the network of local initiatives more visible.

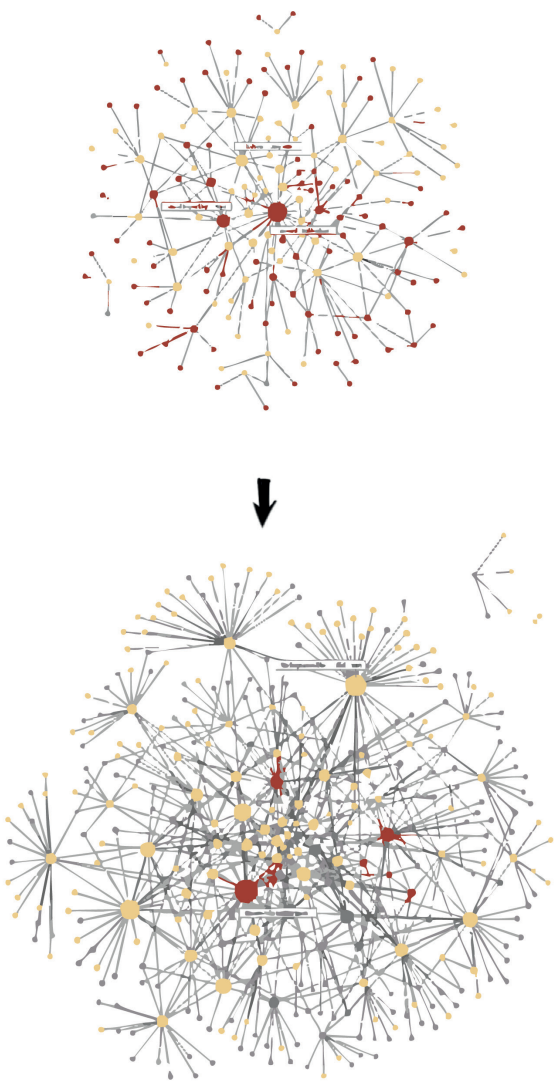


Figure 09: Community network development  
Source: Adapted from Veldacademie. (2024). Monitor veerkracht in Bospolder-Tussendijken: Vijf jaar onderzoek naar sociale veerkracht. Gemeente Rotterdam. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.veldacademie.nl/img/Document/13/b6/13b63821-f06e-4ddc-8ae1-bd2e46f5e736/Monitor%20Veerkracht%20in%20Bospolder-Tussendijken\_maart%202024.pdf



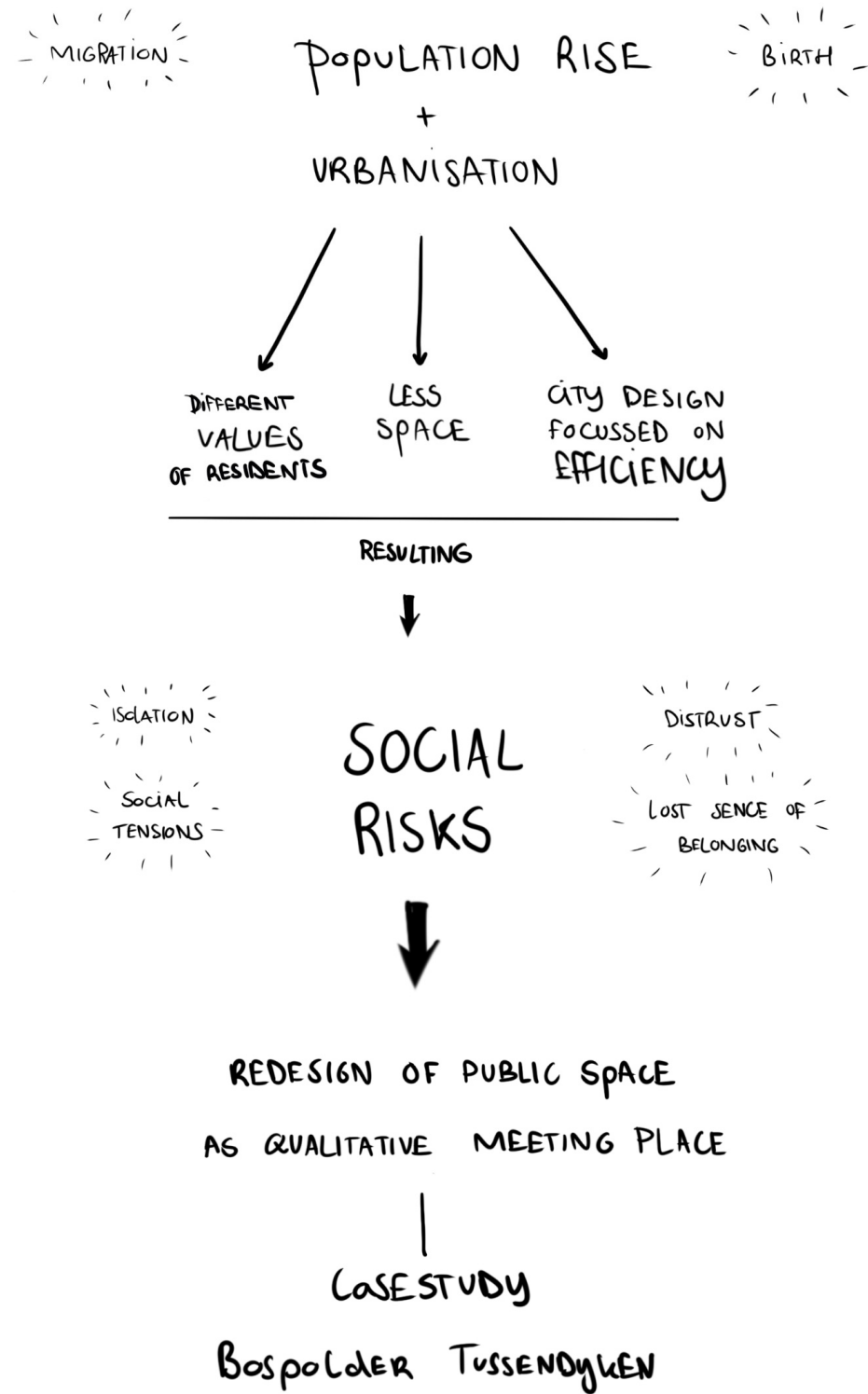


Figure 10: Problemstatement  
Source: Made by author 2025

PROBLEMSTATEMENT

As of 2024, the Netherlands has reached a population of 18 million, with the majority living in urban areas. It is expected that by 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will be living in cities. This urban concentration has resulted in the daily living spaces of individuals becoming increasingly constrained due to rising population density and diversity. Cities, as compact and growing organisms, are experiencing a decline in open public spaces where people can gather, interact, and engage with their surroundings, as well as with one another, resulting in weakened social bonds.

According to Putnam (2000), the short-term effects of losing social cohesion manifest in hunkering down, like a turtle retreating into its shell, which have broader social consequences. Dense urban areas often lack the attractive physical spaces that facilitate users' needs to generate organic interaction. This growing sense of isolation also affects the increased feelings of loneliness. Recent CBS research (2024) showed that Rotterdam is perceived as the least cozy city in the Netherlands, based on questions about social cohesion. As density and diversity can harm the personal bonding to the surroundings (Putnam, 2007).

In a high-density and diverse neighborhood like Bospolder-Tussendijken, where population growth is projected to continue, there is an urgent need to design a neighborhood that encourages social interaction and exchange, increases social bonds, addresses the challenges posed by urban densification, loneliness, and fosters a sense of belonging, as well as promotes neighborhood resilience.



ENHANCING THE CITY’S ROLE AS A MEETING PLACE  
BY URBAN DESIGN  
THESIS AIM

The aim of this thesis is to design urban public spaces in the dense and diverse neighborhood of Bospolder-Tussendijken that foster interactions among residents.

This research aims to understand how meetings and exchanges occur in a neighborhood, as well as how they can be facilitated and enhanced, thereby increasing social infrastructure and mitigating social risks. The study aims to explore how the contemporary public space of Bospolder-Tussendijken encourages meetings and how it might be transformed to unlock its full potential.

Furthermore, this thesis aims to answer the question of how urban design can enhance the city as a meeting place by providing spatial implications, including a pattern language, that enable meetings between residents.

Using Bospolder-Tussendijken as a case study, the objective is to design a neighborhood in which meeting spaces effectively balance private, shared, and public domains, as well as various types of interactions and uses.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How can urban design enhance the city’s role as a meeting place in high-density, diverse neighborhoods like Bospolder-Tussendijken?

SUB QUESTIONS

UNDERSTAND

- 1 How do meetings manifest in the public space of a neighborhood?
- 2 To what extent does the public space in Bospolder-Tussendijken facilitate meeting?

PROPOSE

- 3 What are spatial interventions that enable meetings between residents of a neighborhood?
- 4 What urban design can enhance the role of a city as a meeting place, within the dense and diverse neighborhood of Bospolder-Tussendijken?

NEIGHBORHOOD

A small, localized area within a city where people live and interact. A neighborhood often has its own identity, social infrastructure, and shared facilities like shops, parks, or schools. It can foster a sense of belonging and everyday connection among residents.

DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOOD

A neighborhood where people from different cultural, ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds live together. Diversity can also refer to a mix of housing types, functions (like shops, schools, homes), and age groups. This variety can enrich social life and support more inclusive design.

DENSE NEIGHBORHOOD

A neighborhood with a high concentration of people, buildings, and activities within a limited space. While density can increase pressure on public space, it also creates more opportunities for interaction and shared use. Good design in dense neighborhoods balances private and public needs to foster everyday social encounters.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The network of physical spaces, services, and institutions that enable people to meet, interact, and build relationships. Strong social infrastructure supports community resilience, reduces isolation, and helps foster a sense of belonging in urban life.

URBAN DESIGN

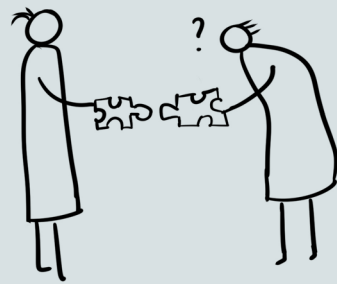
The practice of shaping the physical layout of cities, towns, and neighborhoods, including streets, public spaces, buildings, and infrastructure. Urban design connects architecture, planning, and landscape to create functional and socially responsive environments.

COMMUNITY

A group of people who share something in common, such as a place, interest, identity, or experience. In urban contexts, community often refers to the social ties and mutual support that develop between people living in the same area, helping them to build trust and resilience.

PUBLIC SPACE

Shared, accessible areas in the city, such as streets, squares, parks, and courtyards, where people move, gather, or observe each other. Public space forms the physical stage for social life and daily routines. Its design influences how people interact, feel welcome, and build familiarity with others in their neighborhood.



# FROM RESEARCH TO DESIGN

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK & METHODOLOGY

The how, when and why

This chapter outlines the research’s structure. A brief overview of the problem statement, research aim, project aim, and thesis objectives is given. Following this, the research limitations are addressed, clarifying the study’s scope and constraints. The chapter then introduces the conceptual framework that underpins the research, positioning it within the broader academic context. It further elaborates on the methodology, presenting the main research question and four sub-questions, each linked to specific methods and intended outcomes. Finally, the chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research methods used, along with a discussion of their respective limitations.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The contemporary city lacks qualitative physical meeting spaces where residents can engage with both their surroundings and each other. This is due to increasing densification and the need to accommodate a wide range of values within public spaces. When the design of a public space in a neighborhood fails to meet the needs of its residents, the social infrastructure is negatively impacted. The decline of social infrastructure negatively impacts social cohesion, underscoring the need for a redesign of the urban fabric to enhance the potential of public spaces as places for meaningful interactions.

PROJECT AIM

This thesis seeks to explore the concept of the city as a meeting place through extensive literature studies, understanding how meetings manifest in the public space of a neighborhood. Therefore, it analyzes how the contemporary urban fabric of the case study Bospolder-Tussendijken manifests meetings between residents. Additionally, it investigates the role of urban design in fostering interactions and exchanges among people. The objective is to identify spatial interventions that encourage social interactions and meetings. Ultimately, the thesis aims to propose urban design that effectively facilitates meeting spaces, enhancing the city's role as a meeting place within a dense and diverse neighborhood like Bospolder-Tussendijken.

THESIS OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this thesis are to analyze the concept of the city as a meeting place and explore its potential manifestation in the context of Bospolder-Tussendijken. It aims to investigate the role of urban public spaces in fostering interactions, social exchanges, and community engagement. Furthermore, the thesis seeks to define spatial characteristics and design elements that encourage social interaction and propose effective urban design to facilitate meeting spaces that enhance the city's role.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

While this thesis aims to propose a practical design that facilitates meetings among residents, it has its limitations.

Firstly, this thesis has a substantial research scope. However, the duration of the graduation project is limited to one year. Therefore, not all elements affecting meetings in dense and diverse neighborhoods can be taken into account. As a result, this thesis will not examine power structures related to urban development, economic influences, and other factors.

Furthermore, the thesis focuses on the scale of the neighborhood; design implications on larger scales are not considered.

At last, this thesis draws limited conclusions from the participation of the case study residents due to their reluctance to participate in the research, as the neighborhoods have already been extensively studied.

The diagram (Figure 11) shows the field in which this thesis is operating. Where urban design and social infrastructure overlap, the design of the public space enables meetings.

**Urban Design** represents the physical design of the environment in a city, including the structures of the urban fabric and their functions.

**Social Infrastructure** represents the network of public spaces and social structures facilitating meetings.

The area where the two domains overlap in the middle (the patterned area) is the area where both domains enable each other. Here, the physical design of public space enables the use of social infrastructure and facilitates meetings between residents.

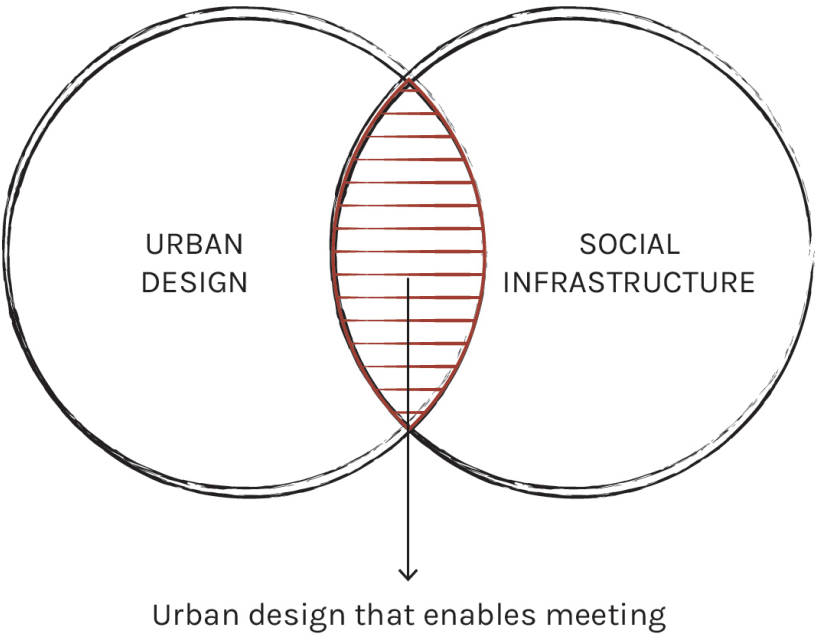


Figure 11: Conceptual framework  
Source: Made by author 2025

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How can urban design enhance the city's role as a meeting place in high-density, diverse neighborhoods like Bospolder-Tussendijken?

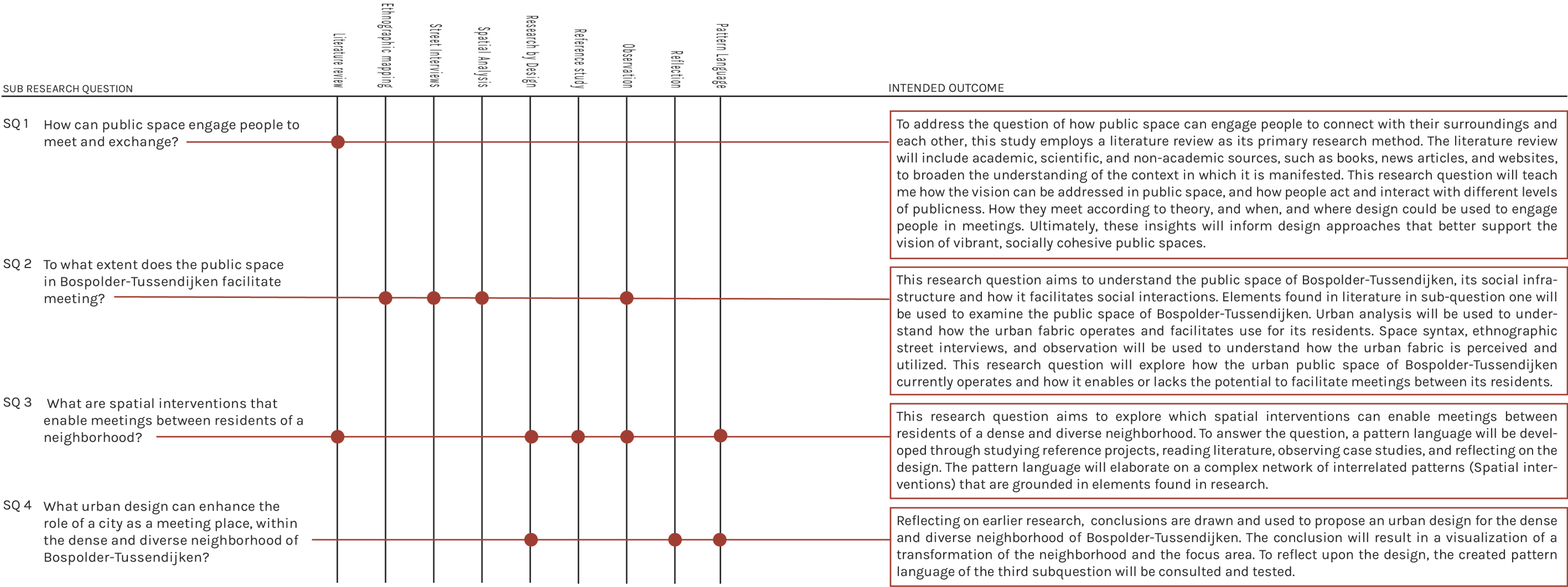


Figure 12: Methodology framework  
Source: Made by author 2025



LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review examines existing literature on the topic and the site. This can consist of academic publications, books, reports, and articles. This method is used to understand the current state of knowledge on the topic, helping to identify gaps and build the theoretical framework. Understanding the body of knowledge is essential for contextualizing the concept of meeting in dense and diverse urban environments. During the literature review, not only are academic and scientific sources used, but non-academic literature, such as books and news articles, is also included to broaden the understanding of the context in which the problem manifests. These informal insights help us understand the values and perceptions of the inhabitants of Bospolder-Tussendijken.

*Limits of the Method*

In reviewing the literature, the selected works may be biased or overlooked due to my own limited knowledge. Furthermore, the chosen literature may be outdated compared to the overlooked literature. The literature review will also be a personal interpretation of the texts, which may lead me to different conclusions than others might come to when reading the same texts.

REFERENCE STUDIES

This method will provide insights into how social problems are tackled in existing projects. It provides insights into the results of existing projects, so that lessons can be learned and taken into account in my project. It also provided inspiration for spatial implications.

*Limits of the method*

Since the references are chosen by me, they will reflect my personal preference, which may

lead to missed spatial implications that could address the problems seen in the neighborhood. Furthermore, data on long-term effects are sometimes unavailable due to the time it takes for a project to complete. So the changes made in the reference studies are not tested. Therefore, changes in societal values could influence the perception of the chosen projects. Ultimately, the reference studies are mostly from other contexts, which shape the results. The difference in context can lead to a different reaction to the project, which could influence perception and reaction to the spatial implications.

ETHNOGRAPHIC MAPPING

Ethnographic mapping will be used to understand social patterns within the Bospolder-Tussendijken context. These social patterns cannot be directly found in the available research data. It will help me understand the behavior of people in dense and diverse urban environments and teach me how they meet and how this can be enhanced.

*Limits of the method*

The results represent a static moment in time. The outcomes may vary depending on the time of year, weather, and time of day, and chance occurrences can influence them. Furthermore, they are personal interpretations of the given situation. The ethnographic map represents a subjective version of the activity in the context. Because it reflects an individual interpretation, it may overlook relevant data that I miss while mapping. Consequently, essential design implications can be excluded. As a result, a subjective view and interpretation of the site emerges that corresponds to my personal frame of reference, as well as my perspective and understanding of the immediate context. These individual interpretations can alter the results and lead to different conclusions.

OBSERVATION

Observation will be used to study user patterns and behavior on the site or traces of behaviour. It will help me understand the values of the people who live inside Bospolder-Tussendijken and create objectives that need to be achieved to engage people in meetings and exchanges. It will generate real-world insights and contextual data.

*Limitations of the method*

As observation will only be done by me, it will be biased. As I will reflect on my perspective on behavior. This can distort the data, which could eventually lead to incorrect conclusions and misaligned design objectives. Furthermore, observed behavior will be generalized to the community of the neighborhood. If particular behaviors are accidentally observed and generalized, it could disrupt the results.

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

This method uses design to explore alternative solutions for the posed problem. Through drawing and model making, this method seeks tangible solutions and spatial transformations that can help achieve the objectives. In this method, reflection is heavily used to determine if the design has achieved the proposed objectives. As some explorations that are done are rejected during the reflection process and not included in the final design, not all will be shown in the report.

*Limits of the method*

Since I will be drawing it, my personal frame of reference will be used. This could result in a design that deviates from the community's values. Potential solutions are conclusions drawn from the analysis, based on the interpretation of the results. Hereby, solutions can be neglected, or if the findings are incorrect, design implications can overlook the underlying social infrastructure.

REFLECTION

The reflection method is used to critically assess the posed design and solution within the context of the research. Reflection on the outcomes of the sub-questions is needed to understand the problematization and the opportunities in Bospolder-Tussendijken.

*Limits of the method*

Reflection must be objective and critical. If not done correctly, the findings may be subjective and limited to a personal scope. Furthermore, reflection is introspective; mainly, it may be difficult to verify or validate the insights gained. Without external data or corroborating evidence, the outcomes may remain speculative.

STREET INTERVIEWS

With this method, I will gather on-the-spot feedback from the community and opinions in the public space of Bospolder-Tussendijken. This will be a very important connection to the community's fundamental values and perceptions on the topic and the site, and may reveal their needs and concerns.

*Limits of the method*

This method's limitations depend on the willingness of people who want to participate. The responses may be biased depending on the backgrounds and perceptions of different user groups. This perception may be altered by their financial situation, cultural background, and housing situation. The street interview will only be a sample of the whole number of opinions existing in the broader population. This sample may not be entirely representative of the whole population. Furthermore, the interview outline will be in an open format. The questions reflect the gathered output. Unaddressed issues can be overlooked in the conclusion.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS

This method will analyse the existing structures of the dense and diverse neighborhood of Bosolder-Tussendijken. It seeks to understand the role of areas inside the neighborhood in the past and the present. It will visually represent the physical, social, economic, and environmental aspects of the urban area. It will be used to identify patterns, dynamics, and relationships of the urban environment.

*Limits of the method*  
This method often focuses on spatial aspects, neglecting social and cultural aspects. Furthermore, this method relies heavily on existing maps. Which are already interpreted perceptions of reality. Relevant data can be left out. In addition, complex systems may be oversimplified in maps. The maps can be misinterpreted or altered by my perception, which could result in different outcomes.

SPACE SYNTAX

This method is used to apply scientifically generated data relationships between social patterns and the built environment. It can provide insight into the patterns people have when moving through an area. The method shows the likelihood of people choosing a street to walk through.

*Limits of the method*  
The results of this method are generated based on the area's urban fabric. Aspects like the perception of the environment are not taken into account. As the results do not accurately reflect reality, they should be used critically.

PATTERN LANGUAGE

The pattern language method offered a systematic approach to converting abstract social values into spatial designs that foster social interactions in densely populated urban neighborhoods. In this project, patterns were created using insights from literature, reference studies, local observations in Bospolder-Tussendijken, and research by design. This pattern language facilitated a reflective design process, enhancing both the design and the understanding of the patterns. The patterns are interconnected within a network, which is where the true power of the pattern language resides.

*Limits of the method*  
Despite its strengths, the pattern language method has limitations. It frames space in concrete, typological terms, which risks oversimplifying the fluid and relational nature of urban life. Social interactions rarely align neatly with spatial categories, and many social patterns overlap, conflict, or shift in meaning depending on time, use, or users. Moreover, because the patterns are drawn from my interpretation of literature and local context, they are inevitably influenced by my perspective and design background. There is also the risk of over-prescription: while the catalogue aims to inspire and guide, it could be misused as a fixed template rather than a contextual tool. Finally, the implementation of patterns in practice relies on many external factors, such as policy, maintenance, and community participation, which lie beyond the scope of this thesis.

SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In response to the growing pressures of urban densification, particularly in diverse neighborhoods like Bospolder-Tussendijken, there is an urgent need to understand how public space can foster social infrastructure and prevent social isolation. While the significance of social infrastructure is widely recognized in scientific literature, limited knowledge remains regarding how these social values can be effectively translated into spatial design interventions that operate at various scales, from the neighborhood to the transition zone.

This thesis contributes to scientific knowledge by bridging the gap between abstract theoretical principles and their spatial implications. Through a pattern language approach, it systematically unpacks how urban design can facilitate recurring meetings among neighbors and how these patterns relate to broader urban structures, routines, and social dynamics. The method provides a structured yet context-sensitive way to operationalize social theories into spatial design, contributing to ongoing discussions in urbanism about the role of design in shaping social behavior.

Furthermore, by grounding design hypotheses in both literature and local observations, the thesis generates transferable insights for other urban areas facing similar demographic and spatial challenges. This work not only reinforces the critical connection between urban form and social cohesion but also supports Sustainable Development Goal 11 by offering practical strategies for creating inclusive, safe, and socially resilient public spaces in dense urban environments.

SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

In many contemporary cities, including Bospolder-Tussendijken, increasing density and social diversity present growing challenges such as loneliness, social fragmentation, and a sense of exclusion. This thesis addresses these societal challenges by examining how public space can contribute to strengthening social cohesion and the daily well-being of residents. By redesigning public space based on the community's needs, spatial principles are developed that encourage encounters, mutual understanding, and shared use of the city.

The project focuses on making the social infrastructure of the neighborhood visible and strengthening it, with special attention to places where informal meetings can take place. Through scale-oriented patterns, this research investigates how encounters between residents can be spatially facilitated in a neighborhood that is under pressure from densification and change. The outcomes of this research not only provide concrete design strategies for Bospolder-Tussendijken but also offer a broader action perspective for other urban contexts with similar social and spatial tensions. Thus, this thesis contributes to the creation of livable, inclusive, and resilient cities prepared for the future.

PROFESSIONAL RELEVANCE

This thesis offers a valuable contribution to the professional practice of designers and policymakers by providing insight into how public spaces can be designed to stimulate meetings among neighbors and cohesion building. Although earlier studies underscore the importance of encounters and human scale, a gap often remains in practice between socio-theoretical insight and concrete design choices.

Through a pattern-based approach, this thesis makes social needs spatially readable and manageable within the design process. The result is a set of design principles that professionals can apply when (re)designing public spaces in densely populated and culturally diverse urban areas. The findings not only provide design-oriented insights but also practical tools for participation processes, area development, and policy-making around inclusive urban living environments.

Thus, this research contributes to a more socially conscious and context-sensitive design practice, in which public space is recognized as the foundation for social resilience and collective urban life.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although this thesis focuses on social interaction in public spaces, it was decided not to primarily engage in direct participation or workshops with residents, but to translate insights from existing literature, reference projects, and local observations into spatial patterns. The choice to primarily work through observation and analysis is partly driven by the complexity of engaging with diverse and vulnerable target groups within the limited time and context of an academic project. Nevertheless, careful attention was given to the ethical dimensions of representation and interpretation.

When observing public spaces, care was taken not to collect identifiable or sensitive personal data. The observations were solely utilized to identify patterns in usage and interaction, without assessing or tracing individual behaviors. A conscious decision was made for a respectful approach to cultural diversity, where differences in use, presence, and interaction served as inspiration for formulating inclusive design principles.

This thesis acknowledges that design choices are never neutral; they reflect implicit norms and expectations. Therefore, the pattern book has consistently reflected critically on the spatial implications of each pattern and the way it contributes to inclusion, shared use, and social accessibility. Although the voices of residents have not been directly included, an effort has been made to approach the neighborhood and its residents with attention, curiosity, and respect.



CHAPTER 1

MEETING IN A NEIGHBORHOOD

UNDERSTAND - SUBQUESTION 1

How does meeting manifest in the public space of a neighborhood?

In this chapter, a literature review will be conducted to answer the first subquestion. The research begins by examining the concept of public space, including its definition and how perceptions and usage vary based on the level of publicness. Furthermore, the manifestation of meetings and the spaces where they typically occur are explored within a neighborhood, focusing on the concept of public familiarity and how it facilitates people’s preference for anonymity and intimacy. Finally, the relationship between publicness and different types of social interactions is analyzed, providing a nuanced understanding of how public spaces can manifest meetings between residents of a neighborhood.

The concept of public space is relatively new. It was introduced in urban planning and design in the early 60s by Jane Jacobs (1961). During the 1980's, public space has become notably more important (Reijndorp, 2001). Public space is defined as a domain for everyday activity (Crawford, 2008) and is the connective tissue that binds daily lives together (Ji & Ding, 2021). According to Kuo et al. (1998), the social function of public space is the place where people can communicate emotionally, which is important in enhancing mutual understanding and social cohesion. Richard Sennett (1978) compares public space to coffeehouses of the past. They played a vital role in the exchange of societal information and change. Having said that, all the authors agree that public space is a place designated for physical meeting (Reijndorp, 2001)

Every day, public spaces are often described as generic and generalizable, according to Crawford (2008). But she describes that once you closely observe the people who inhabit it and the activities that take place there, they become highly specific. This is why it is so important that public space is open for everyone to use. It has to be familiar and feel like home to become softer and more inhabitable for the people. But with more people living in the city and a bigger diversity, there are more values and differences that need to be addressed in the public space. So everyone can experience it as their own.

According to the literature, the main function of public space is as a space for physical meetings (Zukin, 1995; Shields, 1991; Hetherington, 1997). Whereas a meeting can be seen as a form of exchange or confrontation between different beliefs and views (Reijndorp, 2001). People can

gather knowledge of different societal views and form their own judgment. Arnold Reijndorp (2001) compares the city's public space to a theater. Where people could observe and exchange. Public spaces should facilitate these uses. To do so, the space should be safe and manageable (Reijndorp, 2001).



Figure 13: Nolli Map of Rome 1748  
Source: Mapping Cultural Space Across Eurasia, accessed May 12, 2025, <https://eurasia.omeka.fas.harvard.edu/items/show/206>.

THE NOLLIMAP

The Nolimap was first created by Giambattista Nolli in 1748 (Verstegen & Ceen, 2013). In this map, the city of Rome is visualized in black and white, showing private (black) and public (white) areas. However, modern cities today are different from ancient Rome. Today's cities are far more complex with a richness of people's public activities, functions, and modes of transportation (Ji & Ding, 2021).

PUBLIC DOMAIN

In literature, another term is also used in conjunction with public space: the public domain. A key distinction exists between public space and the public domain: public space refers only to the physical space, while the public domain imposes additional requirements. It involves places that diverse people with different backgrounds and interests genuinely appreciate. According to Reijndorp (2001), the public domain refers to places where interaction between different societal groups can occur and does occur in practice. This is considered an ideal, as places do not always meet these criteria in reality.

PUBLICNESS

Public space is a place for the everyday activity of the general public, which means for everyone. Although much of what is referred to as "public space" is unable to create what can truly be called "publicness" (Schroer, 2006, p. 234). In reality, the publicness of public space is a spectrum which exists between the two boundaries: Public and Private.

In the book Privacy Script (2016), levels of publicness are discussed, observing that people adapt their behavior depending on their role in a built environment. A visitor, for instance, reacts differently from a resident. The level of publicness thus determines how we behave and

use the space. The reasoning provided is that the level of publicness influences the likelihood of encountering (strange) people. A private space feels familiar to most people, partly because there is little chance of unexpected others entering.

According to Lofland (2009), publicness is not tied to specific physical territories. It depends on how people relate to one another. For this reason, Lofland speaks of domains. Domains are not literal physical places. However, they represent the actual interaction between people. A group of people, for example, can make a place feel more private than it would feel without them.

To know how one should behave in a particular space, the readability of the level of publicness must be clear, even in the absence of people. Spaces, through their readability, can set certain expectations of publicness. While people may follow these expectations, they can also change the level of publicness through their interactions within the domain (Van de Wal, 2016).

PRIVATE

PUBLIC

Figure 14: Field of public space: Private to Public  
Source: Made by author 2024



Public space is a place for physical meeting, where people exchange or confront each other's beliefs and views (Reijndorp, 2001). Meeting, as a concept, can be divided into different categories. Firstly, meetings can be formal and informal. Formal meetings are mainly planned interactions that occur mostly in a professional setting. Informal meetings are less planned and will be discussed further in this thesis.

Informal interaction and encounters in the neighborhood's public space can be categorized into three types: anonymous, amicable, and affectionate, each contributing differently to community building and social connection.



**Anonymous meetings** are sporadic, fleeting interactions where individuals share the same space but remain largely unaware of each other on a personal level. These encounters are typically non-verbal, like passing someone in a busy shopping street.



**Amicable meetings** involve repeated, casual interactions that evolve into a light form of connection. These meetings, often characterized by brief conversations or greetings, occur in spaces like schoolyards, markets, or local amenities. As people encounter each other frequently, they become "familiar strangers" (Milgram, 1977), developing a sense of trust and safety without crossing into deeper personal relationships. Such interactions contribute to what Lofland (2009) calls "nodding contacts," where mutual recognition fosters a sense of acknowledgment without deeper connection. This level of interaction, termed "amicability" (Duyvendak, 2017), emphasizes shared activities rather than shared identities, bridging social and cultural differences while promoting respect and coexistence.



**Affectionate meetings** are more sustained and intensive relationships, forming the foundation of close social networks. These interactions often grow into friendships or support systems, fostering a deeper sense of community and social cohesion. Such connections are essential for creating a "home feeling" and provide access to emotional support, information, and opportunities for personal growth.

Figure 15: Meeting types  
Source: Made by author 2024

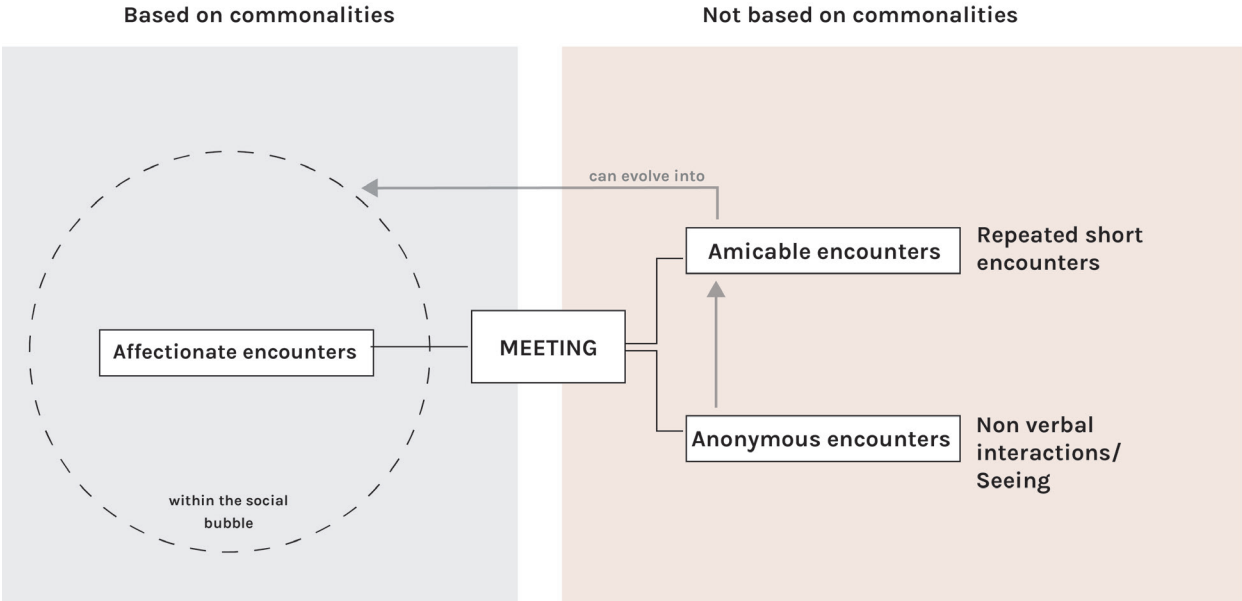


Figure 16: Types of meeting  
Source: Made by author 2025

The diagram (Figure 16) highlights the three types of meetings and how they can foster connections among different individuals. It shows that an initial anonymous meeting, for example, among parents in a schoolyard, can evolve into a more amicable interaction as they start to recognize one another and engage in conversations. With time, these amicable meetings can further develop into affectionate relationships, emphasizing the potential for growth in neighborhood connections, which is further explained in the following paragraph.

The relationships in a neighborhood can be categorized as either strong or weak ties (Platform31, 2021). The strong ties represent your social bubble: family and close friends. The people who are more distant from you form the group of weak ties. According to the research by Platform31 (2021), it has been shown that these very bonds are crucial for people's self-reliance.

Building these weak ties begins with a fleeting encounter (Platform31, 2021) that residents appreciate, contributing to their satisfaction with the neighborhood and sense of home (Albeda et al., 2022).

Lofland (2009) describes the concept of "nodding contacts" within the tension between anonymity and familiarity. These are loose connections that give people a sense of recognition. By recognizing one another, individuals can more easily place each other in context. Although mutual recognition exists in these interactions, people are not acquaintances (Albeda et al., 2022). They only know each other's faces and patterns of daily life but are unaware of each other's personal lives (KIS, 2023, p. 14).

The other tension transforms familiarity into close relationships. Familiar strangers, such as those who frequently meet at a schoolyard, may see their distant interactions evolve into friendliness (KIS, 2023, p. 14). Duyvendak (2017) refers to this phenomenon as "amicability." He argues that these amicable forms of interaction can benefit the respectful coexistence of socially and culturally heterogeneous groups by fostering a sense of collectivity. This is also referred to as "everyday attentiveness" (Kremer et al., 2019)

**BONDING AND BRIDGING**  
Different types of interactions serve various functions within neighborhoods. According to Putnam (2000), meetings can be categorized into two types: bridging and bonding.

Bridging involves fostering connections among individuals who may not share commonalities. On the other hand, bonding pertains to relationships formed between people with similar backgrounds and shared experiences.

Putnam (2002) emphasizes that bonding relationships can provide essential support for individuals navigating societal challenges, while bridging relationships facilitate greater societal development. He asserts that meetings characterized by bridging contribute to personal development and community understanding, allowing residents to gain insights into different social groups (KIS, 2023).

**POSITIONING WITHIN A NEIGHBORHOOD**

The individual's positioning also influences relationships in a neighborhood. People identify themselves as part of a certain group. That happens on different levels. The first level is the family or household, followed by the courtyard or street, where recognition between different places in the urban fabric is important. Then come the neighborhood, the city, the country, and so on to higher scales (Platform31, 2021). Home feelings show that the relationship of residents to a neighborhood can be seen as a stable part of people's identity (KIS, 2023b).

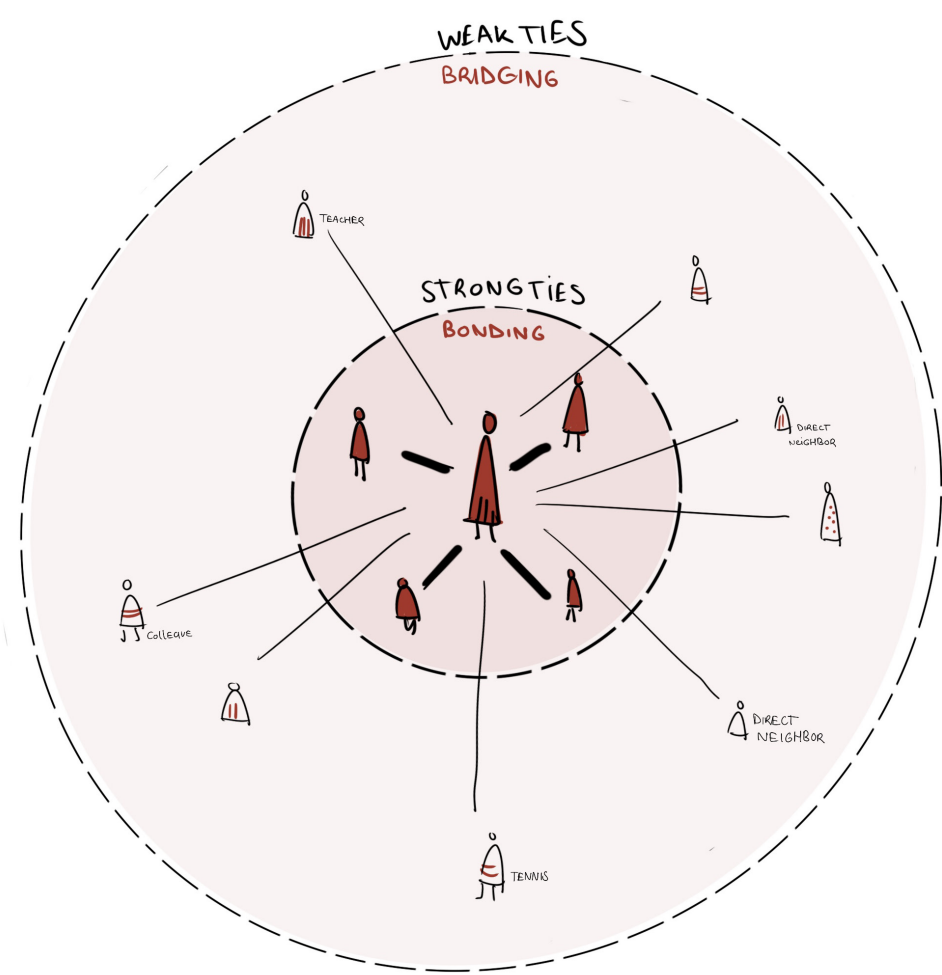


Figure 17: Neighborhood ties  
Source: Made by author 2025

Since the 1970s, public space has increasingly become a realm caught between anonymity and publicity, as observed by Schinkel (2009). Public space has been transformed from a vibrant arena for public life into a transit zone, primarily to connect the suburbanized private zones. As society grew more individualistic, private spaces were seen as superior to public shared spaces, which served as a connective tissue. Augé (1995) highlighted the concept of ‘non-places’, which captures the anonymity that dominates public domains in modern life. On the other hand, Sennet (1974) in ‘The Fall of the Public Man’ argues that modern society is threatened by a tyranny of intimacy, explaining that the anonymous nature of public space is crucial.

As Sennett and Schinkel both agree, public spaces should strike a well-balanced level of anonymity and intimacy. Like Schinkel highlights, public space must accommodate anonymity to prevent the excessive demands that familiarity places on both social life and urban design. The design of public space should be complex, providing room for multiple publics to coexist, without sacrificing the intimacy and anonymity needed to meet the demands of the residents. As the two terms are two extremes, it shows the paradox seen in public space. This is where the concept of public familiarity comes in, introduced by Blokland (2009).

According to KIS (2023), Public familiarity must be seen as a lifestyle. It was built upon the conceptualisation of Talja Blokland (2005, 2006). Public familiarity is a sense of trust formed through spontaneous, brief, and repeated interactions between people in their neighborhood, who have different social backgrounds. The interactions create a sense of familiarity between the people. These interactions foster a sense of recognition, reducing feelings of anonymity and alienation (KIS, 2023)

Defining public familiarity is challenging because it can be created in many ways. Literature identifies two boundary areas: the tension between familiarity and anonymity, and the distinction between familiarity and closer relationships, as discussed in the last paragraph. Frequently encountering and observing one another can help people become accustomed to each other and view a society characterized by ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity—its cultural heterogeneity, as normal (KIS, 2023, p. 16). According to Wessendorf (2014), this is referred to as "commonplace diversity." However, the opposite effect can also occur, as observed to a limited extent in the KIS (2023) study, where some individuals developed a tendency to distance themselves from others' behavior.

