

*Towards an open Blikfabriek area.*

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*Towards an open Blikfabirek area*  
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graduation Urban Architecture

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## Introduction

The Blikfabriek is an old can factory which has been empty for some years, and currently offers space for various artists, small companies and events. It includes the *Maakfabriek* and the *Stelling*, workspaces for artists and creators, and the *Expo Hall*, a space for events. The artists and other users have a lot of freedom in creating their own space, and coming up with initiatives. It is located on the edge of the neighbourhoods Kiel and Hoboken, which are south of the ring road of Antwerp. The Blikfabriek area is an area where you can feel the freedom and possibilities to create and get inspired. The only issue is that the Blikfabriek area is still disconnected from the lives in the neighbourhood. How could The Blikfabriek in the future be more open for the rest of the neighbourhood?

(How to open up the existing Blikfabriek, through integrating fieldwork and participation into the design process?)



## Methodology

As methods I used fieldwork, literature studies and participation, integrated in the design process. The research can be divided into three phases:

1. semi structured interviews and observations on the streets around the Blikfabriek, part of the collective research with the perspective of *Meet the Neighbours*. This consisted of short conversations about how they see their neighbourhood, house, neighbours, the public spaces and what they would like to see changed.
2. Longer interviews in NOVA and SAAMO. These are two social organisations in Kiel, that attract people with various backgrounds from the neighbourhood. The focus of these conversations was on the spatial qualities of these places and their reaction to the spatial qualities of the Blikfabriek. This was either by asking about their mental image, or in case they were unfamiliar with the Blikfabriek, by reacting to multiple photos made by me. Next to that, in these interviews I also asked about their background, if it was something they were open about.
3. Participation sessions in the social supermarket (sociale kruidenier) of Kiel. The social supermarket is a place where people with a lower income can do their groceries. These focussed on the use of the participants homes and what they would like to alter about it (e.g. floorplan, storage spaces, windows). Next to that, in a more hypothetical sense, we discussed the possibilities and willingness of having collective spaces. In these sessions I started with the participants home, because it helps to associate for the more hypothetical questions.

The results informed my design step-by-step: the first phase informed the urban masterplan, the second the overall layout of my individual project and the third phase determined the specifics in the layout of the floorplans. Therefore throughout the process, research and design were strongly interlinked. The phases are also steps in becoming more specific in method and intention with these interviews. This is what helped the process of an inclusive design project. By having an open attitude and approach at the start, I got informed by peoples opinions and needs for the neighbourhood, before I started drawing

In the design process, the design was interlinked with the fieldwork done in the neighbourhood. In this catalogue, I want to tell the story of a design process. After a year of collecting stories and information in Kiel and the Blikfabriek, this book tries to explain how it contributed to this design. It could function as an explanation of how the research informed my design. Or it could be an approachable story of how a building is designed. It finishes with four stories of how the building could be used when it is finished.

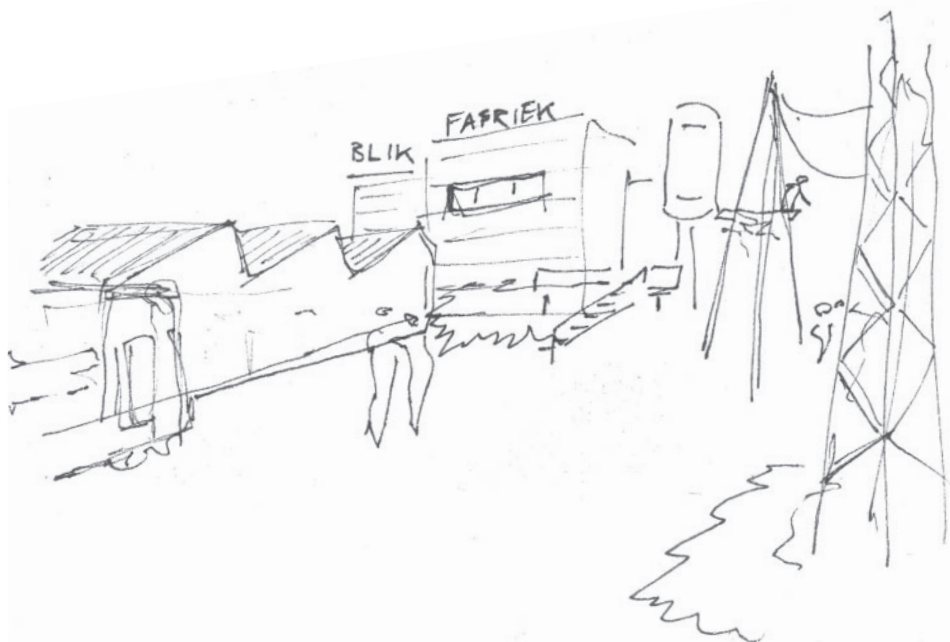


Photos from the first participation session in the social store

*First impressions  
on the Blikfabriek  
and the area..*



A sudden entrance on the Krugerstraat,  
you'd almost just pass by, without knowing  
what world lies behind this residential  
housty front



Arriving in the Bliekfabriek in September, it immediately felt like a special place

As a visitor, and I imagine as an artist as well, you feel endless possibilities

I started off this project with fieldwork with the intent of meeting the neighbours of the Bliekfabriek.



With a group of 4, we were curious about the social spaces in the neighbourhood.

First we wanted to understand in what neighbourhood we were, and we split in two directions, into the directions of Kriel and Hoboken.

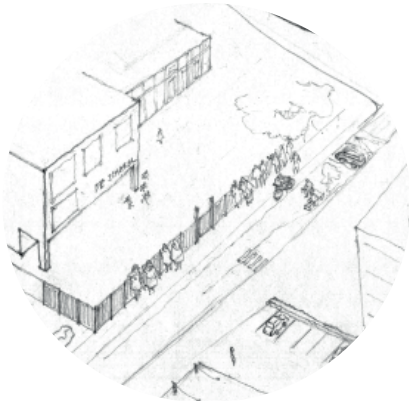
At the end of the day the two groups got a very different look on the neighbourhood.



We come back a number of times  
and discovered how ~~the neighbourhood~~

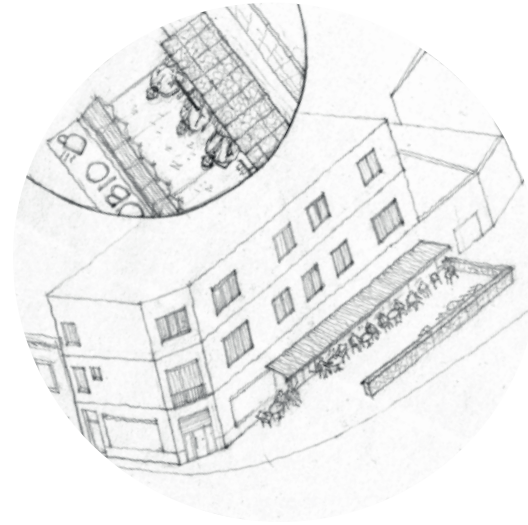
how the public life  
in the neighbourhood is shaped by a  
mixture of third, fourth and parochial  
spaces

One home is the first space, workspace  
is the second space. Third spaces are  
the social spaces we like to spend our free  
time, like cafés and parks. Fourth spa-  
ces are unorganised social spaces where  
interactions still happen.



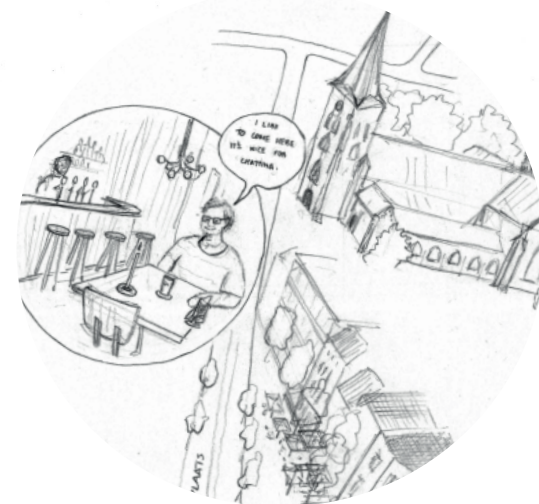
the fence of the school  
(at times when kids go  
into or come out of school)

A half opened  
garage door



Parochial spaces are public third  
spaces which are predominantly appropriated and  
used by a certain group of people, so other groups  
feel like they do not belong or less welcome

In the neighbourhood Kiel & Hoboken we found out  
that most third spaces are of parochial nature



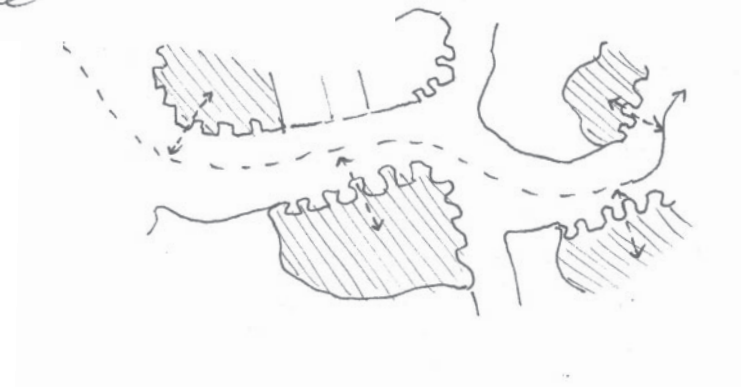


A small interaction like this between different groups in the public space is important.

As written in the book 'In search of new Public Domain': this confrontation can lead to shift of perspective: through the experience of others, the self-evident own view of reality gets competition from other views and lifestyles' (Reijnders, Hager, 2001)

These interactions happen when entering the parochial spaces of another social group.

Representation of passing by parochial spaces and the importance of the edges for the public domain, which sometimes function as a fourth space



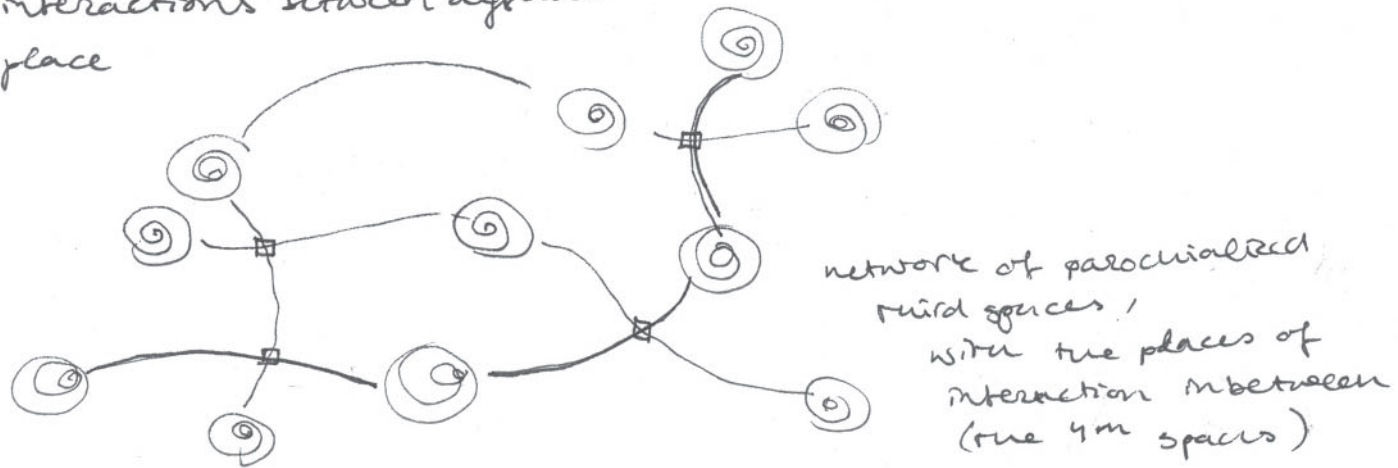




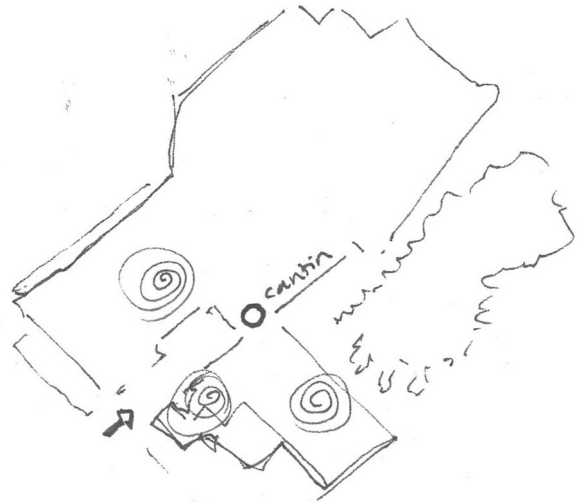
*Designing an open  
Blikfabriek area*



for this reason fourth spaces play an important role, as this is where spontaneous interactions between different people take place



Parochial spaces are good to have, it's a safe space for a specific group, a place to fully express themselves, but as important are the spaces of interaction in between

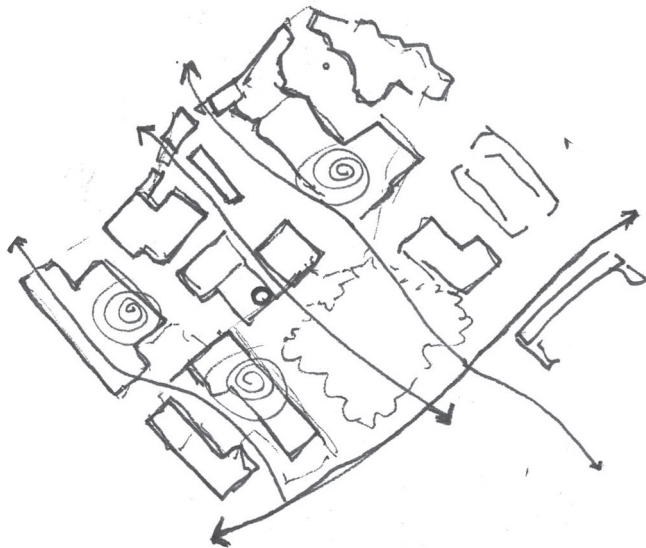


the Bluffville has different  
parochial spaces inside, the  
Bluffville consists of a few  
communities: the Maatfabriek,  
the Stelling and the Expo hall



valuable communities  
where interact and learn  
from each other.

the Bluffville offers a safe  
space

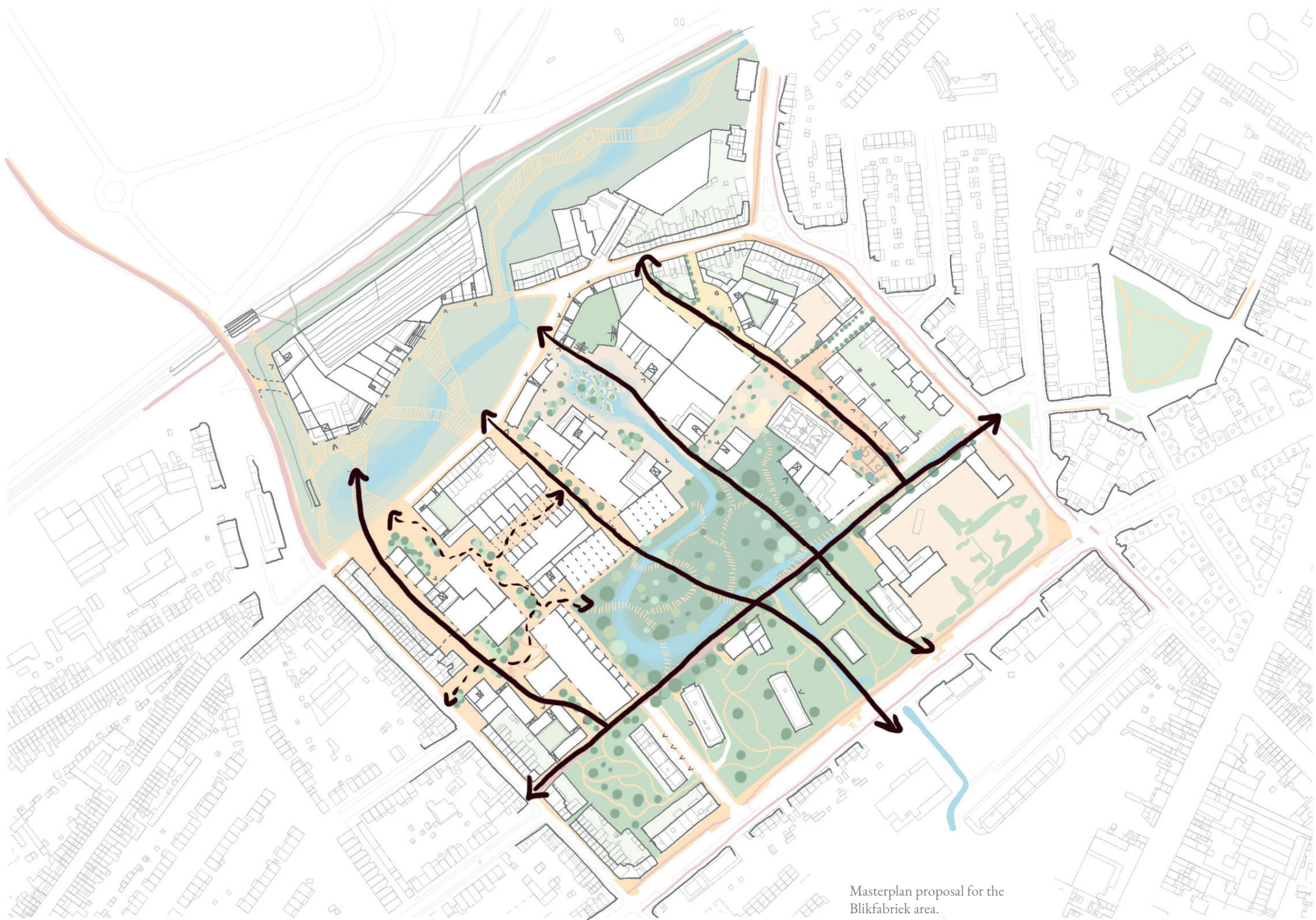


the people from one community in the  
Bluffville do not necessarily know all  
the others in Bluffville

very important starting point for the masterplan  
was to keep these valuable communities (parochial  
spaces)

but to create open in-between space (courtyard  
spaces)





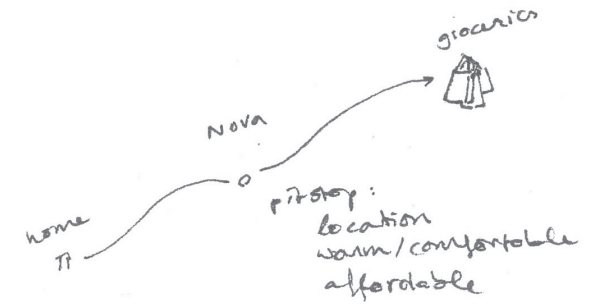
Masterplan proposal for the  
Blikfabriek area.



