

D. Contemporary Best Practices and Studies

The terraced house as prison

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The terraced house as prison

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Maarten Moonens

— Maarten Moonens conducted research into whether it is possible for prisoners to spend their detention period in a homely, urban context. The design follows the principles of the Belgian Prison Act of 2005 (de Basiswet) which states that a custodial sentence should not impair normal opportunities for development and social contact. It is based on the vision of detention formulated by the League for Human Rights (2011) and develops a central aspect of this vision.

—Maarten Moonens conducted design research as part of Advanced Architectural Design under Arnout Van Vaerenbergh and Gideon Boie at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Leuven, the Sint-Lucas campus (LUCA). The images were reproduced and developed by Ruta Valiunaite.

According to the Belgian Prison Act of 2005, the essence of a prison sentence is deprivation of freedom.¹ The act stipulates that any accompanying humiliation and indirect damage should be avoided at all costs. What's more, the law states that imprisonment is only meaningful if placed within the context of humane detention that is focused on reintegrating prisoners back into society.² The regimes in contemporary Belgian prisons do not live up to this ideal. Massive prison complexes based on control and security do not comply with the provisions of this act. This fact is borne out by the high rate of recidivism and increasing aggression within prisons.

New key concepts focus on a small-scale, personal and differentiated approach. In 2011, the League for Human Rights published a vision document on 'differentiated execution of sentences', developed and published under the title 'De Huizen' (The Houses) (2013).³ In this vision document, Hans Claus, director of the prison in Oudenaarde, drew up a new detention model, together with criminologists, lawyers, architects, academics and the League for Human Rights. The model consists of various small-scale detention centres that allow for differentiation with regard to security, how the detention is organised, and counselling.⁴

The present design study affirms the vision document on differentiated stays in detention. An alternative type of detention has been developed in a normal terraced house in a normal urban environment. The detention house is a link in a chain of facilities that have as yet to be developed.

¹ The Basic Law concerning the prison system and the legal position of detainees (2005)

² Beyens, Kristel; Devresse, Marie-Sophie; Gilbert, Elli, 'Vivre et travailler en prison : à l'écoute des usagers' (Brussels: King Baudouin Foundation, 2011) (Summary available in English)

³ Liga Voor Mensenrechten, 'Een zinvolle detentie, hoe doen we dat? Visietekst gedifferentieerde strafuitvoering', (Dutch only) published at: www.mensenrechten.be (2011)

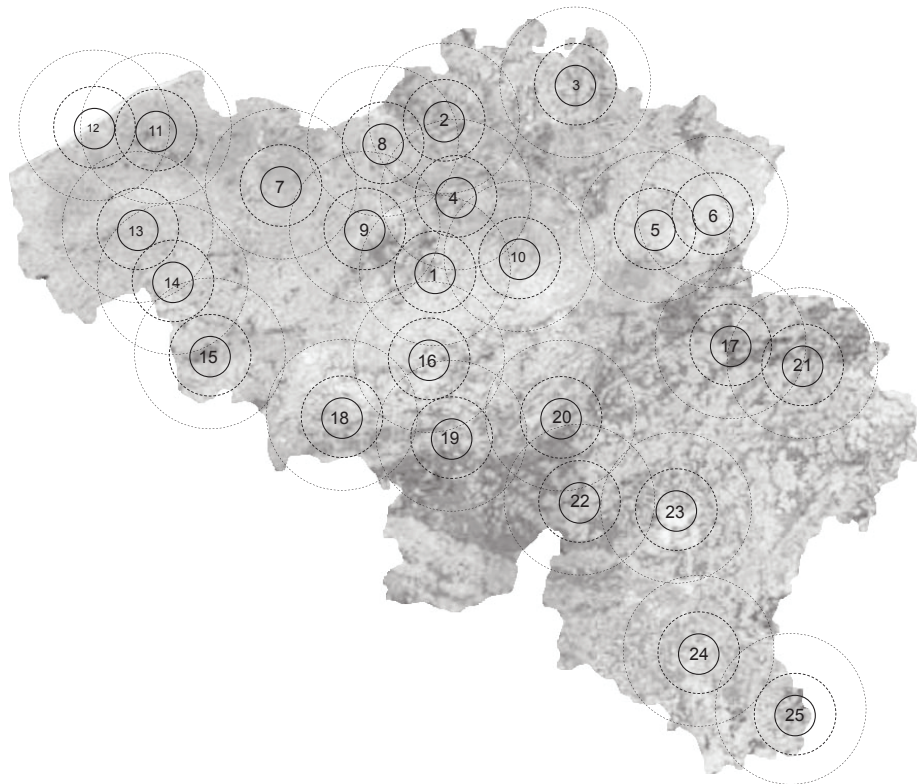
⁴ Boone, Ruth, 'Stoute jongens, kleine klassen', (Dutch only) published at: www.mensenrechten.be (2012)

Detention zone

The design study takes the urban terraced house as a prototype for normalised detention. The prison sentence is spent in the detainee's normal living environment. The intervention is located in several houses within a traditional housing block at Flageyplein in Elsene, a municipality in the Brussels Capital Region. Located near to Louisalaan, the Matongé district, the European district and the VUB/ULB university campus, this square is a cultural hotspot that is characterised by social diversity.

Detention Zones Belgium:

1 Brussels; 2 Antwerp; 3 Turnhout; 4 Mechelen; 5 Hasselt; 6 Genk; 7 Ghent; 8 Sint-Niklaas; 9 Aalst; 10 Leuven; 11 Bruges; 12 Ostend; 13 Roeselare; 14 Kortrijk; 15 Tournai; 16 Nivelles; 17 Liège; 18 Mons; 19 Charleroi; 20 Namen; 21 Namur; 22 Dinant; 23 Marche-en-Famenne; 24 Neufchâteau; 25 Arlon.



The detention complex on Flageyplein is a link within a network of differentiated detention centres in the Brussels detention zone. Belgium is divided into various detention zones, based on the number of inhabitants. Detainees are referred to a detention zone that is close to their birthplace, home or a place they prefer for rehabilitation. Such a choice regarding location provides the advantage that social contact between detainees and their friends and family is not hindered unnecessarily. For this reason, the regionalisation principle has been included in the European Prison Rules (2006).⁵

The detention house connects three terraced houses to form a special group dwelling. The small-scale character makes it easy to differentiate the various detention houses with regard to the degree of security, guidance and daytime activities (work, education, sport, culture). This differentiation enables detainees to follow a personalised programme within the same detention zone. Detainees are also continuously monitored by a personal counsellor, who remains with them throughout the programme.

In addition to detention houses, each detention zone has several walled remand prisons and penal institutions. These facilities are subject to the strictest security within the chain. Existing prison complexes can be used for this purpose. Capacity here is limited to a maximum of 50 detainees. Parts of the existing complex will be converted to provide space for meaningful daytime activities (work, education, sport, culture).

Detention house

The terraced house is undoubtedly one of the most standard housing typologies in Belgium. It is a generic model that has been multiplied in various forms and formats. Today, terraced houses can not only be found in the city, but also in suburban areas and even the countryside. The massive spread and multiple varieties of terraced houses provide the perfect starting point for a differentiated detention model that stretches from the city to its wider surroundings.

Connecting two or three terraced houses creates space for 10 to 15 detainees. They form a community that shares certain parts of the house communally. The kitchen and living room fulfil an important catalysing function in the detention house. These are the places where the detainees can meet each other and undertake activities together. The house was designed for 10 to 15 people in order to simulate a homely atmosphere while guaranteeing a certain degree of anonymity.⁶

The communal kitchen and living room play an important role with regard to security. It is around the kitchen table that detainees, guards and coaches come together to cook, eat and make agreements.

⁵Beyens, et. al., *ibidem*. (2011)

⁶ Paul Dauwe, prison director, during a visit to the Leuven Reserve Prison (2012)

The terraced house
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This personal approach reduces the distance between the detainees and the security and counselling staff, creating a pleasant atmosphere. This atmosphere, which is as relaxed as possible under the circumstances, is very important for what is called 'dynamic security'.⁷ Security in a detention house is not nurtured by a tense atmosphere between detainees, guards and coaches. Respect between the different groups enhances security.

A house in a city

The detention house is not conspicuous from the outside. The façades of the building have not been changed. With the exception of a small change to the contours of the windows, the building's function is not apparently obvious from the street. On this point, the detention house still looks like a traditional terraced house. This gives a whole new interpretation to what Lindsey Dubbeld describes as 'the safety of the prison'.⁸ There is an increasing push towards anonymity in contemporary prison complexes, and towards a less eye-catching design.

An example of this tendency is the new prison in Hasselt (2002) and its quasi-industrial entrance gate with cheerful colours. The new prison complex in Beveren (designed by Stéphane Beel, 2011) has trees and a meadow where sheep graze. This is in sharp contrast to the daunting and impressive entrance gates of the 19th century complex in Sint-Gillis.

Lindsey Dubbeld quotes René Boomkens in placing this trend within the contemporary culture of fear. Standard prison architecture and remote locations are a reflection of the attempt to shut out the violent aspects of social life at any price.⁹

In the detention house, the prison is not camouflaged in an attempt at suppression, but from a positive vision of detention. It is vital to embed prisoners for a variety of reasons. It allows them to stay in a familiar environment and maintain social contact and opportunities to work, etc. The visible presence of a detention complex would undermine the vulnerable position of detainees in normal urban life.

⁷Beyens, et. al., ibidem. (2011)

⁸Dubbeld, Lindsey, 'In de geborgenheid van de gevangenis, de betekenis van de nieuwe Nederlandse gevangenisbouw' (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001)

⁹Dubbeld, ibidem. (2001)

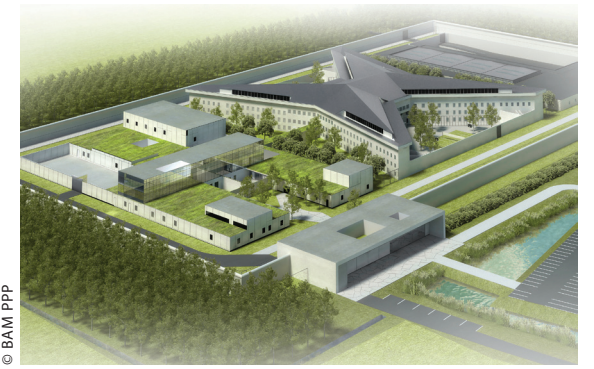
PVT For Hotel Min, Antwerp
© Niels Donckers



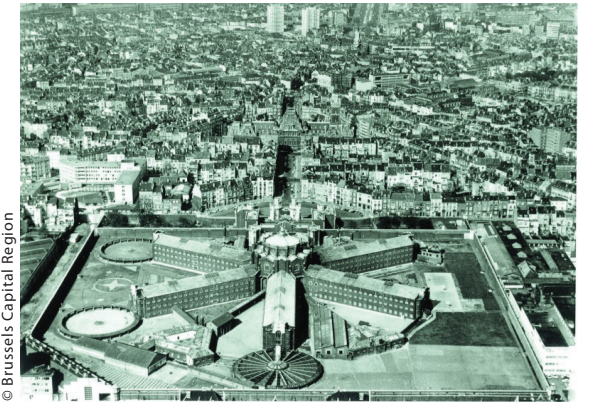
Prison Hasselt
© Buildings Agency



Prison Beveren
© BAM PPP



Prison Sint-Gillis
© Brussels Capital Region



Prison Haren
(Brussels Capital Region)
© Cafasso



Prison Bruges
© vdbnet



A house beside a house

As well as camouflage, the choice of location is another element of what Lindsey Dubbeld describes as 'the safety of the prison.' A major difference between 19th century prison architecture and that of today is the location of prison buildings in relation to the urban centre. 19th century prison complexes were always built at a central location in the city – Sint Gillis prison is even opposite the city hall. The new prisons in Bruges and Hasselt are located in industrial estates next to a motorway or exit road. The new prisons in Beveren and the soon to be built prison in Haren are also located in such marginal areas. Although security is a major reason for not building new prisons in urban centres, functional and financial considerations are also part of the equation.

The undesirability of urban centres as locations for new prisons is mainly due to the fact that today's massive prison complexes have an average of 300 detainees per facility.¹⁰ This does not mean that there is no place for detention facilities in our cities. For instance, the Hotel Min forensic psychiatric care home locates a specialized facility for internment in the heart of Antwerp's Seefhoek district.¹¹ The choice of marginal areas is in conflict with the need to reintegrate prisoners, who are expected to return to society as perfectly functioning citizens. This process is more difficult if they are incarcerated far from society and deprived of contact during their detention.

The terraced houses offer a way to bring detention back to the heart of urban and social life. It does not matter if the detention

house is placed in the city centre, a suburban area or the countryside. What is important is embedding detainees in an environment that is suitable for individual needs or opportunities with regard to work, education or recreation. In the restricted environment of a terraced house, cooperation with the outside world (surrounding businesses, schools, cultural centres) is made easier and more natural. In this way, prisoners can reintegrate into society in a systematic and controlled manner.

