

## Reflection P4

### The Framed Transition



Architecture & Dwelling  
MSc4 Graduation Design Studio  
Dutch Housing

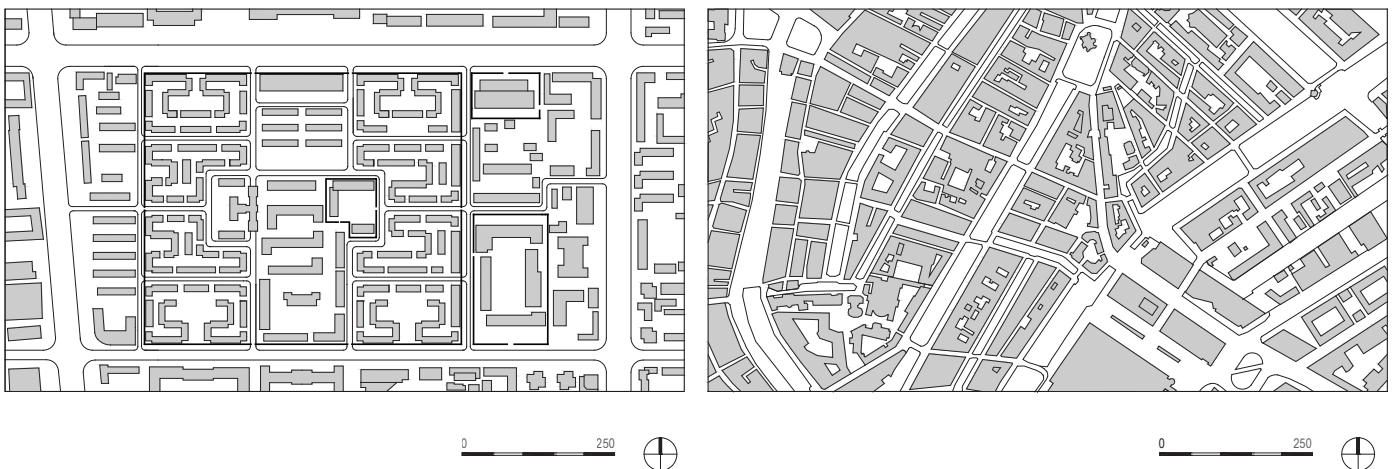
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## Goal of Research

My graduation project is the research for an architectural model of a dwelling complex which discusses the transitional space between public and private. It sits in the context of the city of Amsterdam, but as well with the potential to surpass the context and present a possibilities for the future way of dwelling. The research starts with the comparison between the urban structure of Amsterdam and that of Beijing, which leads to the major concern of my theme research and the first problem statement.



The city of Amsterdam in early twenty-first century. Susanne Komossa. *The Dutch urban block and the public realm models, rules, ideals.* Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2010. Page 112. Right: The figure-ground map of the city of Beijing. Drawing by author.



The city of Beijing and the City of Amsterdam, comparison of urban spatial division. Drawing by author.

The typical urban typology in Beijing is the enclosed compound. Usually, space are divided into areas surrounded by walls or fences, with buildings loosely settled within the boundary. The fragmented areas are not intended for the public, only for the collective group or the residential community. In comparison, Amsterdam is characterized by individual urban blocks and public open space. The confrontation of public and private is so distinct that a transitional layer is somehow missing from it.

If we define the urban typology of Beijing as the definite collective mode, which means that the space belongs to certain community, while that of Amsterdam as the public/private mode, where the space either belongs to one, or belongs to all, then it would be meaningful to discuss where there is a moderate way between these two extremes. This could mean a more fluent transition from the public to the private, that the space is better organized so that group of people as public, as big community, as smaller community, as family, and as individuals all share certain space, but maintain their privacy and freedom at the same time.

## Research to Design

It is an interesting process to reflect upon according to how the research is applied to my dwelling design. It is a path that move left and right a few times and becoming more and more clear throughout the development of the project. In searching for the intermediate way between the enclosed compound and the urban block, the concept changed from “the wall”, to “the frame” and finally settled down as “the framed transition”. The role of the frame is to make transitional space and provide certain degree of flexibility to the dwellers.



