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An evaluation of therapeutic concepts in retreat houses:
A case study of the Pratista Retreat House complex in Bandung

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ABSTRACT

Mental health has emerged as a critical global issue, with individuals increasingly experiencing stress, anxiety, and fatigue—conditions that underscore the need for environments conducive to psychological restoration and relief from daily pressures. Architectural design that emphasizes therapeutic qualities offers the potential to address these mental health challenges by fostering spaces that support psychological well-being. Recent studies have demonstrated that the application of therapeutic architectural principles within the built environment can significantly influence both the physical and mental health of its users. This research addresses a gap in the current discourse by examining the integration of therapeutic concepts within the architectural design of retreat houses. While prior studies have independently explored the phenomenology of spiritual retreats and architectural strategies with psychological impact, limited research has investigated the intersection of these domains. Accordingly, this study focuses on the relationship between architecture and therapeutic concepts, specifically through the lens of theoretical exploration and precedent analysis. The primary objective of this research is to investigate the application of therapeutic architectural principles in the design of retreat house complexes. The methodology is structured as follows: (1) conducting a comprehensive literature review; (2) elaborating relevant references on therapeutic concepts and retreat house design through ideogram representation; (3) analyzing the outcomes of this elaboration concerning selected case studies; and (4) formulating conclusions. The findings of the study reveal a strong correlation between the architectural design of retreat houses and the implementation of therapeutic concepts, suggesting that such integration is instrumental in enhancing the restorative function of these spaces.

Introduction

Mental health has increasingly become a global concern. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the prevalence of mental disorders in developing countries tends to be higher than in developed nations, due to contributing factors such as poverty, social conflict, and limited access to mental health services (World Health Organization 2017). Individuals across all demographics are affected by varying levels of stress, anxiety, and fatigue, which permeate multiple aspects of life (Nater 2021). In Indonesia, the burden of mental health issues is among the highest in Asia, with mental disorders affecting approximately 20% of the

population an alarming statistic that underscores the urgency of addressing mental well-being on a national scale (Basrowi et al. 2024). This trend is largely attributed to the accelerated pace of modern life, which often impedes individuals' ability to adapt to their environments, thereby intensifying mental health challenges. As a form of respite from such pressures, individuals increasingly seek to disengage from daily routines to fulfill psychological needs.

Stress-inducing phenomena whether rooted in interpersonal relationships, interactions with the natural environment, or engagements with the built environment have been shown to affect individual stress levels (Halbreich 2021). The interplay between stress, health, and well-being can be influenced both positively and negatively through architectural interventions that engage with human psychology (Paul 2020). Architecture that integrates psychological dimensions is capable of producing spaces that facilitate emotional recovery and help reduce, or even eliminate, stress in users (Valentine 2024). Recognizing this, the need arises for purposefully designed spaces of retreat, where individuals can withdraw from the intensity of daily life and find mental and emotional relief (Yan et al. 2024).

Research findings indicate that architectural designs incorporating therapeutic concepts can significantly enhance both physical and mental health. Notable outcomes include reductions in stress levels, mood improvements, and overall enhancements in quality of life (Kumar 2023; Al Khatib et al. 2024). The integration of therapeutic design in architecture has thus become a critical element in contemporary society, offering opportunities for individuals to recharge, reflect, and rest in solitude (Bunawidjaya and Yuono 2023). Although still relatively new, the therapeutic architectural concept has shown beneficial applications across various scales of design from site planning and building layout to spatial programming (Toliu and Huwae 2022).

An exemplary manifestation of this concept can be found in the Pratista Retreat House (PRH), which serves as a compelling case of therapeutic architecture in practice. The retreat house extends beyond the traditional spiritual framework to encompass social and ecological dimensions, providing diverse facilities to accommodate a variety of retreat formats (Yayasan Pratista 2018). Therefore, Pratista Retreat House functions not only as a spiritual sanctuary but also as a therapeutic environment for those seeking relief from stress, maintenance of personal well-being, and a peaceful, restorative atmosphere.

Building on these observations, this study is centered around the broader research issue of how therapeutic concepts can serve as a medium for enhancing physical and mental health. More specifically, the research investigates the relationship between therapeutic principles and the architectural spaces that support them particularly within the context of the Pratista Retreat House complex. In response to this phenomenon, the following research questions are formulated: What constitutes a therapeutic concept in architecture? What are the dominant factors that influence it? And how are these principles implemented in the architectural design of the Pratista Retreat House? This research aims to identify and examine therapeutic concepts concerning environmental context, site design, building form, and spatial organization.

Despite the growing relevance of therapeutic architectural approaches, scholarly exploration of their application in retreat house design remains limited. Existing literature has addressed related aspects such as phenomenological experiences, characteristics of spiritual retreat spaces (Rajarshi 2020), and planning and spatial organization in spiritual retreat centers (Holubchak 2017a). Architectural strategies that account for psychological impact have also been studied by Faheem and Ashour (2022). However, an evident research gap persists in exploring the integrated application of therapeutic concepts specifically within retreat house architecture. This research, therefore, seeks to address this void by comprehensively analyzing the interplay between therapeutic principles and architectural expression in such contexts.

The expected outcomes of this study are fourfold: first, to offer insights that can serve as academic references; second, to enrich theoretical frameworks concerning therapeutic architecture; third, to inform architects and stakeholders about the importance of adopting psychologically responsive design strategies; and fourth, to contribute foundational knowledge that can be further developed in subsequent research.

Methods

Pratista Retreat House in Bandung

The Pratista Retreat House (PRH) was selected as the subject of this study based on the fulfillment of several key criteria: first, it remains an actively functioning facility; second, it provides accommodations and infrastructure that support retreat activities; and third, it facilitates interfaith retreats, allowing the extraction of a more universal interpretation of the retreat house typology.

