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Unconventional
Affordable
Housing!

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ATLAS

RETHINKING

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RECOMMENDATIONS

BOOKLET / DESIGN STUDIOS
LIMASSOL (CYPRUS)



Booklet / Design studios

- 1. The project's framework**
- 2. The site: Limassol, Cyprus**
- 3. Stakeholders' perspectives**
- 4. Design/Unpacking methodology**
- 5. References**



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ALDO MORO



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1. The project's framework

The profound socio-demographic transformations that have taken place in Europe over the past decades have led to major changes in household composition and what is typically referred to as the family. As a consequence, the ideal equivalence between “family” and “housing typology”, as promoted by the Modern Movement, collapsed highlighting the increasing distance existing between housing demand and housing supply. The above-mentioned transformations have resulted mainly in an increase in the number of households of single people, divorced couples with children, single parents and the elderly, as well as in the spread of the phenomenon of cohabitation among different population groups in search of affordable housing solutions. At the same time, changes in the labour market, namely a significant rise in temporary employment and delocalization, have forced people to organise their lives between more than one dwelling and led to the emergence of new lifestyles, such as couples living apart together in long-distance relationships. In addition, worsening employment and economic conditions have reduced housing affordability, increased precarious and informal housing conditions and set constraints on access to housing, even for middle-income groups and people whose housing demands appear to be increasingly changeable across their life trajectories.

While unconventional* and affordable housing practices can take many shapes and emerge from a diversity of household situations, the lack of an adequate offer by social and public housing policies reflects the inadequacies, dissatisfaction with or inaccessibility of conventional housing offers. A key hypothesis underlying the research is therefore that unconventional solutions can be strategies to cope with such inadequacies and a lack of affordability, better responding to changing or intensifying demands. The intersection between the two levels, affordability and unconventionality, has yet to be explored in-depth and can provide valuable insights for a reflection on existing housing (design).

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1. The project's framework

The Research Project of National Relevance “UAH! Unconventional Affordable Housing” – guided by Politecnico di Milano with Università degli Studi di Trieste, Politecnico di Bari and Università di Bari – aims at identifying and analysing existing affordable and unconventional housing solutions, investigating practices, projects and policies – thus, gaining an understanding of the wide range of housing phenomena considered unconventional and affordable in Europe; analyse these housing solutions and evaluate their qualities, innovative features, shortcomings and criticalities; and at developing architectural design experiments & proposals (in each of the research units' geographical contexts) at the intersection of policy and design, in order to explore the feasibility of innovative solutions within a given context.

*** By “unconventional” we mean above all:**

- the non-equivalence between the idea(s) of family and the type of housing;**
- the presence – among households – of different (social and cultural) profiles and different age populations.**



2. The site: Limassol, Cyprus

Limassol, the second-largest city of Cyprus, is a growing coastal metropolis shaped by tourism, tech development, and speculative urban expansion. Amid this transformation, stark contrasts have emerged: high-end coastal projects coexist with neglected industrial areas, fragile ecosystems, and a housing market increasingly out of reach for many.

Our projects are set within two key areas facing distinct but interlinked challenges. Tsiflikoudia, an industrial zone between the city and the sea, is marked by abandoned warehouses, informal activity, and rising development pressure. Here, questions of reuse, affordability, and infrastructural integration emerge. Meanwhile, the Salt Lake area, an ecologically sensitive zone to the west of the city, confronts the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, and offers a critical ground for exploring strategies of ecological resilience and adaptive occupation.

Across both sites, students responded to these urgencies by rethinking the role of housing within wider systems of care, reuse, and transformation. The proposals go beyond conventional typologies to incorporate infrastructure, modular systems, and social programming — demonstrating how architecture can respond to shifting urban conditions with flexibility, empathy, and innovation.

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2. The site: Limassol, Cyprus