Prisoners are people

Terraced houses are divided into several rooms. The detention house is organised in much the same way as a traditional terraced house. On the ground floor, there are communal spaces, such as the kitchen, living room, shop and search room. On the upper floors, there are individual rooms for the prisoners. These rooms are fitted with a wet cell containing a toilet, washbasin and shower. In terraced houses, not all the rooms are the same size. Larger rooms can be used for prisoners who are less willing to participate in group activities. Prisoners must not be forced to live in a community at all times. It will still be possible to remain in one's cell during certain activities or at certain times. The door without a handle is one of the last physical reminders of the deprivation of freedom.¹²

A feeling of relative autonomy contributes to reintegration.¹³ Prisoners may arrange their room as they please with personal souvenirs and their own furniture. They can also ventilate their room as they wish, thanks to secondary glazing with traditional window partitions. The stairs accommodate flows of movement

throughout the house. A switch makes it possible to adapt the stairway to different flows of movement. For example, if the stairway is in a particular setting, visitors will be admitted to the living space, while the cell area will remain closed. A secondary flow of movement is possible at the back wall so that guards can intervene if problematic situations arise.

The detention house seeks to provide a living situation that is as close as possible to normal living patterns, both within the house and in relation to the urban environment. This also makes it more accessible for visitors. The small-scale capacity and urban location of the terraced houses offer a unique opportunity to make imprisonment meaningful, using a differentiated regime.¹⁴

¹⁰Vermassen, Jef, 'Een leefwereld of een overlevingswereld', in: Nollet, Lieven, Inside. Gevangenis in België, Prisons en Belgique (Tielt: Lannoo, 2005). P.6-7

¹¹Boie, Gideon, 'Forensic care in an urban environment' in Psyche 32(3), september 2011. Available at: <http://bavo.biz/texts/view/390>.

¹²Beyens, et. al., ibidem. (2011)

¹³Beyens, et. al., ibidem. (2011)

¹⁴Anthone, Richard, 'Parresia in de gevangenis, Mijmeringen bij de filosofische gesprekken met gedetineerden april/mei 2005 in de gevangenis van Antwerpen' in: Nollet, Lieven, Inside. Gevangenis in België, Prisons en Belgique (Tielt: Lannoo, 2005). P.8-13

Conclusion

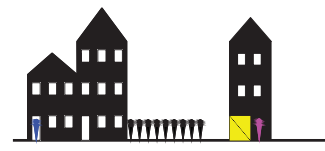
The terraced house offers the opportunity to translate the highly praised detention model in Norway to the Belgian situation. The Norwegian model is possible because Norway has many islands. The most famous prison island is Bastøy, where the natural boundaries make it relatively easy to guard and control the open penitentiary facility. Prisoners may move freely about the island, and it is also possible to easily admit visitors. The design of a terraced house as a prison is an attempt to apply the open Norwegian regime within Belgium's characteristic settlement structure.



Bastøy Prison
© wikipedia



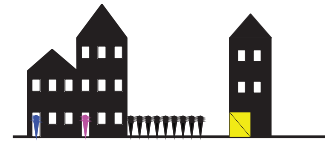
Physical security in a community home with detention-activity and accompaniment nearby, outside the environment of a prison (rural)



Physical security in a community home with detention-activity and accompaniment nearby, outside the environment of a prison (urban)



Physical security in a guidance home with detention-activity nearby, outside the environment of a prison (rural)



Physical security in a guidance home with detention-activity nearby, outside the environment of a prison (urban)



Physical security in a community home with detention-activity inside the house, outside the environment of a prison (rural)



Physical security in a community home with detention-activity inside the house, outside the environment of a prison (urban)



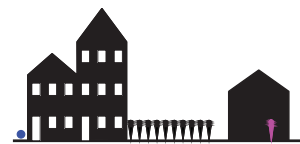
Physical security in a community home with detention-activity inside a prison



Physical security in a guidance home with detention-activity inside a prison



Electronic security in a community home, without accompaniment



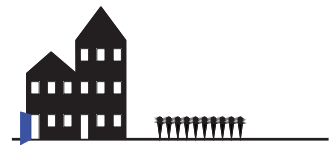
Electronic security in a community home, with accompaniment outside the house



Electronic security in a guidance home, with detention activity nearby, outside the house (rural)



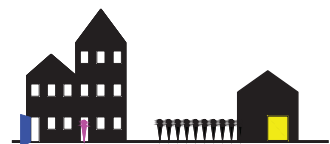
Electronic security in a guidance home, with detention activity nearby, outside the environment of a prison (urban)



Open community home without accompaniment



Open community home, detention-activity and accompaniment outside the house.



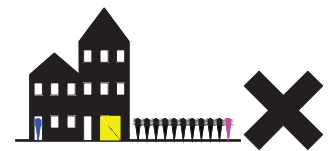
Open guidance home, detention-activity outside the house.



Open guidance home with detention-activity inside the house.



Physical security in a community home with detention-activity and accompaniment nearby, in the environment of a prison



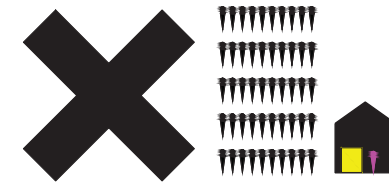
Physical security in a community home with detention-activity inside the house, in the environment of a prison



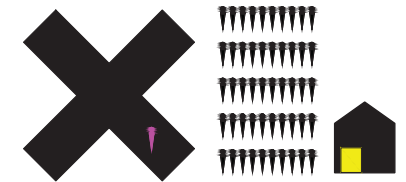
Physical security in a guidance home with detention-activity nearby, in the environment of a prison



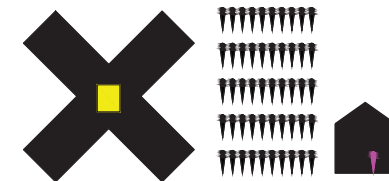
Electronic security in a guidance home, with detention activity nearby, in the environment of a prison



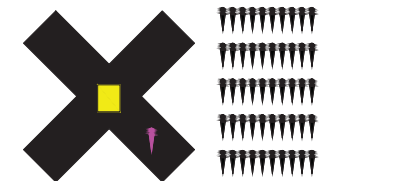
Prison with guidance and detention activity outside the walls



Prison with guidance behind the walls and detention activity outside the walls



Prison with guidance outside the walls and detention activity behind the walls



Prison with guidance and detention-activity behind the walls



Private residence with security through agreed conditions



Private residence with electronic security



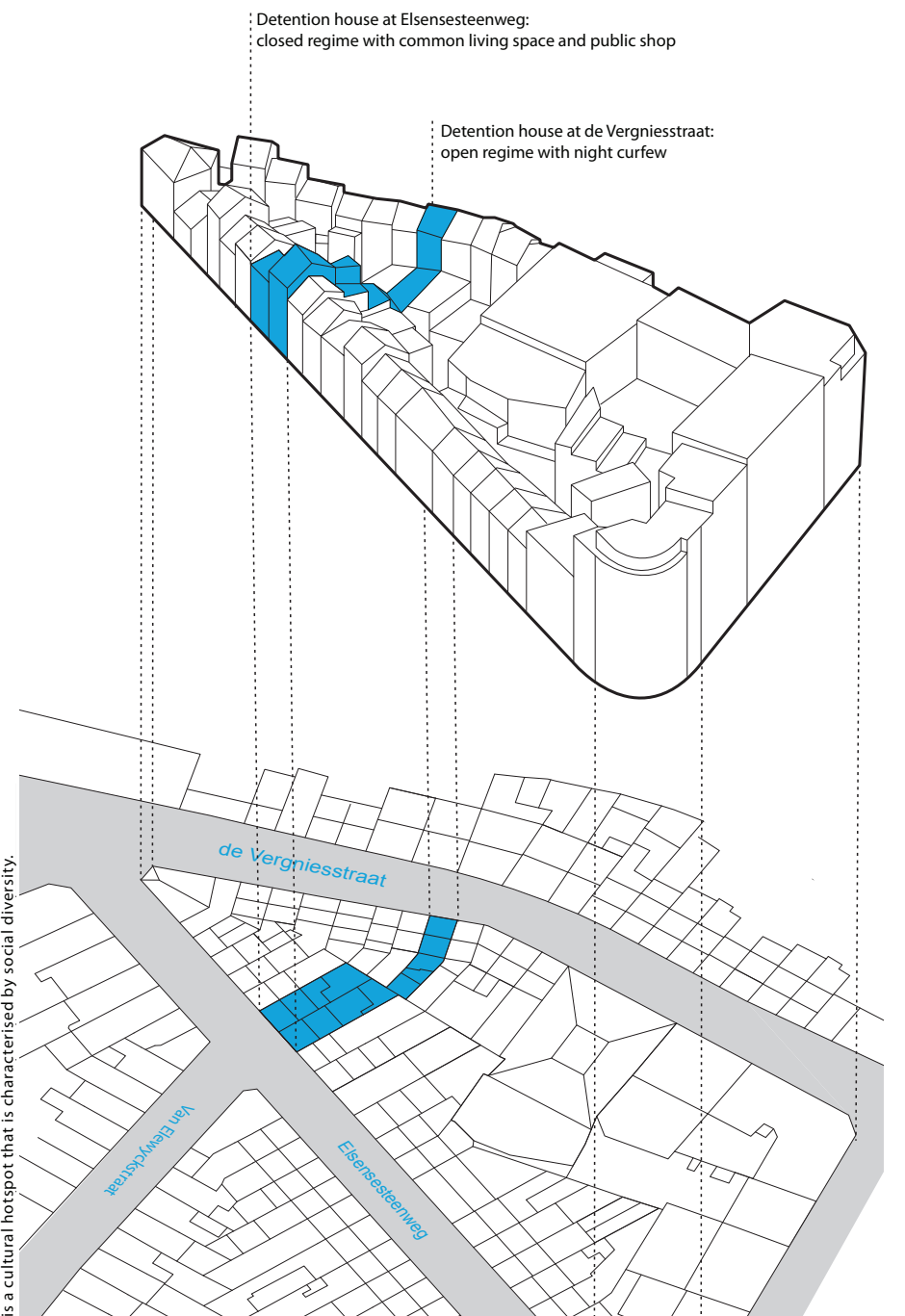
Private residence with electronic security with guidance

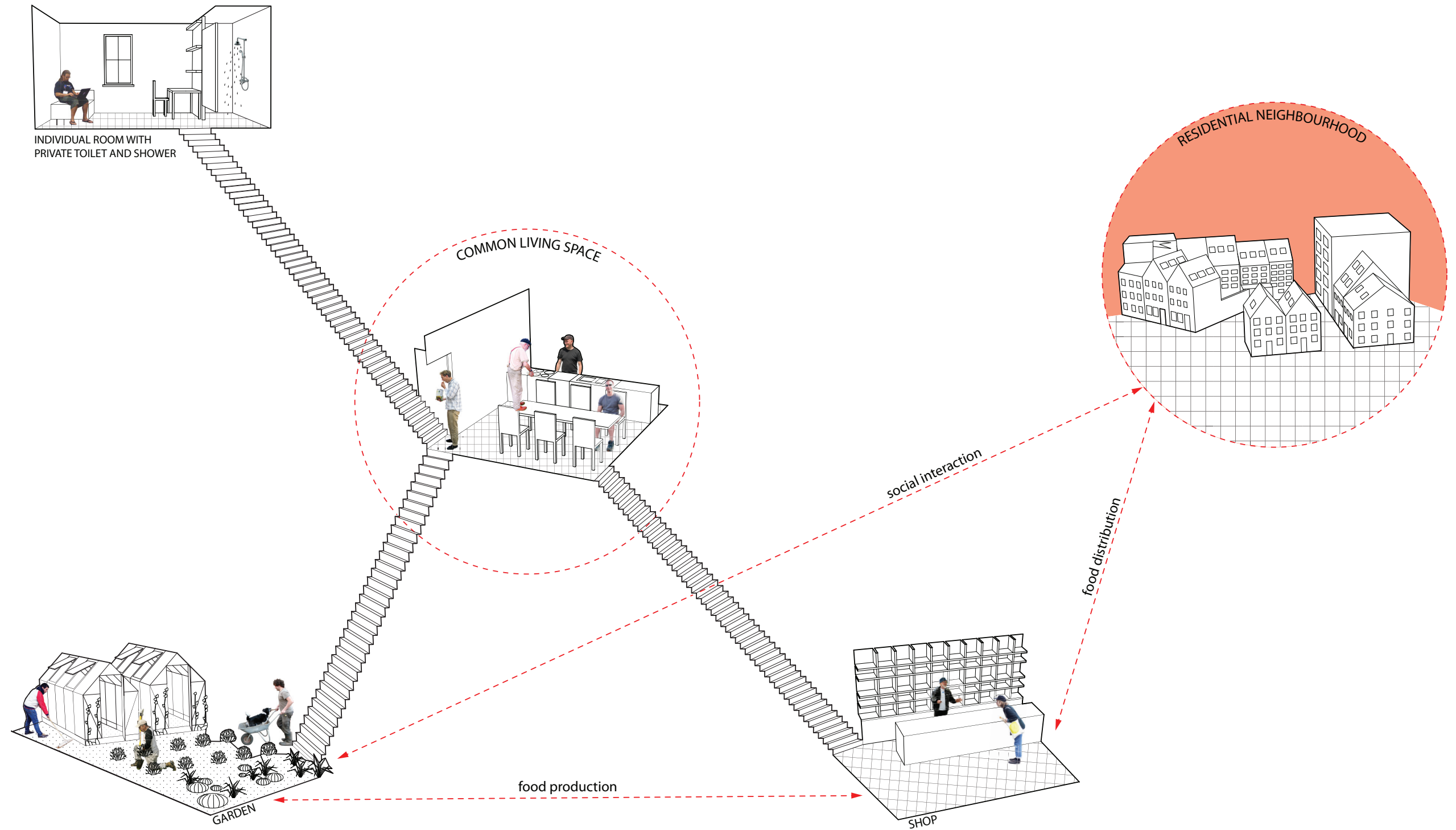
DIFFERENTIATED SENTENCING (League for Human Rights)

