



Queer Dwelling

Mapping as a critical tool for analysing queer home-making
and challenging hetero-normative dwelling cultures
in Flanders and Brussels.

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By Erinn De Waele

ABSTRACT (ENG)

This thesis explores mapping as a critical tool to analyse queer home-making and to what extent queer home-making challenges hetero-normative dwelling cultures in Flanders and Brussels. By the mapping of eight queer households, this thesis aims to contribute to architectural research by shedding insight into the home-making of queer people with diverse intersectional identities. Through a participatory mapping project, queer people are made active agents in this research. As such, this thesis not only challenges hegemonic power structures between the researcher and participant, but also between the architect and the user. By using mapping as a research method of visualising queer home-making, this thesis thus contributes to alternative ways of knowledge production in both architectural and queer research. The mappings are then analysed through a theoretical framework of queer, feminist and decolonial studies and demonstrate how queer home-making both struggles and challenges hetero-normative dwelling cultures in Flanders and Brussels.

Key words: mapping, queer home-making, dwelling, hetero-normativity, queer – feminist – decolonial studies

ABSTRACT (NL)

Deze thesis onderzoekt mapping als kritisch instrument om queer home-making te analyseren en in welke mate queer home-making heteronormatieve woonculturen in Vlaanderen en Brussel uitdaagt. Door acht queer huishoudens in kaart te brengen, wil deze thesis een bijdrage leveren aan architectuuronderzoek door inzicht te verschaffen in de manier waarop queer mensen met diverse intersectionele identiteiten (t)huis maken. Door middel van een participatief mapping project worden queer people actieve deelnemers in dit onderzoek. Als zodanig daagt deze thesis niet alleen hegemoniale machtsstructuren uit tussen de onderzoeker en de deelnemer, maar ook tussen de architect en de gebruiker. Door het gebruik van mapping als onderzoeksmethode voor het visualiseren van queer home-making, draagt deze thesis bij aan alternatieve manieren van kennisproductie in zowel architectuur- als queer onderzoek. De mappings worden vervolgens geanalyseerd aan de hand van een theoretisch kader van queer, feministische en decoloniale studies en tonen aan hoe queer home-making zowel worstelt met heteronormatieve woonculturen in Vlaanderen en Brussel, als ze uitdaagt.

Kernwoorden: mapping, queer home-making, dwelling, hetero-normativiteit, queer – feministische-dekoloniale studies

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an interdisciplinary research on the intersection of architectural, queer, feminist and decolonial studies. The field of architecture still focuses too little on power structures and how the built environment exercises power, resulting in epistemic and spatial injustice in the field itself and in the design process. (Beeckmans, 2021) This thesis particularly focuses on the lack of queer perspectives and the involvement of queer people in architectural research. It tackles hetero-normativity in the production of spaces in Flanders and Brussels. Belgium, and particularly Flanders, is characterised by its sprawl and single-family home, designed for the white, heterosexual nuclear family. This family model is the basis of most housing design policies and construction in Belgium since the Law of De Taeye (1948). This ideal offers few options to accommodate alternative lifestyles and people's changing needs throughout their life (Doderer, 2023). Therefore, it affects not only non-heterosexual people, but everyone who has a different way of living outside this model. Next to that, this housing typology is not only problematic in terms of infrastructure, but is also an ideal that became less and less realistic since real estate prices tripled in Belgium in the last thirty years (Luysterman, 2019), which makes it even less achievable for minorities.

The concepts 'queer' and 'home' are explored in the conceptual framework, while the theoretical framework of this thesis dives in the dwelling cultures of Flanders and Brussels, and feminist and queer critiques on home(-making). The design of the single-family home prescribes hetero-normativity and gender roles, where women are subordinated. (Matrix, 1984) The subordination of women and the relationship with home-making is something that has been critiqued and researched by second-wave feminist thinkers. (Friedan, 1963; Hayden, 1981; hooks, 1990; Matrix, 1984) This will be expanded on in the theoretical framework. However, these works no longer reflect the complex reality we inhabit today. A queer critique can offer a contemporary understanding of the impact of hetero-normative gender roles on the built environment. Next to that, in queer architectural research, there is a lack of references by queer women of gender non-conforming people. Queer existences and their spaces that have been historised are mostly those of white, homosexual, cisgender, middle and upper-class men. Finding evidence for diverse queer existence through time as well as space, remains a problem. (Nathaniel Furman & Mardell, 2022) While naming these specific categories might feel contradictory in a queer research, it is important to include different intersectional experiences, because of the exclusion of queer women (of colour) and transgender people in queer research. Especially queer people of colour and/or with a migration background have the political power to reinvent the home by combining experiences of displacement and discrimination, with queer existence. Their experiences are marginalised in the field of architecture, who is in a severe need of decolonisation, which will be elaborated on in this thesis. (Boccagni, 2022) Queer research gives the opportunity to question societal norms and therefore offer an excellent viewpoint to deconstruct (hetero-normative) power structures in the field of architecture. In a spatial context, as Doderer (2023) says, "the term queer can encompass not only heterotopic spaces of deviation, but also non-defined, permeable, fluid spaces and related subjective and collective practices that can contribute to a further opening of society." (Doderer, 2023, p. 16)

The main goal of this thesis is to make queer people and their home-making practices more visible in dwelling cultures in Flanders and Brussels and architectural research. This thesis fights for more epistemic and spatial justice for queer people in the field of architecture and is focused on visibility and analysis instead on providing practical solutions.

I've chosen the topic of this thesis not only out of academic or political interest, but also out of a personal interest. The subordination of both women and queer people in the field of architecture and the built environment is something I personally experience on a daily basis. From facing sexism in my architecture studies to experiencing harassment in the streets as a woman, I also faced heteronormativity in places like my workplace, as a queer person. Therefore, writing this master thesis is for me an embodiment of the personal is political¹⁰.

This thesis explores one main research question:

How does the mapping of queer home-making challenge hetero-normative dwelling cultures in Flanders and Brussels?

I will tackle this question by trying to answer the next interlinked secondary research questions:

How are queer households making home in dwelling cultures in Flanders and Brussels?

How does queer home-making challenges or struggles with hetero-normative dwelling cultures?

How can mapping be a critical tool for researching queer home-making and challenge traditional knowledge production in architectural research?

The research questions focus on a specific research methodology: mapping. Mapping is an underexposed way of knowledge production in both architectural and queer studies. It's a form of data visualisation and spatializing data, where multiple forms of data are collected and juxtaposed with the purpose of telling a visual narrative. (Beeckmans & Salamé, n.d., p. 1) Mapping challenges traditional knowledge production, focusing on situated knowledge and lived experiences (Haraway, 1988). Mapping therefore to centres the experience of the participants, giving them the opportunity to guide and be active agents in creating knowledge. As such, this thesis not only challenges hegemonic power structures between the researcher and participant, but also between the architect and the user. For example, as a queer person myself, I'll was part of my own research through an auto-ethnographic mapping of my own queer home-making. The results of the mapping sessions reveal both how queer-homemaking practices struggle with and challenge hetero-normative dwelling cultures in Flanders and Brussels, which can be explored in the chapters mapping analysis and mapping insights.

¹⁰ Slogan second wave feminism, introduced by Carol Hanisch in Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation (1970)

1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The two main concepts used in this thesis are ‘home(-making)’ and ‘queer’, both highly complex and ambiguous terms. Instead of offering a complete understanding, this chapter attempts to provide an expanded view of what these terms could mean and how they relate to each other. As the meaning of these terms is highly contextual and personal, and unable to fully grasp the answer myself, I have asked what these terms mean to the mapping participants in my research, which is discussed in the Mapping Analysis.

First, this chapter delves into the complexity of ‘home’ and the practice of home-making, primarily drawing from insights from the book ‘Making Home(s) in Displacement’ (Beeckmans et al., 2022) to develop an intersectional meaning of ‘home.’ Afterward, the concept of ‘queer’ is explored through the history of queer theory and its political potential. The relationship between the two concepts will be examined through the ‘queer imagination’, giving examples in literature and documentary.

1.1. Home(-making)

Home is a concept deeply rooted in human experience, carrying multifaceted meanings that vary across individuals and cultures. In the book ‘Making Home(s) in Displacement’ (Beeckmans et al., 2022), the complex meaning of home is contested through an intersectional lens, giving voice to the experience of migrants’ and refugees’ home-making. This comprehensive research challenges the idealised and normative view on home(-making), which affiliates to home-making practices of queer individuals. (see section 1.3)

Home is often pointed out for having a double meaning (Beeckmans et al., 2022), seen as both “a bounded place” and “a meaningful and emotionalized kind of relationship with place”. (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017, p. 5) Thus, it is often portrayed as a fixed place of comfort and belonging; an idealisation that can be linked to the Western bourgeois idea of home, which sees home as an autonomous, safe haven for the white, middle-class, heterosexual nuclear family. This fixed abode is owned privately and detached from nature, therefore also linked to capitalist society and ecological destruction. (Heynen, 2022) Boccagni states that this depiction of home should be problematized because it is over-idealised and does not fit in the reality of displaced people (Boccagni, 2022), as well as others who are deprived of, or struggle with finding a home. In “Making Home(s) in Displacement’, home is described “as related to housing and family, development of self and community, gender identity and relationships, and to migration.” (Beeckmans et al., 2022, p. 13), focusing more on the complex meaning of home and contesting its idealisation.

Next to that, the book focuses on the process of home and puts forward the home-making as a spatial practice, which for migrants exceeds the boundaries of one fixed place, thus where making home(s) also becomes a transnational practice. (Beeckmans et al, 2022) Therefore, “the making of home(s) in this sense cannot be limited to the appropriation and transformation of domestic spaces; it is also

entangled with establishing access to legal and political representation as well as to community, rural- and urban-based, and citizenship.” (Beeckmans et al, 2019, p. 13) This description of home challenges the private-public dichotomy that is inherently tied to the normative and gendered depiction of home and the built environment, where ‘the private’ is linked to femininity and the home, and ‘the public’ is linked to masculinity and public spaces. (Vallerand, 2020) The private-public dichotomy, and binary thinking in general, is contested in this thesis for it does not align with queer thinking.

Boccagni calls for “the need for a non-essentialised and processual view of home”, where the spatial agency of refugees, but also other minorities such as queer people, can be both appreciated and seen as influential on the built environment. (Boccagni, 2022, p.140) This processual view of home and the spatial practice of home-making is the main focus of this thesis, instead of viewing home as a fixed place. Although some participants in the mapping research will endorse the idealised and fixed view of home, it will be countered by more processual and fluid meanings of home. It confirms that ‘home’ does not have one meaning for queer individuals but is also influenced by their intersectional identities and experiences, including their class, upbringing, age, ethnicity, migration background, and so on.

1.2. Queer

The word “queer” is as complex and loaded as the concept of “home”. The meaning can diverge heavily when, where, and by whom the word is used. It is mostly used as an umbrella term for gender and sexual minorities. (Vallerand, 2020) The term, originating from the Indo-European word “twist” (Ahmed, 2006), was first used as a slur for sexual and gender minorities, but claimed back during the New York Pride in 1990 through the flyer “Queers read this.” This flyer stated that the word ‘gay’ did not align with how many sexual and gender minorities felt or were perceived, especially because it was for many people equal to ‘male’. Queer was therefore a more fitting term for its inclusive meaning. (Queer Nation, 1990).

This queer critique resulted in the emergence of queer theory in the 90s. Pioneering queer theorist Judith Butler writes that it is dangerous to define or institutionalise queer thinking “for normalizing the queer would be, after all, its sad finish.” (Butler, 1994, p. 21) Nevertheless, it is important to give an overview of what ‘queer’ could mean to reveal its complexity and multiplicity. Weiss underlines that queer beholds more than only identity and primarily signifies “transgression of, resistance to, or exclusion from normativity, especially but not exclusively hetero-normativity.” (Weiss, 2016, p. 628) It is less an object of study (a who) and more a critique, an analytic (how to think about the world), giving “the opportunity to open our eyes and minds to other possibilities of being.” (Weiss, 2016, p. 635) Queer can therefore be used in different contexts. When used as a verb, ‘to queer’ or ‘queering’, the term obtains agency, showing its active potential for change. For queer theorist Sedgwick, queer is more about being a continuing movement, emphasizing its active potential. (Sedgwick, 1993) Sara Ahmed relates queer to spatiality in her book *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), referring to its original

meaning of ‘twist’. Therefore, Ahmed (2006) introduces the term ‘queer’ into spatial thinking.

“Queer is, after all, a spatial term, which then gets translated into a sexual term, a term for a twisted sexuality that does not follow a “straight line,” a sexuality that is bent and crooked. The spatiality of this term is not incidental. Sexuality itself can be considered a spatial formation not only in the sense that bodies inhabit sexual spaces, but also in the sense that bodies are sexualized through how they inhabit space.” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 69)

The active potential of queer, being a critique of society, gives it a high political potential. Queer politics breaks from rights-based politics for LGBTQ+ people, accusing it of its conformation to the heterosexual norm. When more normative gay activists fought for same-sex marriage, queer activists critiqued the concept of marriage as a traditional, patriarchal norm that reproduced heteronormativity. (Richardson, 2004) This phenomenon of conforming to heteronormativity as an LGBTQ+ citizen is described as ‘homonormativity’ by Lisa Duggan, where only white, homosexual, cis-gendered, monogamous couples are worthy of social acceptance. (Duggan, 2002) This homonormativity is used for a nationalist agenda in many countries that ‘achieved’ equal rights for LGBTQ+ people. This form of sexual and identity politics is named by Puar (2007) as homonationalism. In Belgium, this is also a widespread nationalist discourse, where openness, tolerance, and sexual liberation for LGBTQ+ are claimed, a discourse also supported and celebrated by the queer community. Nevertheless, the discourse also excludes non-Europeans and authorises imperialism, especially in the Middle East. For example, in the asylum-seeking process, queer Muslims are easily given asylum and warmly welcomed because ‘they need to be saved from homophobia in their country and religion’. This is while a heterosexual male Muslim is most likely to be denied asylum in Europe because of his religion, which is depicted as terroristic, homophobic, and sexist in Western society. This form of islamophobia, racism, white saviourism, and imperialism is common in a homonationalist agenda (Luibhéid, 2008), and queer politics has the potential, because of its inclusivity, to deconstruct these norms and power structures in ‘LGBTQ+ accepting’ nations.

1.3. The Queer Home

According to Bryant (2015), queering the home can further stretch the concept of home. He states that the queer home is a place for queer subjectivity to flourish, especially when the outside world is unsafe and marginalizing for queer people. The erasure of queer subjectivity in heteronormative society forces queer people to construct imaginary uses of space. This queer imagination was conceptualised by queer theorist Muñoz in his book ‘*Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*’ (2009). According to Muñoz, the queer imagination is a form of resistance and a way to envision a better future outside the limitations of socio-political reality. Therefore by inhabiting queer utopian spaces, they can serve as catalysts for societal change. (Muñoz, 2009)

An example of queer imagination can be found in the work of Audre Lorde. In ‘Zami: A New Spelling of My Name’ (1982), Lorde expands the idea of home by eliminating heteronormative family life and imagining alternative kinships. Her diasporic experience led her to seek the lesbian sisterhood as home, where home is an idealised collectivity of women working and loving one another. This sense of belonging, a vital part of identity forming, thus can be found in the ‘community-as-home’. (Bryant, 2015) The concept of ‘community-as-home’ is also found in the ballroom scene, displayed in the highly acclaimed documentary ‘Paris is Burning’ (Livingston, 1990). This documentary shows the lives of queer people in New York in the 80s, especially those of transgender and/or BIPOC queer individuals, whose lived experiences are poorly shown or invisible in history. The ballroom scene is a queer cultural event and safe space where people compete to dress and perform for different categories. For example, the category ‘Executive Realness’ lets (BIPOC) queer people be part of an imagined executive world, a place they were excluded from in the real world. Using terms such as ‘the house of...’, ‘mother’, and ‘children’, the ballroom scene presented an alternative kinship for displaced queer people who lost and/or rejected from traditional family life. (Livingston, 1990) This could be seen as an example of the queer community’s phenomenon of ‘chosen family’, relating to the close friends who replace or supplement their biological family.

In the novel *Stone Butch Blues* by trans writer and activist Leslie Feinberg, the idea of ‘body-as-home’ is explored. (Bryant, 2015) The book follows Jess, who first came out as a butch lesbian and is stigmatized in society for their¹⁰ sexuality and gender non-conformity, even in the queer community. Jess then decides to pass as a man in order to survive when they’re left without work or a community. They struggle with feeling comfortable in their own body and explain that not ‘feeling at home’ in your own skin leads to not feeling at home in a physical place. (Feinberg, 1993) But the story also emphasizes the importance of having a physical place for the body’s survival, safety, and comfort; a place Jess cannot find in their story relating to the reality of displacement of gender non-conforming individuals. The examples of ‘community-as-home’ and ‘body-as-home’ display the potential of queer home-making to reinvent the concept of home, affiliating with the earlier given description home as related to family and relationships, development of self, gender expression and migration. (Beeckmans et al., 2022)

These examples also stress that queer individuals are in need of a real, material place to keep them safe from discrimination. Queer individuals are more likely to be displaced than heterosexual, cisgender people. According to numbers in 2020, 11% of queer people experienced discrimination in terms of housing.¹¹ In those numbers, with their relatively low household incomes due to the gendered wage gap, lesbians are particularly vulnerable to displacement (Kern, 2020) and transgender and gender non-conforming people are at an even higher risk of being displaced. TGEU, an organisation for trans rights in Europe, unpacks housing discrimination for transgender people in Europe.

10 Writer’s note: I decided to refer to Jess with the pronouns of they/them. In the book, Jess is referred to with different pronouns, such as she/her and he/him.

11 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2020). A long way to go for LGBTI equality.

Their policy brief stresses that a quarter (25%) of trans people in Europe have experienced housing difficulties or homelessness at least once in their life, which is 40% for trans people with disabilities and trans people with a migration or ethnic minority¹² background .

With this framework in mind, this thesis explores both imagined and real queer homes and home-making practices. By visually researching them, the struggles, needs and desires in queer home-making is envisioned. This can offer a valuable insight into prevailing societal norms and generate innovative concepts capable of redefining domestic life. This transformative power gets even more significant when performed by queer migrants. As mentioned earlier, when combining the framework of making home(s) in displacement and the framework of queer imagination, the intersectional experience of displacement by queer migrants displays their political power to reinvent the home.

For the title of this thesis, “Queer Dwelling”, the term ‘dwelling’ was decided because it relates more to the meaning of ‘queer’. Dwelling, not as a synonym for house and, therefore a fixed place, (Boccagni, 2017) but related to the verb ‘to dwell’, meaning: to spend a lot of time thinking about something¹³. The verb connects with the processual view of home and queer thinking, highlighting change and fluidity over time. Therefore, the queer home can be used as a lens and a research subject for both queer studies (Boccagni, 2017) and architecture studies, which is elaborated on in Methodology.

12 TGEU. (2021). Coming Home: Homelessness Among Trans People in the EU [Policy Brief].

13 Cambridge Dictionary

2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter delves into the history of dwelling culture in Flanders and Brussels in relation to the conceptual framework. An overview of feminist critique on home(-making) will be extended in the last section of this chapter by a queer critique. The first section on dwelling culture in Flanders and Brussels will be based on information from the book ‘Wonen in Welvaart. Woningbouw en wooncultuur in Vlaanderen 1948-1973’ (2006) edited by Van Herck and Avermaete. For the feminist critique on home(-making), different sources are used, such as the books ‘Making Space. Women and the Man-Made Environment’ (1984) by Matrix and ‘Grand Domestic Revolution’ (1981) by Dolores Hayden, to more recent and intersectional critiques. For a queer lens on feminist theory, I will mainly use the book ‘Unplanned Visitors: Queering the Ethics and Aesthetics of Domestic Space’ (2020) by Olivier Vallerand.

2.1. Post-war dwelling culture in Flanders and Brussels

2.1.1. Personal housing history and the Law de Taeye

This thesis is situated in the dwelling context of Flanders and Brussels, characterized by its (sub)urban sprawl. (Heynen, 2010) I grew up in a typical Flemish house; a single-family home in a rural village near Ghent. The house is a typical Flemish farm house, built in the late 19th century and renovated in the sixties. We use the back door as the main entrance, a recurring practice in Belgian dwelling culture, entering the ‘achterkeuken’¹⁰ (back kitchen). The back door comes out to our long garden; an elongated plot typical for Flemish ribbon development. On the next page, I made a comparison between a Flemish rural house with plan from the book ‘Wonen in Welvaart’ and the house I grew up in. As a kid, I made drawings of my dream house, which resembled the very privileged living standard I grew up in: a green and spacious home with middle to upper-class parents. This living standard shaped my view on ‘home’ and therefore I wanted to ask my mapping participants to also draw their dream house, which could reflect their living standards, cultural and (non-)normative understandings of home.

The suburbanisation of Flanders was facilitated by the implementation of the Law De Taeye in 1948, a housing law that stimulated the construction of single-family homes and played a significant role in establishing and maintaining the welfare state after World War II (Van Herck & Avermaet, 2006). Historically known for its Catholic, rural, and anti-urban background, Flanders strongly favoured suburban living in single-family homes over dense city living. This profoundly impacted Belgian and Flemish dwelling culture, with suburban single-family houses from the 1950s and 1960s still primarily defining the current the housing landscape and way of living (Van Herck & Avermaet, 2006). The influence of the Law De Taeye is seen on the map and 2019 statistics, indicating that 95% of the Flemish population resides in areas characterized by suburban sprawl (Vermeiren et al., 2019), with

¹⁰ An ‘achterkeuken’ is another kitchen or workplace at the back of the house. It is rather a typical extra room in old Flemish farm houses.



Fig. 1: Typical Flemish house in the 1960s in a rural area

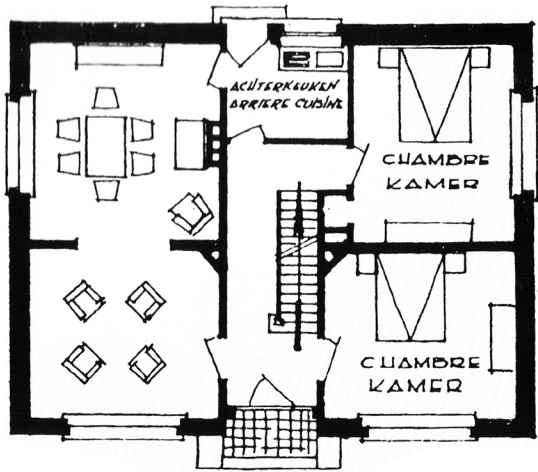


Fig. 2: Floor plan of house on the left



Fig. 3: House where I grew up



Fig. 4: Floor plan of house on the left



Fig. 5: Drawing of my dream house when I was 10 years old.

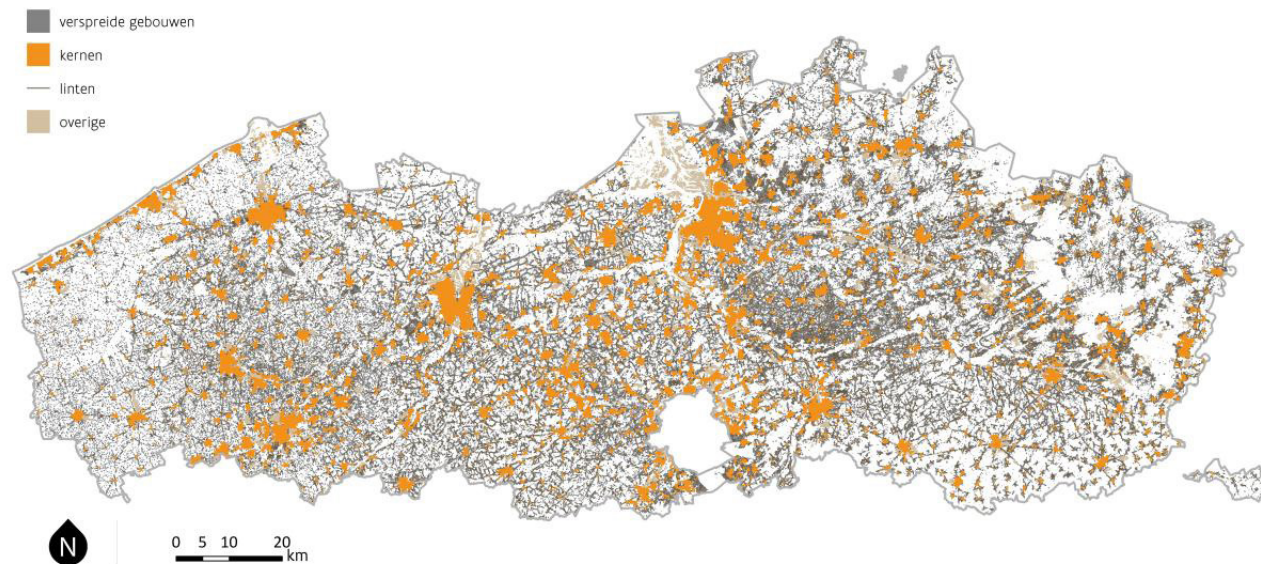


Fig 6: Map of centres and ribbon development in Flanders, 2019

72% of them being homeowners¹¹. The Law De Taeye also caused an urban exodus and demise of the inner city. The 1960s, for instance, were marked by ‘the great demolition’, where in Brussels, historic neighbourhoods were flattened to make way for large building projects. The rich moved to the green periphery while the lower class lived in rental apartments in the city. (Van Herck & Avermaet, 2006). De Law De Taeye was used as a moral instrument for providing modern and functional homes and set out the single-family home as the ideal. Thanks to this law, many families could build houses themselves by receiving a building premium. However, first, a building request had to be approved, where the design of the house had to comply with certain norms prescribed in the law, which were related to the comfort, equipment, and room layout of the house. (Theunis, 2006) Families were also encouraged to use model plans from national building agencies, which hoped to improve living conditions and the family, serving a stabilising role in society. In these plans, there was a growing attention to personal, individual development, most visible in the kitchen and living area arrangement, where the ‘working kitchen,’ separated from the living area, became a new norm. This kitchen was also meant to improve housework and make it more efficient. But it also meant that housework was tucked away, and therefore also the housewife. (Floré, 2006)

2.1.2. A woman’s place?

During the post war period, housing became part of societal debate (Van Herck & Avermaet, 2006), but rather than by the national state, it was taken up by CSOs (Heynen, 2010) such as the ‘Boerinnen-

11 Woonsurvey 2005, Grote Woononderzoek 2013 en Woonsurvey 2018, Agentschap Wonen in Vlaanderen (Steunpunt Wonen), bewerking Statistiek Vlaanderen

bond’, ‘Vrouwenbeweging’ and ‘Christelijke Arbeidersvrouwen.’ These CSO focused on the question: “How to live and organise the household?” and was primarily aimed at women. According to them, women were responsible for organising the housework and decorating the interior of the house. They were addressed by a range of magazines, housing manuals, expositions and even sample houses to educate them in these responsibilities. Opposite of that, men were responsible for practical work in the house, such as garden work. (Van Herck & Avermaet, 2006) Thus, in post-war Flemish dwelling culture, cultivated by sayings such as ‘De vrouw bij de haard’ (the woman at the fireplace) or ‘De vrouw des huizes’ (the woman of the house), a woman’s place was in the home. Therefore, the ideal of the single family home was strongly connected to heteronormative gender roles.

In the golden sixties, housework became more and more an important theme in these CSOs. Women were educated and introduced to new household appliances, such as the washing machine, which would make housework more time- and labour efficient. The importance of hygiene, order and cleanliness were emphasized; values that were considered an important part of an ‘ideal home.’ (De Vos, 2006) Collective facilities, such as public kitchens and laundrettes, were frowned upon by the Catholic CSOs. “Above all, they advocate the individual, suburban family home” with a well-equipped kitchen and washing area for the mother. (De Vos, 2006, p. 224) Thus, these CSOs, which claim to make life easier for housewives, actually perpetuated their oppression by isolating women in single family homes.

Not only was gender oppression a result of the idealisation of the single family home in Flanders, it was also used for colonial oppression in Congo. It is important to emphasize that the construction of the welfare state in Belgium, and its moral and civilizing purpose, also happened simultaneously in the Belgian colony. Due to the limitation of modernist housing in Belgium, the Belgian colonial government initiated modernist architecture in Congo during the 1950s. Between 1952 and 1960, the Belgian colonial government constructed 40,000 houses in various settlements, intended as examples of future, yet controllable, communities. Although these houses are different in style and architecture from the neo-traditional brick houses in Belgium, their layout and purpose was to promote the individualised nuclear family as a form of civilisation. (De Meulder, 2006). So, the ideal of the single-family

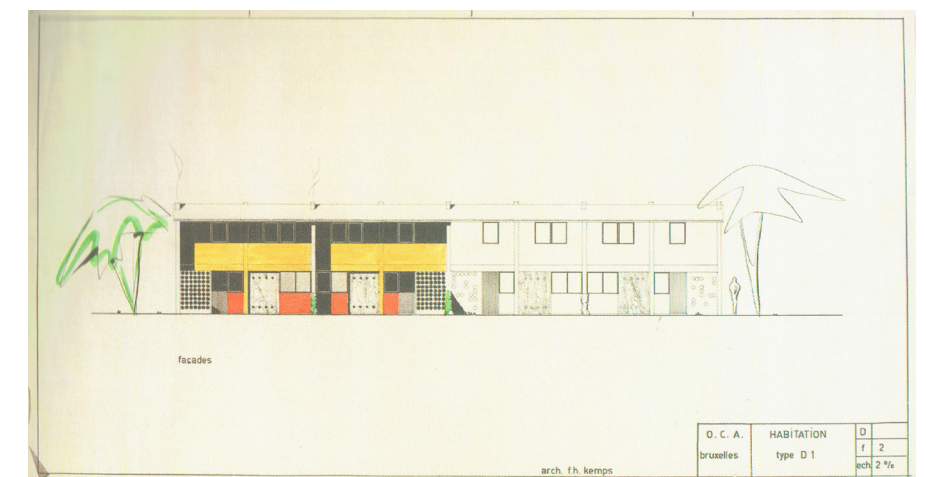


Fig 7: Plans of modernist housing in Congo

2.2. Feminist critique on home(-making)

2.2.1. The separate spheres and ‘Wages for Housework’

The division of women doing the work inside the home and men outside the home is something that got initiated in the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of capitalism. Men, women, and children were employed in factories and mines, giving rise to a social-reproductive crisis and eliciting moral panic due to ‘disruptions in the nuclear family’. The objective was to stabilise social reproduction by withdrawing women and children from factory labour and keeping them ‘at home’ (Fraser, 2016). This resulted in a segregation of a ‘public sphere’, for profit-generating production, and a ‘private sphere’, for social reproduction and domestic work. These separate spheres were highly gendered, where the ‘private sphere’ and the work of women was devalued and subordinated, generating a new form of gender oppression. (Fraser, 2016) In the book “The Grand Domestic Revolution” (1981) by Dolores Hayden, the economic exploitation of women in domestic work is explored. Hayden focuses on early material feminists in the United States who were the first to demand economic remuneration for housework. (Hayden, 1981) Hayden addresses that housework has always been “a major part of the world’s necessary labour,” (Hayden, 1981, p. 1) an idea that was also at the forefront of the feminist movement ‘Wages for Housework’ in the second feminist wave, but also on recent International Women’s days. With the slogan “If Women Stop, The World Stops” , feminists stress the vital work of women, who often do the care and house-work, which is essential in (capitalist) society. (Fraser, 2016)

The home was also seen as a place of retreat, which was in fact only true for men. Men were allowed to have a separate space of their own, like a library or office. (Matrix, 1984) Women had “no room of one’s own”, like Virginia Woolf argued in her essay by the same name. Woolf pleads that women need such a room for their independence and intellectual pursuits, but also as a safe space away from their (gender-oppressive) demands within the home and society. (Woolf, 1929) The separate spheres are also apparent in Belgian dwelling culture, where women got systematically isolated. Citizens got dependent on cars due to the suburban sprawl, something that was long only reserved for men. (Matrix, 1984) CSOs, such as the Boerinnenbond, tried to suppress the ideas of women’s oppression by stressing that the role of the housewife was as essential and respectful as that of the male breadwinner. (De Vos, 2006) However, this conviction gave women a false sense of equality and power, which reinforced their oppression and kept them inside the home. (Matrix, 1984) The separate spheres also gave rise to an ambivalent sexualised perception of women. On one hand, women were viewed as the “angel of the house”¹⁰, (Hayden, 1981) embodying moral superiority as dutiful housewives in need of protection. On the other hand, working women or women in the public sphere were perceived as mysterious and hypersexual. (Fraiman, 2017) Therefore, women required protection from men in the public sphere, adding another rationale from keeping women inside. (Matrix, 1984)

¹⁰ The “Angel of the House” refers to a popular concept in Victorian literature and culture that idealized the role of women within the domestic sphere during the 19th century. It originated from the poem with the same title from Patmore, which described the perfect woman who embodied qualities such as selflessness, submissiveness, and devotion to her family. (Fraiman, 2017)

The subordination of women and the relationship with home-making is something that has been critiqued and researched by feminist thinkers from the second wave of feminism, sparked by the book of American activist Betty Friedan ‘The Feminine Mystique’(Matrix, 1984). Friedan describes ‘the problem that has no name’, highlighting the feelings of dissatisfaction and emptiness that many (white, American and middle-class) housewives experienced despite living ‘the idealised suburban life’. (Friedan, 1963) London based feminist architectural collective Matrix brought women’s oppression forward in the built environment in their ‘Making Space. Women and the Man-Made Environment’ (1984). The ideas of both Friedan and Matrix could resonate with the lives of housewives in Belgium in the post-war period, where behind these women “is the image of the ‘ideal home’; the ideology of domesticity, which describes how things ought to be and ought to look.” (Matrix, 1984, p. 1) Women were responsible for the maintenance of the home and the family, a never-ending job (Matrix, 1984) that was done as an ‘act of love’ for their family and therefore did not need compensation. (Arruzza et al., 2019) This made women reliant on men engaged in paid labour. (Fraser, 2016) But even women who worked outside the home were still assumed to do all of the housework and caretaking. (Matrix, 1984)

“As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, (...) ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, (...) she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – “Is this all?”” (Friedan, 1963, p. 15)



Fig. 8: The film ‘Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles’ of Belgian queer filmmaker Chantal Akerman brought the life of the Belgian housewife to the screen in 1976. The 3-hour long film ,depicting the monotonous life of white, middle-class housewife Jeanne, can be seen as a product of second-wave feminism.

2.2.2. Lack of intersectionality

However, it is important to point out that the feminists referenced above, such as Betty Friedan, Matrix and Dolores Hayden, claimed that the experiences of housewives were ‘a universal struggle’. This notion was recurring in the second-wave of feminism, where the struggles were based on the experiences of white, heterosexual, middle-class, Western women. (Burton, 1991) In the 1970s, black feminists critiqued this ‘universal feminism’ for its lack of incorporating different experiences of women, especially women of colour, where intersectional thinking acknowledged the unique oppression faced by black women within feminism. (Kent, 2004) Bell hooks, also part of this movement, even wrote a critique on Friedan’s work for its lack of intersectionality in her book ‘From Margin to Center’ in 1984. Hooks emphasized that women of colour and lower classes did not exist in Friedan’s book and were those, according to hooks, who were most victimised by sexist and racist oppression in both the private sphere and public sphere. (hooks, 1984) Friedan’s work is also distinctly heteronormative, portraying women as heterosexual ‘wives’. She does not speak of the needs of single women, women without children, queer women; but also displaced and homeless women. (Fetters, 2013)

Hooks dives into the experience of the domestic sphere by black women and black families in her essay ‘Homeplace (a site of resistance)’ (1990), where she speaks about home as a place of resisting against racist and sexist oppression, also referring to the hard lives of black women “who for the most part worked outside the home serving white folks”, which hooks’ mother also did. (hooks, 1990, p. 41). This racist oppression in white homes came accompanied with the sexist oppression of black women by black men in their own homeplace. (hooks, 1990) Even today, where paid housework becomes more apparent, often lower-class women (of colour) and/or with a migration background do the housework of working middle-class (white) women. (Arruzza et al., 2019)

Unfortunately, racism and colonialism remains a neglected aspect in 19th and 20th-century feminism, despite its substantial contribution to gender oppression. Divergent roles and perceptions of womanhood were imposed on white women and racialised, enslaved women. While the ideology of the “angel of the house” was propagated in the Western context, women in the colonies were perceived as robust and strong labourers, qualities linked to their racial inferiority and enslavement. (Hawkesworth, 2006) Consequently, Western concepts, such as the separate spheres and their heteronormative gender roles, were adopted by the colonies, prompting criticism from Western nations and feminism today regarding the very concepts they had imposed (Varma, 2018).

2.2.3 The problem with house design manuals

Heteronormative gender roles can also be seen in house plans and design manuals, who often “perpetuate a very traditional picture of the nuclear family and women’s role of it” (Matrix, 1984, p. 78) This can be most clearly seen in the design of the kitchen, which “got removed from the living room” around the 1930s, “leaving the former solely for recreation and relaxation” for the husband and children. (Matrix, 1984, p. 79) The kitchen became a small, separate workspace who acts like a hub in the

house plan, often having a view into the living and dining area, where the housewife could keep an overview of the children. Kitchens, also in the post-war period, were very small and could mostly fit one working person, presumed to be the housewife (Matrix, 1984) This can be seen on one of the example plans in the book of Matrix, but also in the house plan of my own house displayed in section 2.1.

In my architecture studies, I also got confronted with heteronormative, sexist gender roles presented in design manuals. In the first year, all students were recommended to use the book ‘De Menselijke Maat’ as a reference for ergonomic measures. Although this book dates back from 1980, around 35 years before I started in my first year, it was used as the main reference and thereby reproducing stereotypical gender roles. It depicts the male body as the norm; the female body is only displayed as a side character doing house- or care-work. This design manual claiming ‘neutral’ measurements is based on the white, male body. Therefore, the ‘human’ in the title, truly means ‘male’. I incorporated a scan of a rare depiction of a woman in the manual, used as a reference for designing a kitchen.

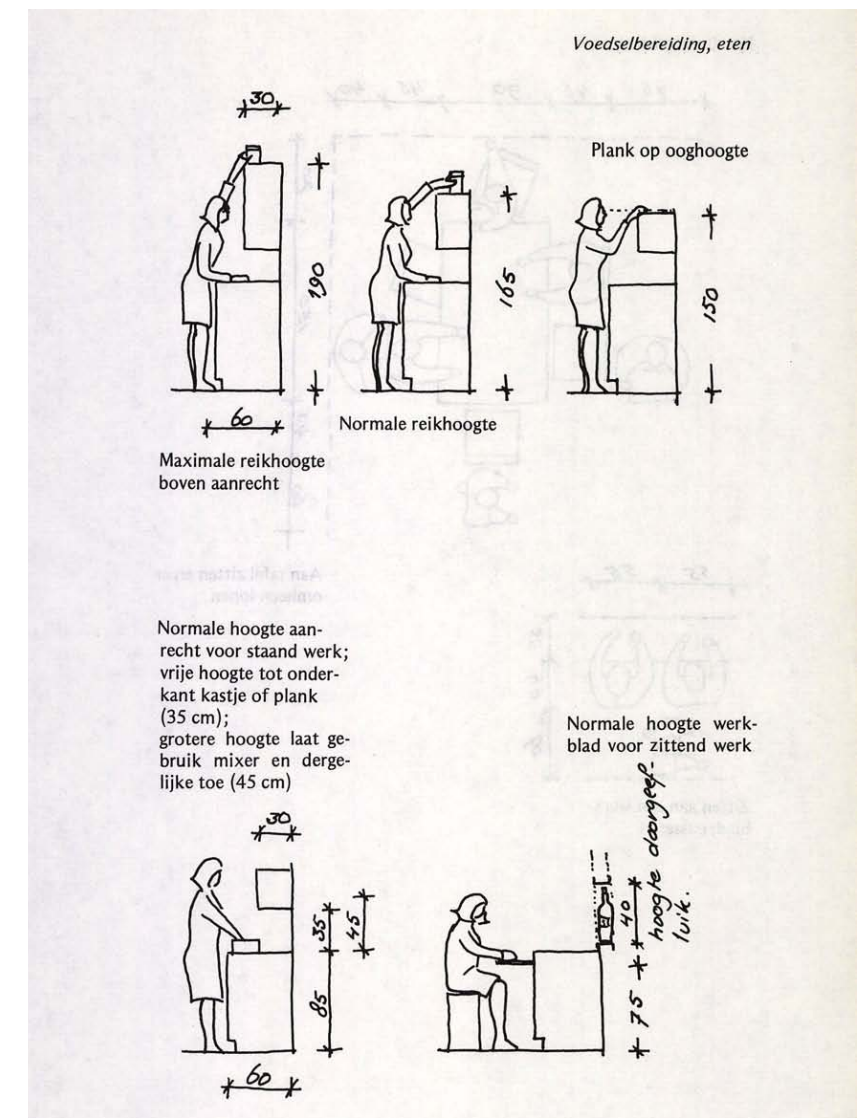


Fig. 9: Page from the ‘Menselijke Maat’ design manual. (1980)

The kitchen as place of gender oppression was taken into debate by several feminists. According to Hayden, the kitchen was an important place for societal transformation for material feminists. They wanted to abolish this private, individual domestic workplace and envisioned collective spaces where domestic labour was shared and recognised as valuable work. (Hayden, 1981) According to Puigjaner, “the kitchen plays a central role in the transformation of society, particularly in the reorganisation of domestic and care work.” (Puigjaner, 2023, p. 71) Matrix also critiques the privatisation of domestic work, which was once a public and communal activity. The single-family home promotes individuality and “an introverted family lifestyle, in which household duties” are tucked away in the back. (Matrix, 1984, p. 88) Even with the invention of household appliances, hours put into housework increased during the 20th century (Hayden, 1981), because the norm for cleanliness also rose (Matrix, 1984).

