

# THE FOUR DIMENSIONAL CITY

*Can students leave for the weekend, allowing tourists to stay in exchange for lower rent? by Joop de Boer & Jeroen Beekmans*



Woon& by Bouwfonds Property Development

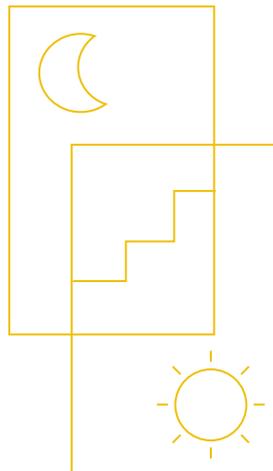
of land. Now, as of 2019, temporary thinking offers solutions for the exact opposite — a lack of space.

### Hybrid house

Somewhere else in the Dutch capital, real estate development company BPD is realising Woon&, a residential complex that completely incorporates the sharing economy. The buildings include guest bedrooms, the coworking space on the ground floor makes its overcapacity available to neighbors, and all residents have access to electric shared cars in collaboration with BMW. The complex also has a flexible shop space that can change function and owner over the course of the day. Coffee bar in the morning, grocery shop in the afternoon, take-away in the evening. It is not only the high pressure on urban space that leads to innovative ways to make more out of it — shifting lifestyles are another main driver for this trend. Work becomes life, life becomes work, and functions are blending together more than ever. Complexes like Woon& facilitate this urban mix.



Woon& adapts its amenities based on the changing needs of residents throughout the day.



**Urban expansion has always unfolded either horizontally (sprawl) or vertically (high-rise). With space becoming scarcer and more valuable, the frontier in urban development is in utilising space that is temporarily unused — not for years, but for hours. Can we turn empty restaurants into coworking spaces during daytime? Can we sleep in office buildings outside office hours? And why not turn university lecture halls into a cinema at night?**

way. New York-based startup Spacious turns restaurants that are empty during the day into coworking spaces. Founder Preston Pesek realised that many eateries in New York only open at 6 PM, leaving an amazing potential of unused furnished space during office hours. Spacious links all these empty restaurant tables to people who are looking for a coworking desk in their neighborhood and makes sure the Wi-Fi works and the coffee machine has fresh beans. The coworking startup brilliantly matches supply (tables) and demand (work spots) without ever owning real estate itself.

### Lecture hall turns into a cinema at night

Another example comes from Amsterdam, where the Free University has teamed up with cinema Rialto to screen movies in their lecture halls outside college hours in the afternoon, evening and over the weekend. It is not a surprise this initiative popped up here. The Free University's buildings are located in the middle of Amsterdam's rapidly developing central business district. With hardly any cultural venues for the inhabitants and the highest land prices in the Netherlands, a hybrid, temporary cinema is a smart idea to make a leisure program possible. When the district was hit hard during the financial crisis, temporary use was a way to deal with an overload of empty and dysfunctional plots

### A giant leap for mankind

The hybrid use of space emerges not only in buildings, but also in mobility concepts. In 2012 public transport startup Leap launched a daily commuter service with small vans in San Francisco. The vans do not only offer a

**Feeling cramped, we tend to focus on space in cities? But what about time? Time is a dimension helping to understand how lecture halls by day can become cinemas at night. How libraries can transform into informal speed dating venues and how communities can unlock more potential from their built spaces**

trip between home and work, but double as coworking spaces on wheels with desks, Wi-Fi, power and quality coffee on board. Among many other automotive companies that explore the future of self-driving cars and additional functions, Honda not-so-long-ago presented a conceptual house in which one of the rooms is a mobile plug-in unit on wheels, that can also be used as a private van or modern type of caravan.

### The future of urban life is 4D

Besides higher costs of urban space and shifting lifestyles, evolving technology is a third driver of this trend. Mobile technology, artificial intelligence and broad acceptance of, and trust in, online platforms open up possibilities to operate and manage space in a smarter and more efficient ways. Hybrid spaces that can host multiple functions over short periods time are the future of urban life. The enormous potential of super-temporarily unused space could be unlocked by incorporating flexibility, matching supply and demand in smart ways, and a focus on operations using digital technologies. Instead of making cities bigger by sacrificing the surrounding landscape or building higher, there is a world to win in using spaces in more efficient ways. This is an experimental endeavor and it will definitely raise many formal and practical issues.

### Unlocking the potential of unused space

Massive urbanization across the world leads to a new frontier in urban development. Space has become an increasingly scarce and therefore an increasingly valuable asset in urban cores. Nevertheless, urban space is still used rather inefficiently. Restaurants stay empty for almost half the day, valuable office floors in expensive downtown locations are only occupied between nine and five, and cars are just standing there doing nothing 95% of their time.

### Restaurant tables become coworking desks during the day

This situation has inspired new companies and entrepreneurs to launch innovative concepts that use space in a more hybrid and efficient

Leap's public transport doubles as a commuter's office space

