

BATHHOUSE

IN REYKJAVIK, ICELAND



Architecture Project by
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Abstract



One of the main qualities of life in Icelandic society is the earth's heat that has been harnessed and fed into the homes of the citizens. The swimming pool is the clearest and most visible manifestation of these qualities of life. Bathhouses are a regular part of many people's daily lives, and human life in the pools is a fascinating part of Icelandic society. Architecture plays a key role there, and the development of the bathhouses reflects a lively dialogue between architects and society. Over time, the culture and architecture surrounding swimming facilities have undergone a significant transformation.

Initially, these facilities were designed to serve as training centers to help people learn how to swim and maintain clean, healthy bodies. However, today, Icelanders view swimming pools as therapeutic places to relax, socialize, and play with their family and friends. The following work will examine the evolution of Icelandic bath culture and its impact on bathhouse architecture through the centuries.

The project is situated in Fossvogur, an urban recreational area between two densely populated residential neighborhoods.



Fig 1- People swimming next to geothermal hotspring

The goal of this project is to propose a design for a public bathhouse that will contribute to the evolution of swimming culture in Iceland. The proposed bathhouse design aims to provide access to the pools in a new way, with the intention of accommodating the needs of all social groups who visit the bathhouse on a daily basis. The design will enhance people's experience by considering their different functional needs. Additionally, the unique elements of the site will be incorporated into the building's design, emphasizing the natural surroundings and appealing to people's senses.

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Introduction

Research Questions



Fig 2 - Woman swimming

In Iceland, swimming and bathhouse culture have a rich history and have undergone significant changes over time.

How will my design contribution to the traditional architecture of Icelandic bathhouses enhance its future evolution?

Bathhouses serve as gathering places for the community.

How to make this particular bathhouse a thriving community center?

Learn, Play, Enjoy. Three different functions and many different users.

How do you create a space where all those different functions and social aspects come together while providing an enjoyable experience for everyone?

Aim of the Project



I'm aiming to design a public bathhouse that prioritizes architectural experiences, and I'm essentially looking to create a space where architecture itself enhances the function and enjoyment of the bathhouse. This design philosophy involves crafting spaces that not only serve their practical purpose but also engage the senses, challenge conventional design norms, and evoke emotional responses through the spatial and material quality.

Method



The proposed design concept was developed after a thorough study of Iceland's rich history and current status of traditional bathhouse culture. The research also included my own personal experience of visiting and enjoying multiple Icelandic bathhouses, having been raised in the country since birth.

The design proposal is a culmination of a deep understanding of the cultural significance of these bathhouses and a passion for creating an immersive and authentic experience for visitors.

Bathhouse in Fossvogsdalur

After decades of discussion if there should be a bathhouse placed in Fossvogur Valley in Reykjavík, Iceland, it has now been decided to take this idea forward and now an architectural competition is going on for the bathhouse.

I'm not taking part in that competition but I will be using the brief as a framework for my design and using some of the helpful analyses that have already been made for the area.

Moving to Fossvogur nearly five years ago was like coming back home. It's very close to where I grew up in Kópavogur, making it feel familiar yet new. My current apartment is just a 10-minute walk from my childhood home, linking my past and present in a city that's changed a lot but still feels very connected.

The appeal of Fossvogur isn't just about its location. There's a real sense of community here, which feels different from other places I've lived. The neighbors are more than just people I recognize; they contribute to a close community that grows stronger over time. The most attractive aspect of Fossvogur is the abundance of green spaces that offer not only a scenic view but also places for various activities. As a resident living near the valley, Fossvogsdalur, I appreciate how nature blends



Fig 3 - Kids playing at Fossvogsdalurs duck pond

seamlessly with the urban environment. It's quite special to be able to step out of my apartment and quickly find myself surrounded by peaceful greenery that extends through the center of Reykjavík. Being so close to nature provides a welcome break from city life and adds a refreshing element to living in an urban area.

I was pleasantly surprised to hear about the new architectural project unfolding in this beloved area. It aims to improve not just the physical surroundings but also to enhance the social cohesion within the community. Such initiatives are important

as they merge aesthetics with community life, creating spaces that align with the values important to us in Fossvogur. This project is more than just a new building; it's about developing a center that strengthens and reflects our community's spirit, encouraging greater involvement and a deeper sense of shared experience. As the project moves forward, I am keenly observing its development both as a local resident and as someone deeply connected to Fossvogur.

Background

Iceland's Unique Swimming Culture

ICELANDIC PEOPLE LOVE SWIMMING. SWIMMING IN THE MORNING. SWIMMING AT NIGHT. IN FROST AND WIND, IN SUN AND GENTLE CALM. WEEKEND SWIMMING WITH THE CHILDREN. WEDNESDAY SWIM WITH A FRIEND. SWIM ANYTIME WITH YOURSELF.

(Katrín Snorradóttir, Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, 2023, p. 7)



Fig 4 - Bathhouse in Hveragerði

The abundance of warm water from Icelandic geothermal energy sources has shaped a tradition of public bathing as a warm healthy and refreshing shelter from the harsh forces of nature. (Birgir Sumarliðason, 2023) Every village and neighbourhood in larger towns have their own unique pool, reflecting the time of its construction, changing architectural trends, and its functionality and meaning over the years. These pools are a result of the successful exploitation of geothermal resources, and represent an emerging everyday cultural phenomenon (Örn D. Jónsson and Ólafur Rastrick, 2017).

Swimming pools are a regular part of many people's daily lives, and human life in the pools is a fascinating part of Icelandic society. Architecture plays a key role there, and the development of the pools reflects a lively conversation between architects and society. But above all, the swimming pools themselves are a kind of social design: they have shaped society, culture and the body of the people in the country for more than a century. (Katrín Snorradóttir, Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, 2023, p. 8). The tradition of going swimming is practiced all over the country or where public pools exist and

are open to everyone. There are about 120 public pools and bathing places in Iceland, and the practice of the tradition is widespread. Infant swimming is available for infants and their parents, and in many places, swimming gymnastics is also available for senior citizens. Primary school children have swimming lessons during their school hours. Sports clubs all over the country have special divisions dedicated to swimming, where different competitive disciplines of swimming are practiced. However, the vast majority attend swimming on their own terms, for exercise, well-being, or companionship.

In some places, pools are open to everyone who comes there free of charge (even 24 hours a day and without guards), but these pools are often among the oldest pools in the country and were built by Youth Associations in the first half of the 20th century. They reflect old times, but at the same time are dear to Icelanders as a reminder of the endurance work done by their forefathers and mothers at the beginning of the 20th century following the revival of swimming (Sundlaugamenning-Hefðin "að fara í sund", 2023).

Icelandic swimming pool culture is so unique that there has been talk of putting it on UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage. It would be a great addition to the Icelandic cultural and heritage phenomena. The book "Sund" (Swimming) by Katrín Snorradóttir and Valdimar Tr. Hafstein is a well-done and entertaining review of this important aspect of Icelanders' lives and the extensive role that swimming pools play.

I was fortunate that the book was published shortly after I decided to focus on a bathhouse for my master's thesis project. It became my primary reference literature, helping me explain, what I've taking for granted, the unique swimming culture in Iceland. Additionally it's save to say the book has influenced and helped me with many different aspects of my design decisions.

The authors, both ethnographers, offer keen insights into the unique social dynamics in bathhouse dressing rooms, at poolside, and in hot tubs. They discuss the unwritten social rules in these settings in an amusing, engaging, and informative way. Swimming pools have distinct social environments, and not everyone feels comfortable in them. This highlights the need for clear, unspoken rules about when and how to interact with others, including greetings and conversations.

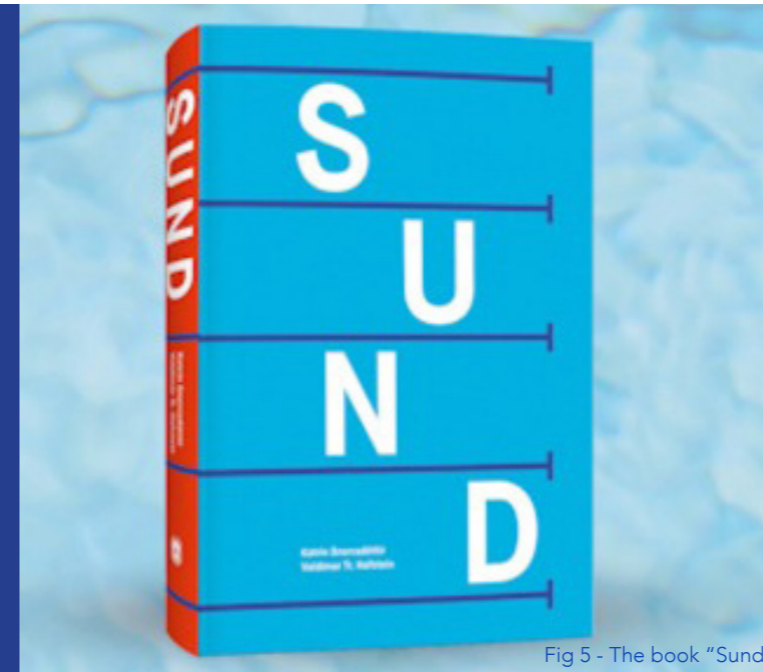


Fig 5 - The book "Sund"

"IN ICELAND THE POOL IS A PLACE WHERE STRANGERS CROSS PATHS AND ACQUAINTANCES MEET, IT SERVES A PURPOSE SIMILAR TO THE PLAZA IN A WARMER CLIMATE, THE PUB IN ENGLAND OR THE CAFE IN FRANCE".
-SIGRIDUR SIGURJONSDOTTIR, DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM OF DESIGN AND APPLIED ART.

The hot tub is a significant cultural feature in Iceland. Morning conversations there often cover political issues, scandals, and local news. Friendships form in the hot tub, though they usually don't extend beyond the bathhouse, but sometimes they can lead to deeper connections. Children's swimming lessons have a historical importance in Iceland. A century ago, only a small fraction of the population could swim, despite Iceland's maritime heritage. The introduction of swimming pools led to widespread swimming lessons, and now almost all Icelanders can swim, surpassing many other countries.

The book "Sund" (Swimming) is filled with pictures of swimming pools from various angles, providing a fascinating historical context. It contains many interesting and entertaining details. In Icelandic swimming pools, people from all walks of life come together to enjoy the warm water, each finding their own space (Steingerður Steinarsdóttir , 2024).

Learn, Play, Enjoy

IN ARNAR DANÍELS JÓNSSON'S BOOK, GEOTHERMAL LIVING, IT IS STATED THAT A RECENT STUDY SHOWS THAT ABOUT 60% OF THE RESPONDENTS GO TO THE POOLS TO SWIM, ABOUT 37% TO RELAX, 23% TO GO TO THE HOT TUB, 21% TO PASS THE TIME WITH FAMILY AND FINALLY 11% TO SEE FRIENDS (ÖRN DANÍEL JÓNSSON, 2009, BLS. 97)

The role of the pools has changed: they were initially built as a means of preventing accidents and training centers for clean and healthy bodies, but they developed into wet social centers or warm squares in a cold country, as the pools have established themselves as informal gathering places for the public in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Originally, swimming pools were meant to shape the people, but over time, the people have shaped the pools according to their needs and desires. (Katrín Snorradóttir, Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, 2023)

The book "Sund" (Swimming) has chapters that are historically categorized according to the purpose of swimming during specific time periods in Iceland's culture, learn, play and enjoy. In the next few chapters, I will briefly discuss how the culture of swimming has evolved in Iceland, according to the book Sund.

To better explain the difference between bathhouses in Iceland today as to how it all began, I chose the example of Laugardalslaug, one of the first swimming pools in the city of Reykjavík and the spa lagoon, Sky Lagoon, recently built in the capital area of Iceland.

Learn

In Iceland, between the years 1900-1950 the pools became a place for the public to learn, to save oneself from drowning, to cultivate the body, and to wash oneself.

Only a small percentage of the population knew how to swim. This resulted in many drowning incidents every year. As people started moving to the seaside and fishing became a major source of livelihood, civil culture also started influencing Icelandic society. This led to a change in attitudes towards the body and people started taking up swimming as a means of life support, sport, and cleanliness (Katrín Snorradóttir, Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, 2023, p. 27).

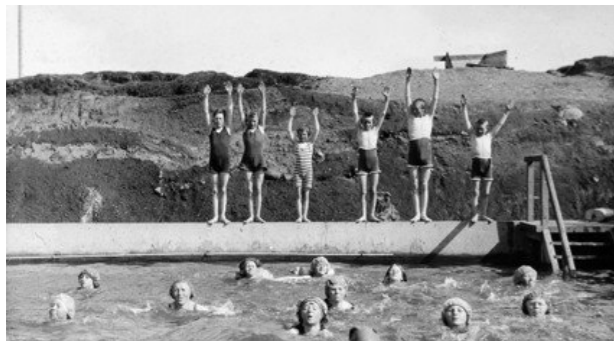


Fig 6 - Swimming pool in Akureyri



Fig 7 - Group of women along with their swimming instruction on the Laugardalslaug deck between 1920-1930

In 1925, the national parliament of Iceland, authorized local authorities to oblige teenagers to attend swimming courses, but in 1940, swimming was made compulsory throughout the country, and swimming became a compulsory subject in schools. Emphasis was placed on breaststroke and backstroke in the swimming lesson, but also on the main methods of rescue swimming and resuscitation in case of drowning (Sundlaugamenning-Hefðin "að fara í sund", 2023). Swimming is a great way to help develop and synchronize a child's senses and motor skills. However, the most important benefit is the general social aspect of their cognitive development. Children learn to respect each other, behave in a responsible and playful manner, and prevent stigmatization (Örn D. Jónsson and Ólafur Rastrick, 2017).

Swimming lessons took place at 56 locations across the country, ranging from cold ponds to beautiful buildings (Sundlaugamenning-Hefðin "að fara í sund", 2023).

Laugardalslaug, before



Fig 8 - Woman doing laundry in Laugardalurs hot spring

One of the biggest and most popular bathhouses in Iceland was once one of the first swimming pools built in Reykjavík. A geothermal hot spring is situated in Laugardalur and there, many years ago, it was originally used to wash laundry. People began swimming in a mud hole in the ground and water was brought into it from the washing pools in Laugardal (Þvottalaugarnar). These were poor conditions, but they were to improve greatly and reach the state we know in Laugardalslaug today. People eventually realized how unsanitary it was to swim

in the dirty water and demanded better facilities for swimming. The first shelter was raised by the pools. It was a wooden house standing on stone pillars over the middle of the pool, surrounded by docks and bridges that extended to the land. In 1908, a new pool was built in the area and it was the first concrete pool in the country. Hot water was piped from the washing pools, while cold water was obtained from Gvendarbrunn. Changing rooms and protective walls were built, and with these facilities, swimming could be taught all year round (Kristín Una Sigurðardóttir, 2009).



Fig 9 - People learning to swim in Laugardalslaug

Play

From ca. 1950 to 2000 people not only went swimming to learn but also to play. Of course, the game had never been far away, but around this time it makes its way into the pools and takes center stage. Friends and family went to the pool together to have fun, to enjoy exercise and togetherness in swimming. The community in the swimming pools

becomes a special part of the experience at the same time, people go swimming to be around others in a warm and pleasant public space. Towards the end of the century, the swimming pool facilities gradually expanded to include hot tubs, saunas, waddling pools, sunbeds, and slides (Katrín Snorradóttir, Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, 2023, p. 101)



Fig 10 - Swimming pool in Mosfellsbær

Laugardalslaug, today



Fig 11 - Laugardals, outside swimming facilities, today

From 1950, Laugardalslaug (Laugardals bathhouse) has undergone significant changes. Over the years, it has grown to become one of the largest health centers in the city.

In 1968, a 50m outdoor pool was added, and in 1986, new reception areas and changing rooms were constructed, which are still in use today. Hot tubs were also added, which became an instant hit. Moreover, a shallow wading pool and a larger tub at the exit of the changing facilities. A water slide was also built around this time, which was replaced in 2009 with a new one that has overbuilt

stairs to protect children from harsh weather conditions. Additionally, there is a smaller slide for little children, and the bathhouse has a single steam room that is shared by men and women. The bathhouse features a restaurant serving light refreshments, a shop that sells cosmetics, swimwear, and necessary items for swimming trips. (Kristín Una Sigurðardóttir, 2009). Recently, an indoor facility for an Olympic-sized swimming pool has also been built, with seating areas for spectators to watch tournaments. Additionally a significant expansion was added to the swimming facilities, which contains Reykjavík's largest gym, as well as a spa in the basement.



Fig 12 - People learning to swim in Laugardalslaug

Enjoy

Swimming culture has seen an increase in comfort and luxury since the year 2000. Swimming pool culture emphasizes the enjoyment of physical experience, company, design, and solitude. Pleasure spas and swimming lagoons have become popular, emphasizing geothermal heat and nature. Architecture and experience design play a key role in these places, which have become a main stop for foreign tourists in Iceland.



Fig 13 - Skógarbóð



Fig 14 - Blue Lagoon

The hot water in Iceland is no longer a public good but a business opportunity. However, the baths continue to market themes from swimming pool culture in a new way for their customers. Innovative public pools take into account the luxury of swimming lagoons, escalating the focus on enjoyment while learning and playing (Katrín Snorradóttir, Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, 2023, p. 187).

Sky Lagoon



Fig 15 - Sky Lagoon

The recently built spa lagoon is situated in the capital area, at the seashore of the town Kópavogur. The destination's design, by Halldór Eiríksson, a partner at T.ark Architects, is inspired by the stunning landscapes of Iceland and is intended to provide a tranquil space near the city. (Whitby, 2021)

The resort features a stunning 70-meter (230 ft) infinity-edge pool that visually merges with the ocean waterscape. The overall design of the resort is inspired by Icelandic culture, offering a unique guest experience that is modeled after Icelandic turf houses. The resort also features a restorative spa that follows Icelandic traditions. Along with cold pool and sauna experiences, you can enjoy an in-lagoon bar, dining experience, and unique retail offerings (Neira, 2020).

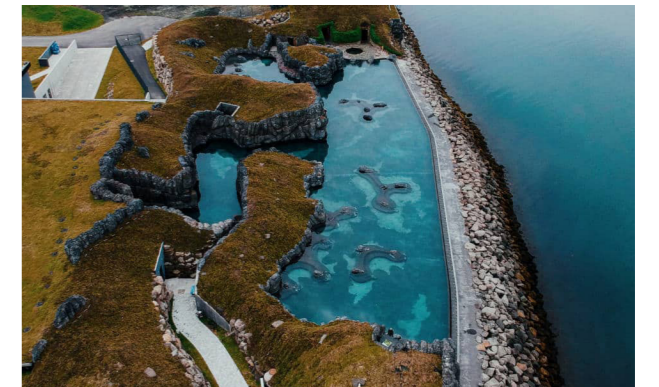


Fig 16 Sky - Lagoon, view from above

Different Social Groups

Visiting a local swimming pool in Iceland is a significant cultural experience with various aspects and functions to consider. People have different reasons for going to their local bathhouse. Through personal experience and observations I listed up a few examples of different scenarios with different people:

The school kids attending their weekly swim class during school hours in the morning.

The elderly people coming to swim their usual morning lap every day (the only Icelandic people that actually get tanned during summertime).

A group of middle-aged strangers discussing politics in the hot tub (usually in the round shaped hot tubs, especially the 38°C one).

The young couple having their relaxation moment in the evening before going home to sleep.

The young family during the weekend. Dad playing with their kids, sliding or jumping from the diving board while mom observes the youngest, paddling in the shallow pool.

The buffed fitness guy grunting in the cold tub, trying to alleviate today's sore muscles after yesterday's workout.

