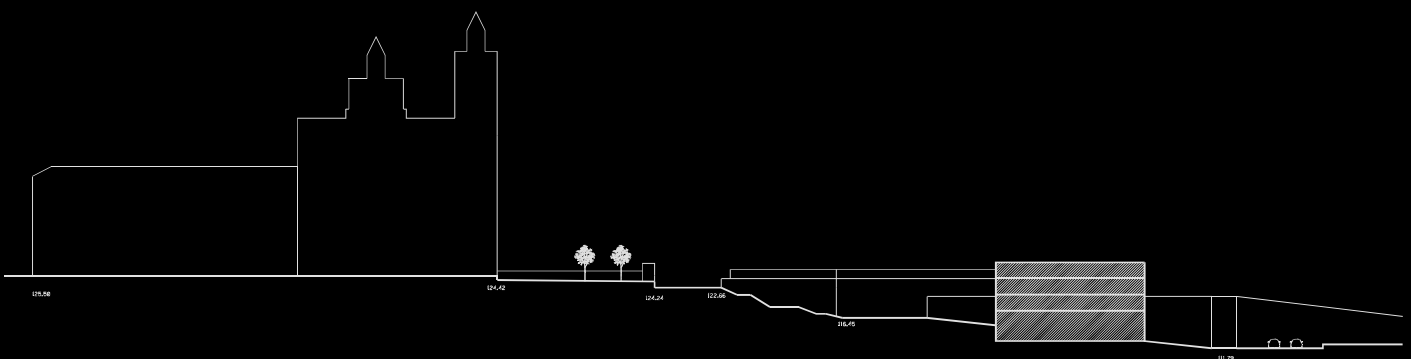


COURTHOUSE  
Edwar Pabón  
2021-UPC



To my parents and siblings for encouraging me throughout the career.  
With special thanks to Josep Giner Olcina for having been my tutor

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## INTRODUCTION

I was born in a small town on the border between Venezuela and Colombia. For my parents I was born in Colombia but I was settled as a Venezuelan. When I was about 5 years old my parents decided to move to Spain to find a better life. That's where I grew up. Years later my father began to travel through Europe because of his work. This meant that every summer I also had to travel to spend time with him.

Sometimes it is difficult to answer where I am from. I feel a little from all sides. Like a coin with two sides, there have always been good things like getting to know new cultures or learning new languages but others have not been so good either. I do not want to be negative but since I was 5 years old I have been from court to court.

What is a court? According to the dictionary: it is that state body in charge of exercising justice. Its objective is to resolve conflicts, as well as to determine if a person has committed a crime.

As you can imagine it is more than that. In general, it is that instance where citizens resort in the search for justice. That means that since the age of 5 years old, My family and I have been continuously in search of justice. That is, change our status from illegal immigrants to Spanish. Not only did that happen to me in Spain, but also when I visited my father in Cyprus I was again in another courthouse. In Costa Rica, in Germany, in Colombia these have all been very important events in my life

Cold places, very large waiting rooms with many chairs, policemen everywhere with serious faces, happy people and others crying, this is how I remember a courthouse. Movies like *Domestic Violence 2* or *Juvenile Court* are a clear example or representation of what it has been like for me. Its American director and producer Frederick Wiseman has inspired me in my thesis in his way of seems things and producing them to show the public a clear representation of American society, public institutions and professional fields.

*\*1 Wiseman's films have a dramatic structure, though they don't necessarily have a narrative arc; they rarely have what might be considered a distinct climax and conclusion. He likes to base the structure of his sequence without a particular thesis or point of view. Any suspense is on one level per scene, not constructed from plot points, and there are no characters the viewer is expected to identify with. The "rhythm and structure" (Wiseman) of Wiseman's films push the viewer into the position and perspective of the subject (human or not). The viewer feels the dramatic tension of the situations portrayed, as various environmental forces create complicated situations and conflicting values for the subject.*

\*1 Taken from Wiseman's spanish wikipedia and translated into english.

While producing a movie, Wiseman typically acquires more than 100 hours of raw footage. His ability to create an engaging and engaging feature film without the use of voice-overs, title cards, or motion graphics, while remaining "fair," has been described as the reason Wiseman is viewed as a true master of the game. Documentary film.

Focusing on Domestic Violence 2 Wiseman works for four to six weeks in the institutions he portrays, almost unprepared. He spends most of the production period editing the material, trying to find a rhythm to make a movie.

It is true that in a courthouse there are so many true stories that sometimes it is difficult to find a connecting thread. This fact reminds me of a personal story. A day like today 8 years ago, my father and I were in the Courthouse of Sabadell waiting to take the nationality test. It is a requirement that all emigrants are asked to apply for nationality. I remember the nerves that the two of us were feeling. On the one hand the fear of not answering correctly and on the other hand, the respect for having to take an exam in one of those places

When we finished they left us in a room waiting to sign other legal procedures when a couple of policemen walked in and stared at us suspiciously. After 5' one of them entered the room and told us that there had been a robbery in an area close to the courthouse and that the people were South American implying that it might be us. My father took my hand and said "don't worry", everything will be fine. I think my dad' words instead of calming me down gave me goosebumps.

