

Mixité as tool for densification

The Netherlands is today facing a serious housing crisis that will lead to the construction of 25,000 new housing units in the urban fabric of Tilburg by 2040.

Faced to this extreme densification of the consolidated fabric of the city, a double question arises: *how to formalize the density and how will the future inhabitant of Tilburg live in a dense city?*

From this question springs our design research “Density - Mode d’Emploi”, which takes up the social-scientific approach from the novel by Georges Perec (*La Vie Mode d’Emploi*, 1978).

The most comprehensive answer for us is: sharing spaces and interacting with each other. This is the opposite of what has been the post-war housing model until now.

Tilburg West is an excellent testing ground for our experimentation. It is, to date, a predominantly residential area of the city, with a low population density facing a complex green and blue network. The classic Tilburg block is a block of two or three storey with a single functional use, inhabited during a specific time slot of the day, in which the interaction between residents is often poor due to the absence of common amenities and an individualism of the experience.

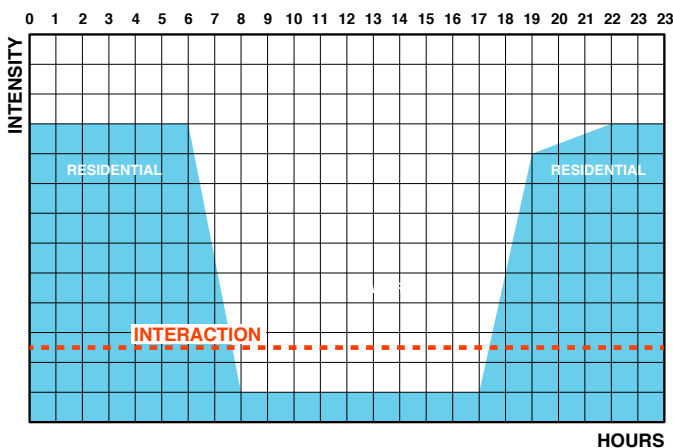
In the prototype of the new Tilburg Super Block, the introduction of shared and public spaces, open and covered, would make the boundaries between the public and private spheres more blurry and at the same time create the conditions for greater interaction between users, stimulating exchanges of knowledge and, consequently, continuous enrichment and growth.

Formally, the apartments could have smaller size, also responding to the downsizing of families and the growth of the singles, and be integrated by shared spaces.

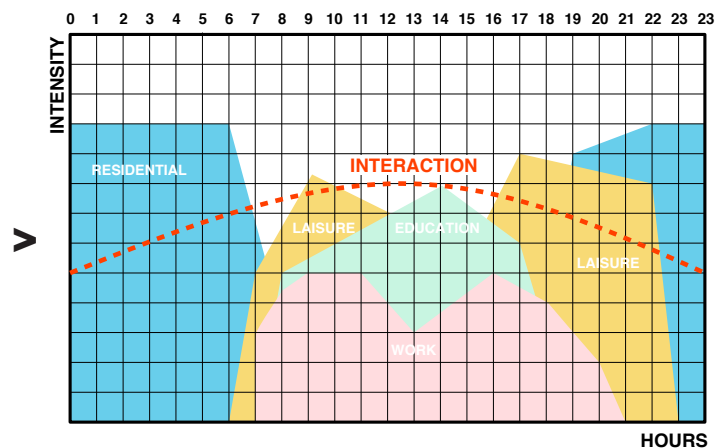
Functional *mixité*, however, is flanked by the theme of social *mixité*. Planning to mix different social classes and different ages, with different needs, would help to create new dynamics still unexplored, as well as to face a housing crisis that involves everyone. Formally, this means providing multiple types of housing, with different sizes and specifications.

The project sees, therefore, *mixité* as a tool for a dense development of the city: mixing functions guarantees, in fact, a new vitality and dynamism of the Super Block as well as a more extroverted character, aimed at the interaction between public and private, between young and old, between different social classes.

“Happy and healthy in Tilburg!”



Tilburg traditional residential block



Tilburg Super Block

Tilburg West: a palimpsest

The urban fabric of Tilburg West is a *palimpsest* (Andre Corboz, 1987) on which the traces of post-war urbanization insist, with its Kennisas and an intense network of green and blue that mixes with buildings heterogeneous regarding shape, but homogeneous regarding functions.

