

This project emerged out of the questions; what is (a) home? and, what do we really need to live to our fullest potential?



“Life’ should also include the vitality generated by participating in healthy communities in beautiful environments; the kind of vitality that inspires people to augment the life and vitality of these communities and the conditions for life.”
Arran Gare, 2016

An alternative way of living in the city of Oslo. A cohousing providing its inhabitants with the goods to create their potential.



Spiritual connection with a place should develop out of ordinary interaction with a place and generate a better earth ethics and culture that contain a certain type of capacity for communication which can recognize those elements that are life supporting. The kind of relationship generated here is dialogical and communicative. It is both two-way and two-place, whereby people can belong to the land as much as it belongs to people.

Kumi Kato, 2009

Inspired by, and dedicated to, the self-organized squat community of *Brakkebygrenda*. With the intention of spreading their vision of social inclusion and an ecological lifestyle that resonates with living an active life of minimalistic consumption, respecting natural resources and challenging the profit-driven housing situation in Oslo with the belief that people have a right to live in the city.



potential



exhibition poster

context

mood

vision

plans, elevations and visualizations:

basement

ground floor

second and third floor

top floor

lighting plan

technical description

attachments:

technical drawings

process- and project documentation



St Halvards gate is situated in Oslo's Old Town. This is where the city's centre used to be, before king Christian IV moved it in the 17th century. The Old Town neighbours the "multicultural" area of Grønland as well as the more recently established area of Bjørvika. The street is named after Oslo's patron saint, St Hallvard. St Halvards gate 31B-C was built in 1909 in a historicist style. It has five levels, including the basement. The backyard is made up by a big green area with a lot of potential.

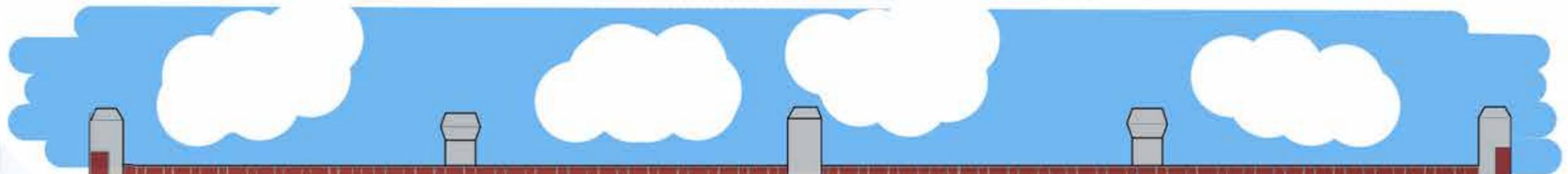
context



- residential
- industry/commerce
- empty (old squat)
- site









basement

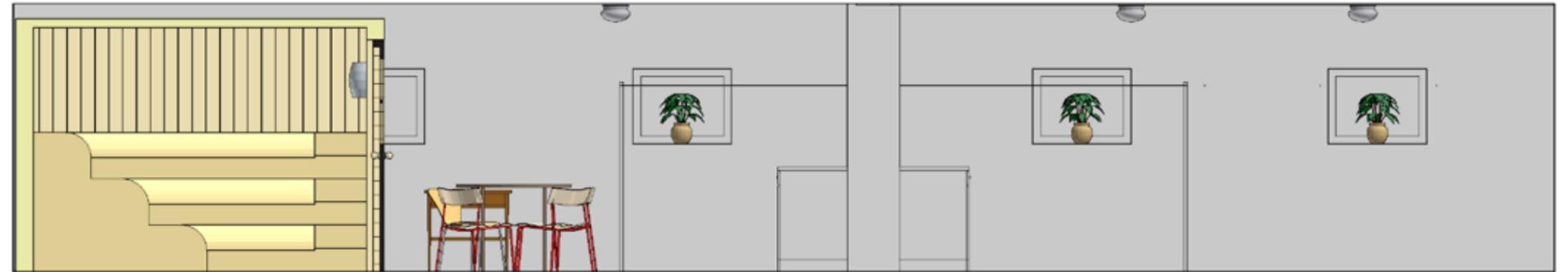
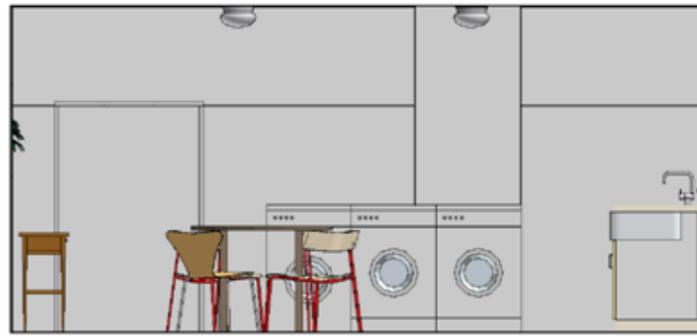


storage units for the residents
the two-room apartments on the
second and third floor has
a unit each (the six along the left wall)
the large unit is shared between
the residents of the
collective on the top floor

shared space
laundromat with space for social meeting,
having a coffee while doing laundry or
socializing in the house sauna
bottom left: a workshop for all to use
bottom right: a "miscellaneous" room for creative purposes,
exercising, as a playroom or something else.



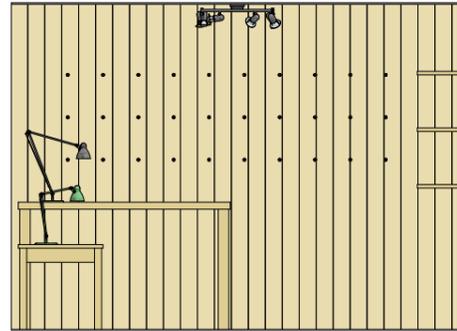
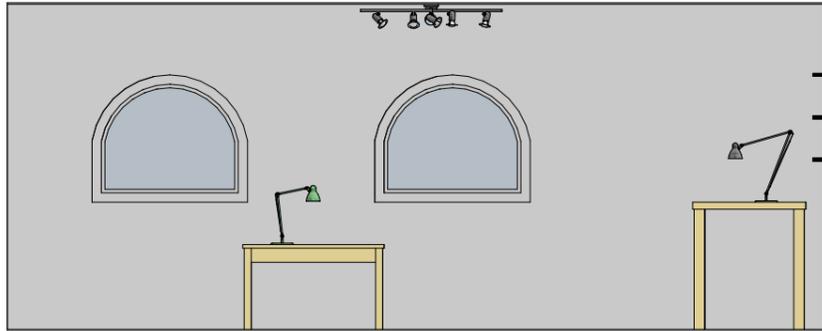
basement: laundromat and sauna



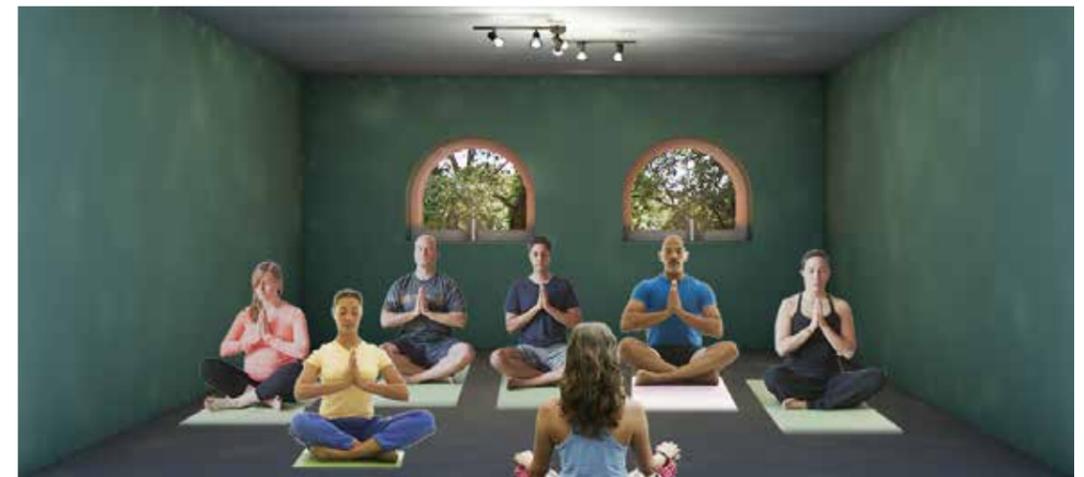
elevations, scale 1:50



basement: workshop and "miscellaneous room"

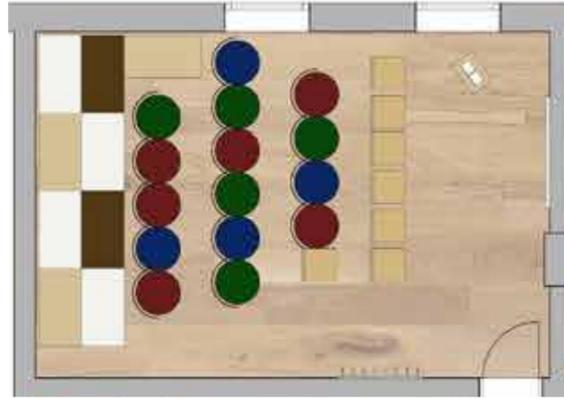


elevations, scale 1:50





ground floor



alternative layout for the workspace/office when used for lectures, with the tables piled in the back of the room and the chairs lined up

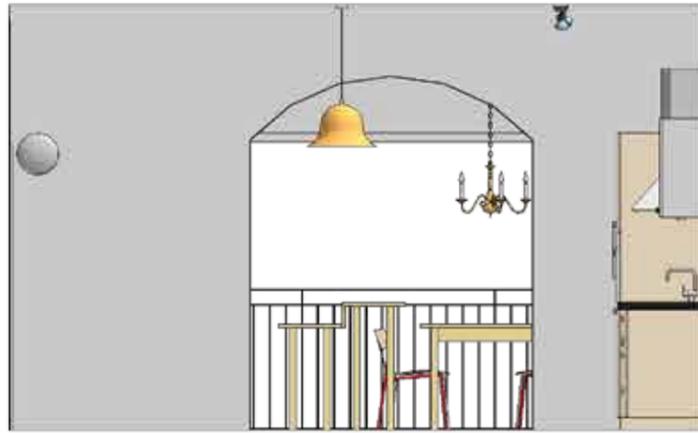


shared kitchen and dining space for the whole house

shared spaces
top left: workspace
bottom left: library
right: living room, with sofa beds for vistor's connected with folding doors to a creative room/playroom



ground floor: kitchen and dining space

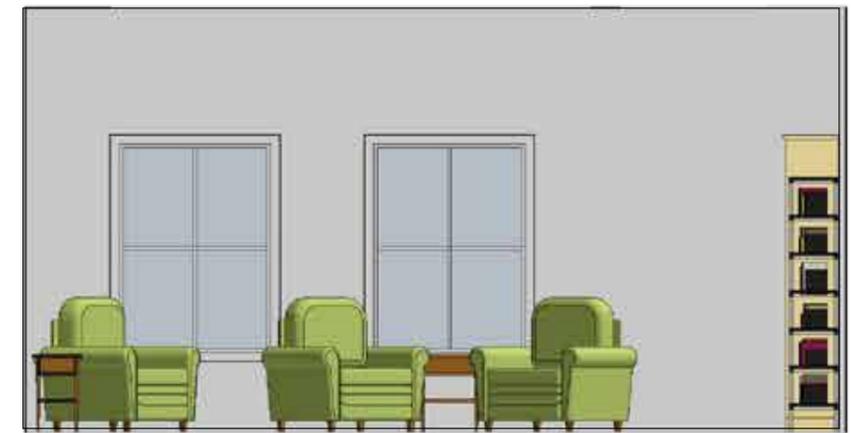
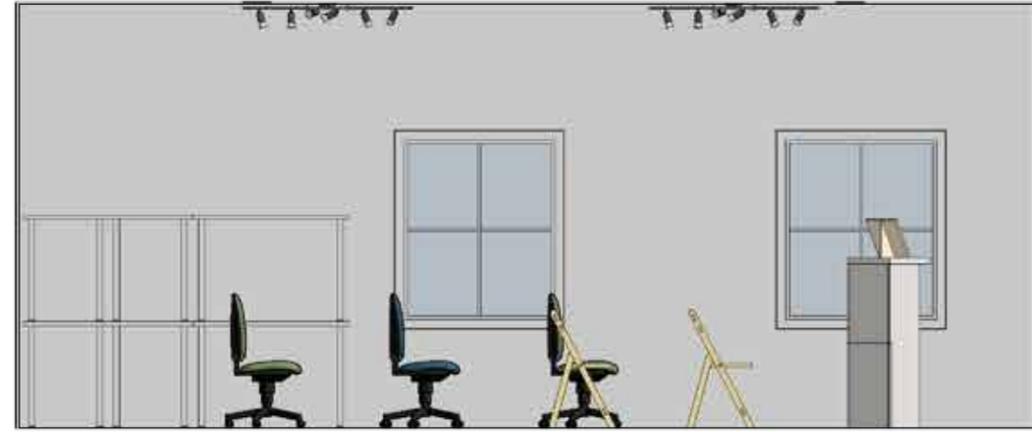


elevations, scale 1:50





ground floor: shared workspace and library

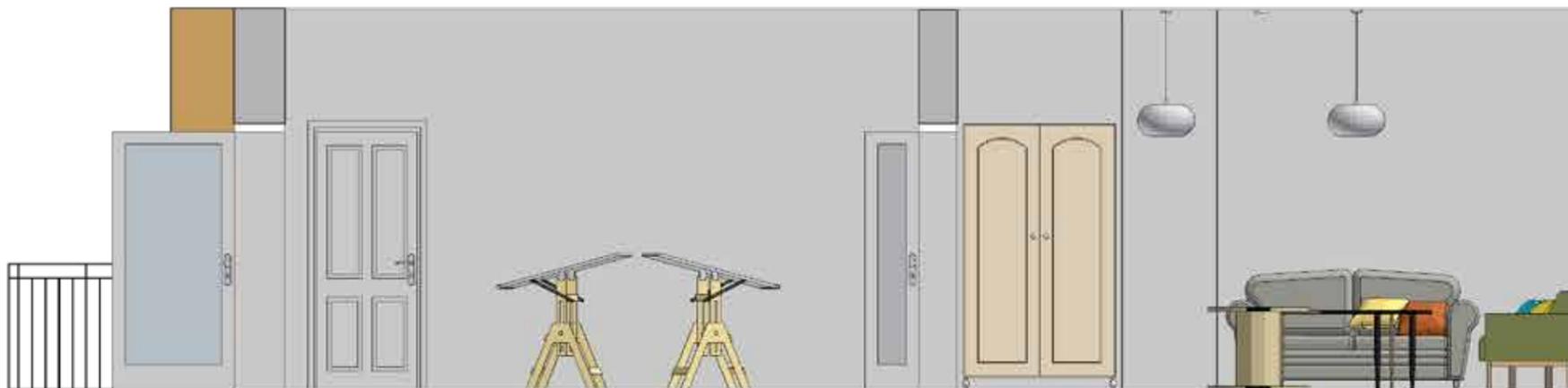
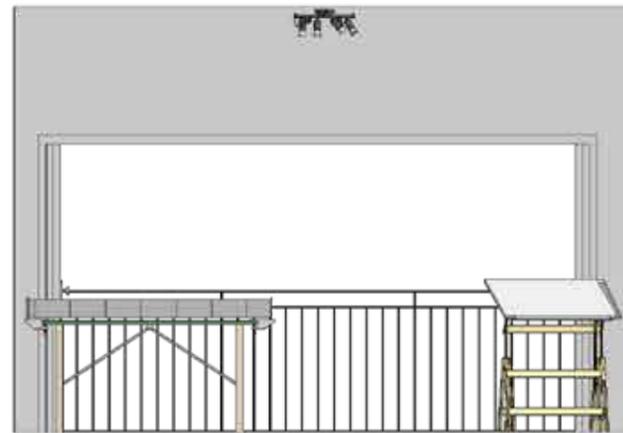