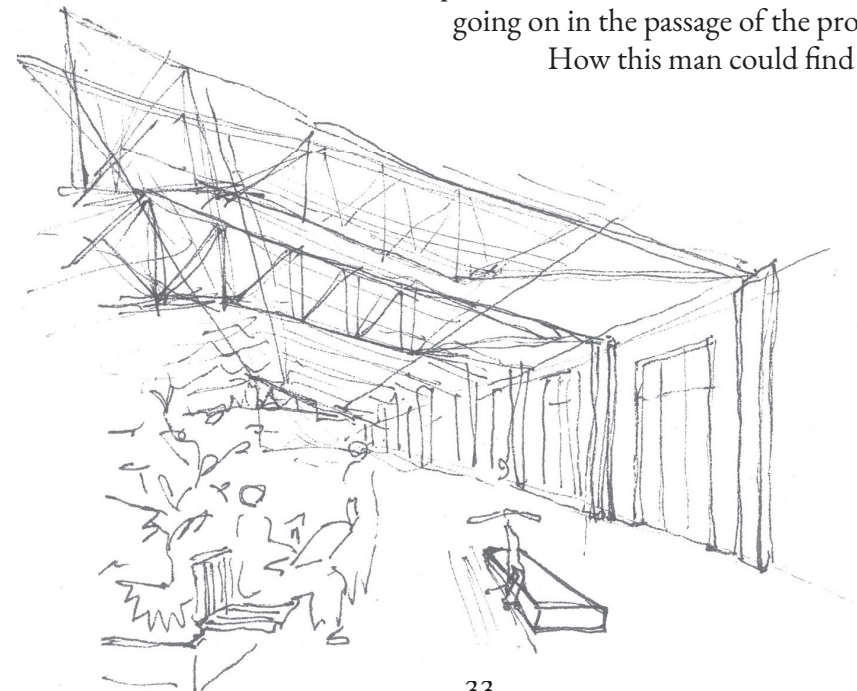


## NOVA

Nova is a social cultural centre in Kiel. Nova organizes different types of activities. Such as: language lessons, yoga classes and theatre performances. All of this is subsidised by the City of Antwerp, so the prices stay affordable. Next to that, they make sure there is a variety of program, to attract different types of people. This is one of the things that makes Nova an inclusive public space.



An example of an interviewed elderly man that would sit at Nova the whole morning. Because it was an heated space, the lunch was very affordable. Besides this, the many different things going on, makes it possible to sit there being unnoticed.



A quick sketch of how I envision different things going on in the passage of the project as well. How this man could find his place in this project

## SAAMO

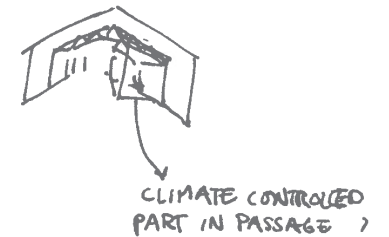
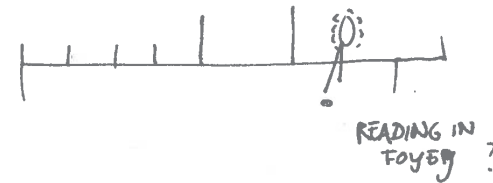
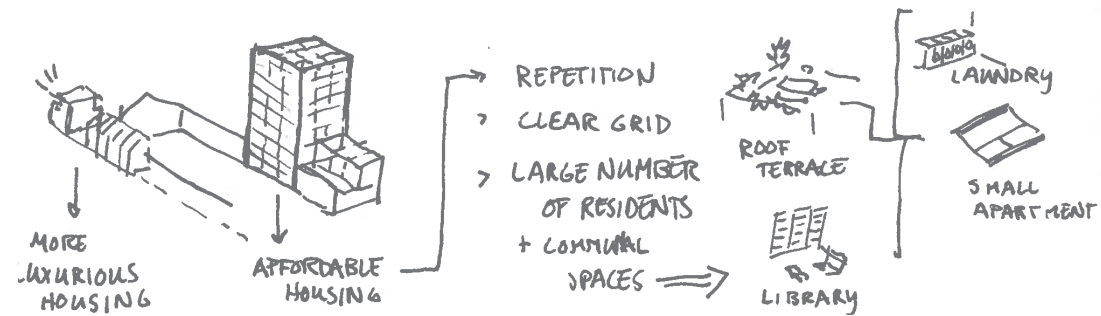
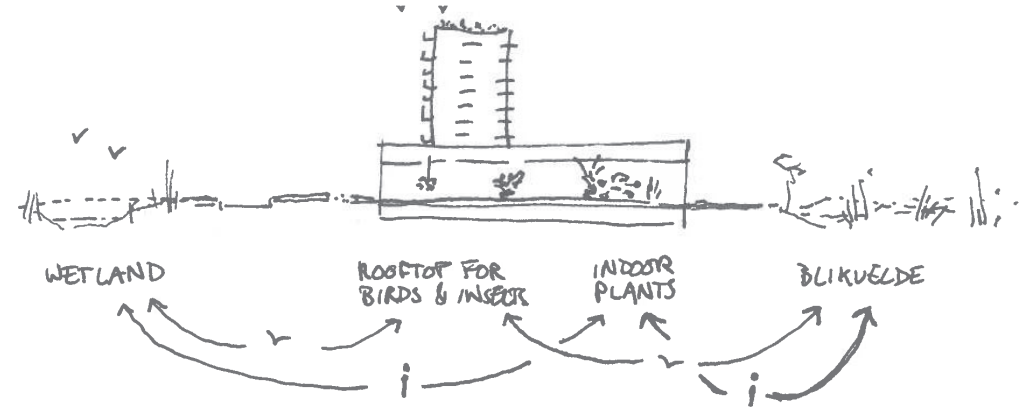
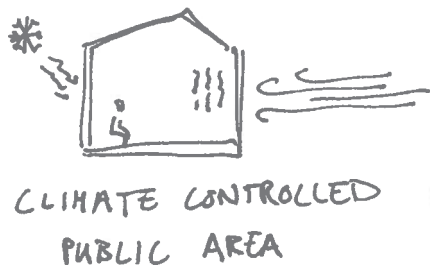
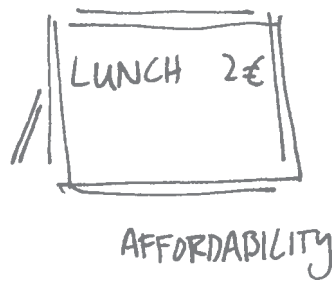
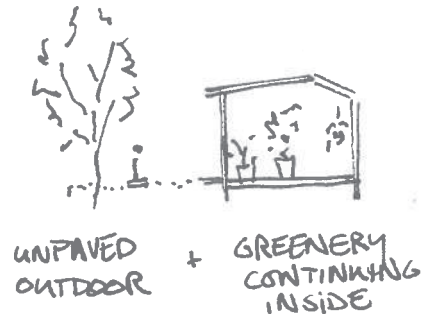
SAAMO is a social centre in Kiel. SAAMO stands for “*samen uitsluiting aanpakken*” which means tackling exclusion together. They work on this on different levels. The place SAAMO is as an informal living room, where people walk in and out, and can get a free drink. Besides this, they organize weekly activities for example *Digipunt* for digital help, *koffie en formulieren* for help with Dutch documents and forms but also more recreational activities.

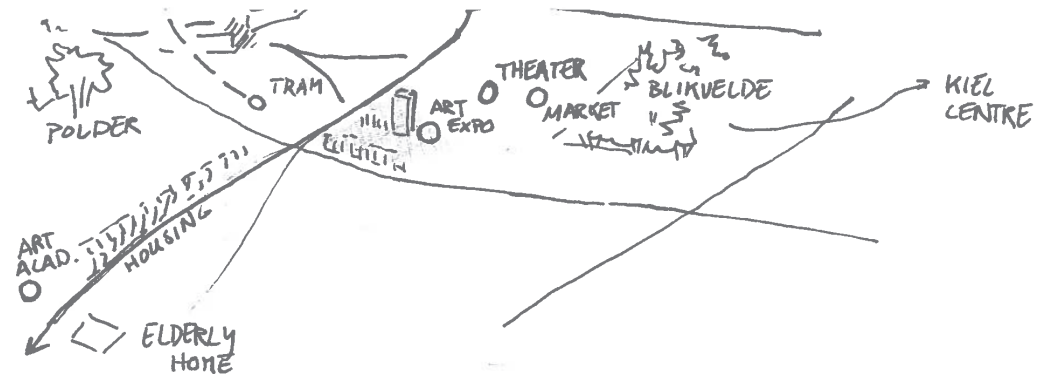
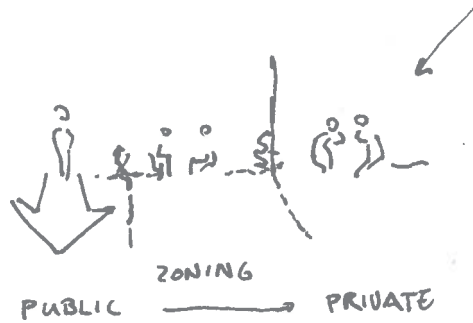
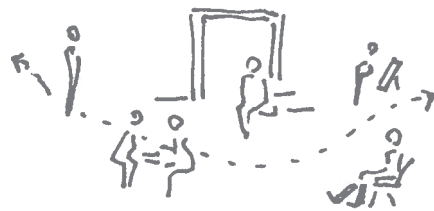
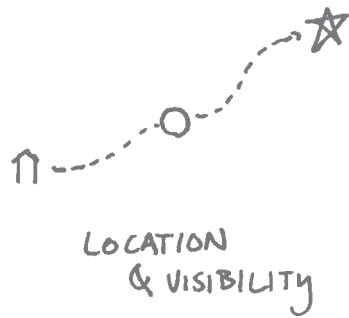
Photo of the neighbourhood garden the residents build up together with SAAMO.



The interior space has different zones. As a result, when more serious and private conversations are taking place in the back, the entrance is still very welcoming, with a volunteer that immediately offers a coffee. For people in the neighbourhood it is a reliable and informal safe space.

As a result of these interviews, I came to the following six design values and principles:







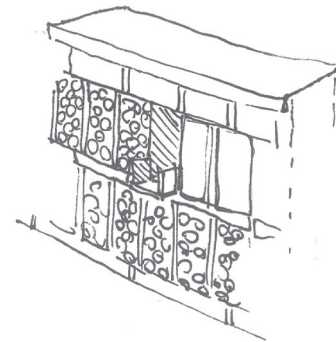
For the next chapter of the Blifabrick,  
to integrate in the neighbourhood it's  
essential to include the neighbours.  
Following the example of an organisation  
like scatto and how they organize  
their projects

- 1 listening
- 2 analysing
- 3 many design principles
- 4 co designing with the neighbours /  
residents

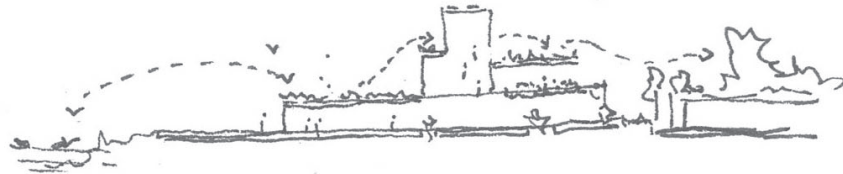
the aim of the project is to make an  
inclusive design, by listening to different  
people in the neighbourhood, by including  
them through participation sessions

*Including the  
ecology*

The project is located between two natural areas: the existing Blikvelde, and the in the masterplan proposed Wetlands. So the roofs are made intensive green roofs to function as a link for the fauna. Next to that, nature inclusive nesting places are integrated in the design.

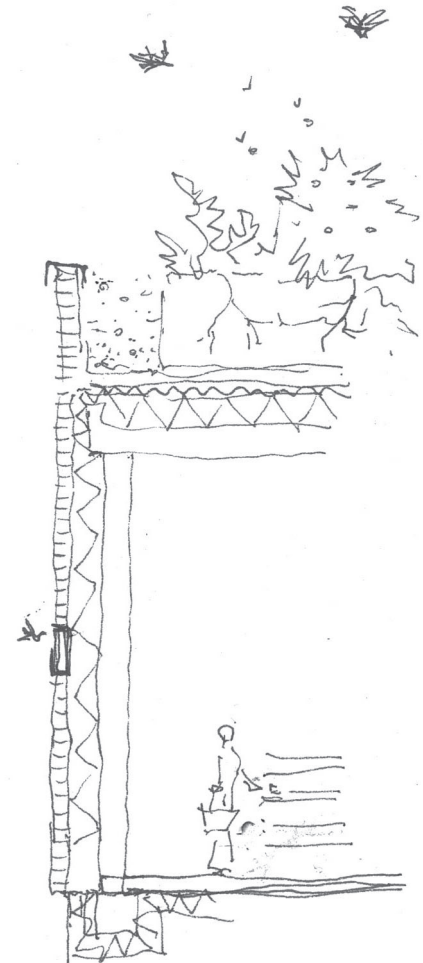
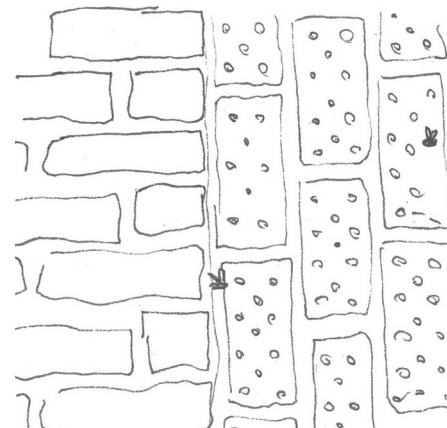


- roof overflows



WETLAND

BLIKVELDE  
existing natural  
area





North-East facade: the back facade of the stores along the passage. This facade is the optimal facade for the nature inclusive nesting spaces, because it the calmer side of the project, facing a vegetated square and because of the direction taking into account sun and wind. On this drawing the water chain is also visible.



*Historical photo of flooding on the Lageweg  
1930 (Stadsarchief antwerpen photo 36785)*



Water has been a big issue on the Lageweg for a long time. For this reason, mitigating water damage was a big theme from the start of the project. In the masterplan, we bring the Hollebeek back to the surface. The project functions as a sponge, where the public space is capable of holding water, as well as the newly added buildings, by means of green roofs.



