

TEH: Building a Cultural Regeneration Project for Europe

Publication #2
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#2



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0 FOREWORD

TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF A “WORKING” MANUAL

Following Publication #1, which introduced the reader to the general aspects of Trans Europe Halles (TEH) and its relevance in the current discussion on the regeneration of the built environment, Publication #2 displays a first selection of concrete strategies, developed throughout TEH’s network. These strategies are intended as a set of “lessons to be learned” from the many cultural regeneration prototypes led by the network’s members over the last decades. Such lessons aim to contribute to a better understanding of what good practices of cultural regeneration can look like and how they could help with shaping an ambitious New European Bauhaus.

To highlight their contribution to the current discussion on the socio-ecological and economic transition and its main challenges, the strategies are organised in four categories which identify the document’s four parts :

1. MATTER MATTERS
2. OUT OF THE BOX
3. TIME, TIME, TIME
4. NEW COEXISTENCES.

Each category addresses a specific set of issues within cultural regeneration.

The first category, MATTER MATTERS deals with strategies addressing the radical reuse of materials and built assets, the (re) distribution of matter and space in service of local communities and the refusal to “build more”, in keeping with Malterre-Barthes’ call for a global moratorium on (new) construction (Malterre-Barthes, 2023). The second, OUT OF THE BOX includes projects and spatial strategies displaying experimental approaches to urbanism and architecture that thwart expectations and known codes (Bouchain et al., 2014). These are strategies that tend to reinvent relationships between the actors conventionally involved in the building process (owners, architects, contractors, residents, users etc.) in ways that break down the usual hierarchies and allow for more collaborations, co-conceptions and co-constructions. The third, TIME, TIME, TIME features strategies integrating a plurality of temporalities within the design process (Morton, 2015). This displays articulations between different conceptions of time as well as different uses of time, from the very short (implementation of ephemeral events/approaches) to the very long (approaches going beyond strictly human temporalities and entailing long-term processes such as the regeneration of an ecosystem, for example). Finally, NEW COEXISTENCES address strategies that actively contribute to a redefinition of the divides that modern rationality has constructed between the cultural and the natural (Descola, 2024), the social and the bio-

logical, the human and the non-human, towards a “new biopolitical project” (Vigano, 2023). Such initiatives feed important discussions on the role of architecture, urbanism and landscape design towards a more inclusive project concerning living entities and bodies in space. Space is here designed as to weave new relationships between living beings which in turn become a powerful reservoir of possibilities for subjects to emancipate themselves, beyond the human/non-human divide.

Each category is – in turn – divided into two sub-categories, with the ambition of describing particular and/or complementary aspects of the same. Each sub-category displays three strategies providing the entire publication with a total of 24 strategies (made possible by a total of approximately 60 interviews).

As such, this publication consists of a first set of concrete lessons from the TEH centres on “cultural regeneration” as shareable knowledge. Each strategy is presented and illustrated by means of one brief description:

- one interview with one (or more) protagonist(s) who fielded/participated in or experienced the strategy in depth;
- one diagram with the ambition of highlighting the strategy’s main spatial elements;
- one evocative image and
- one timeline highlighting the strategy’s main stages.

1 MATTER MATTERS

CIRCULAR THINKING

Cultural Reuse – *Village Underground (London)*

From Rubble to Park – *Nova Cvernovka, (Bratislava)*

Zoristirio – *Communitism (Athens)*

OVERSIZE (OBJETS RISQUÉS)

The Common Roof – *Röda Sten Konsthall (Göteborg)*

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Zone of interest – *Stanica (Žilina)*

Today international initiatives are multiplying to emphasise the need to radically change our approach to construction practice (such as the “global moratorium on new construction” launched by Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, (Malterre-Barthes, 2023). In the same direction, the European Union’s Circular Economy Action Plan (2015) has set a target for member countries to reduce construction waste by 70% by 2030, with an emphasis on reuse. Nonetheless critical questions about the act of “constructing” remain unaddressed (in North-West European countries only 1% of construction elements are reused).

The ecological transition calls for far-reaching changes in the production of the built environment, and more particularly in the architecture and construction design processes. “The best building is the one we don’t have to build... or demolish, for that matter. It’s the one that can withstand, adapt, transform and improve” (Somers, 2017). Demolishing existing buildings is always an admission of failure. Today, it affects many 20th century buildings, whose life cycle is considerably shorter than that of older buildings, which raises questions about their technical qualities, use or meaning. Compared with recycling, reusing seeks to preserve as much resident value as possible, as an integral part of its manner and form, whether material or immaterial.

Besides being essential for a new “Baukultur”, reuse in architecture participates in a profound societal change, from linear to circular. This is a practice that has always existed in history, but which has been devalued for over a century by the linear process of extraction/production/consumption/disposal. It is, however, a practice that is making a comeback (albeit marginal) in the quest for a circular economy. While starting to attract the interest of a new generation of architects (or future architects), who are keen to get closer to more virtuous design and production processes, TEH centres have decades of experimentation behind them that deserves to be studied/understood/translated. This chapter (Matter Matters) aims to give a first, small glimpse of it through two sections: “**CIRCULAR THINKING**” and “**OVERSIZE**”. While the first describes strategies related to the reuse/upcycling of construction materials and/or architectural components, the second portrays strategies related to the reuse of extremely large architectural objects, particularly difficult to reuse (oversized, complex forms etc.).

INSPIRING POSITION/CHARLOTTE MALTERRE-BARTHES (architect)

“We need to stop constructing in order to start building. – (Menna Agha, architect and researcher)

Back in March 2020, everything stopped. Or so it seemed. Worldwide, construction sites largely kept operating. The pause that offered the chance to question our societal model proposed by philosopher Bruno Latour, touting that “if everything is stopped, everything can be questioned, bent, selected, sorted, interrupted for good or accelerated,” did not happen. Critical questions about the contribution of the building industry to the ongoing environmental and social crisis remained unaddressed. Responsible for 40% of carbon emissions worldwide, construction and the expansionist enterprise of extraction it fuels goes on unabated. Yet we know construction material’s extractive practices are physically impacting entire regions. (...) While decarbonising the industry is an urgent task, a drastic change to building protocols is necessary. Beyond the provocation around the suspension of new building activity, the design studio seeks to articulate a radical thinking framework to work out alternatives: What happens if we stop building anew for a moment?”

(C. Malterre-Barthes, 2023b)

This part concerns creative strategies related to the reuse/upcycling of materials and/or architectural components. Careful dismantling processes, ingenious deployment of salvaged building components to drastically reduce the quantity of demolition waste, while offering quality building materials that have a negligible environmental impact. These strategies investigate the architectural/urban possibilities of a new material paradigm, aiming to improve the management of material resources and implement systemic solutions to “reclaim and reuse” more intensively. Reuse of reclaimed materials also requires flexibility in the design process, being prepared to adapt design according to available materials.

In circular thinking, buildings should make use of existing assets to reduce waste and demolition. They should also be enduring, to avoid being demolished themselves. Design should be flexible and adaptable to allow reconfiguration as technologies and the needs of users evolve. Beyond the building’s life cycle, a circular approach to building components/materials is also to think of it as a material ‘bank’, in which elements can be taken apart and reused in future projects.

1.1 CIRCULAR THINKING

Cultural Reuse – *Village Underground (London)*

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CULTURAL REUSE – Village Underground London, UK

Located in the trendy Shoreditch area of East London, Village Underground (VU) opened in 2007 with the ambition to provide affordable creative studios for struggling art professionals. Surpassing the initial goal, VU progressively became an accessible and iconic local and international cultural hub, able to host up to 700 attendees for a variety of events.

Through the reuse of discarded infrastructures and the integration of a wide variety of repurposed materials, the VU project grew in 2006 from a derelict Victorian coal warehouse, a rail viaduct and public bathroom buildings. Four repurposed train carriages and two shipping containers – together with relocated railway ties, staircases, wooden flooring, train seats and many other repurposed elements – actively reduced the quantity of materials needed to produce and transform the cultural space into something vibrant and inviting. In contrast with usual building practices, demolition waste was drastically minimised by radical dismantlement and reuse processes, contributing to an overall negligible environmental impact of the operation, and limited cost. The strategy used is particularly relevant for its ability to implement reuse operations at different scales (urban infrastructure, portions of buildings, architectural elements, materials, furniture components...) and at different stages of the construction process.

Through an active and radical repurposing of different architectural elements/components/ materials, VU has effectively contributed (and continues to contribute) not only to the development of the ‘reuse’ practice itself but also to the dissemination of its developing culture within the urban context. VU’s acquired knowledge in selecting/assembling/reconditioning but also, and especially, taking care of existing architectural and urban repurposed “elements” make them a key actor within an experimentation and research agenda.

INTERVIEW: AMELIE SNYERS/Village Underground Managing Director (2021-present)

Amelie Snyers, VU's Managing Director, was an intern in the centre in 2010, a few years after it opened. For her, "reuse" cannot be considered a "sustainability strategy" within Village Underground: it was neither planned nor calculated nor did it come from ecological convictions. Rather, she describes it as a culture that came from a place of constraints – the ever-rising London real estate market – and responding to this by mobilising what was within reach: "it's really all about circumstances and finding the right opportunities," she says. VU's reuse culture stems from the attitude (typical of cultural centre) that makes use of what is accessible and affordable to achieve specific cultural and social goals. An attitude that, in the case of VU, has translated into a set of "hybrid architectures": train carriages are bought to create affordable creation studios; a portion of the viaduct is adapted and regenerated to shelter them; a neighbouring warehouse is then annexed to abide with accessibility regulations without escalating costs; years later, a green roof is installed to counter noise pollution, etc.

This composite architecture of reused elements is the result of stretched financial circumstances, and not so much because of an aesthetic or ecological pursuit by VU, to the point that it can constitute a constraint in the centre's financial viability:

"It is a thin line, because in order for the business to work, we have to obtain a lot of corporate and private bookings. Because it's London, and our rent is crazy, we absolutely cannot survive as a business without the money from those hires. Thus the venue downstairs cannot look too eclectic. It's got to look sleek. It is still a beautiful brick interior; it's not like we're going to change that. But if we're going to continue reusing material, it has to be with a certain approach in terms of design and look; it needs to be consistent and coherent. [...] In the end, it's so much about saving money, as sad as it sounds. Like, we need to change our bar structure at the moment, but we can't afford a new one. So we're looking for a secondhand bar and it's impossible to find what we need; the dimensions never fit and the

reused market has become too trendy and expensive. So it's going to be a weird mix of sections. If we had the money, then I don't think we would have gone the circular way, but would have used new materials, just from the perspective of making the venue look as professional as possible."

In this context, maintenance plays a vital, yet challenging role:

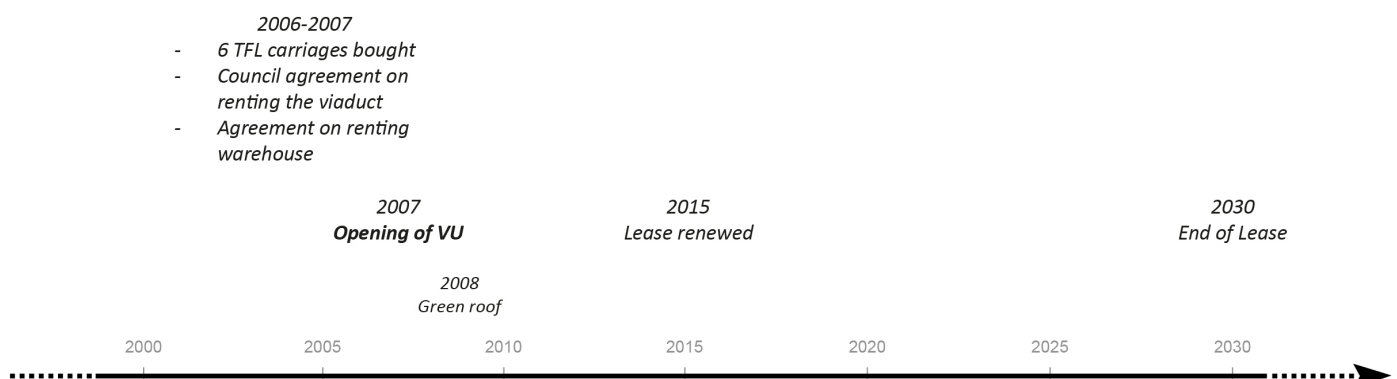
"It's a very old warehouse, so it gets very damp; you have mould growing on the bricks and if you don't wash them regularly, it just keeps growing, forming bad stains. So, for a long time, we organised collective annual cleans during one week – jet washing the walls, removing chewing gum, changing the entrance floor when it got too old. But that level of attention to detail kind of dropped; we can't afford to close the venue for too long anymore, and COVID and the new London regulations on concert venues really hit us.

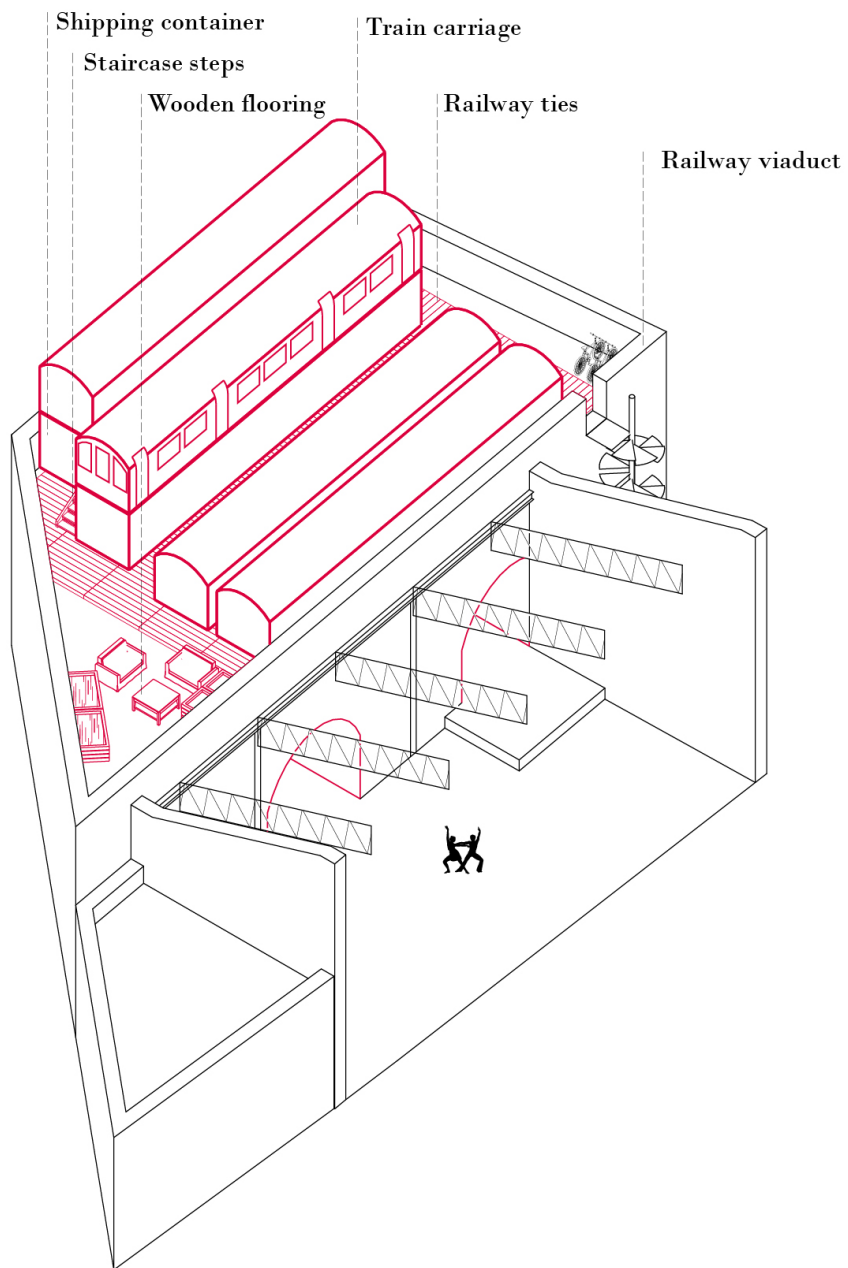
One part of the building we have never maintained ourselves is the train carriages upstairs. But the tenants that rent them as co working spaces are very active in their maintenance. We have left them do whatever they wanted, so they all look very different.

In general, Village Underground, it's a quite straightforward building. There's no extension to be built, there's nowhere to grow. It is going to be the way it is, until it isn't. So, you know, all we can do is look after all those bits and bobs."

At the end of the day, this looking after has required constant work, however frustrating and financially motivated it may have been. But it was still worthwhile, in Amelie's eyes:

"We can still work from those 1983 tube cars; we can run events from a Victorian warehouse, and everything is still solid. It's still functional; we tend to forget it but it's incredible that all this still stands and works so well".









FROM RUBBLE TO PARK – Nova Cvernovka, Bratislava, Slovakia

Established in 2016 in the administrative buildings of a former industrial complex, Nova Cvernovka brings together a community of artists and residents on the outskirts of Bratislava city centre by offering public spaces, activities and services as well as over 150 art and creative studios, hosting over 30,000 visitors annually. Nova Cvernovka's 12 hectare public park is one of the centre's key features: wild and including various services (children's play areas, a community garden, a performance stage, resting spaces, a dog area...), it was in part developed upon the rubble of the school complex's transformation through the 2020 "From Rubble to Park" project.

The construction waste created from the building transformation was first stored in heterogeneous piles, preparing the tons of pieces of concrete, bricks, ceramics, metal, glass, plastic and plaster to be moved to a landfill site. This rendered materials' recycling extremely difficult. In an effort to counter a wasteful and costly use of land and resources, Nova Cvernovka's team made the decision to keep the rubble on site and take responsibility for its future. To do so, several experiments were developed combining ecological, artistic and social efforts with the explicit aim of sorting the discarded materials and reusing them on site. Wood salvaged from ceilings were turned into fences and gardening pots, full bricks were hand-sorted to be repurposed later while smaller mineral elements and fine powders became instrumental in composing the layers of a water-permeable stabilised outdoor threshing floor, a new soil. The "From Rubble to Park" initiative shows a striking enterprise in collective responsibility for past actions and dealing with their results in meaningful and innovative ways while preserving raw material primary sources from further strain. From a research/innovation perspective, this project is particularly relevant for its ability to test the reuse/recycling culture not only within the construction of architectural elements but also within the "construction" of new soils.

INTERVIEW: BORIS MELUŠ/Project Coordinator and Co-Founder of Foundation Cvernovka

Boris Meluš co-founded Foundation Cvernovka and is responsible for the development of its campus, along with Rubble to Park project leaders Juraj Hariš and Lukáš Radošovský. He describes the initiative as a form of “repair” led both for economic reasons and to take responsibility for actions of the past:

“Ideally, you should sort the rubbles right away; it’s easier as you demolish than when it’s all mixed together. And, you know, in other places, tenants would probably have told us ‘Just use my rent to handle that garbage, don’t bother me with this’. But here, there was this kind of... sense of responsibility for what happened in the past and the idea of... ‘let’s try to do this differently. We’re all working there, we made these piles together so we should sort them out together.’

We organised several voluntary days; people came, and we did all necessary sorting by hand for the big pieces first, then again after the machines separated the piles by size. This hand-sorting was hard but such an essential part of the reuse process. Somebody said it quite nicely: ‘we just did the work that we were supposed to do back then’. In that sense, time is also a sort of resource. Sure, a situation can force you to borrow it from the future sometimes, but you have to give it back eventually.”

For Boris, the “nothing should be wasted” attitude is a local “ethos”. While this ethos came from shared ecological values, its consciousness was also developed through experimentation:

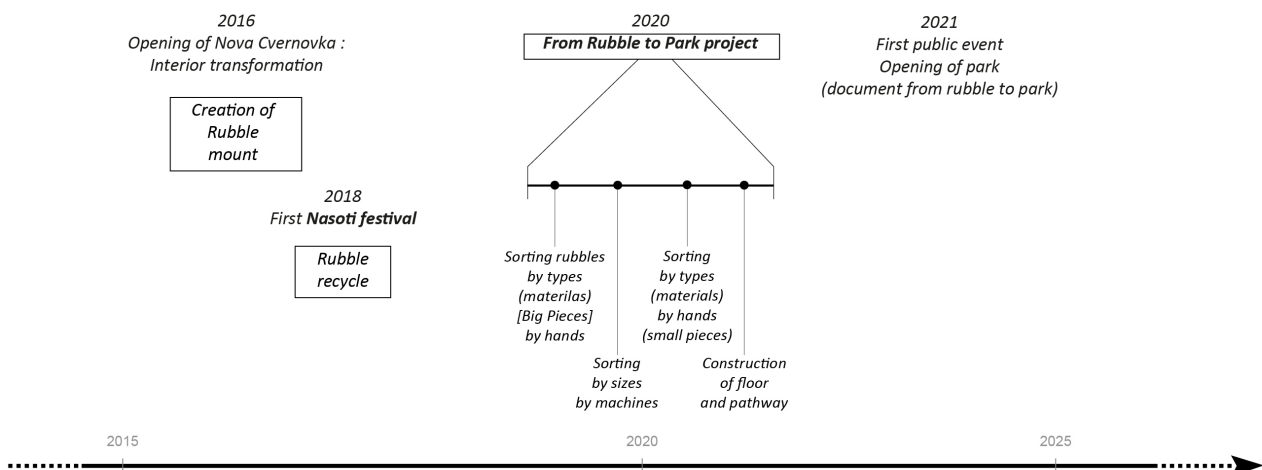
“At the beginning, there was a festival, where we featured the rubble-cycle; it was an experiment to get different fractions and mate-

rials separated and see what was in there. It was the first step for the whole process, but it also had an important community role: it was quite fun, it looked nice and interesting as a visual object so it made a lot of people interested in it. By seeing different layers and separating them themselves, it made them believe in the project. Because suddenly, big piles of garbage were transformed into smaller piles of materials and started to make sense for the people.”

This imaginary shift from trash to material was central to convince all stakeholders to risk investing time and resources into an experimental project. But the transformation extended beyond symbolism: as licensed heavy machines and contractors were hired to process the tons of remains on-site, those legally became usable like any other construction material. However, local legislation would not easily allow for free-standing constructions due to restrictive permit requirements. The choice to repurpose the demolition “rubble” in service of a less constrained park design embraced those limitations while going further than most reuse-based projects:

“Because it is a threshing floor, we were able to use not only big pieces of bricks or concrete but also all the fine powders. Most recycling companies don’t think about it; those fractions of concrete or bricks are usually unusable, yet they play an important role in the layers of the threshing floor, in its stability and in the way it absorbs water.”

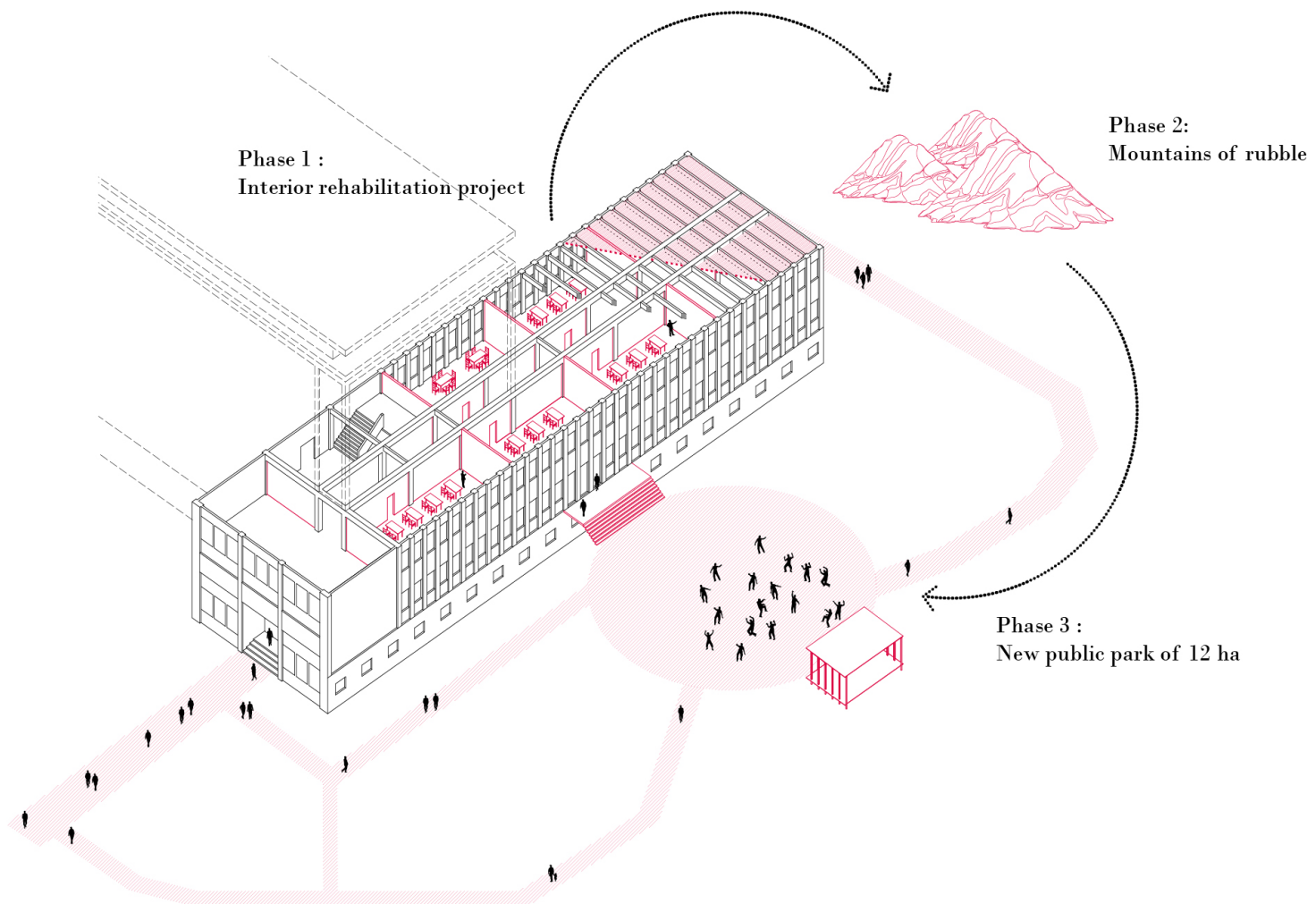
Inspired by the ‘mlats’ – beaten earth pathways common in Slovakian historical sites – the threshing floor was skillfully composed of layers of mixed rubble with the help of local engineers. Its permeability contributes to water infiltration but makes for a more brittle floor. Ideally, it also requires regular maintenance: weeds should be pulled out annually to avoid organic build ups that would threaten its integrity; under dry conditions, the floor should be moistened to avoid its crumbling; exceptional breakages also need fixing, made possible by the remaining stocks of material. Despite challenges with maintaining this rhythm, Boris reports continuous performances and few con-



quences. Experimental and recent, the project still needs to stand the test of time yet its benefits have already inspired locals, with the support of Bratislava's officials, to repeat the experiment in a nearby children's playground.

The rest of the processed rubble, however, is still stored on site. Boris is confident this will serve its purpose in due course. This attitude doesn't come without obstacles, however:

"The community sometimes fights about this; there are people that would prefer to have a completely clean space, saying 'don't store anything, we don't need it anymore'. But, you know, sometimes those things, when we store them, we don't know what will happen with them, but later they become part of the solution of a problem we didn't realise we had yet. It's kind of like this... One person's trash is another's treasure."







ZORISTIRIO/Communitism, Athens, Greece

Zoristirio ('the struggling place') takes its name from the Arabic pronunciation of 'thoristirio' ('the giving place'). This serendipitous play on words was adopted to allude to the intercultural nature of this reuse strategy, as well as the way it was both rooted-in and answered the struggles of Athens' dispossessed populations. Initially it was a simple storage space for clothes collected for homeless populations by the initiative Allos Anthropos ('the other human'). However, in late 2017, it evolved and expanded, through the expertise of two displaced Syrian citizens, Belal Ahmad and Magdi Alshaltie, and resident artist Maria Juliana Byk, into an integrated refugee solidarity system. Zoristiro became a central space to collect and supply clothing for local struggling populations (whether refugees, homeless or low-income families), which then worked with Ithaka Laundry (an NGO for people in need), Chora (a refugee-led NGO offering solidarity spaces, such as a cultural centre, free shop, social kitchen) and assorted refugee housing initiatives to create a local reuse and solidarity ecosystem that ultimately provided over 300 people every week with decent, repurposed clothing.

After Belal Ahmad moved to Ireland, the project was managed by Maria Juliana Byk and Farid Masoudi, a 17-year-old displaced Iranian, with the support of Magdi Alshaltie. In 2019, it was finally associated with the Communitism-based 'fabric hyper upcycling' initiative, 'Butterflies and Camels', which had the ambition of turning unwanted clothing items into new wearable pieces of high-end fashion. The social, cultural and economic reuse ecology developed over the years by Zoristirio and B&C were able not only to test and develop cutting-edge reuse strategies within the clothing (up to the fashion design) field but also to raise awareness and trigger wider discussion around sustainable and creative clothing reuse.

Over the years, thanks to the interest and dynamism generated by this initiative and the related activation of public and semi-public spaces, the regeneration of a socially challenging road was made possible in the neighbourhood.

INTERVIEW: ELENIVOULTSIDOU/Project leader

Zoristirio's former project leader Eleni Voultsidou recounts the immediate success of the volunteer-based initiative, and the eventual professionalisation it required:

"When Belal and Magdi were running the project in 2017, it was a free shop; people that needed clothes could find and take them for their family, for themselves. It became very big; a lot of people wanted to get clothes but [were] also donating them."

While many clothes found new owners, unwanted items started accumulating in Communitism. This triggered the development of clothing repair and design workshop Butterfly & Camels. Organisers, artists Tom Hamilton, Angel Torticollis and Natassa Dourida, recall: "We had that really big amount of unused old clothes. Tom and others had also found a lot of fabric on the streets... You know, we are those kind of people that collect stuff that are thrown away. We collect them and see how we can use and transform them. So we designed the workshops to reuse and upcycle these pieces.

It's partly just using techniques on the clothing; changing the silhouette, the cut, the style... But also incorporating unconventional materials we found. It's using the clothing almost as a vehicle to enable us to recycle materials that might not be recycled, like wood or metal scraps from other makerspaces."

Attended by experimented textile artists and novices alike, these workshops changed the free shop from an isolated solidarity initiative to an essential link into a circular ecology of practices:

"The passing on to refugees was really the 'reuse' portion of the 'reuse - recycle - recover' chain. What we tried to do was to take the clothes that weren't even wanted by refugees in need of them to make sure that they didn't get lost, then go into the next phase, which is the recycling-upcycling really; to make desirable things that were currently unwanted."

From there, runway shows were organised in 2019 then 2021. Through them, Communitism fed this ecology of practice both by displaying and selling the upcycled creations and their circular prin-

ciples to hundreds of fashionistas, and by fostering social cohesion: "The workshops would take up all of March and April. They were centred around peer to peer learning, getting inspiration from each other. But they were also a training in social cohesion that we needed for the runway in May: we did it all together. We had a scenography group taking care of the space set up, a styling team for the models, a self-organised bar, etc. It involved all of the building and the community.

That's central to our methodology: through practice, collaboration and peer to peer learning, by making materials available and letting people use them and do whatever they want... It was a way of becoming a community."