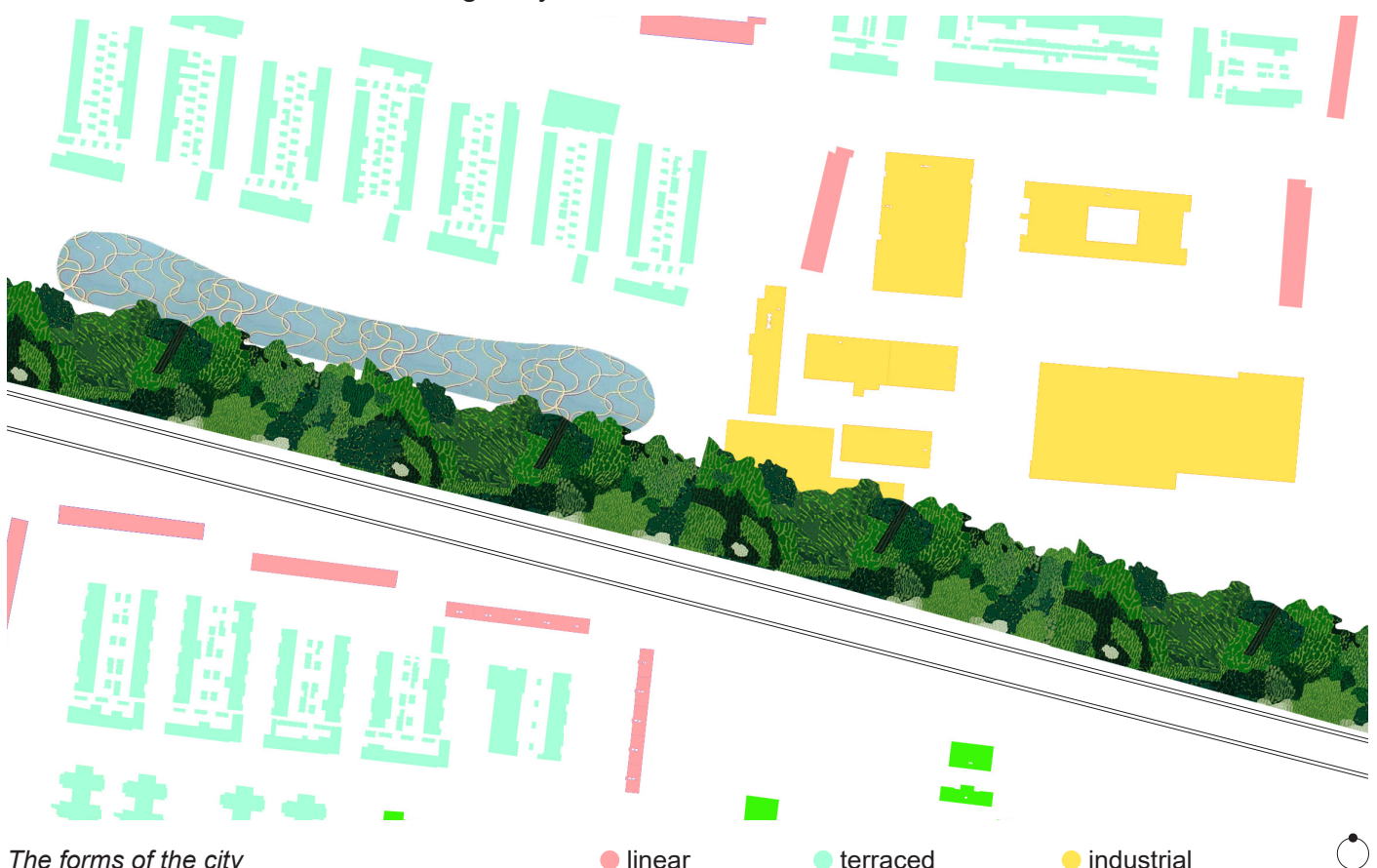
The project plot is located in a morphologically interesting context: in the North, the classic Dutch blocks, characterized by two-storey buildings with a strong relationship with the street and the backyard. To the south, there are modernist linear blocks, with five floors above ground and a strong horizontal organization. In the east, large industrial buildings (factory box), introverted, that do not communicate with the context.

This formal mix is combined with a complex network of infrastructure: the railway running on the northern side of the plot, cycle-pedestrian tracks and main axis connecting to the city center. All this is embedded in a mosaic of green and water, of which the lake is the center of gravity.

The idea of the project stems from the desire to maintain the *genius loci* of the area, reinterpreting the morphologies that insist on the context and organizing the Super Block around the lake. It is "embraced" by the block, becoming its courtyard.

The theme of *mixité* is crucial here. Different functions addressed to different audiences interlock with each other, as in a tetris. And so, the basement (so called *gallery*) houses the public sphere of the project, mixed with the private one of the apartments above. Such mix creates density of uses and proximity of functions, making the area more attractive and alive.

In formal terms, the new block does not stray from the context, but nevertheless resumes what are the forms of the city, rethinking the typological characteristics.



