

Incremental Urban Vernacular:

Portraits of Transitional Spaces in Taipei's Xinwei Building

by
Nancy Yeh

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates creative appropriation of the spaces within the Xinwei Building, a half century post-war walk-up apartment in the Da'an District of Taipei, Taiwan. The thesis expresses the ephemeral, liminal, and spatial layers that exist in the Xinwei Building. In a series of portraits, narratives, photographs, architectural illustrations and plan drawings constructed at various scales, the thesis builds up an alternative perspective on understanding architecture beyond its walls, how architecture can be understood through everyday vernacular materials, how it participates in a series of in-between spaces and how these ephemeral qualities can come together to create surprisingly coherent living patterns.

The Xinwei Building, as one of the remaining 24 Refurbished Residences in Taipei, was originally built by the government during the postwar era. This was allocated for the sudden increase in population in Taipei. Units were planned to be small in order to achieve housing affordability during the 1960s -1980s. As a consequence of the constriction of the small units and crowded interior, residents began to extend their everyday activities into the hallways and outer edges lining the Xinwei Building, creating distinct kinds of communal space.

This thesis uses concepts of transitional 'liminal' spaces derived from the theories of the 20th century Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck in order to value and focus on the significance of these spatial extensions. The study proposes that the Xinwei Building can be understood by closely documenting the accumulations of every-day articles, such as clothes hanging above households' door entrances, impromptu tables made of cardboard boxes and gas barrels between the columns, and buckets of unwashed dishes stacking in front of rows of motorcycles. While these clusters of seemingly disordered materials may have often been overlooked, they can be seen as fundamental constructive elements of a distinct kind of architecture that creates intimate vernacular spatial configurations. The thesis unfolds the portraits of transitional spaces in a series of personal, building, and urban scales, highlighting the importance of traces and inhabitants' adaptations that are accumulated through time.

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To my family.

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“A city is not a city unless it is also a huge house - a house is a house only if it is also a tiny city.”

Aldo van Eyck, final CIAM congress in 1959 at Otterlo





Fig. 1.1 Life at the Xinwei Building

introduction

prelude
literature review
ground work

on



Fig. 1.2 A stamp I collected at the Da'an MRT station when I was back in Taipei for my one year visit throughout 2020- 2021.

PRELUDE

In 2021, I had the chance to revisit Taipei for a year, a city where I was born and spent the majority of my childhood in. Since I was a child, when meandering through the streets and avenues in Taipei, I was often amazed by how a city so small in land size was able to fit such a vibrant and large population of 2.6 million. The city landscape has changed over time since I left Taipei in 2010 with many new additions of high rise developments. The Xinwei Building, a half century old post-war walk-up apartment in Da'an District, caught my attention amidst the surrounding new condo developments as I biked past it several times during my stay in 2021.

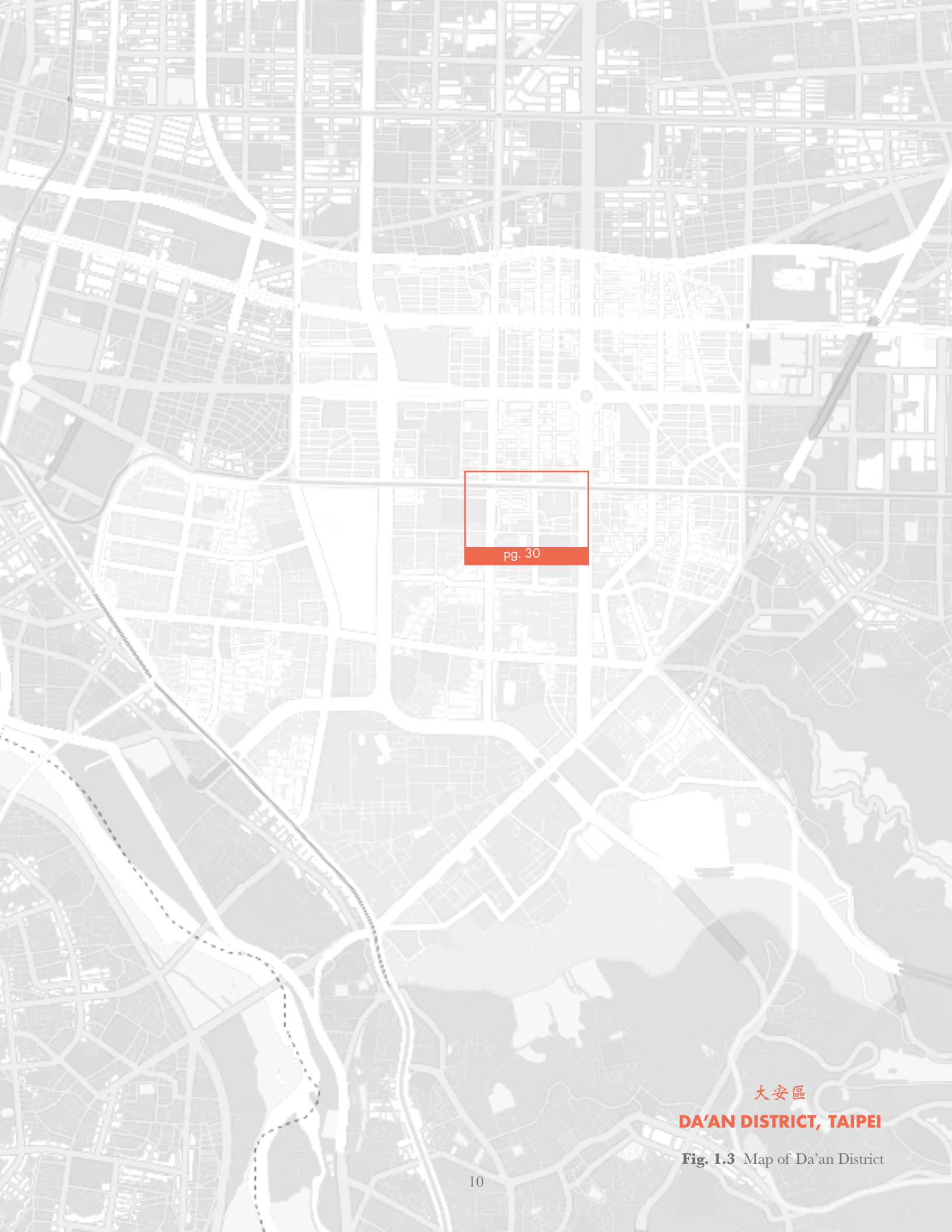
Through close observation of the Xinwei Building, I began to notice the phenomenon of informal occupation adopted by the society in many sidewalks, arcades, walk-up apartments and voids within a structure; from the macro scale where street vendors colonize the area in front of small businesses on the first floor arcades, to micro scale where residents take control of pieces of space from the hallways and rooftops for their own domestic use. The American mid-20th century urbanist Jane Jacobs discussed these kinds of informal patterns in her now-famous *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, indicating “[t]hese uses are bound up with circulation but are not identical with it and in their own right they are at least as basic as circulation to the proper workings of cities.”¹

I found myself strongly attracted to Taipei's built environments and its complex mixed-use city model. I observed how individual commercial vendors and residents would, with what they have around them, configure their own spatial environment for their individual use. It became clear to me that this type of informal arrangement of space forms an important quality for the city of Taipei, where the informality in the actual development of the city often contrasts to the government-organized urban framework. The dwellers of buildings like the Xinwei create complex, highly organized transitional spaces where diverse interactions and a wide range of human activities take place.

1 Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), 45.

“An architecture that aims to be humane, must consequently devote special attention to the inbetween; specifically to the architectural forms and transitional places through which people meet, and invite them to stay.”

Aldo van Eyck, final CIAM congress in 1959 at Otterlo



pg. 30

大安區

DA'AN DISTRICT, TAIPEI

Fig. 1.3 Map of Da'an District

INTRODUCTION

Imagine yourself walking down an old apartment hallway completely covered by large pieces of furniture like fridges, washer dryers, and wardrobes. While struggling to find paths in the apartment, you look up and see clothes hanging above each household's entrances with bicycles, foldable tables, pots and pans laying beside their front doors. This is the Xinwei Building in Taipei. In a megalopolis so dense in population, yet with no more free land left, citizens dwell and utilize space in every possible way they could.

This research thesis investigates the inhabitant's creative appropriation and tells the story of the Xinwei Building, a 51 year-old Taipei post-war walk-up apartment, through the narratives of everyday life surrounding the building's in-between and liminal spaces, such as the spaces in front of a door jam, between the colonnades, on the ceiling, above the roofs, or in the niches and outer lining of the building edges.

The Xinwei Building was built in 1969 as a refurbished residence located at the intersection of Da'an Road and Xinyi Road. As one of the remaining 24 Refurbished Residences in Taipei, it was originally built by the government during the postwar era to allocate for the sudden increase of population in Taiwan, as many political immigrants fled from mainland China to Taiwan with the Kuo Ming Dang party after they lost in the 1949 Chinese Civil War. Units in the Xinwei Building were planned to be small in order to achieve housing affordability during the 1960s -1980s.

Xinwei Building has specifically been planned for shops and market vendors on the first and second floors, residential units on the third to sixth floors, and an air defense basement, which illegally evolved into a traditional market, on the ground floor. The building of nearly 500 small units was packed with more than 1,000 people. As a consequence of the constriction of the small units and crowded interior, small business owners and residents began to find it difficult

to contain all their personal items within their own units. Residents began to extend their everyday activities into hallways and outer edges lining the Xinwei Building, creating distinct kinds of communal space that shelters both private and collective activities.

The informal spaces that emerge within this process take form through the arrangement of ephemeral materials gathered by the inhabitants and the everyday human activities that take place within it. With the current inhabitants of the Xinwei Building still mainly consisting of socially or economically disadvantaged groups, such as elderly, political immigrants, migrant workers, and young professionals that seek cheaper rent to survive in Taipei, there are obvious and significant financial struggles and challenges for daily life in the Xinwei Building. However, this thesis does not unpack all of the social complexities and political aspects of it. Instead, the thesis focuses on the beauty and richness of the vernacular qualities found within the transitional spaces of the Xinwei Building. Despite the unpleasant forms and concerning structure of the Xinwei Building, it contains a rich tradition of informal building practices by non-architects.

This thesis does not propose a new building design. The study proposes that the Xinwei Building can be understood by closely documenting the accumulations and arrangements of every-day articles in these in-between spaces. This could include clothes and light fixtures hanging from the ceiling along with tangled wires, impromptu tables made by cardboard boxes and gas barrels to serve as a shop counter or gateways, or buckets of unwashed dishes lining around the arcade's column in front of motorcycles by the sidewalk. While these clusters of seemingly disordered materials may have often been overlooked, they can be seen as fundamental constructive elements of a distinct kind of architecture that creates intimate vernacular spatial configurations.

This thesis assembles multiple portraits that depict the transitional spaces in a series of personal, building, and urban scales, highlighting the importance of traces and inhabitants' adaptations that are accumulated through time. The drawings style in this thesis document the overlooked quality of inhabitation transformation that people have dwelled overtime as critical to understanding

the complexity of the architecture and the city. Using a series of narratives, photographs, architectural illustrations and multiple scales of plan drawings, the thesis constructs a documentation that builds up an alternative perspective of how to read an architecture beyond its walls, how architecture can be understood through the everyday vernacular materials, its involvement in a series of in-between spaces, and how these ephemeral qualities can come together to create coherent living patterns.

Formations

The development of each transitional space relates to portions of architectural features in the building such as building outer edges and corners, partially covered areas along the building's sidewalk, niches found within entrances, extending into communal areas and surrounding urban spaces.

In my thesis, these spaces are partly defined and revealed using the traditional Nolli mapping technique, and in separate renderings their detailed topologies are further revealed. Within Nolli mapping, public areas are exposed while non-public 'service' and private areas are rendered with a unified dark tone. Within that kind of rendering, those edges, corners, covered areas and niches tend to be consolidated into solid masses that clarify and reveal the extent of public space. The public areas appear as if cut out from solid masses, while the service space that stands outside the public sphere is rendered monolithically as background "poche". For example, the deeply fissured edge of continuous storefronts along Da'an Rd appear within the Nolli rendering of the Xinwei building, revealing a comb-like planimetric shape corresponding to many open shopfronts that open up to the covered walkway along the street. The numerous openings within this edge of the Xinwei building form a complex edge. However, this 'stereotomic' rendering also tends to conceal subtle dimensions by polarizing the architecture into a binary figure and ground state.

In contrast to this polarized rendering, if we look closely at subtle articulations within the details, we can become aware of a fundamentally different kind of space characterized by finely-grained cellular assemblies of many small elements, with multiple interstitial

small fissures and voids between their individual components. This kind of space is revealed by large-scale tonal rendering and detailed delineation within other graphic documents within the thesis. This kind of space extends beyond the graphic boundaries of the physical building into adjacent open spaces where ephemeral assembled forms are created from assemblies of furniture and light-weight objects. Temporal dynamics are associated with these forms in which movements might appear as threads, weaving different parts of transitional layers together. There is no final form of this kind of transitional space, for each part is a unique formation created within constantly changing situations by Xinwei Building inhabitants and the Taipei citizens interacting together with those physical elements. In contrast to reductive, primary geometries of classical architecture, this spatial complex is characterized by manifolds and cellular arrays.

One may start to feel a sense of a transitional space through the following description.

Around 10AM in the morning, before lunch time, the owner of a ground floor shop comes out and arranges the table between the columns of the arcade before the hustle and bustle of the day begins. While laying out and carefully aligning a set of 5 to 6 foldable dining tables, nicely grouping them in a linear geometry along the sidewalks, putting condiments and preparing a handful of chopsticks in the center of each table, the shop owner thoughtfully arranges everything, establishing a calm order in the space between and around the two columns.

During the first hour of the day, the tables are arranged quite precisely with a comfortable 30 centimeters in between each one. They are arranged in a fairly densely packed manner so the space could fit as many seats as possible for dining purposes, without people feeling jammed together. During the lunch hour, people come and sit down. A group of office colleagues from the Xinwei area made small adjustments to the initial arrangements, shifting their chairs back and bringing two tables together to accommodate more people. Over the course of the lunch hours, the line of tables drifts a little bit and the shifting and the straying starts to move. However, the rearrangements are not completely random. Something very interesting happens because rather than seeing this as entropic,

where things just gradually fall apart and become a complete mess at the end of the day, the small movements tend to compliment each other. One customer sitting there might straighten it a little bit, or rather, put their chair back in the initial arrangement when they leave. The next customer may carelessly shove the chairs away, moving the tables back and forth.

The arrangement of motorcycles lining the street changes over the course of the day, but the formation of rows hangs together very interestingly, forming a fissured screen with open spaces in between. Each one of those cells tilts very slightly back and forth based on the inclination of the people sitting in them, supported by chairs that move in and out as well. There is a cross current coming through this entire row of artifacts with people squeezing in between the tables to reach the inner side of the arcade, to the shops or out to the virtual wall of motorcycles. Chairs that are facing out are much more heavily used than the ones facing in, because people naturally want to see the street, surveying the flux of things happening as if it is a row of good seats in the theater watching the passers by on the sidewalk and beyond.

Grouping and arranging the tables on the sidewalks and between the columns makes for a constantly shifting flux. The table row undulates. Its individual parts move back and forth from moment to moment each day, while the general form remains coherent. These persisting physical organizations contrast to smooth-faced reductive clear boundaries of classical architectural surfaces. The table rows create a fine grained reticulated lattice, pieced together to form a deeply fissured screen that acts as a virtual facade.

Over the course of the day, new customers might bring a handbag or a suitcase, set it down on the stool or hang it over the edge of the chair. These daily objects build up a secondary layer of materials accumulating on top of the spaces formed by the surfaces of the building. They appear like strings of necklaces that are loose but still hang together. Their organization acts as a standing wave, working together coherently. While the people who are handling the furniture and objects play fundamental roles, the built architecture of the Xinwei also plays a fundamental role, anchoring and forming the fine-grained reticulated lattices in the transitional spaces.

Theories

This thesis is deeply anchored in a range of theories. The porosity between architecture, the urban fabric, and the body of a human, is a relationship in flux through the everyday. French theorist Michel de Certeau shares the same value in *The Practice of Everyday Life* where he drew connections between users and spatial production by emphasizing on the human-centered aspects of urban life, focusing on the anthropology of human beings, investigating the realm of routine practices and the art of actions such as walking, talking, eating, and dwelling in the everyday of the ordinary. The dwelling of everyday life involves the maintenance of the spatial configurations that dwellers perceive as meaningful.

These special transformations created by dwellers also reflect Edward Hall's most famous innovation of 'proxemics'- which is the informal, or personal spaces that surround individuals. Dwellers and inhabitants continuously structure micro spaces unconsciously- in which microspaces mean the distance between humans in conduct of daily transactions, the organization of space in their houses and buildings, and the layout of the urban fabric.

While this thesis continues to focus on the microspaces in liminal thresholds, the study suggests that the interactions between clusters of daily elements and human activities in these liminal thresholds create 'transitional spaces' that contribute to an emergent urban vernacular. Van Eyck's theory of the 'in-between' suggests that such space is the point at which two different polarities, such as the inside and outside or the public and private, interpenetrate. It is not a matter of choosing between two elements, but of employing both in conjunction in such a way that the right reciprocal effect is obtained.

In parallel, graphic examples including the famous Nolli Map of Rome drawn by Giovanni Battista Nolli between 1736-48 and the dense urbanism shown in the illustrations of Hong Kong's infamous Kowloon Walled City by a group of Japanese researchers in 1993, provide this research with strong references of a visual style that focus on the representation of spaces through a series of meticulously drawn visuals.

Method

What interferes with the general tendencies of those involved with planning is understanding only what they can translate in terms of graphic operations: seeing, feeling at the end of a pencil, drawing.

- Henri Lefebvre¹

As my original plan of the research was to conduct on-site documentation in Taipei after my initial one-year visit between 2020 and 2021, the thesis has become a remote study of the Xinwei Building as a result of COVID-19. With the help of my mother's friend, auntie Jia Rong, I was able to collect on-site photos and research information about the Xinwei Building. The research process mainly involves mass information browsing, investigation of residents' stories, scholarly resource gathering, and documentation through drawing.

As an observer and researcher of the architectural spaces and daily life around the Xinwei Building, the thesis, especially the personal narratives in the Personal Portraits, are set up in a historical fiction format where the historical event or time period complements the story's narrative, forming a framework and background for the characters' lives. The character formations pay close attention to the details of each character's role and background in order to ensure that they fit the time periods in which the personal narratives take place. The purpose of this method is to record architectural spaces in the Xinwei Building using true story settings, historical events, and local inhabitants' behavior, with the names of people and businesses being altered. Documentation for Personal Portraits is primarily based on photographs, articles, news accounts, and research about the Xinwei Building residents, as well as information from family members and recollections of childhood memories of Taipei.

This research thesis is constructed in a bottom-up format into assemblages of visual and textual materials, entitled Personal Portrait, Building Portrait, and Urban Portrait. Starting from a personal intimate scale to a larger urban context, the thesis demonstrates the concept of emergence and the gradual accumulation of vernacular

¹ Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 83.

elements within urban extensions.

The portraits in this thesis are based on a series of architectural plans at different scales, in which architectural vernacularity and qualities of an ephemeral nature are prominent and conveyed through mood, texture, personality, and atmosphere. The intent is to evoke more, to imply more, and to allow viewers to see infinitely more in the drawings. The architectural visualizations of the thesis invite readers to look beyond, to see far more than its visual presentations, and to see life through these portraits. The detailed architectural drawings in these portraits document the overlooked quality of inhabitation transformation that people have dwelled overtime as critical to understanding the complexity of architecture and the city. This includes the rendered detailed plans that reveal groupings of everyday objects arranged along the edge of the ground floor adjacent to the street throughout the three portraits, the isometric projections that focus on assemblies of ephemera in Chapter 2, and the modified Da'an Nolli plans extending to a wider urban fabric in Chapter 3. The purpose of this thesis is to provide readers with an alternative perspective of both architecture and urban fabric by examining transitional spaces in the Xinwei Building and the Taipei neighborhood.

The following is a brief outline of the structure and components of the thesis:

Chapter one, *Personal Portraits*, provides the reader an exploration into the everyday lives of inhabitants of the Xinwei Building at a personal scale. These include Indah, a migrant worker, Papa Wei, a political immigrant, and A-siu, a frequent neighborly visitor. This chapter focuses on the incremental elements and the intricate materials they encounter daily. The 3 characters reflect people that I encountered in my childhood: the Indonesian nanny in my house who came to Taiwan in the 1990s for more income, my grandfather, a political immigrant who fled to Taiwan after the Chinese Civil War in the 1950s, and my mother's friends who were born, raised and spent all their lives in Taipei locally. Through their individual narratives, the readers may see a spectrum of vernacular spatial configurations within and around the Xinwei Building.

Chapter two, *Building Portrait*, delves into the overview of how the residents and vendor owners dwell in the Xinwei Building in an architectural scale. This overview contains a combination of moments that the three characters introduced within Chapter one encounter through their daily events as mentioned in the previous chapter. Through the plan drawings and bigger pictures of the ground floor arcades, the second floor interior corridors, and the rooftop, readers are able to see the overview of multiple uses on transitional spaces and thresholds of vernacular spatial configurations that are molded to suit the needs of an individual or business. The drawings in Chapter 2 are especially represented using space syntax, a set of techniques for the analysis of spatial configurations of all kinds. It explains human behaviors and social activities from a spatial configuration point of view. The drawing method of this chapter focuses on the ephemeral and sheer atmosphere, allowing the intricate daily material to speak to itself.

Chapter three, *Urban Portrait*, extends out to the neighborly contexts of the Xinwei Building at an urban scale. This section introduces the urban transitional spaces beyond the Xinwei Building. The citizens' continuous ephemeral and creative occupations in urban space are contributions to the richness and complexity of Taipei's urban experience. Through an altered Nolli map, this chapter provides readers an alternative way of analyzing a city. The life around the Xinwei Building are traces of each individual, weaving together to form an alternative urban geography.

The final conclusion is a reflection and projection on the material covered within the body of the thesis and a projection of architectural contributions that this thesis offers. The intention of this research is not to create and propose architecture, but to bring the lights to the vernacular qualities that have, for the longest time, been overlooked by professionals. Everyday elements within in-between spaces, and their links to human interaction, are the fundamental ingredients that create living architecture and substantial cities, placing the human scale at its core.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Theory of Everyday

The thesis research adopts the perspectives of viewing architecture in its softer layer of everyday materials rather than a rigid structure. The thesis argues that the actions of every ordinary day is what constitutes an architecture. Chapter 1 particularly investigates the theories of the everyday, the proxemics and the architectural vernaculars created unconsciously by the dwellers. It is a chapter devoted to the inhabitant's creative appropriation of their limited space and the architecture of the everyday. Each personal portrait focuses on the anthropology of human beings, investigating the realm of routine practices and the art of actions such as walking, talking, eating, and dwelling in the everyday of the ordinary. Theorists like Michel de Certeau share the same value in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. He drew connections between users and spatial production by emphasizing on the human-centered aspects of urban life, analyzing the consumers' ability to re-appropriate the rituals.

The practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness.¹

French cultural historian Michel de Certeau's assertion of alternative spatial practices operating within the established framework of the city can be seen everywhere in Taipei's Xinwei Building and his concept serves as a theoretical anchor for my investigation on the everyday spaces in the building. The porosity between architecture, the urban fabric and the body of a human is a relationship in flux through the everyday. These practices of the everyday and the ephemeral qualities around structures have been long overlooked by

1 De Certeau, *The practice of Everyday Life*, 93

professionals yet they are crucial ingredients that contribute to the development of an urban microcosm. This example can be seen in Hong Kong's legendary architectural legacy- The Kowloon Walled city.

Kowloon walled city, located not far from the former Kai Tak Airport, was a remarkable high-rise squatter camp that by the 1980s had 50,000 residents. It was composed of 500 buildings on 2.7 hectares and the interconnected high-rise towers were built without architects and engineers. The street-level shops at the ground floor were a mix of unlicensed dentists and doctors, market stalls and cafes that often included other species on the menu. Electric wires were placed outdoors to prevent fires. Dripping pipes, bundles of cables, people making dimsum and noodles, woks frying, women making laundry, children and rats running around, and all mixed among factories making plastic toys and rubber plungers. Residents carried umbrellas to shield themselves from constantly dripping water pipes above the narrow alleys. Rooftops were used for exercise, playgrounds, relaxing and even pigeon racing. The Kowloon Walled City has no clear architectural boundaries nor clear polarities of inside and out. Every usable space has been occupied by something and even the corners and voids have been used for several both private and public purposes.²

Despite its daunting, squalid appearance and reputation for lawlessness, many of Kowloon Walled City's former residents remember it fondly. The people in Kowloon walled City not only inhabit the structure but also respond to the liminal spaces around the architectural structure in every possible way. It may have been the City of Darkness to outsiders, but to thousands who called it home, it was a friendly, tight-knit community that was economically disadvantaged but generally happy. Aside from sanitation issues and building standards for stability and safety, the Kowloon Walled city was a place that provided warmth and kindness. It embraced human life in difficult conditions and extended community vibrancy in Hong Kong.

2 Inside Kowloon Walled City: 'I Knew I Was Somewhere Extraordinary.'" 2021. South China Morning Post. March 25, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/arts-music/article/3126851/inside-kowloon-walled-city-artist-offers>.



Fig. 1.4 Hong Kong's Kowloon Walled City in 1989



Fig. 1.5 Rubber Plunger Factory inside the Kowloon Walled City, 1989



Fig. 1.6 Residents relaxing on Walled City's rooftop with cloths drying beside, 1989

The dwelling of everyday involves the maintenance of the spatial configurations that dwellers perceive as meaningful. The study of such spaces falls under the rubric of ‘proxemics’. In the introduction of *A System for the Notation of Proxemic Behavior* (1963), Edward T Hall defined proxemics as “the study of how people unconsciously structure microspace – the distance between humans in conduct of daily transactions, the organization of space in their houses and buildings, and ultimately the layout of their towns”³. Similar to the Kowloon Walled City, the Taipei Xinwei Building is also an extraordinary example of Edward Hall’s Proxemic theory in 1966, where it is concerned with how users dwell and build up a resilience of socially defensible space. The users have position and inflect things, allowing their space to become a continuum outside of their units.

Hall later argues that human perceptions of space, although derived from sensory apparatus that all humans share, are molded and patterned by culture. In *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), he analyzed both the personal spaces that people form around their bodies as well as the macro-level sensibilities that shape cultural expectations about how streets, neighborhoods and cities should be organized.⁴ This can be especially seen in the photographs and drawings in chapter 1 of the thesis as the special transformations created by the Xinwei Building inhabitants reflect Hall’s most famous innovation of the definition of the informal, or personal spaces that surround individuals:

Intimate space: the closest “bubble” of space surrounding a person. Entry into this space is acceptable only for the closest friends and intimates.

Social and consultative spaces: the spaces in which people feel comfortable conducting routine social interactions with acquaintances as well as strangers.

Public space: the area of space beyond which people will perceive interactions as impersonal and relatively anonymous.⁵

3 Hall, *A System for the Notation of Proxemic Behavior*, 1003

4 Brown, Edward T. Hall, *Proxemic Theory*, 1966. CSISS Classics, 2

5 Brown, Edward T. Hall, *Proxemic Theory*, 1966. CSISS Classics, 2

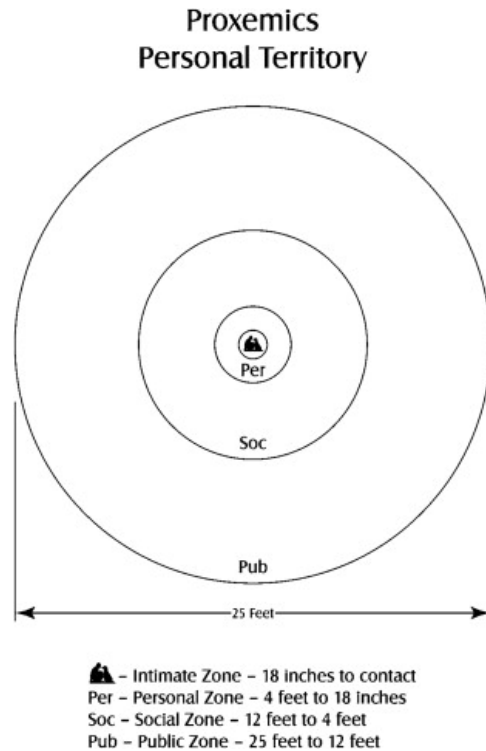


Fig. 1.7 Personal territory zones. Graphic and corresponding text first published in *Therapy Dogs Today: Their Gifts, Our Obligation*. © 2004

“I confront the city with my body; my legs measure the length of the arcade and the width of the square; my gaze unconsciously projects my body onto the facade of the cathedral, where it roams over the mouldings and contours, sensing the size of recesses and projections; my bodyweight meets the mass of the cathedral door, and my hand grasps the door pull as I enter the dark void behind. I experience myself in the city, and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me.”⁶ - Juhani Pallasmaa

Similar study of the everyday and proxemics has also been adopted by Juhani Pallasmaa in *The Eyes of the Skin* where Pallasmaa argues more towards human senses and experiences that happen in an architecture or city. He argues that the four senses- hearing, taste, touch and smell- other than the already predominant sense – sight – are as important in architecture because architecture is not merely an object for visual seduction. The personal portraits in chapter 1 of this thesis explicitly captures the senses by showing lights, textures, and atmosphere in the drawings. The unpleasing and decaying form

⁶ Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 40

of the Xinwei Building reflects Pallasmaa's theory that buildings are not only objects that people inhabit, but inhabitants also respond to them in an equal measure by dwelling the spaces through their everyday experiences. Pallasmaa suggests that architecture that is life-enhancing must address all the senses simultaneously.

De Certeau's theory of the everyday, Hall's theory of proxemics, and Pallasmaa's theory of senses continue to support the thesis research by examining how inhabitants have unconsciously created and formed their own personal private sanctuaries within the collective public spaces in their local environments through their everyday routines, objects and experiences around them. Inhabitants adaptations through their everyday life have led to the informal occupations and the phenomenon of parasitic occupation of limited space in large megapolis that are so dense in population like Taipei.