But, housework can also be seen from a different perspective. “By the enactment of (gendered) household tasks, home is created and recreated through the continuity of identities, families, and cultures (...) For instance, preparing food maintains culture and produces home.” (Dreyer, 2022, p. 209). Therefore, home can be seen as a much more fluid, dynamic and processual, focussing on “the everyday embodied actions of homemaking.” (Dreyer, 2022, p. 209). This places the home in a more positive light within feminist debate. Bell hooks, for instance, sees home as a powerful place for political change. Today, there are “louder calls for the alternative forms of communal living”, especially when “the nuclear family is increasingly losing its normative binding force.” (Puigjaner, 2023, p. 71) A queer perspective, abolishing heteronormative gender roles, can be an aid in this transformation, which will be further explained in the next chapter.

2.3. Queer critique on home(-making)

Since the post-structuralist debate in feminist theory in the 90s, the concept of gender moved beyond the binary logic and tended toward a more complex and intersectional understanding, also encompassing class, race, sexuality, disability, etc. (Doderer, 2023) Therefore, much of the (Western) feminist critique on home mentioned in the chapter before, doesn't reflect the complexity we inhabit today. But, to understand queer theory which builds further upon feminist theory (Vallerand, 2020), it is necessary to understand the intersectional history of gender oppression.

Queer theory contests binary thinking, especially the man-woman dichotomy and where queer space then contests the connection of gender and sexuality to the private-public dichotomy. For example, the act of cruising, where homosexual men seek sexual intimacy in the public sphere, contests the idea that sexuality should only be performed inside the private sphere. (Vallerand, 2020) Vallerand is cautious with these descriptions, because queer spaces are often reduced to its link with sexuality, which “diminishes the complexity and layers of queer space, that go beyond gender and sexual identity.” (Vallerand, 2020, p. 19) Rather, he conceptualises sexuality as the way we form “relationships and the ideals and norms that come with it.” (Vallerand, 2020, p. 19) This can be linked to hetero-normativity, where ideals such as monogamy, marriage, the nuclear family, and buying a house.

“But what is queer space? What does it look like? Is it material or more something defined by emotions and encounters?” During my Gender and Diversity studies, I also struggled with these questions. I first tried to find answers in my personal experience, borrowing ideas from the book ‘Queer Phenomenology’ by Sara Ahmed. According to Ahmed, phenomenology connects to queerness, because it questions static or ‘natural’ facts about the ways we give meaning to things. It emphasises the importance of lived experiences, the significance of nearness and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds (Ahmed, 2006). Thus, what someone experiences as queer space is subjective and not universal or timeless. “Queer space can be private, intimate, and secretive, or it can be communal, public and shared. (...) It comes and goes, sometimes enduring in the same site for years, (...) and sometimes so transient it lasts only for a single encounter” (Nathaniel Furman & Mardell, 2022, p. VIII) I tried to tackle this complexity of experience and relationship between bodies and spaces (Körner, 2016) in an auto-ethnographic research on queerness in public spaces of Brussels. (De Waele, 2022) These questions also appear because queer spaces have been erased and ridiculed throughout history. (Nathaniel Furman & Mardell, 2022) In my architecture studies, I also lacked examples of queer architectural history. The book ‘Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places & Stories’ (2022) by Adam Nathaniel Furman and Joshua Mardell, tries to fill in the absence of queer space in history; seeing archiving as a form of activism. The book includes different typologies, from domestic to communal spaces, contesting the public-private boundary. The book attempts to give a broad range of intersectional and worldwide queer spaces, critiquing that the queer lives that haven been historised tended to be overwhelmingly white, male, and middle/upper-class. (Nathaniel Furman & Mardell, 2022)



I chose an example in the book that sparked my interest because of its unique architectural design. The project is a domestic space in Japan designed by architect Osama Ishimaya in 1995 for a male couple. They asked for a house like a coffin-like box, with no windows, except for skylight windows. The project named 'Light Coffin' therefore soon got the nickname 'Dracula's Den'. This house exists of one open space, where the kitchen, bedroom and bathroom stand in a straight line. When looking up, you can see a metal mesh catwalk crossing the space. (Ueno, 2022)

"A coffin is an object associated with the image of death. However, from the photographic documents and episodes recounted by the owners and guests who were able to enjoy a unique lifestyle inside this box. (...) It offers multiple contrasting forms of privacy, with the couple requiring the feeling of protection from the immediate surroundings and prying eyes of neighbours¹⁰, but wanting total openness in their interior in all activities towards one another and guests." (Ueno, 2022, p. 8)

"The 'Light Coffin' emphasises the fact that it is possible to have different forms of 'family' living in a 'house'", (Ueno, 2022, p. 8) therefore contesting the concepts of 'family' and 'house'.

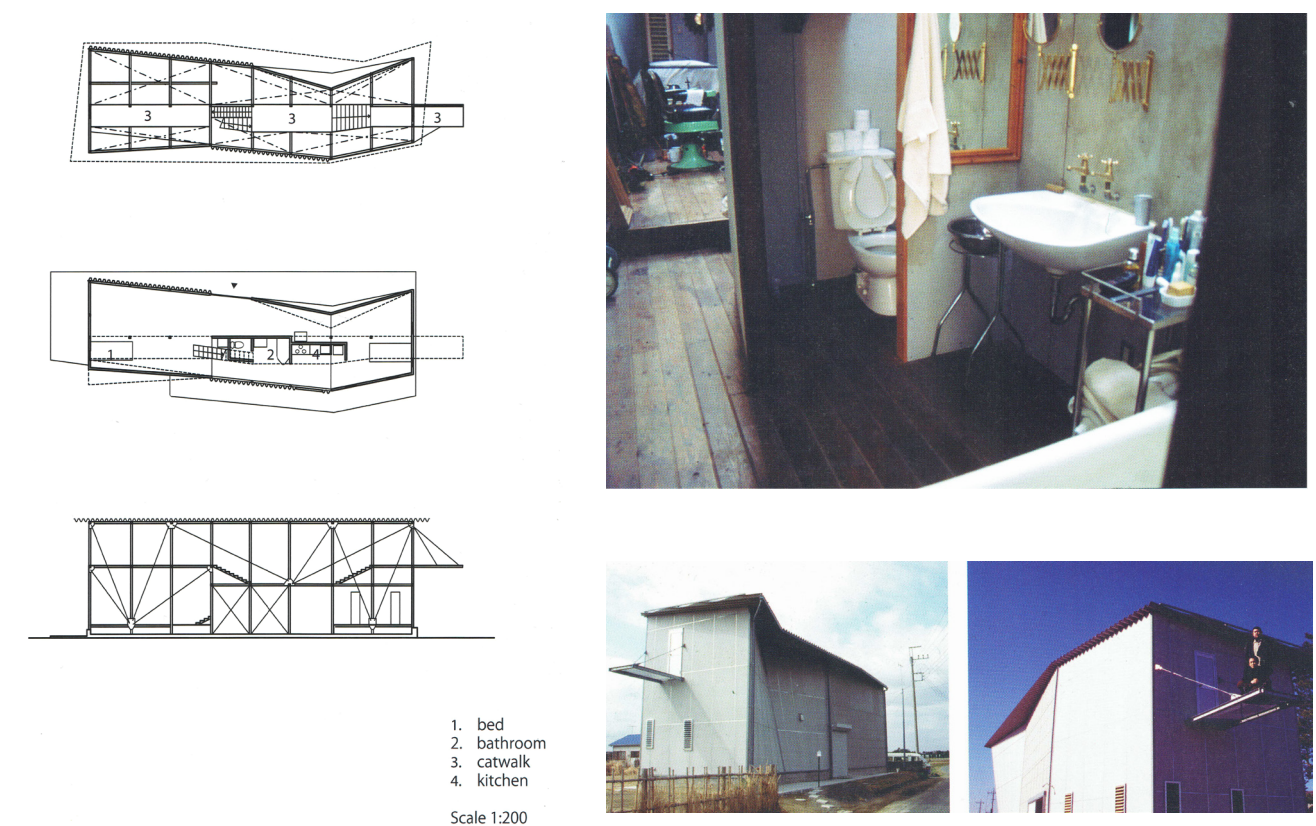


Fig. 11: Plans, interior and exterior of the project 'Light Coffin'

< Fig. 10: Interior of the project 'Light Coffin'

¹⁰ Although Japan had a gay liberation in the 90s, it still had (and has) very notable negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people. (Ueno, 2022, p. 8)

The queer potential to reinvent the home, (see chapter 1, 1.3.) can be seen as carried out by the queer people inhabiting this ‘house’. This form of queer domesticity can also be linked to ideas in the book ‘Extreme Domesticity’ (2017) by Susan Fraiman, where she describes the ambivalence of how queer people reinvent and reproduce gendered household tasks as an essential part of home- and identity making, bringing home-making back to an essential part of being human. (Fraiman, 2017, p. 44) In the conclusion, she suggests that everyone, including queer people, has a “desire for non-extremity – for safety, comfort, and belonging.” (Fraiman, 2017, p. 196) Although she stresses that it was important for her book to focus on ‘extreme’ homemakers “as a way of troubling normative notions of home”, she also wants them to be perceived “simply as homemakers”. (Fraiman, 2017, p. 196)

Although architectural examples are important for representation in (architectural) history, Vallerand (2020) stresses the danger of linking material spaces to queerness. “Would the Light Coffin be seen as a queer space if a heterosexual couple lived in it? Should we define a space as queer, just because queer people use it, inhabit or designed it?” This form of essentialising queer space, focusing on single building or architects, is contradictory to the openness of the term ‘queer’. This is also why this thesis focusses on queer home-making practices, instead of queer ‘homes’. (See chapter 1, 1.1.) Vallerand critiques the book ‘Queer Space’ by Aaron Betsky (1997), which mostly shows single spaces inhabited or designed by white, middleclass, gay men, lacking a broad range of contributions of other queer people (Vallerand, 2020), something that is at least more attempted in the archival book of Nathaniel Furman and Mardell.

Trying to define the specific characteristics of ‘queer spaces’ would only marginalise or side-line these spaces even more. Thus, Vallerand suggests another approach, where he focuses on queer design practices and queer methods which create safe spaces for everyone. (Vallerand, 2020) This can be linked to Matrix concept of the feminist architectural practice, where the focus doesn’t lie on what feminist architecture looks like, but rather in how they can implement feminist thinking into the design of spaces. (Matrix, 1984) In the case of this thesis, the idea of what an queer architectural practice can be, is investigated, which will be further elaborated on in the next part of this thesis, focussing on the research methodology.



Fig 12: Photo by photographer Catherine Opie, who documented queer domesticity in the 90s.



Fig 13: Photo by photographer Catherine Opie, who documented queer domesticity in the 90s.

3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Feminist and queer epistemologies

3.1.1. Critique on traditional knowledge production

This thesis critiques and tackles traditional knowledge production, which often claims to be universal and objective, suggesting that there is a single and neutral perspective to look at the world (Haraway (1988)). However, this ‘neutral perspective’ is predominantly Eurocentric and dominated by privileged groups, particularly white men. This dominance perpetuates power imbalances and marginalizes other voices and knowledge, such as those of women, people of colour, queer people, and other marginalised groups (Haraway, 1988). Like Haraway, this thesis tries to decentre dominant voices to create a more inclusive and diverse understanding of the world.

Traditional knowledge production often neglects the embodied and lived experiences of (marginalised) people. Haraway (1988) emphasizes the importance of valuing these experiences as valuable sources of understanding, particularly in feminist epistemology. (Haraway, 1988) Feminists have emphasized that “knowledge is situated¹⁰ and produced in encounters between an embodied self and other(s)”, which implies “that what a researcher can come to understand or know is always subjective, partial, relational and thereby entangled with power hierarchies” (Dreyer, 2022, p. 202). Therefore, an openness about the epistemology and methodology of research is pursued in this thesis and should “not be brushed aside as irrelevant”, due to its link to political power (Saïd, 1979, p. 210). Hence, this thesis attempts to produce situated feminist knowledge, because it aligns with important aspects of queer theory, such as the existence of multiple truths and perspectives, complexity and intersectionality within identities, and challenging (hetero-)normative power structures within society.

3.1.2. Positionality – becoming a queer ethnographer

Feminist knowledge production also focuses on “interrelated issues,” such as “the relationship between the researcher and researched, the authority of the researcher, representation and a claim to objectivity” (Dreyer, 2022, p. 202). These issues are especially important to discuss since this is an ethnographic research, which has been proved problematic by many feminist scholars because of its colonial history (Tayob, 2018), primarily portraying the colonized as the ‘Other’ (Saïd, 1989). Therefore, “ethnographers should be mindful that their research is not perpetuating colonial control of ‘distant’ peoples and places” (Dreyer, 2022, p. 202).

In searching for participants, I sought a diversity of queer people living in Flanders and Brussels. This resulted in a group of people that I almost all know personally. Being queer myself and growing up and living in the context where this research is conducted, reduces the idea that I’m an outsider who

¹⁰ Situated knowledge recognizes that knowledge is not detached or impartial but is always situated within specific social, cultural, and historical contexts. It suggests that the way we understand and produce knowledge is influenced by our social positions, experiences, and perspectives. In other words, knowledge is always situated within particular power relations and subjectivities. (Haraway, 1988)

creates knowledge about cultural others that set them up as “strangers”. (Ahmed, 2000) Next to that, the topic of this research is related to my own daily reality and field of interest; it’s not a distant, abstract academic question (Dreyer, 2022, p. 208). I also became part of my own research, executing an auto-ethnography¹¹, where I took part in the first mapping as both a queer home-maker and as a researcher. Thus, my experience in this research was also about “moving within and between categories, slipping out of the comfort of identities” of “queer”, “architect,” and “researcher” (Rooke, 2009, p. 157). Besides that, being white, middle-class, and having no migration background, puts me in a privileged position, which also challenged many of my biases and preconceptions.

To address my positionality and subjectivity, I wrote my subjective self¹² in this thesis, sharing my thoughts and doubts, that are conditioned by my identity, assumptions and past experiences (Dreyer, 2022, p. 203-204). It was difficult to decide how much space I should take in as a researcher. Addressing doubts like this are also part of being reflexive, which is an opportunity to address the gaps and biases in this research. Reflexivity is inherently tied to queer research, because it questions “both ontological and epistemological evidence”, where an openness and attention to one’s own queer subjectivity in the research process is required. (Rooke, 2009, p. 154) Therefore, a queer ethnography “recognizes experience as a nodal point of knowledge, providing useful information about the self, subjects, and the spaces they inform and are informed by.” (Rooke, 2009, p. 157) There has been an increased interest in the social sciences in how people, cultures and practices vary spatially, which is also referred to as the ‘spatial turn’. (Mckinnon & McCallum Breen, 2022; Beeckmans & Salamé, n.d.) Where the main objective of spatializing data is “to come to a relational and spatially embedded understanding of social phenomena, highlighting their interconnectedness, multi-layeredness and multi-scalarity” (Beeckmans & Salamé, n.d., p. 1). Therefore, conducting queer architectural research seems valuable in the rise of adding the spatial element in queer thinking and vice versa. Hence, this interdisciplinary research produces new knowledge and cross-fertilisation between the field of architecture and queer studies.

3.2. Contesting architectural knowledge production

The problems within traditional knowledge are also present in the field of architecture. The field predominantly favours and displays Western architectural contributions made by male architects, where contributions of women and minorities (Osteyn, 2023), but also non-Western architectural histories and archives (Sharr, 2009) are devalued and ignored, which consequently become invisible. (Osteyn, 2023) Therefore, the field of architecture is in severe need of decolonisation, where it still focuses too little on power structures, but also in how the built environment exercises power. This results in epistemic and spatial injustice in the field itself and in the design process. (Beeckmans, 2021)

This thesis tries to tackle power dynamics within the field of architecture by challenging authorship

¹¹ Autoethnography is a form of ethnographic research in which a researcher connects personal experiences to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings.

¹² See chapter 2, section 2.1. on my personal housing history – see introduction of mapping sessions and my own drawings during the mapping sessions.

and giving agency to non-experts. The focus of this research lies on the process and subjectivity of knowledge production, where the participants’ contributions stand central; an attempt to add queer perspectives in architectural history (see chapter 2, section 2.3.). In this search, it was important to find a method that does not follow the traditional conventions of architectural visualisations. These visualisations, such as architectural plans and drawings, can be seen as problematic for their so-called neutrality and abstraction. (Sharr, 2009) They often portray, especially renderings¹³, an ‘idealised’ world which is only inhabited by the white middle-class, ignoring the diversity we live in today. (Beeckmans, 2021) Next to that, architects are taught to think about spaces in an abstract way, which distances them from everyday reality and the personal experiences of spaces (by non-experts). (Matrix, 1984) Matrix calls for a need to demystify and democratise this architectural ‘language’ and make it accessible to everyone involved. (Matrix, 1984, p. 94)

Architectural processes suffer from the delusion that ‘objective’ knowledge can be attained by means of graphic representation. (Lefebvre, 1992, p. 49)

The most common architectural drawings are plans, which are scaled orthographic projections of buildings. They follow European Cartesian logic, which is so ingrained in architecture, that its Eurocentrism is hardly questioned. (Sharr, 2009) These drawings are also seen as ‘fixed’ and prescribe how to live in the buildings they portray, especially when furniture is drawn into them, freezing one form of inhabitation. (Sharr, 2009, p. 315) Therefore, they subtly prescribe heteronormative gender roles, also seen in design manuals. (see chapter 2, section 2.2.) Huda Tayob (2018) tries to challenge the power and authority architectural drawings inhabit. She used architectural drawing methods in her ethnographic research which focuses on spaces of marginalised populations. By drawing plans of marginalised spaces, she gives the drawings “an apparent authority as they mimic precision and rationality.” (Tayob, 2018, p. 211) She claims that using the same conventions “emphasises the importance of these spaces as worthy of being drawn” and making them a valuable subject of spatial research. (Tayob, 2018, p.213)

Both Sharr (2009) and Tayob (2018) claim to deconstruct the authority of architectural drawings in their research, while I believe they reinforce them by making these drawings themselves, declining giving agency to the people living in the portrayed places. Therefore, I doubted to incorporate architectural drawings in this research, but I also believe, alike Tayob (2018), that they play a role in making this research valuable in the field of architecture. This will be further expanded on in the introduction of chapter 4, the Mapping Analysis. But in general, I found it important that the visualisation of data focused on ‘drawing’, and not ‘architectural drawing’. Drawing remains “more open to the changing present”, because “another line could always be added, (Tayob, 2018, p. 217-218) and therefore can be seen as a continuous, infinite process (Lyon, 2022). I believed that this understanding, instead of focusing on the fixity and power dynamic of architectural drawings, fitted better within a queer ethnography.

¹³ Renderings are 3D realistic visualisations of future buildings and their environment.

3.3. Mapping as a queer method

This part forms partly an answer to the research sub-question: How can mapping be a critical tool for researching queer home-making and challenge traditional knowledge production in architectural research? This answer will be further formulated in the mapping insights in Chapter 5, section 5.3.

3.3.1. Mappings versus maps

One of the main objectives of this thesis is to develop an appropriate methodology to represent home-making practices of queer people. This methodology also has to be a tool to perform cross-fertilisation between the architecture studies and queer studies, which don't follow traditional visualisation conventions. Therefore, I chose 'mapping' as a method, an underexposed way of knowledge production in both architectural and queer studies. Mapping is a form of data visualisation and spatializing data, where multiple forms of data are collected and juxtaposed with the purpose of telling a visual narrative. It's goal is to present multiple meanings, ambiguities and make presumptions of a certain situation visible and more easily understandable. (Beeckmans & Salamé, n.d., p. 1)

While, mappings stand in contrast to traditional maps, taking on mapping as a method requires negotiation with cartography's difficult history, where maps were used as a colonial tool (Mckinnon & McCallum Breen, 2022) to occupy and dominate territories. (Beeckmans & Salamé, n.d., p. 1) They are also drawn from an Eurocentric perspective and play an important role in the field of architecture and urban design. (Mckinnon & McCallum Breen, 2022) Maps, just like architectural drawings, are therefore no neutral or objective representation of the world (Beeckmans & Salamé, n.d.), just alike architectural drawings. Mapping, however, tries to bring forward subjective and multiple perspectives. Therefore, I refer to the drawings as 'mappings' and not maps, to emphasise the ongoing process of data visualisation and break away from the professionalised world of cartographers and its colonial history. (Mckinnon & McCallum Breen, 2022)

Today, we are constantly surrounded by visual images through the use of digital technologies, including maps, "which blur the traditional division between maps and other images." (Mckinnon & McCallum Breen, 2022, p. 5) These technologies also allow that everyone can become a map maker, challenging the hierarchal position of maps by the increasing presentation of maps made by 'non-experts'. (Mckinnon & McCallum Breen, 2022) An example of this is the online initiative of 'Queering the Map', a community that generates a counter-mapping platform for digitally archiving LGBTQ2IA+ experience in relation to physical space. So, everyone can digitally add their queer experiences to a location on the map, resulting in a widespread collection of queer experiences around the world. It's goal is to preserve queer history, which continues to be invalidated and erased.

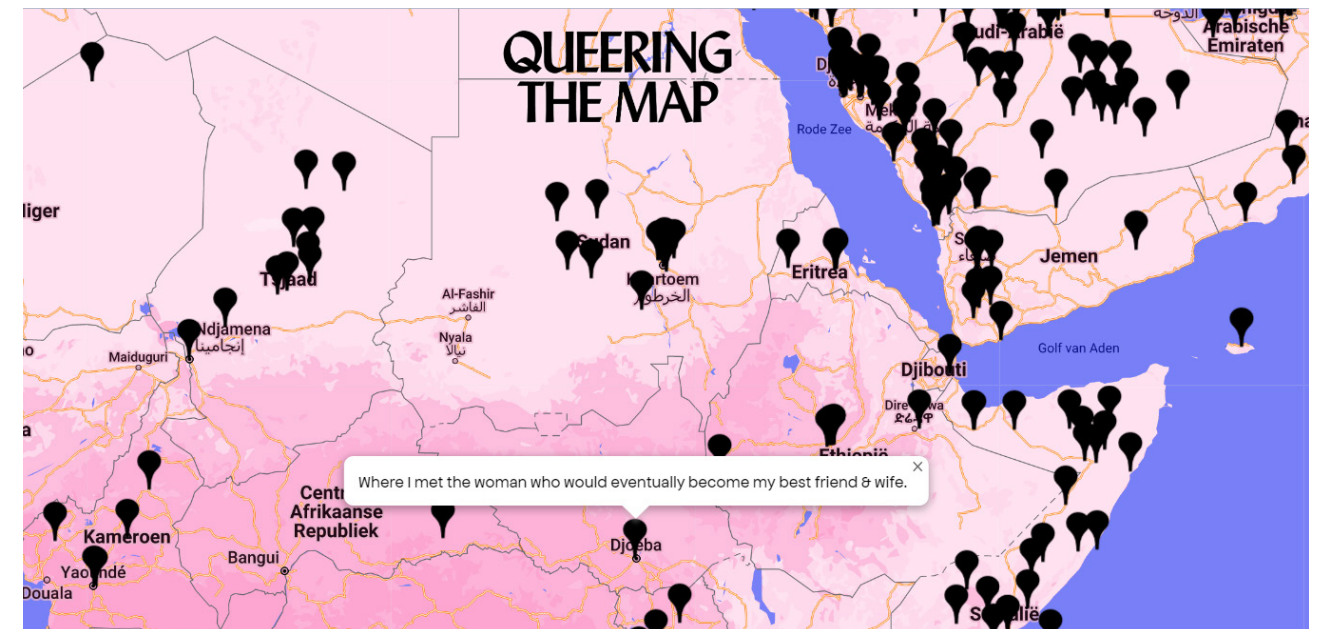


Fig. 13: Contribution to the Queering the Map initiative

3.3.2. Mapping as a critical tool for analysing queer home-making

This thesis focuses, however, on low-tech and soft tools in the creation of mappings. Mainly hand-drawing is used, which also brings it advantages and challenges. Drawing can be an effective and pleasurable tool for expressing, "articulating and analysing thoughts, opinions, experiences, perceptions and behaviour of participants." (Lyon, 2022, p. 6) The danger might be that drawing can be interpreted as 'anything' (Taylor, 2008) and that adult participants also suffer from boundaries to draw, thinking that drawings requires certain skills and has to 'look good'. Therefore, I extended the mapping sessions as a draw-write-speak method, to involve spoken dialogue and to lower the expectation that the drawings should contain all the data. (Lyon, 2022) A mixed method is also beneficial to produce new questions and push the research project in new directions. (Lyon, 2022) However, there will also be a tension between the participants' meaning and the interpretation of the reader, which I rather see as positive in a research that strives for subjective and multiple layers of knowledge, where the reader can add another layer of personal meaning.

To conclude, mapping as a method can be a well-fitted method within queer research, because it can encapsulate the complexity and multiplicity of queer experiences. From a queer theoretical perspective, mapping also challenges normative ways of understanding space and disrupts traditional methods of knowledge production. It allows to centres the experience of the participants, giving them the opportunity to guide and be active agents in creating knowledge. This suggests that mapping can become a democratic method of empowerment and self-presentation of marginalised groups within academic knowledge production, which "are often rendered invisible by hegemonic power systems." (Beeckmans & Salamé, n.d., p. 4)

4

MAPPING ANALYSIS

Participants

The participants in this study are mostly people I know personally or know through mutual connections. Of the fourteen participants, nine were cisgender women and three were cisgender. One was transgender and agender, and one was non-binary. Five of the participants are people with a migration background and/or of colour. I didn't expand on other intersections, but these were often revealed during the mapping sessions. While naming these specific categories might feel contradictory in a queer research, it is important to include different intersectional experiences, because of the exclusion of queer women (of colour) and transgender people in queer research. (see chapter 4)

The research sessions took place in two main cities: Ghent and Brussels. Many participants either grew up in Flanders or have moved there recently. To visualise the participants' trajectories and the location of the mappings, I created a map of Belgium. This map is an attempt to show the dynamic nature of home-making as a process that transcends fixed locations.

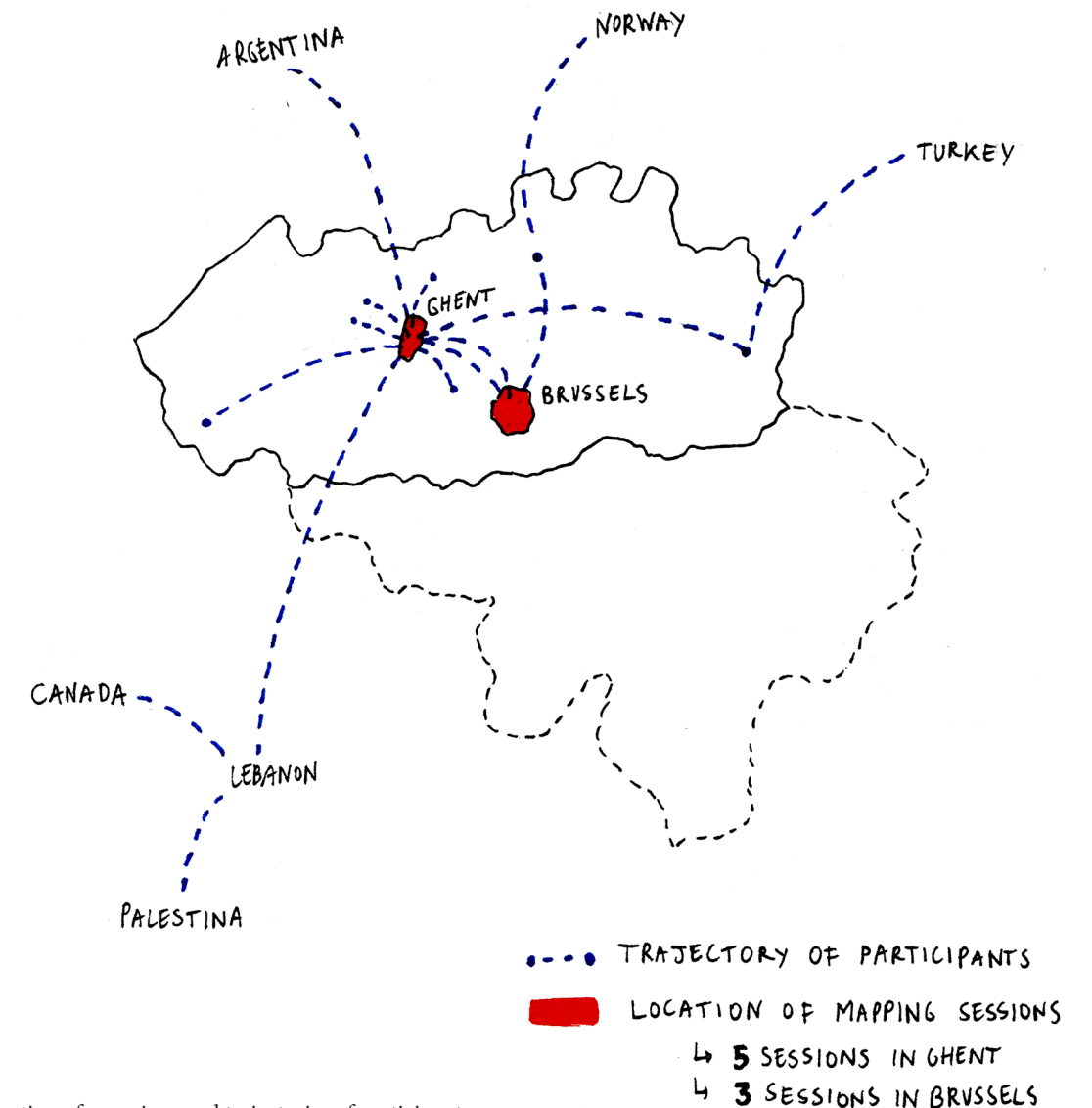


Fig. 15: Location of mappings and trajectories of participants

Research process

The process of preparing the mapping sessions started in February, firstly with seeking participants. The first mapping session was in my own home at the end of March, the last one was in June. The sessions had an average duration of three hours. Consequently, these sessions generated substantial audio recordings, which each required 16 to 20 hours work of transcribing. Therefore, the analysis could only be done in June and July, after the transcriptions. All the mapping sessions were done in Dutch, except for mapping 7. Dutch transcriptions were therefore translated to English.

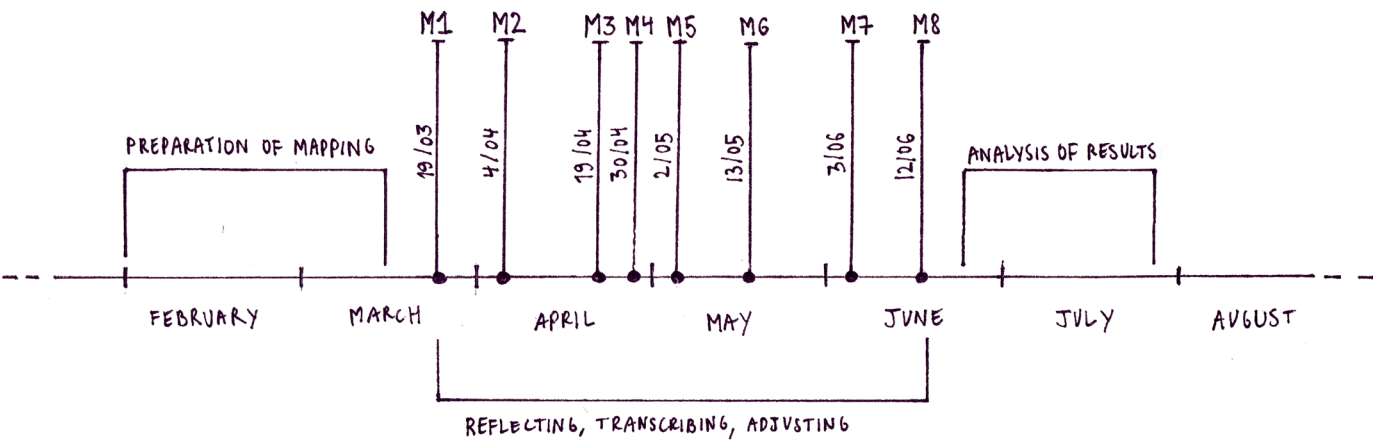


Fig. 16: Timeline of research process.

Materials

I provided the participants with A2-sized paper to draw on, intending to foster a space of creative freedom. Therefore, I kept these papers blanco, not wanting to prepare drawings, which would enhance my hierarchical position as researcher. I brought an assortment of drawing tools and emphasised that participants could use their own drawing materials. Consent for audio recording and the display of drawings was obtained through the signing of an information letter and consent form.

Mapping Questions

The mapping questions were carefully formulated, allowing participants room for interpretation and adjustment. After the first ‘test’ mapping session at my own queer household, I finalised the questions, with some small adjustments later on. The questions are listed below and referred to with a key word in the Mapping Analysis.

1. *Queer: What does “queer” mean to you?*
2. *Home: What does “home” mean to you?*

I saw the integration of these two core concepts of this research into the mapping exercise as crucial. While the conceptual framework provided a theoretical grasp of these concepts, I recognised the significance of including participants’ personal interpretations, given the complex and diverse nature of these terms.

3. *Housing History: Draw the places you’ve lived before. Link them to your own queer journey.*

I would move on to ask the participants to draw their previous residences, preferably linked to their queer journey. This question aims to uncover different home-making experiences, emotions, and locations, also having the ability to involve experiences of displacement.

4. *Dream House: Draw your dream house.*

As elaborated upon in section 2.1. of the theoretical framework, my intention was to ask the participants to draw their dream house. This question aligns with the notion of queer imagination (see chapter 1, section 1.3.). I hope to reveal not only alternative ways of living but also provide insights into the participants’ living standards and therefore class differences among participants.

5. *Floor Plans: Draw the floor plans of your current residence.*
Walking Paths: Draw walking paths to display the usage of space during the day.
Battles with the House: Mark or write down problems you face with(in) the house.

The inclusion of this question served a dual purpose. Firstly, it aims to challenge the authority of architectural drawings, as explained in chapter 4 of this thesis. Secondly, this question sought to provide deeper insights into the participants’ current ways of home-making. After drawing the floor plans, they were asked to mark their walking routes, which could start conversations on spatial utilisation, housework, and important places. The participants were asked to do these questions together, encouraging collaboration and discussion.

Additionally, the participants were asked to mark ‘Battles with the House’, identifying issues such as deficiencies, limitations, struggles, and even conflicts among residents or external parties like neighbours or landlords/ladies . The notion of Battles with the House is described by Lozanovska, where often clients don’t “feel at home in architect-designed houses,” but also “how the embodied dwelling habits that migrants bring with them often do not fit well with the local housing forms in the immigrant cities.” (Beeckmans, 2020, p. 240) Therefore, this question can display a range of struggles, from financial constraints to cultural differences.

6. *Home Object: Which object in this house represents home for you?*

I wanted to end the mapping session on a rather 'light' note, focusing on an object with emotional, functional, and symbolic significance. Moreover, objects in the house can reveal rituals ingrained in everyday home-making activities. This question focuses on everyday reality and lived experiences associated with home-making.

Reflection

Before and after every mapping, I would reflect on the next questions, which are incorporated in the introductions of each mapping session.

- *What did I specifically prepare for this mapping?*
- *How did the mapping go? What were aspects that stood out?*
- *What did I learn for the next mapping? What do I adjust?*

The act of reflection also extended into my personal drawings, where I illustrated my thoughts and contextual elements. These visual snapshots captured unique moments in time, offering a more holis-

Layout of Mapping Analysis per mapping session

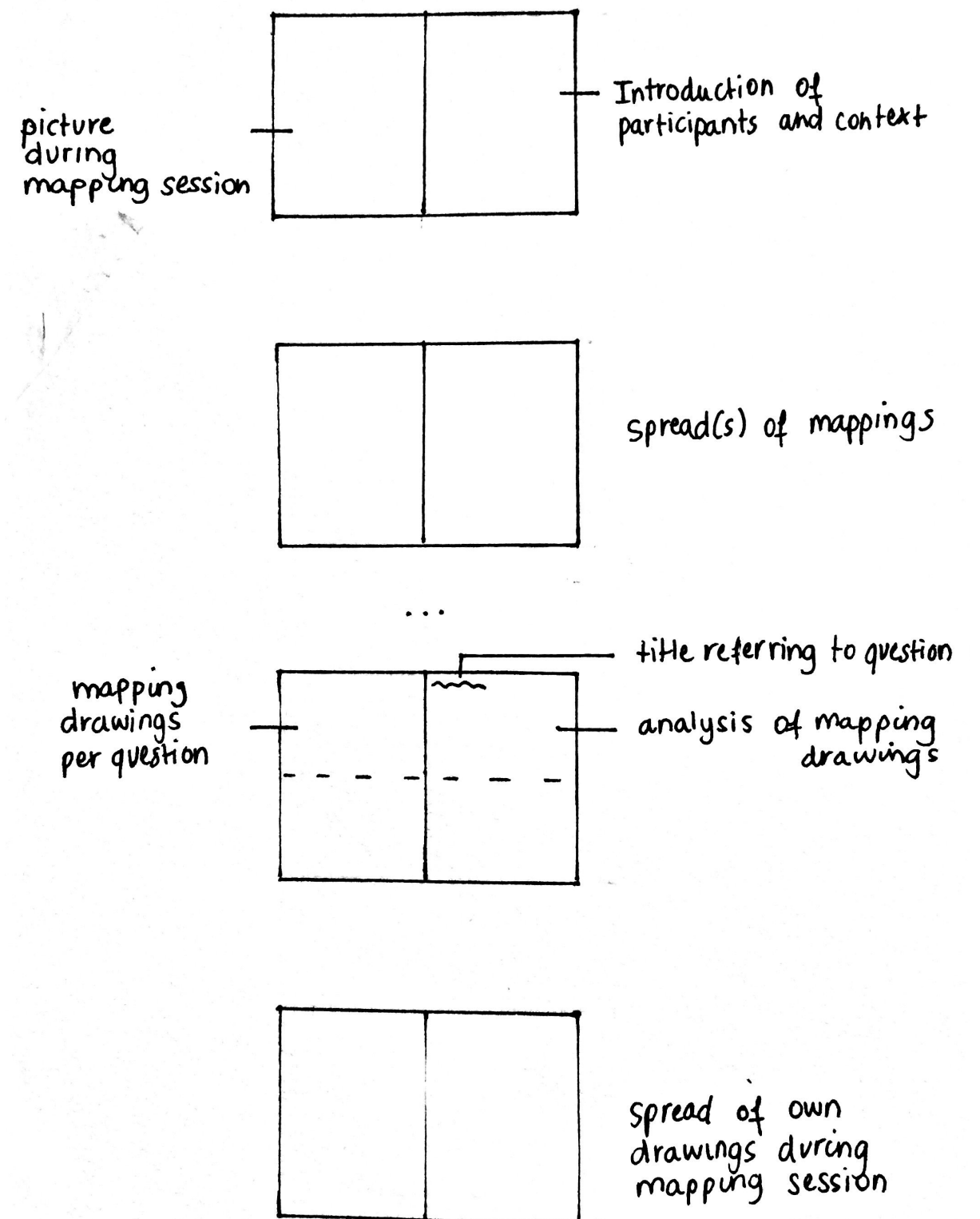


Fig. 17: Layout of Mapping Analysis per mapping session

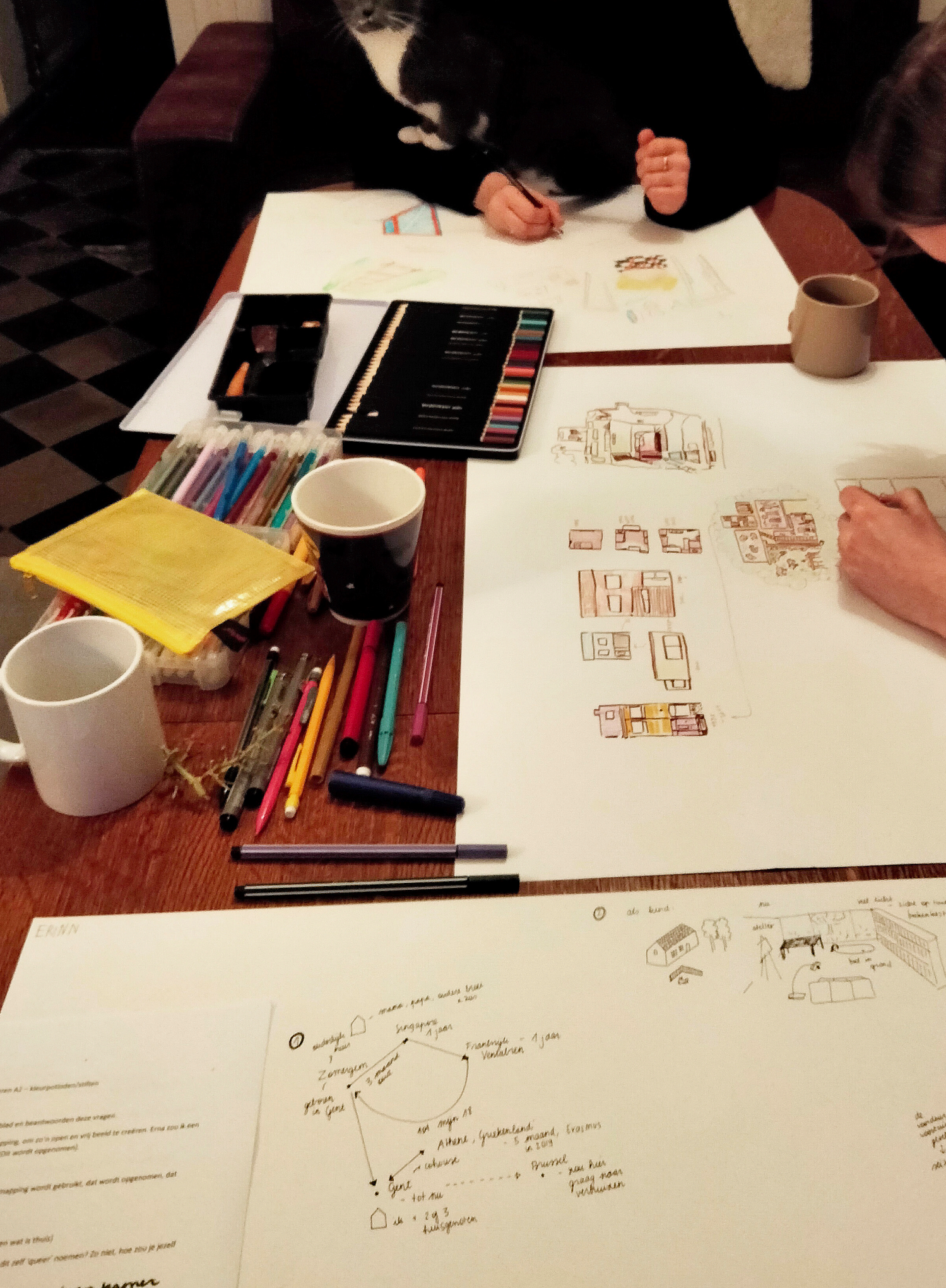
Mapping 1 - Sam, Finn & Erinn

For my first mapping session, I opted for an auto-ethnographic approach within my own queer household. I live with Finn (he/it) and Sam (she/her) in a three-story row house in Ghent. It is important to note that my parents are the owners of the house. Therefore, I've been residing in this house for seven years, where Sam joined two years ago, and Finn a year ago. We know each other from a feminist collective we started. We all do or did an arts education, with Sam specialising in painting and Finn in graphic design. All three of us have Flemish origins.

