

TRAVEL AS A NARRATIVE

©MARTA LULIĆ

FROM LITERARY
EXPERIENCE TO
ARCHITECTURAL
SPACE

Where to next?

THE BOOK OF
JOURNEY

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PREFACE

This book is a result of a one-year research and design trajectory of Explore Lab, a graduation studio within the MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences program at Delft University of Technology.

Explore Lab is a studio that encourages students to design their own curriculum by pursuing personal fascinations within the field of architecture. This approach leads to projects involving extensive research, culminating in both a research paper and a linked design proposal.

This book traces a research journey that explores how can literary experiences be translated into architectural design. It begins by establishing a solid foundation through a clear problem statement, research questions, theoretical framework, and methodologies. Drawing from a collection of travelogues, and memoirs, it offers a framework for understanding the narrative potential of space.

The final chapters represent the culmination of this process: the design. Here, the abstract becomes tangible. Through atmosphere and form, the emotional and experiential qualities of literature are reimaged as architecture - creating places that both reflect and evoke the journeys within them.

ABSTRACT

Inspired by the notion that people frame their lives and experiences through stories (Sartre 1938), this thesis explores the role of narrative in architectural design, proposing that architecture is not merely a physical space but an intricate interplay of tangible and intangible elements shaping human experiences within the built environment (Pérez-Gómez 2016).

Moreover, the research explores how literature can inform architectural design, emphasizing the importance of atmosphere and embodied experiences (Pallasmaa 2005; Zumthor 2006). It addresses key questions about translating narratives into functional design and extends the concept of narrative-driven architecture beyond temporary installations to permanent contexts.

Through theoretical research, case studies, literature analysis, and personal narrative surveys, the study identified the location of the project as well as the design principles and strategies that integrate narrative, atmosphere, and embodied experience into architecture. The culmination lies in an architectural design with a focus on creating spaces and atmospheres that translate fictional literary experiences, emotions, and journeys into tangible form. Ultimately, the fictional narrative aspires to create spaces that are both emotionally resonant and functionally purposeful.

This results in a design of *Habitoria* - a living habitat that is a unique meeting point of personal stories and communal experiences.

Keywords: narrative, storytelling, translation, metaphors, atmosphere, experience, emotions, travel



Figure 1. *Montepulciano* by Max Morriconi

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01

INTRODUCTION

**THESIS TOPIC
RESEARCH DEFINITION
RELEVANCE**

THESIS TOPIC

“...a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them...”

- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, 1938

Architecture is more than just the physical space; it's a complex interplay of both tangible and intangible elements... where buildings and humans engage in a continuous dialogue... where spaces act as stages which users navigate, crafting their own stories while the environment influences their experiences and emotions (Pallasmaa 2005).

Inspired by the notion that people frame their lives and experiences through stories (Sartre 1938), this research and design approach explores narratives as the foundation for an architectural design, where the environment created is not only emotionally resonant but also practical and functional. Each person, as the author of their own story, continuously shapes and interprets experiences as part of an evolving personal narrative. Rather than beginning with a site or program, this project begins with a narrative.

Since travel itself is a narrative journey (Mikkonen 2007), where each destination, encounter, and experience add a chapter to our personal story, travelogues and memoirs provide an ideal foundation for design exploration. Unlike guidebooks, these literary forms recount personal journeys, blending descriptions of places with the author's reflections and emotions. In that way, they delve into sensory and experiential aspects of travel, capturing moments of discovery and transformation. By capturing the essence of movement, place, and emotion, travelogues provide a rich foundation for creating meaningful, atmospheric spaces and as such, they will serve as the basis for translating literary journeys into spatial experiences.

Central to this process is the creation of atmosphere, a concept that moves beyond form and function into the realm of sensory and emotional experience (Zumthor 2006). Atmosphere arises from the subtle interplay of materiality, light, sound, and temperature, working together to craft environments that deeply affect their occupants. Designing with this in mind transforms architecture into an immersive medium, where intangible emotions are translated into tangible spatial experiences. Architecture, then, is not only seen - it is felt, heard, touched.

The culmination of this lies in the design which evolves through narrative research and reflection. This has led to a concept - a meeting point of stories - a building which reimagines travel and accommodation through a new, hybrid model, merging living and hospitality into a shared, immersive experience. As such, the building blends public and private realms, encouraging slow living, cultural immersion, and sensory delight.

In the way that non-fictional literary experiences have guided us to the site and key principles, fictional storytelling guides the design process. Through imagined stories and personas inspired by real people and places, the design unfolds. These characters, shaped by literary research, ethnographic observation, and the emotional textures of Tuscan life, guide every design decision. As such, *Casa Habitoria* becomes not just a structure, but a living environment, where the design is shaped by the quiet poetry of everyday life, creating spaces that resonate with both locals and travellers.

RESEARCH DEFINITION & RELEVANCE

The central problem of this research lies in exploring how architectural design can transcend traditional starting points, such as specific tasks or programs, and instead be grounded in existing narratives, atmospheres and experiences.

By using literature - specifically travelogues and memoirs - as a foundation, the research seeks to translate abstract stories into tangible spaces creating specific atmospheres that evoke emotions and resonate with users, while also remaining functional and purposeful.

Thus, the main question of this research is as follows:

How can a design process begin with a narrative based on literary work, and be effectively translated into functional and atmospheric architectural design?

The following sub-questions provide support for the main question:

How can literature be used as a design tool to generate architectural ideas?

How can architectural elements convey meaning, and intentionally evoke emotions, ultimately shaping the overall experiences of occupants within built environments?

Moreover, this research seeks to connect the two spheres of knowledge/art into one - translating the abstract art of storytelling into the tangible art of built space while demonstrating immersive experience engaging all the human senses. Through this exploration, I hope to show how narrative-driven design can transform architecture into a medium that not only shelters but also tells a story, enhancing the experience of those who inhabit it.

Great works of literature often emphasize human experiences and relationships over mere descriptions of scenery or objects; similarly, architecture should focus on enhancing the human experience (Pallasmaa 2005; Zumthor 2006). Since most buildings are designed for human use, it follows that creating better spaces involves understanding how individuals move through and interact with their environments. And what is a better way to understand humans than through knowing their stories?

In this way, narrative-driven architecture becomes a powerful medium for enhancing human experience by designing spaces that resonate with their users.

Furthermore, the topic of travelling and tourism holds significant relevance today.

The last few years have seen a transformation and exponential growth in tourism, driven by technological advancements, increased affordability, cultural curiosity, and the lasting impacts of the global pandemic. More people are eager to explore the world and seek new experiences. Consequently, many destinations are grappling with issues of overcrowding and environmental degradation, while the nature of travel itself has evolved (Oosterwoud 2021).

By using existing travel narratives as a foundation for design, this approach enhances the emotional resonance of hospitality, offering meaningful authentic experiences and immersive journeys that connect travellers to local cultures and communities. Moreover, integrating such approach can transform generic travel spaces into memorable environments and provide not just functionality but also a sense of place, identity, and emotional connection.



***“...it seems we may best be able to inhabit a place where we are not faced with the additional challenge of having to be there.”
- Alain de Botton***

02

SETTING THE NARRATIVE

SPACE AND ATMOSPHERE
NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURE
THE ART OF TRAVEL
LITERARY FRAMEWORK

This chapter establishes the theoretical and methodological foundation of the research, exploring how narrative, embodied experience, and atmosphere can inform architectural design.

The theoretical framework offers an overview of existing theories, serving as a guide for understanding key ideas and topics relevant to this research. It also informs decision-making in the later phases of both research and design. To establish a solid foundation, key concepts have been defined.

A theoretical base focused on experience, particularly embodied experience and atmosphere, helps to explore the interaction between people and the built environment.

Moreover, narrative in architecture is the central focus of this thesis. As such, a curated selection of projects that use narrative as a design tool has been analysed as case studies. Each is examined through specific criteria to identify principles and strategies for translating literature into spatial form and crafting distinctive atmospheres. The analysis looks at both architectural characteristics and affective qualities, investigating how spatial configurations and narrative media contribute to architectural experience. This dual lens - narrative and emotional - offers insights into how architecture can simultaneously convey stories and evoke feeling.

To deepen the understanding of travel as a narrative act, the research expands into personal narratives collected through a survey. This survey focuses on individuals as tourists or travellers, exploring their emotional connections to accommodation spaces. The responses inform the understanding of potential users and help shape the building's program.

INTRODUCTION

Finally, a selection of travelogues and memoirs, chosen based on specific criteria, forms the foundation for the design. These works focus on personal experiences, vivid landscapes, and cultural reflections tied to particular places. They offer a compelling base for translating emotions and journeys into architectural elements. The study of these texts involves close reading and interpretation of themes with strong potential for architectural expression.

The following sections will examine these concepts in greater depth.

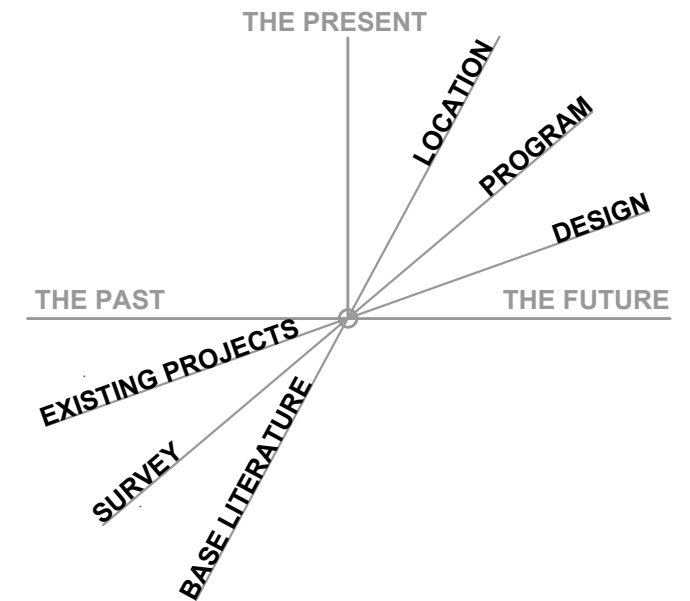


Figure 2. Thesis framework by Marta Lulić

SPACE AND ATMOSPHERE

Architecture is more than just the physical space; it's a complex interplay of tangible and intangible elements. Space and atmosphere are interconnected concepts that shape human experience, perception, and interaction within built environments. Space is traditionally understood as the physical characteristics of an environment - its form, scale, volume, and layout. Atmosphere, however, encompasses the sensory and emotional qualities of that space, influenced by factors like lighting, acoustics, temperature, and even social dynamics.

This view aligns with a human-centric, multi-sensory approach to architecture, one that foregrounds perception, memory, and experience, challenging conventional notions of architecture as purely functional or visual (Holl, Pallasmaa, Pérez-Gómez 2007).

Rather than passively observing a space, individuals engage with it through movement, perception, and interaction, creating an embodied experience where sensory data moulds perception and affects how individuals connect with their surroundings.

As Juhani Pallasmaa states, "when we enter a space, the space enters us", creating an exchange and fusion of the object and the subject and therefore positioning architecture as a metaphysical tool. By engaging the full spectrum of human senses and emotions, architecture transcends its material constraints, becoming a medium for existential meaning.

Every architectural experience is inherently multi-sensory, where qualities of space and scale are perceived through the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, and even skeleton and muscle, involving seven realms of sensory experience that interact and infuse each other (Holl, Pallasmaa, Pérez-Gómez 2007).

When we enter a space, we don't just see it, but we also smell, hear, and feel it, and this sensory data is directly stored in the brain, forming immediate impressions that influence comfort and well-being.

In this way, architecture mediates our relationship with the world by enhancing our sensory experience of spaces, shaping both our emotional and physical engagement with the environment (Pallasmaa 2005).

This role of the senses in relation to space has also been further explored by the philosopher Gaston Bachelard. He discusses how the different senses (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory) contribute to this embodied experience, noting that the subjective perception of space is rooted in the body's encounter with sensory perceptions and bodily sensations (Bachelard 1994).

Pallasmaa emphasizes the peripheral perception of spaces, arguing that "atmosphere stimulates activities and guides the imagination" by unifying the sensory experiences and prioritizing a multisensory, peripheral approach over purely visual design, fostering a deeper connection between the individual and their surroundings (Pallasmaa 2014). Thus, architecture indeed becomes a full sensory engagement where spaces are seen, felt, heard, and smelled, with the collective sensory experience of colour, sound, and scent enriching how we connect with and experience each space.

Complementing this view, Pallasmaa (2007) also underscores the importance of materiality in creating haptic experiences, noting that textures like the warmth of wood or the roughness of stone resonate with the human body, fostering a sense of intimacy and connection.



Figure 3. *Brüder Klaus Kapelle* by August Fischer

SPACE AND ATMOSPHERE

This dynamic engagement is further explored by Peter Zumthor, who emphasizes that quality architecture is defined by a building's ability to move us emotionally, a concept intrinsically linked to atmosphere.

Atmosphere, as Zumthor describes it, is an "immediate appreciation" or "spontaneous emotional response" experienced upon entering a space, with the visitor's perception often being intuitive and formed in a brief moment of interaction.

In his book *Atmospheres: Architectural Environments - Surrounding Objects* (2006), Peter Zumthor emphasizes that atmosphere is generated through the interplay of essential components such as material presence and compatibility, sound, light, temperature, spatial proportions, the tension between interior and exterior and levels of intimacy, which together shape the emotional experience of a space.

Gernot Böhme (2017) expands this view by exploring atmosphere as a bridge between the physical and metaphysical realms. He argues that the aesthetic and functional success of architecture lies in its ability to create atmospheres that resonate with human emotions and perceptions.

The interplay of light, materials, and space is a central theme in Böhme's work, where he delves deeper into the role of light as both material and immaterial, highlighting its transformative power. Light is not only an illuminator of space but also a creator of space, serving as an essential tool for architects in crafting experiential environments through the use of brightness, shadows, and diaphanous light, where light interacts with materials like glass, stone, and metal to evoke moods such as sacredness, tranquillity, or dynamism (Böhme 2017).

This understanding of atmosphere is further enriched by Borch (2014), who notes that atmospheres are not just perceived through the senses but also through the imagination. Moreover, he describes atmosphere as the prototypical 'between' phenomenon, existing between the subject and the object, which requires a balance between the aesthetics of reception and the aesthetics of the product. This concept aligns with Brennan's (2004) view that atmospheres can literally 'get into' the individual, where the presence of multiple people in a shared space can lead to the transmission of affective states, altering the biological constitution of each person. In this way, the social situation itself changes how individuals experience and feel.

Additionally, atmospheres are defined as 'tuned spaces' or 'spatially discharged, quasi-objective feelings,' where a room's inherent quality can evoke similar feelings in different individuals, regardless of their personal background, thereby revealing the power of atmosphere in shaping both individual and collective experiences (Borch 2014). Together, these perspectives illustrate the profound impact of atmospheres on both individual and collective experiences, revealing their crucial role in shaping social, emotional, and biological states.

Ultimately, this theoretical framework emphasizes the profound impact of architecture's spatial and atmospheric qualities. While space provides the structural foundation, atmosphere transforms it into an immersive, meaningful experience that resonates deeply with human emotion and perception. Architecture, therefore, is not merely about functionality or aesthetics but about crafting environments that shape and enhance the way we experience the world around us.

Figure 4. *The architecture of light* by Serge Najjar



NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURE

As Borch (2014) observes, when we read a great novel, we instinctively construct urban settings, along with the ambience of buildings and rooms, without fixating on their details. This demonstrates how our minds prioritize the totality of an experience over isolated specifics. Moreover, writers aim to captivate their reader's attention, while at the same time opening doors for them to escape into their own thoughts, memories, and fantasies. Through the reader's interpretation, the narrated space multiplies and amplifies itself, extending far beyond the information given in the text (Havik et al. 2016).

Similarly, narratives in architecture serve as a powerful tool for enriching the experience of built environments by intertwining spatial design with storytelling elements. Embedded within the spatial context, these narratives enhance a space's atmosphere, inviting visitors to become active participants in a story rather than mere passive observers. This approach infuses design with layers of meaning, shaping spaces that resonate on deeper emotional and sensory levels. By drawing from personal, cultural, or historical stories, architects craft environments that evoke specific experiences and allow architecture to transcend mere functionality, giving each design element a purpose that reflects a larger vision or message.

This transformative strategy can turn a building into a narrative journey, where each space reveals part of a cohesive story, guiding occupants to connect with their surroundings in meaningful and memorable ways. Ultimately, narratives enrich the architectural experience, making spaces not just places to inhabit but stories to be experienced, underscoring the relationship between architecture, atmosphere, and human engagement (Havik et al. 2016).

In translating narratives into architecture, designers face the challenge of preserving the essence of a story while adapting it to spatial and material realities. As the saying goes, "*Traduttore, traditore*" (translator, traitor), every act of translation involves transformation. Yet, this reinterpretation enables architects to imbue spaces with new layers of meaning, creating environments that invite users to engage with their surroundings in profound and personal ways (Havik et al. 2016).

Klaske Havik, in her various works, emphasizes how narrative methods illuminate the relationship between architecture and urban places, suggesting that storytelling can inform design processes and deepen our understanding of spaces. By employing literary techniques, architects can craft atmospheres that resonate with users, where the physical characteristics of a space intersect with the emotional responses it evokes (Havik 2016).

Moreover, narrative methods such as description, transcription, and prescription help translate literary insights into architectural practice, shaping spaces that reflect human stories and experiences. Havik's work highlights how narrative structures can map urban experiences, turning architectural design into a process that reads and writes the city itself (Havik 2014).

By incorporating storytelling into design, architects create environments that transform narratives into spatial realities, fostering a deep connection between the built environment and human experience. This approach crafts immersive and meaningful spaces that resonate with the essence of a place, echoing the richness of memory, culture, imagination, and human interaction.

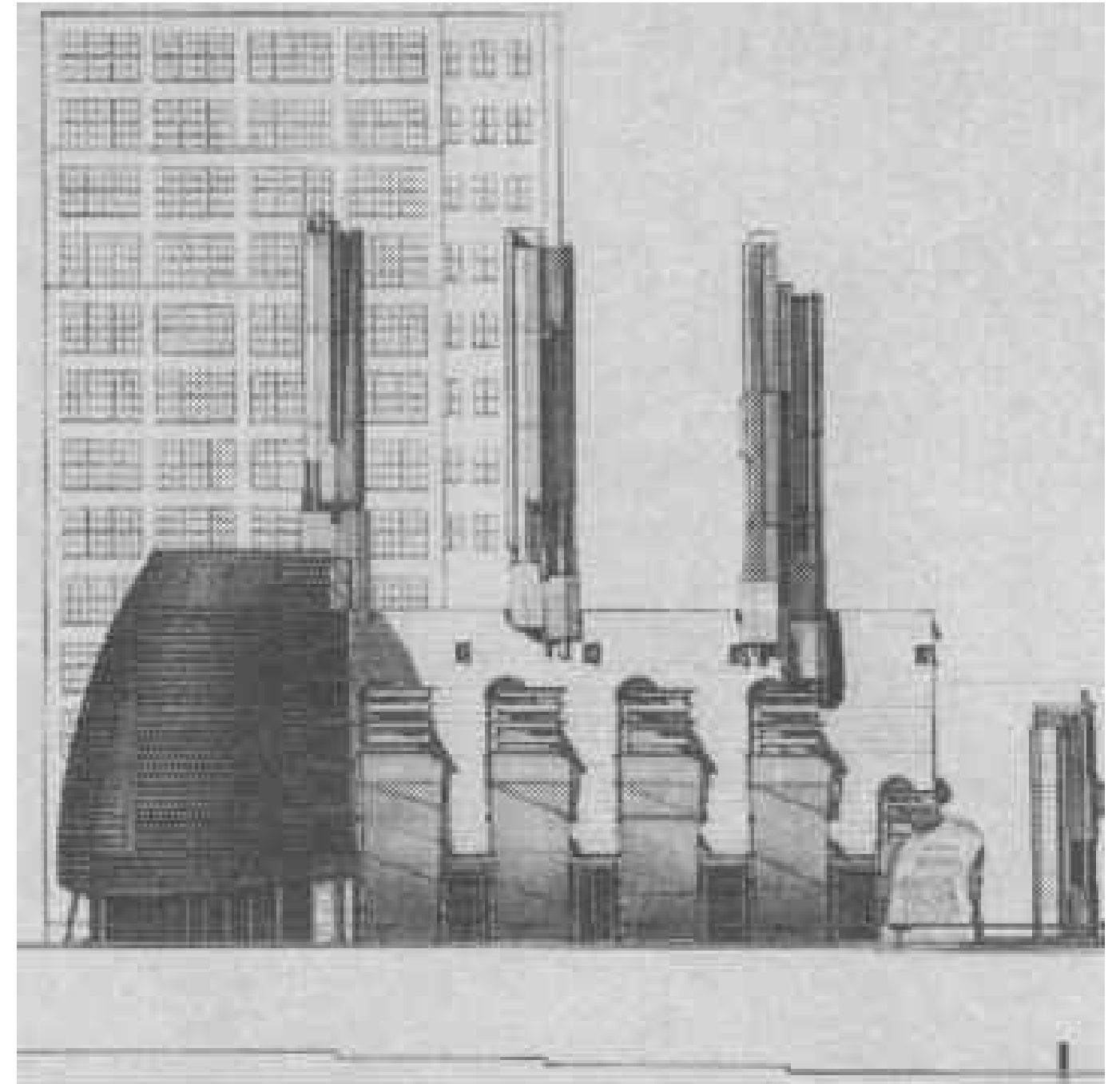


Figure 5. *Melvilla* by Douglas Darden

NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURE

To exemplify the narrative-driven design, a selection of architectural projects have been used as a case study. The three chosen projects are *Francisco de Blas Home* by Alberto Campo Baeza (Fig.6&7), *The Kafka Castle* by Ricardo Bofill (Fig.8&9), and *Danteum* by Giuseppe Terragni (Fig.10&11).

The analysis of these projects focuses on architectural characteristics and affective qualities, examining how physical configurations and narrative mediums contribute to the overall experience of architecture. This analysis also considers the ways in which individuals interact with these spaces, looking for patterns in emotional responses and actions.

In this process, design principles and experiences are connected to actual narratives, allowing for a clearer understanding of their woven interplay and providing insights into how architecture can convey stories and evoke emotions simultaneously.

Key aspects of the study include delving into the literature that inspired the architectural concept, evaluating whether there is a clear and meaningful connection between the literary work and the design, identifying the narrative strategies employed and their impact on the user experience, evaluating how the design engages the senses and investigating the types of spaces created, and the materials used, and their spatial impact.

By addressing these interconnected aspects, the analysis aims to uncover the depth of the relationship between literature and architecture, illustrating how narrative can shape space and influence human experience.

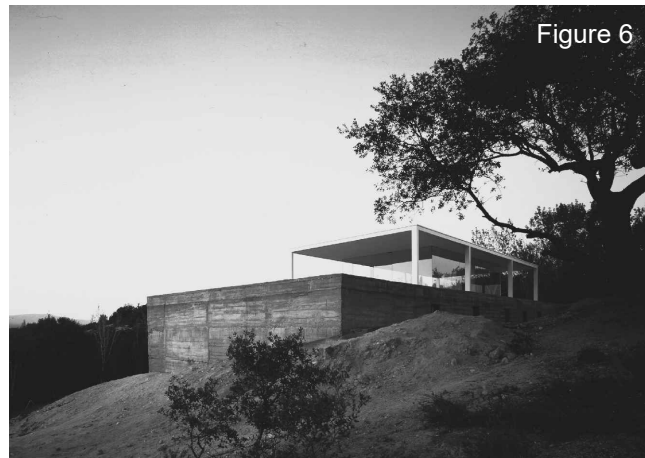


Figure 6



Figure 7

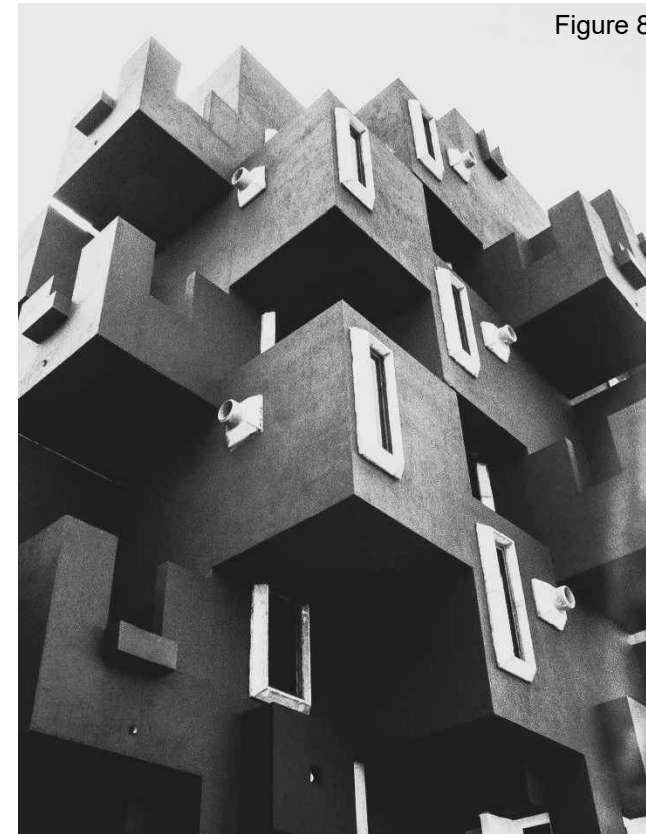


Figure 8



Figure 9

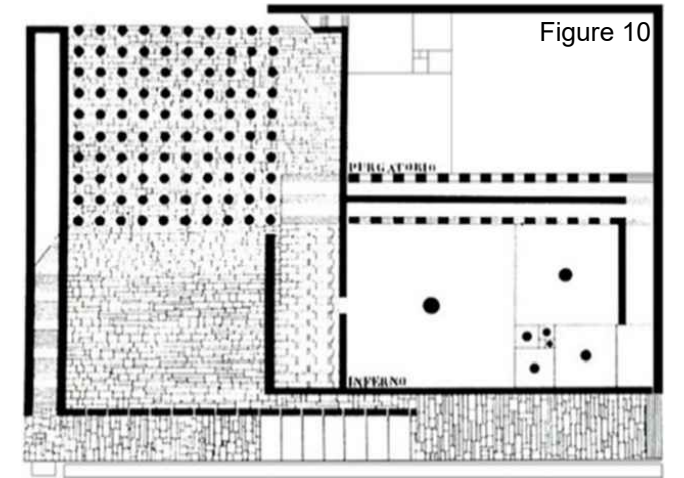


Figure 10

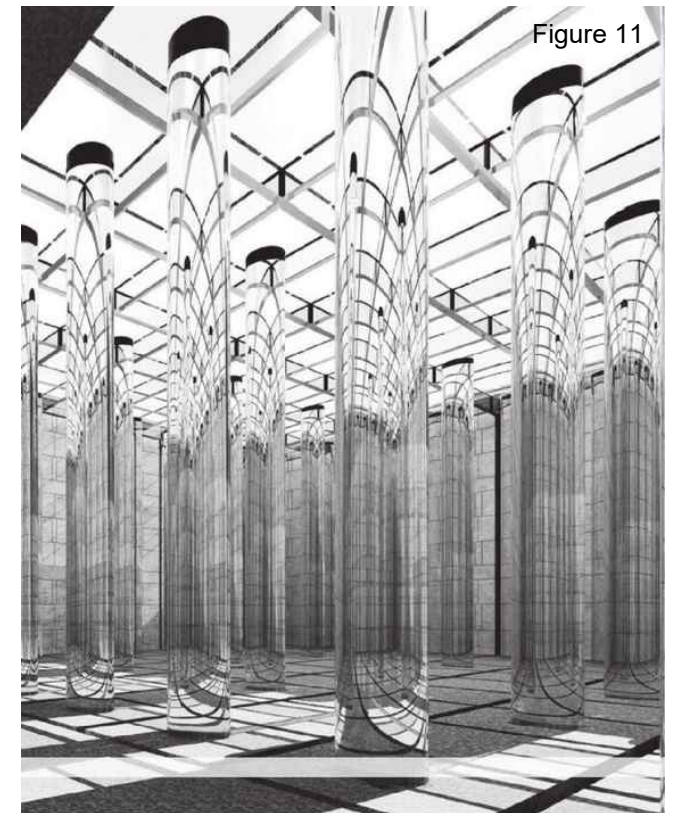


Figure 11

CASA BLAS / Alberto Campo Baeza

Casa Blas, designed by architect Alberto Campo Baeza in 1999, is a residence located in Sevilla la Nueva, Madrid, Spain. Commissioned by literature professor Francisco de Blas, the house embodies a profound connection between architecture and literature, offering a paradoxical interpretation of a poem.

The client presented Campo Baeza with a collection of Andalusian poetry, notably Luis Cernuda's *Donde habite el olvido*, which explores themes of solitude and the human condition. The poem evokes a world where one sets aside their problems in pursuit of freedom, while reflecting on the tension between the longing for liberation and the constraints imposed by reality (Seybolt 1986).

This literary influence profoundly shaped the architectural concept, resulting in a design that harmoniously integrates the emotional depth of the poem with the physical space. Baeza (2000) translates the tension of this dichotomy into architecture through the interplay of tectonic versus stereotomic elements.

A platform was created to divide the house into two distinct components: the podium - a solid, opaque concrete box embedded in the landscape - and, above it, a transparent and lightweight structure made of white-painted steel and glass.

The concrete box, described as a "cave," serves as a refuge (Copertone 2018). Rooted to the earth with thick concrete walls, it houses private and service areas. Its schematic layout is clear and deliberate: a service strip is positioned at the back the served areas, living areas, to the front. Minimal, square openings frame views of the distant landscape, fostering a sense of seclusion and introspection.

In stark contrast, the transparent glass box on top of the platform acts as a lookout point. This space is designed for dreaming and contemplation, offering abundant natural light and unobstructed views of the surrounding environment. The glass box blurs the boundaries between indoor and outdoor spaces, symbolizing openness and a connection to nature. A terrace with a small pool further enhances the sensory experience, inviting reflection and tranquility (del Valle González 2001).

One of Campo Baeza's guiding principles - "doing more with less" - is evident throughout the design. This approach, which he distinguishes from minimalism, embodies an essentialist philosophy. Baeza eliminates unnecessary elements, creating spaces that are rich in content, light, and meaning.

In summary, *Casa Blas* stands as a testament to the seamless integration of literary inspiration and architectural innovation, creating a space that is both functional and emotionally evocative. The integration of poetic themes into the spatial experience not only enhances the aesthetic appeal but also enriches the emotional resonance of the home.

The experience is deeply personal, rooted in reflection - forgetting, remembering, and connecting with the environment. Through this collaboration, Francisco de Blas and Alberto Campo Baeza have created a house where poetry inspires another form of poetry: the subjective, experiential poetry of those who inhabit and perceive the space composed of a few, well-placed words (Campo Baeza 2024).



Figure 12. *Casa Blas* by Gregori Civera

CASA BLAS / Alberto Campo Baeza

Donde habite el olvido

Donde habite el olvido,
En los vastos jardines sin aurora;
Donde yo sólo sea
Memoria de una piedra sepultada entre ortigas
Sobre la cual el viento escapa a sus insomnios.

Donde mi nombre deje
Al cuerpo que designa en brazos de los siglos,
Donde el deseo no exista.

En esa gran región donde el amor, ángel terrible,
No esconda como acero
En mi pecho su ala,
Sonriendo lleno de gracia aérea
mientras crece el tormento.

Allí donde termine este afán
que exige un dueño a imagen suya,
Sometiendo a otra vida su vida,
Sin más horizonte que otros ojos frente a frente.

Donde penas y dichas no sean más que nombres,
Cielo y tierra nativos en torno de un recuerdo;
Donde al fin quede libre sin saberlo yo mismo,
Disuelto en niebla, ausencia,
Ausencia leve como carne de niño.

Allá, allá lejos;
Donde habite el olvido.

frío Camela

Where oblivion dwells... (translated by Eugenio Florit)

Where oblivion dwells,
In the vast gardens without daybreak;
Where I will be only
The memory of a stone buried among nettles
Over which the wind flees from its sleeplessness.

Where my name will leave
The body it identifies in the arms of time,
Where desire does not exist.

In that vast region where love, that terrible angel,
Will not bury its wings
Like steel in my heart,
Smiling, full of airy grace,
while the torment increases.

There, where will end this anxiety
that demands a master in its own image,
Surrendering its life to another life,
With no further horizon than other eyes face to face.

Where sorrow and happiness will be only names,
Native sky and earth around a memory;
Where at last I will be free, without noticing it,
Vanished into mist, into absence,
An absence as soft as a child's skin.

There, far away;
Where oblivion dwells

frío Camela



Figure 13. Casa Blas by Hisao Suzuki

CASA BLAS / Alberto Campo Baeza

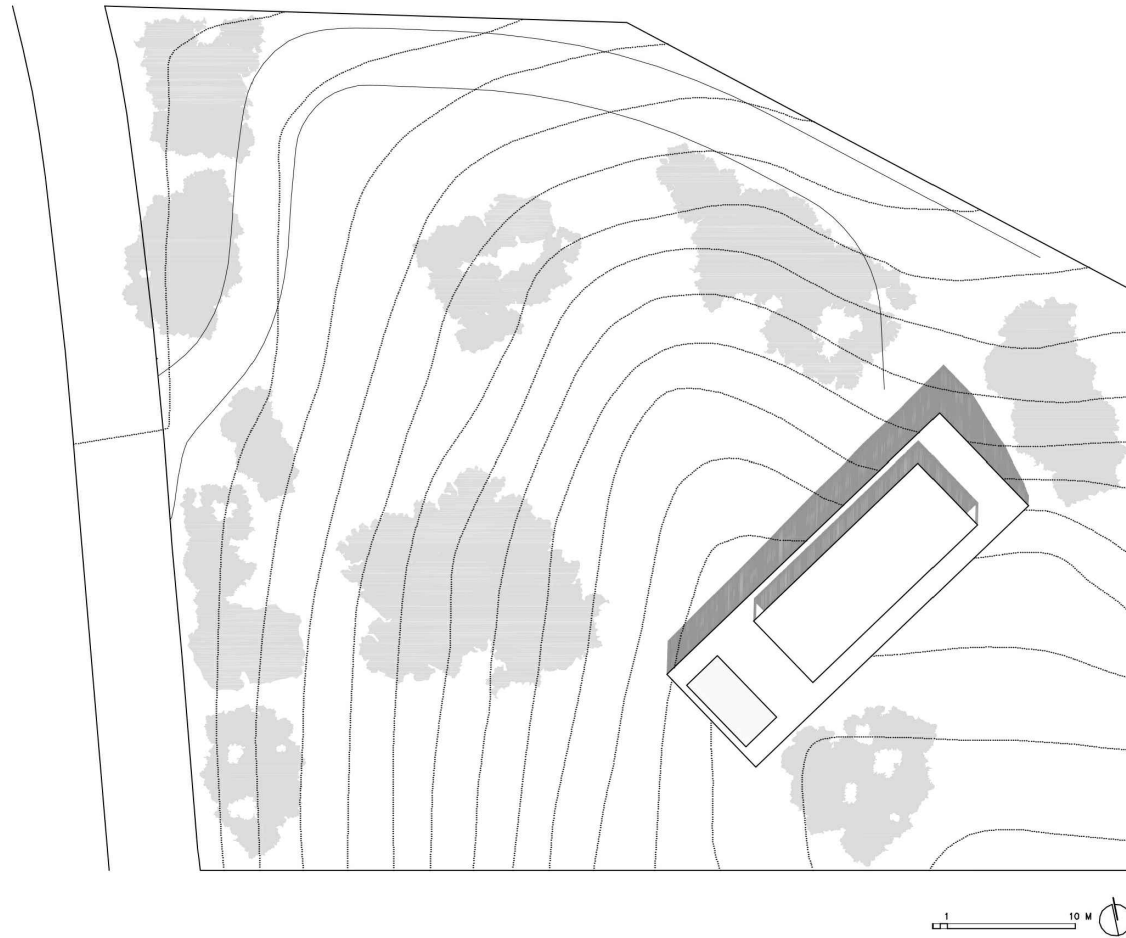


Figure 14. *Situation* by Alberto Campo Baeza

CASE STUDY

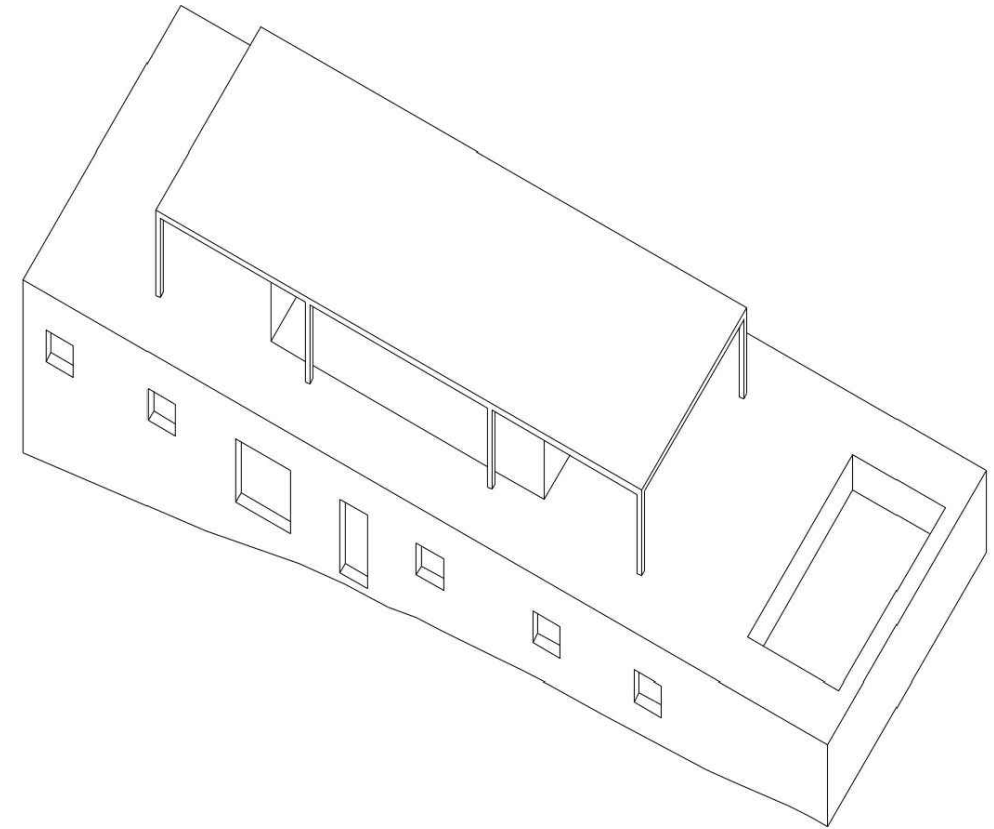


Figure 15. *Axonometry* by Alberto Campo Baeza

CASA BLAS / Alberto Campo Baeza

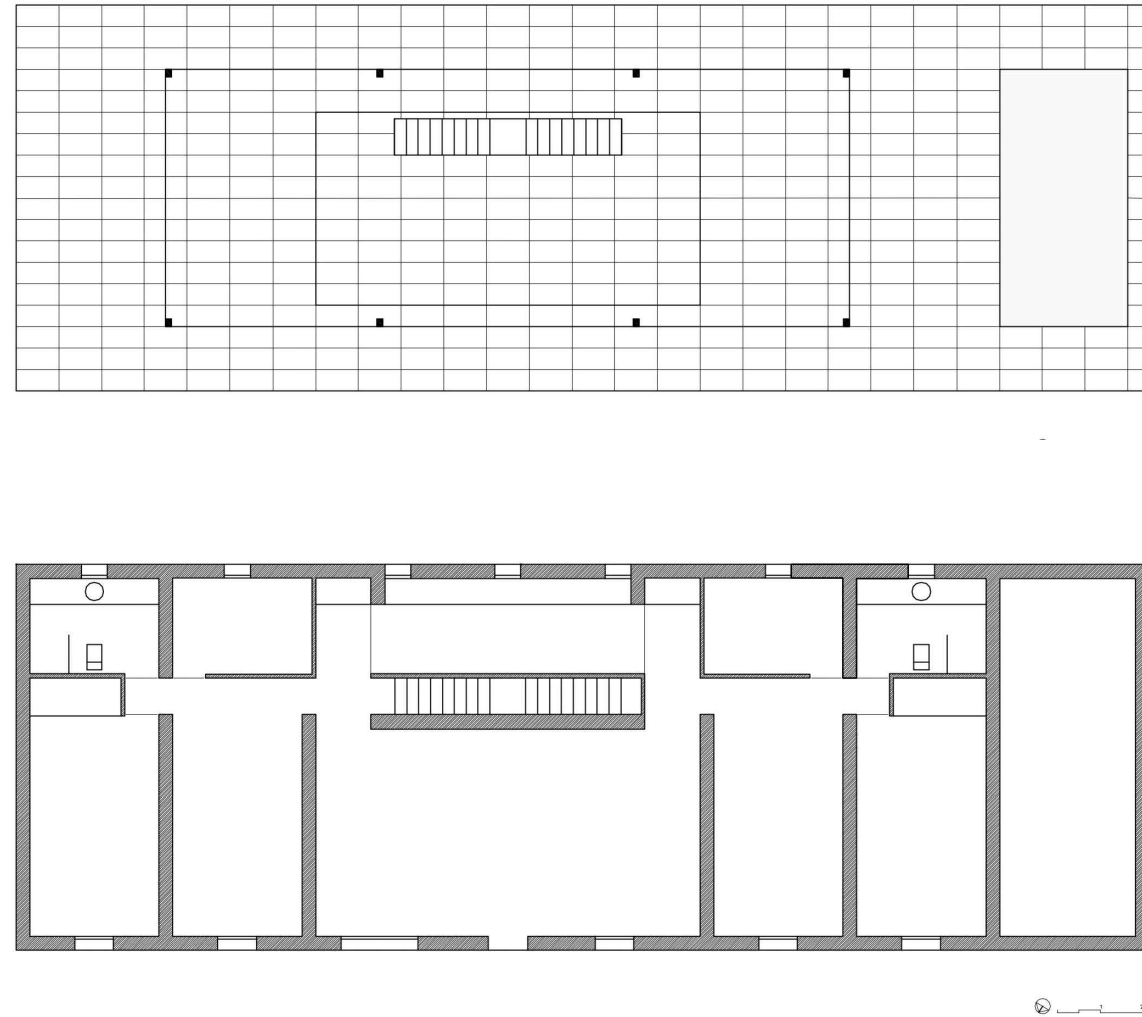


Figure 16. *Top floor and ground floor* by Alberto Campo Baeza

CASE STUDY

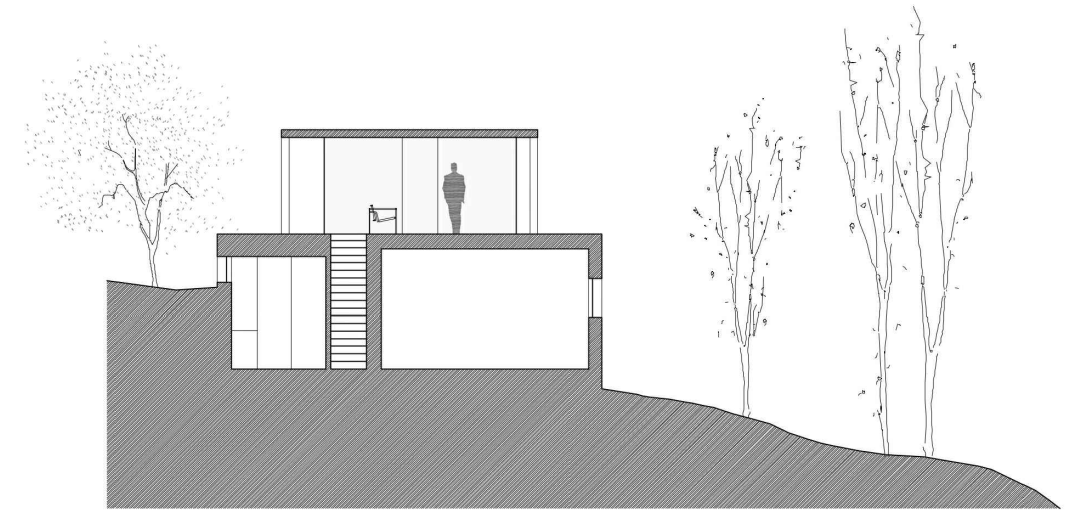
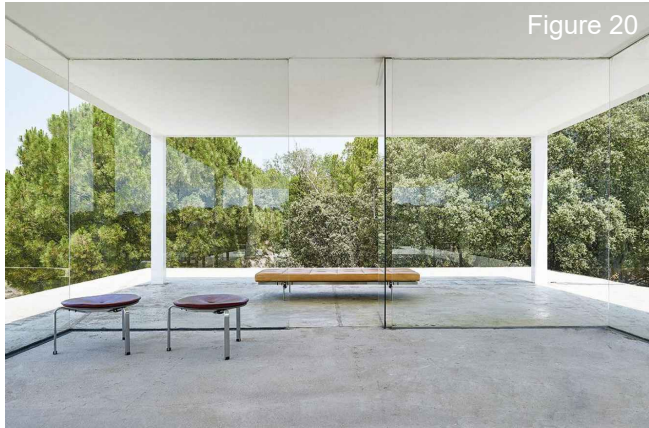


Figure 17. *Section* by Alberto Campo Baeza

CASA BLAS / Alberto Campo Baeza

LITERATURE QUOTE	ASSOCIATED FEELING	ARCHITECTURAL POTENTIAL	ARCHITECTURAL REALIZATION
<i>In the vast gardens without daybreak; Where I will be only; The memory of a stone buried among nettles</i>	borderless space, anonymous, peaceful, forgotten, unremarkable	integration within nature, dissolving boundaries between outdoor and indoor	whole building; anonymous and unremarkable simple concrete base within nature in contrast to openness to the horizon
<i>Where my name will leave; The body it identifies in the arms of time; Where desire does not exist.</i>	detachment, relief, timelessness, tranquility	detachment and timelessness through minimalism, devoid of ornaments and detail	whole building; pure geometric forms, serene white surfaces, simplicity of form
<i>Where love, that terrible angel; Will not bury its wings; Like steel in my heart</i>	beautiful but wounding, longing for calmness and freedom	serene, meditative space, soft play of light	whole building; natural light, absence of visual weight, simplicity of form
<i>There, where will end this anxiety that demands a master in its own image; Surrendering its life to another life</i>	exhausted, desperate, desire for freedom	freedom and escape from external demands, focus on simplicity and essentialism	whole building; balance between openness and enclosure = one can exist independently
<i>Where sorrow and happiness will be only names; Native sky and earth around a memory</i>	detachment, serenity, transcendence, neutrality	sense of belonging to the larger landscape	whole building; blurred lines between interior and exterior, openness

Figure 18. From literature to architecture by Marta Lulić



CASA BLAS / Alberto Campo Baeza

LITERATURE QUOTE	ASSOCIATED FEELING	ARCHITECTURAL POTENTIAL	ARCHITECTURAL REALIZATION
<i>Where at last I will be free, without noticing it</i>	unaware, liberation, effortless	simplicity, space stripped of distractions	whole building; open fluid plan, natural light
<i>Vanished into mist, into absence; An absence as soft as a child's skin</i>	peaceful, innocent, comforting, soft, gentle, tranquil, sense of relief	form dissolving into the light, soft lines	whole building; clean ethereal design, interplay of light and shadow
<i>There, far away; Where oblivion dwells</i>	remote, isolated, peaceful	quiet landscape	location; remote, quiet, within nature

Figure 23. *From literature to architecture* by Marta Lulić

In both the poem and the house, freedom is achieved through an absence - of physical or emotional weight - and through a profound connection to simplicity and calm.

Both the poem and the house evoke a deep longing for simplicity, transcendence, and harmony with the natural world. While Cernuda conveys these ideas through poetic imagery, Campo Baeza translates them into architectural form, creating a space that embodies timelessness, serenity, and a seamless merging of self with the infinite. Together, they present a shared vision of a peaceful retreat, a sanctuary where one can shed life's burdens and exist in a state of pure, unencumbered being.

To achieve this vision, certain design elements stand out: contrasting spaces that spark curiosity, uncluttered spaces that promote clarity and serenity, large openings and blurred boundaries between interior and exterior that foster connection and belonging, natural light that infuses the space with warmth and airiness, heavy materials that provide stability and a sense of timelessness, neutral shades that enhance calmness, and quiet, natural sounds that soothe and create tranquillity.



KAFKA CASTLE / Ricardo Bofill

The Kafka Castle, designed by architect Ricardo Bofill in 1968, is an apartment building located in Sant Pere De Ribes, Barcelona, Spain. It is a monumental architectural achievement that synthesizes poetic inspiration, structural innovation, and philosophical reflection.

Each project by Ricardo Bofill Taller de Arquitectura (RBTA) explored a common theme: the effect of spatial design on human interaction. Bofill also demonstrated a predilection toward poetic and literary references in his work - *The Kafka Castle* included (Fiederer 2017).

The name and conceptual framework of *The Kafka Castle* are drawn from Franz Kafka's *The Castle*, an unfinished novel published posthumously. In the novel, the protagonist, known only as K., arrives in a village overshadowed - both visually and governmentally - by a nearby castle. He claims to be a land surveyor appointed by the Castle authorities, but his efforts are in vain. K. relentlessly seeks recognition from the authorities, validation of his land surveyor title, and proof of his identity. He engages with the barmaid Frieda, befriends Barnabas' family, meets the village official, and sends messages to the Castle, yet all his strategies fail.

Although Kafka left the story incomplete, he intended for K.'s unrelenting efforts, caught between life and death, to eventually lead to his ambiguous acceptance within the system (Qin 2019).

Much like Kafka's narrative, Bofill's architectural interpretation explores themes of alienation, authority, bureaucracy, and the struggle for connection within an imposing system.

The structure's introverted, fortress-like appearance evokes a sense of inaccessibility and isolation, yet its vibrant internal circulation fosters interaction and community. This duality mirrors Kafka's narrative tension, where individuals confront an indifferent system while seeking personal meaning and connection.

Furthermore, the labyrinthine pathways, vertical circulation cores, and modular "capsules" create an environment that is both dynamic and enigmatic, reflecting the novel's exploration of human limitations and the complexities of navigating an unyielding authority.



Figure 28. *The Kafka Castle* by Ricardo Bofill

KAFKA CASTLE / Ricardo Bofill

The Kafka Castle aims to offer a multi-layered living experience by transforming living spaces into more than just shelters. It integrates spaces designed to meet diverse human needs, turning them into centres of interaction and shared experiences.

The building consists of 90 modular apartments clustered around two vertical circulation shafts. Its modular design is governed by mathematical equations: one determines the number of modules connected to the core shafts, while another dictates the spiralling height of the units wrapping around them (Fiederer 2017).

Each apartment comprises multiple cubic modules, with each cube serving as a minimalist environment such as a living-dining area or bathroom-bedroom, articulated across different levels. One side of each cube connects with the central core of the stairwell, while the varying heights of the modules create a spatial variety that reflects the building's exterior within its interiors (Simpson 2013).

Despite their prefabricated appearance, the cubic modules are not structurally independent. They rely on a system of steel columns, brick cores, and ceramic slabs for support. Cantilevered ceramic slabs form the floors and ceilings of the modules, while lightweight materials such as wood and stucco contribute to the experimental nature of the design. Drainage pipes serve as window openings, and simple wood carpentry adds functional touches, with the whole structure stuccoed and painted.

The design of *Kafka Castle* encourages interaction among residents. Moving between capsules provides opportunities to meet others, fostering a sense of community.

This vision extends beyond the apartments to shared amenities such as a swimming pool, sauna, bar, and restaurants. These communal spaces, combined with the interconnected modular design, transcend traditional apartment living and align with Bofill's belief in architecture as a facilitator of human connection (Fiederer 2017).

Architecturally, the exterior of *The Kafka Castle* is composed of endless combinations of capsules, each reflecting its function and purpose while contributing to the building's vitality (Keçeci 2024). The distinctive navy blue façades, chosen from a range of blues, blend harmoniously with the surrounding sky, merging the building with its natural environment and creating a dynamic interplay between built and natural spaces.

Through its fusion of mathematical precision, modular experimentation, and literary inspiration, *The Kafka Castle* challenges conventional notions of residential architecture. Every element of its design harmonizes with the functionality of its interior spaces, transforming the act of dwelling into an immersive experience.

Regardless of the passage of time, *The Kafka Castle* will remain a tribute to Franz Kafka's literary genius, and an object of admiration for those who see its unusual form against the Spanish sky (Keçeci 2024).