To provide a clearer understanding of how Icelandic people use their bathhouses, I've written a few short stories of how different people would use the countries bathhouses. These stories are inspired by people I know personally and a blend of anecdotes from others, as well as accounts from news reports, documentaries, books, and my own experiences.



Fig 17 - Men chatting in the circular shaped hot tub at Vesturbæjarlaug , Reykjavík

Sigurður is a 78-year-old, retired, man from Reykjavik who visits his local bathhouse every morning, except on weekends. It's close to his home, where he has lived for the past 50 years. He meets up with a group of friends there, some of whom he's known since childhood. The group only consists of men, and their wives have never asked to join. If the weather is good, Sigurdur enjoys walking to the bathhouse. The group usually starts by meeting in the dressing room. Sometimes everyone arrives at the same time; other times, Sigurdur is the first to arrive or some friends are already in the pool. Every month, they weigh themselves and record it in a book they keep safely in the dressing room. They see this as a way to monitor their health and support each other. Sigurdur always uses the same locker for his belongings, but occasionally it's already taken, which he dislikes. Some of his friends take their locker keys home, even though it's not allowed, as they feel a personal connection to their lockers. After undressing and washing himself,

Sigurdur puts on his swimsuit and heads outside. He tiptoes through the remaining snow on the pool deck and dives into the main pool, usually swimming in lane 4. He swims a certain distance, which varies based on his fitness level each month, but he tries to keep up with his personal best. Once he's done swimming, he meets his friends in their favorite hot tub, which is set at 38°C and located next to the main pool. They discuss various topics, such as the presidential elections, and wonder why so many candidates are running this year. The conversation can become heated, and other people often join in, which is welcomed and normal. Sigurdur has made friendships this way before, though they usually remain within the swimming pool facility. After chatting in the hot tub, Sigurdur sometimes sits in the sauna for a few minutes before heading to the dressing rooms showers. The group then stops at the reception shop for coffee and kleinur (Icelandic pastries) before heading out to their usual daily routines.

Karen is a 35-year-old hairdresser and a single mother of two girls. Since her divorce, she moved closer to the neighborhood bathhouse and now uses the facilities much more often. With her children every other week, she has more free time and sees it as a great opportunity to meet up with friends and start dating again. She visits her local bathhouse at least 4-5 times a week, either in the morning or after work in the evening, and usually with her two girls on the weekends.

After work, she sometimes meets her friends at the bathhouse. She usually chooses the indoor dressing room because she hates being cold. She quickly heads to the nearest hot tub, where she often finds her friends. It's a great place to catch up and gossip. They plan a dinner party for the weekend and decide to visit a different bathhouse next week for a change of scenery. Sometimes, Karen visits the bathhouse alone after work to relax, especially since

she spends all day chatting with customers. One day last summer, she visited the bathhouse a bit earlier than usual, after work. The sun was still up, and she used the opportunity to catch up on her tan and chose to lay in the wading pool. By chance, she ran into an old friend while relaxing in the shallow water. She knew him from their teenage years playing football. He's now a trainer, and they had a lot to talk about, including some personal topics. They ended up scheduling a date for the next Friday evening.

Feeling immensely satisfied after her bathhouse visit, Karen heads back to the dressing room. She loves how the bathhouse provides a relaxed environment for unpressured conversations. She can't help but think that such a spontaneous and enjoyable encounter wouldn't have happened anywhere else.

Fig 18 - The shallow pool in Laugardalslaug



Fig 19 - The cold tub at Árbæjarlaug during wintertime

Inga is a 58-year-old woman, a wife, and a mother of two teenagers. She owns a home decor shop downtown, but her greatest passion is yoga, which she practices every day. She likes to mix yoga with more intense workouts, usually jogging around her neighborhood 2-3 times a week. If she has time, she finishes her jog at her favorite bathhouse. The distance is a bit longer than she can comfortably handle, but the destination is always worth it. Inga loves the outdoor dressing room, especially on calm, cold winter evenings. After her jog, she's already warm and sweaty, and cooling down outside feels refreshing. The outdoor dressing rooms are usually quite empty since most people prefer to dress inside, making it especially relaxing to visit in the evenings. The stars are particularly bright during the winter

months, and she enjoys watching them while showering. After showering, she puts on her swimsuit, feeling her body tired from the jog. She heads straight to the 40°C hot tub. Because it's late, the pool is not busy, allowing her to relax alone in the hot tub. She glimpses stars in the dark sky through the steam from the warm water. When she feels ready, she dips into the cold tub, which helps ease sore muscles. The main reason she likes the cold tub is the rush of dopamine she feels after the shock of the cold dip. Inga then relaxes in the sauna to warm up again, usually alternating between the sauna and the cold tub two to three times before ending her visit in the outdoor dressing room showers. She leaves feeling extremely relaxed and rejuvenated, ready for a perfect night's sleep.

Eiríkur, who recently turned 40, is married and has three young children aged 2, 4, and 7. He works in marketing for a tech company downtown and leads an active lifestyle. Sitting at his desk all day can be challenging, so he tries to work out at least 2-3 times a week, although finding the time can be tough with young kids.

During weekends, Eiríkur takes advantage of the opportunity to bring his kids to one of the city's bathhouses, depending on the weather. When it's cold, they opt for a bathhouse with a fun indoor pool, but on nice days, they prefer one with exciting outdoor slides. Today, the weather is particularly pleasant, so they head to their favorite outdoor bathhouse, hoping to beat the crowds by arriving early.

At the bathhouse, Eiríkur takes his two boys to the male dressing room while his wife takes care of their daughter in the female dressing room. The boys enjoy showering in a small plastic tub provided by the pool for young children, while Eiríkur helps them get ready by putting on their bathing suits. They start their swimming adventure in the shallow kiddie pool, which has just the right temperature.

As the boys eagerly head to the slides, Eiríkur keeps a watchful eye on them, making sure they're safe as they navigate the stairs and slide down. He even joins his younger son on the slide to ensure a safe landing in the water. Meanwhile, his wife supervises from the kiddie pool while

playing with their youngest.

After the boys tire themselves out on the slides, they switch to the shallow pool and play with floating toys provided by the bathhouse. Eiríkur's wife joins them with their youngest child, allowing Eiríkur to take a refreshing swim in the main pool and then relax in the steam bath for a few minutes while his wife keeps an eye on the kids. As the kids start to get tired, it's time to head home. Eiríkur quickly showers in the male dressing room while the boys take their time under the water, prompting him to rush them along. Before leaving, they stop by the shop for hot dogs and ice cream, and then head home, where everyone is ready for a well-deserved nap, especially Eiríkur.



Fig 20 - The kiddie pool along with couple of slides seeing in the back, at the bathhouse in Selfoss

Context

Fossvogsdalur

The site provided for a bathhouse is in an area called Fossvogsdalur (Waterfall Valley), it's a unique area in the city, sheltered and lush, a popular outdoor recreation area in between two different neighborhoods, Snæland in Kópavogur and Fossvogur in Reykjavík.

Kópavogur is a significant municipality and the second-largest city in Iceland, located immediately south of Reykjavík and adjacent to the Fossvogur neighborhood. Snæland in Kópavogur is a mixed residential area especially popular for young families, in close proximity to kindergartens, elementary school and playgrounds.

Fossvogur is a residential neighborhood located in the southeastern part of the city and is known for its tranquil atmosphere, appealing to families and individuals seeking a quieter urban life close to nature. It borders the scenic Fossvogsdalur valley, which enhances the area's appeal with beautiful natural surroundings.

The neighborhood primarily consists of residential housing, including single-family homes, townhouses, and low-rise apartment buildings. The architectural style is predominantly modern. Fossvogur provides good local amenities, including schools, kindergartens, and healthcare facilities, making it a convenient place for families. The area benefits from good public transportation links to other parts of Reykjavík, making it easy for residents to commute to the city center or neighboring areas.

A RED DOT INDICATES THE SITES PLACEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SURROUNDING AREA, REYKJAVIK AND KÓPAVOGUR.



Fig 21



Fig 22

THE USE OF REAL ESTATE IN THE AREA
 BLUE DOTS: COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
 GREEN DOTS: RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS



Mapping the Context

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Disc Golf Course | 6. Playground | 11. Basketball Court | 15. Playground |
| 2. Outside Gym | 7. Beach Volley Court | 12. Playground | 16. Tennis Court |
| 3. Playground | 8. HK Football Stadium | 13. Kindergarten | 17. Víkingur Football Stadium |
| 4. Duck Pond | 9. Fagrilundur Sports Area | 14. Fossvogsskóli
Elementary School | 18. Plant Garden |
| 5. Allotment | 10. Snælandsskóli
Elementary School | | |

Popular Outdoor Recreational Area



Fig 23



Fig 24 - Ariel photo of Fossvogsdalur

The bathhouse would primarily be thought of as a neighborhood pool and provide closer facilities for the school children to attend swimming classes, but due to its location, it can be assumed that it will be used a lot by outdoor enthusiasts who make their way through the valley. Also, it could become a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts to meet. A very important significance for the site is that it will not be accessible by car (Fossvogslaug Competition Brief, 2022). The valley of Fossvogur is a popular spot for outdoor activities among its inhabitants. With well-maintained paths for jogging and a

separate lane for biking, this area offers the perfect opportunity to indulge in your favorite outdoor activity. There are multiple playgrounds to choose from, where you can take your kids to play and even feed the ducks at the ponds. You can also play frisbee golf, football or volleyball with your friends or simply enjoy nature with a relaxing walk around the area. The area is frequented by people, especially during summertime, and serves as an important connector for those commuting by bike or scooters to work. This is due to the bikeline that runs through the valley, which goes all the way to the center of Reykjavik.

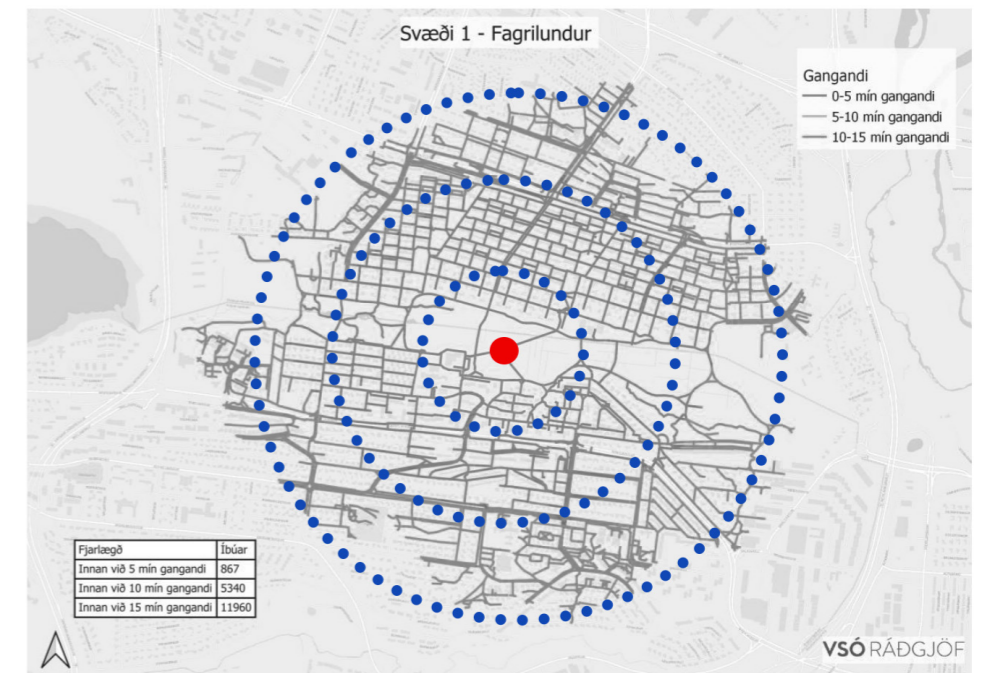


Fig 25

MAP SHOWING THE TIME TAKING FOR WALKING TOWARDS THE SITE IN FOSSVOGSDALUR FROM DIFFERENT PART OF THE SURROUNDING AREA

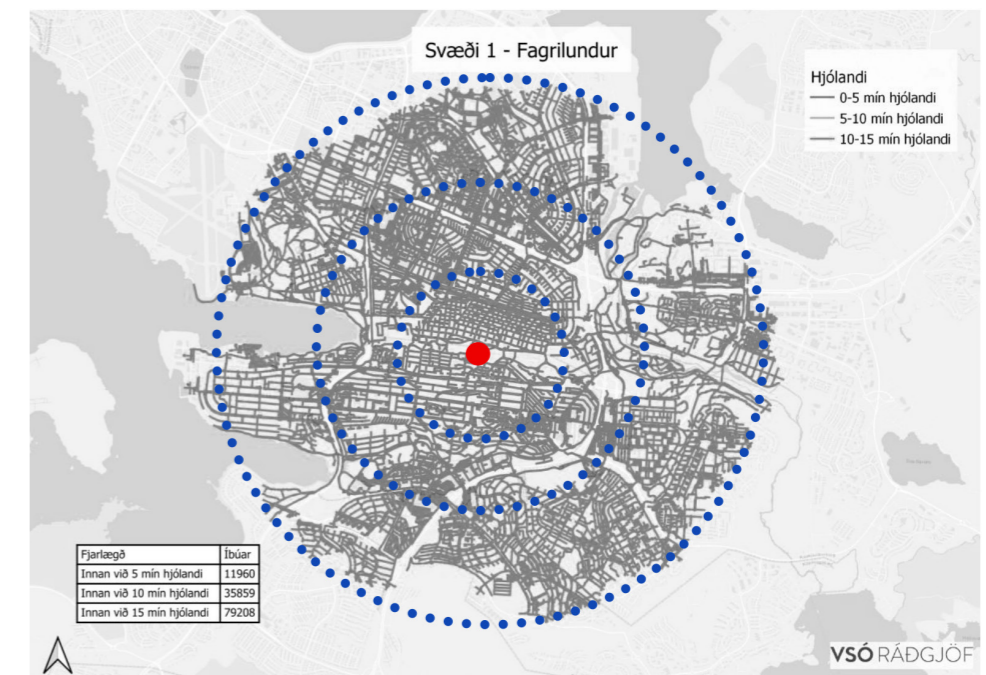


Fig 26

MAP SHOWING THE TIME TAKING FOR BIKING TOWARDS THE SITE IN FOSSVOGSDALUR FROM DIFFERENT PART OF THE SURROUNDING AREA



A NETWORK OF BATHHOUSES IN THE CAPITAL AREA WITHIN A 10KM WALKING DISTANCE FROM FOSSVOGSDALUR. FOR NOW STUDENTS AT FOSSVOGSSKÓLI ARE PICKED UP BY SCHOOL BUS AND ATTEND THEIR WEEKLY SWIM CLASS AT LAUGARDALSLAUG WHILE STUDENTS AT SNÆLANDSSKÓLI ATTEND THEIR SWIM CLASSES AT KÓPAVOGSLAUG (INDICATED WITH RED AND BLUE DOTS).

Fig 27

Competition Brief - Access

In the competition brief it is stated that the aim is for the swimming pool is to provide a variety of experiences and services for the surrounding residents and visitors to Fossvogsdalur. The swimming pool must be built according to green standards. In order to support green goals, do not allow for public parking at the pool, but only for the disabled, supplies and emergency vehicles. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the location and nature of the swimming pool does not result in increased car traffic through the residential areas on either side of the valley. Consider sharing existing parking lots on town and city land, especially near schools.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in commuting cycling in the capital area. A transport agreement has been signed with the state, and work is underway to prepare the Borgarlína line, which is a proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network in the capital region of Iceland. This will greatly improve public transport. These efforts align with the task force's 2013 conclusion on the location of the pool and the green philosophy.

Fossvogslaug (Fossvogur's bathhouse) will cater to the district's school swimming pool, the residents of the surrounding areas, as well as pedestrian and cycling visitors, who can all enjoy the pool and its facilities. It is expected that students from Fossvogsskóli (360 students), Réttarholtsskóla (400 students), Snælandsskóla (460 students), and part of Álfhólsskóli (572 students) will use the facilities for swimming lessons. The estimated number of pool visitors each year is 260,000 (Fossvogslaug Competition Brief, 2022).

SELECTION OF TWO POTENTIAL SITES FOR A NEW SWIMMING POOL IN FOSSVOGSDALUR IS DEPICTED IN PICTURES 1 AND 2. BOTH OPTIONS INCLUDE PARKING LOT (RED SQUARES) THAT CAN BE UTILIZED BY THE NEW BATHHOUSE



Fig 28

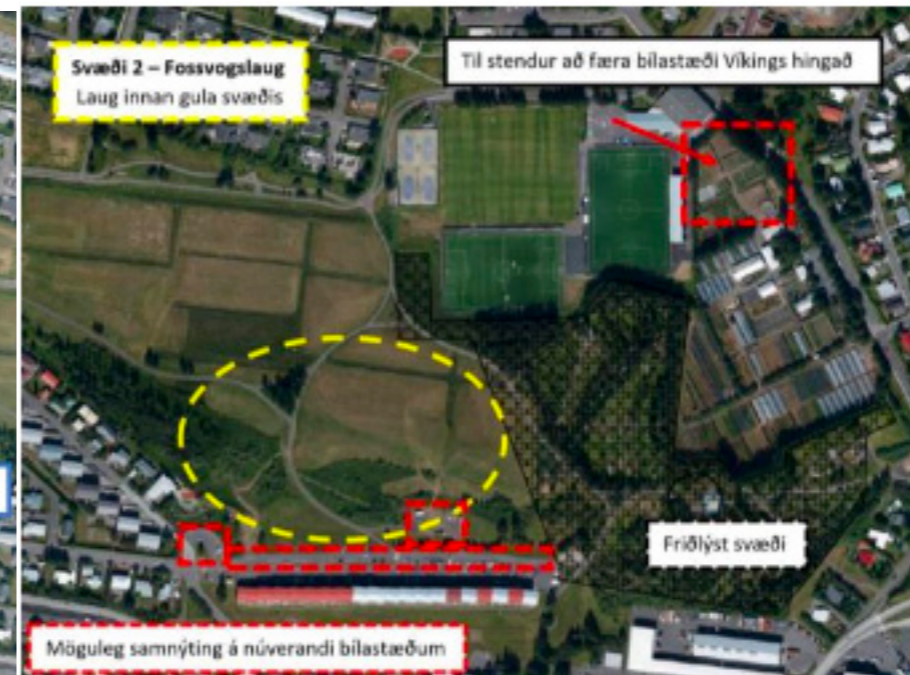


Fig 29

One of my focus for the project was the accessibility to and from the bathhouse. I believe it's important to consider how people will access the building. I'm aware that the local residents are strongly opposed to an increase in traffic, especially on the Fossvogur side. This issue has been the main point of discussion whenever the idea of building a bathhouse in the area is brought up. The neighborhood was designed in the 1970s and it's clear that it was influenced by Jan Gehl's principles from his book "Life between buildings". The area is known for its unique design that minimizes car traffic. Most of the homes are row houses without parking lots directly in front of them, unlike most houses in Iceland. The parking lots are located some distance from the house entrances, so people always need to walk a bit from the parking lot to reach their homes. This design keeps the area around people's homes free from passing cars, making it safer for children to play. This is a significant design feature in Reykjavik.

I've noticed that Icelandic people use their cars a lot, unlike what I've experienced in Sweden. I believe it's important to choose the right location for the building, ensuring it's close to a road for easy access. I thought that providing access to the building from an existing road in Kópavogur would have a lesser impact on traffic flow and parking space. This seemed more practical than using the parking lot next to Fossvogur elementary school, which has been under construction and now has a temporary building occupying the parking space. This has caused the school staff to park in the playground, making the area heavily trafficked, especially during the morning. Therefore, I believed that the road from Kópavogur's

side would be better suited to handle the increased traffic.