I wanted to initiate the mapping session with a conversation around 'queer', 'home' and their relationship. I felt these questions were challenging to address through drawing, so they were not included in the mappings. Subsequently, I posed questions 3, 4, 5, and an additional one: "How do you perceive this house?". I also prepared other questions, which I skipped due to time constraints. Balancing my dual roles as a participant and a researcher during the mapping session was challenging. Personally, my own mapping didn't offer new revelations, given that I was the one answering my own questions. My primary focus was observing Finn and Sam's answers. I suffered a lot from doubts during and after the session, concerned with the complexity of the exercise and the potential usability of data. However, the combination of drawing followed by conversation felt as an effective approach for understanding and delving into the nuances of the mapping drawings.

Feedback from Sam and Finn helped me to overcome my insecurities. While they found the first questions about queerness and home challenging, they acknowledged they helped as an introduction to the mapping exercise. I asked if presenting examples would've helped and they emphasised that this would influence their responses and limit their artistic freedom. Overall, they enjoyed contemplating and drawing about queerness and home, although they noted that the mapping exercise seemed to lean more toward the topic of home than queerness. Given our artistic background, drawing appeared less intimidating. In the next session, I want to incorporate the two introduction questions into the mapping itself. I also intend to emphasise the aspect of queerness. When drawing the housing history, I want to involve the link to the participants' queer journey. I also want to add another layer to the floor plans, where participants express their battles with the house and with each other.

Order of mappings: Finn - Sam - Erinn



< Fig. 18: Photograph during mapping session.

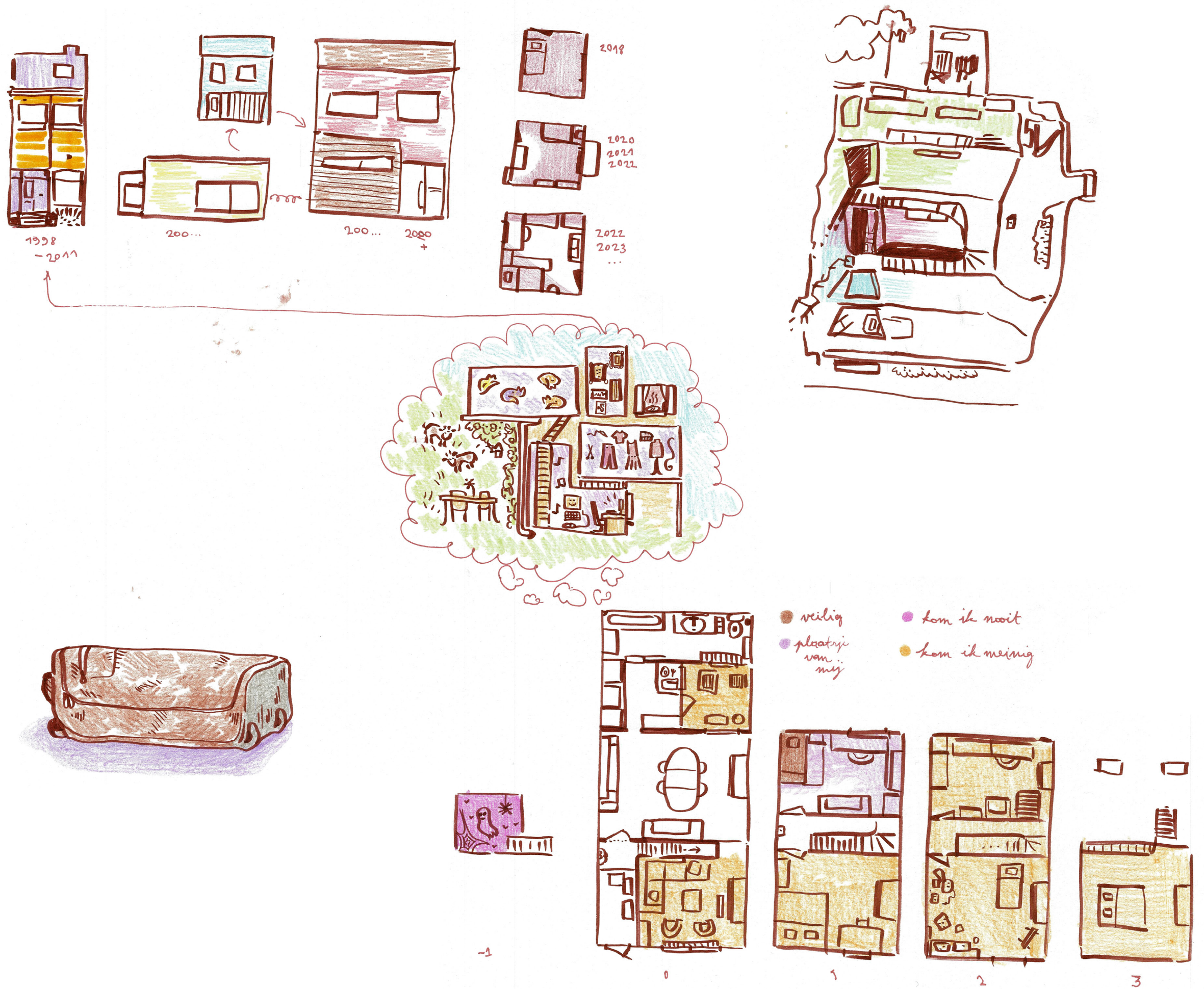
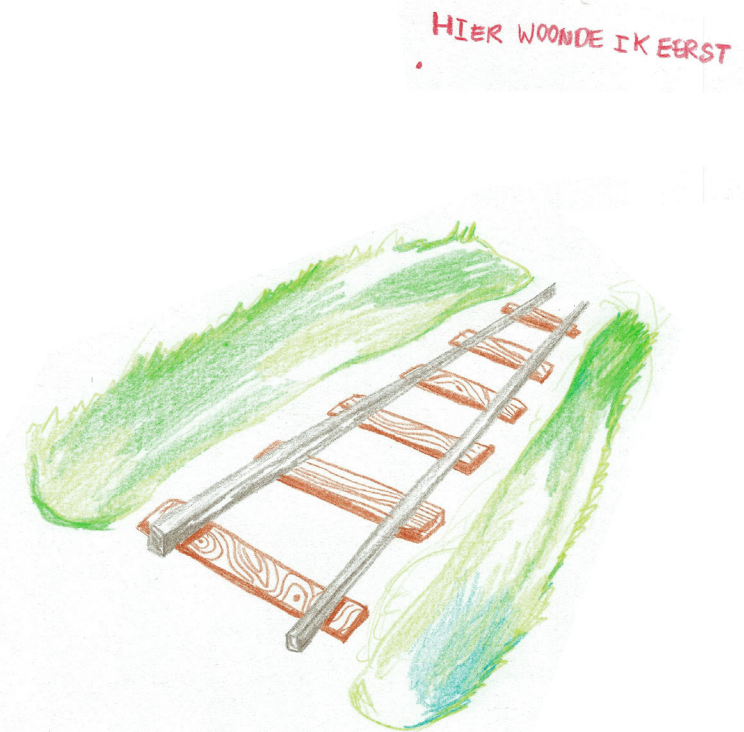
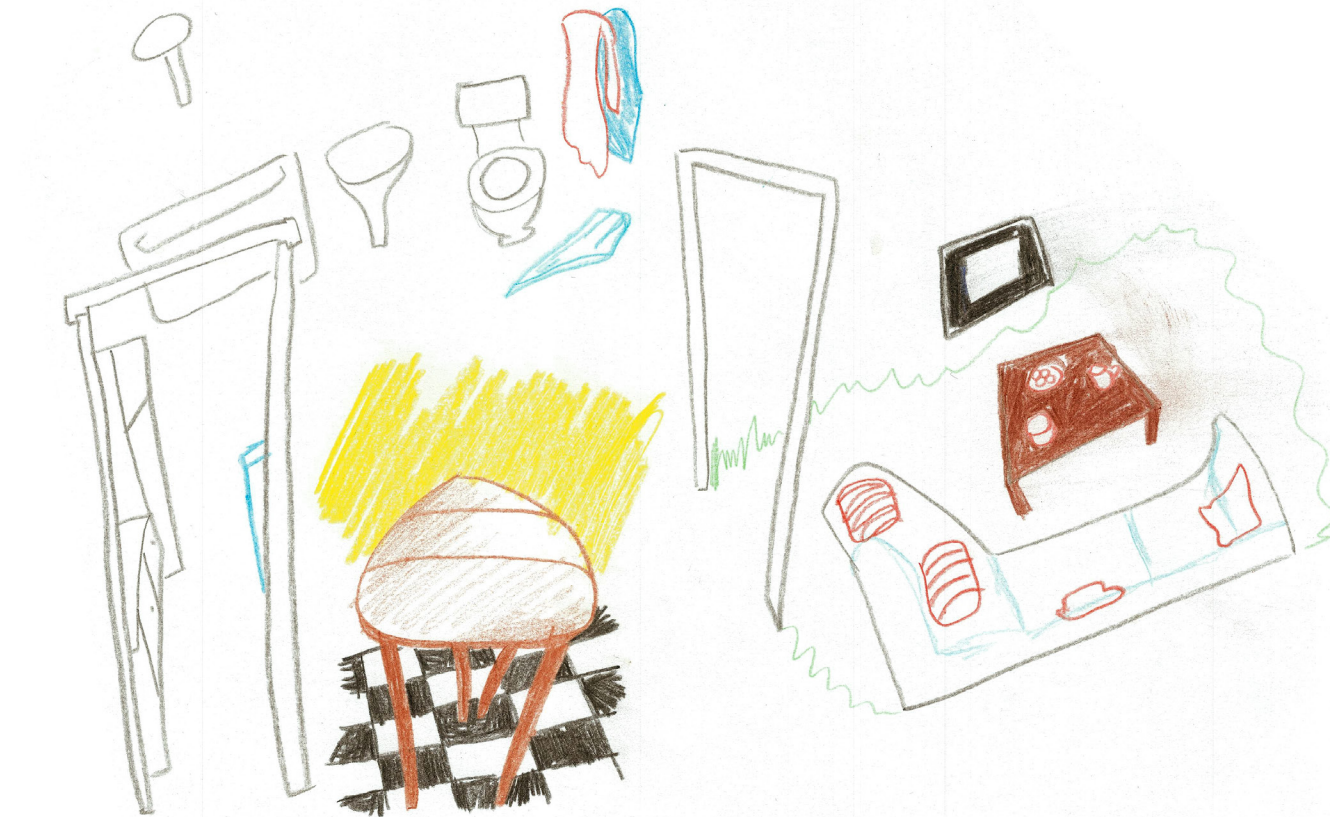


Fig. 19: Mapping Finn



- DAN OOK HIER
• DAN HIER

• EN NU HIER

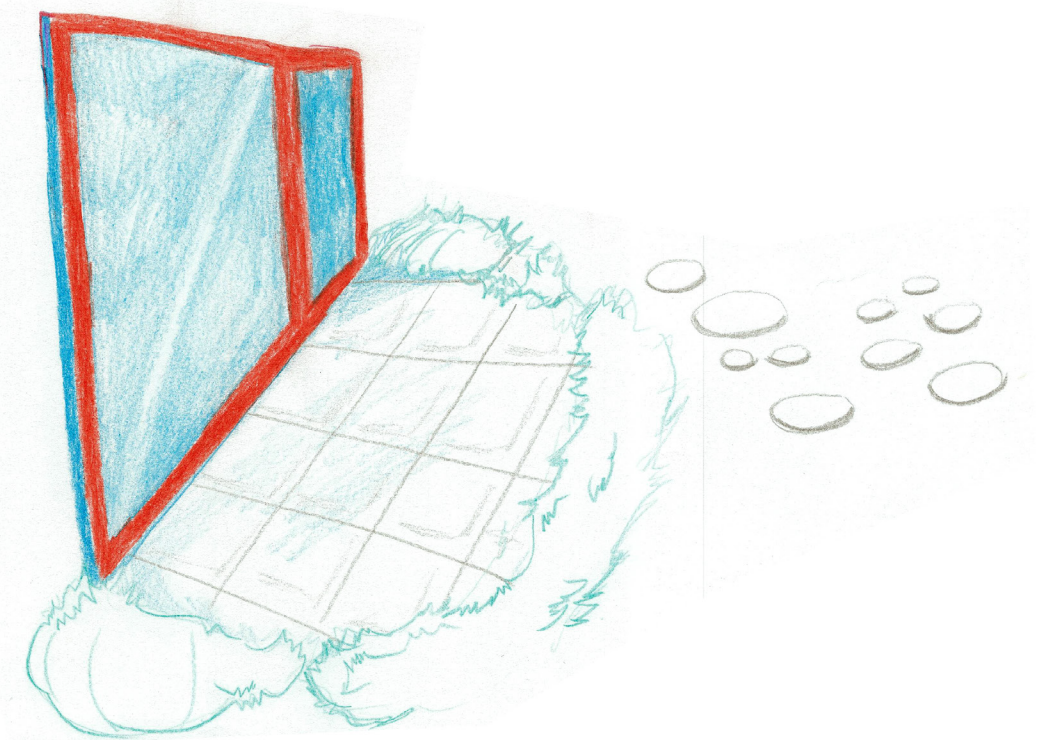
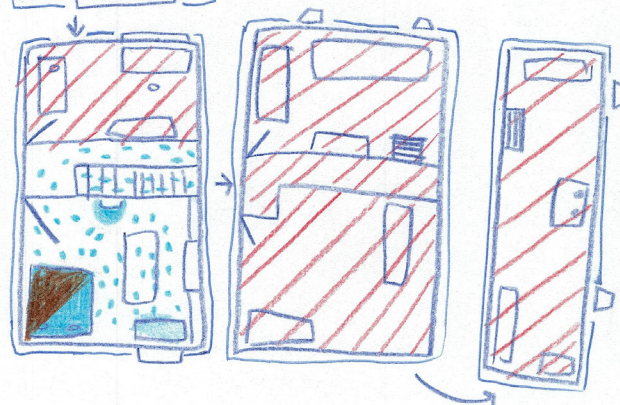
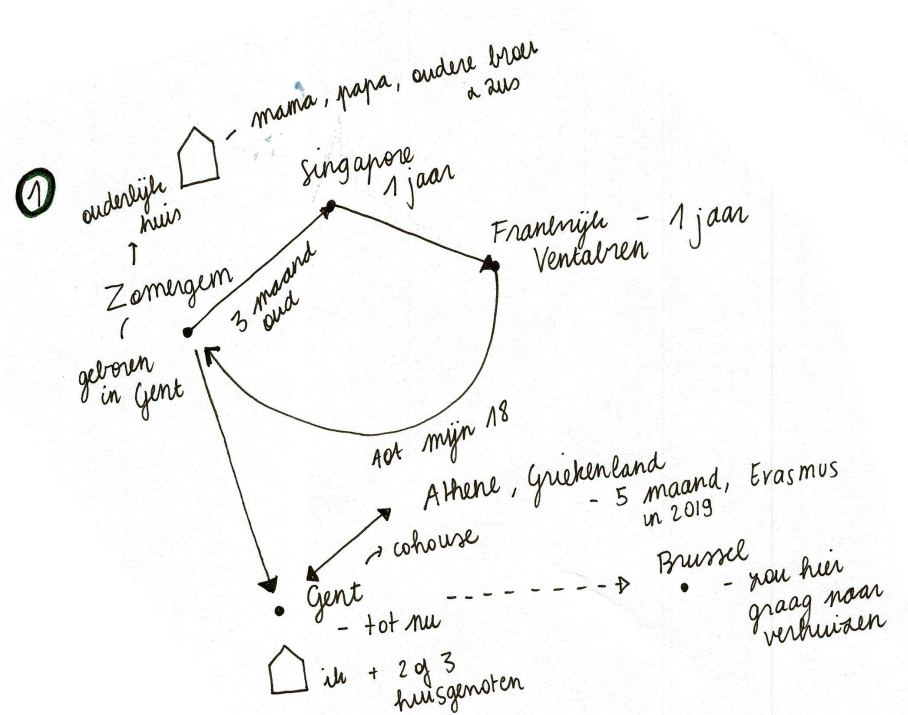
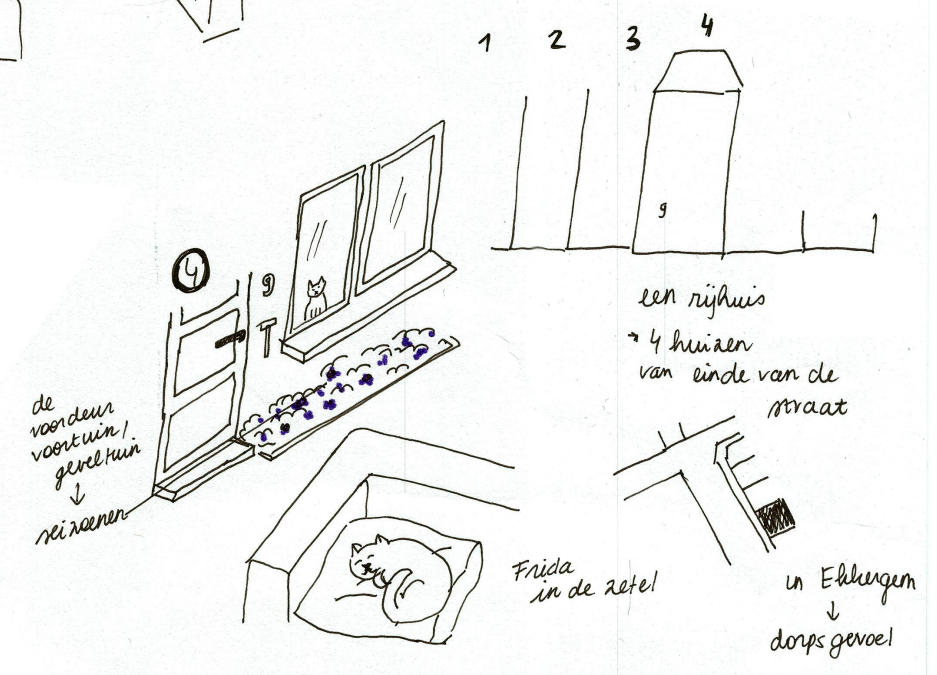
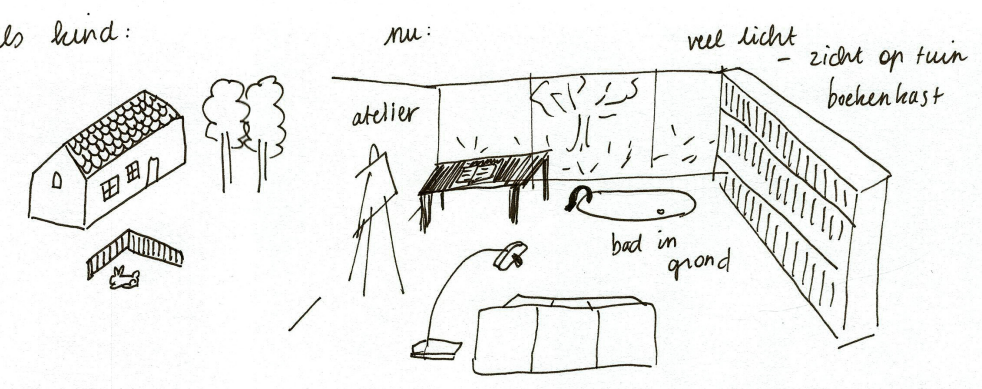


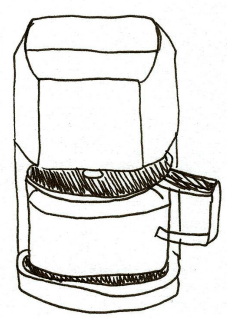
Fig. 20: Mapping Sam



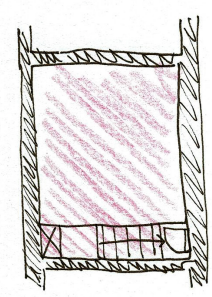
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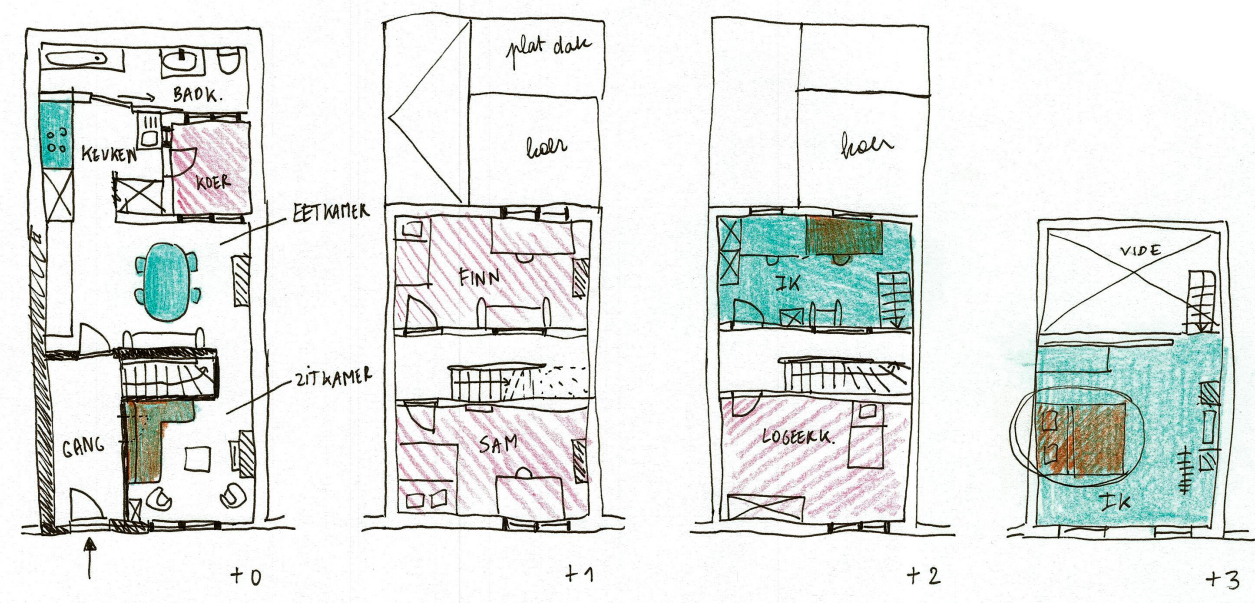
⑤ & ⑥



KOFFIE MACHINE



kelder



- thuis
- veilig
- WEINIG
- veel enkel van mij? → omruil

Fig. 21: Mapping Erinn

Queer

From my perspective, queer has transcended sexuality and evolved into a way of being and developing a critical perspective that questions normative systems. Therefore, I find it important to be surrounded with queer people, as it facilitates the exchange of this perspective. Finn delves into the complexity of labels, particularly in relation to his transition. He highlights his affinity for the term ‘queer,’ as it serves as an inclusive umbrella. “Before my transition, I always described myself as pan-romantic and asexual, showing that complexity of labels. Therefore, it is much easier to say that I’m queer, because otherwise I’ll always have to explain “what I am”” (Finn, 13-3-23) The struggle of explaining your queer identity to non-queer individuals is something the three of us all experience. Sam expands on the straight privilege of non-queer people, who often think you’re “either gay, straight or bi. Because I think those people are not often confronted with their own identity.” (Sam, 13-3-23) She stresses that often as queer people, in contrast, you are forced to think about your identity and label yourself.

Home - in relation to queer

Finn initiates that for him, “home is something weird, because I never felt at home, anywhere” (Finn, 13-3-23), which he partly links to not having a good relationship with his parent and losing his other parent. For Finn, home is more a practical notion, associated with safety and basic survival, where he is always prepared to move. “I always had a suitcase with all of my stuff. (...) So, for many years, my whole life fitted in one suitcase. Now, I dare to buy stuff, which is a big step for me.” (Finn, 13-3-23) Sam points out how waiting for the next transition can hinder fully enjoying one’s current living situation. I added that a significant aspect of home is feeling at ease and not stressed about taking up space, which contrasts with how I often felt in my parental home.

We explored the idea that home should be a space where one is allowed to be themselves without feeling confined to societal norms or familial expectations. I talk about my queer journey, where you infinitely reinvent yourself, which is often hard to explain to non-queer people or family members. Finn expands on the challenge of gender expression, often limited to the privacy of the bedroom due to external pressures. “So, queerness actually comes out inside my room.” (Finn, 13-3-23) Sam related how societal and parental expectations influenced her gender expression, where there’s no clear “winning” option as a woman, critiquing the ‘male gaze’. “You almost disown your own body because you want to meet that norm.” (Sam, 13-3-23) Finn expands on his family’s queerness, revealing the complexities of growing up in a “rainbow family” despite the trauma he experienced within it. He highlighted the unique struggles of coming out as transgender, which is very different than coming out with one’s sexuality—it entails requiring permission for medical steps and a name change, where “you really need to justify yourself.” (Finn, 13-3-23)

Housing History

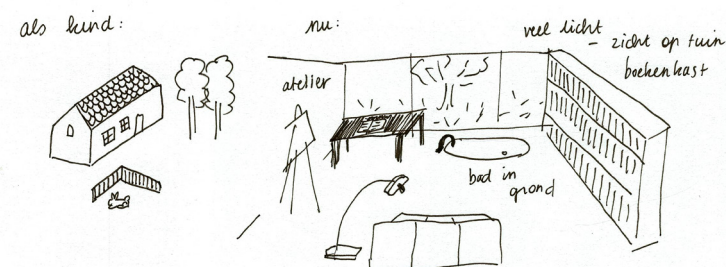
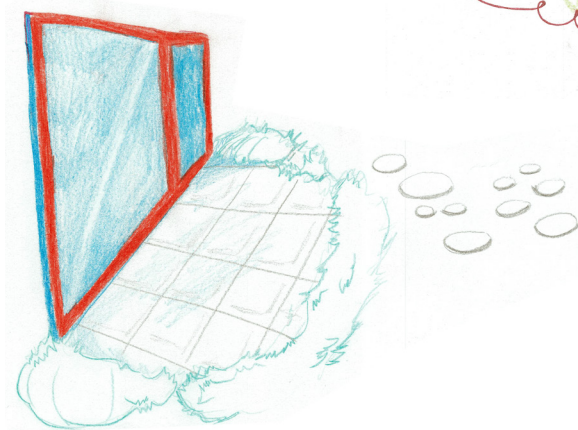
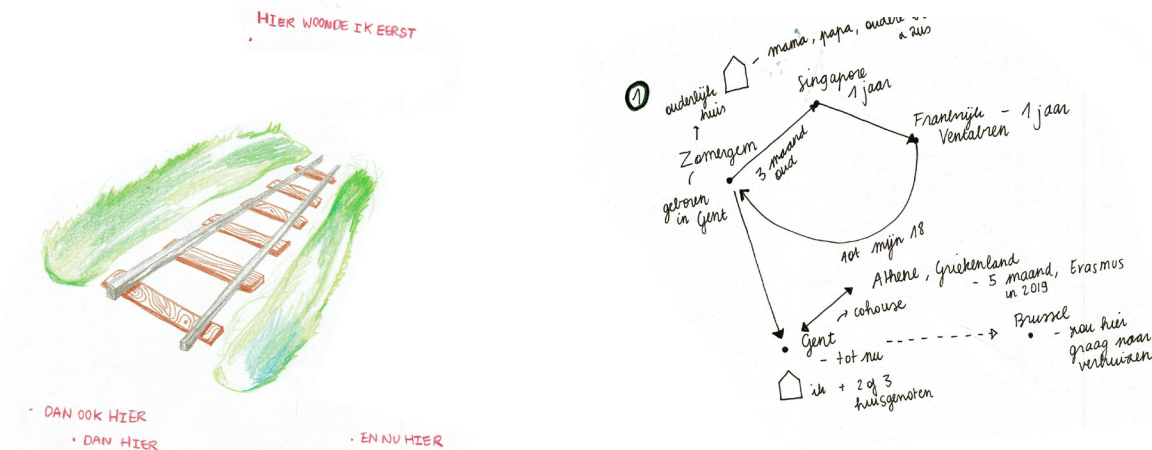
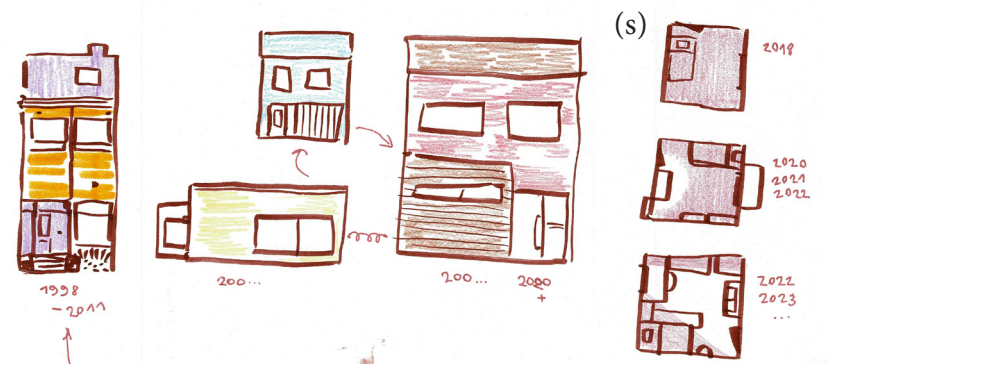
Finn crafted a timeline detailing his various residences, a process prompted by his vivid memory tied to specific dates, particularly the year of his father's passing. In his drawing, he also depicted the rooms he sought refuge when running away from home. Each room's layout and furnishing conveyed a story. The room at his aunt representing the only and smallest place, mainly the bed, for safety. - see (s) "It was also very dark, because I never opened the curtains, I only slept there. It was very functional." (Finn, 13-3-23) Now, residing in our current home, Finn's room slowly evolves into a more light-filled space with additional possessions. This shift signifies his gradual progression toward a more comfortable and self-assured sense of homemaking.

Sam chose not to illustrate her transient student housing experiences but represented her familial homes with a symbolic railroad. This visual metaphor denotes a central thread connecting the houses she shared with her parents. My approach was very different from Finn's and Sam's, tracing arrows to map my various residences, which focus on location rather than houses.

Dream House

Finn's drawing depicts rooms fitting his interests, which don't require a lot of space, since they always fitted within the suitcase. However, he expresses a desire for suitable spaces to accommodate these interests. Finn connects his dream house to his father's house, a property still owned by his family. "I always thought negatively about my future in a that I'll never own anything." (Finn, 13-3-23) So, for him, residing in his father's house seems like the only possible option of ownership.

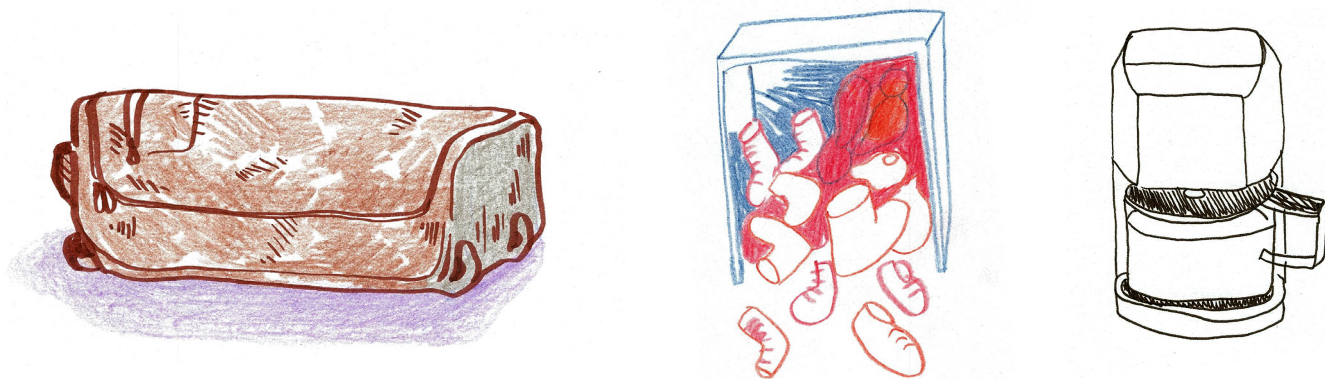
Sam envisions a house featuring a sliding window opening onto an expansive garden with intertwining paths. She expressed a desire for a garden, missing it in her upbringing. My drawing references my childhood drawing of "dream house," (see chapter 2, section 2.1.) Currently, I want a single room where I can contemplate and create, drawing parallels to Woolf's notion of a "room of one's own." (1929) The drawing shows the impact of my architectural studies and the high living standard I grew up with.





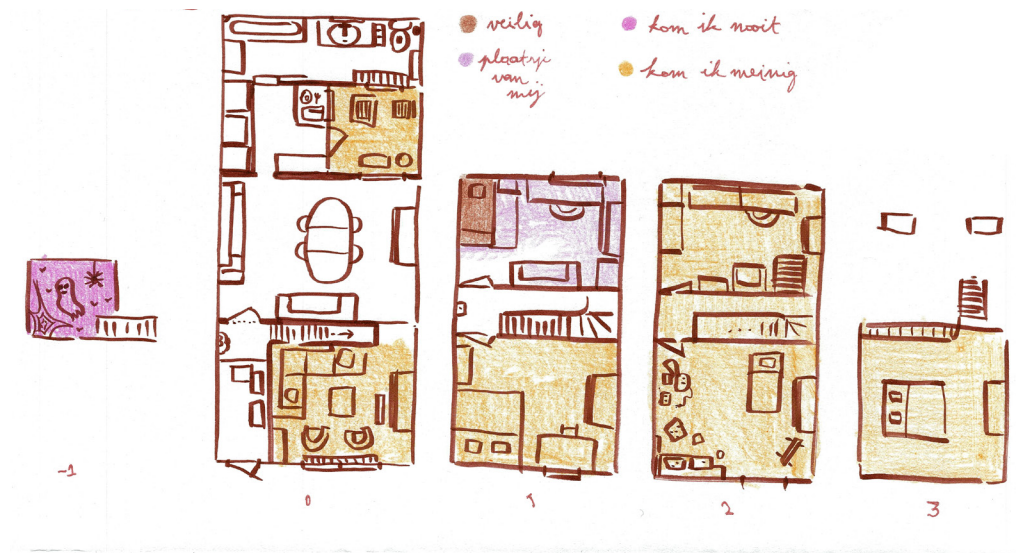
Perspective on this House

Finn's perspective of the house is depicted from a bird's-eye view, gazing downwards into the staircase from the second floor. Sam drew a subjective map of the living area and my drawing highlights the front door and window, positioned in relation to the street and the neighbourhood. My emphasis on context contrasts with Sam's focus on communal spaces and Finn's attention to the different floors. These drawn answers underscore the potential of very different and subjective responses to mapping questions.



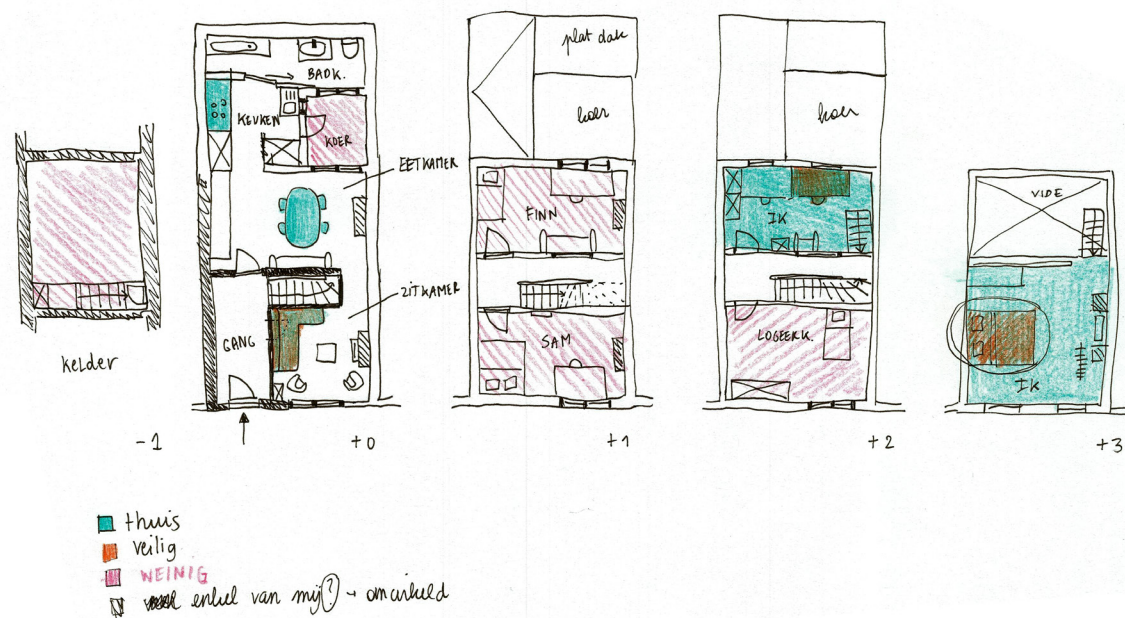
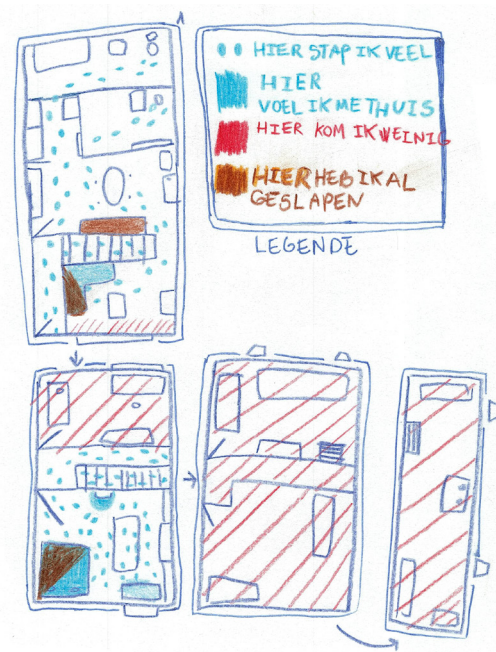
Home Object

Finn drew his suitcase, alluding to his complex journey of home-making, and Sam drew the cupboard containing our shoes, which depicts home as something related to everyday reality. In my case, the coffee machine resembles home due to its sensory elements and being part of a daily routine.



Floor Plans

When asked to draw floor plans of the house, Sam expressed her struggles, particularly in depicting more than just basic shapes. In contrast, Finn, with a background in architecture studies, found the task relatively easy. We discuss places where we feel safe. Finn highlighted his room, particularly his bed, as the ultimate sanctuary. “The closer to the door, the lesser I feel safe.” (Finn, 13-3-23) I share this sentiment, also emphasizing the comfort I feel in the communal spaces. Sam, in turn, depicted the paths she walks and the spots where she fell asleep, as they symbolise safety and solace.





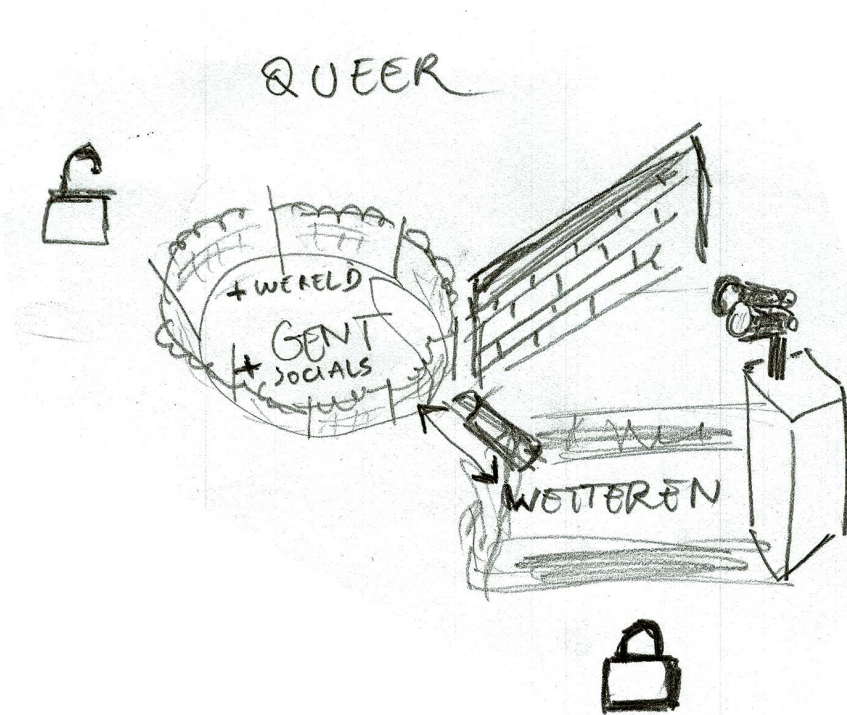
Mapping 2 - Emma

Emma (she/her) lives independently in the city centre of Ghent within a two-story apartment above a coffee bar. We know each other through common friends and university, also studying Gender and Diversity. After experiencing cohousing with friends, Emma made the deliberate choice to live on her own. Her cultural background is Flemish, growing up in Wetteren.