DETENTION ACTIVITY	GUIDANCE	SECURITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - employment - education - sport and leisure - culture - library 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individual and/or in group - guidance to the labor market and the social security - aggression guidance - addiction therapy - relational and family therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - based on conditions - electronically - physical

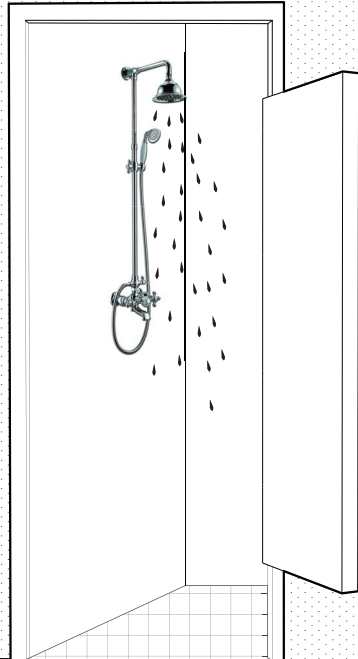


The intervention is located in several houses within a traditional housing block at Flageyplein in Elsene, a municipality in the Brussels Capital Region. Located near to Louisalaan, the Matongé district, the European district and the VUB/ULB university campus, this square is a cultural hotspot that is characterised by social diversity.





Private toilet and shower



Door extending from feet to head level

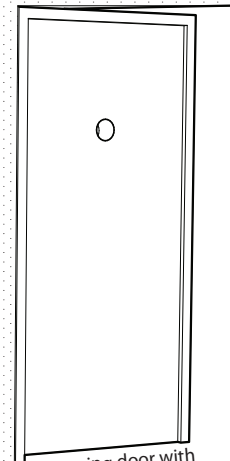


Hinged window with double window frame

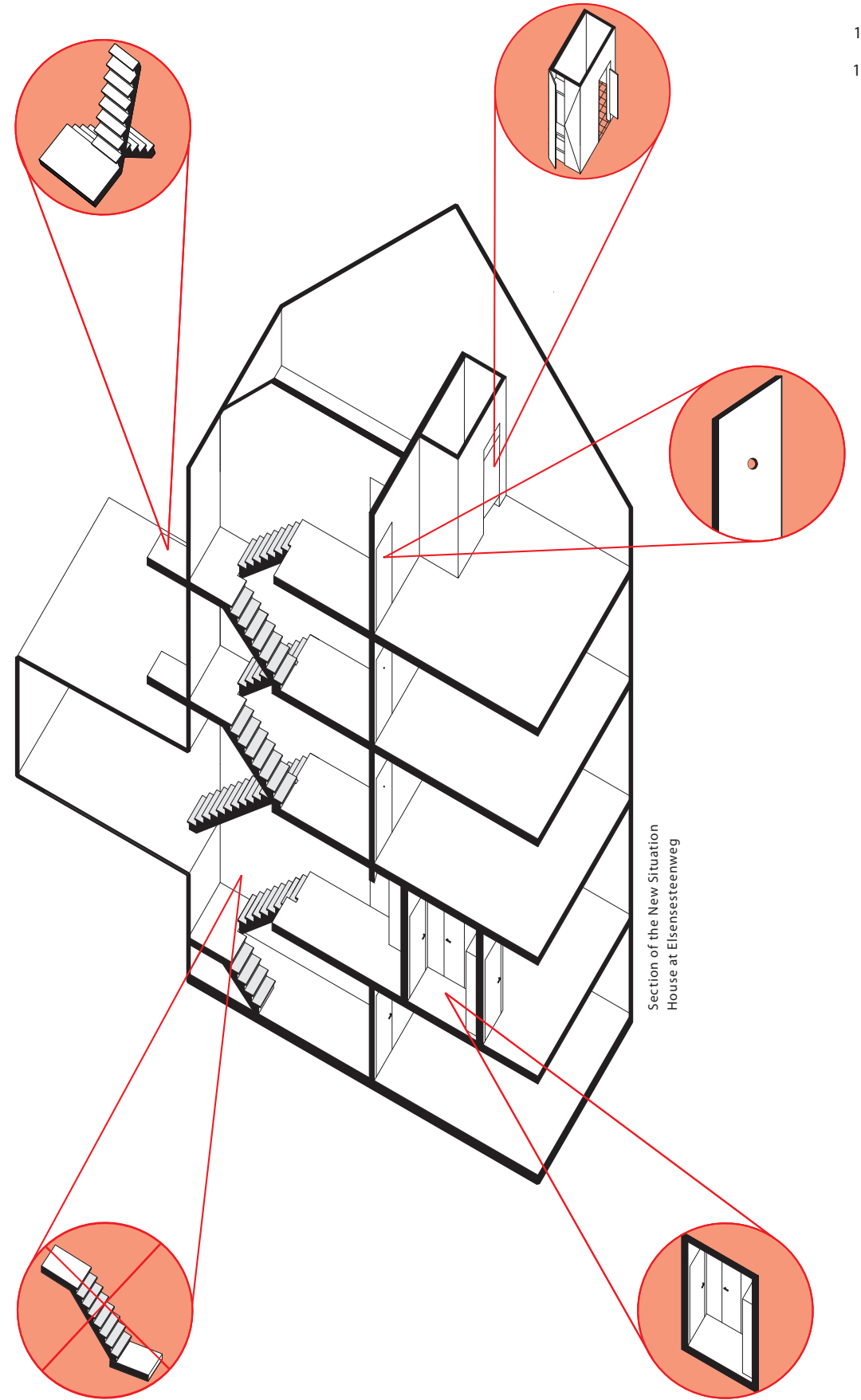
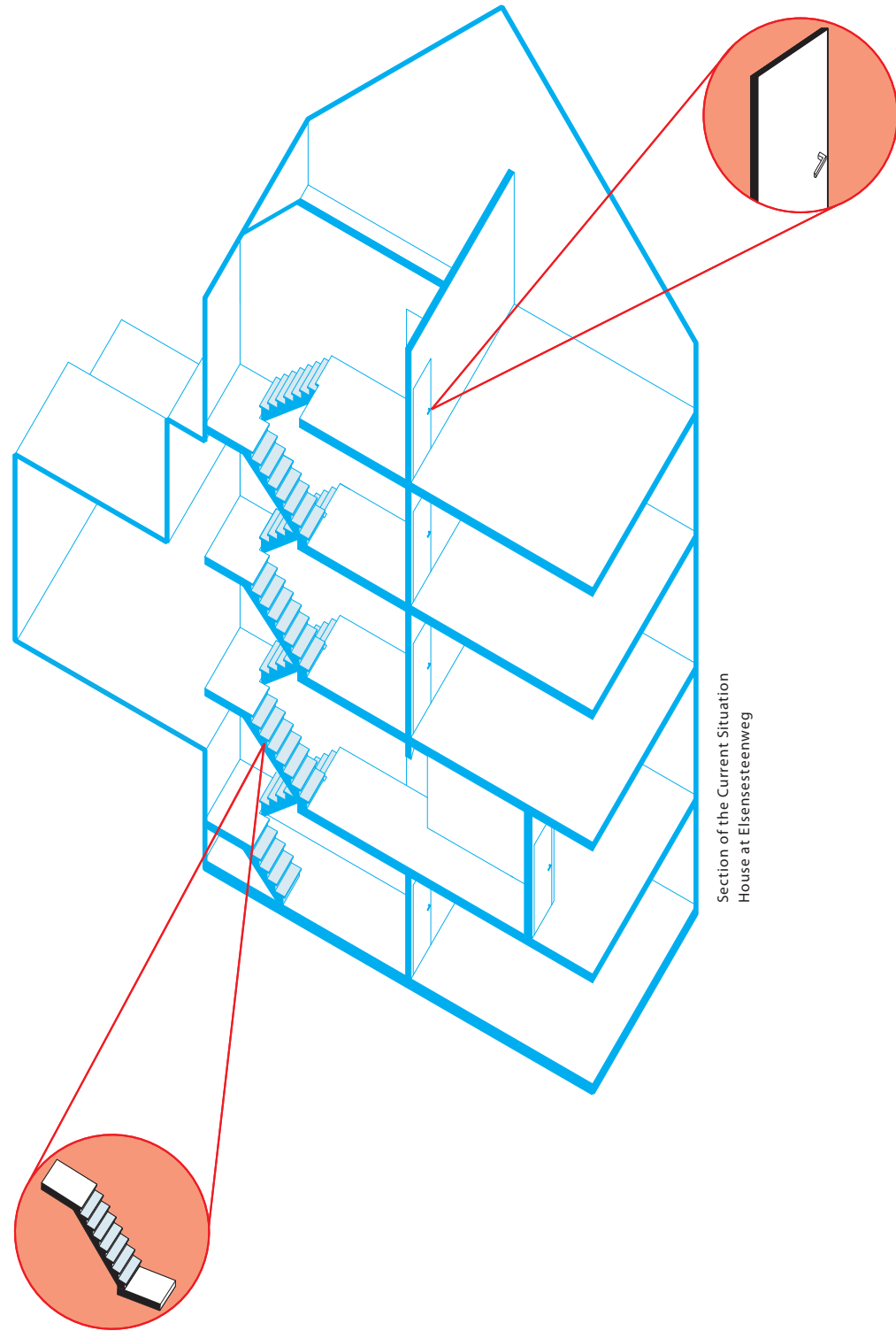


personal furniture

Out-swing door with wide angle peephole and without handle



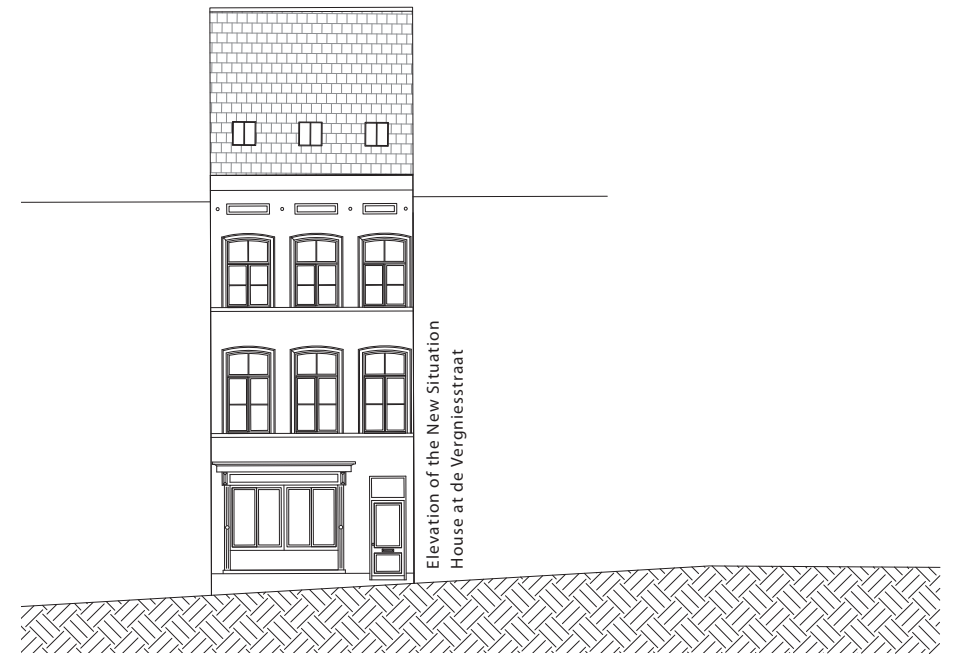
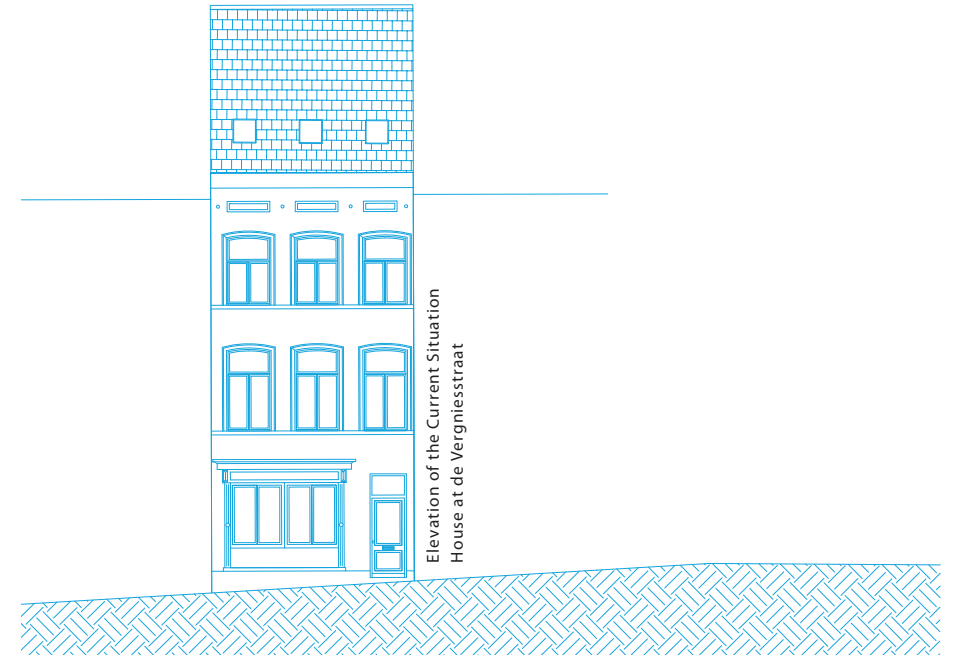
The terraced house
as prison



