studioMERZ

urban village

concept for (temporary) housing in
vacant properties

urban village

introduction

Cities are dynamic and constantly changing. They adapt to new needs and requirements. Buildings are abandoned, wrecked, rebuilt, modified and renovated.

This process of transformation inevitably leads to a situation which is often referred to as "the interim", a temporary situation between old and new; between what was and what is yet to be.

This is often regarded as a loss. Offices are empty, building lots not used and abandoned industrial buildings await renovation or destruction. Would it not be better to turn this around, to make a virtue of necessity?

studioMERZ designs with the concept of "permanent temporariness" in mind; the idea that in an ever changing world everything is always temporary. This (new) reality requires initiatives that use the full potential of the interim; both economically and socially.

A permanent temporariness offers new possibilities and the creative use of the interim can enrich our cities. Designs must be flexible to include every new situation and support changes instead of hindering them.

In Rotterdam alone, more than a million m2 of office space is vacant, while demand is about 100,000 m2. The total of vacant properties is even much larger.

However, there is also a rapidly rising demand for (temporary) housing for refugees and asylum seekers. In The Netherlands, people now have to stay in tents, sports halls and old prisons (!) for long periods of time.

Urban Village closes the gap between supply and demand and provides a dignified and quickly realizable solution to this problem. In many cases, transforming offices and other buildings into housing is difficult especially if the transformation is temporary; the investments are often too high to be profitable.

Urban Village doesn't consider vacant properties as empty spaces that need to be made habitable but as "carriers" for small prefabricated housing units. The units function more or less autonomously so adjustments to the property are small and costs are kept low.

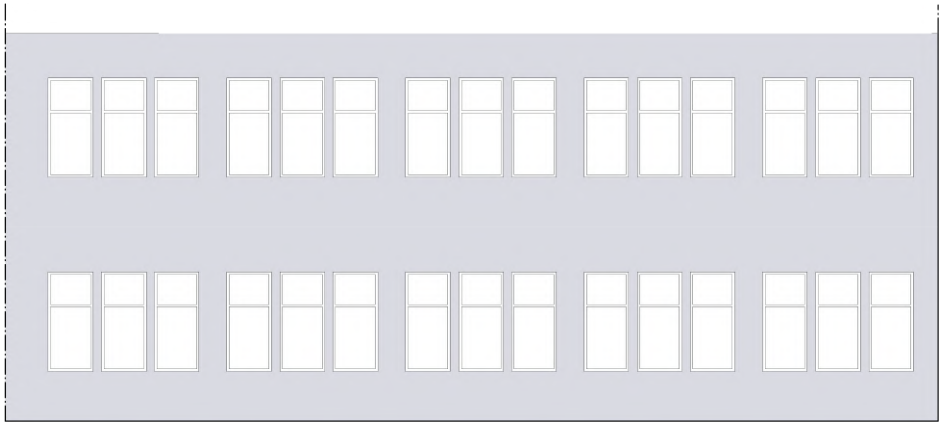
The simple and flexible construction of Urban Village makes that it fits into different types of properties and that units can be adapted to any type of residence. In addition, the units are easily disassembled and rebuild elsewhere.

Urban Village transforms vacant properties in a small society in the truest and most positive sense of the word.