**PASSIVE AND ACTIVE PUBLIC FAMILIARITY**  
Research has shown that the contact leading to public familiarity can occur in both active and passive ways. Passive public familiarity can be described as "nodding contacts," where people see each other, make eye contact, and engage in nonverbal interactions. Passive contact can also serve as the starting point for active contact, where people engage in brief conversations or small talk, consisting of short and fleeting exchanges.

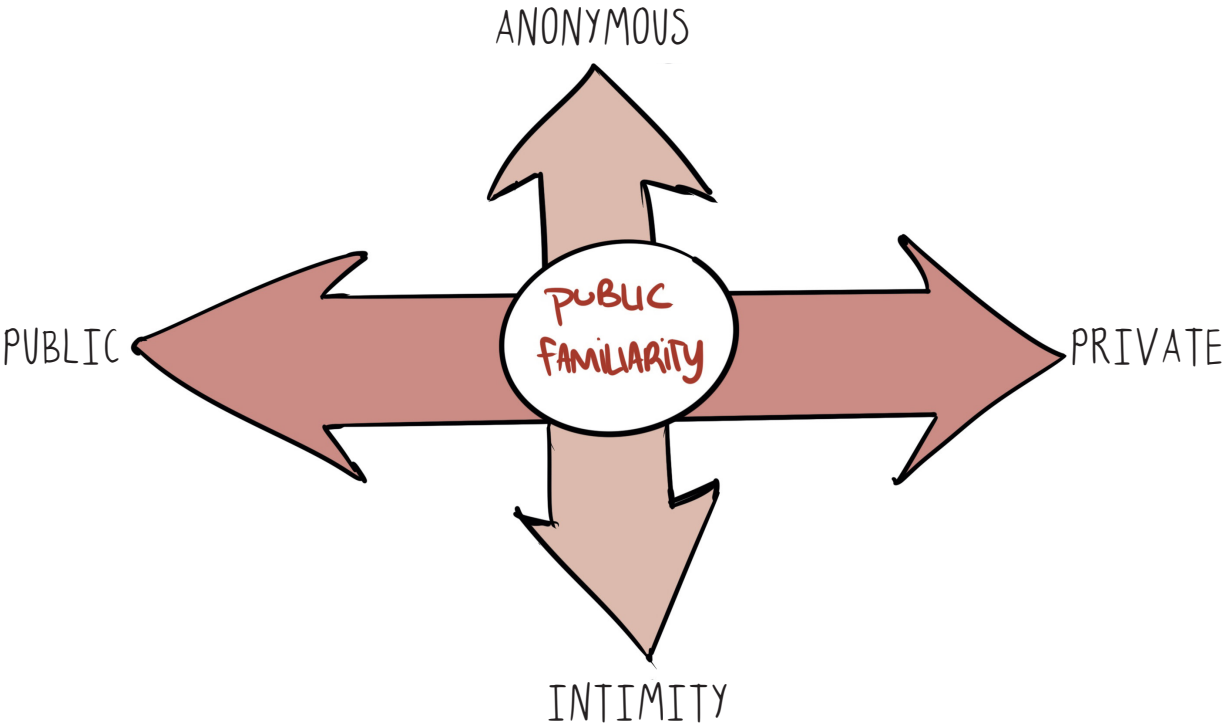


Figure 18: Public familiarity  
Source: Made by author 2025

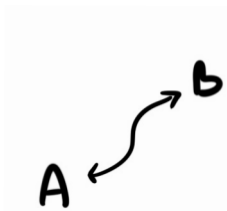


Figure 19: Social infrastructure  
Source: Made by author 2025

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The social infrastructure of a neighborhood can be explained as how the spatial environment and its functions enable residents to use the spaces collectively or individually (Boys et al., 2023). This pertains to the quality of the social environment of a neighborhood (Van Dorst, 2025). Residents who utilize social infrastructure have the potential to meet one another. As Klinenberg (2019) describes, social infrastructure is the physical space that provides opportunities for interaction between people.

It is often believed that public places like parks and playgrounds are the main venues where people meet. However, the importance of places that form part of daily routines is often overlooked, such as taking out the trash, waiting for the bus, or parking a bike. The social infrastructure is much more comprehensive than the public places designated for gatherings. Thus, the entire street network, inner gardens, and access points are also significant. Here, different levels of public spaces become recognizable.

In theory, various meeting places with differing levels of publicness and other characteristics are discussed. Firstly, the different public spaces are categorized from first to fourth. Secondly, the importance of creating routes, routines, and activities to encourage people to meet and exchange is highlighted. The elements of social infrastructure are categorized into different scales, which are essential for various types of interactions.

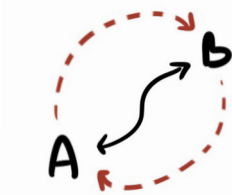


Figure 20: Activities, routes & routines  
Source: Made by author 2025

ACTIVITIES, ROUTES & ROUTINE

According to RVS & CRa (2022), it is important to design space for activities, routes, and routines at home together. This way, people with similarities, as well as those with differences, can meet each other automatically.

Activities can be explained by the places that attract people into the public realm. Various activities bond people with similar interests or backgrounds together. However, some activities can be used for other people to experience new behavior, while walking by or observing, which is bridging.

Routes in the neighborhood connect residents from A to B. Along these routes, people can unexpectedly encounter others who may be familiar or unfamiliar. The routes could be organized to increase the likelihood of meetings. This can be achieved by establishing a main route that attracts more people, facilitating activities adjacent to the path to enhance opportunities for observing others' behavior, and bridging.

Every person has routines. Routines can be daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, and more. A routine means a sequence of actions regularly followed, or in this context, moving and using the neighborhood and its functions in a sequence. As discussed, public familiarity happens when people regularly recognize and see the same happenings, people, or urban environment. Meeting the same things or people will increase feelings of belonging and attachment.

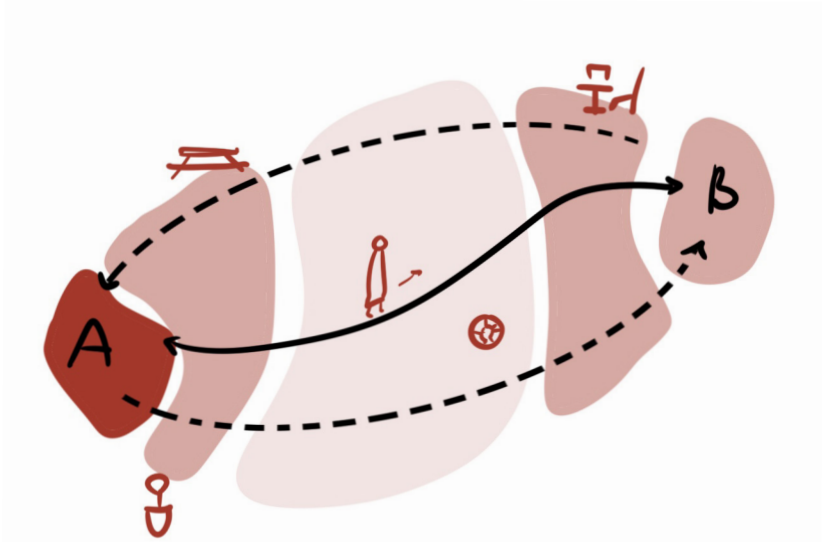


Figure 21: Levels of publicness and use  
Source: Made by author 2025

LEVELS OF PUBLICNESS AND USE

Analyzing literature reveals a relationship between various levels of publicness and the types of meetings.

In a parochial level of publicness, people will regularly see each other if designed correctly, which leads to faster public familiarity (KIS, 2023). They know each other and are familiar with the space.

In very public spaces, anonymity is preferred. The meetings that typically occur, for example, in a shopping street are anonymous. People acknowledge one another, see each other, but rarely engage in conversation. They observe others and absorb their behavior. The individuals present in the same space do not know each other and are likely strangers with no shared backgrounds.

Understanding different levels of publicness engages people in various types of meetings,

and spaces could be designed to enhance this. The publicness of spaces can be physically manifested through design. Additionally, if a space is recognized as having a specific level of publicness, physical design elements that encourage a certain type of meeting can be prioritized.

Furthermore, the publicness level influences the likelihood of unfamiliar individuals entering a particular area. People may behave differently (Van Dorst, 2016); for instance, they might leave their children's toys outside, knowing that strangers could enter the area and take them. People will utilize the space differently depending on the level of publicness. In certain contexts, a space will be used more frequently because it is more readable. If a space is used more, people are more likely to engage in public behavior, which could lead to meetings and exchanges.



A relation could be seen between the different publicity domains and the types of meetings. According to Lofland (1998), three types of "social spaces" can be distinguished where neighborhood residents have opportunities to engage in informal encounters. The private domain, the parochial domain, and the public domain:

In the private domain, close bonds are primarily maintained (Lofland, 1998). In this space, interaction takes place with friends and family. The space can be described as the homes of people and their private gardens.

The parochial domain can be seen as a transitional area between the public and private domains. In these areas, residents maintain more communal relationships (KIS, 2023). In these parochial spaces, people will regularly meet each other; if designed correctly, this will lead to faster public familiarity (KIS, 2023). They know each other and are familiar with the space. They form a bond with their attachment to the space.

In the public domain, anonymity is preferred. A meeting that mostly takes place in a public setting, such as a shopping street, is considered an anonymous meeting (Lofland, 1998). People will acknowledge each other and see each other, but they rarely talk to each other. People observe others and absorb their behavior. People who are together in the same space are most likely strangers.

Furthermore, the publicness level of the domain determines the likelihood of strangers entering a certain area. Knowing this, people will behave a certain way (Van Dorst, 2016). They would rather leave their kids' toys outside, knowing that people who don't belong there will come into the area and take the stuff. People will use the space differently depending on how public it is.

As previously noted, domains are places without a fixed boundary. Places can be public, but over time, they can become parochial due to the occupation by a specific group of people, which makes the space feel more private (KIS, 2023; Wessendorf, 2014). The division of domains is therefore time- and situation-dependent.

Understanding that different types of social domains engage people in various types of meetings and behaviors, spaces can be designed to increase the likelihood of people experiencing a specific domain and thereby acting accordingly. Design can make a physical space more readable.

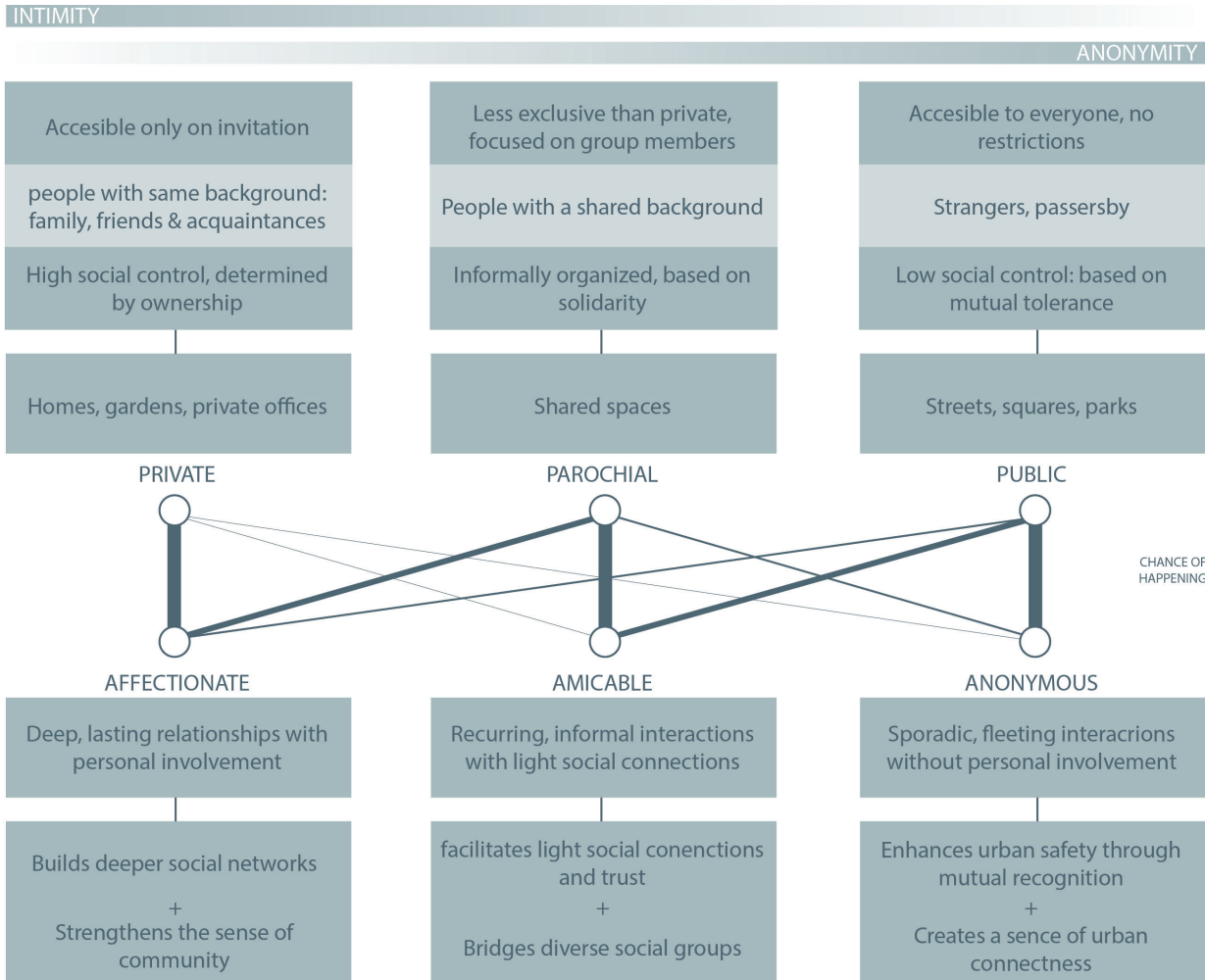


Figure 22: Publicness x meetings  
Source: Made by author 2024



## CHAPTER 3 MEETING IN BOSPOLDER-TUSSENDIJKEN

### UNDERSTAND - SUBQUESTION 2

To what extent does the public space in Bospolder-Tussendijken facilitate meeting?

This chapter focuses on a site analysis of the case study, Bospolder-Tussendijken, using various methods such as ethnographic mapping, street interviews, urban analysis, space syntax, and observation.

Building on the insights from the first subquestions, this chapter explores how elements of the case study align with those found in how meetings in public spaces manifest. It examines how the existing urban fabric facilitates meetings and identifies the design objectives needed to achieve them. These conclusions will inform the design implications and design development in the following chapters.

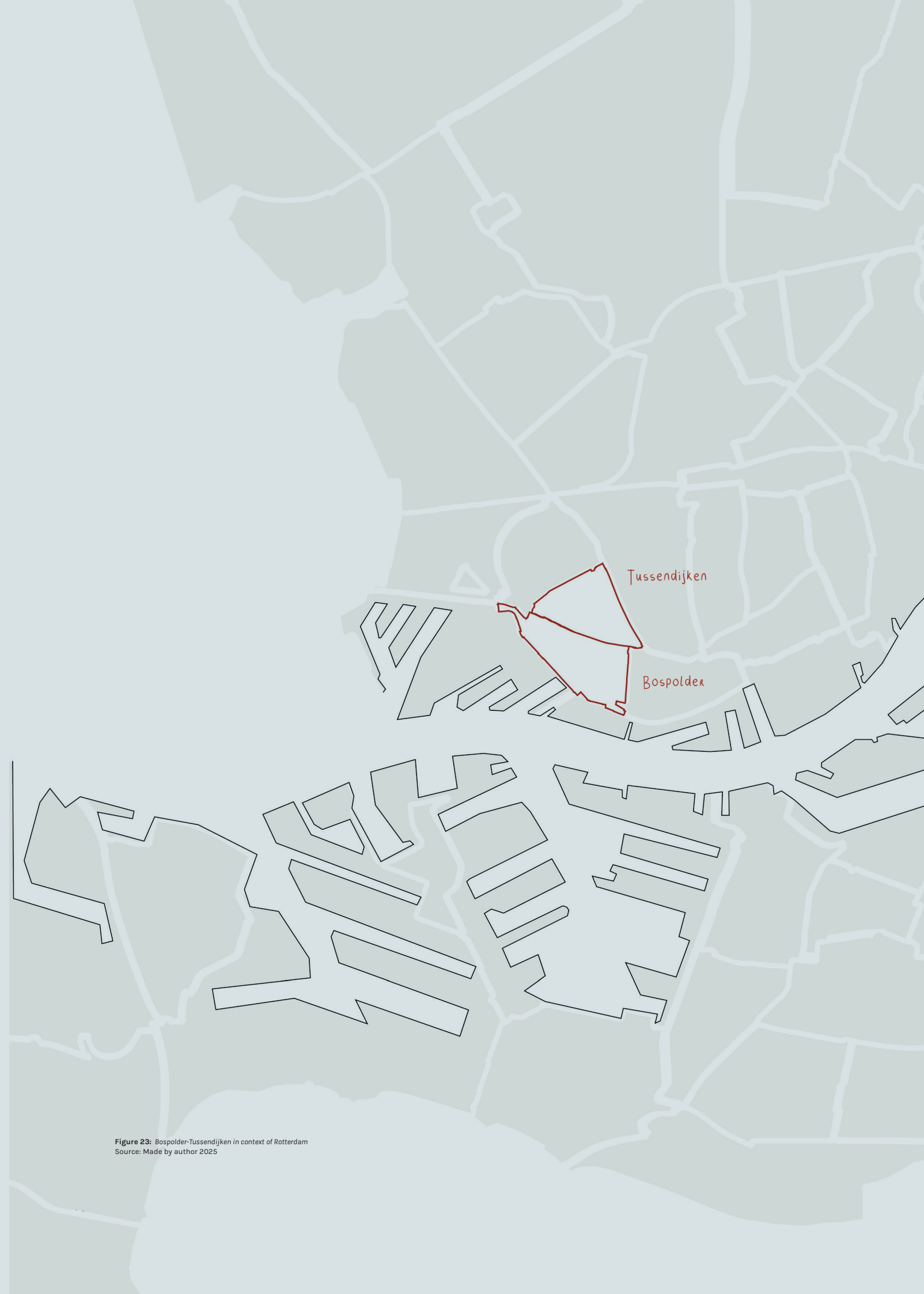


Figure 23: Bospolder-Tussendijken in context of Rotterdam  
Source: Made by author 2025

Bospolder and Tussendijken are two neighborhoods located in the western part of Rotterdam, situated above the Maas and adjacent to the old harbor areas. These neighborhoods consist of a polder with houses that served as residences for dockworkers.

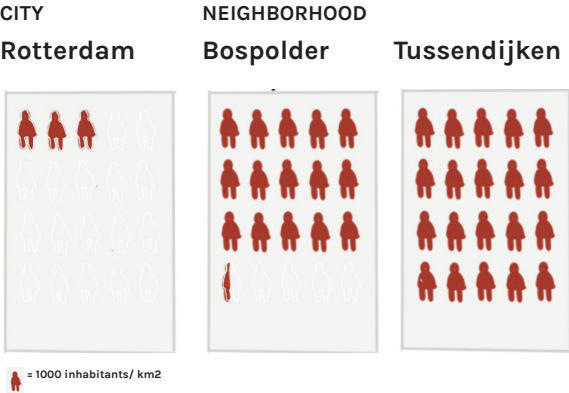
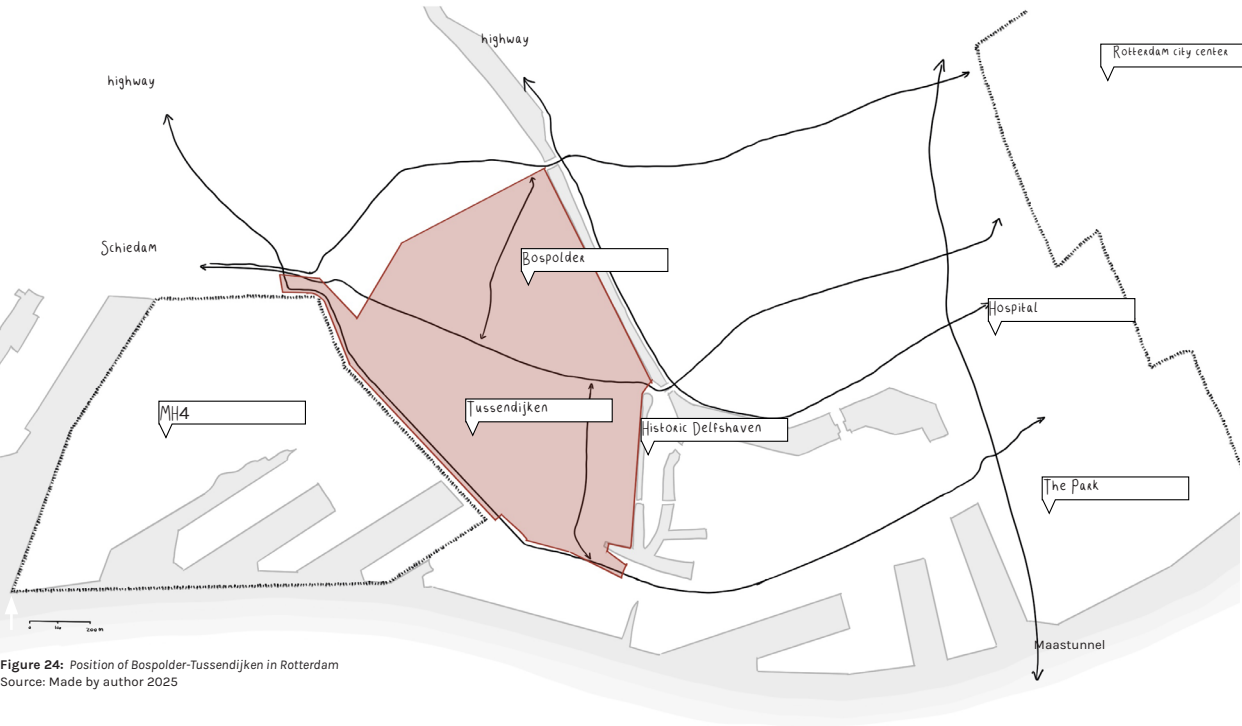
The two neighborhoods are often mentioned together because they share similar demographic characteristics and face comparable urban challenges. According to the media, Bospolder-Tussendijken has been discussed as a vulnerable neighborhood in recent years due to its residents' low income, high crime rate, and poor social safety. Additionally, it scores relatively low on indicators such as language proficiency and housing quality, yet residents demonstrate considerable confidence in the future and a high level of community engagement (Veldacademie, 2024).

These neighborhoods have an interesting location, as they are near the city center of

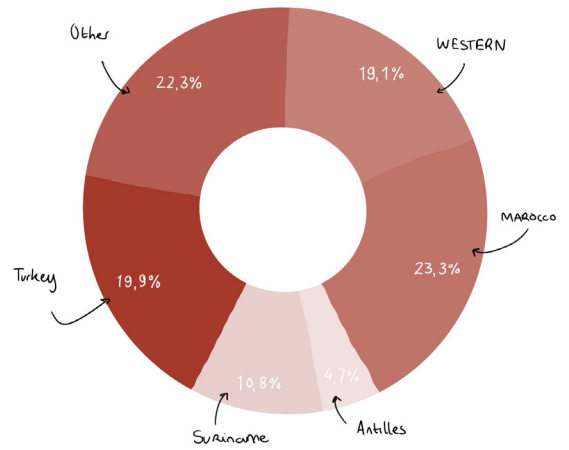
Rotterdam and the historic Delfshaven area, which has now become a tourist attraction. Furthermore, they are considered the heart of the Delfshaven district. The neighborhoods share a vital roadway in the middle: the Schiedamseweg. As the name suggests, this road connects Rotterdam to Schiedam and serves as an extension of the essential commercial artery, the Nieuwe Binnenweg. The square in the center of the neighborhood hosts a weekly market on Saturdays and Thursdays.

Surrounding the neighborhoods, there are essential traffic arteries that facilitate movement from Rotterdam to the highway. These roads are wide and can accommodate a large volume of traffic.

Finally, a new development is underway in the M4H port area, which will soon be transformed into a mixed-use zone.



**DENSITY**  
 Bospolder-Tussendijken is an example of a dense and diverse neighborhood, as it is categorized as a highly urbanized dense area. The whole neighborhood has a total land area of 86 hectares. Within the neighborhood, approximately 14,950 residents live as of 2024 (Allecijfers.nl, 2024). The number of inhabitants, households, houses, and workplaces is growing every year in abundance (wijkprofiel, 2024). Moreover, they are expected to continue growing in the near future.



**DIVERSITY**  
 The neighborhood is rich with many different cultures. 75% of the residents have a migration background. The most occurring migration backgrounds are Turkish, Moroccan, Suriname, and the Antilles (Allecijfers.nl, 2024). As the migration flow to the neighborhood started around 1970, the district housed many generations and different relations to their heritage. Making the community incredibly diverse in terms of values and behavior. The diversity of values is not only influenced by cultural diversity, but also by the diversity of the group of residents in terms of age, income, household size, and ownership.

The diversity of the neighborhood's community is reflected in the range of functions available. The area is home to mosques and a diverse number of non-Western shops. The diversity of values influences the use and needs of the residents in the design of the urban fabric.



INHABITANTS PER AGE

The figures show the number of people per age category. The largest group consists of people between the ages of 25 and 45, who can perhaps be characterized as ‘working’. There are relatively many children living in the neighborhood. Additionally, the group aged 65 and older is the smallest. Nevertheless, this group is very important to consider when facilitating functions. They have the most interest in functions close to home in their neighborhood (Allecijfers.nl, 2024).

INCOME

Compared to other areas of Rotterdam, the income of the residents of Bospolder-Tussendijken is relatively lower (allecijfers.nl, 2024). However, it is rising due to development projects involving homes in the more expensive segment. Further influencing the diversity of values.

HOUSINGSTOCK

The housing stock in the neighborhood is mostly rental apartments owned by housing corporations (Allecijfers.nl, 2024).

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

The most common household is the single-person household (Allecijfers.nl, 2024). For people living in a single-person household, meeting in public spaces is significant. They do not find social contacts at home.

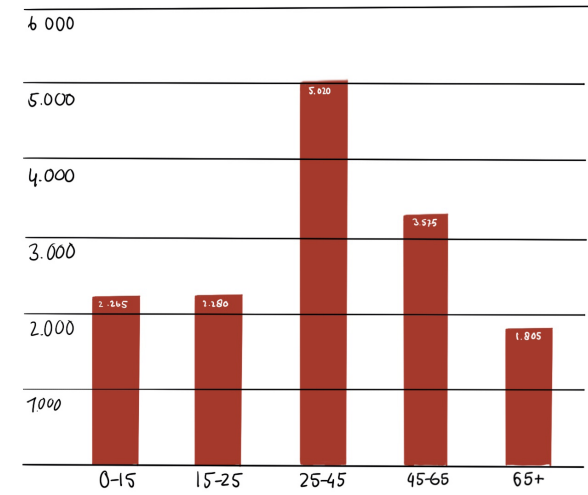


Figure 27: Inhabitant per age  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on Allecijfers.nl (2024)

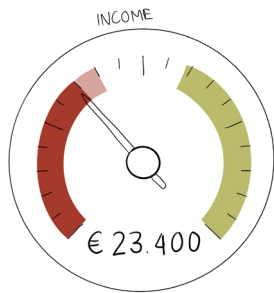


Figure 28: Income  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on Allecijfers.nl (2024)

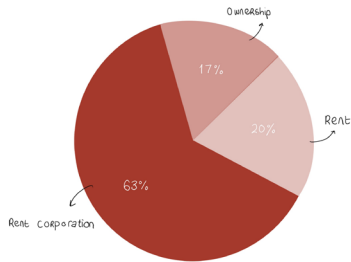


Figure 29: Housingstock  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on Allecijfers.nl (2024)

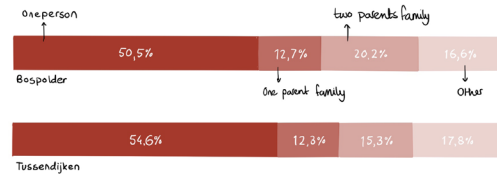


Figure 30: Householdsize  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on Allecijfers.nl (2024)

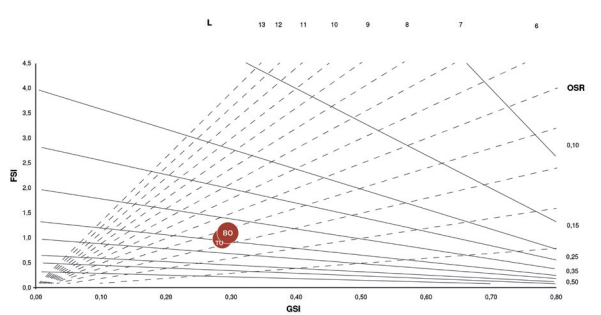


Figure 31: Spacemate diagram  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on Rundifun (2025)

	Bospolder	Tussendijken
FSI	1,008	1,129
GSI	0,279	0,293
OSR	0,715	0,626
L	2,87	3,693

Figure 32: Fsi, Gsi, Osr, L of Bospolder-Tussendijken  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on Rundifun (2025)



Figure 33: Adresses per km²  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on Rundifun (2025)

The urban fabric of a neighborhood can be delivered with different in-between spaces and different building typologies (Sim, 2019). The same total floor area can be built in totally different ways.

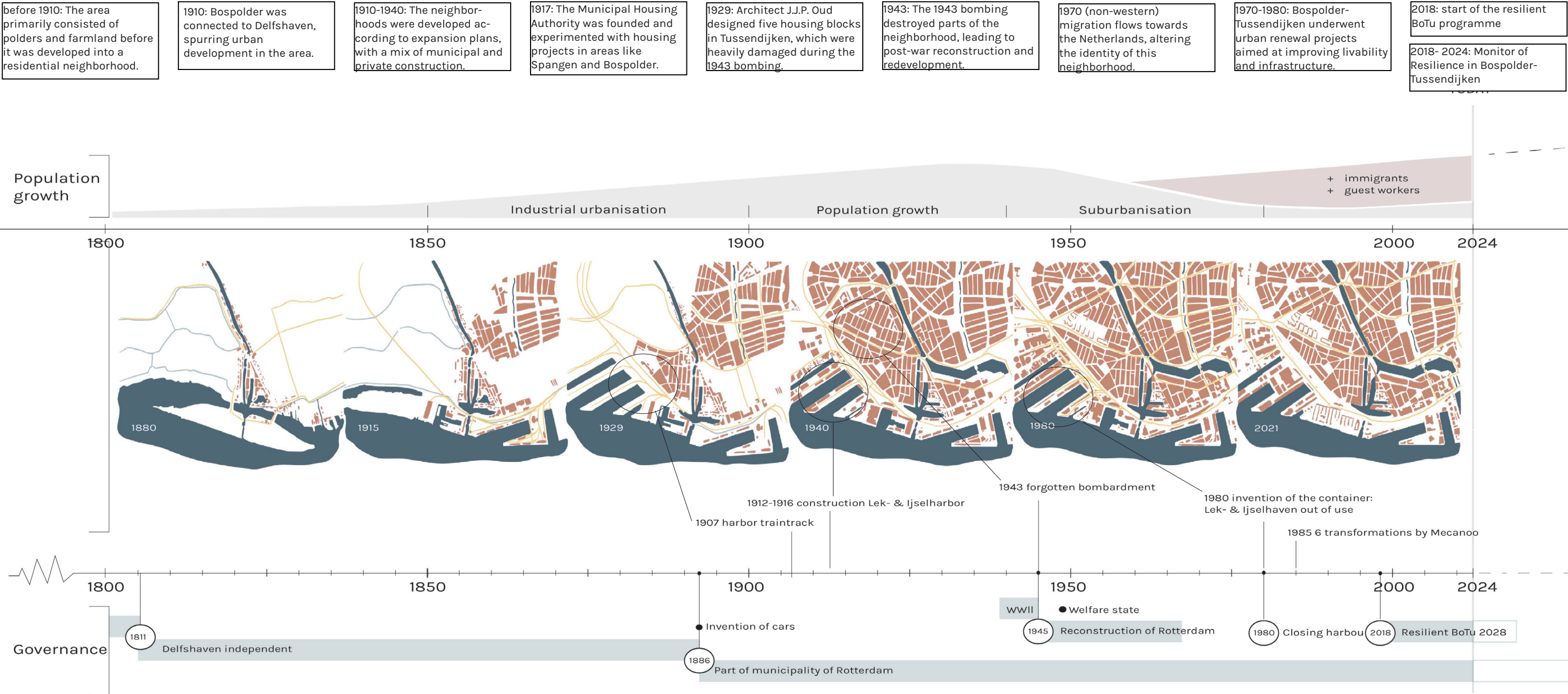
The density of urban fabric is often explained in terms of the Floor Space Index (FSI), which is the ratio of the gross floor area of the built-up area to the total area occupied, including elevations and underground spaces (Habers et al., 2019). The number of levels (L) of a building influences the amount of leftover open space (OSR). The FSI, GSI, Levels, and the OSR give insights about the morphology of the urban fabric.

Height is an essential factor in potential meetings (Gehl, 2010). Walk-up height creates possibilities for meeting on stairs, social access, and a better connection between residents and the public space on the ground floor.

According to David Sim (2019), it is essential to consider the proportion of the building edge on the ground floor, which determines the use of open space, as well as the building’s built form, which defines the distinction between open and closed spaces. This highlights the balance needed between the aspects of urban fabric density.

The figure on the left shows the relationship of the four aspects. Show are the two neighborhoods discussed: Bospolder and Tussendijken. Both could be characterized as medium-density areas. However, the numbers provide a distorted view, as surrounding areas are included in the calculation, as shown in the figure below. Furthermore, public spaces are of low quality, which affects the perceived urban fabric and the potential for meeting between residents.





**SCHIEDAMSEWEG**  
Schiedamseweg has not changed much over time in terms of buildings and width; however, its profile is now almost unrecognizable. In the past, it served as a proper walking and luxury shopping promenade. As seen on the old postcard, there was space for pedestrians in the middle of the street. Compared to the current profile, this space has drastically decreased, leaving only room on the sidewalk alongside the shop windows.

**SPANJAARDSTRAAT**  
The Spanjaardstraat has also changed in use compared to 100 years ago. The Spanjaardstraat used to have a meeting function. As the Spanjaardstraat was once the location of the market, which was later relocated to the Visserijplein. Nowadays, the street is used quite the opposite. The street now forms a more distinct division in the urban fabric, facilitating a tramline.

These two comparisons highlight the changed use of streets. Once a meeting place for residents, nowadays a line for moving fast.

Schiedamseweg 1929



2025



Spanjaardstraat +/- 1920



2025



Figure 35: Changed use of streets  
Source: Steenhuis, M., Voerman, L., Van Doorn, J. (2012). Bospolder-Tussendijken: Cultuur historische verkenning en analyse. Steenhuis Stedenbouw/Landschap & Urban Fabric. [https://issuu.com/stadsonwikkeling/docs/gebiedsonderzoek\\_bospoldertussendijken\\_website\\_02-](https://issuu.com/stadsonwikkeling/docs/gebiedsonderzoek_bospoldertussendijken_website_02-)

Source: Made by author 2025

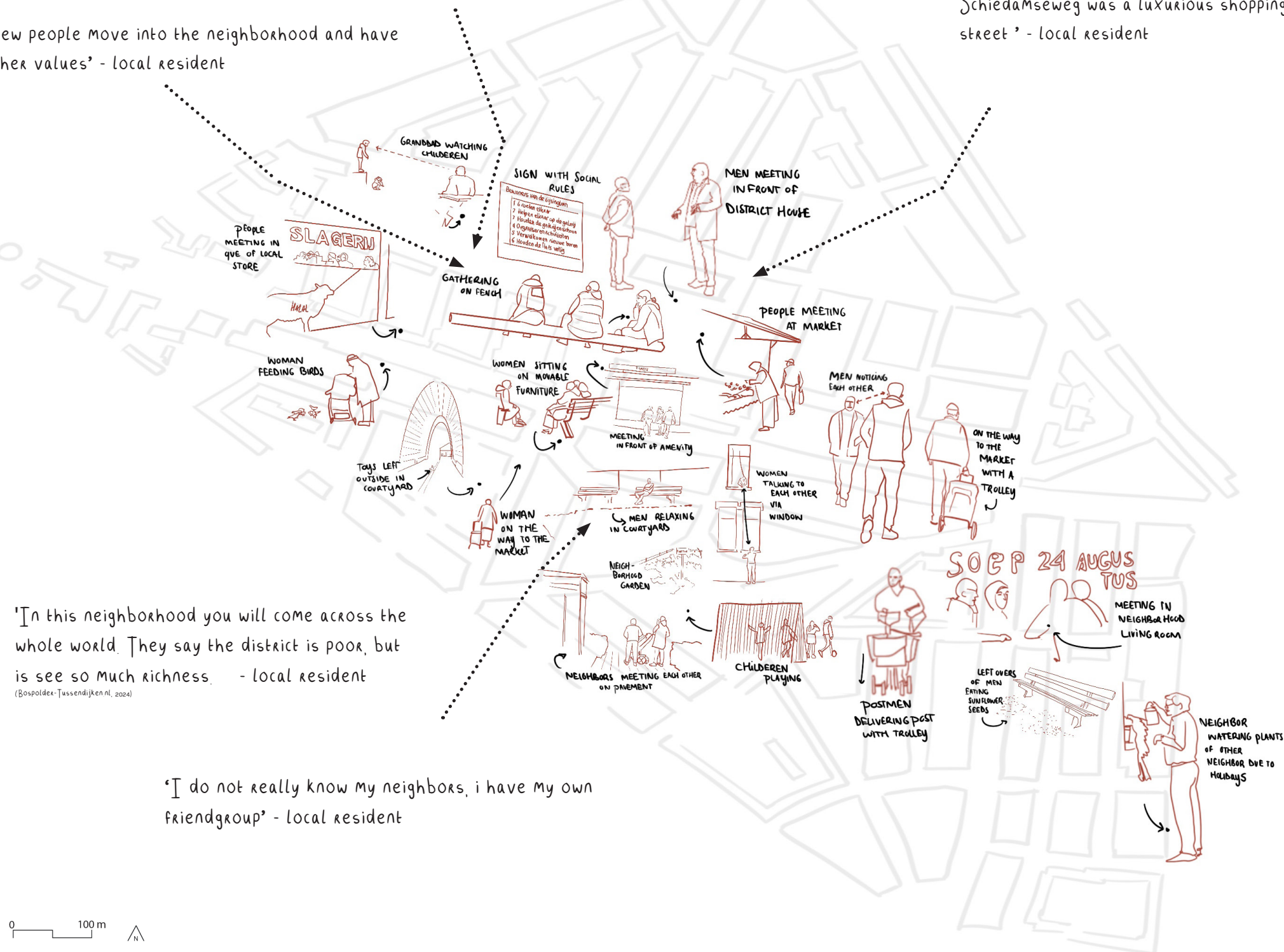


'Money is not going to solve the public space. People need to treat the space outside their front door, the public space, better'

- local resident

'New people move into the neighborhood and have other values' - local resident

'I have lived in Tussendijken for 70 years. When i just started living here the Schiedamseweg was a luxurious shopping street' - local resident



'In this neighborhood you will come across the whole world. They say the district is poor, but is see so much richness. - local resident

(Bospolder-Tussendijken.nl, 2024)

'I do not really know my neighbors, i have my own friendgroup' - local resident

## FLEETING SPONTANEOUS INTERACTIONS

During fieldwork in Bospolder-Tussendijken, research has been conducted on fleeting, spontaneous interactions observed between residents. All of this is documented in pictures and eventually presented in the figure on the left.

The intention was to conduct unstructured street interviews; however, after gaining experience and consulting with experts, it became clear that the residents of Bospolder-Tussendijken are reluctant to participate in the research, as the neighborhoods have already been studied extensively. This led me to believe that the preference for anonymity towards strangers is quite high.

However, observing the residents of Bospolder-Tussendijken revealed that meetings between residents who are familiar with each other occur extensively. The residents of Bospolder-Tussendijken are more engaged with outside street life, routine activities like daily grocery shopping. However, as understood from street interviews, social groups do not comprehend each other well.

Figure 36: Fleeting encounters in Bospolder-Tussendijken  
Source: Made by author 2025

The map drawn on the right page is a representation of Bospolder-Tussendijken in the form of a Nolli Map, as Giambattista Nolli drew it in 1748, supplemented with some more complex levels of publicness that can be found in the contemporary city.

Creating this drawing demonstrated that the true perceived publicness is not captured in the traditional Nolli map. The Nolli map is an abstract and static representation of the level of publicness. However, perceived publicness is linked to the experience of the public domain, which can vary over time. Patterns of social activities influence the perceived publicness of a space. The Nolli map is a top-down representation of the city, but the eye-level experience is much more significant in determining the actual perceived publicness. Today's cities are far complex with a richness of people's public activities, functions, and modes of transportation (Ji & Ding, 2021).