This enthusiasm around circular fashion was soon seen as an opportunity to structure Communitism. For Tom, "we realised that the last stage was to bring it all together, to recognise that all of what we did could be combined, feeding and supporting each other, as a virtuous economic circle."

The project, however, never found stability. In 2018 already, the free shop was closed following both the increasing workload on a limited number of volunteers, and the closure of the neighbouring refugee shelter.

"The free shop was open to the public twice a week; they had to handle that, and the sorting, connection with the social laundry... But nobody working there was getting paid for it; it was just not sustainable in the long term."

The 2020 lockdown followed by Communitism's eviction in 2024 further hindered possibilities for stabilisation. The moving, away from its community, and into a smaller space led to a transformation of the initiative towards a more continuous streamlined approach involving less storage of clothing and events held in public spaces. Untested, this perspective aims to provide an efficient circular economy model.

2018
*Closing of refugee shelter
and closing of Zoristirio*

*Leftover
clothes*

2017
*Launch of Zoristirio
(freeshop)*

Butterfly & Camels
*2019 - First workshop
2021 - Second workshop
Runways*

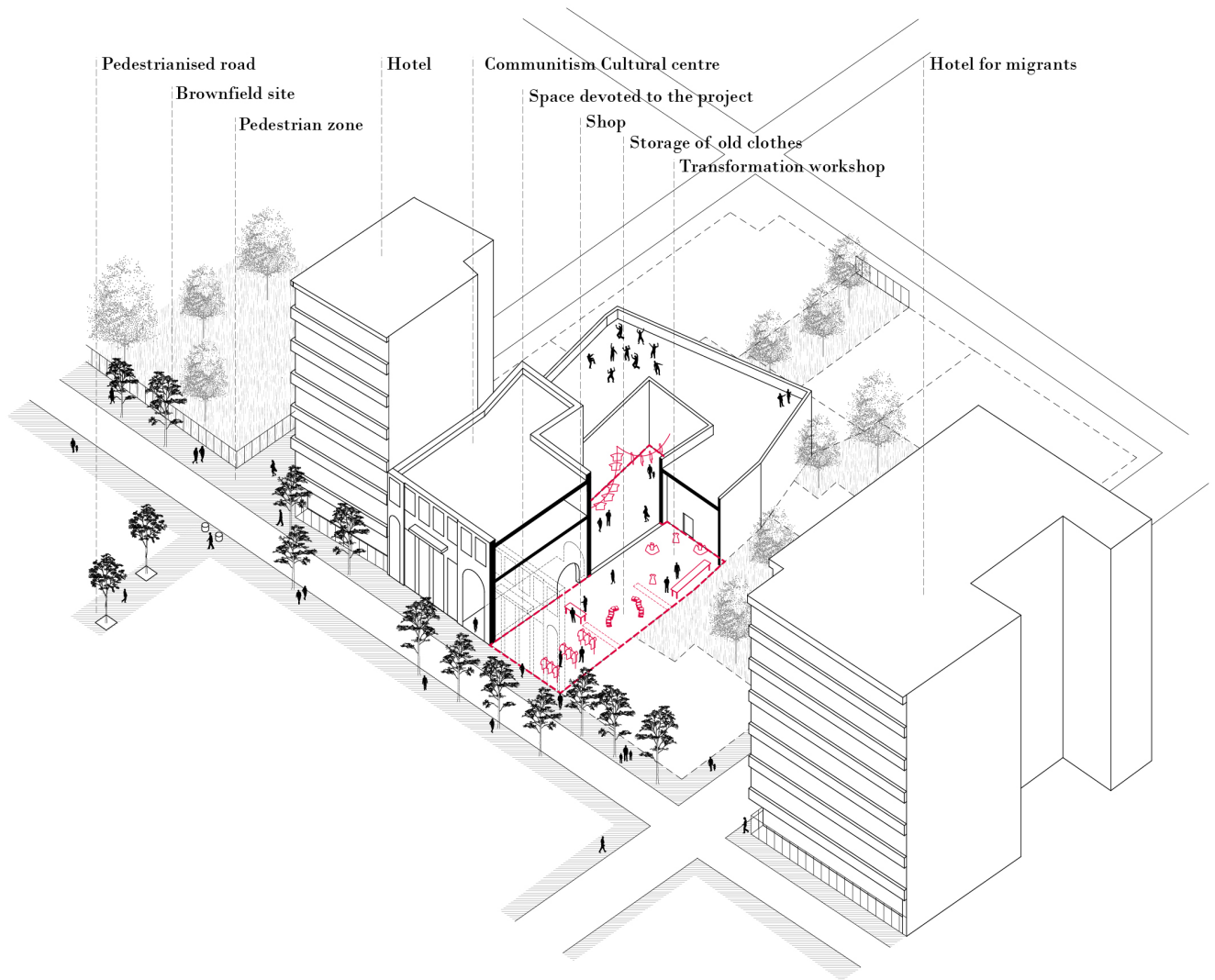
2024
Eviction of Communitism
*Moving to a new place
Transformation of the project*

2015

2020

2025





This section concerns creative strategies related to the reuse of architectural objects particularly difficult to reuse (oversized, complex form etc.); it addresses design opportunities and challenges represented by spaces that are too large in relation to current needs, such as empty buildings and structures. These spaces are prominently present in many contemporary urban contexts, and their future is open to speculation. This section displays TEH cultural centres' strategies that have considered the excess of available space as an architectural and social opportunity and mobilised a reconfiguration of uses/social practices towards new dynamics and possibilities (while considering the limitation of economic means). Three strategies are proposed concerning very different scales and processes.

1.2 OVERSIZE (OBJETS RIS- QUÉS)

The Common Roof – *Röda Sten Konsthall, Göteborg*

(Re)Tripolie – *A38, Budapest*

Zone of interest – *Stanica, Žilina*

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THE COMMON ROOF/Röda Sten Konsthall, Gothenburg, Sweden

An abandoned boiler house from the 1940s was destined for demolition after being used by rave parties and spontaneous art practices. Throughout the 1990s, Röda Sten Konsthall withstood a long battle for its cultural reconversion. Since 2000, it has become a major exhibition and educational space in Gothenburg (and the organiser of the Gothenburg International Biennial for Contemporary Art). Overlooking the Göta älv river as it flows into the sea, the functionalist architecture of bricks and concrete consists of a simple, but vast 12m high hall. While financial constraints would not allow for a complete renovation of this sizable infrastructure, its vastness was put into good use in favour of exceptional curatorial practices, constructing/exhibiting/using 1/1 architectural models and actively testing and reshaping the space every time.

Given the severity of Nordic weather, the hall acts as a public space of sorts where concepts of indoor and outdoor blend into one and where changing spatial strategies help fight heat loss rather than costly wall insulations. This is better seen through examples such as architect Marjetica Potrc's use of the space during the 'Common Roof' installation. The artist took advantage of the large space to explore how to plan and construct a common house, using participatory design with visitors' involvement in the shaping of the architectural forms while developing a dialogue with residents surrounding the building. The possibility of building 1/1 scale prototypes in the mild climate of the large central space, even during the coldest days, allowed this initiative (and others) to flourish.

Thanks to the experimental attitude of the art centre's protagonists, Röda's large hall has proven not only its strong adaptive capacity to expanding and reducing space necessities (exhibitions, gatherings, discussions, workshops, new office spaces etc.) but also an interesting ability to rework the relationship between "inside" and "outside" space. The capacity to use and consequently re-imagine indoor spaces as "outdoors" within the centre's activities provides – together with spatial flexibility – compelling research and design trajectories, especially in countries where the climate severely limits possibilities and related practices.

Image: Model 1/1 built during 'The Common Roof' project.

©Marjetica Potrc / Röda Sten Konsthall

<https://rodastenkonsthall.se/>

INTERVIEW: MIA CHRISTERSDOTTER NORMAN/ Röda Sten Konsthall Director (2005-present)

After a period of mostly volunteer-based operation, in 2005 Röda Sten Konsthall designated Mia Christersdotter Norman as its first Director. She has supervised the expansion and professionalisation of the space since then. She recalls how, in the 1990s, Gothenburg City Council was geared towards a commercial development plan of the industrial area, kickstarting Röda's battle for the building conservation:

"The initial group came from a range of different fields in society, and they had access to a wide and varied network that they informed and included in their battle. The group consisted, among others, of a prominent Art Museum director, a politician, a businessman and many others who saw their vision for the boiler house.

It helped that it was in fashion to turn industrial buildings into cultural centres. But really, they managed to make their dream visible both because they gathered media exposure and had access to people with connections. In this way they succeeded and got the right to use the house from the municipality."

This allowed for a basic renovation of the building; the space was cleaned, windows, staircases and a central elevator to move around the art pieces were added.

"We didn't have any money, so we got loans from the city to renovate step by step, but it was really a slow process. At first, all the available space was mainly used for exhibitions; there was just a tiny, tiny space for the staff.

To this day, the transformation is a continuous process of small improvements; we are doing it all the time, using every little space... we started with this office but smaller. Then we extended the office because we got more staff, which was sometimes faced with resistance

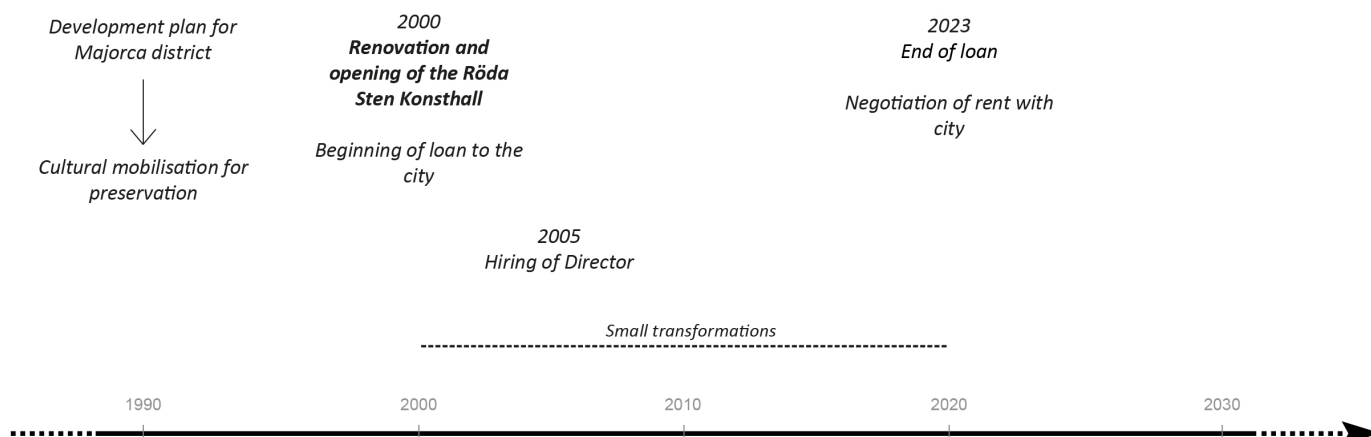
from some members of the association; they didn't want us to take too much of the exhibition space. Then we needed restrooms, as well as storage. So we started to add floors where we could, and it went on through the whole building. By now, it's really like an inverted favela of mezzanines with storage spaces."

The space was adapted for public use, including showrooms and a restaurant, while keeping many traces of the past, from the naked brick walls to the graffiti adorning them. For Mia, this a common attitude in art spaces; industrial halls, by their size and roughness, are seen as a good fit for such purposes. It does, however, imply specific curatorial practices:

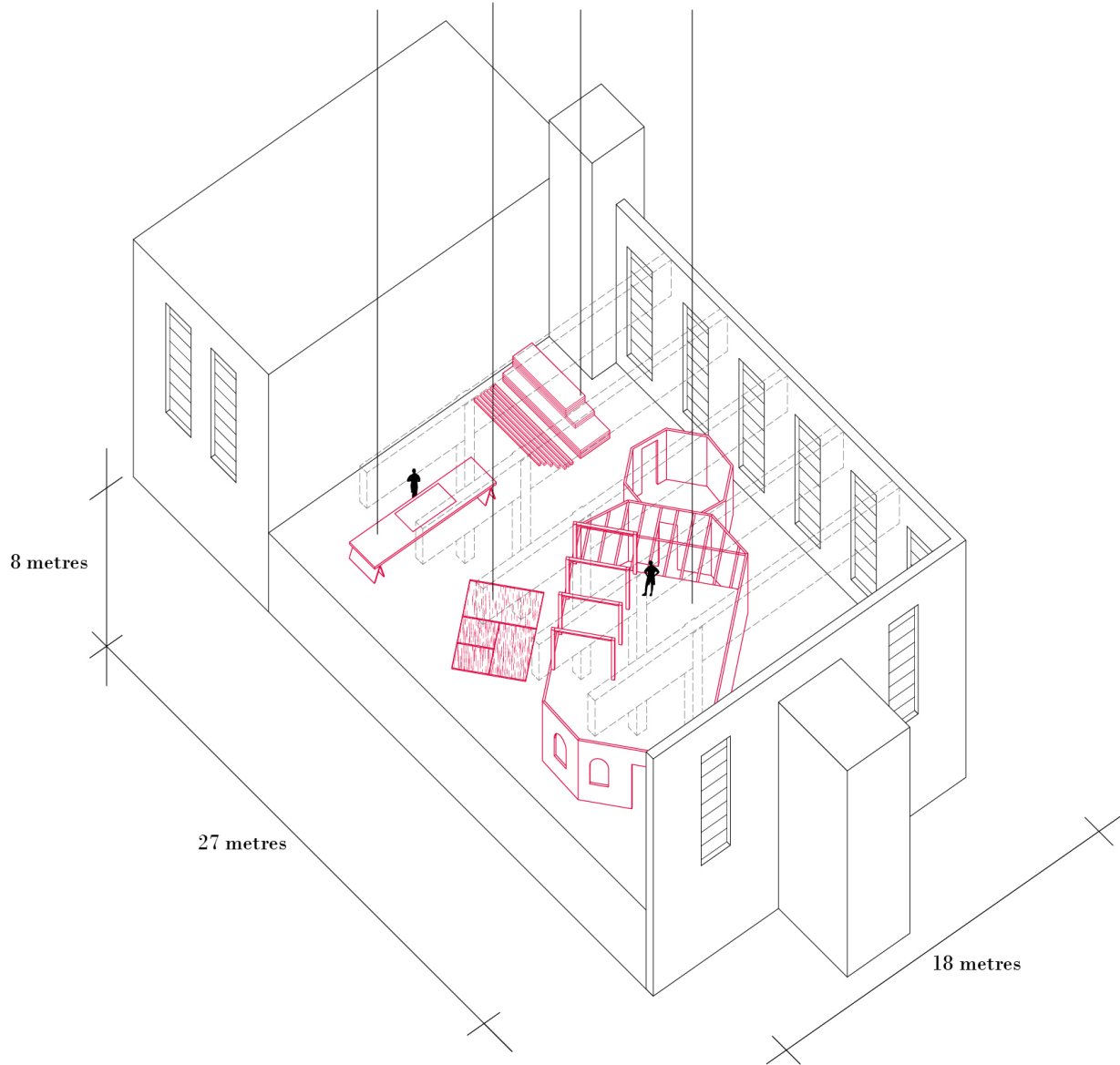
"In one way, it allows us to do rough things. We can drill, we can make dust, noise... but in fact the bricks are starting to become a problem; they became too fragile through repeated drilling. Now, we can't allow drilling in the walls. Add to that the huge windows, we're not left with much hanging space, so we need to constantly build exhibition walls, or use our more 'traditional' floors – two smaller and white galleries.

But we're not mainly directed towards this kind of art anyway. We do a lot more of projections, installations, sculptures or performances. I mean, the ceiling is 12 metres high! It takes some grand gestures to fill that!"

Such gestures include architectural experiment. STEALTH unlimited's "(Dis)assembled" or "Marjetica" as Potrc's "Common Roof" all took advantage of this particular space to offer unique experiences. Activist and architect Antonio Cirugeda and its "Recetas Urbanas" initiative also exemplifies how the unfinished, grand character of the boiler house fosters unprecedented spatial possibilities through temporary extensions of the infrastructure.



Workshop Garden Materials Model 1/1







(RE)TRIPOLIE – A38, Budapest, Hungary

At the centre of A38 Cultural Centre is the transformation of a 1968 Artemovsk class stone-carrier ship into an alternative cultural space on the Danube River. Since its opening in 2003, the 14-by-85 metre boat has developed into a popular concert hall with two supplementary stages, a restaurant and an additional exhibition space, taking advantage of its location to avoid noise complaints so common for urban event venues. As such, and thanks to the regeneration/adaptation of an industrial ship into a public space, A38 has become a major cultural centre in Budapest hosting a variety of coveted events – from gastronomic manifestations to theatre plays, artistic and musical performances, literary discussions and film screenings. The reconversion of this imposing soviet ship represents in itself an important architectural and technical achievement contributing to make A38 a staple of Budapest nightlife as well as to highlight the capacity of monofunctional infrastructures to accommodate new mixed-use futures.

Image : A38, a cultural centre on the Danube.

©Gábor Nagy / a38

<https://www.a38.hu/en>

INTERVIEW: LAZLO VÁNCZA / A38 Co-founder

Lazlo Vánca is the architect and co-founder of A38, along with Attila Bógnar. In 2022, he recounted both the financial conditions and the ambitions from which the project emerged:

“Initially, we made design studies for the utilisation of basement premises [but] we felt that they could not work in the long term. Getting ownership would be a terrible expenditure, and a constant conflict with the tenants was guaranteed.”

A floating space was thus the answer chosen to avoid the struggles faced by many cultural centres. Reusing an abandoned ship and taking advantage of its sturdy structure, various spaces and capacity to be located in low-density areas were key to the success of the project. However, Lazlo and Attila’s ambitions made for a few difficulties in finding the right boat:

“We first tried Danube barges, but because the locks are narrower on this stretch of the Danube, the width of the barges is smaller. The problem with vessels of similar proportions was that the concert hall would have become too long, and we couldn’t handle this problem acoustically. Acoustician Endre Szabó recommended we go east, where the locks are wider and therefore boats are more spacious.”

The choice of the Artemovsk ship came from marrying the needs of the cultural project and the architectural properties of the Ukrainian boat, themselves shaped by the infrastructural nautical system it was part of. Two years of transformation were needed for a specialised company to convert the ship’s structure into a cultural space:

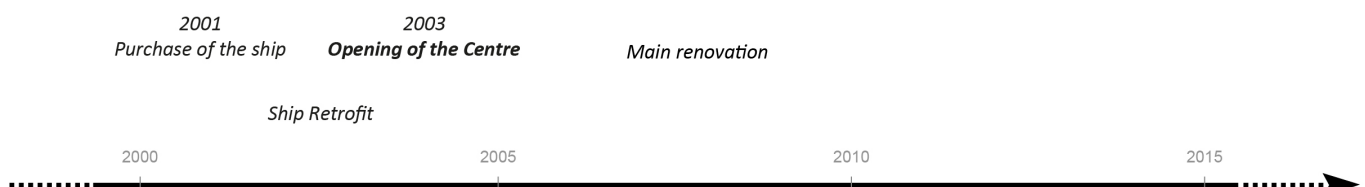
“We completely overhauled the ship’s support structure after dismantling the lower part. This is how we were able to create the concert hall. That was the most important aspect. [...] The hull itself, the steel frame, was completely inadequate to meet the acoustic requirements. That’s why we opted for the house-in-house system, meaning that we slid the concert hall into the skeleton of the ship, flexibly mounted on rubber blocks, which is what made the acoustics so good.”

While these interventions, and later successive ones such as the addition of contemporary exhibition space on the ship’s deck, deeply modified the original structure, a lot of importance was given to the safekeeping of many key elements to the history and character of the Soviet boat:

“The positioning of the stage also had its own logic: in the old days, when this was a transport ship, the crew bridge was aft, from where the sailors could get down to the engine room. Today, this space is the backstage, which has retained its original, industrial feel and that’s why it’s so popular with the musicians. [...]”

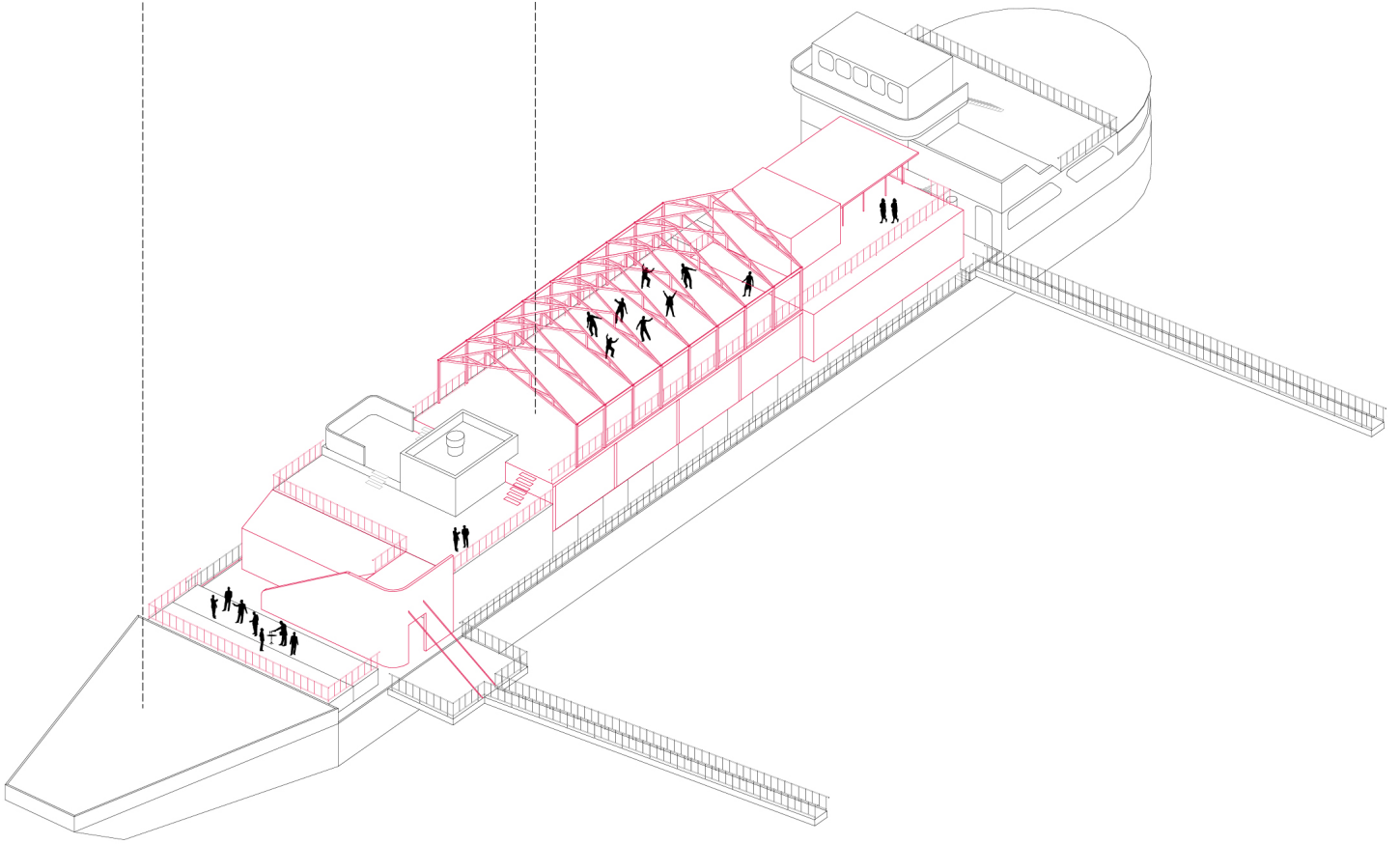
We’ve deliberately left [the navigating instruments panels] in place. We wanted to preserve the atmosphere of the space. The original hull represents the world of shipbuilding in the socialist industry of the 60s. From a design point of view, it is a found object, and we did not want to eradicate its values in any way. It was no coincidence either that Endre Szabó chose the Komárom as the most suitable shipyard for the construction of the first phase, as there were still master shipbuilders working there who were familiar with this shipbuilding technology, the use of materials, and the design principles.”

While the ship’s retrofit might constitute a cheaper alternative to usual buildings, it comes with stronger maintenance requirements, amplified by the number of visitors. The inspection becomes a crucial cyclical moment for A38, which defines its ability to stay afloat: “Every ten years there is a big inspection. Then the thickness of the plates below the water surface is measured. If there is a problem, the ship has to go into dry dock, but if it’s in good condition, with sufficient corrosion protection, it can stay in the water for another five years. As far as I know, a ship can be in the water for up to fifteen years without interruption.”



Former ship

Nested spaces for
cultural activities







ZONE OF INTEREST – Stanica, Žilina, Slovakia

Next to Žilina city centre, Stanica (‘The station’) was created in 2003 within the former Žilina–Záriečie railway station to host an independent cultural centre. Amidst the noise and bustle of trains passing by and cars speeding through the adjacent Rondel overpass highway encircling the building, the space was developed to welcome artistic experimentations and activist groups with the explicit aim to act as a crossroads for people and ideas of all perspectives.

In 2005 the centre began to gradually appropriate its hard and mineral surroundings through – at first – the transformation of the unused spaces below the overpass bridge into a multifaceted outdoor cultural place. After the repair of the pedestrian underpass, the collective went on developing a two-hectare community park and garden in place of a dumping ground, creating a covered outdoor performance stage below the Rondel overpass. Throughout 2009 the initiative continued with the construction of the S2 building within this space, effectively doubling the capacity of the centre and acting as a stage for contemporary art, events and performances. Built out of mostly reused beer crates, straw bales and railway sleepers, through the volunteer workforce of the local community and within a small budget, the space was rapidly adopted for various events – from cultural festivals to weddings.

This initiative brings forward strategies related to the regeneration of major mobility infrastructures’ spatial and material waste. As such, it testifies the strong potential of severely underutilised and neglected spaces to be transformed into vibrant public spaces despite the daunting size and impact of modernist infrastructural giants.

INTERVIEW: ROBERT BLASKO/ Stanica

Co-Founder

Robert Blasko is the Co-Founder of Stanica and Director of the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Trucs Spheriques, the organisation behind the centre. He describes the extension of Stanica from a former train station to its larger environment as a “step by step process”:

“Today you see a beautiful park but back then it was a garbage space. There were a lot of bushes and trees and not much lighting in the underpass leading to the city centre, thus people were afraid to enter. There was also a lot of water accumulating during rainy days. It felt like a ‘broken space’.

The first interventions were aimed at fixing the building –only, we didn’t imagine occupying the space around. We didn’t even plan windows facing the backyard. But then, you start to use it, you look around and you understand [the] potential of [the] space.

Then once a volunteer said ‘Ah, maybe we could make a park even if these lands don’t belong to us’ and the process started. A similar reflection concerned the empty space under the bridge. It doesn’t belong to us but, because we needed a bigger space for theatre, and for the organisation of the TEH annual meeting, a crazy idea emerged to make [it] happen under the highway. We said, ‘okay, let’s do a temporary structure under the bridge.’ So, at the end of the process, there was this great S2 building, standing under the highway and using its structure and protection. It really was a huge project, made possible by volunteers and amateurs.

Then, we started to gradually occupy the bridge, to create a vertical green wall, a U ramp for skateboards, a stage, a screen that we use for projections... all thanks to this special infrastructural residual spaces

and underused structures.”

The use of the overpass bridge comes with several advantages. Its vast deck serves as a roof for many activities protecting them from water and snow but also to collect rainwater then used in the centre’s gardens or for the toilets. Its solid concrete pillars constitute important walls against which smaller structures can lie, and acts as a screen for projections. In general, the resources that allowed this formidable structure to be built here are put in favour of further uses: its size and sturdiness welcome ideally lighter, temporary and experimental interventions suited for community building.

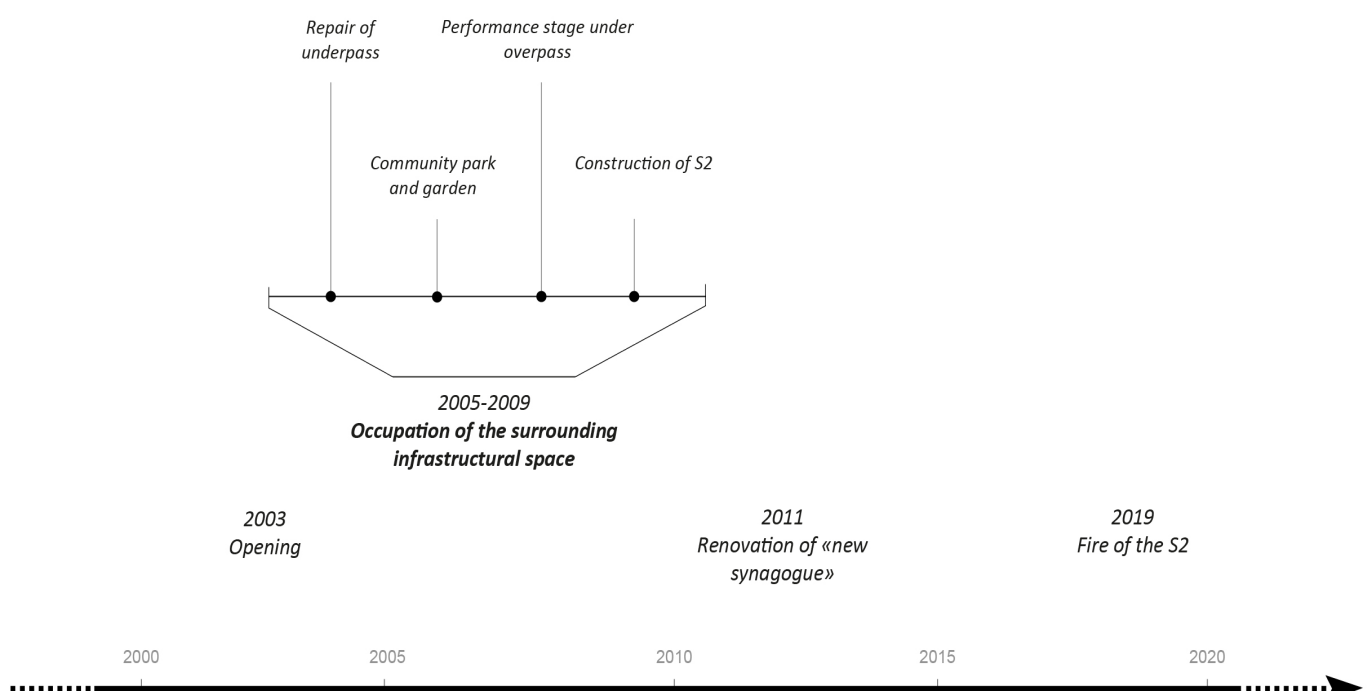
Taking over underused and or ‘abandoned’ spaces is, however, not necessarily without conflicts. While many local residents appreciated Stanica’s initiatives, some long-time users, such as street artists, expressed a refusal of sorts:

“Street artists tried to destroy the vertical garden with chemicals. They said, ‘you took our wall and we were here before you’. But what they were doing was prosecuted by the police. They had to pay fines and so on to make graffiti. So, we convinced the City to make a legal graffiti zone in the underpass so they’d get more space and less problems. That settled the situation; we’re on good terms with the graffiti community now. They didn’t repeat the chemical attacks.”

Other sources of conflicts, such as material theft, night littering or bonfires, had also to be handled by Stanica, in other ways.

