center for Vulnerable Youth

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research subject:
Homelessness.
study case Chisinau, Moldova

research booklet

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foreword

The present thesis was driven by absence. The absence of action, passive or active, the absence of courage and empathy, the absence of information. It all began with avoidance. I was always avoiding their eyes, as I could not help but feel guilt, pain, and pity. I thought at that time I could not help them in any way except by giving them money or food, which, would prolong their pitiful situation. So I chose not to see. I suppose many of us feel the same. We keep avoiding, based on various reasons, to face the problem, to really see them. During this thesis, I understood for myself that homelessness is only a phase of one's life and should not be perceived as a life sentence. I also realised how fragile our human condition could be, when no one can be fully protected from crises and that sometimes, the only difference is, as stupid as it sounds, luck. Luck of being part of a certain ethnic group rather than another, luck of being born in a certain country, rather than another, luck of having someone around you in a certain moment, luck of being loved, luck of being needed. Of course, it is not only about luck, but sometimes there is no other way to explain the unfairness of one's life.

methodology

literature studies

a compilation of research studies, reflecting the diversity of homelesness phenomenon - books, articles, movies.

study cases

international practice and already activating institutions working with vulnerable and homeless.

interviews

discussions with the homeless, vulnerable youth and the social workers, providing an overview on the needs and solutions.

home

"Without it (the house a.n.), man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life." (Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*)

linn warme

Lin Warme

Being at home, having memories, belonging to a place, feeling safe and dreaming, feeling lonely and uncertain. All that a human being can feel is related to a certain setting, while the memories are constructed around the places, involving all our senses.

Home should work as a protective environment and, if seen from a social dimension, as a source of attachment and bonding of its users. The quality of space and environment determines the level of self-value, the sense of belonging, and the importance of oneself in community life. It ends up being the physical expression of our interior balance.

"Everyday experiences contribute to the construction of a "sense of place", with reference to both everyday environments and the wider residential and territorial context." (Cicognani, 2014)

But what exactly makes *a house a home,* and where do we find safety in?

There is a set of factors that work together and comple-
ment each other to create a comfortable and thriving en-
vironment, although it does not mean that the absence
of one factor cancels the possibility of translation. Af-
ter a short scan of thoughts, the first to add to the list
is the physical safety from various climate factors, also
from aggression, and unpredictable dangerous actors.
A home has to shelter you, providing a climate balance.

A major factor of owning a space is to feel it personal
and intimate through individualisation, which is possi-
ble because of physical items or emotional bondage.
By the time you inhabit it, in the game comes the sense
of belonging and emotional value you give to elements
that shape your home, inside and outside its walls.

Home implies stability. No matter where you are and how
far, home is supposed to bring back the feeling of belong-
ing to a fixed, safe place for the time being.
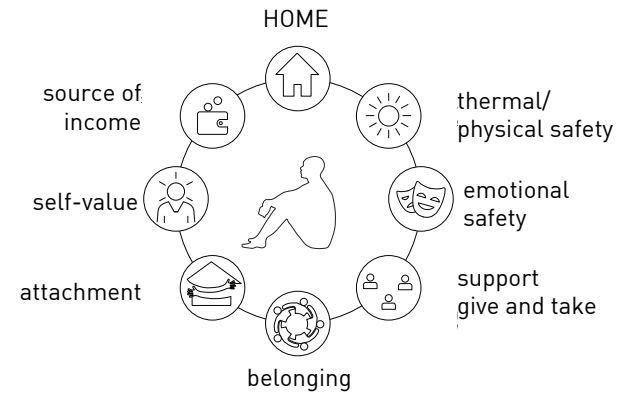
Nevertheless, having a home implies belonging to a
greater level of the community, and shaping the social
openness and emotional prospects of one's personality.
But, what is happening when one cell of this network is
absent or is out of order? What does it take to recover
and if it does, how long? And if many of us can rely on our
built community to bounce back, what happens when the
community, in any definition and shape of it, is absent?

The absence of a node in the network creates an imbal-
ance with various outcomes. It also seeks to be filled,
healed, or ignored, becoming a catalyst of instability in
one's life. The more expanded and powerful the absence
is the more complicated is to recreate the balance.
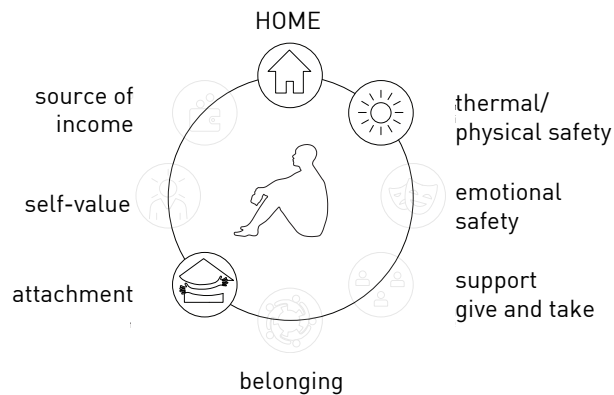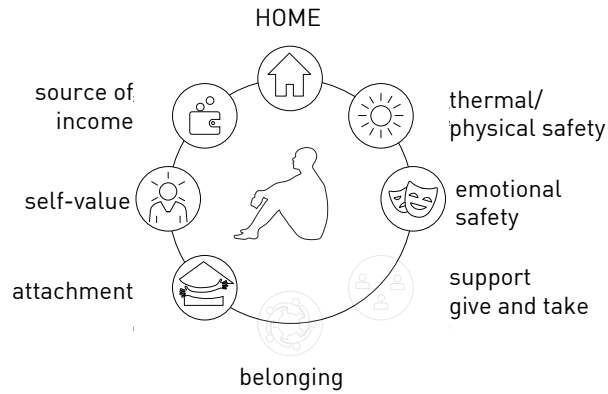
The safety and stability of a home are sometimes measured by the strong vision of one's future, and the will to plan, imagine, to desire. Those of us that take this safe space for granted will, probably, not be able to understand the lack of stability in one's thoughts triggered by the absence. Losing hope without even getting the chance of having it, is by far the least starting point one would wish for their life. This absence is later reflected in the quality of life, behavior, and societal affiliation of the individual.

House is the physical, while home goes beyond its materialistic meaning, although it is supported by items and fragments of memories and emotional attachment. Home becomes the "nomadic" part of the house through the power of belonging, the invisible "backpack" for the eyes of "the other", becoming a group of components of the psychological home that can be replicated.

«"Psychological Home" includes cognitive (attributions about ourselves in relation to the environment), effective (emotions and feeling associated with the establishment and maintenance of psychological home, e.g. security, warmth, attachment) and behavioural components (actions taken to make a physical location more home-like). » (Cicognani, 2014)

Important to understand is if it takes time to create a cer-
tain attachment, it takes even more to recreate it, in case
of (multiple) loss, to regain trust, to believe. This instabil-
ity acts as a powerful inhibitor in people's efforts to recon-
struct their social connections. (Stephenson, 2006, p.35)

The constant change in the environment, people, and
places to live is causing a disturbance in the home-
less' ability to build a stable and healthy sense of be-
longing. Paradoxically, instead of having an experience
where the community works as a support system, in
their lives the community is often the threatening actor.

When trying to fight their situation, it is not only a work
of rehabilitation of their social capabilities; it is also a
work to rehabilitate the notion of community and trust for
them. Therefore, the guarantee of a sustainable future
and building these communities from a socio-emotional
perspective is a niche where architecture has a voice.

Fernando Cobelo

perspectives on homelessness

"I am not homeless, I am houseless. There is a difference, isn't it?" (movie *"Nomadland"*)

Defining and measuring homelessness can vary not only from country to country but also from city to city inside a country, which gives different results and thus, different solutions and the area/ domains of implementation. Also, its definition is responsible for the recognition, but also the invisibility of the phenomena.

FEANTSA (European Federation of organisations working with homeless people) works toward understanding the homelessness, its roots, and to develop ways out of it. For this, they developed the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) to make it easier to communicate between countries and cases.

Based on ETHOS, there are four main concepts of homelessness: Rooflessness, Houselessness, Insecure Housing, and Inadequate Housing with 13 operational categories.

Rooflessness - without a shelter of any kind, sleeping rough;
Houselessness - with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelter;

Living in insecure housing - threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence;
Living in inadequate housing - in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding. (FEANTSA)

This categorisation only can show how complicated the subject of homelessness can be and there is no simple approach or a universal one to be applied, highlighting it as an area where a coordinated and well research response is needed.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948 has declared everyone's right to adequate housing as a basic human right (Article 25), like in other international declarations, as it is thoroughly explained by the United Nations. (OHCHR)

Based on Fowler et al 2019, "the most recent global survey of countries estimates that more than 1.5% of the world's population lack basic shelter, while as many as one in five people experience housing insecurity (109)."

To be mentioned, the data is before the COVID-19 crisis that made the poor poorer and the vulnerable more vulnerable. At the time of writing the thesis, another major natural, cultural and humanitarian crisis is happening – Russia's military invasion of Ukraine.

The war triggered internal displacement of the population and more than 6.7 million refugees fled Ukraine (as of May 2022) with the biggest flow of refugees in the EU since WWII. (UNHCR)

"The number of people forced to flee conflict, violence, human rights violations and persecution has now crossed the staggering milestone of 100 million for the first time on record, propelled by the war in Ukraine and other deadly conflicts" based on UNHCR sources.

"Displacement leads to profound changes in social identity, as a person loses the previous status supported by his or her attachment to neighbourhood community and workplace." (Stephenson, 2006. p.9)

Besides the humanitarian crisis inside and outside Ukraine, the war is causing a constant rise in prices in countries depending on natural resources and products coming from Ukraine and Russia, which leads to less affordability for people with a small income. In this category are included African countries where Ukraine is a major distributor of wheat and grains, irreplaceable in long run (WORLD-GRAIN).

Based on these events, amplified by climate change, persecution, and economic inequality, the number of homeless and those in precarious conditions are, clearly, expected to rise.

The literature identifies four categories of causal factors of homelessness:
1. material, financial, and houselessness factors;
2. relational factors such as marital conflicts, domestic violence, abuse, crisis situations (divorce, death, separation, abandonment);
3. personal factors - physical and mental illness;
4. institutional factors - detention, orphanages, political asylum, etc.
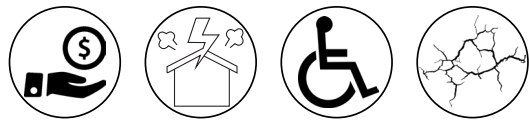
Based on Avramov (1999), there are two main types of casal factors that lead to homelessness:
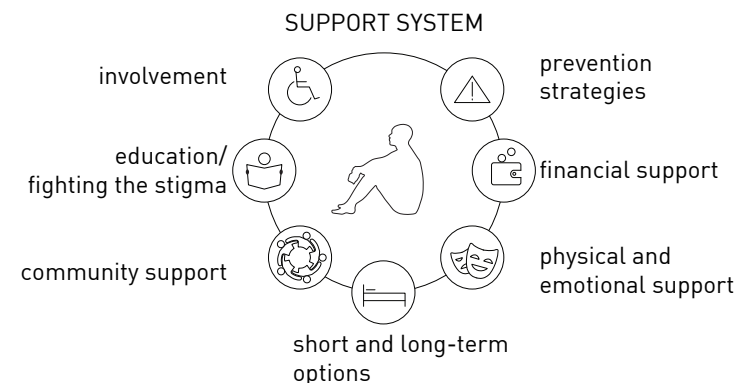1. key factors (structural):
- unaffordable housing;
- inadequate social services and protection;
- lack (insufficient functioning) of care tools for individuals with physical and mental diseases
- legal and social discrimination against different members of the population (migrants, refugees, asylum seekers);

- an inadequate social protection system, which lowers the chance of low-income individuals to access standard quality housing.

2. intermediate factors:
- family structures and dynamics
- the influence of the entourage and the group of friends, of the informal/ illegal work
- exposure to street violence
- subcultural structures.

The failure of the state support system amplifies the already existing vulnerabilities, leading the vulnerable cases towards more complicated homelessness situations.

SUPPORT SYSTEM

involvement · prevention strategies · education/ fighting the stigma · financial support · community support · physical and emotional support · short and long-term options

Based on the time a person spends in homelessness, the research identifies chronic/ long-term, episodic, and transitional homelessness.

Besides these categories, there is a type more compli- cated to identify and capture in official statistics, known as hidden homelessness. Hidden homelessness might include people on the edge of becoming homeless, left with no option or help, or depending fully on friends or relatives when it comes to a place and resources to live (Crisis UK, 2018). As it happens, the phenomena is more experienced by women that are trying to avoid the com- mon meeting places or institutions for the homeless. (Negura, 2019)

Housing insecurity represents the much larger problem of hidden homelessness. Poor families (earning less than 60% of the median national income) in the Europe- an Union spent more than 40% of their income on rent in 2016 (Fowler et al 2019). In this regard, states can use data and research from the Vulnerability Index to recog- nize, support, and prevent vulnerable households from becoming homeless.