We had to wait in that room until they took us to another room called reconnaissance area. An examination room is a room with a black mirror where another person is on the other side of this mirror and tells the police if we were the alleged thieves. What did we do wrong? Why us? It was the only thing that came to mind. We had arrived at 09:00 am to take the exam, at 10:00 we had already finished it but it was already 3:00 p.m. and we were still waiting in that first room where the policemen had come to speak to us. We asked if we could leave the room to get something to eat from the vending machine; However, all the answers were negative. We were possible "thieves" and it seems that thieves do not eat. I was about 15 years old and I do not even think that was even legal.

At 5:00 p.m. someone knocked on the door and entered. It was a blonde woman, with bottle glasses and a little short; I remember because it would be hard to forget what she looks like. She came in, sat down and told us: "guys sorry for the inconvenience but the person we are looking for is a darker color". She said this to avoid using the word "black". And then she said : "so by not meeting those characteristics you can continue to leave".

By not fulfilling those characteristics? You mean not being black? Of course it wasn't our answer, we just took our coats and left. On the way home, neither my father nor I had words. We had a bad taste in our mouths. We felt like "thieves" that they had set free.

Do you really think that a thief would be hiding in a courtroom? Or that a person before obtaining his residence permit would steal and then take the exam?. Nothing made sense to me... A father and his son! It saddens me to remember this. Is it racism? Is it justice? Over the years I have heard similar stories in which immigrants with or without papers have been accused of being guilty for something that they did not do.

One of them is Javier, a friend of the family. He came to Spain as a political refugee. All these people are provided with a NIE (foreign identity number) which is a card that specifies that you can reside in the country. You have specific limitations that you must meet if you want to continue with the process. These are basic and understandable requirements such as not leaving the country; Other stricter ones would be that the refugee can not violate any standard rules.

I am going to tell you something that happened to Javier to better explain my point. He had been looking for a job for months when finally he got a job at the local greengrocer's. They offered him a salary which made it impossible to get to the end of the month. He started working the first day of the month, and on the way to his job he had to walk past a courthouse to get there. Almost a month later, on the 31st of the same month, he was going to work as usual when the police stopped him at the corner of the courthouse and demanded him to enter. They explained to him that there had been a robbery and that he needed to go through the examination room since he had physical singularities that made them believe he could be the robber. The man went back to work 6 hours later; Fortunately without any charges but with a horrible fear in his body which he could not find the words to describe. Now a day, he should still have to walk past the entire courthouse to get to his job but he avoids it and walks around it instead. Isn't this a clear example of racism? Can you call this justice? ...

Different stories with different characters happen every day in courthouse. Some with hopes, others with disappointments.

Other family stories more focused on gender-domestic violence are reflected in Wiseman's film. What is domestic violence? Domestic violence are the aggressions caused by an individual belonging to a family nucleus. In this documentary film we can see a variety of different cases dealing with the same issues that take place in the United States. Putting ourselves in context of how the process is: first someone alerts

the police of abuse, the police determine that it is domestic violence, the accused person is transferred to jail and then he proceed, after a couple of days, to be tried. If the person who has received the ill-treatment testifies that it was not on purpose, the defendant must normally pay an amount and he is set free. However, if this is not the case, he is accused and must serve the years for which he has been accused. Therefore, the film begins with a case in the streets of the United States where a woman is accused of arguing aggressively with her husband; for this reason she is unfairly put in jail, but he promises to get her out soon.

It is difficult to make this type of decision for a police officer but, it is clear, that they must follow some rules already imposed. How could we improve this aspect? Should the police make their own decisions for themselves? I don't think a police officer should make decisions for himself. What I do think should be done is: reform the current rules and make all of them more arbitrary.

The rest of the film is more focused on the courthouse itself, especially in how the judges judge the accused. As I have said before in his films there is not continuous story line throughout the film but instead there are constant trial scenes that constantly happen one after the other to teach us how a court works legally in the USA.

What I want to reflect with this comparison is that the courts follow a fixed hierarchical scheme in which both the judge and the entire group involved in a court play a fundamental role. This can be positive in many cases but negative in others.

First of all, I would like to start by distinguishing two types of jobs that take place in a court. On the one hand, there is a team of people that works literally inside the courtroom and, on the other hand, there is also another team that works outdoors and they carry out a lot of other jobs that are also necessary to do an efficient job.

I would now like to focus on the hierarchy that takes place indoors during a trial. There is a strict hierarchy which makes the image of the Judge the most relevant. However, is it okay to position the judge so high? Is it legitimately correct?

In other words, we can imagine a pyramid where the judge is right at the top and where down below him we can find those who belong to a lower rank, such as lawyers and the jury. Finally, right down at the bottom of this pyramid we have the victims, the witnesses, etc. My point is, is it fair that the victim is so vulnerable and unprotected at the bottom of this scale?

As I mentioned before, we have a group of people that work outdoors, who we do not see, but who are essential for the successful running of the courthouse. There is a team who is in charge of the rest of the courts: lawyers of the administration of Justice, managers, processed, personnel of the judicial aid corps, prosecutors, state

attorney general's office, prosecutor's office of the courts.

