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GRADUATION REPORT

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ARCHITECTURE AND DWELLING
ADVANCED HOUSING DESIGN
AR3AD100

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1.
Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 STUDIO TOPIC

The urgent need for adequate housing in large quantities in The Netherlands is particularly manifested in the larger cities. Amsterdam alone has the ambition to build 7.500 dwellings per year over the next 10-15 years, equalling one 10th of the ambitions for the whole country. As expanding the city's perimeter is no longer an option, these dwellings will be built within city boundaries, and become part of the current city fabric. Ranging from transformation of existing residential areas to industrial sites turned into mixed work-live neighbourhoods, these new additions will without any doubt have a strong and lasting impact on the qualities of living in Amsterdam, for both current inhabitants and newcomers. (Architecture And Dwelling, 2025)

How can we design not merely the quantities but rather the qualities that respond to the living standards and expectations a city like Amsterdam wants to offer? What are those qualities in the contemporary context, and how can architectural and urban design invent new answers to accommodate them? There has never been a more diverse range of target groups, environmental challenges and societal goals than for the new task ahead. How to reinvent our cities, and use the potential of densification to do so? (Architecture And Dwelling, 2025)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.2 STUDIO OBJECTIVE

The Advanced Housing Design Graduation Studio (AR3AD100) explores – in collaboration with an urban research team of the municipality of Amsterdam – how housing design can successfully address these challenges. It departs from an analysis of what 'sustainability', 'living quality', 'beauty' and 'ownership' allude to in urban and architectural discourse as well as in the specific context of Dutch cities today. A research-by-design exploration of new design principles and solutions is followed by a fully elaborated design proposal for a chosen site within the city of Amsterdam. (Architecture And Dwelling, 2025)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.3 RESEARCH TOPIC

In response to increasing urban density and ongoing housing shortages in cities such as Amsterdam, established notions of privacy in residential architecture are under growing pressure. The dominant model of the fully private, self-contained dwelling, most commonly realized today through compact studio apartments, is becoming no longer viable, particularly for young professionals at the beginning of their careers, who are confronted with limited availability, rising costs, and a lack of affordable and spatially generous housing options.

Within this context, collective living emerges not merely as an economic necessity, but as a potential spatial and social alternative to the prevailing studio-based housing model. Yet its success depends on a careful reconfiguration of the relationship between privacy and openness. Rather than treating privacy as a fixed condition defined by enclosure and ownership, this research approaches it as a graduated, relational, and spatially produced quality, shaped through layout, material articulation, and the presence of shared and transitional spaces.

This thesis investigates short-term housing models for one-person, two-person and small family households, understood as transitional living arrangements on the path toward more permanent forms of residence, and as a possible alternative to the conventional studio apartment. Privacy is examined not as an

1. INTRODUCTION

absolute state, but as something continuously negotiated through territorial practices, spatial thresholds, and everyday routines of shared inhabitation. Particular attention is given to how degrees of separation, visibility, and access are mediated within collective environments.

Historically, the concept of privacy has evolved alongside broader architectural, social, and cultural transformations. Today, this evolution continues under conditions of intensified urbanization, shifting social norms, and changing understandings of home, identity, and mobility. Within this context, the central research question of this thesis asks: What if openness and privacy can be rethought to improve shared living conditions for young professionals in high-density areas of Amsterdam, while maintaining personal comfort and well-being?

By reframing privacy as a spatial and relational practice rather than a purely individual right, this research explores how architectural design, through the careful articulation of thresholds, shared spaces, and material qualities, can mediate the tension between autonomy and collectivity, and contribute to more sustainable and socially resilient forms of urban living.

2.

Problem Statement

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

2.1 THE COST BARRIER TO ENTERING THE HOUSING MARKET

Due to the ongoing housing shortage, starter homes have become increasingly unaffordable in Amsterdam. On Funda (2025), a standard 20 m· studio in the Bellamybuurt is listed for €250,000, while a typical 113 m· family apartment in the Robert Scottbuurt is priced at €825,000.

For many starters, often recent graduates or young professionals, purchasing a studio represents the upper limit of what is financially achievable, and typically only after several years of full-time employment. Even then, this is often possible only under favourable conditions, such as stable contracts or limited financial obligations. In contrast, family-sized apartments remain entirely out of reach for this group, reinforcing a prolonged dependence on small-scale housing typologies.

Fig. 1. Studio Bellamybuurt (Funda, n.d.)

Fig. 2. Family apartment Robert Scottbuurt (Funda, n.d.)

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

2.2 EFFICIENCY OVER BELONGING

In many contemporary studio apartments, essential domestic functions like the kitchen, desk, bed, and bathroom, are compacted into a single, highly standardized unit. These elements are often constructed from low-quality materials and designed to minimize cost rather than enhance livability. The result is a hyper-efficient but rigid spatial layout that leaves little to no room for movement, adaptation, or personal expression. This lack of flexibility and individuality hinders residents from forming any meaningful connection to the space. Without the opportunity to personalize or inhabit the space on their own terms, these studios rarely foster place attachment or a genuine sense of home.

A lack of place attachment in housing environments has been shown to negatively impact well-being, social cohesion, and personal identity formation. Residents who are unable to personalize or adapt their living spaces often report feelings of detachment, disorientation, and even emotional distress (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). As Manzo and Devine-Wright (2014) argue, place is not merely a physical container but a meaningful context for identity development and social belonging. When spaces are designed in a way that discourages individual expression or emotional investment, they can lead to social isolation and diminished mental health outcomes (Lewicka, 2011).

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

This is especially relevant for young professionals living in high-density, transient housing, where the absence of meaningful spatial engagement often results in a failure to develop a sense of home.

Fig. 3. Studio with lack of place attachement and lack of flexibility (Funda, n.d.)

Fig. 4. Studio with low quality materials (Funda, n.d.)

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

2.3 WHEN THE BEDROOM BECOMES EVERYTHING

Studies in sleep psychology have shown that when a bedroom is consistently used for activities other than sleeping, such as working, eating, or watching television, the brain begins to associate the space with wakefulness rather than rest. This weakens the environmental cues that help initiate and maintain healthy sleep patterns (Bootzin & Perlis, 1992). In the case of contemporary studio apartments, where the bed, kitchen, and workspace are often integrated into a single open room, the boundaries between rest and activity become blurred. As a result, residents may find it more difficult to fall asleep and stay asleep, contributing to chronic sleep disturbances and reduced well-being.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

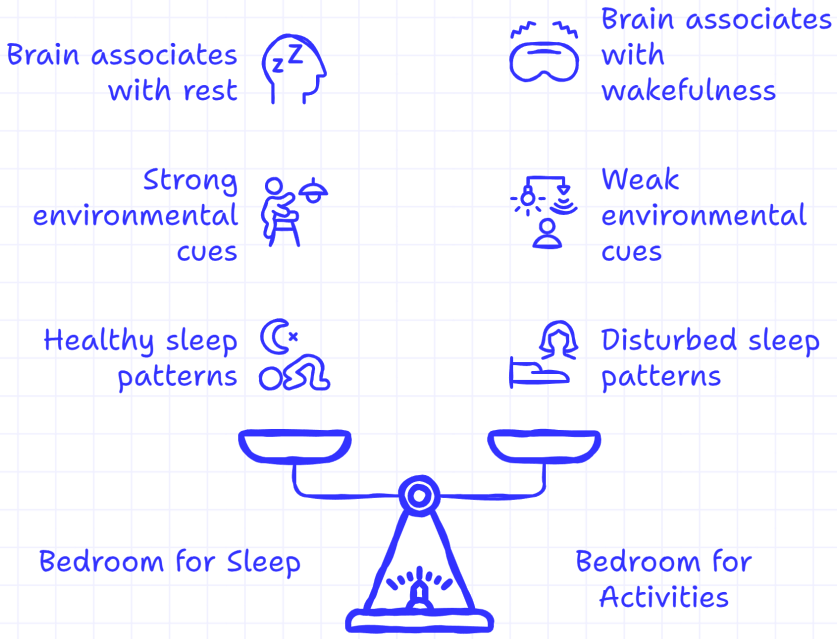


Fig. 5. Comparison of consequences from different bedroom activities

3.

Method of Evaluation

3. METHOD OF EVALUATION

3.1 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND REFERENCE CASE

The aim of the Threshold House is to provide affordable housing for starters, while simultaneously seeking to improve living conditions compared to those offered by conventional studio apartments. To achieve this, a new housing typology is proposed that challenges the spatial and economic limitations of the traditional studio model.

In order to assess whether this new typology operates within the same price range as a conventional studio, a comparative evaluation is conducted based on the average gross floor area (BVO) per resident of a studio apartment in the Little Manhattan building. Little Manhattan is a residential complex composed of six shifting volumes clustered around a central courtyard. The building accommodates 869 apartments for students and young professionals, alongside shared facilities.

Fig. 6. Little Manhattan (Studio Nine Dots, n.d.)

3. METHOD OF EVALUATION

3.2 SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF STUDIO DWELLINGS IN LITTLE MANHATTAN

The studio apartments in Little Manhattan have a total living area of 27 m2. Each unit consists of two separate rooms. One room contains a highly compact bathroom of 2,1 m2, accommodating a toilet, washbasin, and shower. The second room, measuring 23,7 m2, includes a small kitchen with a width of only 2,1 meters. The remaining space must accommodate all other domestic functions, such as a sleeping area, dining space, living area, storage, laundry facilities, and a workspace.

As a result, this single room becomes an intense overlap of activities, where none of these functions is able to fully develop or achieve spatial clarity. The lack of differentiation between uses leads to a compromised domestic experience, characterized by constant negotiation between incompatible activities.

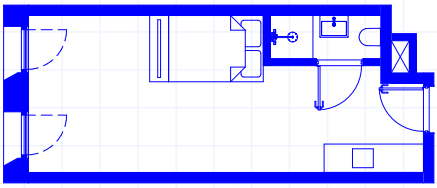


Fig. 7. Recreation of studio layout Little Manhattan

3. METHOD OF EVALUATION

Moreover, the dwellings are strongly oriented toward privacy and are accessed via an internal corridor without daylight, which functions purely as a circulation space. This corridor offers little spatial quality and significantly limits opportunities for spontaneous social interaction between residents, reinforcing isolation rather than fostering a sense of collective living.

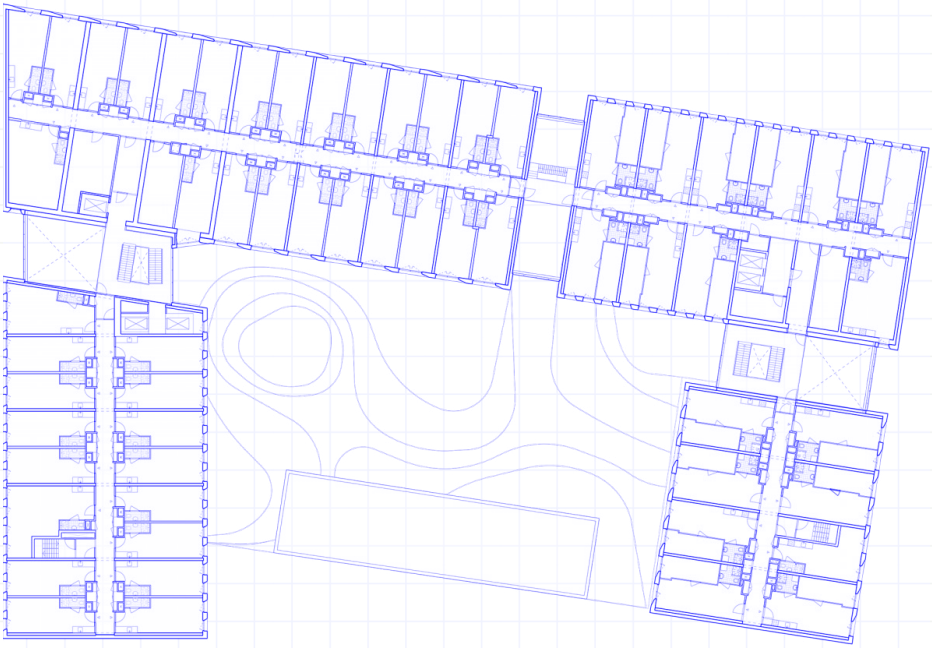


Fig. 8. Typical floor plan, Little Manhattan (Studio Nine Dots, n.d.)

3. METHOD OF EVALUATION

3.3 ESTABLISHING DESIGN PARAMETERS

As previously noted, Little Manhattan accommodates 869 apartments for students and young professionals. The majority of these units consist of the previously discussed 27 m2 studio apartments, while the building also includes a smaller number of larger apartments of approximately 41 m2. For the purpose of this research, it is assumed that the 27 m2 units are occupied by a single resident, whereas the 41 m2 apartments are suitable for two residents.

The total gross floor area (GFA) of Little Manhattan amounts to approximately 36.000 m2. Based on the assumed occupancy, this results in an estimated 1.148 residents, meaning that each resident occupies, on average, 31,5 m2 of GFA. This figure serves as an important quantitative reference for the present study. For the design of the Threshold House, it is therefore essential that the average GFA per resident remains as close as possible to that of Little Manhattan, in order to ensure a fair and comparable spatial framework.

3. METHOD OF EVALUATION

3.4 RESEARCH AIMS AND DESIGN INTENTIONS

The aim of the Threshold House is to investigate whether a new housing typology can be developed that maintains a comparable gross floor area (GFA) while significantly improving quality of living. Central to this investigation is the question of whether it is possible to create a residential model that is socially connected through shared and transitional spaces, rather than structured around isolated private units.

The design should explore the potential for clear spatial differentiation between activities, achieved through the separation of key domestic functions such as a sleeping area, dining space, living area, storage, laundry facilities, and a workspace.

In contrast to the minimal and utilitarian material approach of many high-density housing projects, the Threshold House should try to emphasize the use of high-quality materials, including larger and more luxurious bathrooms and kitchens.

Furthermore, the project should seek to cultivate place attachment fostered through community formation, positioning collective life as a central component of domestic experience.

3. METHOD OF EVALUATION

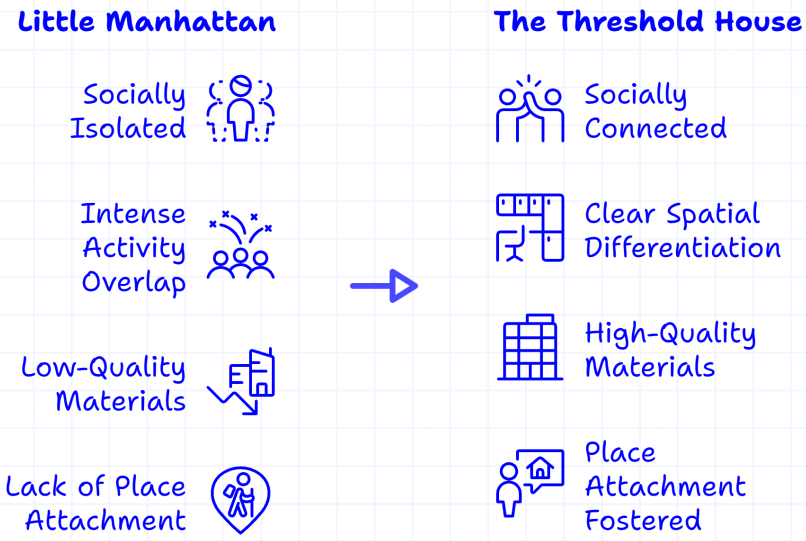


Fig. 9. Research aims and design intentions of The Threshold House

4.

Literature Research

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.1 SPACE AS SOCIAL PRODUCTION

In The Production of Space, Henri Lefebvre argues that space is not a neutral backdrop but a social product, shaped by political power, economic structures, symbolic meaning, and everyday practice. He challenges abstract or visual conceptions of space, proposing instead a "unitary theory" that integrates physical, conceptual, and lived dimensions (Lefebvre, 1991). This framework reveals how spatial arrangements reflect and reproduce social relations, for instance, the cultural construction of "public" and "private" in domestic space. Especially in collective housing, spatial design mediates autonomy, control, and visibility.

Lefebvre critiques the illusion of spatial neutrality, exposing how even "natural" or aesthetic landscapes, like Venice or Tuscany, are historically constructed and ideologically charged (pp. 76–85). Industrial and modernist spaces similarly obscure their origins behind technical rationality and visual clarity. He warns that spaces designed "to be read" often conceal systems of control under the guise of openness or functionality (pp. 92–143). Shared spaces in co-living models may thus encode norms of surveillance or conformity beneath their communal promise.

For Lefebvre, space is produced through bodily rhythms, gestures, and social practices: "a body does not live in space, it produces it" (p. 170). This

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

challenges design approaches that privilege symbolic form or visual logic, advocating instead for attention to spatial experience and affective attachments. Abstract space, standardized, regulated, commodified, erases lived time and becomes “the locus and medium of Power” (p. 130). In this light, concepts like privacy, collectivity, or community are not given, but outcomes of contested spatial production. Understanding space as a social relation, embodied, symbolic, and political, is essential for critically rethinking shared living environments today.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.2 THRESHOLD SPACES AS TOOLS FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

In Towards the City of Thresholds, Stavros Stavrides builds on Walter Benjamin's ideas to describe thresholds not just as physical borders between spaces, but as important moments in time where past, present, and future briefly come together (Stavrides, 2010, pp. 47–53). For Benjamin, a threshold is a space where something new can begin, a place full of potential. This idea is useful in architecture: thresholds are not only the points where public and private meet, but also spaces where social or political change might happen.

Benjamin also makes a key distinction between trace and aura. A trace shows closeness, it's the mark left by someone who was present, like the signs of living in a space. An aura, on the other hand, creates a sense of distance, it makes an object seem special or untouchable, even if it's right in front of you (Benjamin, as cited in Stavrides, 2010, p. 49). This difference is important when designing spaces: do they allow people to leave personal marks, or do they feel too polished and distant to interact with?

Benjamin's figure of the flâneur, the urban wanderer, helps us understand this. The flâneur moves through the city slowly and thoughtfully, noticing details that others might miss. He lives on the threshold, between private and public, between everyday life and deeper meaning (Stavrides, 2010, pp. 50–51).

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

In architecture, this shows that threshold spaces can do more than connect areas, they can be designed to break habits, invite reflection, or reveal hidden aspects of the city. In this way, thresholds can support personal freedom and new ways of being together.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

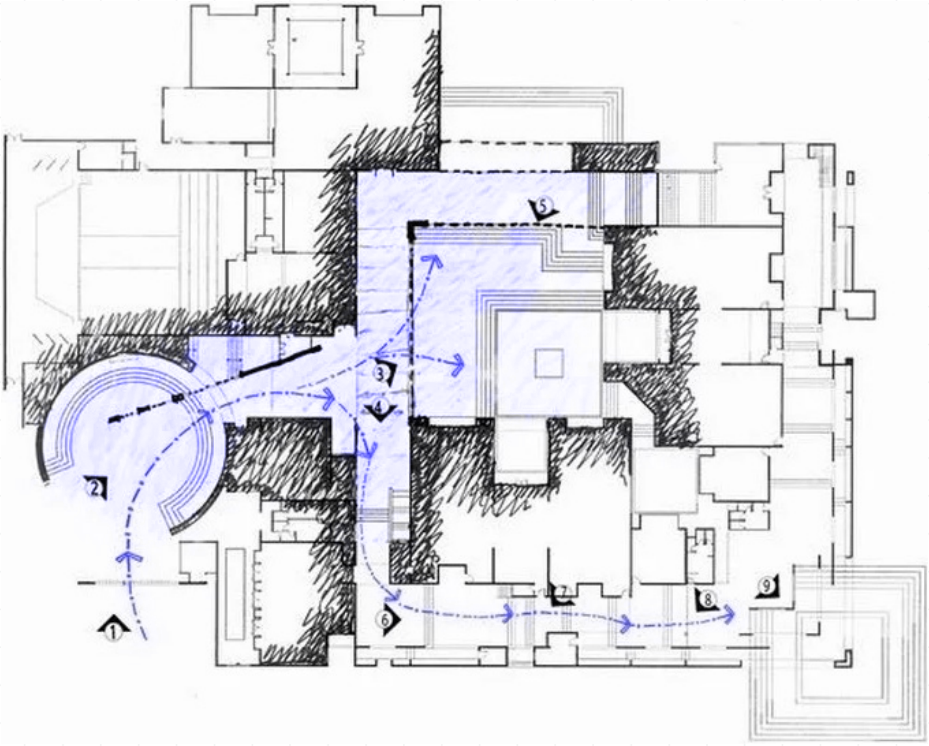


Fig. 10. Example of a threshold space in plan (Threshold Spaces_©2010-2020 ABS Publication)

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

Fig. 11. Example of a threshold space in real life (Threshold Spaces _©pbs.twimg.com)

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.3 THRESHOLDS AS SITES OF RHYTHMIC NEGOTIATION

Threshold spaces, as Stavrides argues in Towards the City of Thresholds, are not merely transitional zones but rhythmic structures that shape how we inhabit difference and disruption. Rather than being passive passageways, thresholds function as "crystallizations of rhythms", zones where repetition is not automatic but instead structured by variations that open possibilities for change (Stavrides, 2010, pp. 54-56).

Drawing on Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis, rhythm here is understood not as regularity but as "difference within repetition", a temporal logic that mirrors the threshold experience: always familiar, yet never the same (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 8). In shared housing environments, such rhythmic thresholds become sites of negotiation, where social habits are not only formed but disrupted by the presence of others. Stavrides describes this as a practice of habiter, to dwell is not to stabilize routine, but to constantly reattune to a "recurring otherness" (2010, p. 58). The threshold, then, mediates between predictability and encounter, serving as a device of social adaptation.

Through spatial design, such as alternating widths in corridors, textural floor transitions, or the choreography of light, architects can compose sequences that render rhythm palpable, allowing dwellers to inhabit not only space but time and change. Especially in precarious or transitional living contexts, such as post-crisis.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.4 THRESHOLD ARCHITECTURE FOR YOUTH

The spatial needs of young adults in shared housing differ significantly from those of other user groups due to their transitional life phase. As highlighted in The Architecture of Threshold Spaces (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022), threshold spaces can be designed as age-responsive interfaces that mediate between privacy and collectivity. These spaces acquire particular relevance in youth-oriented environments, where processes of identity formation and social positioning are active.

