



Visibility in the Liminality;

An architectural
investigation of
spatial care in
women's shelters

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Chalmers School of Architecture
Department of architecture &
Civil Engineering

2026

Examiner: Kristina Grange
Supervisors: Joshua Levy &
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Abstract

Socially vulnerable groups have not been included in urban planning, instead exclusionary measures have been applied to regulate their use of public spaces, as well as having their shelters placed in industrial areas. Recently, however, a shift in approach has begun to emerge in some contexts, with developments of spaces specifically designed for this target group. However, there is a lack of empirical knowledge and appropriate tools to understand and make visible the needs of this group, especially in relation to their shelters and their surrounding environments.

The purpose of this Master's Thesis is to investigate this relationship in the context of one specific type of accommodation: shelters for women experiencing homelessness. It aims to facilitate a better understanding of the considerations, requirements and uses these shelters have in relation to their surroundings, and how this relationship can be strengthened. Through this, it seeks to contribute to the discussion regarding the urban placement of shelters for women experiencing homelessness as well as the women's access to public space.

The research is situated in Gothenburg, Sweden, and draws on a theoretical framework grounded in feminist principles of spatial design. It is based on two case studies of municipal shelters, and adopts a qualitative, participatory approach. The key methods include interviews, participatory mapping, thematic analysis and development of design strategies through sketching. The outcome of the thesis is a set of small-scale design strategies for the semi-public and public spaces surrounding shelters for women experiencing homelessness in Gothenburg, with the purpose to enhance connections between the shelters and their residents and staff with the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates one way in which architecture can function as a tool in addressing questions of spatial justice and equity. It proposes a series of design strategies that may support the spatial agency of a marginalized group, while also illustrating how qualitative, phenomenological methods can inform and contribute to architectural design processes.

Key words: Women's shelters; Social homelessness; Urban marginality; Spatial justice; Borderscapes; Public space; Gothenburg



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Chapter I:

Introduction

- 1.1 Problem formulation
- 1.2 Purpose
- 1.3 Aim
- 1.4 Research question
- 1.5 Terminology
- 1.6 Delimitations



Fig. 1. Photo of public space in Gothenburg. A liminal, open space in Gamlestaden.

1.1 Problem formulation

The dominant planning discourse in Sweden is aiming for social visions as “housing for all” (Turan & Ågren, 2021), but at the same time the spatial as well as the social segregation of the bigger cities in Sweden is increasingly growing, with results of deepened spatialized social inequalities (Thörn & Thörn, 2017). The social services department of Gothenburg have experienced how habitants suffering from substance misuse frequently gets excluded from the urban planning, and instead the city is prioritizing the voices of the public and businesses who wishes to avoid meeting socially vulnerable and underprivileged habitants. Consequences of these planning habits are social housing facilities which gets big in size and placed in the outskirts of the city. There has not been any cohesive planning of how to enable people in social vulnerability to live in or access the public spaces of Gothenburg (Hammersjö, 2024). Several researchers point out the lack of both empirical knowledge as well as suitable or sufficient tools to both understand and to make visible the needs of the group in the public spaces, as well as the relation between their accommodations and their surroundings (Hammersjö, 2024:6, Fredriks-

son & Gregorowicz-Kipszak, 2024:17). There is therefore a need to develop knowledge of how to better facilitate their needs within the urban planning and its expansions of the public spaces, and moreover to create a better understanding of the conflicting objectives which emerge from different groups interests and needs in the public (Fredriksson & Gregorowicz-Kipszak, 2024:7).

One particularly vulnerable group within this context is people without homes. Despite the policy of “Housing for all” in Gothenburg city, this group lacks a spatial domain through which individuals typically establish security and belonging in the city, and their capacity to participate in urban life on equal terms is heavily limited. According to several researchers, women experiencing homelessness occupy a particularly complex and many times less visible position. They are generally found in a poorer condition when seeking support, and due to intersectional reasons, the built environment may inadvertently reproduce forms of insecurity and exclusion rather than mitigate them (Bretherton, Benjaminsen & Pleace, 2017; Thörn, 2004; Grange, 2025).

1.1.2 The role of the architect

In the societal and economic structures which architecture operates, there is not much scope for architects to create impact, which has led to a discipline which historically has been absolving itself of responsibility. It is drawing for the client, not the user, and the client is the one who has possibilities to pay. This has the consequences of socially vulnerable not being subject to the architect’s knowledge in the same amount, even though it might be there where the society needs it the most. The architectural discipline has possibilities to intervene more in these questions, it has several tools and methods to offer in the interdisciplinary research regarding the subject today (Fokdal, 2021). Throughout the history of architecture, the discipline has designed the homes we live in as well as the public spaces we share. The knowledge embedded within the field is therefore crucial if we want to create an urban development process grounded in equity and social sustainability, where not only the needs of the urban middle class are met, but also those of marginalized groups.

“What is the architect’s role in producing, instigating an architecture whose quality does not reside in its aesthetics but in the model of sociability it produces?” (Petrescu, 2012:135)

Doina Petrescu (2012), one of the founders of Atelier d’architecture autogérée writes that architects can aim to design agencies rather than objects, with agency meaning the capability of acting otherwise. This could in the scope of architecture mean for the architect to act with intent to create critical difference and take social responsibility, as well as to question the current rules, structures and regulation for architectural practice. Agency is first understood as the power to act for oneself, but for the architect this power could also mean to act on behalf of others, or to act with others, such as in participatory approaches (Petrescu, 2012). Architecture can be a tool to empower others, and the agency of the architect can be to empower other agencies, as Petrescu writes (2012).

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to foreground questions of social vulnerability within the discipline of architecture by engaging with a topic more commonly addressed in the social sciences and urban planning. Through researching the needs of women experiencing homelessness, the thesis intends to highlight their challenges and lived conditions, and to explore how architectural practice may contribute to supporting their agency. It considers the architect as a potential actor within broader support structures and within interdisciplinary research, drawing on architectural tools, methods and knowledge.

1.3 Aim

This thesis aims to fill the gap of knowledge of the needs of women experiencing homelessness, with a focus on the relation between their accommodations and its surrounding. It aims to find design strategies which mitigate and enhance this relation, with the further possibility to be used as a tool in the discussion of where to place the shelters in the urban context.

Objectives

- Through literature review analyse the gaps in research of urban planning regarding the needs of socially vulnerable groups.
- Through participatory methods, map the needs of shelters for women experiencing homelessness and examine how the built environment addresses them.
- Through architectural methods, create design strategies which responds to a selection of the needs found in the analysis.

1.4 Research questions

- **Which spatial and environmental needs of women experiencing homelessness remain unaddressed by the contemporary built environment surrounding shelters in Gothenburg?**
- **How can feminist principles of spatial design inform the planning of a public space for women experiencing homelessness, in order to foster integration, integrity and safety for the women?**

1.5 Terminology

Borderscape: In this thesis the word borderscape has been borrowed and applied to the social boundaries set up in public urban spaces, which both derives from and reproduces exclusion of certain groups, often based on demographic and socio-economical belonging. For further description of the word, see chapter "Theoretical framework".

Shelter: In this thesis shelter refers to a temporary housing which is not at a secret location, while protected accommodation is at secret location and contains a higher level of security.

Emergency shelter: The term emergency shelter will be used to refer to shelters where individuals in acute homelessness can get a room for up to three months. In this thesis it is a collective, short-term shelter which accepts substance use. In Swedish it is called *akutboende*.

Transitional housing: The term transitional housing will be used to refer to shelters where individuals in acute homelessness can get a room for up to six months. In this thesis it is a collective, short-term shelter which do not accepts substance use. In Swedish it is called *kollektivt boende*.

Intersectionality: An analytical framework which explains how different factors of social and political identities and oppressions can overlap and create interlocking systems of power, which leads to them not being able to be understood fully if analysed isolated (Guest, 2020: 793).

Reflexivity: "A critical self-examination of the role the anthropologist plays and an awareness that one's identity affects one's fieldwork and theoretical analyses." (Guest, 2020 p.246)

1.6 Delimitations

This thesis is an exploration of the relationship between the shelters for women experiencing homelessness and the context they are situated in.

Since its focus is to address spatial dynamics through a feminist architectural lens with intersectional awareness, it will not include facilities for men or mixed populations. It will also not investigate any dynamics related to ethnicity or age, acknowledging that these factors play a big influence but are beyond its scope.

While homelessness is a complex and interconnected issue involving both economic, structural and psychological dimensions, this thesis will put a primary focus on the spatial aspect in connection to social dynamics.

The main focus is on social homelessness, even though it recognises the struggle for the households in structural homelessness.

The research is limited to a contemporary context, it does not include a historical analysis.

It is limited to shelters for women experiencing homelessness within the municipality of Gothenburg, other geographic contexts are not included.

The thesis acknowledges that public spaces are complex and layered by the needs of many groups, but it chose to put focus on the needs of the women experiencing homelessness. Another possible outcome could have been to put focus on also the neighbours needs, and how to handle the conflicting objectives if the different groups would share a public space. This was not chosen since I found that it was necessary to first explore how the needs of the women and their shelters could be met spatially, before it was possible to explore how possible conflicting objectives could be handled. It was also a political stand, to put the needs of the socially vulnerable at the top of the social hierarchy and to design accordingly.

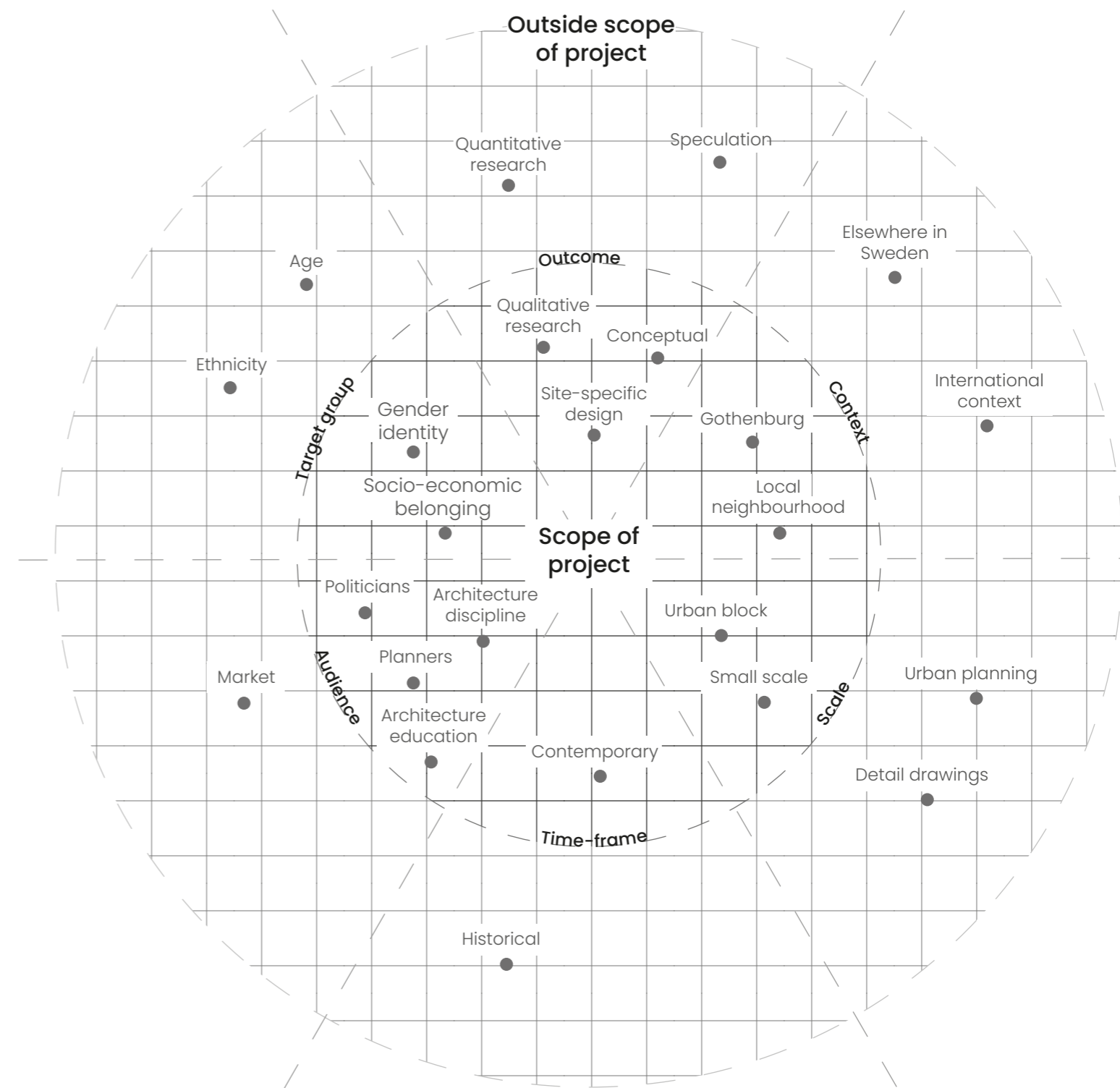


Fig. 2. Illustration of delimitations.

Chapter II:

Background

2.1 Context

2.2 References

2.3 Theoretical framework



Fig. 3. Photo of public space in Gothenburg. A square with greenery in Bråmaregården.



Fig. 4. World map without Antarctica. (Chrkl, 2010).

2.1 Context

The thesis is situated within a Swedish context, specifically on the southwest coast in the city of Gothenburg. With a population of just above 600,000, it is the second-largest city in the country (Statistiska centralbyrån, n.d.). Gothenburg's relevance as a context for this study is based on multiple reasons. Firstly, it is one of the areas in Sweden with the highest percentage of individuals experiencing homelessness. Secondly, it can currently be seen to undergo an interesting as well as ambivalent and partly contradictory policy shift regarding the city's approach to individuals in social vulnerability, and their integration in urban planning.

This chapter provides a summary of the situation for homelessness in Sweden as well as Gothenburg, followed by the situation for women experiencing homelessness and how it differs from that of men. It presents the public discourse, which is mostly not in favour of the socially vulnerable, and lastly it gives an overview of the different shelters for individuals experiencing homelessness provided in the municipality of Gothenburg.

2.1.1 Homelessness in Sweden

According to the national board of health and welfare's definition of homelessness in Sweden, there are four categories in which people may find themselves for longer or shorter periods:

- Acute homelessness. Where people are sleeping outdoors or in public spaces, emergency shelters, protected housing or similar conditions.
- Individuals in institutional stay, such as prison, healthcare facilities and foster homes, and are due to move within three months without secured housing.
- Long-term housing solutions arranged by social services.
- Self-arranged short-term housing, such as people living temporarily or without contract with friends, family or acquaintances (Exploateringsförvaltningen, 2025).

Homelessness is often divided into two categories, structurally homeless, which covers households which experience difficulties finding a home due to a structural lack of affordable housing, and socially homeless, which covers households which experience difficulties finding a home due to social obstacles, such as struggles with substance use or mental health (Sveriges stadsmissioner, n.d.).

There were 27 380 individuals of the age of 18 years or older living in homelessness in Sweden 2023 (Socialstyrelsen, 2024). 31 % of the individuals experiencing homelessness lived in one of the four biggest cities in Sweden, while barely 21% of the total population lived in the same four cities (Socialstyrelsen, 2024). In the article Who counts as a who by Kristina Grange (2025) one can read that Gothenburg together with Malmö recently have introduced a tougher policy on what households will qualify for acute social support. Only people categorized as socially homeless will get help with accommodation, which leaves many structurally homeless without support to solve their situation.

A nationally implemented strategy to reduce homelessness is Housing first (Göteborgs stad, 2025). The method derives from the perspective that for an individual to be able to handle their problems, it is necessary to first have a safe place to live. Individuals in homelessness are through housing first being provided a place to live before they need to be sober or free of substance use. They are being offered apartments on equal terms as other tenants, and they are offered voluntary support to become substance free (Göteborgs stad, 2025).

2.1.2 Homelessness in Gothenburg

2377 adults and 642 children were living in homelessness in Gothenburg 2025 (Exploateringsförvaltningen, 2025). The municipality of Gothenburg (2025) releases a report every year where they evaluate the current situation of people in homelessness in the city. It says: “In 2021, the median rent for apartments built after 2011 was almost 60 percent higher than the median rent for the entire rental stock”. It gets increasingly difficult for households with low income to secure housing independently (Exploateringsförvaltningen, 2025).

In the city of Gothenburg, individuals experiencing homelessness find themselves in the following categories:

- Acute homelessness: 10%, or 225 individuals are registered in this situation in Gothenburg today.
- Individuals in institutional stay: 34%, or 741 individuals are in this situation in Gothenburg today.
- Social services long-term housing solutions: 49%, or 1067 individuals are in this situation in Gothenburg today.
- Self-arranged short-term housing: 5%, or 114 individuals are registered in this situation in Gothenburg today (Exploateringsförvaltningen, 2025).

In the report *The city of Gothenburg’s Homelessness Plan 2025-2026* (2025) the city of Gothenburg describes their plan to reduce the number of household suffering from homelessness. They write that Gothenburg together with Malmö together has reported 2079 individuals experiencing homelessness less in 2023 compared to 2017. Gothenburg had fewer living in category number 3, in long-term housing solutions, as well as category number 1, acute homelessness. They mean that this decrease is a result of several factors, but the investments in the policy Housing first, as well as to provide more counseling regarding housing solutions, together with an increase in residential apartment constructions and reduced number of received newly arrived migrants (Göteborgs stad, 2025). Grange (2025) states that this stands in contradiction with reports provided by NGOs working with homelessness in Gothenburg, since they meant that they had experienced an increasing demand for their services in the recent years. The difference could indicate a discrepancy between statistics and reality (Grange, 2025). She continues that the policy implementation regarding how to qualify for acute social support, which excludes households in structural homelessness could be one of the reasons to the big decline in numbers in the statistics (Grange, 2025).

The plan to reduce the number of households in homelessness in Gothenburg between 2025 and 2026 includes 4 focus areas:

- Homelessness shall be prevented.
- No one should live on the street.
- Housing first will be expanded
- The social perspective in urban planning will be strengthened.

This study falls under the same topic as the fourth focus area, The social perspective in urban planning will be strengthened. One aspect of it is described as that there is a need to plan safe public spaces for all to use, and public spaces with a specific focus on individuals in social vulnerability and homelessness (Göteborgs stad, 2025).

In the report *A city with space for socially vulnerable?* (Socialförvaltningen, 2024) one can read how the city of Gothenburg has sporadically worked with public spaces aimed at socially vulnerable to handle problems which occurred locally, but they have not previously had an overarching strategy. They have placed wind shelters in proximity to spaces where socially vulnerable spend time, often with the purpose to move the group from public spaces such as squares, to more peripheral spaces. This happened in Angered, Olskroken, Backaplan and Gamlestaden. These spaces, called repliplatser, has often resulted in less individuals in social vulnerability on the squares initially, but conflicts and issues regarding maintenance at the wind shelters and several times conflicting objectives when the socially vulnerable returns to the squares which the city tried to exclude them from (Socialförvaltningen, 2024). Catharina Thörn writes in the article *Soft politics of exclusion* (2011) about how Gothenburg city has recently implemented soft anti-homeless laws to create an attractive central business district. Street music was banned, public toilets removed, and Brunnsparcken, a central public park was renovated to have higher visibility and partly turned into a seating area for a cafe, as well as security guards were hired to patrol the streets. These initiatives are according to Thörn not directly targeting homelessness, but that they resemble American anti-homeless policy (Thörn, 2011). The city centre has through several measures excluded socially vulnerable, with a result of them instead going to spend time in suburban areas, such as Jaegerdorffsplatsen or Gamlestaden, and eventually too many of them being at the same place has resulted in the city building wind shelters or similar measures in an attempt to direct their use of these spaces (Socialförvaltningen, 2024).

2.1.3 Services

There is a variety in support for individuals experiencing homelessness in Gothenburg municipality. In the city of Gothenburg approximately 30 accommodation units exist today, with around 1300 available places. About one third of these are located in industrial areas of the city (Grange, 2025). Some of them are run by the municipality and others by idea-based

organisations or privately. They are either mixed or gender specific, and of varying time limits of stay. The women exclusive shelters have levels of security, where some are a protected accommodation with a hidden address. Some shelters allow substance use, while others require sobriety (Göteborgs stad, n.d.).

