THE COURSE TOWARDS HOME
... the path through seamed spaces.
Berlin, a place of different realities . . .
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How to design in this place?
Pohlstrasse, Berlin:
Remarks on location.
U-Bahn rail running along the southern side of the plot.
Gleisdreieck area:
From terrein vague to future (?) park.
Pohlstrasse:
High commercial density and activities
Pohlstrasse neighbourhood: Mainly residential area; tertiary and commercial function are almost completely missing.
How to give a character and an identity to such a diverse context?
Research question: “How can dwelling buildings define the identity of the street, thus enhancing the feeling of urbanity?”
By studying and combining Lynch’s and Cullen’s research . . .

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Definition and analysis of those physical features which give identity to a place.
Singularity

Form simplicity

Continuity

Directional differentiation

Clarity of joints

Dominance

Visual scope

These features become the design tools for the urban scale.
As these features have been developed from a walking-perspective analysis, we start our approach from the street . . .
Introducing a change in the urban block alignment creates an unexpected singularity when looking from Potsdamerstrasse.
Sloping roofs introduce a directional differentiation in the design complex, thus affecting the sense of direction of the observer.
The fragmentation of the blocks creates a series of sequences as the observer approaches.
As the observer approaches, a block pattern different from the context catches his attention, thus inviting him to keep walking along.
In this stage sequences are created by the contrast between the solid mass and the sunlight filtering from the cuts.
And as the observer moves forward...
A side public space opens towards the street. This surprise enriches the visual scope of the observer, contributing at the same time to the life of the street and of the city.
Overlapping a building on top of the railway enhances the sense of boundary given by it, stressing at the same time the clarity of joints between the different bodies of the complex.
The public space opening towards the street becomes a relevant moment in the neighbourhood.
By designing an alien object on top of the railway contrasting with the rest of the complex, a sure point of interest is given.
And here again the light filtering through lends a “lantern” quality which contrasts with the massiveness of the railway brick building.
The end of the composition is an extremely relevant part of the complex, as it ends the urban block. Here is the peak point of the directional differentiation.
A massive and sharp spear ends the complex, recomposing at the same time the urban block.
The path towards home
The routing as experiential tool
The process of moving through is the frame through which not only the urban aspect, but also the architectural position is experienced.
The idea is to create a rich and complex routing to reinforce the sense of position and the experience of the architecture.

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Routing x (architectural tools) = path
Routing $x$ (architectural tools) = path

Visual scope

Complexity

Sequences
To a vertical routing...
To a vertical routing . . .

Is combined a horizontal path, which winds through the complex.
To a vertical routing . . .

Is combined a horizontal path, which winds through the complex.

To make the path used and enjoyed, public ad
collective functions are scattered along it.
To make the path used and enjoyed, public and collective functions are scattered along it.

These functions have been chosen accordingly to the neighbourhood features.
As we move our attention to the groundfloor, we see how the buildings’ bodies define the open space.
Small shops and commercial activities define the central square...
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Creating a lively neighbourhood space.
Dwellings relate to the southern front of the buildings...
Lending the two courtyards a quieter and homely trait.
The ground floor spaces are defined by dynamic walking paths through the square...
And through the light cores, which open connections between the inner courtyards and the street.
As we walk through the courtyard, we can see the connections between the spaces surrounding the buildings.
On the second floor there are two main galleries.
These galleries are always linked by visual connections and the path flows continuously along the buildings.
On the third floor there are two galleries as well as the connections to the public/collective functions.
A regular grid of 7.5 meters of load bearing walls defines the rhythm of the dwellings.
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Whereas the office spear has an hybrid concrete columns-load bearing walls structure, to allow more flexibility.
The lantern structure consists of concrete load bearing walls and concrete columns . . .
The lantern structure consists of concrete load bearing walls and concrete columns... supporting steel trusses, which allow to cover the large span of the building.
The load bearing walls are interrupted by transversal cuts, which host the shafting cavities.
The distribution cores connect the different bodies of the building, transferring the stresses from one branch to the other.
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In this way the different branches themselves work as stability system for the whole complex.
The structural grid is not clearly visible in the unfolded northern facades, but it defines the typologies organisation.
Single floor typologies

A1 - Access form the courtyard
A2 - Access from the short side
A3 - Access from the long side

10 Units. 59-76 sq. meters
Single floor typologies

- **B1** - Access from the courtyard
- **B2** - Access from the gallery - inferior level
- **B3** - Access from the gallery - upper level
- **B4** - Access from the long side - inferior level