THE ENCLOSED COMPOUND

COLLECTIVE



THE URBAN BLOCK

PUBLIC|PRIVATE



ZONE OF TRANSITION

PUBLIC|COLLECTIVE|PRIVATE

Goal of the Research. The Intermediate Way.

Firstly, I developed the concept of “the wall”, intending to make the wall as the element to organize the zone of transition. But the wall in reality is too solid, and its blocking rather than linking or making transition. Later on, this concept developed into that of “the frame”, to give more flexibility in the transitional area and encourage participation by the dwellers in designing their own dwelling. However, the role of the frame is not clear since it is everywhere throughout the project, both in the collective space, and the individual dwelling space. Flexibility overcome the stability. Uncertainty succeeded the defined space. The direction needed to be adjusted again.

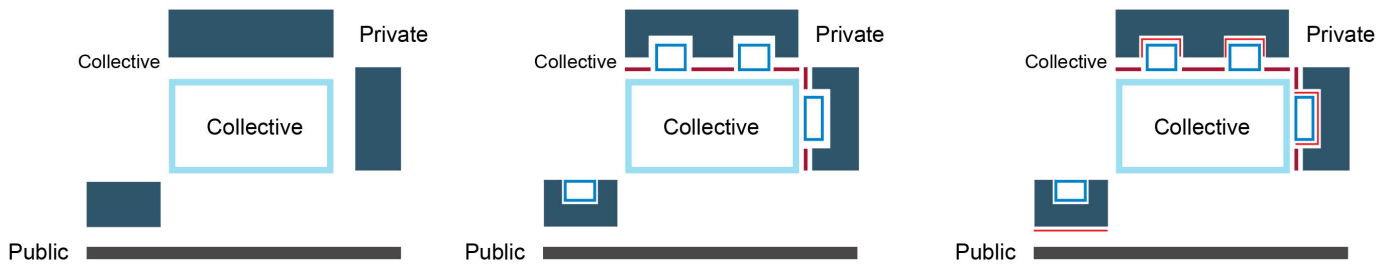


The framed living. View towards the central collective courtyard. Concept in P2.

So after the P2 presentation, it became important for me to discuss actually where is the wall (more defined space) and where is the frame (more flexible space). There was the discussion with how much should be defined and how much could be left open for the interpretation by the dwellers. The attempt was to define structure and materiality of the dwelling, as well as the functional area in the dwelling plan such as toilet kitchen, and device space. Meanwhile, it should be possible to leave out a zone for the dwellers to arrange space by themselves. The challenge was to develop the structure and materiality of the space in order to accommodate both the definite walled area and the flexible framed zone.