“One big step was to make a fence around the park. In a way, we were saying (illegally) ‘this is our space’. The local people, particularly families with kids, felt safe because kids could just run around without the danger of cars and trains around. So it was a paradoxical situation. By creating a fence on one side we occupied land which was not ours but on the other side we offered the entire community a space of better quality and safety.”

Some conflicts, however, found harsher outcomes. In an unexpected



turn of events, the building under the overpass, the S2, was set on fire by unknown people, in what could be an act of protest, or of recklessness. However, to Robert, this event is a testimony to the power of experimental public spaces:

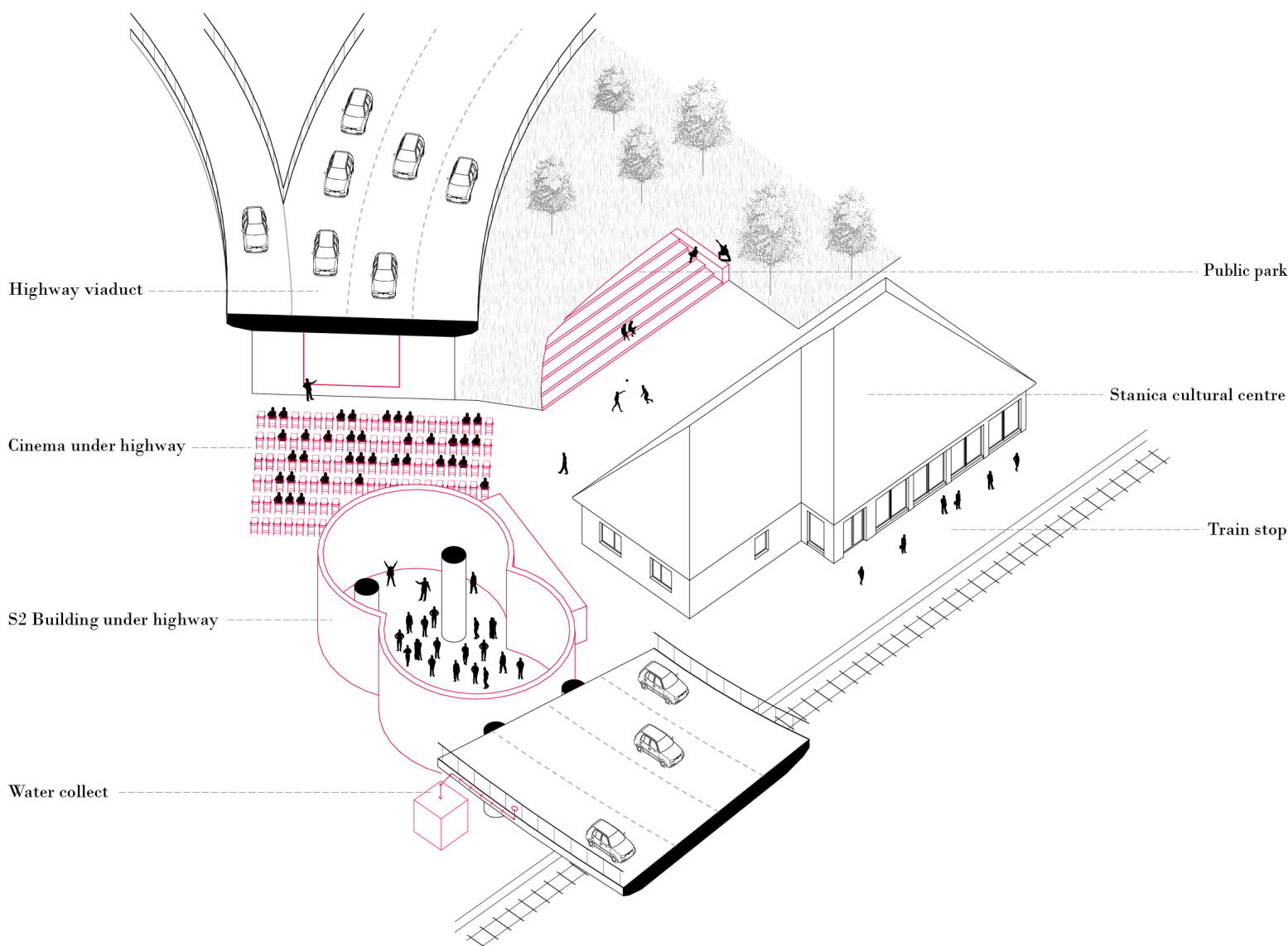
“This place is full of experiments, and many of them failed. This is the story of the place: You try to do something in a different way – of course, often you’ll fail, but there is good coming out of it. It’s easy for the bureaucrats to say ‘you cannot do it’ or ‘it is not possible’. But what I say is, ‘let’s see, let’s test it and then we can adjust’. And then we can learn something new.”

In general, the attitude of Stanica towards its environment can be described as one of struggle and – at the same time – creative and experimental answer and to a harsh context: car traffic, mineral spaces, concrete structures, dangerous or anxiogenic activities are all addressed through further steps of transformation of their direct environment, turning a post-industrial, functionalist and anti-social

site into a vibrant community space. An overpass is turned into a multifunctional cultural space while an underpass – lit up with artistic interventions – into a pedestrian, bike and trolley friendly access and space.

To Robert, this attitude is also an example of how local communities take into their own hands the shortcomings of the far-right government currently in place, including the Mayor’s initiative and project of transforming a public square into a private commercial mall. Stanica opposes turning a parking lot and infrastructural space into a park, regaining spaces lost or privatised in the past.

Robert describes Stanica as an oasis, both a family home and a community island, surrounded by a sea of concrete and destructive politics for independent cultural spaces.



2 OUT OF THE BOX

GUERRILLA URBANISM

The Healing Project – *Basis Vinschgau Venosta (Silandro)*

Critical Revealing – *Malý Berlín (Trnava)*

Coal Bridge – *Kulbroen (Aarhus)*

WICKED THINKING

Parasitic transition – *Ifö Centre (Bromölla)*

The Neighbourhood Office – *Institut for (X) (Aarhus)*

Architectural Permanence – *Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (Bagneux)*

This part of the publication includes projects and/or strategies with ‘an experimental approach to planning, urbanism and/or architecture’ design process, conceiving it as a ‘permanent reinvention’, thwarting expectations and known codes. These are projects that are able to advocate for greater freedom, allowing unprecedented propositions to emerge (new protocols, creative approaches, legal frameworks... etc.), applauding a ‘way of bending the rules of the game from the inside, making the cultural institution itself the site of a revolution’. Strategies aimed at breaking down the usual hierarchy between project owner, architect, contractors and future residents, and to replace it with a synergy that lets each party make their own contribution. Invention and experimentation are put forward to find a balance between desire and realisation. Within these strategies, centres use their knowledge to reinterpret regulations for the benefit of the project they initiate/ manage; they invent their own commissions and demonstrate that new ways of doing things are to be advocated for their economy of means, their efficiency over time and their sobriety.

This chapter (Out of the Box) aims to offer a glimpse of such approaches within the TEH centres through two sections: ‘Guerrilla Urbanism’ and ‘Wicked Thinking’. While the first portrays strategies related to the act of making places on land that the users do not have the legal rights to use, the second describes strategies related to creative ways of developing/implementing urban strategies or governance schemes.

INSPIRING POSITION/PATRICK BOUCHAIN (architect, urbanist)

‘The law should not be confused with regulations. It is essential for life in society, bringing together the conditions necessary for justice, equality and respect for the individual. Reading the texts of the law opened my eyes to their potential and helped me to free myself from the constraints I was often opposed [to]. The law works in the same way as grammar or mathematics: we all have it within us and it doesn’t require any special skill to be tackled. Ontologically speaking, we can only be in the law. You therefore need to know the law in order to interpret the law; in other words, to confront it with reality; creating judicial prec-

edents based on experiments to help generalise new practices. Laws are not immutable. Applying them blindly and a priori would be a step backwards in terms of the law (...) when the law is inadequate or unsuitable, we must not hesitate to interpret it on the basis of experimentation and establish case law (...) Risk assessment, discernment and experimentation must take the lead over the literal application of the law. Interpreting and taking it to its limits does not mean making structures more dangerous, it means making them more humane.’

(P. Bouchain, 2019)

Guerrilla urbanism (from guerrilla gardening) is the act of making places on land that the users do not have the legal rights to use. It encompasses a diverse range of actors who seek to provoke change by using spatial interventions as a form of direct action. This practice has implications for land rights and land reform; aiming to promote re-consideration of land ownership in order to assign a new purpose or reclaim land that is perceived to be in neglect or misused. Guerrilla gardening emerged during periods when a society stopped treating land as a community resource and started treating it as a commodity.

2.1 GUERRILLA URBANISM

The Healing Project – *Basis V Venosta (Silandro)*

Critical Revealing – *Malý Berlín (Trnava)*

The Coal Bridge – *Kulbroen (Aarhus)*





THE HEALING PROJECT – Basis Vinschgau Venosta, Silandro, Italy

Basis is a social activation hub in the city of Silandro, within the South Tyrol autonomous region, where the Italian, Swiss and Austrian borders meet. Founded in 2019, the centre provides a variety of cultural activities while also offering educational and professional support and services (co-working and maker-spaces, residencies, meeting rooms, ...) for local projects.

A striking feature of Basis is the way it managed – through gradual occupation and cultural programming – to process the burdensome history and related social imagery of the spaces it occupied: the 1937 Drusus military barracks. Before its closure in the 1990s, the barrack’s four hectares were well known for being a strategic outpost and fortification for the Italian Fascist forces in their efforts to occupy and ‘Italianise’ the region. It was a space hosting 2,000 soldiers in a village of 1,200 inhabitants . A violent past and a state of abandonment led to development plans that systematically included the demolition of the Fascist infrastructure.

In this context, Basis led an operation of ‘symbolic regeneration’, defending the historical importance of the complex to engage in a critical remembrance of the past while healing the deep wounds left in Silandro.

Through artistic, cultural and intergenerational programmes and a progressive occupation and transformation of the space, Basis has allowed new ties and histories to develop between the space and the local population – to the point that Silandro municipal council has now centred the redevelopment plan of the area around the partial conservation of Drusus barracks.

*Image : Image of the petition “Save the public space ex-Caserna
Druso, Silandro!”
<https://basis.space/it/>*

INTERVIEW: HANNES GÖTSCH/Basis Vinschgau Venosta Founder

Hannes Götsch was born and raised in Silandro and worked in private industry before creating Basis. Today, as the centre's board member and its main strategic developer, he recounts how he came to defend the Drusus barracks:

"I've been involved with the local alternative scene since I was a kid, constantly looking for spaces for experimentation and freedom, concerts, DJ sets... It's difficult here, because everything is very controlled. From 2002 to 2013, we organised an open-air festival, then the police shut us down, out of ignorance. It was a really bad moment. Growing up within this German Tyrolean Swiss mentality, with the Italian laws... It's just a very repressive situation. And I was constantly looking for a positive revenge to that. I was also responsible for the growth of a local company which became very profitable. I managed suppliers internationally, up to China. When I was there, I passed by the suicide nets, workers piled onto each other. I saw myself enrolled with far-right people, who had no care for human rights... I decided I could not continue. I asked for a sabbatical and got a paid leave for all of 2015. It was a huge luxury. Then once I visited Drusus, I had goosebumps: that's what I had been looking for. That place was made to bring people together; we just had to change the way it was perceived. I realised, "This doesn't come from nowhere. It needs all my negative and positive experiences. It needs this cultural work of bringing people together and the capitalistic approach, with all its limits."

While South Tyrol is a wealthy region due to its agricultural activity, Hannes describes it as a complicated context founded on tight communities but little care for innovation and progressive values. As he found out about the demolition plan of the Drusus site, he took advantage of this context to negotiate directly with the Mayor:

"He wanted to develop this district for startups. But there's no push to invest in innovation here, because there's isn't any money issue.

It's a luxurious lethargy. We were not in need of space for entrepreneurs – they left – but of a mindset change to get people out of that lethargy. That's a social activation hub. I had the expertise; I knew all the buzz- words. He was interested, but this is a 2,300m² building, with two floors. It's big. I had to show them the interest in investing in their own building. I offered myself as a skilled employer for the project and they accepted."

My double background and that particular position allowed for a quick development:

"I did a lot of networking, obtained a European Regional Development Fund and a provincial grant. The first two people were employed in 2017. In 2019, we moved in the middle of the construction site and kept on building it from the inside out.

It went much faster than most public renovation processes, it was the private sector way. If you wait too long, you're losing decades and millions of euros, hundreds of relationships, possibilities and young people. The basic things – the hygiene, the internet, making the space usable – is all we needed to start, and that could be covered easily."

Hannes describes the renovation process itself as a frustrating one, made of fights and compromises:

"The renovation almost killed us. The municipality decided on an architect who had no experience in adaptive reuse. I spent a lot of time on the design to help maintaining the quality of the space. This architecture is very strong and clear, with a lot of light, air and space. The whole point was to spend as little as possible to build a pluri-functional box that could adapt to everything. In the end, the architects gave us technical knowledge, but we were deciding everything."

For Basis, this physical renovation represents, however, a tool for the wider transformation of local imaginations:

"Drusus was a black spot. It had been land taken away from farmers and made completely inaccessible. For elderly people, it's still diffi-

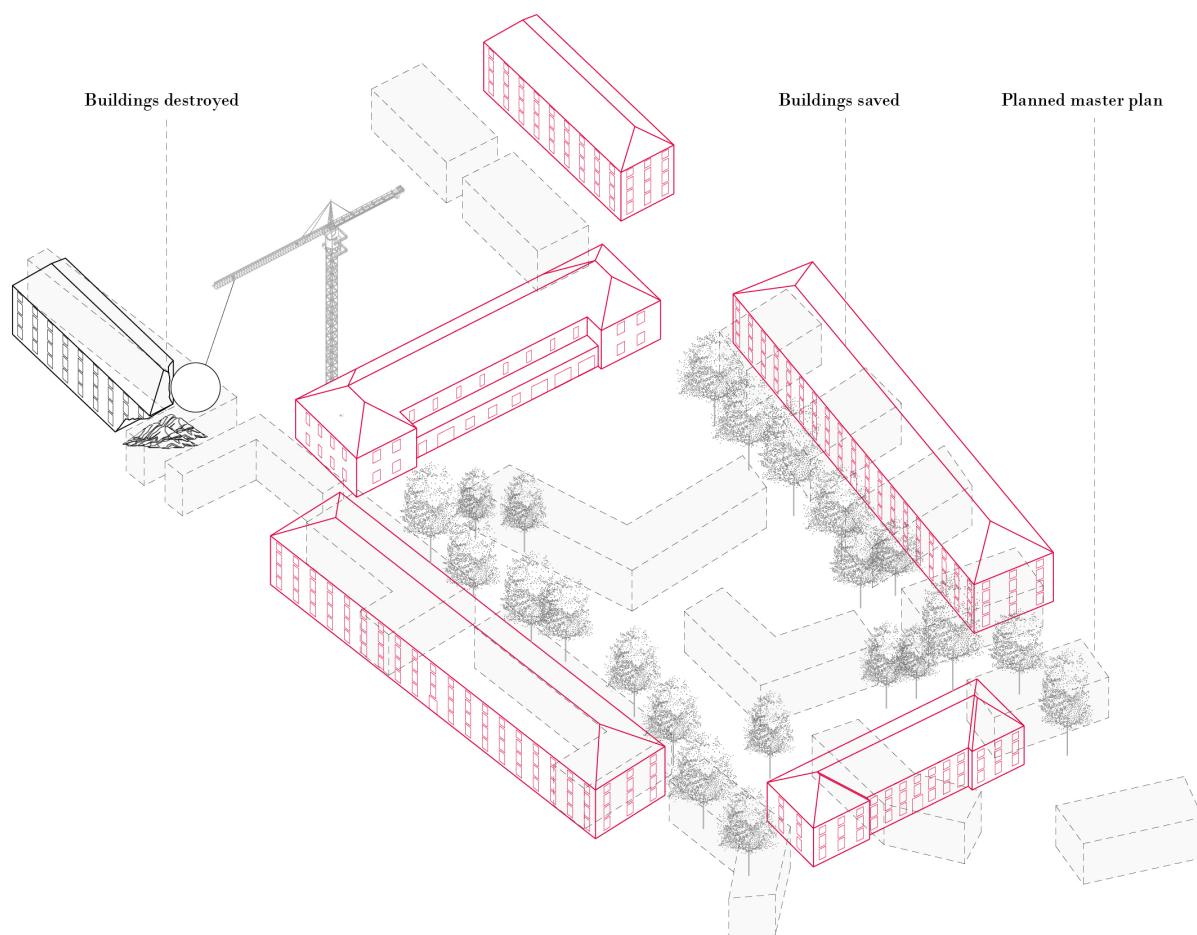


cult to come here. They don't understand why it wasn't demolished. But we cannot wait for people to die to start doing things. So the first thing was to open the space and bring people to come discover it. For example, the farmers' association now has its meetings here, so they're all forced to come frequently and learn it's not negative anymore.

We create good experiences around various topics to trigger different interests and imageries. We bring families, kids, we've got activities for everyone: cinema, music, educational things, talks... We also develop different projects here. Our team uses half the space, and the rest is used by other people to find their own identity, their own expression, like they couldn't do before in Silandro. Step by step, we've reached a big audience.

It's a difficult context: a lot of people don't want to change. But we are successful with people who can see over the mountains. And anyway,

we can't always adapt to the 'status quo'. It is an activist project of respect, love and empathy. There will always be people who hate it and fear change. That can also be a good thing. Because we can say that we are not that, that we are against that, that we are there for different ways, to innovate. And I think that's also why we became a reference for a lot of projects of military space transformation through Italy."







CRITICAL REVEALING – Malý Berlín, Trnava, Czech Republic

Publikum.sk, a cultural association of young creatives, first developed the idea of Malý Berlin Cultural Centre, which opened in Trnava's historic centre in 2018. The centre offers a wide variety of cultural and artistic events while developing ambitious projects. One such "Critical Revealing" brought together – from July 2023 to December 2024 – five cultural organisations (besides Malý Berlín, CC Broumov in the Czech Republic; Aurora in Hungary; Izolyatsia in Ukraine; MUA in Georgia) in a collective research effort to document, discuss, valorise and protect the disappearing Communist cultural heritage. Critical Revealing acts as a network of engaged research initiatives putting in relation key sites and events of Communist history that are nowadays dispersed through the post-Soviet nations. Examples of these are: the industrial bread industry and its built environment (GA); the Western stylistic influence on Soviet industrial buildings (UA); the forced USSR secularisation and internment of nuns (CZ); the College for Advanced Studies democratic learning communities (HU); and the successive integration and exclusion of the Roma minority (SK). As such, the initiative combines both built and immaterial heritage, the safekeeping and critical discussion of Soviet history through exhibitions, oral history, online tools, lecture series, workshops and guided tours.

Image source: Malý Berlín, Trnava
<https://www.malyberlin.sk/>

INTERVIEW: MICHAEL KLEMBARA/Maly Berlin
 Director (2018-present)

Michael Klembara is Director of Maly Berlin and in charge of Critical Revealing. He recounts the origins of the project:

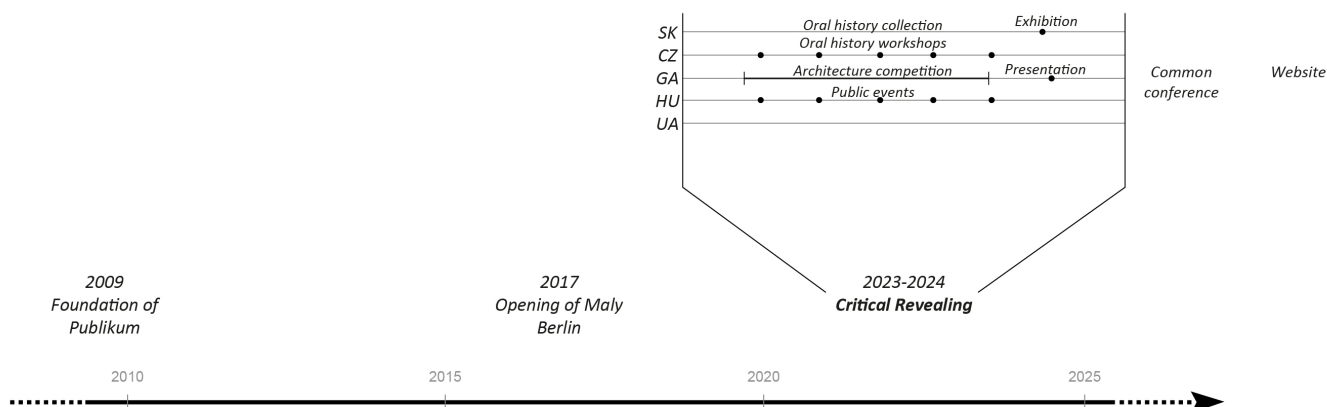
“In Central Europe, the cultural institutions don’t work in the second half of 20th century, so the Communist period is almost never addressed and easily forgotten. Our idea was to show we could work more actively with that time period. It is also important to us to show that independent organisations are working with cultural heritage, within a much broader definition. With Critical Revealing, we show that you can work with heritage through both on a material and immaterial level – for example, through oral history and historical phenomena that still have a strong impact on the present.”

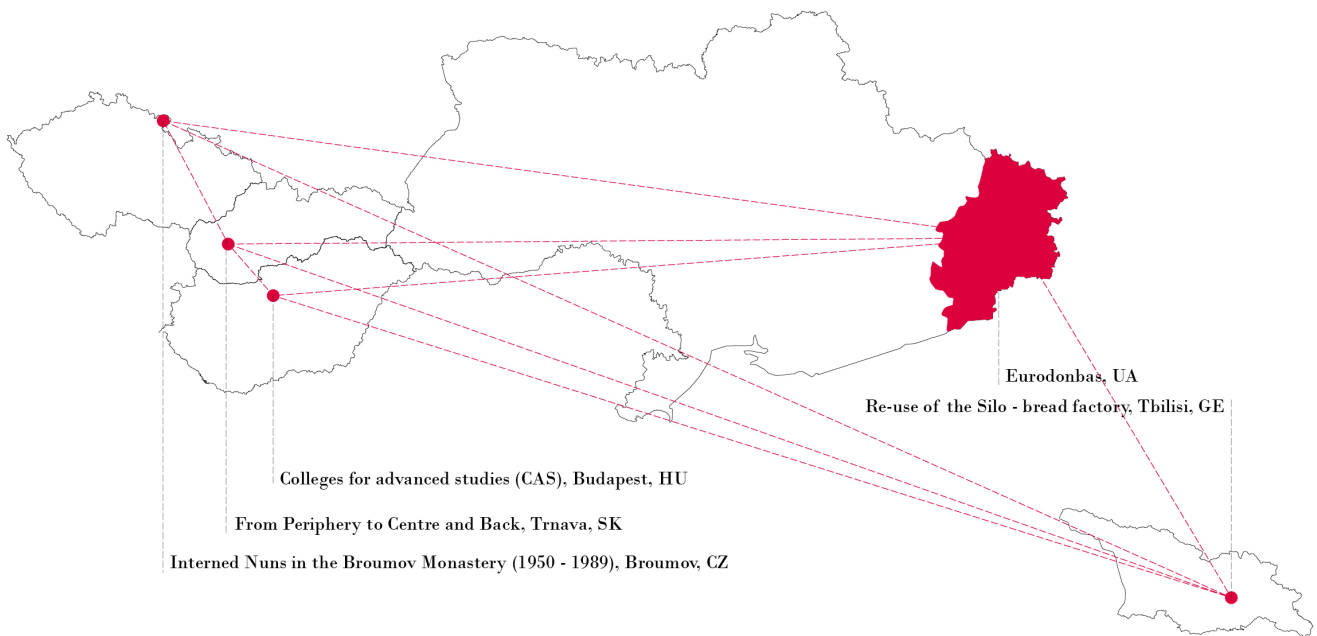
Maly Berlin reached out to both existing partners and new ones: “Maly Berlin is the creator and leader of the project. Since we applied for the International Visegrad Fund, we were looking for centres within the V4 as well as through the western Balkans, but it meant we couldn’t integrate people from Baltic countries, for example. We already trusted a few partners, because of past projects, and we found others who were interested and involved in those topics. It was also about how each project and country shared something in common. Georgia and Ukraine were under heavy industrialisation during the Soviet period, and this emerges clearly in the way they tackle the subject through urban and architectural elements. On the other side, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary share a strong history. In general, it’s important for us to show that the developments of some USSR states were very different from one another. It’s also about the way they shared a political regime, what was possible or not.”

This led to a variety of approaches, drawing a rich spectrum between intangible and tangible cultural heritage valorisation practices: “Every partner chose a very different aspect of Communism. Two are working on industrial heritage at different scales, others with intangible cultural heritage. Heritage recognition is particularly relevant for our partners in Georgia and Ukraine. They have buildings to protect and an intense industrial history. For Ukraine, it’s also a way to showcase the Donbas region’s heritage as well as document it, to save its history and address the conflict and the loss they’re enduring. CC Broumoc works inbetween tangible and intangible heritage: they address the violent history of the persecution of religious orders and of their monasteries. Aurora and ourselves, we work on intangible heritage, with threatened memories of that era. The intangible components disappear every day little by little while the tangible get demolished. At Maly Berlin, we have one researcher and one Roma artist working together on the Roma minority. We could not do it without that, because so much of Roma culture is oral, and access is extremely difficult.”

The collaborative aspect of Critical Revealing is thus mainly centred on a common efforts to support Communist heritage through many initiatives:

“We all do our own research on our side, but we are regularly in contact and exchange information. What the research shows is how this common cultural heritage can be approached in many ways and how much it can connect very different countries.”









THE COAL BRIDGE – Kulbroen, Aarhus, Denmark

Within the deindustrialised central harbour area of Aarhus, Kulbroen stands both for a 1952 disused concrete coal bridge and the associative movement that has been committed to its preservation and valorisation since 2014 through a set of vibrant cultural programmes.

The 160m long infrastructure, cutting through a large industrial site, was once an essential link for the production of energy. Today it constitutes one of the very few monumental remnants of this era since the phasing out of the energy plant and successive demolition process from 1969 to 1997. Through the occupation and cultural animation of the infrastructure, Kulbroen Cultural Centre's team managed to safeguard the bridge from demolition before brokering an agreement with Aarhus officials upon the its central and iconic role within the redevelopment plan of the neighbourhood. In a move reminiscent of New York's Highline Park, the coal bridge is now heading for conservation and transformation, drawing connections and opportunities from the bay to Aarhus' central station, proposing specific adaptations to the various spaces it will cut through.

Image: The coal bridge and interventions by Kulbroen. Museum Aarhus i Den Gamle / Kulbroen / <https://kulbroen.com/>

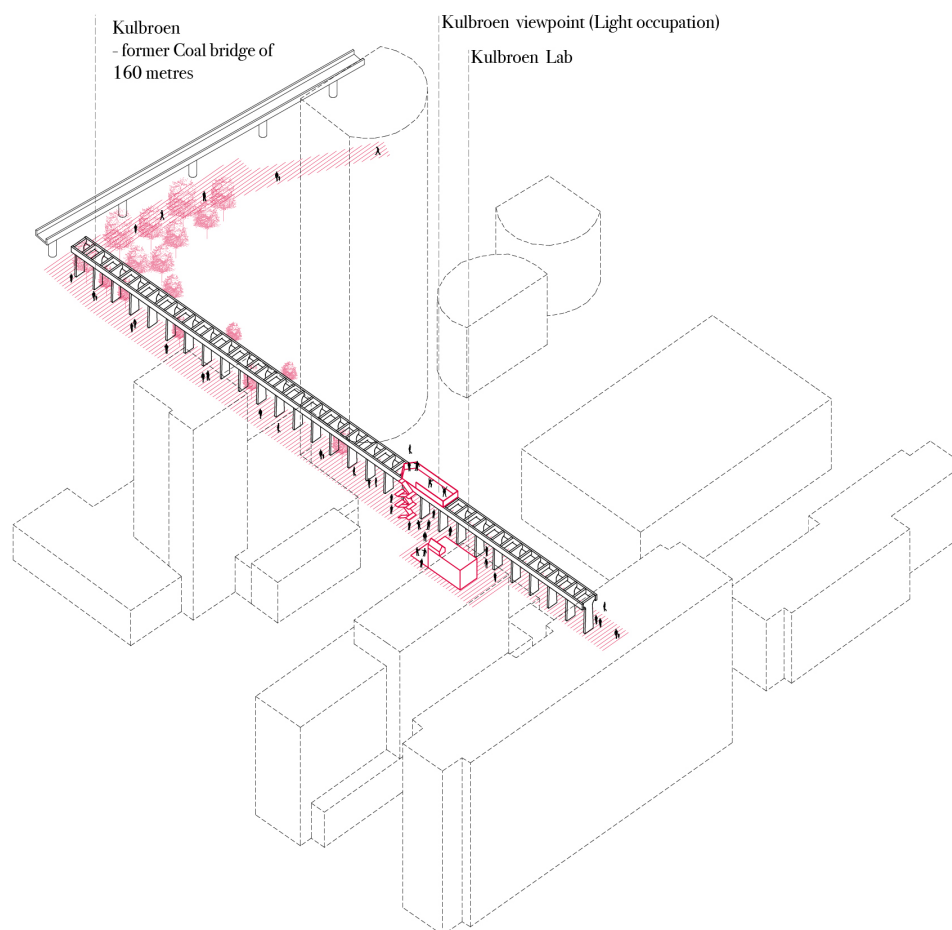
By 2018, the municipality was set on saving the coal bridge and led an architecture competition for the area. Kulbroen put the time of this process in service of their project. Through Underværker (part of Realdania), the organisation was supported to create the Kulbroen Hut, a wooden structure allowing for small events, exhibitions and a restaurant within the bridge. Other private and public funds stimulated the structure until Kulbroen was recognised as a public cultural institution in 2022 and was granted an annual allocation by Aarhus cultural department.

However, beyond public plans and funding, it is the current private constructions that now secure Kulbroen's hopes:

"It's really been a struggle. Many times, we almost gave up and we thought that it would never happen. In the end we've basically created an outdoor cultural institution around a bridge in a country with very shifty weather! Some events were an economical disaster. And we don't even get paid to do this, so I often told myself, 'let's just get out of here and enjoy life instead'.

But one thing that has helped is that, in our project, we linked the bridge to the new buildings. So today, developers are designing the

new blocks to be connected to the bridge, that has become a public space for all. So there's no going back anymore: millions have been invested. Those constructions are nearly finished. They need the bridge to be kept and refurbished, or else it would be a catastrophe. That's why I think you can also sometimes use the developer streams to manifest and develop your own vision."



This section focuses on creative urban/architectural strategies involving experimental governance and/or spatial processes. Strategies which – to develop a project – are not afraid to radically interpret and ‘bend’ well-established customs and regulations and take them to their limits. Spatial strategies able to implement, through creative and constructive process, an innovative and more democratic approach to the city.

2.1 WICKED THINKING

Parasitic transition- *Ifö Center (Bromölla)*

The Neighbourhood Office - *Institut for (X) (Aarhus)*

Architectural Permanence - *Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde (Bagneux)*





PARASITIC TRANSITION – Ifö Center, Bromölla, Sweden

Ifö was established in 2014 in Brömölla in southern Sweden (a town with around 7,600 residents). It started and developed within the 4,500m² abandoned upper floors of the still active Ifö Ceramics insulation factory to offer – through an almost parasitic relationship – collective creative spaces and residencies to artists and exhibitions, courses, visits and cultural activities to the public. Through European, municipal and private funding, the centre has increasingly developed, welcoming events, forerunning international artists and monumental artistic interventions including gigantic street art murals or art pieces such as Gunnar Nylund’s ‘Scanisaurus’, one of the world’s largest ceramic art pieces.

