Practices In Research

practice-based research journal for architecture

Beyond the Mandate

issue #04 - December 2023

Practices in Research #04 - Beyond the Mandate - December 2023

online open access double-blind peer-reviewed journal for practice-based research in architecture.

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In Practice
interuniversity research group
of practising architects

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In Practice explores the multiple ways in which architects can engage their professional practice in academic research and reciprocally.

In Practice seeks to open a space for architecture practices in research through the development of methodologies, conferences and publications.

CONTENT

Beyond the Mandate

"In Practice" is an interuniversity research group of practising architects engaging their practice(s) at the heart of their research. In Practice explores the multiple ways in which architects can engage their professional architecture practice in academic research and reciprocally. "Practices in Research" (PiR) is an open access online journal for practice-based research in architecture and related disciplines, based on a selection of contributions to a conference. PiR explores the ways in which these practices engage or relate to research.

For PiR, the practice cannot be reduced to an illustration of a theory. Inversely, the research reaches beyond the simple observation of a practice. PiR aims at research in which the practice is essential as a subject, as a modality or as a perspective and combinations thereof, it aims at contributions in which research and practice mean mutual enrichment. These contributions remain closely related to the practice, but they are not limited to its presentation or documentation. They ambition to take a step beyond the reality of the practice in the way they present, explore, reveal a question or reflection in the field of architecture.

PiR also invites contributors to explore creative forms of communication, questioning the usual hierarchy between text and image. For PiR, visual and written narrations relate to each other in multiple ways. Images are more than

illustrations, and text is more than an explanation. Hence, the template provided to the authors should be considered as a toolbox or set of rules, to be used creatively.

This journal contains selected and double-blind peer reviewed articles by authors who contributed to the Practices in Research conference that was held at CIVA and the Faculty of Architecture La Cambre Horta at ULB in Brussels, on March 7th 2023.

Beyond the Mandate: a call for contributions

For all projects, architects receive a mandate, be it explicit or implicit. There are expectations and results to be obtained: programs to fulfil, budgets and timelines to keep, regulations and norms to obey or to negotiate, authorizations to obtain and construction sites to monitor. But these mandates also come with freedom, the possibility to address individual or collective ambitions, pleasure, sensibility, or responsibility. Additionally, designing architecture is a public matter. It entails engagements and societal duties that reach beyond the immediate interest of a commissioner. Moreover, practicing architecture is a cultural performance, involving a larger public than the individual commissioner. Maybe this margin, this freedom of proposals, but also this societal duty, is at the same time what lies beyond the mandate, and what enables the mandate.

What do architects do for free, which is not explicitly required? What drives them beyond the expectations inherent to their mandate? What is the motivation of their work? Which are the implicit or explicit duties? What are the dispositions and inclinations in their designing? What are the reflections and inspirations that feed their design practice? This space beyond the mandate, the freedom or the unexpectedness in responding to expectations, is what moves any reflective or inquisitive practice. It is where the relevance of a practice unfolds, addressing the discipline itself, society, culture, theory, and pedagogy. It is where a claim, an assertion or an observation can be made. In a word, what makes a practice worth sharing with an audience resides beyond the mandate.

Similarly, research related to practice always covers a space that goes beyond this practice. Independently of the multiple models of research by, for, or in practice, research is never a simple account or description of undertaken actions. Research creates and explores a margin around the reality of the practice. While focusing on specific topics, it embeds the practice in a broader field. Is research relating to a practice then also about its motivations? Is it then exactly about understanding what goes beyond the mandate?

Beyond the Mandate: a conference and a journal

Based on this open call for abstracts, contributors in line with the ambition of the call were invited to present their work and reflection in a conference organised on March 7th 2023, in Brussels. It consisted of a series of short presentations followed by a moderated debate with the public, the participants and invited panel members.

Based on the contributions to the conference, the editorial committee developed the fourth issue of the Practices in Research Journal.

Firstly, the editors invited the authors of a visually compelling presentation at the conference to provide a visual essay (no peer review). In their contribution titled Fast and Slow Practice, Felix Schiettecatte, Lennart Vandewaetere, Marius Vaneeckhoutte, lecturers at KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture and partners of the architecture office Wissel, reveal series of models and sketches along pictures of realizations, emphasizing the multimodal nature of a reflexive practice.

Secondly, the editors invited selected authors to submit a full article to a double-blind peer reviewing process by two members of the scientific committee or invited experts.

Anonymity[1] was strictly maintained and all information in the paper that identifies the author was removed. The anonymity of the reviews was also ensured. The reviews investigate the scientific rigor, the artistic quality, and the clarity of communication of the contribution. The review also involved an open comment on the contribution.

Following this editorial and review process, five additional contributions out of ten received abstracts were approved for publication. They form the main body of this issue of the journal.

In *NO CLUE – CLUES, working with the morelli method*, Oliver Burch, Jakob Junghanss, Lukas Ryffel (8000.agency, ETH Zürich) evoke how the observation of seemingly irrelevant details (the Morelli method) informed the emergence of a practice resulting in the organization of alternative competition and reflection environments in order to question ongoing processes of urban transformation.

In *Uncertain Soils in Experimentation - architects and scientists representing the plural values of soils,* Pierre Bouilhol (ANMA, ULB, Université Paris 8) and Agrippa Leenhardt (ANMA), explain how the architectural, landscape and urban practice at ANMA started to develop a genuine interest for soil, that is impacted by almost every projects but is rarely taken into account as a productive tool in the design process allowing for a better symbiosis of projects with their environment.

1 The editorial board acknowledges that the work of the involved practices may benefit from public recognition in the professional or cultural field through prizes, exhibitions, lectures, etc. The anonymity of the contribution does not address the practice itself but the authors of the contribution.

In *MAKING THINGS, Practising co-creation in the marginal territories of central Apennine*, Maddalena Ferretti and Benedetta Di Leo (Università Politecnica delle Marche) explore how two practice-based research projects were set up in collaboration with local authorities in the Marche Region Central Apennine in Italy to foster local tourism and development.

In *Ruination design - Experimental preservation and archaeology of the contemporary past, based on art exhibition design in a modernist-post-socialist context*, Tomasz Świetlik and Michał Kulesza, two independent architects, present an experimental approach to dealing with modern ruins and the preservation of the contemporary past, focusing on an exhibition design project for the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw in 2018, authored by Tomasz Świetlik studio and to which Michał Kulesza collaborated.

In *BIG BRICK HYBRIDS, Learning by building beyond the mandate*, Lieven Nijs (BLAF architecten, UGent, RWTH Aachen), evokes the research of the architecture office BLAF on a new construction paradigm related to the production of load-bearing façade bricks. Based on the apparent paradox between façade cladding and load-bearing construction, Lieven Nijs explores BLAF's related and underlying design strategies.

In a last section, the editors invited active panel members of the conference to write an overarching article, based on the conference and on the contributions described above.

In *Beyond the Mandate of the Architect, Or How Inquisitive Practitioners Redefine it,* Johan De Walsche (UAntwerpen), Christine Fontaine (ZED architects, UCLouvain) and Wouter Van Acker (ULB) investigate with precision how the contributors to the conference addressed the topic the "Mandate". This closing article was also peer-reviewed following the same peer-reviewing process as the other contributions.

We would like to thank the authors of the journal, the contributors to the conference and the members of the Scientific Committee for their committed participation. Both conference and journal are forming a dynamic platform of exchange for a network of practicing architects who are either academic or professional researchers, and who share a genuine interest for the critical investigation of the discipline and the positive curiosity for its diversity.

The editors
Benoît Vandenbulcke, Harold Fallon and Benoît Burquel

fast and slow practice

A visual essay of our design methodology in scenography and architecture

Felix Schiettecatte, Lennart Vandewaetere, Marius Vaneeckhoutte

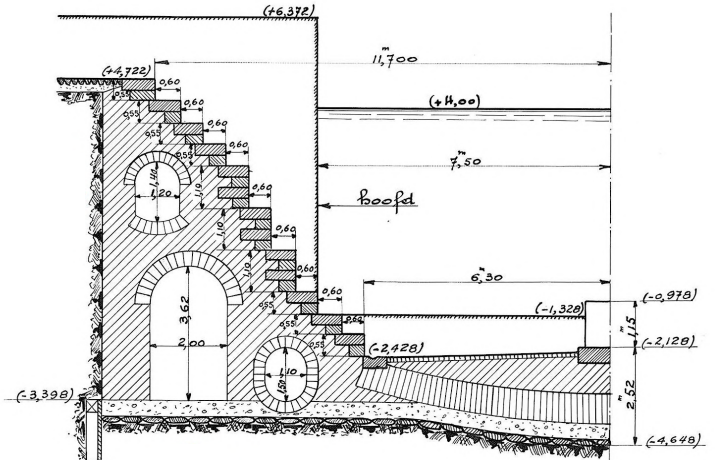
wissel architectuur studio
KU Leuven

'fast and slow practice' is a visual essay presented by Felix Schiettecatte, Lennart Vandewaetere, and Marius Vaneeckhoutte, upon direct invitation by the editors, and was not peer-reviewed. The following documents are part of the contribution presented at the Practice in Research conference held at CIVA&ULB in March 2023.

“Hush Hush Stage, Contrair Open air 2019

The idea grew out of the Port of Antwerp, more specific the dry dock which is located next to the site. This unique construction allows the water level to be controlled and boats can be maneuvered. As the water pours into the dry dock, dancing people stream in to the Hush Hush stage. The visitors are enclosed along either side by dance platforms, which seek tension with the crown of the existing row of trees. Physically enclosing the place creates an intimate club atmosphere. The DJ booth is located in the heart of this ‘tub’ and is integrated under a staircase construction that functions as a meeting place in the treetops near the main entrance to the site.

Festival site, Noordkasteel Antwerp



REFERENCE, Dry dock 4, Antwerp. Archief Gemeentelijk Havenbedrijf

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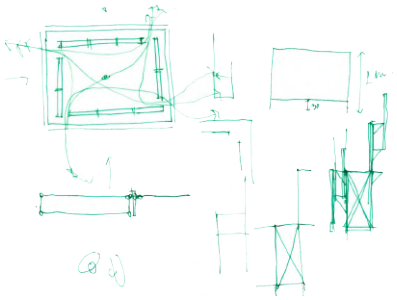

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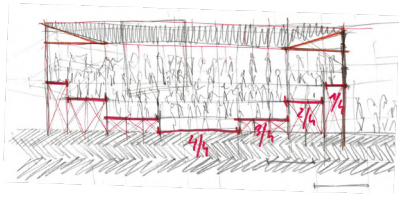

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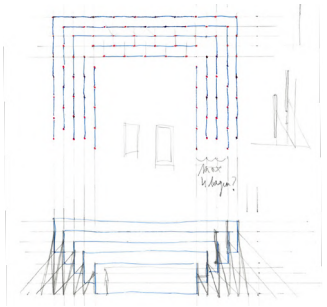

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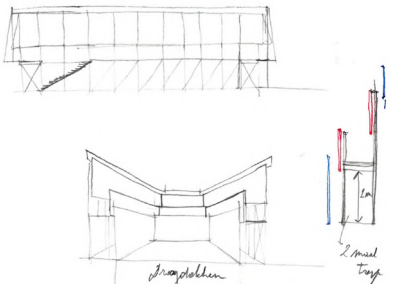

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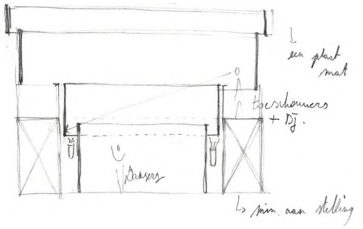

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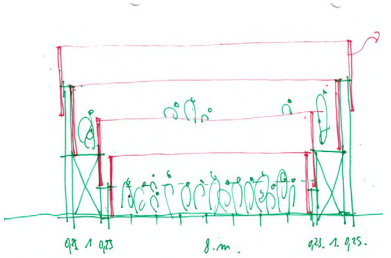

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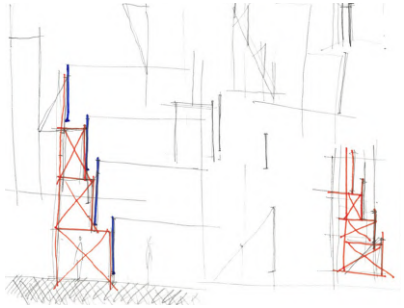

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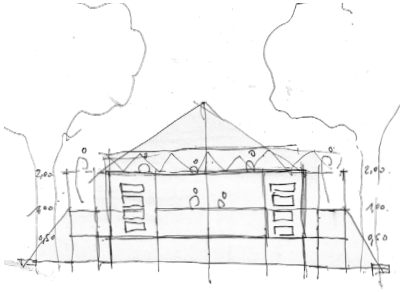

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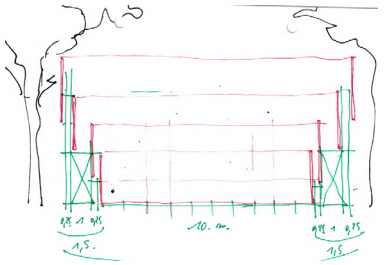

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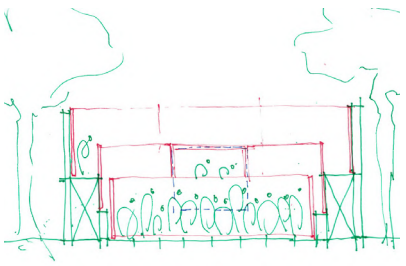

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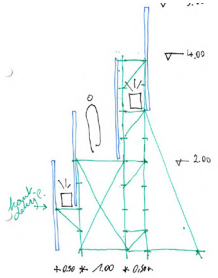

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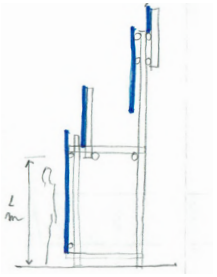

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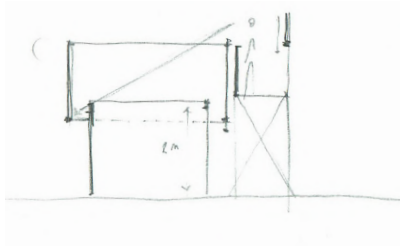

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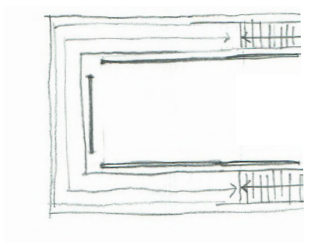

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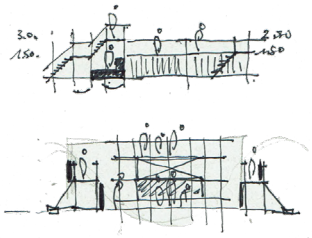

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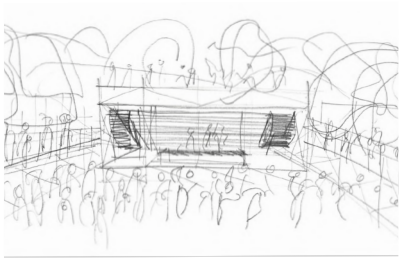

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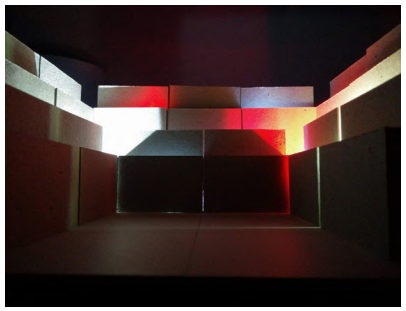

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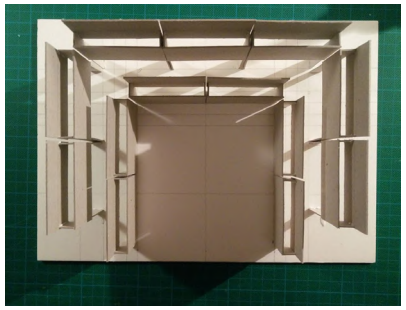

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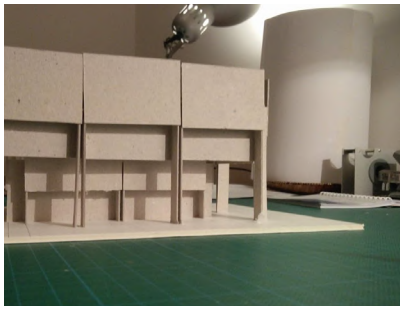

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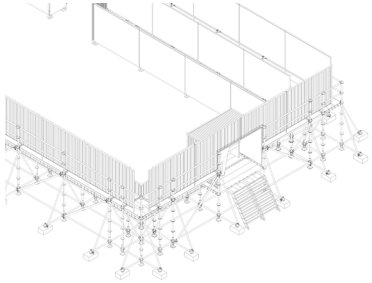

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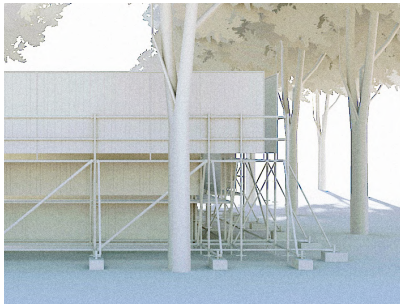

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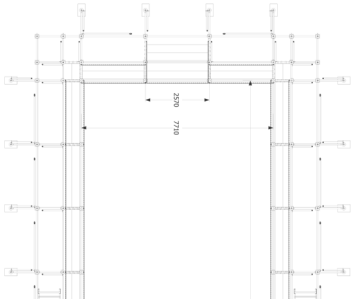

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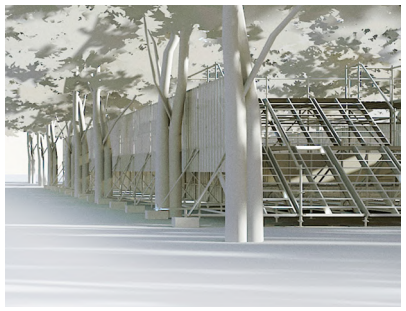

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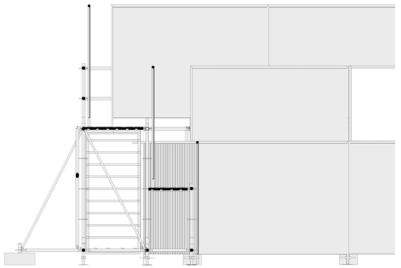

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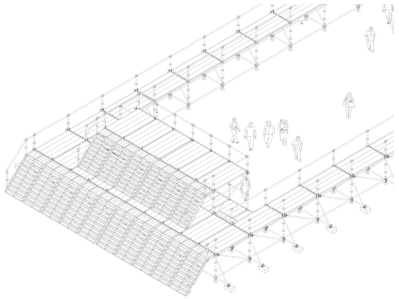

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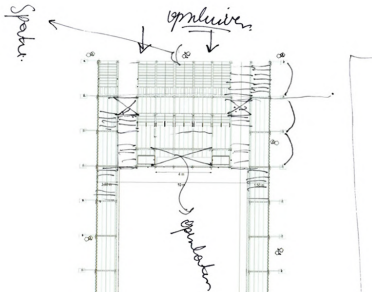

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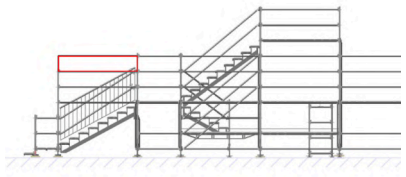

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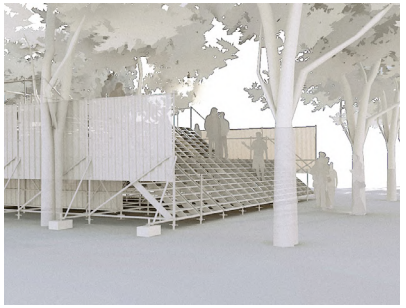
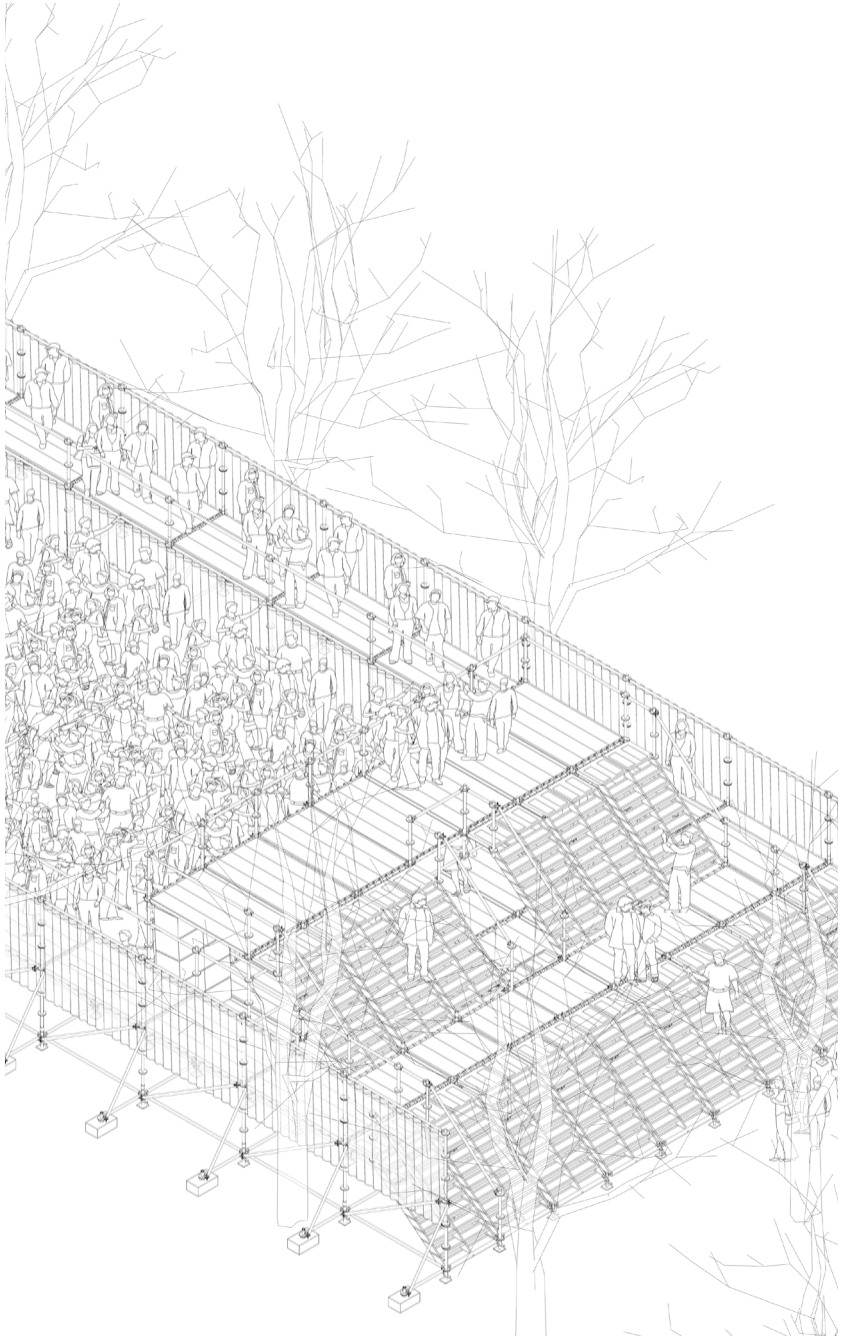


1. first idea sketch
2. sketch of a podium idea
3. plan/section of possible layering of the stage
4. perspective sketch inner atmosphere
5. idea for lighting system
6. section with measurements
7. layering structure ideas
8. drawing of the DJ-booth
9. section with measurements
10. section with measurements and DJ-booth
11. segment section with light concept
12.segment section
13. segment section
14. concept plan
15. introduction of the staircase
16. atmosphere sketch
17. model 1/50 lightning test
18. model 1/50 testing with scale figures
19. model 1/50 plan formation
20. model 1/50 outside façcade
21. axonometric drawing, 3D-model V1
22. exterior rendering, 3D-model V1
23. exterior rendering, 3D-model V1
24. plan, 3D-model V1
25. exterior rendering, 3D-model V2
26. segment section, 3D-model V2
27. axonometric drawing, staircase, 3D-model V2
28. exterior rendering, 3D-model V3
29. exterior rendering, 3D-model V3
30. plan, 3D-model V3, final adjustments
31. contractor drawing, Allscaff scaffolding
32. exterior rendering, 3D-model V3

FAST AND SLOW PRACTICE



Final design, axonometric drawing

Contrair Open Air, June 2019,
photo by Marius Vaneeckhoutte

Contrair Open Air, June 2019,
photo by Marius Vaneeckhoutte

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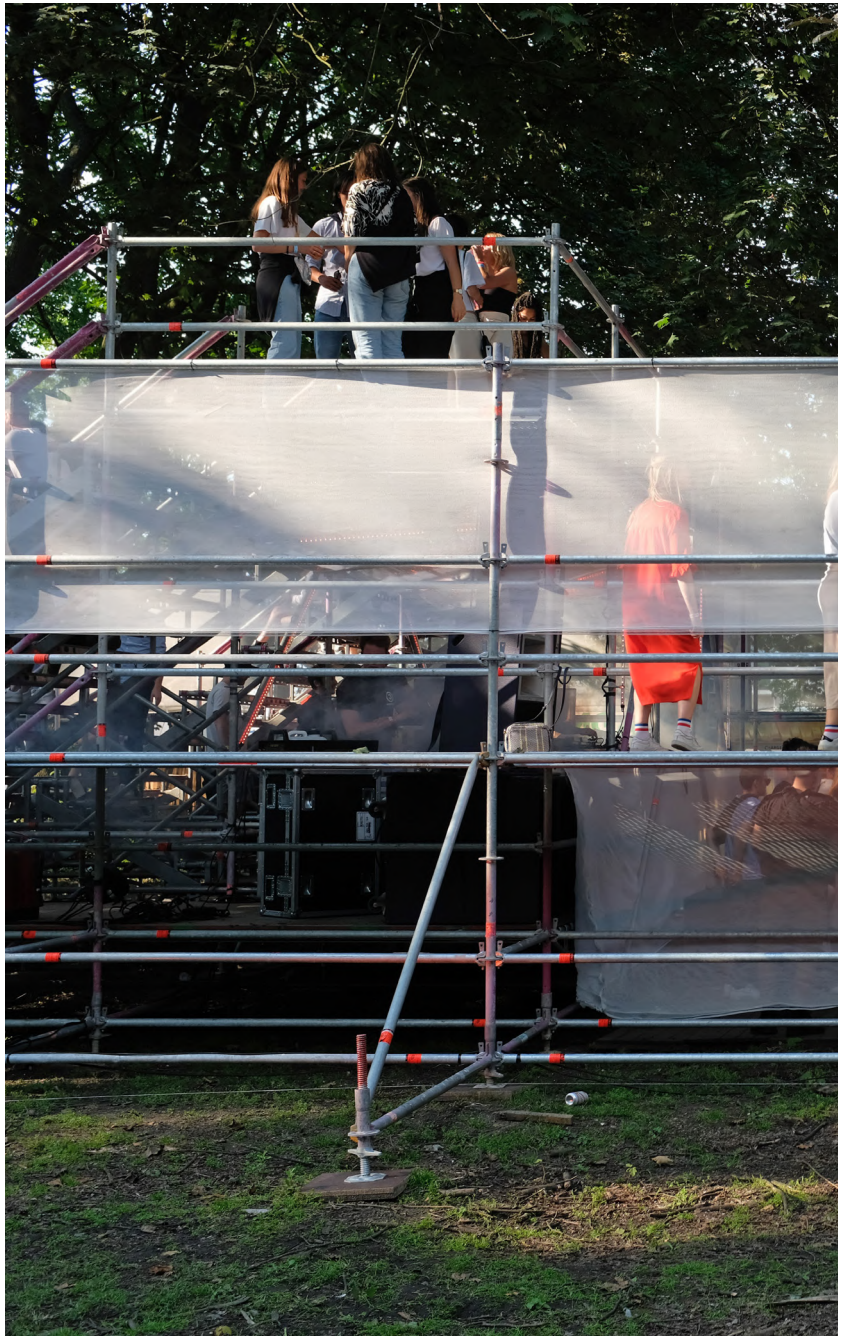

Contrair Open Air, June 2019,
photo by Marius Vaneeckhoutte

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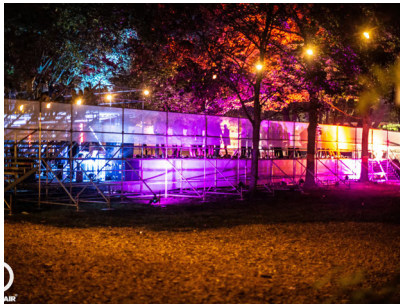
Contrair Open Air, June 2019,
photos by Contrair





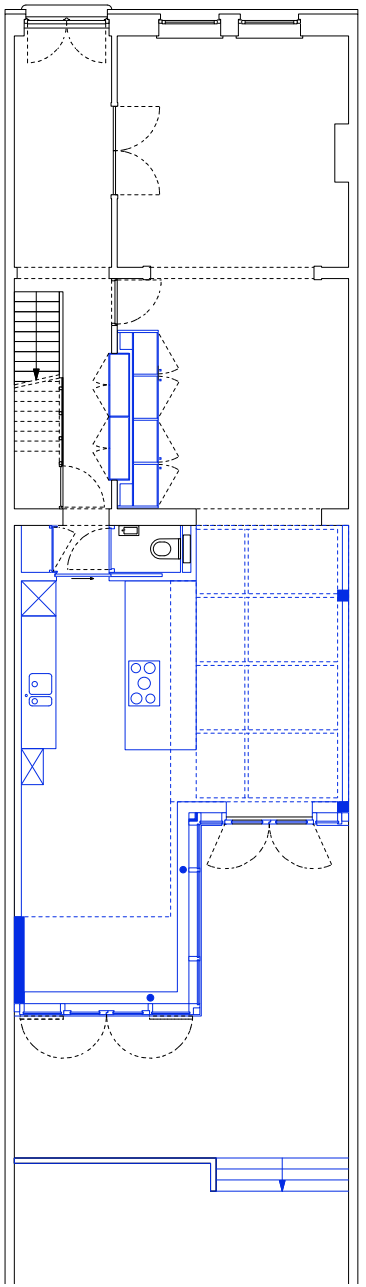
Contrair Open Air, June 2019,
photos by Contrair

“Berchem”, Renovation of a house 2020-2022

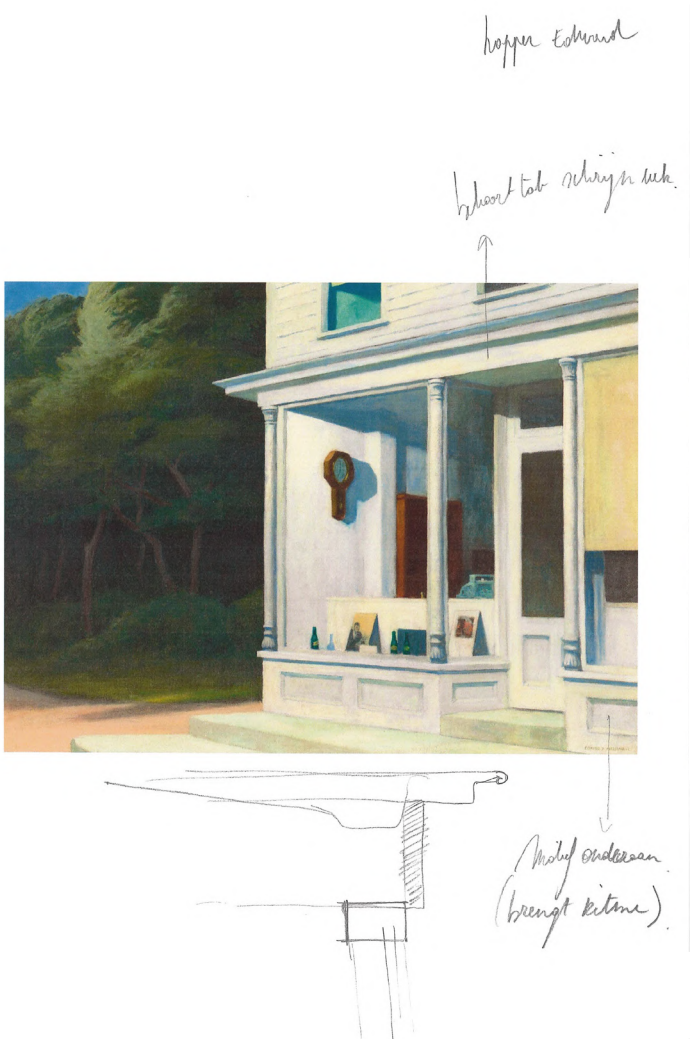
The project started by understanding and decomposing the house in its materiality and structure. Our goal was to strengthen – or perhaps merely support- the identity of the place through an addition or elimination. The house is solid and spacious, but the living room areas are lacking natural light and visual connection to the garden. Our main addition was the introduction of a ‘concrete table’, which supports the valuable bathroom volume on the first floor and allows us to eliminate the volumes underneath. This action created an opportunity to reorganize the spaces on the ground floor and allowed us the create a sequence of four rooms. This sequence creates a feeling of togetherness for the residents and allows light all the way through out the groundfloor plan.