It was a challenge providing building access to a road without encouraging car access. I decided to extend the existing road to create a roundabout on Kópavogurs side. I hoped this would make people understand that it's not a space for parking but only for dropping off people, and that they would always have to drive somewhere else to park their car. This decision was also influenced by future plans for the building, as the roundabout could be an ideal place for buses to stop and drop off passengers.

TYPICAL ROWHOUSE IN
FOSSVOGUR, WITH NO PARKING
SPACE NEXT TO THE HOUSES

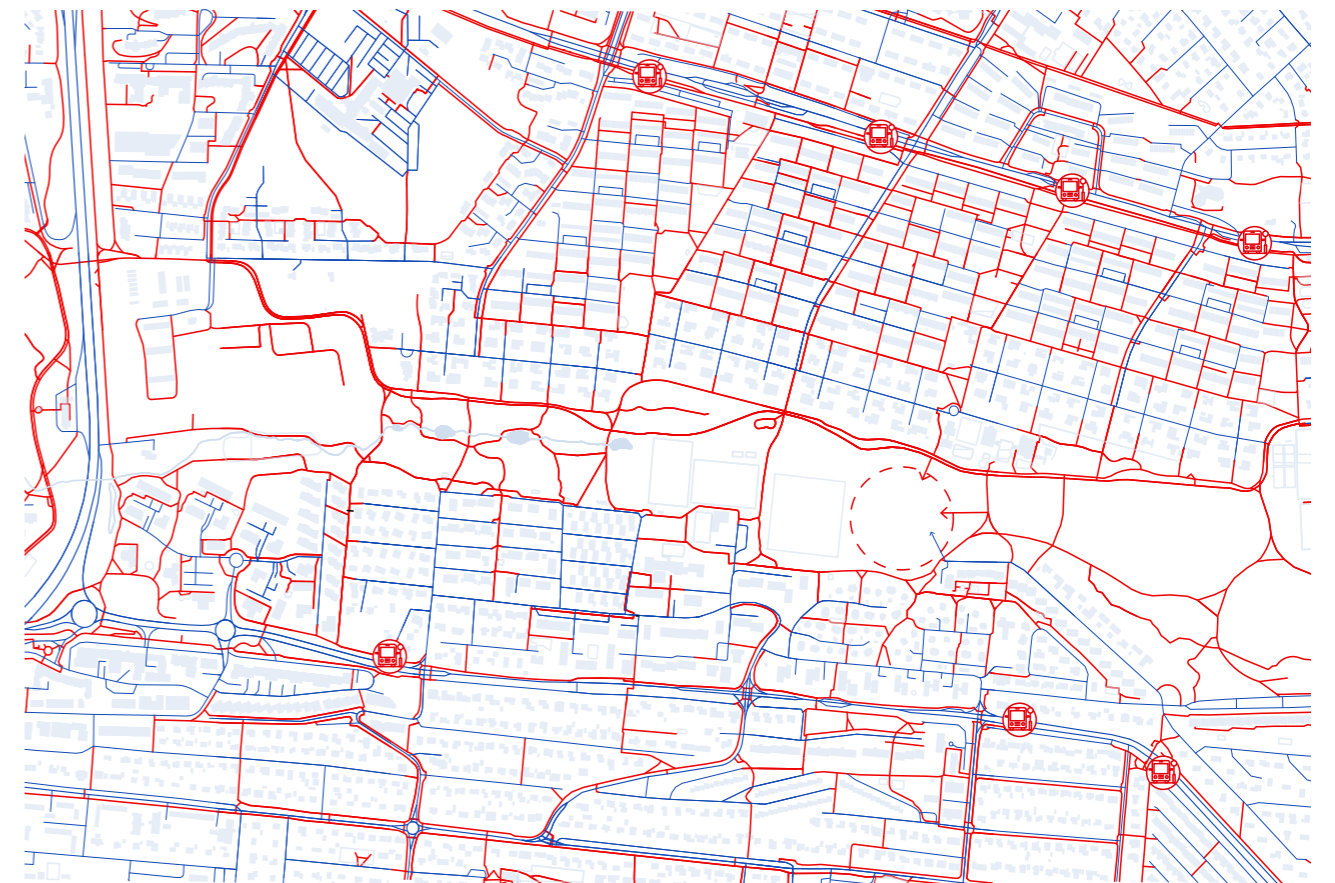


Fig 30

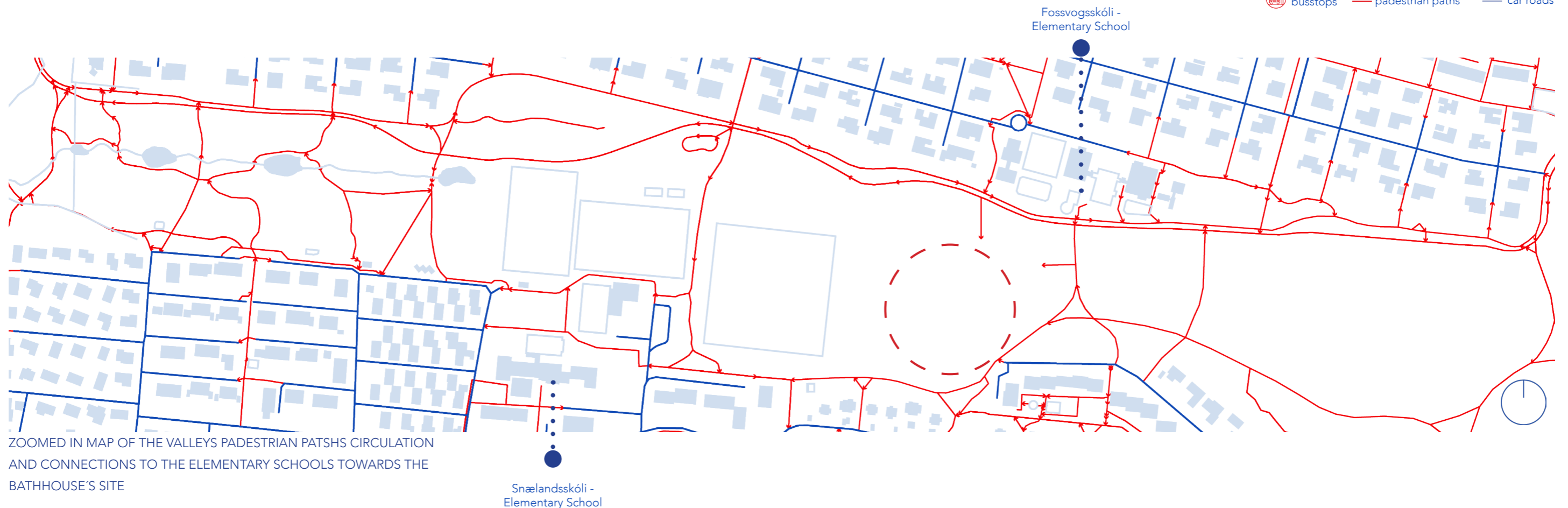
The Site - Fagrilundur

The location of the site I chose (Site nr 1. Fagrilundur) I thought was the best among the options provided in the competition brief, as it offers the shortest distance for students to walk to the pool from their schools. The site is conveniently located near bus stops, and there are multiple

pedestrian paths that provide easy access. Additionally, it is in close proximity to the main biking lane that connects the main capital area with the town of Kópavogur. And if necessary there are some space for cars close to the site.



PATHS AND BUSSTOPS
 busstops — pedestrian paths — car roads



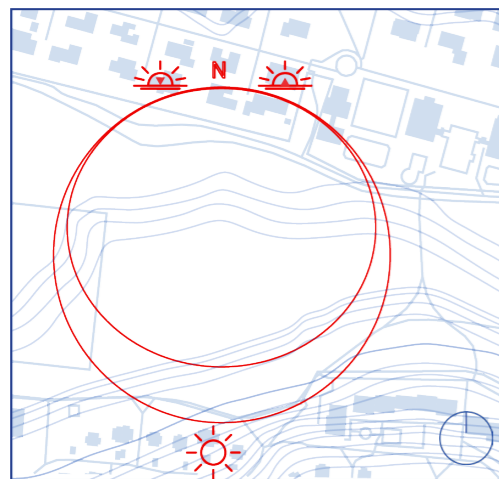
ZOOMED IN MAP OF THE VALLEYS PEDESTRIAN PATSHS CIRCULATION AND CONNECTIONS TO THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TOWARDS THE BATHHOUSE'S SITE

Snælandsskóli - Elementary School

Site Analysis

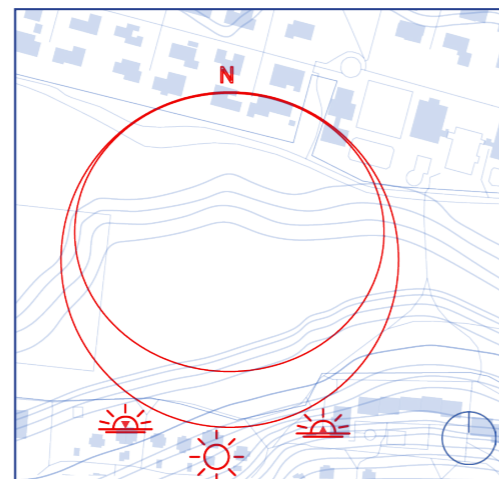
The site is situated in an open grassy field, with a topography that is the lowest in the valley, at a height of 22m – 26m above sea level. The landscape gradually starts to go up both towards the south and north direction. The terrain is quite damp, almost like a swamp, but some trenches have been dug in the field to collect water. It is known that many years ago, the

whole valley was under sea level, but there was a waterfall in the area that gave the name Fossvogur which means "Waterfall Valley". The site has some tall trees but not many different plants other than grass and straws. The wind mostly comes from the southeast direction, and the site is easily exposed to the sun, particularly during summertime.



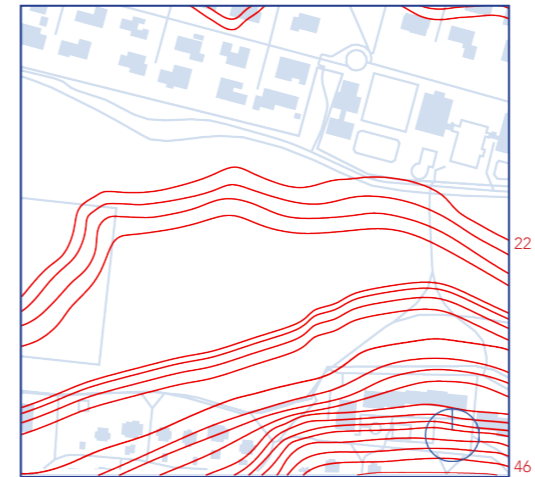
Sun - Summertime

(01. July)
 Sunrise 03:05:27
 Sunset: 23:56:01
 Daylight Duration: 20h50m34s
 Shadow Length (m): 0:87



Sun - Wintertime

(01. January)
 Sunrise 11:18:07
 Sunset: 15:43:51
 Daylight Duration: 4h25m44s
 Shadow Length (m): 18:65



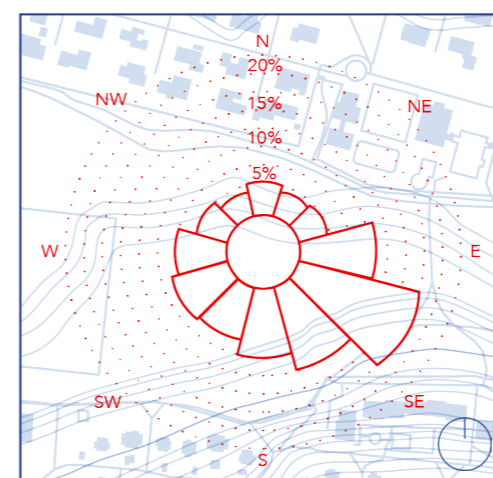
Topography

The site is located in a valley that slopes downward towards north.



Water and Vegetation

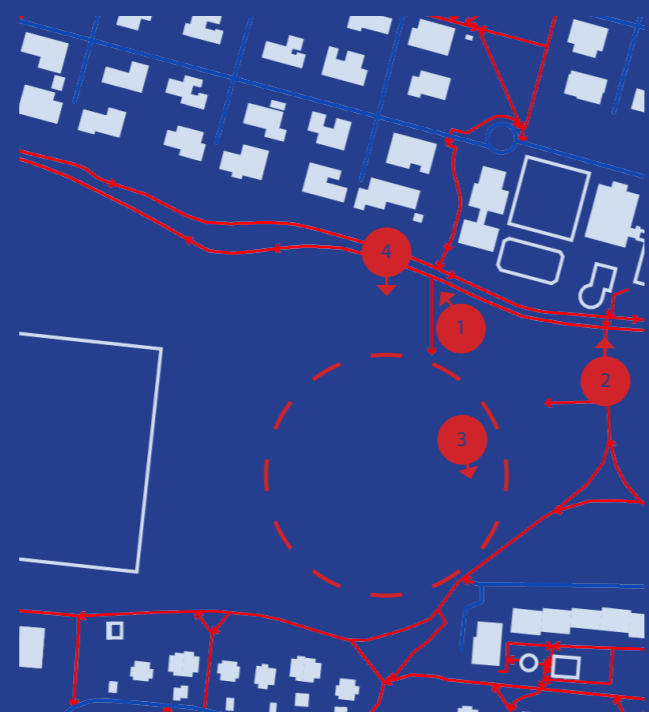
Trees surround the area, which is lush with grass. Man-made trenches collect rainwater.



Wind

Wind blows towards the middle

Physical Characteristics



1. One of the sites trenches full of water



2. Path coming from the site area, from south, looking towards Fossvogsskóli (Elementary School)



3. View over from the site, looking towards north over Fossvogur area.

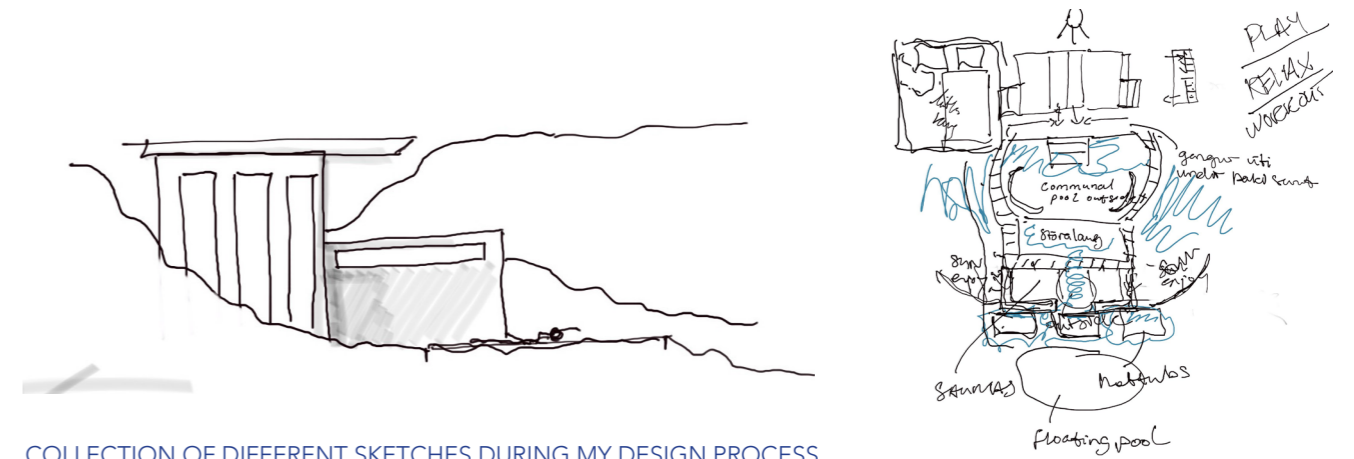
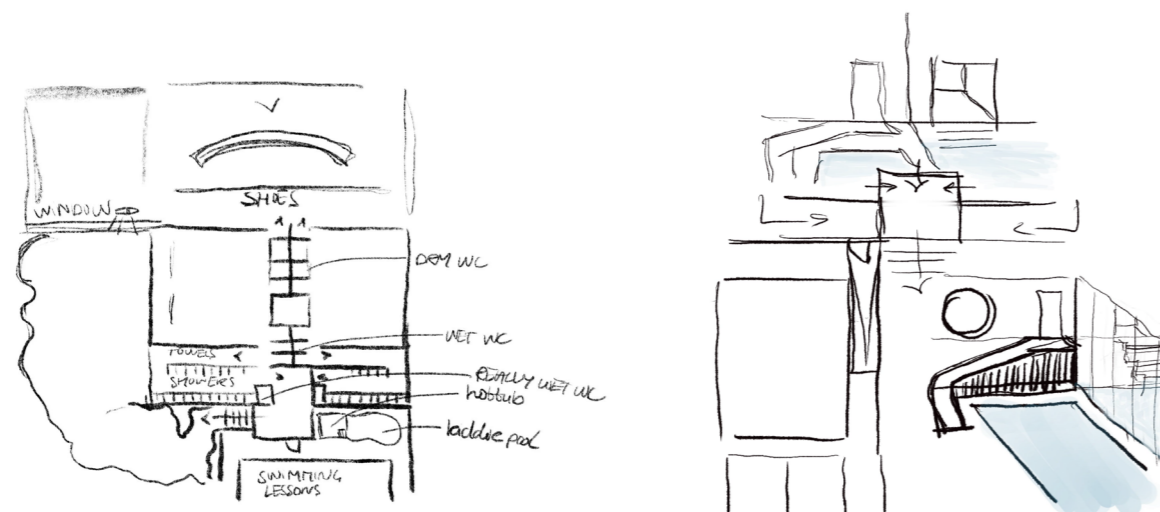


4. View from the path looking over the site towards north, with Kópavogur in the background

*Design Process
& Strategies*

Design Process

The design journey began with an in-depth exploration of the site and its surroundings. I conducted thorough research on local bathhouse traditions, analyzing the distinctions between public and private facilities across Iceland. This preliminary stage was essential to ensure that the design resonated with both historical significance and contemporary needs. Drawing inspiration from existing Icelandic bathhouses, I immersed myself in studying architectural elements that define these spaces. I examined various successful projects to discern what makes them functional and appealing. Additionally I followed the requirements from the competition brief with a critical mind. This research helped in envisioning a bathhouse that could blend traditional Icelandic bathing culture with modern design aesthetics.



COLLECTION OF DIFFERENT SKETCHES DURING MY DESIGN PROCESS

With a solid background knowledge, I began the sketching phase. My focus was primarily on the user journey—from entering the building, navigating through it, and finally transitioning to the outdoor water area. I meticulously planned the layout to ensure a seamless flow that would enhance the user's experience. The challenge was to create an intuitive path that would guide visitors naturally through the spaces, culminating in a tranquil bathing experience. One of the most challenging aspects of the design process was incorporating distinct architectural features without compromising functionality. I wanted to create 'moments' within the building that would captivate and engage the visitors. This included strategically placing windows to frame specific views, designing unique water features, and selecting materials that reflected the natural beauty of Iceland.

Future of Iceland's Public Bathhouses



Considering the future of Icelandic bathhouses, I drew inspiration from private spa lagoons. I've noticed a growing divergence between the evolution of traditional public bathhouses and private bathhouses.

Historically, Iceland's public swimming pools were municipally owned, simple yet functional, and accessible to everyone due to their nominal entry fees. These spaces were designed with a straightforward, utilitarian focus on communal health and well-being rather than luxury.

In contrast, the new private swimming pools in Iceland emphasize luxury and exclusivity, featuring sophisticated architectural designs and enhanced amenities. Consequently, the entry fees for these privatized pools are significantly higher than those for traditional public pools, potentially limiting access for lower-income residents.