The concept of In-Between (Aldo Van Eyck)

The dwellers and inhabitants of the Xinwei Building make extremely vital and durable moments out of increments and the everyday vernaculars. The research in chapter 2 is strongly oriented to the idea of the in-between, layered thresholds and the concept of a house being a tiny city. It investigates the multiple scales of human events happening in the liminal spaces found within and around the Xinwei Building.

“a city is not a city unless it is also a huge house - a house is a house only if it is also a tiny city”⁷ Aldo van Eyck, final CIAM congress in 1959 at Otterlo

The thesis is anchored deeply around the theories and the concept of the in-between and reflects Aldo Van Eyck's theory of twin phenomena. In the 1960s Dutch structuralist movement, discussions around “the space of the in between” suggest that architects' role was not to provide a conclusive design solution but to provide a spatial framework open to multiple transfigurations by the users. This kind of inclusive design method unleashes innate creativity

7 Aldo Van Eyck, 'Is Architecture Going to Reconcile Basic Values?'. in Oscar Newman \ed.l CIAM '59 ,, Otterlo (Stuttgart: Kremer Verlag, 1 961), pp. 26-35

by liberating users from their usual subordinate positions as passive consumers. The architectural process becomes a dynamic practice that embraces the potential for new trajectories.⁸

The idea of in-betweenness was introduced by Dutch structuralist and CIAM Team 10 member, Aldo Van Eyck, where his thinking fundamentally proceeded in terms of reconciling the polarities such as private and public. Van Eyck had repeatedly stated that the Netherlands were becoming 'uninhabitable', because of the soulless character of large-scale planning as well as the bureaucratic and impersonal nature of the welfare society of the postwar years.⁹

Van Eyck characteristically used the terms 'twin-phenomena' to describe the reciprocal nature of house and city, and 'form' and 'counterform' to describe the correspondence of mental and social dispositions and spatial structures.¹⁰ In twin phenomena, the opposites remain recognizable as opposites. But this does not imply that they must be taken to an extreme. It is a concept based on the insight that such opposites are not conflictive or mutually exclusive entities as is generally assumed in Western thinking, but that they are two different halves of the same entity.¹¹

Van Eyck describes that polarities can occur at two different levels: that of structure, and that of form. At a structural level, the most obvious way to unite two opposing into twin phenomena is to establish an in-between. This is generally achieved by making the two poles overlap to some extent, in the case for the Xinwei Building for example, it would be the interior where business owners make their goods and the exterior where the rows of motorcycles are parked. The result should be a place where the two poles are simultaneously present, as if they were complementary colors.¹²

8 Wu, Beijing Underground, 19

9 Jaschke, *City is House and House is City: Aldo van Eyck, Piet Blom and the Architecture of Homecoming*, 180

10 Jaschke, *City is House and House is City: Aldo van Eyck, Piet Blom and the Architecture of Homecoming*, 188

11 Van Eyck, Aldo and O. Newman. (1961) *CIAM '59 in Otterlo*. Stuttgart. P.33

12 Van Eyck, (1982) Aldo. *Aldo Van Eck-Hubertushuis*. Stichting Wonen, Amsterdam. p.82.

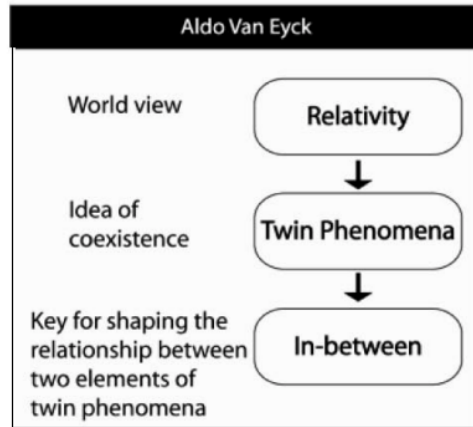


Fig. 1.8 Flow of Aldo Van Eyck's theories of the twin phenomena and the in-between

It is the point at which two different worlds interpenetrate, in the case of Xinwei Building, it would be the public arcades that link the interior and exterior together. It is a place filled with 'multiple meaning in equipoise'.¹³ Van Eyck shows that it is not a matter of choosing between two elements, but of employing both in conjunction in such a way that the right reciprocal effect is obtained.¹⁴ An architecture that aims to be humane, must consequently devote special attention to the inbetween; specifically to the architectural forms and transitional places through which people meet, and invite them to stay.¹⁵

In-between conditions mostly appear between two opposites. Most frequent conditions of contradictory relationship in design could be contradictory spaces such as natural and man-made, interior and exterior, or notions such as old and new, and public and private.

A Natural/ Man-made relationship is introduced in Van Eyck's Visser House through 'continuity of nature into building' by repeating wooden columns, to have harmony with the surrounding forest.

The Interior/Exterior relationship is introduced in Van Eyck's

13 Maryam Farhady & Jeehyun Nam (2009) Comparison of In-between Concepts by Aldo Van Eyck and Kisho Kurokawa, *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, 8:1, 17-23

14 Ligtelijn, Vincent. (1999) *Aldo Van Eyck: Works*. Birkhäuser

15 Aldo Van Eyck, final CIAM congress in 1959 at Otterlo

Hubertus House where he created a ‘vertical gap’ by employing a multi-story doorway between the outside and inside.

An Old/New relationship is also introduced by Van Eyck In the Hubertus House, where the ‘overlap of new and old’ is put into practice through a new part accessible by the old entryway.

The Public/Private relationship is introduced by Van Eyck through a ‘Threshold’ in his Amsterdam Orphanage, where the threshold provides the key for transition between public and private realm. Here it is a forecourt that reaches to the heart of the building, a large doorstep that articulates into an urban square, as the continuity of a public realm.¹⁶ The notion of ‘threshold’ was used to signify the relationship of different spatial and psychological registers and scales in the city.

*We are not only breathing in, nor are we exclusively breathing out. This is why it would be so beneficial if the relation of interior space and exterior space, between individual and common space inside and outside, between the open and the closed (directed towards the inside and outside) could be the built mirror of human nature, so that man can identify with it. These are formal realities because they are mental realities. Moreover they are not polar but ambivalent realities. The dwelling and its extension into the exterior, the city and its extension into the interior, that's what we have to achieve.*¹⁷

Reflecting Van Eyck’s theory of the in-between, the inhabitants’ occupation of the liminal spaces throughout Taipei’s Xinwei Building shares the same qualities and creates a balance between a series of polarities. They unconsciously blur the edges between Interior and Exterior, Old and New, or Public and Private by creating spatial opportunities for a range of activities. It is the interweaving public and private narratives within the in-between spaces that make up the Xinwei Building and the Taipei Neighborhood, creating a sensitive balance in which both private and public energies equally permeate into every aspect of urban life from social conduct to city making.

16 Maryam Farhady & Jeehyun Nam (2009) Comparison of In-between Concepts by Aldo Van Eyck and Kisho Kurokawa, *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, 8:1,20

17 Aldo van Eyck, ‘Over Binnen- En Buitenruimte’, *Forum* 11, no. 5 (1956), 133. Author’s translation.

The accumulation of the everyday fine grained elements in a series of in-between spaces of the Xinwei Building leads to a critical contribution in the formulation of a transitional space where multiple dimensions are involved. Space is the most significant dimension of the in-between. Many of the in-between practices express the spatial aspect of this concept. Time is an invisible dimension of the in-between and human is the dimension that expresses the overlap of different human activities, multi-usage and multi-functionality of a single space in order to produce a non-physical ambivalence concentrated on the human usage of space.¹⁸

Transitional space, by its mean, is a unique kind of space offered as a platform for human activities that lies in between the edges of two polarities like private and public or the inside and out, creating individual or collective spaces and providing emplacements that fulfills individuals. The idea of in-between space resonates with Ray Oldenburg's notion of "Third place".

*"Most needed are those 'third places' which lend a public balance to the increased privatization of home life. Third places are nothing more than informal public gathering places. The phrase 'third places' derives from considering our homes to be the 'first' places in our lives, and our workplaces the 'second.'"*¹⁹

- Ray Oldenburg

Ray Oldenburg's Third Places refers to places where people spend time between home ('first' place) and work ('second' place). They are locations where people exchange ideas, have a good time, and build relationships.²⁰ Third places have a number of important community-building attributes. Informal conversation is the main activity and most important linking function in these spaces. Oldenburg argues that places such as bus stops, city halls and lobbies are places that build communities and third places are nothing more

18 Maryam Farhady & Jeehyun Nam (2009) Comparison of In-between Concepts by Aldo Van Eyck and Kisho Kurokawa, Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering, 8:1,22

19 Oldenburg, Celebrating The Third Place (2000),

20 Diaz, Stuart M. Butler and Carmen. "'Third Places' as Community Builders." Brookings. September 14, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2016/09/14/third-places-as-community-builders/#:~:text=Third%20places%20is%20a%20term.>

than informal public gathering places. In the Taiwanese context, an example would be the intersections at the back alley of the Xinwei Building, where aunties and immigrant workers gather temporarily to wait for the daily garbage truck to come.

Whether it is Van Eyck's theory of the in-between or Oldenburg's theory of third places, the same qualities apply to a transitional space. Architecture depends on the transitional spaces as they are existing and manifesting themselves at every liminal scale level within a corner, between a door jam or around a column.

Transitional spaces are both private and public spaces, yet, it is not something that we typically call "public", like a city hall or a public park, nor something that we typically call "private", like a residential unit. It is a space without clear boundaries where people and human events are the generators of the space rather than a place being built to serve a specific function.

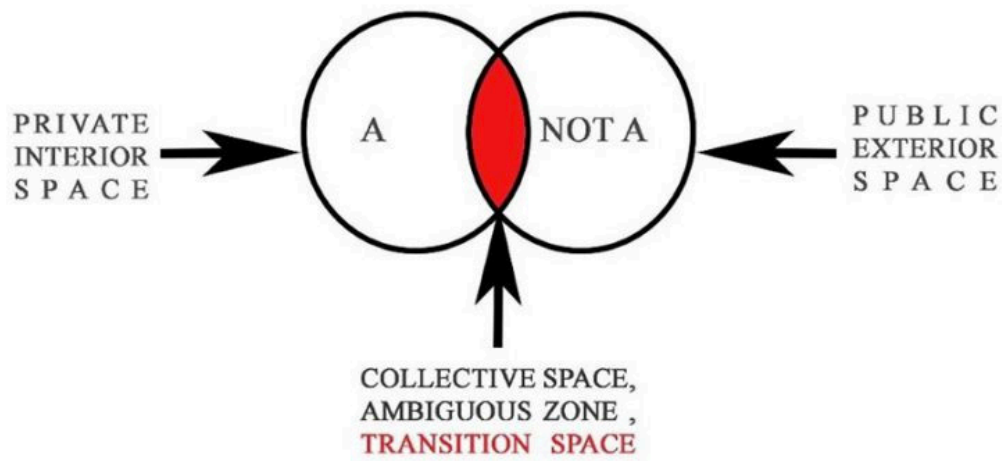


Fig. 1.9 Diagram of a transitional space

Below is a summary of 5 definitions on transitional space:

1. Transitional space is not confined to just one usage. The space in-between allows more than one use, and the appropriation of space is caused by its ambiguity. The expansion of the businesses on the ground floor arcades overlaps with the public walkway that, to a certain extent, are appropriated as private outdoor spaces by the ground floor business owners of the Xinwei Building.

2. Ambiguity and openness are not equivalent to randomness. On the contrary, the in-between transitional spaces are precisely formed and designed with their own specific identity—they become edges of two worlds; the private and the public. The public staircases in the Xinwei Building are used for multiple private purposes and have varying degrees of transparency toward the street, but they are only mainly accessible to the residents.

3. The transitional spaces, created by smaller ingredients and architectural components articulate the transition between inside and outside of the building. Aspects like human activities, network connections and interconnections, robustness in use and the inclusion of day times and seasons are equally important.

4. The transitional spaces exist in architectural elements such as rooftops, colonnades, entrances, basements, staircases and railings. These zones under stairs, next to entrances, on top of parapets, between pillars, and so on remain unnoticed, but in fact vitally contribute to the specific character of a place. The inhabitants transform and create through these elements and different qualities for additional use.

5. Transitional space in the Xinwei Building is a very unique kind of liminal space, where a communal staircase or a shared corridor is not so polarized like public city halls or public squares. The transitional space is a binary that blends polarization between private and public where an emplacement can occur when individuals participate within the space.

The Idea of Emergence

Along with the theory of everyday and the concept of the in-between, chapter 3 illustrates the importance of the idea of emergence. The thesis suggests that emergence is bound up in the everyday. A functioning city is predominantly dependent on a series of transitional spaces where the accumulation of intriguing materials between liminal spaces are built up, evolve and weave together to bring circulation into a larger urban fabric. The formation of collective behaviors between the durable moments, different scales of human events, urban metabolism and transitional spaces results in a vibrant neighborhood and a substantial city.

The idea of emergence can be seen in Jane Jacob's *Death and Life of the Great American Cities*- esp. chapter "On Sidewalks". Jacob talks about this bottom-up emergent thinking through her memory of her childhood in Brooklyn and how beautiful an inner street of a city can be when eyes on a street of many individual actions all weave together to make sidewalk a safe, beautiful and cohesive urban form.

*"Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvelous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city. It is a complex order. Its essence is intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes. This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance — not to a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off en masse, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any once place is always replete with new improvisations."*²¹ - Jane Jacob

Using the observation and analysis of human interaction and transformation within architectural forms, this thesis becomes key in proving the idea that if we work in increments between the transitional spaces, we can make extremely vital and durable communities and urban fabric out of it.

21 Jacobs, J. (2016). *The death and life of great American cities*, 66.

The illustrated cross section of Hong Kong's Infamous Kowloon walled city by a group of Japanese researchers in 1993 is an example that represents the theory of emergence through a series of meticulously drawn visuals. The drawing illustrates spaces that are filled up and created by the accumulation of daily incremental materials through years such as a tunneled passageway that's always leaking rain water and the gap between buildings that's filled with wires and cloth hangers. The human interaction and activities through these spaces make the panoramic cross section filled with much more intensity, complexity and properties that emerge only when the incremental parts of each unit interact with a wider whole, providing viewers an unconventional way of reading spaces.

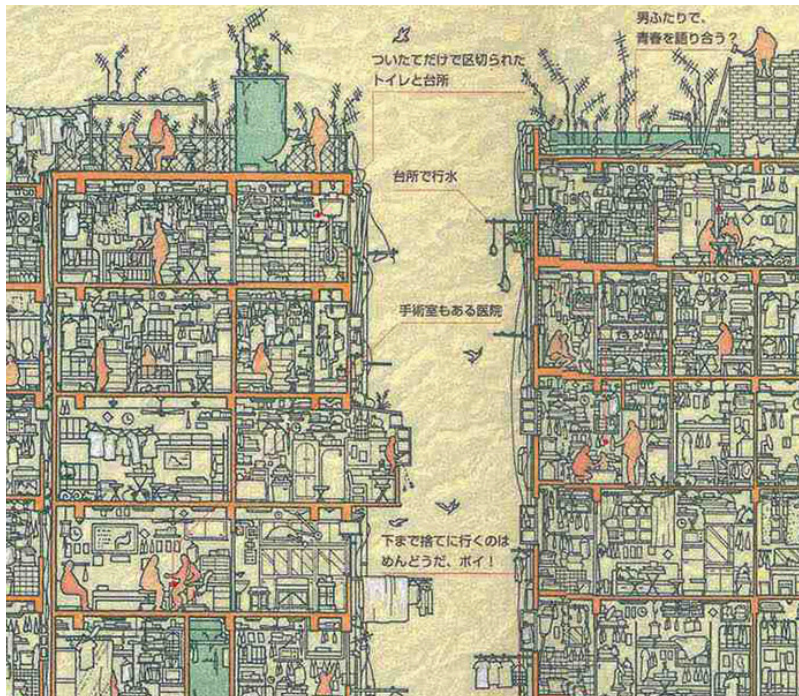


Fig. 1.10 An Illustrated Cross Section of Hong Kong's Infamous Kowloon Walled City by a group of Japanese researchers and illustrators

The Nolli plan is another example that supports this non conventional way of understanding an urban fabric. In chapter 3, I demonstrate access to urban space by using a cartographic technique developed by Giambattista Nolli. The 1748 Nolli map of Rome, a historical and cartographic masterpiece, illustrates the relationship between Roman buildings and public space based on tangible experience. Nolli's cartographic technique uses blank areas to denote public space, accessible by all, while hatched areas represent private or inaccessible space. It is a two-dimensional plan drawing used to

understand the accessibility and flow of space within a city. Unique to the Nolli Drawing is the representation of public space inside buildings, as part of the urban realm. There is no distinction between inside and out; only space and mass. The ground floors of the interior public spaces are part of the social fabric of the city where the full web of streets, routes and squares come alive and hold the city together. The Nolli Map of Rome presented the Eternal City in a way that deepened the comprehension of its neighborhood fabric.²²

Just like the public spaces inside the buildings shown on the Nolli map, transitional spaces in the Xinwei Building and its Taipei neighborhood also serve as a dispersed network piecing the Xinwei Building and Taipei city together as a whole. The development of each transitional space begins with portions of an architectural structure, such as a wall, a staircase, or a column. Over time, each space extends deeper into the communal areas and into the urban realm. There is no final form of a transitional space, for each is a unique transformation created by the Xinwei Building inhabitants. The Xinwei Building is not an isolated event but a small piece to a much larger system. It preserves the vernacular qualities that are dwelled and built by inhabitants and citizens over time, in which many of these qualities have vanished in the newer developments in Taipei.

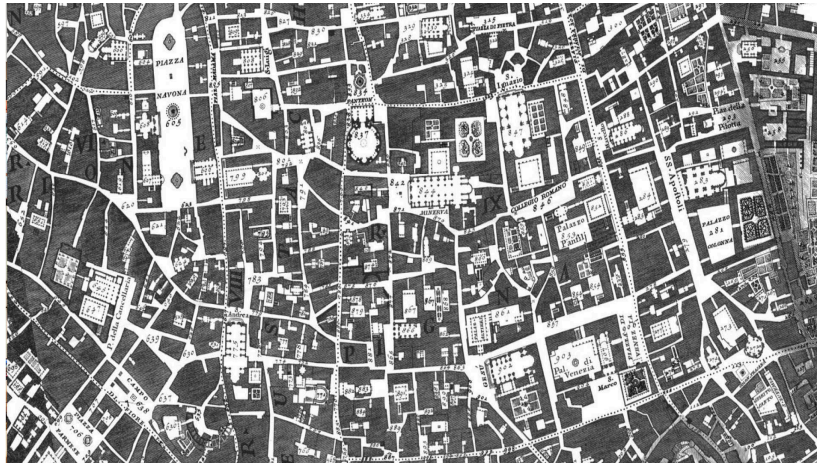


Fig. 1.11 The 1748 Nolli Plan of Rome, a revolutionary way of perceiving urban spaces:

22 King, Marques. 2017. "Nolli Map as a Tool for Small Developers." CNU. January 19, 2017. <https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/2017/01/19/nolli-map-tool-small-developers#:~:text=A%20Nolli%20Map%20is%20a>.

GROUNDWORK

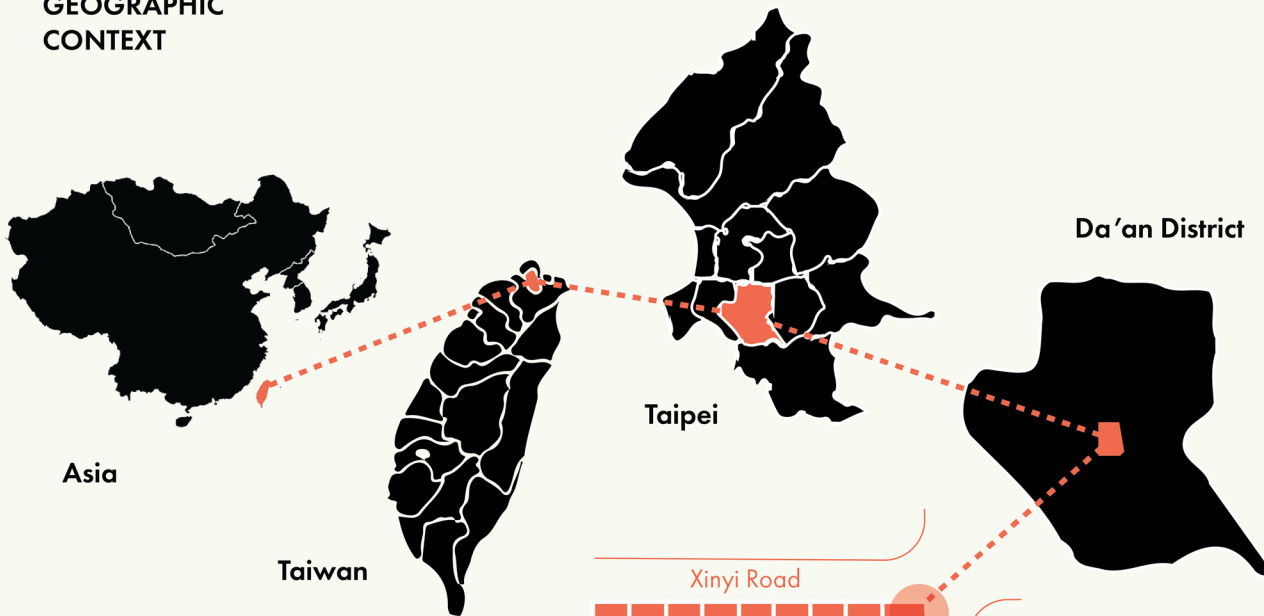
The study area is located in Taipei's Da'an District where many of the capital's urban regeneration projects (Dōu gèng 都更) can be found. The layout of both large and dense urban blocks helped Taipei City to absorb massive postwar population growth from the 1960s to 1980s. 4-5 storey walk-up apartments can be found in the center of the block while 10+ storey buildings border the sides of the block. These “walk-ups” have become an archetype of residential housing due to the city's economic conditions because only luxury houses could afford elevators at that time. The design of the walk-up apartment buildings was confined to the maximum number of stories acceptable for residents to be climbed up by foot.¹ Therefore numerous walk-up apartments below seven storeys were built during the postwar era, including the Xinwei Building as one of the largest walk-up apartments located in the center of Da'an District.

The Xinwei Building was one of 24 Refurbished Residences built by the government to solve the urgent necessity of dwelling in Taipei city during the postwar era and to resettle the massive political immigrants and population growth in the 1960s. In order to give residents more opportunities to earn a living from business, Xinwei Building has specially been planned for a mixed use typology of commercial corridors on the first and second floors, and residential units on the third to sixth floors, with a total of about 500 small units in the whole building.

The Xinwei Building is among the priority list of Dou Geng projects waiting upon renewal. However, it is one of the most difficult projects to start the renewal process due to inconsistent opinions from all the household owners. The following pages contain supplemental materials to enrich reader's understanding of the urban regeneration planning in Taipei.

¹ Taipei, Illegal 2018. “Walk-up Apartments: The Mainstream Housing Typology of Taipei City.” Illegal Taipei. November 9, 2018.

GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

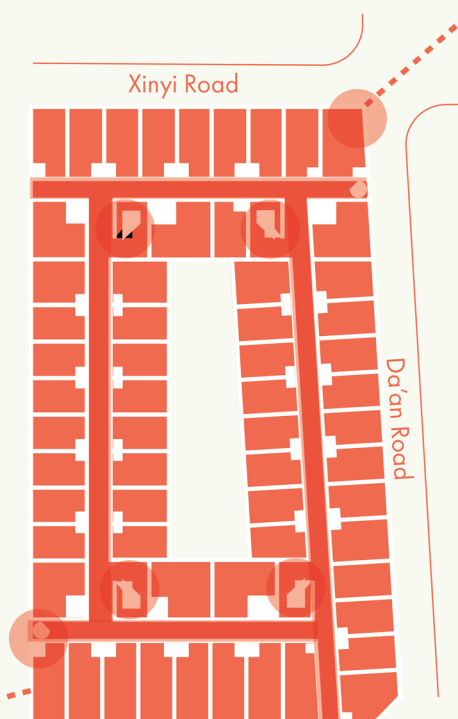


XINWEI BUILDING

The building is located in the centre of Da'an District at the intersection of Xinyi Rd. and Da'an Rd, within both commercial zone 3 and residential zone 3.

- Commercial units 1&2 F
- Residential units 3-6 F
- Xinwei market P1 (demolished 2017)

Total 3399.3 m²



Average living surface area per Taipei citizen in 1969: **6.2 m²**

Average unit sizing in Xinwei Building from **26.5 - 53 m²** with approx **6 people** per unit

Total 489 units
Aprox 1000 residents



Political immigrants

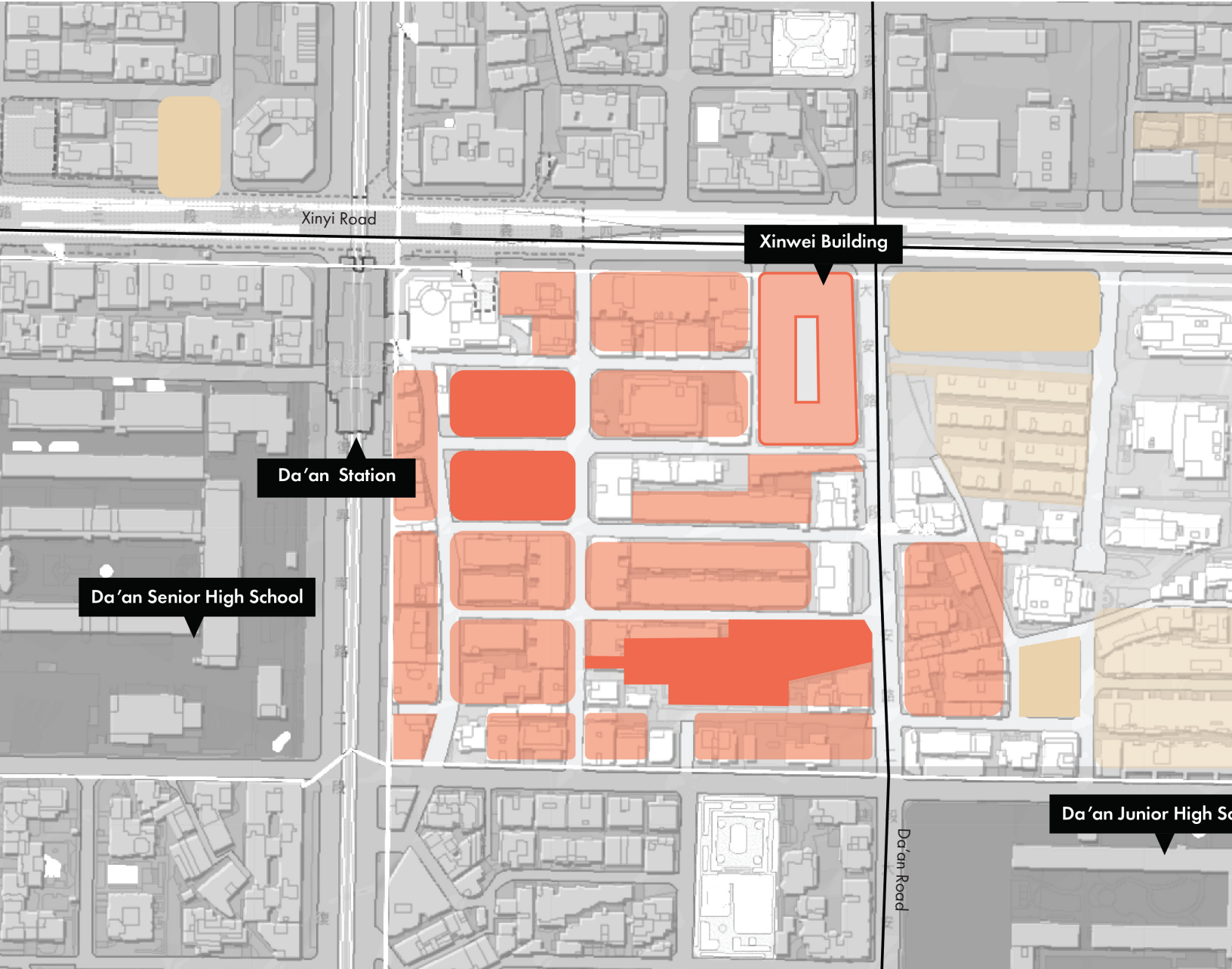


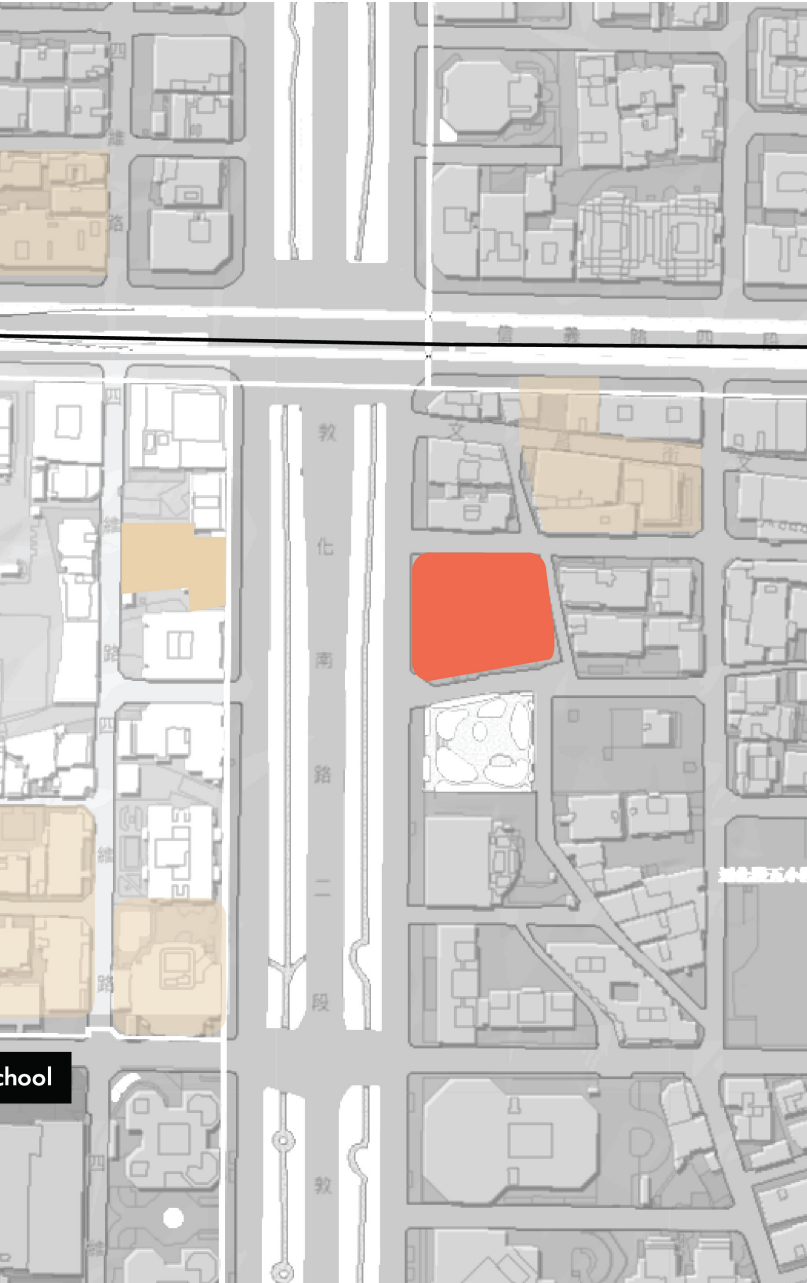
Small business owners



Migrant workers

Fig. 1.12 Geographic context of the Xinwei Building





Taipei Urban Renewal: Dou Geng (都更)

In recent years, the city of Taipei has approved many proposed urban renewal projects, ranging from municipal governed to self organized projects. However, these new top-down high rise developments often lose the intricate ephemeral qualities that the old walk-up apartments have, such as small gatherings or chess games at the corridors, or extruding cage windows that serve as alternative cloth drying locations for households. The images on the next page show how the Xinwei Building is currently surrounded by new developments and it being one of the few Refurbished Residences that still exist in Taipei.