Project as found, 2020

photo by Marius Vaneeckhoutte



final design plan



REFERENCE, Edward Hopper, 7A.M. 1948

REFERENCE, Winter garden, Ursuline Institure, Mechelen

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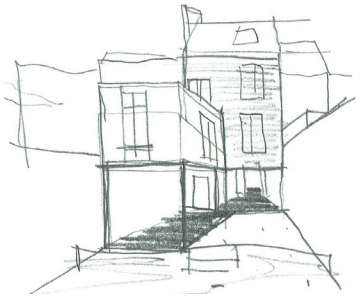

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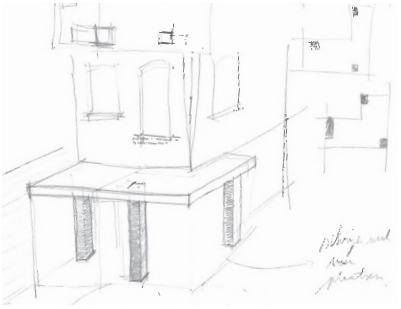

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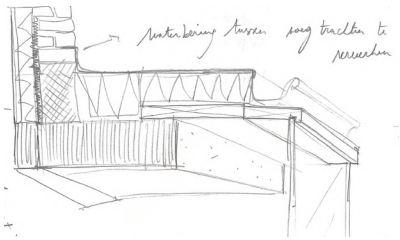

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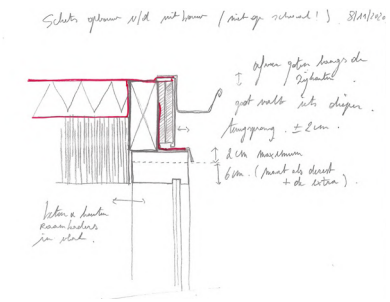

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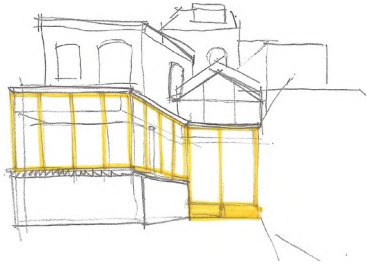

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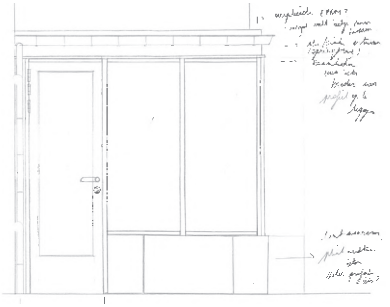

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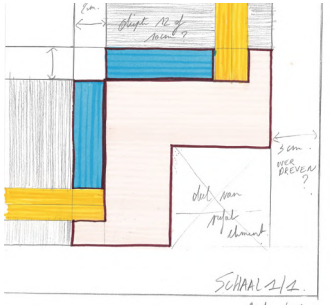

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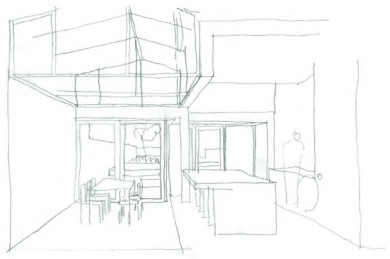

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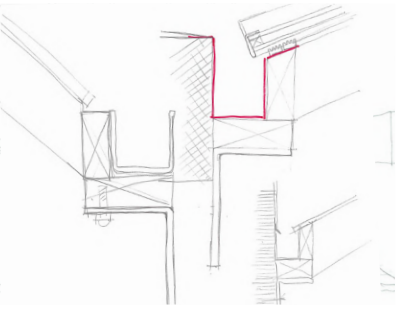

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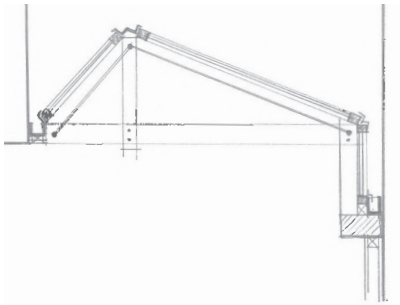

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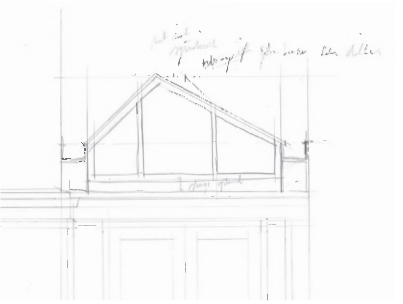

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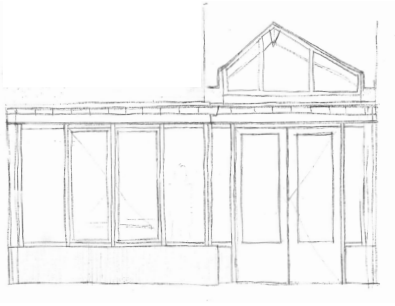

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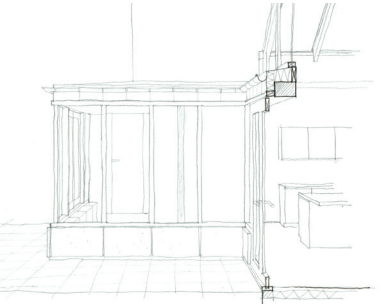

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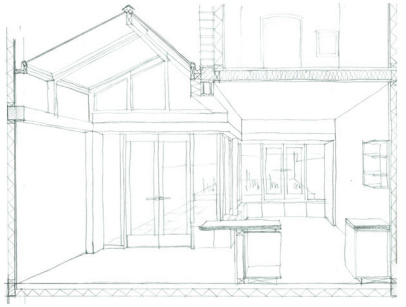

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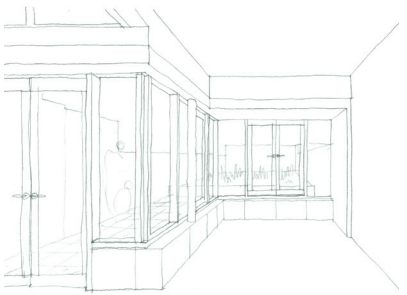

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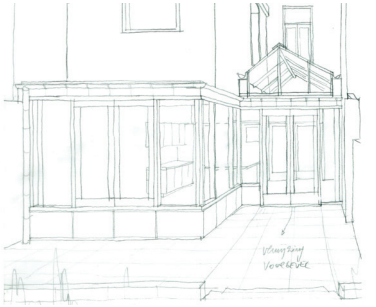

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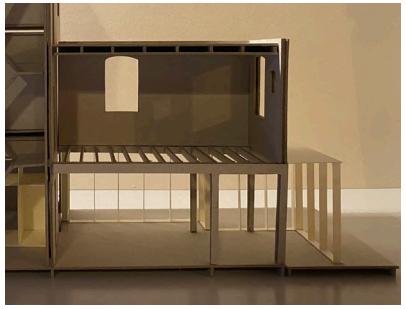

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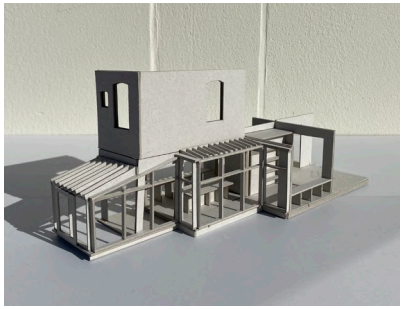

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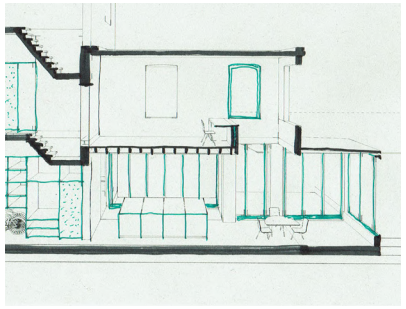

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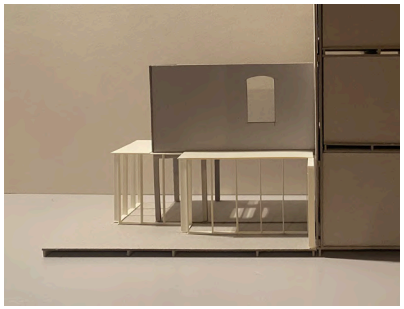

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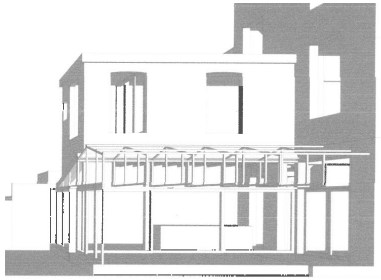

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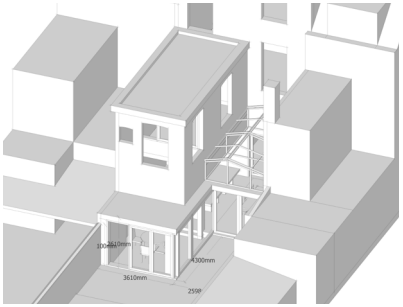

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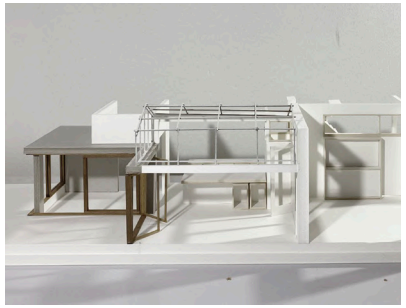

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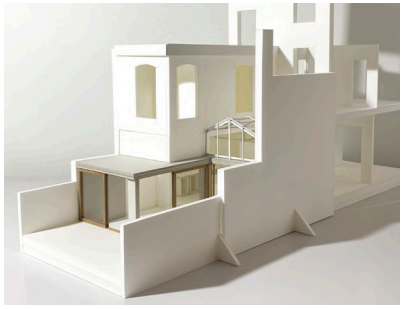

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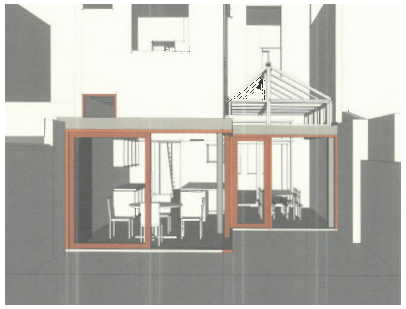

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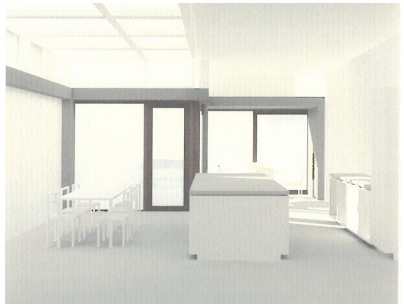

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32.

1. first idea of opening up to the garden
2. concept drawing of a concrete table
3. roof detail inspired by Edward Hopper
4. roof detail alligned with the concrete table
5. elevation sketch
6. elevation fragment drawing 1/10
7. window joint drawing 1/1
8. interior perspective sketch
9. detail fragments of the gutter system
10. skylight detailling 1/50
11. skylight elevation drawing 1/10
12. back elevation 1/10
13. perspective drawing final desing
14. perspective detail drawing final design
15. interior perspective drawing final design
16. exterior perspective drawing final design
17. model 1/50 pre-design 1
18. model 1/50 pre-design 2 fragment
19. 3D model pre-design 2 section
20. model 1/50 pre-design 1
21. 3D model pre-design 2
22. axonometric drawing, urban planning check-up
23. model 1/50, pre-design 3
24. model 1/50, interior light experiment
25. model 1/50, concrete table vs. skylight
26. model 1/50, pre-design 3
27. 3d model exterior, building permit fase
28. model, building permit fase
29. 3d model interior, building permit fase
30. 3D-model tendering fase, interior research
31. model tendering fase, exterior
32. model tendering fase, interior

Final design, perspective drawing

Tendering fase, model 1/33

Tendering fase, model 1/33

construction site, 2021

construction site, 2021

construction site, 2021

construction site, 2021

construction site, 2021

construction site, 2021

Final result, summer 2022

Final result, summer 2022

Final result, summer 2022

Final result, summer 2022

NO CLUE - CLUES

working with the morelli method.

Oliver Burch, Jakob Junghanss, Lukas Ryffel

8000.agency
ETH Zürich

INTRODUCTION

We perceive our world as ambivalent and unpredictable, always being confronted with a plentiness of information, realities and ideologies. Houses get built and inhabited, they get transformed and valued, and sometimes, they get destroyed and forgotten. We acknowledge that everything surrounding us has evolved from processes of change, adaptation and failure – be it on material or immaterial levels. We also acknowledge that things are entangled and somewhat causally determined – even if we cannot trace the causality in it. If we want to engage in these processes, it is crucial to be aware of our means. As trained architects, we have been taught a broad range of tools, concepts and methods to read our world and order it by the logics of gravity, utility and composition. We have sometimes also been taught in sociology, economy, ecology, whatsoever. But in a world as ambivalent and unpredictable as ours, how can we use these skills in a meaningful way? How can we spot latent potential and create momentum to transform it?

THE MORELLI METHOD

It is crucial to find out where to start from. In the dense tissue of influences that are surrounding us, hooking in at the right spot is one of the most challenging things. We believe that these entry points can be found by working with *clues*, a term borrowed from the *Morelli Method* as described in 1979 by Carlo Ginzburg in the text *Clues and Scientific Method*.[1] The method itself was developed in the 19th century by Giovanni Morelli, an art

critic – initially trained as doctor – that aimed for verifying or falsifying the authorship of paintings through the careful analysis of seemingly irrelevant details: Earlobes, fingers – anything that does not obviously influence the overall character of an artwork. In his essay, Ginzburg venturously connects the Morelli Method with an array of philosophical problems about *how people see the world and how knowledge is acquired and organised*.[2] Ginzburg writes:

"*In a social structure of ever-increasing complexity like that of advanced capitalism, befogged by ideological murk, any claim to systematic knowledge appears as a flight of foolish fancy. To acknowledge this is not to abandon the idea of totality. On the contrary; the existence of a deep connection which explains superficial phenomena can be confirmed when it is acknowledged that direct knowledge of such a connection is impossible. Reality is opaque; but there are certain points – clues, signs – which allow us to decipher it.*"[3]

Ginzburg talks about the implications of the Morelli Method for scientists, intellectuals, philosophers and art historians. Even though he never mentions architects explicitly, we believe that it can also be key to us – especially when trying to get a grasp in our world. What working with clues is offering is a shift of perspective, an interpretative tool to detect the seemingly irrelevant as revealing moments for a project: Similar to the work of a detective, we watch out for the overseen or unnoticed details – and transform them into productive reactions. By doing so, we often have to leave our comfort zone and travel far beyond our mandates.

CLUES IN PRACTICE

What working with *clues* could mean in research and practice shall be explored by a journey through a selection of works we did – as *8000.agency*, but also in wider collaborations (*ZAS**). The cases of that journey are loosely connected and told in an anecdotical way. The different chapters try to offer insights into a working method rather than explaining the projects in their entirety.

ON HOW TO APPROACH OUR WORLD

Why helping residents move – as a part of a graduation project – has taught us a lot about the demolition of a 1970s housing estate.

Siedlung Wydäckerring is an unsolicited research and design project on a 1970s housing estate in Zürich, which was doomed to be demolished. During the last year of its existence, we documented the the place and its inhabitants. Our aim was to find a set of arguments and ideas that would lead to an alternative evaluation of it. *Siedlung Wydäckerring* stands exemplarily for the fate of many buildings in Switzerland today. For many owners, it has become common practice to aim for a total replacement (*Ersatzneubau*) if the existing building does not comply with the standards that they wish for – or when the amount of money that can be invested is temptingly high.

A poster to advertise our help brought us into contact with the residents. We offered a *moving service by architects, unprofessional but for free*. When we were contacted, people weren't entirely sure if we really offered help for free.

We spent a day helping a young scientist to move out of his studio to a new place. We did not only learn about his personal story but understood what it can mean to redevelop the existing city.

The Morelli Method was our guideline to take the seemingly unimportant events seriously and to get involved with their consequences. To let oneself be driven by hints and traces, follow them, and herby discover qualities and arguments that normally stay behind the curtain of a streamlined political and economic system.

At some point, the remaining residents had to leave their homes and move all their possessions out of the estate. We decided to offer them help to move. Very personal stories were shared, which were often highly connected to the place of investigation itself. We learned what the residents appreciated about their homes, what they would have changed, and what they think about the arguments for demolition. Spending a day with them and helping to carry their belongings out of their flats changed our role – we became actors ourselves. Experiencing another viewpoint made clear what drastic consequences planning decisions have on the lives of individuals.

With this experience and many more, we condensed our project to a film and a web archive.[4] The work does not only document the place in its last year, but also suggests visions that counter the arguments for demolition – always on the basis of *clues* that we had gathered. Actions such as helping to move, digging a hole in the garden, observing the birds within the estate – actions which at first glance do not seem to be directly useful – became enormously important in order to develop ideas that take up the qualities in the existing reality and develop them further.

Our oberservations lead to a variety of speculations, offering alternatives to the planned demolition of the settlement.

The clues we discovered were translated into spatial projects, reacting to stories of residents and small observations from our research.

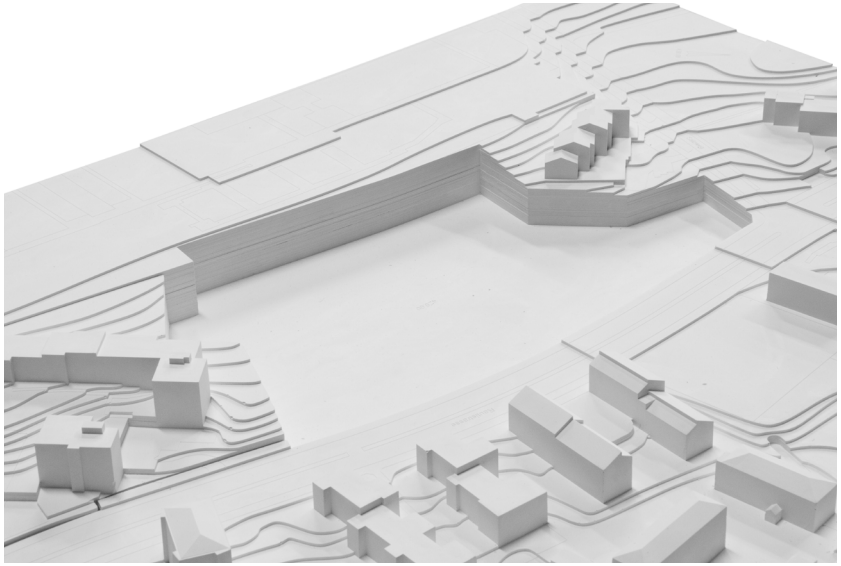
ON HOW TO TRICK PROCESSES

How deliberately mis-reading the task leads to a discourse on alternatives to streamlined destructive processes.

We have been thrown into a world where planning all too often starts from a tabula rasa – where an existing situation is to be completely replaced by a new idea. This is not only controversial from a cultural perspective, but it is also an ecologically and socially questionable strategy as we face climate crisis. The tabula rasa mentality goes so far that sometimes, in the plaster models handed over to the teams of architectural competitions, the existing situation is completely neglected – the site on the model is just a big hole. How can you start working with the existing if you are missing all the information? And how can you raise your voice once the premise of demolition is already set?

In the open competition for the *Siedlung Salzweg* in Zürich, the program was to demolish 130 apartments and construct 240 new ones. The legitimacy of that brief was not obvious to us – we had many questions. While thinking about the competition over lunch, we realized that there is even an official format in the competition process that is dedicated to this: the Q&A session.

In the Swiss comptetition system, all questions have to be answered by the organizers, and the answers are sent to all participating teams. Often neglected or used to obtain mostly legal and technical information, we used



The competition model was delivered as if the reality had already disappeared. The existing situation was not included, instead a big hole marked the project perimeter.

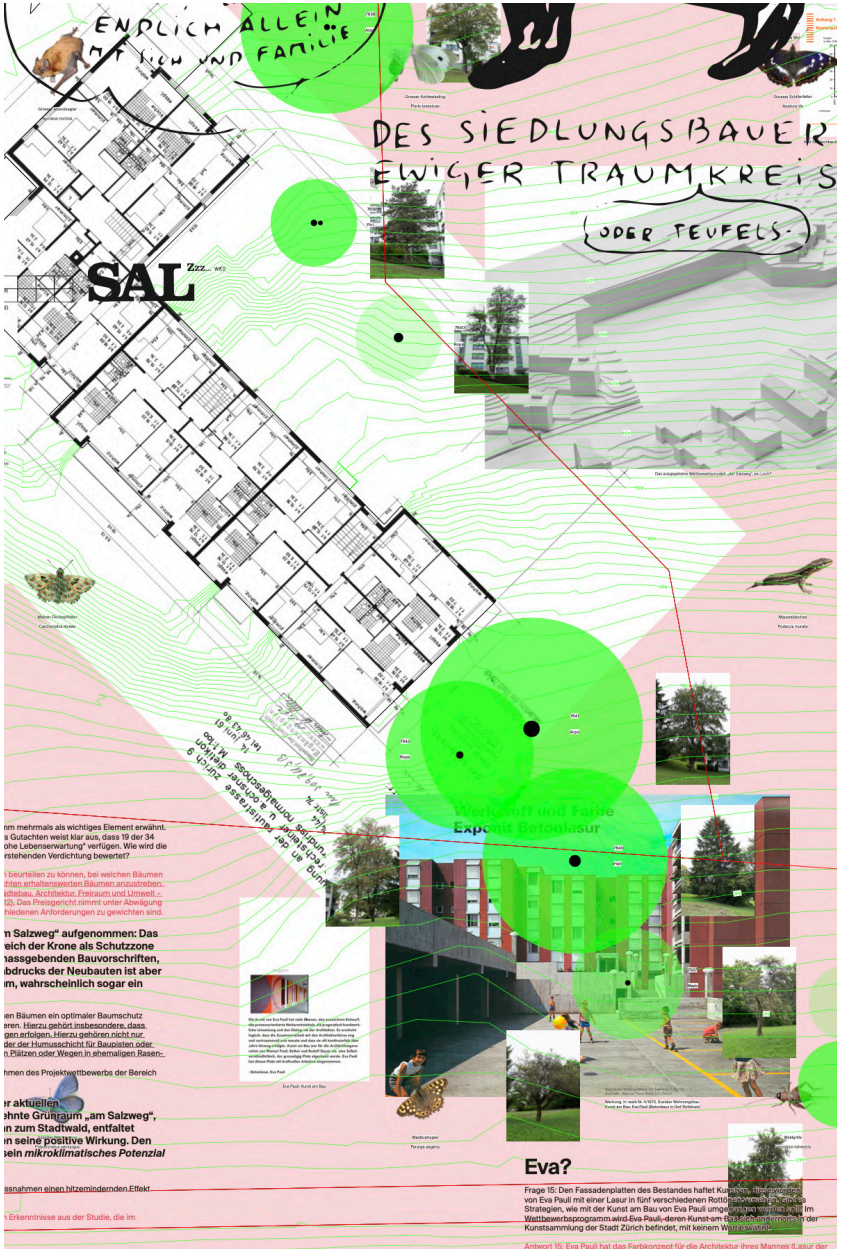
The existing qualities of the Siedlung Salzweg were not taken into account for the competition. We submitted a lot of questions to the Q&A. The compilation of it was shown at an exhibition at *Zentrum Architektur Zürich*, published via the collaboration as *ZAS**.

this format to raise attitude-related questions and urged the organizer of the competition, the City of Zürich, to formulate their position towards the chosen tabula rasa strategy. The many questions we had in the beginning became a tool of research. By posing them officially at th Q&A, we managed to make an additional set of information open to the competitors – for example the plans of the existing and a long list of the many plants and animals that find a habitat on site.

To turn the Q&A into an investigative instrument was a little loophole that we found within an established process. We followed that *clue* spontaneously, and it caused a new reading of the situation from various perspectives: The organizers were confronted to consider the consequences of their brief, other participants started to discover the richness within the existing situation, and also other actors took up the discourse about the demolition of seemingly obsolete housing estates.

As competition hand-in, we put together a dense portrait of Salzweg's entangled reality, and complemented it with questions and demands to the city:

"The contemporary architectural discourse calls for contributions that deal with the complexity of what already exists. (...) With this collection, we intend to support projects that pursue a different strategy than the one prescribed by the competition." [5]



fragment of competition project: *SALZzz...WEG*, by Jens Knöpfel, Tamino Kuny, Lukas Ryffel, Oliver Burch, Jakob Junghanss.

ON HOW TO FIND ALTERNATIVES

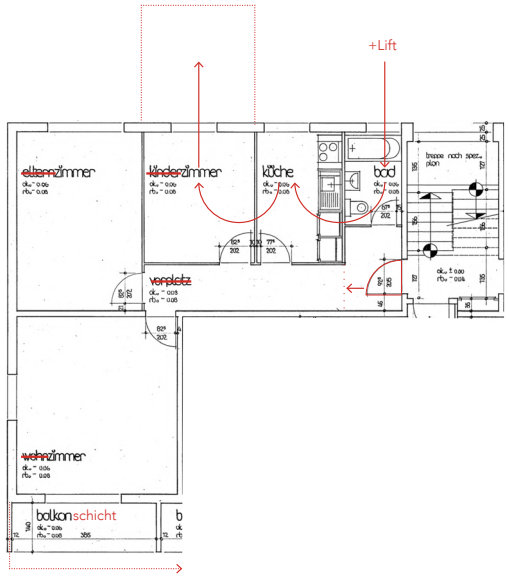
How a cup of tea with residents may lead to an architectural concept for refurbishment.

Other times, we try to prove an alternative approach to the desired demolition and replacement, and start to include the reality where life had accumulated. In the preparation for another housing competition in Zürich for *Siedlung Luchswiese* – where the brief again was about a total replacement – we went for tea with current residents, getting to know their conditions of living there. We tried to find *clues* on where to act when starting from the premise of keeping the current living qualities intact.

The existing buildings and their potential to be extended or transformed were the vocabulary of the proposal. After being together in the kitchen at a resident's home, we realized that a reshufflling of the bedroom, kitchen and bathroom could allocate all these uses into rooms that have sizes of today's expectations. Introducing another new room to the floor plan would make this reshuffling complete, additionally granting a barrier free access to all the apartments. A rochade of uses within a generic floorplan of the 1950s. And these interventions could even be possible while the inhabitants keep living in their flats.

Our proposal worked within the realm of the architectural system – making use of the means of architecture in a competition where one does not agree with the premises.

Visiting residents and getting to know about qualities and difficulties within the existing flats.



The floorplan allowed to reshuffle the bedroom, kitchen and bathroom. The mandatory lift could be integrated into the house after transformation. A rochade of uses within a 1950s floorplan.

The proposal tried to provide spatial alternatives to what was asked for while staying close to the quantitative expectations. It's about how to react and align the brief with the reality – even though nobody had asked to take the existing reality seriously.

ON HOW TO SHIFT PERCEPTION

Why we must claim the right to develop alternatives to what someone had decided decades ago.

The participation in all these controversial competitions has led to another act. We got aware of the importance of these premises – of strategic decisions which were taken so long ago that no one dares to question them within an architectural competition. We understood that if we want to change practice, we have to intervene much earlier in the process: To create fertile ground for a productive discussion on how to dwell on the existing.

While walking through the city of Zürich with an employee of the office for urban planning, we learned by chance that three concrete towers – the former staff houses of the Triemli Hospital from the 1970s – were soon to be demolished. A sentence mentioned in passing, but one that made us alert. A *clue* we had to follow. Given the general housing shortage it felt very odd that these three towers with their 750 rooms were to be demolished without replacement. And it was also a mystery to us that no one had these plans on their radar, which, we then found out, go back to the late 1990s –

SPEKULATIVER PROJEKTWETTBEWERB IM OFFENEN VERFAHREN **STADTHOTEL TRIEMLI**

1 AUFGABE

1 AUSGANGSLAGE

Ein Rückbau der drei ehemaligen Personalhäuser war ursprünglich für Anfang 2023 geplant. Da unklar ist, womit die Türme in Zukunft ersetzt werden, wird derzeit eine 10-jährige Verlängerung der heutigen Zwischenlösung diskutiert und geprüft. Die Stadt Zürich plante bis vor Kurzem, die drei ehemaligen Personalhäuser des Stadtspitals Triemli ab Anfang 2023 rückzubauen. Schon in der Spitalplanung von 1994 wird der Ersatz der 1971 eröffneten Personaltürme vorgesehen, was in der Überarbeitung von 2003 wiederum bestätigt wurde. Gründe für das Abschreiben der Türme waren damals "Erneuerungskosten, die sich auf mehr als 80% der entsprechenden Neubaukosten belaufen würden", die "fehlenden Nasszellen" und "zu kleinen Raumgrössen" der Personalzimmer.* Ausserdem würde sich die Anlage im "zukünftigen Schattenwurf" des damals geplanten und mittlerweile fertiggestellten Bettenhauses befinden. Auch in der aktuellsten Strategie des Stadtspitals von 2018 wurden die drei Personaltürme nach dem Auslaufen der Betriebsbewilligung 2022 zum Rückbau freigegeben. Aufgrund der Unklarheit, welche Gebäude die drei Türme in Zukunft ersetzen werden, wird derzeit in der Politik eine 10-jährige Verlängerung der heutigen Zwischenlösung diskutiert und geprüft.

Während die 750 Personalzimmer der drei Türme in den ersten Jahrzehnten nach Erstellung noch vorwiegend als solche genutzt wurden, hat sich deren Funktion seit den 1990ern gewandelt. Einerseits haben sich die Arbeits- und Lebensgewohnheiten des Spitalpersonals verändert, andererseits eröffnete die bereits abgeschriebene Struktur Ausweichmöglichkeiten für verschiedenste Nutzungen. Heute werden die drei Türme teilweise als Unterkunft für Geflüchtete und als temporäres Altersheim genutzt, oder sie dienen als Praxisräume und Studierendenzimmer. "Die Zimmer entsprechen energetisch nicht den Zielen und Normen, die wir uns gesetzt haben**, meint der Zürcher Stadtrat 2022 zur Angelegenheit – und formuliert damit das Dilemma, wie heutige Ansprüche mit gebauten Realitäten in Einklang zu bringen sind.

Aufgrund der diversen bestehenden Potentiale in den drei Personalhäusern und dem akuten Mangel an Wohnraum in der Stadt Zürich hat sich die ZAS* im April 2022 entschieden, einen spekulativen Ideenwettbewerb im offenen Verfahren durchzuführen, der

1981. Quelle: BAZ (NACHSCHAUEN)
Blick auf Türme bblla

Investigating the case of the demolition of the city-owned Triemli towers let us organise an unsolicited competition to question their fate, together with the group ZAS*. All information was gathered and put together to a competition brief.

The 45 submissions were juried publicly, opening the debate about the future of the Triemli towers to a wider public.

when people were not yet thinking much about the ecological impacts of building and demolishing, and when housing was less of a scarce commodity.

As part of *ZAS**, a bigger association of architects, we organized a speculative competition about the towers – to trigger the collective intelligence of an engaged community of architects. We were sure: As citizens of Zürich – and therefore to a certain extent also the owners of the towers – we are allowed to think about the city's property in a speculative way.

The three towers had already served as buffer for whatever needed space: One tower was especially renovated to accommodate elderly people – a temporary retirement home. But also students who had freshly arrived in the city found a cheap room. And some of the floors were retrofitted for clinic spaces and office rooms. With the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in 2022, it became even more obvious how useful these towers are – especially in times of crisis. The 750 existing rooms offer an enormous potential for a city with a severe housing shortage.