Double floor typologies

- 17 Units. 121-138 sq. meters

Single floor typologies

- 10 Units. 59-76 sq. meters
Single floor typologies

C1 - Access from the gallery - inferior level
C2 - Access from the gallery - second level
C3 - Access from the gallery - upper level

Double floor typologies

4 Units. 171-188 sq. meters
17 Units. 121-138 sq. meters
10 Units. 59-76 sq. meters

Triple floor typologies
Transitions and sequences.
Moving through ...
To feel at home means to be aware of the “stepping out” from the outside world to enter an enclosed cove.
Reinforcing the sense of transition enhances the awareness of entering a different domain, thus arising the sense of home.

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These transitions can be stressed by designing sequences gathered along a path.
Moving through a gallery path, we approach our home...
From the entrance the inner path is clearly visible: the window at the end of the path works as attraction point, as well as the light coming from the side.
The same wooden-plank paving invites you in till the threshold of home, where a step marks a second transition.
Wide windows opening to the gallery create a direct connection between the room and the gallery.
As we enter the apartment the alternation between dark and light areas creates a sequence along the path.
But if the dweller chooses otherwise, it is possible to leave the first room open, thus creating a sequence through a visual scope.
If the dweller chooses so, she can open both sliding windows and sunscreen, and enjoy the company of a neighbour walking by...
If on the contrary she prefers to have more privacy, the windows and shutters can be arranged likewise.
The difference in height and the light filtering from above create a dramatic sequence within the same space.
At the same time the diagonal line of the staircase brings a tension towards the upper level, introducing dynamism in the space.
The inner facades of the dwelling create a relevant contrast in character.
Opposed to the linear and formal northern facade...
The southern facade is complex in depth and acquires a warm trait due to the wooden materialisation.
North facade materials:
- Plaster
- Fruchtschiefer stone
- Dark aluminium frames
South facade materials:
- Plaster
- Wooden frames
- Teak planks cladding
Even though the two facades differ, the cores act as contact edge between them: they retain the same materialisation on both sides.
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The transition between the dark limestone and the dark aluminium frames takes place smoothly.
To the south facade, galleries and balconies continue the outline and the constructive technology of the cores.

Even though the two facades differ, the cores act as contact edge between them: they retain the same materialisation on both sides.
Notwithstanding the different materialisations, both facades have the same interface:

Outer insulation line
South facade vertical section detail:
Floor - facade connection

Isokorb connection
steel-concrete

Tapered profile
steel beam

Wood-aluminium
window frame
Notwithstanding the different materialisations, both facades have the same interface:

Outer insulation line
Precast concrete blocks
Light grey asphalt roof shingles

Photovoltaic solar panels

Dark stainless steel profile

South facade vertical section detail:
Facade - roof connection

North facade vertical section detail:
Facade - roof connection
Notwithstanding the different materialisations, both facades have the same interface:

- Outer insulation line
- Precast concrete blocks
- Timber interface frames
Halfen body anchor system - type HRC

Floating floor modules

Dark aluminium windows frame with polyamide thermal break

North facade vertical section detail: Floor - facade connection
A central heating system made of built-in wall panels (variotherm® modular system) . . .
A central heating system made of built-in wall panels (variotherm® modular system) . . . is combined with an independent radiator heating system, fueled by independent boilers.
In summer time, cold water will flow through the same system, allowing a fresher environment.
Every unit has its own HRU, allowing an air change while lowering energy expenses.

Air conditioning system: Heat Recovery Unit.
Climate design has also a relevant role in the architectural definition of the facades.
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Balconies and galleries.
Climate design has also a relevant role in the architectural definition of the facades.

Sunshades outside the windows.
We started our journey from the street...
We started our journey from the street . . .

. . . then flowing into a path,

which through the building nurtures a new use of the surroundings.
Sequences along the way, as well as striking scopes . . .

. . . lend a strong trait to the design, recomposing the identity of the place.
Extras:
- Parking garage floorplan
- 1:5 details horizontal section
- 1:5 detail vertical section: inner wall
- Additional facades drawings
Parking garage
Horizontal detail
North facade - load bearing wall connection

Horizontal detail
Inner wall - load bearing wall - piping shaft connection
Connection of facades at the corner of Pohlstrasse

Eastern facade towards the central courtyard