IN/OUT/SIDE

MSc 2 Architecture Theory Design Studio
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It is imperative to determine what is the architectural problem that the current syndemic condition posed. One cannot but note that the use of the term syndemic is much more accurate in describing the drastic shifts and far-reaching consequences that are usually simplified when speaking of Covid-19 as merely a medical pathology. A syndemic refers to the transversal (and therefore, transdisciplinary) synergistics of a condition that is at once biological, social, economic and, for our interest, architectural.

Consequently, the first step in examining the issues that emerge at an urban and domestic level, is to approach them as primarily experiential — therefore, spatial and temporal at once. As such, it is both an oversimplification and a wrongly posed problem to focus only on the absence of people from public spaces, from spaces of entertainment and catering, or exaggerate the rediscovering of parks and green areas. Urban space exists independently of us being in it or not; what has drastically shifted is our relationship with it.

During the MSc2 Architecture Theory Design Studio we examined our relationship with urban and domestic spaces as fundamentally technological. To make such a claim clear, we incorporated a different understanding of technology, defining it as any attempt to manipulate, intervene and transform our (built) environment. Moreover, any such attempt, what philosopher Gilbert Simondon calls a technicity, simultaneously transforms our environment, our technologies and us.

Which are our current urban and architectural technicities? What do they change in their reciprocity and how have they changed themselves in the past year and a half? These are the main questions we addressed during this Studio, making clear that the urgent issue of a syndemic urbanity is the significance of collectivity as something that surpasses the binaries between interior and exterior, private and public.

One cannot speak of education during the past year without connecting it with issues of domesticity (since it was in the domestic environment that education took place). This is precisely where the Studio focuses: how can one examine, analyse and eventually speculate on the architectural concerns that the living (and working or studying) conditions of the last year have posed.

We propose that the main issue of the past year is the absence of a negotiation mode where we (student to student, teacher to student, teacher to teacher) could inform each other. In other words, by just being isolated in a profoundly interiorised domesticity, there is no skin in the game, no high stakes: anything can fly, anything can be said but mostly nothing makes an impact. This is what we tried to counter within the studio, both in how it is taught and in its end results: provide the architectural ground and reasoning for collectives to emerge.

Consequently, we examined what occurs when instead of changing our habitats we change our habits. Can we then think of nomadic architectures, or even of ourselves as nomadic subjects? For a nomadic subject, movement is not only an intermediate stage between fixed states or between two points. It is transformative. It is no longer only the 'where' of our lives that matters, but the 'how'.

How do we live? How do we change? How much can we sustain?

If we understand architecture not only as the design of space, but also as the potential to design new ways of life, new subjectivities, then movement, or its absence, gains a succinctly architectural dimension. For whom is a nomadic architecture? How is it produced, recorded, modulated and consumed? How do our habits shape our habitats and vice versa?

During the Studio, the oft-cited quote 'we shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us' was not taken as a metaphor. Through diverse architectural technicities, the precise ways that such a reciprocal determination occurs were examined. Avoiding a reductionist approach, the processes of human subjectification and cognition (anthropogenesis) were directly linked to the very technologies that form and manipulate urban habitats (technogenesis).

Therefore, examining the architectural technicities of our own domesticity — our bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms or anything in between —underlined the importance of a transdisciplinary account that does not operate based on binaries or given presumptions, but rather acknowledges the inextricable relation between our technologies and their effects on our subjectification.

If different modes of domestic life correspond to radically different architectural technicities, then the Studio underlined how they both result in the production of different urban subjects. To develop in its full potential, the course necessarily opened architectural discourse to philosophy, cognitive sciences and behavioural psychology, neuro-anthropology, media theories and affect-oriented studies.

As such, the Studio aimed to distance itself from architectural and urban methodologies that are based on epistemological and typological approaches or on the linear and obscuring understanding of the architectural environment in a simplistic input-output fashion. In this sense, an account that avoids the pitfalls of anthropocentrism and reductionism by focusing on the reciprocal relation between subjectification and technicities, is instrumental in addressing urban, social, political and cultural developments that otherwise remain disassociated and obscured.

Crucially, the main focus of the Studio was that the act of any subject at any level does not emerge from an ideological nowhere but in the entanglement between urban environments and technicities. The question, therefore, is how one can address the urban conditions of the present while aiming towards a future, without the messianic use of a grand narrative of an alternative possibility -left or right- but through the very technicities that made them emerge in the first place.

This is precisely what the five projects presented in this exhibition attempt to do: by transversing all different scales and levels of complexity, they aspire to trace, speculate and problematise the technicities of the past year, aiming not only to find out what we have learned but also what we could still learn were we to think and feel otherwise.

Blurring Thresholds

How can something as simple, as banal and taken for granted as a coffee-break shift and transform so drastically, expressing at once the radical shifts that life itself underwent? How can an object so detrimental as a coffee machine, express the urges, the tensions and desires of a suspended interval, of a threshold that has collapsed and in doing so, brought the interior and the exterior in a contact so close that none of the two are able to exercise their transformative power? These are the questions that the project poses and in doing so, it attempts to diagnose the potentials for a new urban collectivity to emerge, one that operates on the limit itself, longing for a negotiation that (on the excuse of a coffee break) rearranges the interior, the exterior and all their in-betweens. From Henri Bergson's theory of pure memory, to the desires that we long to redirect and to the suspended temporalities of a narrow Amsterdam street during lockdowns, the project eventually distances itself from the actuality of a (post) Covid-19 reality in order to articulate a proposal for a renewed way of urban co-living.

Method out of Madness

What is madness, what is the affective domain of going mad? One would claim that madness is repeating the same actions even though being aware that they have no effect, or even worse, that they have a detrimental effect. Have we all gone a little mad this past one and a half year? If so, if escaping our repeated habits can lead us out of a lucid (yet stale) spiral of madness, how can we do so when our habitats are confined, and we are even more confined in them? Could it be that perhaps we need to develop additional senses, senses previously unbeknownst to us that could assist in finding and adopting new points of view that can estrange us to ourselves? This is what the project proposes: to intensify our relationship with the most fundamental of domestic surfaces, the floor itself. The floor becomes a gradient, one where we need to continuously negotiate our relationship with, while each one of us relates differently with it: different genres, different walking styles, different weights, different heights, different shoes and steps. In the continuous modulatory state of the intensified relationship with the very floor of our domestic enclosure and the potential for a 'what-if' appears: what if we were to feel differently so we could act and think differently?

Alter Bloom Coexist

It was philosopher Alfred North Whitehead who proposed that perhaps the term subject is incorrect: there is nothing hidden deep within, nothing sub-terranean that needs to be unearthed. On the contrary, experience precedes what we call subject and therefore, determines it. I is a habit, another philosopher would claim a few decades later. If we move from a subject to a superject then we acknowledge that what we are is the eventual expression of all the actual and potential relations that determine us. This might seem trivial for architecture, but it is of great importance: space (and how we design it) is eventually the production of experiences and consequently, the production of new subjectivities. In other words, the how determines the what that will eventually determine the who. By unwillingly updating Semper's elements of architecture, this project proposes a gradual unfolding of spatial configurations that are indeed membranic but not in any metaphorical sense: experiences move from dense to loose, from congested to flexible, while remaining within the same single living unit. In attempting to articulate a new mode of co-existence, perhaps we need to alter our very conception of architecture so that space (and all that it potentialises) can experientially bloom.

Kibe Project

If the complexity of a (post) Covid-19 world could be captured in a coffee machine, what about following the opposite direction; what if a humble and scattered communal staircase of a neglected building could open itself to the complexities of the world itself and in doing so, highlight the transformative capacities of architectural design? By claiming that the only way out is in, this project attempts to trace the myriad negotiations that take place in even the most (seemingly) simple of architectural interventions: how can the restoration of a staircase lead (or create obstacles) in the formation of a negotiation mode where a novel collective can emerge. Moreover, how can architecture be understood not only as the design of space itself, but crucially, as the design of lines and points of contact where different modes of existence can come together and affect levels of complexity much greater than any of them. To paraphrase Jean-Luc Godard, what if instead of a just architecture, one would aim in just architecture: the proliferation of ways of life that would not be possible if they were not designed. Indeed, the only way out is in: an Outside, more distant than any exterior, twisted, folded and doubled by an Inside that is deeper than any interior.

Nomesticity

To speculate on a future that is yet to come is never an arbitrary practice: one needs to trace the singular elements that can fundamentally change an already existing condition. As such, the issue of thinking of a future (and a people) yet to come is not to be confused with any ideological wishful thinking, nor with any (equally ideological) condemnation. One should not point fingers neither lift fists in the air; one should trace how certain technicities are compossible and compatible with technicities that are already at play. This is precisely what this project attempts: we all order food, we lease cars, we rent content, we capitalise personal moments; what if we were to expand this on a profound level, where domestic life itself is nothing but another element in an extended platform capitalism (if one can still call it so). Moreover, in doing so, what would be the effects that this would have on the molecular levels of our desires and their flows? Didn't we all wish that our habitats could simply change the past year and a half? Didn't we all wish for a balcony, a garden, an extra room to work or exercise? Conversely, would we still wish the same, confronted with the reality of a slow 'opening' that nonetheless is by no means a return to the previous condition? Eventually, what this project highlights is that (also) Covid-19 is an issue of governance: designing the conditions that can direct our collective modes of existence towards different articulations, for better or worse.
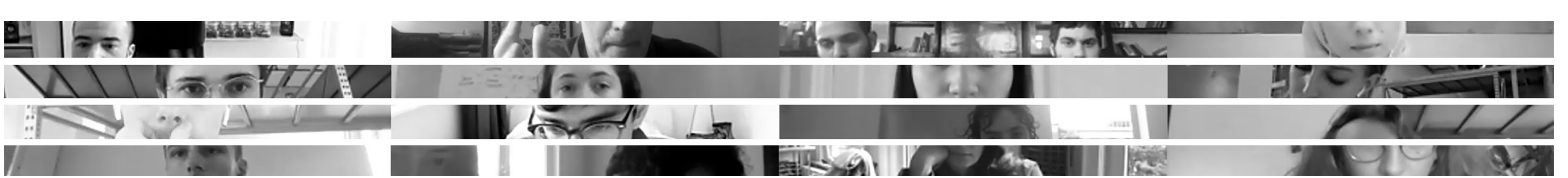
BLURRING THRESHOLDS

