Should city living be communal, again?

To what extent can historical models of communal living inform modern residential design in order to address the housing crisis in London?

Research aims:

Primary — Understand whether communal living can lessen the housing crisis

Secondary — Determine at which point in history the nuclear family became the standard typology

Tertiary — To what extent is privacy synonymous with success in housing and is it paramount?

The Historical Communal

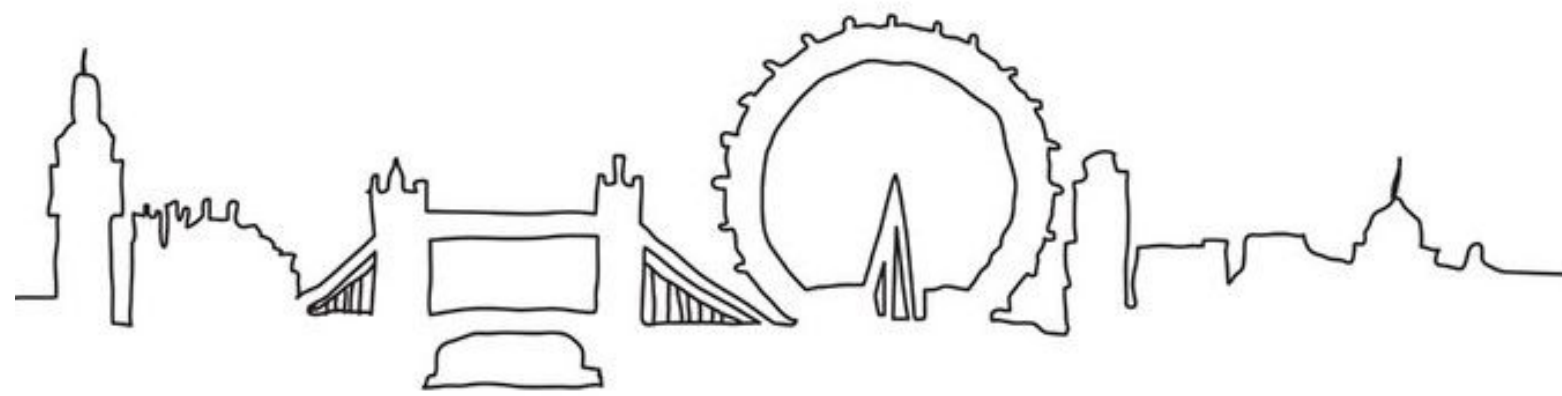A Changing demographic

A new communal response
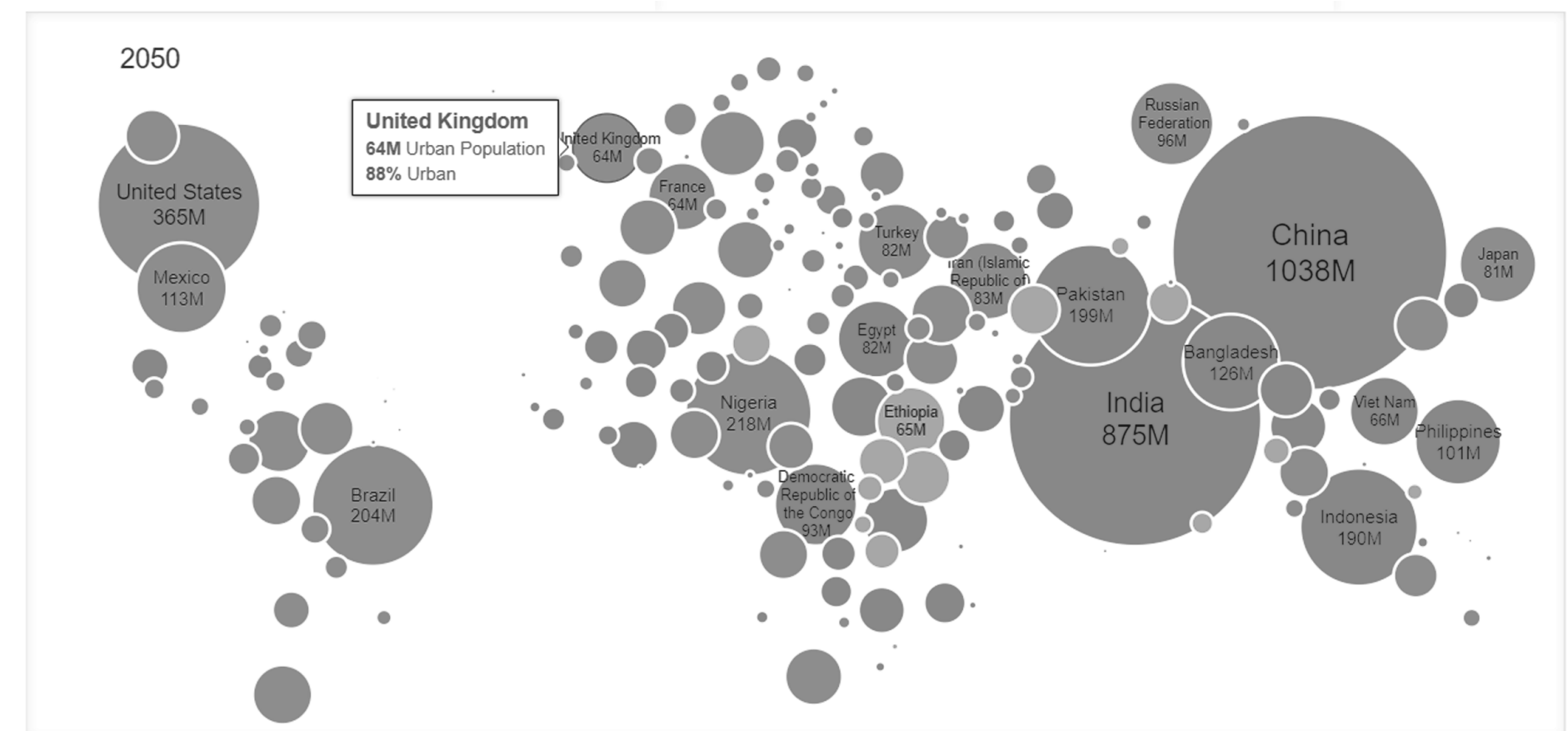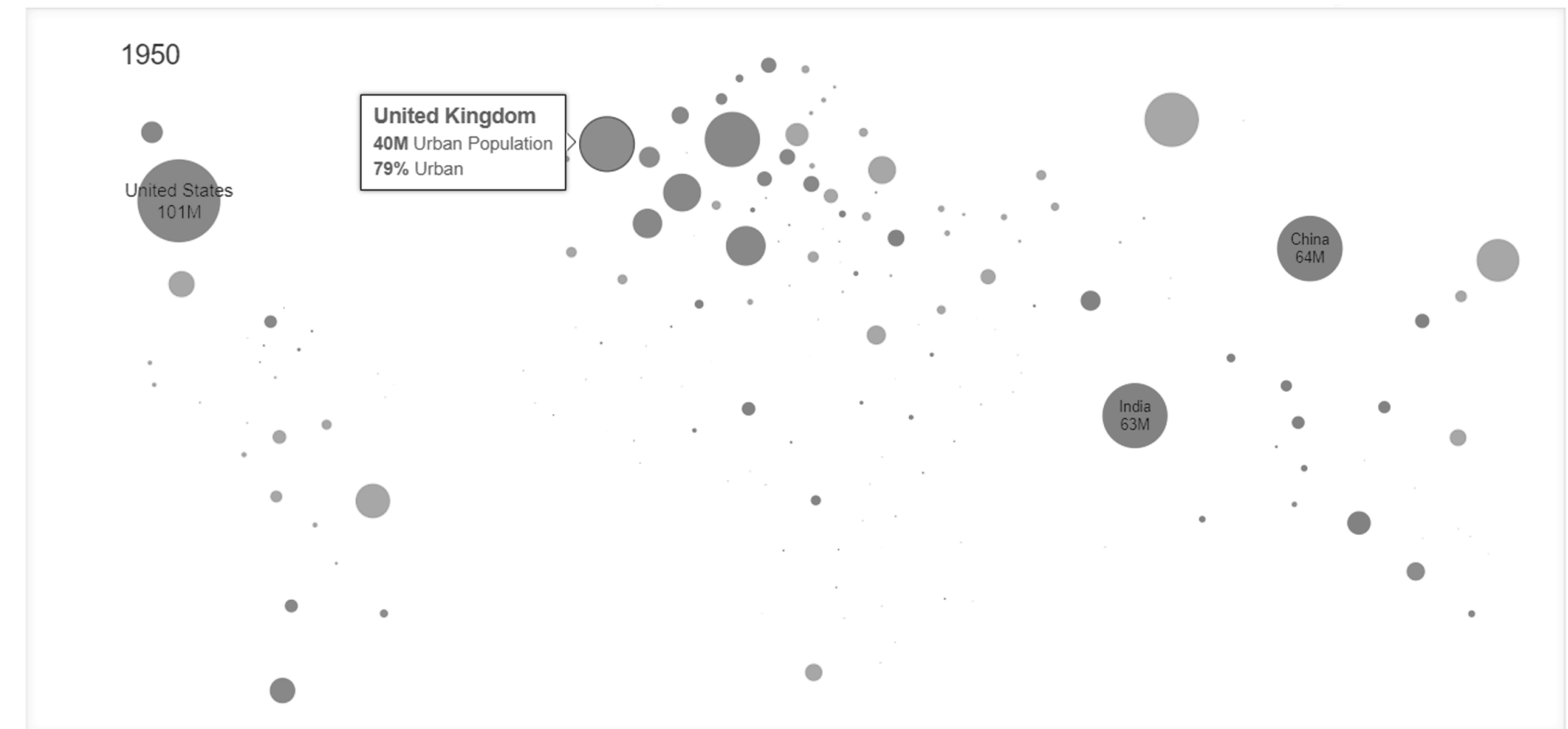
Housing Crisis: Research Context