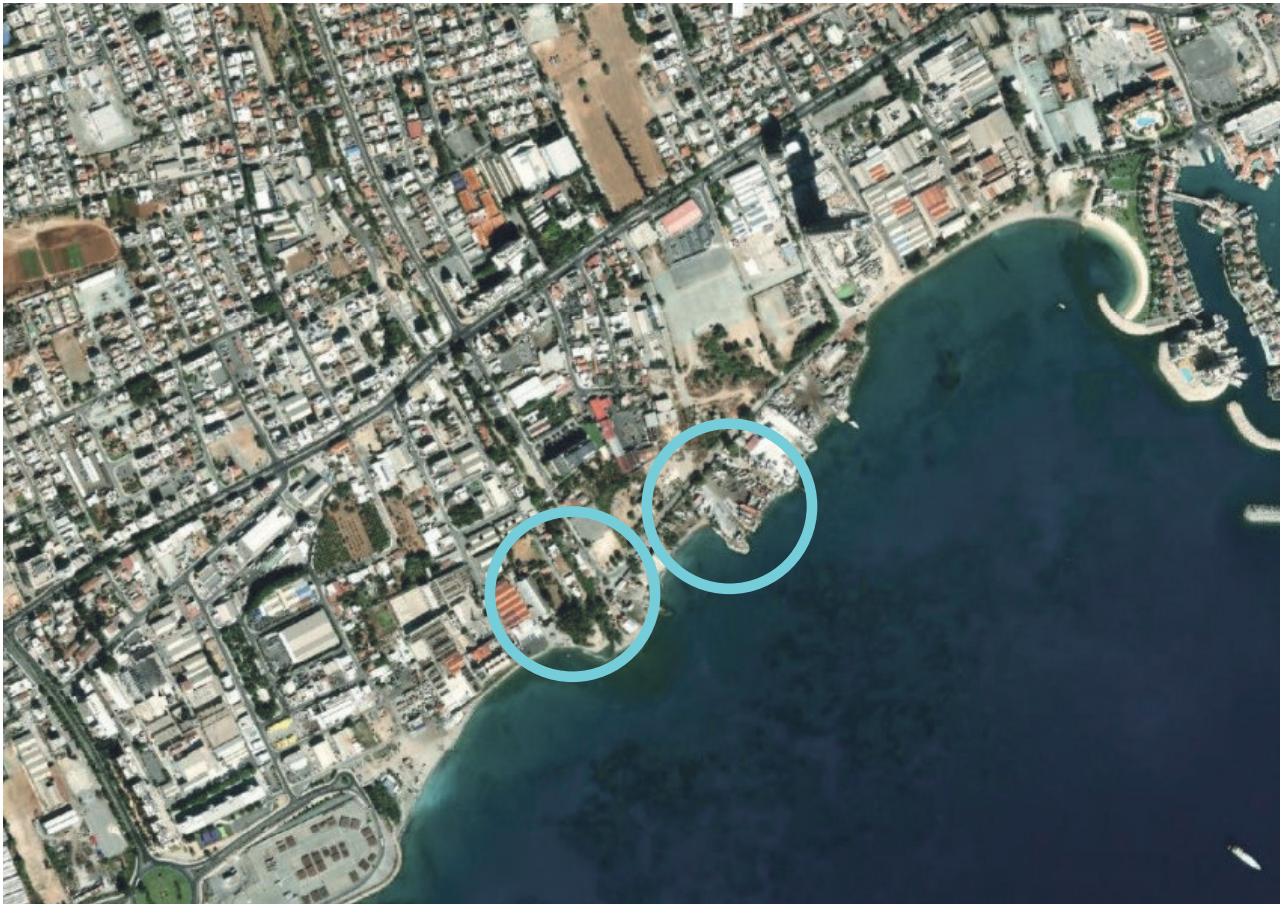
A. Tsiflikoudia, Limassol

Tsiflikoudia is currently undergoing a significant urban transformation. In municipal planning strategies, the area has been earmarked for redevelopment into a mixed-use district, aiming to convert its industrial past into residential and commercial futures. At the same time, the city of Limassol is pursuing goals of climate neutrality, with initiatives focused on improving mobility infrastructure, public space quality, and access to the waterfront. A major challenge lies in reconciling these ambitions with existing uses and the city's plan to strengthen connectivity between the main port in the south and the urban center — raising questions about inclusion, spatial justice, and the future role of leftover industrial heritage.