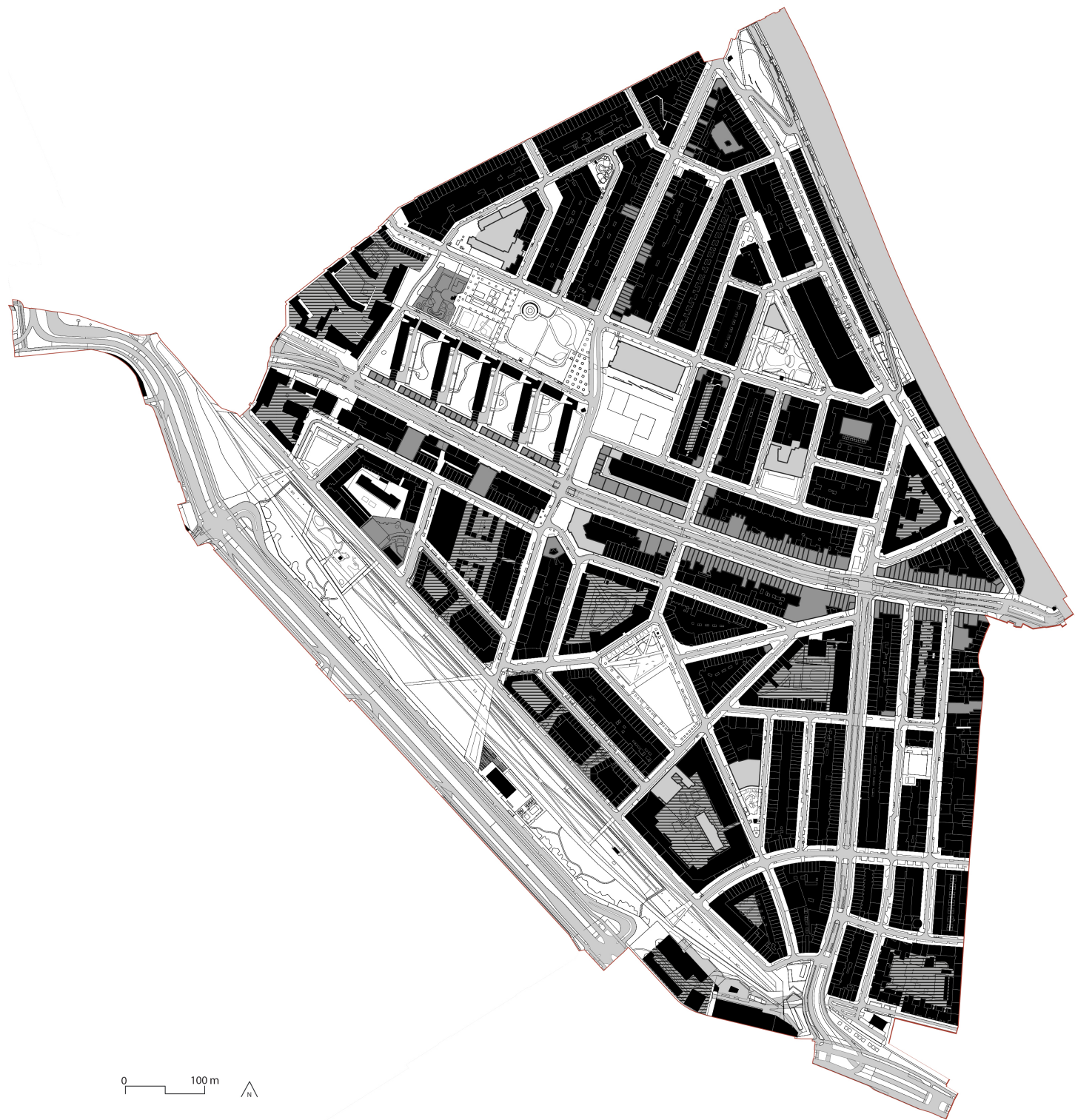
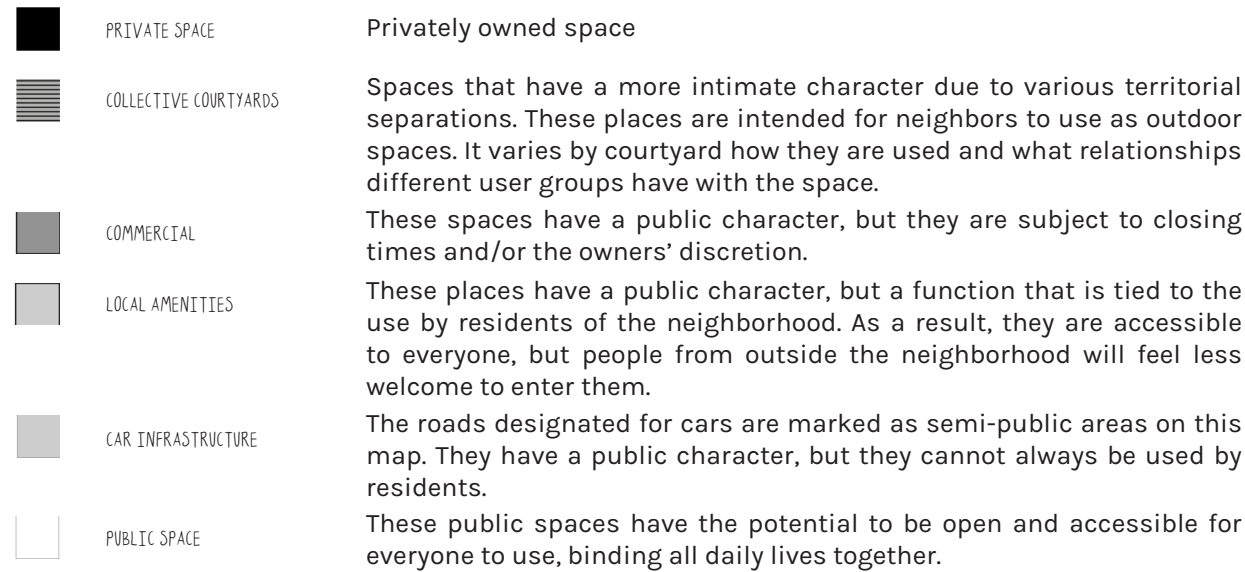


Figure 37: Nolli map of Bospolder-Tussendijken  
Source: Made by author 2025



In Bospolder-Tussendijken, the social infrastructure is shaped by a diverse range of spaces that cater to various user groups, each interacting with the environment in its own unique way. While traditional public spaces, such as parks and playgrounds, are often highlighted as key places for social interaction, they represent just one piece of a larger puzzle. The street network, inner courtyards, bike parking areas, and even mundane locations like trash collection points or bus stops all play a crucial role in the daily lives of residents. These spaces, though seemingly less significant, offer essential moments for people to encounter each other, reflecting the richness of the neighborhood's social fabric.

However, not all places are utilized in the same way by every resident. For instance, community gardens may attract a specific group of individuals interested in gardening or environmental activities, fostering interaction within a defined social circle. Meanwhile, other areas, such as local shops, bike racks, or transit stops, see a broader range of people who may not typically interact with one another outside these shared spaces. This creates a patchwork of social connections throughout the neighborhood, where people from different walks of life intersect in various contexts.

By examining the social infrastructure of Bospolder-Tussendijken, it becomes clear that the neighborhood's layout and its varied uses offer more than just the obvious places for interaction. Every part of the infrastructure, whether commonly used or more hidden, contributes to a larger network of opportunities for residents to encounter each other and form connections. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for designing spaces that cater to the diverse needs of the community and foster meaningful interactions among different groups.

- schools
- community
- park
- playground
- courtyard
- local stores
- hospitality



Figure 38: Social infrastructure of Bospolder-Tussendijken  
Source: Made by author 2025



ELEMENTS OF THE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

PLAYGROUNDS

The neighborhood houses many playgrounds, public spaces that are mainly accessible to everyone. The interesting thing about these places is that they attract people with a shared identity, a commonality. The attracted people thus have a common factor that binds them, which can promote the encounter. This way, children and/or parents will come together here and potentially make contact.

However, the playgrounds in the neighborhood are of low quality. Many are characterized as paved areas. They become extremely hot during the summer.



Figure 43: Bospolder Plein playground and playground in Park 1943  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 44: Elderly watching his grandchildren in playground  
Source: Made by author 2025

SCHOOLYARDS

Schoolyards also serve a function for daily use. The daily drop-off of children can provide repeated opportunities for encounters between parents and children. As learned in the literature, repeated spontaneous encounters can increase public familiarity among neighborhood residents.

- Playgrounds
- Schoolyards

Figure 45: Map of playgrounds and schoolyards in Bospolder-Tussendijken  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 46: Underused green of the Gijsinlaanflat courtyard  
Source: Made by author 2025

In the area, there are some underutilized green spaces. The courtyards between the Gijsinglaan flats are an intriguing location because this part of the neighborhood contains the most addresses, while the available public space is underused (Figure 46).



Figure 47: Park 1943  
Source: Made by author 2025



- Parks
- Underused green

Figure 49: Map of green spaces and parks in Bospolder-Tussendijken  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 48: Community garden on Bospolderplein  
Source: Made by author 2025

PARKS

Bospolder-Tussendijken is a highly paved area, with only eighteen percent comprising open surface. Consequently, the amount of greenery is relatively low. In the northeast of the neighborhood lies the recently developed Dakpark, which connects to the green infrastructure of the city of Rotterdam. In the middle of the neighborhood is Park 1943.



Figure 50: Dakpark  
Source: Made by author 2025



LOCAL AMENITIES

The local amenities in Bospolder-Tussendijken, including many non-Western shops, serve as essential anchors of the social infrastructure. They facilitate routine activities such as grocery shopping and other amenities, which bring residents into regular contact with one another. These places support spontaneous, repeated encounters and are a parochial domain, where familiarity grows over time.

Currently, these spaces function well as informal meeting points for local residents. Their routine character makes them approachable and socially accessible. However, encounters could be strengthened further by clustering these amenities more strategically within the neighborhood. By doing so, residents concentrate on specific nodes, increasing the chances of incidental meetings across different groups.



Figure 51: Residents meeting in que of local bakery  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 52: Local amenities on Schiedamsweg  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 53: Local amenities on Schiedamsweg  
Source: Made by author 2025

COMMUNITY HOUSES

The abundance of community spaces in Bospolder-Tussendijken is already relatively high. Due to the resilience program, the network of communities has grown stronger over the past years. These places enable more intentional forms of interaction, offering room for shared meals, workshops, support groups, and cultural events. They primarily serve those who are already connected to a community network. As stated in the monitor (Veldacademie, 2024), the spaces provided for communities to facilitate all the residents who want to take part in organized activities are not enough. Therefore, there is insufficient space for these communities in Bospolder-Tussendijken. Furthermore, it has been observed that many of these places lack visibility within the urban fabric. This limits their capacity to attract newcomers or casual passers-by. Their potential as sites of triangulation, where people might drift from routine activities like shopping or walking toward something socially engaging, remains underutilized.

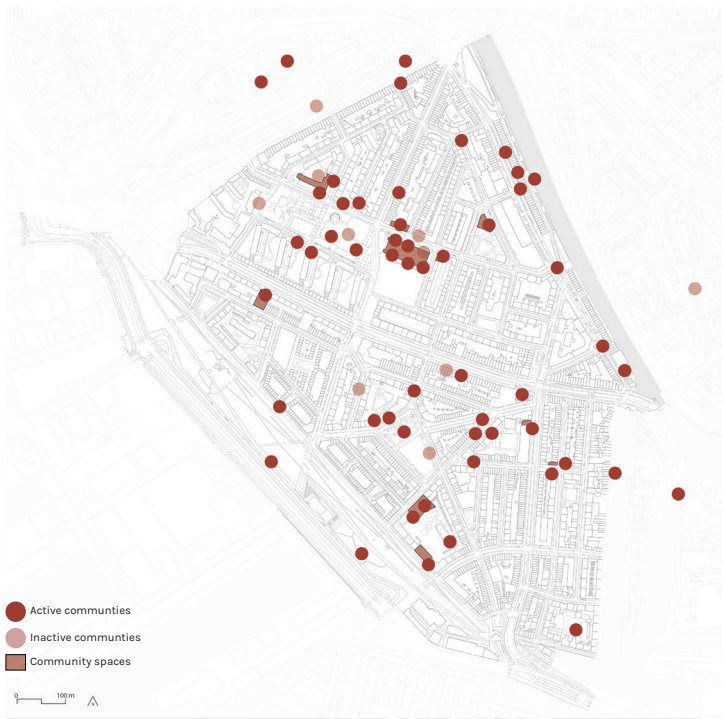


Figure 55: Communities in Bospolder-Tussendijken  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 54: Facade of District center and library: Pier 80  
Source: Made by author 2025

PIER 80

Adjacent to the Visserijplein is the district house, known as Pier 80. The building houses a library, community spaces, and a sports hall. This district house stands out as an important place for the social infrastructure of Bospolder and Tussendijken. Welcoming 1.000 visitors weekly from all over the district (Veldacemie, 2021).

The image on the right shows the facade of Pier 80. This image highlights the lack of visibility of the center and its interaction with the public space of the neighborhood. Not utilizing the potential to attract.



ELEMENTS OF THE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

VISSERIJPLEIN

The square ‘Visserijplein’ is located in the middle of Bospolder-Tussendijken. It provides space for the weekly market, which is very important for regular meetings between residents. However, the market is only open two days per week, leaving the space unused the rest of the time. The square is a big, open space that is paved, lacking the element that attracts residents to meet each other.

Five days a week



Figure 40: Visserijplein during non-market days  
Source: Made by author 2025

Two days a week



Figure 41: Visserijplein during market days  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 39: Squares  
Source: Made by author 2025

THE WEEKLY MARKET

Weekly on Thursday and Saturday, an international market is held. This vibrant event attracts people from the entire district as well as from the rest of Rotterdam. The market is filled with intercultural exchanges, from food to products, and fosters connections among people. It is a place where individuals meet one another spontaneously. Although the interactions between people are mainly anonymous, as discussed before, these types of meetings contribute to the public familiarity of a neighborhood, as people become accustomed to each other's behavior.

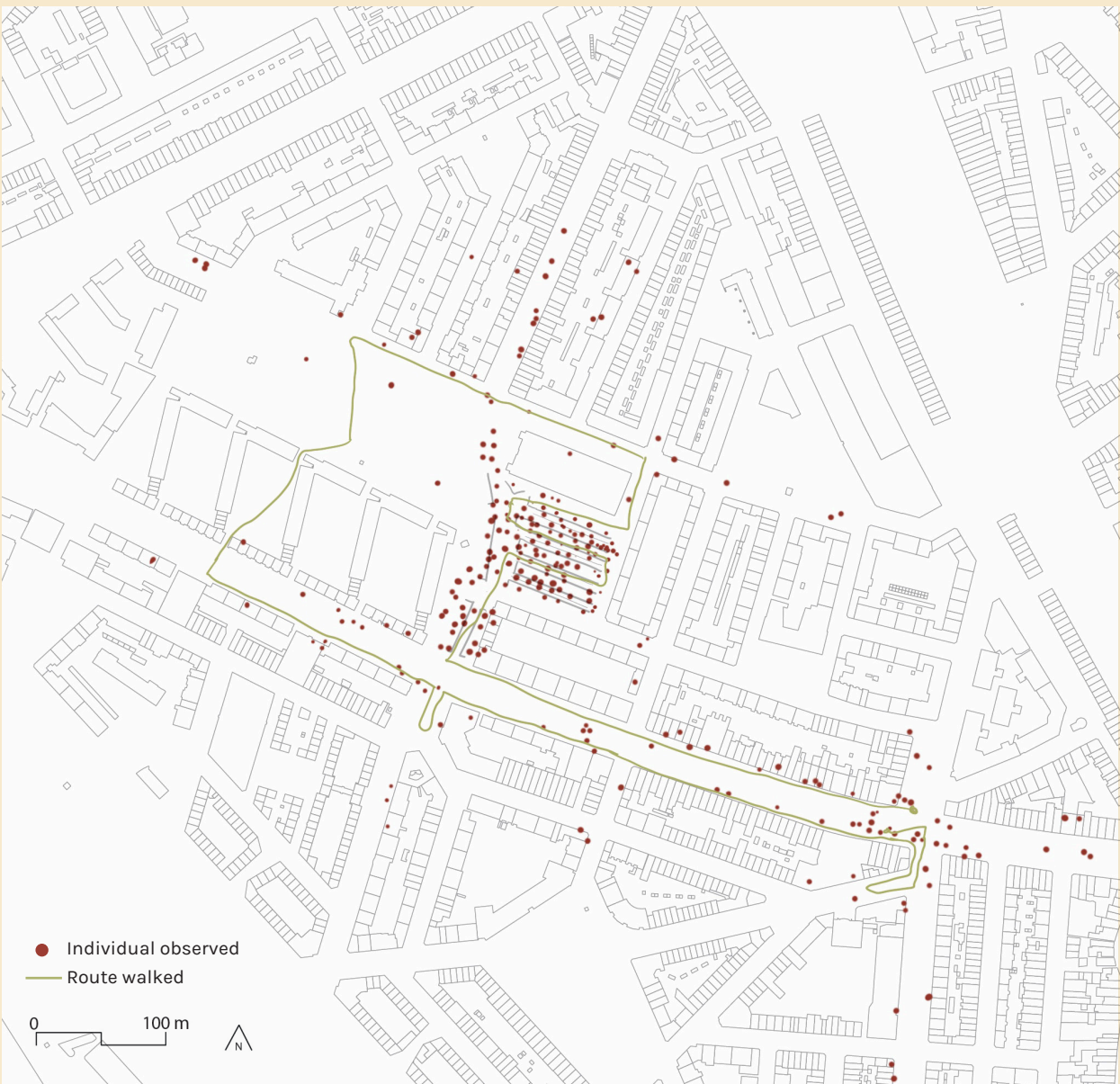


Figure 42: Markets attraction of people  
Source: Made by author 2024  
12 december 2024, 09:30 AM, cloudy 7 degrees

Figure 42 presents an ethnographic map visualizing the distribution of people on a market day. A route (green line) has been traveled, and people are represented as red dots. The map illustrates the market's attraction. Visserijplein becomes a very public space with the potential for people to engage with one another.



Now that it has been established in chapter one that publicness affects use, encounters, and expectations, it is essential to understand what the experience of publicness is like in Bospolder-Tussendijken. For this, an Urban Depth analysis was conducted.

Urban depth shows how the publicness of public spaces is experienced. The experience of publicness influences how people use the space. Thus, use at the city level can be separated by additional activities of residents. A private space that is used more frequently by residents provides greater opportunities for encounters. Urban depth is a structure differentiated into zones with varying norms of privacy, access, and decorum. The readability of these zones, as well as the transitional zones between them, influences where people go and how they engage with the space, both individually and collectively (Urban depth & Autonomy, n.d.).

An urban depth structure reveals a system of social territories (Urban depth & Autonomy, n.d.). These configurations shape people’s behaviour. The physical expression of depth creates social life and, in turn, is shaped by it. The system is shared among individuals, even among strangers, when navigating the system of zones and thresholds.

The structure of urban depth is determined by spatial configuration and informs civic, social, and economic life (Urban depth & Autonomy, n.d.). Layers for creating an urban depth map (Hausleitner, n.d.; Hoogland, 2024) include:

- A space syntax analysis that indicates predicted pedestrian flows and the likelihood of pedestrians using a specific route or street, influencing the sense of publicness by determining the number of ‘strangers’ walking through a street.
- Public ground-floor program that addresses the necessity for a ‘stranger’ to use the street.
- Local ground-floor program that assesses the necessity for a ‘familiar stranger’ to use the street.
- Layout of the street profile.

Combining the layers will create a heatmap, making it evident where urban depth is lacking to provide the desired publicness, use, and opportunities for meeting among the residents of Bospolder-Tussendijken.



Figure 56: Space syntax 800 meter  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on PDOK (2025)



Figure 57: Public functions  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on PDOK (2025)



Figure 58: Neighborhood functions  
Source: Made by author 2025, based on PDOK (2025)



City street  
SCHIEDAMSEWEG

De Schiedamseweg is a super public place in Bospolder-Tussendijken. Here, people move through the city by car, public transport, bicycle, and on foot. In the street, there are shops oriented towards local residents, as well as those aimed at people from the entire city. The profile of the street offers plenty of space for movement, and as seen in the cross-sections, there is little space for pedestrians to stop and take in their surroundings. However, as the literature has learned, it is precisely these moments that are crucial for the emergence of encounters.

The public nature of the street reflects the diverse range of user groups that gather here. The chance that people from different user groups encounter each other here is therefore high. However, the level of interaction here will not be greater than a fleeting glance and, in some cases, a chance encounter. Due to the limited pedestrian space, the fleeting encounter is also hindered by the lack of space to stop for a moment.

Residents of Schiedamseweg have a limited connection to the public space on Schiedamseweg. The chance that people will recognize each other as neighbors during a first encounter here is low. People who walk by can come from anywhere.



Figure 59: Busy Schiedamseweg on Tuesday morning  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 60: Little pedestrian space  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 61: Use of pavement by local stores  
Source: Made by author 2025

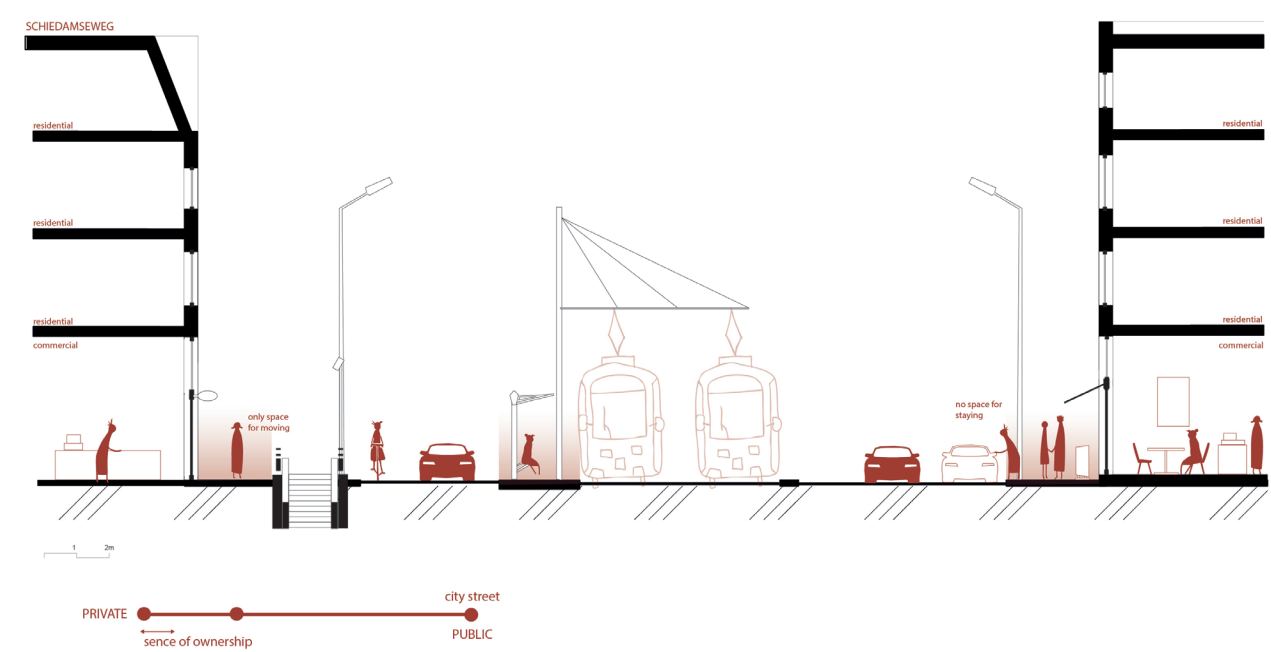
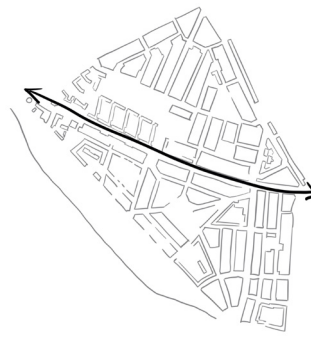


Figure 62: Schiedamseweg  
Source: Made by author 2025





District street  
SPANJAARDSTRAAT

De Spanjaard Street is a wide street that leads users from the outskirts of the neighborhood to the center: Schiedamseweg. As previously discussed, the street used to be a gathering place where residents would regularly meet each other during visits to the market. Nowadays, the street no longer serves this function. People walk along the street to get somewhere else. Additionally, a large part of the profile is used to facilitate fast traffic that brings people to locations outside the neighborhood. The road is difficult to cross because of the long stretch of tram tracks. Furthermore, there are no trees, and the facades feel like long walls. The human scale is not perceptible, and the place is experienced as unpleasant. Residents of Spanjaardstraat feel little connection to and ownership of the public space on the street, partly due to its public nature and also because of the low level of interaction between the buildings and the public space.

Residents of Spanjaardstraat will feel little connection to and ownership of the public space on the street, partly due to its public nature, but also due to the low level of interaction between the buildings and the public space. Residents do not have a transition zone between public and private areas. When the route home is followed, there is no experience of urban depth, which can delay recognition among residents.

When the route home is followed, there is no experience of urban depth, which can delay recognition among residents. The space for pedestrians is very limited, resulting in little room for lingering. Consequently, the level of interaction between Bospolder-Tussendijkers on this street is likely to be low.



Figure 63: anonymous pavement of Spanjaardstraat  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 64: People crossing tram line informally  
Source: Made by author 2025

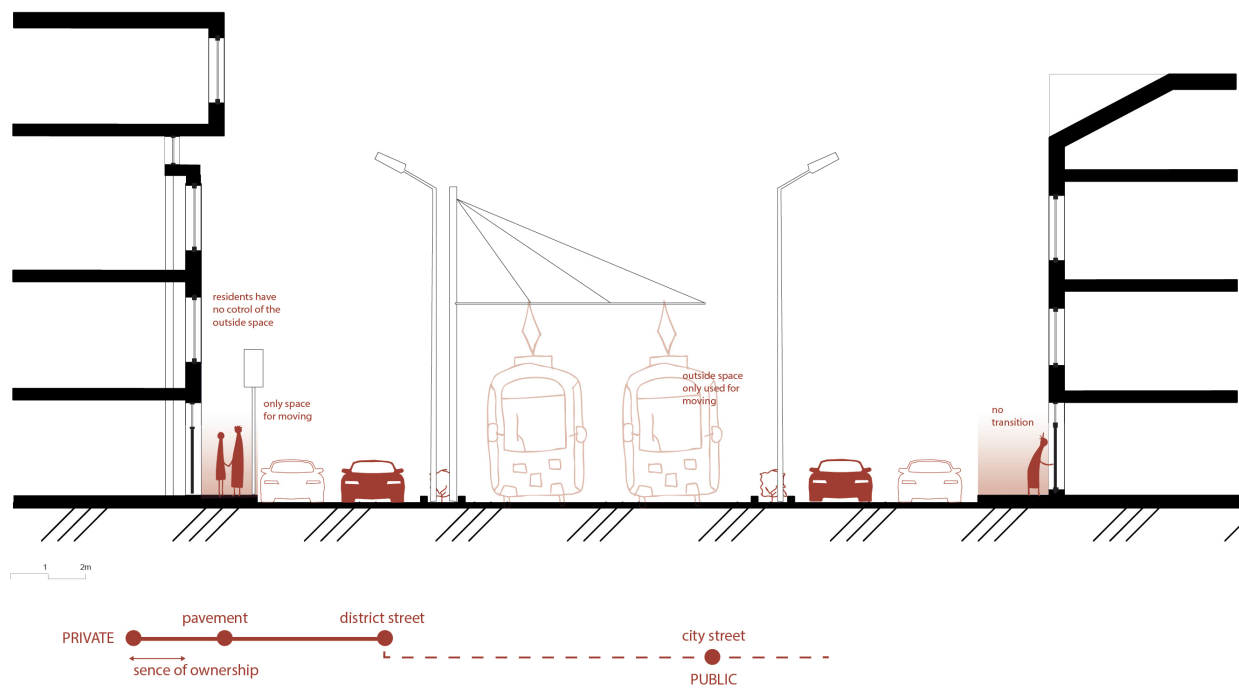
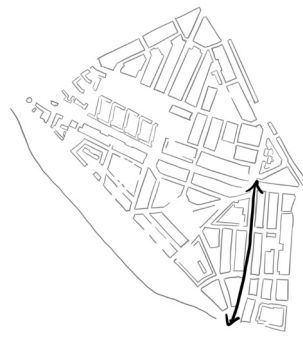


Figure 65: Spanjaardstraat  
Source: Made by author 2025



Neighborhood street  
WATERGEUSSTRAAT

De Watergeusstraat is heavily oriented towards car use. The majority of the street serves this purpose. Curtains are mostly closed, and homes have almost no transition zone from private to public. As a result, there is little interaction between homes and the public space. Additionally, it is evident that residents feel a lack of ownership or control over the street because it is polluted.

When walking home or leaving, anyone who walks past your door could be a neighbor or an unfamiliar stranger. Therefore, it is unlikely that residents will easily recognize each other as neighbors.

Close meetings between residents are desired to increase public familiarity. However, the design of the Watergeusstraat's street profile is inadequate to facilitate interaction and gatherings among its residents.



Figure 66: Car focussed street layout  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 67: Closed facades and low quality of space  
Source: Made by author 2025

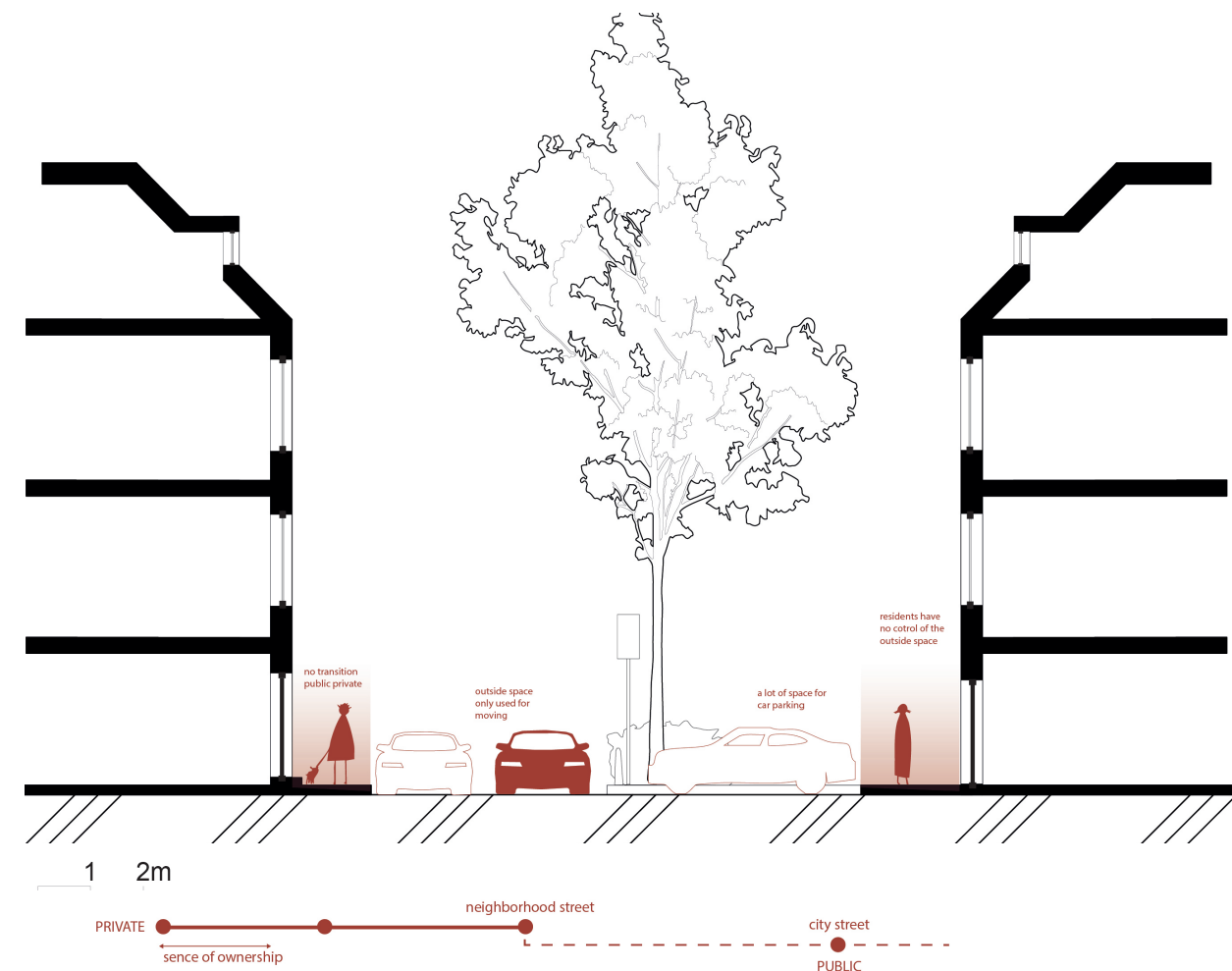


Figure 68: Watergeusstraat  
Source: Made by author 2025





Neighborhood street  
PUNTSTRAAT

The profile of Puntstraat does offer space for a gentle transition from public to private. As a result, residents have the space to organize and arrange their piece of public area. This piece of space is indicated by means of differences in materialization, greenery, or a boundary. The sidewalk is additionally shielded from the road by a green hedge with trees, which further enhances the sense of privatization. Through their piece of public space, residents will feel a greater sense of ownership over the rest of the street. Interaction between private and public spaces will be encouraged, and the way the space is used will change. People are more often in the public space near their homes, which increases the chance of encountering neighbors. Additionally, it has a positive impact on recognition and the repeated, spontaneous interactions that contribute to a neighborhood's familiarity.

Furthermore, the front garden ensures that the road is perceived as private, due to residents' control over the public space. As a result, it is expected that strangers will treat the public space differently.



Figure 68: Neighbors meeting each other on Delftsestoep  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 70: Utilized space next to pavement by residents  
Source: Made by author 2025

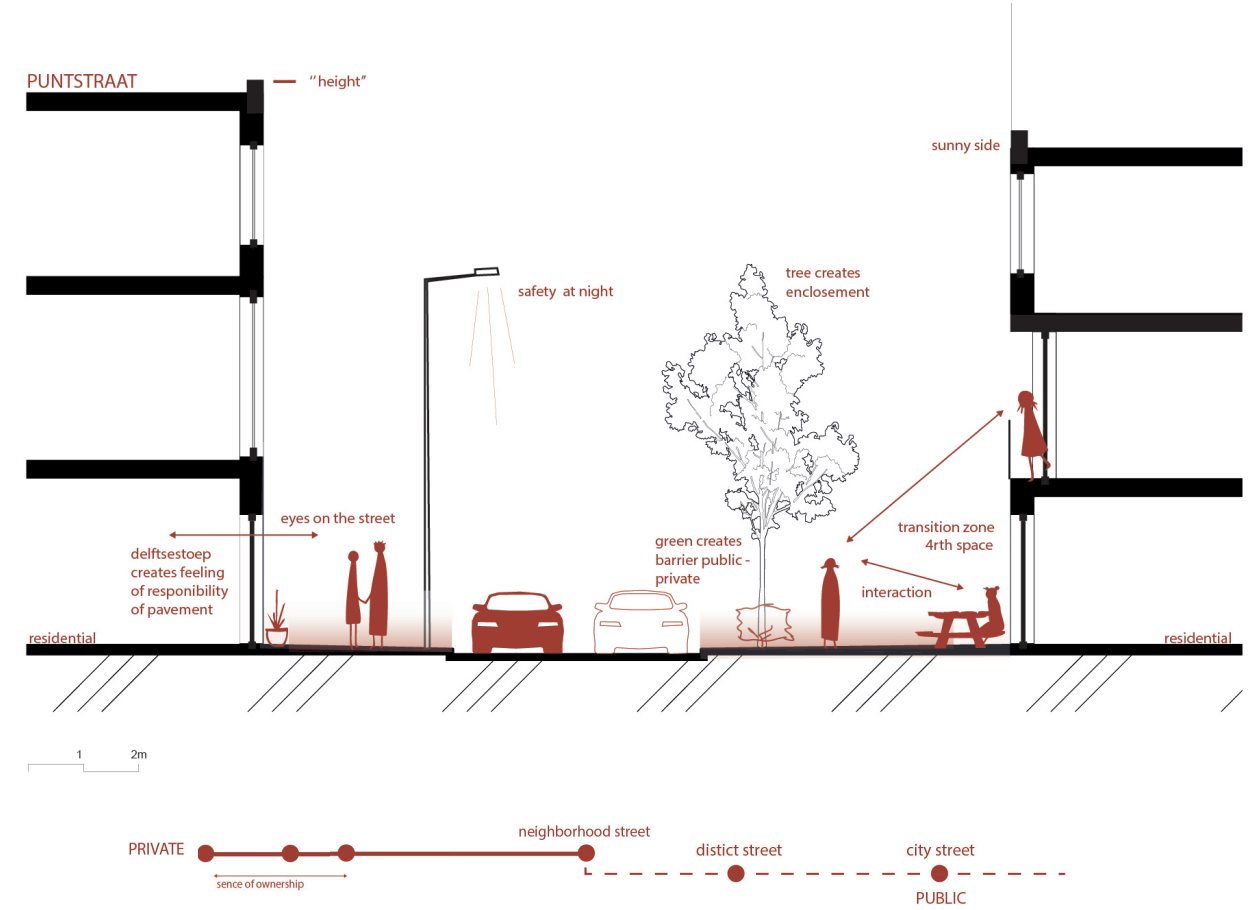
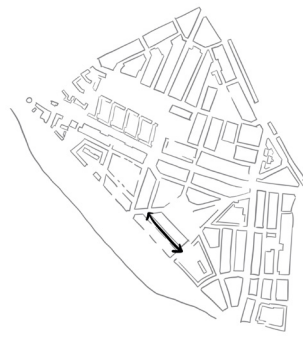


Figure 71: Puntstraat  
Source: Made by author 2025



Semi private courtyard  
LE MEDI

Le Medi is an urban development realized in 2008. The street and courtyard of the project are part of an urban block, which has strong outer walls and a soft inner world. This soft inner world is car-free and reserved for residents.

The courtyard is publicly accessible but closes at night, organized with a fence. When visitors enter the area, it is clear to them that they are entering another territory, one controlled by the residents. Therefore, it is apparent to passersby that the space is not open to the public.

The street functions as a shared space for residents to use. Therefore, a meeting will be enabled between them. When encountering others, it is likely they are neighbors, which fosters a sense of familiarity.

Furthermore, the urban depth of the route when walking home is significant. The positioning of residents within the neighborhood will create a sense of community among them.

The design of Le Medi exemplifies how urban design can enhance interactions between direct neighbors.



Figure 72: Private space adjacent to shared courtyard  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 73: Toys left in shared outside space  
Source: Made by author 2025

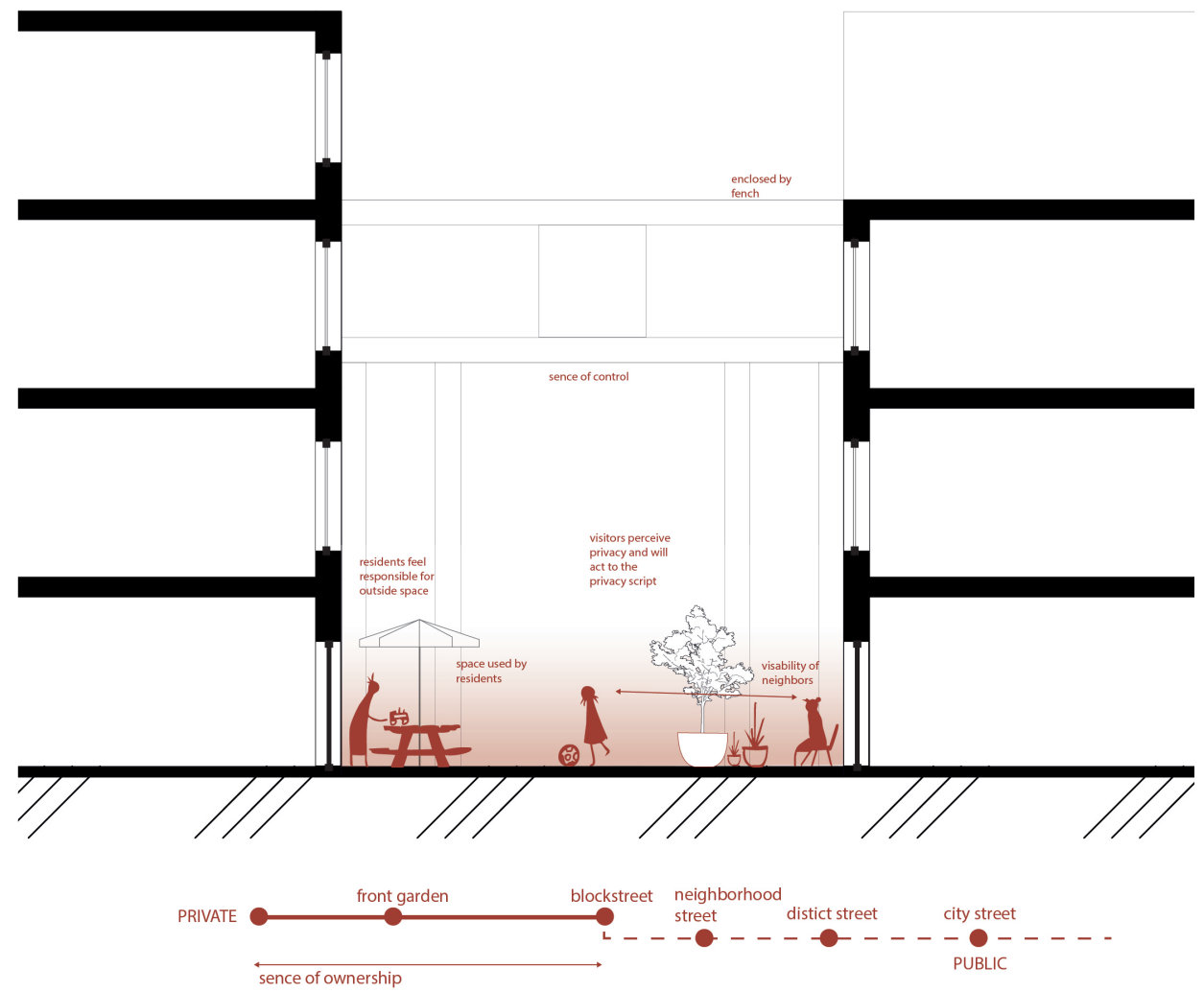


Figure 74: Le Medi  
Source: Made by author 2025



THE HEATMAP

WHERE PUBLICNESS HINDERS MEETING

The heat map, created by overlaying the layers of urban depth analysis in Bospolder-Tussendijken, is presented on the right. This map visualizes the perceived publicness of the urban fabric of Bospolder-Tussendijken.

It's important to note that the map is influenced by time; during events like the weekly market, changes in the urban fabric and shifts in functions affect perceived publicness and usage. The map presented reflects the current representation of Bospolder-Tussendijken on a market day.

As discussed in the previous sections, different types of publicness facilitate various types of usage and interactions among residents. However, certain kinds of interactions are preferred in specific areas.

To encourage a meeting between direct neighbors, a more private space is recommended. Conversely, for gatherings among people with shared interests, an open yet intimate space is necessary to foster a binding factor, such as a function or a particular atmosphere. Finally, public spaces with high publicness attract individuals from diverse backgrounds, providing environments where they are challenged to see new behaviors. It is observed that specific types of meetings are preferred in these settings.

The heatmap shows where the urban fabric and activities lack the potential to facilitate desired publicness, use, and meeting.