Malone (2002) emphasizes that young people often carry "alternative or contesting cultural values, meanings and needs" (p. 157), which they express through what she terms "boundary riding", the exploration and negotiation of spatial limits. In this context, threshold spaces serve not merely as physical transitions but as zones of social negotiation, offering young users autonomy without necessitating conflict with prevailing norms. Percy-Smith (2002) similarly notes that adaptive and loosely defined environments allow young people the flexibility required to explore roles, behaviors, and affiliations (p. 68).

This dual need for structure and openness is particularly critical in contexts of social reintegration, such as youth justice institutions. As Grenier (2021) observes in her study of the Protection Judiciaire de la Jeunesse in France, the architectural articulation of architectural articulation of thresholds, e.g.,

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

through semi-public facilities like skateparks or accessible green edges, can facilitate engagement with the wider community while maintaining a necessary degree of control.

Comparable strategies are evident in youth centers such as the PCYC in Australia, where spatial configurations encourage casual social encounters. The central zone of the Northern Beaches Community Centre, positioned at the intersection of circulation paths, acts as a spatial anchor that stimulates interaction across groups. Around it, spatial "pods" offer varying degrees of openness and enclosure, enabling social modulation.

Architect Vilanova Artigas's FAU-USP building further demonstrates the symbolic power of threshold architecture. Its open central hall and gradual vertical circulation routes function as both literal and metaphorical spaces of collective experience and political expression (Ferraz, 1997, p. 101). These examples suggest that thresholds can do more than regulate movement: they support youth in finding a place, socially, spatially, and emotionally, within broader urban and institutional contexts.

In a design of collective housing for young professionals, this research underscores the potential of semi-open thresholds, such as shared staircases, lounges, or street-facing workspaces, to function as spatial mediators. Rather than

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

isolating or over-regulating, these spaces allow for both visibility and retreat, contributing to a form of habitation that supports both individual development and collective belonging.

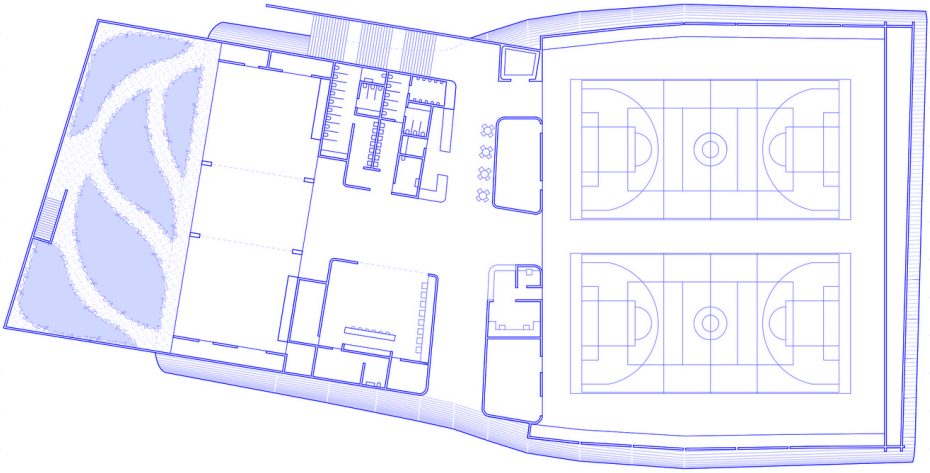


Fig. 12. Floorplan of the social intersection of the Northern Beaches Community Centre (ArchDaily, 2018)

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

Fig. 13. Open central hall in FAU-USP building (São Paulo Secreto, n.d.)

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.5 THRESHOLDS AROUND SEMI-PRIVATE POCKETS IN PUBLIC SPACE

In the spatial negotiation between privacy and openness within collective housing for young professionals, Pocket Spaces provide a compelling model for socially meaningful and flexible shared environments. As outlined in The Architecture of Threshold Spaces (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022), such spaces act as transitional zones that can simultaneously host solitude, observation, or interaction. Projects like Victor Civita Square and the Yokohama Ferry Terminal illustrate how architectural micro-zones, "urban rooms" carved into larger surfaces, can anchor social behavior in the public realm: "The long central deck surface is interrupted by 'urban rooms' that accommodate different public functions" (Levisky, 2010, as cited in Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 104).

Translating this principle to housing, these semi-private zones, such as recessed seating along corridors, shared balconies, or fragmented collective gardens, operate as spatial buffers between the individual and the collective. These are not merely aesthetic features, but performative thresholds that support variable levels of participation in communal life.

Philosopher Hannah Arendt (1958) noted that "the public sphere...gathers us together and yet prevents us from falling over each other" (p. 52). This balance between encounter and separation is architecturally expressed in threshold spaces, which foster

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

"planned coincidences" and user autonomy simultaneously. Organizing collective functions like kitchens or laundries around such socially activated zones allows residents to modulate their engagement with others according to shifting personal needs.

Young residents in particular benefit from such environments. Malone (2002) highlights how "boundary riding contributes to identity formation, allows youth to express their worldview, and positions them in an increasingly urbanized world" (p. 157). Within a housing context, this might take the form of multifunctional lounges with visual links to the street, rooftop gardens, or stair-landings designed as informal stages for expression or retreat.

Design strategies might include:

- Micro-courtyards just outside private rooms acting as buffers toward shared spaces.
- Landscaped rooftops or façade terraces functioning as outdoor Pocket Spaces.
- Communal "kitchen squares" that serve as informal gathering and organizing hubs.
- Transitional elements like bay windows, sitting steps, or perforated walls enabling residents to modulate social exposure.

As Fior (2021) aptly describes, these are "adjacent spaces that extend buildings", extensions that offer not only physical

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

expansion, but social and psychological elasticity. Rather than framing privacy as a binary, these threshold and pocket spaces allow for a gradient of inhabitation, spaces where autonomy and community become mutually supportive.

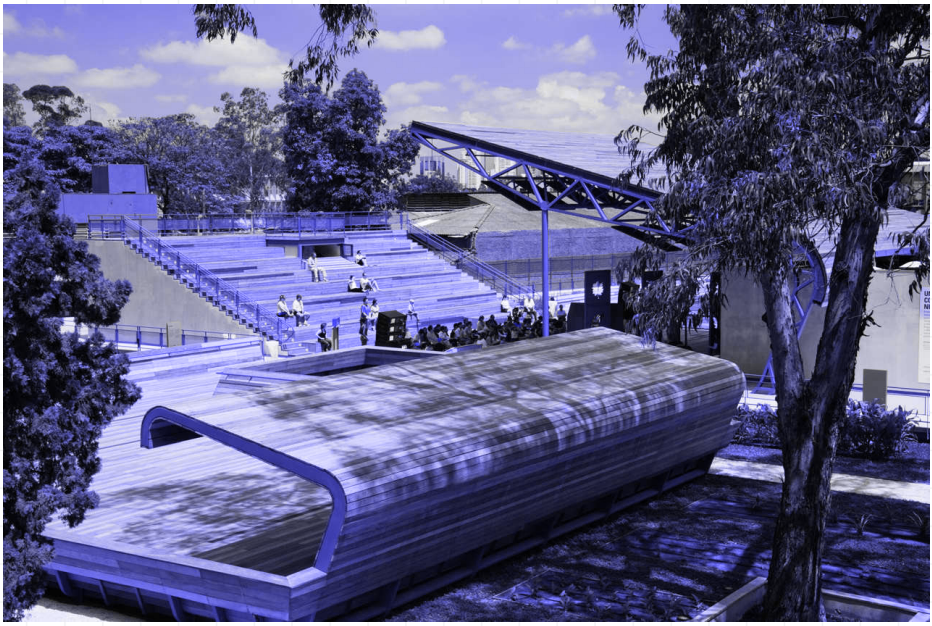


Fig. 14. Victor Civita Square in the Victor Civita Plaza (ArchDaily, 2012)

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.6 THRESHOLDS IN THE CONTEXT OF SECURITY STRATEGIES

The tension between safety and openness is a central challenge in contemporary architecture, particularly in the design of collective housing for young urban professionals. Threshold spaces, those architectural in-betweens between public and private, are key sites where these competing demands intersect. As discussed in The Architecture of Threshold Spaces, thresholds possess an inherently ambiguous status: "neither fully public nor fully private," they are simultaneously zones of invitation and vulnerability (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 119). Their existence complicates simplistic security strategies such as gates or fences: "The existence of a threshold space is inconsistent with this simple control strategy" (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 120). Rather than relying on hard enclosures, spatial transitions, such as vestibules with visual continuity, semi-enclosed courtyards, and socially visible shared entrances, offer more nuanced forms of access regulation.

This approach aligns with Jacques Rancière's critique of over-surveillance, where mechanisms like CCTV and security guards can undermine citizens' capacity for self-governance: "Controls exerted by the presence of a security guard or CCTV monitoring usurp auto-regulation" (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 122). Instead, security can be fostered through design elements that promote natural surveillance, community engagement, and

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

informal oversight. Well-lit shared entrances, visually permeable boundaries, and semi-public gathering spaces can contribute to a sense of security without isolating or excluding.

Mike Davis (1990) famously warned of the "fortressing" of cities, noting that the proliferation of defensive urban strategies, such as bollards, closed façades, and gated zones, has led to "the destruction of accessible public space" (p. 155). In housing design, this suggests a need to avoid defensive enclaves. Instead, a "layered security" approach offers a viable alternative, organizing access through a sequence of increasingly private zones while preserving openness: "Security is organised via a 'funnel effect' that maintains an open profile while sequentially enhancing security" (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 125). For example, a building may feature: an open public edge defined by landscaping rather than barriers; a semi-public threshold zone with informal surveillance and shared functions; and private interior quarters protected by spatial sequencing rather than overt technological control.

Importantly, as Habermas asserts, "the openness of public life is essential to a healthy democracy" (as cited in Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 128). Architecture that embraces openness, such as shared stoops, semi-public co-working areas near entrances, or community-facing seating, can help situate housing as an active civic agent.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

Fig. 15. Entrance of the Chau Chak Wing Museum and a diagram of the layered security in the building (CIMAM, 2023)

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.7 THRESHOLDS IN THE CONTEXT OF HOMOGENIZATION OF SPACE

In The Architecture of Threshold Spaces, the authors argue that freedom, while central to democratic society, can only function meaningfully within a spatial system of boundaries and responsibilities. They warn that "excessive individual freedom of movement means free access to all spaces and the erasure of symbolic differences between spaces" (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 141). In the context of collective housing, this translates into a need for clear yet nuanced spatial differentiation: when there is no hierarchy between public, semi-public, and private zones, residents may experience disorientation, behavioral flattening, and the loss of meaningful social rituals. The text criticizes both segregation and homogenization as threats to urban vitality: "When balanced dialectics are no longer in play in the city, due to excessive constraints or excessive homogeneity, we lose the possibility of a lively and balanced city" (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 144).

Thresholds, then, function as spatial and political buffers that "resist both homogenisation of space and its opposite, segregation between public and private space" (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 147). Rather than being neutral voids, they generate a "politics of the built environment" by structuring the spatial sequence between outside and inside, thus shaping autonomy and collectivity. In design terms, this implies the introduction of subtle spatial

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

codings, material transitions, light shifts, and changes in floor level, that preserve symbolic differences without rigid separation. As Sennett warns, erasing these distinctions results in "neutral, sterile, and homogeneous environments" (as cited in Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 143).

The text draws on Mehdi Belhaj Kacem to frame this issue as dialectical: societies oscillate between homogenizing fusion and segregating fragmentation. Thresholds allow this tension to remain productive by offering variable modes of encounter, observation, and retreat. A well-designed threshold thus becomes "an architectural condition for dialectics, and by extension, for politics" (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, p. 149). This is particularly relevant in Amsterdam's co-living developments, where commodification often leads to standardized spatial modules. As the authors argue, "The standardisation of space creates homogenisation of architectural thinking," while "freedom is reserved for the dominant class; for lower classes it is sometimes temporarily permitted to keep the ideal of emancipation alive" (Hasselaar & Meissner, 2022, pp. 150–151).

In response, threshold spaces should be deployed not merely as polished façades but as critical instruments of social modulation and spatial justice. They must facilitate both encounter and retreat, formal structure and user co-curation.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

Design strategies might include layering access zones, embedding alcoves and shared niches, and transforming corridors into socially programmed connectors. By resisting spatial flattening and allowing gradated social participation, thresholds enable housing to transcend neutrality and become sites of meaningful urban life.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.8 PUBLIC SPACE AS A SITE OF CONFLICT AND ENCOUNTER

In contemporary housing design, the notion of public space as a site of consensus is increasingly challenged by political theorists like Jacques Rancière, who conceptualizes it instead as a space of dissensus, a realm of negotiation, visibility, and contestation. "Politics involve an open-ended set of practices... driven by the assumption of equality between any and every speaking being" (Rancière, 2010, p. 28).

This perspective aligns closely with the argument made in The Architecture of Threshold Spaces (2019), particularly in Chapter 7, where public space is reconceived not as a harmonious backdrop but as an active threshold, a site where conflict, ambiguity, and transformation are made spatially legible. Ludger Schwarte elaborates that "architecture is neither a product nor a fabrication, but an act which frees other possibilities for action" (Schwarte, 2019, p. 211).

In the context of shared housing for young professionals, this implies that threshold zones, such as entrances, communal terraces, or semi-public lounges, should not merely manage circulation but create conditions for spontaneous encounters, negotiations, and even frictions. Rancière warns that "consensus erases dissensus by presenting a space where everything seems already resolved" (Rancière, 1995), reminding designers that openness must not be conflated with sameness.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

Instead, as The Architecture of Threshold Spaces suggests, architecture should stage situations that make coexistence visible and contestable. This is evident in Lina Bo Bardi's design for MASP, where the museum floats above an open civic void that operates as an activated public threshold (Leclercq, 2018).

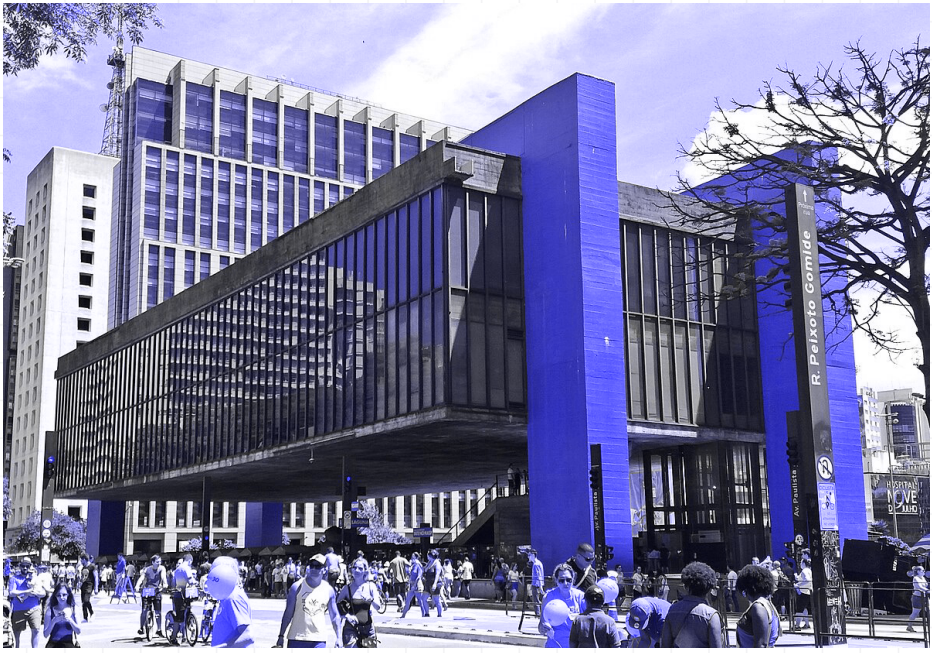


Fig. 16. MASP with public threshold underneath the building (Wikipedia NL, n.d.)

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.9 THRESHOLDS AS CATALYSTS OF PLACE ATTACHMENT

Place attachment is not a static or innate bond, but a dynamic, relational process through which people construct a sense of belonging via emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with space. As Altman and Low (1992) argue in their seminal conceptual inquiry, place attachment should not be understood as a simple sum of affect, behavior, and memory, but rather as an integrated "web of interrelated processes" that bind individuals to their environments (p. 5). This interweaving makes place attachment more than a personal sentiment, it is a socio-spatial experience shaped by routine, memory, and interaction.

Threshold spaces, such as porches, shared gardens, or stairwells, exemplify this relational dynamic. These in-between zones function as key sites where emotion (safety, discomfort), cognition (recognition, memory), and behavior (greeting, withdrawal) intersect. They act as catalysts for place attachment by enabling spatial negotiation and social contact. A well-designed threshold space makes room for subtle encounters and transitions, turning ambiguity, being neither fully public nor fully private, into a productive condition for belonging.

Affective place attachment, moreover, is inherently rhythmic. It is performed and reinforced through cycles, daily routines, seasonal rituals, or disruptions that mark change. As Altman and Low note, place

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

becomes meaningful not just through presence, but through repeated patterns of dwelling (1992, p. 10). In collective housing settings, shared rhythms, like communal meals, cleaning schedules, or quiet hours, can take root in threshold spaces. These micro-rituals create affective traces that embed emotional resonance in everyday environments.

Finally, attachment unfolds across both individual and collective dimensions. While personal objects or private rooms may ground an individual's identity, collective rituals, shared histories, and social routines generate a broader sense of communal rootedness. "Places," as Altman and Low suggest, "are not just physical settings, but containers of social relationships" (1992, pp. 6–7). Designing for place attachment, then, means enabling both private reflection and shared expression, through spaces that allow personalization, storytelling, and care.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

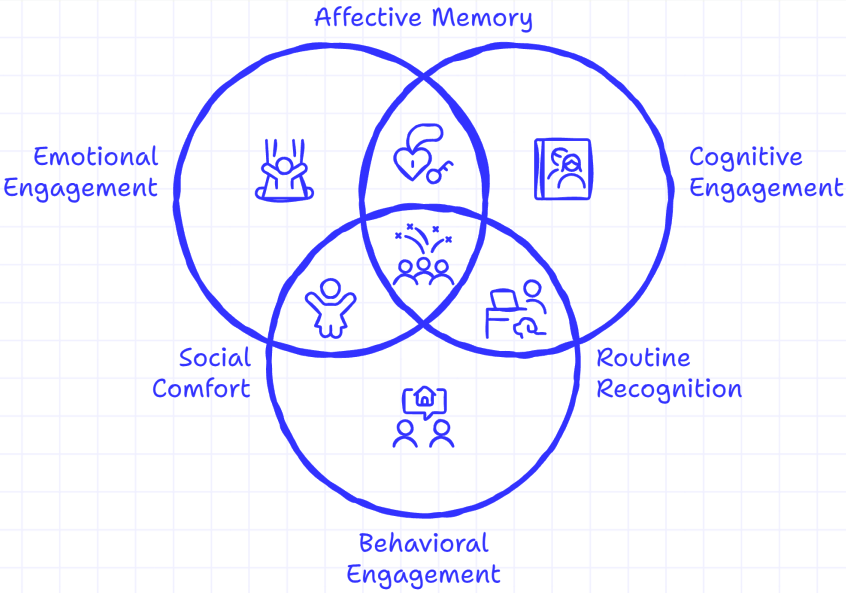


Fig. 17. The interwoven processes of place attachement

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.10 ATTACHMENT TO POSSESSIONS AND THE COLLECTIVE HOME

In collective housing environments, spaces are not merely functional backdrops, but actively shape personal and collective identities. Drawing on Place Attachment edited by Altman and Low (1992), we understand that people form emotional bonds not only with private possessions but also with spaces and communal routines. Chapter 3 in particular emphasizes how "attachments to possessions often reflect attachments to self, family, group, and place" (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 165). This perspective echoes Belk's (1988) notion of the extended self, where material and spatial belongings become integral to personal identity. In shared housing, the hallway, stairwell, or common garden may not be individually owned, but through ritual, repetition, and personalization, they become part of the resident's self-construction.

Rituals and daily routines, like drinking coffee in a shared stairwell or cleaning the gallery, transform anonymous architecture into inhabited space. These micro-practices cultivate emotional investment and memory, reinforcing the affective charge of place. As Altman and Low assert, "attachment can develop through symbolic meanings associated with objects and through routines and rituals in spatial settings" (1992, p. 167). Such insights are vital in designing collective dwellings that enable residents to "leave traces", emotional, physical, and symbolic, thereby

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

anchoring identity not only in personal rooms but also in shared thresholds and in-between spaces.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.11 SYMBOLIC PLACE ATTACHMENT IN SHARED LIVING SPACES

In shared housing environments, residents often develop deep emotional bonds with their living spaces even in the absence of ownership, reflecting what Belk (1988) describes as the home as a "possession" that extends and expresses the self. Such bonds are not merely sentimental but are grounded in the materialization of memory, ritual, and identity.

Altman and Low (1992) emphasize that place attachment emerges not only from habitation but also from shared routines, symbolic interaction, and collective narratives. As Low argues in chapter 8 of Place Attachment, places like public plazas, or by extension, shared living areas, acquire significance through "ritual social interaction and repeated use" (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 170). This dynamic is mirrored in shared housing where common areas such as kitchens, balconies, or stairwells can evolve into "memory places," becoming social anchors through everyday encounters and storytelling.

Even in contexts without legal ownership, residents may experience what Belk terms "habituated possession," in which the repetition of personal acts (e.g., decorating a space, sharing meals) fosters a sense of symbolic control and identity (Belk, 1988). Spatial design that supports appropriation, social interaction, and visible traces of use, like worn surfaces or personalized shared zones, thus plays a crucial role in cultivating collective and individual place attachment in temporary or transitional housing forms.