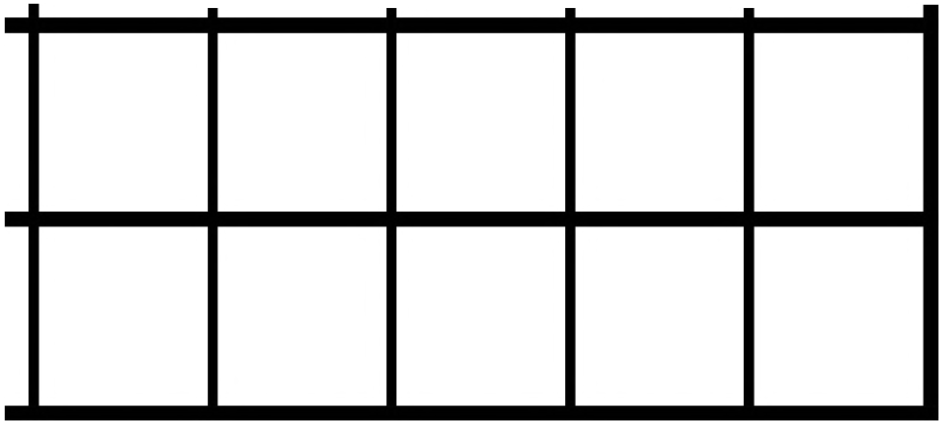
Edwin Dekker | Interior Architect

existing situation // example

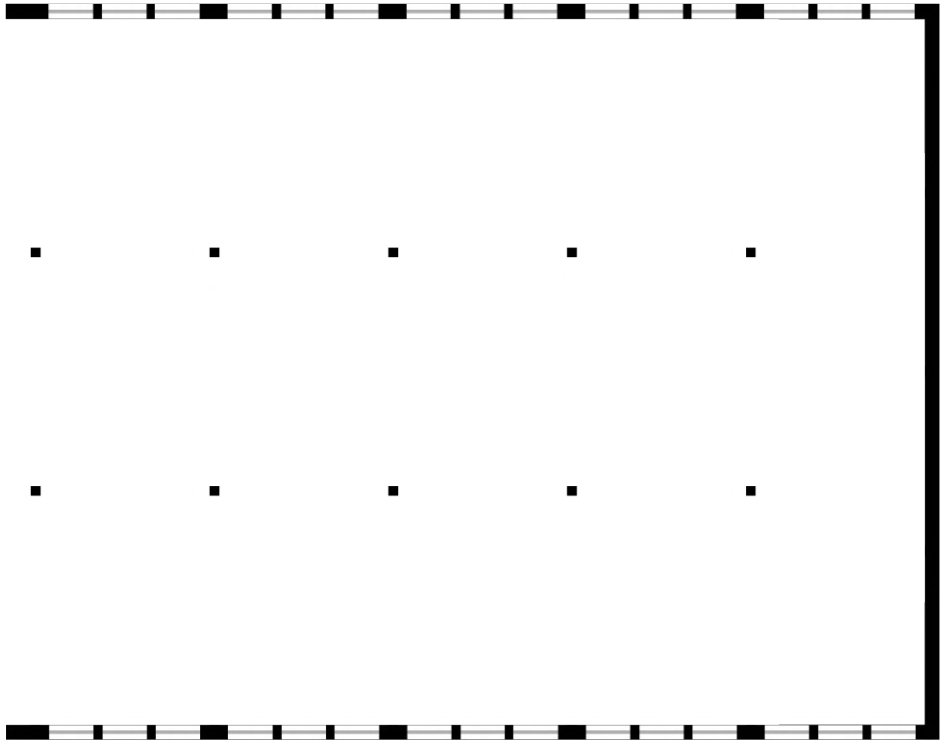
part of an older, multi-storey office building
fixed grid with columns