Unaffordabiltiy

Ageing population

Lack of community

London as a case study that is representative of any city where the same crises are prevalent.

1950

United Kingdom
40M Urban Population
79% Urban

United States
101M

China
64M

India
63M

2050

United Kingdom
64M Urban Population
88% Urban

United States
365M

Mexico
113M

Brazil
204M

United Kingdom
64M

France
64M

Turkey
82M

Iran (Islamic Republic of)
83M

Pakistan
199M

Russian Federation
96M

China
1038M

Japan
81M

Egypt
82M

Nigeria
218M

Ethiopia
65M

Democratic Republic of the Congo
93M

India
875M

Bangladesh
126M

Viet Nam
66M

Philippines
101M

Indonesia
190M

100 years of global urban growth(Peri Scopic, 2012)

Methodology & Approach

'The way people think and feel about the world around them will affect the way they live in their homes; and thus, to work in the opposite direction, that aspects of past thoughts and feelings may be "read" through the form of old houses.'

(Johnson, 1993, viii)

Identifying sociological constants
Analysing demographic trends
Understanding the difference between ownership and value

Sociology   History   Existing response

Analysing past building types in relation to household structures
Identifying past social trends and their spatial implications

Case studies of successful modern proposals
Analysis of why past proposals weren't successful

The diverse London demographic (Matthews, 1912)

Historical Analysis

The Big House

Less formalised household structures
Less specified room functions (no sanitation or kitchens)
Great Fire of London 1666
Often shop or workshop attached
Less children in the home

Industrialisation

More floors in each building
Cooking and cleaning were communal activities
Privacy became intrinsically linked to wealth
Improved child mortality
Separation of family life from polite society
Changing perceptions of comfort