For this mapping session, I refined the formulation of my questions, enhancing their clarity and structure, where I also allow myself more flexibility for participants to engage with or add question. I also brought along the drawings from the previous session, intending to explain the process we undertook, to create a better understanding of the mapping exercise.

The friendship between Emma and me, coupled with our ease of communication, contributed to my confidence during this mapping session. However, I remained conscious of my role as a researcher. Emma readily embraced the mapping process, where her architectural background in high school proved advantageous, making drawing a comfortable task for her. Shared knowledge from our studies facilitated deep dialogues and understanding of the underlying themes and concepts of my thesis. I dropped the question of Housing History, since Emma incorporated this in previous questions. For me, drawing during the mapping session, helped me to structure our dialogue and make me feel at ease. For the next mapping session, I want to further expand on the floor plans, and let participants work together on these plans.

< Fig. 22: Photograph during mapping session

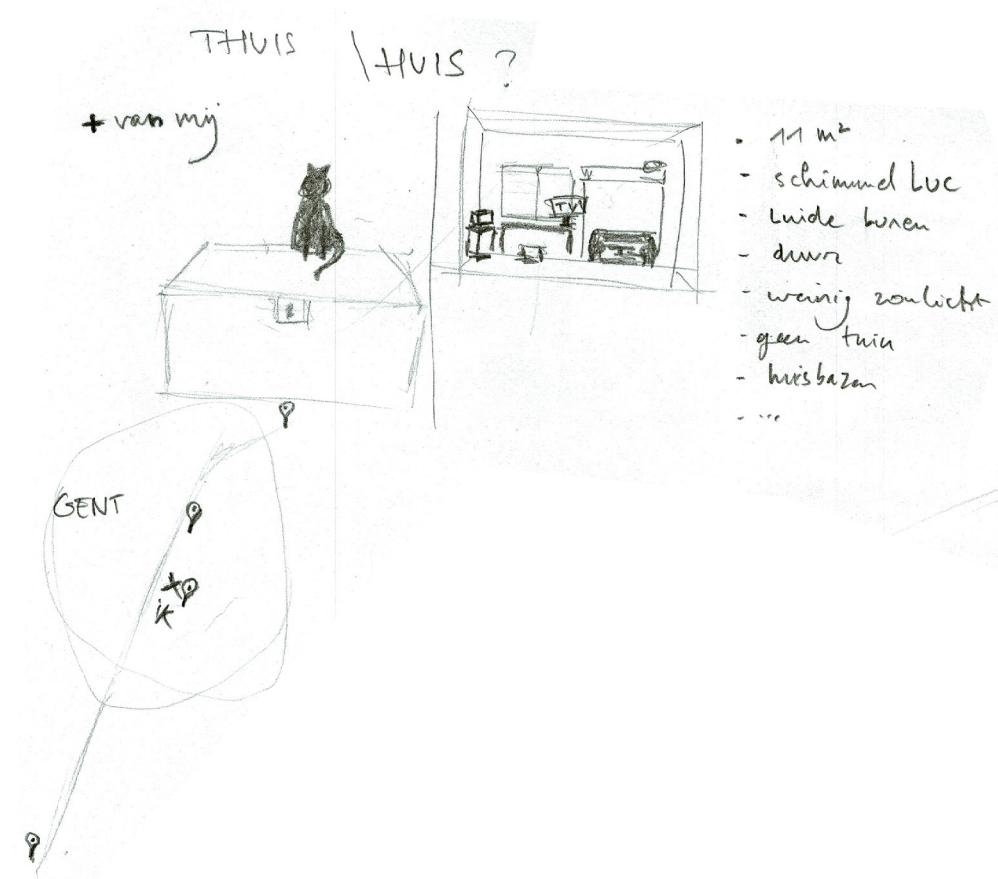


Queer

Emma drew a direct connection between queerness and home. She perceives Ghent as a place where she can liberate herself from societal norms, allowing her to explore her queer identity. Emma favours the term “queer” precisely because it avoids embodying stereotypes—something she is particularly apprehensive about, especially concerning her family.

“For me, being queer is choosing for myself and what I like. It is questioning things and coming up with different answers. (...) It was a long process. To realise “I’m not the problem.” (...) Once that first domino block falls, you realise that everything is a social construct. For queer people, that first block falls by itself.” (Emma, 4-4-23)

In her drawing, she depicted Wetteren, her hometown, alongside a watchtower. “When I’m there, it really feels like I’m trapped.” (Emma, 4-4-23) She reveals feeling more vulnerable and unsafe in Wetteren, where expressing her queerness is challenging, compounded by her family’s unawareness of her being queer. Emma shares that she even experiences panic attacks when travelling to Wetteren. “Leaving Ghent really means leaving my ‘peace,’” (Emma, 4-4-23) she expressed, highlighting the stark contrast in the safety and comfort that Ghent provides in comparison to her hometown. Therefore, she drew Ghent as a ‘fortress’, surrounded by a wall and barbed wire.



Home

Emma expresses that she can feel at home everywhere if given the opportunity. Her drawing features a symbolic box with her belongings, her cat, and Ghent, signifies that home isn’t a specific place for her. She associates ‘home’ with owning a place of herself. She prefers living alone and refrains from having fixed relationships, which for her aligns with queer homemaking, pursuing “what works for me?” (Emma, 4-4-23). She questions conventional norms, such as spending Christmas with family, a source of stress for many queer individuals. Emma resists the notion of needing a partner or marriage to achieve financial stability for homeownership, therefore critiquing the heteronormative underpinnings of housing options.



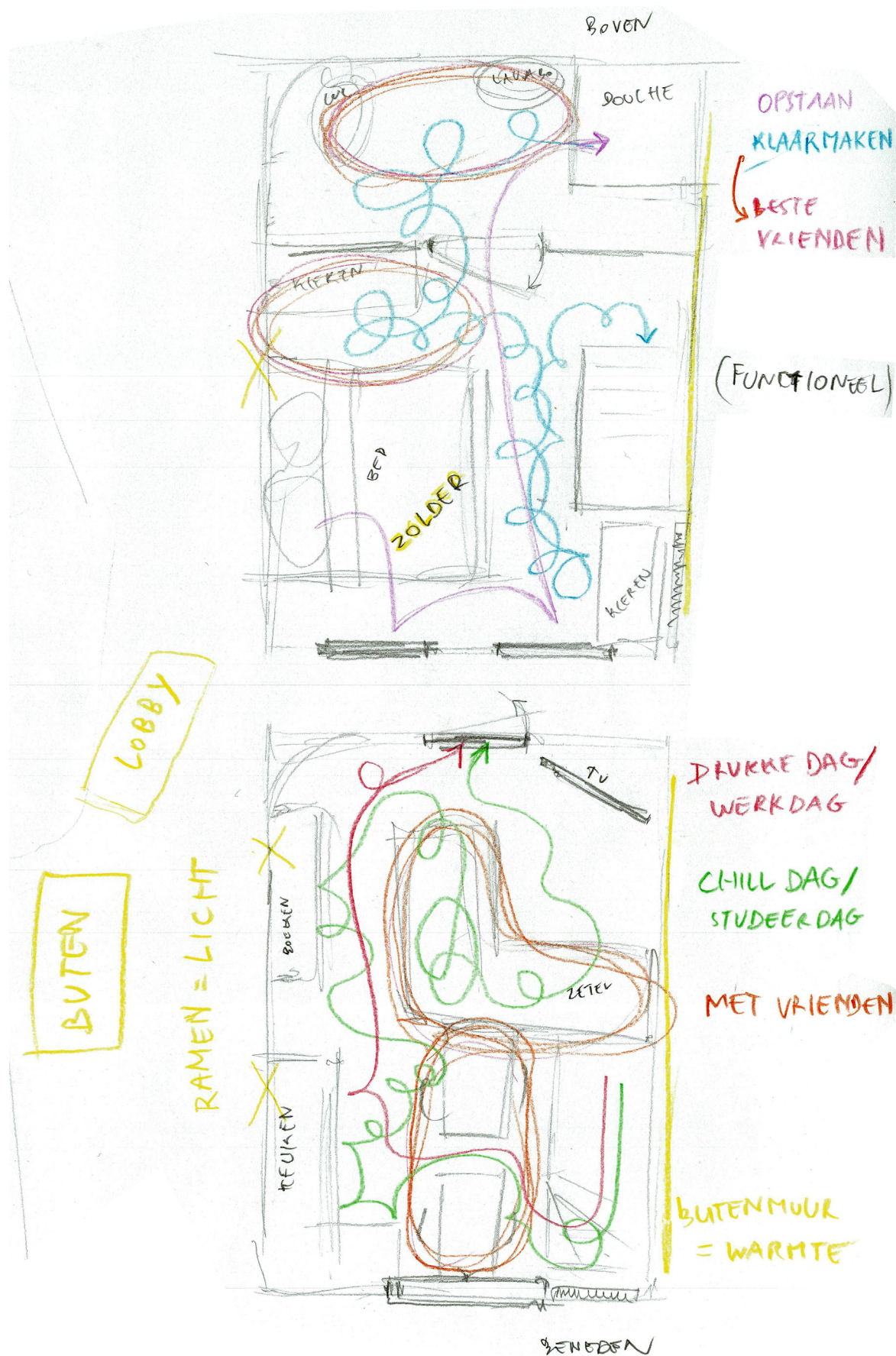
Dream House

Emma expresses that if she didn't have financial constraints, her preference would lean towards a more spacious, characterful house with a lot of windows. She articulates the challenges with paying rent, currently paying 620 euros solo, expressing that she could probably afford her dream house if she would live with a partner. Despite this, her aspiration remains centred on living alone but maintaining a close proximity to her circle of friends. She proposes a building block where each friend resides independently, but having a shared garden. Living near her friends resonates deeply with her, where she identifies Ghent as the optimal city because of its suitable scale, fostering closeness to her friends, the queer community and activities.



Home Object

When prompted with this question, Emma tells the story of 'Shanice', the name she assigned to the puppet head on her kitchen cupboard. Acquired from a friend during a night out, she asserts that her house is full of stuff that tell such personal stories. "Shanice embodies my way of life. She symbolizes friendship, romantic encounters, nightlife, and the sentiment of being truly at home." (Emma, 4-4-23)



Floor Plans

Walking Paths

With her architectural background, Emma easily draws floor plans of her living space, employing distinct colours to delineate its diverse uses throughout the day. Blue resembles her movements in the morning, often fast and chaotic. On the ground floor, she used green for a chill day, and red for a busy day. She perceives the ground floor as a space for hanging out and reserves the first floor for preparation and resting. Places encircled in orange are places she uses when friends come over. Notably, only close friends are granted access to the upper floor. Often, the living room undergoes rearrangements to accommodate dining or socialising.

Battles with the house

Emma marks issues in yellow, ranging from inadequate insulation to drafts, “but all the problems do not outweigh living here happily and alone.” (Emma, 4-4-23) She craves more natural light and a modest outdoor space. She elevated her bed, creating an own wooden structure, to maximize closet space. Despite occasional noise disturbances from the downstairs café, she appreciates the freedom to generate noise herself.

In conclusion, Emma’s adaptability in home-making and modest expectations are also visible in her vision on a dream house, where her primary need lies in living autonomous. This shows resilience and commitment to her authentic self, reflecting of her queer identity and perspective on societal norms.

MAPPING 2

4 april 2023



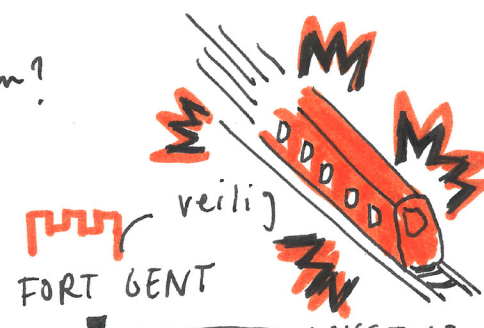
Het helpt dat we elkaar kennen
+ dezelfde richting studeren

Hoe ziet een huis eruit?

Alle begin
is moeilijk
QUEER?
is het gemakkelijk
om dit op te schrijven?

Zou het
helpen om
voorbeelden te zien?

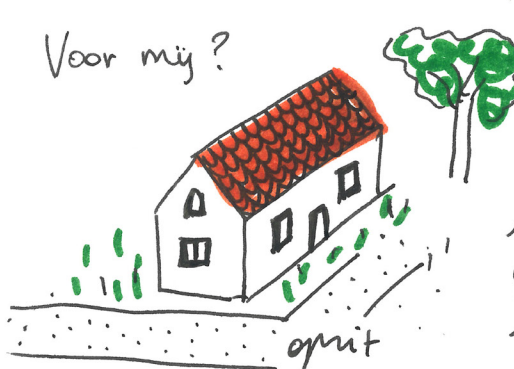
ik ken
zelf al 2
jaar vloeiende vormen
want zo zie ik 'queer'



veilig
FORT GENT
GEVANGENIS
WETTEREN
ANGSTIGE
TREINRIT

familie
onveilig, stress
gevangen,
onzichtbaar

"al mijn planten
zijn aan het
sterven"



het is meer
gebaseerd op waar
ik ben opgevoerd,
een oud boerderij
huis in Zomergem



ik staar allemaal boodschappen
van vrienden op de regels in de keuken

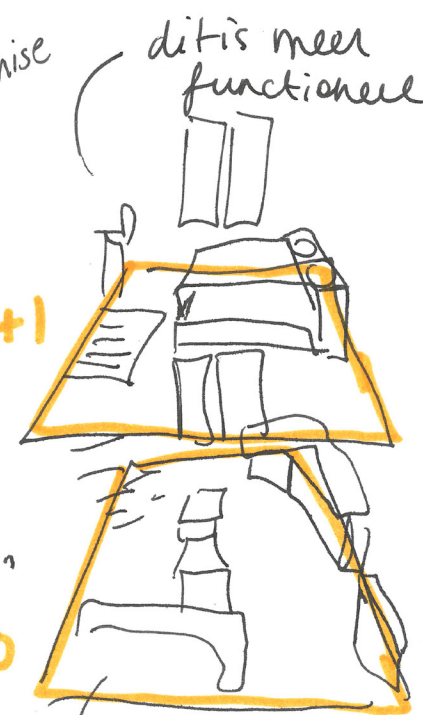
we zitten
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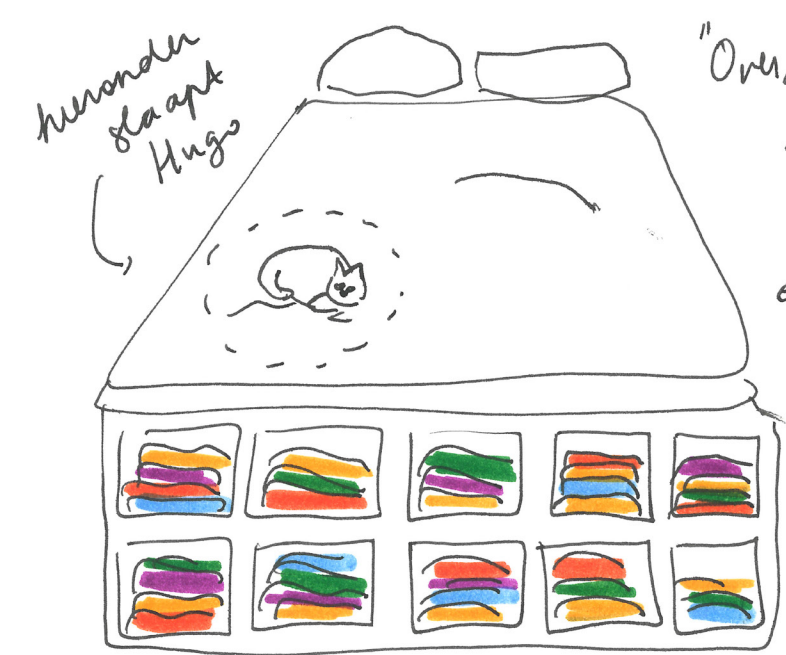
Charise

"Overdag chill ik niet
in mijn bed"

"mijn vrienden
mogen op mijn
bed zitten maar
met met hun
kleren onder de
lakens kruipen."



hier hang ik
veel



het netjes opgeplooid kleren



Fig. 24: Reflection mapping



Mapping 3 - X & H

I know X (he/him) and H (she/her)* through mutual friends. They reside as friends in a two-bedroom apartment in Ghent and both work full-time. X grew up near Ghent, and thus has a Flemish background, while H grew up in Limburg and has a Turkish background.

Engaging in the first mapping session with individuals I knew less closely, I was nervous to enter their home and ask them rather personal understandings of their queer-homemaking. They both displayed enthusiasm and openness, making me feel very welcome, where we also shared a cosy dinner. H, who initially expressed discomfort and aversion to drawing, later admitted enjoying the process.

The mapping process gave insights into X and H's personal interests and educational backgrounds. X's background in bio-chemical engineering was visible in his scientific approach and style of drawing, while H's passion for reading and language were reflected in linguistic references within her drawings. I noticed how they used tools to help them in drawing, such as using the floor plan in the app of their vacuum cleaning robot. They also mutually supported each other in the final exercise, collaboratively drawing plans and discussing the usage and battles with the house. Therefore, the mapping felt like a genuine conversation, even though I noticed a hesitance in sharing personal details.

Order of the mappings: H - X

* X and H are pseudonyms because the participants wished to stay anonymous.

< Fig. 25: Photograph during mapping session

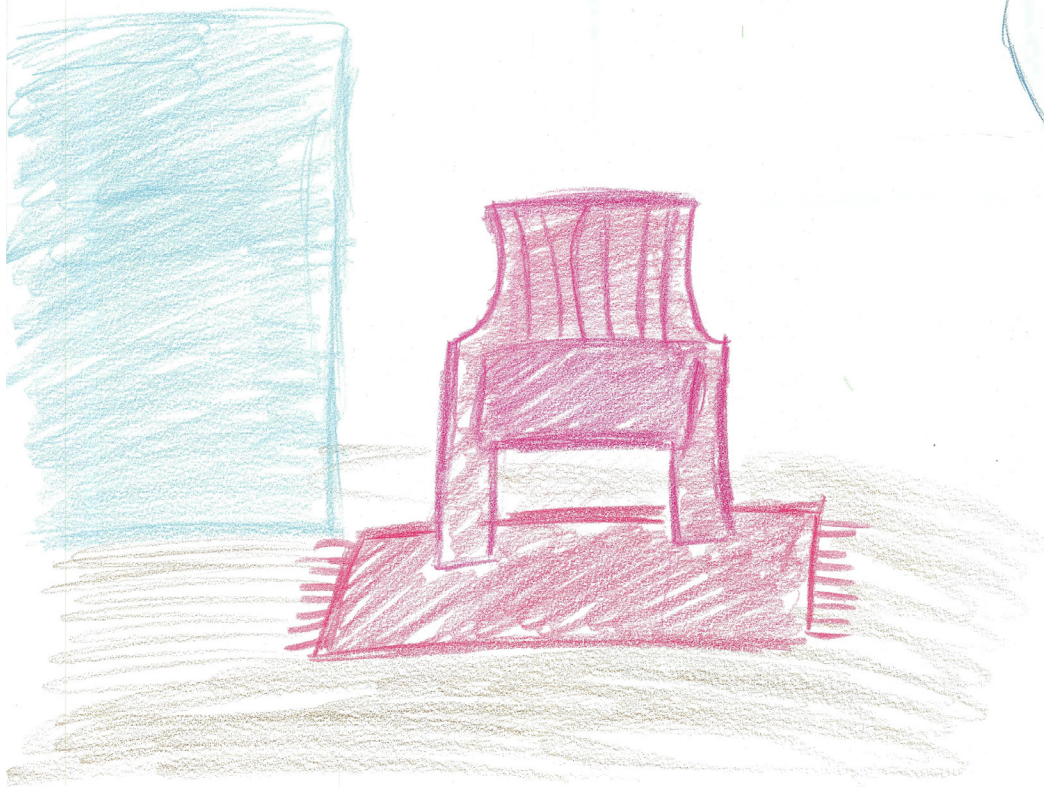
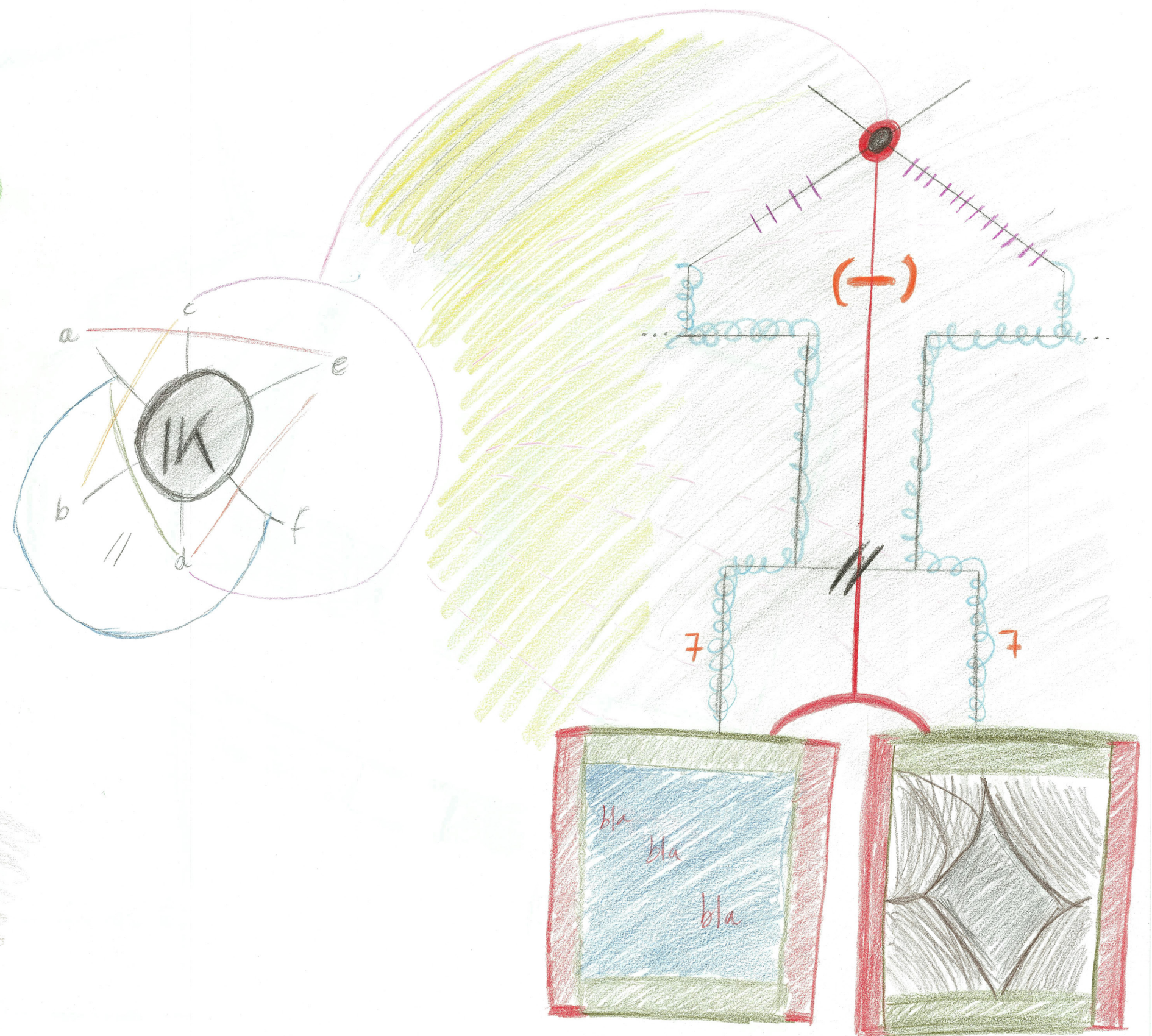
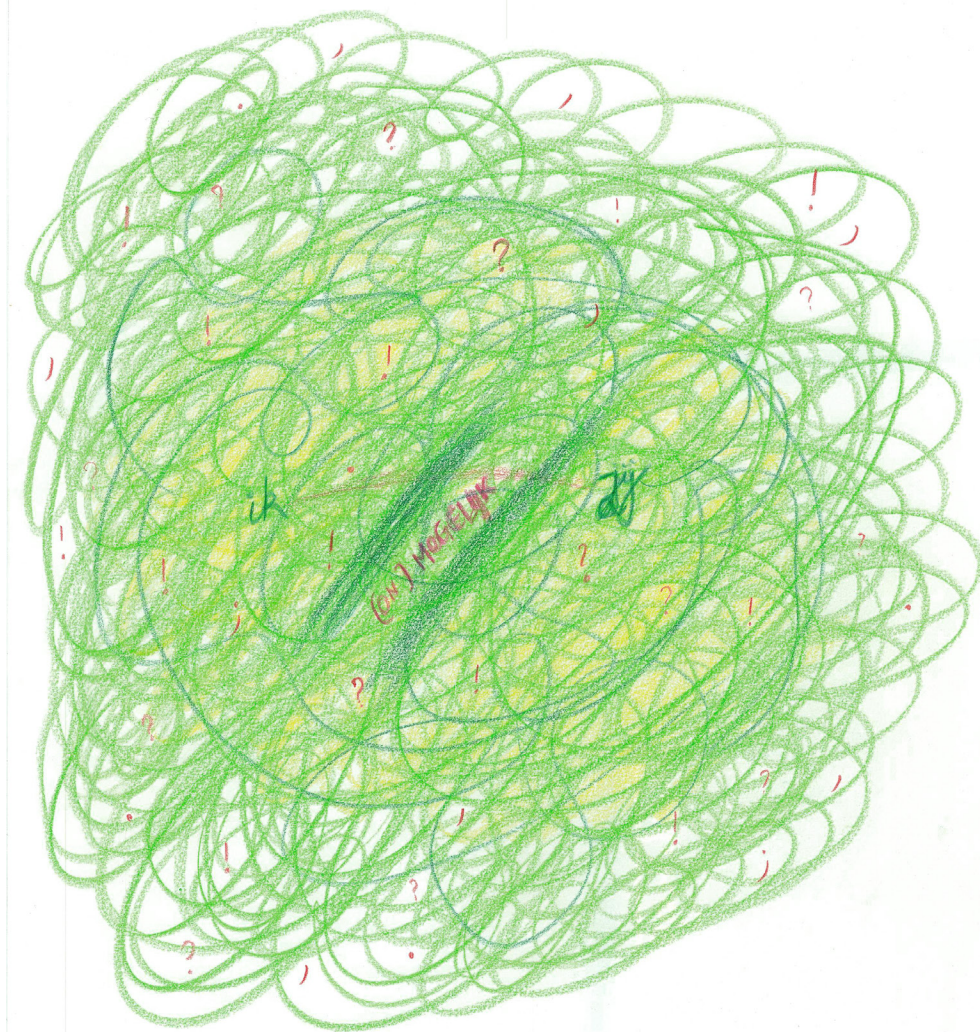


Fig. 26: Mapping H

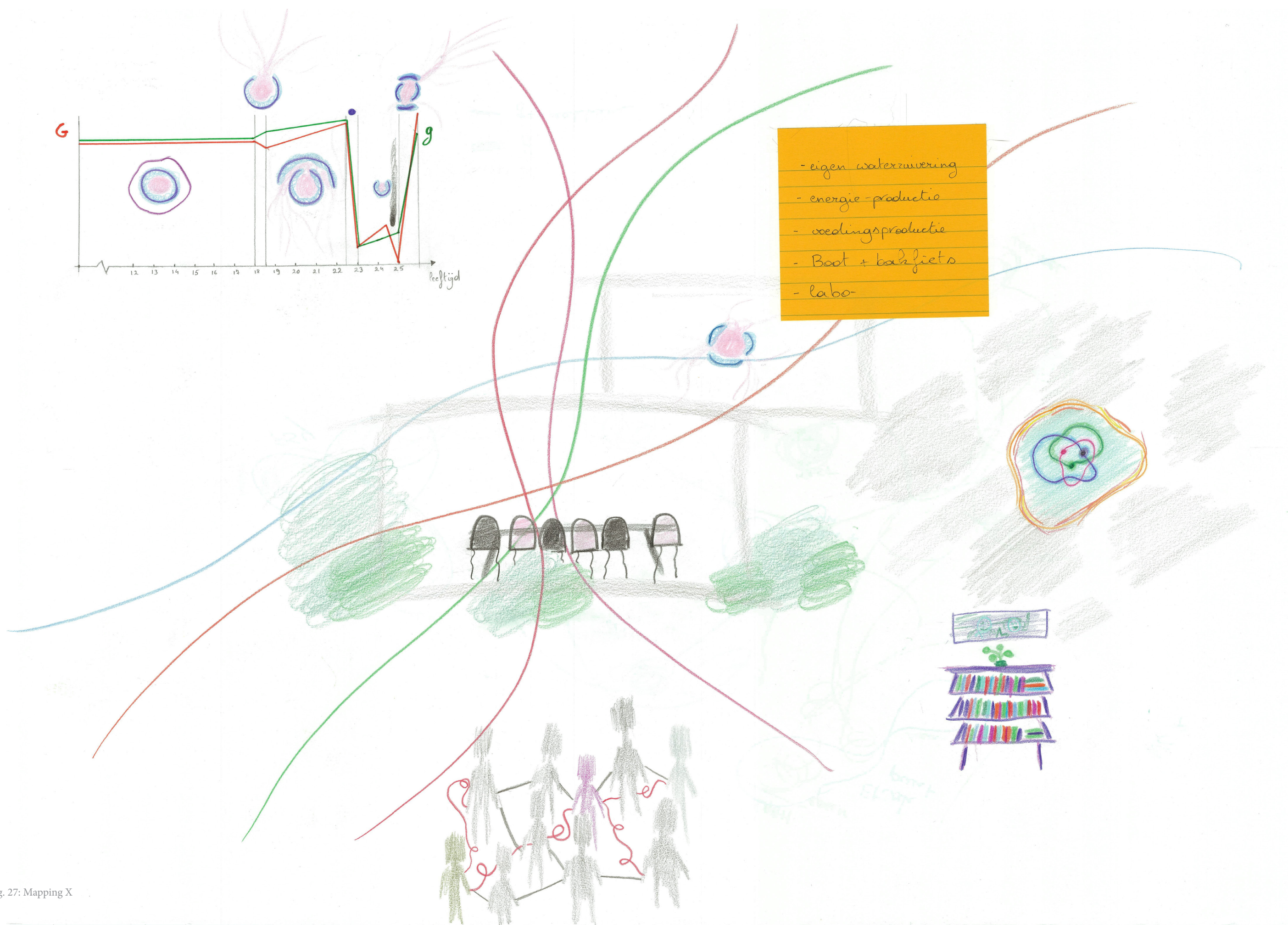


Fig. 27: Mapping X

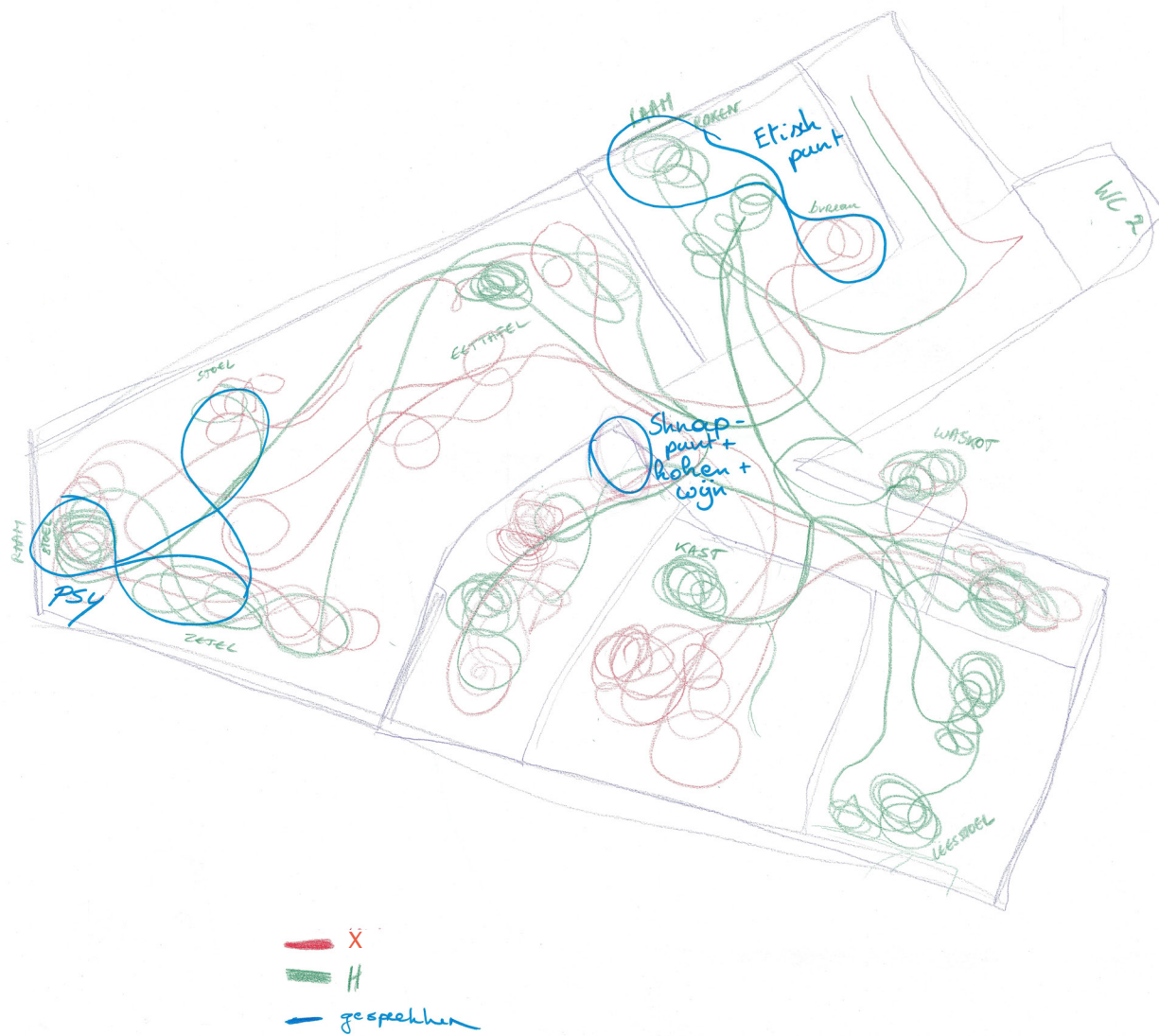
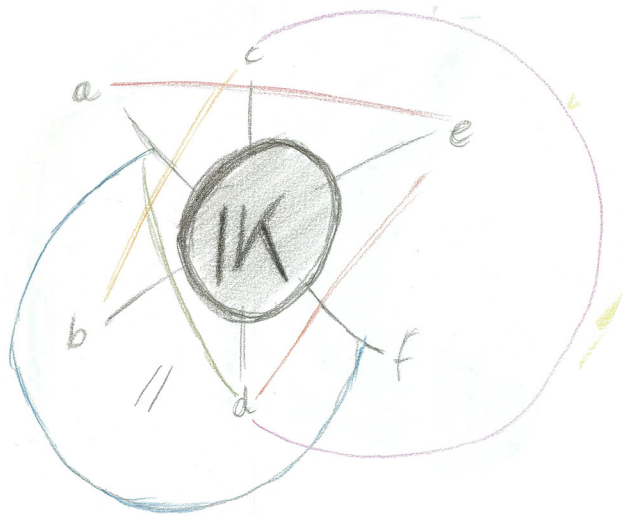


Fig. 28: Floor plan X

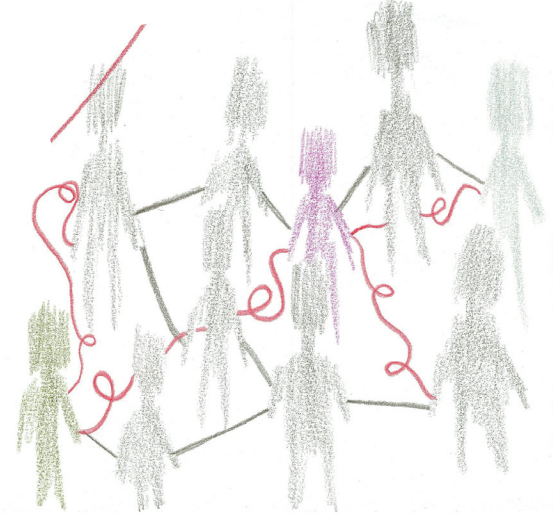


Fig. 29: Floor plan H

(H)



(X)



Queer

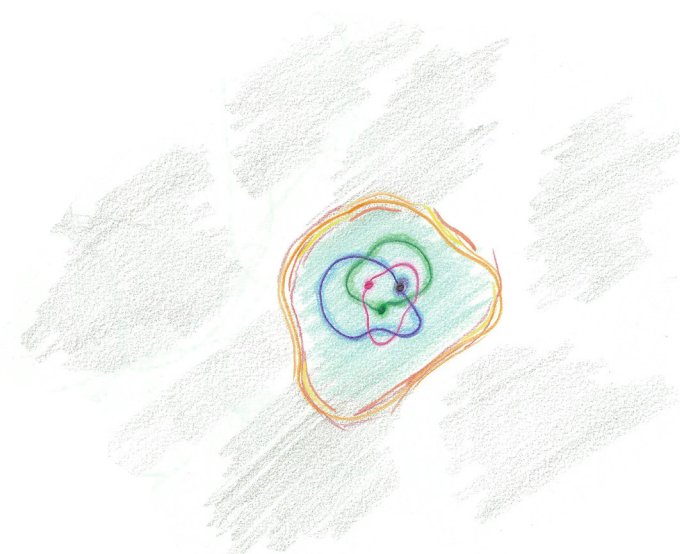
H articulates herself as a person comprising multiple identities, which are all connected through 'being queer'. She drew the 'I' (Ik) at the centre, encircled by various letters, resembling the different facets of her identity. "It's mainly the possibility that 'queer' offers, that you can be different things together," (H, 19-03-2023) which underscores the inclusive potential of "queer" to accommodate the intricate complexity and intersectionality inherent in one's identity.

For X, the 'grey population' represent those conforming to societal norms, while the coloured population represent people who deviate from the norm. These people maintain connections to each other, which can be normative (grey) or non-normative (red), which are drawn more 'twisted'. These "twisted red lines" symbolize the unique personal trajectories and connections which non-normative often people make. So, X puts queer in a societal context, while H directs it more inwards.

(H)



(X)

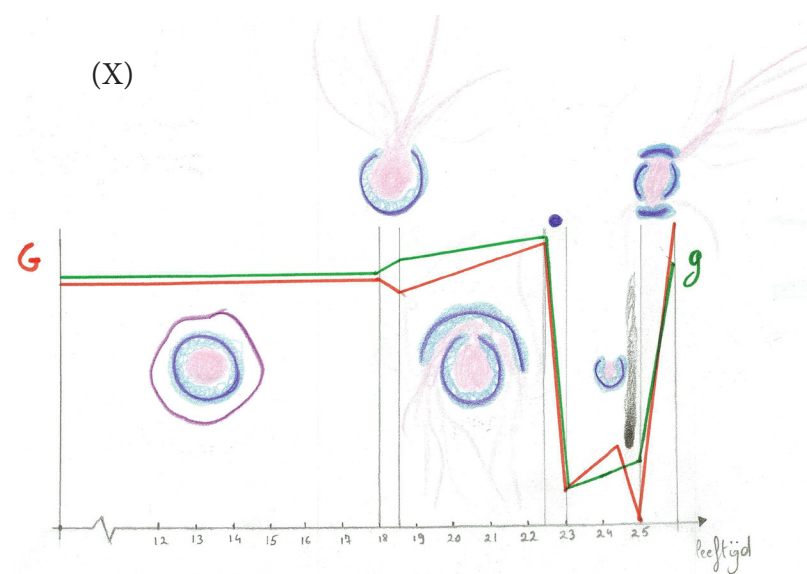
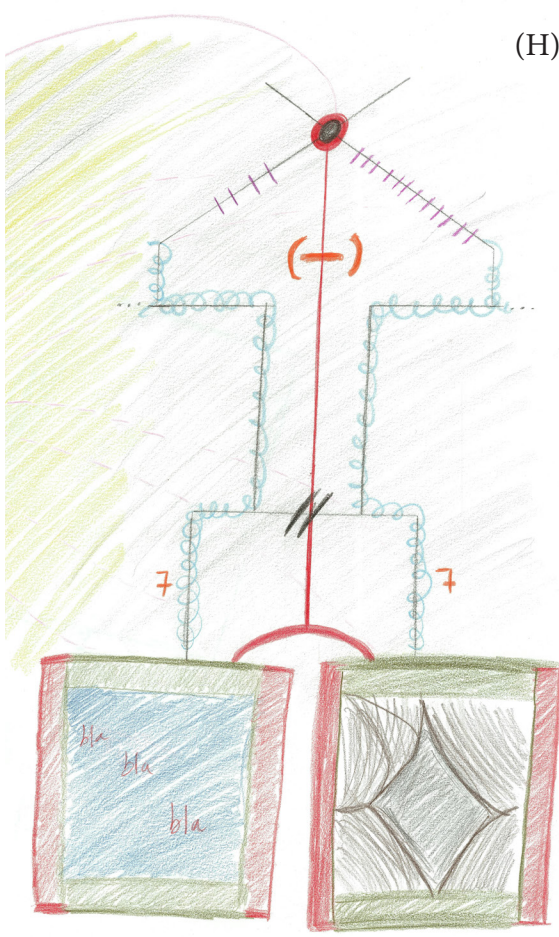


Home

H metaphorically illustrated her concept of home through the depiction of two windows. The metaphor of the window serves as a representation of home as a place where one feels truly 'seen'. The left window symbolizes the space where she can authentically express herself, a place that has both talking (bla bla bla) and reflection. The right window, however, represents a more contemplative aspect of her being, characterized by silence. For H, home is the combination of these two different realms. She mostly finds home in the individuals who acknowledge and accept these dual aspects of her identity.