Fernando Cobelo

The underlying framework for homeless services from a complex systems perspective.
Fowler et. al. 2019
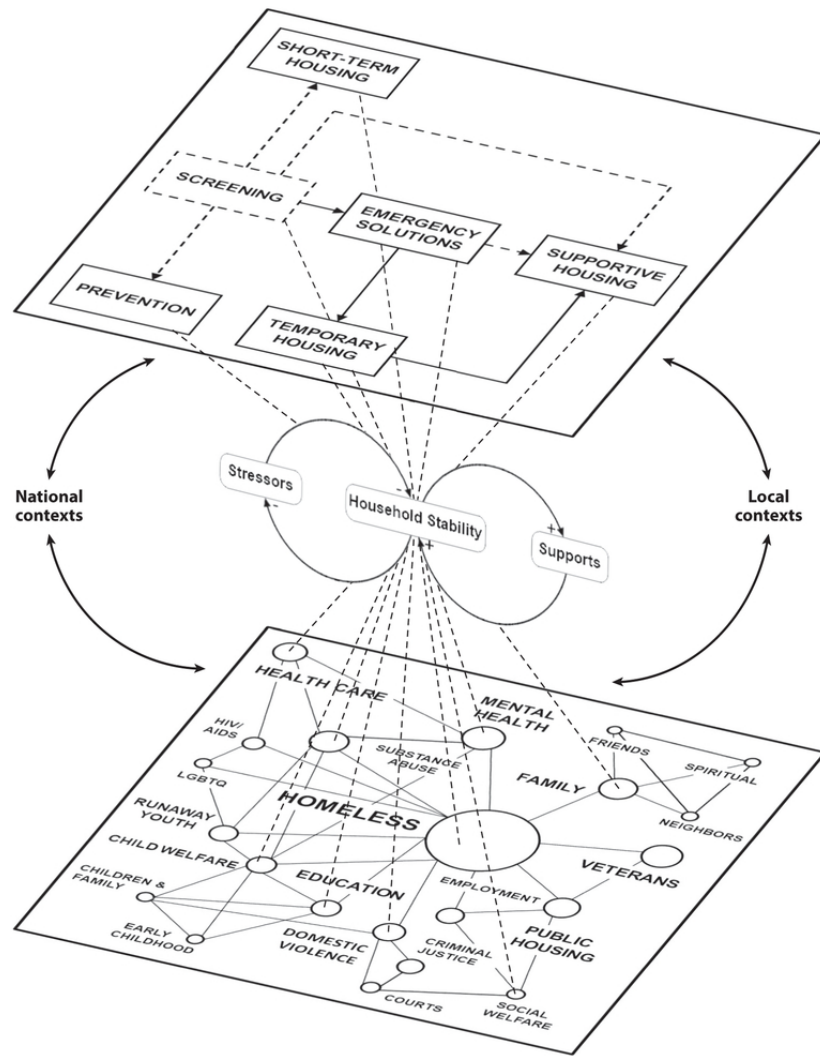
"Coordinated responses to homelessness as a complex system. Solid lines reflect a treatment-first approach, whereas dashed lines represent housing first philosophy. Circular nodes represent examples of key supports in keeping people housed; ties between nodes generally refer to information exchanges, such as communications, service referrals, or funds. The + and – signs indicate the direction of correlation between variables." (Fowler et. al. 2019)

As it can be understood until now, homelessness is a very complex and multidirectional problem linked to individual, interpersonal, and socioeconomic factors. (Fowler et al 2019) To prevent and minimize it, the network of causes and triggering factors have to be found and understood, to solve the problem in a sustainable, long run. Often, the responses to homelessness are directed toward reactions rather than prevention.

Sweden case

"in broad terms, responses to vagrancy can be conceptualised as largely punitive from the Middle Ages, gradually being replaced by reformatory measures at the beginning of the 20th century, then overlain by a therapeutic tendency towards the second half of the 20th century, and with the provision of shelter and housing dominating the beginning of the 21st century." (O'Sullivan, *Reimagining Homelessness*)

According to Knutagård et al 2020, Sweden has the highest number of homeless people per 1000 inhabitants, as compared to other Nordic countries.

Sweden's National Board of Health and Welfare has defined four categories of homelessness. First is the acute homelessness among those living in emergency housing, shelters, sheltered housing, or similar housing, where based on the 2017 national survey, 59% are men and 41% are women, and where 60% are born outside Sweden.

In the second category are persons housed in an institution or transitional housing with social support. Of the total number, 79% were men, 21% were women, and 76% were born in Sweden.

In the third category are people who found long-term housing solutions, meaning they are "subtenants under a 'secondary contract,' i.e. a form of subletting under a special contract entailing that they are renting housing from the social services who have rented it as the primary tenant". (Knutagård et al 2020). Of the total, 55% are

men, 45% are women and 43% are born outside Sweden. The last and fourth category is the short-term accommodations arranged on one's own, which includes people who live temporarily with a family member, other relatives, friends, or acquaintances. Very important to highlight is that, to be part of this category, "the person would also have to have had contact with the social services or some other actor highlighting the housing situation as a problem." (Knutagård et al 2020) Here, 60% are men, 40% are women and 43% were born outside Sweden.

Common reasons for homelessness in Sweden are related to unstable or insufficient income, long time of staying in queues to be eligible for an apartment, and high demands of landlords.

There are several municipal and non-governmental initiatives addressed to prevent and fight the rising numbers of the homeless, such as "transitional housing with social support, group housing and emergency accommodation, housing counseling and communality day care activities for homeless people ''. (Knutagård et al 2020).

Sweden is using a "staircase model" where the homeless have to move up from one type of housing to another, until the point of having their individually owned space with social services contract. Research shows that only a few manage to get there, while all the others get stuck in a "circle" of temporary and emergency forms of housing.
Another model is called "Continuum of Care" and it refers to persons that need to take special treatment for drug/ alcohol abuse. Depending on the results of the treatment, the person will or will not be entitled to a secondary rental agreement.

Although still limited in action in Sweden, the third model is "Housing First" and it emphasises one's need for stable housing to start social integration. The apartments are part of usual residential buildings, where the homeless are treated equally as other tenants showing an improvement in the quality of life and social integration of the residents.
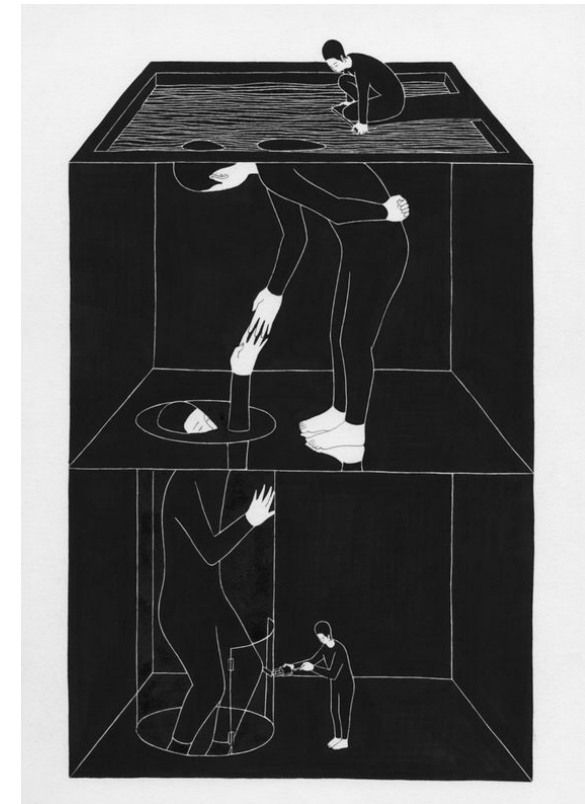
Moonassi

"In the long run, Housing First was proven to be a cost-effective method compared to emergency or transitional congregate facilities, highlighting the need of immediate social housing support, in order to prevent people from entering the emergency accommodation." (O'Sullivan)

"Why does being without a home put one almost outside the human race?" (Stephenson, 2006)

What has happened with a society where homelessness is clearly and deliberately created?
Where the socio-economic system produces marginality and pushes certain categories of the population into homelessness and despair, into a vicious circle with fewer chances to succeed, where entries and exits into homelessness are a matter of bad luck and bad timing. (Fowler et al 2019)

During a brief discussion about the thesis theme, I stumbled upon a thought I never had before, or maybe I did not want to see it in its entire "glory". The thought of measuring or seeing a country through the "homelessness lenses". So much could be said about communities' resilience, care, and network inside a country when looking at the numbers or the absence of them. The absence as in "defining and measuring something recognizes it as a social problem".

Of course, looking through these lenses is to operate

with just one factor out of a bigger system, much more complex and not easy to solve. "The presence of homeless people in the midst of 'settled society' creates anxiety and disorientation" (Stephenson, 2006) highlighting that there is a serious problem in the social, economic, and political systems, while everyone is part of it. Homelessness is a complex result of a society that became more individualistic and segregated than it was ever before.

The actions needed are to be addressed on multiple levels and directions, from individual to family to community approach. Homelessness cannot be ignored and hidden under the idea of bad luck and lack of personal resilience. All the social phenomena are intertwined and require community assistance and resilience at a greater level.
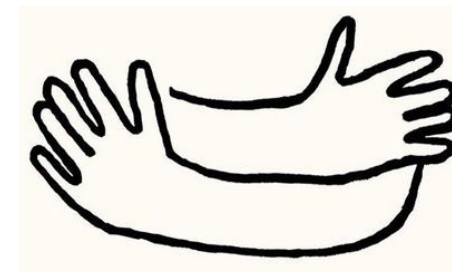
Shihori Obata

study case Moldova

inherited problems, inherited stigma

● Moldova

Chisinau ●

Moldova is a country in Eastern Europe that gained its independence in 1992 after the fall of the Soviet Union. After 30 years, it is still a country bouncing between East influences and West aspirations. After being isolated from the West for half a century and the economic depression that followed the independence, Moldova still has a young and fragile economy, a corrupt law system, and, many times, an unheard civil society. Many of the existing problems, such as homelessness, for example, suffer from social invisibility and very little support from authorities.

As such, the process of fighting homelessness is still new and slow, affected by old patterns of governmental and social behaviour.

Based on National Agency for Social Assistance, the definitions used to define the vulnerable members of the society do not include the homeless persons as a separate category.

Therefore, a "disadvantaged individual and family " is presented as a "socially vulnerable person and family,

being in situations that prevent their normal economic, educational, social activity, etc.";
"Social assistance beneficiary" is a "disadvantaged individual or family that, based on the request, social inquiry and ascertaining documents, is provided social benefits and/or services";
A "difficult situation" is described as "the state of a person who, due to loss of physical, mental or intellectual independence, needs social assistance to perform current vitally important functions.";
And "social reintegration" is the process of "rehabilitation of the basic functions (economic, educational, functional, etc) of an individual or family, that gives them the possibility to participate in social life." (LEGIS)

Besides the bureaucratic layers a person should go through to benefit from social assistance, the definitions used by the authorities make it harder to define who is homeless and how the person can be helped, leaving it to the interpretation of the person/ authority in charge.

Programs such as "Housing First" and Social Housing are available to a very limited extent and are directed towards vulnerable individuals and families, but do not include the homeless people. (Locuinte Sociale, 2021; Prima Casa, 2021).)

In Chisinau, it is believed to live between 3000 and 5000 homeless people. There is only one shelter for the homeless in the city (The Hosting and Guidance Centre for Homeless) with only 70 places to live. Based on the lack of information and facilities on the subject, it is easily understood that homelessness is of no major interest to the local and national authorities.

On the streets of the city, there is a heterogenous homeless population that implies long-term, episodic, and transitional cases. There are multiple reasons for their situation, many of them being victims of fraud or domestic violence, people unable to rehabilitate after a personal or family trauma, and persons released from prisons or orphanage institutions.

Besides them, there are those left without jobs after the fall of the Soviet Union and the economic depression that followed (as it is considered to be the main factor triggering homelessness.) Another group is the one affected by temporal income loss, the transitional cases that, if no support is provided, are vulnerable to becoming more complicated cases of homelessness.

"When people have to live on the streets for a long time, their opportunities for social interaction become reduced and damaged, and despite mobilisation of all their resources and energies, they may ultimately be defeated and truly excluded from the society."
(Stephenson, 2006.p.9)

The study conducted by Petru Negura, the only well-documented research on the homelessness subject in Moldova, served as a source of observations, data, and interviews that help understand the homeless situation in Moldova and its tendency. The research was held continuously in the period between 2004-2017. Part of the study was the interaction with the clients and staff from the Hosting and Guidance Center for the Homeless.

The Hosting and Guidance Centre for the Homeless has a capacity of 70 places (placed far from the city centre, in an industrial part of the city, almost hidden from the public eyes) and is supposed to host the homeless only for three months. Sometimes people end up staying there for several years, while waiting for a job or a place in elderly houses, a process full of bureaucratic barriers. (Negura, p.19) The Shelter is under the central and municipal administration, with rigid rules and regulations decided in advance.

The architectural language of the space supports the intense segregation of people inside the shelter's architectural and hierarchical structures. Rigid attitudes inherited from the old days, a reflection of military and prison-like hierarchies are enlisted as characteristic of the Shelter as a state institution. Both divisions of space and human factors do not encourage the rehabilitation process.

Building's plan consists of a corridor-like structure, with common rooms as dormitories, and toilets with no separate partitions, where the very idea of privacy is discouraged and barely existing. The Shelter has a canteen and a break room, but no common spaces for communication. Also, the night administrator's room, placed in the middle of the hall on the first floor and at the end of the staircase to exert increased control, does not predispose to communication and socialising. (Negura, p.48)

Shihori Obata

The homeless are a heterogeneous group of people with various backgrounds, levels of education, ages, and stories.

During the given research period, 74.44% of the Shelter's clients were men, and 25.56% were women. 23.23% of them have at least one experience in prison, losing their social skills and often finding themselves in a vicious circle.

11% of the homeless from the Shelter lived and studied in a boarding school. As Petru Negura is explaining it, a boarding school (also called internat-school) is a Soviet-type of care and educational institution for orphan, abandoned, disabled or delinquent children. (Negura, p.39)

Based on the UNICEF report, there is "no established mechanism to support the youth after graduation.", therefore, including this category in the vulnerable group, "vulnerable in several dimensions, including in terms of weak family ties, insufficient life skills, and high unemployment risk". (Stanculescu, 2011)

As a result, family relations are often a very complicated and layered network of cause and effect, expectations, and disappointment from both sides. However, when homeless people engage in couple relationships, this brings them the promise of a better life and even a stabilisation of the life of both members of the couple, says Petru Negura after his observations. (Negura, p.41)

The idea of developing social inclusiveness and rehabilitation will increase the chances of personal fulfillment, mutual support, developing coping mechanisms, and end the vicious cycle, not that is the only way of succeeding but it is a part of achieving one's sense of belonging that many have lost or never had.