Yet again, this team of people who work outside the courtroom also follow a hierarchy: they are more important than people like me, normal people who have no connection with the law system. For instance, who is going to be more believable and trustworthy? Me or a policeman? Who would the judge believe? This reminds me of Wiseman's film, which I have recently seen: the story reflects how the law system works in the USA, and there are examples of both the indoor and outdoor processes that take place during a trial.

Going back to what could have been the happiest day of my life if it had not been because I almost ended up in prison... I remember feeling so happy on my way to the courthouse to get my Spanish nationality, I now see how unfair it was what happened to me; I had not done anything wrong but I was vulnerable to the power of the policeman. Unfortunately, this still happens everyday to a lot of people and I hope that my story helps others to reflect about the unfairness of the system.

As a human being I have always tried to find a solution. Although the truth is that sometimes I don't even know where the problem is. Is it the government? Is it the social hierarchy? Are they the judges? then the problems and the solutions become too many ... So I stopped thinking only as a human being and started to think also as an architect and then I found a solution.

## SOLUTIONS TO AN UNBREAKABLE SYSTEM

A court is a facility where justice is administered. Good or bad. Where we will always find the figure of the judge and the entire group of people who work for all their areas to function. It is inevitable to recognize that it is an authoritative system where everyone can rule. It is a structured system to glorify high officials, "justice."

As an architect, I cannot prevent the court from having such strong power, but I can change the design of the spaces on which it is based.

First of all, we are going to talk about the courtrooms. In Europe, in general, courtrooms follow the same pattern, they are linear, so the secondary group (victim, culprit ...) looks at the primary group (the judge, workers ...) \* more is said about it in the next section. While in America it is more centralized. The secondary group looks to the center where the primary group is. Although it seems that in America it is structured better, the figure of the judge is in a higher status than anyone, repeating the European problem again.



Secondly, the structure outside the courtrooms also play an important role, since in general both in Europe and America all of these are always surrounded by other rooms with police officers. Perhaps here we can understand why it gives so much respect. We are not going to lie that when we see a policeman on the street we behave differently and not because we have done anything wrong but because of the importance we think they have. So, placing the police near rooms where immigrants, exiles, undocumented people do not think it is the best. In general I don't think any room should be close. As I have said before, nobody acts the same under the eyes of policemen.

So, the solution to these problems is found from the beginning of any design. That is to say, it is in the order. We are commissioned to do something and we do our best to reflect it in our project. Whose fault is it then? I don't think the blame is directly anyone's. If we talk about the first problem mentioned, it is perhaps difficult to understand that as an architect you have the opportunity to improve it. It's hard to understand but I don't think I'm the first to think about it. We have a role as a citizen which allows us better where we live. Sometimes we try to give a minimum opinion on projects for fear that they won't give us that job. Then we fall into the error of becoming machines that capture what the owner wants. Then our profession loses its meaning there. With this I want to make a wake-up call, we have a profession that can help with the development of humanity.

The perfect solution for the first case would be to create a new courtroom design where we will continue with the circular American model and where no one will occupy a more important role than others. However, it is almost impossible for it to happen. Therefore, the only solution is found in what is already built. Investigating the solutions, I found that light had a very important role. Le corbusier said: "Space, light and order. Those are the things that men need as much as they need bread or a place to sleep."

When I speak of light I mean both natural lighting from the sun and artificial lighting. Both have to have a balance with the architect to be successful in their operation. However, we must also think about aesthetics and efficiency. The aesthetic aspect seeks to create an emotional impact on the user. This is where my solution lies. In the act of acting through light and turning these rooms into something more homogeneous. Currently in these rooms we usually see a spotlight that illuminates the Judge's area and the rest have a very homogeneous light. Is this homogeneous? The answer is simple, the light helps make that area so important. Therefore, we should create the same type of lighting for the entire room. This would help with the emotional impact to anyone who is there.

With the second case the solution for me is simpler. As I have said before, I do not believe that the public rooms of a court have to be in direct contact with the police. It is true that the police are important in private areas in a court, but for that same premise they should not mix with the public. Therefore, in any court project there should be a clear filter between public and private.

## COURTS SEEN FROM THE ARCHITECTURE

Architecture has always had an important role in justice. From the way spaces are planned to the impact rooms have on people.

As we have seen previously, the courts follow a very meticulous scheme in which the judge is glorified and a primary role is given to the service in charge of the court. Always being a problem. Since it insults our human rights.

In this section we will talk about my seventh semester project. Where I projected a court. It is true that, in a career project, you have to follow some guidelines that are given to you by a teacher. So if you want to approve "you cannot go beyond some limits".

This is the truth that played against me. So after a couple of years I wanted to review it and here you will read my review.

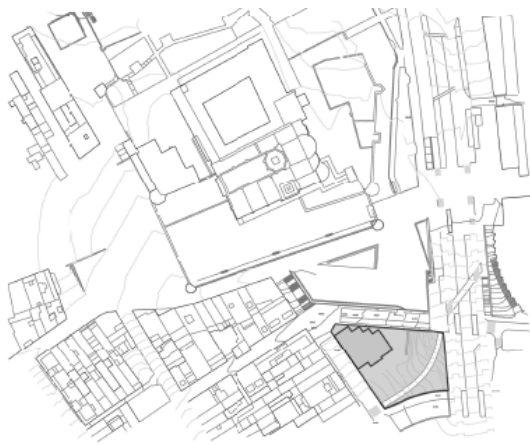
Starting from the base, the project was located in Sant Cugat (Baixada de l'Alba n5). Currently it is a built space with housing that has green space. It is planned in the future to move all these buildings and convert that plot into a space for this equipment.

