The Chinese Box

套盒

Unfolding Chinese Architectural Practice in Transitional Communities

Sofia Leoni
Martijn de Geus
Alessandro Armando

The Chinese Box

Unfolding Chinese Architectural Practice in Transitional Communities

Double Degree Master Thesis
Politecnico di Torino (Architecture, Construction and City)
Tsinghua University (English Program of Master in Architecture)

Academic year: 2021-2022
Candidate: Sofia Leoni 269708
Supervisors: Martijn de Geus, Alessandro Armando

中国的盒子
在过渡性社区展开的中国建筑实践

(申请清华大学建筑学硕士专业学位论文)

培养单位: 建筑学院

申请人: 食宿费
指导教师: Alessandro Armando
联合指导教师: 马丁

二〇二 二六月

“Qual è ‘l geomètra che tutto s’affige
per misurar lo cerchio, e non ritrova,
pensando, quel principio ond’elli indige,

tal era io a quella vista nova:
veder voleva come si convenne
l’imago al cerchio e come vi s’indova;”

(Paradiso, XXXIII, 133-138)
Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, Paradiso, 1320

致力於 海和他的自行车

Abstract

With which kind of apparatus does Chinese architectural practice have to measure with?
What role do professionals, designers and research institutions play?
How to rethink professional practice in relation to the current processes of urban regeneration?
What kind of strategy can be replicated?

China appears to be the arena where the great game of globalized architecture takes place, between the appeal of avant-garde designs by world-renowned architects and the vindication of a traditional regional style, as developed by the experimental architects.
However, recently, the Chinese Government has started pushing towards a regeneration signed by the evolution of the “wiping off and replacing” philosophy, in an attempt to undermine the uncontrolled expansion.
Moving on to the background of the recent shift in the conception of developing communities, the present work acts as an exploration, through the design lens, of a residential community in Beijing, the compound of the MOHURD, the Ministry of Housing, Urban and Rural Development, which is currently an ongoing regeneration project in the city.

The particular problematic node becomes the pretext to explore, through an inductive logic, the complexity of an entangling situation, defining the limits and possibilities of different design actions. Beginning with a reconnaissance of the state of the art that investigates the practices and theoretical assumptions from which the debate on Chinese architecture moves and emphasizing the role of the entities involved, the particular case study, like a hypertext, offers the possibilities to reflect on the changes in approaching this kind of project in the specific geography of China. Meanwhile, it likewise proposes an investigation under the unexplored aspects in order to bring back multidimensional mappings aimed at building negotiating scenarios.

From the original process embedded in public-private dualism, the new urban planning processes are, instead, based on collaborative community design that also considers an evolving spatial negotiation over time. The thesis also proposes an alternative way of looking at the global phenomenon related to Chinese Architecture, pushing it out of its aesthetical border. Imagining the physical space as originated by the deposition and the overlapping process at the intertwining forces between political, social, and cultural mechanisms, the inquiry goes at the core of the built environment, unfolding the apparatus beyond it.

Looking at the area under study not as an object but as a thing, the effort of the design inclination is deposited in the design outcome on the one hand and on the strong cognitive tension on the other. The result is a design proposal that stands as a methodological infrastructure that, starting from the correlations between social and physical reality, investigates the performativity of the design agency as a product of complex negotiations between agents of different natures.

Considering the uncertainty of design as an inherent and constitutive category of the production process of cities, incremental scenarios built at the intersection of human subjects, physical constraints, and financial aspects are hypothesized. The study, therefore, defines the formal and informal negotiations of power emerging among all the different actors taking part in this process. These include conflicts between governments at different levels, the contingency of the market demands, the overlapping roles of design consultants, and dynamics of cultural capital within the academic institutions. The outcome is an open-ended work, an inductive strategy that weaves the networks of a piece of city as a set of implicit relations of a diachronic dimension to subsequently seek a generative model also for other transitional communities. Thus the research does not focus on a pure production of space in absolute terms, but investigates the role of architectural design, both as an interstitial agency performing as a medium. This way, it observes its effectiveness in a context where architecture design, apparently, seems to have played a marginal role.

Keywords:
Chinese Architecture, Regeneration Process, Design Agency, Critical Theory, Incremental Design, Contingency, Community Building, Chinese Communities

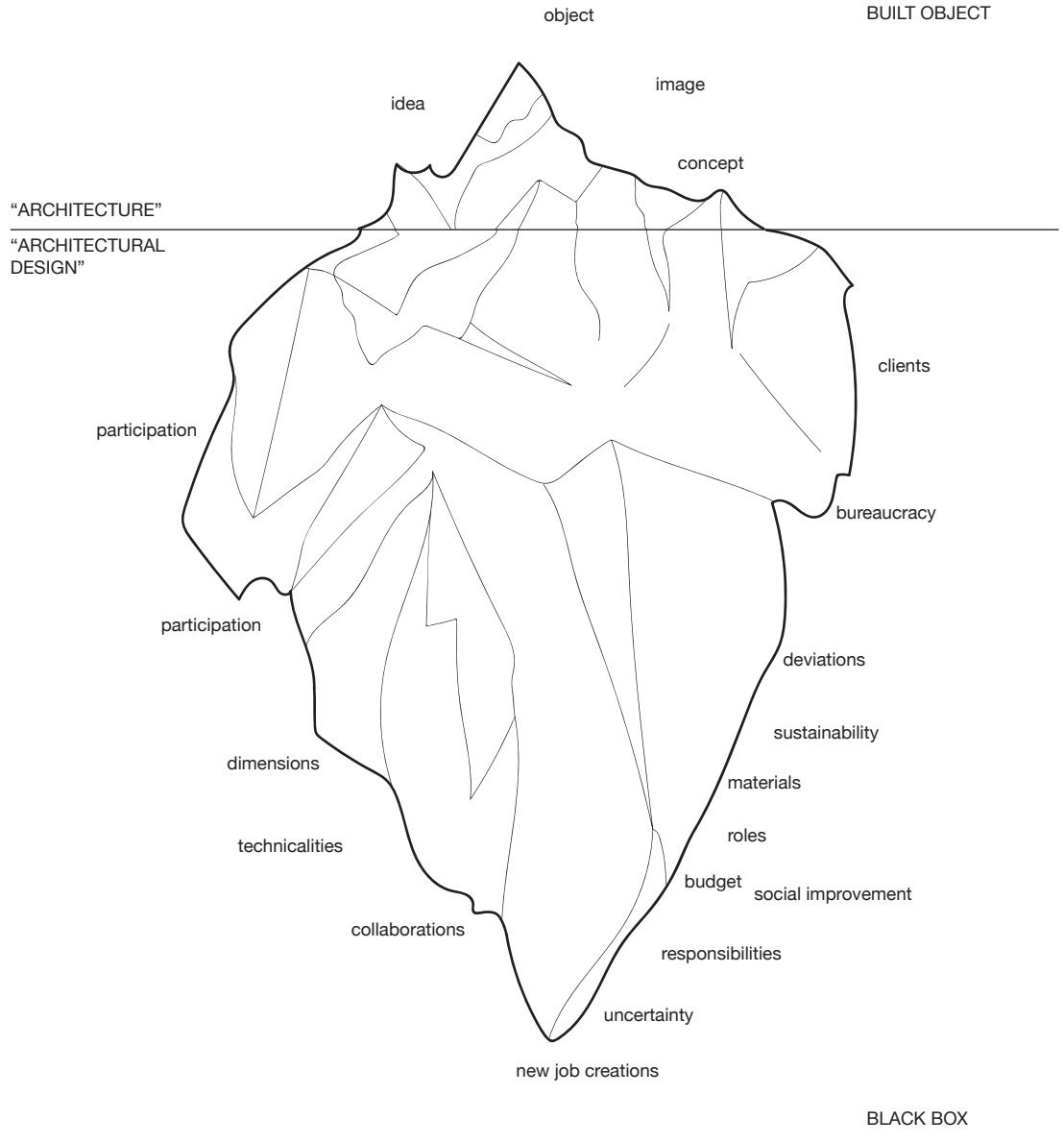
The Iceberg Metaphor

[1] Inspiration: Martijn de Geus's Talk at DATUM2019 Conference.

[2] Johnston, Kenneth G. *"Hemingway and Freud: The Tip of the Iceberg."* The Journal of Narrative Technique 14, no. 1, 1984

Iceberg metaphor is also part of Freud's philosophy. see: Green, C. D. (2019). *Where did Freud's iceberg metaphor of mind come from?* History of Psychology, 22(4), 369–372

The metaphor of the icerberg[1] introduces to the heart of our work. If its tip represents the built object, architecture from the perspective of its narrative, its roots, on the contrary, are the black box, the project, the behind-the-scenes, everything from which it arises, the object, instead, of this research, the hidden part from the reader, and the observer[2] (Hemingway).
At the same time, the project making (the underwater piece, according to the image) is also what architectural design theory investigates and speculates.



*

note of the
~~authors~~
~~writers~~
~~whatever~~

We have always been terrible students (teachers defined us “militants”); we work on the limits of assigned tasks, we prove our abilities by following the most complex path, refusing any simplification. Thus, we could not do the same as for the thesis, which is the last academic work.

The undergraduate years were literally a countdown to the minutes to my thesis, without any intention of closing a path, rather to test the capacities, to build a unique work, to be remembered. In this highest aspiration of ours, we were overly proud and arrogant; the pride of those who claim to change the world, the presumption of being remembered with a certain aura of uniqueness.
As it is often the case, every imagined reality always turns out to be different if not, indeed, the exact opposite of how it has been imagined. And so it was.
We would have liked to change the world. We would have liked to be unique.
And these are two self-constructed false ideologies in response to a society that wants to look at you only under the lens of the gaze you offer.

In general terms, the thesis should constitute only the last path of a journey; a point preceded by a long space, an end that you never want to fulfill. A long gestation. In our case, perhaps, it was so long awaited that it was prematurely anticipated. The greater the anticipation of that moment grew, the greater the fear was, a big torment externalized as external judgment.

Finding the right topic was the first critical point.
The research, aware of the limitations of a double degree program, had begun with an essay on Giancarlo de Carlo, the most idealized designer-subject in history, who attempted to legitimize his own design response in the name of a certain anarchy, an anti-heroic approach. Thus, the initial idea was to defend an approach that carried itself by bringing a critique of an idealized model, proposing, in fact, the very limits of the ‘absolutism’ it was intended to criticize. After a careful reading of Aldo Van Eyck’s work, the heroic approach was transformed into interstitiality, an intimate condition of design action. Lacking, however, was a place where these readings could be reported. And so, in a little while, the project site fell from the heights of judging authority as a real order, a complex and seemingly interesting work proposal, but with so many limitations of understanding and especially of immersion. The total experience was a coexistence between alienation toward the object, the process, the spatial dimension and a total empathy for the project, the transformation, the proposals.

Constructing this thesis has been an ongoing reflection on the limitations of a thesis dealing with architecture. Among the first ones encountered, falls the question; what is the difference between a thesis and a design studios? what is the role of professors when their own lens of judgment is confronted with a larger jury? how can theory and practice be aligned if, a thesis, by nature, carries a discursive character and, architecture, on the contrary, is a spatial science, with a site, a project, a history and, therefore, drawings?

The pages that follow can be read as a self-told story. The projection of an authorial construction struggling to find reasons for its actions in the world outside itself. The content is divided between cold spots (descriptions, realities, states of art) and hot spots (quotations, personal reflections, contaminations). The entire work represents a work of reduction, or perhaps compression to 2% of the complexity that characterized the reasoning on which it is based.
The time spent on this thesis was more useful to rule out taking certain paths than to construct an arguable discourse. We therefore advise anyone who is going to read it to have fun interpreting the position one wants.
The whole book, in the end, is the full representation of us, of our interests, of society that was explored, of the strong tension of a theoretical approach still under construction.

Table of contents

Abstract

***notes of the ~~authors, writers~~, whatever*

-1.0°. The Iceberg Metaphor

00. Preface

00.1. *Before starting*

00.2. *Emigration as a professional opportunity*

I. INTENTIONS

01. Introduction

1.1. T_0 The call from above

1.2. The lens: *Architectural Design Theory*

1.2.1. Architects and engagement

1.2.2. Critical mapping

1.2.3. Theoretical platform

II. GENERAL ⟶ PARTICULAR

02. China files

2.1. The emergence of a profession

2.2. A matter of practice

2.2.1. Heteronomias

2.2.2. The Power of the State

2.2.3. The Economic Power

2.2.4. The Arena

Design Institute, International Corporations, Clients, Academia

2.2.5. Architects?

III. PARTICULAR ⟶ GENERAL

03. Community Regeneration

3.1. The case study

3.2. MOHURD

3.3. The process

3.4. Understanding the project

3.4.1. Residents' data

3.4.2. Vision

3.4.3. Strategy

ANNEX #1

Regeneration case studies
approaches and methods

"THE PROJECT"

04. Diary "INFERNO"

05. Temporality 'PURGATORIO'

06. Narrations 'PARADISO'

IV. MODELING

"My" hutong was swept by bulldozers about six months after I passed through. The people who had lived there for a lifetime suffered the same fate as hundreds of thousands before them. Displaced in small, impersonal modern mini-apartments on the outskirts of the city. They now live in houses identical to each other, the same height, built of the same material and the same color. Perhaps with more comfort, certainly with less soul[I].

[I] *Luca Carboni*

00. Preface

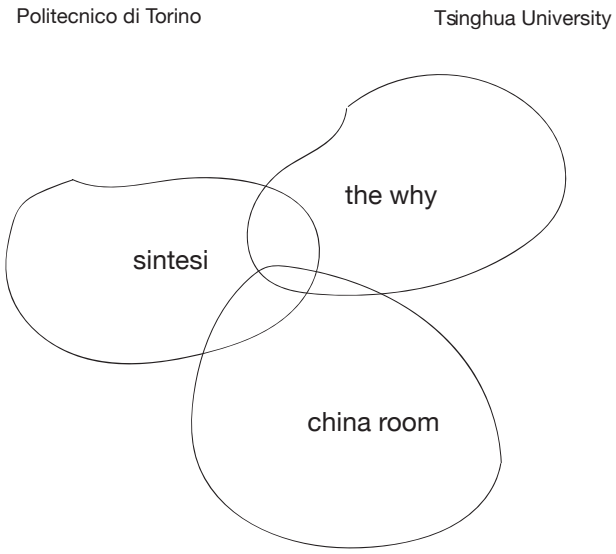


Figure 0. thesis *“collective”*
on the convergence of different academic research groups....

notes
[3]Diamond, J. Armi Acciaio e Malattie Environmental determinism (also known as climate determinism or geographic determinism) is the study of how the ‘physical environment predisposes societies and states toward particular trajectories of development. Jared Diamond , Jeffrey Herbst , Ian Morris and other social scientists gave rise to a revival of the theory during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This school of thought named “neo environmental determinism” examines how geographical and ecological forces influence state-building , economic development and institutions. Many scholars point out that this original approach was used to encourage colonialism and ‘Eurocentrism and devalued human action in non-Western societies, while modern figures such as Diamond have instead used the approach as an explanation that rejects racism.

[4]Armando, Durbiano, Teoria del progetto

[5]Bruno, E.; Forina, C.; Mancini, M., curated by (2021) China Room REPORT 2021. S.L., Politecnico di Torino

The present research work is the concrete result of a collective interest in China that has been supported for years, at the academic and professional level, by several collaborations between Politecnico di Torino and Tsinghua University.

The thesis encapsulates the experiences gained during a co-curricular degree program between the two universities and its roots in the Chinese context to critically summarize the two experiences.
Conducting research in China from a certain distance is not something that can be made alone; it needs an overlook to the complexity of the world through different perspectives, that, perhaps, a single research group alone cannot do. After all, as the theories of environmental determinism state, we are what we are by virtue of the most diverse experiences we live[3] (Diamond, 2006). Therefore, among everything this study is the fruitful result of a debate between different research groups, whose different positions have enlarged the ideal research collective[4] (Armando, Durbiano, 2017).

First of all, the dissertation initiated within the Synthesis Seminar (held by professors Alessandro Armando and Giovanni Durbiano, with Valerio della Scala and Tommaso Listo) a place of reflection around the architectural design theory as a performative document capable of modifying the real, which moves at the intersection between architecture, philosophy and ethnography.

At the same time, it is part of a wider passionate inquiry carried out at the English Programme for Master in Architecture at Tsinghua University around the “*reasons for architecture*” (De Geus, 2022), whose biggest effort is being collected within an Architecture magazine, edited in collaboration with Martijn de Geus and Lidia Preti. The active participation in seminars and interviews with various practitioners, educators and researchers all around the world were particularly important for the sake of this work.

Finally, the research moves within China Room, a hub for research on contemporary processes of Chinese urbanization. Especially, it mirrors the reflection around Chinese Architecture between Academia and Professional Practice[5] (Bruno et al, 2021), a wider inquiry as carried out by Camilla Forina, who shared a part of her academic path with an essential position.

Relevant was also the different conversations with Ettore Santi (from Uc Berkeley), who helped understanding the role of Desing Insitute and more largely the project making in China, with its uncertainty and peculiarities, and Professor Huang He, an expert on community led-regeneration process in China.

00.I.

“Ma, a ben vedere, la Cina non è un tessuto nel quale adattare nuovi manufatti, che si integrino con la storia di quel paese, bensì il luogo privilegiato in cui si combatte la grande partita dell' architettura globalizzata, quella buona per ogni ambiente. In altri termini, scrive Gregotti (il cui primo progetto cinese risale al 1997), l' architettura sta sperimentando in Cina l' immagine di marca, la bizzarria estetica, sottomettendo a queste esigenze il riscontro sociale. E intanto, come scrive nella prefazione Federico Rampini, le quattro milioni di macchine che circolano oggi a Pechino si quintuplicheranno nei prossimi quindici anni”

Quotation by:
Francesco Erbani, “Architetti in Cina: il grande esperimento,” *La Repubblica*, May 9, 2009

I. Why China?

6. Cagnardi A., *Ritorni da Shanghai. Cronache di un architetto italiano in Cina*, (Allemandi, Torino, 2009) pp. 10-30

7. Gregotti V., *L'ultimo hutong. Lavorare in architettura nella nuova Cina*, (Skira editore, 2009)

8. Bradanini A., Cina. *L'irresistibile ascesa*, (Sandro Teti editore, 2022)

9. Pieranni S., *Red Mirror. Il nostro futuro si scrive in Cina*, 2020

10. Giada Messetti, Nella testa del Dragone, (Mondadori, Strade Blu, 2020)

This is one of the questions that - perhaps from Matteo Ricci onwards - sinologists, political scientists, architects, and so on have been asking themselves.
Augusto Cagnardi, in his collection of “Chronicles of an Italian Architect in China” among the general arguments, tells how China has reinvented itself to keep up with the most modern production technologies.

In China, architects can design entire cities from scratch, unimaginable in much of the “western” world[6] (Cagnardi, 2009). An occasion in which the numerous contradictions that animate this State were also discussed, in particular the crazy race towards modernization that is risking, since the dawn of the socialist regime, to erase a large part of the historical, cultural, and architectural heritage[6] (Cagnardi, 2009).

For these and other reasons, talking about China in a faculty of architecture at this time is particularly interesting; the Chinese state is in full economic growth and is increasingly asserting itself as a leader in the world. An economic-financial growth that has had and continues to have in urbanism and, as a consequence, in massive urbanization, one of the most relevant and problematic consequences[7].
China is trying to define guidelines at the level of urban regulation that will guide its expansion and that will pay attention to the traditional building heritage, too often neglected and demolished, as was the case systematically until just over ten years ago.

More generally, even though China’s public debt is higher than America’s, the model of dirigiste capitalism leads to ignoring constraints and increasing public investments towards an expansionist and globalized vision at a time when major international powers are focusing instead on more nationalist policies, such as a ‘domestic priority’[8] (Bradanini,2022).

To date, China is, in fact, one of the states that have been able to best exploit the dynamics triggered by globalization, increasing the middle class by more than half a million people; a model of authoritarian economic power, which has led China to occupy in a few years a leading role, as well as for economic and trade dynamics, for those related to the management of major events.

“While it seems that our future will be written in China”[9] (Pieranni, 2020) and that “What is happening in China is our every day”[10] (Messetti, 2019) the trauma of the coronavirus, which has spread around the world from the distant metropolis of Wuhan, has given an abrupt acceleration to a process that has been going on for years in Western public opinion. Rarely in the history China has been so frequently a rumor: from the Silk Road to its antagonism

11.Filippo Santelli, La Cina non è una sola: tensioni e paradossi della superpotenza asiatica, (Mondadori, Strade Blu, 2021)

12.Giada Messetti, La Cina è già qui. Perché è urgente capire come pensa il Dragone, (Mondadori, Strade Blu, 2022)

13.Martijn de Geus, A Chinese Perspective (phd dissertation)

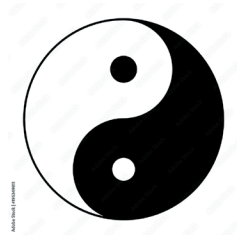
14. Federico Rampini, Fermare Pechino. Capire la Cina per salvare l'Occidente, (Mondadori, Strade Blu, 2021)

with the United States, from overwhelming economic growth to its failure to respect human rights, the vast empire is increasingly the focus of conflicting sentiments and predictions, which anticipate oxymoronic futures, from the planetary dominance to sudden collapse. It is a precise emotional and "schizophrenic" approach also referred to as "synophrenia"[11] (Santelli, 2021).

To truly understand this country and its prospects, one must know the "many Chinas" that now coexist behind the apparent compactness. Indeed, China is an inextricable tangle of strengths and weaknesses, of hard-to-compose tensions that interact along geographical, economic, social, and cultural lines. The ostentatious wealth of the upper classes and widespread poverty in the rural areas and among the folds of the metropolis; the race for innovation and the patriarchal outlook that penalizes women in the family and at work; the ruthless competition in studies and its counterpart of anxiety, frustration, and fear of the future; the spread of Western lifestyles and brands and a tenacious and proud nationalism; ambitions for international hegemony that arouse distrust and compromise alliances; the environmental and demographic issues[11] (Santelli, 2021).

The result is "a country poised between security and insecurity, between evolution and involution." A clear example is the handling of the Covid-19 epidemic, first guiltily neglected and hidden by the Beijing government, then effectively managed with an inflexibility the author experienced firsthand in his hospital quarantine in Nanjing. An event was emblematic of all the chiaroscuro in today's China[12] (Messetti, 2022).

In the end, China is the perfect balance between the tensions of the opposite[13] (de Geus, 2021), mostly recognized in its emblematic yin-yang. The balance of this tension would probably decide new futures not only for the Dragon, but also for the whole world. All these cultural and systematic contrasts make China certainly an interesting territory (for architecture) to investigate, without pretending to know or change a system, but with the synoptic openness of those who believe, on the contrary, to learn something[14] (Rampini, 2021). The recent constant stream of architecture news emanating from China is capturing the attention, tripling opposite reactions from admiration to trepidation. Therefore, it is easily possible to fall into oversimplifications.



陰
陽

Figure 0.1, 0.2:
Painting by Giuseppe Castiglione:
"Cento cavalli"
"Pini e gru in primavera".
Source: <https://cinaoggi.it/2017/11/18/giuseppe-castiglione/>

00.II.

What is happening in China and why is it so crucial for architects?
What is it possible to learn from that context?

Those are a few of the questions which lie beyond the following pages, combining a deductive logic -a research around the global phenomenon of Chinese Architecture, with its development stages, aesthetic dimensions, complex apparatus, actors and networks - and an inductive logic -a specific case study, an architecture project whose implications and relations are tested on the basis of an attempt at projective and partially self-constructed reconstruction of the previously studied dynamics[15].

15. Scott R, *"Essential China"*, in Rizzardi P.A, Zhang Hankun, The Condition of Chinese Architecture, TCA Think Tank, 2014

II. Emigration as a professional opportunity

16. Istat, Censimento laureati nell'area dell'architettura. From Anagrafe Nazionale Studenti (ANS), curated by Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca, consulted: May, 2022 <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSet Code=-DCIS LAUREATI>

17. Huffington post

18. Federighi V., Architetti Italiani in Cina: istruzioni per l'uso, Il Giornale dell'Architettura, October 20, 2017

In Italy, since 2008, the effects of the financial crisis have generated in many professionals a feeling of dissatisfaction, and have led many professionals to consider emigration as the only solution. According to ISTAT, this phenomenon depends partly on the negative trend of the Italian labor market, but also on the new perspective of globalization. So emigration on the one hand is seen as an obligatory choice, on the other hand it has been an opportunity to explore new realities, even in contexts with a very different cultural identity. The actual profession of the architect, in Italy, was born with the law of June 24, 1923, No. 1395, which introduced for the first time the establishment of an Albo, initially joint with that of engineers. According to the annual report on the profession of architecture, published by CSAPPC and CRESME in April 2013, architects represent the fifth largest professional category in our country.

The phenomenon of mobility from Italy to abroad has become unidirectional, with an ever-increasing number of departures and very low chances of return. In 2012, the Huffington post, a famous U.S. blog founded in 2005, published an article "the best 9 countries for architects to find a work" which revealed that the favorite destinations beyond the continent certainly were the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and China. The latter, indeed, is the building site of the world-an estimated half of all the cranes on the planet are located here-but most of what is being built seems to me to be a dull imitation of Western models." Against the saturated perspective of a profession now in crisis on the Italian scene, China has 1 architect for every 40,000 inhabitants. In this great nation, economic and demographic growth continues along with the need to import skills from abroad, even in the field of experimentation, with an ever-increasing eye for areas inherent in quality and sustainability in architecture (Federighi, 2017).

The image of China has come to be identified as an area where great economic growth is proceeding along with the need to import skills and know-how and the possibility of implementing major experimentation. "Architecture is almost always among the protagonists. It is the media face of contemporary China" (Federighi, 2017): the strong promotion of the development of the Chinese architectural situation has helped to highlight the construction industry and the constant search for innovation and modernity. This has caught the eye of a great many European architects both for economic reasons and for professional motivations. Certainly, this country has held great interest in the professional sphere. However, the box of Chinese architecture is a matryoshka; it is not all gold that glitters and it has been explored through the lens of its physical and aesthetic dimension, even its meaning. There are parts of its apparatus which are rarely questioned and argumented.

↖ **Figure 0.3:**
The great migration of italian architects in the world. According to Archdaily, *The 9 Best Countries For Architects To Find Work* are Norway, Panama, Switzerland, Brasil, China, India, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and Australia (in spots).

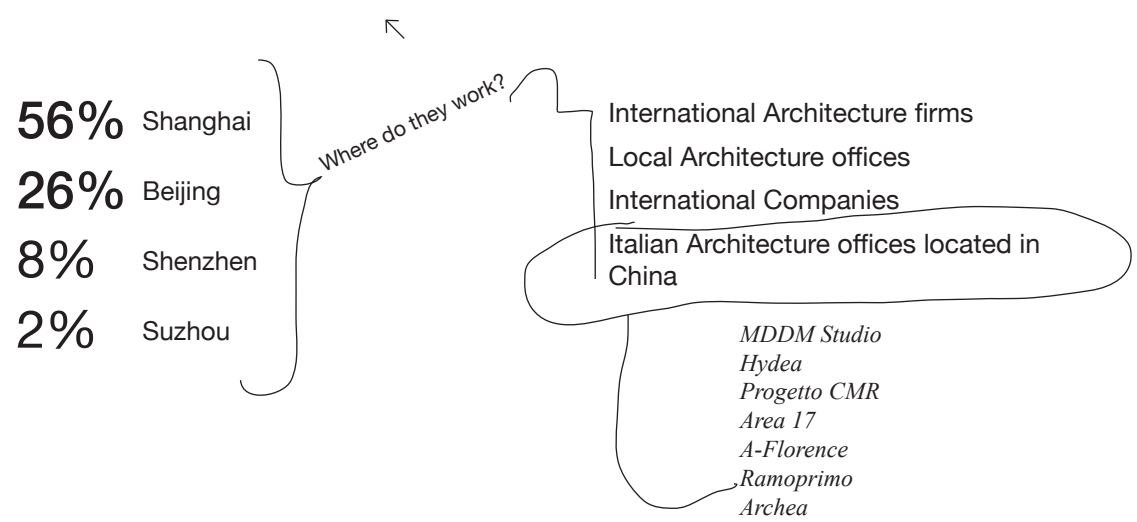


Figure 4:
Data from Giulia Angela Sementa and Sara Varetto Master Thesis "Architetti Italiani in Cina. Alla ricerca del made in Italy" supervised by Michele Bonino and Alberto Bologna. The thesis investigates the status of Italian architects migrated in China, especially in Shanghai and Beijing. Through a champion of 86 interviewers they propose a probabilistic situation.

References

1. Latour B., (2005) Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory, Oxford
2. University Press, Oxford -New York
3. Yaneva A. (2012), Mapping Controversies in Architecture, Routledge
4. Armando A., Durbiano G., (2017) Teoria del progetto architettonico. Dai disegni
5. agli effetti, Carrocci Editore, Roma
6. Schon., D.A. The reflective practitioner. How professional think in action, Ashgate, 1983
7. Cristopher, A. (1979) The timeless way of building. Oxford New York, University Press
8. Khun, T. (1970) The Structure of scientific revolutions, Chicago University Press
9. Rittel, H.W.J. (1980) Thinking Design, Transdisciplinary concept for planet and earth
10. Frichot, H., (2018), Creative Ecologies, Theorising the Practice of Architecture, Bloomsbury
11. Till.J, (2007) Architecture Depends, Cambridge, MIT press
12. Callon M. (1984), Some elements of a sociology of translation
13. Cuff, D., (1991) The story of a practice, MIT Press
14. Gabetti R. (1997) Imparare l'architettura. Scritti scelti sul sapere architettonico, Allemandi
15. Deamer, P. (2005). Branding the Architectural Author. Perspecta, 37, 42–49.
16. Deamer, P. (2011). Practicing Practice. Perspecta, 44, 160–203.
17. Santi, E. (2022). "Redesigning the Rural. System Thinking and China's Agrarian Modernization." in PLATFORM
18. Guanghui Ding. (2014). "Experimental Architecture" in China. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 73(1), 28–3
19. Ding, Guanghui. "Reformulating a Critical Process: Architectural Exhibitions in the Journal
20. Time + Architecture." Time Architecture 1 (2019): 178-181
21. Santi, E (2017), Uncertainty and design practice in China. The apparatus of Shanghai Experimental
22. Architecture, Journal of Architecture and Urbanism, 120-128
    Santi, E. (2016), Il 'dispositivo"dell' architettura sperimentale cinese. Identita e soft power nell'era del sogno cinese", in Territorio, 131-140
23. Dijia C., On the (Mis)Use of Critical Discourse in Architecture: "Experimental Criticism" and its Entanglement with Postreform Art Movement in China Fung, Stanislaus. "Orientation: Notes on Architectural Criticism and Contemporary China." Journal of Architectural Education 62, no. 3 (2009): 16-96
24. Zhu, Tao. "The 'Criticality' Debate in the West and the Architectural Situation in China: Thoughts on the Essay 'Criticality in between China and the West'". Time + Architecture 91, no.5 (2006): 71-78
25. Zhu, Tao. "Rethinking on 'Toward a Civil Architecture.'" Domus China 51, no.3 (2011), 172–173.
26. Zhu J., (2009), Architecture of Modern China A Historical Critique, Routledge
27. Xue, C. Q., Wang, Z., & Mitchenere, B. (2010). In search of identity: the development process of the National Grand Theatre in Beijing, China. The Journal of Architecture, 15(4), 517–5.
28. Xue, C. Q., Guanghui D., The history of Design Institutes in China: From Mao to Market
29. Li, X. (2000.) 'The Celebration of Superficiality: Chinese Architecture since 1979'. The Journal of Architecture 5 (4): 391–409.
30. Li. X. (2002). 'The Aesthetic of the Absent The Chinese Conception of Space'. The Journal of Architecture 7 (1): 87–101.
31. Boyd A (1 962) Chinese architecture and town planning: 1500 B. C. -A.D. 1911. Chicago, IL: Chicago Press
32. Fu X, Steinhardt NS (2002) Chinese architecture. London
33. Lai D (1993c) Some facts on the history of modern China architectural education (Chinese). Jianzhushi 55:86
34. Tianji, X, N.J.Smith, D.A.Bower, A.S.Chew (2004) Development Strategies for Chinese Design Institutes, Article in Journal of Management in Engineering
35. Ren, X. (2008). Architecture and China's urban revolution. City 12, 217–225.
36. Shiqiao, L. (2008). Mediated Architecture in China. Architectural Theory Review, 13(2), 240–253.

1. Introduction

Observing and reading of China from “a certain distance” revealed signs regarding the deep transformations that have taken place in society, but also in its cities and environment. China has indeed experienced an historical rate of urbanization since Deng Xiaoping’s Reform and Opening policies in 1978. The urban population ballooned from 150 million in 1978 to more than 800 million in 2019 — the equivalent of building a new Milan every two months (Johnson et al 2020) . Deng policies prioritized economic development in urban areas, starting with the Special Economic zones in the eastern coastline. As a consequence, millions of migrant workers left the poorest countryside, attracted by more gainful employment in cities and industrial regions. China’s urban growth, with no precedent in history, was pretty fast. However, it is important to note that, just like their economy as a whole, China’s urbanization is not out of control rather, is extremely planned and controlled by the Central Government (which happens to be the main actor of every transformation); to date, indeed, the Hukou System acts as a ways to restrict the extreme urbanization (Johnson et al 2020).

The biggest picture frames China as the place where the battle of contemporary architecture is being played out. Becoming the testing ground for experimentation and innovation, the impressive amount of construction that has taken hold since 1978, has attracted a multiplicity of architectural firms, from the International star system to local professionals. As a side-effect of an unrestrained modernisation, that accelerates continuously, because development cannot be stopped, Architecture in China plays the engine of a steadily growing economy (Rizzardi, 2016).
The media insights described the wider Chinese architecture archipelago from its purely stylistic aspect. The post-modern pastiche of the built environment is not frequently narrated under the lens of political, cultural and economic mechanism which lie beyond it: yet, the built environment, in China as elsewhere, is generated in a multiplicity of processes in which, perhaps, a designer is undoubtedly not always involved.

A form of exploration is therefore needed.