Contrastingly, for X, home embodies a realm that exists in-between 'everything', marked by a clear boundary between interior and exterior. For X, home is a sanctuary where one experiences safety, warmth and a sense of connection; a place where you feel: "I am allowed to be there, and I am embraced by the other people who are here" (X, 19-03-23), which depicts home as a place of belonging.

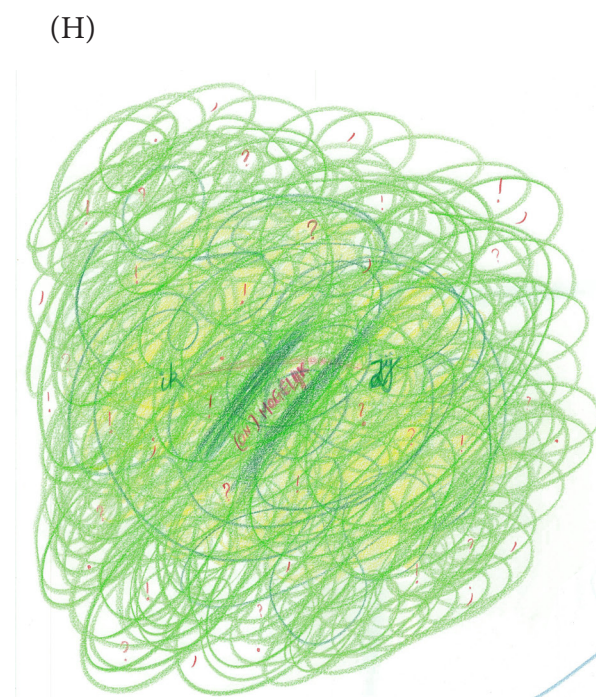
H and X also explore the interconnectedness of 'queer' and 'home'. They emphasize that while their decision to become roommates wasn't directly influenced by their queer identities, it undeniably facilitated the process. They emphasize that co-living with someone who is also queer eradicates the fear and potential danger of rejection based on one's queer identity. Next to that, H also highlights the contrast in identity between herself and X. She is a queer woman of colour, he is a white queer man, which makes them, according to H, also totally different.



Housing History

H grew up in Limburg in a family of seven. She reflects on her Turkish family, where silence (in her bedroom) and extensive conversations (in the kitchen) coexisted. Her family's ethos "I think a lot, but I don't speak," (H, 19-3-23) facilitated that some topics, such as sexuality, remained unspoken. H wanted to move away as far as possible from Limburg, which initiated living in different places in Ghent. Moving into her current apartment was marked by the loss of her father, symbolized as the 'minus' in the drawing. She mixed this drawing with the drawing of 'queer' and 'home', because for her, these two merged together in Ghent. H underscores the profound impact of each her residences, which is represented by the blue twisted line. This symbolises her (queer) journey, which she describes as being retroactive, as it shapes both the future and the past.

X drew his housing history on a graph, categorising residences by age, happiness and feeling seen. The pink resembles himself, while the purple circles around it symbolize the people around him, starting with his parental home where he felt loved and seen. His journey then led him to Ghent for his studies, resulting in a transformative phase of self-discovery, followed by darker periods during the pandemic. However, his current living situation with H has restored his happiness and sense of feeling seen.



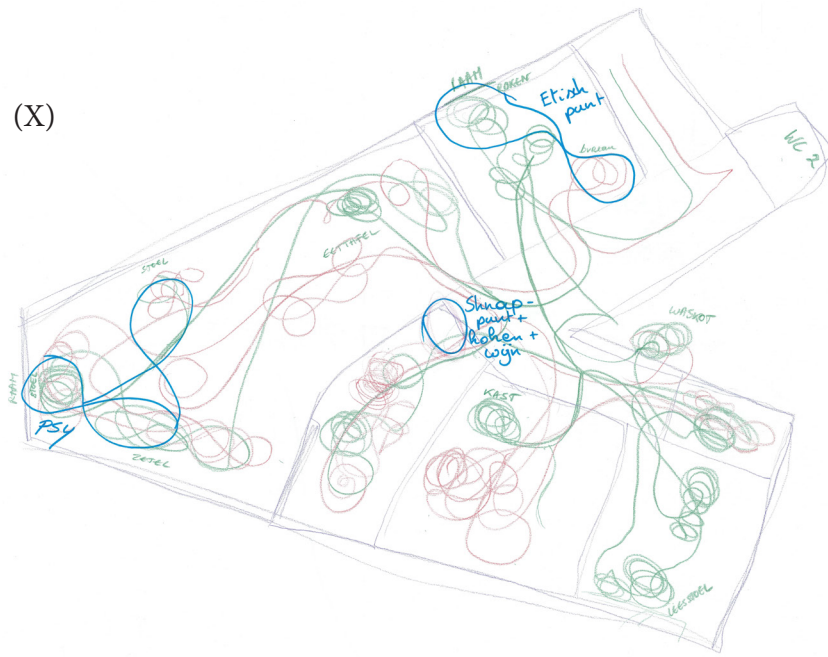
Dream House

H describes her ideal home as less something visual and more as a feeling. For her, home is where both the 'I' and the 'Other' coexist, yet also have the freedom to be independent. For her, home also embraces both possibility and impossibility, a realm of both chaos and balance. "It should be a place of punctuation. I should feel be possible to put dots, question marks, exclamation points, commas, etc." (H, 19-3-23), which is represented in the drawing.

In contrast, X's vision of his dream house takes the form of an ecologically conscious bungalow, constructed from sustainable concrete, surrounded by trees. The post-it note details specific environmental requirements, accompanied by X's statement: "I want the house to not only protect me from the weather, but also to protect nature from me." (X, 19-3-23) For him, home should also be a place where a lot of people come together, which is symbolised by the diverse chairs around the table, as well as the lines which represent the flow of people.

Therefore, the dream houses envisioned by X and H are very different. X perceives his dream home as a physical place, focusing on architectural design, ecological principles, and shared connections with others. In contrast, H's vision revolves around the emotional concept of 'feeling at home,' contemplating the harmony between herself and other inhabitants, using linguistic metaphors to express the inherent chaos of home-making.

(X)

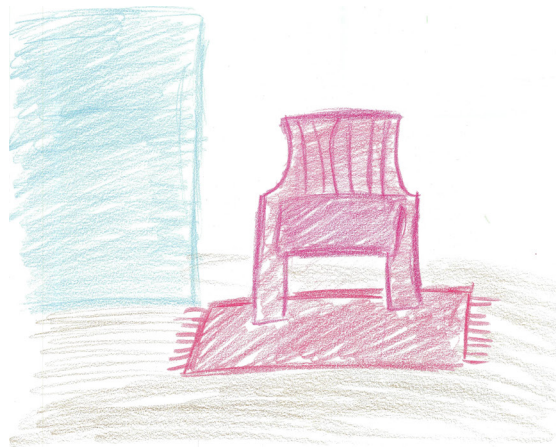


 ~~X~~
 H
 gespeichert

(H)



(H)



(X)



Floor Plans

During the process of drawing, both X and H faced challenges in depicting the floor plan of their apartment, expressing the difficulty because of its numerous ‘unusual corners.’ To overcome this, X used the floor plan in the app of their vacuum cleaning robot as a reference, which explains the contrast between X’s floor plan and H’s floor plan.

Walking paths

X and H frequently use communal areas together. There is a significance in H's routine, where her walking lines lead to the windows for smoking breaks. They both state that they never enter each other's rooms, only when H puts away X's washed clothes, a task H claims he rarely does. They both see the bed as an intimate space that is off boundaries for the other person.

Their discussions revealed that H tends to be more organized than X, displaying an aversion to untidiness and chaos, and consequently, taking on more tidying responsibilities. They view 'trust' as the pivotal element in their cohabitation. They expand on the different conversations they have in the house, such as the 'snapping point' (snap-point) in the kitchen, where they vent about everyday life. Then there is the 'ethical corner' (ethic point) in the office room, and the 'psychological corner' (psy-point) on the living room couch, reserved for discussions regarding relationships and life's 'drama.'

Battles with the house

X and H both desire a bigger kitchen and complain about mould in the walls. Disagreements between them are relatively minor, primarily revolving around snacks, where X occasionally consumes all of H's snacks. They emphasize that communication is very important in their household, underscored by their mutual comfort in expressing themselves. "We both know our own and each other's 'pappenheimers' (our distinct personalities), and we are okay with them." (X, 19-3-23).

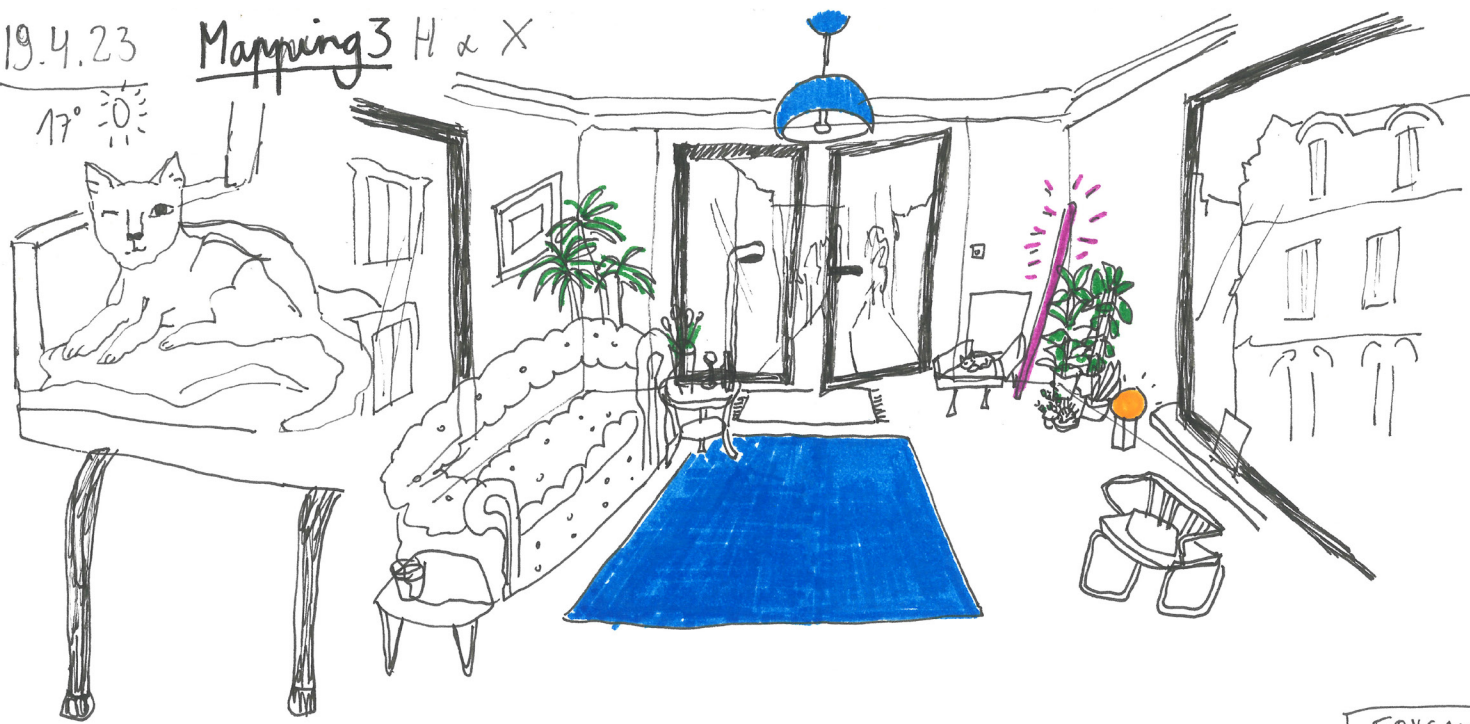
Regarding household chores, they maintain a balanced approach. H leans towards tidying, while X focuses on practical tasks, a division rooted in their preferences, although it can look like they reproduce normative gender roles. But this is relatively challenged by their open conversation on these roles and recognising their different preferences and upbringings.

Home Object

The object that represents home for H is the chair positioned by the window, a space she habitually occupies for smoking, which many visitors also associate with her as a person. X chose the bookcase, where both the books of H and X are “neurotically put together.” (X, 19-3-23), which for him signifies a fresh chapter in the apartment.

19.4.23 Mapping3 H & X

17° ☀



Het gaat over
connectie met mensen,
met vrienden



SNOEPPOT



“ DAT WAS
EEN MOEILIJKE,

DE SNACKS ”

verstopt
in de
slaapkamer

ER WERD EEN GEUZE BOON
GEMORST OP HET TAPIJT

VOORAL ZONDE VAN DE GEUZE BOOM,
NIET VAN HET TAPIJT.



FOUCAULT
FANON
SOLNIT
MURAKAMI
HARARI
SAÏD

ER ZIJN WEL
ENKELE BOEKEN
DIE IK OOK AL LAS

OF ZEKER NOG WIL LEZEN.

HET GELUID VAN
AMBULANCES



“ IK GA DIE FLES RODE WIJN OPEN DOEN
WANT HET IS ECHT ZO'N
DAG VOOR MIJ ”



DEZE GAAT IN DE WAS

... ? !
= INTERPUNCTIE
= RUST

BOEKEN
+
RODE WIJN

het is er
vers
geschilderd

DE FIXER

&

DE OPRUIMER

de was opplooiën



WE HEBBEN DE LAMP AL LANG
MAAR ER ZITTEN NOG STEEDS
GEEN LAMPEN IN

Fig. 30: Reflection mapping

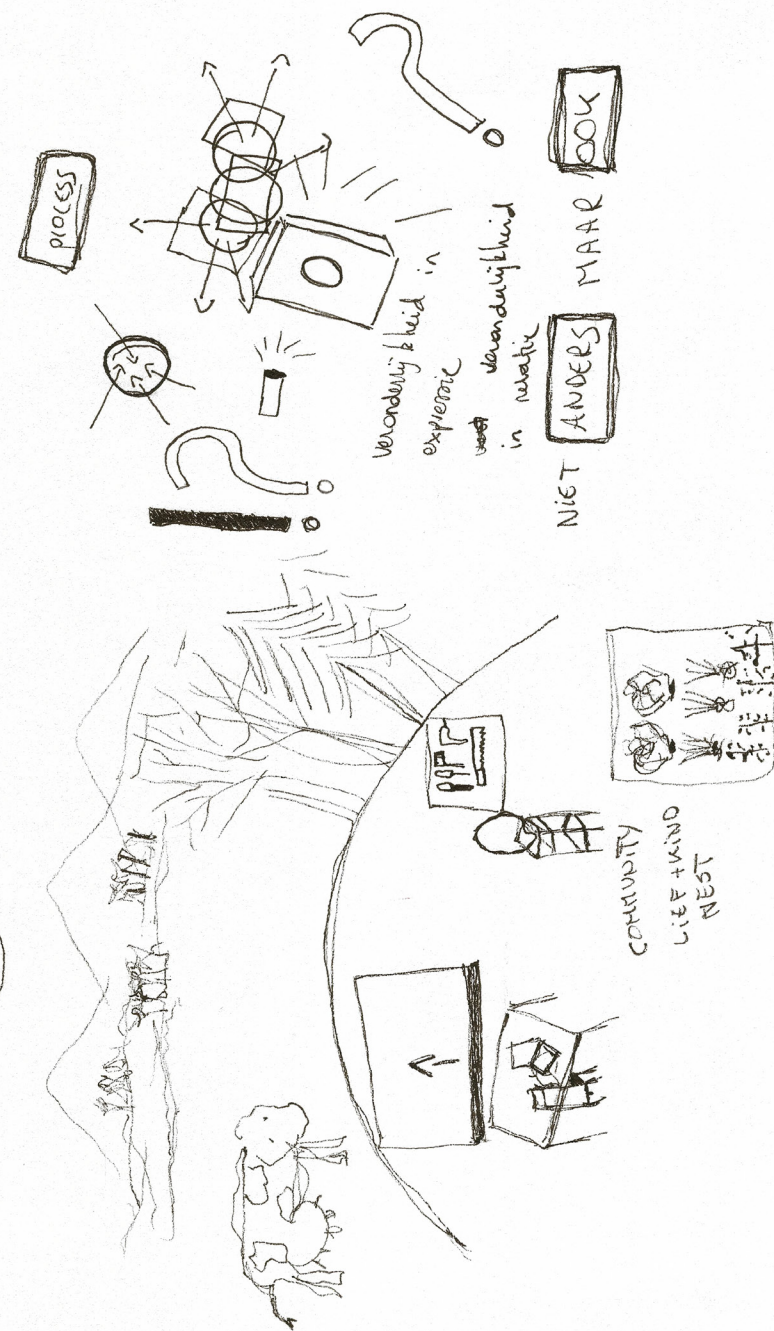
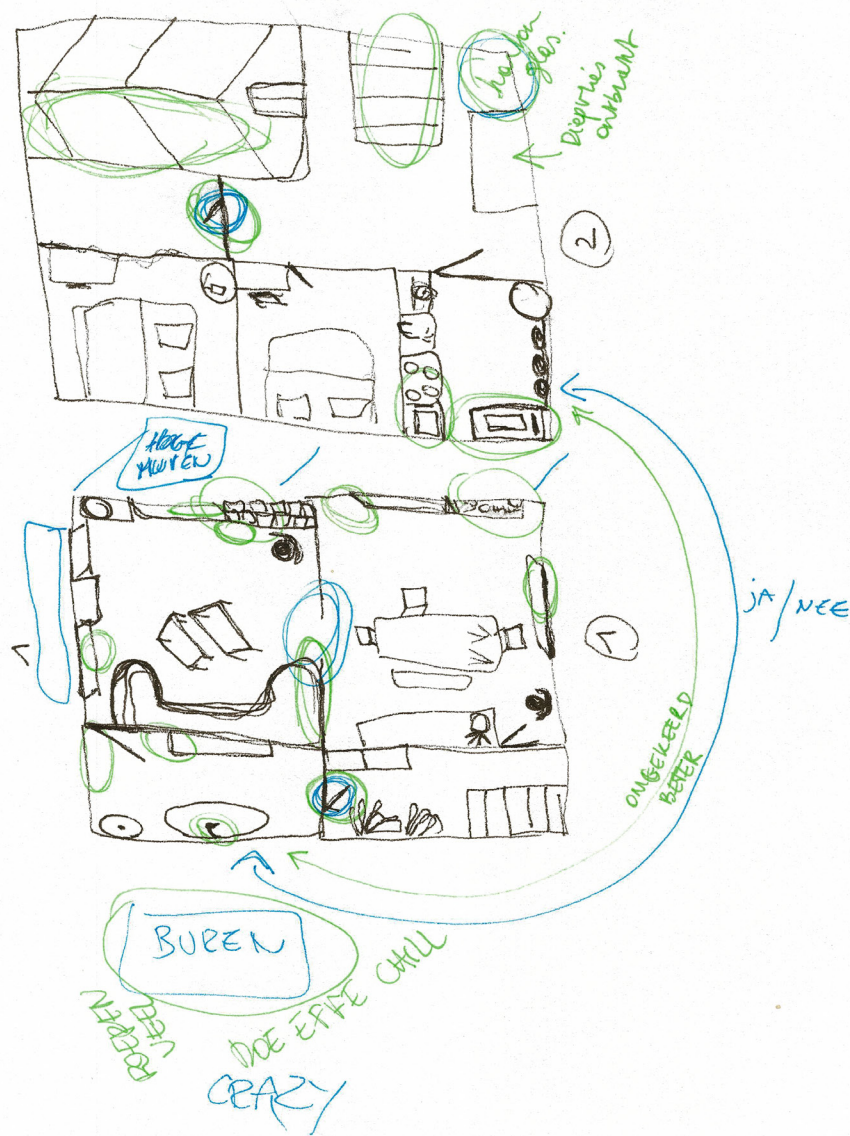


Fig. 32: Mapping Sirine

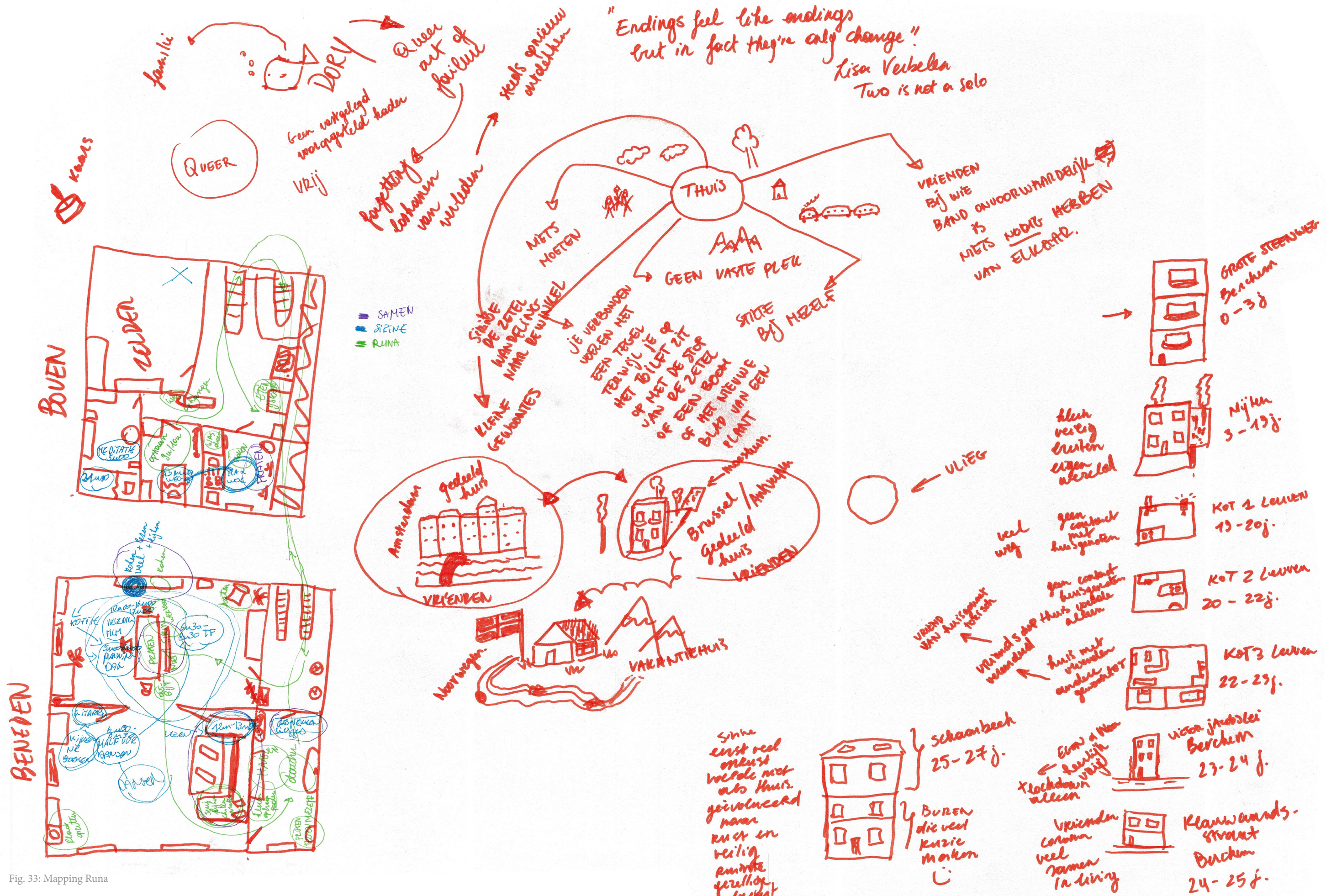
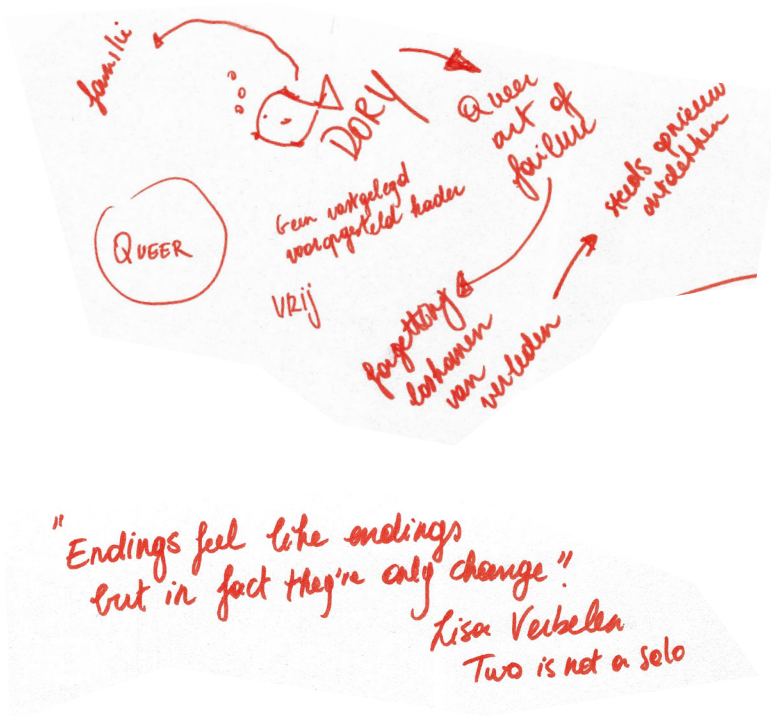
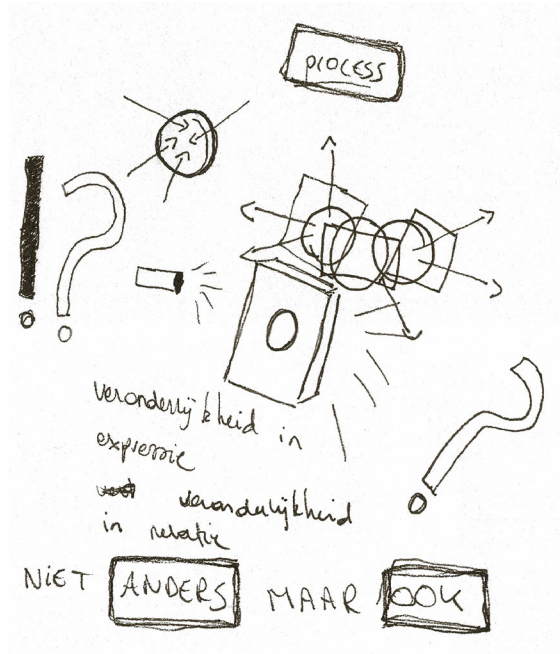


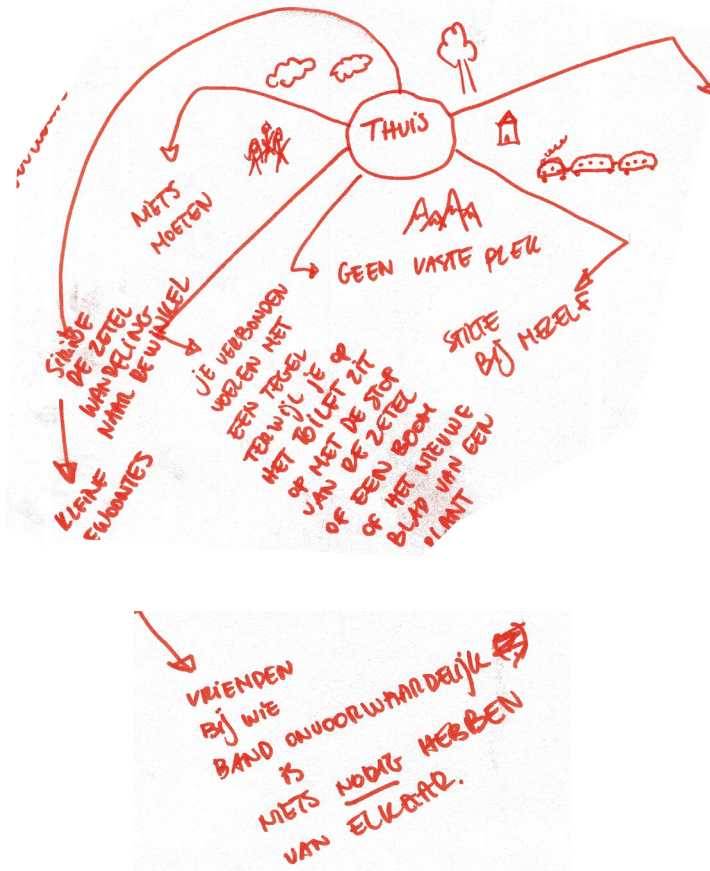
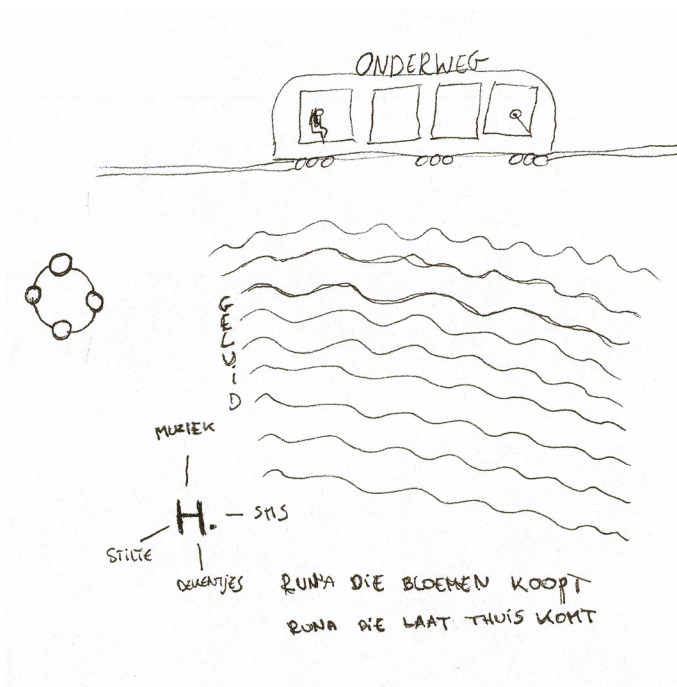
Fig. 33: Mapping Runa



Queer

For Sirine, queerness embodies an ongoing process with different phases, represented by the sphere and the square. The exclamation and question mark represent that “queer is about keeping asking questions.” (Sirine, 30-4-23) She also drew a box where light is shined through, which means “showing yourself while staying the boss of your box, or your body.” (Sirine, 30-4-23) For her, changeability and rediscovery are important aspects of being queer, where she expands on her relationship with Runa. “We fight like exes, but then we’re just roommates, then we’re friends, and so on.” (Sirine, 30-4-23), explaining that their relationship isn’t seen through one label.

Runa aligns with these thoughts, where she references artist Lisa Verbelen: “Endings feel like endings, but in fact they’re only change.”, a notion that resonates deeply within their relationship. For Runa, queer means having no fixed framework in how to act or how to form relationships. She refers to the character of Dory in Finding Nemo, described in the book ‘The Queer Art of Failure’ by Jack Halberstam. “Dory is a super queer character, because she forgets where she comes from, and because she forgets, she doesn’t act from past patterns, making her very open and honest. (...) I kind of identify with that.” (Runa, 30-4-23) Therefore, she sees naivety and forgetfulness as valuable characteristics, instead of negative.



Home

For Sirine, home is really her routine. “When I can do the same every day, then I feel at home. (...) A lot of things can be weird in my life, but some things just have to stay fixed.” (Sirine, 30-4-23) Therefore, she doesn’t like sleepovers and takes all the objects she needs for her routine when she moves places. She also drew waves, because the sound of the ocean is equivalent of home, for its peaceful sound.

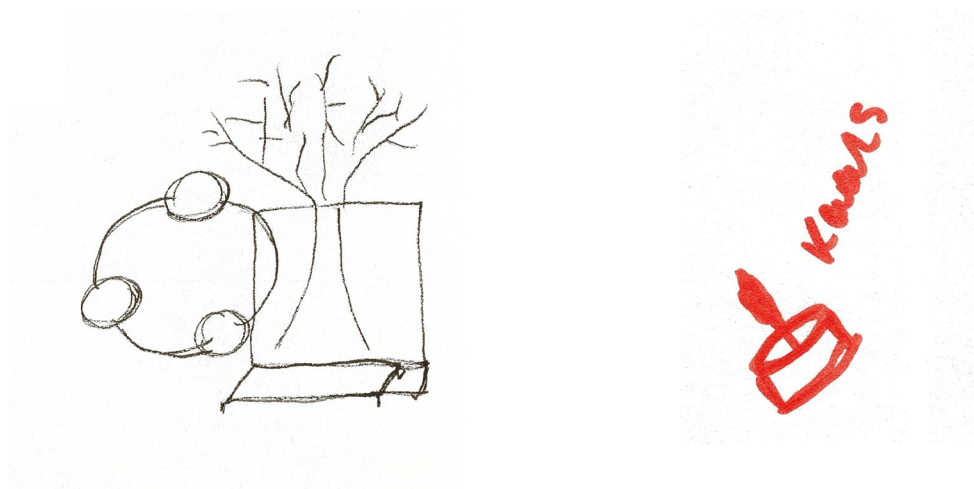
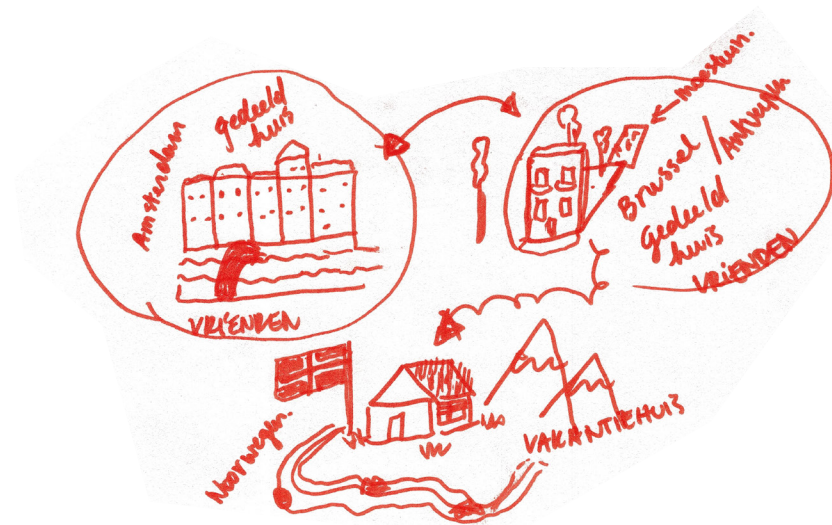
Runa responds that she is the opposite: “I hate rules and things that are fixed. It gives me an oppressive feeling.” (Runa, 30-4-23) Sirine gets up earlier than Runa, and she likes waking her up and asking about her day, which also means home to her. For Runa, home is not a fixed place or tied to a private place. “I can feel at home at a lot of places. (...) With friends. (...) Or when I walk alone through the streets. (...) Silence. And just feeling good about myself.” (Runa, 30-4-23)



Dream House

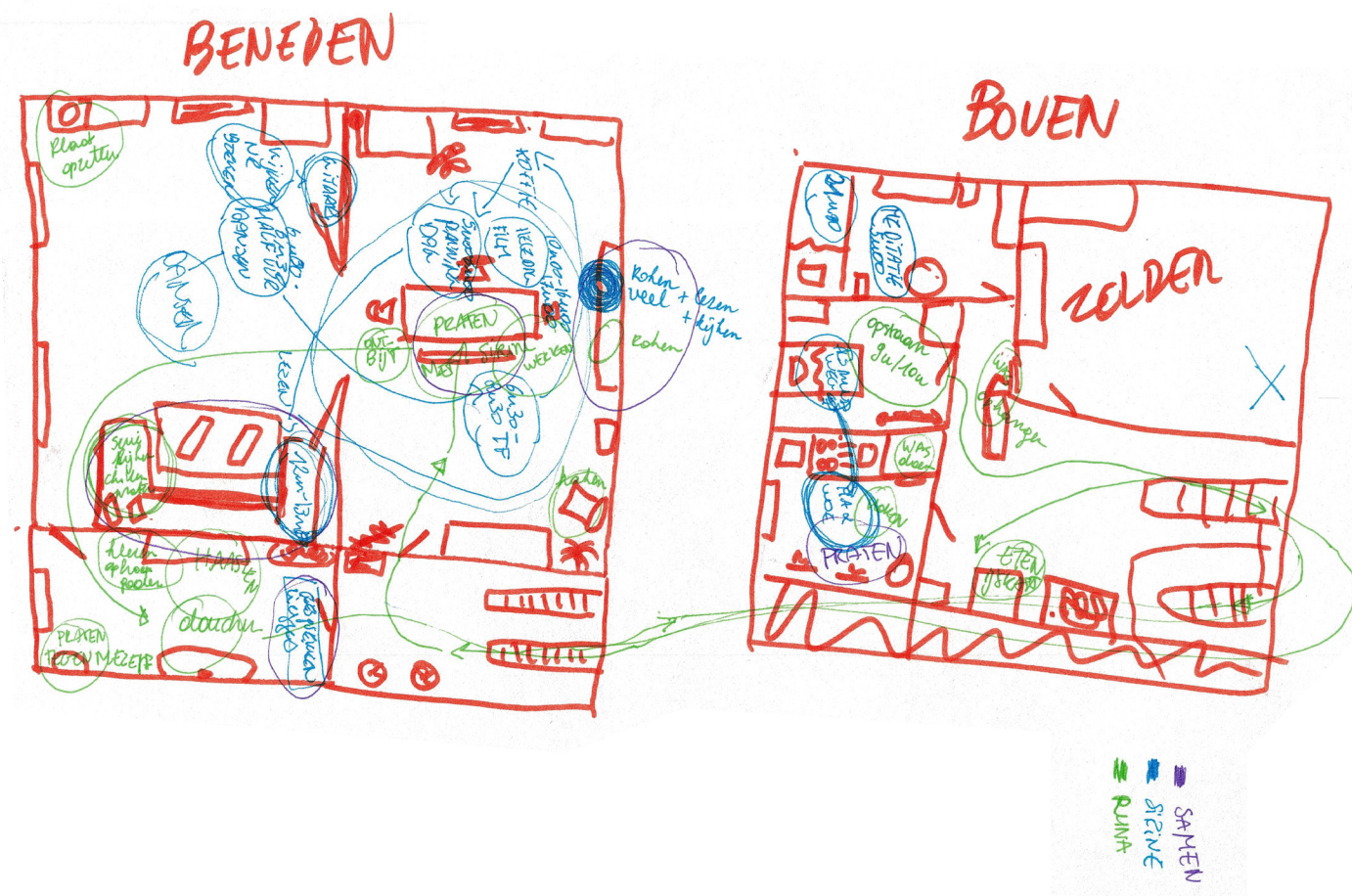
Sirine wants a house in the country side, surrounded by nature and animals. She prefers communal living with different families. “I really want to have children and raise them together with my partner, on the countryside, but also collectively. Really owning the phrase: ‘It takes a village to raise a child’” (Sirine, 30-4-23) She also expands on that such a community would feel more safe and welcoming in the countryside as a queer person. She also desires a vegetable garden and workspace looking out to nature.

Runa drew three places she would like as a dream house. Firstly, a house in Brussels with a garden, because she finds it important to be close to her friends. Secondly, a place in Amsterdam, suggesting this could be in a form of house swapping with someone who wants to live in Brussels. And thirdly, a hut in Norway, because she has family there and therefore Norway always felt a bit like home.



Home Object

Sirine chose to draw her routine. She also drew the tree outside their apartment, which for her is her connection to the outside, to nature, but also to time: beginning the day with chirping birds, but also seeing the tree change through seasons. Runa wanted to draw a lot of things, but she chose a candle light, because it resembles cosiness, warmth and caring for yourself.