elevations, scale 1:50





ground floor: living room and creative room/playroom



elevations, scale 1:50

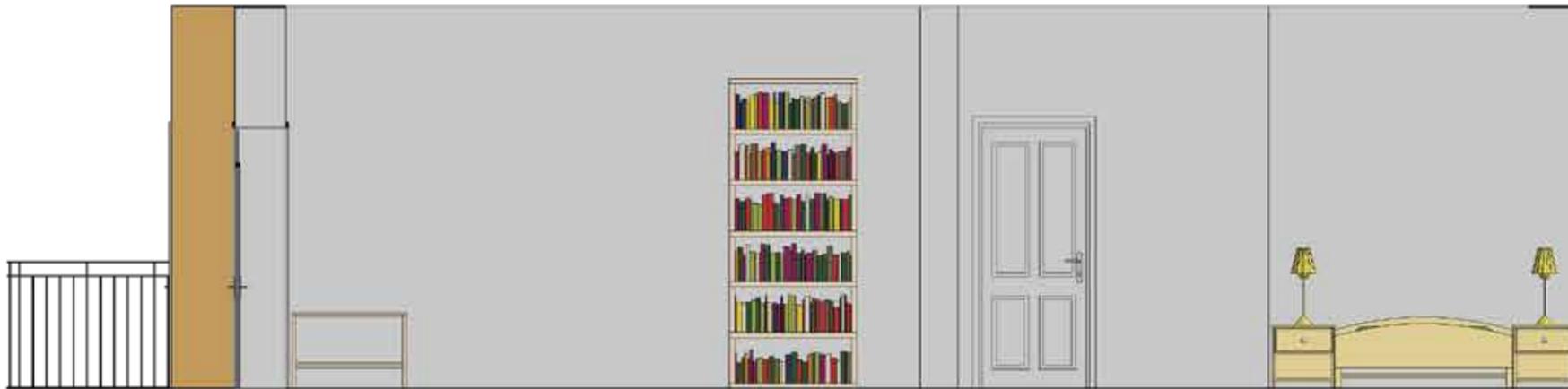


the three separated balconies have been transformed into an exterior corridor,
where the entrances to the apartments and the shared kitchen are

three apartments of about 50m² with a shared kitchen and dining space
the apartments are open-spaced, but all have two windows on the north wall
and could be turned into two-bedroom apartments



second and third floor: apartments



elevations, scale 1:50

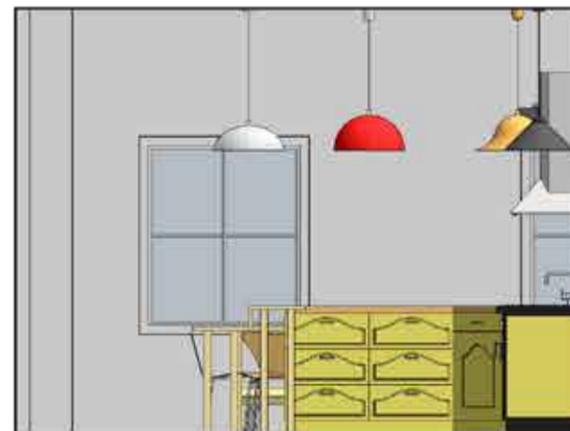




second and third floor: shared kitchen and dining space

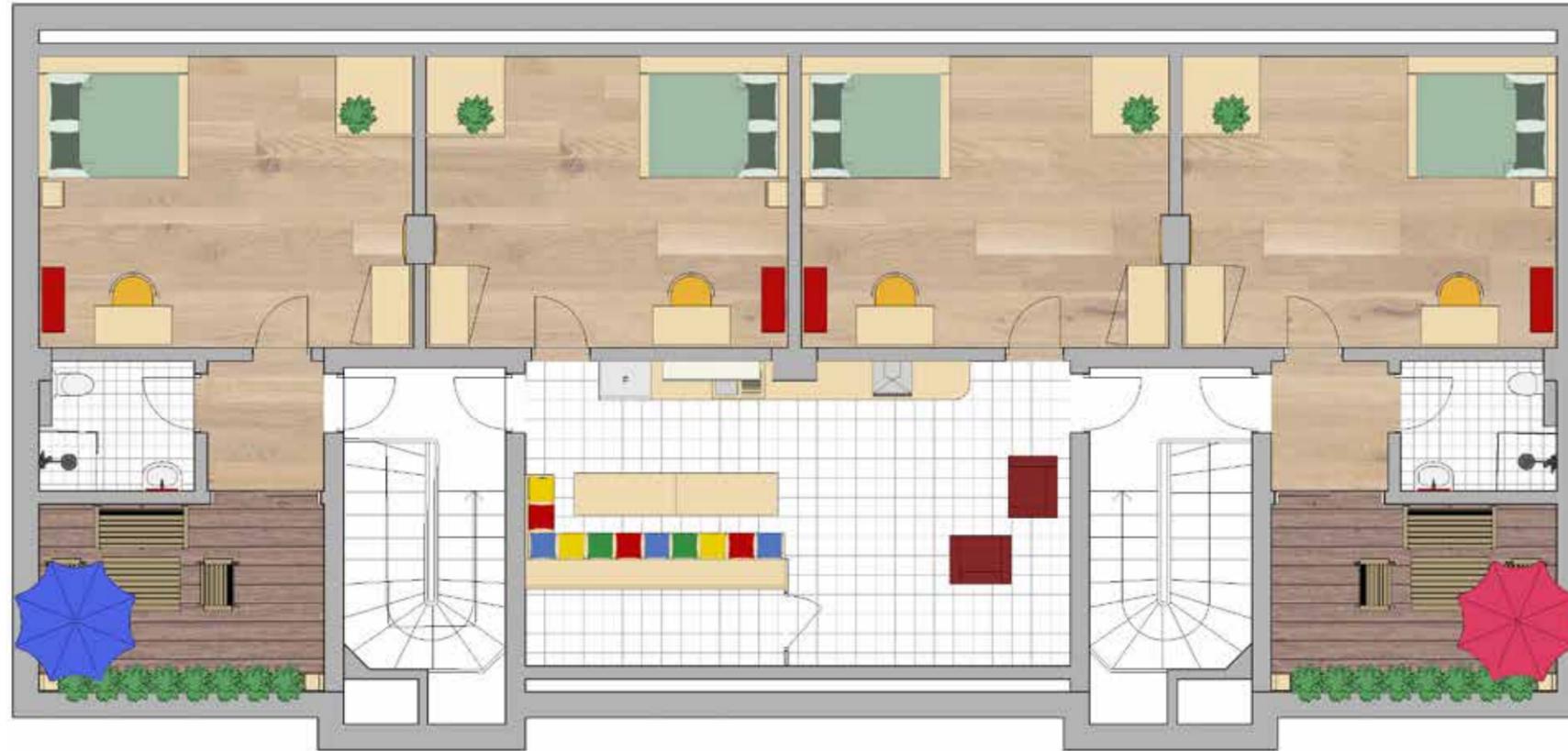


elevations, scale 1:50





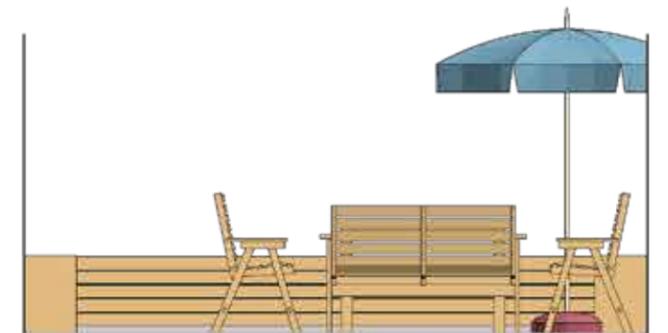
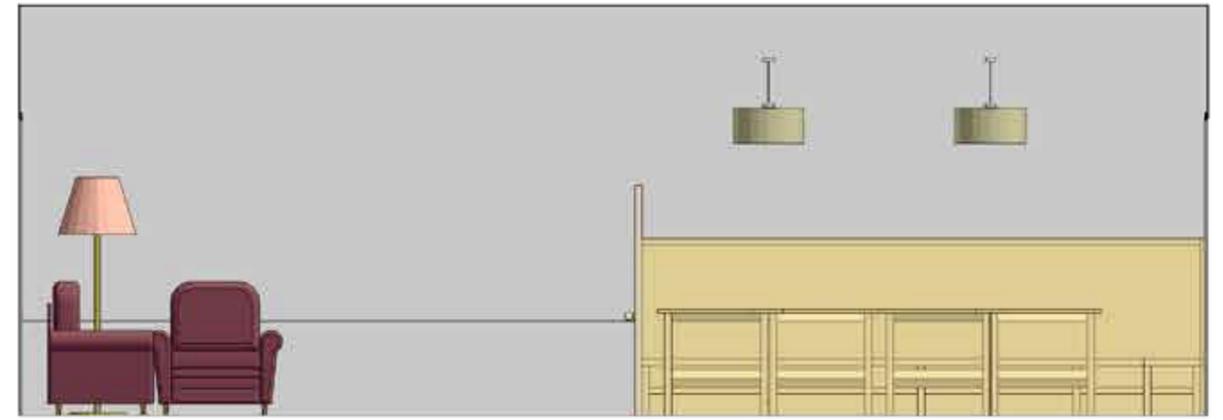
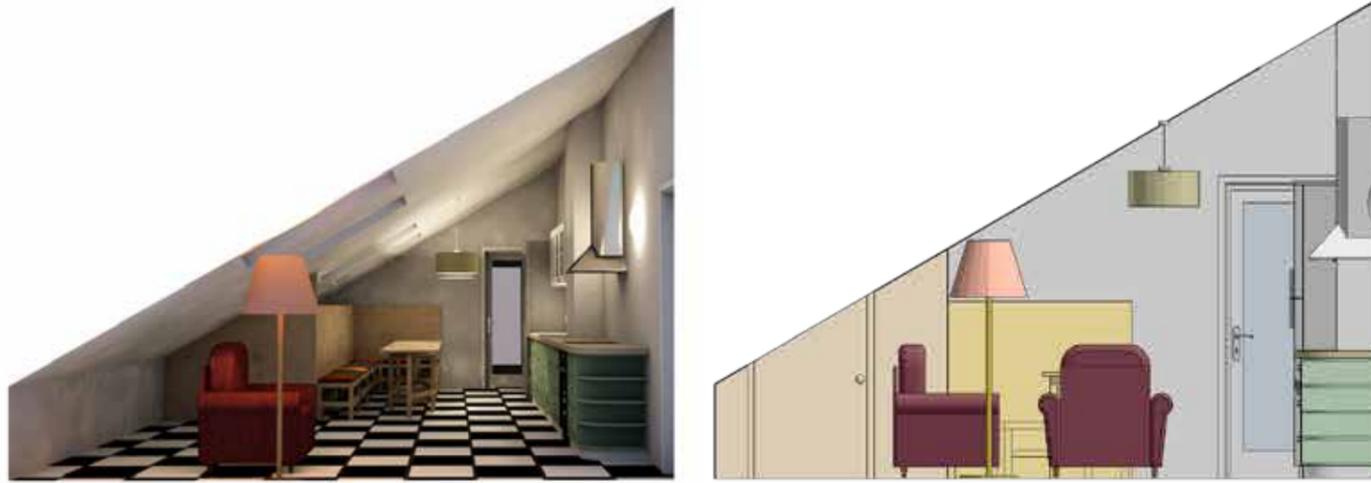
top floor



the collective
four one-room apartments (26m²)
kitchen, two bathrooms and two roof terraces to share



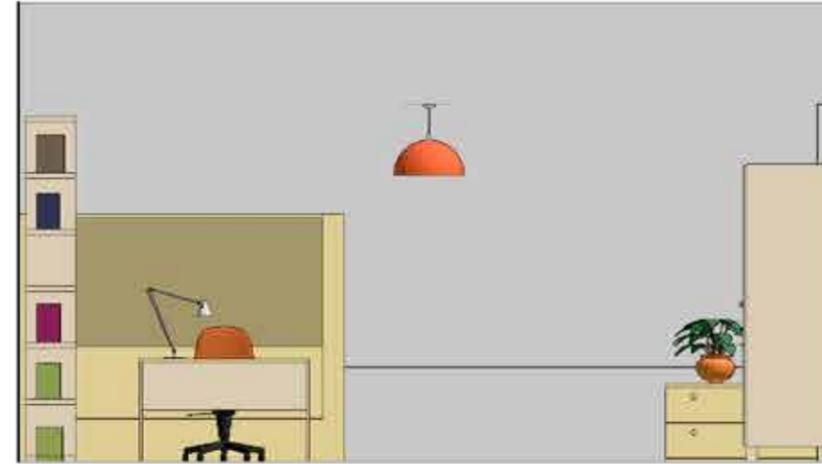
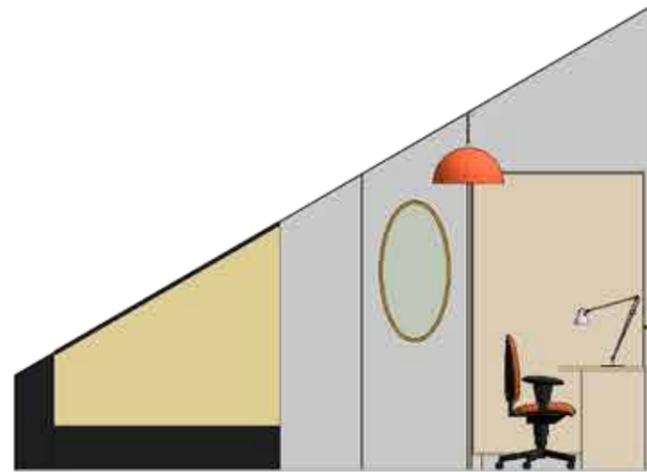
top floor: shared kitchen and dining space



elevations, scale 1:50



top floor: apartments



elevations, scale 1:50





lighting: basement

the lighting plans
are meant to
show suggestions to
where light is needed
and give an idea of
what kind of lighting fixture
that would be a good fit