The Pratista Spiritual Center was established in 1986 by the Ordo Sanctae Crucis (OSC) (Yayasan Pratista 2018). The Pratista complex is composed of three primary zones: the Salib Suci Community (encompassing the OSC community and Novitiate Monastery), a cluster of retreat facilities including the Pratista Retreat House, Pondok Mitra, Pondok Tapa, and Pondok Delapan and the Institut Liturgi Sang Kristus Indonesia (ILSKI). The entire complex, inclusive of surrounding plantations, spans approximately 4 hectares. For this study, the focus is limited to the Pratista Retreat House complex itself, which occupies approximately 1.5 hectares and can accommodate around 100 individuals, as illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1. Pratista retreat house complex area (RRP)
Source: Pratista Retreat House 2024

Figure 2. Siteplan of RRP

The Pratista Retreat House is located on a sloped site with an approximate gradient of 11.5°, resulting in a naturally terraced topography that directly informs the spatial organization and architectural massing of the complex, as illustrated in figures 3, 4, and 5. The retreat complex features a discreet linear access path that gradually leads visitors into the site, crafting a spatial journey toward a serene and private environment (figure 2).

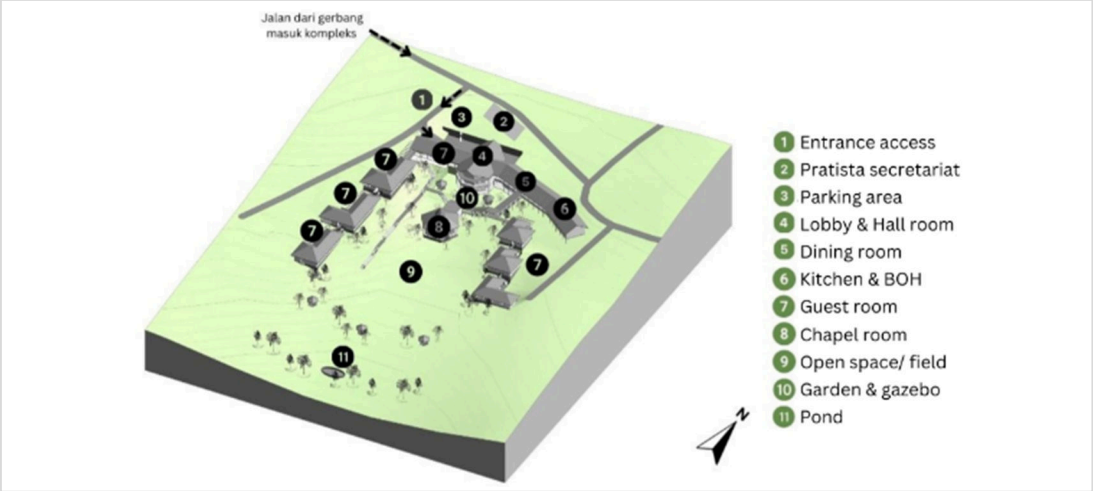


Figure 3. 3D of RRP complex

The architectural composition of the Pratista Retreat House complex consists of one- to two-story building masses arranged in alignment with the site's contour lines. The reception building is strategically positioned at the highest point of the site, adjacent to the parking area, providing a logical and comfortable sequence of arrival. This reception area comprises an octagonal hall that functions as the primary communal gathering space, accompanied by an elongated dining hall and back-of-house (BOH) facilities located on the right wing.

Figure 4. Elevation of RRP complex

Guest accommodations are distributed symmetrically along the right and left flanks of the site, each designed with a single-loaded corridor typology. This configuration ensures that every room enjoys unobstructed visual access to the central open field. Each accommodation unit is designed to host 2–3 individuals, maintaining a balance between privacy and communal proximity.

The chapel, regarded as the most private and contemplative zone within the complex, is located centrally on the site, positioned at a lower elevation than the reception building due to the site's topographical constraints. The chapel is enveloped by secluded open spaces that face outward toward the expansive field, cultivating a meditative and immersive connection between the built form and the natural landscape.

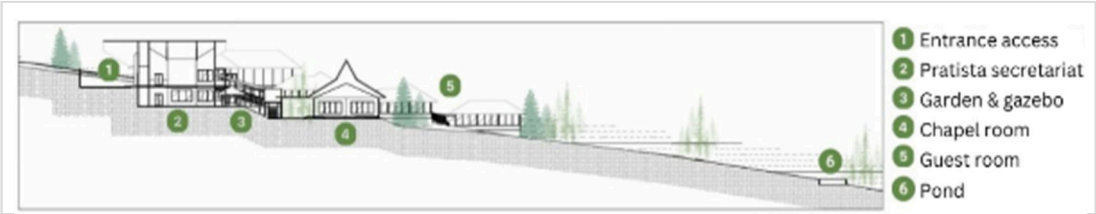


Figure 5. Site section of RRP complex

The redrawing of the architectural object was undertaken to enhance analytical clarity, enabling comprehensive observation from multiple spatial perspectives. This approach facilitates a more precise and structured analysis of the study object in the context of architectural research.

Research method

This study falls within the evaluative research domain and therefore requires the integration of theoretical foundations related to retreat house typologies, architectural therapeutic concepts, and architectural scope analysis. To examine therapeutic concepts concerning spatial zoning, this research refers to the spatial zoning framework proposed by Nair (Nair 2022). For analyzing massing and spatial organization, the study adopts theories on building anatomy as well as property arrangement principles and spatial composition developed by Salura (Salura 2015; 2018). These theoretical foundations inform the structure of the research method, which proceeds through a series of elaborative and analytical steps.

The first step involves mapping the case study through a comprehensive analysis of circulation patterns and user activities within the retreat house. This stage is conducted through field observation, in-depth interviews, and architectural re-drawing. From this mapping process, spatial groupings within the Pratista Retreat House complex can be identified and further analyzed as a case study. The outcome of this stage is the delineation of spatial zoning in retreat house architecture (ARR).