## Research to Design

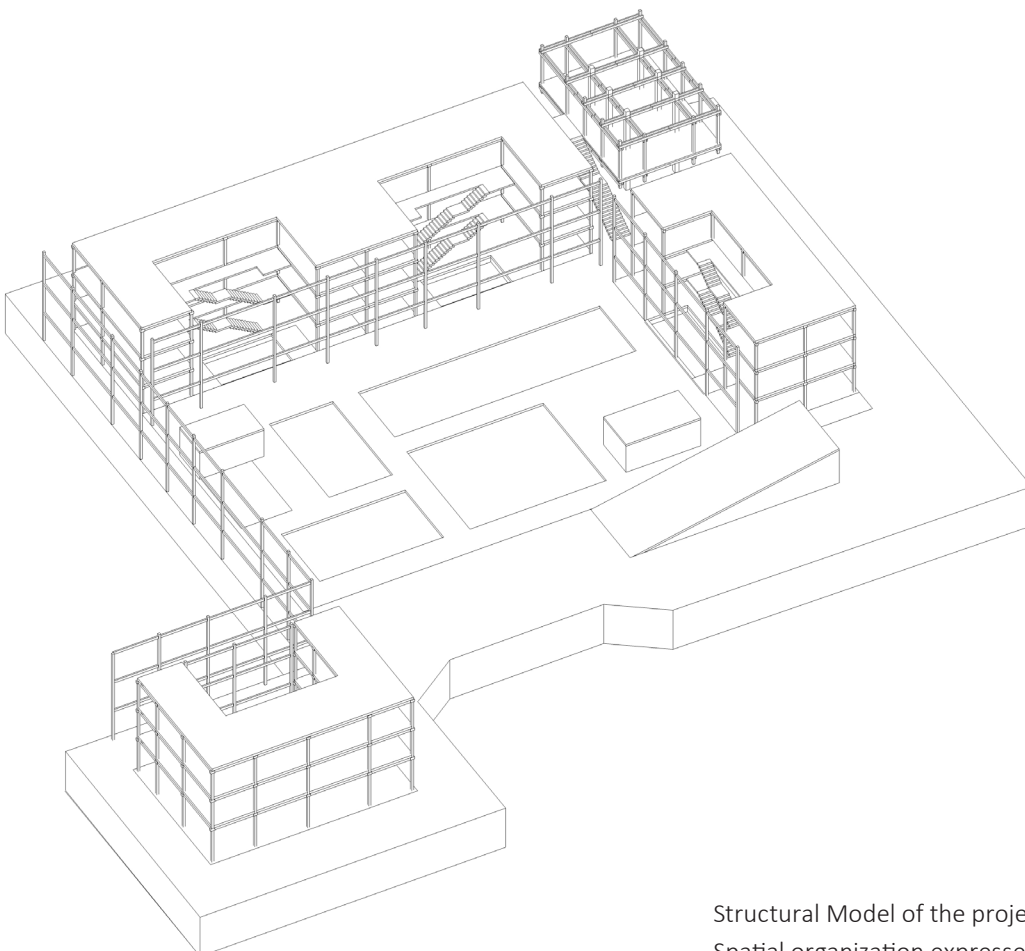
This diagram above shows how the main concern of the research is linked to my dwelling design. The goal is to give a model of space with different layers of transition from the very public to the very private.



Abstract diagram for the dwelling complex. Different layers of transition.