Raneem Nahawandi   4735080
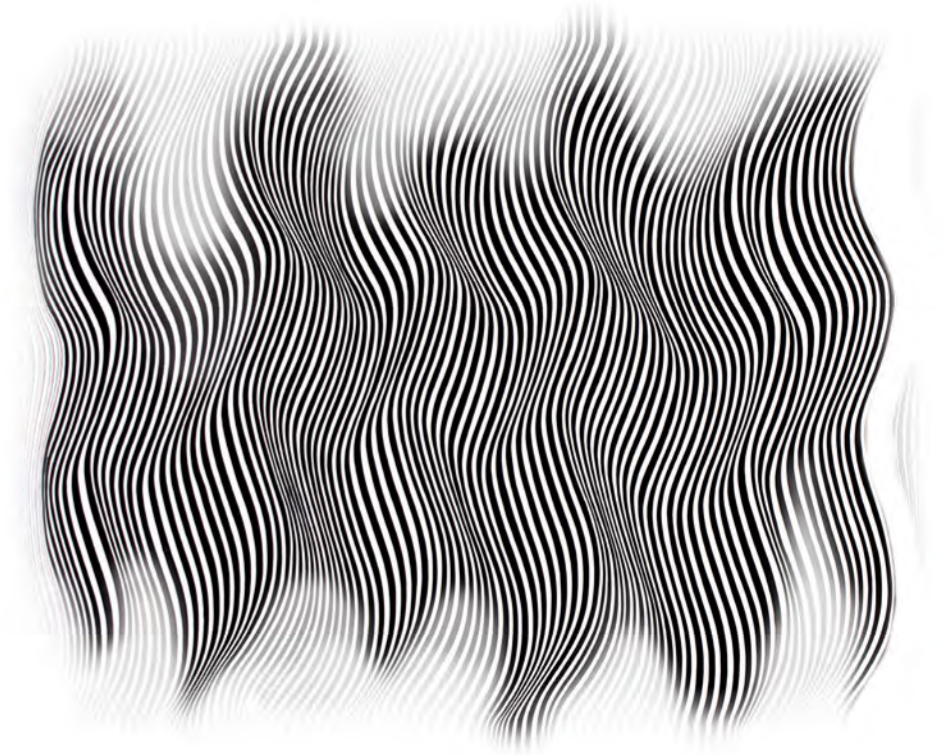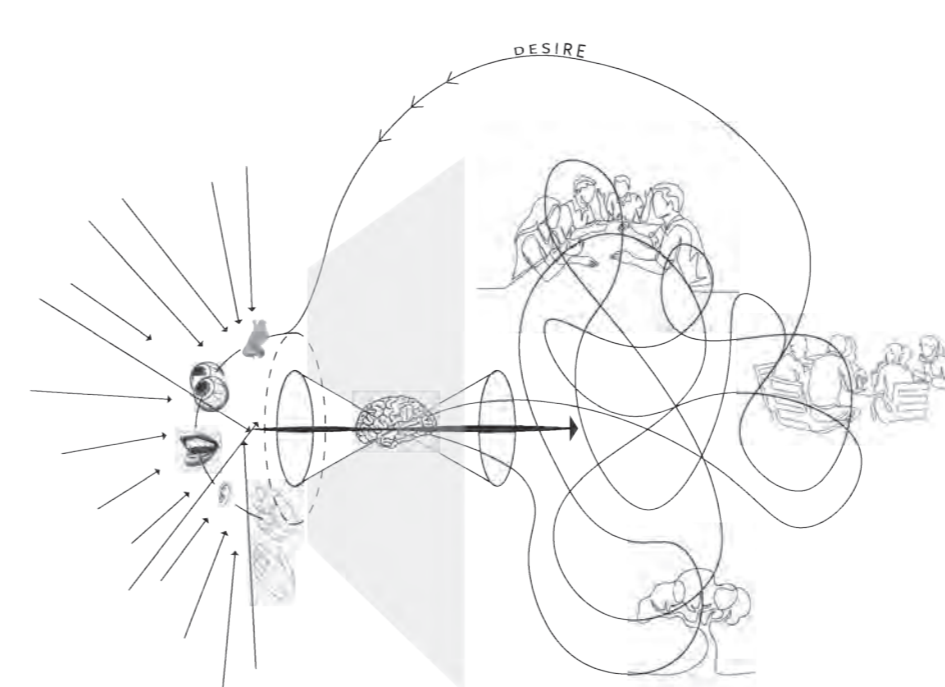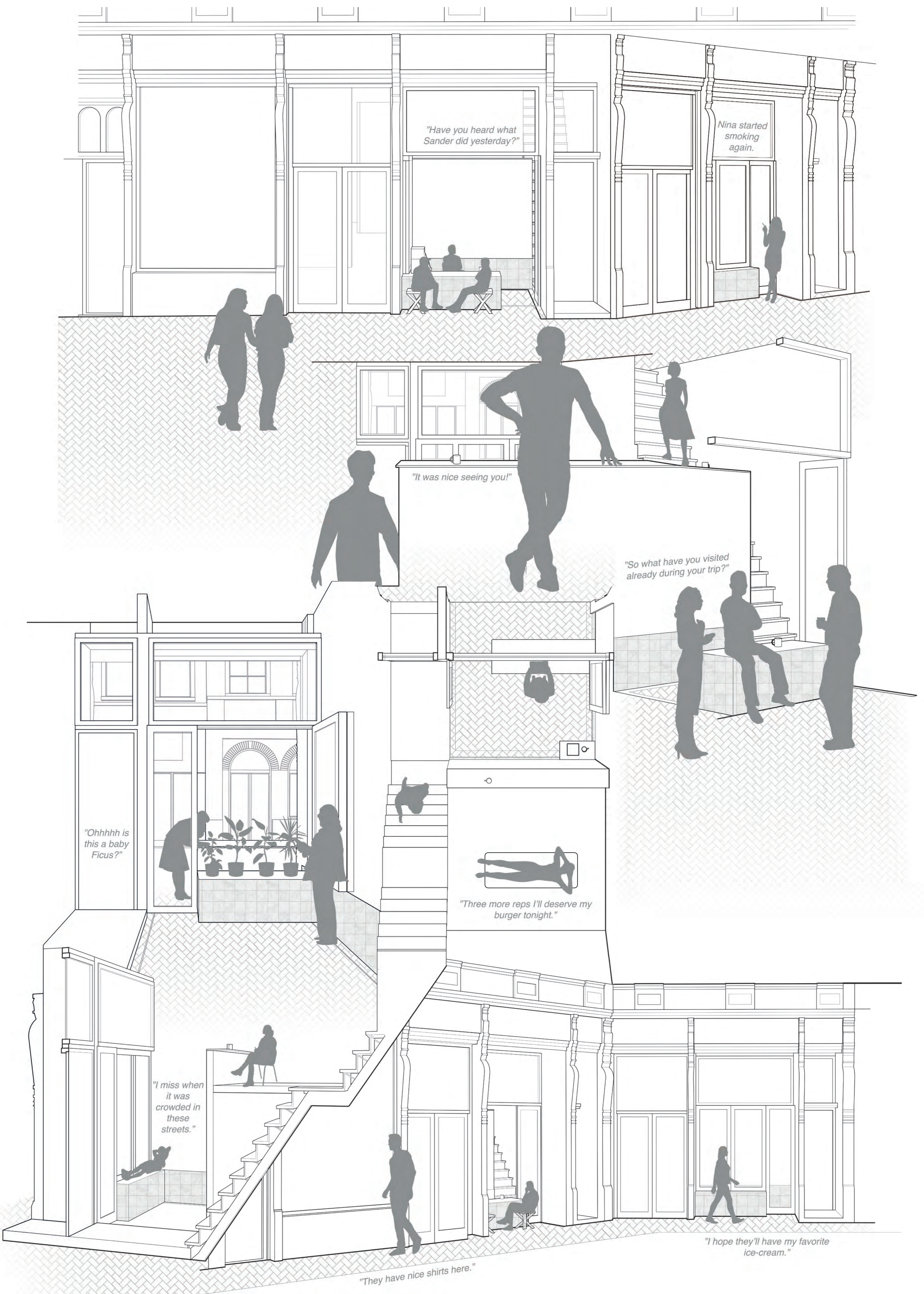Alice Sikiaridis   5273048
Amber Sikkema   5251729

In the design we have attempted to prvide a space without a fixed identity but full of affordances to adapt with the need of the user. A space lies at the threshold between domes-ticity and collectivity. A break room in the private residential building as well as in the neighborhood. An interval space where the rigid lines between public and private are blurred. The space becomes the elastic membrane where the metamorphism happens, where exterior and interior merge. It belongs to both and yet to none.
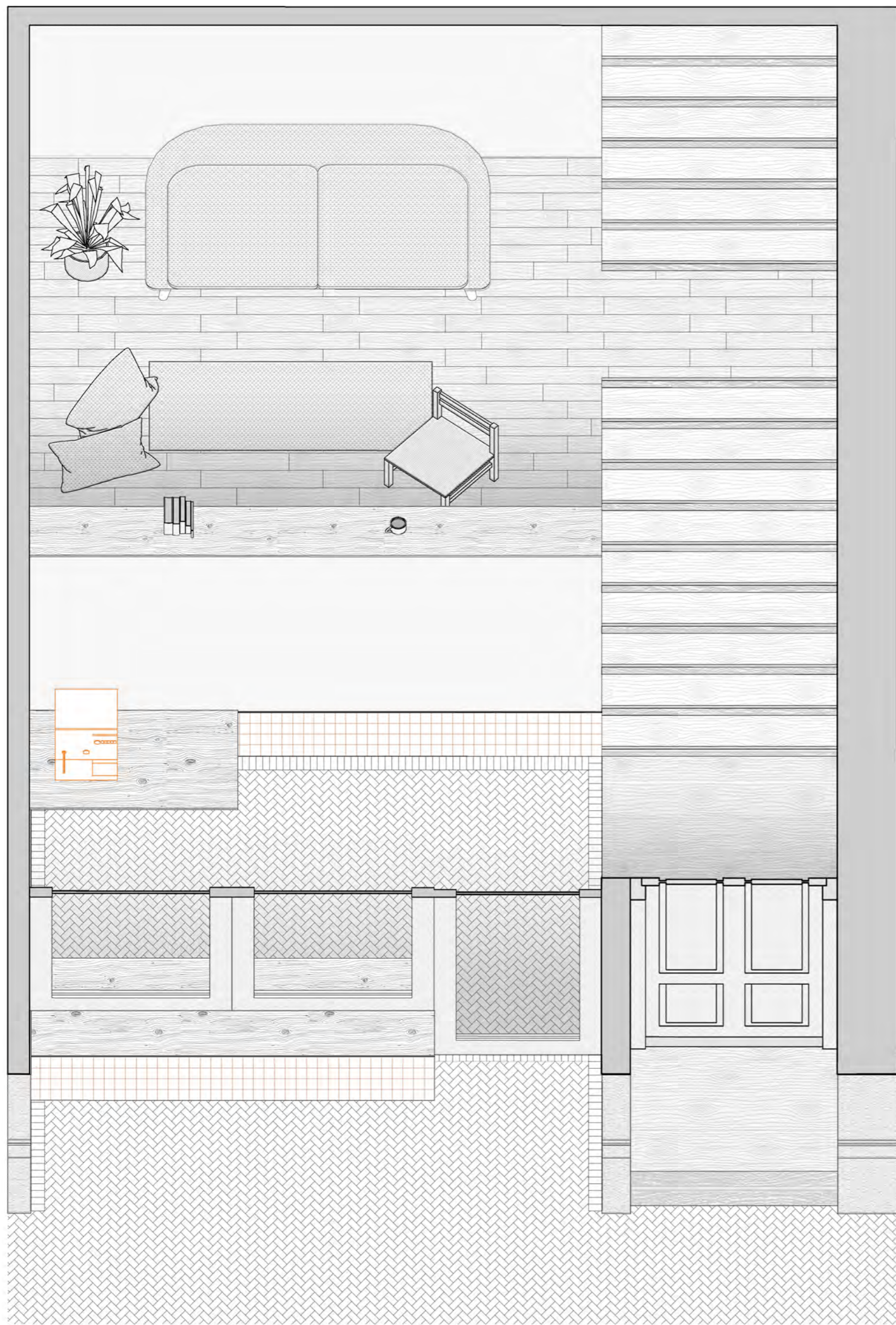
When the facade is closed the space is clearly private and less inviting. How ever, it creates the perfect space to take a break with lots of affordances depending on the duration of the break and the level of openness the user is opting for. An interplay between space qualities, materiality and level of enclosure provides the user with different experiecnes.The space behind the facade is more suitable for short to medium breaks with high need for exteriorizing. The mezzanine suggests a more doestic environment with a high level of openness.
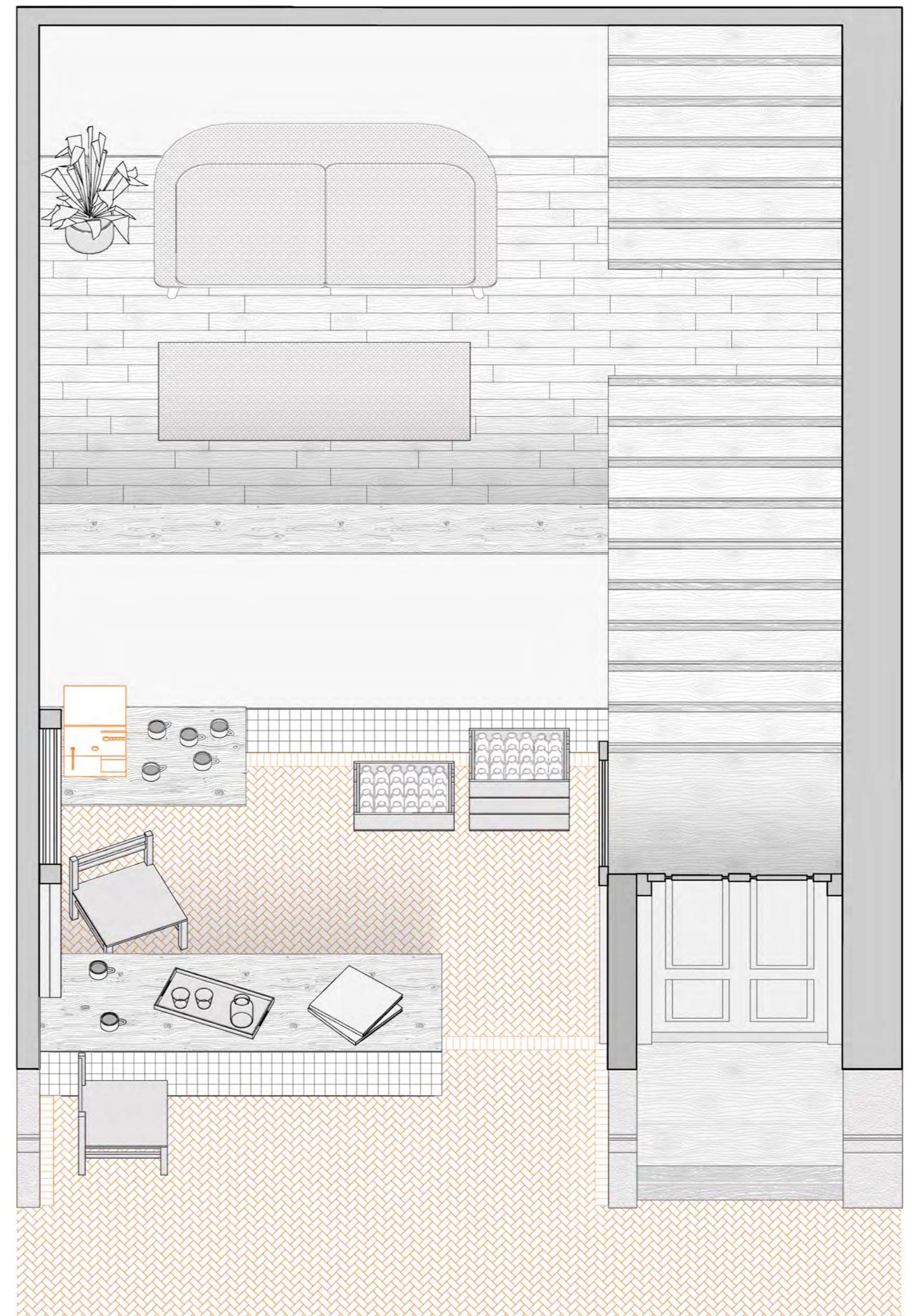
When the facade is open the space becomes a pocket in the street. The street brick flowing to the inside hints with a high level of accessibility. Also smell of coffee is triggering and inviting. The window sill height allows it to become a coffee table or even a sitting bench. When the door is open for public on one side, it blocks the entrance to the hallway leading upstair on the other, preserving the privacy of the residential building. In between those two types of exteriorialization there is a wide range of possibilites that are illustrated in the following drawing.