Reversing the perspective from which the phenomenon has hitherto been observed, repositioning design practices as a collective action in a confrontation with technical, productive and symbolic exchange, the reflection proposed here explores the phenomenon of Chinese architecture not under its morphological, linguistic, technological connotation, but under the lens of its apparatus, resorting to the latest research in the field of architectural design theory, a discipline as a convergence between different disciplines (Santi, 2015).

Thus, the recomposition, based on the inescapable correlation between social and technical dimension, acts in contrast to the ordinary tendency of some academic works, which, by

19. Situatedness and partial perspectives see:
Haraway, Donna. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” Feminist Studies 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.

resorting to morphological and regulatory approaches, tends to omit or even approximate, not only the social implications and outcome of the intertwining of negotiations, but to accommodate the self-ship narration of the subject-author.
The narration problematizes on one side the project, as a situated reality[19] (Donna Haraway, 1988), on the other, a broader phenomenon, the practice, in a precise geographical context: Beijing, a reductionist sineddoche for the whole China.

As with the Chinese box game, all the book needs to be read as a meta-narration: a continuous unpacking of the practice under its multiple declinations (questioning if it wants to be dismantled..). Starting from the intertwining of the evolution of the concept of unity, apparently cultural and rooted, we will try to reconstruct the evolution of the approach to the project - and the practice of architecture- under the lens of the construction of the consolidated city, assuming the specific case of Beijing.

Let the design agency[20] speak
(unless it wants to..)

20. Agency is a term deriving from sociology.
see:
Emirbayer, Mustafa; Mische, Ann (January 1998). “What Is Agency?”. American Journal of Sociology.

The narration of a design agency[20] (Till, 2011) in China might be a provocation. Indeed, the research moves on the active, engaged and endogenous front of design, which investigates the action out of the definition of a subject (the author, therefore the architect), focusing not only on the object (architectural design) but also on its means (in a contrast between the “bottega” and the “laboratory”) (Armando, Durbiano 2017). As a knowledge process (Bianchetti, 2018), the thesis is not a mere design exercise to demonstrate to the academic community the ability and skill to use the tools of the discipline (which are also questioned), but it pushes toward a broader field, a simulation capable of progressively annulling the separation between the academia and the practice (Federighi, Bruno, 2022).

The project is understood not as a completed work, but as the result of the synergy between intentional projections subjectively constructed and in which there is recognition-and a series of conditions present in reality, thus directly knowable and describable (and here stands the specific tension of this work.. we will explain later why). The result is thus the construction of a project as a scientific product, as well as a creative one, the outcome of a negotiation between subjects, rules, inscriptions, social and cultural mechanisms before political ones. Hence, the proposed intent is here defined as the progressive construction of trajectories of action, in an ongoing process with a social demand and through inductive logic. The outcome would really like to be a project, a scientific product, finite and falsifiable (Fregonese et al).

However, the complex phenomenon of Chinese Architecture is not investigated in a perfectly orthodox manner: it springs from an observation and description of a reality, as an hypothesis resulting from interviews and literature reviews. It is a reality explored in its diverse social, spatial and institutional implications, yet assuming a precise point of view correlated with a particular

21. Deleuze, G. Guattari F, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia

A “plateau”, borrowed from ideas in Gregory Bateson’s (a cyberneticist) research on Balinese culture, is “a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities”.

stance. Behind the interest in this topic there is not a moralistic intention nor an oligopticon absolute resolution to conclude a project at any cost and not either to denunce a system driven by the opacity of its relations (guanxi) (Yanjie Bian, 2009).
The question focuses on a specific case, related to a precise logic, embedded in a network of established relations and interests, not directly observable but conceivable. As a reflection on possible associations between conditions and instances, the final product acts as a platform[21] (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987), an instrument of weakness and coexistence between actors, decisions and spatial forms, an incessant movement which takes its roots in times, scenarios and possibilities, not as a statical object (Latour, Yaneva, 2009).

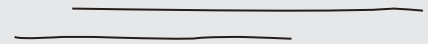
Multiple sources were used to carry out this research – some of which are self-created – to fill a series of gaps that are always present when carrying out research in China: photographies (not taken by me), documents (drawings, briefs), data and interviews are the main tools adopted in this work. The operations moved mainly through a distant observation of some fragments of the city and the drawing is intended as an instrument for the sake of the investigation.

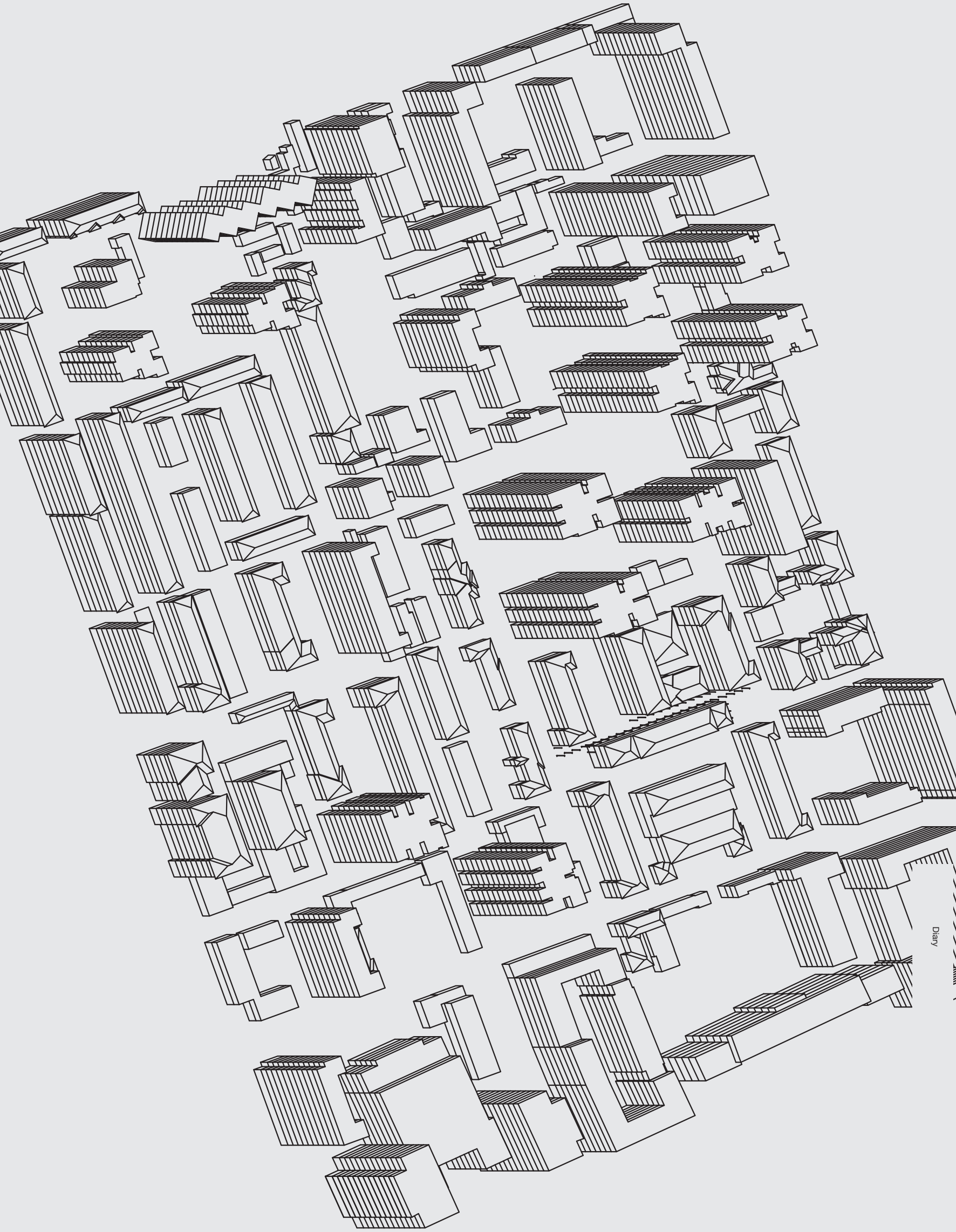
The Chinese Box

- metaphorical title which we decide to use for its capacity of summarize the difficulties of staying in just one scale, rather to open, concentrically, every time new boxes- goes into a dimension of suspension and it moves the attention not just on the traces of urban transformations impressed on the fabric, but on the complexes apparatus which resides beyond it, as an “architectural ethnography” operation.
Many themes were touched: the role assumed by the different actants taking part, actively or not, in the project making; the recent experimental transformations occurring in some other urban regeneration initiatives, at the wider scales; the relationship between narration and physical traces; the contemporary challenge in Chinese architecture frontier - and its new possibilities.
After an initial definition that returns under the theoretical field where the research moves, the inner debate on architecture in China is explored. The state of the art highlights a gap in the treatment, focusing on a problem that is too general and generic at the same time, poorly grounded and contested.
Like a leap in scale, from the general to the particular, the problematic node is therefore introduced. As a hypertext, it proposes not only the limits of reconstruction of a material reality that cannot be directly observed, but also the limits of knowing the intrinsic networks that define it. The reconstruction intersects different dimensions: on the one hand, the city of Beijing, a collage city made of replaced and ripped pieces, and on the other, the apparatus of Chinese architecture understood as a complex of actors taking part in decision-making processes, and the system of relationships established between them.

Diary

Notes




Diary

1.2. The lens:
Architectural Design Theory

Notes

25. “May you live in Interesting Times” Venice Biennale 2019 in reference to the times of trouble. The exhibition reflects also on the concept of hyperobjects.

26. Contrasts in Project Making. Especially in the Italian Context, where after the Economic Crisis the Building Sector collapses, there was an urge to rethink the way of designing. Some sociologist or antropologist claimed this crisis by contrasting it. Territories were mainly seen in crisis (vd. Bianchetti et al, Territories in crisi) signed by contraction and rarefaction. Here we will take that as an assumption, showing a proactive way to react.

Before going deeply into the core of this box, it is necessary to make a consideration, or, more properly, to introduce the theoretical framework through which the work was deeply constructed. Architects in complexity is a declaration of intents, and it is a proper inquiry into the core of the built environment.

Society is an immanent sedimentation and what is evident is the complexity and sometimes even the impossibility of reading the processes involved in the cities.
In this changing planet, human societies are overwhelmed by global phenomenon, the so-called hyperobjects (Morton, 2013) such as climate change, conflicts, economic driven projects, political uncertainty: the whole panorama is a pendulum of instability, in constant movement to balance the weight. This spectacle, dark and negative, is the source of an uncertainty about the future; no one really knows how to make the next step now (Harari, 2018). But this can be seen as an opportunity, for example, to change the cards on board and take new directions. The most traditional tools used to read these processes and the urban space were built in the last century, and more and more seem to be inappropriate because of their theoretical basis or the assumptions on which they are built (La Cecla, 2015). It is necessary to shift the perspective; instead of looking at the phenomenon in general, unpacking the precariousness, the uncertainty and every conflict proper to every architectural design retrospectively, as if they were levels from which acting (Fregonese et al, 2020).

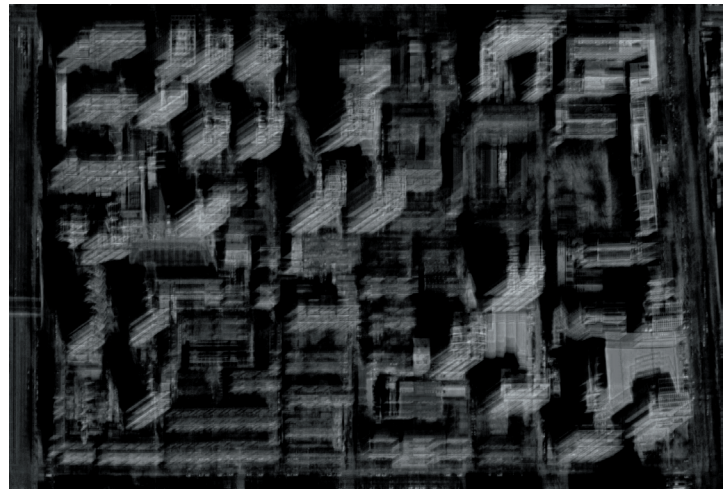
The recent expanded explorations around the architectural practice are rooted in a line of criticism about the traditional way of looking at the project. It provides an alternative point of view, made of elements that define architecture design not only as a physical reality, but a social reality (Searle, 1995). Facts and values construct a multidimensionality of architecture, and, as a result, the geography of entities involved in the design action continually describes cycles of opening and closing determined by the conventions that the parties involved have defined. Buildings and urban spaces are “things” built collectively whose manipulation is complex because they are regulated by open systems of knowledge while governed by norms, laws, ordinances, public funding, as well as made dynamically by social constructions and collective representations. The reversal of perspective thus allows the engine of observation to be shifted to the object-project, recognizing the structural role played by the indissoluble intertwining of symbolic and bureaucratic dimensions. If architecture is understood as a product of a specific design through time, it will not be interpreted as a static object, rather as a thing with diachronic (and

conflictual) nature. In this regard, the metaphor of Etienne Jules Marey's "photographic gun", an instrument capable of freezing the phases of the action of a bird's flight, and the subsequent reversal of this condition within a theoretical device capable of transforming the static representation of buildings into successive frames that document them as a continuous flow (Alexander, 1979) , help frame the framework from which further reflection can be explored (Latour, Yaneva, 2019).

Following the threads defined by the Science and Technology Studies (STS), the architectural design is thus assimilated to a complex ecology, an assemblage of sociotechnical objects, in which relations, conditions and properties are nested (the so-called “fuzzy object” (Latour, 2010). These implications give rise to a systematic and reticular correlation, in which each socio-technical object modifies and influences the design collective. However, the problem of considering buildings and projects as sociotechnical objects, whose production is not unilateral but presupposes a collateral trend of effects, raises an additional question related to the modification.

How and why the movement of the project takes place?
Therefore, the concept of deviation is introduced. In this regard, the built object is just the summa of all the deviations and the processual conditions that happened during the design process, or the materialization of the part that became a contract (Armando, Durbiano, 2017).

↑ **Figure 1.1:**
Etienne Jules Morey, photographic gun
credits: La méthode graphique dans les sciences expérimentales – La circulation du sang à l’état physiologique et dans les maladies.



↗ **Figure 1.2:**
Compound in-actio, authors elaboration to capture a movement scenario

1.2.1. Why it is necessary for architects to be “engaged”?

(**or simply understand the process in which they are involved[27])

The theme of the processuality of design is therefore central to deal with the built environment, and its possible trajectories of regeneration. If during the 20th century the concept of modernity fueled by the search for strong and definitive models and foundations with stable and permanent solutions, the resulting state of crisis, due to the failure and collapse of ethical, cognitive and aesthetic certainties, has led to the emergence of a new condition of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2011), capable of encompassing this condition of weakness, considered as an opportunity for the expansion of knowledge. The contemporary city also reflects this shift (Bianchetti, 2009): it is no longer understood as a mechanism that can be controlled or governed by predetermined functions that are not susceptible to change, whose development is connected to planning techniques based on models that make use of hierarchy and homogeneity.

This flatness (Friedman, 2007) used to ignore times and changes of the urban reality, which is in constant transformation. At the same time, the mechanism of production of architecture, and the relationships of the agents involved, is not just limited to the client-architect binomy; there are several figures involved (the contractor, the builder, the investor, the developer, to name a few). The dimensions of exchanges are always different and they are all possible because there is always someone who can direct it. Since Architectural design is an oeuvre of translation from complex world to a built object, the architects seem to have lost their traditional aura. This is particularly true in the case of that uncertainty already mentioned. If, probably,the economic boom, especially in Italy, made people believe that the construction industry was proceeding with a certain linearity, in the current highly uncertain situation it is a totally unthinkable category. Unless, the architectural design suspends its traditional positions and accommodate new plural forms, to be able to control and design that intriguing tangle that determines the built form . Generally speaking, it is the time to defend values out of the subjectivity and the heroic dimension of the profession (Till, 2007).
Understanding the reasons, the effects and the process that determined the built environment would help to determine new possible trajectories, useful for outlining future perspectives, scenarios and strategies based on a certain method.
In the end, unfolding the ordinary practice permits to codify the architect’s labor’s role to unlock and innovate it (Cuff, 1991).

Notes

27. This part explains the reasons why we need to shift our attention, as architects. Currently, there is a big debate on design thinking, especially on reflectin the practice of architecture to innovate it.

See:
CCA: How to Not: Become a Developer, reflects on the role of hyphenated architects (architect-developer, simply engaged), 2022

Tattara M., Who does your architecture? A pedagogical experiment made at KUL Leuven

Federighi V., Quaglio, C. Todella. E, Dutto AA., Campobenedetto D., Innovation in Practice in Theory, 2022

28. Farinelli F., La Crisi della Ragione Cartografica, Einaudi, 2019

29. StoppaniT. – Not a Schema: Notes on the Anxiety of Mapping, in Philosophy Kitchen V. 3 (2019): EXTRA#3 - Schema. Verso un dizionario filosofico-architettonico, curated by Vittoria Guadagna and Andrea Alberto Dutto.

1.2.2. Critical Mapping[28]

Hence, the object here is to investigate how architects work for the sake of a design simulation shifting the attention from the object and the subject to the means, which regard conception and negotiation of the processes.
The new forms of exploration use traditional tools combined with new ones: multidimensional mappings, for instance, are systems of representation that combine an intellectual and political project of the space. Indeed, a map always is not just a representation of a reality; it is an intentionality and its situatedness.

As Teresa Stoppani puts it *“the lie of the map - its fabrications, conjectures and falsifications- describes the invisibles that rule society, govern a territory and organize its economies* (Stoppani, 2017)[29]. The map is thus configured as a critical act linked to an action, the projicere, a conscious "tracing" (Guattari 1979) that generates new physical and conceptual territories, not limiting itself to their representation.

1.2.3. Theoretical platform

On China

Figure 1.3.
The theoretical structure is based on a dualism between an object of observation, to reconstruct (China-Beijing-the Site) and a Methodological Lens Architectural Design Theory. There is an inner symbiotic relations between the two parts.
Main bibliography references
↑ on Chinese Architecture (object)
↗ on Architectural Design Theory (lens-methodology)

Ettore Santi, *Uncertainty and design practice in China. The apparatus of Shanghai Experimental Architecture*, Journal of Architecture and Urbanism, 120-128, 2015

Ettore Santi, *Il 'dispositivo"dell' architettura sperimentale cinese. Identita e soft power nell'era del sogno cinese"*, in Territorio, 131-140

Donald A. Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action,* Ashgate, 1983

Horst W.J. Rittel, *Thinking Design. Transdiszi-plinäre Konzepte für Planer und Entwerfer*, 1980

Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building,* Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1979

Roberto Gabetti, *Imparare l'architettura. Scritti scelti sul sapere architettonico*, Allemandi, 1997

Callon, M. "*Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay",* 1984

Carlo Olmo, *Progetto e racconto. L'architettura e le sue storie,* 2020

- *"the diachronic nature of architecture actually arises from an inextricable intertwining of collective practices and representations, with the inescapable presence of subjective action".*

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An introduction to Actor-Network Theory,* Harvard University Press, 2005

- Bruno Latour. *Politics of Nature. How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*,Harvard University Press, 2004

Jeremy Till. *Architecture Depends*, Cambridge-London: MIT Press, 2007

Peggy Deamer, *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class*, and the Politics of Design. 2015

Dana Cuff, The story of a practice, MIT Press, 1991

Maurizio Ferraris, *Documentalità. Perché è necessario lasciare traccia*, Laterza, 2009

Alessandro Armando, Giovanni Durbiano, *Teoria del Progetto Architettonico*, Carocci Editore, 2017

Valeria Federighi, Edoardo Bruno, *The Detroit Great Game,* 2022

CCA, How to: not become a developer?
A residence program, a reflection on architecture as an expanded practice 2022

Martino Tattara, Rebecca Carrai, Who does architecture? WDA
Elective course, Sint Lucas University, Bruxelles, 2022

2.China files

建筑

Jian-zhu is the Chinese translation for architecture. Literally, it means “Jian” 建 “establish” 筑, Zhu “building”, also understood as a spatial unit, module, or cell, which included all the structures of the building located behind the façade jian. The definition of what is architecture or what is the art of buildings is related to how it is perceived in local context, and that is passing through a definition from the literature.

30. On authorships:
Lazlo Hudec was an Hungarian-slovak architect active in Shanghai from 1918 to 1945 and the designer for some of that city's most notable structures. Major works include the Park Hotel, the Grand Theatre, the Joint Savings and Loan building.

Using common terms, the architectural practice, for its specific nature, might be assumed to be similar in every country (and might be so, considering its routine). Hoeverver, it might differ from one jurisdiction to another. Of course, the differences are not just legislative, but also cultural and are reflected in the profession, in the responsibilities, in the ownership of work and design, and other aspects. That is the reason why every (hi)story of profession needs to be told through the lens of the influences and the aspects that determined its emergence; from an imperial fiefdom to a centrally planned economy, in the decades of civil strife and unrest that accompanied the evolution (and revolution), the identification of a professional and architectural identity evolved, hand in hand with a change in society (Fu, Steinhardt 2002) -and so far, nothing new on the Eastern front-.

Architecture as the design of “buildings” has been practiced for thousands of years as the Yingzao Fashi (11th century) is the clear evidence of this; a set of construction instructions that determines its material responses, rather than its moral and jurisdictional principles (Boyd, 1962). It could be assumed that the place where intellectual effort was concentrated was the craftsman’s workshop (the so-called bottega di progetto, (Armando, Durbiano 2017)). At that time, the practice had a prescriptive framework in which the main forms (deeply related to the concept of structure) were devised within social, political and cultural norms. While in Europe, the neo-liberal job of architecture was already clearly defined within a specific movement, there was not any equivalent in China (Bingkun, et al 2008).

Architecture was a purely product of colonialism in China. Indeed, it was imported from Western Societies; during the well known decade following the Nanjing Peace (1927-1937), a western middle class moves to China intensifying the trade with West; a prompt series of new project were introduced through a process we might define “globalization ante-litteram”. Many Western architects move to China to establish new firms (Lazlo Hudec[30]), exporting to China the well established figure of the architect as the “designer of buildings” (Cody, 2003).

2.1. The emergence of a profession

As a consequence of Western Migration, a first generation of Chinese Architects arose directly; some moved to the West inspired by what they observed. After the 1920s, many of these architects returned to China and established their own practices. That is the case of the well known Chinese Architect, Liang Sicheng[31], who also founded the Second School of Architecture in China the National NorthEastern University, after having been trained at the University of Pennsylvania. While educational establishments were being founded, so, too, practitioners started gathering and organizing in a variety of ways. The practice was systematically recognised, but without a proper institution behind, so its influence was limited to the intellectual dimension (Rowe and Kuan, 2002).

In 1949, with the founding of the People's Republic of China and the establishment of a centrally planned economy the demise of private capital led architects to be reintegrated within the government bureaucratic apparatus. The architecture practice was nationalized through the Law of the 1950s (Weimin, 2020) and state control was established over the profession; the construction sector was a matter for public bureaus, in a systematic relation of dependence over the central government.
Within the succession of the Five-Year Plans[32], architects were part of the production system and their activity was directed towards the ideological goals of the state. Thus, the practice of architecture came to be carried out either through the Ministry of Construction or through specific architectural units of the Ministries and their subunits.
In the Chinese Communist model of production (Shaw, 1996), architects and engineers were assigned to work in design units, typically known as Design Institutes, where they were responsible for the design and documentation of structures needed by their host entities in the bureaucracy, and the designs were passed to relevant construction units to translate the designs into buildings. In this framework, universities also set up work-units to apply their knowledge to productive labor. In this laboriate model, the role and responsibilities of the architect were limited to the conception and documentation of designs to the satisfaction of political, legal and technical criteria guided by Communist ideology. In such a context, professionalism had no place as the roles, responsibilities and obligations of the architect were governed by legal and political frameworks: the conception of a self-regulating profession could not exist. The power of the Party assumed a central role in Chinese Urbanization's initiatives, mirroring the filo-soviet ideologies.

In the 1980, the Opening Up Reform promoted by Deng Xiaoping legitimized all the systems of "brain workers" and the unit system began to be dismantled. Within these changes, private practice emerged. The state eliminated sinecures and ordered architects to work for fees from different projects (Zhang, 2004).

31. see also:
Liang: the Overarching - A Documenta Celebrating Liang Sicheng's 120th Anniversary
Exhibition, 2021, Tsinghua University

32. 5 Yeas plans
are a series of social and economic development initiatives issued by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since 1953 in the People's Republic of China. Since 1949, the CCP has shaped the Chinese economy through the plenums of its Central Committee and national congresses.

However, the discipline did not have a specific structure, which was drafted in alignment with Western Academy. In this regard, also after the opening up policies, which led to the transition of a market-based economy, the legacy of the Design Institute remained, and they had (and they still have) a key agency in the nation's spatial development processes. The architects, along with other service professionals, were instructed to examine issues related to the training and registration of members of the profession. Senior members of the discipline (which was not yet a profession) were commissioned by the Ministry of Construction to research international examples for professional organization. Hongkong was firstly seen as a model for many of the efforts in modernisation, especially in urban development and related services, which was modeled according to the British system. Looking to the British institutions (HKIA, RIBA, NCAARB, AIA) the first elements of a professional structure were drafted, reflecting a closer alignment. The model of professionalism observable in China is deeply based on an old version of the professional in the West, where the architect is the possessor of particular skills and rights that have been protected by the concept of exclusive practice.

Building design projects						Design units	Registered architects
Special	I	II	III	IV	V		
						Class A design unit	Level A registered architect
						Class B design unit	
						Class C design unit	Level B registered architect

Figure 2.2 ↑
Categorization of building design projects, classes of "Design Units", and levels of "Registered Architects"

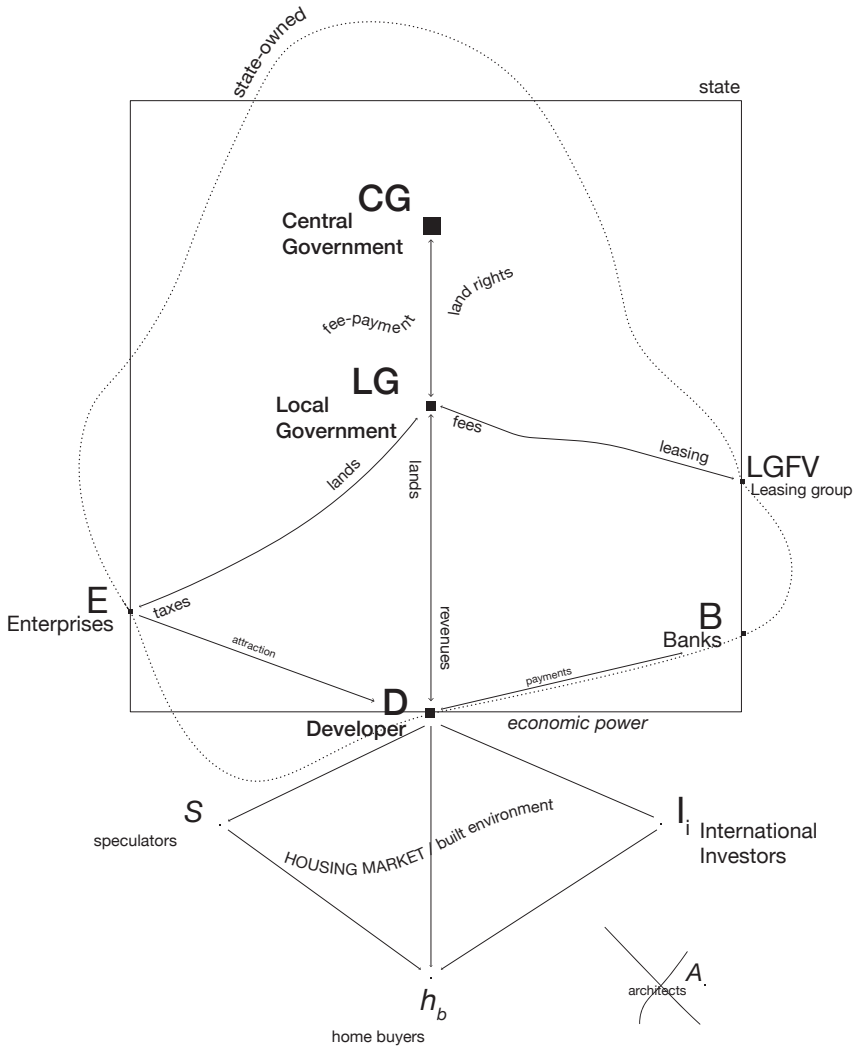
2.2. A matter of practice

The Registered Architects Ordinance of the People's Republic of China (RAO) was released in 1995, directly followed by the Rules for Implementation of the Registered Architects Ordinance of the People's Republic of China (RIRAO) in 1996, addressing architect's labor. The ordinance establishes that an architect has

"the duties of designing or providing technical consultation on the design of a building, as well as undertaking building investigation, and evaluating and supervising the construction of work as designer. The obligations, in the end, are to be carried out under the oversight of a building design unit (Rao, 1995 Section 3, paragraph 2), through which all work should be commissioned and to whom fees are to be paid (for example, construction drawings are to carry the stamp of two parties, the architect and the Design Institute. If a licensed architect leaves a Design Institute, however, the unit is responsible for revoking the license to practice and returning the stamp to the administrative authorities. (RIRAO), and the architect must apply for obtaining a new license and stamp from the design unit". (Construction Ministry 2000)

Recognizing that some architects may wish to practice on their own or in smaller offices, the state more recently relaxed the requirements in section 3 of the RAO to permit practitioners to obtain their own licensing stamp and work outside a recognised Design Institute (Construction Ministry 2000). According to the requirements: all drawings need to be signed by both the Institute and an architect. However, it has not been relaxed yet, so the practitioners need to submit their drawings to a Design Institute for technical and regulatory review, upon a successful completion of which the drawings are embossed with a second stamp and may be issued. To ensure the quality of building design and construction, the Chinese government established a grading system to correlate types of building projects, grades of registration by architects and design units. Building projects are classified according to six classes according to their scale and technological difficulties (Construction Ministry). Registered architects can be Level A or Level B; the first one has more agency, they can take part in different levels of design participation, while Level B have access to Class III building design projects, or even below.
The Design Institutes are classified in three grades according to the number and quality of professionals, management and facilities (Construction Ministry, 1999b).
The construction process is divided into several stages that involve participation from several firms. As noted in the Survey and Building Design Ordinance (SBDO), the work of design firms starts from concept design and ends at delivering production drawings to construction firms (Construction Ministry, 2000b: Section 4, paragraph 8).

*Real Estate Development
The actors and their foodchains



The central government grants land use rights to the Local government, which in turn pays dues.
The Local Government makes land available to the devleoper in exchange for payment of taxes and interest on land rents. At the same time, the Local Government also makes land available to industries that get subsidized tax payments and leasing groups in exchange for loans.
LGFV borrows from banks, which in turn are subject to a loan-interest relationship with the developer. Developers, attracted by the industry sell part of the land to speculators, to often foreign investors. End users, home buyers, are just the last missing link in the food chain.
Here, the architects come in.

2.2.1. Eteronomie

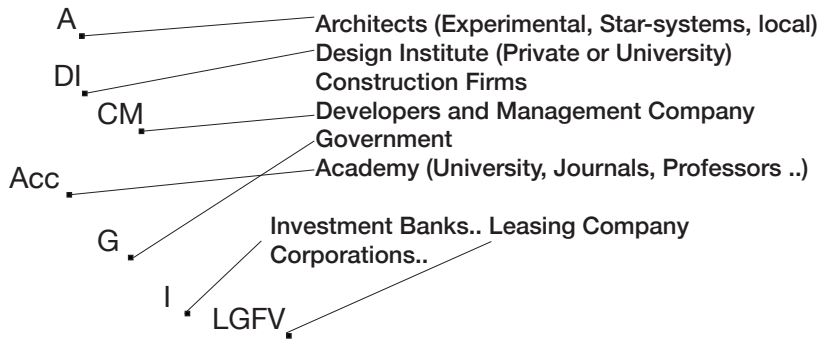
←
Figure 2.2
General model elaboration of the author inspired by a drawing by Ettore Santi, Territorio 2016

The changing nature of architectural practice in China has been guided by bureaucratic directives in the past two decades. Market momentum and demands from increasingly street-wise clients are pushing architects to practice in increasingly different ways. The central forces of changes are mainly three; the market, the privatization of the practice and the professional framework.

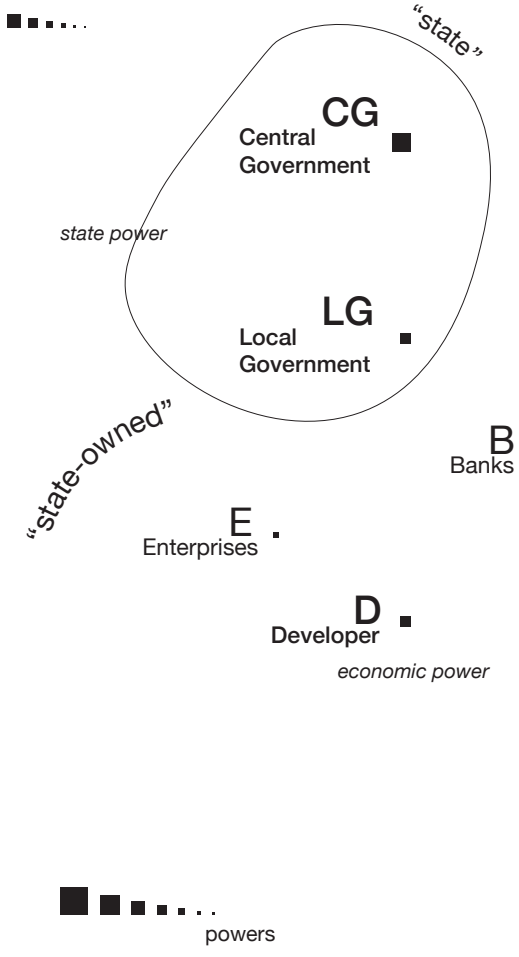
Borrowing from ethics the concept of Eteronomia as “the norm of an action from outside itself” it might be assumed that architectural design, and the project, takes shape from the heteronomy of the different occasions (Santi, 2016). Therefore, from a side, it is possible to consider the “heterogeneous mechanism and structure designed to maintain the given power within a social body; institutions, architectural forms, decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements etc; from the other there is a “set of relationships that can be established (the apparatus).