Fig. 1.13 Municipal Planned Urban Renewal Areas within Da'an District Section 1. Highlighted areas are planned to be demolished for renewals in coming years.

- Approved renewal area - Private
- Private renewal area
- Approved renewal area - Priority
- Priority renewal area



Fig. 1.14 Fig 2.2 Satelite plan view of the Xinwei Building and the surrounding neighborhood. The red indicates the metal sheds of illegal rooftops and highlights the areas that are proposed to be renewed.



Fig. 1.15 Bird eye view of the Xinwei Building looking South West. Red and white roofs indicate the illegal rooftops.



Fig. 1.16 Bird eye view of the Xinwei Building looking North East. Xinwei Building is surrounded by new top-down developments and high rises.

Packing Immigrants Inside: The Origins of The Xinwei Building

In 1963, 28% of the residents in Taipei lived in illegally constructed structures due to the drastic changes in society after the Chinese civil war. In order to improve the situation and leverage the living quality for these political immigrants, the Taipei City Government built 24 “Refurbished Residences” from 1962 to 1975. Due to the financial situation of the households living in the illegally constructed spaces, units in the Refurbished Residences were planned to be small in order to achieve housing affordability. These Refurbished Residences are mostly located in the old urban areas such as Zhongzheng, Datong, or Wanhua District. The Xinwei Building built in 1969 is the only one located in Da’an District.

“Refurbished Residences (整宅 Zhěng zhái)” is a term that refers to the refurbishment of the numerous informal settlements in Taipei that were originally built during the postwar era. These residences are funded by the government to allocate for the sudden increase of population in Taipei, and at the same time, to clean up the illegal housings dispersed across Taipei. Unlike the State Houses (國宅 Guó zhái), which are mainly used to house government officials, the “Refurbished Residence” households are mostly illegal households who come from other places that cannot be assigned to the State Houses. They are the political immigrants who retreated from mainland China with the GMT government in 1949 and economic immigrants who traveled north from the central and southern Taiwan countryside to seek jobs during the second wave of Taiwan’s urbanization in the 1960s.

Compared with the typical layout of the general State House, which each unit is more than 20 to 30 pings (one ping is 3.3 square meters or 35.3 square feet), the units in the Refurbished Residences and the Xinwei Building are only six to eight pings (~23 sqm) with slightly more than 10 pings (~33 sqm) on higher floors. The building of nearly 500 units is packed with more than 1,000 people with a denser concentration on the first and second floors that consists of small



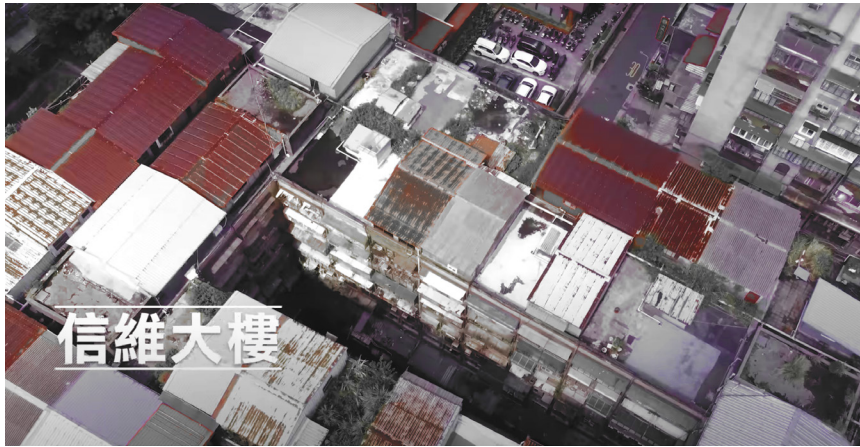
Illegal Informal Settlements (1950)

Fig. 1.17 The illegal settlements in Taipei in the late 1950s.

The illegal street houses, flat houses, and the mixture of informal and formal bungalows were the major archetypes in the 1950 post war Taipei.



Refurbished Residences (1970s - Present)



Dou Geng Projects (Future)



Fig. 1.18 Two of the 23 “Refurbished Residences” built in 1960s that are still awaiting for renewal process today- The Xinwei Building (above) and Shuai Yuan Residences (below).

businesses and market vendors. As a consequence of the constriction of the small units and crowded interior, residents began to extend their everyday activities into hallways and outer edges lining the Xinwei Building, creating distinct kinds of communal space and one of them being the Xinwei Market.

The Xinwei Market was hidden in the basement of the Xinwei Building. This space was originally planned as an air defense basement for evacuation but business owners sought opportunities and turned it into illegal stalls that eventually became the heart of the Xinwei Building for a long period before chain stores and air conditioned supermarkets became popular in Taiwan. Half a century after the Xinwei Building was built, the underground Xinwei Market was closed and shut down in the beginning of 2017.

Nevertheless, the outer ring of the Xinwei Building is still full of food stalls, while the inner ground floor corridors are filled with gold paper shops, barber shops, fruit stalls and meat stalls. As the older generation of inhabitants gradually passed away, the current inhabitants are now composed of marginalized groups with poor economic conditions, small business owners on the lower floors who have been making businesses on the site for their entire life, and investors who see a potential in the site within the most expensive area of Taipei. The government and private developers have failed multiple times in getting the residents' agreements to renew the building because many would rather maintain the status quo, making the development and renewal process extremely hard to continue. As a result, the Xinwei Building has not yet been torn down for renewal and has since formed a sharp contrast with the surrounding luxury high rises.



Fig. 1.21 Xinwei Building at the intersection of Xinyi Road and Da'an Road



Fig. 1.20 Xinwei Building along Da'an Road looking north



Fig. 1.19 The west back alley of the Xinwei Building

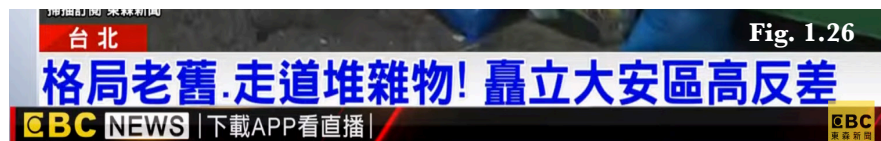
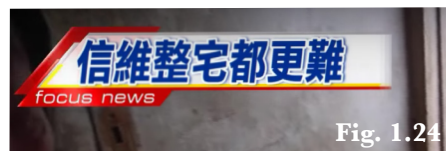


Fig. 1.22 Text says “Corridor filled with miscellaneous items.”

Fig. 1.23 Text says “Capital’s slum is in hope for renewal”

Fig. 1.24 Text says “It is difficult to start the renewal for Xinwei Building.”

Fig. 1.25 Text says “Xinwei Building is the tumor of the city.”

Fig. 1.26 Text says “Decaying structure and misc items on corridor create sharp contrast with the Da’an District.”

“The Tumor of The City”

Shared balconies or verandas of informal settlements in the post war Taipei used to create the transition between the private and public. Though, with increasing demands on private space, these places slowly began to disappear in the new condo developments while being integrated into the individual units.¹

The Xinwei Building, being the Refurbished Residence that shelters the households from the illegal settlements, shares the same essence qualities of having interesting communal spaces. Furniture and miscellaneous items in front of the household entrances are piled up like mountains. Rows of clothes can be seen hanging in the space beside ducts that run across the ceilings along with tangled wires and water pipes. Yet, the poverty, unpleasing forms, and decaying structure in these communal areas are being reported nowadays, resulting in the building to be known as the slum of Taipei. The Xinwei Building is overcrowded and the corridors are often cluttered with signboards and personal items, being one of the first priority projects to be renewed in Da’an District. The Xinwei Building is now known as the “tumor of the city” by the Taipei citizens.

Nevertheless, the old walk-up apartment is still full of life. Inhabitants of the Xinwei Building continue to adapt the common space to expand or adjust their individual interiors. Tacit agreements and informal rules apply between the neighbors. The desire for space together with an overall tolerance and mix-used mentality encourages human creativity much further. The Xinwei Building thus becomes an unfinished structure which is gradually expanding inside out to every direction available.

¹ Taipei, Illegal 2018. “Walk-up Apartments: The Mainstream Housing Typology of Taipei City.” Illegal Taipei. November 9, 2018.



Fig. 1.28 Workers set up their work space on the communal interior corridor because there is no space in the units.



Fig. 1.30 The rooftop of the Xinwei Building. Electricity and water pipes are distributed to the illegal metal shed households.



Fig. 1.27 Bird eye view of the Xinwei Building rooftop community and its context with the Xinyi Rd. The middle lane of the road serves as a bus lane.



Fig. 1.29 Interior residential hallway of the Xinwei Building. Personal household items such as clothes and furnitures can be seen at the communal space.



Fig. 1.32 Communal corridor filled with washer dryers, pipes and wires, and hot water tanks.



Fig. 1.34 Tangled wires can be seen on roof and throughout the facade of the Xinwei Building as an example of how electricity has been distributed.



Fig. 1.31 Entrance of the Xinwei Building as a public passage way that crosses through the west and east sides of the building.



Fig. 1.33 Metal shed roof top expansions built mostly by the residents living on the top floor of the Xinwei Building.

The Urban In- Between

The informal occupation of space expands into the urban voids and corners in the city such as the alley ways, fire lanes, curbsides, storefronts, and the rooftops. These are the liminal spaces that are in the middle of two different polarizing spaces, such as public and private or inside and outside. These urban voids are categorized as public spaces, yet, they are not the kind of public space that are typically understood like a city hall or a public park. They provide a balance of public and private qualities when individuals participate in these spaces, in which they find a piece of individual privacy in the communal areas, on the edges of two different worlds, between individual intimate moments and the collective whole.

Two polarizing elements, such as interior and exterior or public and private, are not opposites but coexist in a complementary way as supported by Aldo Van Eyck's in-between theories. In Aldo Van Eyck's theory, such a condition could also appear when two different interior spaces are linked, such as a residential unit entrance and the building corridor. Ambivalence of the in-between could be expressed through the overlap of two polarities, the continuity of one into another, the articulation of elements, to create a gap as a third space, or the repetition of units and the formation of a whole or fragmentation of elements for a more integrated relation.¹

The entire thesis investigates how the in-between spaces are utilized by the inhabitants of the Xinwei Building, mostly the subaltern groups. They continue to expand their personal items onto the communal areas, out of necessity, overlapping their private interior space onto the public exterior space. Their adaptations and transformation of space resonates with many urban corners in Taipei, forming a tight relationship with the urban vernacular development of Taipei.

1 Maryam Farhady & Jeehyun Nam (2009) *Comparison of In-between Concepts by Aldo Van Eyck and Kisho Kurokawa*, *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, 8:1,22



Fig. 1.35 Restaurant staff washing dishes in the back alley. This space is planned as a fire lane, yet people uses it for many purposes out of necessity.

The research of the subaltern's ability to create a viable form of life through the liminal spaces of architecture offers readers a new understanding of an inclusive and just society. The urban voids and corners in the city may be filled with unruly items such as garbage and tangled wires, yet life goes by there with a flood of traffic that moves in these spaces in its own rhythm with human activities. They may look like a mess or even a big pile of slums, but when these spaces are pieced together and interconnected with each other, they make a coherent whole that make up the urban fabric of Taipei.

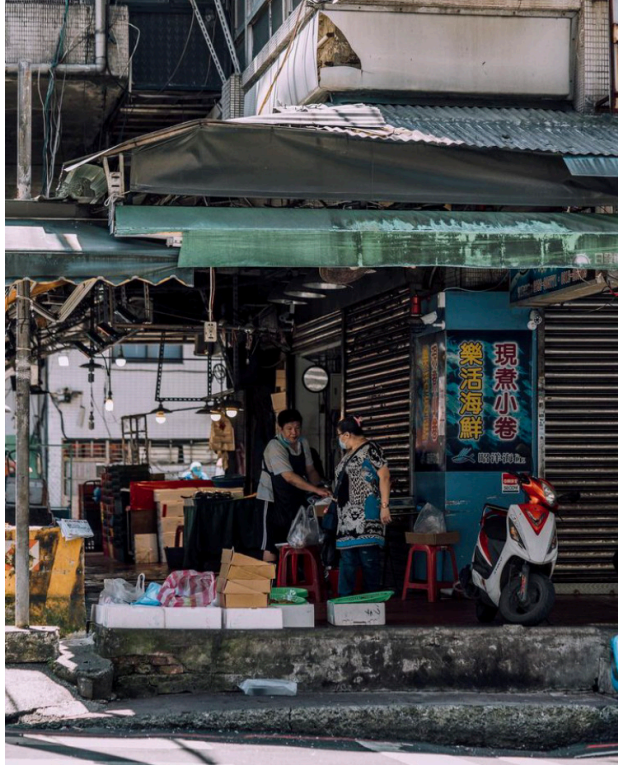


Fig. 1.36 Auntie arguing on sea food price with the merchant who displays the items on the stair steps.



Fig. 1.37 People dining and enjoying cold noodles while sitting on the food stall's extended tables on the curb side.



Fig. 1.38 Old lady is cleaning up recycled items with clothes hanging on the drainage tile on the parapet.



Fig. 1.40 Man enjoying sardine soup



Fig. 1.39 Young man enjoying a fulfilling lunch on the curb side beside the parked cars

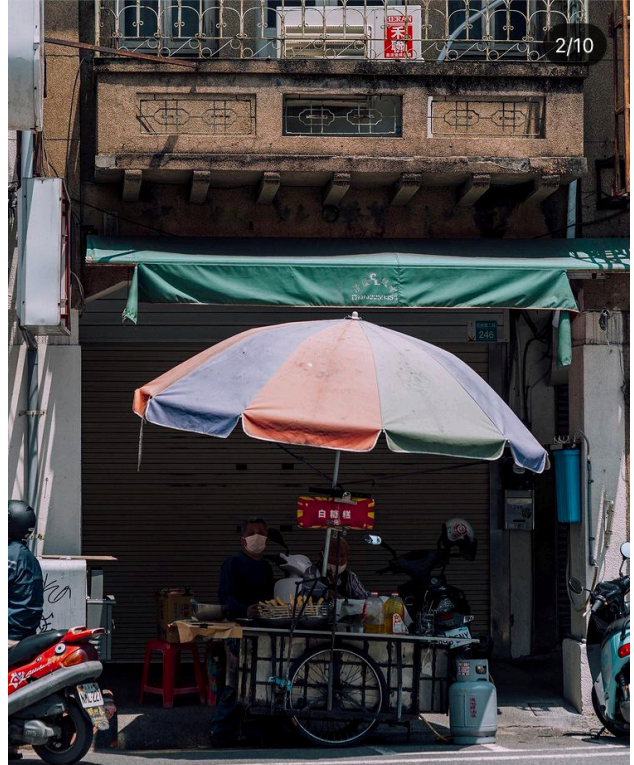


Fig. 1.41 Food cart with two wheels selling sugar coated dessert under an umbrella



There's an interweaving public and private kinds of narratives and scales that make up the Xinwei Building. It is a very sensitive balance of private and public in which both of those energies come together and emerge into a coherent living pattern.

故事在你我身邊流動-柯文哲

Stories flow around us

- Taipei Mayor Kē Wénzhé

Fig. 1.42 The intimate and collective human events within the in-between transitional spaces of the Xinwei Building.

THE EVERYDAY

Everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by “what is left over” after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis, must be defined as a totality. Considered in their specialization and their technicality, superior activities leave a “technical vacuum” between one another which is filled up by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and its form. In it are expressed and fulfilled those relations which bring into play the totality of the real, albeit in a certain manner which is always partial and incomplete: friendship, comradeship, love, the need to communicate, play, etc. - Henri Lefebvre¹

Lefebvre’s spatial practice defines the perceived space through appropriations of the everyday. They are the mundane everyday activities and daily routines that constitute the transitional spaces in Xinwei Building. The repeated steaming of the rice dumplings at store fronts, the ordinary elder’s chess games on hallways, the endless washing and drying of laundry on stairwells, each and every act was one of the spices that produced the liveliness in the Xinwei Building.

The transformations of the liminal spaces within and around the Xinwei Building are inseparable from the dwellers’ everyday life. In a megalopolis so dense in population yet with no more free land left, inhabitants dwell and utilize space in every possible way they could. These are the liminal in-between spaces that are usually built within the voids and gaps of architectural structures over public and collective areas. The inhabitant’s adaptations with vernacular objects in these liminal thresholds form the transitional spaces in Xinwei Building that cultivates daily life and supports human activities.

The next chapter, Personal Portraits, focuses on the three historical

¹ Lefebvre, Critique of Everyday Life, 97.

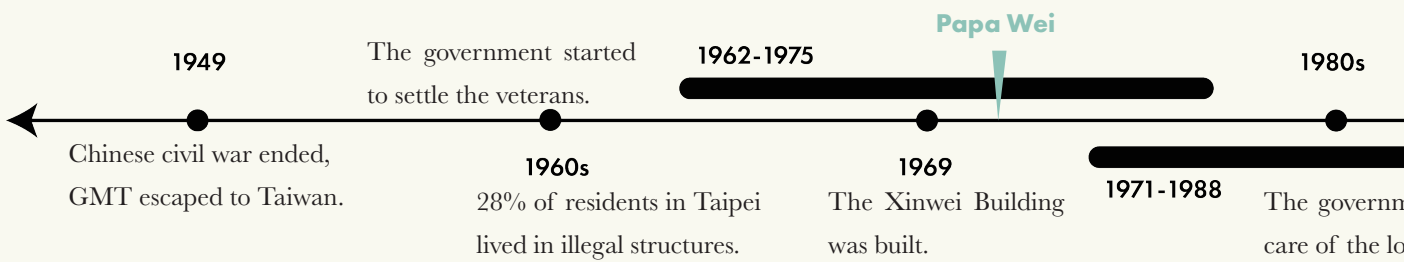
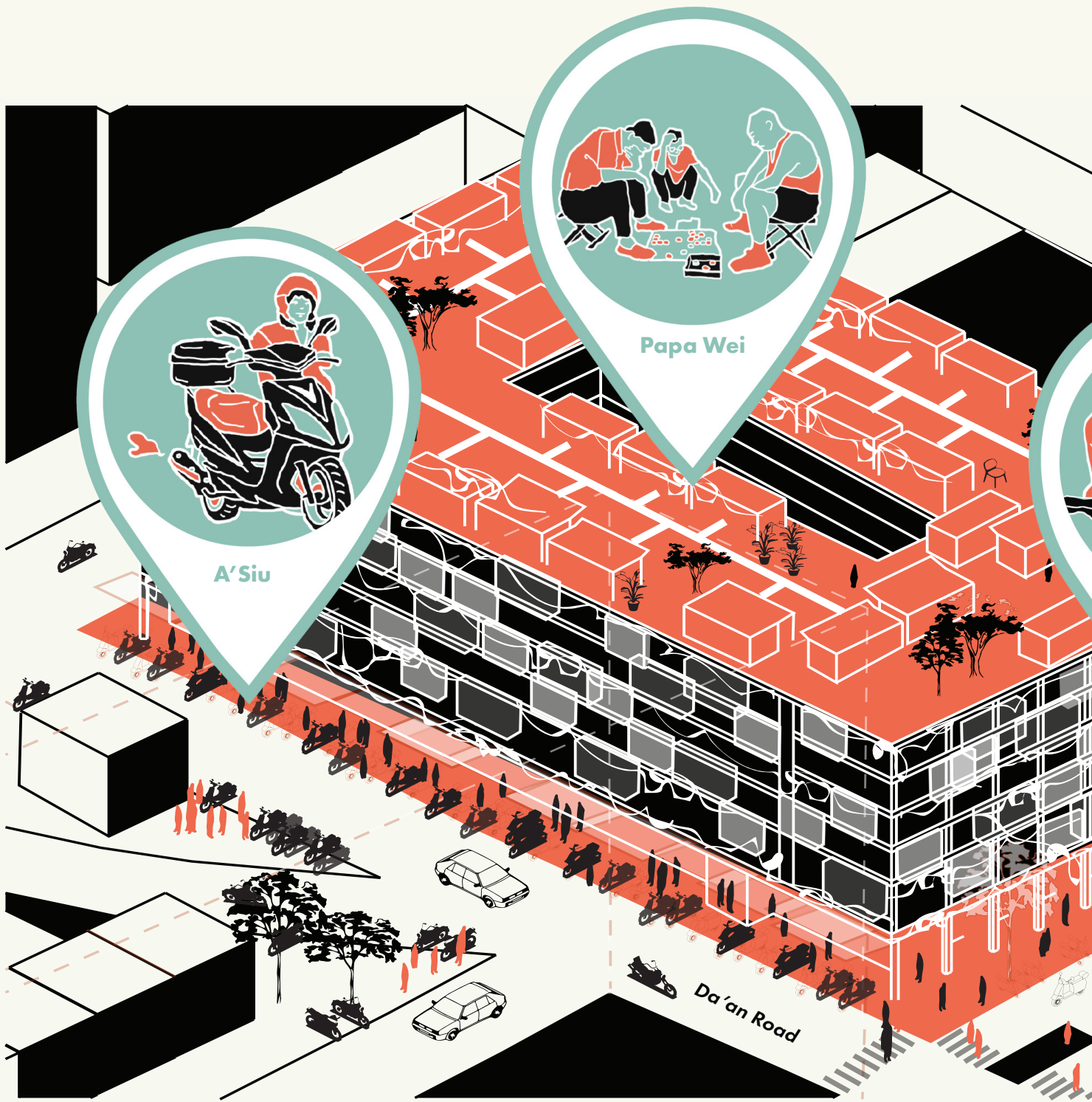
fictional characters' daily lives. In first person narratives, the chapter captures stories of the character's daily routines and how they navigate around the Xinwei Building and its neighborhood. The chapter focuses on the unique occupations of spaces and creative spatial configurations that are, of necessity, carved out of inhabitants', business owners' and citizens' everyday artifacts.

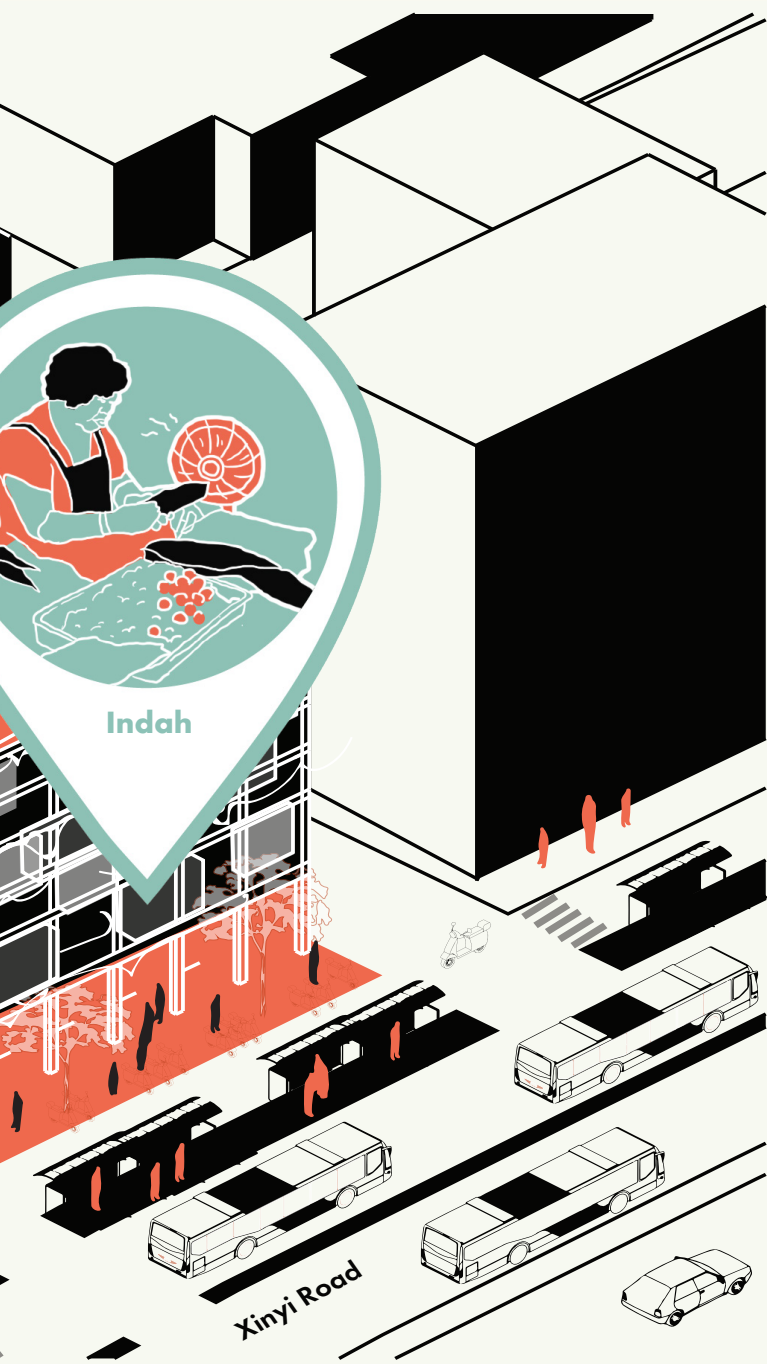
Historical Fiction And Character Formation

The character formation of Indah is based on personal memory of an Indonesian nanny who used to work in our house when I was a child. During my childhood, I shared a room with her and observed her daily life as an immigrant worker in a city so far away from home- Taipei. I watched her interacting with merchants at food stalls for cheaper goods and the way people make their own special individual space on the taiwanese arcades and the spaces in between the store fronts and rows of parked motorcycles.

The character formation of Papa Wei reflects my grandfather who passed away a decade ago. While piecing the stories of what my mother has told me and reminiscing back to my childhood, I remember the numerous visits to his walk-up apartment and watching his daily activities exactly like many others in the Xinwei Building. My mother would tell me stories about him, her childhood and how political immigrant families like them would live in an extremely narrow space in Taipei.

The character formation of A'Siu is purely based on the stories that my mother once told during the time when she had to pass by the Xinwei Building for her work. It also consists of childhood memories of her friends, a group of aunties that frequently visited our house and the area where the Xinwei Building is located. The character of A'Siu reflects the daily life of a middle aged female Taipei citizen, from using a motorcycle as her daily transportation to weekly grocery shopping at the fruit and veggies stalls under the temporary structure instead of going to the supermarkets.



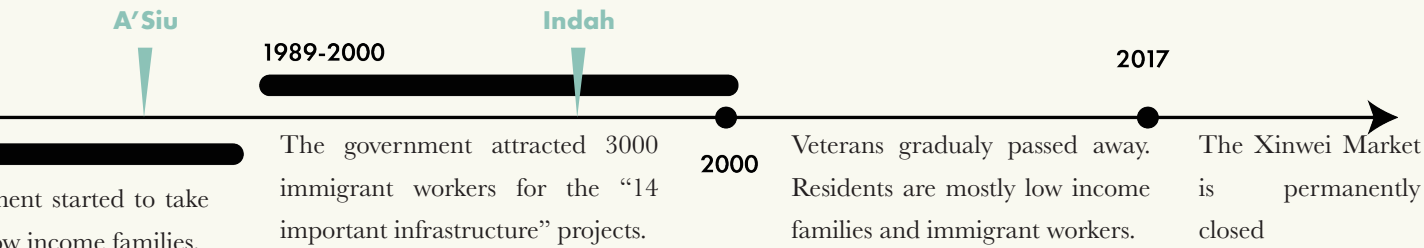


HISTORICAL OVERVIEW & CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS

Everyone creates spaces in the Xinwei Building: Papa Wei, who hails from Qingdao in mainland China, is getting on in age, lives on the sixth floor, and cannot climb more than a few steps without panting. He often does his laundry at the public stairwell and plays chess in the hallway.

A'Siu, a native of Taipei who used to live on the second floor, had to squeeze into an unit of less than 14 ping (one ping is 3.3 square meters or 35.3 square feet) with her family of three. As a consequence of the small unit, she moved all the household furniture to the communal corridor space for a bigger living space.

Then there is Indah, who is originally from Indonesia, gets up early to receive mail and frowns whenever she sees motorcycles parked in the entrance niches beside the mailboxes. When she enters or leaves the building, she raises her head in wonder because in an area full of five-star hotels, foreign companies, and posh apartments, this dilapidated yet lively building is a bit of a wonder to a new immigrant worker.