the lighting fixtures are
to be found used





lighting: ground floor



plan 1:100



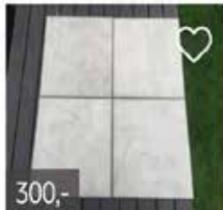
lighting: second and third floor







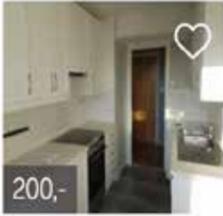
technical description: suggested floor materials

material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier	material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier
 200,- Oslo 23 timer siden Parkett							 250,- Oslo 2 dager siden Store fliser "betongstil"						
 180,- Oslo 10. mai 2017 Parkett (2,75 kvm)	FL:01	parquet wood		social zones bedrooms		second hand (finn.no)	 300,- Farsund 2 dager siden Terracottafliser Fliser 30 x 30 beige	FL:02	tiles		kitchens bathrooms		second hand (finn.no)
 650,- Oslo 10. mai 2017 Boen Parkett Eik White Stone (11 kvm)							 59,- Sandnes 8. mai 2017 Forskjellige nye fliser til en billig penge						
 150,- Oslo 24. apr 2017 Parkett selges							 100,- Fana 2. mai 2017 36 m2 fliser (ubrukt) selges til halv pris						
 600,- Stavanger 11. mai 2017 Ny heltre tregulv parkett fra Terhurne							 50,- Jevnaker 7. mai 2017 Fugemasse HEYDI KOKS		sealant				



technical description: outdoor and paint

kitchen

material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier	material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier
 2 000,- Lillestrøm 8. mai 2017 Terrassebord: Møre Royal Duo 28x120, 220 løpemeter (ca 28 kvm). Brukt 1 sesong	FL:03	decking/ outdoor flooring		balconies		second hand (finn.no)	 Gis bort 3,1 km 30. apr 2017 Retro kjøkken gis bort!						
 150,- Halden 11. mai 2017 Terrassebord							 200,- Oslo 1 dag siden IKEA-kjøkken selges til gi-bort pris	KI:01	kitchen module		kitchen	4	second hand (finn.no)
	SA:02	firtree panel		sauna (walls and ceiling)		maxbo (use second hand if available)	 100,- Kvaløya 1 dag siden Kjøkken (uten hvitevarer) selges						
 Gis bort Oslo 1. mai 2017 Planker, materialer	DIY	wood		building material for customized kitchen sofa		second hand (finn.no)	 3 000,- Oslo 13 timer siden Kjøkken med komfyr						
 200,- Oslo 1 dag siden 3 forskjellige fargeprøver selges	PA:01	wall paint		social zones, bedrooms, kitchens, library, workspaces, laundromat		second hand (finn.no)	 5 000,- Oslo 1 dag siden Kjøkken til salgs						

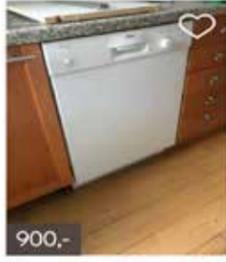
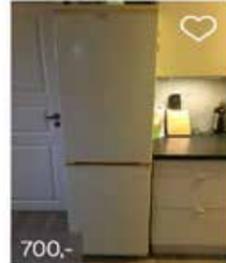


technical description: kitchen appliances

material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier	material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier
 <p>100,- Oslo 8. apr 2017 Diverse dører og hyller til Sigdal Herregård Eik kjøkken</p>	KT:01	kitchen module/ furnishing		kitchens		second hand (finn.no)	 <p>300,- Oslo 16. mar 2017 Oppvask kum med blande batteri</p>	OV:01	oven		kitchens	4	second hand (finn.no)
 <p>500,- Oslo 1 dag siden Overskap med glassdør - Ikea Faktum</p>							 <p>500,- Oslo 2 dager siden Bosch innebygget komfyr</p>						
 <p>200,- Oslo 13 timer siden Blanco kjøkkenvask / oppvaskum med kran</p>							 <p>1 000,- Tønsberg 1. mai 2017 Stekeovn</p>						
 <p>900,- Oslo 2 dager siden Blanco oppvaskum / kjøkkenvask - inkl avløpsrør og feste</p>	SI:01	sinks	double or with drying space, as in images	kitchens	4	second hand (finn.no)	 <p>400,- Oslo 3 timer siden pent brukt ovn + platetopp</p>						
 <p>250,- Oslo 6. apr 2017 Dobbel vask med blandebatteri</p>							 <p>500,- Oslo 19. apr 2017 Husqvarna qc 470 ovn selges</p>						

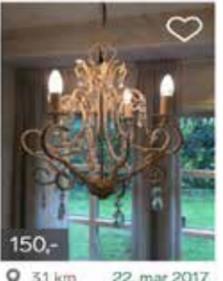


technical description: kitchen appliances

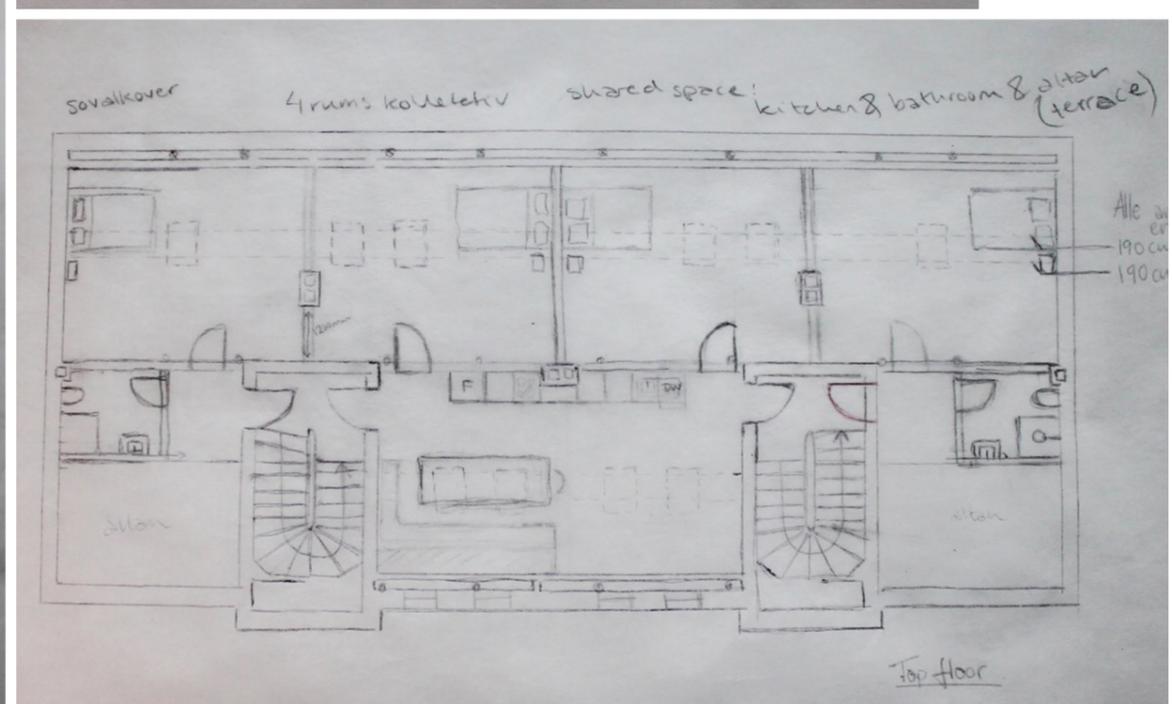
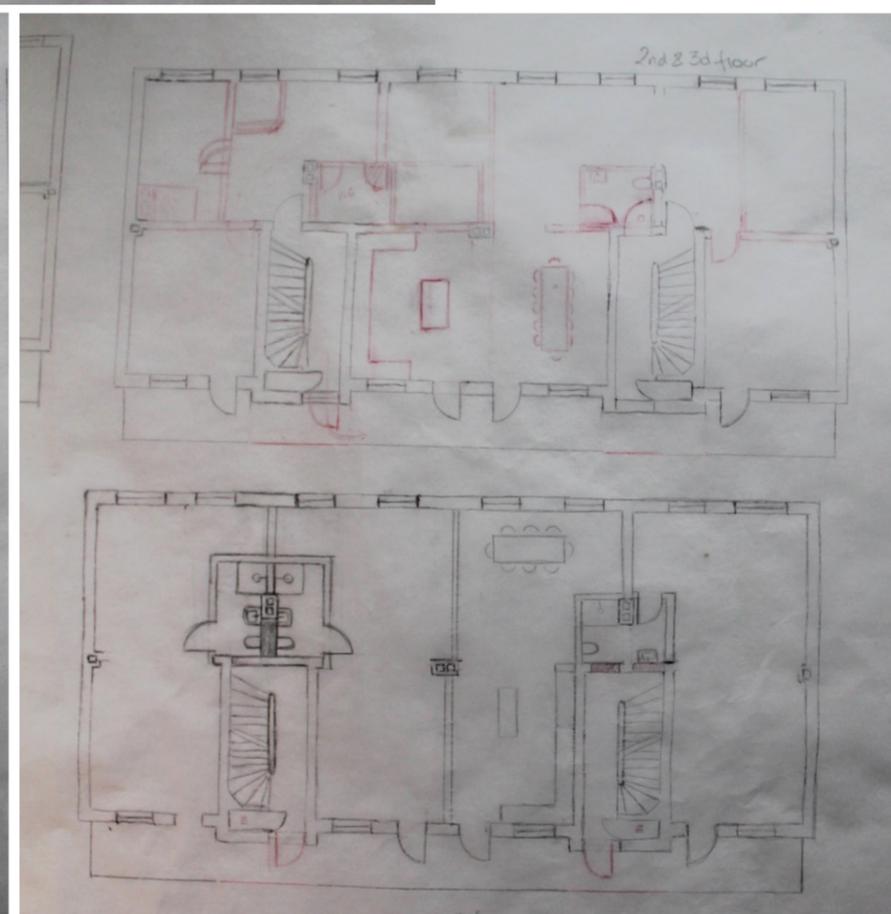
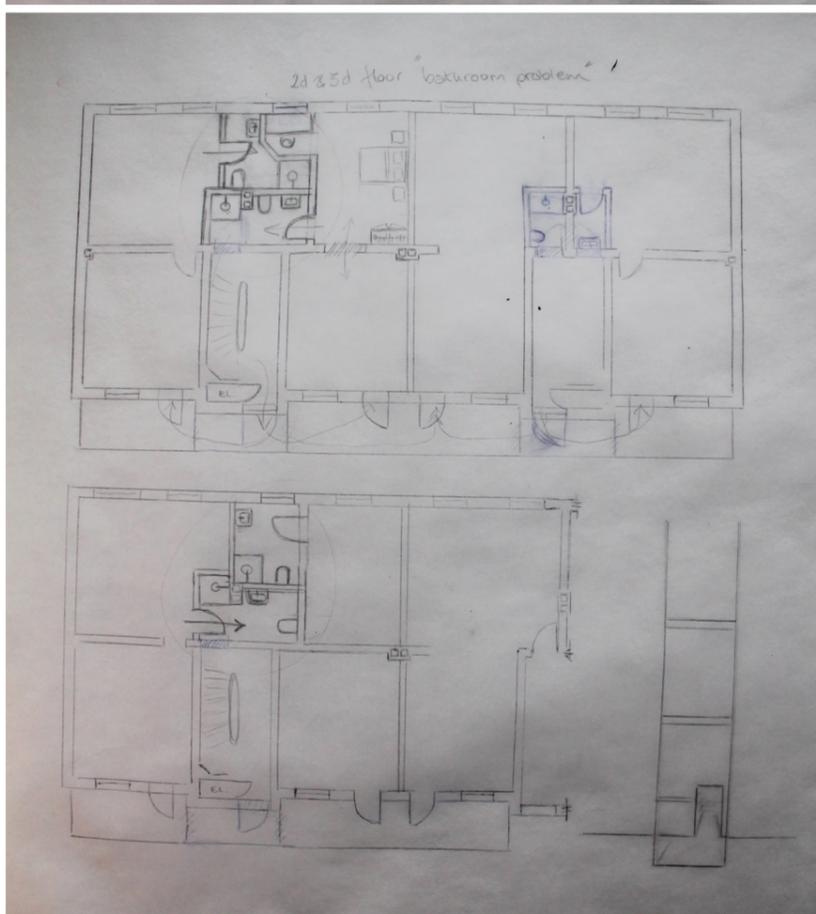
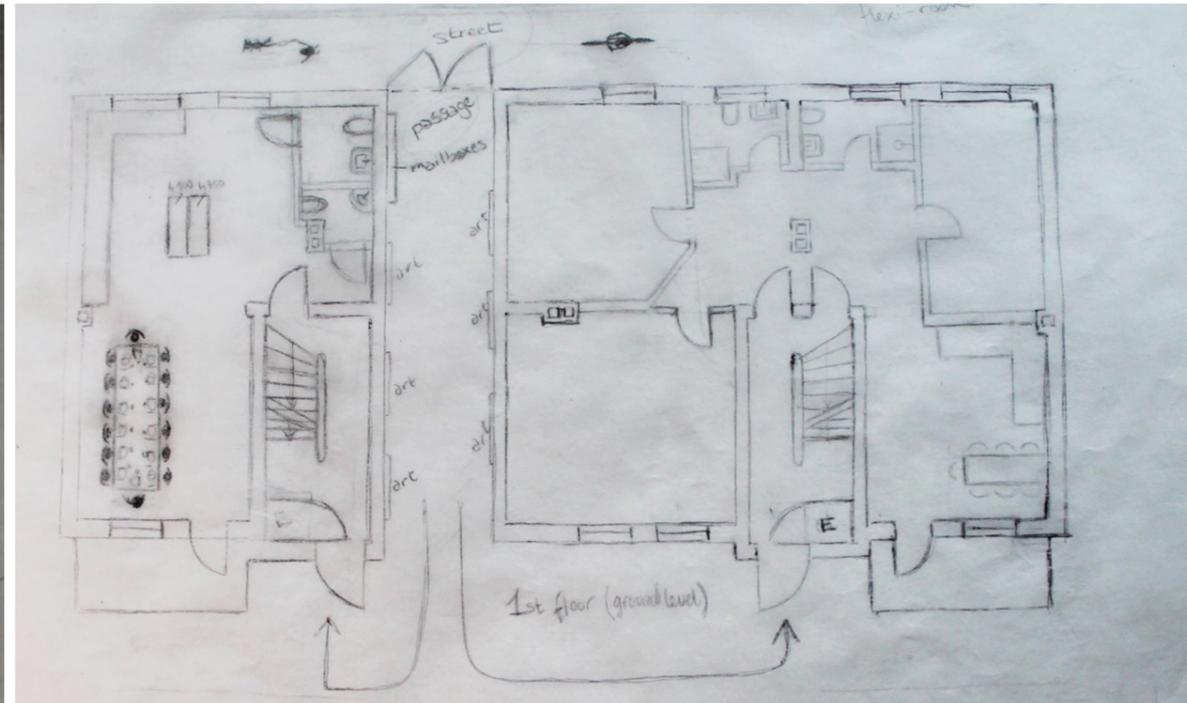
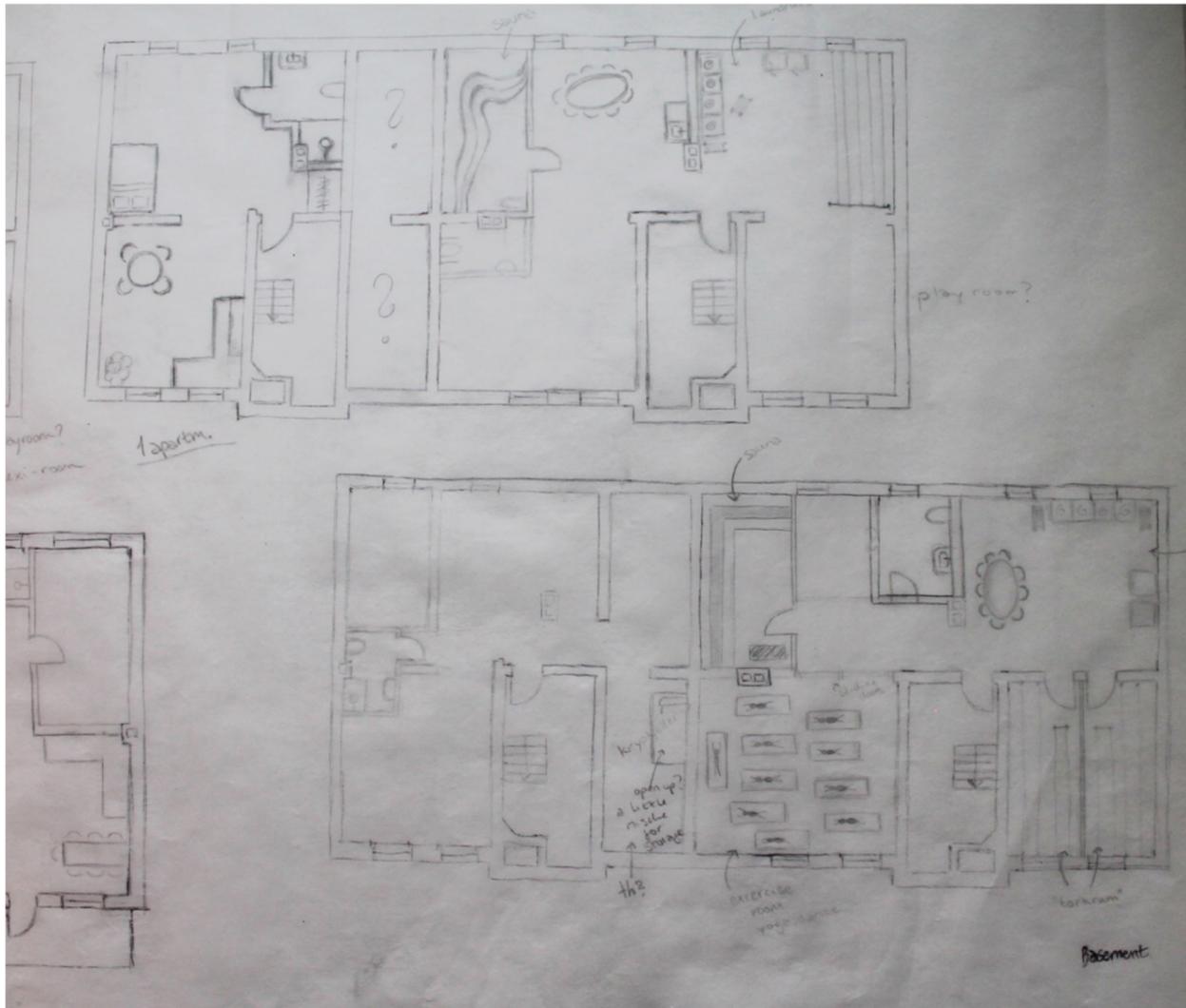
material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier	material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier
 <p>1 000,- Oslo 12. mai 2017 Kjøleskap, komfyr og vifte</p>							 <p>900,- Oslo 23. apr 2017 Bosch Oppvaskmaskin</p>						
 <p>700,- Oslo 1 dag siden KJØLESKAP</p>							 <p>800,- Oslo 10. mai 2017 Oppvaskmaskin Electrolux kun 4 år gammel</p>	DW:01	dishwasher		kitchen	4	second hand (finn.no)
 <p>500,- Oslo 13 timer siden Kjøleskap og oppvaskmaskin</p>	FF:01	fridge and freezer		kitchens	4	second hand (finn.no)	 <p>500,- Oslo 1 dag siden Oppvaskmaskin</p>						
 <p>950,- Oslo 2 dager siden Pent brukt Zanussi kjøleskap</p>							 <p>200,- Oslo 8. mai 2017 Philips kaffetrakter - 900watt, 1.3 liter</p>		coffee machine		kitchen and laundromat	5	second hand (finn.no)
 <p>1 000,- Oslo 7. mai 2017 Siemens oppvaskmaskin tilsalgs</p>							 <p>700,- Oslo 2 dager siden Kaffetrakter Moccaserver med stor kapasitet.</p>						