By trying to connect the Foucaultian concept of devices to Chinese experimental architecture, it is possible to highlight the political, cultural, and ideological constructs that influence such architectural forms. The inescapable and conflicting forces that decide the constructed environment in China are basically two; the State (or the Party) and the Real Estate Market (Xiangning, 2014). As a result, designers are not alone within the project game; rather they are the “weak link in a chain”, as they need to interface with the expertise of Design Institute and International Corporations and with the developers (except those experimental architects, whose agency seems to be different.. but this is a story we will see later).

To date, the main “actors” taking part in a process are:



*State and state owned



Land Administration Law of the People's Republic of China

Article 8:
Land in the urban areas of cities is owned by the State.

Article 9:
State-owned land and land owned by peasant collectives may be lawfully determined to be used by units or individuals. Units and individuals that use land shall have the obligation to protect and manage the land and make rational use of it.

Article 17:
People's governments at all levels shall draw up overall plans for land utilization on the basis of the requirements of the plans for national economic and social development (...)

The duration of an overall plan for land utilization shall be prescribed by the State Council.

Article 18:
In drawing up their overall plans for land utilization, the people's governments of provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government shall see that the total area of the cultivated land within their own administrative regions is not reduced.

Article 38:
The State encourages units and individuals to develop unused land in accordance with the overall plans for land utilization, on condition that the ecological environment is protected and improved and soil erosion and desertification are prevented. Priority shall be given to the development of such land for agricultural purposes where conditions permit.

The State protects the lawful rights and interests of such developers in accordance with law

(Adopted at the 16th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Sixth National People's Congress on June 25, 1986; amended for the first time at the 5th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Seventh National People's Congress on December 29, 1988 in accordance with the Decision on Amending the Land Administration Law of the People's Republic of China; revised at the 4th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress on August 29, 1998 and promulgated by Order No.8 of the President of the People's Republic of China on August 29, 1998; and amended for the second time in accordance with the Decision on Amending the Land Administration Law of the People's Republic of China, adopted at the 11th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Tenth National People's Congress on August 28, 2004

http://www.npc.gov.cn/zgrdw/englishnpc/Law/2007-12/12/content_1383939.htm

2.2.2. State's power(s)

←

Figure 2.3
General model elaboration of the author inspired by a drawing by Ettore Santi, Territorio 2016

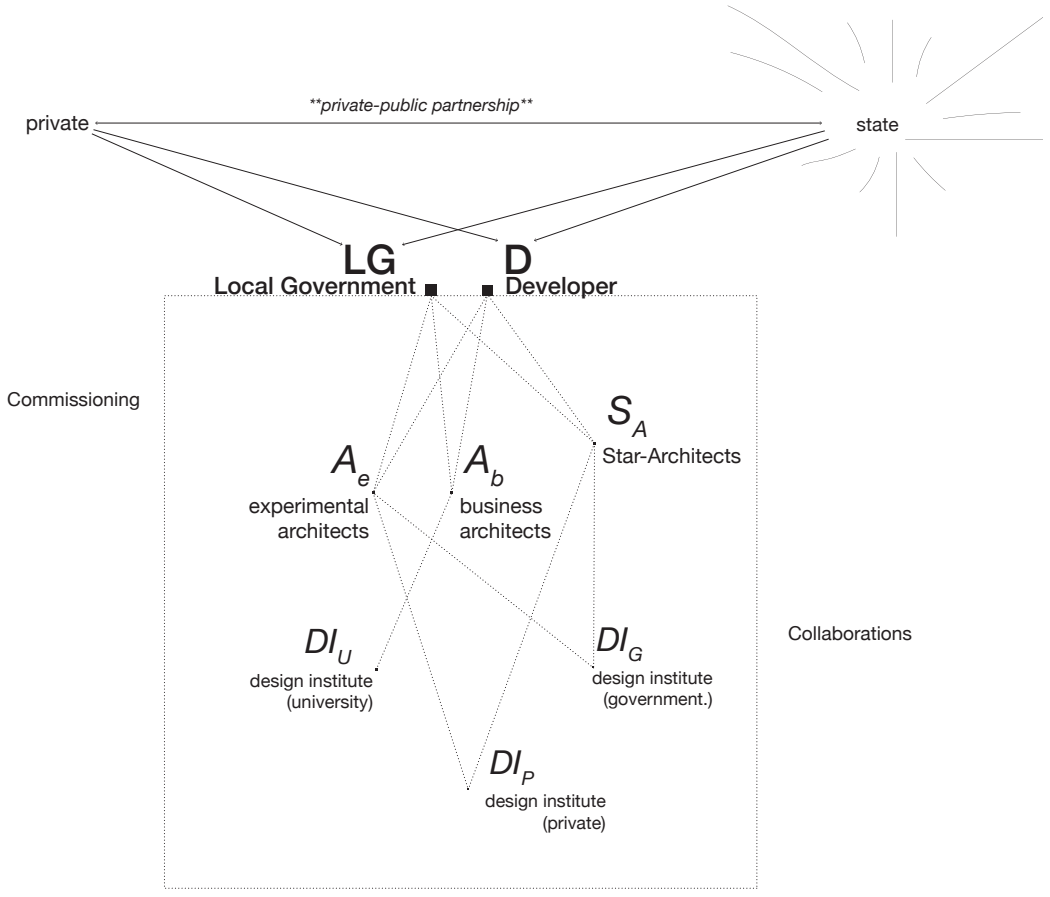
Mao Zedong's National Economic Plan was an engine for urban planning, which was primarily based on productivity and physical development of urban centers to foster industrial systems. Generally speaking, the Planned Economic System provided an "industrialization without urbanization" under which self-sufficient production districts housed small communities and offered all the living supply. The apparently "No-Stop City '' expanded until 1984, when Deng Xiaoping led to producing a legislative apparatus to regulate urban development, including guidelines for site selection, building concessions for the development of the building areas and the engineering concessions for construction. The crucial step in this process was the 1989 amendment to the constitution that granted the transfer of urban land use rights-owned exclusively by the state-in return for compensation; the real estate industry found enormous opportunities for growth, driving the nation toward the Economic Boom.

This radical shift changed the urban development plan from regions to points within which the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) were formed. The new policy adopted was based on the axiom administrative localization-fiscal centralization (Mao, Qizi, 2011); that is, government departments at the national and provincial levels are more involved in drafting development guidelines, supervision and management of fiscal resources, while municipal governments hold more power in controlling land and real estate investment, generating tensions between the central and local governments, a key issue for Contemporary China.

The Central Government has a mixed attitude towards sprawl and massive land-use contracting; massive urbanization generates externalities deserving of ever-increasing expenditures. As for their part, Local Governments vigorously support contracting, since tax revenues are the only source for financing public projects and infrastructure needed for development. Planning and policies have made architects and designers more subservient to the logic of investment and turned the design process into a race to meet the growing market demand. That is the reason why residential design, in particular, is the iconic subject of developers; rigid regulations regarding exposure, building systems, surfaces and openings make it an experimental typology. Few architects develop residential projects (Jenkins, McLahlan, 2010).

The role of architects, generally, only fits into the merits of public buildings; even carefully analyzing the master plans approved by Chinese municipalities, there is a clear logic of distinction between residential design and public buildings (museums schools, libraries, cafes). As enshrined by Article 54, the state ownership of the entire urban land can be leased to a developer for public welfare reasons but for a limited period (fifty years if it is the case for residential proposals, standardized and fast to be executed) (Land Administration of the People's Republic of China PRC).

*General model
The chain of an architecture project



2.2.4. Economic Power

←

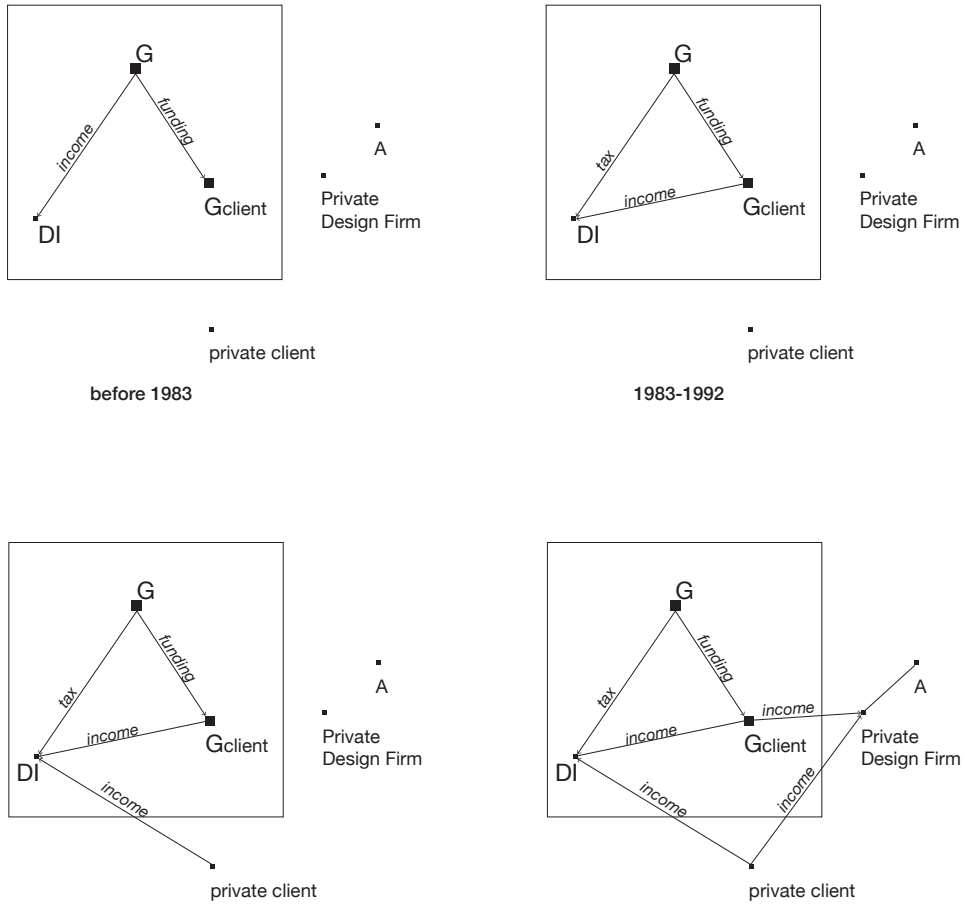
Figure 2.4
General model elaboration of the author after a conversation with Camilla Forina

In China, the management of the residential project is entirely in the hands of the developer, who tries to satisfy the huge demand first, and for the designers has a little influence (in total contrast to what happens in Italy, where residents usually assign their “trusted architect” to redesign their residential unit. After the 1988 constitution amendment, control of New China’s housing production shifted from the hands of the central government to those of Municipal Governments leading to the establishment of the Real Estate firms. To regulate their expansion, the State Council enacted a law to regulate the construction production. The Article n12 of the “Regulations for the Control of the Management of Urban Real Estate” requires real estate companies-before entering into a land use contract-to submit to the Urban Planning Administration and relevant departments of local governments the project for the area, in respect to its nature, scale and duration of the intervention, urban design criteria, construction requirements for infrastructure and public services, definition of property rights after completion and possible specific requests; Art. 15 imposes a penalty, amounting to 20 percent of the sum for the transfer of land use rights established in the ‘agreement, for failure to begin work at the end of the first year from the date of entering into the agreement; and confiscation of the land without compensation for failure to begin. This article is very influential on development processes and the work of planners; in particular, it explains the furious speed attained by design and execution processes in China (Land Administration of the People’s Republic of China PRC).

However, programmatic instability remains an intrinsic category of Chinese architecture and affects design practice. Underlying these mechanisms is the collaboration between local governments, businesses, savers and investors, among whom relationships are strengthened by a convergence of interests. Urban master plans are largely defined in contracts between municipalities, manufacturing companies, banks and investment companies, and real estate companies.

Local Governments are also responsible for producing the infrastructure and services needed to support future projects by acquiring agricultural land (and relocating farmers to new residential structures). They resort to loans issued by investment banks by mortgaging the land while waiting to settle the debt after the contradictions with developers have begun. Within these mechanisms, local governments pass on investment risks to state-owned LGFV companies through rather risky processes. Developers can only enter into a contract on the basis of a specific project, and it is not uncommon, therefore, for competitions to be held to manage lot allocations; at this stage, for the first time since the urban “gestation” was set in motion, the figure of the planner or “consultant” is involved, as will be seen, and this is his role (Santi, 2016).

Enlargement of the Collective



Relationships among the Design Institute and other parties in Architectural design practice in different periods in the post-Mao era. [a,b,c,d]
In 1983 the Ministry and the Governemental institutions interrupted any funds to the DI (which started their path towards a privatization); therefore, Design Institutes stated to request fee and from their still Governmental Client.
The actor network and the diagram of the collective expands till the 2000 when private client and private design firms take part in the project arena. [33]

2.2.5. The arena

Architectural Design in China is generally part of a large-scale investment plan. As a consequence, the context is driven by a multiplicity of professional firms actively in the consulting market. As previously said, architects are deeply forced to collaborate with at least two other elements of influence (in the sphere of design): the Design Institutes, public or private and large international corporations.

[D.I.]

2.2.4.1. The Design Institute

While dealing with Chinese architectural practice it is inevitable to deal with this specific system of government-directedness, which has played a key role and has an interesting unity in the global sphere. It is an institution inherited from the Maoist Legacy and it is a systematic bureaucracy beyond the construction environment. After the design proposal, the Design Institute enters in the game through its consulting capacity. Any architectural firms have any responsibilities for the legislative and executive aspects of the project. When a project is commissioned, a design group will be constituted. There is a special department to do marketing, and a human resource composed of nonprofessionals conducts all staff recruitment.

Typically, the chief architect (within the Design Institute) and the chief engineer approve the project. After the opening to the international markets, these institutions have undergone a process of mutation in their organization, gradually entering the logic of the market and making themselves competitive even on the fronts of design consulting.
Today, Design Institute (more than 200 in the whole China) are really centers often at the intersection between academy and professional practice that converges together different competences; designers, architects, engineers, landscapers, urban planners, real estaters. Their activity is an applied research, while, at the same time, they contributed to the training; for example, in the University Design Institute graduate students have the possibility to work on concrete cases, under the supervisions of scholars, architects and researchers.

They perform as real design incubators, while, at the same time, they attempt the architect's control over the construction process.Today, it is possible to look at the Design Institute in relation with their Policy; due to the marketizations, many units were privatized, and they started to address specific line of projects, as deeply analyzed in different dissertations, which highlight the architectural solution proposed by a specific Design Unit (The case of CADRG). As the Management Company, they are increasingly address a brandization.

←

Figure 2.5.
General model elaboration of the author on the basis of a research by Li Feng

Li Feng, 'Critical' Practice in State-owned Design Institutes in Post-Mao China (1976-2000s): A Case Study of CAG (China Architecture Design and Research Group), supervised by: Zhu Jianfei, 2010

33. Charlie Q. L. Xue, 'Design Institute with China's Characteristics', Time + Architecture, vol. 1, 2004, pp. 27-31.

[C.C.] **2.2.4.2. Construction Firms**

While the SBDO states that architects are responsible for the supervision of their work, is not a common practice. During the Maoist period, in which the work was organised in units, the construction units were autonomous and they could erect a buildings without any drawings, while the designers were called only in case the documentation was inadequate, or in case site contingencies required their advice (and their expertise). This precise attitude pursue in the following years; designers can give descriptions of the size or color but they are not allowed to take decisions during the construction process, since a Construction Firms has the power to do that. So, architects cannot interfere with the construction except as consultants (in case of exception).

[I.C.] **2.2.4.3. International Corporations**

A multinational project company. These International Corporations are private firms with an American matrix. When China takes on the appearance of a Global Nation, a great many large-scale projects have been managed by these types of companies: their experience in project management at all scales and high rise types has made them well accepted by public-private clients. In the practice of city making, these companies are involved in defining intervention master plans and general guidelines. Experimental architects are thus charged with defining the formal characters of already planned buildings.

[C.] **2.2.4.4. Clients**

Until the 1980s, clients were usually linked to the government, while recently they are increasingly becoming private developers. This change of client types has led to a change in expectations for services. Some design firms, especially those recently devolved from design institutes, are marketing services that rely upon their connections to help clients get government approval.

[Ac.] **2.2.4.5. Academia**

According to the triple helix model (Etzekowitz. 2008), a state's innovation yearns for free cooperation between government, business and academia in order to implement a drive toward the project. In this regard, the system sees an overlap of roles that does not always guarantee positive development: strategic manipulation and the constant encroachment of government control makes the relationship unbalanced on one arm of the propeller. In the construction sector, this is reflected in a multiplicity of issues. First, schools of architecture and planning are linked to a design institute; research conducted within departments and is therefore strongly connected to the market, becoming an active

part of the forces at work in shaping the built environment. Universities also play a very important role within the critical and selective process of architectural production. Architecture departments are also the center of debate in the nation's leading architecture journals. The media platforms of debate on architecture actually also had some influence on the decision-making process of political and economic forces, making the academy an influential element in the conception of the built environment.

It is possible to trace a close collaboration between experimental architects and architecture schools in China. Many experimental architects are also teachers in local universities. This kind of mass media diffusion contributes to the selection of experimental architecture and the names associated with it. There is a close relationship between architecture, built environment and academic circles.

However, the evocative presence of these buildings within the scope of the debate hints at subtle official support and image reconstruction driven by progressively incentivized nationalism. The search for a Chinese identity of architecture fits well with the ideological constructs of the Chinese Dream.

In 2014, Xi Jinping's acclaimed *"No more strange buildings"* calls for local designers to produce so-called made-in-China, a trend that seems increasingly to be pushing into other fields. This is partly because many Chinese architectural firms have long since overcome the need for technical and theoretical support from the Western world, found in the early 1990s, and are poised to capture a growing slice of the Chinese construction market, thanks in part to reasonable favor from institutions.

2.3. Architects?

In the complexity of the design market in China, designers are a weak link. These firms, as well as the non-Chinese companies that landed in China after Deng's reforms represent the main competitors and benchmarks for experimental arch. The first stage at which the designer may be required is planning at the medium scale; this involves defining strategies for the development of certain urban areas, within the limits of guidelines set at the general level (provincial or national) by the government in collaboration with the Design Institute. It involves the definition of functional areas, urban indices, lot shape and secondary infrastructure system (Santi, 2017). The intervention can be promoted by both local government and real estate companies. Since deep control of the legislative system is required to handle the multiple regulatory demands, this type of project, when not directly handled by the local design institute, is entrusted to the foreign corporation.

The sponsoring entity reserves the option of launching an invitational competition, developed in incremental admission selection phases. Once this phase is over, the area is ready to receive development proposals from real estate companies. The next phase in which the planner's advice is required is precisely the definition of strategies for developing the lots to support the documentation that developers are required to submit in order to obtain land use rights. This involves a small-scale master plan, one or a few lots, and the architectural definition of the buildings. Here, too, a partnership between architectural firms and local design institutes is made mandatory, which follows the development of the entire executive phase of the project (from construction site to legislative aspects) .

For complex or particularly influential master plans, the developer may decide to involve multiple professional figures, the experimental architects. Or, in specific situations, it is the company itself that launches an invitational competition among the experimental architects or among foreign firms to partly stimulate competition and define a significant part of the masterplan. The design process is increasingly understood more as an aesthetic game for buildings in view than as an evaluation based on urban issues.

At this point, we might ask: what do architects actually do? From a deductive analysis, perhaps, it is difficult to be able to sketch a universally composable manual; the variation in each case would not be taken into account.

"When I was working in China, as an architect, I encountered many difficulties; in particular, the construction details had to be changed..and we could do anything.. Architects don't exist, they act just as consultants ``The real architecture production is produced by the Design Institute.."

Without the perspective of professional obligations, current construction activity has led to a commodification of architecture and the role of custom-made habitats for clients. In contrast to a historical background in which the craftsman worked within predetermined limits, members of the profession today *see the architect as a technocrat in a working process.*

←

Figure 2.6.

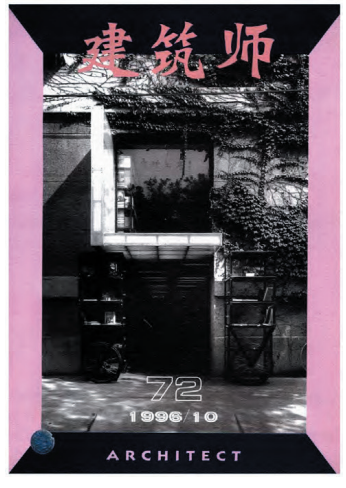
Project by CARG source: Li Feng, beijing opera house,

↙

Figure 2.7.
Project by Vanke, in Beijing, housing block in plot 2 of Beijing Vanke COFCO Holiday Town, source: Yang Chaoying, 2012 and Francesco Carota, China Brand Homes (phD dissertation), 2019)

↘

Figure 2.8.
Yung Ho Chang, Atelier FCJZ's Xishu Bookstore, Beijing, 1996 (cover of Architect, no. 10 [1996] source: Gung Hui



References

1. Latour B., (2005) Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory, Oxford
2. University Press, Oxford -New York
3. Yaneva A. (2012), Mapping Controversies in Architecture, Routledge
4. Armando A., Durbiano G., (2017) Teoria del progetto architettonico. Dai disegni
5. agli effetti, Carrocci Editore, Roma
6. Schon., D.A. The reflective practitioner. How professional think in action, Ashgate, 1983
7. Cristopher, A. (1979) The timeless way of building. Oxford New York, University Press
8. Khun, T. (1970) The Structure of scientific revolutions, Chicago University Press
9. Rittel, H.W.J. (1980) Thinking Design, Transdisciplinary concept for planet and earth
10. Frichot, H., (2018), Creative Ecologies, Theorising the Practice of Architecture, Bloomsbury
11. Till.J, (2007) Architecture Depends, Cambridge, MIT press
12. Callon M. (1984), Some elements of a sociology of translation
13. Cuff, D., (1991) The story of a practice, MIT Press
14. Gabetti R. (1997) Imparare l'architettura. Scritti scelti sul sapere architettonico, Allemandi
15. Deamer, P. (2005). Branding the Architectural Author. Perspecta, 37, 42–49.
16. Deamer, P. (2011). Practicing Practice. Perspecta, 44, 160–203.
17. Santi, E. (2022). "Redesigning the Rural. System Thinking and China's Agrarian Modernization." in PLATFORM
18. Guanghui Ding. (2014). "Experimental Architecture" in China. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 73(1), 28–3
19. Ding, Guanghui. "Reformulating a Critical Process: Architectural Exhibitions in the Journal
20. Time + Architecture." Time Architecture 1 (2019): 178-181
21. Santi, E (2017), Uncertainty and design practice in China. The apparatus of Shanghai Experimental
22. Architecture, Journal of Architecture and Urbanism, 120-128
    Santi, E. (2016), Il 'dispositivo"dell' architettura sperimentale cinese. Identita e soft power nell'era del sogno cinese", in Territorio, 131-140

23. Dijia C., On the (Mis)Use of Critical Discourse in Architecture: "Experimental Criticism" and its Entanglement with Postreform Art Movement in China Fung, Stanislaus. "Orientation: Notes on Architectural Criticism and Contemporary China." Journal of Architectural Education 62, no. 3 (2009): 16-96
24. Zhu, Tao. "The 'Criticality' Debate in the West and the Architectural Situation in China: Thoughts on the Essay 'Criticality in between China and the West'". Time + Architecture 91, no.5 (2006): 71-78
25. Zhu, Tao. "Rethinking on 'Toward a Civil Architecture.'" Domus China 51, no.3 (2011), 172–173.
26. Zhu J., (2009), Architecture of Modern China A Historical Critique, Routledge
27. Xue, C. Q., Wang, Z., & Mitchenere, B. (2010). In search of identity: the development process of the National Grand Theatre in Beijing, China. The Journal of Architecture, 15(4), 517–535.
28. Xue, C. Q., Guanghui D., The history of Design Institutes in China: From Mao to Market
29. Li, X. (2000.) 'The Celebration of Superficiality: Chinese Architecture since 1979'. The Journal of Architecture 5 (4): 391–409.
30. Li. X. (2002). 'The Aesthetic of the Absent The Chinese Conception of Space'. The Journal of Architecture 7 (1): 87–101.
31. Boyd A (1 962) Chinese architecture and town planning: 1500 B. C. -A.D. 1911. Chicago, IL: Chicago Press
32. Fu X, Steinhardt NS (2002) Chinese architecture. London
33. Lai D (1993c) Some facts on the history of modern China architectural education (Chinese). Jianzhushi 55:86
34. Tianji, X, N.J.Smith, D.A.Bower, A.S.Chew (2004) Development Strategies for Chinese Design Institutes, Article in Journal of Management in Engineering
35. Ren, X. (2008). Architecture and China's urban revolution. City 12, 217–225.
36. Shiqiao, L. (2008). Mediated Architecture in China. Architectural Theory Review, 13(2), 240–253.

34. Foucault M, L'Ordre du discours, Paris, Gallimard, 1971

Deleuze G., Che cos'è un dispositivo?, Cronopio 2007.

Agamben G., Che cos'è un dispositivo?, Nottetempo 2006

Socrates' doctrine, under a detrimental and debunking appearance, hides a profound positivity. In itself, Socrates only wants to alert, to raise doubts, to prompt searching. He used to say to be guided in his own actions by a demon, something similar to a guardian angel, who, however, did not prescribe what he should do, but only kept him from what he should not do. And yet these denials imply a principle, in the name of which one denies: otherwise, under what title would we say that something is wrong? The knowing of not knowing, which may seem a mere trifle, is actually the way to overcome skepticism and sophistic relativism; it is the only possible beginning of an illusory wisdom.

At this point in the narrative, we might ask how to apply the syllogism studied in the previous chapter and, more importantly, what are the limits of its ascertainability. Probably, all that has already been long debated is just a reduction of social processes, of a network of actors that is narrated only in an abstract way. In order to verify its limits and its verifiability, it is necessary to make a shift in scale, from general to particular, and introduce an inductive methodology. This shift in methodology allows us not only to critically analyze the practices, but also to observe specific possibilities, useful to define a model. The intimate and appropriate exploration in a problematic case would help to assume a specific point of view, not ascribable to a unified view, which, from a larger perspective would probably be reduced and too generalized. Here is introduced a method, which does not reflect on the potential of the specific object -therefore, the architecture with its own form and possibilities- rather on relatively conditions of movement of its networks -actors, actants, decisions, negotiations, documents and all the set of institutional objects which contribute to for the space.
Therefore, any possible form of repetition would not act through physical declinations, but, rather, through the modification of that apparatus[34].

ex-ante

3. This thing called compound*

*"COMPOUND"
noun [C]
UK /ˈkɒm.paʊnd/ US /ˈkɑːm-/

1. In military science:
it is a type of fortification made up of walls or fences surrounding several buildings in the center of a large piece of land. The walls can either serve the purpose of being tall, thick, and impenetrable, in which case they would be made of wood, stone, or some other like substance; or dangerous to attempt to scale, in which case they could be made of barbed wire or electrified. It can be designed to double as living spaces and military structures in the middle of hostile territory or as a military area within a country's territory; they are also used by those who want to protect against threats to themselves or their property.

2. In chemistry:
a chemical that combines two or more elements

3. In language:
a word that combines two or more different words. Often, the meaning of the compound cannot be discovered by knowing the meaning of the different words that form it. Compounds may be written either as one word or as separate words

4. In Urban China:
it is the basic urban form, generally walled, which contains residential, administrative and commercial areas. It takes its roots from the siheyuan concept, the traditional courtyard houses typology.

→

Figure 3.1.

Controversial Policy for opening up the gate; a proposal/ rendering

source: Hamama, B. (2017) China's new controversial directive to open- up the gates and promote Westernstyle Residential blocks is clashing with the homeowners opposition, Il giornale dell'architettura, 22th
March 2017

"On June 5, 2021 the 2021 Annual Conference of the Housing and Community Planning Committee of the Urban Planning Society of China (UPSC) was successfully held. Under the guidance of the UPSC, the conference was hosted by the Housing and Community Planning Committee of the UPSC, and jointly supported by the Beijing Tsinghua Tongheng Urban Planning & Design Institute and the Specialized Committee of Community Building, Science and Technology Committee, Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development. Taking "Community Building and Community Regeneration" as its theme, and focusing on the major strategic policies of "implementation of urban regeneration action" and "promotion of urban old community renovation and community building" proposed in the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021 – 2025) for national socioeconomic development, the Conference brought together experts and scholars from universities and scientific research institutes, heads of relevant departments and institutions, as well as representatives of the fields of housing studies and community planning, to jointly discuss the ideas and measures of sustainable regeneration, planning and building of urban communities. CCPR (China City Planning Review) was a media supporter of the Conference. After obtaining the consent of keynote speakers, we collected the keynote speeches and condensed them into the following articles, which have been proofread by the speakers. (Yin Zhi. 2021)"

The recent talks from President Xi Jinping regarding China's 'New Normal' have heralded China's entrance into a new era of slower economic growth where the method of stimulating economic growth through large scale public investment incentives are no longer as simple as before (Nishimura, 2020). Local governments now need to be more cautious in investing large sums of money to attract more private investments. The slowing down of the economy will also lead to a weakening of housing consumption and result in surplus housing supply. It will therefore become even more difficult for municipal authorities to meet the growing compensation demands from landowners who are facing displacement. The existing method of financing compensation by increasing the floor area ratio of new developments will gradually become unviable. Although urbanization has been a major contributor to China's economy, all these factors signal that achieving local economic growth through urban expansion is no longer a feasible solution. As a response to this 'New Normal', city authorities will need to adopt an approach towards urban regeneration that relies less on the heavy public investment and instead should depend more on the market and local communities. Even in the face of Covid-19 emergency, the Chinese Central Government is extremely sensitive to the urgency of rethinking urban regeneration through its incredible repairing practice and value creation.

In this regard, the problematic node presented the reality that more summarized the difficulty of this engine. After decades of Compound administration, Vanke, the management company, needs to increase its revenue. The right path is seen in a regeneration project whose effectiveness must be expendable as a replicable model. In the meantime, the measurability of the design action has to deal with a range of entities involved, a dense level on which to act always through the design lens.

N

3.1. The case study

↑

Figure 3.2.
(previous page)

Aerial Picture of the Site taken by Baidu Maps and re-elaborated by the authors. In particular, the white segments circumscribe the whole district, not directly managed by Vanke.

The research project, officially, begins in July 2021, right after Annual Conference of the Housing and Community Planning Committee.
The client's perspective, in this case Vanke, had a clear objective: define strategic lines to regenerate the area, instead of reflecting on the physical transformation. However, the task was not particularly clear, nor were the limits of action knowable. Hence, here reside the main difficulties of the research; the object had no clear and defined boundaries, but a set of intentionalities that needed to be translated and transformed into a complex architectural design that carried with it a certain degree of simulation of a real situation.

The specific contingency given by the impossibility to concretely visit the place brought into play a series of tricks for the interpretations, often self-constructed on the basis of a critical interpretation of the literature and the state of the art. For example, working on public space, within semi-private transitions, means having at least an overall comprehension of how the ground floor might function. In this sense, the Chinese Design logic of standardization for apartment blocks has allowed to redraw the floor plans by assuming them as traditional housing forms, retractable in the literature or manuals (see, Chinese Urban Communities, Beijing Danwei).

The intent of the following chapters, moreover, is to describe the research and design experience conducted over the past months and define a spectrum of design explorations and considerations. Imagining some modifications of a project on the basis of reality implies simulating very similar facts that could have happened. The figure of Martijn de Geus, in this sense, becomes pretty relevant, far beyond being the supervisor of this thesis, and thus the person who judges the final result. But since this research aims to dismantle the traditional process of knowledge, at least in the sense in which it takes place within a traditional design studio at university, it is necessary to frame Martijn's character within a different perspective. First of all, he becomes one of the main cognitive tools; he is the architect directly involved in the project and he is physically in Beijing. He has visited the site, he knows the network of actors involved, and he knows how to move around and how to underpin the situation.

To be able to give back the experience, the narrative form of the "carnet du borde", or diary is chosen, which allows the narration of the path taken according to the chronological order of the events that occurred; this makes possible a temporarily linear representation of the design process. The "strategic" orientation of the diary aims to question this linearity by revealing the true nature of the design action and wanting to emphasize important aspects of it such as its degrees of randomness, due to the impossibility of controlling the whole process, and the continuous need to

"recalculate the path" that recurs every time the project, until its successful completion, is questioned. Instead, "project strategy" refers to the construction of a perspective based precisely on the hic et nunc (Orazio) that constitutes the process. It is a necessary action for the architect, who keeps putting it into practice until the project is realized, and this happens precisely because of the continuous variation of contingencies.

Again, the term "scenario" is closely related to the act of project narrative: to draw and narrate a possible future state of a place means in some way to stand as a guarantor for something that is not yet verifiable and that so far is only represented in some drawings, which constitute the basis of the scenario itself. If the "diary" dimension is reflected in the overall structure of the thesis, the "strategic" key becomes evident in the way each chapter is treated (Todella, Fregonese, Quaglio 2020).

Elements have been superimposed on or placed side by side with the ordinary drafting of the text to legitimize its contents. In particular, two levels of distinction have been adopted:
all these contribute to visualizing the architectural project precisely in the associations it manages to establish with the instances that characterize the place. The project is thus understood as a hypertext, a socio-technical object that finds its effectivity precisely in its associations and modifications.

The time of the project and the time of the work, usually intertwined with each other, are here separated in the treatment of each chapter. The purpose of this choice is to make evident design steps that would otherwise have remained hidden in the final configuration assumed by the project. In this way, instead, it becomes possible to delve into the individual pieces of the scenario that were consolidated in the course of the work. In addition, it offers the possibility of a comparison between the different stages of progress of the proposed strategic actions (Armando, Durbiano 2017).

Composing like pieces of a puzzle, impressions and opinions about the conditions that are attempted to be described must deal with the possibility that the narrative may, in the end, not correspond to an objective reality. The point, in this sense, seems to refer to what Gordon Matta Clark was already talking about; the sense of the proposal is a total restitution of the complexity and opacity in which drowns a fragment of the city composed of collisions and contradictions (Van Essche, 2006). An articulated collage of information will attempt to reconstruct and make explicit the networks that sustain the making of the project and to trace their possible spatial repercussions.