Figure 29. *The Kafka Castle* by Ricardo Bofill

KAFKA CASTLE / Ricardo Bofill

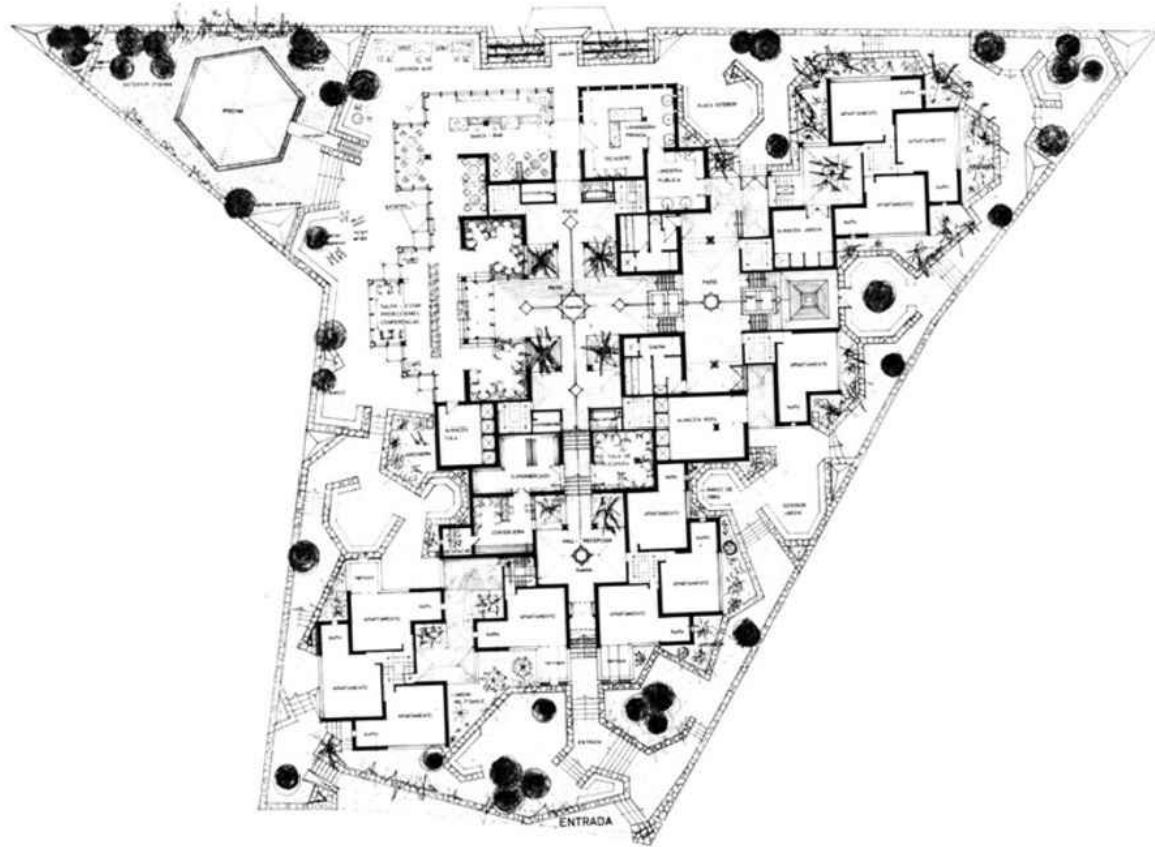


Figure 30. *Ground floor* by Ricardo Bofill

CASE STUDY

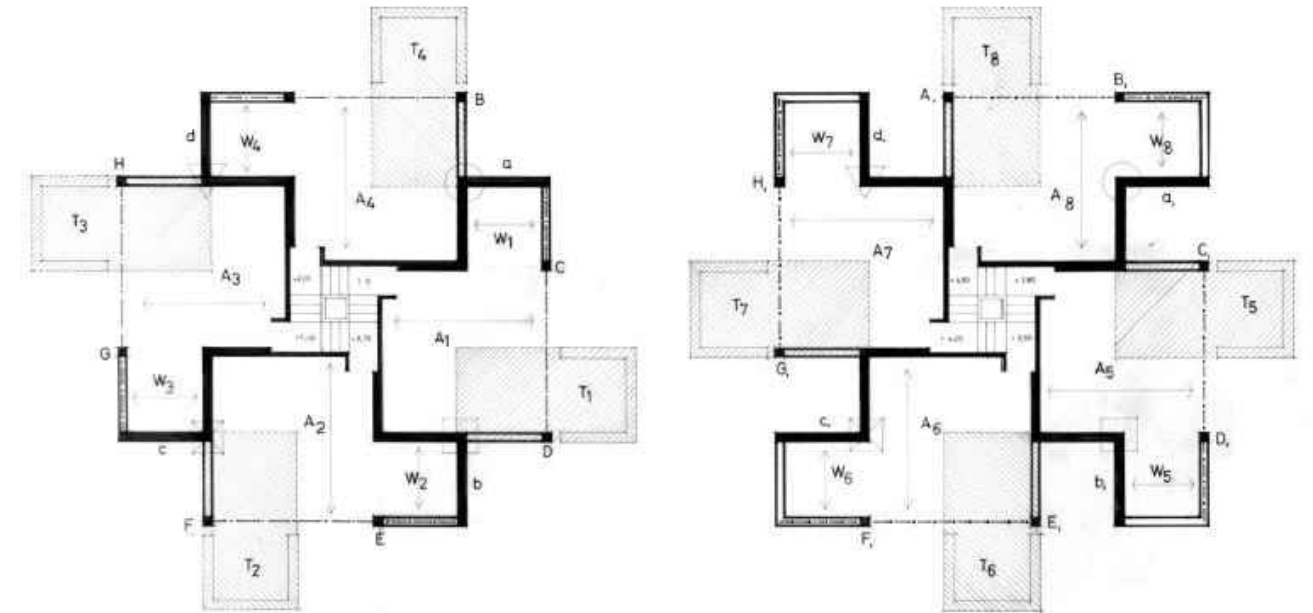


Figure 31. *Methodology* by Ricardo Bofill

KAFKA CASTLE / Ricardo Bofill

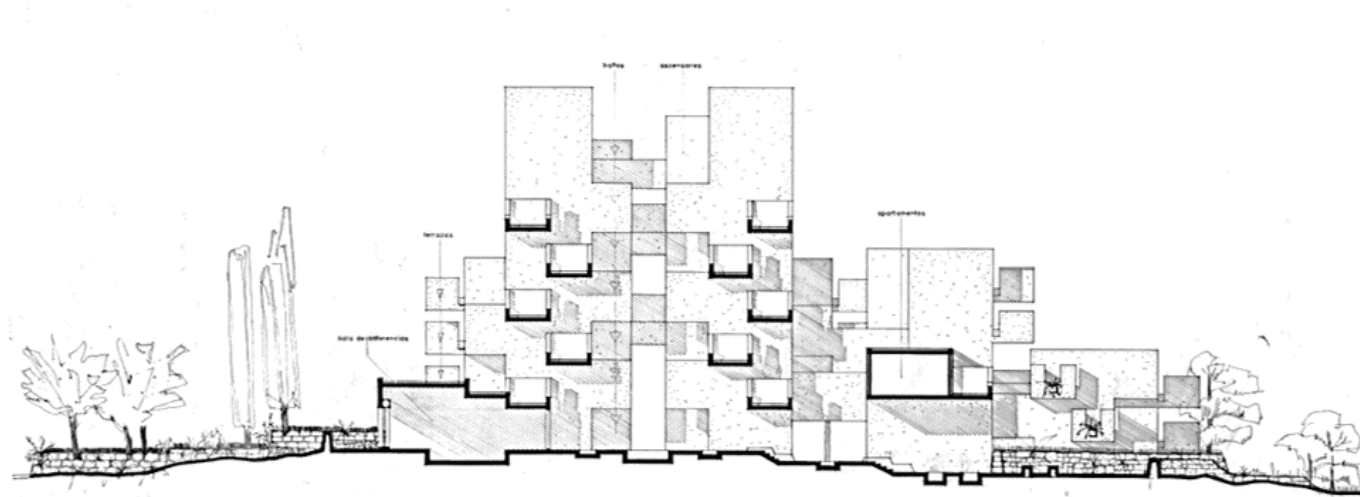


Figure 32. *Section* by Ricardo Bofill

CASE STUDY

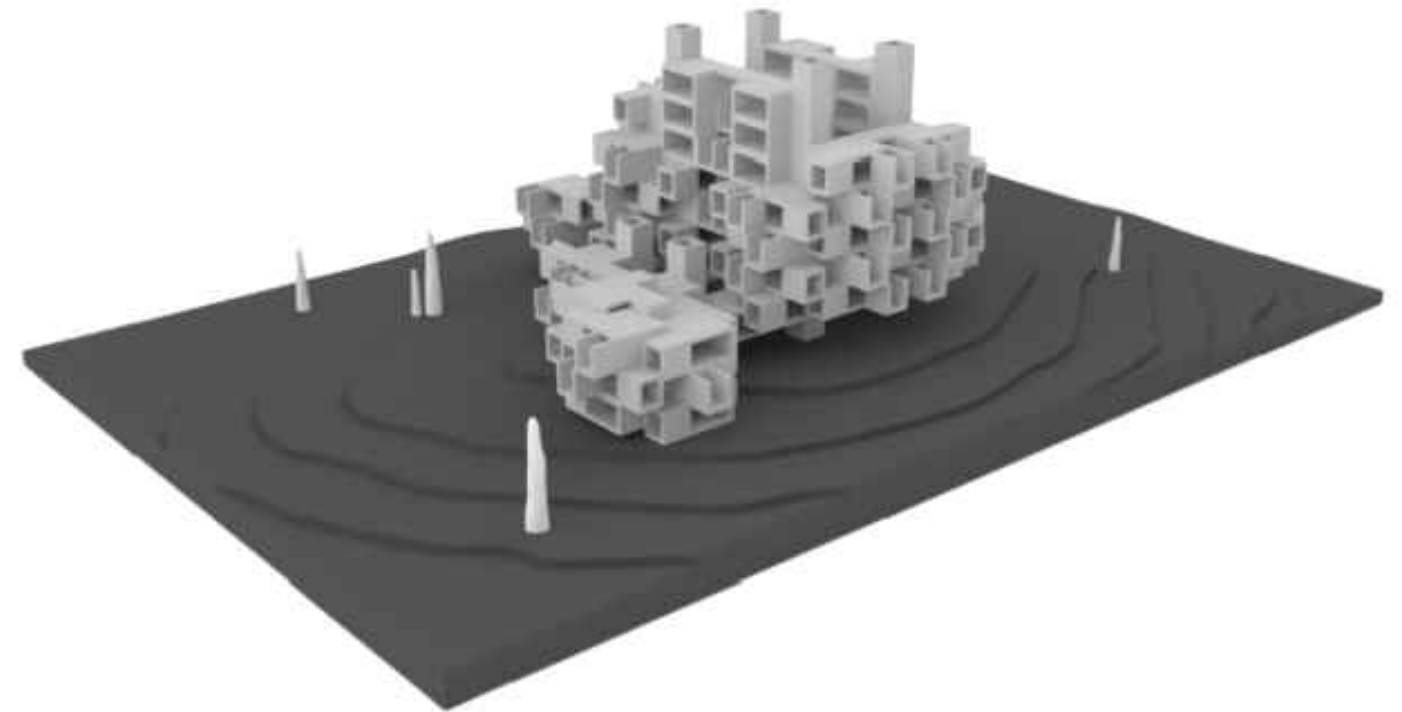


Figure 33. *3D reconstruction* by Factum Foundation

KAFKA CASTLE / Ricardo Bofill

LITERATURE QUOTE	ASSOCIATED FEELING	ARCHITECTURAL POTENTIAL	ARCHITECTURAL REALIZATION
<i>The castle is enigmatic: we cannot tell what power it contains — if any.</i>	ambiguity, authority, dominance, mystery	closed questionable spaces, monumental, scale, complexed	exterior; closed, introverted, monumental, confusing
<i>The castle lacks any such clarity. It looks neither like a feudal fortress nor like a modern mansion, but like a collection of two-storey houses. If you had not known it was a castle, you would have taken it for a small town.</i>	challenging traditional and conventional, unknown, confusing, abundant	unconventional design, collection of apartments, housing complex, modern	whole building; big in scale, monumental, complex, combination of housing volumes, intertwined volumes
<i>The village lay deep in snow. There was nothing to be seen of Castle Mount, for mist and darkness surrounded it, and not the faintest glimmer of light showed where the great castle lay.</i>	ambiguity, darkness, unknown	exterior not giving away of the interior, blending in with the nature, blurring the boundaries	exterior; dark & complex facade not showcasing the function and interior, terraces with greenery, no clear boundaries
<i>The castle is run by a huge staff of bureaucrats, arranged in a hierarchy, who manage the affairs</i>	organized, overlooking the village	systemic hierarchy of elements, organized forms	whole; repetitive elements, modular, interlocking forms

Figure 34. *From literature to architecture* by Marta Lulić

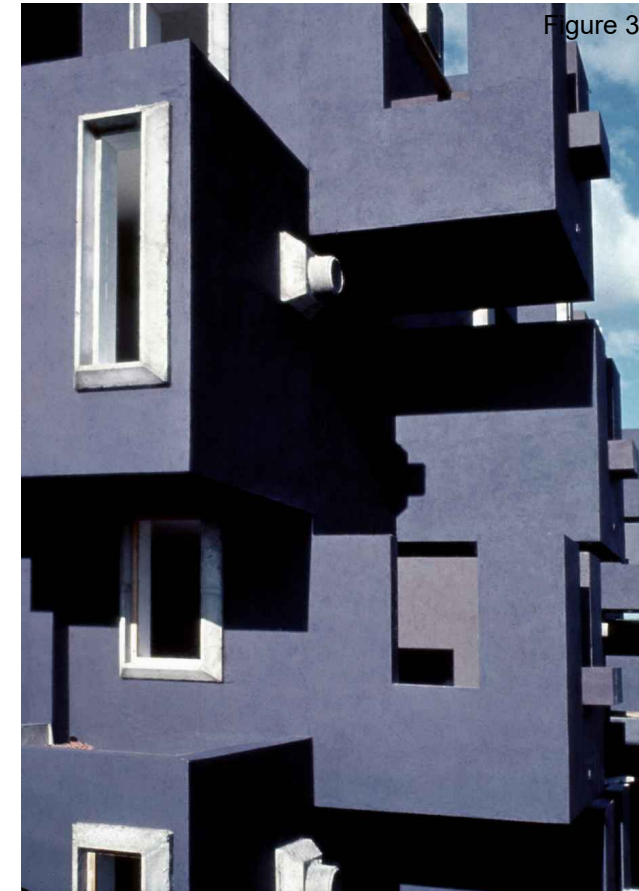


Figure 35

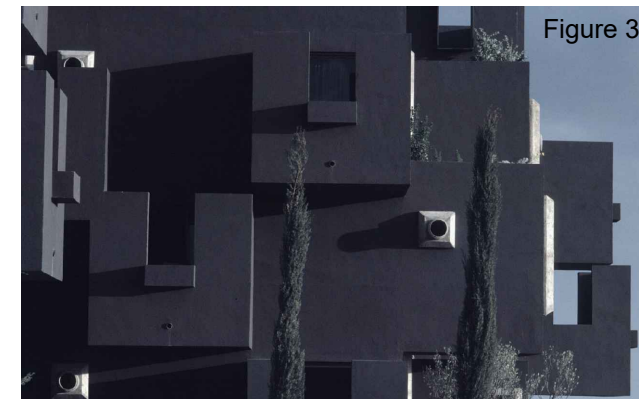


Figure 36



Figure 37



Figure 38

KAFKA CASTLE / Ricardo Bofill

LITERATURE QUOTE	ASSOCIATED FEELING	ARCHITECTURAL POTENTIAL	ARCHITECTURAL REALIZATION
<i>The next day he finds it impossible to get to the castle on foot, because the village street that seems to lead there curves away from it.</i>	confusing, unreachable, inaccessible, circuitous journey, endless searching	labyrinth spaces, exploratory and open-ended movement	interior; intertwining paths, courtyards, and layered spaces
<i>The outsider is treated with condescension, contempt, and outright dislike by the villagers, and allowed only a marginal place in their community</i>	isolated, disliked, disconnected, repulsive	isolated location, specific communal areas, repulsive exterior	whole building; isolated location, fortress-like exterior and hidden communal terraces and spaces

Figure 39. *From literature to architecture* by Marta Lulić

The *Kafka Castle* captures the themes of ambiguity, power, and existential searching. Its repetitive modular forms and labyrinthine layout evoke an endless, exploratory journey, reflecting the novel's open-ended narrative. Moreover, the tension between the castle's imposing authority and its mundane, human aspects is seen in the juxtaposition of monumental scale with intimate liveable interiors.

To achieve this, certain design elements stand out: alternating dimensions sparking curiosity and exploration, contrasting proportions and spaces that heighten sensory awareness and provoke curiosity, unconventional designs that sparks intrigue, dark colours that enhance monumentality and superiority, and heavy materials that evoke stability and strength.

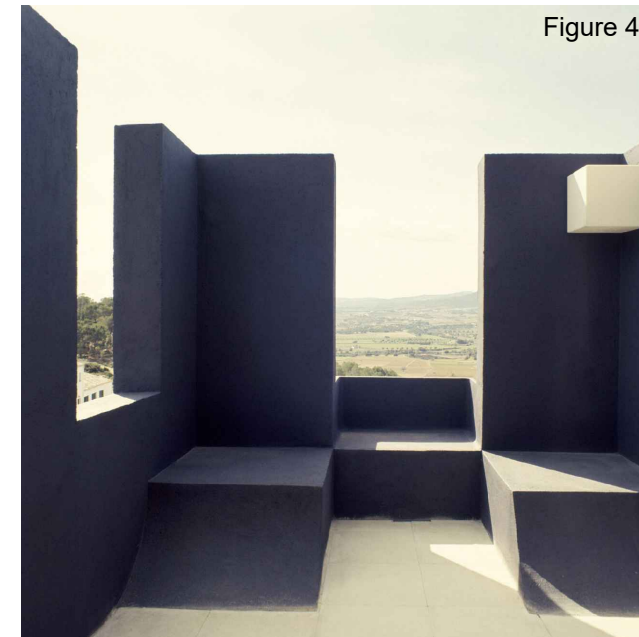


Figure 40



Figure 42



Figure 41

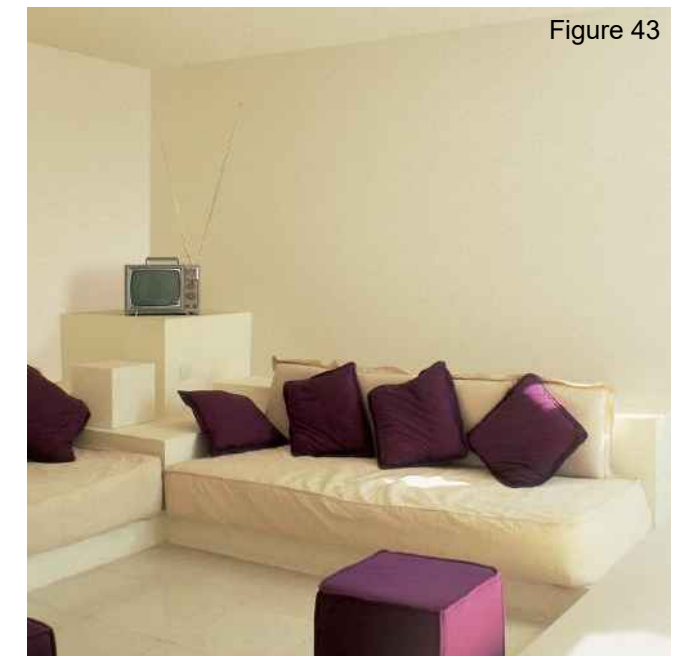


Figure 43

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

The *Danteum*, an unbuilt project designed in 1938 by eminent Italian architects Giuseppe Terragni and Pietro Lingeri, was conceived as a monument to the 14th-century Italian writer Dante Alighieri. It was planned as part of the 1942 World Exposition in Rome, which aimed to showcase the strength of the Fascist regime. In this context, the *Danteum* also functioned as a monument to Mussolini and Fascism. However, the project has never been built due to the outbreak of World War II (Schreiber 2023).

The proposed site for the *Danteum* was along the Via dell'Impero in Rome, halfway between the Colosseum and the Palazzo Venezia, the Renaissance palace in which Mussolini had set up both his government and residence. This strategic location was intended to symbolically connect the glory of the ancient Roman Empire with the ambitions of the Fascist regime (Schreiber 2023).

Today, it is renowned for its allegoric organization of space following Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

The project represents a profound intersection of architecture and literature, transforming Dante's poem into a spatial experience and physical embodiment. What is particularly fascinating about Terragni's design is how he used the *Divine Comedy* not only as inspiration but also as a guiding principle and a framework, translating its themes and structure into architectural and spatial form.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* consists of an introduction and three main parts - *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* - each containing 33 cantos, creating a perfectly symmetrical total of 100 cantos.

The poem narrates Dante's spiritual journey, beginning with his descent into a dark forest where he is lost. The Roman poet Virgil serves as his guide through the first two realms, *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, while Beatrice leads him through *Paradiso* (Kanekar 2013).

In the Dantean universe, the creation of *Inferno* directly leads to the formation of *Purgatorio*: Lucifer's fall into the centre of the Earth after his banishment from Heaven displaces a mass of land, forming a mountain on the opposite side. This mountain becomes *Purgatorio*, an island surrounded by water where souls destined for Heaven undergo purification. At its summit lies the *Earthly Paradise*, closest to the celestial spheres and thought to be the Garden of Eden (Kanekar 2013).

Each realm in the *Divine Comedy* is intricately structured. *Inferno* consists of nine circles, representing the full range of earthly terrains - rivers, woods, deserts, glaciers, castles, and cliffs - all in exaggerated and forbidding forms. Sinners are placed in these circles based on their sins, categorized broadly as incontinence, violence, and fraud. *Purgatorio*, a steep, rocky mountain, features two terraces leading to its gate followed by seven cornices representing the purification of the seven deadly sins, culminating in a lush forest at the summit, the *Earthly Paradise*. *Paradiso*, in contrast, is described as having nine celestial spheres surrounding Earth, each associated with a heavenly body: Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the fixed stars, and the Primum Mobile. Beyond these lies the Empyrean, the eternal dwelling of God, where souls are positioned according to their virtues and degree of beatitude (Kanekar 2013).

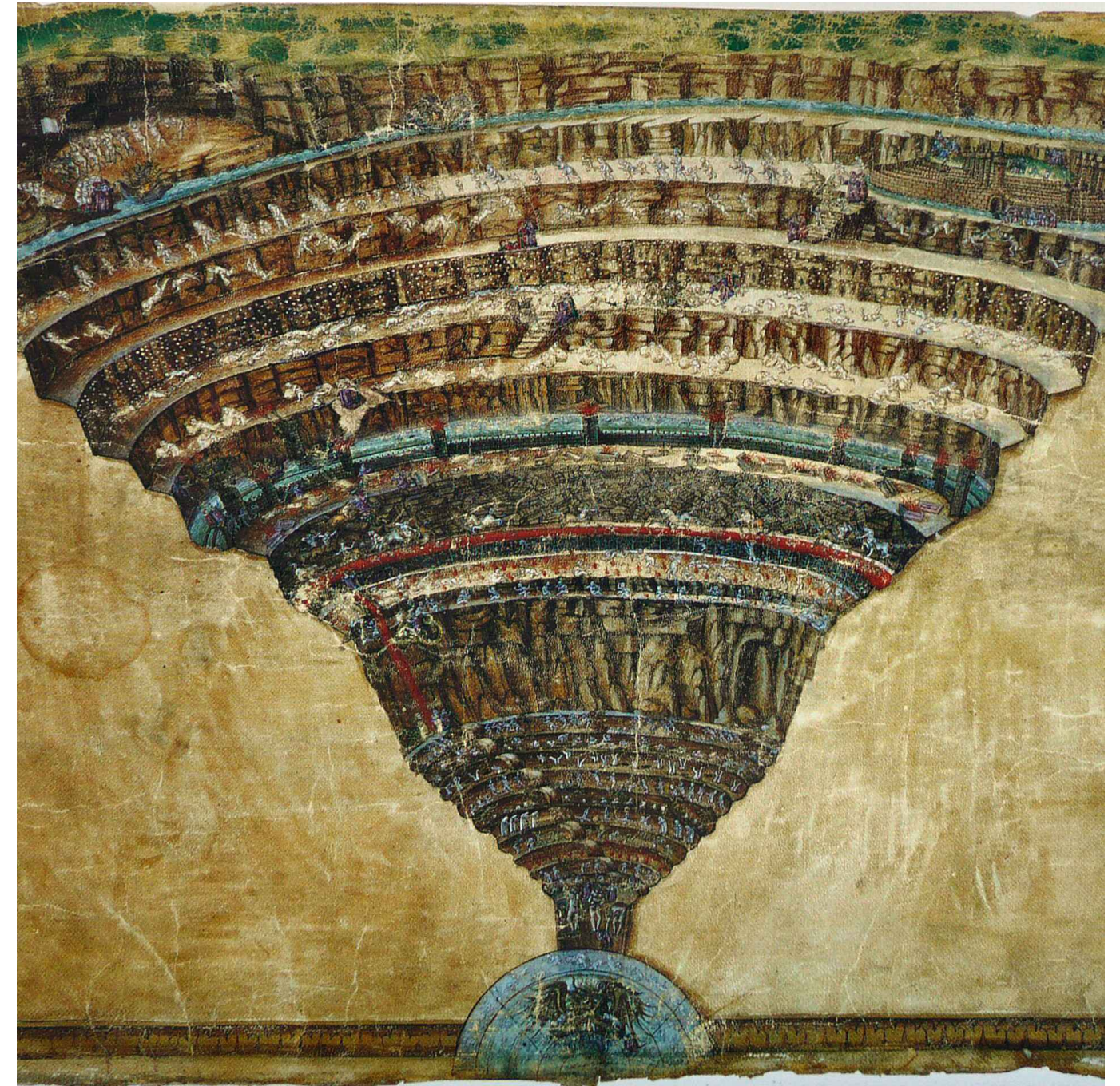


Figure 44. *Divine Comedy* by Sandro Botticelli

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

CASE STUDY

Terragni's design reflects the compositional structure of *Divine Comedy*, not only by illustrating its narrative but also by translating its form and rhyme structure into the architectural language of carefully proportioned spaces. The *Danteum* embodies a profound literary and symbolic intent, transforming Dante's emotional and philosophical journey into architectural form. It consists of a sequence of monumental spaces that parallel the narrator's progression from the "dark wood" through *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*, offering a spatial experience that mirrors the allegorical journey of the poem.

The building's plan is deceptively simple, divided into four parts: an entrance court open to the sky with a courtyard with a dense grid of 100 travertine columns, two rooms that step up in section, intended as representations of *Inferno*, with 7 travertine columns that range in thickness, and *Purgatorio*, with cut-outs open to the sky; and the upper level, *Paradiso*, with a grid of 33 glass columns (Kanekar 2005).

Terragni employed the classical language of proportion, symmetry, and monumentalism, using geometric precision. The sequence of rooms, each defined by distinct levels, forms, and light conditions, was designed to parallel the progression through Dante's *Divine Comedy*, evoking the contrasting emotional and spiritual experiences of *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*.

The golden rectangle, chosen as the fundamental geometrical principle of the project, operates throughout the entire design. While its connection to *Divine Comedy* may be questioned, Terragni justified it as "only rectangle that clearly expresses the harmonic law of unity in the Trinity" (Kanekar 2005).

Symbolic geometry and numbers further align the *Danteum* with Dante's work. The 100 travertine columns in the courtyard represent the poem's 100 cantos, while 33 glass columns in *Paradiso* correspond to its cantos. The 7 columns in *Inferno* symbolize the 7 deadly sins, while the 7 vacant podia in *Purgatorio* align with its terraces, though both diverge from Dante's original structure. The columns serve both numerical symbolism and spatial representation, contrasting the chaotic spiral of *Inferno* with the orderly grid of *Paradiso*, while their absence in *Purgatorio* underscores its transitory nature (Kanekar 2002).

The transitions between realms were carefully orchestrated through architectural forms, creating a narrative-driven experience that relied on spatial symbolism rather than explicit textual references.

The *Danteum* exemplifies how architecture can translate the abstract, emotive, and spiritual dimensions of literature into a tangible experience, creating a bridge between poetic narrative and spatial forms. It was not merely an illustration of the poem, but an exploration of how architectural elements could embody its allegorical and mystical dimensions.

Both a tribute to Dante and a reflection on the relationship between literature and architecture, the project reimagines the *Divine Comedy* as a spatial journey, inviting visitors to experience the progression from despair to redemption and transcendence. By translating Dante's literary legacy into architectural form, the *Danteum* demonstrates how stories can shape our perception of space and meaning, offering a unique medium for interpreting and perpetuating literary heritage while exploring the deep connections between art, narrative, and space.

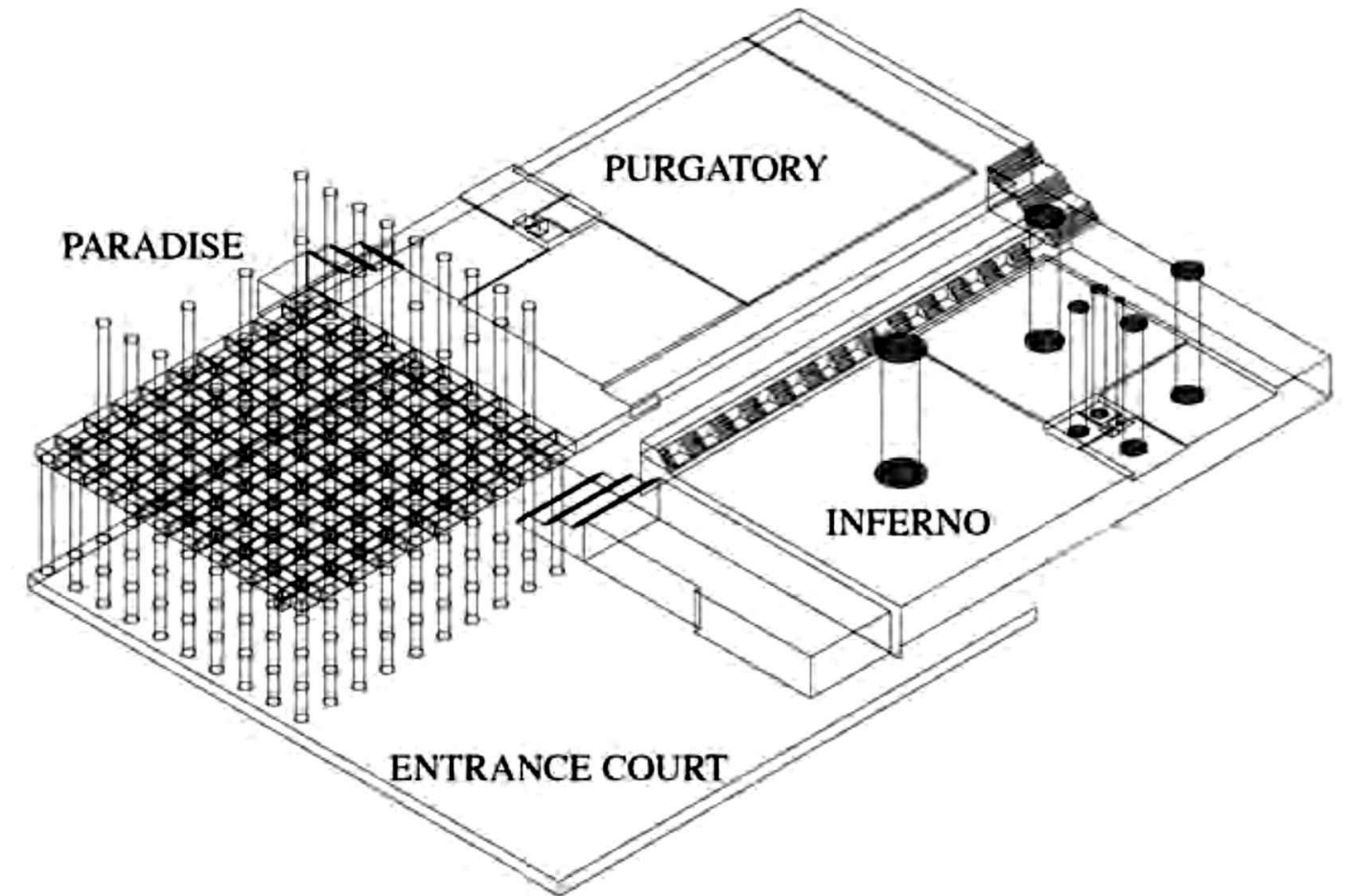


Figure 45. Axonometry by Aarati Kanekar

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

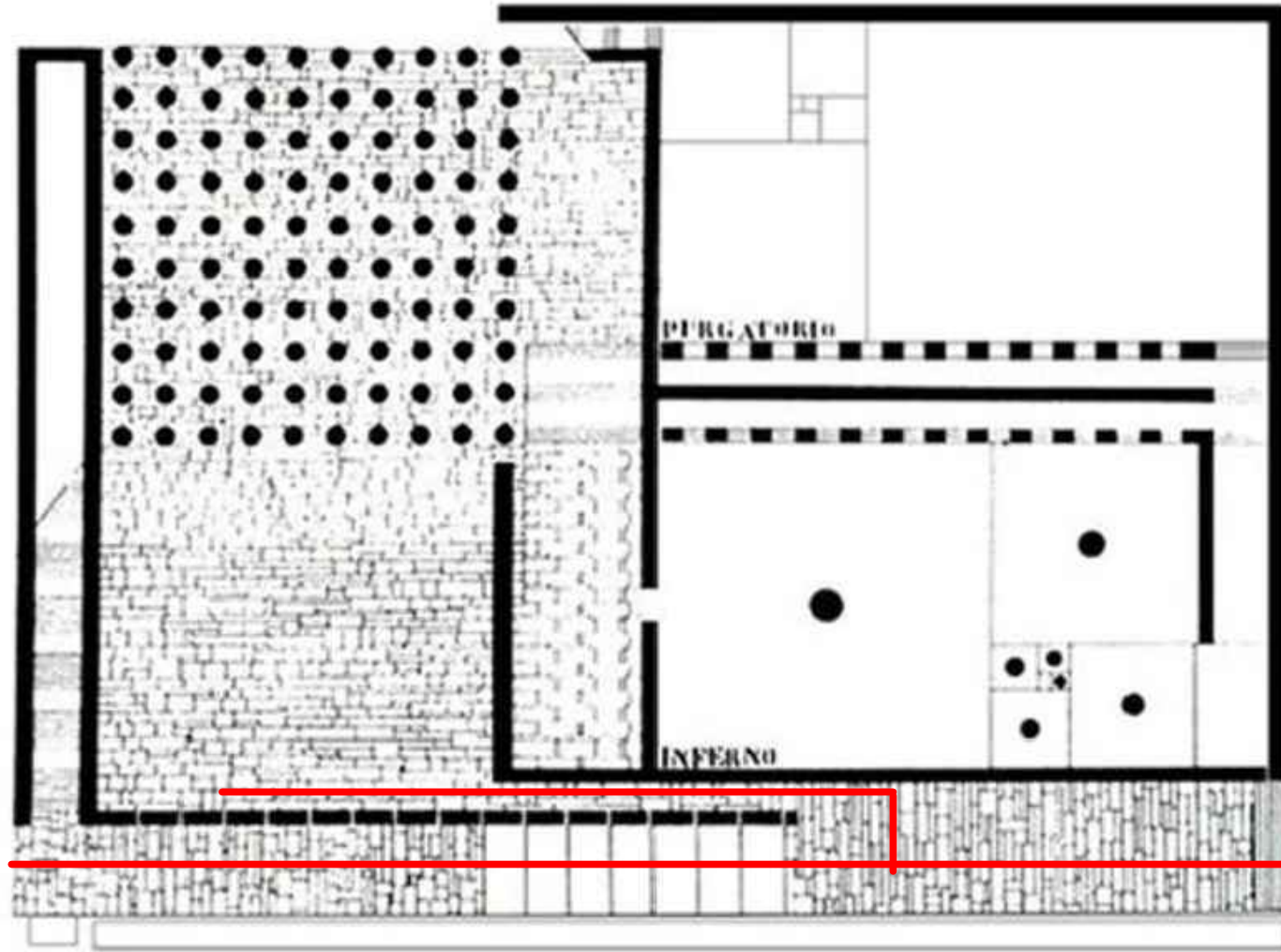


Figure 46. Entrance

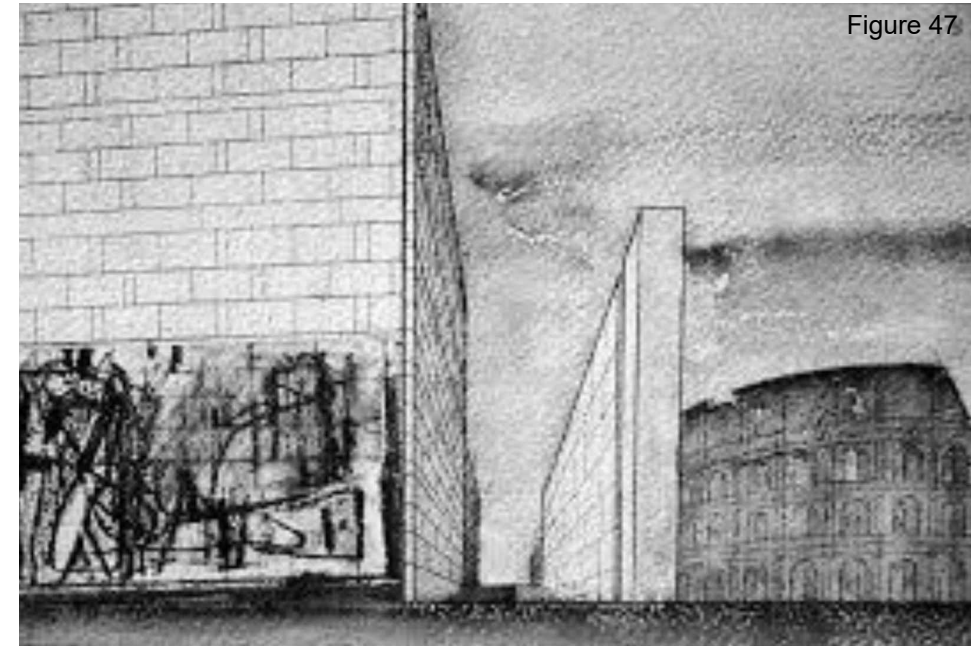


Figure 47

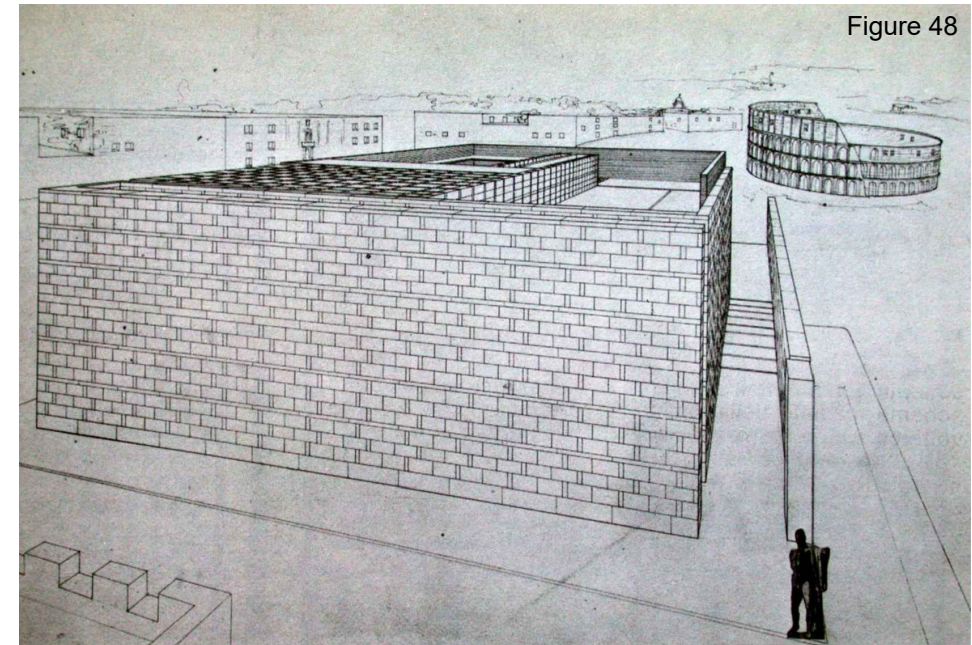


Figure 48

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

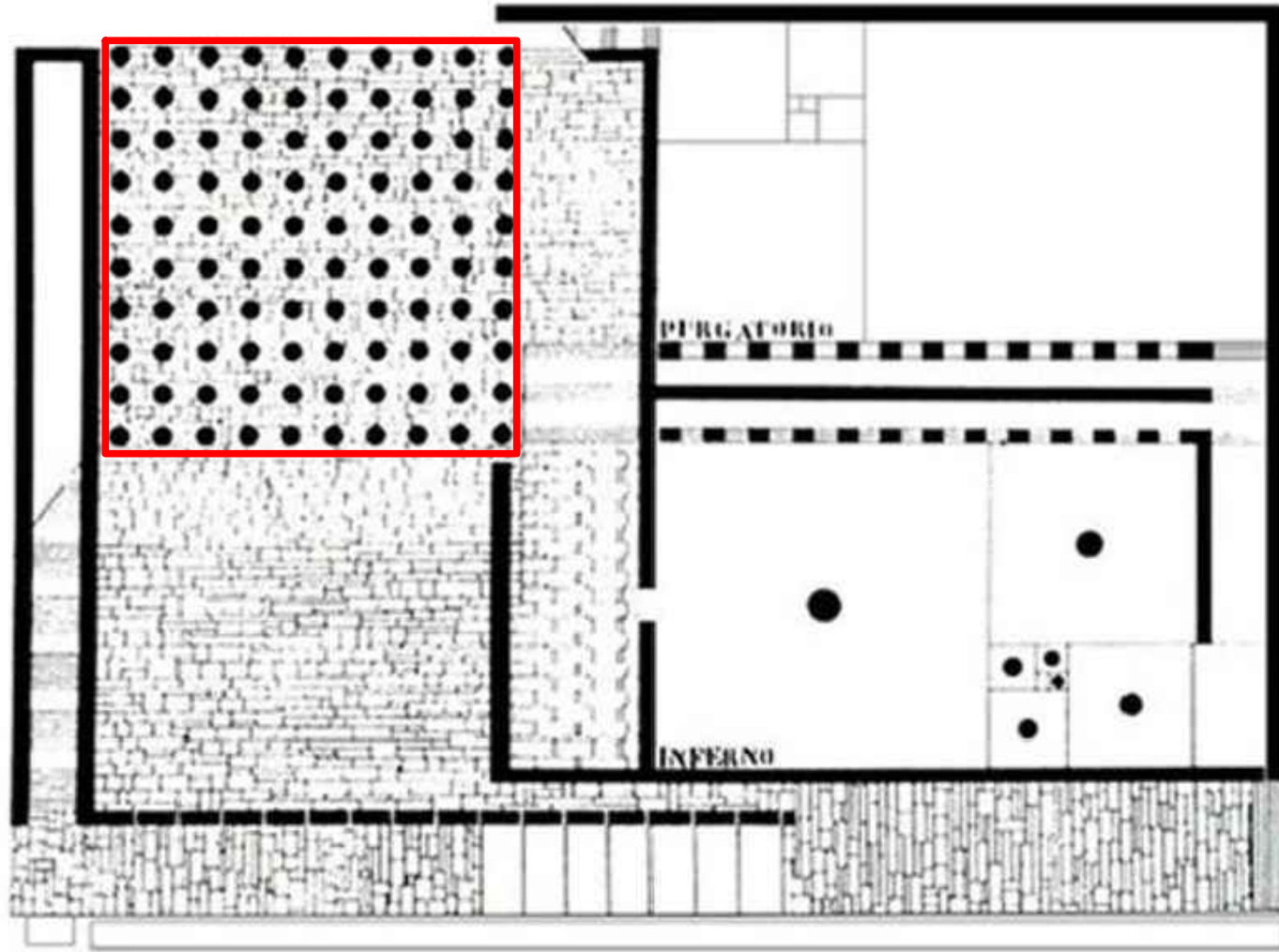


Figure 49. Entrance through hypostyle hall

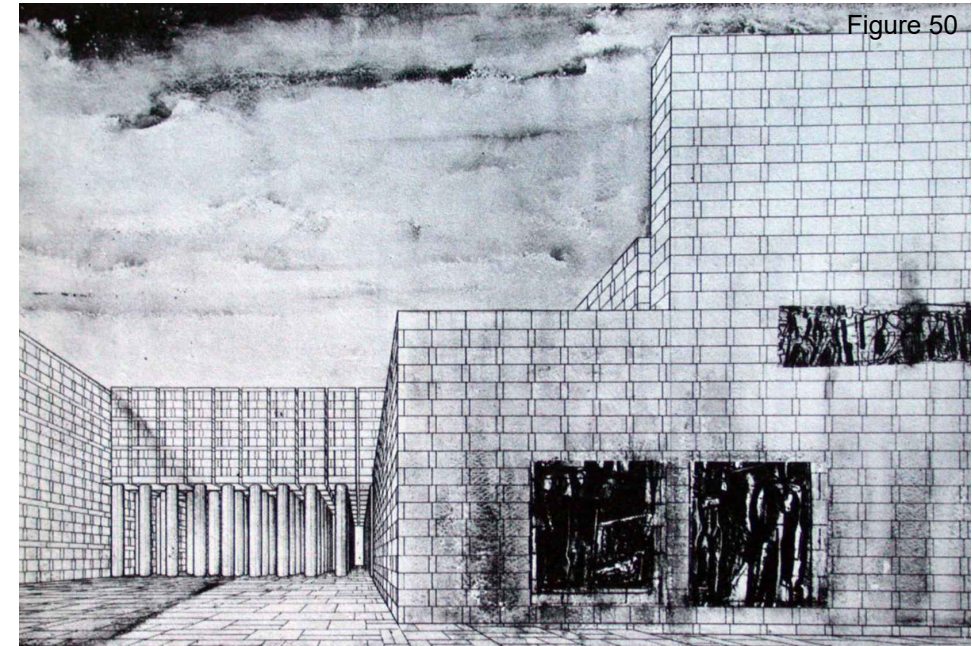


Figure 50



Figure 51

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

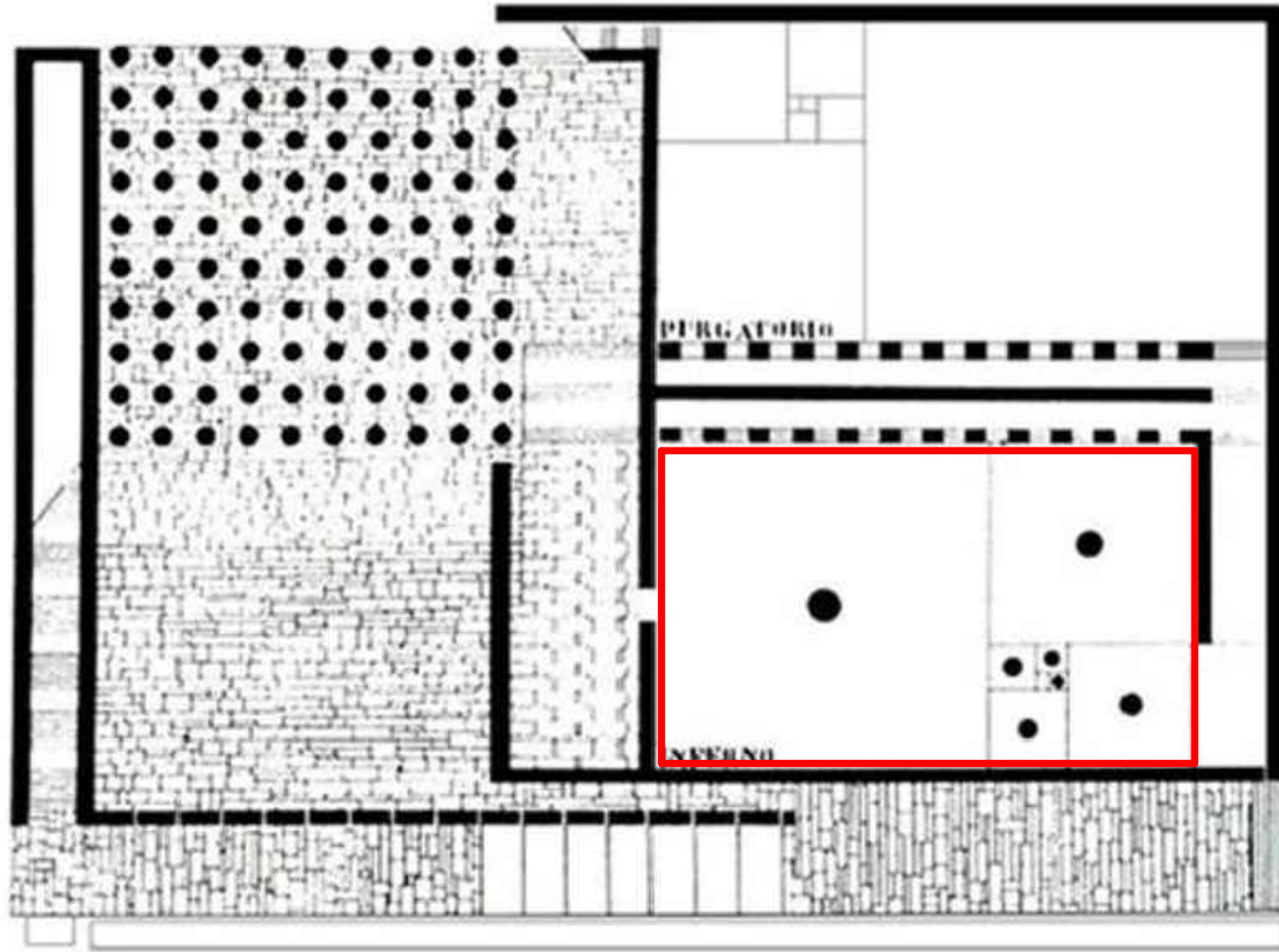


Figure 52. *Inferno*

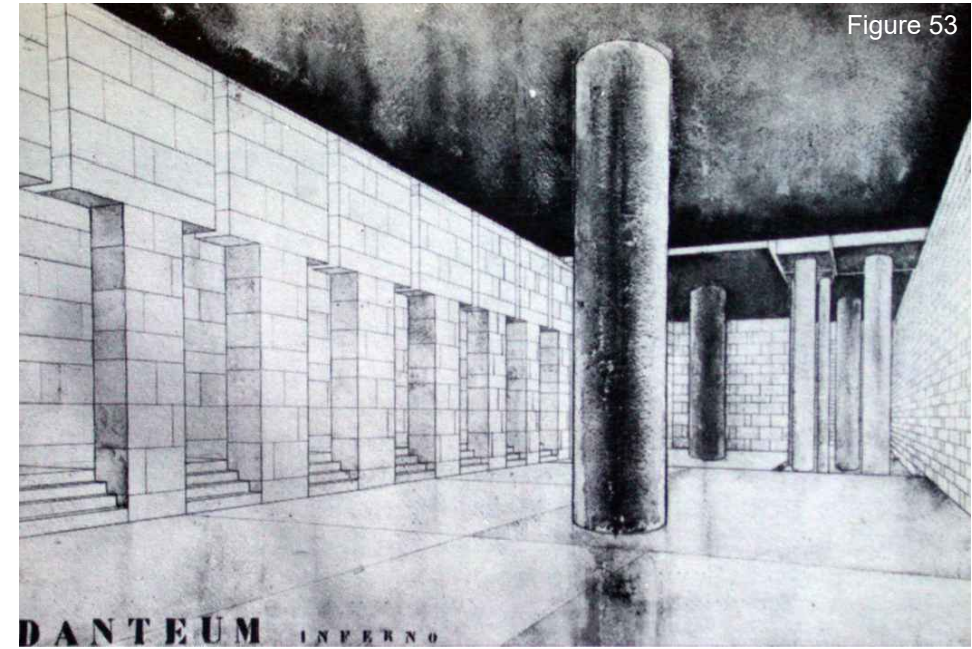


Figure 53



Figure 54

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

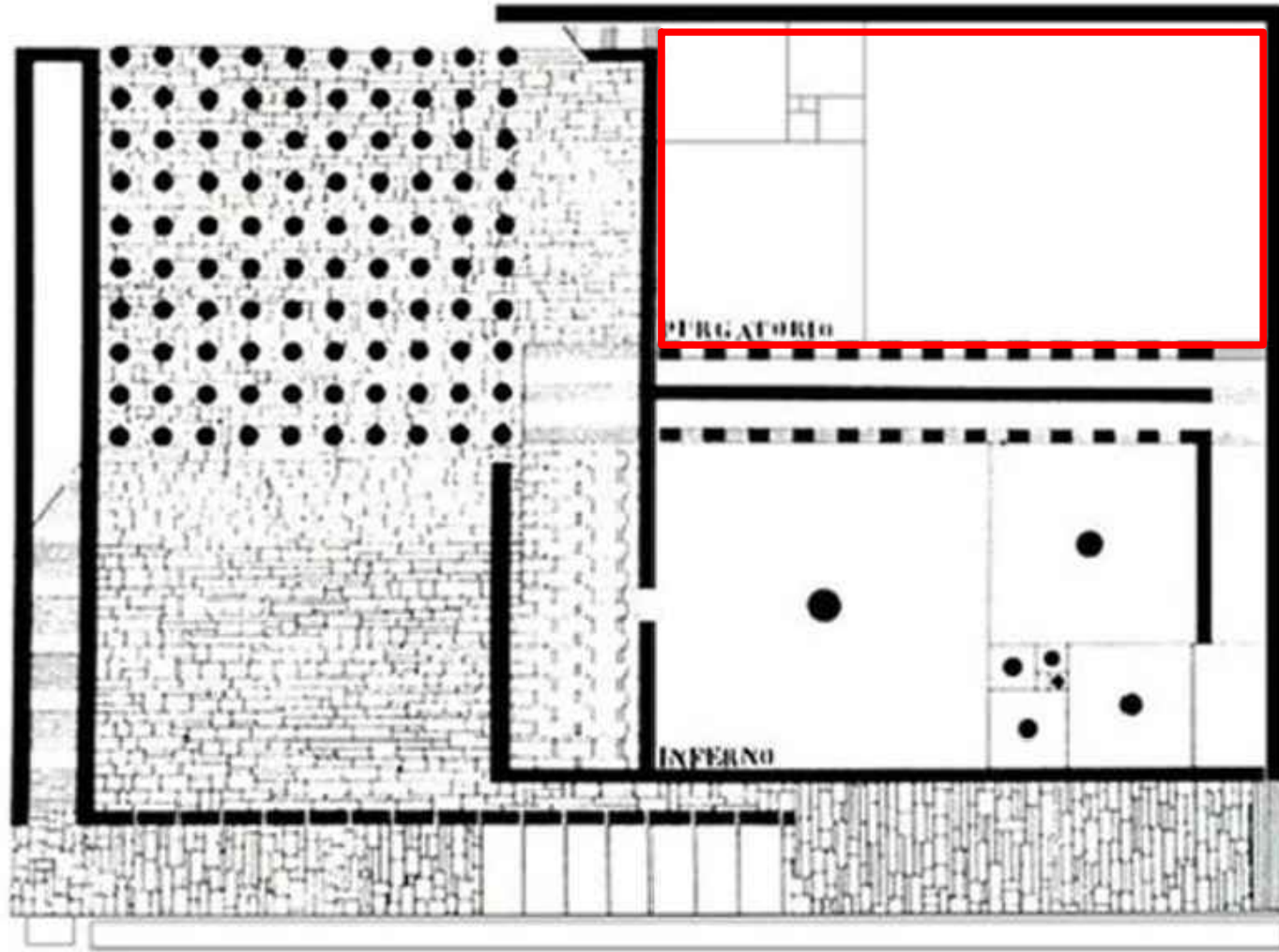


Figure 55. *Purgatorio*

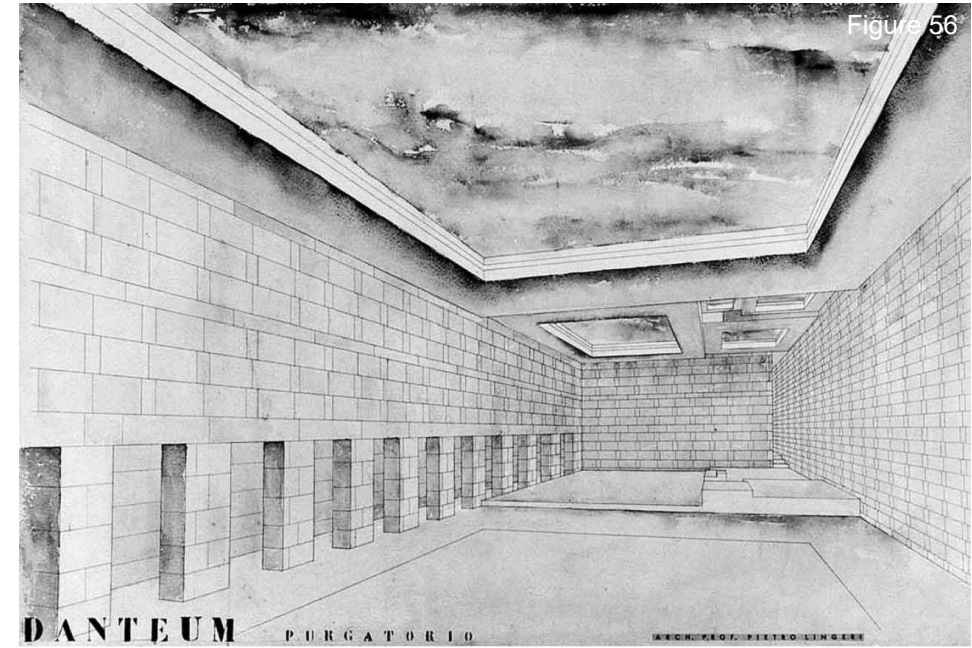


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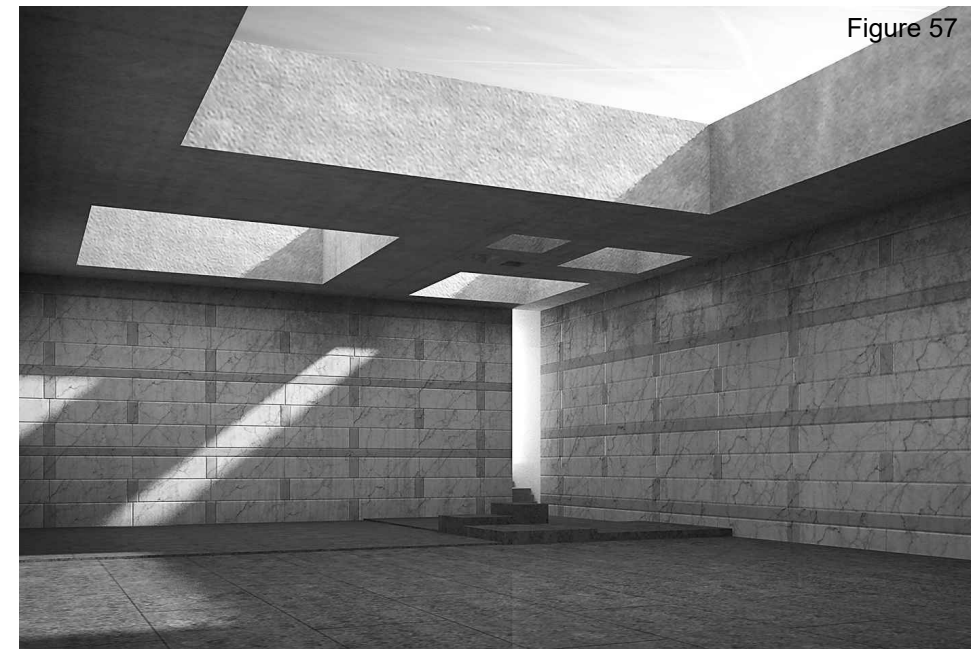