For the competition brief, we wanted to build on that potential. We proposed to accept the towers as a *Stadthotel* – a place that can accommodate people for short or for longer periods, and keeps on working as a buffer. We prepared all necessary documents to work with the towers: we recalculated the shadow studies, as the rules had changed in the meantime, and we prepared plans and a fire safety analysis. 45 submissions from all

over Switzerland beyond were publicly juried in order to open the debate about the future of the Triemli towers to a wider public.[6] In addition, all the submitted works were shown in an exhibition and we actively invited the authorities and politicians to discuss the topic with us. So, this case is still ongoing.

CONCLUSION

Working with *clues* allows to navigate into yet unpredictable realms. To us, this method offers a short outside view onto our field of competence. Arriving back home in the role of architects, we might use our knowledge and tools differently and act more consciously, taking the unnoticed into account. The way of acting and the media we act in is influenced by this search for *clues*. Sometimes a film is the right medium, sometimes it's the organization of a competition, and sometimes it's the basic means of architects – plan and section.

To follow *clues* means not to know yet where a project leads – or even when exactly it starts. To follow *clues* means to develop projects we could not have thought of without the active involvement of the world around us.

Sources

[1] Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method,
Carlo Ginzburg, 1979

[2] Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and the Scientific Method,
Carlo Ginzburg, 1979, Introduction by Anna Davin, p. 7.

[3] Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and the Scientific Method,
Carlo Ginzburg, 1979, p. 27.

[4] The film and archive of the graduation project, ETH Zürich, 2020, can be watched here:
https://www.8000.agency/wyd.html

[5] Quote from the competition entry: SALZzz...WEG, Jens Knöpfel and Tamino Kuny together with
Oliver Burch, Lukas Ryffel, Jakob Junghanss (8000.agency)

[6] The archive of all submitted projects + the competition brief can be found here:
https://www.zas.life/triemli/index.html

UNCERTAIN SOILS IN EXPERIMENTATION

architects and scientists representing the plural values of soils

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Soils provide vital ecosystem services in the fight against climate change; they are the subject of economical tensions; they are "returned to nature" when they are exposed to natural risks; they are the subject of citizen mobilization to defend the "commons"; etc. Urban soils, long considered by architects as surfaces to be urbanized, are moving.

A complex project situation as a starting point for research on urban soil values

The "Urban Brière" project proposes different scenarios for adapting an urban sector to the risk of marine submersion by 2040. Commissioned in 2019 by the Agence d'Urbanisme de la Région de Saint-Nazaire (ADDRN), this study is being carried out by the architecture, urbanism and landscape agency ANMA[1] in collaboration with the hydrology consultancy Urbanwater and the programming consultancy Algoé.

In order to understand the origin of the vulnerability to marine submersion of these soils, now occupied by small-scale economic activities and housing, the first step was to study the topography, geology and history of successive urbanization of these soils. Before anthropization of the swamp to adapt it to agriculture and housing, this area was subject to daily hydraulic movements: the ocean extended across it, joining the Brière swamp, before returning to the Loire estuary. Until the 19th century, rural dwellings were built on rocky hills, sheltered from the swamp's daily hydraulic cycles. From 1850 on, the port, naval basins, railroads and industrial development led to the polderization of the swamps and the creation of dykes, severing this hydraulic link.

The project studied by ANMA proposes to recover this "original" hydraulic functioning, to allow the expansion of marine submersion waves and the gravitational regulation of rainwater, through nature-based solutions (NBS). All

1 ANMA was founded in 2001 and is based in Paris, Brussels and Bordeaux. The agency has a team of 70 collaborators and a research platform where various research activities are carried out: exhibition curation, communication, development, etc.

scenarios propose to move urbanization away from the lower parts - traces of the ancient Brière swamp - towards the upper parts - close to the bedrock.

Caught up in the dynamics of the region's attractiveness, these plots of land have the potential to generate real estate value, as they are close to the town center, the train station and the coast. Their economic value is determined by the logic of constructibility. This economic dynamic is now coming up against the recent recognition of the soil's vulnerability. By restoring thickness to the wave of marine submersion, this currently artificial land has the potential to become living, functional soil in the long term, with characteristics similar to those of the Brière swamp. However, such a renaturation operation represents a major investment for the municipality, without generating sufficient income, since it involves a retreat from urbanization! Also, the hypothesis of a wave submerging the area is accepted in different ways by local and regional actors. In fact, this part of the city of Saint Nazaire has never before been submerged by the sea, nor flooded in the event of heavy rain.

The combination of the financial challenges involved and the low level of risk awareness was an obstacle to the implementation of the project, and reveals a structural problem with development in areas at risk of submersion. Against a context of increasing artificialization, falling biodiversity and the financialization of the city, this commission is at the core of a contemporary paradox concerning the way in which value is attributed to land: there are multiple criteria for attributing value, which are

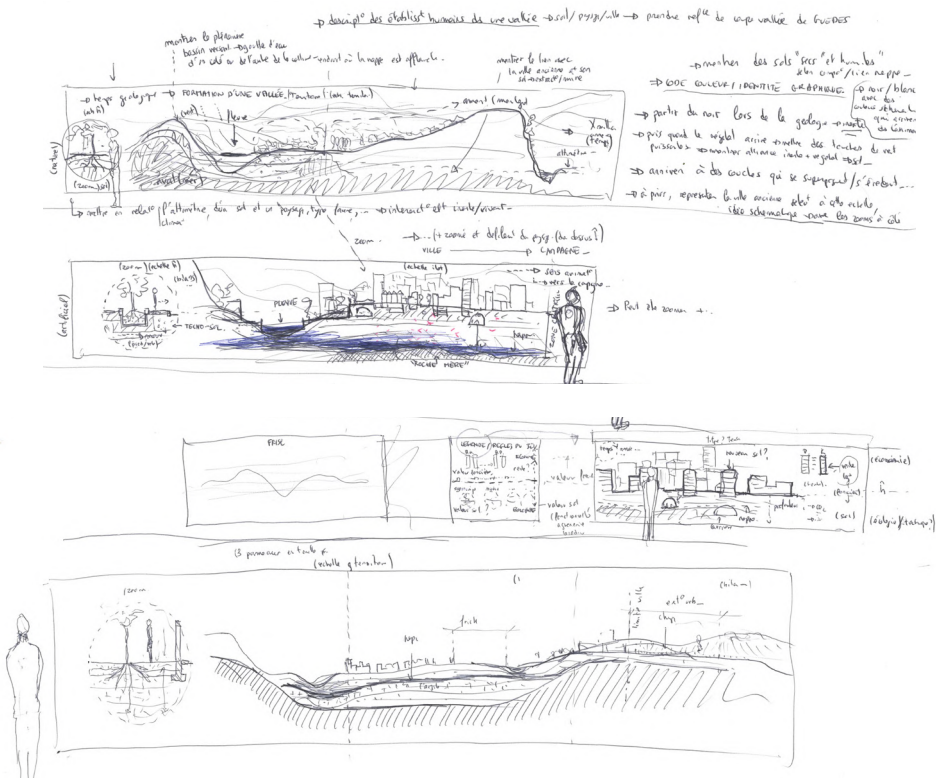
now being disrupted by climate disruption and ecological awareness.
Over the past twenty years, ANMA has carried out several hundred architectural, urbanism and landscape studies and projects in France and abroad. We could cite other mandates in which ANMA's architects are confronted with a complex operationalization of projects linked to competing ways of attributing value to urban soils. This context of changing views on soil reveals major contradictions in contemporary society, which ANMA has to come to terms with in its mandates.

Following a proposal from CAUE Rhône-Métropole to collaborate on an exhibition, ANMA began research into the conditions of urban production through the prism of the value of urban soils. After two years' work in partnership with the CAUE Rhône Métropole, the École Urbaine de Sciences Po and the BRGM national geological service, the *Terre Terrain Territoire* traveling exhibition will first be displayed in Lyon in 2022, then in Toulouse, Strasbourg, Metz, Rouen, Bordeaux and Montpellier in 2023 and 2024.
This article presents the results of the research that led to the *Terre Terrain Territoire* exhibition (TTT), as well as the place of this non-mandated activity within the agency. Firstly, the article will describe the different ways of attributing value to soils, rooted in the practices of the various actors in the urban production process: between land value (land) and ecological value (soil). The article will then focus on the representational work that led to the production of the exhibition documents for a non-expert audience. Those representations are the result of

Moment of work between different participants of the Terre Terrain Territoire exhibition project , ANMA, Paris, 2021

a collaborative process involving architects, hydrologists, soil scientists, ecologists, economists, illustrators and graphic designers. It clarifies two complex processes: the bio-geological process of soil *terraformation* and the process of soil economic value creation.

Finally, the article will look at the place this research activity occupies within the agency's practices: carried out beyond the mandate, it represents an opportunity for collaboration with other disciplines, and an opportunity for collaborators to enhance their skills for future projects.



Working sketch of the sections of three project territories on which ANMA is working, showing the relationships between soils and human installations. Agrippa Leenhardt, 2021

An exhibition to understand the plural values of soils

Tensions (and oppositions) over land values in France

In 1950, a third of the world's population lived in cities. In 2008, for the first time, the majority of the world's population lived in cities, and by 2050 it should be more than two-thirds. This acceleration in urbanization is reflected in the exponential artificialization of land, even in areas experiencing demographic decline. In France alone, we're talking about the artificialization of the equivalent of 110 soccer fields every day! Yet the need for new housing and facilities is still present. With the Zero Net Artificialization (ZAN)[1] initiative, the French government has set itself the target of reducing the rate of artificialization of land by half by 2030, in order to achieve zero net artificialization by 2050, at all territorial scales. The aim of this legislation is to strictly control the consumption of agricultural, natural and forest land, and to define the opposite of this: land artificialization. While the law defines artificialization as the durable alteration of the soil's ecological functions[2], what issues are behind the precise application of this definition? Whether to include, for example, the gardens of urban sprawl, intensive agriculture, quarries, energy infrastructures or monoculture forests on either side of the

1 The goal of Zero Net Artificialization (ZAN) first appeared in July 2018 in the Biodiversity Plan. It leads all local authorities to drastically reduce the rate of land artificialization and has featured since August 2021 in the Climate and Resilience Act, as a consequence of the work of the Citizens' Climate Convention.

2 Article 192 of the Climate and Resilience Act now defines artificialization as "the lasting alteration of all or part of a soil's ecological functions, in particular its biological, hydric and climatic functions, as well as its agronomic potential, through its occupation or use".

monoculture forests on either side of the boundary that the law would determine, is a major issue for many economic sectors. ZAN does not differentiate between the different types of agriculture, and considers any agricultural or forestry parcel to be non-artificialized. However, the impact of intensive agriculture on the soil in France should be included in this legislation on soil, in the same way as urban sprawl, which will only represent around 1% of the territory in the coming decades[3].
And how can we imagine a territorial project in which we could no longer consume agricultural land, which is cheap and easily artificialized, to the detriment of economic competition in increasingly globalized territories? Are alternative models based on resource sharing and bioregional[4] cooperation conceivable?

Soil is more than ever a coveted resource, crystallizing opposition between economic and political players, as well as struggles led by citizens' and environmental movements. These oppositions reveal the widening gap between the conception of their economic value and the recent recognition of their ecological value. Indeed, the acceleration of financial crises since 1971 has transformed real estate into a "safe asset" for diversifying investment portfolios. Neo-liberal urban policies since the 1980s[5] have relied on the financial sector for the urban renewal of post-

3 Jean-Marc Offner, ZAN saison 2 : Un mode d'emploi alternatif du « zéro artificialisation ». *Revue Urbanisme*, 2023

4 Derived from deep ecology, a bioregion corresponds to a territory whose limits are not defined by political boundaries, but by geographical limits that take into account human communities as well as microclimates, soil types and the vitality of flora and fauna in a decentralized perspective. See Mathias Rollot and Marin Schaffner's *Qu'est-ce qu'une bioregion?* published in 2021 by Wildproject.

5 Gilles Pinson, *La ville néolibérale*, Paris, PUF, coll. « La ville en débat », 2020.

industrial Western cities. By transforming real estate into a financial product in these globalized megacities, land value tends to be uncoupled from the real estate market, becoming a speculative investment product.
These tensions over soil in projects influence and question the agency's day-to-day practice, as well as the framework in which it operates. Their land value, associated with constructibility, is central to the operationality of projects, and limits the transition from the current model. This is one of the main reasons why we have decided to make it an object of research, through the *Terre Terrain Territoire* exhibition.

Living soil, an unknown factor in the economic equation of urban development

The production of the exhibition was an excellent opportunity to examine the value that development actors place on soil in their projects, in terms of their economic models and the sector's necessary ecological transition.
In the city's production system, a development project must aim for financial equilibrium. Soil, as a building land capable of generating revenue, plays a key role in this. This leads us to look at it from the angle of land ownership : acquisition costs, building permits and planning regulations. As for its depth, this is approached through the prism of the act of building : the link between soil type and foundation, possible decontamination depending on the expected use, the passage of pipes, etc.The real estate value attributed to a plot of land is defined by an ecosystem of actors. It is the result of negotiations, power struggles, expert debates and sometimes contradictory public policies.

A mechanism structures the creation of value from this resource: the value by anticipation. Whereas market value describes the value of a property in a formal market, value by anticipation refers to the capacity to build according to the maximum capacity defined by urban planning policies. This mechanism enables a real-estate developer to offer a much higher price to the seller of a single-family house, for example, because he will be able to build a building that will multiply the floor area, if the market allows him to sell it. Competition between developers will then generate a bidding competition, which will determine a reference value for similar properties, contributing to the systemic rise in land prices. Value is thus created, but any ecological function of the land is excluded. As a result, the link between soil types and living organisms, the regulation of the water and carbon cycle, its "ecological value", is poorly rooted in the culture of those involved in the urban production process, because its economic value is considered to be negligible.

And yet, in this age of ecological awareness, living soils are recognized as one of the major components in maintaining the habitability of territories[6]. Thanks to scientific advances, the ecological parameters of soils are becoming increasingly legible and communicable. Four soil functions[7] have been characterized to explain their importance in territorial ecosystems:

6 IPCC, "Summary for Policymakers, Climate Change and Emerging Lands: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems", 2019. According to the report, climate "is very largely conditioned by what happens on the land."

7 These four soil functions are defined in the Muse project (integrating soil multifunctionality into urban planning documents) coordinated by Cerema and financially supported by ADEME. This project is a tool for local authorities to qualify soil functions using 1:250,000 scale maps, and to help them integrate this subject into supra-territorial urban planning documents (SCOT, SRADDET).

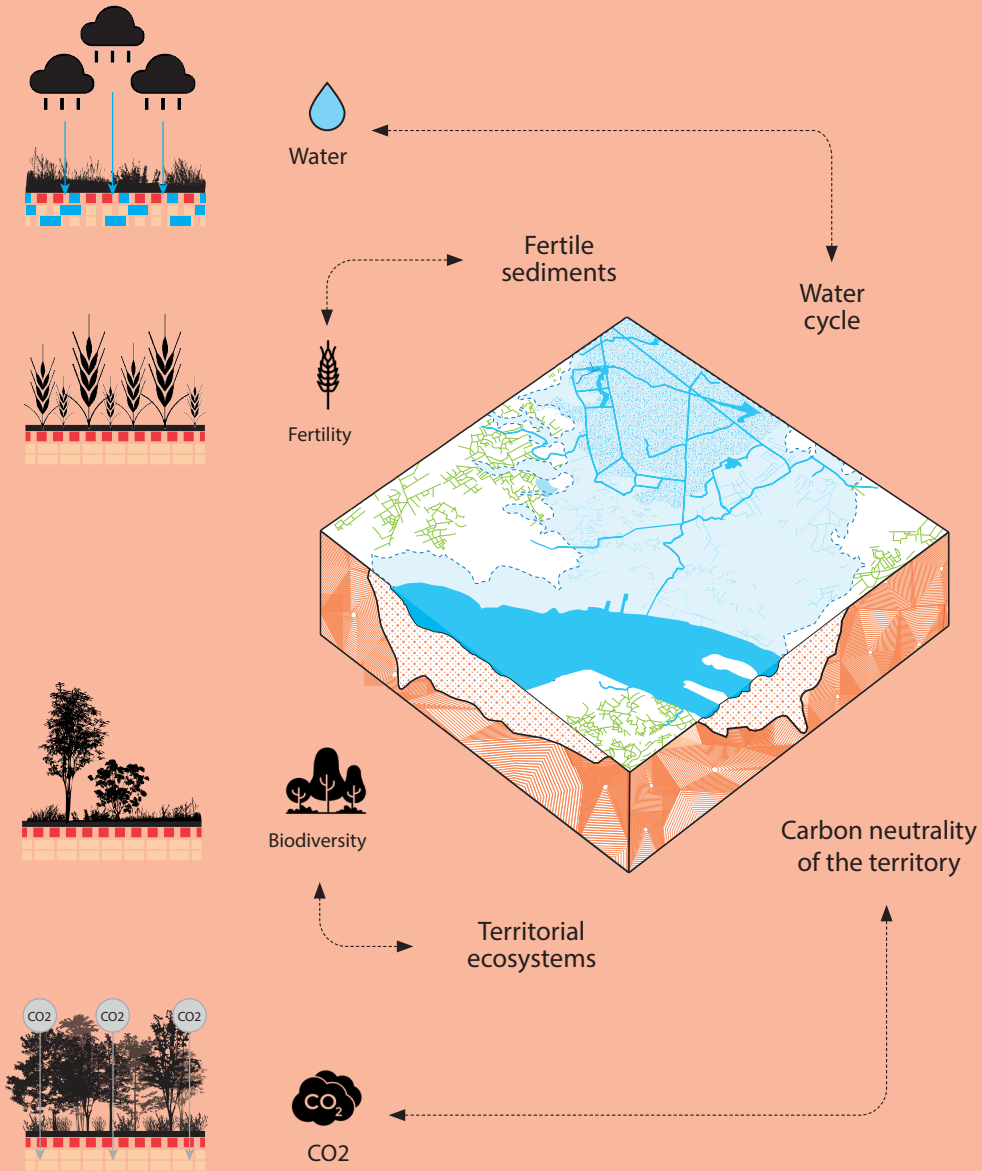
- The hydric function, which is part of the large and small water cycles of a watershed;
- The agronomic function, which depends on the characteristics of a territory's bedrock, the minerals it can transfer to the soil, the silts deposited by a river bed, and its water content;
- The function of carbon capture, involved in a territory's carbon cycle thanks to plant degradation, which could be compared with human activities that consume carbon;
- The function of supporting biodiversity, comprising all life forms whose evolutionary and reproductive cycles take place in the soil.

The ecological value of a soil is understood in terms of the proper functioning of a territorial ecosystem, at the interface between the mineral[8] and living worlds. But we still have a long way to go before we can reconcile the multiple benefits of soil.

To raise collective awareness, the TTT exhibition seeks to unfold these different views of soil, shaped by professional practices and political, economic and cultural acculturation. The terms soil (terre), land (terrain) and territoiry (territoire) illustrate three definitions and interweaving of scales derived from the common ground. They contrast the notion of soil (terre) with that of land (terrain), and highlight the contradictions in the value system of today's city-building model. By linking them to the scale of the territory, the exhibition broadens the gaze towards a notion of common project, which articulates the natural dynamics of soils with their environment, their potential uses, and ways of living.

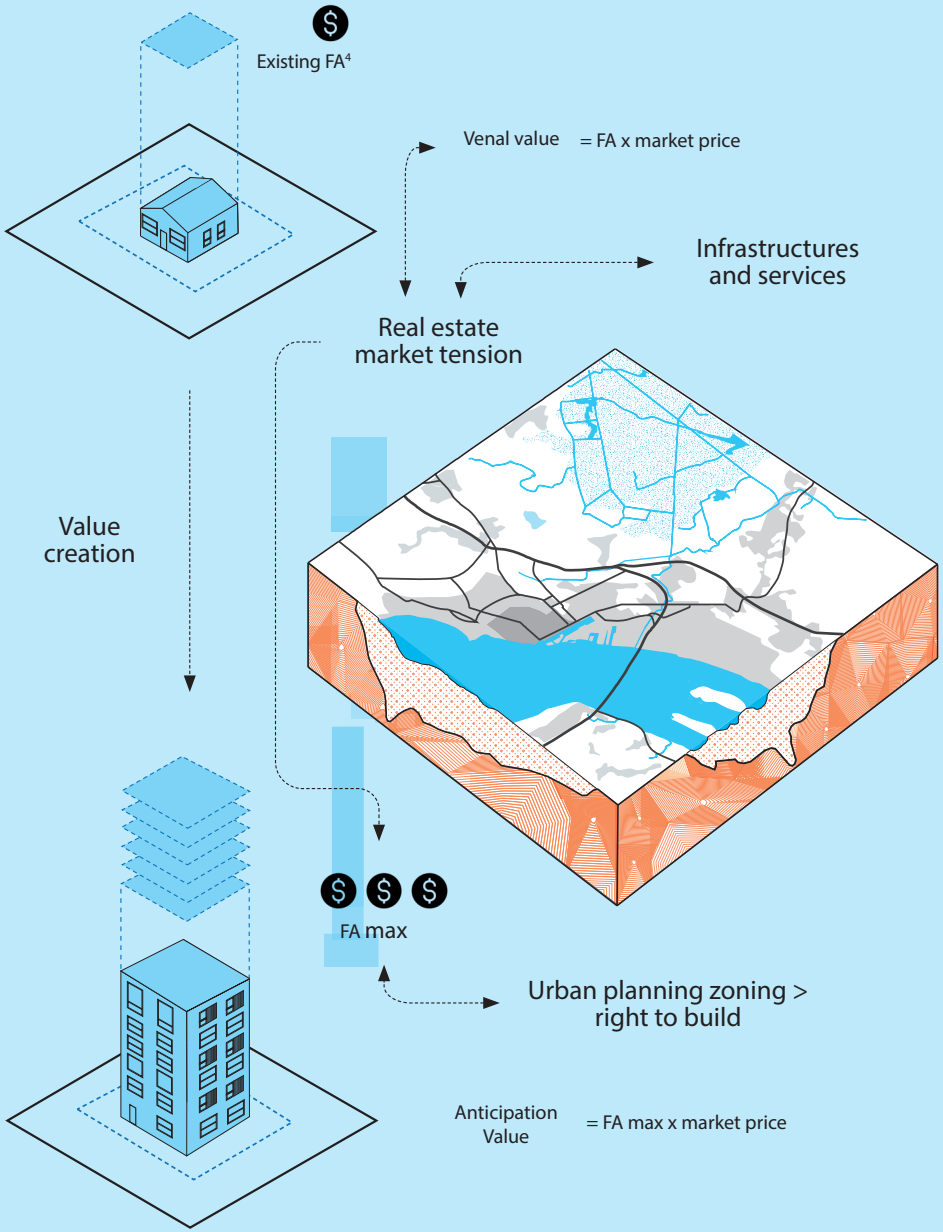
8 Matthieu Duperrex describes our relationship with the mineral world through the concept of "sedimentation", in his essay *La rivière et le bulldozer*, Premier Parallèle, 2022.

SOIL : THE ECOLOGICAL VALUE OF ITS FUNCIONALITIES



These axonometries represent the Saint Nazaire area, the Loire estuary and the Brière marshes.

LAND : THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF ITS CONSTRUCTIBILITY



4 The floor area, or FA, represents the buildable surface area, generally expressed in m^2.

Representing soils: where fields meet

An opportunity for collaboration between architecture and natural sciences

Changing the way we look at urban soils is a matter of representation. And the architectural tools can help to make this shift. In *Terra Forma*, Frédérique Aït-Touati, Alexandra Arènes and Axelle Grégoire explore representations at the crossroads of the natural sciences and art. According to the authors, (cartographic) representations as we know them today "express a relationship to space emptied of its living, an available space that can be conquered and colonized". Yet they have the capacity to unfold worlds, in a context where there is an "urgent need to grasp the crisis of representation of a world in upheaval[1]". As part of this objective, the exhibition explores representations (plans, sections and axonometries) for a non-expert audience, to clarify two complex processes: the bio-geological process of soil terraformation and the process of soil economic value creation. In this section, we will focus on the representation of the soil formation process, which involves biological and geological processes that are still relatively compartmentalized in their respective disciplinary fields[2].

1 Frédérique Aït-Touati, Alexandra Arènes, Axelle Grégoire, *Terra Forma. Manuel de cartographies potentielles*, édition B42, 2019.

2 In *La Terre habitable, ou l'épopée de la zone critique* (La Découverte, 2023), Jérôme Gaillardet describes "the emergence of a new discipline whose aim is to understand the mechanisms by which living beings transform the Earth. A science of "terraformation" in short, which, according to traditional Greek roots, would be a "biogeology" having nothing to do with the esoteric definition given by wikipedia, but much closer to the study of Michel Serres' Biogée, of Gaïa by James Lovelock and the philosophers, of Vernadsky's biosphere."

In fact, representing the complexity of soils challenges the architectural codes of representation. Representing this thickness means taking a step into the world of the natural sciences, each of them having their own language, their own ways of representing and understanding how soils work. This graphic research requires collaboration with other experts in order to transcribe their different languages. It's important to note that, since the 1990s, this knowledge has been shared by a number of landscape architects, who consider the links between plants and soil through landscape design[3].
Ecologists, soil scientists and hydrologists have become the key partners of landscape designers, architects and urban planners in the design process. Faced with an ever-increasing need for expertise, with few knowledge of each of these disciplines, and often with limited soil data available for their projects, commissioning authorities rarely integrate these collaborations into the project process. *Terre Terrain Territoire* was an opportunity to bring these cooperative ventures out of the mandate scope.

In collaboration with pedologists (Sol Paysage), geologists (BRGM) and graphic designers (Les Zinc), we explored a system of graphic representation to explain the ecological functions of soils, and to help us envisage their interaction

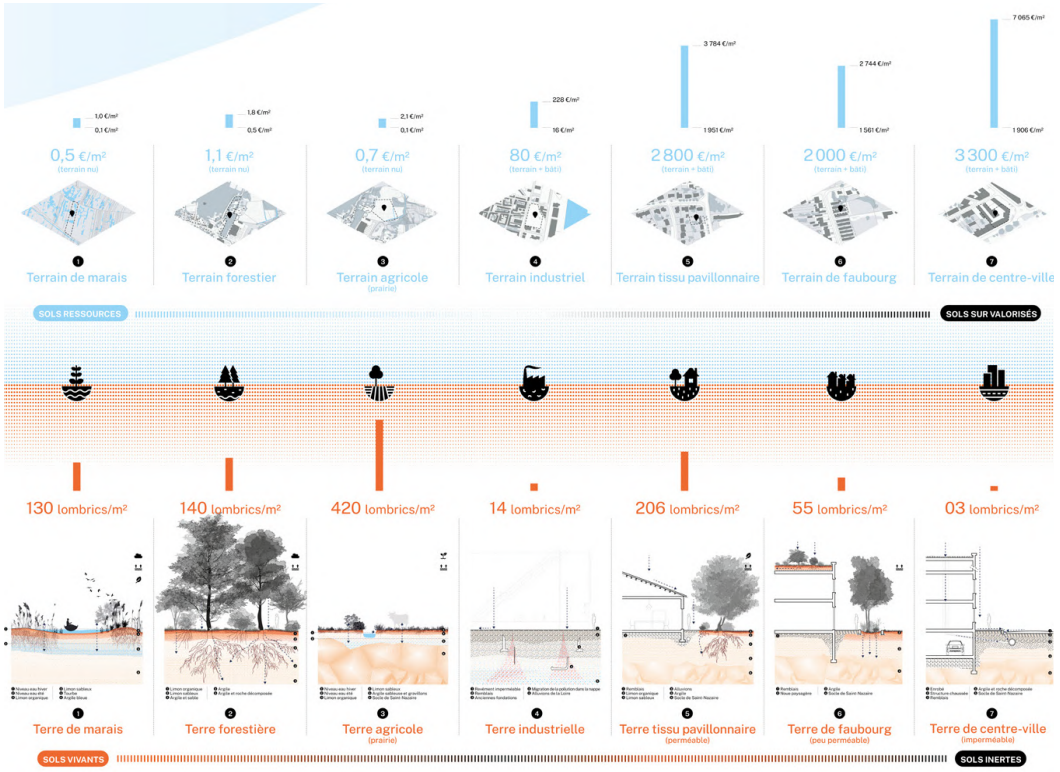
3 For several decades, with the support of ecologists, landscape architects have been changing the approach to soil in landscaping, notably by questioning the contribution of "open soil" traditionally used in green spaces. Landscape architects Marc Rumelhart and Gabriel Chauvel are regarded as pioneers in taking into account the existing soil of urban wastelands. Despite their low agronomic value, the presence of specific, non-standard ecosystems makes them a starting point for a more ecological project where "nothing goes in, nothing comes out", as described in their article "La richesse des sols pauvres", *Pages Paysages*, no. 5, pp. 6-11, 1994.

with the project.
This scientific approach led us to retain traditional soil science graphic codes. Thus, the various layers were interpreted according to stratigraphic principles[1], and the soil patterns were derived from the figurations used in geology and pedology.
However, a difference has been made to the classic color codes of these disciplines to highlight the presence of living organisms in soil, and the economic value of land. Orange, a bright color symbolizing life in soil, contrasts with blue, a cold color that characterizes the vision of soil as inert land. In this way, we aimed to transcribe the opposition between living soil and constructible land in project situations.
This duality is also reflected in the way in which soil is represented: cross-section to read the depth of the soil, axonometry to see the soil as a surface on which uses are thought out and carved out. Some soil characteristics have also been integrated into the representation system, such as water content, pollution, inertness, roots and granulometry.

Through these attempts to represent the project, we wish to highlight the disciplinary partitioning we have inherited and its deleterious impact on the functional characteristics of soils. The technical culture of the building industry has inherited a tradition of heavy transformation of the soil to enable the act of building: excavation, channelling of water into networks, waterproofing of the surface, containment of pollution... Conversely, the natural sciences were traditionally focused on the functioning of natural or

1 Stratigraphy is a geological process used to describe soil layers in order to reconstruct the history of the earth's crust.

agricultural areas. Understanding the functioning of urban soils, and building bridges with the world of construction, are therefore relatively recent developments for these so-called natural disciplines.
While the exhibition contrasts soil (ecology) and land (economy), and by extension the natural sciences with construction engineering, it also outlines the fertility of mutual understanding, with a view to ecologizing construction practices.



Extract from a panel in the *terre terrain territoire* exhibition comparing the economic value (monetary) and ecological value of soil (earthworm content).

Designing the city in the age of the Anthropocene: architects working with the ecological humanities

While the creation of the IPCC in 1988 institutionalized the idea of an environmental crisis, the "ecological narrative[5]" did not penetrate the world of architecture in France until late in the 2000s, with a globalizing discourse dominated by scientific and technical considerations. Sustainable development and energy efficiency were developed around the idea of green growth and progress in the service of more responsible architecture. The 2010s marked a new period, during which the Anthropocene thesis, demonstrating the predominant influence of human activities on natural, social and climatic disturbances, spread to the field of architecture, and "shook the way architects took up the

5 This is the hypothesis constructed by Léa Mosconi in her thesis *Emergence du récit écologiste dans le milieu de l'architecture. 1989-2015: de la réglementation à la thèse de l'anthropocène*, under the direction of Jean-Louis Violeau, which she defended at ENSA-Paris Malaquais in 2018.

Greta Thunberg during Donald Trump's speech to the United Nations in New York on September 23, 2019. REUTERS/Andrew Hofstetter.

ecological question[6]", which had until then been very much oriented towards sustainable development, or had been dealt with on the margins by activists.

We are entering an era in which "nature" can no longer be seen as a stable, timeless framework, as the mere "environment" for human activities. The powers of the Earth are reacting to human actions, ever more violently, on every scale. The proliferation of the Anthropocene thesis calls into question the way we conceive of our place in the biosphere, and the relationship between humans and the rest of the living world: we are going through a crisis of sensitivity to the other *earthbound* that make up this environment[7]. Soil is not an inert surface available for urbanization, but "the multi-millennial theater of joint, cobbled-together actions by an infinite number of communities of living beings[8]."

