

Five Skins - Bustaldea

What? The proposal seeks to comprehensively revitalize the Bustaldea residential complex, improving quality of life through an intervention that promotes sustainability, identity, and social cohesion.

How? By preserving the existing structure, redistributing the housing units to optimize efficiency and comfort, incorporating a lightweight enclosure that regulates climate and encourages social interaction, and transforming the ground floors into communal spaces.

Where? In the five multifamily blocks of the Goikolarra neighborhood in Vitoria-Gasteiz, integrating the complex with its immediate urban and natural surroundings to enhance its identity and functionality.

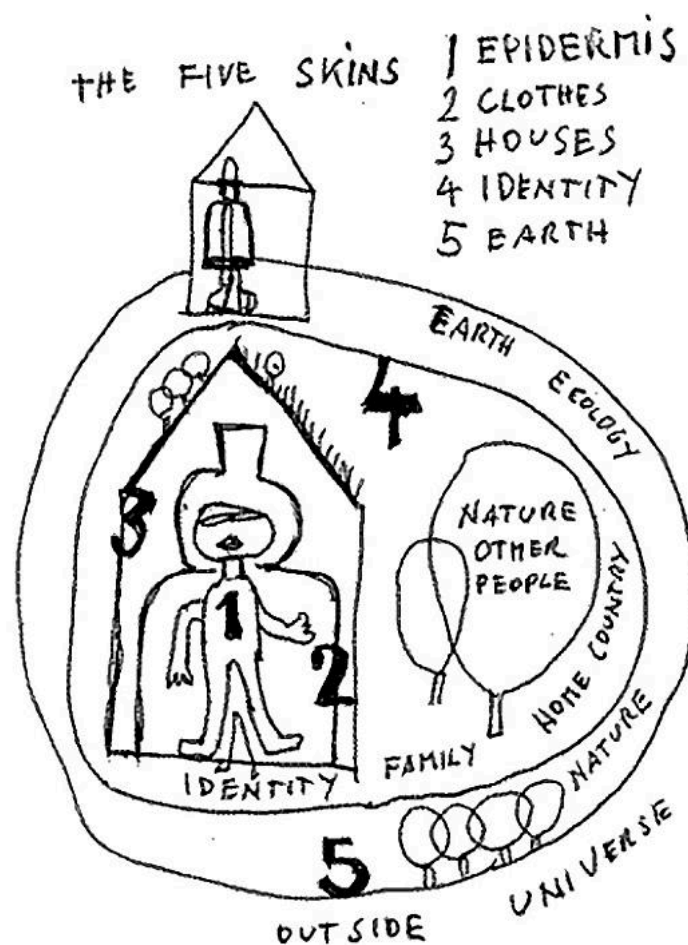


Diagram of The Five Skins – Friedensreich Hundertwasser – 1997

Friedensreich Hundertwasser proposed that the human being is enveloped in five skins that define their relationship with the world: the bodily epidermis, clothing, the house, social identity, and the planetary skin. Each layer represents an increasing level of interaction, from the intimate to the global, and their harmony is essential for a full and sustainable way of living. In Bustaldea, these five skins are reinterpreted to guide an intervention that articulates body, home, community, and nature, generating a comprehensive urban renewal that responds to the contemporary needs of the site.

First Skin: The Epidermis

Hundertwasser understands the epidermis as the most intimate and sensitive boundary of the human being, the limit where privacy and bodily protection are manifested. In the project, this skin translates into the strategy of concentrating all sanitary spaces—the most intimate uses—in the central strip of each floor. This spatial decision responds to the need to protect privacy and ensure efficient control of internal environmental conditions, creating an intimate core that organizes the dwelling and allows flexible distribution of other spaces.

This centralized concentration of sanitary facilities optimizes network installation and facilitates energy efficiency, while improving interior functionality. The arrangement frees the façades to locate the most used and social spaces, favoring natural lighting and ventilation, and contributing to superior thermal and acoustic comfort, consistent with contemporary criteria of habitability and well-being.

Second Skin: Clothing

The second skin, in Hundertwasser's vision, is the layer that protects and socially defines the individual, expressing their identity and regulating their relationship with the immediate environment. In the project, this skin materializes in the distribution of social and private spaces within the dwellings, placing social areas towards the east façades and bedrooms towards the west façades.

This spatial organization takes advantage of solar and climatic conditions: social spaces receive the soft and constant morning light, creating bright and welcoming environments for daily life, while bedrooms face west, benefiting from afternoon shelter and more stable thermal conditions for rest. Thus, the architectural “clothing” becomes a system that protects, defines, and enhances the domestic experience, respecting the functional and sensory needs of its inhabitants.

Third Skin: The House

Hundertwasser conceives the house as a living organism that must be flexible, creative, and in dialogue with its surroundings. In this project, it materializes through the community programs located on the ground floors and in the enclosed gardens between the buildings, which serve as spaces for gathering, recreation, and participation.

These communal spaces foster social cohesion, intergenerational interaction, and collective appropriation of the environment. The strategic arrangement of these gardens and facilities promotes visual and physical permeability, integrating nature into daily life and strengthening the neighborhood's social fabric, in line with Hundertwasser's vision regarding the importance of community and cultural context.

Fourth Skin: Social Identity

The fourth skin represents the social and community fabric that provides a sense of belonging and strengthens coexistence. In Bustaldea, it is expressed through a lightweight enclosure that unifies the five preexisting blocks, functioning as a common "coat" that regulates the microclimate and redefines spatial relationships between the buildings.

This enclosure acts as a climatic filter that improves thermal and acoustic comfort in intermediate spaces, while generating new circulation routes and social connections. Its lightness and constructive economy allow for gradual and flexible adaptation, also incorporating productive rooftops and renewable energy systems, consolidating a shared space that enhances collective identity and environmental sustainability.

Fifth Skin: Planet Earth

The fifth skin is the global dimension that entails ethical and technical responsibility toward the planet. In Bustaldea, this skin is expressed through environmental remediation via efficient management of clean energy, the use of sustainable materials, and direct connection to the adjacent productive land.

The proposal incorporates systems for water collection and reuse, renewable energies, and ecological corridors linking the complex with the green belt and nearby rural spaces. This integration with the natural environment promotes a model of social, economic, and environmental circularity, positioning the intervention as a benchmark of resilience and urban regeneration in harmony with the planet.

The Five Skins of Bustaldea

The project configures an integrated system where each skin dialogues and complements the others, generating a mode of inhabiting that acknowledges the complexity of the human being and their environment. The articulation between intimacy and sociability, protection and openness, local identity and global responsibility, gives rise to a renewal model that not only physically rehabilitates the complex but also reconstitutes the relationships among people, space, and nature, establishing the foundations for a more sustainable, inclusive, and vital future.

