Living Knowhere
Research and design on dementia and architecture

DESIGN BOOKLET
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The whole building is designed to provide different experiences and atmospheres for all its users. Main focus is placed on perception of a person with dementia but other people are not left behind.

By accommodating different feelings and actions, every person can find something for him or herself. Variety of spaces guides a person through the building and creates a rich environment.
To be oneself

Private room becomes the smallest unit of the whole building, yet a very important one. Its dimensions allow for personalization and therefore it can turn into a space of identity. A space to remember who you are and how you used to live. It is big enough for additional furniture while still small enough to create a safe, enclosed space.
Trouble shared is a trouble halved

In between two personal spaces, there is one which makes people bump into each other. Sharing troubles, laughing about them, getting annoyed one by the other, helping each other, these are all valid social activities. They are part of our everyday lives but often missed in private rooms. Dealing with the neighbour’s good and bad sides is a relevant, stimulating activity.
Reducing the number of choices

By clustering two rooms together, the number of doors to choose from on the way back is reduced. Instead of 8 separate entrances, there are now 4 that one has to distinguish. Their size and enclosed character creates a buffer zone, an in-between step.

Courtyard as a constant reference of time

Central courtyard not only brings daylight into the building but also provides an important reference of time. It invites people on their way from a room as it triggers their curiosity. It brings valuable stimulation and freshens up the whole space.
Personalized entrance in-between zone
Spring at doorstep
To be together

Divided in zones according to activities, the most public space of the unit offers chances to engage in different activities. It gives opportunities for familiar actions people can do together. By being accessible, it allows people to participate, be responsible and feel part of the home.

Functionality

Homely space with no storage capacities and no service rooms is of no value. Therefore the unit is completed by service and storage rooms.
Variety of spaces and activities they allow is enhanced by modulation of roofs. Two spaced adjusting the courtyard form enough space for frequent wandering, for relaxation and contemplation. Vaulted roof gives more space for the mind to fly.
Summer below a vault
Diversity of sound sources modulate the various atmospheres throughout the unit.

Diversity of smell sources modulate the various atmospheres throughout the unit.
Altogether, the unit is a sequence of spaces with different levels of intensities and activities. It offers spaces to be alone as well as to be with others and also simply watch or listen to other people.
Such sequence is enhanced by modulation of roofs. The more private the lower the roof and vice versa. These height differences provide subtle cues for people to walk through the building as with every step, it becomes brighter and higher.
In the public space, enclosed shelter with a fireplace can be found. It is a space seen from everywhere, a landmark always to be found. It offers safe overview of the rest of the building while still being protected by its intimate atmosphere. By its lowered ceiling, outside space for nurses and families to retreat is created.
Autumn views
Visiting a loved one with dementia can be very demanding. Often there are no activities to do together or no place to sit alone. This design tries to offer valuable spaces not only for people with dementia but also for their friends and relatives. There are spaces to join and help with daily routines as well as spaces to take a breath. Small private living rooms offer possibilities to stay over night or to just have a nice family dinner.

Taking care of people with dementia as an extremely difficult job. Often the nurses are not only care giver but very often a friend. Making their work easier saves their energy and time for the people who need it the most. Therefore the building is rather small and compact, eliminating any long distances. It opens up and offers clear overviews. There are different storage spaces and practical details. Besides that, the building is also a source of pleasant spaces to retreat to and rest for a moment.
Late summer shadow
Walls dividing a private zone from public one are made of concrete, carrying all the vaulted roofs and their horizontal forces. The rest is made of bricks, giving the building a smaller, human scale. Bricks are easy to understand and easy to grasp which can subtly contribute to the overall readability of the environment.
Sunk door sill allows for easy transport of the bed outside to the terrace.
Automatic ventilation systems keep fresh air in and save time of the nurses.
Cluster

Two units completed by two flats for independent elderly and office spaces wind around an entrance courtyard. This has a city-like atmosphere and welcomes all the visitors. Articulation of units forms different outside spaces which open up in steps from an enclosed garden to an open one.
By opening the care center to people from the neighborhood as well as to people from the whole city, dementia can be understood and accepted better. Prejudices which are now there can be dissolved and stigma placed on the disease lowered. Dementia, although sad, offers a great chance to reflect upon what we consider relevant and upon life in general. Allowing people to encounter this lesson could be a relevant experience. Especially in today’s time where we rush to fulfill ours and other peoples’ expectation to often neglect the simple but important aspects of our lives.
Summer