The level of education of the Shelter's clients is lower than the country level, while 14.6% still have specialised secondary education or secondary vocational education. Based on that, we can understand that even though there were people with certain skills, those skills were either not adapted to the market needs or the Shelter (which is an institution not only of Hosting but also of Guidance) did not properly connect job seekers with those offering it Only 7.6% of men and 3.4% of women manage to find a job after leaving the institution.

Therefore, enforcing the idea of the necessity of institutions and actors involved, will not only instruct but also guide and connect the future employees and employers, preparing them for proper inclusion in the working field and social life.

A very important factor for homeless' stagnation is the loss of their IDs and papers that would give them more chances of decent and safe work, also access to various services. While 51.2% of Shelter's users were lacking the official papers, the bureaucratic system makes it extremely difficult to get them back. Without the papers

and the proof of residency, their chances of an official job are equal to zero. Therefore, working unofficially they face the dangers of being unpaid, exploited, and vulnerable.

Based on the research, 7.6% of men and 13.1% of women continue to stay or go back to the shelter after failing to succeed in finding a job or a place to stay.
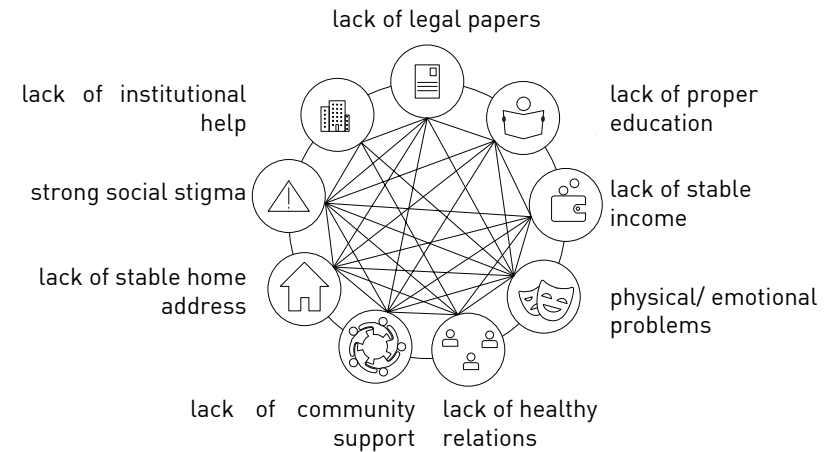
Whatever status individuals had in their previous lives, the street progressively strips them of any social advantages and does not let them accumulate new ones. (Stephenson, 2006, p.44)

There are several steps and various options that have to be performed before someone will integrate back into society, after experiencing homelessness. Many people in the risk zone require financial support or a fast and temporary solution for living. As Chisinau has a single Shelter for temporary accommodation, there is an urgent need of supplying this niche with adequate spaces, in multiple locations, adequate counseling services, and support in finding work.

Several settlements inserted in the urban fabric that address the needs of homeless people or the ones that are at the risk of becoming homeless, would have a huge impact on the community. These places could serve as temporary accommodation, night shelters, sanitary stations, and day-training centers (for women, children, and single parents) covering a wide range of cultural and educational needs.

Identifying the vulnerability nodes in one's life, identifying the vulnerable groups subject to homelessness, and preventing local, national, and international triggering events are crucial in prevention and rehabilitation.

"The best way to tackle homelessness is to stop it happening in the first place. Where there are predictable routes into homelessness, like leaving the care system or prison, we should do everything we can to help people find and keep a home.
Funding for local authorities to provide a mandatory set of activities to help prevent homelessness, including family mediation and supporting people to keep their tenancies."(Crisis UK)
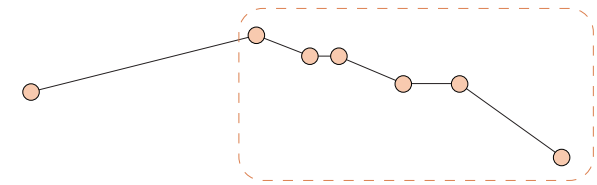
vulnerability period. no intervention.
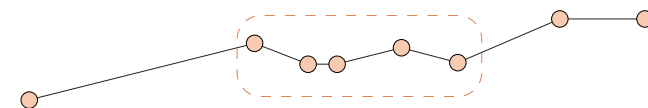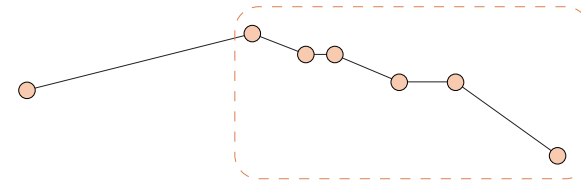
vulnerability period. late intervention.

defining the user

"At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being's stability..." (Gaston Bachelard, The poetics of space)

Preventing homelessness from happening is proved to be a more reasonable and economically favorable method in the long term. Rehabilitation rather than punishment helps break the vicious cycle and provides the users with more options, using fewer system resources. It also implies that the state would have a young, healthy, and qualified working force with less spent resources.

For that, it is necessary to identify the group that is prone to vulnerability and represents a meaningful part of the homeless in Chisinau. Therefore, the youth from internat (boarding) schools, orphanages, and vulnerable families were selected as the target group of the thesis design.

Early interventions ensure a smaller period of instability and broader possibilities, faster adaptation, better results, and more chances of someone to be useful to the society. While late and no intervention graphs show a longer time for rehabilitation and shorter or no time of productiveness.

vulnerability period. no intervention.
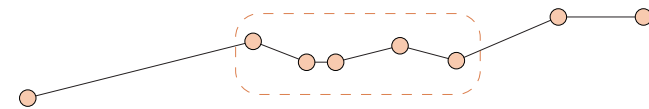
vulnerability period. late intervention.
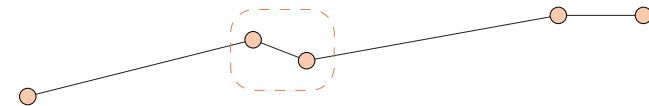
vulnerability period. early intervention.

To ¨shape¨users' profiles, a series of interviews were selected from three different sources, to give a better understanding of their experiences to highlight the needs, particularities, profiles of the possible user, and the services that the future design should host.

These studies are interviews from The Hosting and Guidance Centre for Homeless in Chisinau, interviews from a study published by the Public Association ¨Demos¨ from Moldova, and interviews with social workers working with vulnerable youth in the United States.
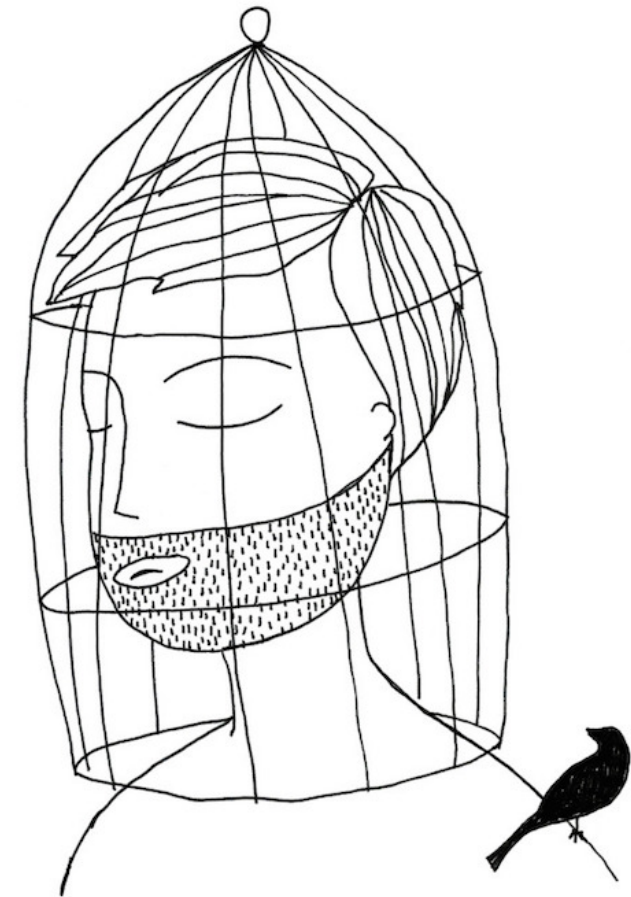
Fernando Cobelo

Note: *The following interviews were held in the Hosting and Guidance Center for the Homeless in Chisinau, Moldova, by Petru Negura during his research between 2007-2014. And I have to thank him for trusting and sending me the files.*

V. (male, 28 y.o. in 2014) lives and works at the Homeless Shelter. He says he studied at a boarding school and was also in prison for a few years. *"People like me do not have a chance to make a future. Because this is how the system works."*
Even if he has a paid job now, he says there is no way he can find a proper job and have a house, and a family. However, he did find one more part-time job to gain more money and also was in the process of getting his driver's license so he can work in taxi service later on.

L. (female, 18 y.o. in 2016) complicated family situation. Was sent to an internat school to study and live, but did not pursue any professional education afterward.

D. (male) became a person with disabilities after he was injured and robbed in a hooligan's attack in Russia, while he was there for work. His both parents died shortly after he came back home. He moved to Chisinau to find a job: *"Plans? Honestly, I don't know. The most important thing is to find a job."*
Note: *Since May 2015 and for a while, Dan has been interdicted to access the services of the Centre for breaking the disciplinary rules of the Centre (alcohol, violence).*

E. (male, 29 y.o. in 2014) comes from a village where he studied in a boarding school and then continued with a 2-year professional school, learning to be a cook. Moved cities and places before stopping at the Centre. After this "break" he is planning to find a job and rent an apartment.
"It is easy when they take care of you: they dress you, they feed you, heal you and take you to the hospital, it is easier." (When asked about the years at the boarding school.)

E. (female, 32 y. o. in 2016) grew up in an internat. Graduated after two years of professional school. Got married to another internat graduate, have a child together, but are divorced. Has seasonal/ periodic jobs, while the child is raised by another family:

"Well, I need to have at least a room. This is the first thing I want. After that everything will fall into place. If I would have at least a room, it would be way easier, and I could take my child with me, I would know that this room is only mine, that I can come there anytime and rest."

M. (male, 28 y. o. in 2014) was born and raised in Chisinau. After his parents' divorce, his father sells the apartment while he and his mother are left on the street. After changing places and jobs, and living on the street for a while, they end up in the Centre. He continues to work in seasonal jobs: *"For now, I have only one plan: to buy myself an apartment. At least a room."*

V. (male, 38 y. o. in 2016) orphan, grew up in an internat and graduated from a professional school as a cook.

"I wrote a letter to the city council of Orhei. I was born in Orhei. I wrote, but no point in doing it. I wrote and they did not give me an apartment, anything, no money, no subsidies, nothing. By law it is mandatory, do you understand?"

V. (male, 22 y.o. in 2016) was sent to the internat school after his parents decided that they cannot afford to raise him. He did not continue to study after school and has seasonal/ periodical jobs.

"I have my ID and I have to apply for the birth certificate, but I don't have the money right now and I'll try to fix that somehow. But there is time. And I'll do it. And, God help, will go and get my school certificate and, maybe, I can apply to a professional school. And that's it."

Note: *The following interviews are selected from the sociological study "Social and professional reintegration of the vulnerable youth" held by DEMOS Moldova in 2010.*

"I graduated from the orphanage... I was there for 8 years... My dad was beating my mom. And what happened was that one day, he beat her very badly... It was one evening. [...] The next day she died... After that, they took us to the orphanage." (IIA1)

"I have lived in the orphanage since I was little. I had a mom and dad, but my dad died when I was 5 years old. Then, my mom remarried and we continued to live together. I was around 6 years old. Then, in the first grade, they sent me to the orphanage... We are three sisters from the first dad and a brother from the second and all of us studied at the orphanage... The second dad has another spouse and now they live together." (IIA2)

"You are poor when you do not have a place to live... When you need money to go to school and you do not have it... To be rich means to have a home, a family to live with... You understand someone is rich, based on how that person is dressed, the way they shop in the store, how often they eat." (IIA5)

Fernando Cobelo

Youth people in precarious situations are prone to become homeless or to get involved in activities that would lower their chances for a better life.
Based on a study conducted by AO "Demos", 58,7% of the respondents "do not know how and what to do in order to have a good life" and only 3,8% have thought of a strategy. Their lack of resources (of all kinds), good examples of how to deal with the external world, and support from family and authorities, continue to keep them in a vicious circle while feeling that they are abandoned by society.

A view about the outside world and their success in it is defined depending on where the persons are coming from. For the youth in the rural areas, it is harder to imagine a future and proper ways to achieve it, while those from the urban areas are more optimistic but also tempted to use other ways than the "correct" ones. Being susceptible to the environment they are in, they become vulnerable to various factors and actors in society. When it comes to jobs, the majority of them succeed in finding one even if for a short period of time, although their lack of qualifications dictates the type of jobs they

can apply to. This means that the options are limited, imply the lowest-paid wage, and are physically exhausting, therefore are not stable and cannot suffice a good life.

Based on the interviews, one major subject of interest for the youth is related to job searching and all the aspects it might include, from writing a CV to working agreement and how to behave at work. Other major subjects of interest were: Family and children, Love relationships, Social bonding, Rights and Obligations as a citizen of Moldova, Healthy life.

As a conclusion to the conducted study, the authors outline the need for a strategy to help vulnerable youth not only to study but also to find jobs and places to live after their graduation, together with stronger involvement of public authorities and increasing social support.
Due to economic difficulties, parents choose to emigrate and look for jobs, leaving their children in the care of one parent, grandparents, or other relatives. Children lose the support system and safety they had before, often not getting the care and skills necessary to succeed.

Note: *The following interviews are selected from the study "Stories of working with homeless youth: on being mind-boggling" by S.A. Kidd, S. Miner, D.Walker, L. Davidson 2006.*

"Meeting these kids where they are at was built on the understanding/ reality that their clients have a wide range of circumstances, needs, ways of coping, and ways of progressing through the counseling process."

"Unconditionally valuing, liking, and caring for the individual youth and treating them "like human beings" was described as a powerful intervention for youth who are disliked, devalued, and treated as commodities."