3.2. MOHURD

Site photos received on
September, 9
courtesy: Minjie Song (MJS)

→

Figure 3.3.
The Canteen

↘

Figure 3.4.
The Street and its surveillance system

Figure 3.5.
see in the next page:

The Compound: overall master-plan, boundaries and physical properties.

↓

In our eyes, pretending to visualize it, we are confronted with a fragment of a city, which is the most obvious result of two city models, apparently colliding, but not denying each other; the socialist city, with its inner aim of controlling society through a deep organization -or sectorization- of urban space and the neo-liberal city, driven by the law of the market. Despite the imaginative effort, it is necessary to give names (and surnames) to this status. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Rural Development is a compound, “fenced or walled-in area containing a group of buildings and especially residences'' (Collins), located in Beijing, in Haidian district, an urban piece known to be the city’s directional center; major jurisdictional bodies, ministries, and major institutions reside here.

Especially, as it might be clear from its name, the area is among the main headquarters of the business center of the construction sector. Indeed, the current status of the property rights belongs to Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (MOHURD), National Building Materials Administration (NBMA), China Urban Planning and Design Institute (CUPDI), China Architectural Design and Research Institute (CADRI), China Urban Science Research Association (CUSRA), Haidian Commercial Commission (HCC), State Planning Commission (SPC), to name a few.

As data described it, the total population includes more than 15.000 inhabitants, including minors and the elderly, divided for more than 3200 households. Generally speaking, it is a medium high-income area; indeed, previously, the majority of the population was employed in local offices, replicating the same lifestyle legacy of the Danwei, it is now open to new residents. It could not be otherwise; Vanke is rarely involved in managing social housing.

Describing this place is not an easy task. How should we describe it, moreover, if we cannot see it? Here is the paradox of description: not everything visible can be described. And so, the following pages would try to attempt a physical-spatial description, without recalling to the subjectivity reconstruction guided by any phenomenologie de la perception (*what would say Merleau Ponty*?). The following pages will unpack the elements that compose vanke's proposed brief for the mere sake of understanding its scope, which can be projected, or better critically reflected in a design proposal.

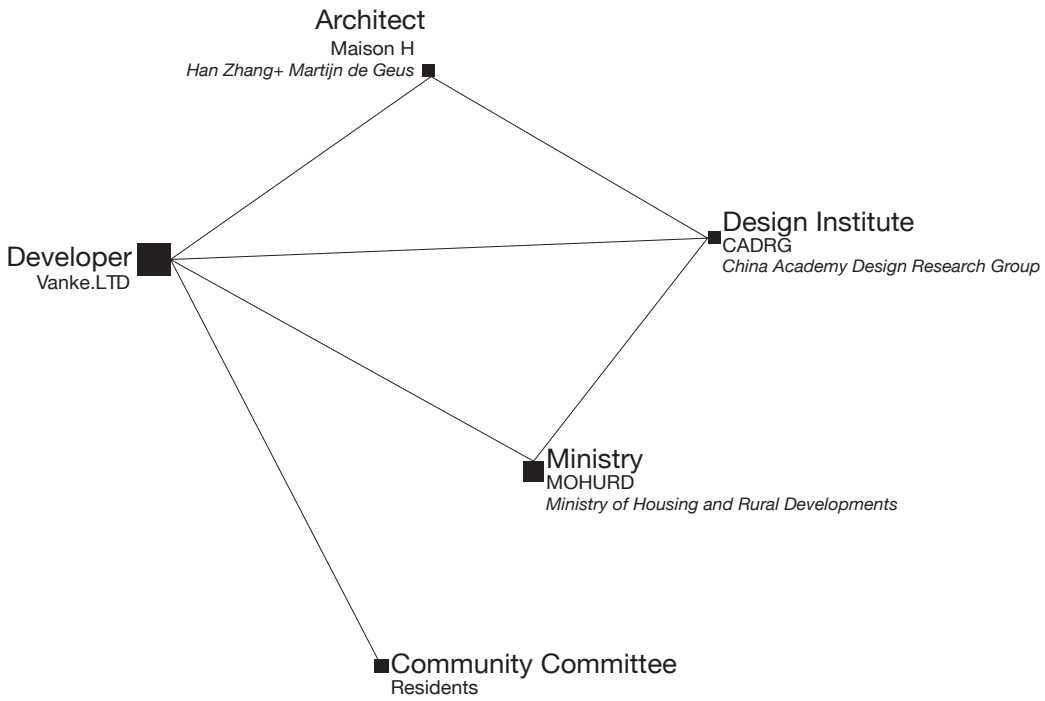
欢迎来到大院!
三里河9号院, 北京

Cad file received on September 31st

Topography

- compound
- community under vanke management
- protected buildings
- buildings to renovate

3.3. The process



三里河9号院, 北京 / Sanlihe Courtyard n9, Haidian District, Beijing
Compound of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Rural Development (MOHURD)

Property:

Minister of Housing and Urban Rural Development (MOHURD)(public property) National Building Materials Administration, China Urban Planning and Design Institute, China Architectural Design and Research Institute, China Urban Science Research Association, Haidian Commercial Commission, State Planning Commission

Management:
Vanke Co. Ltd.

Client:
Vanke Co. Ltd.

Project by:
CADRG (China Architecture Design and ResearchGroup), Maison H (Han Zhang, Martijn De Geus), Vanke Co Ltd.

←

Figure 3.6.
Actor-network diagram
synchronic relations

Our Research Object, as already defined, is complex; indeed, it is generally known and referred as a compound. It interfaces with a range of needs and relationships, between disputes and agreements. Its complexity lies not only in the network of relationships but also in the specific intent.
Since it is the Ministry's Compound, the bodies and entities issuing the guidelines are also the ones that have interests in the area; this could generate conflicts of interest within the process and controversies: the client, called in, is Vanke, one of the largest Real Estate companies, ex-state owned, a real brand.

Big companies, especially in the field of Real Estate, are about selling dreams; they build solid imaginaries of parts of cities that often make themselves unsound and slippery, especially if we think of the recent collapse of the giant Evengrande. And that is the case we are talking about: there is a plan, a vision, a picture which it is framed to be a futuristic compound,

"A Superblock 2.0".
"A Futuristic compound in co-creation with inhabitants and communities"

Are we really sure that betting on this vision would led to a project? What are therefore the instruments that build a solid response to this promise?

Before delving into the construction of a scenario and its synthesis, the aim here is to reflect on its current layout-process as a level from which acting.

We know virtually nothing about its history; we have no archival documents to place in sequence and construct a diachronic-documental mapping. We do, however, have an interlocutor, a specific figure, Martijn de Geus, who is our intermediary; we will better re-define his role later.

3.3.1. A burden

"From understanding the policy and the urban development, Vanke's mission points a vision to reach a community building: the project should be in line with four main strategies: people-oriented; financial and environmentally sustainable; in line with the current regulations on planning projects; promote the cultural heritage of the unique character of the compound."
From Vanke Brief

34. In China, after the nationalization of architectural practice, foreigners can not be licensed architects, and as such, the designer team needs to collaborate with a Design Institute)

Let's start with a social problem: the regeneration and renovation of all the residential communities. Urban development has complicated the composition of old public housing, deeply repetitve and apparently inflexible. These settlements have not been able to keep up with the radical social changes that have taken place since the opening up of China. It is clear that old public housing needs to be renewed to enable and adopt contemporary urban needs; but at the same time, the renovation should not be a demolition.

What form should this regeneration take? How can regeneration be promoted? What is the future of old public housing?

To date back to the 2008, the fate of this area started when the Ministry of Housing and Rural Development was relocated in the Compound n9, in Sanlihe Road, Haidian District, Beijing. At that time, Vanke was already managing the area, since at least ten or fifteen years before.

Recently, with the restrictions on Land Requires, Vanke had to change its strategy towards regeneration, taking advantage of the economic benefits released from the Government, and so, in a nutshell, with this premise, it was beginning the Regeneration of MOHURD Compound.

In December 2019, after collecting site materials and investigating the definition of residents' needs and regulations, Vanke set the brief to start the project.
Therefore, they organized the project team. They called a young Beijing-based architectural firm to assign the Maison-H project, co-founded by Han Zhang and Martijn De Geus at the end of the months. The first commission was relatively informal, and they obtained the job right after a simple interview, in which the Company evaluated their relevant experiences

"The task was not about the design in itself but the process's definition to arrive at that design. The group did not need someone to understand how to design."says MdG.

35. The designers here facing an opportunity and use, strategically, a Governmental Norm as a way to obtain and tackle more funds; this is a clever tactic for the project to succeed.

However, Maison H had to respect one condition: they had to collaborate with a local Design Institute, the China Academy Design and Research Group, the most important Design Institute. This might lead to some negotiations and controversial situations from the side of the designers; as we already said in the Deductive Land, the Design Institute generally prompted an over controlling on Design Process; so Designers basically cannot change some details, and their role is more related to just "being" consultant[34].

The project starts right during the covid-19 outbreak in China.
To create an inclusive process, the architects and Company set up different collaborative meeting, with the form of workshops. Meetings comprehends a different actors: from the community representatives to the designers and builders, from Design Institute Representatives to Vanke Employees.

"The organization of collective workshop avoid a strict work division, seeking a more inclusive way of distributing design responsibilities"

The different workshops were attended by different actors involved: community representatives, designers, builders, Design Institute representatives, Vanke employees. The collective workshops avoid a strict work division, seeking a more inclusive way of distributing design responsibilities.

In terms of design actions, Maison-H proposed a general masterplan, to redefine all the urban voids and streetscapes.
The site's most significant issue is the location of car parking: the area was built in a period in which cars were not so standard; all the compound needs to be readapted to contemporary commodity.

At first, design actions on the building were mainly excluded. However, the clients' necessities to obtain some revenues from the first step put the designers in a condition of defining their strategies. Considering the different disused heating plants (constructed before their centralization), they proposed an elderly care point, highly requested by the residents and advantaged by Ministry Policy on Elderly Center to prevent Aging Solitude[35].

After different changes, the design was submitted for approval, and it is now waiting to get it.

next pages:

Diagram in Annex 1
Shenzhen Diagram construction and elements: intellectual technology to dispell the process here narrated

Diagram in Annex 2
Shenzhen Diagram

Interview to MdG dated to September 21st

↓

Shenzhen Diagram

比较议题
“drafting a common diagram”

in reference to
Armando A. “Four diagrams and the architecture of the effects”, in Watersheds: A narrative of Urban Recycling, Frassoldati F., Federighi V, Berta M., 2014 34-50

note for the readers

Land Management Act (1990)

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis

Shequ Policy (2000)

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis

New type of urbanization (2014)

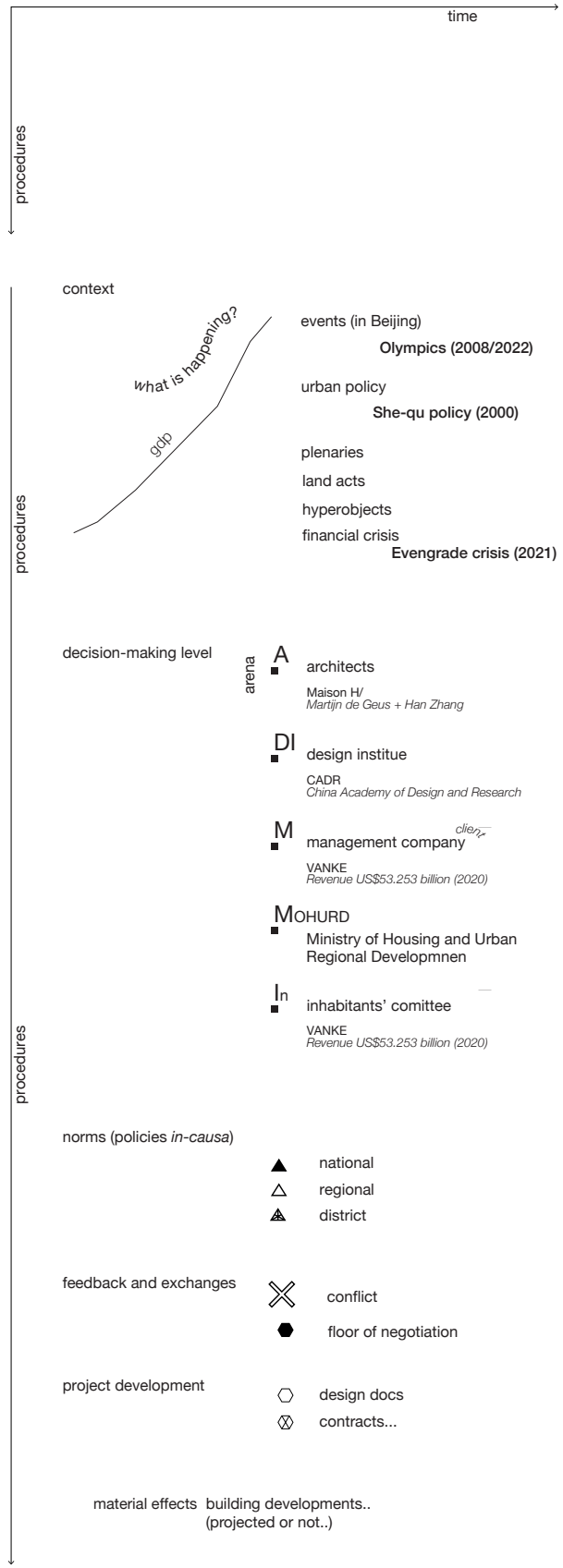
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis

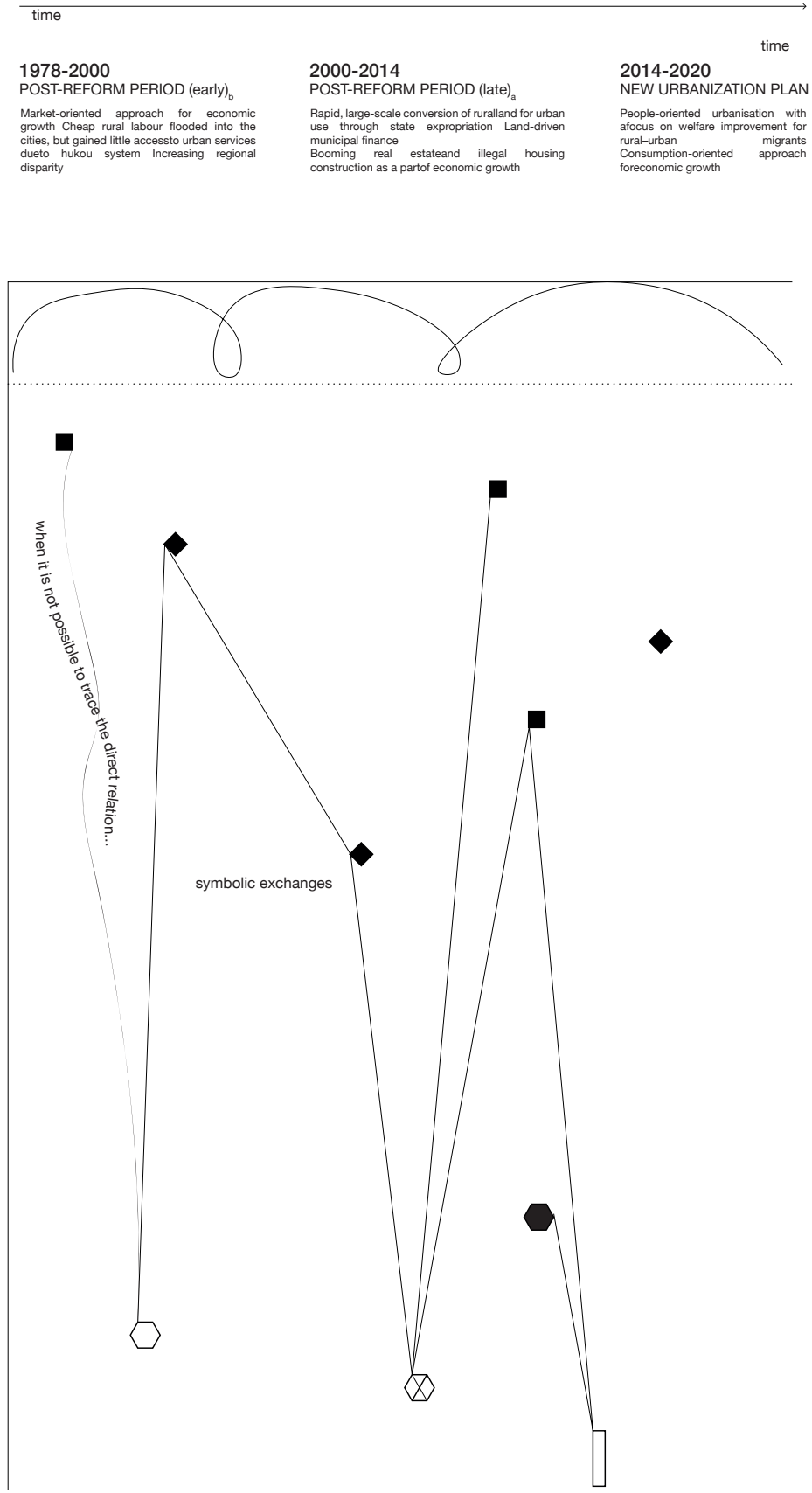
13th Five years plan

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis

13th Five years plan

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit, sed diam nonummy nibh euismod tincidunt ut laoreet dolore magna aliquam erat volutpat. Ut wisi enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exerci tation ullamcorper suscipit lobortis nisl ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis





Shenzhen Diagram

The present diagram dispels the process from which the thesis arises, understanding the problematic which lies beyond the current status of the project. It is possible to define it as the real immaterial palimpsest-framework from which the work begins.

"Every global process contains an indefinite number of single authoritative actions which are observed as they take place or in sequence, from the decision to the final effect. (Armando, 2017)"

Stated the time and the place of each action, it is possible to identify the sequences of action that generated the physical transformation or the decisions beyond every material transpositions.
The process is analyzed through the number of exchanges happening everytime on the basis of a precise document (Armando, Durbiano, 2017).

The diagram is here used as a critical tool for the inquiry, to understand the "watersheds" beyond the project-making". The final outcome is to start from this premise, and move steps after steps proposing each deviated sequence.

Legend

Documents

- descriptive doc.
- prescriptive doc.
- authorization
- agglomeration

Actors/Actant

- actor (human)
- actant (non human)

Conflicts and Negotiations

- conflict
- floor of negotiation

Norms

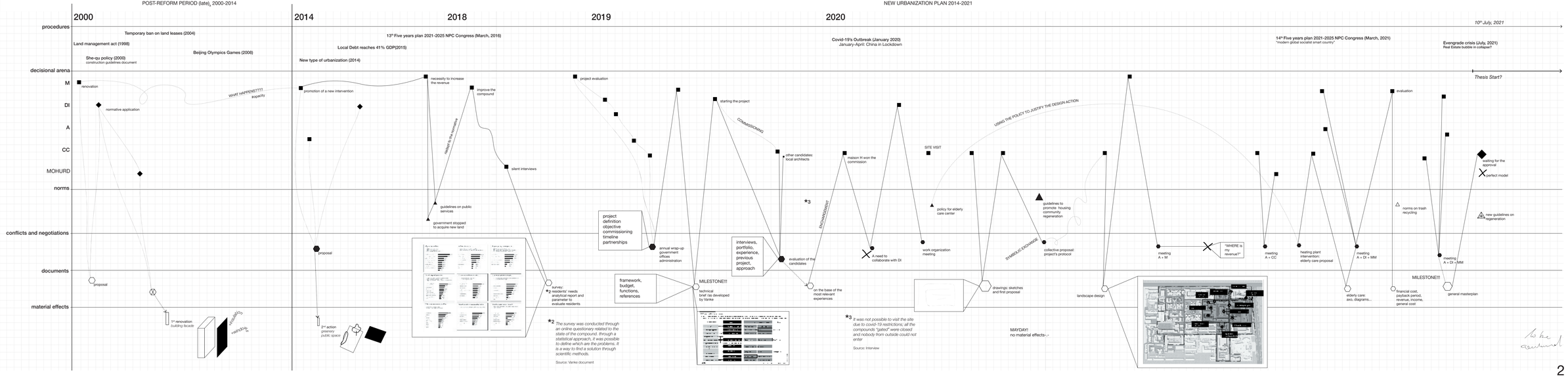
- national norm
- regional norm
- district norm

Material Effects

- on the collective
- on the space

Connections

- "it produces"
- "it implies"
- "it norms"
- "it is connected to"
- "temporal prolungation"



*2 *The survey was conducted through an online questionary related to the state of the compound. through a statistical approach, it was possible to define which are the problems. it is a way to find a solution through scientific methods.*

Source: Vanke document

*3 *It was not possible to visit the site due to covid-19 restrictions; all the compounds "gated" were closed and nobody from outside could not enter*

Source: Interview

MARTIJN DE GEUS' S INTERVIEW

The area under study, MOHURD, is predominantly publicly owned but managed by the VANKE company. It is now being regenerated, in line with recent directives to regenerate housing communities. However, studying some of the reports, I noticed that the interest in a project happened a few years earlier. By 2000, a redevelopment had already moved forward. But by 2014, Vanke had already started promoting the project. When, then, did this process begin?

I'm not sure what exactly is the exact date when all the process begun, because it's more an ongoing process because they have been property management company for many many years, 30 years in total I think. So The problem, from the VANKE point of view is that in those times, in those years of management the properties the property management fees haven't increased but the expenditure has increased so a lot, that means that the people pay a small amount of property management fee, there had a small property fees, 40/50 for years, which is very very low. That was the problem from that side, they could not increase that, unless they change the it. d. They have been facing that as a company for a long time, the project had a lot of and important possibilities, so they do that as a favour to get some favour, because it's ministry compound. They didn't need to make money before because they had a sort of grouchy back, to enable other projects. But in the past years they understood this is not gonna be limitless, and it's gonna be very difficult to require new land, so they need to change their strategy, so the strategy in the future will be regenerating all the communities and a lot of times those communities receive money from the government, they probably kind of having had to deal with property management group, that they would do the work, but someone would be paid for that, that is not sustainable financially either, it's just spending money to private parties so, then the case of this specific project, that is why it is taking such a long time to really putting together, is that because every part involved wants to make it a real model, so it should be financially sustainable, it should be very based on people's desires and intentions and needs, and should be executable within all the regulations (fire regulations, traffic regulations, trash recycling regulations. Actually a project like that sounds strange but has not ever done before in china, so typically one of the effects is not fully solved, maybe some of the regulations have not fully applied, or it's not financial sustainable.. it is a kind of different process of finding the right people, and the right conditions to form the project in Chinese they called it ling Xiang: in order to start a project you need to have the project brief, the project budget, the project requirement, the feasability, and then it would be approved by the land department of government and then you can start your project. And that process is taking a lot of time. It is a bit difficult. That compound hosts the MOHURD but also a lot of the leaders that are very important for the design related departments, mean for instances.. all the ministers live there. They are very sensitive, the leaders live there, maybe someone would be offended, so it's very difficult for them to start this project on their own departments, because they don't want to take any risks, because of the fear of proceedings, or they go in the other way, to try something extremely bold which would be absolutely unrealistic so they are looking for some people that are good for this project.

From the developer side they made a brief, so Vanke, they made an investigation of all the problems that are really really there, real problems, scientific based real problems, the regulations were not good, the traffic problems, the fire pumps that weren't connected to the systems, traffic Flow, facilities weren't there, they made a brief and they presented to that and they presented that to the local government, and Beijing government and they said: ok we can do something about it, we can find a way to make that project.

And then VANKE contacted us.
January 2020, right before covid.
Before spring festival
The lady inchargeed for the design department of Vanke she studied in tsinghua, she knows me. Martijn I have. Project, it's interesting, and then also another firms was recommended by someone else, young firms, with a low experience in public regeneration in china, they were quite nice, the public space-
Then I asked her what do you want to achieve with tha she said, the process is very difficult, create a model that could work in other areas, it is not easy, we need something that works as a system, to replicate, can we improve the life of people living there.
Before coming to china I did project like that in Rotterdam, bottom up regeneration together with the government and together with the community, and private developers in dilapidated areas, in the centre of the city. So I did some research, and I show her, which were published in a book called "exploring in the public city" which was a joint workshop with different university, we looked how to create public spaces in new towns. And she said: it's that what we need, we don't need someone to tell us how to design, but we need someone which can understand that this is a process.

So there wasn't a proper competition between you and the other firm?
Yes, we just had an interview and they evaluate us according to our relevant experiences.

Actually I just brought my approach, my teaching. Every year we do an urban design studio, where we work on different people from all around the world, and every year we chose different sites in Beijing, we work with different people to understand how we can help different part of the city. She really appreciates that.

She decided that we have to continue. However, at one condition; which was we had to work together with a local design institute. If you are not a licensed architect here you can not stand to drawing, and as a foreigner you can not be a licensed architect here.
The point is that they actually assigned us CAURDG, which is not a local design institute, but it's China most important design Institute.

For a foreigner coming to that such an important project they would take you in the back, there was a bit a competition between us and them at the beginning. The clients cleared outlined what we were in charged and what they should do. They really want to show. 20 people around the same project, it's really terrible.

Martijn even couldn't visit the site because at that time china covid was quite undercontrol, and they were afraid foreigners would bring the covid, foreigners were dangerous. So, I wasn't able to visit the site by myself. Han was fine.

During covid had you already started collecting drawings or?

I actually did just one drawing.
In Holland, I learnt how to create and understand the public space as just one system.
I just thought to look at the public space as one system, and then understand how this works with different flows of people. It's important to understand that as one system, connecting with the possibilities of different public spaces, and defining where that particular function in the public space can be placed, according to that hierarchy of places and users.

There were different workshops.

They asked me: how do you think we should organise the process? And I said; for me, it would be better to not dividing the project into different competences, and saying: this is the construction office, this is the architecture office. It's not gonna work.
It would be better if we are going to have a workshop from the start, in which you show the informations, to make feel that we are equal partners.

The design institute had a branch located in the compound so they could access of the historical informations, and we split the work, we were doing mostly the spatial analysis.

Sofia: did Vanke do a sort of promotion before starting the project to sell the project?
They didn't want to give false informations. Before the approval.

Material effects no.
The project got different steps. In the beginning, in march of last year it was pretty intense for 3-4 months. Then we presented it to the ministry, and they were quite happy for that.

And then they released that guidelines that they should re do all this community everywhere. (It was a good idea, they are already starting globalising it). And then, there were several operations initiatives deploit at that time.

The branch of ministry released the guidelines on renovation of this kind of community and then the Beijing Government released guidelines on the new systems of trash recycling (not putting together, but splitting and making it more efficient). And the local district government , Haidin district, so all together the 7 ministries were very busy together to implement this guidelines

So they were very busy and they couldn't take care of their compound. But at least we could sign the contract, and so we were able to identify what actually is gonna be produced, how to split the work, who actually paid. And then, we didn't hear anything for a while. And then we start thinking: ok, this is not gonna happen. And then they asked us for some drawings, because they needed it.
Because, what happens is that, in the meantime the design needs to be improved much, because we made a masterplan, we made a concept design of key public spaces, in the first phase, the key building that needs to be regenerated, we propose the function that should be there, they approved, what they need now is allocate fans, to get approval, and also be certain that that functions are really the right functions for there future needs.

There was an heating plant, which didn't serve a function anymore, and they don't need it anymore, we propose to out an elderly care center, there was also a policy "increase facilities for elderly care for the increasing elderly population in Beijing, ad in China in general, cause many many people are growing, and traditionally child take care of them. But now, that they are retired, they can't take care of them. There might be less able to walk around. They need a place to socialise together, and have social connections, social control. We propose this daily care facility.

We propose a participatory elderly care, they can cook together, it can become a library, they can grow the vegetables.

Can be possible to propose a flexibility of that specific function? Or to consider it static?

It can be a way to generate an income for the developer, because it's a way to host a new function, and you can have subscription. You have different subscription level. You can even outsources. After we did the design, they had to define how to manage that function. Do we need to have a third party? How much? How should be the payment for it?
So there was a structure consequence of that design. Before you need to be sure that this project is possible. Li Xiang, to really make the project.

Li Xiang.
It's a philosophy behind. It includes several parts. It explains and outlines what we gonna do, how we gonna do.. in line of current policies, how the policies are gonna outlined the future. What found are gonna be used.

They need to find and open a new company, a joint venture between the company and the property management, and takes time to set this company. All of that takes 8 months.

Sofia: participatory process.
Each community in china had a rappresentative, there are several people. When we did the meeting with the ministry, in which we were several, they were always there. They comment on very simple questions. For example: in. That area there are flowers we planted, have you ever thought about that?
We all listen to them, and try to incorporate all this element as ingredients.

Since it's quite an historical compound, we talked a lot with the local community to create an history walk. It's a walk from the canteen to the home and we wanted to add photos to document and connect to the history of the community. It is not so much about architectural design, It's really about life and sense of place.

There's a lot of people involved that we don't always see. Also in Vanke there were different departments, many many of them, and different regulatory institutions defined (parking, water recycling).

What about the negotiations?

what also they wanted to do in this project is also to integrate smart systems, which is also encouraged by policy guidelines and helps making management process more efficient, so the parking registration, how to make sure that people living in that area have a parking.
Smart amanagement system, in that you can also integrate the fire alarms. There are several systems inside this kind of process.

"Smart compound"

Yes exactly, and there were thousands of meetings, we kind of help to facilitate the process. Han was in mainly all of those meetings

"Your role as architect worked more as a mediator"

We helped to mediate the process, and also to get sure that everybody felt they are part of a plan.

Sofia: I think that this is challenging and it's the role of creating a project today.

Martijn:
Yes and also, you need to facilitate and tell to people working in smart systems implementation that you also need to be human.

In the project in apenheful we include everybody. From the cleaners to the animals, the governments. I would go in Holland for 3 days. To take all the layers in.

S:In the documents, the concept of temporality is specified several times about different phases. Was there a specific request in this regard? Or, in considering the case, did you propose different scenarios of diachronic and synchronic possibilities?

When they proposed us the project, they already think that the project should be fased. We did discuss on what would be the appropriate phases and then we decided together that the best way would be to start writing and defining were the public functions should be located, behind the ministry and the canteen. And that would have the biggest impact, if you do that, everybody would see it in everyday use. If you start with the back, only the people inside the area would benefit of it. So we started at the heart.

We didn't have a final scenario or timeline, rather we do start with the full masterplan, if you wanna do for the entire area or not, how you're gonna divide it. And from there, we pick and said: ok what are we gonna do in the first phase? What are we gonna do after?

We have a meeting and defined it together, the developer had a look to the financial investment and returns, and for instances they need something in the first phase that at least enable also an income, otherwise they can not make the next step.

So, in the first phases we included new functions so they can at least rent or operational income and we should do something with parking systems, so there can be more parking places so they can get the parking fee. Those 2 kind of those elements from the management side and we propose that should also be visible, should be in day to day use preferably in the area in which the minister himself sees everyday, so if it's done well, he will see it everyday, and will give more possibility for the next steps.

What about the Housing Units?

They have already changed the facades, they add some insulations, on the other sides, the buildings have already renovated. They looking quite fine. Inside the building would need changes in the fire systems, in some entrances, but we are not intending to act on them , rather to work on the public space, on the facilities.

Supporting the lifestyle of the communities.
Convenience store?
Elderly facilities?
A local bakery?
What functions they would like to see, and number

M: there is a government guideline 5/10 mins community principle. Within a specific range you should be able to find a service.

SOFIA: GATING:
From now all the communities should be opened up.
Especially with covid outbreak, it seems it's extremely important to be closed and gated.
You now live in this community and you know who goes in and out, you can monitor. Even with covid ì; the city was open butt you need to register. That was totally a good system.
Neighborhood watchers. To survey the area, know all the problems.

They are gated but people can go through the compound. There is a gate between school and the compound that opened in the afternoon to facilitate the traffic flow of people going to the school. It is a gate that can be.

Tackling all what

Connection between academy and practice.
It's a good example of someone with an academic background in a context, can be useful in the facilitation on practical process, anybody can design.
You can really mention in your general background, coming from Turin, trying to understand the real practical problem and the academic environments.
You can take away from Tsinghua. Tsinghua is a university that has much involved in how to use the academic relevant as a part of the improvement of life of people living in the country and in the cities.

3.4. “The project”

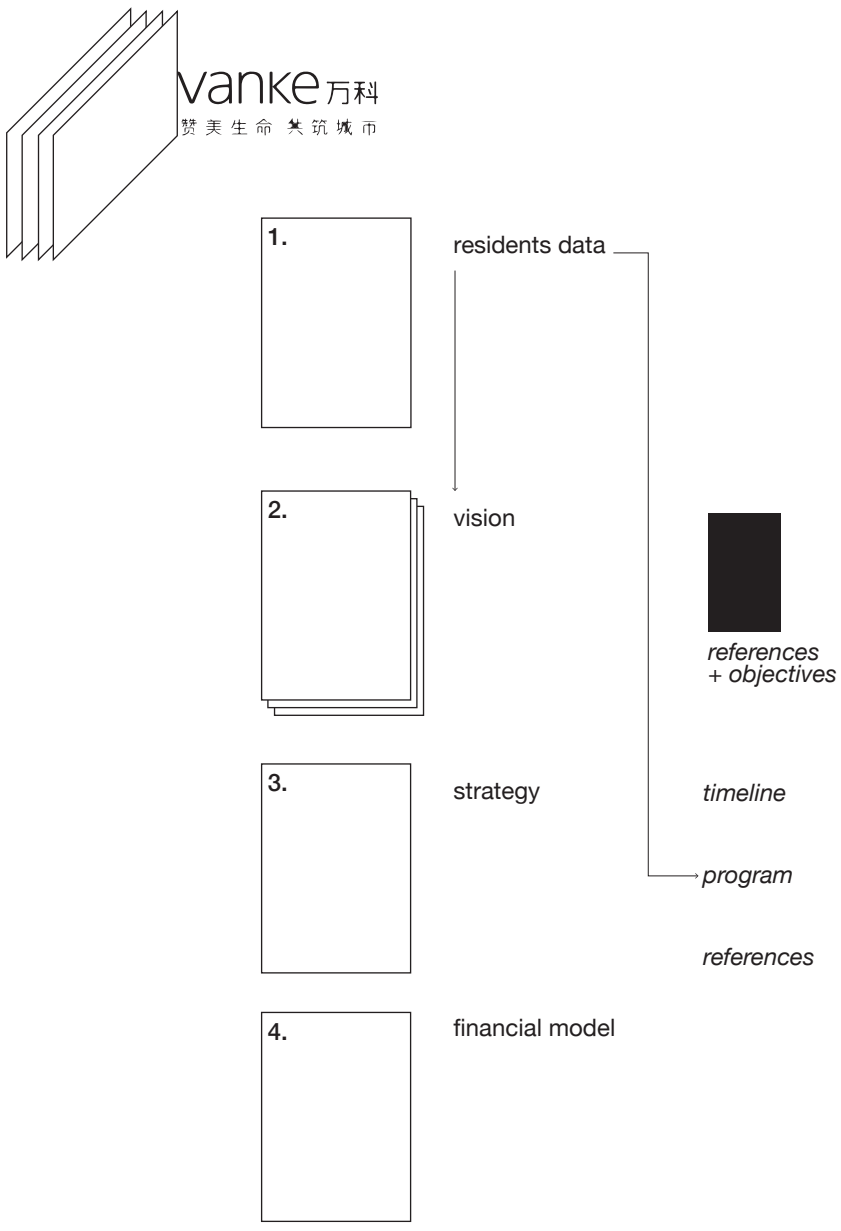


Figure 3.7.
De-costruction of the elements
that made Vanke’s Brief

36. Participation, indeed, is a problem of “rapresentation”, of those who emerged and are reflected in the proposal; and as it happens in politics, it is deeply impossible to obtain an overall consensus. There are examples of the ideology of participation that constitute important cases in design in recent decades, as in the case of Giancarlo De Carlo. In the project for the Matteotti neighborhood in Terni, a virtuous example of a participatory process, which sees the architect including user-clients in the construction of the project. However, by De Carlo’s own indirect admission, in the end the architect has to make an operation of synthesis, of re-aggregation of the parts. Thus, participation also presupposes that there is a representation at stake that must be translated and explained, through a pedagogical operation, to a set of interlocutors (subjects who exchange representations that must therefore be convinced, enlightened, to whom something must be revealed: all terms placed within a dimension of persuasion)...

