

# Transitional Spaces as Lever for Social Sustainability in Dense Housing Projects

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## Introduction

- Topic

... **Social sustainability in Dense Housing Projects (DHPs)**

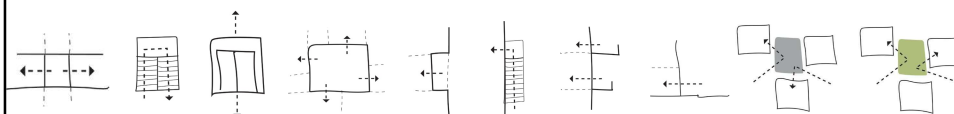
- Findings > Incentives

... necessity of **building with higher densities** ... to tackle urban sprawl & land scarcity  
 ... DHPs **often perceived as a step back** ... due to historical individualistic building/living  
 ... **Social sustainability** as crucial aspect in DHPs ...

... **successfully integrated in European communal housing projects**

... **promising role of transitional spaces** ...

*semi-public spaces that connect multiple private dwellings with  
the public spaces (e.g. courtyards, galleries)*



## Introduction

- **Problem statement** ... narrow approach to 'sustainability':
  - **Social sustainability is not yet seen as a crucial aspect in DHPs**
  - **lack of focus on implementing/integrating measures for Social sustainability**
  - **conflicts > dragging legacy** for support base of DHPs
- **Objectives** ... counter this legacy by:
  - **studying how transitional spaces can act as a lever for social sustainability in DHPs**
  - **developing promising perspectives for transitional spaces enhancing social sustainability**
  - **formulating design principles for architect-designers**
- **Methodology**
  - literature review > components for Social sustainability
  - empirical research (case study ... interviews, research by design)
- **Limitations**
  - Single case study, within the context of Flanders; small size of the sample ...

## Content

- Introduction
- **Social sustainability of the transitional spaces – a theoretical framework**, *not included in this presentation*  
 Housing situation in Flanders, the potential of high density housing, social sustainability, communal housing, and transitional spaces
- **Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study**,  
 Identification of the case, Phase 1: Site observation, Phase 2: Exploring best-practices on the transitional space, Phase 3: Inhabitants' stories, Phase 4: Design proposals
- **Outcome: Design principles for social sustainability in the transitional space**,  
 Five design principles
- **Reflection**

## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

### Identification of the case

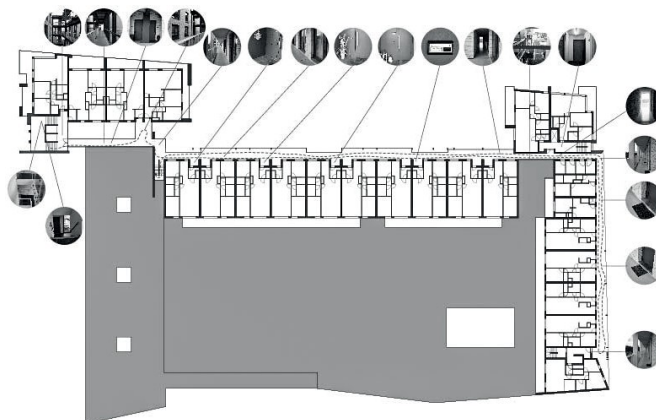


most untapped  
potential of improvement

## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

### Phase 1: Site observation

Observation route



PLAN #03 / SCALE: 1:500 / HASSAPORTA

## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

Phase 1: Site observation

Some observations

Unclear circulation signage



Width of the gallery



## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

Phase 1: Site observation

Some observations

Personalisation of the private landings



## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

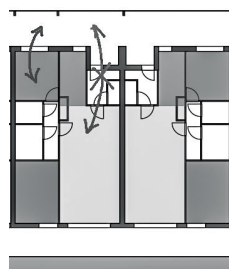
### Phase 1: Site observation

#### Some observations

Visual relation with the courtyard



Windows towards the external gallery



## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

### Phase 2: Best-practises

- 'Seestadt Aspern' in Vienna (Austria), by Wimmer und partner;
- 'R-50 Cohousing' in Berlin (Germany), by Ifau & Jesko Fezer + Heide & von Beckerath;
- 'Torghalle' in Katrineholm (Sweden), by JAJA architects;
- 'Stadstuinen' in Rotterdam (The Netherlands), by KCAP;
- 'Koekoekspreeuw' in Amersfoort (The Netherlands), by KCAP;
- 'Coming out' in Grenoble (France), by Maison Edouard Francois.