"Have you heard what Sander did yesterday?"

Nina started smoking again.

"It was nice seeing you!"

"So what have you visited already during your trip?"

"Ohhhhh is this a baby Ficus?"

"Three more reps I'll deserve my burger tonight."

"I miss when it was crowded in these streets."

"They have nice shirts here."

"I hope they'll have my favorite ice-cream."

Our project started with a retrospective look at how our lives have changed during the past year and a half. Where everything became intertwined and collapsed onto our houses. we were living just in repetition. Everything became too close to be seen. we got used to our environments, became unaware of the intervals, and we fell in what Bergson refers to as "False recognition". However, this situation resulted in shifting our mindsets from Ego-logical thinking in to ecological one. We became aware of the reciprocal relationship between us and our environments in the emergence of the becoming and the creation of our individuality.

At the moment we desire something, we are becoming, which is why this moment could also be perceived as an interval. When we desire we always desire an assemblage, the coffee machine diagram shows the relation between our habits and habitats and illustrating the affordances of a coffee machine. When desiring a cup of coffee we wish to exteriorize and expose ourselves to novelty.

The case study apartment is located in a crowded shopping street of Amsterdam, which got deserted during the lockdown. During this period, we struggled with studying and breaking within the same space. When we try to define spaces we could say that the identity is defined by the habits which we perform in it, but what if it is not clear which habits belong to a certain space? How do we separate space, where does space begins or ends?
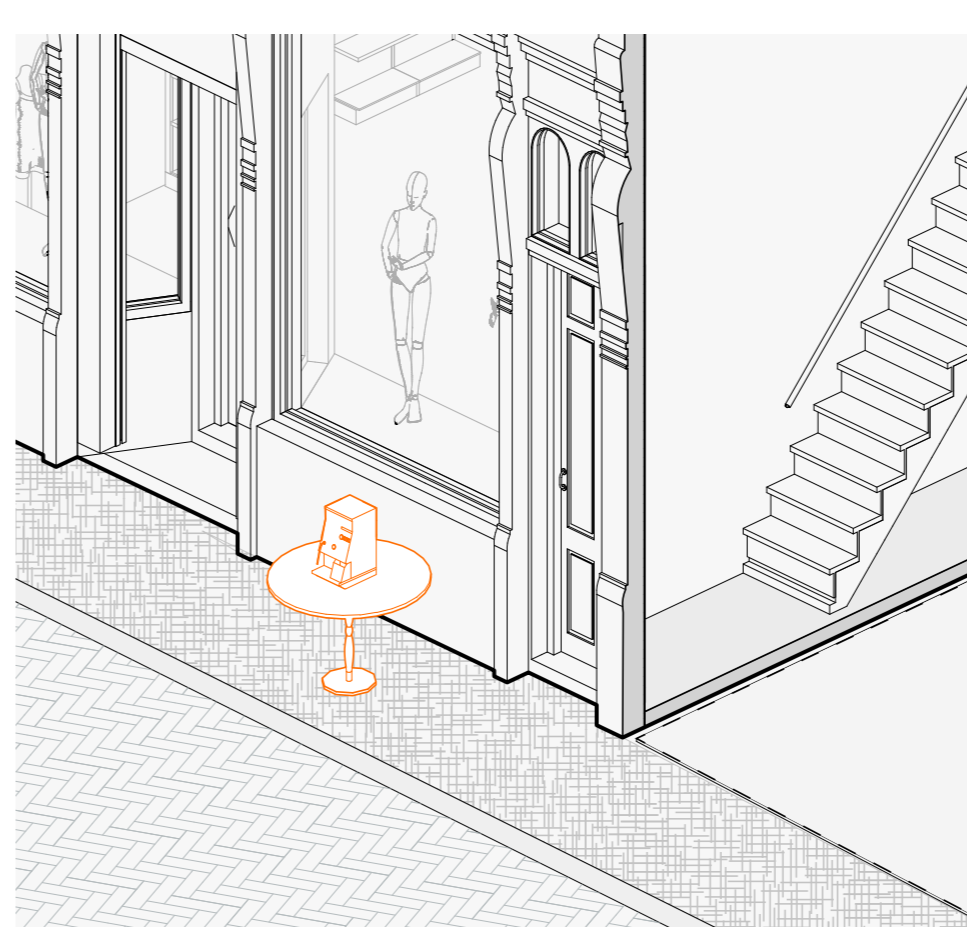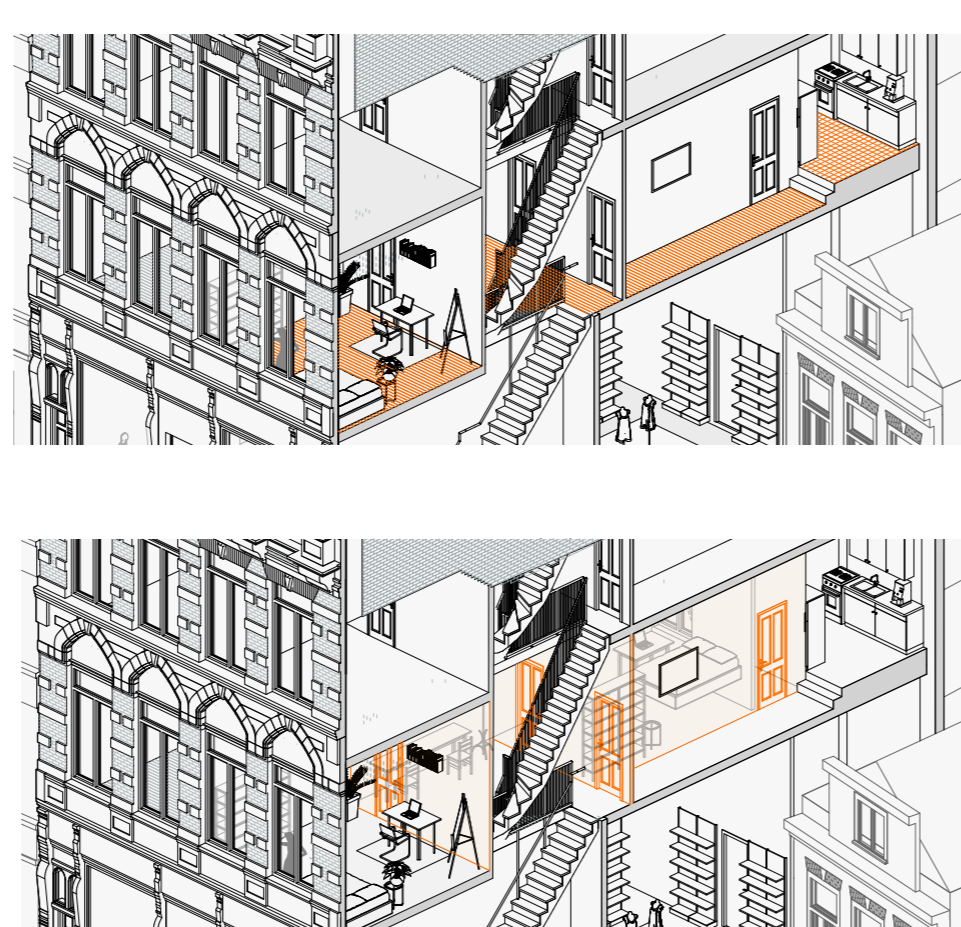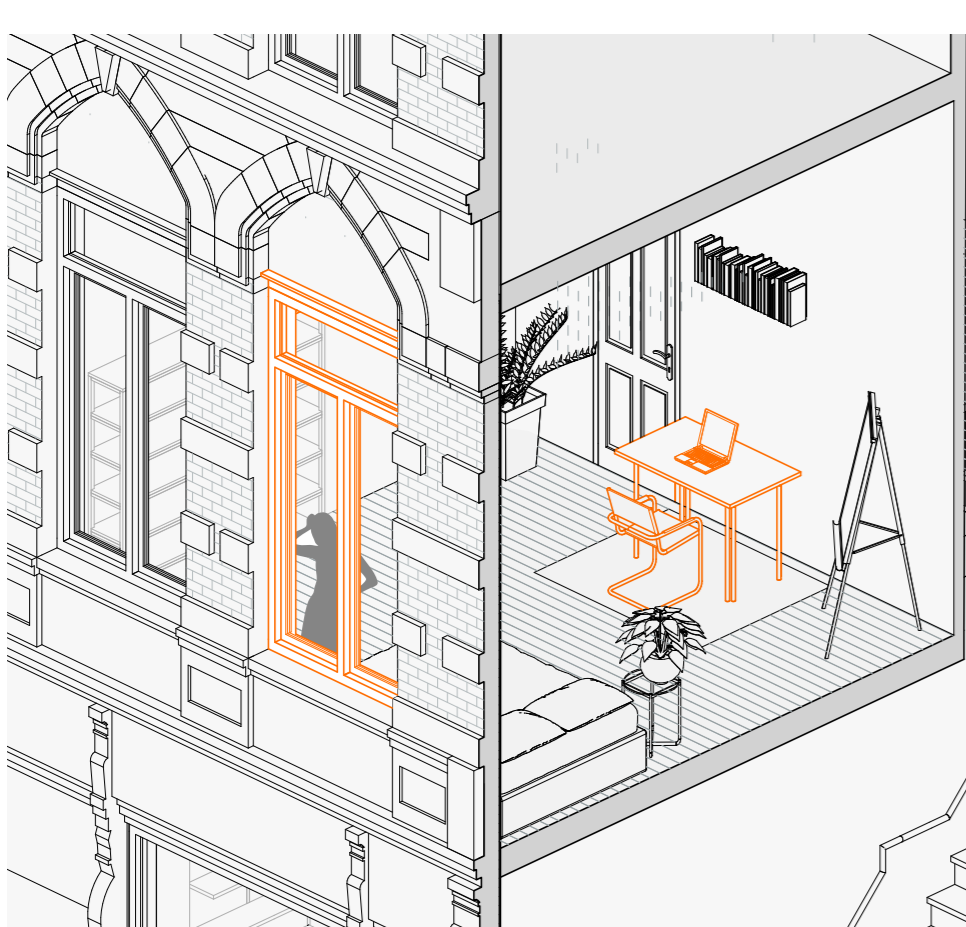
METHOD OUT OF MADNESS

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How can we create architecture with technicities that control, nullify and/or foster, the affects created in co-living, and how can architecture provide the dwellers with this control over the environment?