The terraced house
as prison

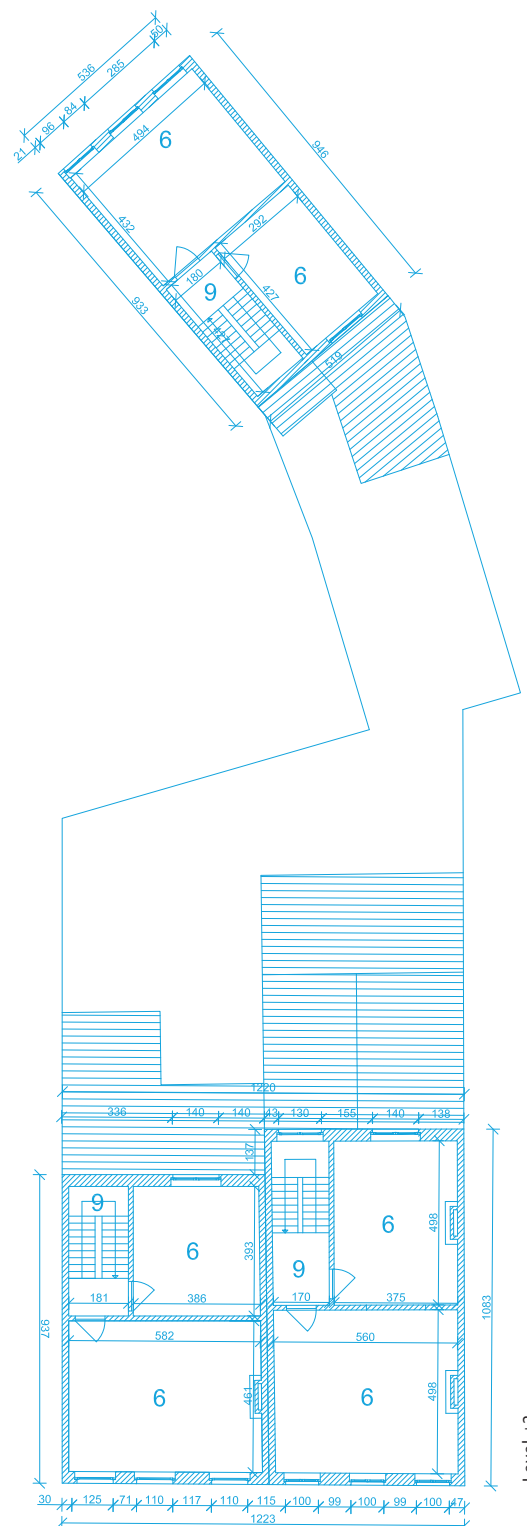
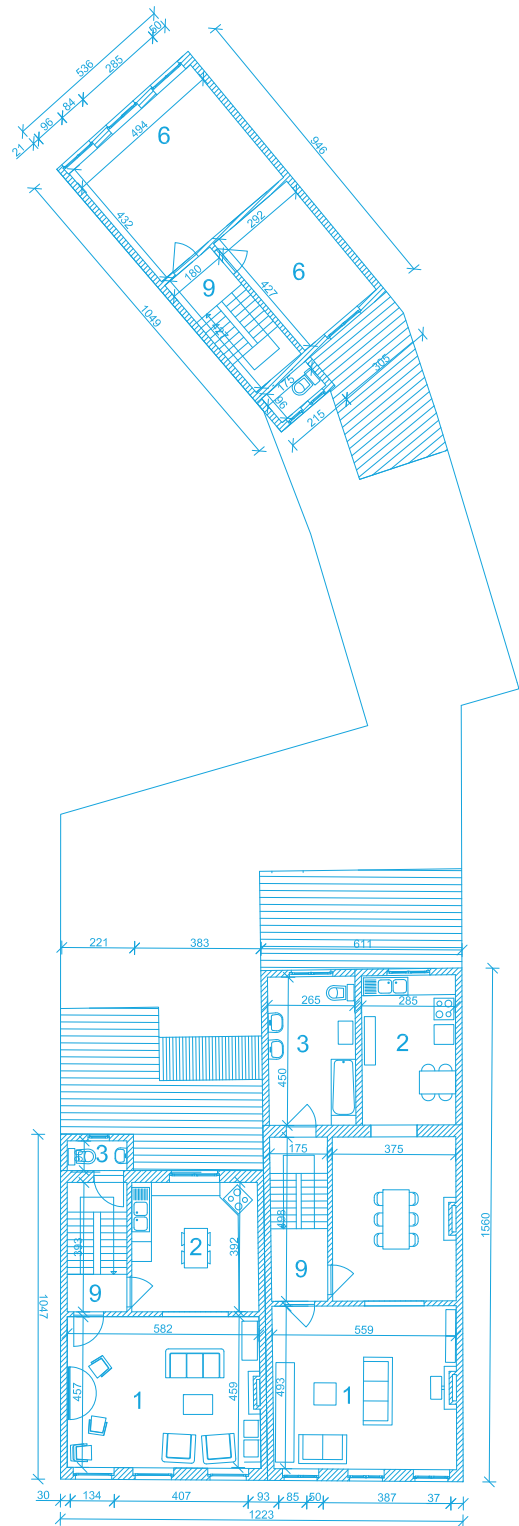
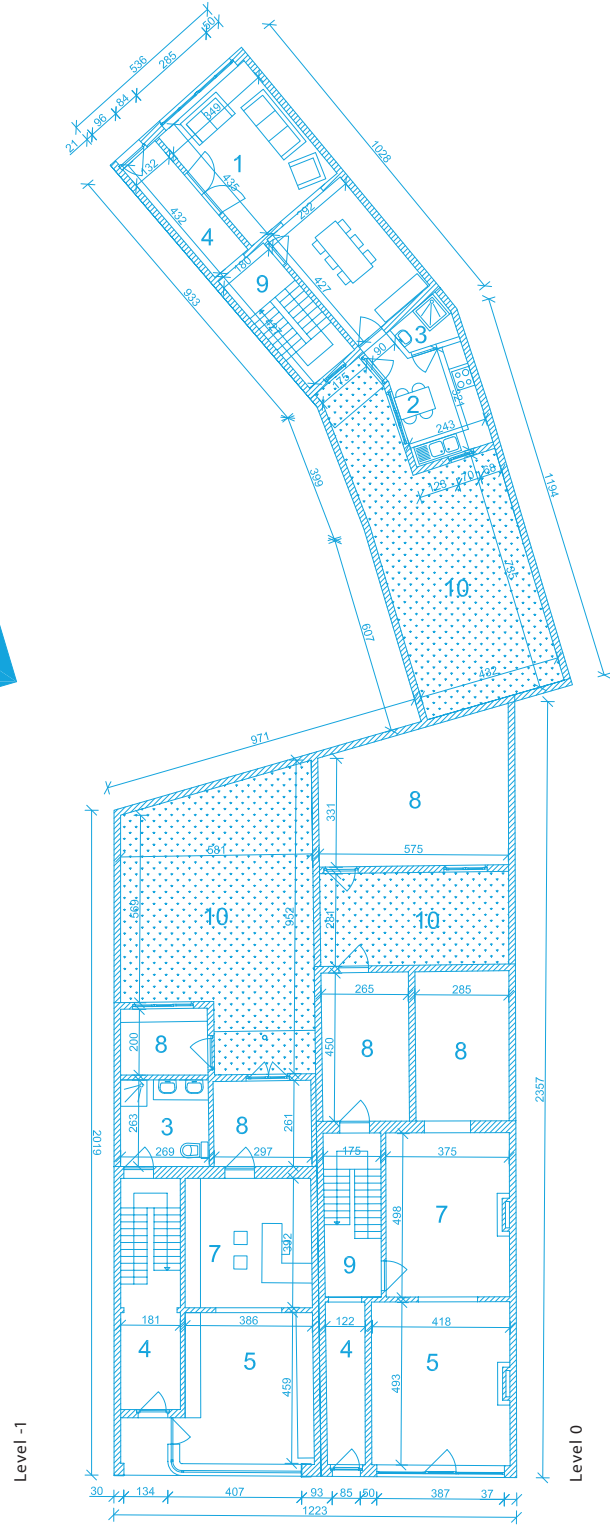
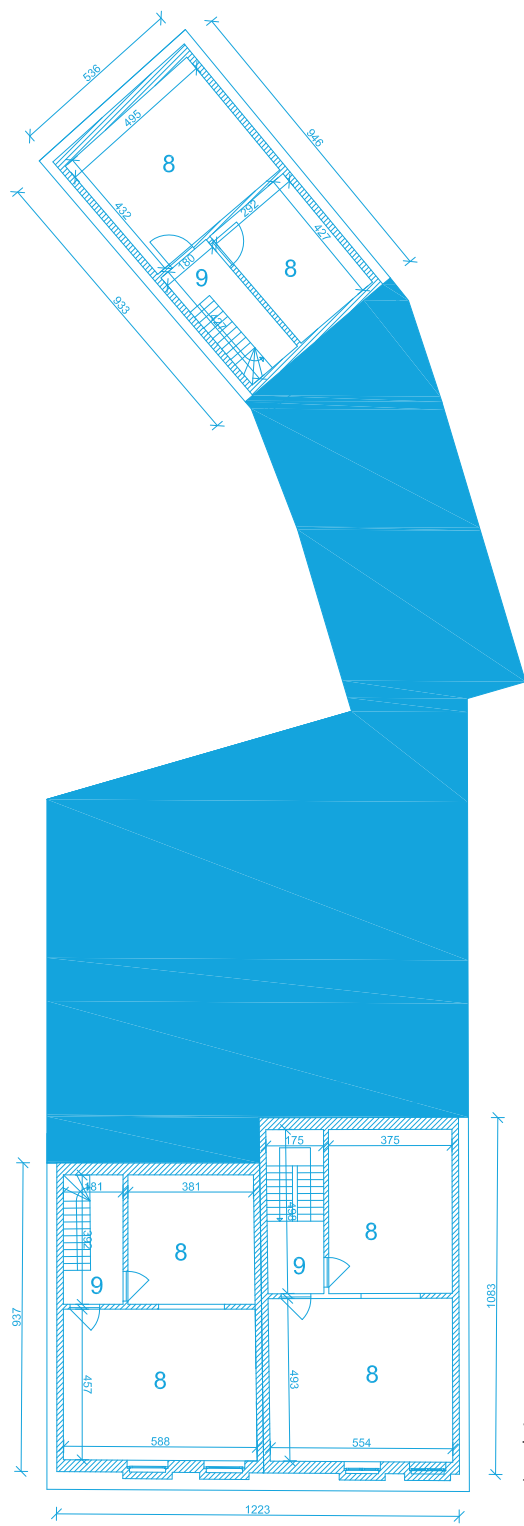
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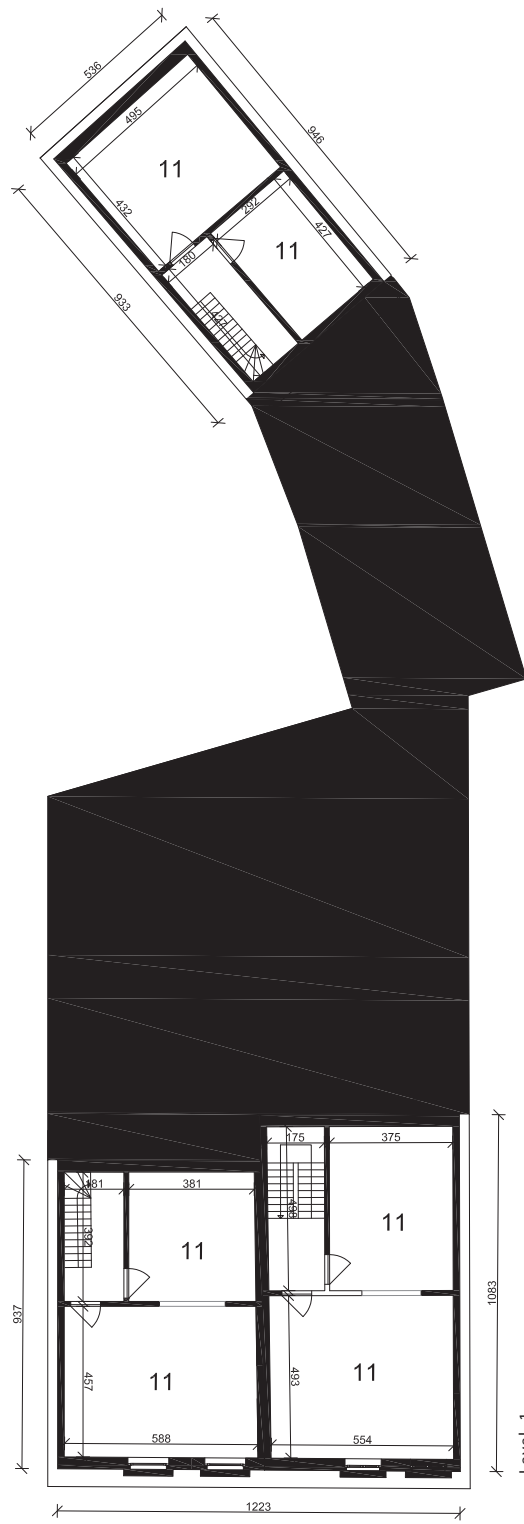
Plans of the Current Situation
Houses at Elsensteenweg and de Vergniesstraat