Economically, this shift has benefited Iceland by attracting more tourists and generating higher revenue. However, it also raises concerns about preserving community spaces that are accessible to all. The privatization of swimming pools in Iceland represents a move away from the egalitarian principles that characterized the country's public pools. This evolution highlights a tension between maintaining traditional community values and embracing a market-driven approach to leisure and tourism.

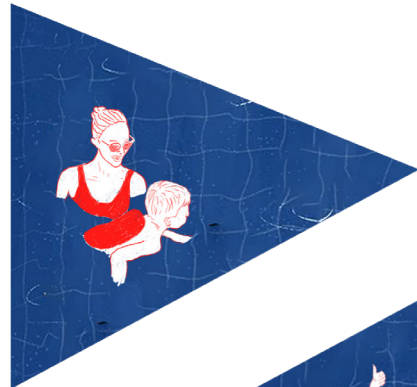
Private spa lagoons in Iceland are renowned for their stunning designs and spectacular settings, often blending seamlessly with the natural environment. Public swimming pools could draw inspiration from these designs, enhancing their facilities to be more appealing and inviting. Improvements might include better landscaping, more thoughtful architectural designs, and an overall aesthetic that elevates the user's experience while maintaining accessibility and community focus. While private spa lagoons and public swimming pools serve different market

segments, the influence of private amenities can be a catalyst for positive changes in public facilities. By selectively integrating aspects of private lagoon experiences into public swimming pools, Iceland can enhance its communal offerings without compromising the accessibility and community spirit that define these public spaces. Such a balanced approach could set a precedent for how public and private sectors can inspire each other, ensuring that the benefits of economic growth and tourism are felt across the community.

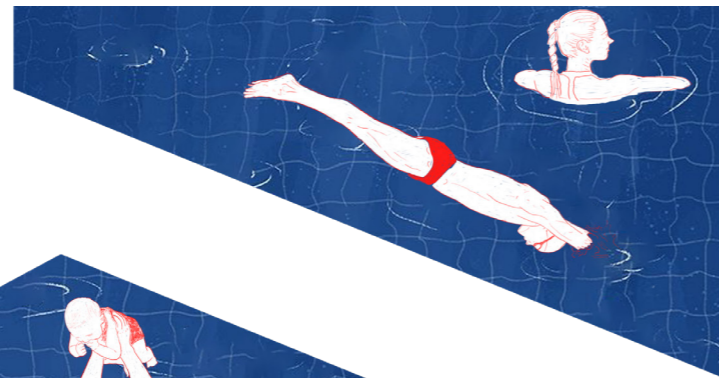
Learn, Play, Enjoy + Social Groups

From the book "Sund", I again sought inspiration from the chapters called learn, play, enjoy. I realized that the bathhouse could be separated into three different sections in relation to the spaces function. There's the space or pool for learning to swim. The pools to play in and then space for enjoying which can be either relaxing in hot tubs or sauna or maintaining health by working out. I then categorized the different social groups into three groups in relation to their functional needs.

Enjoy: The individual or group of friends, usually adults that want to maintain their health, relax or work out.



Learn: The school kids attending their weekly swim class during school hours.



Play: Families with young children during the afternoons and weekends

Competition Brief - Spaces

IN THE COMPETITION BRIEF IT IS STATED: WHEN ASSESSING THE NEED FOR SPACE, OTHER SWIMMING POOLS IN THE MUNICIPALITIES HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED, AS WELL AS CONSULTATION WITH OPERATORS AND USERS.

THROUGHOUT MY DESIGN PROCESS, I SOUGHT INFORMATION FROM THE BRIEF. THIS IS A SIMPLIFIED SUMMARY OF THE NECESSARY SPACES THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR THE BUILDING

Accessibility and Entrance

All structures and the pool area should be accessible to all guests, following universal design principles.

The main entrance must have a service desk with access control and good connectivity to other pool areas.

Catering and hospital room.

Simple catering facilities like a café or juice and sandwich bar should be available. Outdoor dining should encourage social interaction.

A hospital room should be near the reception and pool area.

Changing Facilities

Provide both indoor and outdoor changing facilities, divided into dry and wet areas, with wardrobes, drying areas, and showers. All facilities must have direct pool access, including private rooms.

Gender-Separated Facilities: Minimum of 100 lockers and 15 showers per cabin, with drying areas and toiletries.

Locked lockers in cabin areas.

Non-Gendered Private Cabins for Handicapped Individuals:

At least 2 cabins, each 10 m², with a toilet, shower, bench, and cupboards. Accessible cubicles for assistants.

Outdoor Cabins: Consider cabins with shared shower and toilet facilities, similar to Árbæjarlaug. Include private outdoor cabins to complement indoor ones.

Staff Facilities

Must comply with laws and regulations. Include coat hangers for outdoor clothing near the staff entrance.

Design task-oriented and flexible workspaces.

Dressing Facilities: Non-gendered changing rooms with

lockable wardrobes, private changing stalls with toilets and showers. At least 30 lockable lockers for staff clothes and equipment.

Coffee Facilities: Accessible to all staff, connected to other staff areas, with a kitchenette (oven, stove, dishwasher, fridge) and tableware.

Multi-use design for meetings.

Bathroom Attendant Facilities: Open central area for overseeing changing rooms, wet and dry rooms. Space for one employee with a table, chair, and locker.

Watch Room: Located in a watchtower with a good pool view, space for one employee with a table, chair, screens, and cupboards. Coat hanger at the entrance.

Office Space: Shared open workspace for 2-3 employees, with a meeting room for 8-10 participants and standard equipment.

Grooming and Storage

Toilets for employees and guests must comply with laws and regulations, with non-gendered designs. A public toilet near the reception/lobby should be accessible during pool hours without an admission ticket.

Outdoor Pool Storage: For teaching materials, toys, sunbeds, cleaning supplies, etc., with a flushing sink and hose.

Indoor Pool Storage: For swimming lesson and exercise equipment, either dedicated

space or trolleys on the pool deck.

Indoor Storage: Lockable storage for uniforms and hygiene products, possibly near reception/staff area.

Laundry: Separate, lockable space with washing machine, dryer, drying facilities, near the reception. Storage for rental towels, swimwear, and cleaning rags.

Cleaning: Unlocked boot spaces as per regulations, with a laundry cupboard in changing facilities.

Souvenir Storage: Near reception/service area, with lockable compartments for items like bicycle helmets.

Watchtower and Technical Space

Watchtower: Must meet requirements for house management access, camera system, and pool overview. Allow for AI security system installation. Includes a watch room as specified.

Technical Space: Preferably underground, for intakes, water purification, pipes, ventilation, electrical systems, chlorine production, and a control center for the pool structure. (Fossvogslaug Competition Brief, 2022).

I TOOK THE LIBERTY TO CRITICALLY EVALUATE THE COMPETITION BRIEF AND MADE ADJUSTMENTS WHERE I FELT CHANGES WERE NECESSARY.

A simple catering facility is a basic feature commonly found in traditional Icelandic bathhouses. For this bathhouse, since I'm looking for inspiration from spa lagoons, that includes restaurant spaces and great cuisine I therefore propose a café or a more advanced catering space, separate from the reception area. In my opinion, a nice café would not only serve bathhouse guests but also benefit the local residents, as there currently isn't such a facility in the neighborhood.

During initial discussions, the idea of having two separate dressing rooms emerged. Icelandic bathhouses often get busy, especially with children, young families, and regulars, typically older adults, who visit daily. To accommodate both groups, I propose creating separate dressing facilities. Regulars should have a relaxed space, while families with young children need easy access to indoor facilities without having to go outside in the winter.

Creating a separate dressing room for regulars allows it to be situated further from the reception, as this group typically has year-round passes and doesn't need to stop at the reception for tickets. This design enables the building to have two distinct entrances, offering two different experiences. One entrance provides the basic functions commonly found in bathhouses across the country, while the other offers an experience more influenced by private spa lagoons.

To achieve this, I've made some modifications to the competition brief. I kept the required number of lockers, showers, and other amenities but divided the dressing rooms into two sections. Since young children usually don't use outdoor changing facilities, the "adult" section will have gender-separated indoor and outdoor dressing rooms. The brief suggested linking these rooms with shared showers, as seen at Árbæjarlaug. Through discussions and testing various outdoor dressing rooms, I found that people prefer outdoor options for privacy and a calmer environment. Therefore, using shared showers from busier indoor facilities

doesn't make sense. However, many outdoor dressing rooms lack a connection to nature. I believe outdoor dressing rooms should provide direct access to nature, offering both visual and sensory experiences, rather than just exposure to cold weather.

For the remaining requirements in the brief, such as staff facilities and storage, I did my best to adhere to them.



Fig 31 Outside dressing room at Árbæjarlaug

Competition Brief - Water Facilities

THE COMPETITIONS REQUIREMENTS FOR WATER FACILITIES

Main Outdoor Pool

Must be 25m long, 15m wide, with 6 lanes.
Shallow enough for all school levels for swimming lessons.
Suitable for general swimming and lessons.

Outdoor Wading Pool

Can be part of or separate from the outdoor pool.
Serves as a playground for children with appropriate play equipment.

Indoor Pool

One covered indoor pool for young children's swimming lessons.

Reference size: 12.5m x 8m, depth: 0.9m.

Hot and Cold Pots

2-3 types of hot and cold pots.

Must align with Icelandic pot culture, for communication and relaxation.

Hot Baths

2-3 versions of wet and dry steam baths for relaxation.

Access from the outdoor area of the pool.

Outdoor Shower

Must be provided, especially for hot baths.

Lot

Ensure good flow and shelter in the pool area.

Provide bicycle parking and covered shelters for prams, bikes, and other equipment.

Include a resting place usable by swimmers and the public, possibly connected to a restaurant.

Consider connections to beach volleyball courts and other nearby recreational activities.



Fig 32 - Seamless transition through water at Árbæjarlaug

As for my adjustments to the briefs requirements for the water facilities, I maintained the layout of the main outdoor pool but decided it should be located within a short walking distance from the dressing rooms. Often, swimming facilities are placed too far from dressing rooms, which is less than ideal in Iceland's cold climate. Inspired by Árbæjarlaug and spa lagoons, I liked the idea of seamlessly transitioning between different water spaces. Instead of having to run from the dressing rooms to the hot tubs in the cold, swimmers could move directly from warm indoor facilities to outdoor pools. While Árbæjarlaug's direct water connection between pools is ingenious, the temperature disparity between the main pool and others can be less than ideal. Which is why I didn't connect the

rest of the water facilities directly to the main outdoor pool.

I'm adding to the building that is housing the indoor pool, a wading pool for younger children, since it's more common to want to stay indoors with young children if the weather conditions are harsh. Drawing inspiration from other bathhouses, a hot tub is placed next to the wading pool, for parents. This allows parents to relax indoors with their children while they play. As for the hot tubs, outside, I retained the traditional circular shape, known in Icelandic swimming culture as places where conversations start and perfect for socializing. However, for those seeking solitude, I created a separate area with a rectangular-shaped pool and seating only on one side, making it less inviting for stranger to address each other.

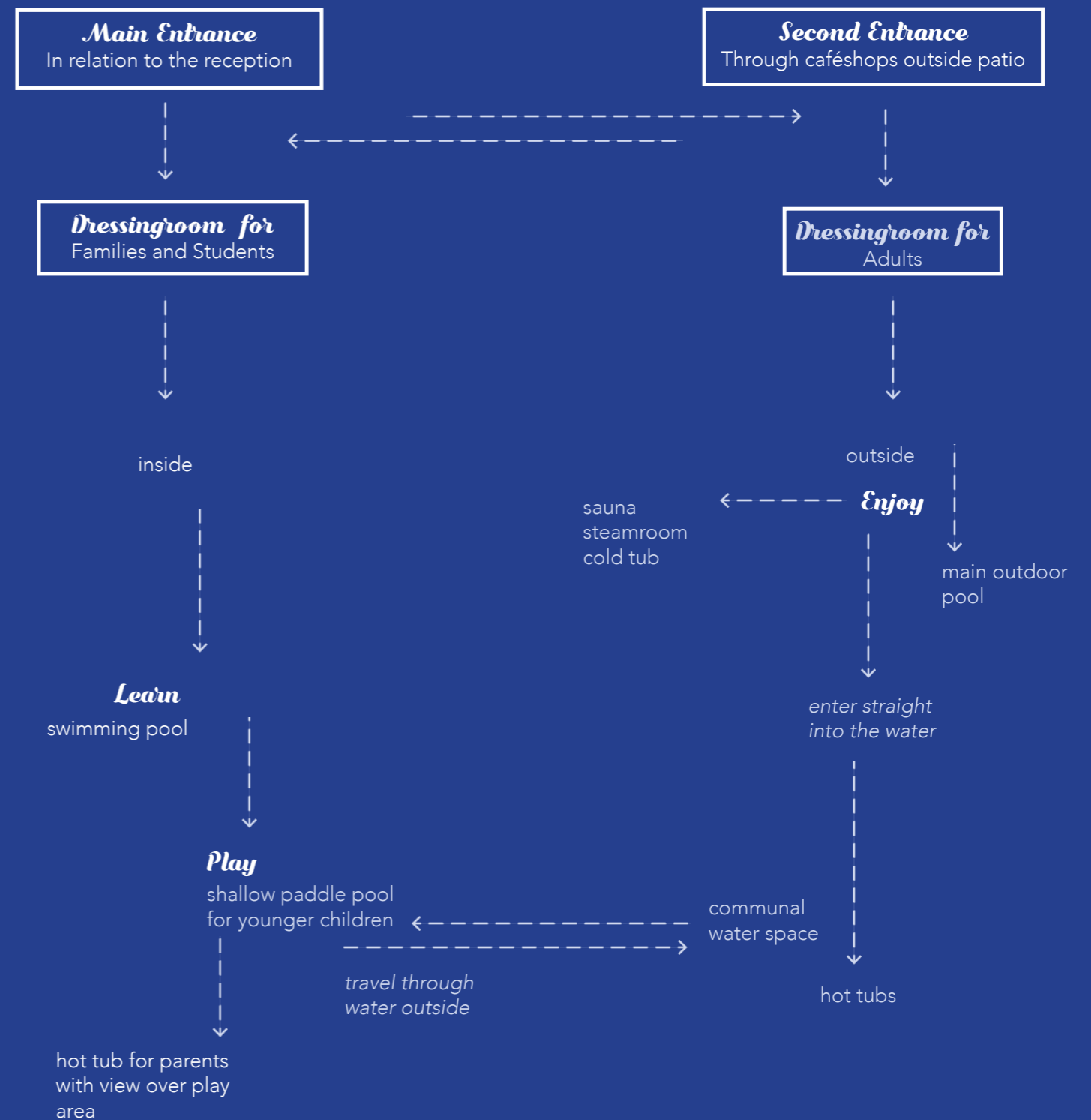


My initial strategy for how you would travel through the building in connection to what part of the facility you would like to use.

By providing the bathhouse with two separate dressing rooms—one for families and students, and another for adults—I have also designated two separate entrances for them

The first dressing room is strategically located to provide easy access to the outside area. From there, you can swim to hot tubs. Additionally, the dressing room is situated within a short walking distance to the main pool, sauna, steam room, and cold tub.

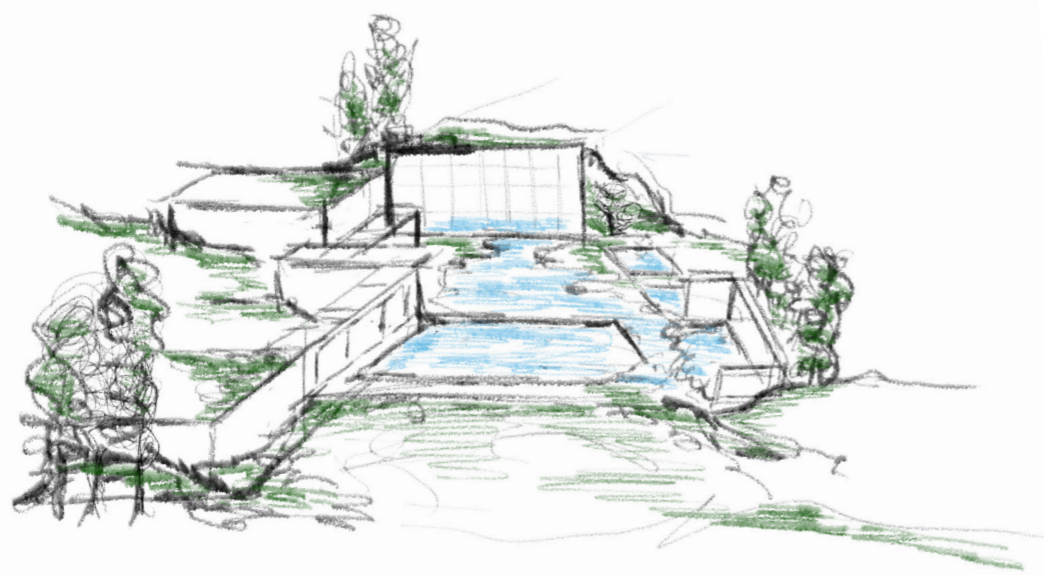
The second dressing room is designed for young students attending swimming classes during school hours and families with young children during the afternoon and weekends. It is situated near the main entrance where you can purchase access at the reception. After going through the dressing rooms, you will be able to access the swimming facilities inside, which include the main pool for teaching and playing, a shallow kiddie pool, and a hot tub for parents with a view over the play area. From the kiddie pool, you can swim directly to the outside water facilities.



Nature with in a City



I'm placing special emphasis on landscape design around the pool so that it strengthens the environment of the valley and doesn't reduce its quality. Undeniably, those who live in the city have less contact with nature than those who live in the countryside, and untouched nature will inevitably move away when settlements become denser and larger. Is this a negative trend when it comes to swimming pools, where the environment and contact with nature give a swimming trip more value and increases pleasure. Getting out of the hustle and bustle of city life and into the vastness of nature can help a lot with stress relief.



EARLIER CONCEPT SKETCH

In my opinion, in Iceland, public bathhouses often lack a connection to nature and prioritize practical functions over the holistic experience of being in the water and participating in the rituals associated with bathhouses. It's worth noting that public bathhouses in Iceland often have a very closed-off appearance to the public, typically gated with no visible connection to the outside. This lack of transparency can further contribute to the feeling of disconnect from nature.

Moreover, the rituals connected to bathhouses, such as the transition between hot and cold baths, steam rooms, and relaxation areas, are sometimes not fully integrated into the design of public bathhouses. These rituals have deep cultural and therapeutic significance and should be carefully considered in the design process to ensure that they are accessible and enjoyable for all visitors.



Fig 33 - Salalaug, a public bathhouse, example of extreme fenced off facilities with almost no presence of nature near the pools

Inspiration



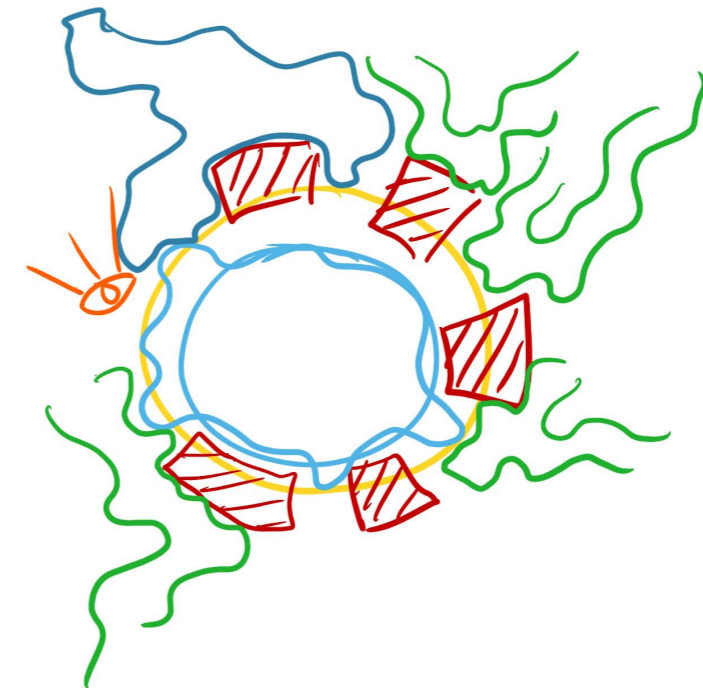
Fig 34 - Seljavallalaug

At the beginning of my research, I came across an inspiring text about Seljavallalaug, one of Iceland's oldest swimming pools, built in 1923 in South Iceland. To reach Seljavallalaug, you must park a few kilometers away and hike towards it. As you approach, the pool gradually comes into view. After the hike, rather than swimming, you relax in the warm water, soaking in the surrounding nature and revitalizing all your senses.