Since 2016, a range of actors in the field of architecture have been refocusing their attention on soil. To cite just a few examples: exhibitions such as "Sols vivants" by the Ter agency (2020), TVK's "La terre est une architecture" (2021), "Elément Terre", theme of the biennale d'architecture et de paysage d'Ile-de-France (2022) or "Reclaim the Earth" at the Palais de Tokyo (2022); new journals such as "Topophile" (2019) or "Terrestres" (2018); or publishers such as "Terres urbaines" (2020). The *Terre Terrain Territoire* exhibition is part of this current trend. By attempting to clarify the dual complexity of bio-geological processes and the processes involved in the production of economic value from urban

6 Ibid. p. 409.

7 Bruno Latour, *Face à Gaïa, Huit conférences sur le Nouveau Régime Climatique*, La découverte, 2015.

8 Léna Balaud, Antoine Chopot, *Nous ne sommes pas seuls, Politique des soulèvements terrestres*, éditions Seuil, 2021.

soils, it hopes to contribute to a better understanding of contemporary conditions for the production of architectural and urban projects.

There is a need for research beyond the mandate, to understand and represent soils in order to transform them with greater care and caution. In this case, the research led to an exhibition as a means of training and collaborating with other disciplines; to better support clients in taking better account of soil and experimenting with other project methods.
More than ever, citizens and authorities expect urban projects to be sustainable, taking care of social situations, resources and landscapes. ANMA believes that the role of architects is to support urban planners in transforming the way they look at urban soil. This role can be played in the context of the mandates, but also beyond.

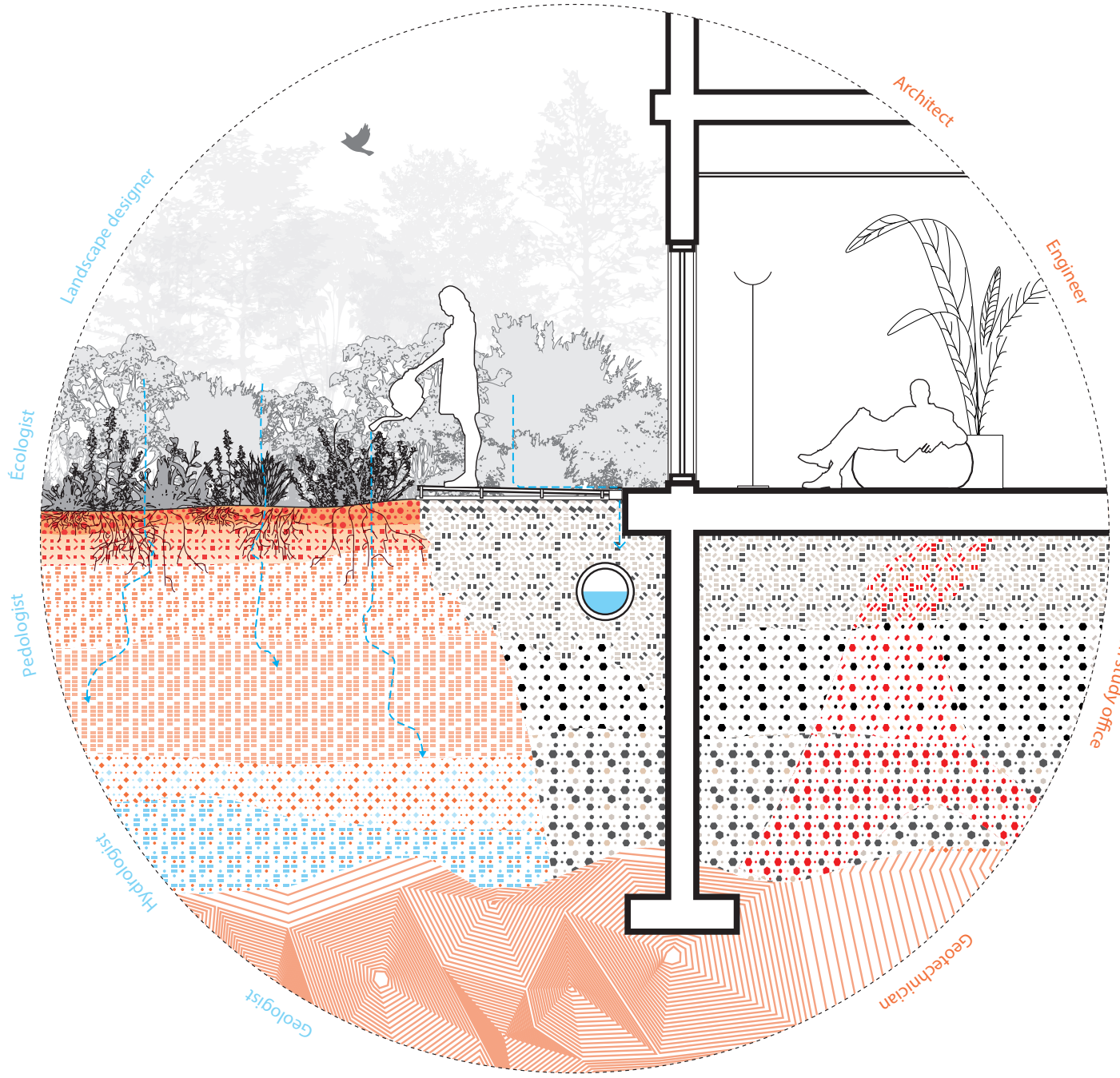
Getting projects moving towards an ecological transition means taking into account the technical complexities and bio-geological dynamics of soils. Urban planning must engage in a broadening of project disciplines. Rejecting the division between natural and social sciences, the *ecological humanities*[9] represent an emerging interdisciplinary field of research in which designers have their rightful place. Understanding hydraulic dynamics through the expertise of the hydrologist informs us about the capacity of soils to infiltrate water and become the support for ever more

9 *Ecological humanities* propose to abolish the exteriority of nature to the social and cultural to install new acting forces at the heart of the humanities and social sciences. See Deborah Bird Rose, Libby Robin, *Vers des humanités écologiques*, Chapter 11. A new field of research organization, Wild project, 2019.

specific living environments, which the ecologist reveals. The pedologist tells us how the soil functions, the geologist teaches us about the long-term dynamics of the subsoil, which the geographer, sociologist or economist cross-references with the successive dynamics of human settlements. Unavoidable at a time of climate change, these alliances of expertise can be worked out in plan, but also in cross-section. The cross-section becomes a privileged tool for design and experimentation, as it enables us to measure how human and natural actions have shaped the thicknesses of soils over the course of history. The cross-section becomes a powerful tool for representing these interfaces between soil and architecture.
These moments of project making, necessarily trans-disciplinary, are places of learning and breaking down barriers of expertises and particular interests to arrive at a shared understanding of the challenges of soil use and functionality. These moments-workshops are places for the construction of a common culture, debated and negotiated by the actors involved, based on the interaction of projects and soils, specific to each territory.
This research, carried out beyond the mandates, allows us to *take a step aside* to return to our projects in a different way: the collaboration with other experts, the representation of soils and their dynamics, the narration of projects, constitute new fields of research that ANMA wishes to explore in new mandates.

Linking natural sciences and landscaping

to planning techniques and architecture



Living and mineral

- Climate
- Fauna and flora
- Living soil
- Sédiments
- Groundwater flow
- Bedrock

Man and artifact

- Bâti
- Structure
- Network
- Backfilling
- Pollution
- Foundation

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MAKING THINGS.

Practicing co-creation in the marginal territories of central Apennine.

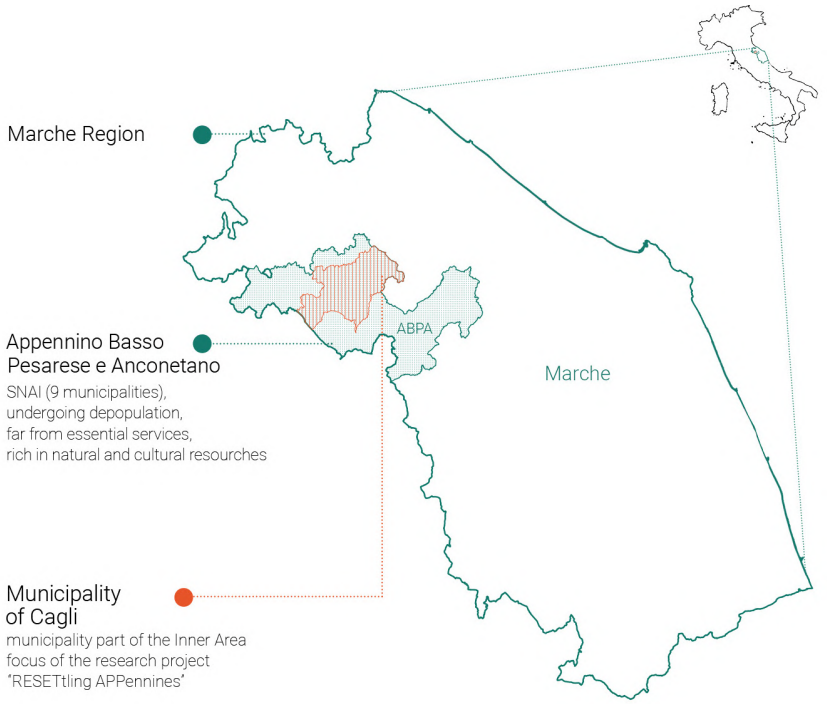
Maddalena Ferretti, Benedetta Di Leo

Università Politecnica delle Marche

Introduction

This contribution aims to discuss two interconnected and ongoing research projects working on the re-activation of some municipalities in the Marche Region central Apennine in Italy with the goal to regenerate them through architecture: a Project of Relevant National Interest, *Branding4Resilience*, and a connected PhD research, *RESETtling APPennines. Territorial promotion, cultural heritage enhancement and transformation of living space for a resilient revival of the Marche Apennines*, both funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research.
Branding4Resilience (B4R) is a project that links four universities (Università Politecnica delle Marche, Università degli Studi di Trento, Università degli Studi di Palermo, Politecnico di Torino) and investigates four Italian inner areas. The intention is to bring out their ability to adapt to the changes and current environmental, social, economic challenges, they are facing by building operative branding actions. The research focuses on places and projects, starting with tourism as a driver of new dynamics of reactivation and resilient transformation of territories.
In particular, our research unit focuses on one inner area in the Marche Region, Italy: the Appennino Basso Pesarese e Anconetano (ABPA), the same area investigated by *RESETtling APPennines*.
Both projects adopt a multi-disciplinary, trans-scalar and multi-level approach, but while the former is more concerned with investigating the large scale, looking for solutions that network municipalities and developing replicable

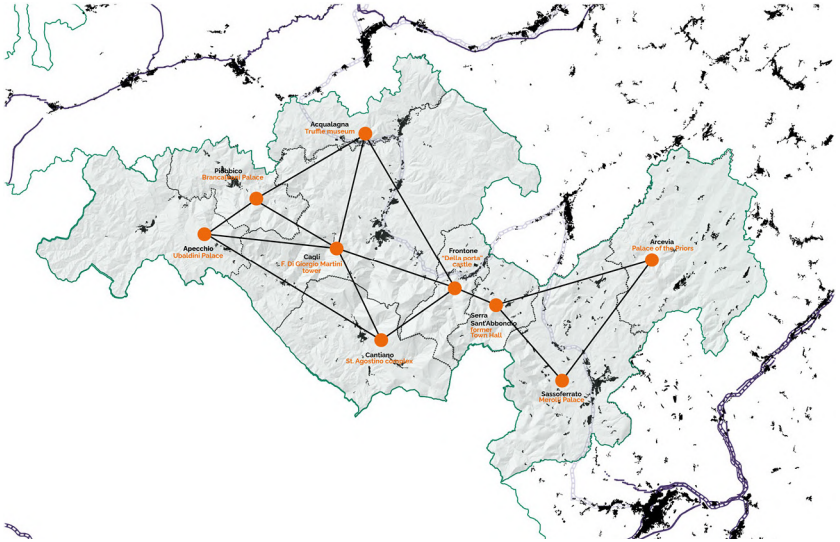
territorial strategies, the other focuses specifically on the small city of Cagli, developing meta-projects that enable the reactivation of its "potential spaces".
Both research projects aim to support the involved administrations in defining and implementing strategic regeneration projects that, as accelerators of community resilience, become starting engines to activate new economies and new life cycles.
This promotes a shared vision of the future (*co-thinking*) that starts from the relationships and identity of places.



The inner area of Marche Region, in Italy: the Appennino Basso Pesarese e Anconetano (ABPA), the area investigated by the Branding4Resilience research project and by the PhD project "RESETtling APPennines". Elaboration by B. Di Leo, 2021

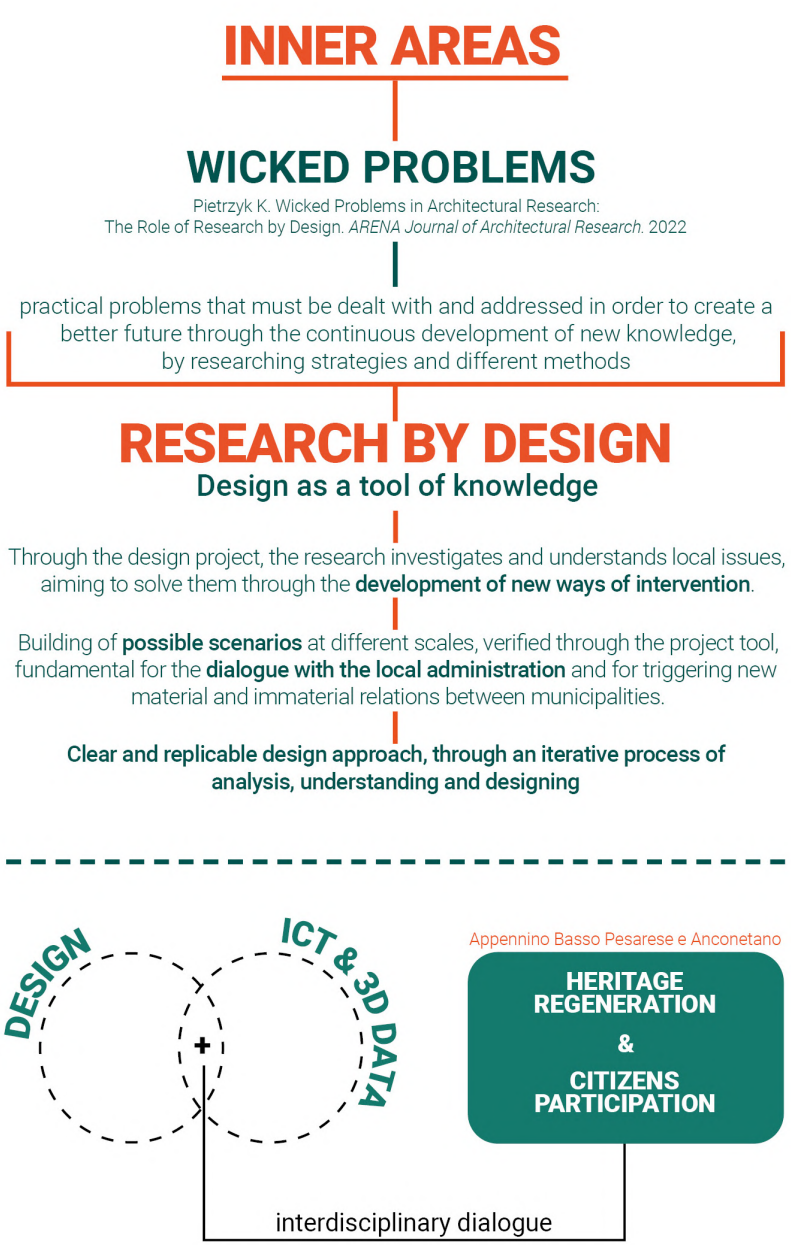
The Inner Areas

The Appennino Basso Pesarese e Anconetano is a territory that includes nine rural-mountain municipalities and it has been defined as the Marche Region's pilot area for the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) (Barca et al., 2014). SNAI is an innovative national policy of territorial development that aims to fight the marginalization and phenomena of demographic decline characterizing inner areas in Italy, namely the municipalities distant from essential services, such as education, health and mobility, and rich in important natural and cultural resources. Usually in these areas there is a lack of network between the centres, both because of weak infrastructure and of a cultural closure of each place. The national strategy allowed the area to realize some joint projects that contributed to strengthen the connection among the participating municipalities. For example, the nine cities host the "Asili d'Appennino", a network of important cultural buildings that have been reactivated for the rebirth of the territory through a new model of local development based on creative residences and enhancement of the cultural landscape. The administrations of these fragile territories are also supported by the university, which goes *beyond the mandate* to analyse and design the urban spaces and can guide them both in analysing and interpreting data and in identifying the strengths that could be enhanced (Ferretti et al., 2022). Moreover, in line with the strategic goals of the inner area, our research projects rely on existing projects and relationships between university and the local governments.



Map of the "Asili d'Appennino": a network of important cultural buildings that have been reactivated for the rebirth of the Appennino Basso Pesarese e Anconetano through a new model of local development based on creative residences and enhancement of the cultural landscape. Elaboration by B. Di Leo, 2023

Villages, landscapes and built heritage of the Appennino Basso Pesarese e Anconetano: Pianello (Cagli) and the Bosso river; Cagli theater; the former cement factory of Sassoferrato; the former railway station of Piobbico; F. Di Giorgio Martini tower; Loretello (Arcevia); view of Cantiano; Church of S. Lorenzo (Acqualagna); Church *della Madonna del Fosso* (Loretello). Pictures by M. Ferretti, B. Di Leo; 2019-2021



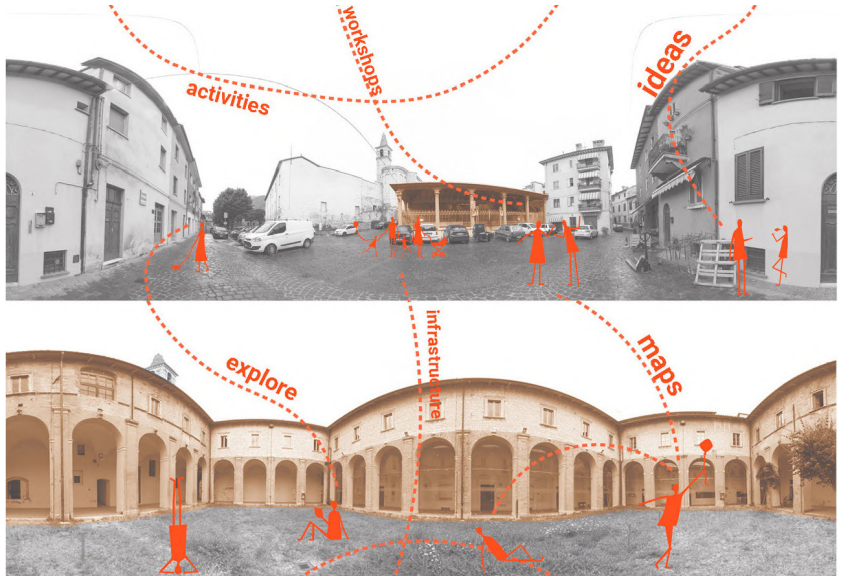
Methods and tools

Given the complexity and the richness of the area, the research operates with different qualitative-quantitative tools and with an integrated, multi-scalar and trans-disciplinary approach.
The initial deep analysis of the territory allowed us to understand how the inner areas are characterized by those that Rittel and Webber (1973) call *wicked problems*, i.e. planning problems that lack clarity both in objectives and solutions and that are difficult to solve by a specific method. For these reasons, they need to be addressed and managed to create a better future through the continuous development of new knowledge, through a search for different strategies and methods (Pietrzyk, 2022).
Consequently, we realized that the best way to address the ABPA municipalities' problems was the *research-by-design* method (Roggema, 2016), because it can build future scenarios through a process in which research components and spatial design activities are mixed. The architectural project becomes an integrated part of the research process and at the same time, the researcher uses a clear and replicable design approach through an iterative process of analysis, understanding and design.
The *research-by-design* approach is both exploratory and innovative (Di Leo B., 2022) in that it involves experimentation with ideas, materials and technologies, but also the research of cultural, social, economic, aesthetic and ethical issues (Strand, 1997), hypothesizing multiple futures

for the area (Frieling, 2001). It is based on a combination of on-field research, action-research (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992; Swann, 2002; Herr, 2017) and collaborative processes, thanks to which researchers can understand potentials and risks of the place and have a more direct relationship with local communities. The interdisciplinary approach and in particular the use of new technologies as a design participation tool allows us to imagine innovative design methods to enable heritage regeneration and community engagement in the inner areas by testing new technologies. The researcher goes beyond the mandate of investigation in that he/she begins a dialogue with the administration and the community to guide them through analysis and interpretation of data, towards the identification of strengths to be further enhanced (Ferretti et al., 2022). In this circular process research thus becomes at the same time, a study of the design project and a process of producing knowledge through the design action itself (Viganò, 2010).

RESEARCH ON FIELD AND INTERVIEWS

From these premises, and given the rich complexity of inner areas, the identification of new scenarios and perspectives for the city's future requires planning and designing on multiple levels and through multiple tools. We identified thus the need of a trans-scalar approach. The initial reading of the territory, its data and values, but especially the numerous site surveys were fundamental in framing, in the first instance, the focus area and understand its *wicked problems* and potentials: the ABPA is dotted by rural-mountain villages, characterized by a rich built heritage, often abandoned and underutilized, but isolated from

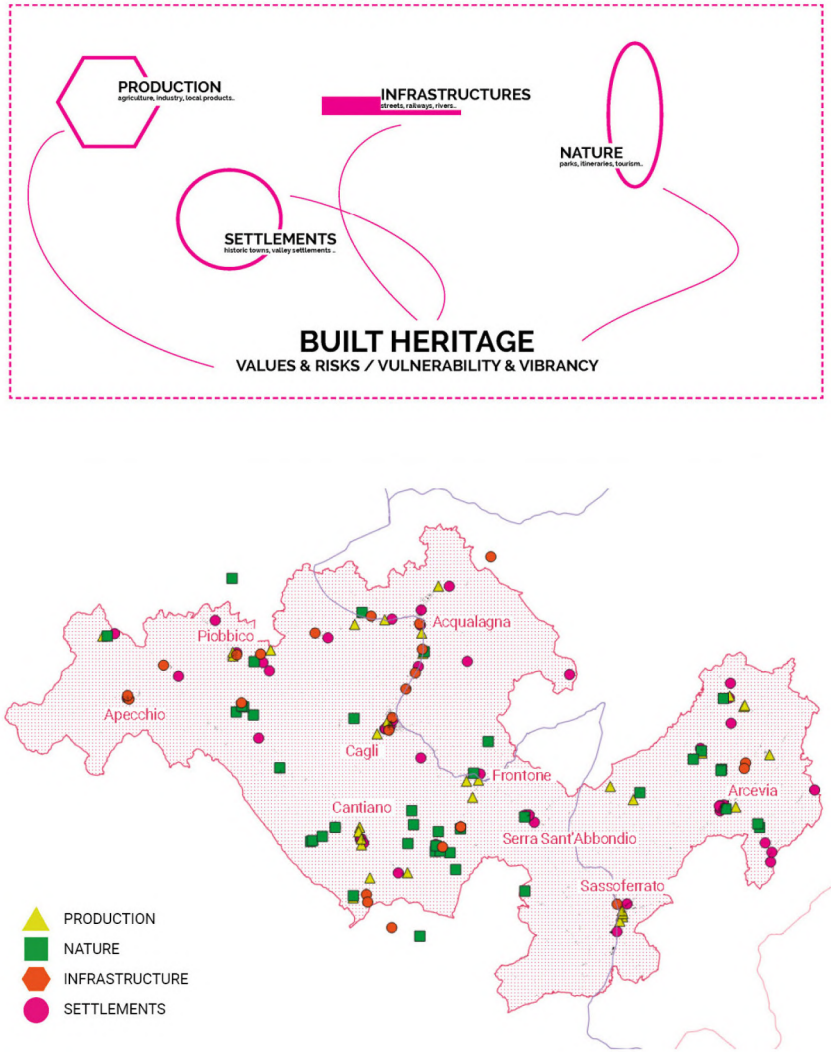


Panorama photos of some "potential spaces" in Cagli. From the top: the covered market and the former convent of San Francesco. Elaboration by B. Di Leo, 2020

Spatial-perceptive analysis of the Sant'Emidio Arena, Cagli. Elaboration by B. Di Leo, 2020

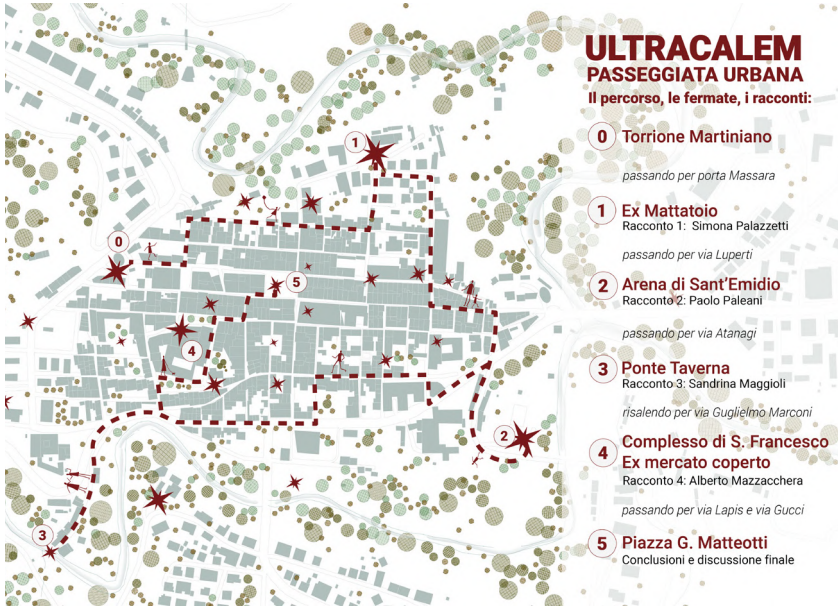
each other and from the major urban centers due to scarce infrastructure and services. The research on field allowed us to envisage a perceptive analysis of spaces and ongoing relational dynamics while collecting data on the field. The surveys have focused attention on the built heritage, which has been mapped and classified as related to: production, infrastructure, settlements and nature and studied in its values and risks, in its vulnerability and vibrancy.

Built heritage in the APBA is mostly concentrated in urban centres but it is also spread in the rest of the territory, where it is often linked to nature parks or to agricultural areas. The exploration of the territory has allowed us to map the ordinary, but also the degraded and the forgotten heritage, namely what we call "potential spaces" (Ferretti, Quattrini, Di Leo, 2021): abandoned, forgotten containers or open spaces (Berger, 2006) and, usually, perceived as residuals of the city (Gangemi, 2019). The research on field, combined with online data collection and the essential help of local administrations, supported the identification of specific target groups and key actors. The store of data acquired led to the creation of a map of social innovators in the area, which proved precious for engaging these people in interviews and in the *co-design* processes. In particular, the interviews have been a key tool for understanding desiderata and necessities of those who live in the inner area, and they have been divided into three types: Expert, Actors and Citizens Interviews. Thanks to the stakeholder analysis and the different meetings with the people who live in the ABPA, we finally tried to understand the needs of the inhabitants and of the city, and then hypothesise meta-projects based on them.



Map of the built heritage identified in the Appennino Basso Pesarese e Anconetano area and classification in production, nature, infrastructure and settlements. Study of its values and risks, its vulnerability and vibrancy through a transcalar and relational approach. Elaboration by M. Ferretti, B. Di Leo, 2021

Classification of the interviews realized within the RESETtling APPennines research project. Elaboration by B. Di Leo, 2022



Route map of the urban walk in Cagli. The itinerary, the stops, the tales. Activities realised with the project ULTRACALEM. The Cagli of the Future. Elaboration by B. Di Leo, 2022

Design Results

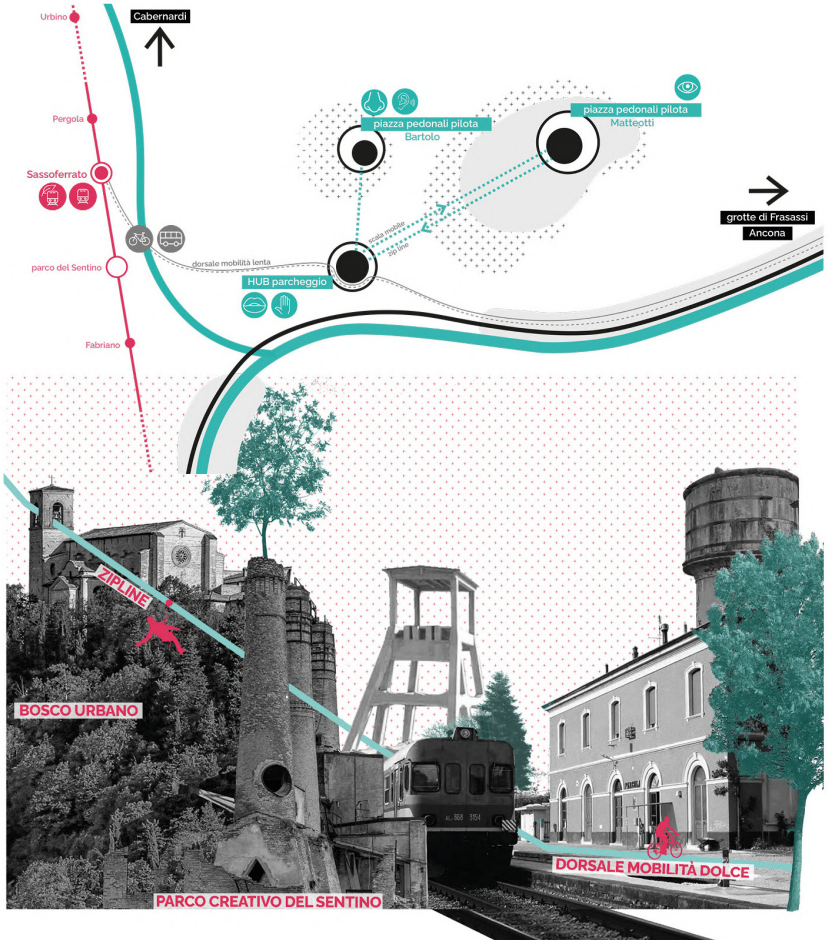
CO-DESIGN WORKSHOPS

Co-design workshops are one of the tools used by researchers to address the *wicked problems* (Rittel, H.W.J., Webber, M. M., 1973) of the selected inner area.

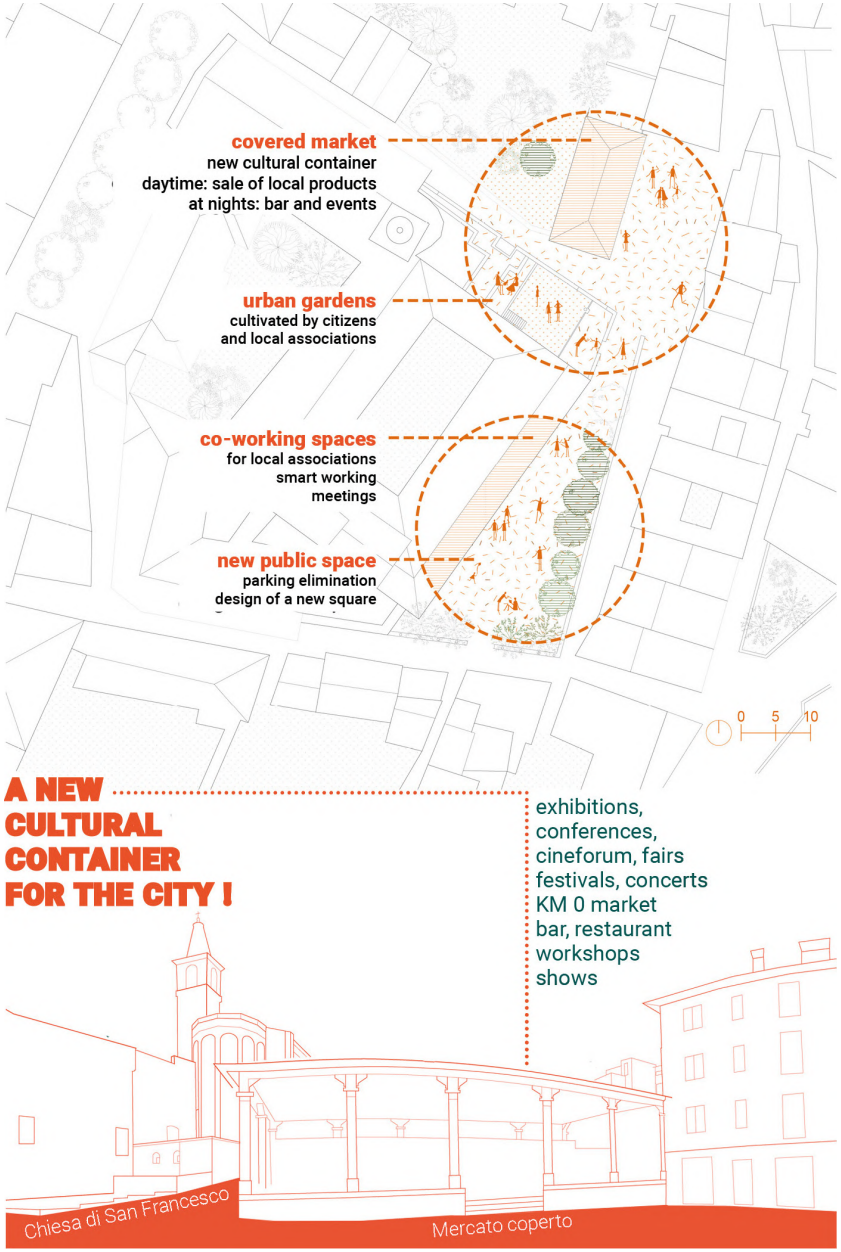
For example, for the *B4R* project, the *co-design* was applied in Sassoferrato, in the Italian central Apennine. Here, the final meta-projects result from the dialogues with the community: the researchers first listened to the citizens and to the local stakeholders (Ferretti, M., Di Baldassarre, M. G., Rigo, C., 2022) involved in round tables; then they used the gathered information to produce projects and territorial strategies on the topics of mobility, natural resources and reuse of the abandoned industrial heritage. Finally public discussions were opened to envisage alternative futures for the architectures and the territory.