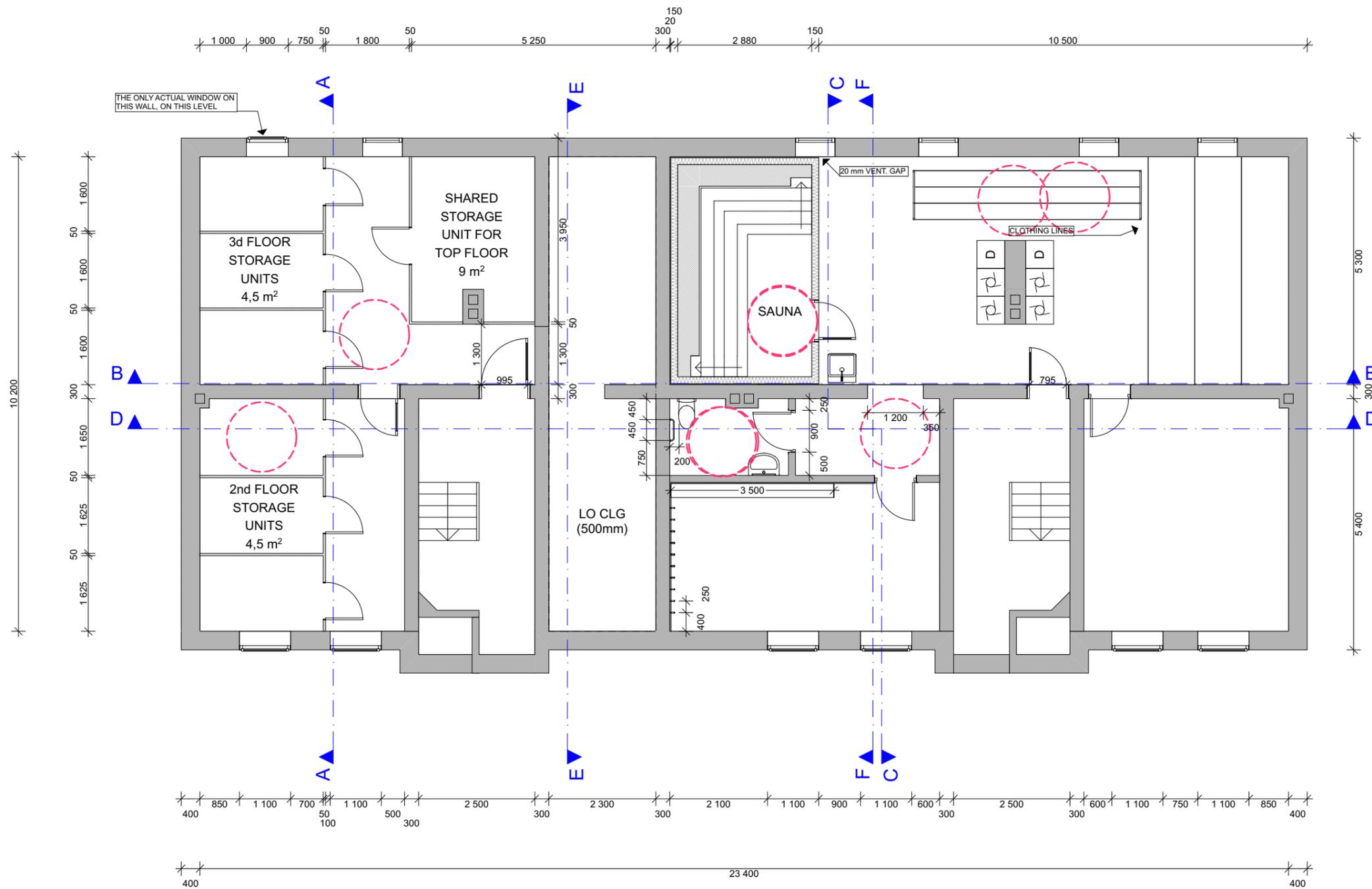
technical description: bathroom appliances

technical description: lighting

material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier	material	code	product specifics	size	areas of application	qty	supplier
	TO:01	toilet		bathrooms	10	second hand (finn.no)		CH:01	chandelier		over dining table in the big shared kitchen on the ground level	2	second hand (finn.no)
	BA:01	basin		bathrooms	10	second hand (finn.no)							
	SH:01	shower either with glass doors or shower curtains	90x90 cm	bathrooms	8	second hand (finn.no)		KL:01	random pendant fixtures		ceiling-mounted over kitchen tops and dining tables	approx 8	second hand (finn.no)

sketching process





Rev	Nr	Description	Date	Sign	Contr

NB! Alle mål må kontrollmåles på stedet!
(All measurements must be checked on site!)

Technical Plan: Basement

Site Location: St. Halvards gate 31B-C, 0192 Oslo, Norway Date: 23.05.2017

Bachelor's Project: potential Drawing ID: IA125

Student Nr: 287581 Class Name: 14BINHO1 Scale: 1:100

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Rev	Nr	Description	Date	Sign	Contr

NB! Alle mål må kontrollmåles på stedet!
(All measurements must be checked on site!)

Technical Plan: Top Floor

Site Location: St. Halvards gate 31B-C, 0192 Oslo, Norway Date: 23.05.2017

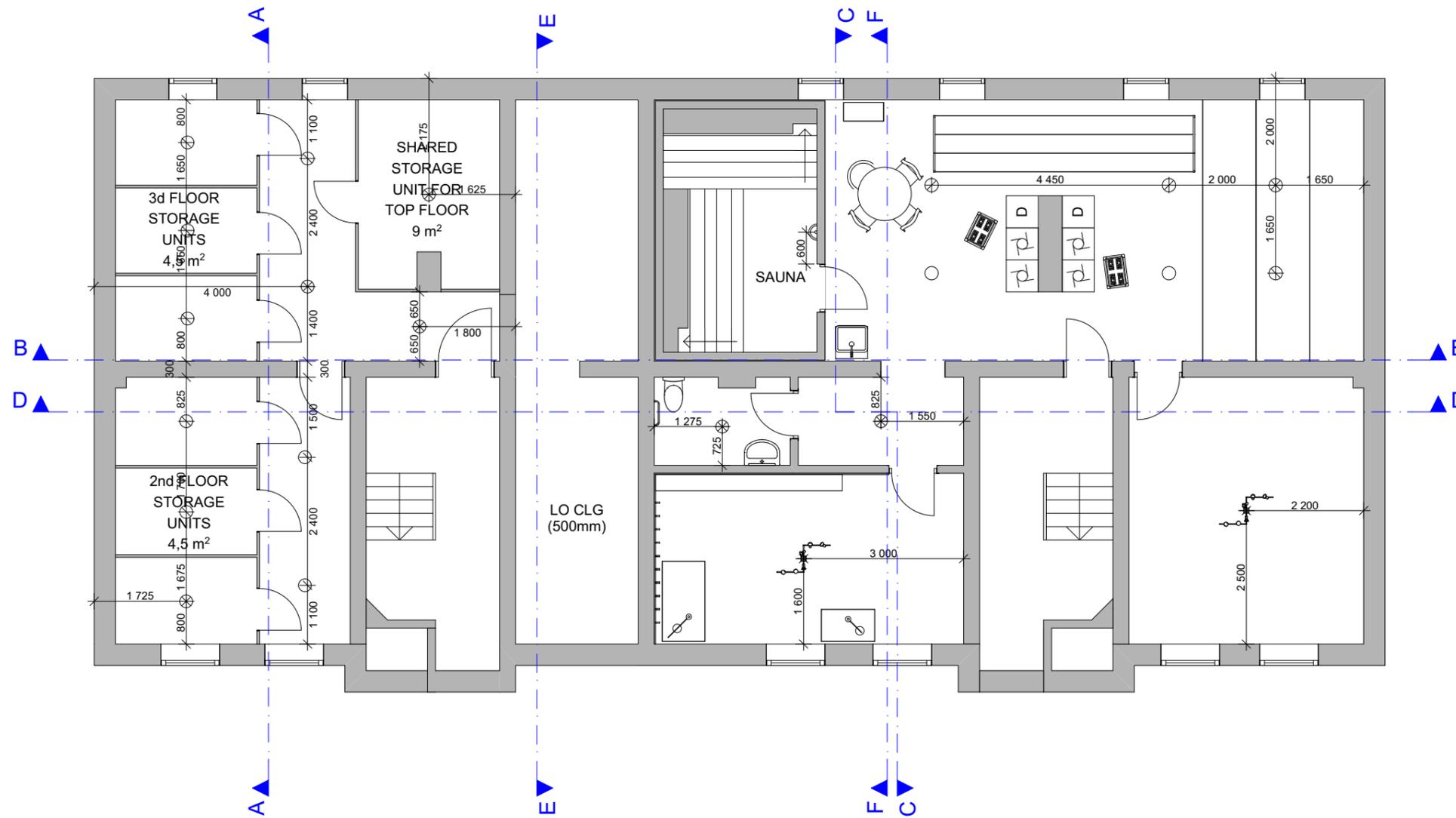
Bachelor's Project: potential Drawing ID: IA121