ARCHITECT:	Wimmer und partner
LOCATION:	Austria - Vienna
STATUS:	Completed (2015)
HOUSING TYPOLOGY:	High-density housing - Communal housing
TRANSITIONAL SPACE TYPOLOGY:	External gallery
FUNCTIONS:	45 private units - External communal building - bicycle parking
AREAS:	Private units (55m <sup>2</sup> ) Communal garden / Communal furniture /
FLEXIBILITY:	The plans were designed with great flexibility. Only the central part of the houses is made of red brick walls, and instead the rest of the house can be configured like pressed houses can also be combined in dense super-blocks.
PARTICIPATION:	Building group (Stadstuinen)
SOCIAL COHERENCE/ INTERACTION:	The external gallery is linked with the private units through big windows and the semi-private outside spaces. The external gallery acts as a social interaction between the residents. The semi-private outside spaces can be combined for children in urban with each other.
IDENTIFICATION:	The semi-private outside spaces are used for personalization, these personalized outside spaces create a great level of identification with the building. "Coming out" for the building means a high identification.
ACCESSIBILITY:	There is one communal staircase from which the external gallery can be accessed. The private houses are accessed through the external gallery.
ATTRACTIVENESS:	Because of the high level of flexibility in the in- and outside, the appearance can be changed individually.
PRIVACY:	The level of privacy is very low because of the big windows directly into the external gallery.
	(Wimmer und partner, 2015)

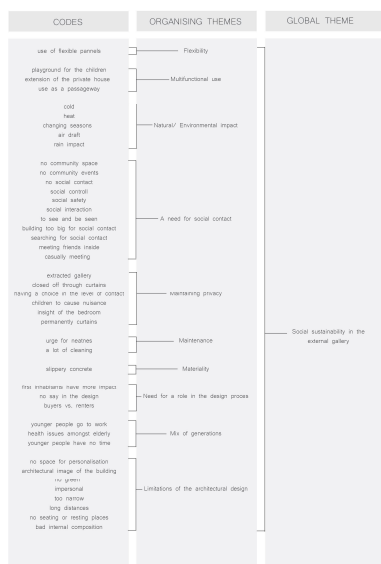
**All external galleries of selected projects are evaluated through the same matrix of components for social sustainability, retrieved from the literature review**

## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

### Phase 3: Inhabitants' stories

#### Interviews & thematic coding

#### Emerging themes



#### [1] FLEXIBILITY

Inhabitants are in need of a flexible system to protect them of **natural hazards**. Also for **privacy reasons**, flexibility can be an opportunity.

#### [2] MULTIFUNCTIONAL USE

The external gallery is mostly used as a passageway, but not solely. Often children use this space as a playground, so it is seen as an **extension of the private dwelling**.

#### [3] NATURAL/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The use of the gallery is **influenced by natural hazards and changing seasons**.

## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

### Phase 3: Inhabitants' stories

#### Interviews & thematic coding

#### Emerging themes

#### [4] A NEED FOR SOCIAL CONTACT

The inhabitants have a need for social contact with their neighbors. **They miss a space to meet as a community** would do, or just for casual meetings.

#### [5] MAINTAINING PRIVACY

Besides a need for social contact, respondents attach a lot of **importance to a certain level of privacy**. Today the internal composition of the private dwellings contradicts with this level of privacy since the bedrooms are oriented towards the gallery.

#### [6] MAINTANANCE

Choosing for a more communal 'place' ultimately would also bring **more maintenance** that could be the cause for some conflicts. In order to prevent conflicts, a clear **management system** is key.

#### [7] MATERIALITY

Today the inhabitants have some complaints about the usage of the concrete within the external gallery, as it becomes much too slippery in the winter. **Materiality can create or break a pleasant 'place'**.

## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

### Phase 3: Inhabitants' stories

#### Interviews & thematic coding

#### Emerging themes

#### [8] NEED FOR A ROLE IN THE DESIGN PROCESS

Buyers would have liked to have **a say within the design process**. Renters care less.

#### [9] MIX OF GENERATIONS

Where elderly do **search for social contact**, the younger generations do not have any time for this. Yet, they would appreciate initiatives for having parties or events organized by and for the neighbours.