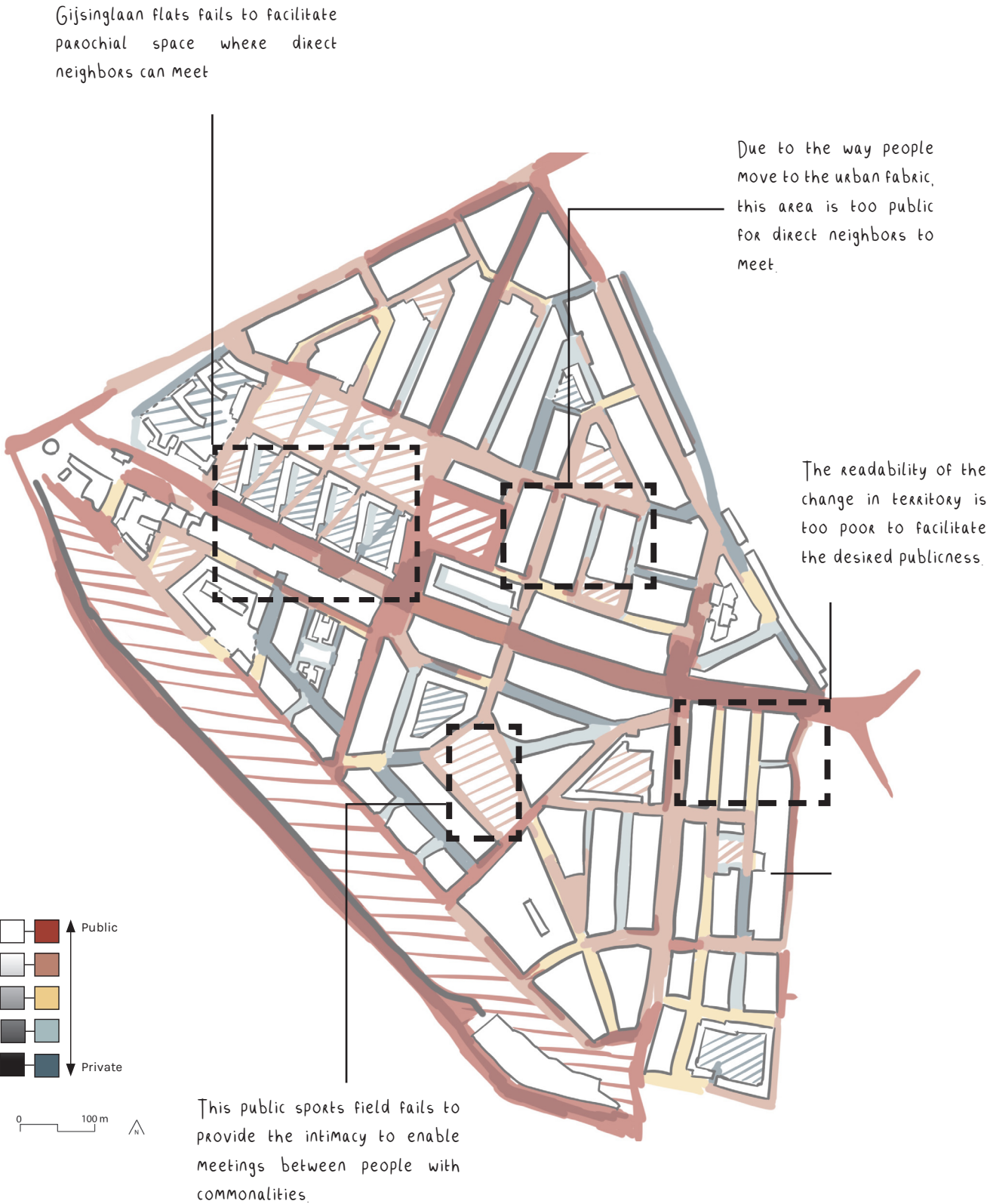
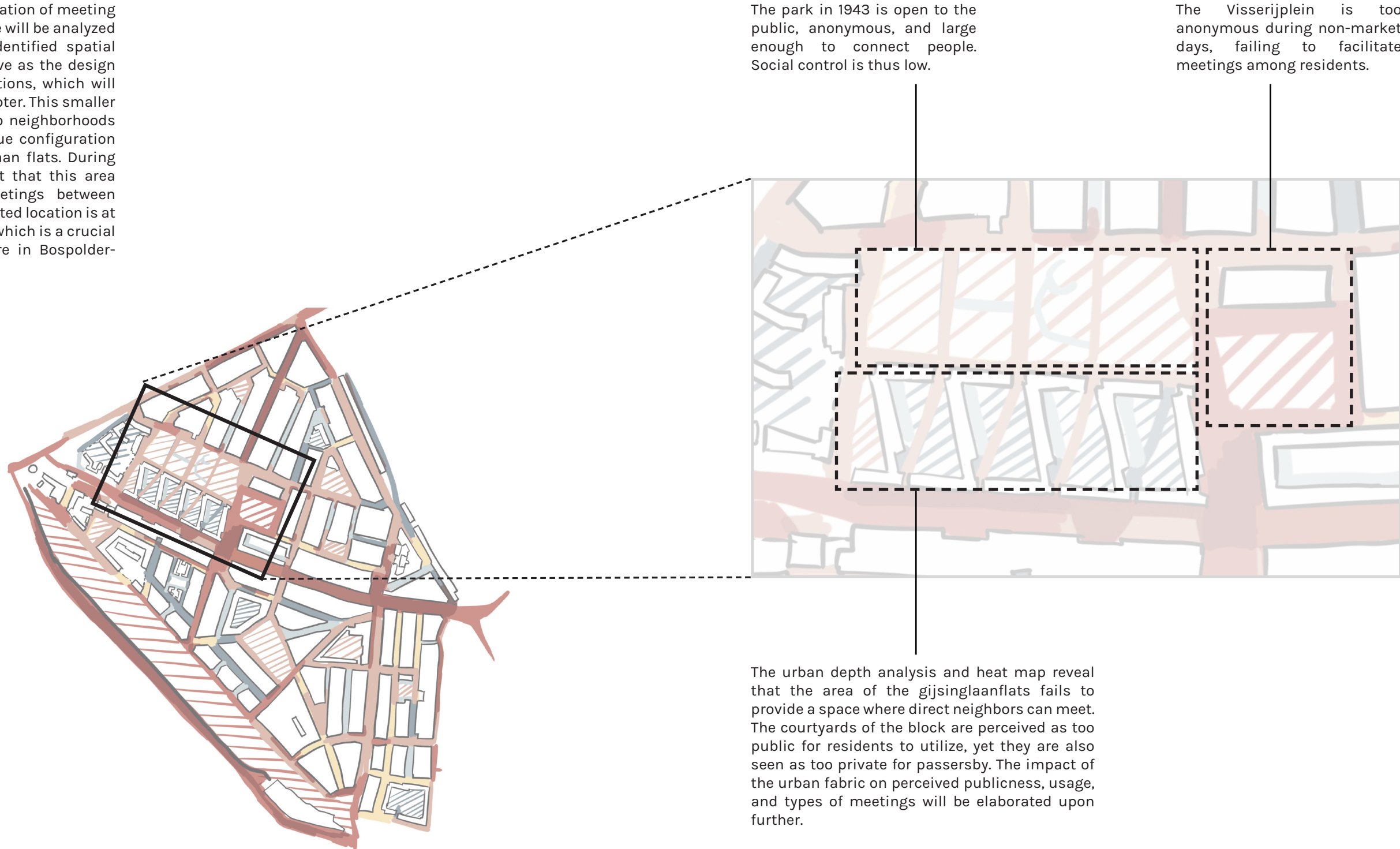


Figure 75 Heatmap of perceived publicness  
Source: Made by author 2025

To further research the manifestation of meeting in the case study, a smaller scale will be analyzed and designed based on the identified spatial interventions. This area will serve as the design zone for the proposed interventions, which will be elaborated on in the next chapter. This smaller area is located between the two neighborhoods and is characterized by a unique configuration within the region: the Gijslinglaan flats. During the analysis, it became evident that this area lacks the most enabling meetings between residents. Furthermore, the selected location is at the center of the neighborhood, which is a crucial part of the social infrastructure in Bospolder-Tussendijken.



Figure 76: Selection of area of interest  
Source: Made by author 2025





The Gijsinglaan flats were developed after the 1943 bombardment, leaving space in the urban fabric. The plan's design is characterized by five similar buildings that form four courtyards.

The composition of the flats was transformed in 1980 into a new spatial configuration, which added new buildings to the north side, closing the courtyard and fading the connection between the green spaces between the buildings and the adjacent green open space: Park 1943.

As of today, the flats' configuration cannot connect residents with each other. The most profound challenge is the underused courtyards.

#### PUBLIC YET PRIVATE

The courtyards are located between the flats and are accessible to the public. However, they lack clear readability, making it unclear which user group the space is intended for. Residents perceive the courtyards as too public to use, while passersby view the area as too private to enjoy the public open space. This results in residents avoiding the area, while passersby deem it unusable.

Moreover, due to the homogeneous composition of the flats, the courtyards lack distinct characters, making it difficult for residents to position themselves within the urban block.



Figure 77: Courtyard of Gijsinglaanflats: design hindering meetings between residents  
Source: Made by author 2025





Figure 78: path through courtyard: unclear hierarchy in territory  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 79: path through courtyard: unclear hierarchy in territory  
Source: Made by author 2025

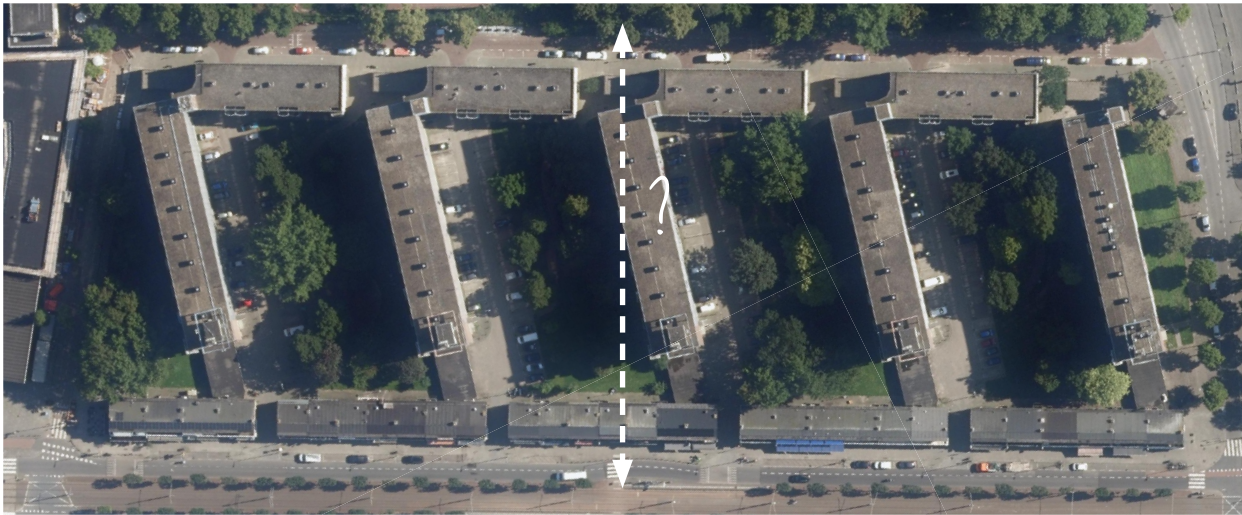


Figure 80: Unreadable hierarchy in routes through urban block  
Source: Made by author 2025

SPATIAL AMBIGUITY

The courtyards fail to accommodate spatial diversity, as they simultaneously serve the front and back sides of the adjacent flats. This spatial ambiguity leads to unclear orientation for passersby and results in confusing circulation and poorly defined usable space.

DEAD EDGES

The buildings surrounding the courtyard all have dead walls or are elevated with half an elevation. Therefore, there is a lack of interaction between the buildings and the public space.



Figure 81: Dead edges in courtyard  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 82: Disconnected houses to courtyards  
Source: Made by author 2025





Figure 83: Low quality public space - playground  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 84: Scattered public space  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 85: Public space disconnected from edges  
Source: Made by author 2025

SCATTERED ISLAND

PARK 1943

Park 1943 was developed in the same way as the Gijsinlaan flats. The park offers various facilities and activities for its residents. However, the park lacks interaction with the rest of the neighborhood. The area feels like an island, a disconnected space. Due to the lack of connection to adjacent spaces and the size of the open space, the park's public space lacks the 'eyes on the street' and could be perceived as unpleasant, thereby not realizing its full potential.

The park is divided into three zones: a green area, a playground and sports area, and a fenced area that is only accessible during opening hours.

VISSERIJPLEIN & PIER 80

The square 'Visserijplein' is located in the middle of Bospolder-Tussendijken. It provides space for the weekly market, which is very important for regular meetings between residents. However, the market is only open two days per week, leaving the space unused the rest of the time. The square is a big, open space that is paved, lacking the element that attracts residents to meet each other.

Adjacent to the square is the district house, known as Pier 80. The building houses a library, a community space, and a sports hall. The building lacks interaction with its surrounding public space, failing visually to show its importance to the residents of Bospolder-Tussendijken.



Figure 86: Empty paved space hindering meetings  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 87: Invisible community center  
Source: Made by author 2025

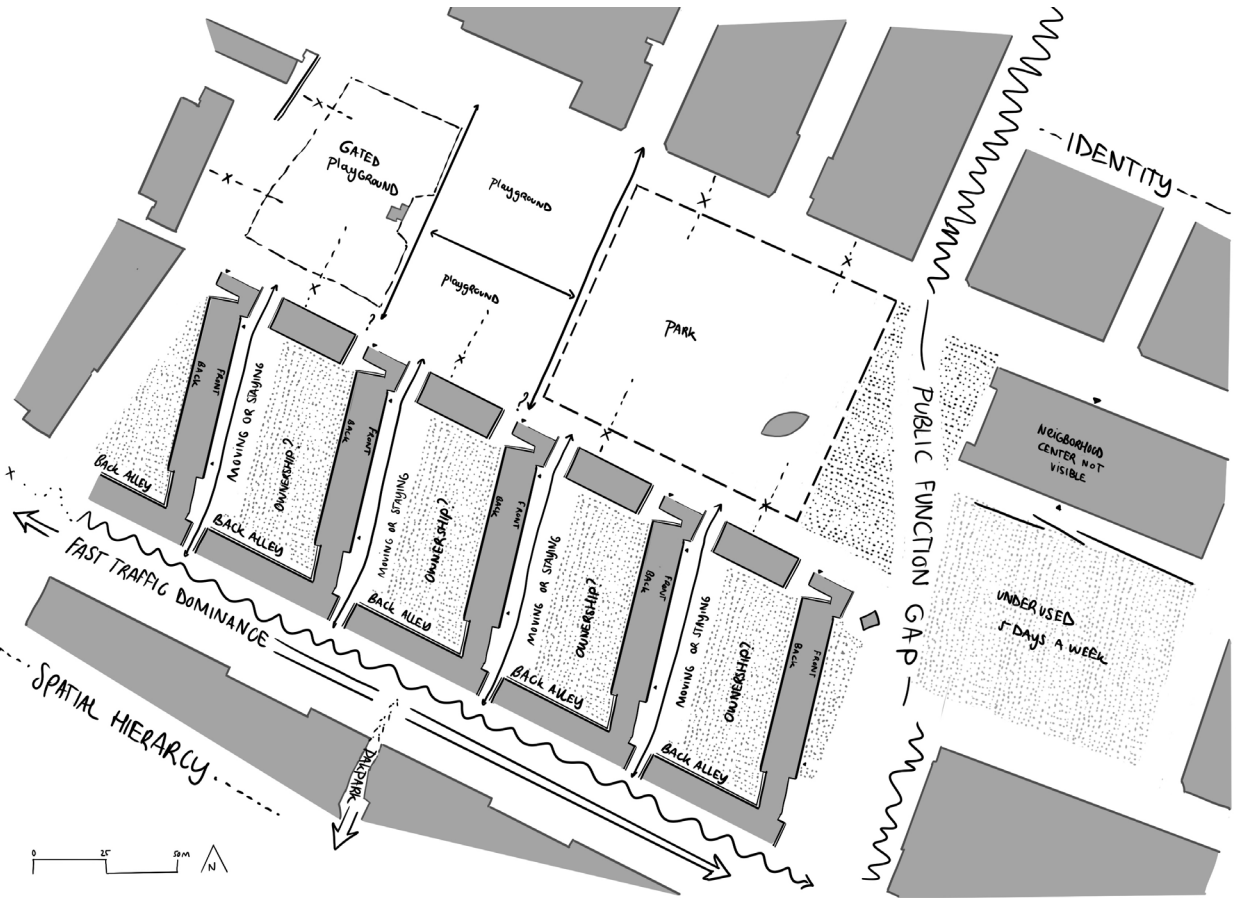


Figure 88: Problem map of area of interest  
Source: Made by author 2025





## ABSENCE OF SPATIAL DIVERSITY



PUBLIC SPACE NOT CONNECTED  
TO SURROUNDINGS



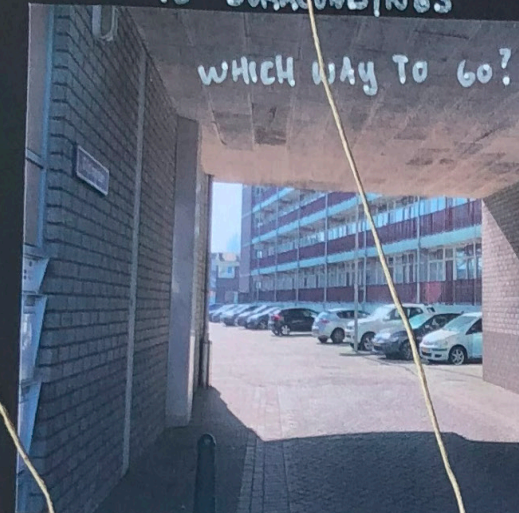
# SCATTERED SPACES



LOW SPATIAL QUALITY



NO DIRECT ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACE



WHICH WAY TO GO?



NO SPATIAL HIERARCHY



UNDER USED SPACE



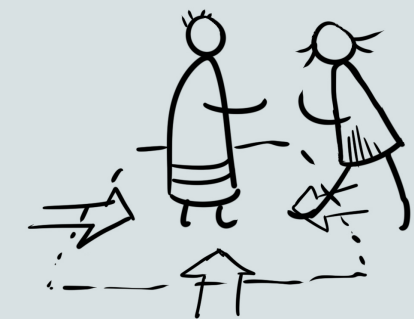
READABLE SPACE  
ONLY USED FOR CAR PARKING



NO VISIBILITY OF COMMUNITY NETWORK







## CHAPTER 3

## SPATIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR MEETING

## PROPOSE - SUBQUESTION 3

What are spatial interventions that enable meetings between residents of a neighborhood?

In this chapter, a pattern language is developed. Including a complex network of interventions that enable meetings between residents. The pattern language is developed to connect intervention (design) to research. The cards all have a specific hypothesis, which is grounded in literature, observation, and reference studies. Every hypothesis has a spatial implication, which is found in literature, reference studies, observation, or through research by design. The patterns are used to create a transformation design in Chapter 4 for the neighborhoods of Bospolder-Tussendijken. Furthermore, the pattern language will be used when reflecting on the design output.

"It takes a place to create a community, and a  
community to create a place"  
- Fred Kent

One of the pioneers in using urban fabric to create community is Richard Sennet (2006, 2020). He argues that people are crooked, and we cannot build in a straight way to meet them. He stated that to make for people, we should build in an open way, where people can engage and interact, so the two crooked elements can come together harmoniously.

Sennet states that contemporary designers should focus more on the city's evolution over time, rather than seeing it as something they can control. Looking at the urban design in the 20th century, he notices that buildings built at that time would rather be destroyed nowadays than be adapted. This is because their form strictly follows their function, which makes it almost impossible to adjust. He states that this strict, closed way of designing influences the lifespan of the result, making it less sustainable.

Jane Jacobs (1961) highlights that cities thrive when their design fosters layers of different activities and informal encounters, rather than imposing rigid order. This view aligns with Sennett's belief in incomplete forms and processes that evolve, allowing urban spaces to grow alongside their communities. Therefore, urban design should be open and adaptable, embracing an inevitable incompleteness that allows for evolution and adaptation over time. As Fred Kent (n.d.) states, "It takes a place to create a community, and a community to create a place." The relationship, discussed in the

quote, between space and society highlights the importance of urban design that facilitates use and encourages connection. The design should strike a balance between creating space that promotes and leaving room for interpretation, allowing users to shape it.

The Dutch 'Raad voor Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling' (n.d.) states, "People must connect themselves, but the government can increase the opportunities for this to happen" (translated from Dutch). This is reinforced by new forms of urbanism, such as "everyday urbanism" (Crawford, 2004), which emphasizes intensifying and enhancing what is already there to shape urban spaces that reflect and facilitate daily life. So, urban fabric designers and governance should focus on enabling use and behavior rather than dictating it.



THE PATTERN LANGUAGE

CONNECTING RESEARCH AND DESIGN

The pattern language is developed to connect intervention (design) to research. These are used to create a transformation design for the neighborhoods, Bospolder-Tussendijken. Furthermore, the pattern language will be used when reflecting on the design output.

The patterns of the pattern language are outlined in this thesis based on essential scales in the design that facilitate meetings among residents of a neighborhood.

The complete pattern language is included in Appendix 1.



N. NEIGHBORHOOD

- N.1 LAYERS OF PUBLICNESS LEVELS
- N.2 VISIBILITY OF COMMUNITIY NETWORK
- N.3 DESIGN INBETWEEN SPACES
- N.4 CHAIN OF SPACES
- N.5 DISTINGUISABLE NEIGHBORHOODS
- N.6 FOCUS ON SLOW TRAFFIC
- N.7 URBAN THEMED ROOMS
- N.8 AMENITIES CLUSTER
- N.9 MARKETS
- N.10 MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES
- N.11 PRIORITIZE LOCAL SHOPS
- N.12 HIERARCHY IN ROUTES
- N.13 PUBLIC SCHOOLYARDS



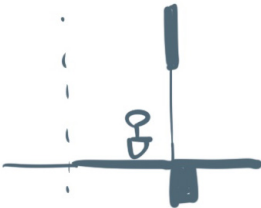
R. ROUTE

- R.1 URBAN DEPTH
- R.2 SOCIAL ACCES
- R.3 ENTRY GARDEN
- R.4 STAIRS
- R.5 SHARED PARKING
- R.6 STAYING PLACES ALONG ROUTE
- R.7 EXTENDED GALLERY



B. BLOCK

- B.1 SIZE
- B.2 JOINED UP BLOCKS
- B.3 HUMAN SCALE
- B.4 HEIGHT
- B.5 UPPERFLOOR NEIGHBORS
- B.6 LAYERED OUTDOOR SPACE
- B.7 SHARED COURTYARD
- B.8 SHARED SPACES
- B.9 READABILITY OF SPACE
- B.10 COURTYARD ENTRANCE
- B.11 SPATIAL DIVERSITY
- B.12 RECLAIM STREETS



T. TRANSITION ZONE

- T.1 CREATE FOURTH SPACES
- T.2 LIVELY PLINTH
- T.3 YOUR OUTSIDE
- T.4 IN FRONT OF AMENITIES
- T.5 PUBLIC TO PUBLIC
- T.6 EYES ON THE STREET
- T.6 SOFT TRANSITIONS

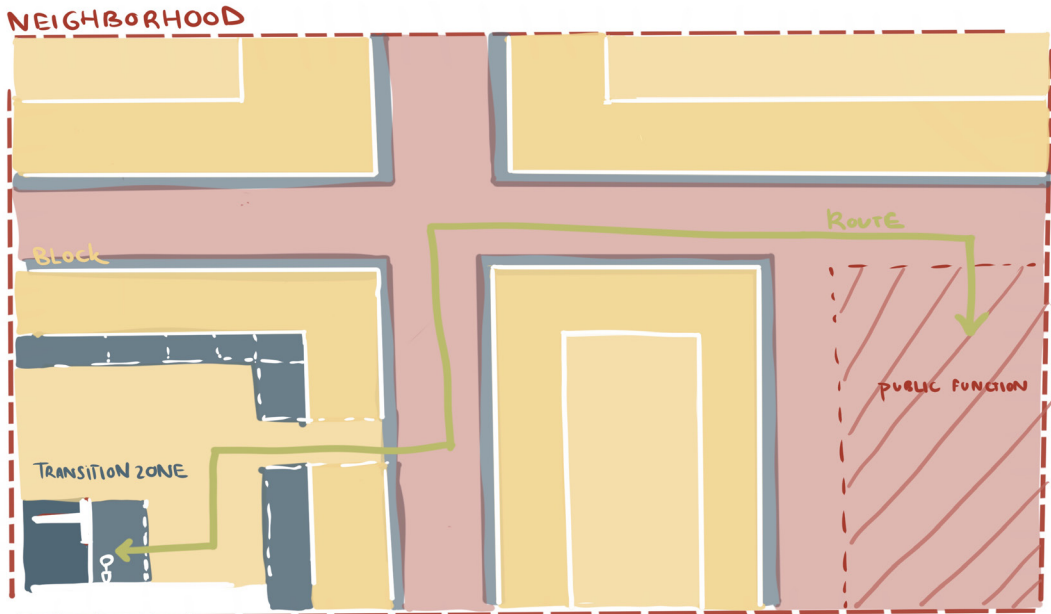


Figure 90: Scales of the pattern language  
Source: Made by author 2025

This page elaborates on the methods and sources used for developing the pattern language.

OBERVATION

To develop the patterns, observations of the public spaces in Bospolder-Tussendijken were conducted. These focused on how residents engage with the spaces in their daily routines, as well as on traces of usage, such as taken paths, used furniture, or personalized elements, that indicate informal appropriation. This helped identify where and how encounters between residents naturally occur or are currently absent in the case study.

LITERATURE

Jane Jacobs, Richard Sennett - How the city functions as a living organism and can be designed in a way that the spatial fabric connects with the inhabitants. Both writers emphasize that diversity and openness to spontaneous interaction foster a neighborhood.

Jan Gehl, David Sim - How the city can be spatially designed in a way that the space is used by its residents. The emphasis here is on creating comfortable spaces that invite people to stay, move, or meet each other.

Reindorp, Kennisplatform inclusief samenleven (KIS) - Both emphasize that meeting strangers can strengthen the cohesion in a neighborhood. KIS advocates the concept of public familiarity as a desirable lifestyle in a neighborhood. Reindorp presents the public domain as the place for encounters between others.

Kremer, Platform31 - translating concepts such as everyday attentiveness and neighborhood encounters into spatial interventions.

The literature reviewed for developing spatial interventions all emphasize the importance of physical design that interacts with social rhythms and daily practices to facilitate encounters. Where Jacobs lays the foundation, Sennett advocates for space for difference. Reijndorp and KIS add a socio-structural perspective to this, while Kremer, Sim, and Gehl focus on the human scale and experience. Platform 31 has begun the translation to practice: how design can promote encounters, this catalog of interventions builds on that.

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

The patterns and design for the case study are interconnected, influencing and inspiring each other. The spatial implications identified through design serve as solutions for the existing literature and hypothesis.

REFERENCE STUDIES

To develop spatial implications that spatialize literature into design intervention, three reference projects served as key inspirations: Woensel-West (Eindhoven), Le Medi (Rotterdam), and Vauban (Freiburg). Each of these projects demonstrates how urban design can strengthen social cohesion through spatial quality and layered publicness, principles that resonate with the approach taken in this project. Their common thread lies in recognizing the city not merely as infrastructure, but as a space for daily use and meeting, an ambition mirrored in the proposed transformation of Bospolder-Tussendijken.

Woensel West

Woensel-West, in northwest Eindhoven, was considered one of the Netherlands’ most vulnerable neighborhoods in the early 2000s. Designated a ‘Vogelaarwijk’ in 2007, it underwent a comprehensive transformation focusing on resident empowerment alongside physical improvements (Monster, 2023). Projects like Volta Galvani and Plan Celsius introduced colorful, sustainable construction and created green courtyards as meeting spaces. Today, Woensel-West is a lively, mixed neighborhood where old and new residents coexist harmoniously.

Le Medi

In the Rotterdam neighborhood of Bospolder-Tussendijken, an area long known as a vulnerable neighborhood, the residential project Le Medi was realized in 2008. This project, consisting of 93 ground-level homes, was designed with a clear vision: to create a living environment that reflects the diverse cultural backgrounds of the residents while simultaneously bringing new energy to the neighborhood (Era Contour, n.d.). The design is based on the concept of a walled city, with houses surrounding a central courtyard featuring a water element. This layout promotes social interaction and provides residents with a safe and communal space.

Vauban

In the south of Freiburg, Germany, lies the district of Vauban. The redevelopment of Vauban began in 1994 with a strong emphasis on environmentally friendly construction, social inclusion, and participatory planning. The neighborhood is designed to be car-free, promoting walking and cycling while contributing to a safe and livable public space. It is viewed as an example of a livable urban environment that fosters meetings among residents.

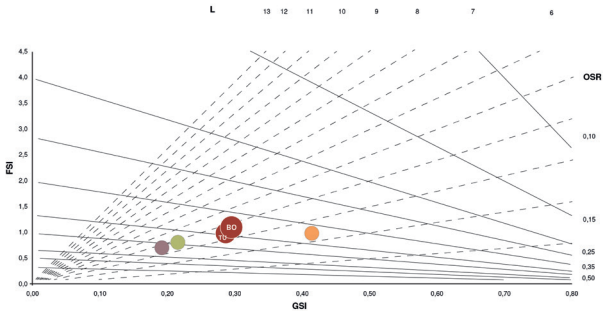


Figure 91: Space mate diagram of references compared with casestudy (Made by Author)  
Source: Made by author 2025



DETAILS  
Eindhoven  
The Netherlands

Area: 70.000 m<sup>2</sup>  
5.500 inhabitants  
Year: 2007

Figure 92: Woensel west  
Source: Made by Author 2024



DETAILS  
Rotterdam  
The Netherlands

Area: 20.000 m<sup>2</sup>  
250 inhabitants  
Year: 2008

Figure 93: Le medi  
Source: Made by Author 2024



DETAILS  
Freiburg  
Germany

Area: 40.000 m<sup>2</sup>  
5000 inhabitants  
Year: 2006

Figure 94: Vauban  
Source: Walkabout, D. (2018, July 6). Vauban, Germany - The world's first sustainable living suburb - TravelFeed. TravelFeed. <https://travelfeed.com/@izzynoei/vauban-germany-the-worlds-first-sustainable-living-suburb-103065550>



The cards all have a specific hypothesis, which is grounded in literature, observation, and reference studies. Every hypothesis has a spatial implication, which is found in literature, reference studies, observation, or through research by design.

The pattern cards connect some aspects to the interventions. They represent tangibility, operating scale, relations to strategy (explained in Chapter Four), strength, and relations to other patterns.

Strength

- based on literature in combination with reference and/or observation
- based on literature or reference studie
- based on observation or research by design

Operating scale

- 1:10 furniture
- 1:100 building
- 1:500 one urban block
- 1:1000 composition of urban blocks
- 1:5000 the whole neighborhood

Tangibility



Strategy implemented

- Meeting between direct neighbors
- Meeting between common interest
- Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

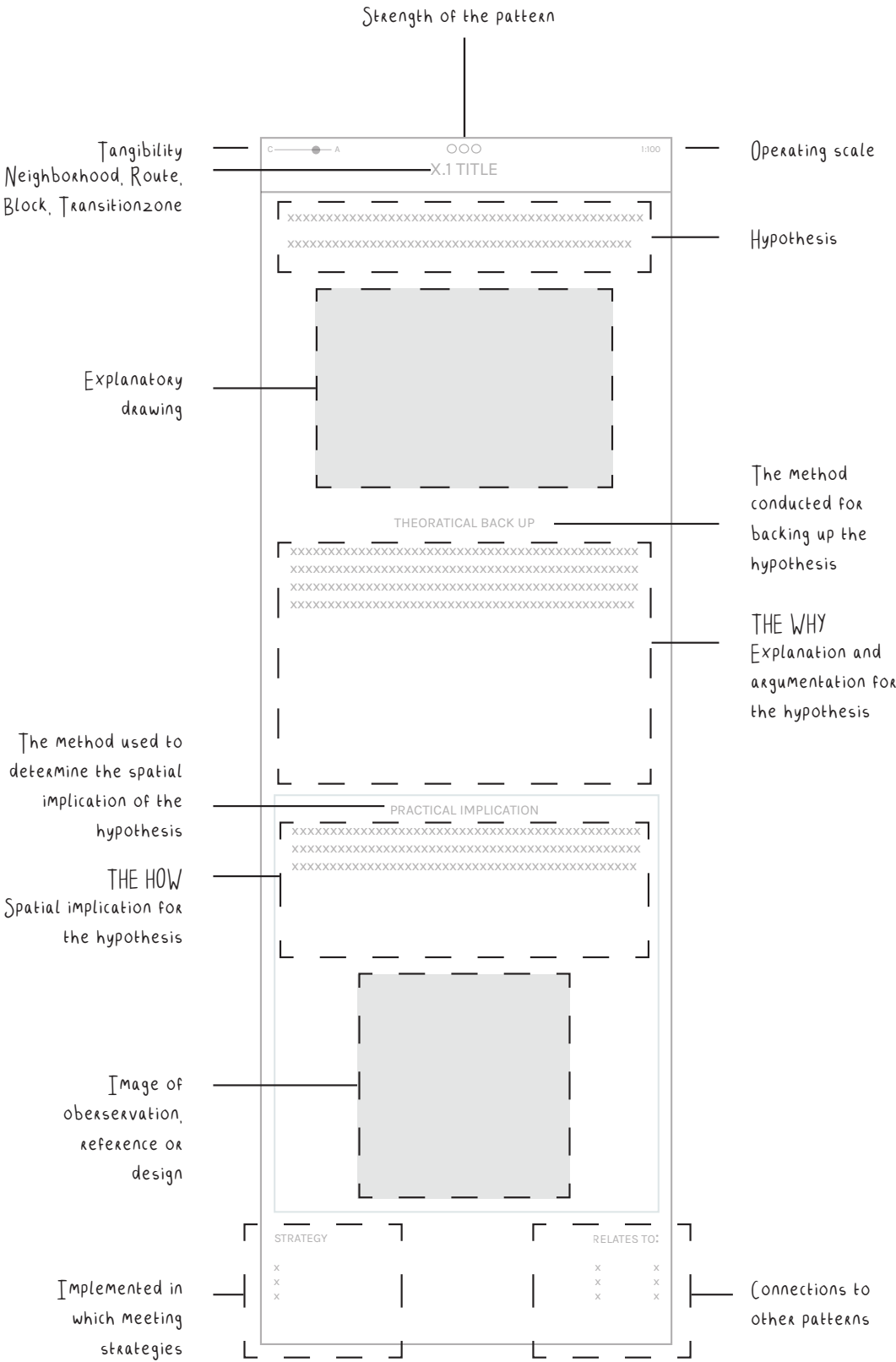


Figure 95: Elements of the pattern cards  
Source: Made by author 2025

Pattern language could serve as a guide for future designers who aim to create design interventions that facilitate meetings among residents. The patterns are designed as general solutions applicable in various settings within dense and diverse neighborhoods. However, a thoughtful analysis of the neighborhood's needs must be taken into account, if done.

The two illustrated patterns, N1 Layers of Publicness Levels and B7 Shared Courtyard, demonstrate how the patterns within this language function as a network of interrelated spatial strategies. They are not standalone solutions but enhance each other when implemented together.

The N1 neighborhood-scale pattern proposes creating spatial gradients: from public to semi-public to private spaces. This concept lays the groundwork for how people navigate and engage with their environment. On a more detailed scale, pattern B7 expands on this idea by incorporating a shared courtyard as a semi-public or collective space within the block. This courtyard serves as a social condenser, softening the transition from street to private home with a shared layer that fosters casual meetings and shared ownership among residents.

By combining these two patterns, the spatial experience becomes more coherent and intuitive. The layered approach proposed in N1 reinforces the role of the shared courtyard in B7 by clearly situating it within a broader framework of publicness. In turn, B7 activates the semi-public layer described in N1, providing a tangible spatial solution.

These patterns exemplify how the pattern language as a whole can assist future designers in creating connected interventions. When applied thoughtfully and sensitively to the needs of dense and diverse neighborhoods, the interconnected nature of the patterns ensures more resilient, legible, and socially enriching environments.

NEIGHBORHOOD

C — A

1:5000

N.1 LAYERS OF PUBLICNESS LEVELS

Creating different layers of publicness facilitates different uses

THEORETICAL BACK UP

The built environment consists of different layers of publicness, which are used in various ways (Platform31, 2021). Creating different layers of publicness in the structure of the urban fabric could indicate to users how spaces could be used (Van Dorst, 2016). Clustering public functions in one area makes other areas more private, facilitating greater engagement and use by residents.

REFERENCE STUDY

The concept of Woensel West is characterized by a clear arrangement of levels of publicness, a public axis with surrounding pockets of residential parochial clusters. The houses along the axis are taller and have a more urban character. The houses in the courtyards have soft transitions that facilitate the engagement and use of the public shared spaces. The courtyards have small entrances that indicate to users the change in territory.

Figure 96: Layers of publicness in Woensel-West

Source: Plan Cielius in Woensel-West: Cielius 3-4, (2021, June 20). Trudo: <https://www.trudo.nl/woensel-west>

IMPLEMENTED IN STRATEGIES:

RELATES TO:

Meeting between direct neighbors

Meeting between common interest

Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

N.4

N.12

R.1

B.6

B.7

B.8

Figure 98: Exemplary pattern cards  
Source: Made by author 2025

BLOCK

C — A

1:500

B.7 SHARED COURTYARD

The shared courtyard facilitates space for residents to meet

THEORETICAL BACK UP

An enclosure between buildings or inside a block provides privacy and security (Sim, 2019). The space is protected, both visually and physically, which makes it suitable for use as an extension of the life inside the surrounding buildings. David Sim (2019) describes them as spaces for tolerance in the urban fabric, playing a vital role in buffering human activities from one another. The group using the shared courtyard has a common interest in cleanliness, safety, security, and quietness at night (Sim, 2019). This creates a sense of identity and belonging to the group.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the Le Medi project, an open space has been created in the middle of the building block that can be used by residents. Adjacent gardens provide residents with space to use. It gives the opportunity for residents to see and meet each other. The courtyard is perceived as parochial, as the transitions from one territory to another are clearly defined by arches, fences, and materialization.

Figure 97: Shared courtyard in Le Medi

Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

RELATES TO:

Meeting between direct neighbors

N.1

R.1

R.2

R.6

B.6

B.8

B.9

B.10

B.11

B.12

T.3



The pattern language does not present the spatial interventions as isolated solutions but as part of a coherent network of interventions. Every pattern operates on a certain scale. However, their full potential is realized when they are implemented together. By strategically positioning interventions across scales and spatial hierarchies, the design creates an urban fabric where informal, spontaneous, and planned meetings can occur.

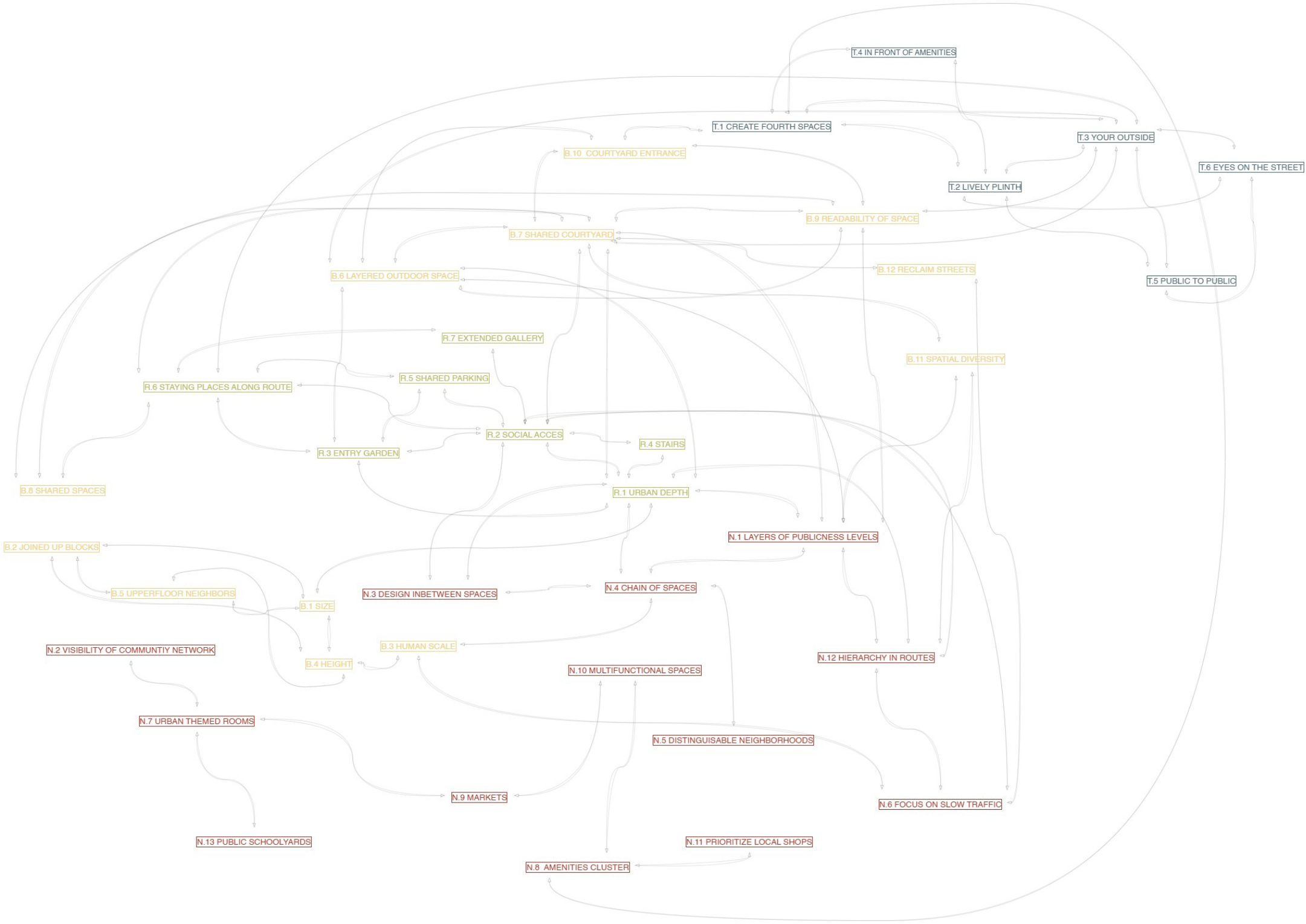


Figure 99: Pattern language network of patterns  
Source: Made by author 2025

MAPPING THE PATTERNS  
A DIAGRAM OF PUBLICNESS AND MEETINGS

The patterns are arranged in a diagram along the same axis defined in the first chapter. The diagram connects the types of meetings with the levels of publicness, along with the area highlighted where public familiarity is perceived the fastest.

In the diagram, it is evident that the patterns are primarily situated on a diagonal line where three connections are observed.

- Private/parochial spaces where affectionate/amicable meetings occur
- Parochial spaces where amicable meetings occur
- Parochial/public spaces, where amicable/anonymous meetings occur

Some patterns cannot be placed in a single spot on the diagram, as they can be utilized across all levels of publicness and facilitate various types of meetings.

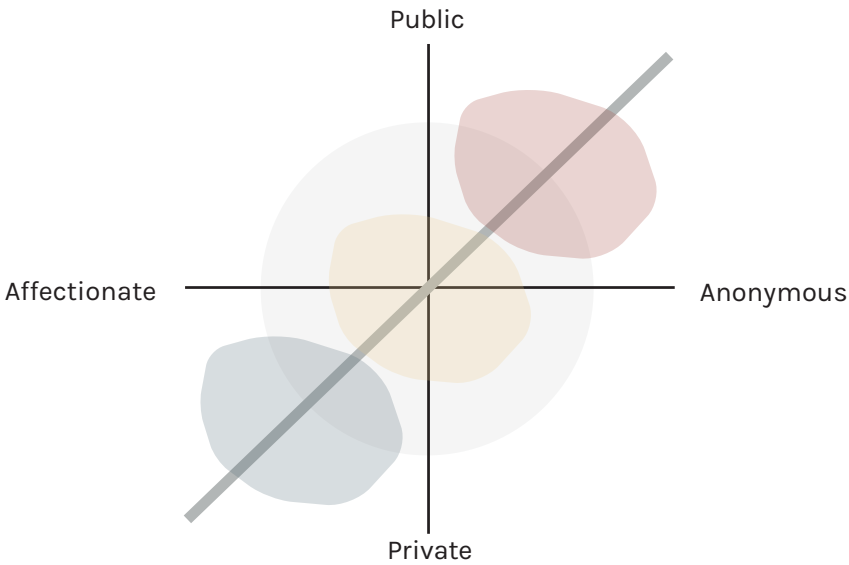


Figure 100: Field in pattern field  
Source: Made by author 2025

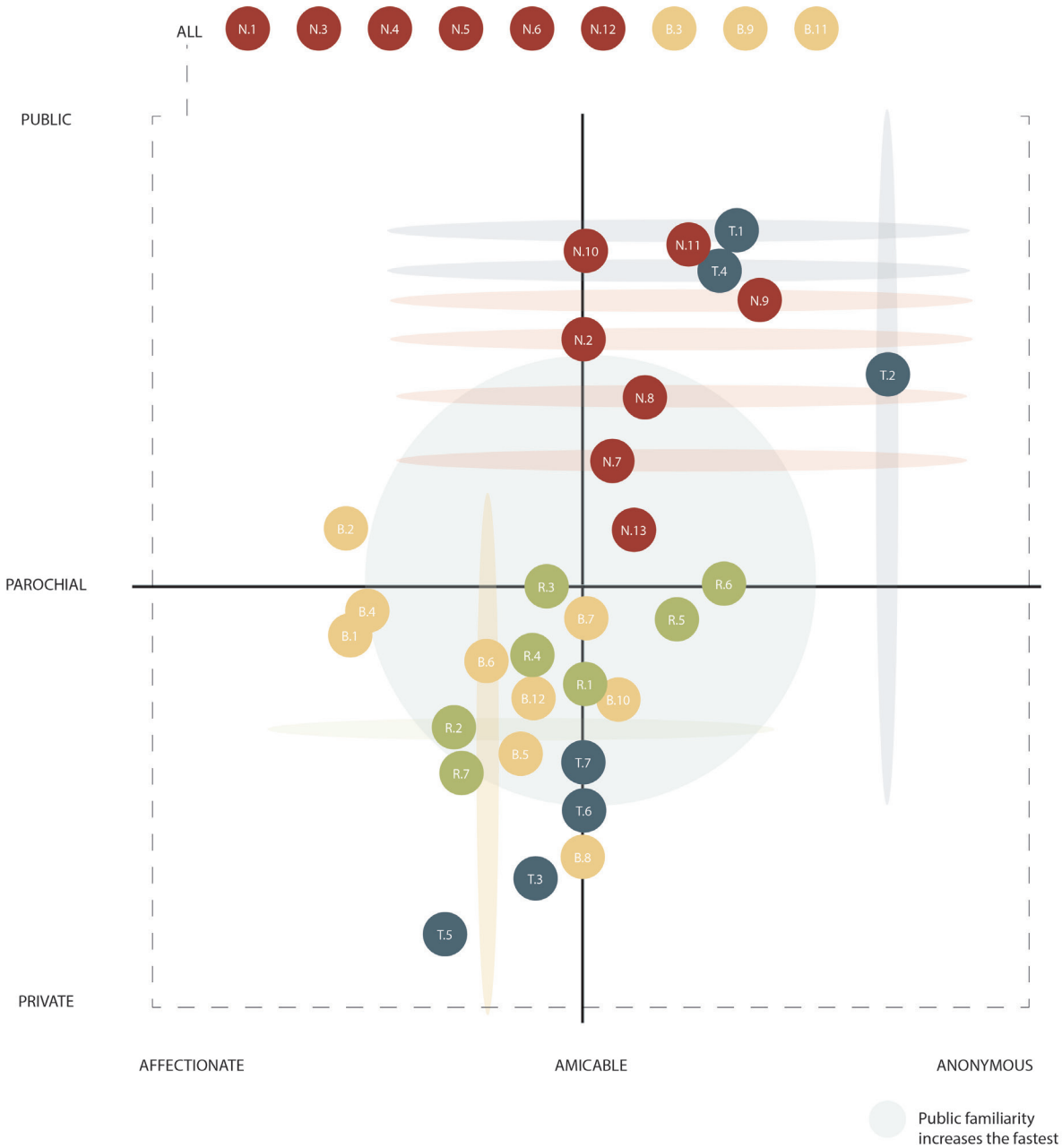


Figure 101: Pattern field  
Source: Made by author 2025



THREE STRATEGIES  
LENSES FOR FACILITATING MEETINGS

As seen in the analysis and literature study, meetings among residents can be divided into different types, which relate to the varying levels of publicness of the public space. The three important fields have been developed into three strategies for enabling meetings between residents of a neighborhood:



MEETING BETWEEN ALL RESIDENTS  
OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD



MEETING BETWEEN RESIDENTS WITH  
COMMONALITIES



MEETING BETWEEN DIRECT  
NEIGHBORS

The strategies serve as lenses to develop the design concept, influencing the desired level of publicness in certain areas and the intended use and types of meetings.