01

personal portraits

This chapter provides the reader an exploration into the everyday lives of inhabitants of the Xinwei Building. These include Indah, a migrant worker, Papa Wei, a political immigrant, and A-siu, a frequent neighborly visitor. This chapter focuses on the incremental elements and the everyday objects they encounter daily. Through their individual narratives, the readers may see a spectrum of vernacular spatial configurations within the Xinwei Building.

**the
everyday**

I need to work hard in Taipei so my family back home in Indonesia will be able to live a better life.

- Indah, age 47



Fig. 2.1 Fig.3.43 Indah's a day in the life around the Xinwei Building

1. Indah

Originally from Indonesia, Indah has been working in Four Fortune Rice Dumpling house for more than five years. She moved to Taipei in order to seek better employment and pay to feed her family back home. Her work place, the Four Fortune Rice Dumpling house, is located on the second floor of the Xinwei Building. She spends the majority of her time there doing all kinds of work from prepping ingredients to wrapping dumplings and to collecting garbage.

I was one of the immigrant workers that came to Taipei during the 1990s and worked for Four Fortune Rice Dumpling in order to seek more income to support my family financially back home. Lots of the staff here are also immigrant workers like me who also live in this building so we share similar daily schedules.

- ①— *At 7:00 am in the morning, I would go downstairs to the breakfast cart located between the intersection of Xinyi Road and the back alley.*
- ②— *Throughout the day, I would mostly be working with my boss on the second floor wrapping the rice dumplings along with other immigrant workers.*
- ③— *Depending on the day and season, sometimes we work over hours and we would miss the daily evening garbage collection time where garbage trucks stop by the intersections of the back alley. That is the happiest time of the day because while we wait for the truck to come, I get to relax and chat with some other neighboring immigrant workers who also came from my hometown-Indonesia.*
- ④— *Sometimes during my off hours, I go to the shoe repair shop on the first floor public arcade of the building to chat with the nanny who used to fix my shoes. This is where I find security and joy during my time in lonely Taipei.*



Fig. 2.4 Breakfast stall at the alley corner between Xinwei Building and the Mentor hair salon

Every morning around 7-8am, there is a long line up filled with students and young professionals by the breakfast stall. It is located at the pedestrian crossway near the entrance of the Xinwei Building and the corner of the Mentor Salon. Temporarily set up with the tent covers, foldable tables, portable freezers, toasters and tea barrels, I always get cheap and tasty breakfast here to fill my stomach first thing in the morning!

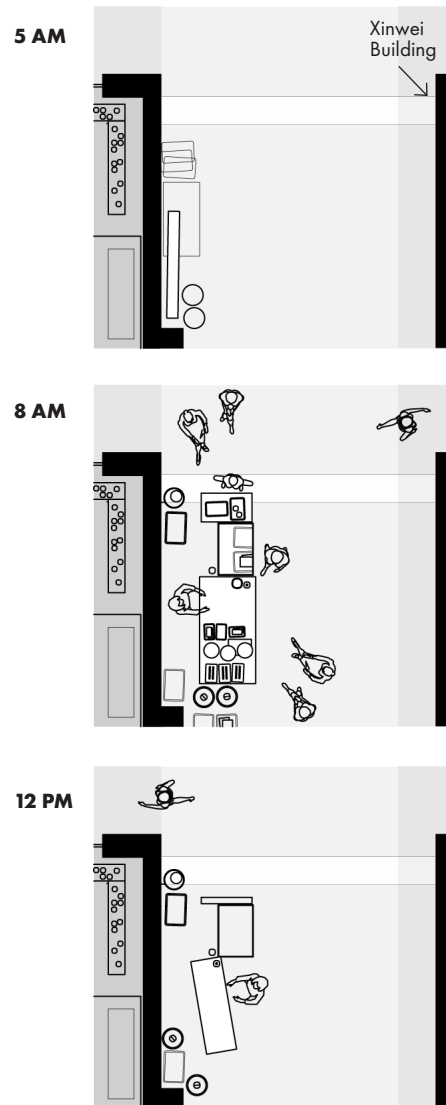


Fig. 2.2 Vernacular spatial configuration of the temporary breakfast stall at the corner of the side alley close to the Xinwei Building's West entrance .

Fig. 2.3 Plan view of the transitional space created by the breakfast stall owner between Xinwei Building's north west corner and the alley.

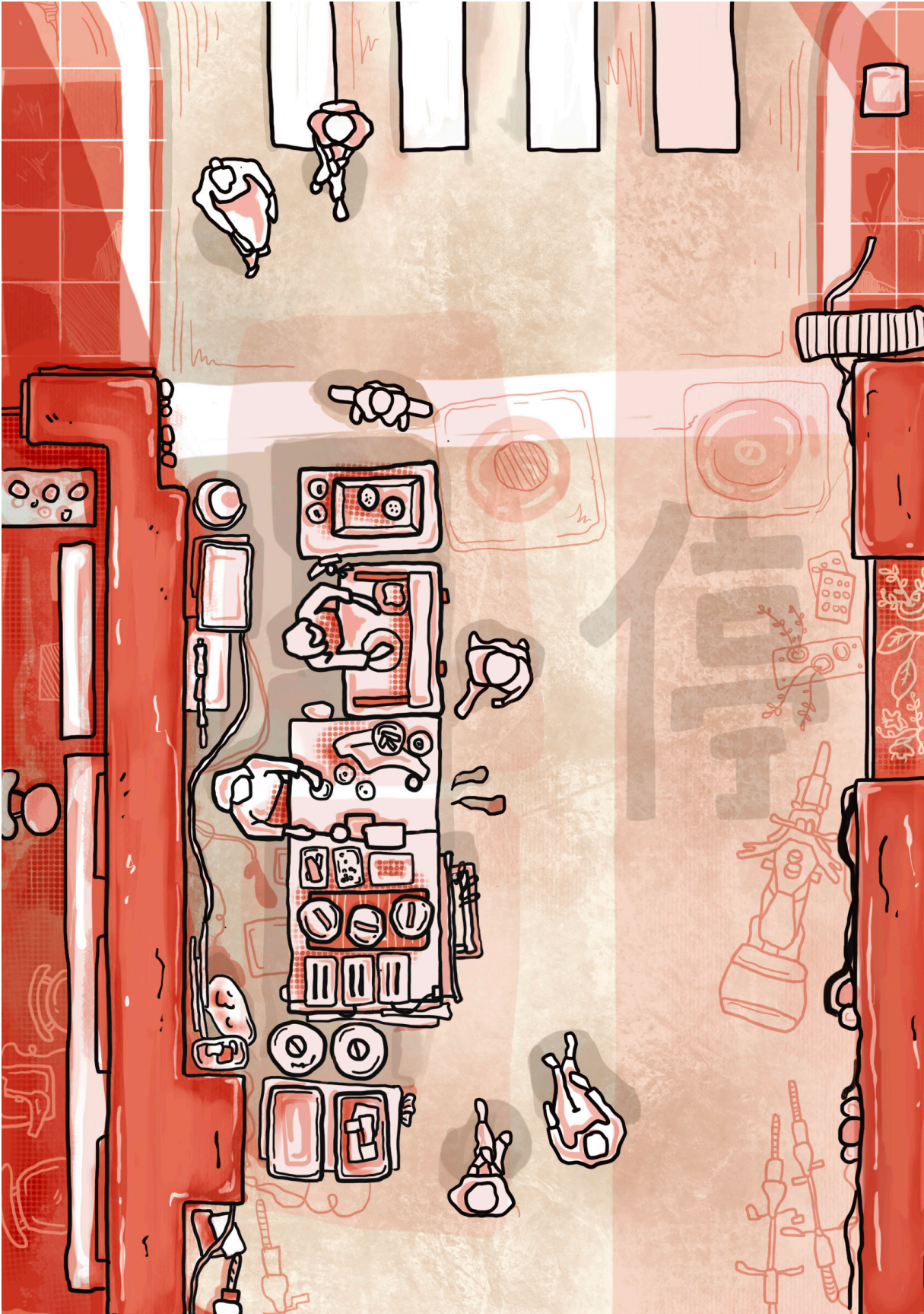




Fig. 2.7 Work setting on the communal corridor by the stairwell

After breakfast, I go upstairs to the second floor where my work, Four Fortune Rice Dumpling, is located at and start setting up my work environment for the day. Sometimes we like to find a more ventilated spot on the hallway close to the stairwell. My coworkers and I like to place some tables together so that it is easier for us to put all the ingredients at the centre. When there is no space left on the table, we would put them on top of a stool or in the basket on a cart.

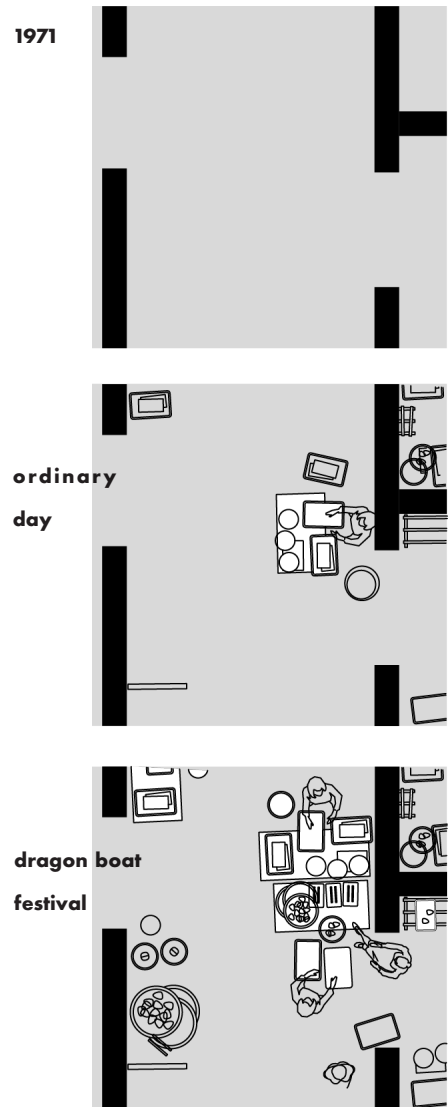


Fig. 2.5 Different vernacular spatial configurations of Four Fortune Rice Dumpling's work settings at different times on the second floor corridor.

Fig. 2.6 Plan view of the transitional space between the walls and the corridor created by Indah and her co-workers.





Fig. 2.10 Work setting of nannie's shoe repair shop behind a column

Sometimes, I come downstairs to chat with the nannie who owns the shoe repair shop on the public arcade. The nannie continues to work at night because there are light fixtures hanging above her small customized workspace. Despise the lights being tangled and mixed with other wires on the ceiling, it is more than enough for nannie to continue her work. Her shoe repair shop is always busy because she charges the cheapest price for the best quality in the Xinwei area.

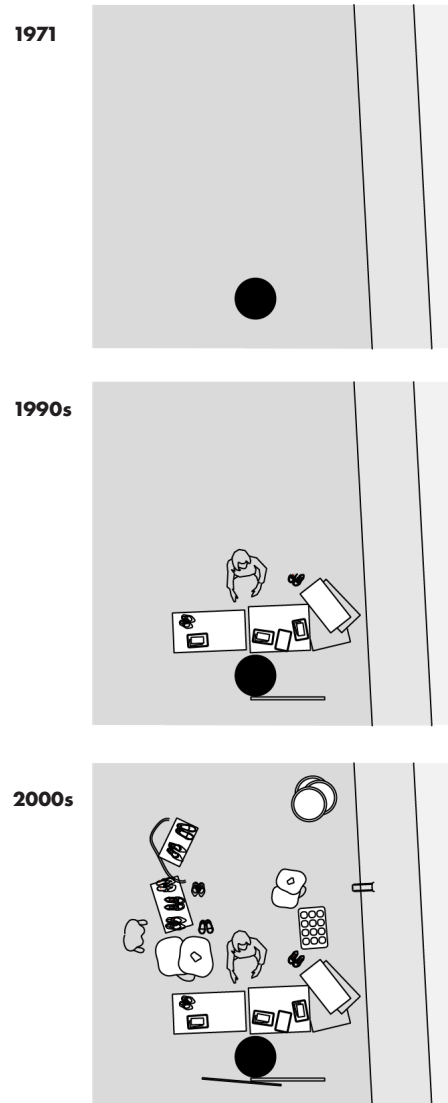
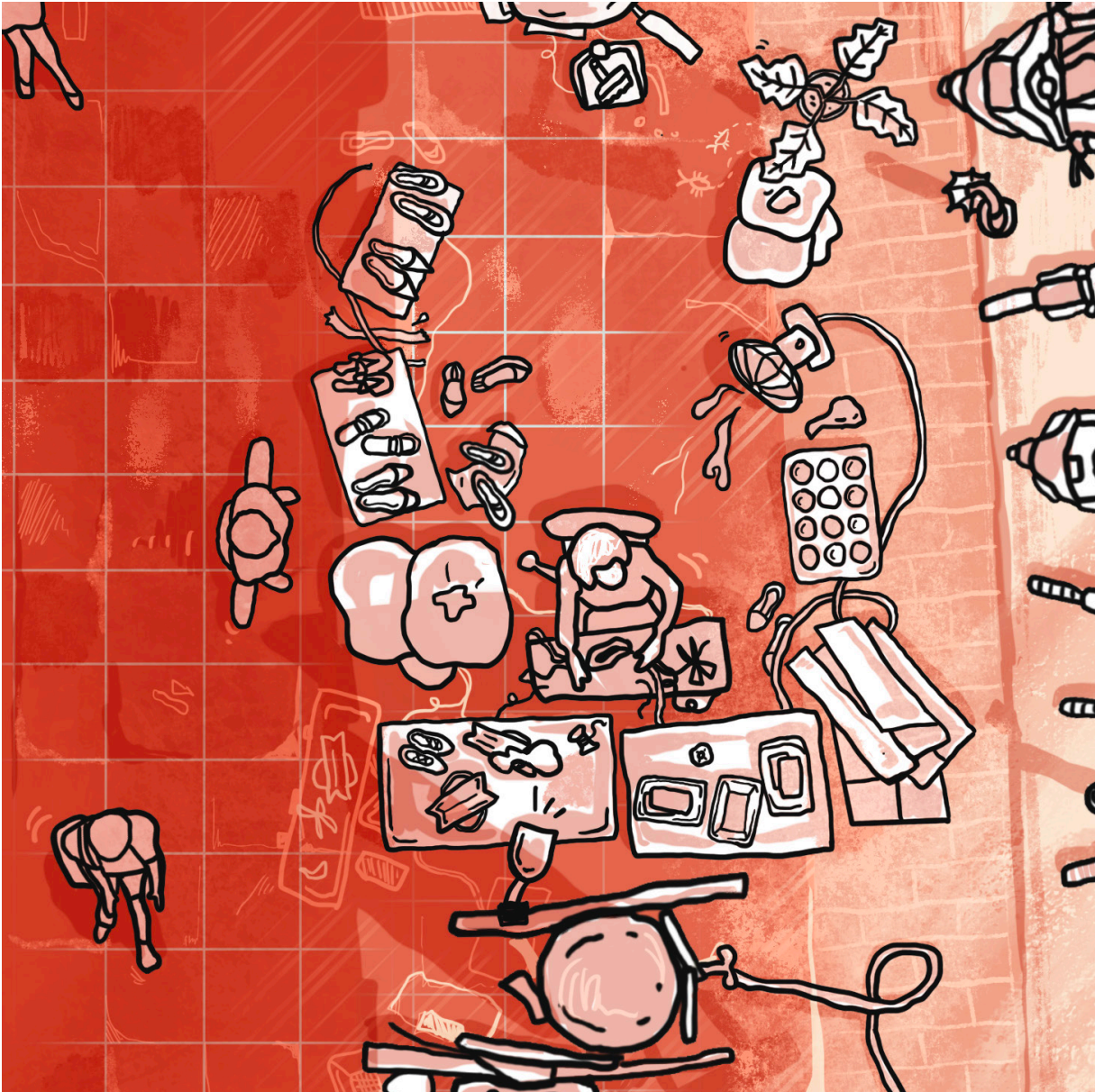


Fig. 2.8 Vernacular spatial configuration and everyday accumulation at the shoe repair shop on the ground floor from 1971 - 2000s.

Fig. 2.9 Plan view of the transitional space behind one of the building's load bearing columns, created by the nannie who owns the shoe repair shop.



Unlike conventional shoe repair stores, nannie's shoe repair shop is a temporary spatial configuration on the ground floor that are set up by a shelf behind a column with tables surrounding the shelf. She sits on a swivel chair in the centre with her sawing machine placed on the shelf. Bags of customer's items are sitting under the foldable tables. Although she is surrounded by the food shops on her right and rows of motorcycles on her left, she can still fully concentrate on her work in this personalized individual space.



5

How do I win this chess game? It seems impossible to beat him... Maybe we'll have another round tomorrow.

-Papa Wei, age 72



4



1



3



2

Fig. 2.11 Papa Wei's a day in the life around the Xinwei Building

2. Papa Wei

Papa Wei is an honorable veteran who lives with his wife on the sixth floor of the Xinwei Building for over 50 years. Originally from Qingdao in mainland China, he is one of the political immigrants who migrated to Taiwan from Mainland China with the KMT (Kuomintang) party during the post-war period. He lives in the Xinwei Building ever since it was built as one of the 24 Refurbished Residences that were to accommodate the sudden population growth of post-war Taipei in 1971.

I was among one of the migration waves from China to Taipei in the 1950s after the KMT (Kuomintang) party lost in the Chinese Civil War in 1949. Like most other political immigrants living in the Xinwei Building, my unit is so small that it doesn't have enough space to store all the household furniture. I'm now 71 years old and my wife is 69 years old.

- ①— *We are getting on in age that we find it difficult to climb upstairs to the worshipping room everyday. It is a small metal shed built illegally on the rooftop due to the lack of space in our unit.*
- ②— *I often do our laundry at our door entrance and dry the bigger items like bath towels on the public stairwell.*
- ③— *Sometimes I go downstairs to the first floor for lunch as it is the most convenient way along with the most options.
In the summer afternoons of horribly humid Taiwanese*
- ④— *weather, I would read newspaper and people watch in the post office across the Xinwei Building. I take advantage of their free air conditioning so I could save my electricity bill. As a retired veteran and political immigrant from China, I've now been living the days based on the government's pension.*
- ⑤— *As I pass by the building entrance coming back from the post office, I would always see residents parking their motorcycles by the mail boxes. I always have to spend extra effort in reaching my mails.*



This is the rice vermicelli soup (米粉湯) shop I encounter everytime I come downstairs because it is located at the corner of our entrance. The menus and fans are hanging from the ceiling with tables configured around the column. The stacks of stools and people sitting around the column are always blocking my way.

Fig. 2.12 Stools and tables are stacked and placed around the column at Xinwei Building's entrance for more dining spaces.



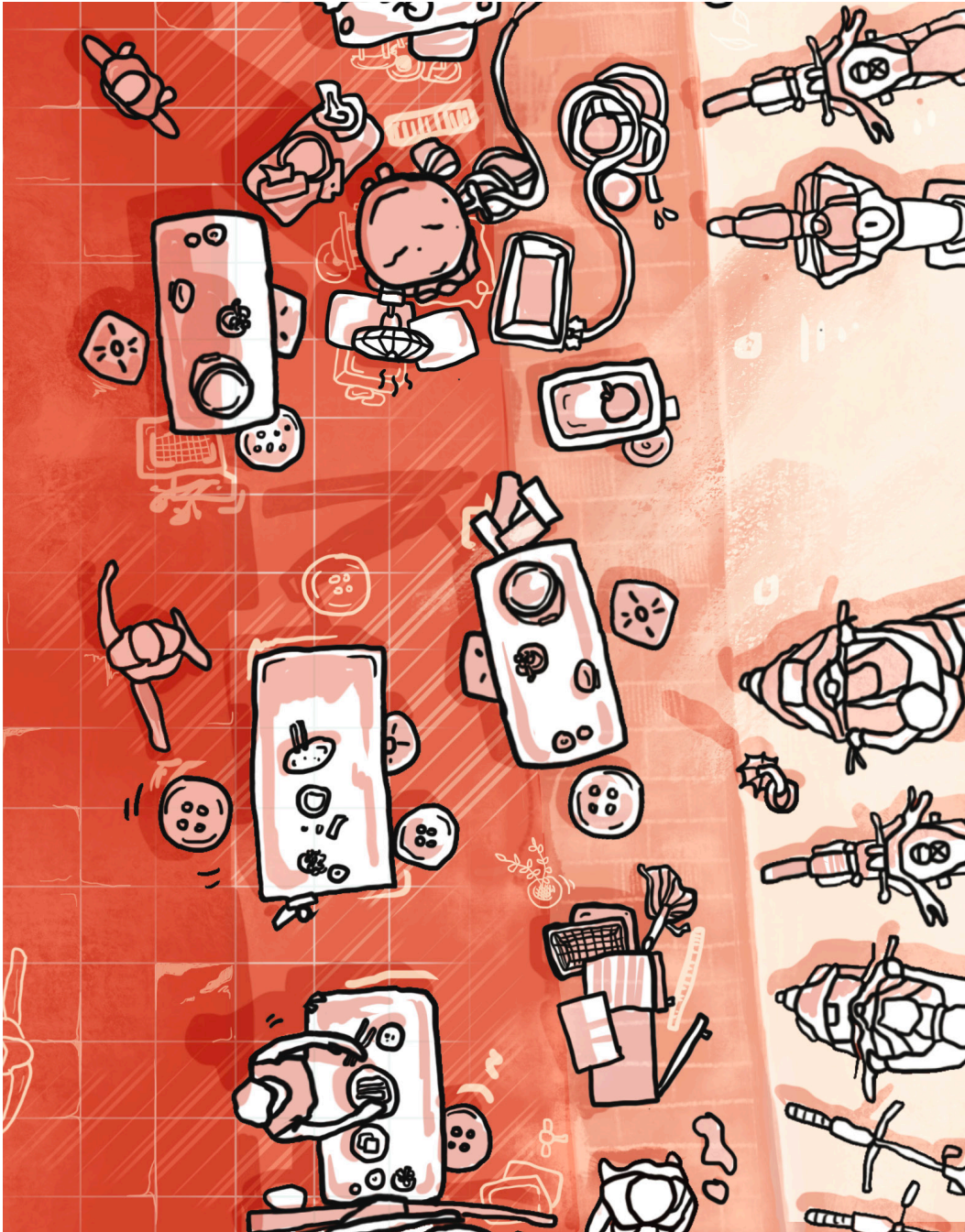
As I walk further out onto the arcade, I am surrounded by more people dining at the temporary tables set up by the business owners and people lining up for their lunch takeouts. The signages, ducts, and running wires all mix together on the ceiling with electric outlets and tissue boxes mounted on the columns. More fans could be seen on the ground by the tables.

Fig. 2.13 Tables are continued to be placed between the columns on the ground floor arcades for more dining spaces due to the small interior unit.



I decide to go to my favourite noodle shop and walk straight to the table that's furthest from the crowd and closest to the road. I like to eat my peanut sauce dried noodle (麻醬麵) there because I am usually surrounded by other tables and miscellaneous items like utility carts, trolleys, brooms, or plants that separate myself from the crowd near the shops.

Fig. 2.14 Trolleys, garbage cans, plants and tables continue to expand out on the side walks. People dine beside the motorcycles and under the hanging signages and menus.



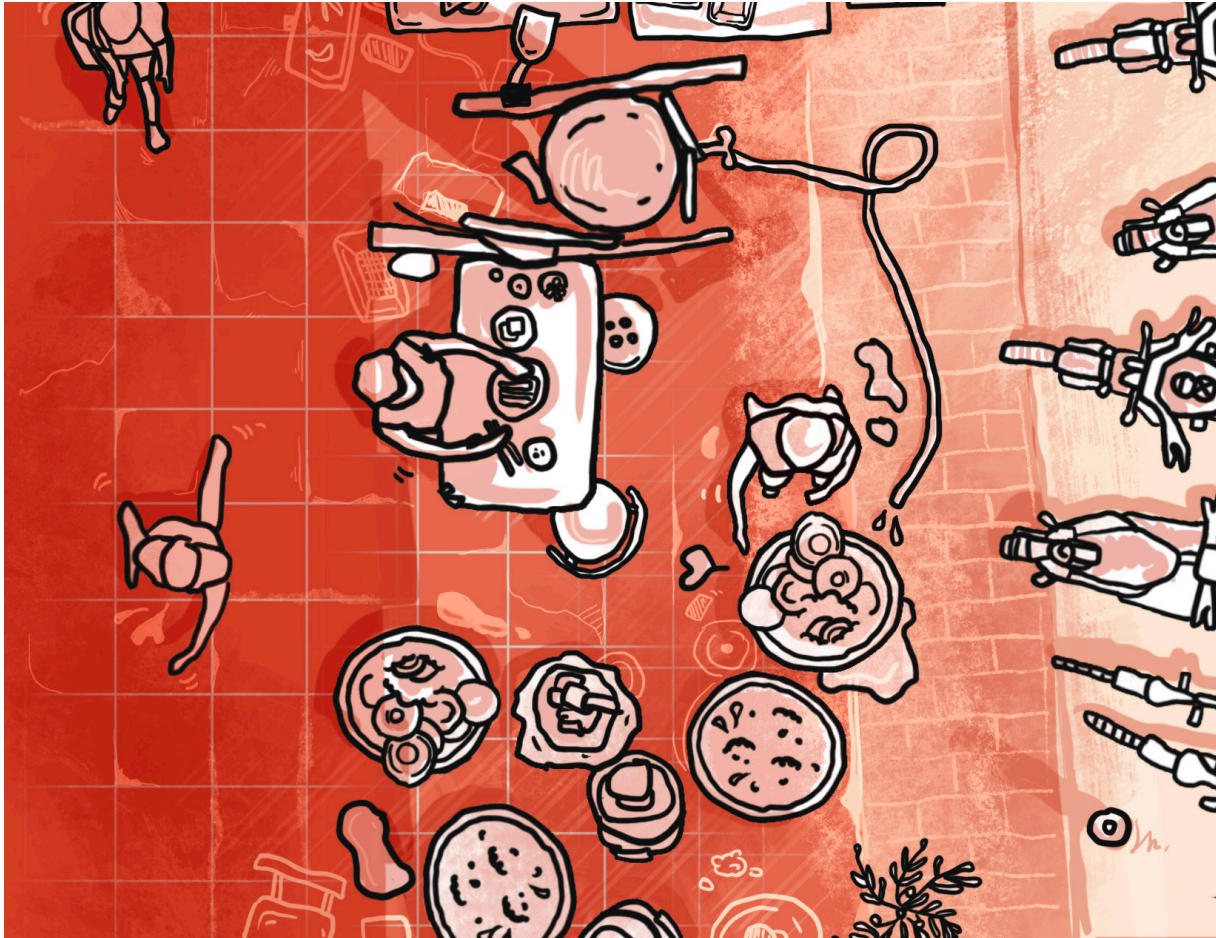
Many tables are set up by the curbside and beside the rows of motorcycles on the road to allow more pedestrian walking space in the inner part. They are also placed between the columns so that the column could also serve as a display for many hanging menus from the shops along with paper advertisements from other businesses.

Fig. 2.15 Plan view of the transitional spaces between the two columns and on the sidewalks. These spaces are mostly created by small food stall owners.



As I enjoy my lunch, I always see the staffs from the noodle shop washing dishes at the curbside beside me. Sometimes we enjoy good conversations while he transfers the pile of bowls and plates from a basket to another. There are usually a few buckets and trash cans beside so food waste and clean bowls could be seperated.

Fig. 2.16 Buckets and trash cans filled with unwashed dishes and garbage on the side walk.



Water hose is connected to the column and there is always water leakage from the hose on the curbside. The several buckets, bins, and baskets are either lined up or configured in a way that the person washing the dishes could sit in the middle, creating some kind of personal space while people on the arcade and vehicles on the road flow in its own rhythm of traffic.

Fig. 2.17 Plan view of the dish washing spaces between the two columns and in front of a row of motorcycles.



I love to sit in the post office across from the Xinwei Building and enjoy their free air conditioning after lunch. There are several stamp shops along the way to the post office which the business owners all place their display shelves on their storefronts. Using every possible space as a place to display their goods, items are often hanged on the ceiling or racks in front of the store.

Fig. 2.18 Items like blessing couplets (red or gold posters with blessings and image of the gods of local religion) are hanging on the ceiling at this stamp engraving shop for better display.



This stamp engraving shop on my way back home along the Xinyi Road displays items on every occupiable space, from hanging toys and new year posters on the makeshift racks tied under the signage and AC to displaying new year items on the portable tables set up beside the arcade column. The owner place large signages on every possible space on the column to attract more business.

Fig. 2.19 Exterior of the stamp shop. Store items are placed outside the unit itself and light fixtures can also be seen hanging from the makeshift rack under the arcade ceiling.



I dry our clothes at our entrance by attaching a string across our front door because there is no space inside the house. Sometimes, we see our neighbors do the same too, so when we run out of space, we dry our bigger items like bed sheets on the stairwells as there is more sunlight and better ventilation there.

Fig. 2.20 Bedsheets and clothings drying on the stair railings. Undergarments are usually clipped on a circular ring.



Sometimes I mix up with my neighbors laundry. They also use the stair well space for laundry because they have a pet bird and they hang the birdcages on the railings along with their laundry items. It is very ammusing to watch the two birds interacting with each other while I hang up my linens on the railings.

Fig. 2.21 Bird cages can be seen hanging on the stair railings as well. It is a place with the best ventilation and sunlight in the Xinwei Building



Can't wait to visit A-Mei today!
 Hopefully she has some gossip
 updates on Mrs. Wang's divorce
 process and Mrs. Tang's nephew's
 university acceptance...

- A-Siu, age 65



Fig. 2.22 A'Siu's a day in the life around the Xinwei Building

3. A'Siu

A'Siu, a native of Taipei who is now 57 years old, witnessed the rise and fall of the Xinwei Building. She was a middle school teacher at the Da'an Junior High and she moved out after living in the Xinwei Building for 10 years because her family of three were squeezed into an unit of less than 14 ping (one ping is 3.3 square meters or 35.3 square feet). However, she still keeps close ties with her old neighbors and often comes back to the Xinwei Building for groceries, meals, medicines, and weekly gossip.

I used to live on the second floor of the Xinwei Building. However, as my kids grew older, the unit is too small to fit myself and my three children, so we moved out. My neighbor A'Mei lives and owns a clothing alteration shop right around the corner and I still keep good relationships with her.