The second step consists of conducting an in-depth literature review and synthesizing various references concerning therapeutic concepts, retreat house design, and relevant architectural theories. The result of this process is the formulation of an ideogram illustrating therapeutic concepts across different spatial zoning stages in ARR.

The third step involves the application of the theoretical elaborations and ideogram to the case study. In this stage, the ideogram is tested within the architectural and spatial context of the Pratista Retreat House complex to examine the correspondence between theoretical therapeutic concepts and real-world architectural implementation.

The fourth and final step is to conclude the integration of architectural therapeutic concepts within the Pratista Retreat House, establishing the nature and extent of their relationship based on the findings.

Results and discussion

Step 1: Mapping the spatial zoning of retreat house architecture

The term *retreat* originates from the Latin word *retrahere*, meaning “to withdraw” or “to step back.” Architecturally, this is manifested in spaces designed as vessels for individuals or groups to disengage from daily routines in pursuit of tranquility, introspection, and spiritual renewal. Retreat house architecture is intended to provide a calm and secluded atmosphere with a primary focus on supporting mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, contributing to the overall balance of mind, body, and soul (Sutrisno 2019). In recent decades, this typology has undergone significant evolution, giving rise to a broad range of innovative design approaches under the retreat architectural paradigm (Holubchak 2017b).

Types and categories of retreat house architecture

Retreat house architecture encompasses a range of typologies tailored to the specific needs of its users. These include spiritual retreat centers designed to accommodate religious practices and meditative activities (Nauwage 2023); health and wellness centers that prioritize holistic therapeutic approaches; nature retreat centers that emphasize reconnection with the natural environment (Osonwa 2023); and recovery centers that focus

on healing from trauma and mental health conditions (Rodríguez-Labajos et al. 2024).

Zoning and space programming of retreat house architecture

Activities within a retreat house generally revolve around three core components: meditation and contemplation, social interaction and community, and reflection and rest. These functions inform the spatial zoning, which is typically divided into four distinct areas (Gill et al. 2019). First is the personal space, a private zone designated for rest, often marked by simplicity and minimal distraction. Second is the contemplative space, a semi-private zone intended for meditation and introspection, usually designed with strong visual or physical connections to nature. Third is the communal space, a semi-public area that encourages social interaction and group activities. Lastly, the support space comprises public and service zones essential for operational functions. This spatial organization follows a gradient of privacy and function, supporting the therapeutic goals of retreat house architecture, as illustrated in figure 6.

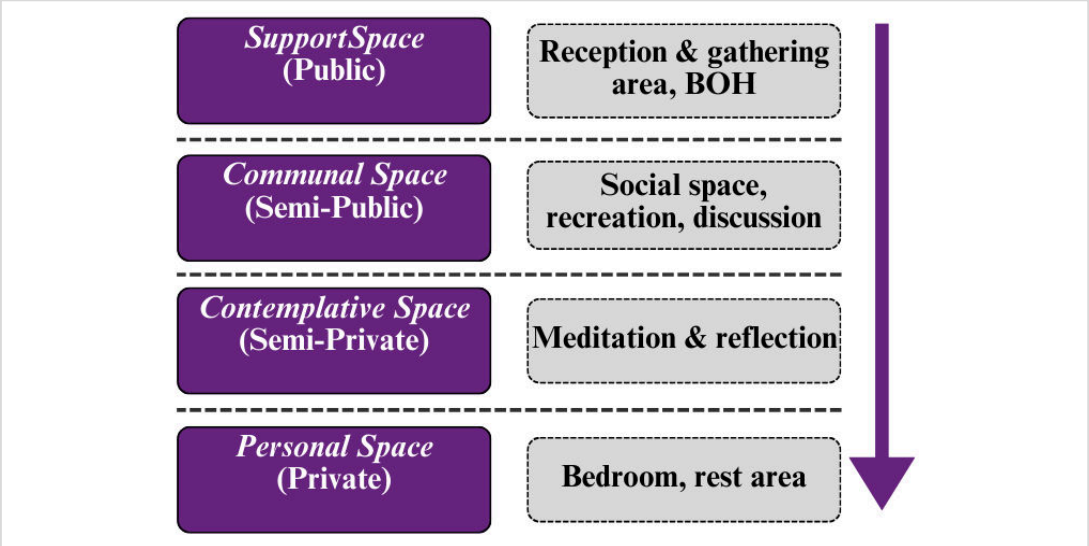


Figure 6. Diagram of zoning and spatial program of the retreat house

Step 2: Analyze architectural therapeutic concepts in the case study

Architectural therapeutic concept

The concept of therapeutic architecture originates from the broader notion of "therapy," which refers to interventions aimed at improving both physical and psychological well-being (Faccio et al. 2022). Therapeutic architecture, introduced by Johnstone and Chrysikou (2020), is a design approach that creates environments conducive to health by emphasizing users' physical and psychological interactions with space. Chrysikou (2014), further elaborates this concept through four foundational principles: care in community (emphasizing social interaction), design for domesticity (promoting a home-like atmosphere), social valorisation (ensuring privacy and security), and integration with nature (establishing a strong relationship with the natural environment).

Building on these ideas, Nair (2022) formulated detailed guidelines that translate these therapeutic principles into spatial elements within architectural design, particularly through the concept of therapeutic zoning, as visualized in figure 7. These zoning principles aim to shape atmospheres that promote healing, reflection, and emotional recovery.

Figure 7. Guidelines for the therapeutic zone concept
Source: The Evolving Scholar 2022

This guideline for therapeutic zoning leverages spatial elements to cultivate optimal healing atmospheres within each designated zone. Nair outlines specific design requisites applicable to each area, which are subsequently distilled into core design principles characterizing each zone. These principles are then synthesized and visually articulated in the diagram shown in figure 8.