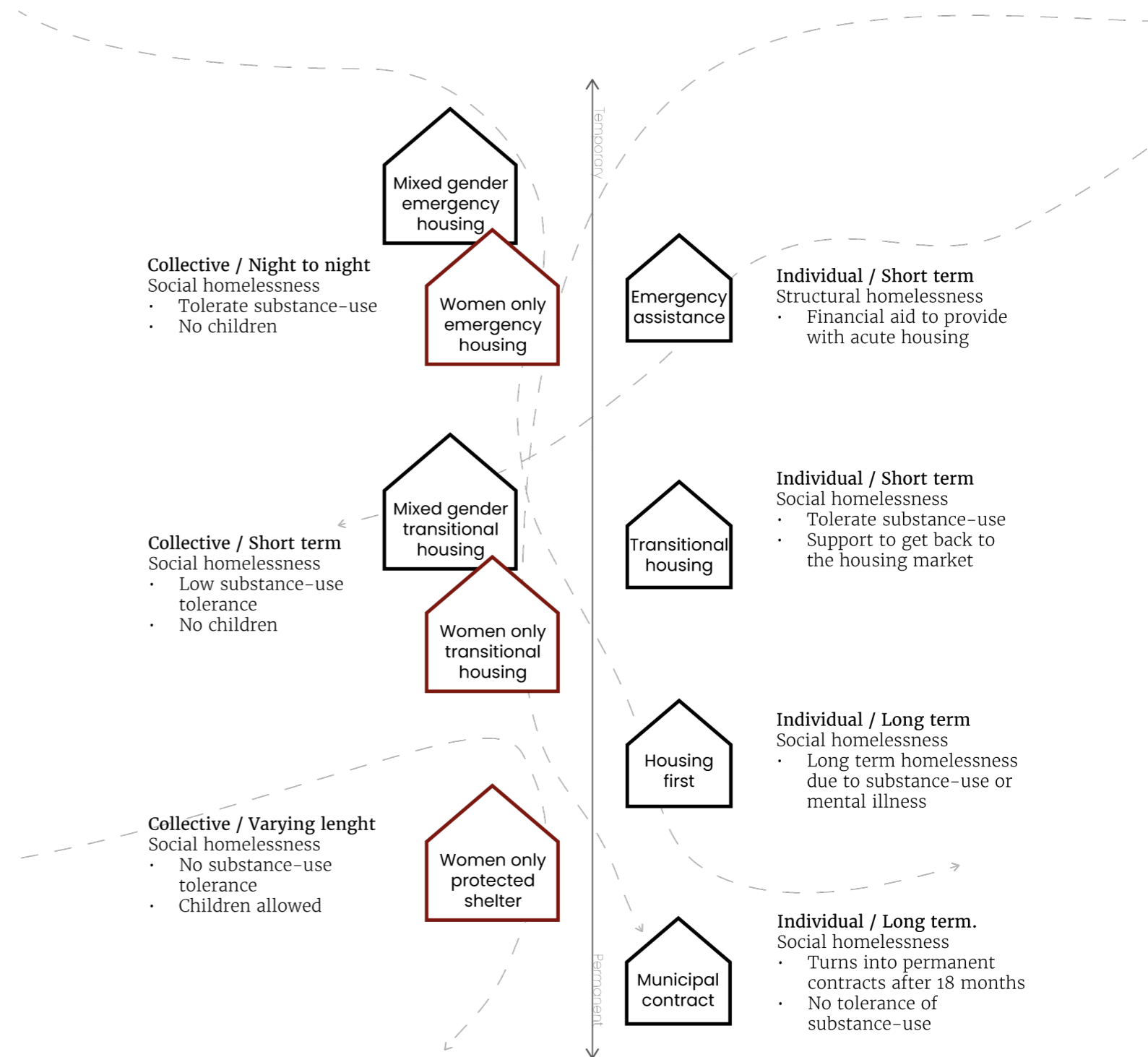


Fig. 5. Illustration of variety of accommodation support offered for individuals experiencing homelessness.

2.1.4 Women in homelessness

Research shows how women experiencing homelessness are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our community (Social Resource Administration, n.d). 797 individuals, 37% of the people living in homelessness in Gothenburg are women (Exploateringsförvaltning, 2025), but they tend to seek institutional support later than men, which indicates they are not fully represented in the statistics (Bretherton, Benjaminsen & Pleace, 2017). This can be due to how women in homelessness are experiencing another level of stigmatisation, leading to them avoiding being recorded in the services and systems for people in homelessness (Thörn, 2004). There is also an intersectional lens, where the solutions provided meet the needs for people in homelessness, but not the needs of women (Grange, 2025). As a result, women are generally in a lot worse condition than men when they seek support.

“Yet, there is other evidence (...), that of women exhausting informal arrangements before seeking formal help. When homelessness, other negative experiences and lack of treatment and support have taken a toll, some homeless women may need higher degrees of support at greater rates than some homeless men.” (Bretherton, Benjaminsen & Pleace, 2017: p. 97)

Layers of vulnerability

Homelessness is frequently correlating with mental and physical health conditions, substance use issues and lack of financial support and dependence on social services as well as exposure to crime and violence. Research shows how 91% of the group “women experiencing homelessness” have been victims of different types of physical and sexual violence (Social resursförvaltning, n.d). A research done in Stockholm in 2009 showed how 34% of the women in the research group were carrying an infectious disease, such as HIV or Hepatit C. Women which former Kvinnovårdkedjan, (the continuum of care for women) consisting of two women separatist shelters and a activity centre in Gothenburg, have been in contact with witnessed of an exposure of sexual violence, earlier experiences of sexual violence during childhood, unintended pregnancies or engagement in prostitution (Social resursförvaltning, n.d).

Violence

In the research Men’s Violence Against Women with Substance Use Issues – One Type of Intimate Partner Violence Among Others, done by Carin Holmberg, Goldina Smirthwaite och Agneta Nilsson (2005) one can read how women who

participated witnessed how a notable amount of the participants had experienced violence already during childhood, or they had witnessed violence within their family. They can be described as multiply marginalised, as they can experience violence in their home by partners, or in public spaces by other men or women in substance use. Some women also witnessed of violence by people in their professional practice, such as police or security guards. In the interviews the violence was described as a normal part of life (Holmberg et al., 2005).

A survey was conducted in the study by Holmberg et al. (2005), where in total 103 women from different support facilities in Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm answered. In the result one can read how 92% of the women answering had been experiencing sexual, physical and/or psychological violence in adult age. Out of these occasions, 12% the perpetrator was a woman, and in 87% it was a man. 93% of these women had experienced violence of more than one type. 46% said they had experienced violence two to ten times, and 52% said they had experienced violence more than ten times. 84% of women answering the survey said had experienced violence during the last two years. 63% of these were two to ten times, and 29% were more than 10 times. 75% of these women had experienced violence in their home, 41% in a public space. 74% of all women answering the survey answered yes on the question if they got an injury by the violence (Holmberg et al., 2005).

Substance use

Sexual violence and substance use are co-related, according to Holmberg et al. (2005). A woman in a violent relationship can use substances to cope with the situation, or a woman with previous experiences of violence can use substances as a form of self-medication. The substance use can also make the woman more dependent on the relationship, if the partner is the one providing her with the substances or is the one providing funding. The women can also avoid seeking help due to fear of having their substance use or possible criminality revealed, or if they have children to have them taken by social services. This can also be used as a threat by men they live with, if the women seek help, leave the man or report him to the police he will reveal her substance use or criminality to relatives or social services. Another layer of vulnerability to women with substance use issues is how many instances requires the woman to not be in active substance use to be able to receive support, which highly limits this group of women’s possibilities to receive help (Holmberg et al., 2005).

2.1.5 Public discourse

Several media articles have been published in recent years regarding shelters for women in homelessness and other forms of accommodations for socially vulnerable individuals. Most commonly, these articles focus is on opposition and protests from local residents when social housing facilities are established in or relocated to their neighbourhood.

In an article called *Homeless women forced to live in industrial areas i Gothneburg* (original name: *Hemlösa kvinnor tvingas bo i industriområden i Göteborg*), written by Mia Pettersson and published in October 2023, they interviewed clients and staff from a women shelter in Gothenburg. The article derived from a discussion of where to place shelters for individuals experiencing homelessness. Some politicians meant that they should not be placed in industrial areas anymore, but residents’ protested heavily when shelters were moved to residential areas (Pettersson, 2023).

Another article called *After the protests - no substance abuse shelter in Lundby* (original name: *Efter protesterna - inget missbruksboende i Lundby*) written by Johanna Hagström in December 2022, describes how a collective home for individuals with substance use due to the neighbour’s protests would not move to new facilities in Lundby, Gothenburg, even though it had previously been decided. The protests regarded how it was considered inappropriate to have the accommodation located close to families with children and schools (Hagström, 2022).

The article *Concern among neighbours when Alma accommodation move to Gamlestaden* (original name: *Oro bland grannar när boendet Alma flyttar till Gamlestaden*) written by Mia Pettersson in October 2022, tells about how neighbours as well as Bid-coordinators (Business improvement district) protested when a shelter for women experiencing homelessness was planned to move to a residential area in Gothenburg. They meant that it would decrease the safety of the area, mostly because of the people following the women who lives at the shelter (Pettersson, 2022) (see ”the tail”, described under Home and safety at p.56).

2.2 References

2.2.1 Mutual Benefits

The project Mutual Benefits – wise design for safety, inclusion and a city for all was active between November 2021 until October 2024 in the city of Gothenburg. It aimed to explore the question of how to include the needs of socially vulnerable groups in the development of the city, since this group often suffered exclusion from the planning, with results of strict rules, security, excluding design and peripheral placement in the city (Hammersjö, 2024). The project was a collaboration between Gothenburg municipality, Gothenburg city mission, Chalmers University of technology and the two real estate companies Wallenstam and Stena fastigheter. It was funded by Vinnova. With socially vulnerable they meant individuals experiencing homelessness and/or problematic substance use and/or mental health

issues (Socialförvaltningen Sydväst, 2024).

During the development of the project, it became clear that the connection between homelessness, social vulnerability and city development has not been sufficiently explored in existing research (Socialförvaltningen Sydväst, 2024), and that the city of Gothenburg does not have a sufficient, coherent or long-term planning approach for people in social vulnerability: both regarding their housing solutions, and how they are able to move through and use the public spaces of the city. It also became clear how there was a lack of sufficient tools to make visible the needs of the target group as well as the relation between their social housing and its surroundings (Hammersjö, 2024).

Aim and result

The aim of the project was to provide an empirical discussion material to be used in the development of Gothenburg, as well as to provide support to stop the negative spiral of relocation and exclusion of socially vulnerable in the city. It resulted in what the City of Gothenburg refers to as a “funktionsprogram” (program of requirements) for social housing. They also tested a model of place-based collaboration together with a social housing in Kallebäck, which expanded to also be tested in several other social housings in the city of Gothenburg, one of them being the emergency shelter which this thesis has collaborated with (Socialförvaltningen Sydväst,

2024). The work with place-based collaboration resulted at the end of the project in guidelines and a decision to implement their model in all facilities within housing and homelessness services within the Southwest Social Administration (the Gothenburg City administration responsible for all social housing). Moreover, Mutual Benefits developed the mapping system of all social housing in the municipality to provide a better opportunity for them to be included in the future development plans in the city. It also contributed to the evidence base and knowledge dissemination regarding social housing and its inclusion in city planning (Hammersjö, 2024).



Fig. 6. Map of Gothenburg.

Extraction of the program of requirements, relevant for this thesis:

- **Women and transgender individuals in homelessness** have a particular risk of being victims of violence or sexual violence in their residential and public environment. It is therefore highly inappropriate to locate their housing in peripheral or unsafe areas, as well as in connection to other forms of housing for socially vulnerable, unless these are women exclusive as well.
- **Outdoor environment:** Individuals in social housing are a heterogeneous group, but with a common need of an inviting and inspiring outdoor area in proximity to the accommodation. A common outdoor area in connection to the housing which offers seating solutions and greenery are appreciated. It should have lightning, and on some occasions a fence or garden hedge with limited visibility.
- **Indoor environment:** Should be characterized by the fact that the accommodations are the private home of the clients, they should provide a homely feeling
- **Outdoor lightning:** Is of importance, and should provide a welcoming atmosphere, be decorative as well as reduce dark areas to increase safety and prevent crime.
- **Perimeter protection:** the housing should limit visits or attempts of contacts from other individuals, through not being placed on the ground floor, possibly having only one entrance, or implementations of other forms of boundaries outside the building.

(City of Gothenburg, Social Services South-West, 2024).

2.2.2 Mobile sanctuaries for the socially vulnerable

Including vs excluding design

In the report “Stadsrum för fler” written by Julia Fredriksson and Joanna Gregorowicz-Kipszak (2024) about Mutual Benefits they describe the consequences of including and excluding design. They mean that the actual consequences of excluding and including design are complex and under researched. Design which aims to exclude non normative behaviour can reduce the risk of harm for individuals in problematic substance use. There is also often a correlation between excluding design and social support for socially vulnerable. It is at the same time important to remember the values which leads to excluding design, and even though design whose purpose is not to be excluding can have the same effects as excluding design, the later sends a clear visual message of who is welcome to be in the public and who is not (Fredriksson & Gregorowicz-Kipszak, 2024). Fredriksson & Gregorowicz-Kipszak (2024) writes that European cities tend to use excluding methods to manage the users of public spaces, such as removal of visibility reducing vegetation, public restrooms and implementation of restaurants outdoor seating areas, which pushes socially vulnerable out to the peripheries of the cities. Another strategy is to go for universal design with the aim to include everyone, but this is criticised by researchers since different groups can have conflicting objectives regarding their needs in public spaces. Moreover, universal design is often adjusted to the norm, which can further emphasise the hegemonic structures and ignore issues of intersectionality (Fredriksson & Gregorowicz-Kipszak, 2024).

A solution proposed by the Fredriksson and Gregorowicz-Kipszak (2024) is to design spaces aimed at certain groups and to divide the public spaces into several parts, to acknowledge and meet the different needs of different groups and to make possible for them to co-exist. It is important to stay aware of how certain groups are under researched regarding their needs and their relation to their surroundings, such as those of socially vulnerable. They also mean that these spaces can risk more individuals to be included in problematic substance use, if there are spaces where many with the same habits are clustered (Fredriksson & Gregorowicz-Kipszak, 2024).

Odense municipality in Denmark did previously have issues with a big amount of open problematic substance use in the city centre and applied a holistic approach of how to handle this question within their urban planning (Fredriksson & Gregorowicz-Kipszak, 2024). From an analytical study they got an overarching and brief understanding of how individuals in social vulnerability used the city centre, which they followed by adding and designing spaces with seating and other necessary functions aimed for them to use in spaces where the city wanted them to be, away from the main street of the city centre. These spaces were called “Hellesteder”, and their aim was to provide a space for socially vulnerable to be a part of the public, but without negatively affecting other groups. The spaces are both movable and removable (Balfelt, n.d). It was appreciated by the socially vulnerable, but also criticised. They said that the analytical study showed where they were allowed to spend time today, not where they would like to spend their time. They also said that the movable function of the module gave a layer of insecurity to the space (Fredriksson & Gregorowicz-Kipszak, 2024).

Odense municipality lifted the following aspects as important during their creation of public spaces for socially vulnerable:

- Proximity to commonly requested items by the target group, such as cigarettes and beer.
- Proximity to flows of pedestrians and traffic, for safety reasons.
- Placement which provides for the target group to be a part of public life, without negatively effecting other users of the space.
- High visibility, for safety reasons.
- Visual and functional attractiveness.
- Comfort, belonging and safety (Fredriksson & Gregorowicz-Kipszak, 2024).

When Kenneth Balfelt Team together with Land+ developed and designed the mobile sanctuaries in Odense they meant that public spaces for socially vulnerable needs to reach the same standards as other public spaces in the city. In the program they developed for the mobile sanctuaries, based on their analysis as well as discussions with the users of them, the “Hellesteder”, they highlight the importance of weather protection, a heated room with elevated floor, restrooms, sound proofing, solid construction and boundaries made of vegetation separating the space from its surroundings. They meant further that functions which were attractive to other groups of society, such as bicycle pumps, could facilitate meetings between the different groups (Balfelt, n.d).



Fig. 7. Mobile sanctuaries for the socially vulnerable (Kenneth Balfelt team, 2014). Reprinted with permission from Kenneth Balfelt team.



Fig. 8. Mobile sanctuaries for the socially vulnerable (Kenneth Balfelt team, 2014). Reprinted with permission from Kenneth Balfelt team.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The thesis adopts a grounded theory approach. The analysis is initially informed by two conceptual theories, Borderscapes and The right to everyday life, and the theoretical framework is progressively expanded with additional concepts and theoretical perspectives as the analysis develops.

This theoretical framework brings together perspectives on boundaries, care, belonging, and the right to the city to analyse how opportunities, challenges, and forms of vulnerability are produced in urban spaces for women experiencing homelessness.

First are the two conceptual theories presented shortly, followed by the theoretical framework, and lastly a theoretical synthesis is presented.

2.3.1 The right to everyday life

The feminist urban theory “Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life” by Yasminah Beebeejaun (2017) emphasizes how everyday spatial practices can reveal and challenge the gendered and unequal nature of urban environments. It means that space and gender are co-constituted: not only are urban spaces gendered, but gender itself is also spatialized. Everyday practices of movement, use, and occupation both reflect, emphasize and reproduce gendered hierarchies.

From this perspective, rights to the city are not static entitlements, but are enacted and negotiated through small tactics of everyday life, drawn from de Certeau’s “the practice of everyday life”. These tactics, which could be small acts of resistance or appropriation, constitute a form of urban agency that makes visible who has access, safety, and belonging within public space. Beebeejaun’s theoretical framework also recognizes that gendered experiences intersect with race, class, age, sexuality, and ability, and that these dimensions produce layered and shifting forms of inclusion and exclusion across urban contexts. The feminist critique of the “Right to the City” therefore expands Lefebvre’s concept by adding the embodied and relational nature of rights. They should not be understood as universal abstractions but as spatially and temporally contingent practices, which depend on the context, time and individual (Beebeejaun, 2017).

2.3.2 Borderscapes

The master’s thesis will also draw on the urban theory by Chiara Brambilla (2015), “Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept”. The term borderscapes originates from the words border and landscape, but it has in the evolution of the theory come to represent circuits of images and ideas of the landscape, more than the landscape itself, and how it is perceived and represented differently by each individual. It relies on being able to be used as a verb, “border-scaping”, which refers to shaping the border and its surroundings, not physically, but in people’s minds (dell’Agnese, E., & Amilhat Szary, A.-L., 2015). Brambilla (2015) conceptualizes borders as performative and of shifting symbolic and material constructions, whose meanings change through interpretation and in relation to their historical and socio-political contexts. Rather than understanding borders as stable spatial divisions, the theory of borderscapes emphasizes their dynamic, temporal, and relational nature. Brambilla (2015) interpretation of the concept of borderscapes adds the layer of using the theory as a framework to also understand boundaries in the everyday, urban scale:

“By seeing double it is possible to be aware of geographical and territorial borders as well as ethnic, social and cultural boundaries, also considering their visible and hidden interactions.” (Brambilla, 2015:25).

With “by seeing double” she refers to the multiple layers of perspectives and scales acting simultaneously (Brambilla, 2015), from the initial nation-state border towards putting focus on how it affected the small-scale, human experiences of the borders in the day-to-day life (dell’Agnese, E., & Amilhat Szary, A.-L., 2015). And now Brambilla (2015) proposes how it can also be applied at landscapes not affected by a nation-border, but other kinds of boundaries acting in urban spaces. Wherever bordering processes have impacts, are represented or negotiated the theory can be applied (Brambilla, 2015).

2.3.3 Application

Boundaries, inclusion and exclusion

In an architectural and urban context, the **borderscapes** framework (Brambilla, 2015) can be used to enable an examination of how borders are produced within cities through spatial design, use, regulation, and perception, and how actors experience and use the same urban spaces in different ways. This approach supports an understanding of the city as a complex and contested spatial landscape, shaped by overlapping borders that are constantly redefined, and it is this application of the borderscapes concept which this thesis will examine. More specifically it will examine how the boundaries are experienced and interpreted by those who inhabit the surroundings in everyday life, through the framework by Beebeejaun (2017), “Gender, urban space, and **the right to everyday life**”, which suggests that the urban public and its socio-spatial boundaries is an ongoing negotiation between bodies, spaces and power. Beebeejaun (2017) writes:

“Struggles over space reveal the implicit hierarchies, the ordering of space, the rules, and the exclusions in order to maintain particular visions of the orderly city. The concept of the public itself has relied upon the exclusion of different groups over time.” (Beebeejaun, 2017:325)

National and urban boundaries can be viewed as socio-cultural and discursive processes, defining power dynamics (Brambilla, 2015). The boundaries examined in this thesis can be viewed as that their purpose is to act as separators between different groups, including some and excluding other. These two theories will be used to position this project as a mediator, with the aim to acknowledge the experience of some of those who are normally being excluded by said boundaries.