- ①— *In the past, the Xinwei Market in the basement used to be the cheapest place to buy groceries. Now, as the market in the basement is gone, I always go to the vegetable stall in the back alley where they sell the freshest and cheapest local produce.*
- ②— *Every week, I come back to the Xinwei Building for some afternoon chats with A'Mei. Before I go upstairs, I always stop by Yuan Yuan steam bun shop on the first floor to fill my stomach.*
- ③— *We would gather and sit around A'mei's store entrance to gossip about other neighbors in the building. Depending on the days of the week, A'Mei's mom would sometimes join us.*
- ④— *As the evening approaches, I would go downstairs to the first floor arcade to take out dinner and buy some chinese medicine ingredients home before the store closes.*



Every Saturday, I come back to the Xinwei Building and park my motorcycle usually along the Da'an Road. It is hard to find a spot as it is always crowded but it's the closest to all the shops and savory food. Sometimes, I have to move other people's bikes or motorcycles in order to make a spot for myself. No one follows the parking grid on the ground anymore.

Fig. 2.23 Row of parked motorcycles along Da'an Road. All kinds of signages can be seen along it as well.



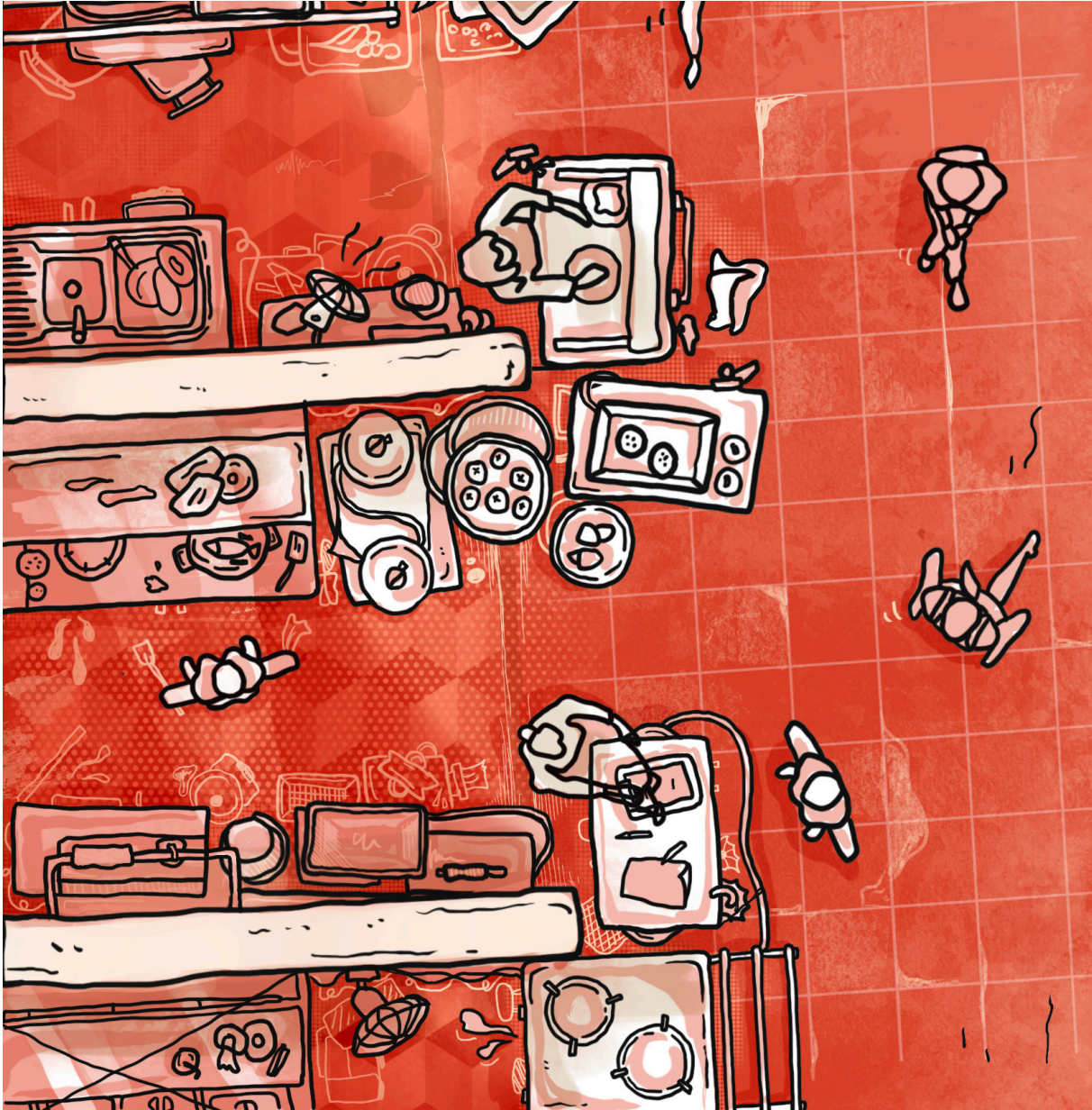
The rows of food stalls at the outer ring of the building and their signages and menus on the columns always catch my eyes as they are the first thing I encounter every time I park my vehicle. There are oyster pancakes, teriyaki fried rice and much more. However, considering the sauce bottles, mini fridges, and ingredients exposed directly to the road, I always walk past them to reach the stores inside for food.

Fig. 2.24 Food stalls between the columns on the arcade. Stall owners place foldable tables as an expansion of their dining spaces and refrigerators as extra storage to store their ingredients in the hot weather .



Dong Jia is one of the popular lunch places along the arcade that I frequently visit. It sells fried rice, fried noodles, congee and much more. The unit is very small because the rental price is extremely expensive in Da'an District, yet, they still make the full use of the space by having all the cooking stoves on one side and the packing table on the other, leaving the 2 large gas barrels outside the unit on the corridor in front of the column between the other unit.

Fig. 2.25 Units on the ground floor of the Xinwei Building are so small that it can sometimes only fit 3 people. Most of the stores only offer take-outs unless they place temporary tables on the arcades.



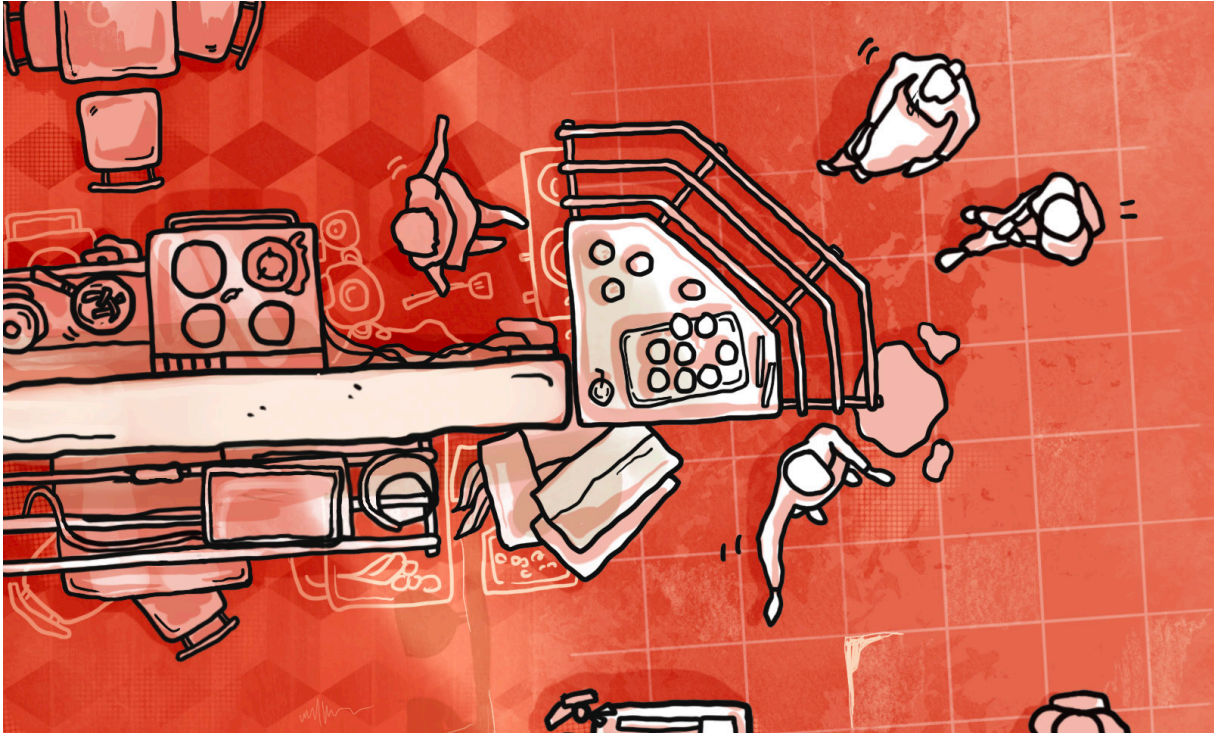
When the shop gets busy and the line gets long, the owner would set up a temporary table with a styrofoam board on top of the 2 gas barrels so they could write and place the waiting list on top. Take out bags are usually hanging on the racks that are made out of some strings, different sizes of clips and wires. The menu can be seen along with the water pipes and Uber Eats advertisement on the columns. Every usable space has been conquered deliberately.

Fig. 2.26 Plan view of the ground floor commercial units and their storefront spaces. Many expand their business goods, stoves, and displaying shelves onto the arcade.



Pieces of communal pedestrian corridor space are occupied by each shops on the arcade. Since there is no actual separation between the interior and exterior space, many business owners do not see the value of having AC in their units. Fans can be seen either hanging from the ceiling, anchored on the walls and columns, or placed on the ground of the communal spaces to help relieve the painful hot and humid Taiwanese weather.

Fig. 2.27 The unit size of this noodle shop is only enough for the owner to place stoves for noodle cooking and tables along the walls for ingredients. Big buckets and fans are placed around their entrance.



The storefront space between two commercial units is usually filled with lots daily objects like stoves, large buckets of unwashed dishes, fans, gas barrels, display shelves and all kinds of temporary makeshift tables and racks. The space in the unit itself is so scarce that every business owner tries to use every space possible and incrementally spills out their belongings onto the communal corridor space.

Fig. 2.28 Drawing showing store items spilling out onto the arcade. Objects like fans and water buckets often result in water spills or tangled wires on the arcade floor.





At the corner of the corridor on the second floor of the Xinwei Building, the “Clothes Alterations” sign is bright and well led. I come up every weekend to visit A Mei. I usually pull a chair from the corridor and sit in front of her shop to gossip on everything. A Mei’s elderly mother also sits on the bamboo chair inside the shop, constantly talking about her daughter’s harsh life.

On every seventh month of the lunar calendar, A Mei sets up a table of worshipping goods with an essence stick on each item at her entrance, including cooked food, drinks and snacks. Under the essence smoke, we laugh and doze off, allowing the time to pass by slowly. Vibrant intimacy of life still lies within this old and decadent building.

Fig. 2.29 Corridor on the second floor of the Xinwei Building. Items like foldable tables, stools, movable storages and big closet can be seen.

Fig. 2.30 Snacks and food with incense sticks are placed on one of the foldable tables for worshipping purposes.

Fig. 2.31 Plan of a transitional space created by A'Siu at the door jam of A Mei's cloth alteration shop.



After visiting A Mei, I walk to the back alley through the east entrance. It is always parked with residents' motorcycles and the walls are filled with real estate advertisements. I often find it annoying because they always park in front of the mail boxes, blocking the passageway way. Wheel chairs and bicycles can be seen along the entrance as well with running ducts, water pipes and wires tangled on the ceiling.

Fig. 2.32 Path that connects Xinwei Building's west entrance to its east entrance. Large ducts run across the ceiling with vehicles parking by the mailboxes.



I come to the vegetable stall at the back alley of the Xinwei Building. This is where I usually get my weekly groceries. The display of the local produces may not be so well but it is the cheapest place to get vegetables and fruits in the Xinwei area. I dig through the walls of items, trying to find circulation through these walls of boxes and baskets.

Fig. 2.33 Cabbages are placed on top of some cardboards above a rack. Boxes of local produce are stacked on top of each other on the roadside to create more space.

02

building portrait

This chapter delves into the overview of how the inhabitants dwell in the Xinwei Building. Through the plan drawings and bigger pictures of the ground floor arcades, the second floor interior corridors, and the rooftop, readers are able to see the overview of multiple uses on transitional spaces and thresholds of vernacular spatial configurations that are molded to suit the needs of an individual or business. It contains a combination of in-between moments that the three characters introduced within Chapter one encounter through their daily events.

the

in-between

THE XINWEI BUILDING

Imagine yourself walking down an apartment hallway completely covered by large pieces of furniture like fridges, washer dryers, and wardrobes. While struggling to find paths in the apartment, you look up and see clothes hanging above each household's entrances with bicycles, foldable tables, pots and pans laying beside their front doors. This is the Xinwei Building in Taipei. In a megalopolis so dense in population yet with no more free land left, citizens dwell and utilize space in every possible way they could.

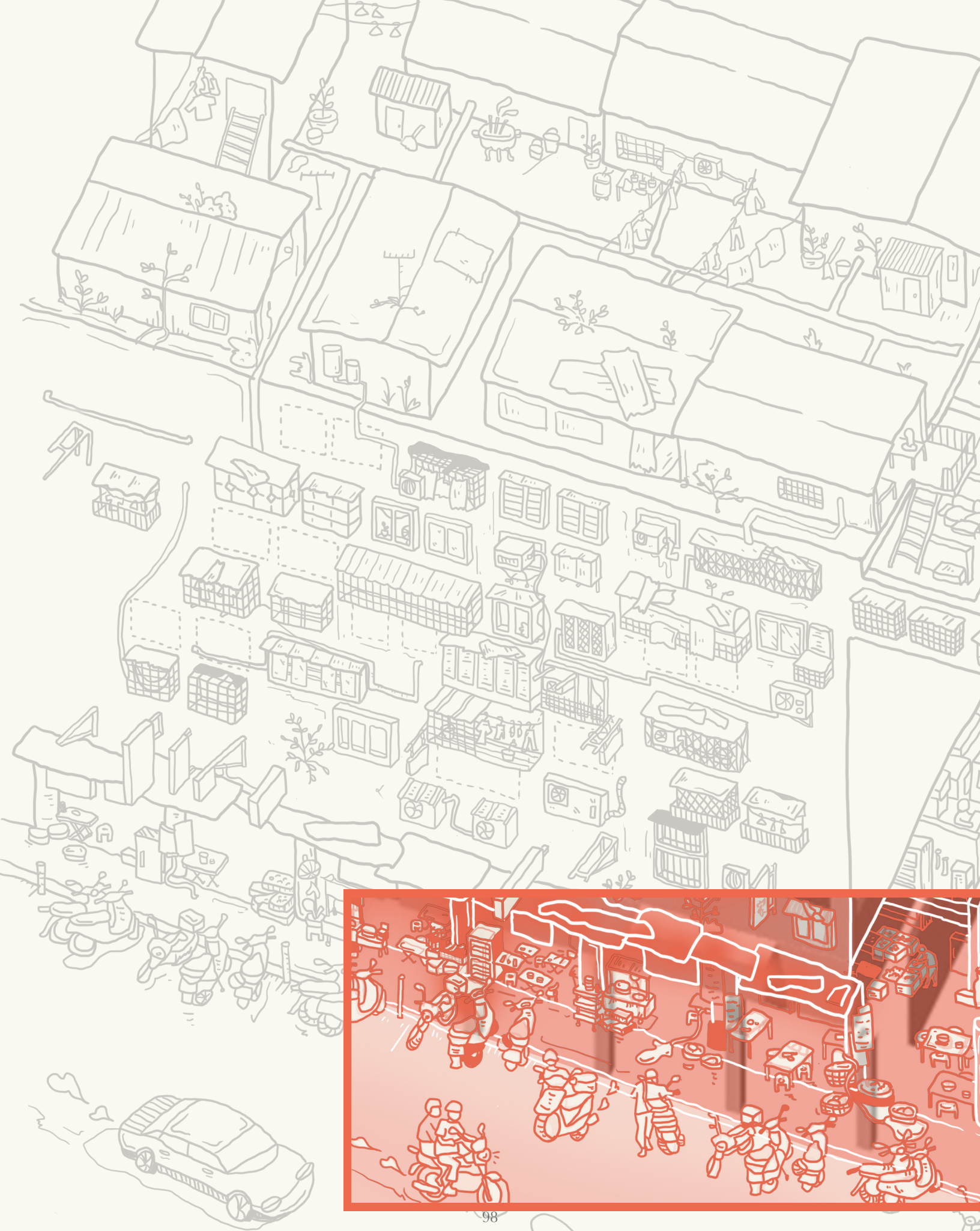
The Xinwei Building is a breathing architecture filled with in-between liminal spaces that fostered many inter-human activities, whether it is residents doing laundry and drying personal undergarments on the public stairwells or aunties pulling their chairs from their units to gather on the hallway for some afternoon gossips, these unique individual occupations of collective spaces become the transitional places for individuals.

If one were to track the movement of dwellers in the Xinwei Building, the traces would flow in and out of the buildings, through the main and side of the colonnades to exterior shops and to interior residential units as if the walls were porous rather than solid. The movements would look like threads, weaving different parts of the layers together as a whole.

The following set of drawings in this chapter are categorized in 3 sections, the ground floor arcade, the interior corridor, and the rooftop, showing a wider context of the various accumulated incremental moments captured in chapter 1. The diagrammatic and isometric drawings in this chapter shows portions of architectural adaptations in the building. Using space syntax and complex systems, the zoom out plan drawings in this chapter also highlights the layered thresholds and how the dwellers utilize the in-between spaces within the Xinwei Building.



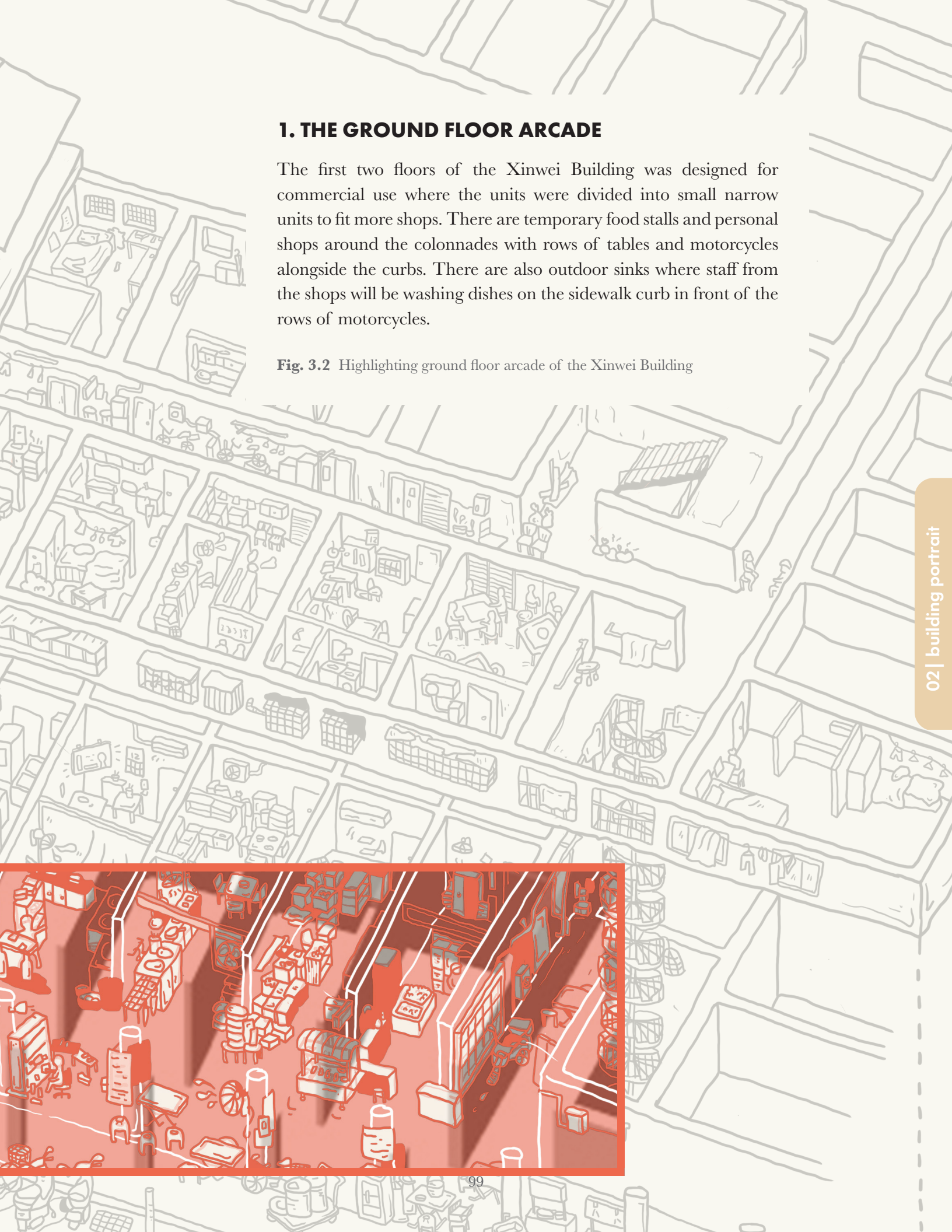
Fig. 3.1 The courtyard of the Xinwei Building



1. THE GROUND FLOOR ARCADE

The first two floors of the Xinwei Building was designed for commercial use where the units were divided into small narrow units to fit more shops. There are temporary food stalls and personal shops around the colonnades with rows of tables and motorcycles alongside the curbs. There are also outdoor sinks where staff from the shops will be washing dishes on the sidewalk curb in front of the rows of motorcycles.

Fig. 3.2 Highlighting ground floor arcade of the Xinwei Building



The Ground Floor Arcade- Layered Threshold

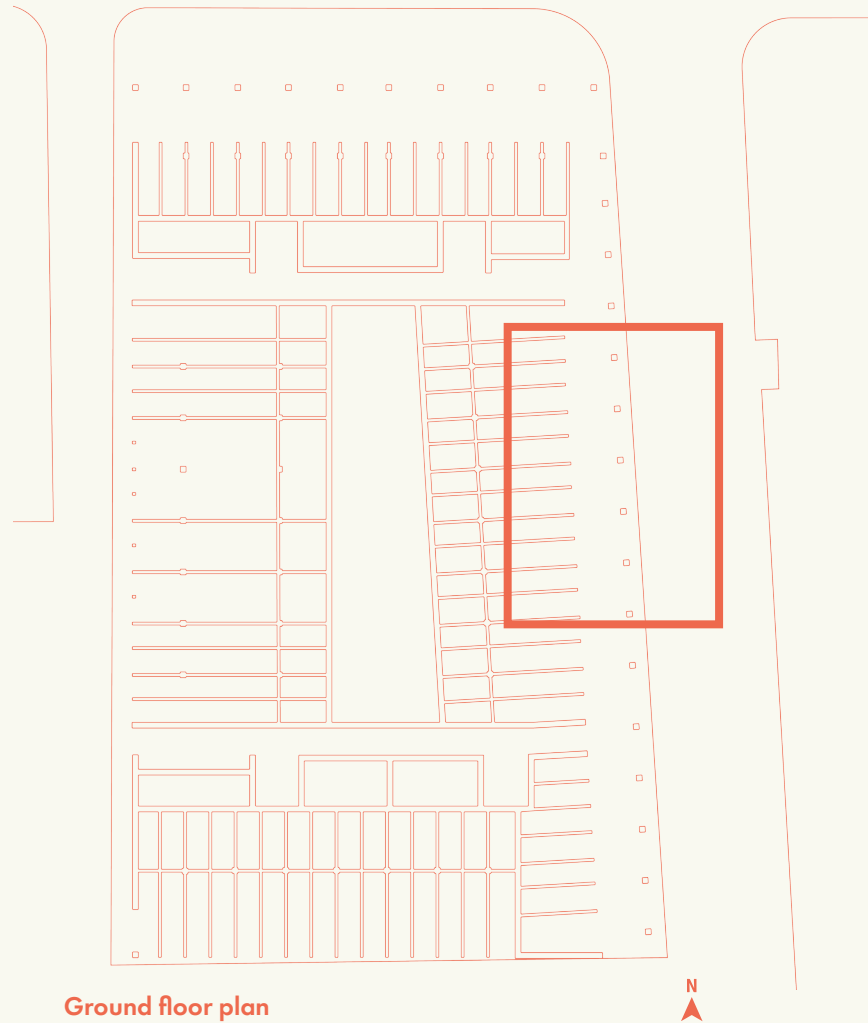
Layered threshold defines the border between different zones in-between the interior and exterior space as mentioned in Aldo Van Eyck's concept of 'Threshold' in the literature review. A thickened threshold, like the spaces from one column to another or the spaces from the storefront to the rows of parked motorcycles, can encourage social interaction in an environment. In a building mostly filled with subaltern groups, the transitional spaces inject a surge of liveliness against the decaying and unpleasing architectural structure of the Xinwei Building.

Walking through the first floor corridor of the Xinwei Building, people experience changes in atmosphere created by the changing density of the different layouts in front of the first floor shops. Local citizens with vehicles like A'siu enters from the bright street into the dappled threshold of a row of motorcycles, eventually reaching the steam bun shop through a series of temporary dining tables and food stalls alongside the colonnades. She experiences a fluctuating sense of compression and visual depth along her journey. As she enters through a series of activities happening on the curb, such as staff washing dishes, people eating noodles, and nannie repairing shoes, she reaches the open space of the corridor filled with pedestrians and local citizens' busy footsteps. As she approaches the steam bun shop, the path becomes narrower again as she enters through the miscellaneous items lying in-between the entrance and the demising wall of it's neighbor.

The public arcade itself incorporates varied layouts of transitional spaces formed by ephemeral items, such as advertising signages and fans hanging from the columns or tangled wires that hold the vernacular light fixtures in place, generating a multi-sensory experience within this space.

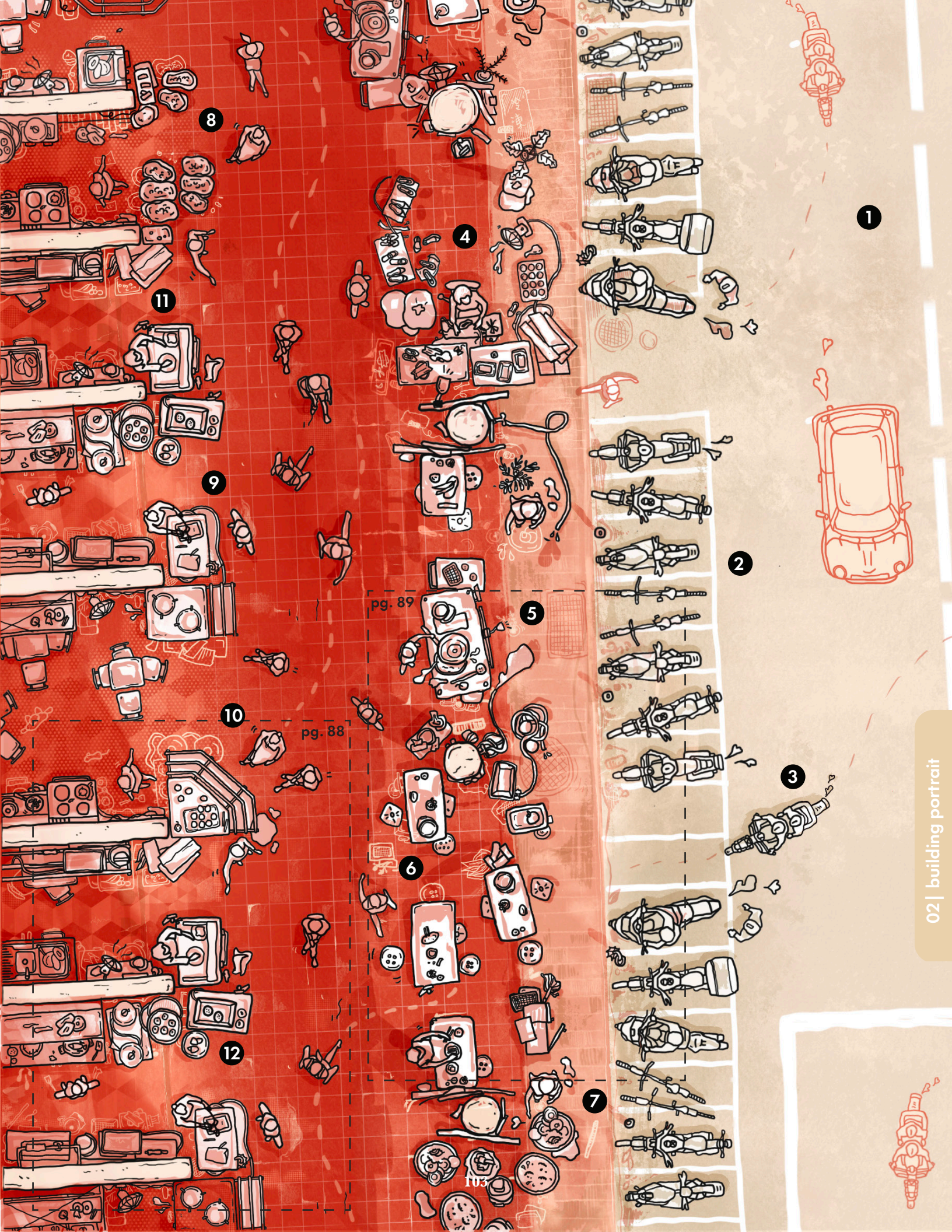
Fig. 3.3 The plan of the Xinwei Building's ground floor arcade along the Da'an Rd.





- 1 Vehicles passing on the Da'an Road
- 2 A screen of motorcycles parked along Da'an Rd.
- 3 New addition joining the virtual wall of motorcycles
- 4 Tables and shelves formulate behind column as a repair shop
- 5 Temporary food stall with cooking gears, carts and fans
- 6 Foldable tables and stools spreading out beside the food stall
- 7 Clusters of water hose and buckets with unwashed dishes
- 8 Bags of chinese medicine ingredients serving as shop's facade
- 9 Assembly of foam board and gas barrels as impromptu table
- 10 Clusters of pots and pans at store edges underdisplay rack
- 11 Stoves and boxes lining along the edges of the shop
- 12 Baskets of steam buns stacked up on a stool as a gateway

Fig. 3.4 The plan of the Xinwei Building's ground floor arcade with legend.