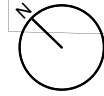
WETLANDS

WADI

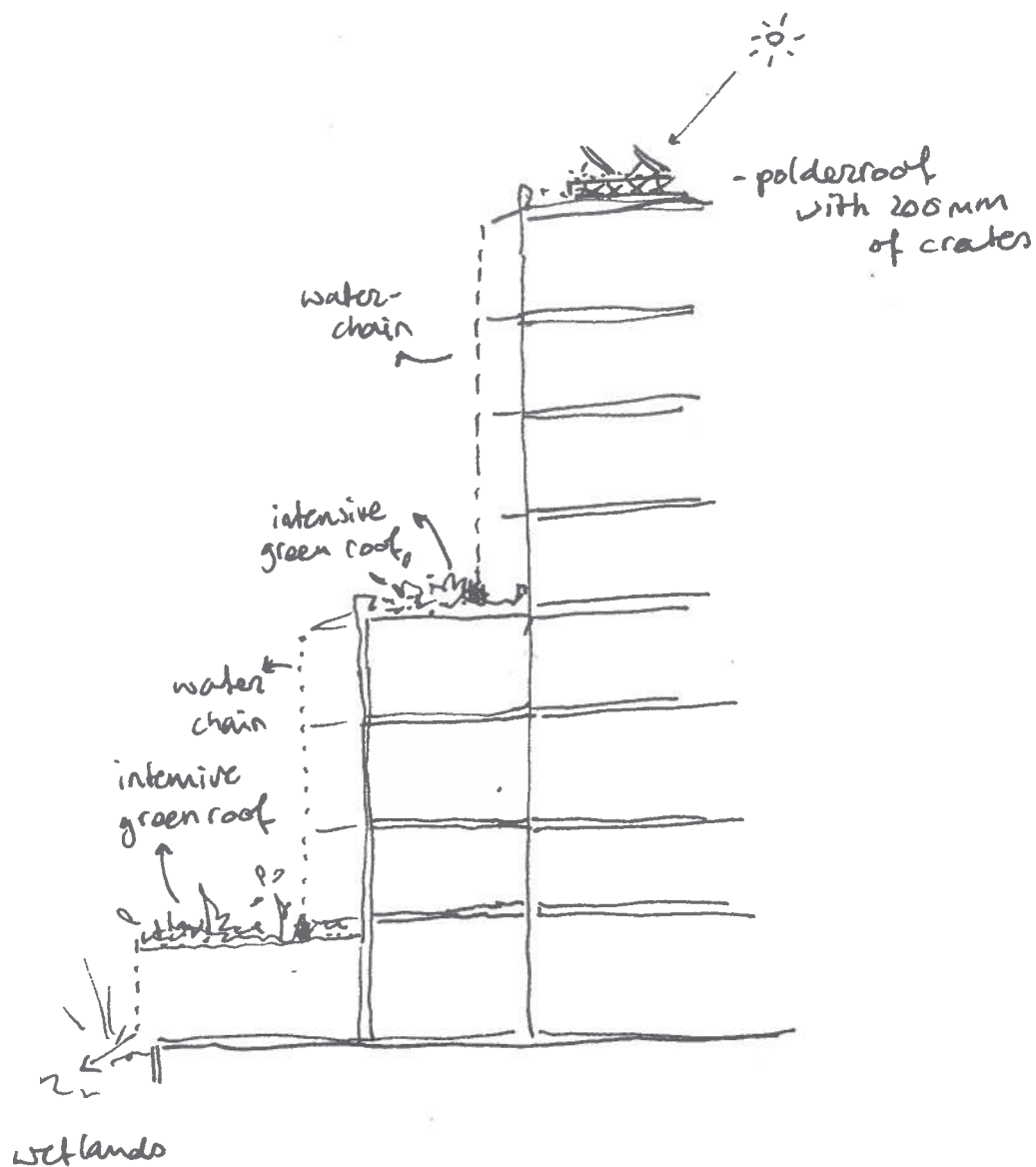
WATER CHAIN

INTENSIVE  
GREEN ROOFS

BLIKVELDE

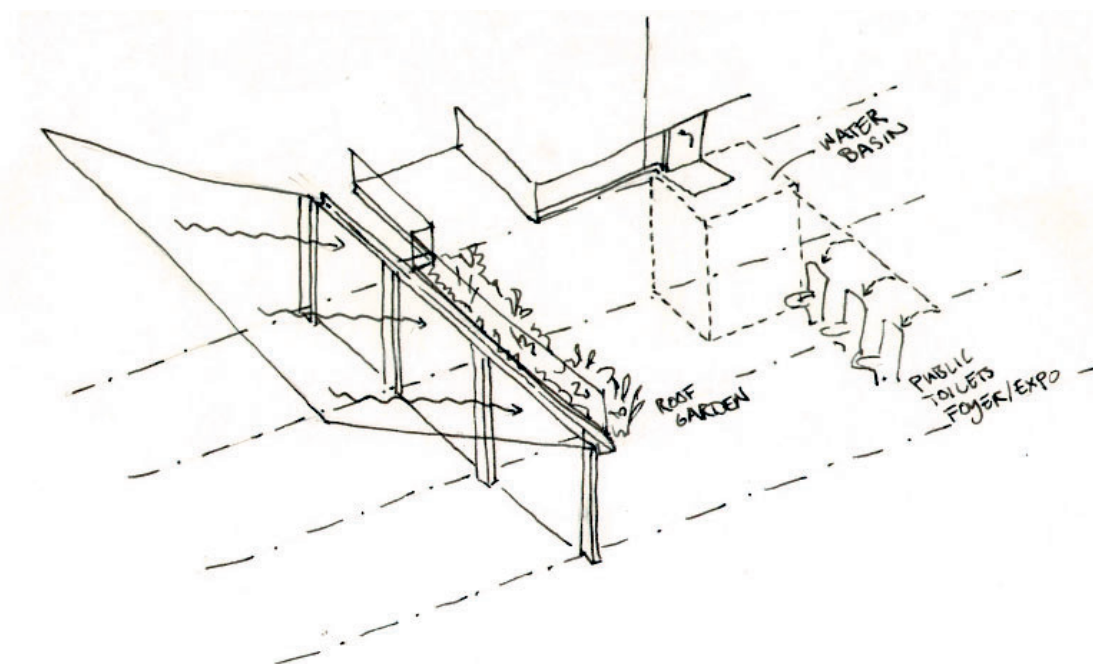






The building has different types of intensive green roofs: some are for the residents to use as a roof garden, and others are for non-humans only. Both have a 50 cm layer of substrate, so many different types of vegetation can grow. The highest roof is a 'polder roof'. This roof has 200 mm crates to hold rain water, a 10 cm layer of substrate and above solar panels. The 'polder roof' can release water when the crates are full, or when heavy rain is predicted in a few days. When released, the water will go down to the lower green roofs via chains.

The roof with the communal roof garden is irrigated differently. This roof is the responsibility of the residents. The roof can be irrigated by tapping water from the water basin. The water basin is filled with water collected from the roof of the passage.



*Participatory  
design*





Representation of how from the model we built with the participant, it's easy to draw the floorplan. Working with models has the advantage that it is easier to comprehend for the participant than 2D floorplans.

Together with 3 other students, Pranav, Anton and Bérénice, I organized participation sessions in the social supermarket (sociale kruidenier) of Kiel. The social supermarket is a place where people with a lower income can do their groceries. These focussed on the use of the participants homes and what they would like to alter about it. We came with simple models of furniture pieces (a kitchen block, different sizes of tables, chairs, toilet, laundry machine etc.) so people could build a floorplan. Next to these sessions with visitors on the home, we also had a session with a worker at the store, about the ideal space for the store, and another session with the after school homework class SLIM. Since the space of SLIM is located within my project site, I included them into the design. For the social store on the other hand, the ideal space would be next door to where they are situated now. This is not in my project area, so not worked out for the design.



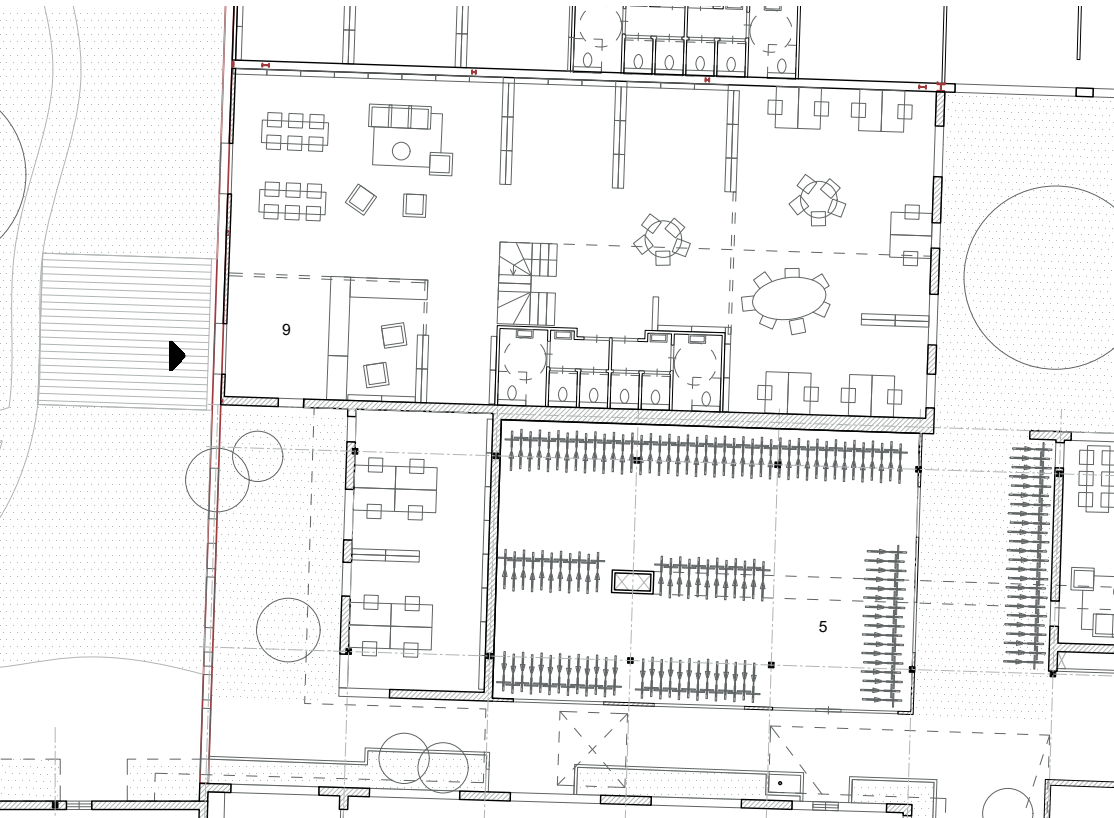
Photos from the first participation session in the social store

## SLIM

SLIM was started by two mothers who started small when their own kids were in school. They noticed the amount of immigrants started to grow in the neighbourhood, and that classmates of their children could not keep up with the classes. These kids speak Dutch but their parents often can't, so they often get behind in vocabulary. Hilde started at home with one kid, but soon noticed how great the need is. The two women soon expanded and even now, with 90 students, the need is still too big for what they are able to offer. There is a current waiting list of 156 students. The limit is mainly because of the amount of volunteers. They want to offer private guidance.



Current space of SLIM on the Blikfabriek site



In the space, enough separate tables are needed, to give these private guidances. Next to that, it is important to have a place where the parents, often with smaller children, can wait, and a place where the kids could play. To Hilde and Veerle it is also important to have a separate room that could be closed off, where the computers are standing. I placed SLIM in one of the old factory halls adjacent to the residential building. The space is located between the courtyard, and a large green square. In this natural space, the kids can play while waiting for the class to be over. In weekends, the space could function as a children's library.

## Housing.

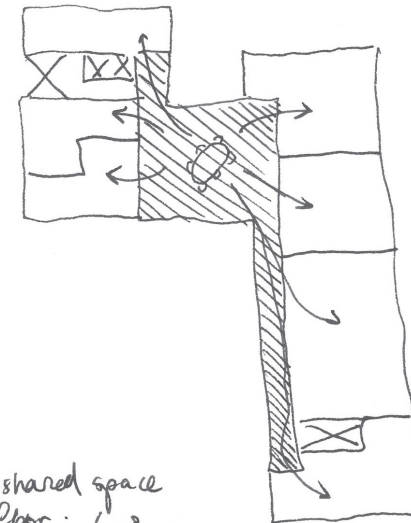
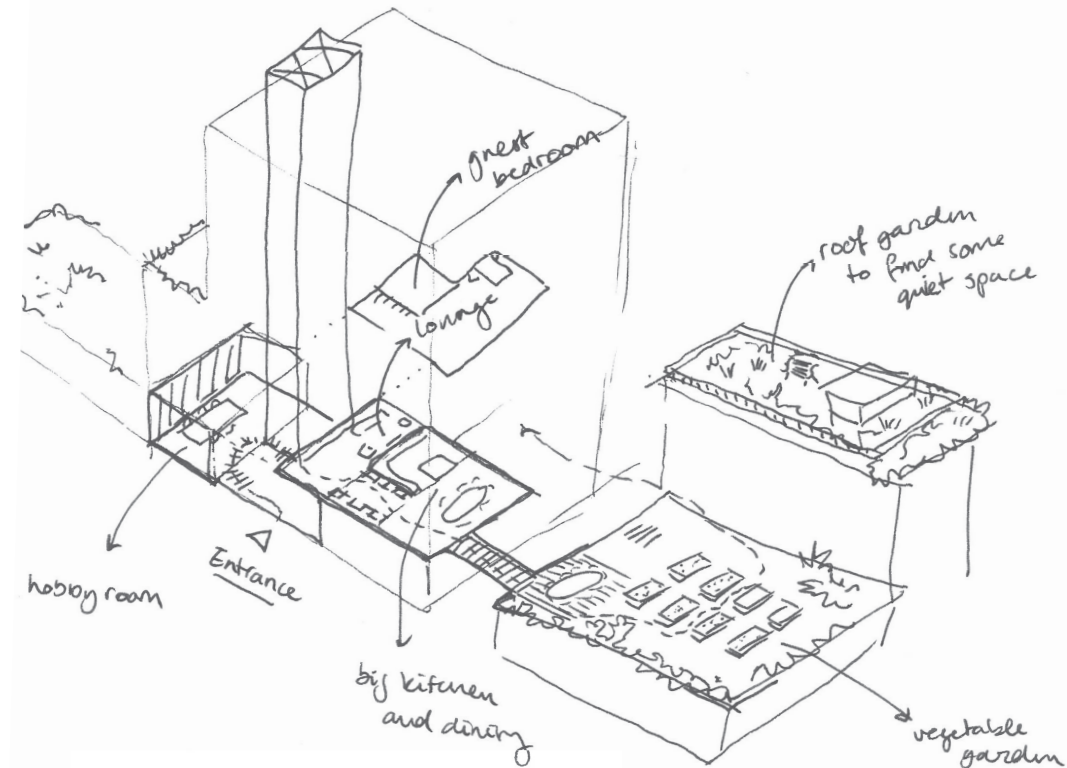
The participation sessions were done with a various group in terms of gender and cultural background. The sessions focussed on the use of the participants homes and what they would like to alter about it. Next to that, in a more hypothetical sense, we discussed the possibilities and willingness of having collective spaces. In these sessions I started with the participants home, because it helps to associate for the more hypothetical questions.

### *Layout*

I learned some values from the sessions in terms of floorplan layout. All participants I interviewed, preferred a seperate kitchen from the dining area. This way, when hosting a dinner, guests do not see the messy kitchen. One participant wanted an extra room, besides her and her kids bedroom, so that when guests need some privacy (for praying or changing clothes for example) they don't have to enter her room. Besides her, also another woman recently moved to have more rooms. In her case, to give both her kids their own bedroom. Someone else did not like that his bedroom was so much bigger than his son's. These personal wishes show the importance of the ability to alter the floorplan.

### *Collective spaces*

Then, when discussing the possibilities for collective spaces, the participants were open for the idea, as long as their privacy is maintained. After that, different functions came up: to have more greenery with a shared garden, more space in the private home when sharing a laundry room, a lounge to game. Safety is important, so no sharing with too many people.

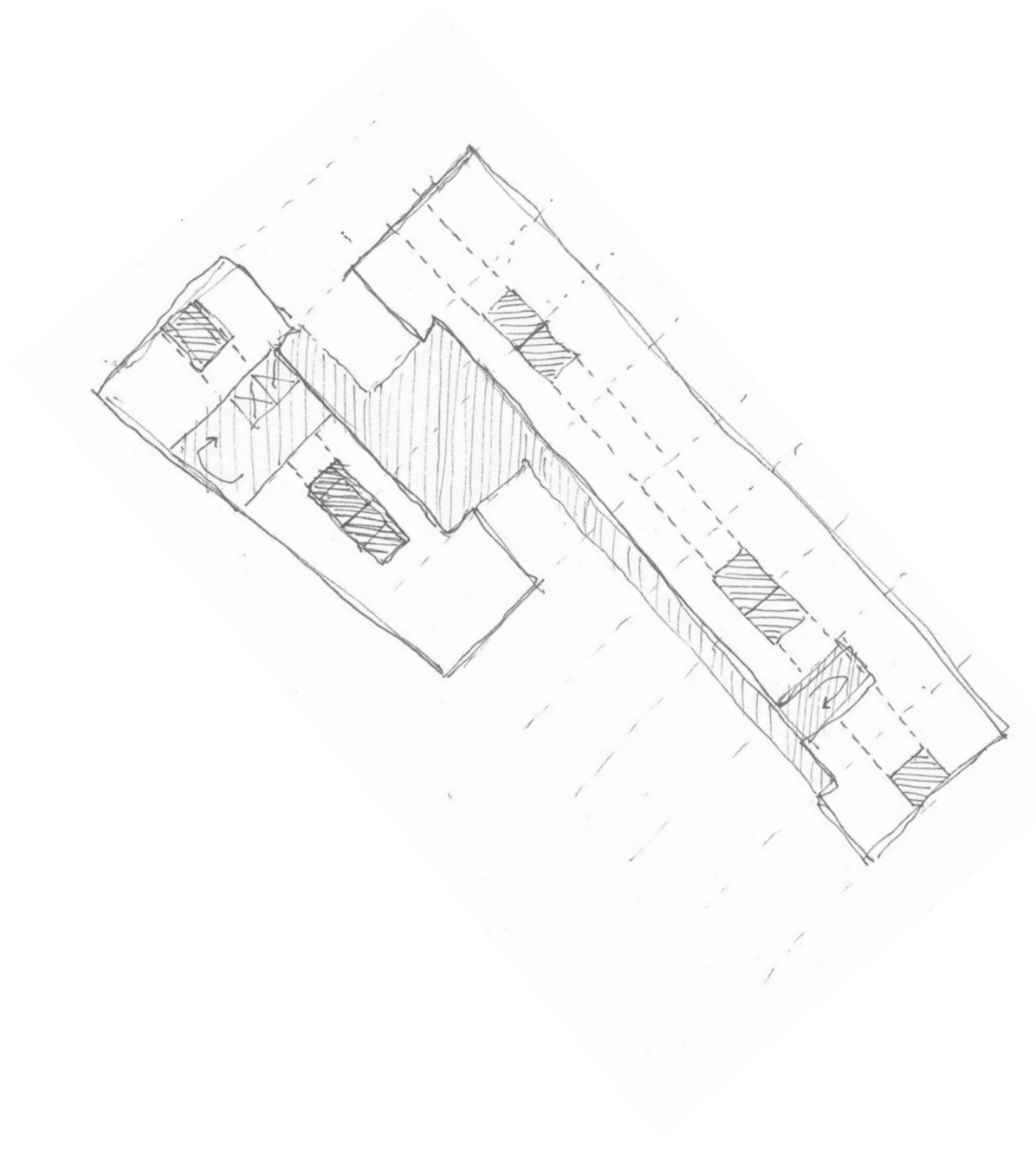


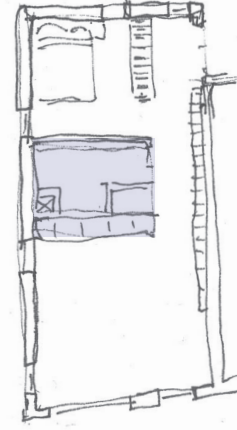
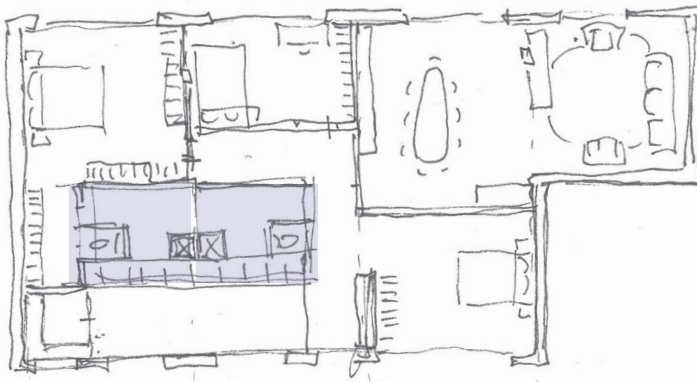
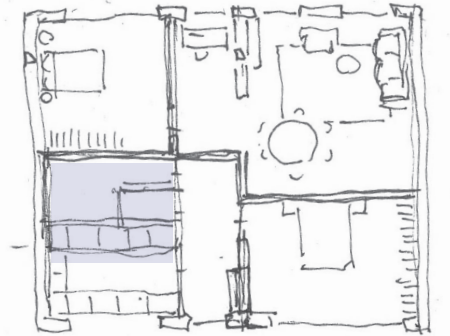
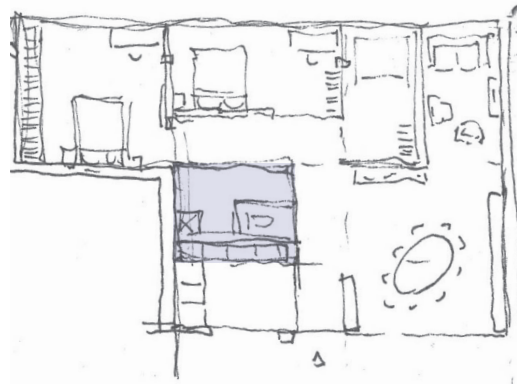
Also shared space  
per floor: 6-8  
apartments  
→ space to meet your  
neighbours