An argument for women experiencing homelessness to be included in society can come from **Social cognitive theory**, described by Nabavi and Bijandi (2012) in Bandura’s social learning theory & social cognitive learning theory. They write that this theory, in the understanding of psychologist Albert Bandura, describes behavioural change in humans, as individuals. Bandura meant that in order for an individual to change their behaviour, they were dependent on two factors. One was their level of self-efficacy, if they believed in their ability to master a specific task or behaviour and to achieve a desired outcome, it was more likely they would find motivation for a behavioural change. He

meant that individuals could train their self-efficacy through doing things they were good at. The second factor which was crucial for behavioural change was their surroundings, because the theory comes from an understanding that humans learn by observing others surrounding them (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012). This is why it can be important for women experiencing homelessness to be included in society, to be surrounded by different people, and not as in an industrial area only by other people with similar struggles as themselves.

Social production of space

Brambilla (2015) states that boundaries can be seen as performative, and their construction takes place through representation, acts of narration, visualization and imagination, a form of borderscaping. To agree with this, it can be necessary to state that borderscapes draws from processual ontology, meaning the understanding that our reality is actively constructed and depends on our own understanding and praxis (Brambilla, 2015). In the same way, “Gender, urban space and the right to everyday life” draws from Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) theory of **the production of space**, that no space is neutral, but constructed by social processes and interpretations. Beebeejaun (2017) adds to this perspective that the city also is gendered through multiple actions and experiences of its inhabitants. Our rights are embodied, they are not experienced in the abstract, but they have material dimensions.

Gender, belonging and a right to the city

Beebeejaun (2017) argues that spaces in the language of planning often are positioned without a context and as an independent factor within which we are enabled to coexist. But the access we have to a space is in constant negotiation with its other users, and inclusivity as well as exclusion are simultaneously and dynamically produced (Beebeejaun, 2017). Similarly, borderscapes can be used as tool for rethinking categories of political belonging, where borders are “markers of belonging and places of becoming” (Brambilla, 2015:24). Beebeejaun writes that when women’s rights get restricted within public space, their feelings of belonging are being restricted. When women felt excluded from spaces at certain time periods by men, their ability to express their rights were reduced (Beebeejaun, 2017). An extra layer of complexity is how being gendered is not one identity, it is intersectional, and it requires an integration of gendered perspectives within professional practice to present a coherent analysis of inclusion (Beebeejaun, 2017). Women in this thesis are not being restricted only because of their gender, but also

because of their socio-economic belonging as being homeless. Beebeejaun (2017) writes that when we try to subsume gendered experiences to articulate universal rights in urban planning, we underestimate the complexities of difference.

Even though multiple users’ risk being in conflict or create gendered patterns of exclusion in urban space, the planning attention or policy intervention have put no focus in creating an understanding of this matter (Beebeejaun, 2017). Applying the borderscapes concept to this reveals how social boundaries are acting as fluid fields of political, economic, social and cultural negotiations, and are never marginal but can rather be seen as an engine of social organisation and change, a connection between processes of social and political transformation and local experience (Brambilla, 2015), if they are recognised and analysed. Through this occurs an opportunity to emphasise the potential of belonging in borders, and not only for the privileged groups in society.

Claiming space and spatial Agency

Beebeejaun (2017) writes that in the time of neoliberalism, the urban scale has become an important arena to promote progressive and collective rights, and a variety of perspectives has come to the front as a means of reclaiming urban space. She argues that the constant repeat of the same perspective is a sign of neglect of gender within urban theory, and a growing concern of increasing socio-spatial segregation (Beebeejaun, 2017).

The neighbourhood is an important site for understanding women’s identities, but it is not the only important site, according to Beebeejaun (2017). Where we work, care or are enjoying leisure activities are spaces where women are claiming or denied their rights, and it is through small everyday activities and tactics where this claim is taking place. Simply walking through a space and filling it with one’s own meanings and bringing memories and emotions there is to temporarily take over a place, and through repetitive use of a space an embodied sense of belonging is being developed. Beebeejaun (2017) continues that it is of importance to enable different groups to claim urban spaces, and that it is on the responsibility of the planners to map the dynamic qualities and everyday experiences to be able to do so. It is also of importance to understand that spaces cannot be equally inclusive at all times, and the need of a diverse range of spaces can occur.

Awan, Schneider and Till (2011) write about **spatial agency**, and they suggests that archi-

tecture is not limited to the production of objects but also encompasses the production of space as a social and political process, and they position the architect as an agent embedded within dynamic networks of relations. It acts in collaboration with and on behalf of others to empower, enable change and participation and open up potentials within the built environment (Awan, Schneider & Till, 2011). The design of the urban spaces can therefore be expected to be able to enhance or reduce the agency of its users, and it is as a result possible to challenge or enhance the social structures and inequalities.

A tool to claim space for the individual is through art. Brambilla (2015) writes how we can challenge dominant representation and hegemonic discourses and make the border and active site of resistance through art and cultural productions, and that they can contribute to deconstructing the border landscape. This she suggests is a possible way to connect border experiences and border representation.

Another tool to claim right in the city, as well as to increase the experienced and actual safety is visibility. Brambilla (2015) writes that visibility equals representation, and it is a first way to access the public sphere. Beebeejaun (2017) states that women challenging the norms of public space are powerful reminders how they are normally restricted within the urban spaces. One way to challenge norms can be through visibility. To simply be at a place when they are not expected to be there, or to act in ways which are non-normative for women.

Visibility and Safety

Social and cultural production are not static. Brambilla (2015) argues that there is a need to develop tools which can help identify where and for whom borders are acting, and how they function in different contexts. The borderscapes concept suggests that borders are temporary, their time frame is unstable, and they are under constant change (Brambilla, 2015). According to Beebeejaun (2017) in the right to everyday life, spaces are also not static. They are animated with history, time of the day or week, season or the presence of people. This results in a constant negotiation between people and groups, where their dynamically produced inclusivity and access are at stake. The temporality also affects the experience of safety. Fear is not located solely to a space, but it is often concentrated to specific times (Beebeejaun, 2017). These issues are not solely related to design, but they are related to spatial dimensions of rights, which urban planning and design are highly connected to.

Jane Jacobs (1961) lifted another aspect of safety already in 1961 in *The death and life of great American cities*, in the theory of **eyes on the street**. She argues that safety within a city primarily comes from how safe we feel on the streets. She also writes that what differs a city from suburbs or less dense places are the number of strangers you meet there. We must therefore find a way to feel secure among strangers on the streets. The greatest contributor to provide safety and peace in cities are according to Jacobs to have many eyes watching, a network of voluntary controls and many people passing. The eyes watching can come from different residents or other proprietors of the street, and the streets should have a continuously amount of users, both to increase the number of eyes on the street, but also to induce the people in the buildings to have something to watch and therefore encourage them to watch more. A risk of streets with low visibility is to be “assaulted, unseen or unrescued” (Jacobs, 1961:31).

Spatial care, environment and well-being

Jessie Speer writes about **Institutional care**, and how institutions for individuals in homelessness are working with care but also punishment, and she suggests that these two are entangled. The institutions provide care, but often in a directing manner where the clients need to adopt to normative behaviour to receive it (Hennigan & Speer, 2019). Speer also writes that unsheltered homeless individuals can be seen as underserving of care from the surroundings, if they refuse to be sheltered. All institutions, e.g. shelters, jails or welfare offices, are imposing some degree of socio-spatial control, with a more or less amount of care (Hennigan & Speer 2019). Speer argues that they are also upholding hegemonic structures and social norms:

“Studies have also revealed that the architectural design of shelters and service providers can be coercive, aiming to recreate hegemonic domestic ideals of individualism and private ownership” (Speer, 2023:3).

Access to housing has long been connected to private property, and social norms in relation to domesticity have favoured and privileged these forms, as well as state interventions. As an example, “Housing first” policies are upholding and supporting these norms (Speer, 2017). Further she writes that shelters have also faced the issue with NIMBY approach, where they in several cities across the globe have been prevented from being located anywhere but in marginalised neighbourhoods, resulting in segregated and marginalised areas of socially vulnerable and their services (Speer, 2023).

Lin et al. (2022) writes in *Towards cultural landscapes of care* how care also can occur in the smaller scale, in the relation between individuals, but also between individuals and non-human materialities. The relation between people and places can be understood as co-constitutive. They mean that the materialities of care are shaping social encounters and senses of well-being, and that practices of care can be used to construct meaningful lives and belonging. Moreover, they write that care can be understood not only in an institutional level, but more importantly in the everyday acts and happenings by the individual (Lin et al., 2022).

Environment can in turn provide care back, in the co-constitutive relationship which Lin et al. (2022) indicated. **Stress reduction theory**, originally stated by Roger S. Ulrich in 1979, indicates that exposure to natural environments can reduce psychological and physiological stress, enhance cognitive function and improve health outcomes (Ulrich, R.S. (2023). **Attention restoration theory** suggests that natural environments also support a recovery of the capacity to focus attention, which in turn play a significant role in the ability of coping with challenges. Natural environments have also proved to improve the inhibitory capacity. There are many patterns and situations in which one can relate to and interact with a natural setting, one being the domestication of the wild, which includes gardening and caring for pets as examples (Kaplan, S. 1995).

Kent et al. (2026) writes in *Complex lives: Enduring vulnerability associated with care-experience for women in the criminal justice system* about relations between different vulnerability factors for women who are care-experienced and means that they are shaped by gender. They write:

“Feminist criminological theories have long emphasised that women’s pathways into the justice system differ from men’s, often rooted in histories of trauma, coercive control, and structural marginalisation.” (Kent et al. 2026:3).

Poor mental health, substance use, homelessness and contact with the criminal justice system rarely occur in isolation, rather they cluster and accumulate and together lead to increasingly limited life chances. They mean that the initial stressor among women in the justice system are shaped by experiences of domestic abuse, coercive control and social stigma, and that they lead to cumulative disadvantages across life, including neurodisability, mental health, education and housing. Lastly, and that current service delivery approaches many times fail to address these intersecting challenges, reducing

the women’s access to social and health support services (Kent et al. 2026).

Public space vs Home

The historic ideal of public space as a place for all dwellers are destroyed by the restriction of use through outlawing sitting, sleeping and camping in public space, which in multiple ways excludes individuals without homes (Speer, 2017). Unsheltered homeless collectives have been found to reshape urban spaces through small-scale, creative place-making tactics (Speer, 2023), which can be connected to how Beebeejaun (2017) writes that we through small, everyday tactics can create belonging. Speer (2023) continues that they often form alternative kinds of domestic spaces. Public spaces can function as homelike sites of belonging, as they are places where the individuals return and meet friends. They can also form communities, which provide security and protection for each other (Speer, 2023).

Feminist urban scholars argues that spaces associated with femininity have been repressed, especially in the domestic realm. Politics of the home have been historically viewed as secondary to politics of the workplace, the public space and the city (Speer, 2017). The home is a “spatial imaginary” Speer (2017) states, it is rich with social meaning, and its meaning is fluid and dependent on time, place and identity. Home is a space that can protect the body and provide privacy (Speer, 2023), but it can also be a space of domestic violence, a space of unsafety (Speer, 2017). This result in people without homes can both be experiencing bodily exposure, but also higher safety than if they had a home in the socio-normative meaning. Speer (2017) continues that homeless shelters and public spaces can function as homelike sites to return to for individuals without homes, and as a site from which to venture forth.

NIMBY

Michael Dear (1992) writes about the NIMBY syndrome in the article *Understanding and overcoming the NIMBY syndrome*. NIMBY stands from Not-In-My-Backyard, and covers when residents of an area opposes to different functions being located in their proximity. When the functions are human services for socially vulnerable the opposition is often based on prejudices and discrimination (Dear, 1992). Public attitudes towards difference tend to be organised hierarchically. According to the Daniel Yankelovich group (Dear, 1992: 291) the groups being found high on the good neighbour bar are those suffering from disabilities which most people will encounter at some point during their lives, like old are and terminal illness. In the middle of

the acceptance bar mental disabilities are found. The least desirable neighbours are those with social diseases, such as crime, alcoholism and drugs. People suffering from homelessness were often found being in the third category as well, since they are likely to be seen as complicit in creating their own difficulties (Dear, 1992).

Dear (1992) argues that a neighbourhoods approach to new human services facilities (or other development perceived as a threat to the area) being located in their proximity, and their level of NIMBY-approach depends highly on the neighbourhood homogeneity, both social and physical. This results in suburban areas of high homogeneity being more likely to oppose to new additions, while the inner city often is made up of more diverse social and physical topologies, land uses and social classes, and are therefore more likely to let new additions pass more or less unnoticed (Dear, 1992).

Synthesis

To understand the relationship between women experiencing homelessness and their surroundings, a theoretical framework consisting of social production of space, spatial agency, care and gender perspectives will be used. The theories of *Borderscapes* (Brambilla, 2015), the right to everyday life (Beebeejaun, 2017) and spatial agency (Awan et al. 2011) will be used in a framework where they support each other to explain the power dynamics of space, both how they act and are produced and facilitated.

Social cognitive theory (Nabavi and Bijandi, 2012) and *eyes on the street* (Jacobs, 1961) will be used to describe what types of support the women can get from their neighbours if they have a good relationship, and NIMBY (Dear, 1992) will be used to analyse the relationship when the neighbours act otherwise.

Institutional care (Speer, 2017, 2019, 2023) and Kent et al. (2026) theory of care describes together how spaces, gender and social norms are co-constituted, and what affect and control they can have on their users. This can happen in the public, in care facilities or in homes. Lin et al. (2022) describes together with the stress reduction theory (Ulrich, R.S., 2023) and Attention restoration theory (Kaplan, S. 1995) how environments which the women act in can also be restorative and rehabilitating.

Chapter III:

Methodology

- 3.1 Methodological approach
- 3.2 Participation
- 3.3 Ethical consideration
- 3.4 Methods and tools
- 3.5 Limitations



Fig. 9. Photo of public space in Gothenburg. A wooden deck by the water in Sannegården.

3.1 Methodological approach

This thesis is situated within the field of research for design (Taylor, 2017), with a linear although iterative process, where the outcome is a design proposition created at the final phase of the thesis.

A qualitative research strategy is applied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), with the aim to explore and understand the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to the research problem. Qualitative data consists of personal stories and observations about daily life. It enables the researcher “(...) to answer the questions of why people behave in certain ways or organize their lives in particular patterns” (Guest, 2020:250). This thesis does this through adapting a participatory approach, where qualitative methods are used to explore spatial experiences related to shelters for women experiencing homelessness. This is done through two case studies, to connect to real experiences and an actual context.

In its first phases the thesis draws from an ethnographical approach, with methods such as interviews combined with architectural methods including mapping to partly support an interdisciplinary framework. The last stage of the thesis is based on architectural methods, namely sketching in 2D and 3D and are of a more explorative character.

The participatory methods will give relevance to the project and put it in a context. The mapping, sketching and modelling will give it readability. The outcome is a user centered design.

The thesis uses a grounded theory approach, meaning that the collection of data, codes and themes found during the thematic analysis informed the theory and the research questions as well as the conceptual development of the thesis (Cope, 2020:361). This approach allows for the empirical data to primarily inform the thesis, rather than being shaped by it.

The analysis is guided by a phenomenological perspective, aiming to understand the meanings individuals ascribe to these spaces and to capture the complexity of the situation. It adopts a constructivist and transformative epistemological perspective (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), valuing qualitative research, the lived experiences and contexts of participants, and an awareness of the ethical and collaborative dimensions of research involving marginalised groups.

The research will be divided into four main stages:

Phase 1:

Objectives: To shape the research foundation through creating an understanding of context, both theoretical and spatial. Initiating communication with stakeholders.

Methods: Literature review, informal interviews and informal site observations.

Phase 2:

Objectives: Collect information and data from people with life experience from the research topic, staff and clients of shelters as well as researchers from the municipality.

Methods: Interviews, site observation and participatory mapping.

Phase 3:

Objectives: To analyse the collected empirical data with the theoretical framework.

Methods: Thematic analysis and coding.

Phase 4:

Objectives: Translate the empirical data into spatial objects, through a proposal of a public space aimed at the target group of the research.

Methods: Sketching in 2D and 3D.

3.2 Participation

To begin with, and maybe most importantly, women experiencing homelessness are not one homogenous group, they are individuals with their own experiences, preferences, thoughts and opinions. The aim of this thesis is to design a space accustomed to their needs, but they all have of course different needs, and it is impossible to design a space which appeals or accommodates all of them. The design is not accustomed to a few of them; it is based on a general understanding of what could accommodate some of them at some times. But still, I think this topic is of importance, because today no spaces are adjusted to any of them in the urban public, and this thesis works as a tool to raise their voice, even just shortly, and give them a chance to take part in the discussion of the public planning in the future.

The thesis adopts participatory methods, where it through mapping and interviews collects information and experiences from other individuals. The result depends on their will to participate, followed by my ability to interpret their information. To adopt participatory design can be vulnerable out of two reasons.

Firstly, the information the participants share are being called data in this thesis, but as Lauren Tynan (2024) states in Data collection vs knowledge theft, it is derived from lived experiences and knowledge originally belonging to them. As said by Foucault and Said, “knowledge is not innocent, it is an exercise and apparatus of power” (Tynan, 2024:142), which in this context can mean that they through sharing their information gives away power, and it is then important to handle it with care (Tynan, 2024:142). This is extra relevant since the target group of this thesis belongs to one of the most marginalised in society, sometimes with the least power to perform change. As Tynan (2024) writes about “relational accountability”, meaning that when other people are involved in a study it also becomes their research, and the thesis is now answering to them as well and not just the receiver of the project.

Secondly, the information is being filtered through my, as the author, biases and prejudices. As Guest (2020) writes in Cultural anthropology that the author will always affect the result of the study, since their perspective and previous experiences will impact the analysis of the material. It is therefore of importance to be transparent with one’s own position so the reader can assess their biases, strengths and weaknesses (Guest, 2020). This is necessarily not something negative, but it needs transparency. In this thesis the target group of the

study, women experiencing homelessness, are not speaking for themselves. Instead, the staff at the shelters are being their voices. This is due to several reasons, mentioned and explained in limitations, 3.5.

3.3 Ethical consideration

The target group of this thesis, women experiencing homelessness, is as mentioned a vulnerable group and subject to violence. The two shelters examined in the case studies are not at a protected location and their address is public, but there is still a need to be cautious about their address and not disclose it too lightly. The level of the graphical material has been discussed with manager and clinical supervisor at the shelters, and it was decided to not reveal either the names or the addresses, as a safety measure. Even if it is relevant to talk about the shelters to bring awareness, the context determines to what level it should be done. In the context of this thesis, the addresses or names of the shelters will not provide information necessary enough to justify mentioning them, compared to the risk it may pose.

This causes some limitations in the graphical communication. Buildings are removed in maps to make it more difficult to recognise or locate the address, which removes some of the context they would have provided. Pictures of the sites are for the same reason not used. All photos in this booklet are from various urban spaces in Gothenburg, but not connected to the locations of the shelters, the locations of the photos are randomly selected.