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

4.12 SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS AND ROUTINE

In Place Attachment, Altman and Low (1992) emphasize that attachment to place is not solely a result of physical or functional attributes but arises through deeply embedded social experiences and repeated interactions. This view is reinforced by Hummon, who argues that emotional attachment to a neighborhood is primarily fostered through social integration, through friendships, routines, and reciprocal interactions, rather than through satisfaction with amenities or aesthetics (Altman & Low, 1992, pp. 253–278).

In collective housing environments, shared spaces like corridors, rooftops, or laundry rooms can function as informal meeting grounds. If designed to be socially permeable, visually open, temporarily occupied, and loosely programmed, such spaces foster spontaneous encounters and, over time, attachment.

Hummon also underlines the power of local routines and long-term residence in building place attachment, as memories accumulate through repeated use. Even in temporary living arrangements, attachment can be stimulated through micro-rituals like morning sun spots, shared plants, or weekly communal meals, all of which create continuity and a sense of belonging.

Crucially, Hummon distinguishes between community satisfaction ("how good is this place?")

4. LITERATURE RESEARCH

Therefore, design must allow room for affective appropriation, not just functional performance. Features like benches in the sun, community bulletin boards, and varied entrances can support this emotional dimension.

Moreover, Hummon points to local friendships as particularly strong indicators of attachment. Architecture that facilitates repeated, casual interaction, such as shared entrances with seating, communal kitchens, or neighborhood libraries, helps foster a "social infrastructure of attachment."

While mobility often disrupts local ties, Hummon shows that place attachment does not correlate linearly with social class. Factors such as duration of residence and life stage (e.g., raising children) matter more. In mixed-use or transitional housing, designers can encourage continuity through shared symbols, persistent spaces, or rituals passed down between successive residents.

Importantly, Hummon frames place identity as autobiographical: places become loaded with meaning through lived experiences and transitions. He refers to Rowles' notion of "insidedness", the layering of physical, social, and remembered familiarity. Even temporary or shared spaces can support this if residents are allowed to leave visible traces, through bulletin boards, shared objects, or personalized rooms.

5.

Case Study Research

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

5.1 CASE STUDY FRAMEWORK

To explore how openness and privacy are spatially organized and experienced in collective living environments, this thesis examines five architectural case studies that represent a broad spectrum of shared residential arrangements. These case studies are later analyzed through a gradient of spatial access, ranging from fully public to tightly controlled private domains, using six spatial categories: public (residents), shared (residents), shared (household), private (staff), private (residents), and controlled private (residents).

The selection includes three conventional examples of cohabitation. Goddards (1898–1900) by Edwin Lutyens was conceived as a holiday home for "welcome gentlefolk" and can be seen as a precursor to contemporary co-housing. Kruisplein (1984–1985) by Mecanoo provided experimental youth housing in Rotterdam with flexible two- and three-level maisonettes aimed at non-traditional households. The Social Hub Amsterdam City (2016) by Penta Architecten blends student housing with hospitality, offering flexible short- and medium-term accommodation alongside communal spaces for work, dining, and leisure.

To stretch the conceptual boundaries of collective living, two out-of-the-box examples are added. Bentham's Panopticon (1791), although never fully realized, theorized a building organized around centralized

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

surveillance, where privacy is systematically limited and behavioral control is spatially encoded. In contrast, Le Corbusier's La Tourette Monastery (1953–1960) explores how solitude, silence, and spiritual focus are structured within a community of monks through carefully choreographed transitions between private cells and shared spaces.

By positioning these five cases along a open-to-private spectrum, this comparative framework reveals how different architectural strategies negotiate boundaries between self and other, autonomy and collectivity, control and freedom. It provides a foundation for rethinking spatial design in high-density housing for young professionals, where the balance between openness and privacy is both socially urgent and architecturally unresolved.

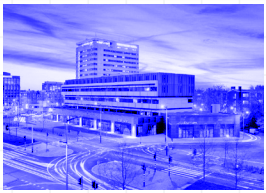
5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Panopticon, 1785

Goddards, 1900

Sainte Marie de la Tourette, 1960

Kruisplein, 1985



The Social Hub, 2016

Present

?

Fig. 18. Timeline of casestudies

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

5.2 GODDARDS

The Goddards house, designed by Edwin Lutyens for the Art Workers Guild in Surrey, offers a compelling historical example of early collective living. Built as a holiday retreat for "gentlefolk of reduced means," the house was intended to foster communal life within a refined, domestic setting (Brown, 2001, p. 45). Rather than centering on individual ownership or long-term residency, the project embraced shared temporality and modest privacy through spatial design.

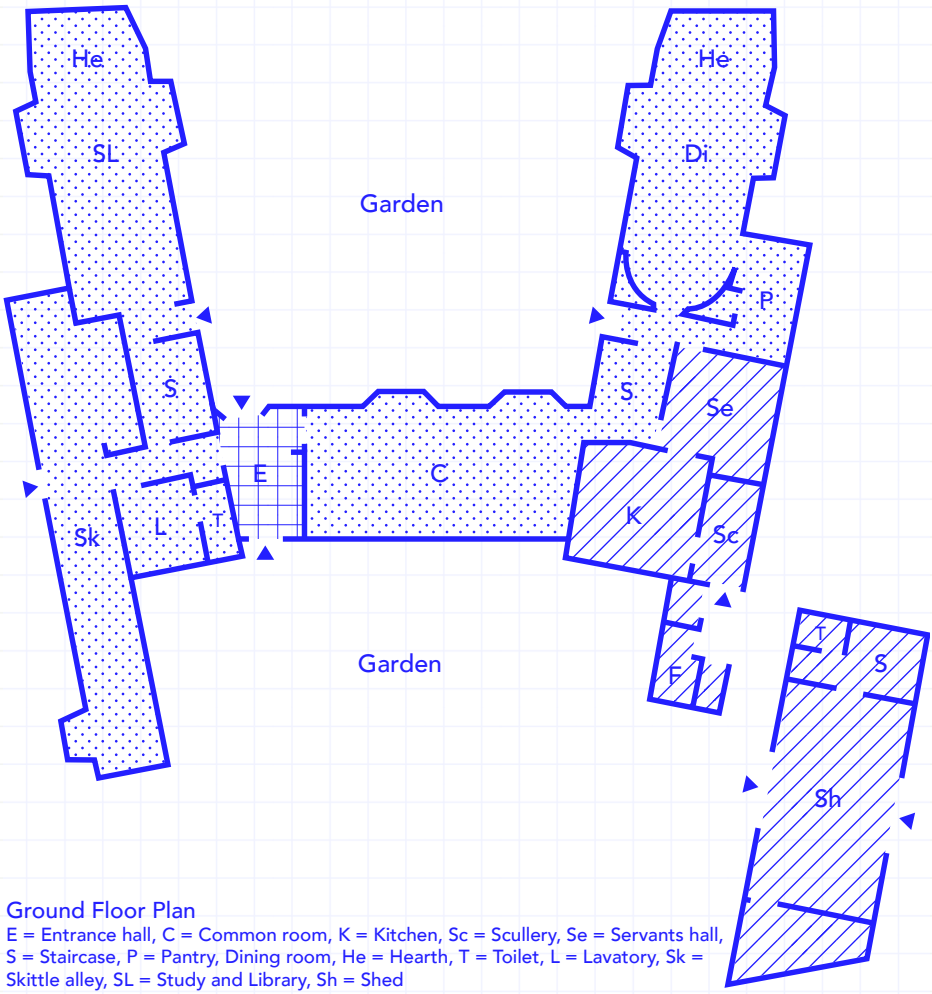
At the heart of Goddards lies a large common room, functioning as the building's central social hub. From this core, two wings extend outward, each containing a set of specialised rooms. The right wing contains the dining room and discreet service quarters for staff, while the left wing accommodates a library and study room, and a skittle alley, introducing both contemplative and recreational dimensions to the domestic setting. This branching layout encourages different modes of cohabitation: collective meals, focused solitude, and leisurely play, all spatially distributed but loosely linked through the central common space.

This architectural rhythm reflects a nuanced understanding of openness and privacy. As the research diagram shows (p. 46), 53% of Goddards is shared between the public and residents (including entrance room and spacious garden), 26% is shared only between residents (such as the dining room, study,

and skittle alley), 9% is private for staff, and 12% is allocated as private space for each guest. This layered composition does not merely separate spaces, it stages a daily choreography between retreat and encounter.

One could say privacy was modest and structured, but not absent. Guests moved fluidly between degrees of exposure and seclusion, allowing for individual reflection within a socially vibrant setting. The Goddards house thus anticipates many of the ambitions of contemporary co-living: to balance autonomy with collectivity, and form with routine.

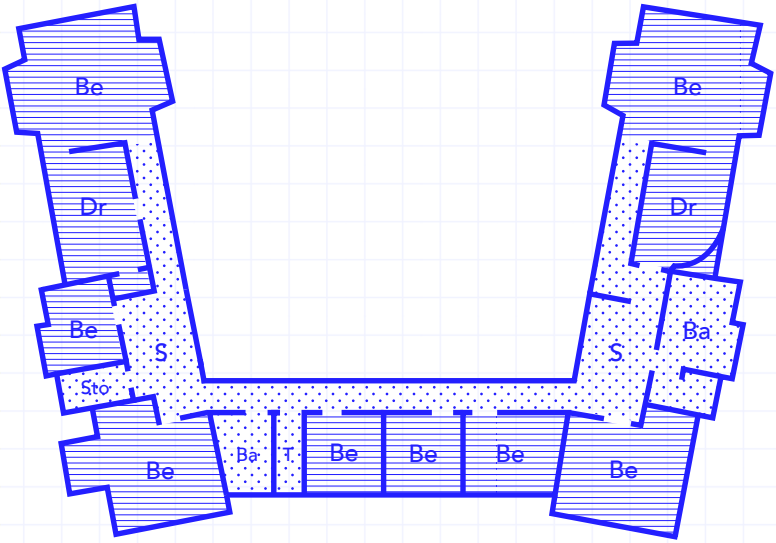
5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH



Ground Floor Plan
E = Entrance hall, C = Common room, K = Kitchen, Sc = Scullery, Se = Servants hall, S = Staircase, P = Pantry, Dining room, He = Hearth, T = Toilet, L = Lavatory, Sk = Skittle alley, SL = Study and Library, Sh = Shed

Fig. 19. Spatial organization of private and shared rooms Goddards, ground floor

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH



First Floor Plan
Be = Bedroom, Ba = Bathroom, T = Toilet, S = Stairs, Dr = Dressing room, Sto = Store

Fig. 20. Spatial organization of private and shared rooms Goddards, first floor

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

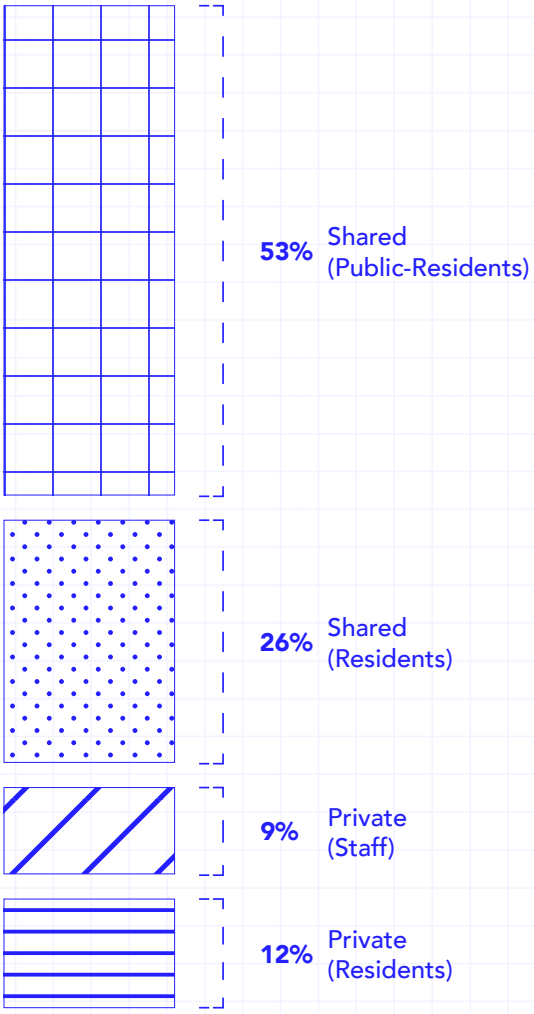


Fig. 21. Legend of spatial organization Goddards

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

5.3 KRUISPLEIN

Kruisplein, designed by Mecanoo in the mid-1980s, offered a forward-thinking approach to youth housing in Rotterdam. The project responds to the shifting realities of domestic life by embracing flexible spatial configurations that accommodate non-traditional households. Rather than separating functions strictly by units or floors, Kruisplein introduces a vertically layered maisonette typology where privacy and collectivity are constantly negotiated.

A typical maisonette is organized around a middle level, which functions both as the main entrance and the primary social hub of the dwelling. Here, residents encounter the shared kitchen and dining area and a small balcony, spaces intended for communal use within the household. This central zone functions as a spatial anchor, from which vertical movement connects more intimate or more public areas.

Stairs from the kitchen lead down to the lower floor, which contains three private bedrooms, a bathroom, and a toilet shared within the household. This level also offers a shared building-wide balcony, reinforcing the project's strategy of interleaving private and collective zones.

Moving upward from the entrance level, the top floor features two additional bedrooms and a second bathroom and toilet, again shared by the household. Like the other floors, this upper level opens onto a

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

communal balcony that is accessible to all residents. The vertical layout of the maisonette thus creates a rhythm of progression, from semi-public to increasingly private spaces.

The spatial analysis graph on page 51 shows how Kruisplein allocates approximately 12% of its space to areas shared between the public and residents, 6% to zones shared among all residents of the building, 31% to spaces shared within the household, and 51% to private resident spaces.

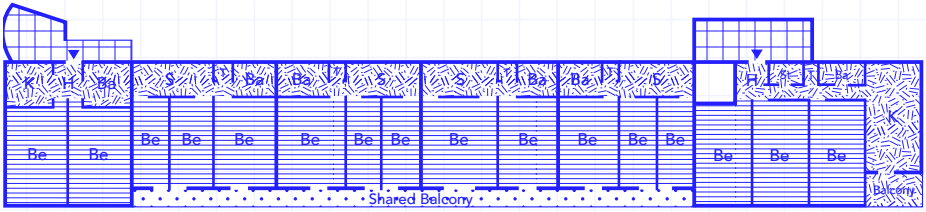
Compared to Goddards, Kruisplein offers a notably higher degree of privacy for its residents, both in terms of spatial allocation and the level of enclosure within the domestic sphere. While Goddards was conceived as a shared retreat with open communal lounges, a central dining hall, and bedrooms arranged along a continuous corridor, Kruisplein breaks this collectivity into discrete, household-specific domains. The maisonette structure ensures that each group of residents can circulate within their own vertical cluster, without regularly encountering other building occupants, something that was not possible in the open-plan configuration of Goddards.

Privacy at Kruisplein is not only about spatial separation but also about access control and visual permeability. Residents can close doors, choose when and where to interact, and define their own domestic boundaries. This is in stark contrast to

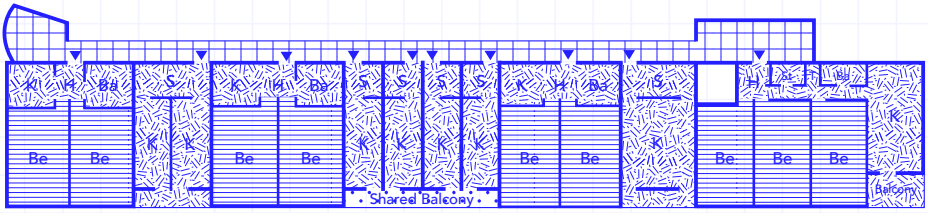
5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Goddards, where openness was integral to the design ethos and privacy was a more communal, negotiated condition.

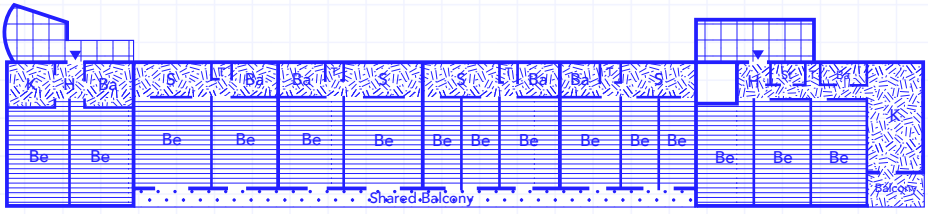
5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH



6th Floor
Be = Bedroom, Ba = Bathroom, K = Kitchen, H = Hall, T = Toilet, S = Staircase, St = Storage



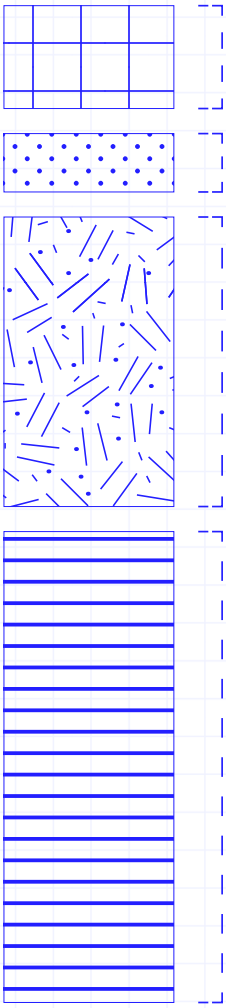
5th Floor
Be = Bedroom, Ba = Bathroom, K = Kitchen, H = Hall, T = Toilet, S = Staircase, St = Storage



4th Floor
Be = Bedroom, Ba = Bathroom, K = Kitchen, H = Hall, T = Toilet, S = Staircase, St = Storage

Fig. 22. Spatial organization of private and shared rooms Kruisplein

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH



12% Shared (Public-Residents)

6% Shared (Residents)

31% Shared (Household)

51% Private (Residents)

Fig. 23. Legend of spatial organization Kruisplein

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

5.4 THE SOCIAL HUB, AMSTERDAM CITY

The Social Hub Amsterdam City, designed by Penta Architecten in 2016, exemplifies a hybrid model of student housing and hospitality that reimagines how openness and privacy intersect in collective living. Tailored for short- and medium-term stays, the building merges the spatial logic of a hotel with the social ambition of a co-living concept. It offers residents fully private units, each consisting of a bedroom with a desk and an ensuite bathroom, while fostering community through an extensive range of shared amenities.

The ground floor acts as the social heart of the complex and is consciously designed to dissolve boundaries between residents and the public. Spaces such as the restaurant, theatre, event lobby, bar, co-working area, café, meeting rooms, and even third-party-run amenities create a vibrant interface with the city. These public-facing functions are supported by a daily event programme that draws in a diverse audience of users beyond residents. Observations during a project visit confirmed the popularity of the co-working café and study spaces among non-residents, highlighting the porous and civic character of the building's ground floor.

In contrast, the upper floors are structured for efficiency and privacy. Long, narrow corridors provide access to the individual rooms, with minimal space allocated for communal use beyond circulation.

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

From the perspective of spatial privacy gradation, The Social Hub demonstrates a vertical zoning strategy: nearly the entire ground floor is shared between the public and residents (35%), while only 4% is shared exclusively among residents. Just 2% is reserved for staff-only areas, and a striking 59% of the total floor area is fully private to individual residents (see p. 57).

In comparison to Goddards and Kruisplein, The Social Hub introduces a radically different model of shared living, one that prioritizes functional autonomy over communal intimacy. Whereas Goddards was built around shared rituals like tea-time, reading, and gardening within a domestic-scale commons (with only 12% private space per resident), The Social Hub adopts a hospitality-driven logic, where "community" is organized through programmed events rather than informal, lived-together routines. This reflects an urban shift in co-living, where "community" is often mediated through curated space rather than direct spatial sharing.

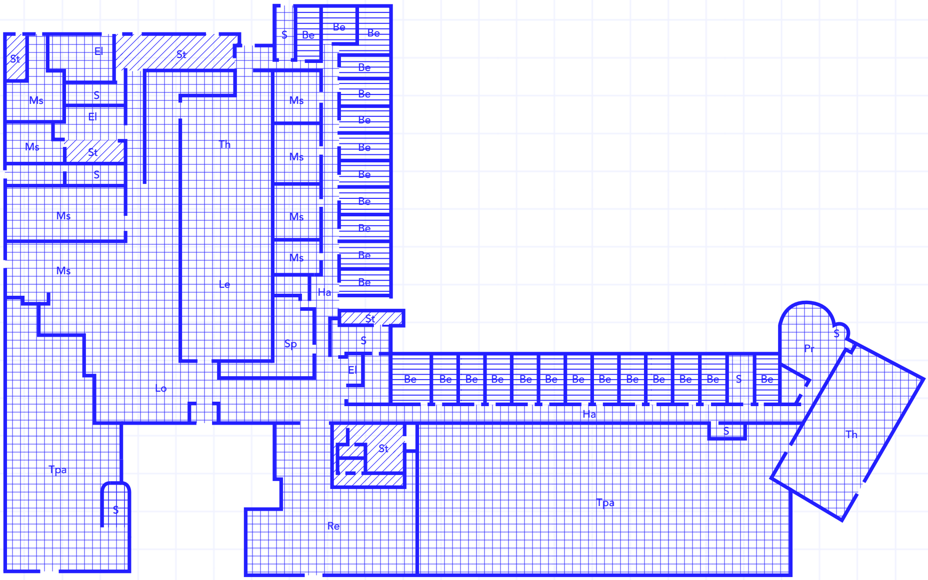
Similarly, Kruisplein embeds privacy within the household through vertically stacked maisonettes that combine private bedrooms with shared household kitchens and bathrooms, encouraging negotiated boundaries and sustained interaction among small resident groups. In contrast, The Social Hub externalizes almost all shared life to the ground floor, integrating it with public amenities like

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

co-working spaces, a theatre, and a café. These spaces are accessible to both residents and the city, making the threshold between "home" and "public" highly permeable. Residents live mostly in private ensuite rooms, entered through narrow hotel-like corridors, with little incentive or infrastructure for casual interaction among neighbors.