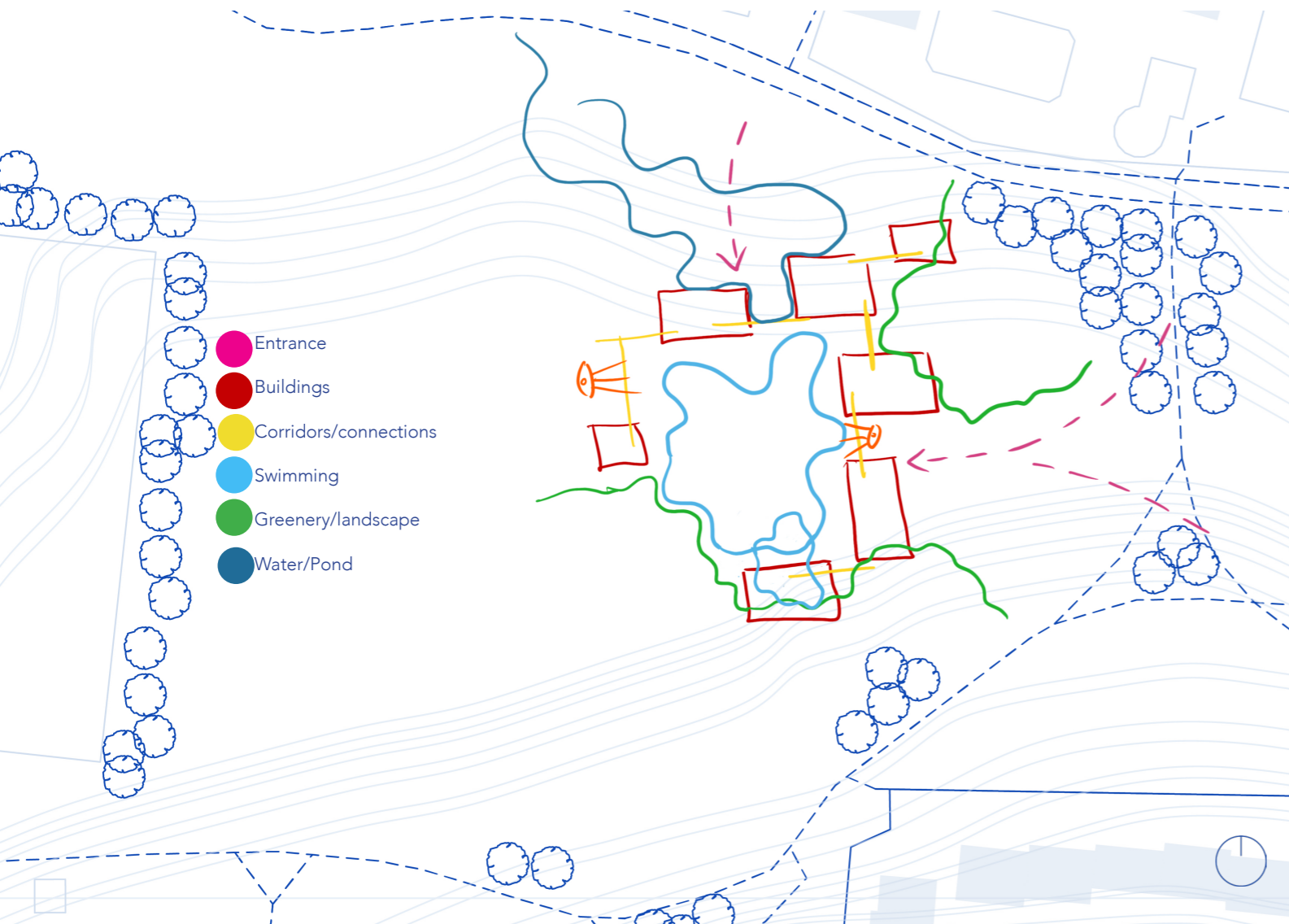
I connected this experience to the bathhouse site in Fossvogsdalur. I envisioned people jogging or biking in the valley, eventually stopping at the bathhouse to relax in its warm water after their outdoor activities. Seljavallalaug became the main aesthetic inspiration for my building concept. I admire the simplicity of both the structure and the pool, seamlessly integrated with the landscape. The pool is partially embedded in the ground, standing only about half a meter above it, maintaining a low profile. This design allows for direct and visual contact with the natural environment. Additionally, the sound of the nearby Selá river, flowing just a few meters away, enhances the immersive experience.

CONCEPT SKETCH

WATER/SWIMMING FACILITIES ARE PLACED IN THE MIDDLE. THE BUILDING SURROUNDS THE CENTER, SHELTERING FROM THE WIND. I'M CONNECTING THE BUILDING VOLUMES WITH CORRIDORS. THE CORRIDORS ARE SOMETIMES SEE-THROUGH, CREATING VISUAL CONNECTIONS. EMPHASIZING THE PRESENT NATURE WITH ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPING AND MORE PLANTS, AND BRINGING IT CLOSER TO THE BUILDING, SOMETIMES INTEGRATED INTO THE POOLS.



Placements



Transitioning from the concept sketch for the bathhouse, I tested the concept diagrammatically on the site in Fossvogsdalur. I placed two entrances: one crossing a pond and another in the middle of the site. The water facilities are centrally located, nestled within the building structure. Different building volumes, each dedicated to a specific function, are separated but connected by corridors.

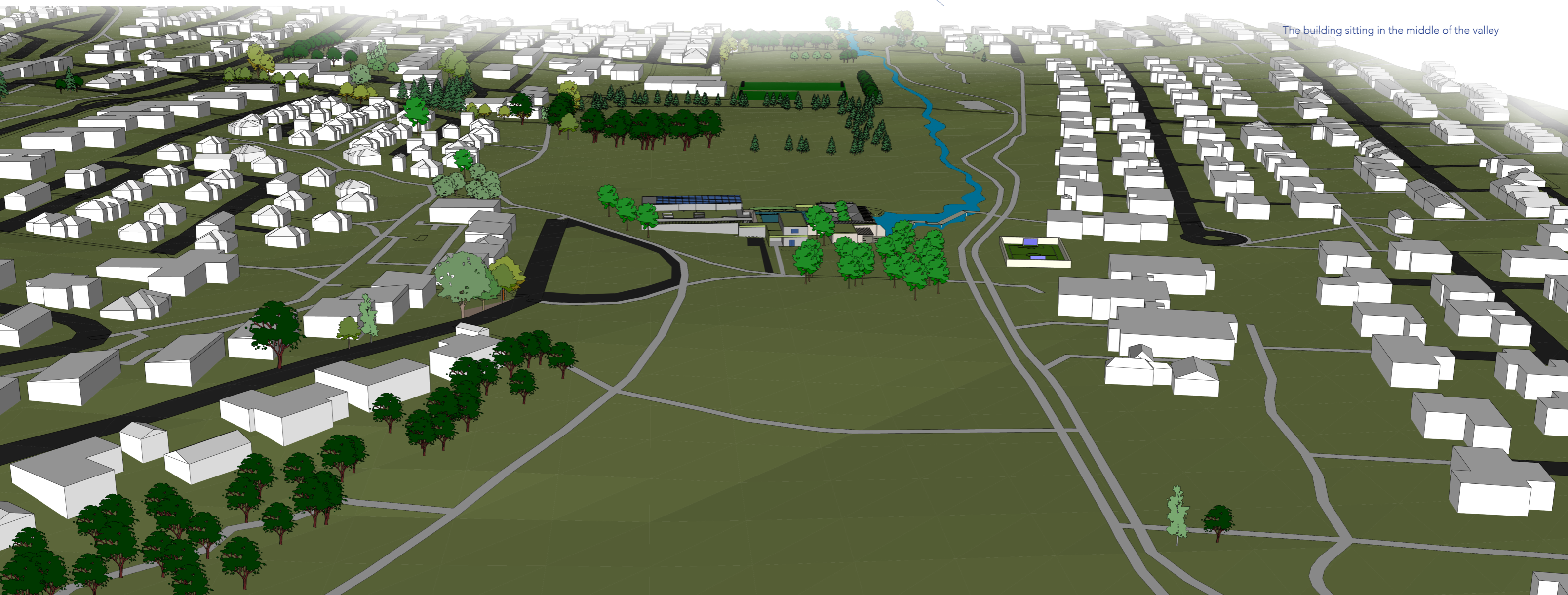
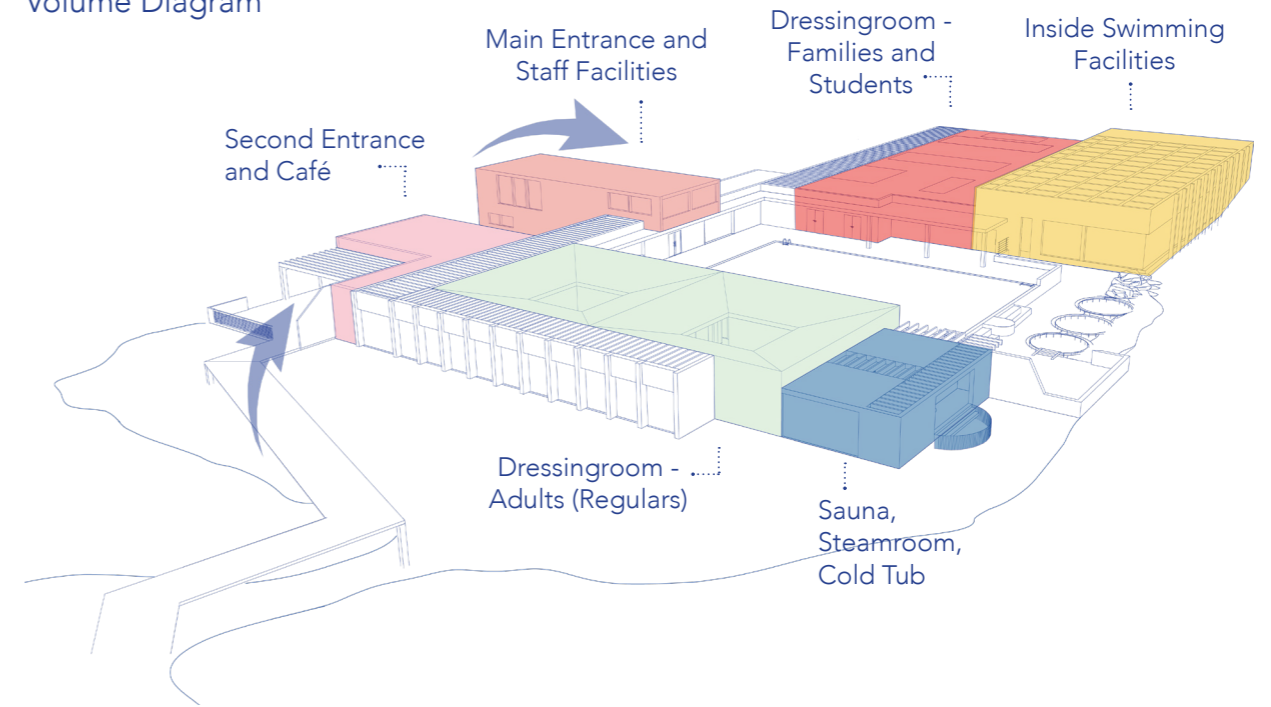
Design Proposal

Design Proposal



Iso-view looking towards south-east

Program Distribution Volume Diagram



The building sitting in the middle of the valley

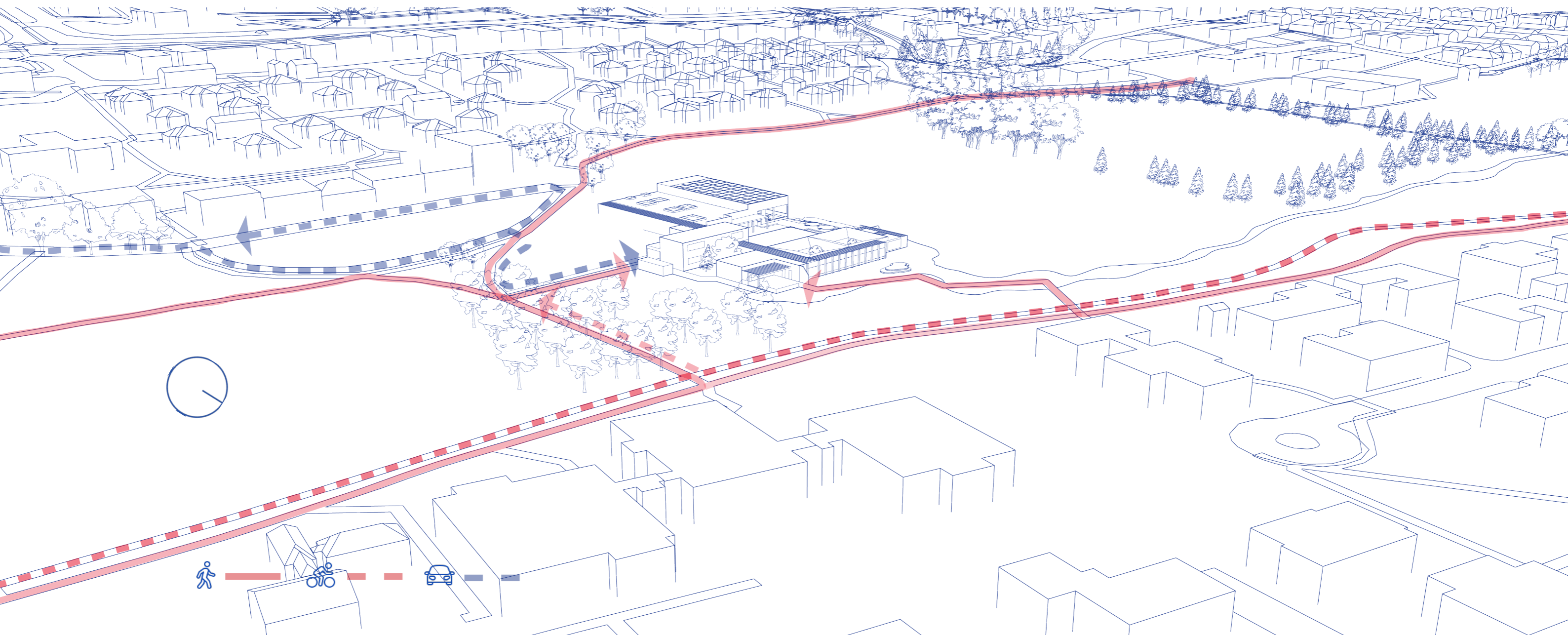
Access to the Site

There are multiple ways to access the Bathhouse site, including two pedestrian routes, and one for cars. The main path that runs through the valley in the north connects to Fossvogsschool and is the primary pedestrian access point. The second pedestrian route is in the southeast and connects in all directions, so it is likely that students from Snælandschool will enter from there.

An extension has been added to the road for cars, in the south, for easy circulation near the building, primarily for dropping off people, or possibly for future plans to place a bus stop there. Finally, from there, a road is available for emergency vehicles and deliveries to park closer to the building. This is the only access point for cars.



- SOME TREES HAVE BEEN ADDED CLOSE TO THE MAIN ENTRANCE OF THE BUILDING TO BRING NATURE CLOSER TO THE BUILDING.
- PLANTS ARE PRESENT IN THE DRESSINGROOMS COURTYARDS.
- IN STEAD OF MAINTAINING TRENCHES THERES A DUCKPOND
- TO SHELTER HOT TUB PUT STILL PROVIDE VIEWS TOWARDS THE VALLEY I'VE MAID AN ARTIFICIAL HILL AND CLOSED IT OFF WITH STONES TO INTERTVINE NATURE INTO THE WATER AREA.