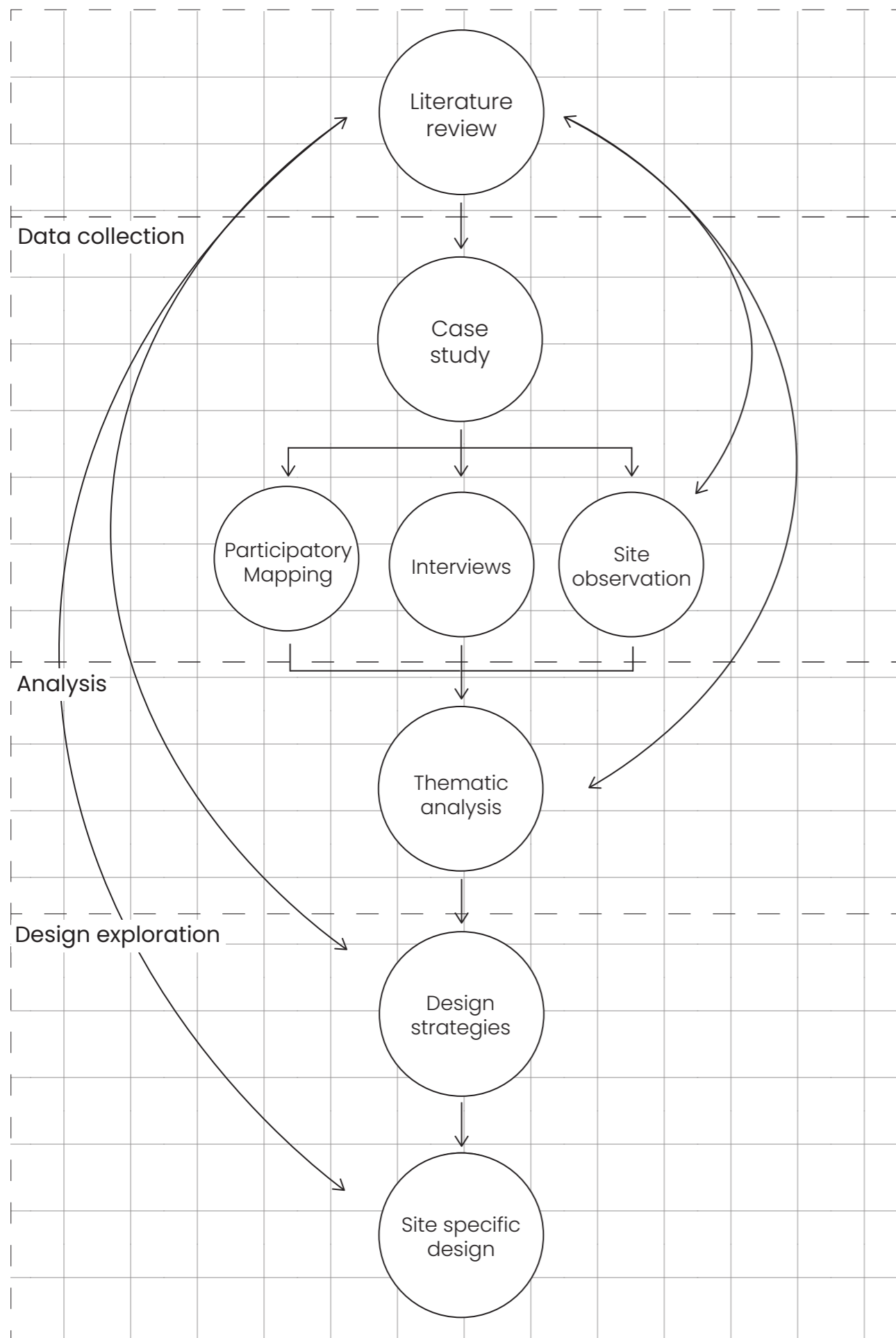


Fig. 10. Illustration of process.

3.4 Methods and tools

Here follows a description of what methods was chosen for the study, and why:

Literature review:

Literature review was used to summarise and create an understanding of the existing research and published work of the topic. Literature of homelessness in a Swedish as well as an international context, different accommodations, the urban planning and theory regarding the topic was being analysed and connected to architectural theory. Together this created a framework which the thesis could build upon.

Case studies:

The thesis applied the method of case studies aim to obtain a thorough knowledge of a situation, and to paint a clear picture based on information from multiple perspectives, sources and tools. Case study is an effective method to illustrate the complexity of a situation. The case is selected for its uniqueness or its typicality, and the goal is to investigate a “contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Range, 2025:1). In this thesis two case studies were used, two municipal shelters for women experiencing homelessness in Gothenburg, one being an emergency shelter and the other one a transitional housing. The difference between them helped create a broader understanding and helped put each other in a context.

This study is based on two case studies of two collective, women exclusive shelters located in Gothenburg. One of them is an emergency shelter for women being 21 years and older. It accommodates up to 18 women in acute homelessness, and they have no sobriety requirements. Their plan is for women to be able to stay there up to three months, but the women sometimes stay longer. The other shelter is a transitional housing which can accommodate up to 21 women at a time. They have more strict sobriety requirements, even though they take an individual decision and sometimes receive women who are actively trying to be sober. This shelter plans for women to stay there up to 6 months, but they sometimes stay longer as well.

Site observations:

Site observations were used as a complementary method in the data collection-phase. It falls under qualitative data, and it will create an understanding of the dynamics of the space through observations of daily life activities and patterns, as well as to give an indication of how the spaces are being utilized today. It is a central method within ethnographical research (Guest,

2020). In this thesis the site observations were not a prominent method, but the information it gathered supported decision making in the later stages, particularly in the design exploration. The tools used was photographing, behavioural mapping at different times of the day, and movement pattern tracing (Gehl-Svarre, 2013).

Semi-structured Interviews:

To obtain in-depth, qualitative information from people with experience of the research topic, the method of semi-structured interviews was applied. According to the method, topical questions of the subject were prepared beforehand to guide the conversation, based on previous informal interviews, site visits and literature review, but the questions were allowed to be meandered to create a fuller understanding of and for the conversation to reflect the actual needs of the stakeholders (Architecture Sans Frontières-UK, n.d.).

In total twelve interviews were held in the first phases of the thesis. Ten interviews were conducted with staff members of various positions and one client at the shelters, five interviews at each shelter. They were all individual, about one hour long and in person. They were advertised through an information sheet which were distributed to the staff and clients through a manager or clinical supervisor.

Two interviews were held with two people at the municipality. A phone interview was conducted with the former manager of the project Mutual Benefits, and an interview in person with a development manager at the city property administration.

Since this was the first time I encountered individuals experiencing homelessness or those working at shelters aimed at them, the interviews were of big importance for me to shape a foundational understanding of the situation.

Participatory mapping:

During the interviews participatory mapping was used as a communicative method. If the tools are visually captivating, they will enable participants to take part into a meaningful and stimulating conversation. Through visual tools they can point, discuss, manipulate and alter the information shared (Architecture Sans Frontières-UK, 2022). It was used with the aim to create a deeper understanding of the situation the staff and residents have in relation to the existing infrastructure and urban spaces surrounding the building of the shelter (Architecture Sans Frontières-UK, n.d.).

Thematic analysis:

Thematic analysis was used to identify and analyse patterns or themes within the qualitative data collected within the project. This method emphasizes the importance of researchers' reflexivity as well as theoretical transparency to ensure credibility of the analysis (Ahmed et al., 2025).

All interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed to facilitate systematic coding and analysis. Coding meaning the process of identifying, examining and interpreting patterns and themes emerging from the empirical material of the interview transcripts, in this thesis through a deductive approach. The analytical process was recursive and iterative, involving multiple cycles of revisiting the data and refining the codes and to find new insights. This formed an integral part of the theory-building process of this thesis, in line with grounded theory methodology (Cope, 2020).

“Coding refers to a data reduction process of creating identifiers based on common elements within the data as well as on themes that researchers predetermined to be of particular interest”. (Cope,2020: p. 358)

The transcription of the audio-recording was done through Microsoft word transcript program, and later manually reviewed and corrected as a preliminary step of the coding and analysis process. In vivo coding was applied in the initial stage, meaning that the codes were derived from the research participants own expressions, phrases and terms. This approach was chosen to remain close to the data and to preserve the participants meanings. Furthermore, open coding was conducted without predetermined themes or categories, allowing patterns to emerge from the material in a transparent and systematic manner to allow for a neutral but reflexive data analysis (Cope, 2020).

Sketching:

As a tool to iterate and explore several solutions to the design, hand-drawn sketching is applied as a method. It is used to test proportions, relations and functions during the design development.

2D and 3D-modelling:

To create a communicative material, the method of modelling is used. To define the measurements and a defined layout, drawings in two and three dimensions are created, using the programs of AutoCAD and Rhinoceros. The material allows for spatial analysis as well as visualization from several perspectives, to allow the reader to understand the outcome of the project.

3.5 Limitations

To create a communicative material, the method of modelling is used. To define the measurements and a defined layout, drawings in two and three dimensions are created, using the programs of AutoCAD and Rhinoceros. The material allows for spatial analysis as well as visualization from several perspectives, to allow the reader to understand the outcome of the project.

The initial plan was to have more interviews with clients, but I was advised by the managers and staff how it could be difficult to arrange, mostly regarding the clients at the emergency shelter, since their mental as well as physical health did not always allow them to follow plans. They also informed how it could be difficult to create a relationship in such a short time, strong enough for the clients to open and want to share their experiences. At the transitional housing they provided the information sheet about this thesis to the clients, and one responded. I was told that possibly more could want to participate, but the time was not in our favour, since many interviews with staff was already conducted and needed to be transcribed. The one interview with the client at the transitional housing confirmed a lot of the information the staff had given, which can mean that the staff has a good understanding of the habits, experiences and routines of the women living at the shelters.

The intent was to use participatory mapping as a method at both shelters, but in the end, it was only followed through at the emergency shelter. Maps was brought to the interviews at the transitional housing, but I got the understanding that they have a different approach to their surroundings, which can be due to that shelter being in the same location longer and are therefore more integrated, not having clients in an active substance use in the same extent as well as how they are leaving more responsibility to the clients, which led to them not talking about the closest surroundings in the same extent and therefore the map ended up not being needed as a tool during to facilitate the conversations.

Chapter IV:
Analysis

- 4.1 Data collection
- 4.2 Thematic analysis
- 4.3 Findings
- 4.4 Spatial requirements



Fig. 11. Photo of public space in Gothenburg. A liminal space with benches in Brunnsparken.

4.1 Data collection

4.1.1 Interviews

In total 12 interviews were held to create an understanding about the topic. On this page follows an extraction of some of the information conducted from the two interviews with the municipality. On the next pages the interviews with staff and client at the two shelters are presented.

| | | |
|----------------------|---|------|
| Emergency shelter | Treatment support worker | 19/2 |
| | Treatment support worker | 19/2 |
| | Clinical supervisor | 20/2 |
| | Treatment support worker | 20/2 |
| | Manager | 23/2 |
| Transitional housing | Clinical supervisor | 3/3 |
| | Treatment support worker | 3/3 |
| | Treatment support worker | 3/3 |
| | Treatment support worker | 10/3 |
| | Client | 10/3 |
| Municipality | Mutual benefits Project manager | 12/3 |
| | City property Administration Development manager | 31/3 |

Fig. 12. List of the interviewees and date of interview.

Development Manager at Gothenburg City property Administration

Sana Rabia, a development manager at the city property department, worked with the emergency shelter when it moved to a new location a few years ago. She took over the project after it was already initiated and a contract was signed for the new building. When asked what was described in the needs assessment of the facility, she mentions the geographical location, proximity to public transport and other people, a central location for the safety of the clients and staff. Sana remembers that the decision of new location needed to be quick though, since

the shelter needed to move soon. The fast decision resulted in some unexpected technical issues, such as correct fire sprinklers and a technical shaft, which first went undetected or were miscommunicated, which they needed to solve funding for and fix rapidly. Another possible consequence of the quick decision could be criticism from neighbours, since they experienced insufficient communication during the decision to move the shelter to their area. She means that the target groups of social housing often are very vulnerable, and it is therefore of

high importance that decisions regarding them are based on well-grounded analyses, since the consequences of mistakes can become big and highly affect the individuals.

What Sana found positive with the new facility of the shelter was its location in the city and its scale, that it was not a big industrial building. That the views through the windows was a small street and a courtyard, and the proximity to cafés and supermarkets. She remembers that their guiding principle during the project was dignity.

“Creating dignity and conveying a sense of dignity and ensuring that the architectural strategies we used were based on creating a safe environment without it feeling overly institutional.”

The fact that the clients of the shelter are not allowed to use the courtyard was a decision she

think was made by the social services administration, and it was due to the courtyard having a playground visited by many kids in the surrounding residential building, which was thought to be problematic in combination with the clients substance use. Access to a private outdoor environment was not included in the need assessment of the service.

Sana describes that even one and a half year after the shelter moved to their new location, she got requests from neighbours to access excerpts from public documents and the building permit documents, they wondered if it was allowed to have that type of service in the building. They even raised the question with the County administrative board. The right to have the shelter there was long questioned and it raised resistance. It engaged people. She also understood that the staff has been very active in inviting the neighbours to dialogue to reduce the problems.

Former Project Manager at Mutual Benefits, Gothenburg municipality

Petter Nilsson, project manager of mutual benefits said that the project started since socially vulnerable had been given less space in the public of Gothenburg. As an example, the number of seatings would be reduced in some spaces, a form of excluding design.

When asked if they found any conflicting objectives during the project he mentioned how property owners want high property value and long-staying, steady residents. They can therefore be worried that a social housing in proximity to their property makes their residents feel unsafe or uncomfortable. But he said that these thoughts can derive from prejudices of these housings and their clients, and it is therefore not a real conflicting objective. The place-based collaboration model is about creating opportunities for socially vulnerable to be a part of society, and to reduce the stigma affecting them.

“There is a very tangible climate surrounding this target group, which they suffer from greatly, as they are often attributed negative characteristics that they do not actually have. There is also a level of exposure to crime affecting this group, which is closely linked to a broader sense of insecurity. The general public often finds it distressing to witness people being subjected to crime, and this is one of the reasons why they are reluctant to live next to this type of service.”

It will always be a bit uncomfortable for young people to orientate in an environment with individuals with substance use, but we need to keep an overarching perspective, this group needs to live somewhere and this could be an acceptable inconvenience. But the protection of children is something we all agree on in society, and to not want to subject the children to the socially vulnerable is a more acceptable argument in society than how a property loses value. Therefore, the argument of the protection of children is often used.

Petter means that the question of women’s shelters anonymity is who we are protecting, and from what? The women at the emergency shelter are often very sick in mental health and substance use. They are also surrounded by men, who follow them and wanting to control the women. It can be men from relationships, or that they supply the women with substances or alcohol. Often these men are also troubled with mental health issues, substance use or have a capacity of violence. These shelters do not have a protected address, and the clients tend to tell their friends about the location. If the neighbours are informed about the shelter and what clients live there, empathy can be created, which can lead to a higher tolerance of disturbing behaviour. The clients often live in these housing solutions because they are unable to comply with the tenancy law. He meant that there can be reasons to not keep the shelters anonymous to the neighbours, and to instead be transparent to reduce stigmatisation and encourage the neighbour’s patience.

Interviews with Shelters

In total 10 interviews were held with the two shelters, 9 with members of the staff and 1 with a client at the transitional housing. The interviews were recorded and transcribed but will be kept anonymous. The interviews were semi-structured; the questions can be seen in appendix 1.

The two circle diagrams are representing the topics discussed during the interviews. The sizes of the circles are representing the time spent at each topic in total at each shelter, the bigger the circle the more time they spent talking about the topic. The aim of the diagrams is to show an indication of what the interviewees found important or interesting. The diagrams cannot be taken as a complete representation, only an indication. The information is taken from the transcriptions of the interviews. The interview questions had an important impact on the result of these diagrams, but since the interviews were semi-structured the interviewees could guide the topic to some extent, as seen in the difference in discussions between the two shelters.

- Directly relating to thesis
- Indirectly relating to thesis
- Indirectly informing but not relating to thesis

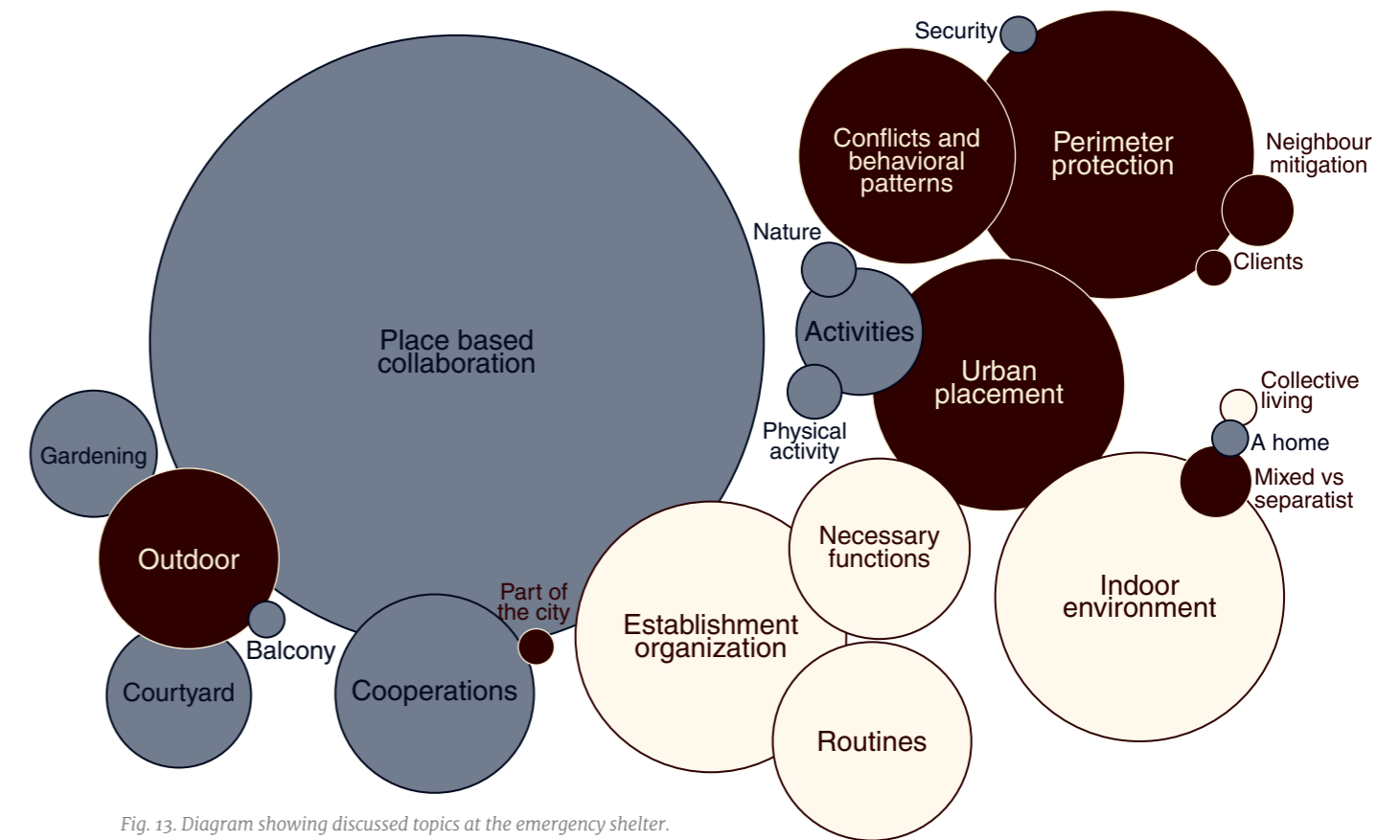


Fig. 13. Diagram showing discussed topics at the emergency shelter.