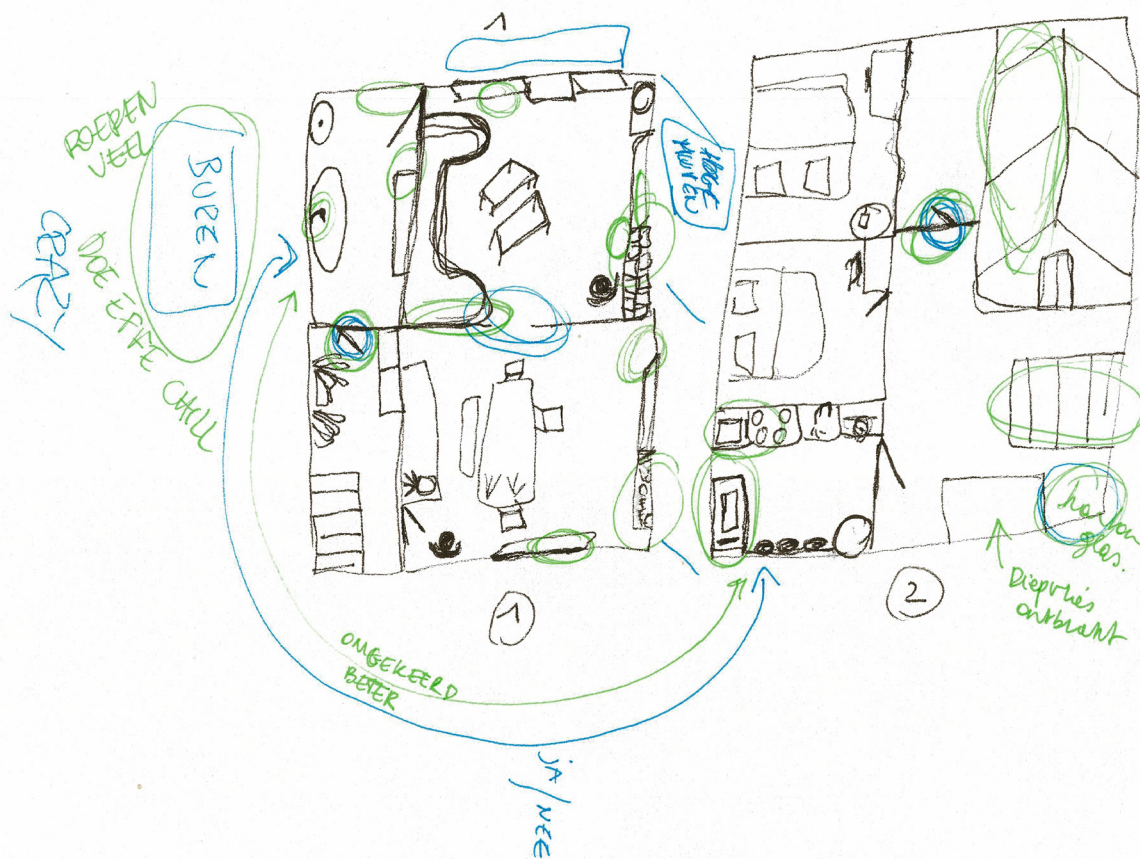
Floor Plans

Walking Paths

Sirine starts drawing her walking paths strictly following her routine, where she marked the different steps on the plan. She gets up at five in the morning and goes to sleep at nine. "I need to do my routine, otherwise I can start mulling or get over-stimulated. So I follow my routine very strictly." (Sirine, 30-4-23) In contrast, Runa gets up around nine or ten, where she meets Sirine in the living area, often following her in her routine, which she can sometimes find this following irritating. "Sometimes I find it a bit irritating that I have to follow you." (Runa, 30-4-23) She is less structured than Sirine in her day planning, feeling the most energetic at night. "You're evening is like my morning" (Runa, 30-4-23), she says. While their routine and day schedule highly differ, they find it important to find a moment during the day to ask about their previous days. They both emphasize they talk a lot and also marked the places of their conversations on the plan. "Especially in the bathroom, where we talk about relationships and love." (Sirine & Runa, 30-4-23)

Battles with the House

They list some small things that they struggle with, like squeaking doors. Runa is often annoyed of the chaos of Sirine's stuff. "When there is chaos in the house and with the neighbours, I can really say that I want to move out." (Runa, 30-4-23) They do expand on their neighbours, who live underneath them, and who are also the landlord and -lady. They complain a lot, setting out negative atmosphere. "And she have a really fixed world view, like 'that is the way to do things.' (...) I am really afraid of them, because they can get really angry." (Runa, 30-4-23)



MAPPING 4

30 APRIL 2023

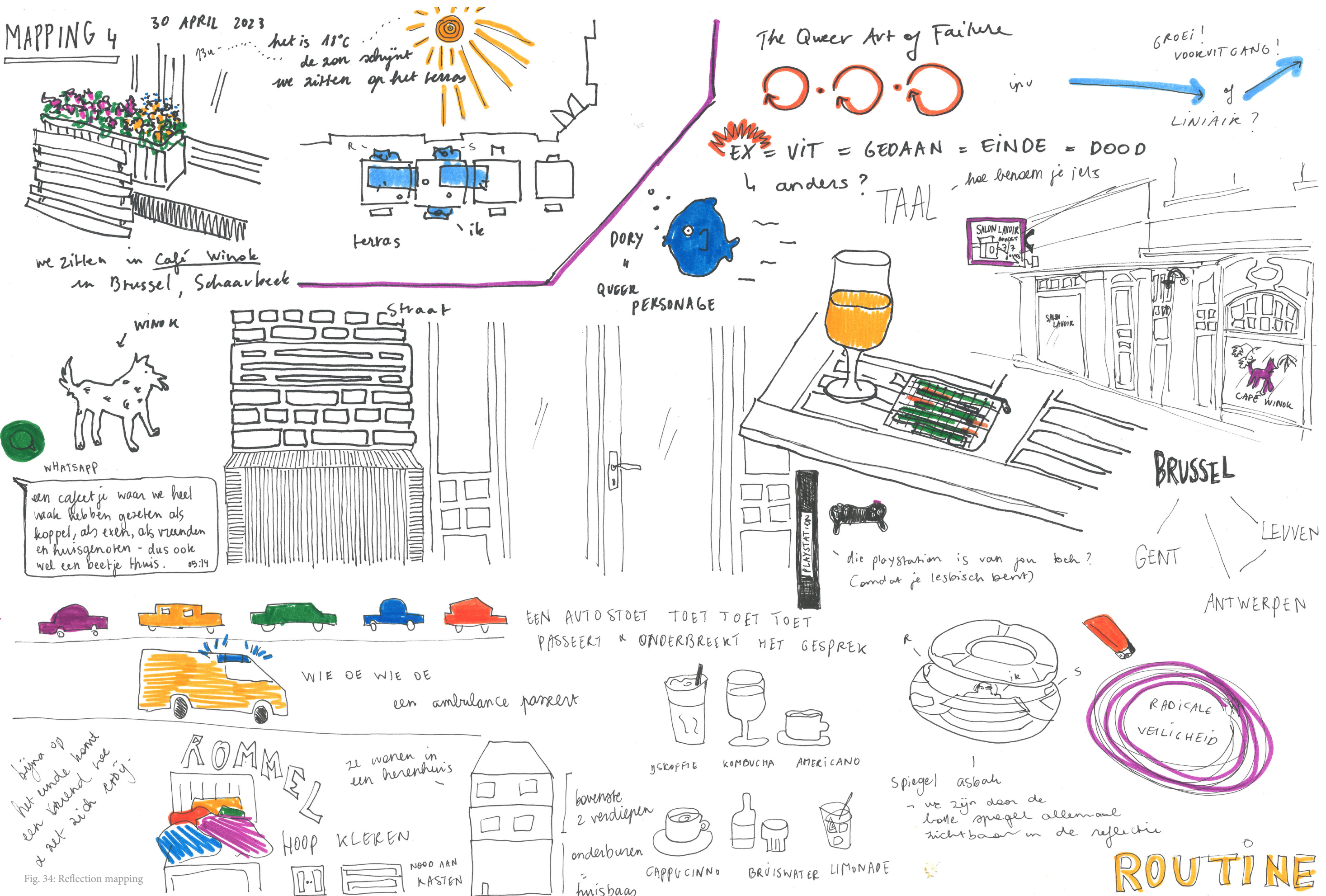


Fig. 34: Reflection mapping



Mapping 5 - Adam

Adam (he/him) shares a corner row house in Ghent with his partner, Paulina (she/her). Both Adam and Paulina identify as queer and polyamorous. Me and Adam are friends, shortly dating at one point, that being also part of my own queer journey. Given their unique perspective, I invited Adam and Paulina to participate in the mapping session. Unfortunately, Paulina couldn't join due to time constraints, as she faces considerable academic pressure to maintain her visa status. Paulina, originally from Argentina, moved to Ghent a few years ago, while Adam grew up in Flanders.

Both Adam and Paulina warmly welcomed me into their home, extending their hospitality with snacks and coffee. Adam, currently studying Design, naturally engaged with the drawing exercises during the mapping. I felt he had a deep understanding of his current home with Paulina, where he talked a lot in terms of their relationship, rather than focusing on his own living approach. Adam often required time to articulate his thoughts, where I sometimes offered help or extra questions, which pronounced my role as researcher.



< Fig. 35: Drawing referring to mapping session

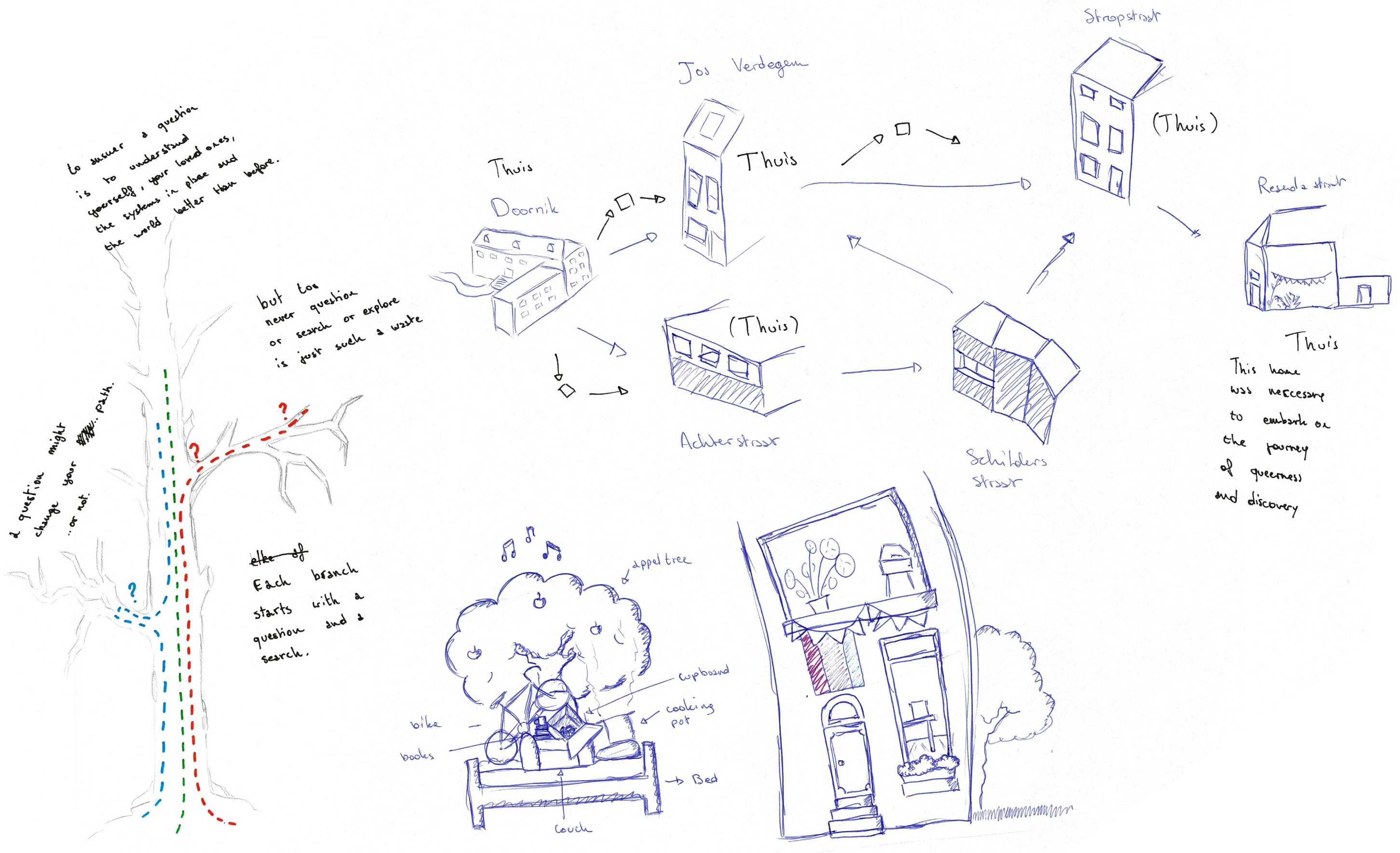
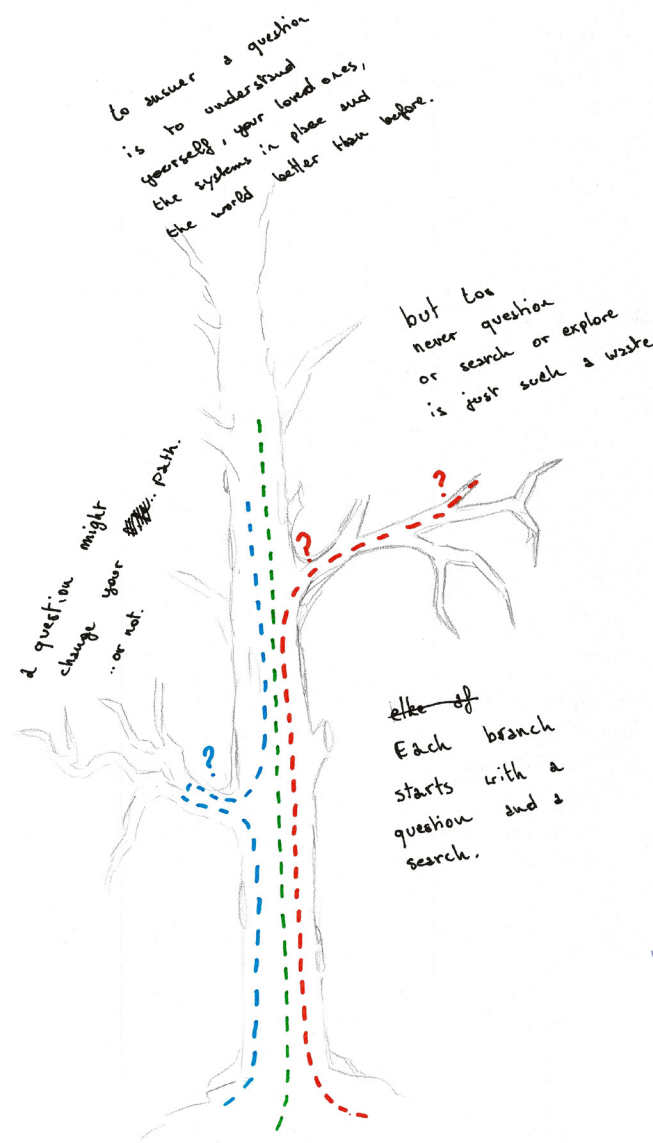


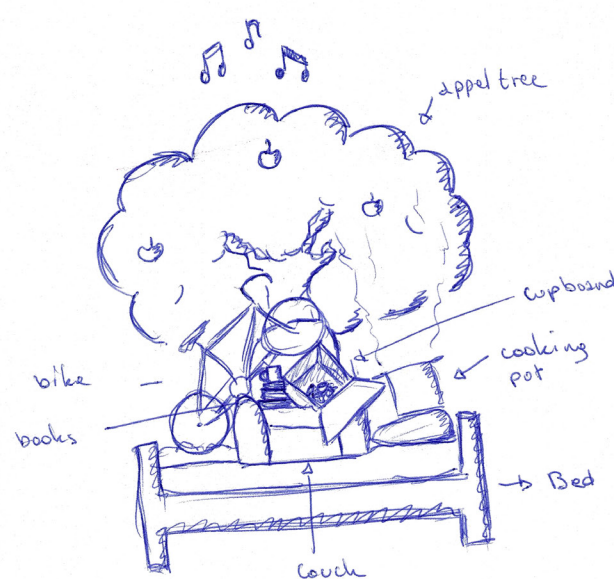
Fig. 36: Mapping Adam front



Queer

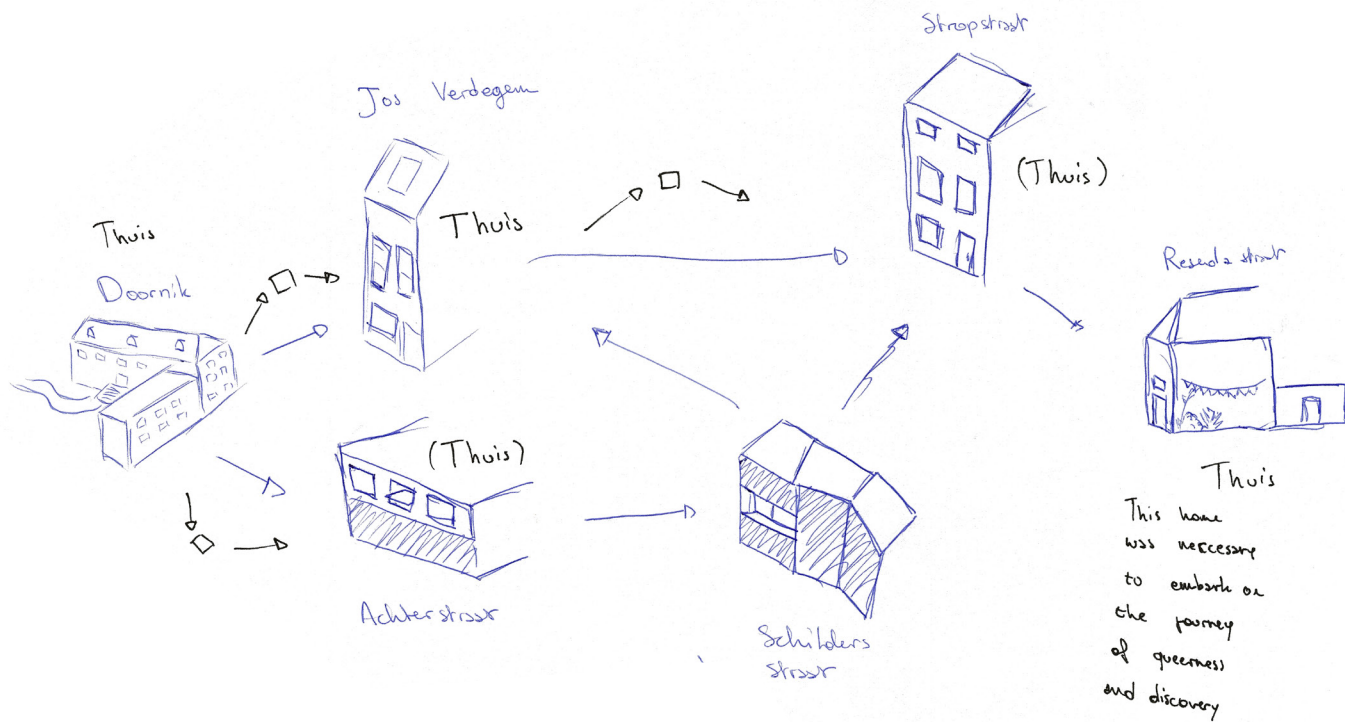
Adam notes at the beginning of our conversation that he sees polyamory as part of being queer, while it is not part of the LGBTQ+ acronym. He states that, for him, being polyamorous also undergoes a level of oppression. Adam employs the metaphor of a tree to convey his understanding of (being) queer. The branches represent the journeys individuals undertake to discover their authentic selves. These paths are marked by questions, which serve as catalysts for personal exploration. The trunk of the tree symbolizes the conventional, normalised path that aligns with societal expectations, while the branching out signifies divergence from this norm, reflecting the pursuit of personal needs and desires. For Adam, being queer encompasses this continuous search (about oneself), but also questioning systems of oppression.

With the statement, “But to never question or search or explore is just such a waste.” (Adam, 2-5-23), he highlights that some individuals are privileged to avoid the necessity of questioning or exploring their life journeys, following an “automatic” and presumed way of living.



Home

Adam’s concept of home revolves around specific objects, which symbolize both the places and activities that evoke a sense of belonging and comfort. Therefore, Adam’s notion of home is less an abstract idea; it is tangibly represented by physical objects, specific conditions, and the engagement in particular activities. This perspective highlights the interplay between the physical and emotional aspects of home, encompassing both the tangible presence of cherished items and the comfort derived from meaningful activities.



Housing History

Adam grew up in an old monastery where his divorced parents resided separately but within the same building. After that, he found that the houses his father inhabited felt less like home. While he acknowledges that his queerness was generally accepted within his family, he also sensed subtle forms of queerphobia and the influence of traditional gender roles. His current residence feels like the first place where he can entirely express his queerness, saying that “this home was necessary to embark on the journey of queerness and discovery” (Adam, 2-5-23). Adam emphasizes that this queer journey is closely tied to his partner, enabling conversations that he couldn’t have had with previous (straight) roommates or family members.

The process of searching for their current house was also a queer journey for Paulina and Adam. The house needed to align with their polyamorous relationship, necessitating two worthy bedrooms. This decision, while not a direct reflection of the openness of their relationship, signifies their need for independence and personal space.

“I think we built our relationship very much on the idea that nothing is evident and that everything is negotiable, and that we make every decision in our relationship because we want to.” (Adam, 2-5-23)

Additionally, Adam reflects on the privilege he and Paulina hold, as they often appear as a heterosexual monogamous couple, which may protect them from (housing) discrimination. However, Adam acknowledges the limitations of this privilege, recognizing that it diminishes when he goes out alone, when expressing himself in a less gender-conforming way.



Dream House

Adam’s vision of his dream house aligns closely with the elements he articulated when discussing the concept of home. He emphasizes a preference for a house with ‘crooked’ character, drawing than a newly constructed one. He expresses a desire for a spacious and well-equipped kitchen, while the overall size of the house matters less to him.

Furthermore, he’d like the opportunity to display the bisexual flag, stressing the need for a safe and welcoming queer-friendly neighbourhood. He expresses a need to feel connected to the neighbourhood and says that he and Paulina can sometimes feel uncomfortable in their current one. He says that he and his partner sometimes feel uncomfortable in their present neighbourhood.



Floor Plans

Walking paths

Adam proposes to use different colours to indicate his activities within the house, using green to signify areas of silence and rest, while red designates bustling activities. The kitchen emerges as a pivotal hub, being both a lively and relaxing place. Purple indicates the shared areas with his partner, although he distinctly perceives her bedroom as a place he visits, reinforcing their decision to maintain separate bedrooms. This arrangement engenders a sense of independence, as he doesn't require explicit approval to occupy her space, with the couple often alternating rooms for sleeping.

Adam highlights the numerous conversations he and Paulina engage in throughout the house, shedding light on the bathroom as a meaningful space, not only for their shared routines but also from a queer perspective. Here, they prepare together, put on makeup, becoming a place "where we let go of gender roles." (Adam, 2-5-23)

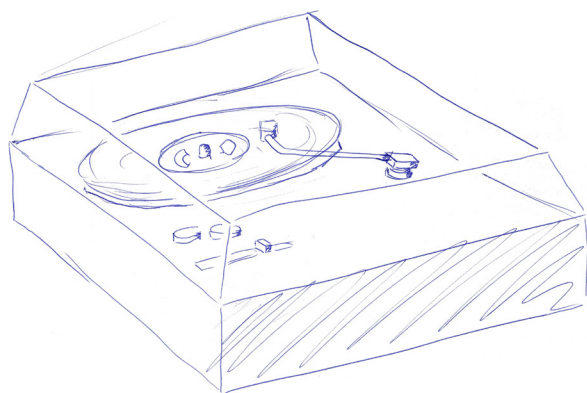
Regarding household chores, Adam and his partner conscientiously work to deconstruct these tasks from traditional gender roles, a conscious shift catalysed by Paulina. Adam shares his previous tendency to require reminders for housework from Paulina. He underscores the significant responsibility of coordinating and managing household tasks, which often has to be done by women. Additionally, Adam expresses his ease in adapting to new meal schedules influenced by Paulina's Argentine cultural background.

Battles with the house

Discussing challenges with the house, Adam first highlights areas and aspects he appreciates, which he marks in yellow, citing sunlight and music as important elements. However, he also acknowledges frustrations with the house, marked in blue. He notes the lack of soundproofing, although he also appreciates that all the rooms are connected and the house has an open atmosphere.

Home Object

Adam chose his record player as a representation of home, because of its association with relaxation and dedicating time to listen to music. Closing our conversation, Adam emphasizes the profound role that this house plays in his personal queer development. "The queerness becomes part of the house, and vice versa. (...) Because we need to ask a lot of questions about the house in terms of our polyamorous relationship, (...) so these things (queer and the house) feel inherently connected to each other." (Adam, 2-5-23)



MAPPING 5 2.5.23

Adam

Adam woont met zijn vriendin P. (die ironisch meedeen) - zij komt uit Argentinië

het is 20 n
hijna

de zon
schijnt nog
binnen

het is een
hoofthuis

DE MAPPING
gebeurt aan
de keukentafel

STRAT

'heb je de Bi-vlag al
achter jou gezien?'

KOER

Adam's
fiets
hangt

op - het is een
1 mooie hoersfiets

de deur
uitslaan

Some green problems also happen
want straight passing.

soms wel door
gender expressie

er hangen
veel referenties
naar ^{Argentinië} ~~Portugees~~ in het kvi.
g _{SP2265} teksten

Ik krijg  eerst een rondleiding

en dan de aanbreding
om iets te drukken

P. maakt haast 108ti's

het is al avond
maar toch drinken we koffie
met vers melleschuim
en suiker.

er zijn heel
wat
planten in
het huis.

1. ZORGE  & PFLANZEN

BOEKER

BOEKEN

"We leven een beetje
op een Argentijns ritme" = TAVIS
Zeker qua etenstijd."

Wat heb jij nodig?

"we hebben hier een
grevbankje"

"Ik zat er
daar net nog"

T
A
A
L

op zondag

we horen
allebei
heel graag

! Adam maakt
de mappin
in het

hij is er vleiend in
want die taal spreekt hij ook met

contact met ☐ ☐

voorbijgangers

contact met de
buren

Fig. 38: Reflection mapping



Mapping 6 - Turr & Joren

Turr (they/them) and Joren (he/him), known to me through mutual friends, are a couple living in a two-story house in Ghent, situated in a peaceful neighbourhood away from the centre. They chose this house for its garden, where their cherished chickens Peertje and Yoko live. Turr grew up in the West Flanders region, while Joren grew up close to Ghent, thereby both sharing a Flemish background. Turr works and has various interests, while Joren still studies.

We did the mapping outside in the garden because of the nice weather. This mapping took longer than other sessions, and therefore I skipped the last question. During the mapping, I observed Joren's hesitancy, often asking Turr how they were drawing their answers. I noticed a more spiritual approach in Turr's answers, while Joren directed his drawings more to his direct context and his relationship with Turr. It was nice to notice their loving way of communicating to each other, something they often referred to in their answers. I felt very peaceful and welcome in their home and garden, where they offered me risotto and homemade lemonade, showing Turr's love from cooking and working in the garden.

Order of mappings: Turr - Joren

< Fig. 39: Photograph during mapping session



Fig. 40: Mapping Turr



20 km

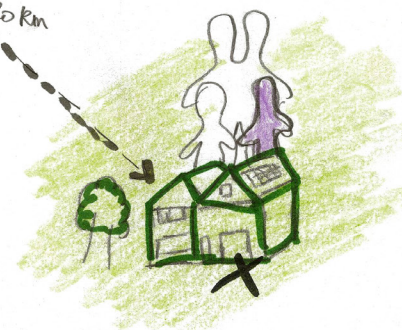


Fig. 41: Mapping Joren

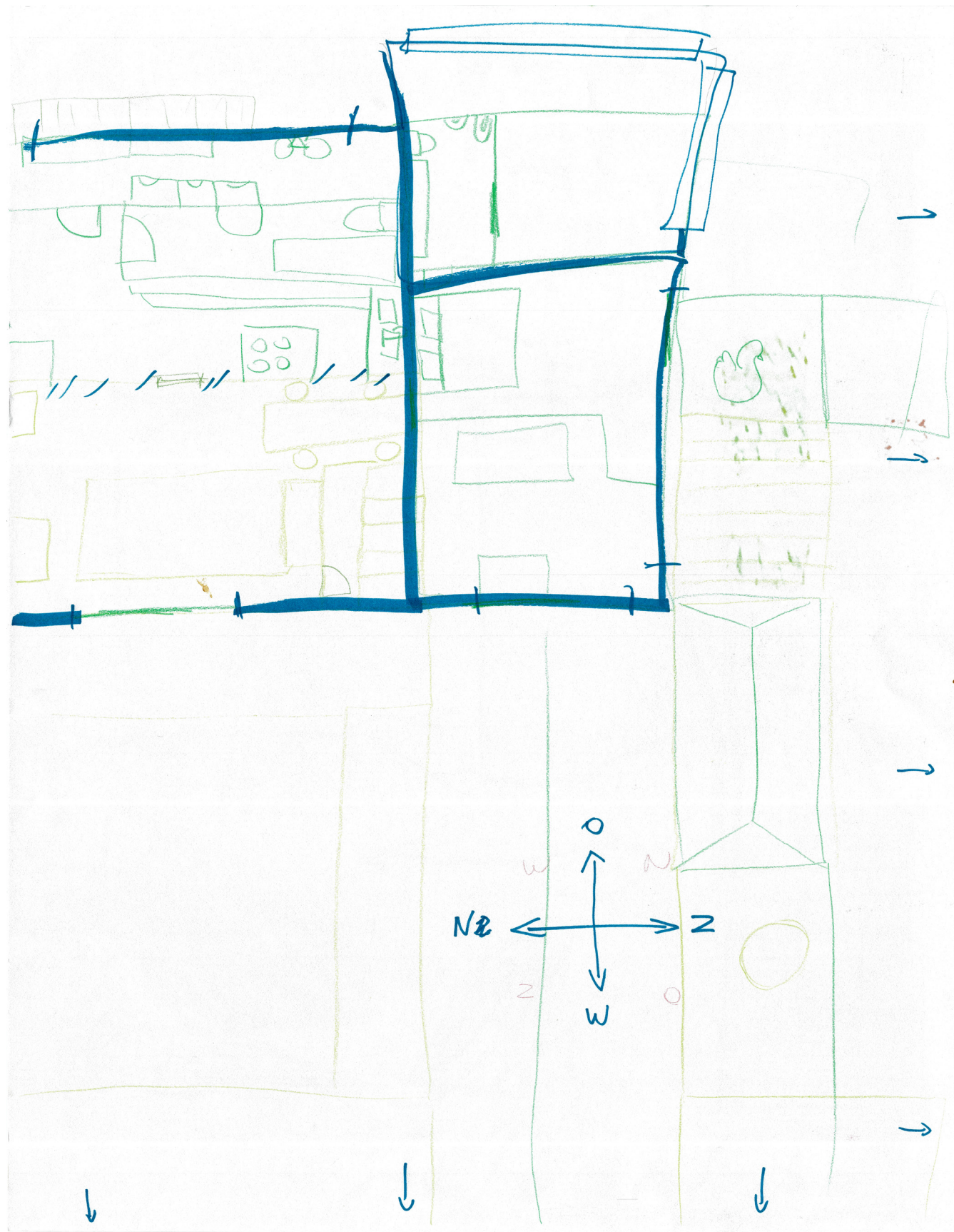


Fig. 42: Mapping Turr back



Fig. 43: Mapping Joren back



Queer

Turr's perspective centres upon the notion of 'balance'. Queerness is inherently intertwined with their non-binary identity, where they elaborate on cultures that perceive non-binary individuals as people of wisdom. According to Turr, non-binary people "have to look deeper into themselves, even within the queer community." (Turr, 13-5-23) They critique traditional Western scientific paradigms and its construction of binary categories. Both Joren and Turr object the notion of science's 'neutrality', contending that it reinforces gender norms. In addition, since Turr works with children, they observe children's capacity to think beyond fixed categories and embrace 'queerness' more readily than adults. Turr further expands on energy and connectedness with nature, showing their spiritual way of thinking, which resonates with their non-binary identity, in which they seek to transcend conventional definitions. "They often talk about masculine and feminine energy, but I'm kind of looking for non-binary energy and what that might mean within society." (Turr, 13-5-23)

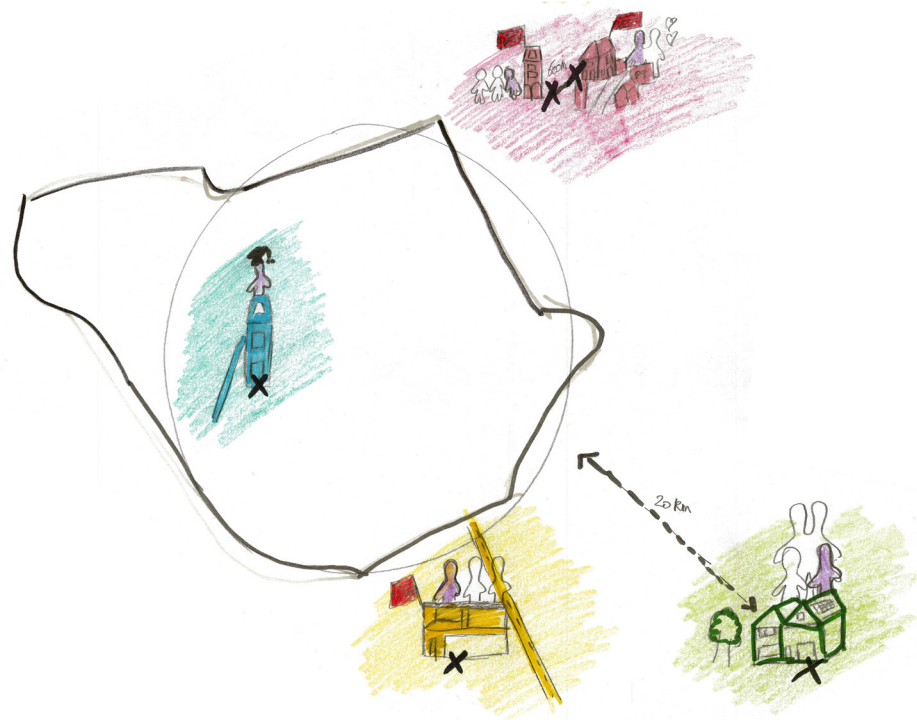
Conversely, Joren articulates that for him, queer is a spectrum, symbolised in the drawing by a gradient of colours. For him, his queer friends and the queer community are essential, because there he feels the safest and reassured. He enclosed the people in the spectrum within a pink bubble, "because you kind of choose your own bubble and you want to keep your bubble as safe as possible." (Joren, 13-5-23)



Home

Turr's depiction of home comprises the greenhouse in their garden, alongside Joren and their chickens. The drawing also shows themes such as rest, safety, warmth, luminosity, and fun, represented by balloons. Turr refers to terms as power, energy and growth, which aligns with their spiritual view and connection to the natural world and its elements.

On the other hand, Joren's drawing features two figures locked in embrace, symbolizing both himself and Turr, with yellow representing warmth, rest, and affection. Joren expands: "Home is mainly our relationship, finding peace in each other but also in myself. It is about finding yourself, finding each other and always finding again. (...) This place would no longer feel like home if Turr was no longer here." (Joren, 13-5-23) Thus, while for Joren home is less a physical place than for Turr, they share a similar perspective on home, where rest, safety and warmth stand central.



Housing History

Turr drew three houses they inhabited. Growing up as an only child within a restrictive family environment, Turr sought refuge in their imagination and the natural world. “In my family, the rule was not to stand out, something I did according to them. While I was just different from the norm.” (Turr, 13-5-23) Consequently, Turr wanted to move away from Ypres to Ghent, where cohousing allowed them to explore their identity and queerness.

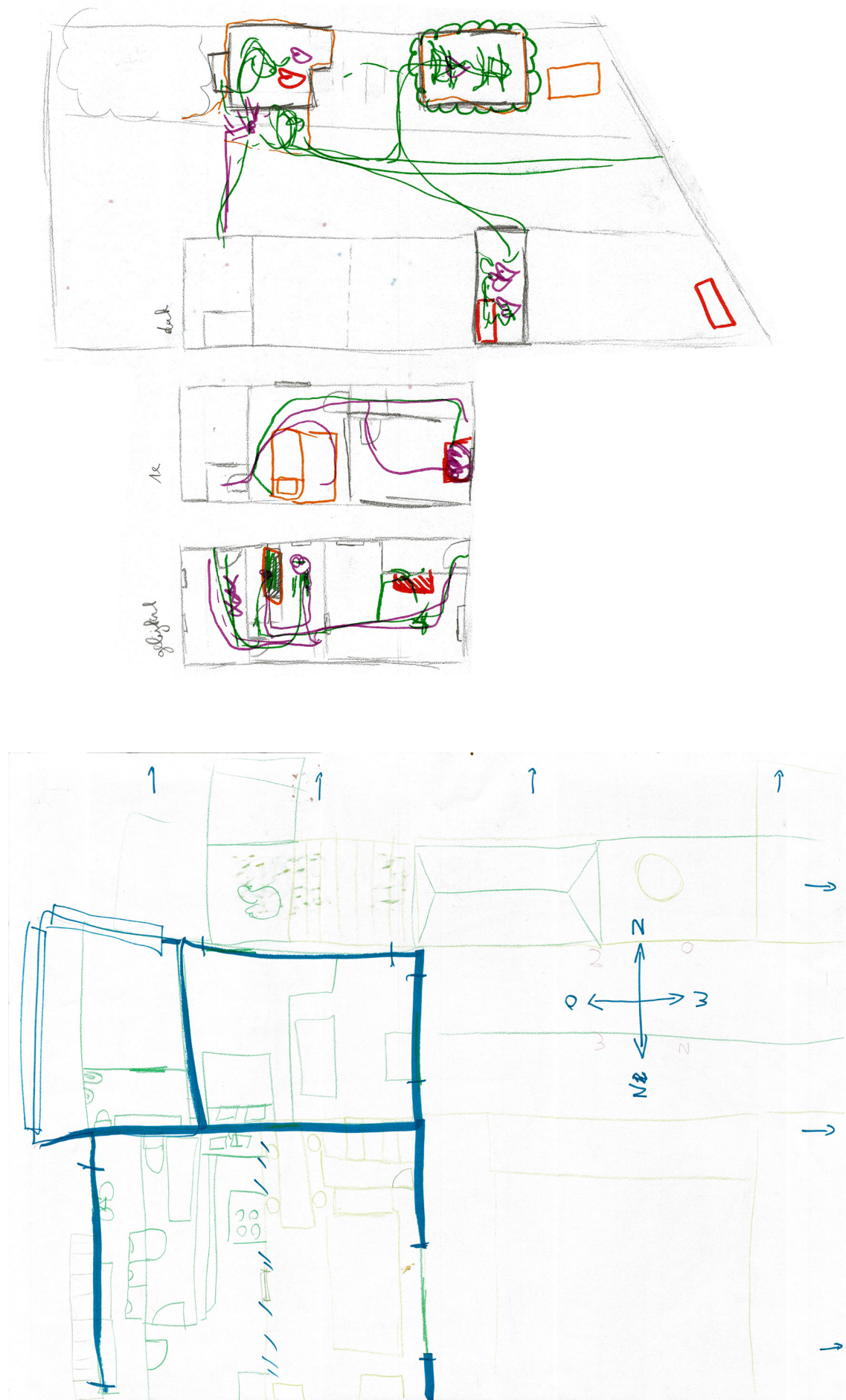
Joren drew a map of Ghent and marked the places where he lived. He drew his parental house green, resembling rest and stressing he had a nice childhood. The houses with a flag are houses where he lived with queer people. He said this was not intentional, but “it would have been strange if I would live with two cis straight men, for example, (...) because I don’t feel comfortable with them. (...) If I think about the people I feel safe with, I don’t think about the cis straight men that I know in my life.” (Joren, 13-5-23)

Both Joren and Turr emphasize that Ghent really means home to them, also because of its queer community. Joren expands on the contrast between the countryside and the city. When he returns to his parental home, he really feels that he could be less himself and feels more visible and unsafe, a feeling he had his whole life there. “I always thought in high school “I’m not going to come out until I get out of here.” (Joren, 13-5-23)



Dream House

When envisioning his dream house, Joren loves to have a house with an abundance of windows and a greenhouse as a living space. He would also like an expansive garden. He says that his dream house comes close to their current house, but Joren wishes a place that’s warmer during winter. Joren remarks the resemblance between his dream house and Turr’s dream house. They would also like a greenhouse living space and an expansive garden, envisioning a pond to foster fish farming and a more spacious environment for chickens. The pastoral life, intertwined with the serenity of nature and the presence of animals, greatly appeals to both Joren and Turr. However, they still prefer living in the city, acknowledging its presence of activities and the queer community.



Floor Plans

Walking Paths

At the start, both Joren and Turr ask how to draw a floor plan, where Joren starts walking around the house to understand its layout better. Regarding their daily activities, Turr shared their affinity for spending time outdoors, particularly with the chickens and in the greenhouse. Joren aligned with this, stressing that the most important place for both of them is the outdoors, especially the terrace. Joren expands that both their daily routines would shift during winter. “It really is a house tied to the seasons.” (Joren, 13-5-23) While the workspace is more Joren’s place, the greenhouse is Turr’s place.

Battles with the house

In terms of house-related challenges, their desire for an open kitchen emerged as a common wish, driven by Turr’s enthusiasm for cooking. The scarcity of natural light shared a desire for more windows. The discussion on housework revealed a shared preference for cleanliness, where Joren expresses he needs structure and organisation in this. Their approach to decision-making involves “liefesvergaderingen” (partner meetings). Joren often leans on Turr for practical tasks, but this is hardly linked to gender roles. “We both had no example of how to live this life. (...) I never saw this kind of relationship on TV, and there is no standard for a queer relationship.” (Joren 13-5-23) Therefore, Turr links their skills to the experience of having to be independent from a young age, while Joren was more ‘spoiled and privileged’ in his upbringing. Evidently, their relationship challenges conventional heteronormative notions of living together, where communication and upbringing play significant roles instead of binary gender roles. Additionally, they emphasize the value of autonomy and independence, enjoying time apart and individual activities. They share a mutual respect for each other’s needs and communication, which they identify as essential for a successful relationship. “We need to talk about everything because everything is kind of ‘new’. Nothing can be seen as self-evident, because what is self-evident, is not applicable to us.” (Joren, 13-5-23)

Looking ahead, they expressed ideas for improving their living space, with Joren prioritizing practical enhancements while Turr considered broader changes like altering wind direction and expanding the garden. But they also both express their wish for moving out, because the house gets too cold in wintertime.