Student Nr: 287581 Class Name: 14BINHO1 Scale: 1:100

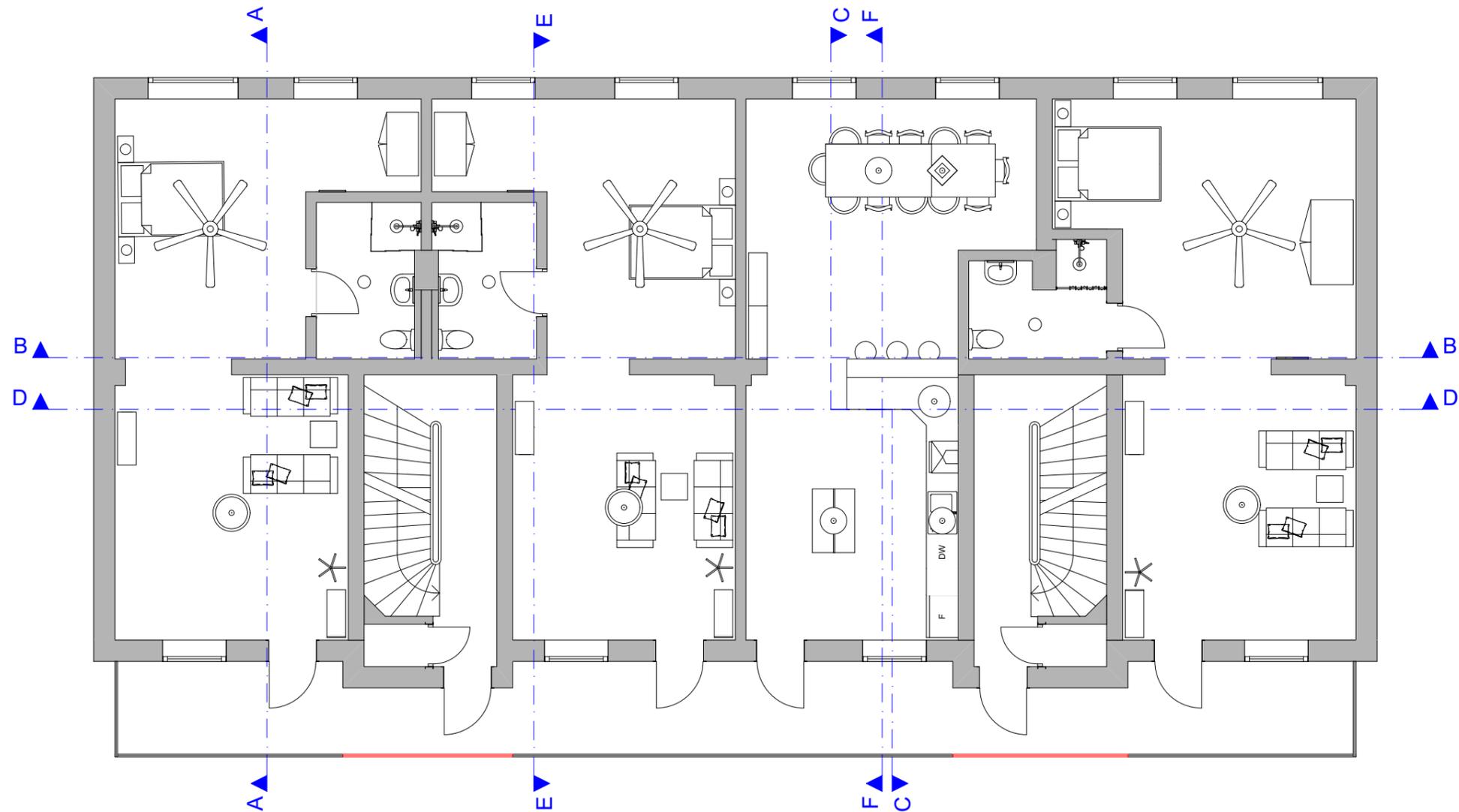
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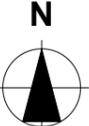
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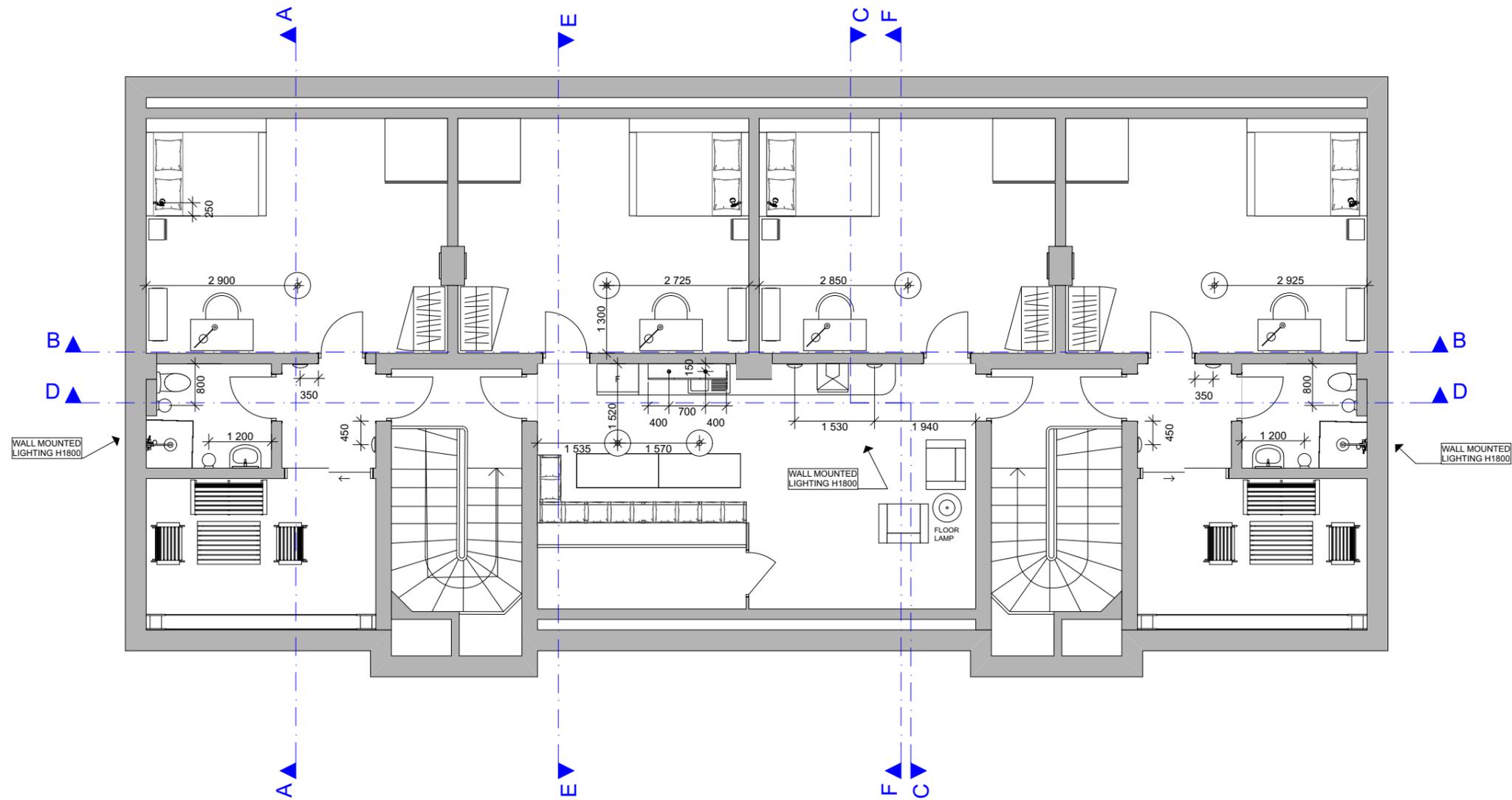


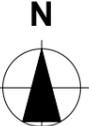


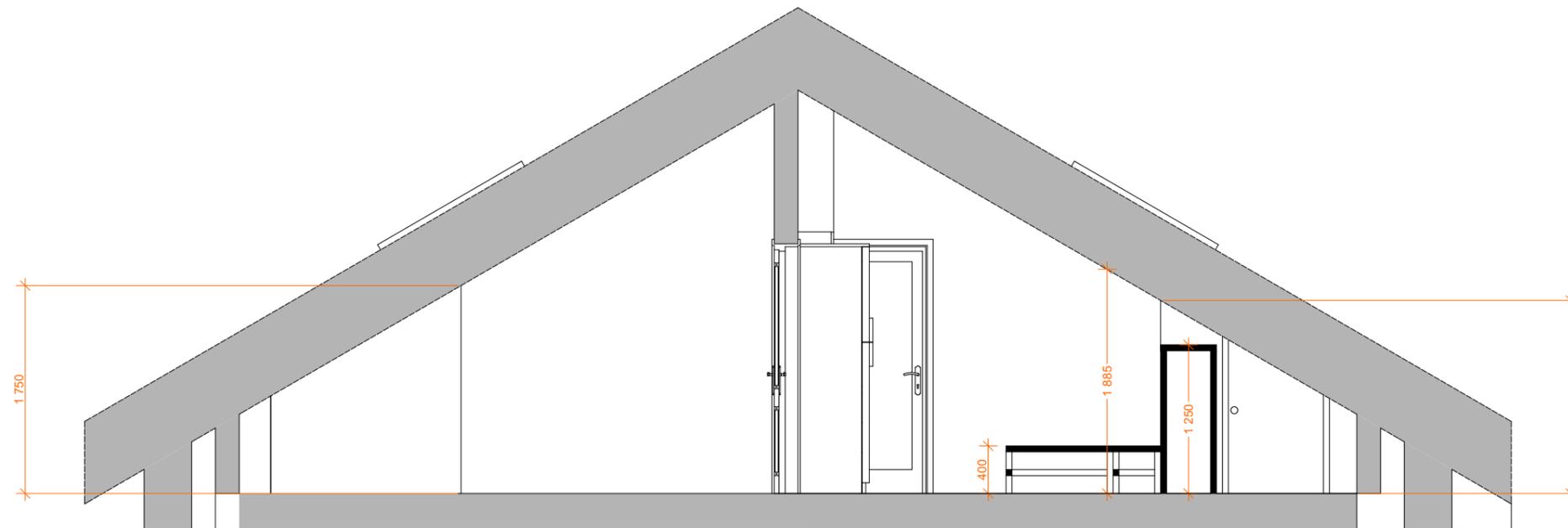
Revision history:					
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NB! Alle mål må kontrollmåles på stedet! (All measurements must be checked on site!)					
Lighting Plan: Basement					
Site Location: St. Halvards gate 31B-C, 0192 Oslo, Norway			Date: 23.05.2017		
Bachelor's Project: potential			Drawing ID: A1414		
Student Nr: 287581		Class Name: 14BINHO1		Scale: 1:100	
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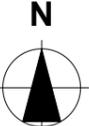


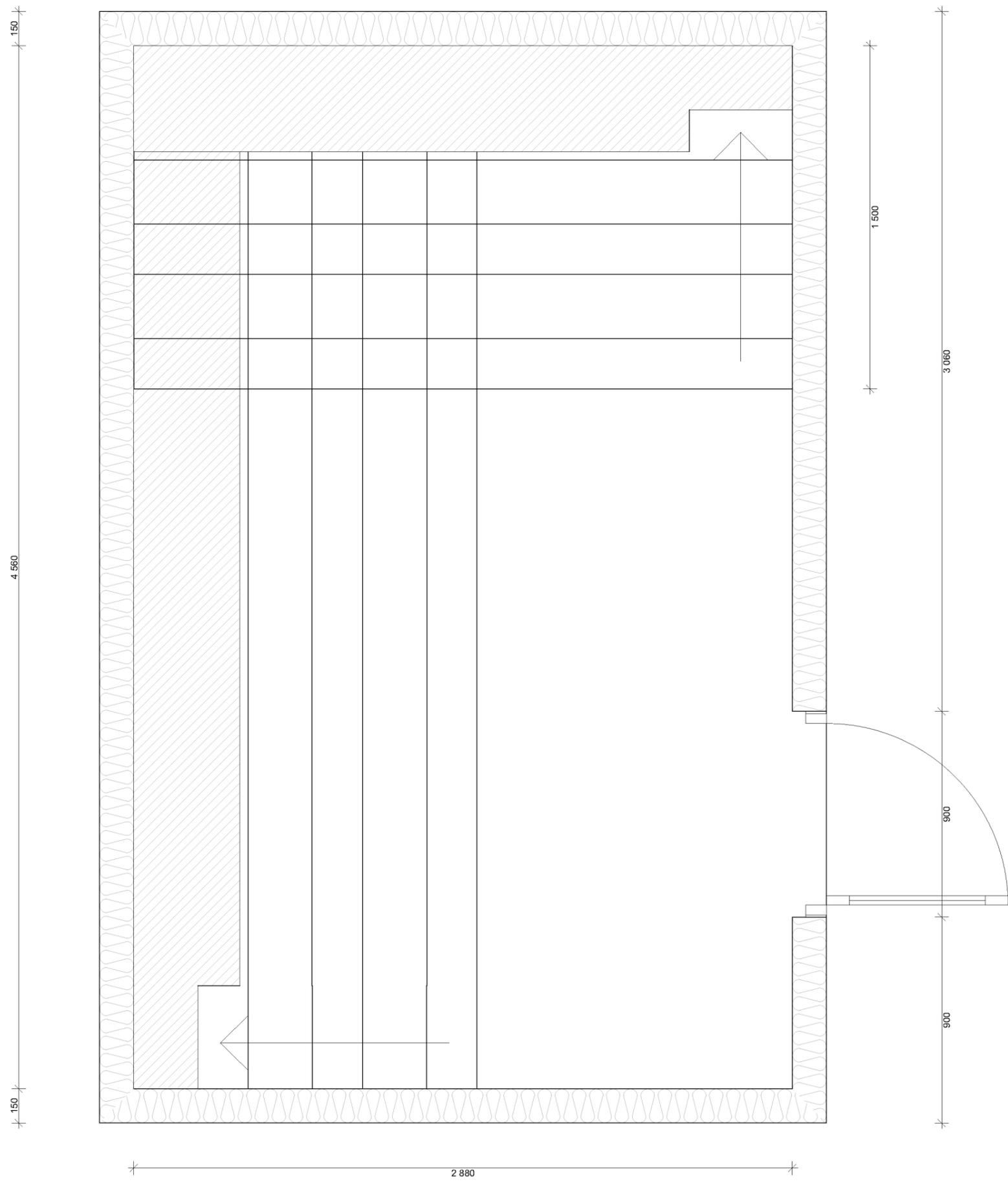
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Lighting Plan: 2nd and 3d Level					
Site Location: St. Halvards gate 31B-C, 0192 Oslo, Norway			Date: 23.05.2017		
Bachelor's Project: potential			Drawing ID: A1412		
Student Nr: 287581		Class Name: 14BINHO1		Scale: 1:100	
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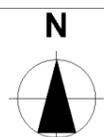