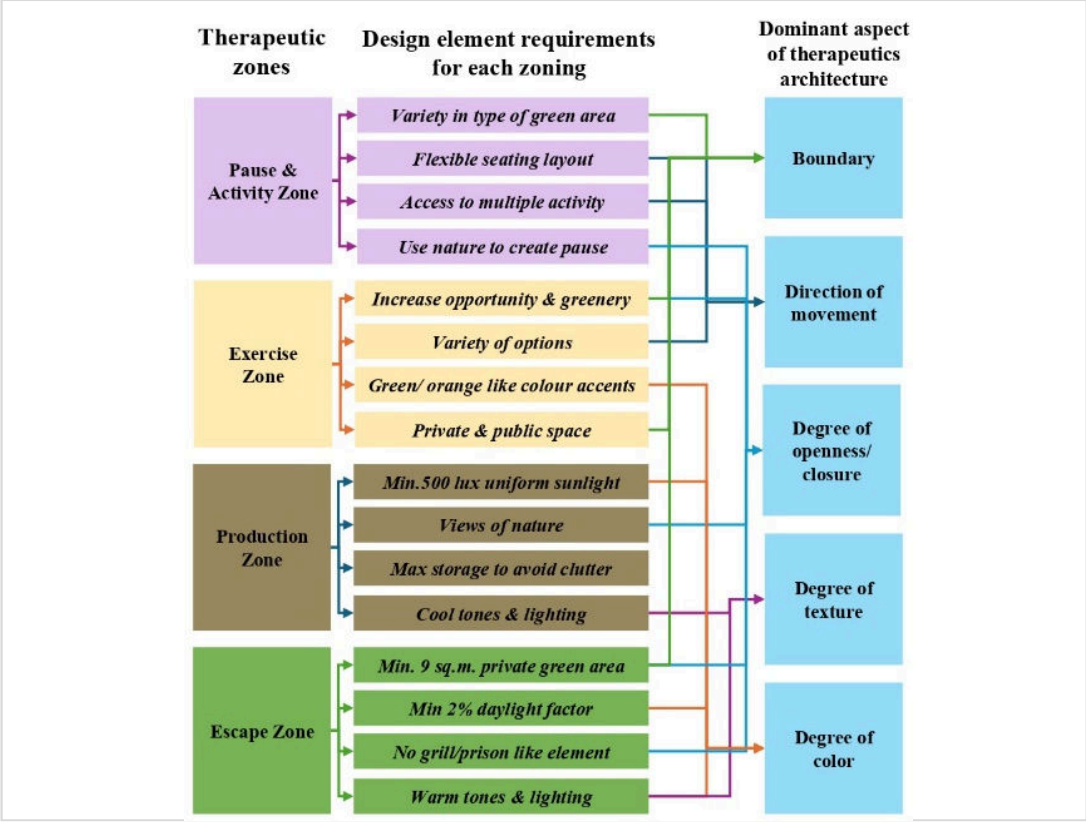


Figure 8. Elaboration of the ARR therapeutic concept

a. Boundaries

The boundary design in retreat houses plays a pivotal role in balancing privacy with openness to nature. The use of simple, organic boundary forms fosters harmony between interior and exterior spaces. Spatial proportions are carefully considered to provide both comfort and therapeutic efficacy, avoiding excessively large scales that may feel overwhelming and overly confined scales that may feel restrictive (Ashihara 1970). This supports the retreat's function as a sanctuary for self-healing and introspection.

b. Movement direction

The spatial circulation and progression throughout the retreat house are purposefully designed in gradual stages, facilitating a spiritual journey from outer zones toward more introspective, contemplative interiors (Raghani et al. 2022). The configuration and orientation of spaces strive to balance privacy with a sense of connectivity, enabling serene interactions between users and nature while offering meditative focal points for reflection and prayer (Ngwoke et al. 2023; Munawar and Suastika 2025).

c. Degree of openness/closure

The level of spatial openness pertains to how boundaries are articulated between interior and exterior environments, contributing to formal or relaxed spatial atmospheres. These variations are instrumental in establishing tranquil settings that support therapeutic and restorative processes (Gao et al. 2025).

d. Degree of texture

Materiality is crucial to fulfilling the functional and spiritual goals of a retreat house, especially in evoking atmospheres of tranquility conducive to meditation and reflection. Here, silence and serenity are considered indispensable, both internally and externally. Attention to the sensory and spatial ambiance is essential to foster a meditative, prayerful, and restful environment. Material selection must support thermal comfort while enhancing the calm, intimate atmosphere necessary for deep contemplative experiences.

e. Degree of color

Color plays a vital role in shaping reflective atmospheres within retreat environments (Law - Bo -Kang 2023). Light colors evoke spaciousness and calm, while darker tones convey intimacy (Yang 2024). A deliberate blend of warm hues for comfort and cool tones for relaxation is implemented to optimize meditation and reflection activities (Manalansan et al. 2025).

Step 3: Exploring therapeutic architectural concepts in the retreat house complex

The therapeutic design is structured around four principal zones pause and activity, exercise, productive, and escape corresponding to four categories of retreat functions: personal spaces (bedrooms), contemplative spaces (meditation and reflection rooms), communal spaces (areas for social interaction and dialogue), and support spaces (reception and management areas). The intersection of these therapeutic zones with spatial typologies forms the foundation for identifying architectural indicators of therapeutic design within the retreat house.

As a facility dedicated to personal retreat, the architectural layout must delineate the boundary between public (external) and private (internal) areas. Transition is established in two phases: the first occurs from the general external environment into the retreat complex, and the second from the complex into the core retreat facilities. The reception zone serves as a transitional node, housing publicly accessible spaces such as management offices and discussion rooms, aligned with the pause and activity zone. The exercise zone supports informal physical movement, while the productive zone includes lodging facilities designed to foster a sense of calm and focus. Meanwhile, the escape zone accommodates fully segregated worship areas, ensuring utmost privacy and an atmosphere conducive to deep contemplation. A detailed visualization of this therapeutic spatial zoning is presented in figure 9.