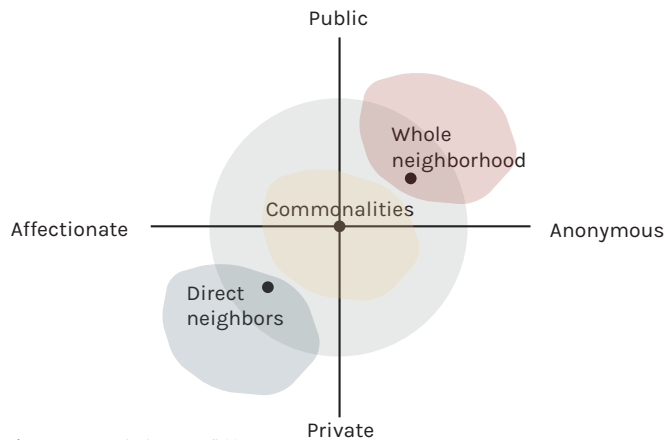


Figure 102: Strategies in pattern field  
Source: Made by author 2025

Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

- N.1 Layers of publicness levels

N.2 Visibility of community network

N.3 Design inbetween spaces

N.4 Chain of spaces

N.6 Focus on slow traffic

N.8 Amenities cluster

N.9 Markets

N.10 Multifunctional spaces

N.11 Prioritize local shops

N.12 Hierarchy in routes
- R.6 Staying places along route

B.3 Human scale

B.4 Height

B.11 Spatial diversity

Meeting between commonalities

- N.1 Layers of publicness levels

N.2 Visibility of community network

N.3 Design inbetween spaces

N.4 Chain of spaces

N.7 Urban themed rooms

N.9 Markets

N.10 Multifunctional spaces

N.11 Prioritize local shops

N.13 Public schoolyards

B.3 Human scale

T.2 Lively plinth

T.6 Eyes on the street

Meeting between direct neighbors

- N.1 Layers of publicness levels

N.3 Design inbetween spaces

N.4 Chain of spaces

N.5 Distinguishable neighborhoods

N.6 Focus on slow traffic

N.10 Multifunctional spaces

N.12 Hierarchy in routes

R.1 Urban depth

R.2 Social acces

R.3 Entry garden

R.4 Stairs

R.5 Shared parking

R.6 Staying places along route
- R.7 Extended gallery

B.1 Size

B.2 Joined up blocks

B.3 Human scale

B.4 Height

B.5 Upperfloor neighbors

B.6 Layered outdoor space

B.7 Shared courtyard

B.8 Shared spaces

B.9 Readability of space

B.10 Courtyard entrance

B.11 Spatial diversity

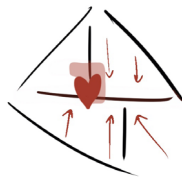
B.12 Reclaim streets
- T.2 Lively plinth

T.3 Your outside

T.5 Public to public

T.6 Eyes on the street

T.6 Soft transitions



NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER  
MEETING BETWEEN ALL RESIDENTS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

This strategy focuses on anonymous, spontaneous meetings among residents, which can develop into amicable interactions over time.

The approach centers on the public areas of Bospolder-Tussendijken, where there is potential for establishing a neighborhood center. Daily activities, such as access to essential amenities, will be clustered to encourage residents to utilize the space regularly, concentrating them in a specific area. This increases the likelihood of residents meeting each other spontaneously on multiple occasions. Additionally, the neighborhood center serves as a venue for local events and activities, with the district house of Bospolder-Tussendijken and the weekly market also situated there.

The design enhances the space available for people to gather and observe others, with a primary focus on pedestrian movement and staying. This transformation aligns with the concept of the city as a theater, where individuals can participate in people-watching and casual observation, creating a dynamic urban experience. By emphasizing pedestrian activity, the street becomes a setting that encourages spontaneous and anonymous encounters.

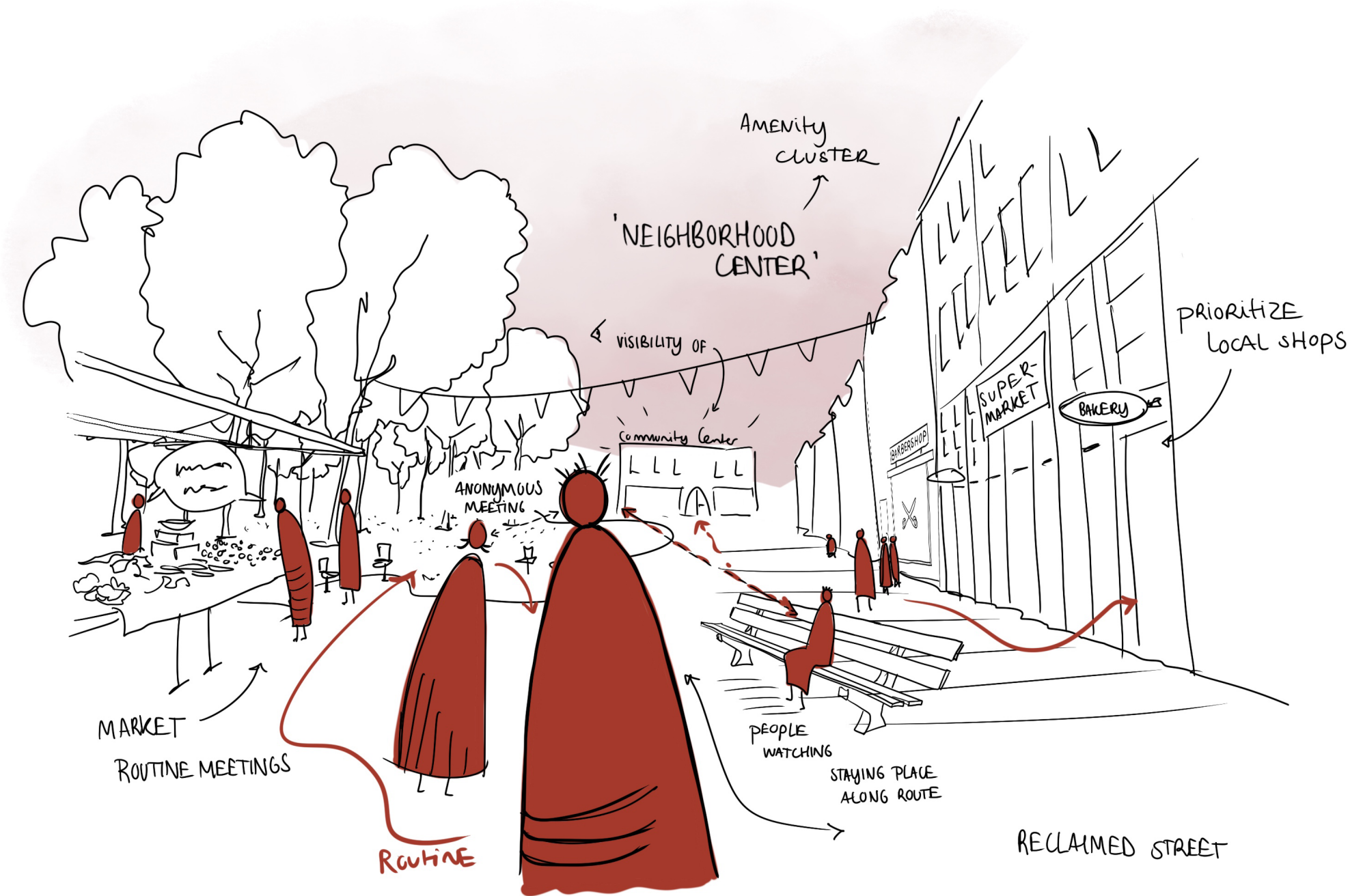


Figure 103 Sketch of space promoting neighborhood center strategy  
Source: Made by author 2025





URBAN ROOMS  
MEETING BETWEEN RESIDENTS WITH COMMONALITIES

This strategy focuses on amicable, spontaneous meetings among residents who share commonalities, facilitated in parochial, neighborhood-oriented spaces with binding activities. These spaces are called urban rooms.

Designing urban "rooms" tailored to the interests and preferences of neighborhood residents creates environments where individuals with commonalities can foster interactions. These rooms are strategically designed to reflect the needs and desires of the residents. It is essential that these spaces integrate well with the existing urban fabric, connecting public areas to their surroundings, thereby creating places perceived as intimate and safe.



Figure 104: Suggestion of urban rooms in Bospolder-Tussendijken  
Source: Made by author 2025

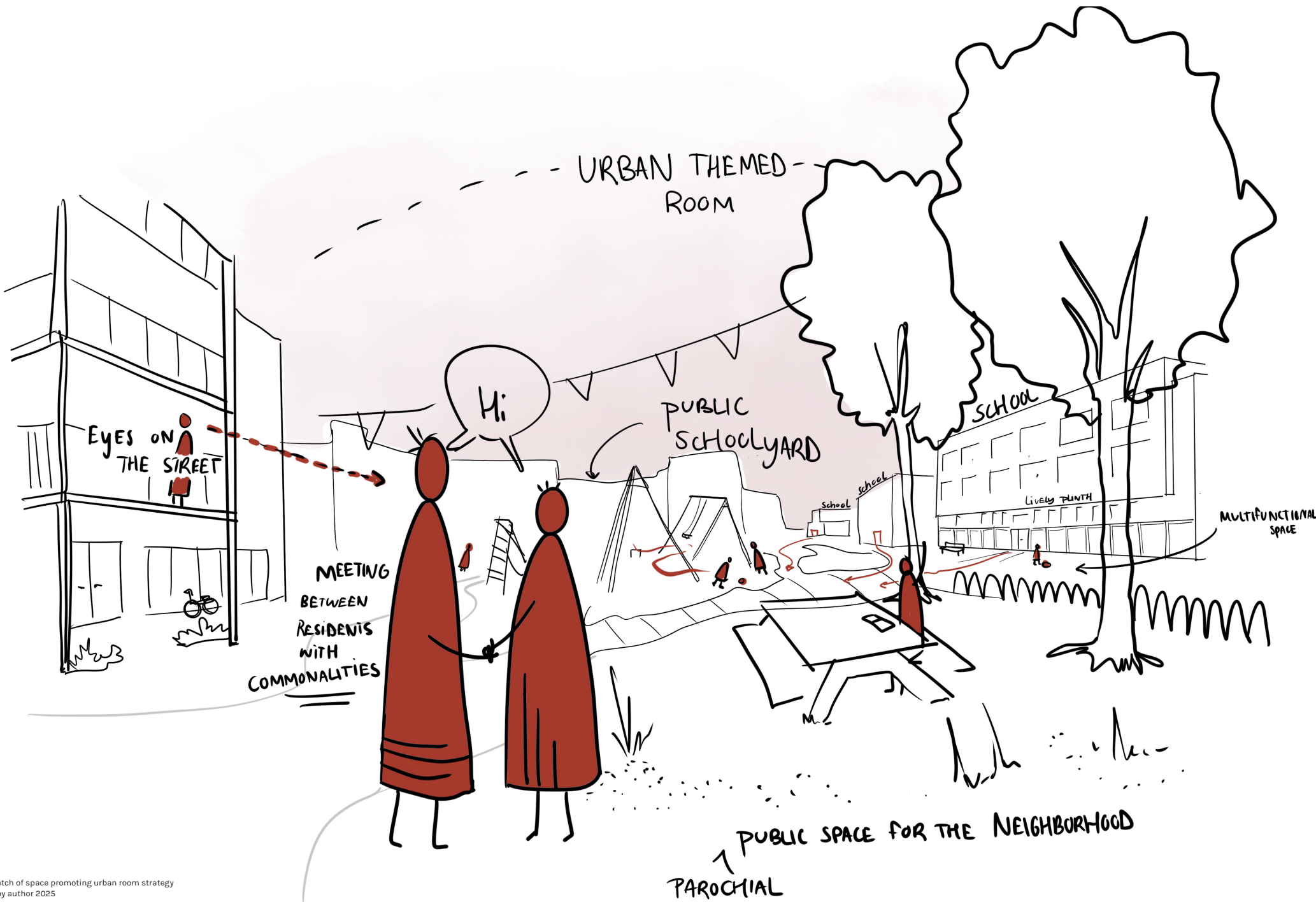


Figure 105: Sketch of space promoting urban room strategy  
Source: Made by author 2025



SUPERBLOCKS  
MEETING BETWEEN DIRECT NEIGHBORS

This strategy focuses on amicable, spontaneous meetings among neighbors who share the same street or courtyard (direct neighbors), facilitated in parochial, block-oriented spaces through bonding activities.

The concept involves creating urban superblocks by transforming streets and underutilized spaces into more private, car-free areas. This shift redefines the function of the spaces, encouraging residents to engage more actively with their outdoor environment. By softening the boundaries between private homes and public spaces, these redesigned streets foster greater interaction and a sense of connection among residents.

This approach enhances urban depth, creating spaces that encourage more intimate and amicable social interactions.

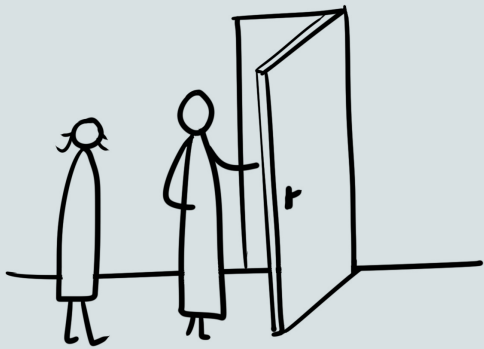


Figure 106: Suggestion of super blocks in Bospolder-Tussendijken  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 107: Sketch of space promoting super block strategy  
Source: Made by author 2025





CHAPTER 4

# DESIGN FOR MEETING

PROPOSE - SUBQUESTION 4

What urban design can enhance the role of a city as a meeting place, within the dense and diverse neighborhood of Bospolder-Tussendijken?

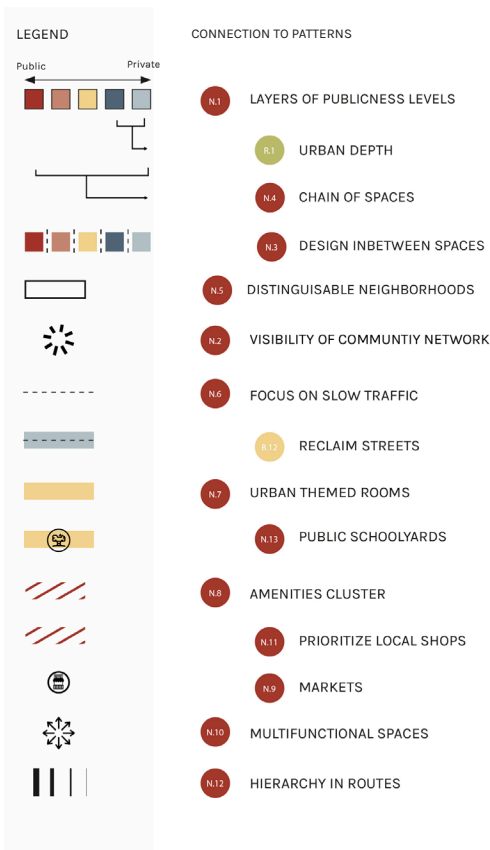
In this chapter, the design is highlighted and explained. The design was developed using three strategies that emerged from the literature review and case study analysis. These three strategies are connected to the patterns established in the pattern language. This relationship is illustrated by the tests conducted on the design through the creation of thematic maps. Key aspects of the design are examined in greater depth and presented from an eye-level perspective.

At the neighborhood level, a distinction is made between different public spaces that influence user groups. Thus, the public character of Schiedamsseweg and the neighborhood character of the fishing square will be clarified through urban design. As a result, the spaces will become more readable for users and utilized to their full potential.

In the neighborhood, places are being created with different themes in the public space. These urban rooms are intended for people with commonalities and promote spontaneous encounters. These places are accessible to everyone but are primarily focused on functions that cater to the needs of residents. Thus, the playground within a cluster of schools is made public, allowing children and parents to meet each other here. The function of the public space is also determined by the surrounding functions. By placing functions near each other, spontaneous exchanges can occur between different social groups.

To implement the third strategy, meetings between direct neighbors, parochial spaces are created near homes. Due to the parochial atmosphere, recognition

By creating routes from public spaces to homes with a social character, the chances of spontaneous encounters increase. The social route is created by establishing recreational functions along the route and carefully designing transitions to different territories.



**Figure 108** Concept drawing for the casestudy conencted to implemented patterns  
Source: Made by author 2025



SPATIALIZING STRATEGIES  
FOCUS ON THE AREA OF INTEREST

Building on the concept for Bospolder-Tussendijken and the introduction of the three strategies, which serve as lenses to guide the design, this phase focuses on the previously analyzed site: the area of interest.

In this area, the three strategies are implemented to transform the urban fabric into a space that fosters interaction among neighbors.

The Gijsinglaan flats are central to the strategy, which aims to facilitate meetings between direct neighbors, Superblocks. Analysis identified this location as the least supportive of social interactions; the courtyards are perceived as too public for residents to feel a sense of ownership, yet too private for passersby to use, leading to underuse. The spatial layout lacks clarity, identity, and interaction between buildings and open spaces.



Figure 109: Underused courtyard  
Source: Made by author 2025

The second strategy, Urban Rooms, is applied in and around Park 1943. Although the park offers various facilities, it feels disconnected from the neighborhood due to poor spatial integration and limited passive surveillance. Consequently, it fails to realize its potential as an active and inviting public space.



Figure 110: Low quality disconnected public space  
Source: Made by author 2025

Lastly, the creation of a neighborhood center that encourages interaction among all residents is proposed at Visserijplein. While the square hosts a lively weekly market, it remains underused on other days and lacks a design that invites everyday use. Adjacent to the square, Pier 80, a key community building, struggles to establish a visual and functional connection with the surrounding public space.



Figure 111: Empty market square  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 112: Three strategies implemented in area of interest  
Source: Made by author 2025



BUILDING A STRUCTURE THAT FACILITATES SOCIAL LIFE

The design of the zoom-in area within the case study is represented in a three-layered diagram, where each layer builds upon the previous one. The sequence of steps illustrates how the design intervenes in the existing situation, transforming the urban fabric into a concept that enables and facilitates meeting among neighbors.

The first step presents the current spatial structure of Bospolder-Tussendijken. In red, it marks the buildings selected for demolition. These choices were made carefully, with the principle to remove as little as possible. Rather than representing a loss, this selective demolition creates opportunities to implement a new spatial structure. It clears the ground for a layout that centers daily life and facilitates meeting.

The second step introduces the new composition of the urban fabric. A revised distribution of publicness is implemented, creating a framework of inner courtyards, squares, and routes that foster public familiarity. The neighborhood gains a legible structure with a strong central core, where key functions are clustered: local amenities, markets, community rooms, and informal gathering spaces. The balance between private, shared, and public domains are carefully designed to strike a balance between anonymity and intimacy. Buildings and open spaces together form a choreography of meeting places. The existing Gijsinglaan flats are integrated with new buildings, creating shared courtyards that actively promote meeting among direct neighbors.

The final step illustrates how the new design becomes animated by everyday life. Resident routines and movement patterns intersect at strategic points, where public familiarity grows through repetition and recognition. Children play, older adults rest, neighbors greet one another, and strangers become familiar faces. Public space is no longer just infrastructure, it becomes the social stage of the neighborhood, a place where anonymity and intimacy coexist within a dynamic web of social infrastructure.

CLEAR SPACE

The spatial structure of Bospolder-Tussendijken shows buildings, marked in red, for selective demolition, aiming to minimize loss while creating a new structure to enhance daily life and meeting.

CREATE PLACE

The urban fabric is redesigned to improve public spaces with a balance of private, shared, and public areas, fostering intimacy and anonymity. The existing Gijsinglaan flats are integrated with new buildings to create shared courtyards that encourage neighborly connections. A central core features local amenities, markets, and gathering spots.

ENABLE LIFE

The area transforms from mere infrastructure to social stages of the neighborhood, allowing anonymity and intimacy to coexist within a dynamic social network.

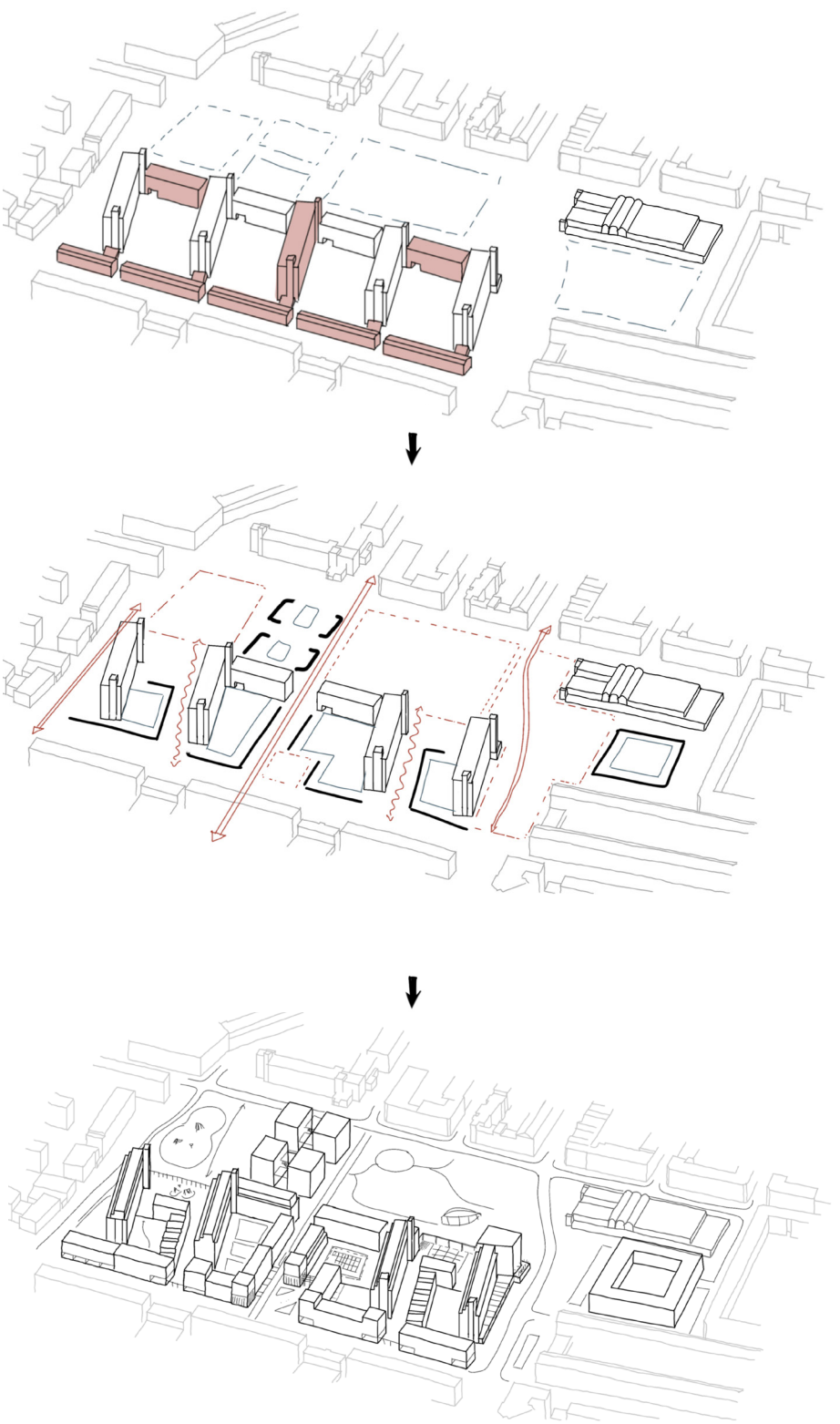


Figure 113: Built up diagram and calculation density  
Source: Made by author 2025



A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD EXPERIENCE  
SEEN AT EYE LEVEL

This page illustrates how spatial design transforms the experience of public space from the user’s perspective. Eye-level views provide insight into how residents and passersby relate to their environment. The before-and-after views demonstrate how strategic spatial interventions can shift a street or square from a passageway into a place of encounter.

View 1 shows how a disconnected edge of the park in 1943 and the Gijsinglaan flats is transformed into a community entry garden: a soft threshold that strengthens the social fabric within the block while making the playground more accessible, connected, and visible for residents.

View 2 transforms one of the existing courtyards into a clear public route that invites movement and visibility through the block. This improves the continuity of the urban fabric and encourages spontaneous interactions along the way, making other paths within the urban block feel more informal and perceived as more private.

View 3 reimagines an empty, hard-paved square as a softer, more intimate neighborhood square, offering opportunities for residents to meet throughout the week, not just during market days.

Together, these views show how eye-level design, informed by design interventions on a larger scale: publicness, hierarchy, and social infrastructure, can help reclaim space for residents, supporting spontaneous, informal, and repeated meetings.

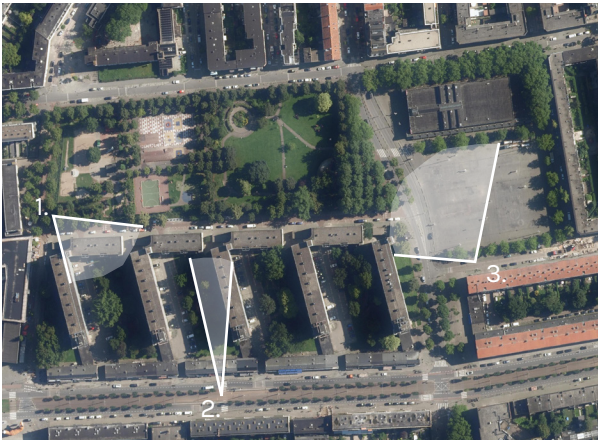


Figure 114: Locations of eye-level views  
Source: Made by author 2025

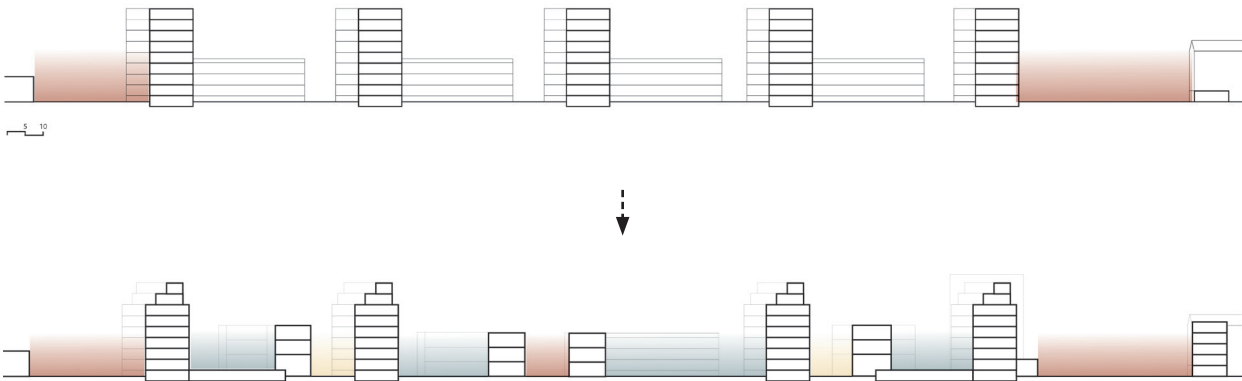


Figure 115: Change in section and levels of publicness  
Source: Made by author 2025

VIEW 1: Entry garden provides improved transition to playground and parochial space for neighbors.



Figure 116: Before view of park and gijsinglaan edge  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 117: After view of park and gijsinglaan edge and entrygarden  
Source: Made by author 2025

VIEW 2: Public route guides passers-by through urban block.



Figure 118: Before view of ending route through neighborhood  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 119: After view of public route through gijsinglaan block  
Source: Made by author 2025

VIEW 3: More intimate neighborhood square facilitates meeting all week long.



Figure 120: Before view of Visserijplein  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 121: After view of Visserijplein  
Source: Made by author 2025



- LEGEND:
- Public path
  - Grass
  - Buildings
  - pedestrian path
  - Car road
  - Entrance / shared space
  - Public function
  - Green
  - Terrace



Figure 122 Plan 1:1000  
Source: Made by author 2025

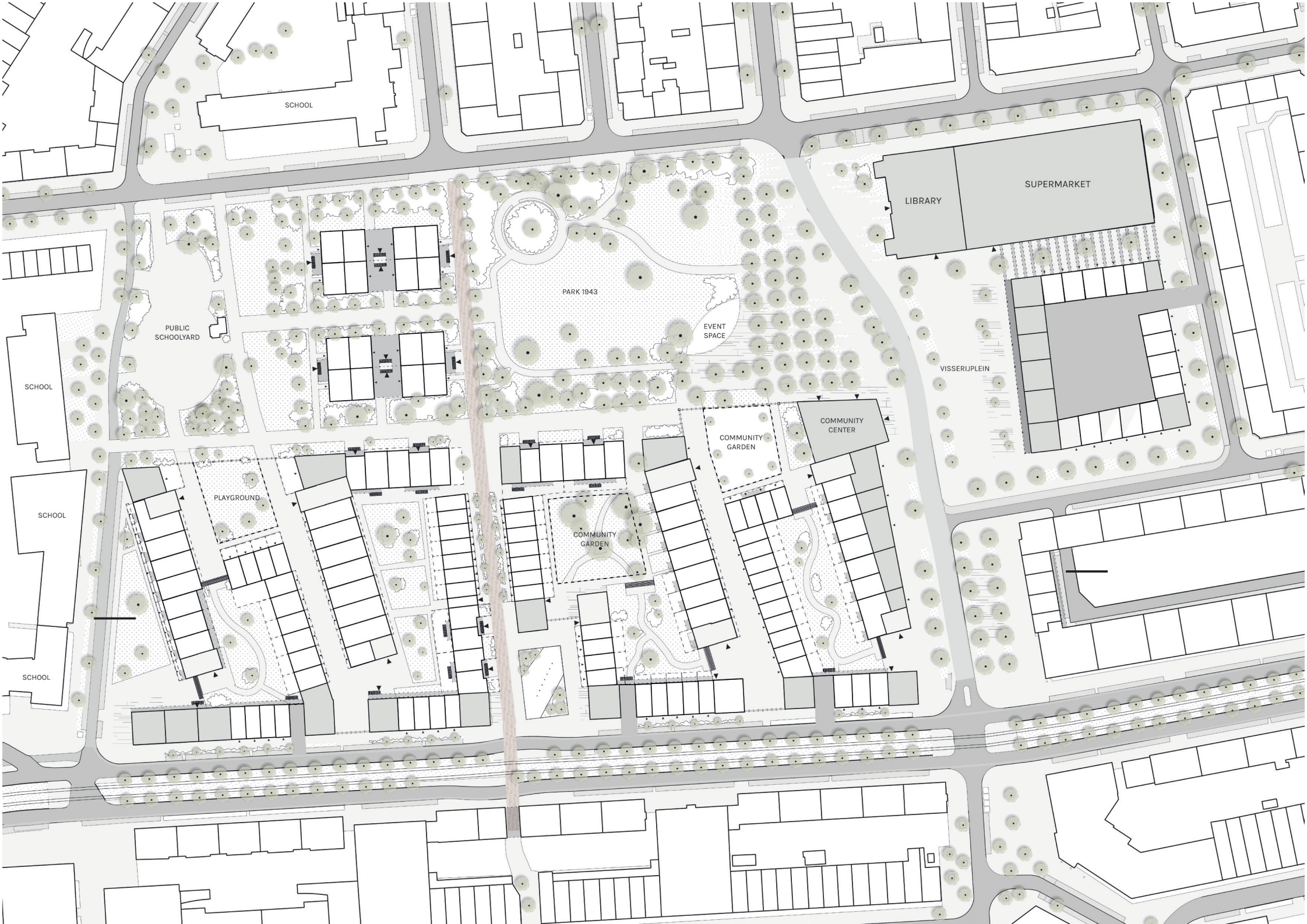


Figure 123 Plan 1:1000  
Source: Made by author 2025



The design for Bospolder-Tussendijken has been tested against a number of core aspects that are essential for facilitating encounters through public space. These thematic maps illustrate how the design addresses themes such as the distribution of public space, routes, entrances, usage, transition zones, and spatial diversity.

The chosen themes are directly linked to the developed pattern language, in which literature is translated into spatial patterns that enable encounters between residents. By examining the design through this thematic lens, it becomes clear how and where in the neighborhood the proposal contributes to public familiarity, spontaneous encounters, and social use of the space.

The connection of design to a pattern is shown with the following.

X.1 'PATTERN NAME'

FUNCTIONS



Figure 124: Function map  
Source: Made by author 2025

- Residential
- Public (City) function
- Neighborhood function
- Shared spaces
- Public space function



- URBAN THEMED ROOMS N.7
- MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES N.10
- PRIORITIZE LOCAL SHOPS N.11
- SHARED COURTYARD B.7
- SHARED SPACES B.8
- EYES ON THE STREET T.6

The type of functions determines whether people are invited to a specific place. This influences the level of publicness, as seen in the urban depth analysis. Allowing functions in certain areas can help organize the desired perceived publicness. Adjacent to Schiedamseweg, functions that operate on a larger scale can be (re)introduced. Next to Visserijplein (the neighborhood center square), local functions that are important to the local social infrastructure are desired. They could enable a hotspot for local contact and meetings among residents of the entire neighborhood. Within the courtyards, only residential functions are desired, along with shared spaces that provide areas for residents to use and meet.



From the literature review, it has emerged that the balance and level of publicness strongly influence the use and types of meeting. The balance of levels of publicness in the public spaces that facilitate desired use and meeting is therefore very essential in the design.

In the courtyards, an intimate parochial experience is created, enhanced by the gentle transitions from homes to the courtyard and a clear entrance to the inner gardens. These parochial spaces are necessary to facilitate encounters between direct neighbors.

The design is enriched by a rare typology of space, the entry garden. This space ensures a softer transition to the public domain by facilitating a clear parochial territory, which gives entry to the large existing Gijsinglaanflats.

The Schiedamse Weg functions at the city level, so this space will be experienced as the most public. The Visserijplein functions at the neighborhood level and when the market is held on a larger scale. This also emphasizes the temporality of the experienced publicness.

In the design, the urban rooms are truly parochial. They facilitate use for the residents of the neighborhood but have a more intimate character due to connections to adjacent functions and human scale.

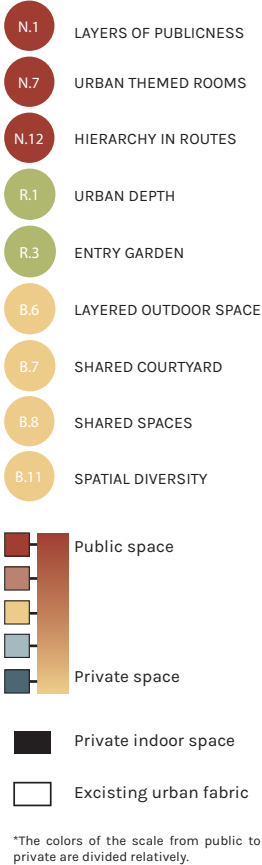


Figure 125: Balance of publicness levels  
Source: Made by author 2025

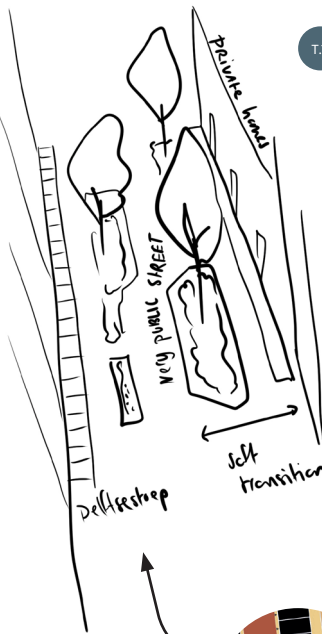




TRANSITIONS ZONES

To experiment with the design of transition zones, the model is used to draw on top of. Hereby is focussed on creating readability of space.

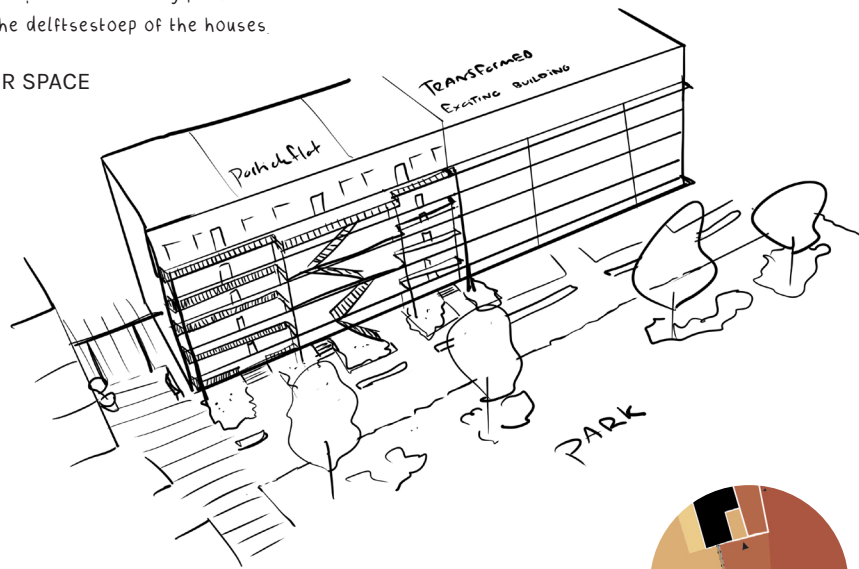
B.9 READABILITY OF SPACE



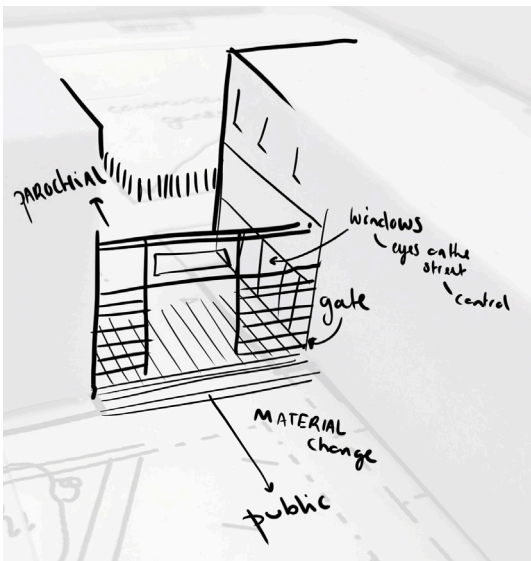
T.7 SOFT TRANSITIONS

As this street is more public than others, the transition is made softer, gradually moving from public to private. A stroke of green is added, and a secondary path runs alongside the delftse stoep of the houses.

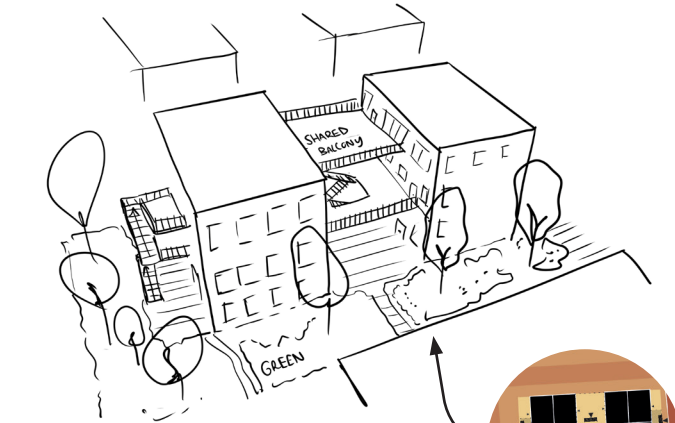
T.3 YOUR SPACE



B.10 COURTYARD ENTRANCE

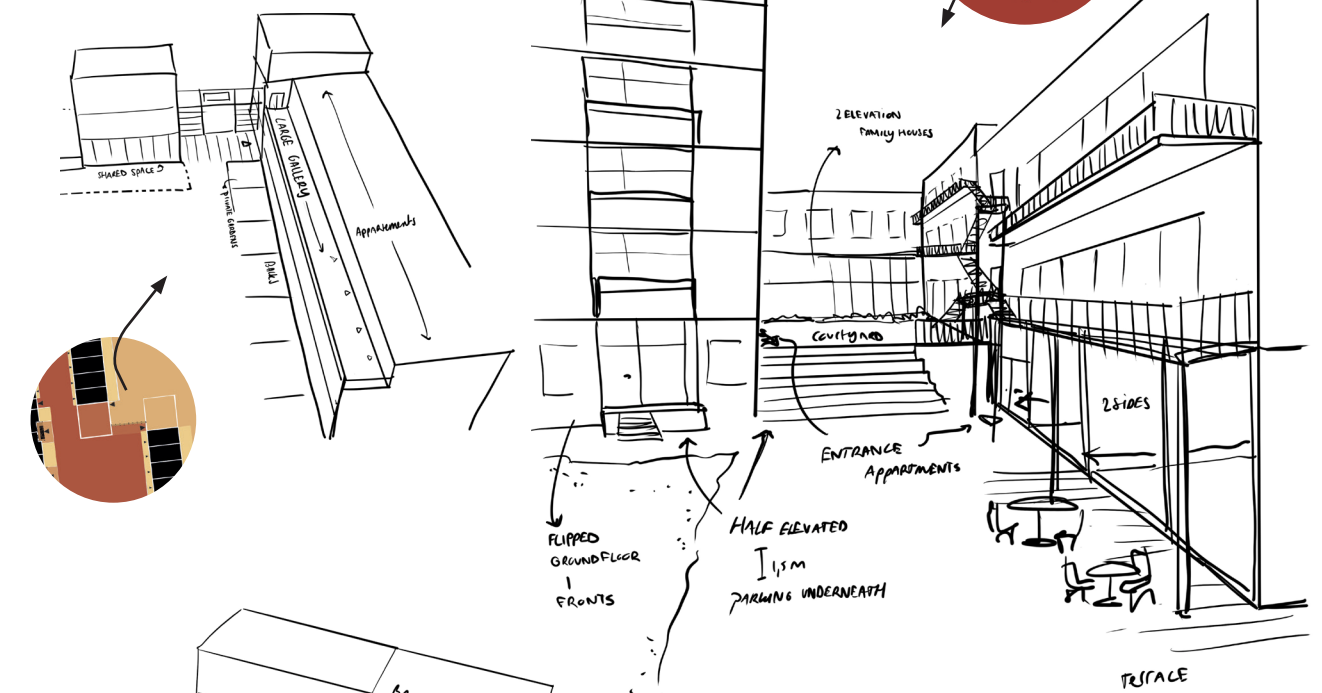


The flats adjacent to the neighborhood square have been provided with a new building edge that facilitates space for local stores. The houses are accessible via the created rooftop terrace on top.