### Flexibility of the floorplan

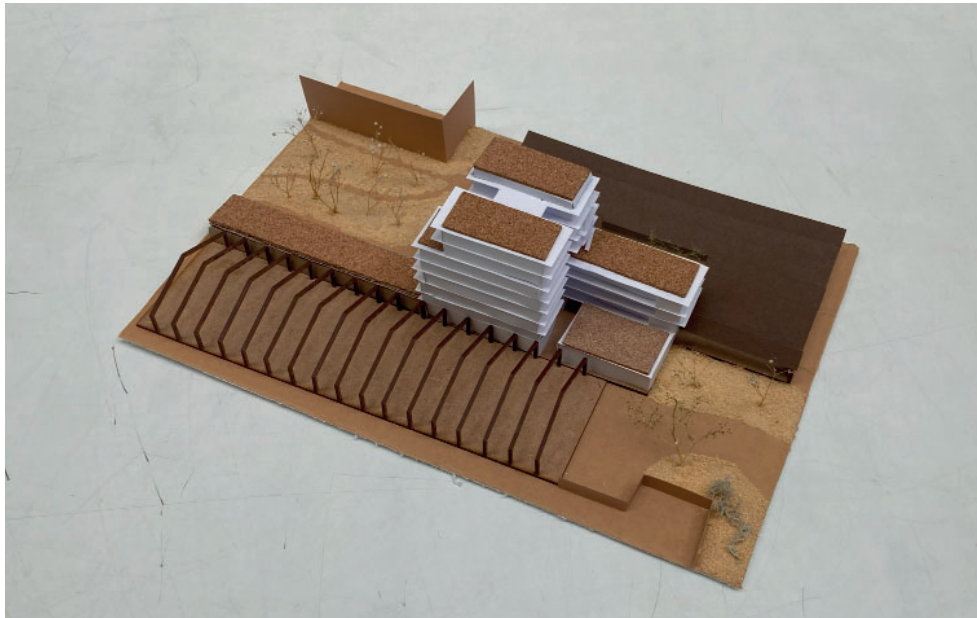
From the participation sessions, individual needs came forward. So in the lay-out of the apartments, adaptability was an important starting point. With a rigid structure in the floorplan, flexibility for changes is enabled. This sketch shows the structure of a typical level: there is a grid of gluelam (columns and beams) structure, with a repeating utility core, consisting of the toilet, bathroom and kitchen element of a unit. With this structure, there is a lot of possibilities in composing units.





Showing how different layouts can be created from the same repeating bathroom/kitchen block. In one example two blocks are combined to create a bigger apartment.

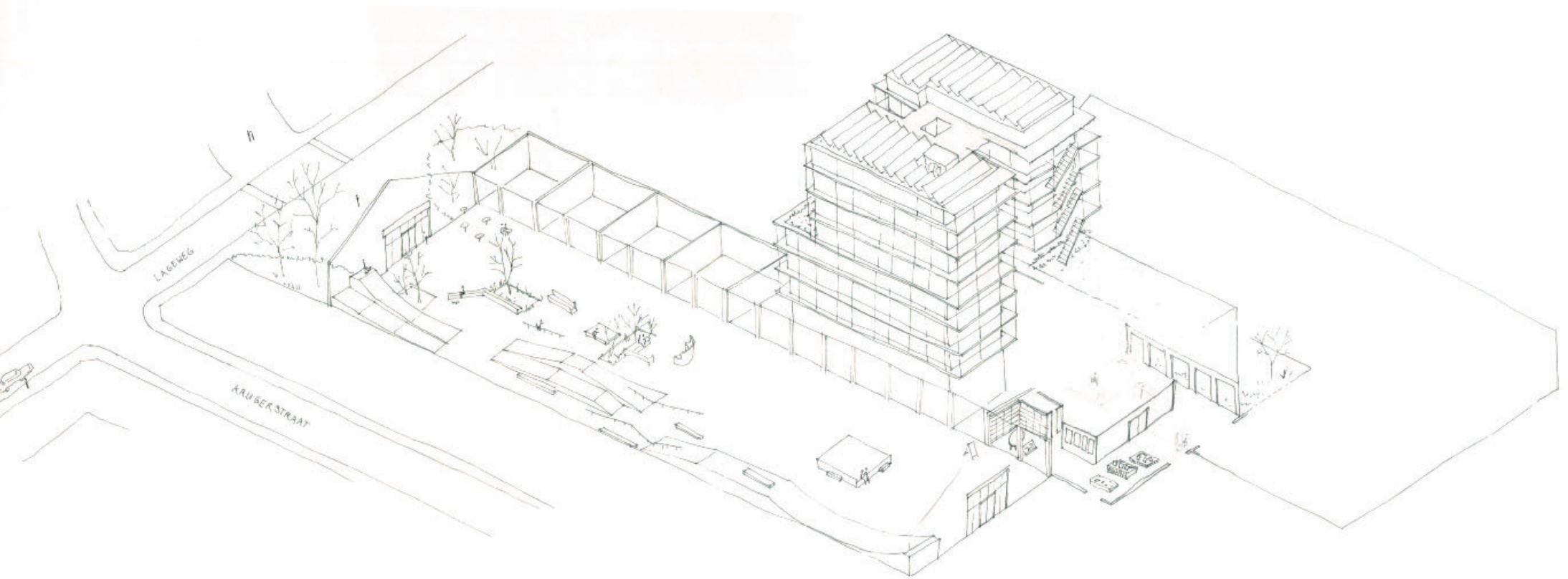
*Life in the project*



## Introduction

The project is a mixture of different functions, different parochial spaces along a passage. To explain how the project would live, I thought the best way to explain is through the eyes of the envisioned future users. I came up with four personas. The users are either based on an interviewed person, a combination of several or made up based on observations. The personas each use different spaces of the design, a unique combination of first, second, third and fourth spaces. Besides the different spaces, the stories take place in different seasons as well. In this way, the stories show the multiplicity of the design.

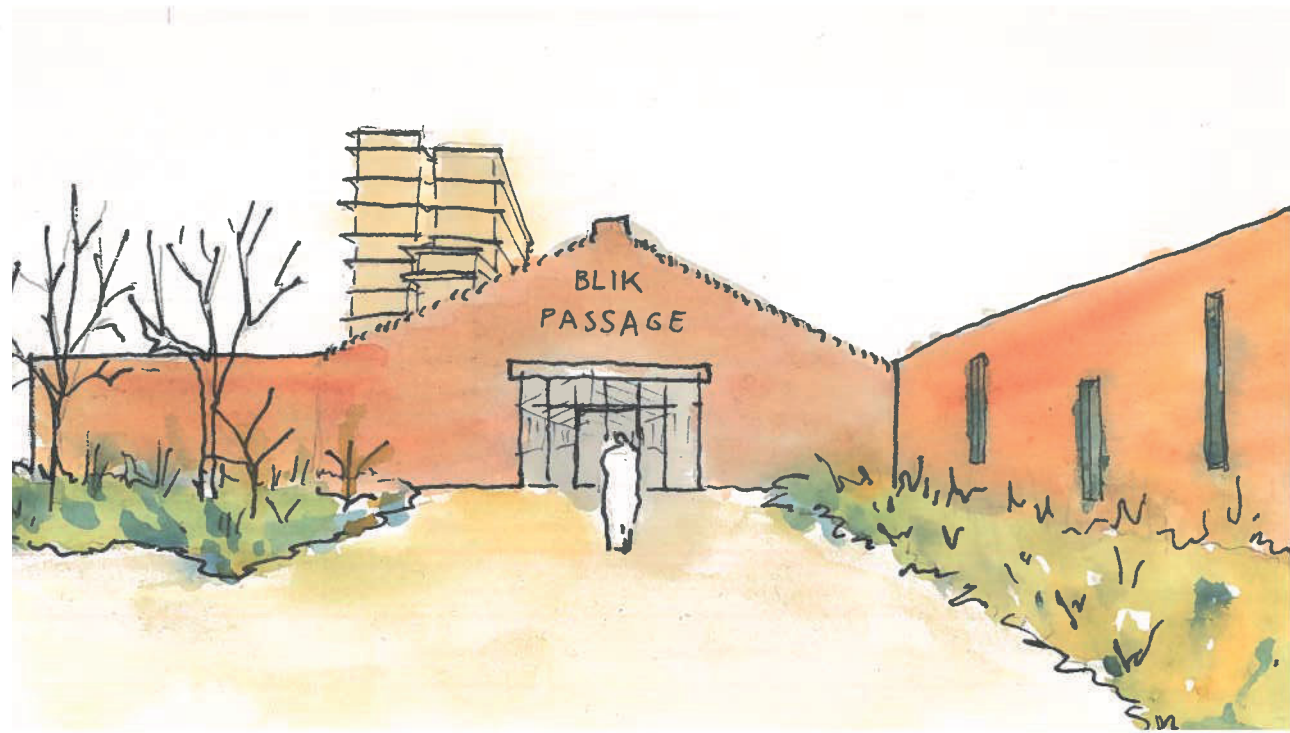
December 15th,  
It's a cold winter day. On days like these, the streets of Hoboken are very empty. Cars are rushing through the streets, and people quickly go from A to B. Not many interactions happen on the streets between neighbours, or?.. Zafer knows the places in the neighbourhood to go..







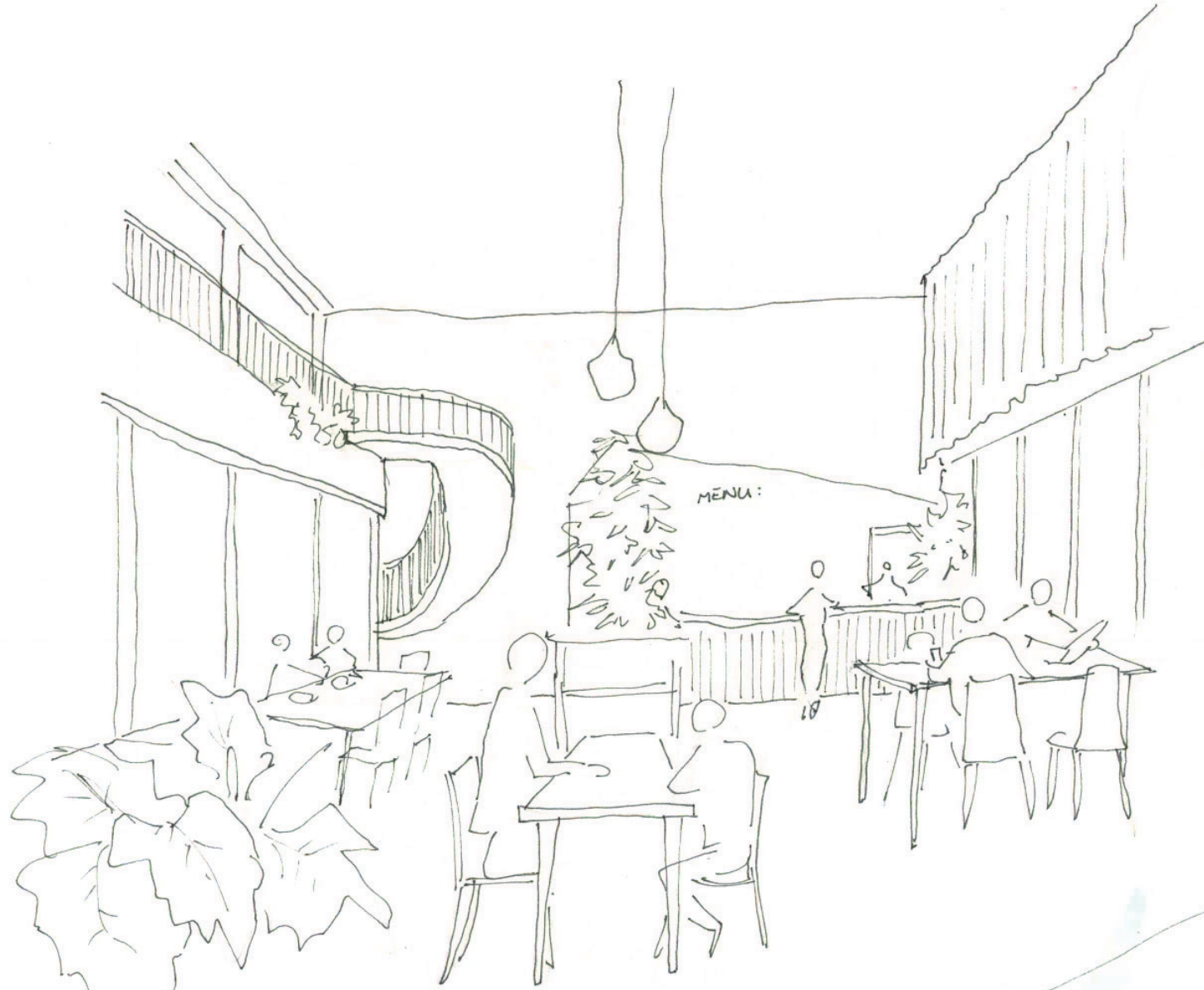
10:00  
Brr, two steps on the street and I already have  
freezing toes.. And these smelly cars coming by..  
Luckily, around the corner we now have the  
Blikfabriek passage.

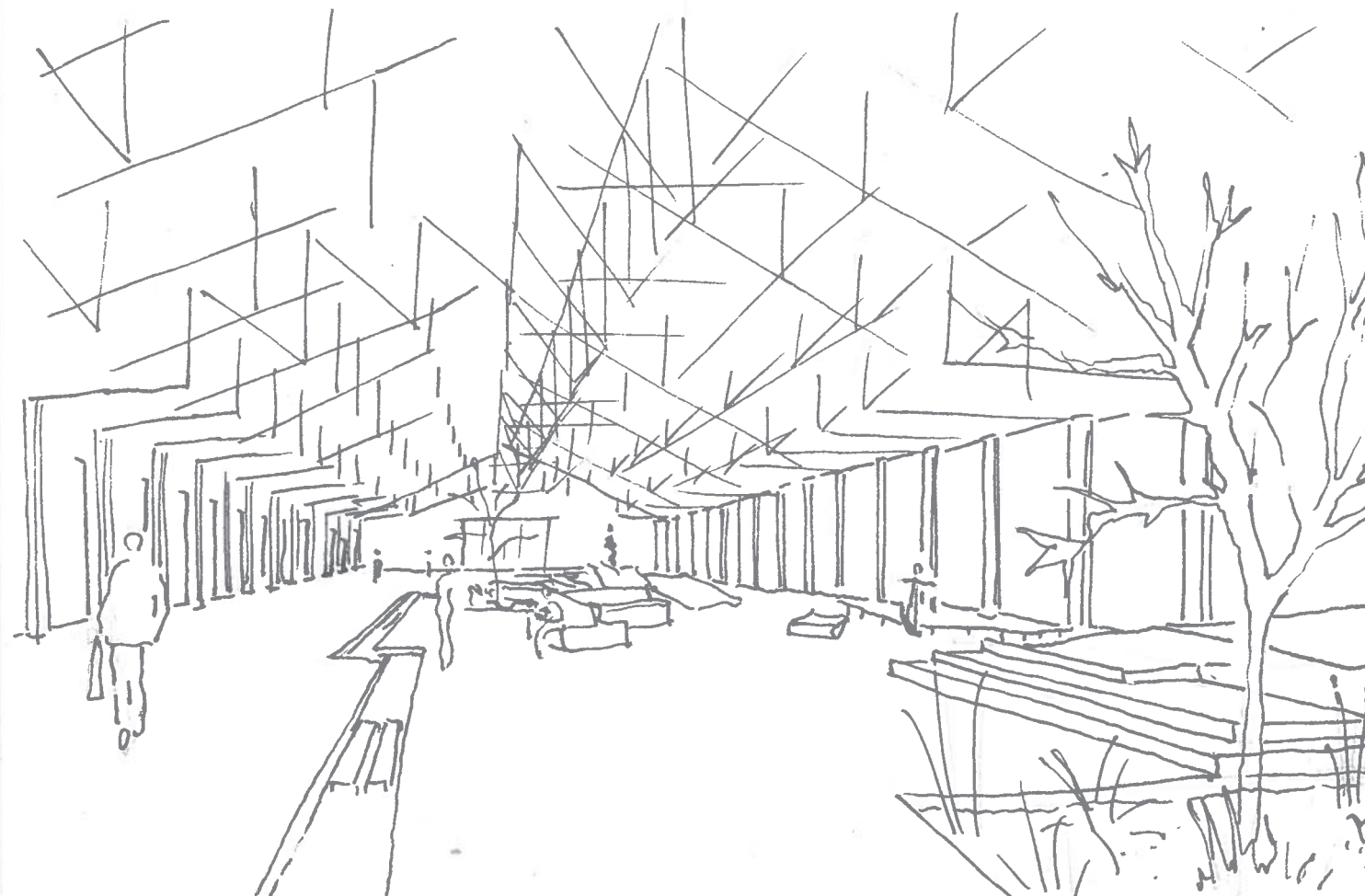




... There used to be not much amenities in this area. So for all my daily chores, I went all the way to Kiel, to the Abdijstraat and the mall, which is quite a walk for an old man like me. Now with the new developments, the shops have come a lot closer to my house!

Between my house and the centre of Kiel, there is Nova, where I often go as a pit stop. They sometimes have activities and theatre, but I come mainly for the food! Very cheap and good. And I can sit there for hours without anyone questioning my presence. It's not open every day of the week, so today I'm going to the foyer of the exposition hall.