Based on the paper and the interviews of the social workers providing services in a centre for homeless youth, it was clear that the process of rehabilitation requires time to build a strong, healing relationship. To accomplish this, the most basic human needs have to be provided in a proper, safe environment where the clients and social workers can make an individual plan and work towards a common goal.

The solution to helping the vulnerable youth appears to be simple, yet layered and complicated. From the studies, we can understand the need for a safe space, self-owned, where a person can feel safe physically and emotionally. A space where they have a chance to create a community, but also to be an active member of it, a contributor. This way will contour several roles they might have in the community around, becoming more engaged and responsible. A wide range of social services is needed to be related to psychological support, family reconciliation, legislation support, and various workshops that would give them skills appealing to the job market. They need a space with a horisontal hierarchy, that would help them grow and develop.

why youth?

"Research has shown that poverty and especially child poverty creates a clear risk of homelessness and can be seen as the common denominator among people experiencing homelessness"
(Bramley & Fitzpatrick 2018; Knutagård 2019).

inspiration

"This is the environment in which the protective being live. We shall come back to the maternal features of the house." (Gaston Bachelard, *The poetics of space*)

In order to develop the design, I looked for already exist-ing practices that would provide me with the necessary spaces and services one needs to advance in his/ her rehabilitation. I chose both national and international examples of organisations that provide such services, as it is a known and common practice in many countries. The inspiration expands from services to the physical features of space and is not limited only to these three examples.
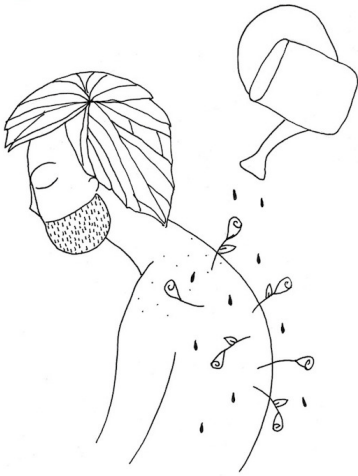
Fernando Cobelo

Public Association "Demos", Edinet, Moldova

The association is providing social, cultural-education-al, and psychological services for young orphans, youth lacking parents' care or from disadvantaged families, at the time of their graduation from the boarding school or vocational school in order to be integrated into society.

Their target groups are vulnerable children and youth, single mothers/ fathers with minor children in care, young women, and victims of human trafficking and of domestic violence. Together with the social workers, teachers, trainers, legal experts, psychologists, and economists, they provide a wide and necessary range of services such as psychological assistance and counsel-ing, information and education for life skills formation, legal assistance, vocational training (qualification and requalification), accommodation and socio-vocational reintegration.

In their projects, "Demos" is collaborating with many local and international organisations, their activity depending on, mostly, foreign funding and donations.

Heizenholz, Zürich, Switzerland

Heizenholz, Zürich, Switzerland is a social services cen-
tre for children and young people.
Heizneholz is a residential and day center, that pro-
vides social services to clients and their families such
as daycare for preschool children, care and housing for
children, teenagers, and young adults, and intensive
support for families.

Besides, they offer various residential options, depend-
ing on the youth's situation. They come as a support
group for both children and their parents, constantly
collaborating and communicating with actors like au-
thorities and NGOs throughout the entire process.

Heizenholz served as an international inspiration for the
various services a Centre can provide, the flexibility of
the programs and spaces it would need to have, and the
focus not only on the individual but also on the family
members.

family counceling

communication

psychological assis-
tance and counceling

educational support

short- and long-term
options

legal assistance

vocational training

involvement
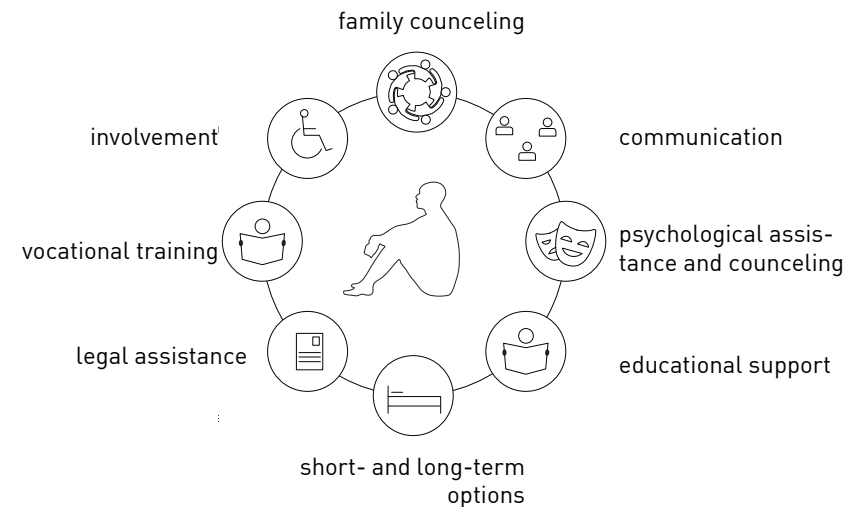
social services of the design object

42

Tietgen dormitory, Copenhagen, Denmark

Tietgen dormitory from Copenhagen, Denmark is a student housing complex, built by the Lundgaard & Tranberg Architects in 2005, serving as an inspiration for quality individual and shared spaces. Tackling this dichotomy, common spaces are open toward the interior courtyard, while the courtyard becomes an external continuation of the interior movement.

This typology, although "softened" and adapted, is known as a panopticon and will be used in the future design of this thesis. Private rooms are facing the surroundings, as a communication tool to the "outer" world. The units are providing quality in terms of space and materials, with working space and balcony.

photo: Jens M. Lindhe, Maria Gonzalez

safety

permeability

common/
social space

thermal
confort

dynamic facade

quality
materials

functionality

community
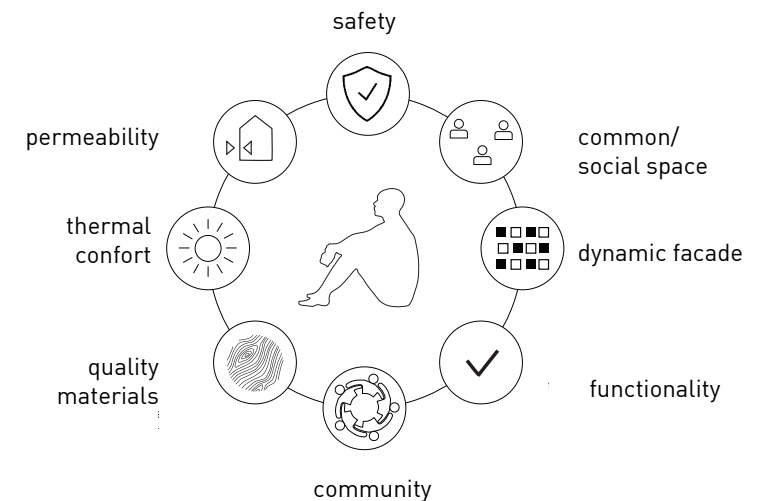
priciples of the design object

location

case of the Republican Stadium
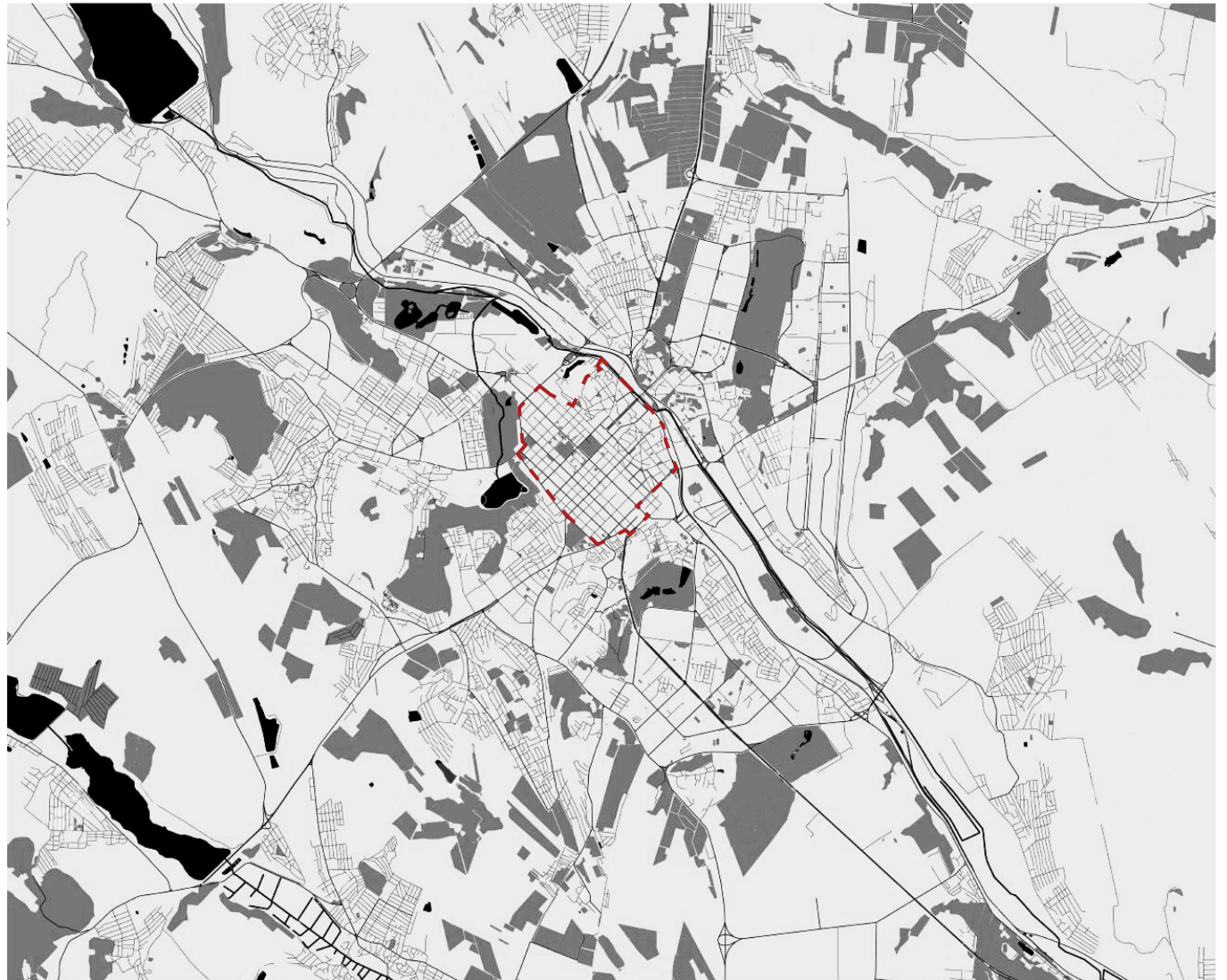
historical city center. Chisinau.
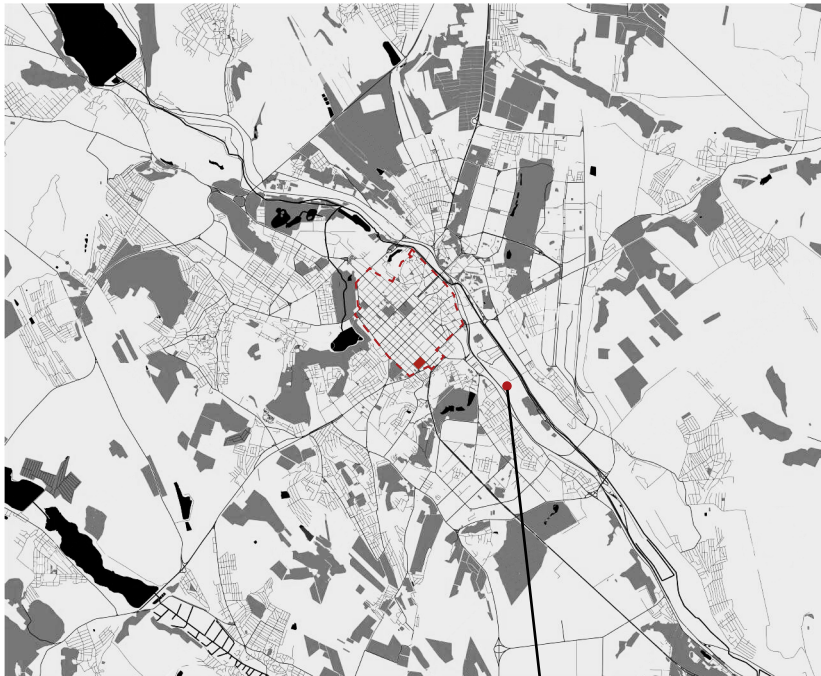
city map. locations.

Centre for Hosting and
Guidance for Homeless

city map. public transport.

The Centre for Hosting and Guidance for Homeless in Chisinau is situated in an industrial and less accessible location as if it is hidden from the public eyes.

The proposed site in the old part of the city has a strategic placement, meeting the needs of an urban green escape as well as an easily accessible facility for everyone.

city map. meeting points of homeless people.

city map. location of boarding schools.

The site is also one of the many meeting points for the homeless people in the city, including the homeless youth. Providing a facility centre with various services would make them come out from the shadows and feel represented, in a central, important location.

As boarding school users are the possible clients of the center in the long term, it was important to find a location easily accessible and representative for most of them.

--- - - - limits of the historical city centre

◼ the site - Republican Stadium

◼ blue layer

◻ green layer

functions, besides residential

——— the site

- - - student facilities

- - - police station

- - - prison and correction facilities

- - - memorial/ cemetery site

flower shop

hotel   barbershop

rental   textile store

business centre   realter office

bank   tattoo studio

sinagogue   insurance company

The site is the territory of an old Stadium, known as "The Republican Stadium" (from the state's name during the Soviet Union - The Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova). Built in 1951 on a 5, 1814 ha, it had the capacity of 25 000 people and became an important multifunctional sports center (ARHIVA MD). Due to technical and economic issues, in 2007 started the demolition of the Stadium, with only SE and NW gates left. Since then, the territory perimeter was fenced with a high, stonewall, blocking any interaction of the city dwellers with the space. Meanwhile, nature took over, resulting in a lush green space in the middle of the city.