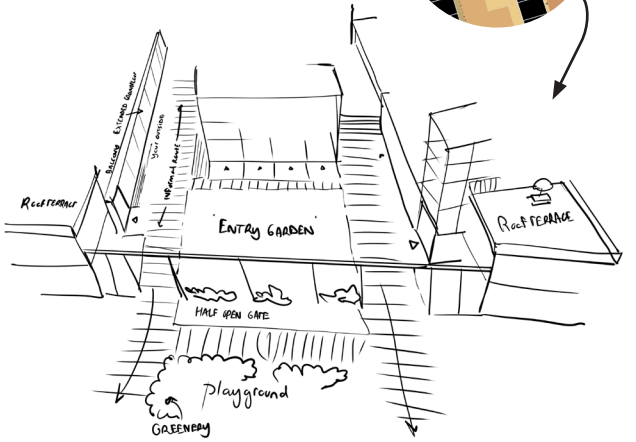
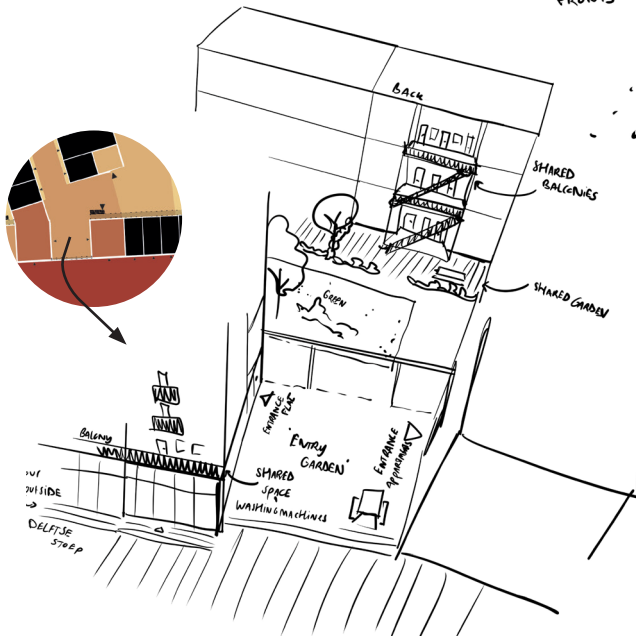
B.10 COURTYARD ENTRANCE

As this courtyard entrance has a strong transition from public to private, a clear visual boundary is created. This transition is highlighted by a gate and changes in materials.



Entry gardens provide a parochial space for residents of the larger flats. In the design, they also function as transition zones from the public space to the courtyard.

R.3 ENTRY GARDEN



The transition of the Gijsinglaan flats to the park is softened. Connections to the residential buildings are restored by designing direct access to the public space from the ground floor, thereby increasing safety and visibility within the park 1943.

N.3 DESIGN THE INBETWEEN SPACES

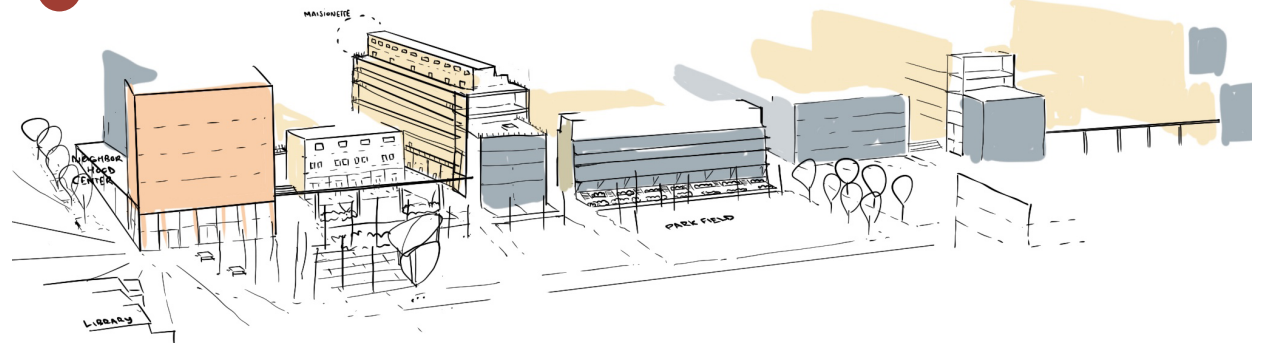


Figure 126: Model sketches of transition spaces  
Source: Made by author 2025



SPACE FOR ALL RESIDENTS TO MEET  
NEIGHBORHOOD SQUARE

The square, along with Schiedamseweg, constitutes one of the most public spaces within the design. Due to its central location in the neighborhood, the square serves as an important meeting place for local residents.

Currently, the square is home to Pier 80, which includes the community center and the library. These functions are hardly visible, making them not very inviting for newcomers. In the new design, the community center will occupy a more prominent and central location on the square, in a striking building that stands out due to its architecture and color. This change will give the square more of the character of a community center. The library will remain in its current location but will feature an open and lively facade that enhances accessibility.

On the former site of the community center, a supermarket will be constructed. This daily facility will draw residents to the square, naturally encouraging informal gatherings.

The square itself is also undergoing a transformation. The previously empty area will be filled with a new residential building. This building will make the square more intimate and activate the ground floor with space for local shops, an essential part of the social infrastructure in Bospolder-Tussendijken.

With the addition of the residential building, the square shifts closer to the street. This area will become part of the public domain and will adopt the character of a 'reclaimed street': a space where staying, meeting, and moving coexist. At the same time, there will still be sufficient open space available for multifunctional use, such as neighborhood activities and the weekly market.



Figure 127: Visibility of Community center  
Source: Made by author

N.2 VISIBILITY OF COMMUNITY NETWORK

N.11 PRIORITIZE LOCAL SHOPS



Figure 128: Eye level view of transformed Visserijplein  
Source: Made by author 2025

- N.8 AMENITIES CLUSTER
- N.6 FOCUS ON SLOW TRAFFIC
- B.12 RECLAIMED STREETS



Figure 130: Soft map of neighborhood square  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 129: Stores with balconies as pergolas  
Source: Made by author

T.2 LIVELY PLINTH

N.11 PRIORITIZE LOCAL SHOPS

T.4 IN FRONT OF AMENITIES

T.1 CREATE FOURTH SPACES

N.10 MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES

N.9 MARKETS

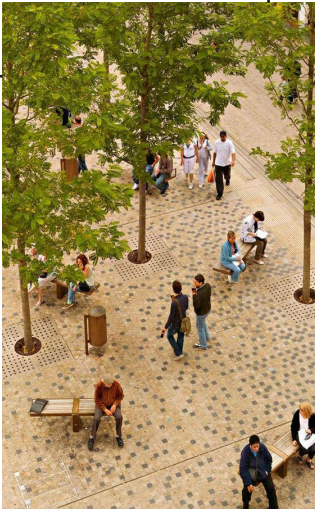


Figure 131: Informal staying area  
Source: Bonn Square by Gramme Massie Architects (n.d.). <https://moool.com/en/bonn-square-by-gramme-massie-architects.html>



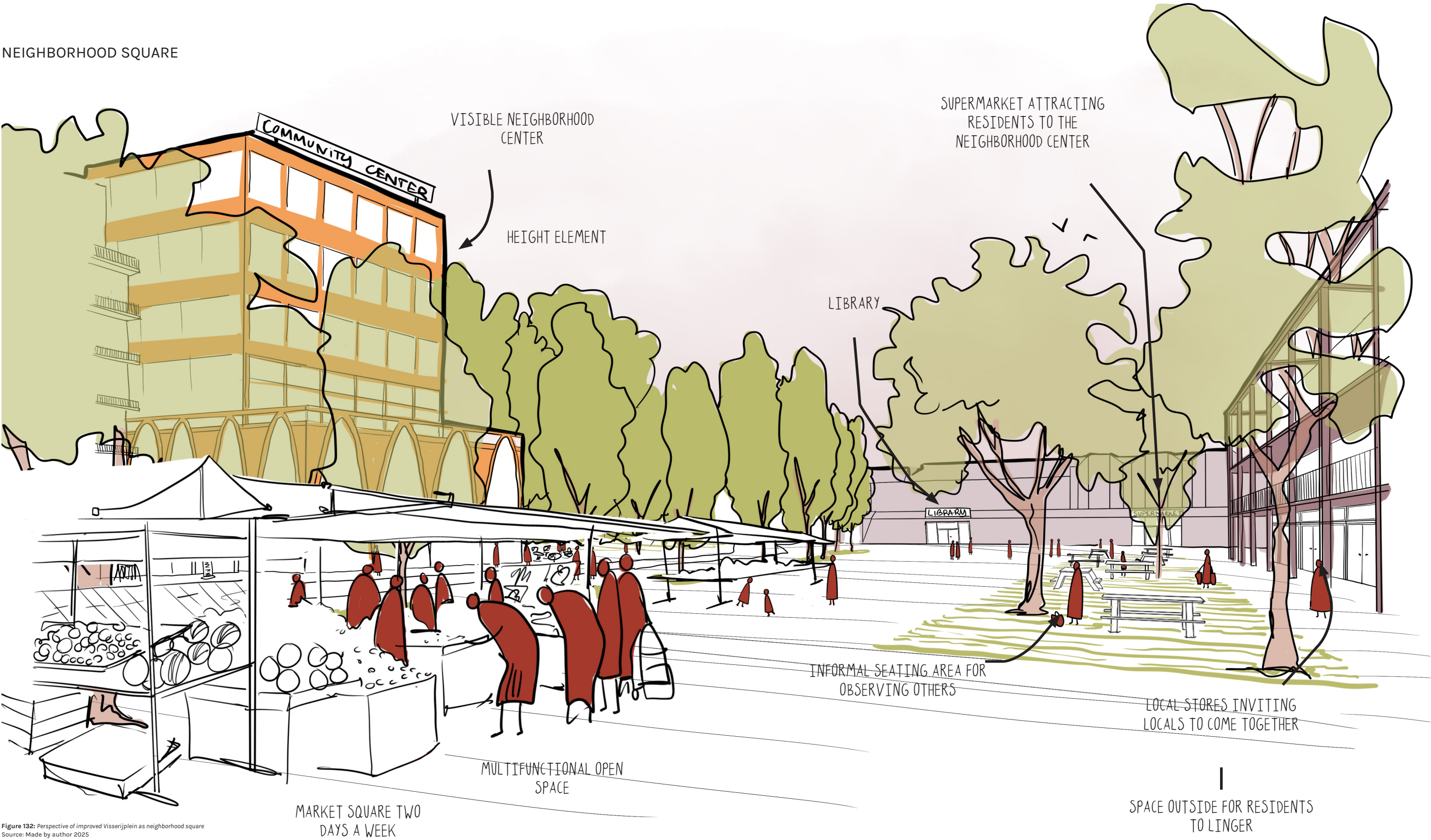


Figure 132: Perspective of improved Visserijplein as neighborhood square  
Source: Made by author 2025



TEMPORAL PUBLIC SPACES  
ADAPTING TO SOCIAL RHYTHMS

The visserijplein becomes a multifunctional space. The square facilitates the weekly market; however, it remains empty when not in use. In the design for Bospolder-Tussendijken, the square is relocated to the Grote Visserijstraat. A new residential housing block and local stores will be developed. The street will function as a square, reclaiming the street as a space for residents. This reclamation will encourage spontaneous meetings among residents, forming the heart of public life in the city. In her groundbreaking work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Jane Jacobs argues that the vitality, safety, and social cohesion of a neighborhood are directly linked to the use and design of its streets.

The street will change function over time, according to the needs of the residents. During market days or other events, it will not serve as a road for cars. However, on non-market days, it will still be possible to use the street by car.



Figure 133: Multifunctional use of car road and market space  
Source: Made by author 2025

Zooming out on the scale of the district reveals the existing car network of Rotterdam. Along the borders of the neighborhood, large roadways exist. These routes will guide cars throughout the entire city. The Schiedamseweg connects to these larger routes; however, the fastest way according to Google Maps (2025) is along the bigger routes to reach the other side of the neighborhood, as traffic jams often occur due to the numerous pedestrians crossing.

When reclaiming the Grote Visserijstraat as a neighborhood square, residents can still access their homes throughout the neighborhood, thanks to other connections to the surrounding streets.



Figure 134: Infrastructure following design that facilitates meeting  
Source: Made by author 2025



N.12 HIERARCHY IN ROUTES

By introducing spatial diversity in the network of streets and routes within the neighborhood, accommodating different forms of use and user groups becomes possible. A central, more public route through the neighborhood acts as a carrier of movement and interaction. This route connects important public places such as Park 1943 and the Rooftop Park, attracting visitors and passersby. This creates a natural distribution of public activity, where more informal, secondary streets, such as those in the Gijsinglaanflats block, maintain a quieter and more private atmosphere.

These informal streets are short, set back within the neighborhood structure, and are primarily used by the directly adjacent residents. Due to their location and scale, they offer space for informal use, such as meetings between neighbors, playing children, or small-scale community initiatives. This fosters a layered network in which publicness and privacy complement one another: the public route stimulates urban dynamics, while the secondary streets maintain a more intimate, neighborhood-oriented setting.

B.11 SPATIAL DIVERSITY

In the design, spatial diversity is embraced by clearly distinguishing between the front and back of the buildings. All residential entrances are oriented toward the same shared space, ensuring clarity and coherence in the public realm. The front side of the buildings, being the most exposed, is expected to accommodate more formal interactions and contribute to the collective appearance of the street. In contrast, the back side, which is less visible from public routes, allows for more informal and personalized use. As Sim (2019) notes, residents generally accept and even expect greater freedom of use in these more secluded areas, enabling a diversity of everyday practices to emerge across the site.

T.7 SOFT TRANSITIONS

The pattern of soft transitions highlights the importance of gradual shifts from public to private spaces to ensure a sense of privacy. This approach will facilitate meetings between residents as they interact more within public spaces. The design required for creating a gradual transition depends on the severity of the shift; a larger and softer transition is needed in more public areas to guarantee a sense of privacy and prevent anonymous behavior from occurring.

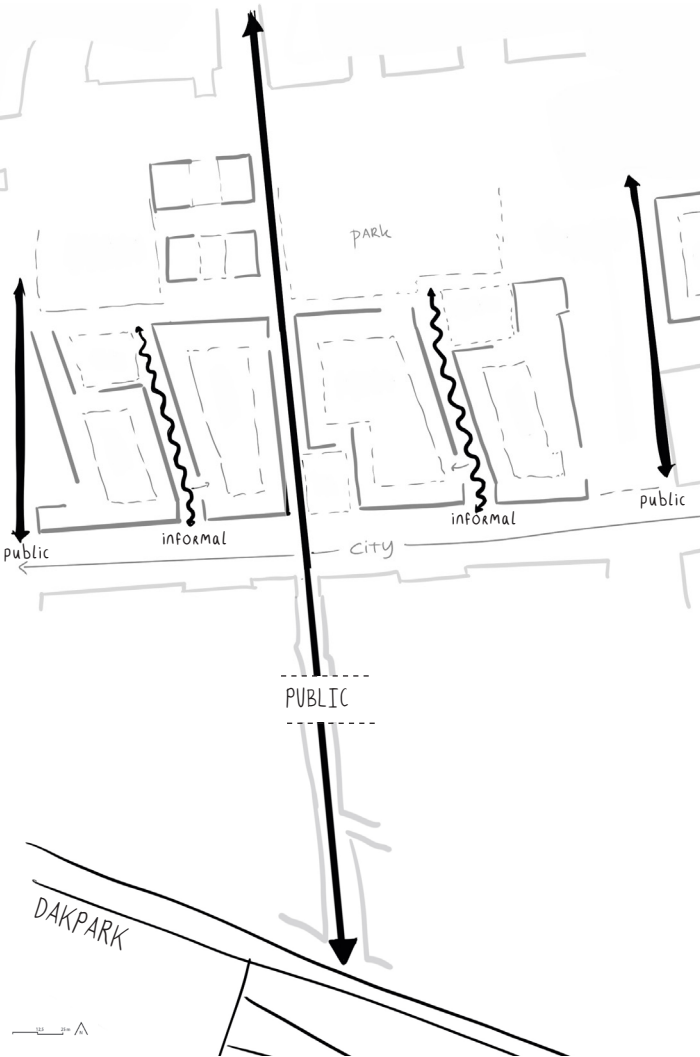


Figure 135: Hierarchy in routes  
Source: Made by author 2025

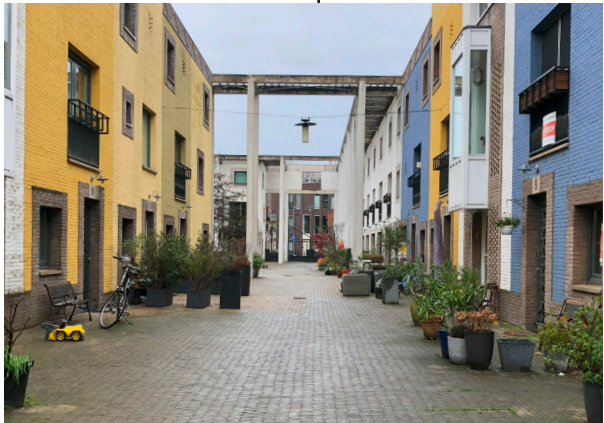
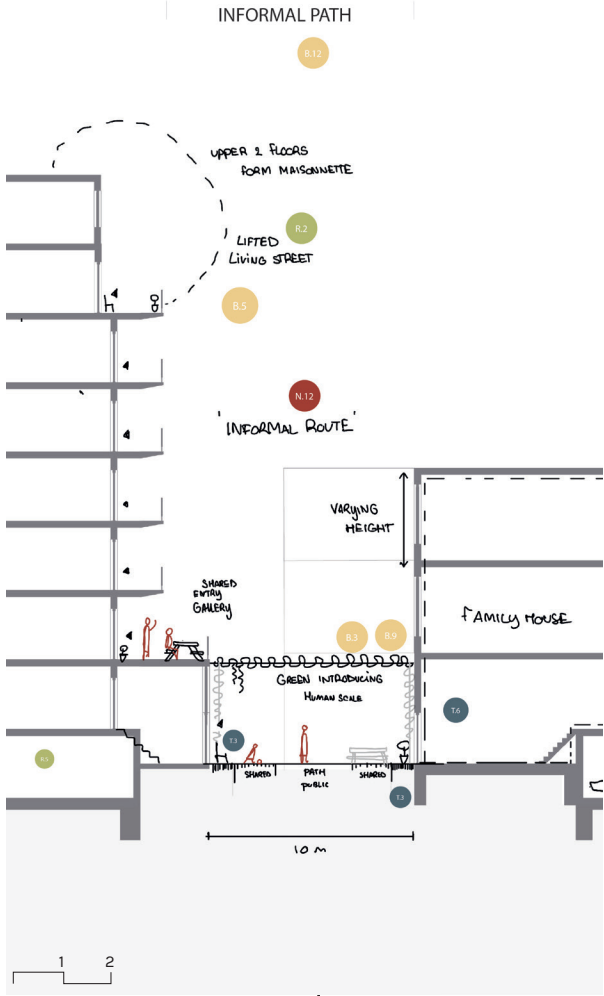


Figure 136: Used streets in Le Medi  
Source: Made by author

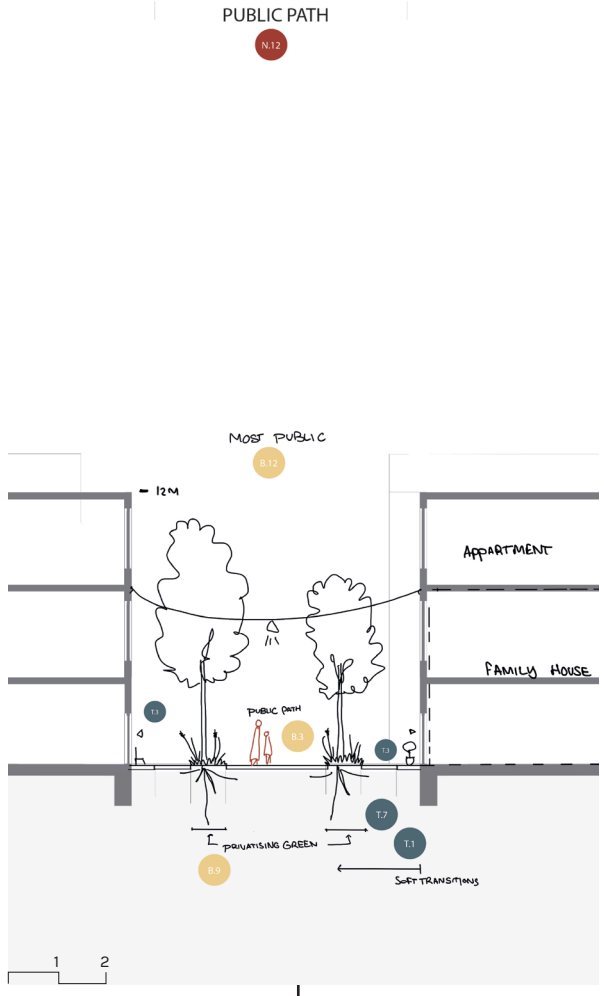


Figure 137: Secondary street and privatizing green creating softer transition  
Source: Made by author

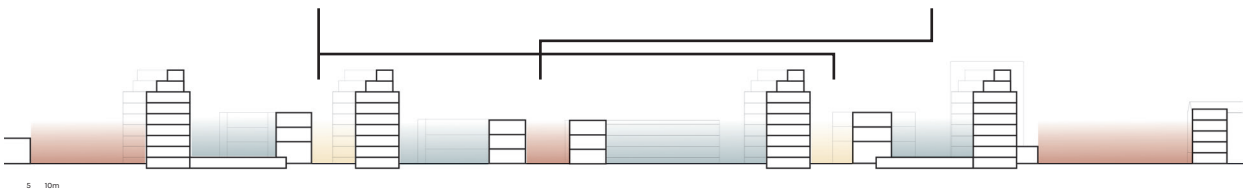


Figure 138: Section of Gijsinglaan flats with levels of publicness  
Source: Made by author 2025





Figure 139: Perspective of public route guiding residents through Gijsinglaanflats block  
Source: Made by author 2025



SPACE FOR NEIGHBORS WITH COMMONALITIES TO MEET  
URBAN ROOMS

In the design, part of the existing Park 1943 is utilized as an 'urban room': a public space with a neighborhood-oriented function. This area encourages spontaneous encounters among local residents with shared interests or routines, commonalities.

Where the park currently features a fenced playground with limited hours, the design transforms it into a more accessible and communal play area. During the day, this space serves as a schoolyard. By opening up the area and connecting it to the surrounding urban environment, social safety is enhanced. New homes with views of the playground and foot traffic routes promote social oversight and vibrancy. The site is surrounded by four schools, all of which will enjoy direct access to the new playground outlined in the design.

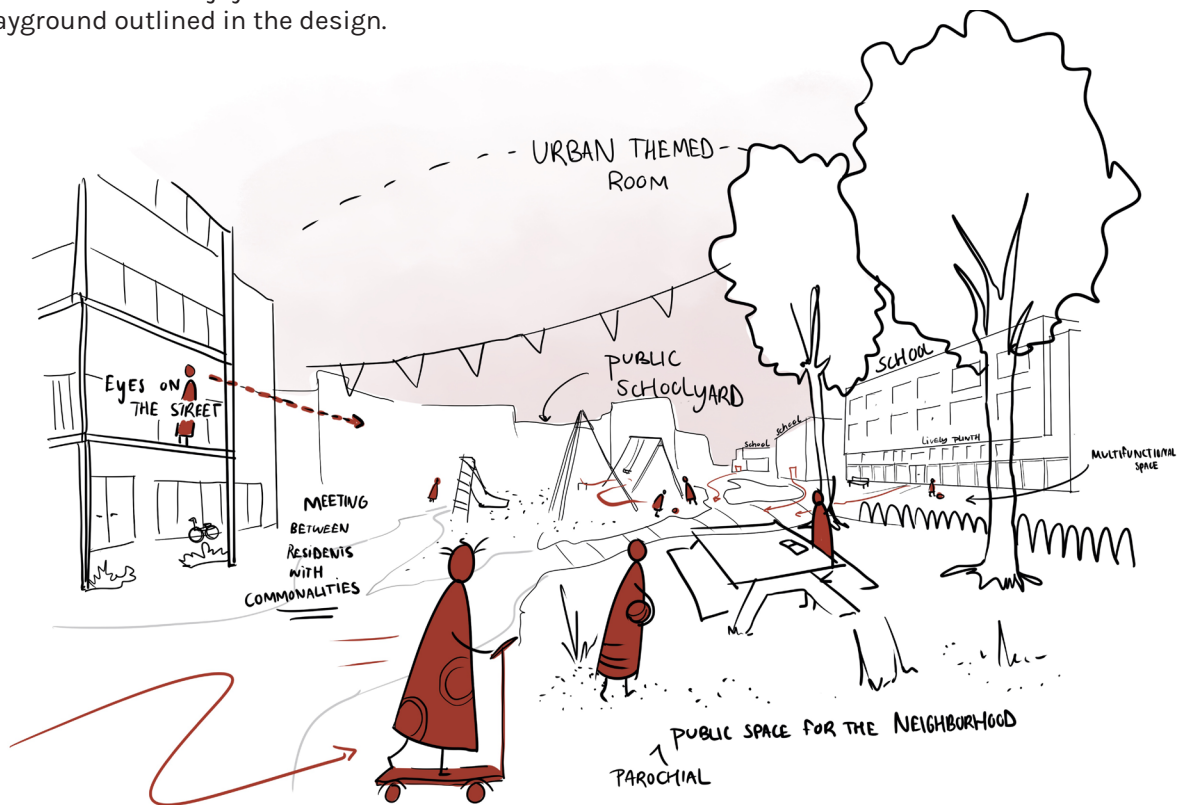


Figure 140: Eye-level of urban room  
Source: Made by author 2025

To soften the park's scale and create a more intimate atmosphere, a new residential block has been introduced, dividing the park into smaller, more distinct zones.

The result is an inviting place where neighborhood residents, such as parents with children, can come, not only to stay but also to naturally connect with other residents of the area.



Figure 141: Soft map of urban room  
Source: Made by author 2025



The design focuses on facilitating meetings among direct neighbors by creating block-oriented spaces that encourage social bonding. The Gijsinglaan flats are essential to this strategy, as they have been identified as obstacles to social interaction. The courtyards are too public for residents to feel a sense of ownership, yet too private for visitors, resulting in underutilization and a lack of community identity. To address these issues, the design introduces a new urban layout with clearly defined levels of public areas, including inner courtyards, entry gardens, and pathways that enhance familiarity and promote meetings. By converting streets and underused spaces into private, car-free zones, the design encourages usage and strengthens connections among residents. This approach enriches the urban environment and creates intimate spaces that support residents' social lives.

- R.6 STAYING PLACES ALONG ROUTE
- R.3 ENTRY GARDEN
- B.9 READABILITY OF SPACE



Figure 142: Open fence: visual barrier territories  
Source: Muis, R. (n.d.). Bouw markante woontoren Highnote in Almere dichterbij. Architectenweb.  
<https://architectenweb.nl/nieuws/artikel.aspx?id=48524>



Figure 143: Soft map of parochial neighbors spaces  
Source: Made by author 2025



As previously mentioned, the design of the existing flats hinders interaction among their residents. Due to the good condition of these flats, they are preserved; however, they are being transformed into a design that facilitates meetings among their residents.

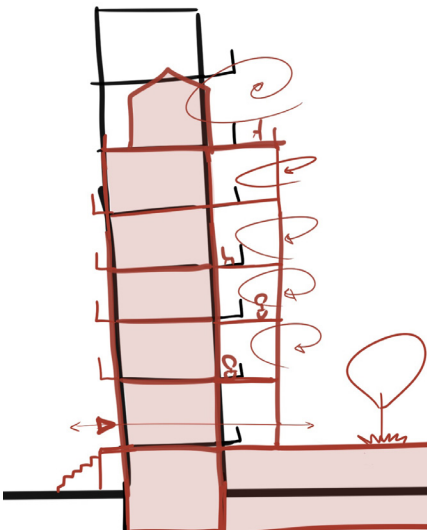


Figure 146: Concept drawing of Flat transformation  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 144: From balconies to access  
Source: De menselijke maat in het stedenbouwkundig westfel, (n.d.). Stedebouwe & Architectuur. <https://www.stedebouwarhitectuur.nl/artikel/graandheid-fake-welzijn/de-menselijke-maat-in-het-stedenbouwkundig-westfel>



Figure 145: Heightened access to public space  
Source: Esch Sintzel Architecten, Paola Corsini, Philip Heckhausen. Conversion of a Wine Storage into Housing, (n.d.). Divisare. <https://divisare.com/projects/483980-esch-sintzel-architecten-philip-heckhausen-paola-corsini-conversion-of-a-wine-storage-into-housing>

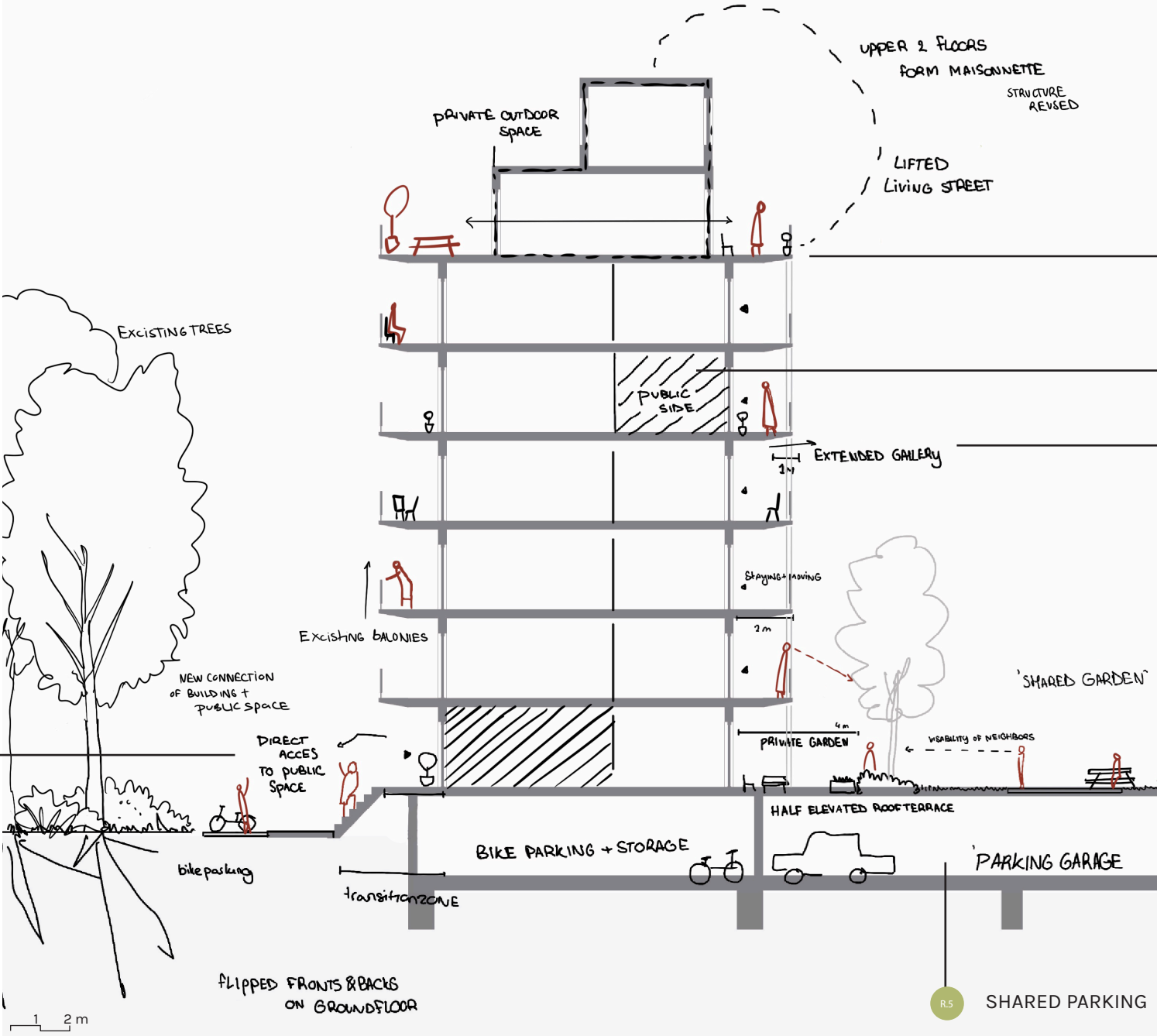


Figure 147: Transformation of Gijsinglaanflat connected to patterns  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 148: Upper floor houses in Vauban  
Source: Green City Times, (2023, November 8). The greenest town in Europe. <https://www.greencitytimes.com/europes-most-sustainable-city/>



Figure 149: Lifted living street  
Source: Broghmans, L., & Broghmans, L. (2023, March 6). Justus van Effendi - met opmerkelijke luchtstraat - architectuurwizer. <https://architectuurwizer.be/de-luchtstraat/>

B.5 UPPER FLOOR NEIGHBORS

B.4 HEIGHT

T.5 PUBLIC TO PUBLIC

R.7 EXTENDED GALLERY



Figure 150: Extended gallery  
Source: Schaatsbergen, R. (2024, November 27). Iamthe-mantingh-we-moet-en-sloppen-met-bouwen-voor-gezamenheid. <https://www.dearchitect.nl/2023/27/iamthe-mantingh-we-moet-en-sloppen-met-bouwen-voor-gezamenheid>



Figure 151: Wide galleries in Vauban  
Source: Google, (2023). Google Maps (Streetview). Retrieved on 20 April 2025, of <https://www.google.com/maps>

SHARED ENTRANCES FOR SOCIAL ACCESS

R.2 SOCIAL ACCESS

In the new structure of the residential blocks, consideration has been given to organizing shared entrances. These provide opportunities for encounters among direct neighbors. From the literature and pattern language, it became clear that creating a social entrance is crucial for connecting residents. The entrances are oriented so that most homes are linked to the public space by a short distance. As a result, residents feel a stronger connection to the ground level.

All existing galleries are expanded to create space for residents, facilitating meetings. The shared entrances of the multilevel buildings provide areas for staying activities. Some entrances feature postboxes, a shared kitchen, or laundry facilities.

Most homes also have access to shared parish spaces with residents of the bow block in the form of entrance gardens and courtyards. These common areas facilitate opportunities for meetings among direct neighbors.

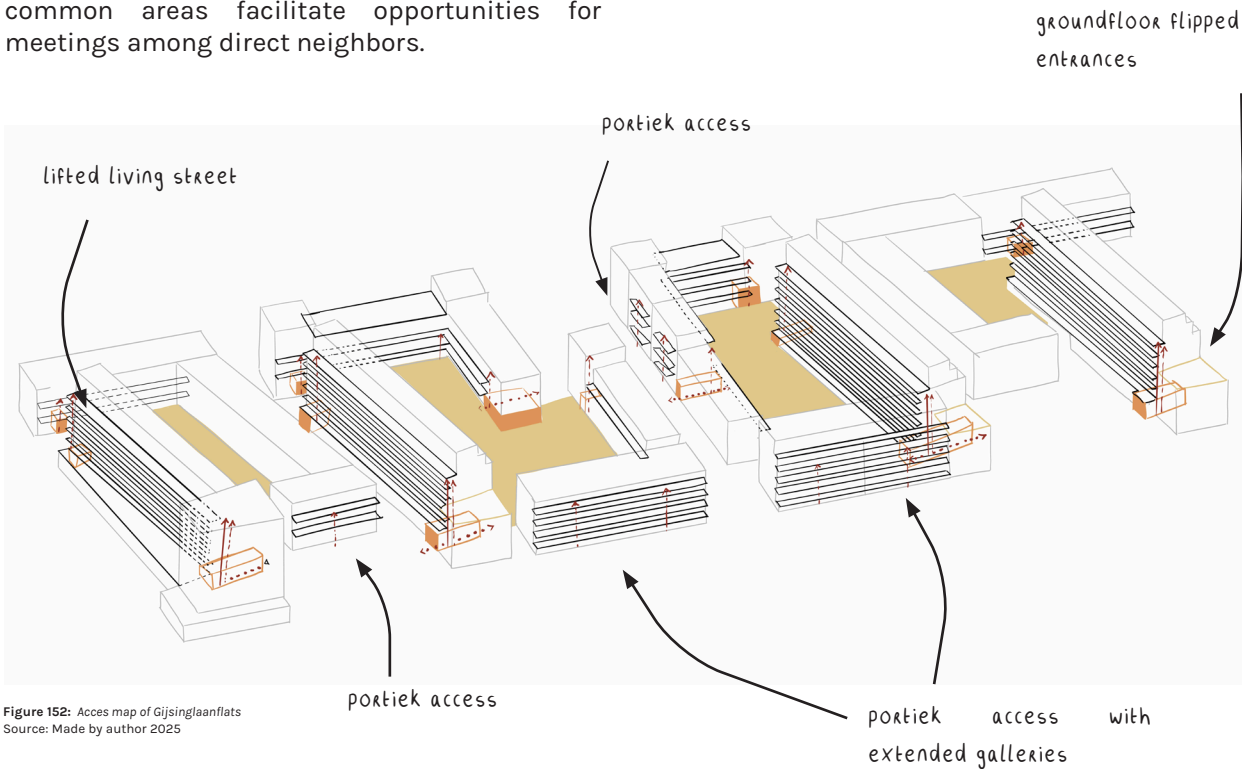


Figure 152: Access map of Gijsinglaanflats  
Source: Made by author 2025

- > Stair access
- > Elevator access
- .....> Walk through building
- Extended galleries
- Shared space
- Courtyard
- Shared roof terrace
- Building blocks

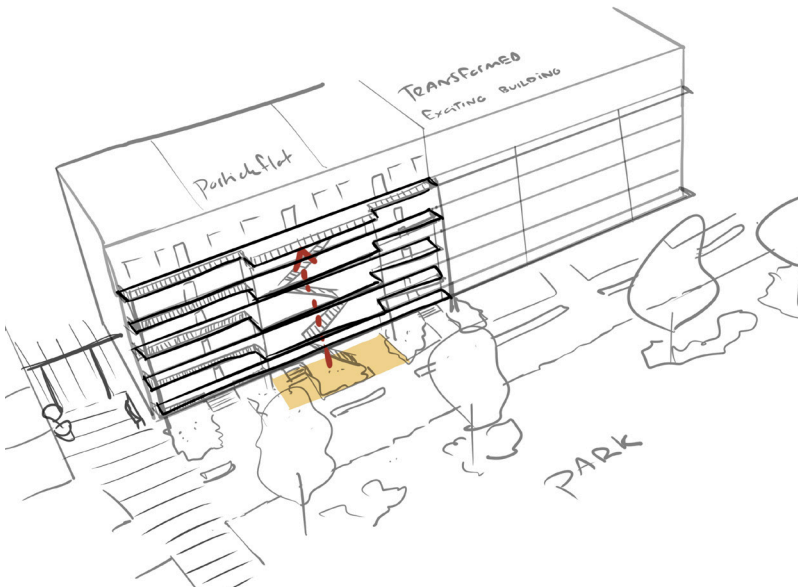


Figure 153: Transformed access of park edge blocks  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 154: Portiek access and shared galleries  
Source: Siedlung Erlgatter / Genossenschaft Neuhöh, (2022, December 18), Genossenschaft Neuhöh, <https://neuhoh.ch/siedlung-erlgatter/>

Existing multi-story buildings have received a renewed entrance. Initially, they were enclosed by the entrance of the gallery flats. By decoupling this, the group sharing the entrance is reduced. Additionally, the building is divided into two parts, each with its own portiek access added to the existing widened gallery. Residents of a block

share this staircase and can spontaneously encounter each other here. The widened gallery imparts a functional purpose to the space, enhancing the likelihood that residents will come across each other. At the back of the blocks, a staircase connects existing balconies, providing entry to the courtyard.

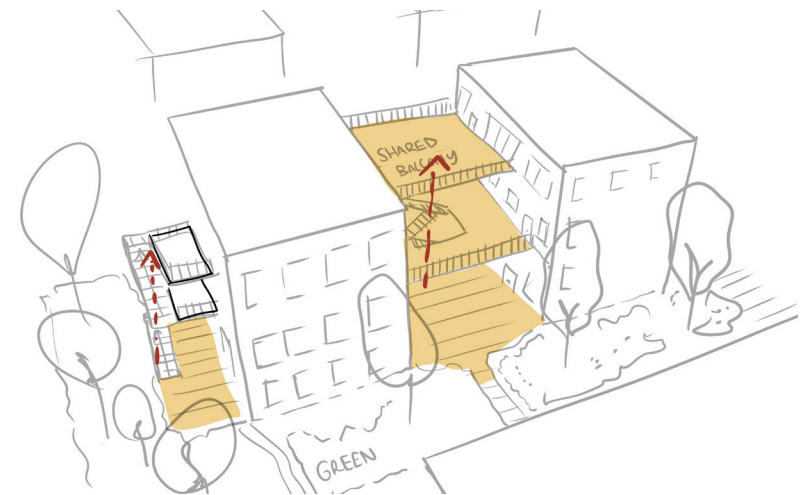


Figure 155: Social shared space of Park 1943 blocks  
Source: Made by author 2025



Figure 156: Shared balcony inbetween buildings  
Source: Abdel, K. (2025, May 28). 38 Albermarle Street Residential Building / Fieldwork, ArchDaily, <https://www.archdaily.com/1008183/38-albermarle-street-residential-building-fieldwork>

In Park 1943, new residential buildings have been introduced that break up the size of the park and provide more eyes on the public spaces. The residents of these blocks have access to a communal space that facilitates interaction among them. This communal area is designed as shared balconies that connect to the adjacent

homes. Four houses connect to each balcony. The houses can be reached via a central staircase. The parochial space is shielded from the public areas by a soft green transition. The outer houses feature a shared staircase, allowing residents to meet each other in the portiek entrance.



The route represents the daily movement from the front door to the rest of the city. This routine path has the potential to transform from a functional passage into a social route. By aligning routes along shared spaces, green areas, and moments of pause, spontaneous meetings between neighbors become possible. The gradual shift from public to semi-private space allows residents to position themselves and feel at home, reinforcing familiarity within smaller social groups.

In the drawing, the route from the transformed neighborhood square to the home of a resident in the project is elaborated. It is clear that many opportunities are facilitated where the residents can come across their neighbors. Furthermore, urban depth is enhanced, allowing residents to position themselves within the urban fabric and enhancing their sense of belonging.

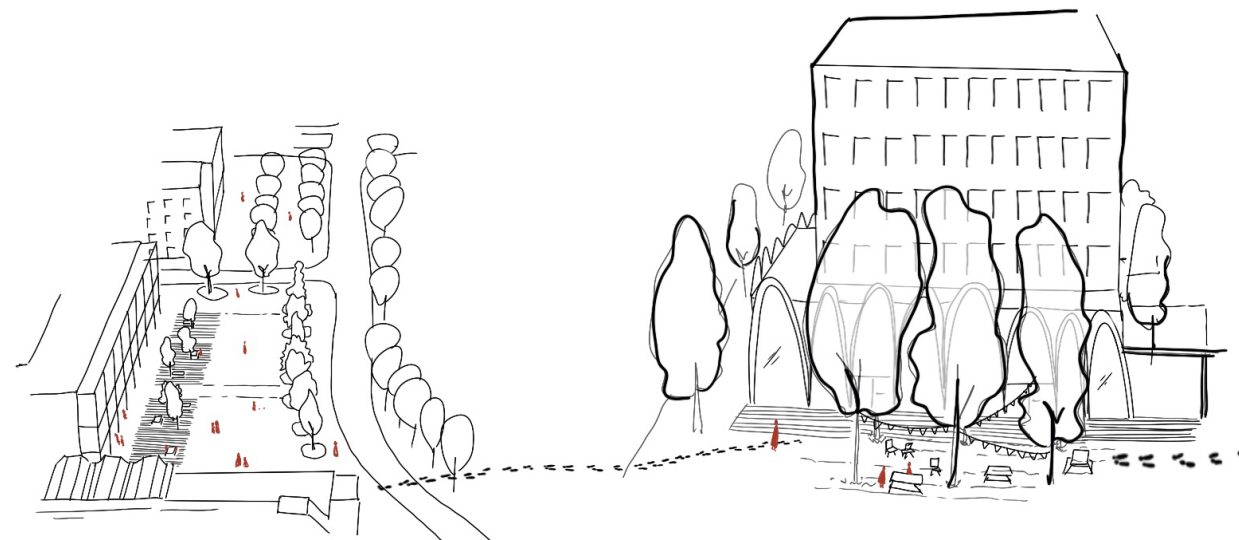


Figure 157: Improved walk home with more opportunities of meeting their neighbors  
Source: Made by author 2025

R.1 URBAN DEPTH

The route to a home enhances the sense of the individual's position as the route transitions from public to increasingly private spaces. The group the person is part of becomes smaller, clarifying who your neighbors are.