#### [10] LIMITATIONS OF THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

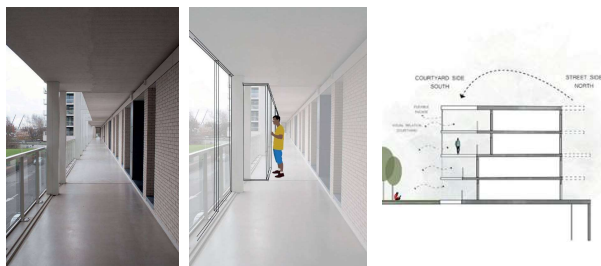
The respondents do acknowledge some limitations, such as the **external gallery being too narrow**. Inhabitants **miss identification** of their dwelling, so they have tried to personalize it. As there is no clearly identified space for this, inhabitants of dwellings with a private landing personalize it to create a more pleasant and liveable environment.

## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

### Phase 4: Design proposals

#### Incremental & fundamental

#### [1] THE EXTERNAL GALLERY AS AN OUTSIDE/INSIDE SPACE

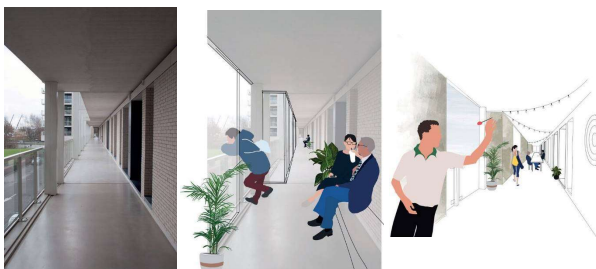


## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

**Phase 4: Design proposals**

**Incremental & fundamental**

[2] THE EXTERNAL GALLERY AS A COMMUNAL MEETING SPACE



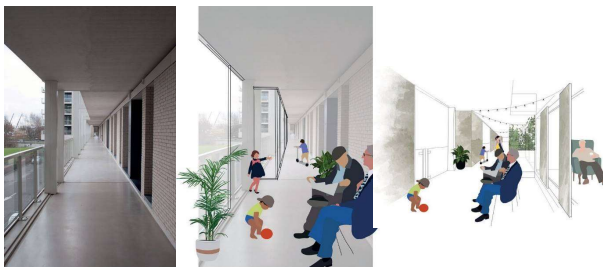
## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

