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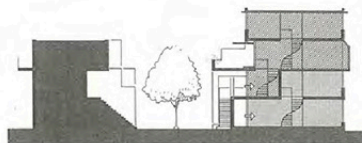


### Immediate Living Environments

The immediate living environment is a spatiality connected to the familiarity of home, yet simultaneously shared with others. Typical sites are community gardens, shared pathways, entrances, courtyards, the closest street, parking lots, and drive-ways. The immediate living environment is a key site for fostering local communities and social bonding between people who live in or frequent the same places. Neighbors and employees from nearby workplaces, local shop owners or regular passersby can experience a sense of belonging here, expressed in everyday greetings and conversations, routines, and the comfort of recognition. As time goes by, casual acquaintances may develop into more meaningful relationships.

Being included in local communities is immensely important, as we will further explore (see *Belonging* → page 122). Many times, community is facilitated by designated "community rooms" or areas that demand the crossing of hard social and spatial borders. Often these spaces must be accessed by separate doors or gates and thus are outside of daily rhythms. Inspired by Rianne van Melik and Roos Pijpers (→ page 100), we argue that places that support the spontaneous forms of encounter and allow for a graduation of social contact constitute a far more inclusive approach. To introduce elasticity to the immediate environment means to value and propagate a great diversity of community engagement and contribution.

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← Aiming to introduce the neighborhood as the core social structure in the city, the 111 Building in Barcelona explores spatial strategies to promote communication, relationship and familiarity between neighbors. Conceived as a dense web of opportunities for contact, this architecture extends or otherwise manipulates outdoor movements at the expense of the most efficient journey from A to B. The elevator of the complex connects all floors, but does not reach the underground parking. To access it, inhabitants are forced to cross the courtyard: a casual annoyance and opportunity that emphasizes the importance of the courtyard as a meeting place for the local community. Flores y Prats, *Edificio 111*, Barcelona, 2004. © Flores y Prats

↑ We imagine, for the kids playing in this street, the distant sounds of mothers rummaging with pots and pans or the low voices from a top balcony provide them with a sense of security of home. Elsewhere, a woman sits and enjoys the sun, knowing that the children see her and recognize just how good a tanning spot she has found for herself. In many cases such "banalities" are what communities are built of. Herman Hertzberger, *Haarlemmer Houttuinen Housing*, 1987, Amsterdam. © Herman Hertzberger

### References

- Buchanan, P. (2018). *Dutch care: Herman Hertzberger's architecture and influence*. Retrieved from <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/dutch-care-herman-hertzbergers-architecture-and-influence/10037612.article>.





### In the City

Some public spaces belong to the city as a whole. Grand plazas, parks, and promenades are spaces where the flow of strangers and visitors often is so dominant that local neighborhood identity dissolves in favor of a more general and all-embracing city identity. Considering elasticity in the context of these public spaces has to do with the provision of various opportunities for engagement and participation within the same public place. Varied possibilities for social interaction allows people to more intuitively adjust their use and experience of places according to changing personal preferences and competences.

Being able to find a place "that feels right," be it at the border of the space or emboldened amid the action, can be decisive for people's desire to participate in public life. The way people can introduce themselves to the social life of places is central. Allowing for more subtle, indirect, and hesitant movements from periphery to center gives people the opportunity to gradually come in contact with social settings and more easily overcome social boundaries. Elasticity gives the changing human being the possibility to form individual participation within personal boundaries. A great variation of opportunities for inhabitation and a design with different actors in mind is thus key to the elastic potential of the public space of the city.

↑ In the Plaza Nicaragua by Flores y Pratts multiple possibilities for seating—alone, together with others, or amidst the scene—provide great freedom of choice. One can cross the square or stick to the paths, pass it by unnoticed or just briefly rest on its borders. Overlaps and juxtapositions between different elements of play, leisure, and recreation form a nuanced landscape with great variety for many kinds of participation and social engagement. The relationship between center and periphery is constantly in flux, depending on who is inhabiting the place. Flores y Pratts, *Plaza Nicaragua*, Barcelona, 2005. All Images © Flores y Pratts, Barcelona





**New public spaces tend to overrepresent attention to the young and middle-aged, whereas elderly citizens are often neglected by contemporary urban design practice.**

**This publication provides practitioners with inspiration as well as theoretical and practical knowledge on how to design public space to meet the needs of people of all ages. Conceived as a dialogue between practicing architects and contributors from**

**a variety of disciplines, this book combines academic research, architectural case studies, and introduces an age-inclusive design methodology. The drawings, photographs, and illustrations of contemporary built environments, historic gardens, art installations, and atmospheric landscapes cater to the reading habits of spatial practitioners at large.**

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