Upon the closing of one of four active factories in 2019, Ifö managed to buy back the building through crowdfunding, stabilising its presence in the industrial area. Through progressive, almost parasitic functioning, Ifö integrated a rough industrial ecosystem, building from medium-sized activities alongside production chains to the acquisition of the 43,000m² industrial building by way of a share-holding company. Through a combination of various public fundings, revenues of public activities and a structure made up of both private and non-profit organisation, Ifö created a specific balance allowing its ongoing transformation within an exceptional context.

<https://www.ifocenter.com/>

*Image : Mural painting “Alice in Wonderland” ©Karin Levin
(2020)*

INTERVIEW: TERESA HOLMBERG/Ifö Center Co-Founder and Director

Visual artist Teresa Holmberg is the creator of Ifö Center and holds the position of Director of the cultural organisation as well as being Chairwoman of its boards. She recounts how the centre came to life: “I started squatting when I was 16 in Malmö then in Eastern Berlin, right after the Wall fell. I would not have taken the initiative to create Ifö Center without this. It was a village within the city. It taught us not to ask but to do things. It taught us grassroots democracy and to solve problems as a community.

After ten years, I moved back to Sweden with Jonathan Haner, the co-founder of Ifö. In 2011, I was working on an artwork and needed to create precise pieces that could wrap around pillars. So I went to this company which made ceramic pipes. What I found was this beautiful, gigantic and almost empty old factory. I had just lost my studio at the time. So, after I saw their fantastic work, I asked if I could have a space there. But it’s not enough to show up and knock on the door, right? There needs to be someone willing to open it. That was the manager on site: he thought having an artist around was an interesting challenge for the workers.

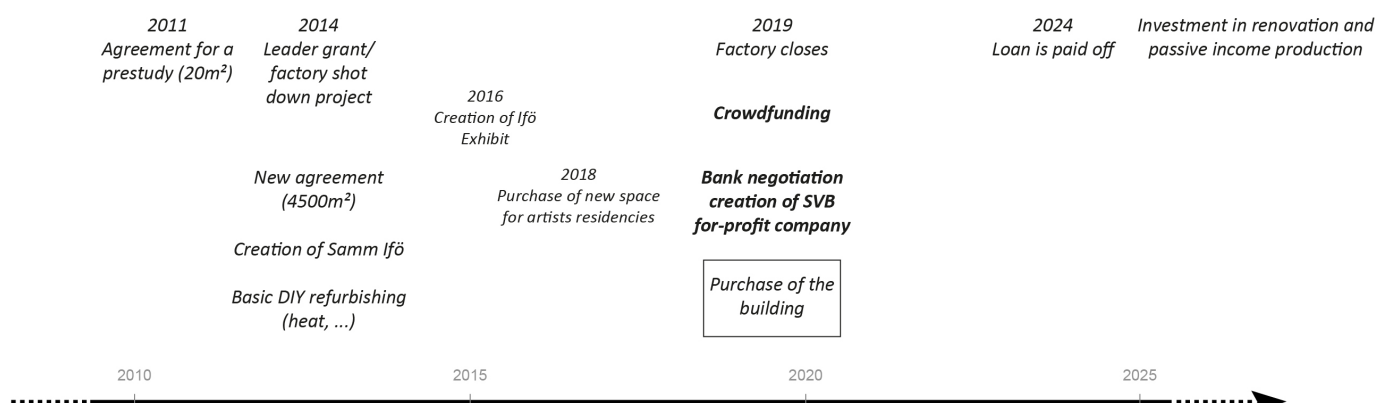
I got a two-month grant through a fund for rural areas, LEADER, to see what was possible, and he gave me a small space. Jonathan came over and got also fascinated. We asked so many questions to the workers; we explored and mapped everything: what they did and where they did it, who knew what, what parts were unused, hazardous or safe. You see, the more we understood about that system, the better we could fit in without bothering the host. In the report, we showed that it was possible to create a cultural centre within a big working machine.

With the help of the municipality, we applied to the same programme to start the project and got 1 million kroner in 2014. Then a horrible thing happened: the enlightened manager was fired and the new management shut us out completely. They didn’t understand why he let us in in the first place. It was terrible, by then our entire studio was there, and we just got all the funding. But the ex-manager gave us good contacts and we managed to sign a contract stating that the company was not liable for us and allowed us to use 4,500m²; we founded the organisation Sann Ifö.”

While the location was then secured, it still needed to be put to work, with limited funds:

“Our funding was for cultural activities, not for the building, so we had to make do and look around for help, just like squatters. We met with international friends and local volunteers to figure out how to clean and heat the space. The local paper mill provided us with hot water through the existing network and we installed old radiators from dismantled buildings. It was not warm in the winter but at least some areas were not freezing.”

From there, Ifö Center grew exponentially through the organisation of exhibitions, visits, events and the invitation of international artists. By 2016, the growing activity justified the creation of a structure focused on the management of the centre’s art hall, Ifö Exhibit. By 2018, Ifö had developed a successful artists’ residency programme, justifying the purchase of a new space. This development was done in parallel with the ongoing industrial activity, with little interference: “Such big groups don’t want to be landlords, they don’t care about maintaining their buildings. What allowed the local leadership to welcome us is that they weren’t liable, and it didn’t cost them anything. Unless you really cause a problem, you’re not on their radar. So, we just avoided being in the office area and did our own activities. They did give us rules; we couldn’t have children, alcohol or fires in



most of the centre. We thought that would hold us back, but it actually forced us to focus on adults rather than children, like art spaces usually do in Sweden.”

In 2019, the centre’s development was threatened again:

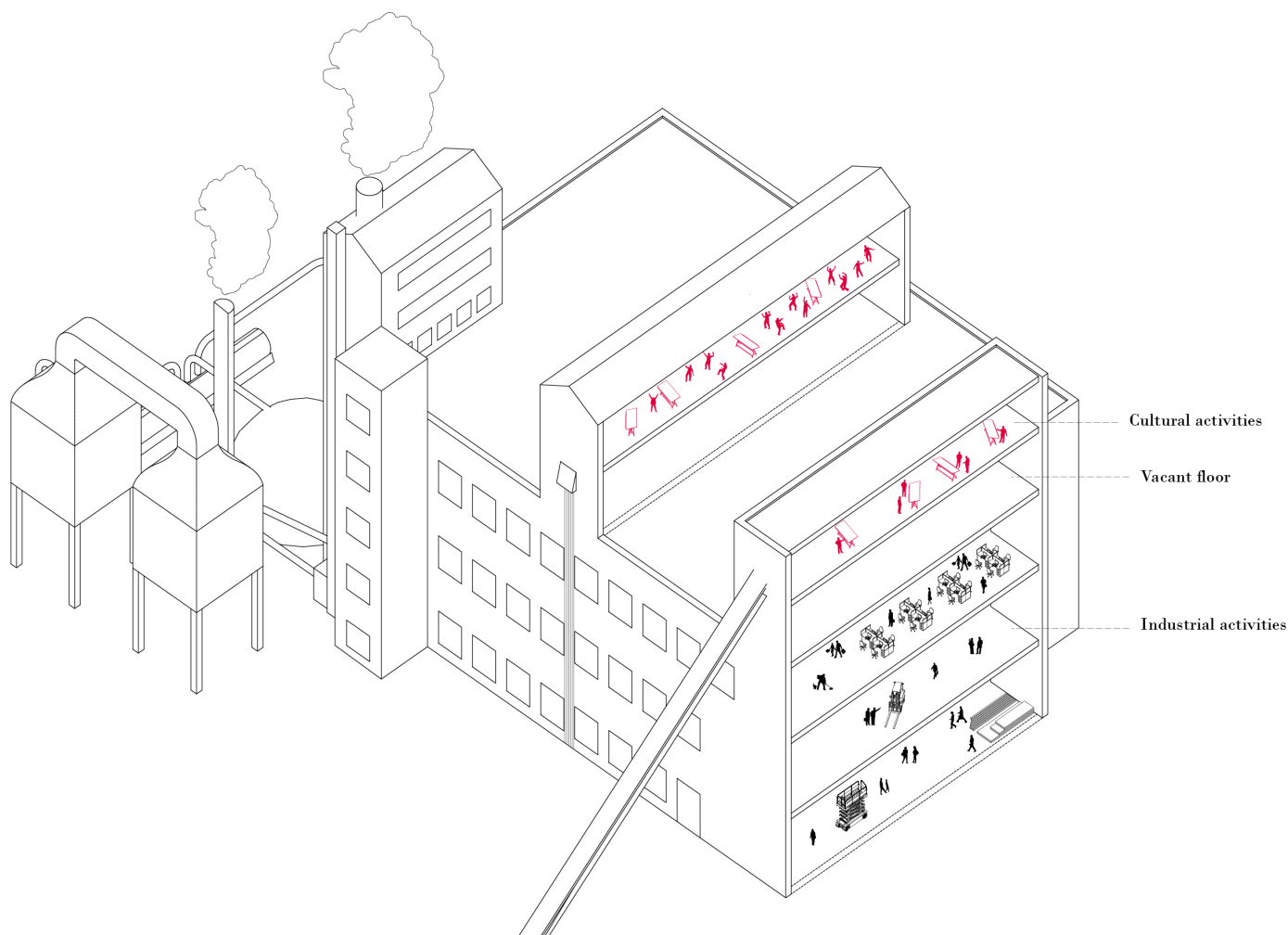
“The owners of the factory decided to close it down. All the workers got laid off. They were all angry and sad. They disappeared day after day, and we didn’t know what would happen to us. I heard they were selling the building and realised the price wasn’t impossible to reach. We had been watching that company neglect this building for so long, and nothing bad had happened, so the bar was very low, it made us confident that we could do it.

We studied how other people did it and decided to start selling 500 kroner imaginary ‘support shares’. We only crowdfunded through people who knew us; friends, family... We had been up and running for a while, and lot of people wanted it to continue. We also had a clear narrative, and that made it easier for people who wanted to help: if we managed to buy, they’d become shareholders and if we didn’t

get it, they’d get their money back. We ended up with 550 contributors, at an average of 1,500 kroner. That was enough to contract the loan we needed to buy the factory.”

Through a long negotiation with the local bank, and with the help of a pro bono lawyer, Ifö was able to purchase the property in 2019. Five years later, Ifö has paid off the loan and is now investing towards passive income creation through solar power production and an optimisation of the building’s use. Teresa is also looking to share her experience:

“I’ve squatted so many houses that owners neglected so they could tear them down. Squatting is the opposite; it’s people seeing something discarded who start to take care of it together. What we do is no different. We also want to pay forward, to help other communities to take control of their spaces.”



**Ask not what your
city can do for you;
Ask what you can
do for your city.**





THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICE – Institut for (X), Aarhus, Denmark

Institut for (X) opened in 2009 in a 1920s abandoned customs building in the district of Godsbanen – a former railway traffic area – in Aarhus city centre. Institut for (X) acts today as a cultural and business platform fostering grassroots initiatives, bringing together 90 projects, 50 businesses and 35 associations. The centre follows a strong horizontal philosophy, a “Do-ocracy” that “gives power to the ones who act on their ideas and follow through. The essential lack of hierarchy within the system gives space for rapid change and smooth spatial transformation, easily occupied by doers” (This is X 2015: 159).

Following this philosophy, X has gradually occupied and actively transformed the site’s buildings and public spaces while acknowledging their eventual eviction and demolition planned by the city. By celebrating the ‘bulldozer days’, X mobilised the intrinsic qualities of their temporary and ephemeral condition (to the point of celebrating it) to stimulate innovation and spontaneous actions (rather than opposition) beyond ordinary procedures and frameworks. This proactive and constructive attitude eventually led the centre’s work and added value to be recognised by local stakeholders in 2017 when Institute for (X)’s “Neighbourhood Office” was formally designated and funded. Functioning as an information agent for the population and a consultant for local development, the “Neighbourhood Office” is today a key actor within the city’s urban transformation. It currently conceives, develops and implements a variety of tactical projects and clever ‘urban tools’ for a more creative and inclusive urban development.

*Image: Excerpt from ‘This is X’ book (p. 252), (Haack et al., 2015)
/ Institut for (X), Aarhus
<https://instituforx.dk/>*

INTERVIEW: CHRISTIAN JUUL WENDELL/Institute for (X) Head of Communication

At first, Christian Juul Wendell was the user of a small studio at X before he became the Institute's chief community officer in 2014. Now head of communication, he recounts how the "Neighbourhood Office" came to be:

"Originally we had a trust-based oral agreement with the city. The municipality let us (X) be here for free as long as we didn't cost them anything. We had to handle the electricity, the garbage, the sewage... But that also meant that the municipality had to overlook how we did it. Anything that was built since our installation, was done without any permit, which sounds crazy today.

They could also ask us to leave anytime. That's the Bulldozer day philosophy; we knew that eventually, we would have to go, which created a sense of urgency, especially politically. We never had a big advocacy plan, but year after year, we made a series of small tactical projects, which helped us build credibility. We started by making infrastructures that the everyday citizen would like; small water stations, green spaces ... I believe one of the reasons we're still here today is that we brought all those things to the urban fabric and that people enjoyed it.

In 2013, we got a small use contract, which was renewed every year. We built a good relationship with the municipality and the owners of the lands around by showing that we felt responsible for the space around us. Through this attitude, we were building public opinion to like this kind of rowdy, dirty cultural space where people prototype all kinds of things.

The fact that the Mayor was an ally of the project helped of course, but, in Aarhus, every department has its own Mayor so we had to convince many people. One thing that helped is when we developed the 'SpaceMakers' initiative for the municipality, in 2015. We helped map the empty buildings through the city, for the purpose of reusing them in the future. That showed our capacities and goodwill and convinced even the right-wing politicians and private actors.

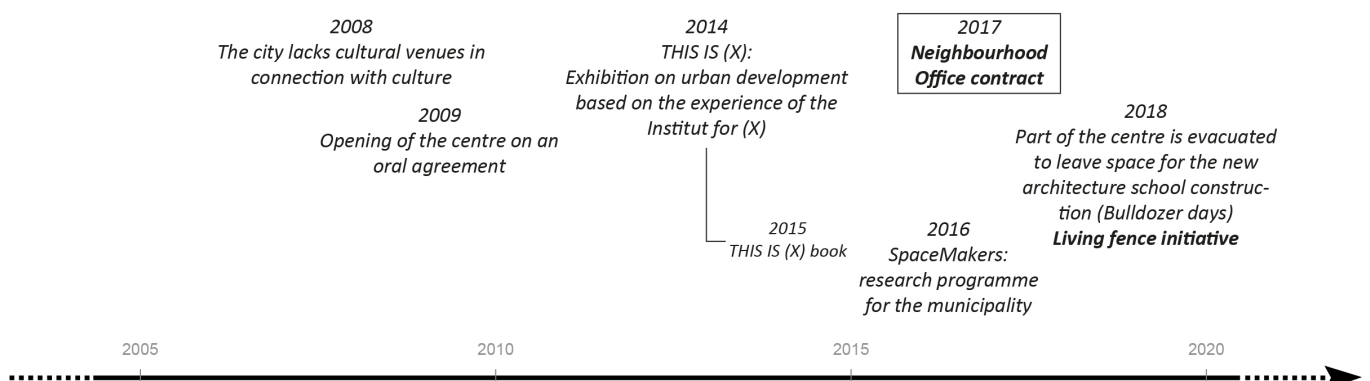
By 2017, we were supposed to leave but we had this dialogue ongoing with the politicians. It took some time, but we were finally granted a ten-year lease and recognised as an official partner through the "Neighbourhood Office" contract, in exchange for services and the 'normalisation' of all buildings. Now, 90% of the centre has a proper permit. And now, we've been around for so long and been so persistent and useful for the city that it's very unlikely anyone would want to see us gone."

Christian explains this outcome through a sort of middle path strategy:

"We could have been more anarchist; be angry, throw rocks, fight... But we were allowed to stay for a while, and decided to settle; we were not trespassing, but it was definitely a grey area. So, we decided to lean into the problem. And that's part of what we call the 'bottom-up/top-down strategy', which basically dictates that when we're doing urban projects, we establish it as both bottom up and top down. That means we do our own thing, but we also involve decision-makers, politicians and civil servants."

While the agreement with the municipality formalised the Institute's presence, it also gave it duties and a precise role in local development:

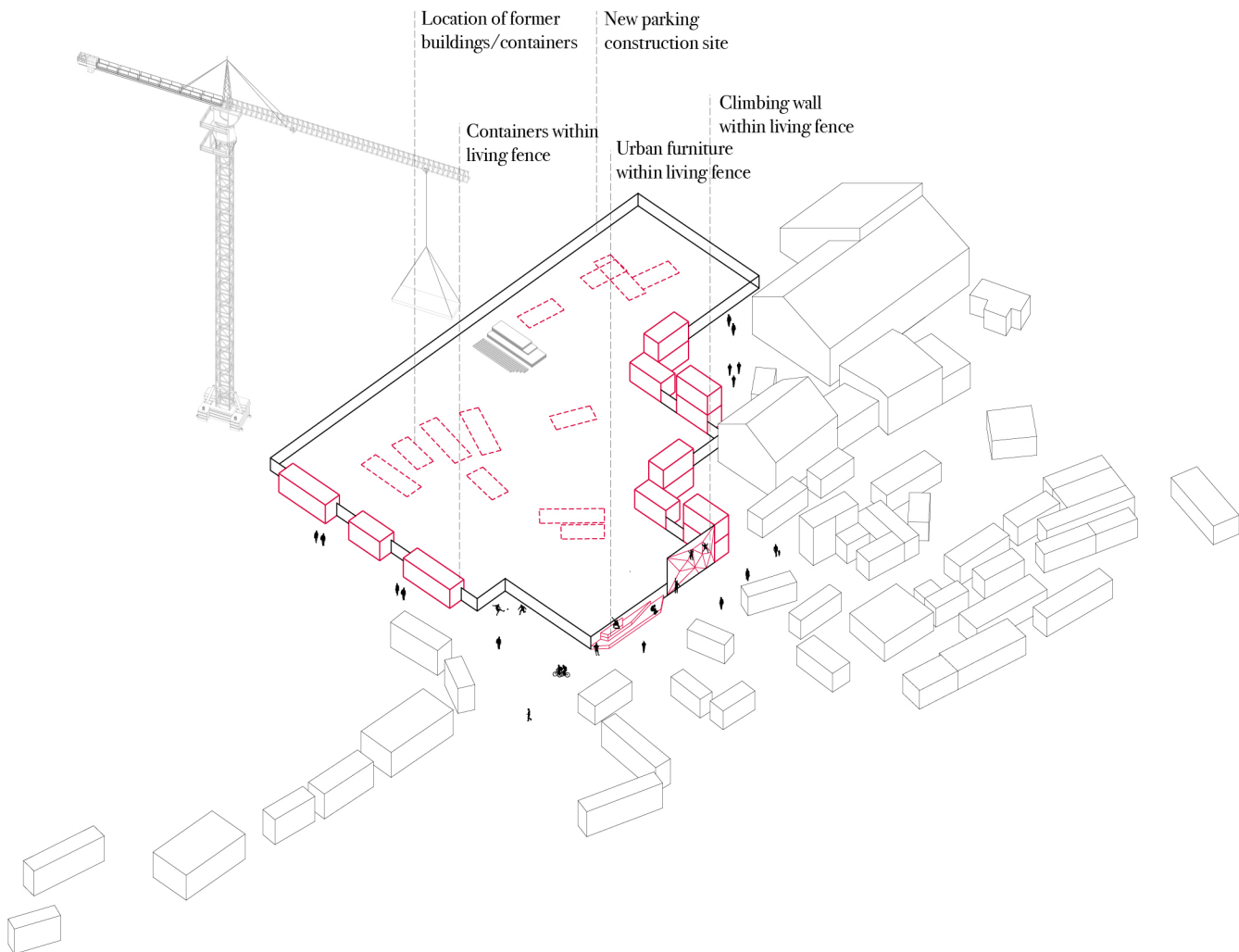
"From the start, the municipality's plan was to make the site a creative and cultural district. In this frame, our first mission as the Neighbourhood Office was to develop a citizen engagement strategy. We inform the population about what's going on, we also hold some of the official public meetings here. But we do it our own way. For instance, we made one as a marketplace just for the developers; each had their stand, and the neighbours could just ask questions directly. With the Neighbourhood Office, we also get to work on public tenders and with developers. One of our big wins is that any person buying land here will have to consult us. They gave us 'carte blanche' to be a thorn in the side to all the city departments and the owners. That way, we can foster dialogues between the projects and see how they're going to give back to each other and to the public space. And now, for the southern development, that allows us to contribute to the design ing process, from the size of the lots to the competitions' design."



This formalised role of Institute for (X) allowed for new experiments, some of which have since been reconducted in other spaces in the city:

“One of our main methods is what we call ‘co-drawing’; we put together the different local planners and architects to design together so they achieve more understanding of each other’s project and how they can relate and produce things for [the] public sphere. It also helped us directly contribute. There’s also what we called the ‘Living Fence’. When the architecture school was getting built, we went to the build-ers and asked what they would like from the construction fence that separated us from the building site. This led to integrate in the fence a window, to showcase what they were doing. Then we gradually integrated a space where they’d leave surplus construction material for artists to use and – always within the fence – a temporary building for the architecture school. It gradually became a living and inhabited fence rather than just a wall. This triggered many exchanges, and now we’re hired as consultants in the harbour area to do the same, and we have it included in all the tenders.

In the southern area, we’re also helping create citizen landscapes through ‘Borgerlandskab’ (urban life hubs). We lead open calls for the future open areas and people can contribute to their design. That’s kind of the new frontier because, when you go there, it feels like X, 10 years ago. It is a big open freight train area, with nothing but garbage and industrial waste and then small pockets of young guys developing studios and workshops. They feel like small satellites of X.”





LE

AVANT LE LYCÉE



ARCHITECTURAL PERMANENCE - Le Plus Petit Cirque du Monde, Bagneux, France

Founded in 1991, PPCM ('the smallest circus in the world') structures its programme around a circus art school, creation workshops and a variety of public events and services. Since 2014, it has established its activities within an experimental building and process designed by architects Loïc Julienne and Patrick Bouchain, in the northern suburbs of Paris. Under the mentorship of Bouchain, a series of experimental urban and architectural strategies have been implemented. Among these, the 'architectural permanence' stands out – a collaborative design process including an 'open building site', where users, construction workers and the public share the space as it changes. The strategy was expanded in 2019 when PPCM, Bagneux's administration and Bouchain's newly founded agency La Preuve par 7 (LP7) collaborated within 'Le lycée avant le lycée' – a permanent structure for the construction of the neighbourhood's new high school. Through the occupation of the construction site, its opening to the public and a programme of performances, debates, experimental workshops and engagement with local actors (administrations, private actors, residents, teachers, schoolchildren...), the permanence was able to build a strong educational community for the future school, years before its opening. The collaboration allowed for an innovative educational programme including arts and circus practices to take form and find consensus while feeding the programmatic and architectural project through the needs and desires of its future users.

INTERVIEW: JULIA DESFOUR/PPCM Project Manager (2022-present)

Architect Julia Desfour has been the ‘Lycée avant le Lycée’ project manager on behalf of PPCM since 2022. She recounts the origins of the project:

“Originally, PPCM used the old sports hall of the local high school. After 30 years of existence, the municipality launched a competition for a proper building and Patrick Bouchain and Loic Julienne won. That’s when they brought these practices of ‘architectural permanence’ and open building sites.

The ‘Permanence Architecturale’ is about implicating both architects and inhabitants before construction to engage the entire territory and better understand the context in which we work. Ultimately, the goal is to engage citizens ‘permanently’ in the conception and in the construction process. For architects, it’s a way to get truly confronted to the context, to the future users and to exit a practice that’s out of touch and only centred on drawing.

Bouchain and Julienne’s idea was that the construction of a circus should also be a cultural action that engaged all the territory’s inhabitants; building a big infrastructure like that can be something brutal and violent in the history of a city. Especially in a working-class neighbourhood, with many delicate issues.

That’s when the ‘Vendredis Baraques’ (Worksite Fridays) were created. We used construction huts to make meeting places for inhabi-

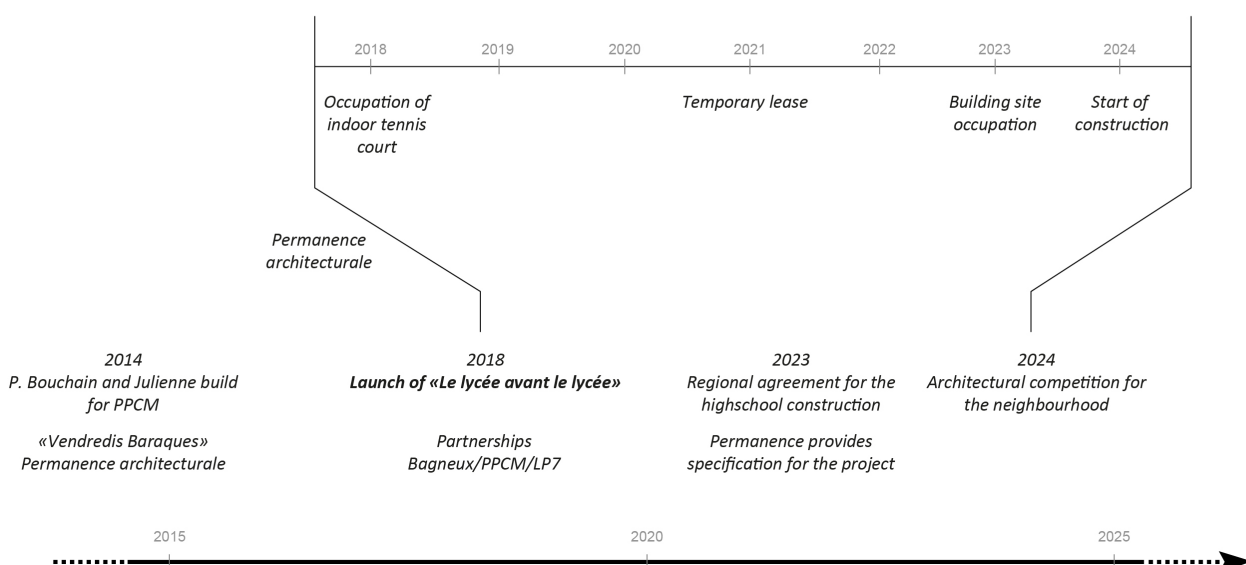
tants, artists, architects, local associations, schools... So, they could get information but also propose a cultural and festive programme. We still hold those one Friday a month; we still pursue this sort of territorial mediation, with an open programme.

Thus, the ‘Lycée avant le Lycée’ project emerged in 2018 from this particular network. The regional authorities had no plan to build a new general high school in Bagneux, but there was a local need and request. PPCM carried this request and managed to broker an agreement for a triple partnership between the Municipality, PPCM and LP7 to convince the region to build the high school here.”

The agreement set up the possibility to both express the need for a high school and to investigate the kind of high school that was needed. Each structure provided one employee on secondment:

“Our goal is to get the high school built the way the local population needs it. And our way to do that is to inhabit the place where we want it built, because construction needs to feed on its territory. Thus, we started the ‘permanences’ within some indoor tennis courts; then we obtained a temporary lease within an abandoned building. Finally, in 2023, we settled on the future construction site. And now, we’ll leave soon to let construction begin.

So yes, that’s how we managed: we opened a ‘permanence architecturale’ on site for a future ‘high school’ and made it irreversible. Through the mobilisation and engagement of citizens, we managed to both set the project on the public agenda and to discuss the pedagogical and architectural elements long before the beginning of any design process.”

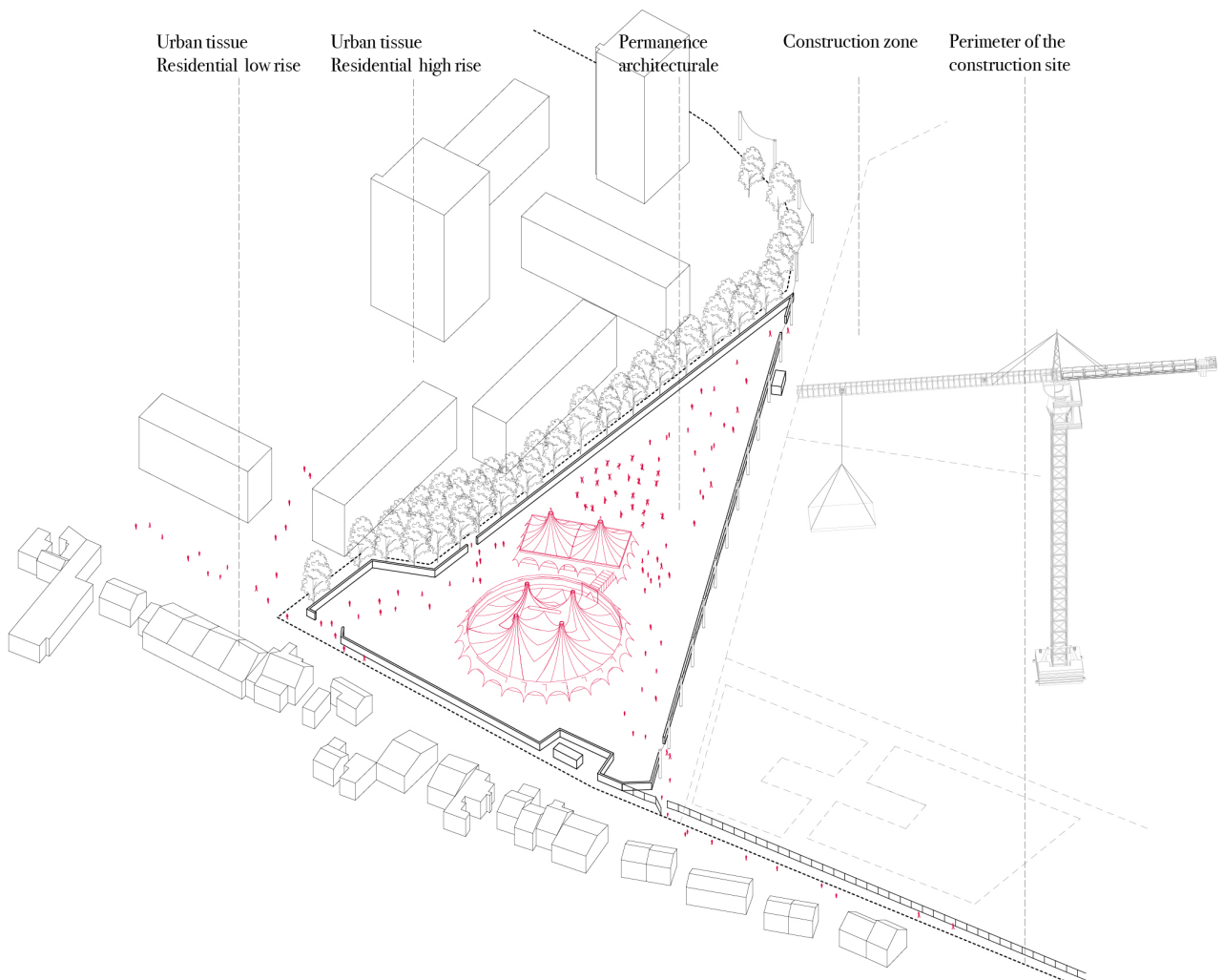


The triple partnership was also supported by an important private actor's financial support:

“The high school project represents only 1 hectare of a bigger (conventional) development led by BNP Paribas. They finance our experiment through their social and economic committee, and they give us operational support.”