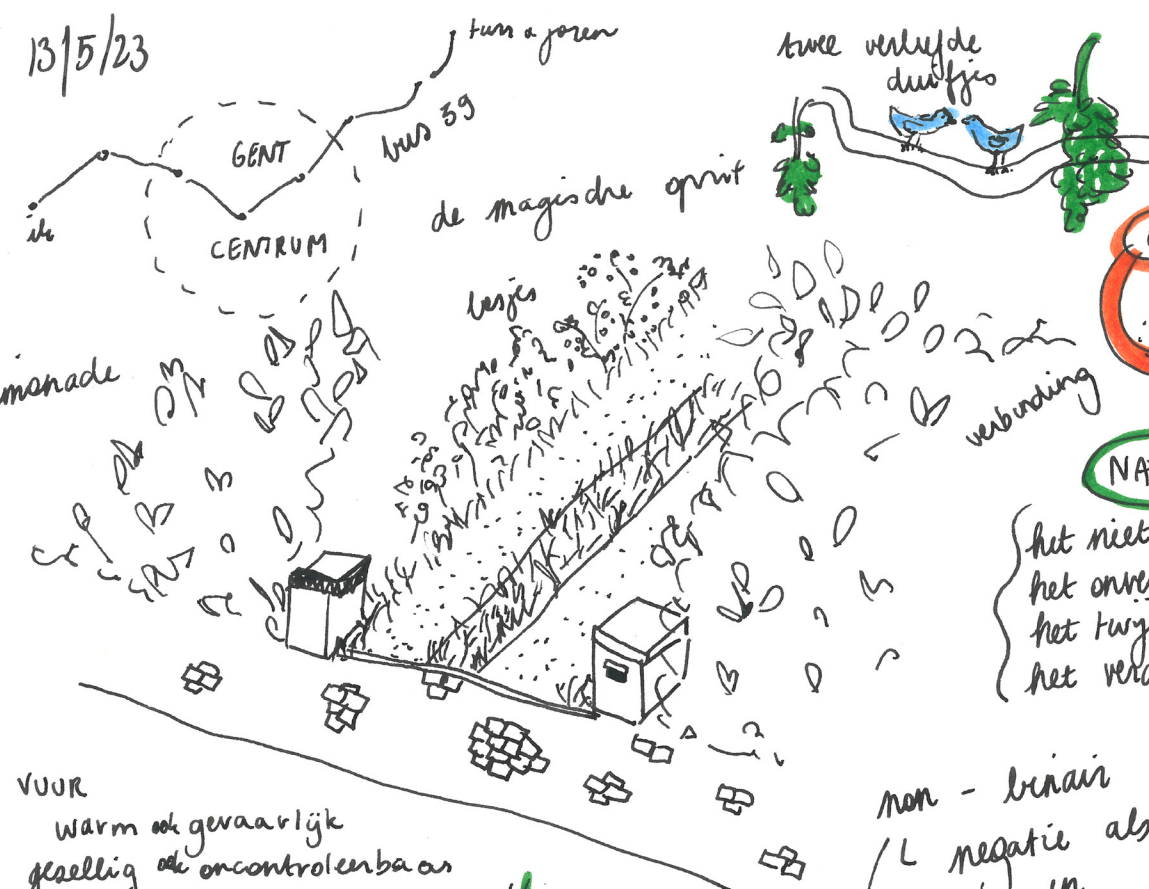
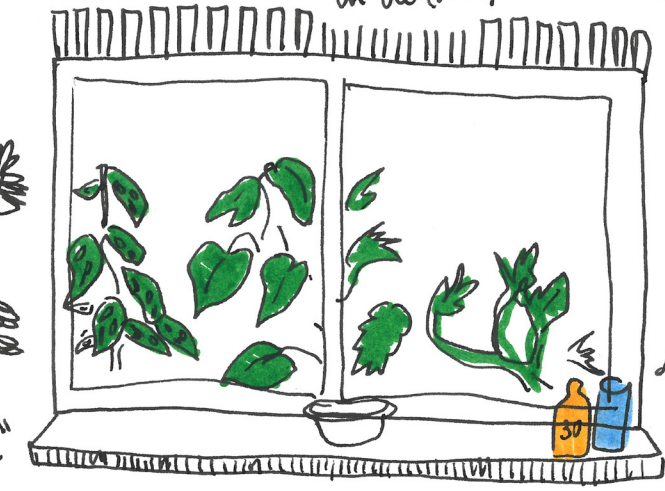
MAPPING 6 twee a jaren 13/5/23



enige verwarming
in huis is haardruim



ik wil de
roze marjijn
struik
meenemen
als
verhuizen"



QUEER
NATUUR

het niet weten
het onoverlaagbare
het twijfelen
het veranderlijke

non - binair
/ negatie als
in
NIET X

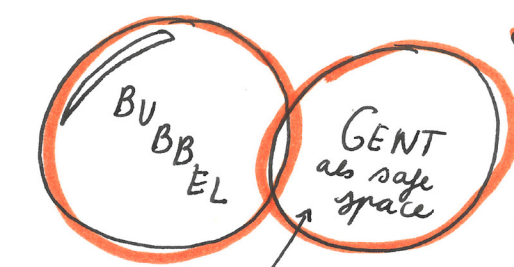
ander
woord dat niet
verkeert met hetgene waar het tegen is

KOUDE WINTERS
ZALIGE ZOMERS

de tuin > het huis
als kind
= het spelen

VEILIGHEID

BALANS & SPIRITUALITEIT



QUEER
gemeenschap

platteland
= normierend
"niet mogen quallen"

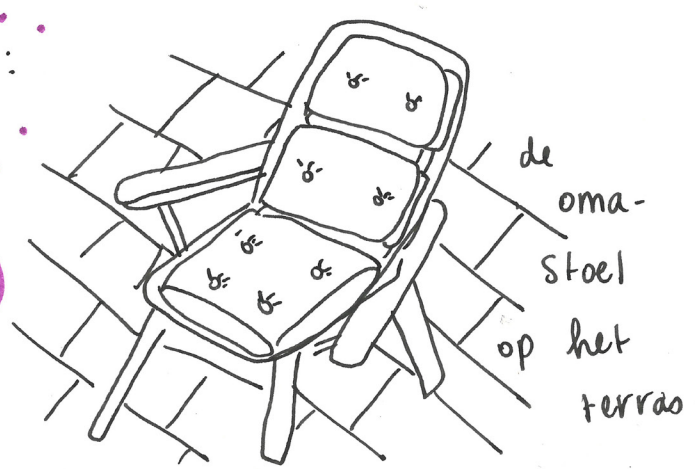


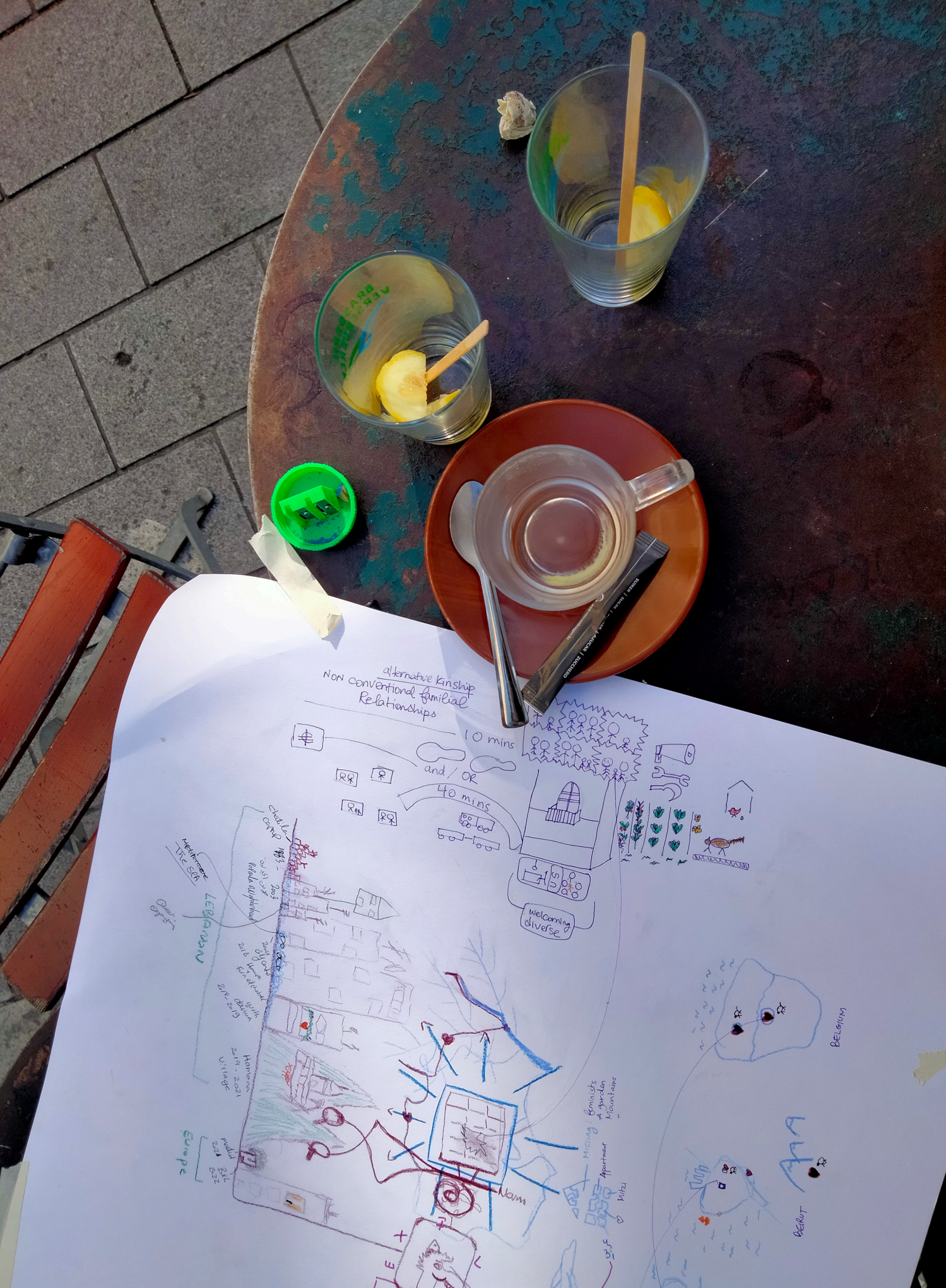
Fig. 44: Reflection mapping

Mapping 7 - Nadia & Sra

I know Nadia (she/her) through my studies, but didn't know her partner Sra (she/her)*. They live in an apartment in Brussels with their dog. They moved to Brussels not so long ago and lived in Ghent before that, moving from Beirut. Nadia works as a researcher, while Sra is a writer.

Although we initially would do the mapping session at home, Nadia took me to the bar where Sra was working, because of the nice weather. It was a very nice setting and I felt very welcome with them. They both engaged enthusiastically in the mapping and were the first ones to decide to perform and participate together on one sheet of paper, resulting in a collective mapping where their drawings and ideas meet. The mapping sessions resulted in an engaged discussion between Nadia and Sra, contesting the presumed position of me being the one asking questions. Therefore, I had the opportunity to more of a moderator, learning a lot from their conversation, which I'm very thankful for.

* Nadia and Sra are pseudonyms as they wish to stay anonymous



< Fig. 45: Photograph during mapping session

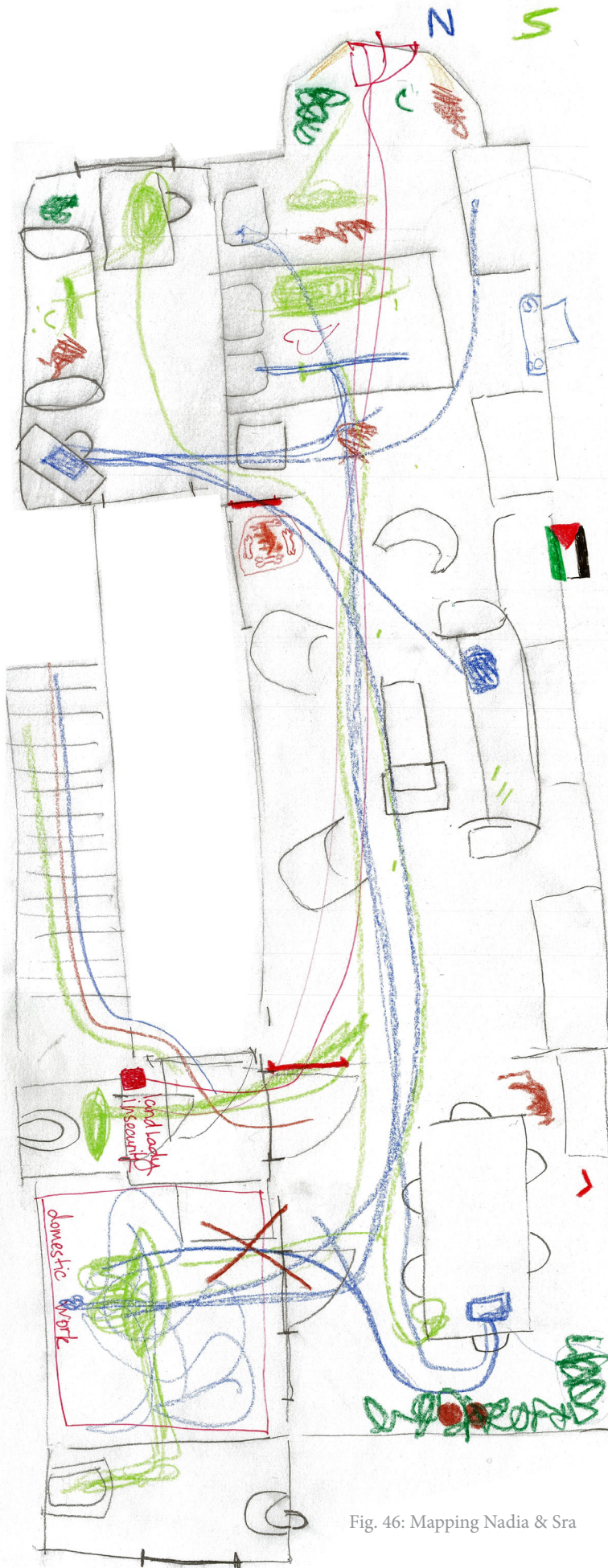
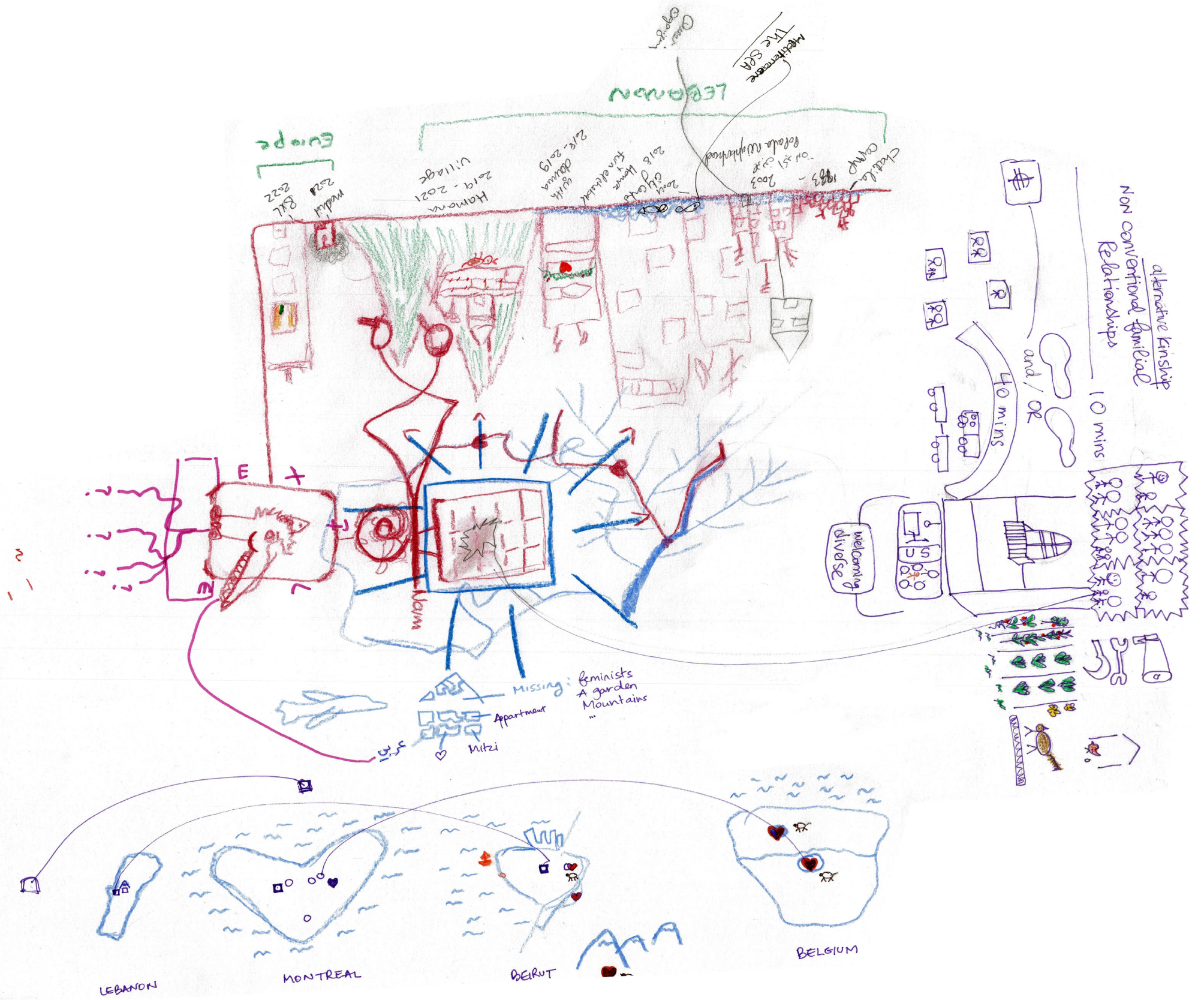
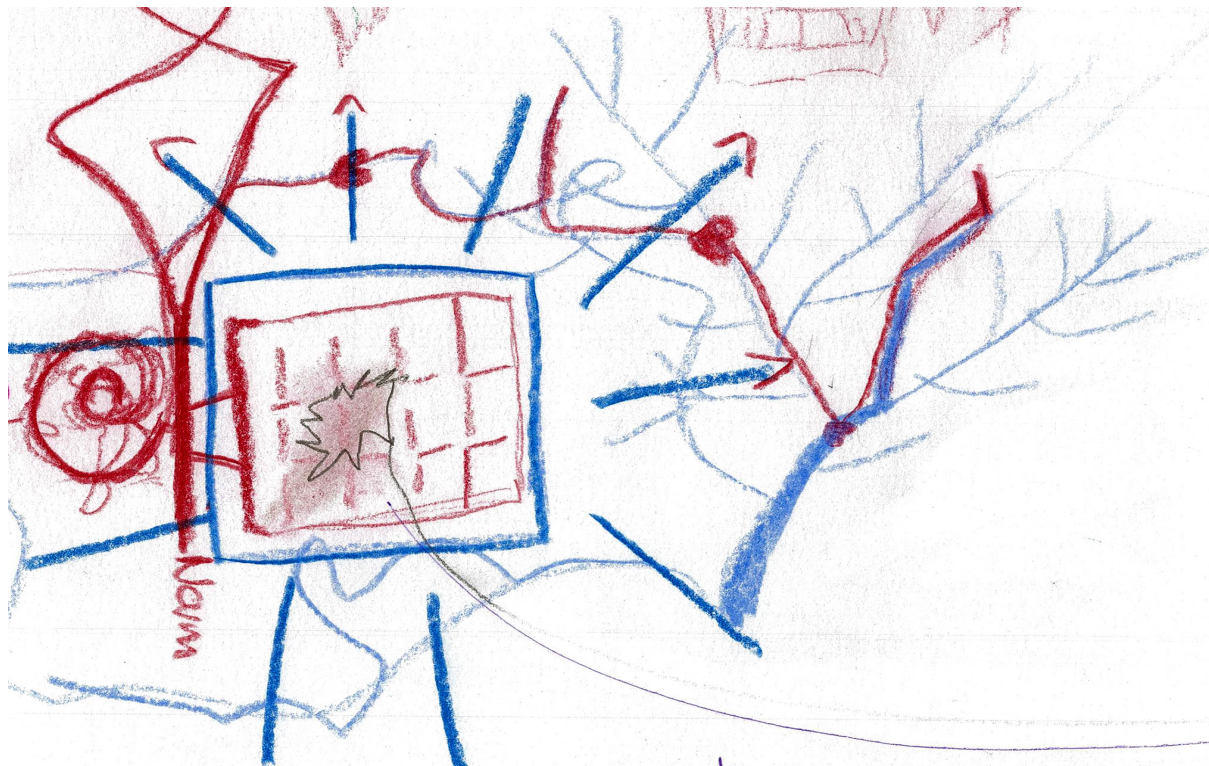


Fig. 46: Mapping Nadia & Sra

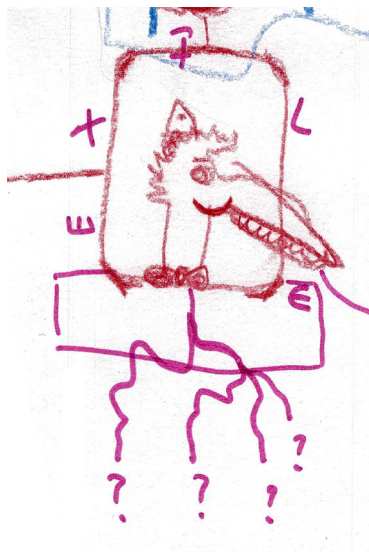




Queer

For Sra, queer means to have “the freedom to invent the shape that you want your life to be.” (Sra, 3-6-23), where she drew branches who resemble infinite possibilities. She expressed her fear of talking about queerness and home-making, because “there’s a lot of pain, (...) and a lot of negotiation with the norm. It’s not a smooth ride.” (Sra, 3-6-23). Nadia therefore suggests to draw the norm with “spikes that affect your life.” (Nadia, 3-6-23) Sra expands as a Palestinian, you already exist outside of the norm. “Being Palestinian and being queer is the space that I occupy that is always imaginary. (...) I embody what is the imagination. (...) We just have to build the structures to say it’s actually not imagined.” (Sra, 3-6-23)

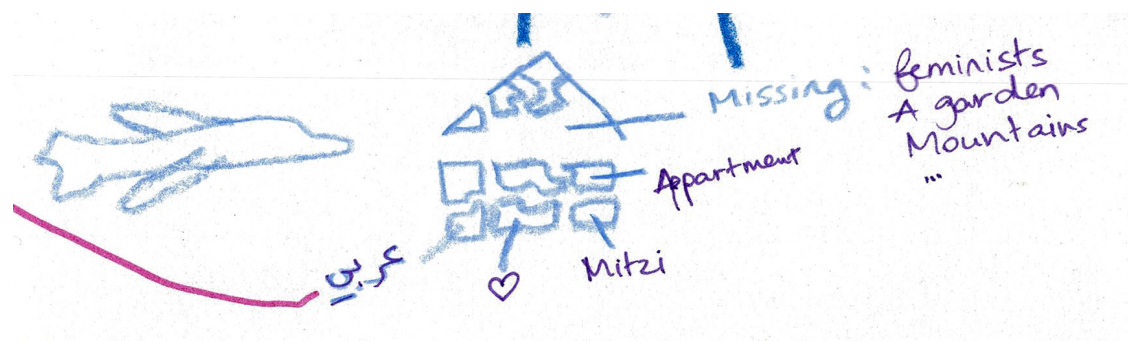
Nadia notices she takes in a political positioning stating that, where Nadia expands on their involvement in feminist organisations, where their queerness is also contested. “Because you are queer, you discover the freedom of living outside this heteronormativity and you become very active supporting women who want to be outside this heteronormativity, even if they are not queer.” (Nadia, 3-6-23) Sra aligns with this “We build bridges between communities and identities. (...) Once we found our Arab community here, we were like, okay, now we want our queer community.” (Sra, 3-6-23) To conclude, Sra and Nadia expand on the complex intersectional experience of their queer identity, relating it to issues of exile and feminism.

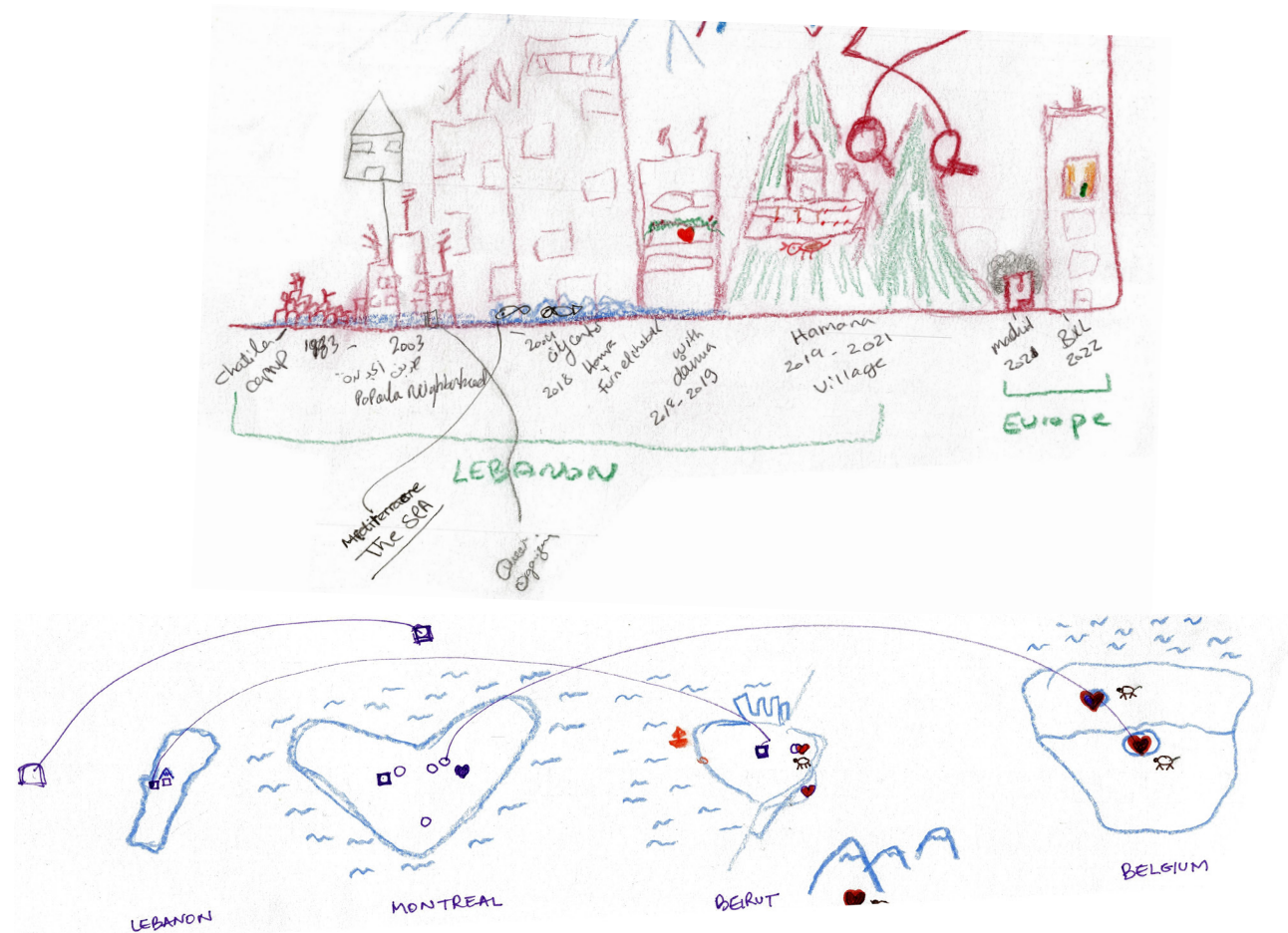


Home

Sra drew a reference to a cartoon where a human reveals to be an alligator in their home, meaning that home is “where I get to be myself, (...) like all of these experiences in safety and in acceptance.” (Sra, 3-6-23) Nadia asks: “So are there places where you feel this way right now in your life?” (Nadia, 3-6-23), where Sra answers their current apartment, and their relationship. Nadia reacts, saying that home is much more complicated to her, where she relates it to the specific place, Lebanon.

Nadia says she carries home with her: “Living in exile, home is like pieces that I have to build very consciously.” (Nadia, 3-6-23) Pieces like, the Arabic language, their dog, Sra, political engagement, and some of them are missing “which is maybe okay as an exile or a migrant, because there are always missing pieces.” (Nadia, 3-6-23) Sra says she envies her “because you know of a place where you belong to.” (Sra, 3-6-23) Sra expands on their political engagement in Lebanon and their feeling of responsibility for a place to become better. “We open feminist spaces, organise demonstrations. (...) So other people who are like me are comfortable. (...) Our relationship to Beirut is also home-making in terms of the larger space of the city.” (Sra, 3-6-23)





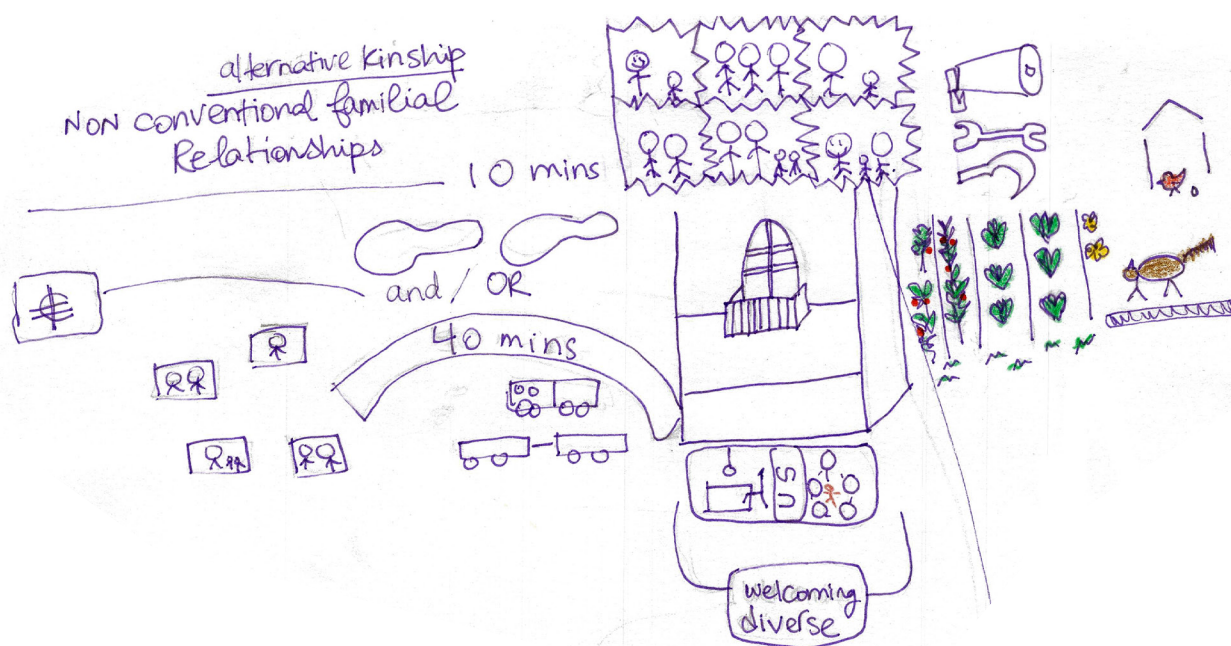
Housing History

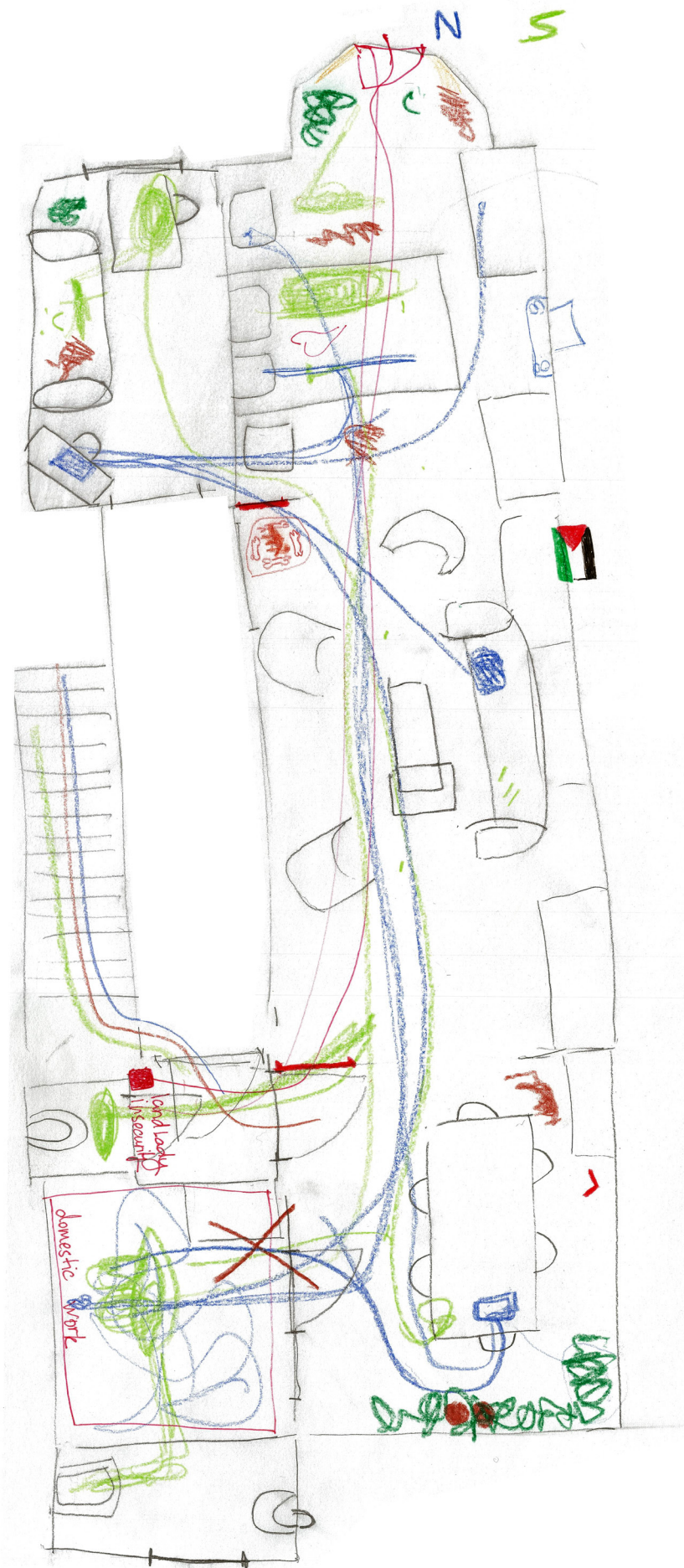
Sra depicted her housing history through a timeline of residences. She grew up in a neighbourhood adjacent to Shatila camp, where she hung out during her teenage years. During covid, she lived together with Nadia and then found a house in a mountain village, where their dog also became part of their lives. Nadia drew the big moments of where she lived. She used a legend: squares for places she lived with her parents, hearts for places with their partner, and circles for other places. She used red to indicate where she lived with Sra. She talks about living in Canada and Lebanon, where the water/sea (and Beirut's port) were an important part of. The port became more significant after the explosion in 2020, which "affected so much. (...) It was a bit the impulse for my migration." (Nadia, 3-6-23) Sra also expresses her connection to the sea. "For a long time I assumed that all cities in the world had access to the Mediterranean." (Sra, 3-6-23)

They expand on their current apartment and neighbourhood. Nadia expresses that she can do things here she couldn't in Lebanon, partly because "our relationship is institutionalised here." (Sra, 3-6-23) Nadia talks about the discomfort she can feel walking hand in hand in the neighbourhood, but she emphasizes that she wants to talk careful about this because of it could evoke racist assumptions about the neighbourhood's diversity. She refers to Sara Ahmed: "As a feminist, I have to say, fuck this homophobia and fuck your racism." (Nadia, 3-6-23)

Dream House

Nadia suggests to draw their dream house together. Sra emphasizes she can't live without a balcony, an important element in Lebanon. She would their house to be a "space to be able to host both our individual needs". (Sra, 3-6-23) Nadia prefers living in a village, but she worries because "we don't come from here and that living in a village will mean isolating ourselves." They moved to Brussels from Ghent to be closer to friends, and now they are thinking of a house with a garden in Brussels. So, Nadia drew a garden, with flowers, chickens, vegetables, and so on. They embark on a discussion on communal living, where Sra wouldn't like living with friends, but having them close-by. Nadia says she likes cooperative living because "we have a double disadvantage: we are queer, but also migrants. And so we live in a place where our traditional kinship is not around us. And this is like inventing other models for me, like "what does alternative kinship look like?" (Nadia, 3-6-23) She stresses the feminist struggles of care-work, and therefore likes to share this with others.





Floor Plans

Walking Paths

Both Nadia and Sra draw their usage of the apartment during a typical day, with also adding paths of their dog. Sra talks about the bed as an the most important place, where she and Nadia spend more time in the bedroom than the living room. “It’s where I read, it’s where I do my meditation, where I hang out. I’m mostly always here writing.” (Sra, 3-6-23) Nadia also works from home, often sitting at the kitchen table.

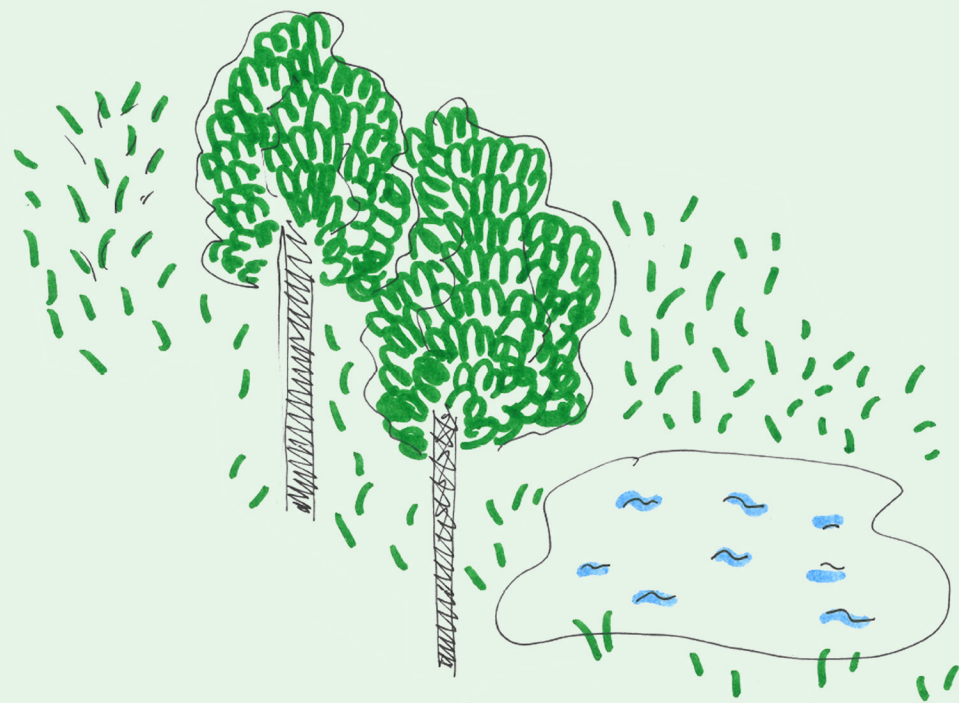
Battles with the House

They expand on their conflicts in the house. The many fights with the landlady make Nadia feel uncomfortable and wanting to move out. “We are feeling a bit exploited. She raised the rent a lot this year because the law allows her to.” (Nadia, 3-6-23) This feels unfair to them, given that she’s not repairing or maintaining anything.

They also expand on their fights about domestic work, mostly centred in the kitchen “because we use it every day. There’s always work to do in the kitchen. I mean, feminists have said that domestic work is infinite, it’s invisible. It never ends.” (Nadia, 3-6-23) But they emphasize they haven’t fought in a while, where Nadia says they are learning to live together. Sra says, although working from home is challenging, they “have a good division of labour. (...) Nadia really does take care of keeping things organised. (...) I’m the laundry person an bathroom cleaner, (...) and I also do projects around the house.” (Sra, 3-6-23) She concludes that they complement each other and she says she loves the way their living together is unfolding, even with the conflicts.

Home Object

Nadia says she immediately thought of the Palestinian flag hanging on the wall. “Actually, everything on our wall reminds me of home,” referring to their wedding photo, a poster of Beirut and references to friends.



Mapping 8 - Momo

Momo* (she/her) is a single mother of a daughter, describing herself as non-heterosexual, rather than queer. She resides in a row house situated in the northern part of Brussels where she cohouses with six other individuals, almost all of whom identify as queer. Momo's housing journey has been marked by discrimination, reflecting the challenges faced by a single, non-heterosexual mother seeking a comfortable yet affordable home in Brussels. She relies on state benefits, which could be easily affected if her living situation changes, such as cohabitating with a partner.