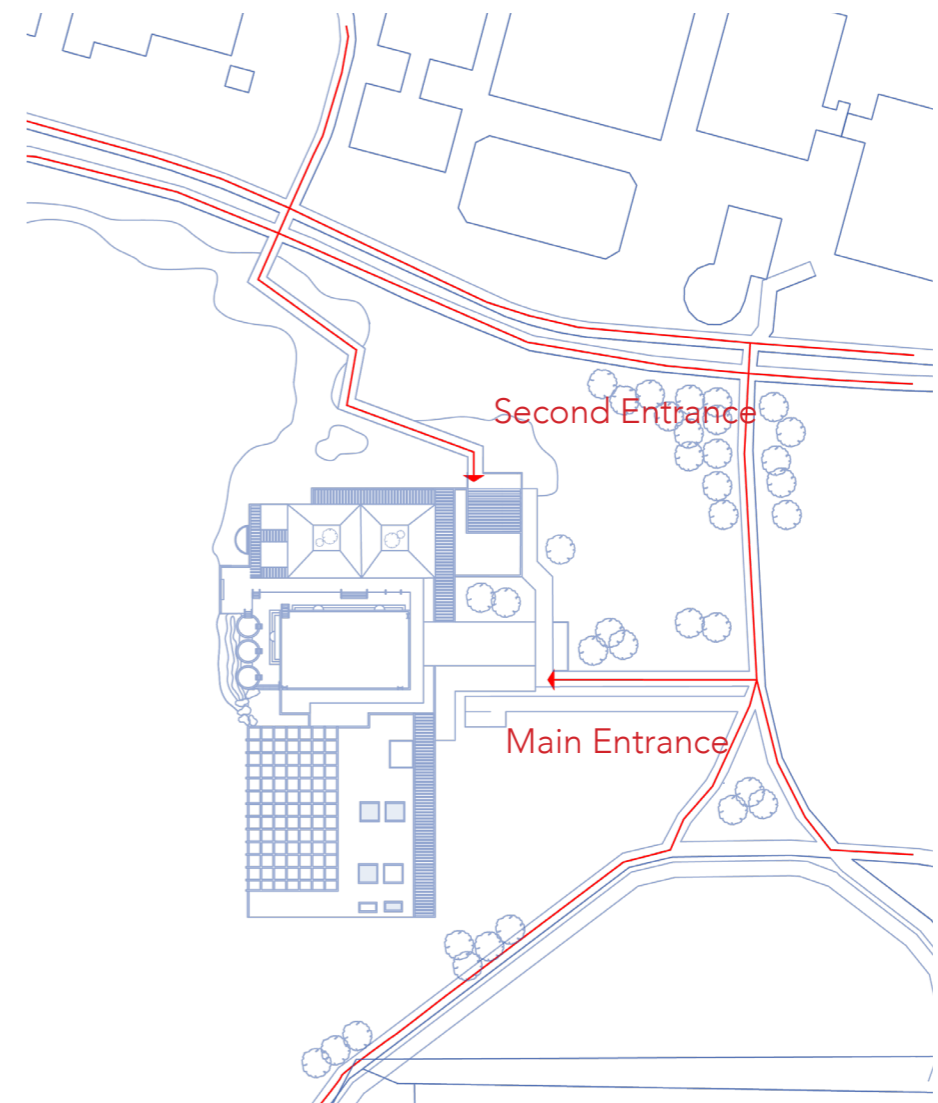
Site Plan



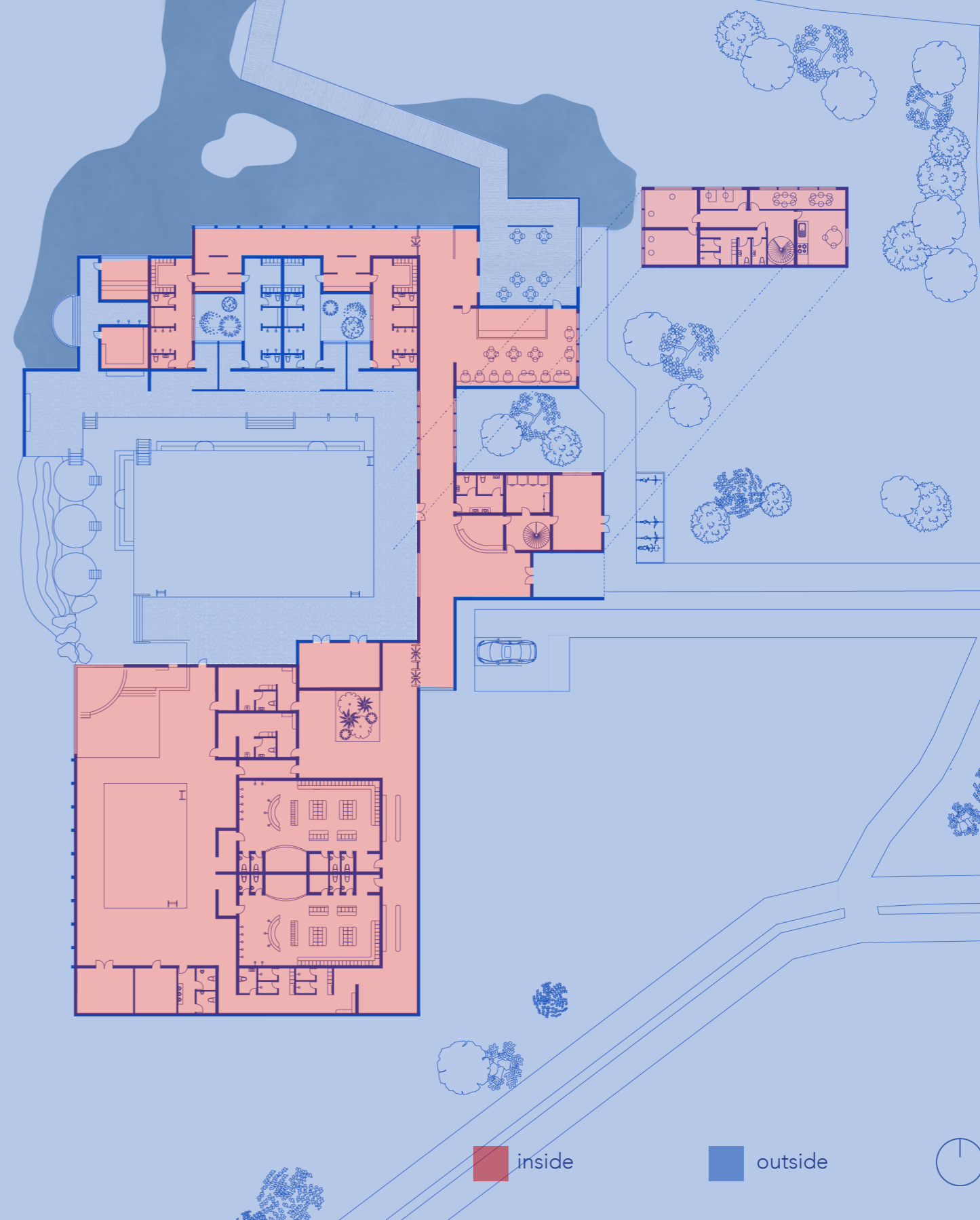
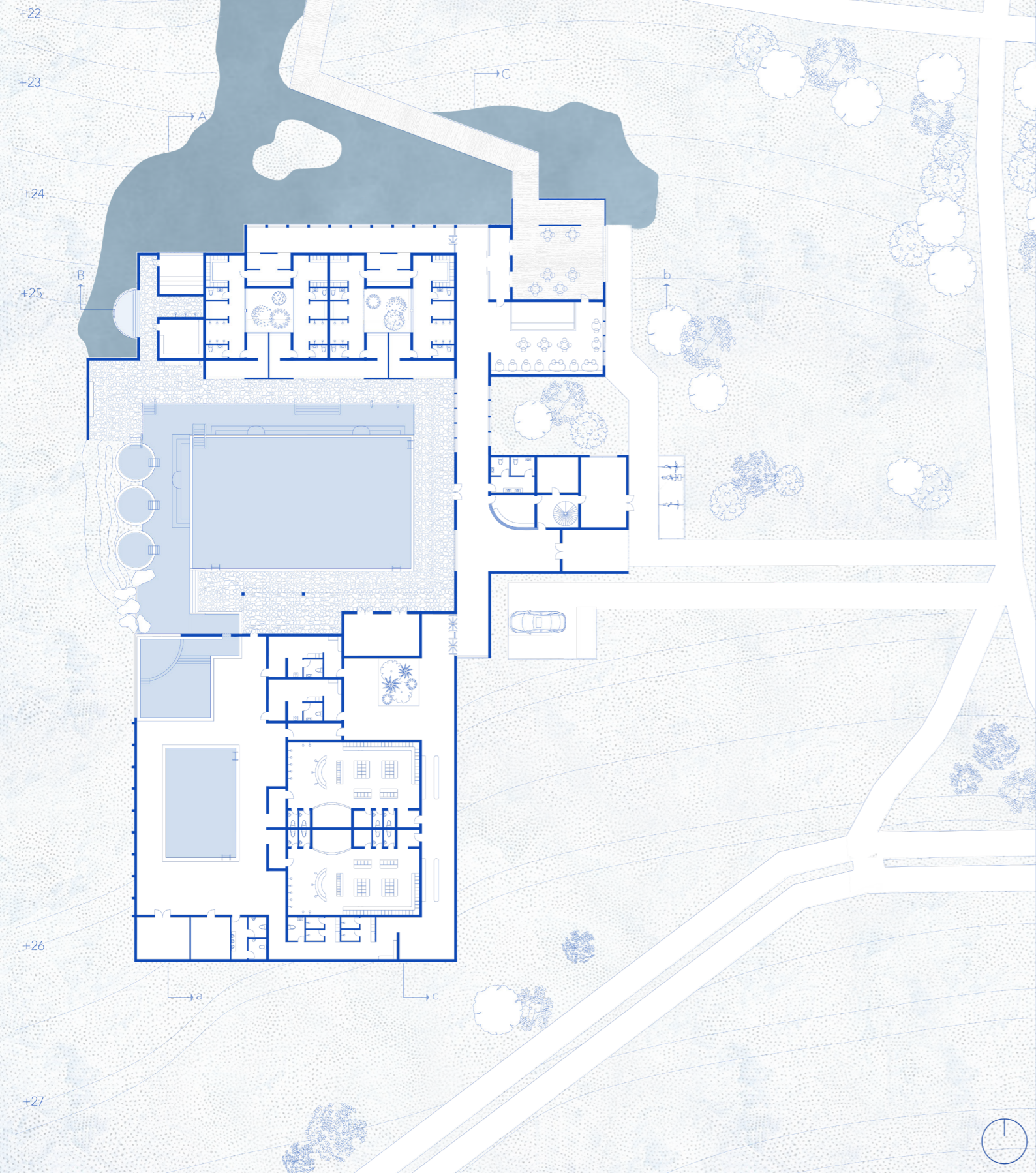
Entering the Building

The main entrance I chose is situated in the middle of the site, I prefer this path for bicyclists to enter the facilities, so from there I placed a bike shed next to the main entrance. From the bike shed there's a path outside leading you to the main entrance and the second entrance, towards the south, as well.

If you are approaching on foot from the north side, you can continue on your way by crossing a bridge over a pond. Instead of maintaining trenches, I have created a larger hole to collect water and enhance the quality of the entrance experience. As you walk, you may encounter some ducks on the pond before making your way to the outdoor patio of the café.

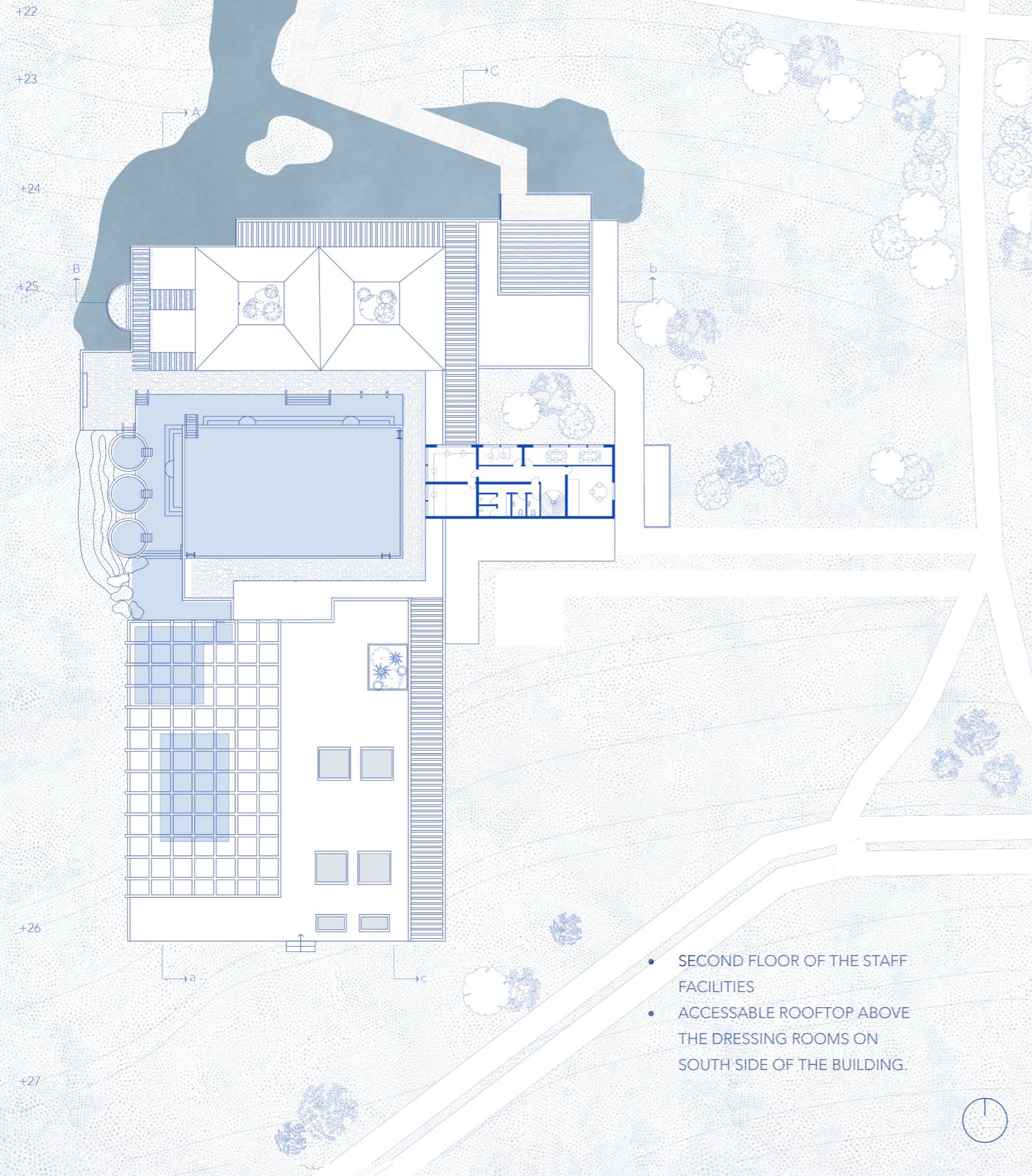


Floorplan



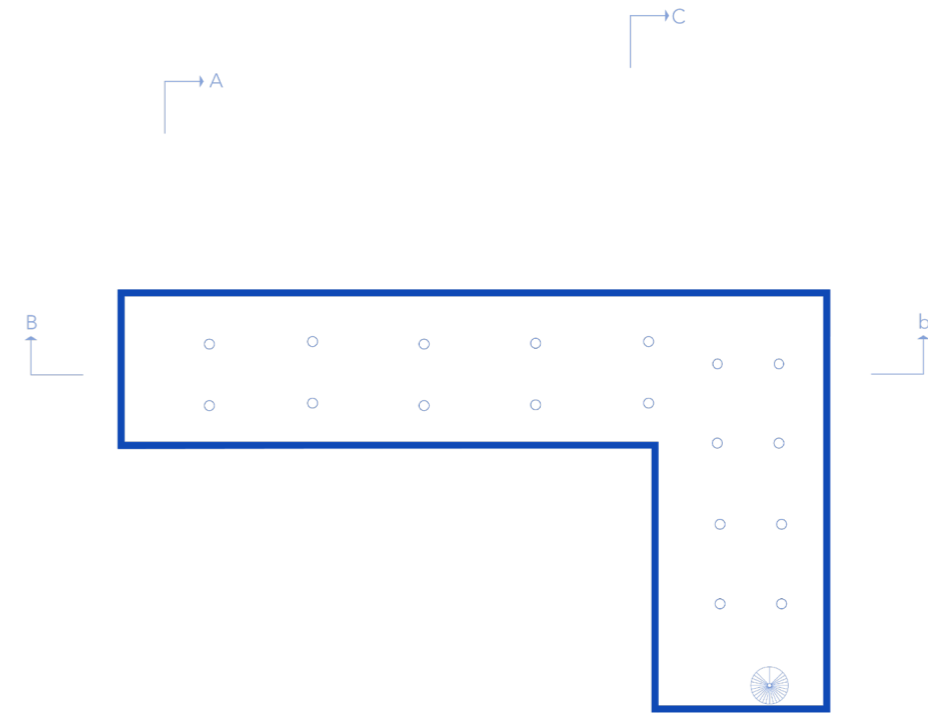
inside outside

Second Floor & Rooftop



- SECOND FLOOR OF THE STAFF FACILITIES
- ACCESSIBLE ROOFTOP ABOVE THE DRESSING ROOMS ON SOUTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING.

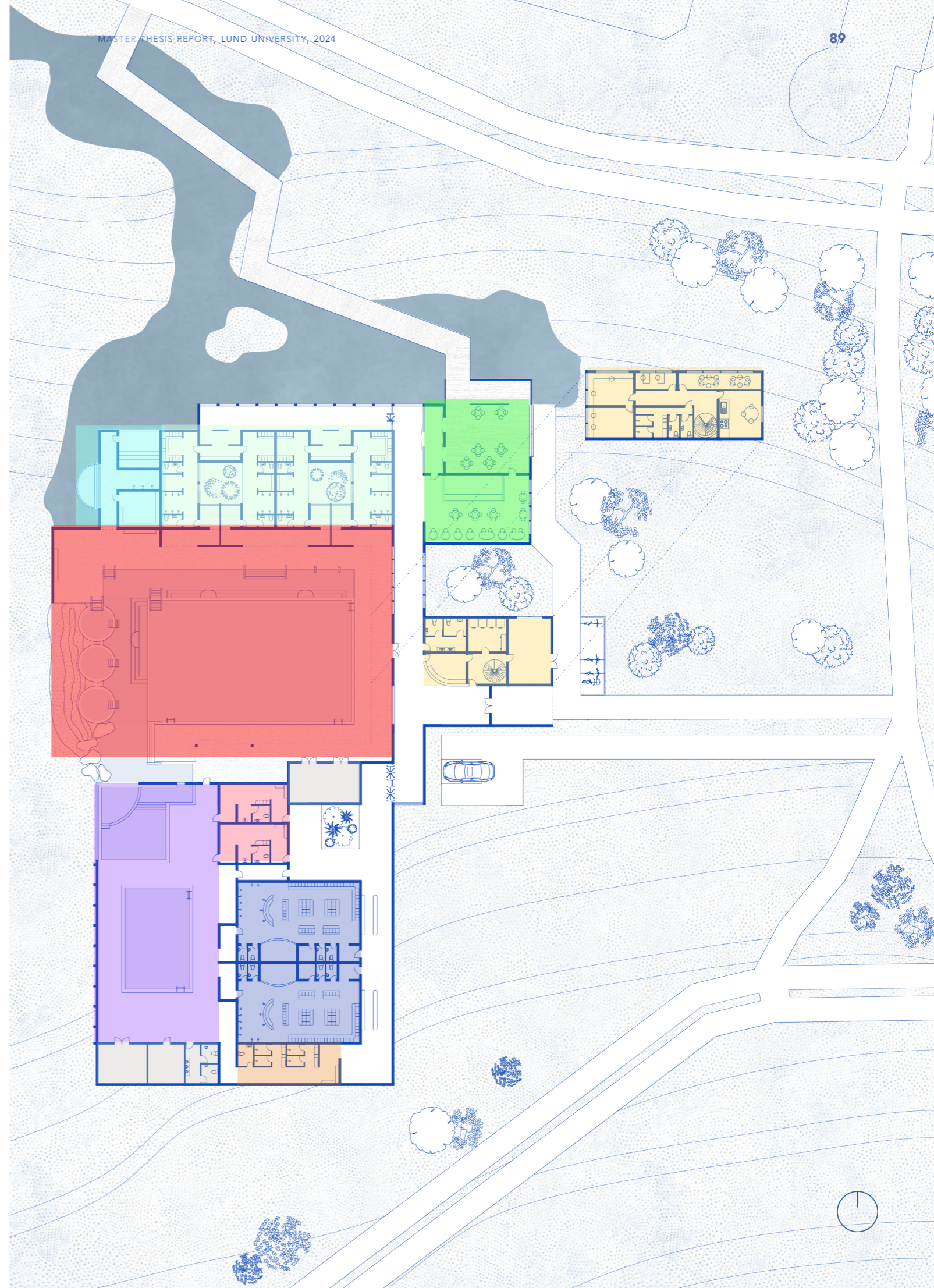
Basement



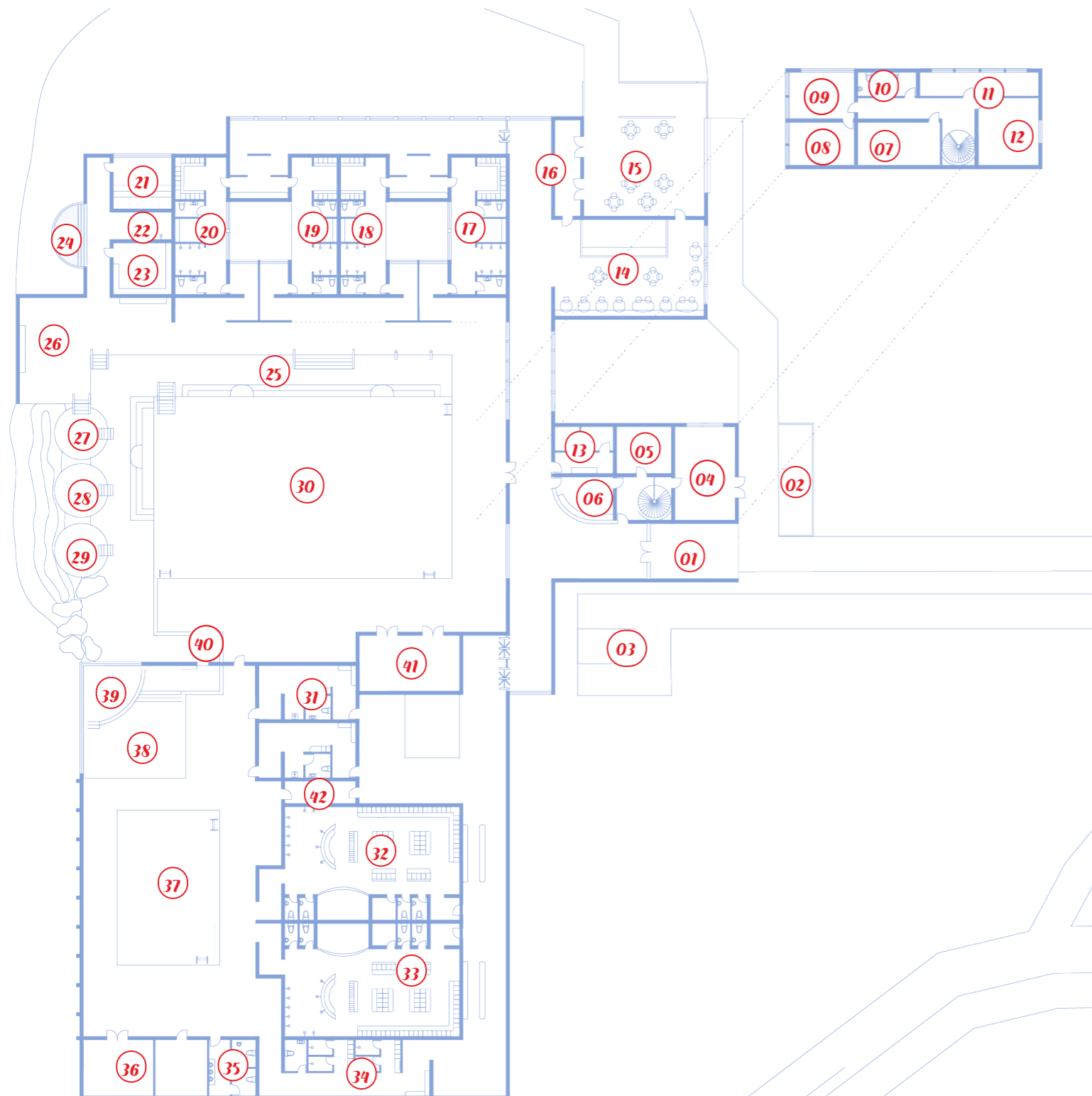
- TECHNICAL SPACE IN THE BASEMENT, ACCESSIBLE FROM THE STAFF FACILITIES

Space Distribution

- Staff Facilities
- Café and Patio
- Dressing Room, Adults
- Sauna, Outdoor Showers, Steam Room, Cold Tub
- Outdoor Swimming Facilities
- Storage
- Dressingroom, Handicapped
- Dressingroom, Student and Families
- Dressingroom, Non-binary
- Inside Swimming Facilities



Detailed Description of Spaces



DIFFERENT SPACES AND THEIR SIZES WERE INFLUENCED BY THE COMPETITION BRIEF IN ADDITION TO MY OWN EVALUATION AND EXPERIENCES WITH DIFFERENT BATHHOUSES IN ICELAND.