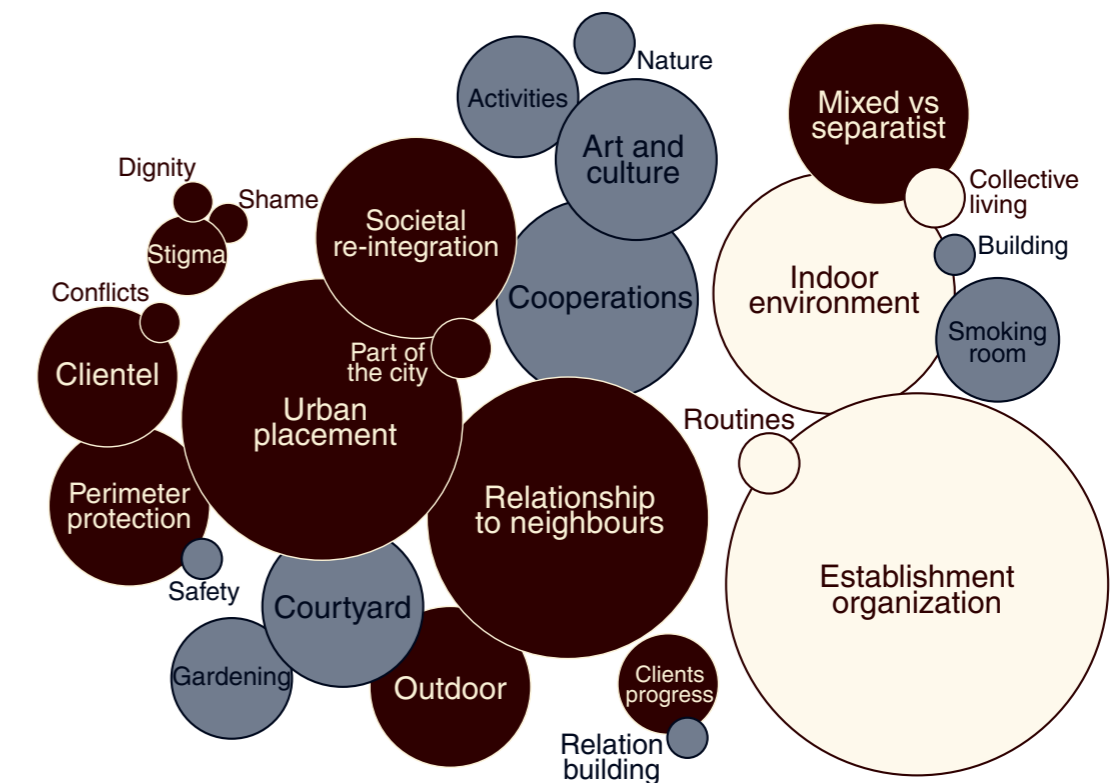
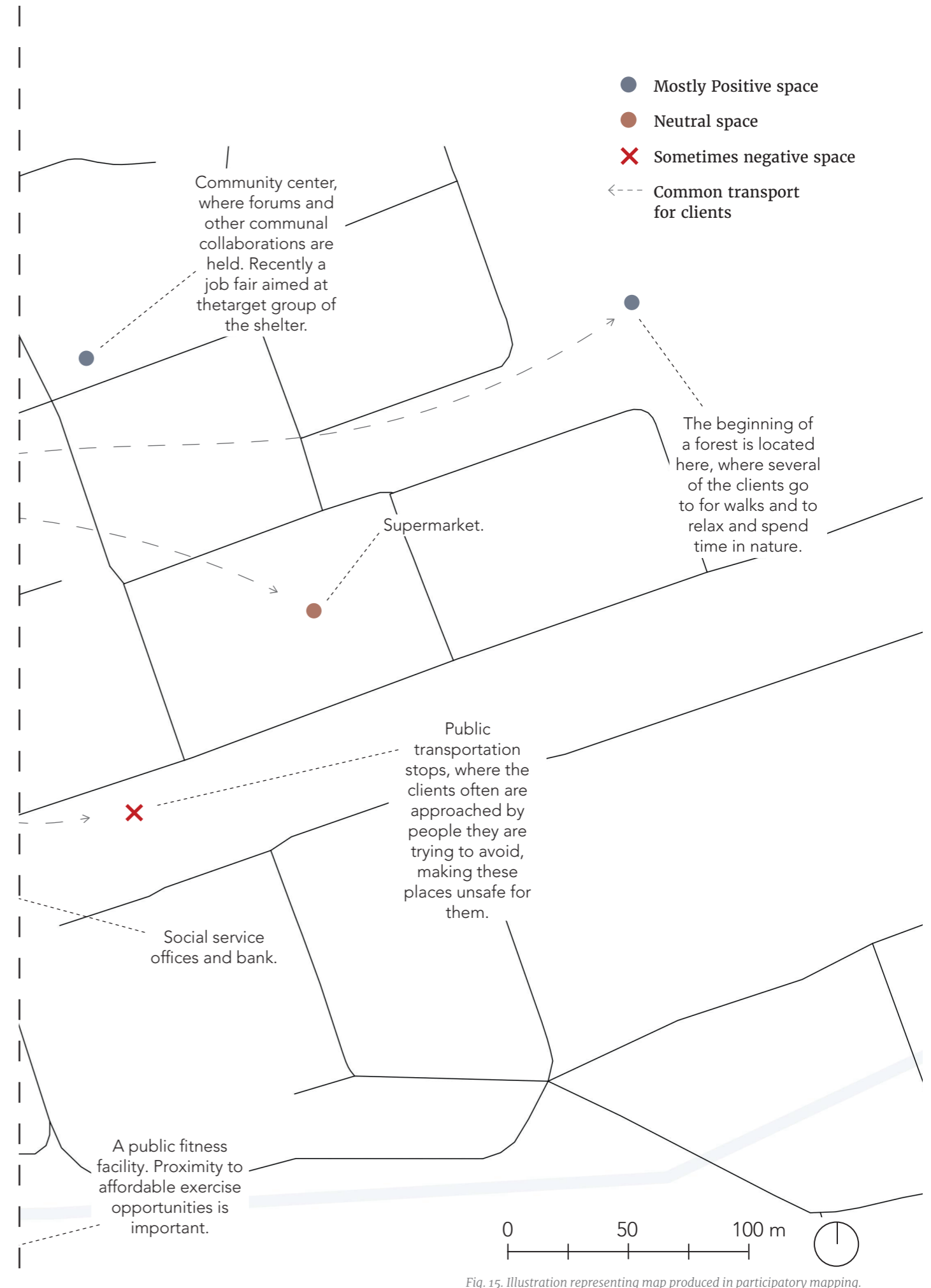
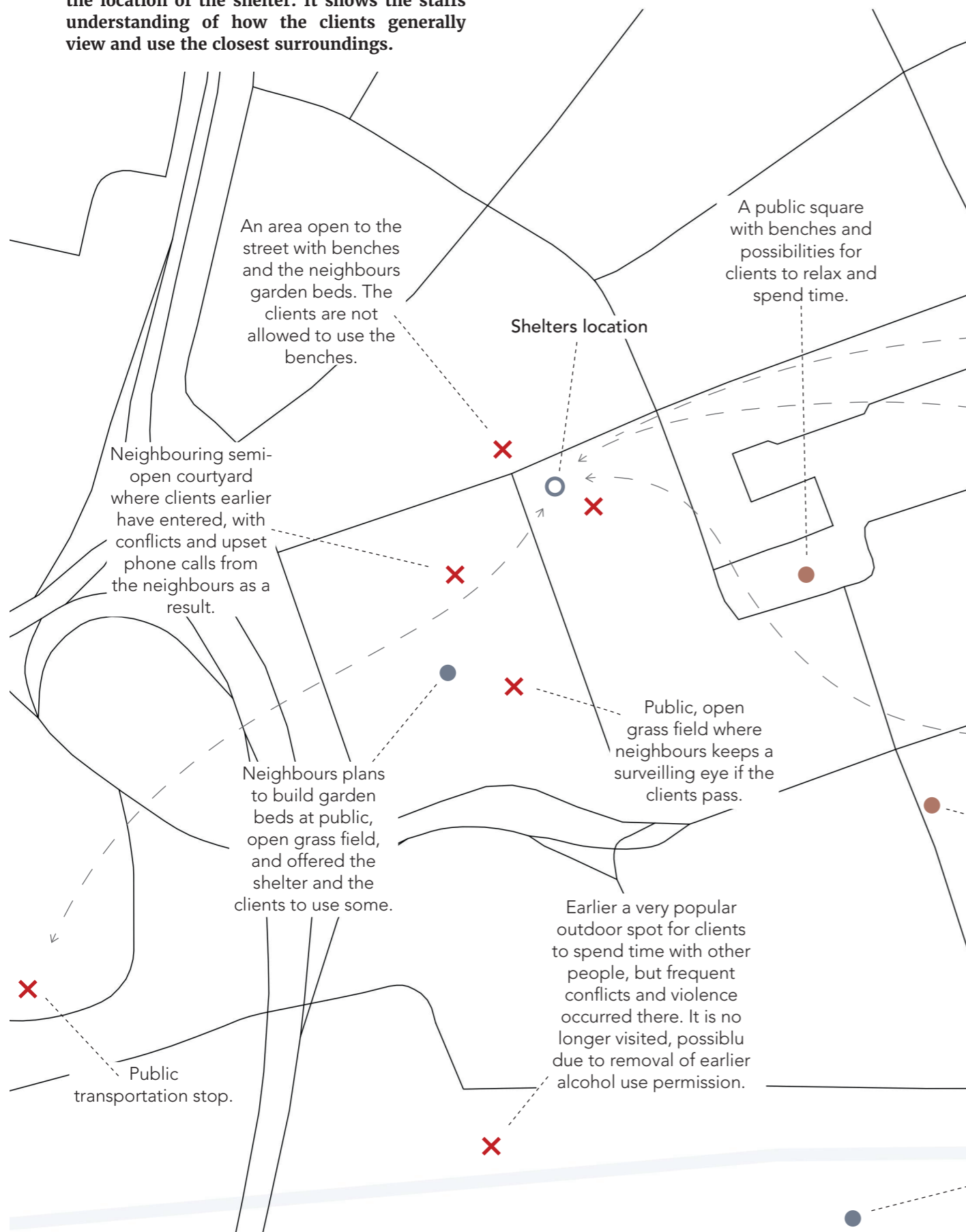


Fig. 14. Diagram showing discussed topics at the transitional housing.

4.1.2 Participatory mapping

A participatory mapping was done during the interviews at the emergency shelter, as a tool to talk about the surroundings. The map, figure 14, has been made abstract to not reveal the location of the shelter. It shows the staffs understanding of how the clients generally view and use the closest surroundings.



- Mostly Positive space
- Neutral space
- ✗ Sometimes negative space
- ←--- Common transport for clients

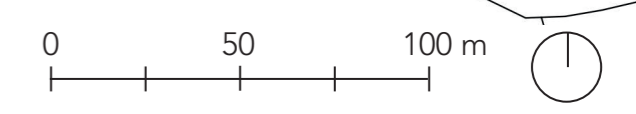


Fig. 15. Illustration representing map produced in participatory mapping.

4.2 Thematic analysis

Figures 15 and 16 are two diagrams representing the thematic analysis of the interviews with the shelters. The themes are shown together with the codes under them. The differences between the shelters are visualised with colours, where the white shows what is relevant for both shelters.

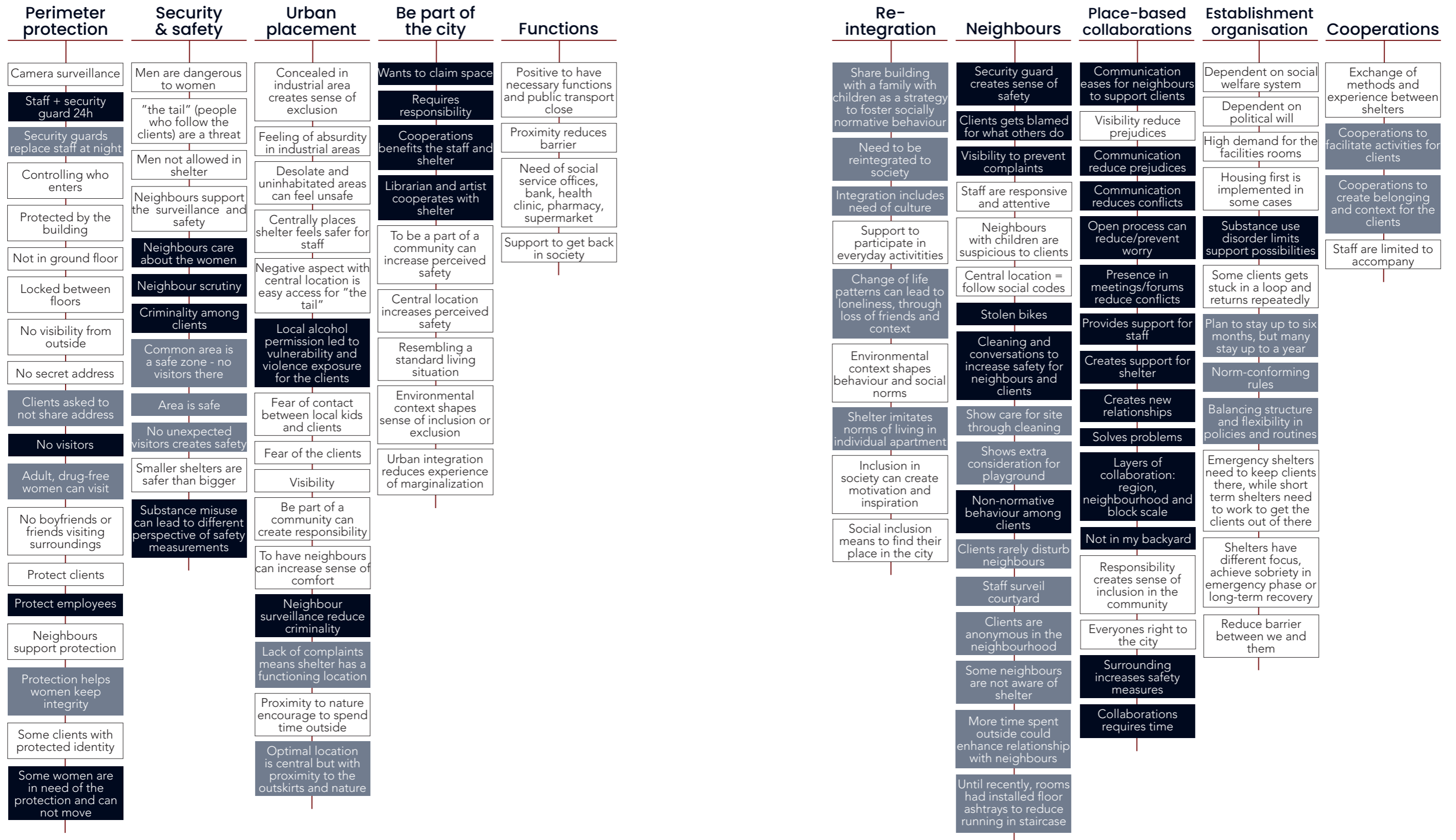
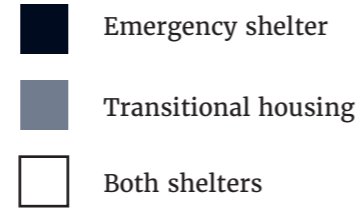


Fig. 16. Illustration of thematic analysis.

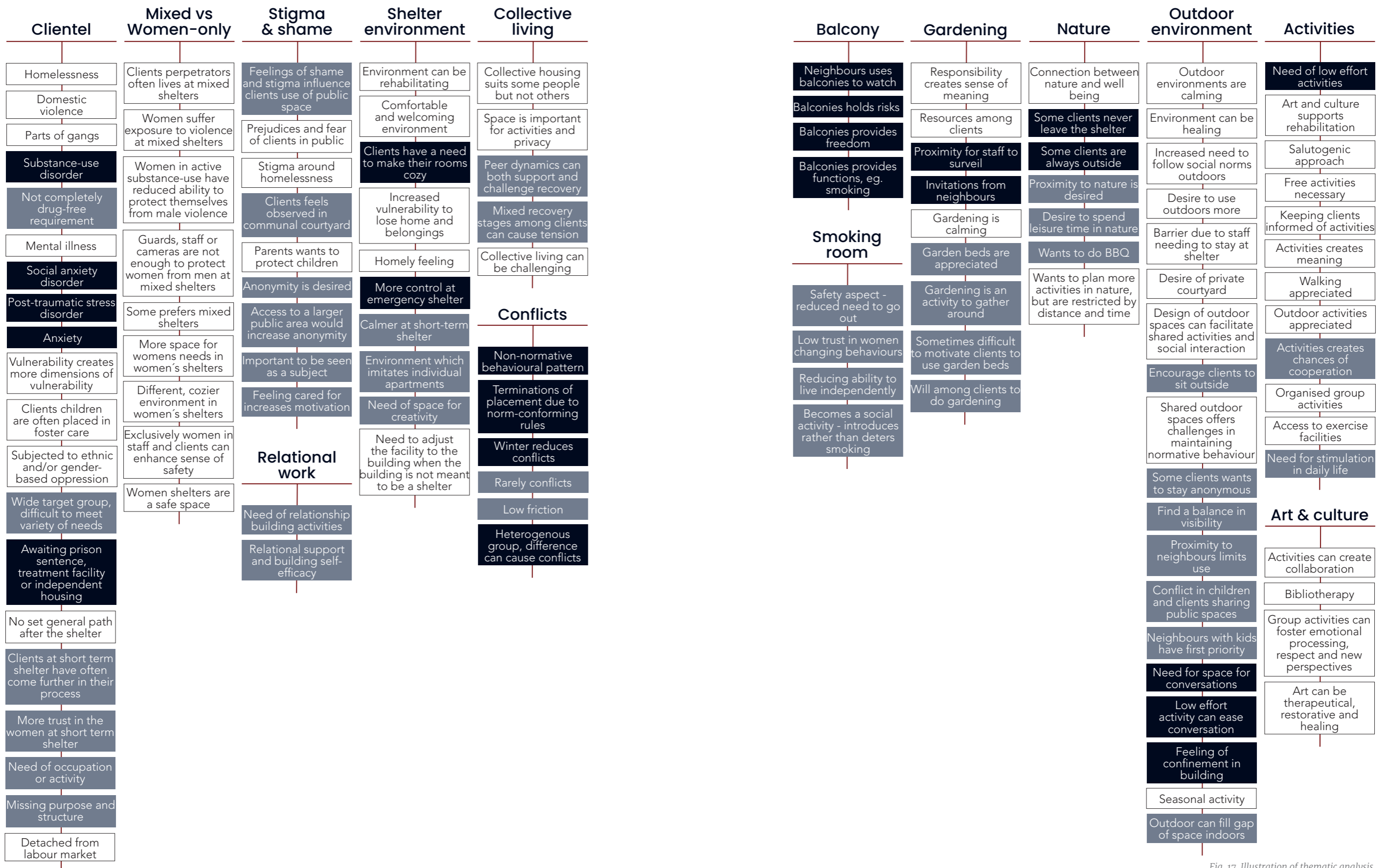


Fig. 17. Illustration of thematic analysis.

4.3 Findings

This chapter presents an extract of the findings from the interviews with the staff and client at the two shelters. The findings were developed through a thematic analysis, which can be seen in appendix 2.

Clients

The clients are a vulnerable, marginalized group and they are many times victims of domestic violence, suffering from substance misuse and/or have medical and psychiatric conditions. Importantly, they are not a homogenous group, and they have different life experiences. The reason to why they are at the shelter could be that they are awaiting prison sentence, treatment facility or independent housing.

“There is a lot of fear in society toward people who struggle with addiction, and they are often treated as if they are dangerous.” (Staff, transitional housing)

The staff lifted how many times substance abuse, violence exposure and homelessness are consequences of each other, and several of the clients gets stuck in loops where they cannot break out of their situation, and instead they return to the shelters repeatedly. This is an example of how one vulnerability can create more dimensions of vulnerability, and how they together accumulate as Kent et al. (2026) wrote. How the women get stuck in loops can be related to how they wrote that the structures of service delivery approaches fail to address these intersecting challenges (Kent et al., 2026).

Women exclusive shelter

The client’s perpetrators often live at the mixed shelters, which creates an unsafe environment for the women to be there.

“I am of the opinion that mixed housing arrangements should not be used. I have experienced and seen too much to think that it is a good idea. There is a lot of abuse and violence in these types of housing, and women in particular are the most vulnerable.” (Staff, transitional housing)

Staff experienced how the women are able to take more space and talk about their needs and feelings at the women’s shelters, at the mixed shelters the focus is often at the men and their needs. How Beebeejaun (2017) suggests that our rights are embodied, through actions and experiences. And if some groups are given a bigger right to claim space (Awan et al. 2011;

Beebeejaun, 2017), the already existing social structures of inequality can get amplified. In this case, how the women at mixed shelters feel unsafe there, and they are also given less space to address it. Some women prefer mixed shelters still: they have expressed that they cannot be around only women. There is a very high demand on the rooms though at the women shelters, and they are always running at full capacity, which indicates how the need of them is very big.

“It is a safe space. You don’t need to be afraid of men or of violence. There are no drugs or alcohol here, which makes it feel secure.” (Client, transitional housing)

The women who are in heavy substance abuse also have very limited possibilities of support, except for the emergency shelter. According to Speer’s theory of institutional care, this is one example of how individuals to receive support needs to adapt to normative behaviour: they women can receive more help if they get rid of their substance use (Hennigan & Speer, 2019).

Home and Safety

The perimeter protection varies at the two shelters. They are both elevated from the ground floor, they have camera surveillance and locked doors. The emergency shelter has 24h security guard who watch both the shelter and the surroundings, while the short-term shelter has a security guard in the night and they stay inside the shelter. The emergency shelter does not receive any guests, while the short-term shelter receives adult women to the private rooms of the clients.