If we talk a bit about the location, it seemed to me a strategic point since in front of this space we have a National Police Station. This would solve our second problem, in which the police should not be integrated into the public space of a court. As I mentioned before, the court needs police officers in its operation. Having this equipment out front will not help separate it from public areas within the courthouse. In addition, the street can be seen as a transition filter from one space to another.

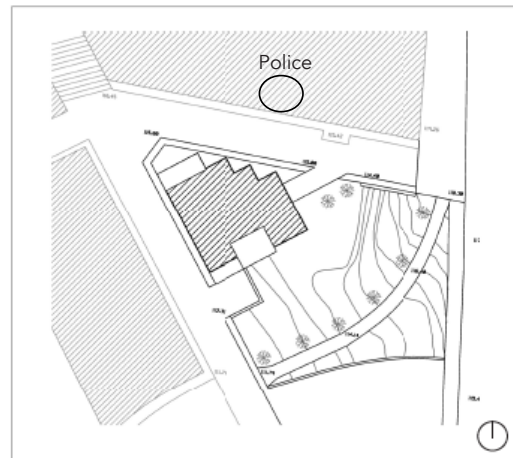
Having overcome one of the problems, we are going to explain the operation of each floor and thus find the solution to the first problem.

The first floor that we will talk about is the ground floor. This floor has two entrances-exits. One of them, the main and public one, which is located on Baixada de l'Alba street. The other, on the other hand, secondary and private, is located on Carrer

del Vallès street. Being perceived as such since it is the same street that it shares with the Police Station.



Situation: Sant Cugat



Location: Carrer del Vallès,5

This floor has the entrance to the parking lot. Parking is an important area in the project as it has different functions. First of all, this area must allow officials direct access to the building. Second, this area has to provide for a parking facility with protective walls which the police when they bring the accused through a van are not in danger of escaping. These performances are reminiscent of a cage. Since the van enters this area and the doors of it do not open until the doors of the cage are closed. The police are then in charge of bringing these defendants to the mini-prison located on that same floor or of taking them directly to the corresponding rooms (examination room, guard room ...).

Another aspect of which I would like to talk about this floor are: The versatility of spaces and circulation that it has. Public and private space. Each with its own circulation. Said circulations are linked through a door that functions as a filter between said zones. In addition, each area has its access to the next floor through stairs or elevator. With this peculiarity we achieve that these two different areas extend to each floor. Therefore, the public and private areas are the same on each floor.

The second floor we are going to talk is floor 1, this has the most important rooms, from my point of view, which are the courtroom, the testimony room and the identification room.

Before continuing, let's focus on the aforementioned rooms. The courtrooms are the spaces where the culprit is tried. It has to have a serious character. Within this room we can observe different positions, the judge and his assistants are positioned on a

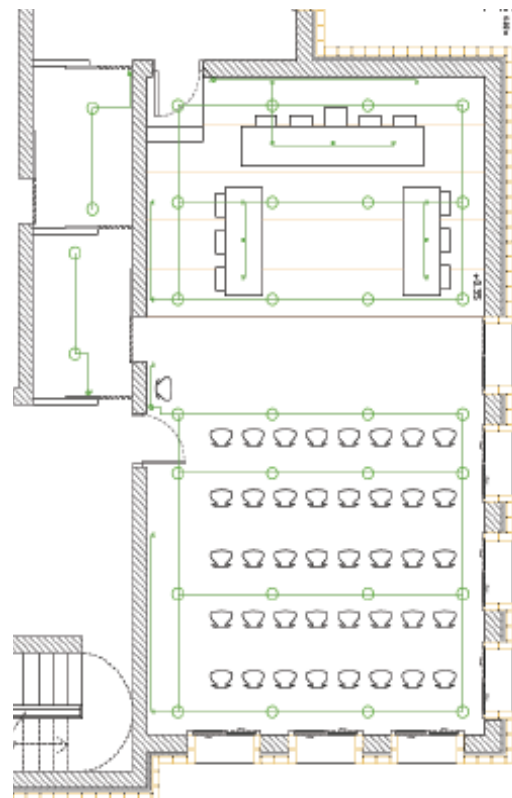
higher platform and the rest of the people including the accused below. In addition, it can be accessed from different points, this allows the accused, the victim and the judge at no time.

When I designed this room, I kept thinking that because we were serious about our character, we should position people according to their position. So I followed the same guidelines that the rest followed. It is true that at that time I wanted to play with the natural light through the windows without realizing that it was the beginning of a great change.

Today I criticize myself. In order to move forward we have to start making changes to our architectures. Playing with light was one of my fundamental principles in this great change. Create a homogeneous light in the room helping this to establish an equality in the room.