- 1. Main Entrance
- 2. Bicycle Parking
- 3. Car Parking
(for handicapped or for deliveries)

Staff Facilities ≈ 230 m²

- 4. Emergency Room
- 5. Laundry Room
- 6. Reception
- 7. Changing Room
- 8. Surveillance Room
- 9. Watch "tower"
- 10. Staff WC
- 11. Meeting Room
- 12. Break Room
- 13. Public Restrooms
- 14. Café
- 15. Outside Patio
- 16. Second Entrance

Dressingroom Adults

- 17. Female - Inside
40 lockers & 6 showers
- 18. Female - Outside
20 lockers & 4 showers
- 19. Male - Outside
20 lockers & 4 showers
- 20. Male - Inside
40 lockers & 6 showers

Outside Swimming Facilities

- 21. Sauna
- 22. Outside Showers
- 23. Steam Room
- 24. Cold Tub
- 25. Water Passage
- 26. Sundeck
- 27. 38°C Hot Tub
- 28. 40°C Hot Tub
- 29. 42°C Hot Tub
- 30. Swimming Pool
L: 25m W: 15m D: 1.80m

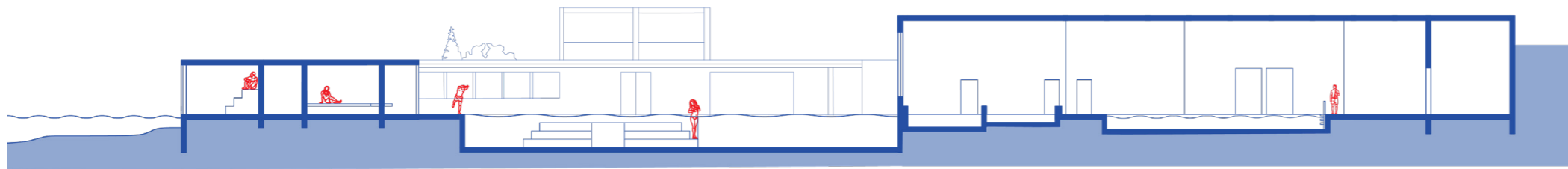
Dressingroom Families and Students

- 31. Private Dressingroom for Handicapped People
4 lockers & 2 showers
- 32. Female Dressingroom
60 locker & 10 showers
- 33. Male Dressingroom
60 locker & 10 showers
- 34. Private Dressingroom for Non-Binary
8 lockers & 4 showers

Inside Swimming Facilities

- 35. WC
- 36. Storage for Inside Pool
- 37. Swimmingpool
L:12,5m W:8m D 0,9m
- 38. Shallow Kiddie Pool
D 0,5m
- 39. Hot Tub
- 40. Passage Through Water to Outside Area
- 41. Storage for Outside Pool
- 42. Passage for Staff Members/Teachers

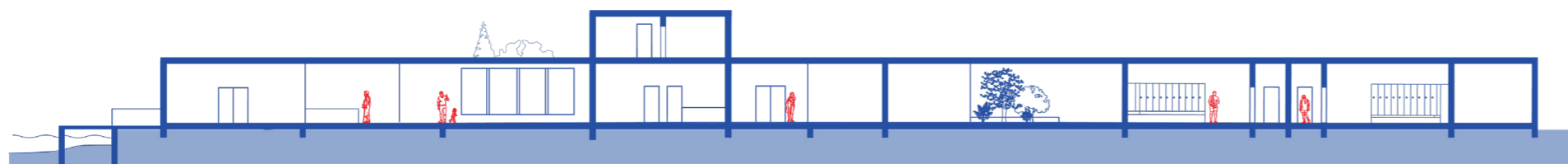
Sections



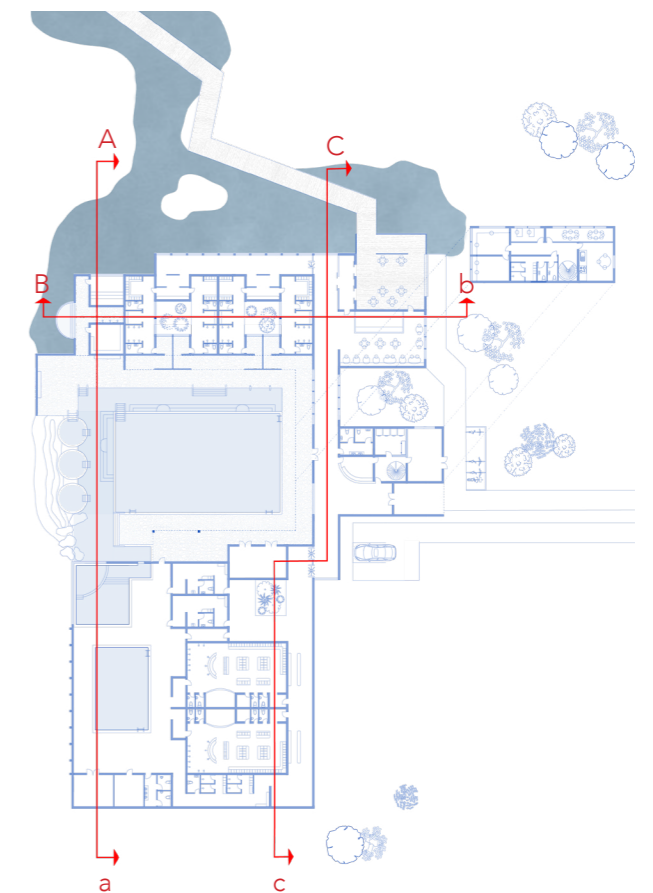
SECTION A-a INCLUDES A SAUNA, OUTDOOR SHOWERS, AND A STEAM ROOM. THEN, YOU'LL SEE THE OUTDOOR SWIMMING AREA. INSIDE AGAIN, THERE'S A HOT TUB, A SHALLOW KIDDIE POOL, AND THE MAIN INDOOR POOL FOR LEARNING AND PLAYING.



SECTION B-b PASSES THROUGH THE COLD TUB AND OUTDOOR SHOWERS THEN THE "ADULT" DRESSING ROOMS, ILLUSTRATING THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OUTDOOR AND INDOOR SECTIONS, AND THEN LEADS TO THE CORRIDOR CONNECTED TO THE CAFÉ.



SECTION C-c GOES THROUGH THE OUTSIDE PATIO, THE ENTRANCE FROM IT, THE CORRIDOR AND STAFF FACILITIES, THE RECEPTION, MAIN ENTRANCE SPACE AND THEN THROUGH THE DRESSINGROOMS MEANT FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES.



Sequence of Rituals - Main Entrance

Upon entering the main entrance, you will pass through a tunnel like structure that leads inside to a spacious area with a **direct view of the outdoor pool (1)**. The reception area is located on the right, along with other staff facilities such as the laundry room and emergency room on the ground floor. Upstairs, you will find a staff changing room, break room, meeting room, office, watch room/tower, and surveillance room.

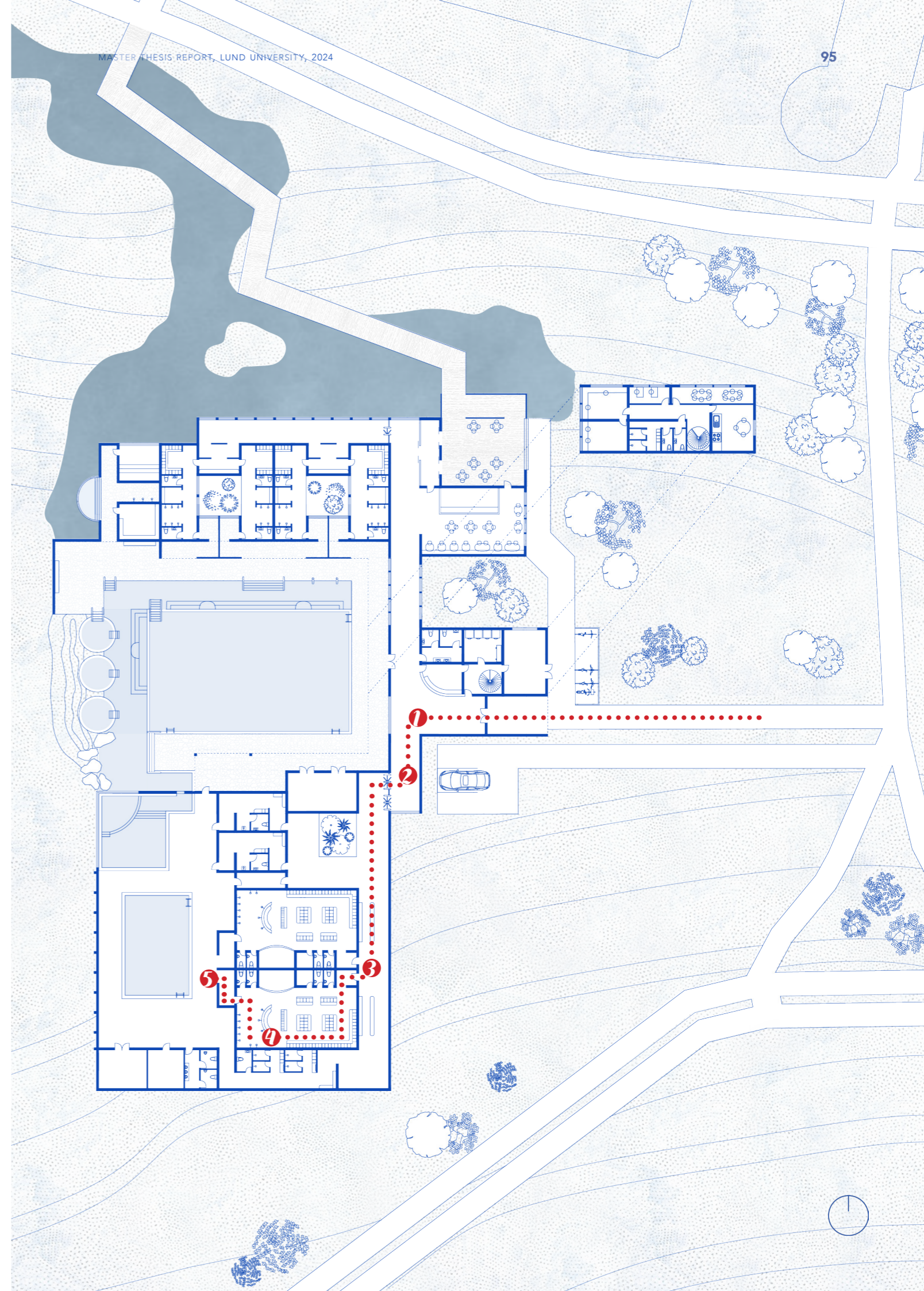
As you enter through the gates to the left of the reception area, you will be welcomed by an **indoor atrium (2)**. Beyond the atrium, there are private dressing rooms available for handicapped individuals. Moving ahead down the corridor, there's **bench for taking**

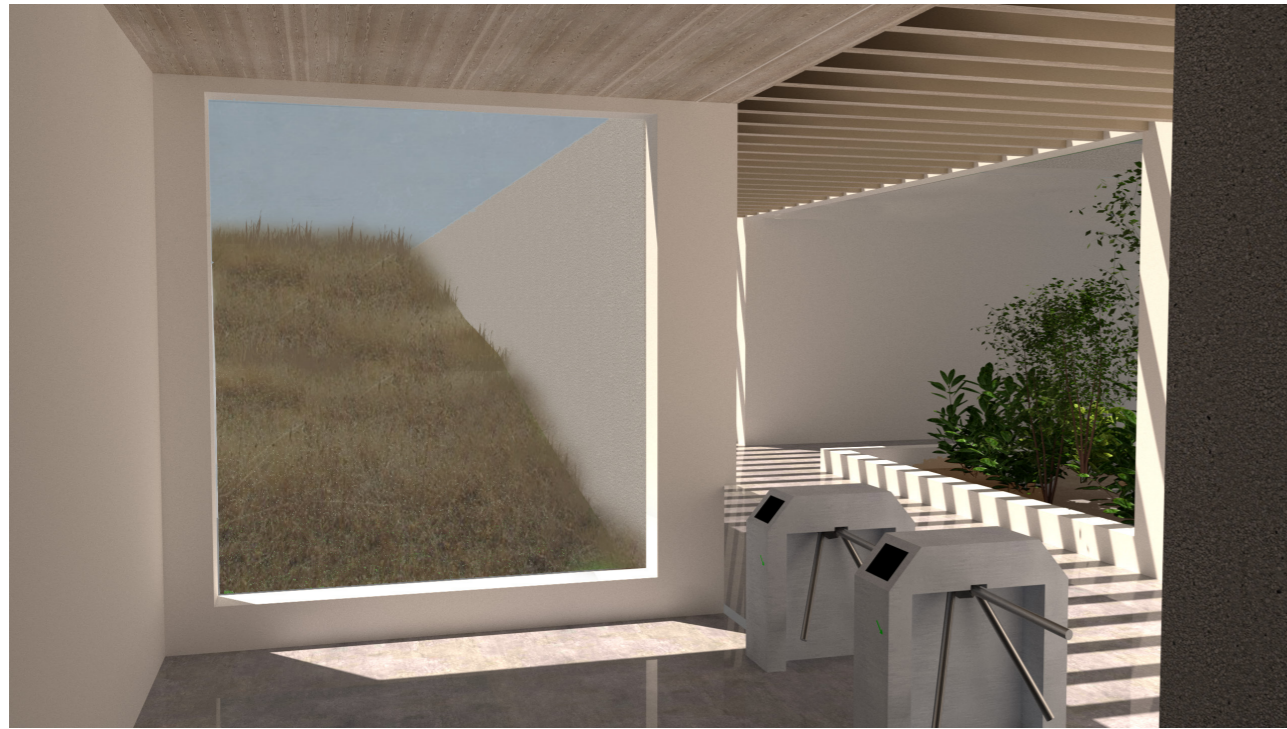
off shoes and storage shelves (3), you will then find a spacious **family and student dressing room (4)** with full-sized lockers that are designed to make it easier for parents to share them with their children. The room also offers a comfortable area for drying off after a shower, complete with a bench for storing items and a pleasant place for kids to sit and wait for their parents to finish getting ready. Additionally, there is a staff surveillance room and a storage area for cleaning supplies

In the end of the corridor you will find private dressingroom meant for non-binary people. From these different dressingrooms you then enter the **inside swimming facilities (5)**.



