

Another Architecture

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MARK

Room for Imagination

Centre for literature in Prague



*'The US election
killed social
media for me'*
Mimi Zeiger

*'I thought
games would be
the bliss zone of
architecture'*
Nick Leavy

*'From a plant's
perspective,
manmade borders
don't exist'*
Kentaro Kurihara



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The plinth of the building is fitted with a semi-transparent façade of white concrete. An overhang on the side of Kattendijkdok provides protection for the visitors of the commercial spaces on the ground floor.



Antwerp's

957-m-long and 140-m-wide Kattendijkdok was excavated in the 19th century. But the Port of Antwerp continued to develop in a northern direction and at the end of the 20th century, the once beating heart of the harbour was gradually abandoned and earmarked as an urban expansion area. Since 2005, the zone around the dock has been undergoing a drastic transformation. A row of six residential towers designed by Diener & Diener, David Chipperfield and Tony Fretton was built on the west side. Conversion and expansion transformed the former fire station on the north side into the new Havenhuis, a spectacular design by Zaha Hadid Architects (*Mark 65*, page 84). On the already built-over east side of the dock stood a disused



customs service office building. Kristiaan Borret, Antwerp's City Architect at the time, supervised a competition for the redevelopment of this location in 2010. The competition was won by a combination of Polo Architects and Meta architectuurbureau.

In their analysis, Polo and Meta found that the 1970s customs building was hardly suitable to be converted into housing. Polo's Mauro Poponcini: 'The structure left little opportunity to provide each dwelling with sufficient daylight. The building was also located in the middle of the block and surrounded by parking spaces and residual greenery.' The architects demolished the old Brutalist building and decided to build over the entire 113 × 106-m plot. That way, the

project would also better match the existing street pattern. The programme was complex and included both commercial spaces and dwellings. There was also the requirement of diversity in dwelling types: apartments, luxury penthouses, studios, social housing for a housing company and a residential care facility for senior citizens.

The crucial question was how, on an area of one hectare, they could achieve a density of 40,000 m² and simultaneously provide the dwellings with an optimal orientation in terms of both sunlight and views. Meta's Niklaas Deboutte: 'Fairly early on in the design process, we got the idea to make an urban plinth containing the shops, hospitality industry, offices, social housing and the care facility. This

plinth is limited to three floors. Towering above it are four high volumes with the apartments.' In accordance with city regulations, the four higher volumes do not align with the site borders, but are set back, in the central green patio, so their presence does not dominate the streetscape.

On the west side, the Kattendijkdok side, which will see the construction of a tram line to the Havenhuis in the future, the plan was to create a covered arcade with commercial functions. On the south side, the plinth contains two floors of social housing that are accessible from the street. All these dwellings have spacious terraces. On the east side are the entrances to the dwellings for people in need of care, and the car park. The north side >

All dwellings have balconies or roof terraces.
In the background is Zaha Hadid's Port House.



'Orientation and views were major compositional aspects'

of the plinth is the most open side. Thus, the block's green courtyard garden (designed by Dirk Vandekerkhove Landschapsarchitecten) links up with the new neighbourhood square that will be developed here (a design by PTArchitecten from Brussels). The communal space of the care facility is half a floor above street level with glass walls on three sides. This provides the residents with a beautiful view of the neighbourhood square.

The four building volumes placed on top of the plinth each measure 42 × 18 m with a height of 32 m. Their arrangement is intended to create beautiful panoramas from the interiors and maximize privacy. There are eight dwellings on each floor, with four corner apartments that each have two 3-m-deep terraces. The designers opted for an elongated core and loadbearing exterior walls. This solution allows the easy reconfiguration of the apartments if necessary. Three of the four volumes are not only accessible from the street, but also from the patio. The volume on the side of the Kattendijkdok does not have this

double connection and is only accessible from the street.

The composition of the façade comprises continuous concrete floors separated by brick piers with angled profiles at the windows. Staggered terraces on each floor improve the incidence of light in the interiors. The top floor has a construction height of 3.6 m, which makes it possible to create additional outdoor space in various ways. It is, for example, possible to add an indoor terrace on the corners and the smaller apartments on the top floor have sheltered rooftop gardens with stunning views of the port and city, accessible via a terrace with outdoor stairs.

