



de Wachtkamer

(the Waiting room)

Shelter solutions for privacy, peace and dignity.

de Wachtkamer

We believe refugee shelters can — and must — be more than holding spaces. They should become places where people regain control, build community, and actively contribute to society.



Our goal is to transform shelters by using low-cost, high-impact interventions that are built together with the people who live there.

These interventions are based on intensive research conducted together with the residents and other experts.

A Modular Privacy Shell



Design Features

- Enhanced Privacy & Comfort
- Increased height allows comfortable sitting on lower bunks
- Sliding panels and curtains provide flexible privacy control
- Improved acoustics reduce noise disturbance

Practical Improvements

- Integrated shelving for personal belongings
- Additional storage maximizes limited space
- Redesigned stairs prioritize safety and comfort
- Reinforced frame ensures structural stability
- Built-in LED lighting

Every shelter is spatially different – a challenge of its own. On top of that, most are shaped by complex and shifting circumstances that often limit our ability to act as architects.

But one thing connects them all: the standardized bunk beds, the closest thing residents have to personal space. It is the only place that is truly theirs.

Built around existing beds



By building a shell around the existing beds, we've created a solution that is: applicable across all shelters, minimally invasive, quick to install, and an immediate improvement in quality of life. By increasing the height you can comfortably sit on the lower bunk. Curtains give flexible privacy control.



The shell is mounted to the bed to improve the structural stability. With integrated shelves we create space for personalization and belongings. Additional storage makes use of limited space smarter. And the new ladder provides safe and comfortable entrance to the upper bunk.



Privacy and light control



Personalised space



Safe storage of belongings



Improved stability

Co-design with residents



From the very start of the project, our goal was to challenge the existing gap between the designers, users, and supervisors, and explore the most beneficial ways these groups can work together to achieve the optimal design solution. We began with surveys and site visits to understand

the shelter environment—but we didn't stop there. We took it a step further by inviting architects with previous shelter experience to join us in a sprint design workshop, where the first design was born. Residents were also invited to give their feedback on the first prototype.

“Co-creation
isn’t just a way
to improve
the product.
It empowers
residents with
confidence,
skills, and
a sense of
ownership.”



Pilot location



The Red Cross location in Bleskensgraaf is one of many temporary housing solutions - or "waiting rooms" - for asylum seekers in the Netherlands. The former agricultural showroom, now rented by the municipality, currently houses 58 residents. People live here up to 2 years on average,

waiting for their legal status to be processed. However, due to unfit living conditions, what could be a time for integration and participation instead becomes a period of stagnation. Hence: De Wachtkamer.

“I am unable to lead my regular life. I can not meditate in private, or rest when I am tired, study, or get the amount of sleep I need. The hygiene and smells are bad as well”



In close collaboration with the Dutch Red Cross and the Municipality Molenlanden the first 29 privacy cabins are being built for residents of the emergency shelter in Bleskensgraaf.

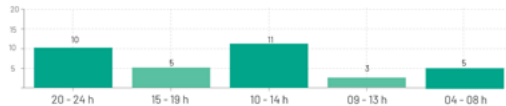
One of many

This shelter is just one of many in the Netherlands. Over 70,000 people currently live in shelters across the country—often with little or no privacy. Most of these shelters rely on expensive, temporary

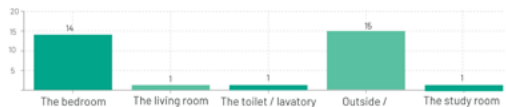
infrastructures, often managed for profit by private entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, mental health issues and internal incidents continue to rise.

“There is no personal space here, there are a lot of people and a lot of noise, which makes us feel irritated”

How much time do you spend in the bedroom?



Where do you go if you want to be alone?



How do you experience the air quality



Prototype

“This is so much better! Finally I can sit up straight in my bed and have personal space.”

- Feedback from one of the residents of the Bleskensgraaf emergency shelter.



Our team

The Wachtkamer project initiated by Studio Antidote and de Toekomstfabriek. The project is developed in constant collaboration, conversations, and workshops with supervising institutions, current residents, the building company,

and professionals who have previously experienced life in the shelter. That way, we are sure we can get enough feedback and input to produce the best possible product with all the involved parties.



“The solutions are developed in co-creation with inhabitants, architects by experience and professional experts.”



Collaborate?

Interested in bringing Privacy Cabins to your shelter? We provide hands-on support, including cost estimates, delivery logistics, and installation timelines tailored to your location.



We're always looking for partners who share our vision of dignified, empowering shelter spaces. Let's build together—because everyone deserves a space to call their own.

Contact us

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