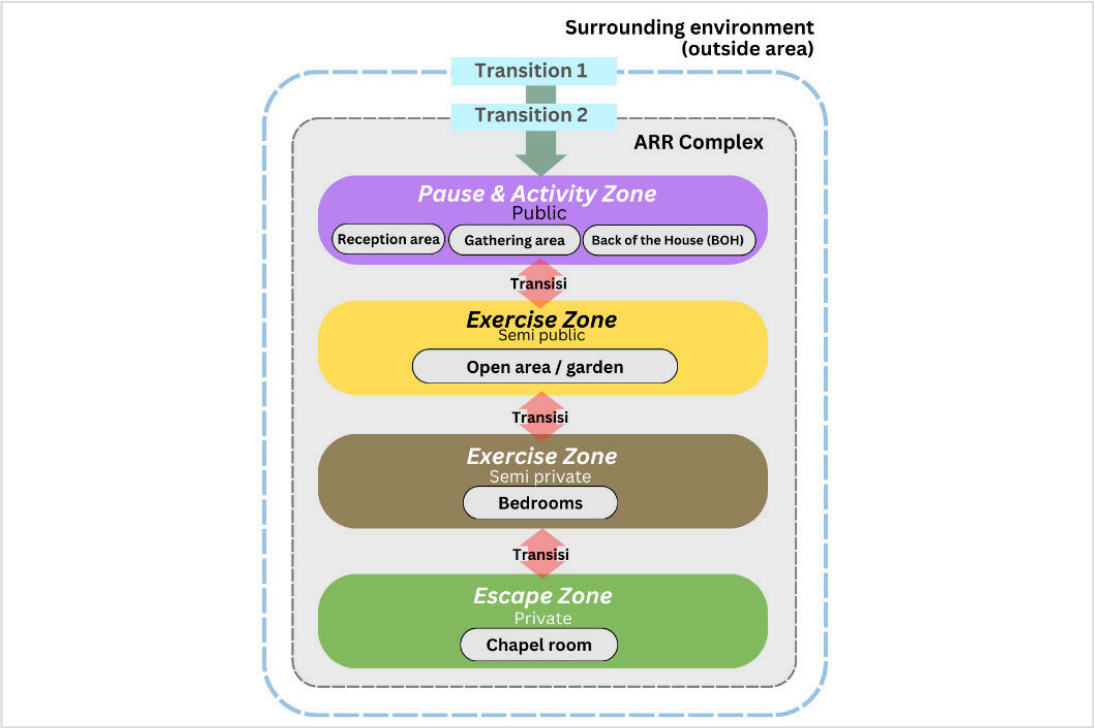


Figure 9. Elaboration of the therapeutic zoning in the retreat space

Ideogram of the therapeutic architectural concept of the retreat house

An ideogram represents a core conceptual idea or underlying design philosophy. This research adopts the therapeutic architectural ideogram for each zoning area as a means of understanding the relationship between retreat architecture and its healing objectives. The ideogram model employed is adapted from the formulation of (Wirakusumah et al. 2021) to meet the specific needs of this study.

The user's experience within the retreat complex unfolds in a sequence of spatial transitions, beginning in public zones and culminating in the most private and sacred escape zone. These zones reflect ARR (Activity, Reflection, Recovery) groupings, structured according to therapeutic zoning principles. Each ARR zone's dominant spatial value is interpreted architecturally through the lens of property and composition theory, anchored by the theoretical framework of architectural anatomy, which comprises four domains: (a) surrounding environmental scope, (b) site scope, (c) building scope, and (d) form scope, as presented in table 1.

Table 1. Formulation of the therapeutic ideogram of ARR

Zoning	Retreat room	Spatial scope	Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture	Properties and composition of therapeutic ARR
Zoning name	Room name	- Surrounding environmental scope - Site scope - Building scope	Boundaries	Openings-Boundaries (Exterior-Interior)
				Form
				Scale - proportion
			Direction of movement	Organization & Spatial Layout
				Shape & Spatial Orientation
				Movement Flow
		Form scope	Degree of Openness/Closure	Enclosing Elements: Floor, Walls, Ceiling
			Degree of texture	Rough - smooth
			Degree of color	Light - Dark
				Warm - Cold

Case study discussion based on the ideogram of therapeutic architecture in the retreat house

a. Ideogram of the transition zone

The transition into the retreat house complex unfolds in two sequential stages: the first, from the external environment into the complex, pertains to the environmental scope; the second, from the complex into the architectural mass, corresponds to the site scope. The entrance transition zone is deliberately designed to be discreet and spatially withdrawn, thereby preserving the core qualities of seclusion and serenity that define the retreat house experience.

Table 2. Analysis of properties & therapeutic composition of the Pratista Retreat House in the transition zone

Zoning	**Retreat room**	**Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture**	**Property**	**Composition**
			Surrounding environmental scope	
Transition zone	Neighborhood transition – ARR complex site			
		Boundary	The shape & size of the site complex is the largest compared to others around	• The site location is in a suburban area – contour, quiet (around residential areas & rice fields/plantations • Located above/higher than the environment (as a potential view)
			Site scope	
	ARR complex site area			
		Boundary	The fence wall is in the form of vegetation: it acts as a filter and connector from the outside to the inside of the site	• Covers the perimeter of the site • Harmonious/does not stand out from the environment

Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture	Property	Composition
			Surrounding environmental scope	
				
		Direction of movement	Linear and concealed entrance access into the site complex	Site complex entrance at the northern end, at the highest elevation of the site, so that the complex area can be seen in its entirety