In 2019, the subject of selling the plot for a new US Embassy in Chisinau sparked discussions and protests against this action. The attention was brought to the need for a green, inclusive, public space by opening it to the citizens.

A civic movement called "The Stadium is for the People" (from Romanian "Stadionul este Republican") began to organize various acts of reclaiming the urban space, providing arguments and solutions of how the Stadium can be transformed to serve for the good of city dwellers (Chisinau, 2021). They demand public discussions and transparency of what should be done with the site. The civic initiative that brings together architects, urban planners, artists, and activists is asking for a referendum concerning the Stadium's future functions. (The Calvert Journal, 2019)

Fortress-urbanism and extreme security resulting after building an Embassy lead to specific behaviour of the people around, avoidance and segregation. The design proposal of this thesis is an attempt to avoid the creation of an urban island in the middle of the city.

"As previously observed, these typologies inadvertently devastate the city matrix, producing hyper-private spaces of secrecy. As stipulated, the most important facet that architects take into consideration whilst designing these buildings is the notion of safety. " (Filipovic, Tomic, 2020)

Note:
As of May 2022, it was officially decided to give the site to the American Embassy, for new development.

historical photo of the Stadium.   oldchisinau.com
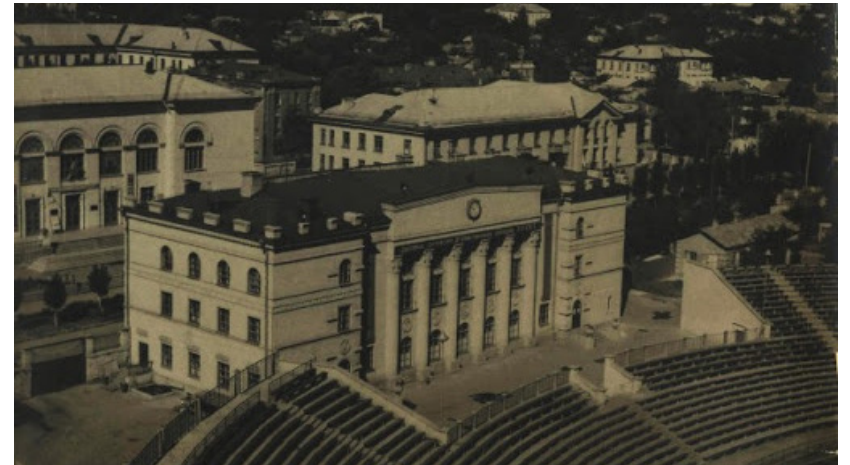
administration building of the Stadium, historical photo.   oldchisinau.com

aerial photo of the Stadium, 2019.   oldchisinau.com

administration building of the Stadium, 2021.   author photo

While the Soviet Union ideology canceled any idea of privacy, be it physical or mental space, the land became a common good with only one owner - the state, with total rights for its use and purpose. After the fall of the USSR and the independence of the Republic of Moldova, a reversed process started - an intense trade of state properties. While some spaces were private, others became places of non-interest and ignorance, when the state had no funds but also low interest in investing in them.

The site of the Republican Stadium is an example of "an isle of carelessness" on a state level. While being still in the state property, but kept in very poor condition, with almost the entire built structure demolished, this site is proposed to become an example of re-appropriation of urban space, claiming that the old stadium site should go back to public use.

Having these factors as starting points, the design of the site is meant to approach the public realm on a community level, transforming it into a common space.

The chosen site is that breathing space, wild and lush, accessible and acceptable for all, a natural and social space of being, meant to become a democratic space where even those vulnerable and ignored will find themselves represented, valuable and visible, in the very city center. As a tool for meeting various social actors, the site is meant to be the common ground for those who have specific rights and privileges and those that found themselves in vulnerable conditions. When involved, the discovery of personal attributes is possible as well as the blurring of any distinctions other than those directed towards the final scope.

I find this land left and ignored for years a very good analogy with those vulnerable members of the community, once active and respected, now ignored and repressed. But while the value of land is easy to see (talking about money and the very short time you need for transactions), it is way harder to make the public structures understand the value of people that got lost in the avalanche of life events, when the process of rehabilitation is taking longer than the "market" is able to wait.

details, Stadium, 2021.   author photo

homeless youth finding shelter on the territory of the Stadium.
photo: facebook.com/anapopapa

homeless youth finding shelter on the territory of the Stadium.
photo: facebook.com/anapopapa

NB. Between 15 to 20 young homeless live in the ruins of this building. In June 2020 police evacuated the homeless and demolished the improvised home. Many of the youth and children have run from them, others were transferred to Social Services, and others will be sent back to their families. But, as the director of the Asociation ¨Nu esti singur¨ (from Romanian ¨You're not alone¨) says, these children and youth are forced to go home, considered ill and delinquent, but no one is really working towards their reintegration. (NOI.MD, 2020)

art performance by Pavel Braila, in front of the Stadium.
photo: Liolia Ghilca

volunteers cleaning the territory of the Stadium.
photo: facebook.com/constantadohotaru

civic initiatives and discussions in front of the Republican Stadium gates.
Reapropriation of the urban space.
photo: facebook.com/omulfacelocul

civic initiatives and discussions in front of the Republican Stadium gates.
Reapropriation of the urban space.
photo: facebook.com/constantadohotaru

The neighborhood has a specific 19th and 20th-century orthogonal urban fabric. The built environment mostly consists of low-rise, from one to three-story buildings from the 19th and 20th centuries, with courtyard planning.

The area is rich in functions and users, with not only residential buildings. From South-East and East, it is noticed intense traffic due to two of the main circulation network. On both streets, public transport is present, with bus stops at each end. On the contrary, the North-West and West streets, bordering the site, have less traffic and therefore, are more safe and pleasant.
The Stadium gates are proposed to be protected as monuments, with the historical and architectural value.

In West, there is a multipurpose student complex, with festive, sports, and residential facilities, while neighboring a police department. Further, there is the Prison and Correction facility, an old fortress-like structure. In the latest discussions about it, the municipality has announced the plans of moving the prison facilities in another location.

NW stadium gates. author photo

SE stadium gates. oldchisinau.com

— — two-way traffic. active street

— — one-way traffic. calm street

● bus stops

—— existing walking paths

The administrative building of the stadium is still standing but in very poor condition. The interior is visibly damaged while preserving the austere Sovietic style on the exterior.

Worth mentioning is that in the present, the stadium is fenced all around, with restricted access to it. Part of the wall, from Bucharest and Tighina street, was painted during a summer festival in various styles and motifs.

The strategy is to open the existing site to the public while working with the existing facilities. The site would be divided into passive and active sides, due to the noise pollution on the E and S-E and a more quiet zone on the other side. The noise will be absorbed by the greenery of the park, while the quiet will be activated by activities.

Starting from the E: first, open the tennis courts to the green outside and make the fence between permeable. Second, connect Ismail street with Tighina street through a green corridor of the park, for easy, pleasant access. Third, connect the N-W side of the park with the existing student facilities through the Kogalniceanu street.

For the third step it is proposed to build the Centre for Vulnerable Youth (the design proposal for the current thesis), alongside a new cultural building, a modern digital library, that, together with the already existing buildings on the N-W side of the site, will activate the area and the street. To do that, the existing buildings on the site will be given a public active ground floor. The space can contain shops, pastries, and cafeterias, with evening/ late evening activities.

At the same time, the pedestrian path will be extended, taking the space from the driveway. The street is recommended to become a shared street, between cars and pedestrians, and pedestrian only on weekends.

graffiti on the stadium fence. author photo

site strategy

road strategy

1   open the sport facility

2   safe and pleasant street connection

3   activate and connect the new and old
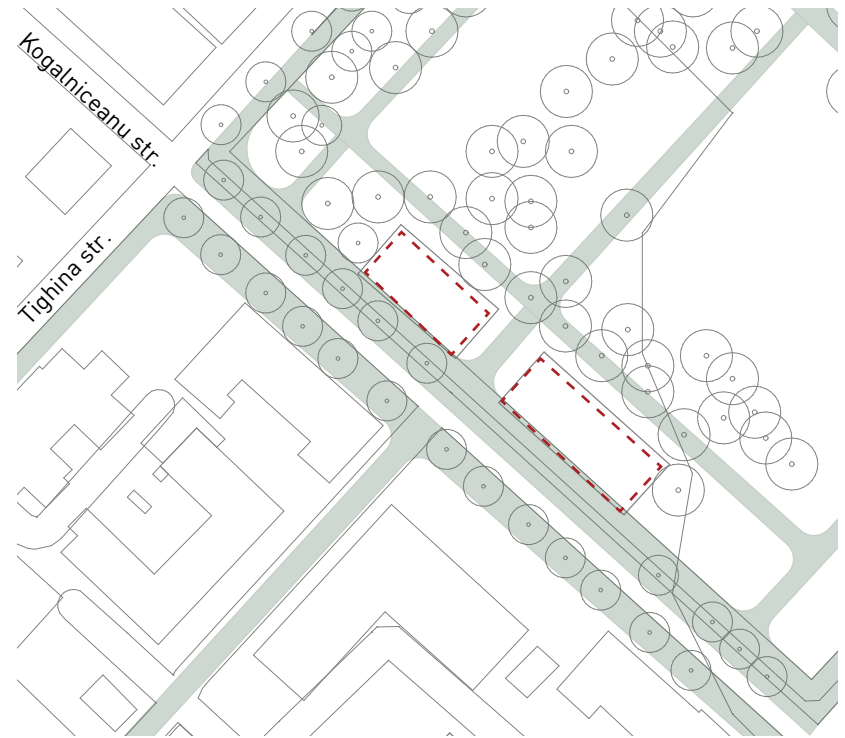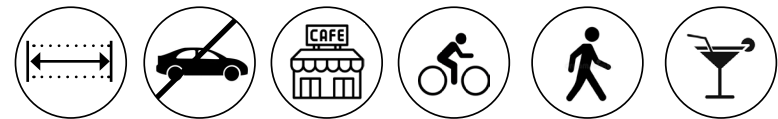
widen the pedestrian part of the street

limit the car access

activate the ground floor of the existing buildings

outcome

the Centre for Vulnerable Youth

site plan concept

A common space is designed for the community, with the help of the community itself and its various actors. The action is meant to revive the site as well as the community, serving as an example of urban and social acupuncture, as an exercise of re-appropriation of public space.

The aim is to encourage the development of new social and spatial relationships between heterogeneous actors. Distinct from public and private spaces, "common spaces are those spaces produced by people in their effort to establish a common world that houses, supports and expresses the community they participate in" (Stavrides S., 2015). This suggests that the space is shaped by and with the help and implication of the user itself, increasing their involvement and sense of belonging. While public and private spaces are defined by already implied rules at the time of their creation, the common spaces come as a more "porous world", with various actors and a constant fluctuation of them.

As a tool for meeting various social actors, the site is meant to be the common ground for those who have specific rights and privileges and those that found themselves in precar-

ious conditions. When involved, the discovery of personal attributes is possible as well as the blurring of any distinctions other than those directed towards the final scope.

Therefore, the Republican Stadium site will become the green "escape" of the city, with the space free to be used in the way citizens will want to, and social space, in terms of services and functionality.

As for now, the proposal is to create two different active zones and one passive in-between. The SE area is characterized by light sports activities and lush greenery. The park can become a place for weekend markets, a place for passive activities and simple greenery, or a place for sustainable communities such as De Ceuvel in Amsterdam and Institut for X in Aarhus.

The NW side is the one connecting the site through design and services, away from the active streets and protected by the green buffer. The aim is to integrate the new buildings and preserve as much green as possible.

Kogalniceanu str.
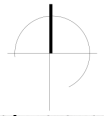
① active area

② passive area

- - - - Centre for Vulnerable Youth

- - - - digital library (support activity)

- - - - active ground floor

The Centre for Vulnerable Youth (building A) comes as both a residential and public services Centre. Due to intense hot summers, the building is positioned in such a way that most of the living units will avoid facing the direct sun in the South, while the transitional spaces will be the most exposed to it.

Young people between 15 and 18 y.o. will have the possibility to live in their units for up to three years, while an individual plan for treatment and rehabilitation will be created.

The ground floor of the building is meant for services opened to the public outside the facility, youth, and adults that have problems in getting IDs or other official papers, those in need of a lawyer, psychologist, family therapy, or gaining working skills. It is proposed that building B (see the site plan on the right) would extend these social services, while integrating a modern public library, with spaces for reading, games, concert halls, VR, and other facilities.