In the Cagli *co-design workshop* citizens and selected local actors have been involved in the discussion of 4 main topics that emerged from a SWOT analysis and a "needs analysis" conducted by researchers: regeneration of the historic centre, risk management, infrastructural connections and mobility, public space and participation. The next step will be an urban walk to (re)discover the "potential spaces" and to involve more citizens, engaging them also with new digital and immersive technologies. These approaches initially contribute to increase the awareness of the place by the community, its ability to network and care for the territory. They become an opportunity to co-think the reactivation of "potential spaces" (Ferretti, Quattrini, Di Leo, 2021).

This helps to address common goals towards the enhancement of the city and to set strategic priorities at the inter-communal level. In the framework of the research on the marginal territory of the central Apennine, the analysis, the interpretation and the dialogues have merged into the co-design process and have resulted in meta-projects on urban and landscape contexts.



Filoferrato. 5-sense mobility for the Sentino Creative Park. Outcome of the co-design workshop in Sassoferrato. Elaboration by B. Lino (coordinator), M. Mengoni, B. Di Leo, M. Pasquali, A. Barreca, C. Andreani, L. Moretti. ©Branding4Resilience, 2020-2023



Meta-project for Piazza Garibaldi, Cagli. Result of interviews and dialogues with the local administration. Ideas used by the administration to participate in a Regional call for obtain public funds. Elaboration by B. Di Leo, 2022

META-PROJECTS

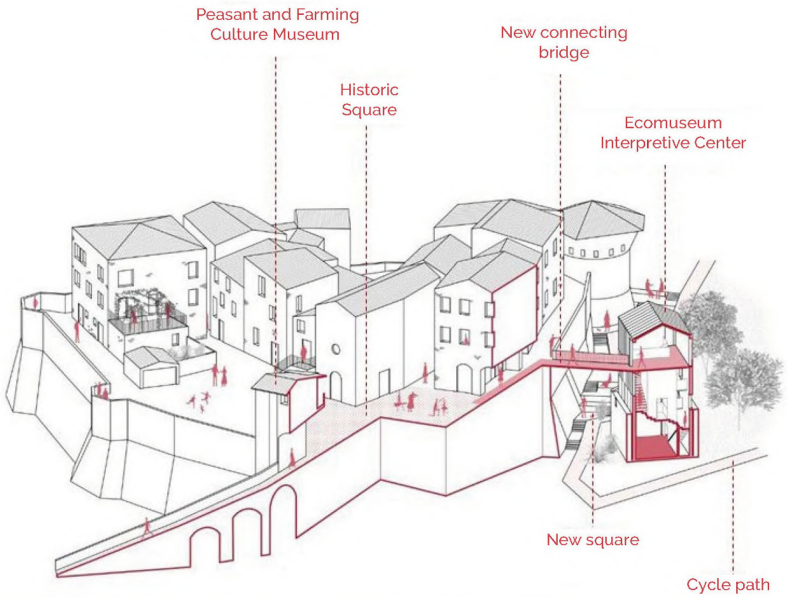
Although the design project is continuously intertwined between investigation and proposal and it involves aesthetic and beauty values, which are difficult to assess through indicators or 'scientific' criteria, it is through it that the researcher can make comparative hypotheses, asking questions and developing complex solutions, through the continuous weaving between problem and solution in an iterative process of analysis, understanding and design (Thomsen and Tamke, 2009).

In the research conducted on the Apennine area, the architectural design project was performed on paradigmatic cases such as former industrial buildings or open public spaces or riverbanks.

The synthetical and intuitive approach typical of design was a tool to explore and investigate the inherent and specific characters of the areas.

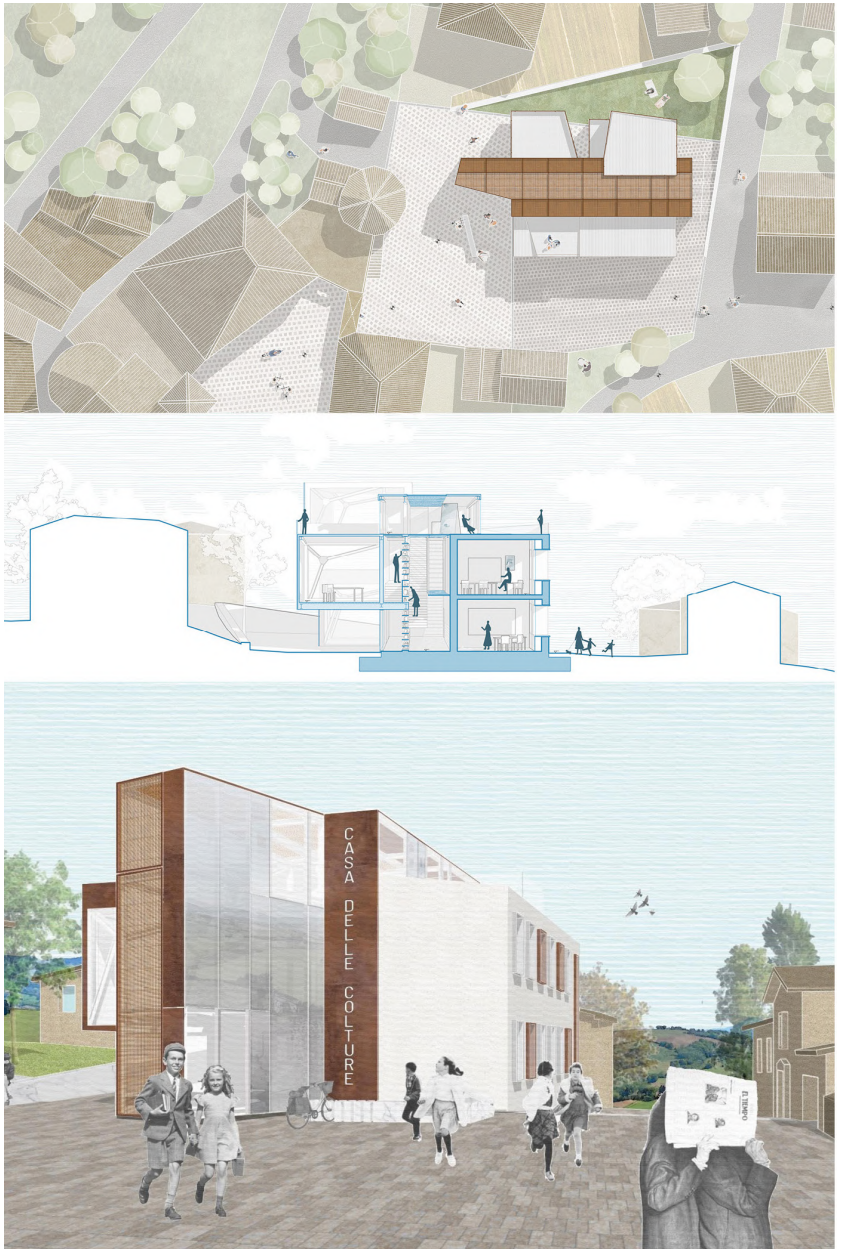
Design highlighted some pattern conditions that are repeated in the territory. The iteration made the approach more systematic and transferable even though, clearly, every design project is a different one and it is developed for a specific context. Yet, the elements highlighted through the explorative designs managed to become effective examples of intervention or to extract specific issues of the territory.

Designers use "solution-focused" strategies while traditional science applies a problem-solving approach. Scientists use analysis, whereas architects utilize design, namely they seek for various different solutions until they have evidenced the one that is possibly the most promising one. In this case, "prospective solutions can even be generated without any research", and designers could just operate by



The ecomuseum of agrarian historical landscape. Recycling strategies for the creation of an interpretive center in Loretello.
Elaboration by L. Marconi, with M. Ferretti and B. Di Leo for Branding4Resilience - UNIVPM, 2022

synthesis, collecting previous conducted research and synthesizing it into a design proposal (Swann, 2002).
For example, several meta-projects have been developed in the towns of Loretello, Palazzo and Cagli, born from the need to reactivate abandoned spaces designed for citizens, but also capable of stimulating and regularising tourism, which today is particularly problematic for these areas: often completely absent, in the summers it invades the town without rules, making them unlivable for the citizens who live there.
Therefore, the proposals contribute to triggering positive dynamics in the identified places, proposing infrastructures that are useful above all to the community.
For both Loretello and Palazzo, the project is based on the administration's desire to establish an Ecomuseum of the Historic Agrarian Landscape. The strategy focuses both on strengthening sustainable mobility and the accessibility of the villages but also on the reuse of the abandoned built heritage. In particular, the Church of the Madonna del Fosso is transformed into the gateway to the Ecomuseum, maintaining the old church shell and inserting a new volume to create an exhibition space.
On the other hand, in the former Palazzo school, the idea is to design a Casa delle Colture: a multidisciplinary hub for the training of new professional figures related to the protection and conservation of the historical agrarian landscape. The use of the existing structure with the addition of new volumes allows the creation of spaces for workshops and exhibitions, providing new opportunities for the community.
Meanwhile, the meta-project for Cagli provides both a



The *Casa delle Colture* at Palazzo di Arcevia: plan, perspective section and view of the new public spaces for artistic and agricultural formation.
Elaboration by L. Moretti, with M.Ferretti and B. Di Leo for Branding4Resilience - UNIVPM, 2022

new functional network for the "potential spaces" and the strengthening of connections between the historic centre and the rivers, with the creation of a river park. The former monastery of St. Francesco is instead transformed into Community House, a new cultural and tourist centre, provided with educational spaces, recreational areas, accommodation and artisan production that would improve the quality of life of the inhabitants and allow the flow of new tourists.
In all three examples, the reactivation of the area takes place through a trans-scalar design, which not only deals with both the territory and the built heritage, but also with the social, political and economic impacts that the intervention may cause, each time confronting the needs and urgencies expressed by the administration and the citizens.

Conclusion

The relationships engaged with municipalities try to show how the university can support them in achieving more sustainable and resilient futures, demonstrating the importance of investing in the existing built and natural heritage, but also in human capital and local expertise.
The meta-projects that have emerged and will emerge from the experiences described above cannot be built by researchers-designers, as the Italian regulation doesn't allow it. Yet, they produce unexpected impulses, lead to new collaborations and become ideas that, as it has already happened, administrations can use in calls for tender to obtain

funds for new interventions. In these complex and multi-layered contexts, going beyond the mandate means exploring new fields of possibilities for architecture by making things happen together with the people that inhabit, or re-inhabit, this remote but central territory.
The researchers work on and with the territory, transfer their knowledge and competences and aim to produce short, medium and long-term impacts, using the architectural design (Amirante, 2018) as a re-activating tool to change the physical contexts they are working on (Wakkary, 2005). In the practice of co-designing public places, indeed, the architectural design is not only a trans-scalar and multidisciplinary research tool (Pietrzyk, 2022), but it is also a means to activate new networks of culture and knowledge, and thus produce new meanings for the territory: "making things to make sense of things" (Jungnickel, 2018). Moreover, the researcher-designer, in making things with and on the territory, especially in small towns such as those investigated, must handle the fundamental and fragile relationship with local actors, avoiding top-down solutions that are unrelated to the context and favouring instead new collaborative practices. This finally allows design projects to stay open and flexible and to adapt to different emerging conditions or requests of the administrations. The level of 'abstraction' of the meta-projects developed by researchers, which is a mandatory condition for universities who are not entitled to sign and realize projects, is precisely the third mission of the academia.
Especially in inner areas, where lack of infrastructures, economic resources and technical competences are often serious issues to be tackled, universities are committed to

A transcalar strategy for Cagli: from the river, to the city to the *Community House* and interior view of the recovery of the former St. Francesco convent. Elaboration by S. Marinelli, with M.Ferretti, B. Di Leo and G. Mondaini for Branding4Resilience - UNIVPM, 2022

relate to the territory with knowledge transfer and support, by accompanying small cities into processes of transformation that enable them to face the complexities and challenges of an uncertain future.
The design results were useful for the research to test and reframe some contextual approaches to specific territorial issues and to propose more effective solutions both at the strategic and architectural scale.

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RUINATION DESIGN

Experimental preservation and archaeology of the contemporary past, based on art exhibition design in a modernist-post-socialist context.

Tomasz Świetlik, Michał Kulesza

Introduction

This article presents an experimental approach to dealing with modern ruins and the preservation of the contemporary past. In particular, we analyse a project of exhibition design commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw in 2018 to Tomasz Świetlik studio (currently ŚŃŃ studio) where Michał Kulesza contributed as a part of a design team. The exhibition titled *Neighbours* was exceptional in two ways. First, the location of the exhibition, unknown until late into the project, turned out to contain a surprisingly complex and under-documented architectural and social legacy. Second, the significant size of the curatorial team and the collaborative spirit surrounding the process allowed us to closely engage with the exhibition's artistic content and use this position to augment our design.

The commissioned exhibition was a part of the tenth instalment of the Warsaw Under Construction Festival (WWB), an annual festival dedicated to the city of Warsaw. It uses contemporary art and research to bring the discussion about the city's changes and challenges to a wider audience. While exploring new themes in urban discourse the festival also explores the city itself by changing its venue to a new unexpected location every year. The title of the WWB 2018 edition - *Neighbours* referred to the changing demographics of the Polish capital and the growing contribution of the Ukrainian community to the city life, and the challenges they were facing.

In chapter 1, we provide a background of the project and explore the idea of the modern ruin through the lens of heritage management, anthropology, and archaeology of the contemporary past. We bring examples of novel interpretations of heritage practices and draw conclusions for our work. In chapter 2, we share findings from the on-site survey and describe how the conceptualization of these findings contributes to the advancement of our design. In chapter 3, we describe the curatorial concept for the exhibition, institutional arrangements surrounding the design process and elements of social and historical context relevant to understanding the project. We also share our methodology of working with complex contemporary art exhibitions. In chapter 4, we present how research and theories described in previous chapters, compounded within the design process and what were the final design outcomes. Chapter 5 concludes the presented argument.

Figure 1. Cepelia pavilion, 1966. source: fotopolska.eu

Figure 2. Cepelia pavilion, 1967. source: fotopolska.eu

1. Modern Ruins

The 10th edition of WWB was located in an abandoned modernist icon called *Cepelia*. As found, the building was subdivided into a number of disjointed spaces, with most of them being vacated. Abandoned spaces were rented to the museum together with a plentitude of interior decorations that amassed over decades. These were said to be of no value to the owner and destined to be one day all removed, which left them fully to our discretion.

The building, however, did not possess an up-to-date survey, and the historical documentation was incomplete. Given the immensity of the transformations the building underwent, as well as the feeling of importance and richness of the story that those transformations carried, led us to conduct a study of the history of the building and an on-site survey of undocumented changes. While accepting this commission, we agreed not to know what will be the venue of the exhibition and what extra work it will require. We see our research and survey as a form of extended mandate, a planned but still unknown part of work, a design risk.

What are ruins?

The idea of the modern ruins has attracted some attention in the past two decades, particularly as part of a broader “turn to things” in anthropology and social sciences in general (Bennett 2009; DeSilvey 2017; Ingold 2013). Notably, these developments led to the emergence of the new sub-discipline of archaeology, that is the archaeology of the contemporary past (Harrison and Schofield 2010). We look into theories and

concepts behind those developments as we see them well suited to elucidate our approach.

Modern ruins present themselves as immediately ambiguous and problematic. How to be modern and a ruin at the same time? More often than not they are neither of them, rather they are in the process of ruination. They are somewhere in between two sought-after, glorious states, thus easy to be overlooked or even dismissed (Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014). In a paradoxical position for heritage management, the ruins are sacred but the process of their creation - ruination - is deemed intolerable. Therefore, modern ruins often do not meet the aesthetic expectations of a ruin, and can induce the feeling of disgust (Kristeva 2002). Even worse, their presence still tightly linked to a current state and often being witnesses to recent failures, they do not easily lend themselves to become so-called *lieux de mémoire,* a fabricated site of memory with carefully constructed meanings (Nora 1989). The preservation practices often favour the exceptional objects over their mediocre and generic counterparts, thus creating a distorted historical image (Koolhaas 2010).

Becoming a ruin relates to the acquisition of a new function, that is being part of the heritage. In a utilitarian view, the heritage derives its justification as a resource - to be consumed or extracted either economically or politically e.g. tourism or identity building. Becoming a heritage is a way to domesticate what was once left outside of the public realm, the raw, the rough, the devastated. Often with a deliberate aestheticization and (hi-)story telling (Smith 2006; Lowenthal 1985).

A critical reading of this approach leads some scholars to reject this line of thinking as top-down, selective and reductionist (DeLanda 2006). The first challenge comes from feminist, post-colonial and subaltern studies as a way to challenge dominant historical narratives and broaden the interpretative spectrum (Spivak 1988; Bhabha 1994). The second challenge, at which we are looking more closely in this text, comes from the things themselves in line with the paradigm of new materialism (Bennett 2009; Coole and Frost 2010). In reference to the ruins, it can mean a suspension of the strict categorisation like heritage or usefulness and putting more attention on things as they are, their agency, their affective effects upon encounter and involuntary material memory. In this view, the material landscape is in its entirety a 'diverse and palimpsestal assemblages' (Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014), where every object is an amalgamation of histories.

How do ruins work?

Loss of function, abandonment and ruination all contribute to the erasure of history-preserving matter (Edensor 2005). Fading colours, deforming shapes, and enigmatic old tools all fall victim to this processes. But they also open new possibilities. Loss of function allows for a study not possible during the state of operation (Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014). Like a dead body that lends itself to an autopsy, allowing for a careful study of life when the life is gone. Ruination can also be seen as a form of self-excavation where decomposition can reveal hidden layers and complexities of an object (Edensor 2005).

Modern ruins, unlike still useful and aesthetically acceptable

objects, give face to the part of history that is usually forgotten (Buchli and Lucas 2002). In their uniqueness, they often remind us of failures, mistakes, things marginalised and pushed out of acceptable existence. Being young for a ruin means also that it might be associated with a much wider set of personal memories, including the times before ruination. These serve as a limiting factor for construction of coherent hegemonic narratives, a reality check.

How to work with ruins?

Heritage practices deal with the useless and the abandoned mostly through the lens of supposed other forms of usefulness like historical rootedness and belonging (Solli et al. 2011; Harrison 2013). There is little attention placed on the inherent value of things, their ability to be as they are, not be there for us (Bennett 2009). Taking seriously otherness of things is therefore a prerequisite for a shift toward a broader concept of heritage. Selective and discriminatory process of writing history could be supplemented or even replaced by more creative approaches where things can also be left to speak for themselves.

Aesthetics of heritage also often play a limiting role in engagement with modern ruins. Turning away from aesthetic expectations of frozen in time, purified artefacts and embracement of the aesthetic value of ruination, as well as new artistic and experimental approaches can open new ways of engagement with history. Some notable artistic explorations of heritage and memory of the recent past include works by Gordon Matta-Clark, Rachel Whiteread, Jorge Otero-Pailos. While the full analysis of their artistic production falls beyond

the scope of this text, it is worth noting that they all share direct engagement with things (often buildings) in the process of ruination and they transcend the aesthetics of *lieux de mémoire* through innovative site specific methods.

Among social sciences, archaeology, based on obvious limitations of its subject study, offers an approach with unparalleled attention to things. Archaeology, mostly occupied with objects without any textual layer, goes deeper into understanding objects as they are, stripped from our misleading expectations of what we want them to be witnesses of (Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014). Archaeology of the contemporary past can help us fill the gaps where there is no text to describe things, but also crucially can let us see things anew without preconceptions.

In his works Victor Buchli provides examples of using traditional archaeological methods to study the recent past as a science focused on the interaction between material culture and human behaviour, to reveal new perspectives on modern societies (Buchli and Lucas 2002; Buchli 2021). Generally, in an interdisciplinary spirit, it was argued that material culture studies are not restricted to ethnography, but could be broadened with the contributions of history, archaeology, geography, design, and literature (Miller 1998). This holistic approach allows for a capture of the object more comprehensively and even to influence contemporary society through the results. Buchli and Lucas (2002) call this approach archaeology of the future and define it as the active engagement of archaeologists in the materialisation of the present, in a way comparable to designers' work.

Figure 3. Inventory

2. Excavation

Our own survey followed a quasi-archaeological methodology. We uncovered changes that were hastily built on top of each other, we opened up space without entrances, looked for hidden architectural gems and documented all our findings. At the same time, we researched historical sources to understand the context of Cepelia's construction and the process of transformation that accompanied its deterioration to the current state. Our aim was not to look for lost modernist legacy, but to take every found material trace with equal care, regardless of its age, origin, state of ruination, and impulsive aesthetic judgement.

We discovered that over the years the building acquired a layered structure of changes, remodelings, use adaptations, quirky decorative additions, and advertisement infrastructure. We documented and systematised our findings as four distinct layers.

Layer of identities

Cepelia was designed by Zygmunt Stępiński and was completed in 1966 as a part of the bigger urban rearrangement in the city centre. The Building was located right next to the intersection of the two main city avenues but with spacious public space surrounding it. Cepelia served as the display and trade pavilion of the *Central Folk and Artistic Industry*. (abbreviated Cepelia - from which comes the common name of the pavilion).

Cepelia was a state founded association of craftsmen

cooperatives, set up shortly after the Second World War. Its aim was to promote a nationalistic style rooted in Polish folk culture through a variety of products, some handmade, some adapted to larger scale manufacturing. With the shortage economy and low quality of mass production as a backdrop, Cepelia's products were defining a higher standard of living. The design of the trade pavilion followed the principles of its founding institution. It embodied the unlikely merger of airy, transparent, dynamic, modernistic form with reimagined folklore ornamentation. It was an attempt to cement a nationalistic identity in the new realities of a centrally planned modernising country.

Layer of makeshift

The fall of the socialist system brought privatisation, fragmentation, and often abandonment of state owned enterprises. Cepelia was no different, it was split into 5 different companies that, without state support, quickly became irrelevant.

The trading pavilion maintained its function but only partially. Parts of the building were sold out, which initiated a spiral of uncontrolled changes, divisions of space, and new functions like Internet cafe, xero shop, kiosks and grocery store. The facade of the building was also divided, giving way to competition over ever more eye-catching advertising. New entrances punctured the facade to allow access to newly subdivided spaces.

Division of ownership and poor maintenance inhibited the progressing decay of the building. The solution though was not a renovation but concealment. The building facade was

covered from the outside, and a couple of times over from the inside. The outdated aesthetic of both modernism and folklore gave way to cheap interventions, and their aesthetics of randomness, quickness, and makeshift.

Layer of illusion

In the final incarnation in mid-2000s the building's upper floor turned into a gentlemen's club with a casino, and the underground floor into a nightclub.

Upper floor walls, once fully glazed, were covered from the inside with a layer of kitschy Las Vegas-style ornamentation. Next to slender steel columns dressed up with thick classical forms stood dancing poles. Glossy lacunar ceilings reflected the red carpet and marble-like counter of the bar. The place was designed and thought through yet naive and illusory. Golden surfaces and mirrors lid by the led lights turned the space into a suspended in time capsule. Closed off from the world, concentrated around individual and clandestine pleasures, the building became an antithesis of the original modernist open and communal ideal.

A cruder interior of the nightclub in the basement with bare black walls, though originally just a shop storage, revealed more about the structure of the building than other spaces. And it was less elegant than one might expect. A selection of apparently random decorations coincided in the space. The frivolous patchwork of different floorings too geometrical to be coincidental and patterns of sound-insulating panels on the ceilings created a chaotic atmosphere. White stencilled wall paintings with faces of American pop icons like Madonna

or David Haselhoff stood out even in the gloomy light. Together with a pink flamingo (the club's name) they speak in the language of camp aesthetics about soft power and American cultural hegemony.

Layer of information

With more and more introverted functions, the building's facade began to live its own life. Banners and shop names were added and windows were plastered with endless layers of posters and notices. Overlooking the city's main intersection, a jumbotron higher than the building itself was placed on the roof. Finally, the main body of the building was completely covered in large-scale banners. The facade was reduced to an advertising surface which created a paradox of the building that occupies the most visible and busy location in the capital's city centre yet is totally forgotten and invisible.

We found these layers and the stories they tell fascinating and we wished in a quasi-conservationist approach to preserve and expose them. To do so meant to break the taboo about the aesthetics of early transformation, and to confront visitors with what usually remained hidden, the insights of nightlife culture but also the tangible effects of ruination.

All this was happening in the moment of the ongoing mostly essentialist discussion about the modernist architectural legacy in Poland, and the fight for protection, renovation of buildings and mourning about the irreversible losses (Springer 2022; Krasucki 2015). That discourse also led Cepelia's pavilion (its original modernistic form) to be registered as a monument in February 2019.

Figure 4. Cepelia pavilion, 1971. source: Polish National Archives

Figure 5. Cepelia pavilion 2017. photo: Piotr Halicki

Figure 6. Cepelia pavilion 2019. source: czarnota.org

Figure 7. Client at Cepelia, 1968, photo: Andrzej Wiernicki

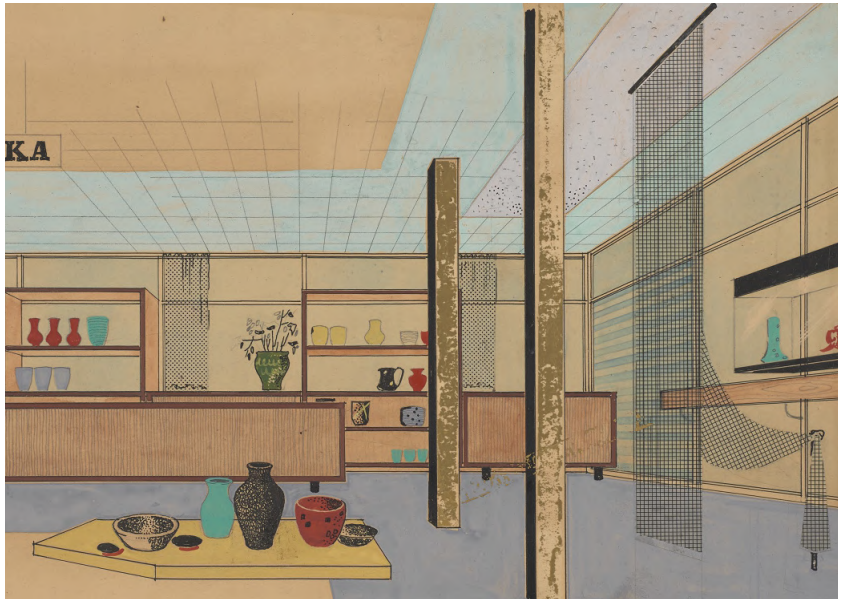

Figure 8. Cepelia pavilion, Interior, 1st floor, Zygmunt Stępiński, 1964-1966. source: Collection of the Museum of Warsaw

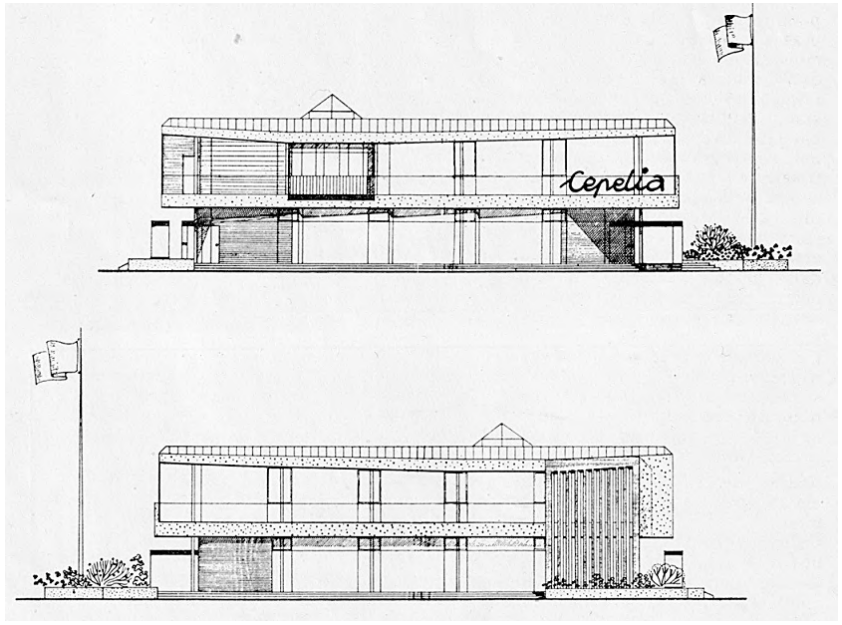

Figure 9. Eastern and Western facades drawing. souce: journal *Architektura,* 1966, nr 8/9.

Figure 10. Cepelia Pavilion, view from south. Zygmunt Stępiński, 1964-1966, source: Collection of the Museum of Warsaw

Figure 11. Cepelia pavilion, 1971. source: fotopolska.eu

Figure 12. Cepelia pavilion, 2022. photo: Krystian Dobuszyński

Figure 13. Cepelia pavilion, Interior, 1st floor, 1966, source: Collection of the Museum of Warsaw

Figure 14. Cepelia pavilion, Interior, 1st floor, 2018, photo: Wojtek Radwański

3. Context & Content

The curatorial concept of the exhibition aimed to establish a new frame of reference where the other is rephrased as a *neighbour,* to engage the audience in the process of community-making based on commonalities and proximity. The focus on the Ukrainian nationals was in 2018 both an obvious and surprising choice.

Following the 2014 Maidan Revolution and Russian annexation of Crimea, the flow of Ukrainian migration to Poland and elsewhere took off. Significant demographic shift apparent in the statistical analysis was at the same time less obvious in the discourse. New *neighbours* who were often employed in so-called invisible jobs were not fully present and recognized in urban communities. Yet for the city, whose population remained to a large extent ethnically homogenous since WWII, their arrival marked a notable change in its self-image.

The 2018 WWB was curated by Polish curator Szymon Maliborski together with nine members of Visual Culture Research Center* (VCRC) - an art collective from Kyiv. VCRC is distinguished by its horizontal organisational structure and deliberative decision-making process. This practice influenced not only the internal workings of the curatorial team but also engaged in the same fashion other involved parties, us included. Unlike regular exhibitions where an

* Members of VCRC: Anna Kraweć, Justyna Krawczuk, Ołeksij Radynski, Rusłana Kozijenko, Serhij Kłymko, Wasyl Czerepanyn, Natalia Heszeweć, Oksana Briuchowecka, Hanna Cyba

architect is given an exhibition brief that works as a starting point of his or her work, we have been witnessing the emergence of the exhibition's curatorial and artistic vision from the very beginning. This complex set-up, with the multitude of participants, creates an unexpected space for negotiations not possible in more structured projects. The process of co-creation of the exhibition with curators and artists led the design to be not only about the production of space but also about the meanings and narrations based on the interplay between art and architecture.

Through a collection of 46 pieces of conceptual art the exhibition deals with an array of themes like workers' conditions and their economic dependency, issues of collective memory and amnesia, construction and erosion of identities in connection with hastily decommunization and wave of neo-fascist movements, and architectural legacies and conflicts that shape urban life in the state of rapid transformation.