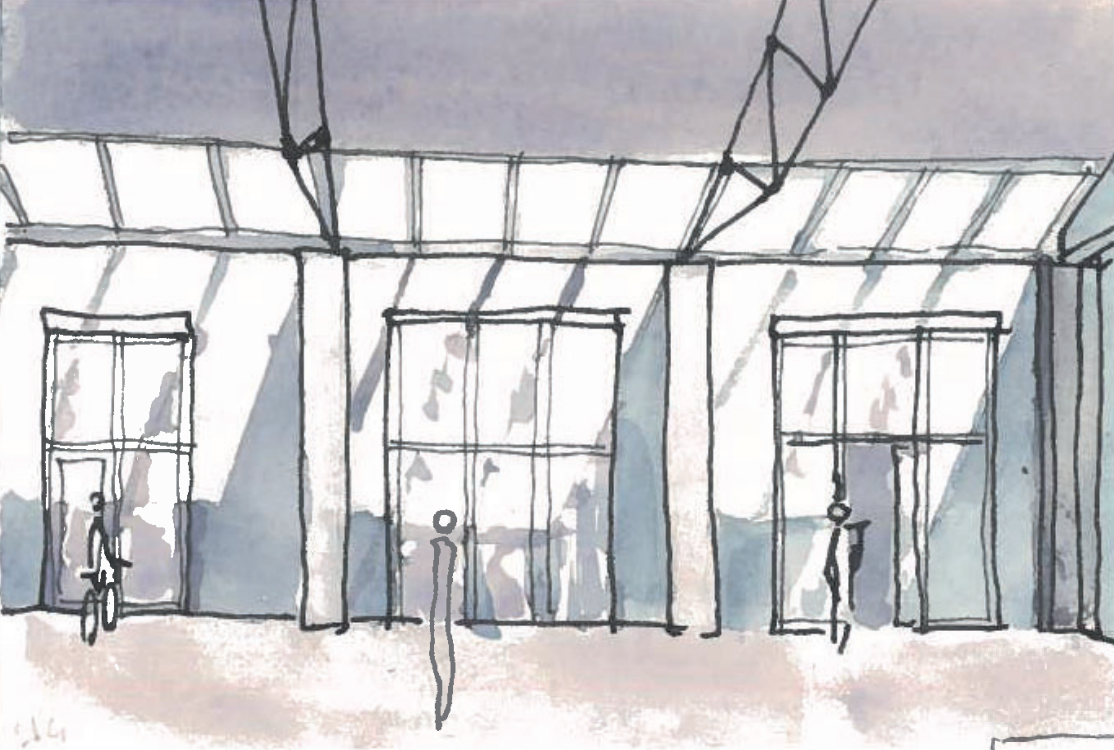
10:05

Ah, here is some life again! Hah, there is that skater with the red head.

Hmm, and the smell of fresh bread from the bakery, I'll buy it now already, before it is sold out, when all the workers come here for lunch!

Though this space is more comfortable than outside, it is still a bit too cold for my old toes. Let me continue to the foyer of the expo hall, for some heating.





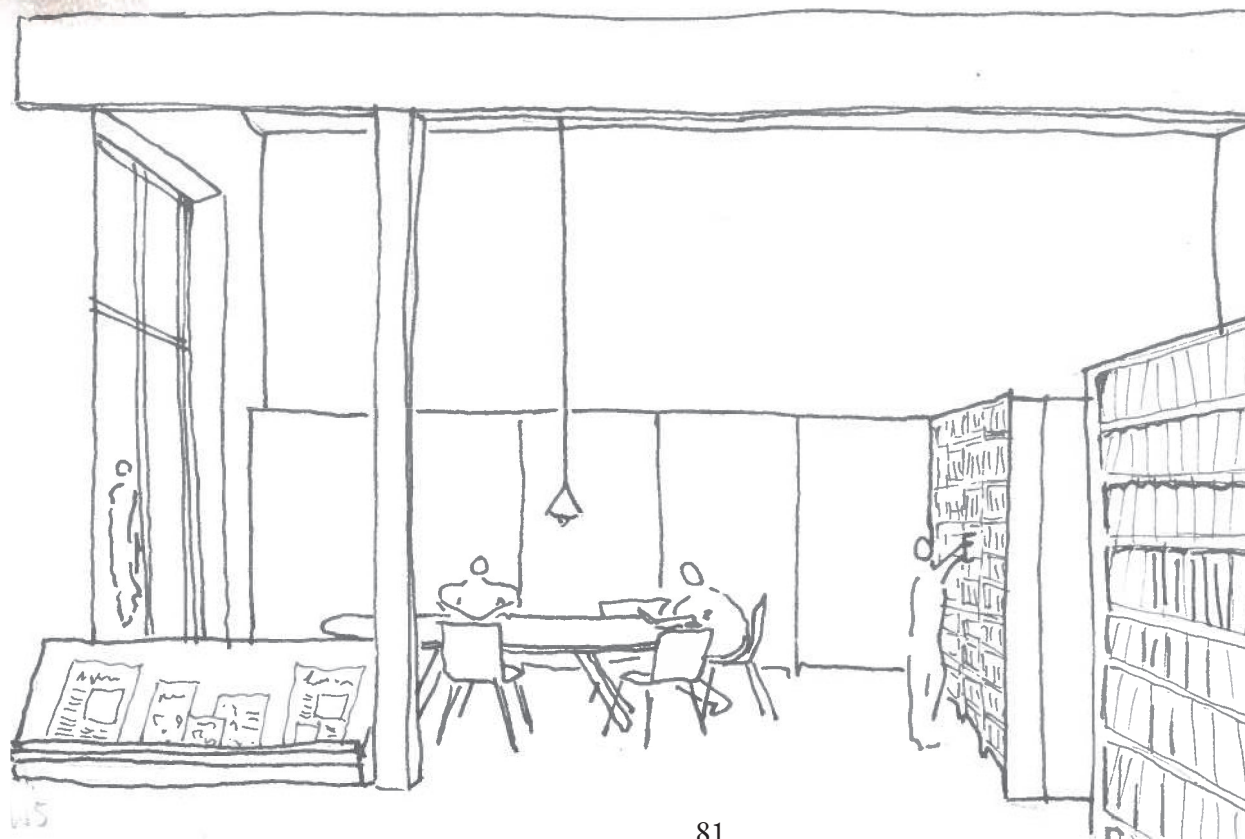
10:07

Hmm an exposition from a local artist.. that might be interesting to visit later.

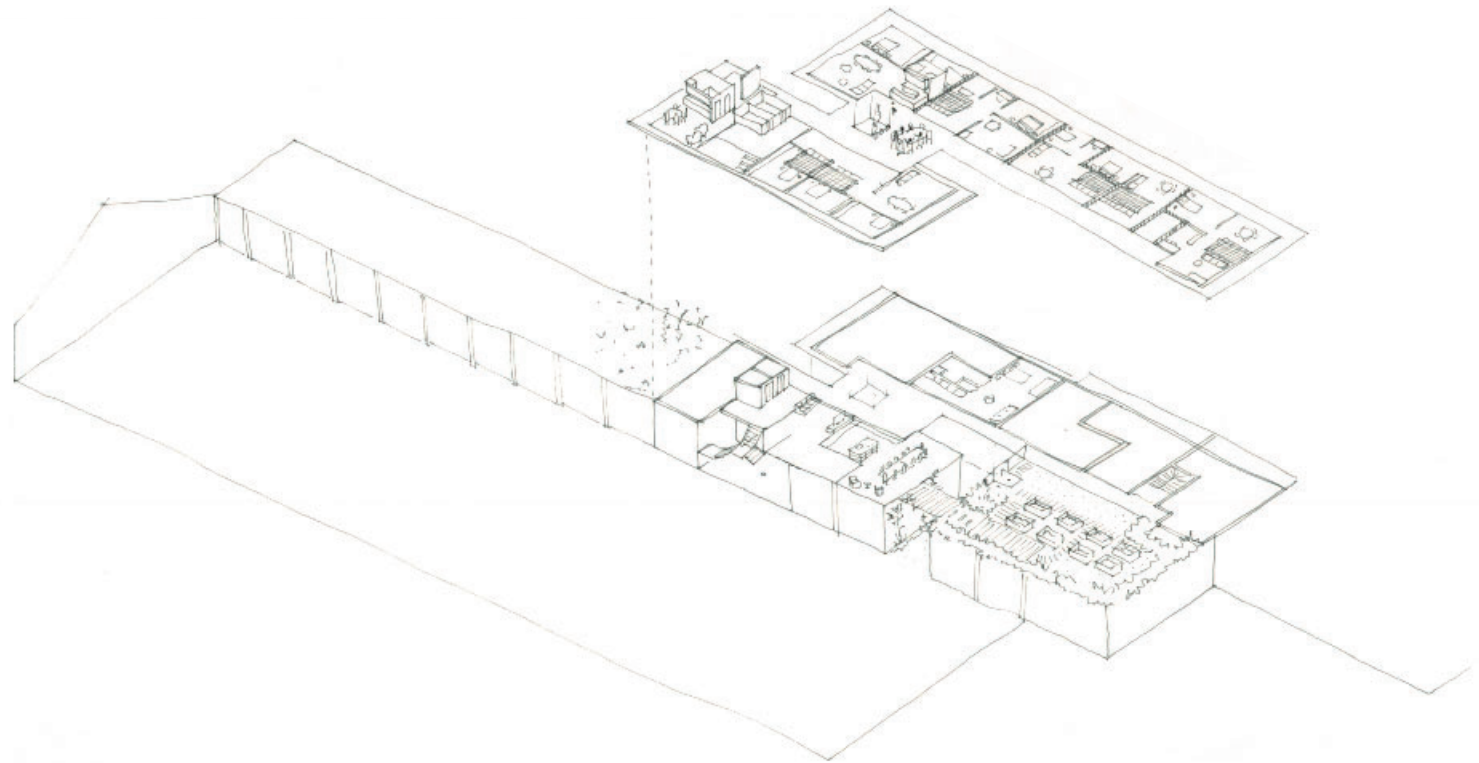
But first the news, ah There is already someone else as well, that man with the bright glasses.

Good morning.

hmm, Let's see what's the news in the Gazet van Antwerpen

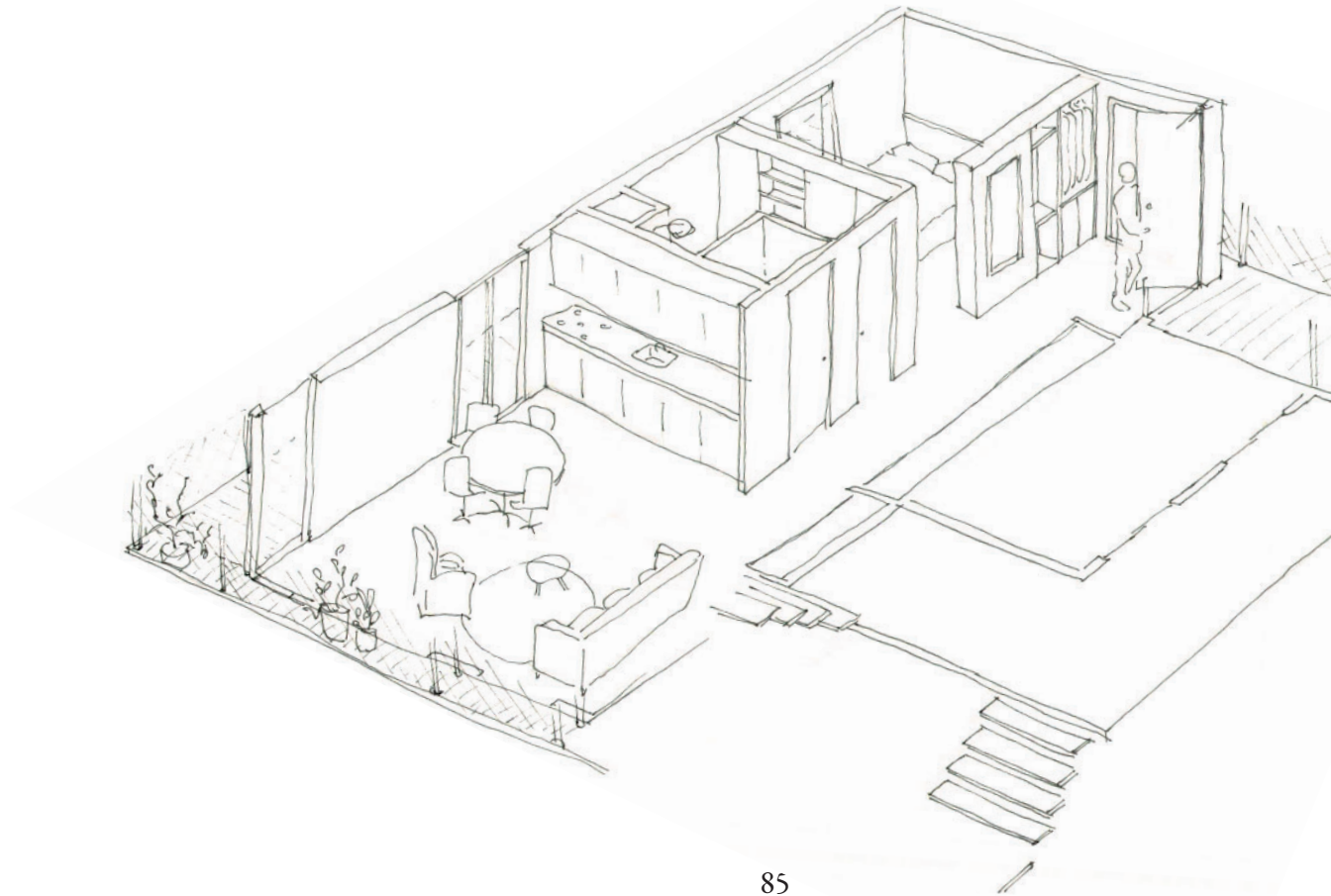


April 20th,  
It's a spring day. A lot of rain fell last week so the  
polderroof and water basin are filled up. This  
week the sun has returned. Many flowers on  
the different types of intensive green roofs have  
started to bloom. On this day we will zoom in  
on the housing..



14:00

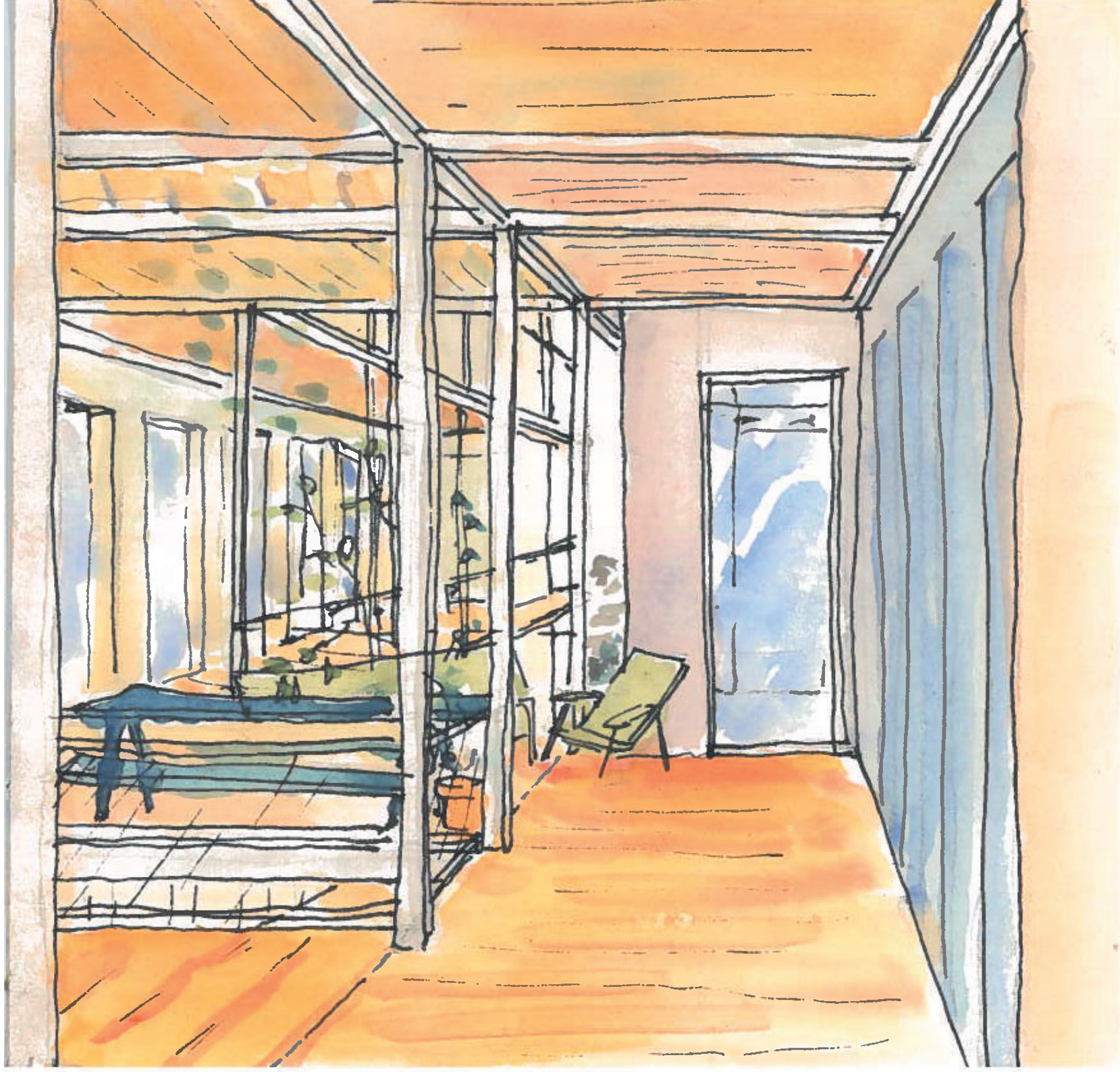
mmm, just had a lovely lunch on the balcony!  
On the green roof I'm looking out on, some  
flowers are starting to bloom! No wonder,  
because last week I saw a lot of water come  
down along the water chain. Now with all this  
sun, is the perfect circumstances for the plants  
to grow. On this free sunny day, it is the perfect  
time to go down to the collective roof garden, to  
water our newly growing vegetables and other  
plants.