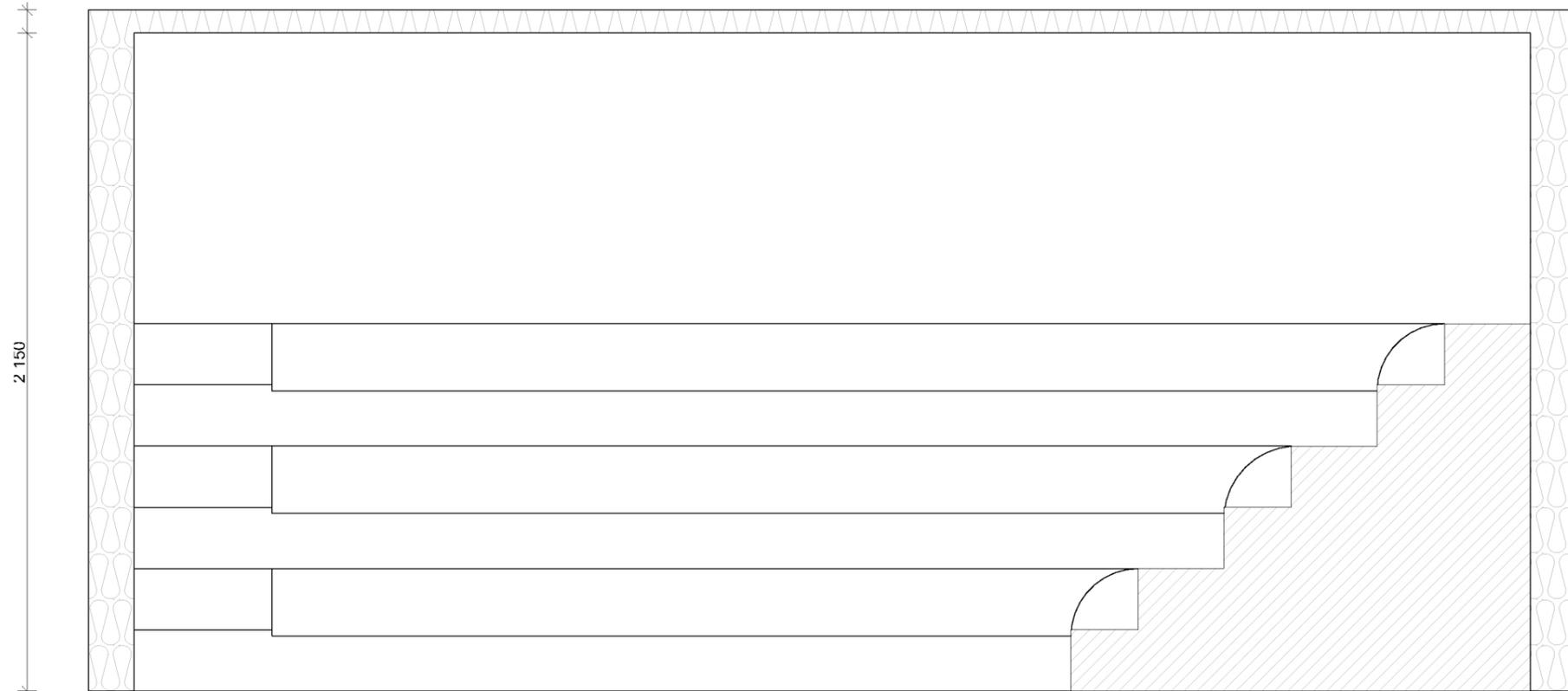
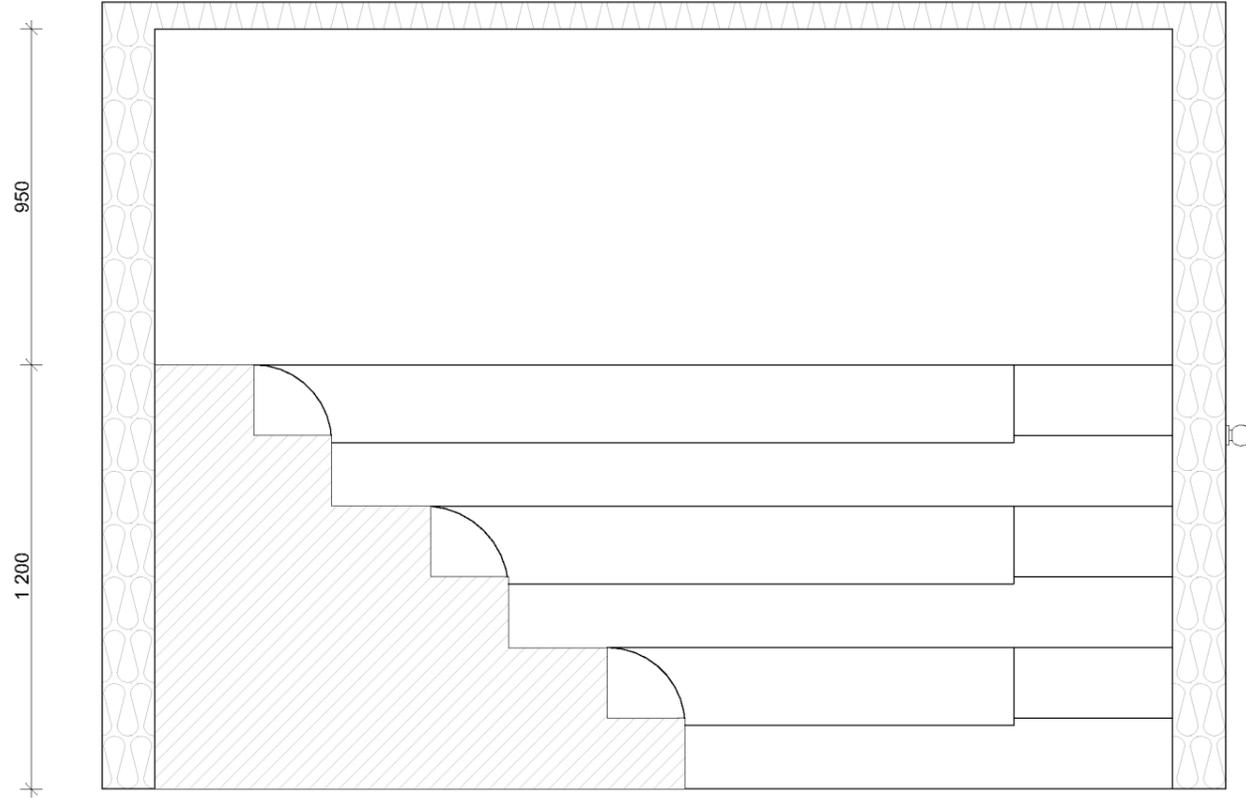
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Lighting Plan: Top Floor					
Site Location: St. Halvards gate 31B-C, 0192 Oslo, Norway			Date: 23.05.2017		
Bachelor's Project: potential			Drawing ID: A1411		
Student Nr: 287581		Class Name: 14BINHO1		Scale: 1:100	
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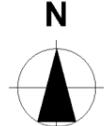
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Section E-E					
Site Location: St. Halvards gate 31B-C, 0192 Oslo, Norway			Date: 23.05.2017		
Bachelor's Project: potential			Drawing ID: IA1265		
Student Nr: 287581		Class Name: 14BINHO1		Scale: 1:50	
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Revision history:					
Rev	Nr	Description	Date	Sign	Contr
NB! Alle mål må kontrollmåles på stedet! (All measurements must be checked on site!)					
Working Drawing: Sauna (1:2)					
Site Location: St. Halvards gate 31B-C, 0192 Oslo, Norway			Date: 23.05.2017		
Bachelor's Project: potential			Drawing ID: IA133		
Student Nr: 287581		Class Name: 14BINHO1		Scale: 1:20	
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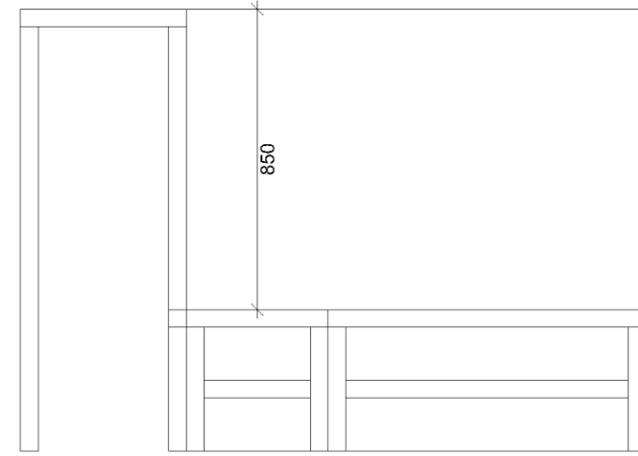


200
200

Revision history:					
Rev	Nr	Description	Date	Sign	Contr
NB! Alle mål må kontrollmåles på stedet! (All measurements must be checked on site!)					
Working Drawing: Sauna (2:2)					
Site Location: St. Halvards gate 31B-C, 0192 Oslo, Norway			Date: 23.05.2017		
Bachelor's Project: potential			Drawing ID: IA134		
Student Nr: 287581		Class Name: 14BINHO1		Scale: 1:20	
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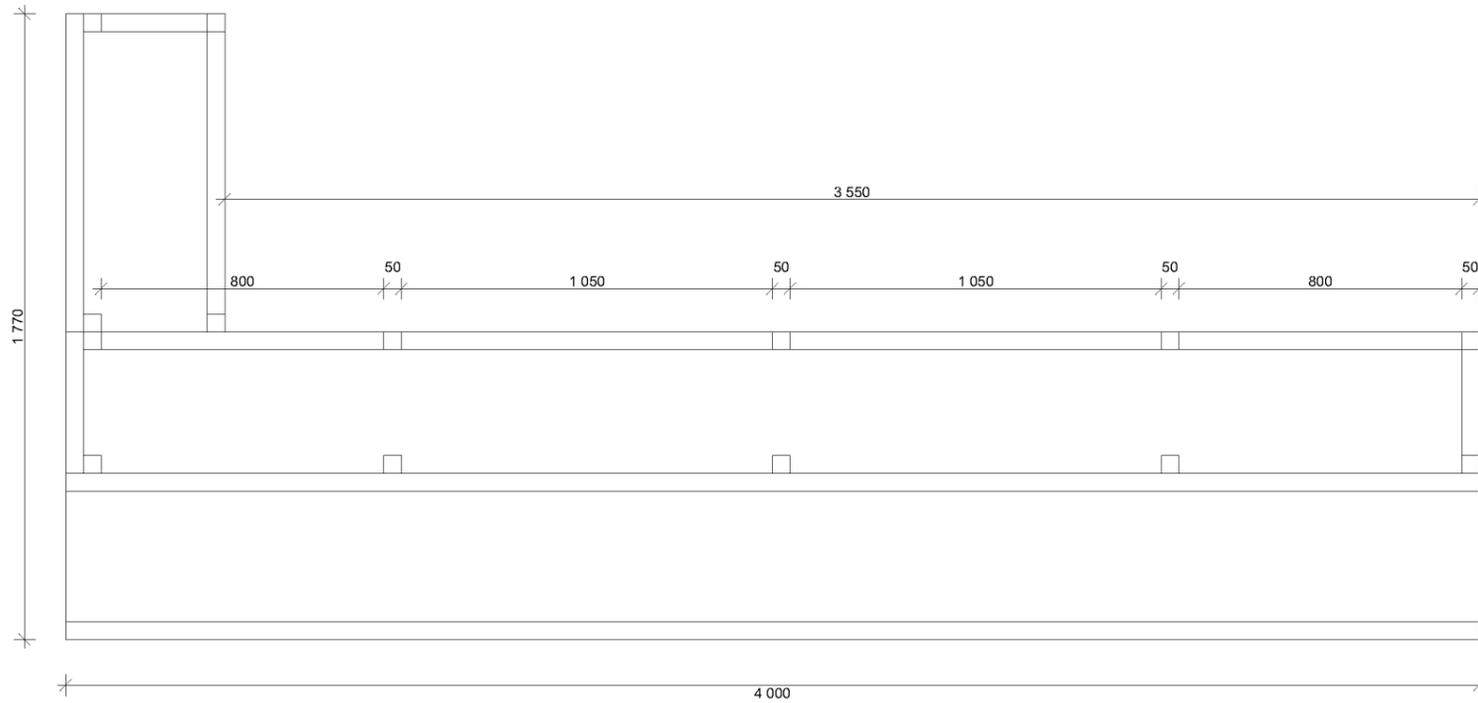