B. Salt Lake, Limassol

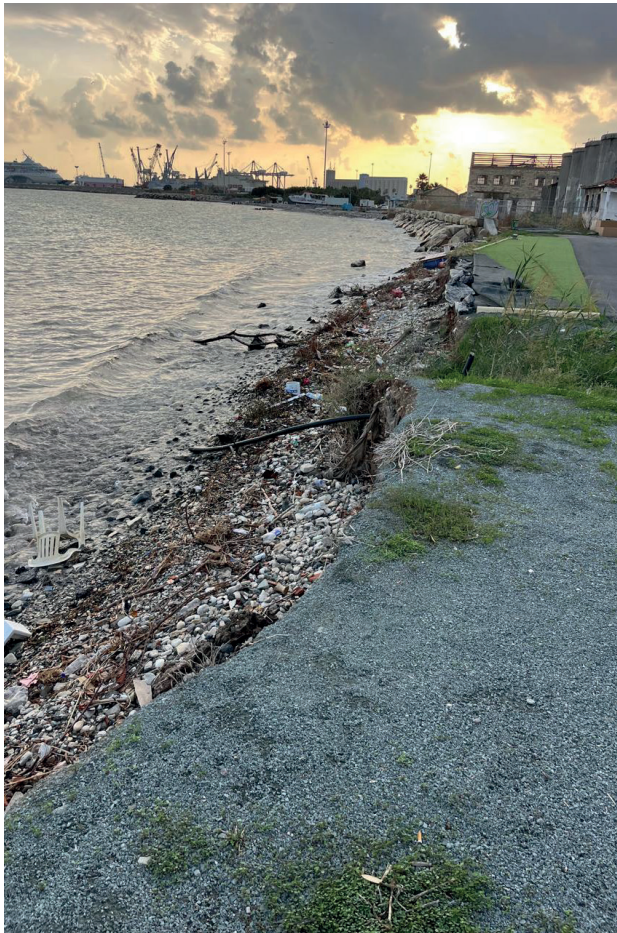
The Salt Lake area, by contrast, presents the inverse challenge: not overdevelopment, but the need to intervene carefully — if at all. Designated as a protected natural zone, the site is ecologically sensitive and part of a wider wetland ecosystem that plays a crucial role in local biodiversity and climate resilience. In this context, architectural proposals were guided by principles of minimal intervention, seasonal use, and ecological integration, testing how temporary structures, adaptive reuse, and landscape-based strategies might enable new forms of dwelling without compromising the integrity of the site.

2. The site:
Limassol, Cyprus



2. The site:
Tsiflikoudia, Limassol

Warehouses & Seafront



2. The site:
Salt Lake, Limassol



Conservation Area



3. Stakeholders' perspectives

The collaboration with local stakeholders was instrumental in grounding the design research within the specific dynamics of Limassol's urban transformation. Through dialogues with municipal authorities, policy initiatives, and cultural platforms, students engaged directly with the city's complex challenges.

Limassol Municipality

The Limassol Municipality (limassol.org.cy) provided essential input on ongoing urban development strategies, highlighting issues such as the regeneration of Tsiflikoudia's industrial area, integration of port infrastructure, and the preservation of sensitive ecosystems like the Salt Lake. The city's broader goals—climate neutrality, sustainable mobility, and public space enhancement—served as key reference points for the design investigations.

Local Professionals and Experts

Throughout the studio, guest architects, urban planners, and practitioners based in Limassol were invited to contribute their first-hand perspectives on the city's evolving conditions. Their critical input, drawn from direct experience with local projects, revealed the pressures shaping Limassol's rapid urban expansion: real estate speculation, housing affordability gaps, and the ongoing tension between private development and the preservation of public space. These discussions enriched the students' understanding of the complex socio-spatial struggles facing residents, adding valuable depth to the design process.

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3. Stakeholders' perspectives

NetZeroCities Pilot Project: Lemesos City Cooling Challenge (LC3)

Through the Lemesos City Cooling Challenge (lc3-nzlimassol2030.eu), students explored the implications of climate adaptation on housing and urban design. The project's focus on nature-based solutions, thermal comfort, and microclimatic strategies informed several proposals, aligning with the unit's broader hypothesis of integrating housing within multifunctional infrastructures that address both environmental and social needs.

Reflect Festival 2025

Participation in Reflect Festival (reflectfest.com) offered students the opportunity to present their work within a wider public forum, connecting academic research with broader discussions on urban futures, technology, and sustainability. The festival's interdisciplinary environment fostered valuable exchanges with policymakers, professionals, and the public.

Converging Perspectives

These collaborations underscored key themes: the tension between real estate pressures and housing needs; the fragility of Limassol's ecological zones; and the potential for architecture to mediate between infrastructure, care, and resilience. The resulting projects emerged as situated experiments, responding to Limassol's evolving urban realities.

4. Design/Unpacking methodology

In Unit 11, design research emerged from site-specific urgencies across Limassol's southern edge — from the post-industrial transition of Tsiflikoudia to the ecologically fragile Salt Lake area, threatened by rising sea levels and increasing environmental pressures. These dual conditions formed the testing ground for architectural responses that combine social care with systemic innovation.