The forms of the city

● linear

● terraced

● industrial



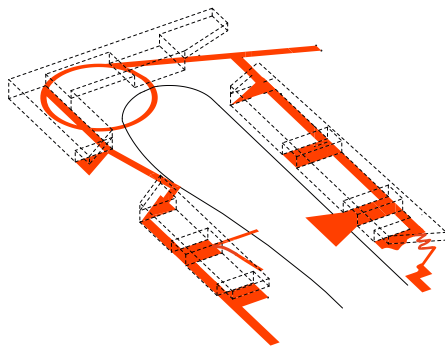
The podium: a gallery open to the city

In Kevin Lynch's vision of the city, the *podium* would be a node: a point where several streets converge and where the public functions of the project are.

It opens towards the city, through large hangar openings, which make it extroverted and welcoming. The *podium* is crossed by a continuous gallery system, which in addition to the distribution, has a dual urban value: first, it is a covered

extension of the public space and, then, the element of connection to the urban paths.

An isotropic and flexible space where citizens can find themselves to discover the different activities hosted in it. Strolling along the *gallery*, users will come across some moments of "expansion" of space, so called objects facing the lake.



Podium and gallery



F. Di Giorgio, The ideal city, 1615

A beacon along the railway

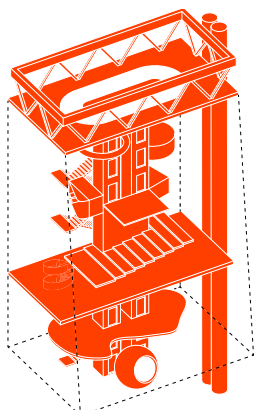
The tower is a beacon, marking the entrance to the city while passing along the railway. It is a big window towards the lake, a screen of different scenarios happening at the same time.

Students, young professionals, tourists and elder people meet and share common spaces located at the central core, emphasizing its role in the typology and giving an additional function to it. In this typology, the apartments are smaller, since

they share the kitchen on each floor. Generous terraces are provided to each apartment with a view towards the lake and the city.

The tower is marked by a double cut: one at the top, hosting a sport space, one in the middle with a double height glass box, hosting an auditorium, directly connected to the podium through an escalator.

This emphasize the *mixité* of the block.



The tower and its equipped core

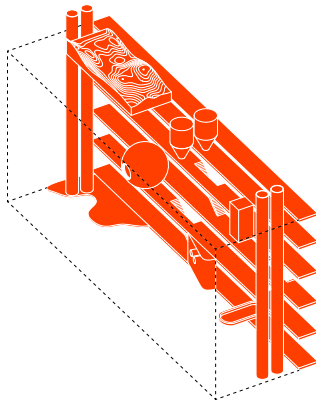


H. Eschke, Lighthouse on a cliff, 1879

Streets in the sky

Reinterpreting the post-war vision of the linear block sitting just on the northern side of the plot, the new one proposed is characterized by a social value.

The corridors that run along the whole building - so called "*streets in the sky*" (Smithson) - are a living and meeting distribution space. The multitude of typologies hosted in the linear block will lead to the creation of a large social mix, making



Streets in the sky as social condenser

the corridors as social condenser.

Along these corridors, two elements fit together:

- a semi-public space of the apartment, a *patio* where the public and private spheres mix together, creating new connections between inhabitants;

- a serie of shared three-dimensional objects, which host accessory functions, such as gym, study rooms, music room, kitchens, etc.



E. Hopper, Summer Evening, 1947

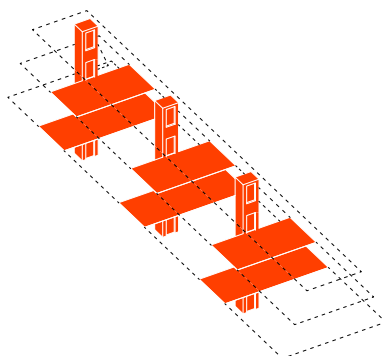
House with a garden

The southern block has a more intimate character, due to its size. It is closely connected to the surrounding context, characterized by two storey terraced blocks, with a strong relationship with the street and the backyard.

Taking up these characteristics, "*house with a garden*" is based on a rethinking of the distribution space. The landings, in fact, are not limited to the only distribution function, but become li-

ving spaces. Every two apartments share the common landing, an additional outdoor space. These are traversing spaces, which have views of the lake and the surrounding city, where residents will have the opportunity to customize the space and share moments of life.

The typology of the Dutch terraced house was also taken up in the layout, with the introduction of duplex, with an internal staircase.



A shared "living room"



P. de Hooch, Courtyard of a House in Delft, 1658