According to Poponcini the project prioritizes achieving a wealth of experiential qualities. 'Coming up with a bizarre shape and imposing it on account of an ambition to make something spectacular just isn't our thing. Conversely, the project is based on the desire to give future residents more than just a number of square metres. Orientation and views were major compositional aspects.' For

Polo and Meta, a building must, above all, have intelligent floor plans. Cadiz, as the complex is officially called, is an interesting exercise in achieving high urban density and a mix of functions. Starting from the classical typology of an urban block bounded by three streets and a square, the closed nature of the inner area is opened up through several interventions. Deboutte stresses: 'The result is much more complex than that of an urban planning decision involving isolated towers. Architecture is more than an image, it creates a physical environment. The enclosed patio garden offers protection, unlike the garden concept around the six towers on the other side of the dock.'

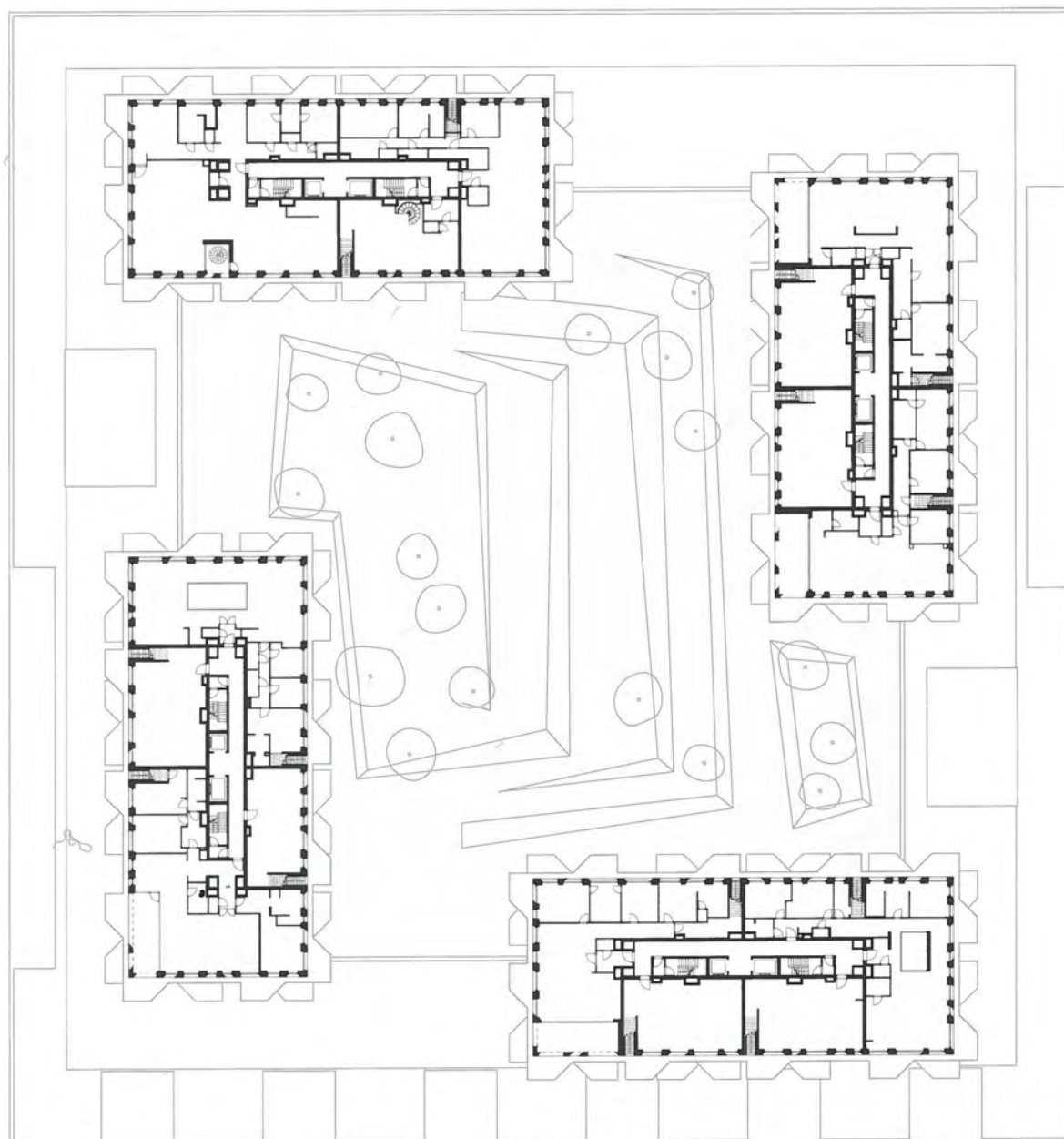
Unique for Belgium, the Cadiz project comes at the right time to serve as an example in the debate about the question of how to achieve urban compaction while maintaining experiential qualities such as views and sunlight incidence. —