In that context, the choice of Cepelia as a venue for the exhibition is far from accidental. The building belongs to the ill-conceived legacy of socialist architecture that connects Warsaw and Kyiv, and embodies the transformation that took and still takes place in those cities. Moreover, the history of the institution it housed, for better or worse, was deeply invested in the process of constructing identities through material culture (Korduba 2013).

Warsaw as a city provides historically significant context for

working with ruins. After being almost entirely destroyed during World War II, it was rebuilt to the large extent from rubble. The recycled material used in building construction and landscaping is an ever present part of the city's self-image as well as a potent source of discursive reflection on circularity, collective action and material memory (Piątek 2020; Przywara 2023). We see our project as a contribution to Warsaw's long tradition of working with ruins.

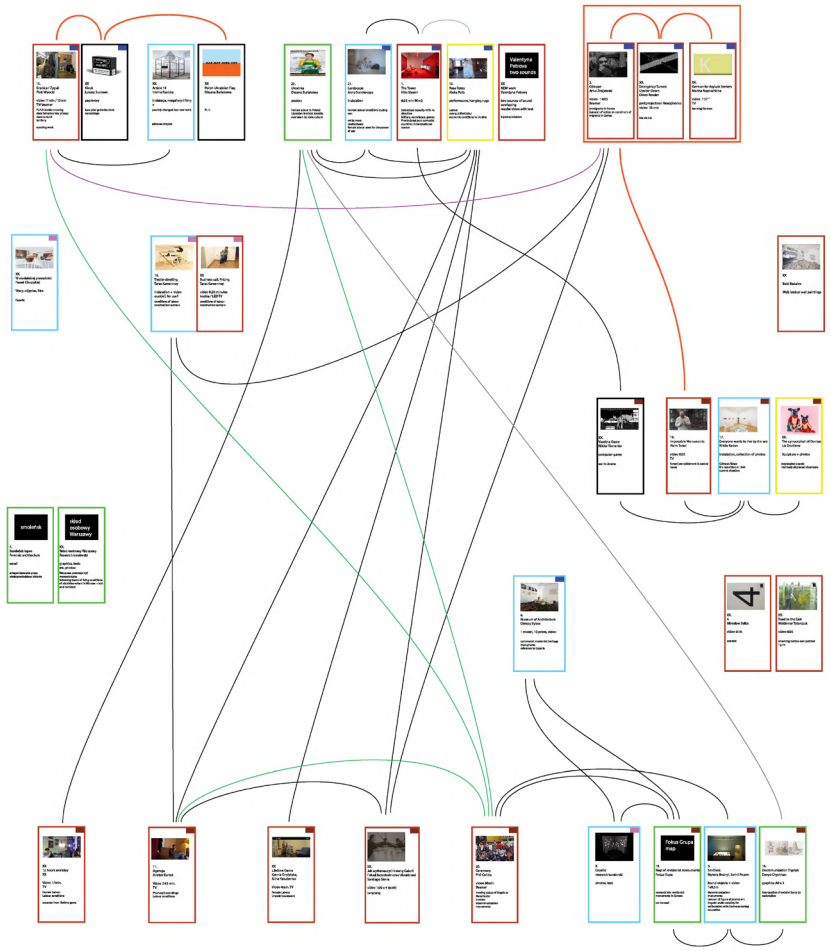

Figure 15. Caption for the diagram
Map of different conceptual links between artworks. Each line and category represents a story that was later transformed into spatial relationships in the exhibition space and/or curatorial text and/or left to be discovered to the curious visitors. This diagram, rather than being a comprehensive source of information on the exhibition, was used as a form of mnemonic device to help us navigate through complex symbolic space.

4. Ruination design

With an understanding of both the building's historical layers and the artistic content of the exhibition, we were able to augment our design process to create a more meaningful backdrop for art and add interpretative depth through involvement of architecture as an artistic/archaeological object in its own right. We uncovered, peeled off, sometimes transformed and relocated pieces of history, making layer manipulation our main design tool. We intervene in the state of ruination not to stop it, but in a way to amplify it.

The exhibition space, turned into a form of archaeological excavation site, brings to the visitors a reflection about the recent past, while carefully manipulated layers create space where artworks can interact according to interpretative frameworks and curatorial concepts.

Figure 16. Curatorial text at the exhibition, 2018. photo: Rita

Following is a selection of interventions that have been made and a rationale behind them.

Roots, bones, ghosts

Fragments of the building were cleared back to reveal their original nationalistic soc-modernistic form from the 1960s. We used these spaces to present artworks that reflect on the architectural heritage, issues of constructed identities and history told through architecture.

The exhibition's opening piece (seen already from the street) by Oksana Briukhovetska (Fig. 17, 27) was a huge mural that blended colours of Polish and Ukrainian flag, and uses a telling phrase, "Has not died yet", that appears in both national anthems. The mural is a commentary on the impact of modern migratory flows on the neighbourhood, with its blending and blurring of populations, and the pursuit of symbolic equality. It also deconstructs the same nationalistic ideas that lied at the heart of the creation of Cepelia.

The story of a so-called *Flying Saucer* (Fig. 19) - an iconic futuro-modernistic building in Kyiv presented throughout the works and research of Oleksiy Bykov (Fig. 20), connecting two capitals in their struggle for recognition and preservation of ill-conceived heritage. The saucer, destined for demolition and replacement by a generic shopping mall, is presented next to stripped to the bare bone deteriorated walls and blade shaped facade detail of the Cepelia.

During our survey of the building we discovered a hidden

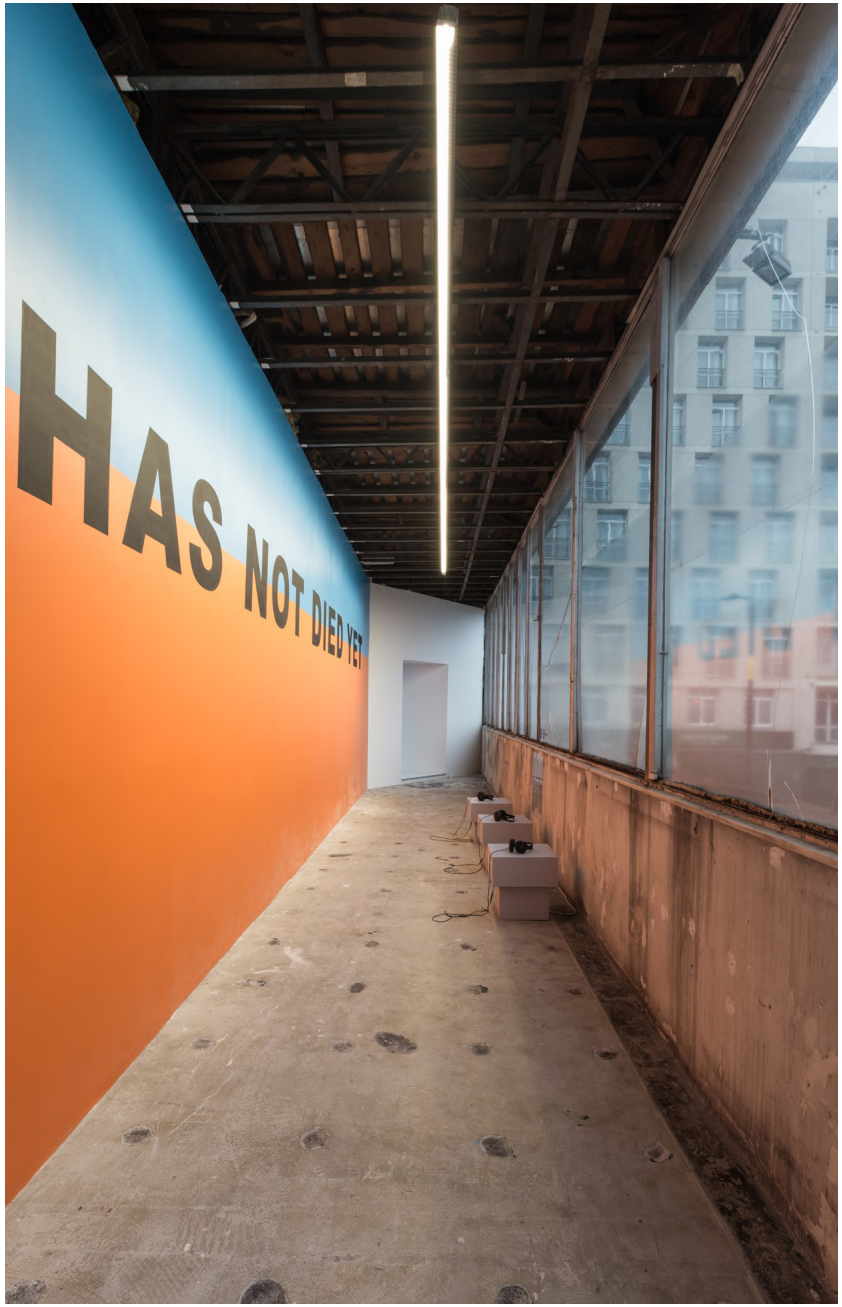

Figure 17. Oksana Briukhovetska, *Polish-Ukrainian Flag*, 2018. photo: Rita

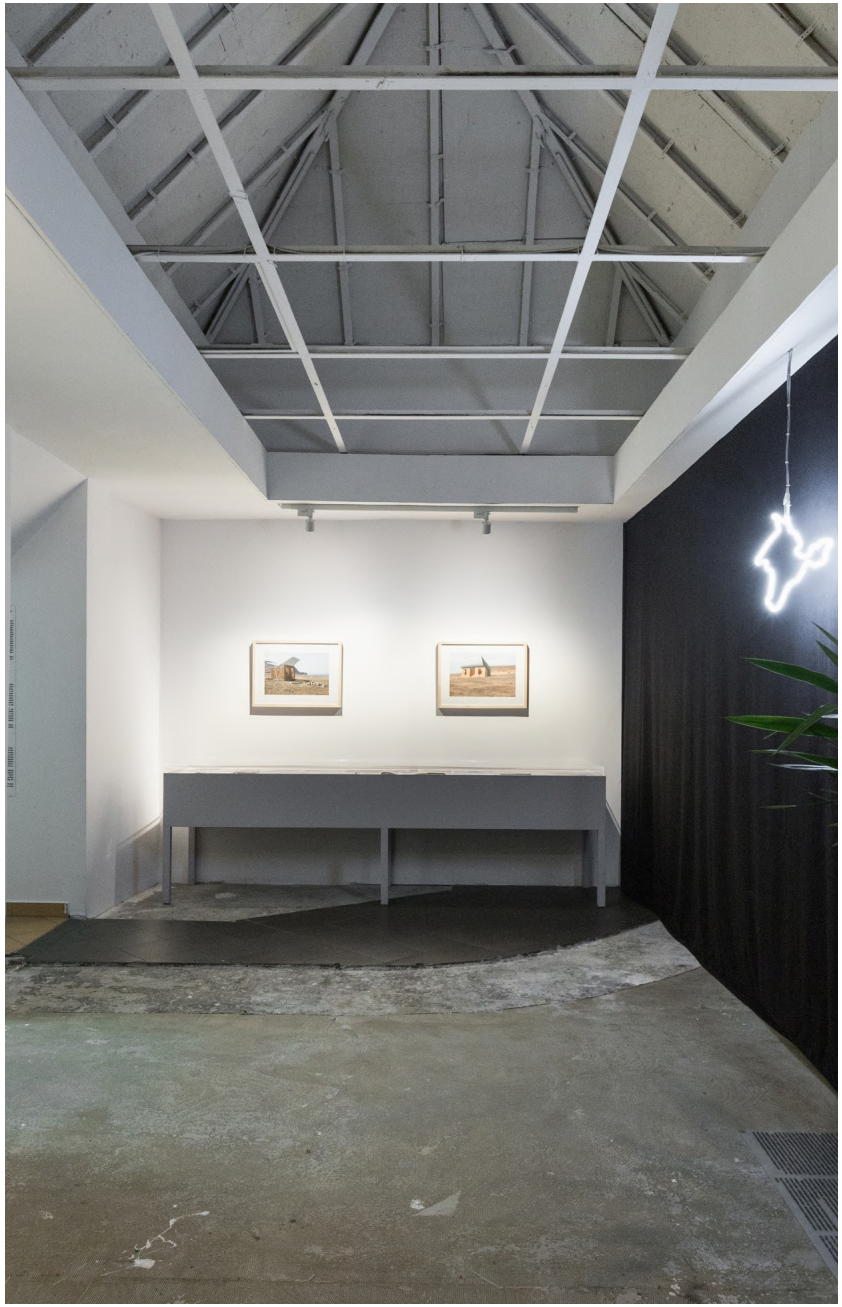

Figure 18. Nikita Kadan, *Everyone wants to live by the see*, 2014. photo: Rita

Figure 19. The Flying Saucer in 1970s. source: National Scientific and Technical Library of Ukraine

Figure 20. Oleksiy Bykov, *Museum of Architecture*, 2018. photo: Rita

skylight completely covered both from the inside and the outside. We decided to bring it back like an architectural ghost to be part of the exhibition. The space underneath was used to present an artwork about Crimea, the legacy and unrealized dreams of its native (ethnic cleansed in 1944) population, Crimean Tatars. In his work Nikita Kadan (Fig. 18) paints dreamed modern Tatar architecture scattered through grassy landscape to bring back the place's forgotten ancestry.

Not what it seems

The former casino main hall was kept with only a handful of adaptations. We designed furniture out of recycled pieces of decoration to match and amplify the place's character. In dim exhibition lights the casino's mirage of prosperity contrasted with the undeniable reality of its makeshift cheap materials. We used this space for artworks that express the discrepancy between the imagined and the factual.

In a group of artworks the promises of economic migration are confronted with the reality of migrant workers living conditions and their state of economic dependency. Taras Kamennoy's installation (Fig. 21) recreates small architectural objects made by construction workers to sustain their living, while Antek Bartek's video (Fig. 22) documents the process of job search that uncovers the actual, far from legal code, quality of work arrangements.

Three large screens floating in the main space show the work of Hito Steyerl (Fig 23, 24). The immersive animation is a commentary on production of idealised images of violence both in gaming and military training software, a thriving part

Figure 21. Taras Kamennoy, *Trestle-dwelling,* 2018 (foreground), Antek Bartek, Agencja, 2018 (background), photo: Rita

Figure 22. Anna Sorokovya, *Landscape*, 2017. photo: Rita

Figure 23. Hito Steyerl, *The Tower,* 2015. photo: Rita

Figure 24. Hito Steyerl, *The Tower,* 2015. photo: Rita

of Ukrainian IT sector. Juxtaposed with this work is Anna Sorokovaya's installation *Landscape* (Fig. 22) about realities of civil populations in the times of military conflicts.

Working in liminal space

The Underground level of the Cepelia pavilion has been cleared from the walls, which over time overgrown the space. Yet, we maintained the patchwork of floor styles and marks that remained after the demolished walls to keep the former fragmentation of that space recognizable. On top of that we introduced textile partitions suspended between the floor and the ceiling in clear relation to the original, at some points erratic, building structure.

In an open plan, yet clearly marked by its previous states, and with only ephemeral divisions we placed artworks that speak about the struggle in the liminal space of new social order. The polyphony of critical perspectives from workers

Figure 25. Babi Badalov, wall-painting, 2018. photo: Rita

and feminist, to pacifist movements, represented by different artists such as Lesia Ukrainka, Aleka Polis, Babi Badalov (Fig. 25) respectively filled underground spaces.

Artworks in the central room of the basement took on the issues of the fight for historical narrations. Decommunisation Tryptyk by Davyd Chychkan speaks about the interception of socialist icons by nationalists, and the rise of neo-fascist movements in Ukraine, while in their installation Mykola Rodnyi, Serhii Popov (Fig.26) document the hasty and prone to misunderstandings process of destruction of memorials.

From invisible to transparent

To bring the existence of the Cepelia to public attention and attract visitors to the inside of the building we decided to turn the building from invisible back to transparent. We also cleared the front facade from billboard advertising and placed a passage between the layer of interior decorations

Figure 26. Mykola Rodnyi, Serhii Popov, *Smithers,* 2018. photo: Rita

and the glass. (Fig. 17, 27) We use this space to project an opening piece of the exhibition toward the busy street.

The old layer of sticker signage indicating past functions like “XERO” or “24H” was left on the facade. With the help of graphic designers Maciek Chodzński and Katarzyna Łygońska, we matched with them our own exhibition identification typography, to draw visitors’ attention to the building’s recent history. (Fig. 27)

All art pieces in the exhibition space are supplemented with curatorial texts, but no direct interpretative frames regarding the exhibition design are presented, rather the ruins are left to speak for themselves. Although a lot of thought was put into creation of an interplay between art and the excavation site, we see the unmediated by text exposition and amplification of the ruins and ruination as the key component of our intervention.

With our approach, we directly oppose the ideas that were part of the modernist project behind Creation of Cepelia, with its constructed notions of national aesthetics and identity which uses the heritage as a resource to be exploited if not for profit, then for political means.

Figure 27. Oksana Briukhovetska, Polish-Ukrainian Flag, 2018. photo: Wojtek Radwański

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the showcased design serves as an illustration of an experimental method for addressing modern ruins and preserving the heritage of the contemporary past. It transcends the conventional mandate of exhibition design, that is the creation of space for exhibits, with novel ways of engagement with the context while utilising theories from multiple social sciences.

We drew on the theories surrounding the idea of modern ruin and ruination as a way to question dominant heritage practices. Inspired by the developments in the field of archaeology of the contemporary past we implemented in our research new tools to help us deal with historical complexities of the site. We found excavations and archaeological attention to objects as valuable approaches in the study of the contemporary past.

Our design exemplifies an experimental preservation based on a broader, less discriminatory definition of heritage, that sees all things as historic and worthy of historical consideration. We decided to protect the project site for the duration of the exhibition, but also knowing that it was destined for demolition, we were free to experiment with new approaches, that could be called a ruination design. We followed the idea that history should rather be told than just preserved, and serve as a source of knowledge and reflection rather than mere cause for nostalgia or rejection.

We see such approaches as increasingly relevant, especially

as established cities undergo transformations that render more modern buildings obsolete. As the field of architecture embraces strategies related to the circular economy, architects have the opportunity to view historic materials not only as a material resource but also as historically complex objects. We advocate that the careful consideration and use of these materials can foster conceptually richer architecture.

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BIG BRICK HYBRIDS

Learning by building beyond the mandate.

Lieven Nijs

BLAF architecten
UGent, RWTH Aachen

INTRODUCTION

"Il faut avoir le courage de le reconnaître, en fait d'architecture, soumis à beaucoup de préjugés, à un certain nombre de traditions, habitués à la confusion, les idées comme les principes nous manquent; et plus les monuments que nous élevons se chargent de details, plus ils sont riches par la reunion de nombreux éléments, plus ils trahissent l'oubli des grands principes et l'absence d'idée chez les artistes qui concourent à leur execution."[1]

In 1872 - a time of societal turns and technological progress - architect, theorist and 'builder' Viollet-Le-Duc described the forces at play when discussing 'the method of architecture'. One might say that much like in any epoch, during the last two decades the global societal and environmental challenges have forced architecture-related disciplines into deep introspection and action, resulting in an explosion of regulations, technological developments and discourses. With every approach leading to different solutions, the outcome is confusion, luring architects to reside in the agency of others.

The architecture practice of BLAF architecten (Lokeren, 2003) is stretched between engagement and building. The inseparability of both, for BLAF, is the condition for being able to speak of a practice. Engagement is the origin of each architectural project, building its finality. In between lies the battlefield -the dirty kitchen- of the design and realization.

BLAF's 'learning by building' addresses multiple practice based knowledge fields of architectural design and construction: vernacular and recent historical hybrid building practice (Vobis), the geometry and anatomy of architecture (Pezo Von Ellrichhausen; Atelier Bow-Wow), material and construction technology (Deplazes), comparative case study testing (Baumschlager & Eberle; Nagler), and the critical deconstruction of regulations,

1 E.E. Viollet-le-Duc, *Entretiens sur l'Architecture* (A. Morel, 1872).

standards and conventions (Blocksdorf). As both a premise and a method, practice based research and development is situated beyond the mandate. By digging into the genealogy of the Big Brick Hybrid series, this article aims to identify and make transferable some of the tacit design principles and the practice based research rationale behind numerous iterations of comparable projects.

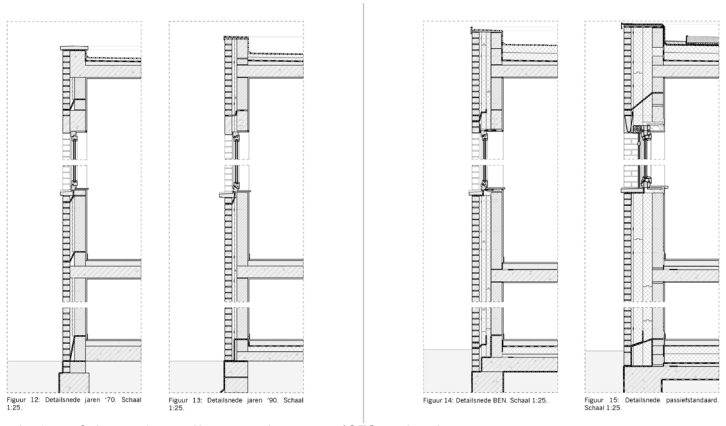
Big Brick Hybrids
btL house (top left); tmEK house (top right); jtB house (bottom left); wsT house (bottom right). Photos Stijn Bollaert

In the first section of this article - ‘Paradoxes’ -, I will identify some of the discussions and challenges at play when addressing brick faced building design. The nature of the paradoxes is that seemingly opposed phenomena or forces emerge simultaneously, co-exist, differ and argue, without leading to one definite answer.

In the second section of the article - ’Productive Concepts’ - I will subsequently highlight some of the ideas and principles that have led to self-reflection in the developing practice of BLAF, and their conceptualization into further projects. Together they have added to the genealogy of the Big Brick Hybrids, operating as a series of projects within the oeuvre of BLAF, from the long term engagement of one particular practice with one particular design question.

PARADOXES

Load-bearing and Cladding



The evolution of the cavity wall system between 1970 and today
“Architectuurdetails door tijd en ruimte. Deel 1: Spouwmuren uit metselwerk van 1945 tot heden.”
Bex; Cammans; Verniers. KUL 2022.

Within the construction principle of the brick-faced cavity wall, the structural role of the outer leaf is midway between load-bearing and cladding. Built through the stacking of bricks, the outer cavity leaf is not very different from load-bearing masonry (both solid construction). However, due to its structural dependencies, it flirts with the construction principle of cladding.

The structural integrity of the thin outer cavity leaf is limited. Secondary structures and ties, mostly made of steel, allow the facade masonry to stay stable under the vertical forces of its own weight, and to transmit the horizontal forces, caused by wind-pressure, to the inner structure. Equally important for the stability of the facade leaf is mortar. The historical parallel between the rise of the cavity wall system and the falling into disuse of lime mortar, can be attributed to the ‘need for speed’ in construction

after the second world war, that precipitated the generalized use of (the much 'quicker') cement mortar.[2] At the same time, the break-through of cement mortar has without a doubt been accelerated by the structural dependency of the 'weak' outer cavity leaf.

Design practices engaging with the construction of very energy-efficient building skins were the first to reveal the shift away from brick as a façade material of choice, since the introduction of EPB[3] in 2006 . The installation of energy performance regulations, the race to zero carbon, design for deconstruction, and the lack of trained craftsmen, challenge the ambiguous structural role of the facing brickwork within the cavity wall system. With the width of the cavity expanding due to increasing insulation thicknesses, the outer cavity leaf has become ever more dependent on the steel armoring and cement mortar for its structural integrity, adding to the complexity, the cost, and the error-proneness of facade masonry construction. Feasibility and executability have cleared the way for lightweight cladding materials, either mounted on a ventilated structure (wooden planks, fibre-cement scales, aluminum panels, corrugated plates, etc.) or applied directly on thermal insulation (render, tiles etc.). Subsequently, the shift away from the cavity wall system for the construction of energy-efficient buildings adds to the thesis that the brick faced cavity wall can no longer be considered a state of the art solution.

Ceramic industries have moved in line with this shift towards cladding and 'dematerialization', along the path of the further development of brick slips, known since the 19th century, and, in wood construction cultures, adequately referred to as 'brick veneer'. Despite the assets of brick slips for prefabrication, the construction speed and economy, their application remains counter-intuitive and also controversial in terms of circularity. Gluing brick slips

2 "Industriële Metselmortels", Febelcem Dossier Cement, juni 2002

3 EPB - Regelgeving Energieprestaties en Binnenklimaat

to a carrier - mostly water-resistant, rigid insulation - results in degrading the ceramic material to mixed waste at the end of its lifecycle. Many of these systems are yet to encounter the challenge of the shift towards bio-based, non-rigid insulation.

Visible and Invisible

'the brick dress'
Engelbrecht, M. "Femme de Maçon". 1730

In 'Brick. An exacting material", Jan Peter Wingender identifies the ambiguous role of the cavity wall brick facade between load-bearing and cladding adequately as 'the brick dress': "The brick dress can express individuality, or can endeavor harmony. It can accentuate, correct or conceal the anatomy of the body.".[4] With the notion of the brick dress, Wingender ties in with Semper's tectonics of dressing, which entails the intentionality of the expression of 'the ideal' rather than the necessity of construc-

4 Jan Peter Wingender, Brick : an exacting material (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Press, 2016).

tion, "[...] either for reason of greater durability, better preservation of the inner wall, economy, the display of greater magnificence, or for any other reason.".[5]

All through the history of construction, the distinction between the visible ('the ideal') and the invisible ('the necessary') faces of brickwork has been a design concern, and has nourished, among others, the debate on truthfulness of construction.

From the Romans on, in solid load-bearing constructions, the distinction between the visible and the invisible is reflected in the construction of the 'appareil mixte'[6] (diaphragm walls with rubble infill), the use of 'voorwerkers' and 'achterwerkers'[7] (sorting the best bricks for the visible work, the rest for the invisible), and 'Verblendsteine'[8], slips and tiles (the production of high quality facing ceramic products). Ever since the first description of 'hollow' walls (Atkinson, 1805)[9], the cavity has triggered the imagination of architects and engineers, leading to a wide range of experiments and in practice explorations. The virtual disconnection of the visible and the invisible layer of the construction by means of the cavity, from the 19th century on, ultimately solved multiple problems. The two-step rain protection resulted in healthier interior living conditions. And in terms of the economy of materials and construction, the cavity has allowed for the development of bigger modules of 'lower quality' for the invisible masonry from the 1900's on (later developed into construction blocks), boosting the speed of construction and reducing

5 Gottfried Semper, The four elements of architecture and other writings, RES monographs in anthropology and aesthetics, (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

6 L. Cloquet, Traité d'architecture : éléments de l'architecture, types d'édifices, esthétique, compositon et pratique de l'architecture (Paris: Librairie polytechnique, 1898).

7 Ronald Stenvert, Biografie van de baksteen : 1850-2000 (Zwolle Amersfoort: WBOOKS ; Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2012).

8 Wilko Potgeter, Die Erfindung des Verblendsteins : Bautechnik des Backstein-Rohbaus im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung, Berichte zur Bauforschung und Konstruktionsgeschichte, (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2022).

9 D. Bernstein, J. P. Champetier, and F. Peiffer, La maçonnerie sans fard : méthodes récentes de maçonnerie apparente, Collection Architecture et technologie,, (Paris: Editions du Moniteur, 1982).

its costs, as the finest, most expensive craftsmen, only had to be hired for the facade work.

Despite the performance of the cavity wall, the precise function of the cavity - because of its invisibility – for a long time remained covered with obscurity, and has been extensively questioned, studied, and discussed. With the introduction of insulation materials during the 1970's oil crises, the usefulness of the ventilated cavity was questioned. And even today advanced dynamic simulations of the hygrothermal behavior of both new and historical brick-faced walls, show that the cavity wall complex is highly dependent on parameters that can not be generalized.

The expression of the brick facade leaf, like its structural role, is equally ambiguous. As mentioned in 'the paradox of Load-bearing and Cladding', the structural collaboration with the inner leaf of the cavity wall is key for the stability of the facade leaf. As a result, the dependency of the outer cavity leaf is here and there exposed in its expression. It has been stated among others by Andrea Deplazes, that the expression of the thin, structurally dependent, outer cavity leaf, often leads to no more than "the unsatisfactory deception of the solid wall".[10] Expansion joints, ventilation joints, and window reveals remind us of the presence of the cavity. As does the stretcher bond, which is the simplest and most economical application for stacked bricks in the thin façade leaf. They all make the invisible visible.

From a historical perspective, cavity wall constructions, load-bearing constructions, and clad constructions have co-existed for over a century, and still do in our historical building stock. Regardless the construction, the eventual expression of the facade was always a design question, subject to many considerations. Load-bearing brick walls

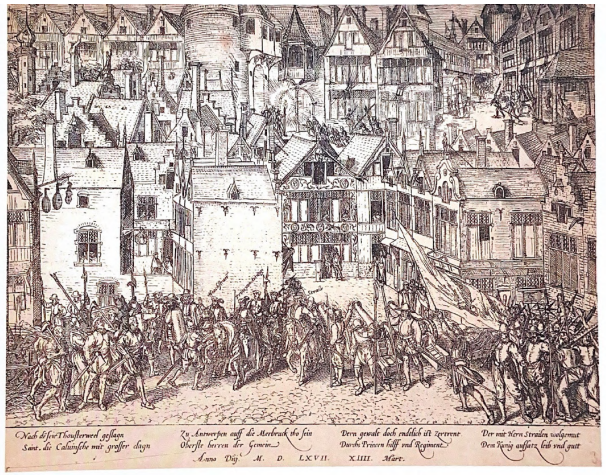
10 'The Pathos of Masonry', in Andrea Deplazes and Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich. Departement Architektur., Constructing architecture : materials, processes, structures : a handbook, Fourth, revised edition. ed. (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2018)

were often finished or clad with high quality bricks or tiles, allowing for the design of bonds and patterns that had little to do with the tectonic expression of the load-bearing masonry itself. Equally so, cavity facade leaves were often designed to express load-bearing brickwork (i.e. by including 'false' headers in the brick bond or making deeper window reveals), to avoid the association with cheap or weak construction. Today, 'the expression of real, solid masonry' is promoted as one of the assets of lightweight ceramic cladding systems. So, to many archaeologists' surprise, there is no "truth" in the visible expression of brick masonry.[11]

The brick faced cavity wall has lived through the introduction of thermal insulation, the changing anatomy of window frames and sills, cold bridges, mobile sunscreens, fire protection compartmentation, air tightness, foils, tapes, acoustic standards, sealants, connectors and disconnectors, and even a radical change in the construction sequence and logistics, without – literally – losing face. Despite its constantly growing complexity, the appearance of the cavity wall has remained reassuringly intact for about 150 years. In other words, it is exactly the invisibility of the cavity that was the key to the long-lasting success of the cavity wall construction system.

11 Kent Archaeological Society.1982.Researches and Discoveries in Kent: The Custumal of Kent An unrecorded Achievement of Edward Hasted A Celtic Bronze Coin from the Canterbury.Archaeologia Cantiana.98:237-258.

Permanence and Temporality



'Urban petrification'
"Oproer in Antwerpen na de Slag van Oosterweel". 1567

Belgium considers itself a brick and stone country. However, like in most European regions, wood has been our predominant construction material until the 17th century. The construction of wooden houses in the Southern Netherlands consisted mainly of half-timbered frames filled and clad with sod cutting or wickerwork and clay. Construction wood however became scarce, as the result of centuries of ruthless deforestation. 17th Century archives testify of local legislations dictating the mandatory reuse of construction wood in case of storm damage or demolition, to save it from becoming firewood, and the prohibiting of moving wooden construction elements from local forestry to other municipalities. Constructions in wood were literally considered as 'furniture': the deconstruction, moving and reconstruction of wooden buildings was common practice.[12] Wooden buildings were 'designed for deconstruction': the construction methods facilitated the reuse of materials. The material was considered as a com-

12 Rosan Meijer; Veronique Van Humskerke; Hannelore Vandebroek, Van houten skelet tot strodak: houtbouw in de Kempen, BKRK (Antwerpen: Geheugen Collectief, 2016).

mon. This 'ecosystem' of legislation, material economy, construction and design, indicates that wood construction in the pre-industrial era was essentially circular.