Momo's voluntary participation in this mapping session was facilitated through my search for participants within the Gender and Diversity student community. In anticipation of her involvement, I adjusted the mapping questions to encompass the unique perspective of queer parenthood. Considering her time constraints and ongoing thesis work, I skipped certain questions during the session. Momo displayed an interest in the subject of the thesis and its creative side, but she struggled at times to translate her thoughts into drawings. Despite these challenges, her profound comprehension of non-normative living arrangements and alternative kinship structures enriched the mapping session.

*Momo is a pseudonym as she wishes to stay anonymous



< Fig. 48: Drawing referring to mapping session

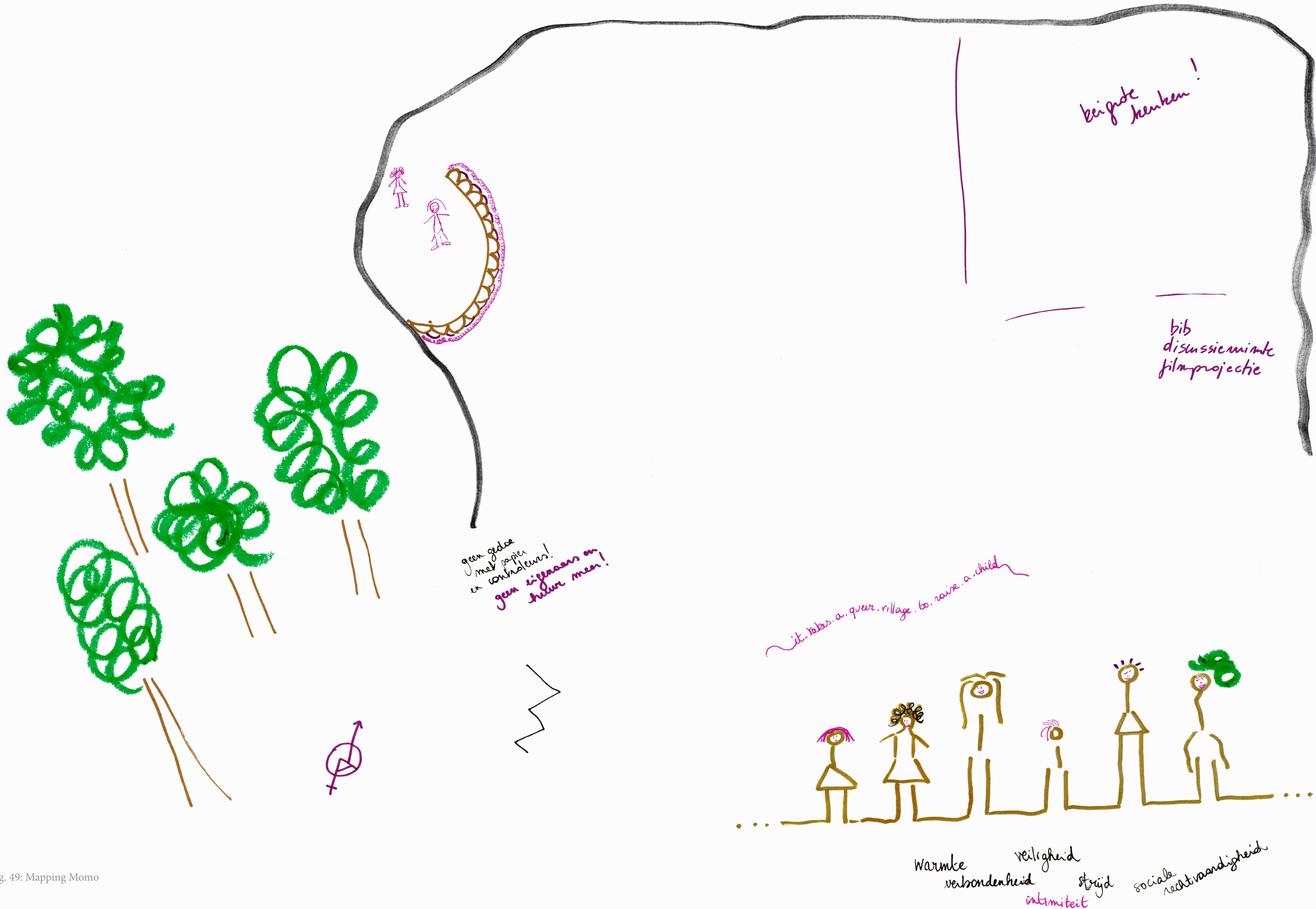


Fig. 49: Mapping Momo

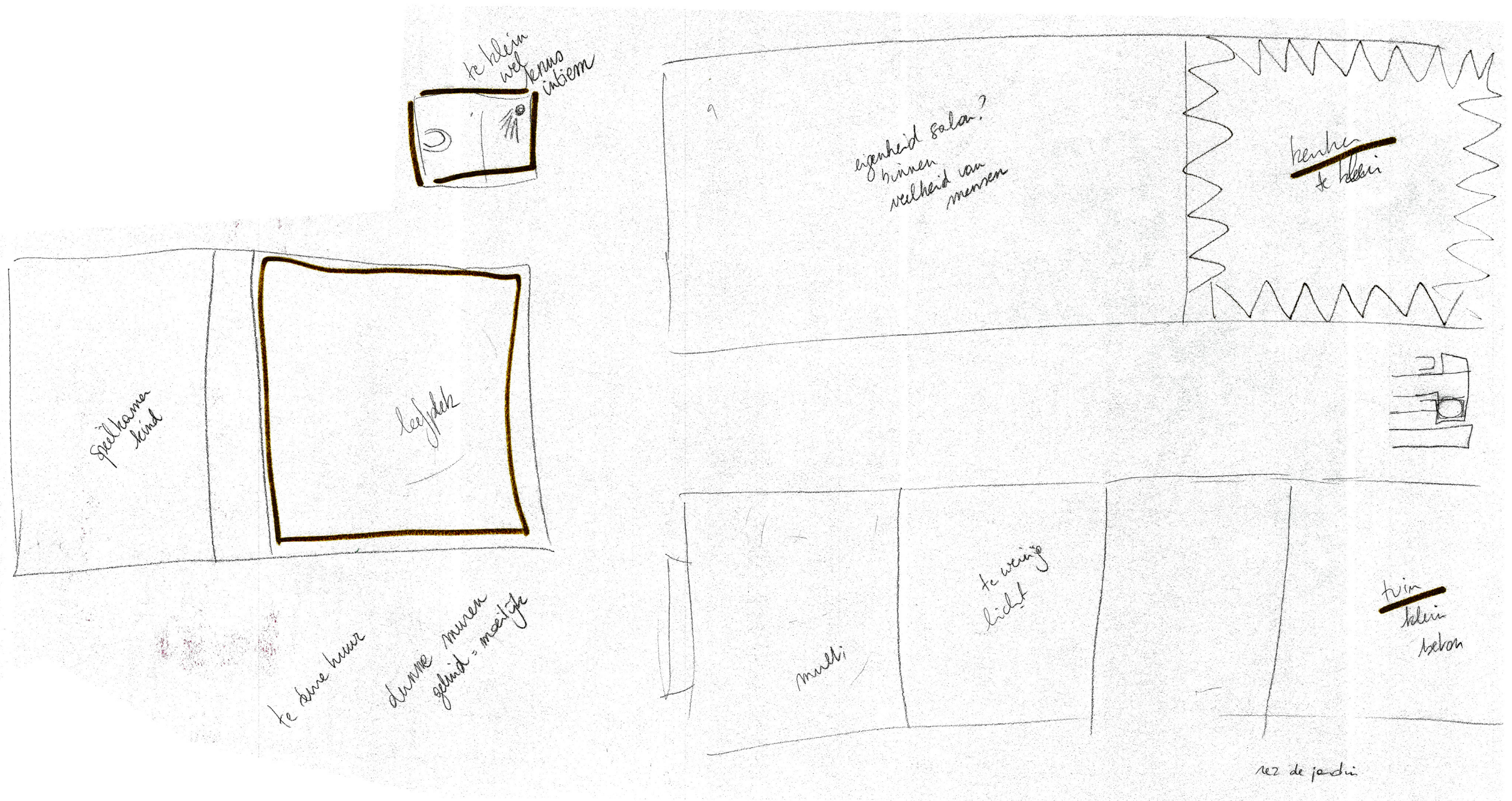
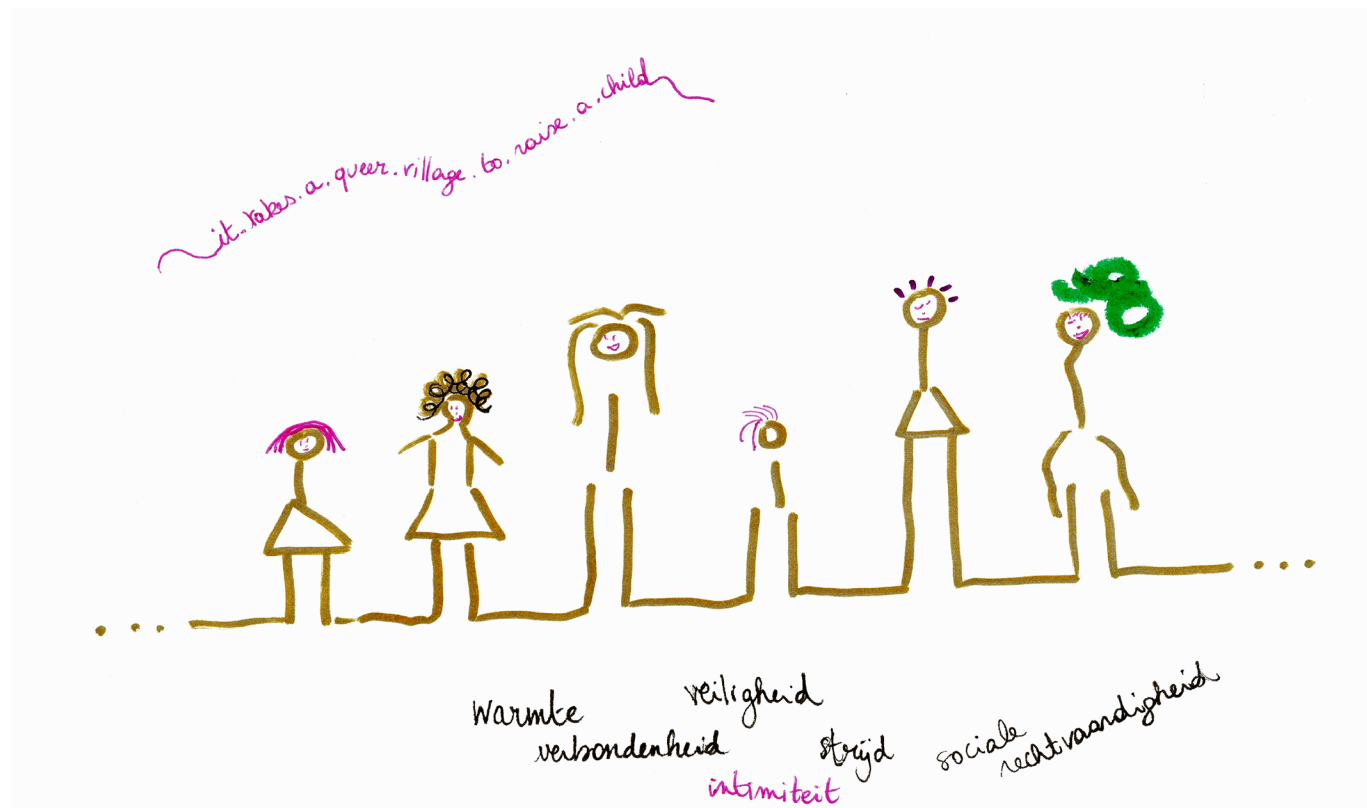


Fig. 50: Mapping Momo back



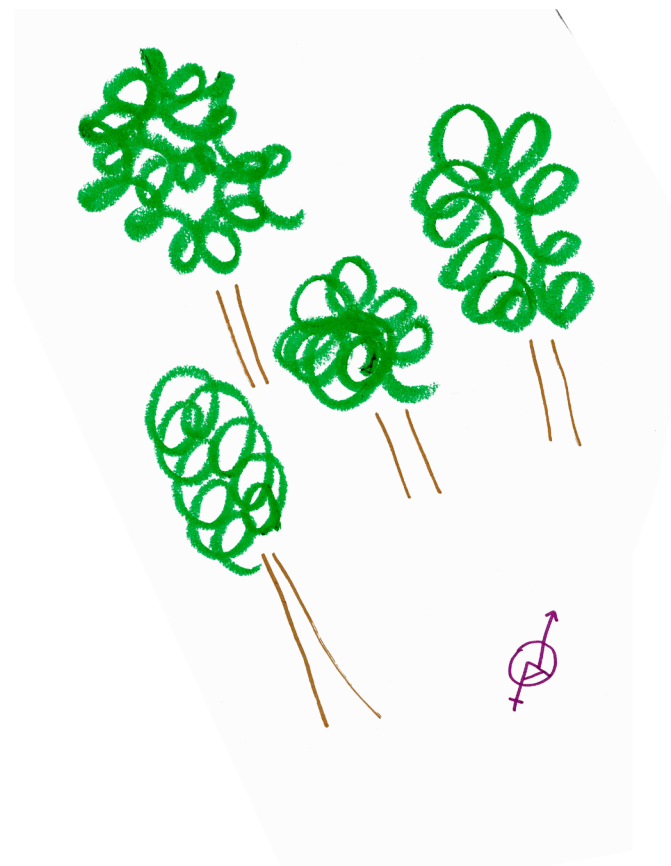
Queer

Momo finds resonance in the term “queer” due to its encompassing nature and interconnectedness. She delves into her role as a single mother, where she emphasises the pressure to conform to normative expectations of parenthood and raising a child. She endeavours to cultivate a “new normality” for her child by cohabitating with individuals who defy conventional norms. She emphasizes that she finds communal living and collaborative child-rearing very important, seeing it as the true meaning of queer home-making. She aims to break intergenerational (queer) trauma, which she has experienced first-hand with her parents.

Momo’s work with children has given her insights into their inherent fluidity and queerness. She observes that school, the curriculum, other children and parents tend to shape children’s perception of gender and sexuality, leading them away from their natural fluidity. She emphasises that “mother work is hard work” (Momo, 12-6-23), especially in counteracting these (hetero-)normative influences on her child. She tries to create a queer upbringing, challenging traditional norms and embracing openness and fluidity in her child’s life.

Home

Momo’s concept of home embodies notions of warmth, safety, and interconnectedness, but also conflict. She finds connection with the people in her cohousing based on their shared non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality, but lacking a common interest in social justice issues, an important aspect in Momo’s life.



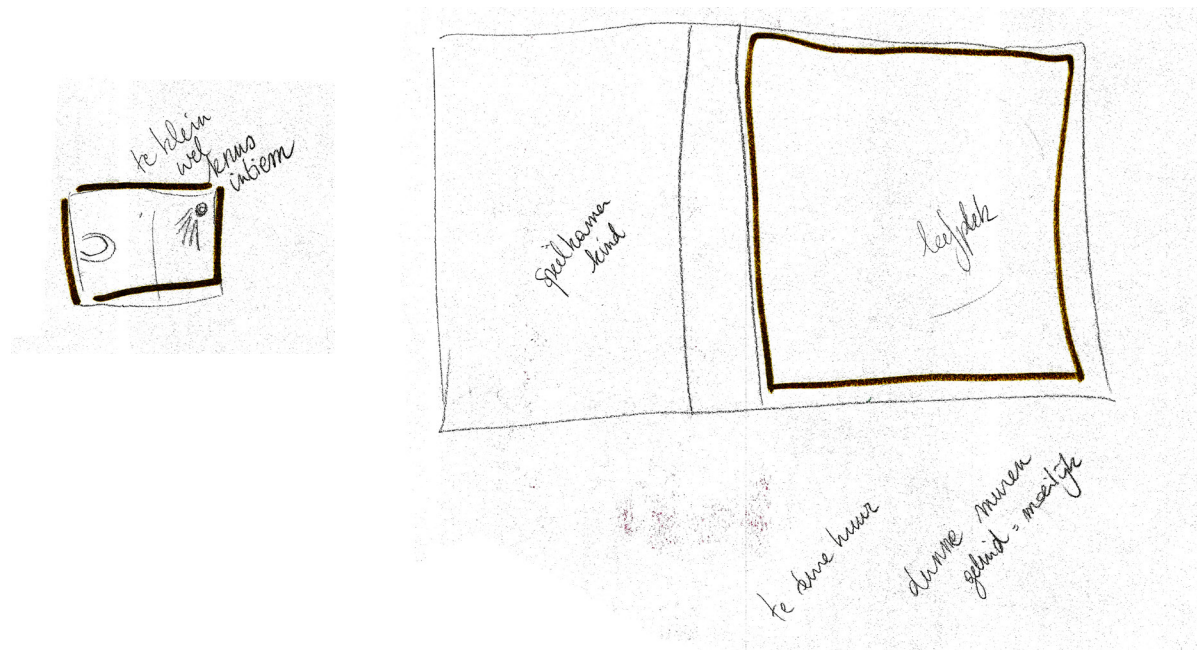
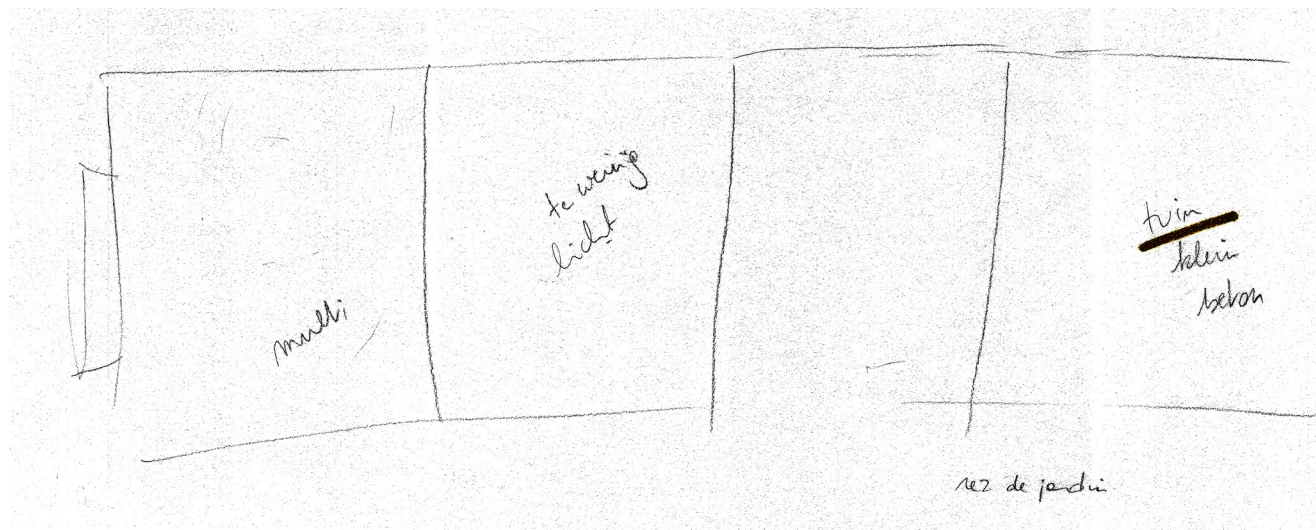
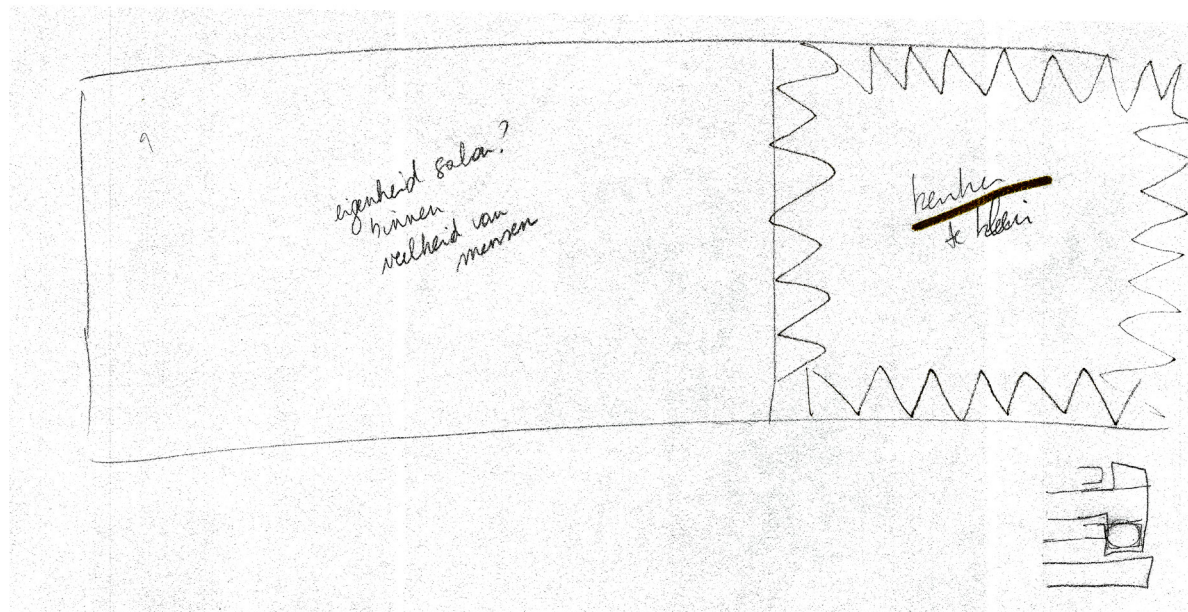
Housing History

While we refrained from including this question during the mapping session, I inquired if Momo would like to share any insights on her housing history. She delves into her history of squatting, a lifestyle that inherently deviates from the norm. “When we talk about housing and home, then for me it is also about: What is property? Who has access to housing?” (Momo, 12-6-23), critiquing how capital and ownership is often inherited and unequally distributed. Momo’s engagement with squatting dates back to her early teenage years where squatting fostered her adaptability and readiness to embrace various spatial and social configurations. However, upon becoming a mother, she felt compelled to provide her daughter with a sense of stability. She still finds it confronting to pay so much rent, which is barely possible with her state benefits, making “her rich landlord even richer”. Therefore, Momo’s experience adds value to the discussion on equitable housing and class discrimination.

Dream House

Momo delves deeper into her financial challenges in achieving her desired home environment. “If you’re poor, you often don’t have access to nature. For example, we have a park next to us where we come every day. But it is one of the most polluted places in Brussels.” This experience informs her aspirations for a big garden and inviting neighbourhood. She envisions a spacious house where she lives together with people who collectively work towards a more equitable world. Therefore, she stresses again her desire for communal living and collaborative child-rearing. “It’s a need that I have but also a need that other people have. (...) There are people who don’t want children, but who want to be surrounded by children.” (Momo, 12-6-23) She drew her dream house as an open structure that remains adaptable and open to nature, but with a comfortable sanctuary for her and her daughter. Her dream house also features a shared library and cinema room, symbolising her belief in communal living.

it takes a queer village to raise a child



Floor Plans

Walking paths

Momo only drew the three floors that are used by her and her child. She describes the cellar (rez de jardin) as a polyvalent space, where she expresses her affiliation for having these flexible spaces. She expands on her and her daughter's room, where she feels privileged to have such a big space that feels nice and safe. She appreciates that her daughter has a lot of room to play with also the chance for privacy of her own. In contrast, she expresses her own lack of privacy, where living so closely with her child sometimes feel suffocating.

Battles with the house

Momo would prefer a bigger garden, critiquing the way that gardens are private and unequally. She struggles that her child can't leave many toys in the salon, which she can also respect in a cohousing of eight people. "I feel that a salon shows how people live together and that with us, it's still a little bit 'living next to each other but not with each other.' The salon feels a bit like a no man's land." (Momo, 12-6-23) She expands on the organisation of housework, where there is a strict schedule for cleaning, and where conflict often happens in the kitchen. Other tasks are divided by people's skills and preferences and these are very much respected. When they can't compromise, they arrange meetings or collective chore days.

Momo reflects on financial and practical struggles with the house. Each year their rent gets indexed, because "the landlord knows and uses every law and every rule that can benefit him." (Momo, 12-6-23) She also expands on the patriarchal and heteronormative principle that when a man moves into the house, the municipality comes to check if she has a relationship with that man, which would cut her state benefits short. The fact that she is not heterosexual, is not taken into consideration, but she stresses that "it is not about equal rights in a system that is already discriminating for the people involved. (...) For me, that is also what queer is about, questioning and transforming the system. (...) That is why I think this research is important (...) because the queer perspective is just lacking in terms of housing." (Momo, 12-6-23) She closes off by saying they will move to London in a cohousing with their partner.

In conclusion, Momo's mapping not only illuminates her personal experiences but also becomes a lens through which to examine broader societal constructs. Her emphasis on social justice, inclusivity, and communal living serves as an important reminder of the impact of space on individuals and communities. Momo's narrative encapsulates the essence of queer thinking, highlighting its potential to challenge norms and transform systems.

12.06.23
MAPPING 8

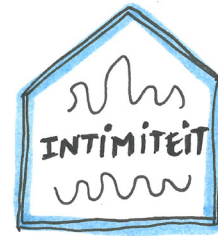
+ 31°C

BXL

alleenstaande ouder / moeder
discriminatie
→ financieel = grenzen
→ KLASSE-ARMOEDE



⑧ 6 volw + 2 kinderen
MOTHER WORK
= HARD WORK



BINNEN

BUITEN

ENERGIE

LONDEN

niet-hetero

QUEER

GROOTSTAD

TUIN



?

BUURT

TOEGANG
TOT
GROEN
&
WATER

VS
VERSTIKKEND

cohousen
VRIENDEN

VS

COHOUSEN
WIT FINANCIËLE
REDENEN

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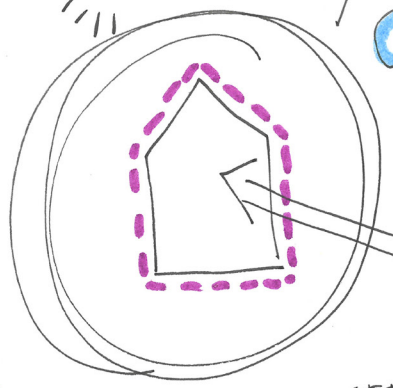
HUISBAAS

ruiken
wollen
ruiken

MACHT

hoe stad
& huis
vormgeven

BELEID



KINSHIP

KRAKEN

WAT IS EIGENDOM

MATTI-work
- no. relevant

SCHAAMTE

FLEXIBILITEIT

OPENHEID

MULTI

DIVERS

HETERONORMATIEF
PATRIARCHAAL !!!

NORMATIEF
GEGENDERD

CHEF DE FAMILLE
= ALTIJD MAN

maakt niet
"OOK VROUW"
worden

gewoon
papierwerk /
bureaucratie
afschaffen

GELUID

COMFORT

CONFLICT

Fig. 51: Reflection mapping

5.

MAPPING INSIGHTS

The mapping sessions brought forward a great amount of visual and textual data. This chapter attempts to bring different insights together, which are structured under the three secondary research questions. Therefore, this chapter formulates an answer to the main research question:

How does the mapping of queer home-making challenge hetero-normative dwelling cultures in Flanders and Brussels?

It is important to note, referring to the conceptual and theoretical framework, that these mapping insights focus on the lived experiences of the participants, rather than essentialising the spaces they inhabit. This is to avoid the construction of the idea that queer people live ‘differently’ from non-queer people, thus marginalising their home-making practices even more. The participants’ answer on what queer means to them revealed that they often used queer as an analytic to critique (hetero-)normative structures (Weiss, 2016). This queer lens therefore lies at the basis of the following insights.

5.1. How are queer households making home in dwelling cultures in Flanders and Brussels?

5.1.1. Queer imagination

Apart from the drawing their dream house, some participants expanded on (queer) imagination. This concept by Muñoz (2009) reveals how queer thinking has the power to imagine spaces outside the reality of hetero-normative society (see chapter 1, section 1.3).

“Being Palestinian and being queer is the space that I occupy that is always imaginary. (...) We just have to build the structures to say it’s actually not imagined” (Sra, 3-6-23).

“They often talk about masculine and feminine energy, but I’m kind of looking for non-binary energy and what that might mean within society” (Turr, 13-5-23).

Sirine and Runa’s home-making is imagined beyond heteronormative understandings of relationships and their linear time frame. Hetero-normativity prescribes the future of romantic relationships, where you get married, have children, buy a house and so on. (Vallerand, 2020) After a break-up, one of the partners ideally moves out, often resulting in a distant bond between ex-partners. Sirine and Runa contest this way of ending relationships, by, after breaking up, seeing the positive in remaining to live together.

Therefore, they conceptualise a queer temporality, which has the potential “of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and childrearing” (Halberstam, 2005, p. 5). For Munoz (2009), queer time is a horizontal temporality in which past, present and future are hewn together.

“Endings feel like endings, but in fact they’re only change” (Runa, 30-4-23).

“Perhaps the retroactive movement typifies me. Because I always believe that something has an effect in both directions.” (H, 19-3-23)

5.1.2. Creating safe spaces

The queer imagination extends in imagining and creating safe spaces. For almost all of the participants, home evoked the feeling of safety. For example, Finn saw home as a practical notion associated with safety and basic survival. Runa and Sirine strive for ‘radical safety’ in their house. This need for safety can be tied to the struggles of queer people (see chapter 1, section 1.3.) with displacement and marginalisation, therefore needing material safe spaces.

“Home is where I get to be myself, (...) like all of these experiences in safety and in acceptance. Where you are who you are.” (Sra, 3-6-23)

A common expression in the mapping was that some participants felt particularly unsafe sharing a space with cisgender heterosexual men. Emma, Joren, Runa and Sirine expressed such experiences. This can be related to the analysis of patriarchal masculinity in the home by hooks, who describes her own feelings of unsafety with men, like her father and partners (hooks, 2004).

“He brought in this sort of masculinity (...) I felt really unsafe, but it was my house. (...) Also, when there is a man in the house, I adjust myself. (Sirine, 30-4-23).

“It would have been strange if I would live with two cis straight men, (...) because I don’t feel comfortable with them. (...) If I think about the people I feel safe with, I don’t think about the cis straight men that I know in my life” (Joren, 13-5-23).

Some participants extended the notion of safety beyond private space. Adam stresses his need for a safe and LGBTQ+ friendly neighbourhood. Turr, Joren and Emma experience Ghent as a safe space because of its queer community. Joren and Sra also expand on creating safe communities, highlighting the political engagement. This also relates to Lorde’s community-as-home, described in chapter 1, section 1.3.

“You kind of choose your own bubble and you want to keep your bubble as safe as possible” (Joren, 13-5-23).

“Once we found our Arab community, we were like, okay, now we want our queer community. (...) We build bridges between communities and identities. (...) So other people who are like me are comfortable” (Sra, 3-6-23).

5.1.3. The essential role of communication

In this creation of safe spaces, often the role of communication was brought up. Many participants expressed the essential and pivotal role of communication, trust and honesty in their home-making practice. H and X and Sirine and Runa even indicated different kinds of conversations on the floor plans of their residence. This deep form of communication was for many participants inherently tied to being queer, where you are constantly questioning yourself and societal norms.

“We need to talk about everything because everything is kind of ‘new’ (...) Nothing can be seen as self-evident, because what is self-evident, is not applicable to us.” (Joren, 13-5-23)

5.1.4. Urban versus rural

All of the participants in this research live in cities. However, drawing their dream house, they often expressed their desire for living in rural areas, surrounded by nature, as described by Sirine, Turr and Joren, Nadia and Sra. But they also expressed their fear of isolation and marginalisation in these areas, where there’s often a complete absence of queer institutional spaces (Johnston & Valentine, 1995). Ribas (2022) describes being queer in a rural area as “navigating the layers of small-town hypervisibility” (Ribas, 2022, p. 2). Joren and Turr express their need of a queer community and therefore prefer city life, despite desiring pastoral life.

Participants shared their experiences of marginalisation in rural areas, often tied to struggles within their parental homes. Butler theorised the body as a surface that is “politically regulated and established,” (Burtler, 1990, p. 139) where the parental home can restrict the performance of the queer identity by prescribing hetero-normative behaviour (Johnston & Valentine, 1995).

“When I’m there, it really feels like I’m trapped”, where Emma reveals feeling more vulnerable and unsafe in Wetteren. “Leaving Ghent really means leaving my ‘peace’” (Emma, 4-4-23).

“I always thought in high school: “I’m not going to come out until I get out of here” (Joren, 13-5-23).

5.1.5. Flexibility, temporality and fragmentation

In their mapping, Finn and Emma expressed their minimalistic requirement of objects to create a

home. Finn symbolically represented this notion by illustrating a suitcase encompassing “his entire life”, reflective of his history of running away from home. Emma drew a box containing all her belongings, because she can ‘feel at home anywhere.’ Nadia further expands on this theme by articulating the pieces she needs to construct home. These pieces go from the Arabic language, to a feminist community, showing the more complex nature of her home-making puzzle, acknowledging that she can take some pieces with her, and others not. This reflects the often fragmented transnational experience of home-making.

Andrucki and Kaplan(2018) argue that such treasured objects or pieces materialise the complex creation of the queer home, which surpasses normative notions of time and space and highlights the fragmentation, temporality and flexibility of queer home-making. This can also be seen in descriptions of Battles with the House, where a lot of participants express that, although they experience struggles with landlords and practical things, they are happy for having a roof above their head.

5.2. How does queer home-making challenges or struggles with hetero-normative dwelling cultures?

5.2.1. Blurring the public-private boundary

While some participants reinforced the public-private boundary, such as X’s description of home, most of them blurred it. Participants like Adam and Finn expressed their modification of their gender expression when leaving the house. Finn expands on the train ride as a space going from one safe space to another, where he feels tension in expressing his desired gender expression. Ribas (2020) elaborates on the train ride as a threshold between the threat of their hometown to the anonymity of the city, serving as a space of transition and transformation. “Queer space is simply that which allows us to move between worlds, to shapeshift, and to conceive our own worlds” (Ribas, 2020, p. 2). The meaning of home was expressed in multiple entities, referring to people, different scales, feelings, etc. Some participants contested the idealisation of home as a fixed sanctuary, while others confirmed it.

“Our relationship to Beirut is also home-making in terms of the larger space of the city.” (Sra, 3-6-23)

“Home is something weird, because I never felt at home, anywhere.” (Finn, 13-3-23)

Managing the public-private boundary is particularly important for sexual minorities due to social marginalisation and the heightened need to control public visibility (Gorman-Murray, 2012). Often, participants revealed the lack of privacy and safety in their homes due to their landlord or neighbours. For example, Finn and Turr had to confront their landlord about their name-change and Adam couldn’t hang out the bisexual flag in his neighbourhood. This revealed the privilege enjoyed by cisgender

heterosexual individuals, who can choose whether to share their sexuality and gender identity to landlords, neighbours, and others, without apprehension of facing marginalisation as a result. Therefore, the queer home becomes a site of identity politics (Gorman-Murray, 2012) and a place of resistance (hooks, 1990) against heteronormativity.

5.2.2. Alternative kinships and home-making practices

Participants also expressed their alternative kinships which are shown in their home-making practices. Adam and Paulina sought a house with two apart bedrooms because of their polyamorous relationship. As a single mother, Momo insists on communal living and shared child rearing. Sirine and Runa reinvented their relationship, choosing to still live together after their break-up. These examples subvert traditional heteronormative home-making practices and invent new forms of living together. Some participants expressed their need and desire for more examples of these alternative kinships and home-making practices, often in depicting their dream house. Sirine drew her dream house in a form of queer communal living in a rural area. Emma drew a building block where all her friends lived in and Nadia expressed her desire for communal living and sharing care-work.

5.2.3. Housework: reproducing and deconstructing gender roles

When expanding on housework, there is both a reproduction and deconstruction of heteronormative gender roles. Fraiman describes the ambivalence of how queer people reinvent and reproduce gendered household tasks as an essential part of home- and identity making, “bringing home-making back to an essential part of being human.” (Fraiman, 2017, p. 44)

Adam expresses that he and his partner conscientiously work to deconstruct household tasks from traditional gender roles. In general, conflict between participants in terms of housework often centres in the kitchen, but they remained critical on their this type of housework.

“There’s always work to do in the kitchen. I mean, feminists have said that domestic work is infinite, it’s invisible. It never ends.” (Nadia, 3-6-23)

H and X’s household, with H doing the tidying and X focusing on practical tasks, seems to reproduce traditional gender roles. But, they emphasize that the division of housework is based on personal preferences and skills. Other participants, such as Turr who does practical tasks, link these tasks to upbringing and life experience, and detach it from gender roles.

“We both had no example of how to live this life. (...) I never saw this kind of relationship on TV, and there is no standard for a queer relationship” (Joren 13-5-23).

5.3. How can mapping be a critical tool for researching queer home-making?

This answer will be partly formulated in the chapter Methodology, section 3.3. The mapping sessions undertaken in this research served as a means to explore and understand queer home-making through a creative and open-ended approach. The use of blank sheets provided participants the freedom visually represent their thoughts and feelings in a way that resonated with them personally, accommodating both those with or without artistic backgrounds.

Sirine expressed that she realised through the mapping that their home-making practices differed from conventional norms. Runa further highlighted the utility of the mapping in conveying their unique way of living together, bridging a gap in communication, because she has a “hard time explaining how we live together to other people.” (Runa, 30-4-23) Nadia expressed that the mapping came at a good time to reflect together on their home-making practices. Additionally, Momo wanted to participate in this research “because the queer perspective is just lacking in terms of housing”. (Momo, 12-6-23) Mapping therefore emerged as a versatile method, bridging visual and verbal communication. The coexistence of both modes of expression dissolved barriers and fostered open interpretations, preserving the authenticity of each participant’s narrative. This resulted in different approaches and styles, from spiritual, linguistic and abstract styles, to more direct and material depictions. Similar symbolic references emerged throughout the mappings, from geometry to tree branches.

To conclude, mapping showed to be a well-fitted method to reveal the many layers and different meanings of queer home-making practices. It allowed for the experiences of the participants to centre, giving them the opportunity to be active agents in creating visual, spatial knowledge. This visual data brings visibility to queer home-making practices which are marginalised in society. Therefore, mapping revealed how queer home-making practices contest heteronormative dwelling cultures in Flanders and Brussels, giving them the political potential to deconstruct hegemonic power systems.

EPILOGUE

The previous chapter has comprehensively responded to the research questions posed within this thesis. This epilogue delves into the challenges encountered throughout this research, potential future research directions, and underscores the contributions this research makes to both queer and architectural studies.

This thesis has critically explored queer home-making practices in Flanders and Belgium, making a first attempt to unveil these marginalised practices. Doing so, it makes queer existence less invisible in the Belgian context. The home-making practices of queer individuals showcased the transformative potential to deconstruct and reimagine the ideal of the single-family home, which is commonly spread across the (sub)urban landscape of Belgium (see chapter 2, section 2.1). These queer households offer insight into alternative kinship structures that exist outside the confines of heteronormativity. However, participants have expressed their need for tangible, built examples of alternative home-making practices within Belgium and beyond, which was lacking in this research. Therefore, a possible trajectory for future research could be to investigate references of alternative home-making practices that align with queer home-making practices. This future research can expand the idea of ‘queer’ home-making to include a broader spectrum of relationships and arrangements, including non-mogamous couples, communal living with collaborative child-rearing, and so on. It can also expand on how these examples are established. What are the housing laws in Belgium preventing or enabling this? Can this research offer a methodology for creating alternative home-making practices that transcend geographical, institutional, and political boundaries, incorporating transnational home-making practices?

Several challenges were encountered during this research journey, particularly in challenging traditional academic rules. The extensive transcription process shifted time away from the mapping analysis, and the word count limitations resulted in cutting away valuable data about the participants’ lived experiences and theoretical expansions. The queer, interdisciplinary and open nature of this research clashed with rigid traditional university rules. Thus, this thesis was also about queering academic research. Conducting unconventional research also challenged my position as a researcher, where I am very thankful for my participants which let me explore this position. During the mapping sessions, I realised I was relying on traditional notions of the role as researcher, feeling like I needed to show expertise or professionalism. Acknowledging this, I could have looked for other methods to offer more agency to the participants. I could’ve explored more on participatory techniques like discussions on the mappings altogether, which was also suggested by Nadia. This shift could transform the research into a fully bottom-up process rather than a current top-down imposition of insights onto participants’ mappings. The meaning and role of my own drawings during the mapping sessions is also underexposed. Another improvement in this research could be to include a more diverse group of participants, incorporating more varying age groups, people with children, and queer people living in rural areas.

The contributions of this research to queer studies is the representation of the multiplicity of queer experiences through visual spatial data, something that is still lacking in queer studies (see chapter 3). Additionally, it adds queer existence into architectural studies, where it has been historically marginalised and made invisible (Nathaniel Furman & Mardell, 2022 – see chapter 2, section 2.3.). Next to that, the mapping drawings challenge the power and authority of architectural drawings. (Tayob, 2018) This thesis explores what a queer architectural practice can look like by advocating that mapping is a critical tool to capture the complex, critical and valuable insights of queer home-making. However, it lacks in providing concrete insights for architectural designers and urban planners. I critically take this gap into account, as the focus of this research remains on challenging hegemonic power structures within the architectural field, instead of offering a design toolkit with quick solutions. This perspective aligns with the viewpoints of Matrix (1984) and Vallerand (2020) (see chapter 2, section 2.3), who underscore the significance of implementing queer and feminist methods in design practices while refraining from rigidly defining what queer or feminist architecture should look like. Therefore, let this research be a step towards shaping queer architectural practices that embrace and include the valuable perspectives of queer people.

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Fig. 5: own creation

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Fig. 10: Scans from book. Nathaniel Furman, A., & Mardell, J. (2022). *Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories*. Riba Publishing. p. 9

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