To activate the space and connect it to the Student Housing and Sport/ Festive facilities, it is recommended the transformation of the old administration building of the
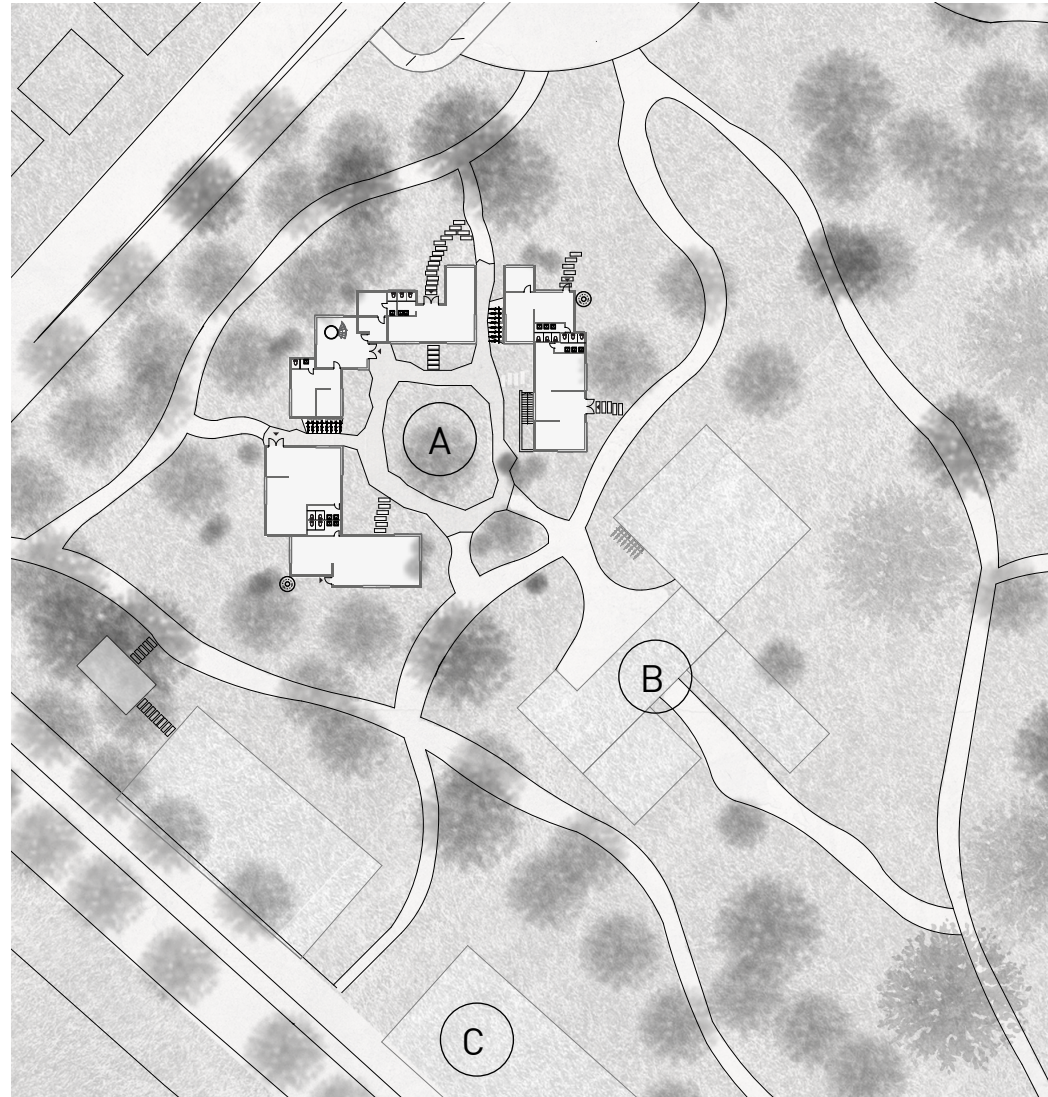
site plan Sc 1 1000

Stadium (building C). As the facade is specific to the 20th-century design and is in a good shape, the interior could be rebuilt and transformed into studios or other rental spaces.

"As an image of private yet opened space. Can serve as someone's hiding place/ intimate but not totally isolated, with a chance of an "open door" to someone passing by, a chance to be yourself, guarded by the walls and windows behind you, but also be with others." (Bachelard, p. 156)

Given the specific subject of the thesis, the design comes as a threshold in tackling the dichotomy of personal space and shared common. A threshold where there is the need for individualization of space, of creating a personal relationship between the user and the space, where the first roots of developing an attachment feeling and a bonding process will begin.

The first step would be allowing individuals to transform the apartments and the house into a familiar place. I see it as a mandatory step in the rehabilitation process, as it is about giving time and space.

The second step is to open up to the neighbor, with which the users share the balcony. It still implies maintaining your privacy but allows you to share.

The third is the small community dimension, where users have the common rooms, the kitchen, the playrooms, and the chance to find others just like them, but in a safe, controlled environment.

The fourth step is opening up to the community on a bigger level, joining the workshops, classrooms, and other facilities, also available for people outside the Center. In this way, the design supports the rehabilitation process step-by-step, with an individual approach.

Apartments with on-site social services and community spaces, administered by the tenants themselves based on common sense rules appeared to be more successful social housing projects.
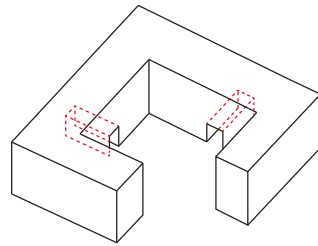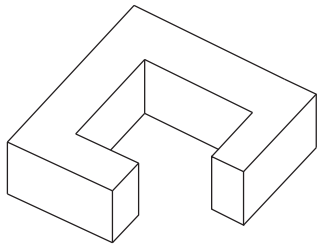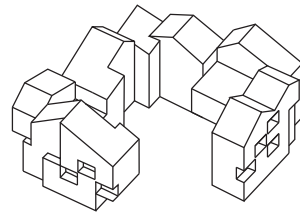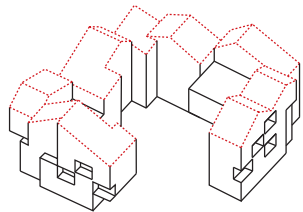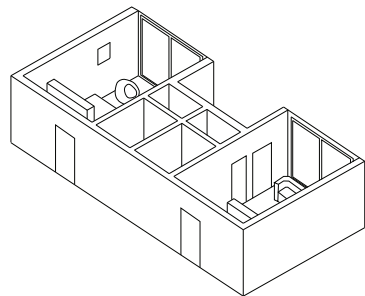
filtering corridors

common spaces -
outwards movement
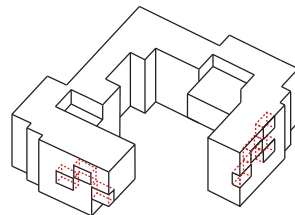
private spaces -
inwards movement

common spaces facing the courtyard,
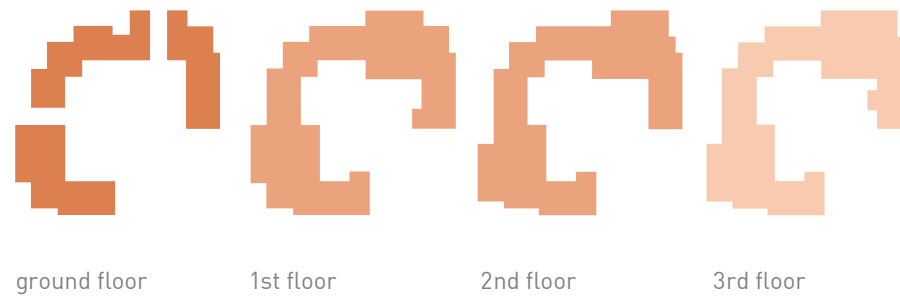as a passive social control method
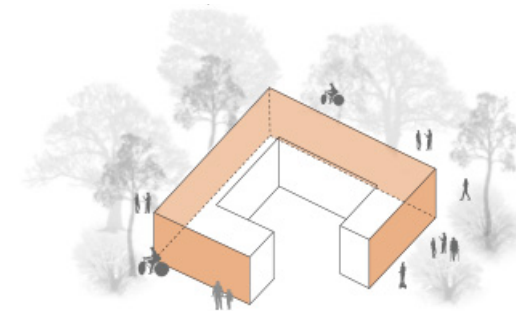
private units facing surrounding,
passive interaction with the ˝outside˝

volume diagrams
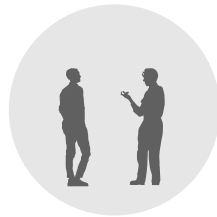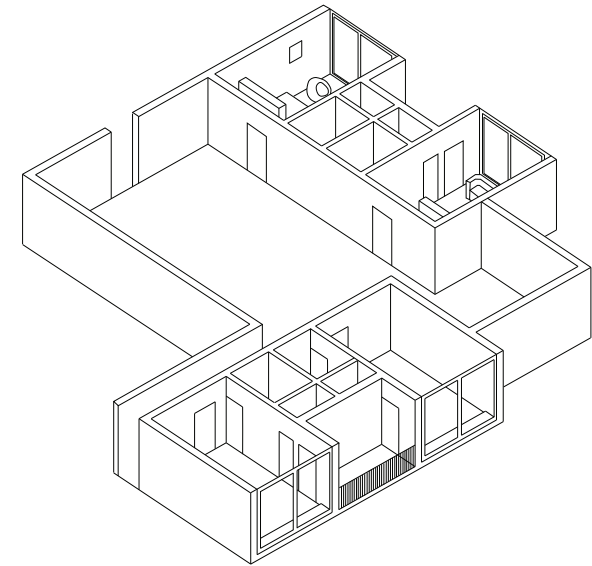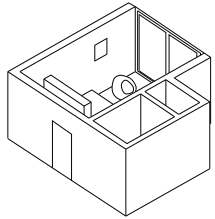
The design concept comes as the ground for users to open up to other people around, when they are ready to do that. Step-by-step approach in both mental and physical dimensions.

ground floor   1st floor   2nd floor   3rd floor

● common spaces
  mixed use

● residential spaces

● open to the public spaces
  mixed use

vertical zoning

④

③

②

①

14.600

7.800

1.800   7.100

7'   9'

F'

A'
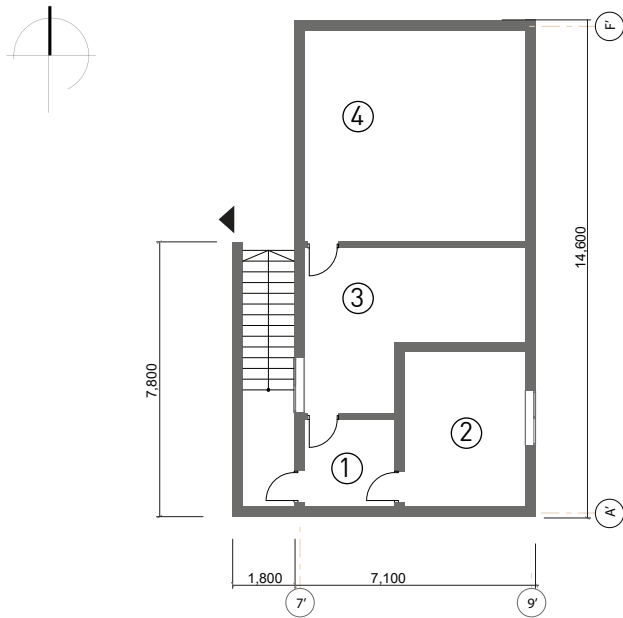
① entry hall
② technical room
③ laundry
④ storage

Ground Floor works as a meeting place for the residents of the Centre and other people joining the common activities, using spaces or in need of legal help, etc. The services are open to public use and are to be provided in coordination with the needs of all users. the spaces are flexible and leave the freedom of moving the interior walls depending on the need. Entrances are all from the outside, to separate the flux of daytime users of the services and the residents of the Centre, to ensure a certain level of security. If the activities will require, rooms 4, 5, and 8 are thought to be opened to the courtyard, as an extension of the space.

The main entrance of the building is from the courtyard, while its access is limited to the residents and guests. As an additional filter, there are two corridors entering the courtyard, with windows on the corners. Bike parking is also placed there.

In the courtyard, there is the entrance to the basement, where the residents find the laundry and service room.
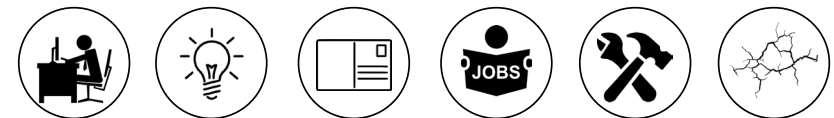
resources   inspiration   legal help   network   workshops   counceling

basement plan Sc 1:200

70
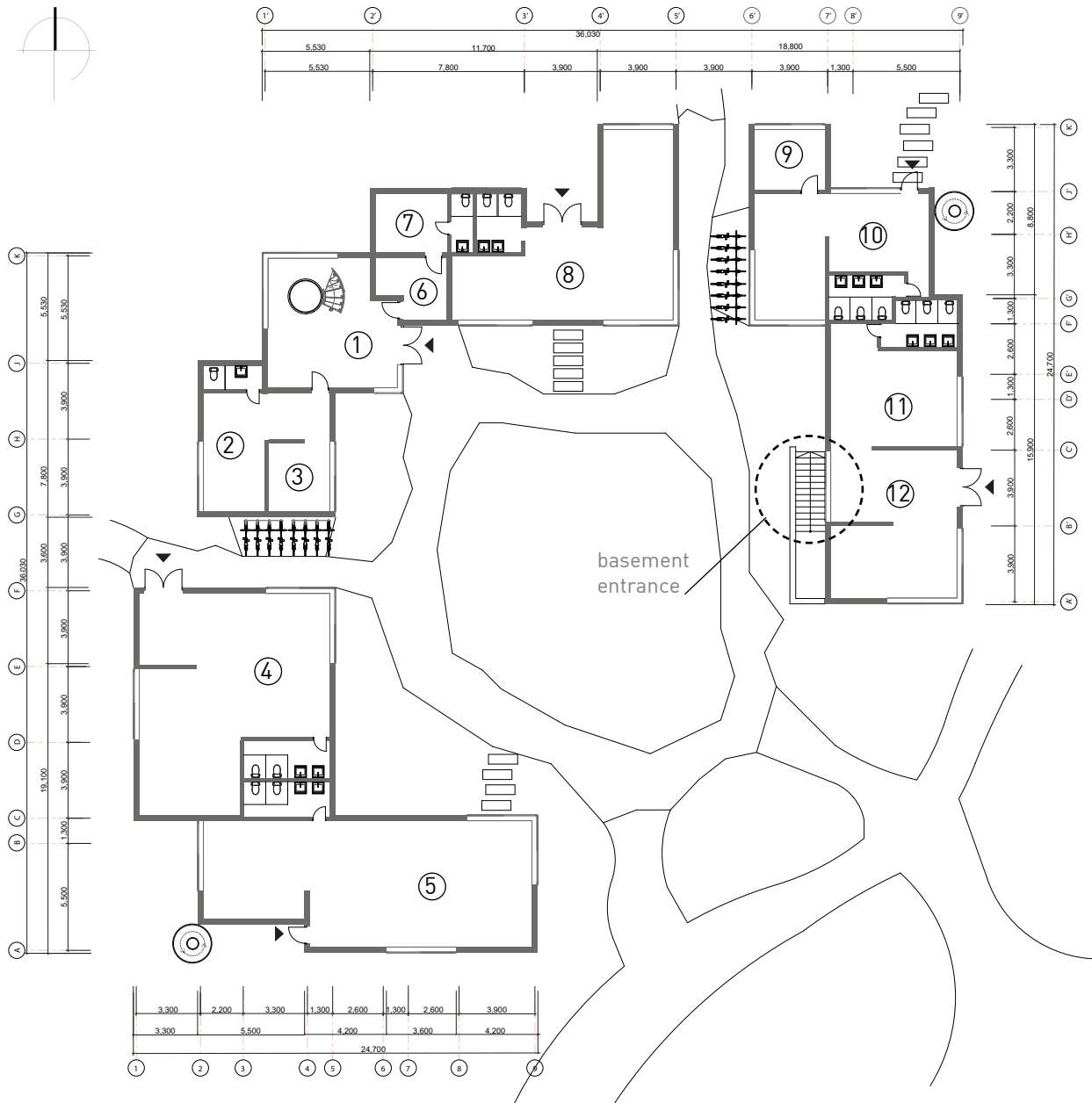
① vertical communication
② personel's room
③ administration
④ legal services
⑤ IT courses
⑥ janitor's room
⑦ night guard
⑧ educational support for children with special needs
⑨ psychologist
⑩ family support and reconciliation
⑪ art studio
⑫ art shop