**Phase 4: Design proposals**

**Incremental & fundamental**

[3] THE EXTERNAL GALLERY AS A MEDIATOR BETWEEN GENERATIONS

[4] THE EXTERNAL GALLERY AND THE RELATION TO THE PRIVATE HOUSE





## Transitional spaces in Dense Housing Projects - Case study

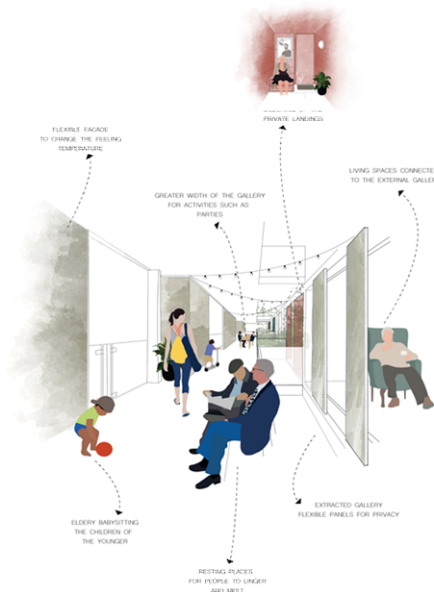
Phase 4: Design proposals

Incremental & fundamental

### [5] THE EXTERNAL GALLERY TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES



## Outcome - Design principles for social sustainability in the transitional space

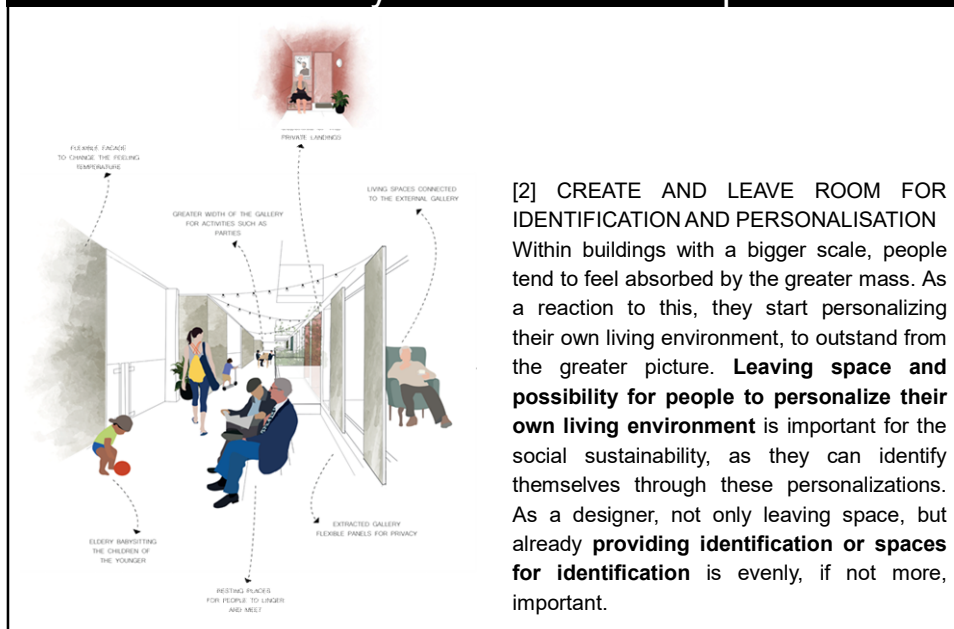


### [1] PRIVACY vs. VISUAL CONTACT AND SECURITY

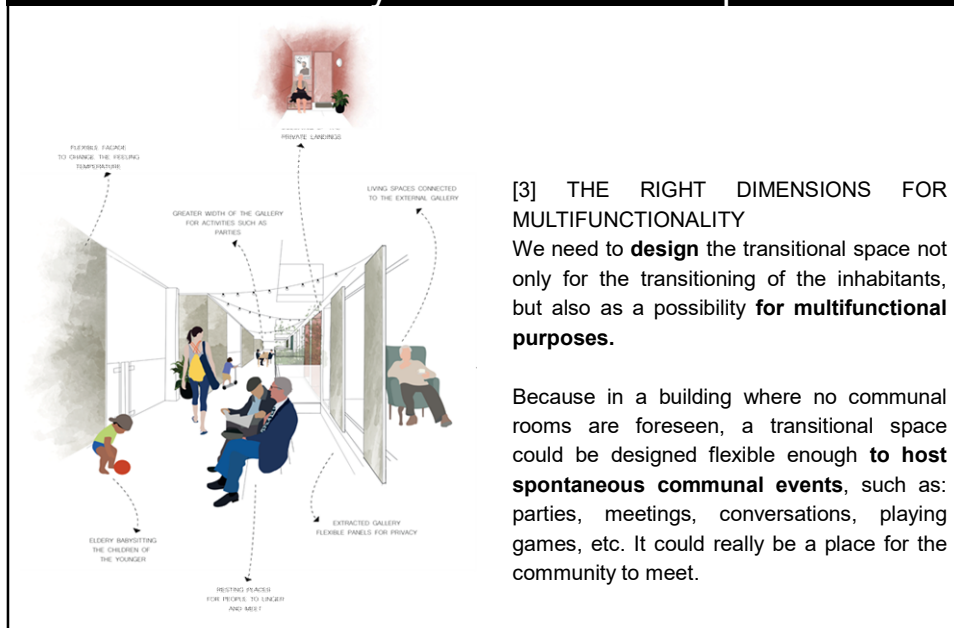
Visual contact between the private units and the transitional spaces can be important to create a **greater social coherence level**.

Visual contact can also give security to a project, by increasing safety through neighbours. On the other hand, it is even as important that the transitional space does not invade privacy.