Research Aim

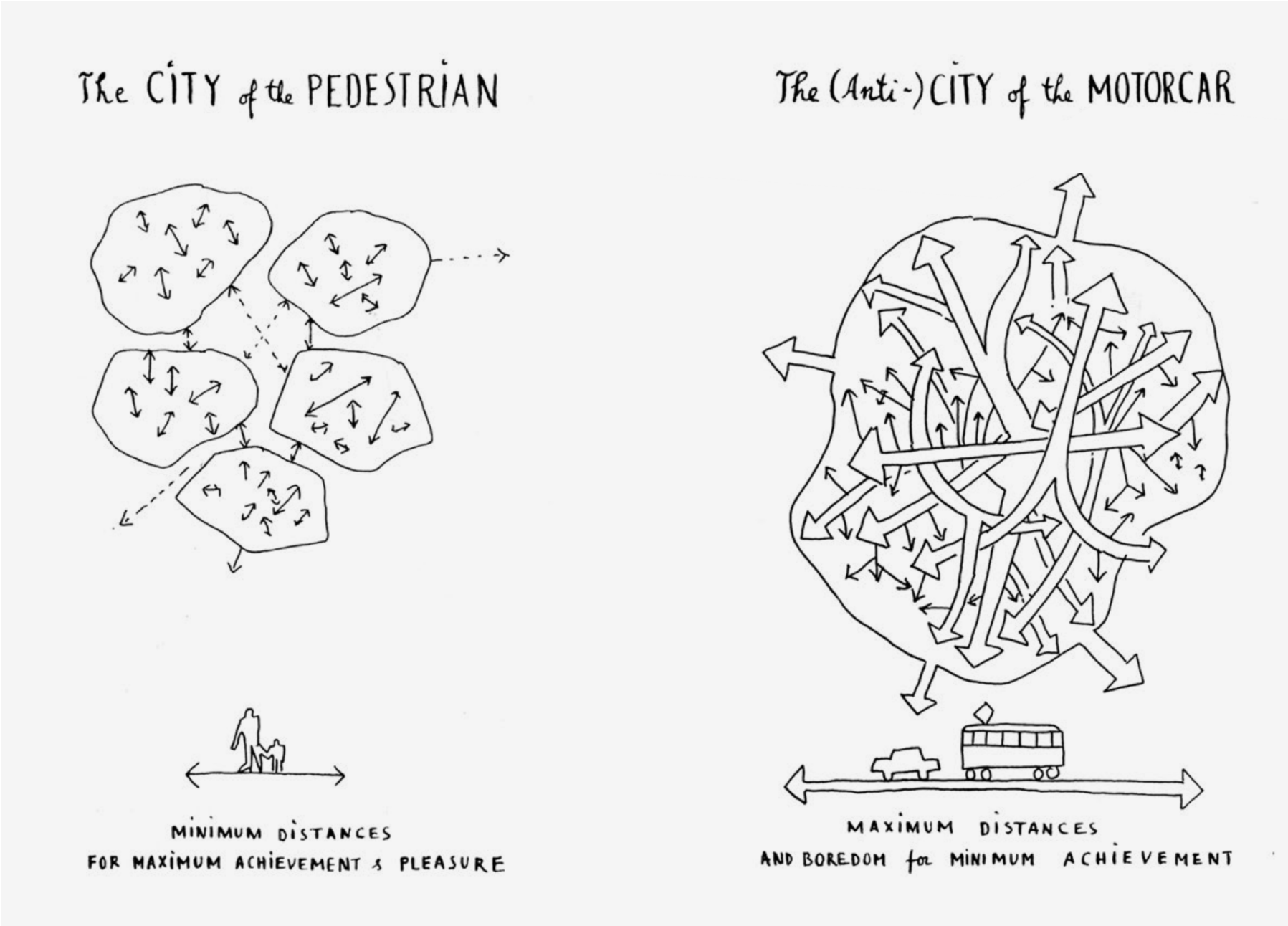Nuclear family becomes standard household structure

WW1 & WW2

Attitudes to women are rapidly changing
Socialist governments wanting to provide housing
Radical ideologies and consequently architecture
Rise of technology renders staff in the home obsolete

Children and the industrial urban residential (London, 1902).

Sociological Analysis

THE CITY of the PEDESTRIAN

The (Anti-) CITY of the MOTORCAR

MINIMUM DISTANCES FOR MAXIMUM ACHIEVEMENT & PLEASURE

MAXIMUM DISTANCES AND BOREDOM for MINIMUM ACHIEVEMENT

Traffic induced lack of human scale (Krier, 2020)

The human, and pedestrian, scale within the city
Desire for community and social interaction

Anthropological Constants

Decreasing household size
Relationship with work and home
Rural - urban migration patterns

Changes in the Home

Income to price ratio of residential property
Desire for control or ownership?
Ownership and rental stigma
Qualitative values of the home

Ownership & Value

To what extent is privacy,
ownership or control paramount?