How do you combine and balance the need for privacy, or the ability to control the boundary between the inside and outside, with the need for external renewal?

How can a spatial intervention enable the Self to be en route at home?

How is the territorial border between flatmates in common spaces formed into coherent spatial and habitual dynamic?

HOW IS THIS SYNDEMIC SITUATION DRIVING US MAD?

GENEALOGY

In this project, we aimed to extract a method out of madness. We developed a diagrammatic genealogy of our shared problem statement to better understand the Deleuzian ontology. From this understanding, we evolve our theory by expanding into Leibniz's monadology, which encompasses the functioning of different points of view. The developed view of how these come into existence is used to start our design process. This resulted in an estranging project that offers the inhabitant a constant change in their point of view.
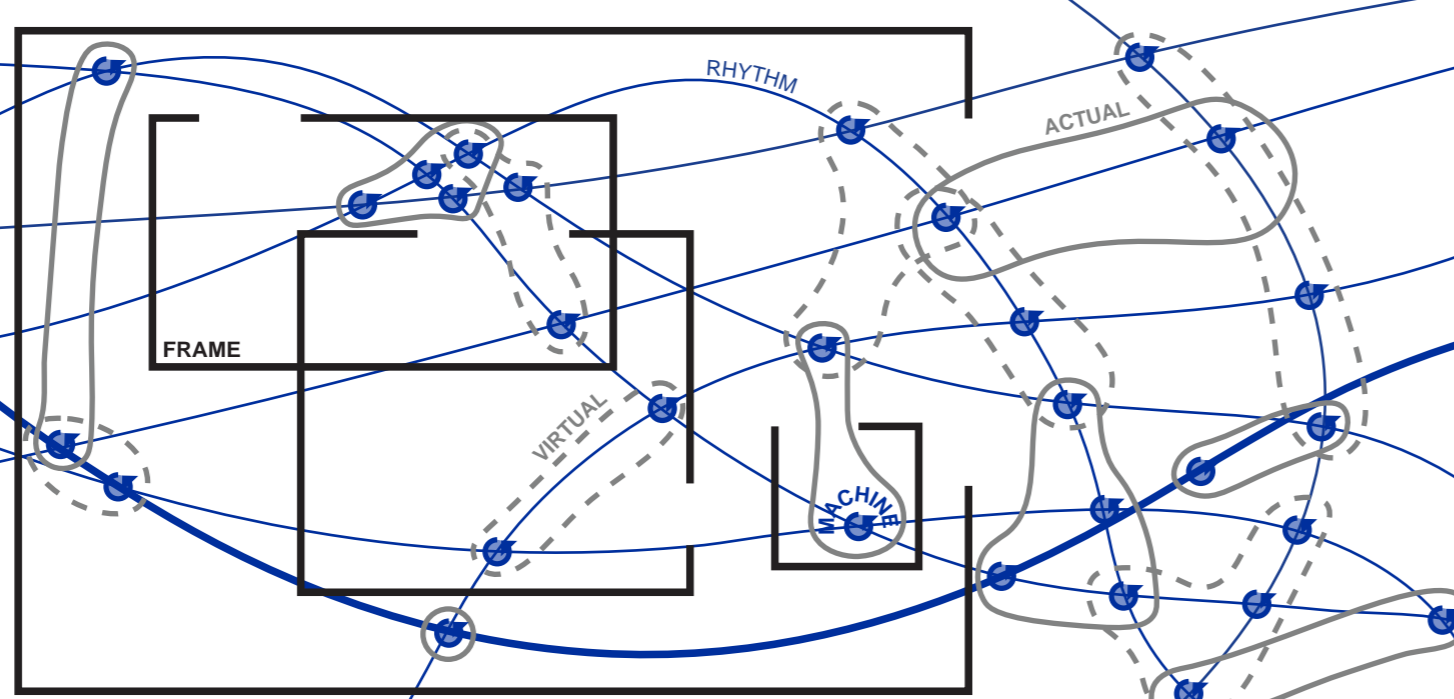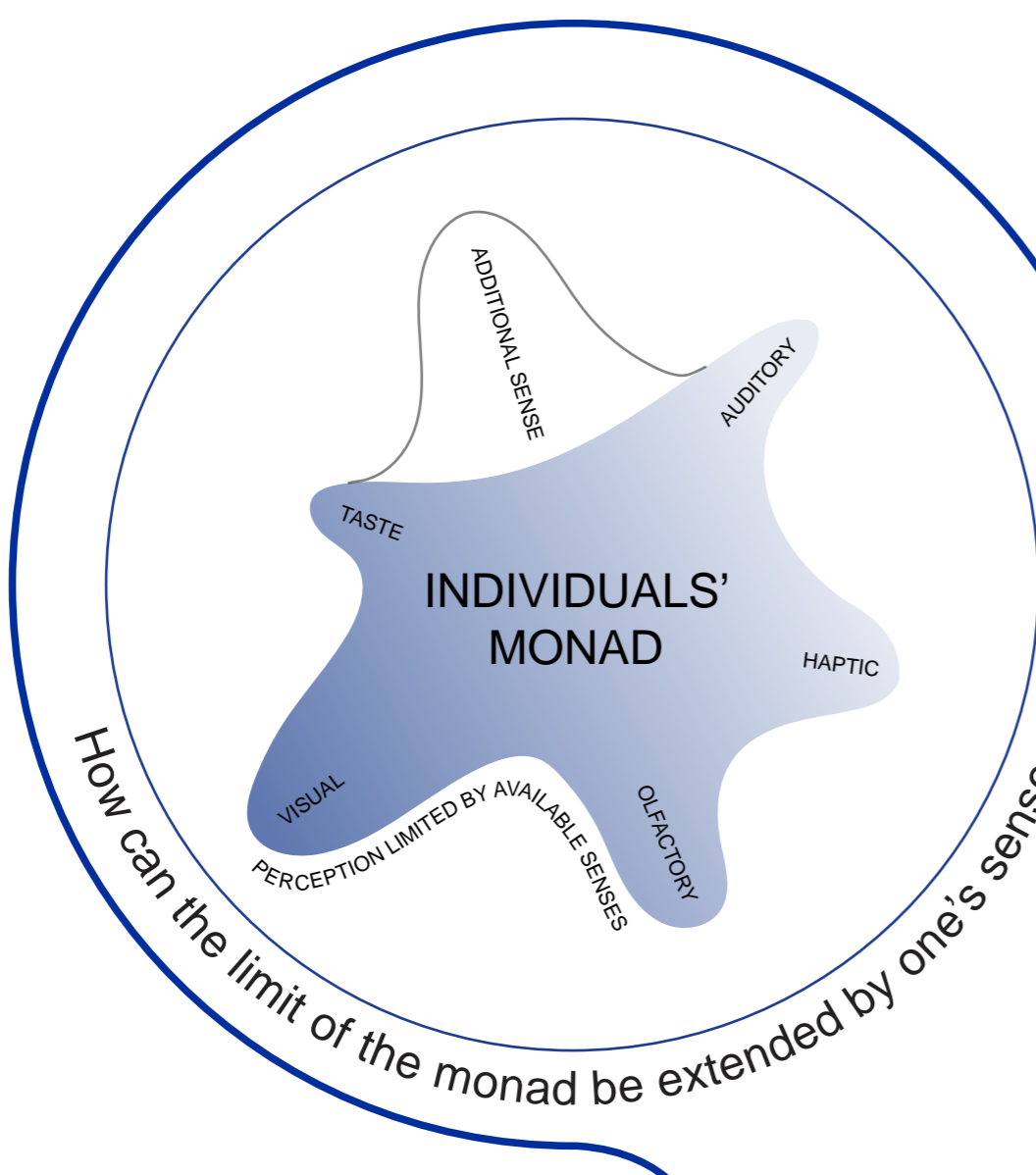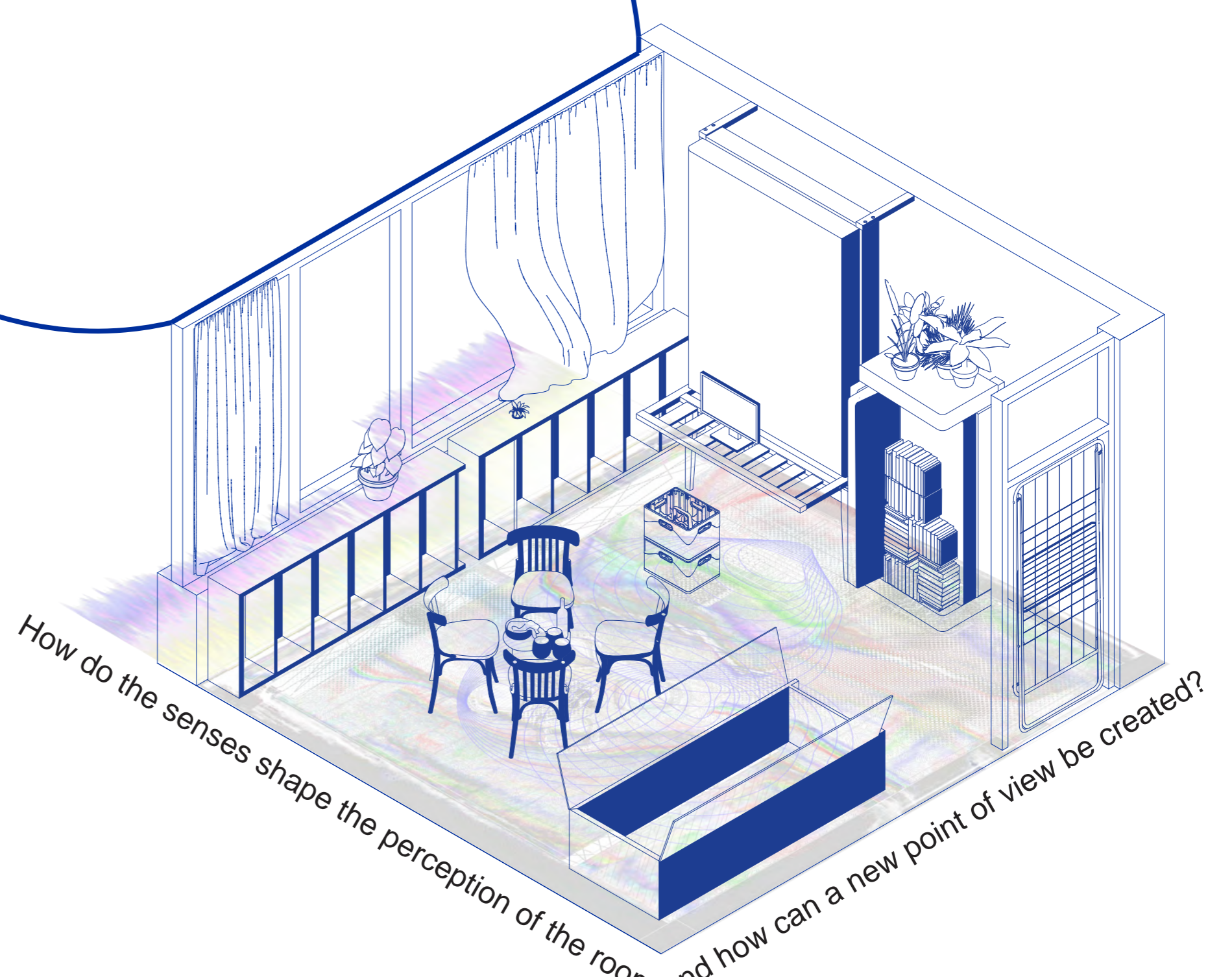