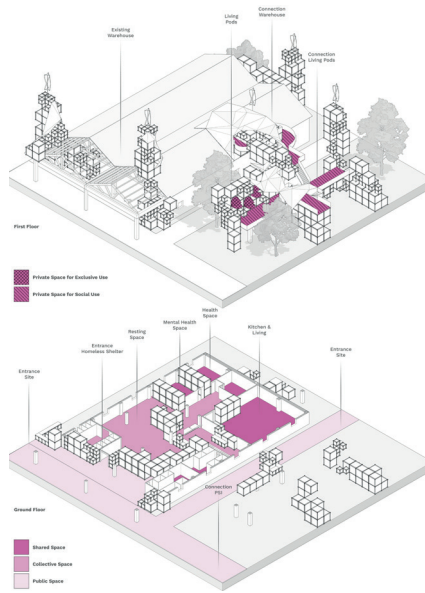
Rather than treating housing as an isolated typology, we explored how it can be embedded within broader infrastructural ecosystems. Our proposals reimagine affordable housing as part of integrated, adaptable, and multifunctional systems capable of addressing both human needs and global challenges.

The following unpacking strategies guided the interpretation and development of our proposals:

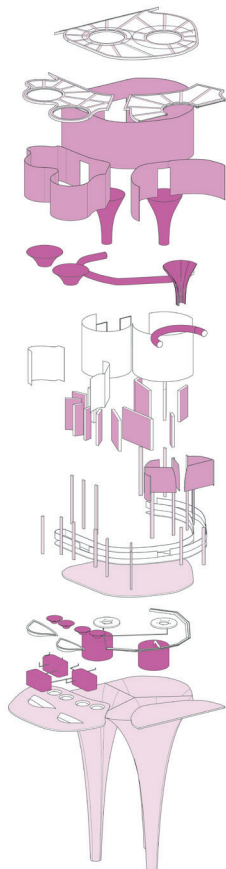
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4. Design/Unpacking methodology



Flow & Haven
Pia Bernhardt



State of Oblivious
Konstantinos Tsamis



A. SYSTEMS OF RELATIONSHIPS

We explored how modular systems, reused structures, and infrastructural strategies can become platforms for both ecological care and social engagement. The architectural framework operates at multiple scales — adapting across terrains, responding to environmental sensitivity, and blending technical functions with human and collective needs.

We investigated:

- How spatial systems can mediate between infrastructure and habitation
- The transformation of technical elements into public or social interfaces
- Integration of existing industrial or natural elements as active design material
- Adaptive layering of architecture across rigid and fluid spatial conditions

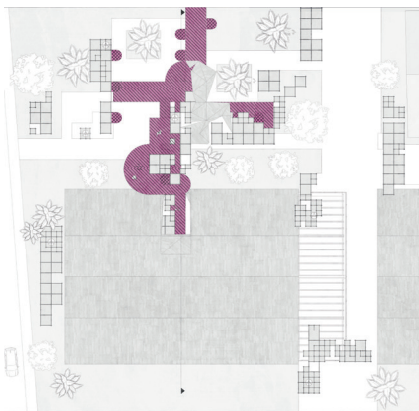
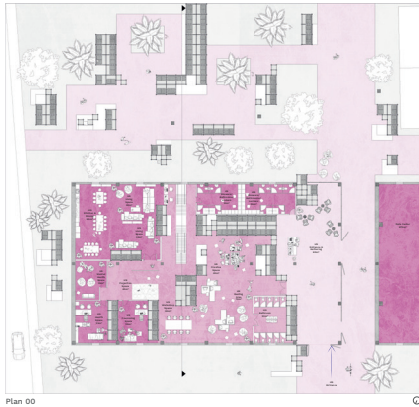
Research hypothesis:

Infrastructure can be an agent of care. By embedding housing within modular and multifunctional systems, architecture becomes both connective tissue and civic platform — capable of addressing social urgency, ecological risk, and technological transformation at once.

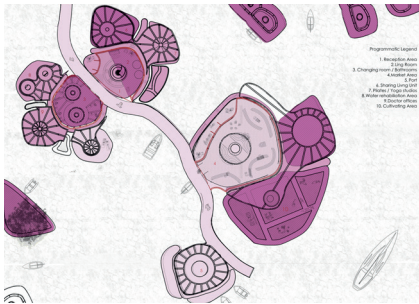
DRAWINGS:

Axonometric exploded view highlighting horizontal and vertical distribution bands, public and collective spaces.

4. Design/Unpacking methodology



Flow & Haven
Pia Bernhardt



State of Oblivious
Konstantinos Tsamis

B. LEVELS OF PRIVACY

The projects in our unit redefine the gradient between private and public, using modular typologies to transition from emergency housing to shared and public amenities. Private units are embedded within larger systemic logics, ensuring flexibility, accessibility, and coexistence.

We distinguish:

- Private units as both intimate shelters and nodes of interaction
- Clustered shared facilities like kitchens, hygiene areas, and workshops
- Collective spaces accessible through or beside infrastructural elements
- Public ground floor zones that integrate with existing urban flows

Research hypothesis:

In unconventional housing, privacy must be relational — spaces need to support individual recovery while remaining connected to shared and collective systems.