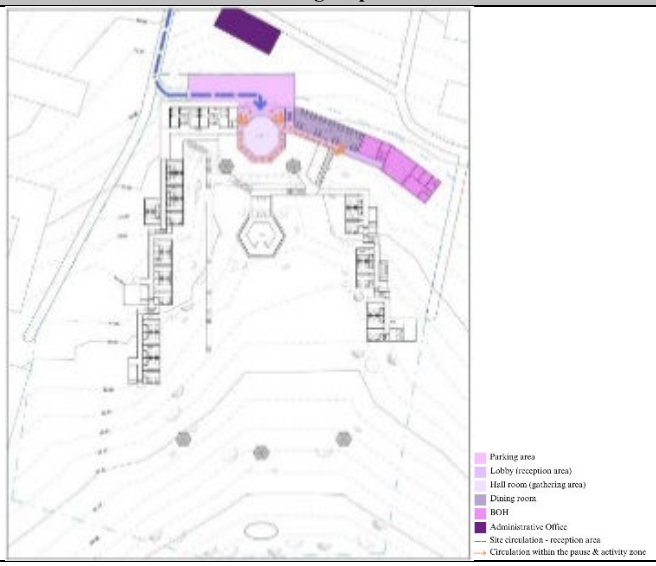
The boundaries of the retreat house complex are delineated through a combination of vegetation and fencing, serving to ensure privacy, mitigate external noise, and clearly define the spatial perimeter. The entrance is intentionally designed to be inconspicuous, fostering a secluded spatial experience that harmonizes with the suburban context while distancing occupants from the distractions of daily life. The building masses are intentionally detached from their immediate surroundings to evoke a sense of exclusivity and intimacy. Employing low-rise, single-storey structures, the architectural design adheres to a human scale, facilitating visual connectivity among spaces and reinforcing the retreat's foundational principles of simplicity, serenity, and harmonious integration with nature, as detailed in table 2.

b. Ideogram of the Pause & Activity Zone

The transition into the retreat house complex unfolds in two sequential stages: the first, from the external environment into the complex, pertains to the environmental scope; the second, from the complex into the architectural mass, corresponds to the site scope. The entrance transition zone is deliberately designed to be discreet and spatially withdrawn, thereby preserving the core qualities of seclusion and serenity that define the retreat house experience.

Table 3. Analysis of properties & therapeutic composition of the Pratista Retreat House in the pause and activity zone

Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture	Property	Composition
			Building scope	
				
Pause and Activity Zone	Reception and gathering room	Boundary	Directly adjacent to the parking area in front of the building mass, with very close viewing distance	• Elevation descends from the site entrance towards the Pratista complex area • Hidden at the inner end of the site

Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture	Property	Composition
			Building scope	
				
			Direction of movement	•Asymmetrical mass consisting of combined forms; symmetrical octagonal hall mass located in the center & dining room mass and BOH (Back of House) extending on the right side of the site •Close access connecting to various other public activity spaces •Mass orientation directed inward to the ARR complex
				•Directly adjacent to the parking area in front of the building mass, visibility is very close •Movement in the public space of the hall & dining room is scattered in all directions •flexible hall space organization (according to various activities), with supporting spaces; dining room, kitchen and BOH linearly along the public zone (pause and activity zone)
			Form scope	
			Degree of Openness/Closure	 Hall room  Dining room

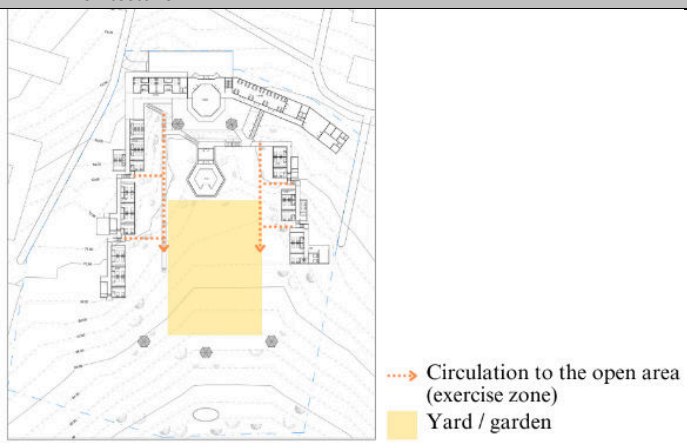
Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture	Property	Composition
			Building scope	
		a. Hall room	The smallest degree of openness to minimize distractions.	Window gaps in the upper back wall section (orientation facing into the site), and window openings on the right and left sides of the wall
		b. Dining room	Higher degree of openness in the dining room with more window openings	Rows of windows on both elongated sides
		Degree of texture	The use of fine materials on smooth white paint walls, ceramic floors, and white wood & gypsum ceilings	
		Degree of color	Selection of light and warm colors; white-painted walls and brown-wood ceiling and floor	

As outlined in table 3, the reception area functions as a pause zone, serving as a transitional threshold from the external environment into the retreat house complex. Adjacent to it, the gathering area (hall) the primary social activity space is designed with geometric clarity to reduce inefficiencies caused by residual spatial pockets. From a compositional perspective, the hall is strategically positioned at the forefront, directly following the reception zone, to facilitate communal and social interaction. The movement pattern and spatial circulation within the pause & activity zone are characterized by formal symmetry, enabling an intuitive and legible spatial experience for users. At the same time, the gathering space is designed with flexible organization and fluid connectivity between adjacent zones, supporting the integration of dynamic activities within a structured spatial framework. A restrained degree of openness helps limit external distractions, while the use of smooth-surfaced materials in warm color palettes contributes to a calm and inviting atmosphere.

c. Ideogram of the exercise zone

To support the tranquil and reflective atmosphere of the retreat environment, an open space is essential as an integral part of the ARR (Activity, Reflection, Recovery) concept. This open zone not only serves as a contemplative landscape and environmental backdrop but also functions as a setting for light activities and interpersonal bonding (William and Brown 2021). The use of natural color tones particularly greens and oranges draws from vegetative elements, establishing a visual balance between serenity and vitality (Gupta 2021).