1. MAIN ENTRANCE SPACE, WHERE THE RECEPTION IS LOCATED, WITH DIRECT VIEW TO THE OUTSIDE SWIMMING POOL





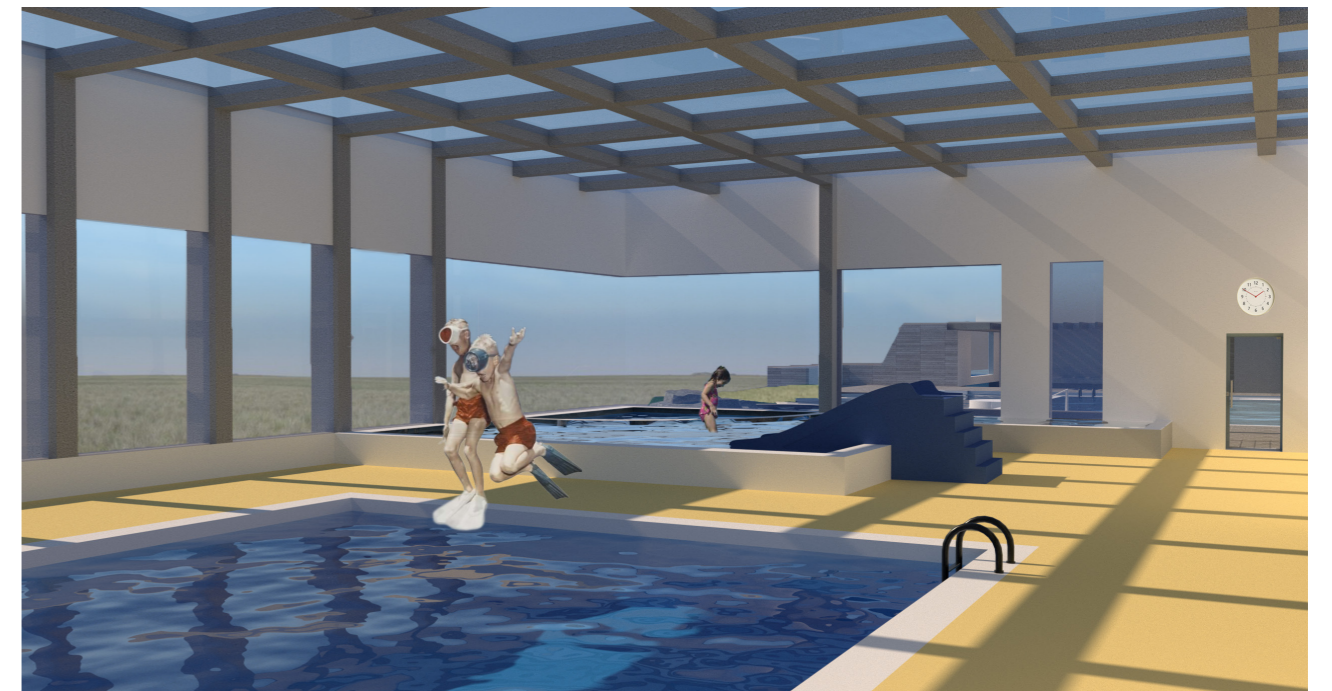
2. GATES TO ACCESS THE FAMILY AND STUDENT DRESSINGROOMS, VIEW TOWARDS THE HILL OUTSIDE AND AN INSIDE ATRIUM



3 BENCH FOR TAKING OFF SHOES AND STORAGE SHELF FOR SHOES BEFORE ENTERING DRESSINGROOMS



4. FAMILY AND STUDENT DRESSING ROOM. SHOWERS AND SPACE FOR DRYING OFF.



5. INSIDE SWIMMING FACILITIES

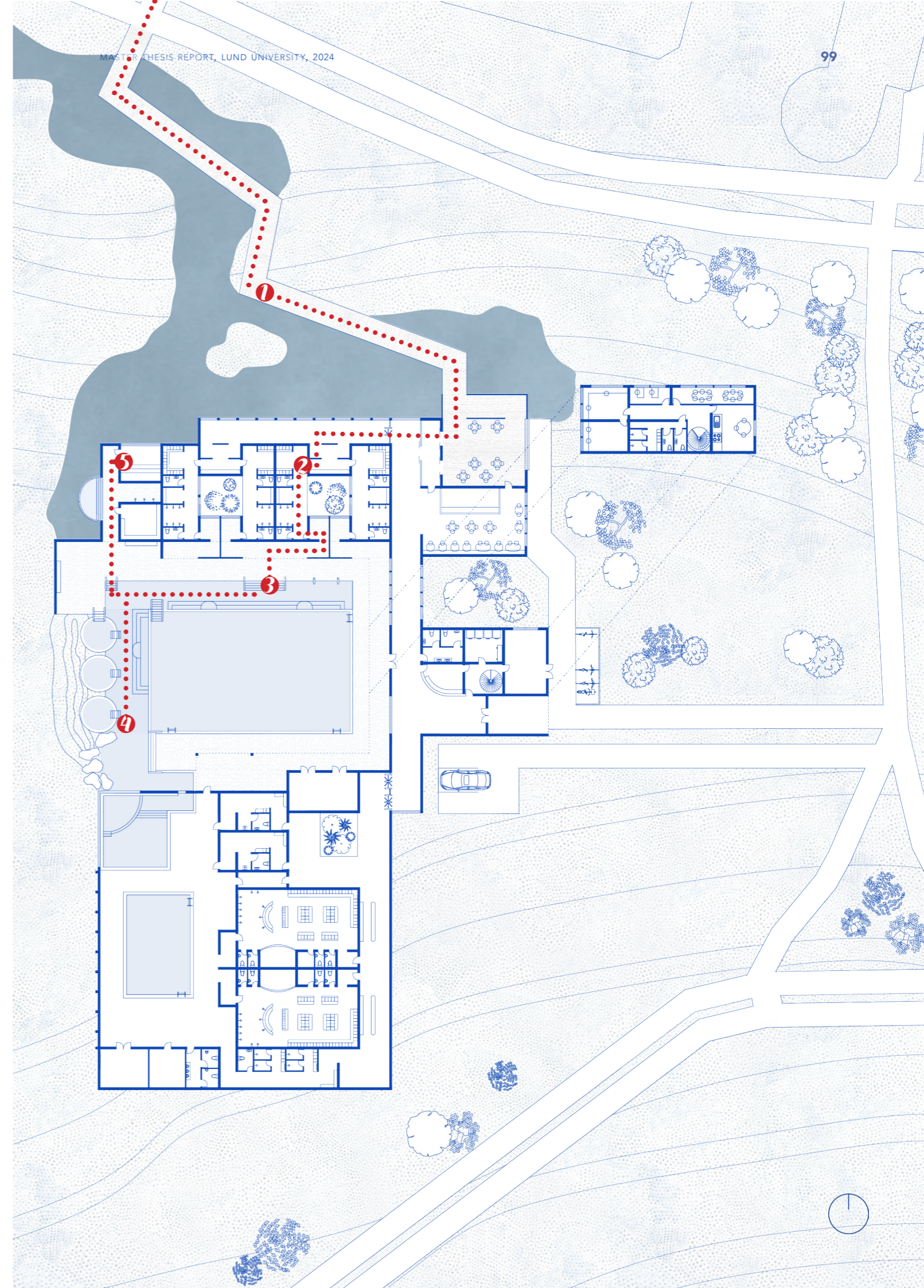
Sequence of Rituals - Second Entrance

With a **scenic view over the duck pond (1)** you enter via bridge towards the café patio. Pass by the café facilities and enter through the second gate, on your left, you will see the entrance to both male and female dressing rooms. A comfortable bench is available for you to take off your shoes before stepping into either **"inside" or "outside" dressing rooms (2)**. Both rooms have a similar spatial arrangement but differ in their level of openness. They both have direct connections to an outside garden, which offers plenty of natural sunlight.

The outside dressing room provides an enhanced experience of getting dressed and showering while enjoying the view of the vegetation and the sky with its multiple weather conditions. On the other hand, the inside dressing room has a glazed facade towards the garden, which maintains a visual connection to the outside while offering a warm and cozy space. Once you're done getting dressed, you can walk straight from the dressing rooms **to the pool (3)** or head **to the sauna (4)**.



1. BRIDGE LEADING YOU TO THE SECOND ENTRANCE WITH SCENIC VIEW OF THE POND AND THE BUILDING.





2. OUTSIDE DRESSINGROOM WITH DIRECT ACCES TO OUTSIDE GARDEN.



4. HOT TUBS WITH VIEW TOWARDS THE CITY



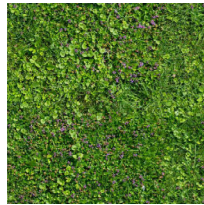
3. QUICK ACCESS TO WARM WATER FROM THE DRESSINGROOMS.



5. SAUNA WITH A VIEW OVER THE DUCK POND



Materials



Green Roof



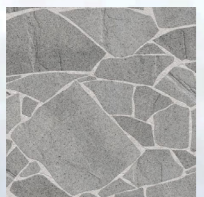
Larch Wood Exterior Cladding



Exposed Concrete Walls

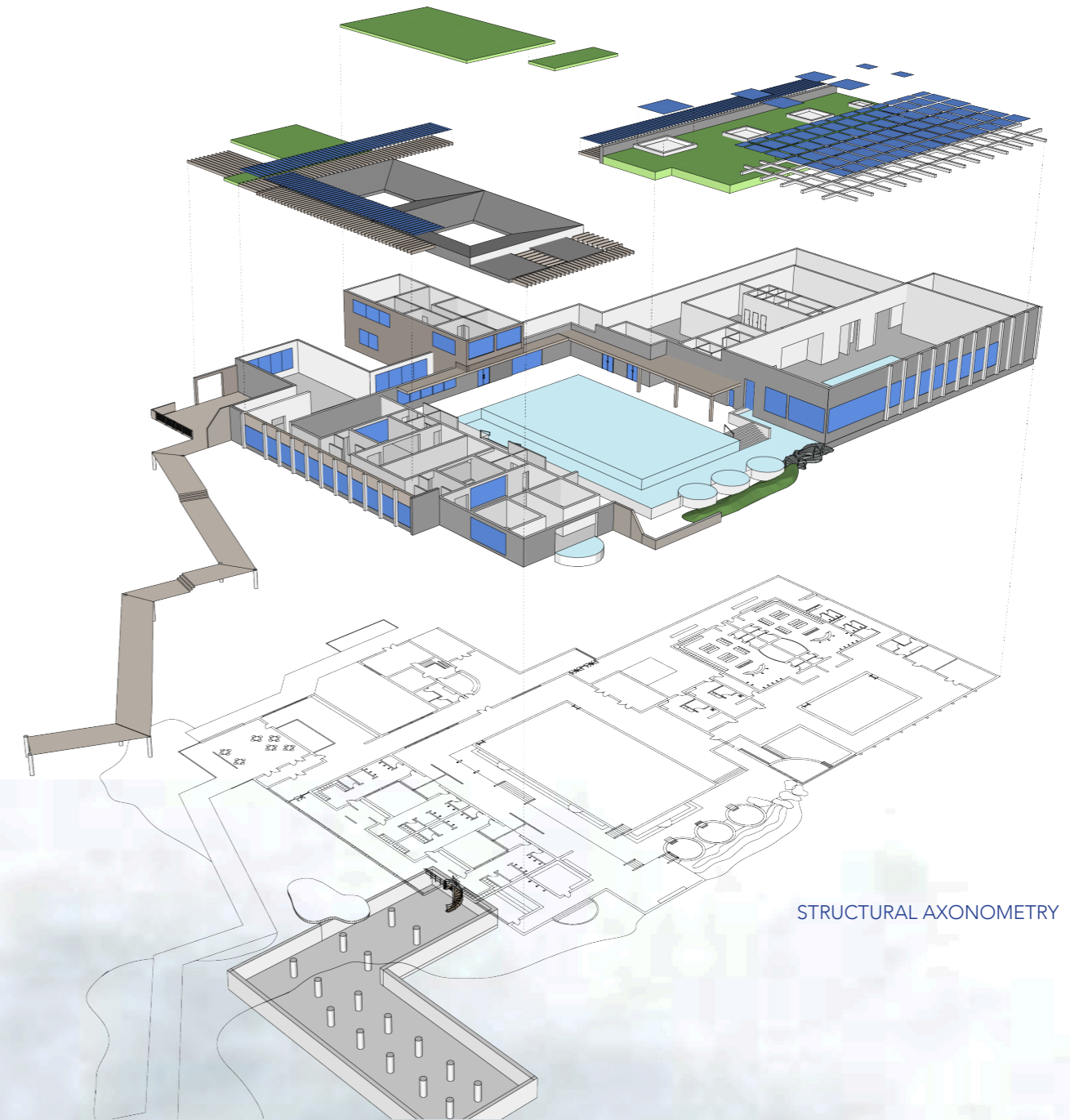


Smoothed Concrete Inside Floors



Granite Stone Outside Floors

The building is constructed with concrete, which is left exposed in some areas. Concrete is the most commonly used building material in Iceland. Given the frequent earthquakes, sudden weather changes, and temperature fluctuations that the country experiences, concrete has proven to be a durable material that can withstand these environmental factors. To add some variety, I have chosen to clad some walls with the wood Larch. The lifespan of an exposed larch is 50-100 years and with the use of larch, apart from its resistance to moisture and mold, is that you can avoid the constant maintenance that many other types of wood require. Mixing exposed concrete with natural wood has, in my opinion, become a typical Icelandic architectural style, blending the brutalism style with modern touches, popularized by my favorite Icelandic architects such as Högná Sigurðardóttir and Jes Einar Þorsteinsson.



STRUCTURAL AXONOMETRY

ELEVATION
S-N, FRONT FACADE LOOKING AT BOTH THE MAIN ENTRANCE (LEFT SIDE)
AND THE SECOND ENTRANCE (RIGHT SIDE)



Conclusion

Conclusion



The project began with a fascination for my country's rich bathing culture, which melds communal well-being with personal solitude. Diving into the history and modern practices of Icelandic bathhouses informed my initial concepts significantly. Researching both ancient springs and contemporary facilities helped me appreciate the subtle nuances that make Icelandic bathhouses unique—a blend of openness and intimacy, of nature and architecture.

One of the primary challenges was seamlessly integrating the bathhouse into its urban surroundings while ensuring that it reflected the serene beauty of Iceland's landscapes. Achieving a balance between aesthetic appeal and functional utility was a key theme throughout the design process. Crafting a space where visitors could fluidly navigate between relaxation and active engagement required numerous iterations and sketches. Every decision, from the design of the changing rooms to the layout of the pools, was influenced by the goal to enhance the visitor experience, accommodating those who come to unwind and relax as well as those looking to play and be active, without compromising on practical needs. A particularly nuanced aspect of the design involved the strategic separation of changing areas. Recognizing

the diverse needs of our visitors, I designed separate changing facilities for families and individual adults. This approach ensures that families who visit the bathhouse for playful interaction in the pool area can do so without disrupting those who come seeking a quiet, restful experience. For families, the changing rooms are more spacious, equipped with larger lockers and private family cubicles that allow parents to manage their children comfortably and securely. These family zones also feature direct access to the more active pool areas, where children and parents can enjoy their time without unnecessary transitions. Conversely, the changing areas designated for individuals looking for relaxation are crafted to be serene retreats from the outset. These spaces are quieter, more secluded. They are designed to start the relaxation process from the moment one steps into the changing room, emphasizing tranquility and peace. By distinctly catering to these different user groups, the bathhouse design not only enhances the overall functionality of the space but also respects and nurtures the different reasons people visit, ensuring all guests have a tailored and enjoyable experience.

Reflection



This project was not only a test of my architectural and creative skills but also an endeavor deeply rooted in cultural respect and environmental sensitivity.

When I started this project, I asked myself some initial questions.

In Iceland, swimming and bathhouse culture have a rich history and have undergone significant changes over time. **How will my design contribution to the traditional architecture of Icelandic bathhouses enhance its future evolution?**

Bathhouses serve as gathering places for the community. **How to make this particular bathhouse a thriving community center?**

Learn, Play, Enjoy. Three different functions and many different users. **How do you create a space where all those different functions and social aspects come together while providing an enjoyable experience for everyone?**

Contribution to Traditional Icelandic Architecture

Iceland's bathhouses are deeply intertwined with the country's culture and everyday life. My design respects this tradition while updating it for modern times. The challenge was to innovate yet retain a connection to historical architecture. In doing so, I observed how current bathhouse culture is diverging into public and private realms. I noted that public bathhouses typically focus more on functionality rather than aesthetics and experience. Drawing inspiration from contemporary spa lagoons, I incorporated elements from these modern facilities into the design of the public bathhouse to enhance both its beauty and the user experience.

Creating a Thriving Community Center

Understanding that bathhouses are more than just places for bathing—they are vital community hubs—guided my approach to making this bathhouse a thriving center for communal interaction. This insight led me to design spaces that are flexible and inclusive, accommodating a wide range of activities and social interactions. I placed particular emphasis on the location of the building's entrance, ensuring it is easily accessible by foot and strategically situated close to the school's proximity and its playground. Additionally, I highlighted the café area, making it a welcoming space for visitors to gather before and after their time in the water.

Integrating Multiple Functions and Social Aspects

The challenge of designing a space that caters to learning, playing, and enjoying while accommodating diverse user groups is significant. This question highlights the need for a multifunctional design that considers various activities and their spatial requirements. To create a cohesive environment where different functions and social interactions coexist harmoniously, I focused on fluid architectural solutions—such as transitional spaces that serve multiple purposes and can be reconfigured as needed. The design promotes interaction while also providing areas for privacy and quiet, ensuring that everyone—from children playing to adults relaxing—can find a space that suits their needs.

I feel a great sense of accomplishment and gratitude as I reflect on this project. The opportunity to design a structure that seamlessly integrates with Icelandic culture and its landscape has been extremely rewarding. This project has not only contributed to my professional growth, but has also deepened my appreciation for the role of architecture in enhancing community well-being and environmental harmony.

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Fig 2 - Womens Health Mag. (2023). Woman swimming. Available at: <https://www.womenshealthmag.com/fitness/a28940942/swim-workouts/>

Fig 3 – Kringlumyri. (2021). Kids playing at Fossvogsdalurs duckpond. Available at: https://kringlumyri.is/sumarid-2021/img_1841/

Fig 4 - Lifandi Hefðir. (2023). Bathhouse in Hveragerði. Available at: <https://lifandihedir.is/sundmenning-unesco/.jpeg>

Fig 5 - The book “Sund”

Fig 6 – Minjasafnid. Swimming pool in Akureyri. Available at: https://www.minjasafnid.is/is/moya/gallery/index/index/syningar/1-16/02_38-0062prent

Fig 7 - Magnús Ólafsson (2013) Group of women along with their swimming instruction on the Laugardalslaug deck between 1920-1930. Facebook. <https://m.facebook.com/ljosmyndasafnreykjavikur/photos/a.10151816080743727/10151816081003727/?type=3>

Fig 8 – Ferlir. Woman doing laundry in Laugardalurs hot spring. Available at: <https://ferlir.is/thvottalaugarnar/>

Fig 9 - Ellidastod. People learning to swim in Laugardalslaug. Available at: <https://ellidaarstod.is/saga-og-menning/saga-sundlauga/.jpeg>

Fig 10 - DV. (2018). Swimming pool in Mosfellsbær. Available at: <https://www.dv.is/frettir/2018/07/23/10-bestu-sundlaugarnar-islandi/>

Fig 11 - Visit Reykjavik. Laugardals swimming facilities, today. Available at: <https://visitreykjavik.is/service/laugardalslaug-pool>

Fig 12 – Ellidastod. People learning to swim in Laugardalslaug. Available at: <https://ellidaarstod.is/saga-og-menning/saga-sundlauga/.jpeg>

Fig 13 Iceland Travel. Skógarböð. Available at: <https://www.icelandtravel.is/tours/the-forest-lagoon-skogabod/>

Fig 14 Iceland Trippers. (2021). Blue Lagoon. Available at: <https://icelandtrippers.com/blue-lagoon-iceland/>

Fig 15 WTI. Sky Lagoon. Available at: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwatertechnologyinc.com%2Fprojects%2Fsky-lagoon&psig=AOvVaw2n6NM2I5CeKdoJKpQkjFQg&ust=1712869018239000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBiQjRxqFwoTCOi0rL3EuIUdFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE.png>

Fig 16 WTI. Sky Lagoon, view from above. Available at: <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwatertechnologyinc.com%2Fprojects%2Fsky-lagoon&psig=AOvVaw2n6NM2I5CeKdoJKpQkjFQg&ust=1712869018239000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBiQjRxqFwoTCOi0rL3EuIUdFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE.png>

Fig 17 Visir. (2019). Men chatting in the circular shaped hot tub at Vesturbæjarlaug, Reykjavík. Available at: <https://www.visir.is/g/2019490057d/tveimur-pottum-og-vadlaug-lokad-i-vesturbæjarlaug-vegna-kuldans>

Fig 18 – Iceland Nordic Visitor. The shallow pool in Laugardalslaug. Available at: <https://iceland.nordicvisitor.com/travel-guide/attractions/reykjavik-capital-area/laugardalslaug/>

Fig 19 – Leidin. (2023). The cold tub at Árbæjarlaug during wintertime. Available at: <https://leidin.is/kaldi-potturinn-kaetir-hressir-baetir/>

Fig 20 – South. The kiddie pool along with couple of slides seeing in the back, at the bathhouse in Selfoss. Available at: <https://www.south.is/is/upplifun/laugar-og-vellidan/sundlaugar>

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Fig 23 – Kopavogsbær. Images captured in Fossvogsdalur
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Fig 31 – Reykjavik. Outside dressing room at Árbæjarlaug. Available at: <https://reykjavik.is/arbaejarlaug>

Fig 32 – Reykjavik. Seamless transition through water at Árbæjarlaug. Available at: <https://reykjavik.is/arbaejarlaug>

Fig 33 – Kopavogur. Salalaug, a public bathhouse, example of extreme fenced off facilities with almost no presence of nature near the pools. Available at: <https://www.kopavogur.is/is/frettir-tilkynningar/salalaug-lokud-vegna-bilunar>

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