The project reflects an urban shift in co-living where "community" is often mediated through programmed space rather than direct spatial sharing. As Altman and Low (1992) suggest, privacy is not only about retreat but also about having agency in social interaction. The Social Hub offers such control through architectural zoning, providing residents with the freedom to choose when and how to engage in communal life. The emphasis on personal autonomy aligns with contemporary lifestyles that demand flexibility, yet it also raises questions about the depth and quality of social connection fostered in such settings.

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

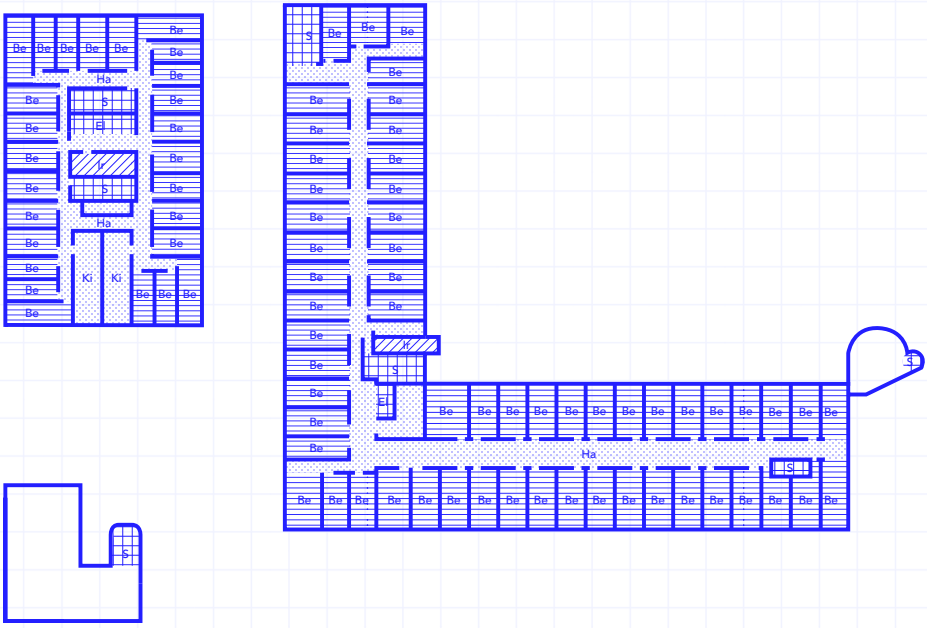


Ground Floor Plan

Th = Theatre, Le = Lobby Event Space, Re = Restaurant, Tr = Terrace, Lc = Lobby Cafe, Ms = Meeting Space, Pr = Playroom, Ba = Bar, Ha = Hallway, Lo = Lobby, Ws = Working Spaces, S = Staircase, El = Elevator, Sp = Study Spot, Tpa = Third Party Amenities, Be = Bedroom, St = Staff Areas

Fig. 24. Spatial organization of private and shared rooms Social Hub, ground floor

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH



Standard Floor Plan

Ha = Hallway, S = Staircase, El = Elevator, Be = Bedroom, Ki = Kitchen, Ir = Installation Room

Fig. 25. Spatial organization of private and shared rooms Social Hub, dwelling floors

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

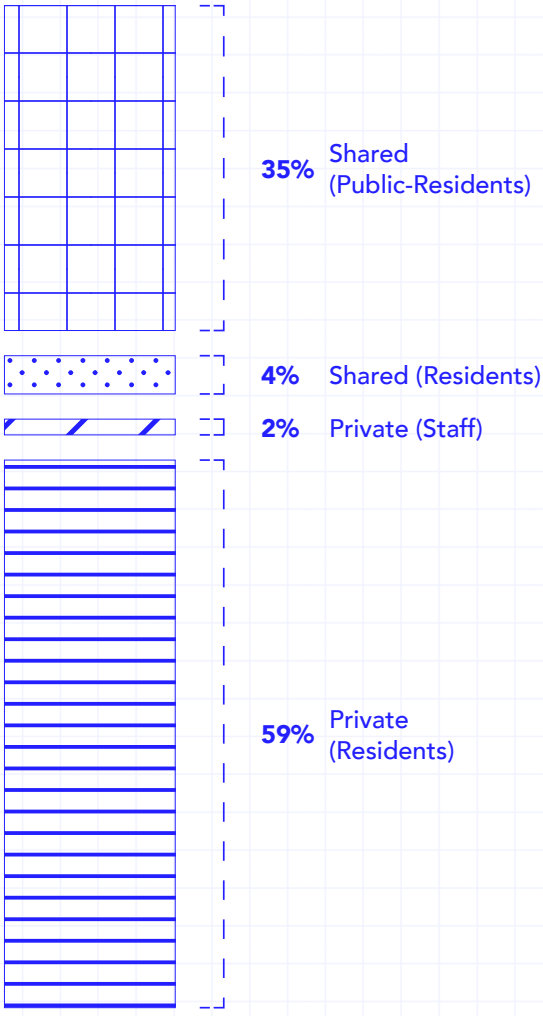


Fig. 26. Legend of spatial organization Social Hub

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

5.5 PANOPTICON MODEL

To stretch the conceptual boundaries of collective living, Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon (1791) is introduced as a radical counterpoint to conventional models of cohabitation. Although never physically constructed by Bentham himself, the Panopticon was theorized as a space of absolute surveillance, designed to create behavioral compliance through architectural control. It presents a stark inversion of privacy: not as a right to be protected, but as a condition to be systematically dismantled.

The Panopticon, literally meaning "all-seeing", was envisioned as a circular building with individual cells lining the outer perimeter and a central inspection tower at its core. From this tower, a single inspector could observe all inmates without ever being seen. Through an ingenious system of 'conversation tubes', he could even address prisoners directly, reinforcing the illusion of omnipresence (UCL Bentham Project, n.d.). As Bentham famously declared, it offered "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example" (UCL Bentham Project, n.d.).

This configuration radically reframes the dynamics of openness and control. As shown in the research diagram (see p. 61), only 1% of the building is shared between the public and residents (entrance), while 36% is shared internally among residents (prisoners). Most strikingly, 59% of the space is classified as "controlled private",

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

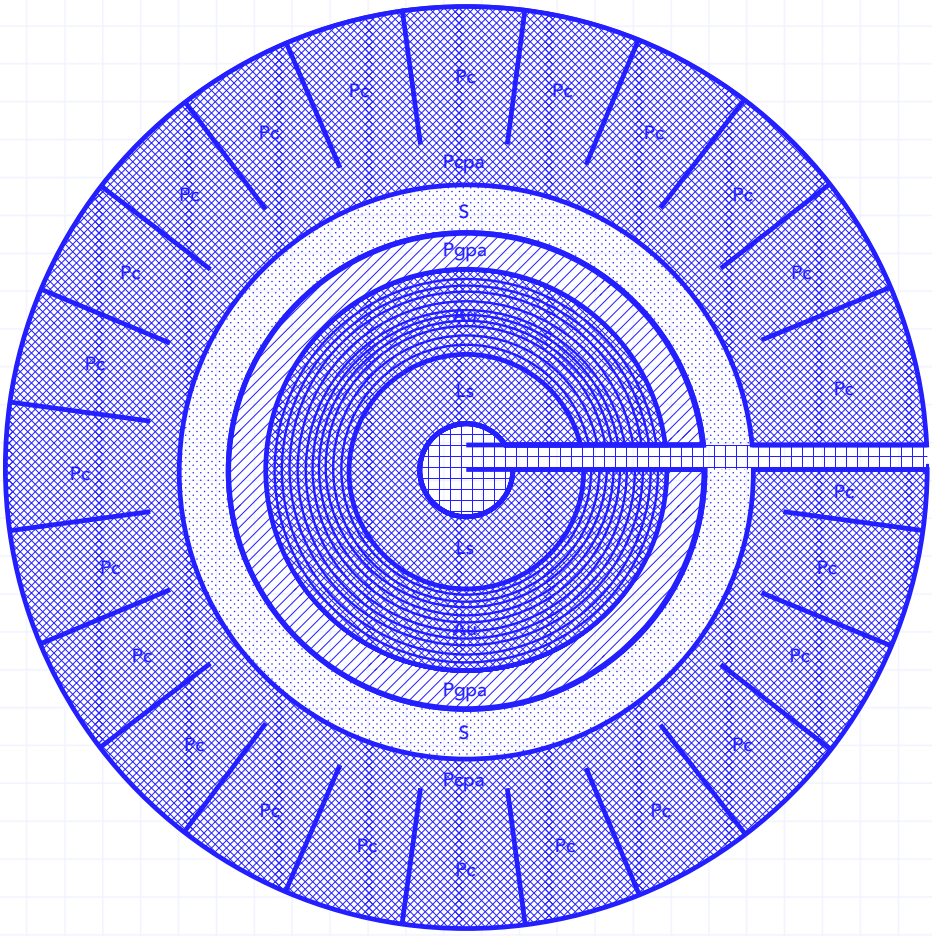
indicating the individual cells that, while spatially isolated, are entirely subject to surveillance. A further 4% is reserved for staff, who operate within a central command core of visual and auditory oversight.

In contrast to the domestic informality of Goddards or the layered thresholds of Kruisplein, the Panopticon represents an architecture of enforced transparency. Openness is no longer a social resource but a disciplinary tool, where visibility becomes synonymous with control.

The Panopticon raises difficult but important questions for contemporary co-living environments. What happens when openness exists without personal choice? Can transparency exist without domination?

This comparison underscores that for co-living environments to be truly supportive of well-being, transparency must be paired with the ability of individuals to set boundaries and negotiate their privacy (Altman & Low, 1992). Without this balance, openness risks replicating surveillance-like dynamics, reducing trust and undermining the very social cohesion these shared spaces aim to build.

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH



Standard Floor Plan
En = Entrance, Pcpa = Prison Cell Passageway, S = Stairs, Au = Auditorium, Ls = Lecture Space, Pgpa = Private Guard Passageway, Pc = Prison Cell

Fig. 27. Spatial organization of private and shared rooms Panopticon model

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

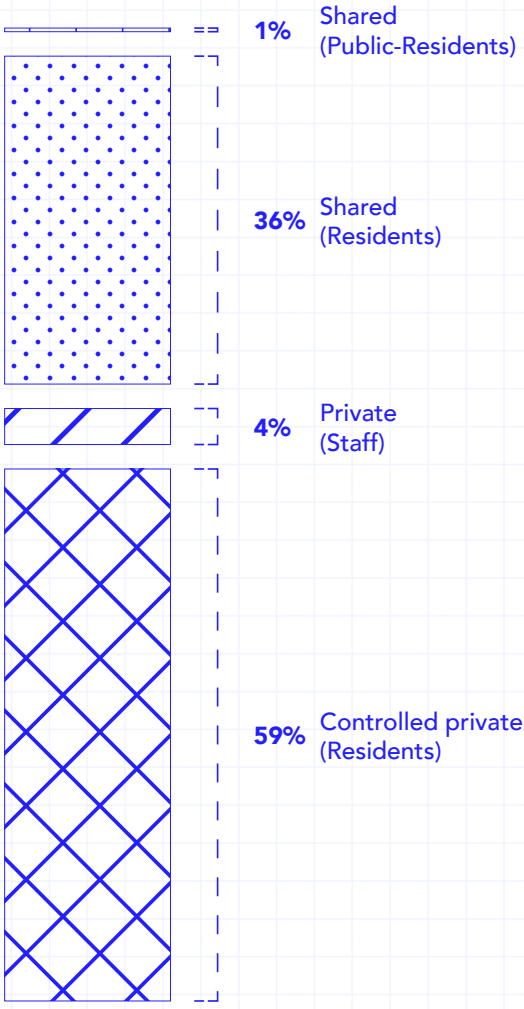


Fig. 28. Legend of spatial organization
Panopticon model

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

5.6 SAINTE MARIE DE LA TOURETTE MONASTERY

Le Corbusier's La Tourette Monastery (1953–1960) offers a unique perspective on the balance between privacy and openness within a religious community, emphasizing solitude, silence, and spiritual focus alongside communal living. The design carefully choreographs transitions between private monk cells and shared spaces to support both individual contemplation and collective worship (Le Corbusier, 1964).

The building's layout is organized across multiple floors with distinct functions. The entrance level hosts mostly shared spaces that serve as points of congregation and interaction, including conversation cells, a common room, oratory, reading room, library, lecture rooms, cloister, church, and porter's area. These spaces are designed to encourage spiritual dialogue and community engagement.

The cell floor contains various types of private and semi-private rooms such as sick cells, nurse cells, visitor cells, fathers' cells, monk cells, student cells, oratory, student brother cells, lay brother cells, church spaces, and sanitary offices. This floor balances personal retreat with access to shared religious and practical facilities.

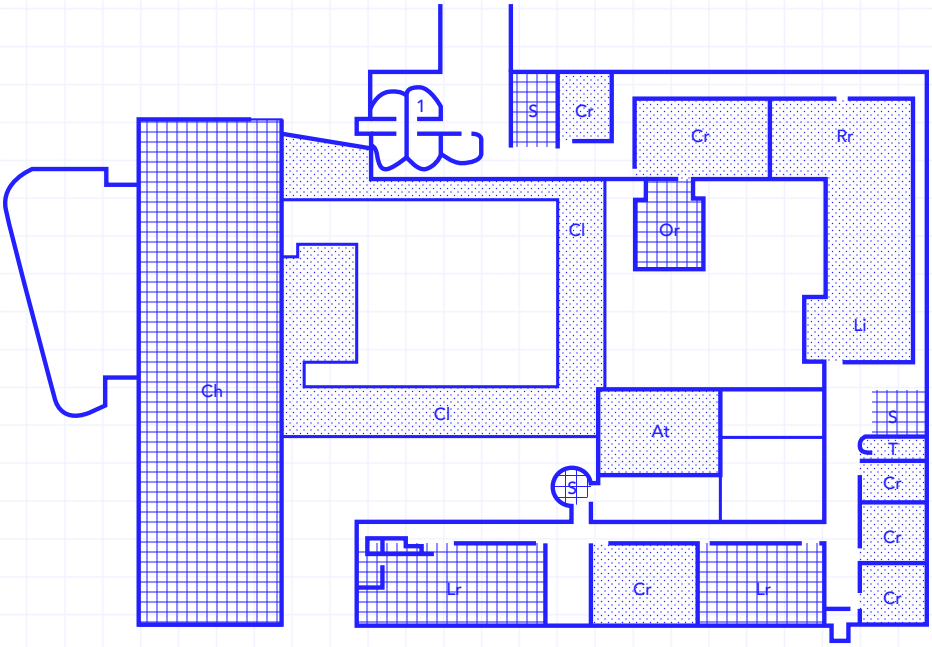
The refectory floor is primarily communal, housing the pantry, refectory, chapter room, atrium, cloister, lower church, high altar, sacristy, courtyard, and church, emphasizing shared rituals like meals and prayer.

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

The research graph (see p. 67) shows that 69% of the monastery's spaces are shared between public and residents, mainly concentrated on the entrance floor, reflecting its openness to community and visitors. Shared spaces exclusive to residents constitute 17%, while private areas for staff are only 3%, and private rooms for individual residents make up 11%.

Le Corbusier's La Tourette Monastery shows a distinctive perspective on how privacy and openness can be balanced in a collective living environment rooted in intentional design and spiritual practice. Unlike typical residential or co-living projects, the monastery demonstrates how architectural layout and spatial transitions can carefully structure solitude, silence, and community within the same building. This deepens the understanding of privacy not just as physical separation, but as a carefully negotiated experience shaped by social and cultural rituals.

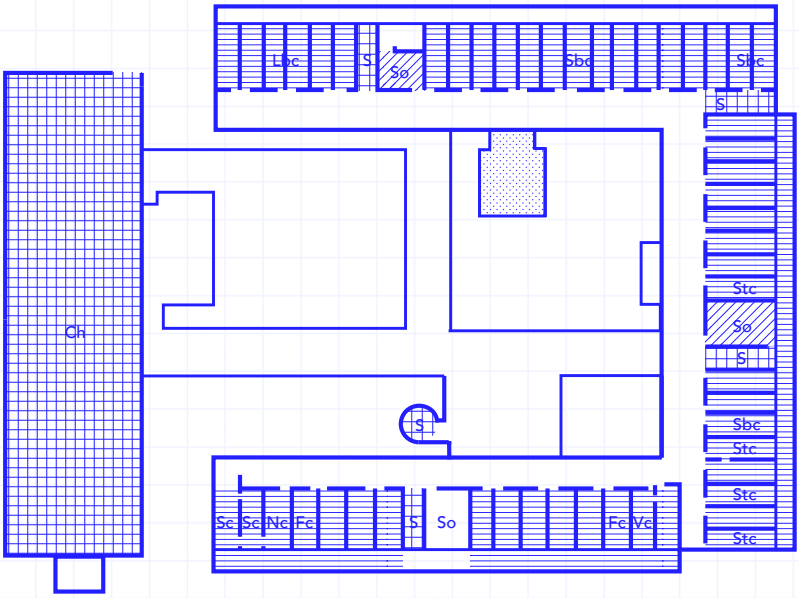
5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH



Entrance Floor Plan
Cc = Conversation Cells, Po = Porter, Mr= Meeting Room, Cr = Common Room, Or = Oratory, Rr = Reading Room, Li = Library, Le = Lecture Rooms, Cl = Cloister, At = Atrium, T = Toilet, Ch = Church, Ha = Hallway, S = Stairs

Fig. 29. Spatial organization of private and shared rooms Sainte marie de la tourette monastery, entrance floor

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH



Cell Floor Plan

Sc = Sick Cells, Nc = Nurses Cells, Vc = Visitors Cells, Fc = Fathers Cells, Mc = Monk Cells, Stc = Student Cells, Or = Oratory, Sbc = Student Brothers Cells, Lbc = Lay Brothers Cells, So = Sanitary Offices, Ch = Church

Fig. 30. Spatial organization of private and shared rooms Sainte marie de la tourette monastery, cell floor

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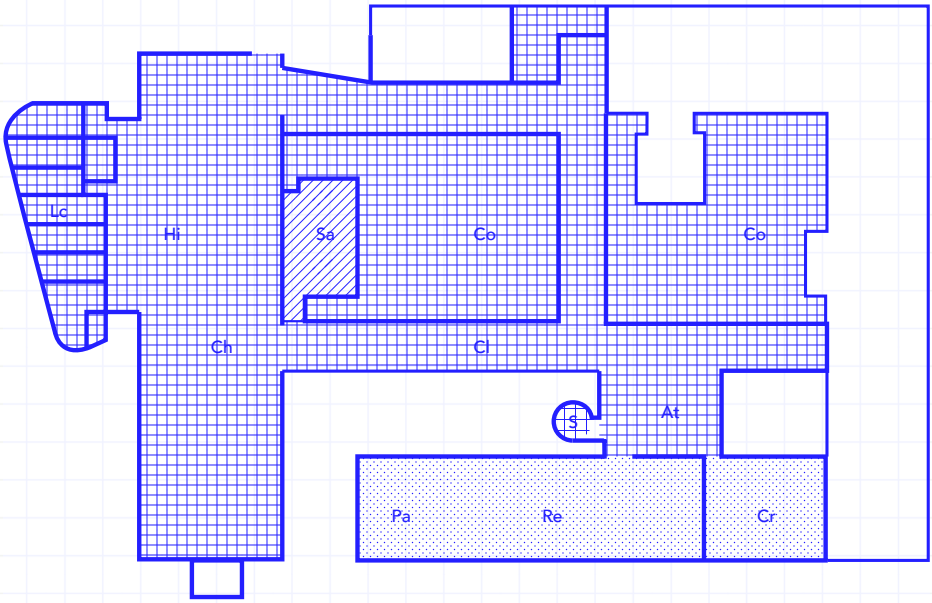

Refectory Floor Plan
Pa = Pantry, Re = Refectory, Cr = Chapter Room, At = Atrium, Cl = Cloister, Lc = Lower Church, Hi = High Altar, Sa = Sacistry, Co = Courtyard, S = Staircase, Ch = Church

Fig. 31. Spatial organization of private and shared rooms Sainte marie de la tourette monastery, refectory floor

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

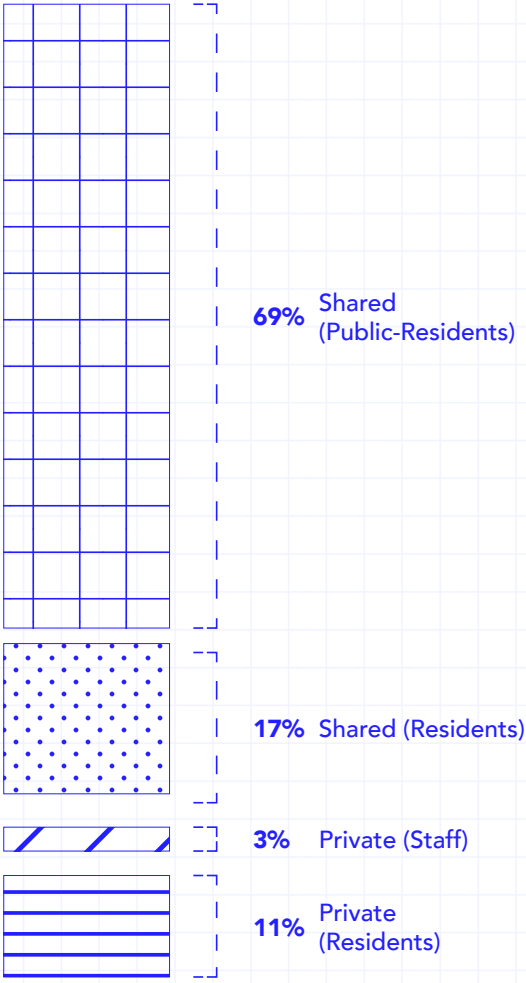

Fig. 32. Legend of spatial organization
Sainte marie de la tourette monastery

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

5.7 CASE STUDY COMPARISON

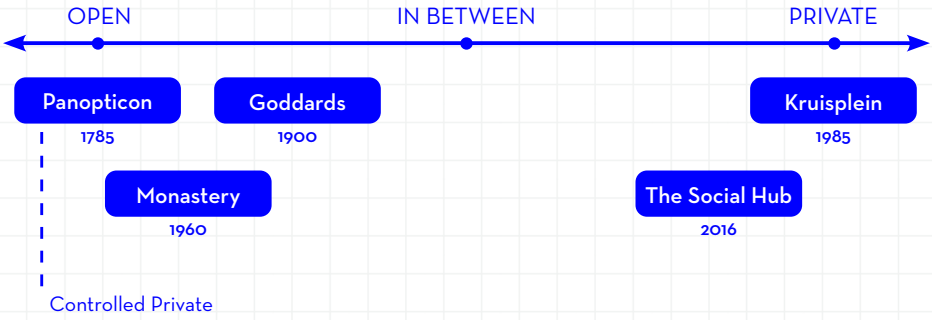

Fig. 33. Comparison of all case studies based on spatial organization

Comparing these diverse case studies reveals clear differences in how openness and privacy are balanced and expressed through their architectural layouts. At one end of the spectrum is Bentham's Panopticon, which represents the most extreme openness through constant surveillance and limited personal agency. This model prioritizes control over privacy, with a spatial organization designed to make residents perpetually visible and monitored. Following the Panopticon is Le Corbusier's La Tourette Monastery, which combines openness and privacy by choreographing transitions between shared spiritual spaces and private cells, fostering solitude within a collective environment. Goddards by Lutyens also shows a relatively open model, with significant shared spaces used by both

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

residents and the public, supporting social interaction in a semi-private retreat setting.