How does chaos play a role within the creation of a delirium state of mind?
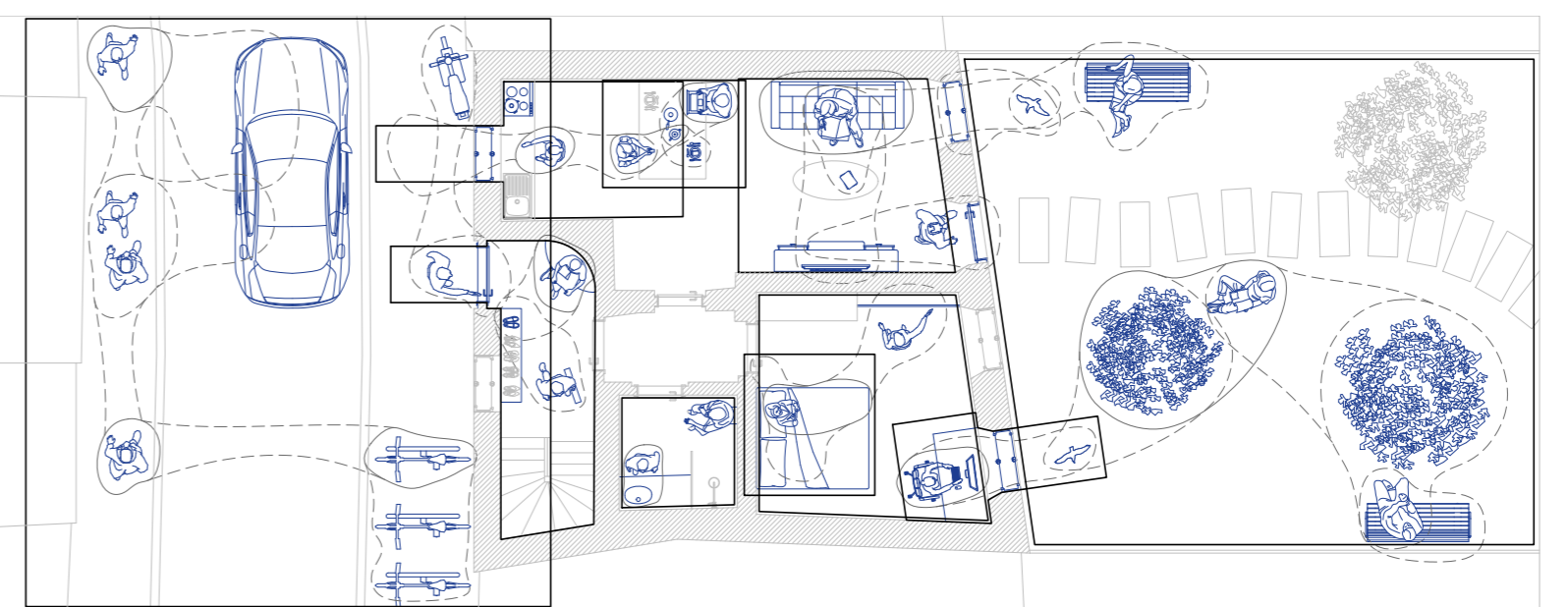
How is the lack of interaction with the exterior created? Is the frame too rigid? Are there not enough virtual potentials to enable rhythm?

SPECULATION

How can the limit of the monad be extended by one's senses?

INDIVIDUALS' MONAD

How do the senses shape the perception of the room and how can a new point of view is created?

DETERMINATION
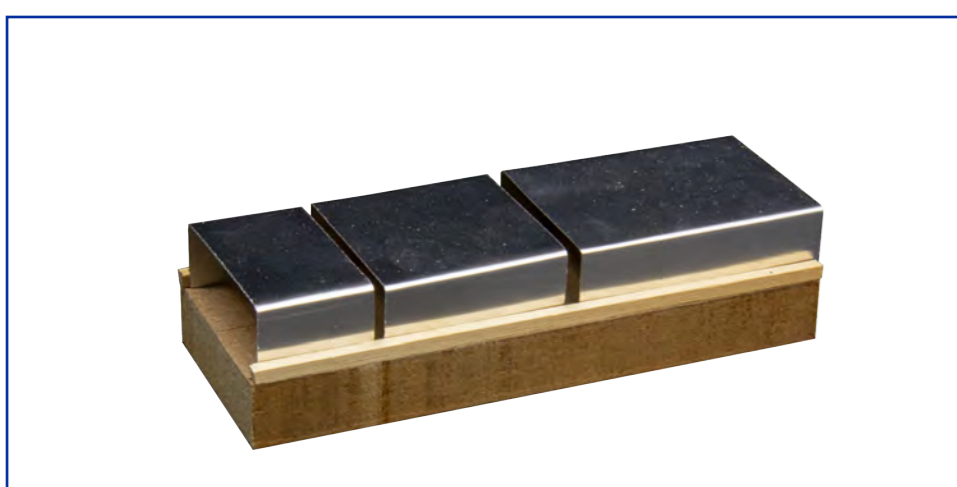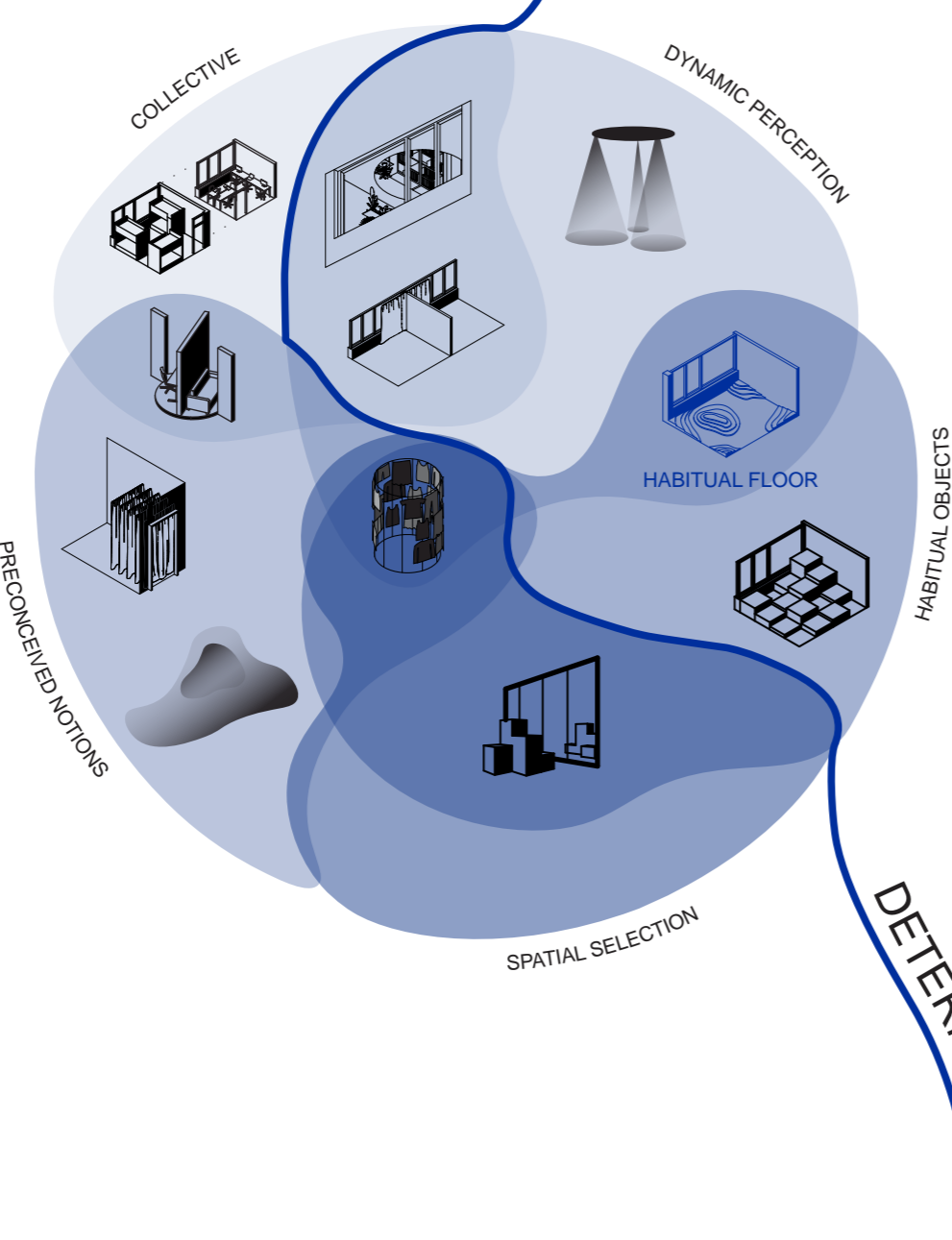
How can the auditory sense be activated?

How can the haptic sense be activated?

How can the visual sense be activated?

How can the olfactory sense be activated?

TAC_TILE

TAC_TILE is a design created from the theoretical process shown above. This design aims to change the inhabitants' perceptions by consistently challenging their habits. The perception of the inhabitants is formed by their senses. Therefore our design directly challenges the senses through a renewed interpretation of the floor.

The floor is split into sixty-four segments that each function individually. Foam boxes held up by a moldable frame are covered with aluminium panels. Next to them, there are fixed and hollow aluminium panels. Therefore, the perceptions of these two types of panels function differently for each of the architectural senses. The panels can either be loud or quiet, static or dynamic, scratched or smooth, bland or bland. The result is an estranging floor that challenges the preconceived notions of the traditional floor. TAC_TILE offers the inhabitant a constantly changing point of view.
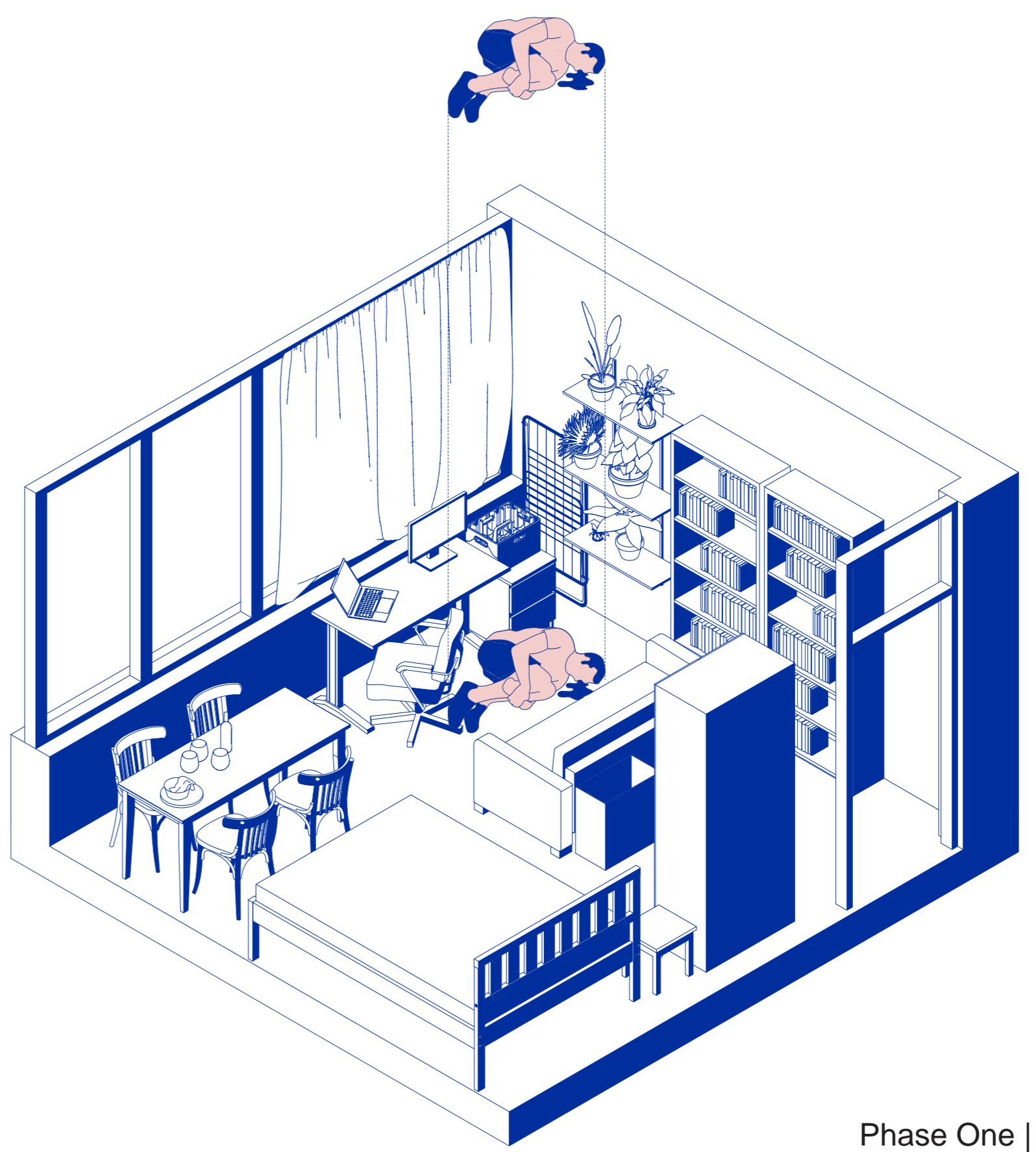
Phase One | Madness