14:00

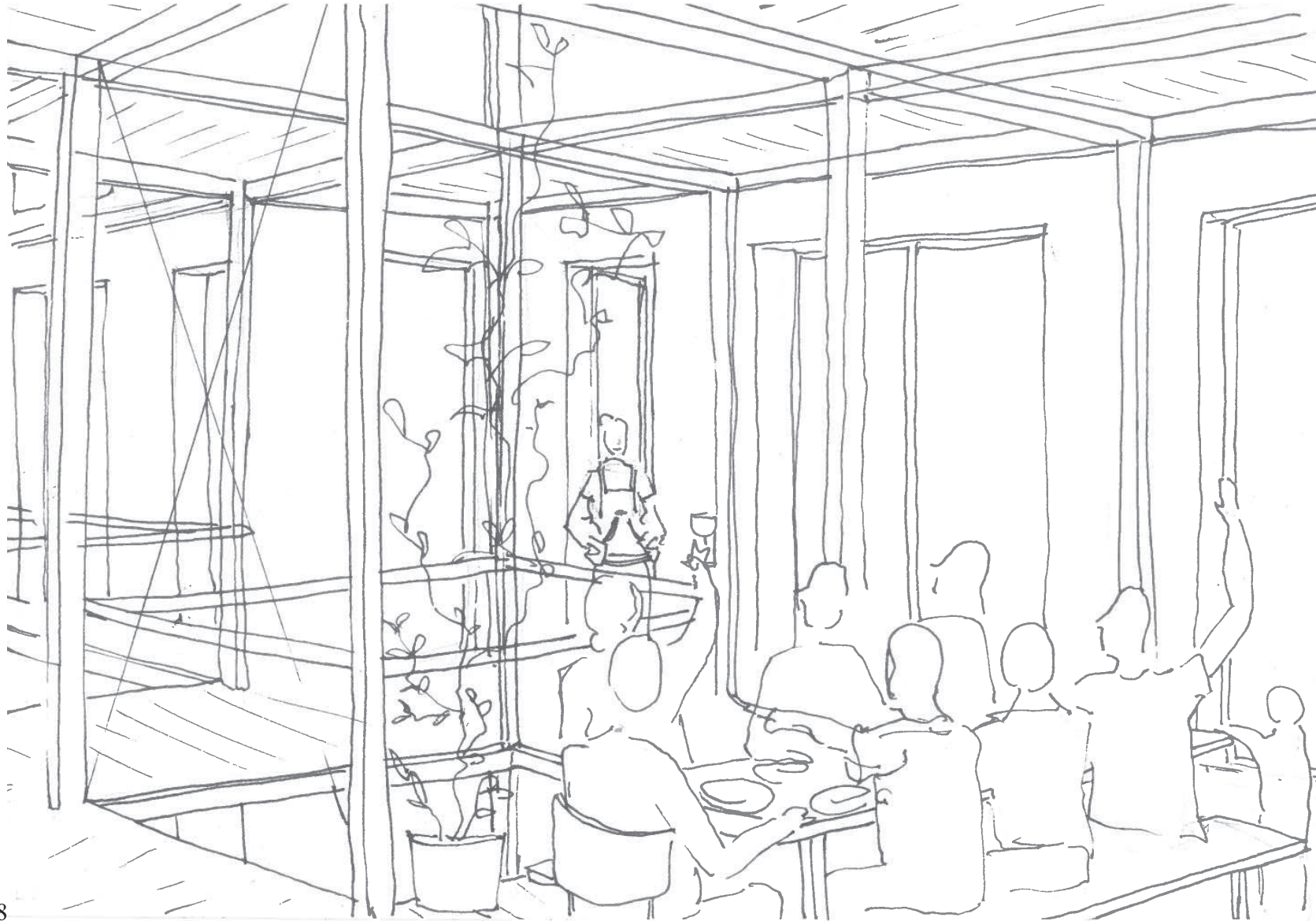
Ah our grape plant is starting to climb up along the mesh! This reminds me it was only two years ago that I got into gardening ...





... 2 years ago

It was in the middle of summer, when Loes my neighbour across the gallery, had made a tajine for our whole floor with a lot of fresh harvest! I did not know what I tasted! And that it was possible to do this yourself. Loes explained me all about it, and about the gardening group. So glad I found this new hobby! While living alone, I never have to feel lonely.



14:05

Let's, go past the big kitchen to see if someone is here.. Ah there is Mohammed!

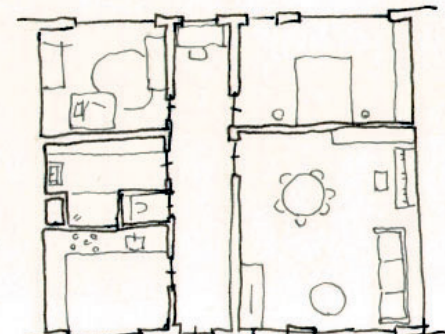
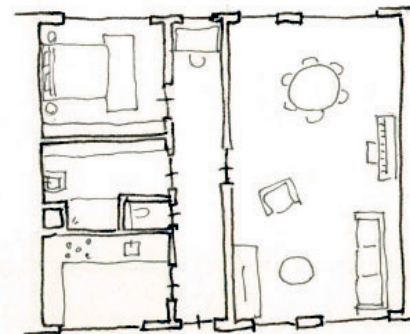
**Hey Houssan! Are you up to some gaming in the lounge this afternoon?**

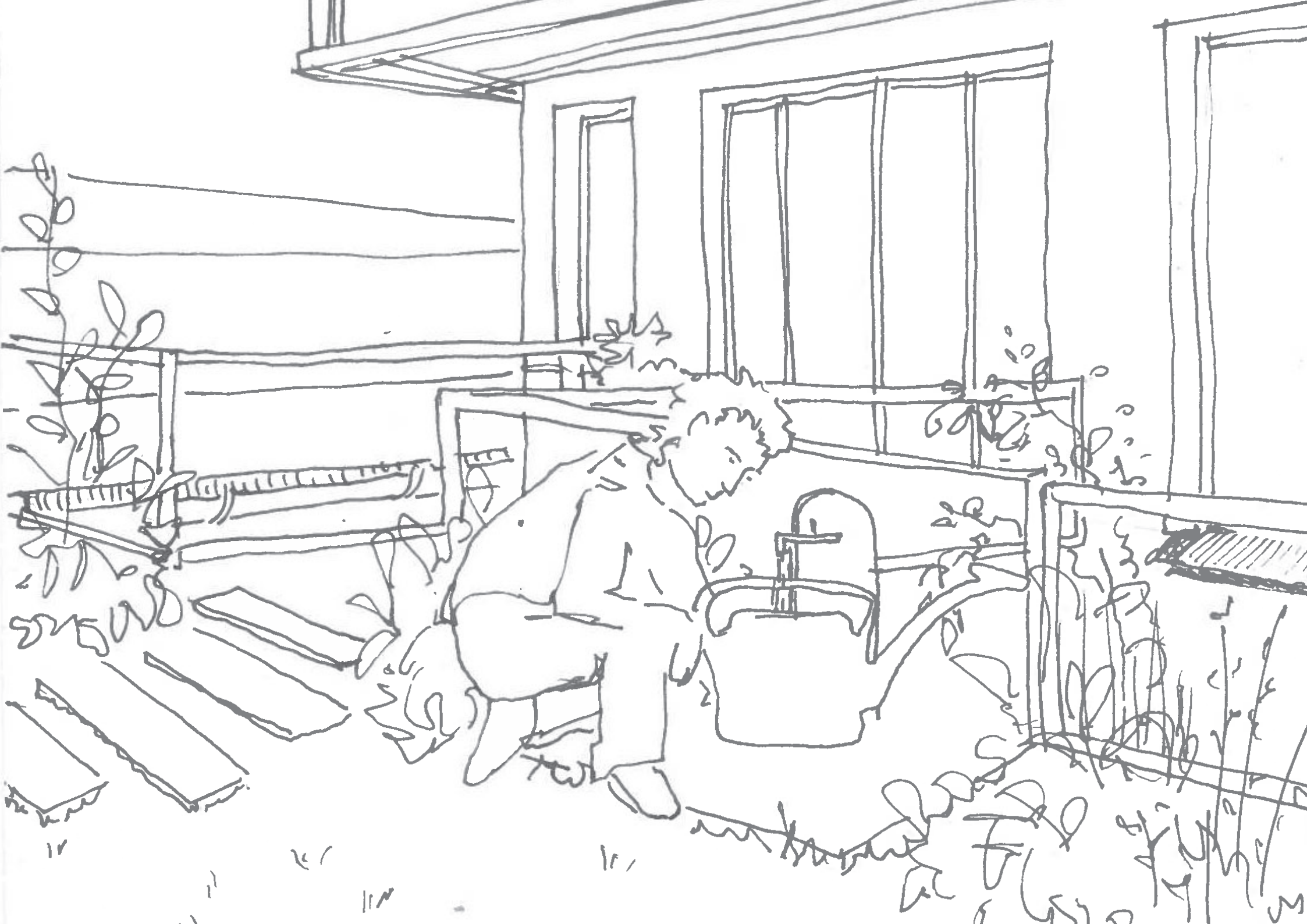
(the lounge is something I asked the architect to include, since this is what I always enjoy doing with friends. And in this lounge I met Mohammed from the 6th floor)

**Yes for sure! This afternoon I'll be taking care of the garden, but tonight I'm free!**

**Great! I really need a free night from the baby..**

(Mohammed recently redid the interior of his house, when they were expecting their baby. So nice, how minimal changes made the house perfectly appropriate! Now they have two big bedrooms and a study)

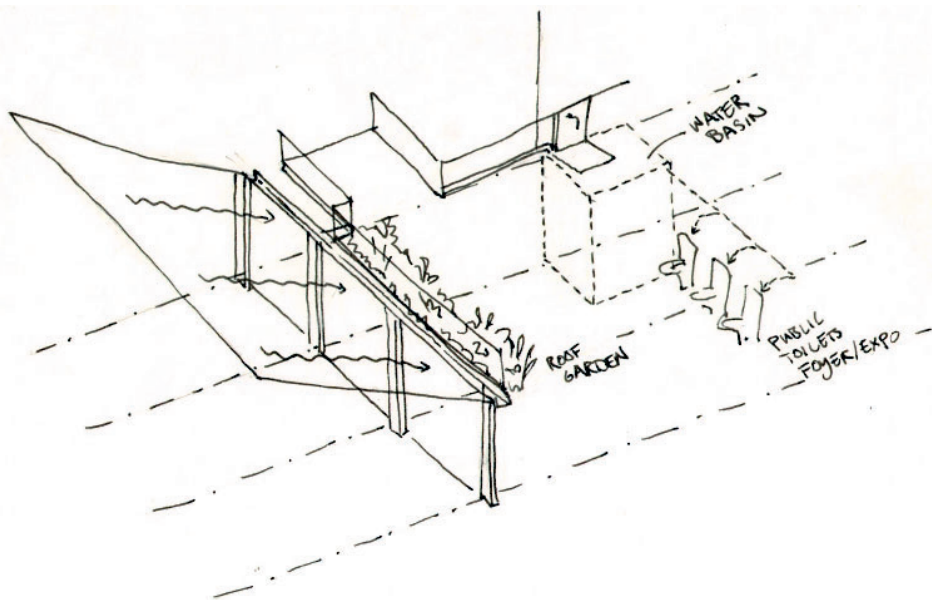






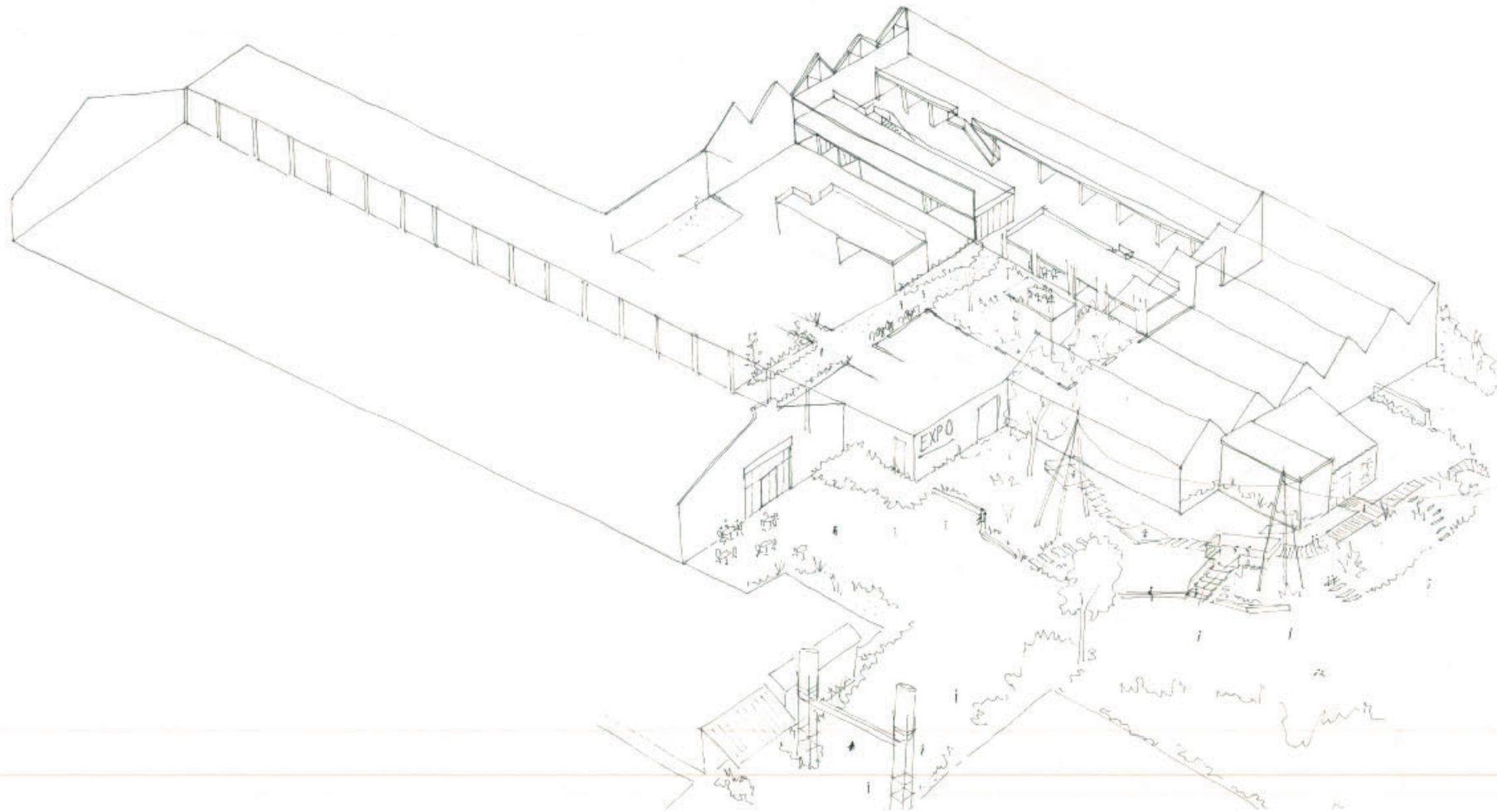
14:10

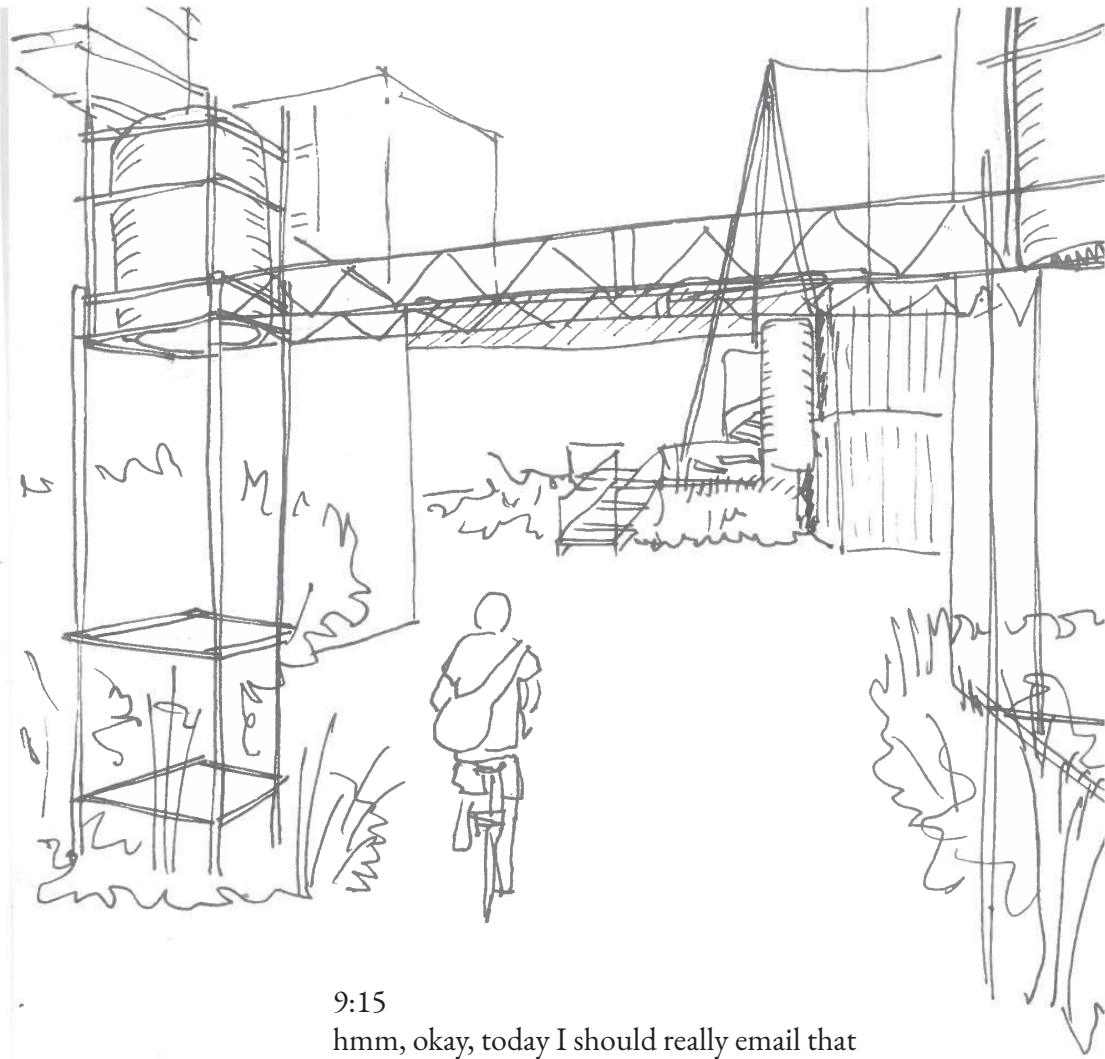
The water is collected from the roof of the passage into a big basin! this way we always have enough water for our plants, even in dryer periods.