Giancarlo De Carlo, L’architettura della partecipazione, 1997

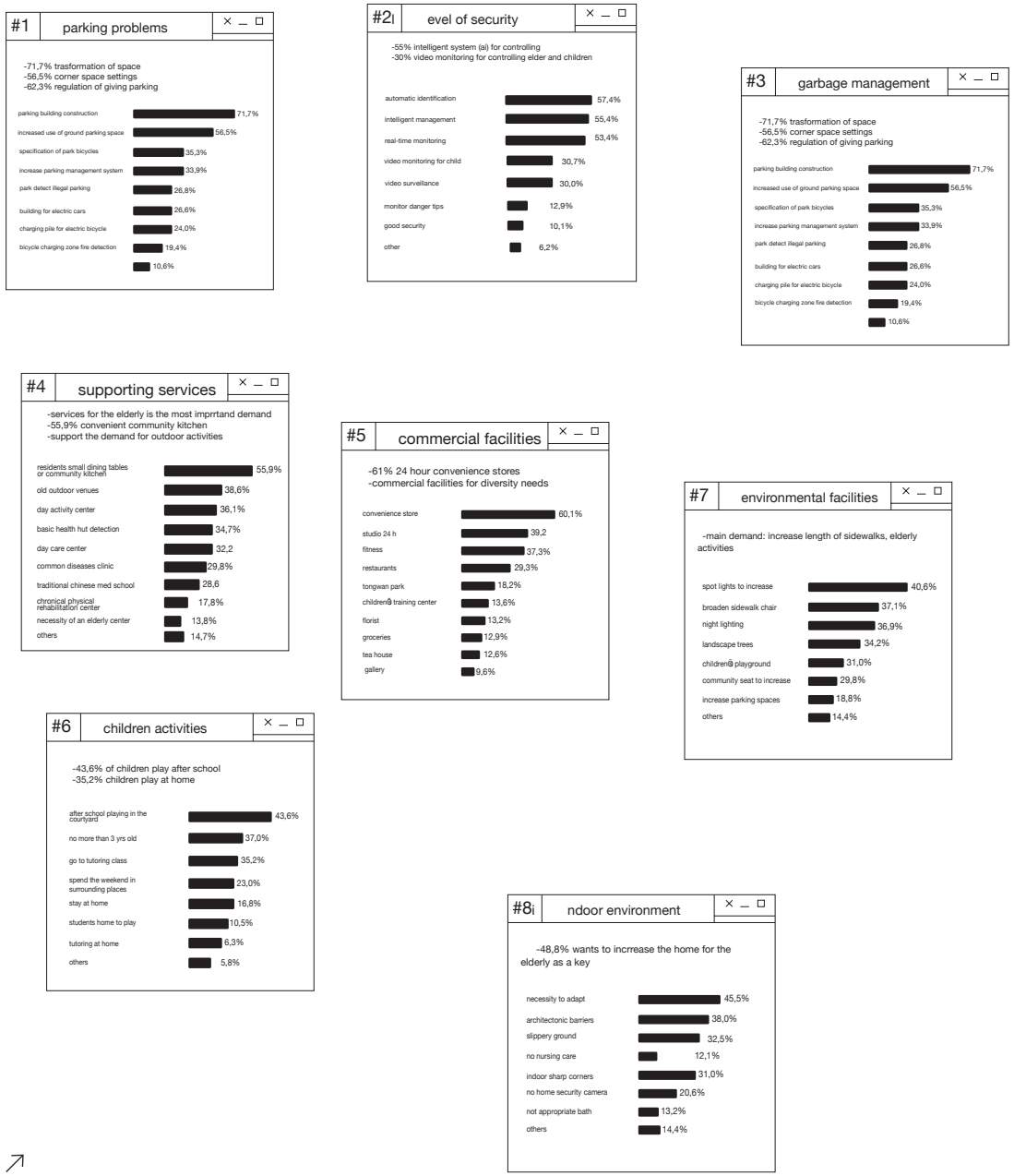
The first point of departure, after a procedural reconstruction of its history from an interview, we then dive right into the project dimension, which is still unknown and not entirely clear. Due to lack of direct exchange with clients, it is decided here to consider the constraints and possibilities from the presentation document drafted by Vanke, in November 2019, before the start of the project. Especially, we will unfold here two elements: the vision (or the promise) and the specific brief (or the client request).

[In architecture, a brief is a statement of a client’s requirements, which form the basis for appointing an architect. The brief describes the requirements that need to be reconciled and accommodated, and is developed first as a design which is submitted for approval, and subsequently constructed as a building or other structure. A brief is a written document that might be anything from a single page to a multiple volume set of documents. The term program is often used today, in conjunction with, and in part as a synonym of, an “architectural brief”. (O’ Goorman, 1998)]

The apparently logic which led to the construction of the framework starts, according to its narrations, from residents data collection, through an online questionary posed by the Community Committee. Since China is the Big.data company, it is quite common that everything starts by collecting people desires. However, we might criticize this point. A very participation process moves from the assumption that residents, inhabitants and all the population is involved into the different steps of the projects; therefore they are the people who co-design the space and in that case architects act as facilitator; here it is not the case. Rather, Residents’ opinions are deeply filtered by some specific questions (car parking, elderly facilities for example) and they are the ingredients from which defining a brief: made of a vision (the promise) and the strategy. (a timeline, a program and, in that case even some architecture reference: yes the client have a deeply clear idea on the appearance of the space[36].

Here, the strategy is deeply defined;
Vanke set an implementation development which is made by three main phases, between architectural intervention and security installment and Artificial Intelligence according to Smart Cities systems.
Phase 1: is related to the Ministry Area
Phase 2: is concentrated in the remediation of main public spaces systems
Phase 3: see the birth of a parking multistorey building
The time is not specified, however, since the Developer can manage at least for 50 year a residential community, we need to consider a span of 10/15 years.

3.4.1.Residents'data

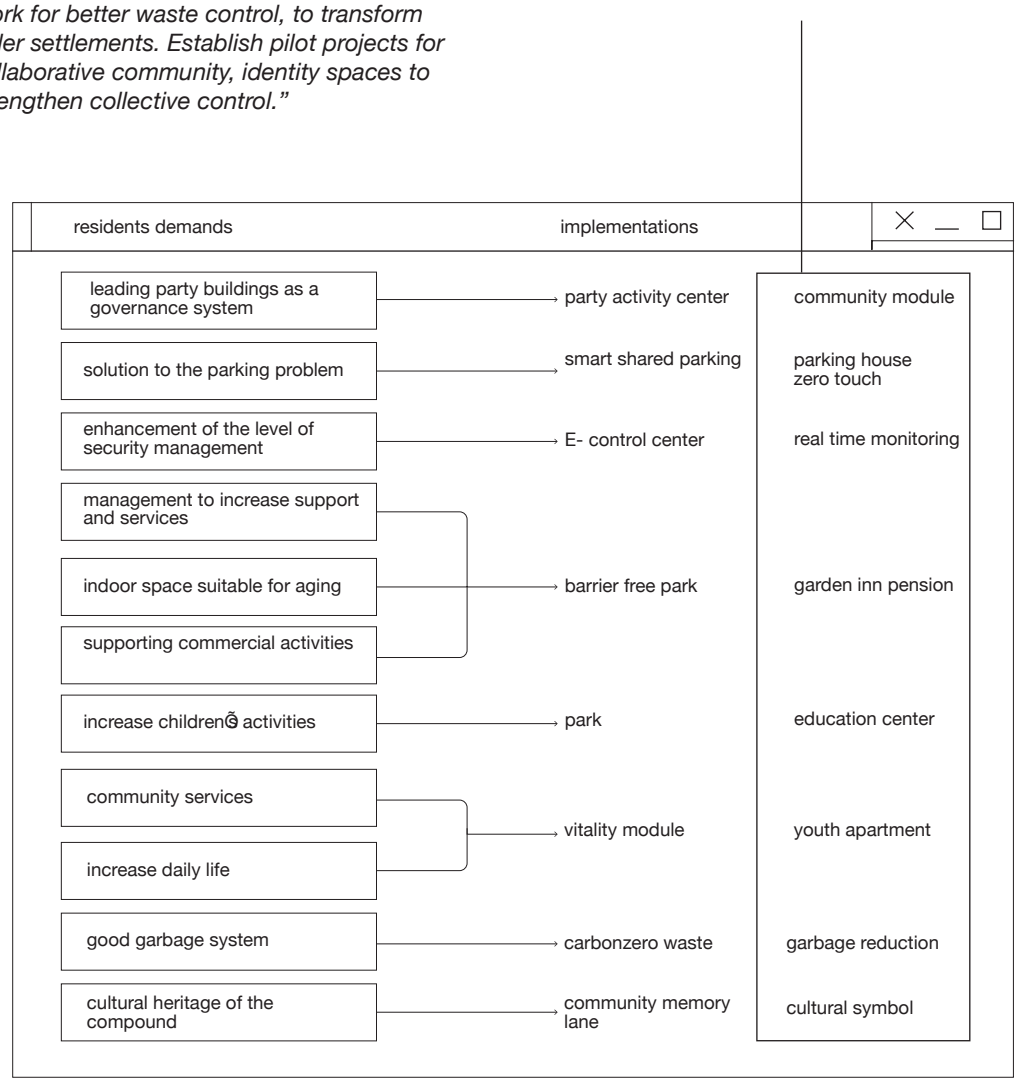


↗
Figure 3.8.
Residents' need: graphic visualization of the data collected

Minister Wang Menghui's speech:

"Encouraging the construction of better, more inclusive and sustainable environments. Work for better waste control, to transform older settlements. Establish pilot projects for collaborative community, identity spaces to strengthen collective control."

FINAL PROGRAM?



↗
Figure 3.9.
Residents' need: final outcome as a program

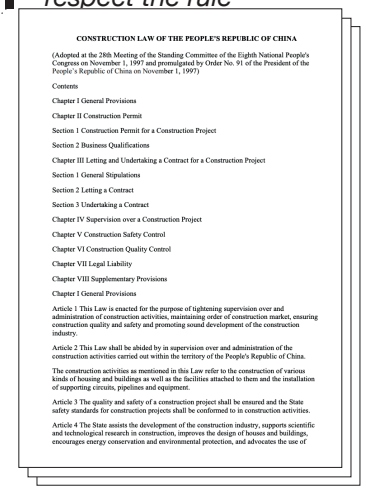
3.4.2.Vision

Figure 3.10.
De-construction of the elements that defined the project promise, or vision, the branding image that Vanke is wishing

1 *“live in order”*

“build green” 2

3 *“respect the rule”*



CONSTRUCTION LAW OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

(Adopted at the 28th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Eighth National People's Congress on November 1, 1997 and promulgated by Order No. 91 of the President of the People's Republic of China on November 1, 1997)

Contents

Chapter I General Provisions

Chapter II Construction Permit

Section 1 Construction Permit for a Construction Project

Section 2 Business Qualifications

Chapter III Letting and Undertaking a Contract for a Construction Project

Section 1 General Stipulations

Section 2 Letting a Contract

Section 3 Undertaking a Contract

Chapter IV Supervision over a Construction Project

Chapter V Construction Safety Control

Chapter VI Construction Quality Control

Chapter VII Legal Liability

Chapter VIII Supplementary Provisions

Chapter I General Provisions

Article 1 This Law is enacted for the purpose of tightening supervision over and administration of construction activities, maintaining order of construction market, ensuring construction quality and safety and promoting sound development of the construction industry.

Article 2 This Law shall be abided by in supervision over and administration of the construction activities carried out within the territory of the People's Republic of China.

The construction activities as mentioned in this Law refer to the construction of various kinds of housing and buildings as well as the facilities attached to them and the installation of supporting circuits, pipelines and equipment.

Article 3 The quality and safety of a construction project shall be ensured and the State safety standards for construction projects shall be conformed to in construction activities.

Article 4 The State assists the development of the construction industry, supports scientific and technological research in construction, improves the design of houses and buildings, encourages energy conservation and environmental protection, and advocates the use of

4 *“compound culture”*

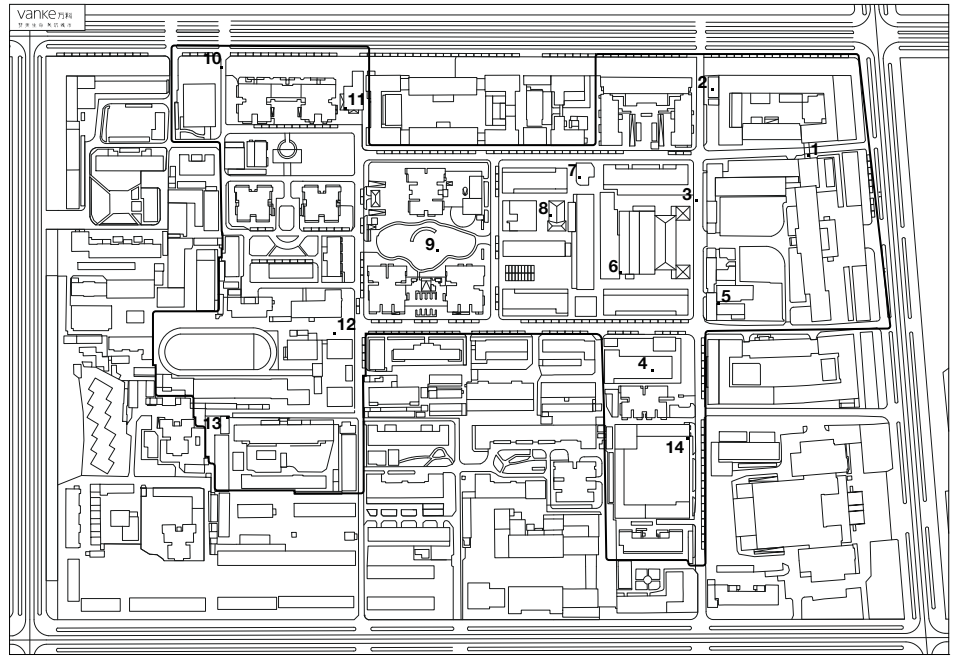
3.4.3.Strategy

phase 1 → phase 2 → phase 3

1. black wisdom
2. waste disposal center
3. gingko avenue memory lane
4. garden inn pension
5. league hui commercial center
6. food court

7. vitality park
8. party activity center
9. sunshine garden

10. black wisdom
11. commercial center
12. childscape
13. bookshop
14. parking house



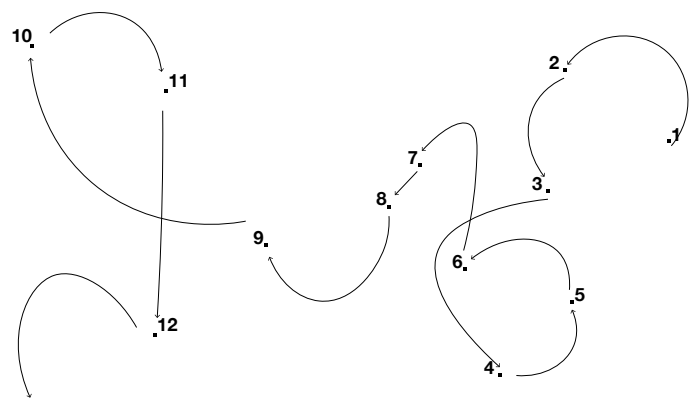


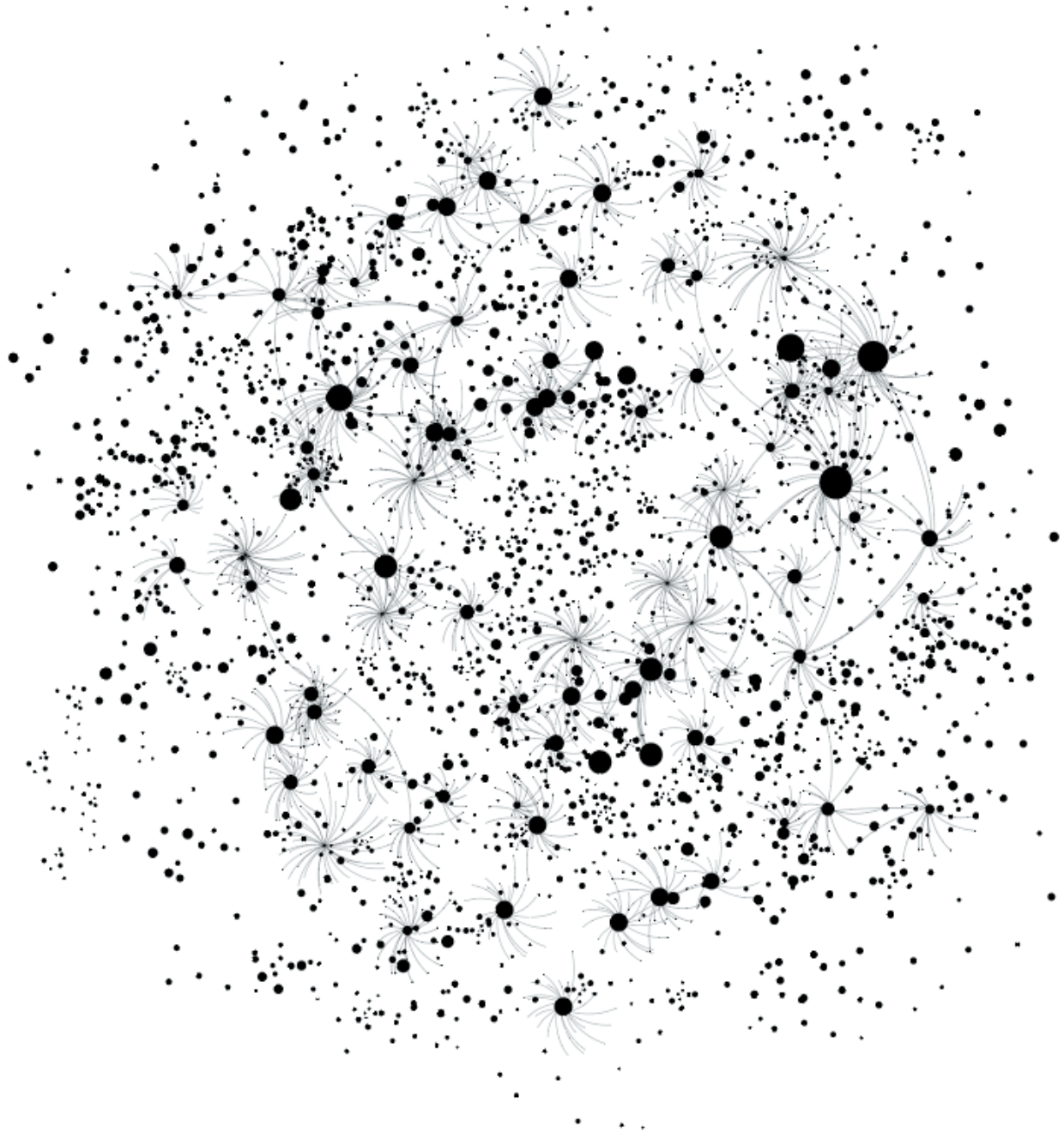
Figure 3.11.
Phases of implementation

ANNEX #1

Community Regeneration

Regeneration practice in China

Analysis conducted through We Chat tag and article to understand the debate around the topic



MAIN HASHTAG

#beutification
#repairingstreet
#sustainability
#smartcities
#trashrecycling
#parking

MAIN ACTORS

Institution
University
Government

Companies
Real Estate
Smart systems

Citizen's association
Communities
University

↗
Figure 3.12
Keywords on we chat articles
Image elaborated by using Gephi and RawGraphs, and showing the interrelation between data (which were download directly from the platform) and the number of articles. Every center represented the main topic (i.e. <<regeneration_community_beuatification>> or <<regeneration_community_repairing street).

The diagram owns a reduction: is not a spatialized map; it does not have any relation both with a physical space neither with times; therefore, it is just useful to trace the current dimension of the debate

A new trend in real estate in Beijing: the renovation of apartments

Last Updated: Wednesday, November 13, 2019 - 10:45

“According to Beijing Municipal Commission of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the renovation is part of Beijing's efforts to build a world-class city to live in. The campaign will create more green space and improve public facilities in urban districts.

China aims to complete renovation of rundown urban areas and dilapidated housing by 2020, to provide low-income urban residents with affordable housing. Nationwide, the government rebuilt 6 million homes last year and aims to renovate the same number this year.”

“Beijing renovating 5,000 old urban residential communities”

Xinhua | Updated: 2020-12-17 11:24

China renovating 55,600 old urban residential communities

Xinhua | Updated: 2022-2-17 10:24

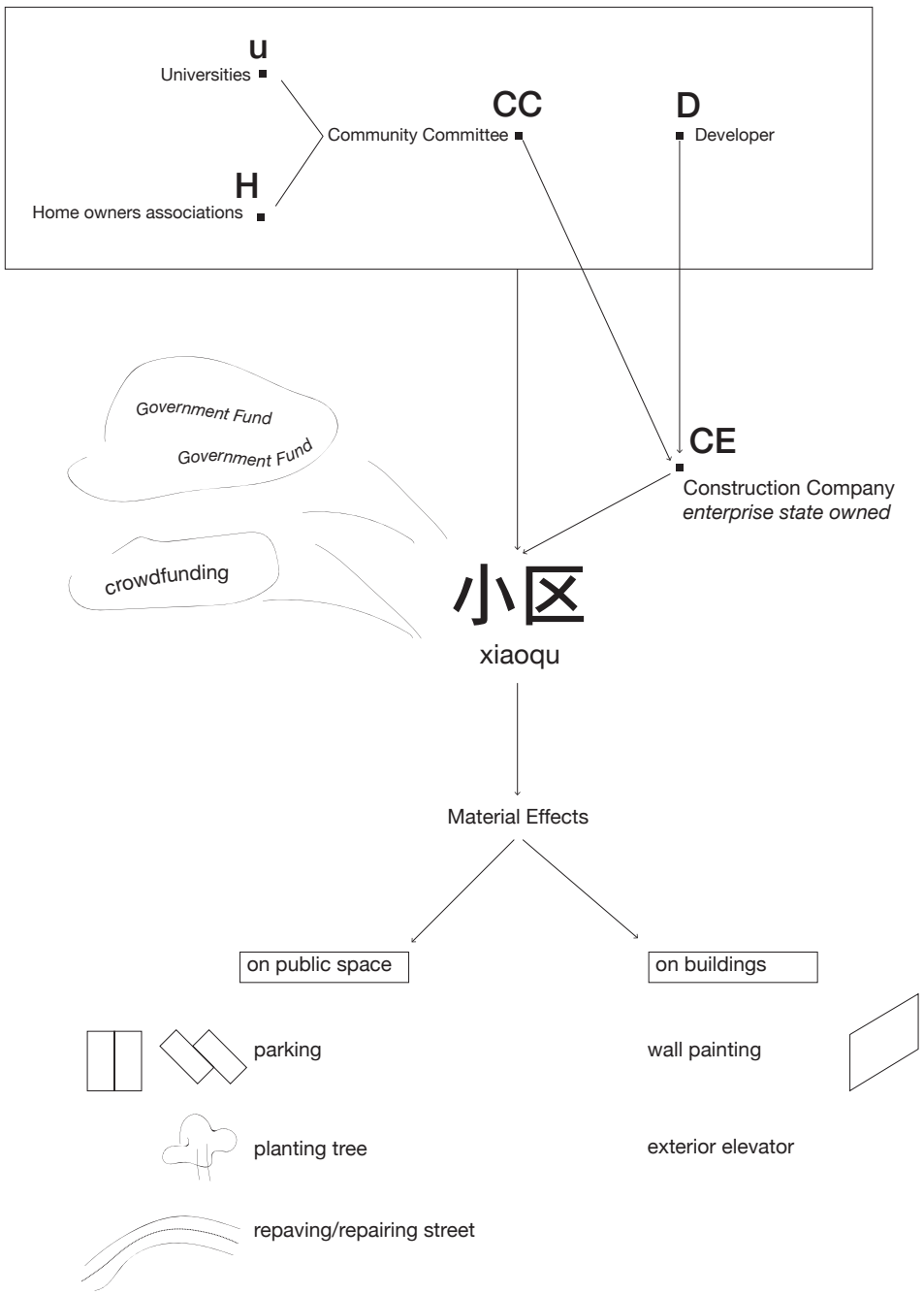
“The country plans to renovate another 219,000 old urban residential communities between 2021 and 2025, according to the 14th five-year plan (2021-2025) for public service.”

← ↖ ↑

Figures 3.12. ; 3.13; 3.14
Community Renovation

Extract from different Articles
Source:
3.12: Xinhua, 2022-2-17
3.13: Xinhua,2019-11-13
3.14: Xinhua, 2021-12-17

I.Bottom-up approach



II.A matter of keywords?

←

3.14
Community Renovation and Building dynamics, a taxonomy of relation that can be learnt from the case study analysis

We chat is the most powerful instrument for Chinese communities. It is instant message platform, but also the main platform through which people exchange idea. Basically, all Chinese life is based on that.
As this research aims to explore the current debate and the practice behind, to interpret the phenomenon of “regeneration” it was carried out a research around we chat. By searching for the hashtags of: #regeneration #regeneratingcommunities different case studies where found. What was pretty interesting was not just the huge amount of articles found, but also the variation of the keyword connected to every cases. In the diagram on the left, it is possible to trace the complexity of the article. Among them, it was created a specific categorization, which aimed to discretize the different keywords found.
It was possible to make a distinction.
The main were #beautification #reparingstreet #smarticities #parkingmanagement #trashrecycling.
Projects were mainly carried out by three main levels (that sometimes may intertwine each other). Institutions, companies, citizen’s associatins... and an additinal distinction was made between University, Government, Real Estate, Smart systems enterprises (and mobility), communities, universities...

The next pages will present some case studies, the one that attracted more attention among the huge list. Of course, as we chat is a web-platform, it was possible also to enter in touch with different realities. Some of the projects that will be listed belong to different range. It was interesting to trace some line of actions, which will be further discused later.

Also, part of the topic of regeneration will be intertwined at different scales.

Generally speaking, while dealing with the existing fabric, the main practice are related to use cultural and creative industry to regenerate. That is something easy to do in the case of Hutong or historical district (as it happens in Europe). However, while dealing with gated communities the situation is pretty different.

01 CPTED - Based Community Transformation Program
Reconstruction Design of Changshouyuan Community in Chengdu

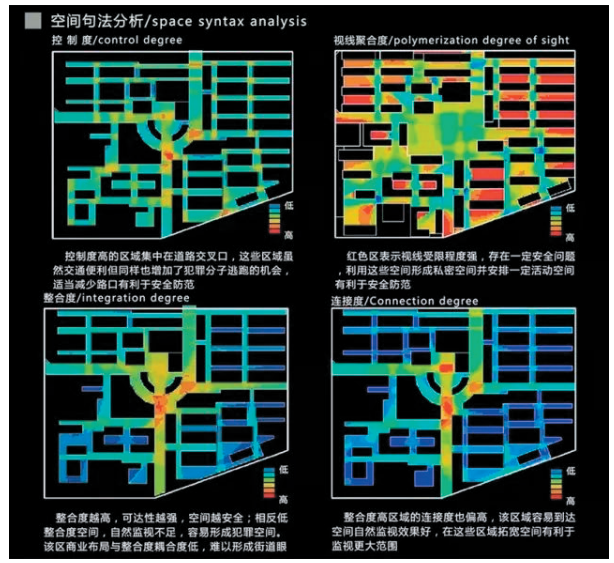
Article:
LAF Frontiers of Landscape Architecture *2016-12-28*
"The 12th National College Landscape Architecture Graduation Works Exhibition LA Pioneer Award"

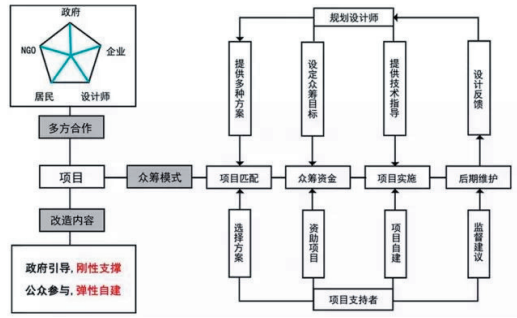
Authors:
Wen Jinyan Chen Kai Yan Xuexin Luo Liangxu Luo Yan in collaboration with the Chengdu University Design Institue and the Sichuan Agricultural University

Problems:
Changshouyuan is a community located in Wuhou District, in Chengdu built in the Eighties and with many security problems. The area is lacking the basic servicies and activies.

Action/Methdology:
Through a space syntax analysis driven by Gis maps, the "crime analysis" was conducted by using some data. Through a manipulation, was posisble to highlight how adding such as "greenery" and "control access" can limit the flux.
The proposal aims to solve the crime prevention through environmental design theory (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, CPTED), which further proposes that crime prevention measures might include six elements such as field strengthening and access control, and implementing them into space design is space division , road reconstruction, street shaping and other aspects.
The project is supported by a specific pattern model framework *of cooperation among the different actors* (government, organizations, enterprises, designers, residents). The government first formulates the community planning, then the public participates, with a crowdfunding action to complete part of the action in the public space. Then the developer helps providing extra funds and technical support for the project; here the designer enters.
The resiliency model includes the transformation of a public plaza, two streets, four community gardens, four community micro-centres and multiple courtyards. The proposal aims at removing the fences, by treating the street as "concave and convex", on the one hand, the entry and speed of vehicles were restricted, and on the other hand, a rest platform was formed to increase the number of stalls. The surveillance function of the street forms the street eye.
The action within the public space strengthens the domain of the space, encouraging a nautral surveillance.
In addtion, it is proposed an online service platform named "community online microcenter" for the community management, the security, parking management, interactions..

https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/NeMKSL2njSGrCNl-Q42ZRUA





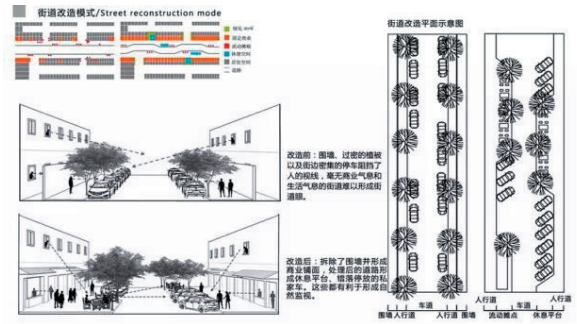


Figure 3.15
Masterplan

Figure 3.16
Online management platform

Figure 3.17
Section of the new parking

Figure 3.18
Gis Analysis of the flow

#repairingstreet
#parking
Agriculture University Led Pilot-Project

02 Micro Update Case
Financial Street Smart Fitness Park

Article:
Urban Green Renewal
2020-03-21, Zhang Yang, Zhang Xuehui

Authors:
Beijing Financial Street Holding Company, Ltd.

Problems:
The Financial Street in Beijing was waiting for the redefinition of the public space for a long, after the 2008 urban master-plan released by SWA Landscape Architect. The proposal aims at creating a smart fitness park for workers of the area and to promote electric vehicles (whose enterprises sponsed the whole project).

Action/ Methdology:
On November 25, 2019, the Financial Street Smart Fitness Park was completed. The fitness park consists of a rubber jogging track, a smart trail punching pile, a smart trail large screen, and a 100-meter smart racing track.

Among them, the 100-meter-long smart racing track has become a big hit in the park, but who would have thought that this track was originally just a dull ordinary street!

As we all know, there are many high-rise buildings around Financial Street , and the development and construction of a large area of green open space is difficult and costly. Therefore, the fitness park has been “ micro-updated” in the original street green space, adding new functions to the green space. In this way, the originally dull green space has become a good place for white-collar workers and residents to digest their food after meals . The vitality injected into the city by such a smart “micro-update” is clearly visible . Today, I will follow the author’s cartoon first cloud. Check in on this 100-meter interesting street, and when the epidemic is over and spring flowers bloom, bring your family and friends to the Financial Street Smart Fitness Park to check in!