Auditory Floor

Static Boxes

Panels

Dynamic Boxes

Frames
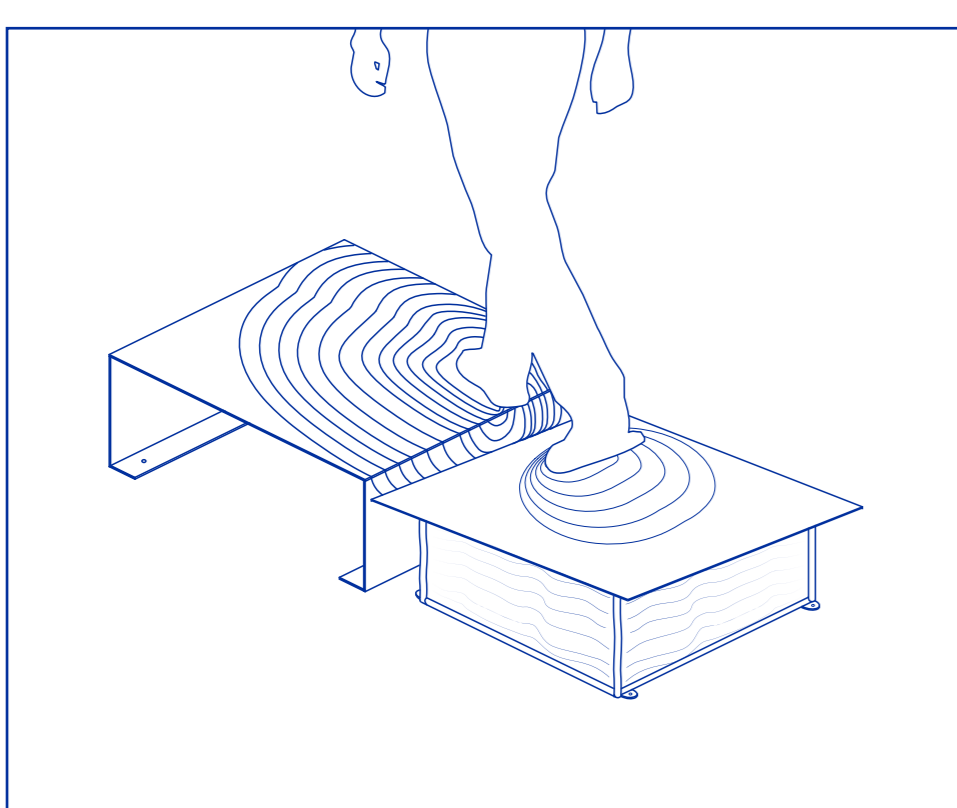
Phase Two | Built Up Floor
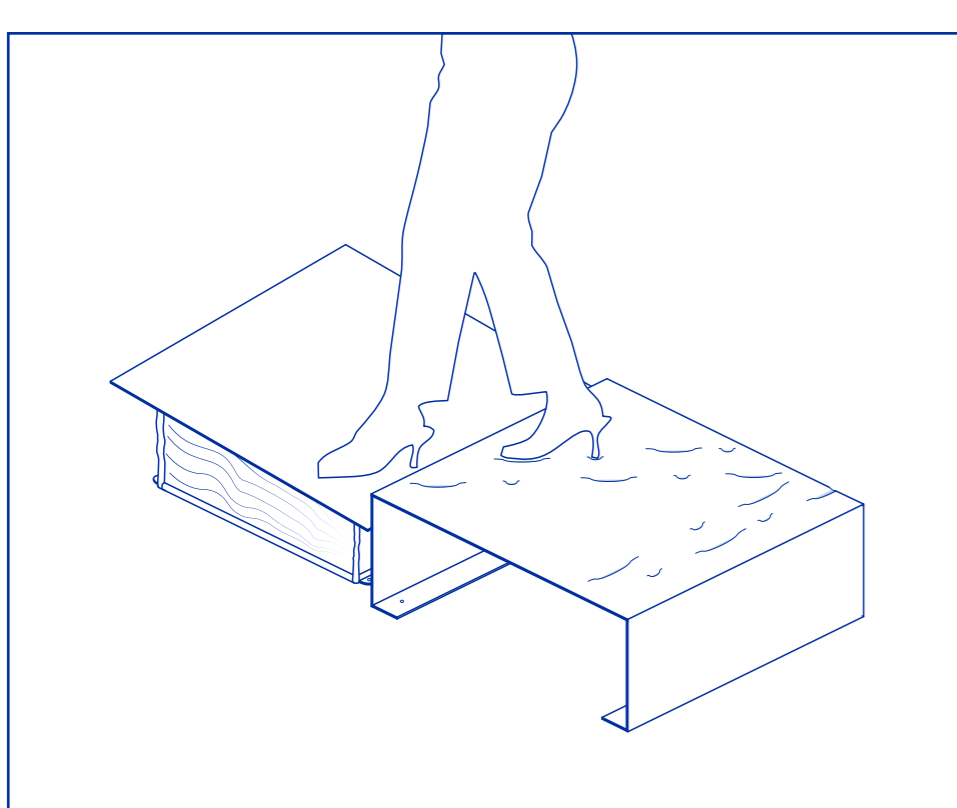
Haptic Floor
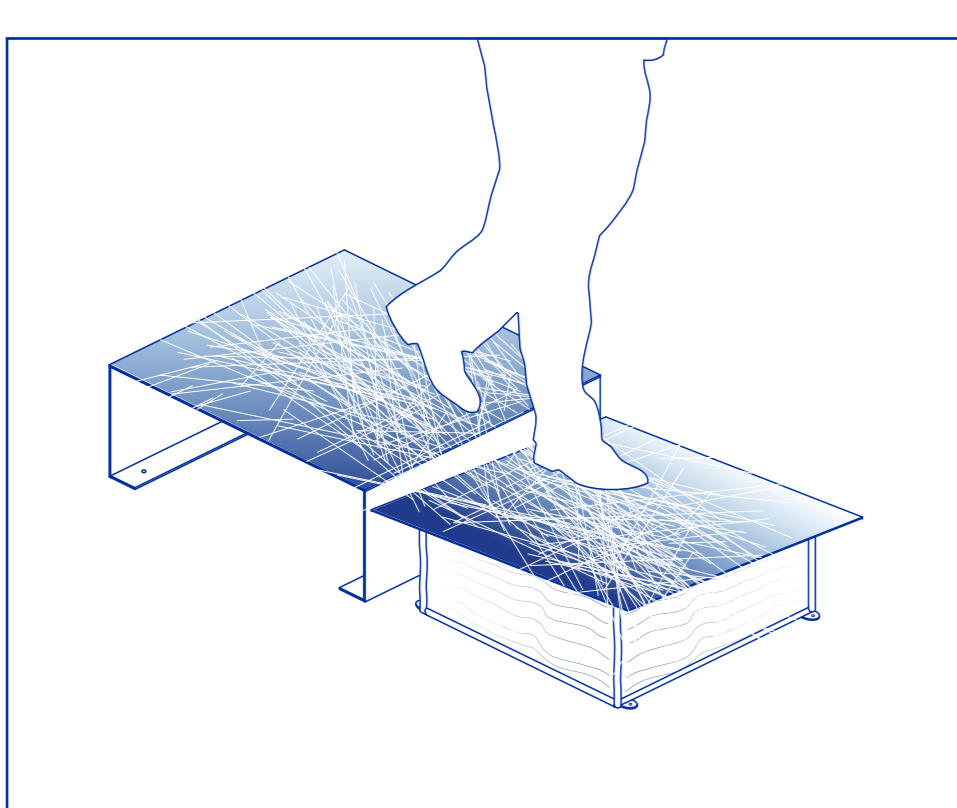
Visual Floor
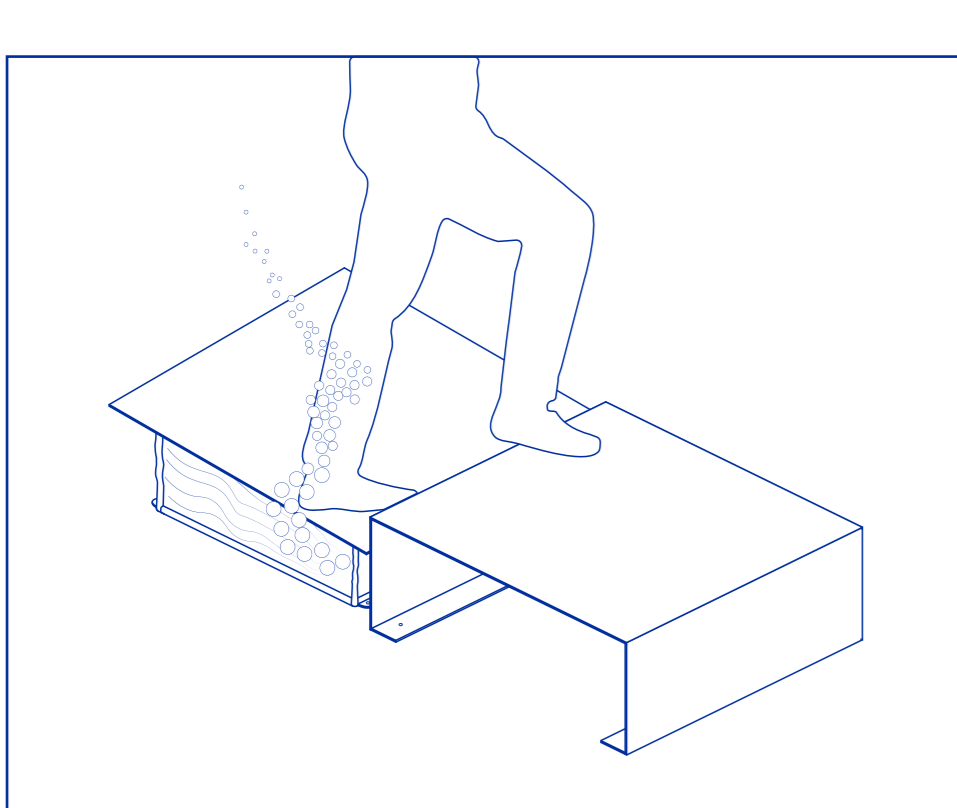
Olfactory Floor

Phase Three | Enstrangement

ALTER, BLOOM, COEXIST

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Our domestic habitats usually consist of generic, rigid spaces. You are given a space – it is what it is – conform to it. In a shared living context, this rigidity becomes problematic. Turning our gaze towards the attributes comprising the communal spaces, we extracted information on how Space produces Subject. However, Subjects have a very limited impact on the space they live in, how could that be empowered further? What if Space was temporal and gradual, capable of changing and blooming, reflecting the dynamics between the individuals and the collective?

These speculations were explored through the case study of a typical Dutch townhouse, in order to experiment with a variety of technicities, on how the Subjects could temporally alter their individual cells and generate a unique culture of collective habitat.