polo-architects.be
meta.be

The communal courtyard garden is a contoured landscape with birch trees and forest vegetation. It is partly draped over the commercial spaces that have a greater depth than the rest of the block and extend into the patio.

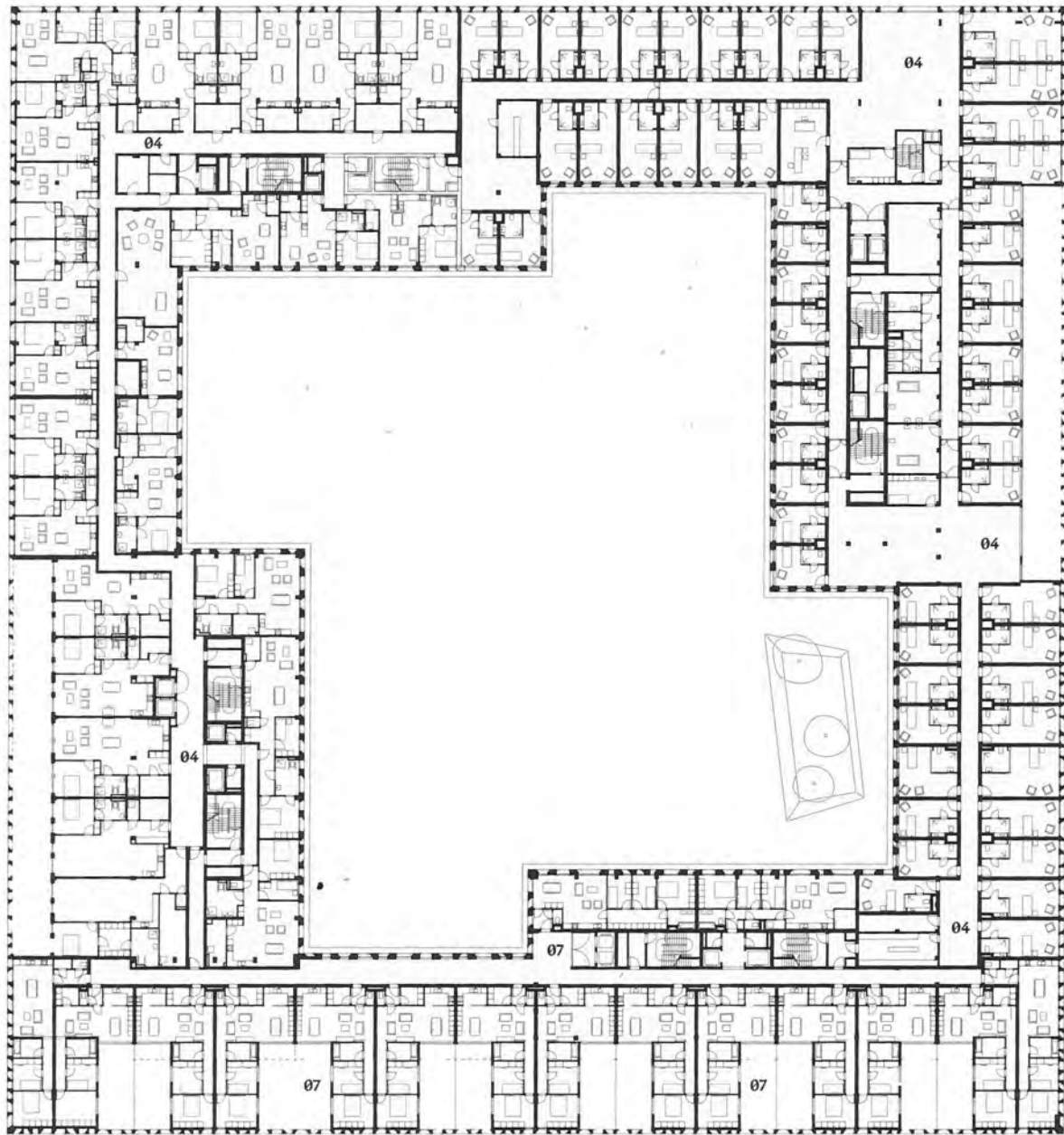


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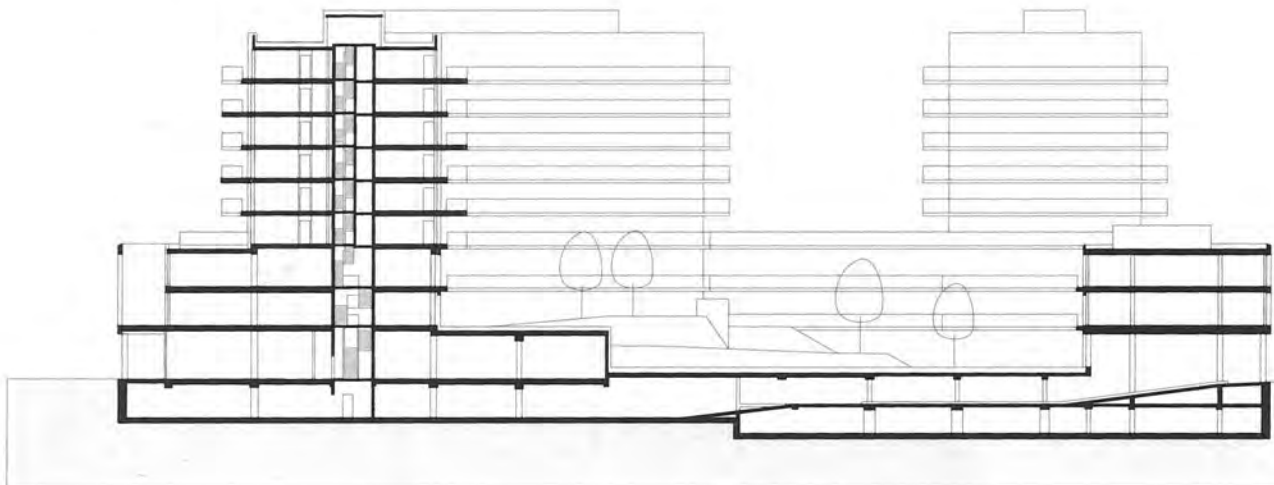


Because the higher volumes are inside the alignment, their presence at street level is not all that prominent.