“Many women need that level of security, which is why they cannot move on to other types of housing.” (Staff, emergency shelter)

The purpose of the perimeter protection is to create a safe environment for both clients and employees. The perimeter protection is protecting against what the staff calls “the tail”, which refers to people, mostly men, who follow the women. Some of the clients are in need of the security which the perimeter protection provides. Additionally, some clients at the emergency shelter would not be able to keep the secrecy a protected accommodation requires. This relates to what Speer (2017, 2023) wrote about the “spatial imaginaries” of a home. These shelters become the temporary home of the women: it provides integrity and safety and protects them from violence which they might

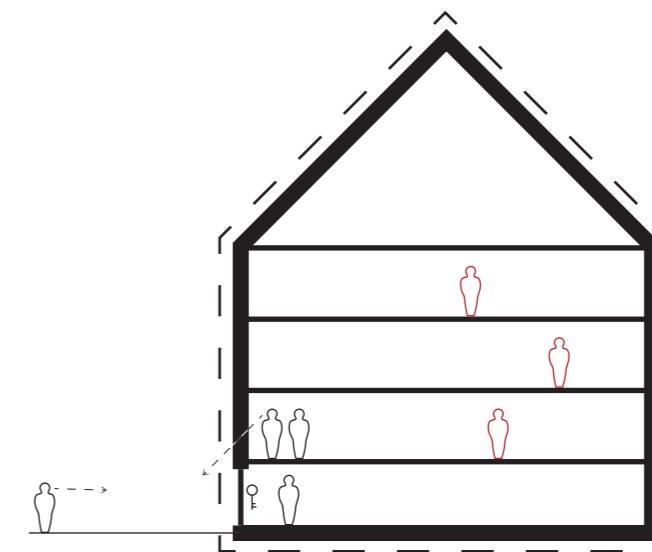


Fig. 18. Illustration of the protection of shelter. The building itself provides a protection, as well as the locked door and a security guard at the entrance floor, and staff as well as neighbours keeps an eye on the street.

have experienced in previous homes.

The transitional housing has a smoking booth at their second floor, and up until a few years ago they also had smoking columns in the rooms on the third floors, where they could throw the cigarettes during the night after they smoked in the rooms. These columns have today been removed, but the smoking booth remains and can be used during the nights. The staff means that they send a contradicting message, where it can be seen as the shelter facilitates and eases the clients' smoking habits. They said that they think that the reason the smoking facilities were implemented was because it reduced running in the stairs and disturbance of neighbours, and it could enhance the women's safety when they do not need to leave the protected shelter to smoke.

"I'd like to think there must have been some kind of protective aspect to it, so that certain women who are afraid wouldn't have to go outside. But I'm not sure." (Staff, transitional housing).

On the other hand, they said that no other shelter has the same facility and it is maybe not necessary for safety reasons.

The environment at the women's shelters are often cozier and calmer than those of mixed shelters. This can be due to the violence within the shelter taking different forms. The staff think the clients have a need to create a cozy and calm environment; they often bring in stones and things from nature to decorate their rooms with. The aim is to create a comfortable and welcoming environment, and the environment have possibilities to be rehabilitating.

"I think that's really important to have something to take responsibility for. It gives you a sense of purpose when getting up in the morning, like feeling that today I need to get up and water the plants or check on the flowers, you know." (Staff, emergency shelter)

Lin et al. (2022) writes how it can create a sense of meaning to take care of space, and how space can be rehabilitating. That the clients want to decorate with nature relates to the theories of how nature is restorative (Ulrich, 2023; Kaplan, 1995). The clients are in this way providing care for themselves. Since the shelter is a collective house, it does not follow the normative view of a home. But since the definition of a home is fluid and dependent on time, place and identity (Speer, 2023), the shelters are the home to the women, even though temporal, and they are trying to make it also feel like a home through decoration.

Visibility

The neighbours help provide an extra level of security and safety for the shelter through surveillance. They look after the public and semi-public spaces, and if something happens to the women, they increase the chances of it being detected quicker. They have a sense of care and concern for the women.

"Of course they (neighbours) call and are upset sometimes as well, but other times they call the police when a woman is out on the street fighting with a man. This makes it visible, and the police makes a report. If you were walking past an abandoned industrial area and saw some people fighting in a corner you would probably just run away." (Staff, emergency shelter).

On the other hand, the neighbours also keep a close surveillant eye on the women and the shelter in a monitoring manner as well, looking for mistakes and problems. The clients of the shelter get the blame for several problems happening in the area, even though they are not the cause.

"And somebody had smoked there (in semi-public space belonging to neighbours), but it turned out that it was the neighbour who takes care of the garden beds who had smoked there. But the neighbours called us and complained that it was smelling and cigarette smoke was reaching their apartments in some way. But eventually they admitted that it was their neighbour who had smoked there, not us." (Staff, emergency shelter).

The clients often have a non-normative behavioural pattern, and difficulties to adapt to norm-conforming rules and situations can cause problems and consequences. To reduce the suspicion and negative surveillance from the neighbours, the security guard's protection is of big help. Moreover, the staff are careful to keep the public areas clean, and they are responsive and attentive to the needs and complaints of the neighbours. They keep a high visibility in meetings and forums to both reduce possible talking, prejudices, and to stop conflicts and problems before they grow bigger.

"And it is actually quiet nice as well to get to know other actors, so they get a better understanding of what on earth it is that we're doing here at the shelter, and how much we do to support the

women without getting much in return. It helps to reduce some of the prejudices towards the housing." (Staff, emergency shelter).

Neighbours are important for an increased safety for the clients, according to Jane Jacobs (1961) theory of Eyes on the streets. But they are also watching in a surveillant manner, and that they are the ones defining the boundaries and expected behaviour on the streets, and if someone is not acting accordingly, they are ready to exclude them from spaces (Brambilla, 2015). A functioning communication and relationship with the neighbours act supportive of the women. It reduces chances of NIMBY (Dear, 1992) approach, it eases for the neighbours to contact the shelter if they notice something unusual, as well as it reduces conflicts if the neighbours can contact the shelter if they are disturbed by something, and they are then more likely to keep watching the streets in favour of the women.

Winter reduces the conflicts, less clients as well as neighbours are outside. In the warmer times the neighbours often sit at their balconies and look at what is happening at the street more often.

"But there we had a garden (in shelters previous location). Of course it was a lot of work, everything from telling you can't sunbathe naked in the garden in front of the neighbours. Not disturbing the neighbours I think have been a big part of the job (...) But there we could go outside and maybe rake leaves, and it was pretty much then we got really nice conversations" (Staff, emergency shelter).

The interviews at the transitional housing indicated that the clients there have a higher awareness of the stigmatisation surrounding their situation:

"That's also why I think it would be beneficial if the residence were located closer to a green space. Then people could go outside and sit for a while without feeling that everyone in the neighborhood knows they live here. There is still a lot of stigma associated with living in a place like this. I would like to see more green areas nearby, a place where people can go outside and simply sit without feeling watched or judged." (Client, transitional housing).

The staff also discussed the same topic; they meant that the clients at the transitional hou-

sing asks for lower visibility and higher anonymity when they spend time outside. The staff who worked at both transitional housing and emergency shelter meant that this was a general difference between the two, at the emergency shelter the clients generally care less about the stigma. They were not sure about the reason to this, but they thought it possibly could be both due to less awareness of it as well as less ability to adapt to others perception and created stigmatisation.

To claim space

The location of the shelter has great influence on the establishment, the clients and the staff. Industrial areas have a sense of absurdity. The staff expressed how a placement there could create a feeling of being concealed, and a sense of exclusion and unsafety.

"There's often a very strong sense of exclusion, and I think being almost hidden away in an industrial area can really reinforce that feeling." (Staff, emergency shelter)

Through being placed in a peripheral area of the city, they are being excluded from the community, as seeing boundaries as performative (Brambilla, 2015). An industrial area also has less eyes on the street (Jacobs, 1961), and it is therefore more unsafe than a central location. More centrally placed location led to more visibility of the clients; they were accepted as a part of the community. As visibility equals representation (Brambilla, 2015), and the act of the socially vulnerable women being at an unexpected place, in this case the central city, challenges the norms and supports their right to claim space (Beebejaun, 2017). To be a part of a community can create a sense of responsibility and meaning the staff expressed, and this is also supported by what Lin et al. (2022) states, it creates a sense of meaning to have something to care for.

"Many of the women have children or grandchildren of their own. When they're in a environment where there are families and children they can sometimes pull themselves together a bit more (...) They are still people even though they use drugs, they are people with big hearts and problems. They can relate to their own situations, to what they have had and what they might still have." (Staff, transitional housing).

The neighbour's surveillance can also result in less criminality among the clients, the shelter in a central location were not surrounded by stolen

bikes as it was when it was previously located in an industrial area. The case with the bikes can be seen as a result of eyes on the street (Jacobs, 1961), when the clients knew the neighbours were watching they behave differently. But it can also be a result of them feeling a belonging and inclusion in society (Brambilla, 2015; Beebeejaun, 2017) which resulted in them wanting to care more for the site (Lin et al., 2022). Moreover, it can also be a consequence of institutional care (Hennigan & Speer, 2019), where the women need to adopt to more normative behaviour to be able to stay at the shelter. The staff at the transitional housing also expressed that when the shelter was located amongst other residential buildings it helped its clients to reintegrate into society.

“If people are isolated in an area where everyone has the same problems, the don’t learn how society works. But if you live more centrally you see how others live, how people behave, how they talk to each other. (...) You learn a lot from the people around you. If you only live among others with substance use issues, that’s who you learn from.” (Staff, transitional housing).

This is supported by the Social cognitive theory (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012), which suggests that we learn through observing others. According to the interviewed staff and client the neighbours express a fear of clients and their non-normative behaviour and are unwilling for clients to share spaces with them and their children. In this sense, their non-normative behaviour is being used as a reason for exclusion (Brambilla, 2015).

The staff at the emergency shelter wants the shelter to claim a space in the city. They mean that to take a part in the city creates responsibility, which is good. This is supported by Lin et al. (2022), to have a part to care for can create meaning, which in turn could be connected to Beebeejauns (2017) idea to use everyday tactics, in this case small acts of care, as a tool to claim space. Cooperations with others also benefits both the staff and clients:

“The people who live with us are vulnerable and struggling, and they share many difficult stories. The staff also need to work with recovery, so having the art center hold a workshop is truly restorative and helps strengthen the group.” (Staff, emergency shelter)

The staff needs support in handling and supporting the women, since they sometimes have heavy conversations with the clients about what they have been through, as the project Mutual Benefits (Göteborgs stad, 2024) promoted. The shelter expresses how they feel less alone through these collaborations, compared to when they were sitting alone in an industrial area.

“Here you become a part of the community, like more visible and that is good for everyone I think. It is also something which gives them motivation and value, like that people will call the police if someone beats them because that is what you are supposed to do. Maybe it is difficult for them in the moment, but in the long run it is valuable.” (Staff, emergency shelter)

Activities and recovery

The staff and client at the transitional housing discussed the value of having daily activities and routines, and the value of belonging to a context.

“Unfortunately many people lack meaningful activities or occupation, the social services simply don’t have enough time to work on the employment and activity aspect. Many people here could actually be working or engaged in something meaningful. A lot of them want to have something to do, they don’t really have a sense of belonging or a context to be part of.” (Staff, transitional housing)

The client talked about the same subject, where she meant that a change of context and scenery is important:

“Just sitting here watching Netflix all the time isn’t very good. It’s important to get a change of scenery every now and then. It makes a big difference in people’s lives.” (Client, transitional housing)

Staff mentions gardening as a possible tool, both for recovery and to have conversations:

“I remember when I started at (another shelter), something I really liked doing together with the clients was to go outside, do a bit of clearing up and rake leaves. That was often when we had really meaningful conversations.” (Staff, emergency shelter)

Summary

Some contradicting aspects can be found regarding the shelters. Firstly, is the level of visibility. A higher visibility can be beneficial for the safety of the women of the shelter, since the neighbours then can support and help notice if something happens to the women. The emergency shelter also wants to increase their visibility since it can help them claim space in their area, and if they are visible, they can prevent prejudices and conflicts, and the neighbours can more easily talk directly to them before problems occur or grow big. On the other hand, they need to be aware of the visibility since “the tail” then can reach the women easier, and at the transitional housing the clients want more anonymity since they are more aware of the stigma surrounding their situation.

The second contradictory aspect is the temporality. The shelters are the homes of the women, and it is rehabilitating to have something to care for and to be surrounded by a homelike atmosphere, and the women are making themselves feel at home and decorate their rooms. At the same time, it is temporary and they are only allowed to stay there a few months.

Thirdly, is the aspect of the neighbours. They can be supporting the shelters, at the emergency shelter they help to look after the women, and at the transitional housing they mean that the neighbours help to re-integrate the women into society and teaches them normative behaviour. At the same time, the neighbours are also the shelters heaviest critics, and they are the ones creating the boundaries of where and how the women are allowed to use their surroundings. The shelter also creates socio-spatial boundaries, mainly through their perimeter-protection, but that one is primarily against “the tail”.

They mean that responsibility creates a sense of meaning to the clients. Several of them are also skilled at gardening, and it would be a way of using their resources and strengthen the clients. Outdoor environments are also calming, but they also have a higher need to follow social norms compared to inside the shelter. According to the Social cognitive theory (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012) a higher self-efficacy can act as motivation in behavioural change, which is highly relevant for the women living at the shelters, since all of them are in one way or another going through great life changes. This motivates why the shelters should have accessible activities for the clients, such as gardening. The nature is also restorative and being outside can be rehabilitating, and gardening is a way to interact with nature (Kaplan, 1995). Inside the shelter they are protected by their own boundary, the perimeter protection, but outside they are sharing the space with others and in the negotiation of space they need to conform to the norms set in the space to be included (Brambilla, 2015; Beebeejaun 2017).

Gardening has also been a tool for neighbours to reach out a hand, as a block across the street from the emergency shelter were planning to build garden beds and offered the shelter to share. They shelter declined since the staff cannot leave the shelter and need proximity to keep an eye on the activities, since they suspect the clients could use it otherwise for criminal activity.

Activities such as art and culture support rehabilitation, and they also create a sense of meaning. Both the shelters offer different group activities, they do art with a local painting artist, they have bibliotherapy, where they discuss life and feelings with support of art and poetry.

“We have bibliotherapy (..). This week, the theme is change, and then you talk about poems and images together. It’s very beautiful, because everyone is very considerate toward each other. It really touches our hearts too. Most people find it very meaningful. The topics can be heavy, but they are approached in a gentle and thoughtful way. People really take care of one another.” (Staff, transitional housing)

Art is restorative, and according to Brambilla (2015) it can also be a tool of resistance and representation.

4.4 Spatial requirements

The findings of the analysis phase have been translated into what spatial and social requirements would be necessary to create a public space for women experiencing homelessness. The space is intended to be adjusted to the needs of the clients at the shelter, while neighbours and staff can use it as well.

The requirements aim to challenge the boundaries set up against the shelters, as well as to sustain the boundaries which the shelters have set up against their surroundings. The space will claim the women's right in the urban public through different levels of visibility, interaction and inclusion to provide rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

▪ Sustain safety

- › **Transitional housing:** Watches so no men are visiting in the courtyard or around the shelter, but leaves more responsibility to the clients outside of the shelter.
 - › **Emergency shelter:** Keeps a closer approach where the staff and security guard keeps an eye on what the clients does in the proximity of the shelter, as well as makes sure no one is visiting.
- Proximity to shelter: for staff to be able to know what happens.
 - Visibility from outside for neighbours or others passing to be able to see what happens, more visibility at emergency shelter and less at short-term shelter.

▪ Provide privacy and integrity

- › **Transitional housing:** Requires a certain level of privacy and integrity, since the women often are more aware of the stigmatisation associated with their situation and therefore want to stay anonymous to some degree, but still be able to interact with the surroundings to reintegrate into society.
- › **Emergency shelter:** Requires their own private space, but with a certain level of visibility for passers to see what happens, for the women's safety in case something happens to them, as well as to be able to interact and see the surroundings and reintegrate into society (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012).

- Aware choice of location, as well as use of privacy screening or other elements to allow for adjustable levels of privacy.

▪ Be comfortable, calm and homelike

- › **Transitional housing + Emergency shelter:** To support rehabilitation and rest the environment should be inviting and visually appealing. An inviting environment encourages care, which can create meaning and belonging (Lin et al., 2022). Care could also reduce chances of littering or deliberate damage.

- Low need of maintenance.
- A carefully considered design which is accustomed to the site, context and purpose.
- Space for personal adjustments of the users.
- Create a sense of home which the women need, but not too permanent. The shelter is a liminal space where the women only stay temporarily.

▪ Offer seasonal and temporal adjustments

- › **Transitional housing + Emergency shelter:** To provide use for all clients at the shelter, not only the ones being there in the summer. Moreover, the complaints of disturbances often increase in the summer since more people are out then, both clients and neighbours. Group dynamic as well as activities varies from time to time, since the clients move in and out.

- Adjustability in functions, to meet both change in weather and activities.
- Weather protection such as roofing or similar to protect from precipitation.

▪ Enable to claim space in area

- › **Transitional housing:** Keeps a lower profile and want the shelters' location to be anonymous.
- › **Emergency shelter:** Wants to claim more space in the area, to create a better relationship with surroundings and therefore get more support. To be more visible can also provide more empathy from the neighbours when they understand the purpose of the shelter, which can lead to a higher tolerance for non-normative behaviour.

- Art exhibitions could be a tool to claim space. Beebeejaun (2017) means art is a tool for resistance. It is relating to their collaborations with artists. Further it could be a tool to provide empathy from neighbours, when they show the human behind the socially vulnerable.

▪ Facilitate rehabilitation

- › **Transitional housing:** Focuses in supporting their clients to be independent after they leave shelter, to have daily routines, activities and social setting. A change of environment can be rehabilitating.
- › **Emergency shelter:** The emergency shelter focuses on supporting the women in fulfilling their stay and to not end it prematurely, for the women to be able to receive the rehabilitation which the shelter offers.

- Nature has rehabilitating and restorative ability (Kaplan, S. 1995; Ulrich, R.S., 2023).
- To have something to care for increases well-being (Lin et al., 2022), as well as self-efficacy and motivation (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2012).

Chapter V:
Design

- 5.1 Design strategies
- 5.2 Site election
- 5.3 Programme
- 5.4 Exhibition stand
- 5.5 Design proposal



Fig. 19. Photo of public space in Gothenburg. Shared garden beds in a residential block in Majorna.

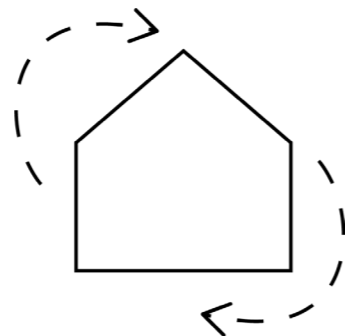
5.1 Design strategies

Here follows a presentation of design strategies for a public space aimed at women experiencing homelessness. They are developed from the spatial requirements, where the material and spatial elements were extracted and translated into material design strategies. Their purpose is to explore what requirements of the women experiencing homelessness can be facilitated through design, to create an understanding of what role architecture can have in creating spatial justice.

The emergency shelter was chosen as a site to test the design of this thesis, and these following strategies are developed according to the clients and routines of the emergency shelter.

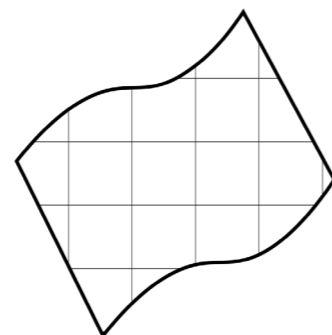
1. Location with proximity to pedestrians:

> The location is highly related to the safety of the shelter. It should be located on a street with movement and people passing by, to increase the number of eyes which can notice if something happens, or if someone is visiting the women at the shelter who should not be. The location is also relevant to the shelters opportunity to claim space in the area.



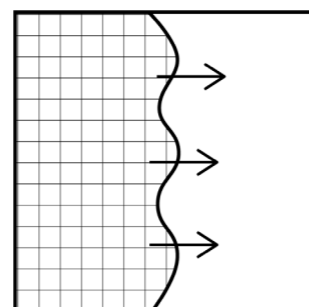
2. Low maintenance material:

> To be able to sustain an inviting and visually appealing environment the material should be of low maintenance, to provide opportunity for the space to be comfortable and homelike over time.



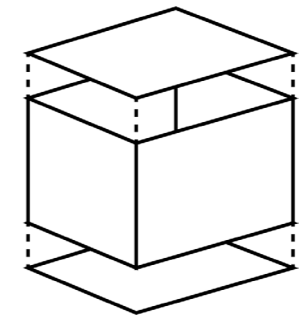
3. Adaptable visibility:

> The spatial requirements to provide integrity and safety and to sustain safety has varying needs of visibility. The safety increases for the women if neighbours and staff can see what happens, but their integrity and privacy could require lower visibility. The different functions and activities also require different visibility. Therefore, an adjustable visibility level is needed. This can be achieved through screeningboards or greenery.



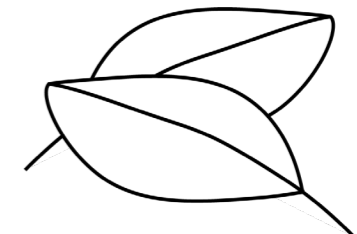
4. Adjustable use:

> The women stay at the shelter for a short amount of time, and their activities and preferences shifts. The space should therefore be flexible and adjustable to change. It is also beneficial if the space can adjust to be used during all seasons, to provide for all the clients passing the shelter. This can be done through weather protection, and functions which can meet the needs of several activities.