- 1. Living room; 2. Kitchen; 3. Bathroom; 4. Hall; 5. Shop; 6. Bedroom;
- 7. Office; 8. Storage; 9. Staircase; 10. Garden

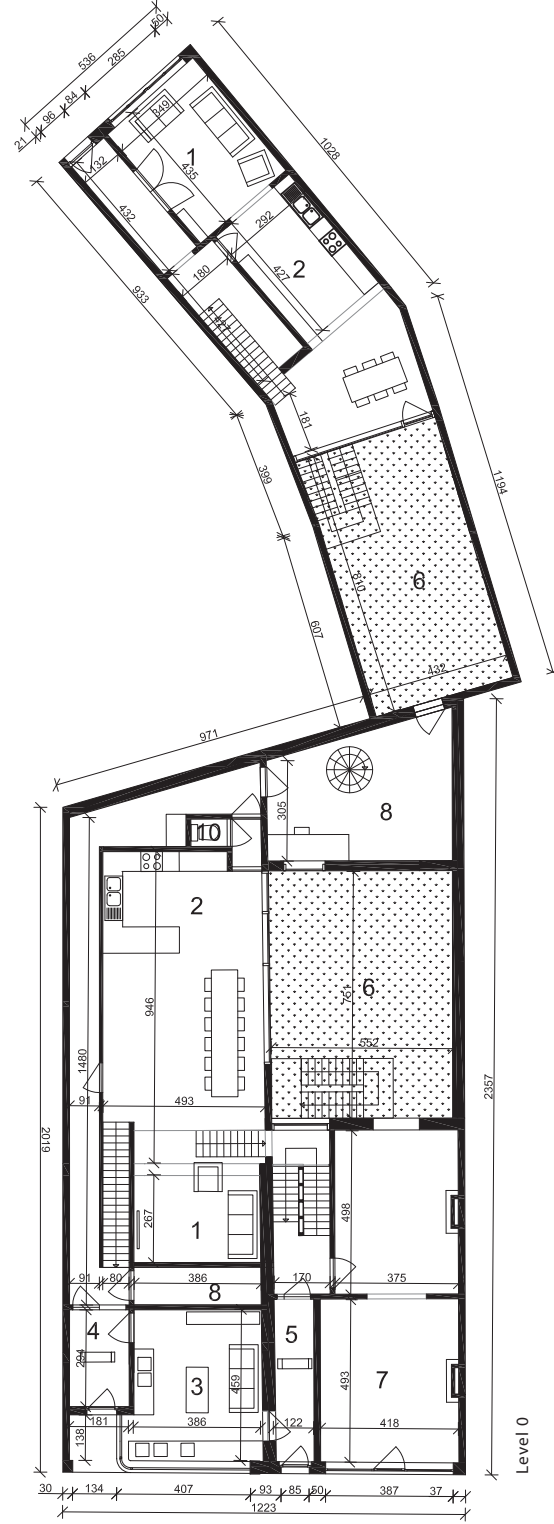


Plans of the New Situation
Houses at Elisensteenweg and de Vergniesstraat

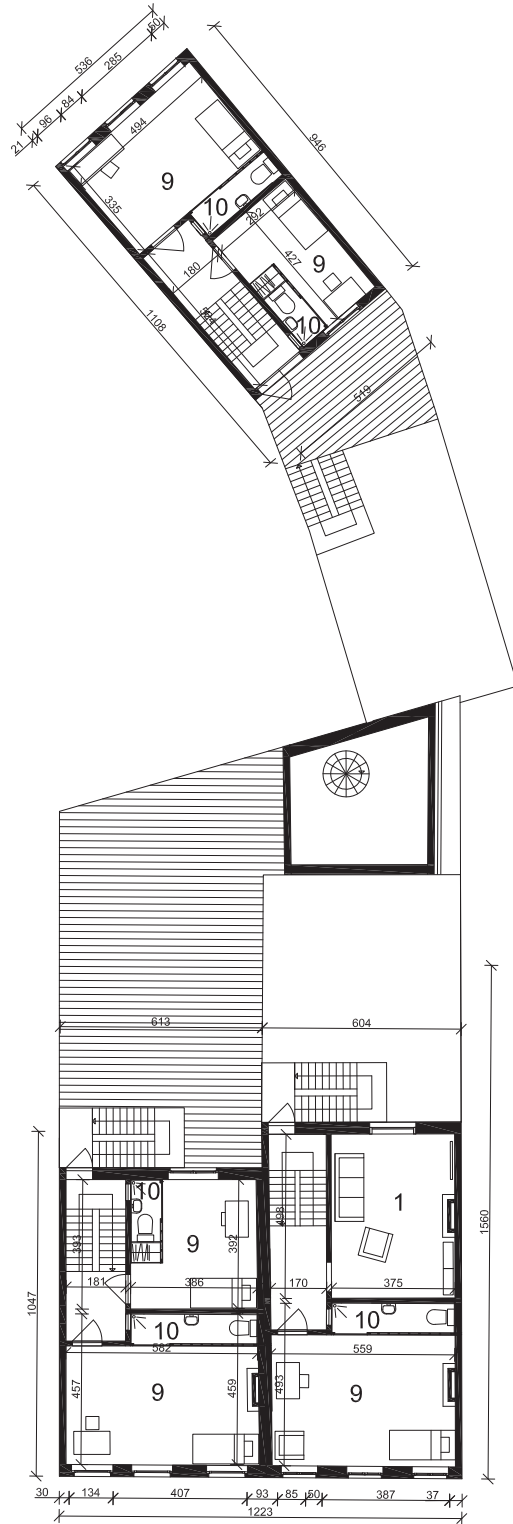
- 1. Living room; 2. Kitchen; 3. Visitors waiting area; 4. Entrance for detainees;
- 5. Entrance for visitors and personnel; 6. Garden; 7. Shop; 8. Frisking room ('fouillie');
- 9. Cell; 10. Bathroom; 11. Storage