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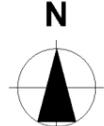
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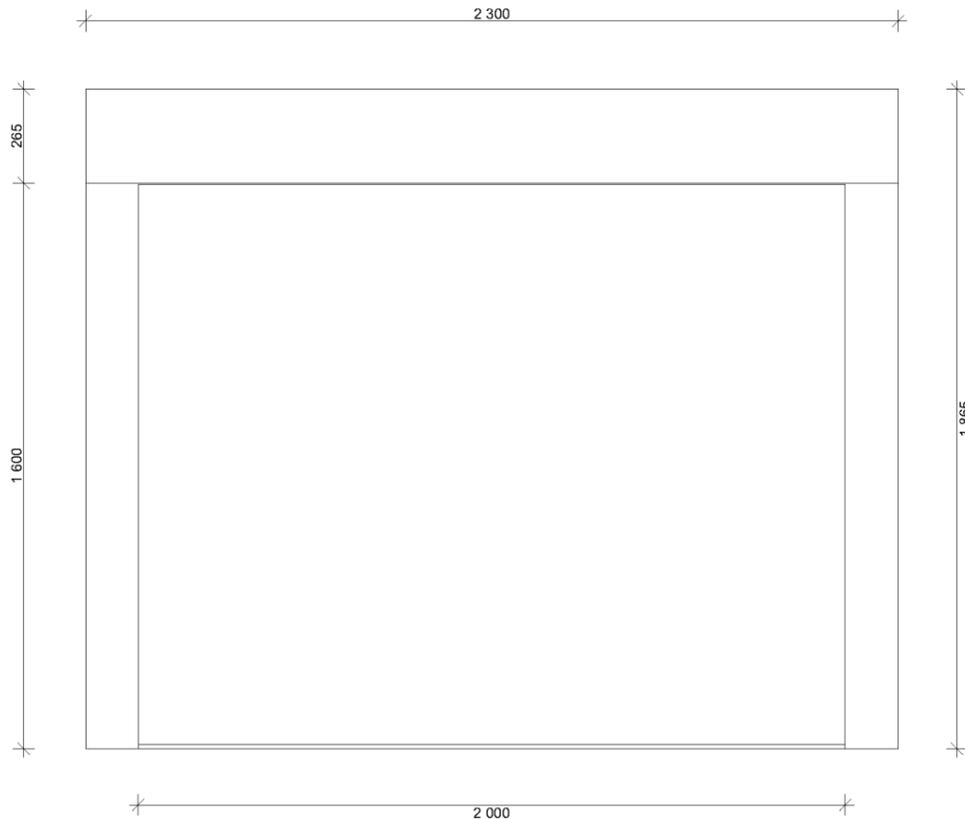
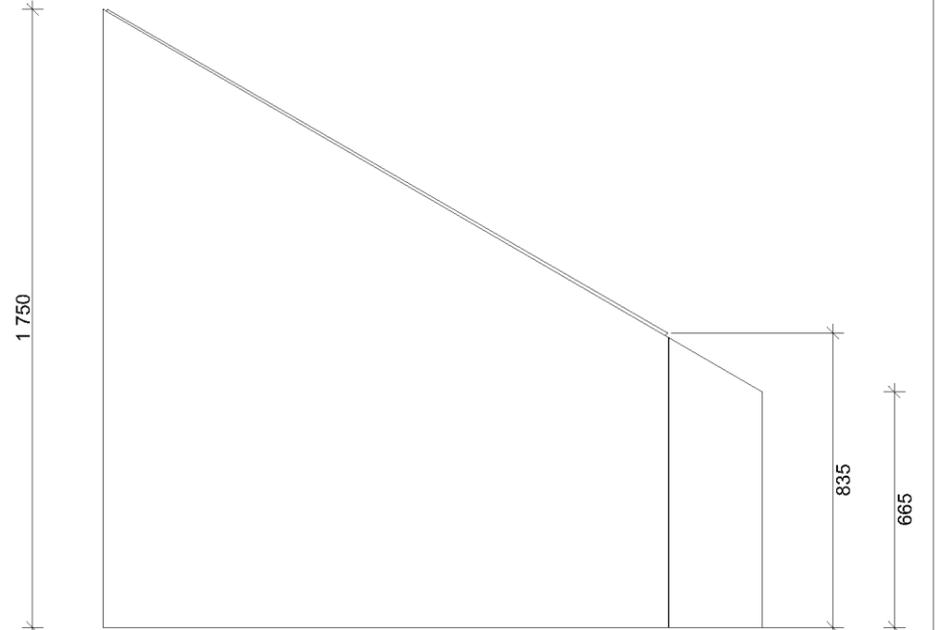
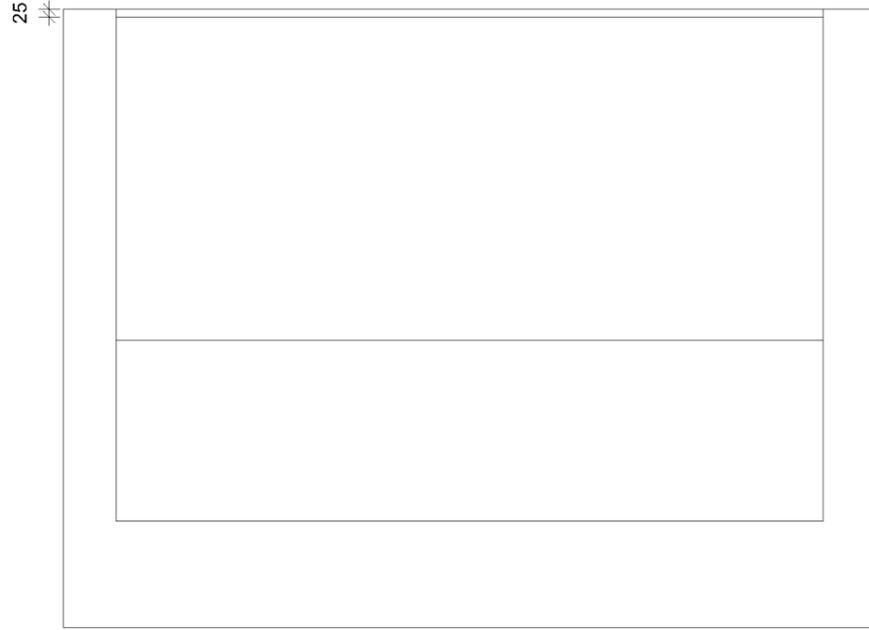
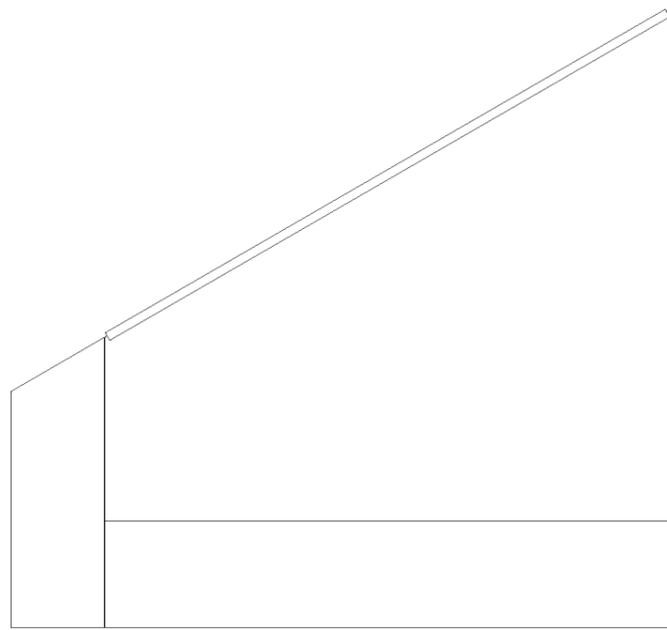
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NB! Alle mål må kontrollmåles på stedet! (All measurements must be checked on site!)					
Working Drawing: Kitchen Sofa					
Site Location: St. Halvards gate 31B-C, 0192 Oslo, Norway			Date: 23.05.2017		
Bachelor's Project: potential			Drawing ID: IA131		
Student Nr: 287581		Class Name: 14BINHO1		Scale: 1:20	
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Rev	Nr	Description	Date	Sign	Contr

NB! Alle mål må kontrollmåles på stedet!
(All measurements must be checked on site!)

Working Drawing: Sleeping Alcove

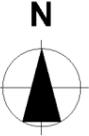
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Bachelor's Project: potential Drawing ID: IA132

Student Nr: 287581 Class Name: 14BINHO1 Scale: 1:20

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Bachelor in Interior Design and Sustainable Design at
 Høyskolen Kristiania



BOP3102
Bachelor Dissertation



23.05.2017
Spring 2017
Bachelor in Interior Design

Veileder: Jeremy Williams
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”Denne hjemmeeksamen er gjennomført som en del av utdannelsen ved Høyskolen Kristiania. HK er ikke ansvarlig for oppgavens metoder, resultater, konklusjoner eller anbefalinger.”

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Introduction

Presentation of the Project - Problem Statement - Delimitations

This project emerged out of two questions: what is (a) home? and what do we *really* need to live to our fullest potential?

My own life experience has only recently made me believe that home is about people. This led to my research focusing on social living, or cohousing. With advice from my supervisor, I started in Denmark. A Danish report on *bofællesskaber* led me to discover the *Baugruppen* movement in Germany. Then, my supervisor suggested that I go to Trondheim and visit *Svartlamon*, an experimental district with focus on city-ecology and social housing.

I discovered after I had chosen a site for this project that, two numbers down the street, there had been a caravan-squat, on a space that is now empty and enclosed by a fence. The squat of *Brakkebygrenda* was last evicted in 2014, after a second occupation, but nothing has yet happened with the space. On their homepage they write:

“Focusing on city-ecology; recycling, less consum, and a more social housing-politics. It is important for us to be an active participator in this city, to claim our rights to have a voice in the development of it, and to prove in action that there are sustainable, functional and positive alternatives to consumerism and apathy.”

Brakkebygrenda

These values have inspired this project, for there is a need for people to question the status quo, there is a need for people to inspire and create different paths than the one we are all headed.

Process

Precedents

Denmark: bofællesskaber

In 2016 Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet (trans. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Integration and Housing) in Denmark published a report on Fremtidens bofællesskaber i funktionstømte bygninger i storbyen, provinsbyen og på landet (trans.: The Future of Cohousing in Defunctionalized Buildings in the City, the Provincial City and the Country). The report identifies different reasons why Danish people choose to live in bofællesskaber (cohouses), naming changes in family structures as one factor. In Denmark the traditional nuclear family is currently accompanied by 36 other family structures. These social changes naturally bring forward new ways of living. Single-person households is a particular living form that is increasing in Denmark, and it is likely that this is the case for other Scandinavian countries as well. For people “living alone”, a Cohouse living situation would mean daily social interaction with other people. In the case of single parents, a social “mateship” could also offer practical help, for example in shared cooking responsibilities, babysitting and car-pooling (UIM 2016, 5-15).



The report highlights the potential of interior design in regards to creating places for unplanned social interaction. The image illustrates this form of intervention (see report p. 46).

The report states that “Cohousing as a form of living had its golden age in the 70’s and 80’s”, growing out of ideological movements that aimed at challenging the political and social state. “Før ville man omstyrte systemet, i dag vil man forbedre det” (Danish, trans.: “Back then people wanted to overthrow the system, today people want to improve it”) and remain a part of society (UIM 2016, 17). The report argues that this means that today’s Cohousing initiatives are not ideologically inclined, but rather emerge out of “practical” necessity. However, the point is made here that the ecological agenda is as recurrent a theme as the social aspect of most contemporary Cohouses. The ecological approach includes different scales of self-sufficiency through organic farming, minimalistic consumption, the use of “green energy”, as well as shared possessions and, in some cases, economy (UIM 2016, 5-15). This, one could argue, is an *active* ideology that very much challenges the present Zeitgeist.

The report ends with practical suggestions for people thinking about starting a Cohouse, as well as a page with suggestions for Communes on how to facilitate for Cohousing projects, and thereby also attract Cohouse initiators (UIM 2016, 78-81).

Germany: Baugruppen

The suggestions are inspired by the equivalent of *bofællesskaber* in Germany, namely *Baugemeinschaften* (“building communities” in German), or *Baugruppen* (“building groups”). The Commune of Berlin has a branch that promotes Baugruppen projects and offers a platform for communication between initiators (often architects) and other participants, often artists. ‘The *Baugruppen* is a “solution for the moment, when the city is not acting like it should”’ states a resident in a *Baugruppen* living space in Berlin, the *R50* or *Ritterstrasse 50*. The driving force that sparked the emergence of *Baugruppen* was the vision to create long-term affordable housing in German cities, in contrast to the prevailing agenda – short-term profit – in urban development. The enabling of this truly lies in a “stronger together” philosophy, meaning that the project is based on collective (the inhabitants) financing and planning.

Another R50 resident and one of its architects, Jesko Fezer, states that “A project is not finished when the architects leave – typically, they start and finish in a certain period in the life of a building.” This is a *Baugruppen* key design approach, to create spaces that are “finished, but not entirely done” and that have the flexibility to change and adapt over time. The approach is thus based on inclusion and participation of its future residents throughout the whole process (Bridger 2016). The environmental commitment is present through the understanding that green areas make urban areas more attractive and livable, and “helps foster a sense of community identity and encourages people to take responsibility for the place they live in” (Ring 2015).

Norway

Trondheim: Svartlamon

In Trondheim’s old industrial district lies *Svartlamon boligstiftelse* (trans.: The Housing Foundation of Svartlamon). Since the 1940’s the city of Trondheim had had plans to tear down the houses that used to house industry workers, in order to expand the area for further industrial purposes. The houses that were not demolished were rented out while waiting for their turn. Feeling the end of their limited time growing nearer, the people renting the houses decided that they wanted to stay. Thus, in 1990 *Svartlamon beboerforening* (trans.: Svartlamon Residents Union) was officially founded. And what followed was an eight yearlong struggle for the right to stay. In 1998 the city’s plan for *Svartlamon* was changed from industry to an experimental district of city-ecology (*byøkologisk bydel*). The only one of its kind in Norway, *Svartlamon* is organized in a way that it can provide affordable rents to people that do not have the possibility to buy a place to live, or simply do not want to.

I met with Kathrine Standal, the managing director of Svartlamon, on the 29th of March. Apart from a janitor/carpenter, she is the only person working for *Svartlamon boligstiftelse*. I arrived ten minutes early on the day of our meeting, so I was let in to a meeting room with untreated pine walls by a smiling woman who said Kathrine probably would be there soon. There were several leftover coffee cups on the meeting table from an earlier gathering. The room immediately made me feel at ease, and the

nervousness that I had been feeling earlier that morning faded.

The building that I was in has quite a modern look, asymmetrical and slightly phantasmal. The wood looks worn, which helps it assimilate harmoniously to the surroundings, consisting of houses in various colours, walls with graffiti, and various other kinds of art, which can be seen in every direction.



The building to the left is where I met with Svartlamon's managing director, Kathrine Standal. The bottom floor/basement is where the Foundation's office is, all the floors above are collective living spaces. Photo taken by author on the 29th of March 2017.

Kathrine arrives, introduces herself and immediately offers me a cup of coffee. We move to her office and she begins telling me the story of *Svartlamon*. She tells me that the houses in the area had not received any "modernisation" between 1947 and 2001, which was when *Svartlamon boligstiftelse* was founded. Originally from Oslo, Standal has been working for *Svartlamon* for three years. Her partner is from Trondheim and, when he expressed a wish to move back home, her condition was: as long as I get a really interesting job. She tells me about the people's struggle to attain the right to stay in *Svartlamon*, and how Norwegian artists contributed by painting artworks on the buildings. The foundation consists of approximately 240 residents over 130 households. These households are either freestanding or terrace houses (in Scandinavia we call them *radhus*, "row houses"), or apartments. Some are one-family

households, though many are collectives, where groups of people have certain shared spaces, usually bathrooms, but sometimes also kitchen and living room. All forms of living spaces have shared laundry rooms. The largest group of people living together consists of seventeen individuals; they all share three or four bathrooms. All outdoor space is shared, as well as some “DIY” (Do It Yourself) projects, such as a garden cottage used as both a greenhouse and a social room that was made entirely out of repurposed material that was either found or donated. Everyone is *expected* to contribute to maintenance of the common spaces, about five hours per month, though it is voluntary. There are different groups, coordinated by the residents, that take responsibility for different things, such as gardening, a media group that organize the internal magazine, a car group that organizes the use of the shared car, and a group that keep the webpage updated, among others. I asked Standal about the challenges with this social aspect. Of course, she stated, some contribute more than others, and that *Det er ikke alltid en dans på roser, hvert fall ikke roser uten torner*. (trans.: ‘it is not always a “dance on roses, at least not roses free from thorns”’). And she does not hesitate to say that the reason for people to move out from *Svartlamon* is, either, that they have saved up to buy a place, or because they are simply *dritt lei* (trans.: sick) of living there.

I told Standal about some matters that my research had made me consider in regards to Cohousing, especially of its potential role as one solution for battling loneliness amongst the older generation, as well as a possible way of dealing with what Norwegians call *eldrebølgen* (trans.: the wave of elderly people, which refers to the fact that, in the future, Scandinavia will be short of working-aged people to take care of the older generation, due to today’s prolonged life expectancy and people having fewer children). She told me that they currently have one senior person living there, but due to the low-cost, DIY-nature of *Svartlamon*’s architecture, she said that none of the houses or social spaces are *universellt utformet* (trans.: universally designed, or accessible), “so, *Svartlamon* just isn’t for everyone” she shrugged matter-of-factly, and not like she does not care.

After about forty minutes of conversation, our coffee cups empty, Standal offered to show me around the area and the houses. We walked around the area, and I got to see

some shared bathrooms and laundromats. The bathrooms makes one think of school bathrooms, with two to three cubicles. In one of them, the cubicles have hanging locks with code-keys. She told me that in this cohousing the residents solved the problem of people having different ideas of what “clean” is, ergo different preferences of how clean they want their bathrooms to be. The solution they came up with for this bathroom, which has three cubicles, is that each cubicle is used and maintained by a group of people that have agreed on their desired level of “cleanliness”.

On the grounds there is a row of five houses under construction.

The houses are designed by the architecture firm *Nøysom Arkitekter* (trans.: “Careful Architects”) and have a simple shape. The architects have only designed the framework of the house, which includes a system of natural ventilation. The construction part, however, is left to the houses future dwellers, who can also decide exactly how they want the inside shape of the house to be.

“The goal with this way of organising the process is to make the future residents participants in creating their own long term sustainable environment, rather than just being passive consumers.”