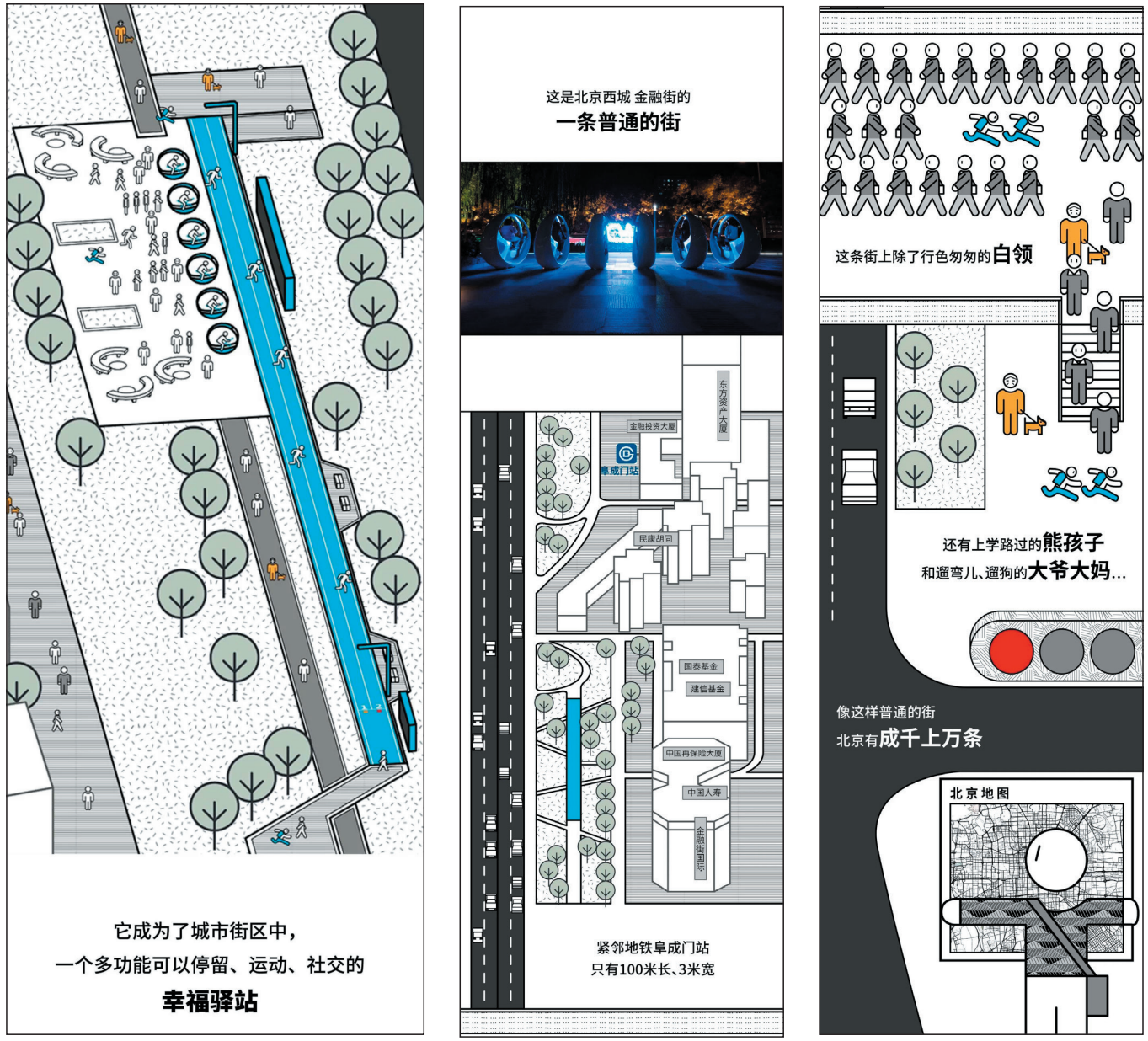


Figure 3.19
Project Vision and its “propaganda”

#beuatification
#repairingstreet
High-tech company

03 Big Fish
Xinhua street community building

Article:
AAAPLUS
2021-03-96, Zhang Yingjing

Authors:
Big Fish Construction Party
Anshun Greenland, Xinhua District Community

Problems:
Regenerating community through participation

Action/ Methdology:
The first acquaintance with big fish construction began in 2018, during the 2018 Urban Design Festival. Under the vision of “creating a Beautiful Xinhua” the urban micro-renovation and renovation design of some vacant buildings was achieved. People start feeling part of the community. What makes all this change, apart from the designers who participated in the micro-update, is inseparable from a group of “translators” - the efforts of “Big Fish Creation” (hereinafter referred to as “Big Fish”), who collected extensive collections in the early stage of design. It collects the opinions and wishes of the community residents about their living environment, and transmits this information to the designers, so that the designers can use the means of design to solve the “pain points” of the community, played a role of listening to the voices of the community residents, and conveyed these voices to the designers, so as to play a role in the process of community micro-updates It works well, but it’s just one of the many ways in which Big Fish has built a community. In Xinhua Road Street, we planned a neighborhood publication “Xinhua Lu” to share the stories of the neighborhood. When preparing for the No. 2 “Sustainable Growth Neighborhood” in Xinhua Lu, we tried to co-create with the neighbors, allowing them to participate in the entire process of content planning, event execution, editing, proofreading, and design promotion. Through the presentation of “sustainable perspective” neighborhood stories, themed maps, community activities, etc., it tells the charming story of a sustainable Xinhua neighborhood.

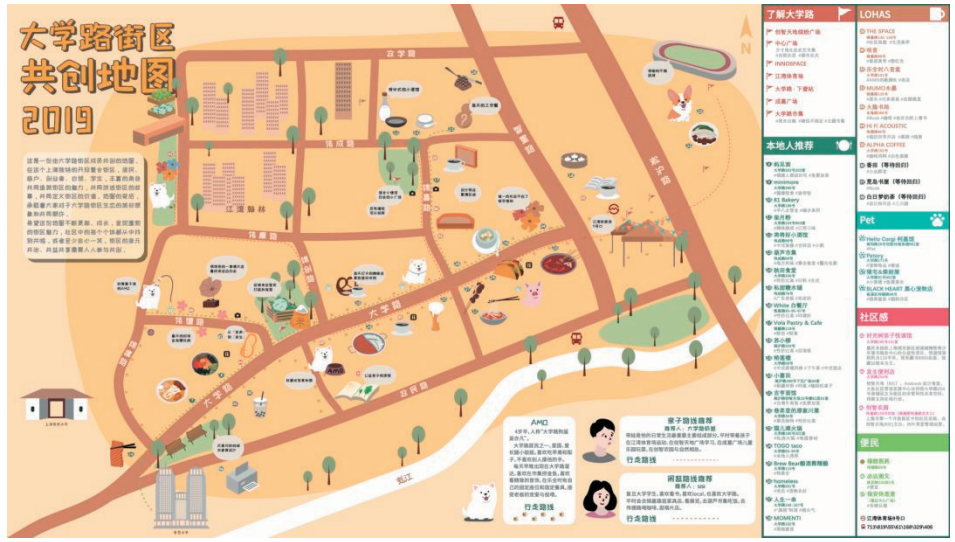


Figure 3.19
Map of the area

Figure 3.20
Photo of the Opening Event

Figure 3.21
Co-design Initiatives

#beuatification
#community
#participationdesign
Local Community Initiatives

/project
-making

4.Science in the Making

4.1
Made by the OMA
Picture by Albena Yaneva in Yaneva, A. Made by the OMA. An Ethnography of Design, 2018

4.2
" Ready Made Science " versus " Science in the Making. "

source:
Eglash R, Bennett A., O'Donnell C., Jennings S. M. Cintorino, Culturally Situated Design Tools:Ethnocomputing from Field Site to Classroom, June 2006American Anthropologist 108(2):347-362

"by following scientists (and engineers) in their practices, one could witness that science, technology, and society are continually coproduced in a reciprocal and entangled process of tuning facts, theories, machines, human actors, and social relations" (Yaneva 2022)

Any Documentation of the designer's making process demonstrates the "interplay between rationality and creativity" which expresses the interaction between creative endeavor and theoretical design paradigm.
As Plowright puts it, indeed, "any disconnection between theories and practice is impossible to be even thought of when dealing with design".
The poisoned cocktail between theory and practice can let us understand the various contours of design knowledge, and it is an essential translation operation, since it is part of design methods.

In this case, the attempt is to narrate, again by means of a simulation, the assumptions and transformations that led to the final state of an architectural project, for the mere purpose of being able to understand its dynamics, which are useful in defining a model. We rely, in this pathway, on the Dantean metaphor of the Divine Comedy, an allegoric journey towards salvation, that conducts from hoscurity to light, from dismissal to understanding of the errors committed, from evil to good, from bestiality to spirituality until the approach to god and angelic nature (his Beatrix). In our case, however, the journey will not be so divine nor, transcendental: the only reason for deciding to turn to literature as a source of argumentation arises from the proximity of the three cantica to the three themes of which the story is made up.

[I*nf.*] If **H*ell*** represents the recognition of sin,likewise unfolds our project diary, the result of continuous rediscovery and deviation.

[P*u.*] **Purgatory** is the condition, process or place of purification or temporary punishment where, according to Catholic belief, the souls of those who die in a state of grace are prepared for heaven. Here an attempt will be made to unpack the outcome of the last design proposal, assuming implementation scenarios in phases, trying to understand the implications that each of the phases entails (Le Goff, 1982).

[P*ar.*] Lastly, ***Paradise***, an enchanted place, Eden, where bliss dwells. In this part, a specific scenario corresponding to the final production will be discussed. The Edenic place of the final instant, where the project is fulfilled and remains pending. A final scenario that will be realized (hopefully) (Bosch 1453-1516).

.

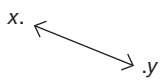
4.1. Mediation/Intermediation
Shaping the form of knowledge within the action

* "INTERMEDIARY"
ɪntəˈmiːdiəri

as a name/substantive:
1. a person who acts as agent between parties
2. something that acts as a medium or means
3. an intermediate state or period

as an adjective:
4. acting as an intermediary
5. situated, acting, or coming between; intermediate

example:
"He continues to act as intermediary between the two worlds. Rutherford, Ward Celtic Mythology (1980)"



** "MEDIATOR"
ˈmidiˌeitər

as a substantive:
a person who mediates, esp. between parties at variance

37. Louis Pasteur's on Latour as reported by Yaneva in Latour for Architects, 2022

The diffusion model is a method based on termodynamics, which Latour started dismantle.

All of the facts narrated and hypothesized here are socially constructed on the basis of a series of exchanges (in the form of dialogues, interviews, and involvements) with an interlocutor, as mentioned several times before. In order to continue in a projective exploration that is intended to be as much scientific and objective as possible, it is necessary to define the position under investigation.

The question we pose is a question of social ontology that must be read through the lens of a translation model (Yaneva 2022). What Bruno Latour introduced with the STS is a shift in conception from a *diffusion model*[37] -which sees science and technology separated from society ("an artefact") leading to a pure model made of determinism (somehow what we did in the Part II of this book were we explore through diagrams a deterministic state of the action) and a translation model, achievable by following some ongoing process in their making (Yaneva, 2022/ Latour). According to their inner linguistic terminology, translation models are referring to the deviations introduced by different actors, whose mediation "is indispensable for any action to occur" (Yaneva 2022).

Therefore, any framework of the interlocutor find its definition occurring at the difference between Intermediary and Mediator.
The intermediary, by definition, acts between two parties: he acts as a go-between in the sense that he is impartial: he has his own subjectivity, but in the process he moves objectively. In essence he is either totally uninvolved in the facts, or he has a closeness in the same way between the two parties, who, nevertheless, know and see each other.
The mediator, in contrast, has his own agency of design; the relationship is unbalanced, but is a valuable as an actor within a process. *(see Lost in Translation,by Sofia Coppola, 2003 or The Nickel Ride, Robert Mulligan, 1974.)*

In conclusion, the knowledge and the position we reflect is deeply filtered from the position of a mediator, who helps us simulating the process in the name of its situatedness and its definitions.

INFERNO

[I*nf.*]

Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.
Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say
What was this forest savage, rough, and stern,
Which in the very thought renews the fear.

Inf, I, 1-3, La Divina Commedia

↗ **Figure 4.3.**
Gustave DoréThe Hell, Dark Forest, Date: c.1868, Medium: engraving

Inferno describes Dante's journey through Hell and is depicted as nine concentric circles of torment located within the Earth; it is the *"realm ... of those who have rejected spiritual values by yielding to bestial appetites or violence, or by perverting their human intellect to fraud or malice against their fellowmen*".

As an allegory, the Divine Comedy represents the journey of the soul toward God, with the Inferno describing the recognition and rejection of sin.

Borrowing such an allegory and imagining our goal to be the "successful completion" of a project (or its material effects), we could, therefore, repurpose the same narrative line.

The somehow provocative title, in strong connection with the Divine Comedy (still a hot insert, the result of the subjectivity of the authors), traces the steps of a project that continually confronts with a reality, not directly observable, and therefore the product of assumptions and consequent reconsiderations.
Inferno is the first step toward this journey, made of continuous detours. It recounts, following the lines of a self-produced ethnography, the steps that constituted the project making; deviations, but also irruptions, continuous discoveries, errors and approvals.

4.2. PROJECT DIARY

$T_0 \longrightarrow T_4$

The narrative of the time of the project comes alongside that of the time of the opera through an investigation of the design elements that have most characterized the given phase. In doing so, we borrow the concept of

1.“Tempo di progetto”
2. “Tempo dell’opera”

1.It is the period of production of the project. In reality it is intertwined with the time of the work. (Armando A., Durbiano G., Theory of the project architecture. From drawings to effects, Carocci Editore, Rome, 2017)

2. It is the period of realization/ construction of the project, which consequently becomes a work realized. In reality it is intertwined with the time of the project. (ibid.

[n]

**note for the readers:

when you see this bracket it means that something is happening: a reflection might be in progess. Indeed, we will use this graphic effort to suspend our narration and reflect upon under the lens of cognitive and philosophical theory related to the field of action. It is just a way which led us to reflect, ex-post, our operations or some elements that emerged.

Figure 4.4
Retrospective reconstruction of the diary from T0 (Reconstruction) and T4(The project) passing through each situated and simulated deviations

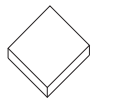
↓

scenario 0

First site' s drawings (and site understanding)

Site' reconstruction (danwei, and bibliography...)

First site's picture



T_0

scenario 1

October-November

problems (-)
-street:
parking
street direction
traffic congestion

-public spaces:
underutilized
not designed

-privacy problem:

proposals (+)

-redesign of the street

-adding more parking

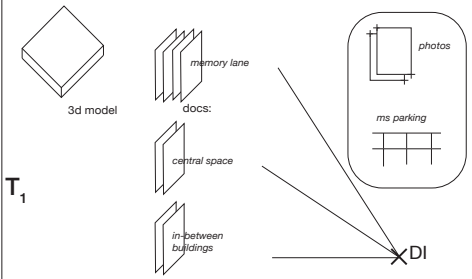
-new key public spaces

three areas
1. Memory Lane
2. Central Space
3. Space between buildings

DESIGN INSTITUTE' s comments:
weak action
there is a multistorey parking you can re(use)
you cannot work on the MOHURD soil
keep the project in line with our edges

SITE PHOTOS

// IRRUPTION_
A-there is a construction in process
B-there is a multistorey parking to reuse



T_1

T_{1+E}

scenario 2

December-January

proposals(+)

+multistorey parking (strategy to reuse it)

+phasing proposal on street parking

+new masterplan

DEVELOPER's comments:
which revenue can we obtain from a public space?

CADRG DRAWING / building to reuse

which function? which program?

T_2

T_{2+E}

scenario 3

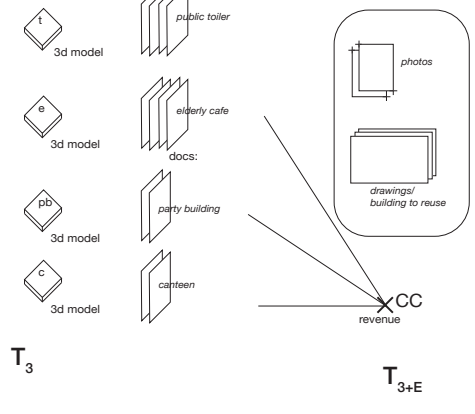
February-March

proposals(+)

+action on buildings:
canteen
boiler room
public toilet
party building

COMMUNITY 's comments:
which is the advantage the community can gain?

SITE VISIT



T_3

T_{3+E}

scenario 4

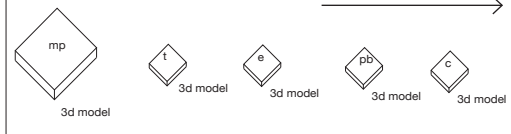
April-May

proposals(+)

+action on buildings:
canteen
elderly carer
commercial hub
party building
community center
waste education and recl.

final project

<<OVERALL MASTERPLAN>>
<<BUILDINGS>>
<<elderly>>
<<canteen>>
<<shop incubator>>



T_4

T_{0+1}

September 2021

“BOTTEGA”

It is the beginning of September, a time of the year with a drop of sadness (listen to Lana del Rey Summertime Sadness as a track while reading it..)

We are phisically in Turin, while our minds, hearts and strength are in Beijing, or at least they wish to be there.
If we might question wether this sympathy is true or not, something is certain: our project is in Beijing, and it is not started yet.

The project formally begins in July 2021, soon after the commissioning. Nevertheless, after the initial clarification and deployment (discussed in the previous chapter) we proceed with the first design explorations. The lack of an actual contract between the authors and the clients, suspends us, at least initially, from any constraints (or at least, so we believe).

Generally speaking, the first “thing to do” in the list of any architects, right after the commissioning, is the so called site visit. Most of the time, site visits take place during the first phase of a project and it offers unique learning opportunities. It is well known that an accurate site visit might prove that the actual space is lately different from how we envisioned it. There are always part of the physical experiences with a place which are generally lacking in the mere two-dimensional drawings.

The global pandemic was a contingency that totally prevented any possibilities to visit, and directly observe the site. The first approach happened to be through Baidu Maps; however, since the compound is gated, is not directly accessible and consequently it cannot be fully navigated remotely.
We did not have any drawings, nor any surveys. We start by picking an amount of photos (received between 31st August and 9th September) and employing literature as a source of comprehension (at least, for the housing typology). From reading through some of the documents made available by Vanke, mostly written in Chinese, we have been able to reconstruct, rather tentatively, the history of the area, without recounting too explicitly the concatenation of transformations, or even the reasons behind them. Yet, there are aspects that are easily guessed. The question at this point appears to be clear; what do we do with history here? The answer is easily intuitable.
To compensate for the absence of any archival documents, original drawings and any juridical evidence, we resort to reasoning by typology in order to reconstruct, at a minimum, the spatial dimension. The 3D model becomes the main element of our “bottega”, the instrument through which we can experience space, make variations, and imagine scenarios.

[2]

In the closing lines, the establishment of a very important matter emerges, which can be read under the guidance of a theory by Bruno Latour. Studying the practices of scientists, in Cogitamus he defines their laboratory through an operative description. The laboratory is the place where scientific discoveries are constructed, from which texts, documents flow out. By resorting to the antecedents of the laboratory, Latour defines the difference between Workshop (or Bottega “Artigiana”), Office (or commonly known as Laboratory) and Academy.

The construction of a 3d model, the use of aerial photos, Vanke documents and photographs received constitute our Project Workshop (or Bottega di Progetto), a fictional space, which could be our studio, our room, a miro platform, our pc, where there are materials being transformed, and practices. Borrowing the metaphor of scientists, it is the place where architects produce their inscriptions, assemble and adapt their practices.

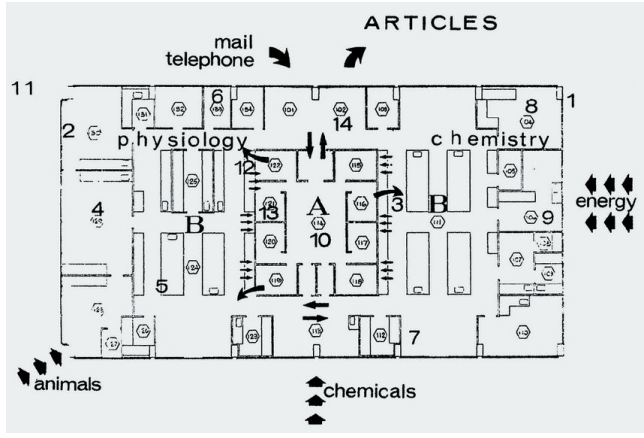
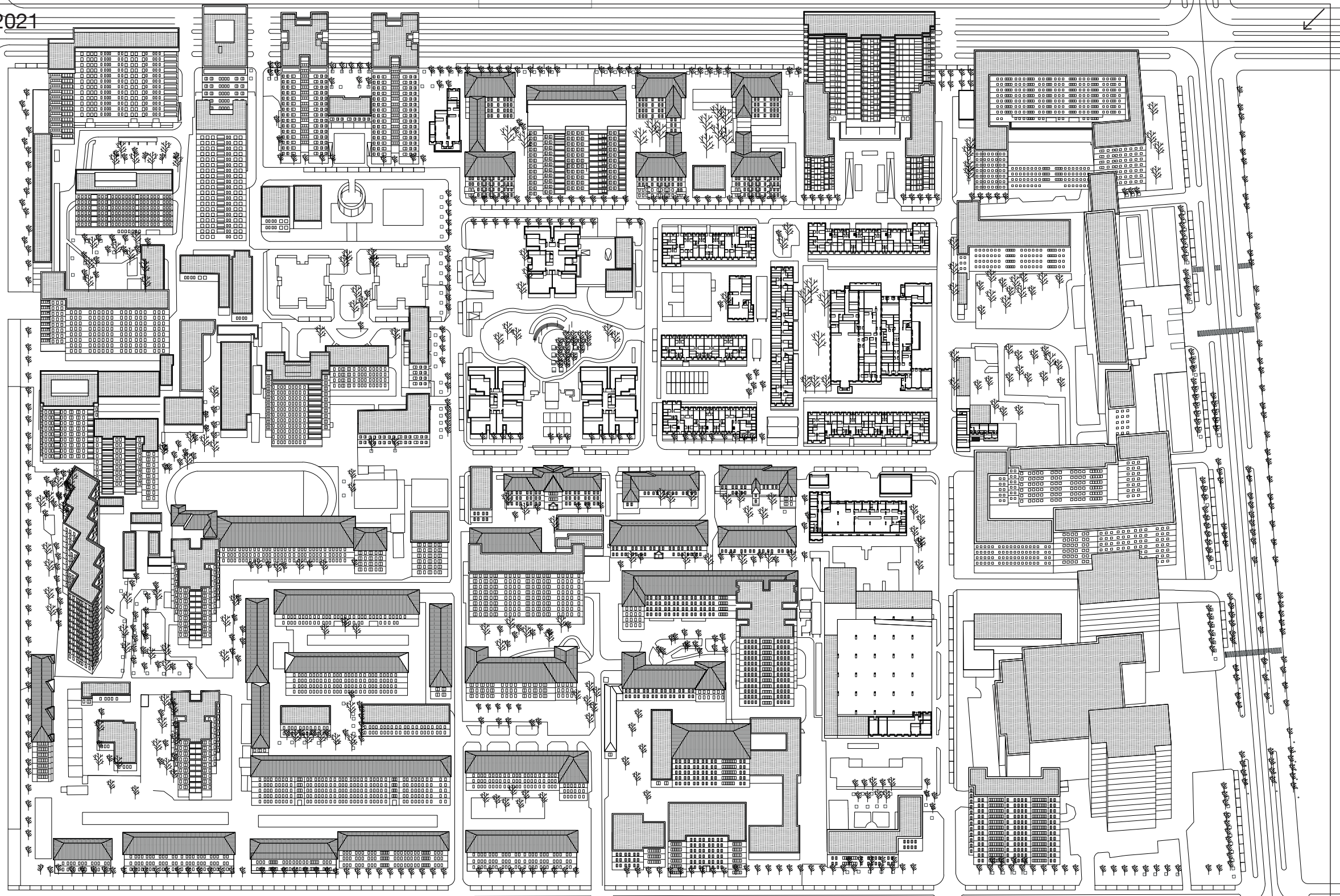


Figure 4.5
Joyce Havstad, Forty years after Laboratory Life, laboratory study, that of Latour and Woolgar's classic Laboratory Life (1979)

Figure 4.6
Monometric Axonometric /90° of the current state of the compound.
The inclination is preferred as a way to inquiry both the ground and the buildings. It is a synchronic map in terms of its re-construction; the plan of the buildings were reconstructed recurring to the traditional typology during T0 The public bulding were instead modelled in T2.

2021



Reporting from the community /A series of narrations

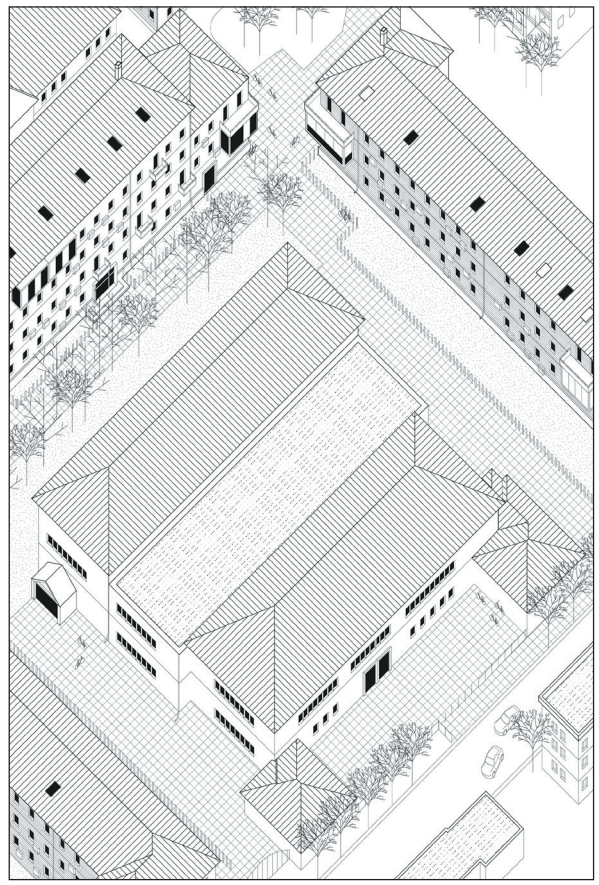
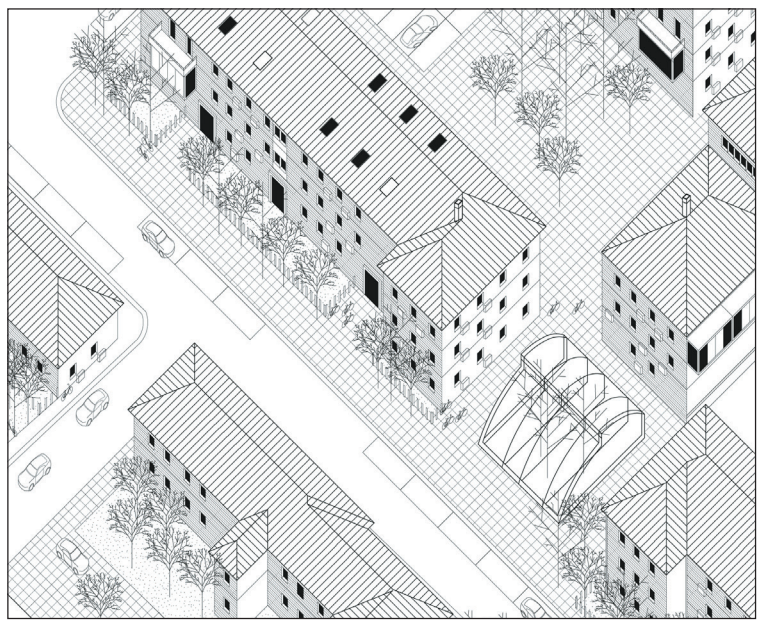


Figure 4.7
Canteen in the middle of a residential courtyard. In the while, cars are fighting for finding a parking.

Figure 4.8
Street, housing, parking and a flower shop.



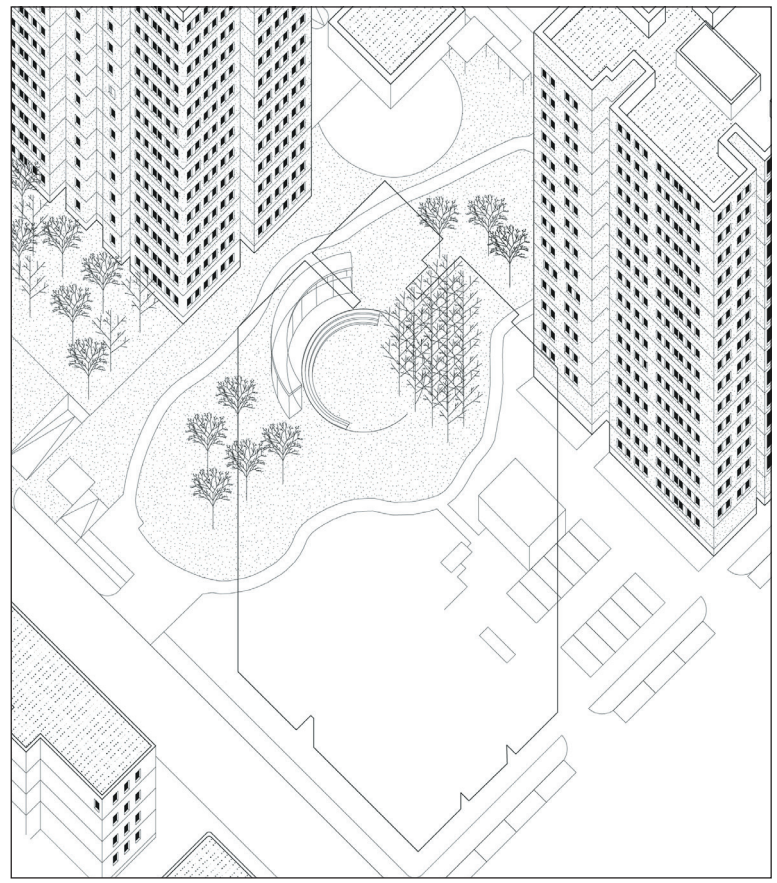


Figure 4.9
Tower and a modern public space

Figure 4.10
Residential and others public stufff facilities.. and public space

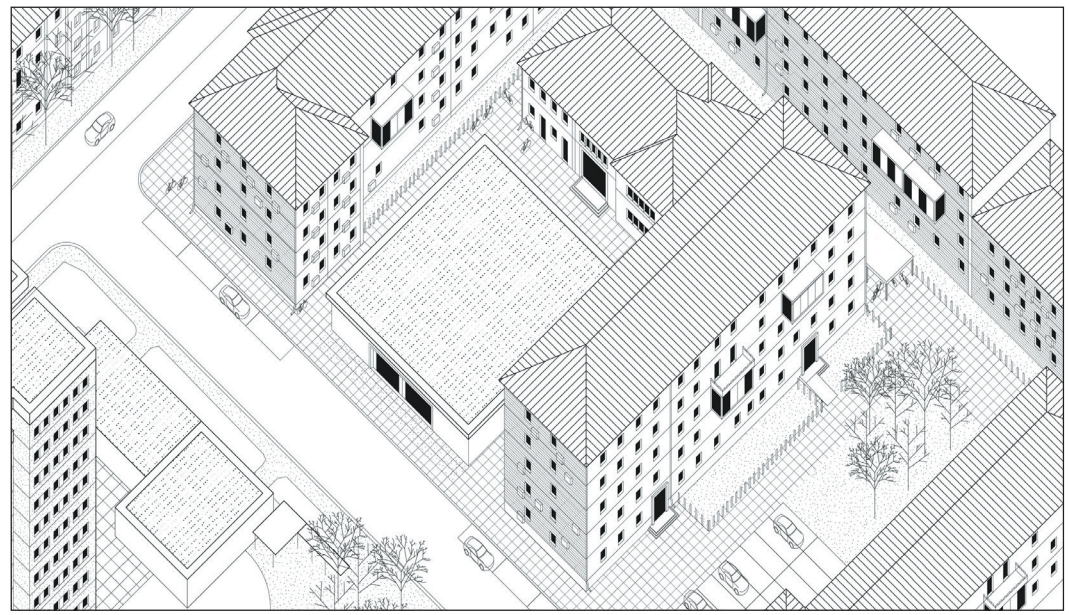


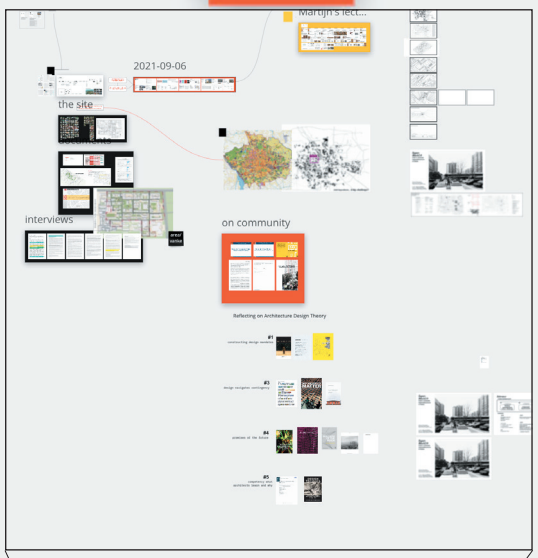
Figure 4.11
Space in front of the canteen
photo courtesy: MJS

Figure 4.12
Crowded street and
monitoring

Figure 4.13
Our Bottega/
Miroboard

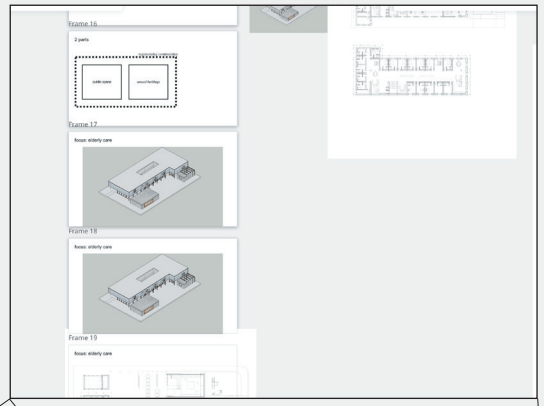
“BOTTEGA”

+data and bibliography



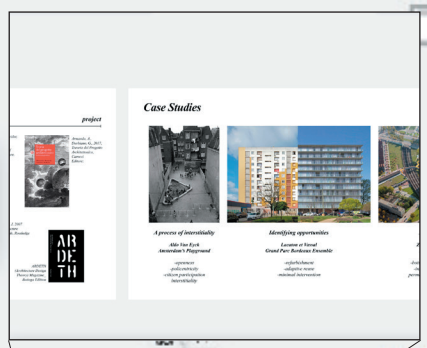
+presentation

+3d and project diagrams

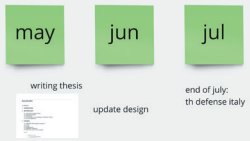


interactions

+case studies



update calendar?