Table 4. Analysis of properties & therapeutic composition of the Pratista Retreat House in the exercise zone

Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant Aspects of Therapeutic Architecture	Property	Composition
			Building scope	
				

Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant Aspects of Therapeutic Architecture	Property	Composition
			Building scope	
Exercise Zone	Open space/ field	Boundary	• Is an open area • Provides clear views to all masses and spaces within the site for easy space identification	• Symmetrical placement deeper within the site than the chapel (escape zone) and surrounded by lodging units on both sides of the site. • Connecting circulation serves as both an enclosing boundary & a connector.
		Direction of movement	• Direction of movement in all directions according to the activity being carried out • Circulation direction surrounds the open area via walkways and stairs on the right and left side of the site	Orientation in all directions in the ARR complex
			Form scope	
				
		Degree of Openness/Closure	• Semi-enclosed nature (not visible from outside the complex, but open to the interior area of the ARR complex) • Serves as a connector to all areas – has a direct connection with the open space.	Tall and dense trees (cypress and pine trees) surround the yard.
		Degree of texture	The use of softscape materials includes grass and evergreen trees such as cypress and pine, and hardscape materials include stone for the pathways and stairs.	
		Degree of color	The cool atmosphere is surrounded by the shade of tall trees on the right and left sides of the site, with the open area consisting only of grass.	

According to table 4, this zoning area is designed to support informal physical and social activities and is characterized by a centrally located green open space with a symmetrical layout across the site. This open area allows for unobstructed sightlines throughout the complex, enhancing visual orientation and spatial connectivity between adjacent zones. The movement patterns within the exercise zone are intentionally flexible, permitting multidirectional circulation to accommodate various forms of physical activity. A linear circulation system comprising pathways encircling the green space provides efficient, well-integrated routes of movement, subtly defining spatial boundaries without restricting either visual or physical accessibility. Material and color selections emphasize natural aesthetics, with the

predominant use of natural stone, timber, and tall, leafy vegetation around the site perimeter, while the central green space remains open and covered solely in grass. This material palette contributes to a balanced and restorative environment.

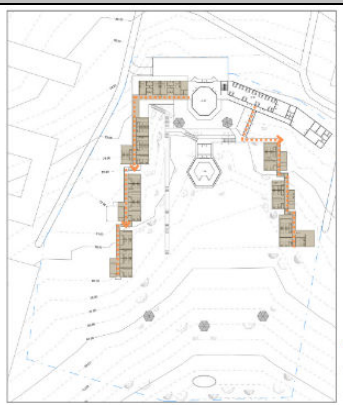
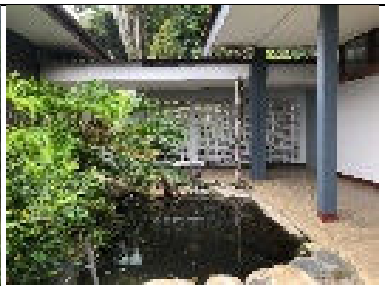
d. Ideogram of the productive zone

The productive zone, which houses the residential units, embodies the foundational principles of spiritual retreat architecture. In this context, private spaces function not only as areas for physical rest but also as sanctuaries for spiritual productivity such as reading, writing, and contemplation. The spatial arrangement follows a linear configuration, separating resting quarters from personal meditation areas while ensuring circulation efficiency and maintaining transitional zones between functional spaces.

Residential units are designed with clearly defined spatial boundaries, incorporating physical enclosures to cultivate a sense of privacy and enclosure. The degree of openness is thoughtfully controlled, with strategically positioned openings that frame views of the surrounding landscape while maintaining interior seclusion. This design strategy facilitates a harmonious relationship between interior privacy and exterior engagement.

Color usage within the interior spaces plays a critical role in shaping the atmosphere and influencing psychological responses. Bright, contrasting tones are applied to energize and stimulate mental activity, whereas darker, more subdued hues tend to foster calmness, introspection, and personal reflection (West and Silberman 2020). The spatial experience is further enhanced through the subtle articulation of materials and textures, reinforcing simplicity, intimacy, and meditative quality.

Table 5. Analysis of properties and therapeutic composition of the Pratista Retreat House in the productive zone

Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture	Property	Composition
			Building scope	
				
Productive zone	Guest room	Boundary	  A transition area before entering the lodging mass, featuring a calming pond element.	

Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture	Property	Composition
			Building scope	
		Direction of movement		
			The connecting circulation is in the form of a linear corridor (walled barrier) and stairs as a connection between the accommodation masses	The corridor (one single loaded) borders the outer side of the site.
			The building mass is a rectangular geometric form composed of several cubic masses with repetitive shapes.	• The building mass is positioned near the escape zone and pause & activity zone. • It has a symmetrical composition on the right and left sides of the site, allowing for a separate composition (between women and men).
			Form scope	
			 Bedroom: beds and reading/productivity desk	
			Degree of Openness/Closure	• Visual openings to areas within the site, namely, open spaces • Normal human scale
			Degree of texture	Use of fine materials
			Degree of color	• Adequate lighting from visual openings. Colors tend to be warm (gray walls and white ceiling) (brown floors) • Sufficient lighting, and material elements in warm colors, or allowing for a dimly lit sleeping area

According to table 5, the spatial arrangement of rooms within the productive zone follows a radial configuration, with units organized around a central green open space. These rooms adopt a repetitive cubical form, each oriented toward private outdoor areas to provide expansive visual access to natural surroundings, thereby fostering a serene and contemplative atmosphere. Circulation to the individual rooms is designed linearly and is strategically buffered by vegetation, serving to reduce ambient noise and enhance user privacy. Each unit is designed for a

maximum occupancy of two persons, ensuring personal comfort and spatial intimacy. Interior finishes incorporate smooth materials complemented by a warm color palette, further reinforcing a sense of calm and retreat. Lighting within the rooms is deliberately calibrated to avoid excessive brightness, thus supporting a restful and restorative indoor environment.