On the other side of the spectrum, Kruisplein stands out with its clear household divisions and private bedrooms, emphasizing individual autonomy within shared living. The Social Hub Amsterdam City is also quite private, with most of the upper floors dedicated to individual rooms, separated by corridors, while reserving openness primarily to the lively, publicly accessible ground floor.

Plotting these case studies on a spectrum of openness to privacy, the Panopticon is the most open, followed by the monastery and Goddards, which share more communal qualities. Kruisplein and the Social Hub are positioned towards greater privacy, reflecting contemporary priorities in residential design. Notably, the newer buildings tend to favor privacy more strongly, trying to respond to modern demands for personal comfort and well-being in dense urban settings.

However, it is worth questioning whether this trend toward increased privacy is truly effective. Is maximizing personal space really the best way to foster well-being and community in collective living environments? Or are these designs also influenced by practical concerns such as cost-efficiency and space optimization? The emphasis on privacy might partly reflect economic pressures and the

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

desire to standardize units for easier management, potentially at the expense of social connectivity and flexibility.

Interestingly, the comparison reveals a distinct gap in the middle of the spectrum, an "in-between" zone that is neither fully open nor fully private. This absence is significant, because privacy is not a static condition but a dynamic process: residents continually move between moments of withdrawal and moments of sociability. A well functioning collective housing model therefore requires more than a balance between private rooms and communal areas; it depends on the presence of multiple layered thresholds that mediate these shifting needs. Such an intermediate spatial structure has the potential to offer residents the ability to negotiate their own degree of engagement. Rather than forcing interaction or isolating individuals, layered semi-private zones, shared vestibules, enlarged landings, pocket spaces, and adaptable circulation areas, can support casual encounters while still preserving a sense of control.

Viewed through this lens, the question becomes how architecture can choreograph these transitions and create environments that respond to varying rhythms of privacy and openness. Successful collective housing must therefore calibrate a sequence of spatial gradients rather than rely on a binary divide.

5. CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Exploring this “in-between” not only opens up new typological possibilities but also promises more inclusive, adaptive, and resilient living environments, ones capable of supporting the diverse and fluctuating needs of urban dwellers in high-density contexts.

6.

Site Research

6. SITE ANALYSIS

6.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The project is located in Amsterdam, in the Overhoeks district. The site sits directly along the IJ River and is surrounded by several major public landmarks, including the Eye Film Museum and the A'DAM Tower. It is bordered by apartment buildings and the broader Overhoeks neighbourhood, which is characterized primarily by high-end residential developments. A ferry connection to Amsterdam Central Station lies within immediate reach, and an underground parking facility is located adjacent to the site. The area is lively and well-used throughout the day.

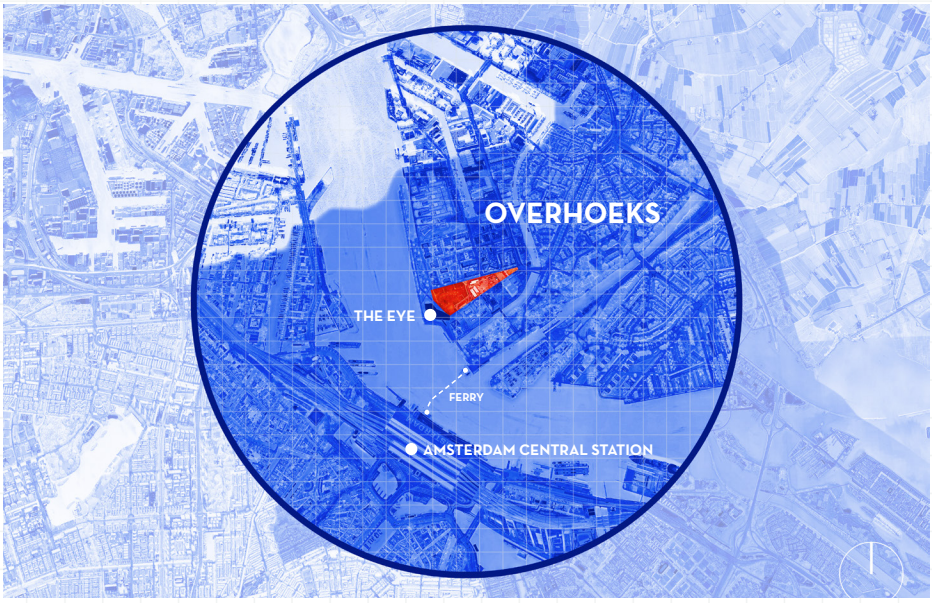

Fig. 34. Zoom out on site location

6. SITE ANALYSIS

Given this context, the site offers a strong opportunity to introduce a landmark project, one that not only signals the current challenges in collective urban living but also demonstrates how a new prototype can serve as part of the solution.

Although the site is presently designated as parkland, the design integrates this existing green space into a new community framework, allowing the park and the residential program to reinforce one another rather than compete for space.

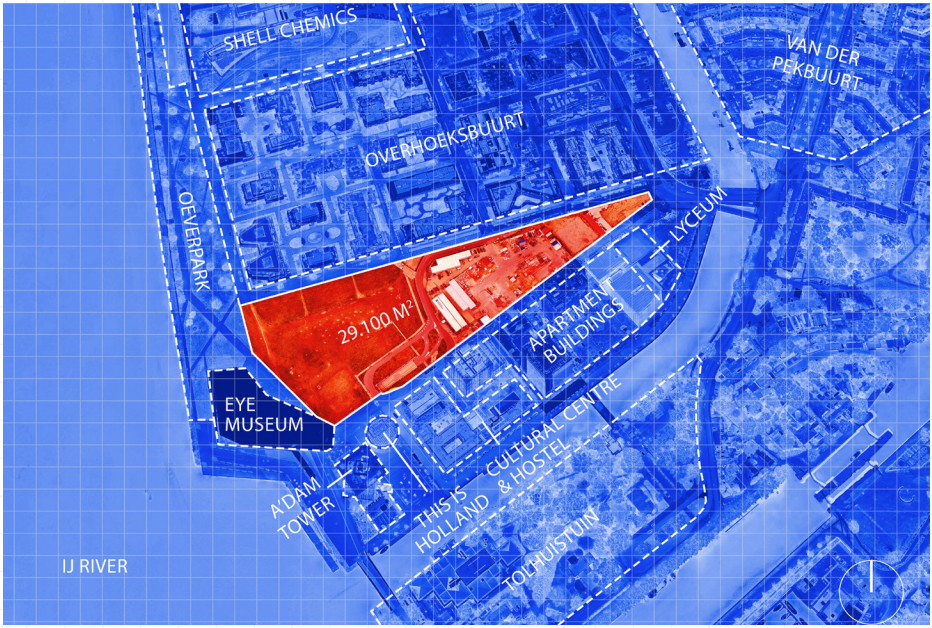

Fig. 35. Zoom in on site location

6. SITE ANALYSIS

6.2 HISTORY

Between 1400 and 1795, the Overhoeks area served as a gallows field, where the bodies of executed criminals were displayed as a warning to the public (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.; Onsamsterdam, 2018). This grim function placed the site on the symbolic edge of the city, a peripheral zone associated with deterrence, fear, and social exclusion. Its role as a space of state power and moral spectacle remained embedded in Amsterdam's collective memory for centuries.

Fig. 36. Overhoeks as a gallows field (AMS Noord, n.d.)

6. SITE ANALYSIS

In 1662, the area softened in character with the construction of the Tolhuis, a small inn where travelers could rest, eat, and drink during their journey along the IJ (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.; Amsterdam op de Kaart, n.d.). The Tolhuis transformed the site into a place of exchange and hospitality, marking a shift from punishment to public leisure. It became a recognizable waypoint along the waterfront, linking rural routes with the growing urban center.

Fig. 37. The Inn “De Voetangel” (Weyerman, n.d.)

6. SITE ANALYSIS

Around 1900, Shell purchased the land, which led to the disappearance of the original Tolhuis and the creation of the Tolhuistuin as part of a broader industrial expansion (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.; Tolhuistuin, n.d.). This industrial era reshaped Overhoeks into a strategic node of economic activity, introducing new infrastructures and altering the social identity of the site once again. The Tolhuistuin later evolved into a cultural space, reflecting the area's ongoing transformation from marginal ground to a vibrant and publicly accessible district (Tolhuistuin, n.d.).

Fig. 38. The Tolhuistuin (Wikipedia, n.d.)

6. SITE ANALYSIS

6.3 SITE SURROUNDINGS

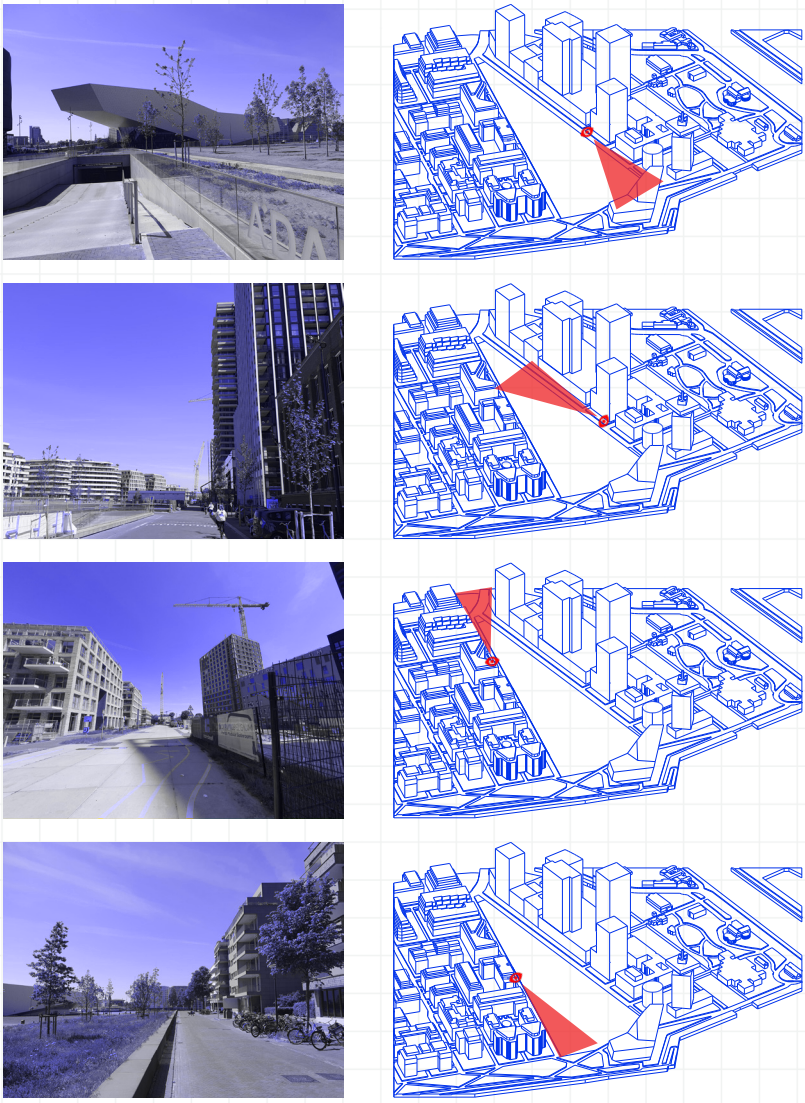

Fig. 39. Site surroundings

7.

Clients

7. CLIENTS

7.1 PARTIES INVOLVED

The development of a new collective housing prototype in Overhoeks involves a diverse set of stakeholders, each contributing specific priorities, expectations, and forms of expertise. Together, these parties shape not only the programmatic and architectural direction of the project, but also its social, economic, and spatial feasibility.

The Municipality of Amsterdam ensures that new developments contribute to broader urban goals related to affordability, inclusivity, sustainability, and high-density living. Their policies and spatial frameworks establish the conditions within which the project must operate, reinforcing public values and long-term citywide strategies.

Housing associations are interested in developing scalable, marketable, and financially viable typologies that can be efficiently managed over time. For them, the project represents an opportunity to test new operational systems and spatial configurations that could be replicated across the city.

Finally, future residents are at the heart of the project's vision. Their needs revolve around affordability, opportunities for social interaction, flexibility in living arrangements, and the ability to establish a strong urban foothold in a well-connected location. Their lived experience ultimately determines the success of the prototype.

7. CLIENTS

7.2 MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM

The Municipality of Amsterdam plays a central role as both client and stakeholder in this project, shaping its ambitions and constraints through citywide policy priorities. As the governing body responsible for spatial development, the municipality emphasises four core principles: affordability, inclusivity, sustainability, and urban density.

Affordability is crucial, as Amsterdam faces an ongoing housing shortage that disproportionately affects young residents and middle-income households; new developments must therefore contribute to a more accessible housing market.

Inclusivity similarly guides municipal expectations, ensuring that projects foster socially mixed communities and provide equal access to shared amenities and public space.

Sustainability has become a non-negotiable requirement, pushing for energy-efficient buildings, resilient landscapes, and circular material strategies that align with the city's long-term climate goals.

Finally, the municipality views increased density as essential to accommodating population growth within limited urban land, while maintaining high quality of life.

7. CLIENTS

7.3 HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Housing associations are key stakeholders in the development of collective housing models, especially in high-density urban areas. Their primary interest lies in the scalability of the proposal: new housing typologies must be replicable across different sites and adaptable to changing demographic demands.

In addition, associations evaluate the marketability of the concept, ensuring that the design can attract a diverse resident base while aligning with long-term affordability goals.

Despite their social mandate, housing associations must also guarantee a degree of profitability, maintaining financial stability through responsible investment strategies and life-cycle cost management.

Finally, efficiency remains essential, both in construction and operational terms, requiring housing models that streamline maintenance, reduce energy consumption, and optimize shared spatial infrastructure.

7. CLIENTS

7.4 RESIDENTS

Future residents, young professionals, form a central stakeholder group whose needs directly shape the architectural and spatial ambitions of the project. For this demographic, affordability is a defining priority: rising housing prices and increasing precarity in urban labor markets make accessible housing prices essential for livability.

At the same time, starters often seek sociality, valuing environments that support casual encounters, shared programmatic spaces, and opportunities for community formation without sacrificing privacy.

Their lifestyles also demand flexibility, both in spatial configurations and in the ability to adapt living arrangements to changing work patterns, relationships, or financial situations.

Finally, locatability, the desire to live in well-connected urban areas with strong mobility infrastructure, strongly influences their preferences, making sites like Overhoeks particularly attractive due to proximity to the ferry, cultural venues, and employment hubs.

8.

Design Principles

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

8.1 OVERVIEW OF DESIGN PRINCIPLES

In response to the challenges of collective living in high-density urban contexts such as Amsterdam, this thesis formulates five interrelated design principles that underpin the architectural concept of the Threshold House. These principles aim to recalibrate the relationship between privacy, autonomy, and community within temporary housing for young professionals, offering an alternative to the isolated studio apartment model.

The principles; (1) Functional Clarity and Shared Luxury, (2) Privacy Beyond Physical Separation, (3) Personalization and Place Attachment, (4) Informal Encounters through Pocket Spaces, and (5) Layered Security and Connection to the City, articulate how spatial thresholds, shared amenities, and gradations of access can be strategically designed to support both individual comfort and collective life.

Each principle addresses a specific spatial or social condition through which tensions between individual needs and shared environments can be mediated. Collectively, they establish a coherent design framework that will guide the development, testing, and evaluation of the Threshold House as an architectural proposal for more socially connected, spatially differentiated, and resilient forms of urban living.

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

8.2 FUNCTIONAL CLARITY AND SHARED LUXURY

The spatial organization of the home has a direct impact on daily routines, bodily rhythms, and mental well-being. In contemporary high-density housing, particularly in small studio apartments, multiple domestic functions such as sleeping, working, eating, and resting are often compressed into a single undifferentiated space. This overlap can blur functional and temporal boundaries, contributing to disrupted sleep patterns, reduced concentration, and increased stress (Bootzin & Perlis, 1992). Research suggests that environments which provide clear distinctions between key activities, whether spatial or temporal, better support restorative practices and reduce cognitive and emotional overload.

Functional clarity, therefore, emerges as a critical design consideration in collective housing. Rather than maximizing flexibility within a single room, this principle emphasizes the importance of legible spatial differentiation between everyday activities. Such differentiation does not necessarily require larger private dwellings, but instead calls for a careful distribution of functions across private, shared, and transitional spaces.

When individual living units are necessarily compact due to economic or spatial constraints, design can compensate through the introduction of shared luxury: high-quality collective amenities that extend the domestic realm beyond the private unit. These may include generously

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

proportioned kitchens and dining spaces, well-equipped work areas, spacious bathrooms, or shared outdoor environments, facilities that are rarely attainable within small private apartments. When thoughtfully designed, shared luxury enhances everyday comfort while also supporting social rituals, collective use, and a sense of value attached to shared space.

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

8.3 PRIVACY BEYOND PHYSICAL SEPARATION

Conventional understandings of privacy in residential architecture have long been grounded in physical separation. Walls, doors, and exclusive rooms are commonly treated as the primary mechanisms through which privacy is secured, framing it as a condition defined by enclosure, restricted access, and visual isolation. While effective in low-density domestic settings, this model becomes increasingly problematic within dense urban environments and collective housing, where space is limited and rigid separations can undermine spatial efficiency and social adaptability.

In response, privacy can be more productively understood as a dynamic, relational, and negotiable quality, rather than a fixed architectural boundary. Within shared living environments, privacy is shaped not only by physical barriers, but also by spatial configuration, material articulation, acoustic conditions, and the presence of transitional zones such as thresholds, alcoves, and semi-private spaces. These elements introduce gradations of privacy, enabling residents to adjust their level of openness or withdrawal in relation to changing activities, social situations, and personal needs.

Such an approach shifts privacy from an absolute state to a situational practice, one that is continuously produced through everyday use. As Hasselaar and Meissner (2022) argue, rethinking privacy in this manner

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

supports both comfort and autonomy in communal living contexts, allowing individuals to maintain a sense of control and security while remaining embedded within a shared social environment. This understanding aligns with theories of proxemics and territoriality, which emphasize that privacy emerges through the interaction between bodies, space, and social relations, rather than through static architectural features alone.

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

8.4 PERSONALIZATION AND PLACE ATTACHMENT

The ability to personalize one's living environment plays a crucial role in the formation of place attachment, a key component of emotional well-being, identity, and a sense of belonging. Rather than emerging automatically from occupation alone, attachment to place develops through repeated social and spatial practices, including rituals, memory-making, and everyday acts of appropriation (Altman & Low, 1992). In housing contexts that are collective or temporary in nature, the opportunity to establish such bonds becomes particularly significant, as residents may otherwise experience their environment as anonymous or interchangeable.

Personalization allows inhabitants to actively participate in the production of space by adapting it to their own needs, preferences, and identities. Simple acts, such as arranging furniture, displaying personal objects, hanging artwork, or tending to plants, enable residents to create emotional continuity and a sense of ownership, even within short-term or shared living situations. Through these practices, standardized architectural settings are gradually transformed into places imbued with personal and collective meaning.

In collective housing, personalization extends beyond the private domain to include shared spaces, where residents can contribute to a shared identity through collective expressions such as community

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

notice boards, shared decorations, or communal gardens. These visible traces of use and care foster recognition, social connection, and a sense of co-authorship over the living environment.

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

8.5 INFORMAL ENCOUNTERS THROUGH POCKET SPACES

Social interaction within collective housing does not occur solely in designated communal rooms, but often emerges through informal, incidental encounters embedded within everyday movement and use. Small-scale, semi-private spaces, often referred to as pocket spaces, play a crucial role in facilitating these interactions. Situated within or alongside larger shared environments, such spaces offer opportunities for brief contact, quiet presence, or temporary retreat without withdrawing from the collective setting altogether.

Research by Malone (2002) highlights the importance of these micro-spatial conditions in enabling spontaneous social encounters while maintaining individual comfort. Rather than demanding active participation, pocket spaces allow residents to regulate their level of engagement, supporting a flexible balance between sociability and privacy. They introduce moments of pause within the domestic environment, softening transitions between private rooms and shared zones through gradual spatial thresholds.

Because pocket spaces are informal and non-programmed, they encourage lingering, observation, and low-intensity interaction. This makes them particularly valuable for residents who may be new to a shared living environment or who prefer indirect forms of social engagement. By enabling presence without exposure, pocket spaces

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

support familiarity, recognition, and a sense of shared life without imposing social obligations.