R.7 EXTENDED GALLERY

The galleries are two meters wide, and residents can utilize the area as an outdoor space. Here, meetings between gallery residents can occur spontaneously.

R.4 STAIRS

The stairwell is the backbone of the walk-up-height building (Sim, 2019). The building forms a small community close to the public realm. Residents can meet each other while walking up the building.

T.3 YOUR OUTSIDE

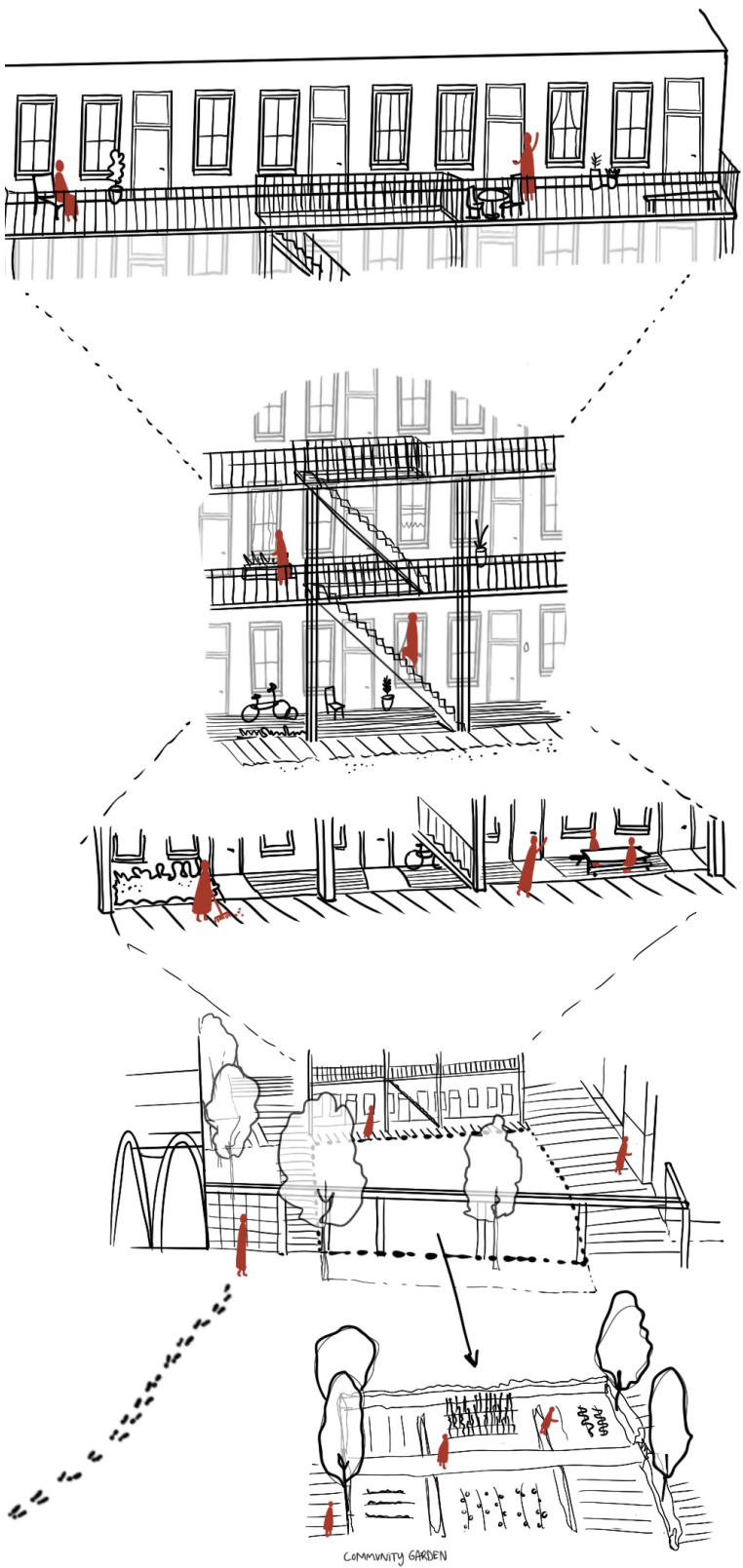
A two-meter space is provided for the residents to use as a front garden. Spontaneous meetings between neighbors can occur when using the space; furthermore, this enables a feeling of ownership over the entry garden.

R.3 ENTRY GARDEN

The entry garden is an area that provides access to the large flats, while the archway and materials make the space feel less public. This shared space fosters meeting and recognition among the residents of the block.

N.7 URBAN ROOM

The middle of the entry garden serves as a community garden. Here, residents with commonalities can meet each other.





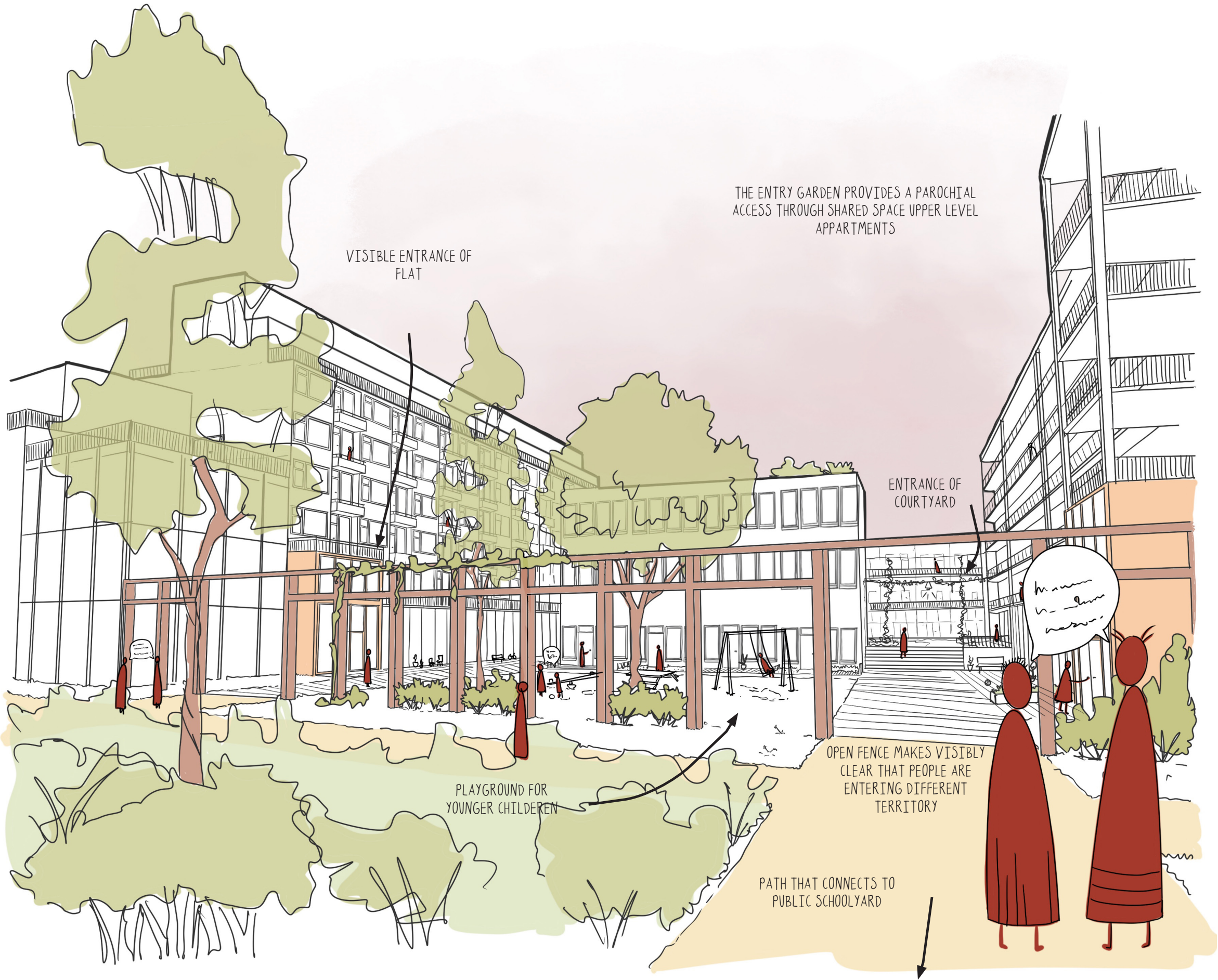


Figure 158: Perspective of entry garden  
Source: Made by author 2025



COURTYARD

- N.1 LAYERS OF PUBLICNESS
- B.7 SHARED COURTYARD
- B.6 LAYERED OUTDOOR SPACE
- B.5 UPPER FLOOR NEIGHBORS
- R.5 SHARED PARKING
- B.10 COURTYARD ENTRANCE
- N.7 URBAN THEMED ROOM
- R.1 URBAN DEPTH
- R.4 STAIRS
- B.2 JOINED UP BLOCKS
- B.4 HEIGHT
- B.1 SIZE

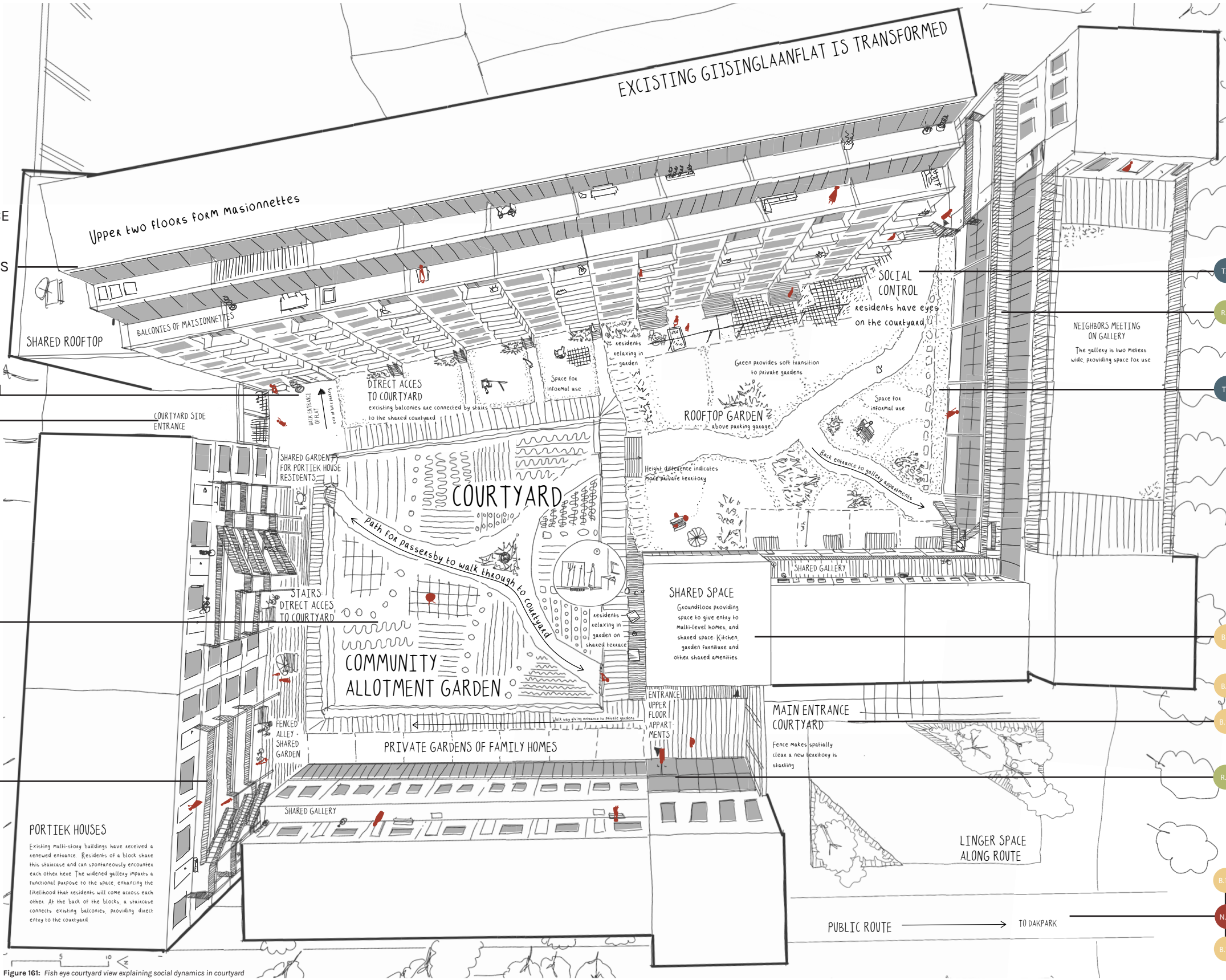
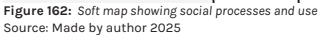


Figure 161: Fish eye courtyard view explaining social dynamics in courtyard  
Source: Made by author 2025

- T.6 EYES ON THE STREET
- R.7 EXTENDED GALLERY
- T.3 YOUR OUTSIDE
- B.8 SHARED SPACE
- B.9 READABILITY OF SPACE
- B.10 COURTYARD ENTRANCE
- R.2 SOCIAL ACCESS
- B.12 RECLAIMED STREETS
- N.12 HIERARCHY IN ROUTES
- B.11 SPATIAL DIVERSITY





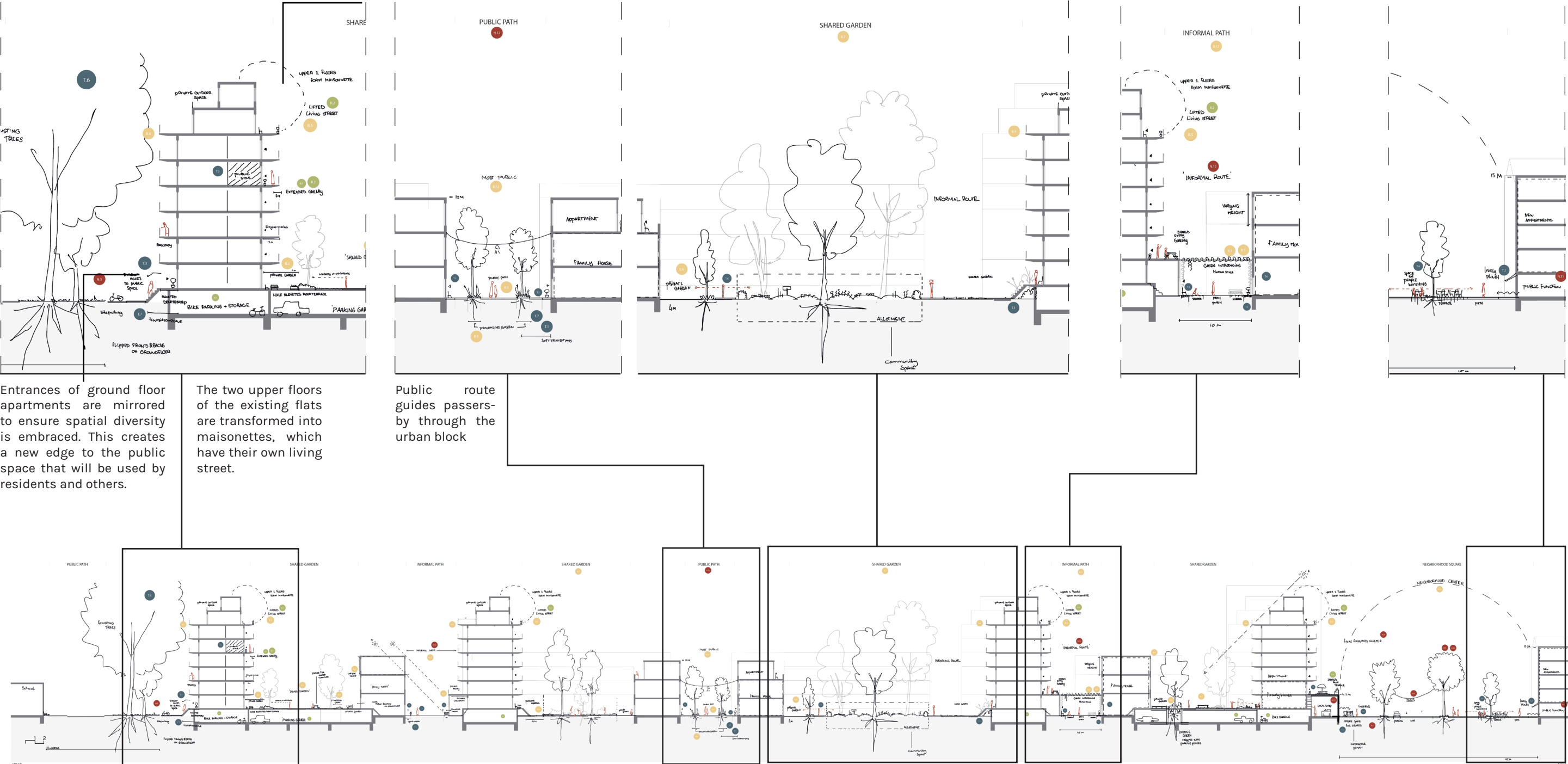


Soft transitions are designed to help residents perceive the edges of their homes as private enough to engage with the space and utilize the outdoor areas provided. The human scale of the buildings is maintained by incorporating trees, streetlights, and limiting the building height to a maximum of 12 meters.

The larger courtyard has a more public character than the others, including a community garden accessible to everyone. By providing soft transitions to the courtyard, the space is perceived as more private, which will make the usable space more readable for residents.

Informal paths through the urban block provide access to house entrances. The space is car-free, thereby facilitating use for residents.

Local shops attract residents by clustering them adjacent to the neighborhood square, concentrating residents and enabling meetings. Local shops attract residents by clustering around the neighborhood square, concentrating foot traffic and facilitating gatherings. A lively edge engages residents and encourages them to linger.



**Figure 163:** Section of design for Gijsinglaanflats connected with patterns 1:200  
Source: Made by author 2025

The research confirms that a larger population in a neighborhood can bring more amenities, vibrancy, and potential for interaction. However, not every additional resident automatically strengthens the social fabric. The number of dwellings, the size of homes, and household composition affect the pressure placed on public space, especially when private space is limited. Weather conditions further influence the intensity and timing of public space use. These factors make it clear that density alone is not enough: it must be spatially guided through a network of places where people can see, recognize, and meet one another.

From both literature and design research, there are spatial barriers to social cohesion regarding informal encounters. As buildings rise above five stories, contact with the ground level significantly decreases, reducing opportunities for spontaneous meetings. Similarly, a courtyard or shared block only functions socially when group size remains limited: enough people to create liveliness, but not so many that anonymity becomes dominant.

The level of publicity a space can accommodate is directly linked to the scale of the neighborhood. A space that is too public can feel impersonal or even overwhelming; one that is too secluded may exclude others. Parochial inner gardens only support interaction when mutual recognition exists; with too many people, this recognition becomes difficult to establish. Creating neighborhood spaces as ‘urban rooms’ promotes diverse uses. When these spaces meet residents’ needs, it leads to less frustration and more feelings of ownership.

What the design demonstrates is that the balance of density is not achieved through numbers alone, but through spatial structures that support recognition, familiarity, and everyday use. Thus, this thesis argues that the question is not how much density a city can handle, but under which spatial conditions high-density can contribute to social urban life.

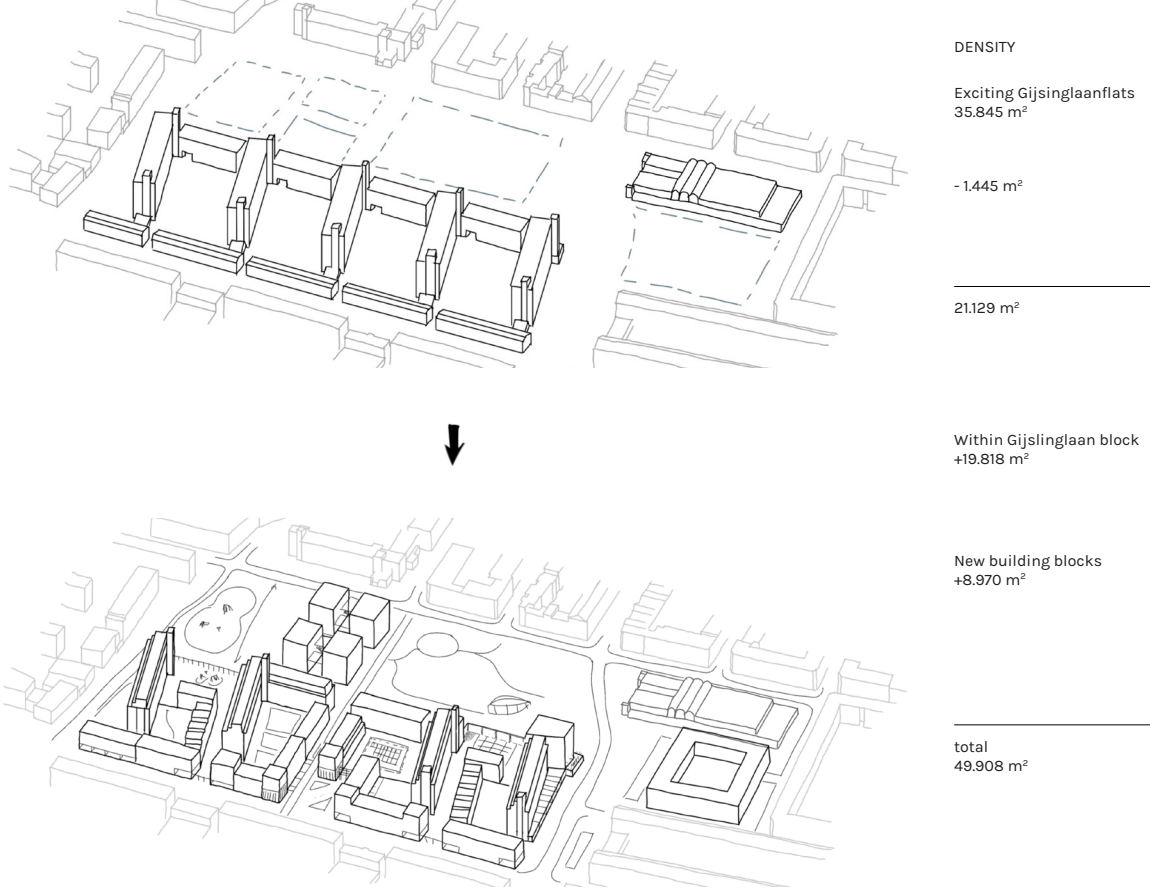
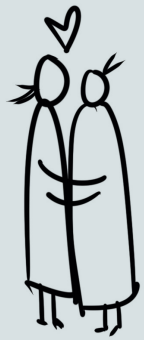


Figure 164: Densified urban space  
Source: Made by author 2025





## CONCLUSION & REFLECTION

CONCLUSIONS

FIRST SUBQUESTION

How does meeting manifest in the public space of a neighborhood?

The meeting in a neighborhood manifests itself in various ways, depending on the level of publicness, the type of space, and how people relate to each other and their surroundings.

The primary function of public space in a neighborhood is to facilitate physical meetings. These meetings can be divided into three types:

- The anonymous encounter: fleeting contact without commitments
- The amicable meeting: repeated light social contact
- The affective encounter: closer contact

Such meetings between residents often arise from repeatedly seeing each other through recurring routines. Gradually strengthening public familiarity in a neighborhood: a desired form of contact between neighbors. Public familiarity is essential for building weak ties, which play a crucial role in the resilience of residents and fostering a mutual sense of connection.

For facilitating use and meeting between residents, a relationship has been observed between the level of publicness of the domain. In this context, affective contact is mainly established in the private domain, amicable contact in the parochial domain, and anonymous contact in the public domain.

Understanding that different types of social domains engage people in various types of meetings and use spaces can be designed to increase the likelihood of people experiencing a specific domain and thereby acting accordingly. Design can make the level of publicness of a physical public space more readable.

By recognizing how domains shape social use, designers can facilitate an environment that enables the desired types of meetings among the residents. In this way, the public space can live up to its potential of becoming the tissue that binds daily life together, as the city is a meeting place.

SECOND SUBQUESTION

To what extent does the public space in Bospolder-Tussendijken facilitate meeting?

The analysis of Bospolder-Tussendijken shows that the public space has varying potential for facilitating meetings between its residents. On the one hand, it has important meeting spaces with strong social significance, like the Visserijplein and the Schiedamseweg; on the other hand, these places are not utilized to their full potential for enabling spontaneous encounters.

In areas that operate at the neighborhood and city scale, the public domain, such as roads and squares, primarily facilitates anonymous encounters: residents pass each other anonymously. These places predominantly act as transit zones, partly due to the lack of pedestrian space and the low quality of stay. Streets like the Schiedamseweg offer insufficient space for pedestrians to stop and lack the comfort needed to linger, thereby noticing others. The Visserijplein is a well-known location in the neighborhood, especially when the weekly market is held. Residents, as well as people from outside the neighborhood, specifically come to this place and engage in light forms of interaction. As people see each other more often, recognition of behavior can occur, helping individuals understand each other and build trust. However, on non-market days, the Visserijplein becomes a barren, stony expanse five days a week, failing to utilize its potential.

Places with activities that operate at the neighborhood level can bring together and bond residents with common interests. However, these places often lack quality, connection with the urban fabric, and social control. Consequently, they become less attractive for use and anonymous, thereby not fulfilling their potential to facilitate amicable meetings among residents with commonalities.

Literature suggests that public familiarity develops most quickly among neighbors in parochial places where repeated meetings occur. The places facilitated close to home are frequently streets. The streets studied in Bospolder-Tussendijken exhibit varying levels of publicness and facilitate meeting among residents to differing degrees. Streets like those in the Le Medi block offer more opportunities for spontaneous encounters and can be considered as courtyards. The experienced parochial domain gives residents a sense of ownership, encouraging the use of the space. Moreover, the usable space for residents is significantly larger because the street is car-free. Increased usage allows residents to encounter each

other more frequently, fostering spontaneous meetings that, through repetition, contribute to recognition and public familiarity among residents.

It has been observed that a good transition from public to private is essential. This space offers residents the opportunity to engage with the public realm. When a transition is facilitated from the home to the public street, residents can use this as their own space to express their identity to the neighborhood. In the absence of this space, residents may experience the transition as too abrupt, leading to anonymous behaviors, such as closed curtains, as seen in Watergeusstraat. The lack of a soft transition in public space results in fewer opportunities for residents to recognize their neighbors. As a result, everyone who uses the street may remain an unknown stranger.

A good balance between places with differing levels of public access in a neighborhood is crucial for facilitating various uses and types of meetings. The urban fabric of Bospolder-Tussendijken holds significant potential for facilitating various types of meetings, yet it does not fully leverage this potential. The case study illustrates that the design of public space in a dense and diverse neighborhood is vital. Effective design fosters opportunities for spontaneous meetings, provided it is actively designed with careful attention to staying, use, transition zones, and the balance of levels of publicness to facilitate desired meetings.

THIRD SUBQUESTION

What are spatial interventions that enable meetings between residents of a neighborhood?

To define spatial interventions that enable meetings between residents of a neighborhood, a pattern language is made. The pattern language connects literature, observations, and reference studies to spatial interventions observed and found in the reference studies.

Pattern language (see Appendix 1) presents a structured bundle of patterns organized into four spatial categories: neighborhood, route, block, and transition zone.

The pattern language does not present the spatial interventions as isolated solutions but as part of a coherent network of interventions. Every pattern operates on a certain scale. However, their full potential is realized when they are implemented together. By strategically positioning interventions across scales and spatial hierarchies, the design creates an urban fabric where informal, spontaneous, and planned meetings can occur.

FOURTH SUBQUESTION

What urban design can enhance the role of a city as a meeting place, within the dense and diverse neighborhood of Bospolder-Tussendijken?

In the dense and diverse neighborhood case study of Bospolder-Tussendijken, a site is selected to explore an urban design that can enhance the city's role as a meeting place.

The design focuses on a layered network of publicness levels that facilitates various uses and types of meetings among residents. Based on the meeting types and the level of publicness, three design strategies are proposed to implement the spatial interventions outlined in the pattern language.

Super blocks: meeting among direct neighbors: Within the Gijsinglaanflats, inner courtyards are introduced as parochial spaces that foster repeated encounters and public familiarity among close neighbors. These car-free, semi-private zones provide a sense of ownership, encourage spontaneous social contact, and allow residents to personalize and share the space.

Urban rooms: meeting among residents with commonalities. Along key pedestrian routes and functions, in the design area, urban rooms are created as public schoolyards and community gardens. These spaces serve as shared activity hubs where residents with commonalities could meet.

Neighborhood center: meeting among residents of the whole neighborhood: The Visserijplein is redesigned as a more inclusive and inviting neighborhood center that accommodates both the weekly market and daily informal use. The goal is to transform the square from a mono-functional, hard-paved area into a flexible and layered meeting space that promotes longer stays and chance interactions.

Furthermore, the design of the case study area shows that high density can still be achieved, and social infrastructure can be enhanced if designed thoughtfully. The design explores a higher density of the urban fabric while manifesting the city as a meeting place.

Together, these spatial strategies illustrate how urban design can strengthen the city's role as a meeting place in a dense and diverse context like Bospolder-Tussendijken. The complete transformation design, presented in Chapter 4, builds upon the developed pattern language and reflects a continuous dialogue between design and reflection.



How can urban design enhance the city’s role as a meeting place in high-density, diverse neighborhoods like Bospolder-Tussendijken?

In the context of dense and diverse neighborhoods, like Bospolder-Tussendijken, the importance of qualitative public meeting spaces is high. This research indicates that urban design plays a crucial role in enhancing the city as a meeting place. By carefully designing the physical environment, informal meetings between residents can be enabled, social infrastructure can be strengthened, and social risks can be reduced.

The literature study and analysis of the case study reveal that interactions between people occur on a spectrum of anonymity to intimacy, and the level of publicness in a space influences the type of meeting and use that is facilitated. Public spaces with varying levels of publicness, ranging from private to parochial to public, support a broader range of uses and types of meetings. The analysis of Bospolder-Tussendijken highlights that public spaces are often not readable enough, lacking the quality needed to enable different types of meetings between residents. Furthermore, to stay and use the public realm. The spaces near residential blocks are often too anonymous and public to foster interactions among direct neighbors.

Moreover, the research highlights that traditional meeting spaces, such as squares and parks, are not the only essential areas; daily infrastructure, like pavements, courtyards, and parking spaces, is equally necessary, if not more critical, in facilitating meetings between direct neighbors. These spaces remain underutilized regarding meetings; they often lack thoughtful design and clear readability regarding use, publicness, and ownership.

The activities, routes, and routines within neighborhoods greatly influence the potential for meetings, which has led to the development of three strategies aimed at enhancing types

of meetings, the level of publicness, and usage. First, urban blocks should facilitate parochial spaces near residential areas to enable meetings among direct neighbors. Second, urban rooms can provide a more open parochial space that fosters connections among residents with commonalities. Lastly, the neighborhood center concentrates residents, allowing them to observe and understand the neighbors of the whole of Bospolder-Tussendijken.

In conjunction with observation of the case study, literature reviews, reference studies, and research by design, a pattern language is developed, which formulates multiple design implications connected to the findings. This complex network of implications helps develop and design readable, accessible, and diverse meeting spaces that can facilitate the needs of residents in a dense and diverse neighborhood. The design of the Bospolder-Tussendijken case study shows that context-based physical interventions provide opportunities for fostering strong social infrastructure and meetings among neighbors.

Ultimately, urban design can enhance a city’s role as a meeting place by thoughtfully designing from the user’s perspective. It is essential to recognize that urban design serves as a facilitator of social interaction, rather than the designer of social interactions themselves. The role of the designer is to facilitate spatial conditions that enable meetings between residents. By developing public spaces as nuanced networks with varying levels of publicness, urban design can promote spontaneous encounters among residents, strengthening public familiarity and reducing social risks.

*How did your research influence your design/ recommendations and how did the design/ recommendations influence your research?*

During the graduation process, the relationship between research and design developed as an iterative and reciprocal process, as shown in the diagram (Figure 111). In the initial phase, during P1 and P2, the focus was on building a theoretical and contextual framework through literature study, case study analysis, and field observations. This phase primarily served as research for design: it helped define the problem field, formulate the research question, and identify spatial patterns that promote social interaction.

With the transition from P2 to P3, the focus shifted to testing these insights in practice. In this phase, the strongest iteration between design and research emerged. Design made the previously abstract literature tangible and concrete. By translating them spatially, it became clear where additions or refinements were needed. This led to new questions and observations that enriched the research. The importance of practical literature became evident to me here. New research was conducted to strengthen the project.

In P3 and P4, where the design was further refined, the research became more specific and targeted, resulting in smaller iterations in the schedule. The design decisions served as checkpoints of the literature, but also vice versa. During this period, the pattern language was developed through an iterative process where designed interventions were generalized and linked to the literature, while the design was also tested to

see if it reflected all the found literature. It was a process of research by design and design by research.

The process I went through worked well. The design is strongly grounded in the literature found. As a designer, I find it essential that design is driven by research. This approach ensures that design decisions are not just intuitive but well-argued and grounded in contextual and theoretical understanding. Research provides the framework and justification for spatial choices, enabling a more intentional and accountable design process. The developed scheme helped me take a critical look at the research and design process. I acknowledge that starting earlier with making literature spatial would have helped me define my research earlier in the process. This would have allowed me to identify patterns that were more related to the context of the case study, influencing the design in a neighborhood that reflects the needs of the residents of the case study better.

*How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?*

The value of my approach lies in the continuous interplay between research and design. From the beginning of my thesis, I combined literature studies with a site analysis. I already had a strong interest in the theme of how we live together in dense and diverse cities and how public space design influences potential use. However, due to the pressure of the studio, I had to select a site by week 3 before I had fully developed my

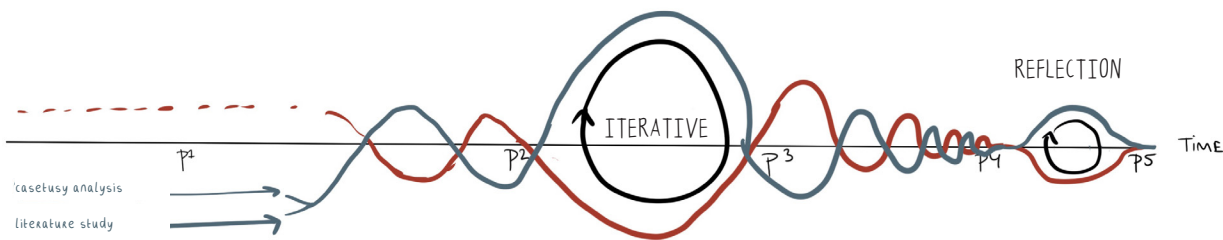


Figure 165: Process of research influencing design, and design influencing research  
Source: Made by author 2025

topic. In hindsight, this location was chosen too early. However, as the project progressed, the topic and location evolved together: I shifted to a nearby neighborhood and refined my focus to the influence of spatial design on the meeting of residents.

My structured way of working allowed me to think multiple steps ahead. This helped me lead the process efficiently, but also limited my openness to explore detours that might have led to unexpected insights. Although the thesis period offers room to explore alternative paths, I often felt held back by self-imposed performance pressure within the given time. During the project, I came to understand what exploration could bring me. Looking back, I notice a shift in my way of working when exploring had to be done to achieve design by research and design, and I acknowledge this is where my thesis developed into a better project. From this, I learned that it is good to work in a structured way and think ahead; however, planning time to let structure go gives a lot of potential.

Initially, I wanted to conduct street interviews to let spontaneous local stories influence the design. But it quickly became clear that residents of Bospolder-Tussendijken were reluctant to participate, partly due to research fatigue from many past studies. I was also unlucky and missed several opportunities to join local activities. As a result, direct input from residents was limited. I tried to compensate by conducting observations in public spaces, documenting behaviors and informal use. This method allowed me to study how people use or avoid using certain spaces from an eye-level perspective. It became one of the most valuable parts of my methodology.

To explore potential spatial interventions, I studied reference projects. Initially, I struggled to integrate them into the project narrative. Eventually, I used them to link abstract theoretical concepts to spatial interventions. Since I had already developed the design concept on the neighborhood scale quite early through research by design, references helped shape smaller-scale interventions. Connecting literature to reference

projects gave me confidence that my proposed design hypothesis could potentially work in practice.

In the later phases, p3-p4, of the project, I developed a pattern language. Initially conceived as a design catalog, the process of making it revealed the value of pattern language as a tool to connect design interventions to social and contextual dynamics. However, because this shift came relatively late, many patterns are still generalized rather than fully context-specific. I now realize that more context-sensitive patterns could have made the final design more meaningful to current residents. This also showed me the importance of project scope: for smaller-scale designs, the specific use and needs of existing communities should take center stage. In the future, when using the method pattern language, the process of making the patterns has to start earlier; this way, the recognition of patterns in the case study analysis can help make the pattern language more context-specific.

Looking back, I'm satisfied with the path I took, and I learned a lot from it. Naturally, some things could have gone better. In the winter period, I delayed starting the design phase out of uncertainty about whether I had enough knowledge to design with confidence. Ironically, when I finally began designing, I realized how much design itself generates new research questions. Early sketching would have accelerated both the research and design process. Again, performance and time pressure played a role in that hesitation.

Ultimately, I believe that design should not rely solely on intuition but should be critically grounded in research. Combining theory, observation, analysis, and iterative design allowed me to build a well-founded and socially engaged urban design approach.



*How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?*

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*Societal Value*  
My graduation project addresses the pressing societal challenge of maintaining livability, inclusivity, and social cohesion in increasingly dense and diverse urban neighborhoods. As housing is added to existing districts, public space comes under increasing pressure. My thesis addresses this issue by providing concrete spatial strategies and design principles. The interventions facilitate the urban fabric needed for enabling social ties, mutual understanding, and a sense of shared ownership of the neighborhood.

By translating these insights into general patterns of a pattern language, the results become accessible to a broad audience of designers, municipalities, and policymakers engaged in urban densification. The patterns illustrate how spatial decisions can actively support social processes and help prevent issues like social isolation, contributing instead to a culture of everyday urban togetherness.

The project emphasizes the importance of public space as social infrastructure. The academic sources and theories I used may not be radically new. However, as my analysis of Bospolder-Tussendijken confirms, many opportunities for social interaction remain unused. And many designers fail to address the social processes that enhance the livability of a neighborhood.

*Implication*  
The project advocates for a design approach that structurally integrates social dynamics into urban transformation. It promotes a shift toward more community-oriented design strategies that consider everyday interaction a key design parameter.

However, it is essential to underscore potential adverse side effects. Enhancing neighborhoods by improving the quality of public space can

unintentionally lead to gentrification. Rising housing prices may pressure the very residents the project aims to support. While the intention is to improve the living environment for current residents, this paradox represents a real ethical dilemma. I emphasize the importance of designing with an inclusive mindset, strengthening existing networks, preserving informal uses of space, and avoiding the top-down replacement of community life.

In a future project iteration, I recommend actively involving residents in the design process and recognizing their existing social infrastructures as valuable starting points. Due to time and scope limitations inherent in a graduation project, this aspect was not fully implemented, but remains crucial for ethical, long-term impact.

Overall, this project is grounded in the belief that public space is not neutral: designers play an active role in shaping environments that either support or hinder social life. Through observation and contextual understanding, the project aims to design public space in a way that fosters inclusive and meaningful encounters rather than overlooking the subtle dynamics of place.

*Scope*  
The project deliberately engages with the complexity of diverse urban populations. Instead of reducing diversity to ethnicity, religion, or political background, I have framed it in terms of differences in interests, routines, and lifestyles, seeking what I refer to as ‘commonalities’ to form the spatial basis for connection. While it is essential to acknowledge that many other factors, such as economic status, education level, and access to resources, influence opportunities for social encounters and cohesion, this thesis specifically focuses on how the urban fabric can contribute to these processes.

Furthermore, the types of social encounters considered are categorized according to three types found in the literature and are applied in the context of a neighborhood. However, social interactions exist on a spectrum. There are far more than three types in reality. The current

framework captures only a segment of this, and expanding it further could enrich future research or practice.

*Academic Value*  
This project merges urban theories with practical spatial design tools, effectively connecting theory to practice. Transforming abstract ideas of sociability into tangible patterns enriches the ongoing discussion on how design affects daily life. Using pattern language as both an analytical and generative approach provides a structured and reflective mechanism for designers, potentially serving as a model for future design-research projects.

Although the theoretical framework is rooted in established literature, its academic contribution lies in its application to a specific case, converting concepts into spatial language.

*How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?*

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The outcomes of my project consist of targeted design interventions structured into a pattern language. This language generalizes spatial interventions developed through both design practices and research. It enables the results to be transferable to urban contexts beyond Bospolder-Tussendijken. This is particularly relevant for areas facing similar density and social complexity levels.

The developed pattern language is a valuable tool for other designers. It can help others to address the social dynamics of meetings in dense neighborhoods. The transferability of my results is valuable. The pattern language can guide designers in avoiding common mistakes, such as neglecting informal social processes or underutilizing shared spaces. My experiences inform this perspective; for example, the flat I currently inhabit suffers from a lack of social design thinking, leading to wasted public space. I hope that socially attuned, reusable design patterns can help avert similar oversights in future developments.

It is essential to note that applying these patterns in different contexts does not automatically result in a ready-made design. Each design requires careful contextual analysis. The abstract nature of the patterns encourages interpretation, reinforcing their role as both reflective and generative design tools. This dual quality positions the pattern language not simply as a repository of ideas, but as a flexible framework for socially engaged urban design.

*What is the relation between your graduation project topic, your master track (A, U, BT, LA, MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?*

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As my project focuses on the urban fabric of a neighborhood and the community that lives within it, this thesis aligns perfectly with this year’s studio theme: The Neighborhood! The scale and the approach of the studio are reflected in my thesis, as it focuses on gaining concrete design solutions that address local spatial needs, but also engage with broader societal questions. A key approach of the studio is its integration of theoretical and practical perspectives. Rather than relying solely on theory, the design process draws informational input from the physical, contemporary urban context at eye level. This dual focus allows a more legitimate understanding of existing urban issues and how they are perceived, enabling the project to identify and respond to these challenges more effectively. In parallel, the inclusion of theoretical bodies roots the design solutions with an in-depth comprehension of the underlying processes at play in the urban fabric, which results in solutions that are both rooted in the contemporary neighborhood and informed by knowledge.

The contemporary city is analyzed through key aspects such as density, diversity, public space, publicness, and the users of the built environment. The aim is to understand urban dynamics in the context of the city while also making an initial effort to establish spatial implications. This thesis contributes to ongoing

discussions about how cities can become more inclusive, livable, and resilient for the future. This thesis aims for a design that reflects the needs of its residents.

My thesis is centered on a design project, aiming at achieving spatial transformation within the built environment, augmented in literature and spatial knowledge obtained by research. The thesis acknowledges the relation of disciplines by including the social perspective. By distinctly focusing on spatial design, this project is positioned within the scope of the MSc AUBS program.

*How did you navigate the complexity of terminology and conceptual nuances within social theories and processes during your thesis?*

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During my graduation project, I noticed how complex and sensitive the terminology is within social theories and urban processes. Many concepts, such as social cohesion, social infrastructure, community, inclusion, and meeting, seem similar, but each has its own connotation, origin, and application. This overlap often made it difficult for me to articulate my thoughts precisely or to communicate clearly with others.

Some terms are heavily loaded or interpreted differently across various disciplines, which can cause confusion. In conversations with supervisors and during presentations, I discovered that clarifying definitions is essential to avoid misunderstandings. At the same time, I realized that finding the right words is not just a matter of semantics; it also affects the direction and clarity of the research. In a follow-up study, I recognize the importance of carefully delineating these concepts first so that the story can be told more sharply.

*What is your position on the responsibility of an urban designer in shaping social processes within an urban environment?*

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While working on this thesis, I concluded that a designer cannot directly design social interaction. Nevertheless, design plays an important role in social processes. The design of the urban environment can facilitate a spatial framework that enables, invites, and stimulates behavior. In that sense, design is an enabler, not a director of daily life.

Public space should be seen as social infrastructure. Designers must be aware that their spatial choices have social consequences. A poorly designed transition can discourage neighborly interactions, while a shared bench in the right spot can spark unexpected conversations.