Nøysom Arkitekter

The five houses will be completed this summer (2017).

Note:

This part on Svartlamon has been informed by my conversation with Kathrine E. Standal, with additional information from Svartlamon’s homepage and from the article *Gjør det selv-bydelen* (trans.: “The Do It Yourself-borough”) on *Svartlamon* by Gaute Brochmann, published in *Morgenbladet* (March 3^d 2017) (check reference list)

Oslo: Brakkebygrenda

Two numbers down the street from my chosen site for this project there is an empty piece of land, completely enclosed by a fence.



St Halvards gate 27, land lying fallow. The second building down is the site for this project.

Photo taken by author on March 15th (2017)

Lying fallow for years, the space used to include an old wooden house built in 1840 – in bad shape after a fire in 1987 – which was heritage-listed in 1999. Before the squatters occupation the land and house was used as a local waste-zone, and as a meeting place for drug addicts. The original owner of the plot has not shown any interest in neither maintaining it nor giving it a purpose. The Commune of Oslo made several attempts to disown the owner. Nevertheless the *Brakkebygrenda* (trans.: Barack-city-alley) group started transforming the land into an ecological housing project in. They renovated the burnt house as best they could and complemented it with caravans, inspired by caravan-villages in Berlin organized by people who saw the potential in defunctionalised lots of old mining fields, left empty after the fall of the Berlin wall.



Street view of *Brakkebygrenda* in May 2014.
Screenshot from Google Maps, 29th of April 2017.

Brakkebygrenda's vision was (is!) based on social inclusion, and creating a culture with an ecological, cyclical approach to living. Practically this means minimalistic consumption (anti-capitalistic) and a focus on repurposing materials and waste (into energy, mainly as fertilizer). The catalogue *Gentrifiseringskrefter i omløp* (trans.: Gentrification Forces in Motion) was published in accordance with the artist Anita Hillestad's exhibition "*Brakkebygrenda: et sted i byen – som ble borte*" (trans.: *Brakkebygrenda: A Place in the City – That Was Lost*) in the Museum of Oslo in early 2016. The article discusses processes and implications of gentrification from a European activist approach, and includes several in-depth examples. It argues that when it comes to caravan-villages in Europe, the verdicts are completely contradictory. On one side, squatters are criminalized and perceived as disrupters of the order of the city they inhabit. On the other side, they are met with curiosity and interest by creative disciplines, such as architecture and design (Hillestad and Hiram Jensen, 2016, 42). Unfortunately, the decision-makers in Norway seem to belong to the first category. In 2008, after nine years of making the slot into their home, the people of *Brakkebygrenda* were evicted in a police action ordered by the Commune of Oslo. Their caravans were removed and the garden destroyed. Again, the slot stood empty. Two years later, people returned to St Halvards gate 27 and *Brakkebygrenda* ensured its renaissance. This time it lasted for four years until their eviction.



“LEVE GAMLEBYEN!” (trans.: Long Live *Gamlebyen*!). It has been two years since the caravan ecovillage of *Brakkebygrenda* was evicted, and the slot again lies empty.

Photo taken by author on March 15th (2017)

The Site: St Halvards gate 31B

Objective and subjective description

St. Halvards gate runs through the borough of *Gamlebyen* (trans.: Old City). The street houses among other things a skate park; a Kindergarten; the old, rebuilt ruin of St. Hallvard’s Cathedral (Saint Hallvard is the Patron Saint of Oslo); an abandoned, empty space (Nr 27); a newer housing block, criticized for its appearance and a nursing home (St. Hallvardshjemmet). This project will be formed within and around the house on St. Halvards gate 31B-C, built in 1909 in a historicist style. The building is painted in a bright, happy yellow, with white frames. However much the historicist style can be criticized, I consider the house to be beautiful, and so are the surrounding houses. Even the next-door industrial brick building fits in this cityscape. Diagonally in front of the site there is an apartment block, however, with a different outlook. St. Halvards gate 20, built in 2013, appears to be two connected buildings with a dead-square shape. Every

other section of the building is painted apricot or bleak blue. Though, being surrounded by high, gray walls, you only see the upper part of the building.



St. Halvards gate 20, built in 2013. Photo taken by author on March 15th. (2017)

In the article *Antikrist i St. Halvards gate* (transl.: “Antichrist in St. Halvards gate”) (Morgenbladet, 31st of July 2014) Gaute Brochmann writes about St. Halvards gate 20 that “... the bedroom facing the street is without a doubt the apartment’s best (room), with a view over the 19th century houses on the other side of the street, that serve as a reminder that there is a better world out there”.

“The apartments in St. Halvards gate 20 upholds an agreeable standard and meets all technical directives. But narrow, dark rooms and plain materials suggests that the architects had no higher ambitions than this when it came to creating a good living environment.” (translated from Norwegian) (Brochmann 2014).

Geographical, Historical and Cultural Context

History

In Gamlebyen there are ruins from the Middle Ages, an area that is known as “Middelalderbyen Oslo”, the Middle-Age City of Oslo. The old city of Oslo was burnt down and rebuilt many times, until Christian IV, in 1624, famously renamed the city *Christiania*, and moved the whole city to be close to the protection of Akershus Fortress, to a part of the city today known as *Kvadraturen*. He demanded Old Oslo to be buried and used as farmland. This helped the preservation of the ruins, which was the reason the Swedish antiquarian Sigurd Curman came to speak of it as a “Nordic Pompeii” (Gjerland 2014).

Two of *Gamlebyen* neighbours are *Grønland*, known as the “multicultural centre” of Oslo, and *Bjørvika*, the area around the central station, where *Snøhetta*’s famous opera house long stood alone as a model image for the modern Oslo to come, its white *Carrara* marble surface blinding every gaze. It has recently been accompanied by “Norway’s first skyline”, a row of well-polished buildings, known as *Barcode*, that provides the city with 5000 dwellings (price tag: 100 000 Norwegian kroner per square metre) and 20 000 workplaces (Bjørvika) (Wold 24.02.09).



Barcode in Bjørvika. Image: Wikimedia Commons

Purpose/Aim

HOME

The definitions of what constitutes a home vary, though a common denominator is that it is a spatially defined phenomenon, a place on Earth that one feels a connection or a sense of belonging to. So, when does a place become a home?

Spiritual connection with a place should develop out of ordinary interaction with a place and generate a better earth ethics and culture that contain a certain type of capacity for communication which can recognize those elements that are life supporting. The kind of relationship generated here is dialogical and communicative. It is both two-way and two-place, whereby people can belong to the land as much as it belongs to people.

(Kato 2009, 81)

Rethinking Needs

I had a friend who bought an apartment and in the moving process he stocked up on interior design magazines to know how to construct his new “home”. The first thing that he did was to change the “old” kitchen (it was not) to a completely new one (in white, of course), replacing the kitchen meant he had to get new floor for it and the big living room connected to it. And then his “home” was ready.

This is how “home” is thought to be created, by renovating to make it “our own”, but as an article in *Dagens Nyheter* states “Vi vill vara individuella men inreder likadant” (Swedish, trans.: “we want to be individuals but decorate the same”) (Arbman 2017). This means that we believe home to be created out of the things we buy, and not by the people we want to include in our home or out of care for the place itself (and its surrounding environment).

In the proposal for this project I compared the top level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization or self-realization, with Aristotle's notion of the "highest good" in human life, which he considered to be a life of virtuous activity, or *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* "... consists in doing something, not just being in a certain state or condition. It consists in those lifelong activities that actualize the virtues of the rational part of the soul." (Kraut 2016). So, for Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is never an end, or something to be achieved in the future, but an active and continuous way of living (Gare 2016, 213).

According to Aristotle, there were some basic needs, or "goods" that would allow a person the potential to live virtuously. Firstly, having been taught how to be virtuous through our family and "fellow citizens". Friends, strength, power, beauty and children are other goods that he considered reasons and opportunities for acting virtuously.

Why a cohousing?

One could argue that if we only were "better" at being the social beings that we are, that is better at interacting with people around us, the social benefit of Cohousing would not stand out as much, because it would not be missing from society (see Aristotle 1999, 5). But it appears that a higher population density, ergo having more and more neighbours, does not naturally translate to a social environment (Kato, 82). It actually seems to have the opposite effect. In Oslo it is even a question of whether to greet people that you share an elevator with or walk past out "på tur i marka" (Norwegian: "on a walk in nature"). Have we really come to a point where we *need* to live in a Cohousing to socially engage with each other?

Or rather, do we need to socially engage with each other?

I believe that by thinking of the creation of home as a cultural (social) and natural process (without which nothing is possible), and by enforcing these as drivers for what should be a meaningful and, as Kato argues, a communicative relationship between people and between people and place. In doing this we can abandon the consuming (and excessive wasting) part of the process of creating home.

Target Audience

For this project, springing out of the question of what makes a home, and inspired by previous and ongoing projects grounded in “the Right to the City” movement, and by examples of placemaking-processes, there was never going to be any other “target audience” than just *any one that would want to live in a place like this*. The design of the interior will consider all ages, in other words, take on an age-in-place approach. Age diversity among residents, I believe, might bring a deeper social understanding cross generations and inspire awareness and appreciation of their existence in a socio-historical perspective. It is, for instance, very easy for the younger generations to shake their heads over the older generations’ confusion over things such as everyday technology (taking over more and more of every day). My grandmother had to leave her old apartment, her home for about twenty years, when the two flights of stairs and the bathroom’s high threshold had become impossible obstacles for her. There was no elevator, and the commune would not help to pay for a lift to be put in. So she had to move into a new apartment-block, built in accordance with accessibility regulations. She moved from three rooms and a big balcony with a panoramic view over *Gullmarsfjorden*, to one room and a small balcony, and a much higher rent. The bathroom was big and easy to move around in with a wheelchair, but apart from that, it did not seem that much thought had been put into the design of the place. The micro-sized balcony could just fit the wheelchair, but it had a threshold, not very high but high enough that it was a struggle to get past with the arm-strength of a seventy-something person (the whole house was excluded for seventy-plus people to live in). The television was set up in such a way that every time it was turned on you had to change the settings to the channel-box (with one remote) to be able to watch and change channels (with another remote), a procedure that my grandmother always forgot how to do. And for some reason her beloved radio could not get good enough reception in the apartment, it must have been something with (-in) the walls. We got her an extra antenna. It improved the reception, but only a little bit.

This story is relevant to this project in the terms that regulations do not make a home. They are good, but often it seems that architects and designers only follow the numbers

necessary to be able to label a space “accessible”, without actually caring for the human aspect.

In our fast paced world, living around and with older people could encourage people to understand how our existence on earth is bound in time and space. In turn, this could inspire a more humble way of dwelling, both towards other individuals and towards the planet, than the way that prevails today.

Project

The plans that I found for the house only show that there is an elevator between the second and the third floor, it is not drawn on the plan of the first floor or the basement. If no elevator is provided from ground level, both down to the basement and to the upper levels, either it needs to be installed. If this is not possible, a chairlift can be installed on the stairs instead.

The Solution: Infrastructure and Potential

The Basement

The basement is parted in two, because of the lowered passage way from the street to the back of the building (this ceiling in this part is only 500mm high). The left side are made up by storage units, one per two-room apartment (six units) and one, larger unit for the top-floor collective.

On the right side, which has more space, is the laundromat for the house. It is equipped with four washing machines and two tumble dryers, as well as two clothing lines and a washbasin. The laundromat has been given a “coffee-corner” where people can socialize over a coffee while doing their laundry. Next to this coffee-corner, on the left-hand side, is the sauna with seating for as many as 20 to 30 people.

To be accessed from the laundromat is also the house’s workshop, which the residents

can stock up with all tools they might need, where all will be shared. Through sharing there is no need for all ten households to own a set of tools.

The last room of the basement is a room designated for the inhabitants' own wishes, a miscellaneous room to use for creative purposes, for exercising, as a playroom or something else.

The Ground Floor

Like the basement, the ground floor is parted in two, and consists entirely of shared spaces. On the left side there is a shared kitchen and dining space to be used for house gatherings. The dining room has a balcony that has been given a double folding door, in order to extend the space when the outdoor temperature allows it. This side has a bathroom, to make it easier to have visitors. It also makes it easier for kids to run to the bathroom when they are outside playing, as well as for anyone working in the backyard (with the potential for a shared garden and a greenhouse).

On the other side there is a library with a table for eight and four reading-chairs, where the residents can study together, work or organize a book club.

The next-door room is a shared office space, which potentially also could be used by people from the surrounding community, and that can be used for hosting lectures as well.

Thirdly there is a living room space, with plenty of sofa's. These could be sleeping sofas for people that are visiting from out of town, possibly to host "couchsurfers". The room has a cabinet for keeping pillows, doonas and such.

To this room there is a connected playroom/creative room equipped with painting easels and a ping-pong table. This room is also "extendable" with folding doors to the balcony.

The Second and Third Floor

The second and the third floor are identical, consisting of three two-room apartments (approx. 50m²) and a shared kitchen and dining space. The apartments do not have kitchens, but each has its own bathroom.

The balconies of these floors have been transformed into an exterior corridor, where the entrances to all the apartments and to the kitchen are. The motivation behind this is to encourage further daily social interaction. With the transformation the balconies becomes a big, shared balcony (it is 1750mm deep on most parts, but narrower, 1250mm, where the staircases are) where people still are able to move out chairs to sit on and enjoy sunny days.

The kitchen is fully equipped and includes a specially designed kitchen “island”. The “island” is made up of two tables connected with a plank of wood. The low table is 750mm high, a good height for older people that might need or prefer to sit when preparing food, and also a better height for kids to help out in the kitchen. The high table is of normal kitchen desk height, 900mm.



ArchiCAD rendering of the kitchen “island”

The kitchen connects to the dining table with a bar desk that further allows cooking to be a social activity.

The apartments rooms’ are not divided with doors, in order to allow the north (street side) and the south (back side) windows face openly to provide as much natural lighting as possible. Since the north wall of the apartments has two windows, it is possible, however, to make them into two-bedroom apartments, which families might want.

Top Floor

The top floor have four small single-room apartments (26m²), which share two bathrooms, a kitchen and two roof-terraces. Due to the tilted ceiling, the lowest point being 800mm, around two metres of the north and south side are too low for standing (-1800mm). The offered form of “solving” this is with double sleeping alcoves (1600mm width), prioritizing the space with standing height for other activities than sleeping.



ArchiCAD rendering of the sleeping alcoves for the Top Floor apartments

The two corner apartments have entrances from the hallway next to the staircases and the middle apartments are accessed through the kitchen.

The south part of the building has a roof terrace on each side and the kitchen is situated in between. The tilted ceiling situation has in the kitchen been addressed with a custom-made kitchen sofa with seating for eight people. The ceiling height over the sofa seat is 1200mm (from floor 1625mm), with the average height of a sitting adult being between 800-900mm it is a solution that works. The truth is that people would probably bump their heads in the ceiling several times until they get used to it, but this is part of this project’s concept. This underlines the dialogical relation that needs to exist between people and place for a sense of home to have the potential to emerge.



ArchiCAD rendering of the custom designed kitchen sofa

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