These rooms generally always have two or more entrance doors. One public and the other private. However, I believe that it is best to project 3 since in many cases the victims do not want to access either of these two. And they are in every right.

Something as simple as light can favor the idea of partiality since it is not the same that one area of the room is given more light than another.



Finally, another thing I wanted to talk about is waiting rooms. I did not give them much importance in my project. Today I regret it because they are very important in court. Why is it important? since many times those waiting rooms are present before our life changes. That is, a person who is going to obtain his nationality, has to wait there for his results. A person who is guilty of a crime is his last free zone before going to prison, among many. This area should be valued much more and given the importance it deserves.

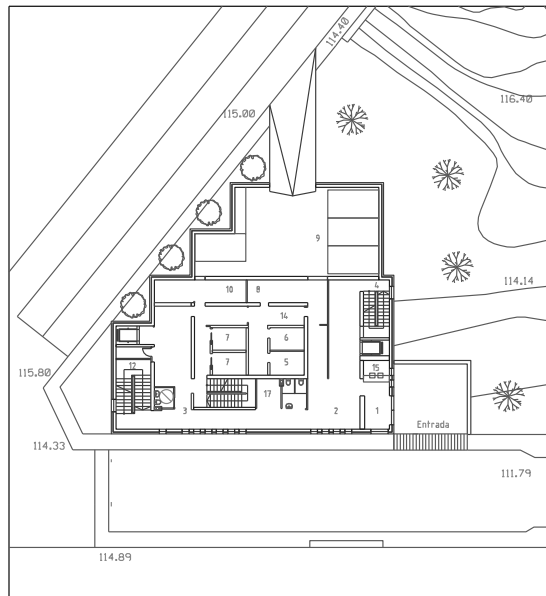
Therefore, a homogeneous light will help us to perceive a more partial space. The testimony room is usually a small and cold space where, separately, the victim and the accused explain their point of view of the events that occurred. One of the walls usually has black glass inside that lets the police see this room from the outside.

Therefore, a homogeneous light will help us to perceive a more partial space. The testimony room is usually a small and cold space where, separately, the victim and the accused explain their point of view of the events that occurred. One of the walls usually has black glass inside that lets the police see this room from the outside.

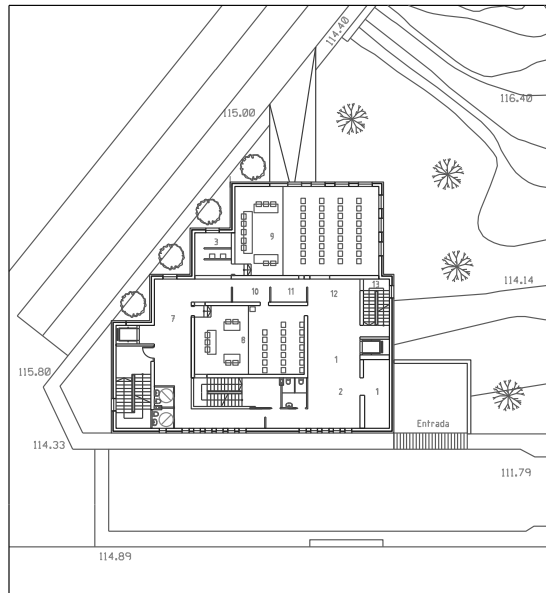
Last but not least, the identification room. This room has the function of identifying the people who are inside the room through the translucent mirror. It also has two entrances, that of the victim and that of the accused.

With this we would end floor 1 and give continuity to floor 2. This floor is granted for court paperwork, and it is where all marriages, residency exams, birth certificates, among others, take place. So it continues to have that public and private character. In my project I gave much more importance to the paperwork rooms, however I think it should be more versatile since many of the operations that have to be carried out are impossible in today's space. So she would organize at least one of the rooms with private space within herself. With this, there would be private spaces that would allow the correct functioning of the area.

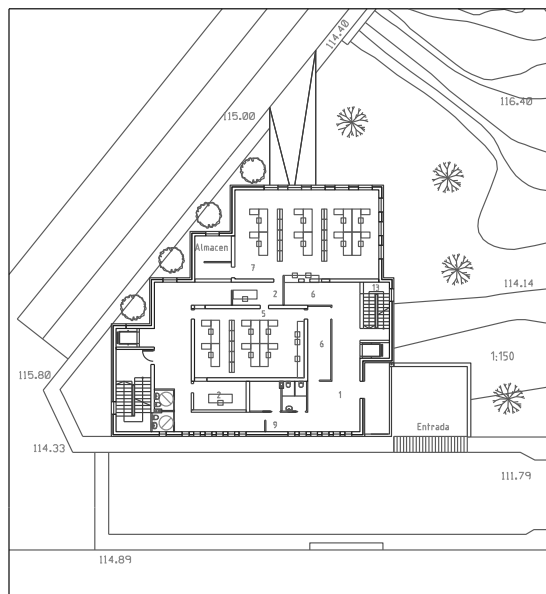
To finish, we will talk about the last floor, the roof. It can be accessed from both areas of the project. It is designed from the inside as a rest area so it is the only space where the private and public areas can be joined. It also has the output of many facilities. From the outside, the facade continues as if it were another floor and this allows us to hide the interior facilities from the outside.