KIBE PROJEKT

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Genealogy

The epigenetic layer of Tbilisi's urbanscape is characterized by the sporadic and improvised construction of courtyard houses. The etymological origins of the physical buildings are a synthesis of Persian, Ottoman, and European influences, while being constructed partly from Siberian larch wood sourced from Russia. Nevertheless, there is some resonance with wood-craftsmanship which is characteristic of Georgian vernacular houses from the central and western parts of the country. Most of the houses found in the city today were built by aristocrats in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and then partitioned and distributed among the proletariat in the 1920s with the introduction of the Soviet Union. The epigenetic layer of the Tbilisi *ezo* (courtyard) henceforth is not fully attributed to the physical building, but is greatly influenced by the social dynamics which were ontologically incongruous with the aristocratic origins.
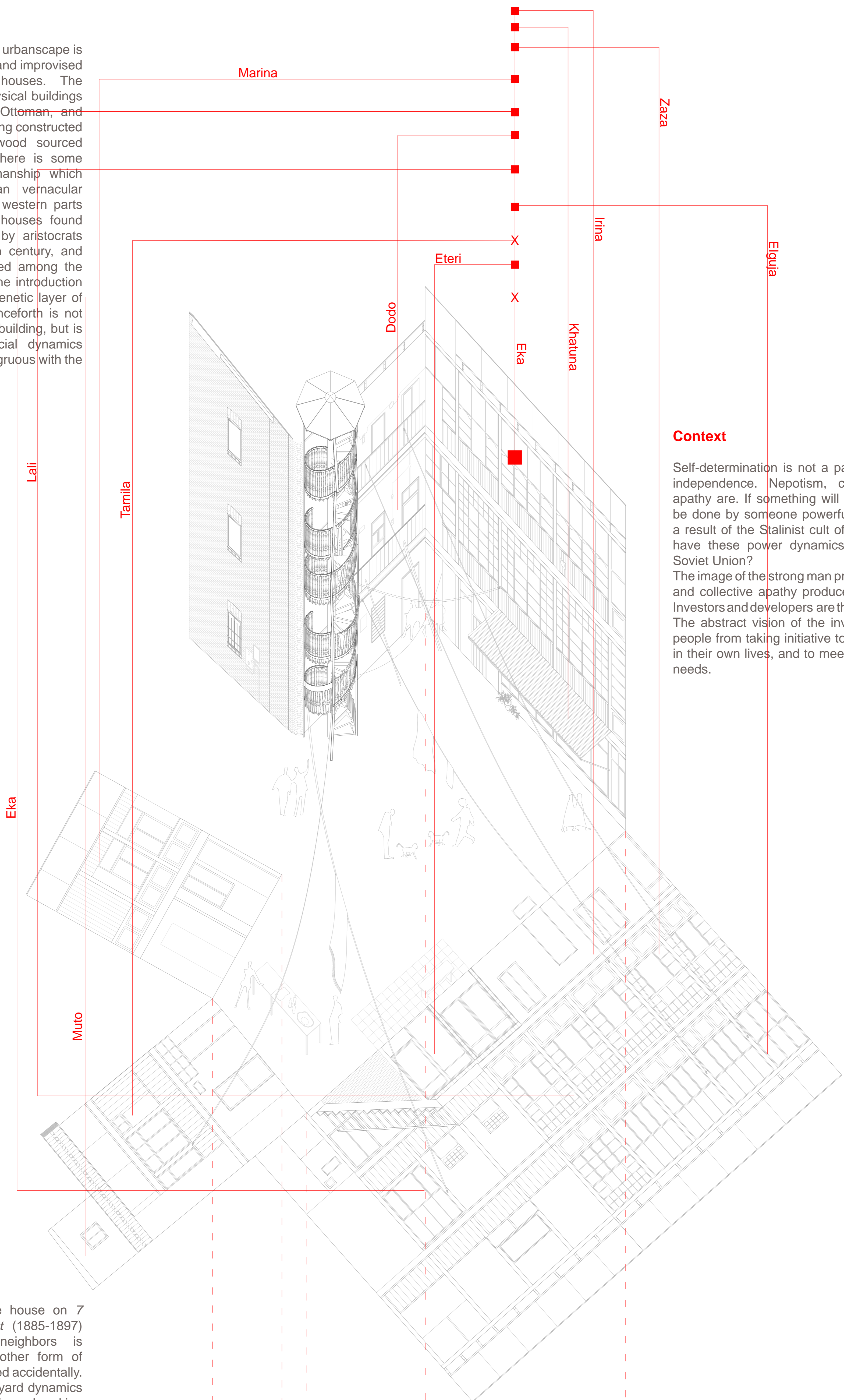
Context

Self-determination is not a part of Georgian independence. Nepotism, criminality, and apathy are. If something will be done, it will be done by someone powerful. Is this partly a result of the Stalinist cult of personality, or have these power dynamics preceded the Soviet Union?
The image of the strong man produces apathy, and collective apathy produces strong men. Investors and developers are the saving grace. The abstract vision of the investor prevents people from taking initiative to change things in their own lives, and to meet their personal needs.

Dynamics

In the particular case of the house on 7 *Dzmebi Kakabadzeebi Street* (1885-1897) the social dynamics between neighbors is much more alive than any other form of housing which was not produced accidentally. The commoning into the courtyard dynamics stem from the general lack of privacy, breaking the conventions of nuclear families, avoiding the contemporary tendencies towards capsularization. Life and habits become a part of the ecology of the yard.
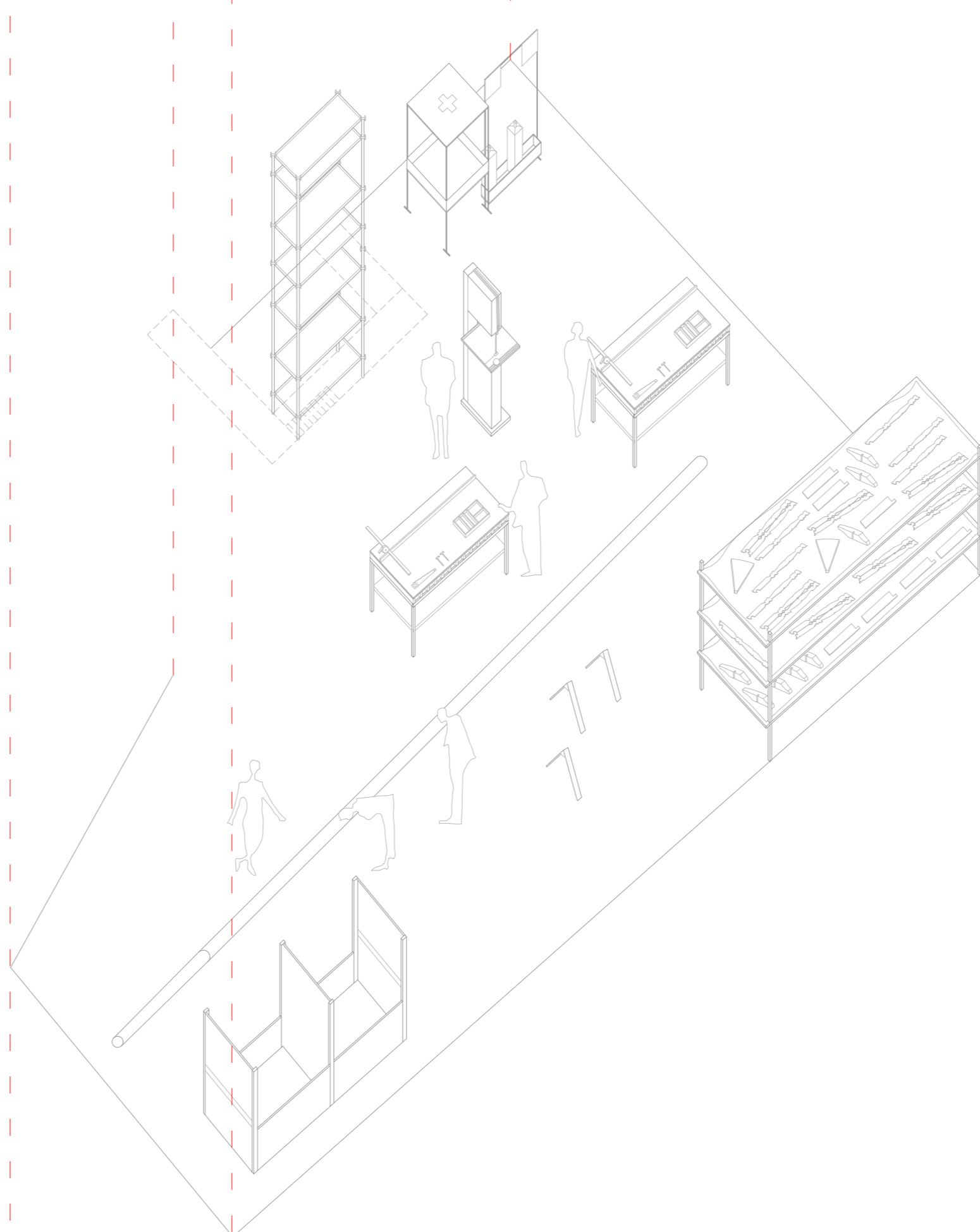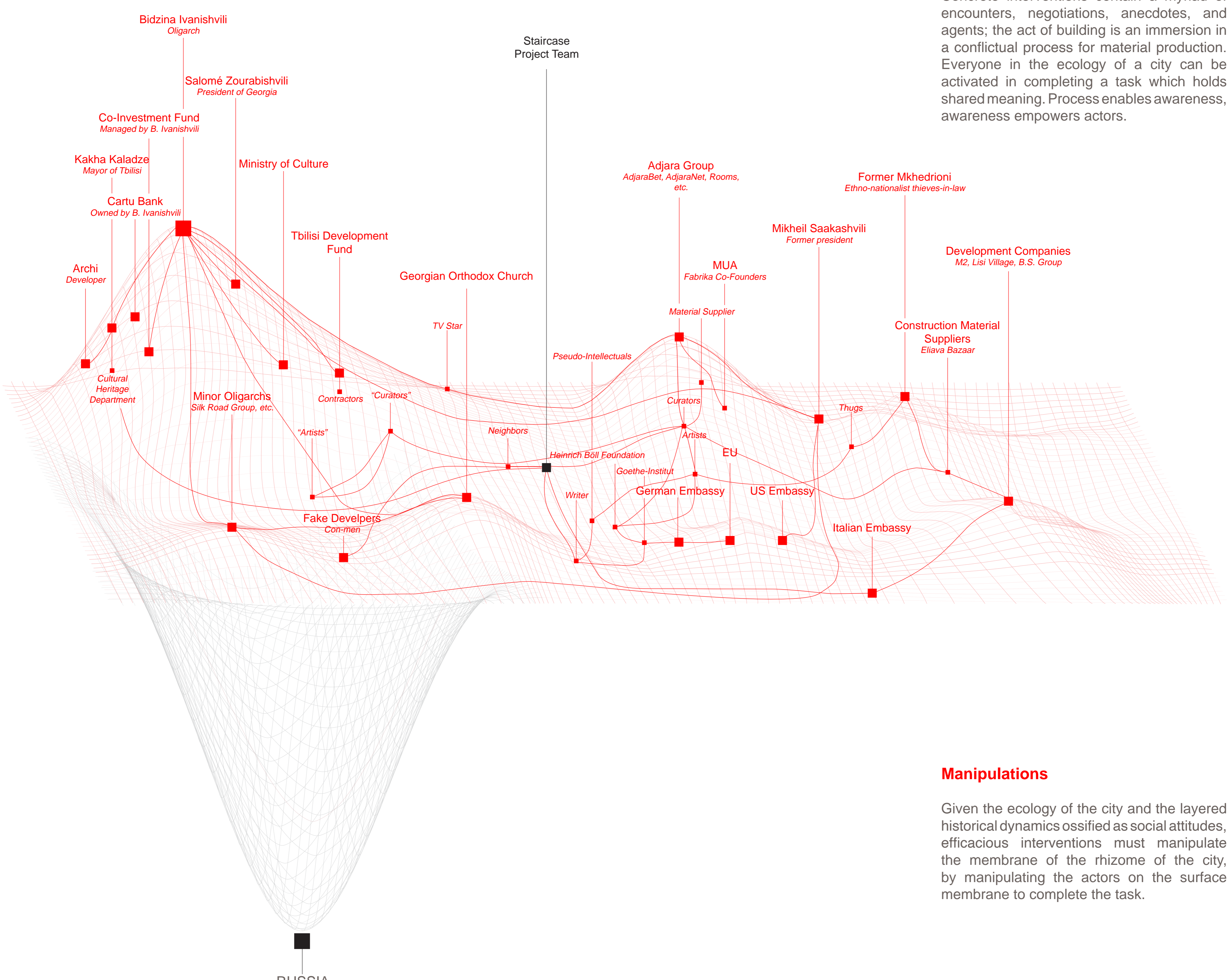
Task

Conservation projects are about embalming buildings. The removal of social and cultural dynamics, and the elevation of static objects to a special status.
Though this spiral wooden staircase is one of the last of its kind in the city, the form of the object can only produce a shared meaning if people participate in the process of making. The dynamics of the Tbilisi ezo cannot be separated from the shape given to the space. The remaking of the staircase should find its energy from the social dynamics of the context.

Tendencies

The tendency of the government and their adjacent networks is to make poor cultural heritage preservation projects, which totally sterilize the complex ecology of entire districts. The poorly executed projects are only inhabitable by tourists, and in-fact the whole stated purpose for these grotesque reconstructions is to stimulate the tourism industry. This aesthetic territorialization, translated into abstract Europization, has eliminated biodiversity and tecnicities which gave life to the city. Contrary to this tendency, but nevertheless aiming towards tourism development, the private sector in Georgia has produced a more accurate caricature of Europe. These private businesses provide a single concretized alternative to the municipal development strategies.