5. Integrated greenery:

> To provide for a comfortable, inviting and restorative environment, nature should be integrated into the design.



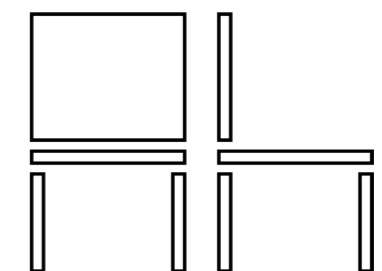
6. Low effort activities:

> Low effort activities provides rehabilitation. Garden beds are a beneficial option, since it also offers rehabilitation through its elements of nature and through providing something to care for. The temporal aspect needs consideration, since the shelters are short-term. It should be home-like but prevent the women to be too attached. Moreover, the staff do not have much time to care for the garden beds. A compromise is garden beds adjusted in size.



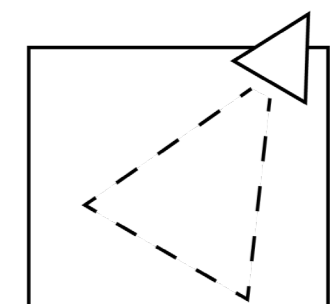
7. Varying seating:

> The space will provide for several needs and functions. The women will go there alone for privacy, which requires smaller seatings, and the shelter will go there to use it for group activities which require larger seating arrangements. The continuation of the place-based collaboration meetings has possibilities to be held in the public space as well, and would require a larger table.



8. Exhibition:

> As a method of rehabilitation the shelter have collaborations with artists. Art is also considered a tool to claim space. A space where the women could exhibit their art would provide an opportunity for them to appropriate space temporarily.



5.2 Site election

Possible locations:

Location 1

An open space next to the street, in proximity to and visible from the shelter. Belongs to the neighbour block.

- Proximity to shelter
- Allow adjustable visibility
- Space for activities
- Claim space in the public

Location 2

The entrance of the shelter. It was early decided not to be optimal since it would not align with the perimeter protection to mark where the entrance to the shelter is.

Location 3

The courtyard of the shelter, shared with the neighbours. They are not allowed to use this space today, since there is a playground at the courtyard and used by many children.

- Proximity to shelter
- Allow adjustable visibility
- Space for activities

Choice of location:

Location number one was chosen, since it could be a space which can be used by the shelter, while simultaneously explore how to challenge the public norms and boundaries and allow the women to appropriate and claim space.

It is not too public, as number five, and it is in enough proximity to be visible from the shelter, to sustain the safety, which eliminated location four and six. Location two would have been a possible option, but since it is a closed courtyard, it would provide less possibilities to claim space in the city and the women would not meet the neighbours at this space. This space is today not only used by the women because the neighbours do not want them there, and to overcome this boundary a better relationship and safety measures need to be created. The first aspect,

Location 4

A public and spatially open grass field between residential blocks which today is mostly used by people walking through it. In proximity to, but not visible from the shelter.

- Allow adjustable visibility
- Space for activities
- Claim space in the public

Location 5

A public square used by different groups in the area. In proximity to, but not visible from the shelter.

- Claim space in the public

Location 6

A space previously designated for socially vulnerable, located a bit in the outskirts of the area. Not visible from the shelter, but a beautiful space.

- Space for activities
- Claim space in the public

a better relationship, can be created through providing a space at location one, which means that location two could have potential to be used by the women at the shelter in the future.

Location one belongs to the neighbour block today, which means that a practical realization would require navigating regulatory frameworks, including land acquisition or inter-communal agreement. However, this thesis prioritizes exploration over feasibility, and it acknowledges that its proposal is speculative, and if this would be applied in reality location number three would be a better choice. But for the purpose of this thesis, to design a space suitable for women staying at a shelter as well as to challenge the urban norms and planning, a more public space was chosen, which is location one.

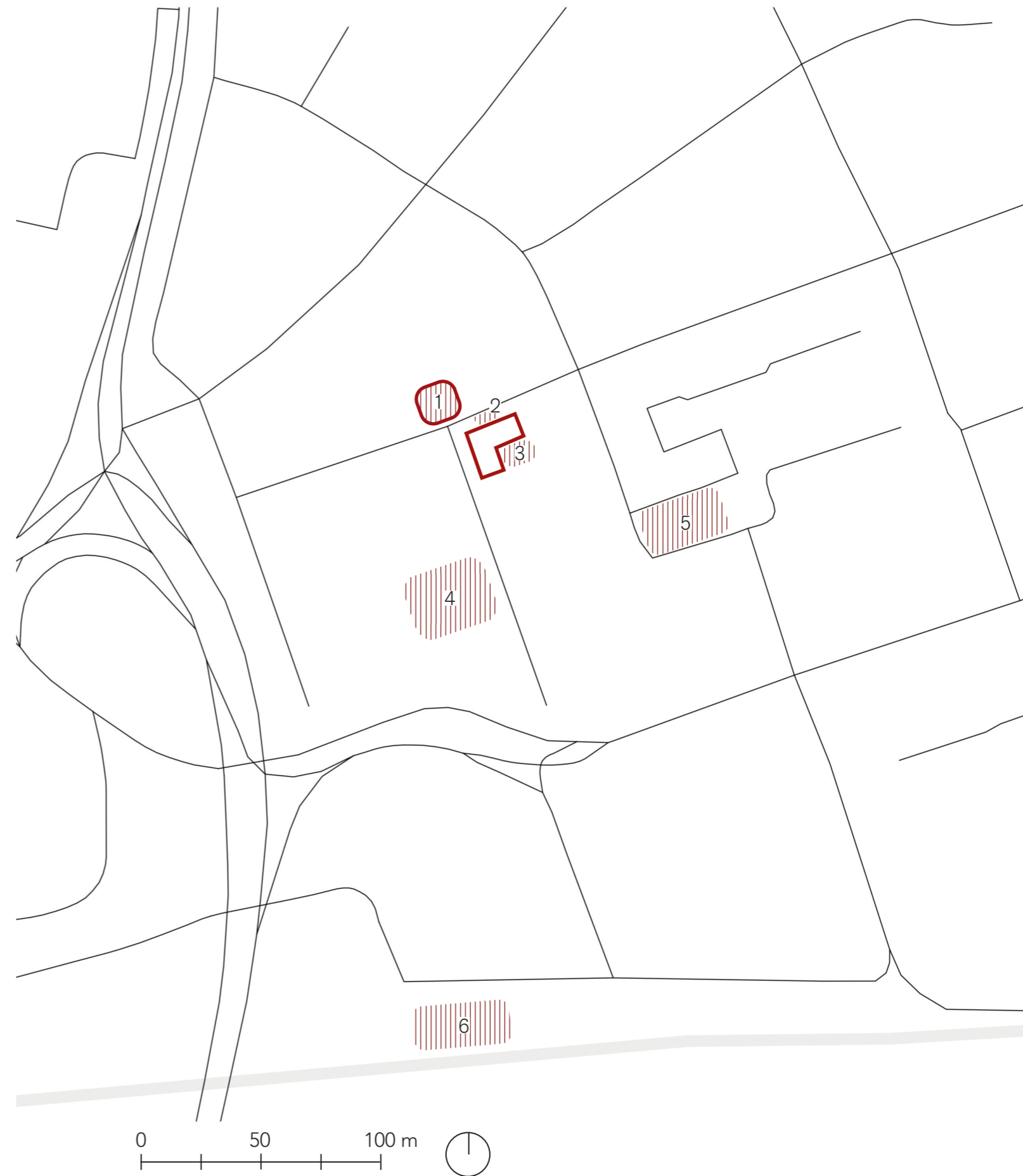


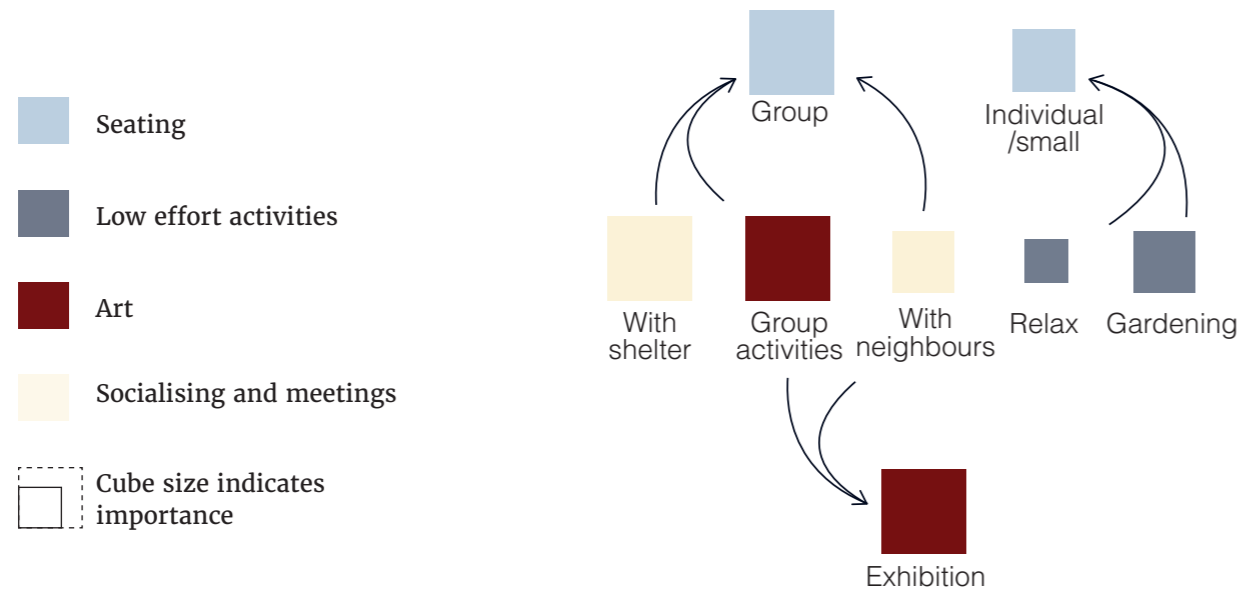
Fig. 20. Map showing different options of location of design in the area surrounding the emergency shelter.

5.3 Programme

The next step was to explore what functions are needed at the site, to facilitate the design strategies and their relation to each other, as well as where to place them.

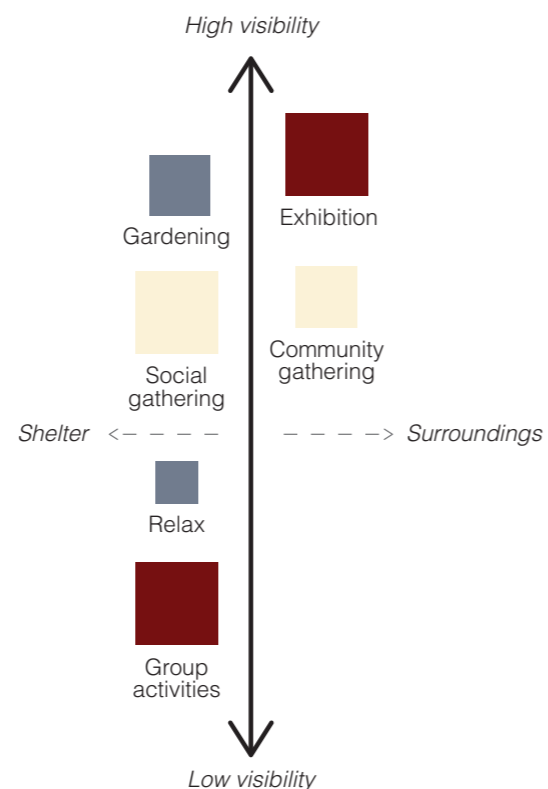
5.3.1 Functions overview

The following diagram represents the different functions together with their importance at the site, in relation to how many of the strategies they provide for.



5.3.2 Audience and visibility

The functions were categorised according to what visibility level they require or can manage. The group activities such as art, and individual relaxation require higher privacy, while the exhibition require visibility. The gardening and social gatherings are more flexible but can handle visibility. The diagram also shows who the functions main audience is, are they turning to the shelter only or to the neighbours as well?



5.3.3 Site analysis

Here shows a site analysis regarding the visibility of the chosen site. It is surrounded with three story buildings along three sides, with residential apartments inside, and a car street with a sidewalk on the fourth. Today the site belongs to the residential association and the apartments surrounding it, and it has some garden beds and benches, which everyone is allowed to use. Mentioned in the findings from the thematic analysis, chapter 4.3, the neighbours have called and complained that the clients where smoking

at this space, when it turned out it was not the clients but other people smoking there. The clients have also used this space to hide substances, and they are therefore not allowed to use it. It is a space today where socio-spatial boundaries are stopping the clients from using.

As can be seen in the analysis, the space are being watched from all directions, and it requires adjustments to reduce the visibility where the red lines are marked.

Where visibility need to be considered and adjusted.

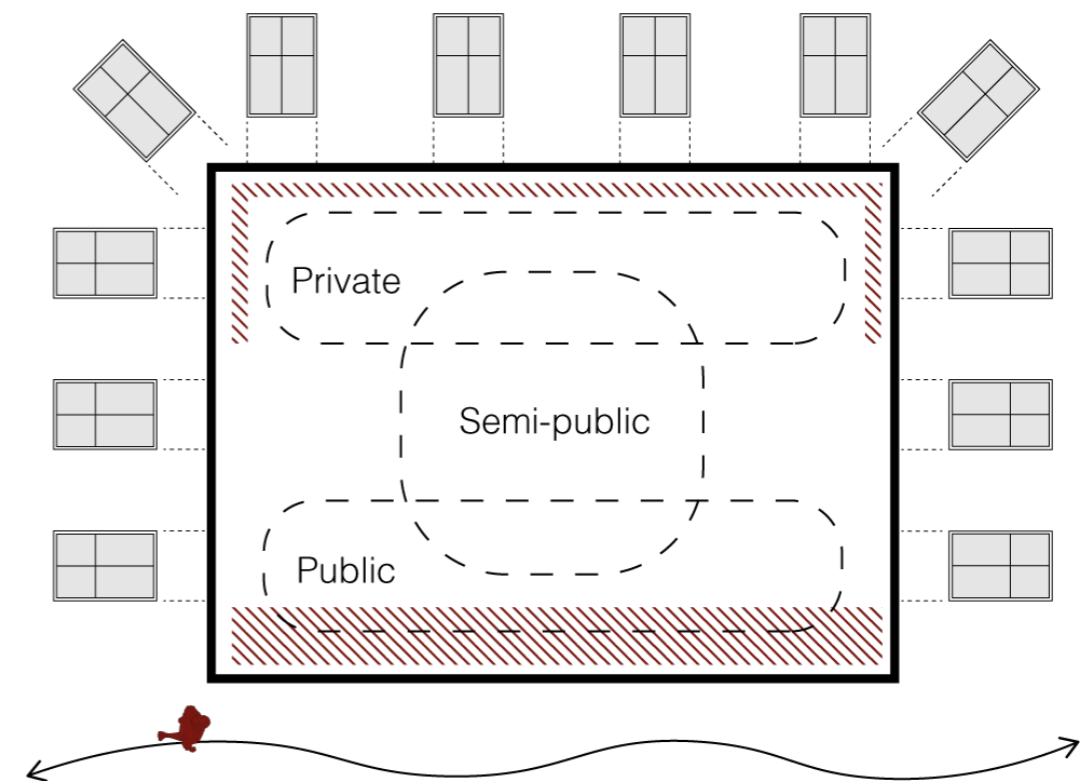


Fig. 21. Site analysis regarding levels of visibility on the site.

5.4 Exhibition stand

To facilitate the women to appropriate space, a space where the women can exhibit the art which they create alone or in group activities at the shelter. The exhibition space is combined with an outdoor lamp, to be placed at the public space designed for the women living at the shelter.

Since the exhibition stands are combined with a lamp, it can easily adjust to the variations at the shelter. Since the interests of the clients as well as the activities changes over time at the shelter, often with a short notice, the use of the exhibition space will vary. When no object is being exhibited, the pole still make use as a lamp in the evenings, and it will not look empty.

The staff of the shelter have access to the key and are having the ownership and maintenance of the lamps. It has an integrated surface where paintings, sculptures or other objects can be exhibited, and one lockable glass door.

The purpose of the exhibition space is to provide an opportunity for the women to claim space, but it is optional and only if they want to. They are being placed at various spaces in the design proposal shown in 5.5, several of them in proximity to the sidewalk so people passing by can see them, but some further in the space, if the women prefer a space which is at a more private level of visibility.

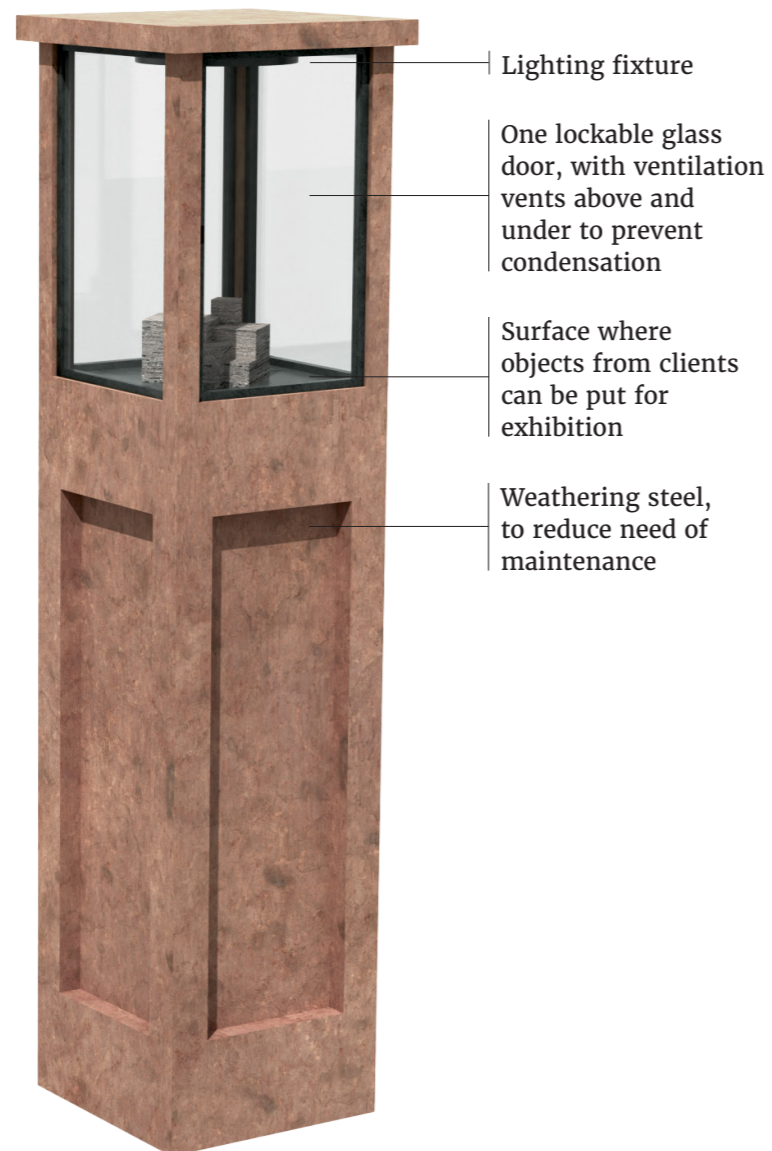


Fig. 22. Perspective of exhibition stand.