Ground floor - Courthouse



Floor 1 - Courthouse



Floor 2 - Courthouse

## CONCLUSION

We have seen throughout that a court, despite the years that they have been constituted, continues to bear the burden of many problems that have not been solved.

With the two stories that I have explained above and the feature film by Frederick Wiseman, I have verified that this inherent way of constructing the courts often undermines our values. Glorifying the judge in a courtroom has never been the right thing to do. We all have the same value as people, that we are judged does not imply that we do not have any importance. On the other hand, the fact that the police can wander around the courthouse, I don't think is the most appropriate thing either. No one today is the same in front of the police or no one wants to be judged as guilty of something that he has not done just for being there.

So transforming the courtrooms into something more homogeneous and separating the police from the public area in the courts would improve all aspects of a courtroom. However, the desire to improve these spaces is not an idea that should only be carried out by the developer or the person who contracted, but all architects should learn from these mistakes and help our society to be better, without repeating the mistakes of the past. Not being influenced only by our contractor but doing our part, making our words count. We are the only ones who have the power to change this hierarchical structure with the incorporation of new thoughts and new designs when projecting. We saw how with the simple way of organizing a room differently (focusing the light differently) we could convert such a hermetic space into a more flexible one.

Now I am speaking to you from a more humanitarian point of view, putting yourself in the shoes of any of us who have had to go through these injustices. Perhaps they are coincidences, perhaps it is racism we are not going to fool ourselves but as an architect we can begin to change this mentality. There is no no for an answer, there is a yes to evolve as a society, to improve.

Small changes make a difference. I am sure that many of us have more ideas for change and perhaps we do not dare to take that step. But I assure you that little by little with everyone's help we will change this misconception of justice. And through these evolutionary steps, reflected in our projects, we will improve not only physical but mental aspects such as hatred, racism, among many others.







## languages

Catalan - Native  
Spanish - Native  
English - B2  
French - A2  
Swedish - A1

## education

2016 - Ongoing -Architecture degree - ETSAV, Barcelona  
2020 - 2021 -Erasmus - Umeå School of Architecture, Sweden  
2015 - 2016 -Architecture introduction course - ETSAV, BCN  
2012 - 2015 -Scientific Spanish baccalaureate - les Castellar  
2008 - 2012 -Secondary compulsory schooling - les Castellar

## software

Microstation  
AutoCad  
Window & Mac OSX  
Premier pro  
Adobe creative  
Oficce  
Photoshop

## skills & interests

hand drafting, sketching & drawins  
model making  
digital 3d modelling & graphic design  
video editing  
literature & writing  
photograpy  
travelling  
rowing  
art



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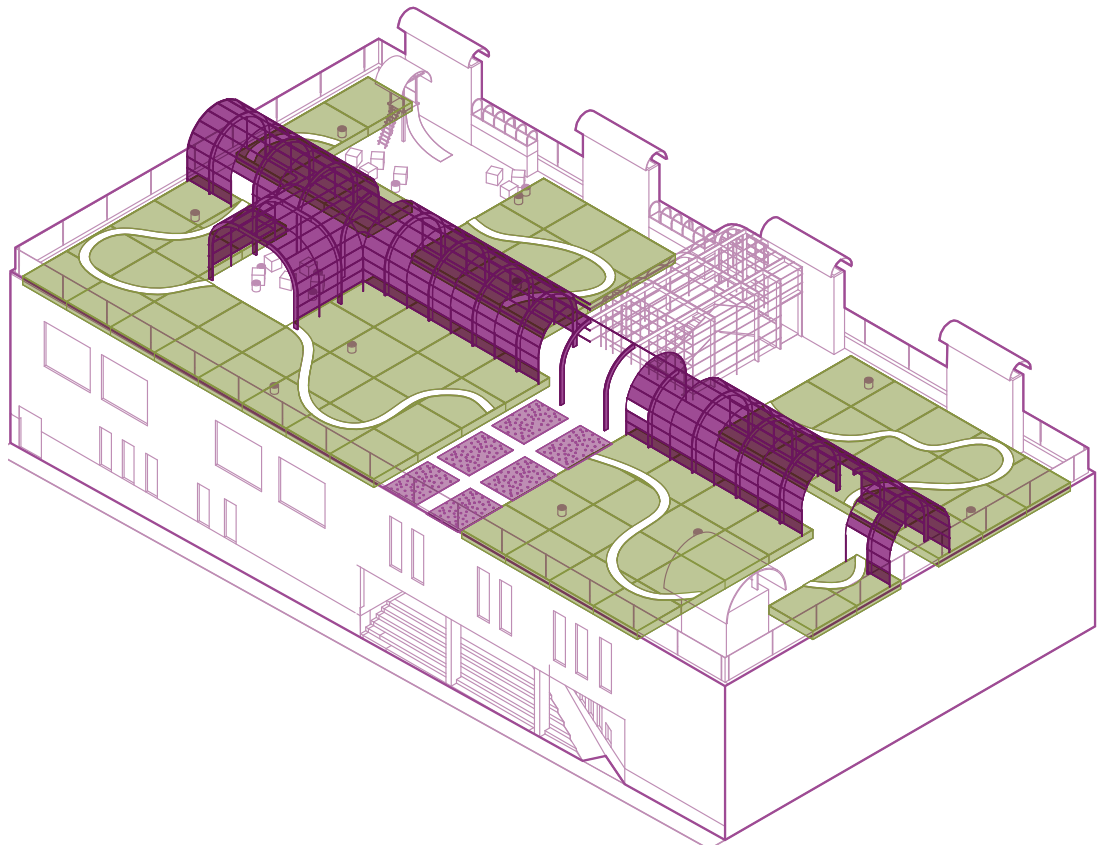
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# ANNEXES