view // part of the building



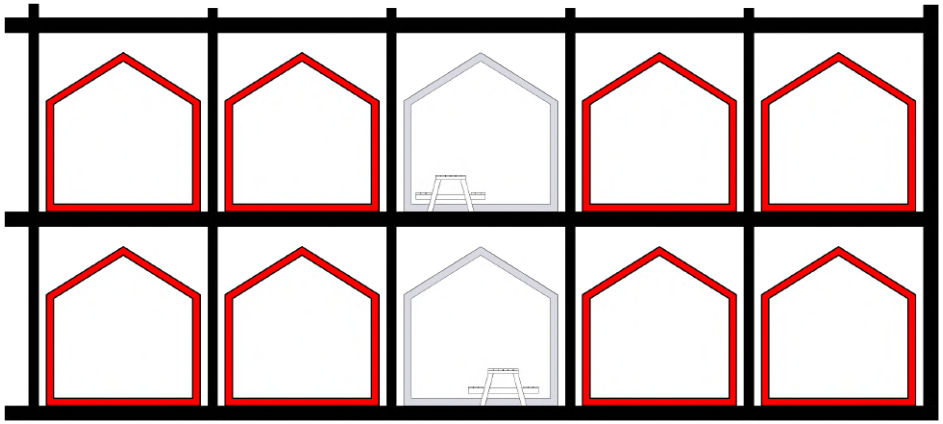
section // floors and columns



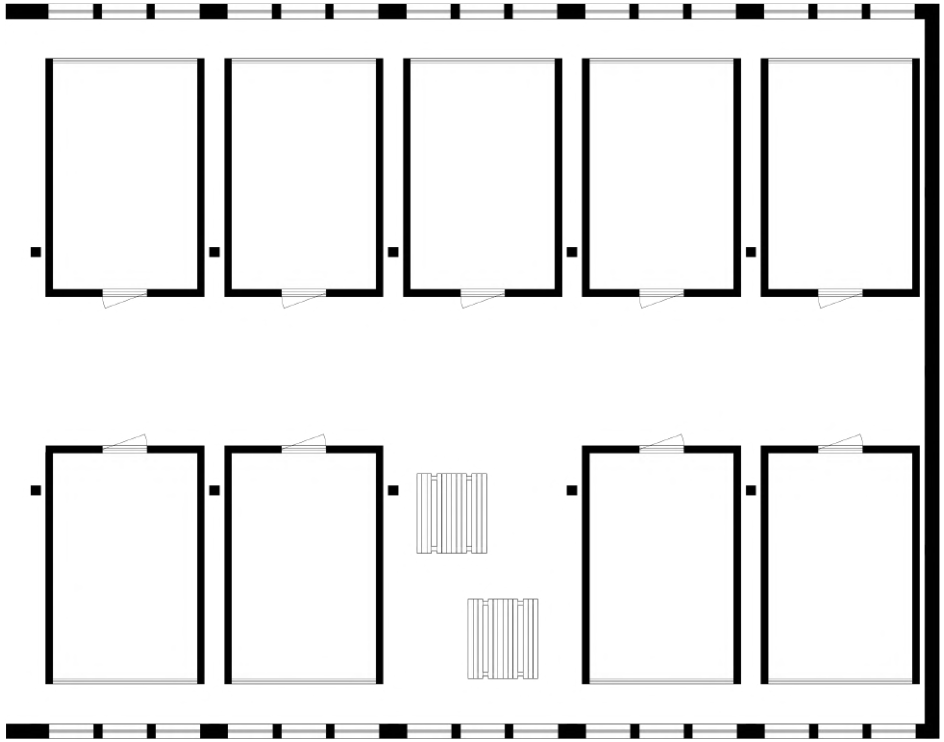
floor plan

new situation // example

9 units per floor
backside of the unit is glass and placed close to the outside wall / windows
well insulated; low dependency on the technical state of the building
communal area // picnic tables // plants