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

8.6 LAYERED SECURITY AND CONNECTION TO THE CITY

In collective housing, security is often addressed through physical separation and exclusion, relying on hard boundaries, controlled access points, and defensive architectural measures. While such strategies may provide protection, they frequently result in isolation and a weakened relationship between housing and its urban surroundings. An alternative approach understands security as a layered and relational condition, structured through a gradual sequencing of spaces that transition from public to collective to private domains.

This principle is particularly relevant in the context of a project situated within a public park, where the building inevitably becomes part of a broader urban and social landscape. Rather than positioning housing as an enclosed object within the park, layered security allows the project to contribute actively to the public realm, creating interfaces that are open, legible, and socially inviting while still protecting the privacy and safety of residents. As Grenier (2021) suggests, permeability can be spatially and socially calibrated to support openness without compromising territorial integrity.

Transitional zones play a critical role in this process. Thresholds between park, building, and dwelling act as mediating spaces where residents can regulate interaction and establish informal forms of social presence. These zones encourage a sense of shared responsibility

8. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

and mutual recognition, allowing the building to function as a supportive extension of the park rather than a barrier within it. Security, in this sense, is reinforced not through isolation, but through visibility, familiarity, and everyday social use.

9.

The Prototype

9. THE PROTOTYPE

9.1 OVERALL BUILDING ORGANIZATION

9. THE PROTOTYPE

The Threshold House consists of three towers with heights of 43, 52, and 61 meters, positioned at the center of Amsterdam's Scheg Park. Each tower is organized into vertical clusters, which function as distinct communities within the building while remaining vertically connected to one another. A typical cluster comprises six residential levels (with one exception of a three-level cluster), forming a recognizable social unit within the larger structure. At the heart of each cluster is a generous shared space, designed to support collective activities and everyday interaction, while the individual households are positioned along the perimeter.

Fig. 40. Perspective section of the Threshold House

9. THE PROTOTYPE

The three towers are further connected by large-scale bridges, each accommodating its own programmatic functions and acting as social and spatial connectors between communities. Together, these bridges reinforce horizontal relationships across the complex, complementing the vertical organization of the clusters.

At ground level, the towers are anchored by a commercial plinth, while a central public square between the towers serves as a shared gathering space and strengthens the project's relationship with the surrounding park. Beneath this square, a bicycle parking facility is integrated, ensuring functional accessibility while preserving the openness of the public realm.

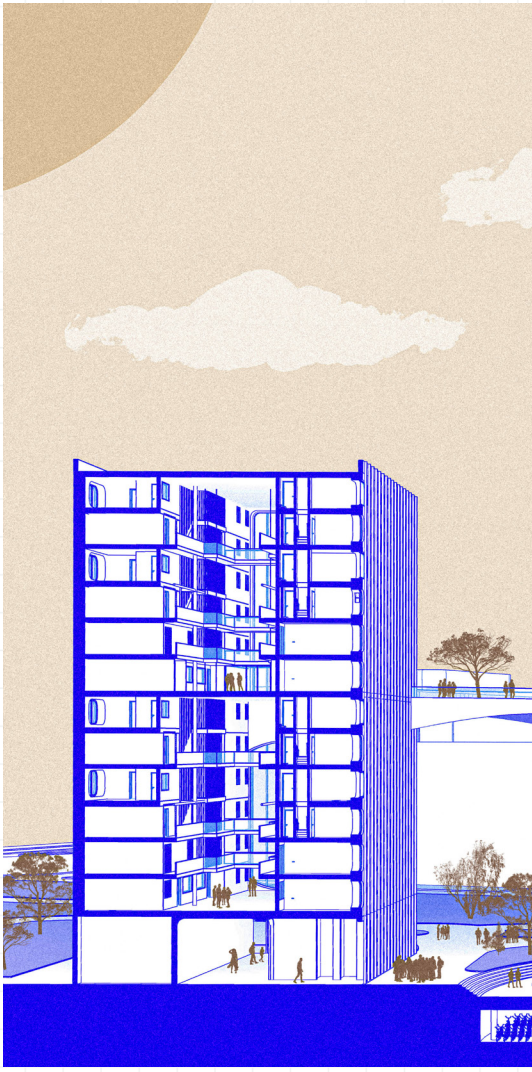

Fig. 41. Perspective section of the Threshold House

9. THE PROTOTYPE

9. THE PROTOTYPE

9.2 PRIVACY GRADATION IN FIVE PERSON HOUSEHOLD

To create space for a higher quality of living than the traditional studio apartment model found in Little Manhattan, while maintaining a comparable gross floor area (GFA) per resident, it became necessary to reduce the size of individual private spaces. This strategy is clearly reflected in the household floor plans. Multiple iterations of the dwelling layouts were developed in order to arrive at the final design; these iterations are discussed in Chapter 11, Reflection. For the purpose of this section, the final design of a five-person household is presented to illustrate how the proposed housing typology operates.

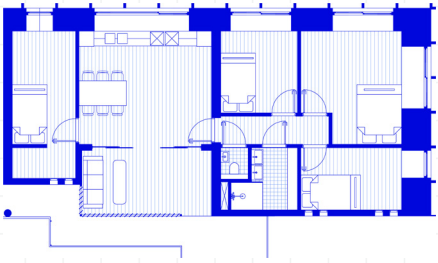

Fig. 42. Five person household

The first gradation of privacy is found in the individual one- or two-person bedrooms, which function as the most private spaces within the household. Although modest in size, these rooms are designed with a strong emphasis on quality rather than quantity. By limiting the program of the bedroom primarily to sleeping, residents are encouraged to use the space as a dedicated place for rest, supporting healthier sleep rhythms and mental

9. THE PROTOTYPE

well-being, as supported by research on sleep hygiene (e.g., Bootzin & Perlis, 1992). This directly reflects the design principle of Functional Clarity. At the same time, these rooms allow residents to store personal belongings and express individual identity, supporting Personalization and Place Attachment.

Within the façade, space is allocated for a window seat combined with storage, offering views over the park or central square. This element can be understood as a pocket space within the private realm, a small, inhabitable niche that provides comfort, retreat, and spatial depth. Some bedrooms additionally feature a walk-in closet, introducing variation between units.

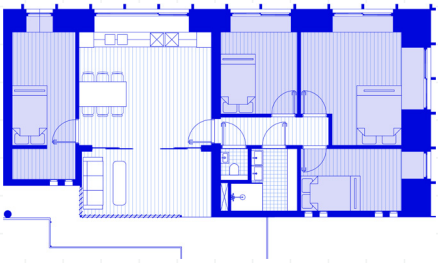

Fig. 43. First gradation of privacy in five person household

The next gradation of privacy is found in the spaces shared by the household: the hall, toilet, bathroom, and kitchen. These shared facilities offer a higher level of comfort and spatial generosity than those typically found in studio apartments such as Little Manhattan, exemplifying the principle of Shared Luxury. The toilet is separated from the bathroom, and the rooms are

9. THE PROTOTYPE

more generously proportioned, improving usability and daily comfort. Beyond their functional role, these spaces also act as social interfaces, encouraging informal interaction between household members.

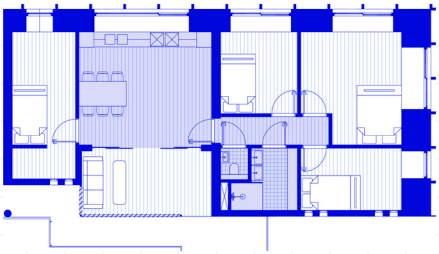

Fig. 44. Second gradation of privacy in five person household

Connected to the kitchen through a fully openable sliding partition is the living room, which introduces a further layer of spatial transition. Notably, this space is positioned between the cluster hall and the private household domain, creating an intermediate condition. Acoustically, the living room remains connected to the cluster, while visually it can be screened off through a series of vertical lamellae, allowing residents to regulate openness and seclusion according to their needs. This spatial arrangement exemplifies Privacy Beyond Physical Separation, enabling residents to negotiate privacy through adjustable thresholds rather than fixed boundaries.

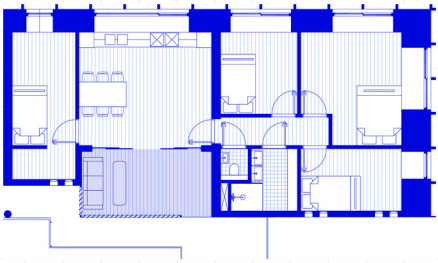

Fig. 45. Third gradation of privacy in five person household

9. THE PROTOTYPE

Finally, the gallery functions as the most public interface of the household, where encounters with neighboring residents can occur. As part of the collective circulation system, it supports Informal Encounters through Pocket Spaces and contributes to Layered Security, allowing social presence and familiarity to emerge gradually through everyday movement rather than enforced interaction.

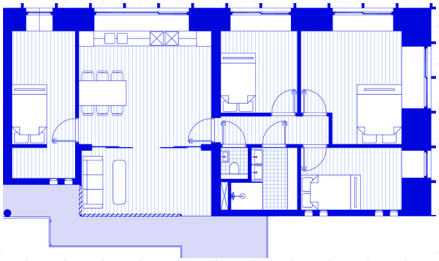

Fig. 46. Gallery next to five person household

9. THE PROTOTYPE

9.3 OTHER HOUSEHOLD LAYOUTS

In addition to the five-person household, the project includes a range of other household types, offering variation in bedroom size and the degree of shared spaces. These include four-, three-, and two-person households, as well as a family household designed for young families with a baby. The family households are conceived as flexible living arrangements, allowing residents to transition to a different household type with a larger private room as children grow older and spatial needs change.

To ensure that social responsibility and informal social control within the household, such as the collective maintenance and use of shared spaces, are not diminished, the size of each household is limited to a maximum of five residents. This threshold is intended to maintain a manageable scale of cohabitation, where shared responsibilities remain legible and personal relationships can be sustained.

As the number of residents within a household decreases, the spatial organization becomes increasingly oriented toward privacy. In the two-person household, both bedrooms are equipped with a small private bathroom comparable in size to those found in studio apartments. In this configuration, the living room positioned in the shared hall is omitted and instead integrated into the shared kitchen, which remains the primary collective space within the household.

9. THE PROTOTYPE

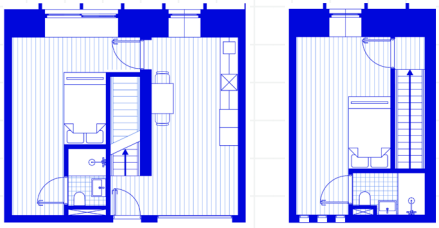

Fig. 47. Ground floor and first floor in two person household

In the three-person household, a shared bathroom is reintroduced, while the living space in the hall continues to be absent and remains integrated with the kitchen.

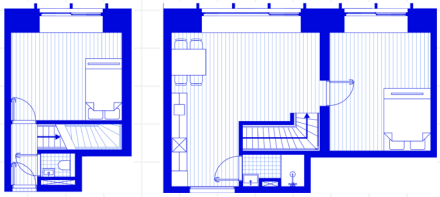

Fig. 48. Ground floor and first floor in three person household

The four-person household reintroduces a spatial configuration similar to that of the five-person household, with a clearer differentiation between shared living areas and circulation spaces.

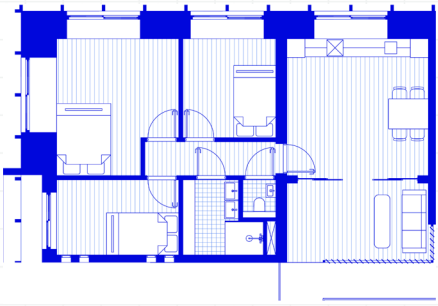

Fig. 49. Four person household

The family household is designed to accommodate two couples with a baby, enabling shared childcare and mutual support between households. In this case, the living room is

9. THE PROTOTYPE

intentionally integrated with the kitchen and kept entirely within the household unit, prioritizing safety, supervision, and visual control while maintaining a strong sense of collective domestic life.

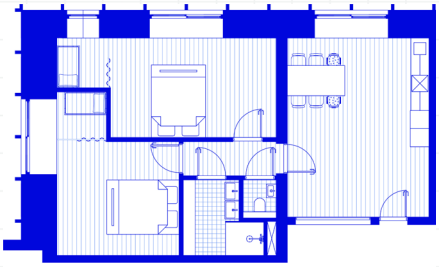

Fig. 50. Family household

9. THE PROTOTYPE

9.4 THE GALLERY AS SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Adjacent to the households, the gallery functions as a horizontal circulation space that connects the dwellings within the cluster. However, the gallery is conceived not merely as a corridor, but as an inhabited social space. Each residential level within the Threshold House incorporates a series of pocket spaces embedded along the gallery. These spaces are intended for informal use, such as play, sitting, or quiet retreat, and include seating niches equipped with closable acoustic curtains, allowing residents to regulate their level of exposure to the cluster hall.

Rather than being positioned along the primary everyday circulation route, which leads directly to the stairs and elevators, the pocket spaces are located along an optional secondary route. This route crosses the cluster hall as a bridge, connecting neighboring households while simultaneously functioning as an alternative escape route in case of fire.

Because this path is not required for daily movement, the pocket spaces along it invite voluntary engagement rather than incidental passage. Residents consciously choose to enter this route, making the pocket spaces places for intentional pause, observation, or informal interaction rather than forced encounters. This reinforces the principle of Informal Encounters through Pocket Spaces, as social contact emerges through choice rather than obligation.

9. THE PROTOTYPE

At the same time, the positioning of this route above and across the cluster hall maintains visual and spatial connection to the collective heart of the cluster. The pocket spaces thus operate as suspended thresholds, simultaneously connecting households, overlooking shared space, and allowing residents to regulate their level of participation within the collective environment.

9. THE PROTOTYPE

On the first floor, the gallery widens to accommodate a table tennis area and a small seating zone with views overlooking the cluster hall. This widened section functions as a communal activity space, encouraging casual interaction between residents and reinforcing the principle of Informal Encounters through Pocket Spaces, while maintaining visual connection to the collective heart of the cluster.

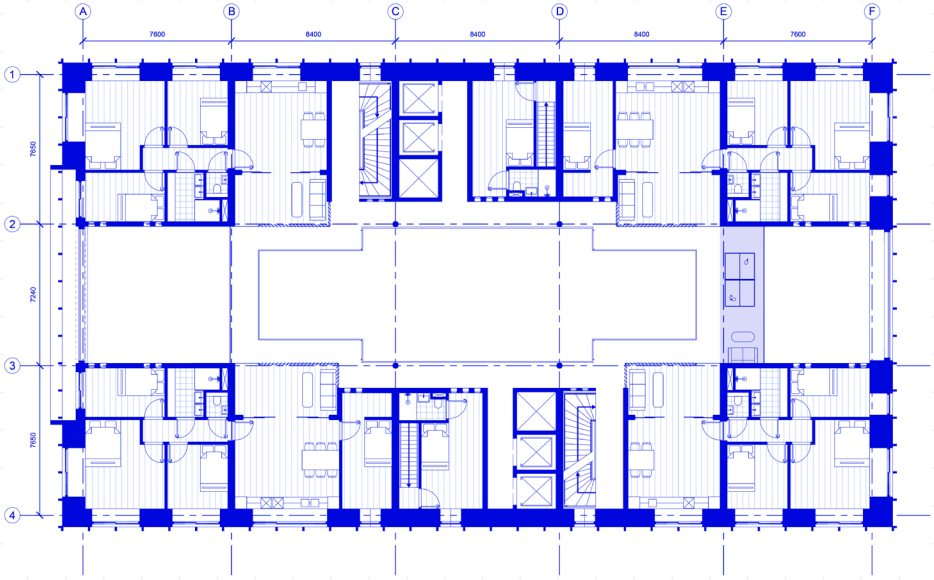

Fig. 51. Pocketspaces on first floor

9. THE PROTOTYPE

The galleries on the second and fourth floors feature similar widened zones, positioned on the opposite side of the building to create spatial variation within the cluster. These levels accommodate a pool table and seating areas with views into the cluster hall. In addition, these galleries include seating niches beneath the staircases, equipped with closable acoustic curtains, allowing residents to temporarily withdraw from the shared space. These niches exemplify Privacy Beyond Physical Separation, offering gradations of privacy through spatial articulation rather than rigid enclosure.

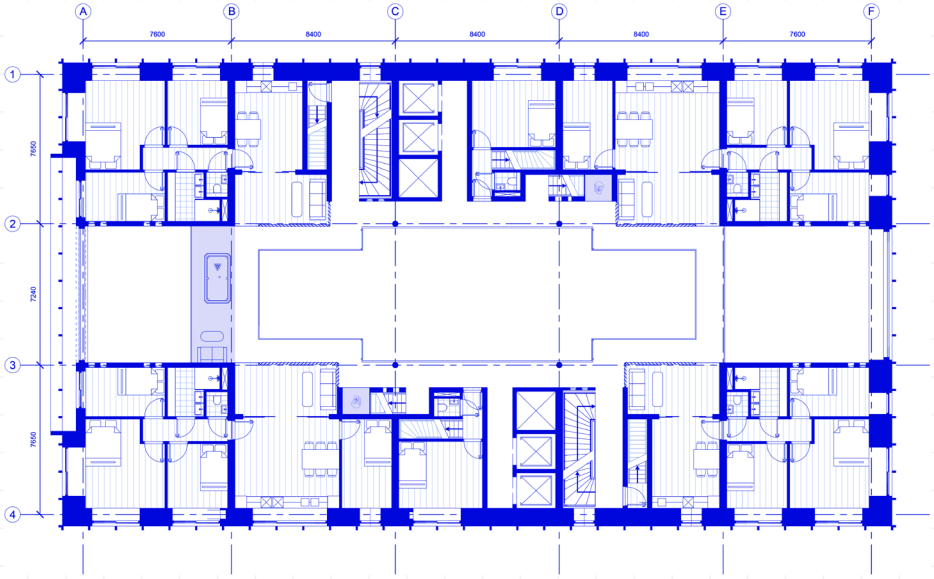

Fig. 52. Pocketspaces on second and fourth floor

9. THE PROTOTYPE

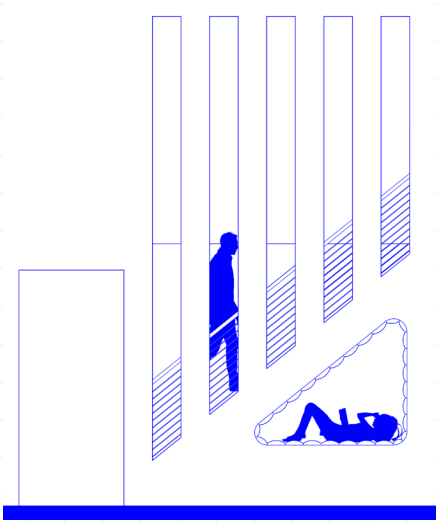

Fig. 53. Seating niche beneath the staircase on the second and fourth floor

9. THE PROTOTYPE

The third and fifth floors do not contain a gallery, a deliberate design choice aimed at increasing openness and spatial continuity within the cluster hall. Residents on these levels make use of the gallery on the floor below and access their dwellings via a private internal staircase leading directly to the living room of their household.

Fig. 54. Floor plan of the third and fifth floor

9. THE PROTOTYPE

9.5 COLLECTIVE FACILITIES AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE CLUSTER

At the base of each cluster lies the cluster floor, a collective level that accommodates a range of shared facilities supporting the everyday routines of the residents of the Threshold House. This floor functions as the social and functional heart of the cluster and is designed to encourage both autonomy and interaction. Facilities include workspaces for working from home, lounge areas, niches in the wall with closeable curtains, a pantry for coffee, tea, and small snacks, laundry facilities, sport and play elements, a themed room, and several multifunctional spaces.

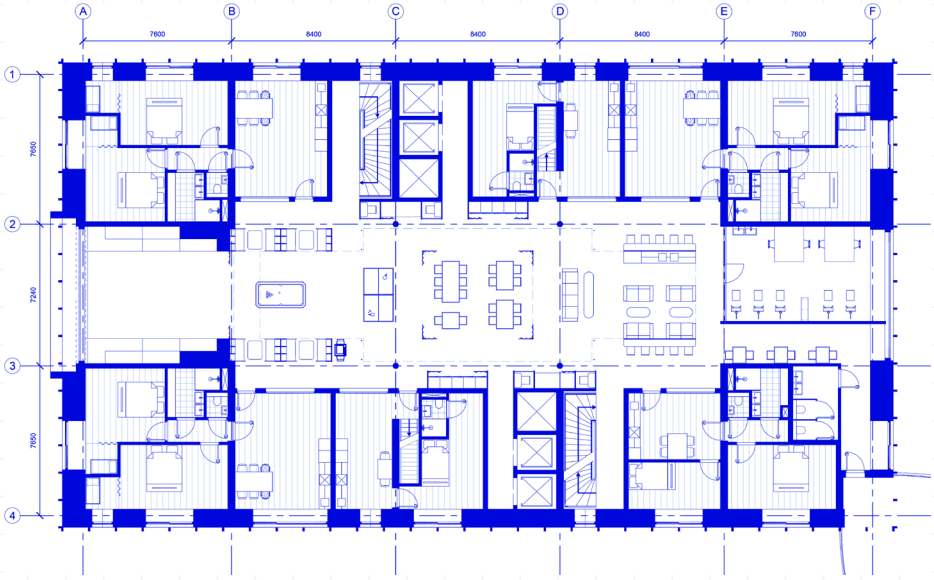

Fig. 55. Floor plan of the cluster floor

9. THE PROTOTYPE

In line with the design principle of Privacy Beyond Physical Separation, these multifunctional spaces are not rigidly programmed but are spatially articulated to allow different degrees of use, exposure, and withdrawal. For example, communal lunch tables are positioned at the center of the cluster hall and can easily transform into a more intimate dinner-party setting by closing acoustically dampening curtains. This enables residents to modulate the level of privacy and openness according to the social situation, without relying on permanent enclosures.