August 9th,  
It's a warm summer day. Because it's summer  
holiday, the adventure square of the Blikfabriek  
area is filled with kids from the neighbourhood.  
The kids are playing in the small water streams  
of the Hollebeek through the square and the  
water around the Wintergarden. George is an  
artist that has had his atelier in Blikfabriek for a  
long time. He is arriving for a day of work.





9:15

hmm, okay, today I should really email that client on the specifics for the project.. oef the grass is quite yellow, it has been some dry weeks. I remember when we had sown the grass and other planting.





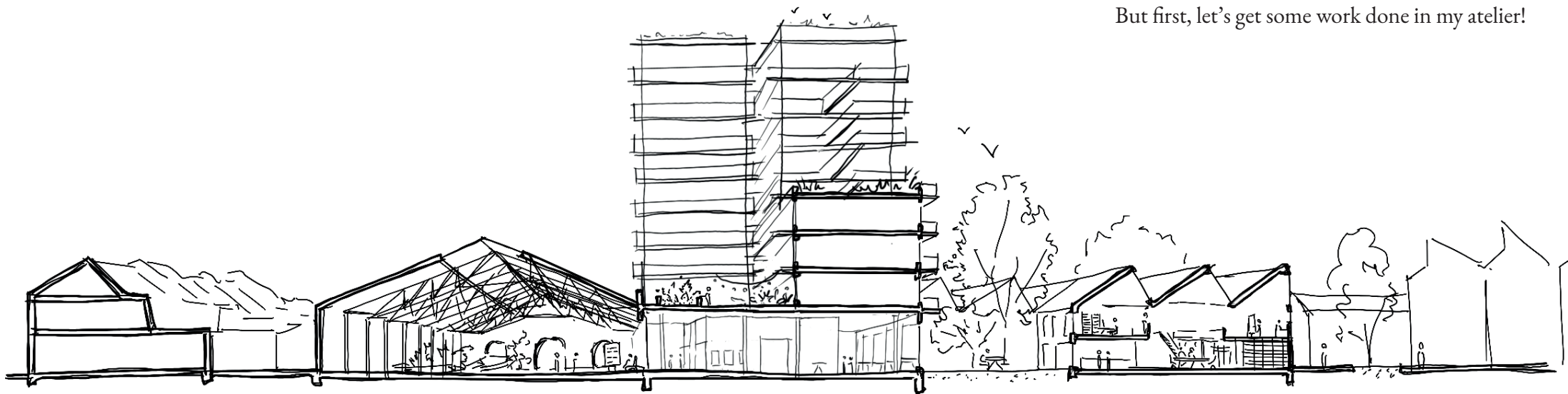


9:20

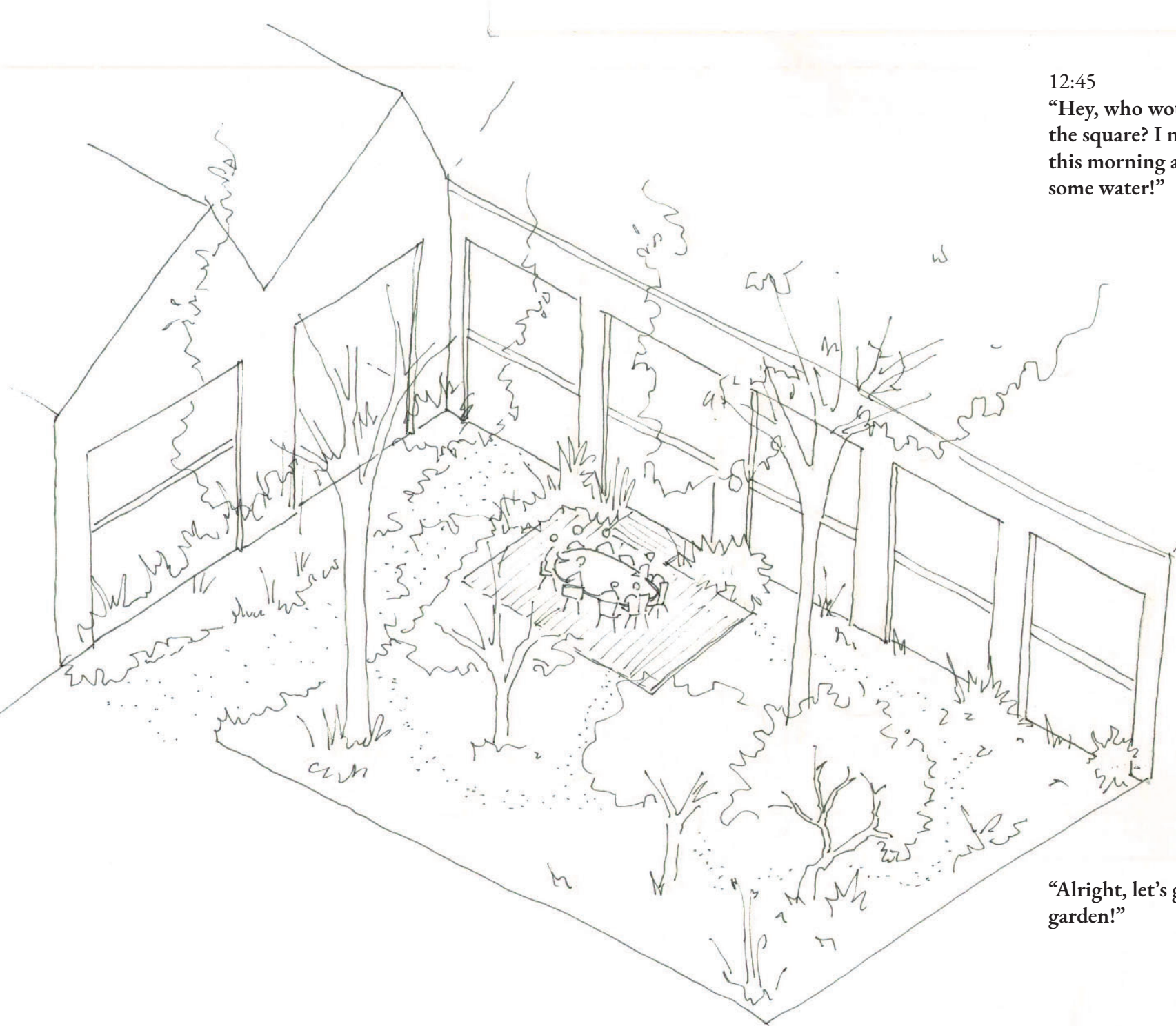
During lunch I can propose to the others if they want to help water the courtyard. Ah, the plants here look better! I guess the residents of the building have taken responsibility over these!

9:22

But first, let's get some work done in my atelier!







12:45

**“Hey, who would be up to take this break to the square? I noticed some really dry plants this morning and thought they could use some water!”**

**“Yes, I’m up for that!”**

**“Alright, let’s get some water from the winter garden!”**

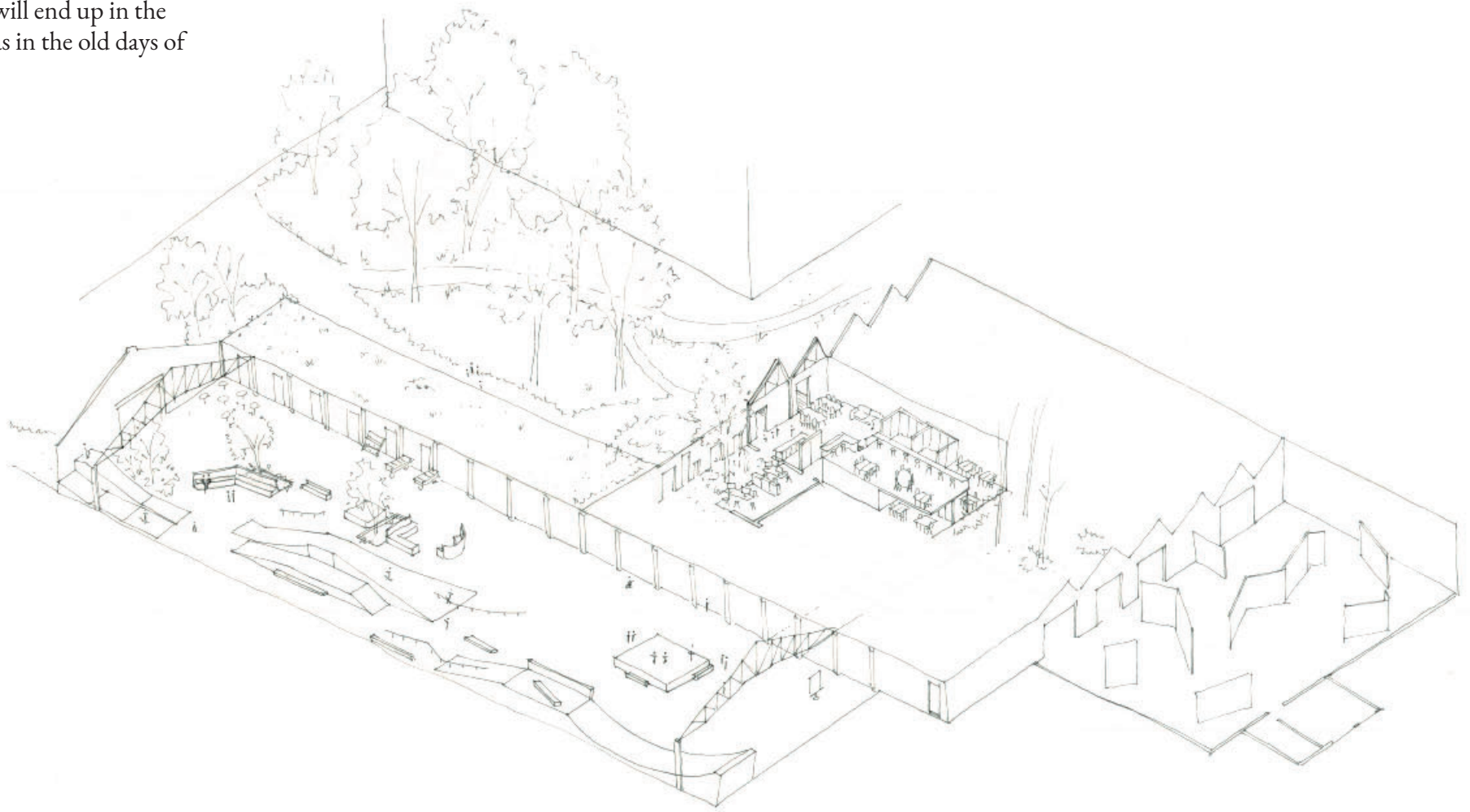


13:00

I'm glad that when the development of this area took place, the Blikfabriek area stayed this free space it used to be. The wintergarden project, that one of my colleagues started back when the Blikfabriek was a temporary project, is still here. It is so important to have spaces like this in a full city like Antwerp. It gives me creativity!



October 20th,  
It's storming, and heavy rain is falling down.  
From the sky, and along the water chains! It  
flows onto the green square and waters towards  
the Wetlands. All places, starting with the green  
roofs on the building, will absorb some water  
like a sponge, before flowing further to the next  
place. Eventually, the water will end up in the  
Schelde. No more flooding as in the old days of  
the Lageweg.





Aicha's eldest daughter is since recently going to SLIM, a homework after school, that was started by Hilde and Veerle from the neighbourhood. The school has really helped, since Dutch is not Aicha's first language. She wishes the best opportunities for her daughter. The classes are luckily funded by the City of Antwerp.



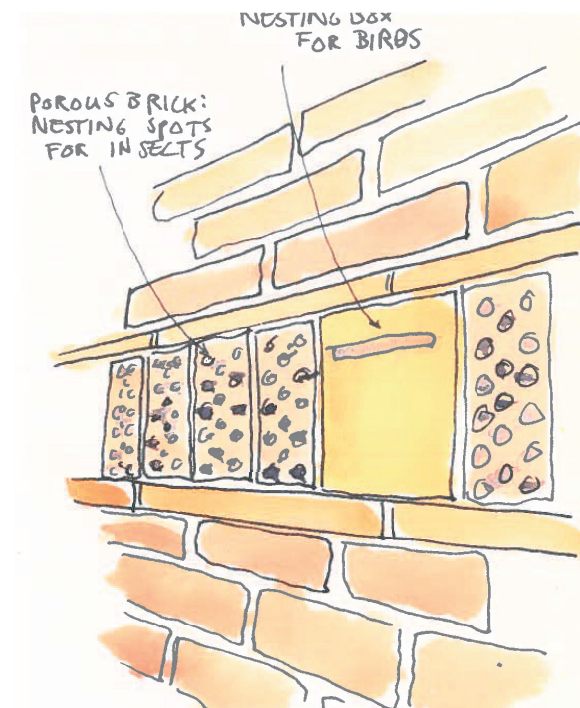
15:55

**“Mom, where will you be after my homework class?”**

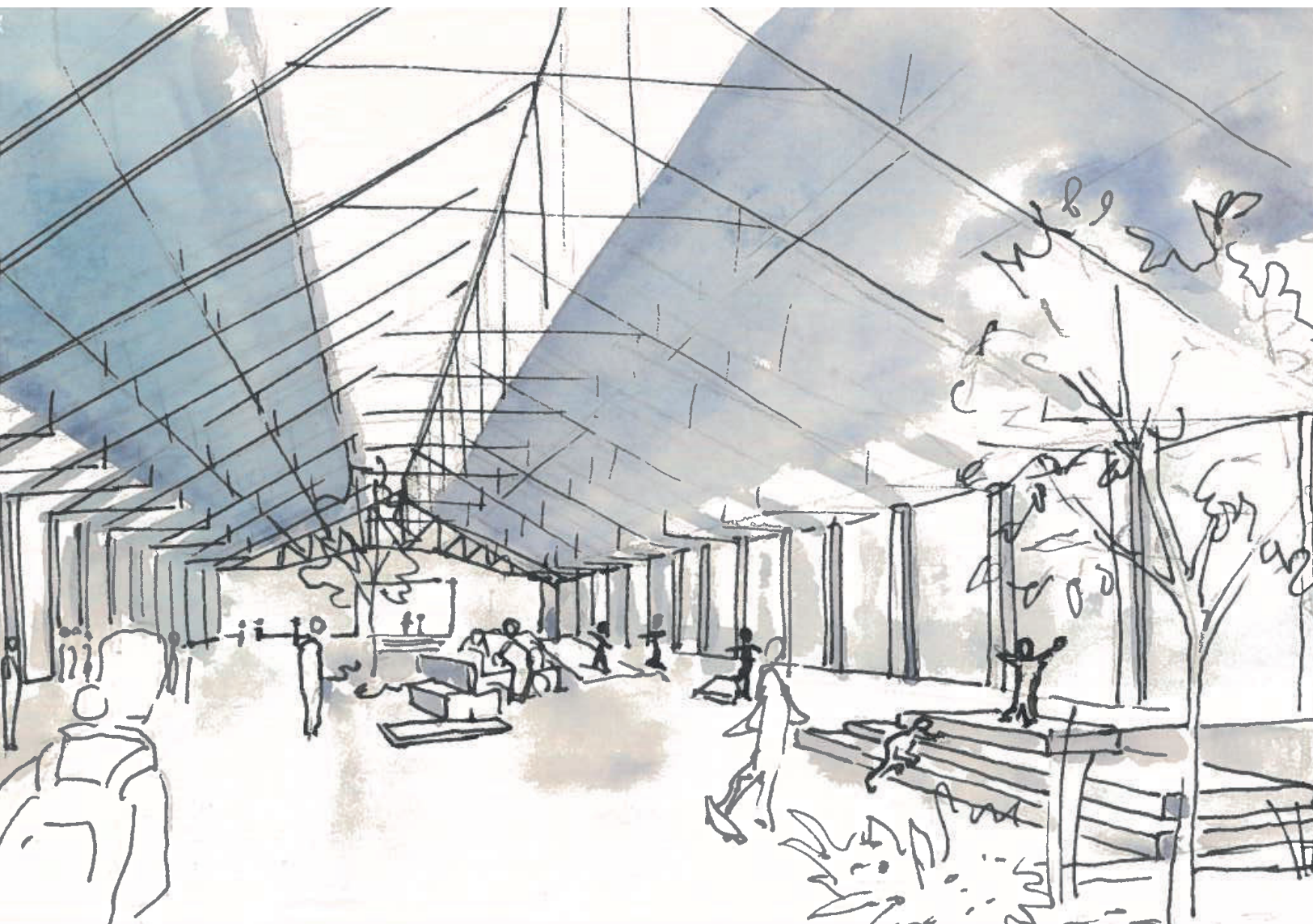
**“Well, with this rain, not here outside! I'll be with your siblings in the passage around the corner. Then I can also get some last groceries for tonight.”**

**“Look mom! All the water is falling down from the roof!! wow..”**

(In this North-East, where the kid is pointing to, nesting places for the non-humans are integrated. Perforated brick for insects, and nesting boxes in different sizes for different types of birds.)