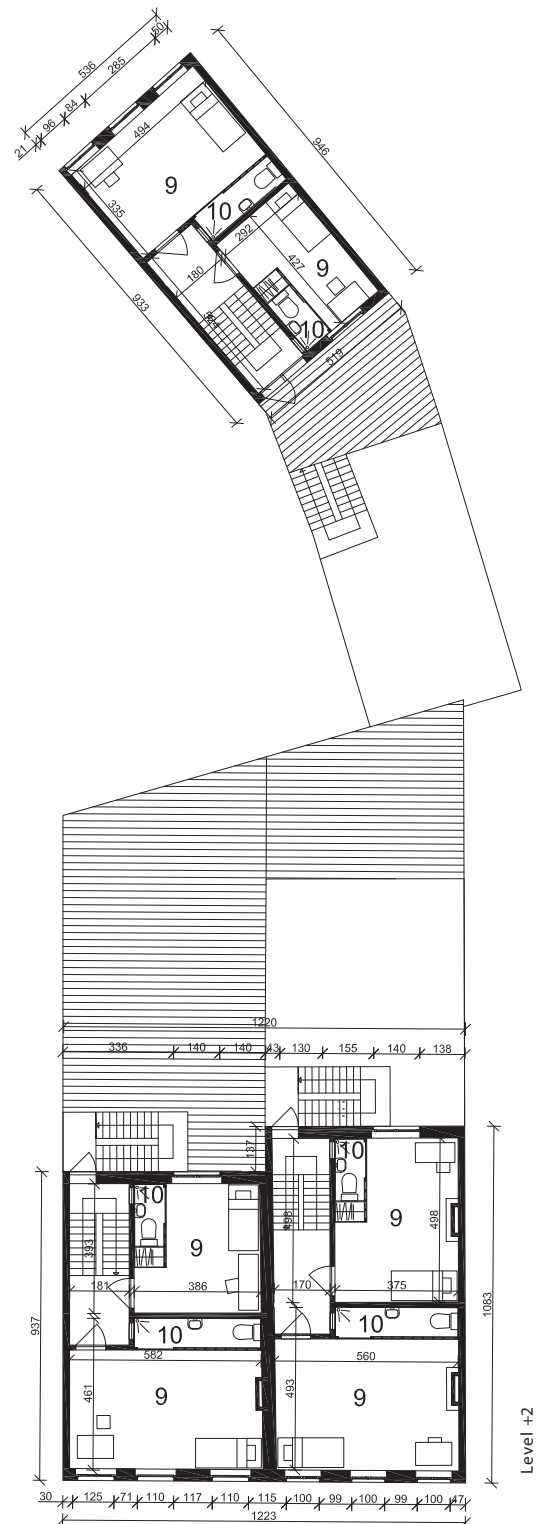
Level -1



Level 0



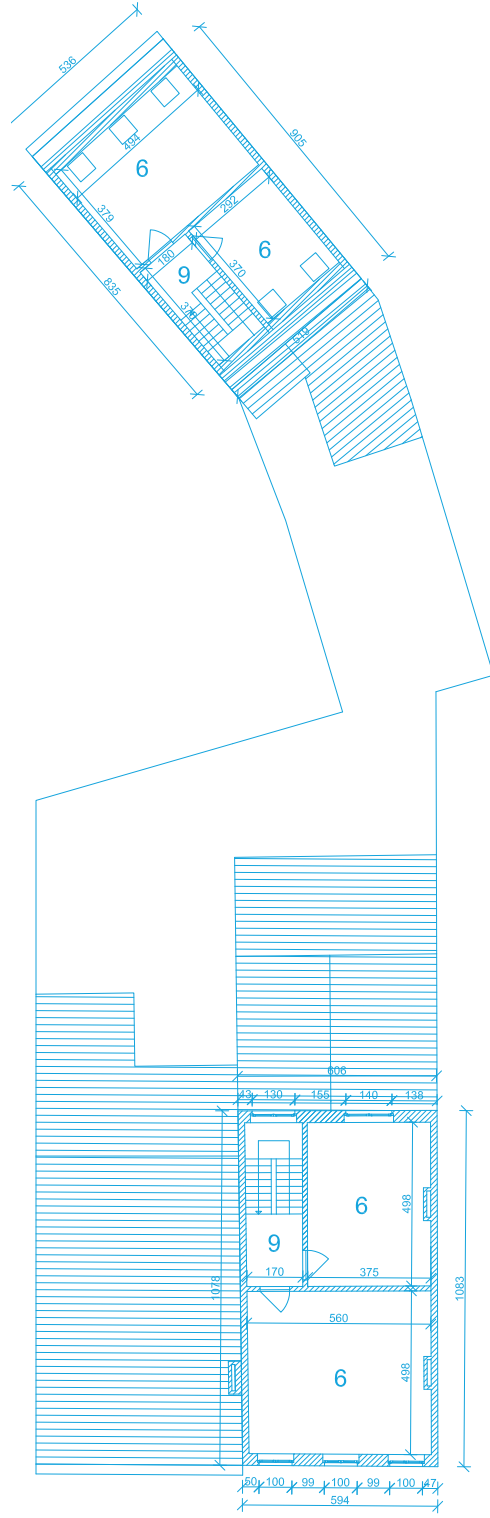
Level +1



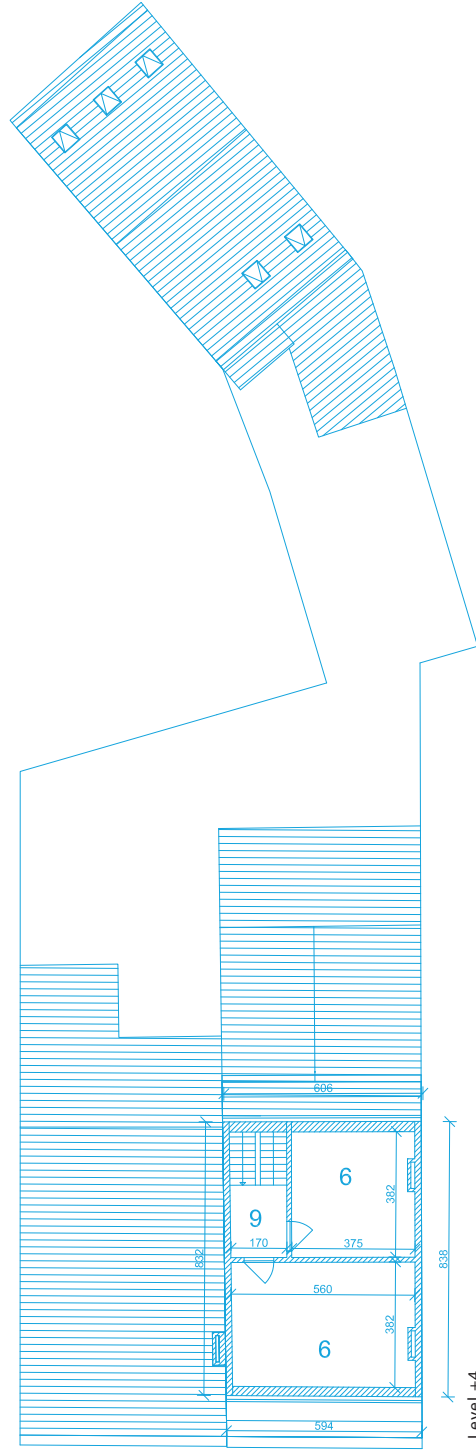
Level +2

Plans of the Current Situation
Houses at Elsensteeweg and de Vergniesstraat

- 1. Living room; 2. Kitchen; 3. Bathroom; 4. Hall; 5. Shop; 6. Bedroom;
- 7. Office; 8. Storage; 9. Staircase; 10. Garden



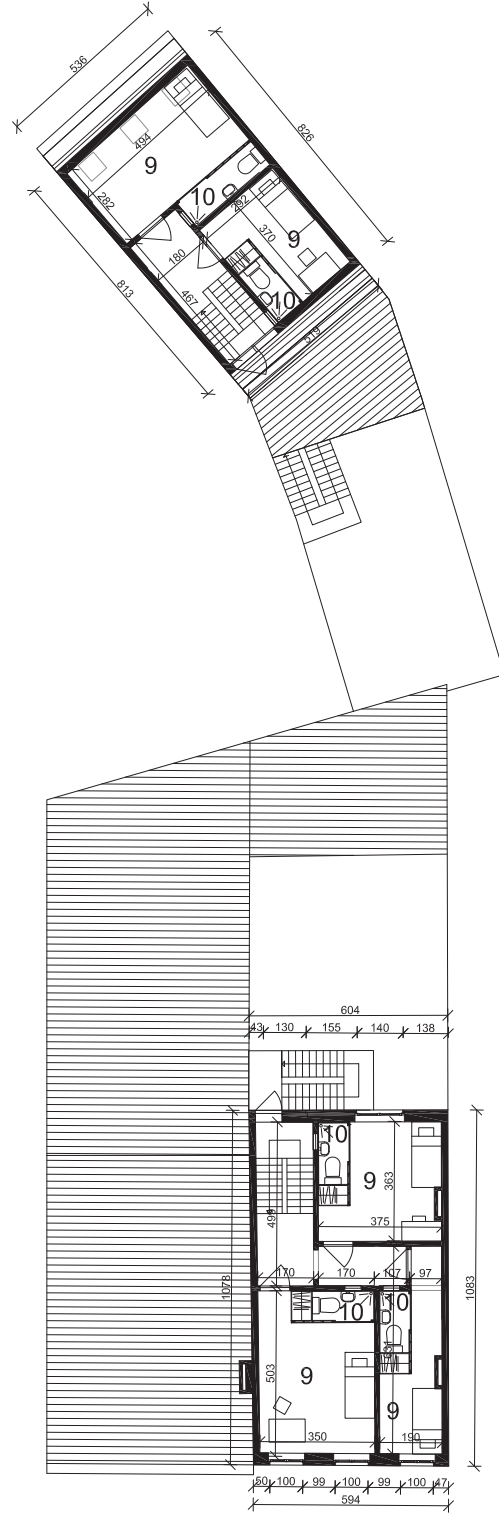
Level +3



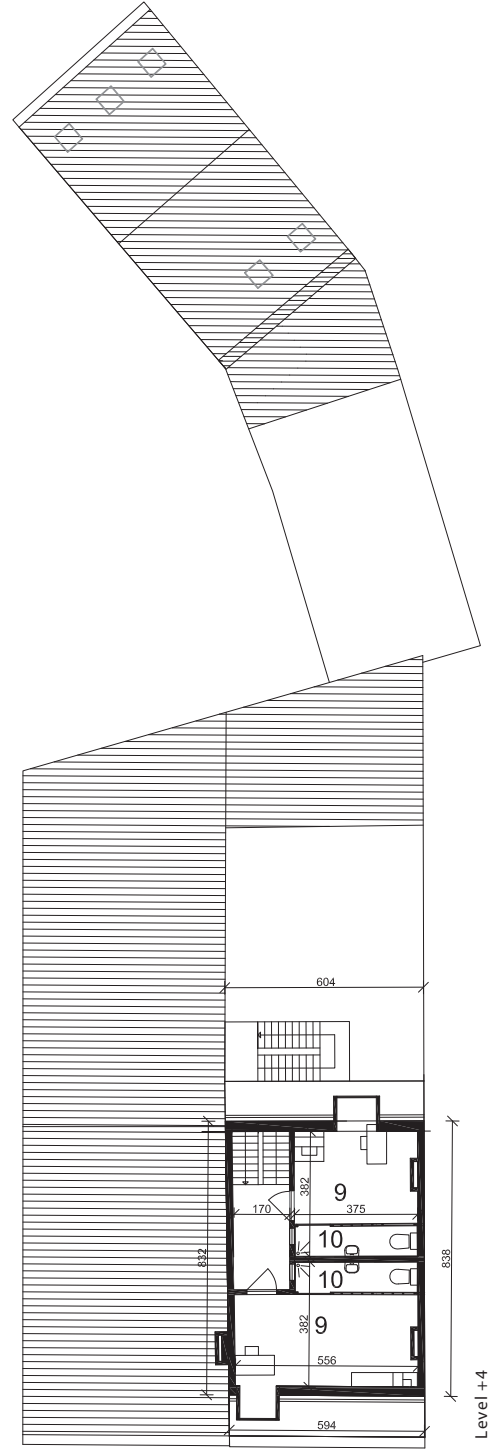
Level +4

Plans of the New Situation
Houses at Elsensteeweg and de Vergniesstraat

- 9. Cell; 10. Bathroom



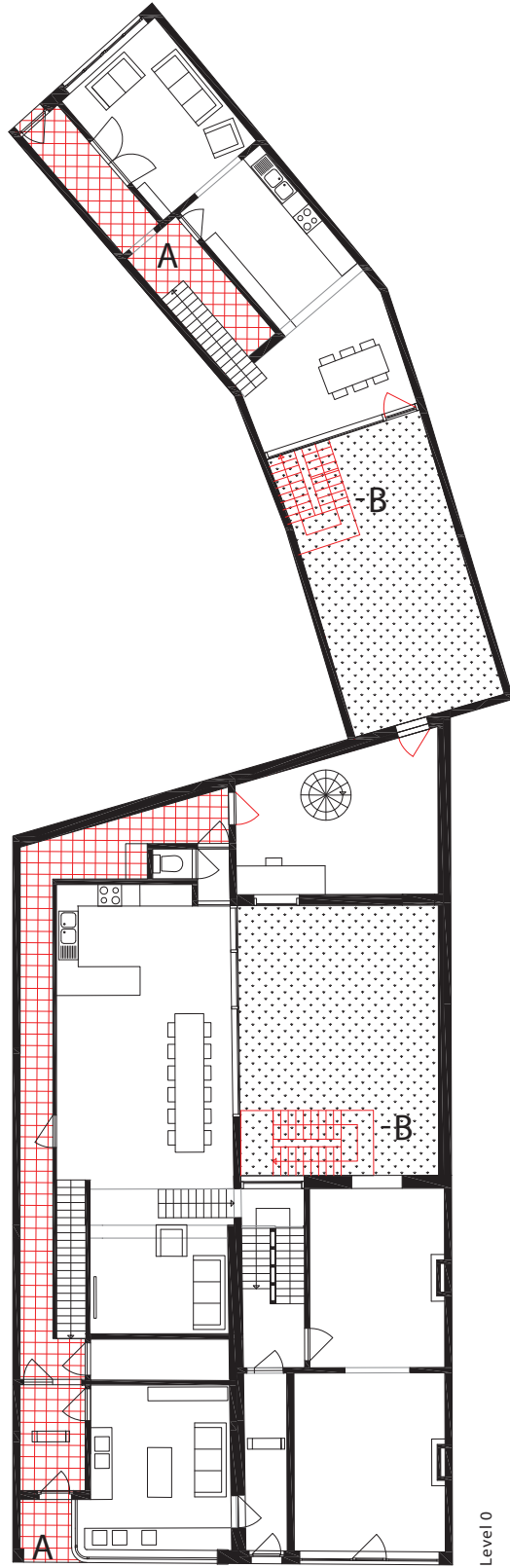
Level +3



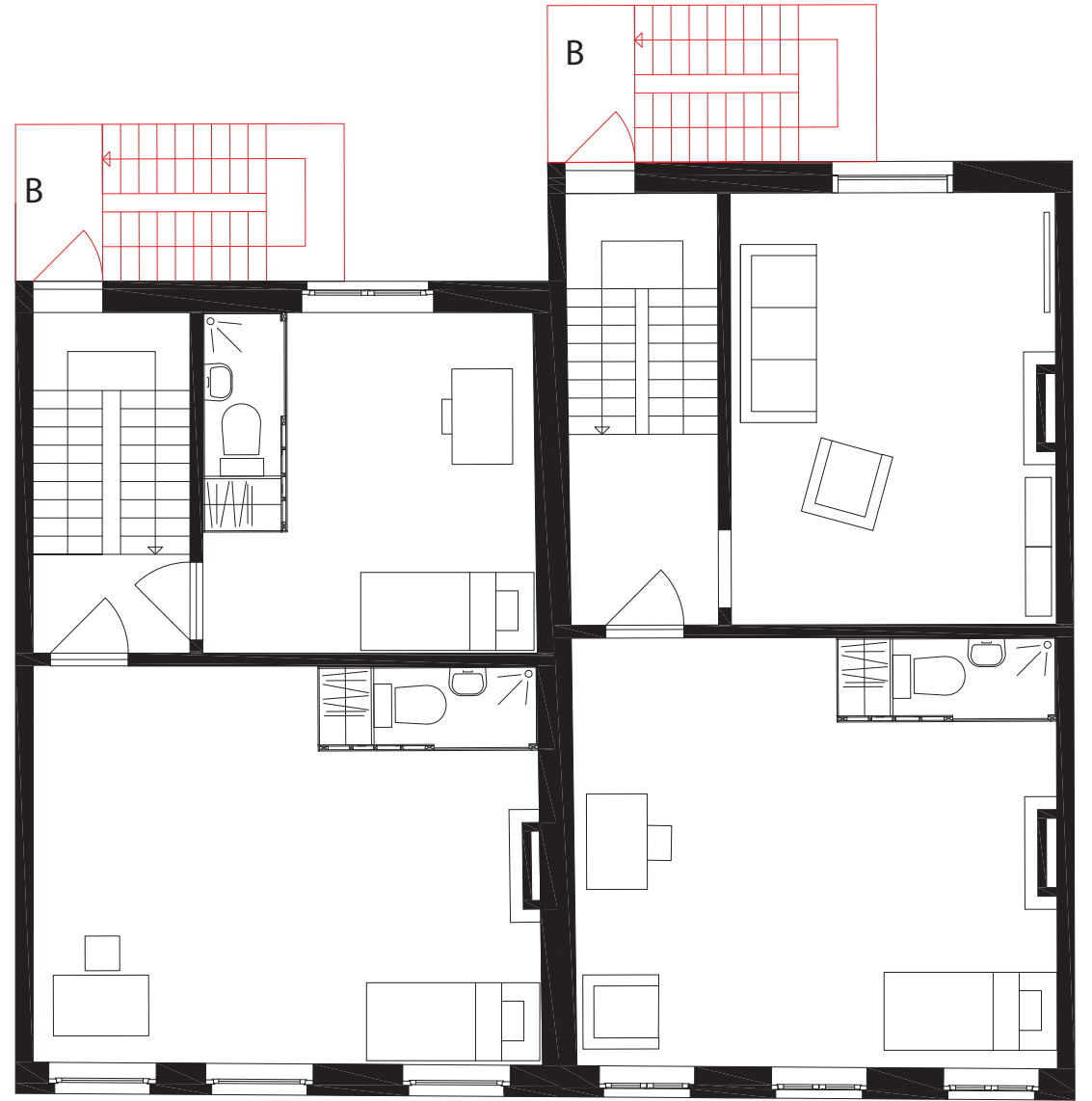
Level +4

Security measures (ground level)