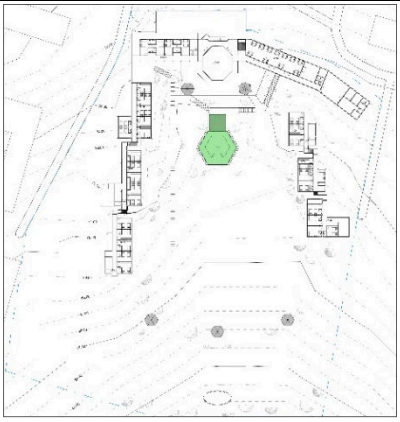
e. Ideogram of the escape

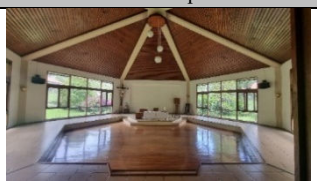
Upon entering the main retreat space, a transitional zone functions as a psychological and spatial buffer, mediating the shift in atmosphere and mentally preparing individuals before they access the central area designated for contemplation. The design strategy in this intermediary space is deeply attuned to the requirements of silence, focus, and spiritual cohesion, with the integration of centralized geometry, spatial hierarchy, and intentional light manipulation working cohesively to establish an environment supportive of both solitary and collective contemplative practices.

The spatial organization employs a centralized layout, where the most private and sacred zone is placed at the core, encircled by progressively more public areas. This arrangement generates a clear gradation of privacy, guiding users from openness toward introspection through spatial layering.

The primary spatial orientation is accentuated using contrasting architectural elements—such as differentiated wall or ceiling treatments—particularly in the altar area, thereby reinforcing the visual hierarchy and directing focus. The contemplative ambiance is further elevated through warm lighting, achieved via a calibrated interplay of natural and artificial sources. Variations in light intensity between the seating areas and the altar subtly emphasize the sacred focal point, enriching the overall spiritual experience.

Table 6. Analysis of properties and therapeutic composition of the Pratista Retreat House in the escape zone

Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture	Property	Composition
			Building scope	
				
Escape zone	Chapel room	Boundary	• The main space within the retreat complex. • It has a symmetrical composition relative to the site, with an imaginary main linear axis connecting the building masses throughout the complex as the orientation direction	• Positioned after the public mass (pause & activity zone), symmetrically in the center of the site. • The chapel space mass is lower than the public mass area due to zoning and the sloping site contour. • It is composed separately from the building masses with active activities • Has a direct connection to the open space, specifically private?

Zoning	Retreat room	Dominant aspects of therapeutic architecture	Property	Composition
			Building scope	
			• Surrounded by private green space areas.	
		Direction of movement	Directed linearly to a gathering point/transition area before entering the private area.	The transition area includes a gazebo garden and a storage space area at the front before entering the chapel.
			• The space orientation is centralized (symmetrical mass) towards the altar as the main orientation of the ARR complex. • The visual orientation of seating faces the altar area and is unobstructed.	
			Form scope	
			 Chapel  Transition space leading to the chapel	
		Degree of Openness/Closure	Large & wide visual openings on every wall except the altar area, in a private area (vegetation), as a barrier to limit the most private area in the complex	The position and elevation of the floor are higher than the previous transition space.
		Degree of texture	The use of smooth materials on all enclosing elements: walls (smooth white paint), floor, and ceiling (gloss-coated wooden parquet).	
		Degree of color	• The use of light and warm materials and colors, with bright white and brown materials. • The altar area is simple, without special lighting or contrasting colors.	

As presented in table 6, the chapel is designed with a symmetrical and centralized layout, oriented toward the altar as the primary focal point, thereby establishing a serene and contemplative atmosphere. Functioning as the main axis of the complex, the chapel connects the surrounding architectural components in a balanced, symmetrical composition. It is deliberately placed apart from the main building mass, enveloped by private open space, which enhances its spatial and symbolic prominence. Elevated above the preceding hall mass, the chapel asserts its hierarchical significance as the spiritual heart of the retreat complex. Access to the chapel is organized through a linear circulation path, carefully framed by transitional spaces and tranquil prayer gardens that facilitate gradual entry and psychological preparation. Surrounded by expansive green open areas, the chapel offers unobstructed and calming visual connections to nature, further enriching the user's contemplative experience.

This space exhibits the highest degree of spatial openness among all zones, intentionally

blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior environments. This design choice promotes a seamless connection with the surrounding landscape, thereby reinforcing the retreat's therapeutic architectural concept. The use of smooth, minimalistic materials and the absence of decorative elements results in a clean and distraction-free texture, allowing users to remain fully engaged in spiritual and reflective activities.

Conclusions

This study concludes that the architectural configuration of the retreat house complex demonstrates a strong alignment with the principles of therapeutic architecture. The findings affirm the research question by illustrating how zoning strategies and the application of therapeutic design aspects manifest across the retreat environment. All key therapeutic components boundaries, movement direction, degrees of openness and closure, material texture, and color schemes are intentionally integrated to cultivate an atmosphere of tranquility, which is the fundamental essence of a retreat facility.

Based on the case study analysis, it is determined that the retreat house is organized into five therapeutic ideogram zones, forming a continuous gradient from public to private space. These zones include transitional spaces from the exterior into the complex, each exhibiting distinctive therapeutic characteristics that collectively enhance the overall spatial and emotional experience of the users.

This research introduces a novel ideogram framework for evaluating the integration of therapeutic concepts in retreat house design, addressing an existing gap in the holistic application of such principles. The architectural implementation observed in the Pratista Retreat House in Bandung serves as a compelling case study, demonstrating the successful embodiment of therapeutic ideograms in spatial design and their efficacy in fulfilling therapeutic objectives. Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study provides practical architectural guidance for designing environments that actively support users' mental and emotional well-being. The ideogram proposed here holds potential for further development and application as a conceptual model in the planning and design of future retreat houses and similar therapeutic settings.

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