section // units fit between the columns



floor plan

sketches

urban village, decent housing in vacant properties

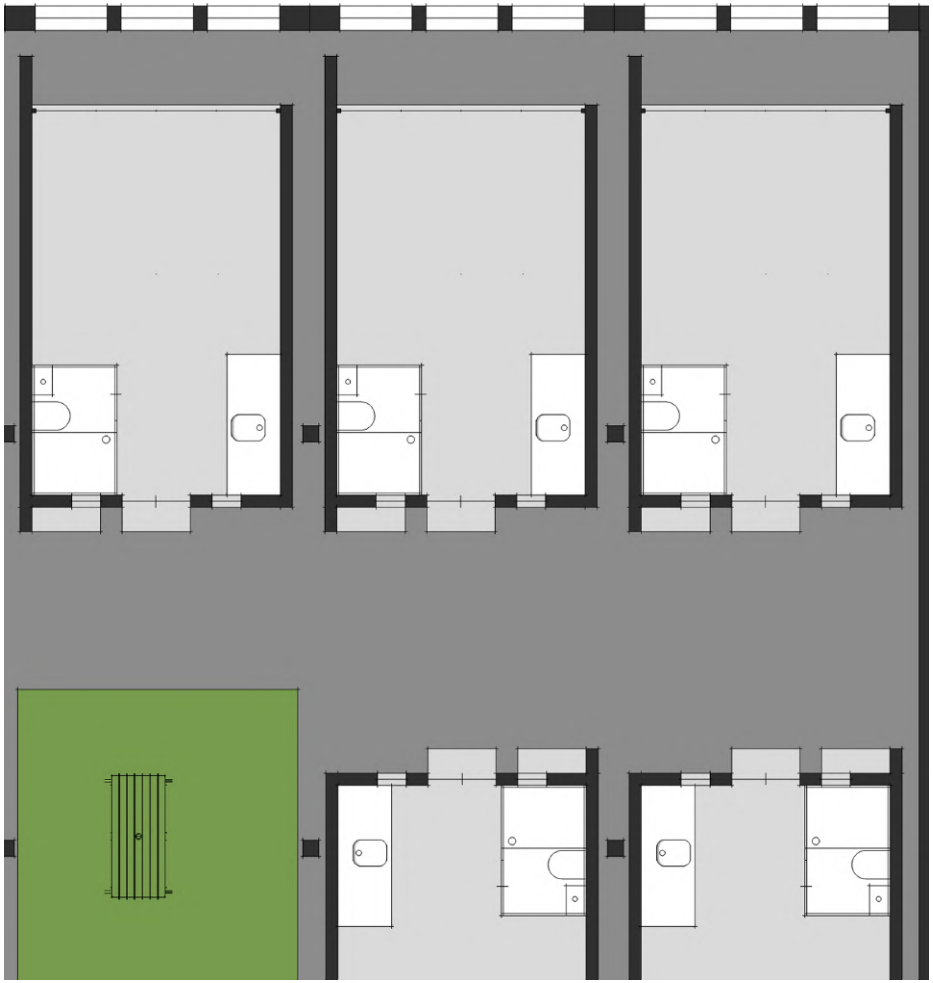
communal area with picnic tables

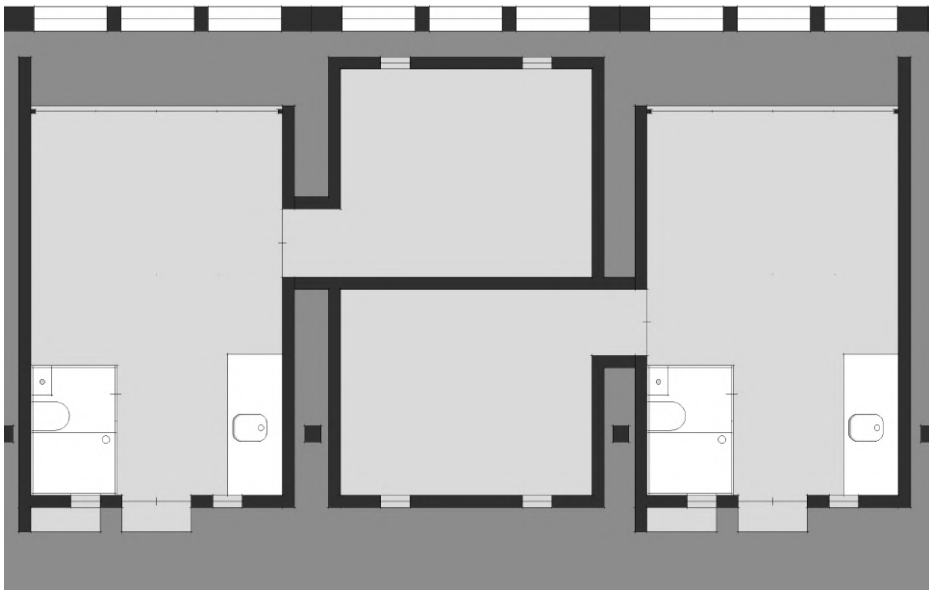
the backs of the units are placed close to the outside wall and windows for maximum sunlight

budget interior with sleeping couch

a room with a view

private facilities: bathroom, shower and kitchen





↑ example of two units with separate bedrooms

← single room units with private facilities

technical details and pricing

construction

The units are constructed with plywood sandwich panels (600 x 2400 mm) which are insulated with 100 mm mineral wool. On site they are mounted together and the (lighter) roof panels are placed. The panels are easy to make and can for instance be fabricated by the refugees themselves or a social employment facility. Pipes and sockets for electricity are pre-fixed. The back is largely made out of glass for maximum sunlight.

After assembly, the inside is finished in white wall paint and the exterior in transparent matt lacquer. The dimension of the panels provides for easy transportation and flexibility within existing modular grids.

heating, ventilation and shower + toilet

The units are basically self-sufficient. Due to the box-in-box situation and insulation, heating with infrared mats is sufficient. Because of the very low temperatures, they can be placed under the flooring material.

Ventilation depends on the building. The units can be connected to existing systems, or can be ventilated passively.

The units can be fitted with a ready-made shower + toilet. The built-in drainage pump can transport waste water through a 40mm tube for 5 meters up and 100 meters horizontally.

pricing

Unit 5400 x 3600	7000 (incl. mounting)
Shower + toilet	1300
Kitchen eg. Ikea	500
Heating infrared	500
Flooring	500
Additional	200
Total	10000 euro

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