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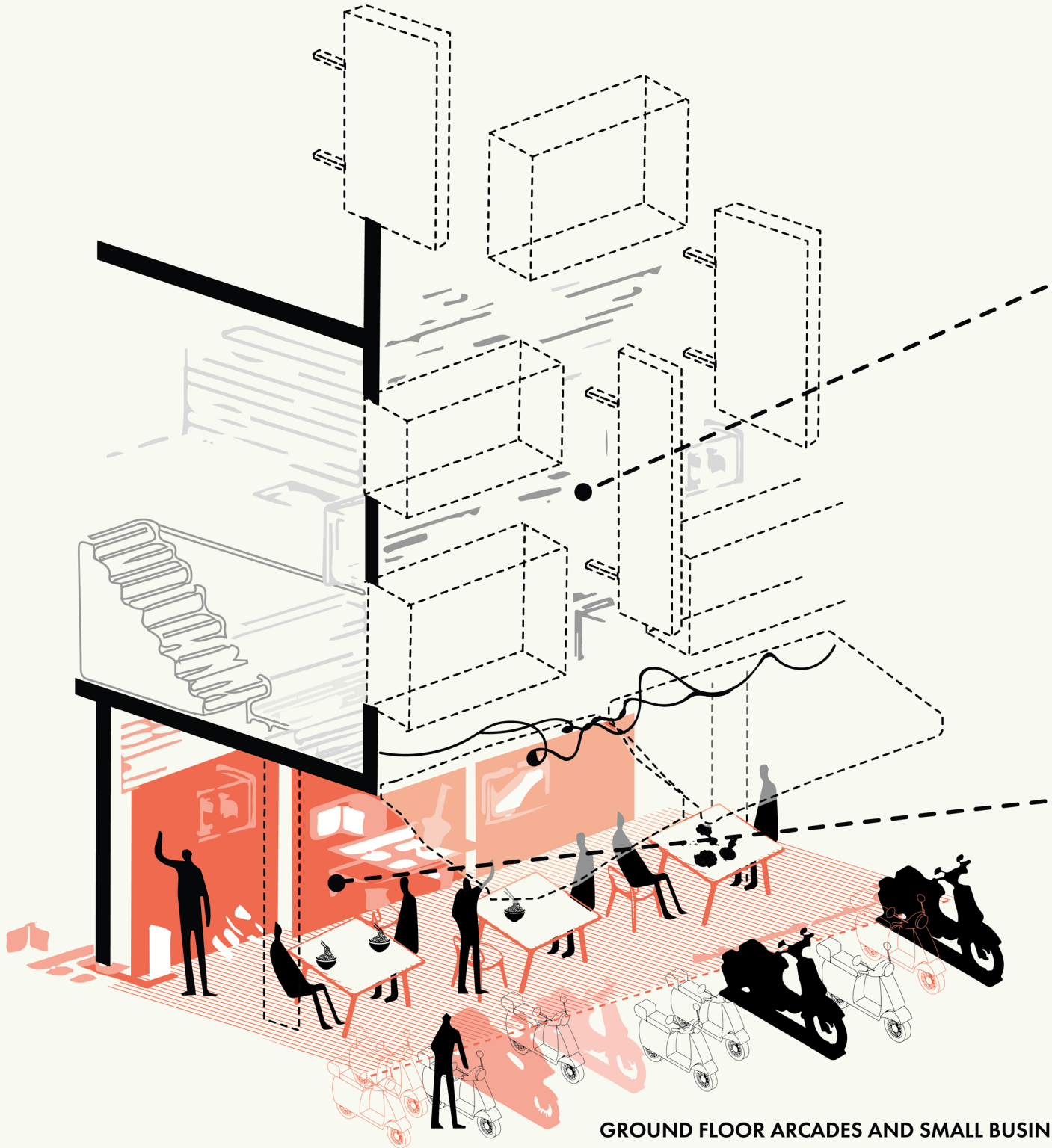
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1



GROUND FLOOR ARCADES AND SMALL BUSIN



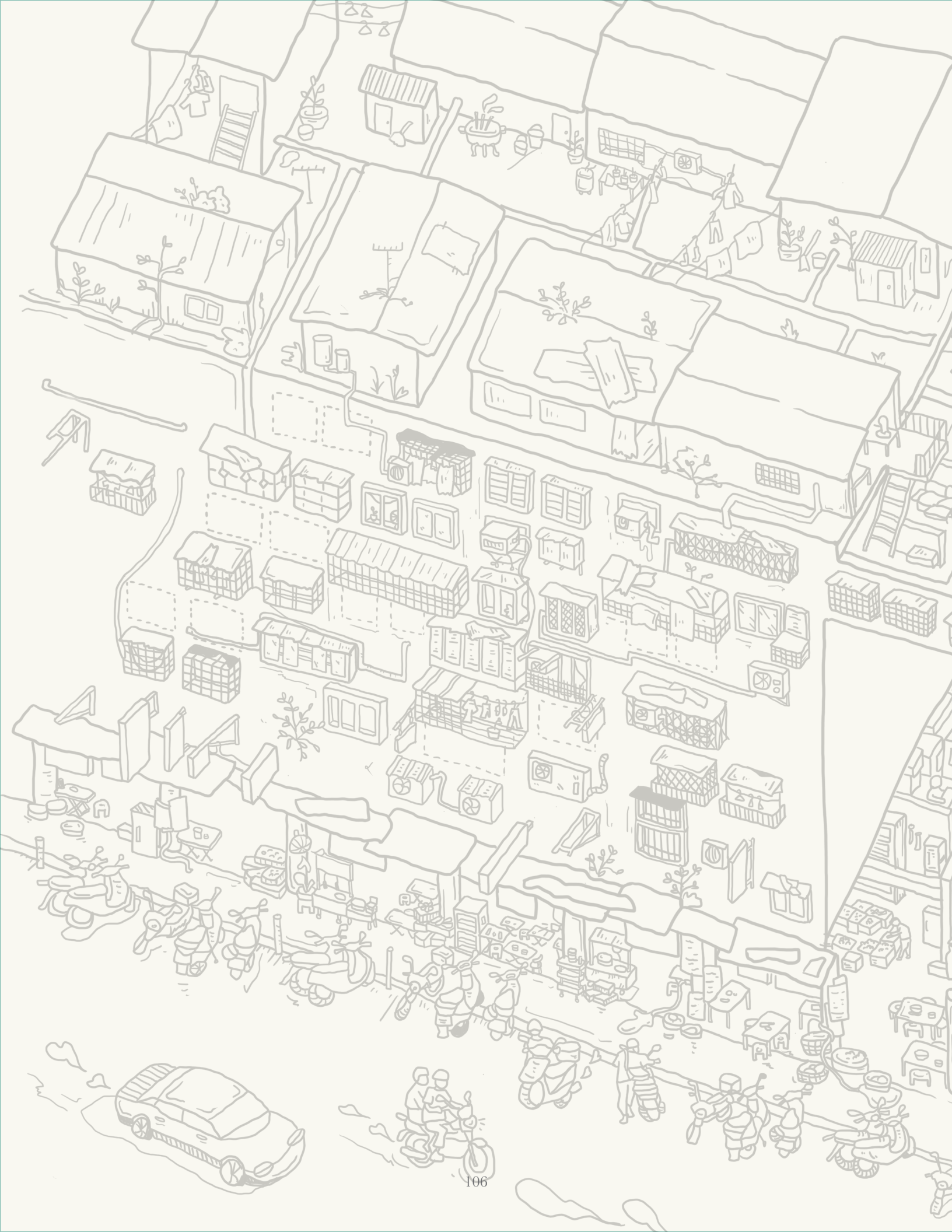
Residents expand their balconies outward to create more space

Signages from small businesses can be seen all over the elevation of lower floors, utilizing the space of the exterior of the building as much as possible.



Food stalls and noodle shops expand their dining spaces outward and placing their goods on the public arcade for more attraction

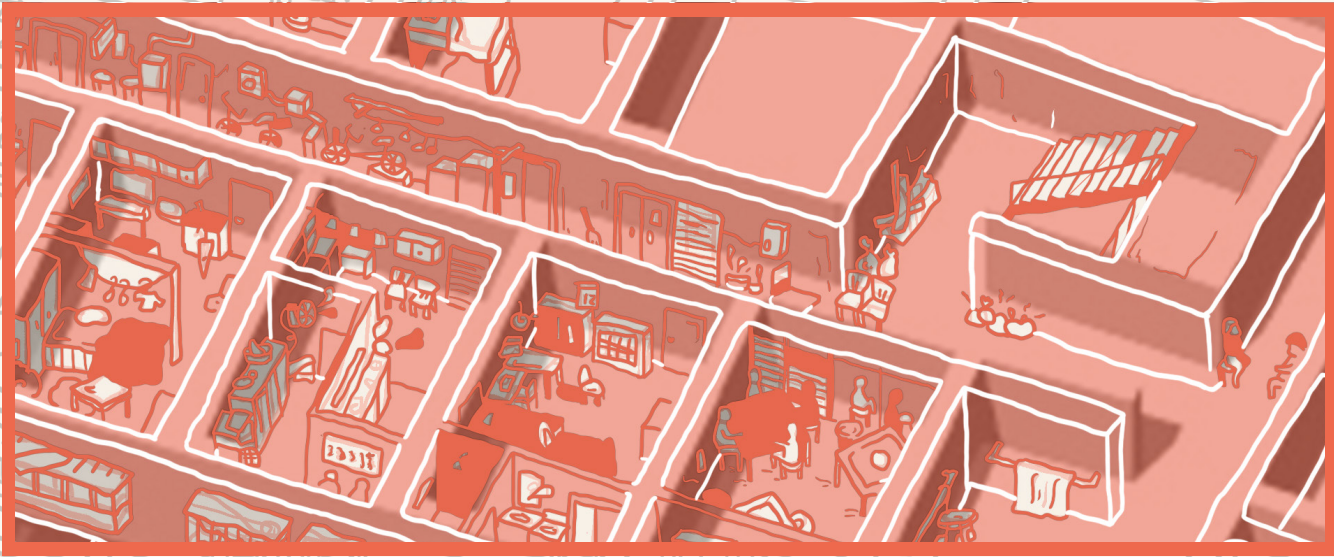
Fig. 3.5 Diagrams of Xinwei Building's ground floor usage



2. THE RESIDENTIAL CORRIDOR

The 3-6th floors of the Xinwei Building was designed for residential use. Each unit is about 14 ping (one ping is 3.3 square meters or 35.3 square feet). The collective space is filled with personal household items such as refrigerators, washer dryers and hot water tanks. A series of activities can be seen on the residential corridors such as chess playing and rows of cloth drying along the corridor.

Fig. 3.6 Highlighting interior corridor of the Xinwei Building



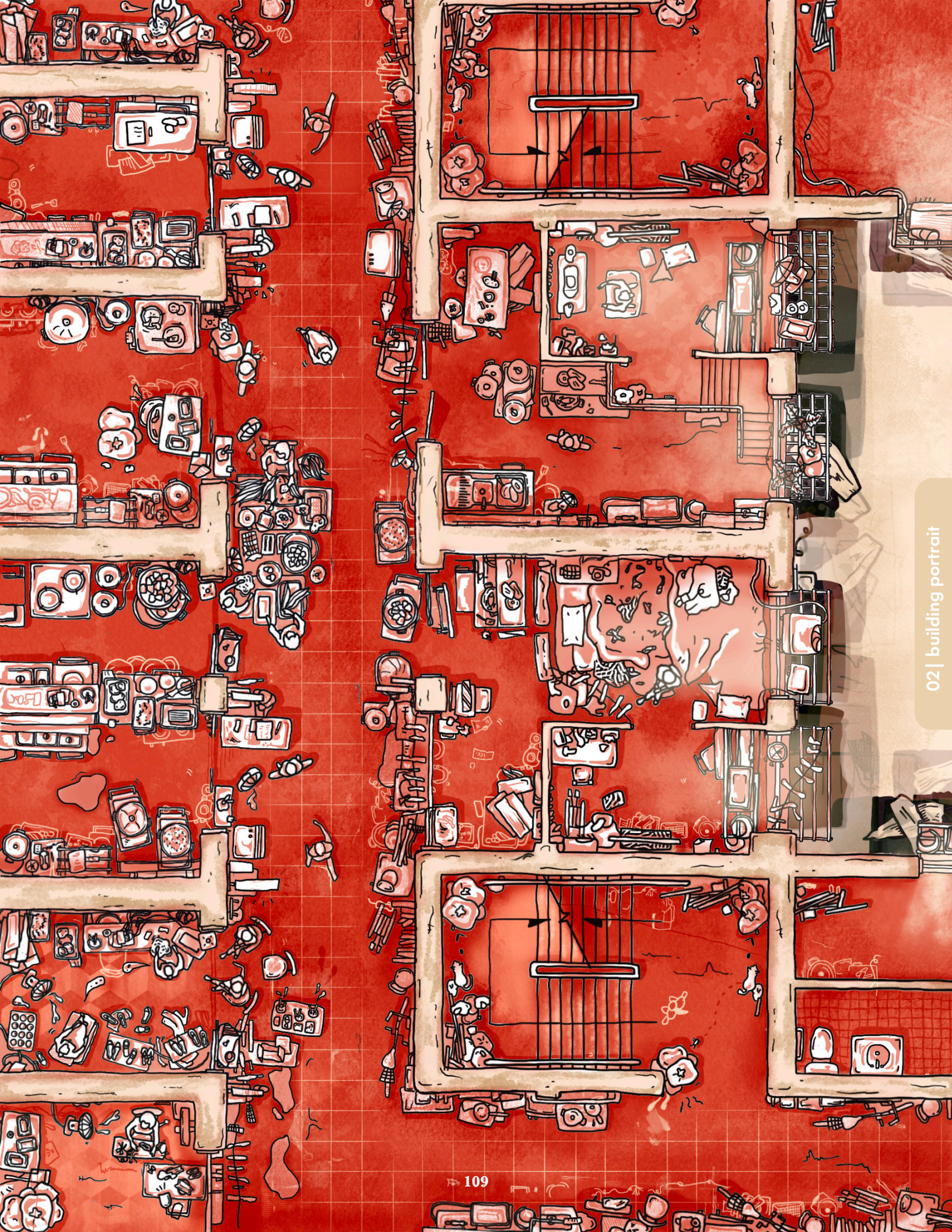
The Residential Corridor- Layered Threshold

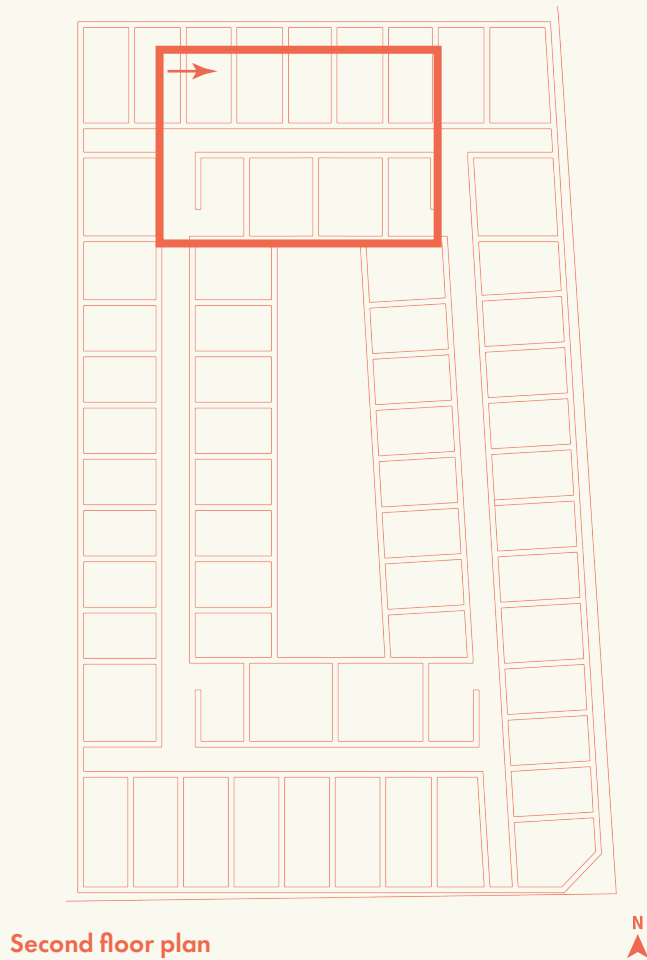
The threshold between public and private is explored in the form of a interior corridor that allows the co-existence of communal and intimate moments. In the residential corridor of the Xinwei Building, the thresholds exist in a range of scales from a step to the space right in front of the door jam between one room and another and to the wall that separates the outside and inside. These layered thresholds act as a place of consciousness and improve the continuity of inhabitants' spatial journey by easing the transition from one zone to another. The result is an integrity given to otherwise autonomous individual or communal events, groups and spaces.

The interior corridor of the Xinwwei Building is filled with patterns of layered thresholds. The accumulation of each unit's personal household items on the communal spaces form secondary layers of individual spaces. Walking up the stairs, Indah passes through a layer of garbage and furniture pieces. While reaching her work place, she approaches a series of tables lying between the wall and corridor walking space with baskets of ingredients on top.

Papa Wei creates his own intimate space within this layer of threshold by hanging his laundry in front of his door entrance with his washing machine and pots and pans below the drying clothes. Across the corridor is another semi intimate space created by A'Siu, her friend A'Mei and other aunties, sitting and gathering their chairs at the edge of A'Mei's tailor shop's entrance gossiping about daily life matters. The layout of the book shelves and closet by the door jam of the tailor shop form a space that allows a foldable table for A'Mei to put her monthly worshipping items on.

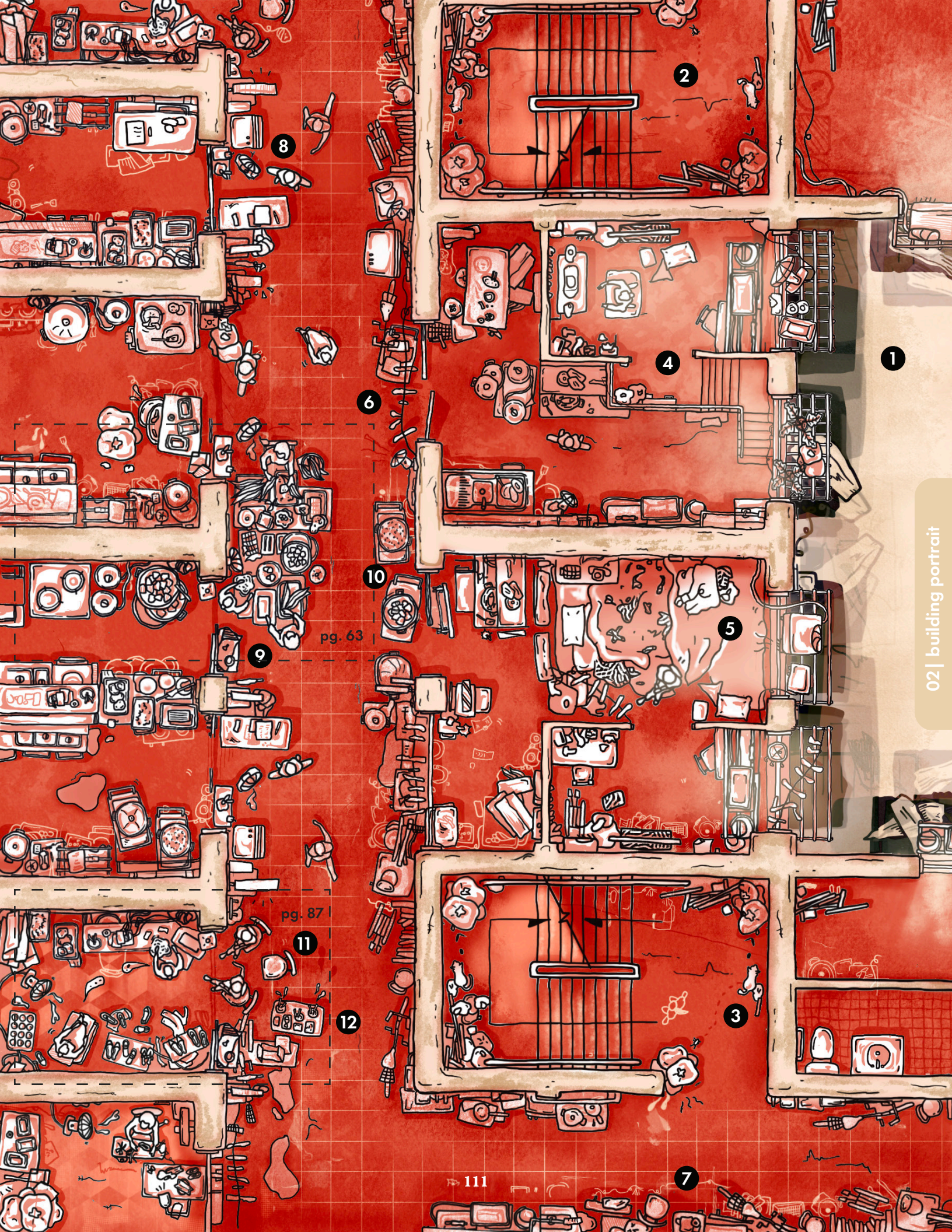
Fig. 3.7 The plan of the Xinwei Building's second floor corridor





- 1 Caged windows extruding out from units to courtyard
- 2 East staircase with bags of garbages and furniture pieces
- 3 West stair case, kitten and cockroaches can be seen sometimes
- 4 Sub storey is built inside a unit as a worshipping room
- 5 AC installed on caged windows along with hot water tank
- 6 Rows of clothes hanging on wires above unit door entrance
- 7 Clusters of bikes, stools and misc items along the corridor
- 8 Table beside washer dryer and fans with shop signage above
- 9 2-3 tables pulled together to form a working environment
- 10 Baskets of rice dumplings stacked on the carts across corridor
- 11 2-3 stools pulled together at the door jam of A'Mei's shop
- 12 Food with essence sticks placed on table for worshipping

Fig. 3.8 The plan of the Xinwei Building's second floor with legend.

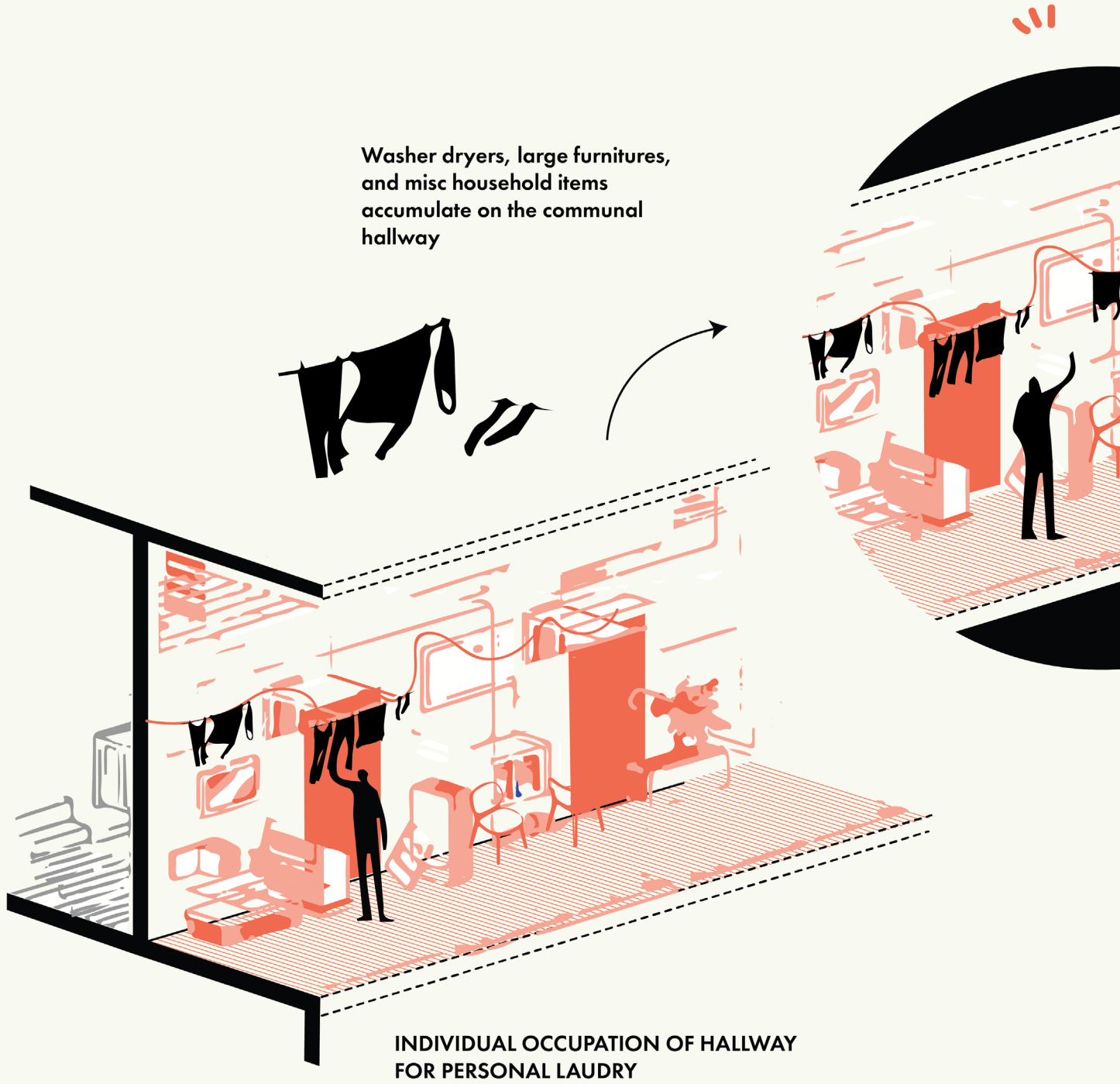


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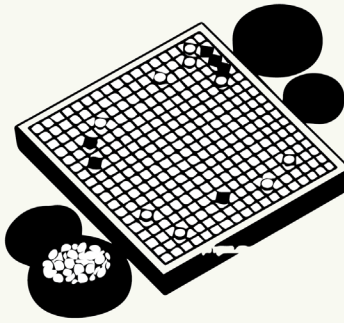
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Interior Corridor Architectural Adaptations

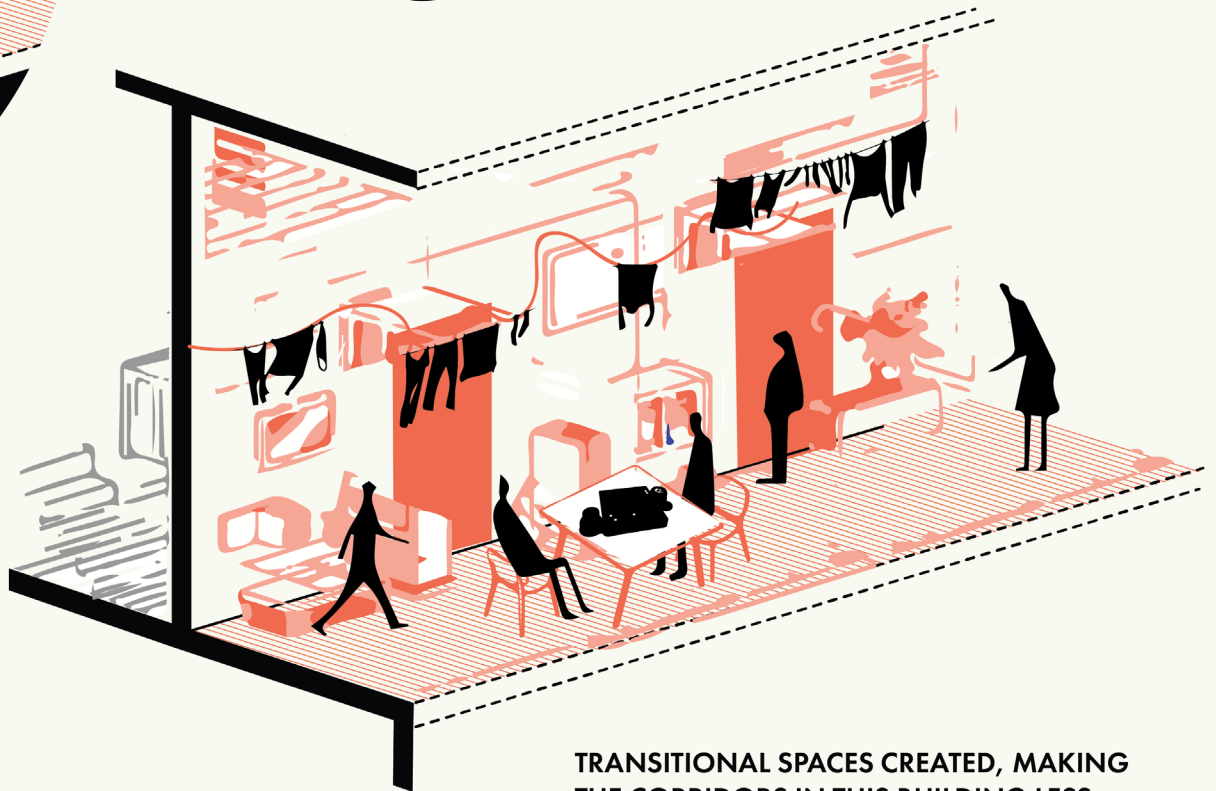
Washer dryers, large furnitures,
and misc household items
accumulate on the communal
hallway



Residents do their individual laundrys at their front door and on public stairwells