Research Aim

Case Studies: Past & Present

Isokon Lawn Road Flats (Woodland, 2016)

Isokon Lawn Road Flats

Residents based on similar political views
Inflexible terms of lease
Shared amenities retract from the individual home
Unpopular and unsuccessful

Kensal House (Hart, 1937)

Kensal House

Aimed at clearing slums
Functional, flexible community spaces
Successful in part

The Lane   (Butler, 2019)

Marmalade Lane

Shared amenities act as additional facility, not retractions from the home
Sense of community
Shared pedestrian zone for social interaction

Learning from the past

Terraced Houses

Already the densest housing type
Have survived many societal changes
Flexible to household structures
Resonates with the british populous
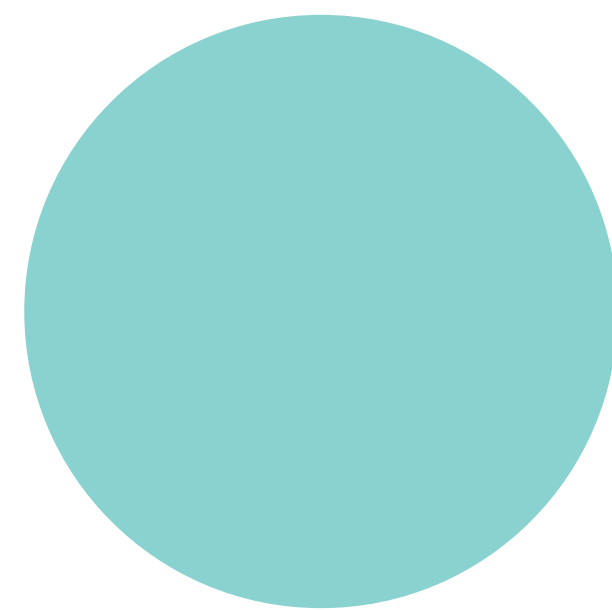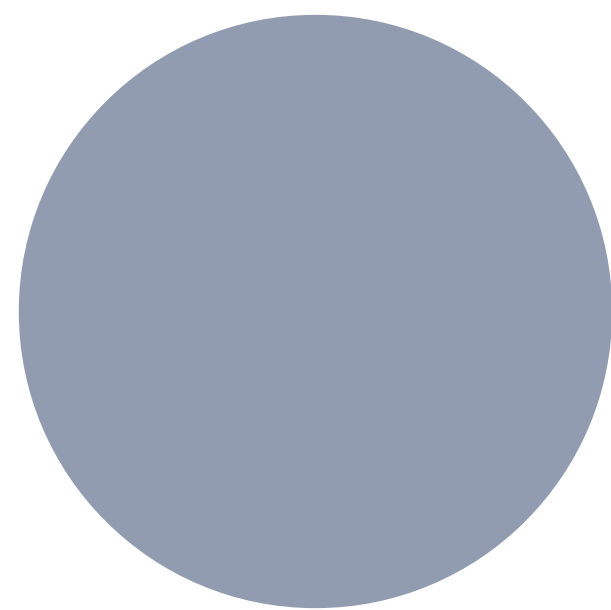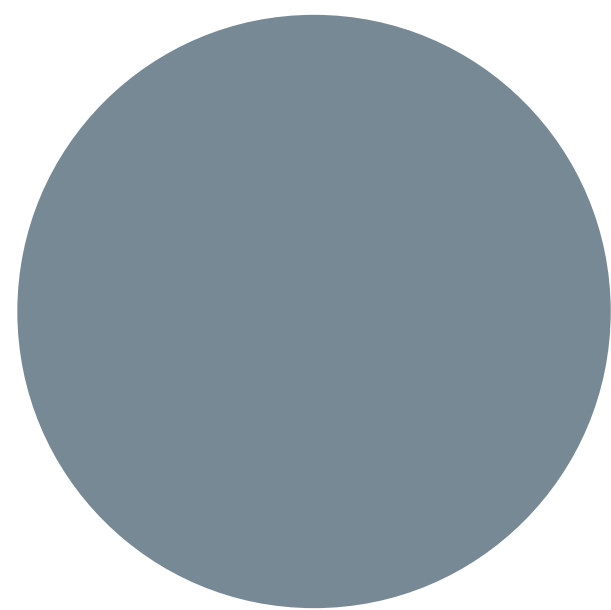
Pedestrianisation

Maintains the human scale in architecture
Promotes better lifestyles
Environmental improvement

Capacity for work in the home

Ensures longevity of architecture
Flexible to societal attitudinal shifts

Industrial terraced housing imagined in a new context

Thank you for listening

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