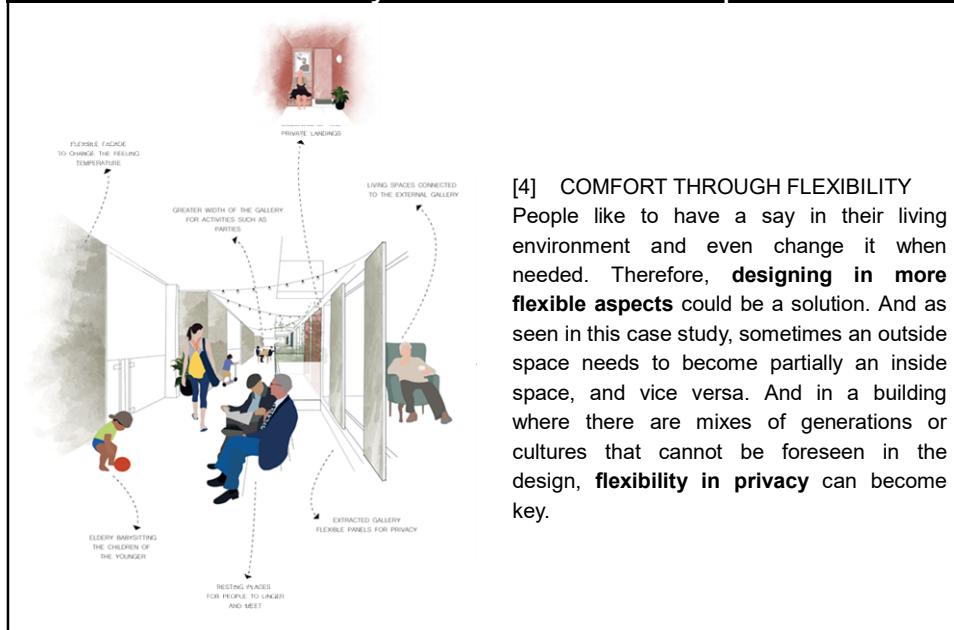
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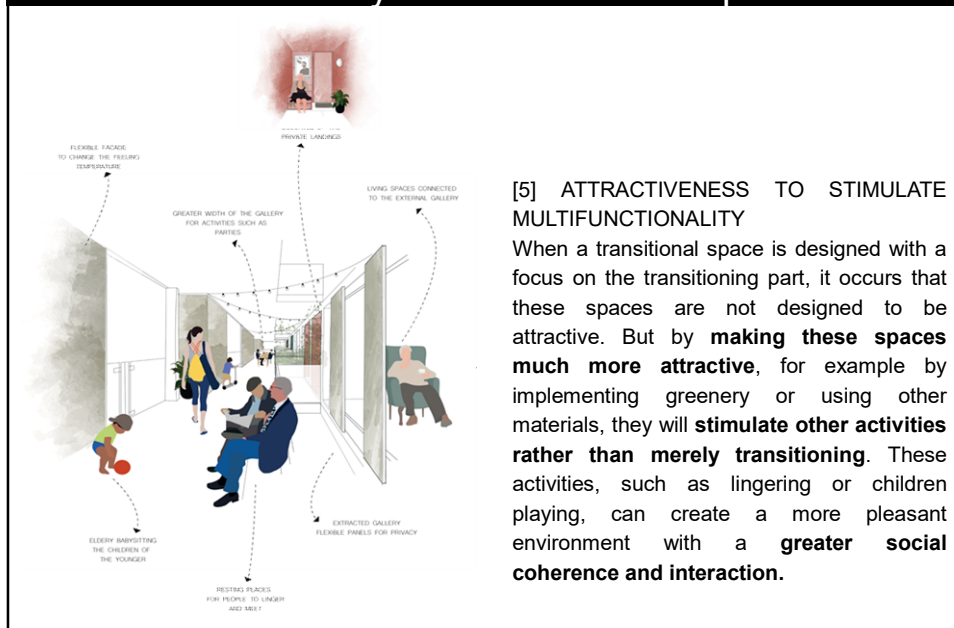
## Outcome - Design principles for social sustainability in the transitional space



## Outcome - Design principles for social sustainability in the transitional space



## Outcome - Design principles for social sustainability in the transitional space



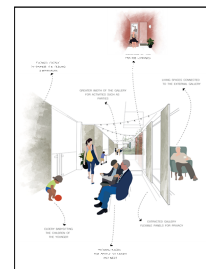
## Reflection

- Can the transitional space act as a lever for social sustainability in DHPs, and if so how?



- Today, the transitional space is merely seen as space to go from private to public, or vice versa. However, transitional spaces hold much greater potential, i.a. regarding enhancing the social sustainability of the project.

- In order to design them to their full potentials, five design principles for architect-designers were developed. These can lead to inspiring, contributing and even reconciling 'places' in DHPs.



Thank you.

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