Figure 57

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

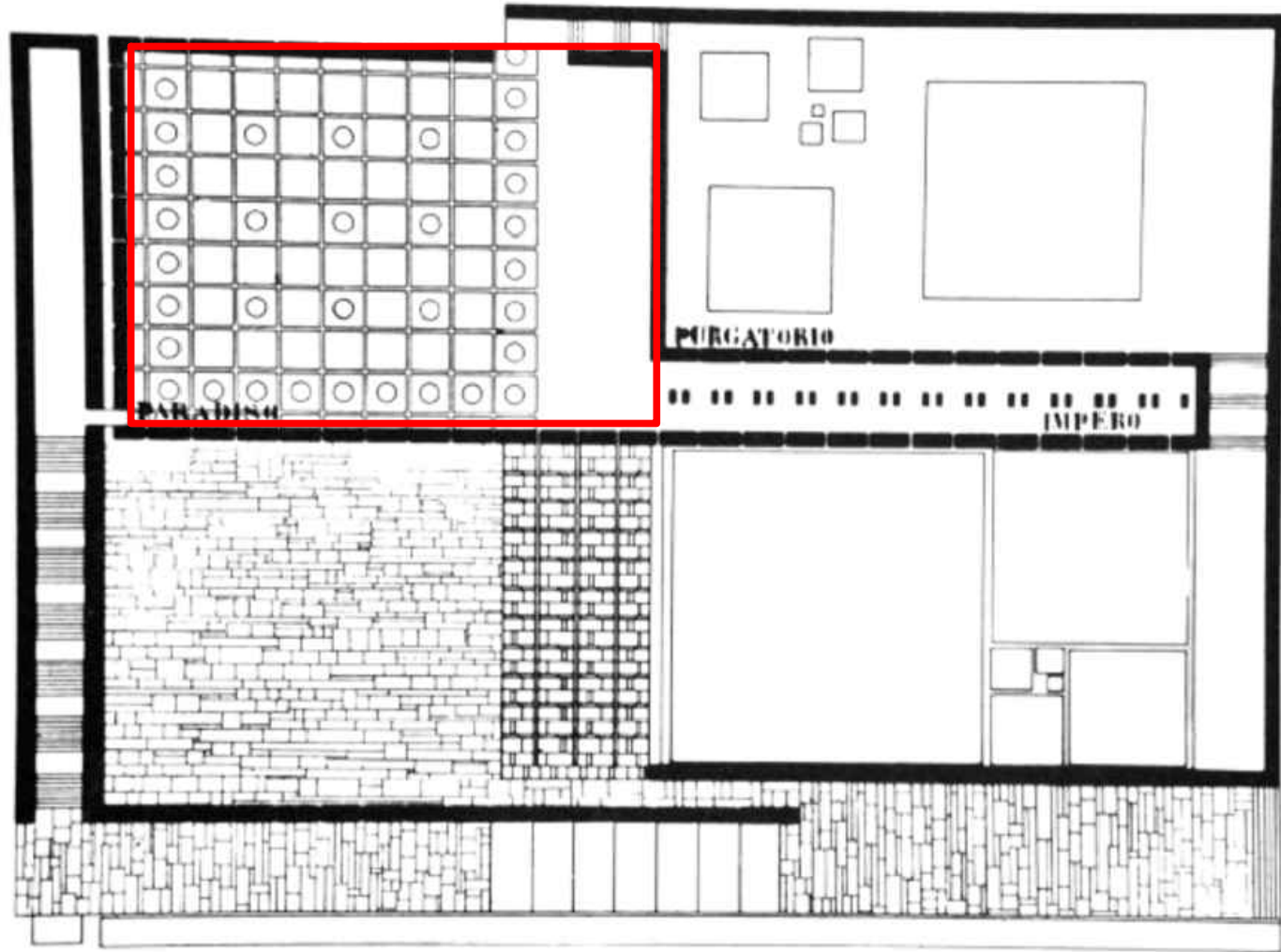


Figure 58. *Paradiso*



Figure 59

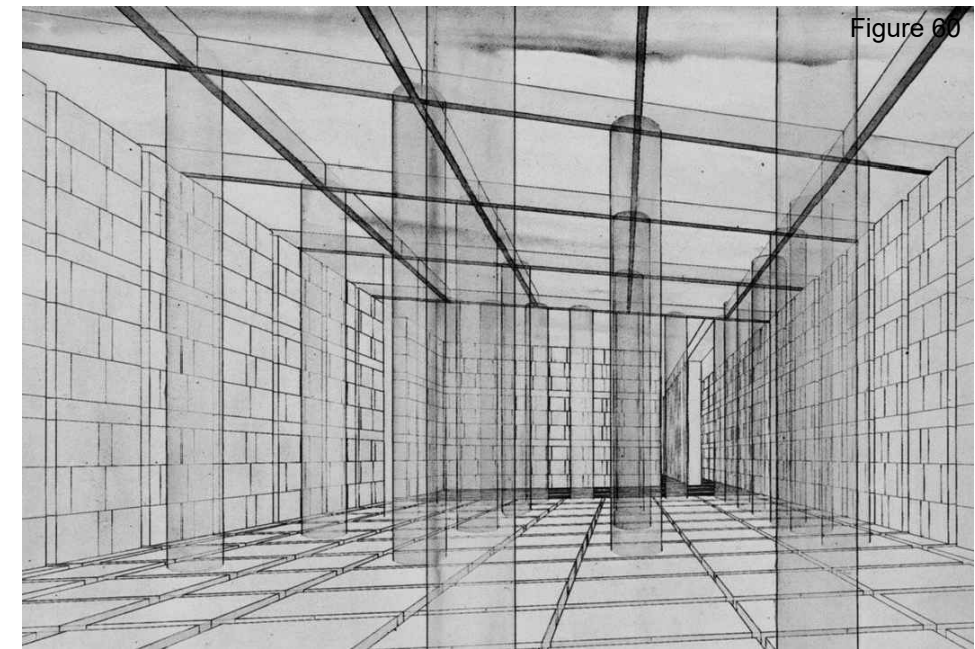


Figure 60

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

LITERATURE QUOTE	ASSOCIATED FEELING	ARCHITECTURAL POTENTIAL	ARCHITECTURAL REALIZATION
<i>Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.</i>	hopeless, unknown, introspection, inferior	silent precursor to chaos, constrained spaces	entrance; high walls, open ceiling, threshold
<i>I found myself within a forest dark, for the straight-forward pathway had been lost.</i>	lost, confused, inferior, disoriented, step into an unknown and dark territory	defamiliarization, labyrinthine pathways, enclosed, narrow spaces, poor visibility	entrance; ambiguous space, forrest of dense positioned heavy and big columns, dimly light
<i>Through me the way is to the city dolent; Through me the way is to eternal dole; Through me the way among the people lost.</i>	despair, distress, disorientation, endless suffering, hopeless	dark, narrow spaces	entrance to inferno; ambiguous, enclosed space, narrow hallway leading into the dark
<i>Hope nevermore to look upon the heavens; I come to lead you to the other shore, to the eternal shades in heat and frost</i>	eternal darkness, endless suffering	contrasting spaces, dark, temperature differences	inferno; contrasting elements, interplay of materials, light, and temperature
<i>Thus I descended out of the first circle, down to the second, that less space begirds, and so much greater dole, that goads to wailing.</i>	despair, sins, suffering, fear, awe, sinking into unknown	uncomfortable space, descending into darkness	inferno; dark space, no lights nor windows, stairs

Figure 61. From literature to architecture by Marta Lulić

CASE STUDY

LITERATURE QUOTE	ASSOCIATED FEELING	ARCHITECTURAL POTENTIAL	ARCHITECTURAL REALIZATION
<i>So bitter is it, death is hardly more.</i>	claustrophobic, oppressive, suffering	narrow, dark, heavy, enclosed spaces	inferno; enclosed spaces, harsh materials, darkness
<i>I reached a place where every light is mute, which bellows like the sea beneath a tempest, when it is battered by opposing winds</i>	darkness, stillness	dark, enclosed spaces	inferno; no windows, dim lighting, shadows, quiet, sensory overload
<i>“Come,” said he, “near at hand here are the steps, and easy from henceforth is the ascent.</i>	hopefull, purification, positive, leading to heaven	gradual ascending, progressively brighter and open	purgatorio; transition from dark to light starting with dim/shadow, stairs
<i>Along the solitary plain we went, as one who unto the lost road returns, and till he finds it seems to go in vain.</i>	hopeful, lost, confused	sense of wandering	purgatorio; high walls, closed off, no views
<i>on the left hand appeared to me a thong of souls, that moved their feet in our direction, and did not seem to move, they came so slowly</i>	observative, introspective, contemplative	simple, clean, elements, timeless, ethereal	purgatorio; platforms, high walls, minimalistic

Figure 62. From literature to architecture by Marta Lulić

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

CASE STUDY

LITERATURE QUOTE	ASSOCIATED FEELING	ARCHITECTURAL POTENTIAL	ARCHITECTURAL REALIZATION
<i>thence we came forth to rebehold the stars.</i>	hope, freedom	escape from darkness	purgatorio; bright, stairs
<i>The rays of the four consecrated stars, did so adom his countenance with light, that him I saw as were the sun before him.</i>	hopefull, bright, calm, radiant, divine, progress	bright, open spaces	purgatorio; open ceiling, interplay of shadow and natural light
<i>The glory of Him who moveth everything, doth penetrate the universe, and shine in one part more and in another less.</i>	spiritual journey, divine glory	light, transparency	paradiso; transparent materials (glass), columns, interplay of light intensity
<i>And his will is our peace; this is the sea to which is moving onward whatsoever it doth create, and all that nature makes.</i>	harmony, peace, unity, order	simplicity, order, proportion, movement	paradiso; use of proportion, creating movement
<i>and how much I beheld it grow with the new joy that superadded was unto its joys, as soon as I had spoken!</i>	joy, happines, grateful, spiritual fullfilment	clarity, bright space	paradiso; light, stairs

Figure 63. *From literature to architecture* by Marta Lulić

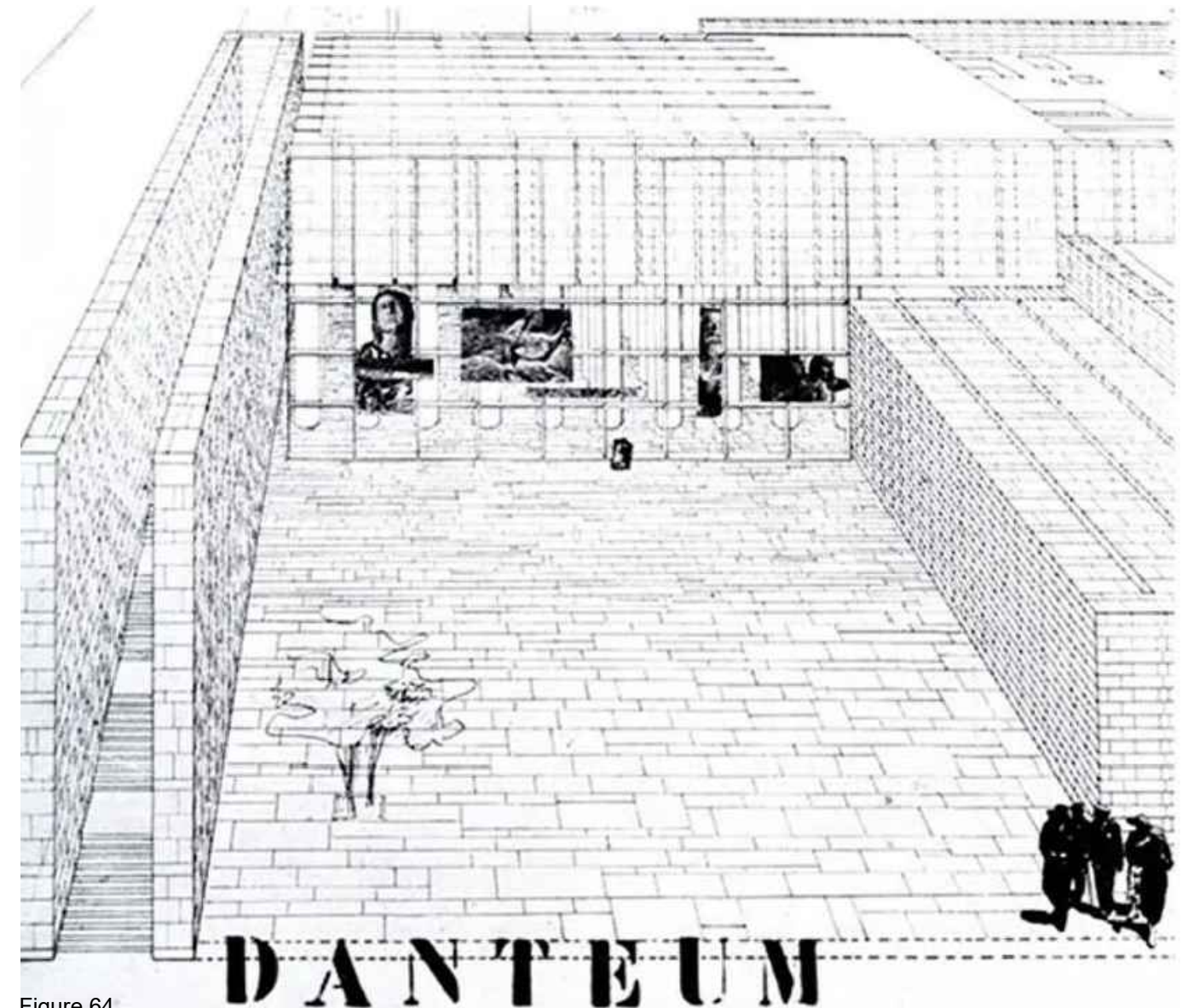


Figure 64

DANTEUM / Giuseppe Terragni

The *Danteum's* design transforms the poetic imagery and moral lessons of *Divine Comedy* into a tangible, spatial experience, echoing Dante's progression from darkness to light, confusion to clarity, and suffering to divine peace.

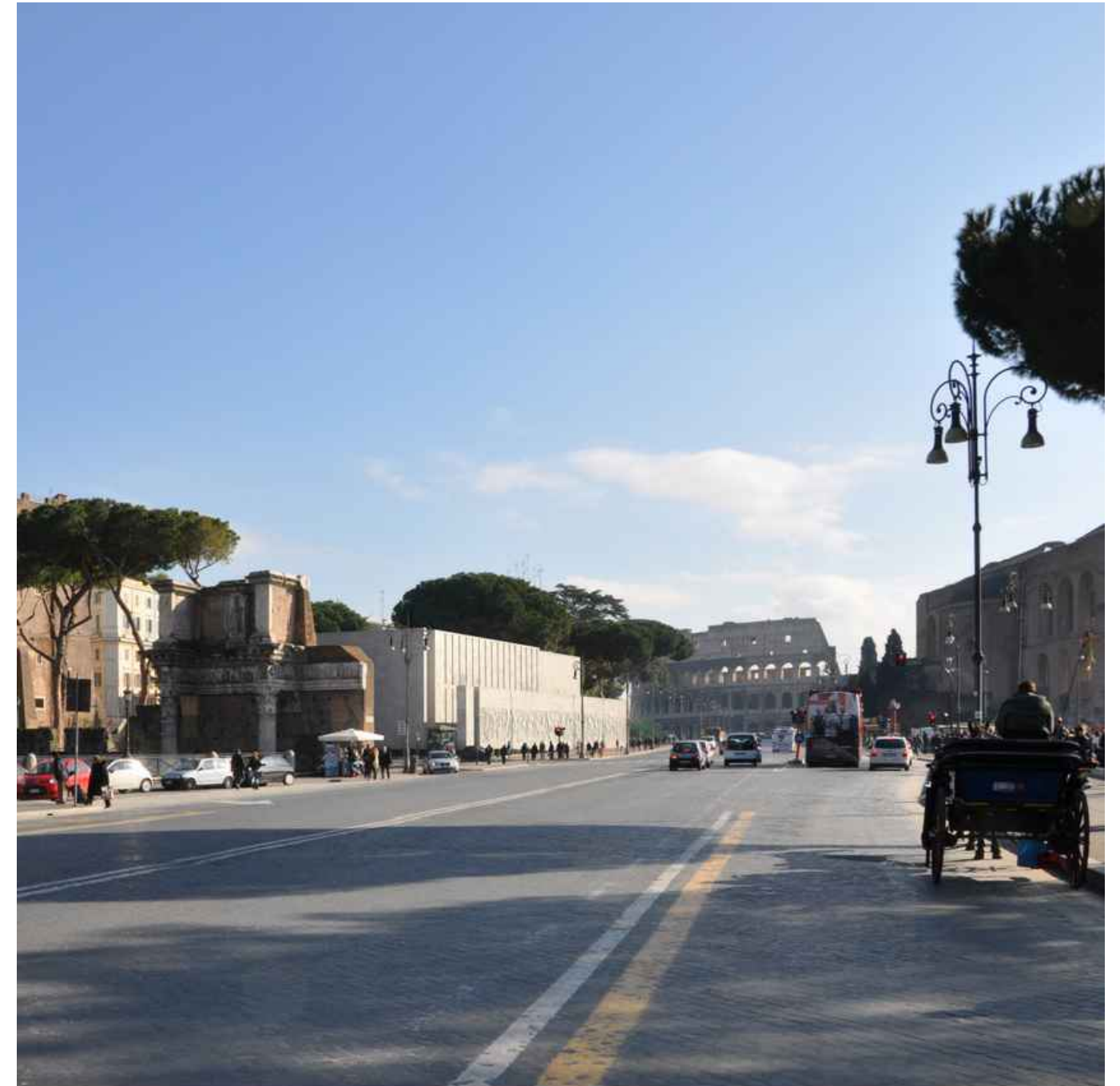
Inferno is portrayed through fractured and oppressive spaces that evoke darkness and despair, with sunken floor sections and fragmented columns intensifying the sense of distortion and weight. The proportional sinking of the floors creates horizontal discontinuity, while the dislocation of floor and ceiling sections suggests shear distortion under immense pressure. This interplay of light, scale, and materials amplifies the crushing atmosphere of heaviness and darkness.

Purgatorio, in contrast, features stepped platforms open to the sky, suggesting ascension and transition. The use of light and form plays a crucial role here as it emphasizes the movement from darkness into light.

Paradiso is expressed in a luminous hall of glass columns, glass blocks and glass beams, embodying light, purity, and transcendence. Moreover, natural light, tall ceilings, symmetry, and simple forms create a serene sense of peace and clarity. The transparent columns symbolize harmony and divine order, while their interaction with light transforms the space, reflecting the unfolding of spiritual truth and enlightenment central to Dante's journey.

“*architecture is not simply construction, or even the satisfaction of material needs; it must be something more [...]. Only when a harmony of proportions is reached, inducing the observer to pause in contemplation or emotion - only then will the constructive scheme have become a work of architecture.*”

- Giuseppe Terragni, 1931



CONCLUSION

The case studies highlight how architecture transcends mere functionality to become an evocative medium for atmosphere, narrative, and emotional resonance. By drawing from literature and poetry, these works reveal the power of spatial design to express intangible qualities.

The atmosphere of a space emerges from a thoughtful interplay of layout, light. The use of natural materials like stone, brick, and wood reflects an understanding of time, history, and human interaction. These materials, with their textured surfaces and patina of wear, witness the continuum of time and evoke authenticity. They allow spaces to communicate their origins and the passage of time, creating a dialogue between the built environment and its users. This connection to the natural world enhances feelings of comfort, stability, and belonging.

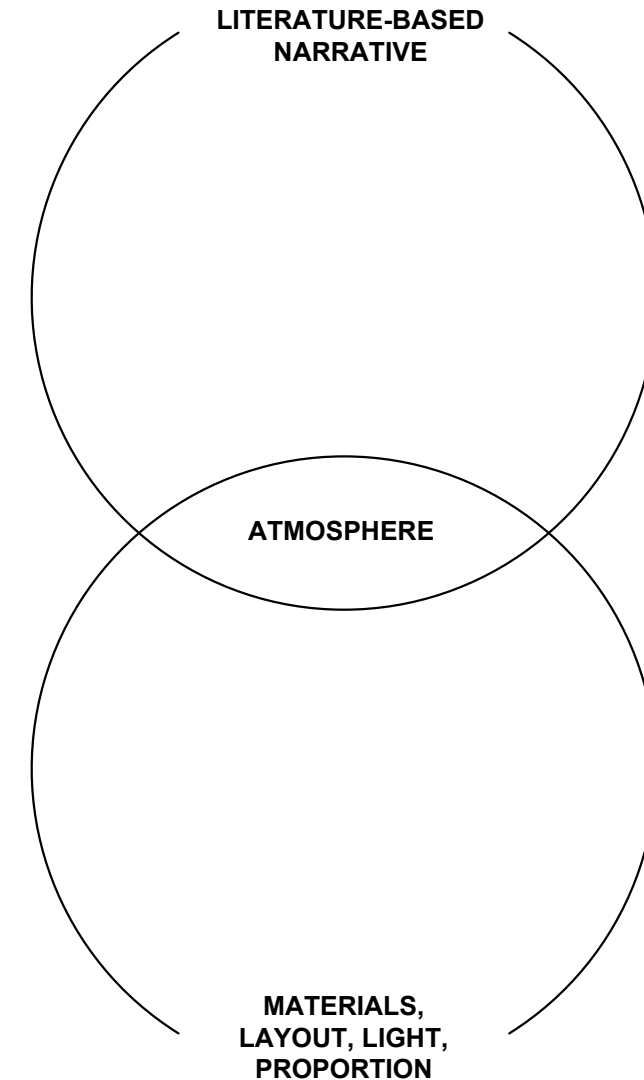
In contrast, contemporary materials like glass, metal, and synthetics, while visually striking, often lack this expressive depth. Their smooth, uniform surfaces can feel disconnected from the narrative of time, limiting their ability to convey meaning (Holl, Pallasmaa, Pérez-Gómez, 2007). Consequently, the thoughtful selection of materials becomes a vital narrative tool, enabling architecture to communicate on both a tangible and symbolic level.

Spatial organization further shapes the atmosphere of a space. For instance, Campo Baeza's designs emphasize openness and blurred interior-exterior boundaries, fostering calm, clarity, fluidity, and connection. Conversely, the contrasting spaces, modular repetition, and labyrinthine pathways of the *Kafka Castle* evoke curiosity, exploration, and discovery. Proportionality and organic forms cultivate harmony and biophilic connections, while minimalist designs simplify environments, reducing cognitive overload and promoting serenity and focus.

In the *Danteum*, light, proportion, and materiality are employed to convey Dante's poetic journey from darkness to enlightenment. Large openings and natural light fill spaces with warmth and airiness, while darkness emphasizes discomfort and introspection. Similarly, earthy tones and natural sounds provide a sense of calmness and connection to nature, whereas bold palettes and loud noises can evoke feeling of authority and overstimulation.

Atmosphere is cultivated through deliberate design choices that engage the senses. Architecture, in these cases, is not merely a physical construct but an emotional and intellectual endeavour, creating a multi-sensory experience that resonates deeply with human perception. Through the careful orchestration of materials, proportions, light, and space, architecture transforms into a profound experience, embodying the timeless interplay between humanity and the world it inhabits.

NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURE



THE ART OF TRAVEL

Traveling opens the doors to new experiences, immersing us in diverse cultures, landscapes, histories, and ways of life that broaden our perspectives and challenge our assumptions. Each place tells its own story, weaving a tapestry of moments that connect travellers to its unique essence, allowing them to temporarily live within its rhythm, colours, and atmosphere.

Navigating such unfamiliar environments often unfolds as a blend of discovery and transformation, leading to serendipitous encounters and profound insights that craft unique narratives rich with lessons and memories. This exposure to diverse cultures, histories, and ways of life only broadens perspectives but also pushes individuals to look beyond their daily routines. As you explore new places and meet diverse people, you gain subtle reminders that life varies across the world in countless ways - better or worse. Ultimately, the act of traveling enriches one's understanding of the world and deepens connections to oneself and others, highlighting the profound impact of exploration on personal growth and shared human experience.

However, the pursuit of novelty in travel often undermines genuine experience, with travellers fearing they'll miss out and seeking validation through photos or souvenirs instead of true connection, which then turns them into spectators rather than participants. This leads to travel offering an illusion of change, while leaving them fundamentally the same (Callard 2023).

While travelling and vacationing share the commonality of leaving home, their motivations and outcomes differ. Vacationing emphasizes relaxation, comfort, unwinding and mental rejuvenation, often through familiar options like all-inclusive packages or guided tours to recharge from daily stress. It provides

detachment from reality and a break from routines. In contrast, traveling is driven by curiosity and a desire to immerse oneself in new cultures, local traditions, and unfamiliar experiences. It encourages engagement with the environment, fostering personal growth by embracing unpredictability and expanding one's worldview (Potts 2002).

Moreover, travelling invites us to focus not only on destinations but also on the richness of experiences along the way - the conversations, moments of solitude, unplanned turns that reveal hidden places and perspectives, savouring local cuisine, participating in traditional rituals, or simply taking in the sights. This approach encourages us to pause, observe, and connect with the present moment. Each trip adds a new layer to our personal narratives, evoking a range of emotions from joy to nostalgia, shaping how we perceive not only the world around us but also our place within it (De Botton 2002).

Personal narratives in travel capture moments of deep connection, worry, joy, and solitude. They evoke the warmth of crowded markets, the quiet of mountain villages, or the thrill of discovery. Reflecting on these experiences - whether the intensity of a bustling city or the peace of a hidden spot - translates into spaces that embody the sensory essence of travel. Each detail, from feelings of solitude to the chaos of unfamiliar places, shapes a traveller's journey.

Travelogues and travel memoirs are literary forms that capture these journeys. As such, they can transcend their original purpose, becoming a source of inspiration for new and creative approaches for design with distinctive local characteristics as they are linking past narratives, present readings, and future visions (Papastergiou 2024).



Figure 67. *Movilidad* by Jean Pierre Orfeuill

THE ART OF TRAVEL

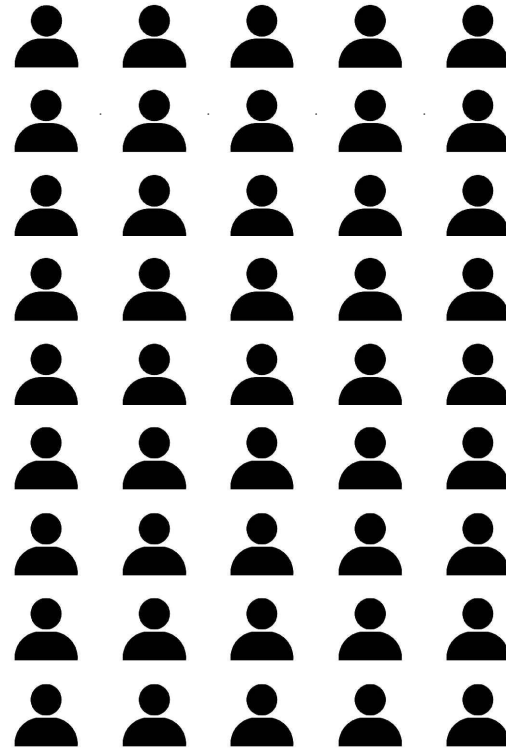
In order to get a better understanding of the topic of travel experiences and accommodations, I have expanded the idea of literature narratives to personal narratives as well.

As such, a survey is used as a quantitative research method where the interviewer, I, poses questions based on specific research topic. Personal background information is also requested to get to know the person better and possibly link the answers to a particular profile. This helps the create a better idea of a potential user and the program of my building.

The survey focused on individuals as tourists/travellers, aiming to explore their personal travel experiences and emotional connections to accommodations. It was conducted through *Google Forms* with 45 participants, who were asked the questions on the following page.

This set of questions was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how accommodation influences travellers' perspective, emotions and overall experience.

The answers will be presented in the following pages and later discussed.



SURVEY

1. What is your age group? (Multiple choice)
18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+

2. Where are you from? (Open-ended)
Short answer text

3. What type of traveler are you? Select which apply. (Multiple choice - checkbox)

- Adventurer – I seek out new, challenging and upbeat experiences.
- Cultural explorer - I love immersing myself in local cultures, history, and traditions.
- Leisure traveler - I travel to unwind, focusing on relaxation and enjoyment.
- Luxury traveler - I prefer exclusive, high-end experiences with top-tier services.
- Budget traveler - I focus on traveling economically and seek out affordable options.
- Business traveler - My trips are usually work-related, with a focus on efficiency.
- Solo traveler - I prefer to travel alone, enjoying solitude and personal interests.
- Nature lover – I enjoy exploring the outdoors, hiking, camping.
- Other (please specify)

4. Based on which criteria do you pick an accommodation? Rank these criteria from most to least important.
Amenities, Design, Interest, Location, Price, Ratings

5. What is your preferred type of accommodation? (Multiple choice - checkbox)
Hotel, Hostel, Guesthouse, Airbnb, Camping, House swap, Couchsurfing, Visiting friends or family, Other (please specify)

6. Is the accommodation something you remember from your past trips? Why? (Open-ended)
Long answer text

7. How did the accommodation's design and atmosphere influence your mood during the stay? Mention a particular example and explain. (Open-ended)
Long answer text

8. What elements of your accommodation stood out to you - whether comforting, unsettling, memorable or simply eye-catching? Mention a particular example and explain. (Open-ended)
Long answer text

9. If you could describe certain accommodation as a story, song title, movie title or a mood, what would it be and why? (Open-ended)
Long answer text

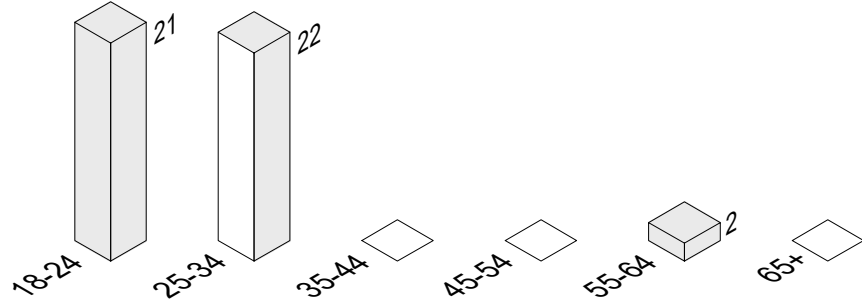
10. Do you like the option to talk to new people within your accommodation? (Multiple choice)
Yes, No, Sometimes

10.1. If yes/sometimes, identify situations where you value social interaction within your accommodation. (Multiple choice)

- At public spaces like bar/lobby
- During group activities
- Within shared facilities like kitchen/bathroom
- At communal spaces like spa/pool
- Other (please specify)

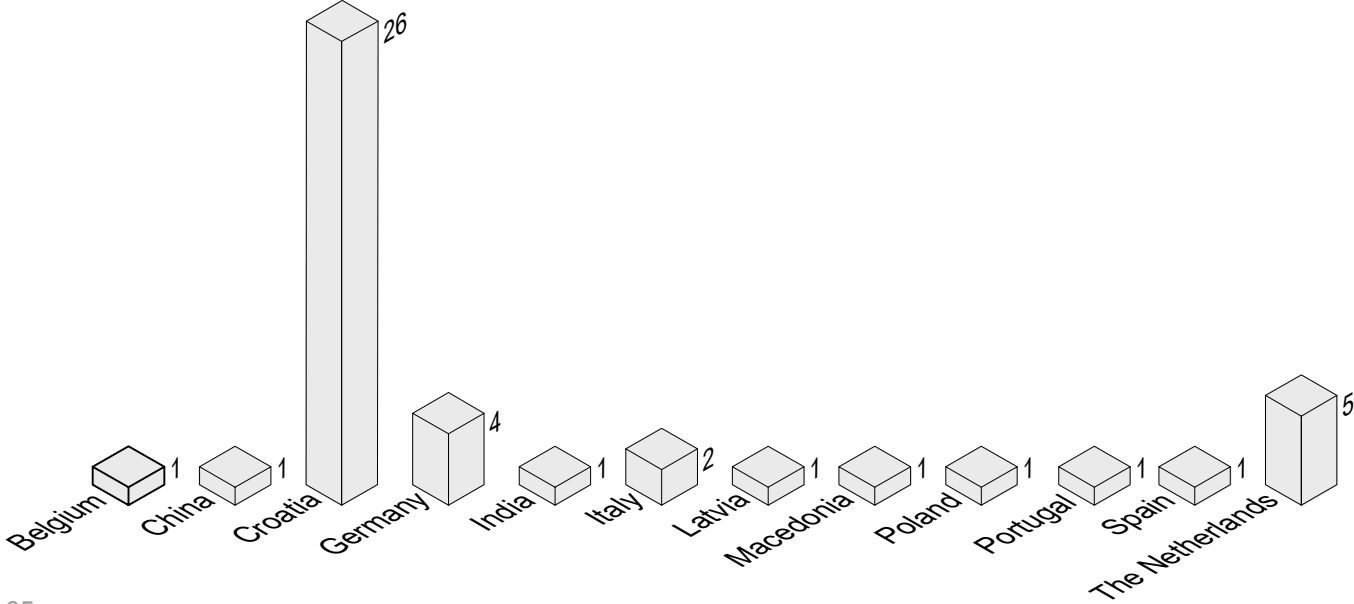
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What is your age group? (Multiple choice)
18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+



Note: the number next to the charts represents the number of answers unless stated otherwise

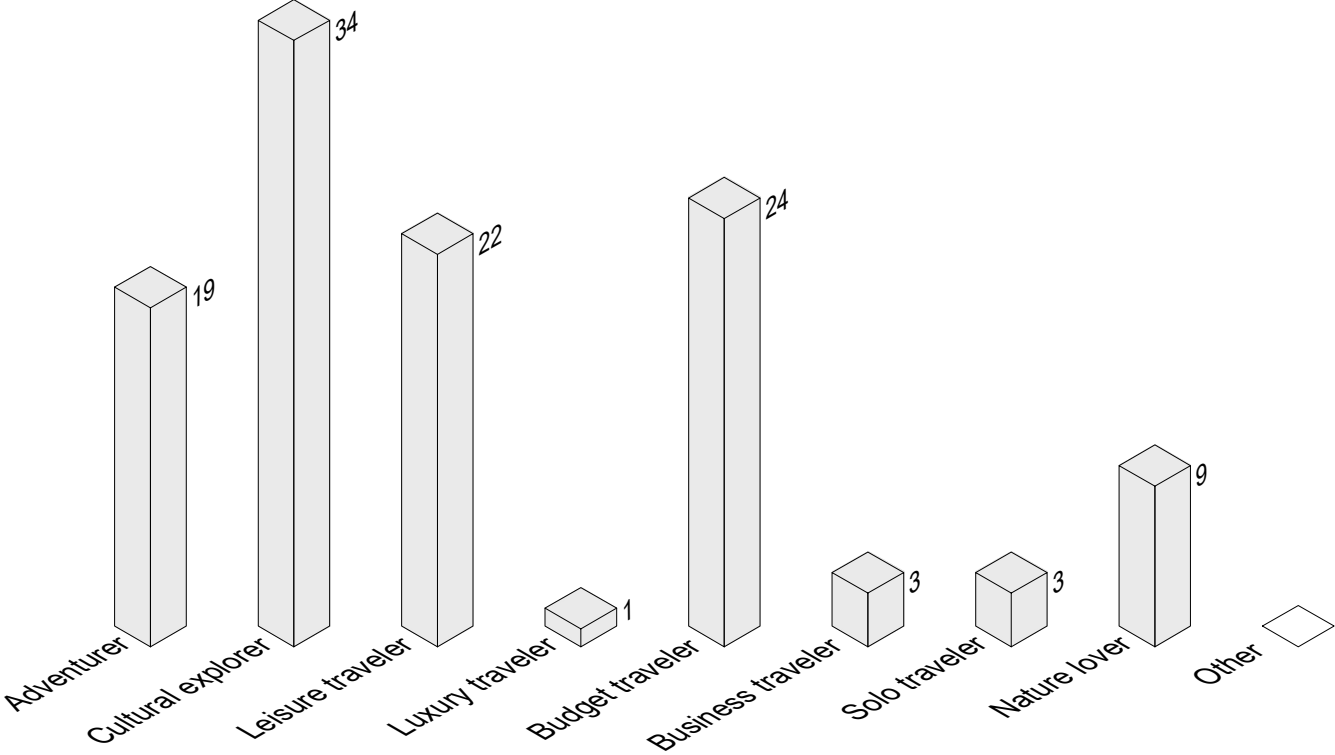
2. Where are you from? (Open-ended)
Short answer text



SURVEY

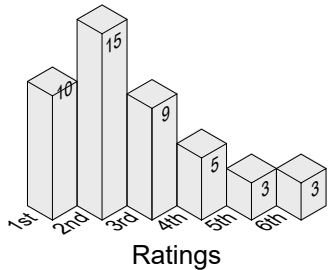
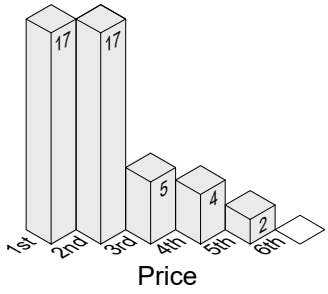
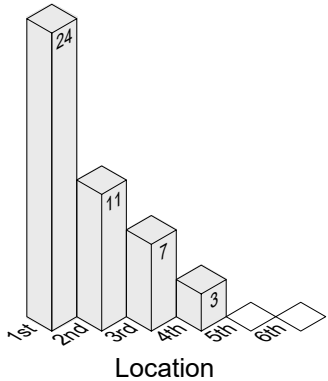
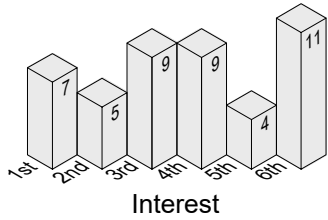
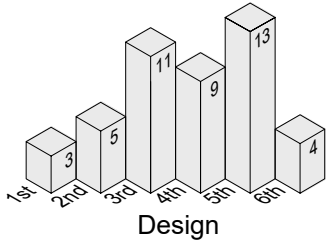
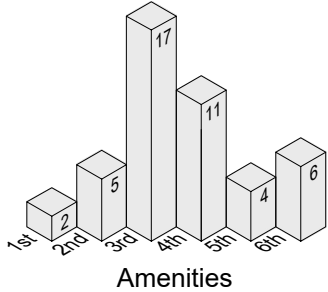
3. What type of traveler are you? Select which apply. (Multiple choice - checkbox)

- Adventurer - I seek out new, challenging and upbeat experiences.
- Cultural explorer - I love immersing myself in local cultures, history, and traditions.
- Leisure traveler - I travel to unwind, focusing on relaxation and enjoyment.
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- Business traveler - My trips are usually work-related, with a focus on efficiency.
- Solo traveler - I prefer to travel alone, enjoying solitude and personal interests.
- Nature lover - I enjoy exploring the outdoors, hiking, camping.
- Other (please specify)

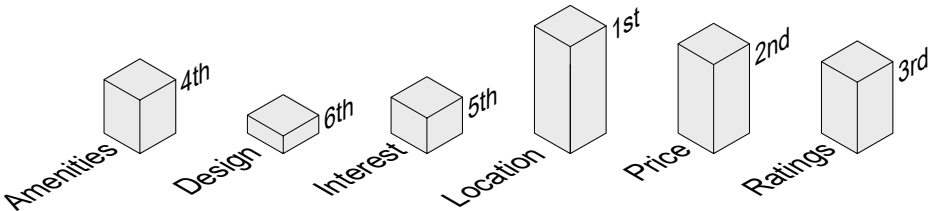


QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

4. Based on which criteria do you pick an accommodation? Rank these criteria from most to least important.
 Amenities, Design, Interest, Location, Price, Ratings

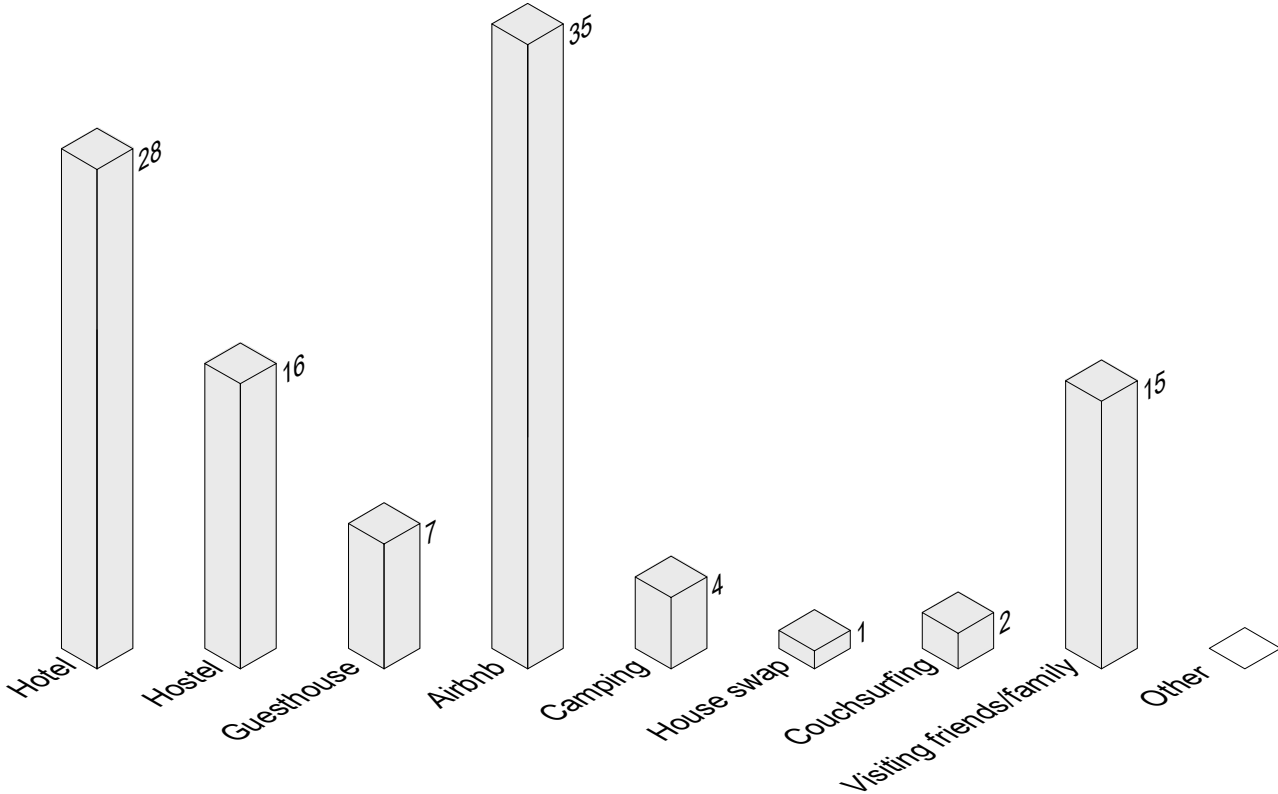


Based on the answers, the overall ranking would then be like the following:



SURVEY

5. What is your preferred type of accommodation? (Multiple choice - checkbox)
 Hotel, Hostel, Guesthouse, Airbnb, Camping, House swap, Couchsurfing, Visiting friends/family, Other



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

SURVEY

6. Is the accommodation something you remember from your past trips? Why? (Open-ended)

Long answer text

The survey responses highlight that accommodations play a diverse role in travellers' experiences. For some, they are merely functional spaces for rest, while for others, they create lasting memories through comfort, design, or emotional connections. The data based on the answers suggests that accommodations with thoughtful design, excellent service, or a unique element are more likely to leave a lasting positive impression. Conversely, poor conditions or negative experiences can also leave a mark, albeit for the wrong reasons.

The answers can be analysed by grouping them into themes based on the reasons why accommodations are or are not memorable to travellers.

Often not memorable: Many travellers view accommodations as secondary, recalling them only if they stand out.

Example: *"I stayed mostly my day out of my accommodation; it is a less important part of experience in my trip."*

Memorable for positive reasons: Features like comfort, unique design, or functionality enhance the experience.

Example: *"Most likely yes, comfort is essential, and amenities, even if it's a hostel, I appreciate clean warm spaces."*

Memorable for negative reasons: Poor conditions, such as dirty or unsafe environments, leave a strong impression.

Example: *"Sure, but negative experiences stick around longer."*

Emotional or social connections: Accommodations that foster community or connect to local culture are impactful.

Example: *"Yes, staying in a COEO hostel in Malaga was like being part of a community."*

Specific features: Factors like location, service, or unique experiences often define memorability.

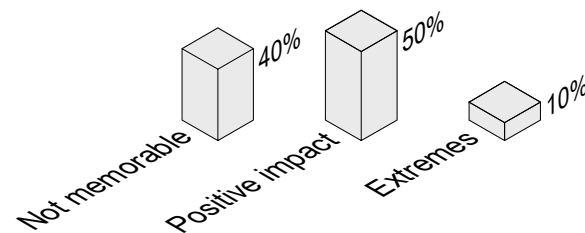
Example: *"Yes, but what stood out to me the most was freshly made lemonade made out of locally grown lemons."*

If the themes based on the responses are quantified, the chart would be like the following:

Not memorable: Many see accommodations as purely functional, not influencing their overall travel memory.

Positive impact: Design, comfort, location, and emotional or cultural connections significantly enhance travel experiences and leave lasting impressions.

Extremes: Accommodations are remembered primarily for being exceptionally good or bad.



Transcript of answers:

It's not that important for me, so I don't remember it that well because my plans are mostly strolling around and using the accommodation mostly for sleep

No, not really, mostly because of budget reasons, which meant I would spend as little time in the accommodations as possible

No, because I stayed mostly my day out of my accommodation, it is a less important part of experience in my trip

No, not necessarily. Other stuff was more important

Nope

Not really unless it had something unique

Not really, I spend most of my time roaming around

Usually not, except if it was a really great experience (very nice hotel, really friendly staff...)

I remember a few that were really cute and cozy. But most of them I don't remember, when I travel it's only where I sleep.

I remember, but it's not important compared to everything else during a trip

If it stood out with something - a nice view, a cool feature, or specific design

Only if it was super bad/had an unpleasant experience

Depends on if accommodation was memorable, probably it has to be either the best or the worst I visited to remember it

Sometimes; what stood out to me the most was freshly made lemonade made out of locally grown lemons

Sometimes if the accommodation is really nice or has a really good location

Sometimes, but only if the design stood out. Normally I'm in budget places, so the design is like so. I would remember it better if the accommodation had something special or a special experience.

Sure, but negative experiences stick around longer.

It is. The place where you are staying while traveling remarks memories that you keep long after the trip is done. That place is becoming your home, a shelter, relaxing escape from all the adventures that triggers your existence in space.

If it was positively influencing the trip in any way then yes.

I usually do. It's the place in the evening where you process what you have seen during the day.

Most likely yes, comfort is essential and amenities, even if it's a hostel I appreciate clean warm spaces.

Of course, if the accommodation was good the whole trip is better.

Of course, it is very relevant for me. It affects your trip and for me it is important to have a decent accommodation with something interesting that I will remember.

The accommodation set the bar when I was traveling with my family at young age and it was important to have a good settling.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes, because it was cheap, private and complete.

Yes, because it's really nice design overall.

Yes because I've had a few that really showed how the people in that country live, others were just a big laugh with my friends, some were very luxurious but cheap.

Yes because of the comfort/ non-comfort that I had.

Yes - if it's exceptionally good or bad.

Yes, Grand Park Hotel...Beautiful architecture...large rooms, large terrace, beautiful view, spa, excellent food...

Yes! This is the place you go to to sleep or relax for a bed. So it is nice if it is clean etc. If it is not clean then I will remember that very clearly.

Yes, because it's where we cook or relax after a long day of exploring so its important.

Yes, cause it becomes a reference point in the city.

Yes, especially if I'm traveling with friends/boyfriend so we have gatherings or relax in it.

Yes, I was recently in a luxury design hotel, where most of it is subordinate to the design, but because of that, the function is often inferior or even dangerous.

Yes, if it is a nice place to stay during the day too, not just for the night.

Yes, if it was special (example: location, nice view...).

Yes, mostly positive memories while hanging out with fellow travellers.

Yes, since it's part of trip planning and especially when we spend more time there. Plus, I'm a visual thinker/observer.

Yes, staying in a COEO hostel in Malaga was like being part of community.

Yes, the staff at hotels can really improve your experience during a trip.

Yes. It had a great sauna ambient.

Yes. Travelling can be exhausting so it's nice to have a place where you can leave your stuff, feel at home and rest.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

SURVEY

7. How did the accommodation's design and atmosphere influence your mood during the stay? Mention a particular example and explain. (Open-ended)

Long answer text

The answers to this question reveal several key themes regarding how the design and atmosphere of accommodations impact travellers' moods and experiences. We can group them based on what plays the biggest role and has been mentioned the most:

Relaxing atmosphere: Designs with wooden details, warm lighting, and home-like spaces were highly valued.

Examples: *"A cozy Airbnb made me feel like at home"*

Local connection: Accommodations aligning with the destination's vibe enhanced their experience by deepening their connection to the place.

Examples: *"When I was in Milano, my apartment screamed Italian design with high ceilings and fashionable furniture, and it really made our trip much better."*

Functionality & hygiene: Cleanliness, comfort, and practicality greatly influence mood.

Examples: *"If it feels and looks clean and not outdated, it boosts my mood."*

Social spaces: Accommodations with communal areas contribute to socializing and overall mood.

Examples: *"A hostel with comfortable common spaces, bar and a different program each evening, helped me learn more about Malaga from people we met there."*

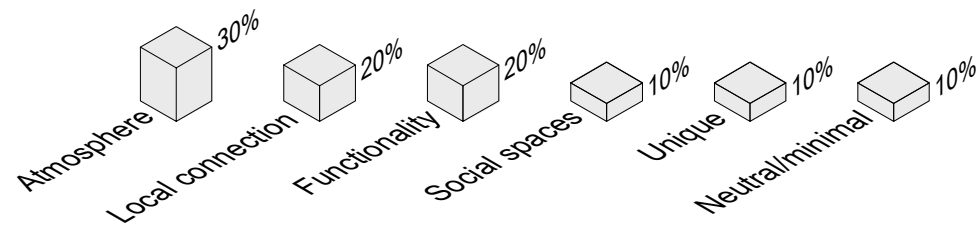
Unique experiences: Unique elements make stays more memorable and positively impact the overall trip.

Example: *"Sleeping in a renovated castle made me feel like a noble."*

Neutral or minimal impact: Some respondents noted that design and atmosphere had little impact on their mood, as they primarily used accommodations for sleeping and spent most of their time exploring outdoors.

Examples: *"Accommodation rarely impacts me as most of the time I am not in it"*

If these themes are quantified based on the frequency of mentions, the estimated chart would look like this:



Transcript of answers:

I like when I have a feeling that I live at the place, for example wooden window frames and furniture and old stove in the Alps, or the complete opposite, when everything is white, luxurious and cosy, alluding to me that I am somewhere on a vacation, and have to rest and enjoy.

If the design and atmosphere were interesting then staying in the accommodation, hanging out or sleeping would be more pleasant.

Accommodation rarely impacts me as most of the time I am not in it - I am out exploring. During winter, I was drawn to a cozy, wooden ambiance while staying in the mountains, whereas in summer, beige, white and bright rooms make me feel the ocean breeze more.

If the design is neutral, it would make my mood neutral. But if it was a special place, it could liven up my mood.

Lack of space in a hotel room inspired me to stay even more outside.

I stayed at a traditional Japanese guest house (ryokan) made out of wood and kind of old but still clean and cozy. Made me feel welcome and immersed in Japanese culture. Overall good vibe.

If the accommodation has a design that shows local architecture, then it makes the stay there really special and memorable. For example, when I was in Milano, my apartment screamed Italian design with high ceilings and fashionable furniture, and it really made our trip much better.

I like it when it matches the vibe of the place I'm staying in. If it is big urban city - I like it to be modern and urbanistic. And if I'm staying in the countryside - cozy and woody vibes is what I'm looking for.

It's important getting well with the place you stay because that place is becoming your temporary home, a shelter after the whole day of exploring new places. Once my friends and I stayed in a place where hosts took lovely care of us, making us nice welcome dishes, communicating with us as a part of their family which immediately made the whole trip way better and memorable. Also, the accommodation was super nice, very well maintained and taken care of. Felt like home.

A hostel with comfortable common spaces, bar and a different program each evening, helped me learn more about Malaga from people we met there.

The accommodation's design can influence my mood during the stay, but not so much because usually I am in the place not so often

Stayed in Goa for a day at this beautiful Airbnb as a respite for staying at a hostel for the rest of the week. Lovely accommodation, slept like a dream because I could be alone (light sleeper).

Accommodation has to be functional, not necessarily luxurious or beautiful. If it is not functional (like a broken shower), I'll be unhappy for sure.

I stayed in Budapest in an apartment in the city centre. This made us feel relaxed and happy as we could walk everywhere.

It does not influence my mood.

It was therapeutic as it was really close to the sea so I could hear the waves.

I was staying in Greece in a hotel that wasn't the cleanest, but it did not influence my mood much because we were in the room just to sleep, the rest of the days we spent walking around the city so I did not think about the dirty room or the bad part of town it was in.

When I got upgraded to a suite, every part of the trip instantly felt better.

Not really

Modern kitchen made us cook more and spend less on restaurants.

A hotel served really good breakfast so my day started really well and it was also nice when I got to meet new fun people who were solo traveling.

If the accommodation's design suits your design preferences, then you feel more comfortable in this place, almost like at home, but if it is something that you don't like then it creates an unsettling and repulsive atmosphere which makes you want to leave the place.

When traveling, it's important to have a good rest and shower, so design is important, and it has to be welcoming as it's a new place to stay.

Once I slept in a renovated castle and it made me feel like a noble.

It sets the mood for the day.

Design makes the atmosphere more pleasant, and cozy, which achieves a feel like a home. For example, a beautiful common rooms, lobby, etc. where you can spend your time.

When I was in a very nice accommodation it immediately made my trip better, and when my accommodation was disappointing it made my trip worse even though I liked the city.

A cozy Airbnb made me feel like at home.

I was in a good mood because of the location and sunlight in the apartment.

I stayed at a couple's apartment that they rented out on Airbnb. It was tiny but very cozy, I felt at home and inspired by their lifestyle.

A resort in Thailand had the most beautiful surrounding, and it really relaxed me. Most hotels I've been in didn't really make me think "oh this ambient makes me feels xyz".

If it feels and looks clean and not outdated, it boosts my mood. In Budapest, I had a really nice Airbnb which from the outside, looked really old and outdated, with paint falling off! I was scared of how the apartment would look but once I've entered, it was very clean and renewed! In the end, I had a nice time there and the apartment was great!

A hotel in NYC had one of the most famous bars in it, the whole vibe was "New York loft" and I remember it made me feel like I was living an experience more similar to a New York life rather than just travel.

The sauna had an earthy tone and rocky walls, and it was just so calming and relaxing.

Lightning of the accommodation has a huge impact on my mood - I don't like it when the lightning is too white, it needs to be cozy.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

8. What elements of your accommodation stood out to you - whether comforting, unsettling, memorable or simply eye-catching? Mention a particular example and explain. (Open-ended)

Long answer text

The survey responses highlight a range of factors that influence a guest's perception, including comfort, design, functionality, location and distinct experiences.

The answers can be grouped into the most common themes based on the prominent elements that stand out in accommodations.

Comfort & hygiene: Many highlight the comfort of beds, cleanliness of the bathroom and overall coziness.

Example: "Bathroom is the key element - if it's yellowish or dark it just gives worse impression than a clean and bright one. Showering and sleeping, is the main purpose of my stay in accommodation, so they play the crucial role."

Design & aesthetics: The visual appeal of accommodations enhances the experience. Well-designed spaces with cozy lighting, unique details, well thought materials and beautiful views or terraces make the stay memorable.

Example: "For example, the industrial look of the rooms with a couch leather - that combination is exactly what comes to mind when I think of a loft in NYC."

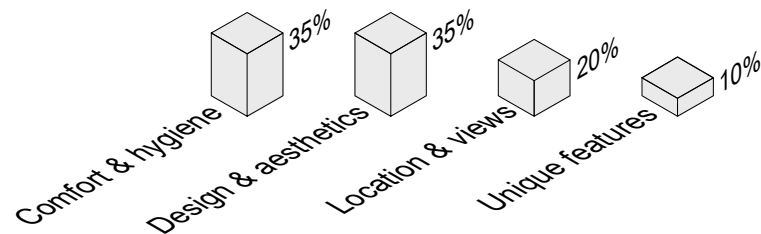
Location & views: Many highlight the importance of scenic views, proximity to beach and city centre, and immersion in local neighbourhoods.

Example: "Staying in an apartment in Spain that was close to the beach. This was comforting as it was close to the beach, so it made everything easier. It was also nicely decorated which we really liked."

Unique or unsettling features: Memorable experiences often come from unusual elements, like capsule hotels or quirky designs, which evoke novelty but can be unsettling or impractical.

Example: "Louis Vuitton picture frame and hidden wardrobe - very eye-catching and unsettling, seemed like a weird thing to find in an Airbnb."

If these themes are then quantified, the chart of their mentions would approximately be like the following:



SURVEY

Transcript of answers:

Having to use a new/different utility that I don't usually use - an old stove, a specific heating device, a different coffee maker, toaster...

Big terrace in apartment in Venice where we all hung out. And capsule hostel in Madrid where you sleep in a box.

I don't think particular elements but the whole set up stands out to me - how elements blend and what they reflect: in Copenhagen everything was in line with Scandinavian minimalism and being practical.

Once I stayed in an Airbnb in Prague, and it was on the 4th floor. But to get there we had to go past a hostel, up the stairs again and then outside through a balcony. So, the way to it made it memorable.

I love Scandinavian interiors - they are always very appealing to me.

Mostly comfort and hygiene.

Cozy lighting and natural materials.

Our apartment had really nice modern furniture with Italian decorative details.

I really like it when accommodations have balconies or any outdoor space.

I think one of the most important elements is the view and the location. Once, my friends and I stayed in a very lovely apartment on a top floor of some old house in one of many small streets of Napoli. Even though the entrance was disgustingly old and not well maintained, the whole experience of staying in the heart of Napoli brought the vibe of the city closer to us, feeling like one of the locals. Also, the view was like a vedute of Napoli, a horizon filled with roofs and houses.

A clean bathroom.

I was a bit uncomfortable that rooms are capsules, which was interesting experience, but there wasn't any natural light.

I was staying in an apartment in Budapest, it was not clean, and the bathroom had a weird smell, but the host was really great and that was enough to forget about the state of the apartment.

Beautiful Goan courtyard with wooden beams, definitely very pleasing.

Comfortable and cosy beds.

Huge comfortable bed, view over the city, nice design on the walls.

Location in Brussels = unsettling, scary; Apartment on an island = homey feeling due to welcoming hosts and "traditional" elements

An apartment in Komiža had a great terrace with new outdoor furniture where I could sunbath or sip my coffee in the mornings.

The comfortable beds and good location.

I guess design and functionality of the place does that for me usually.

The beautiful terrace; the view from the restaurant, café and reception.

The light experience.

The view of beach for example.

Louis Vuitton picture frame and hidden wardrobe - very eye-catching and unsettling, seemed like a weird thing to find in an Airbnb.

Clean bathroom and bed, comfortable chairs, nice kitchen with basic elements. Also, it is very important to feel warm and as in your own home.

The entrance or lobby is always a specific vibe. Sometimes super corporate and uniform, sometimes very intimate, almost private like you are entering someone's home.

Old wooden elements make me feel like home, small staircases inside the apartment make the experience more interesting.

It was a newly renovated apartment house with beautiful vintage furniture. Really comforting and simple.

Overall cleanliness. Found an old sock under a hostel mattress and hadn't slept well at all during my travels, just felt gross the entire time.

Bed - cozy, comforting, connected with a good rest. Food - memorable.

Comforting - attic with pitched roof, big windows and lounge sofa. Unsettling - dark apartments, without enough daylight.

A lot of ambient lights can make a basic accommodation look cozy.

Design of kitchen, piano, white shelf and stone island.

Staying in an apartment in Spain that was close to the beach. This was comforting as it was close to the beach, so it made everything easier. It was also nicely decorated which we really liked.

A kitchen with many cool hacks to make the best of the space, a living room with a big wall full of DVDs and a window bay where you could sit and enjoy your breakfast in the morning sun.

Having a lemon tree on the terrace, immersive and pleasant.

A friend and I booked one of the cheapest Airbnbs in Napoli that we could find - it was an old religious Nonna's place that had an old kitchenette, broken toilet, 9 Jesus' around the whole place, old furniture and that Nonna smell. It was a fantastic and fun experience, won't ever forget it.

Bathroom is the key element - if it's yellowish or dark it just gives worse impression than a clean and bright one. Showering and sleeping, is the main purpose of my stay in accommodation, so they play the crucial role.

For example, the industrial look of the rooms with a couch leather - that combination is exactly what comes to mind when I think of a loft in NYC.

See-through shower - very impractical when travelling with family.

Quality-wise always sofa and bed. Memorable was a hinging sink over a toilet to save space, not super useful but did its job.

Own kitchen, lounge area

The thick concrete walls and good soundproofing were soothing, making the accommodation a calming space. The strangely lit stairs, which made climbing them quite unsafe were disturbing.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

9. If you could describe certain accommodation as a story, song title, movie title or a mood, what would it be and why? (Open-ended)

Long answer text

The survey responses highlight the diverse role accommodations play in travellers' experiences, reflecting a variety of emotional connections and personal experiences.