Tiafi is an NGO that helps Syrian women who emigrate to Turkey because of the wars in their country. My project focused on finding an improvement solution for Tiafi. We explored the circulation of the building and gave it another rhythm. In addition to improving the pre-existing spaces. That is, we gave flexibility in each stay.

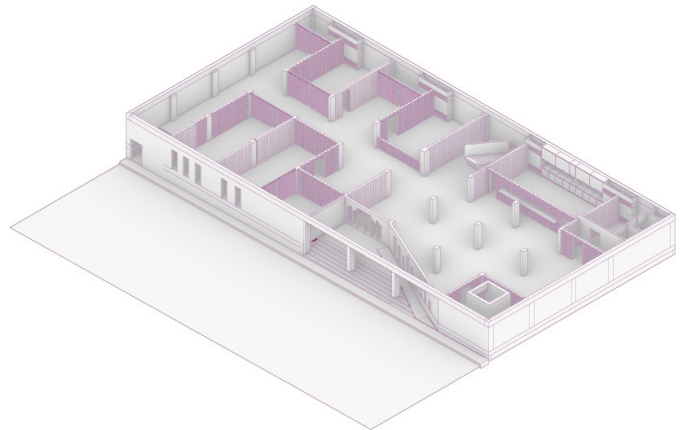
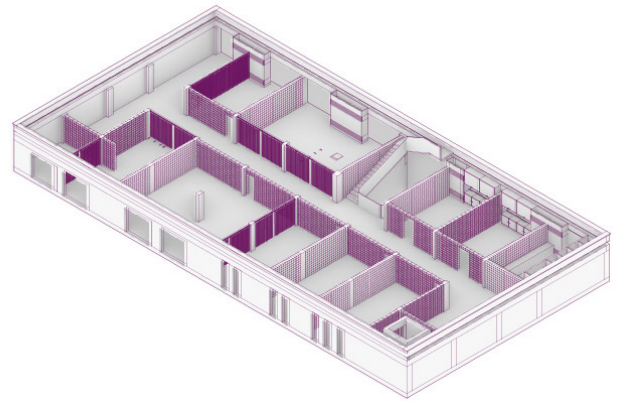
Not least the value we gave to the roof, solving many pre-existing problems.



With these sections we can see the flexibility in the spaces, with simple curtains you can easily create two spaces.

The solar fireplace was one of our most interesting projects within Tiafi since its shape helped us to ventilate better and it was also easy to camouflage.

To finish we wanted to give the main facade that natural touch with a green wall.



# BASMANE

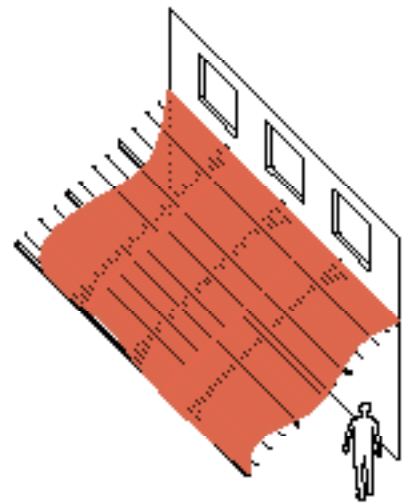
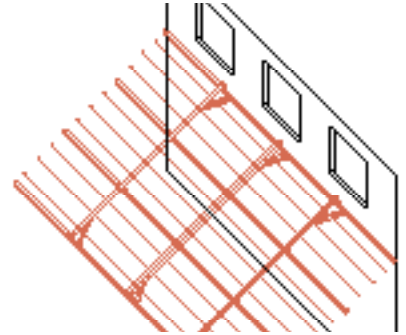
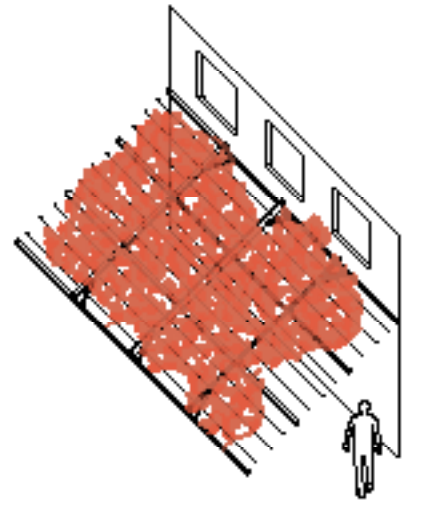
2020-2021

Izmir is one of the three more important cities in Turkey. Composed of several metropolitan districts I focus my project in one of them. It's called Basmane. This city is multicultural and solidarity that has arisen around the neighborhood, many refugees have found a safe haven.

