PART 3

MIA: You know that joint presentation we've got to do this semester, Leo?

LEO: On houses of the future?

MIA: That's right. I'm a bit concerned – are we meant to come up with creative new suggestions for these houses?

LEO: I don't think so. It's more a matter of reporting and evaluating possible developments. But we mustn't be too general, we've got to support our points by referring to specific cases. So that'll need a lot of work.

MIA: I'm afraid so. When's it got to be done by?

LEO: In about 6 weeks, so that's not too much of a rush.

MIA: Good. We'd better decide now what type of housing we're going to focus on.

LEO: How about housing for different generations living together?

MIA: We could do. Or accommodation for one person?

LEO: I think someone else is doing that. I was wondering about housing for the elderly? That's likely to become more important.

MIA: Yeah that's true. But I think your suggestion about intergenerational living might be more interesting – let's go with that.

LEO: OK. Now I think the future demand is mainly going to be for accommodation in urban areas. So one way of meeting that demand might be to use existing commercial buildings and adapt them to form accommodation…

MIA: … or come up with original ways of organising space so that people can live in smaller homes. But I think the solution is to design multi-storey apartment blocks.

LEO: Building up rather than out, yes.

MIA: Let's think of some specific developments for houses of the future.

LEO: OK. How about increased use of roof space on high-rise buildings for gardens.

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MIA: Yes. In fact it doesn't have to be high-rise, you can do it on a one-storey building in a suburb, but it would greatly improve how you feel if you live in an urban high-rise.

LEO: Especially if you don't have a balcony.

MIA: Yes. I think homes of the future will all need access to a shared working space, somewhere in the same building or group of houses, where people can go and work instead of just having a laptop on the kitchen table.

LEO: Yes, so they aren't having to travel to an office but can still interact with others. That's often how new ideas get generated – by chatting to someone from a different profession.

MIA: Yeah. I read about a type of design where the internal walls of an apartment are moveable, so the space can be adapted over time as people's needs change.

LEO: Like when children leave school and start working but still continue to live with their parents for many years? Or when an elderly relative moves in with the family… it would mean they could still have their own space, specially designed for their needs.

MIA: Yes. Have you heard about those smart bathroom mirrors which can monitor people's health? They recognise signs of illness and contact a doctor automatically?

LEO: Hmm, not so sure they're a good idea.

MIA: Nor am I. People might worry about conditions which aren't serious at all.

LEO: What about transport? Wouldn't it be good if there were bike sheds with charging points, so people could store their electric bikes securely and charge them up at the same time.

MIA: Yes. That would encourage more people to cycle, instead of using their car. Much better for the planet.

LEO: I read about one housing development where cars had to be left just outside it, so the centre was all a pedestrianised area. Great for families with children.

MIA: Maybe. But what if you're disabled or elderly, and can't walk far? It wouldn't be so good for people like that.

LEO: No.

MIA: I saw a scheme for communal vegetable plots, where neighbours could decide what to grow together. That'd be a great way for older people to get to know one another, especially if they're no longer going out to work.

LEO: Yes, doing something together's always more enjoyable, isn't it? Do you think…

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