Common themes include moods of comfort and relaxation, with many describing the spaces as cozy and homely.

It's interesting to see how many respondents connect their accommodation experiences with existing movies and songs. This reveals how deeply travel and lodging can influence emotional states, often evoking nostalgia or capturing the essence of certain cultural moments. By drawing parallels with well-known films or music, travellers are able to articulate their feelings in a way that resonates with their memories or perceptions. These references not only add a layer of personal meaning to their experiences but also demonstrate how universal themes in media - whether it's the sense of adventure, relaxation, or even discomfort - can translate into a person's stay. For example, some respondents referred to movie scenes or song lyrics that mirror the atmosphere of the accommodation, reinforcing how these emotional connections go beyond just the physical space, creating a more profound and immersive travel experience.

SURVEY

Transcript of answers:

A mood would be modern and clean but still having some home feel to it
A safe stop from which adventures begin.

A shelter of memories.

A wooden snowy cabin next to ski slopes with Christmas lights everywhere you look = *It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas* by Michael Buble, because it matches the atmosphere of the song and completes the holiday mood

Jazz is for ordinary people by Berlioz - because I want it to be cozy and relaxing just like I feel when I listen to jazz.

Blinding lights by The Weeknd - because there were too many light switches.

Comfort by Buba Corelli.

Cosy but modern place that reflects the environment so that we feel the spirit of the place.

Croatian film *Murina* by Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović, 2021.

'Dirty Sock under my mattress - a horror story'.

Ex yu - I almost got stuck in the elevator in an old hotel in Belgrade.

Fly - apartment was high in the sky.

Hate it or love it - this hotel is not everyone's "cup of tea", it was a small boutique hotel that had a garden in the middle of it.

Interlude by Hollow Coves - it reminds me of good times.

Home abroad.

Horror story - broken mattress, filthy wet towels...

I always connect movie *A room with a view* with summer vacations in Croatia. Comfortable accommodation with beautiful views from windows, and remarkable setting.

I am not sure.

I could sleep here forever.

The moment when you open the curtain in your room, feeling the sunlight shining in, and the scenery outside.

I would describe a guesthouse (cabin) in the woods as *Dirty Dancing* because of the rural yet romantic atmosphere.

I'm definitely not the type for such parallels and answers.

Inferno by Dante, because I bought this book during the trip.

Less is more.

Mood: relax - hotels always give me a sense of relaxation and time out.

Mood: relaxation, carefree, peace of mind, joy.

Movie *Rear Window* - accommodation had a huge window but after some time is started to be suspicious.

Sex and the city (I felt like Charlotte).

My mom hated it because people were walking in front of our room all the time to get to the garden, but i really loved this hotel because of that garden.

Not really an answer to your question but I really like the movie "*Lost in translation*" where the hotel is this meeting place for all the outsiders of the Japanese culture. Some use it to socialise but I especially like the scenes where the woman is being "captured" in her room, high above the city, looking over it from a safe distance. She is in her cocoon in the middle of this weird culture that she doesn't understand.

Osmijeh - Grupa 220, accommodation in Italy. Because the whole mood of the part of Napoli we were in (place called Cercola) was so ratchet and Italian, and the song makes me think of it.

Perfect days.

Mood: relaxing - the beach house in Spain that was a 5 min walk from the beach, as we didn't have any stress in the morning because we could leave whenever and not worry about commuting.

Saudade - the feeling of nostalgia, sadness and comfort.

Sleeping beauty.

Sunrise by Norah Jones - because of the breakfast nook and feeling at home at the place.

Titanic - because everything in the hostel was falling apart.

Too sweet by Hozier - because our accommodation was nice, home like and sweet just like the song.

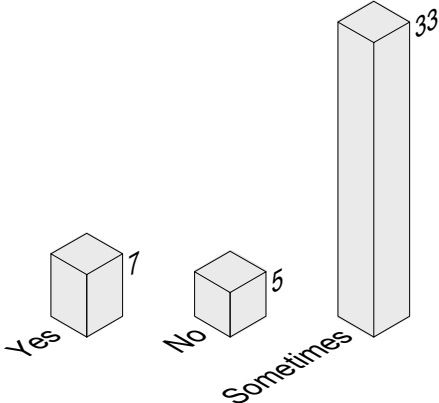
Unfortunately, I haven't yet been in such accommodation because I think there is a lack of those, owners are mostly thinking of how to trick tourists and earn most money.

Where you sleep is how you experience travelling. For instance, in order to get close to a certain culture, it would mean much more if you stayed with local people instead of a neutral hotel room.

"*What just happened*" = we were just couple of students on a road trip through Sweden when we reached our Airbnb; the landlord showed us the apartment (new, modern, nicely decorated) and later we went to a city tour with him and his Rolls-Royce???

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

10. Do you like the option to talk to new people within your accommodation? (Multiple choice)
Yes, No, Sometimes



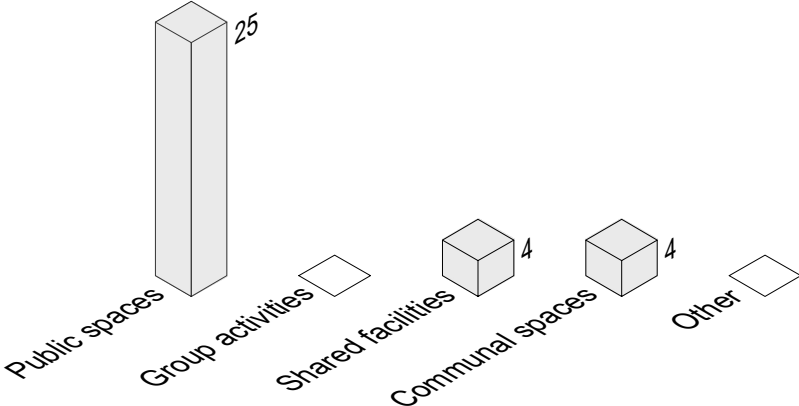
10.1. If yes, identify situations where you value social interaction within your accommodation. (Multiple choice)
- At public spaces like bar/lobby
- During group activities
- Within shared facilities like kitchen/bathroom
- At communal spaces like spa/pool
- Other (please specify)



SURVEY

10.1. If sometimes, identify situations where you value social interaction within your accommodation. (Multiple choice)

- At public spaces like bar/lobby
- During group activities
- Within shared facilities like kitchen/bathroom
- At communal spaces like spa/pool
- Other (please specify)



CONCLUSION

The survey on travel experiences provides valuable insights into the preferences and behaviours of travellers - potential future users of my building.

Most respondents fell into the younger age brackets (18-24 and 25-34 years), primarily from Croatia. The majority identified as "*Cultural Explorers*", who prioritize immersion in local traditions, culture, history, and everyday life of their destinations, followed by "*Adventurers*" - those seeking out new and unique challenging experiences. This contrast indicates a blend of thrill-seeking and cultural curiosity among travellers.

When selecting accommodations, respondents demonstrated thoughtful decision-making driven by practical and emotional considerations. Location and price were consistently ranked as high priorities, emphasizing the importance of accessibility and affordability. While design and amenities were considered less critical by many, they still held meaning for travellers seeking a certain atmosphere or aesthetic that enhanced their stay.

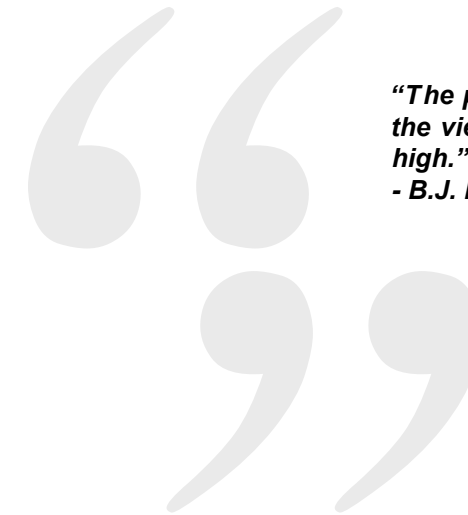
The role of accommodations extended beyond basic functionality, with many respondents recalling memorable stays due to unique features, design, or ambiance. Examples ranged from capsule-style hostels that encouraged social interaction in community areas to serene spaces like sauna-equipped accommodations that fostered relaxation. This demonstrates the lasting impact of accommodations that align with a traveller's mood or expectations, underscoring the emotional resonance of well-curated environments.

Despite a preference for exploration and immersion, travellers displayed mixed feelings toward social interaction within their accommodation. While some enjoy engaging with others in communal areas like lobbies, bars, or spas, valuing the opportunity to meet fellow travellers and exchange experiences, others value privacy and solitude during their stays. This suggests a need for accommodations to cater to both introverts and extroverts by offering flexible spaces that balance privacy with opportunities for connection.

Ultimately, the survey highlights the intricate balance travellers seek between adventure, culture, comfort, and social engagement. While the type of accommodation and level of interaction may vary, a common thread emerges: the desire for unique and immersive, memorable experiences that align with personal preferences.

As travel continues to evolve, these insights can inform how accommodations and services are tailored to meet the nuanced needs of modern explorers.

THE ART OF TRAVEL



"The past is a hotel. You can visit any time; enjoy the view. But you can't live there. The cost is too high."
- B.J. Neblett

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."
- Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss)

This chapter explores the potential of literary narratives - specifically travelogues and travel memoirs - as frameworks for architectural translation. These literary works offer more than descriptions of journeys; they immerse the reader in deeply personal experiences, emotional landscapes and cultural observations, making them valuable sources for informing architectural design. The aim is to investigate how the subjective experience of travel - its moments of discovery, reflection, transformation, and connection - can be translated into spatial language and atmospheric qualities.

The project seeks to capture the essence of travel by using these stories as a guide, transforming the sensory and emotional experiences of travellers into spatial design. The central questions guiding this exploration are how a traveller feels, what do they experience, how do they act, and ultimately, how can that sensory and emotional journey of a traveller be captured and embodied in physical space?

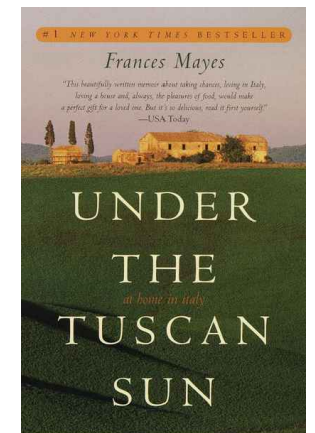
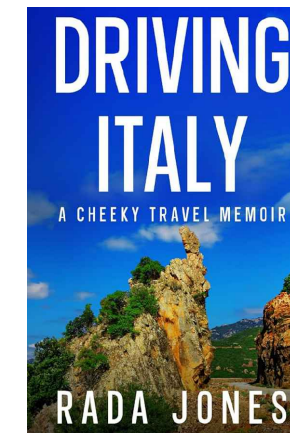
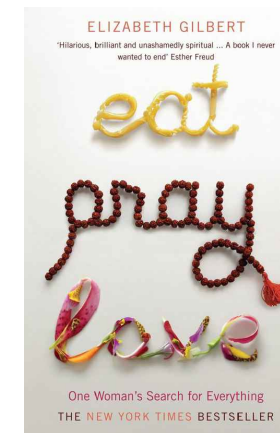
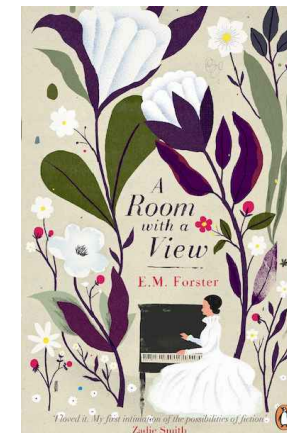
To ground this exploration, four literary works have been selected for detailed study:

- *A Room with a View* by E.M. Forster
- *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert
- *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir* by Rada Jones
- *Under the Tuscan Sun: At Home in Italy* by Frances Mayes

All four books are set in Italy and were chosen based on specific criteria: their format as travelogues or memoirs, their rich descriptive content, their focus on a clearly defined location, and the personal perspective of the traveller or narrator. Each text presents a unique journey, ranging from romantic self-discovery to humorous cultural encounters.

Through close reading and thematic analysis, this chapter extracts motifs, narrative structures, atmospheres, and sensory cues that hold potential for architectural interpretation. It also considers the historical and cultural context of each narrative, as well as the literary techniques used to shape the reader's experience.

The following sections delve into each book in detail, highlighting key excerpts and interpretive themes that will later inform the design process. Together, these stories offer a foundation for a design that seeks to embody the emotional and experiential essence of travel.



A ROOM WITH A VIEW / E.M. Forster

A Room with a View is a coming-of-age novel by English writer E. M. Forster that blends romance, societal critique, and personal growth within the context of early 20th-century English society.

The story follows Lucy Honeychurch, a young Englishwoman torn between societal expectations and her desire for self-expression and love. While traveling in Italy, she encounters the unconventional George Emerson, whose free-spirited nature challenges the constraints of her conservative upbringing and the rigid gender roles of early 20th-century England.

Divided into two sections, Italy and England, the novel humorously critiques societal norms, particularly those surrounding class, convention, and the constraints placed on women, especially regarding marriage and social roles. Forster contrasts Italy's vibrant landscapes and liberating spontaneity with England's traditions and societal obligations, reflecting Lucy's internal struggle. Through this juxtaposition, Lucy's journey of self-discovery unfolds, leading her toward independence and emotional authenticity.

The focus for this research is *Part I. Italy*, where Lucy travels with her cousin and chaperone, Charlotte Bartlett. Dissatisfaction with their accommodations at the Pensione Bertolini - lacking a promised view - leads to an encounter with the Emersons, who offer their rooms. This gesture sparks Lucy's awakening to new perspectives, setting the tone for her transformation.

The novel concludes with Lucy and George eloping to Florence, finding freedom and authenticity symbolized by a room with a view. The title itself represents Lucy's yearning for a broader, more meaningful life.



Figure 68. Theatrical release poster

A ROOM WITH A VIEW / E.M. Forster

The *Italy* section in *A Room with a View* exemplifies the liberating power of travel as a catalyst for self-discovery and emotional awakening. It captures the vibrant contrast between the passionate, spontaneous Italian culture and the restrained, structured norms of Edwardian England. Through Lucy Honeychurch's experiences, the text evokes the joy of breaking away from societal expectations. It emphasizes moments of introspection, connection, and emotional vulnerability, showing how a change of environment can open the door to personal growth.

KEY THEMES:

Journey of self-discovery and transformation:

Lucy's journey reflects the tension between personal freedom and societal expectations. Her experiences in Italy act as a catalyst for her self-discovery, allowing her to embrace her desires while rejecting the constraints of societal expectations. Moreover, Italy symbolizes liberation, spontaneity, and passion, while England represents restraint, tradition, and duty.

Romanticism and passion:

Romance serves as a multifaceted motif that goes beyond conventional love stories, delving into emotional depth, personal freedom, and human connection. Lucy Honeychurch's journey is deeply intertwined with her awakening to the idea of love--not just romantic, but also as a symbol of self-discovery and emotional fulfillment.

By translating these themes into architectural design, focusing on embodying the tension between freedom and constraint, and the transformative power of perspective and self-discovery. The architecture could invite exploration, reflection, and connection.

The following book excerpts have been selected, identified and interpreted as potential for architectural translation and will later serve as a foundation for the design process.

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

It was pleasant to wake up in Florence, to open the eyes upon a bright bare room, with a floor of red tiles which look clean though they are not; with a painted ceiling whereon pink griffins and blue amorini sport in a forest of yellow violins and bassoons. It was pleasant, too, to fling wide the windows, pinching the fingers in unfamiliar fastenings, to lean out into sunshine with beautiful hills and trees and marble churches opposite, and close below, the Arno, gurgling against the embankment of the road. (p.13)

This quote evokes tranquillity, wonder, and a deep connection to the surrounding landscape. It captures the sensory experience of waking up in a beautiful, albeit imperfect space, where the beauty of the room, the view, and the sounds of nature create a sense of warmth, joy, and tranquillity.

Architectural potential:

Sensory connection to nature: Focus on natural light, creating a sense of openness, tranquillity and connection through outdoor terraces and large openings that frame views and let sunlight in.

Textural elements: Focus on natural materials like terracotta or wood, embracing imperfections that add character and warmth.

As to the true Italy - he does not even dream of it. The true Italy is only to be found by patient observation. (p.15)

This quote suggests that true understanding comes not from rushing through experiences but from observing and immersing oneself in the environment. It conveys a sense of curiosity and contemplation, where meaning and beauty are revealed over time through thoughtful attention and a willingness to explore beyond the surface.

Architectural potential:

Journey-based spaces: Focus on spaces with non-linear layouts that unfold gradually and encourage meandering and discovery, slowly leading visitors to unexpected views or quiet corners.

"A smell! a true Florentine smell! Every city, let me teach you, has its own smell." "Is it a very nice smell?" said Lucy, who had inherited from her mother a distaste to dirt. "One doesn't come to Italy for niceness," was the retort; "one comes for life. Buon giorno! Buon giorno!" bowing right and left. "Look at that adorable wine-cart! How the driver stares at us, dear, simple soul!" (p.15)

This quote highlights the sensory experience tied to place - unique character and vibrant energy of daily life. It conveys the emotions of discovery and immersion in the life of a city, embracing both its beauty and imperfections.

Architectural potential:

Sensory engagement: Focus on elements that engage all the senses, like textured materials, ambient sounds, and curated scents that evoke a place's essence.

EAT, PRAY, LOVE / E. Gilbert

Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India, and Indonesia is a memoir by American author Elizabeth Gilbert. This memoir recounts author's self-discovery and healing through a trip around the world after her divorce.

Divided into three sections, the book explores pleasure, spirituality and balance across countries:

Italy (Pleasure): Gilbert immerses herself in the joys of food, language, and leisure. From savouring pizza in Naples to learning Italian in Rome, she reconnects with her senses and begins to heal emotionally.

India (Spirituality): At an ashram, she practices meditation and prayer, confronting her inner struggles and seeking divine connection. This phase marks her spiritual awakening and emotional cleansing.

Indonesia (Balance): In Bali, she reconnects with a medicine man who helps her find harmony between pleasure and devotion. She befriends locals and meets Felipe, her future partner, rediscovering love and companionship.

Through her travels, Gilbert transforms her life, finding joy, peace, and a renewed sense of self-worth. Her story emphasizes the importance of living authentically and embracing the full spectrum of human experiences.

The part of the book that was in focus for the needs of this research is *Part I. Italy*, where Gilbert immerses herself in the pursuit of pleasure, embracing the art of enjoying life without guilt or obligations. This chapter highlights her experiences indulging in the beauty of Italian culture, its culinary delights, welcoming people and the richness of the Italian language.

In Rome, Liz embraces the city's charm, while Venice serves as a cultural gem where she reconnects with a friend. In Naples, the birthplace of pizza, she enjoys its vibrant energy and culinary delights. She also visits Sicily, Florence, and Tuscany, captivated by their scenic beauty and rich cultural heritage, embodying the essence of Italian tradition.

Together, these locations frame Italy as a haven of pleasure, indulgence and rediscovery, reflecting Liz's journey of rediscovery.

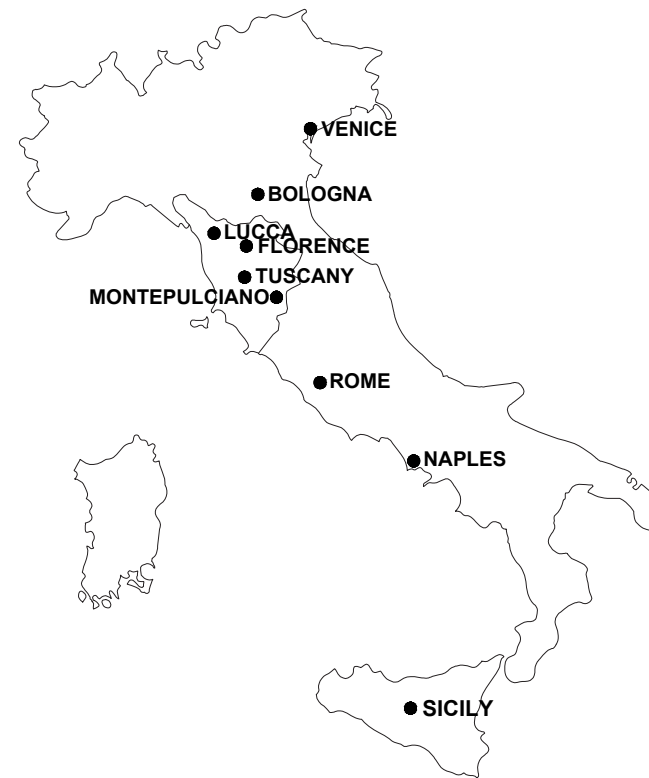


Figure 69. Movie scene



EAT, PRAY, LOVE / E. Gilbert

The *Italy* chapter in *Eat, Pray, Love* exemplifies how indulgence and leisure can become powerful tools for personal restoration, showing a profound connection between environment, culture, and emotional well-being. It conveys a sense of surrender to life's simple pleasures, moments of introspection, and the transformative power of everyday experiences. Through slowing down and appreciating beauty - whether in food, language, or surroundings - the text evokes self-discovery, contentment, and a renewed connection to oneself.

Key themes:

The pursuit of pleasure:

Emphasizing indulgence in food, wine, and leisure as tools for reconnecting with life's joys. Exploring the art of living fully and savouring the present moment. From pizza in Naples to fine dining in Sicily, Gilbert revels in culinary delights. She views eating as a transformative act, helping her recover from years of stress and emotional exhaustion.

Journey of self-discovery and personal growth:

Italy becomes a space for reflection, where she regains her self-worth and vitality by embracing country's traditions, authenticity, savouring life's beauty, and balancing external joys with inner peace. Through this process, Gilbert heals emotional wounds and redefines happiness, demonstrating how simplicity and introspection can lead to a deeper sense of self and purpose.

Connection to local tradition:

Immersing in Italy's rich cultural heritage through exploration. Gilbert experiences the charm of Rome's neighbourhoods, the melancholy of Venice, the bustling pride of Naples, and the serene beauty of Sicily. She uses her explorations to connect with the Italian ethos of "*il dolce far niente*" (the sweetness of doing nothing). Her interactions with locals, like Giovanni and Luca Spaghetti, enrich her appreciation for Italy's linguistic and cultural vibrancy.

These themes serve as an evocative foundation for translating experiences into architectural design, focusing on creating spaces that evoke pleasure, comfort, and transformation while promoting relaxation, sensory delight, and a connection to the present moment.

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

The following book excerpts have been selected, identified and interpreted as potential for architectural translation and will later serve as a foundation for the design process.

To make matters even more confusing, I'd also been dying lately to get over to Italy, so I could practice speaking Italian, but also because I was drawn to the idea of living for a while in a culture where pleasure and beauty are valued. (p.30)

This quote captures a longing for a lifestyle focused on pleasure, beauty, and cultural richness, where sensory experiences take precedence over practicality and efficiency. It embodies *la dolce vita*, encouraging indulgence, slowing down, and appreciating beauty in everyday moments.

Architectural potential:

Spaces for pleasure: Focus on areas that encourage leisure and relaxation, such as sunlit terraces, courtyards, gardens and communal dining spaces, all dedicated to pleasure and enjoyment.

Celebration of beauty: Focus on elegant proportions, artistic details and ornate materials, such as marble, mosaic, and hand-painted tiles.

Sensory engagement: Focus on spaces that awaken the senses, incorporating play of light, colour, and texture to evoke a serene, joyful ambiance, with elements like natural light, soft textiles, and lush greenery.

I have my own set of survival techniques. I am patient. I know how to pack light. I'm a fearless eater. But my one mighty travel talent is that I can make friends with anybody... (p.43)

This quote evokes a sense of confidence, adaptability, and openness. It emphasizes the joy of exploration and the value of human connection.

Architectural potential:

Social spaces: Focus on spaces that foster interaction and connection, such as communal lounges, open kitchens, or shared dining areas where people can gather easily and feel comfortable.

EAT, PRAY, LOVE / E. Gilbert

Over the next six weeks, I travel to Bologna, to Florence, to Venice, to Sicily, to Sardinia, once more down to Naples, then over to Calabria. These are short trips, mostly - a week here, a weekend there - just the right amount of time to get the feel for a place, to look around, to ask people on the street where the good food is and then to go eat it. (p.101)

This quote highlights a sense of spontaneous exploration, excitement, and curiosity. There's an underlying appreciation for the authentic and simple pleasures of life, like finding good food through personal connections, and the satisfaction of living in the moment.

Architectural potential:

Exploration and discovery: Focus on areas that encourage curiosity, like winding corridors, hidden courtyards, or alcoves that invite guests to explore and engage with the space.

Local engagement: Focus on creating a connection with the locals and the local culture, like open kitchens where guests can interact with chefs or community spaces for locals to meet.

These weeks of spontaneous travel are a fantastic time, running to the train station and buying tickets left and right, finally beginning to really enjoy my freedom because it has finally come to me that I can go wherever I want. (p.101)

This quote evokes a sense of exhilaration, freedom, and spontaneity. It celebrates the joy of unplanned exploration and the realization of true freedom, where the journey is as meaningful as the destination.

Architectural potential:

Flow and exploration: Focus on versatile areas that allow for free movement, winding corridors, multiple access points, or dynamic pathways that encourage discovery and a sense of motion, much like the spontaneous travel experience.

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

But is it such a bad thing to live like this for just a little while? Just for a few months of one's life, is it so awful to travel through time with no greater ambition than to find the next lovely meal? Or to learn how to speak a language for no higher purpose than that it pleases your ear to hear it? Or to nap in a garden, in a patch of sunlight, in the middle of the day, right next to your favourite fountain? And then to do it again the next day? (p. 119)

This quote evokes a sense of liberation and indulgence in life's simple pleasures. It celebrates the joy of slowing down, finding beauty in everyday experiences, and living in the present moment, free from the pressures of rush, guilt, or purpose,

Architectural potential:

Spaces for leisure: Focus on spaces that encourage unhurried activities and prioritize comfort and relaxation, such as sunlit nooks, quiet reading rooms, intimate dining areas, and peaceful garden lounges.

Connection to nature: Focus on seamless transitions between indoor and outdoor spaces, like gardens or terraces that invite guests to relax, and enjoy the surrounding beauty.

Sensory experiences: Focus on creating sensory-rich environment - such as calming water sounds, tactile natural materials, calming colours, or aromatic gardens.

I came to Italy pinched and thin. I did not know yet what I deserved. I still maybe don't fully know what I deserve. But I know that I have collected myself of late - through the enjoyment of harmless pleasures - into somebody much more intact. (p. 121)

This quote reflects a transformation through self-care and indulgence in simple pleasures. It conveys a journey toward self-discovery, finding balance, and mending fragmented aspects of oneself through the act of slowing down and enjoying life's small pleasures.

Architectural potential:

Restorative spaces: Focus on spaces that promote relaxation and healing, such as peaceful lounges, quiet reading rooms, or wellness areas with calming textures, soft lighting, and natural materials.

DRIVING ITALY / R. Jones

Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir is a memoir by Romanian-American author Rada Jones. This humorous travelogue chronicles the adventures of a retired couple as they explore Italy by a car.

Spanning ten thousand miles, the narrative captures their exploration of diverse landscapes, from Paris to Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily to mainland Italy. Along the way, they encounter various challenges, including navigating narrow streets, cultural quirks, and language barriers.

Amid these challenges, they manage to immerse themselves in Italy's unique charm, sampling local cuisine and engaging with the country's rich cultural heritage. Despite the scenic beauty and culinary delights, their travels are punctuated by moments of frustration, homesickness, and exhaustion.

Jones brings Italy to life through vivid descriptions of destinations like Mount Etna, Matera, and Tuscany, capturing the chaotic charm of its cities, the warmth of its people, and the unexpected joys of simple, shared moments.

Through the couple's encounters with locals, local dishes, and unique cultural experiences, the book offers a delightful glimpse into life off the tourist trail. Yet, it also reflects the realities of travelling, including small and cold accommodations, pandemic-era disruptions, homesickness, and moments of exhaustion, painting a balanced and authentic picture of the journey.

Blending humour, warmth, and authenticity, the memoir captures Italy's allure while offering a realistic portrayal of the ups and downs of travel. As their adventure ends, the couple reflects on the bittersweetness of leaving beloved places, mixing gratitude for the experience with a longing for home.



Figure 70. Tuscan roads

DRIVING ITALY / R. Jones

This humorous travelogue explores the challenges, joys, and cultural discoveries one experiences while being in a foreign territory - whether it's squeezing through narrow streets, engaging with locals, or savouring local cuisine and history. Moreover, it revolves around the contrasts and complexities of travel, blending the romantic allure of Italy with chaotic realities, such as frustrations of moving from place to place, adjusting to unfamiliar customs, and managing life on the road...

Key themes:

Adaptation to new environments:

The couple faces the challenge of constantly shifting from one temporary "home" to another, adjusting to unfamiliar environments and living conditions. This theme touches on both the physical and emotional adjustments that come with extended travel, including feelings of longing and homesickness.

Cultural exploration and immersion:

The memoir delves into Italy's diverse culture, from its bustling markets and historical sites to the simple moments shared with locals. Food as a sensory and cultural experience is a recurring theme, alongside the warmth of the people and the beauty of Italy's landscapes.

Reflection on home and belonging:

As their journey nears its end, the couple reflects on the complexities of "home." The theme of longing for comfort and stability amidst the nomadic lifestyle resonates, exploring what it means to "feel at home" even when away from your usual life and familiar surroundings.

The potential for architectural translation of these themes offers the opportunity to design spaces that reflect both the external and internal journey, focusing on a dynamic, immersive experience that blends function, aesthetics, and emotional resonance to capture the complexities and joys of travel, adaptation, and cultural immersion.

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

The following book excerpts have been selected, identified and interpreted as potential for architectural translation and will later serve as a foundation for the design process.

I don't know much about being homeless. Still, I can tell you that gathering all your belongings in a car to drive into the unknown is deeply unsettling. (p.14)

This quote evokes feelings of uncertainty, vulnerability, and anxiety. It reflects the unsettling nature of change and the discomfort of stepping into the unknown, especially when it involves leaving behind a sense of stability or home.

Architectural potential:

Transition spaces: Focus on areas that represent the feeling of journey and unpredictability of travel, such as entryways, corridors, or vestibules, designed to be fluid and welcoming, but not fully settled.

Sensory comfort: Focus on cozy, enclosed spaces areas that provide a sense of security through soft materials, warm lighting and quiet sounds.

Without TV or the internet, we spent three days watching the colourful hot-air balloons float toward the sky at sunrise, reading old books, and walking around the châteaux. (p.43)

This quote evokes a sense of tranquillity, peace, mindfulness, and simplicity, emphasizing the joy found in simple, unhurried activities-- slowing down and watching the beauty of nature, reading, and exploring.

Architectural potential:

Connection to outdoors: Focus on outdoor spaces such as terraces, gardens, or courtyards and large openings to allow views of nature and connection.

Quiet spaces: Focus on areas that encourage relaxation, such as reading rooms, cozy alcoves, or sunrooms that invite visitors to slow down and enjoy their surroundings without distractions.

DRIVING ITALY / R. Jones

Living in someone's home is fascinating. It's more voyeuristic than looking into people's houses through lit windows, though not quite as bad as watching some reality shows. You don't get to see the people, but you get to see their lives: you eat from their dishes, sleep between their sheets, and read their books. The most revealing thing is the fridge. You won't believe what you can learn about people by studying their fridge. And their pantry. (p.48)

This quote evokes a sense of curiosity, intimacy, and voyeuristic delight in experiencing a new environment through the smallest details of their domestic environment. There's a fascination in seeing how others live, in discovering personal habits and preferences through objects like food, dishes, and books, even if the people themselves remain unseen.

Architectural potential:

Subtle transparency: Focus on elements that provide glimpses into the everyday lives of the place, allowing guests to engage with the culture and lifestyle in a way that feels both intimate and respectful.

When in Sardinia... we'll do like Sardinians do. We'll adopt the siesta, the late dinner, and everything else, and we'll live like they do. We'll try, at least. (p.78)

This quote evokes a sense of curiosity, openness, and immersion in local culture. It reflects a willingness to embrace and adapt to a different lifestyle, driven by the desire to experience a new rhythm of life.

Architectural potential:

Cultural immersion: Focus on spaces that celebrate local traditions, invite guests to fully immerse themselves in the local way of life and connect with locals.

I'll also miss our adventures. We're no longer young but still love to explore and enjoy life. We delight in nice dinners and good wine and laugh at things nobody else understands. (p.180)

This quote evokes nostalgia and contentment, highlighting the excitement of ongoing exploration, the connection formed through shared experiences and the joy of savouring life's simple pleasures with loved ones.

Architectural potential:

Celebration of culinary and cultural pleasures: Focus on areas that highlight the sensory joys of food and drink, like open kitchens, wine cellars, or tasting rooms, where people can engage with the experience of dining in a relaxed, social environment.

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

We left delighted, not only with the food but the owner's hospitality and the warmth of four generations of Italians sharing the pleasure of their lunch, the fire, and each other. It melted my heart to see the old man showing the toddlers how to warm their hands to the fire - close, but not too close - and the tired women's smiles. (p.186)

This quote evokes feelings of warmth, connection, and the deep emotional resonance of shared experiences. It reflects the joy of community, the comfort found in family traditions, and the emotional warmth of hospitality. The imagery of generations coming together to share a meal by the fire creates a sense of intimacy, care, and timeless human connection.

Architectural potential:

Multi-generational spaces: Focus on areas that cater to different age groups, allowing for interaction across generations and encouraging people to gather, share meals, and engage in activities together.

Warm and welcoming hospitality: Focus spaces that foster warmth and togetherness, such as communal dining areas with a central fireplace, soft lighting and cozy seating.

Eating in Tuscany is always an experience. Not because of the food - the food is always fantastic, and the wine washing it down is stupendous. But it's not about the food. It's about the people. (p.252)

This quote evokes a deep sense of community, connection, and the emotional richness of shared experiences. It conveys that the joy of eating transcends the food itself, rooted instead in the atmosphere, the people, and the shared moments that make the meal memorable.

Architectural potential:

Communal dining spaces: Focus on open dining areas or long communal tables that encourage interaction and shared meals.

Welcoming atmosphere: Focus on warm, earthy tones and natural materials like wood, stone, and terracotta to create a rustic, comfortable atmosphere that reflects the warmth of Italian hospitality.

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN / F. Mayes

Under the Tuscan Sun: At Home in Italy by Frances Mayes is a memoir that chronicles author's journey of purchasing and renovating an abandoned villa in Tuscany, as well as her deep appreciation for the region's culture, landscape, and cuisine.

The narrative covers the challenges and joys of restoring the abandoned villa named *Bramasole*, navigating Italy's complex real estate system, and making the villa a liveable home surrounded by olive groves and vineyards. The memoir also delves into Tuscan traditions, local food, and festivals as Mayes immerses herself in the community, gradually adopting the Italian way of life.

She vividly describes the beauty of the Tuscan landscapes and exploring local markets, mastering traditional Tuscan recipes, and partaking in regional festivals. Moreover, the memoir highlights her interactions and relationships with the locals, fellow expatriates, and her partner, Ed, who shares this transformative journey.

Alongside these transformations, the author reflects on her own personal growth, noting the emotional and spiritual renewal the experience brings. For Mayes, *Bramasole* becomes more than just a house - it serves as a metaphor for her own healing and the process of embracing change, simplicity, and authenticity. It's a sanctuary where she reconnects with herself, learns to embrace change, and discovers the pleasure of living fully in the present.

Set against the stunning backdrop of Tuscany's picturesque hills and historical towns, the memoir highlights the pleasures of life in the countryside, such as cooking, gardening, and engaging in local traditions. Ultimately, *Under the Tuscan Sun* is about finding a new sense of belonging, and through the villa's restoration, Mayes discovers the deep, restorative power of home, community, and living fully in the present.



Figure 71. Cortona by Stefano Orazzini

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN / F. Mayes

This memoir captures the journey of personal growth and renewal as the author immerses herself in Italian culture, local traditions, and the pleasures of daily life in Tuscany. Mayes intertwines her restoration of Bramasole with her deepening connection to the people, landscapes, and culinary delights that make Tuscany an unforgettable place to call home.

Key themes:

Joy of simple pleasures and slow living:

Frances Mayes emphasizes the richness of life's experiences when focused on the present moment and basic joys. In Tuscany, she immerses herself in daily activities that connect her with nature and the local culture, such as gardening, enjoying food, cooking, eating meals, and sharing them with others. The joy of simple pleasures is portrayed through the sense of freedom and contentment that accompanies slow, intentional living.

Local connection and immersion:

The memoir showcases Tuscan way of living and emphasizes community eating, sharing meals and Tuscan cuisine using locally sourced ingredients. The sense of belonging, as Frances forms connections with the locals, enhances the themes of home and rootedness. The book underscores how a connection to nature and culture can offer profound healing and self-renewal, while celebrating the timeless pleasures of life in Italy.

Connection to nature:

The author expresses her reconnection with nature through a deep appreciation of the Tuscan landscape, describing how the natural surroundings of Tuscany bring a sense of tranquillity and renewal.

These themes embrace the tranquil beauty of Tuscany's landscapes, fostering relaxation, connection, and cultural immersion. The space should encourage slow living and resonate with the joy of good food, time spent with loved ones, and deepening connection to both place and self. Through architecture, the essence of Tuscan living and personal transformation could be communicated, making this design both a haven for locals and a journey for visitors.

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

The following book excerpts have been selected, identified and interpreted as potential for architectural translation and will later serve as a foundation for the design process.

A guest on holiday is intent on pleasure. (p.xii)

This quote evokes a sense of delight and freedom. It highlights the pursuit of enjoyment, relaxation, and escape from daily routines with a focus on joy and the simplicity of living fully in the moment.

Architectural potential:

Spaces of indulgence: Focus on areas dedicated to sensory pleasures, such as terraces with panoramic views, wellness and spa, and dining areas emphasizing food, drink, and atmosphere.

Leisure-centric layouts: Focus on features like lounging spaces by the pool, garden walkways, and shaded verandas to encourage unhurried enjoyment.

When I first saw Bramasole, I immediately wanted to hang my summer clothes in an armadio and arrange my books under one of those windows looking out over the valley. (p.9)

This quote evokes intimacy, sense of belonging and comfort capturing personal connection to the space at first sight.

Architectural potential:

Domestic warmth: Focus on human-scale and natural materials like wood, stone, soft textures, light-coloured fabrics, and sunlit rooms to evoke airy and welcoming, home-like feel.

Integration of Views: Focus on spaces with expansive windows strategically placed to frame views of valleys, emphasizing the connection between interior and exterior.

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN / F. Mayes

Here, I am restored to the basic pleasure of connection to the outdoors. The windows are open to butterflies, horseflies, bees, or anything that wants to come in one window and out another. We eat outside almost every meal. I'm restored to my mother's sense of preserving the seasons and to time, even time to take pleasure in polishing a pane of glass to a shine. To the house safe for dreaming. One end of the house is built right against the hillside. An omen of reconnection? Here, I don't dream of houses. Here, I am free to dream of rivers. (p.88)

This quote evokes a profound sense of connection, simplicity, and restoration, highlighting the healing power of living in harmony with nature. It describes a rediscovery of joy in small, everyday acts, reflecting a slower, more mindful way of living. Moreover, it conveys sense of security, tranquillity and freedom.

Architectural potential:

Indoor-outdoor integration: Focus on outside areas, large openings and cross-ventilation, inviting nature, light and sound into the space and blurring the line between indoors and outdoors.

Rooted in the landscape: Focus on building following the contours of the land, symbolizing reconnection with the surroundings and grounding.

In my next life, when I am an architect, I always will design houses with kitchens that open to the outdoors. I love stepping out to head and tail my beans while sitting on the stone wall. I set dirty pots out to soak, dry my dishcloths on the wall, empty excess clean water on the arugula, thyme, and rosemary right outside the door. Since the double door is open day and night in summer, the kitchen fills with light and air. A wasp - is it the same one? - flies in every day and drinks from the faucet, then flies right out. (p.115)

This quote conveys a sense of openness, simplicity, and connection to nature. It evokes joy in the daily rituals of life--cooking, cleaning, and caring for plants--performed in harmony with the outdoors. There's an appreciation for light, air, and seamless indoor-outdoor integration.

Architectural potential:

Outdoor connection: Focus on spaces that open into the nature. Moreover, focus on practical outdoor living.

Multisensory integration: Focus on natural elements, air and light, herb gardens or planters, reinforcing the connection to nature through all the senses.

Community and gathering space: Focus on creating adjacent seating areas that promote fluidity and blend indoor and outdoor spaces, encouraging communal cooking or relaxing moments.

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

My daughter showed every sign of breaking the legacy of my mother and Willie, whose talents destined my sisters and me to shelves of cookbooks, constant plans for the next party, and--ultimate test--even the fate to cook when eating alone. Throughout her childhood, except for an occasional batch of obsidian-like fudge, Ashley disdained the kitchen. Shortly after she graduated from college, she began to cook and immediately started calling home for recipes for chicken with forty cloves of garlic, profiteroles, risotto, chocolate soufflé, potatoes Anna. Without meaning to, she seemed to have absorbed certain knowledge. Now, when we're together, we, too, go into paroxysms of planning and cooking. She has taught me a great marinated pork tenderloin recipe and a buttermilk lemon cake. These familial connections give me a helpless feeling: Cooking is destiny. (p.116)

This quote highlights the bonding power of cooking and its role as a deeply ingrained familial tradition. It evokes a sense of continuity, nostalgia, and shared joy, as culinary knowledge is passed down across generations and becomes a defining part of identity and connection.

Architectural potential:

Social and flexible food areas: Focus on open-plan kitchens with gathering points and adjacent communal dining spaces that encourage shared cooking and eating.

Blending tradition with modernity: Focus on natural materials like wood, stone, or terracotta to evoke a comforting and timeless atmosphere while incorporating contemporary systems and appliances for functionality.

Whatever a guidebook says, whether or not you leave somewhere with a sense of the place is entirely a matter of smell and instinct. There are places I've been which are lost to me. (p.146)

This quote emphasizes shaping of a true memory of a location by personal perception--sensory details like smells and instinctive reactions create lasting connections.

Architectural potential:

Sensory design elements: Focus on awaking the senses through use of scent (natural elements like fragrant flowers and herbs) and textural variety by implementing contrasting materials and finishes, such as smooth stone, rough wood, and soft fabrics to engage touch, enriching the sensory experience and enabling a deeper connection to the space.

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN / F. Mayes

In these stony old Tuscan towns, I get no sense of stepping back in time that I've had in Yugoslavia, Mexico, or Peru. Tuscans are of this time; they simply have had the good instinct to bring the past along with them. If our culture says burn your bridges behind, you-and it does-theirs says cross and recross. (p.152)

This quote evokes a sense of continuity, timelessness, and a deep cultural connection. It speaks to how the Tuscans, by blending the old and new, maintain a harmony between the past and present. The notion that "they bring the past along with them" evokes a sense of stability, preservation, and respect for heritage.

Architectural potential:

Blending old and new: Focus on preserving the existing and adding new sensible structures, creating a sense of connection across time.

Modern interpretations of traditional styles: Focus on continuing the use of traditional building materials such as stone and terracotta, but also incorporating modern materials such as glass, steel, and concrete to embody the idea of integrating history with the present.

We're falling into a deep relaxation and exhilaration by now, just what a vacation is supposed to be. (p.175)

This quote conveys a sense of ease, freedom, and joy. It captures the essence of the ideal vacation experience: a profound relaxation coupled with the exhilaration that comes from taking a break from daily stresses.

Architectural potential:

Comfort and serenity: Focus on spaces designed for relaxation, with soft lighting, plush seating and tranquil elements such as soft acoustic materials, and light-filtering curtains.

Lively gathering spaces: Focus on integrating communal areas that encourage connection, exploration and sharing moments of joy.

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

Far more than the book's fate, life in Tuscany altered my compass. If I went there for the art, food, culture, and landscape, I stayed for the people who live with a vivacity toward every day. I'm seduced by the Italian ability to enjoy life. My neighbours and friends have a particular genius for celebration at the table. The pleasures of eating and drinking are never tortured into psychological struggles. Instead, the relaxation around food is extraordinary. No need to ask if you can bring an extra guest or two. Throw in another handful of pasta; grab a chair. So much is revealed by how food gets to the table-who prepares it (everyone in the family), who's seated (great-grandfather and two-year-old toddler), what's the dynamic at the table (shouting, talking all at once, singing, card playing afterwards). For me, product of a lavish Southern table, food was the defining point of turning me half-Tuscan. The life around the table reminds me of the South. Every time I pull up my chair to a friend's table, I know that I am home. (p.292)

This quote evokes warmth, connection, inclusion and belonging. It captures the heartwarming experience of being welcomed into a community, celebrating food as not just nourishment but as a joyful expression of life. Moreover, it highlights this seamless blend of tradition, family, and culture in daily life, elevating something as ordinary as a meal into an experience of connection and warmth.

Architectural potential:

Communal spaces: Focus on flexible spaces that encourage gathering, inclusivity and connection.

Warm and inviting atmosphere: Focus on warm lighting and natural materials like wood, stone and terracotta to create a welcoming and cozy, evoking Tuscan simplicity and comfort.

Celebration of food: Focus on kitchens being the heart of the building, where the act of preparing, cooking and sharing food is visible and celebrated.

These old hill towns retain an intense sense of community. If I were writing Under the Tuscan Sun today, some things would be different. The magnetic pull of the piazza would not. (p.294)

This quote conveys a deep sense of community, belonging, connection, and tradition. The "magnetic pull of the piazza" evokes an emotional response centred around the bonding and social cohesion found in small, tight-knit communities.

Architectural potential:

Centralized gathering spaces: Focus on creating welcoming communal spaces where people are drawn to socialize, relax, and meet.

Communal engagement: Focus on creating something for the local people as well as the newcomers where nurturing communal bonds and the spontaneous interactions are promoted.

CONCLUSION

This chapter of base literature research has explored the potential of travel literature for translating into architectural design, focusing specifically on travelogues and memoirs set in Italy. Through a narrative-driven approach, this study sought to answer how the emotional and sensory journeys of travellers can be spatially embodied. The personal reflections and vivid depictions of places and emotions in these texts offer a powerful medium to connect the intangible qualities of a journey with tangible design elements.

By engaging with four selected texts - *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir* by Rada Jones, *A Room with a View* by E.M. Forster, and *Under the Tuscan Sun* by Frances Mayes - it was examined how the themes, experiences, and imagery within these works can serve as a foundation for architectural design.

Through these books, there were some repeated overarching themes:

Celebration of simple pleasures: culinary indulgence, shared meals, leisure, and nature emerge as pathways to joy, emphasizing mindfulness and slow living. The richness of simple acts - like cooking, eating, gardening, or cleaning - becomes an avenue for mindfulness and personal renewal

Freedom and spontaneity: the liberation associated with travel, such as wandering through cities or embracing unplanned moments, highlights the joy and exhilaration of exploration and the discovery of unknown elements.

Connection to place, heritage and people: embracing local traditions, history, landscapes and cuisine builds a sense of belonging, community, and respect for continuity between past and present. Moreover, interactions with locals, multi-generational families, and fellow travellers demonstrate the rich relational tapestry of travel, underscoring the significance of shared stories and bonds

Tension between home and travel: the duality of longing for stability versus the excitement of movement highlights the internal push-pull between rootedness and the nomadic spirit

Integration with nature: emphasis on connection with the place and nature itself through landscape, gardens, wildlife, and also views of it.

Journey of self-discovery: travel acts as a catalyst for personal transformation, breaking free from societal norms and fostering introspection, emotional awakening, and balance.

These themes collectively form a layered foundation for exploring how literature can be translated into architecture.

LITERARY FRAMEWORK

Moreover, the books themselves led to the choice of a site for this project through overlap of all locations mentioned - all of the books have a common theme - **Tuscany** and Italy's Tuscan hill towns.

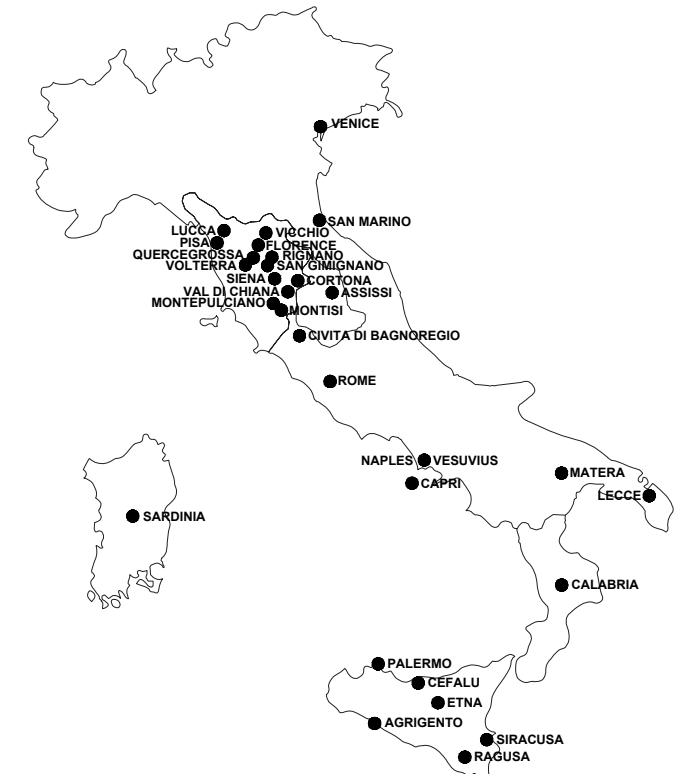
The main takeaways and focus points when picking an exact location were its proximity to the town and locals, but also peaceful atmosphere within nature that provides views of the vineyards and landscape.

My instinct was telling me that a serene hillside setting near Val d'Orcia, a UNESCO World Heritage site, would provide a perfect location. This area is renowned for its picturesque landscapes, rolling hills, cypress-lined roads, and historic towns.

Taking that into account and also the locations mentioned in the books, the following places were shortlisted: **Montepulciano, Montalcino and Pienza**.

Eventually, Montepulciano is the chosen town due to being mentioned in three out of four books (*Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir* by Rada Jones, and *Under the Tuscan Sun* by Frances Mayes).

Montepulciano is a charming medieval and Renaissance hill town in southern Tuscany, known for its stunning views, rich history, and exceptional wines. Located atop a ridge between the Val d'Orcia and the Val di Chiana, it offers a picturesque setting and an authentic Tuscan experience. The countryside surrounding Montepulciano is lush with vineyards and olive groves, offering a serene environment, while the town itself is full of life. It is celebrated for its well-preserved architecture, agritourism, various festivals, filming sets and, of course, world-renowned wine, *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*, a prestigious red wine made from Sangiovese grapes (Novak 2024).



03

FRAMING THE NARRATIVE

LOCATION
DESIGN BRIEF
CHARACTERS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays the narrative framework for the design, establishing the geographical, cultural and emotional context upon which the architecture is built. At its core, the chapter weaves together three threads: the specificity of the site, the literary and experiential foundation of the project and the development of fictional yet research-based characters who will inhabit the space.

The chosen site - Montepulciano, a hilltop town in southern Tuscany - emerged through the convergence of locations mentioned in the guiding literary works. Set amidst rolling vineyards, olive groves and golden light, Montepulciano offers a rich spatial and emotional landscape. With its medieval stone streets, Renaissance facades, and sweeping views across the Val d'Orcia and Val di Chiana, the town is not just a backdrop but a protagonist: textured, storied, and alive. It reflects the essence of Tuscany's rhythms and was selected for its proximity to nature, quietness, scenic views and immersive cultural character.

This atmosphere is not only described but felt. Through books like *At Least You're in Tuscany: A Somewhat Disastrous Quest for the Sweet Life* by Jennifer Criswell, the local way of life - its rituals, contradictions, and cadences - comes into sharper focus. Further layered by personal reflections and a cross-cultural familiarity with Croatia's Istrian region, the project is approached with a sense of empathy and intuitive spatial understanding. This allows the design to move beyond picturesque representation toward lived experience.

The design brief responds to these insights by proposing a hybrid typology: a meeting point of stories, a space that blends hospitality and housing, offering a home for locals and an immersive, story-driven stay for travellers. This is not tourism as escapism, but as meaningful cultural exchange. Moreover, this design seeks to create new value for the community while offering tourists an authentic connection to the local way of life.

At the heart of this spatial narrative are the characters: imagined personas who bring *Casa Habitoria* to life. These users are not generic; they are defined by their relationship to place, by their desire to engage with the Tuscan way of living, and by their movement between retreat and participation. Informed by literary tone, ethnographic cues, and emotional texture, they represent a diverse mix of locals and travellers. Their lives unfold through diary entries, letters, text messages, and overheard conversations. Each character inhabits the space differently, and through them, the architecture is activated and brought to life. They are not users, they are narrators and they guide not only the conceptual direction but the very logic of the spatial organization, allowing stories to shape form, rhythm and atmosphere.

As the chapter concludes, it defines the principles and strategies that guide the architectural response: slowness, porosity, community and atmospheric layering. These tools will shape a building that is not merely functional, but emotionally resonant - one that tells a story, holds memory and invites presence.

MONTEPULCIANO

Montepulciano is a charming hill town in southern Tuscany, with a population of around 14 000 people. Located atop a limestone ridge at an altitude of 605 meters above sea level between the Val d'Orcia and the Val di Chiana, it boasts breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside. Known for its rich history and exceptional wines, Montepulciano offers visitors an authentic Tuscan experience, blending stunning landscapes with cultural and culinary delights. During the Middle Ages, the town was a source of constant conflict between Florence and Siena, leading to a unique blend of Gothic and Renaissance architectural styles that remain well-preserved today (Novak 2024).

The surrounding countryside is lush with vineyards and olive groves, creating a serene and picturesque environment, while the town itself is vibrant and full of life. Montepulciano is celebrated for its various festivals, iconic filming locations, exquisite gastronomy, and, of course, world-renowned wine, *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano*.

This prestigious red wine, made from Sangiovese grapes, holds the esteemed *Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita* (DOCG) status. Alongside *Brunello di Montalcino* and *Chianti Classico*, it is one of Tuscany's principal red wines (Cindrić 2017).

Visiting Montepulciano offers an authentic Tuscan experience, where history, culture, and natural beauty seamlessly converge. The town itself is lively and culturally rich, with charming narrow streets, artisan shops, and inviting trattorias. It is celebrated for its well-preserved architecture, which includes Renaissance palaces, charming piazzas and historic churches.

The main square of Montepulciano, Piazza Grande, is surrounded by stunning Renaissance buildings, including the Palazzo Comunale (Town Hall), which resembles a mini version of Florence's Palazzo Vecchio, and the Duomo di Montepulciano, a simple yet beautiful church built in the 16th century.

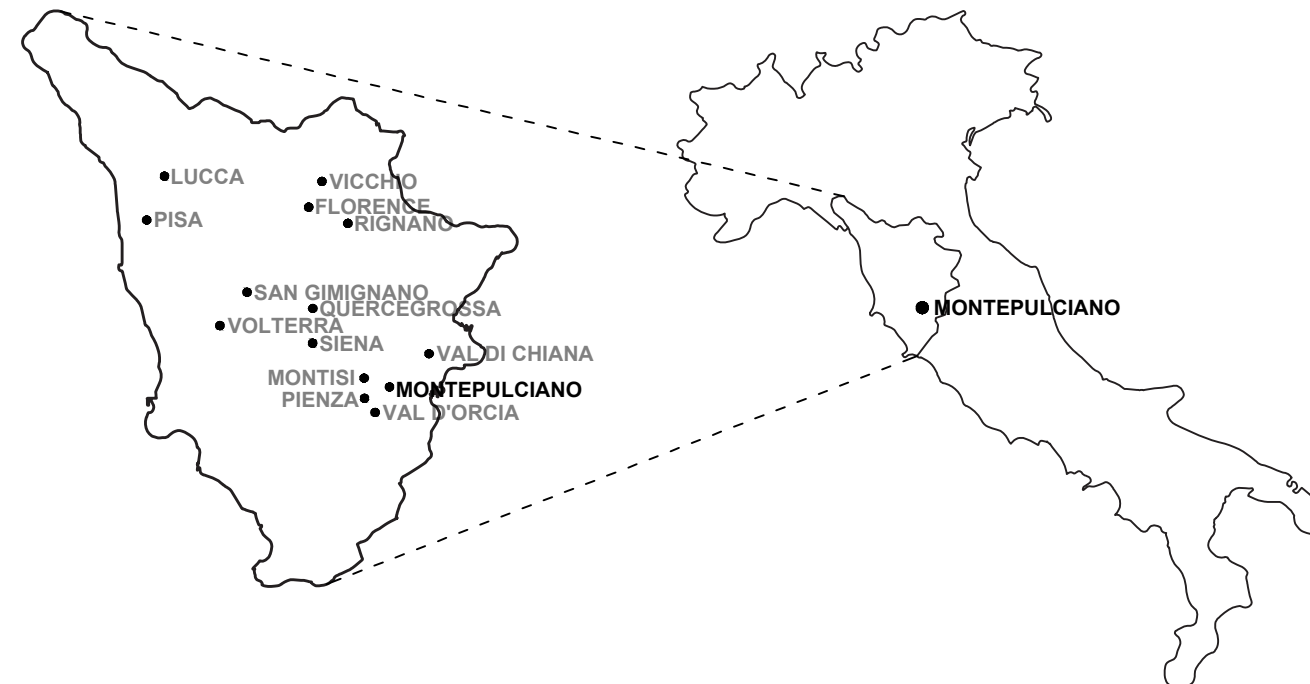
Community is central to life in Montepulciano, with festivals, religious celebrations and events bringing locals together. One of Montepulciano's most famous events, the *Bravio delle Botti*, is an annual barrel-rolling race through the town's narrow streets held in August (Damijanić 2022).

Bravio delle Botti itself has a long history, dating back to the 14th century when the race was originally held on horseback. Today, it uses wine barrels, reflecting Montepulciano's renowned red wine, *Vino Nobile di Montepulciano* (Damijanić 2022).