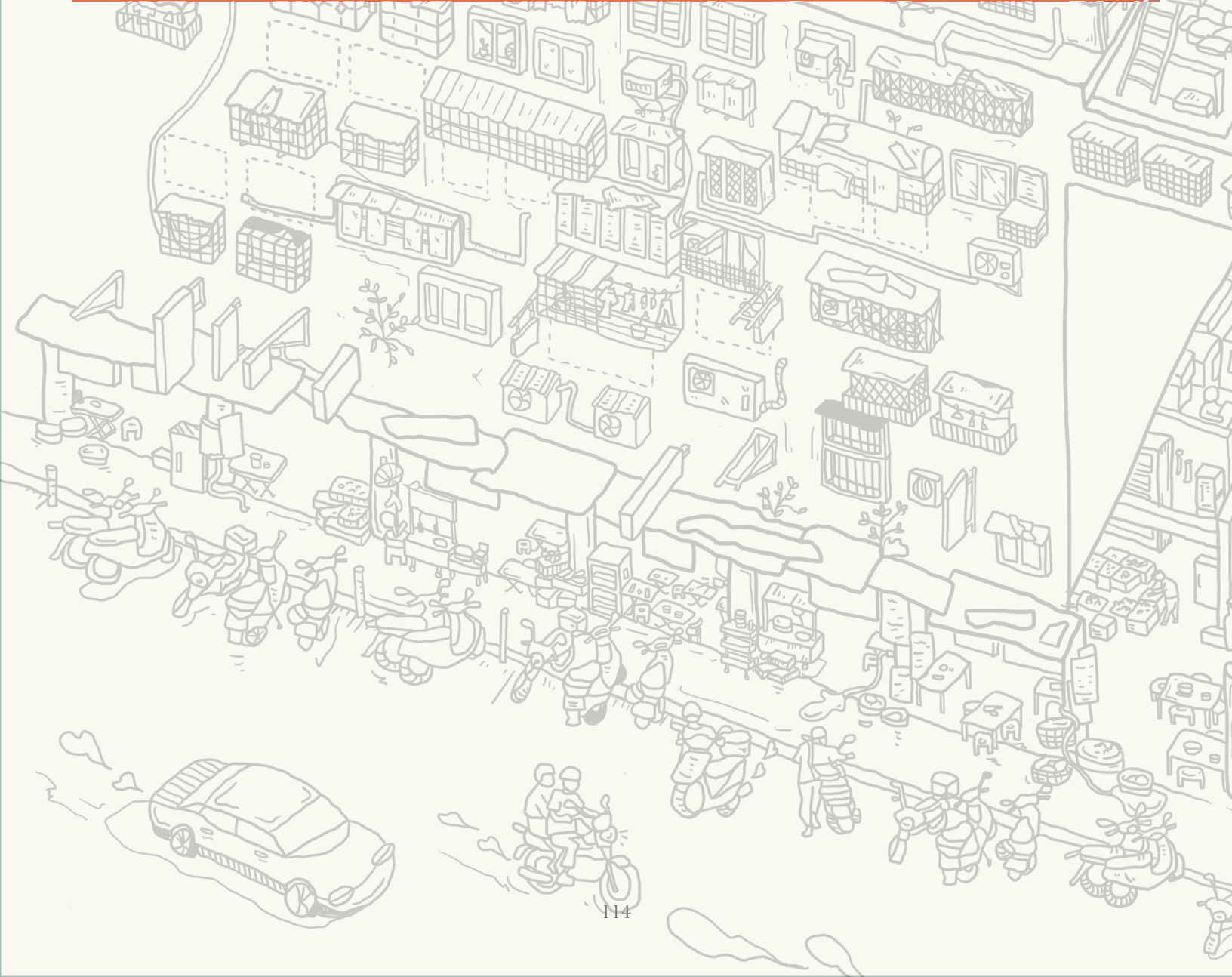
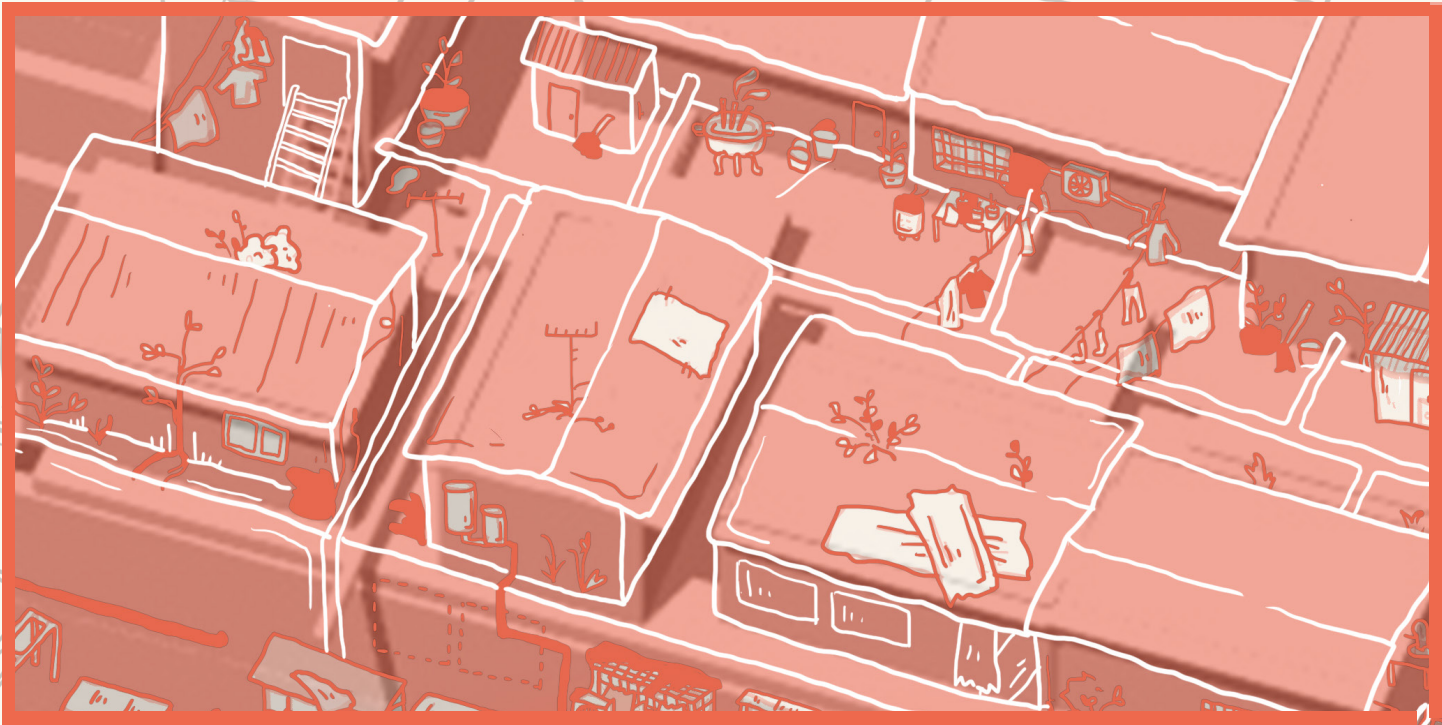


While they wait for their clothes to dry, residents pull out their foldable tables and play chinese chess or chat on their corridor



TRANSITIONAL SPACES CREATED, MAKING THE CORRIDORS IN THIS BUILDING LESS BIPOLEAR OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

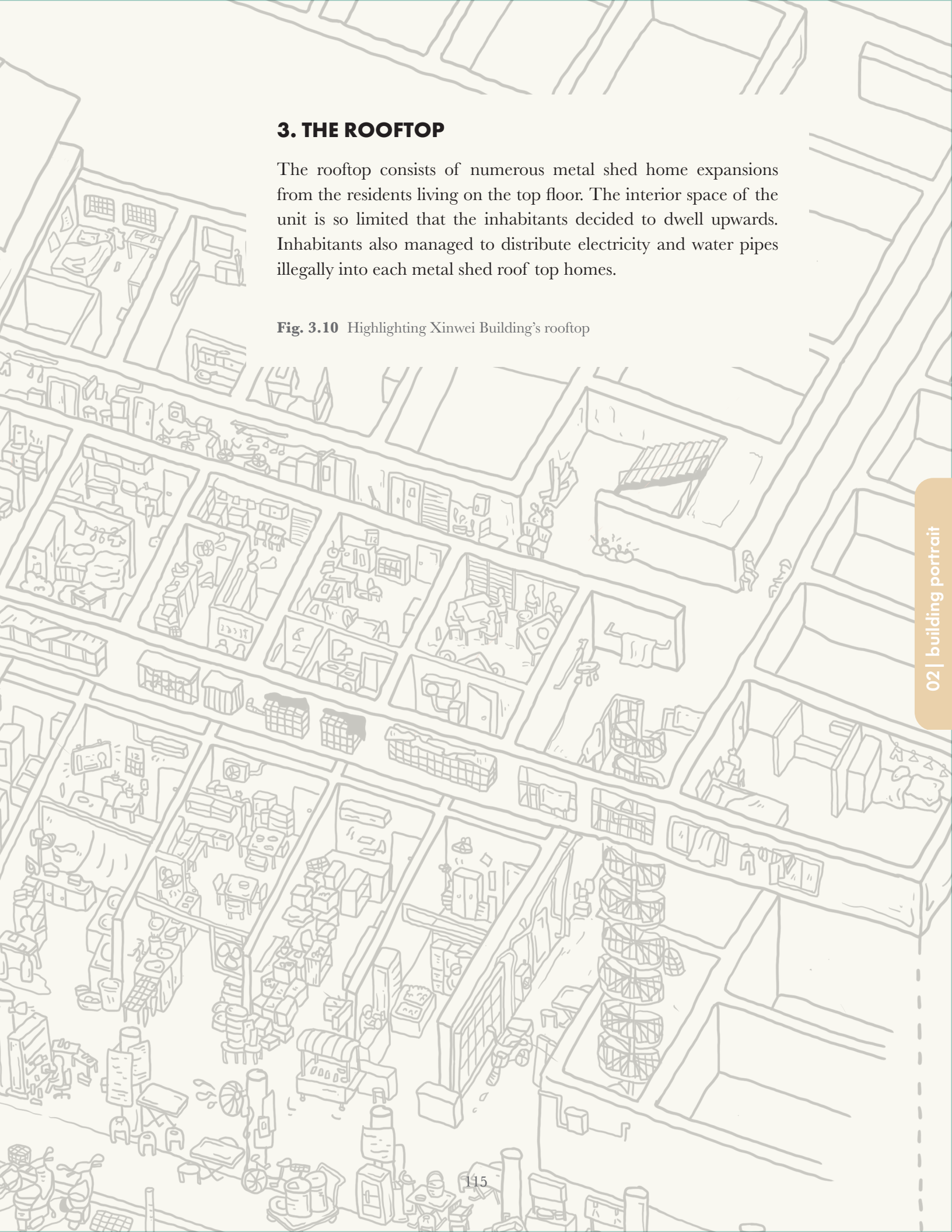
Fig. 3.9 Diagrams of Xinwei Building's interior corridor usage



3. THE ROOFTOP

The rooftop consists of numerous metal shed home expansions from the residents living on the top floor. The interior space of the unit is so limited that the inhabitants decided to dwell upwards. Inhabitants also managed to distribute electricity and water pipes illegally into each metal shed roof top homes.

Fig. 3.10 Highlighting Xinwei Building's rooftop



Rooftop Architectural Adaptations

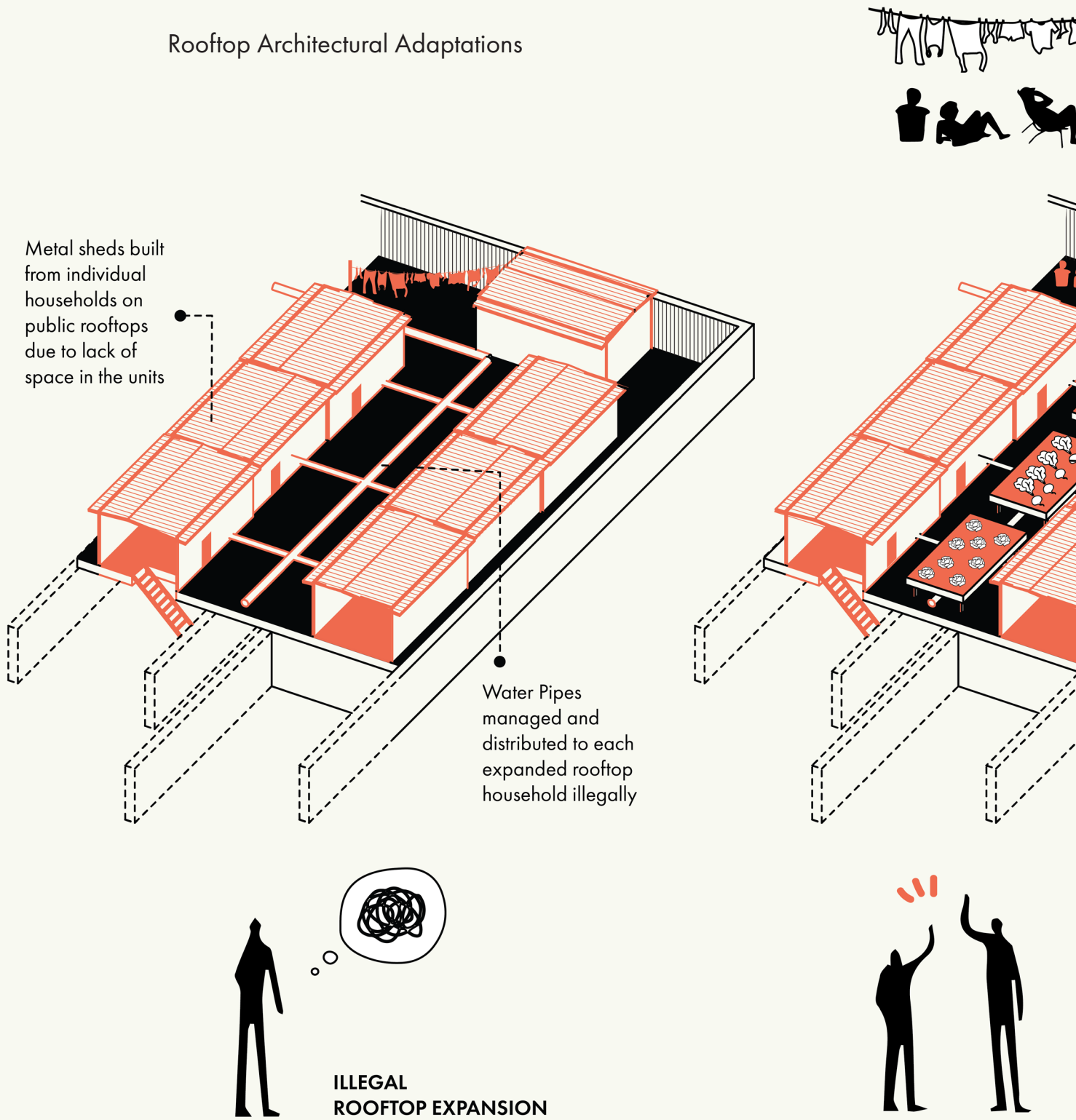
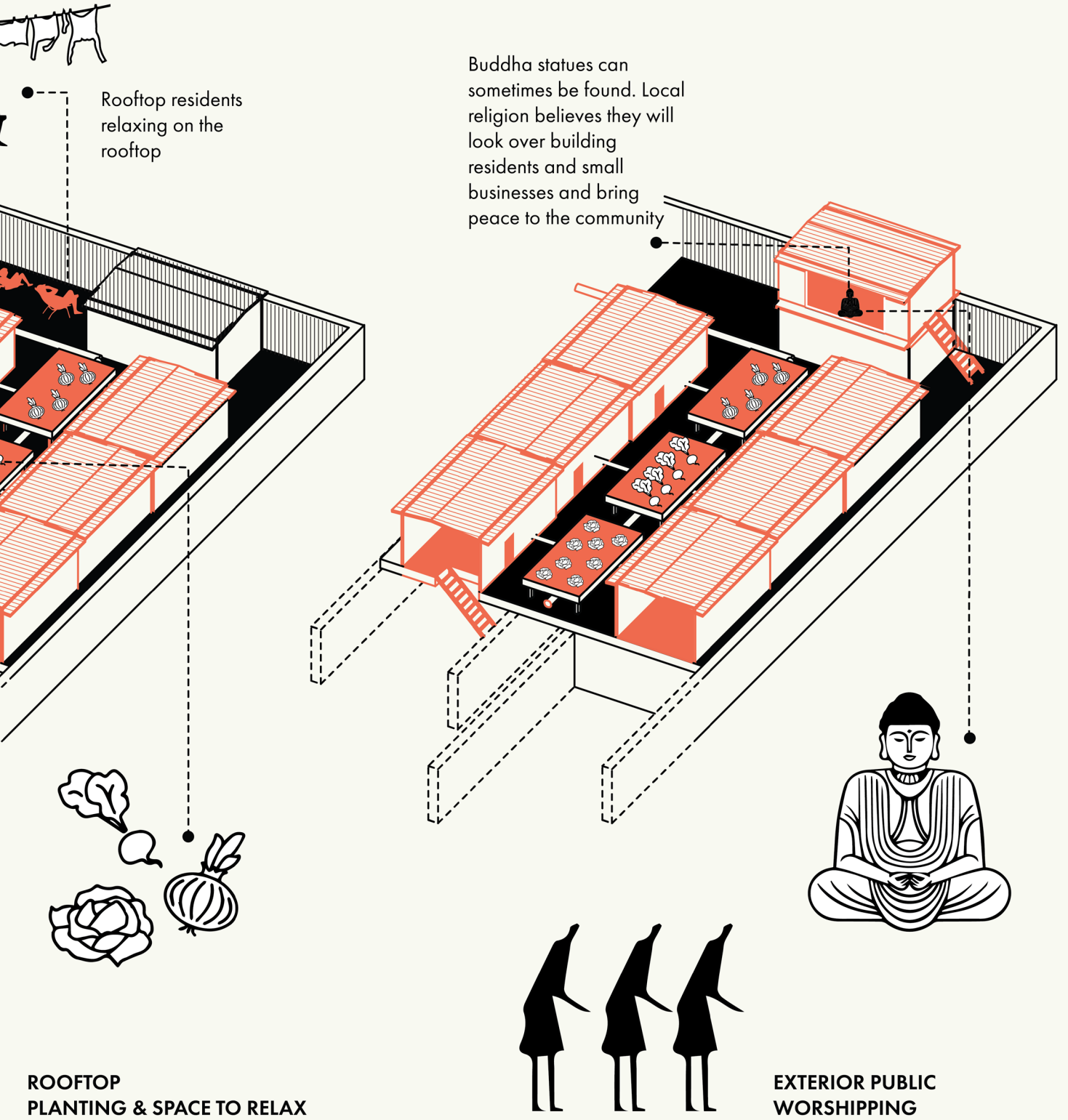


Fig. 3.11 Diagrams of Xinwei Building's rooftop usage



THE IN-BETWEEN MOMENTS

This drawing shows a diagrammatic overview of the inhabitants' occupations, adaptations and transformations of the Xinwei Building. The commercial occupations on the first floor public arcade, such as the informal shoe repair shop, rows of food stalls, and temporary dining spaces by the curb side, redefine the spatial programs when dwellers and small business owners bring in new activities into the space.

Inhabitants and business owners expand their personal belongings outward due to limited residential and commercial unit spaces. This is when large signages and window cages come in useful as they could contain more household items such as air conditioners and hot water tanks. The usage of liminal spaces is an important spatial strategy as everyone wants to grab as much space as possible

The interior corridor of the Xinwei Building is filled with vernacular architectural adaptations within the transitional spaces. The accumulation of each unit's personal household items under the rows of drying clothes, electric wires, and hot water tanks are traces of residents' informal usage of communal space, out of necessity.

The rooftop community lives on the top floor of the Xinwei Building, after walking up the stairs, passing through a layer of garbage and furniture pieces. Outdoor worshiping space with the buddha statue becomes a semi intimate space for many residents living on the top floor.

Fig. 3.12 Diagrammatic overview of architectural adaptations in the Xinwei Building



BUILDING TO STREET



Fig. 3.13 Portable water sinks, water pipes and buckets can be seen between the front of the units and the green bike lane, between a sign post and the building's exterior wall, or beside a fridge that is also placed on the road exterior wall, or beside a fridge that is also placed on the road.

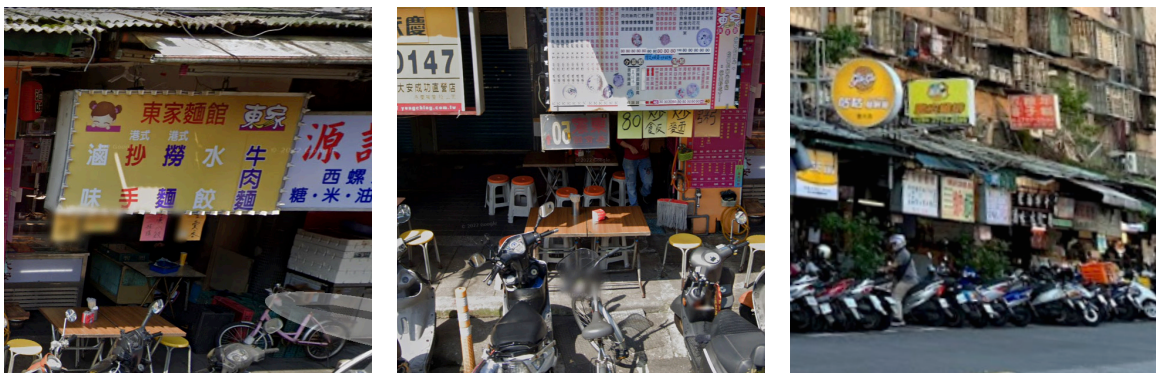


Fig. 3.14 Large signages and menus can be seen everywhere on the outer ring of the building, extruding out from the exterior walls to hanging under the sheds. They form some kind of vernacular shading devices for the range of activities happening on the sidewalks along with clusters of motorcycles beside as a form of wall.



Fig. 3.15 Spaces around the columns serve multiple uses. It is most commonly used as temporary dining places for the food stalls and the shops with small units or. Foldable tables, stools and dish washing buckets are placed beside the column so people feel more secured doing their activities under this spatial configuration.

BUILDING TO UNIT

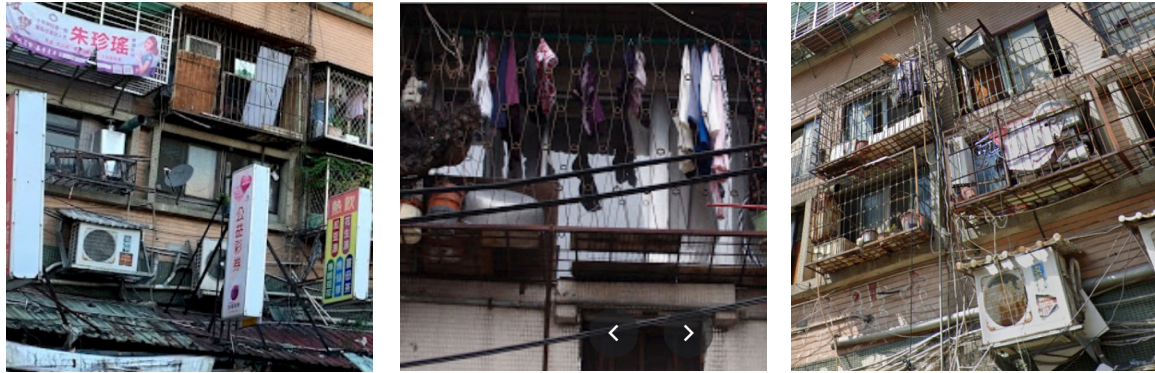


Fig. 3.16 Windows are secured with metal frames to prevent break-ins and at the same time to allow more space extending from the units. These “cages” act as a place for storage, cloth hanging, planting, and commercial advertising; Objects such as air conditioners, hot water tanks and cloth hangers are typically seen.

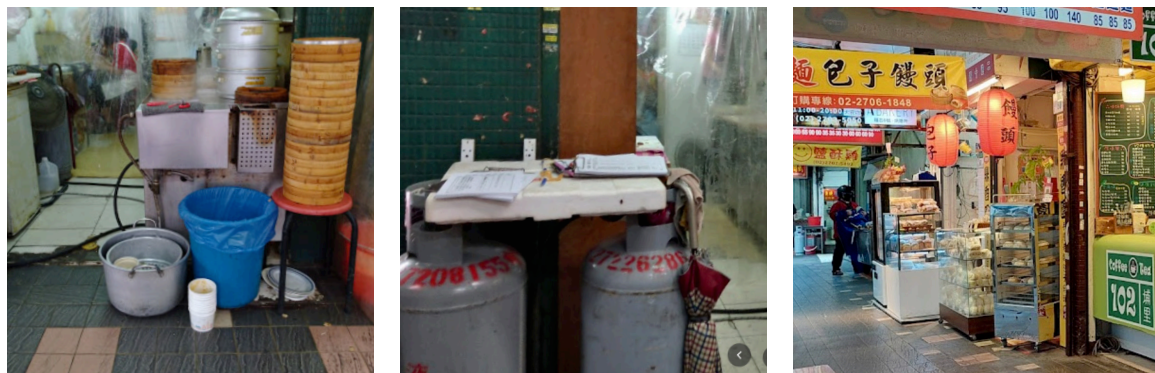
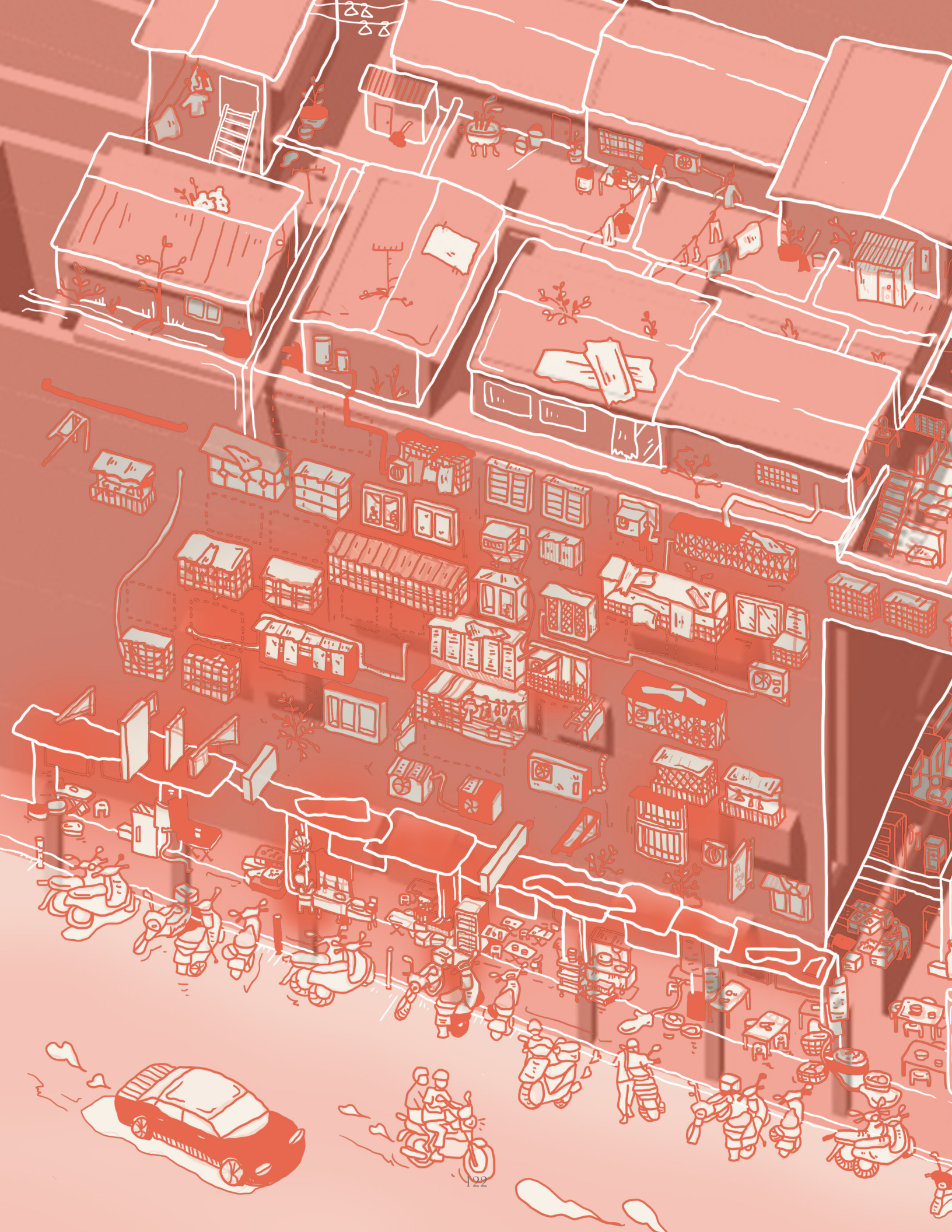


Fig. 3.17 There are no actual thresholds dividing the ground floor units to the pedestrian arcade, allowing spatial arrangements at the storefront spaces. Stoves are placed outside and baskets of buns are stacked on a stool beside trashcans and unwashed dishes. Gas barrels are placed to hold waiting lists and to hang umbrellas.



Fig. 3.18 The spacious space in front of the building’s entrance and its hallway was designed for circulation purposes, but business owners see them as wasted space to generate more income. Therefore, many food vendors use this space as an opportunity to place their goods and attract more customer attention.