- A. Central intervention corridor
- B. Second vertical circulation for guards only



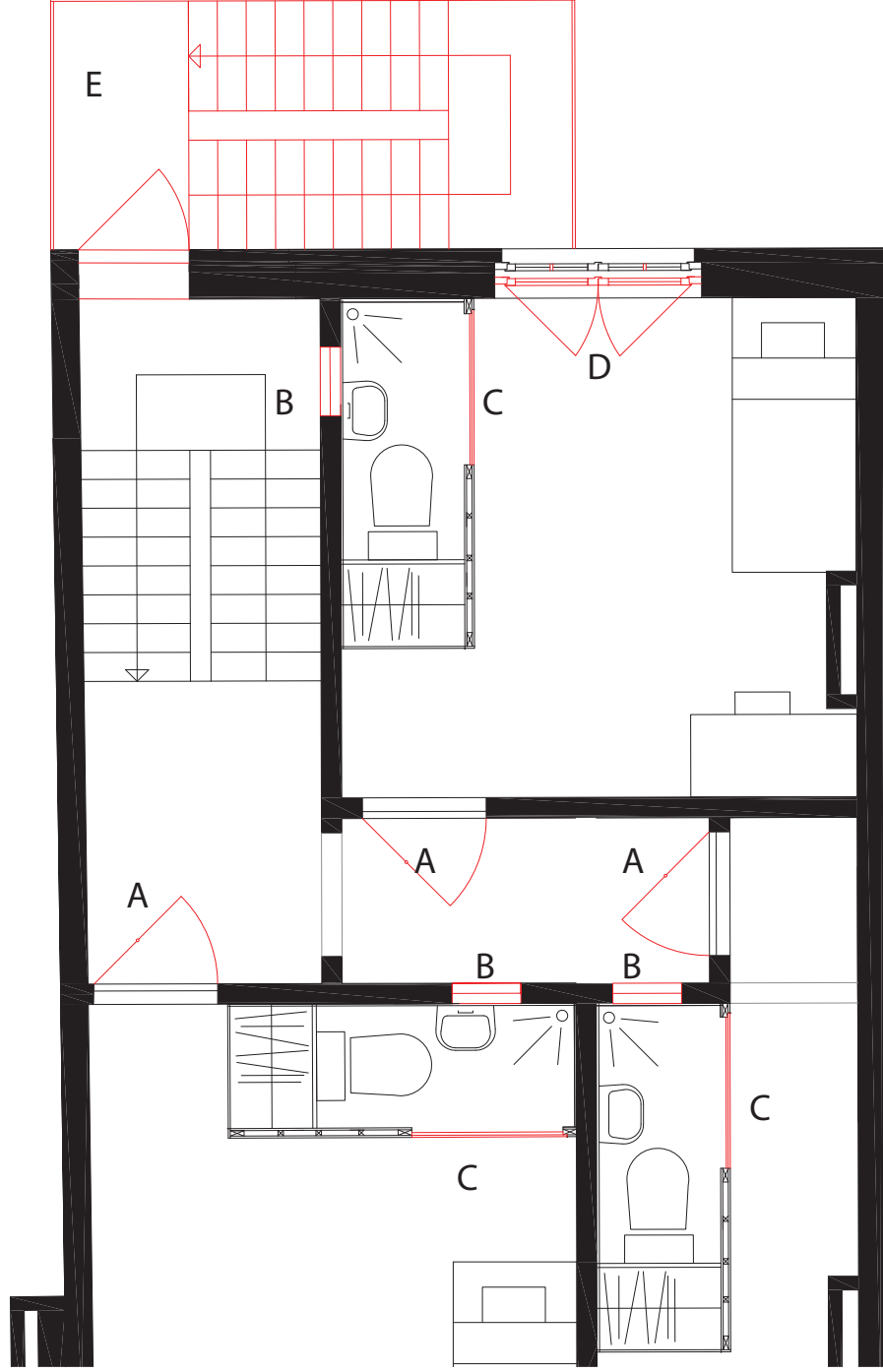
Level 0



Detail level +2

Security measures (private room level)

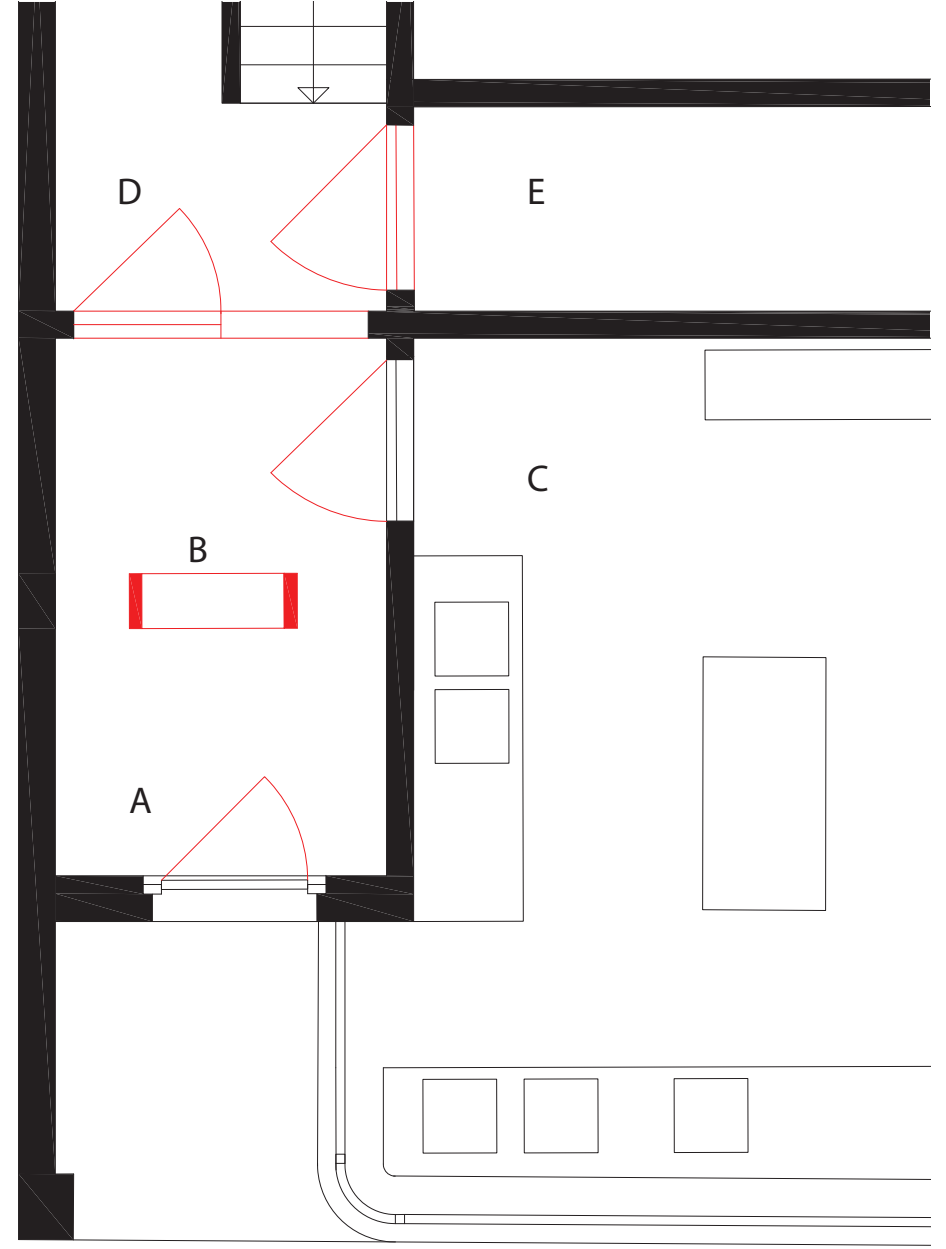
- A. Out-swing door with a wide angle peephole
- B. Emergency control opening
- C. Doors extended from feet to head level
- D. Double window frame
- E. Second staircase (guards only)



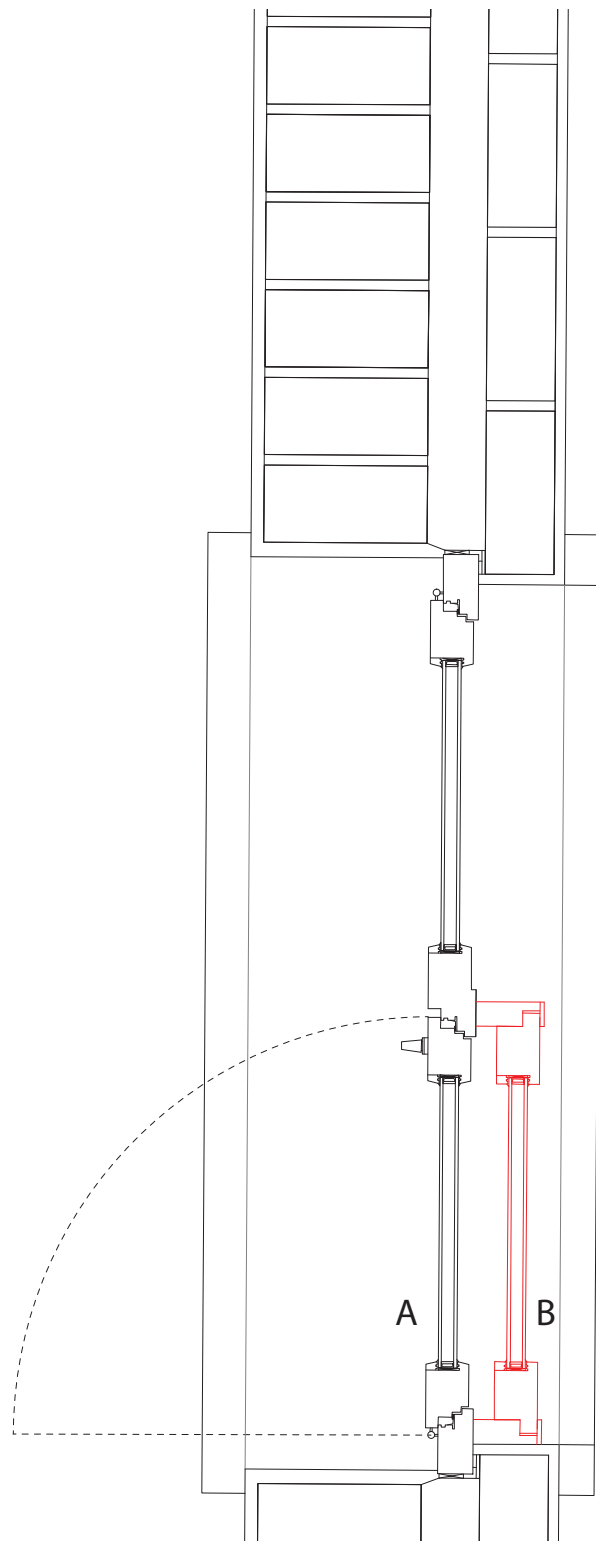
Detail level +3

Security measures (prison entrance)

- A. Lock
- B. Metal detector gate
- C. Waiting room
- D. Entrance for prisoners and personnel only
- E. Frisking room