Montepulciano has also served as a filming location for movies such as *The Twilight Saga: New Moon* (2009) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999) (Criswell 2012).

Beyond its cultural and historical riches, Tuscany offers a wide range of culinary and gastronomic experiences. From traditional food markets and village fairs to cooking classes (Criswell 2012) and guided culinary tours, visitors can explore the region's world-renowned cuisine. The region's wine routes and olive oil trails allow visitors to connect directly with local producers, enhancing their travel experiences. As Tuscany's food and wine offerings expand, the region remains one of the most sought-after gastronomic destinations in the world (Novak 2024).

WHERE?



"Montepulciano is shamelessly seductive. It confidently puts it all there: breathtaking landscapes, beautiful houses, and rich offerings. One can't but lust, so I drooled my way from one window shop to the next..."
- *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir* by Rada Jones

TUSCANY

In Tuscan's hill towns, mornings often begin with a visit to a local café for an espresso or cappuccino, accompanied by a pastry like a cornetto. Cafés serve as social hubs where locals, usually between 40 and 50 years old (UrbiStat 2022), gather to chat and exchange news.

Residents may then visit the weekly outdoor market or specialty shops for fresh produce, local cheeses, and meats. Seasonal ingredients like truffles, mushrooms, and wild herbs feature prominently in local cooking.

Lunch, typically the main meal of the day, is often enjoyed at home or in a family-run trattoria, with dishes like handmade pici pasta, pecorino cheese, and hearty soups such as ribollita. After lunch, it's common to take a short rest or "siesta," especially during the hot summer months. Many shops close for a few hours in the afternoon and reopen later (Jones 2021).

Afternoons might be spent strolling through the town or enjoying its theatres and festivals. As Frances Mayes described in *Under the Tuscan Sun*, 'We all ride over to Montepulciano to see a medieval pageant scene filmed in the piazza', capturing the town's timeless allure and cultural vibrancy.

This timeless character is also reflected in the region's architecture. Tuscany owes much of its charm to traditional building techniques that reflect a profound connection to the land. These methods prioritize the use of locally sourced natural materials, sustainable practices, and skilled craftsmanship, often characterized by simple yet elegant geometric shapes.

Local stone, such as pietra serena and travertine, is a hallmark of Tuscan construction. Quarried locally to minimize transportation, these materials lend buildings their distinctive looks.

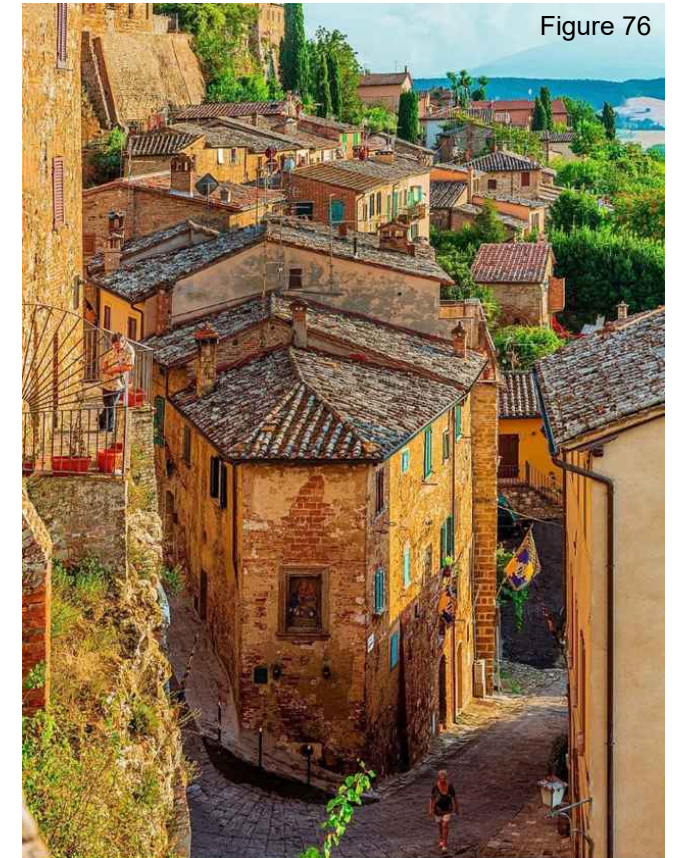
Stone is frequently used for structural walls, foundations, and decorative features like arches and lintels.

Handmade terracotta bricks and tiles are another staple of Tuscan architecture. Terracotta roof tiles, carefully arranged in layered patterns, ensure effective water runoff while contributing to the region's iconic skyline.

Wood is traditionally used for beams and frameworks, while technique of dry-stone walls involves stacking stones without mortar to create terraces, boundary walls, and even building foundations. It is not only eco-friendly but also allows for natural drainage, preserving soil integrity. To coat walls, lime-based plaster and stucco finishes - often tinted with natural pigments - are used to provide insulation and protection against moisture. The resulting finishes not only enhance durability but also contribute to the region's aesthetic unity.

Tuscany's building techniques emphasize harmony with the environment. Homes are often positioned to maximize natural light and ventilation, reducing the need for artificial heating and cooling. Thick walls made of stone or brick regulate indoor temperatures, providing insulation year-round (Criswell 2012). Furthermore, the widespread use of arches and vaulted ceilings, a legacy of Etruscan and Roman design, remains iconic in Tuscan architecture (Despot and Sandeva 2016).

Figure 73-77. Montepulciano



AGRITOURISM

Rural tourism is a form of tourism that invites visitors to immerse themselves in the natural, cultural, and traditional essence of rural areas, offering a slower pace of life, scenic landscapes, and authentic countryside experiences. Unlike mass tourism, it focuses on intimate activities in smaller, tranquil areas often run by family-owned businesses. Visitors engage in agricultural experiences, cultural exploration, outdoor adventures, and wellness, fostering a deeper connection to the land and local communities. Beyond personal enrichment, rural tourism plays a crucial role in revitalizing villages, preserving cultural and natural heritage, supporting local income, creating jobs, fostering community engagement and combating rural depopulation (Šajn and Finer 2023).

Agritourism is a specific form of rural tourism where the tourist experience is rooted in agricultural activities. It offers them an authentic glimpse into rural life, including participating in agricultural work, tasting local specialties and learning about traditions.

Main activities involve visits to farms, fruit picking, milking cows, harvesting grapes, and education on local agricultural practices as wine and olive oil production. In addition to that, many destinations provide participation in community customs and other cultural activities like cooking classes and craft workshops, creating a well-rounded rural adventure.

Combining elements of travel, education, and recreation, agritourism offers a unique opportunity to escape urban life and connect with nature, culture, and the roots of food production (Balić 2021).

Agritourism is the fastest growing form of tourism in Italy, with Tuscany leading the way. In fact, Tuscany was the first Italian region to recognise the importance of integrated rural development, passing the first regional law on agritourism in 1985. This law aimed to create a more comprehensive tourist offer and prevent depopulation in the area (Grgić et al. 2015).

Tuscany, is therefore often cited as one of the most successful examples of rural tourism and agritourism in Europe (Grgić et al. 2015). Its unique blend of natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, traditional gastronomy and wine, makes it an ideal destination for the development of these forms of tourism.

Agritourism in Tuscany is particularly based on preserving the traditional way of life and valorising agricultural products. Numerous farms offer accommodation in rustic villas and farmhouses, where tourists can enjoy nature, taste local products and participate in activities such as grape and olive harvesting or learning traditional recipes (Vučić 2018).

The region of Tuscany successfully balances the preservation of heritage and the encouragement of tourism investments. For example, the legislative framework in Italy (*Legge nazionale sull'agriturismo*) makes it easier for farmers to diversify their income through tourism, while regional laws additionally support specific programs and activities aimed at rural tourism. The Tuscan model is often used as an example of a successful approach to revitalizing rural areas (Balić 2021).



Figure 78. Farmhouse in Val d'Orcia by Casa Romana

THE TUSCAN WAY OF LIVING

Living in Tuscany, particularly in a town like Montepulciano, is not just about enjoying its famous wine and food - though both are exceptional. It's about immersing oneself in a culture that values beauty and pleasure as much as sustenance. For a few months, to live in such a place is to embrace a lifestyle where the most mundane moments are elevated into small rituals of joy. Whether it's savoring a lovely meal, learning a language purely for the pleasure of its sound, or napping in a sun-dappled garden, there is an undeniable magic in the simplicity of life here.

What makes the experience even more profound is the way in which the everyday is intertwined with human connection. Living in someone's home, even temporarily, opens up a window into their life - into their choices, their habits, and, often, the quiet grace with which they navigate their daily routines. The fridge and pantry, those often-overlooked corners, can tell you volumes about a person's life and priorities. It's this sense of shared humanity that becomes so compelling, as it's not just the food that matters but the way it's shared - around a table, surrounded by friends and family, where the atmosphere is filled with laughter, warmth, and spontaneous joy.

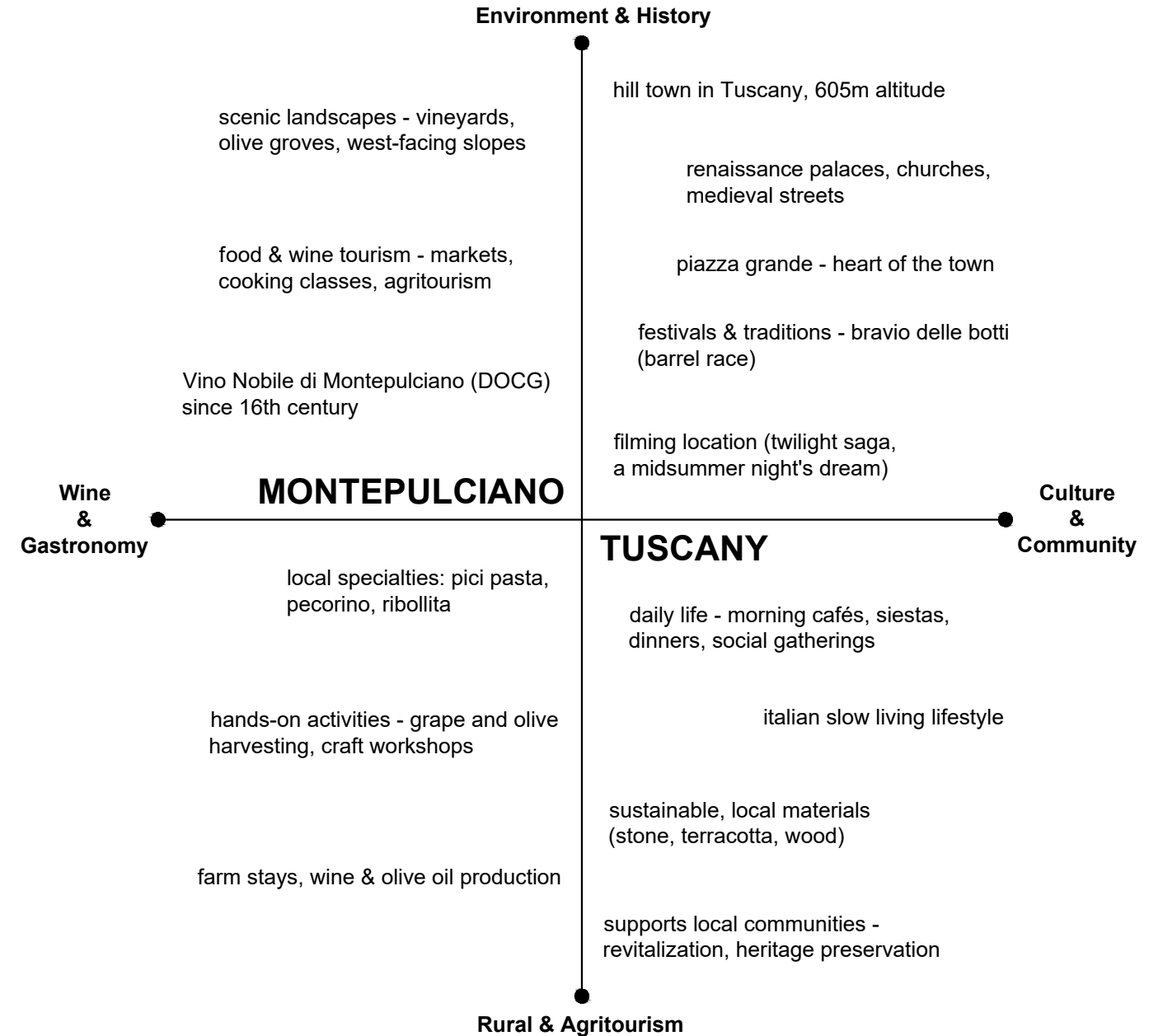
Tuscany, with its vineyards, valleys, and hill towns, offers an unparalleled sense of place. When you sit at a window looking out over the landscape, there's a powerful connection to both the natural world and a time-honored way of life. The house you live in might be simple, but it is a sanctuary for dreaming - where open windows invite butterflies and bees, and where the daily rhythms of cooking and cleaning bring you closer to the earth.

The house is not just a shelter; it is a conduit to a slower, more intentional way of life, one where you have time to savor each moment, whether it's a sip of wine or the act of polishing a pane of glass.

Tuscany's charm lies not just in its art, food, or views, but in the people who live there - those who have perfected the art of living fully. The way food is prepared and shared speaks volumes about their approach to life. There's no need for pretense; the pleasure of eating together is in the abundance, the generosity, and the ease with which the table is set. It's a celebration of life's small pleasures, and there's always room for one more guest, one more story, one more glass of wine.

The strong sense of community in these towns is palpable. The piazza, with its centuries-old charm, draws people together, creating a space for connection and celebration.

Life here is not rushed but savored, a vivid reminder of what truly matters: not just the landscape, but the people who breathe life into it. It's not just a place to visit - it's a place to belong. When you pull up a chair to a Tuscan table, you are not just a guest; you are home.



SITE

"I loved living in the very heart of the city, so I could come and go as I pleased a dozen times a day."

- *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir* by Rada Jones (p.124)

"The house, only two kilometres from town, feels like a deep country place. We can't see any neighbors, although we hear the man way above us calling *vieni qua, come here, to his dog.*"

- *Under the Tuscan Sun* by Frances Mayes (p.74)

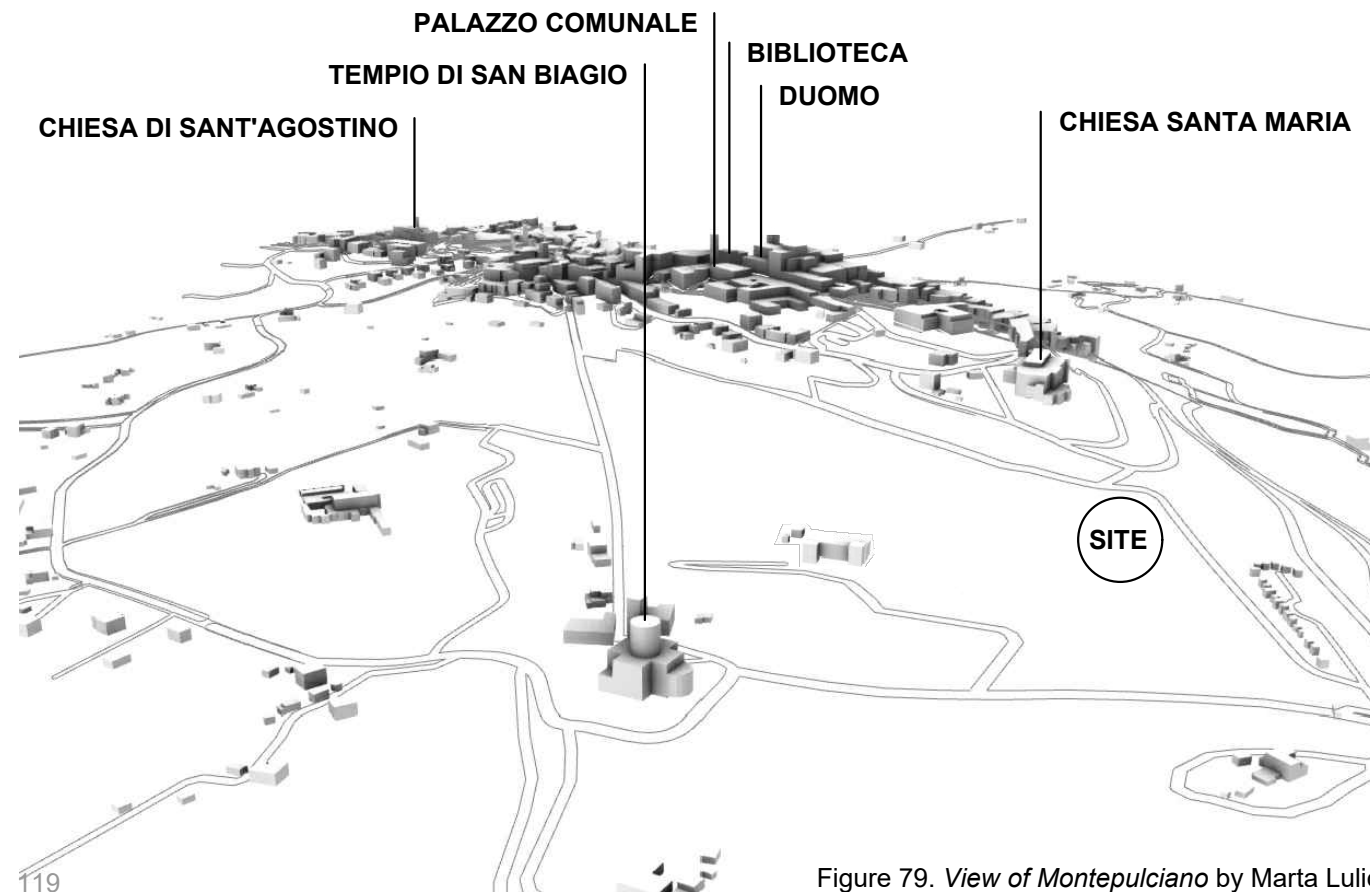


Figure 79. View of Montepulciano by Marta Lulić

When choosing a location in Montepulciano, it was clear that the chosen site needed to balance authenticity, convenience, and a connection to nature. The heart of the town, where many locals tend to live, offers a rich cultural experience, while the outskirts provide tranquillity and stunning views of the Tuscan landscape. This combination of factors led to the selection of a specific site that perfectly embodies these qualities.

The chosen location is situated on a slope, offering picturesque views toward the west and south, ideal for enjoying long hours of sunlight and breathtaking sunsets. It is conveniently close to the city centre, within easy walking distance, yet remains slightly removed to provide privacy and serenity. The main Piazza Grande is just a 10-minute walk away, while the Tempio di San Biagio can be reached in about 15 minutes. Surrounded by greenery, the site provides a harmonious blend of serenity and privacy of natural beauty and cultural immersion.

Insights from base literature reinforced this decision, emphasizing the allure of both urban convenience and rural charm. Rada Jones, in *Driving Italy: A Cheeky Travel Memoir*, highlights the joys of living in the town's heart, while Frances Mayes in *Under the Tuscan Sun* describes the peace of a countryside home just outside town, where nature and solitude dominate.

This site offers users an atmospheric and immersive Italian experience, allowing them to connect deeply with the local culture and enjoy the natural surroundings.

Figure 80-82. Site



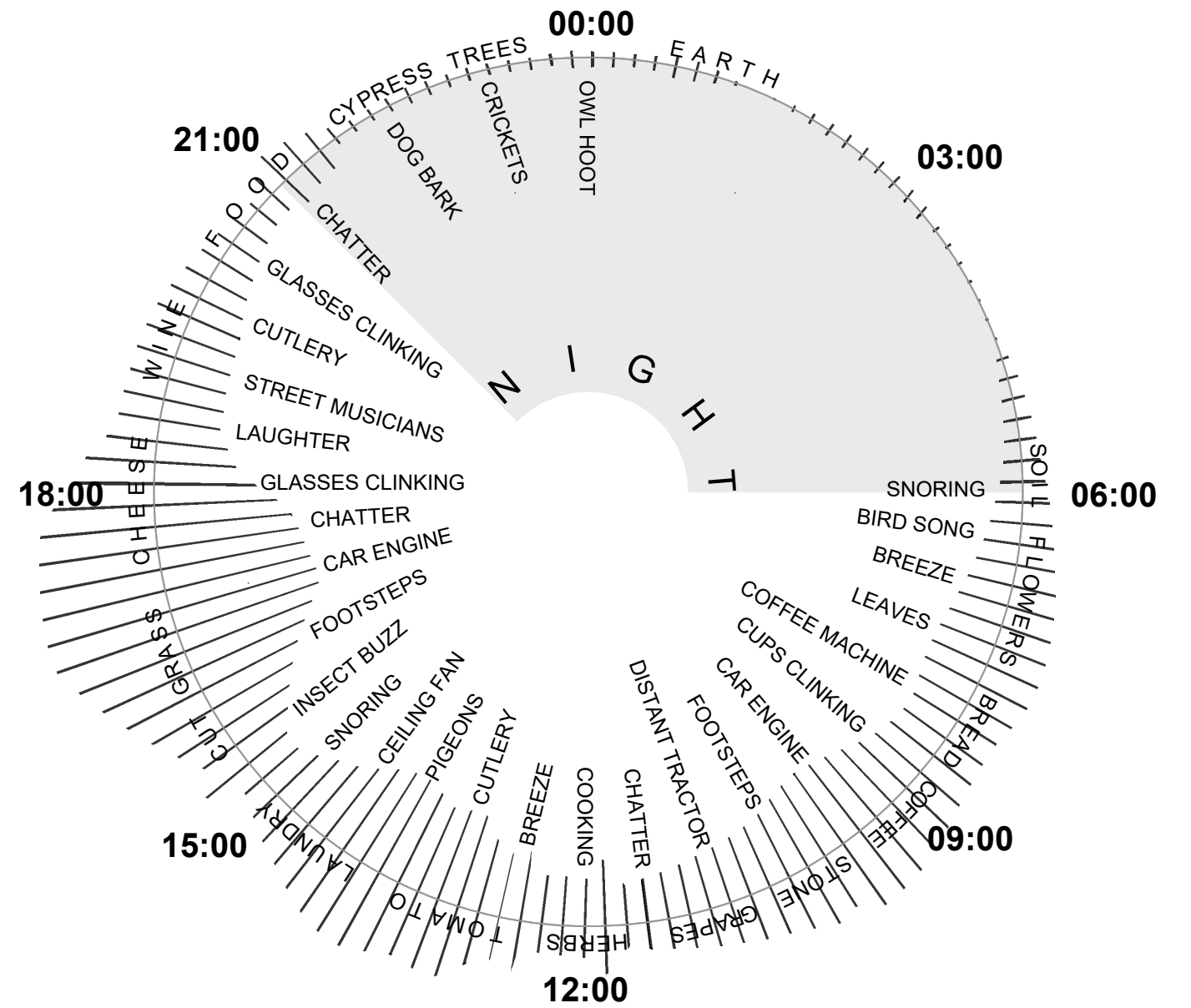
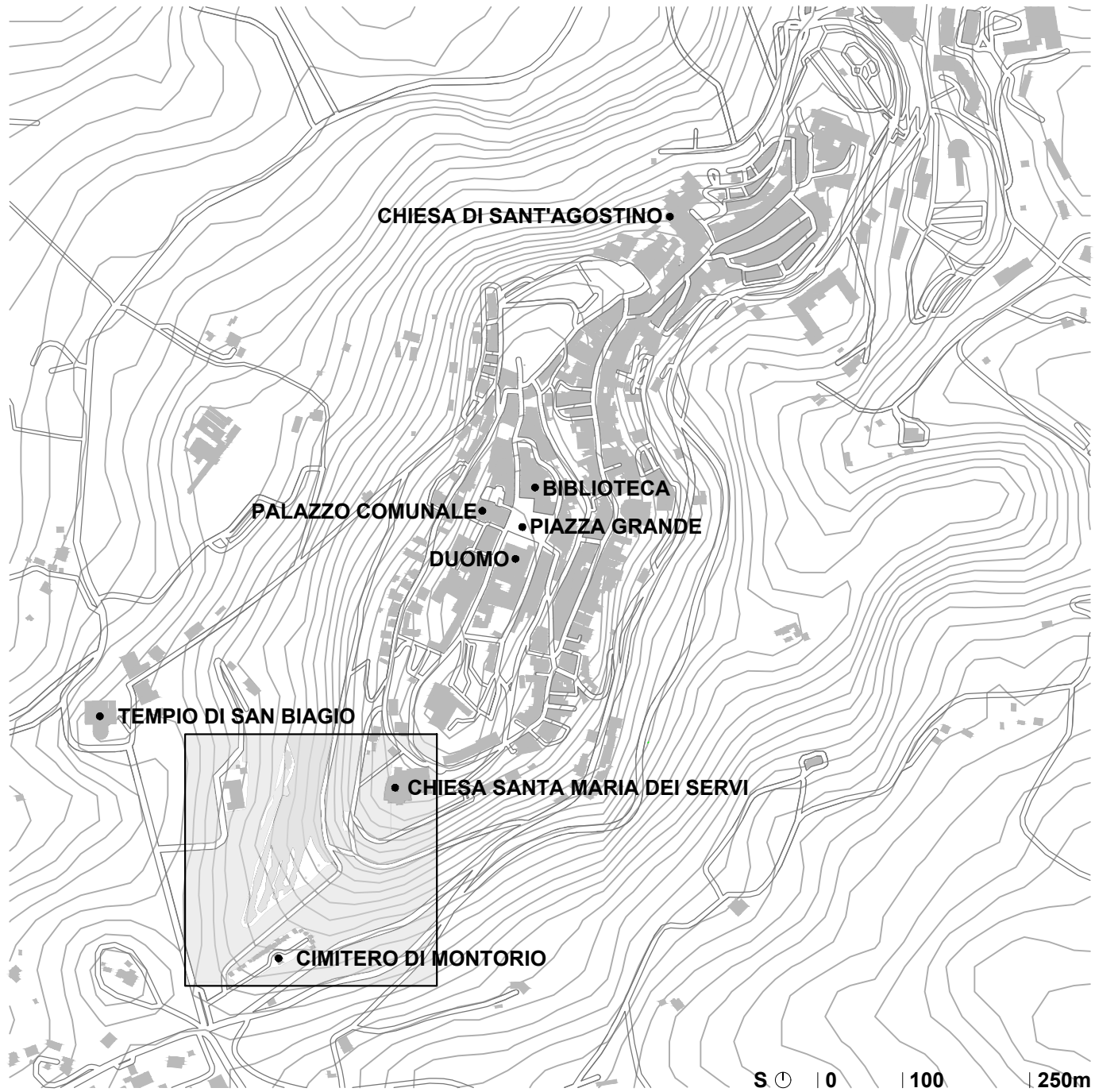
Figure 80

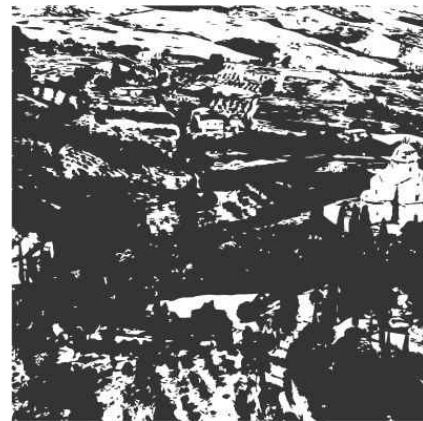
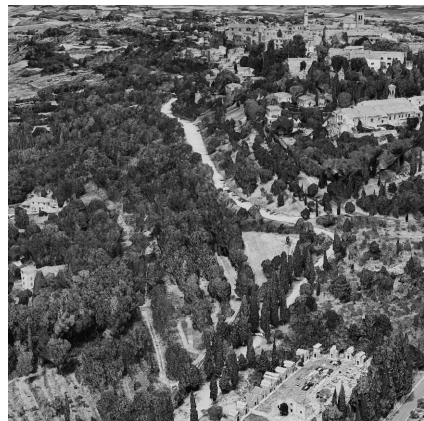
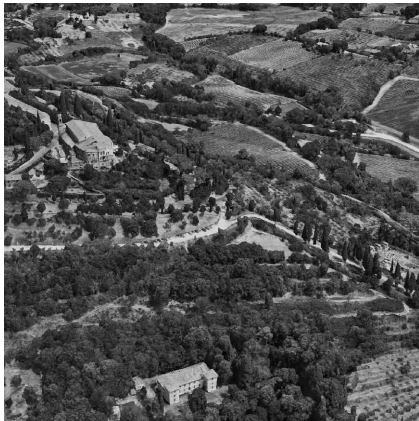


Figure 81



Figure 82





A PERSONAL RESONANCE

Another layer that can be added to expand on the project's location in Italy is the inclusion of a personal narrative, highlighting its connection to my home country, Croatia.

Particularly, the similarities between Tuscany and the Croatian region of Istria highlight a shared Mediterranean heritage, with both regions exhibiting many cultural, historical, architectural, and geographical parallels. These commonalities stem from their deep historical connections, reflecting their intertwined past and mutual influences that have shaped their distinct yet comparable landscapes and traditions.

Istria, often called Croatia's Tuscany (Wiseman 2019), is renowned for its stunning coastline and idyllic beaches, while inland it features lush vineyards, olive groves, truffle-filled forests, and medieval hilltop towns resembling Tuscany's landscapes. Geographically, both regions share similar features, such as gentle hills and abundant vineyards and olive groves, leading to frequent comparisons in (agro)tourism and gastronomy.

Pula (Fig.85) is the largest city in Istria and it's a home to many ancient landmarks, including a 1st century AD Roman amphitheater. Rovinj boasts a beautifully preserved Old Town and seaside charm, while medieval Motovun (Fig.87) in central Istria sits atop a hill and is renowned as one of the most picturesque towns. There are plenty of other small hill towns such as Oprtalj (Fig.84), Grožnjan (Fig.88), Bale (Fig.86)...

Istria was ruled by the Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, Habsburgs, and Napoleon. It came under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian empire in 1814. Afterward, it became part of Italy and was then ceded to Yugoslavia. In 1991, with the breakup of Yugoslavia and Croatia's independence, it became one of the regions in Croatia (Goldstein 1999).

Italy's rule over Istria left a deep mark on its cultural heritage, shaping its architecture, art, and social structures. From the stone-built structures and synergy of agriculture and tourism to the emphasis on a relaxed, quality lifestyle, there is a clear resonance between the way of living in both areas.

In relation to the topic of travelogues, it is also worth mentioning the ones focused on the Croatian coast, with significant emphasis on Istria.

British consul Richard Burton, during his visits to Istria, collected geographical, historical, and ethnographic data. In his work *Note sopra i Castellieri o rovine preistoriche della Penisola Istriana del capitano*, he portrayed the inhabitants of Istria as exemplary, hardworking, tidy, and polite. Burton likened Istria's landscapes to Italian ones, highlighting its "wild and romantic" inland fortresses and clean coastal cities adorned with Roman-Venetian architecture (Trtanj 2023).

Similarly, in *The Shores of the Adriatic*, F.H. Jackson provided a detailed account of Istria, focusing on Svetvinčenat, home to one of the best-preserved Istrian castles. His descriptions extended to local traditions, knightly tournaments, and the castles and prisons of the region (Trtanj 2023).

French author Charles Yriarte contributed further with his richly illustrated works on Istria and Dalmatia, offering thorough depictions of cities like Pula, Vrsar, Rovinj, and Pazin, as well as their surrounding landscapes. His writings detailed the region's natural resources, the habits of its people, and the developmental potential of Istria. Yriarte's legacy preserves a wealth of data on Istrian life during the 19th century, including its cultural and architectural heritage (Trtanj 2023).

Figure 83. *Map of Tuscany and Istria* by Marta Lulić

TUSCANY & ISTRIA





DESIGN BRIEF

The culmination of this project lies in a design that emerges from using existing narratives from literature as its foundation.

Extensive research has been conducted to establish a framework for concept and design development, including a detailed study of guiding narratives and theoretical frameworks. This has led to a central concept - a meeting point of stories.

The idea lies in redefining the traditional understanding of travelling and travel accommodations by introducing a new approach both to living and travelling. It envisions a space where both locals and travellers coexist, bringing together people from all walks of life in a shared environment.

This hybrid building is a seamless fusion of living and hospitality, where locals and visitors coexist in harmony. It is more than a place to stay; it is a place that fosters experience, connection and a sense of belonging for both locals and visitors. It redefines the idea of travel accommodation - not as a neutral backdrop, but as an active, immersive cultural encounter.

Inspired by Tuscany, agritourism and its timeless beauty, rich heritage and vibrant community, the aim is to create a space that immerses travellers in genuine Tuscan life. Rather than isolating tourists from the rhythms of local life, the design invites them into it, creating opportunities for mutual exchange and everyday connection. It invites them to engage with locals and experience the essence of the town and truly play a part in it.

This central concept can be described in various ways, including a dual-use housing, mixed-stay building, co-living hotel, community stay and living habitat.

Following that, the design should promote balanced coexistence, ensuring everyone feels a sense of belonging. It should emphasize shared spaces that encourage interaction, connection, and exploration, while respecting individual privacy and cultural identity. This way, the architecture should blend public and private realms with sensitivity, encouraging exploration without intrusion and togetherness without obligation.

Moreover, the design should embrace the ideas of slow living, sensory delight, comfort and pleasure and the timeless joy of community, connection and gathering around shared experiences.

Through thoughtfully chosen materials, light, sound and temperature, the atmosphere should transform the building into an immersive experience that evokes emotions and fosters a profound sense of belonging. This design is not aimed for vacation, but for travelling, experiencing and evolving.

WHAT?

LOCAL INTEGRATION

The design should honour the unique character of the location by using natural materials like stone, terracotta, and wood, and respecting vernacular architectural styles. In this way, the building is going to blend with the local aesthetic and landscape, creating harmony and serving as a natural extension of the environment.

SUSTAINABILITY AND ORGANIC FORM

The design should embrace natural shapes and organic forms that seamlessly blend into the environment. By incorporating sustainable practices - such as using local materials, maximizing natural light, and integrating greenery - the connection between the building and its surroundings will be further strengthened.

CULTURAL IMMERSION

The design should embrace local community and traditions, playing a crucial role in enriching the experience and offering travellers authentic insights into local life. Priority should be given to creating areas for communal dining and gatherings, where food serves as a medium for connection, reflecting Tuscan tradition.

HUMAN-CENTRED DESIGN

The design should prioritize spaces that invite interaction and create opportunities for connection. By considering how inhabitants and visitors move through and experience the space, the design should foster relationships among individuals, between people, and with their surroundings.

CONNECTION TO NATURE

The design should have a strong relationship between indoor and outdoor spaces. This way, the design not only enhances the well-being but also reflects the Tuscan lifestyle of living in close symbiosis with the land.

CELEBRATION OF SIMPLE PLEASURES

The design should embody the Italian ethos, where beauty is woven into daily life, and joy is found in small moments and the pursuit of simple pleasures. The spaces should encourage slowing down, savouring life, embracing the present moment, and rediscovering the joy of every day.

EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE

The design should be experiential, offering a range of sensory experiences that evoke various emotions, much like the journey of travel. Each space should invite exploration and reflection, allowing individuals to connect deeply with their surroundings and themselves.

SENSE OF BELONGING

The ultimate goal of the design is to make people feel like part of the community adding a new value both for the locals and for the travellers.

NARRATIVES OF CHARACTERS

This chapter is rooted in a dual literary approach: while the research draws from non-fictional literary experiences, the design emerges from fictional storytelling. It is through this interplay that the characters of *Casa Habitoria* were born - imagined personas inspired by real people, places, and the unique cultural landscape of Montepulciano. These characters form the narrative core of the project, serving not as abstract users, but as fully fleshed-out storytellers who bring the architecture to life.

Each persona is fictional yet deeply grounded in research. Their stories are shaped through an intuitive blend of literary interpretation, ethnographic observation, and immersion into the rhythms of Tuscan life. Each one is filled with memories, routines, longings, and stories.

They embody both locals and travellers, spanning generations and lifestyles - from Chiara, the warm-hearted receptionist whose diary entries reflect a quiet devotion to place, to Evelyn, the solo traveller rediscovering joy and slowness in midlife. There is Nanni, the elderly widower whose letters to his late wife are woven with memory and presence, and the group of old friends who return to themselves and to one another through shared rituals.

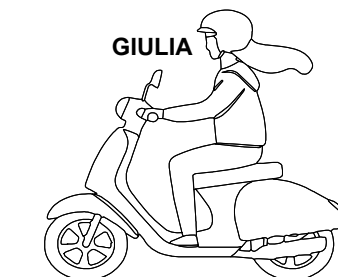
These characters are introduced not only through descriptive background narratives but through intimate literary forms - diary entries, handwritten postcards, letters and personal reflections. These fragments offer glimpses into their inner worlds, their rituals, and their emotional landscapes.

In doing so, they reveal how architecture is lived: how it hosts memory, how it responds to the body's rhythms, how it becomes embedded in everyday life. Moreover, these narrative fragments open a window into how people emotionally connect with a place and how architecture becomes more than function - it becomes home, memory, belonging.

The fictional dimension allows the design to move beyond generic programmatic requirements. Instead, the space becomes layered with emotional resonance. *Casa Habitoria* is not simply a building; it is a woven fabric of stories, a living, breathing environment shaped by the quiet poetry of everyday life. Each spatial decision responds to the gestures, longings, and daily rituals of these characters. The shared terrace becomes a stage for conversation. The kitchen is scented with herbs and memory. Bedrooms are personalized sanctuaries.

Through this narrative lens, the building becomes more than functional - it becomes intimate, lived-in, and alive. Fiction here is not escapism but a method for deepening reality. The characters remind us that architecture, at its best, is not just inhabited - it is remembered, felt, and loved.

WHO?



THE STORY OF CHIARA

Chiara is 34 years old, Montepulciano born and raised. She has a warm, open smile that instantly puts people at ease - the kind of person you trust to tell you where to find the best pecorino or which vineyard is worth the walk. Her life is simple yet deeply rooted in the rhythms of the Tuscan countryside.

Chiara works at *Casa Habitoria* - a beautiful, old stone building at the edge of Montepulciano's historic centre. *Casa Habitoria* is special: half of it is a cozy guesthouse with only a few rooms, the other half is housing for locals - older residents who grew up in the town, a loving couple who runs an art gallery nearby, and even Chiara's childhood friends, Matteo and Paola, who returned after years in Florence.

She lives five minutes away from her work, in a small apartment in an old traditional building. Every morning, Chiara walks to work through narrow streets, greeting the same faces: the old man with his newspaper at the bench, the baker setting out fresh *schiacciata*, the ladies talking in front of *Chiesa Santa Maria dei Servi*.



Chiara arrives at *Casa Habitoria* around 7:30 AM, before the guests wake up. She starts by brewing a huge moka pot of coffee, filling the air with its rich aroma, and preparing a simple breakfast - bread, butter, homemade jams, seasonal fruit. She sets it out in the sunlit communal kitchen island, greeting early risers with a cheerful "*Buongiorno!*"

After breakfast, Chiara checks emails and the reservation book, answers inquiries, and chats with the residents - news spreads fast in a small town, and she always knows who got engaged, who is organizing a dinner party, or whose vines are doing especially well this year.

Mid-morning, she might take a small break. Sometimes she steps out for an espresso at the nearby piazza, or helps with groceries. The dual nature of the building means her job is never just "hospitality"; it's also community. She's the glue holding the two worlds together.

In the afternoons, she organizes small tours for the guests: a visit to a family-run winery, a cooking class, a stroll through the olive groves. She loves sharing the authentic side of Montepulciano - the parts you wouldn't find in a tourist guide.

After her shift ends, around 7 PM, Chiara often meets friends for *aperitivo* and a glass of wine on the terrace enjoying the low sun.

THE RECEPTIONIST

Dear Diary

5 April 2025

Montepulciano, 22:47

Today was one of those days that felt like a warm breath - soft and familiar.

I opened Casa Habitoria early, just as the sky was turning from pearl grey to that pale, sleepy blue. I love being the first one awake. Everything is still - the walls still cool from the night, the smell of last evening's rain still lingering on the stone terrace.

Signora Maria from apartment 2 woke up soon. She waved and told me she's baking a crostata tomorrow - "only if you promise to come for a slice", she said. Of course, I promised. You don't say no to Maria.

The guests were slow this morning - two couples from Germany, and a young woman from Milan who's here working remotely (how strange it still sounds to me, working remotely...). I set out breakfast on the terrace and we all ended up sitting together, chatting about what to visit.

Later, Matteo dropped by, needing help printing flyers for his exhibition next week. We sat out in the courtyard afterward, sipping coffee and laughing about the time we tried to run away to Siena when we were kids. We made it only as far as Pienza before getting too hungry and coming home.

Sometimes I wonder - should I be doing more? Going somewhere else? Starting a "reatareet" like people say? But then days like today happen: simple, bright, full of little things that make my heart full.

Maybe this is it. Maybe being here, being part of this life, is doing enough.

Now the town is quiet, just the sound of wind in the trees and some distant clatter from the trattoria closing up. I have the window open.

Buonanotte, caro diario,

Chiara

THE STORY OF CHIARA

Dear Diary

11 April 2025

Montepulciano, 21:21

The rain today made everything smell like wet terracotta. It drizzled most of the morning, not heavy, but just enough to keep the streets glistening.

I spent most of the day in the front room - our little reception. It's more like a sitting room that forgot to be formal. There's an old armchair by the window that everyone gravitates toward. I think it's the way the light hits it in the afternoon. Matteo jokes that it's the unofficial throne of Casa Tabitoria. I love that the residents always wander through and chit-chat. It keeps the place from feeling like a hotel.

I sat there today with my laptop, handling bookings and writing thank-you notes to two guests who left yesterday. They left me Austrian chocolates as a goodbye gift - I'm saving them for tomorrow!

And then there's my little back nook - just in the corner of the reception, through a door most people don't even notice. It used to be a storage closet, but now it's where I leave my bag, fix my hair and sometimes add lipstick if I'm feeling a bit faded. There's also a small bench with a drawer underneath where I hide soft slippers. When it's quiet and my feet ache, I slip them on. It feels like my little secret.

The lobby always smells like whatever candle I've lit - today it was fig and cypress - mixed with coffee from the kitchen downstairs and the faint scent of the stone floor.

*This afternoon, one of the Danish guests came in and just sat quietly in the corner by the bookshelves for an hour, reading *Intermezzo* by Sally Rooney. When I asked if he needed anything, he said, "No, I just like being here". That sentence meant more than he probably knows.*

It's strange how the space has shaped itself over time. It's not the biggest, but it's full of the lives that pass through. I imagine it like a woven fabric: soft voices, tired feet, creaking chairs, coffee spoons clinking, happy hellos.

Anyway. Tomorrow I'll bring the flowers for the front table. And the fig candle again. It suits April.

Buona notte,

Chiara

THE RECEPTIONIST

Dear Diary

17 April 2025

Montepulciano, 20:37

The terrace was golden this morning - truly golden. I stepped out barefoot with my coffee, just to feel the cool stone under my feet. It's my favourite way to ease into the day - quietly, with the town still stretching itself awake.

I love that you can see straight through the lobby to the terrace - through the tall glass doors that open wide when the weather is good. From my usual seat at the desk, I can watch the light move across the stone floors, touches the armchair and dances across the bookshelf.

The kitchen is just down two steps from the lobby. When I make coffee, I can hear if someone's checking in or lingering in the front room. I like that fluidity. It feels like a home where people pass through rooms naturally, drawn by smell, light, or the sound of a voice.

The espresso machine is moody, but I've learned its quirks. I made myself a strong cup this morning and took it to the terrace. That sequence - down to the kitchen, up with coffee, across the lobby, through to the terrace - it's like a quiet choreography I do every morning.

By 9, the upper terrace had filled with soft voices and spoons clinking on ceramic. Two guests took their breakfast out there and stayed for over an hour. One of them kept sketching - the wall, the sky, a coffee cup.

Later, when I walked back through with folded laundry, I caught a glimpse of it all in the reflection on the glass: kitchen below, lobby behind, terrace ahead. It felt like standing inside a living postcard.

There's something about the way these spaces wrap around each other. Maybe that's why I like this place so much. Nothing is sealed off. Nothing insists on being separate.

I left the terrace doors open all afternoon. Let the house breathe.

Buonanotte, diario mio,

Chiara

THE STORY OF FABIO AND ANNA

Fabio and Anna are the heart and soul of this little corner of Montepulciano. Childhood neighbours turned sweethearts, they grew up running through vineyards and sitting on stone walls overlooking golden hills. Now in their early 50s, they are still deeply in love - the kind that's playful, full of teasing, hand gestures, and knowing glances across a crowded room.

Fabio runs a small art gallery nearby. His laugh is loud and contagious, and he greets everyone with a booming "Buongiorno!" and a clap on the back. Anna is warm, with soft hands always dusted in flour or soil. She keeps the house glowing with life. She loves the garden - a colourful chaos of tomatoes, basil, and flowers. Cooking is her art; there's always something simmering on the stove, and she could feed an army at a moment's notice. Her hugs smell like fresh bread and sunshine.

They are classic Italians - family is everything. Sundays are sacred for long lunches, where their guests are treated like cousins. They speak with their hands, their faces alive with expression.

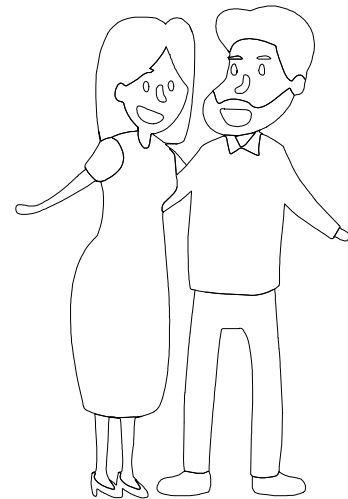
They are one of the first living in this dual housing - half is a cozy pensione (guesthouse), offering rustic, simple rooms overlooking the rolling hills, and the other half is home to a few locals - friends and old family connections - and it feels more like an extended family than a formal arrangement.

Fabio wakes up early and has an espresso standing up at the kitchen island. He heads off to work while Anna starts her day in the garden, watering plants, clipping herbs, picking up fresh flowers. Around 9 AM, she sets out a little breakfast spread for the guests: fresh bread, fruit from the garden, homemade jams, and coffee.

By noon, Fabio is back for lunch. They often eat on the terrace, arguing gently about politics or gossiping about the neighbours. Sometimes, guests join them for lunch as well, laughing through a mixed Italian-English conversation.

Fabio returns to work or sometimes hosts a little art tour for the guests, explaining everything with wide hand gestures and proud smiles. Anna tidies up, bakes cakes, plans dinner, and sometimes sneaks an hour of rest in the shade.

Evenings are lively. Guests are here for *aperitivo* - local wine, olives, bruschetta. After dinner, they all sit under the stars, talk, sing and have a good time.



THE LOVING PARENTS

Ciao Amoretti,

Just a little note from casa nostra to remind you that we are thinking of you - sempre!

The vineyards are waking up again - your papa says they look especially good this year (even though he says that every year). Lucia the cat had kittens - five tiny little troublemakers - and Mama is already trying to find homes for them before we end up with a zoo!

This morning, the whole house smelled like fresh bread from Nonna Maria's kitchen. We sat outside for coffee and Papa insisted on telling every tourist who passed by that his children are studying in Florence, the finest city in the world. (He said it at least three times, very loud).

Don't forget to eat well and sleep enough! You're making us so proud every single day.

We can't wait to see you next month - we are already planning the Sunday lunch. (Hint: pappa al pomodoro and your favourite crostata!)

Ti vogliamo bene fino al cielo e ritorno.

Un abbraccio grande,

Mamma & Papà

ALESSIA & LEONARDO

RESIDENZA UNIVERSITARIA "SAN GALLO"

VIA S. GALLO 58

50129 FIRENZE

ITALIA

THE STORY OF FABIO AND ANNA

Ciao Amoretti,

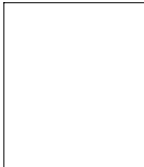
You should've seen the kitchen today - it was a storm of flour and joy! We hosted another pasta workshop, and this time we made tagliatelle with sage butter. Guests were laughing, kneading, arguing over the right dough texture like true Italians! Even your papa joined in (he mostly just ate the leftovers).

The terrace filled up quickly afterward - all the doors to the kitchen open, everyone squeezed around the table, passing plates. We told them stories about you - your first attempts at making pasta (remember when someone accidentally used powdered sugar instead of flour? Still one of Papa's favorite stories).

And after all the chaos, do you know what we did? We took a long, slow bath, the only proper way to end a day like this. You remember how I always say, "Yowash stress off in the shower, but you soak joy in the bath".

I kept thinking of you - the kitchen always feels a bit emptier without your footsteps running through it.

Baci mille,
Mamma & Papà



ALESSIA & LEONARDO
RESIDENZA UNIVERSITARIA "SAN GALLO"
VIA S. GALLO 58
50129 FIRENZE
ITALIA

THE LOVING PARENTS

Ciao Amoretti,

This morning, we went straight from bed to coffee on the terrace - the sun was gentle, the garden smelled of rosemary and wet earth, and Papa swears he saw a swallow building its nest above the loggia. Spring is waking everything up again.

Speaking of Papa - he's turned the storage room into an art studio. He says cooking is my art form, and hand-painting tiles and terracotta pottery is his. He's been sketching the quests mid-lunch - you know, hands flying, mouths full, everyone laughing. A little wobbly, but full of life.

The terrace has become our second living room. The doors stay open all day, so the house breathes - the kitchen spills into the terrace, the terrace melts into the garden, and everywhere there's life: clinking cups, trees rustling, laughter from the courtyard.

Oh - and your bed? Still waiting patiently for you. Papa sat there the other day to read, and he said it still feels like your spot. He didn't even wrinkle the cushion.

Come back soon, even if just for a nap and a plate of pasta.
Ti abbracciamo forte,
Mamma & Papà

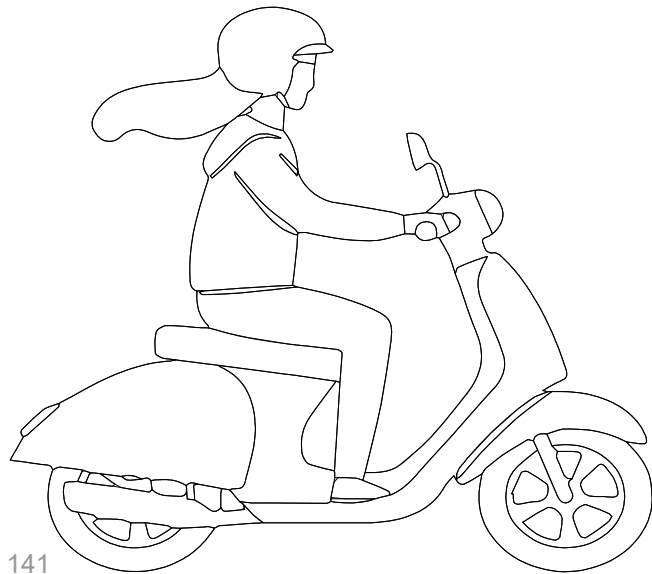


ALESSIA & LEONARDO
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ITALIA

THE STORY OF GIULIA

Giulia is 49 years old, born and raised in Montepulciano. She is one of those true Tuscans - proud, lively, stubborn in the best way, and full of little sayings about life, love, and the changing seasons. She works as a secretary at a local notary office, right off *Piazza Grande*. It's a job she's had for over 15 years, and she's a master of it: knowing everyone's business without ever betraying a secret.

Giulia is endlessly curious, friendly to strangers, fiercely loyal to her friends. She is the kind of woman everyone in town knows. She has stories about every stone, every family, every vineyard. She's seen Montepulciano change over the decades but remains deeply rooted. For her, life is about small pleasures: a good walk, a strong coffee, a beautiful Mass, a heartfelt conversation.



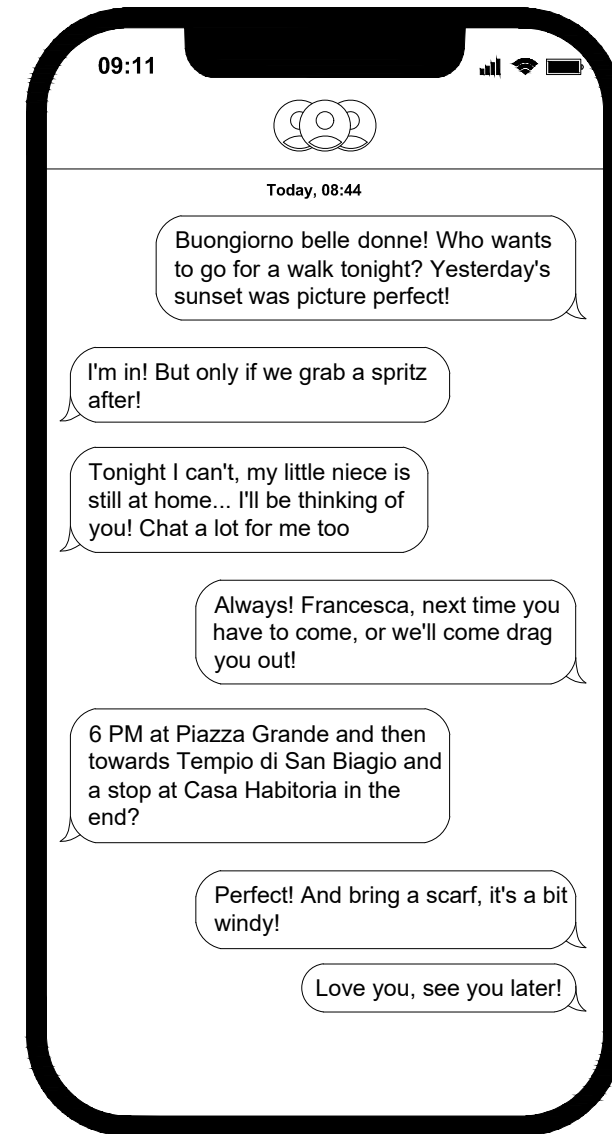
Giulia wakes up early to the sound of the bells from the Cathedral. She makes herself a strong espresso and a slice of toasted bread with homemade jam. Before work, she opens her windows to let the town smells in: fresh pastries and bread, the earthy scent of the old stone streets, newly washed laundry...

From 08:30 until 1 PM, she's at the office - typing, filing, answering calls. Lunch is sacred. She goes home for it: a simple plate of pasta, a salad from the market, sometimes sharing a meal with her neighbour or her sister who lives nearby. Then she's back to the office until 5 PM.

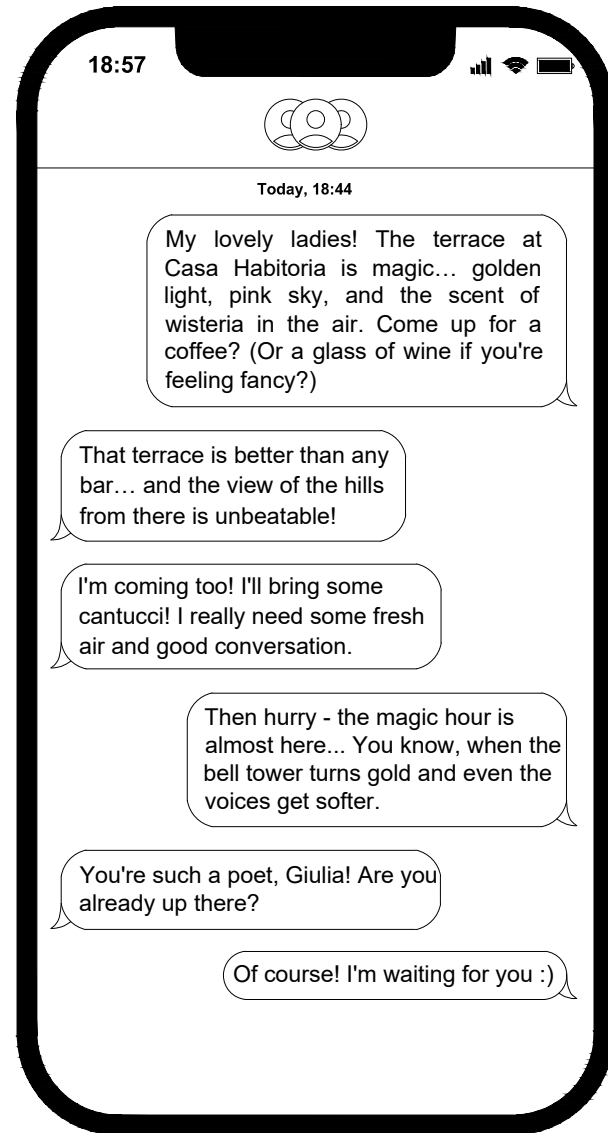
In the evening, she puts on comfortable shoes and goes for her daily walk. Every evening, the same: up and down the hilly streets, past *Piazza Grande*, along *Via di Gracciano nel Corso* and *Via di S. Biagio*, greeting friends, commenting on the weather, asking about families, maybe stopping for an aperitivo or to admire the sunset over *Val d'Orcia*.

Sundays are special. She dresses nicely and heads down to *Tempio di San Biagio* for the 10:30 Mass. After Mass, she strolls among the cypresses, sometimes carrying a small bunch of flowers to leave at her parents' grave at the cemetery. On the way back, she always stops at *Casa Habitoria*. It's her favourite ritual - a small, cherished break. She'll sit at the kitchen island, talking animatedly about town gossip, the weather, recipes she's trying, or memories from the childhood. She always says she'll stay for "just one coffee" but ends up chatting for at least an hour, laughing and gesturing, sipping slowly.