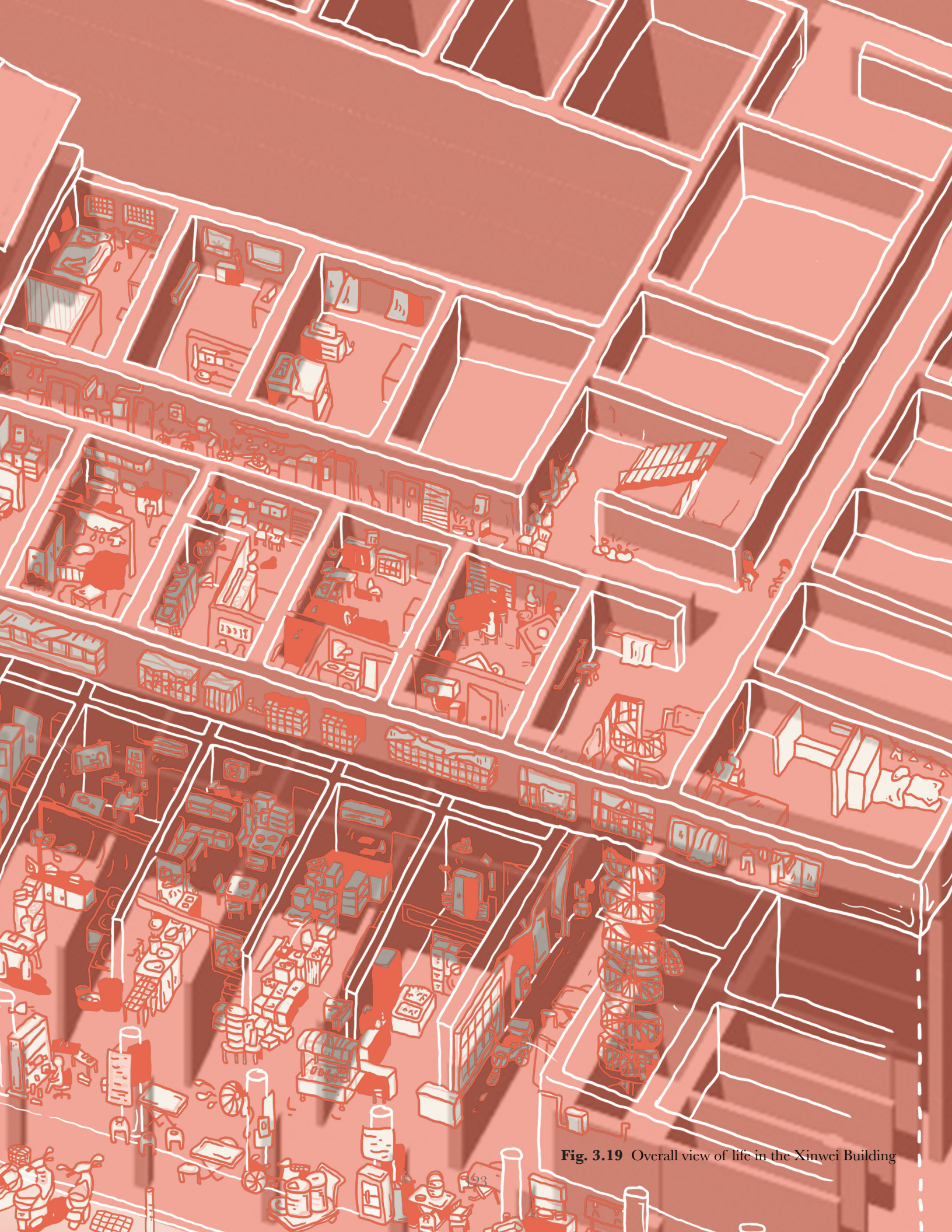


Fig. 3.19 Overall view of life in the Xinwei Building

03

urban portrait

This chapter extends out to the neighborly contexts of the Xinwei Building. This section introduces the urban transitional spaces beyond the Xinwei Building. The citizens' continuous ephemeral and creative occupations in urban space are contributions to the richness and complexity of Taipei's urban experience. Through an altered Nolli map, this chapter provides readers an alternative way of analyzing a city. The life around the Xinwei Building are traces of each individual, weaving together to form an alternative urban geography.

emergence

THE DA'AN NOLLI PLAN

The top-down forms of development are the primary culprits in the loss of a vital urban life that many cities had experienced. In order to restore, maintain, or promote a vital urban life in large cities like Taipei, the physical environment should be characterized by a series of transitional spaces at both the district and street levels. Transitional spaces- inhabitant's appropriation and transformation of liminal spaces- serve as rhetorical devices in blurring the edges of architecture and the polarities between the private and the public. The liveliness of a city emerges only when the multiple scales of human events interact with the incremental qualities of their everyday surroundings and the urban transitional spaces that are built up from these ingredients.

This chapter documents the elusive qualities within an urban fabric, such as how intersections are transformed during daily garbage pick up time and how the vernaculars spatial configurations extend from the inside to outside, allowing the readers to read the geographical context of the Da'an district in its ephemeral form instead of the conventional way through a typical map that is commonly used by urban planners and tourists. The classical polarized way of reading space of a city is inadequate and the study of Nolli's plan in this chapter contributes to the next generation towards reading an action in a space in which multiple dimensions are included. Some of the dimensions are ephemeral, conceptual and some of which are personal in stories and psychogeography.

I have altered the figure-ground graphic method found in the Nolli maps in order to aptly represent the Da'an neighborhood, where transitional spaces are integral to the idea of a city. Mapping the study area with layers of graphical icons from chapter one reveals that transitional spaces continue to exist beyond the Xinwei Building and expand further into the public realm. The drawings in this chapter propose a new way of reading the urban fabric as opposed to the standard way of understanding a city through a conventional map.



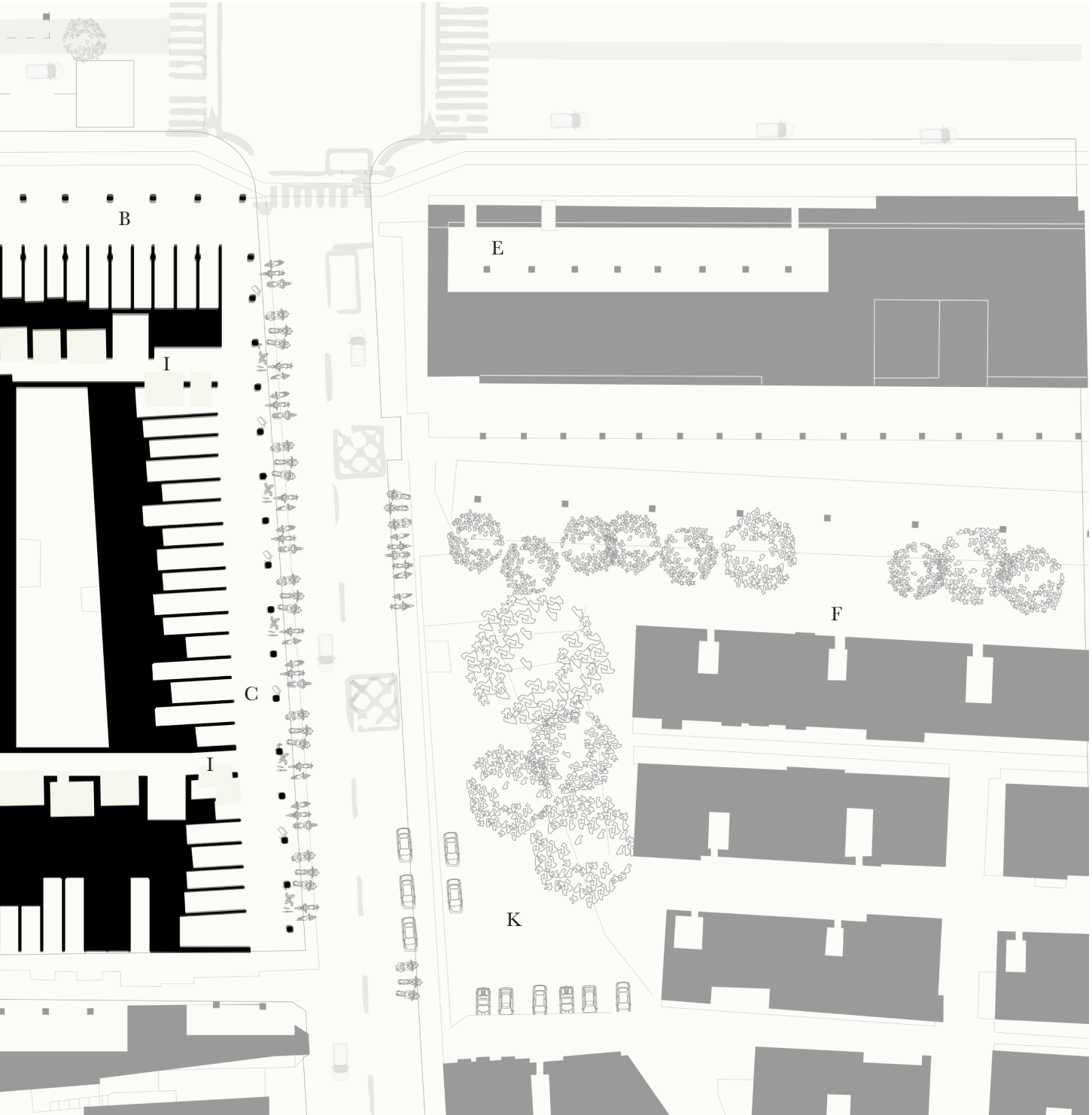
Fig. 4.1 Figure ground drawing of the Xinwei Neighborhood in Da'an District

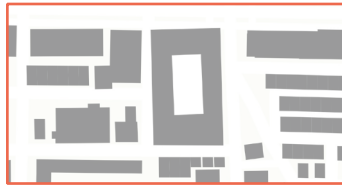


Fig. 4.2 Nolli plan of the Xinwei Neighborhood in Da'an District separating public accessible and inaccessible space

The Da'an Nolli Plan

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| A West back alley | G Bike lane |
| B Xinyi Rd. corridor | H Bus terminal |
| C Da'an Rd. corridor | I Entrance |
| D South back alley | J Hair salon |
| E Post Office | K Parking spaces |
| F Private residences | L Daily garbage truck route |





- Inaccessible - BuiltVolumes
- Highlighted Area
- Accessible



Fig. 4.3 Unconventional Nolli plan of the Xinwei Neighborhood in Da'an District filled with transitional spaces and events

The Da'an Nolli Plan

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 Indah at breakfast stall | 7 A'Siu visits veggie and fruit shop | 12 Papa Wei at sliced noodle shop |
| 2 Papa Wei checks his mailbox | 8 A'Siu picks up ingredients at chinese medicine shop | 13 Granny's shoe repair shop |
| 3 Papa Wei dries his laundry | 9 A'Siu visits A'Mei and her tailor shop | 14 Yuan Yuan Steam Bun shop |
| 4 Indah wrapping rice dumplings | 10 Four Fourtune Rice Dumpling shop | 15 Post Office |
| 5 Papa Wei's rooftop shring room | 11 A'Siu parks her mortocycle | 16 Indah and her friends wait for garbage truck to come |



BEYOND THE XINWEI BUILDING

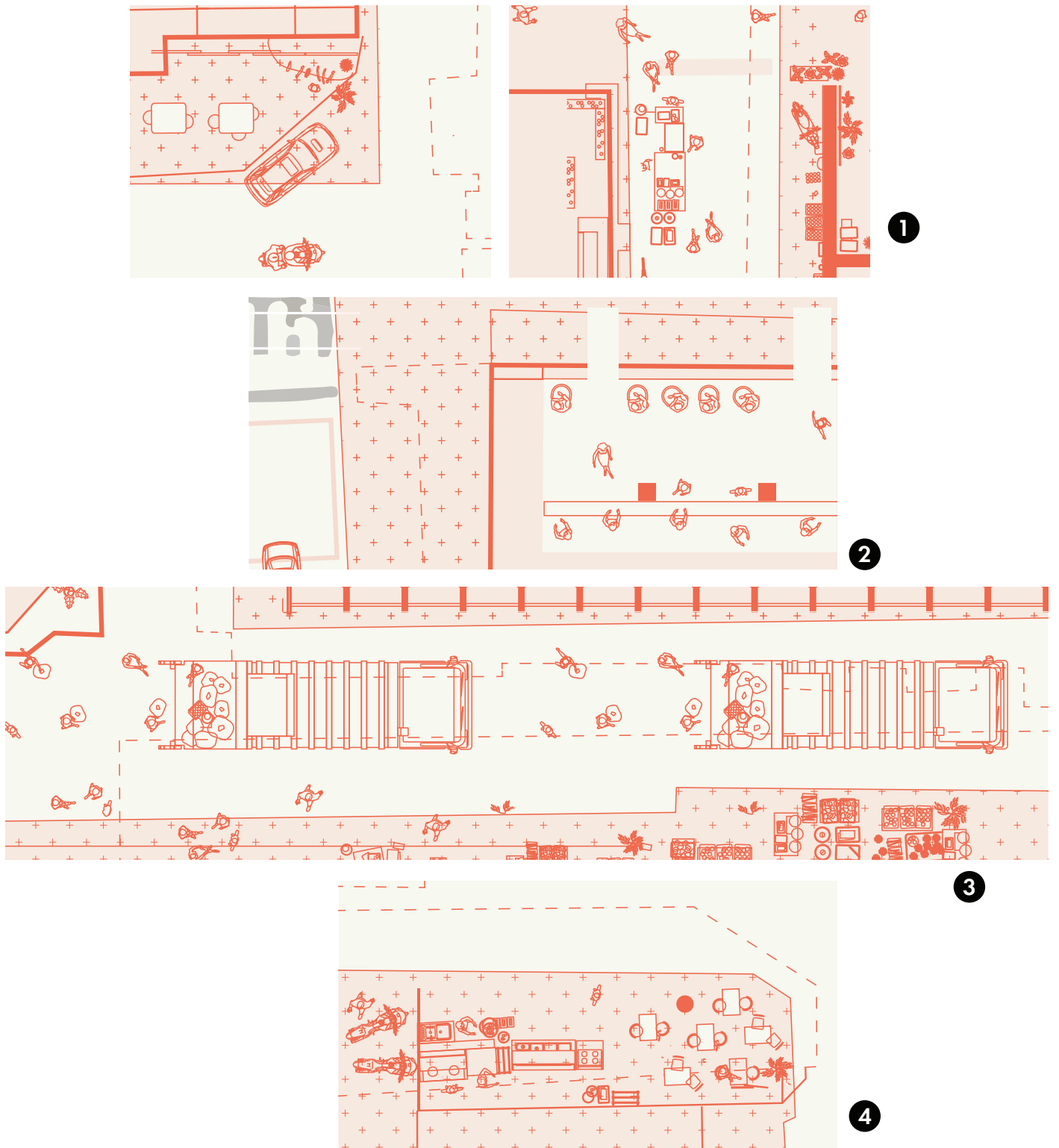
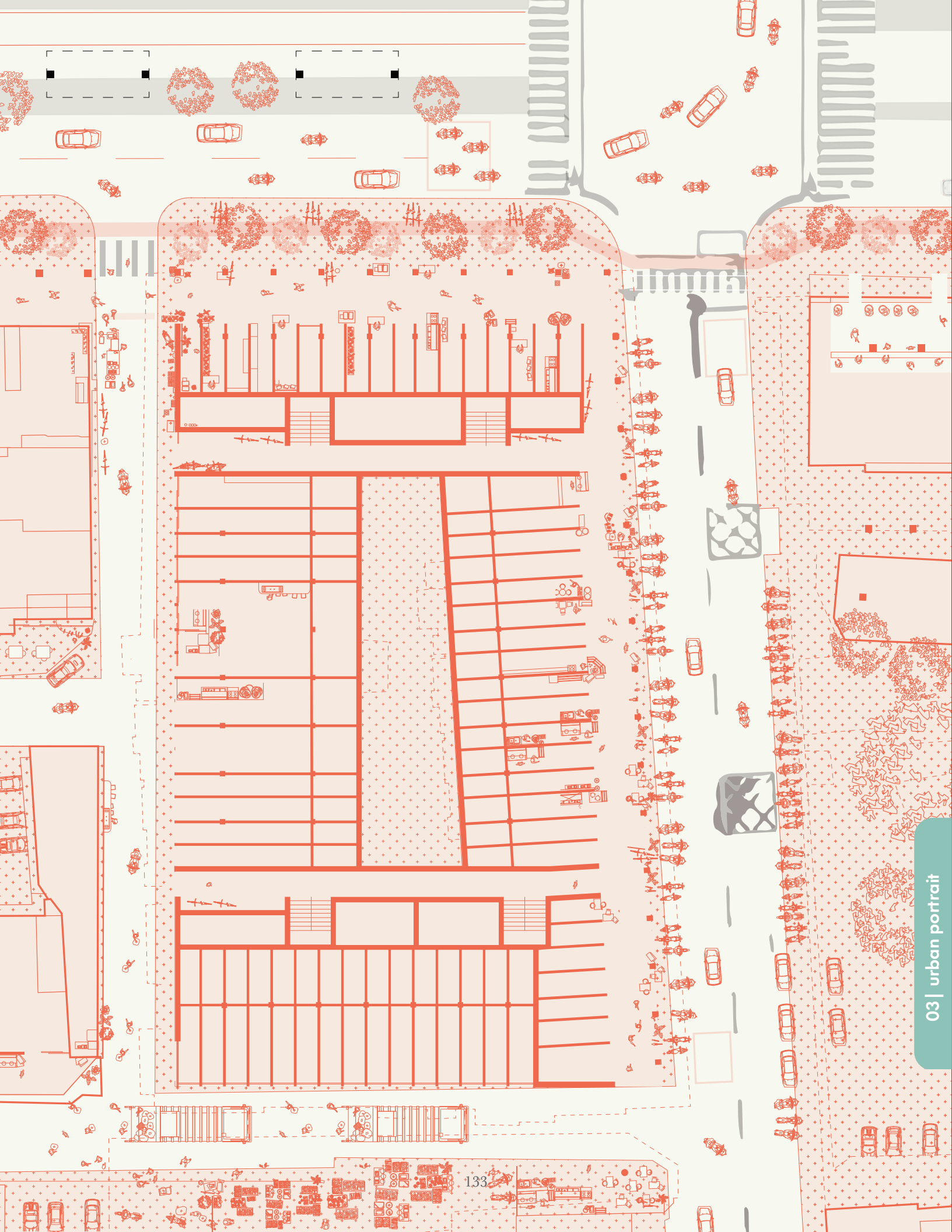


Fig. 4.4 Plan of the Xinwei Building and its relationships with the neighboring alleys and streets



1 Vernacular Dining Spaces

The usage of transitional spaces for small business can continue to be seen in the back alley and many streets around the Xinwei Building. The vernacular dining table along the exterior wall of a building, food carts placement beside temporarily parked motorcycles, and exterior sinks by the curbside for dish washing are typical liminal urban spaces.



Fig. 4.5 Vegetarian noodle shop in a vernacular setting. Dining tables extend out from the exterior wall of the building with stools beside the green bike lane.

2 The Xinwei Post Office

The Xinwei Post Office across from the Xinwei Building serves a broader function than just a place to mail the letters. With the building's lack of enforcement, the post office opens its doors for people to take advantage of its free air conditioning. Many elderly from the Xinwei Building spend hours on a summer afternoon doing a range of activities such as newspaper reading to people watching. The Xinwei Post Office is now moved across Xinyi Street due to the building's demolition for renewal.



Fig. 4.6 The Xinwei post office. It is often filled with people who want to take advantage of its free air conditioning in the hot and humid Taiwanese weather.

3 The Daily Garbage Truck Route

Streets and intersections are the urban transitional spaces that support various human events other than its usual purpose of regulating vehicular and pedestrian traffic. In Taipei, yellow garbage trucks and white recycle trucks would cycle in many alleyways and intersections at around 7:00 PM everyday. This is usually the favorite time of the day for many immigrant workers like Indah as they meet people from their hometown, gather, and chat in groups while they wait for the trucks to come.



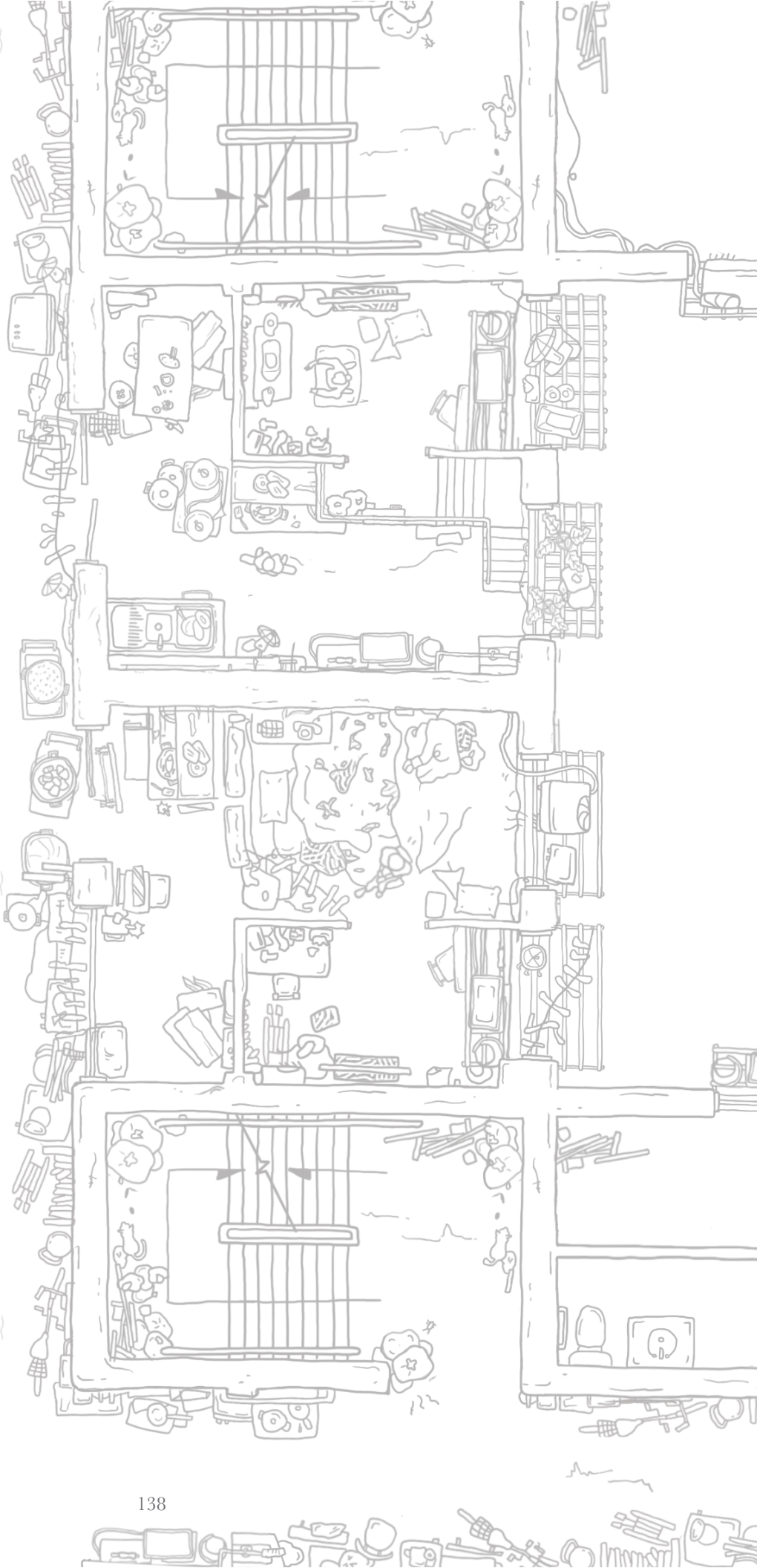
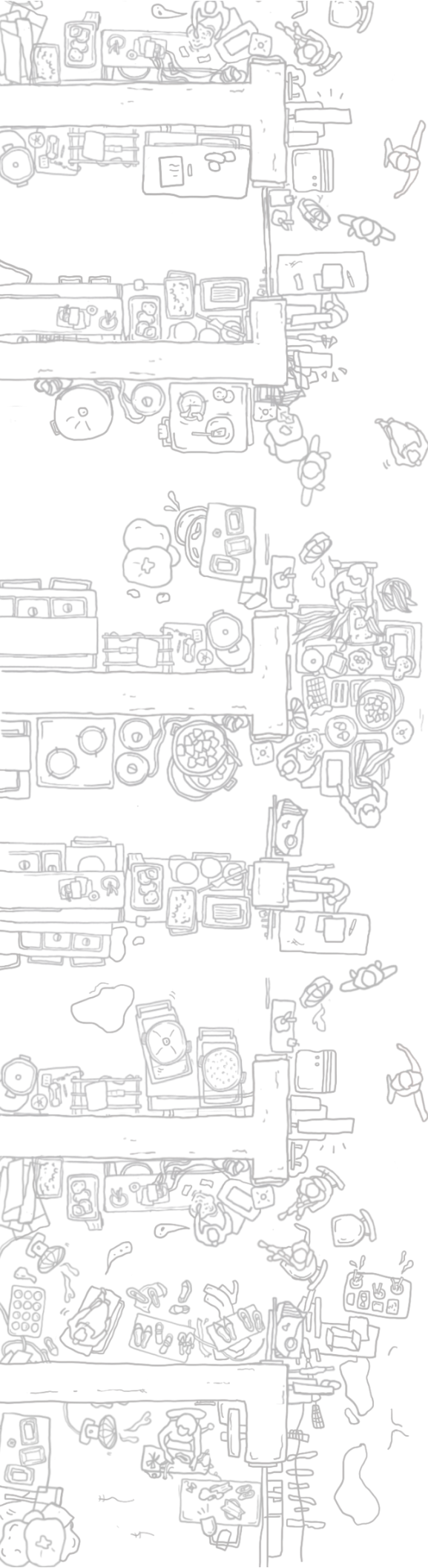
Fig. 4.7 Daily garbage collection in Taipei. Groups of people, usually mothers, nannies, and immigrant workers, gather by the alleys and intersections.

4 Vernacular Restaurants Under the Sheds

Vernacular restaurants can be seen under temporary shelters made up by metal sheds and poles for light structural framing. Dining spaces, tables and stools are configured on the sidewalk under the metal shed roof with accumulated miscellaneous items lining along the edges of the metal shed wall. Larger items like refrigerators and water sinks are placed on the streets where motorcycles would sometimes park beside it. This kind of restaurants can be seen in many alleyways or inner streets where traffic is less.



Fig. 4.8 The strategy of building vernacular restaurants under temporary metal sheds can continuously be seen in the corners of the back alleys or inner streets.



REFLECTIONS AND PROJECTIONS

As the city of Taipei undergoes a series of Urban Regeneration, many walk-up apartments are in the fate of demolition. The Xinwei Building is among the projects planned to be torn down for new replacements of top-down high rise developments due to its decaying structures and the changes of household sizes in modern day society. These globalized models of urban regeneration, which have been adopted by local governments, often result in failures in obtaining the vernacular qualities that can be seen in the architecture of Taipei's subaltern groups.

The extended sense of belonging in the transitional spaces is a unique quality that the Xinwei Building offers to its inhabitants. The local vernacular environment that the dwellers configured in the in-between space speaks the importance of architectural soft edges (architectural qualities without the walls) and provides the readers an understanding of how the informal assemblies of daily objects in architecture can develop into a series of surprisingly coherent spaces. These formations contribute to a vivid picture of the Xinwei Building, illustrating the importance of vernacular spatial configurations in liminal thresholds. The in-between space in the Xinwei Building plays an important role in maintaining a vibrant living in the community where a wide range of informal personal and communal activities, unplanned events, casual conversations, and small businesses, take place. Despite the unpleasing forms and decaying structure of the Xinwei Building, the transitional spaces make this building a place imbued with liveliness.

As the research unfolds the discoveries of transitional spaces in the Xinwei Building, such as spaces above units' front door entrances for cloth drying and bird feeding, spaces between two columns in front of parked motorcycles for temporary dining and spaces above the building's roof for individual household domestic extensions, the thesis highlights the coherent living pattern emerged out of the Xinwei Building communities. The marginalized groups in Taipei

constantly dwell and carve spaces, out of necessity, to create their own individual moments in an overly dense and populated urban city. The study of the architecture of Taipei's subaltern groups reaffirms the creative capacity of people.

The research of the daily materials and ephemeral qualities within Xinwei Building's liminal spaces expanded my understanding of how an architecture could be understood. While the Xinwei Building challenges the traditional notion of residential and commercial units as a fixed structure with 4 walls separating the public and private domains, this research reveals transitional spaces to be mutable entities highly responsive to individual needs and external circumstances. Substantial evidence of the resident's creativity and adaptability can be seen throughout the artifacts in this thesis. The transitional spaces serve as a dispersed network piecing the Xinwei Building together and connecting the Taipei city as a whole.

As contemporary lifestyles change in modern society, as they are rapidly changing in megapolis like Taipei, architects are being asked to adjust, renew and redevelop existing buildings. However, the tradition of architectural development emphasizes a disregard for user creativity in conventional practices. The ephemeral qualities and architectural soft layers, which are often overlooked by professionals, are crucial in the development of a livable architecture. I argue that the life of a building only begins when its occupants transform the built volumes into lived-in forms, which in this thesis focuses on the in-between liminal threshold and the transitional spaces that serve a wide range of human events. By paying more attention to the value of everyday incremental fine grained elements and individual's appropriation within the in-between spaces, architects and urbanists can start to think about, perhaps, consolidating the presence of vernacular elements within an architecture or city rather than entirely focusing on creating new top-down ritualized developments, turning architecture merely into wealthier classes' investment vehicles for capital growth.

Without advocating for substandard housing, innate human survival instincts also push existing boundaries and hold the potential for innovative, alternative spatial praxes. This thesis relates to a growing international discourse of Asian urban vernaculars for architects.

The vernacular spatial forms in the liminal thresholds documented in this research offer inspirations for future generations of architects in considering the involvement of end users in the beginning of the design phase and throughout the entire development process. Alternative methods such as participatory and bottom-up design processes are becoming a more popular approach in modern day professional practices. In the end, the architect's mission should support flexible frameworks for future evolution instead of providing fixed end solutions.

Architects, planners and others could then look more closely at the potentials and the problems that exist all around us, even among the poorest communities. The poor, in turn, could tap into a wider range of hopes, fantasies and strategies. Significant theoretical questions in the arts, culture and politics would come to the fore, not just critiques. How do innovations take hold? How do we extrapolate from one domain to another? When do constraints hamper possibilities, and when do they ignite creativity?

Gwendolyn Wright¹

With Taipei's Urban Regeneration (Dou gang) planning happening, the demolition of the Xinwei Building is almost inevitable. While documenting the unique spatial formations in the Xinwei Building, the thesis reveals the unique vernacular usages of liminal spaces in Taipei. By investigating the transitional spaces and its relation with both individual and collective human events, the research provokes readers to think beyond conventional ways of understanding architecture through its constructive and architectonic characteristics, providing a new perspective of reading architecture and analyzing communal spaces in a way that is not typically understood. This thesis serves as a documentation that remembers the essence in the Xinwei Building, an iconic community legend within the Da'an District of Taipei, Taiwan.

¹ Wright, Gwendolyn. "Informal Cities, Multiple Realities." Chap. 2 in *Informal City: Caracas Case*, 82.

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