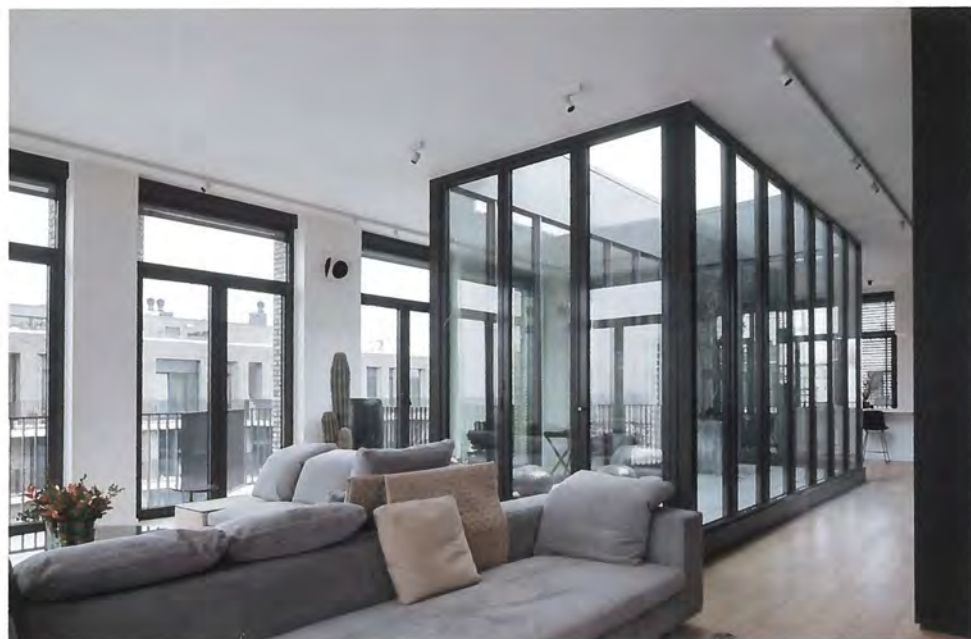
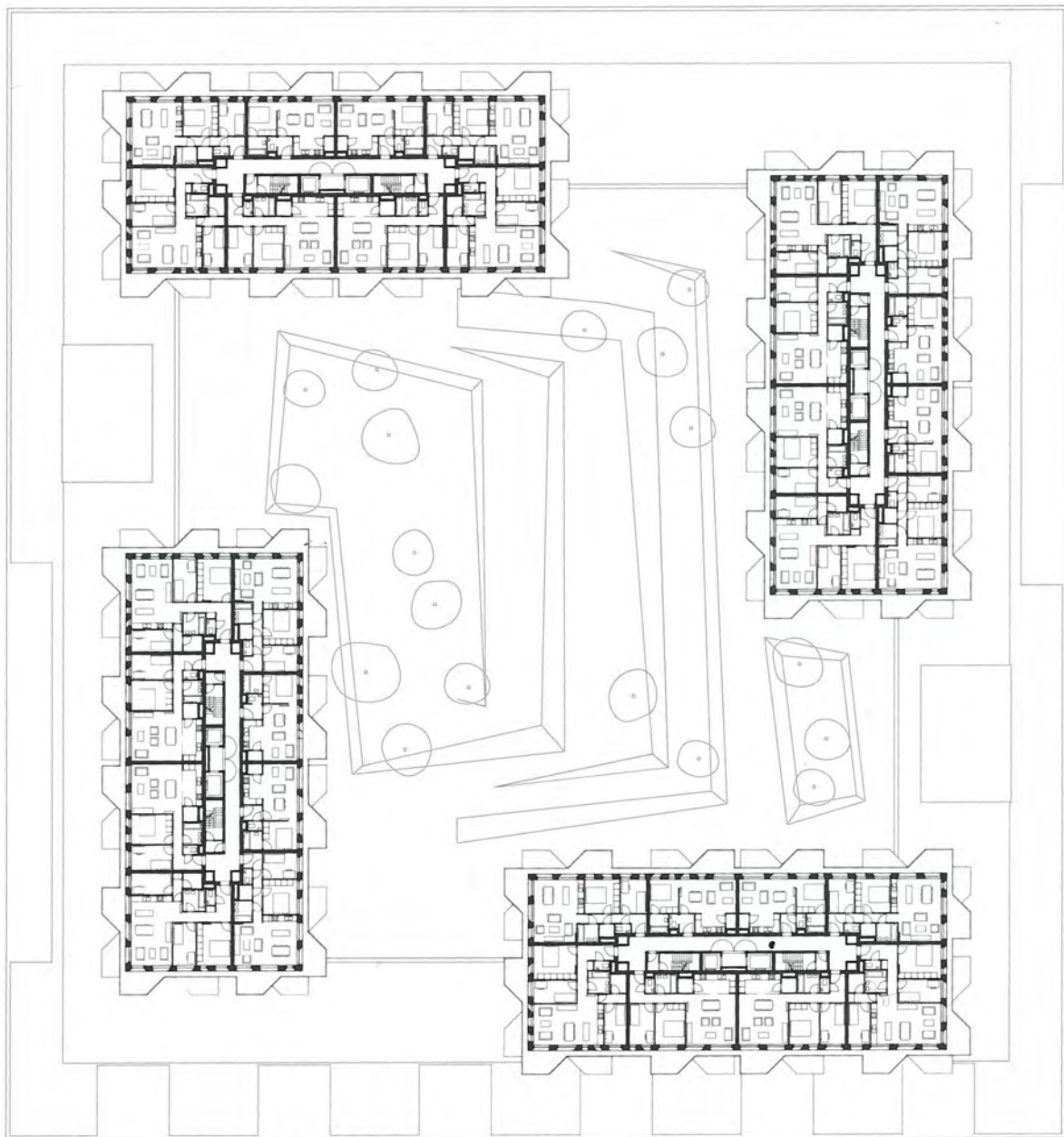
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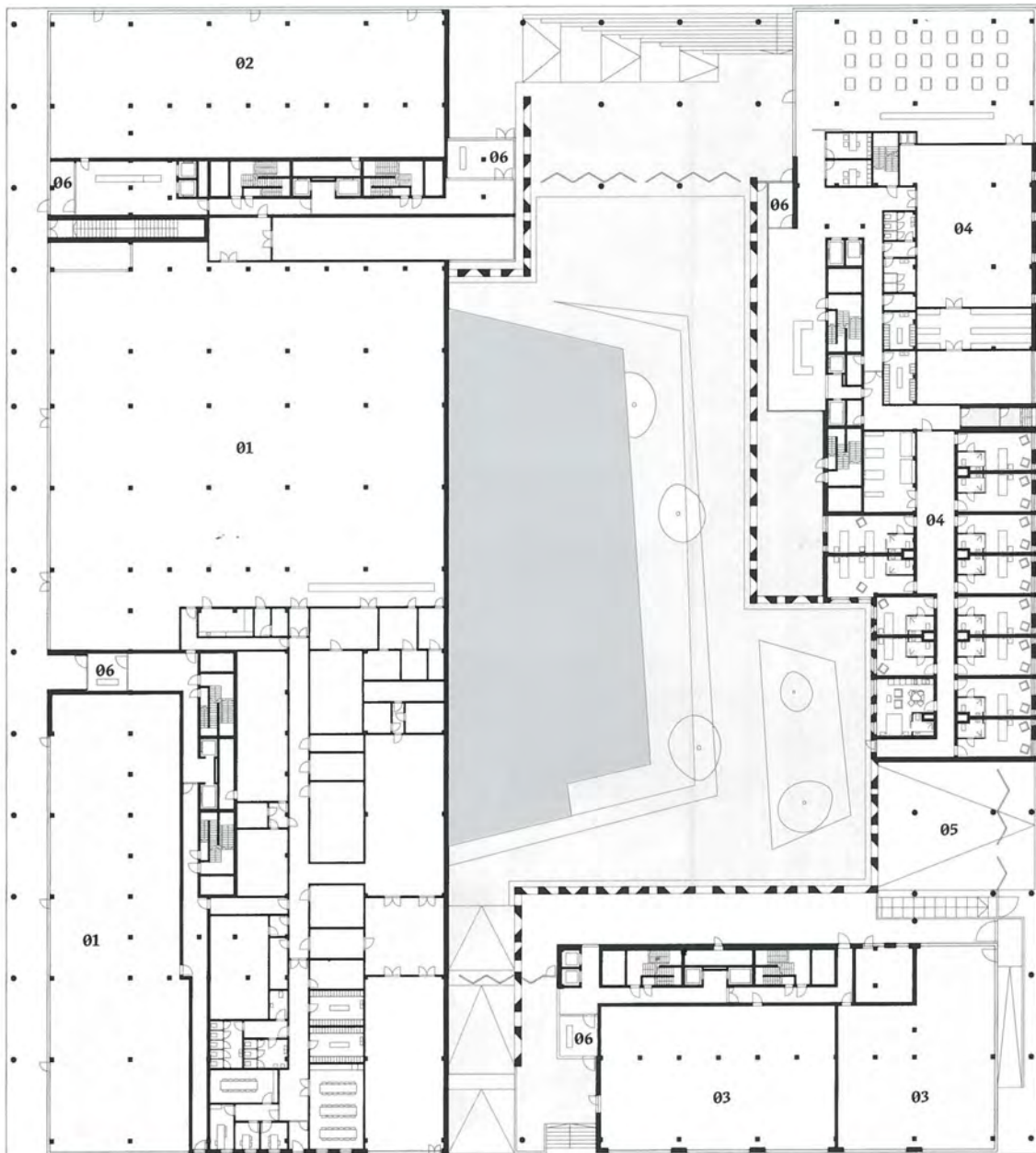
Cross Section



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In addition to restaurants, cafés, shops and offices, the Cadiz complex contains 160 apartments, 24 penthouses, 32 social housing units, 116 assisted living units and 48 assisted living units with guaranteed emergency assistance for senior citizens who live independently.



- 01 Shops
- 02 Cafés / restaurants
- 03 Offices
- 04 Residential care facility
- 05 Entrance to parking garage
- 06 Entrance to apartments
- 07 Social housing



The upper apartments have views of the communal courtyard garden and the surrounding city – including (left in the background) the MAS by Neutelings Riedijk Architects.