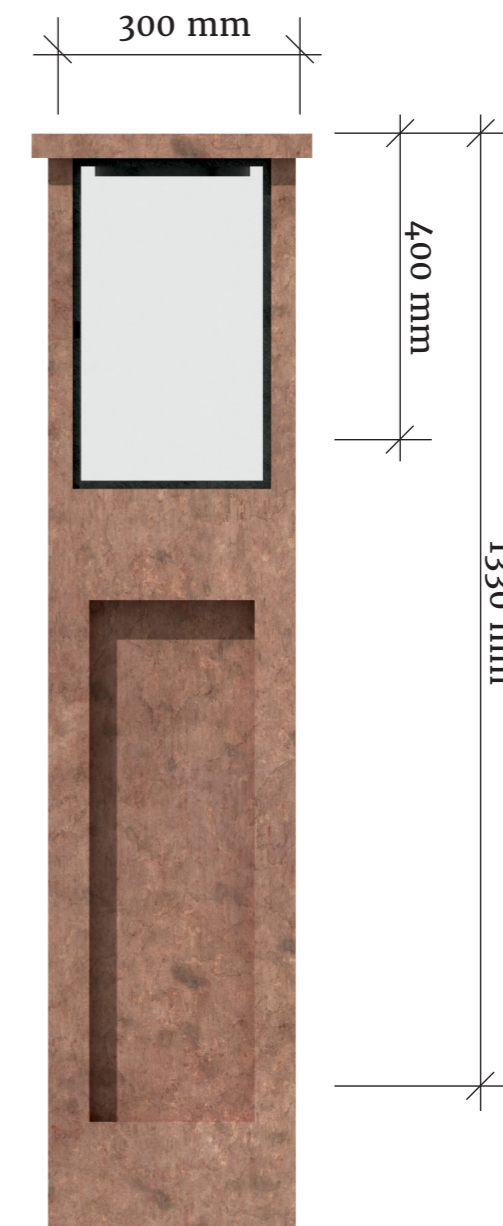
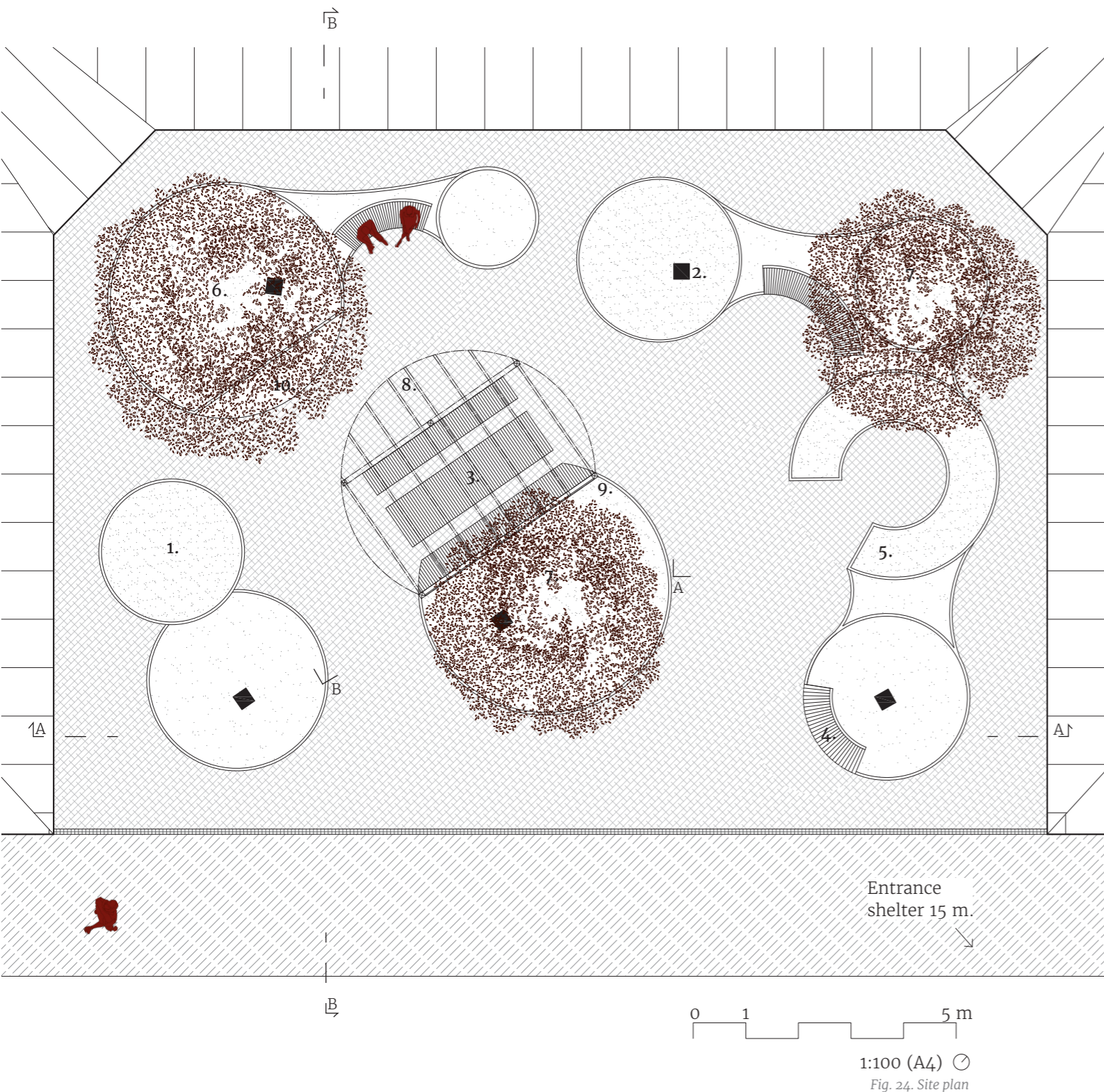


Fig. 23. Elevation of exhibition stand.

5.5 Design proposal

A proposal of how a public space aimed at women experiencing homelessness could look like.

5.4.1 Elevation



1. Flower beds.
2. Lamp poles with exhibition stand, see 5.4
3. Group seating.
4. Smaller seating.
5. Garden beds.
6. Existing tree.
7. New tree.
8. Roofed pergola.
9. A screening board which can be adjusted in height, hanging on the wall of the pergola.
10. Preparation table, for food or other activities.

Flower beds are placed around the space, to create a spatial as well as visible distance from the surrounding buildings. They open up partly towards the street. The combined lamp- and exhibition poles are spread out over the space to provide the women with a chance to appropriate the space at various levels of visibility, meanwhile as it will give light and enhance the perceived safety during evenings and nights.

A larger table is located in the centre, and smaller benches are placed around the space. One is facing the street to meet by passers or women living at the shelter who wants to sit more publicly, and two further in at the space to provide a higher level of privacy.

The municipality will be providing for the space, and the staff of the shelter will do the daily maintenance, which they already do outside the shelter today. The entrance to the shelter is across the street, approximately 15 metres away.

5.4.2 Spatial experience

The flower beds are of varying heights, differing between 0.5 meter to 1.2 meters tall, to create different levels of privacy and openness. Lower garden beds are placed facing the street and surrounding the small benches higher garden beds are placed to provide less visibility and more privacy.

The placement of the flower beds has the purpose to create small rooms, and to create a feeling of being embraced when spending time at the benches or when fixing with the plants.

One circular flower bed is placed at the space, to create an opportunity for the women to grow smaller amounts of plants of their own likings. It is small to not create a too big attachment for the women, but to still offer an opportunity for care and rehabilitation through gardening activity. To provide a space for the women to care for through the plants enables them to appropriate the space and create a feeling of belonging.



5.4.3 Function and materiality

To be able to adapt the level of visibility further, adjustable boards are placed on the wall of the pergola. They can be moved up and down, to create a flexibility in the view from and towards the bigger table.

A roofed pergola is placed over the bigger table to offer weather protection and create possibilities of use in the rainy or snowy seasons as well, to enable use for all women staying at the shelter, since the stay there is temporary and some are only there during these seasons.

The space is designed to enable several activities or functions to happen simultaneously, through the separation of the spaces and the functions. This can create company to those who need it even if they prefer to sit in silence or doing their own thing.

The materials at the designed space are of warm colours, to create a calm and homelike feeling. The chosen materials have a low need of maintenance. The flower beds are of weathering steel, the roofing structure are of wood and corrugated metal roof, and the benches are of wood construction.



1:100 (A4)
Fig. 27. Section B.

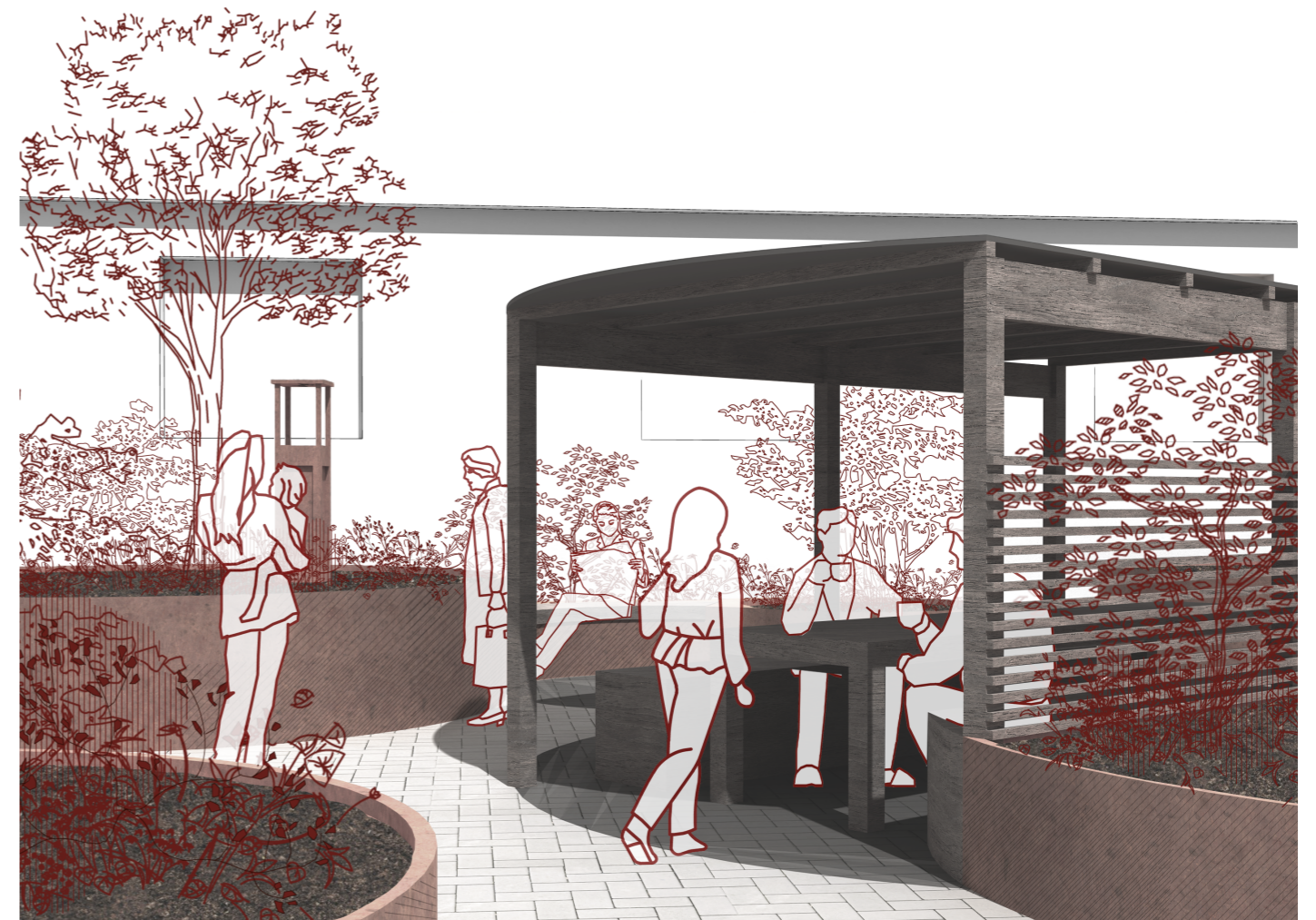


Fig. 28. Perspective B

Chapter VI:
Discussion



Fig. 29. Photo of public space in Gothenburg. Public transport stop in Lindholmen.

Purpose and approach

This thesis has investigated the needs of women experiencing homelessness, in a Swedish, urban context, with a particular focus on the relation between their shelters and their surroundings. It has highlighted the gap of empirical knowledge regarding socially vulnerable groups use of public spaces and how they could be integrated into the urban planning, and it has filled a part of the gap through researching the needs of women experiencing homelessness.

The thesis derived from an understanding of planning and design as mediators which can reinforce or challenge existing inequalities. It calls for practices which attend to everyday life, temporality and emotion, and practices which actively include needs and experiences of marginalized groups while planning the city. By grounding the master's thesis in the theory of "right to everyday life", it situated the project as part of an ongoing negotiation between bodies, spaces and power, and it acknowledged the experiences and bodies of those who are normally not acknowledged by the architectural discipline. Through this the Master's thesis challenged the typical discourse and praxis of the discipline.

It is in the everyday lived spaces where gender relations are being created, and through them a sense of belonging and spatial rights are being built. It is through attention to this, and attention to the unequal experiences and access to everyday spatial practices where a more inclusive urban planning is being created. Through creating a design of a public space aimed at women living at gender exclusive shelter and tailored to their needs, this thesis has given one solution of how to provide more spatial agency to some women experiencing homelessness.

Through participatory methods, the thesis researched and investigated the relation between the two case studies and their clients and staff and their surroundings through, and the lived experiences put the thesis in a context. Through architectural methods it explored how these relations could get facilitated in the favour of the women through spatial design. By having two case studies, the situation of the women could get more thoroughly analysed, and the variety of lived experiences, processes and struggles got highlighted. Women experiencing homelessness is not a homogenous group, and one space could not accommodate them all. The list of spatial requirements aims to highlight the diversity of needs. A difference can be found already between the emergency shelter and the transitional housing, even though they are in the same municipality and in close collaboration with each other, and many times are accommodating the same women.

Result

The thesis set out to answer the two research questions:

Which spatial and environmental needs of women experiencing homelessness remain unaddressed by the contemporary built environment surrounding shelters in Gothenburg?

How can feminist principles of spatial design inform the planning of a public space for women experiencing homelessness, in order to foster integration, integrity and safety for the women?

The first question was answered through the analysis phase, where the findings highlight the complex and often contradictory situation of the spatial requirements of the shelter's surroundings. The second question was answered through putting focus on the lived experiences and perceptions of a space, and specifically how it is experienced, accessed and used differently by everyone. The spatial requirements put focus on the diversity, and the design strategies answers how a public space for women experiencing homelessness can be planned in order to foster integration, integrity and safety for the women.

A conclusion of the thesis is the role of temporality, in two layers. Firstly, at the scale of the shelters, the clients are supposed to stay at the shelters for a short time, only up to three or six months. It was mentioned several times how the women were not supposed to grow too affectionate of the spaces since it was only a temporary home of them, but at the same time how a homelike feeling and to have something to care for is restorative. There is a contradiction and difficult balance to find in not making the women feel too at home, but at the same time give enough homelike feeling to support rehabilitation. The design in this thesis tried to work with temporality in one way, which is through the exhibition. It provides a tool for the women to claim and appropriate space, but for them to also be able to take the object with them after they leave.

In a larger scale, I think individuals in social vulnerability are often considered by society as being in a temporal or liminal space and in a process towards a more permanent state, which limits their right and access to the city today. Since they will not stay in their situation there is no need to include them in urban planning. But one thing they need to have a chance to get in a better situation is rehabilitation, which they can get through inclusion and spaces aimed for them and their needs.

Another contradictory aspect of the situation is the relation between safety and visibility. It was

described how the client's and staff's perceived safety increased when the emergency shelter moved from an industrial area to a residential, and how the neighbours and their eyes on the street helped to notice if something happened to the women. Therefore, a high visibility is positive. On the other hand, the tail following the women, and finding them outside the shelter, in public transport stops or similar, should not have a high visibility of the women, which is why the shelters do not announce their address or have a sign outside the door, and they are the reason to why the shelter have a perimeter protection. To find a balance in visibility was therefore a subject of exploration during the design phase of the project, how could the space provide integrity and safety, through being visible but not too visible? It should not offer space to hide, but also not be completely open. To meet this need the design worked a lot with vegetation, which can be adjustable in size, but it is mostly functioning in the summer. It also worked with screening boards which can be moved up or down next to the seating area, to provide a flexible level to the visibility. Mostly it met the criteria of visibility through the placement of the functions, resulting in a variety where some got more private and other more visible.

Moving forward

This thesis has only briefly touched the surface of the subject, the relation between shelters for women experiencing homelessness and their surroundings. It needs to be further studied to give a full picture, since it is a complex and layered topic. The question, what needs the women have, needs to be further studied, and then to take the next step and reflect over the conflicting objectives which might occur with other groups in society, and if and how these conflicts can be met. In many cases, it can be in the favour of the women to also consider other groups needs, since the women's safety and possible re-integration can get supported if they are amongst individuals of other groups in society. It is not as simple as to give the target group access to a space. All the social relations and socio-spatial boundaries acting in spaces needs to be considered since they can be in favour of the women if treated right, such as the support from the neighbours. On the other hand, if the boundaries set up are not paid enough attention it can be for the negative, as the boundaries the shelters set up to protect the women from the tail of men following them.

Another question of importance which needs further investigation is the difference between the shelters. How would a similar design appear for a public space aimed at transitional housing? The women staying at that shelter had generally a bigger need of anonymity since they were more

aware of the stigma surrounding their situation, and they wanted to be able to sit outside without feeling watched. Their visibility should therefore be lower, but to what extent can the visibility be reduced before the safety of the women are being affected?

Reflection over process

The methods used was successful in fulfilling their purpose. The number of interviews could have been shortened down considering the length of the thesis and the time it takes to transcribe and analyse the material. The site observations could have been given a bigger role, to further deepen the understanding of the use of the site. If I had more time, I would have built a prototype of the exhibition pole, which could have given a more detailed understanding of the purpose of the space.

What was unexpected was the response from the shelters. Their big will to participate in interviews, and how they so generously shared their time, experiences and encouraging words. To this I am very grateful, and when I felt lost in the process their encouragement was a big and helpful motivation. Everyone who participated considered this topic to need more consideration, attention and research, and after writing this thesis, I can only agree.

The role of architecture

The purpose of this thesis was to foreground questions of social vulnerability within the architectural discipline, and to reflect over what role architecture can have in questions more commonly addressed within social sciences and urban planning. Reflecting over the process and outcome of this thesis, the architectural methods and tools have potential to contribute. To position the architect as an actor within interdisciplinary processes can broaden the understanding of topics of social sustainability relating to spatiality, materiality and social relations connected to these.

Regarding the spatial requirements architecture could answer to some of the needs more than others. Spatial design can enable the perception of safety, privacy, integrity and comfort. It can offer seasonal adjustments and support appropriation of space as well as rehabilitation to some extent. Mostly, it can facilitate relations and relationship building. These are in turn the one aspect which have the most potential to meet the different spatial requirements which the women experiencing homelessness have of their surroundings. It is in the social relations as well as interdisciplinary processes where the most potential lies to contribute to change.

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All other illustrations and photos are by author.

Appendix

Interview questions for staff and clients at shelters, here translated to english from swedish. The questions written in italic text was prioritized.

Interview Questions:

Background and Context

- (Staff) What is your role at the accommodation facility, and how long have you worked here?
- How would you describe the facility's purpose and goals?

The Facility Environment

- How would you describe the physical environment of the facility? (*Ask only one person.*)
- Which functions or activities are primarily located inside the facility? Which are primarily located outside?
- Which parts of the facility work best?
- Are there any parts that work less well?
 - o What do you think makes some places function better than others?
- Regarding women experiencing homelessness, what specific needs or challenges might they have that are relevant to the built environment?

The Surrounding Environment

- What outdoor spaces around the facility are available?
 - o How are these spaces used by residents and staff?
 - o At what times are they used more or less frequently?
 - o Do you feel that residents feel safe in these spaces?
 - o Are there any places that residents particularly appreciate?
 - o Are there any places that residents tend to avoid?
- Does the surrounding environment affect residents' daily lives, sense of safety, or well-being? If so, how?
- Is there anything that currently affects how the surrounding environment is used? Are there any aspects that you actively avoid or protect yourselves against? Is anything missing?
- How do you perceive the facility's relationship with its surrounding environment? What does the interaction and/or connection look like? (e.g., with the street, neighbours, or the local neighbourhood)
- Do residents have a need to use outdoor spaces? Do they use them today?

Resident Participation

- Do residents have opportunities to influence how the environments are used or designed?
- What wishes, suggestions, or opinions have residents expressed regarding outdoor spaces or shared/common areas?
- Has any change led to greater use of the surrounding environment? Has anything made it easier to use these spaces? Or is there something you believe would facilitate their use?

Safety and Security

- How do you think about safety and security in relation to the physical environment?
- Are there any trade-offs between safety/security and opportunities for recovery, privacy, or freedom?
- How does the physical design affect staff members' ability to work safely?

Potential Improvements

- If you could freely change something in the physical environment, what would it be?
- How could the courtyard/outdoor environment be used more or in a better way?
- What potential change do you think would make the greatest difference to residents' well-being?

Closing Reflection

- Is there anything important regarding the facility's environment that we have not discussed?
- Is there anything that you feel is often overlooked when planning or designing this type of accommodation?