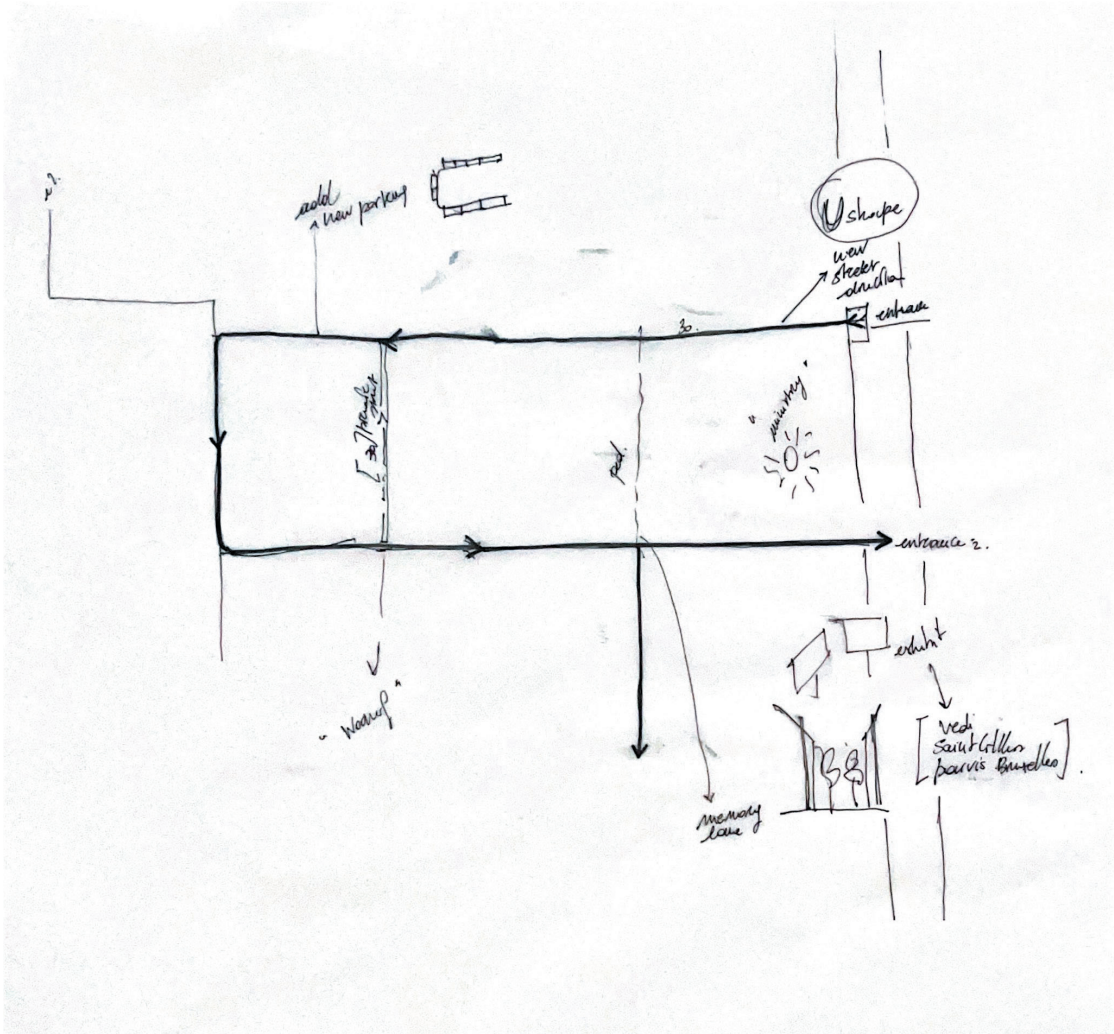


T_1

THE U-SHAPE

September 2021

First sketch:
new street direction



↑

Figure 4.14
a series of free associations/
woonerf and parvis de saint gilles
sketches of the authors

It's almost October.
We spent too much time on understanding the site, without reaching any conclusions. The project proposal does not descend from above, nor can it be the result of extreme subjectivity. Stretched between the act and the non-act, we decide to descend into the heat of our action and undertake, for the first time, a transcription operation (see drawing on the left). The first project scenario was delivered in October (2021) and was developed as a response to previously acquired information.

To do list (issues):

- **Lack of parking:**
  it appears there is a definition of areas in which to park. In addition, the streets have dual roadway, and cars are illegally parked on both sides.

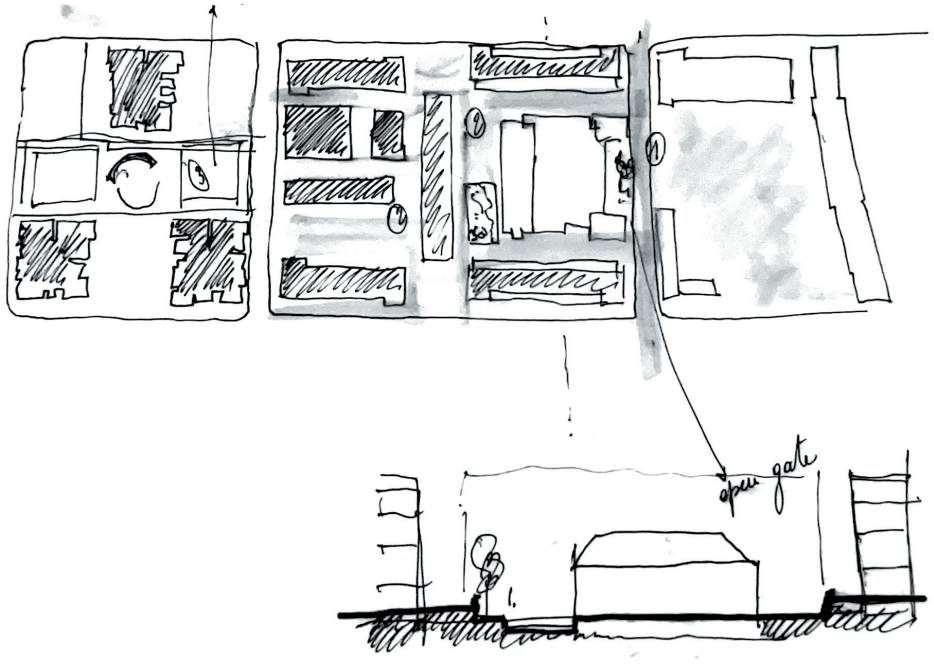
- **Poor use of public spaces, and poor equipment to community activities:**
  shows how residents spill their living dimensions into the outdoor space, which is then treated with some degree of intimacy, but without real support. The same people complain that they do not have adequate design, that indeed are unused

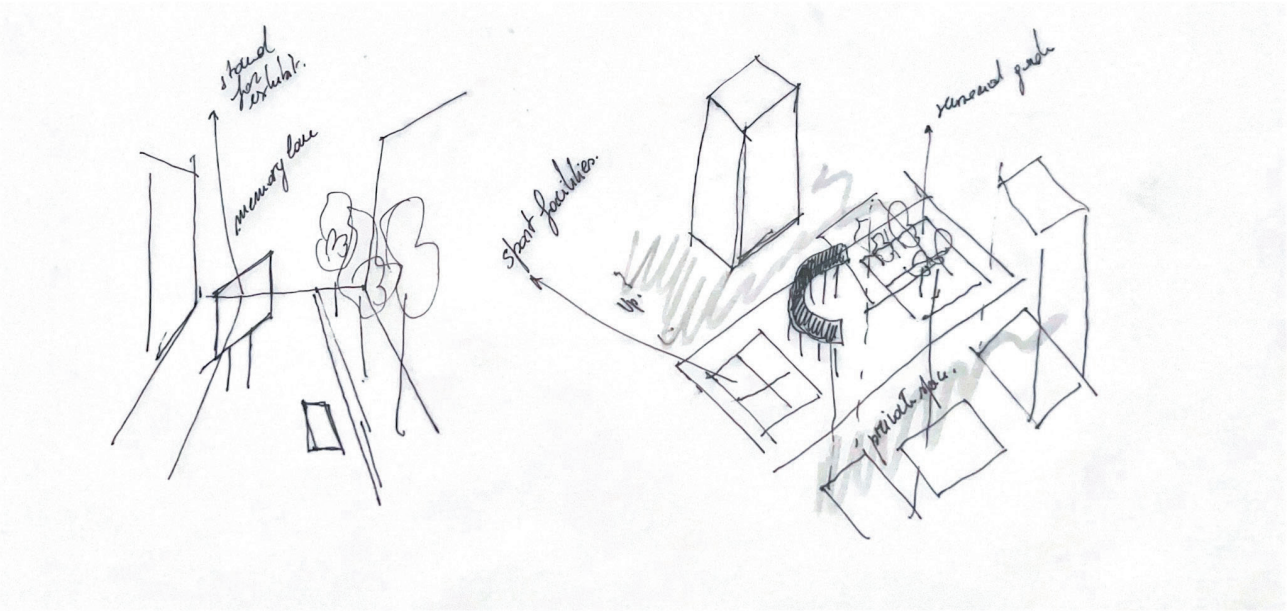
- **Privacy problems:**
  he use of the interstitial space between the dwellings affects the privacy of those living on the ground floor. The only margin of interaction is given by the gate, but this simply circumscribes a semi-public space that is scarcely utilized.

- **Situations of traffic congestion:**
  in some place, also exacerbated by the lack of parking facilities.

Starting from these demands, the first design line, the first document produced, is a sketch, which redescribes a proposed street readjustment, a collective ring. As can be seen, it is loaded with a series of projections and associations that the author freely defines, as a free association between one space and another. Indeed, designers are often able to associate one image with another that is easily understood by them and perhaps their audience.

- ~~Traffic congestion~~





←

Figure 4.15
sketches proposal of the operations

studies

Figure 4.17
strategic and potentiality chart mapping/ a spatialization of the strategic operations

Figure 4.18
Final state

↓

By acknowledging ground and soil design and minimal punctual redefinition of the street layout as the first level from which acting, the design action starts from this first concern, seeking to define the interstitial space as the platform from which to initiate a series of consecutive transformations. The course of action, moreover, weaves together the current, partially bottom.up line of regeneration proposed within other communities in Beijing, projects that are not only fostering the construction of a sense of place, but are also improving the quality of spaces, through improved spaces. Most of the projects focus on a line called "repairing street" an initiative of pilot projects, funded by the government and the communities themselves.

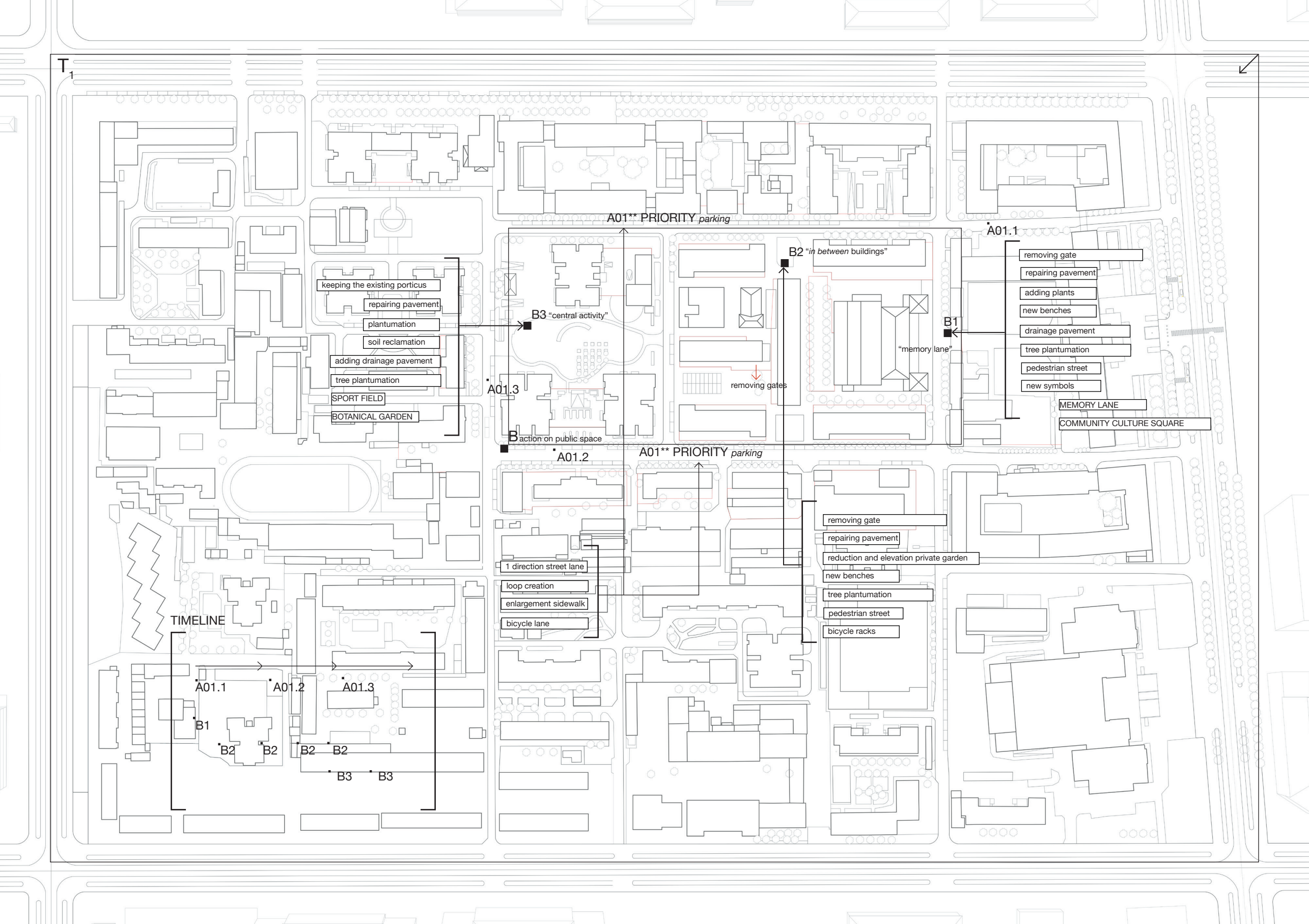
1. A street realignment:

in particular; a one-way street system will be constructed, acting as a collective ring that can serve all residences in a radial manner. The transitional street section will be redefined by adding so-called soft mobility, bicycle lanes and pedestrian paths, preserving the arrangement of existing trees, which become points from which to start.
A memory lane will be redefined in the street redevelopment in particular, pedestrianized

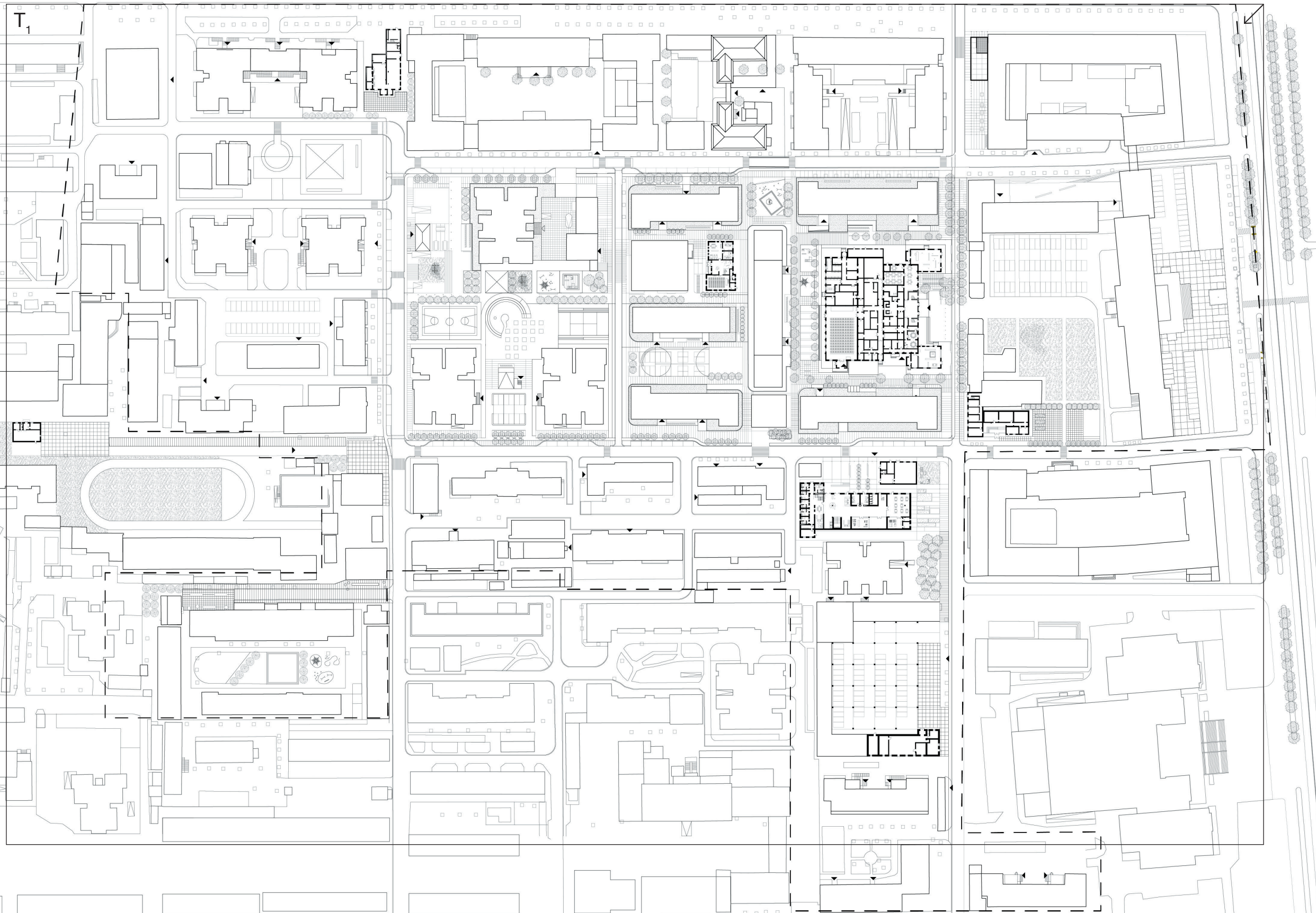
2. Alongside the street realignment the internal public space will be treated, specifically in three areas:

-community lane
-central space
-space between the houses

Action will be taken to demolish the gates and redefine the layout of the semi-public space by raising the garden level by 1 m(making it equal to the height of the second floor) so as to create a private garden for the inhabitants of the ground floor.



T1
A01** PRIORITY parking
A01.1
B2 "in between buildings"
removing gate
repairing pavement
adding plants
new benches
drainage pavement
tree plantumation
pedestrian street
new symbols
MEMORY LANE
COMMUNITY CULTURE SQUARE
keeping the existing porticus
repairing pavement
plantumation
soil reclamation
adding drainage pavement
tree plantumation
SPORT FIELD
BOTANICAL GARDEN
B3 "central activity"
B1
"memory lane"
removing gates
A01.3
B action on public space
A01.2
A01** PRIORITY parking
removing gate
repairing pavement
reduction and elevation private garden
new benches
tree plantumation
pedestrian street
bicycle racks
1 direction street lane
loop creation
enlargement sidewalk
bicycle lane
TIMELINE
A01.1
A01.2
A01.3
B1
B2
B2
B2
B2
B3
B3


T1

T 1+e

October 2021

LO SCAMBIO

We made our first attempts.
We produced some documents.
We may argue to have a project (legitimized or not).
We need to talk with someone. We need to produce effects.

The first major "symbolic" exchange, or the very first project presentation takes place at the end of October, with the same interlocutor, Martijn de Geus.
We can assume that here the role he played is more related to the Design Institute, which generally has a key agency in shaping the design process in China, since it is the entity who “regulates” and takes in charge all the element

In this occasion, we presented a general master plan, accompanied by a series of diagrams and sketches and some views.

The proposal, as well as still not so clear, is still deemed to be not very solid and site-conscious: it is not properly solved probably the parking problem, while the public space is still a make-up operation. According to his knowledge, it would probably impossible to solve all the problems, especially related to parking. The easiest solution would be to build from scratch a multistorey parking building, or an underground system. However, the precise request and the urgency to act, drives us not to add any square meters.

We were not conscious that an irruption would have arrived soon. At this precise moment, indeed, we discovered that there was an existing parking space, not much utilized, which nevertheless can be reused by installing an automatic system, very common in China, especially in dense environments. (we will proceed on that way, looking for case studies; how we, as architects, can design a complex system as such?..)

A limitation is added to the work; our action must adhere to the boundaries of the area managed by Vanke; thus the ministry part and other open spaces formally part of offices and “public” buildings are excluded.

Here it emerges a big question: *what is public and what is private?*
In this management problem can be defined, perhaps, the specificity of the context in which we operate.

***what is public and what is private?*

38. Property law in China/ Documents Lehmand, Lee and Xu legal studies

http://www.lehmanlaw.com/resource-centre/laws-and-regulations/general/property-rights-law-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china.html

Article 7
Article 39
Article 43
Article 117
Article 120
Article 125
Article 128
Article 135
Article 137
Article 146
Article 149
Article 148
Article 152
Article 153
Article 156

Property law in China | 中华人民共和国物
As a socialist country, all land is subject to government ownership or collective ownership. In principle, municipal land is subject to government ownership and land outside cities is subject to collective ownership. However, one can obtain the right to use the land. There are two types of land-use rights, the “granted land-use right” and the “allocated land-use right”. The difference is that granted land use rights are limited in time against payment, whereas allocated land use rights are usually given for free and without allocation of time. Real property rights in China can generally be grouped into three types: ownership rights, usufructuary rights, and security rights.

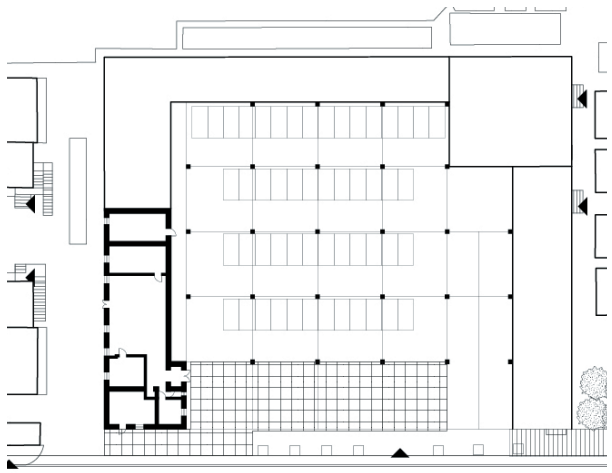
It is also noteworthy that rights to buildings and rights to land are different. In principle, rights to buildings and land must be acquired together. Because land use rights are limited in time, it raises the interesting issue: what happens to the right to a building after the land use right has expired? This is a new issue that has yet to be resolved (and we have already widely discussed in the previous chapter). The real property law will most likely be reformed in the next several years in order to clarify issues like this.

Ownership rights:
are protected under Article 39 of The Property Law of the People’s Republic of China, which gives the owner the right to possess, utilize, dispose of and obtain profits from the real property. However, this right has to comply with laws and social morality. It can harm neither public interests nor the legitimate rights and interests of others. (Article 7 The Property Law of the People’s Republic of China)

Usufructuary right:
The owner of a usufructuary right has the right to possess, utilize and obtain profits from the real properties owned by others.
The obligee may not intervene in the exercise of rights by the owner of the usufructuary right (Article 120) . There are several types of usufructuary rights. These include the right to land contractual management, the right to use of construction land, the right to use of residential housing land and easement (Article 125).[38]

↑
Figure 4.19
Photo of the parking, MJS

Figure 4.20
Guessing interior layout/
parking plan →



[3]

The value of a symbolic exchange

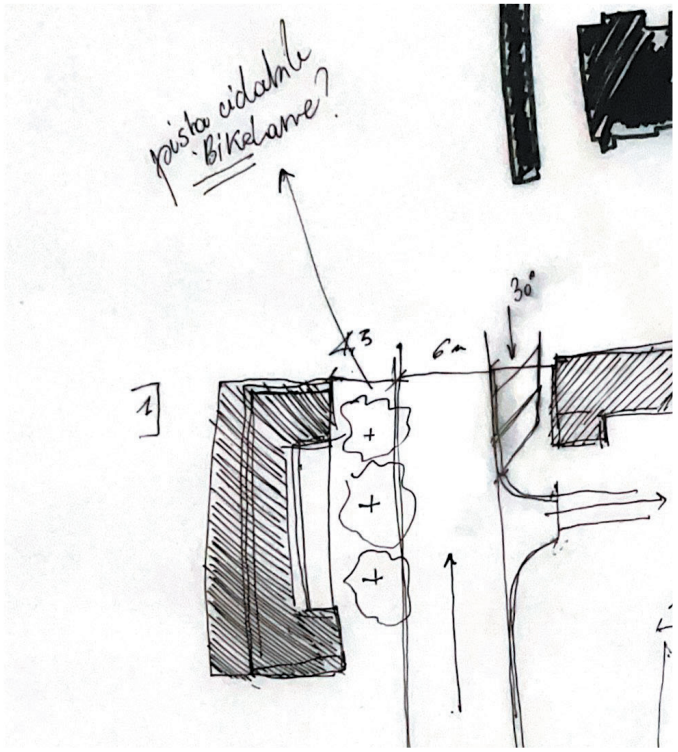
exchange
/ɪksˈtʃeɪndʒ,ɛksˈtʃeɪndʒ/
“an act of giving one thing and receiving another (especially of the same kind) in return.
“negotiations should lead to an exchange of land for peace”

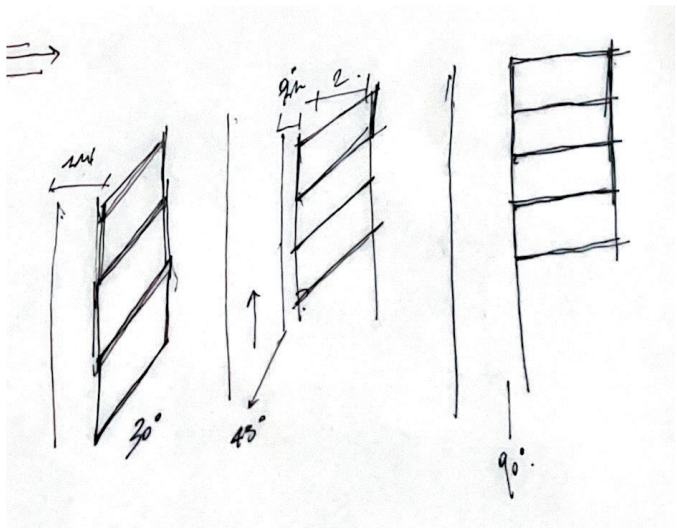
Architects try in their practice to transform social objects, into institutional objects with the power of coercive,operant. To do this requires a lot of work, not an easy thing (sketches, e-mails, files, drawings). The document cloud is made up of documents of various types, more or less institutional, more or less definitive. If one thinks not only of production but also of exchanges, the horizons widen even more. In the beginning, schematically, there is an institutional object, from which a symbolic exchange opens (one begins to talk, negotiate), probing the various conditions on the ground. This opening proceeds in a divergent direction, but from a certain point forward this divergence precipitates in a certain direction (deadlines expire, we run out of time, etc.), thus closing mechanisms are implemented, one concatenated to the other, which takes the name of bureaucratic exchange until the last institutional object. This general figure can also be further articulated, with smaller and larger issues, at many spatial and temporal scales. At the transition points from opening to closing, something happens: decisions are made. (Armando, Durbiano, Teoria del progetto architettonico)

T_2

PARKING-ROOM(S)

December 2021





← **Figure 4.20**
parking studies
sketches

↓ **Figure 4.21**
Zoom/ Studying the
specificity of traffic

十七岁的单车 Beijing Bycicle is a film from the sixth generation. Here the protagonist has just left the countryside in favor of the vibrancy of the city seeking a job. The film is set in 2001, a year when Beijing was also the home of bicycles. That is no longer the case today. And the website tells us so. Now Beijing is teeming with cars, the project,therefore, is in a "post-anthropocentric" dimension, just to speculate, where space is left only for machines.

It is clear at this point; it takes a long-range strategy to respond to a major contingency, a parking lot, or rather multiple parking lots. It is clear at this point that exploration as a masterplanner is not enough; we need to choose in detail and understand well what operations need to be put in place to solve a problem of global scope.
We will specialize in parking eventually; that is what the mere knowledge gained from these speculative months will be.

Proceeding therefore by parts, our strategy now consists of two points;
1.
The redefinition of an overall master plan, with the articulation between public and "private" spaces (B)
parking lots (A)
2.
The strategic action of the multi-story parking lot, an architectural project at the small scale (C)

In this sense, this precise sub-chapter will be named "parking rooms", in relation to the aim of the project to look for them.

T2

#1

#2

3

#1

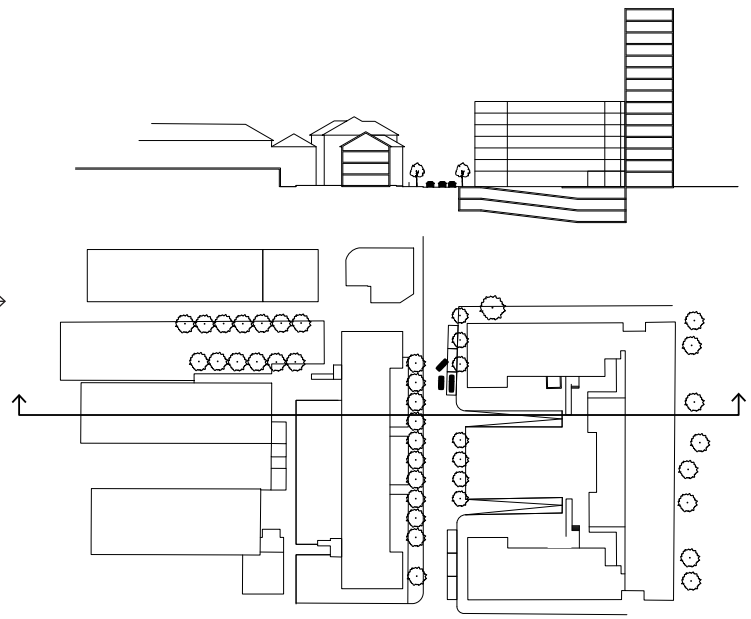


Figure 4.22
existing

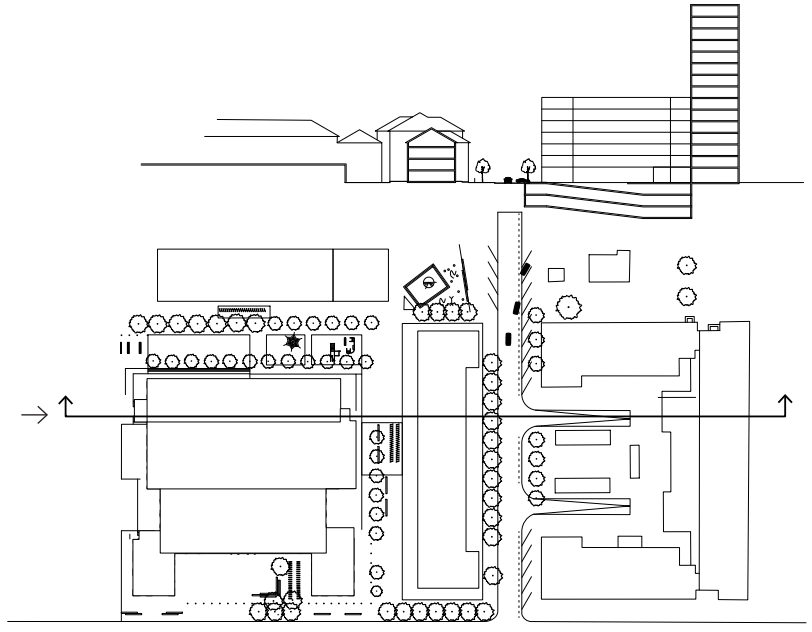
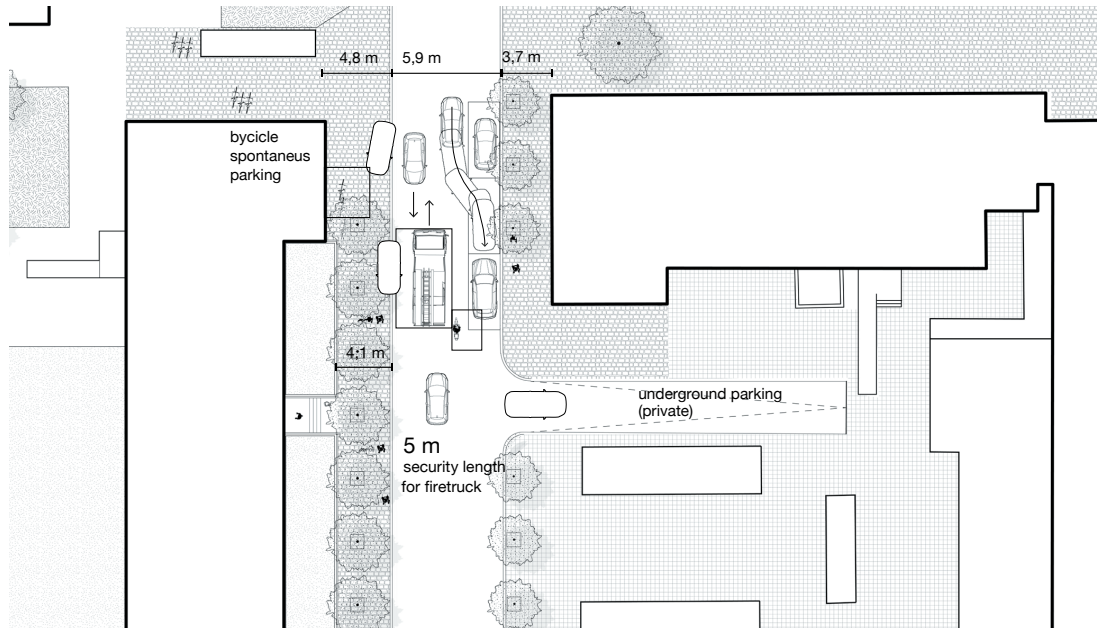