basement entrance

ground floor plan Sc 1:300
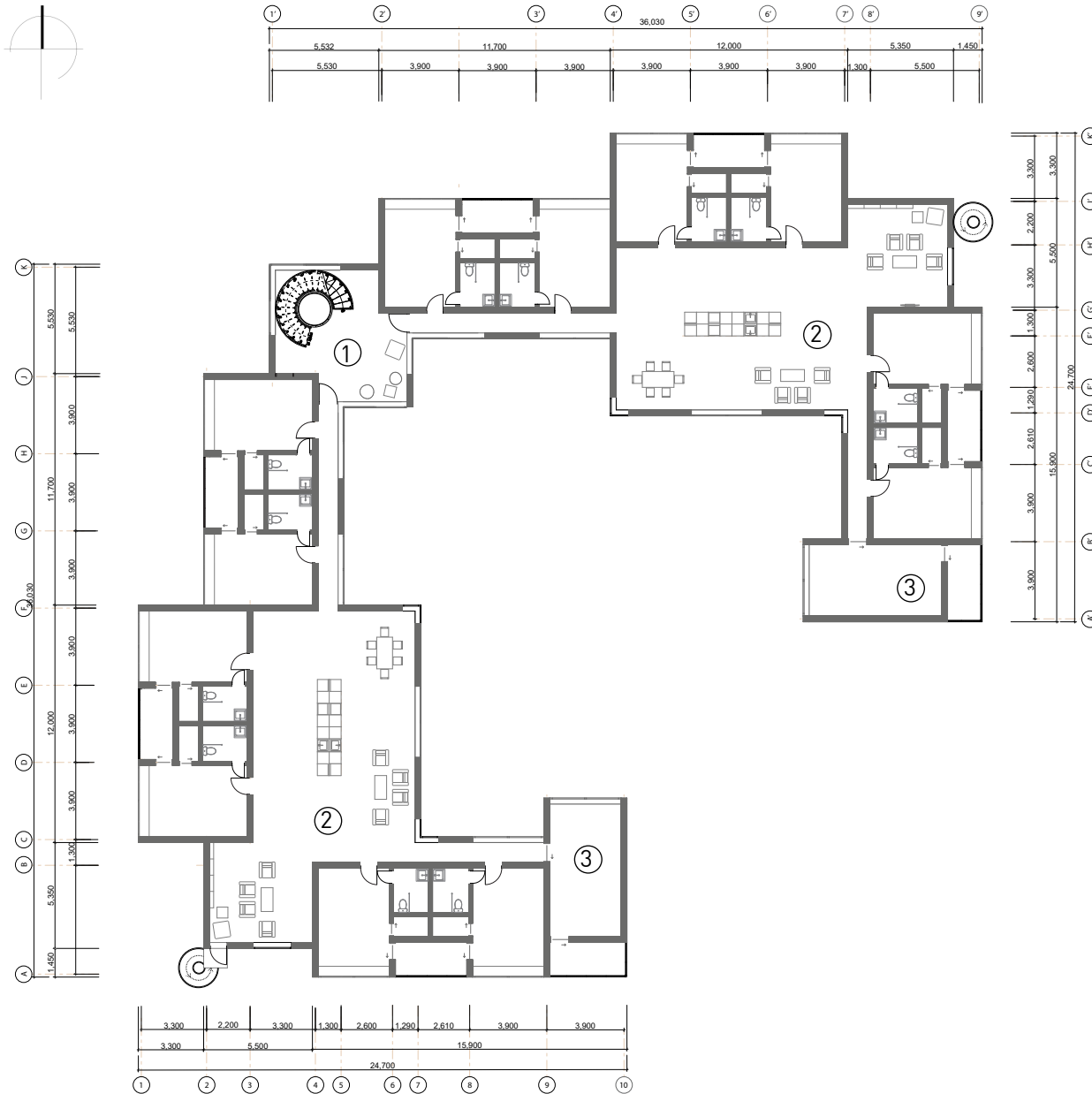
① vertical communication

② common room

③ private meeting room

44.2% private
5.75% semi-private
41.2% common
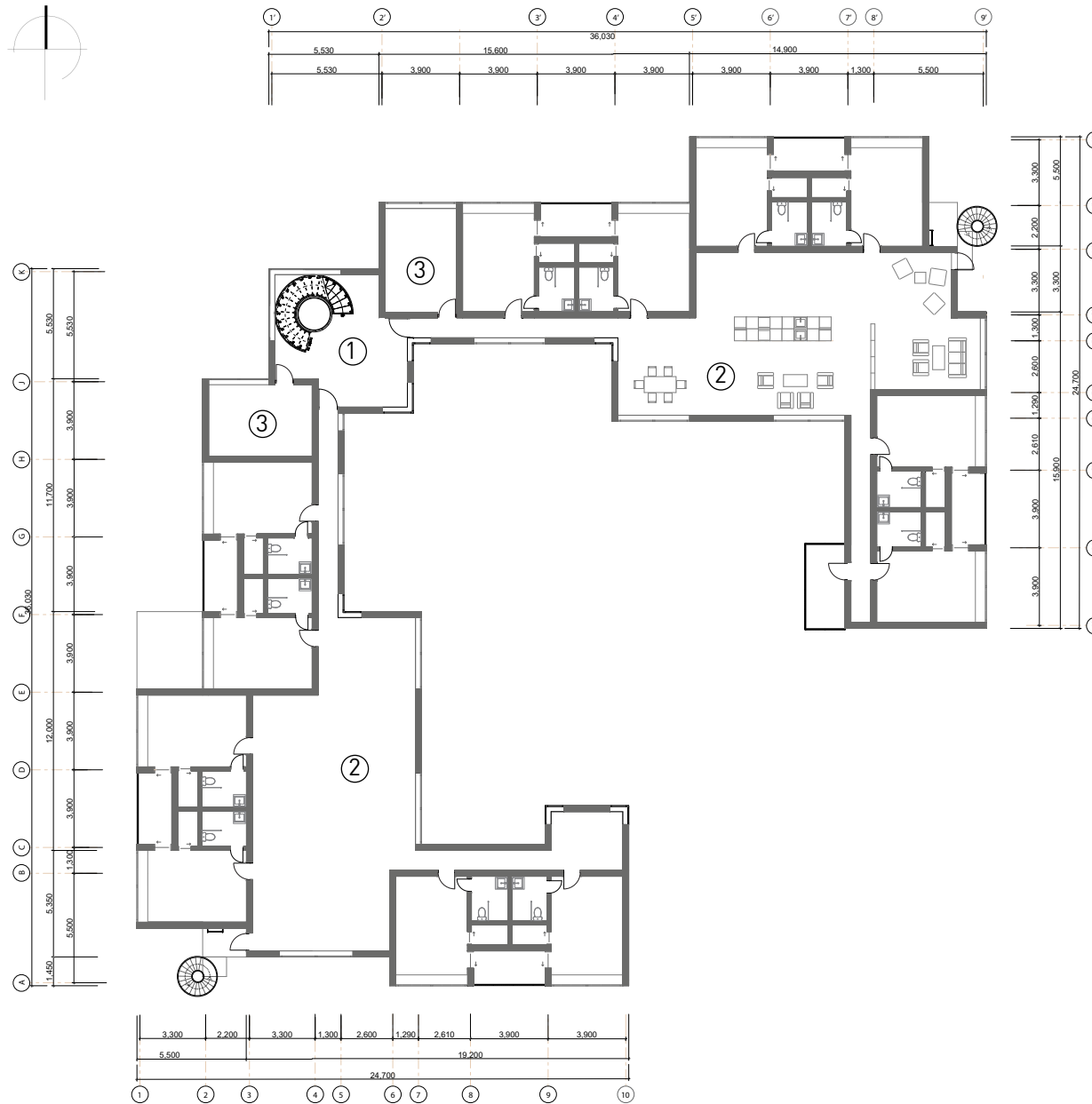8.76% transitory
100%   total

privacy   togetherness   choice   safety

1st floor plan Sc 1:300

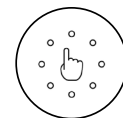① vertical communication

② common room

③ private meeting room

44.2%   private

5.75%   semi-private

41.2%   common
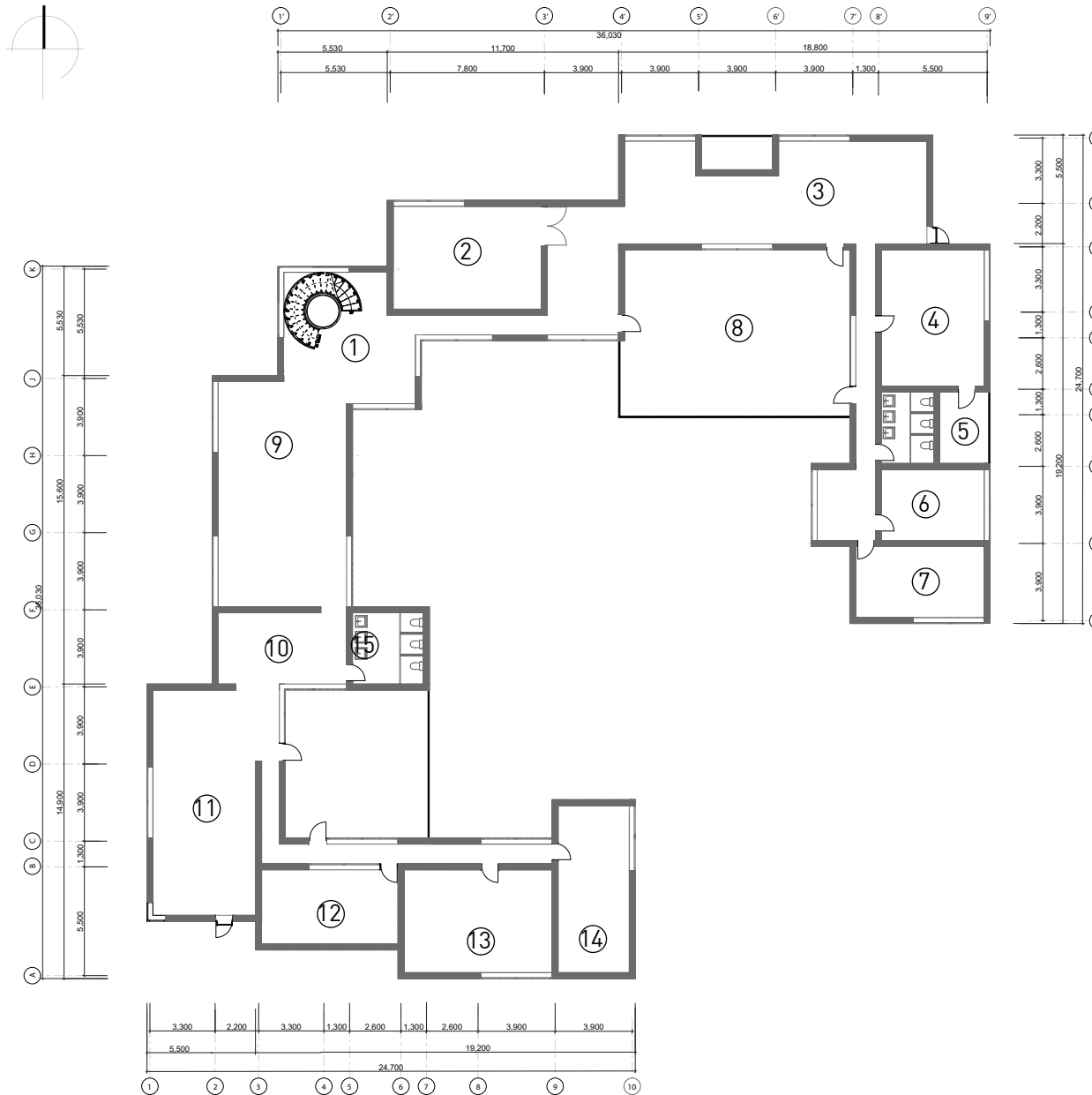
8.76%   transitory

100%   total

privacy   togetherness   choice   safety
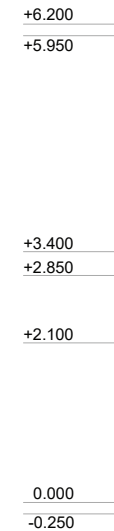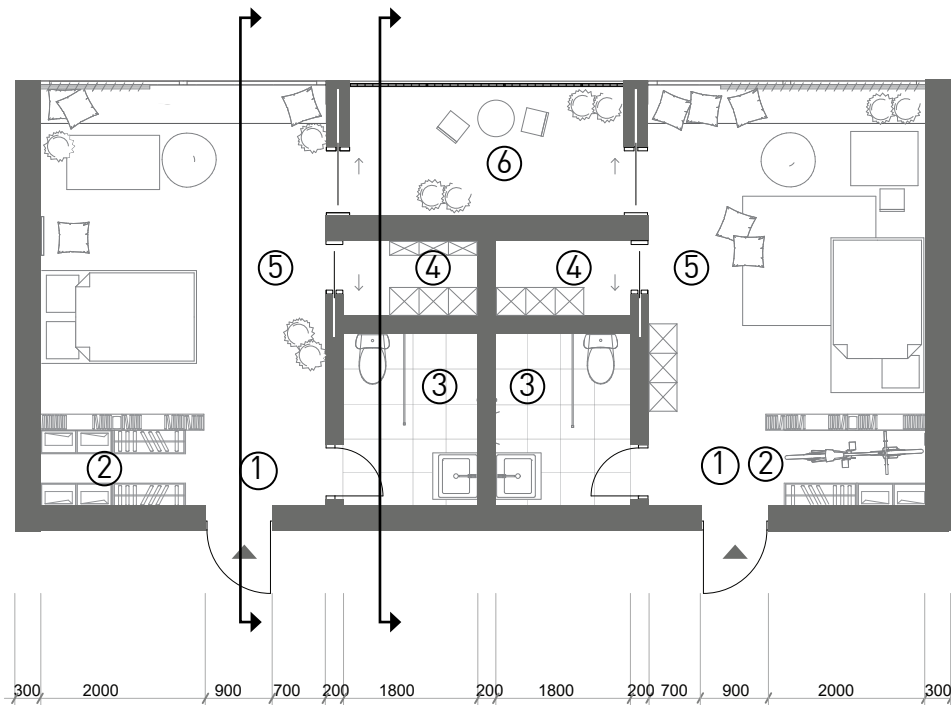
2nd floor plan Sc 1:300