Although it is clear that a circular economy of bricks has equally always existed, the use of brick masonry for infrastructural constructions, religious and institutional buildings, has always added to the connotation of brick with permanence. City fires, urbanistic legislation and the local production of bricks (and natural stone) as an alternative for scarce or imported construction wood, have gradually pushed wood as a building material further to the background. With the petrification of our cities, brick has installed – first in party walls, as the replacement of the wickerwork in half-timber frames, and eventually in load-bearing facades – a new understanding of permanence and continuity of construction.[13] By the start of the 20th century, the use of construction wood in our region was limited to roof timber and beamed floors, the expertise in wood construction had faded, and the building economy had been taken over by masons as the primary contractors for construction works.

Since the institutionalizing of 'sustainability' as a design concern, wood -as a bio based material- has found its way back to construction in our region, both as a facade cladding material and for structural use. But on the globalized market, the use of maintenance-free tropical hardwood for outdoor conditions is still contested, despite the PEFC/FSC label.[14] And the life extension treatment of fast-growing European wood – by thermal or chemical modification, or with paint, oil etc. – also comes with an environmental cost, and maintenance. For the structural

13 Rutger J. Tijs, Tot Cieraet deser Stadt : bouwtrant en bouwbeleid te Antwerpen van de Middeleeuwen tot heden :een cultuurhistorische studie over de bouwtrant en de ontwikkeling van het stedebouwkundig beleid te Antwerpen van de 13de tot de 20ste eeuw (Antwerpen: Mercatorfonds, 1993).

14 Jane Elizabeth Hutton, Reciprocal landscapes : stories in material movement (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group,, 2020).

application of wood, construction has shifted from the use of demountable – temporary – assemblage to the not so demountable use of nails and glue.

In present day brick masonry, all components have become controversial in the face of sustainable construction. Cement (mortar) is debated because of its embedded CO2 and energy, and the environmental impact of the extraction of the raw materials and production. But most importantly, due to its strong adhesion – its permanence – cement mortar makes the reuse of bricks impossible. This means that ever since the generalized application of the cavity wall system, we have deprived bricks of future reuse. The embodied CO2 and energy in steel is equally controversial. Moreover, steel cavity ties and facade carriers are known to be detrimental for the lifespan -the permanence- of the masonry of the outer cavity leaf, as well as for the energy-efficiency of the facade (micro cold bridges). And last but not least, fired bricks are also known to be 'CO2 bombs'. Even more paradoxically, we have shifted to more energy- and resource-efficient perforated bricks. But together with the reduction of the material and the embedded energy and CO2, both the quality – thus the longevity – and the reusability of a brick are reduced.

Although a lifecycle of a century can compensate for the upfront carbon emissions of bricks[15], the forementioned explains why, in the last decade, the building industry extensively focused on the demountability of brick masonry. Dry-stacked masonry systems tackle the problem of the mortar, and facilitate the reuse of bricks. Business models like 'brick as a service' can moreover add to the guaranteed reuse. The biggest problem is that the application of dry-stack systems is to be found in cavity wall constructions, as with the omitting of the mortar, the thin outer dry-stacked cavity leaf is even more dependent on

15 NMD, april 2022

the cavity ties and secondary steel structures than its predecessor.

The simplified association of brick with permanence (and urbanity), and of wood with temporality (and rurality), has recently yet again been reshuffled by the notion of circularity. The association of circularity with temporality questions the legitimacy of the notion of permanence in architecture, and is thereby leading to new paradoxes. Contradictory to what we learn from history and inherent material properties, today we are extensively focusing on the life extension of wood (permanence) and the demountability of brick (temporality), without zooming out from the construction elements to the construction system.

'brick for permanence and the future ruin'
St-Elizabeth's Hospital renovation, Washington DC
Photo unknown

PRODUCTIVE CONCEPTS

The (Future) Ruin

Many before us have addressed the ruin as an architectural concept. For BLAF, the concept of the ruin is closely related to architect bOb Van Reeth's frequently paraphrased notion of "The Intelligent Ruin", which contrasts the material permanence of architecture with the temporality of its use. The ruin thereby touches on what today, within various approaches of sustainability, we would call durability, permanence, and continuity, as well as adaptive reuse, transience and circularity.

In the BLAF practice, the concept of the 'future ruin' became tangible for the first time in the dnA house project. The construction of the newly built house was one of many iterations on the construction possibilities of the building skin, and to a great extent informed by both the practice of post-insulating brick faced buildings in renovation projects as well as by the exploration of the 'brick veneer' construction method (timber frame construction with a thin brick façade) in the dhL house.

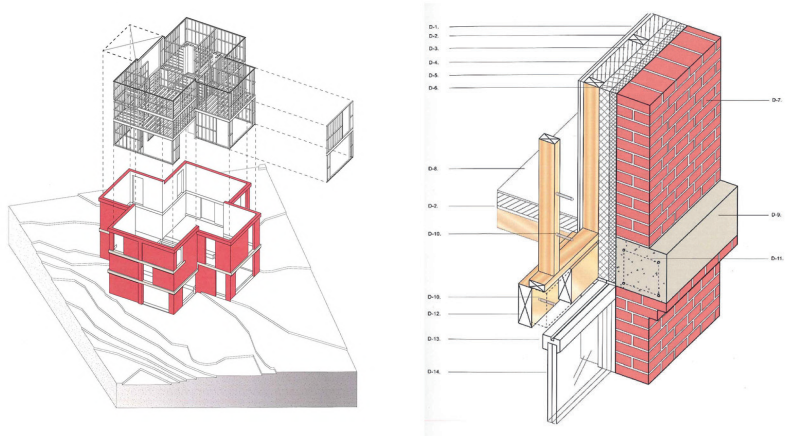
'The Future Ruin' (l'abri souverain) of dnA house, exterior (left) and interior (right)
Photos Stijn Bollaert

From these practices we observed how well designed, built with quality materials and craftsmanship, load-bearing brick buildings often prove to be highly valued, and easily adaptable. However, the question of how to post-insulate these buildings to meet the new energy-efficiency standards, in BLAF's case according to passive house principles, became a serious design concern, because even more challenging than the construction of new sustainable buildings is the transformation of our existing building stock. Due to the fact that the structural, physical and aesthetic role of the load-bearing masonry facade are contained in one and the same constructive layer, adding insulation to these existing buildings from the outside is often a heart breaker. And from the inside, it is often a deal breaker. The penetration of wooden floor beams in load-bearing facade walls, the intersections of adjacent walls, and the structural embossments on the inner surface of the masonry make the execution of the air-tightness that comes with the post-insulation excessively complex, error prone, and therefore expensive. As a way out, the addition of a dramatized cavity space the setting back of a climatized box inside the brick shell (the box-in-box) was often the solution, that had been put into practice by many.

From the problematic post-insulation of existing brick buildings (both the solid load-bearing and the cavity wall system), we moved on to an 'improved version' of the load-bearing brick shell as a design concept for new buildings, taking into account the layeredness of construction, and the combination of both the associations and performance inherent to the materials. The brick shell of the dnA house was designed to be structurally and thermally independent from the other layers of the construction: the timber frame and thermal insulation. The shell carries the load of the roof; together they create a bell, an 'abri souverain'.[16] The inner surface of the brick shell was above

16 Amy Gardner (1997) Auguste Perret: Invention in Convention,Convention in Invention, Journal of Architectural

all kept flat, to enhance the easy and continuous application of the thermal insulation from the inside. The beams and columns, necessary for the stability of the shell, were integrated in the masonry, resulting in an exterior relievo of buttresses and cornices, expressing the structural scheme of the shell, and safeguarding the flat inner surface of the walls.



dnA house: the construction principle of the post-insulated self-bearing shell

Stepping away from the cavity wall construction system for the dnA house, allowed for the adjustment of the construction sequence of the façade. Building the self-bearing façade walls and the roof first, created optimal workshop-like conditions for the wood construction on the inside, protected from the wind and rain. With the brick shell taking the wind forces, the structural collaboration of both the inner and the outer construction was no longer needed, and the amount of wood used for the inner structure was significantly reduced.

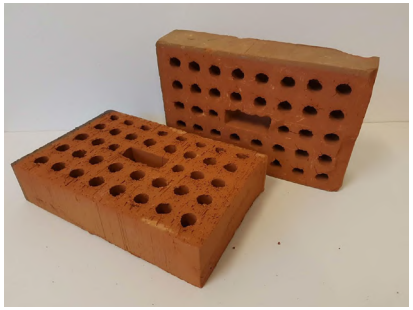
In its in between stage of the 'freshly built ruin' (Kirkeby, 1977) the brick shell of the dnA house triggered many re-

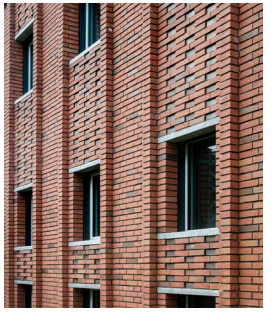
flections. The definitive disconnection of the layers of the construction of the house -the permanent and the temporary, the solid and the filigree, the stone and the wood, the durable and the circular, the past and the future, the carbon and the bio based, the wet and the dry construction, the public and the private-, offered a glimpse at its future state of ruin. It marked the potential zero point from which any future lifecycle of the building can be re-imagined. The dnA house, as a 'seismic point' in our search to tackle the cavity wall lock-in, has instigated the further research of the brick shell 'ruin' as both a construction and a design concept.

Obviously, one can argue that the solid walls in reclaimed bricks of the dnA house were built with cement mortar and consolidated concrete beams and columns cast on site. It means that in the dnA house, the reclaimed bricks have reached their final destination. The conscious approach of that paradox was BLAF's reaction on the behavior of the brick industry, extensively focusing on the development of new products for the 'dematerialization' of the brick façade, without questioning the construction system in which their application is to be found. According to BLAF, practices of adaptive reuse and renovation had convincingly proved that the lifespan of brick masonry is its most valuable asset. Interestingly, within this approach, the resistance and incompatibility of the ruin is generally taken on as an asset for the new design, rather than as a problem. Rather than the singular brick, the brick shell can be a product of the circular economy.

The realization of the dnA house was rather satisfactory, except for the economics of the brickwork. One might say it took too many bricklaying to build the shell. A retake of the construction concept of the brick ruin with large bricks, to reduce the cost of the bricklaying, was an obvious next step. With no such products on the Belgian

market, together with a manufacturer we dove into the production aspects of bricks, we decided on the size and the recipe for the brick, and had the production set up for a Big Brick. The concept of the Big Brick 'ruin' was further explored in three case study houses: btL house, tmEK house, wsT house.





BLAF Big Brick 1.0 (left), btL house, tmEK house, wsT house; BLAF Big Brick 1.0 (right), btL house

Geometry

Geometry as a design concept initially entered the BLAF practice through the notion of 'volume efficiency', or the understanding of compactness within the principles of energy-efficient design. Compactness is highly paradoxical, both in EPB and PHPP[17] assessment. Big buildings being geometrically more compact than small ones, may lead to the impression that building a bigger house is a smart thing to do, or that energy demand reduction in a big house is less important than in a small one.

Led by the passive house principles, in the BLAF practice, both the compactness and the 'smallness' were tak-

17 Passief Huis Project Pakket

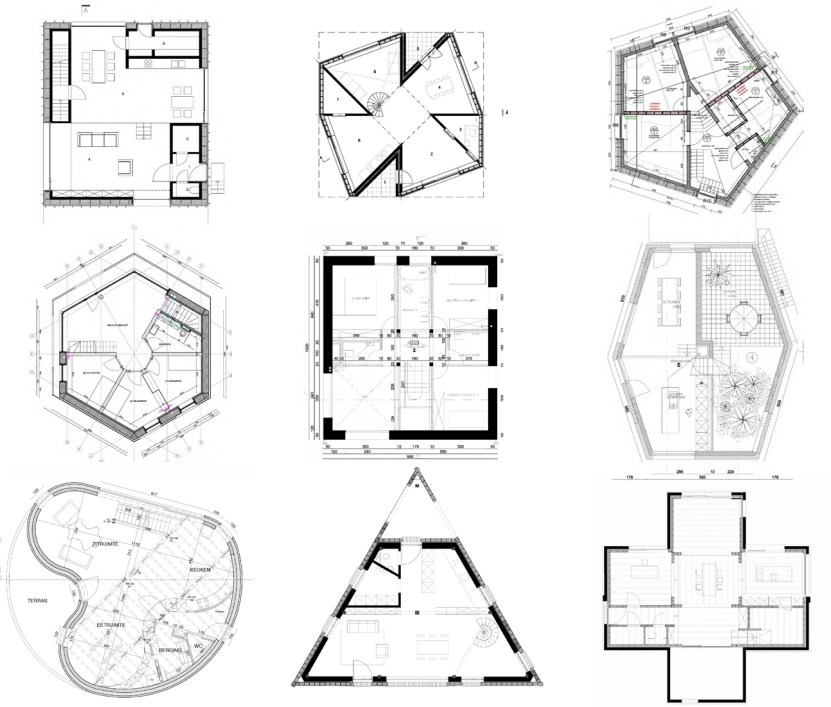
en on as equally serious challenges for the transition of our energy supply system, aiming at low absolute energy consumption of houses, rather than the relative.[18] The assumption in the Flemish EPB of the 'economic optimum' as a motivation to set unambitious targets for energy demand reduction (first and most important step of the Trias Energetica[19]), has nipped the passive house agenda in the bud. During the rollout of EPB, research consistently showed that a passive house was 15 to 25 % more expensive than the same house according to EPB standards. Of course it was. But why the same house? Was EPB not blatantly ignoring the asset of design? And had it not already been proved that the energy investment in extra building materials (mostly insulation and glazing) are marginal compared to the energy savings during the building's use?[20] Building according to the passive house principles, we were triggered by EPB to prove that the extra budget could easily be compensated by a design approach, that would not lead to 'the same house'. It is exactly there, in the search for smallness and compactness, material economy and affordability, that the geometry of the floor plan and the building envelope started playing an important role.

With the sphere being the ultimately compact volume, we started adjusting the box shaped house (gbL house) to more faceted variants with circle-like floorplans, so that their extrusion would result in more compact prisms. In timber frame construction, the geometry of the floorplan is translated into logical spans and beam patterns, using direction changes and triangulation to generate stability. From rectangles to trapezoids (wsT house), pentangles (deW house), hexagons (jtB house), octagons and 'blobs', the regular geometries drastically enhanced our understanding of the relation between the rationality of the inner structure, its performance, and its material use.

18 Griet Verbeeck, "Sufficiency: waarom energie-efficiëntie niet genoeg is " (paper presented at the Pixii Expert Day: Sufficiency, 2023).

19 Duijvestijn, Delft 1972

20 Griet Verbeeck, "Optimisation of Extremely Low Energy Residential Buildings". KUL Arenberg, 2007



Iterations on geometric floorplans

The iterations on the geometry of the house thus became a 'shortcut' in the design, to embed our principles and ideas on energy-efficient design as from the first step. And it has further recalibrated the design of the house. The geometry is responsible for the land use of the house in its 'administrative landscape' (allotments and ribbons), the orientation towards the planetary energy system (the sun), the more vertical organization of the program, and, ever more importantly, the calibration of the interior space in time and space by its materiality.

Compact interior spaces of houses with geometric floorplans
gbL house (top left); jtB house (top right); jmO house (bottom left); hkZ house (bottom right)
Photos Stijn Bollaert

Hybrid Construction

In 2014 BLAF debunked this shift away from facing bricks as a facade material of choice as a pragmatic choice to tackle the increasing complexity of the cavity wall system, rather than as a positive choice in favor of other materials. The book "Passive + Architecture" from 2015, heralding the introduction of the Brussels Region Passive House Standard by displaying good practices, contained no more than one brick faced building: the dnA house.

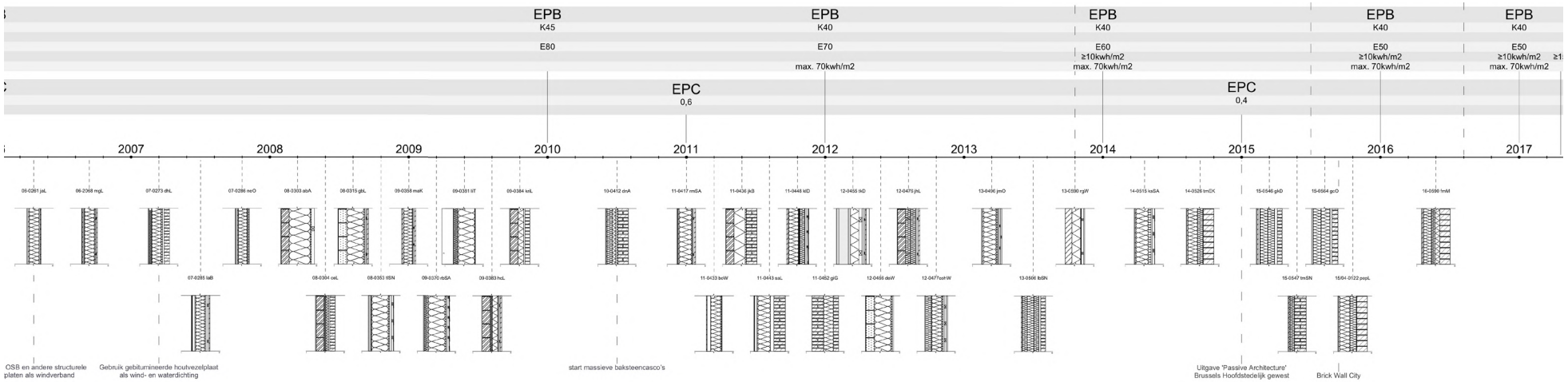
From a background in the design of timber frame constructions, and in design according to the passive house principles -not the standard-, BLAF have extensively explored, through practice, variations on construction methods for 'sustainable' architecture, since 2003.

1. Constructions with wooden structures (filigree or solid) and light facade cladding
2. Constructions with solid structures and light facade cladding
3. Constructions with solid structures and a solid facade 'dress' (cavity wall)
4. Constructions with wooden structures (filigree or solid) and a solid facade 'dress' ('brick veneer')

From these variants and their iterations, we developed a multi-directional approach of the layeredness of construction and the precise meaning and role of each material in the complex, i.a. the cavity. It has among others led to the observation that the brick faced cavity wall, as a 'closed' system, today causes many lock-ins that add to the conclusion that it can no longer be considered as an adequate, state of the art system. These reflections triggered our search for the combination of economic, sustainable, ecologic, energy-sufficient, simple and circular wall compositions, and have eventually lead to the proposition of the Big Brick Hybrid construction concept (following the dnA house case study project).

Much like in cavity wall constructions, the necessity of the ventilated cavity remained an important question within the construction mode of the Big Brick Hybrids. But because of its big share in the construction complexity, it had been no less than our goal to omit it. To do so, firstly we focused extensively on the air tightness and vapor regulation on the inside of the wood construction. Together with the flatness of the inner surface of the shell, they allowed for the placement of the insulation in full contact with the brickwork and thereby reduce the risk of condensation on the inside of the brick shell. Moving from the traditional solid, stone thick masonry of the dnA house

BIG BRICK HYBRID



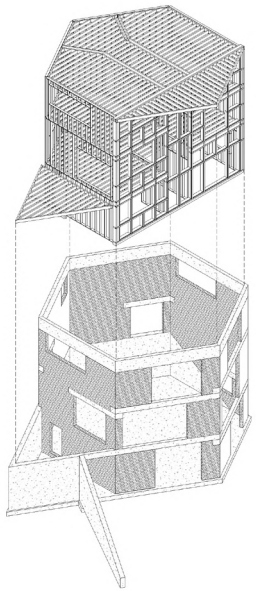
Iterations on hybrid wall compositions
from "30 Ways To Build a Wall". N.Claeys, UGent 2019

to the perforated mono-wall big brick, called for precaution of water infiltration from the outside, resulting in Big Brick Hybrid projects to be realized with a ventilated cavity. A next step was taken in the jtB house, where for the first time we used lime-hemp insulation. Because of its exceptional capacity to buffer and release moisture coming from both the outside (rain) and the inside (vapor) of the construction, thereby protecting the wood construction from rotting, we took the informed risk to fill the entire cavity with half-dried loose lime-hemp, thereby drastically optimizing the simplicity of the execution.

The jtB house, as a realized project, is the 'preliminary conclusion' of the practice based research on the open construction method for brick faced, wood construction building design. It entails the use of two main materials in their 'most appropriate' way: brick for permanence, durability, low maintenance, representation and 'pathos'; wood for temporality, adaptability, interior and ecology. The deconstruction of the hybridity of the cavity wall resulted in the radical disconnection between the constructions of the shell and the infill, both in terms of stability and thermally. Together with the concepts of the future ruin and the geometry, the hybrid construction concept reveals the jtB house as a new 'seismic point' in the practice of BLAF.[21]

jtB house
Photo Stijn Bollaert

21 The notion of seismic points as developed by Helga Blocksdorf in: Ballestrem, Matthias and Gasperoni, Lidia. Epistemic Artefacts: A Dialogical Reflection on Design Research in Architecture (Baunach: AADR, 2023), 27-29.



The construction of the jtB house
Brick shell and timber frame

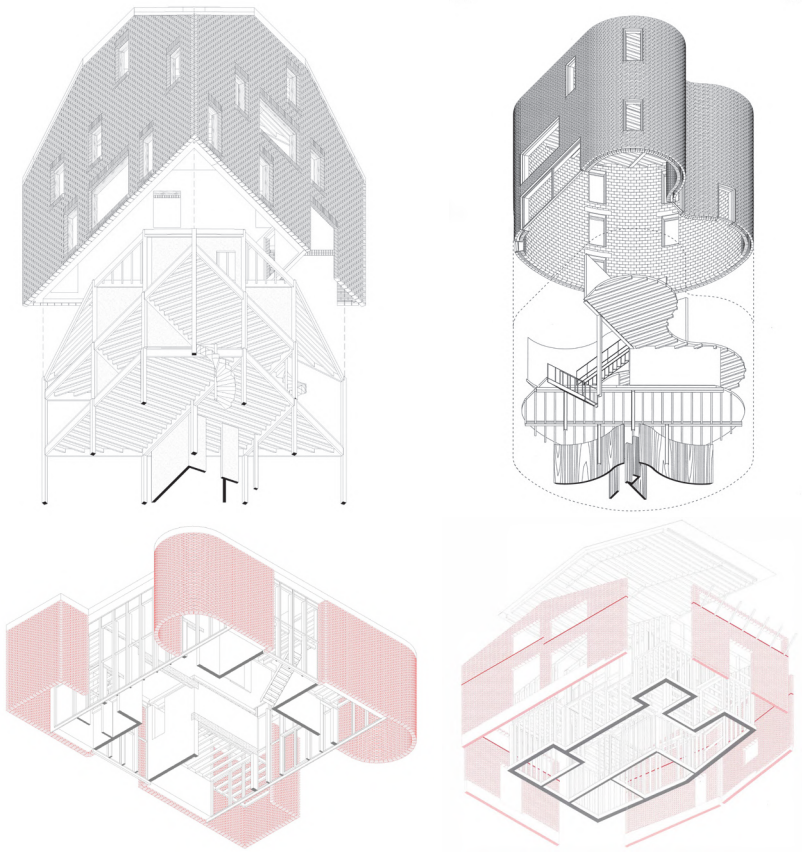
The construction of the jtB house
Brick shell and timber frame, limehemp insulation with no ventilated cavity (right)

BEYOND THE MANDATE

With this article I have set forth how the 'Big Brick Hybrids' entail more than the product development of a brick. As a series, the houses feature the repeated and multi-directional process of designing and building a house as an epistemic trajectory, a knowledge acquisition process. By digging into the archaeology of this trajectory, and by identifying the paradoxes and concepts at play, this contribution aims to make the practice based knowledge - from the long-term engagement of one particular practice with one particular design question - transferable.

According to Viollet-Le-Duc, the way out of 'confusion' is the reliance of the architect on ideas and principles. In architecture practice, ideas and principles are instrumentalized into concepts, that allow for design decision making. Concepts cannot undo paradoxes, nor can they simply reside in them. They call for a position, and are thereby productive, as they set a path to further explore the extent of the speculative possibilities of design. They allow for simultaneous action and reflection, for propositions.

In the BLAF practice, the 'learning by building' - iterations based on ideas and principles leading to 'seismic points' , in their turn leading to concepts for future projects - is a methodology for knowledge production by design. The 'productive concepts' have instigated the shift from designing and building 'the same but different' – each time a house, promoting the tailor-made to meet the clients' private considerations – to 'different but the same' – optimizations of the same principles from a general concern. Each individual client becomes an accomplice in that process, a facilitator of the practice-based, unfunded research beyond the mandate.



The structural and thermal disconnection between the shell and the infill, conceptualized in drawings wsT house (top left); gjG house (top right); fmM house (bottom left); tmEK house (bottom right)

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Beyond the Mandate of the Architect.

Or How Inquisitive Practitioners Redefine it.

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Tensions and discrepancies

What is "in" the mandate and what reaches "beyond"? What is the mandate of an architect anyway? What to think of the inclination of the architect to systematically do more than strictly what a client asked for? This topic has been little theorised in academic literature, probably because it is a matter of practice. This chapter reports on an in-depth analysis of six research practices, described in a set of academic papers, submitted by architects who participated in the "Beyond the Mandate" symposium in March 2023 in Brussels.[1] It inquires into how they deal with these questions in their country and how they relate them to history, law and theory. We will provide some speculative answers as we ponder over and question the role and position assumed by the architect in regards to the mandate given by the commissioner.

The notion "beyond the mandate" evokes crossing or transgressing a limit. But beyond what? If we relate this notion to the definition of the legal liabilities of the profession of the architect, there are as many possible answers to this question as there are different definitions of the responsibilities of architects throughout the world. The Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) refers to this variation of the definition of the practice of the profession across Europe:

> *In Europe, planning and building activities are subject to special regulations, which are based on general interest.*

1 Practices in Research #04 practice-based research seminar, 'Beyond the Mandate', organised at the CIVA and Faculty of Architecture, ULB, Brussels, 7 March 2023.

> *The nature of these regulations, to which the stakeholders are bound, varies greatly from country to country. In all Member States of the EU, architects carry liability for the work they undertake. This liability arises from the duty of care that architects owe to their clients as well as to society in general. The ability to act independently of vested interests on behalf of society is a characteristic feature of liberal professions and much cherished by architects. Nevertheless, there is a need to ensure that the liability imposed on architects is balanced against the range of their duties and the influence an architect can exert on a project during his or her working life.* [2]

This definition balances two time frames - the time of the project (and by extension the life of a building) and the career of the architect - when defining the liabilities within the "influence" and "duties" exerted on a project during the architects' career.

A client commissions an architect to design a building. By doing so, the client gives the architect the mandate to take up the responsibility to complete a specific job, entailing a set of roles, tasks and duties. The extent to which these roles, tasks and duties are legally determined, and hence intrinsically inscribed into the commission, may vary per country. While in countries such as Australia, the US or the UK, the title of architect is protected by law, and the practising architect is required to register with the national institute of architects, there is no legal requirement to hire an architect

2 Architects' Council of Europe, 'Practice of the Profession' accessed December 4, 2023, https://www.ace-cae.eu/practice-of-the-profession/,

when building single family residences under a certain size. In Belgium the signature of an architect is required on the plans of each house. In the early 80s, the controversial architect, Luc Deleu was summoned by the Belgian Order of Architects, when he put his signature as architect on the plans of hundred houses drawn and designed by the non-architect clients themselves.[3] While in France the mandate usually limits itself to the conception or design of the building only, and intervening in the construction phase could be a case of going beyond the mandate, in Belgium, not only the project design, but also the on-site inspection of the works is assumed to be part of the job description of the architect. Article 4 of the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Belgian Architects stipulates that "the architect must have the independence to practise in accordance with the position, which is of public interest, and the rules of ethics so as to take responsibility for his actions." [4]

Here, a first tension appears. Since architecture is a matter of public interest, with the architect being the persona to secure this public interest, and not the commissioner in articulating the commission, a discrepancy may appear between what is asked to be done (by the commissioner) and the awareness, insights and societal duty of the architect about *what ought to be done*. [5] There might be a significant difference between

3 Lillian Dewachter, Luc Deleu & T.O.P. Office 1967-1991 (Antwerp: Muhka, 1991), 101.

4 Art.4 of the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice of 16 December 1983 as Established by the National Council of the Order of Architects (BOJ, 8 May 1985), Approved by Article 1 RD of 18 April 1985 (BOJ, 8 May 1985).

5 The distinction between "what is asked" and "what ought to be" is inspired by Jürgen Mittelstrass' notions of Verfügungswissen ("knowledge about what can be done") and Orientierungswissen (knowledge about "what ought to be done") as described in Maarten Simons. "'Education through Research' at European Universities: Notes on the Orientation of Academic Research." Article. Journal of Philosophy of Education, 40, no. 1 (2006): 31-50.

these two points of view. To which extent does the mandate entail aspects that are reaching beyond, or even go against the immediate interest of the commissioner? In the context of rapidly changing environmental and societal expectations, the brief might or might not explicitly request for features that are considered common practice or common sense today. Fulfilling such requests might bring the architect into a societally subversive position.

The discrepancy between the commission and the effective set of tasks, roles and duties it may imply, also leads to a second set of tensions regarding the workload entrusted to the architect. The Belgian Code of Conduct states that: "The architect will adjust the number and size of the engagements he accepts to suit his personal capacities, the resources at his disposal and the special demands imposed by the significance and circumstance of the services he renders."[6] In view of the size, specificity, complexity and circumstances of a specific commission, the architect is demanded to self-monitor the feasibility of what(s)he is able to handle, and to rely on external expertise if necessary.

Is going beyond the mandate then a mission the architect sets to oneself, expanding upon or reducing a commission, while operating within the legal constraints of the profession? Each of the contributions we received for the colloquium doesn't formulate a definite answer but anchors the position the architects take in regard to specific projects and specific cultural contexts in which they are operating. For example, in France and the Netherlands, the inspection of the construction

6 Code of Professional Conduct and Practice, article 4 (see note 2).

site is often delegated to an office in charge of the execution of the architect's design. In Belgium, architects are and feel responsible for the project from the first sketches to the end of the construction process. Therefore, what is beyond or within the mandate differs and depends on where the limits are drawn and where one positions oneself during the life span of a project.

Over time the responsibilities of an architect have been more and more defined in juridical terms. The duties of the architect end up being a normative list of obligations, which hardly includes any aesthetic or ethical sense, or qualitative, symbolic or even simply human engagement. It is therefore all the more important to determine for oneself what is in one's mandate beyond the legal and contractual frame.

Hijacking the mandate

Is going beyond the mandate a way to engage with buildings from a critical viewpoint, from a distance? The following paragraphs sketch out different views and paths which practitioners developed to address the discrepancies, tensions and unease that are caused by the difference between what is asked to be done and what ought to be done. The themes, stances and strategies that are presented have been distilled out of an in-depth analysis of six papers written by inquisitive practitioners, in response to the "beyond the mandate" symposium and the debates it has induced. Two types of underlying drivers to go beyond the mandate can be discerned: (i) an unwillingness to continue the job as it has

been trained, and as demanded by the market, ("no more BaU") and (ii) annoyance or irritation of the architect regarding the narrowness of the project briefs of the commissioner.

No more BaU

The symposium revealed reluctance from certain young professionals, trained and graduated from architecture programmes, to adhere to the prevailing understanding and normative expectations of architectural design practice. They go beyond the mandate because they feel they have to, as they take their professional and civic role seriously. They are convinced that the changed conditions of how we look at the world, intrinsically imply a transformation of architectural practice as well. Oliver Burch, Jakob Junghanss, and Lukas Ryffel (8000.agency) formulate this as follows:

> *As trained architects, we have been taught a broad range of tools, concepts and methods to read our world and order it by the logics of gravity, utility and composition. We have sometimes also been taught in sociology, economy, ecology, whatsoever. But in a world as ambivalent and unpredictable as ours, how can we use these skills in a meaningful way? How can we spot latent potential and create momentum to transform it?* [7]

These practitioners no longer want to run "business as usual". The term "business as usual", abbreviated as BaU, originates in environmental studies. It was adopted by the

7 Oliver Burch, Jakob Junghanss, and Lukas Ryffel (8000.agency), "No Clue - Clues. Working with the Morelli method", Practices in Research #04, (December 2023), 58.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007, to refer to the dramatic scenario that would happen when continuing the way of living and producing as we do, instead of urgently implementing measures for reducing global warming.[8] Although the discourse about climate change was acknowledged by the discipline soon after, the awareness that it would also affect architectural practice fundamentally, came late and slowly. Pierre Bouilhol and Agrippa Leenhardt (ANMA) argue that when the ecological narrative finally penetrated the architectural debate - it was in the late 2000s - it led either to a reductionist understanding of architecture dominated by science and technology, or to a marginalisation of activist minorities.[9] The shift induced by anthropocene thinking in the 2010s was "weavering the way in which architects took up the ecological issue", and finally arrived in the 2020 as what is refered to as the *terrestrial turn*. [10]

Bouilhol and Leenhardt don't believe that the necessary re-orientation of the discipline can happen from within. Close interactions with other disciplines have to be established. They provide an example of such a collaborative framework:

> *Understanding hydraulic dynamics through the expertise of the hydrologist informs us about the capacity of soils to infiltrate water and become the support for ever more*

8 IPCC, 2007, IPCC, Climate Change 2007: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (Cambridge University Press (2007).