Based on on-site workshops and events with a variety of local actors (the seven existing high schools, teachers, students, parents, neighbourhood residents, artists, designers and architects...), the partnership agreed on a set of architectural and pedagogical specifications. These include an active and inclusive pedagogy, legitimising the pursuit of general and higher studies by working-class students, offering flexible spaces, adapting to a variety of activities and identified potential collaborations with existing structures around the area to support the infrastructure programme. “One way or another, our

work will influence the project, it won't just stay on paper. It's a way of thinking and doing that already reached the inhabitants and the municipality. So even if we will not have a full impact we did – for sure – manage to change the ways things are done: it's already a huge victory to have a municipality build a partnership of this kind, for the first time. In the longer term, it can constitute an example that can be discussed by researchers in architecture schools among others. We contribute to change the norms in general, I think.”



3 TIME, TIME, TIME

SIDEREAL

Healing heritage – *Not Quite (Fengersfors)*

Deep State – *Kulturfabrik (Esch-sur-Alzette)*

Cultural Energy Fund – *Pot Kommon (Sine Saint-Denis)*

EPHEMERAL

Six to Six – *Interzona (Verona)*

Meanwhile Forever – *Haceria Arteak (Bilbao)*

Cultural Sound Zone – *NGBG (Malmö)*

This part of the publication highlights projects and/or spatial strategies that are able to explore the multiplicity of temporalities within the design process (beyond limited and rigid conceptions of time). When we think about time in an expanded sense, it ceases to be ‘monolithic’ and ‘exclusively human’ but instead becomes multifaceted and ‘open’ to multiple possibilities.

Within the last century, having shifted from a representation of time as an ‘open future’ (understood as an open process driven by progress), towards a ‘closed’ one (a future that has lost its force of attraction, within which ‘projecting’ has become forbidden), the ‘present’ has gradually become the only conceivable horizon to experience. This is what F. Hartog calls ‘presentism’ (Hartog, 2015), a ubiquitous yet limited dimension that has absorbed the future and the past and paralysed time to a single extent.

A dimension, recalls Hartog, that has recently destabilised by the advent of the Anthropocene era, which carries an extremely long future and draws upon an extremely long past. Today, new and diversified temporal concepts to be explored.

This chapter (Time, Time, Time) aims to give a glimpse of projects with multiple and open approaches to time, from ‘short-term’ projects capable of having a strong impact in a very short time (‘Ephemeral’) to particularly ‘visionary’ and far-reaching projects capable of projecting themselves over long or very long time horizons, beyond several decades despite the lack of immediate results such as, for example, those related to the five years of a political mandate (‘Sideral’).

INSPIRING POSITION /TIM MORTON (Philosopher)

“Time. If no one asks us, we know what it is. Or at least we know what one of the different versions of it is. Deep ecological time, evolutionary time, time travel, longitude, time expansion and contraction, alternative timelines and parallel universes. Polyphasic sleep, anti-ageing creams, fertility clocks, black holes and artificial intelligence. The groups of neurons forming population clocks within our brains, the nanosecond of difference between the space-time of our feet and heads, the monitoring of every second through our devices.”

(Morton et al., 2019)

This section concerns urban/architectural strategies involving ‘long-term’ perspectives in radical terms. Projects with a strong, long-term vision that are not afraid to confront the lack of short-term results and to commit the project (partly or exclusively) to future generations.

3.1 SIDEREAL (TIME)

Healing Heritage - *Not Quite (Fengersfors)*

Deep State - Kulturfabrik (Esch-sur-Alzette)

Cultural Energy Fund - *Pot Kommon (Seine Saint-Denis)*





HEALING HERITAGE – Not Quite, Fengersfors, Sweden

Not Quite was established in 2002 as an art studio and workshop ensemble in a repurposed paper mill in the middle of the small town of Fengersfors, Sweden (350 residents). It has since then drawn over 70 permanent and semi-permanent Swedish and international artists, designers and craftsmen and has expanded to include pottery, carpentry and forging studios, exhibition spaces and a cafe, making it one of the liveliest hubs of this rural region. The paper mill is also used by small-scale enterprises including a bakery, several carpentries, a micro-brewery and a fish farm.

In 2019, this development was facing a big challenge because the current owner wanted to sell the property. As a response to this, the ‘New Mill Town’ project was established, funded by Not Quite and the region of Västra Götaland. The aim was to secure a new, long-term ownership for the paper mill, and support rural entrepreneurship in material-based art and food production.

As ground pollutants make ownership complicated and possibly very costly, the sub-project Healing Heritage was initiated as part of this long-term process to study and develop a solution using new, nature-based techniques. Healing Heritage received separate funding from FORMAS, a Swedish government research council for sustainable development. The research team includes artists, natural scientists and spatial planning experts. Together, this cross-disciplinary team has investigated the impact of pollution – both at the mill area itself, and in the entire landscape surrounding it.

As such, Healing Heritage constitutes a research-based demonstration of qualitative, sustainable and livable long-term decontamination practice using time – here understood in decades – as an asset, far from the common expensive and wasteful practices of extracting/dumping/ capping. It holds itself as a proof of concept for the further generalisation of regenerative, non-extractive practices within urban planning and landscape design.

*Image: Experimental cultivation phyto-remediation of metal contaminants. ©Not Quite
<https://www.notquite.se/en/>*

INTERVIEW: YLVA FRID/Healing Heritage Initiator

Architect Ylva Frid was employed by Not Quite as Project Manager of the New Mill Town project and was the initiator of the Healing Heritage project. She takes up the story:

“When the owners announced they wanted to sell the papermill, it became evident that it was necessary to secure our long-term conditions if we were to continue to invest in a place like this. So, we started searching for long-term ownership models and it quickly appeared that a key element was soil pollution. In Sweden, the owner is responsible for the depollution of the land, but that only takes place at the transfer of the property, unless the original ‘polluter’ can be found and sued. In our case, it concerned old industrial pollution, so we would eventually have had to address that depollution ourselves. This was a big obstacle, especially in our rural context, thus it froze the situation. We then sought a research grant for sustainable innovation to see how we could tackle that problem in a different way.”

Financed over four years, Not Quite obtained a pilot project, which brought together interdisciplinary experts around real and large-scale experimentations:

“We’ve put together a team of two researchers in soils and agronomy, one artist and three architects. First, we looked at the history of this pollution. The paper industry used to transport wood from the forest through one of our lakes then, after processing it into paper, they’d transported it down to the other lake to ship it out. We realised that the industrial process affected (polluted) the whole landscape, including the mill and the southern lake. Cordula Bielenstein-Morich, the artist in the team, proposed an installation on five sites, able to

show those connections.

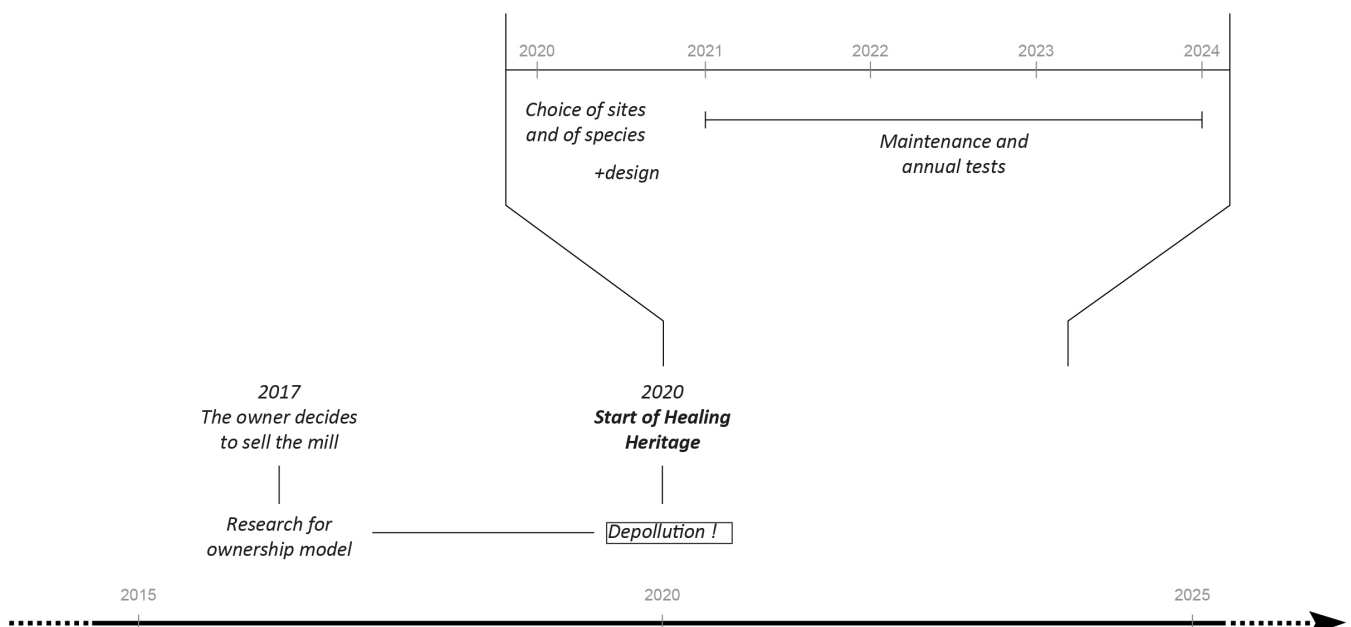
From there, we picked two places around the mill to test out phyto-remediation. This choice was strategic: one was located just by the cafe, well visible, thanks to the big sunflowers, and the other was located in an unused area, within an exciting industrial ruin setting; it was supposed to be the starting point for having more activities there. That choice was about the pollutants but also about how they could add something to the environment and invite visitors to new perspectives and places.

We first did soil surveys to have a precise vision of the pollutants. The process was slow but, once we had the results, we knew that it concerned only chemical pollutants that could be broken down by plants. Based on that, the climate and the local history, the researchers suggested five species we should work with: sunflowers, lusern [a perennial summer legume], mustard, nettles and tobacco. We’d normally use willows, but since our situation was not necessarily permanent, we couldn’t work with trees. They also established a clear protocol: one of the spots was our testing ground while the other was the control subject. They’re also both 400m², *so they’re big enough, but not too big to maintain.*

We did a lot of design and worked with gardeners to end up on different styles and perspectives. One was more of a classical baroque garden with clear shapes for different species, and amounts that were easy to control, which was required from the research perspective. The other an open setting, arranged around the visual perspectives on the different species.”

As the plants needed annual nurturing, harvesting and analysing of the pollutants, maintenance has been an important part of the project:

“The first year, we had a lot of work to take away the top layers of grass and plant everything... Then each spring, we needed to sow



everything, water and nurture the gardens, take away the weeds... you need someone almost on a daily basis to attend to the gardens. You're also dependent on weather: one year, it snowed in May so we had to delay our work; another year, it got so dry that we had to replant everything... It was much more demanding than we expected.

But once you have learned how to do it, it gets easier. It's a feasible technique if you're running a centre already, if you're anyway taking care of a public environment frequently. Also, if you can plant more permanent plants like willows, that will definitely require less maintenance."

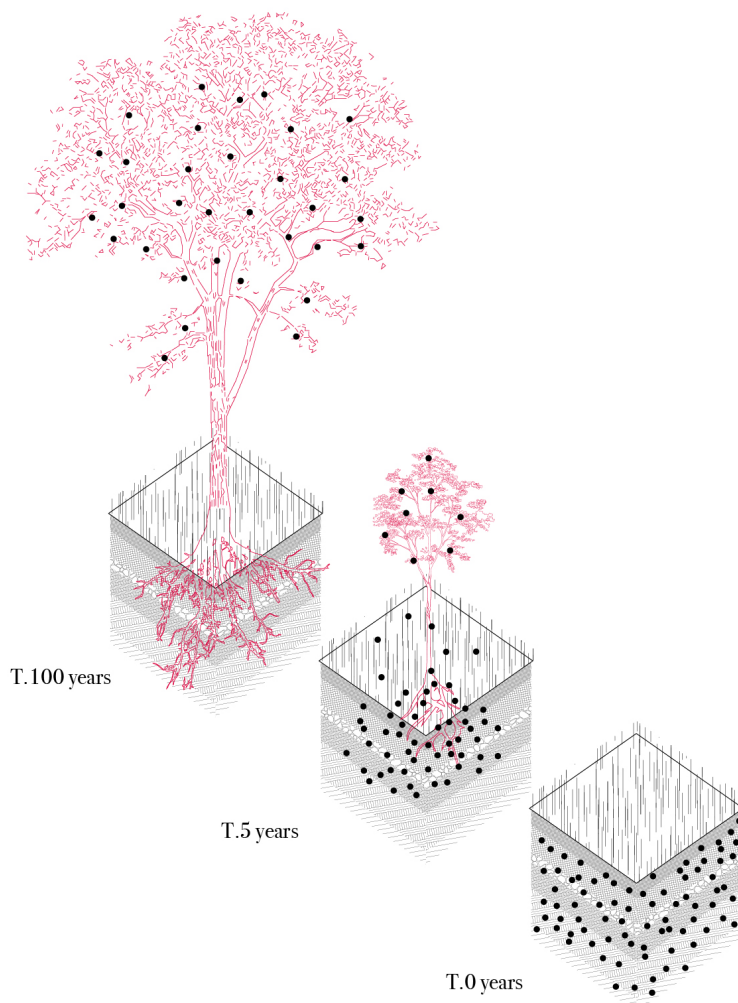
As the project is going through its third and final season, results are promising, but the imminent displacement of Not Quite gives her mixed feelings.

"There are clear advantages: it is not only ecologically sustainable, but it allows to take part of the process, you can explore and care for the space. You also don't have to carry and transport polluted soils and waste oils. But in exchange, you still must inject human labour for maintenance, and it is very slow. It would take at least 15 years to solve the problem here. So, it might not be a solution in densely populat-

ed areas, with lots of pressure to build. But in the rural conditions, where we don't have much financial flow it becomes very interesting.

We need more time to get a full view. The results we obtained are only a starting engine to get more research done on the subject and more funding. Because there is a lot of interest in these techniques but not that many concrete tests... I think we're the largest test in Sweden! But now that Not Quite has to definitely move out, there's not much reason to put all that work anymore. So, I don't know what the future of the project will be.

In any case, it is very unusual to do such long-term projects, so we've learned a lot. What's interesting is that you can really start to imagine a new kind of industry. Cordulla, for example, was really interested to see if she could get out lead from the ashes of the burnt plants to then turn them into glaze for ceramics. That could be an interesting long-term storage solution for those pollutants, but also a powerful metaphor. Because, especially in Europe, we are really at a stage where we need to deal with our previous mistakes in a relevant way."







DEEP STATE – Kulturfabrik, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Kulturfabrik was founded in 1983 amidst the cultural and artistic occupation of a 19th century municipal slaughterhouse that had closed a few years earlier. Since its public recognition as an art centre in 1996, “KUFA” has grown as one of the main cultural centres of the Grande Région (‘Great Region’), in southern Luxembourg. Covering an area of 4,500m², two performance halls, a gallery, a cinema, a brasserie, a bistro and several rehearsal rooms, KUFA offers numerous shows and services to artists and visitors while developing several experimental projects and research.

This ever-growing activity and attractiveness progressively increased pressure on the centre and its staff, eventually sparking a severe internal crisis in 2017, which – after its intensification during the 2020 lockdown – was addressed through a radical organisational shift towards a voluntary slowdown of activities. This allowed space for reflection and creative research to expand while providing better working conditions and a strong reduction of energy consumption. KUFA’s 2021-2025 development plan has involved a strong redefinition of its identity as an ecosystem that takes slowness as a value and a principle to carry, together with qualitative, positive and sustainable cultural work. By taking the time to think, KUFA offered itself, and the cultural sector, a place for experimentation where eco-responsibility and de-acceleration are interconnected.

*Image: Curiosity Feeds Imagination (mural painting of Marta Bevacqua), ©Mantra (2016).
<https://kulturfabrik.lu/fr>*

INTERVIEW: RENÉ PENNING/KulturFabrik Director (2020-present)

René Penning has been working as musical programmer then administrative director of KulturFabrik since 1998 and took the position of Director in 2020. He recalls the emergence of the centre's radical transformation:

“We're in a very dynamic city, the second largest in Luxembourg, which was European Capital of Culture in 2022. It has a bad reputation, poverty and a lot of post-industrial sites. The reconversion of all those abandoned areas is a new dynamic that has recently emerged, but we can already see that it's going to completely change the city. In 2017, we decided to question how our cultural project could evolve to fit in those changes and better professionalise our activity. That's when we started to develop a proper strategy for the Kulturfabrik, with the help of Olivearte, a counselling agency.

We started by a participative survey of the organisation, with individual and group interviews. It made us realise that we were putting ourselves in a difficult situation. You see, we had 30 employees, but we were constantly underwater because of a very dense agenda; we always had a large quantity of ongoing projects like residencies, exhibitions, shows, the cafe... We also did a lot of things outside, like urban art festivals, international pedagogical projects... It's so common in this sector, because we're passionate and enthusiastic, we never say no. But that has a heavy impact on our teams. So, in January 2020, we knew we could not continue like that. But even through the retreats we organised to address the issue, we felt we were still not going in the right direction; the only solution we could see was to stop everything and start back from scratch.

Then COVID happened, which brought all those problems, including someone from the team passing away. But it also gave us time to

think about what we really wanted to do, and we realised how important that was. So, we started back in 2021 with a new strategy centred on slowing down and taking the time for creation.”

René explains the philosophy behind this strategy as essential for both cultural workers' wellbeing and the creative and ecological roles of the centre:

“The strategy relies on the well-known motto: 'less is more'. We want to slow down, to have the time to set up our programme. That's for the wellbeing of our workers because if we can't create a healthy environment for them, we can't do it for the public, the artists or anyone. But it also gave us more time and space for actual creation, to put that work back at the centre through a proper artist residency programme.

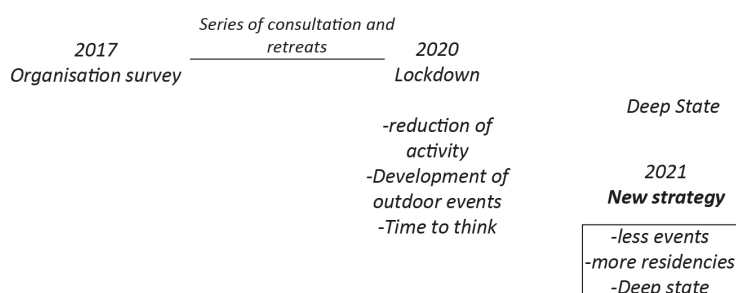
We are also a very ecologically engaged centre, but we never had the time to question how we did things: should we have an artist come by plane just for one show? How could we work more with local artists? Having more time allowed us to develop answers, rather than constantly focus on production. Just because we finally took time to think about it, we managed to save 52% in energy costs in the last four months, for example.

All of that brings us to have an ecosystem that seems to work in a calmer and more thoughtful way. That doesn't mean stopping work; we do pretty much as many hours as before, but with a different rhythm, and in a more committed way.”

In action, this strategy can be seen through an important reduction of activity as well as refocusing on 'non-productive creation' and the creation of the 'Deep State' – a watchdog organ responsible for maintaining this slow rhythm:

“First, we decided to cut our ties with several big structures and stopped our largest projects to focus on ourselves. Then, we defined three main intentions:

(1) Rethinking our artistic project. That means we spend less time on hosting and producing shows and more on artistic residen-



2015

2020

2025

cies where we support the artists from beginning to end. That means we pay them and we host them for longer periods. We now have an associated artist for three-year cycles – without obligation of results, for example. Our strategy is to help them work on their art in a safe space without necessarily having to deliver something at the end.

(2) Working more with the public and becoming a living space. The cafe plays a big role in that, especially with our big outdoor Summer Bars, which we started during the pandemic. Because people love this place and it makes KUFA much livelier; people want to stay there, not just see a show.

(3) Strengthening culture in the long term, including the future renovation of our building.

Finally, we realised that our biggest challenge was not to get taken back to our previous speed. Thus, we created what we call the ‘Deep State’ – an organ composed of KUFA’s programmers and the production director, which meets monthly to think about our programme, its density, its rhythm and how it affects the centre’s life.”

Behind this strategy, taking the opposite course imposed by capitalist growth, René sees an essential character of a proper sustainable future:

“We try to do better by taking more time to protect our ecosystem. Because the question is not to know what changing our ways will cost us economically but rather to understand all that will be lost if we don’t change anything!”





CULTURAL ENERGY FUND – Pot Kommon, Seine Saint-Denis, France

Pot Kommon first started in 2016 as an informal network of four independent cultural spaces within the Seine Saint-Denis ‘departement’: Mains d’Oeuvres, 6 B, Villa Mais d’Ici and Les Poussières. It developed in 2018 into a subsidised structure proposing a variety of common actions, from organised visits and support to other cultural spaces to on-site trainings taking advantage of resident artists’ expertise. Several ambitious projects arose progressively from this alliance and mutualisation, such as the cultural community land trust La Main or the energy cultural community project Green Kommon.

The latter, initiated in 2024 with a governmental subsidy of €2 million, seeks to set the Pot Kommon network up both as producer and consumer of solar energy. By articulating the four centres (and another 15 cultural spaces within a 9km perimeter) into the creation of micro solar power plants and auto-consumption energetic loops, Green Kommon aims to reduce the energy expenditure of the group by half while partly financing their cultural activity through the sale of electricity back to the grid. With the support of “Plaine Energie Citoyenne” – a social cooperative venture for photovoltaic promotion and development, Pot Kommon developed an expertise now expanding into a forerunning initiative of economic and energetic autonomy for the cultural sector. Drawing from an ecology of actors with complementary roles, Green Kommon offers new long-term perspectives for the sustainable transition of cultural spaces.

INTERVIEW: JULIETTE BOMPOINT – Mains d’Oeuvre Director (2014-2021)

Juliette Bompont was Director of Mains d’Oeuvre from 2014 to 2021 before becoming project developer at Trans Europe Halles. She also contributed to the creation of Pot Kommon and Green Kommon. She takes up the story:

“We created Pot Kommon in 2016 to bring together four local cultural third spaces. It was first an informal initiative to better understand what we could do together, then we structured it to seek out specific fundings.

Our relation to land property was one of the very first topics: everybody had issues with their landlord. That’s how we created a cultural land trust cooperative in 2018, La Main, to help us, and then others to take back some degree of ownership. Since then, through the support from the Ministry of Culture, we extended it throughout France. Green Kommon emerged in that context. At the time we had a big issue: energy prices had been surging but our public fundings had not, so we had less and less resources to dedicate to our main activity – arts and culture. Sometimes, our public supporters offered to pay the bills but it was a temporary solution that didn’t fit our sustainability vision. This made us realise we don’t use our buildings enough as tools for territorial transition.

Thus, in 2023, while directing Saint-Ouen’s candidacy as the 2028 European Capital of Culture, I met many sustainability transition actors and I discovered the energy auto consumption model. The idea is to create energy loops; energy communities of actors who are both producers and consumers and that can distribute what they produce locally (within 2km). As we were collecting Pot Kommon’s consumption data, we rapidly realised that cultural places have the capacity to produce more energy than they use and thus carry the entire neighbourhood towards energy transition.”

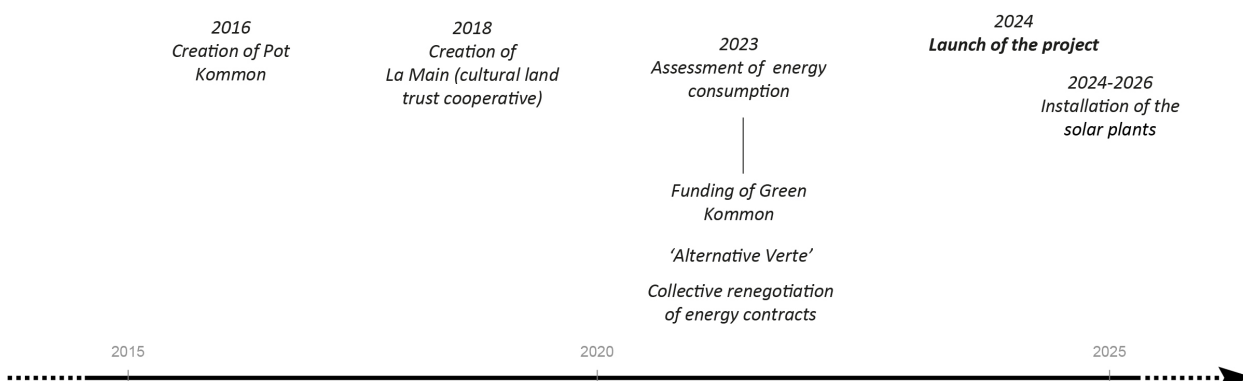
Co-developed with the local cooperative ‘Plaine Energie Citoyenne’ on the basis of a governmental ‘Alternatives Vertes’ grant, Green Kommon aims to bring together cultural independent spaces as engines of the energy transition. Juliette expands on the strategy their network developed:

“Plaine Energie Citoyenne (PEC) trained us to use online tools to assess our production capacity, how to collect consumption data and compare them. From the data we got, we first collectively renegotiated our existing energy contracts, which saved us some money. We then realised we could produce €10 million within 25 years. With this long-term perspective, our goal became also to constitute a cultural energy fund to help art residencies and employment in the local cultural sector for the future. In a context where public financing for culture is shrinking, in the long term it’s a question of survival.

On an organisational level, La Main and PEC are the producers for 15 self-consumption loops, each with a leading organisation in charge of organising consumption around a photovoltaic station. The plan is that, on one side, we’re going to use our funding to equip the buildings with solar panels and on the other, we will continue recruiting local actors, like schools or private companies, to become consumers of the energy we’re going to produce. We’re also in discussion with actors like supermarkets to equip their parking lots with solar panels, which could produce large volumes of electricity, that they can donate to us with a 60% defiscalisation through the cultural patronage laws in France.

The 20 cultural spaces can produce by themselves over 792 MWh annually but, with all the collaborations, we aim to produce 2.5 GWh by 2026. That means we can feed this cultural energy fund while providing the consumers with energy for 40 to 80 c/MWh less than what they’re currently paying. And that will be a fixed price for 25 years, we are –thus – helping ourselves and the local community to fight against energy price surges in the long run.”

While energy loops are multiplying through the world, the specificity of the cultural sector is highlighted by Juliette:



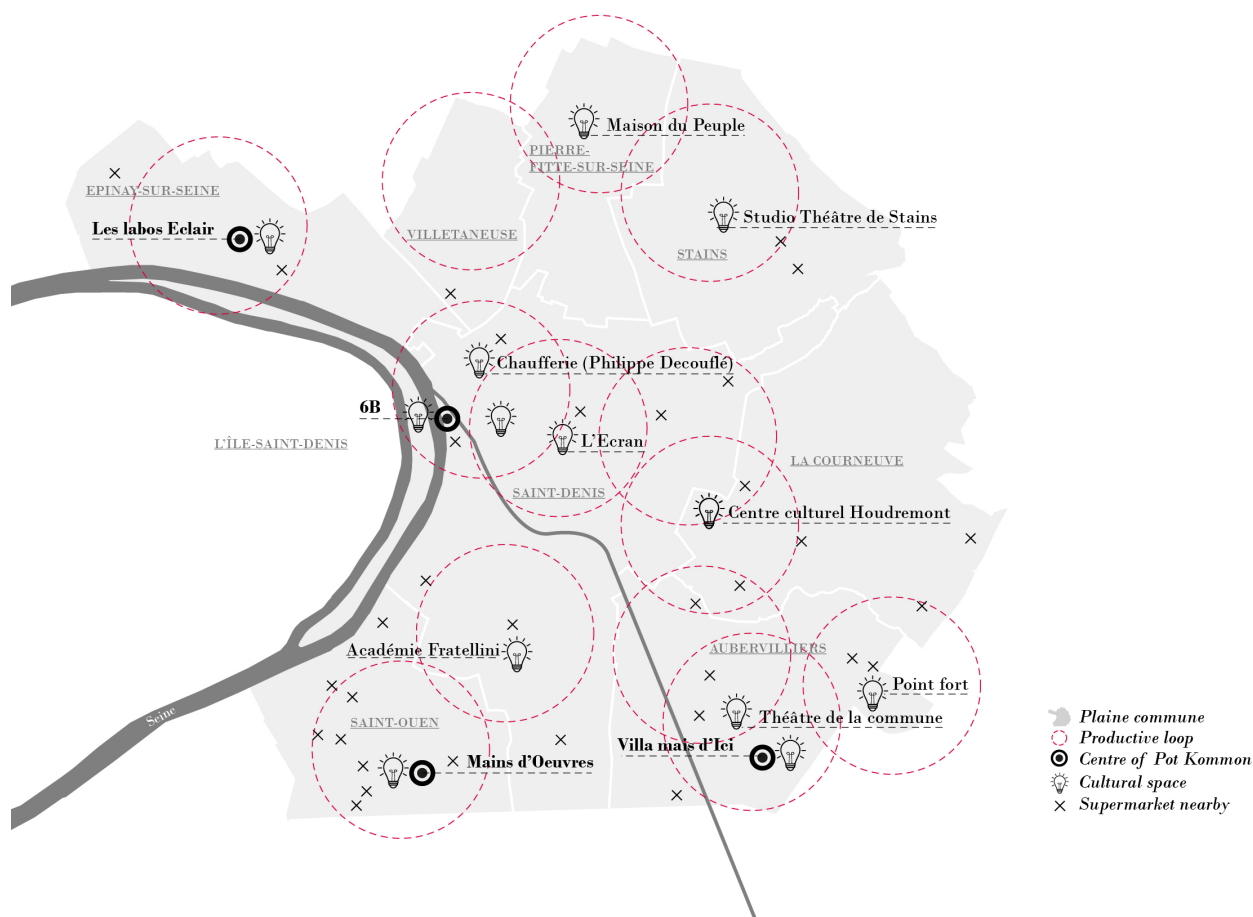
“Pot Kommon is used to cooperate on projects that carry millions of euros. We trust each other, which is essential for such a big initiative. We’re also reaching over 500 000 visitors annually in our centres. We’re used to dealing with the public, reaching out to many people, teaching them about sustainable energy. This initiative is also about making the cultural sector more independent and allowing us to focus on culture rather than trying to survive in the long term. So, it’s not only about mutualising our resources but also and especially about collectively empowering everyone and upscaling what is already happening here.”

Green Kommon is, however, not without its own challenges:

“We need an authorisation from every landlord for 25 years to install solar panels in a context where most cultural spaces are owned by public actors (just three by private owners). Some pay their energy bills directly, others through public contracts. So, it’s very complex, and a case-by-case situation.