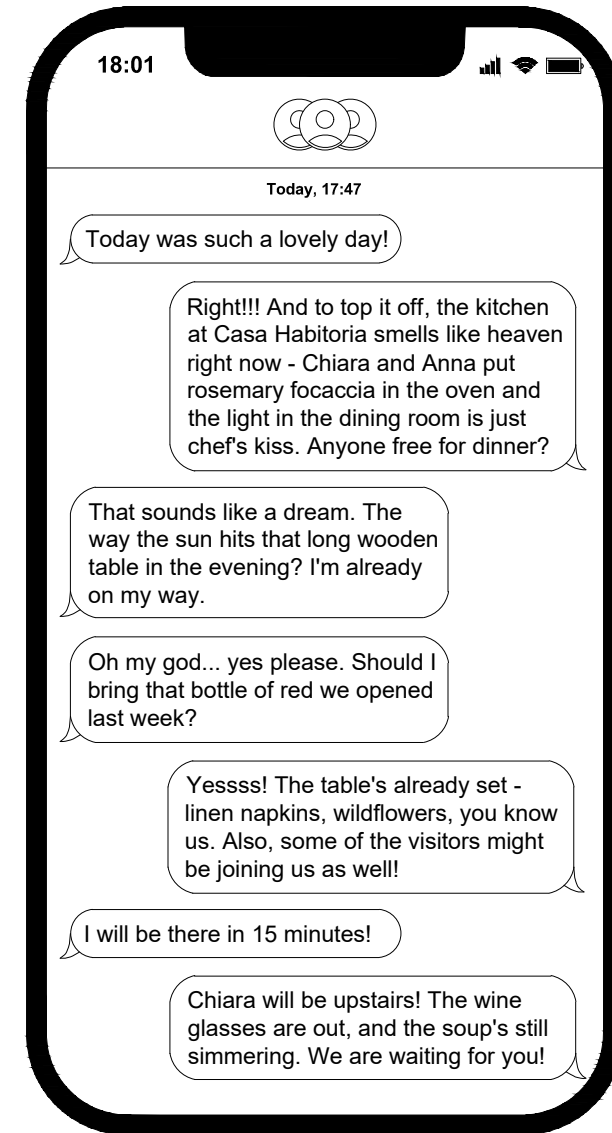
THE LOCAL



THE STORY OF GIULIA



THE LOCAL



THE STORY OF GIOVANNI

Giovanni (everyone calls him Nanni) is a wiry 75-year-old with a weathered face full of smile lines. His silver hair is always a little messy, his hands always moving - either explaining a story or shuffling a deck of cards.

He is born and raised in Montepulciano, on a vineyard just outside the town walls. He married his childhood sweetheart, Lucia, and they lived a full, vibrant life together, raising two children who now live abroad.

After Lucia's passing, the family home felt too big and too empty. That's when he decided to move into *Casa Habitoria* - the dual housing that mixes a guesthouse with local homes. It gave him just enough privacy and constant access to new people, which he craves.

Nanni is the heart of *Casa Habitoria* - the unofficial concierge, grandpa, and entertainer all rolled into one. His presence fills the building with warmth. Outgoing and endlessly welcoming, Nanni has a gift for storytelling, often embellishing the details just enough to bring his tales to life. He's deeply curious about people, always eager to learn their stories. He believes everyone has something worth sharing.

Though he's easygoing, Nanni can be a bit stubborn when it comes to traditions. Sunday lunch, for example, is non-negotiable, as is the proper way to make and drink espresso. These are the little rituals he holds close - the ones that, in his eyes, keep life rich and meaningful.

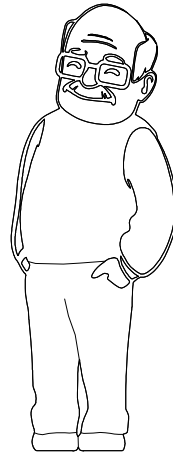
His days are spent in simple joys: playing cards with friends, tending to the small garden, and organizing relaxed aperitivos in the courtyard. He enjoys fixing little things around the building, ensuring everything is in its right place.

Nanni wakes to the soft sounds of the countryside - birds, church bells - and heads to the communal kitchen for coffee, chatting with early risers. After a quick breakfast, he strolls into town, greeting everyone along the way. By 10 AM, he's back at *Casa Habitoria*, offering guests tips on hidden trattorias, secret wine tastings, and scenic walks - sometimes even joining them if he likes them enough.

Lunchtime is sacred. He eats with residents or visitors in the shared dining room before taking a short nap. By 4 PM, the courtyard transforms into a lively card table, filled with laughter, jokes, and swearing in dialect.

Afterwards, Nanni tends the garden, watering tomatoes and basil while catching up on neighborly gossip. At 7 PM, he sets up a simple aperitivo - local wine, olives, prosciutto - and the courtyard buzzes with chatter as visitors and locals mingle. Nanni shines here, making introductions and telling stories.

If there's a town event, he gathers a group to go; otherwise, he winds down with a last card game or a quiet glass of grappa on a balcony. By 10:30 PM, he goes to bed with a full heart, wondering who tomorrow will bring.



THE LONELY RESIDENT

Montepulciano, April 8th 2025

My dearest Lucia,

It's a warm evening here. The sky turned that soft pink you always loved - like the colour of your scarf when we used to sit outside and watch the sun fall behind the hills. I sat in the courtyard tonight with a glass of wine, and for a moment, I almost turned to pour you one too.

New visitors arrived this morning - two young couples from France and an older lady from England who reminds me a little of you. She wears her hair pinned up and reads at breakfast, just like you used to. I almost told her about you, but I kept you for myself instead, tucked away in my heart.

This place is lively today. I played cards with James and Matteo who live upstairs. I lost, of course - badly - but I laughed so hard my stomach ached. You would have said I let them win. Maybe I did.

In the afternoon, I picked the first basil leaves from the garden. You would have scolded me, said they were too small still, but I couldn't resist. The smell of them on my fingers - it took me straight back to our kitchen, the one with the crooked window where the light always made you look like a painting.

Lucia, sometimes the ache of missing you is like a stone in my chest. But on days like today, it feels more like a thread - a fine, silver thread that ties me to you, still. I like to think you are here, just beyond the edge of the courtyard, sitting in the sun, smiling at my foolishness.

I miss you every moment, but I live for you too. I fill my days with stories, with laughter, with the little things we both loved. I hope, wherever you are, you can hear it all - the clinking of glasses, the shuffling of cards, the songs floating in the evening air.

Until tomorrow, my love.

Always yours,

Nanni



THE STORY OF GIOVANNI

Montepulciano, April 11th 2025

To my beloved Lucia,

Today the skies are gray, and the rain has been falling softly - the kind of rain you used to call buona per dormire. I can almost hear you saying it, wrapped in that big cardigan you always wore when it got chilly like this.

The courtyard is quiet now, only the sound of raindrops on the stone and a few birds hiding in the vines. No garden today - the basil will have to wait.

But the living room has come alive instead. I brought out the cards, of course, and we played for hours. Matteo accused me of cheating - as he always does when I win, which is often, as you well know. James was there too, giggling and trying to learn Scopa. I think you would've liked him - he has the same kind of mischief in his eyes you used to tell me I had when we met.

Later we just sat around, talking. Nothing too serious - a little gossip, a few memories, a lot of laughter. Someone put on an old record and for a second, I thought it was that song we danced to that night under the olive trees. You remember? It was too dark to see properly, and we tripped over everything.

Now, I've come to my room. The house has gone quiet again, only the distant hum of someone making tea. I'm in my bedroom, curled up with that novel you once tried to get me to read - I finally picked it up, just to feel closer to you. The rain is still steady outside my window, but it feels comforting.

I miss you deeply on days like these. The kind of day that begs for slippers, hot coffee, and someone to lean against while the world outside sighs. But I try to fill the hours with people, like you would. I still live as though you're just in the next room, humming while you fold the laundry, or laughing at something I said.

You are still here, in the way I shuffle the cards, in the way I make space on the sofa, in the way I read out loud to an empty room.

Always yours,

Nanní



THE LONELY RESIDENT

Montepulciano, April 16th 2025

My sweetest Lucia,

This afternoon I sat on my little balcony, though I always imagine you there too, watching the hills breathe in and out. The wisteria is blooming early this year, climbing up the railing like it's trying to peek inside. The scent reminded me of that spring in '72, when you wore it in your hair and made even the bees jealous.

From up here, I can see the courtyard, soaked in golden light. The tomato plants are finally showing signs of life again. I watered them early this morning, talking to them like you used to. You always said they needed affection just like people did. Maybe that's why they're doing so well this year - I've been missing you more than usual.

The terraces were full today. The young couple from Berlin made Vesperplatte for everyone, and we pulled the tables together like we always do when the weather is kind. There was wine, olives, someone brought figs, and as the sun dipped low, it all started to feel like one of those long, lazy Sundays we used to love. You would've loved today, Lu. The air was soft, music playing faintly from the radio, conversations flowing like warm honey. I sat there and listened, smiling, not saying much - just letting it all wash over me.

But later, when the chatter quieted and the plates were empty, I snuck back up here, to my little perch. I lit a candle and leaned on the railing, watching the lights in the valley blink on one by one. That quiet - it's when I feel you most. Not in the big laughter or even in the stories I tell, but in the pause after, when I look to my side and still expect your eyes to meet mine.

Lucia, I live among people, I laugh, I play cards, I share meals and wine. But it's always for you. I keep your spirit alive in the joy I spread, in the flowers I tend, in the seats I keep empty beside me - just in case you're still nearby.

Always yours,

Nanní

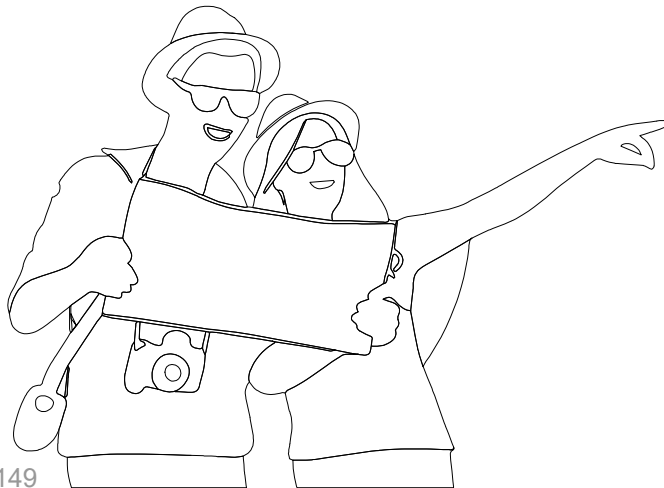


THE STORY OF FELIX AND KATJA

Katja and Felix, both in their mid-40s, are a couple from Berlin. In their everyday lives, they are typical urbanites: she is a creative director in an advertising agency, and he is an architect at a big firm. Both are stylish, witty, and a little jaded by the "hustle culture" they usually glorify but secretly resent. Their shared love for life's pleasures - fine wine, good design, beautiful food - binds them tightly.

Traveling to Tuscany was a deliberate escape from their overstimulated existence. Instead of a five-star hotel, they chose the dual housing: a rustic, beautifully aged stone building with thick walls, terracotta floors, and a vegetable garden tended by the locals. Sharing space with Italians rather than other tourists felt like a secret they were proud to have discovered.

Katja and Felix came to Montepulciano to taste a different kind of life - slow, tactile, communal. Away from their ultra-structured Berlin routine, they let themselves loosen, soak in pleasure without agenda, and rediscover a version of themselves that feels truer: curious, passionate, alive.



Mornings start slow. They wake naturally with the sunlight filtering through old linen curtains. They wander down to the shared kitchen where Nonna Maria has left a basket of fruit and fresh bread.

Late morning, they stroll through Montepulciano's streets, stopping to poke their heads into small artisan shops - Felix eyeing handmade ceramics, Katja trying on leather sandals. They get a little lost, they love it. They laugh at their broken Italian as they chat with shopkeepers.

By midday, they are back to *Casa Habitoria* for a lunch. Glasses of chilled wine, plates of pici pasta dripping with ragù. They linger for hours, eating slowly before taking a nap under the whir of a ceiling fan.

In the golden late afternoon, they join the locals harvesting tomatoes or picking herbs. They're clumsy but eager. The locals chuckle at their efforts but appreciate the enthusiasm.

As a reward, an aperitivo is waiting for them: spritzes, pecorino cheese, olives. They sit on the upper communal terrace, chatting with whoever passes by - a mix of German, Italian, English words weaving together. Later, Katja helps chop zucchini while Felix grills meats over an open fire. They eat together with the rest under a pergola tangled with vines, candles flickering, laughter bouncing into the night.

THE HEDONISTIC COUPLE

Ciao from Montepulciano!

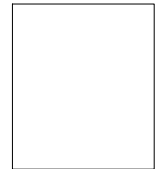
We have officially mastered the art of doing nothing! Mornings here start with strong coffee, and somehow turn into long afternoons filled with pasta, wine, and naps. We've even helped pick tomatoes with our neighbours - who laugh at our technique but feed us like family.

The sun, the food, the people... everything tastes and feels better here. Felix is seriously considering a career change to "full-time Tuscan farmer", and I might just open a tiny bookshop on a hilltop.

We miss you all (but not enough to come home just yet!)
A big kiss from both of us!

Katja & Felix

P.S. We're bringing back wine... if it survives the trip!



FAMILY MEYER

HABERSATHSTRASSE 4

10115 BERLIN

GERMANY

THE STORY OF FELIX AND KATJA

Dear ones,

This place - this life - is pure pleasure. Hedonism in its softest, most honest form. It's not just indulgence, it's presence. Every meal, every smell, every ray of sun feels like something to be savoured.

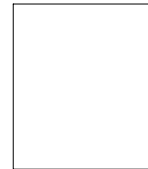
Every evening, we sit on the terrace with our bare feet on cool terracotta tiles, surrounded by lavender and rosemary bushes, watching the sky melt into pinks and oranges. Time slows down here - no screens, no stress, just the sound of laughter, cicadas, and clinking glasses.

We've forgotten our shoes. We've stopped checking the time. We've remembered how good it feels to feel.

Hope you're all doing well back home, but honestly... we're not rushing back.

Baci e abbracci,

Katja & Felix



FAMILY WEBER

WILSNACKER STRASSE 48

10559 BERLIN

GERMANY

THE HEDONISTIC COUPLE

Cari tutti,

We're deep into our Tuscan escape - where every day feels like a long, delicious exhale. This place isn't just beautiful, it's indulgent in the most soul-soothing way.

Hedonism here isn't about excess, it's about slowness. Ripened tomatoes still warm from the sun. The smell of woodsmoke at dusk. Sipping wine that Anna's cousin made while learning to make fresh picci from Nonna Maria - who rules the kitchen with flour-covered hands and the energy of a queen.

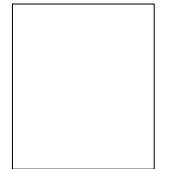
Dinners stretch into the night. No phones. Just laughter, shared plates, wine-stained lips, and candlelight flickering across old stone walls. The garden spills into the terrace - vines, herbs, fig trees - and the air smells like rosemary and grilled peaches.

We've never felt more alive, more human. We cook, we eat, we drink, we rest, we feel, we hear, we touch. And repeat.

Wish you could taste it. Truly.

Un abbraccio,

Klara & Felix



FAMILY SCHMIDT

DERNBURGSTRASSE 23

14057 BERLIN

GERMANY

THE STORY OF GROUP OF FRIENDS

They're not just travelers - they're returners. Returners to each other, and to the versions of themselves that only exist when they're together.

Years of shared adventures, detours, and late-night talks under foreign skies have shaped their bond. Though scattered across cities and time zones, they reunite once a year - one week, always somewhere new. No missed flights, no excuses. Just time to slow down and reconnect.

Now in their mid-20s, life is shifting. Careers are growing. Some are in love, some are still figuring it out. But this tradition remains.

Paul - the adventurous architect in Copenhagen. Practical, impulsive, and loyal. Spots an abandoned tower and says, "Let's climb it".

Amelia - the storytelling pharmacist in Amsterdam. Witty, observant, always journaling. Romanticizes everything. The funny one, keeper of memories.

Daniella - the calm product designer in Milan. Rational and thoughtful, always sketching. Loves to cook and bring everyone to the table.

Mia - the laid-back planner in Berlin. Marketing pro, always finding the best food, hidden gems, and spontaneous detours.

Drawn by Tuscan landscapes, cuisine, and slower pace, they chose Montepulciano - a hill town close to airports but far from noise. There, they've found a dual home - part guesthouse, part local housing with terracotta floors, an overgrown garden, and a communal kitchen smelling of tomatoes and basil. More than the view, they were drawn to its authenticity - waking to the sound of real life next door, not just other tourists.

Sunlight slips through the shutters as the church bells echo softly waking the friends up. Daniela stretches on the balcony, Paul brews coffee, and Amelia flips through their old notebook. They gather sleepily at the long table outside - laughing, teasing, catching up.

Mia scrolls her "hidden gems" list but eventually they decide to go with the flow.

They lazily bike through vineyards and olive groves as they stumble upon a winery welcomed by Frani who insists they stay for "just one glass" - it turns into three.

Lunch is shared with locals: homemade picci, Amelia helping with tiramisu, radio playing in the background. They all agree it's the best lunch yet.

Afternoons are slow: naps in the garden, reading, sketching. At sunset, they walk into town, sipping aperitivo as golden light washes the hills.

Back at the house, locals and travellers share dinner and fragments of language under a pink sky and later, under the stars, another bottle is opened.



THE ADVENTUROUS TOURISTS

Montepulciano, Tuscany - Day 3

Today, we got lost.

It started with Paul insisting we "just follow the little path" behind the vineyard - the one that looked more like a goat trail than anything else. Thirty minutes later, after climbing over two stone walls (sorry, local farmers), we stumbled onto the most perfect olive grove.

There was no one around. Just crooked trees, buzzing bees, and that golden late-afternoon light that looks like something out of a painting. We sat down right there in the dirt, passing around the last apricots we had in Amelia's backpack. Daniella said it was "a glitch in the world, a secret pocket just for us."

We made a pact to always get a little lost on purpose.

Later, back at the house, we helped Nonna Maria (the sweetest local grandma, owner of the guesthouse) make ravioli from scratch. She didn't speak a word of English, but it didn't matter. She taught us how to fold the dough properly, scolded Paul for being too messy, and pinched Amelia's cheek when she finally got it right.

We ended the night full, sunburnt, and slightly tipsy, promising each other that someday we'll come back - maybe when we're old and wrinkled - and find that olive grove again.

PS: Paul says he has no memory of choosing the wrong path. Blames "Tuscan air" for confusing him. We all call BS.

THE STORY OF GROUP OF FRIENDS

Montepulciano, Tuscany - Day 1

We arrived just before golden hour, rolling our suitcases over cobblestones, not expecting much beyond the usual Tuscan charm. But Casa Habitoria surprised us.

From the outside, it looked simple - warm stone walls and climbing vines - but inside, the space unfolded slowly. Cool terracotta floors, high ceilings, breezes carrying in the scent of basil. The house was bigger than it seemed - doorways opening into unexpected corners, as if the walls had been shaped by lives rather than plans.

The bedrooms are all unique: Daniella's and Amelia's has a desk with a perfect reading chair and a view tangled in vines, and Paul and Mia have a tiny balcony and bookshelves with a forgotten stack of books.

The living room is where we all landed first. It has soft sofas that look like they've hosted long conversations and accidental naps. Shelves lined with old novels, mismatched ceramics, a fireplace that seems ready for us even in summer.

We didn't expect the house to feel so lived in - like someone had paused their life just long enough to let us step into it.

It's really a home and not a rental and we love it. We already feel like we'll miss it when we leave.

THE ADVENTUROUS TOURISTS

Montepulciano, Tuscany - Day 6

The terrace is where mornings begin, and nights never really end.

It's shaded just enough, with views that spill out over the rolling hills - the kind of view that makes you forget to check your phone. We've made it our gathering spot: coffee in the morning, slow dinners at sunset, wine under the stars. The table wobbles a little, but we love it more for that. It's already covered in olive pits, pages from Amelia's notebook, and Mia's endless food maps.

The garden wraps around the house like a secret. Overgrown in the best way - rosemary everywhere, tomatoes on the vine, basil so fragrant you smell it before you see it.

Daniella's been picking herbs like a local, already talking about cooking something from scratch with Nonna Maria. We found two old wooden chairs half-buried in ivy and dragged them out - they creak, but they're perfect. Giovanni said we can repair them together.

Some mornings Paul disappears out there with a book, only to fall asleep with his hat over his face.

It's not just pretty - it's grounding. Quiet. Alive. Like the house, the garden feels like it was waiting for us to arrive.

PS. Daniella has already googled "how to buy a farmhouse in Tuscany"

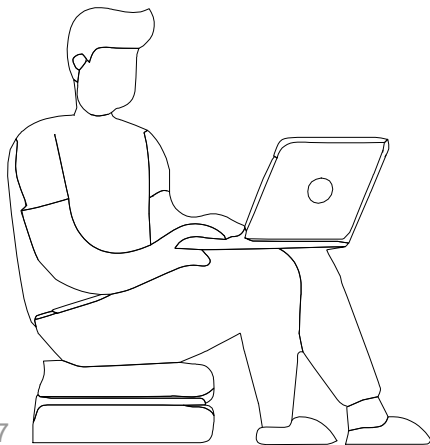
THE STORY OF JAMES

James is the kind of person who carries the rhythm of New York wherever he goes - quick-witted, intelligent, and endlessly curious. But after nearly a decade of the Manhattan grind, he decided to trade skyscrapers for nature, buzzing coworking spaces and cafés in sleepy towns.

He isn't just traveling - he's living everywhere he goes. To James, each new place is a chapter, and he's determined to fill it with real experiences: friendships with locals, late-night chats over wine, secret swimming spots, hiking paths not found on Google...

After more than 2 months in Italy, by now James speaks passable Italian (with a bit of an American accent), enough to order a cappuccino and slip into casual conversations at the market.

His lifestyle is light - a 40-liter backpack, a laptop for working, a worn-out notebook filled with doodles, ideas and new experiences. His work hours are flexible, as long as he meets his clients' time zones and now he became a master at carving out time for both Zoom calls and vineyard strolls.



The Tuscan sun filters through small room's old wooden shutters and wake James up. He does a quick 10-minute meditation followed by some light stretching on the stone terrace outside. The cool morning air is thick with the scent of rosemary and earth.

He heads to the communal kitchen where he chats with Paola, one of the locals who makes the best espresso in the whole house. They exchange laughs and a bit of broken Italian-English banter. Breakfast is simple: fresh bread, cheese, figs.

Around 9 AM, James settles down to work. He's found a perfect sunny corner overlooking the rolling hills. Noise-cancelling headphones on, he spends a few focused hours troubleshooting a cybersecurity issue for a client in London and answering emails.

During lunch break, he walks down to the garden and picks up fresh tomatoes and basil. Today he will be making a simple pasta dish, sharing it with others in the house alongside conversations that flow easily.

While Italians go for their siesta, he is back to work for a couple more hours, lighter tasks now - maybe a few meetings or future planning.

At 5 PM, he decides the work day is over and it's now time to explore. Maybe a hike through the vineyards today, or a Vespa ride to a neighbouring town.

Dinner is a social affair. Tonight there's a gathering in the shared kitchen: locals, guests, even a visiting winemaker. There's music, laughter, discussions about philosophy, technology, dreams.

As the night winds down, James writes a few lines about the day in his notebook and reads a chapter of a novel he picked up at a little bookstore in town.

THE DIGITAL NOMAD



THE STORY OF JAMES

 **digital_james** FOLLOW



 **1522 likes**

digital_james Work doesn't feel like work when the "office" is a sunlit living room filled with soft chatter, espresso clinks, and the smell of baked bread drifting in from the kitchen.

La dolce vita isn't a cliché here. It's just... life.

#DigitalNomadLife #Montepulciano #RemoteWork #WorkFromAnywhere #LaDolceVita

THE DIGITAL NOMAD

 **digital_james** FOLLOW



 **1118 likes**

digital_james Waking up to golden hills, sipping coffee on the terrace, losing time in the garden - living the Tuscan way: slow, sun-kissed, and soul-deep.

The view from my bedroom feels like a painting - and somehow, it's real.

#RoomWithAView #Montepulciano #TuscanyLiving #SlowLiving

THE STORY OF EVELYN

Evelyn has always been a romantic at heart. For as long as she can remember, she dreamed of cobbled streets, sun-drenched piazzas, and long Italian dinners where the conversation and wine flow endlessly. She imagined herself living in a stone house draped in ivy, marrying an Italian and learning to roll pasta from a nonna.

But life, as it tends to, took her in other directions: a career she loved, a quiet home in England, a handful of serious relationships that didn't quite lead to wedding bells. Still, the dream never faded - it simply waited.

Now, for her 54th birthday, Evelyn has gifted herself something extraordinary: a three-week stay in Italy. Precisely in *Casa Habitoria* in Montepulciano which is half-guesthouse, half-home. That blend of intimacy and authenticity is exactly what she was craving. She didn't want luxury; she wanted life. Real Italian life.

Thoughtful, gentle, and quietly witty, Evelyn has a soft but strong spirit. She notices small things - the way laundry flutters from a balcony, how old men gesture animatedly over a chessboard. She's the kind of person who leaves handwritten thank-you notes and carries a novel wherever she goes.

Lately, Evelyn has become fascinated with pottery - especially terracotta. There's something grounding about the clay, its earthy texture and ancient resonance in Tuscany.

Evelyn knows three weeks won't last forever, but she hopes they'll plant something enduring. Maybe it's not too late to live the life she always dreamed of - maybe it's just beginning.

Evelyn wakes early as the cool Tuscan breeze drifts through half-open shutters. She brews strong coffee and steps outside with her book. Mornings have always been her favourite - quiet, full of promise.

After a light breakfast of pastries and fruit, she joins a casual Italian class in the nearby piazza. She laughs at her mistakes, thrilled when she forms a full sentence.

Late mornings are for wandering - no maps, just following the scent of baking bread or the sound of church bells. She stops at a tiny bookstore and buys a novel in Italian she can barely read. Soon after, she comes back to *Casa Habitoria* for a lunch and a shady bench to read or doze.

In the afternoon, she heads to the pottery studio with Fabio and Paola. She loves asking questions - about recipes, materials, childhood stories, quirky words, and what life here was like decades ago.

After the lively dinner where locals and guests both cook and eat together, she heads to her bedroom. Before bed, she writes in her journal, capturing the day in loving detail. Tonight, she might end with: "Today felt like a dream I finally caught up to".



THE SOLO TRAVELLER

Montepulciano 2025 / April 6th

Today I woke up early, before the rest of the house had stirred. The streets smelled of warm stone and they were still sleeping, except for an old man sweeping his doorstep and a few pigeons cooing under the eaves.

At the market, I bought a handful of figs and a tiny pot of honey from a woman with a kind face who insisted I try her cheese. We spoke in a delightful mixture of broken English and softer Italian, and I felt, for a moment, as though I belonged here.

Later, Anna taught me how to make picci pasta. My fingers fumbled at first, but we laughed until tears welled up in our eyes. I promised to practice before I leave. She said I had the heart of a Tuscan, and I tucked that compliment away like a treasure.

This evening, the sky turned a shade of pink I don't think I've ever seen before - not even in my daydreams of Italy. I sat on the terrace with a glass of wine, watching the light fade over the hills.

Somewhere in the distance, someone was playing a violin. I closed my eyes and let the music wrap around me.

If love had a shape, I think it would look something like today - golden, slow, full of small, perfect moments.

I am more myself here than I have been in years.

Buona notte, my beautiful Montepulciano

E.

THE STORY OF EVELYN

Montepulciano 2025 / April 13th

This afternoon, my hands were once again covered in terracotta clay - warm, grounding, and full of sun. Paola showed me how to shape tiles properly, reminding me to slow down. Fabio painted olive branches on his, and I tried to imitate him. Mine were a little crooked, but he said they had character.

I love these afternoons in the studio. Working with clay makes me feel fully present. The conversations - about village festivals, old romances, the best porcini spots - are as rich as the work itself.

Life here moves gently, but never feels empty. I wake with the light, sip strong coffee, exchange cheerful *buongior*nos.

I'm speaking more Italian now - clumsy but heartfelt. People smile, correct me softly, or just go along.

My days have a rhythm: slow walks, fresh market lunches, quiet reading, then pottery. Evenings bring wine, laughter, and shared dinners in the courtyard.

There's nothing grand, yet every moment feels full. Tuscany has a way of wrapping you up in beauty and letting you exhale.

Maybe it's the clay. Maybe it's the people. Maybe it's finally giving myself this time. But something about it all feels just right.

Buona notte, Italy!

E.

THE SOLO TRAVELLER

Montepulciano 2025 / April 22nd

This afternoon I found myself on the terrace again, book in hand and a glass of white wine beside me. The garden below was alive with the buzz of bees and the rustling of olive leaves, but I couldn't help thinking about the novel I'm reading - *The Enchanted April* by Elizabeth von Arnim.

There's something about this book that mirrors my own experience here. The characters in the story are escaping to a villa in Italy, just as I've found my own slice of this sun-drenched place. It's a story of women reclaiming parts of themselves they thought were lost - a quiet kind of transformation. Every page reminds me of the peace I feel here: the stillness, the slowing down, the space to just be.

As I read, I couldn't help but smile at the synchronicity. I thought of the garden below - the lavender, tomatoes, and basil - and how it feels like the land is nurturing me, just as it does in the novel. The landscape here, with its rosemary and terracotta, is like a living part of the story.

Mornings are quiet, with coffee and a cool breeze, then a wander through the market or a sit in the piazza.

Evenings are spent sharing meals and stories under the pergola. It's as if I've stepped into a dream I've always had and I don't want ever to end.

Buona notte, Tuscany!

E.

04

TRANSLATING THE NARRATIVE

**DRAWINGS
MATERIALS**

CONCEPT

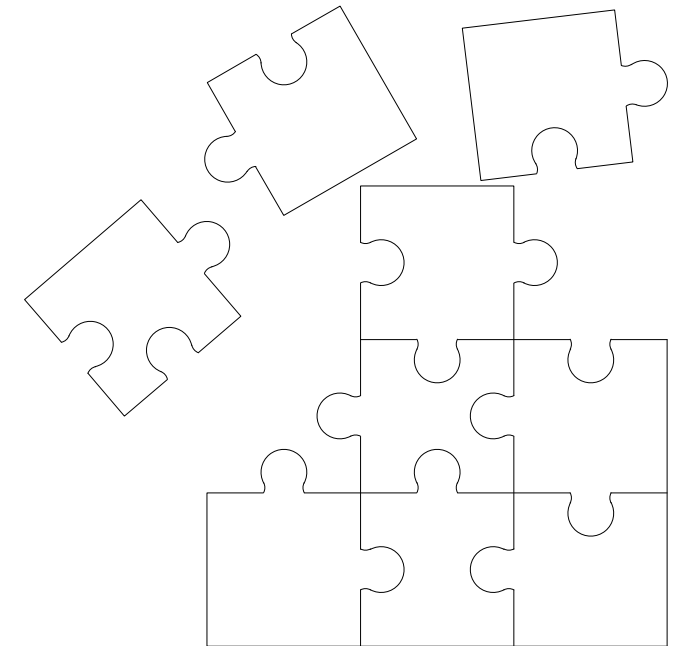
The following chapter translates the narrative into a tangible design concept focusing on creating of program and zoning.

The analysis of the stories of characters provides a unique lens through which we can understand the program, positioning and use of space. Through these narratives, we explore not only how they live but also how they experience the space - what they see, smell, hear and feel. Their movements, rituals and interactions with their environment unveil the building and how the space is inhabited and experienced on a sensory level.

The stories serve as a guide, shaping the spatial design, yet still leaving room for creative manoeuvring. Each character's daily rituals and ways of living offer key insights into the spatial dynamics of the environment, illustrating the overlapping of their individual habits and how these intersect with the larger space.

Starting from the inside, the design process unfolds through the fragments of these stories, each piece adding depth to the overall picture. These fragments - though seemingly isolated - are connected by life, with each possessing its own unique spatial character. Rather than isolated entities, they come together like puzzle pieces, building a cohesive whole that reflects the complex, layered experiences of the characters.

This approach reinforces the idea that architecture can be inhabited in tactile, sensory ways, allowing the characters to engage with their environment beyond its physical form. The design becomes not just a backdrop, but an integral part of their lived experience, responding to the nuances of daily life and the sensory interactions that define it.



UNDERSTANDING THE USER

CHIARA

home arrival coffee & breakfast emails coffee break groceries emails chat home

FABIO & ANNA

waking up coffee work / gardening lunch work / nap & cleaning aperitivo cooking dinner chat sleep

GIULIA

work walk aperitivo / dinner walk

GIOVANNI

waking up coffee breakfast town chat lunch nap cards gardening dinner chat/cards sleep

FELIX & KATJA

waking up breakfast stroll lunch nap gardening aperitivo grilling & cooking dinner chat sleep

FRIENDS

waking up stretching coffee exploring lunch nap / reading stroll aperitivo dinner chat sleep

JAMES

waking up stretching breakfast work gardening cooking lunch work exploring dinner chat sleep

EVELYN

waking up coffee reading breakfast lesson stroll lunch nap / reading pottery dinner chat sleep

PROGRAM

entrance kitchen office kitchen terrace office lobby / living room / terrace

bedroom kitchen garden terrace bedroom storage terrace kitchen outside dining bedroom

terrace / dining / outside dining

bedroom kitchen lobby dining bedroom terrace / living garden outside dining bedroom

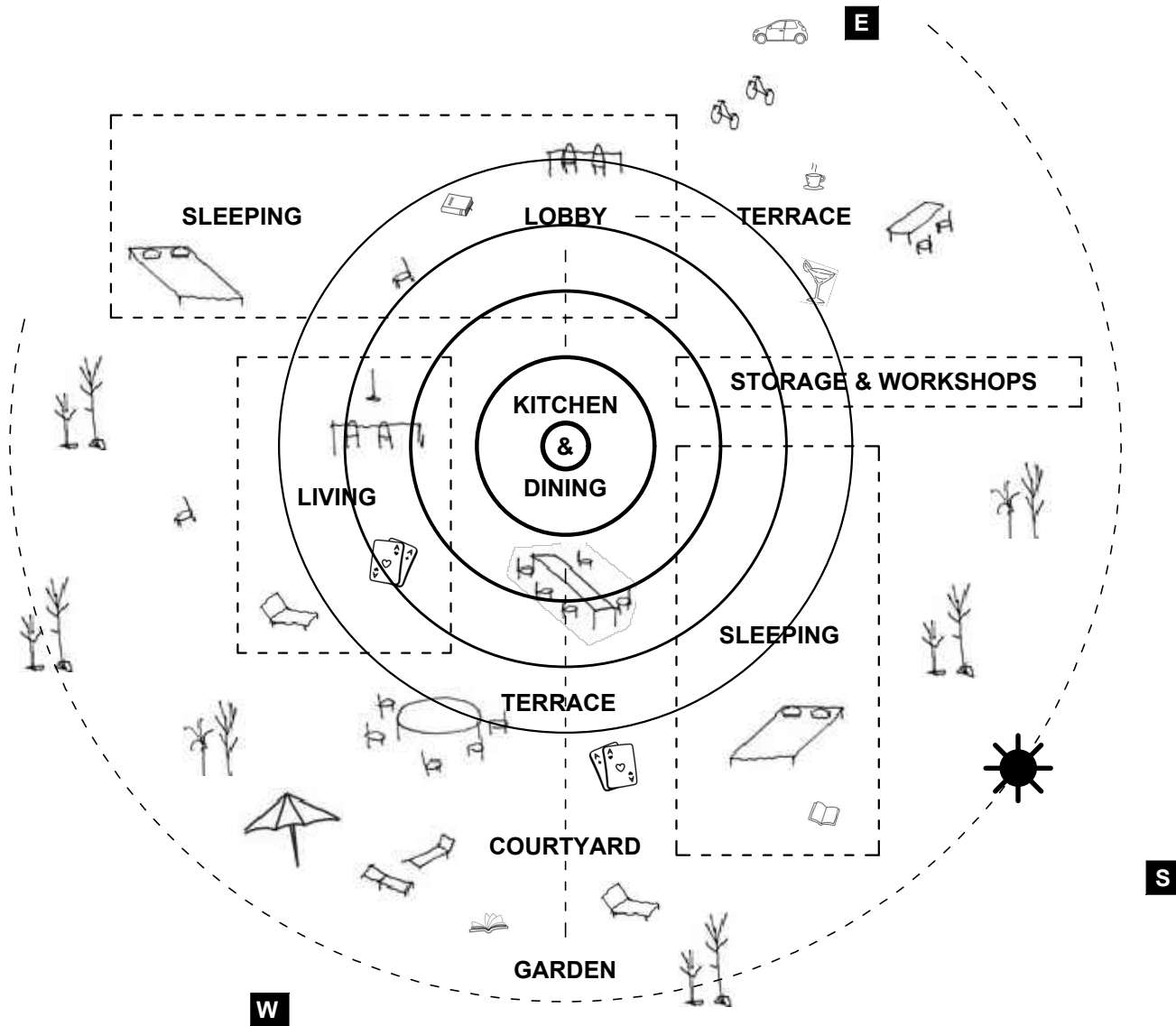
bedroom dining lobby dining bedroom garden terrace kitchen outside dining bedroom

bedroom balcony kitchen lobby dining bedroom / garden lobby outside dining bedroom

bedroom balcony kitchen living room garden kitchen lobby outside dining bedroom

bedroom kitchen terrace dining lobby kitchen bedroom / garden art studio outside dining bedroom

ZONING



PROGRAM

The building program of *Casa Habitoria* is a direct response to the fictional yet research-driven lives of its users. Each space has been shaped by the routines, emotions and rituals of the imagined characters whose stories reflect a range of experiences, desires and ways of inhabiting. Rather than starting from a list of requirements, the program emerged from narrative: it was lived before it was planned.

Through diary entries, letters, postcards and messages, the characters reveal how they move through space and time - how they wake up, cook, rest, reflect, connect, observe... These personal rhythms offer architectural cues: quiet morning rituals suggest soft transitions between private and semi-public zones; spontaneous conversations hint at thresholds designed to invite without insisting; communal meals evoke long tables and open kitchens filled with light, scent and sound.

The program is not rigidly divided, but layered. Public and private realms are interwoven with sensitivity, allowing for both openness and seclusion. The architecture encourages exploration without intrusion, and togetherness without obligation, aligning with the principles of slow living and experiential design.

The resulting program reflects both individual and collective needs, weaving private and shared spaces into a fluid sequence that allows for exchange and immersion.

By mapping the characters' stories, routines, and emotional landscapes, the program gains clarity and depth. It becomes more than a functional layout - it becomes an architectural reflection of life as it is lived. In this way, *Casa Habitoria* is not only designed for people; it is designed from them.

BUILDING PROGRAM:

Communal culinary spaces:

- dedicated to celebrating the joys of food and wine, highlighting traditional dishes and local ingredients
- open-plan kitchen and dining area, communal tables, outdoor dining spaces

Social spaces:

- welcoming communal and gathering spaces where people are drawn to socialize, relax, and meet
- living rooms, communal lounges, lobby

Spaces for pleasure:

- designed for relaxation and enjoyment of slow living
- pool, lounging spaces, terraces

Residential zones:

- private areas for solitude and rest
- sleeping rooms, bathrooms, small balconies

Commons:

- spaces where people come together to share knowledge, experiences and culture
- cooking classes, working in the garden, artisan workshops (e.g. tile painting, terracotta pottery...)

Outdoor areas:

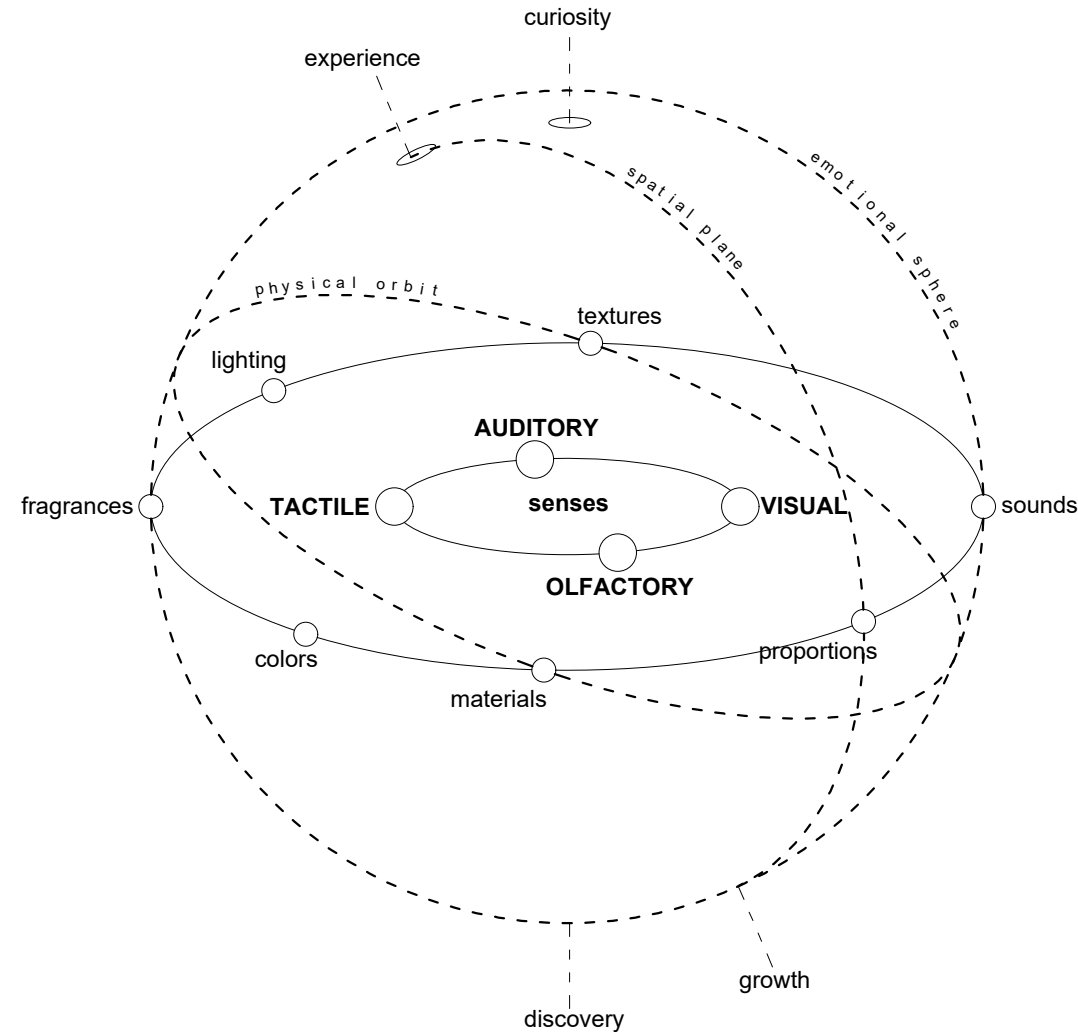
- these outdoor spaces provide essential extensions of daily life
- gardens, terraces, courtyards, balconies, outdoor dining spaces, vineyards, orchards, olive groves

Threshold spaces:

- places of spontaneous meetings and quiet observation
- corridors, stairwells and in-between zones are designed with intention

ATMOSPHERES & MATERIALS

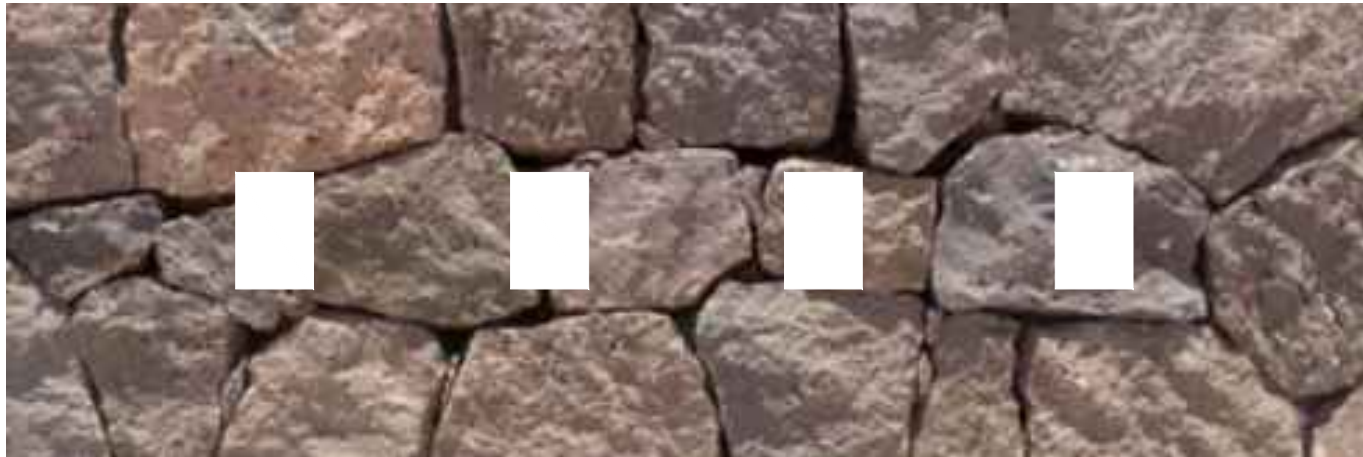
The selected elements and materials act as a catalogue for design as they emphasize the creation of an immersive atmosphere, engaging all senses through materiality, textures, colours, sounds, and scents. Each design choice correlates with a specific feeling or experience.



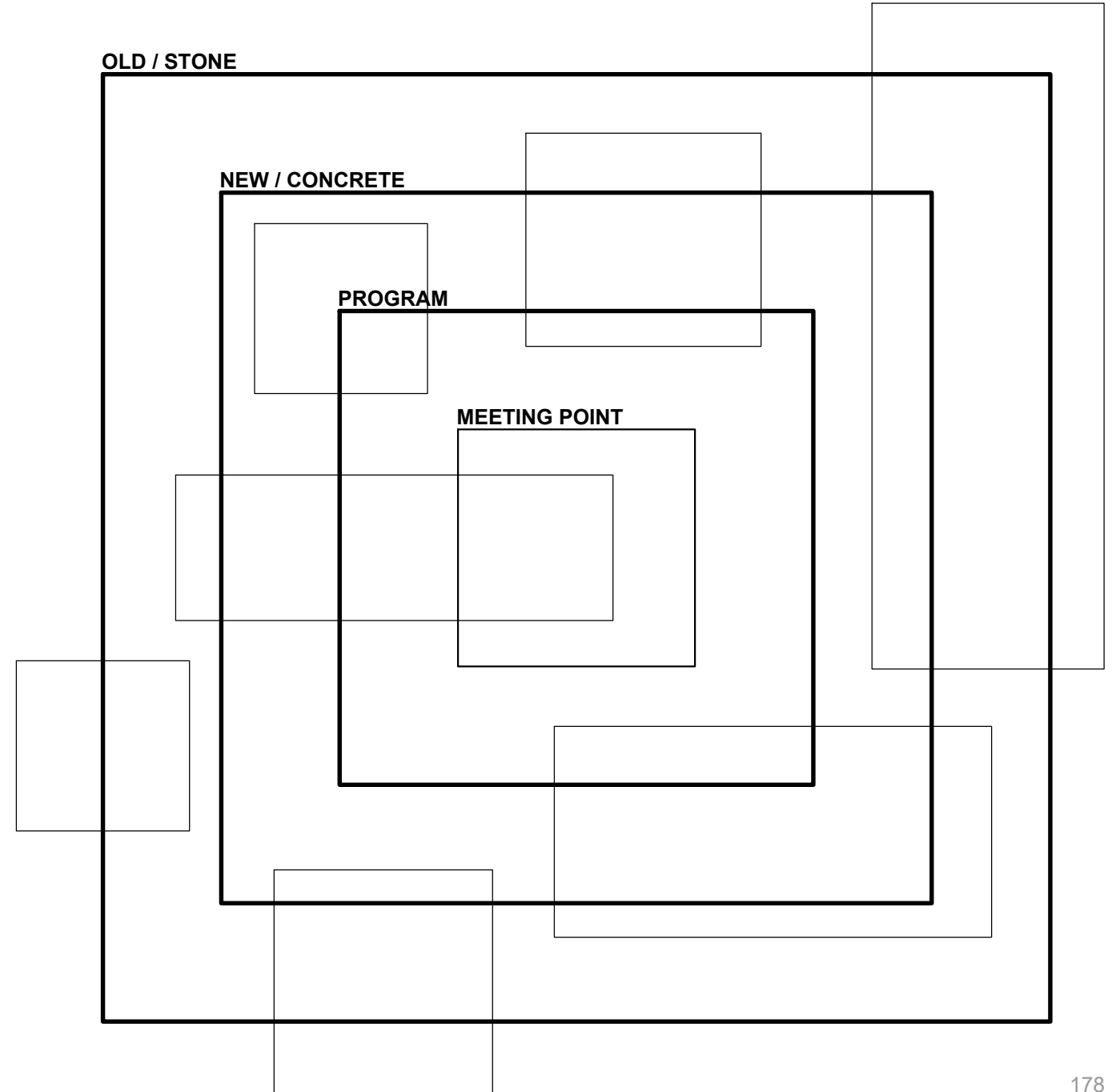
- open layouts
 - narrowing and widening hallways
 - labyrinthine pathways
 - contrasting spaces
 - uncluttered, minimalist spaces
 - organic forms, irregular angles, and non-linear paths
 - arches, colonnades, and vaulted ceilings
 - human scale and proportions
 - blurred lines between interior and exterior
 - unconventional design
 - monumental scale
 - large openings
 - natural light
 - sunlit rooms
 - warm, golden light
 - dim lighting with shadows
 - dark spaces
 - natural materials (wood, stone, terracotta)
 - rustic elements (terracotta tiles, wrought-iron accents)
 - heavy, sturdy materials (stone, concrete, wood)
 - soft, light materials (textiles, fabrics, linen, cotton)
 - smooth finishes (plaster, wood, concrete)
 - decorative elements (hand-painted tiles, mosaic)
 - earthy tones (warm yellows, browns, rich greens)
 - bold hues (deep reds, ochres)
 - neutral shades (whites, light greys, beiges)
 - vibrant colour palettes (orange, red, blue)
 - natural sounds (water, rustling leaves, breeze)
 - background music and countryside noises
 - quiet sounds
 - loud sounds
 - essential oils
 - fragrant plants and herbs (oleander, cypresses, basil)
 - fresh-cut flowers
- fluidity, spontaneity, freedom
 - movement, curiosity
 - exploration, mystery
 - dynamic, curiosity, dramatic, discovery
 - timelessness, clarity, harmony, serenity
 - exploration, movement, curiosity
 - traditionality, locality
 - harmony, unity, approachable
 - connection, belonging to the larger landscape
 - interesting, unknown
 - authority, dominance
 - connection, openness, inviting
 - openness, tranquillity
 - airy, welcoming
 - coziness, comfort, security
 - introspection, quietness, stillness
 - distress, discomfort, disorientation
 - warmth, comfort, simplicity, welcoming, coziness
 - authenticity, warmth, comfort
 - rootedness, stability, timelessness
 - warmth, coziness, security, comfort
 - inviting, warm, calm
 - authenticity, artistry, uniqueness
 - natural, rustic, comforting, warm
 - vibrancy, traditionality, sophistication
 - serene, timeless, welcoming
 - joyfulness, playfulness
 - calming, soothing
 - awakened, lively, immersive
 - stillness, cozy, security, tranquillity, isolation
 - overstimulation
 - relaxation, calmness
 - connection, freshness
 - freshness, warmth







KNOWN + UNKNOWN
PUBLIC + PRIVATE
OPEN + CLOSED
SERVING + SERVED



04 TANGIBLE NARRATIVES

DRAWINGS
MATERIALS
DETAILS

CONCEPT

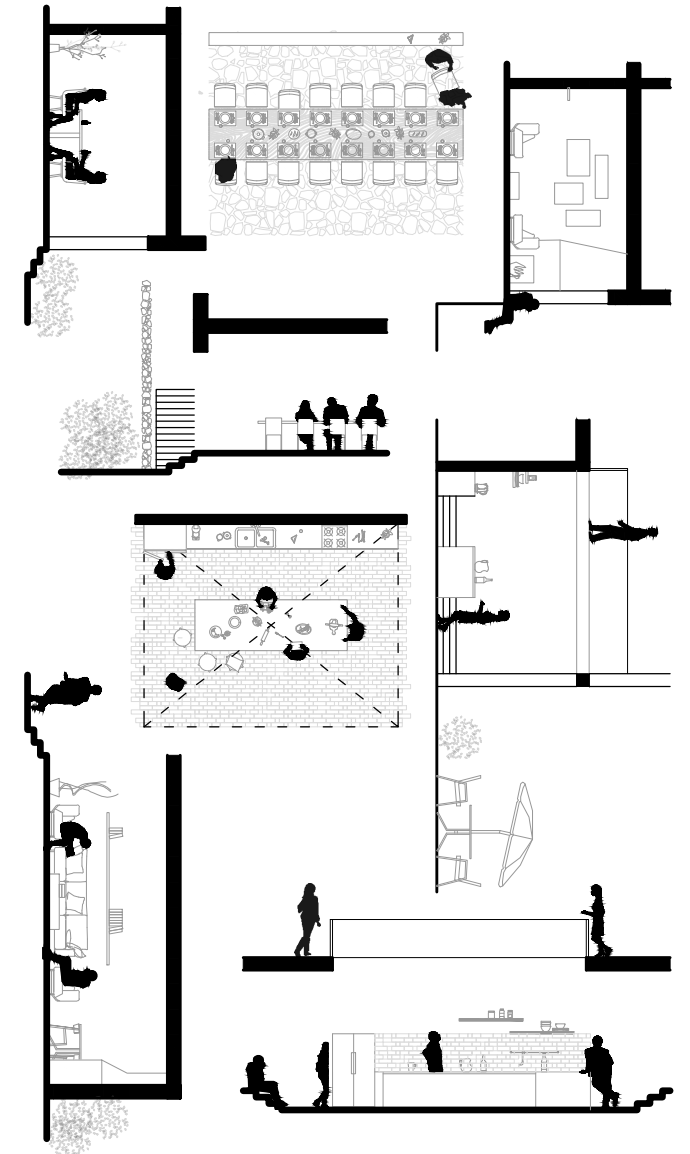
The following chapter presents a series of drawings that guide the reader through the design project across multiple scales. It begins with the broader site context, situating the building within its landscape and village surroundings, and then gradually zooms in to explore the architectural composition, spatial layout, and materiality. The sequence concludes with detailed drawings that reveal the construction logic and finer design elements, offering a comprehensive understanding of the project from concept to detail.

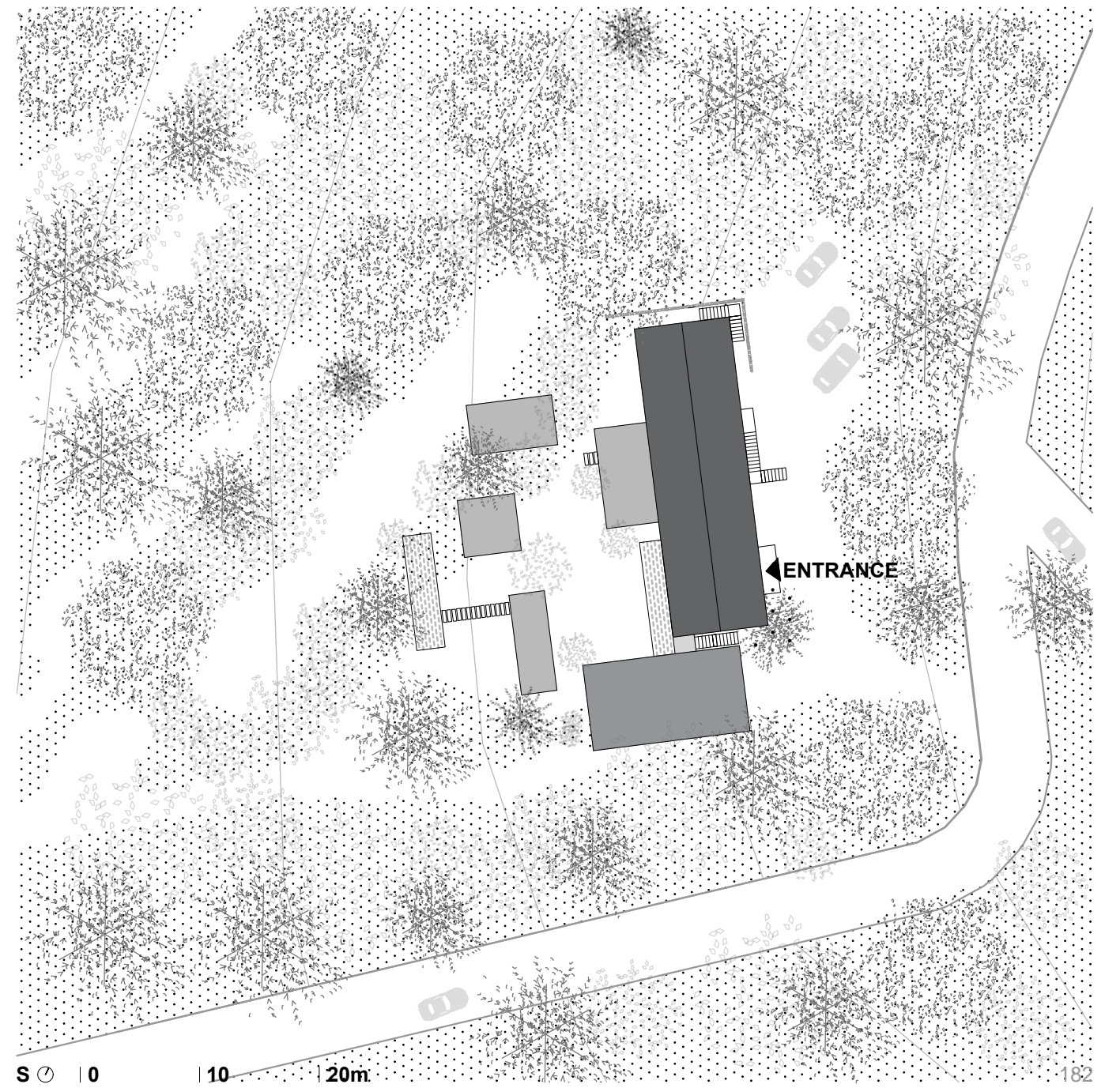
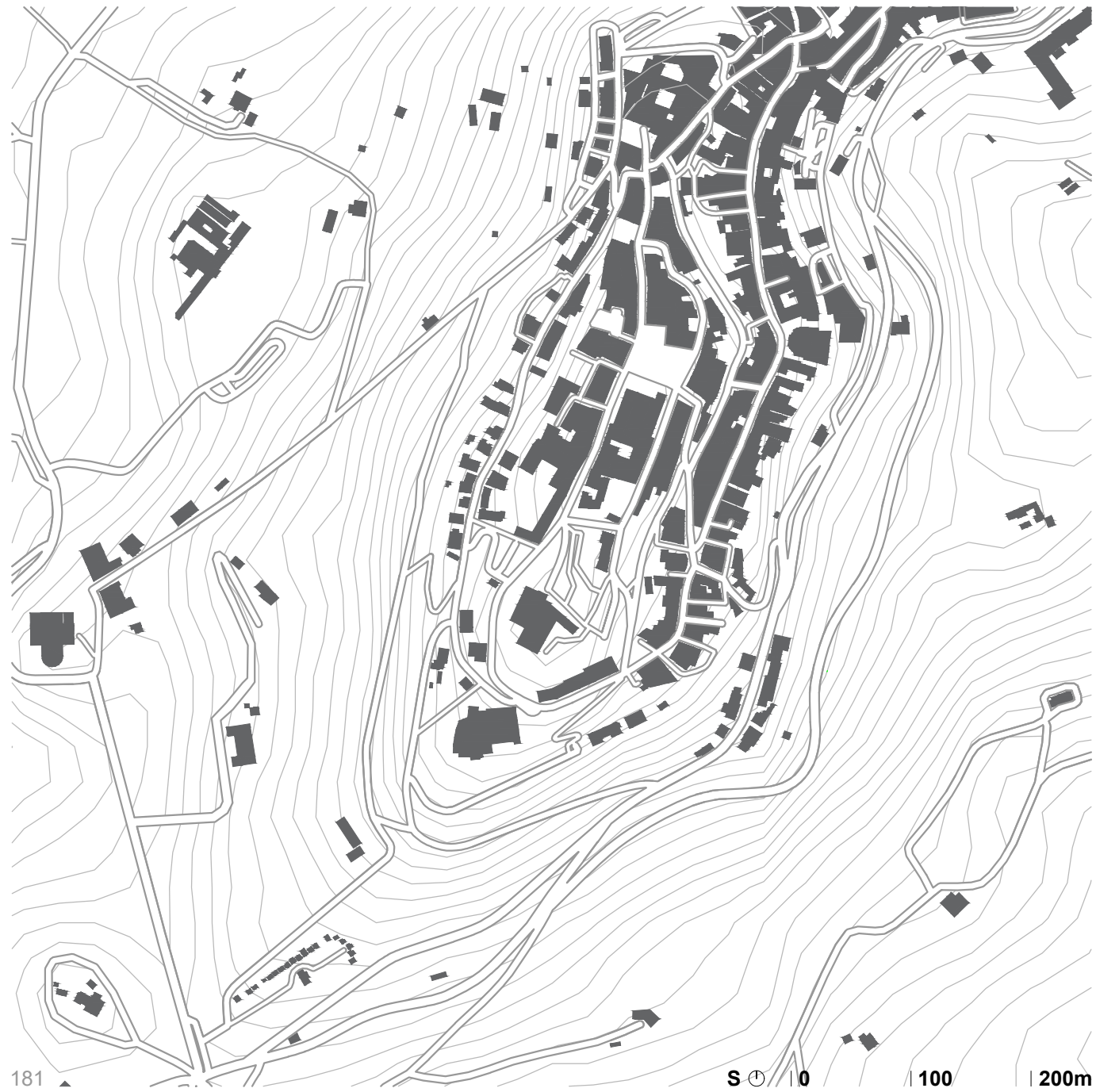
The design began with a collection of narrative fragments - moments, atmospheres and spatial impressions assembled like puzzle pieces. These fragments were not treated as isolated ideas but as parts of a larger story, gradually assembled into a coherent architectural whole. Each space is imagined as a continuation of a narrative thread, where personal experience shaped form, material and sequence.