Detail level 0

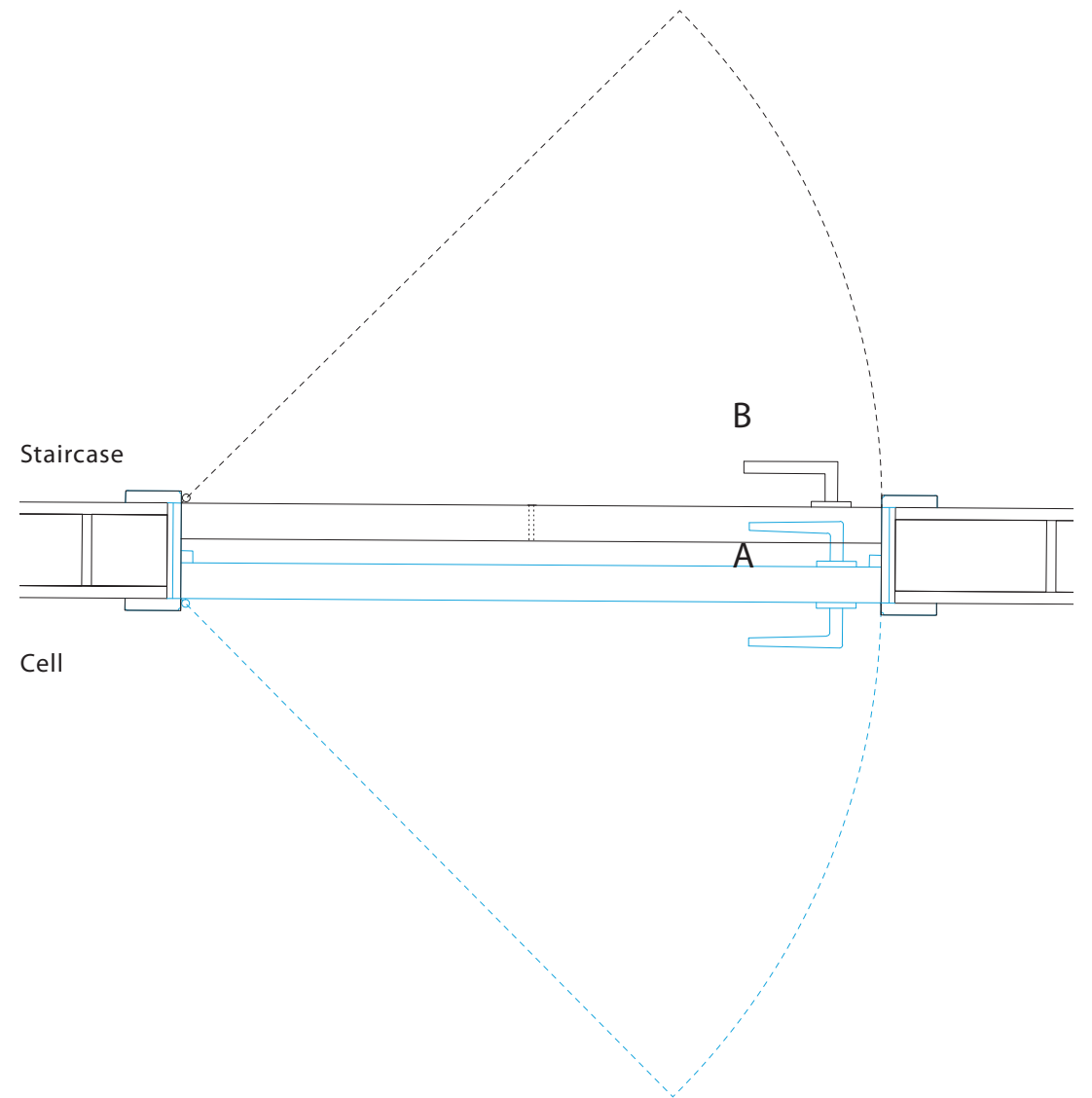


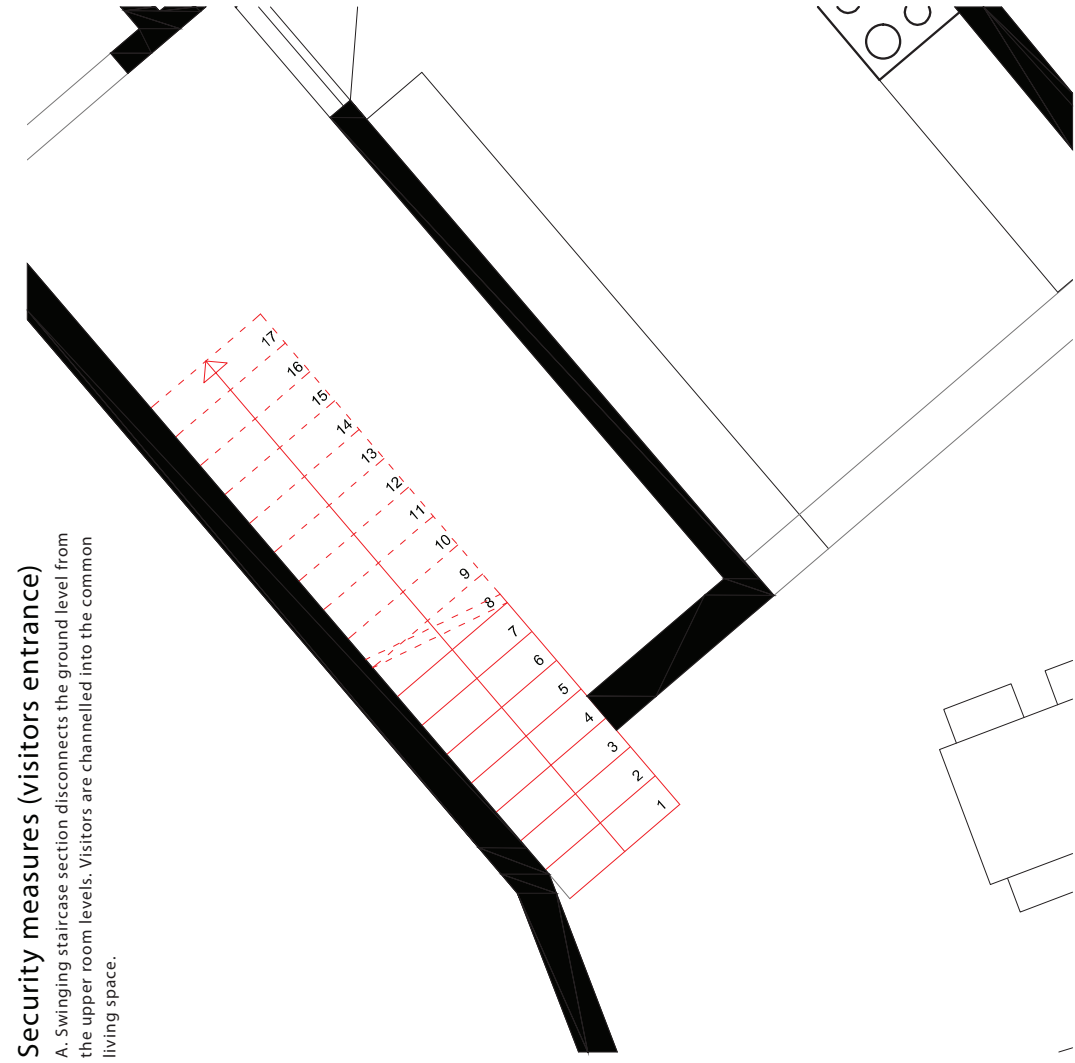
Security measure (windows)

- A. In-swinging part
- B. Fixed part

Security measures (room door)

- A. Current situation: door handles on both sides of an in-swinging door
- B. New situation: door handle on the outside only of an out-swinging door

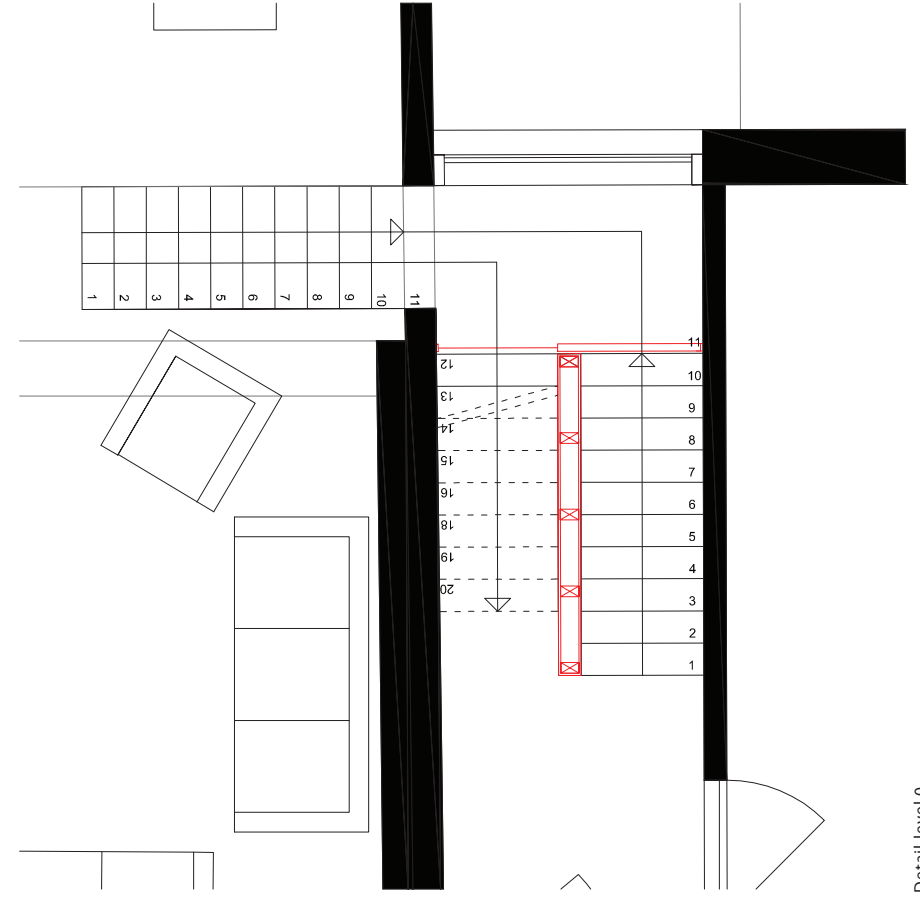




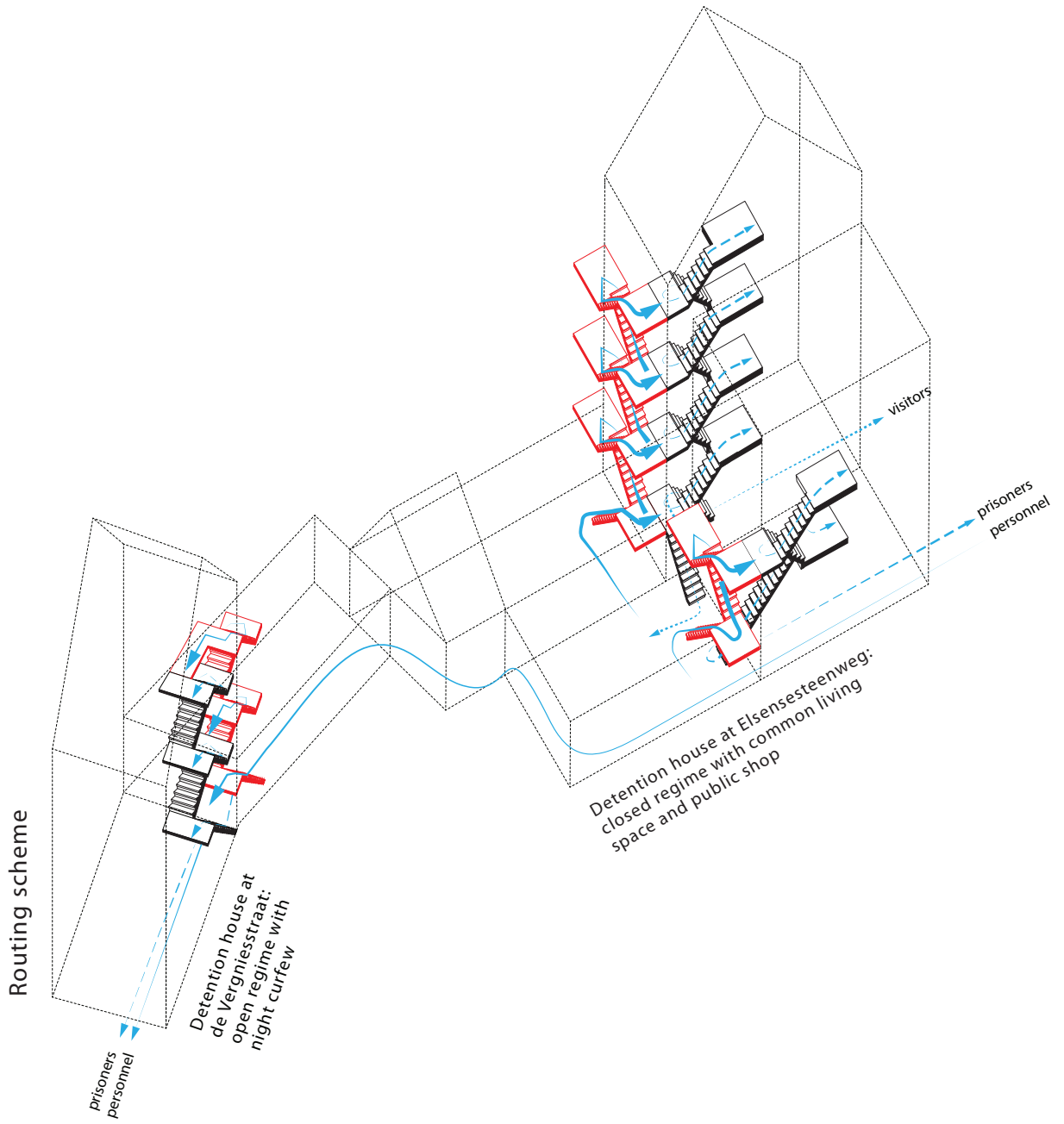
Security measures (visitors entrance)

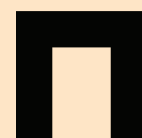
A. Swinging staircase section disconnects the ground level from the upper room levels. Visitors are channelled into the common living space.

Detail level 0




Detail level 0





PRISON GEAR

KENNISPLATFORM
VOOR HUMANE
GEVANGENIS
ARCHITECTUUR

 With support of
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