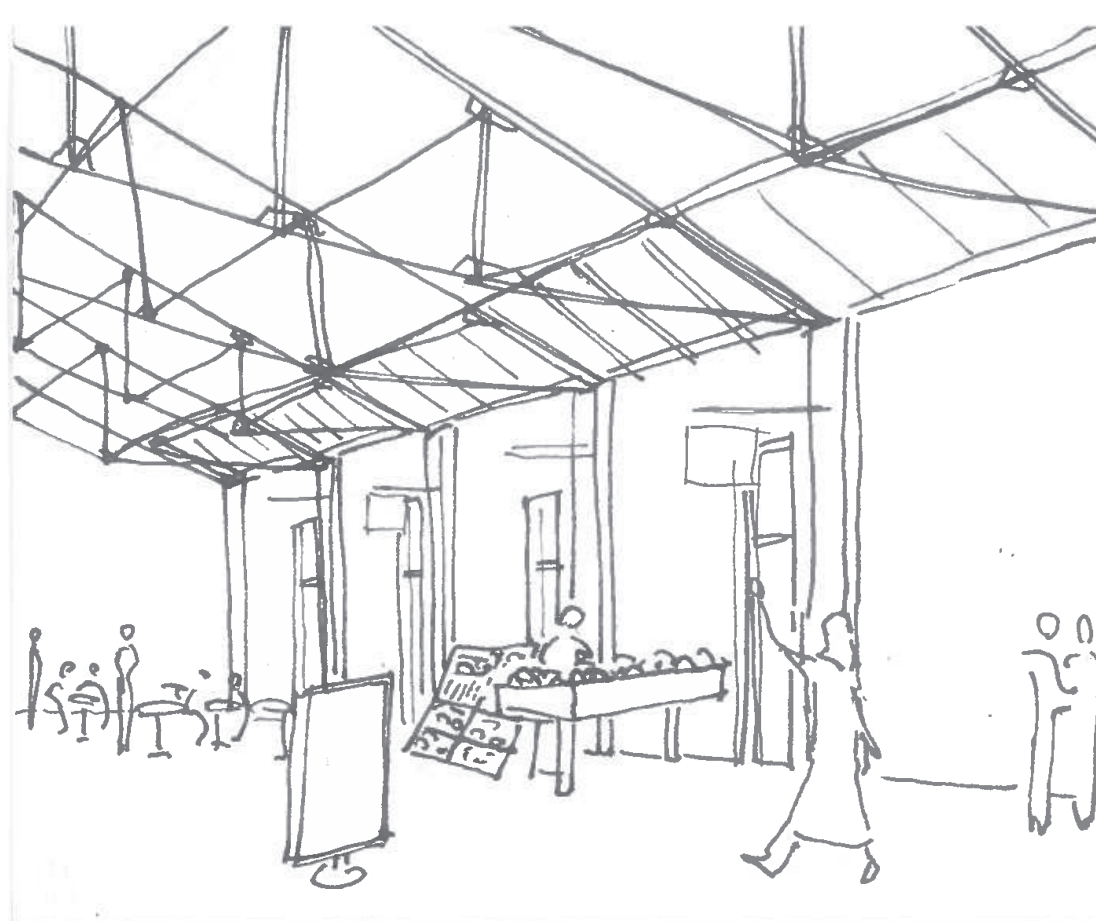
16:05

Ah a lot of people in the passage! This is like a big playground for my kids. They're immediately climbing on these skating objects.

**"Watch out for the skaters, Souffian!"**

...

**"Alright, Souffian! I will clickly go to the vegetable store, okay? It is right there, you see?"**



“Ah hmm, but I think you would also like this! It’s photographs of the street life in Kiel. I found it really nice to recognize these places. Finally a proper representation of Kiel”

“Ah I see, hmm, I dont know.. maybe another time..”

“Hi, Aicha!”

Ah, another mother from the homework class:

“Ah hello! How are you doing?”

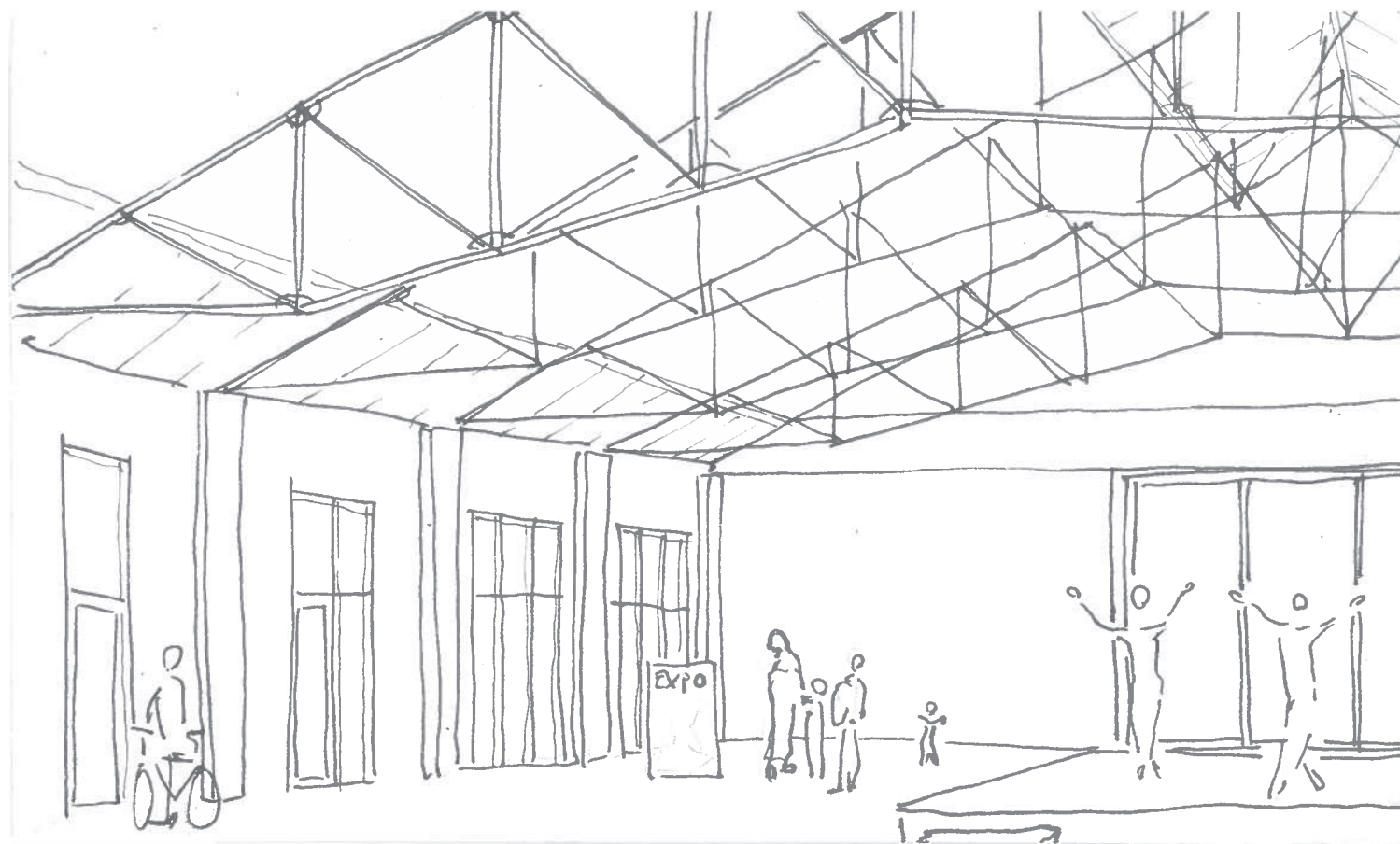
“Very well, thank you for asking, I just visited this expo hall, do you know it?”

“Oh yes, but that is not a place for me..”



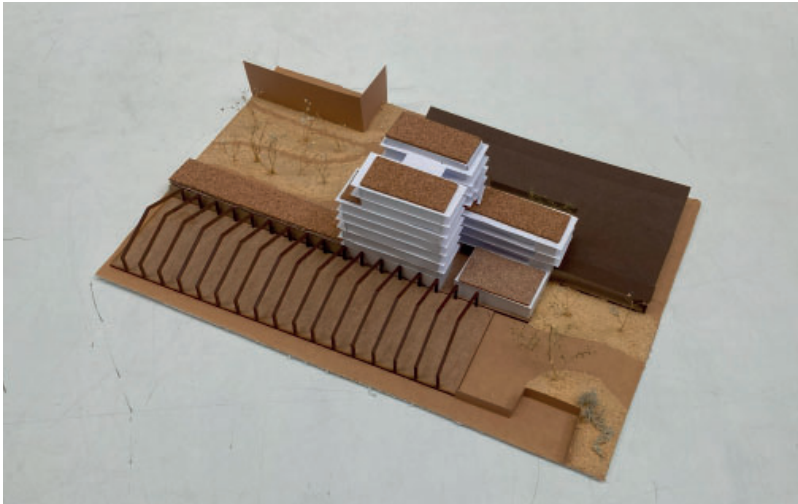
17:15

As the family walks out of the passage, Aicha slows down a little in front of the Expo hall. She watches the poster in front of the door and peeks inside the foyer. Who knows if she will enter next week..

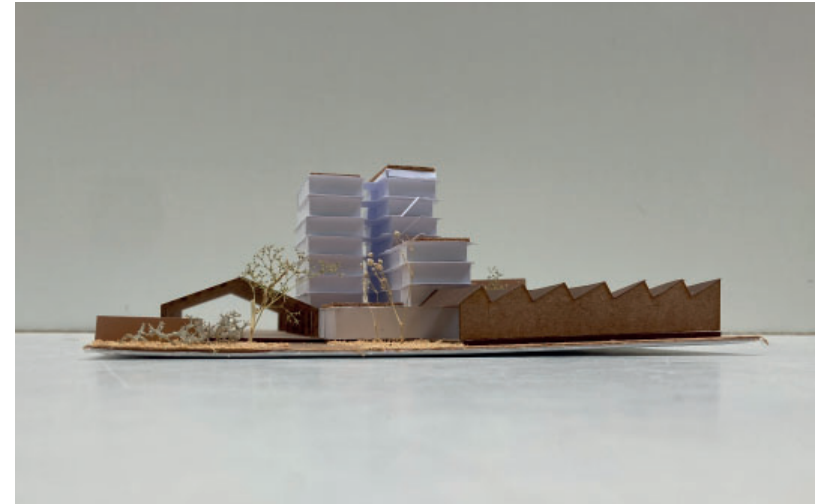


*Model photos*





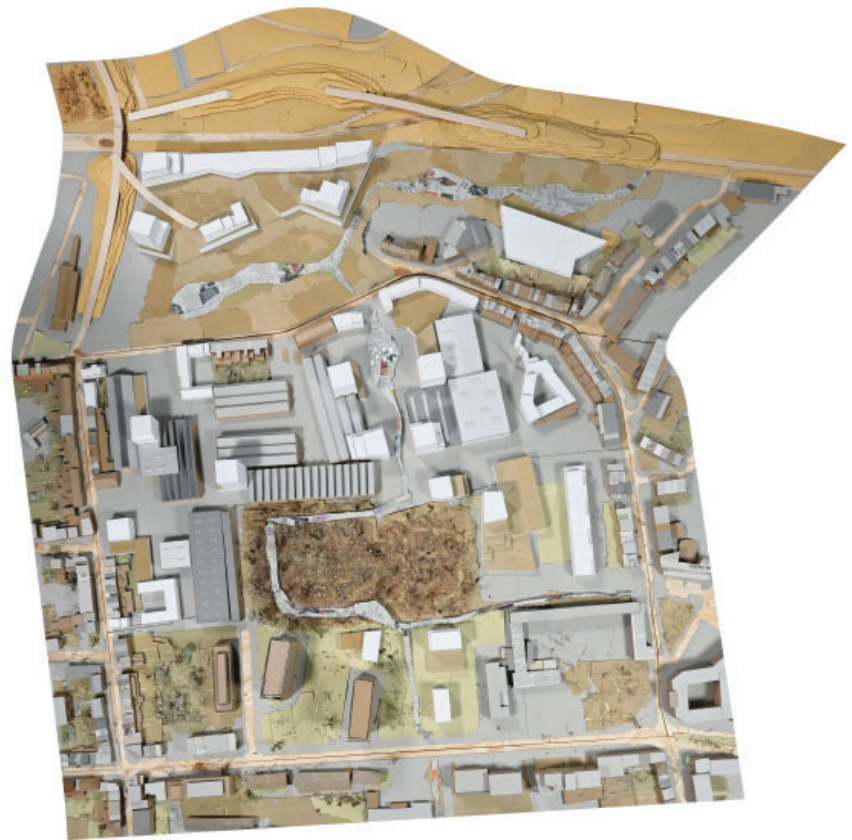
1:333 model, North-West side



1:333 model, South-East side



1:333 model. Current situation of the Blikfabriek site



1:333 model. Proposed masterplan. Keeping many of the existing halls, while also creating more public space for the neighbourhood and for the Hollebeek, that is brought back to the surface.



1:33 fragment model. The model fragment is of the crossingpoint between three building parts: the passage, the housing and the retail. To show the different types of construction and materiality.



In the passage, there is a zone the adjacent owner can appropriate, then a zone for passing by and then a zone with more square furniture. Like skating objects, benches, plantings, a podium etc.







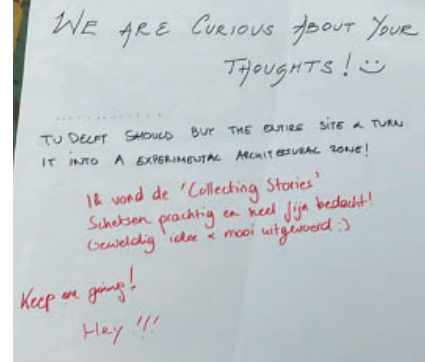
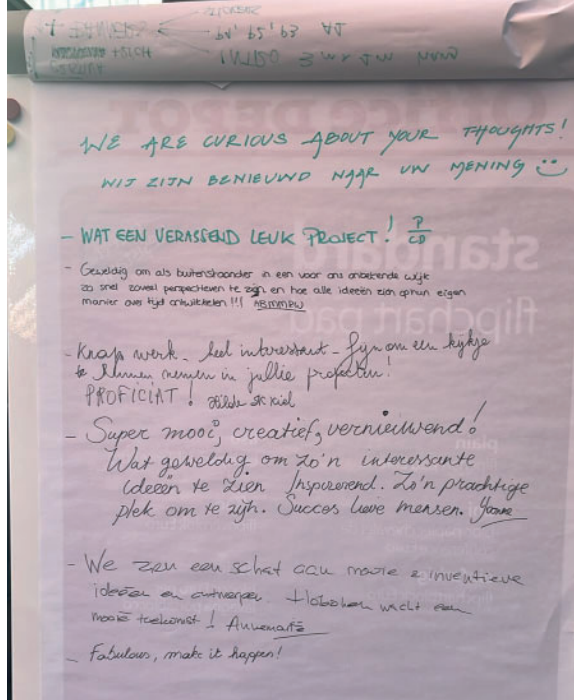
On these photos, we see the relationship between the residents and the vegetation on the intensive green roof, which climbs up towards the balcony along the mesh.



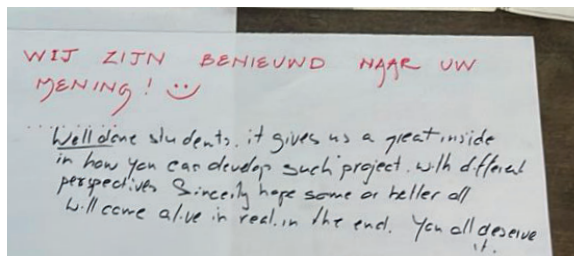
This photo shows the view from the housing into the passage. With the window strip, there will be more social control in the public space.



*Reflection*



Reactions visitors left after the exhibition. 'Collecting Stories' was the exhibition piece of my group *Meet the Neighbours* (see p.20).



I believe the inclusive method I used is very valuable in the field of architecture. By having residents participate at the first stage of the design (the masterplan), they feel included and also get a clear understanding of the made decisions. Next to that, the residents feel a certain responsibility and ownership over the place, and care for it more. This can be seen in the projects in the public space that SAAMO started up in Kiel. During the P3 presentation, our studio organized an exhibition of our work-in-progress at the Blikfabriek. The positive responses we received from visitors confirmed the appreciation for our sensitive approach.

In this participation process, I was intentionally looking for participants with various different backgrounds. The participants in this project are people that you would probably not reach through Facebook-groups or other advertisements for participation.

At the beginning of the project in September, engaging with people in public spaces proved relatively easy, largely due to the pleasant weather and individuals' openness to casual conversation. During this initial phase, we worked collectively as a group and were able to approach people in pairs, which facilitated interaction. By December, however, the collaborative phase of the project had concluded, and I was preparing to begin the interviews. Coinciding with this shift, winter set in and the Blikfabriek closed its doors to visitors. As a result, my original plan to conduct interviews at Saamo, Nova, and Blikfabriek in order to compare these social spaces was no longer possible. The winter season also posed broader challenges for outreach, as people were less inclined to spend time outdoors, and fewer events were organized in the neighborhood. I am particularly grateful that Saamo and Nova remained open during this period. These accessible venues play a vital social role during the colder months by offering warmth and fostering a sense of community, thereby fighting social isolation. In future participatory work, it will be essential to consider how seasonal variations influence daily routines and community engagement. Social spaces such as Saamo and Nova provide valuable opportunities to connect with diverse groups, regardless of the time of year.

For the participation sessions I teamed up again with three other students with similar research topics. Collaborating made these participation sessions more effective: one of us could lead the conversation, another

could take notes, and a third could focus on observing. Conducting meaningful dialogue, asking the right questions, and capturing everything on your own can be very challenging. While doing these sessions, we all had our projects in different masterplans, and on different locations, so we integrated the results in our own way.

### **Transferability and the wider field**

The project results are very context specific, so in that sense there is a limit in transferability of my project results. The methods, on the other hand, is more transferable to other projects, especially the participatory design process, that converged in specificity towards the end. This research aims to include people from various cultural groups in Hoboken and Kiel. By understanding these diverse experiences, it offers valuable insights for creating more inclusive and responsive spaces. Unlike traditional top-down urban developments, where final plans are often imposed with limited input from residents, this approach advocates for a more sensitive approach including participations in the process. A step-by-step method, where residents are involved in shaping their environment, fosters a stronger sense of belonging and ownership. I believe that integrating such participatory processes, can lead to architecture that is more meaningful for its users. This research contributes to a broader conversation about how inclusive design can improve urban spaces, making them more adaptable, engaging, and reflective of diverse communities.