① vertical communication

② individual therapy room

③ common meeting room

④ indiviual therapy room

⑤ balcony

⑥ technical room

⑦ multi-purpose room

⑧ terrace

⑨ common meeting room

⑩ transitional space

⑪ common meeting room

⑫ technical room

⑬ individual room

⑭ individual room

⑮ balcony

group activities   support   hobby rooms

3rd floor plan Sc 1:300
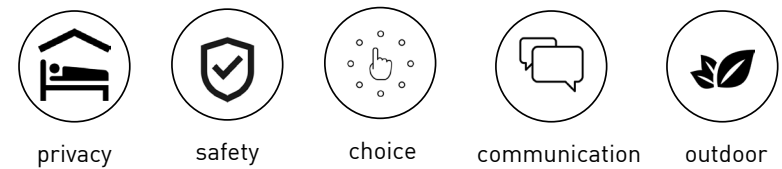
plan unit Sc 1:100

Individual rooms are designed to fulfill the need for privacy, safety, and quality space. With an open closet for clothes, an equipt bathroom, room for additional storage, and furniture that can be moved and changed based on the client's taste.
The windowsill is lowered and serves as a sitting or a flower pot place.
To save more space in the room, sliding doors are used to connect the room and the balcony.

section unit Sc 1:100

① entrance
② closet (open)
③ bathroom
④ storage
⑤ individual unit
⑥ balcony

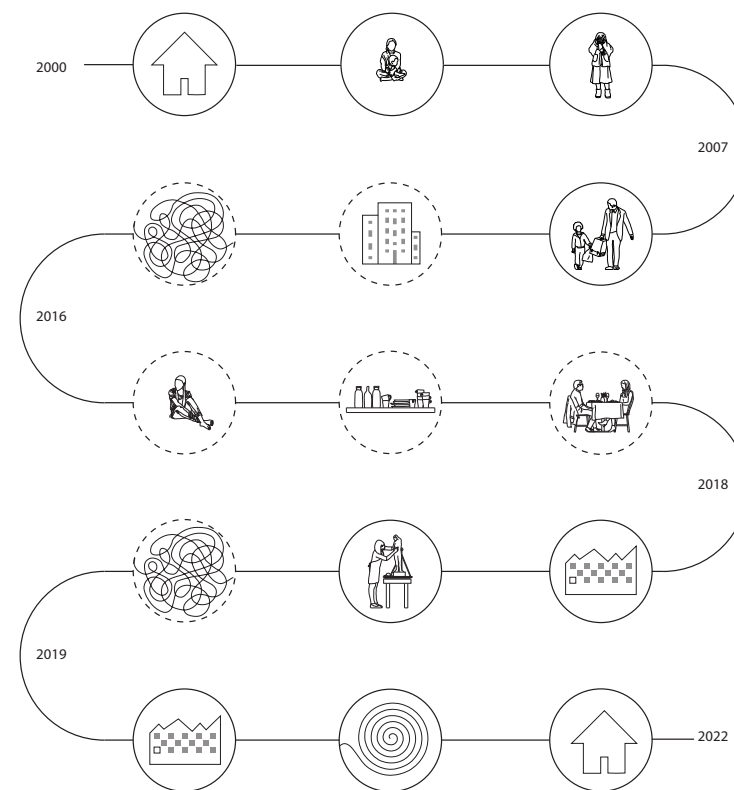privacy   safety   choice   communication   outdoor

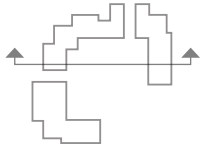*Stories make everything more real, they help us see through someone else's eyes, and humanise a stranger.*
"So, here is a story of a girl, born in her parent's house, in a loving family. And right when she begins to dream, and life seems good, there is a turning point. Call it a tragedy, call it economic collapse, call it bad luck, call it a ticking time bomb. Call it the most painful experience you ever had. At crossroads like this one, you need a backup system, or at least a person strong enough alongside. But not everyone has that someone to help and fight. Our girl ends up in an institution. Her world has been crushed, the new world is harsh on her, and she becomes a mess of old and new.
At the age of 16, she has the right to leave. And she does, although there is nowhere to go. She finds an illegal and low-paid job. There is no other way. She tries to shape a relationship, but she doesn't know how. There are many things she's not ready to face. Everything is vulnerable, and so is she. But, sometimes, there is a bit of luck and good people are around. She's 18 now and lives in the Centre for Vulnerable Youth. Has a room only for herself, some time to pause and space to breathe, and got some help, although not ready to open up yet. She's still a mess so decides to leave, and goes back to the unknown of the streets. Just not ready.

But after only a year she goes back to the Centre. With new wounds and new experiences, she gives herself another chance.
It's 2022, her third year in the Centre. Maybe she's not fully ready, but knows what to do, knows who she is, and learned just enough to break the cycle and start again."

+18.500

+16.000

+13.800

+10.950
+10.700

+7.850
+7.600

+5.050
+4.500

0.000

+18.500

+15.500

+10.950
+10.700

+8.150
+7.600

+4.750
+4.500

+2.850

0.000
-0.500

-2.500

section 1-1 Sc 1:200

+18.500
+17.800
+17.000

+16.000

+13.050

+10.950
+10.700

+8.150
+7.600

+4.750
+4.500

0.000
-0.500
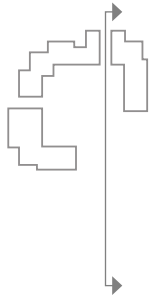
section 2-2 Sc 1:200

connection to the adiacent building

connection to the adiacent building

perspective
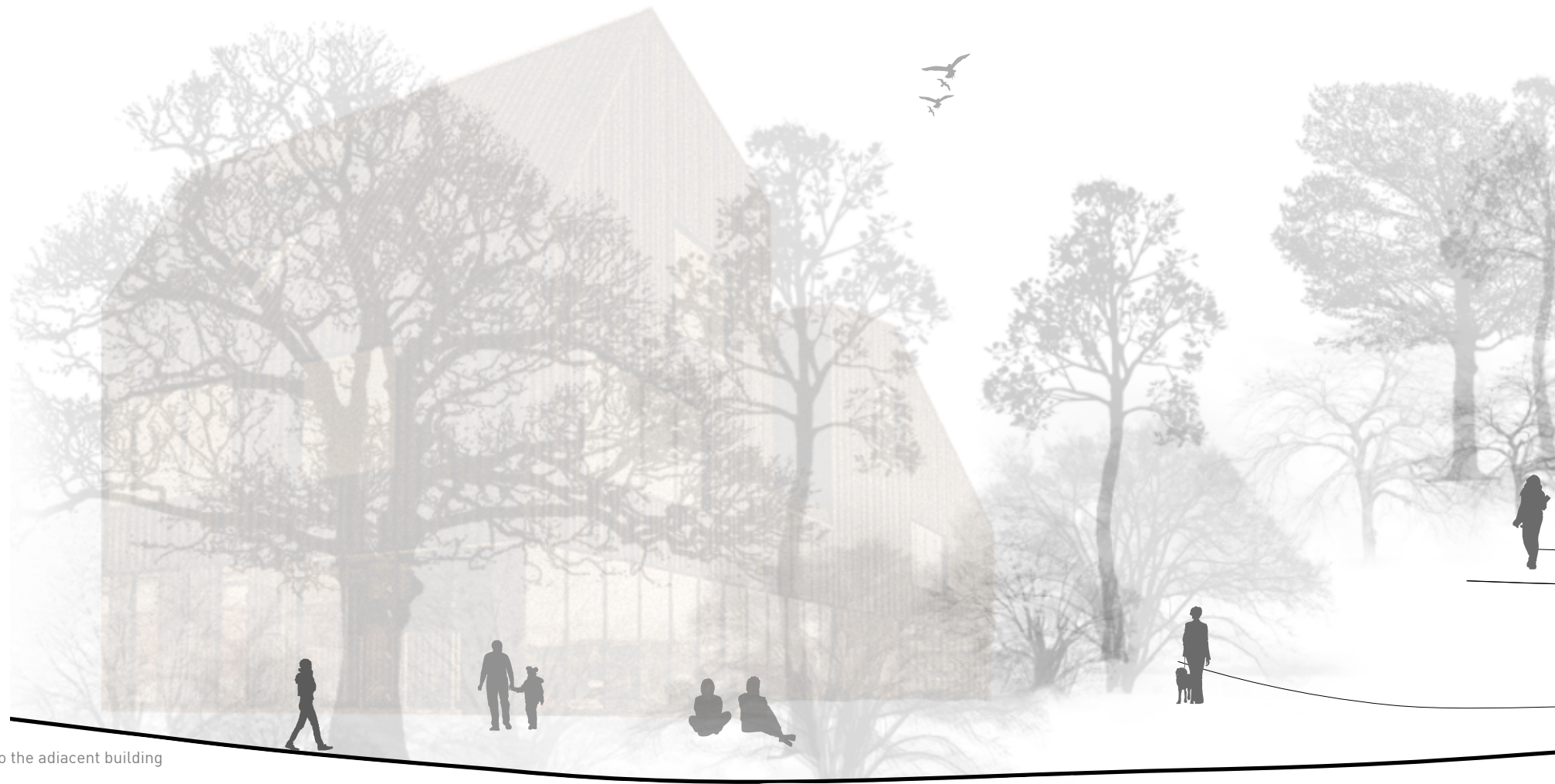
facade K-A

facade 9'-1'

reflections

"A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability."
(Gaston Bachelard, *The poetics of space*)

Being non-judgemental. Trust. Connection. Time.
A process you cannot force.

First of all, the project intended to start a discussion about the vulnerable part of society and the meaningful role the architects can have in the rehabilitation process. I found it important to bring it to academia since it is rarely discussed and even less seen as a design subject in the practicing studios. The project is intended to highlight the need for coordination and cooperation between architects, social workers, social scientists, authorities, and users.

Secondly, the thesis subject is bringing on the focus the humanitarian architecture and its importance in improving the quality of life in a democratic and socially sustainable society. It makes us go back to the very meaning of architecture, that of sheltering and of providing safety for all. It outlines the importance of quality space in shaping quality personalities and improving life, independent of the user's financial status. Poor households are struggling to cover their primary needs, leading to difficulties in achieving other fundamental ne-

cessities as Maslow's pyramid is showing us. Therefore, to achieve one's full potential, they have to be helped to overcome the first steps and become an active, flourishing member of society.

Thirdly, the research revolves around social sustainability, as a major focus, besides sustainability as energy and materiality. It discusses the importance of the person as part of the sustainability circle. It outlines the value of oneself, the value one can bring, and the need to grow a healthy society. The project subject brings us back to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), where human life is a value to protect.

If thinking specifically of the study case, Moldova needs an organised, systemic plan, coordinated by the authorities of different levels, with NGOs and all the possible actors involved. But first of all, the authorities should recognise that there is such a problem as homelessness and it has to be solved. Therefore, there is a need of formulating the definition of the problem and formulating policies and plans of action.

I was wondering why local authorities are not interested in this subject, and why the local architecture school does not discuss it? And one answer could be that it is not a profitable subject to work with. Humanitarian projects are rarely about profit right away, they are more about the long-term result. But even so, there are ways and programs to provide funding, if only the priorities would be right.

Moldova and specifically Chisinau, is lacking rent control on the housing market, which, together with a very low pay wage is dragging a part of the society into poverty and extreme vulnerability. Its lacking options and a support system. Besides, it lacks short- and long-term housing, rehabilitation centres and "housing first" programs, night shelters, drinking water, and shower services. But most of all, it lacks flexibility and compassion when fighting the rigid, bureaucratic system.

In terms of practical work on the design project, I was happy to see that the jury understood my approach, the sensitivity of the subject, and the need of discussing it in our field of work. Their feedback helped me explain the

project more visually, encouraging me to express my thoughts behind the design.

Although I followed the advice and added some of the information I thought is missing, the project has room for more drawings and diagrams, arguing the design and placement. From this perspective, even if the design proposal and the site work together as a strong political statement, the entire area needs to be more activated. Otherwise, the design proposal risks becoming an isle in the urban forest, and its users - isolated actors of the city, when my intention was exactly the opposite.

Overall, I am pleased with the process I went through, the knowledge I gained and the result of it. Studying this subject so close, I understood for myself the direction I would like to pursue in my future career.

p.s. In the research, I mentioned local NGOs and groups fighting social vulnerability. Very often they work based on donations and grants. In case you want to help, you will find them in the reference list. Thank you!

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