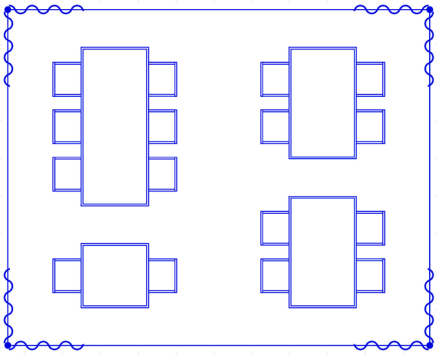

Fig. 56. Lunch tables

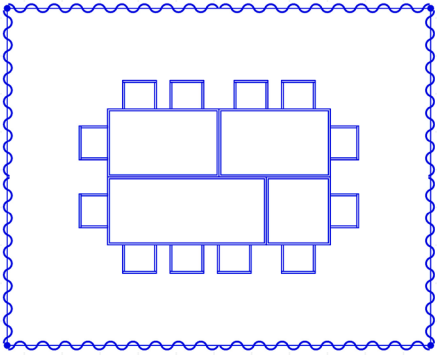

Fig. 57. Dinner-party setting

9. THE PROTOTYPE

Adjacent to the circular window of the cluster hall, stepped seating provides a flexible environment where residents can play board games, read, or observe activity within the space. In the evening, this area can be transformed into a shared movie room, allowing larger groups of residents to gather and watch films together.

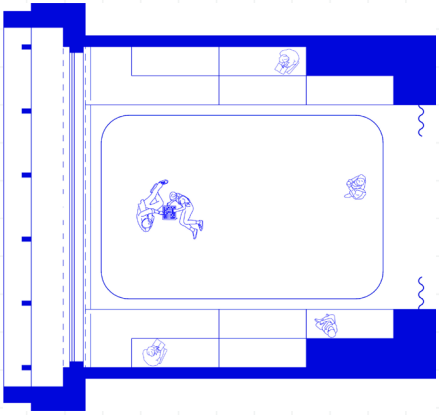

Fig. 58. Stepped seating

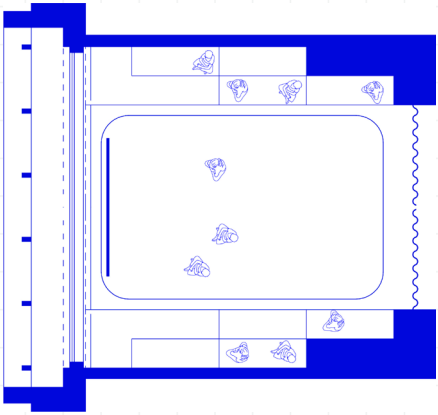

Fig. 59. Movie room

Each cluster also contains a themed room, which differs from cluster to cluster. These themed spaces contribute to place attachment by giving each community within the Threshold House a distinct identity. A themed room might function as an art studio, a workout space, or a library, encouraging residents to appropriate the space in their own way. At the same time,

9. THE PROTOTYPE

the variation between clusters stimulates residents to visit other clusters, fostering spontaneous encounters and reinforcing connections across the building.

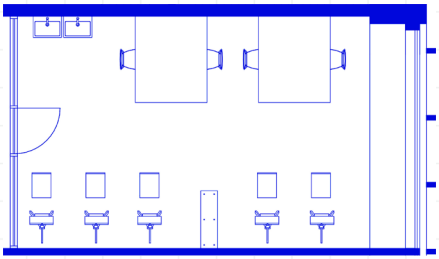

Fig. 60. Themed room functioning as an art studio

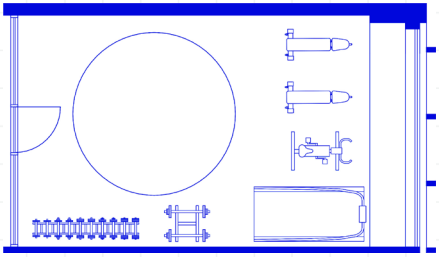

Fig. 61. Themed room functioning as a workout space

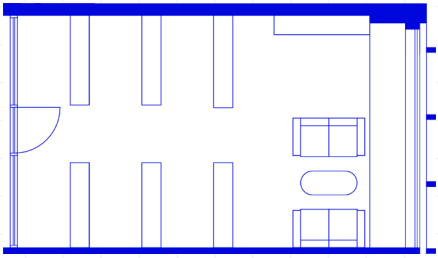

Fig. 62. Themed room functioning as a library

As previously noted, the spatial organization of the cluster floor is structured around daily routines, ensuring that shared spaces align with the rhythms of everyday life rather than exceptional events. To illustrate this, the following narrative describes a possible day in the life of a resident, Anna.

Anna is working from home for the day and has a meeting in the morning. She chooses to take a seat in one of the silent work pods, a space

9. THE PROTOTYPE

that supports focused work.

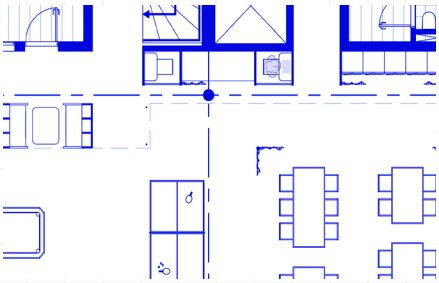

Fig. 63. Anna working in the silent work pod

After her meeting, she feels like having a coffee and walks to the pantry.

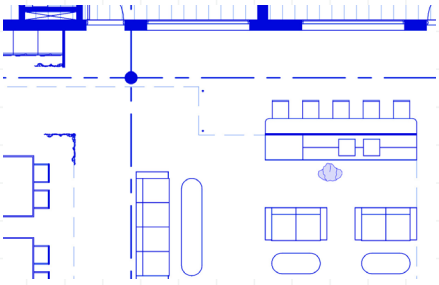

Fig. 64. Anna getting a cup of coffee

Still in a focused mindset, she decides to return to the silent work pod to continue working.

Meanwhile, Anna messages her friend Bella, who lives in the cluster below and is also working from home that day. They decide to have lunch together and meet at the communal tables in the cluster hall.

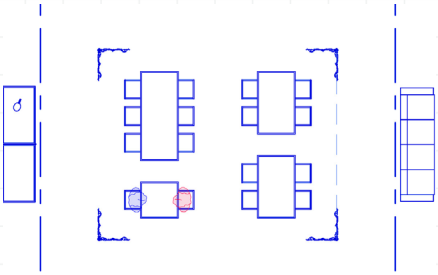

Fig. 65. Anna and Bella having lunch

After lunch, they choose to continue working side by side in the work pod, demonstrating how

9. THE PROTOTYPE

the cluster floor supports both social and professional routines.

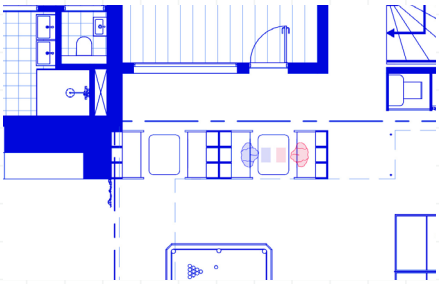

Fig. 66. Anna and Bella working together

At some point, Anna remembers that she has laundry to do. She briefly returns to her dwelling, starts a load in the shared laundry facilities, and continues working while her clothes are being washed.

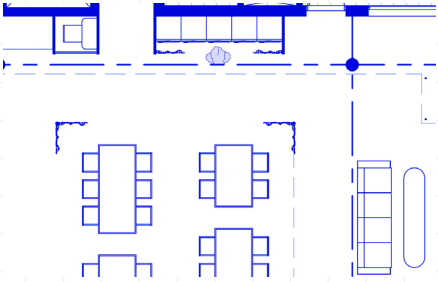

Fig. 67. Anna doing laundry

After the workday ends, Anna and Bella feel the need for some movement and play a game of table tennis together, using one of the sport elements integrated into the cluster floor.

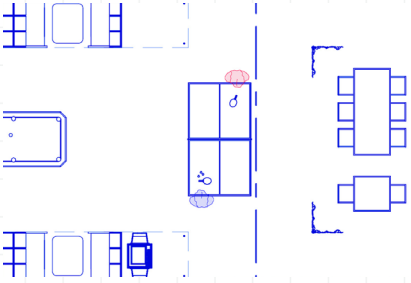

Fig. 68. Anna and Bella playing a game of ping pong

9. THE PROTOTYPE

Later in the evening, Bella heads back to her own dwelling. Anna notices that her neighbors have started a movie in the cluster's movie room. Feeling like joining, she decides to sit in and watch along.

This sequence illustrates how the cluster floor operates as a shared domestic landscape: a spatial framework that enables residents to navigate privacy, sociability, and routine in a fluid and self-directed manner, reinforcing community while respecting individual autonomy.

9. THE PROTOTYPE

9.6 BUILDING STRUCTURE AND MATERIAL COMPOSITION

The structural system of the Threshold House is conceived as a hybrid construction that combines steel, concrete, and timber, allowing both structural robustness and long-term adaptability. The building is primarily supported by a steel main structure, paired with reinforced concrete floor slabs that recur every three levels. These concrete slabs, together with the concrete elevator cores, provide the necessary stiffness to absorb horizontal and rotational forces acting on the towers, ensuring overall structural stability.

Within this primary structural framework, the building is infilled with timber-frame wall systems and Lignatur timber floors. Timber is chosen as a lightweight and flexible construction material, making it relatively easy to adapt or modify between the main structural grids. This strategy introduces a high degree of spatial and functional flexibility every three floors, allowing the building to respond to future changes without compromising the primary structure.

The façade is composed of composite Rockwool panels, which are selected for fire safety reasons, as timber façade systems are not permitted at this height. These panels are combined with vertical fins that give the building its distinctive architectural expression while also contributing to solar control and visual rhythm.

As visible in the construction

9. THE PROTOTYPE

drawings, the building incorporates a deep cavity behind the façade. This cavity originally results from the cantilevering of the circular geometry but is deliberately utilized to serve multiple functions. It enables the integration of window seating niches within the bedrooms, while also accommodating building services such as the greywater system, rainwater drainage, ventilation ducts, and heat recovery units (WTW). By routing these installations along the façade, the interior spaces remain uncluttered and spatially efficient.

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9. THE PROTOTYPE

spaces remain uncluttered and spatially efficient.

To bridge this cavity and support the façade cladding, an aluminium mounting system is employed, combined where necessary with extensions of the steel structure. This layered construction approach ensures structural continuity, service integration, and architectural flexibility, reinforcing the Threshold House as a resilient and adaptable building system.

9. THE PROTOTYPE

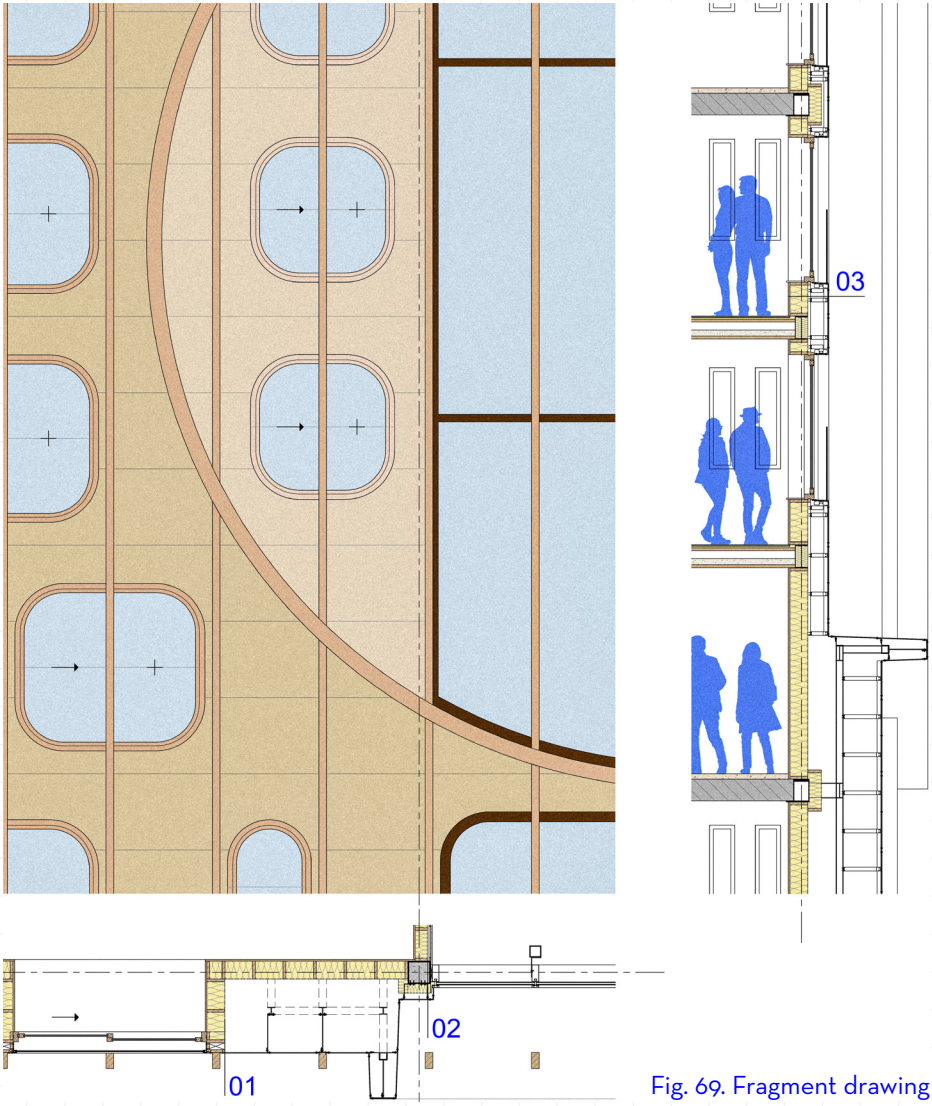

Fig. 69. Fragment drawing

9. THE PROTOTYPE

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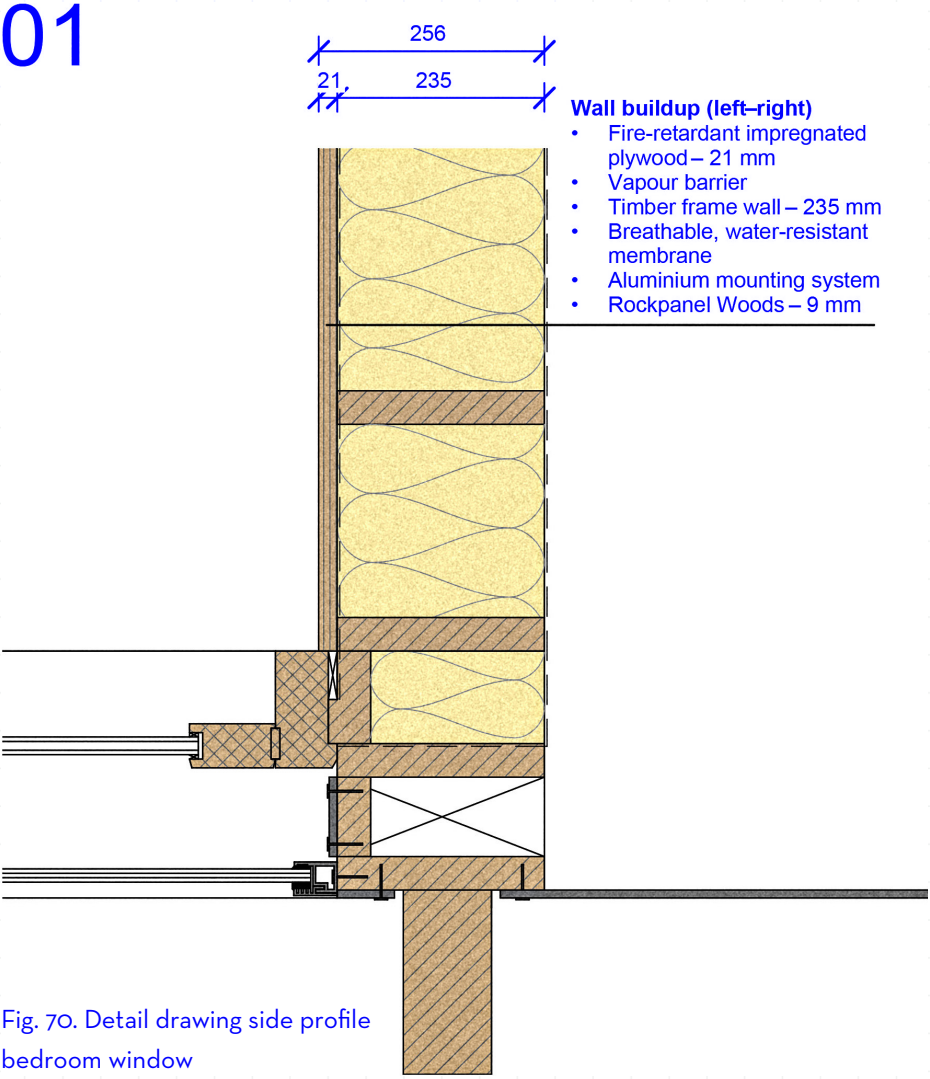

Fig. 70. Detail drawing side profile bedroom window

9. THE PROTOTYPE

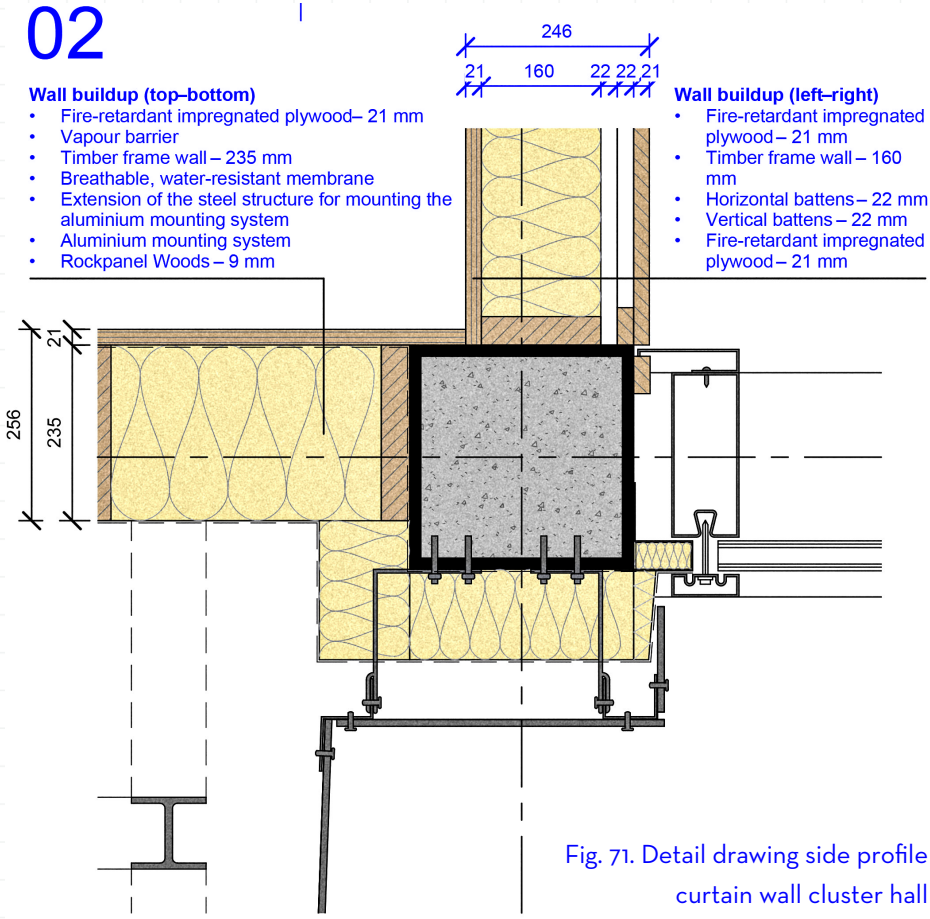

Fig. 71. Detail drawing side profile curtain wall cluster hall

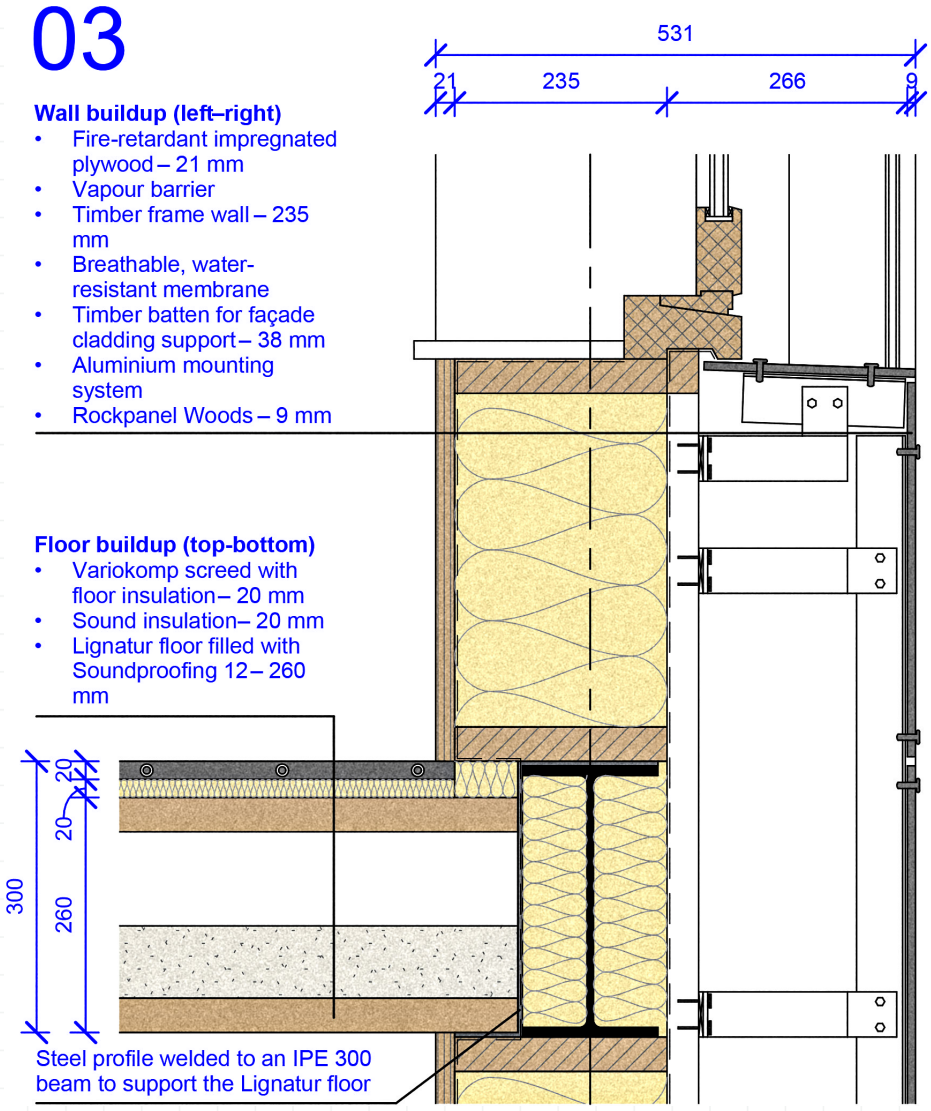

Fig. 72. Detail drawing bottom profile bedroom window

9. THE PROTOTYPE

9.7 BUILDING CLIMATE CONCEPT

When examining the climate systems of the Threshold House, the building is designed to operate using an underground aquifer thermal energy storage (ATES) system. During winter, thermal energy is extracted from the aquifer beneath the site, where heat stored in the stable underground layers, accumulated during the summer months, is reused. At the same time, cold energy is returned to the aquifer, enabling seasonal energy balancing.