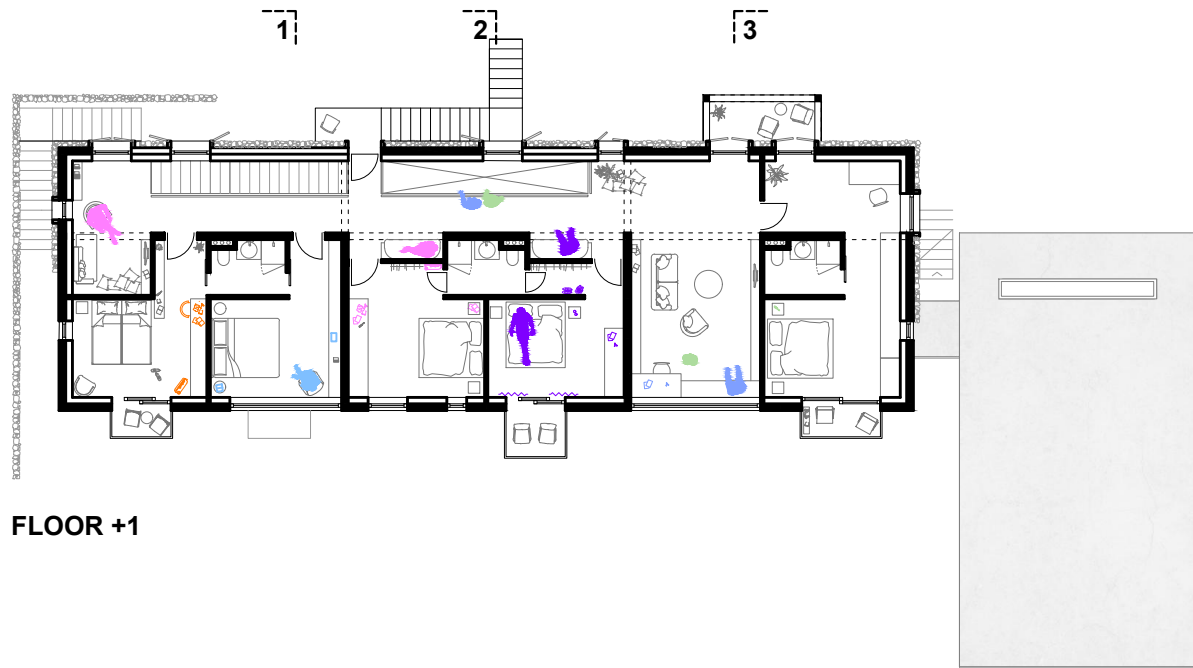
Rather than imposing a predefined form, the architecture emerged through stories, allowing the design to grow organically and meaningfully. Starting with the atmosphere of interior spaces, the design expands outward into thresholds, terraces and gardens that blur the line between interior and exterior.

This layered progression creates a deep connection to the surrounding landscape. Outdoor spaces are not just extensions of the house - they are integral parts of it, supporting seasonal rhythms and everyday life.

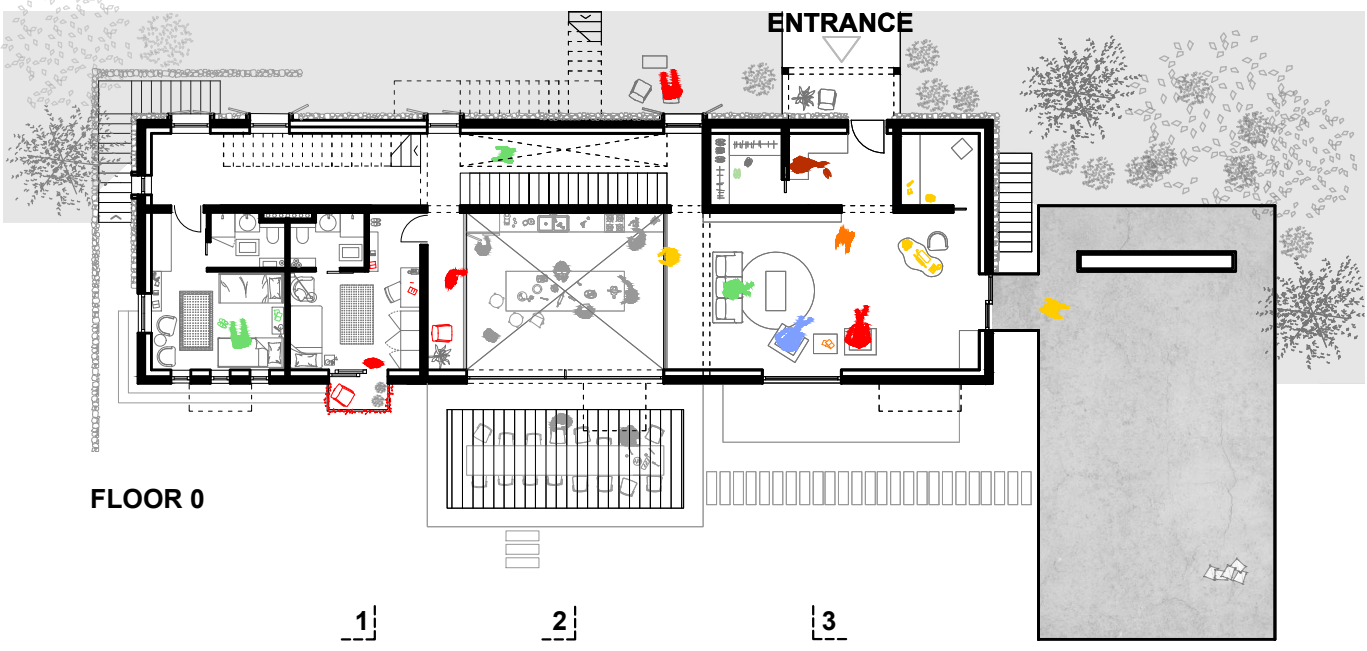
Equally important is the house's relationship to its rural context. The project avoids isolation; instead, it integrates thoughtfully into its surroundings by responding to the scale and material language of the environment, while still maintaining its own distinct identity within the broader setting.



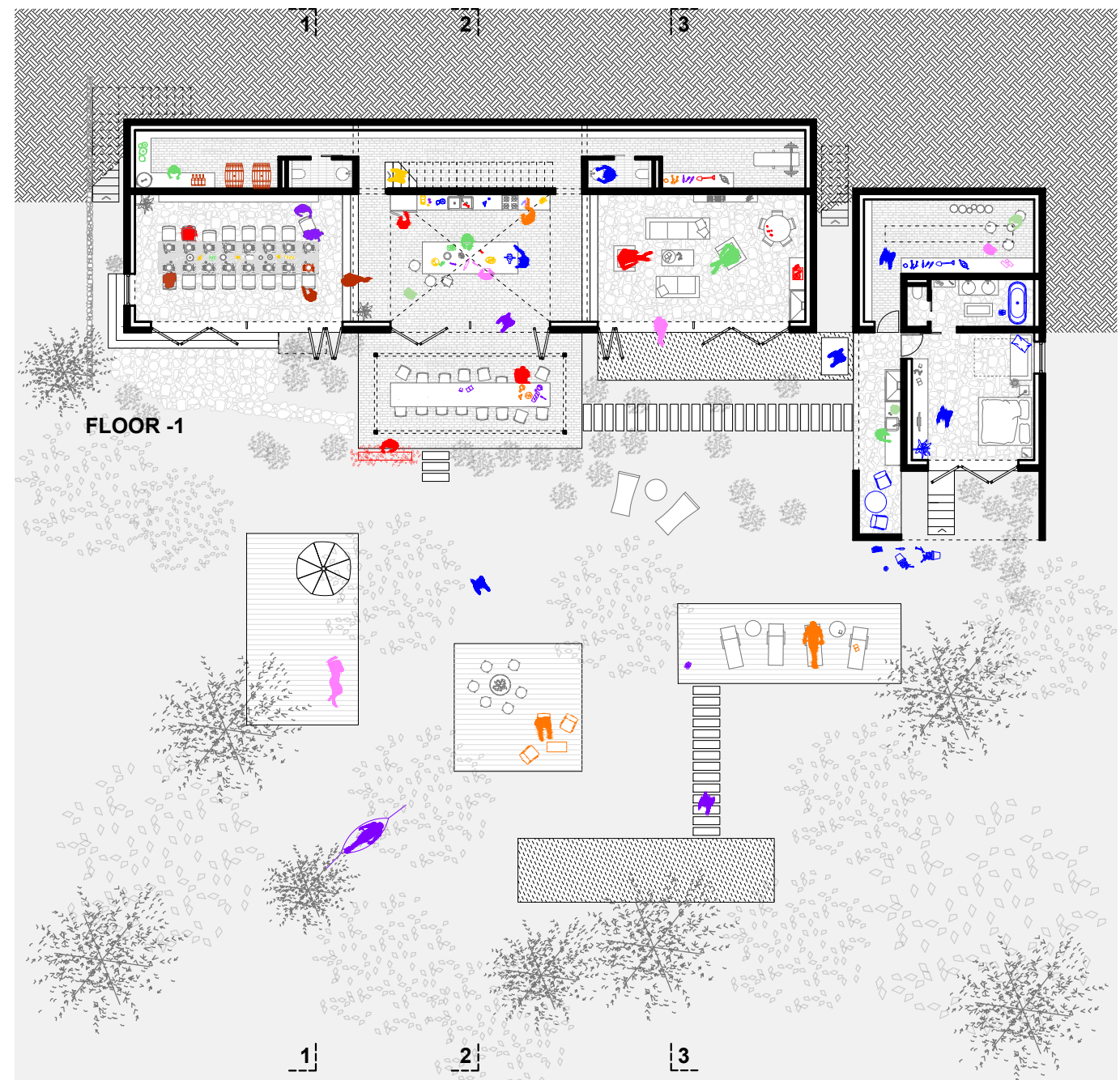




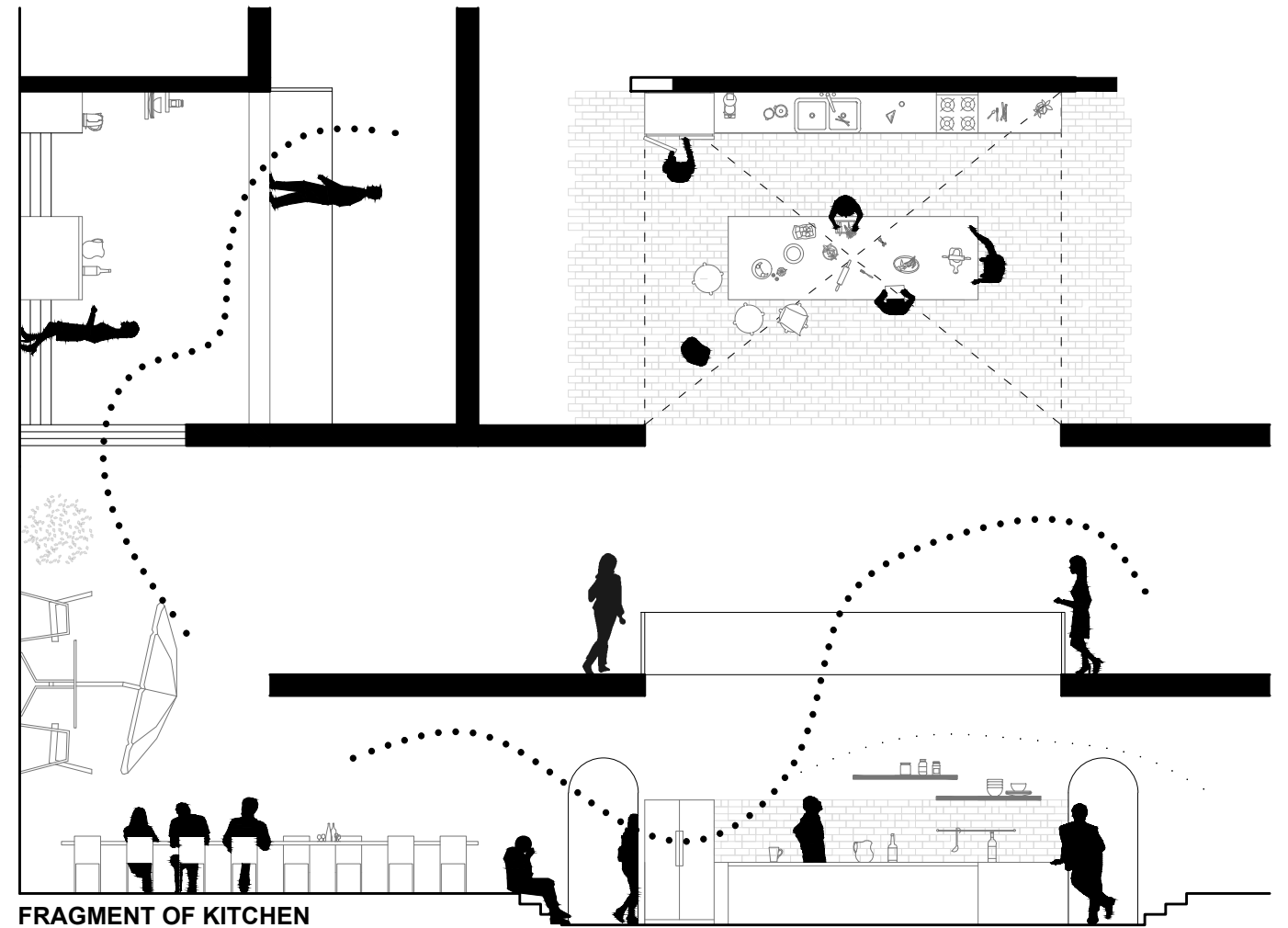
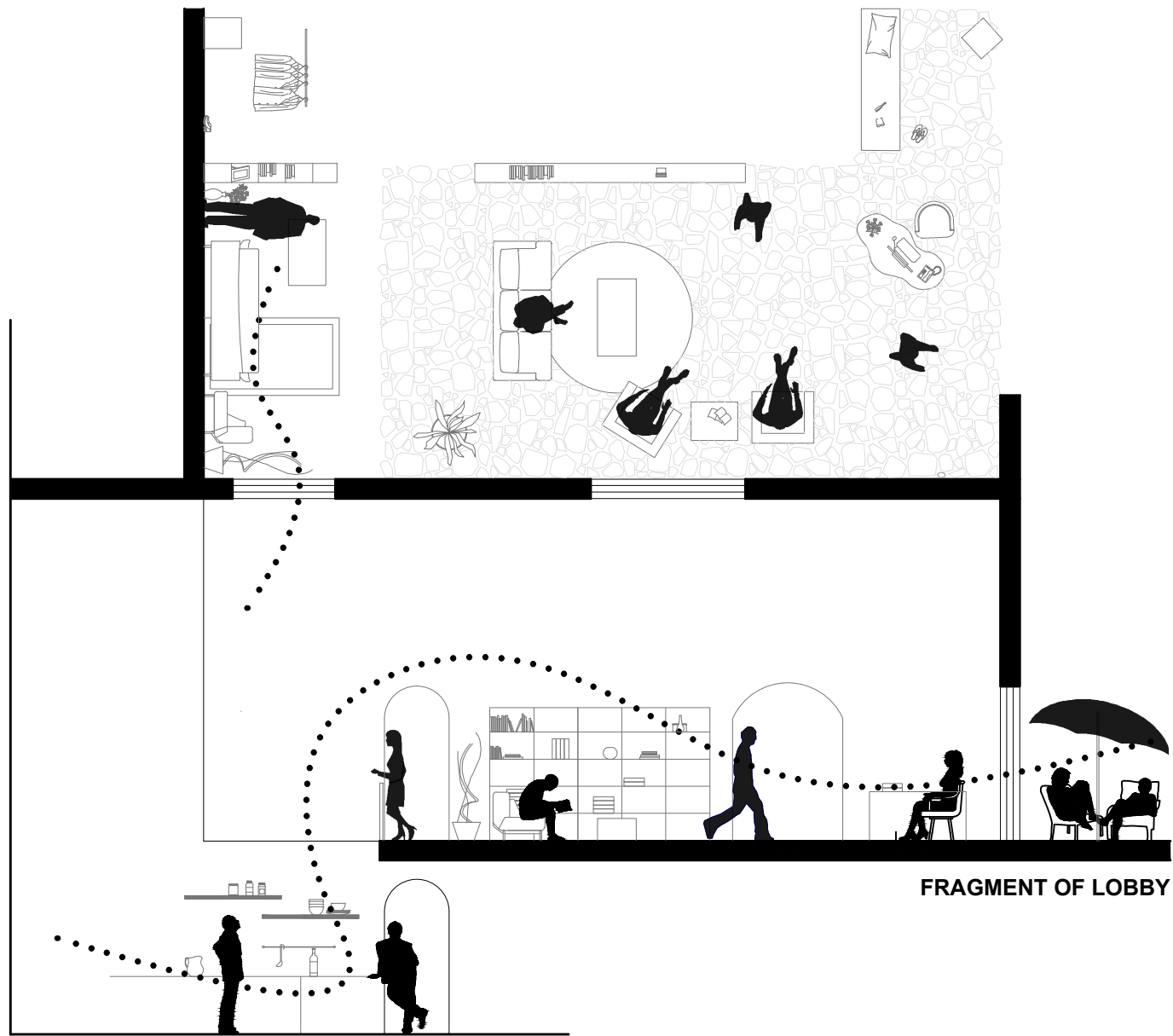
FLOOR +1

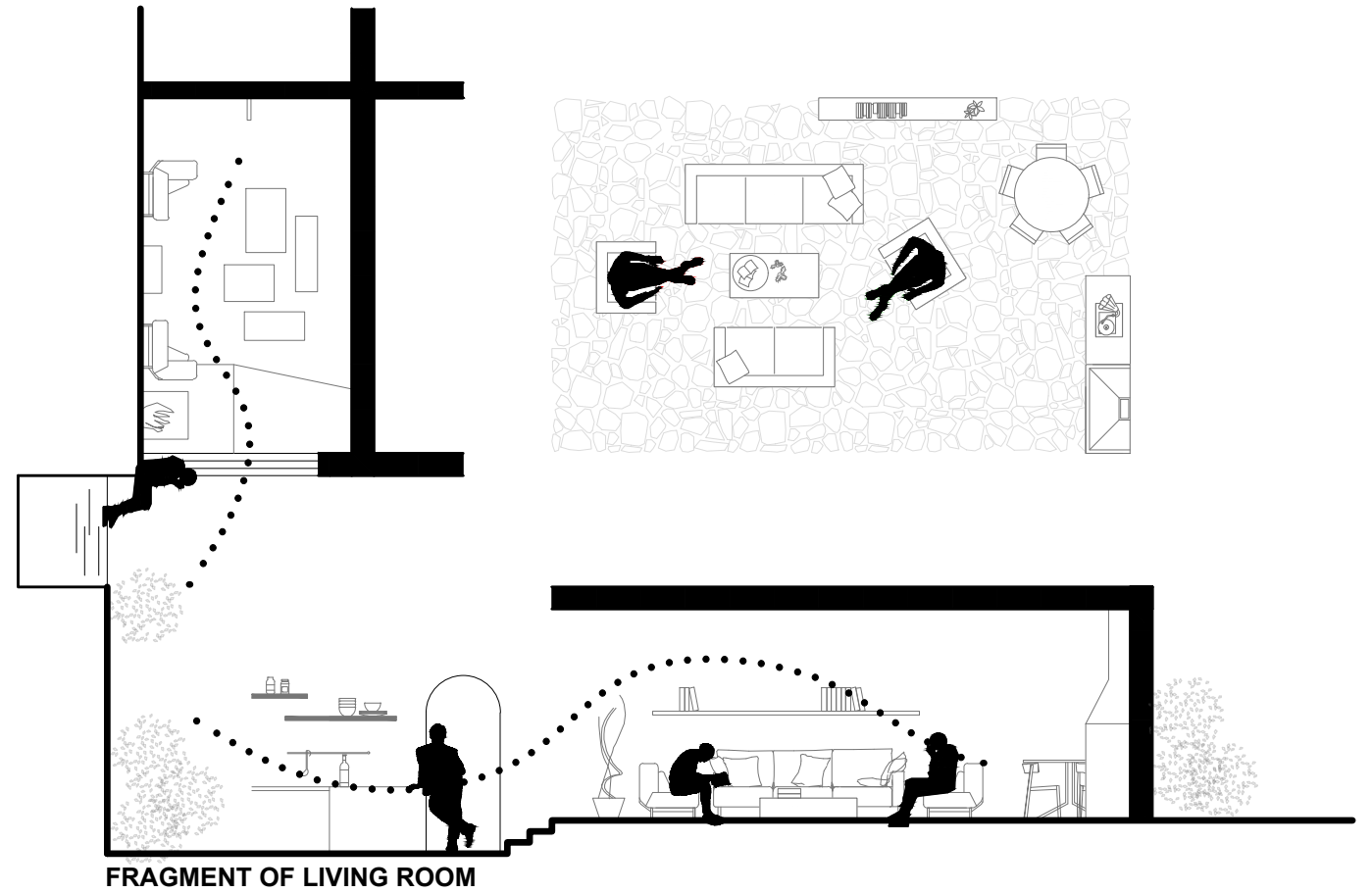
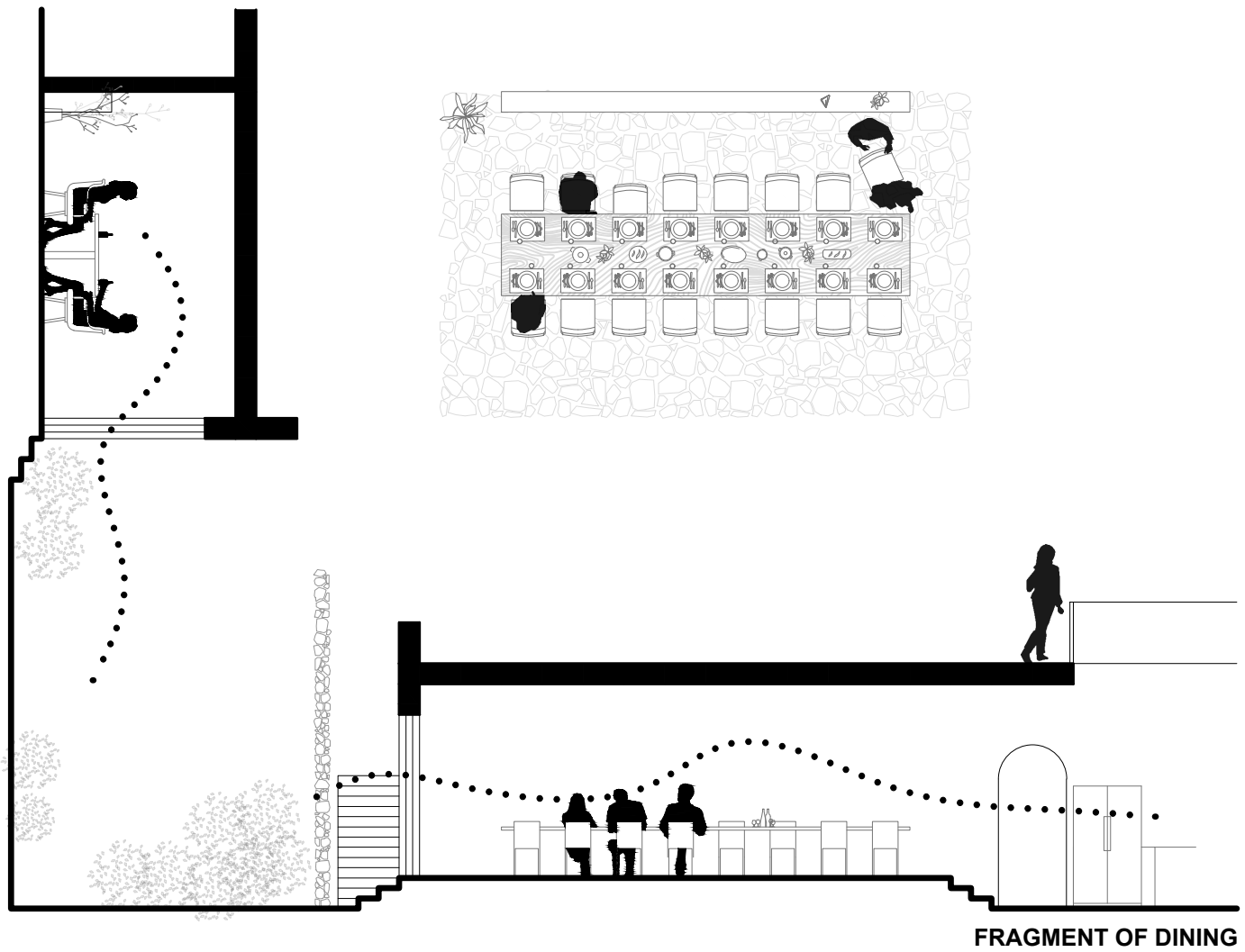


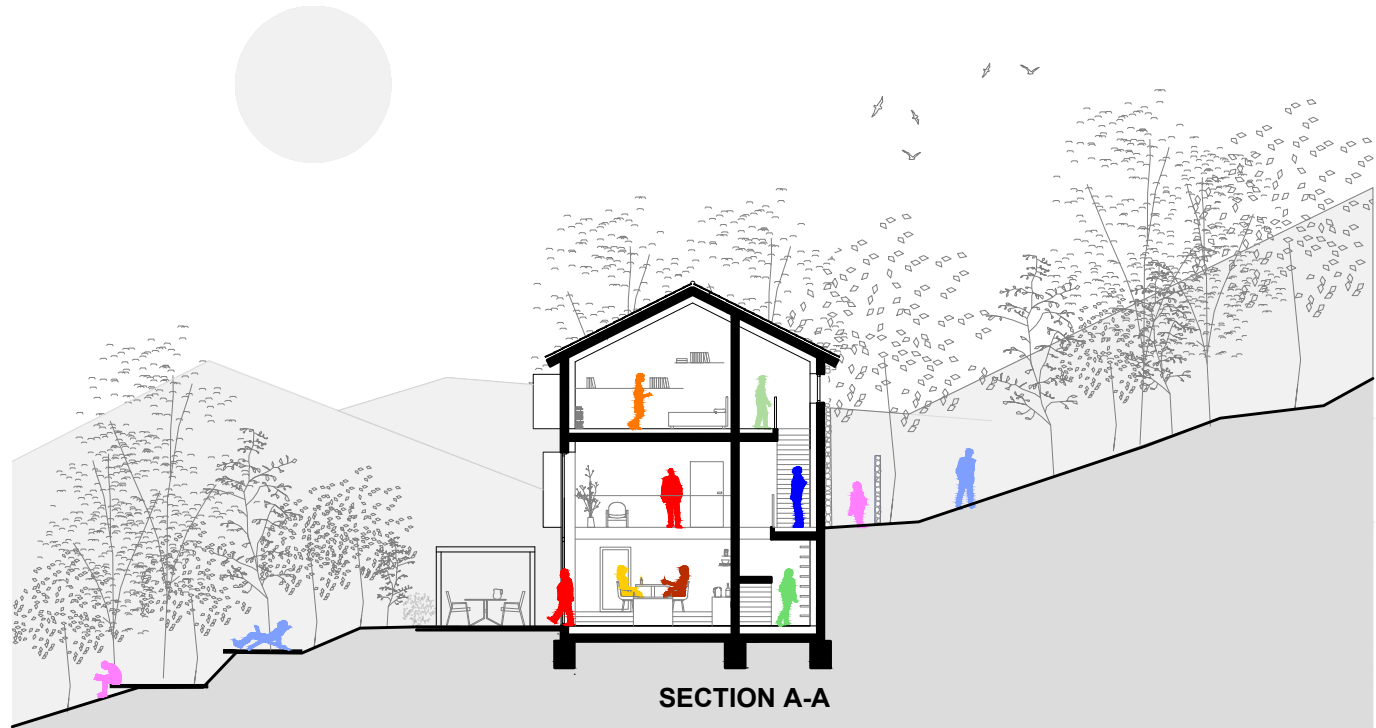
FLOOR 0

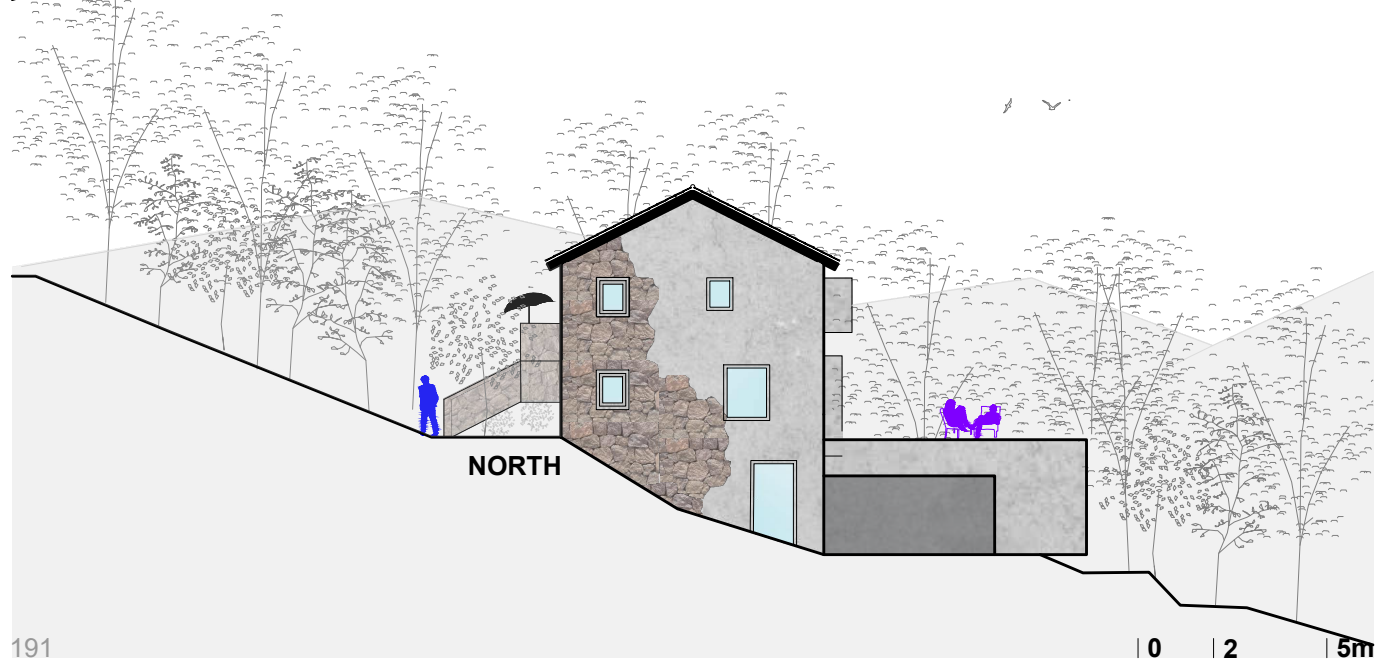
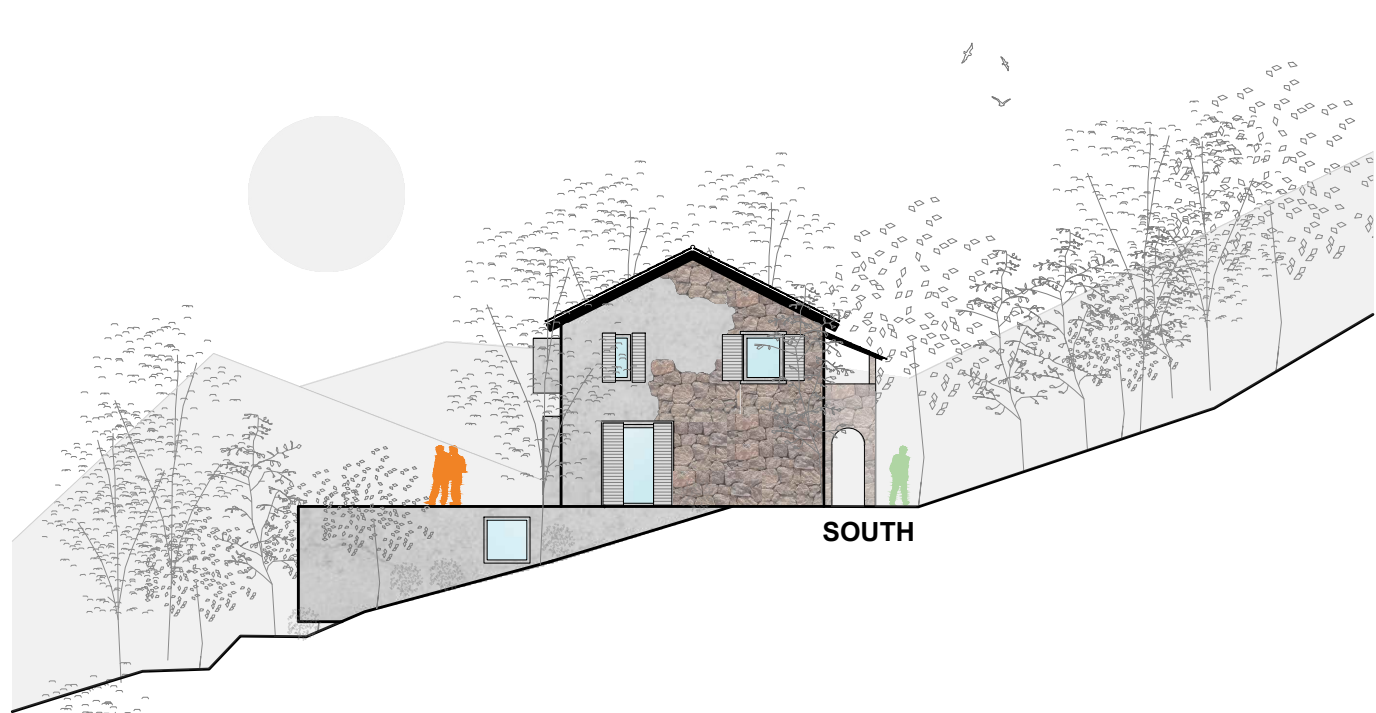


FLOOR -1

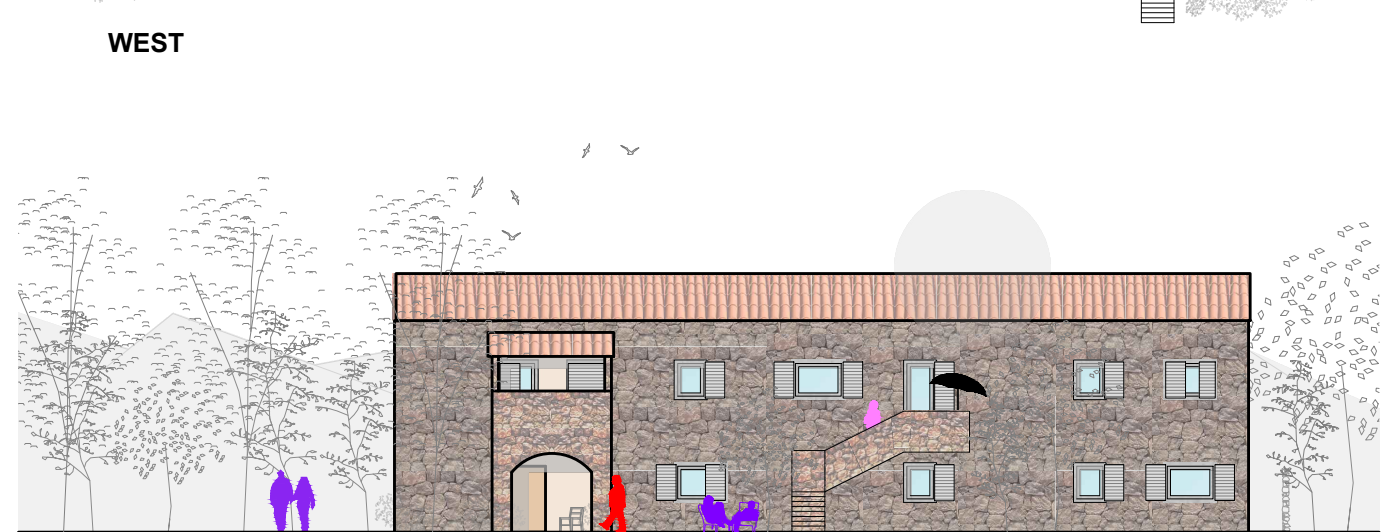




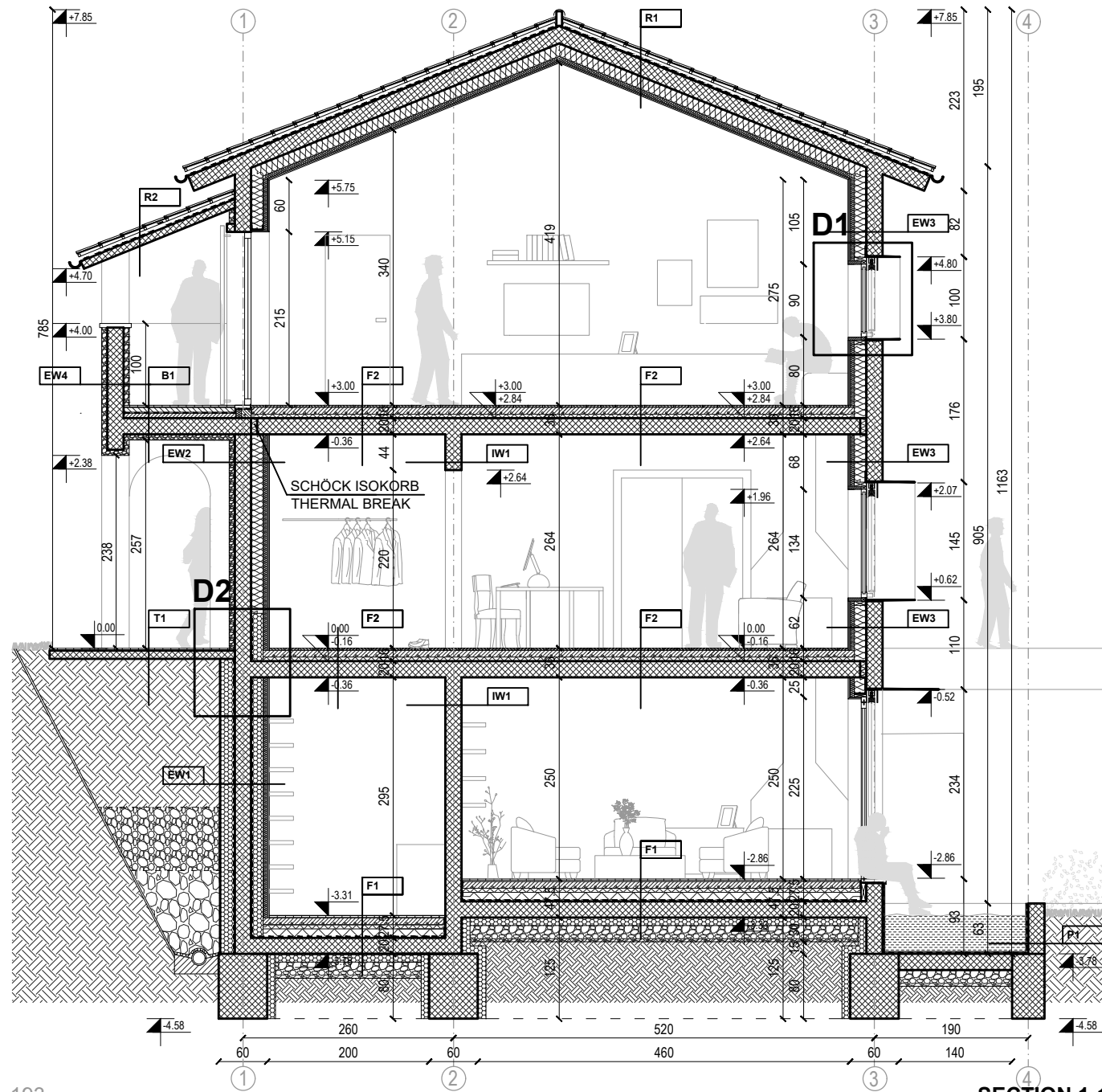




191 | 0 | 2 | 5m



0 | 2 | 5m | 192



R2 - ROOF

- REINFORCED CONCRETE SLAB 20.0 CM
- WATERPROOF MEMBRANE -
- CAVITY WITH COUNTER-BATTENS 6.0 CM
- BATTENS TO FIX TILES 3.0 CM
- TERRACOTTA TILES 2.0 CM

B1 - BALCONY

- TERRACOTA TILES 2.0 CM
- ADHESIVE MORTAR 1.0 CM
- DRAINAGE TAPE 1.0 CM
- SYNTHETIC TAPE WITH FELT 0.4 CM
- SLOPING SCREED (>2%) 4.0-6.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE SLAB 16.0 CM
- METAL LATH 0.5 CM
- MORTAR WITH STONE CLADDING 7.0 CM

T1 - TERRACE FLOOR

- TERRACOTA TILES 2.0 CM
- ADHESIVE MORTAR 1.0 CM
- SLOPED SCREED 10.0 CM
- COMPACTED SOIL -

F2 - INTERFLOOR CONSTRUCTION

- WOOD FLOORING 2.5 CM
- SCREED WITH HEATING PIPES 8.5 CM
- PE FOIL 0.02 CM
- T.I. / S.I. - EPS 5.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE SLAB 25.0 CM
- PLASTER 0.5 CM

F1 - GROUND FLOOR

- TERRACOTTA FLOOR TILES 2.0 CM
- ADHESIVE MORTAR (TILE GLUE) 1.0 CM
- SCREED WITH HEATING PIPES 8.5 CM
- T.I. - EPS LAMINATED WITH PEHD FOIL 15.0 CM
- H.I. - BITUMINOUS WATERPROOFING 1.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE SLAB 25.0 CM
- T.I. - XPS 10.0 CM
- COMPACTED GRAVEL 20.0 CM
- COMPACTED SOIL -

EW4 - BALCONY WALL

- REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH WATERPROOFING ADDITIVE 20.0 CM
- METAL LATH 0.5 CM
- MORTAR 1.0 CM
- STONE CLADDING 6.0 CM

EW3 - EXTERIOR WALL

- PLASTER 0.5 CM
- DOUBLE GYPSUM BOARDS 2.5 CM
- T.I. - MW BETWEEN SUBSTRUCTURE 5.0 CM
- VAPOR BARRIER - PEHD FOIL -
- T.I. - MW 15.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH WATERPROOFING ADDITIVES 20.0 CM

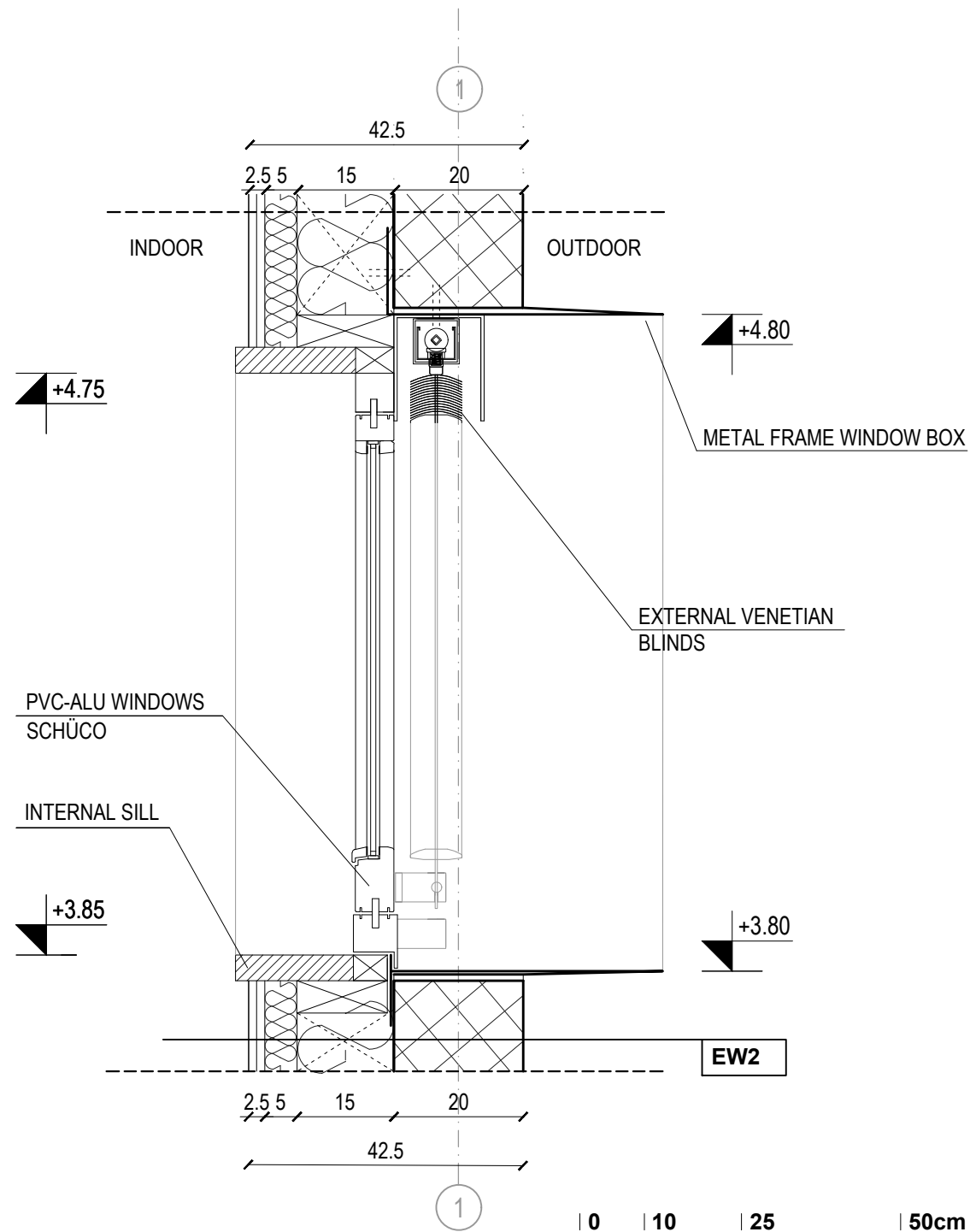
EW2 - EXTERIOR WALL

- PLASTER 0.5 CM
- DOUBLE GYPSUM BOARDS 2.5 CM
- T.I. - MW BETWEEN SUBSTRUCTURE 5.0 CM
- VAPOR BARRIER - PEHD FOIL -
- T.I. - MW 15.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH WATERPROOFING ADDITIVE 20.0 CM
- WATERPROOFING LAYER 0.2 CM
- METAL LATH 0.5 CM
- MORTAR WITH STONE CLADDING 6.0 CM

EW1 - EXTERIOR WALL

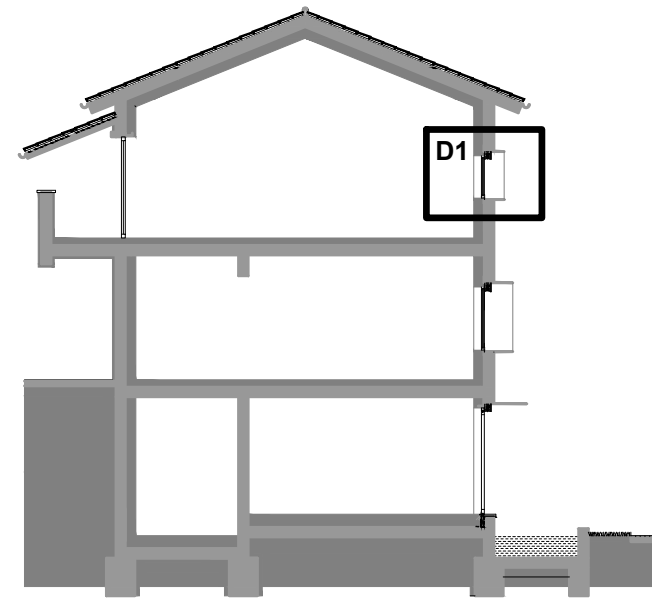
- PLASTER 0.5 CM
- DOUBLE GYPSUM BOARDS 2.5 CM
- T.I. - MW BETWEEN SUBSTRUCTURE 5.0 CM
- VAPOR BARRIER - PEHD FOIL -
- T.I. - XPS 15.0 CM
- DAMP-PROOF MEMBRANE 15.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH WATERPROOFING ADDITIVE 20.0 CM
- H.I. - POLYMERBITUMEN STRIPS 1.0 CM
- T.I. - XPS 15.0 CM
- DRAINAGE BOARD 1.0 CM
- SOIL -

DETAIL 1

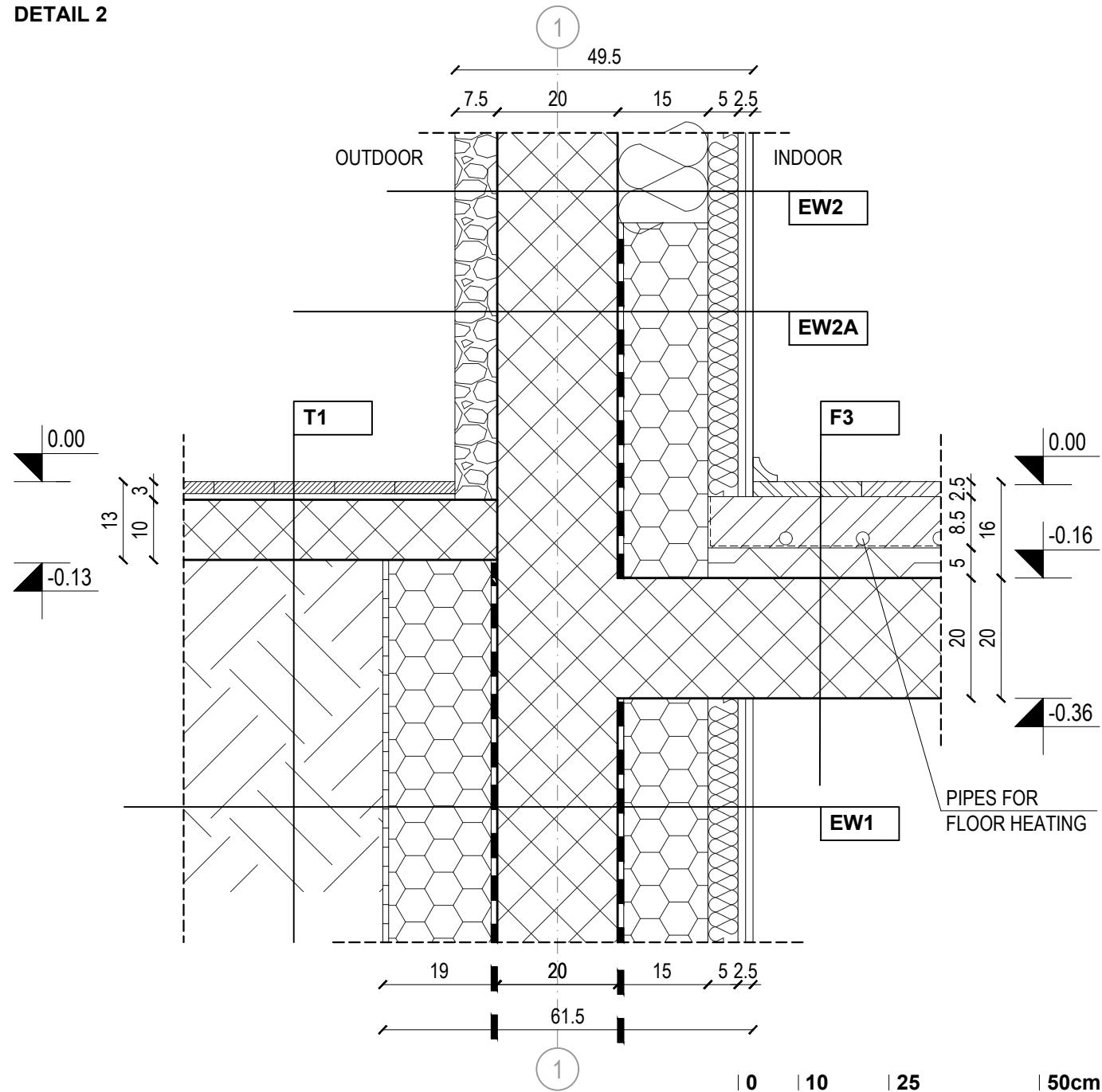


EW2 - EXTERIOR WALL

- PLASTER 0.5 CM
- DOUBLE GYPSUM BOARDS 2.5 CM
- T.I. - MW BETWEEN SUBSTRUCTURE 5.0 CM
- VAPOR BARRIER - PEHD FOIL -
- T.I. - MW 15.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH WATERPROOFING ADDITIVE 20.0 CM



DETAIL 2



F3 - INTERFLOOR CONSTRUCTION

- WOOD FLOORING 2.5 CM
- SCREED WITH HEATING PIPES 8.5 CM
- PE FOIL 0.02 CM
- T.I. / S.I. - EPS 5.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE SLAB 25.0 CM
- PLASTER 0.5 CM

EW1 - EXTERIOR WALL

- PLASTER 0.5 CM
- DOUBLE GYPSUM BOARDS 2.5 CM
- T.I. - MW BETWEEN SUBSTRUCTURE 5.0 CM
- VAPOR BARRIER - PEHD FOIL -
- T.I. - MW 15.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH WATERPROOFING ADDITIVE 20.0 CM
- H.I. - POLYMERBITUMEN STRIPS 1.0 CM
- T.I. - XPS 18.0 CM
- DRAINAGE BOARD 1.0 CM
- SOIL -