Architectural form is predicated on economic systems and available building technologies. // What we humans always have been seeking for are improvements, we seek a better quality of life, more efficient buildings, more living space that expands our presence and elevates our comfort levels. It is a clear, unquestionable path towards any evolutionary process - to improve. Everything should get better. And how can you think otherwise? // Architecture is no longer illuminating, is no longer engaging, is no longer tactile. Architecture is inhuman. Architecture is for-profit. Architecture must not disrupt the market conditions, and if architecture should be critical its criticality should be instagramable. Architecture should be sensitive to be marketable. The city is better as appropriations. The city is better as what we need to fulfil current needs. // The social interactions given by the unconstructed and un-constricted spaces feel more spontaneous, as you sit on the floor and you find your way to be more comfortable, and maybe you need to try a few positions before being satisfied. You have been through the house, or through the city, and after the search, you have found the emptiness that stimulates your creativity. // The exterior, the unexpected encounter, a qualitative change, an undoable change. Reality is the process of becoming but form is a state of stability functional to the process, just as the chaos of accidents.

Rhizome

The rhizome partly demonstrates the ecology of the city, and the connections which needed to be made in order to begin to fulfill the tasks with the desired precision. In order to produce a desired effect, an understanding of who can be efficacious in the project, and to what degree they can produce a positive effect must be understood.

Will

The only way out is in.
The will to do something, and the perseverance to complete the necessary tasks are self-empowering and empowering for others. The accumulation of energy and resources from an entire ecology (and beyond its limits) can be exploited to produce a *positive* creative effect.
Concrete interventions contain a myriad of encounters, negotiations, anecdotes, and agents; the act of building is an immersion in a conflictual process for material production. Everyone in the ecology of a city can be activated in completing a task which holds shared meaning. Process enables awareness, awareness empowers actors.
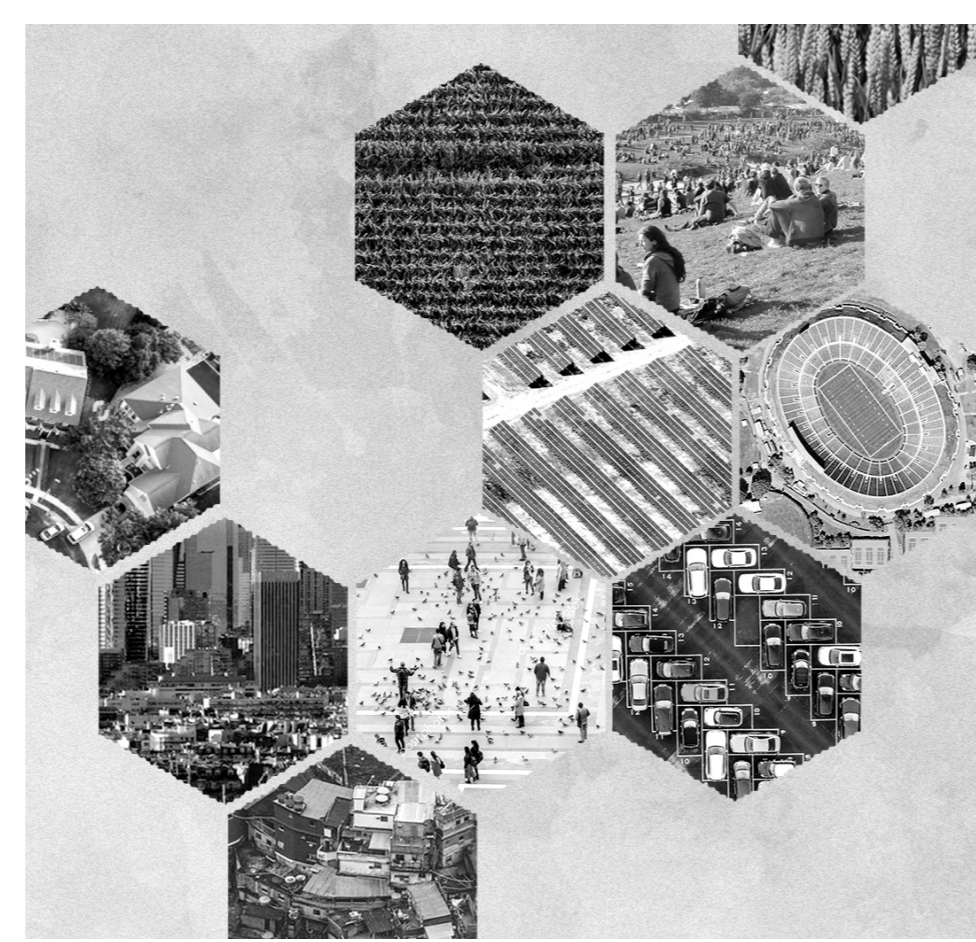
Manipulations

Given the ecology of the city and the layered historical dynamics ossified as social attitudes, efficacious interventions must manipulate the membrane of the rhizome of the city, by manipulating the actors on the surface membrane to complete the task.

NOMESTICITY

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What if to further reduce your material belongings you only kept the ones you needed during the time you were actually using them?

What if the only belongings you ever had at your immediate disposal were the ones you could fit in your small backpack, and all the rest were stored in an off-site storage location?

What if material ownership is replaced by access to services or affordances?

What if you could have access to housing and domestic services on-demand so if you want you can sleep in a different place every night according to your specific desires?

What if with moderate adaptability your routine was able to be maintained through different spaces yet its codification of the behavior was made explicit so you can make and break it?

What if on arrival at your night accommodation you get a hospitality package containing your belongings, and these items were collected at the end of each of your stays?

What if you could also occasionally be surprised with new pairings, or unexpected findings to keep discovering on the mundane?

What if you lived out of desire instead of out of need, so your identity is defined from within?

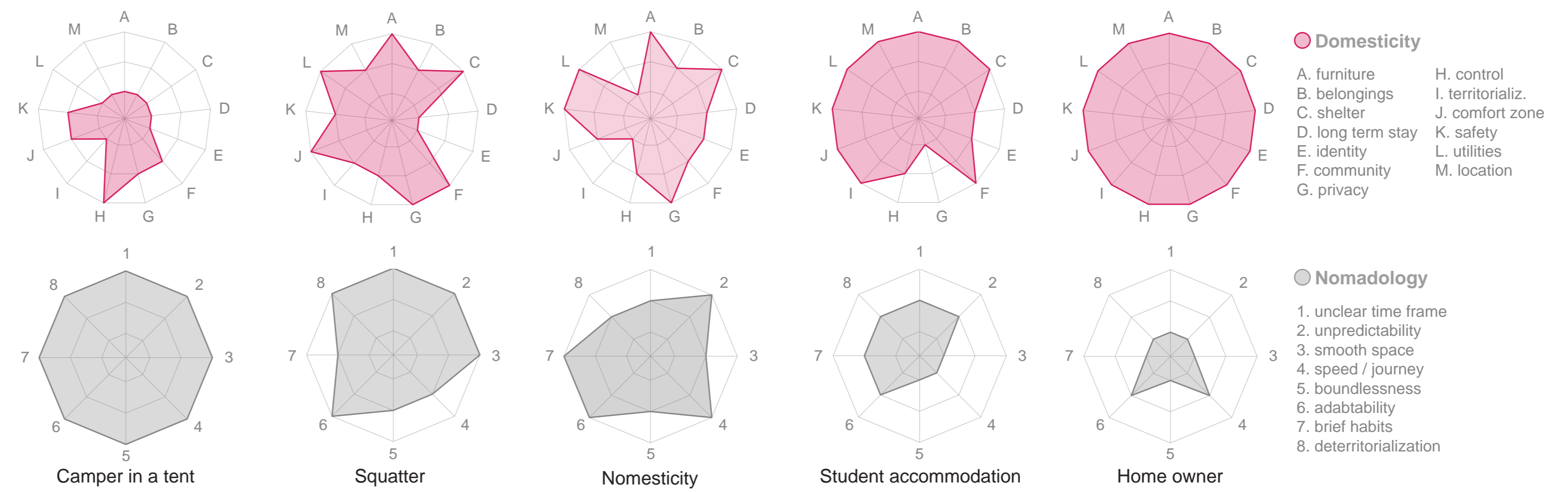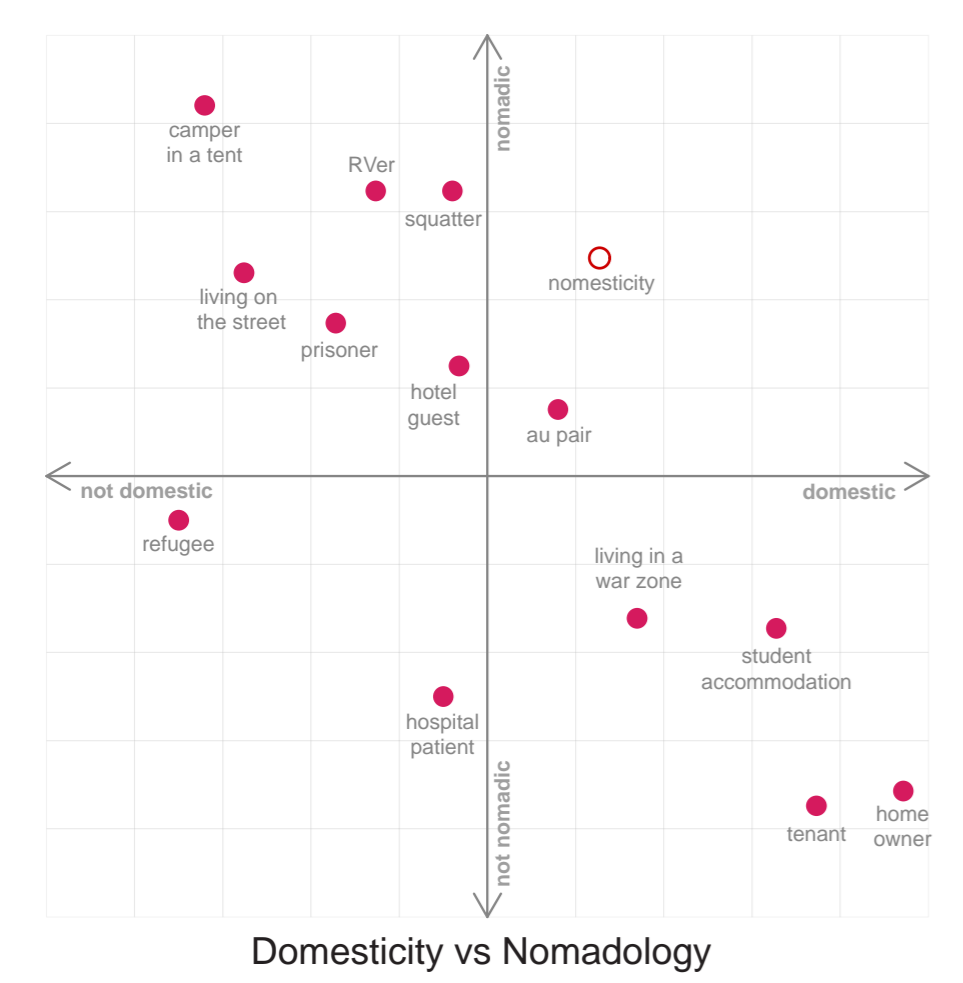**What if due to extreme weather everyone is a squatter?**

What if settlements are made of interchangeable dynamic units?

What if Supersurface had existed for one-hundred years?

What if settlements are made of interchangeable dynamic units?

Domesticity vs Nomadology

Camper in a tent

Squatter

Nomesticity

Student accommodation

Home owner

Domesticity
A. furniture
B. belongings
C. shelter
D. long term stay
E. identity
F. community
G. privacy
H. control
I. territorializ.
J. comfort zone
K. safety
L. utilities
M. location

Nomadology
1. unclear time frame
2. unpredictability
3. smooth space
4. speed / journey
5. boundlessness
6. adaptability
7. brief habits
8. deterritorialization

Nomesticity is a platform which provides the user with a great variety of options that can be chosen on the spot: where to sleep, what to eat, or what to wear. Ownership is minimized and replaced by services and affordances in an attempt to increase the nomadic qualities in a domestic environment. The name is a portmanteau of the words nomadic and domestic, concepts borrowed from 'A Thousand Plateaus' by Deleuze and Guattari. However, these concepts in Nomesticity are made perverse: the users live in schizophrenic movement in the hope of sparking a nomadic movement-in-place. But what are the implications? Is the platform repackaging consumerism and deepening divisions of haves and have-nots? Ultimately, is Nomesticity a utopia, or a dystopia?

Nomad / Migrant / Sedentary — Deterritorialization / Reterritorialization / Territorialization
Habitat — Habit
Movement / Speed — Expectation / Unpredictability — Chaos — Rhythm
War Machine — (Lack of) Control — The Sublime
Nomadology — Limit / Boundlessness — Routine — Domesticity