9 Pierre Bouilhol and Agrippa Leenhardt (ANMA), "Uncertain Soils in Experimentation. Architects and Scientists Representing the Plural Values of Soils," Practices in Research #04 (December 2023), 96-97.

10 "terrestrial turn" is a term coined by technology philosophers Pieter Lemmens, Vincent Blok and Jochem Zwier, to expand "the now dominant microlevel analyses of concrete artefacts and particular social use contexts favoured and promoted by what has been called the 'empirical turn' since the 1990s, to a philosophy of technology as a planetary phenomenon". Pieter Lemmens, Vincent Blok, and Jochem Zwier. "Toward a Terrestrial Turn in Philosophy of Technology." Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology 21, no. 2/3 (2017): 123.

> *specific living environments, which the ecologist reveals. The soil scientist tells us how the soil functions, the geologist teaches us about the long-term dynamics of the subsoil, which the geographer, sociologist or economist cross-references with the successive dynamics of human settlements.*[11]

And since their ultimate goal is to induce a shift in perspectives on mechanisms of valuation and financialization, real estate actors have to become part of this interactive process. The mandate has necessarily become trans-disciplinary, inducing moments "of learning and breaking down barriers of expertises and particular interests to arrive at a shared understanding" of the commission."[12] However, so the authors continue, in spite of the ever-increasing need for expertise, commissioners have little knowledge of each of these soil-related disciplines and have only limited soil related data available. As a result, commissioning authorities rarely integrate such collaborations into the project process. [13]

The urge to cease from BaU, and go beyond the mandate, doesn't necessarily lead practitioners to the macro scale of urban planning, or to conduct research outside the discipline. Also within the architectural discipline, and at the micro scale of the building, there is room for change and need for expansion of the mandate. Lieven Nijs (BLAF) heavily criticises how the predominant construction mode

11 Bouilhol and Leenhardt (ANMA), "Uncertain Soils," 98-99.

12 Bouilhol and Leenhardt (ANMA), "Uncertain Soils," 99.

13 Bouilhol and Leenhardt (ANMA), "Uncertain Soils," 93.

of the brick-faced cavity wall unquestionably perseveres, in spite of its myriad of fundamental architectural "paradoxes", at all levels, not only regarding climate change, but also broader, conceptually.[14] Attempts of further developing this construction mode would be a case of doing the wrong thing better. Instead, BLAF explores alternative construction methods. He argues that material knowledge and expertise is available within the discipline, but has remained largely unexploited. By reassembling existing technical and material knowledge and expertise, and linking it with architectural theory and history, He built up a new state-of-the-art for the discipline, and hence a source of inspiration for what a contemporary mandate ought to be. His line of reasoning is not built on theory only, but grounded in one decade of exploratory experimentation throughout real building practice, embodied in a series of case study houses.

A third response regarding the unease to continue BaU is to shift the stance regarding the mandate. Instead of understanding a commission from its content and functional requests, it is understood in terms of required attitudes and stances to reach a desired outcome. Stéphane Damsin and Jan Haerens (Ouest) argue that instead of continuing the Western modernist vision that building a new world implies building new buildings, they argue that everything is already there. The city is built and rebuilt on itself.[15]

14 Lieven Nijs (BLAF), "Big Brick Hybrids. Learning by building beyond the mandate," Practices in Research #04 (December 2023).

15 The quotes from Ouest are taken from a paper presented at the symposium but not published in this issue, and from the extended abstract, that was part of the symposium programme booklet. "Teatro, lo Tuyo es Puro Teatro" Practices in Research, practice-based research seminar, Beyond the Mandate, (March 2023): 129-137, accessed December 4, 2023, https://architectureinpractice.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Program%20and%20extract_5_compressed.pdf

> *The condition of unfinished symphony. A city is never done, never accomplished. In an architecture magazine, even about projects working with existing, there is often a clear before/after dialectic where the after is not only way better than the before, but moreover considered or presented as a final result. It's a kind of self-satisfied way of seeing, which fortunately disappears as soon as you walk around the city.*[16]

As an architect, you are free to decide which commissions to take, and which to leave. Too often and obvious young architecture practices are driven by the ideal to gradually acquire projects of an increasing scale. Likewise, too often, housing and urban renewal projects are articulated as large scale projects, thereby systemically overlooking the total impact of the myriads of small-scale interventions, resulting from modest commissions. Policy makers at the urban scale should include them in their future agendas as leverage for urban transformation, and ways should be found to make those commissions more attractive and economically remunerable for architectural offices. Also this is a way of taking architecture seriously as a matter of public interest. With their professional practice Ouest, Damsin and Haerens break with BaU by shifting attitudes: from aspiring for the big scale to valuing the modest intervention; by focussing on the urban void instead of on the buildings; by trying no to solve all the problems, but embracing ambiguities as drivers for encounter and negotiation, rather than as problems to be solved; by trying not to finish the job, but cherishing the

16 Stéphane Damsin, and Jan Haerens (Ouest), "Teatro," 132.

constantly unfinished state of the city, always inviting for adaptation and evolution, instead of aspiring for the delivery of completed buildings; and by upscaling projects by seeking dependencies, encounters and interaction, rather than by defining huge programmes.

A similar aversion for uncritically and obediently responding to commissions for urban renewal can be found in the work of 8000.agency. After having been involved in a few competitions for renewal of the urban housing stock, they conclude that the briefs, and the consequent commissions are based upon unfounded assumptions, impelling architects to act in unsustainable ways. Such briefs not only prevent architects from exploring alternative approaches and solutions, it even negates their duty to do so. While the mandate of an architect should intrinsically be based upon directing the requested project towards a more sustainable world, such commissions do the opposite. The following section of this chapter elaborates on these difficulties "to go beyond the mandate" out of an aspiration to transcend the status quo.

Transcending the status quo

The mediaeval philosopher Thomas Aquinas characterised the role of the architect by two features: (i) leading knowledge and foresight, meaning that he is the one who is able to conceive how a future could look like and how it could be made, and (ii) labour division, pointing to the fact that he is not the one who will realise it - this is the work of others.[17]

17 Merlijn Hurx, Architect en aannemer. De Opkomst Van De Bouwmarkt in De Nederlanden 1350-1530 (Nijmegen en 's-Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2012), 39-40.

On the one hand the commissioner expects the architect to execute what he asks for, on the other hand, he also expects the architect to be the professional who is in on the latest developments of the discipline. But how to respond to the request of a commissioner when you, as an expert, see other issues that matter, and know better? Why make an appeal to an architect if not because he is the one who knows both what can and what ought to be done? The inquisitive architect is eager to explore what the discipline can mean, and tries to keep pace with the newest developments, attitudes and strategies. He is in constant interaction with peers in order to quickly and efficiently exchange experiences and insights among each other. Consequently they act as "reporters from the front".[18]

The insight that it could be done differently and better than articulated in a commissioner's brief, makes architects feel that it becomes part of their mandate to redefine the commissions. For Ouest this means to understand a commission primarily as a call for intervening towards a healthy and lively city. In this regard the question should always be to which extent the commission is effectively staging the urban condition, strengthening meaningful interdependencies as neighbours, individuals and communities.

Michal Kulesza , and Tomasz Swietlik describe the story of a commission for an exhibition design.[19] Nothing special at

18 Reference to the title and theme of the Venice Biennale of 2016, curated by Alejandro Aravena.

19 Michal Kulesza, and Tomasz Swietlik, "Ruination Design." Practices in Research, #04 (December 2023). The exhibition was commissioned in 2018 by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN), as part of "Neighbours" the 10th Warsaw Under Construction Festival (WWB),

first sight, albeit that the commissioner labelled the project unofficially as "high-risk" for several reasons. Firstly, the building where the exhibition should take place was not known yet, and when known it turned out to be a surprisingly complex, and under-documented building, with a societally charged legacy. Secondly, no exhibition brief was available. Instead of such a brief, composed by a curator, there was a horizontally organised art collective of 10 persons, intending to have a curatorial and artistic vision emerge during the process.[20] In fact, plenty of information was missing in the commission to act as a solid basis for a clear elaboration of the request. Instead of setting out a trajectory by themselves, the architects deliberately stepped aside, bringing the curatorial team of the exhibition to the front. Simultaneously, they started to investigate the building in search for hidden architectural gems, and, next to the curatorial team, they also made the building speak. By doing so, they shifted the mandate of the architect from frontman in the design project, to facilitator bringing two other voices to the front - the curatorial team as demanding guests, and the building as attractive host. Kulesza , and Swietlik thus not only mobilise their competences as architects for designing a building, but also for establishing a network of diverse actors - human (architects, curatorial team, artists,...) and non-human (the building, the artworks, the found "hidden gems",...) - and making them accomplice in the process. Consequently, driven by its own agency, this resulting actor-network induced an unpredictable self-directing project trajectory, steered by

addressing the capital's changing demographics, and Ukrainian immigration in particular.

20 Kulesza, and Swietlik, "Ruination Design," 132, 152-153. The group consisted of the Polish curator Szymon Maliborski, together with nine members of the Kyiv-based art collective VCRC (Visual Culture Research Centre).

what emerged - similar to the writer who feels that the story, during writing, gradually takes over. In contrast with BLAF or 8000.agency, who aim for transforming architectural practice by primarily relying on acquired architectural competence and expertise, Kulesza and Swietlik deliberately put aside those qualities, in order not to be biassed and fully open for the discovery of issues, just by being involved in a unfolding process of uncertain practice. Against the fear and suspense in the commissioner because of the uncertainty and many imponderables, the architects put in the capacity of cunning of uncertainty.[21]

Issues with a mandate not only refer to unclearness of the commission, as discussed in the case above. It happens that the commission is very clear, but not in line with what ought to be done today. 8000.agency charges against commissions for replacement of existing housing stock by new buildings. The predispositions of the commissioner prevent them from gathering sufficient information about other options. They contend: "How can you start working with the existing if you are missing all the information? And how can you raise your voice once the premise of demolition is already set."[22] Their strategy of going beyond the mandate resembles Ouest's attention for the small, turning "the seemingly irrelevant as revealing moments for a project." Similar to the work of a detective, the architects of 8000.agency "watch out for the overseen or unnoticed details – and transform them into

21 The term "cunning of uncertainty" refers to the title of a book by Helga Nowotny, 2016, where she discusses the need for providing new epistemologies and practices for scientific research conduct. Helga Nowotny, The Cunning of Uncertainty (Malden, MA: Polity, 2015).

22 Burch, Junghanss, and Ryffel (8000.agency),"No Clue - Clues," 64.

productive reactions."[23] They navigate through the ignorance of the commissioner by a strategy of civil disobedience, looking for loopholes in the rules: deliberately misreading the task, leading to a discourse on alternatives, and inducing many questions. Appealing to the rule of the Swiss competition system that all questions have to be answered by the organisers, and all answers have to be distributed among all participating teams, they composed a set of strategic questions and sent them to the organisers, who were now obliged to formulate answers and send them to all competitors. The result was an expansion of the commission with an additional set of information, such as the plans of the existing building, intended to be demolished, but also a long list of the many plants and animals that find a habitat on site. This extra information made other participants discover the richness of the existing, and confronted the organisers with the consequences of their brief. They made the formulation of strategic questions a tool of research in itself. Eventually, their activist strategy impacted the discourse about the demolition of seemingly obsolete housing estates thus breaking through the status quo of prevailing opinions about renewal of the housing stock.[24] Rather than spending their energy in disputing with the commissioner they "claimed the right to develop alternatives to what someone has decided decades ago".[25]

Also Bouilhol and Leenhardt (ANMA) point to limitations in briefs and competitions, due to limited knowledge and insights

23 Burch, Junghanss, and Ryffel (8000.agency),"No Clue - Clues," 59.
24 Burch, Junghanss, and Ryffel (8000.agency),"No Clue - Clues," 64-66.
25 Burch, Junghanss, and Ryffel (8000.agency),"No Clue - Clues," 70.

of urban development commissioners. Their conclusion however, is that you cannot blame the commissioner for not including in the brief something that has not been seen yet. More particularly they hold a plea for "making the city through the prism of soil".[26] A shift has to be made from considering soils as "surfaces to be urbanised"[27] to "soils as elements of a vital urban ecosystem".[28] This shift has to be made by those who are expected to have up-to-date knowledge and insights, namely the experts. It is a moral duty of the commissioned design team, in its competency of possessing up-to-date knowledge and insights, to address today's inescapable and undeniable concerns – such as care and caution towards soil - even if they were not part of the brief, and thus go beyond the mandate.

Emerging topics and tactics

A commission is not a mandate

The practices and strategies that are described above in terms of an unease to continue business as usual, and an urge to transcend the status quo, all witness an apparent discrepancy between what is asked to be done and what is ought to be done. Can this discrepancy be related to a difference in meaning and content between the two terms mandate and commission?

26 Bouilhol and Leenhardt (ANMA), "Uncertain Soils," 81.
27 Bouilhol and Leenhardt (ANMA), "Uncertain Soils," 79.
28 Bouilhol and Leenhardt (ANMA), "Uncertain Soils," 87.

The Oxford English Dictionary reminds us that the word "mandate" refers to a verb and a noun. As a noun, "mandate" is defined as "a command, order, or injunction", but also as "a commission". OED thus considers mandate and commission as synonyms for each other. As a verb however, OED defines "to mandate" as: "to commission or delegate authority to (a representative, group, organisation etc.).[29] To mandate an architect to design a building (and inspection of progress of the work) thus points to authority that is delegated to a specific person. "Authority", in that same OED, refers to "Power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience; moral, legal, or political supremacy."[30] To mandate an architect to design a building thus means to delegate the power to this person to give orders, make decisions and even enforce obedience. Such an interpretation sheds another light on the relationship between commissioner and architect. For the commissioner the status of the architect moves from being the supplier of services that he pays for, to an authority that takes over power of decision and rights to decide (from an acknowledged and accepted supremacy.

A similar exploration for the term "commission" tells us that, as a noun, it is understood as a "charge, instruction, or command to act in a particular manner on behalf of a superior authority." As a verb it means "to order or authorise the production, provision, or undertaking of (something)."[31]

29 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "mandate," accessed December 4, 2023, https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=mandate..

30 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "authority," accessed December 4, 2023, https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=authority.

31 Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "commission," accessed December 4, 2023, https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=commission.

In contrast with the "term" mandate, the term "commission" emphasises the authority of the one who commissions, over the one who is charged to undertake.

Apparently it is meaningful to make a distinction between "mandate" and "commission". It is remarkable to notice that both definitions ultimately refer to an hierarchic position of operating under the authority and by the permission of someone else. "Mandate" highlights the dependent position of the commissioner, while it emphasises the architect's obligation of constant study and personal development, to be up-to-date, and to be able to judge and decide. "Commission", in contrast, highlights the obligations of the architect "to act in a particular manner on behalf of the commissioner". The dialectics between a commission and the mandate imply a mutual accountability and hence a strong interdependency between the two parties. There is a triggering balancing relationship that invites constant negotiation and update of itself. Indeed, the commissioner then is the one who authorises the architect to take over the power of decision and rights to decide, on behalf of that commissioner.

The cases that are discussed here relate to inquisitive practitioners, who are eager to explore new and alternative ways of conceiving architecture because they feel an urge to better respond to the changing circumstances of our time. This results in self-initiated research, either within the discipline (BLAF, 8000.Agency), or by journeys to neighbouring disciplines (ANMA, Ouest,) leading to new insights that they want, and have to share and apply. In such cases the difference between what an (ignorant) commissioner expects

to receive, and the eventual response he receives from these inquisitive undertakers might significantly differ. Adhering business as usual, the commissioner will expect "variants" on what is known. In contrast, the inquisitive architect, who considers it his duty to thoroughly scrutinise the brief, will explore a wide range of possibilities. Other options than the obviously expected solutions may come into view. As a result, he might come up with an unexpected solution, an "alternative", instead of a predictable "variant". The more such leap from a variant (of BaU) to an alternative (in order to do better) happens, the more a discrepancy occurs between the notions "commission" and "mandate".[32]

A changing object of concern

The shift that ANMA refers to as "the terrestrial turn" is about more than just the inclusion of "soil" as an additional component of architectural design. The plea of Ouest to reconsider the role of architecture in urban design through artistic metaphors and imaginaries is about more than paying attention to small moments of daily life. The participatory approach adopted by Di Leo , and Ferretti is about more than completing the brief of urban renewal projects with desires and concerns of residents.[33] ANMA's discourse about soil is calling for a repositioning of architecture within a new entanglement of mutually interacting disciplines. Architecture can no longer be conceived in terms of its

32 A good discussion about the distinction between "variant" and "alternative" and its relevance for architectural design and design research can be found in Charlotte Geldof and Nel Janssens. "Van Ontwerpmatig Denken Naar Onderzoek." In Achtergrond 03 - Architect / Ontwerper / Onderzoeker? Casus Mare Meum: Een Oefening Op Zee (Antwerp: VAI, 2007.) (in Dutch).

33 Benedetta Di Leo, and Maddalena Ferretti, "Making Things. Practicing co-creation in the marginal territories of central Apennine," Practices in Research, #04 (December2023).

own materiality, but – similar as its iconic or symbolic meaning – in terms of how this materiality interacts with the physicality of the environment where it becomes a dynamic part of. Moreover, it cannot be conceived in terms of inhabitation (by humans) only, but as part of an organic ecosystem, acknowledging the "inhabitation" of worms in soil. As people are (actively and interactively) inhabiting a building, a building is (actively and interactively) inhabiting its environment. Ouest's attention for the small scale is about addressing a certain essentiality of the city that is currently overlooked by architects and planners, namely the staging of those beautiful interdependencies as neighbours, citizens, individuals and communities in the liveliness of the urban palimpsest. "One can push the door of an ordinary building and find oneself in a much larger and different universe than what it seems from the street". Although not, or insufficiently, "seen" by architects and planners these phenomena are grasped in other fields, such as theatre, cinema, music, visual art and comics.[34] It is thus possible to identify them, also by architects, if only to reach out to those disciplines. And since they thus can become part of the conception of architecture, they also should. Based upon a thorough awareness and appreciation of those interdependencies, including their contingency and unpredictability, architectural design becomes a matter of staging occasions and conditions where such interdependencies could occur and flourish. Next to the concern to design a spatial constellation that closely corresponds to a predefined programme, architectural design should be evaluated against its capacity to facilitate and favour these interdependencies. Di Leo and Ferretti's reliance

34 Damsin, and Haerens (Ouest), "Teatro," 131.

upon participatory approaches is not primarily aiming at revealing the desires of residents in order to include them in the project brief, but to reveal potentials of existing buildings, natural heritage, human capital, local expertise, and all the complexities and contradictions that are involved in the "wicked" problems, posed by urban reactivation. Consequently, not the residents' desires, nor a brief of functional demands, but the potentials of existing buildings, of natural heritage, of human capital and of local expertise become the building stones to design with. By doing so, they explore how the architectural project, and the practice of designing architecture can become a methodology in its own for facing and "wickedly" solving such complicated commissions.

The discourses that these inquisitive practitioners are developing are not to be understood as a mere expansion of what we know about architecture, but about what architecture is (or has to become). They call for reconsidering the constituents of architecture. It points to an ontological shift, reaching beyond the existing epistemological body of the discipline. It also implies a reconsideration of the essential components, features and concerns that architectural design has to take into account. From an understanding of architecture in terms of objects - buildings, urban plans and infrastructure - a shift is seen towards an understanding in terms of connections, interactions, and experiences that take place or are induced. The focus of the disciplinary debate is no longer attempting to define what architecture is, or what it means, but on how we live it, how it's done, how it operates, how it impacts and how it comes into being. These questions

are, according to Albena Yaneva, adjectival by nature - "not architecture but the architectural".[35] In her words, it thus looks as if architecture is currently re-assembling "the architectural".

Architecture as a process

The symposium revealed practices that look at architecture as a component in the continuing transitory state of our environment, rather than in terms of its occasional deliveries - buildings. The architectural project then is understood as the active intervention - more particularly intervention with a spatial articulation - in this ongoing process of transition.

Burch, Junghanss , and Ryffel (8000.agency) decide to help people moving out of their homes, as a strategy to get into conversation with them. As they do, they discover unknown stories about how these people inhabited their building. Deliberately they have shifted their from the design question of conceiving a new building out of a brief, towards a curiosity in daily life, in order to gradually conceive what might be possible, and develop insights in how to intervene. This modus operandi fundamentally criticises the way in which projects, tenders or competitions are being defined. Instead of relying upon fixed ideas, rules and regulations Buch, Junghanss , and Ryffel break a lance for conceiving architectural interventions out of growing insights about a specific case on a specific place in a specific time. The architects suspend design action, insert a stage of inquiry and undertake specific actions in order

35 Albena Yaneva, Mapping Controversies in Architecture (Burlington: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2012), 108.

to develop such insights. They adopt what one could call an activist inquiry, sometimes leading to inquisitive activism, as for instance in their initiative to pose critical questions to the competition organisers. What is even more fundamental is that they reframe the architectural project from a disruptive understanding in terms of a new building to replace the old, into an intervention in the ongoing transitory condition that society is in.

Also Damsin , and Haerens (Ouest) are suspicious of predefined commission briefs that uncritically assume a building as the self-evident answer to an architectural question. Rather than projecting ideals about how we desire to live into a new building design, they suggest to reconsider the architectural project in terms of facilitating the unexpected, the intriguing, the disorder and "happy mess" that characterises daily urban life. No need to conceive a new "ideal" future, it is all already here. Designing architecture is primarily a matter of adopting an attitude and taking a stance towards how we look upon daily life, as it happens. The architectural project is basically to be understood as a timely intervention in the ongoing and continuously self-renewing theatre of (urban) life.

Kulesza , and Swietlik turned the high degree of contingency and uncertainty of their commission from a challenge of themselves, into a condition that allowed others - in their case curators and artists - to come into view and take up a role in the conception of the architectural project. It reminds of John Habraken's reasoning that the architect is not the one who is to be creative, but the one who creates the conditions that make it possible for the inhabitants to be creative; and

in its turn, the urban planner is the one who has to create the conditions that make it possible for the architects to create the conditions that make it possible for the inhabitants to be creative.[36] But in addition to this space for creativity by others, Kulesza , and Swietlik highlight how transformative a distributed engagement in the design project can be. The agency of a shared commitment among a diversity of actors, and the persistent alertness of all for responding to what emerges during the process, results in a mandate that no longer pertains to the eventual physical product outcome only, namely the renovated building with its and the exhibition that it contained, but that extends itself by explicitly including the process of investigating the building, "making its architecture speak",[37] and the public debate that this inquisitive process and distributed engagement induced.

The inclination to redefine the architectural project in terms of the processes it induces rather than of the built objects it envisages, reminds of "Freespace", the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale. Curators Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara stated that "Architecture affects everyone, so it's like a human right" and placed at the heart of architects' concerns "a generosity of spirit and a sense of humanity at the core of architecture's agenda … with the aim of promoting the 'desire' of architecture".[38] On this occasion, the collective of French architects Encore Heureux asked themselves the

36 John Habraken, The Appearance of the Form, four essays on the position designing takes between people and things (Cambridge, Awater Press, 1985. Second ed. 1988).

37 To "make architecture speak" refers to a suggestion of Jeremy Till as being one of the ways to go for conducting proper architectural research. Jeremy Till, "Three Myths and One Model." Building Material, no. 17 (2008): 4-10.

38 Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara, opening statement brochure Biennale architettura 2018, 16th International Architecture Exhibition, accessed December 4, 2023, https://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/2018..

question: "Building buildings or places?". They experimented with "collective processes for inhabiting the world and building commons,... Open, possible, unfinished places, which establish spaces of freedom where alternatives are sought."[39] These stances might be reminiscent of the activist and collaborative participatory approaches originating in the 60s, by architects such as Lucien Kroll. In order to reach their ideals of prioritising collective action and decision-making, they involved ample mediation with residents, construction site workers, and artists.[40] The new generation however, targets a broader scope, and aspires to a wider outreach. While the participatory movements were focused on instigating bottom-up action, the new generation explicitly addresses policy makers and real estate agents. Their goal is not only to empower residents and primary users, but also, and to the same extent, to make powerful agents accomplice in the consequences of the commissions they launch. Next to their own disciplinary expertise, they bring together local knowledge with expert knowledge from other disciplines, and next to the intention for a final product, they pay great attention to the process. They put effort in framing their inquisitive activism in methodological frameworks, and make time for sharing their findings in academic settings, such as the symposium this paper is reporting on, thus expanding their audience. For them, all of these steps, from concept over action to dissemination, critique and feedback, are part

39 With the Infinite Places exhibition at the Biennale of 2018, Encore Heureux Architects has introduced the notion of "Infinite Places" which evokes all the possibilities left open by those who make these places exist. See exhibition catalogue of the French Pavilion of the 2018's Venice International Architecture Biennale, Infinite Places curated by Encore Heureux, "Infinite Places," ,accessed December 4, 2023, https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/dd-lieuxinfinis-def-040518-en_1__cle04a553.pdf

40 Simone Kroll, Lucien Kroll, Ordre et désordres: une architecture habitée (Paris: éditions Sens & Tonka, 2015).

of architecture as a dynamic discipline and hence at the roots of the mandate that goes with it.

Who is listening?

Many of the contributors to the symposium delivered a post-reflection on how they, as architects, have been thinking and positioning themselves through the design and building process. Retracing how they went beyond the mandate then implies also communicating to a public with hindsight on the process of designing, realising or maintaining a building. In the context of the symposium "Beyond the mandate," architects were scientifically reporting about their research in and through professional practice. When communicating on this "research in practice" one imagines and chooses an audience – a community of people who are assumed to be interested.

The papers collected in this issue address an audience not only of academics who are active in the discipline of architecture, but also their peers - architects working in the same professional field - and more generally, people interested in the same question, persons who potentially want to be involved in the conversation. And while an audience is expected to listen, the audience is also whom the speaker wants to listen to and enter into conversation with. In creating a conversation, one creates a new audience. On the topic "beyond the mandate", this conversation, as pointed out earlier, was to a large extent to be created.

All architects need to speak the language of multiple

audiences: of the client, of architectural discourse, of engineers and everybody involved in the project, of future users and of society at large. A project starts with listening, with giving attention, recognition, understanding and only then of finding a response. But, as many of the papers report about commitments beyond the mandate, an expanded conversation comes into view - one that is about how architecture speaks to an inclusive society, to the city in all its history and to our environment. The conversation is therefore also inherently extra-disciplinary. The architect mandates himself to commit to these causes, but on the other hand these causes are shared with society. Somehow all architects are to be engaged socially, environmentally, historically and to take part in the widely ramified discourse on architecture.

If the practitioner should take all these dimensions into account, are the stories told here more profound engagements in one of these dimensions? Are they a way of telling a story that is to be heard? Are they a way to profile a practice and take a position in a subfield, even of identity-building in a competitive market of architecture and research? Is the architect to define priorities for each project differently, to stake out what is worth doing beyond the mandate for this project?

Through the publication of their papers, the involved practitioners are stepping beyond the mandate of the architect, they enter grounds of academia, thus tying academic research to professional practice and vice versa, and nourishing architectural culture at large. Together these papers gravitate around a new middle ground or symbiosis of intersecting

audiences, tying together the professional, academic and cultural spheres. As publishing research is about translating knowledge to make it debatable and share it with a larger public or audience, one of the challenges of the papers presented here is to not only address an academic audience but also a wider culture. As such, the move from “research in practice” to publishing this research as academic knowledge poses the question if this move restricts its audience, or is rather a way of enlarging an audience or creating a new one. Beyond the format of academic conversations, one clue to this question seems to lie in the multiple formats of conversation evoked in the papers. The activities documented in the papers testify of interactions with an audience in different manners, from text to drawings, from images to movies, from close dialogues with collaborators, to conversations with imaginary clients, to social engagement through narrative structures set up with residents, dialogues with the city administration, to co-creation or considering a conversation as what the building is able to communicate with the city over time.

Conclusion: shifting the beyond within

The “variability of the mandate” is linked to the unpredictable nature of working in complex contexts and the architect’s aspiration to make the most out of every situation. Going beyond the mandate is a continuing negotiation between the “beyond” and the “what is in” the mandate and its deliverables, and, as such integrating the “beyond” within it. Yet, choosing

the right mandate might be in quite a number of cases, to refuse the mandate, as they don't allow you to go beyond it. Some commissions do not allow for taking up the mandate properly.

As the mandate of an architect includes a societal accountability that transcends the mere interests of the commissioner, and as society is in constant evolution, the mandate constantly evolves. It responds to shifting insights about how to cope with, or respond to those societal evolutions. The annoyance to uncritically execute "what someone has decided decades ago", to quote Burch, Junghanss , and Ryffel, and consequently "claim the right to develop alternatives" refers to a conviction that a commission inherently is obsolete, inescapably reproducing the status quo.[41] While a commission thus might inherently be obsolete, rooted in the past, the mandate is also inherently rearticulating itself and adapting to changing circumstances. To look at architecture as a component of societal and environmental transition rather than (solely) in terms of the buildings it delivers, is not to dismiss architecture as a design discipline in itself. On the contrary, it brings the specific views, entries and speculations that the discipline is able to provide, into the heart of the ongoing debate and the continuing process of looking, evaluating, questioning, inquiring, pondering, valuing, deciding, caring and giving shape to our built environment. Such ongoing inquiry implies research. The practices that are discussed here convincingly witness of the privileged conditions that professional practice provides for effectively conducting such research.

The message for architectural education, which basically

41 Burch, Junghanss, and Ryffel (8000.agency), "No Clue - Clues," 70.

is a design-driven education, is to retain from conceptions of architectural design as mere application of technical knowledge and aesthetics, or as a preparation for professional behaviour in terms of a predefined set of learning outcomes, but to acknowledge it as both a place of personal development and a place of common debate and negotiation about what ought to be done/designed, aware of the cultural context one is operating in. As mentioned above, it is not a surprise to notice that the main body of the research cases that have been discussed here, is situated in professional practice, not in academia. Indeed, to the extent that inquisitive practitioners are to be considered as "reporters from the front", it must be said that with regards to the topic of interest - the mandate of the architect - the "front" is situated in professional practice. In order to keep pace with the fast transitions we are in, there is an important role for academia for developing solid and robust ways for securing the input of such inquisitive practitioners, as research-active professionals, into architectural education, to stimulate their work, and help them in the development of their research methodologies.

The message for commissioners is to acknowledge that they, when commissioning an architect to undertake a project, authorise a creative critical citizen to take up a responsible role towards achieving a desirable future, which might contain other acts and practices, and have other implications than foreseen. For them, this distinction between mandate and commission, can be useful in the way to understand how the client considers the mission he entrusts to the architect. But here, legal frameworks under which both

actors, commissioners and architects operate, come into play. In a country like Belgium hiring an architect is mandatory, whereas in the United States for example, hiring an architect is a voluntary choice without any obligation. In the first case, the client expects a signature and a ten-year insurance and the architect feels indebted to the client for having chosen him; in the second case, the client expects a work of art, and the architect gets a real mandate with the trust of the client. In these contrasting constellations, the contract involves different obligations and another degree of freedom for the architect to develop side ideas.

In the context of this colloquium, what was discussed as being "beyond the mandate" was only considered from the architect's perspective. However, the people with whom the architect collaborates can also go beyond their mandate, or be stimulated to do so. Beginning with the client or contracting authority. In the case of a private commission, the client might have an agenda, which goes beyond simple construction. In the case of a public commission, however, a societal and cultural dimension is at stake. Its funds being public, this public power has an obligation to meet expectations of society, to account for their decisions to future generations, but also to contribute to the cultural production financed largely by the public sector The building contractor can also carry out the project beyond his or her mandate. The construction site can be a space of freedom and exploration in the making of the project. What is "beyond the mandate of the architect" is not located in a single mind, with a hidden agenda, but can be found through collaboration between parties involved in the same project.

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