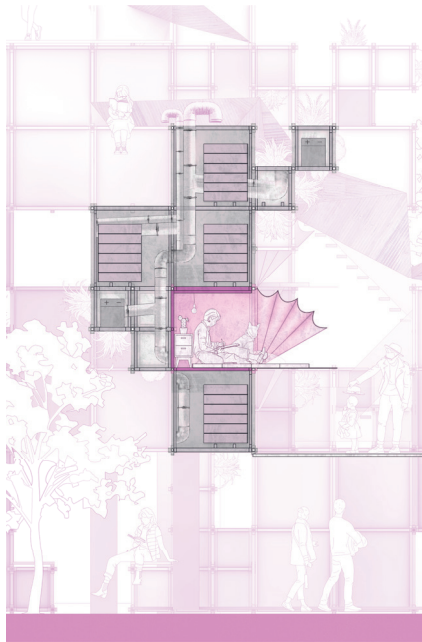
DRAWINGS:

Floor plans of the ground floor and significant floors showing the different types of use of the space: from the most private (darkest) to the most public (lightest)

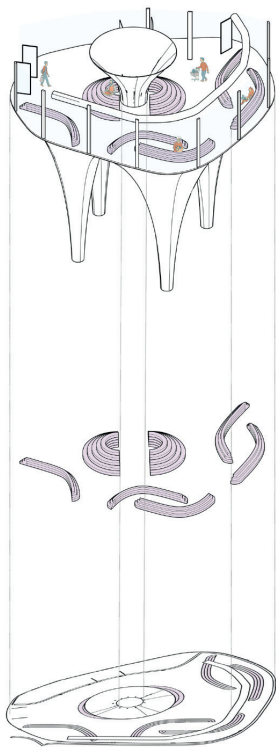
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4. Design/Unpacking methodology



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Konstantinos Tsamis

C. WAYS OF USE/TRANSFORMABILITY / ADAPTABILITY / UNCONVENTIONALITY

We explored how architecture can evolve beyond fixed housing models, embracing modularity, reuse, and multifunctionality as design strategies. Housing becomes embedded in broader infrastructures — socially, materially, and ecologically — forming systems that serve both immediate needs and long-term adaptability.

Our key spatial investigations included:

- Stackable, connectable modules that combine shelter with energy and thermal functions
- Infrastructures acting as platforms, public spaces, or adaptable supports
- Reuse of warehouse fragments as secondary systems for shade, circulation, or identity
- Phased and temporal design logics that accommodate change, reuse, and partial occupancy

Research hypothesis:

The unconventional becomes a method for care. By embedding housing in flexible, multi-scalar systems, architecture can support social agency, ecological reuse, and resilient spatial adaptation.

DRAWINGS:

Sections and axonometric visualisations of the relevant spaces in relation to the research focuses

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5. References

UAH! collects references, projects, readings, exhibitions in order to frame the broad background of the research topic. Here is a selection that we consider relevant to approach the topic, as well as a list of the referenced student projects.

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Cycle Craft
Bradley Burrell

State of Oblivious
Tsamis Konstantinos

Kovcheg 2.0
Ksenia Dovydenko

Equilibrate
Anastasia Leontiou

Buried
Tamara Fansa

Wave Nest
Konstantina Serefoglou

Flow
Veronica Mishina

5. References

> PROJECTS, RADINGS AND RESEARCHES

Territory: Architecture Beyond Environment

David Gissen

Weather Architecture

Jonathan Hill

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David Gissen

Flesh, 1994

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Living in Motion: Design and Architecture for Flexible Living

Vitra Design Museum

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Nomads (London 1991)

Carmichael, Peter

Mobile: The Art of Portable Architecture

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Junya Ishigami

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Huizinga, J. H. (1992)

Design Like you Give a Damn: Architectural Responses to Humanitarian Crises

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Humanity

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Boundaries, Institute
without, B. M. D. I.
(2004)

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Sou Fujimoto

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Slavid, Ruth

Architects Without Frontiers: War, Reconstruction and Design Responsibility

Charlesworth, Esther

Architecture for the Poor

Fathy, Hassan

para_SITE

Michael Rakowitz

Concrete Canvas

Brewin.P & Crawford.W

**UNCONVENTIONAL
AFFORDABLE
HOUSING** explores the
new possibilities of
contemporary living
at the intersection
of affordability and
unconventionality,
starting from a
reflection on existing
housing projects,
practices and policies.

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