I consider it the designer's responsibility to recognize and support the informal. This means not only shaping physical structures but also being sensitive to how space is experienced, used, and shared. In my thesis, I approached this through a pattern language: an instrument that offers intervention to support social interaction while allowing space for local interpretation, with generality.

Ultimately, designers must resist the temptation to shape social behavior through form. Instead, they should curate opportunities, offering open spaces that invite commonality, difference, and coexistence. To design for people, we must make space for people.



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APPENDIX

- APPENDIX 1: Pattern book
- APPENDIX 2: Model experiments
- APPENDIX 3: Challenges and opportunity maps





N.3 DESIGN INBETWEEN SPACES

To connect different targetgroups designers must design the inbetween space as connector



THEORITICAL BACK UP

The book 'Opzoek naar nieuw publiek domein' (Reijndorp, 2001) states the challenge for designers is to craft "in-between" spaces that facilitate dynamic exchange, making the public domain a vital and transformative aspect of urban society. The value lies in the potential for urban proximity between elements meaningful to various groups to offer shifts in perspective. By experiencing lifestyles, ideas, and ways of thinking different from their own, individuals are momentarily challenged to reconsider their worldview, providing "competition" to their default perceptions. The design of these spaces must balance diversity with usability, avoiding frictionless, homogenized designs that fail to reflect the vibrancy and tension of urban life.

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

In the design of BospolderTussendijken the inbetween space of the gijsinglaan flats and the surrounding urban fabric is used to connect urban fabric. Unused green space is transformed into space that provides entrances to homes.



Figure 5: New edge of Gijsinglaan flats in design  
Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

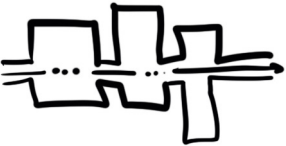
- Meeting between direct neighbors
- Meeting between common interest
- Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

- N.4      B.9
- R.1
- R.2

N.4 CHAIN OF SPACES

The shape and connection of spaces influence the degree of interaction between people



THEORITICAL BACK UP

The city has a network of squares, streets, alleys, and parks. The shape and connection of spaces influence the degree of interaction between people (Platform31, 2021). It narrows and widens, and the spaces allow people to pass through as they connect, facilitating human flows that accelerate, decelerate, or sometimes come to a standstill. Platform31 (2021) states that a chain of smaller spaces, which are perceived as safe and valued, are the spaces most people come across, not the big open spaces meant to increase interaction. The spaces are defined by the edges of building blocks (Sim, 2019). The pattern of block edges can create different types of spaces and thereby uses

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

In the design for Bospolder-Tussendijken, a new route through the neighborhood is created. Along this route, the urban fabric opens into staying spaces and narrows into streets that guide people. In the open staying spaces, people will feel encouraged to linger, which could lead to people acknowledging each other.

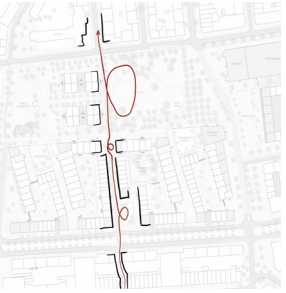


Figure 6: Flow of spaces in design  
Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

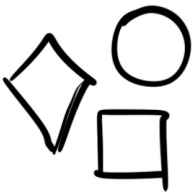
- Meeting between direct neighbors
- Meeting between common interest
- Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

- N.1      R.1
- N.3      B.3
- N.5

N.5 DISTINGUISABLE NEIGHBORHOODS

Creating distinguishable neighborhoods creates a connection between residents



THEORITICAL BACK UP

Identity and pride are essential for people to feel part of a specific group or area. Recognizable neighborhoods add to the feeling of togetherness (Sim, 2019). Neighborhoods formed from the composition of multiple building blocks with a distinct character add to the sense of identity.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the Woensel West project, four neighborhoods have been developed along a public axis. Each of these neighborhoods has the same principles but its own character. Thus, the public space's volumes, materials, and functions are handled differently. Residents can therefore position themselves within the Woensel neighborhood as part of certain area.



Figure 7: Neighborhoods with own characters  
Eindhoven.nl (n.d.). Woensel West 2013. 2.4 Recent ontwikkelingen.  
[https://www.planner.nl/energie/plan/1600772/8076-0301\\_NLDM-80.0772.8076-0301\\_2.4.html](https://www.planner.nl/energie/plan/1600772/8076-0301_NLDM-80.0772.8076-0301_2.4.html)

STRATEGY

- Meeting between direct neighbors

RELATES TO:

- N.4

N.6 FOCUS ON SLOW TRAFFIC

Focussing on slow traffic promotes meeting



THEORITICAL BACK UP

When neighborhood design promotes slow traffic, people are more likely to encounter each other in public spaces (Platform31, 2021). Furthermore, Sennet (2019) argues that walking is a method of developing embodied knowledge. Experiencing something new fills the gaps in knowledge, teaching us more about the space and the people around us. This process cannot be replicated when you move quickly due to the number of elements a person can experience while standing still, moving slowly, and moving quickly.

REFERENCE STUDY

Reference: In the Vauban project, Freiburg, the area has been designed in such a way that the car is explicitly a guest in the neighborhood (Gebiedsontwikkeling.nu, 2023; Sim, 2019). As a result, there is visibly more space for residents as a usable area. Also, due to the focus on slow traffic, the chance of people encountering each other while moving from location to location is greater.



Figure 8: Car-free Vauban  
Peterson, T., & Schoenen, D. (2008). June 200. Vauban, milieuvriendelijke pionierstad. Sluising. <https://voering.nu/nl/vauban-milieuvriendelijke-pionierstad/>

STRATEGY

- Meeting between direct neighbors
- Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

- N.12      B.11
- R.2
- B.3



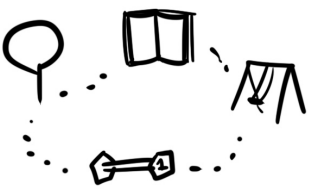
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N.7 URBAN THEMED ROOMS

Urban themed rooms connect residents with common interest



THEORATICAL BACK UP

Creating spaces for different user groups or different interests draws people outside and gives opportunities to facilitate meetings between people outside their social bubble. The greater the diversity of spaces, the greater the potential to facilitate all the needs of the residents (Sim, 2019)

SPATIAL IMPLICATION

In the design for Bospolder-Tussendijken, urban rooms are created. These urban rooms have a parochial character, which enables amicable meetings between residents. The parochial character is established by connecting the spaces to adjacent functions. This provides clarity about the target groups and offers a sense of control over the space. The urban rooms facilitate activities that attract residents who share commonalities, for example, a playground.

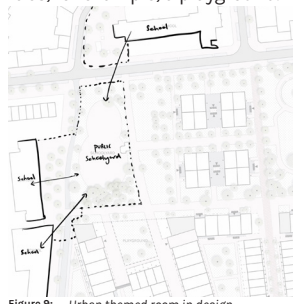


Figure 9: Urban themed room in design

Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

Meeting between common interest

RELATES TO:

N.2  
N.9  
N.13

B.9

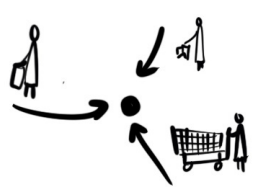
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N.8 AMENITIES CLUSTER

Concentrating amenities increases meeting between residents



THEORATICAL BACK UP

Facilities have a certain type of audience. Thus, the general practitioner post and the local supermarket will mainly attract neighborhood residents. If these facilities are clustered, it can increase the chance that people will encounter each other while going about their daily activities. It is also important to consider the accessibility of these places (platform31, 2021), so that local residents can easily reach them on foot.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the neighborhood of Woensel West, a public axis has been created where local functions and amenities are located. This central axis is accessible on foot from all places in the neighborhood, so residents who use it might run into each other by chance.

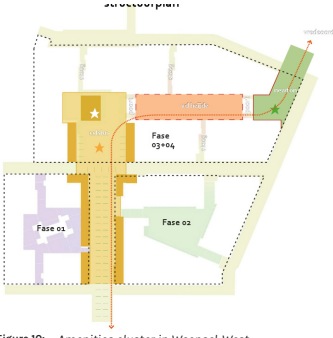


Figure 10: Amenities cluster in Woensel-West

Source: Plan Cetus in Woensel-West: Cetus 3-4, (2021, June 30). Trudo. <https://www.trudo.nl/woensel-west>

STRATEGY

Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

N.10  
N.11  
B.9

T.4

199


C

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N.9 MARKETS

Markets enable spontaneous meetings between residents on a routine basis



THEORATICAL BACK UP

Markets have historically been centers of social life, where economic exchange intersects with social interaction. They house informal, spontaneous encounters between visitors. Markets encourage diverse social interactions by attracting people from various economic, social, and cultural backgrounds. According to William H. Whyte in The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (1980), markets naturally encourage social encounters because of their dynamic and fluid nature, open layout, and diverse stall configurations.

OBSERVATION

The Bospolder-Tussendijken market attracts many visitors from the surrounding area. This routine activity has the potential to give people the opportunity to recognize and meet others. In order to give space to a market, the neighborhood should include an open space that is multifunctional in use.




Figure 11: Meeting at market

Source: Made by author

STRATEGY

Meeting between common interest  
Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

N.7  
N.10

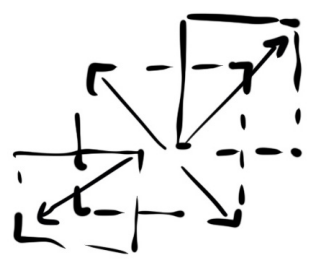
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N.10 MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES

Multifunctional spaces provide space for (recurring) activities that enable meeting



THEORATICAL BACK UP

Flexible spaces are adaptable to different activities, functions, and social interactions over time. In The Open City (2006), Richard Sennet advocates for spaces that can evolve and accommodate changing social needs. Flexible spaces can support a city's resilience by allowing informal, temporary, and seasonal uses that foster community engagement. Jane Jacobs (1961), in The Death and Life of Great American Cities, similarly emphasizes the importance of multi-use areas that can support a wide range of social activities. Furthermore, flexible spaces are necessary when the available space is limited, like in densely populated areas. It increases the capacity of the available public space.

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

In the design for Bospolder-Tussendijken, a multifunctional space is facilitated. The Visserijplein provides an open space that can be used for events or markets, and also supports the use of adjacent functions. The use of the open space for the adjacent functions will be more extensive when the area is not occupied by events. The implementation of movable furniture enables this flexibility.

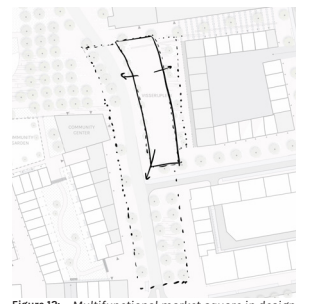


Figure 12: Multifunctional market square in design

Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors  
Meeting between common interest  
Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

N.8  
N.9  
B.9

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N.11 PRIORITY LOCAL SHOPS

Prioritize and help shops that are connected to the local community



OBSERVATION

Bospolder-Tussendijken contains many shops that are focused on the local scale. These places have the potential to become part of the social infrastructure of residents. Shop owners and workers have the potential to guide social interaction between other residents.

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

Facilitate spaces for local shops in a central area of the neighborhood. In the design for Bospolder-Tussendijken, spaces will be prioritized to accommodate shops that are important for the local community. Existing shops will be guaranteed to have space provided in the transformation of the Visserijplein. Furthermore, the shops will have an active plinth that engages residents.




Figure 13: Local shops in design  
Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

Meeting between common interest  
Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

N.8

C

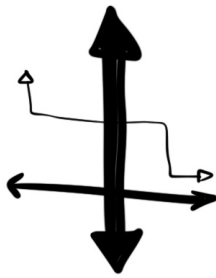
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N.12 HIERARCHY IN ROUTES

By creating a hierarchy in routes through the neighborhood, desired types of meetings can be enabled



OBSERVATION

Different publicness domains facilitate various types of meetings and uses (Lofland, 1998; Van Dorst, 2016). When creating hierarchy in the routes through the neighborhood, differentiations in the perceived publicness can be facilitated. Thereby, the desired types of meetings can be enabled.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the Vauban project, various types of routes have been integrated into the urban fabric's structure. In the image below, it can be seen that two public routes run along green public spaces to the other areas of the district. The residential block located between them does not have any connected paths to longer lines, which means that visitors are less likely to use the paths between the residential blocks. This makes the street feel more private and facilitates more use by residents, thereby promoting encounters among them.

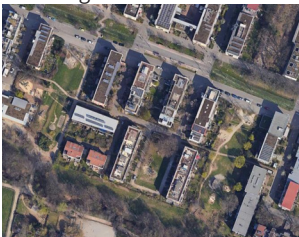


Figure 14: Routes through Vauban  
Source: Google (2023). Google Maps [map]. Retrieved on 16 april 2025, of <https://www.google.com/maps>

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors  
Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

N.1  
N.6  
R.1

R.2  
B.11

C


A

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1:1000

N.13 PUBLIC SCHOOLYARDS

Schoolyards and playgrounds can be combined to act as public space



THEORITICAL BACK UP

Schoolyards and playgrounds are vital elements of a social infrastructure in a neighborhood (Klinenberg, 2018). These activities draw children outside, but also their parents. A fleeting encounter could potentially be enabled between residents while using the playground. In Dense urban areas, space is often scarce. A solution could be creating a public playground that acts as a schoolyard during school hours.

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

In the design for Bospolder-Tussendijken, an existing playground near a cluster of schools will be transformed into a public schoolyard. The area will be multifunctional over time. During the day, it serves as a schoolyard, while outside school hours, it acts as a playground for everyone to use.

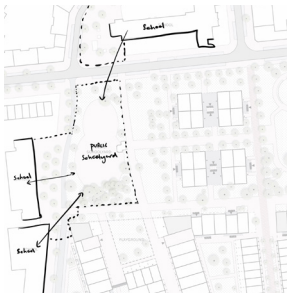


Figure 15: Public schoolyard in design  
Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

Meeting between common interest

RELATES TO:

N.7  
B.9





ROUTE

The route represents the daily movement from the front door to the rest of the city. This routine path has the potential to transform from a functional passage into a social route. By aligning routes along shared spaces, green areas, and moments of pause, spontaneous meetings between neighbors become possible. The gradual shift from public to semi-private space allows residents to position themselves and feel at home, reinforcing familiarity within smaller social groups.

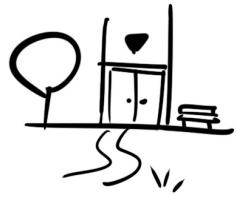
CONTENT

- R.1 URBAN DEPTH
- R.2 SOCIAL ACCES
- R.3 ENTRY GARDEN
- R.4 STAIRS
- R.5 SHARED PARKING
- R.6 STAYING PLACES ALONG ROUTE
- R.7 EXTENDED GALLERY

<

R.3 ENTRY GARDEN

Placing the route home through shared space, lowers the bar of using the space



THEORATICAL BACK UP

Platform31 (2021) recommends putting the route through or close to the possible common areas. The bar for actually using the space is lowered since residents may walk by it without realizing it. Additionally, this raises the likelihood that they will cross paths. If someone else is using the space, they will run into each other on their way home.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the project Vauban residents walk past a shared garden. The likelihood that people will feel connected to the space is bigger.

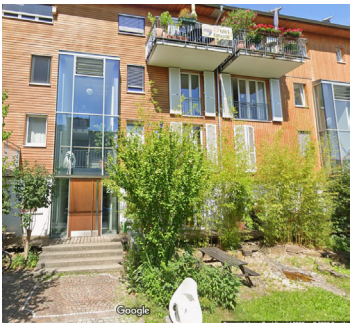


Figure 18: Entry garden in Vauban  
Source: Google. (2023). Google Maps [streetview]. Retrieved on 10 april 2025, of <https://www.google.com/maps>

STRATEGY

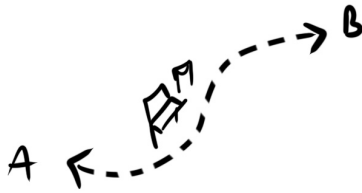
Meeting between direct neighbors

RELATES TO:

R.1 R.6  
R.2 B.6  
R.5

R.6 STAYING PLACES ALONG ROUTE

Facilitating staying places along routes increases the likelihood of spontaneous encounters



OBSERVATION

While relaxing on a bench or playing outside, residents that walk past meet each other. When organizing routes and keeping spaces adjacent to each other, spontaneous encounters between residents could be facilitated.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the Le Medi project, the front doors of the residences are located in the courtyard, which means residents must walk through the shared courtyard to reach their homes. When other residents use the space, spontaneous encounters can occur. Staying places can be created by facilitating a seating area or functions like a playground.



Figure 21: Staying along rout in Le Medi  
Source: Made by author

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors  
Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

R.2 B.7  
R.3 B.8  
R.5 T.3  
R.7



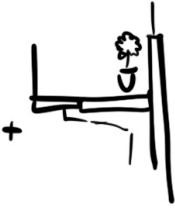
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R.7 EXTENDED GALLERY

Extended galleries facilitate use by residents along the acces of their home



REFERENCE STUDY

In the Vauban project, some buildings are equipped with a wide gallery. As a result, people are using the space as an outdoor area. the area in front of each door has a personal influence from the residents. When residents use the space, an encounter can occur.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the buildings of the Vauban project, the galleries are two meters wide. This ensured that half a meter is available for the resident's use, and one and a half meters remain for movement along the gallery. To represent this functional separation, different materials or recessed facades can be used.




Figure 22: Wide galleries in Vauban  
Source: Google (2023). Google Maps [streetview]. Retrieved on 20 April 2025, of <https://www.google.com/maps>

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors

RELATES TO:

R.2  
R.6

207

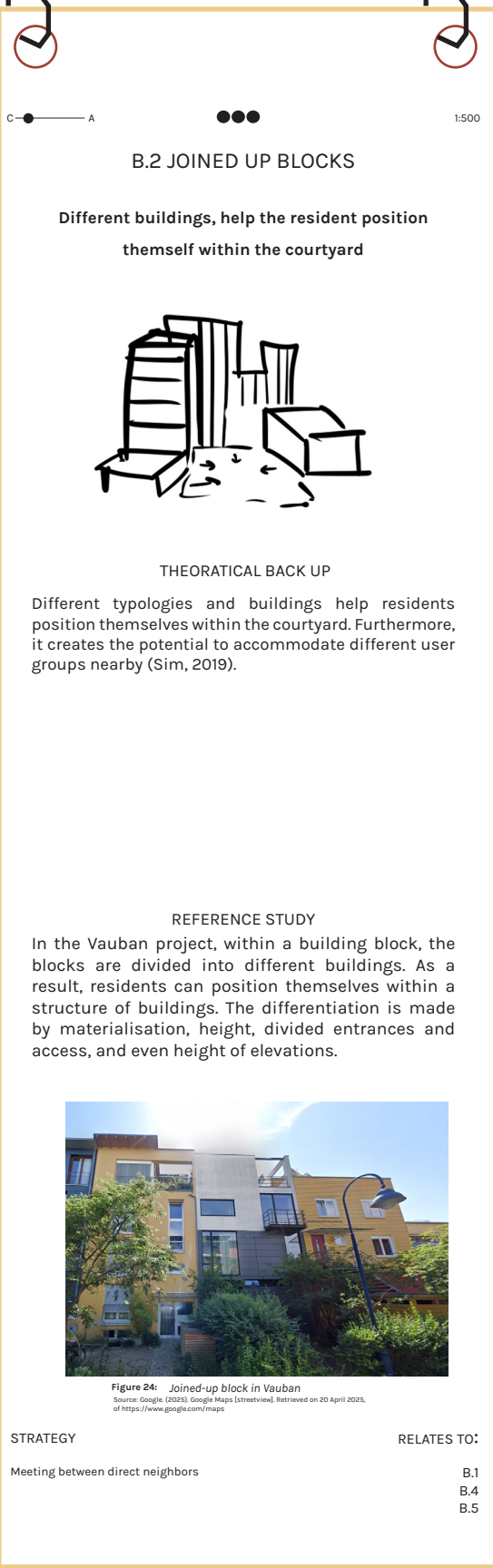
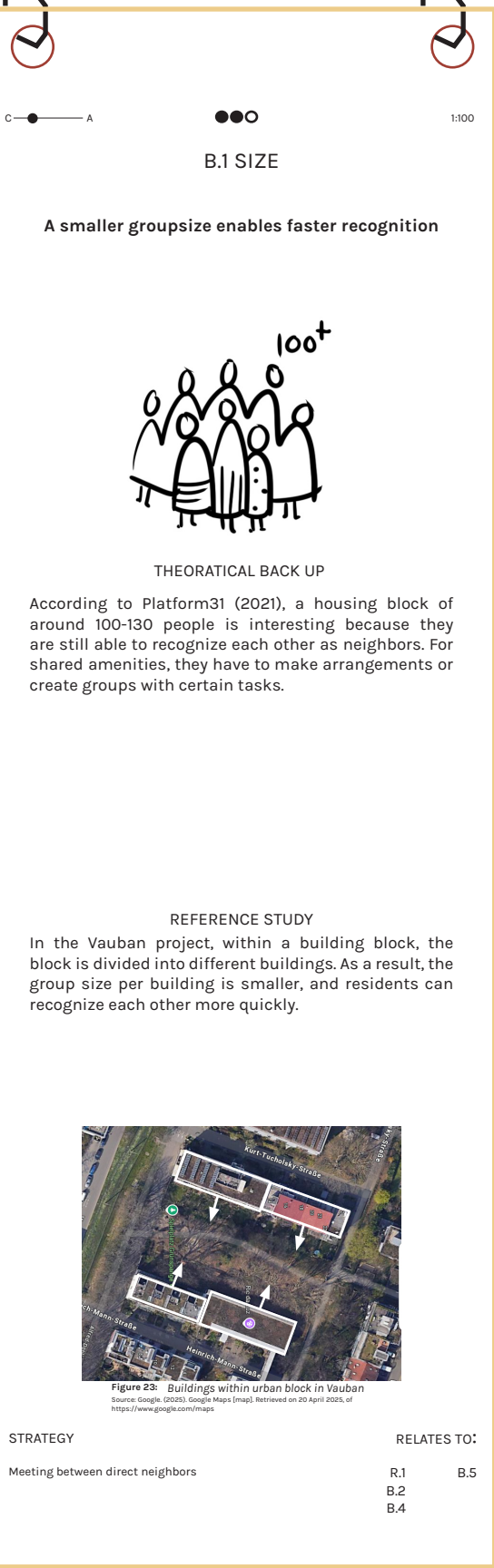


BLOCK

The block defines the direct living environment of residents: the scale at which neighbors recognize each other, children play together, and shared spaces are maintained. Its layout, size, mix of typologies, and communal facilities strongly influence the type and frequency of social interaction. When blocks are designed at a human scale and communal areas are legible and welcoming, they create a sense of comfort, identity, and openness to social connection.

## CONTENT

- B.1 SIZE
- B.2 JOINED UP BLOCKS
- B.3 HUMAN SCALE
- B.4 HEIGHT
- B.5 UPPERFLOOR NEIGHBORS
- B.6 LAYERED OUTDOOR SPACE
- B.7 SHARED COURTYARD
- B.8 SHARED SPACES
- B.9 READABILITY OF SPACE
- B.10 THE EDGE OF PUBLIC SPACES
- B.11 COURTYARD ENTRANCE
- B.12 SPATIAL DIVERSITY
- B.13 RECLAIM STREETS






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B.3 HUMAN SCALE

Human scale design makes spaces more pleasant and promotes intimacy and interaction



THEORATICAL BACK UP

Human scale is the dimensions rooted in human senses and behavior (Sim, 2019). David Sim (2019) explains that it is designed with attention to the experience at eye level. The coziness of the created spaces gives the feeling of comfort, which promotes intimacy and sociability.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the Vauban project, air bridges have been installed in certain areas to reduce the perceived scale of the buildings, bringing them closer to a human scale. By creating a height barrier, the design fosters a stronger connection to the environment and enhances the sense of human scale.




Figure 25: Air bridge in Vauban

Source: Google (2023). Google Maps (streetview). Retrieved on 20 April 2025, of <https://www.google.com/maps>

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors  
Meeting between common interest  
Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

N.4  
N.6  
B.4

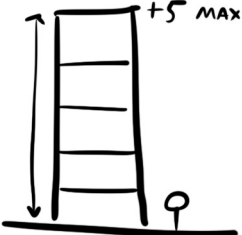
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B.4 HEIGHT

Low rise buildings give residents stronger relations with the public space



THEORATICAL BACK UP

The height of a building partially determines the relationship that residents will have with the ground level (Platform31, 2021; Gehl, 2010; Sim, 2019).

SPATIAL IMPLICATION

A height of up to five floors has the potential to maintain contact with the ground level (Gehl, 2010). However, the lower the elevations, the higher the contact with the ground floor.

Figure 26: Looking up and down

Source: Gehl, J. (2010) Cities for People. Island

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors  
Meeting between common interest  
Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

B.1  
B.2  
B.4

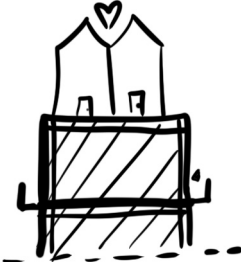
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B.5 UPPERFLOOR NEIGHBORS

The roofs of buildings can act as a small neighborhoods



REFERENCE STUDY

In the Vauban project, the upper layers of the building block have been designed so that residents form their block on top of an existing building. The residents thus have a shared space on the roof, where interaction between neighbors is encouraged.

REFERENCE STUDY

On top of one of the most central buildings in the Vauban district are houses. The houses are oriented in opposite directions and have their front and back sides, gardens, and elevations. The residents of these houses form a smaller group on top of the building.




Figure 27: Upper floor houses in Vauban

Source: Green City Times. (2023, November 10). The greenest town in Europe | Green City Times. <https://www.greencitytimes.com/europe-s-most-sustainable-city/>

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors

RELATES TO:

B.1  
B.2  
B.4

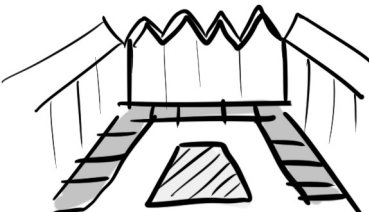
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B.6 LAYERED OUTDOOR SPACE

Different layers of publicness gives space to different types of use by the residents



THEORATICAL BACK UP

Providing private outdoor space and communal space invites different uses (Sim, 2019). The common space is perceived as neutral and represents the shared interest of the neighbors who own it. The space has the potential to create a sense of community among neighbors with front doors on different streets, as they realize they are neighbors (Sim, 2019). The private ground-floor gardens are useful spaces that directly connect to the adjacent rooms.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the Le Medi project, spaces have been reserved for adjacent residents at the edges of the shared courtyard. As a result, residents have direct access to and connection with the shared space.




Figure 28: Private space adjacent to shared courtyard in Le Medi

Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors

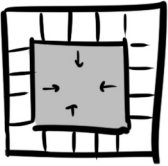
RELATES TO:

N.1  
R.1  
R.3  
B.7  
B.9  
B.10  
T.3

211

B.7 SHARED COURTYARD

The shared courtyard facilitates space for residents to meet



THEORATICAL BACK UP

An enclosure between buildings or inside a block provides privacy and security (Sim, 2019). The space is protected, both visually and physically, which makes it suitable for use as an extension of the life inside the surrounding buildings. David Sim (2019) describes them as spaces for tolerance in the urban fabric, playing a vital role in buffering human activities from one another. The group using the shared courtyard has a common interest in cleanliness, safety, security, and quietness at night (Sim, 2019). This creates a sense of identity and belonging to the group.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the Le Medi project, an open space has been created in the middle of the building block that can be used by residents. Adjacent gardens provide residents with space to use. It gives the opportunity for residents to see and meet each other. The courtyard is perceived as parochial, as the transitions from one territory to another are clearly defined by arches, fences, and materialization.



Figure 29: Shared courtyard in Le medi  
Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors

RELATES TO:

N.1 R.6 B.10  
R.1 B.6 B.11  
R.2 B.8 B.12  
B.9 T.3

B.10 COURTYARD ENTRANCE

The entrance of a courtyard makes a spatially clear transition to a new territory



OBSERVATION

The entrance of a shared courtyard has the potential to make a clear difference between the public outside and the parochial character of the courtyard. A courtyard does not have to be locked, but the clear spatial order still reflects a sense of control, which influences the privacy script and, in turn, the behavior of unfamiliar strangers.

REFERENCE STUDY

The entrance to the shared gardens in the Woensel-West project is designed with clarity in mind. Utilizing specific materials, arches, and signage, it signals the transition into a different area. This helps users understand the privacy level of the space. The entrance features an open design, inviting passers-by to enter, but the archway indicates that this area is not as publicly accessible as the main public pathway.



Figure 32: Courtyard entrance in Woensel-West  
Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors

RELATES TO:

B.6 B.7  
B.9 T.1



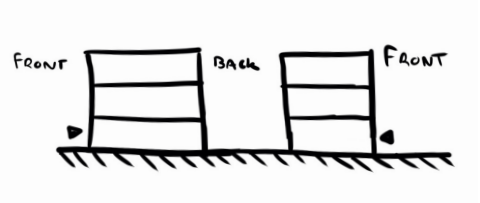
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B.11 SPATIAL DIVERSITY

Embracing spatial diversity facilitates a wider range of informal uses by the residents



THEORATICAL BACK UP

Creating spatial diversity increases the likelihood of different potential uses (Sim, 2019). The front is the most exposed side, which is expected to have a certain formality. While the back side is less visible, it facilitates more informal use. On the other hand, residents generally accept greater freedom of use (Sim, 2019).

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

In the design of Bospolder-Tussendijken, spatial diversity is a key focus. The layout clearly distinguishes the front of each house from the back. This distinction is also reflected in the level of public interaction; the front is more formal and accessible to passers-by, while the back offers a more private and relaxed atmosphere for residents.

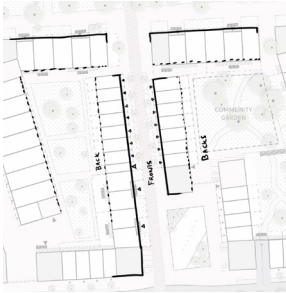


Figure 33: Fronts and backs in design

Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors  
Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

RELATES TO:

N.1  
N.12  
B.6

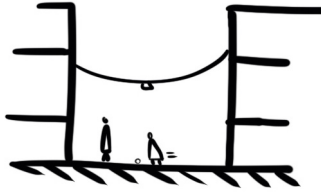
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B.12 RECLAIM STREETS

Prioritising use, instead of moving, will increase meeting between residents



OBSERVATION

The street is not just an infrastructure for traffic, but forms the heart of public life in the city. In her groundbreaking work The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961), Jane Jacobs argues that the vitality, safety, and social cohesion of a neighborhood are directly linked to the use and design of its streets.

REFERENCE STUDY

In the Le Medi project, the spaces between houses are designated as living streets with a focus on pedestrians. As a result, it can be seen that the space is being used differently by the residents. The space has become a usage space instead of a traffic space. Through use, opportunities for encounters are created.




Figure 34: Used streets in Le Medi

Source: Made by Author

STRATEGY

Meeting between direct neighbors

RELATES TO:

N.6  
B.7

## TRANSITION ZONE

Transition zones form the threshold between the public realm and private living. These in-between spaces, such as stoops, porches, plinths, and small front gardens, are where public life subtly overlaps with private life. These are the spaces where informal interactions emerge: a greeting, a short conversation, a visual connection. By designing transition zones as active, layered, and inviting, they become more than passages; they become moments of meetings, recognition, and familiarity.

## CONTENT

- T.1 CREATE FOURTH SPACES
- T.2 LIVELY PLINTH
- T.3 YOUR OUTSIDE
- T.4 IN FRONT OF AMENITIES
- T.5 PUBLIC TO PUBLIC
- T.6 EYES ON THE STREET
- T.6 SOFT TRANSITIONS

## T.1 CREATE FOURTH SPACES

Fourth spaces encourage interaction between a diverse set of users



## THEORETICAL BACK UP

Urban design needs to offer possibilities for creating fourth spaces, which could come from gaps, overlaps, or the adaptation of uses. Fourth spaces are characterized by an open character and encourage interaction between a diverse set of users (Aelbrecht, 2016). These are the places that can be named transitional zones or entrances. It can be thresholds, edge spaces, paths, nodes and props. Places that have a truly public and anonymous character. Their most distinct characteristic of fourth spaces are spatial, temporal and managerial in-betweenness (Aelbrecht, 2016).

## OBSERVATION

Designing fourth spaces involves shaping transitional zones with physical elements that invite people to pause. Introducing edges, benches, props, or trees encourages passersby to sit or stand still, transforming anonymous in-between spaces into areas of informal social encounter. These spatial cues subtly prompt dwell time and layered use, creating opportunities for spontaneous interaction among a diverse set of users.



**Figure 35:** *Used fourth space in Tussendijken*  
Source: Made by Author

## STRATEGY

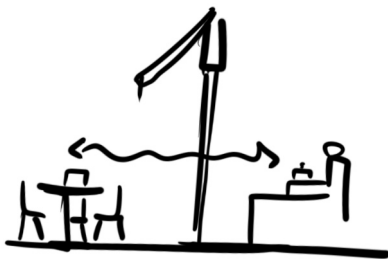
Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

## RELATES TO:

N.8	T.3
B.11	T.4
T.2	

## T.2 LIVELY PLINTH

## Lively edges enable social interactions



## THEORATICAL BACK UP

Spaces are often defined by the quality of their edges: how the building interacts at a ground level with the surrounding public space (Gehl, 2011). By designing a transparent, active, and engaging edge, it attracts people and generates social interaction. If the edge fails, meaning it is inactive, blank, or closed off, the space itself struggles to become lively, regardless of its other features.

## REFERENCE STUDY

The neighborhood of Woensel-West demonstrates how minor architectural adjustments can transform inactive edges into lively, interactive zones. By adding windows at the back of shops, what would otherwise be a blank, dead edge becomes visually permeable. This intervention enhances the sense of safety, transparency, and engagement with the public realm, fostering casual encounters.



**Figure 36: Back of stores in Woensel- West**  
Source: Made by Author

## STRATEGY

- Meeting between direct neighbors
- Meeting between common interest
- Meeting between residents of the neighborhood

## RELATES TO:

N.3	T.4
T.1	T.5
T.3	T.6

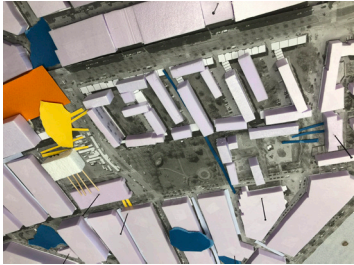
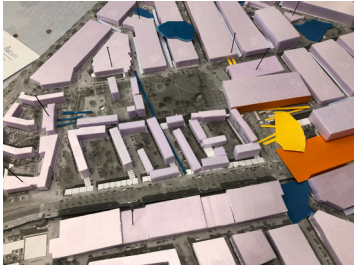
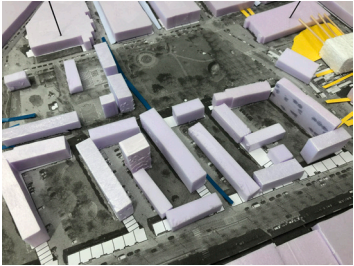
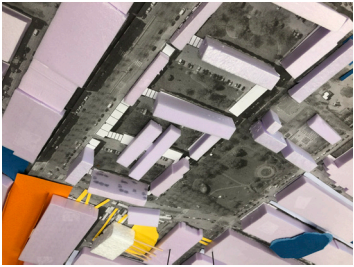
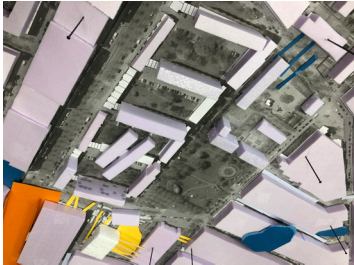
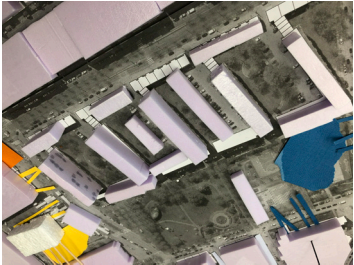
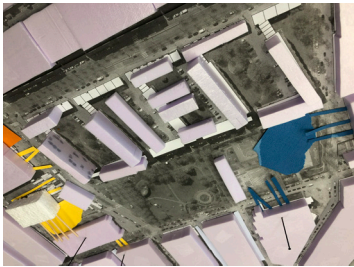
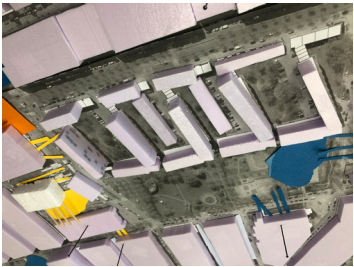
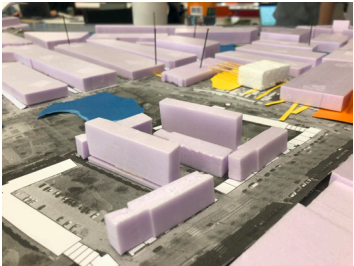
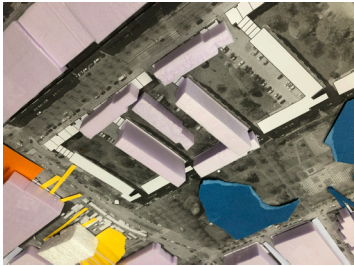
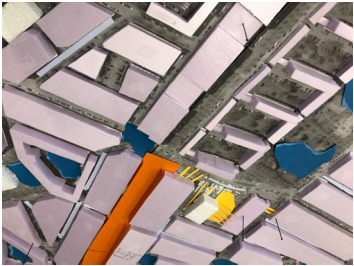
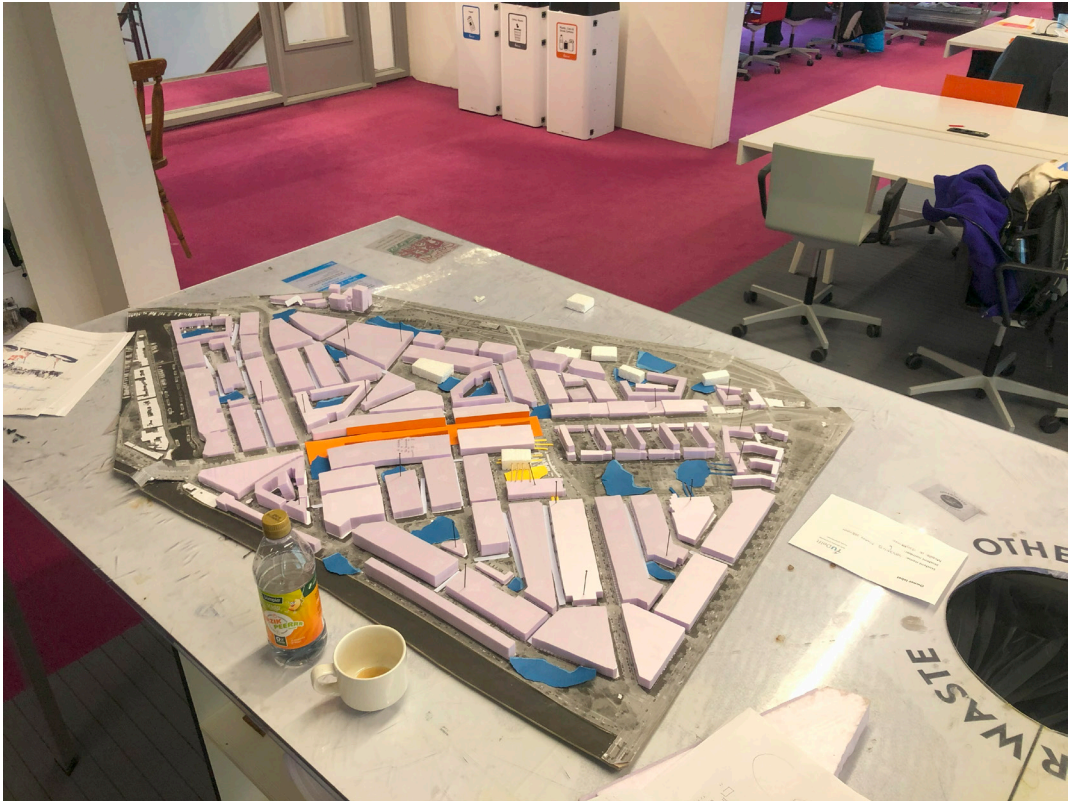






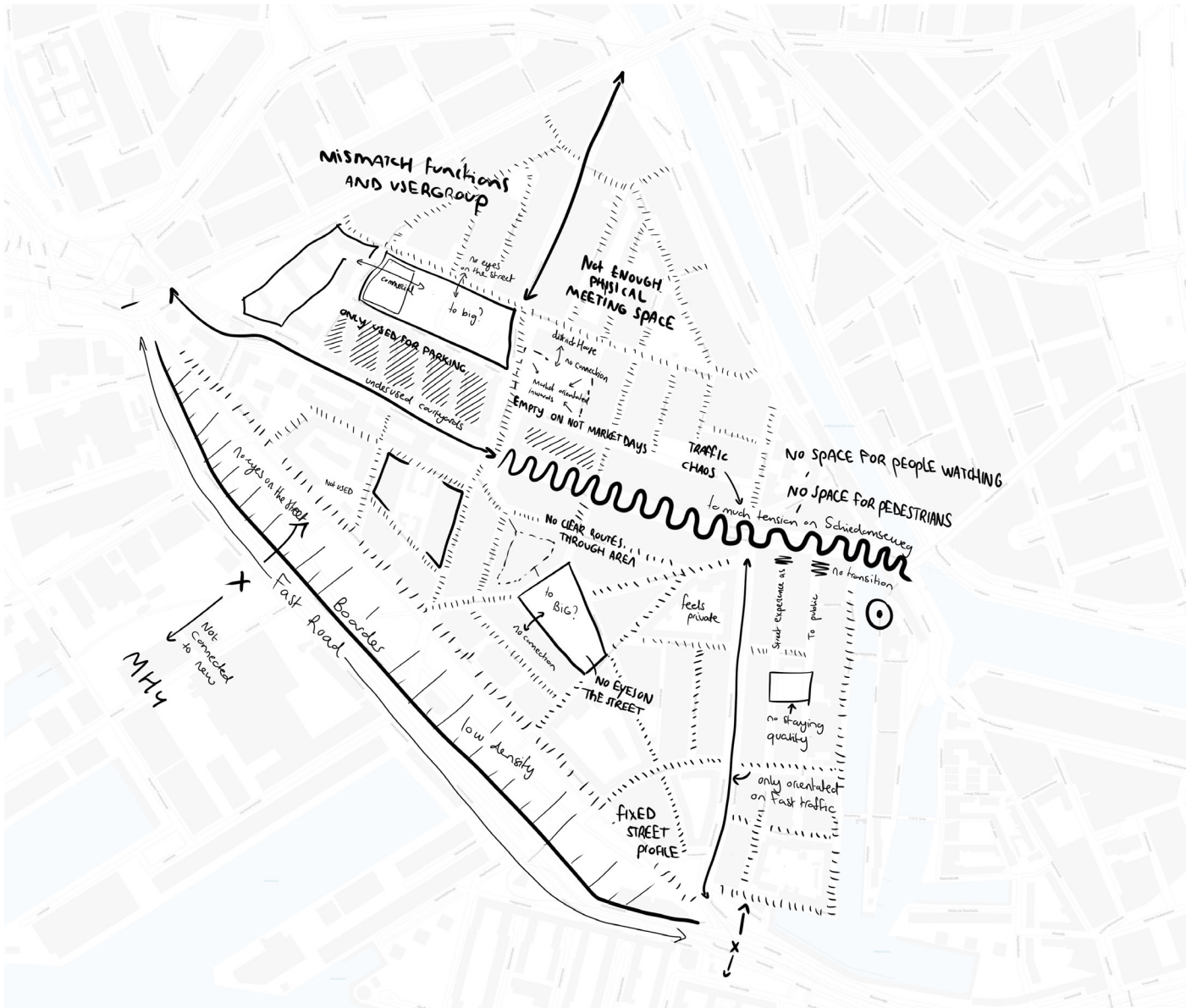


APPENDIX 2  
MODEL EXPERIMENTS





Challenges map



Opportunities map