Next, One of the most important problems in Izmir is how difficult the integration between Turks and Syrians is. Different facts allow this to happen, such as different language or customs. So my project will focus on finding the best tactic to give new hope to any woman who comes from Syria.

So here we can see the potential in the façades of Basmane.







# APATACOJA

2008 - Current

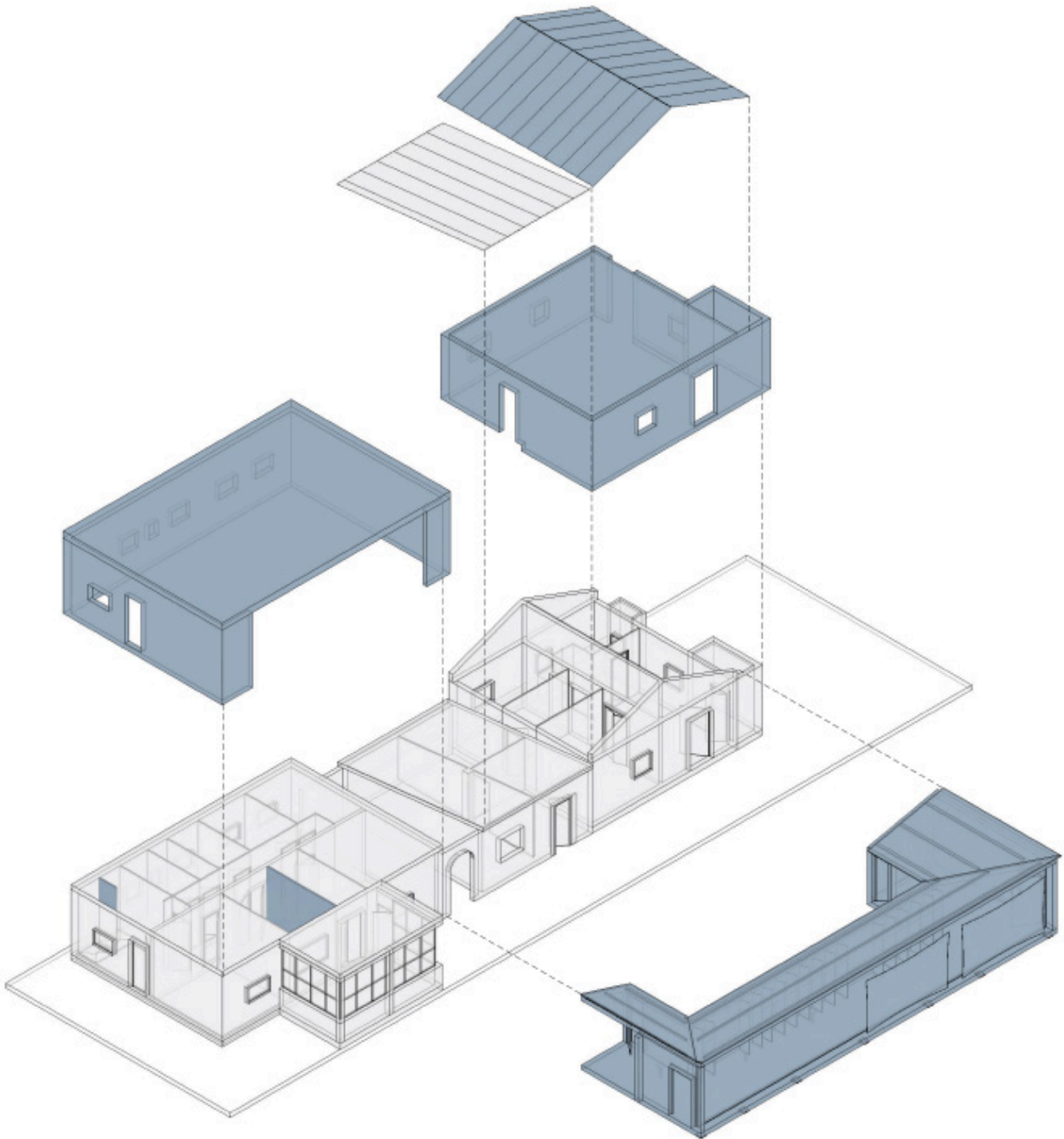
## The project

Our goals are to carry out a rehabilitation with passive housing strategies, to accomplish a reversible intervention and to finance the project based on donations.

In the first phase, the construction was analysed, detecting pathologies and deficiencies. Based on the information collected, several proposals were project, among which the one that best responded to the needs was chosen, alongside the users. This is marking the roadmap for the next phase.

In the second, our project received the name "apatacoja" inspired by the flamingos that can be found all year around the Ebro Delta. The objective of this new edition was to start building solutions. A workshop was organized in July 2019, in which began the rehabilitation of the South-east façade, the flat roof and the construction of part of the structure that would host the future capture space.

(Many students work on this project.)



Author: Edwar Michel Pabón Jiménez  
Barcelona, June 2021



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Final Degree Project. ETSAV-UPC