Even with public owners, we’re doing a job that shouldn’t be within our responsibility: such public buildings should already be geared towards sustainable energy. But, for now, it’s never been a priority,

especially in a territory like ours, where poverty and housing are the first things to be addressed. In this sense for public actors, it is always awkward to see us accomplish what they’re supposed to do but can’t. They’re happy but it’s also complicated, especially if we start asking them to make land available for us. It’s a very fragile relationship. But it also comes back to the question of land ownership: we want to be long-term actors of our territory and Green Kommon leads us to negotiate proper perennial contracts to do that, if not to buy back our buildings where we can.”



This section concerns urban/architectural strategies involving 'short-term' and transitory perspectives; projects including a strong performative component (space as performance), related to temporary structures/occasions/conditions, ideal for experimentation. The creation of short-lived and transitory spaces, although temporary, can leave an indelible mark in the memory of those who witness them.

3.2 EPHEMERAL

Six to Six – *Interzona, Verona*

Meanwhile Forever – *Haceria Arteak, Bilbao*

Cultural Sound Zone – *NGBG, Malmö*





SIX TO SIX – Interzona, Verona, Italy

Interzona was first funded in 1992 as an independent art and culture laboratory inside the abandoned Magazzini Generali of Verona's periphery. However, since their eviction in 2016, the Interzona team has kept operating without a fixed location, favouring events and ephemeral actions to sustain their goal of promoting cultural initiatives. Interzona presents SixToSix, as a 'festival of urban imagination'. In 2021, this temporary action invited a variety of cultural and artistic actors to appropriate Verona's abandoned industrial/agricultural spaces for a night through performances, concerts, installations and projections. The initiative, besides revealing the potential of underused/abandoned spaces, offered new ways to look at and live these vast suburban disinvested areas. For 12 hours, visitors were invited to discover a 'renewed' landscape of 20 original musical and visual artworks through a pedestrian and cycling route, accompanying a slow path within a new imaginative process. The Viale Piave overpass, abandoned factory buildings, railways and residential neighbourhoods became the nocturnal scene of a cultural transformation. In a matter of hours, SixToSix led over 250 people to reconsider their relationship with and the possible futures of this important productive space, inspiring new initiatives.



*Image : Series of photos of the different places occupied during the festival. ©SixToSix
<https://www.izona.it/>*

INTERVIEW: STEFANIA MARINI/SixToSix Co-Manager

Stefania Marini has been a member of Interzona since 1996 and actively engaged through its board starting in 2014, before taking on the role of Co-Manager of the SixToSix project. She recounts:

“Around 2017, we had just lost our space and our volunteers were starting to disappear. We took part in a training course for third sector actors where they had us compete on a project proposal. We came up with this idea of a festival to attract new people and revitalise the association as well as the spaces we would use.

We came second but the project was appreciated so they gave us a small amount of money, which made us able to organise a micro-festival, a sort of a prototype to SixToSix. So, when the Bank Foundation launched a call for projects, we were already prepared to participate; we had a project, and a large network of partners. I spent one month during the summer to create the partnership and in November 2019 we won the call.

We started to organise the whole event but had rapidly to stop because of the COVID crisis. We started to rethink the project in a hybrid format. That way, some artists could be involved in person, which they preferred, but others could also contribute with pieces of art, music... We organised also a lot of meetings and some training activities online so in July 2021 we could finally hold the festival.

The participants would register at the starting point, receive a map of the installations and their description and explore them by themselves. There were a lot of performances but also installations, music and videos, some live, some accessible through QR codes.”

The choice of the ZAI (“Zona Agricolo Industriale”) industrial zone was important for Interzona and for the festival:

“The festival was organised in this big area full of iconic but abandoned warehouses, an area developed in the 20s and then in the 50s around the local food and agricultural industry. It’s a very chaotic area with empty spaces and new commercial and logistical hubs. We had two big spaces there before getting evicted. So, the location was natural to us, because we were born here, with the goal to revitalise the area. People dismissed the buildings. But if you looked at them as pieces of history, a social symbol or icons of post-industrial archi-

itecture, they become charming and important. Modifying that gaze towards a new vision is the heart of Interzona. So, the festival was a way to continue promoting this vision with art, music and culture and bringing people to walk and bike through these forgotten spaces.

We also tried to match the iconic spaces of the ZAI with the artists. The main strategy was to find places that were suited to hosting performances, installations, but artists could also choose the ones they felt better in. Several artists produced music pieces that were created or adapted for those spaces, for example.

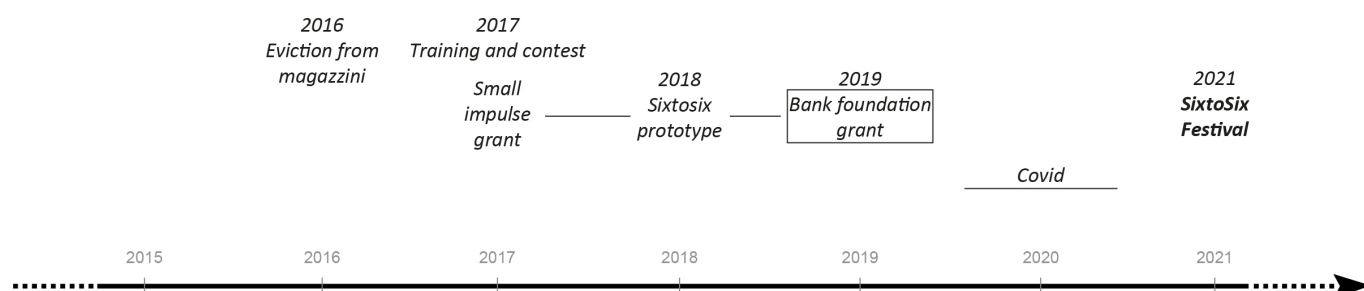
One key aspect of the festival was its size, bringing people to explore a large industrial landscape implicating complicated logistical issues: “Another objective of the festival was to explore the area in a sustainable manner, through walking and biking. But it’s a very car centric area: it’s difficult to reach, and dangerous for pedestrians. So, we avoided using the main streets and planned safe itineraries.

It was our first big event outside of our space, and it was so big! We had to bring in all the logistics, the technical elements... which was even more difficult because there were so many locations. We also didn’t have enough volunteers to manage all the locations so we really struggled, even with some help from the municipality and artists helping out. It was very stressful.”

Stefania describes this experience as both a success and a failure, fearing for Interzona’s future:

“We managed to realise the festival, it was a great success in itself. The park is more used now, and the municipality is considering regenerating the bridge area. But the rest of the ZAI is still quite empty. We only reached 250 people, that’s not much given the energy we put in. We also still don’t have a new building, and some volunteers left. COVID played a huge role in that: it made the whole organisation even more complicated, and lots of people were not ready for such a big event right after the lockdowns. But another thing is that, for an association like us – that used to have a space – losing it is terrible, because you have your habits on how you organise things, and a community involved in that space.

So right now, the association is in a complicated position, but we did make an impact. Through the festival, we got some support from a newer association, and it was great to get to engage with young people and pass on our knowledge. Another association started doing events in the industrial park, promoting the revitalisation of the area with a similar approach to ours. In this sense, I feel the event provoked a series of positive spin-offs. That’s fertilisation.”







HANT FREE BROOK AVTE CONVOLUTIONE



MEANWHILE FOREVER – Haceria Arteak, Bilbao, Spain

Haceria was founded in 1997 as an organisation dedicated to performing arts through the reconversion of an abandoned sawmill in a flexible exhibition and creation space, within the Zorrotzaurre island, less than 3km from Bilbao's infamous Guggenheim Museum. The organisation also offers services, consultancy and research work based on their cultural expertise.

In 2008, Haceria launched ZAWP (Zorrotzaurre Art Work in Progress), a major programme challenging the newly approved urban regeneration development plan for the Ribera de Deusto and Zorrotzaurre island neighbourhoods as designed by Zaha Hadid Architects. Through arts and performances, ZAWP promoted the cultural regeneration of the local abandoned industrial buildings of the island during the lengthy process of operationalisation of the development plan. Through this project, Haceria is trying to reorient the future of the sector, safeguarding the presence of industrial and grassroots cultural actors from the urban renewal process. While acknowledging the eventual full transformation of the island (as testified by their first eviction in 2018 to another space on the island) Haceria takes advantage of the 'meanwhile' condition to reorient this ongoing process, fuelling local cultural activities with the animation of 10 spaces throughout the island, at varying times.

Image : People moving to a new site. ZAWP Bilbao
<https://www.haceriaarteak.com/>

INTERVIEW: CRISTINA PASCUAL/Haceria Communication Manager

Cristina Pascual is Haceria's Communication Manager and has overseen the ZAWP project since 2019. She explains:

"Bilbao was an industrial city, with big shipyards, and many smaller companies living from it. When this shipping industry started to disappear, so did those companies. Then, in 1997, the Guggenheim replaced the shipyards, but all the small companies of the islands were still abandoned. So, the idea of the founders of Haceria was to replicate this big institutional idea on another scale: convert the small industrial spaces into small cultural venues. That's how the association opened, and how they transformed an old sawmill into a theatre venue, in 1998. And for 10 years, Haceria gave spaces for creators in the city in a very free and familial manner.

In 2008, the current president of the association, Manuel, heard that the municipality was developing plans for this part of the island. The first plan was to demolish everything to rebuild. But the problem is that the island is owned by many small owners, so it's quite a complicated space to work with. We realised that the plan was not going to get done before 20 years or similar.

So, Manuel's idea was to see how Haceria could contribute to the transformation process in the meantime and maybe avoid the demolition of everything. He hired a sociology student, Ruth Mayoral, to work on this. At the same time, Haceria was invited to a 'Forum for a sustainable neighbourhood' which brought together institutions and the 450 inhabitants that still lived on the island. That was the beginning of the ZAWP movement that Ruth carried until she became Professor at University."

ZAWP is based on a clear understanding of its urban context, and attempts to use it to divert on-going transformations:

"Since the beginning, we knew that what we did could only happen

in what we called the 'Meanwhile'; institutions will eventually decide what they want to proceed and do it. So, we developed and carried on our projects in that 'suspended time' even if we knew that the island would be – eventually – completely transformed. But maybe things would have changed in the meantime.

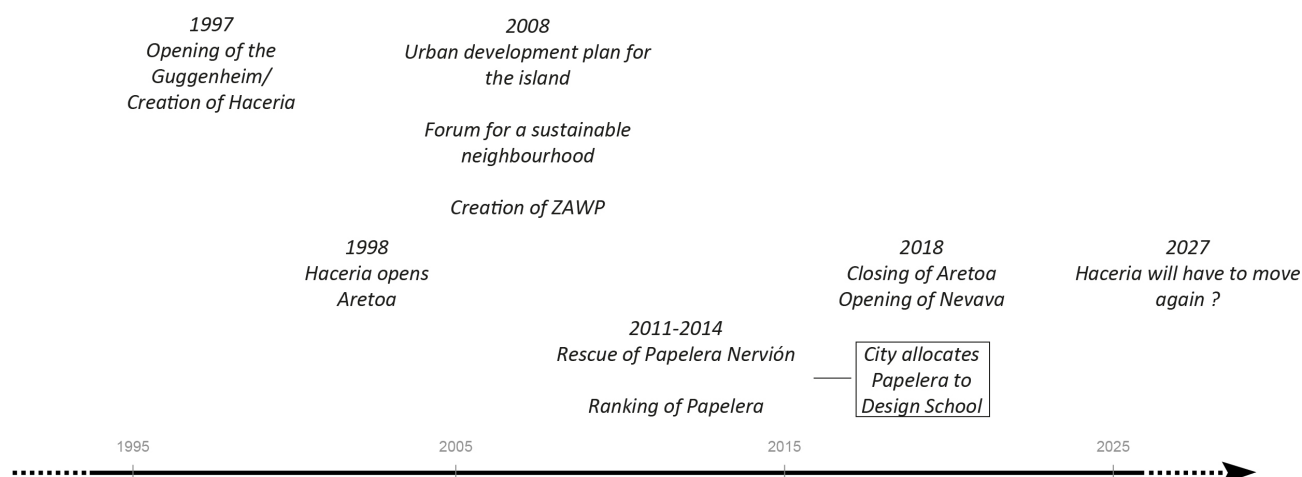
We have four main work lines: (1) to transform the landscape through arts and culture, that's why we have an annual call for artistic residencies and affordable co-working spaces; (2) to revitalise the area through culture, that's why we develop many activities, to stimulate the neighbourhood and attract new people; (3) to revitalise the industrial memory of the landscape, that's why we made a big archive of demolitions of the buildings and interviews with inhabitants, owners, directors of the factories... ; (4) to export our model, that's an ongoing process."

By promoting cultural activities and initiatives throughout the island, Haceria is slowly influencing the on-going transformation of its environment:

"First, we saved the Papelera Nervión, one of the island's industrial buildings. The rule was that they couldn't demolish it as long as there was an ongoing activity. So Haceria rented it for three years, sacrificing salaries on this, with the hope that we could force public institutions to save it and eventually use it for our cultural factory. But suddenly, the town hall took the management of the building and gave it to a design school. It was a success, we were happy because we saved the building but, of course, our cultural factory could have been there too.

Another example is Pavilion n° 6. There, a theatre association that we funded at the beginning started their activity. Now local institutions will give them a new building in the project. We had to move and reinvent many times. We ended up renting another pavilion, and started transforming it into a cultural factory in 2019, with concerts, exhibitions, events, gastronomy, music...

I think this process and approach shows how cultural activity can change the landscape; there are going to be cultural venues on the island after all. And the city decided to keep 14 industrial buildings in their final plan, so that's good too. But then we still fear that, in



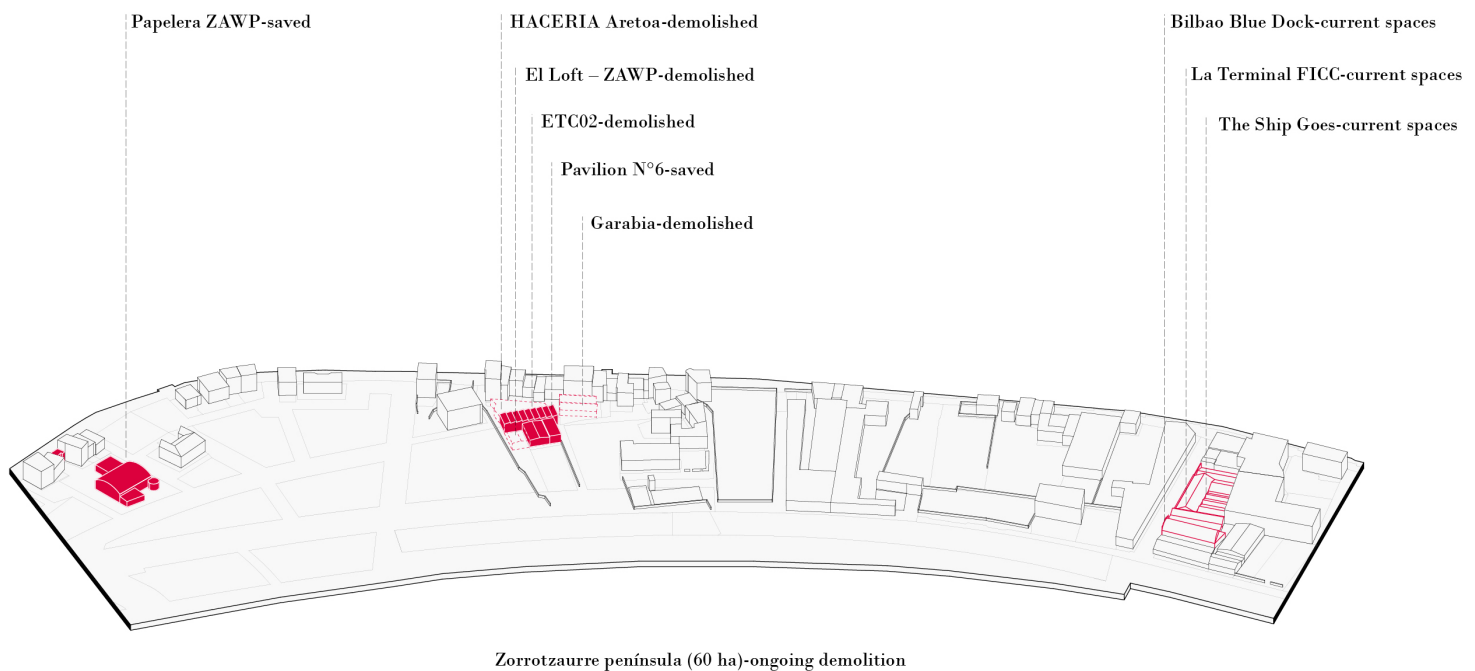
three or four years, our building will be demolished, and we will have to move again, and reinvent our project.”

Indeed, despite the understanding of the urban development context, Haceria’s relationships to public authorities can be at times frustrating:

“We have the support of the institutions; our main income comes from yearly nominative grants by the city of Bilbao and the Basque government. But their attitude is more about... ‘don’t give us any big trouble, because we are going to change the island and then we will maybe give you new equipment. In the meantime, just adapt to the master plan.’

That’s why our philosophy is temporary, because we don’t really know if, in the end, we will have a space or not, and what kind of space

we will eventually obtain. We are not a public institution, so our power is very limited. But we like to bring change by doing small things and keeping a low profile. That’s why we like to call ourselves space-time intruders; we are like hackers of the island. We can defend the island’s cultural projects’ common interest.”





CULTURAL SOUND ZONE – NGBG, Malmö, Sweden

Situated South-East of Malmö's city centre, on the border between the Sofielun and Annelund neighbourhoods, NGBG was established in 2019 within a former farm. Its ambition has been – since the beginning – to build a new cultural centre for Malmö ('Malmö's new cultural heart') within the industrial area of Norra Grängesbergsgatan, from which it drew its name. Bringing together artists, craftspeople and cultural workers, NGBG wants to focus on building an accessible, inclusive, sustainable, mixed use and joyful free space within an otherwise desolate industrial space.

While today this ambition takes form through various projects and spaces spanning from co-working locations to after-school programmes, NGBG grew out of an ephemeral initiative: the annual 'Gatufest', a temporary but extremely intense musical and cultural event, taking over the Norra Grängesbergsgatan street and attracting thousands of people to the otherwise deserted industrial space. A special event making room for artistic and cultural actors otherwise pushed out of city centres due to residential noise complaints.

In 2021, such ephemeral events led Malmö officials to both provide NGBG with their current building and to recognise part of the industrial zone around Norra Grängesbergsgatan street as a 'cultural sound zone', which is to say a space in the city where not only industrial, but also cultural activities (clubs, theatres, organisations ...) are allowed to be louder than anywhere else in the city.

Through a series of ephemeral activities, NGBG thus managed to actively change the imaginaries and uses of the area while challenging local urban regulations. The adoption of NGBG Cultural Sound Zone serves as a testimony to the power of ephemerality to overcome modernist mono-functionalism as well as to preserve the rich cultural liveliness of urbanity from displacement and extinction.



*Image: The Gatufest (edition 2018). ©NGBG
<https://ngbg.se/>*

INTERVIEW: IAN DACE, NGBG Chairman (2019-2023)

Ian Dace is the creator of ‘Gatufest’ and was the Chairman of NGBG from its founding in 2019 until March 2023. He recounts how he came to build this project:

“From 2006 to 2011, we ran a grassroots event, the Møllevångensfestivalen, in an area nearby. It was of a sort of anarchist style; we would throw electric cables out of people’s apartment windows and bands would just plug in and play. We’d just ask for permits to stop the traffic, but other than that, it was a ‘free-for-all’: people would just do what they wanted. But then we moved to Norra Grängesbergsgatan when the city proposed us to occupy a building there.

The area was seen as useless and unproductive, so the city originally planned to knock it down to build residential units. Malmö’s public housing company had a project to transform one of the factories but when they applied for it, this major baking company took the project to Supreme Court. Obviously, if housing was to be built close to the factory, immediate complaints would arrive about transport, noises from ventilation or the smell.

In the meantime, we found out how useful it is for cultural workers to be in an industrial zone: you can make much more noise and do many more things than in most areas within the city. That’s why you often find there many welding firms, garage workshops or studios, clubs and rehearsal rooms for bands. We wanted to safeguard these conditions for our members so we flanked the factory with the argument that there should be an area in the city centre where noise could be made. That’s why we started Gatufest in 2016, to showcase how lively and useful this place actually was, and that it didn’t need housing or demolition to gain significance. By 2018, we had 9,000 visitors, and it really changed the way people spoke about the area, it was clear that residential projects would destroy its potential.

In 2019, the company won the case, establishing that, since they had

been there before, there couldn’t be any residential units built there. This, of course, annoyed the city. That’s when the municipality pivoted towards us. They started promoting our argument: this could be a great ‘cultural sound zone’. Newspapers also picked it up. Soon enough, the city pushed this policy as if they were rooting for it all along.”

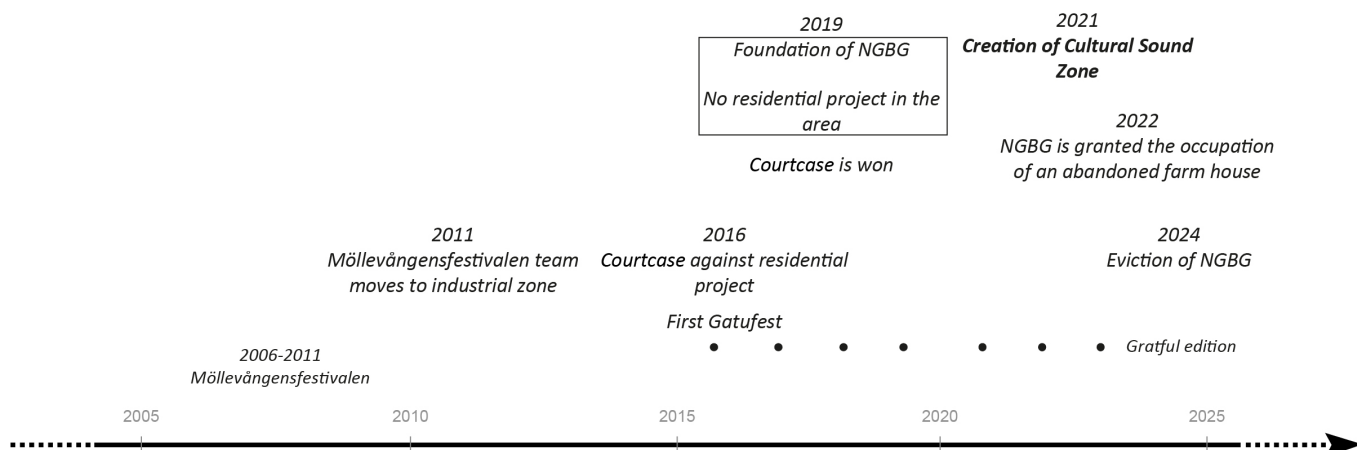
The ‘Gatufest’ relies on a few principles of being non-commercial, inclusive of a variety of cultures and open:

“The festival itself is about giving people access to the space without terms or conditions. There’s a stage for every genre, every ethnicity ... We don’t pick the best bands, we just open applications and people apply by indicating whatever style or genre they define themselves with. Then we put them together and they form self-organised groups around the stages that they use as they prefer. Then, since everybody knows at least one person from the other stages, they can always negotiate between groups. Our only rule is that you can’t complain or try to stop someone else.

Mind you, a lot of fights could be possible: we sell alcohol and meat next to Muslim or vegan groups, for example. But actually, the worst conflict we ever had was between the ‘noise’, ‘drone’ and ‘ambient’ scenes; they’re all forms of electronic dance music with maybe a 20 bpm difference. Because they’re close, they fight to distinguish themselves. In comparison, people from the mosques, or the LGBTQ people, are very secure: they present themselves and ignore the rest. The general idea is to operate tolerance and respect; no one gets to dominate the culture in the area, anyone who lives here can get a stage.”

While NGBG has been very successful in its endeavour, Ian also recognises the limits to their actions:

“In 2023, we had 50,000 attendees – it’s hugely successful. Since the court case, zoning laws have been changed to cancel all housing plans, and the Cultural Sound Zone (CSZ) agreement runs until 2040. But the factories are already leaving, and all the available properties are bought back. Ultimately, they will build commercial centres and housing areas. I think you can probably interfere at some



point like we did, but you can't stand in the way of huge companies and administrations for too long.

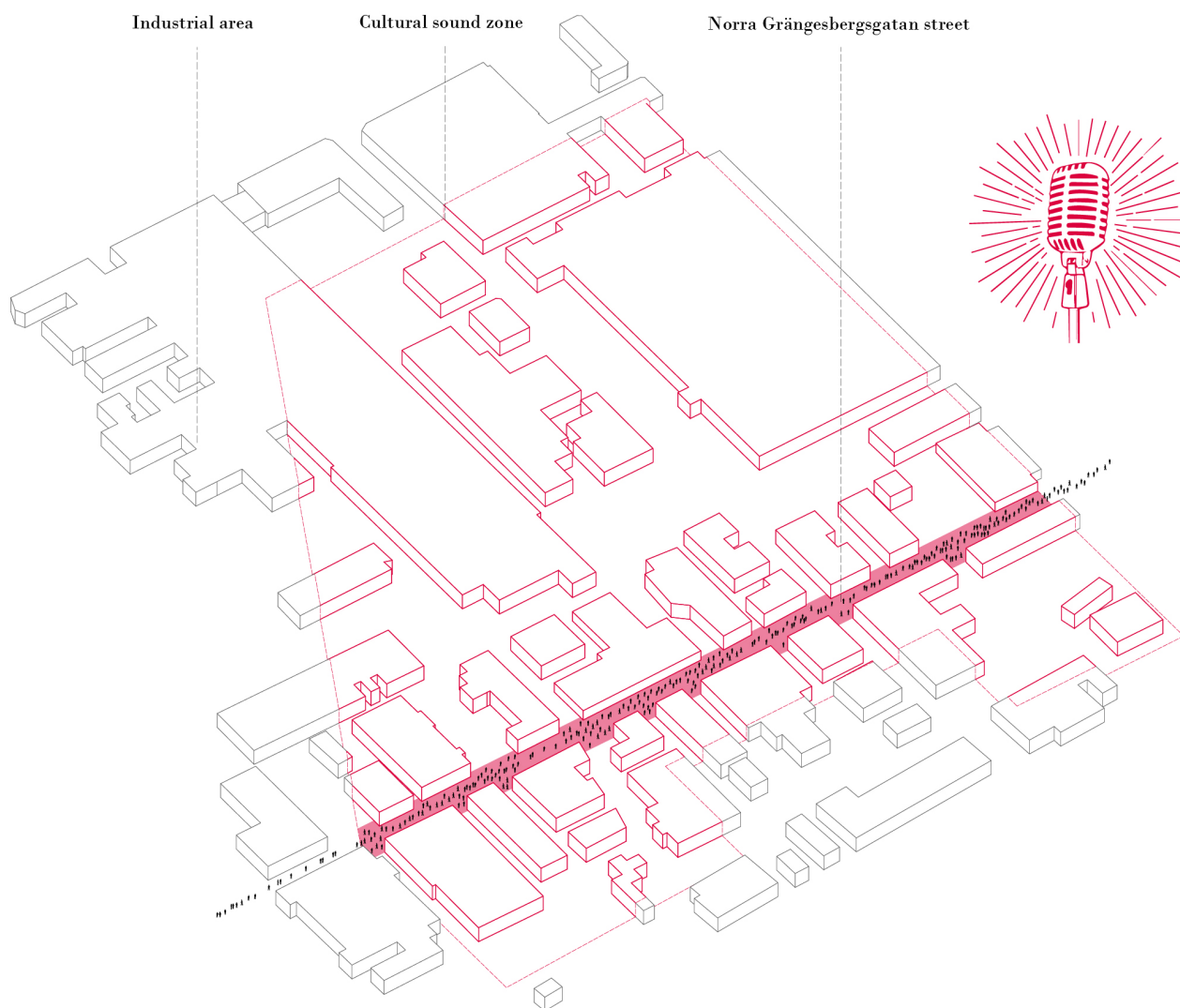
There is also less culture in the area now than before. Because the municipality's idea was mostly related to cultural start-ups and not really for bands or non-productive groups. So, we got what we wanted in the first place, but in the end they did it in the service of what they mean by culture, even us, we recently got evicted from the space they gave us to allow the extension of a big night club.

That made us realise that the details of the Cultural Sound Zone were more inspired by our language than based on it, and that – in the end – we risk being kind of gentrifiers. It is more a temporary victory that allowed people that were pushed out of the city to find a 'safe haven'.

We will, maybe, have to move culture again: either outside of the city, in farms or rural areas or literally, with moving events. But can we get

the urban culture to move to the countryside?

However, if I learned anything from it, it's that it's better to do something even if it doesn't last. You can't expect to last forever in the same place, but you can keep it together by using your strengths and being ready to adapt. You often see communities losing a building and giving up. But the buildings are not the ambition, they're just tools; so it's possible to survive, no matter what."



4 NEW COEXISTENCES

THE OBLIQUE HUMAN

Imagine your City – *Creative Industry Košice, Košice, Slovakia*
Epsilon – *Timis County Youth Foundation, Timișoara, Romania*
Borderland Fabrika – *Bitamine Faktoria, Irun*

CONSTELLATIONS OF BEINGS

Holistic Habitat – *ufaFabrik, Berlin*
Incontri del Terzo Luogo – *Manifatture Knos, Lecce*
Embassy of Non-Humans – *Farm Cultural Centre, Favara*

“Space enables, defines living conditions and opens (or can deny) possibilities of emancipation. It is an essential instrument of redistribution: of opportunity, justice and horizontality. Redefining boundaries and distances between species in space will define the distance between the present and future city. This part investigates projects and/or spatial strategies exploring new ways of coexistence in space between humans (The Oblique Human) or between humans and non-humans (Human/Non-Human). Questioning these modes re-opens the (modern) debate on the role of architecture, urbanism, landscape design in the frame of a broader biopolitical project concerning living entities and bodies in space. The biopolitical space is here considered not (only) as an apparatus of control exercised over a population/species, but also as a powerful reservoir of possibilities for subjects to emancipate themselves, between human beings, and between humans and non-humans.” (Vigano, 2023)

In a context of widening political divisions and growing economic inequalities, we need to imagine and envisage spaces in which we can live differently together. Today the question becomes even more urgent and relevant, and on a bigger scale than before. The socio-ecological transition could provide a precious opportunity to question and redefine the ties that Western man maintains with his environment and to imagine radically new forms of society.

INSPIRING POSITION/PHILIPPE DESCOLA (Anthropologist)

“There is a vast field of research here, at the crossroads of ethology, ecology, infectiology and the social sciences, which is still in its early stages and which would enable us to better understand the diversity of our associations with ‘fellow’ species. As the current crisis clearly shows, it does us little good to think of it in the abstract terms of man’s relationship with nature. What we need, on the contrary, is a better understanding of the dense and complex network of interactions, interrelations and feedback between beings and phenomena that cannot be defined a priori.” (Descola, 2010)

The 'oblique focus' facilitates revisions of fundamental, persistent Western narratives about difference, especially racial and sexual difference. Is it possible to create a community where everyone lives according to their own rhythm, and yet respects the individual rhythms of others – increasingly dilated, flexible spaces, homes that become places of 'extended' cohabitation? This section explores a series of projects regarding new spaces of coexistence and new ways of living together among humans.