EW2 - EXTERIOR WALL

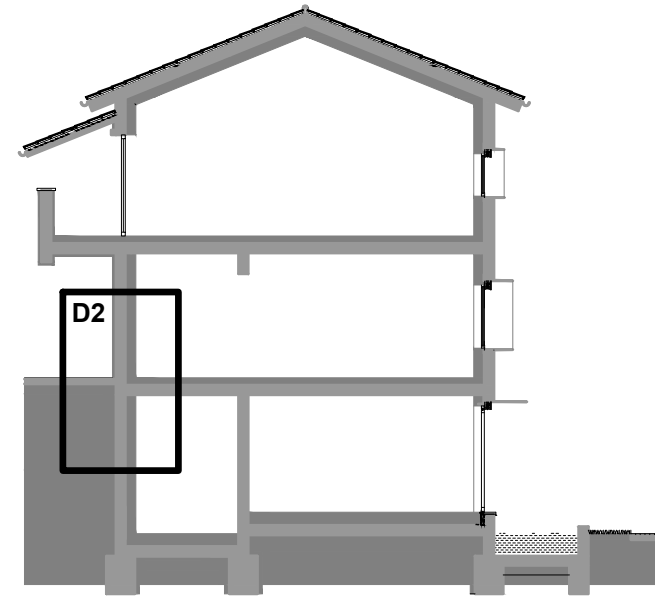
- PLASTER 0.5 CM
- DOUBLE GYPSUM BOARDS 2.5 CM
- T.I. - MW BETWEEN SUBSTRUCTURE 5.0 CM
- VAPOR BARRIER - PEHD FOIL -
- T.I. - MW 15.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH WATERPROOFING ADDITIVE 20.0 CM

EW2A - EXTERIOR WALL

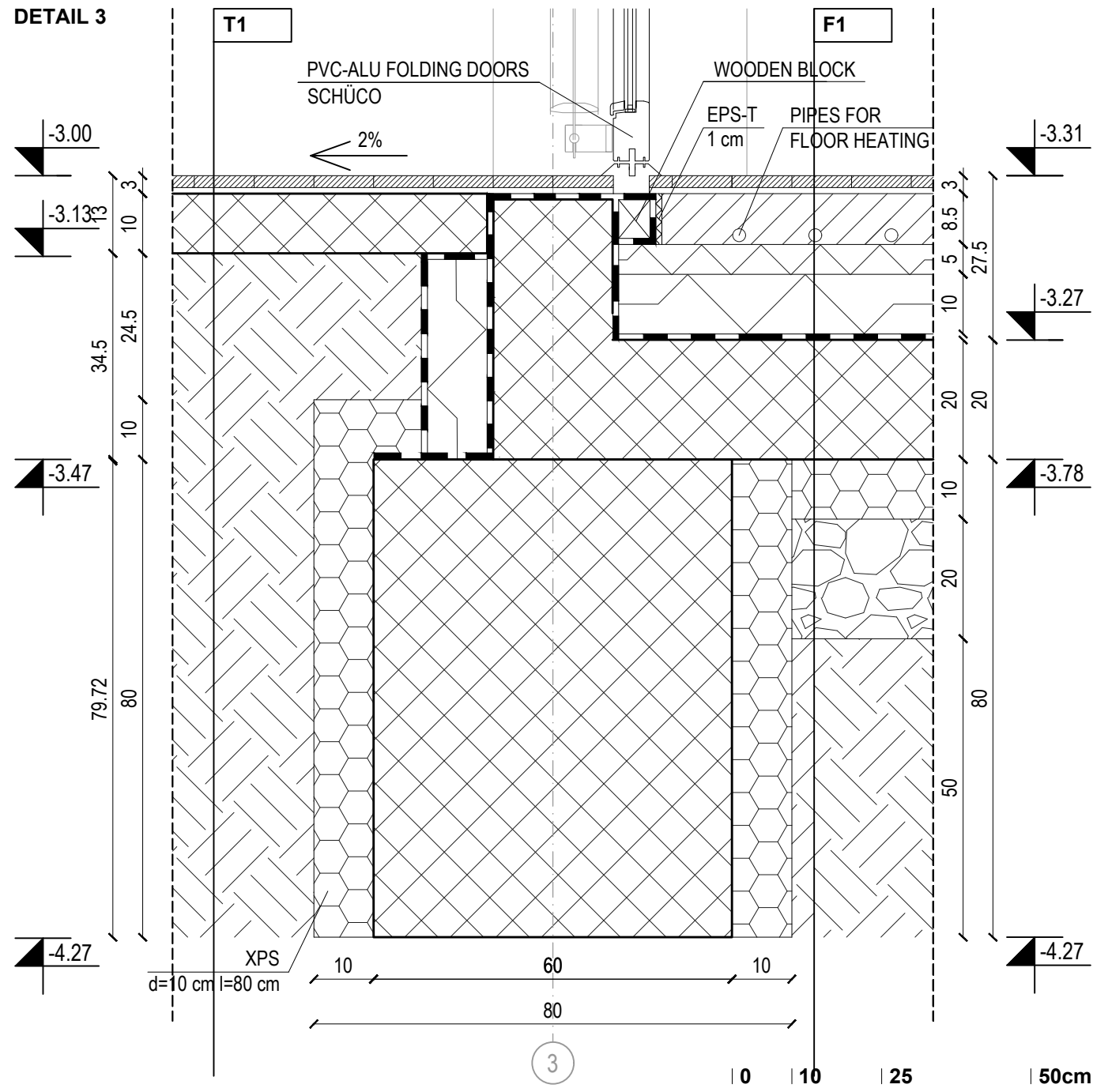
- PLASTER 0.5 CM
- DOUBLE GYPSUM BOARDS 2.5 CM
- T.I. - MW BETWEEN SUBSTRUCTURE 5.0 CM
- VAPOR BARRIER - PEHD FOIL -
- T.I. - XPS 14.0 CM
- H.I. - POLYMERBITUMEN STRIPS 1.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH WATERPROOFING ADDITIVES 20.0 CM
- WATERPROOFING LAYER 0.2 CM
- METAL LATH 0.5 CM
- MORTAR 1.0 CM
- STONE CLADDING 6.0 CM

T1 - TERRACE FLOOR

- TERRACOTA TILES 2.0 CM
- ADHESIVE MORTAR 1.0 CM
- SLOPED SCREED / MORTAR BED 10.0 CM
- COMPACTED SOIL -



DETAIL 3

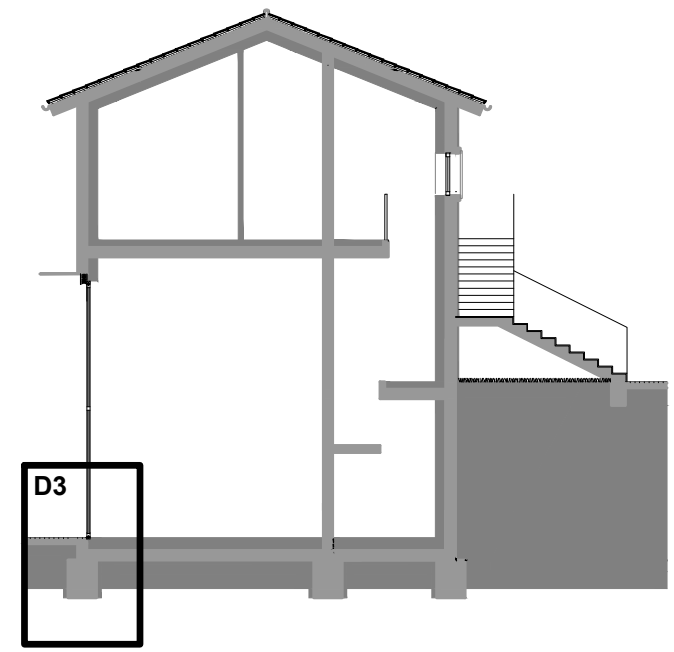


F1 - GROUND FLOOR

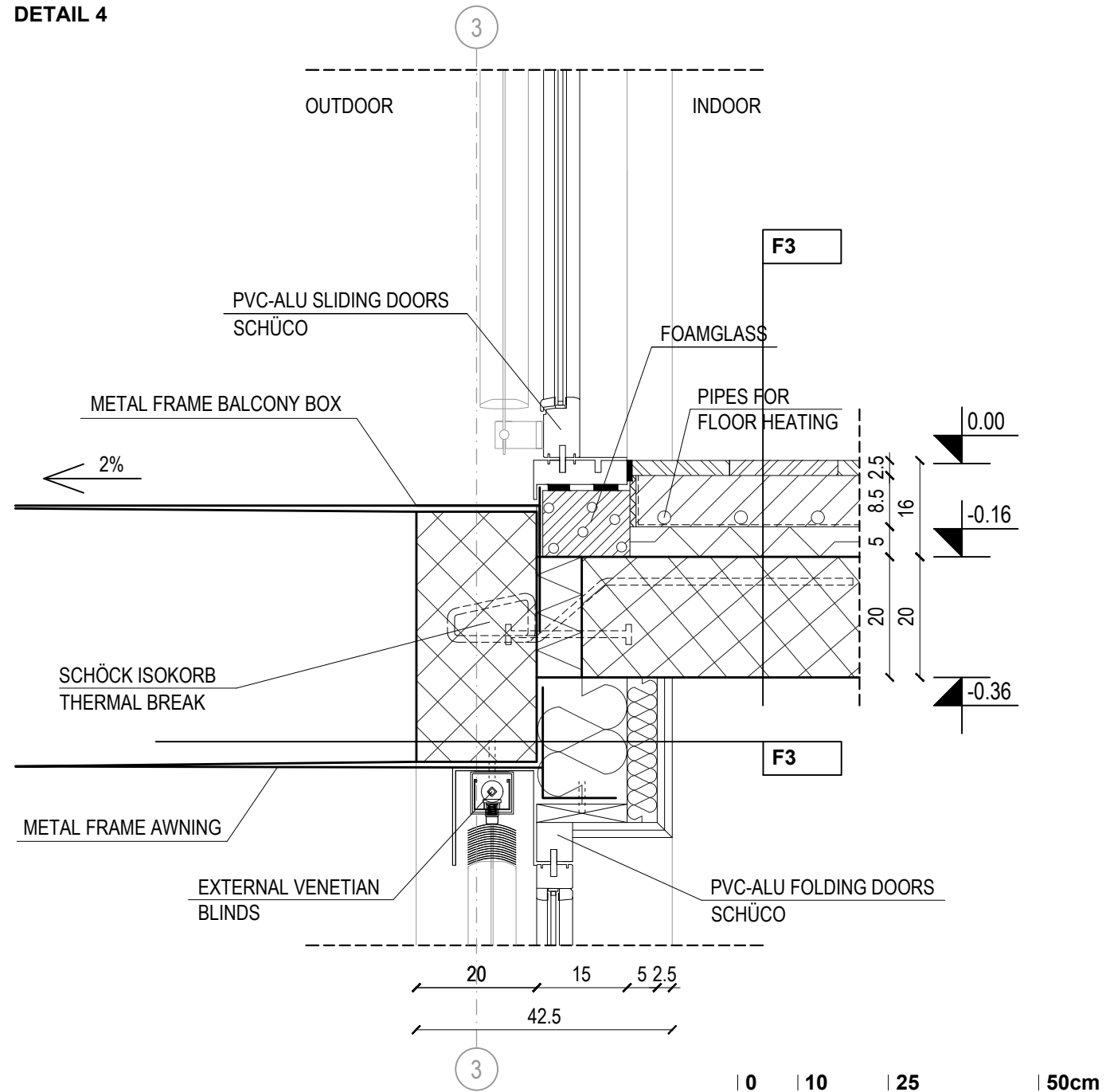
- TERRACOTTA FLOOR TILES 2.0 CM
- ADHESIVE MORTAR (TILE GLUE) 1.0 CM
- CEMENT SCREED WITH PIPES 8.5 CM
- T.I. - EPS LAMINATED WITH PEHD 15.0 CM
- H.I. - BITUMINOUS WATERPROOFING 1.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE SLAB 20.0 CM
- T.I. - XPS 10.0 CM
- COMPACTED GRAVEL 20.0 CM
- COMPACTED SOIL -

T1 - TERRACE FLOOR

- TERRACOTA TILES 2.0 CM
- ADHESIVE MORTAR 1.0 CM
- SLOPED SCREED / MORTAR BED 10.0 CM
- COMPACTED SOIL -



DETAIL 4

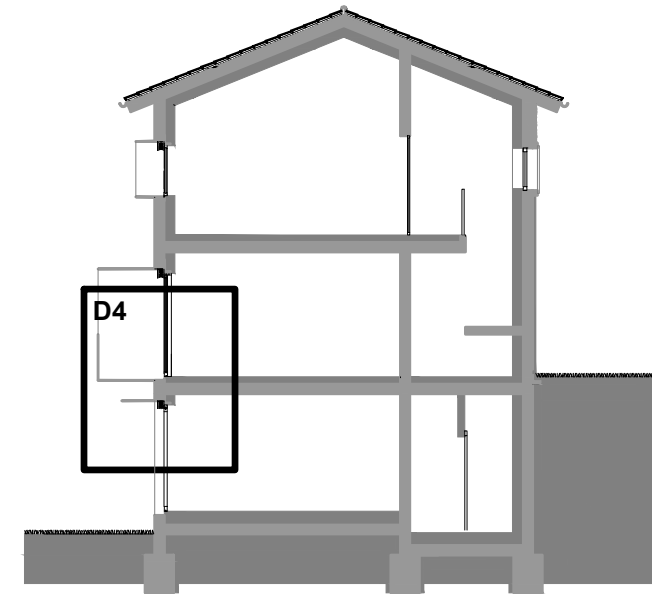


F3 - INTERFLOOR CONSTRUCTION

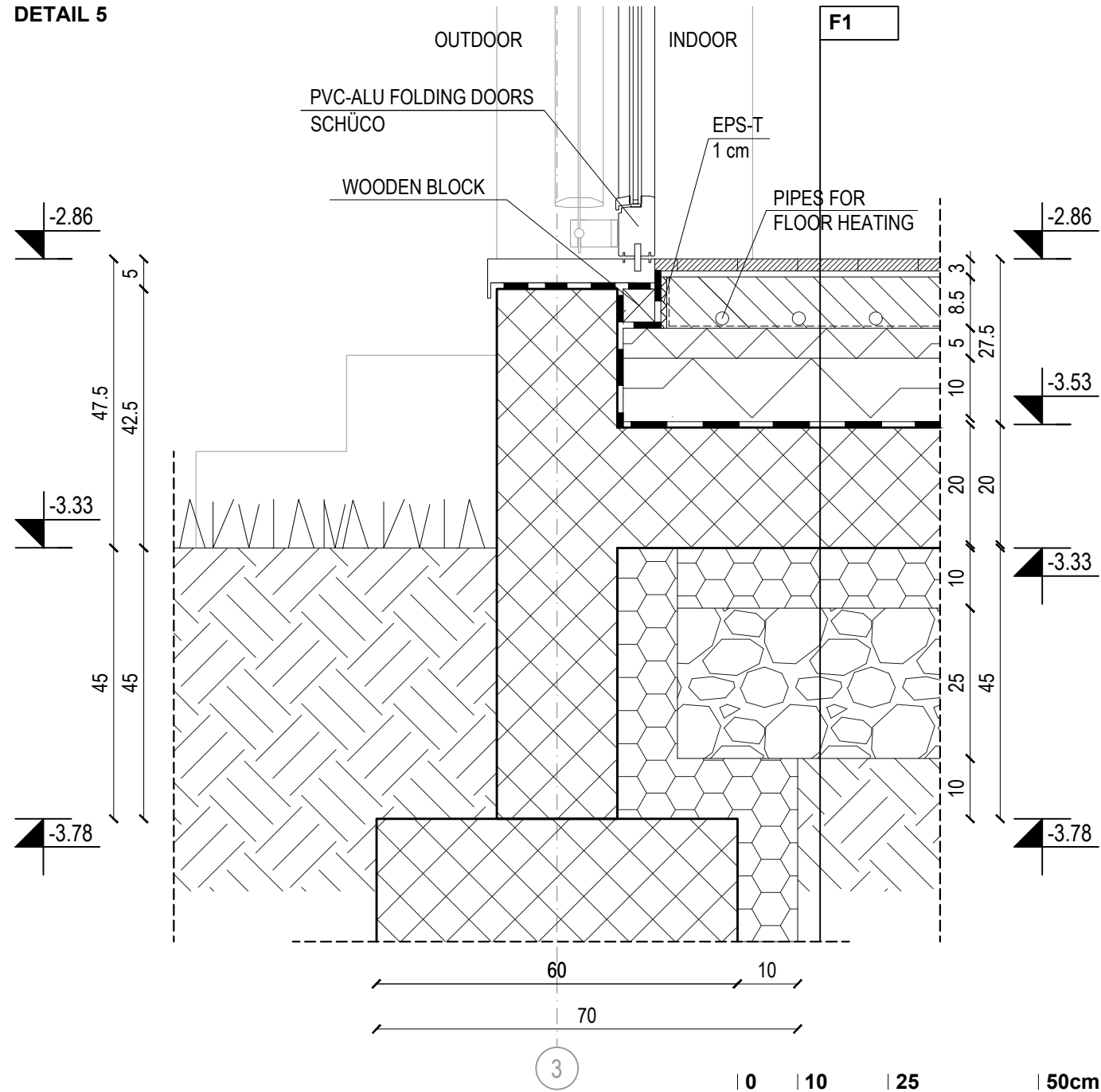
- WOOD FLOORING 2.5 CM
- SCREED WITH HEATING PIPES 8.5 CM
- PE FOIL 0.02 CM
- T.I. / S.I. - EPS 5.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE SLAB 25.0 CM
- PLASTER 0.5 CM

EW2 - EXTERIOR WALL

- PLASTER 0.5 CM
- DOUBLE GYPSUM BOARDS 2.5 CM
- T.I. - MW BETWEEN SUBSTRUCTURE 5.0 CM
- VAPOR BARRIER - PEHD FOIL -
- T.I. - MW 15.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE WALL WITH WATERPROOFING ADDITIVE 20.0 CM

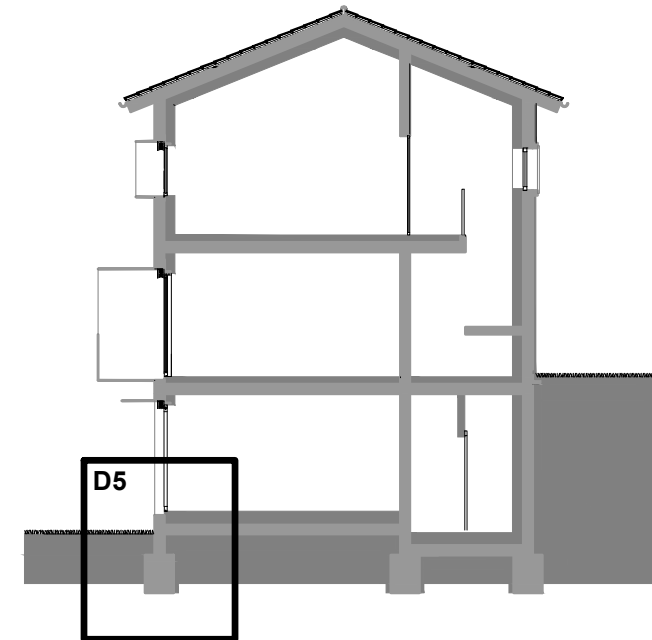


DETAIL 5

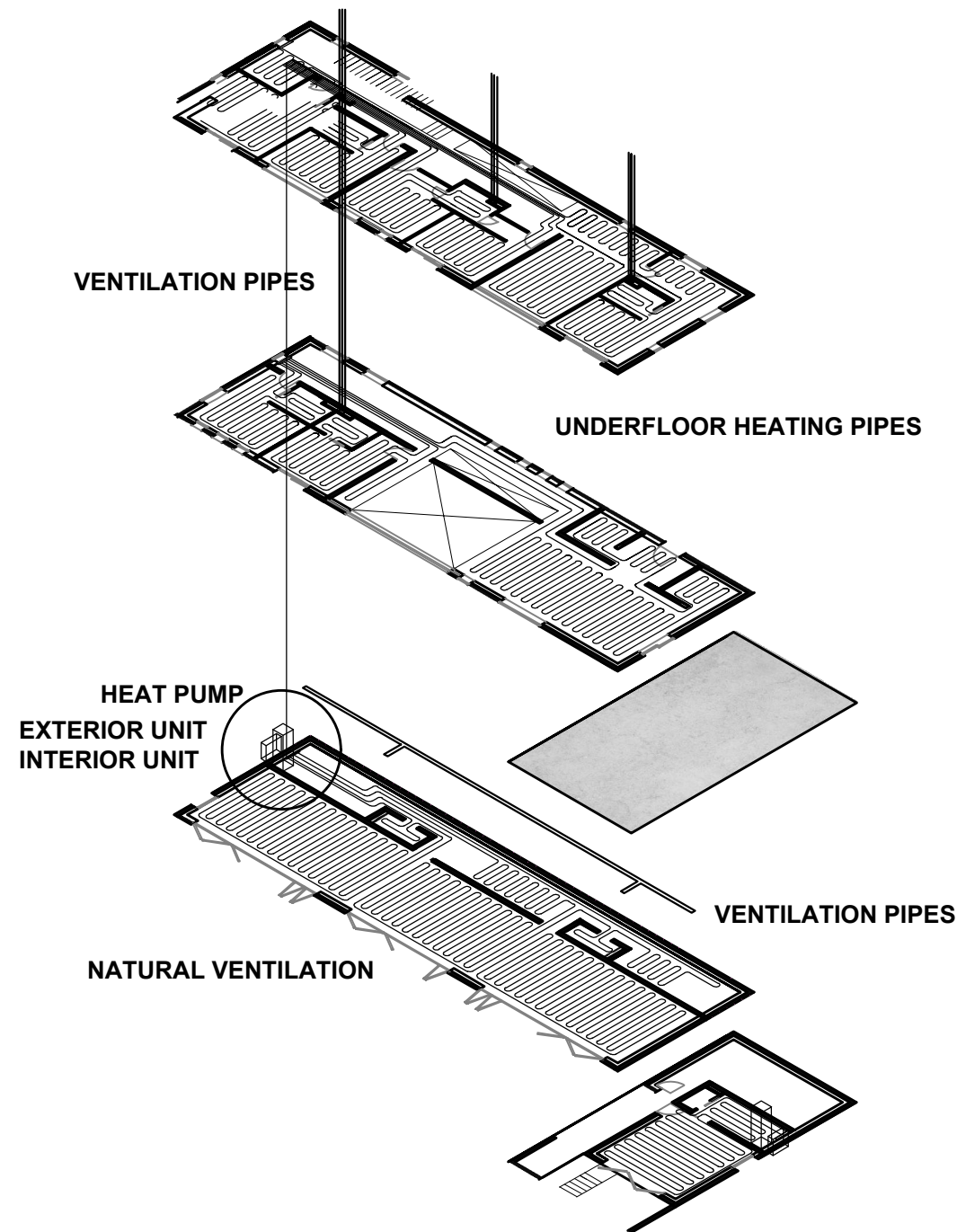


F1 - GROUND FLOOR

- TERRACOTTA FLOOR TILES 2.0 CM
- ADHESIVE MORTAR (TILE GLUE) 1.0 CM
- CEMENT SCREED WITH PIPES 8.5 CM
- T.I. - EPS LAMINATED WITH PEHD 15.0 CM
- H.I. - BITUMINOUS WATERPROOFING 1.0 CM
- REINFORCED CONCRETE SLAB 20.0 CM
- T.I. - XPS 25.0 CM
- COMPACTED GRAVEL 20.0 CM
- COMPACTED SOIL -



PROJECT DESCRIPTION



This project is a three-storey housing carefully embedded into a sloping village environment, balancing contemporary comfort with sensitivity to its rural surroundings. The spatial organization follows a clear vertical stratification: one underground floor, one at surface level and one elevated above ground.

The underground level hosts service spaces, such as technical rooms, storage, laundry and utility functions, as well as main living areas - generous open-plan kitchen, living room and dining area that open toward gardens and terraces.

The middle, surface-level floor functions as the social and connective heart of the house, featuring a lobby that opens towards downstairs living area.

The top floor is more private, designed around sleeping rooms that cater to different generations or guests. It also includes nooks as second living areas.

The organization of spaces follows the principle of “served” and “servant” rooms, where support functions are tucked away, allowing primary living areas to be light-filled, open, and inviting. This architectural clarity enhances the house’s livability while maintaining a feeling of ease and cohesion.

The house has an inverted construction with exterior reinforced concrete walls and interior thermal insulation, ensuring both durability and a monolithicity that resonates with the surrounding built fabric.

Moreover, the idea was to create a connection between traditional and modern both in terms of materials and building techniques. As such, façade facing the town is a stone one with smaller windows while the garden facade has visible concrete and bigger openings.

In terms of sun protection, the project features both horizontal and vertical shading elements, carefully positioned to respond to the sun’s path and enhance indoor comfort year-round.

On the garden-facing façade, a distinctive system of metal console boxes serve as horizontal sunshades, reducing summer heat gain while allowing winter sun to enter. They also act as balconies, creating semi-private outdoor spaces and adding a dynamic rhythm to the façade through shadows and changing light. Vertical shading is used on other façades to block low-angle sun during mornings and evenings.

A heat pump system is used for efficient climate control, paired with underfloor heating that provides radiant warmth across all living areas, enhancing both environmental performance and user comfort.

The project uses a hybrid ventilation system, combining natural ventilation through operable windows and vents with mechanical ventilation in spaces without direct access to fresh air, such as service rooms and underground areas. This ensures consistent air quality, natural cooling, and energy efficiency throughout the building.

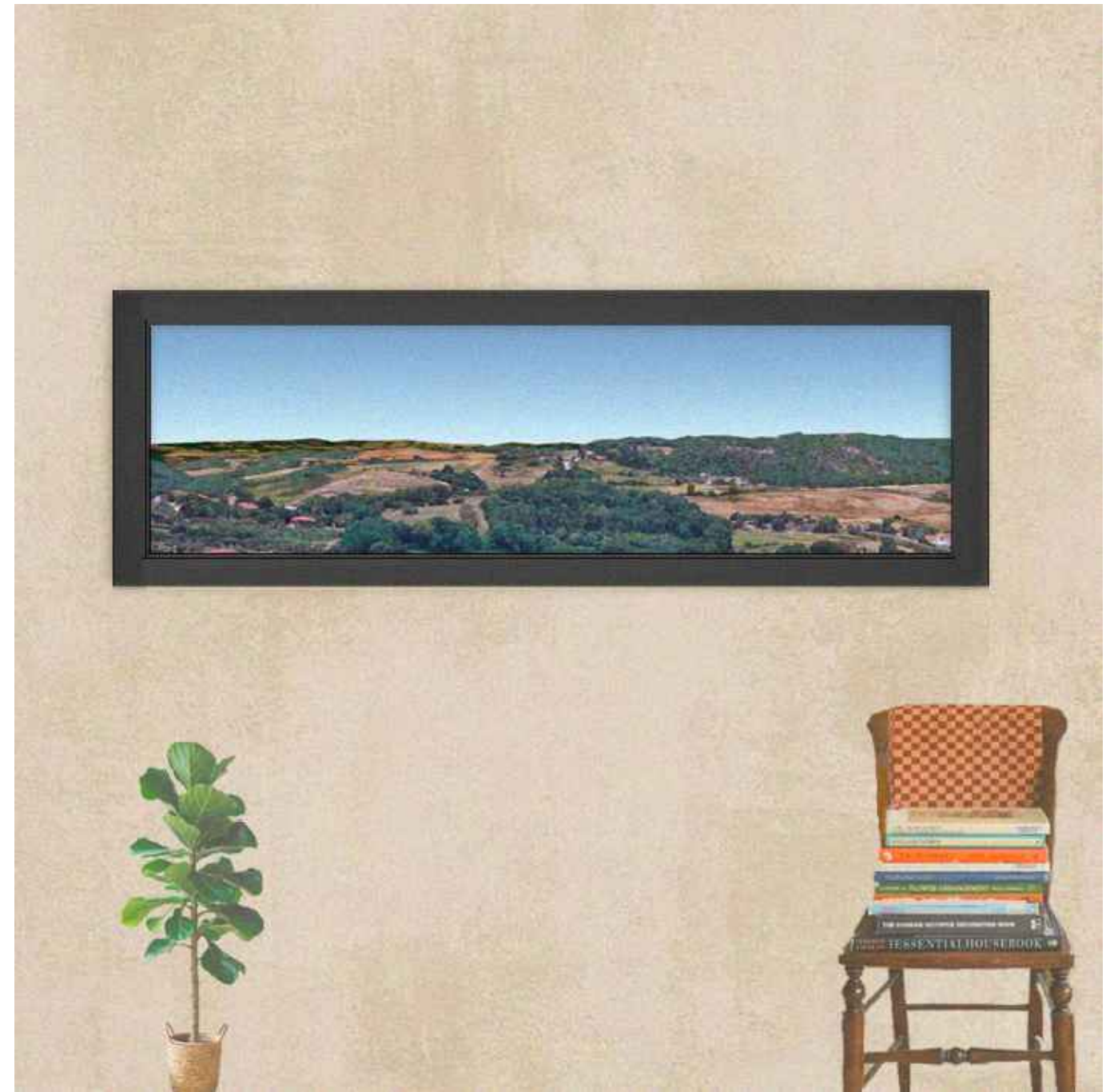
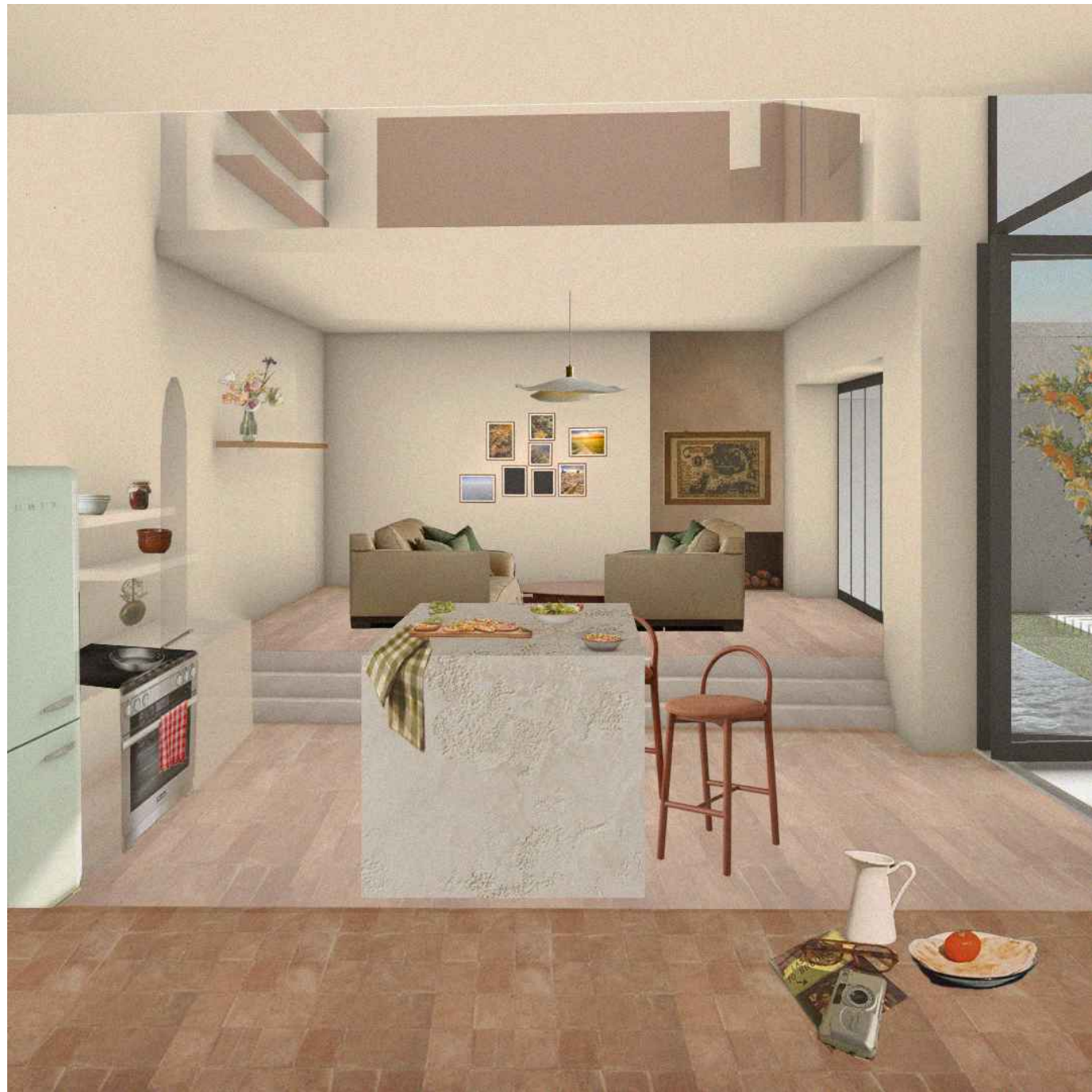
A strong connection to the outdoors is expressed through gardens, terraces and a pool, creating a seamless flow between inside and outside. These outdoor spaces are not just for leisure - they are part of the architectural narrative, inviting residents to slow down, enjoy the nature and feel integrated with the landscape and local rhythms.

Ultimately, the house is designed to support a way of living that balances privacy and retreat with openness and togetherness, adapting to the seasons and the rhythms of the village life.

06 EMBODIED NARRATIVES

THE SPACE IN MOTION
TRACES OF LIFE







07 ATLAS

DIAGRAMS GLOSSARY

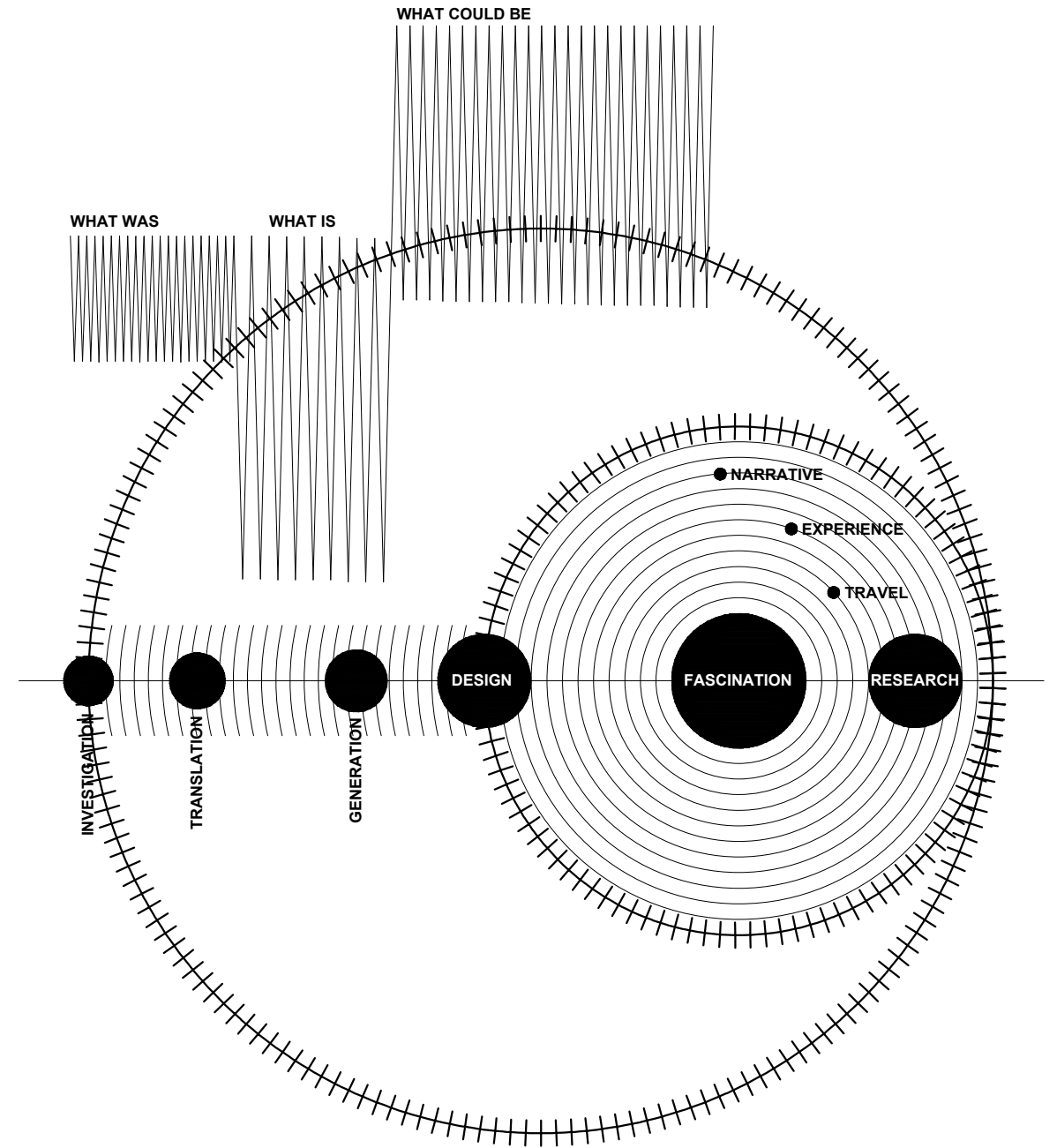


Figure 90. *Graduation idea* by Marta Lulić

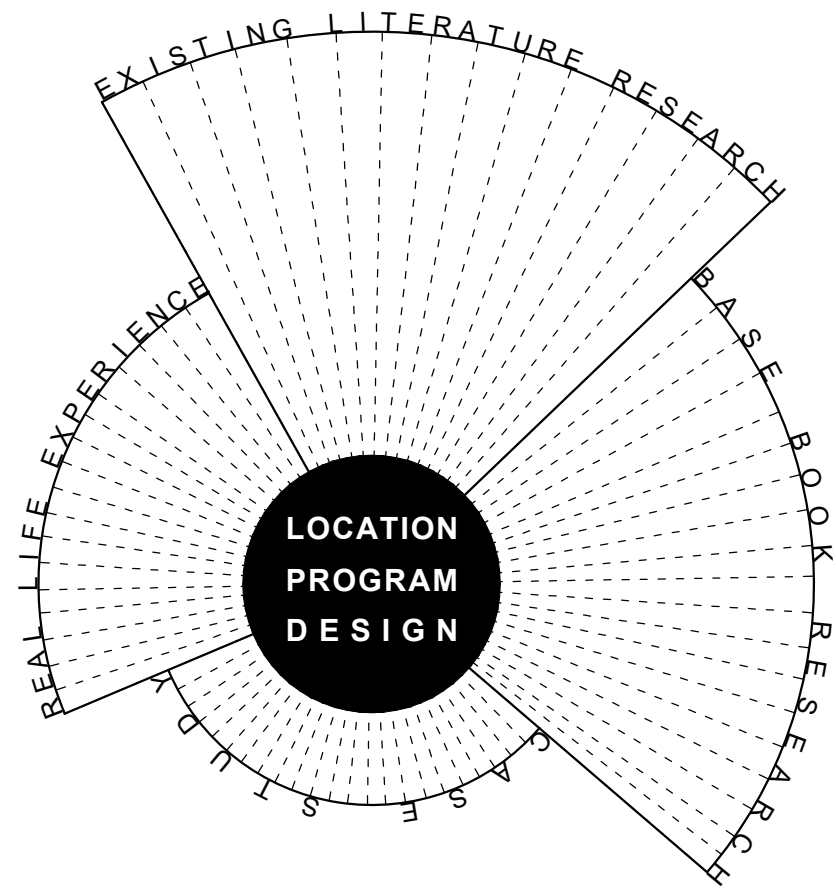


Figure 91. Thesis topic by Marta Lulić

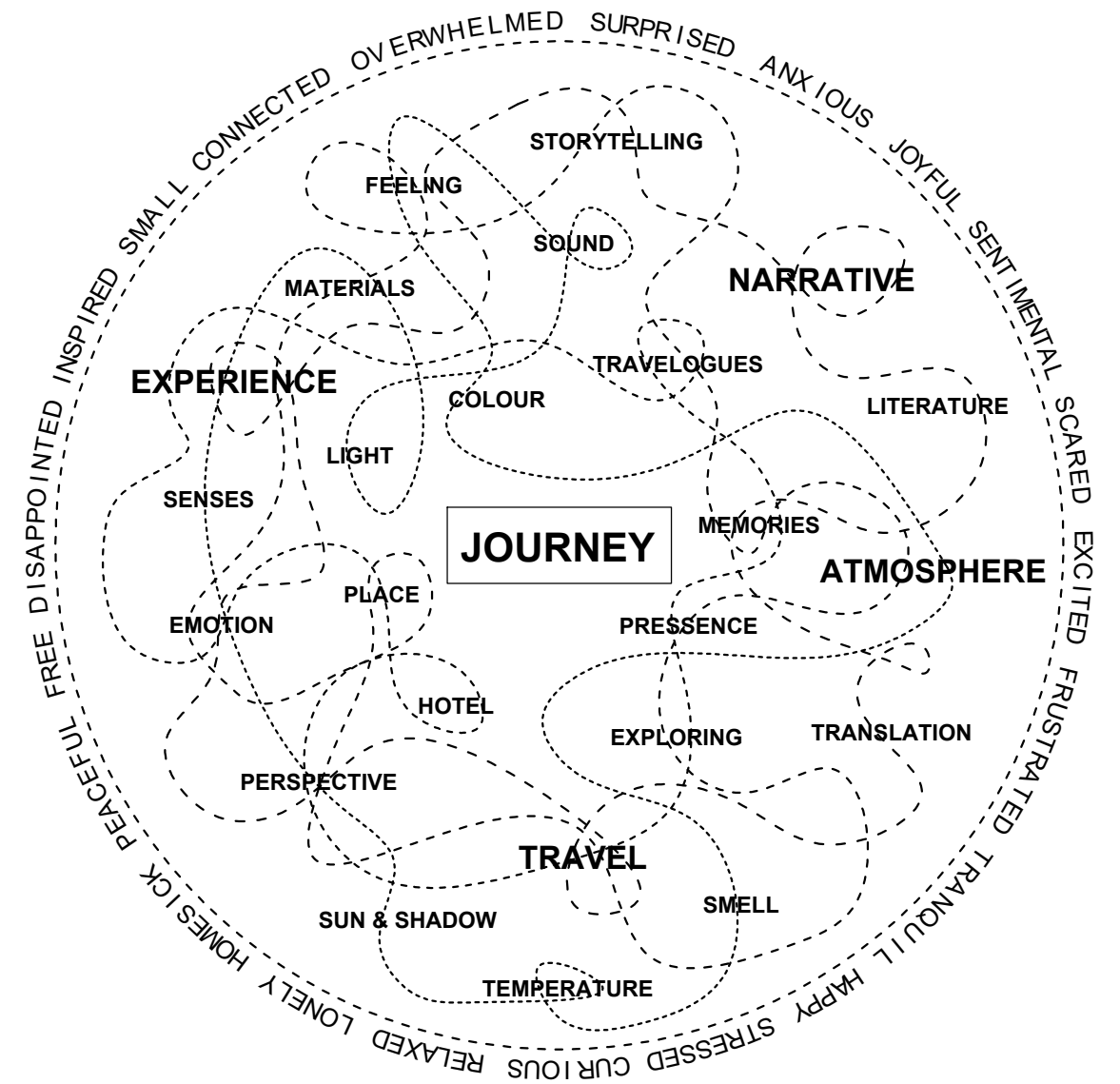


Figure 92. Glossary by Marta Lulić

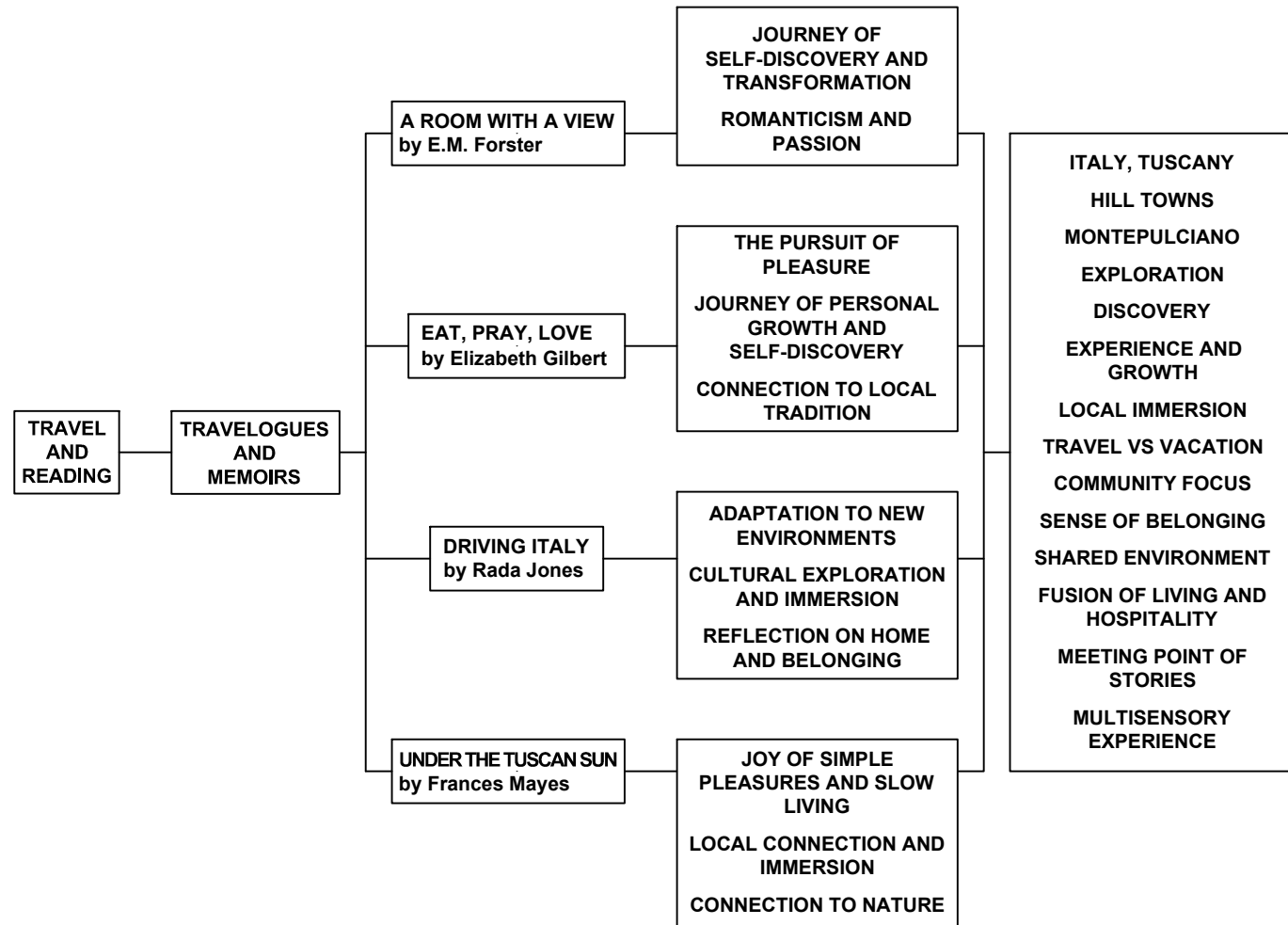


Figure 93. Narrative by Marta Lulić

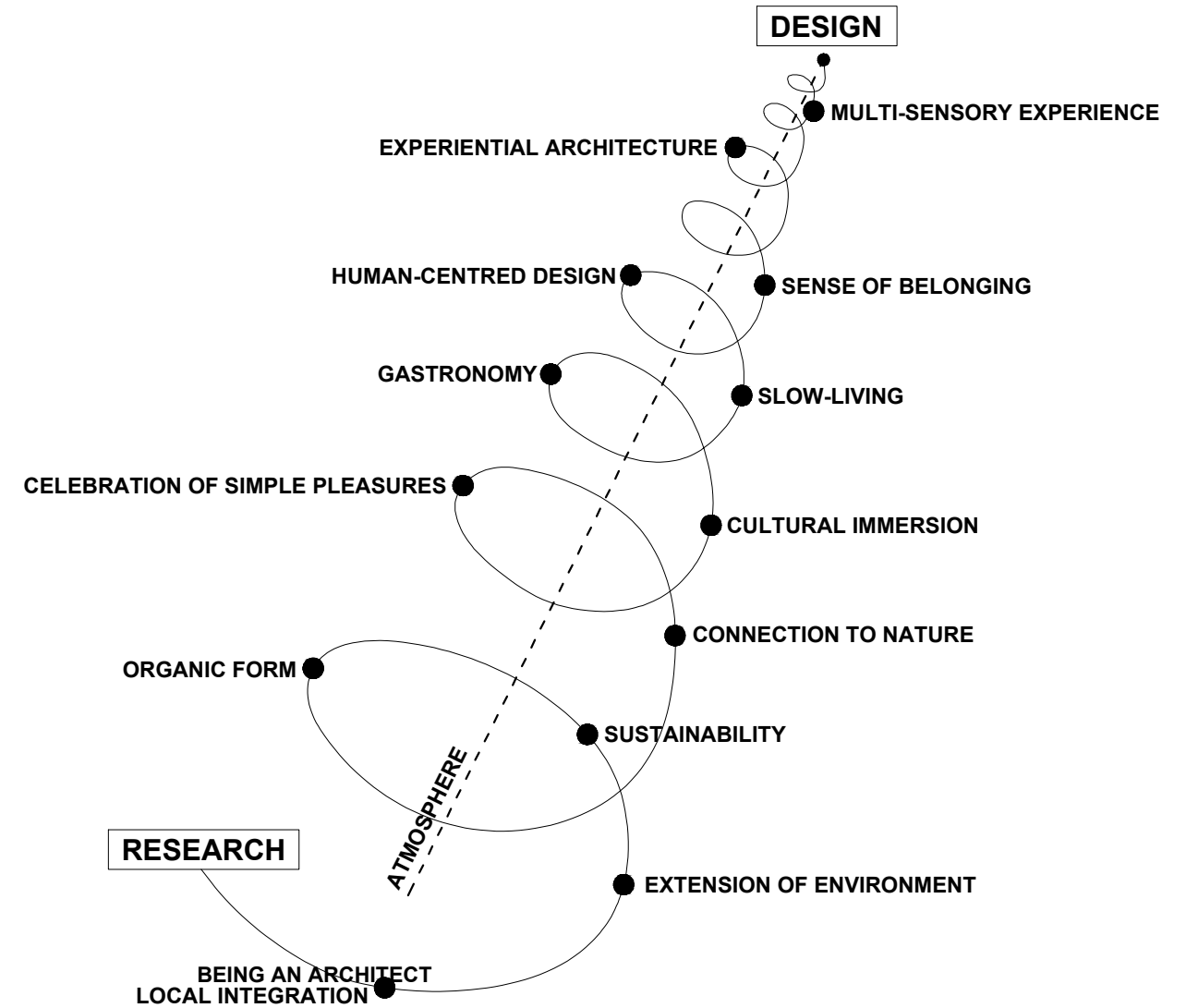


Figure 94. Key themes by Marta Lulić

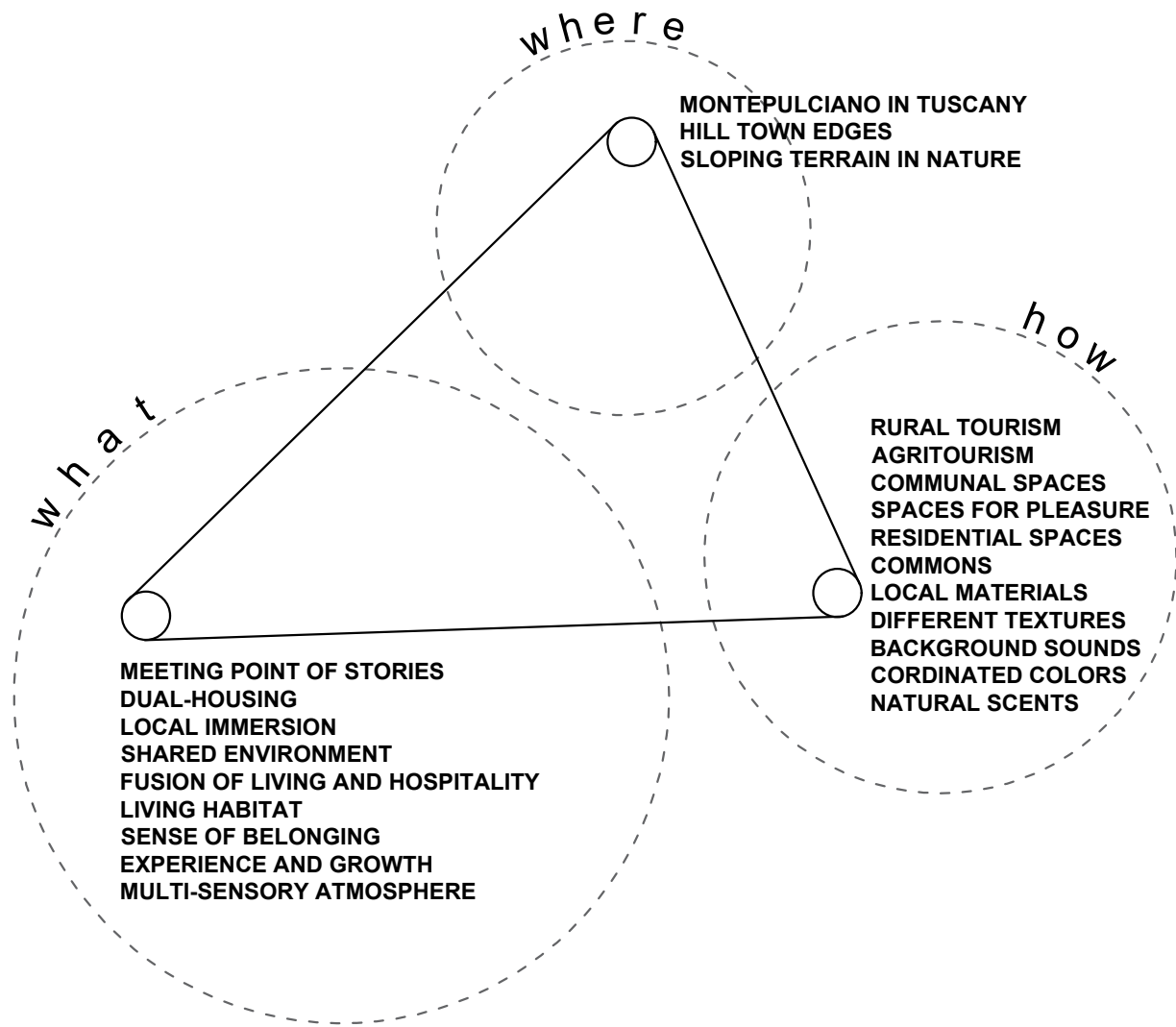


Figure 95. Framework by Marta Lulić

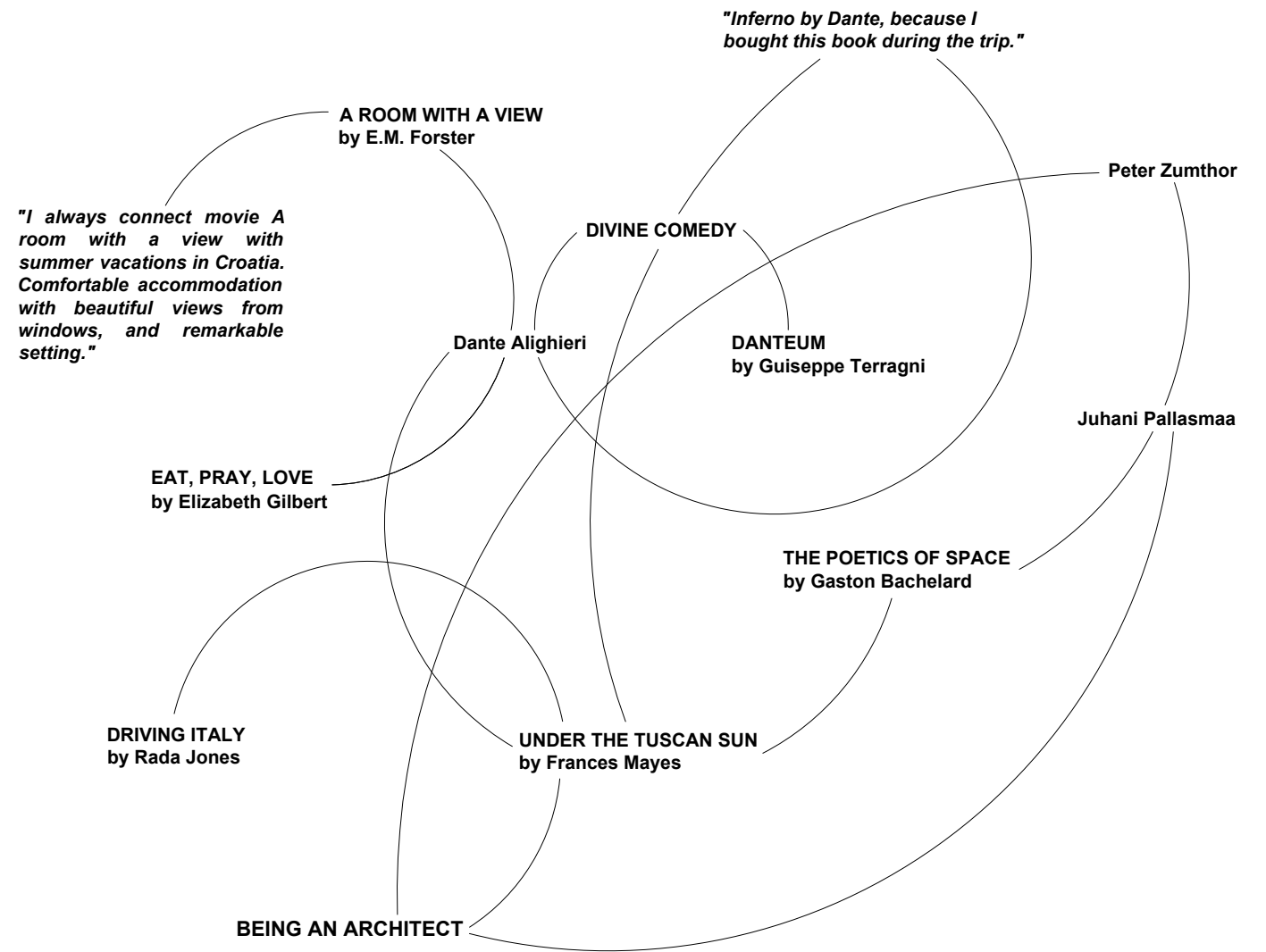


Figure 96. Everything is connected by Marta Lulić

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