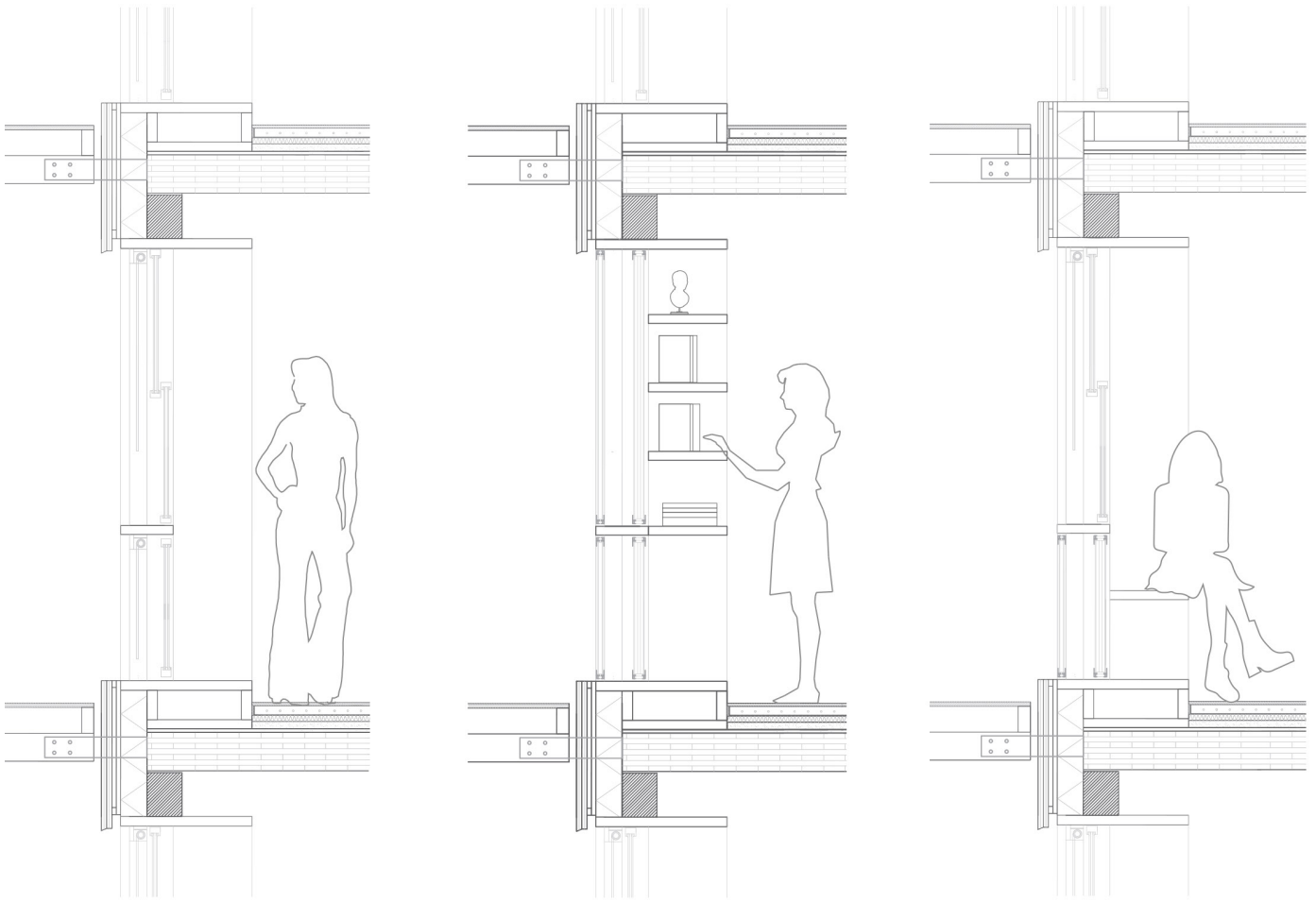
In this project, the urban configuration follows the outline of the site, enclosing a central courtyard. This collective courtyard is shared by dwellers from all three blocks. But different from a closed urban block, it also offers the green back to the neighborhood. In this way, it forms the first layer of transition.

On the other hand, there are free standing frames extending out from the volumes facing the central collective garden. The space between the free standing frames and the solid volumes of the dwelling are balconies that makes up a green façade. Meanwhile, the collective green extends again into three different blocks as community gardens, where it is the entrance zone for dwellers in their own block. Thus, the green facades with balconies and the community gardens make up the second layer of transition.



Structural Model of the project.  
Spatial organization expressed.

## Research to Design



Framed area with furniture designed by the dwellers. Possible to control the degree of openness or enclosure.

The third Layer of transition happens inside the dwelling, between the interior space and the community garden. The idea is to give certain degree of flexibility for the dwellers to organize this transitional space between the very private and the smaller community. It is a framed area with integration of furniture, transparent openings and half transparent polycarbonate wall panels so that the degree of openness can be decided individually. The dwellers choose where to keep open and where to close off, putting up different furniture to make use of the space.

Thus, three layers of transitional zones could realize a smooth transition from the very public to the very private. The idea of transition goes from the urban scale until the interior and detail of the dwelling design.

This presents an architectural model that is an intermediate way between “the enclosed compound” and “the urban block” as I compared in the beginning of the research. It can actually transcend the specific site in Amsterdam, possible to be applied in a larger context. It is a process of trial and error in realizing the goal of research all the way into the dwelling detail, a process of searching for the appropriate form and making the right choice, from position to composition and materialization. Still, the model could be further elaborated towards a better degree, but the idea it presents could also be the base for more architectural models that I might be able to develop in the future.