4.1 THE OBLIQUE HUMAN

Imagine your City - Creative Industry, Košice, Slovakia

Epsilon - *Timis County Youth Foundation, Timișoara*

Borderland Fabrika - *Bitamine Faktoria, Irun*



IMAGINE YOUR CITY – Creative Industry, Košice, Slovakia

Creative Industry Košice (CIKE) was established in 2015 in Slovakia's second biggest city (240,000 inhabitants), after its members were involved in the organisation of the city's title of 2013 European City of Culture. Since then, CIKE has developed strong expertise in cultural projects, including the development of international co-operation, education, mobility and professionalisation programmes, as well as artistic residencies. Among these, the Imagine Your City project (IYC) aims to use urban co-design to foster stronger communities, bridging Košice's citizens and the Ukrainian populations seeking refuge from Russian invasions. Held through 2022, this project brought communities together through the co-creation of site-specific interventions in public space around the temporary refugee shelter of the Jedlikova dormitory. The project aimed to co-design public space while creating prototypes for scalable solutions. Developed and upscaled by local creative businesses, those prototypes were aimed to be usable by city administrations across Europe when dealing with future refugee crises, whether the result of wars, climate change or energy and economic crises.



*Image: Workshop & exploration on site. ©Creative Industry
<https://www.cike.sk/>*

INTERVIEW: MARKO POPOVIČ – CIKE Project Manager (2021-present)

Marko Popovič has been Head of Programme and Project Manager at CIKE since 2021 and has overseen the development of Imagine Your City from beginning to end. He shares his thoughts:

“CIKE is different from other TEH members because we are not a cultural centre, we are an intermediary organisation established by the city to build capacity for the cultural and creative sector in Košice. We have city representatives on our board, and we are financed up to 50% by the city. In return, we deliver services and co-develop, co-design and implement strategic cultural policies in the city. We also help the municipality to design processes to make the urban development more participatory and community based. In this frame, we seek to build a common sense of identity, joint ownership and values. We collaborate with the city to foster these kind of activities and diminish top-down development.”

The closeness of Ukraine to Košice led CIKE work to evolve following the Russian invasion of Ukraine at the beginning of 2022:

“Suddenly, so many Ukrainian refugees came to Košice, because we are just 80 km from the border. Some moved rapidly to Bratislava, Czech Republic, Poland, or further to the West. But many decided to stay here too. Of course, there was a first wave of solidarity but, you know, it’s a small town, so when you have a lot of new people coming in, you can feel it. I wouldn’t say that there were any problems, but you could start feeling some tensions, and the city at the time didn’t have any coherent strategy. So, as an organisation that connects culture, creative industry and urban planning; as people that work with communities, we started developing different programmes towards the integration of this new community with the local population.

Some among them were students and started studying at the local university, but for the majority there was no social interaction with the local population. That is how IYC started, the idea was to use our expertise in urban development to connect to communities. We wanted to use our expertise in placemaking to bring together those communities.”

IYC was developed in two different phases, starting with exploratory research: “First, we did some research on the area around Jedlikova dormitory, the city’s main refugee shelter. We had interviews with residents and the Ukrainian community, to understand how they used the area. The potential was huge: the area consisted of a large open space made of grass, trees and some parking lots, in the middle of a residential neighbourhood. The communities were already sharing that space, which was in very bad conditions. So, there were already strong incentives for both communities to come and say something about it and how it should be. And, from the point of view of the city, even without this context, the area was to be revitalised.”

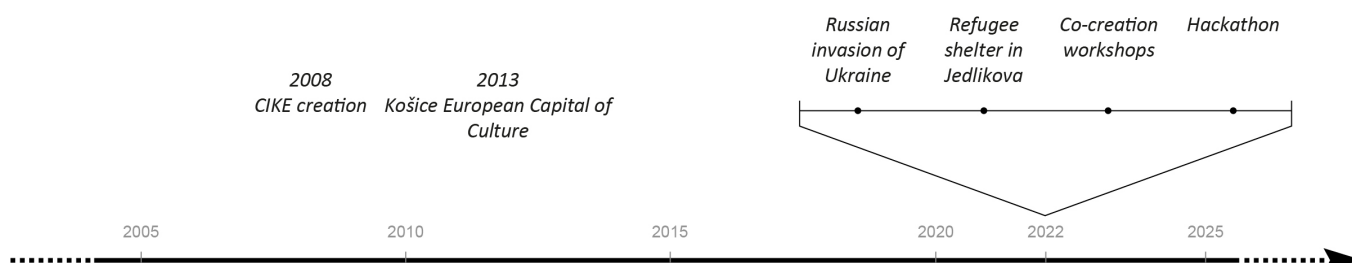
Based on those preliminary elements, and explicitly building on the New European Bauhaus principles, CIKE went on to organise a series of workshops:

“We developed living labs where we invited facilitators from different fields, including people from our organisation. We also invited Ukrainians who lived in the dormitories, and the population that lived in the neighbourhood. Through participative workshops, the experts guided discussions with them about what to do with that public space, engaging both communities through placemaking, with maps, models, etc. And bringing them to give suggestions. They were basically developing possible future uses and suggesting concrete interventions in the public space to bring people together.”

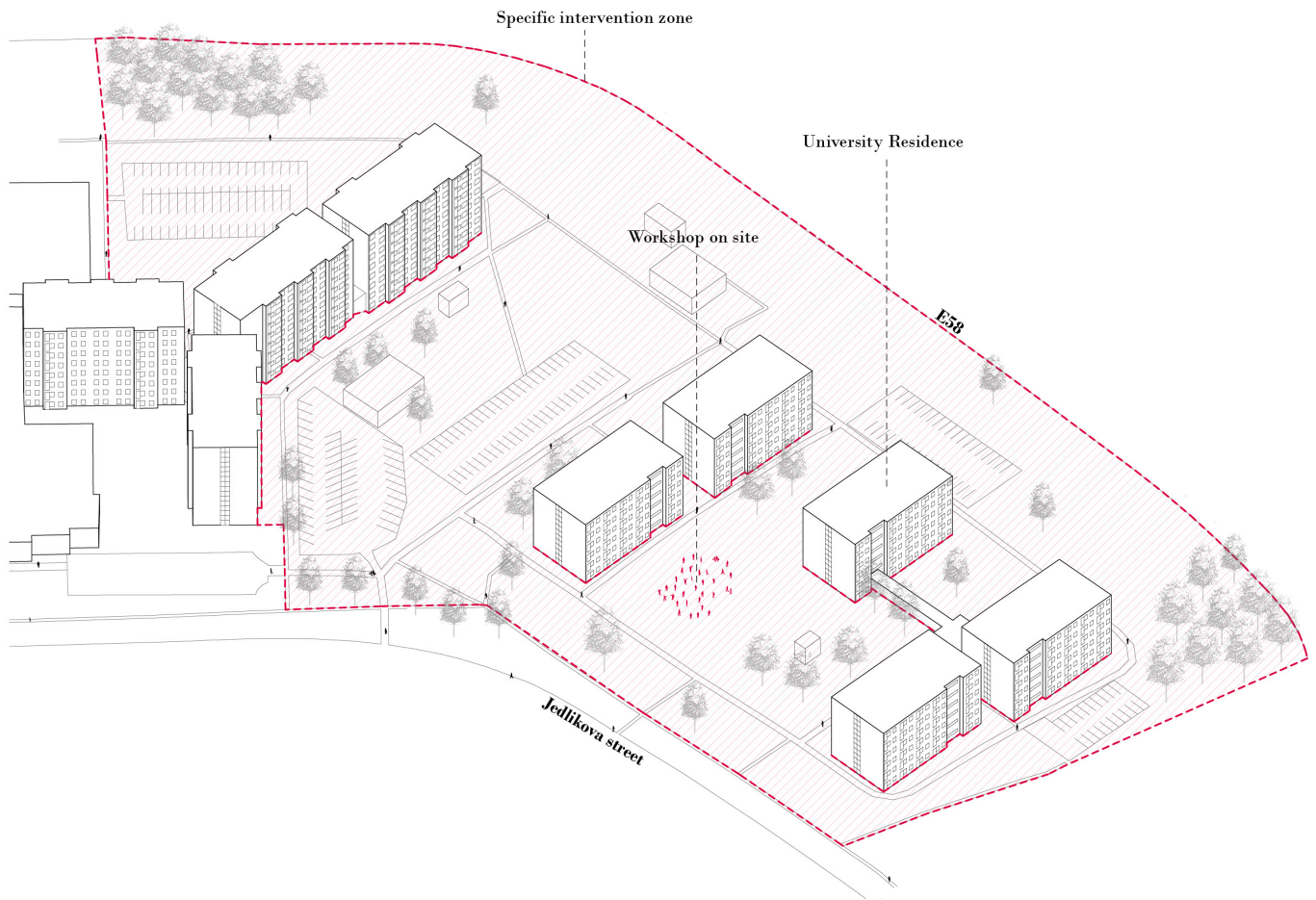
Based on those results, CIKE held an open hackathon, inviting creative professionals to propose strategies for the space, with the ambition of enabling the encounter of two communities:

“We used the data developed during the living labs on how the space was used, what were the people’s needs, their ideas and interventions to structure a Hackathon Challenge for companies and professionals. We said: ‘OK, so you got the technical knowledge, we have inputs from citizens, so your challenge is to propose very concrete solutions for that area.’”

While CIKE’s programme had come to a close by 2023, Marko is confident: “We ended up with a large quantity of inputs and brought them to the city administration. While we are still discussing the possibilities for more actions with the city, it’s not that important because, for us, the goal was that people from different communities



somehow connect and interact. And that happened: lots of people came and made new connections. What was important to us was that local residents started thinking about the Ukrainian people as their new neighbours; not as some poor people in a dormitory. And inversely, that Ukrainians started to see themselves as new citizens, and to see Košice as the place they live in and not only a place to survive. In the end, it's part of the process of finding a new home and developing a feeling of ownership. Because feeling a city as your home is not so much about the kind of spaces you go through to buy food or other, and much more about the relations you build, if you start talking with your neighbour on the way.”





Change
maker

Change
maker

Change
maker



EPSILON (FOR AND BY YOUNG PEOPLE) – Timis County Youth Foundation, Timișoara, Romania

Timis County Youth Foundation (FITT) was established in 1990 in Timișoara – one of the most populated Romanian cities (311,000 inhabitants) – as a federation for 33 youth NGOs. FITT also manages the Timișoara Youth House, a youth centre offering housing, cultural activities and services and a performance hall in Northern Timișoara, within the iconic Communist Youth House designed by Haralambie Cochechi and Ivan Stern. From the construction of the building (in the 1970s) to the current management of the Youth House, FITT places the active involvement of young people (from 14 to 35) at the centre of their activities. The Epsilon initiative incarnates this stance. Taking from the symbolic ‘epsilon’, designating infinitesimal mathematical quantities, the initiative hints at the neglect of young artists and the absence of support, trust and recognition they find in an ageing society and the general contemporary artistic field. Started in the autumn of 2023, Epsilon offers the space and conditions for young creatives to be considered as a force and a source of innovation for Romanian arts and society at large. It constitutes a platform for the expression of their visions and ideas while relating to the 21st century conditions and struggles.

Image : <https://fit.ro>

<https://youthcenters.fit.ro/timis-county-youth-foundation/>

INTERVIEW: MIHAI VILCEA/ FITT President

Mihai Vilcea is FITT's current president. As he reaches his tenth and final year of involvement, he recounts how young people were at the heart of the project well before the foundation of FITT and the fall of the Soviet regime:

"It's very important to understand how the Youth House was made, because it was built with less than two or three percent of the total budget coming from the state. Everything else came from the annual fee of young people. It was money coming from youth volunteering; during the Communist period we had this kind of mandatory volunteering during the summer where young people would work in agriculture or organisations of the Communist Party's youth branch. A lot of young people also worked on the actual construction along with the professional builders, as sort of semi mandatory/semi volunteer work. The building was opened in 1978 and it was the first building built from scratch in Romania with the purpose to serve young people."

FITT was founded by one of the last popular decrees issued amidst the fall of the Communist era and in absence of an elected government, in 1990. Those circumstances allowed the youth organisers to claim ownership of the iconic building they built and pursue their activities despite an eventful political climate and uncertainty that concerned the future of publicly owned infrastructures.

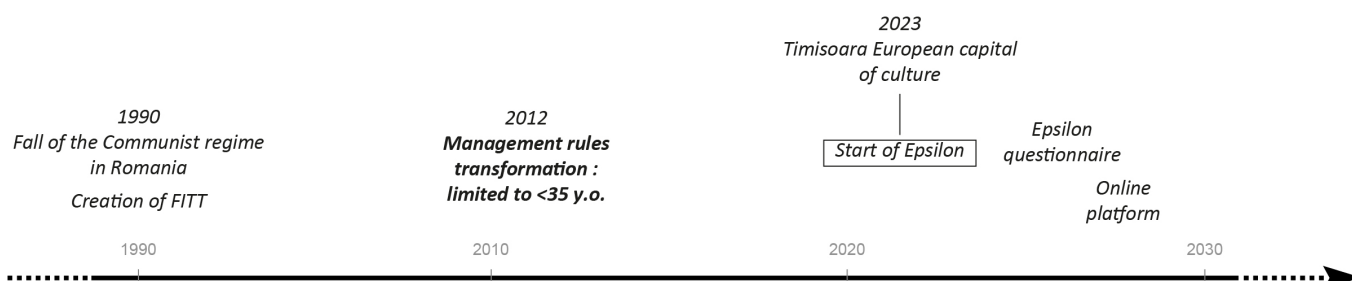
After a period of conflict within the organisation, in 2012 users and workers allied to fundamentally change FITT and its management structure, setting up rules ensuring that the structure would be man-

aged democratically "by and for young people". Since 2013, the majority of the staff and elected board members need to be below the age of 35. The board itself is subject to specific criteria: composed of 10 members, four places are devoted to women and four to men, one for a young person coming from a disadvantaged background and another to a young person who is part of a socio-cultural minority. Beyond the democratic goal of this organisational change, Mihail describes the structural impulse it brings:

"It creates a system in which you constantly must prepare new generations. The whole idea is that you will work maybe eight or nine years but, after that, if they are not young people competent enough to continue what you started, then everything crumbles. So, each generation has the responsibility to create a space in which young people are able to grow and get directly involved. We have to maintain a space where they can come as volunteers, for example. And if they show commitment or potential, then we have to make sure our space allows to bring them further, as an employee or as a member of the board for example. And you know, the Youth House is a 11,000m² space. The local, regional and national authorities give us no money to maintain it or support it, not even to pay utilities. So everything is coming through grants, services or programming that we plan here: it is a lot of responsibility. At the end of the day, this really is about creating a system in which new generations can come and become leaders, much earlier than in the real world."

The philosophy behind FITT is that young people should always have a say in the decisions that affect them, away from conventional patronising stances considering youth as unable to lead or build constructive decisions. This extends to cultural grants, whose main public is often young people even though institutions rarely involved them:

"Timișoara, for example, was the 2023 European Capital of Culture. That's millions of euros given for different programmes. Guess



what? The only age group that was not specifically targeted is young people. You've got programmes for children, adults, pensioners, seniors... But nothing specific for young people. And while most of the public has been young people, they still didn't build a specific programme for that. So, as part of Epsilon, we've been developing a collection of young artists' opinions, building an argument that European Capital of Culture funding should be primarily for young artists. We want to introduce a new criterion making it mandatory for cities to target local young artists and be agents of change for young people's EU frameworks."

Mihail is joined by Alina Sferle. She started visiting the Youth House at the age of 17, a year before she was employed part-time at FITT while completing her art degree. She is now Director of FITT's cultural department and responsible for the Epsilon initiative:

"We are trying to make a community for young artists in Timișoara and connect them with artists throughout Europe and the world," she says. "We started with a questionnaire on how young artists felt through this year of capital of culture and how they saw themselves in this process, what helped or didn't help them. We held workshops with them and now we're also developing an online platform. It's a website where the artists are part of a community. They can have their page where they promote themselves and connect with others. Younger artists are so often working alone, from their home, they need connections with other artists at a professional level to evolve and get opportunities."

Mihail adds: "In the end, it is also about establishing an art movement. The idea is that we're slowly starting a community to transform the art field in Romania and open it specifically for young people, with their perceptions and their visions. So, we're trying to shape also an art movement in which young people are the centre, and not waiting to grow old to become confirmed artists."





BORDERLAND FABRIKA – Bitamine Faktoria, Irun, Spain

Bitamine was first founded in 2010 by the Artitadetó Artists' Association, a group of women artists and cultural workers, on the Bidasoa riverbank, which marks the Franco-Hispanic border. Since then, the project developed into a 'creation factory', offering a range of cultural and artistic initiatives focused on intercultural exchanges and community building with a strong focus on gender perspectives, local memories and public space. In particular, Bitamine develops reflections on borderland socio-cultural conditions in the Basque country setting, and the many intercultural relationships and conflicts it triggers. Through various projects, Bitamine proposes spaces to overcome boundaries, bridge cultural communities and bring forward the importance of working together to face present and future challenges. From the wandering theatre Transbita to the Ribera festival, as well as through their more research-oriented projects, the centre has set an example of bringing together different social and cultural communities to meet and share beyond the political fragmentation of political borders. Since 2021, Bitamine Faktoria became Bitamine, a room for artistic, cultural and social research on the border, with a focus on re- search and, since 2023, also acts as a publisher.

*Image : Barriers on a bridge linking Irun (Spain) and Hendaye (France). ©Bitamine Faktoria
<https://bitamine.net/en>*

INTERVIEW: HELGA MASSETANI PIEMONTE/ Bitamine Director (2010-present)

Helga Masetani Piemonte has acted as Director and Coordinator of Bitamine since its foundation, and acts as its sole employee since 2021. In her words, the geopolitical situation of the centre is central to its existence:

“I use the border, and I live in it; my house is in France, my work in Spain. So Bitamine, myself, we’re part of this ecosystem, with those specific interactions. There are so many layers: it’s the border of Spain and France, but we’re also in the Basque country, which is autonomous, a sort of ‘country within a country’. That adds another layer: there is a Spanish, Basque country and a French one. Then the language: people may speak Basque, Spanish or French. And the political layer, with the Basque country politics – the Euskal Herria – the Spanish and the French ones. Everything works in this way, we need to combine it all.

It has always been very important for us to understand those variations and how they can engage together because we love to work in common with both sides of the border.”

Starting in 2012, Bitamine went from being a small collective of feminist artists to being recognised by Irun’s socialist municipality for their work with local public and spaces. Through project funding, Bitamine ran many successful events until 2021. A few were recurrent participative and or artistic happenings, taking place alternately on either side of the border, via light and mobile devices. These include the Creative Neighbourhood workshops, intergenerational participative moments discussing Irun’s public space issues, the experimental performance caravan Transbita or the artistic publication Contrabandistas. Other events took the form of festivals spreading over the city and bridging its divides, including the artistic youth festival Kontoparanea, inviting local creatives to a first paid experience to create, programme and manage cultural events; the street art festival A town that makes you happy or Ribera, a site-specific art festival

focusing on historical memory and the cultures of borderland. The creation of festive events as well as the promotion of creative freedom were the main objectives of those initiatives but the end goal of Bitamine has always been the encounter of cultures, whether through the geography of the events or their programme, as Helga explains:

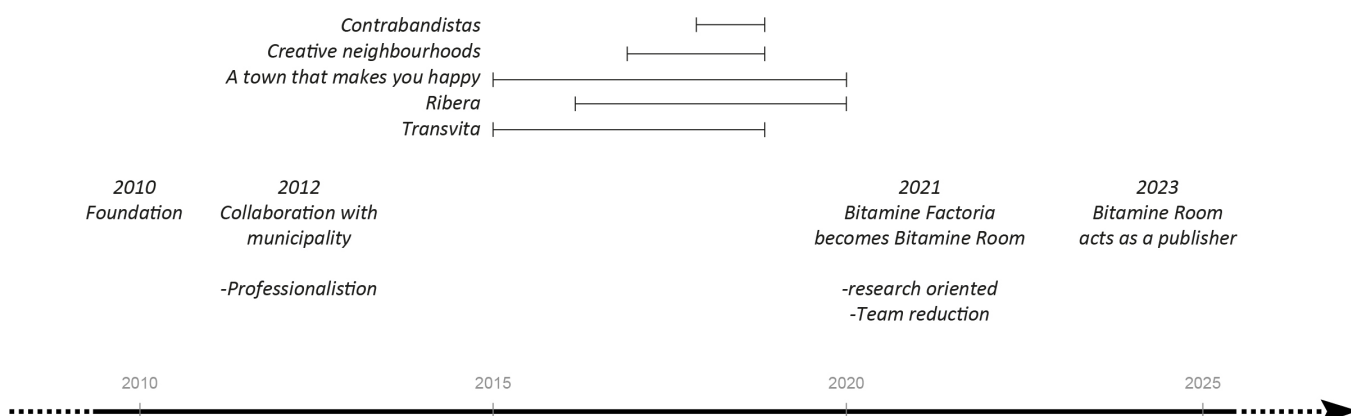
“We would mix artists from both sides of the border, and we would put them together for the event. For example, a musician from the Spanish side and a visual artist from the French side; or a Spanish dancer and a French musician would work together.”

Working together often implies recognising and addressing the limits of intercultural action through active means:

“It is not easy here, because of so many small things. For example, if we organised something at lunch or before dinner, we always had to think about time: it can’t be too late for the French nor too early for the Spanish. We don’t even eat at the same time! It’s frustrating but, beyond the question of participation, it’s a kind of tolerance we need to develop towards each other; to sometimes give something so we can receive something back from the other. We need to be able to accept the culture of others, to construct something together.”

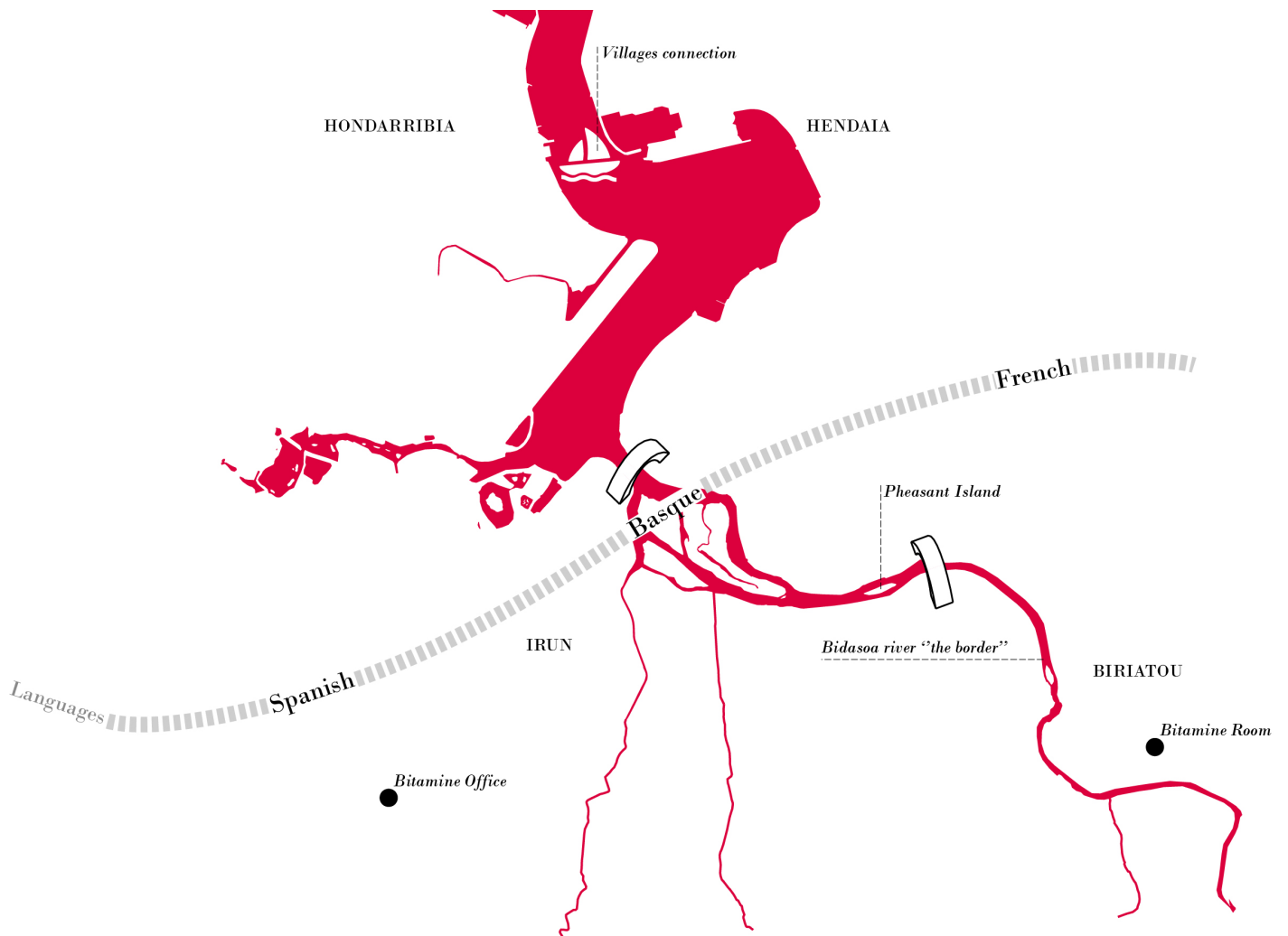
Bitamine has thus developed a set of key strategies to engage intercultural. One concerns events held in public space. Spectacular devices or performances have proved useful to attract a wide audience, but Helga highlights how, following the COVID lockdown, such moments became too energy-consuming and difficult to organise. A second strategy requires every meeting, event or communication to be multilingual. This implies time and resources invested towards translations, whether written or ‘live’, so that everybody can be understood and understand each other, which is a particularly important aspect when the events include children. Bitamine’s attitude towards translation extends beyond logistics:

“Language is used as a full part of the artistic project. If we make an event of poetry, some poetry might be in other languages too. So, the artist needs to understand these languages. Let’s say she’s from Spain and doesn’t speak French or Basque. She still introduces these languages in her poetry, it’s part of the research process. Language can be like a brush, or a pencil.”



A third strategy brings Bitamine to actively engage the public with the creative process. Through questionnaires, visits or interviews with inhabitants, every project is developed starting from the populations' lives and memories:

“We have more engagement with the people if we make them full participants of our projects. When we started the Bidasoa Emotional Atlas, for example, we started with listening to the people. We'd rather work with them directly and place their words on a new level of importance. So, within the research project, we have a bibliography, the archive, but also their voices, and all is placed on the same level of importance.”



The custom from which it is necessary to break away is called human-centred organisation. This section highlights a series of projects/ spatial strategies working on cohabitation, coevolution among species, and embodied cross-species sociality. Projects highlighting the importance of ‘engaging with the significant otherness’. Projects testing new ways of sharing continuities and discontinuities between man and his environment.

4.2 CONSTELLATIONS OF BEINGS (HUMAN/NON HUMAN)

Holistic Habitat - *ufafabrik, Berlin*

Incontri del terzo luogo - *Manifatture Knos, Lecce*

Embassy of Non-Humans - *Farm Cultural Centre, Favara*





HOLISTIC HABITAT – ufaFabrik, Berlin, Germany

UfaFabrik was created in 1979 amidst the planned demolition of the ‘UFA-Film Kopierwerke’ historical location for German movie production, in southern Berlin. From a first illegal occupation, this space quickly became forerunner of the ‘reclaim movement’ of abandoned urban spaces. Today hosting 30 inhabitants and 300 workers, UfaFabrik has developed a vast array of activities: accessible housing, community gardens, theatre programmes, a cinema venue, a restaurant, a cultural centre, a daycare centre... One common feature is the focus and expertise Ufa has developed – throughout its activities – around innovative ecological projects and the virtuous relationships between them. As early as 1979, the local community developed initiatives of clean energy production and mutualisation, then planted walls and roofs before taking on projects of green building insulation, natural grey water treatment as well as computer-optimised solar and wind power production. Throughout its more than 50 years of existence, UfaFabrik has kept on fine-tuning this constellation of ecological initiatives to propose a holistic vision including humans and non-humans into a single ecosystem and metabolism.

Image : First occupants at ufa. ©ufaFabrik
<https://ufafabrik.de/en>

INTERVIEW: WERNER WIARTALLA – ufaFabrik Environment Office Project Leader

Werner Wiartalla joined ufaFabrik in 1987 shortly before becoming the project leader for the organisation’s *Ökologie Büro* (Environment Office) and developing its wide array of sustainable practices. He highlights the circular strategy at the heart of ufa since the 1980s: “The main goal for me has always been to create circles, that everything comes together. That all of the houses can be electrified by a cogeneration system, that hot water could be produced in one house and used everywhere, or that we collect rainwater from all the buildings and use it for the toilets, or to water the plants. It’s all about the circles: we grow the plants that we eat, we cook them with the electricity we generate, we shit in the water we collect, and from the shit, we make the biogas we heat ourselves with. The sun, the rain, the wind, they make us very well connected to nature and our environment.

We started in 1979 with ‘Mao diesel’ so we could be autonomous in electricity and heat production. It was an old van motor running on waste, paired with a waste gas washing system. It produced more electricity than we used, meaning the counters were turning backwards and the electricity company had to pay us money! Of course, they didn’t allow it, but that forced the development of new measuring systems, which helped when we all started using cogeneration systems and solar panels. I started making plans for ufa; by the end of the 80s we got fundings from the EU to develop sustainable pilot projects. That’s when most of our projects started.”

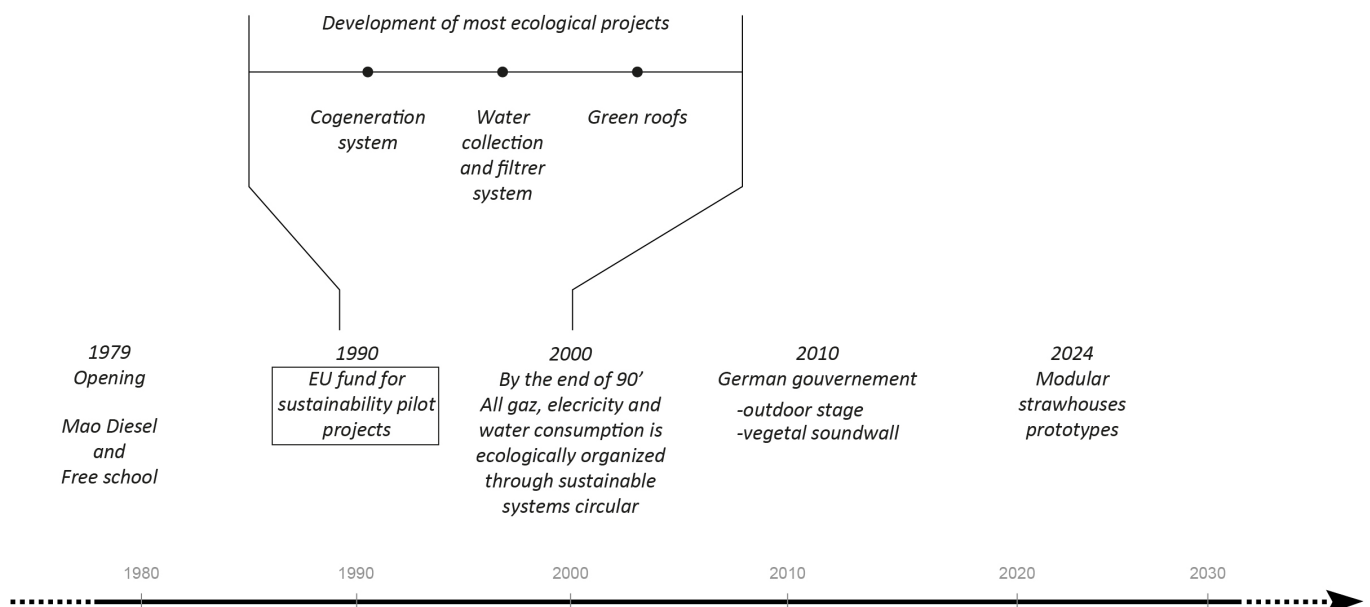
Building on a major funding, ufa developed several initiatives through the 1990s. Some, such as the first propane-based cooling

system once used within ufa’s bakery, were short-lived innovations that didn’t withstand the test of time. Many, however, are still thriving today. The buildings’ roofs were reinforced and planted with vegetation with the help of the local university. The green roofs first contributed to the buildings’ insulation and fight local heat island effect. Through selections and monitoring, ufa’s roofs also became more biodiverse than most public parks: through monthly blooms, they provide insects with resources and gather over 65 vegetation species per roof.