The building is heated through a combination of underfloor heating and mechanical air heating. This system is integrated with mechanical ventilation, ensuring a continuous supply of fresh air while minimizing heat loss that would otherwise occur through the frequent opening of windows. As a result, indoor comfort is maintained efficiently throughout the colder months.

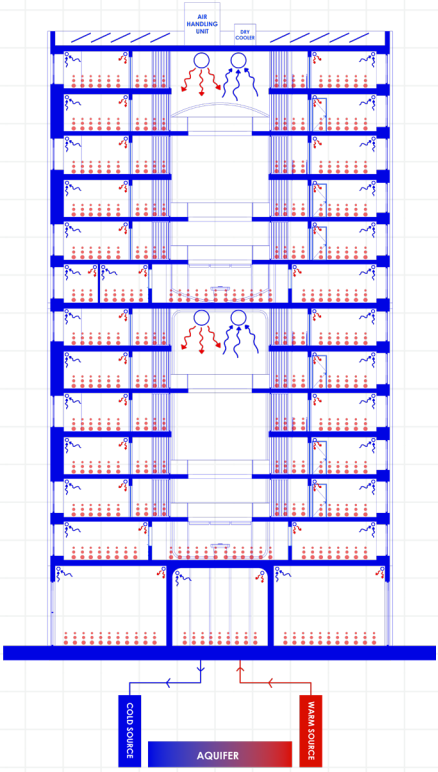

Fig. 73. Winter climate section

9. THE PROTOTYPE

In summer, the ATES system operates in reverse. Stored cold energy is extracted from the aquifer to cool the building, while excess heat is reinjected into the ground for later use. Cooling is primarily achieved through mechanical ventilation, although occupants retain the option to open windows when desired, allowing for user-controlled comfort and natural ventilation.

Photovoltaic panels installed on the rooftops generate renewable energy that is used directly within the building. In addition, the vertical façade fins function as external louvres, reducing direct solar gain, while the deep cavity behind the façade acts as an air buffer. This buffer slows down heat accumulation from solar radiation and contributes to the overall thermal performance of the building envelope.

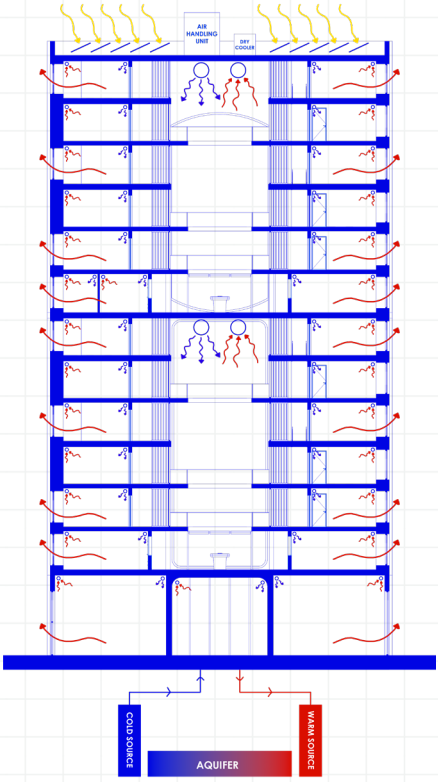

Fig. 74. Summer climate section

9. THE PROTOTYPE

The Threshold House also incorporates a rainwater harvesting system. Rainwater is collected and stored in a dedicated reservoir located adjacent to the bicycle parking facility. After filtration, this water is redistributed throughout the towers and reused for non-potable purposes, including laundry facilities, toilet flushing, and plant irrigation.

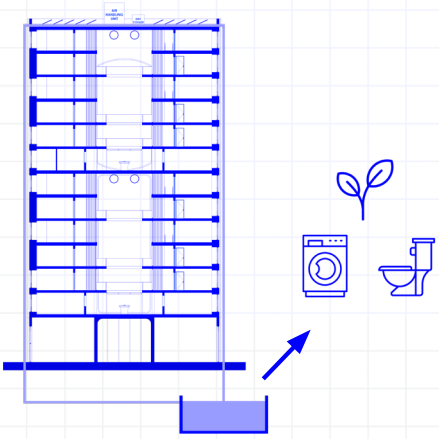

Fig. 75. Rainwater storage

10.

Design Evaluation

10. DESIGN EVALUATION

10.1 QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE THRESHOLD HOUSE

The quantitative evaluation presented in the table demonstrates that the Threshold House operates within a spatial framework that is broadly comparable to that of the Little Manhattan development, while accommodating a significantly different residential model. Excluding the commercial plinth at ground level and the bicycle parking, the total gross floor area of the Threshold House amounts to 32.207 m2, housing 942 residents. This results in an average gross floor area of approximately 34.2 m2 per resident.

When compared to Little Manhattan, where an estimated 1,148 residents occupy a total gross floor area of approximately 36,000 m2, resulting in an average of 31.5 m2 per resident, the Threshold House shows only a modest increase of around 2.7 m2 per resident. This difference remains relatively small within the context of housing economics and suggests that the proposed typology can plausibly operate within a similar affordability range as conventional studio apartments.

Importantly, this slight increase in average GFA per resident is not allocated to enlarging private living units, but rather redistributed toward shared and transitional spaces that enhance spatial quality, functional clarity, and social interaction. Whereas the studio apartments in Little Manhattan concentrate all domestic functions into a single undifferentiated room

10. DESIGN EVALUATION

and rely on inward-facing, daylight-less corridors, the Threshold House reallocates space to collective facilities, layered circulation, and communal amenities that support daily routines, well-being, and community formation.

In this sense, the results of the evaluation confirm that the Threshold House meets the primary criterion established in the method of evaluation: maintaining a comparable spatial and economic baseline to the conventional studio model. At the same time, it demonstrates that this baseline can be strategically reinterpreted to support a fundamentally different living experience, one that prioritizes spatial differentiation, shared luxury, and socially connected forms of habitation.

The findings therefore validate the central premise of this thesis: that improving quality of living in high-density housing for young professionals does not necessarily require a substantial increase in gross floor area per resident, but rather a critical rethinking of how that area is distributed, shared, and activated through architectural design.

10. DESIGN EVALUATION

Level	Gross Floor Area (m2)	Number of Residents
Bicycle Parking	1,963	
Ground Floor + 1st Floor	Commercial plinth (excluded from GFA)	
2nd Floor	2,634	78
3rd Floor	1,953	60
4th Floor	1,953	60
5th Floor	1,665	60
6th Floor	1,953	60
7th Floor	1,665	60
8th Floor	2,874	72
9th Floor	1,953	60
10th Floor	1,953	60
11th Floor	2,225	66
12th Floor	1,953	60
13th Floor	1,761	60
14th Floor	1,433	46
15th Floor	1,302	40
16th Floor	1,206	40
17th Floor	555	20
18th Floor	651	20
19th Floor	555	20
Total	**32.207 m2**	**942 residents**
Average per resident	**34,2 m2**	

Fig. 76. Calculation of GFA Threshold House

11.
Reflection

11. REFLECTION

11.1 SUMMARY

In the Advanced Housing Design graduation studio of Architecture and Dwelling, we were tasked with developing a design proposal for a mixed-use building in Amsterdam. The project is framed by the ongoing housing crisis and the municipality's ambition to add 7,500 new homes each year within the existing urban fabric. This leads to the studio's guiding question: How can we design not merely the quantities, but rather the qualities that respond to the living standards and expectations a city like Amsterdam wants to offer?

As rising housing prices increasingly limit first-time buyers to small studio apartments, the concept of The Threshold House was developed. It proposes prototype apartment buildings that reimagine the balance between shared and private amenities, offering an alternative to the conventional studio. This alternative provides greater spatial quality for a comparable price, giving residents the opportunity to live both privately and socially. In doing so, The Threshold House seeks to redefine starter housing and offer a viable contribution to the city's search for more qualitative and future-proof living models.

11. REFLECTION

11.2 "HOW DO YOU ASSESS THE VALUE OF YOUR WAY OF WORKING?"

The first step in my work process was to clarify the kind of outcome I wanted to achieve. I knew I wanted to explore a new form of collective living, even though its final form was still uncertain. I therefore began by gathering knowledge through literature research, focusing on spatial theory, territorial dynamics, threshold spaces, and place attachment. Although these insights were often broad and abstract, they helped me articulate why the conventional studio model is, in my view, insufficient and which conceptual directions I needed to pursue in search of an improved alternative.

The next step involved a case study analysis of various co-living environments. This revealed how the balance between private and shared space has shifted throughout history, yet none of the examples offered a well working transition between the two. Both the literature and case analyses confirmed that privacy is a dynamic condition, sometimes requiring withdrawal, other times inviting social engagement. Translating this into an architectural strategy became a key design challenge, especially without any strong precedents to draw on.

Converting research into design took considerable time. I developed many elaborated apartment plan iterations before arriving at one that met both the spatial and conceptual ambitions of the project. Although I believe the final plans work well, I still wonder whether a more efficient

11. REFLECTION

process could have led me to a similar result more quickly.

Finally, by using Little Manhattan in Amsterdam as a benchmark and comparing the gross floor area per resident, I could make quick estimations about affordability. This helped ensure that the prototype remains feasible for its intended demographic. Composed mainly of studio apartments arranged along a corridor with minimal shared facilities, Little Manhattan represents an efficient but ultimately limited housing model, one that underscores my critique of contemporary starter housing. This benchmarking step proved crucial, as it demonstrates that the prototype can genuinely work as a new form of future living.

11. REFLECTION

11.3 "HOW DID YOUR RESEARCH INFLUENCE YOUR DESIGN AND HOW DID THE DESIGN INFLUENCE YOUR RESEARCH?"

I began the design process by formulating a set of design principles drawn from the literature research and case studies. These principles informed the first iteration of the apartment layouts presented in the P2 review. However, after the presentation and talking to the tutors I realised that the principles I had established could be far better applied in the design. The units could still be designed far more efficiently: the transition between private rooms and shared spaces was not yet fluid and the shared cluster hall, intended to function as the key social space for each community of residents, ended up behaving more like a circulation corridor.

Redesigning the apartment layouts turned out to be a much greater challenge than anticipated, I think due to the absence of any suitable reference plan. Each new iteration solved one issue but introduced another, making the development of a coherent and convincing layout an iterative and complex process.

At the same time, I began testing the design against the average gross floor area per resident in Little Manhattan in Amsterdam, a typical studio building. I only started this comparison after the P3 presentation, once the apartment layouts had already been developed quite far. The analysis showed that each resident in Little Manhattan occupies roughly 31.5 m·, while each resident in the prototype used around 51 m·. This made clear that the building

11. REFLECTION

needed to be redesigned to use space more efficiently.

But this time, before returning to the drawing board, I first started calculating: How many additional residents would I need to add per floor to approach the same ratio as Little Manhattan? Could some rooms be made smaller without compromising quality? Were there functions in the cluster hall that could be removed or perhaps shared between multiple towers? After working through these questions, I went back to the drawing board and developed a revised design that comes much closer to Little Manhattan's spatial ratio.

11. REFLECTION

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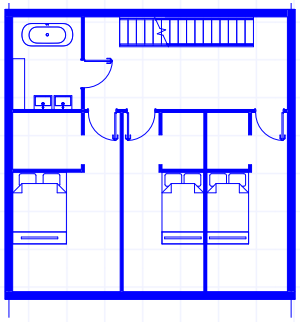

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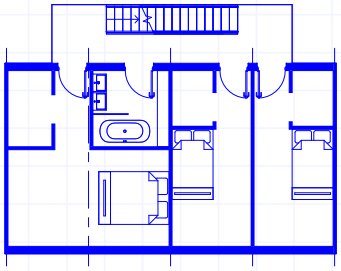

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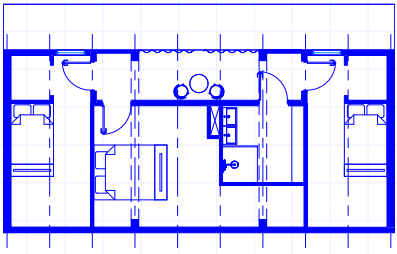

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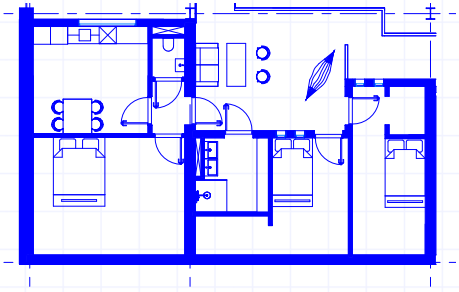

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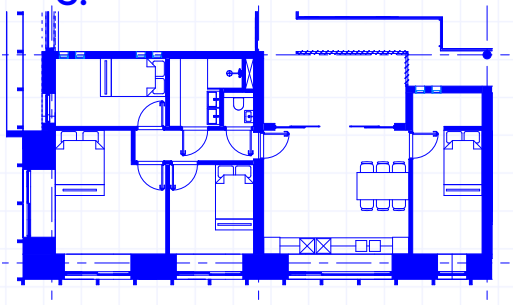

Fig. 77. Evolution of households

11. REFLECTION

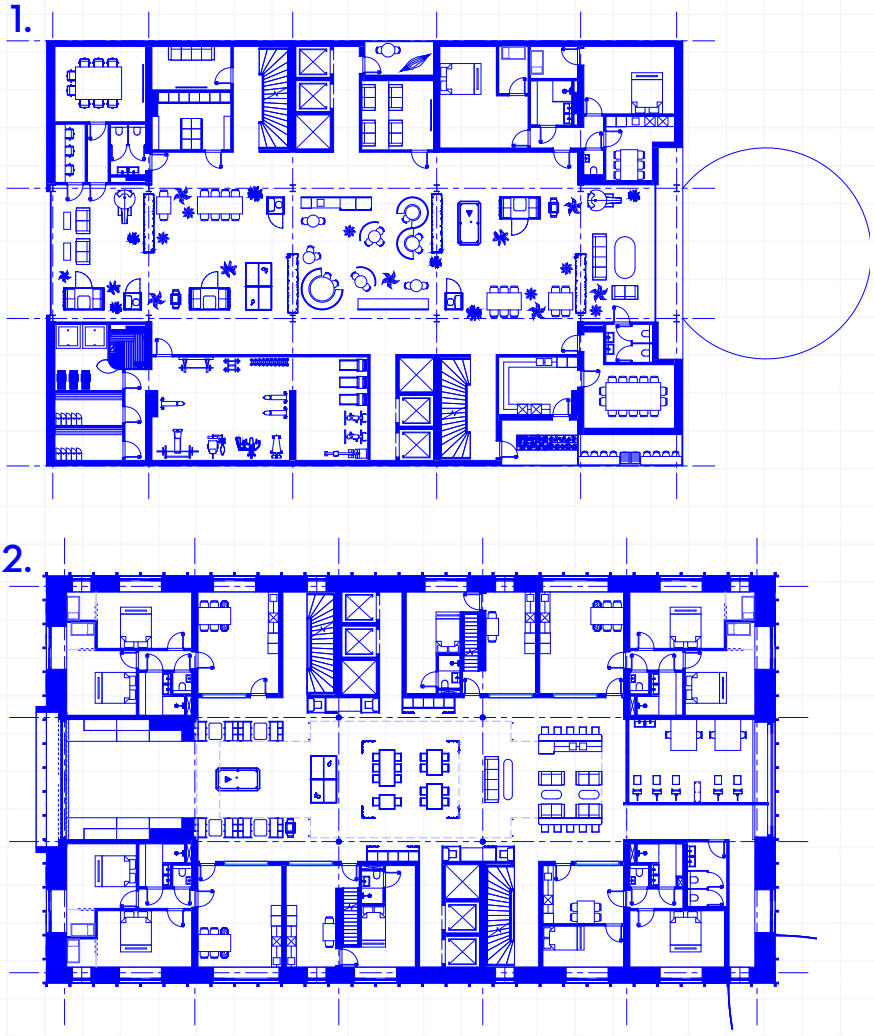

Fig. 78. Evolution of cluster floor

11. REFLECTION

11.4 "WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN YOUR GRADUATION PROJECT TOPIC, YOUR ARCHITECTURE MASTER TRACK AND YOUR MASTER PROGRAMME?"

In every studio project or elective during my master's program, I deliberately chose topics that offered a clear challenge and learning objective. Dwelling was a subject I had not yet explored, and it seemed like a strategic choice to prepare myself for my career after graduation. The Advanced Housing Design studio was ideal for this: not only did it allow me to focus on designing a new type of building, but it also addressed a pressing national issue, the housing shortage. This made the project feel more realistic and motivated me even more, as a successful design could genuinely give new insights on solving a societal problem.

I therefore set out to find a graduation topic that meaningfully aligned with this ambition. I wanted to address the needs of those who are currently the most affected by the housing shortage: first-time buyers. How can we offer starters better living conditions than the conventional studios being built today, while keeping the cost comparable? Every aspect of this question resonated with me: its urgency, its social relevance, and its architectural potential.

11. REFLECTION

11.5 "WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF YOUR GRADUATION WORK IN THE LARGER SOCIAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC FRAMEWORK?"

Socially, the project responds to one of the most urgent issues in the Netherlands: the structural shortage of affordable housing for first-time buyers. While the current housing market largely produces standardised studio apartments that have no room for movement, offer low-quality amenities, and isolate residents socially, The Threshold House proposes an alternative housing model that remains affordable while delivering higher spatial and social quality. It introduces a typology that no longer forces starters to choose between complete privacy or full collectivity but instead acknowledges that privacy and social engagement are dynamic, context-dependent needs. In doing so, the project contributes to the well-being of young residents who are currently underserved by existing housing models.

Professionally, the project offers a new perspective on how design strategies can navigate the tension between building efficiently and living well. It reframes the role of the architect within the housing crisis: not merely as a producer of more units, but as a designer of better living conditions. In doing so, it contributes meaningfully to the professional discourse on affordable, compact, and collective housing.

Scientifically, the project introduces an innovative model in which threshold spaces and gradations of privacy operate as structural components of

11. REFLECTION

of residential building typologies. The prototype demonstrates how theoretical concepts, such as Lefebvre's social production of space, Benjamin's ideas on the interior and individuality, and Setha Low's theories of place attachment, can be translated into concrete spatial strategies for developing a new form of dwelling. This makes it relevant to ongoing academic discussions on collectivity, domesticity, and emerging housing models in high-density urban contexts.

11. REFLECTION

11.6 "HOW DO YOU ASSESS THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIETAL VALUE, SCOPE AND IMPLICATION OF YOUR GRADUATION PROJECT, INCLUDING ETHICAL ASPECTS?"

The academic value of the project lies in developing an integrated theoretical and design framework in which threshold spaces serve as key mediators between privacy and openness in collective housing. By linking spatial theory, proxemics, threshold theory, and place attachment to design research, the project offers an innovative contribution to studies on the social production of space and the role of transitional zones in contemporary living environments.

The societal value arises from the urgency of the issue: in cities like Amsterdam, young professionals are increasingly dependent on affordable housing, which currently trends toward highly individualised studio models that prioritise isolation over shared spatial quality. The project demonstrates how carefully designed threshold spaces can support both autonomy and community-building, thereby improving the quality of life, inclusivity, and psychological safety within collective housing.

The scope of the project spans architectural design and policy. The design principles developed are scalable and applicable across various urban contexts, offering tools for designers, housing associations, and urban planners seeking more human-centered forms of shared living.

Ethically, the project emphasizes that collectivity should never come at the expense of individual agency, dignity, or accessibility.

11. REFLECTION

11.7 "HOW DO YOU ASSESS THE VALUE OF THE TRANSFERABILITY OF YOUR PROJECT RESULTS?"

The prototype is intentionally designed so that the underlying housing concept, based on clustered communities, gradations of privacy, and threshold spaces, can be easily replicated within different building forms and urban contexts. The spatial logic of the floor plans is modular rather than site-specific, allowing the organisational principle of the dwellings to be applied to a range of architectural typologies.

Furthermore, the structural system supports long-term adaptability. The building is organised around a fixed primary structure of concrete floor plates every 9 metres in height, supported by a steel frame. Within these 9-metre zones, the interior is constructed using timber, providing a robust, partially load-bearing, lightweight secondary structure. As a result, each 9-metre zone operates as a reconfigurable layer, allowing the building to evolve without modifying the main load-bearing system.

Together, these features make the project highly transferable: both the architectural concept and the structural strategy can be scaled, replicated, or adapted to evolving housing needs, ensuring long-term applicability beyond the prototype itself.

12.
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