Both this biodiversity and ufa’s energy production are amplified by the combination of green roofs with solar panels. The latter provide shade, allowing for the growth of more species. In turn, the soil cools the photovoltaic devices, providing better efficiency. The roofs and streets of ufa were also equipped with extensive rainwater collection systems. In 2024, 60% of the water falling on the area is collected, filtered first through a pre-tank then aquatic plants and organisms, allowing the centre to save 13,000m³ of water annually. The system also requires little maintenance: the green roofs are left to their natural rhythms while the solar panels demand little more than an annual cleaning and punctual service maintenance.

In 2024, ufa is still developing new socio-technical experiments, thanks to German funding. Those include the creation of vertical gardens, soundproofing an outdoor stage by combining demolition scraps, coconut fibres and selected plants as well as modular housing prototypes, built of compressed straw.

However, ufa’s sustainability strategy is as social as it is technical. Werner is joined by Benedikt Sudau, who has known ufa since he was a child at the centre’s elementary school and has worked there for over 13 years, now working as staff coordinator. Benedikt adds to Werner’s circular vision by showing how community and education

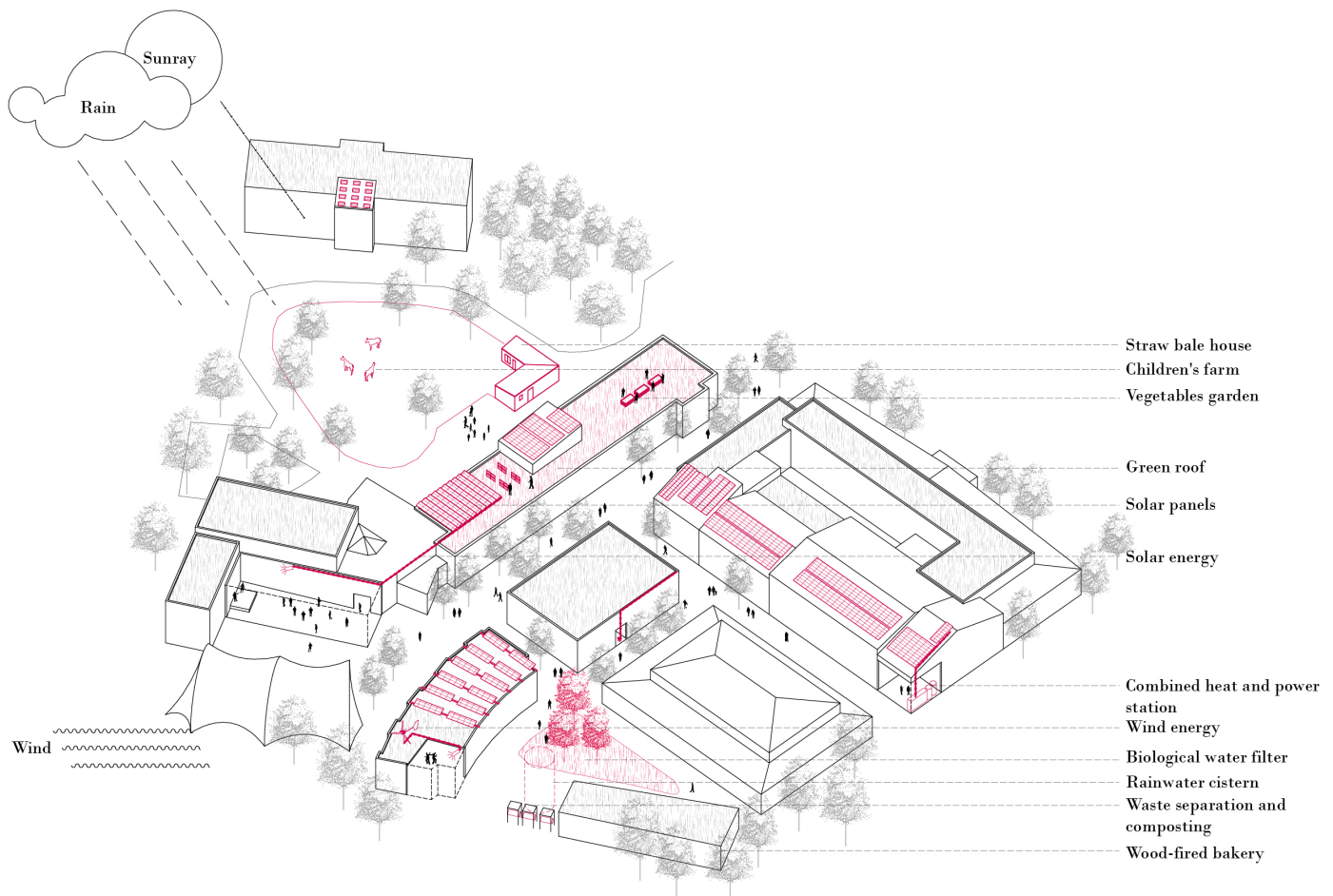


adds to the equation:

“To be sustainable, to last a long time, you can’t see it as just techniques. If you don’t care about the surrounding, the culture and the education, technique alone is nothing. We must be connected with the entire neighbourhood (human and non-human). That’s why we have a free school. We don’t want to teach our children that they must do this or that, in a simplified and flat way. We need them to be critical and innovative and challenge us. So here, you don’t have regular classes. What you learn is to solve problems by yourself, and a lot of social skills; the teachers are there to bring you to solve conflicts in a good and caring way. The school is paired with our animal farm, which is open to the public, so the children must interact with animals and strangers. They learn how to work with animals and plants, how to care for them. Then they grow up and know that nature is important, that animals have feelings and lives and need care. That’s very important for children in a city, and it also shows that an elementary school is a central part of our society.”

This commitment to education is everywhere in ufa insists Benedikt Sudau:

“We offer services, education and cultural programmes accessible to everyone, and we always show what we do. We don’t have a fence, we don’t have a door to close, almost every area is open to anybody, even at night. Everywhere we have signs that explain the science behind our ecological actions. So, when people come for a coffee, a show, they can learn and understand what’s possible.”







INCONTRI DEL TERZO LUOGO – Manifatture Knos, Lecce, Italy

Once a 4,000m² steelworker training centre, Manifatture Knos has been transformed – since 2007 – into a ‘third place’, i.e. an explorative and creative cultural hotspot for non-profit organisations. The transformation and gradual regeneration of the site included the participation and expertise of important intellectual figures, including the renowned landscape architect and gardener Gilles Clément and architect Patrick Bouchain, making use of Knos not only as a space for free artistic and social expression but also as a continuous in situ experiment for social engagement and sustainable landscape design.

In this context, the ‘Incontri del terzo luogo’ (meetings of the third place) first started in 2012 as a biannual event bringing together 30 to 150 architects, landscape specialists, artists, students and inhabitants to observe, discuss and experiment with the possibilities of ‘third places’ in Knos (and throughout Europe), in real scale and time. From small-scale design interventions to the conversion of a 10,000m² parking lot into an experimental garden, those encounters invited practitioners, scholars and students to imagine, explore and design new relationships between the built and non-built environments and between different living species (human and non-human).

INTERVIEW: MICHELE BEE/KNOS Co-Founder

Michele Bee is one of the founders of Knos. He has been its President for a decade and is now focused on the development of the centre's international relations. He recalls the Incontri's origins:

"They were created when we had to close the Manifatture because it had to be refurbished to fit security norms. Since we couldn't use our space, we launched some participatory projects, but it didn't work. Inhabitants would say, 'You are the experts, why do you need me? I don't have time, I don't care, just don't touch to the parking lots in front of my house'.

When we came back, we had to try something different. We found what we were looking for in the 'Third Landscape Manifesto', by Gilles Clément, in the way he described the importance of giving back political dignity to indecision. The third landscape is something beyond places determined by the laws of man. But, to him, it happens in spaces abandoned by humans. We wondered: can we have the same indecision, spontaneity and openness, where humans are still there? The third space to us was where the undecided biological and social inventions happen.

So I wrote a letter to Gilles Clément to ask him if he would accept to experiment with us, and he accepted. That's how the Incontri started. We chose places that were taken back by nature, like an abandoned quarry, or completely at the hand of men, like our asphalt parking lot. And we asked: 'can we open this to indecision?' 'to new forms of coexistence?'

When Gilles came to Knos we asked him: 'what shall we do with the asphalt?' Everybody had ideas and projects. Luckily, we didn't have money to make them. Then, someone came and broke it [the asphalt]... Just like that.. it started a process that brought us to create a garden. Later, we realised that we simply accelerated a process that would have happened if humans didn't do anything for 100 years; the plants would break the asphalt, and then the forest would start appearing. Just like Gilles said: 'Don't worry, because if we do nothing, the forest will always come'."

This led to more workshops in Lecce and then in Denmark, Slovakia, Greece and Switzerland. The Incontri tested new situations and con-

ditions to understand in situ how to create 'new coexistences where all living things are welcome, even humans'. These workshops were also a testimony to the capacity of self-organisation in scarce contexts, away from conventional planning practices:

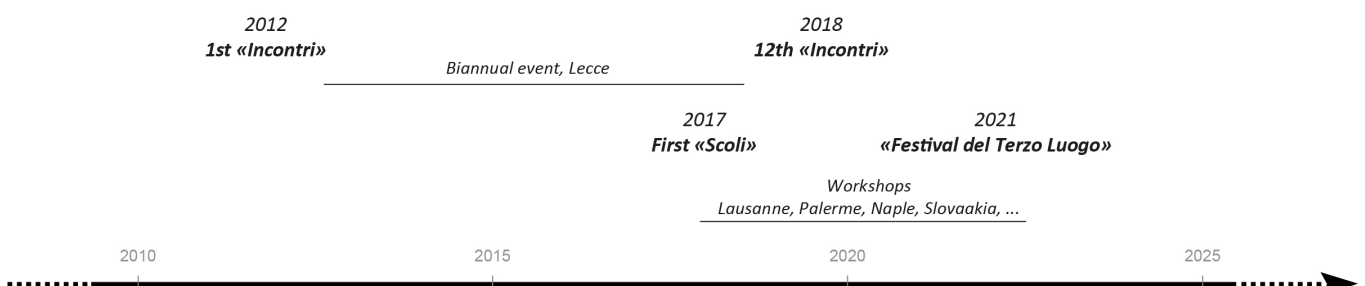
"It started with that guy who broke the asphalt. We don't even remember who it was. Then we started cutting it here and there. And that's great because if we took away all of the asphalt, if we brought tons of soils and the trees, it would have been terrible to maintain. On the contrary, by taking out small pieces and helping spontaneous plants to colonise and grow, we discovered that the asphalt – if cracked in the right place – could keep the moisture in during summer, rather than being a furnace during summer. Today, we don't even have to water the garden. It is self-sustained despite the climate in Lecce."

The Incontri also provided the occasion to see how to divert from conventional technocratic ways of planning and their expectations:

"We also learned to stop asking for permission and rather perform actions. That's when administrations come to tell you 'it's marvelous' and citizens come to ask 'what's happening'. And this way also allows a lot of people to become protagonists at any time. Because anyone, if they think of doing something, can do it. It happened in Lecce and in Lausanne: we were breaking the asphalt, with no communication at all, and people spontaneously came to ask. They'd say, 'Why are you putting the tree there? There's a shadow, you should put it there!'. Then we'd give them the shovel, and that's how you get people breaking down the parking in front of their home. Because if we rung at their house and told them they could do whatever, they wouldn't move."

Given the importance of nature within the Incontri, temporality was also a major aspect of the dynamic:

"In Lecce, we organised Incontri every six months, for years, because time is necessary to see natural changes. It's not a one-shot performance like, 'I come, I take out the asphalt, I put some soil, plant some stuff and I leave'. You need to come back with some distance and respect the temporality of the garden, the repetition it requires. It is also a rhythm, with slow periods and moments of climax where energy and people gather freely, a bit like a carnival, before it relaxes again."

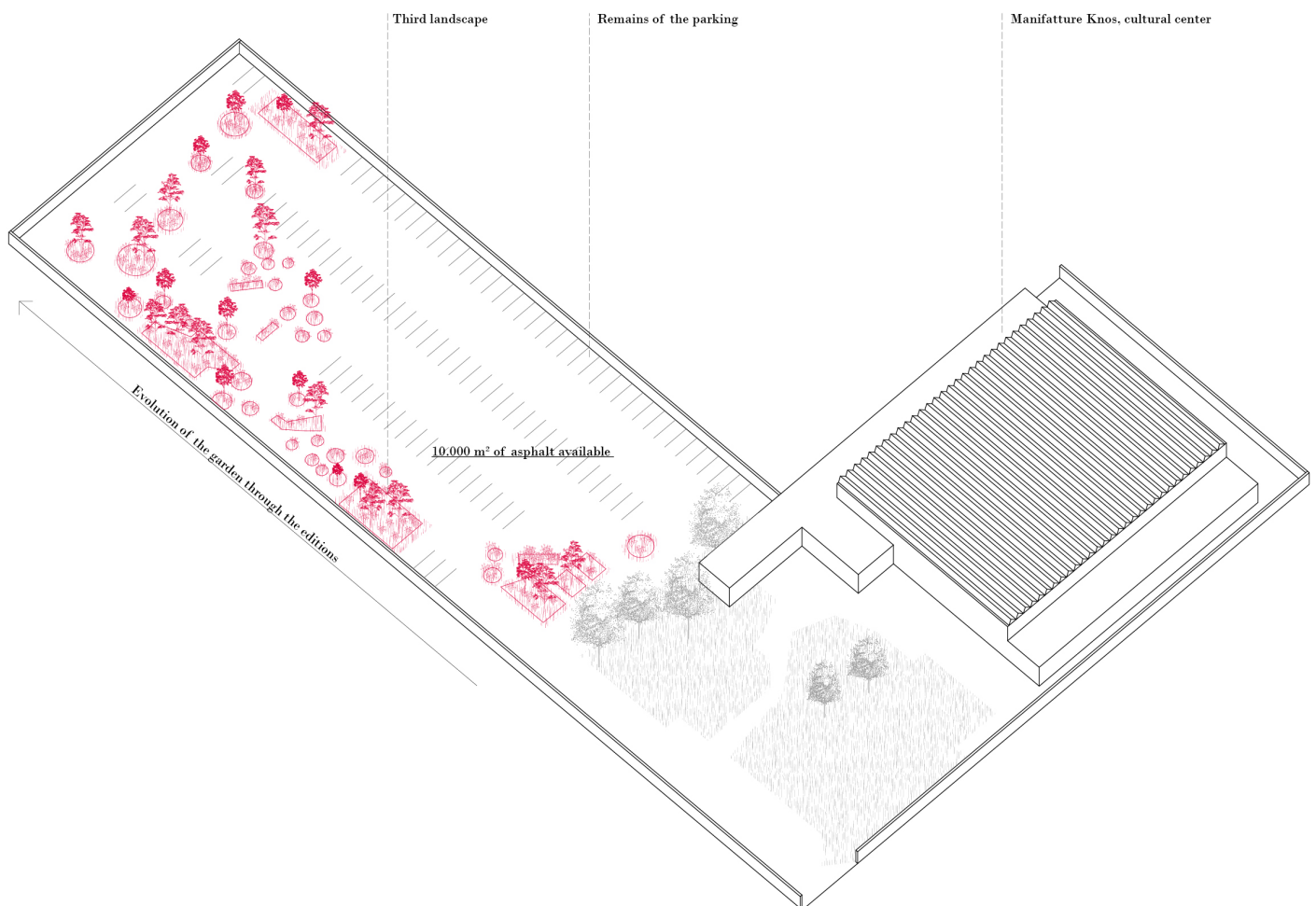


That aspect was particularly striking within another edition of the Incontri, developed in another site in Lecce, an abandoned quarry: “When we arrived there, the municipality cut all the plants. So, Gilles Clément said, ‘let’s go, we cannot do the workshop here anymore.’ And, suddenly, we found a space that was untouched, because it didn’t belong to the city. Gilles started walking through the brambles, we cut some pathways. That’s when inhabitants came, called us crazy, told us that all they wanted was to burn it down to make way for a new parking lot. After three days, they discovered with us an orchid garden that was protected by the brambles and their gaze started to change...

Six months later we came back with people from all over Europe. Everybody interacted with the space in their own way. We widened the pathways, threw some seeds to accelerate the forest process. We had a beautiful meeting with the inhabitants. Someone came to sing, and everybody had to come through the brambles ... We created new interactions between inhabitants, plants, animals...

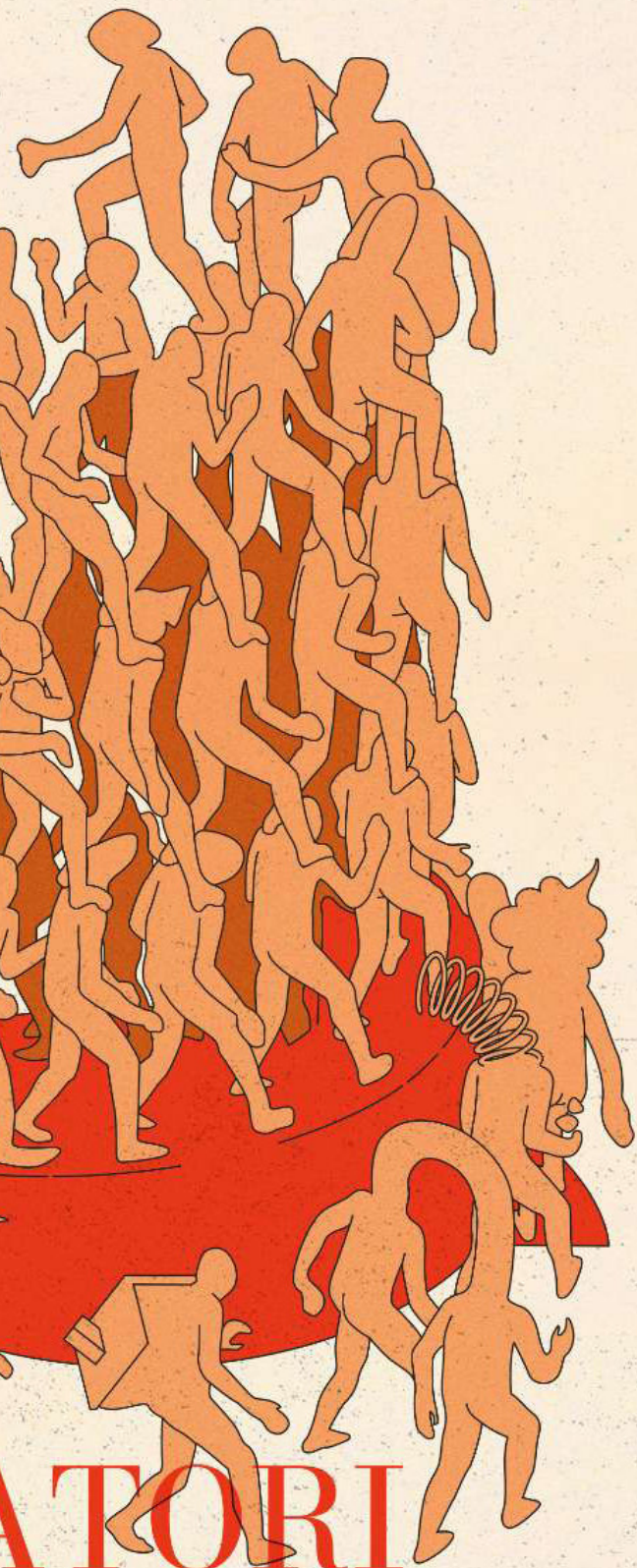
Then, two things happened. First, the inhabitants from the surrounding village came spontaneously and told us, ‘listen, this is the

first time in 40 years that we all met together’. Then, when we were leaving, they told us, ‘this time, you’re not taking the gardening tools with you. Leave them with us, we’ll be the gardeners of this place. This is not a place to burn, it’s a place to care for’.”



TEATRO DE LiNUTILE

PRESENTA



ATTORI
MANI

Produzione Teatro de LiNUTILE

18 AGOSTO 2023 - ore 22

FARM CULTURAL PARK

Palazzo Miccichè - Favara, Agrigento



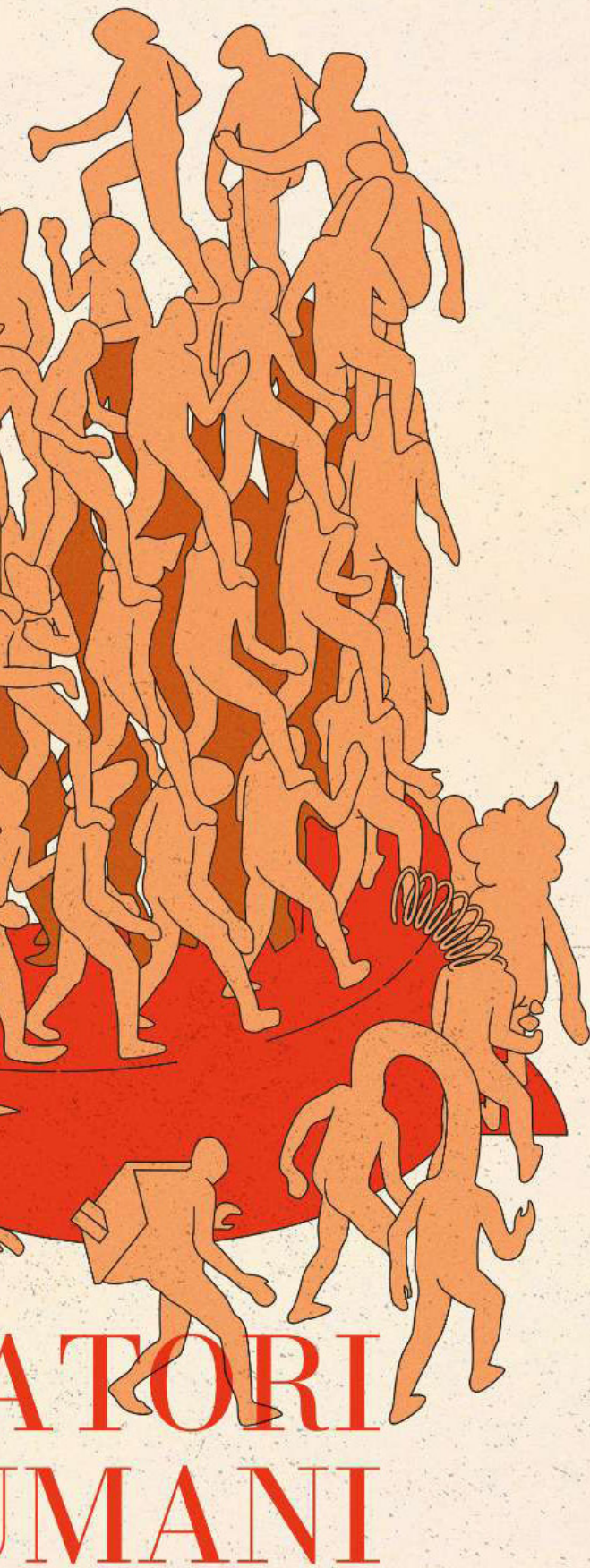
GLI
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Testo di Saverio Massaro ed Enrico Lain

Con la Compagnia Giovani de LiNUTILE

Regia di Marta Bettuolo e Stefano Eros Macchi

HUMAN
FOREST



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EMBASSY OF NON-HUMANS –Farm Cultural Centre, Favara, Italy

Farm Cultural Park opened in 2010 under the impetus of art collectors Florinda Saieva and Andrea Bartoli, who intended to reinvigorate the shrinking town of Favara (30,000 inhabitants), on the Sicilian western coast of Italy. The cultural centre, developed within the then-abandoned Sette Cortili residential ensemble, now spreads across the town through a variety of projects, exhibitions, events and workshops and attracts numerous residents, artists and tourists. One of these projects, the ‘Non-Humans’ Embassy’ (NHE), was launched in 2023, following Enrico Lain and Saverio Massaro’s intervention at the Italian Pavilion of the 17th International Architecture Biennale of Venice in 2021. Here the first Non-Humans’ Assembly took place: 10 delegates, each representing a community of humans, plants, animals or technologies, all fostered ideas, texts and references to consider a common future. In later years, the assembly led to an innovative theatrical performance guiding spectators, wondering around the streets of Favara, to interact and participate in this democratic assembly of a new kind. By removing humans from the centre of the planetary experience and showing non-humans as a necessary interlocutor to build a common future, the NHE aims to renew our collective consciousness of who inhabits our planet and to reflect on how we can and should collaborate to sustain each other in a forthcoming transformation.

*Image source: Project’s poster. ©Farm Cultural Centre
<https://www.farmculturalpark.com/>*

INTERVIEW: ENRICO LAIN and SAVERIO MASSARO /Non-Humans' Embassy Co-Creators and Curators

Saverio Massaro and Enrico Lain are the co-creators and curators of the Non-Humans' Embassy (NHE). While the former has been part of the Farm Cultural Park ecosystem for a long time, the latter came to it through this collaboration. They both reminisce:

“In 2021, in the context of the Architecture Biennale, we wanted to talk theatrically about sustainability and ecosystems, and to give a space to non-humans, as we were very inspired by Bruno Latour. With the help of two actors from Padova's Teatro dell'inutile, we created 'Fair Play', a piece where different experts acted as representatives of different non-humans: concepts, techniques, animals, ...”
“Andrea and Florinda were invited to represent the agent 'community'. They quickly saw the potential of the play and challenged us to make it bigger, offering us the resources and the space to do it. That's how we started working on this larger project that is Non-Humans' Embassy.”

Building on this first experience, the two architects went on to write other parts for other non-humans, played by other actors. This led to the birth of the first Embassy in Favara in the summer of 2023, which they describe as follows:

“The Embassy was activated by a ritual, a public performance. In Favara, thanks to the special contribution of Oriana Persico – a cyber activist involved as well in the Biennale's Assembly – the opening ritual was the first request for political asylum submitted on behalf of five computational agents created by Persico and Salvatore Iaconesi. Performance is central to activate the public and its attention. It brings a completely different way of perceiving those issues that we can't put in writing; the written language is a segment of the whole process. All the rest is made by actors who integrated and developed their parts. As you're invited to enter the Embassy, you are involved in a situation floating between fiction and reality; you're not entering a pavilion or a building, you're entering a condition in which the space, this strange palazzo, itself populated by trees and plants, allows you to understand new relations through the way people act and interact room after room. There, you discover the different pieces

of the performance where the actors move and express complex concepts with their bodies.

The public is not passive and is part of the performance. Under the guidance of an actor, the procession starts outside the palazzo. The public holds things, chants with us, is very active. Once we enter the building, you're also involved by the actors, who interact with you...”

This setting leads the people involved to reconsider their relationship to humans and non-humans, and what and who surround them:

“The result is striking; for instance, we asked children if they understood the concepts, had them draw, and it was clear they understood perfectly the complex issues and the connections we made. This shift included also the actors, you know. They were at first reluctant about the texts; they didn't understand how we wrote them. But once they've completed the performance, the opposite happened: they understood the message and their role in it; they defended and transformed it. It's an empirical process for everybody, including us.”

Farm Cultural Park's Palazzo Miccichè, where the play was held for the first time, is central to the Non-Humans' Embassy. The performance takes full advantage of the many rooms of the formerly abandoned building, combining the raw stones and growing vegetation to the explorative performance, a site-specific project itself:

“The palazzo is a powerful vision: it's clearly made for plants, not for humans. So, it was the perfect starting point for the Embassy. And the actors, once in Favara, they all got influenced by this fantastic place: they discovered the roles they were performing; they went on to find the right room and the right place for that specific agent they were performing.”

Beyond the performance itself, the Non-Humans' Embassy is a wider project to connect and involve the public actively with non-humans and research the best way to do so. In the words of Enrico, “it's a political act that started aesthetically[...] the Non-Humans' Embassy is a research for the impossible and the paradoxical, to find a freer way to see the city”.

In that sense, the duo constantly collects data emerging from the performances:

“In the end, the actors become the antenna of the work; their understanding of the performance gave us new data about the interrelationship between non-humans and the space. We are using them as indicators of how the performance is adapting. We collect interviews

2010
Opening of Farm Cultural
Centre

2021
17th biennale

2023
Non-Humans' Embassy

2010

2015

2020

2025



of the actors on the way they perform their part. It is a kind of one-to-one empirical experiment of non-human relationships that we document in real time.”

While a digital archive project is currently being developed, data are currently shown through a permanent exhibition in Favara. Using the biennale to today, explaining the role of the participants and non-human delegates. Each computational agent that has been welcomed for asylum through the performance constitutes also a digital artwork itself.

Indeed, Enrico and Saverio’s goal is the expansion of the Non-Humans’ Embassy through a larger network that is being built little by little.

“The first network started at the Venice Biennale, through the participants who worked with us to put their words into texts that we could use afterwards. Then the horizontal collaboration came, with more people, extended with the opening of the Embassy in Favara. Soon, we’ll try to open other embassies in other places. It’s both a family that we try to create and a research process.”

While this process is only at the beginning, the co-authors firmly state their intentions:

“As designers, we think our task is to change the setting, rather than problem solving. So it’s a different way of thinking. What we hope is that thinking can be as engaging as playing music in a band.

We believe in it because we never saw people crying or having goosebumps concerning sustainability before this. So, the question is not what ‘sustainable’ theme to broach, but rather in which way we talk about it. This is the main thing, to propose new ways of communicating and raising awareness.”

TOWARDS A “WORKING MANUAL”

As shown on a preliminary basis in these pages, each centre has developed a specific expertise shaped by its local circumstances, a finely tuned answer to local contexts as well as particular built typologies and architectural features inherited from the past. As such, they each entail a set of opportunities to learn from on-site experiments. As a set of expertise, skills and know-hows that are more often than not tacit, valorised or necessarily even acknowledged represent an extremely valuable asset.

This study tackles the need to unveil this knowledge in the hope of both valorising it and helping more initiatives to learn valuable lessons from it. This part consisted of a first set of concrete lessons from the TEH centres on “cultural regeneration” as shareable knowledge. As such, we believe that these lessons could fundamentally contribute to a concrete and ambitious expansion of what the “New European Bauhaus” could look like and how we could achieve it in a systematic way.

While this publication is only a stepping stone towards this goal, it is an essential one that is rooted within long-term, situated and applied strategies. Bringing such innovative and forward-looking experiences alive constitutes the beginning of a wide-ranging and significant research programme that can make an important contribution to a truly sustainable Europe – both in spirit and action.

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