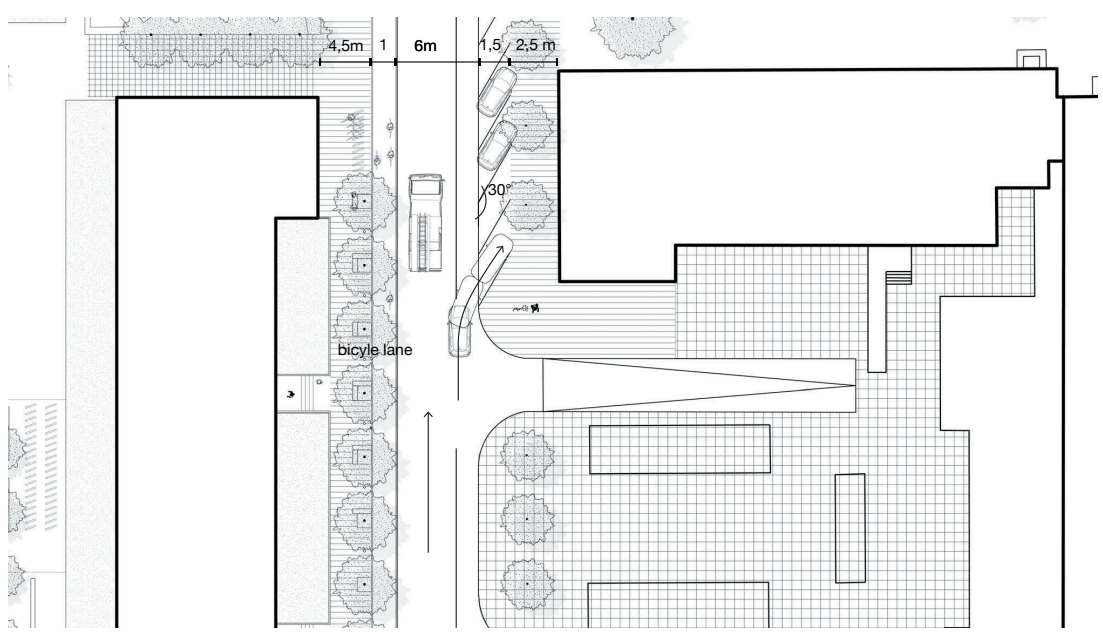
Figure 4.23
strategy

Figure 4.24
existing problems
Car congestion
Scooter
spontaneuous parking

Figure 4.25
strategy
parking 30°
bicycle lane

#1





#2

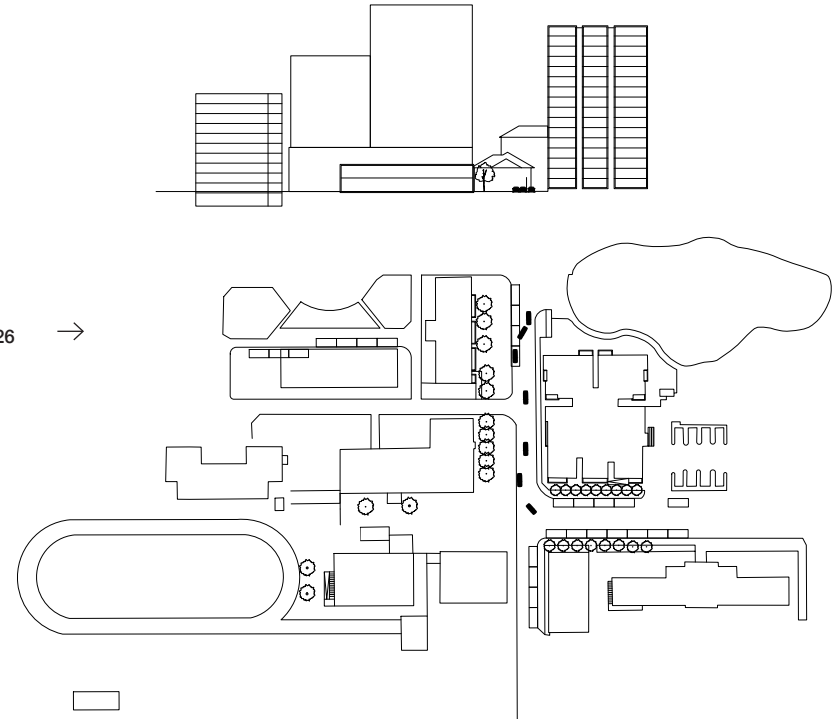


Figure 4.26
existing

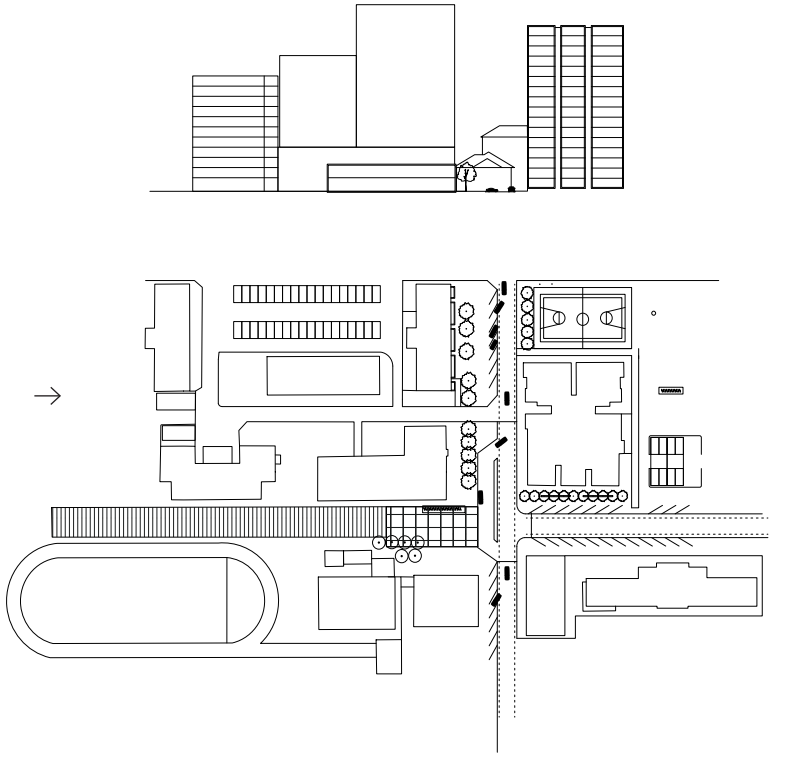
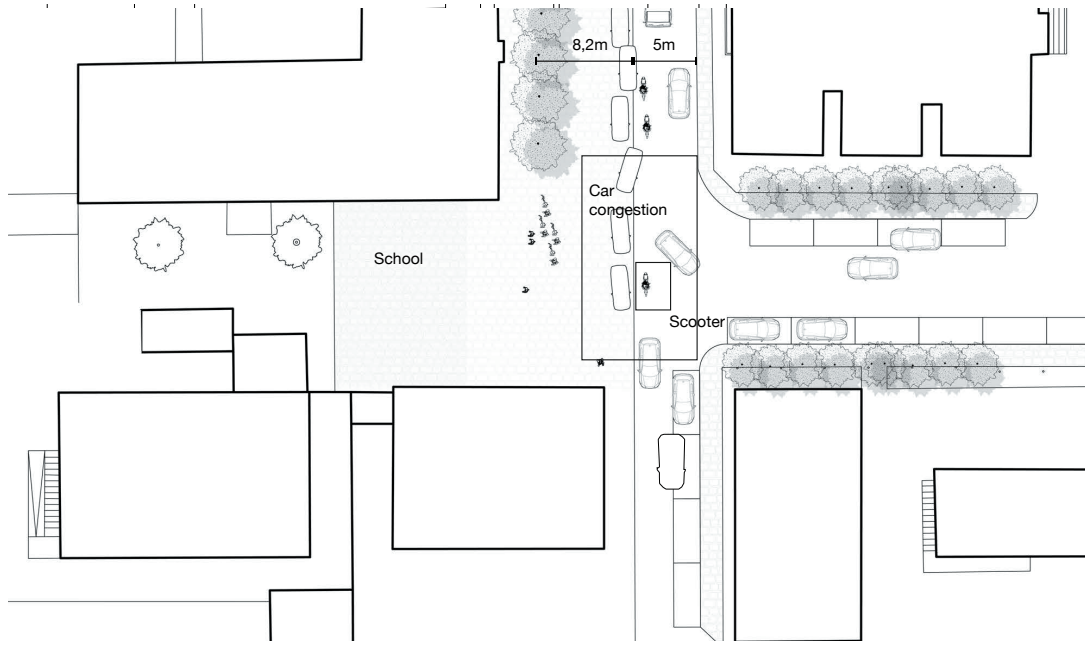


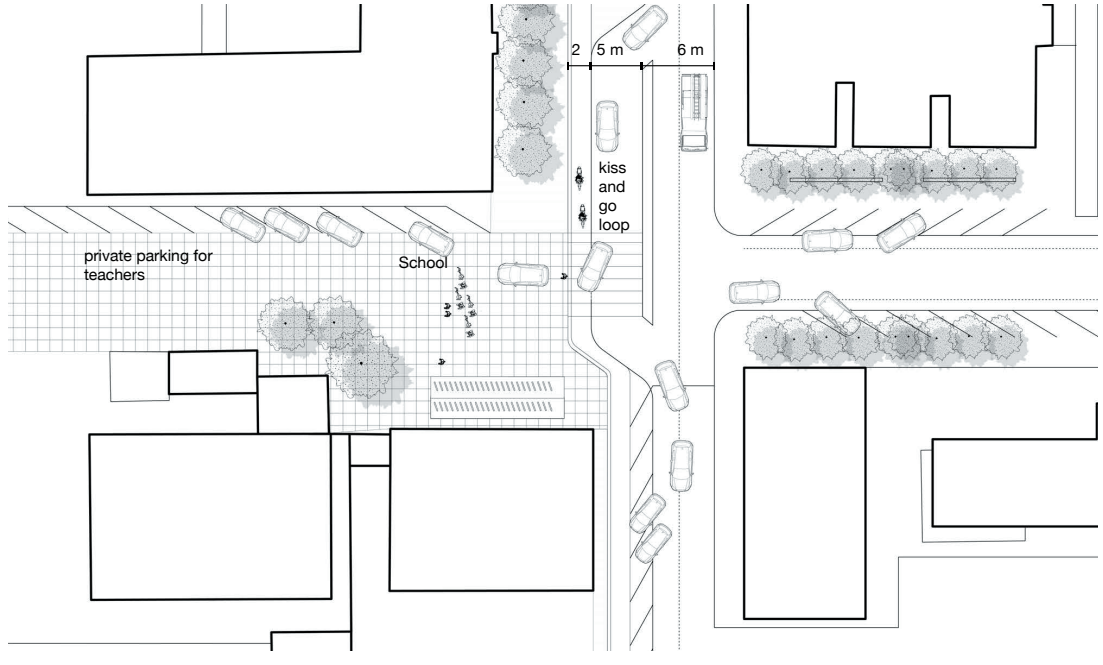
Figure 4.27
strategy

Figure 4.28
existing problems
Car congestion
Scooter
and School

Figure 4.29
strategy
Private parking
Kiss and go loop
bikelane

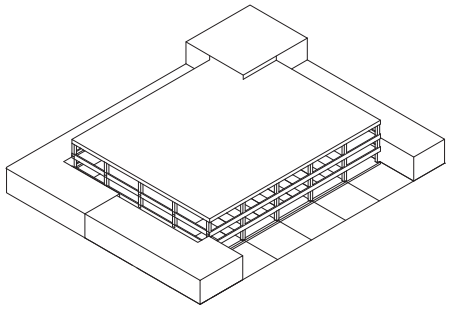
#2



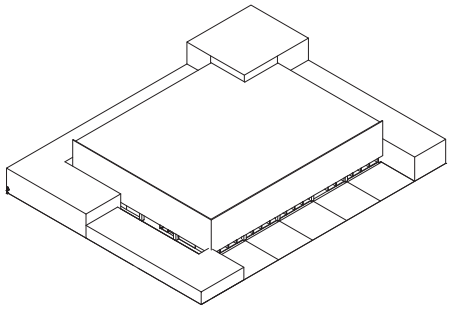


#2

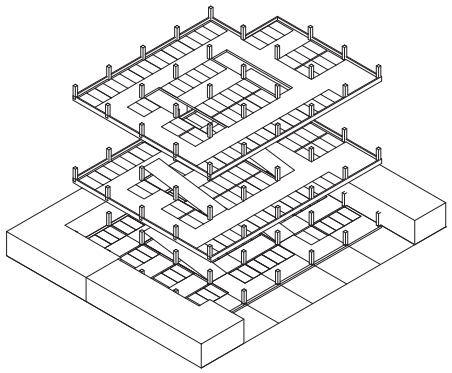
PARKING ISSUE



existing



automated parking



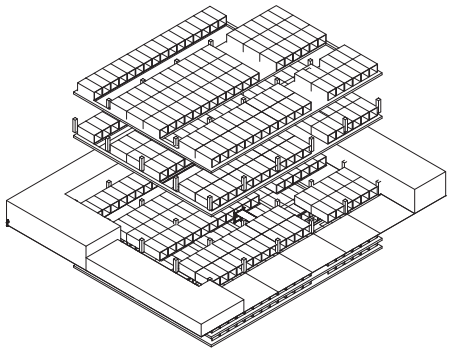
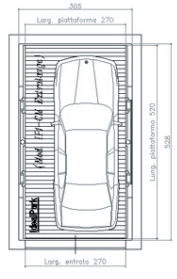
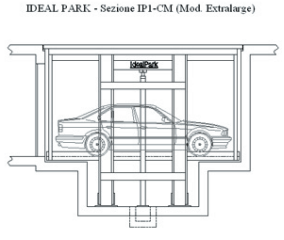
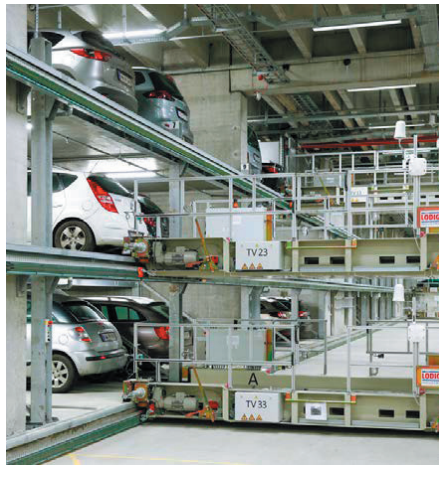


Figure 4.27
Parking explorations







#2

Figure 4.28
Traffic congestion
MJS

T 2+e

January 2022

THE EXCHANGE

Here is the thing: the meeting with clients is getting closer and we need to present a proposal. We keep in mind to defend, as architects, our positions but, if we want the project to succeed, we have to accomodate their ambitions, conjectures and suggestions.

New year new life!
Let's hope not a new project.
Before going in deeper into our second term of negotiations, let us clarify our starting point.
Our proposal wishes to solve the parking problem, as to provide a safer environment and as such, create a vibrant atmosphere (elements that can probably aid in increasing revenues).

Again, also in this case, we will ecounter our main interlocutor, which would play the part of the Developer, or indeed Vanke Co.Ltd, our main client on behalf we are guessing to work.

We have produced a lot of documents but again, all our documents do not have any prescriptive aspect, neither economic value.

The first question we are called to answer is related to the revenue. We did not have estimated anything yet, so our idea is based on our subjective awareness. This is called "project's promise". There is a part of this argument which is partially true; probably we can not obtain any revenue from a public space, unless we consider an amount of payment for parking (which is not properly our task indeed). We may ask therefore; do you think that just "buildings" might create any form of money??

There is an irruption. There are a series of buildings listed to be renovated, which are currently unused. They are a series of boiler rooms, public canteen or toilet, which were still an heritage of the Maoist period, in which water and electricity was mainly centralized in some points of "stockage". We received documents; archival documents of their current layout. Again, we do not have anything related to their stories, but we can project our proposal more precisely, since we have drawings, details and even windows.

The question might be natural: what can we do with this buildings? The program is uncertain, but we can guess to define it, step by step (we will show how, probably).

[4]

When the authors, our "architects" meet the client, they generally act by promising a future. The so called "project's promise" o "promessa di progetto" represents the telling of the future effects of a project. What the promise aspires to is a contract that makes it effectual. Until this happens, it can be said that this promise is just a lie about the future state of the world.

Jacques Derrida in "Pseudology: on Arendt and Lying in Politics" say that "Between lying and acting, acting in politics, manifesting one's freedom in action, transforming facts, anticipating the future, there exists as an affinity essential. Imagination is according to Arendt the common root of the "capacity to lie" and the "capacity to act." Capacity to produce images: the producing imagination as the experience of time, Kant or Hegel would have thought. It is possible to venture to say that the lie is the future, beyond the letter but without betraying Arendt's intention in this context. To tell the truth means on the contrary to say what is or what will have been (anterior future, from the past looks to the future), preferring rather the past" (ibid., p. 83)."

The design fable is thus a possibility, but it is enunciated as a necessity (Cf. the "circle of necessities")
I begin as a lie, end as a realized act. In this case the lie is the mode of the future, of invention.

Irruption 1

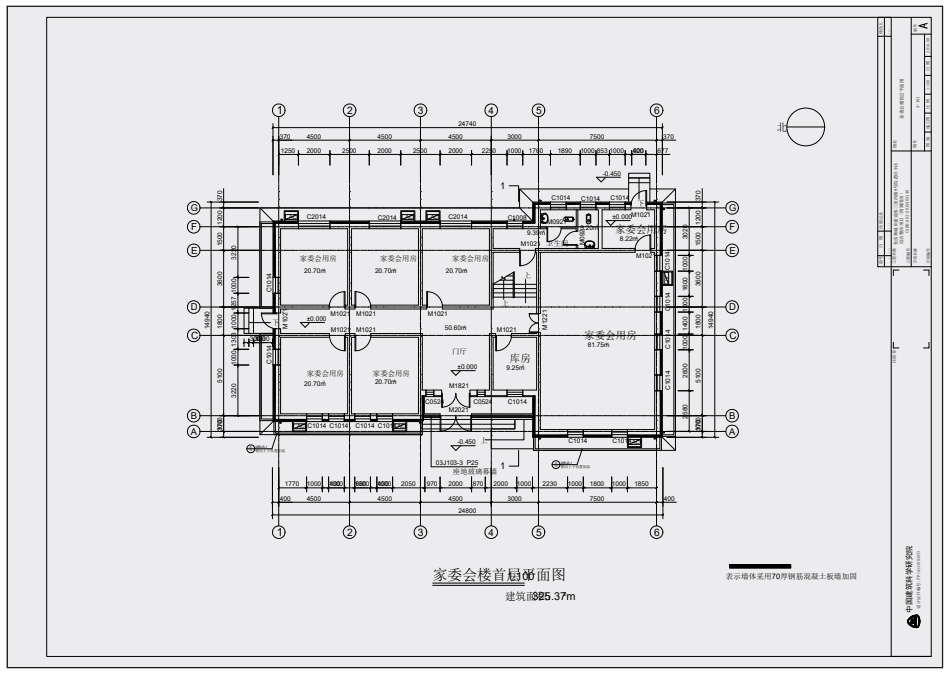


Figure 4.29
Archival technical drawing by Cadr made available for the research: Community Committee plan, sections, facades

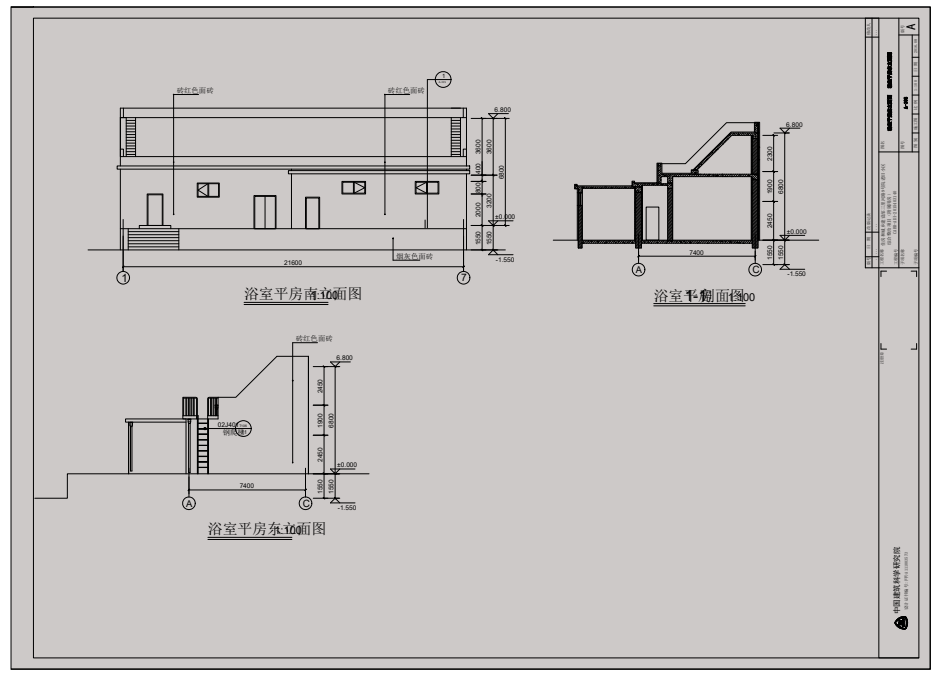
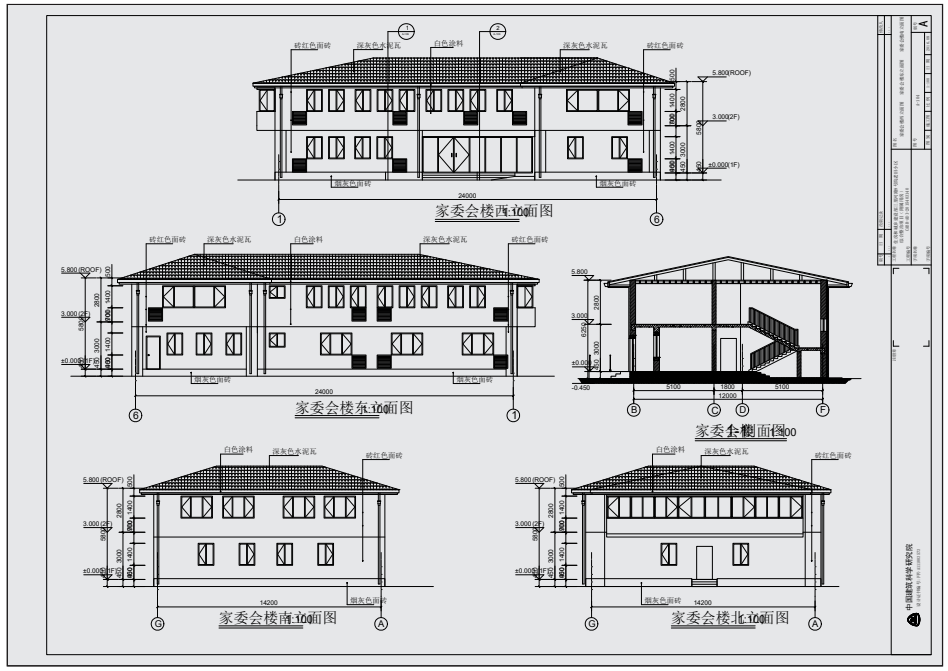
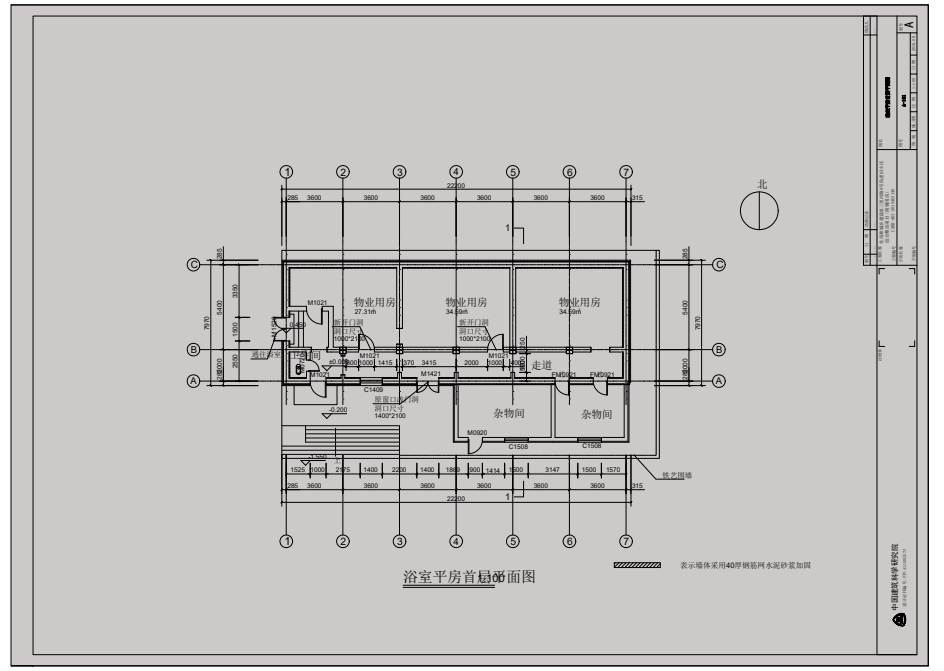


Figure 4.30
Archival technical drawing by Cadr made available for the research: Public Toilet plan, sections, facades





Irruption 2

Figure 4.31,32
Irruption: discovery of a construction process in the main area; not clear what is happening

MJS

Figure 4.32,33,34
Received other photos from the site Committee, Toilet and a bycicle shed (to demolish) MJS

T_3

February 2022

“RE-FILLER”

The third point of our journey once again responds to the demands made previously by our counterpart. The finding of a series of buildings listed to be renovated us with a number of questions of no small importance.

There is, however, a positive side side, at least this time; we have drawings, we know the space we can reconstruct it more accurately. However, the state of preservation is not particularly clear: from the photos it seems that some of them are currently in use. The first action, therefore, seeks to trace their current uses.

The task of the client is clear; we need to define a spatial strategy that will increase the revenue; therefore, the idea goes side by side in proposing an alternative made of rentable spaces and fixed function, directly under Vanke management.

The idea is to regenerate the area looking to new opportunities, such as microeconomies and new jobs creation.

The strategy, take in consideration the different status of the current renovation; indeed, in that regard, if actually the client set already a phase of implementation, we are here proposing its resetting; there are parts that are listed to be renovated before others that needs more repairing.

In particualr, the strategy is articulated in looking to find the first engine which would led to an higher gain, both economically and socially.

In that way, the first building to be renovated would be the Boiler Room, which will require an overall transformation and the aim is to make it an elderly care (parallel to MDG proposal). Private elderly care, indeed, have a special status and benefit from the government, which is releasing policies on contrasting the Aging lonely issue. At the same time, the Elderly care appear to be one of the requests from the community.

The second node will see the partial reuse of the canteen.
As a third, the Community committee will be converted into a Paty Headquarter, while the garbage reclamation center would act as an education condenser.

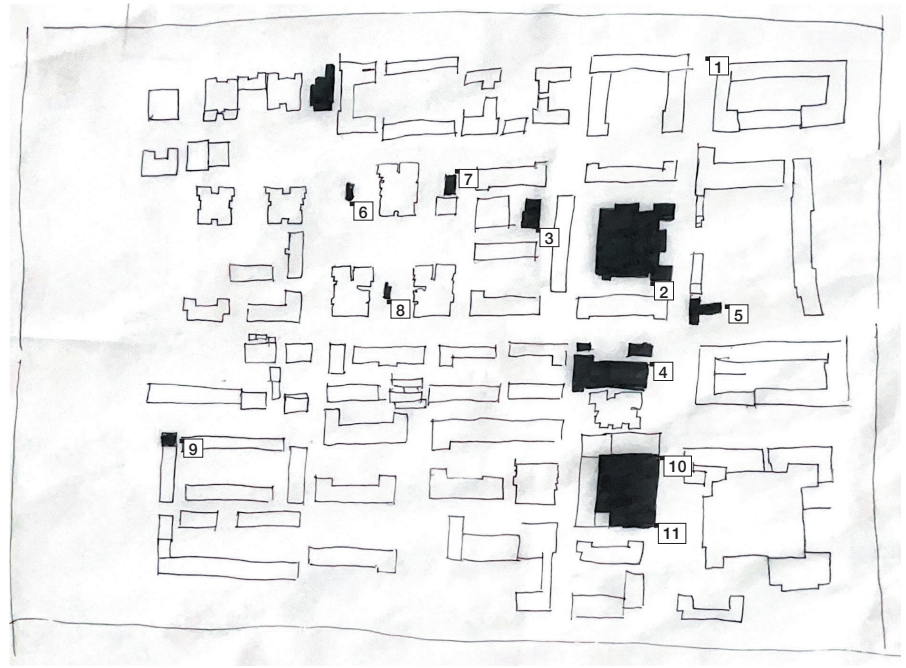


Figure 4.35
sketch and state of renovation of the buildings listed.

Figure 4.36
T3 strategy: program

		CURRENT USES	KIND OF RENOVATION	AREA
Phase 1.	1	Garbage Transfer Station	Overall Transformation	137 m^2
	2	Canteen	Partial Transformtion	267 m^2
	3	Community Commitee	Partial Transformtion	658 m^2
	4	Boiler Room	Overall Transformtion	1705 m^2
	5	Public Toilet	Overall Transformtion	695 m^2
Phase 2.	6	Waste Saving Center	Overall Transformtion	100 m^2
	7	Office	Overall Transformtion	250 m^2
	8	Fire Control Room	Overall Transformtion	25 m^2
Phase 3.	9	Boiler Room	Overall Transformtion	90 m^2
	10	Parking Lot	Overall Transformtion	3870 m^2
	11	Office	Overall Transformtion	264 m^2

T3

SDG

EDUCATION CENTER

fixed function

GARBAGE RECLAMATION CENTER

4

rent

COWORKING AREA

fixed function

PARTY HEADQUARTER

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

3

rent

CONFERENCE ROOM

2

CANTEEN

VANKE SALES HOUSE

fixed function

EXHIBITION CENTER

rent

CONFERENCE HALL

rent

TOILET

COFFEE AND SMALL FOOD HUB

COMMERCIAL HUB AND SHOPS

rent

fixed function

fixed function

fixed function

COMMUNITY LIBRARY

ELDERLY CARE

BOILER ROOM

COFFEE AND SMALL FOOD HUB

5

PARKING

GYM TERRACES

open

OFFICES

rent

T 3+focus

March 2022

“ELDERLY”

In the case of the elderly care, the first design exploration aims at preserving the existing structure and riprogramming the building. The ground floor was mainly conceived as an open gathering space, while the upper deserves a more private environment.

After the meeting with Local Communities, the strategy needs to be rethough; indeed, the draft was not preserving the overall picture of the existing facade which, instead, was listed to be preserved. Therefore, we need to reconsider our effort on the overall facade and ripropose an action that is more conservative (and regional).
If, our vision was somehow even radical (at least we though so) it is arrived the time to reconsider it.

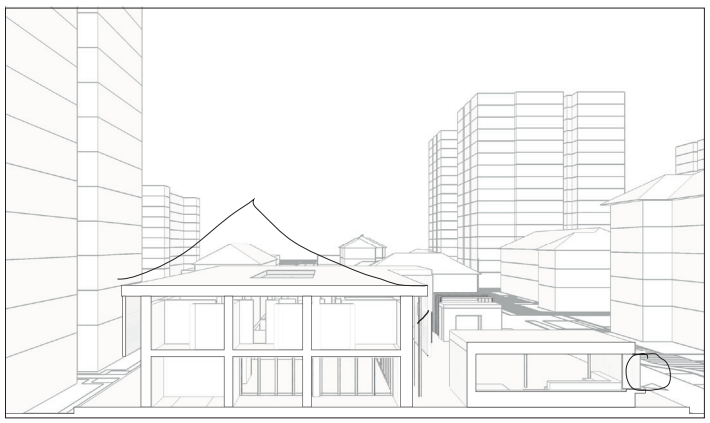
PROPOSAL TIMELINE

1. Maintainining the structure (column and beams)

2. Demolishing internal partitions

3. Changing Roof

4. ~~Adding a new facade~~



T 3+focus

March 2022

Simon, K.W. (2013). Civil Society in China: The Legal Framework from Ancient Times to the "New Reform Era"

Here we go, again at our third meeting.
This time, for the first, we simulate the encounter with one of the community members. In China, indeed, the residents' committee (居民委员会) is a residents' association a grassroots mass autonomous organization for self-management of residential communities. After a long conversation, which highlighted the history of the area and also allowed us to understand how, in fact, the site retains a rather historic appearance; most of the buildings are constructed using typical Chinese bricks, a legacy of the Maoist period, to which the community is apparently very attached. Delving into the issue of preservation of the historical image, the hypothesis of building a memory lane, as a place of more lively remembrance of the past, of its traces, is enhanced even more.

The first issue addressed concerns the strategy of action, from the proposed program. We narrate about the possibilities, even considering the actual gain our client would like to make from it (thus activities involving management and procurement to principals outside the community, broadening, in fact, the arena of actors. Their response is immediately ready to our overly expansive perspective: what gain can the community make?
It reminds us of the very specific role of residential communities, a character of highly intimate space. Effectively, the area lacks amenities and vacant buildings, our client's interest can be a gear lever that drives change.

Thus, the project becomes a pretext for redefining community spaces not only from the perspective of making money, but from a proactive vision of interchange. By association, we remember DPA architects' project in Singapore, a kitchen open to the public. We now need to reconsider partly our program, at least, create a balance between our clients' needs and the community.
It is time to return in our *"caverna"*, and start again with a new project

[5]

The theatrical structure of design representations functions like the Platonic cave, a Pentecostal model in which the wise "man"-architect is supposed to come out of the cave, in our case going to his "bottega", then return to the arena, to the theater of representation to explain to others how the future can be. In this case in the cave myth, the wise man who sees the sunlight comes to a bad end. In any case, beyond the tragic denouement of the myth, what matters is that the sage has understood something, and he returns to a revelatory position. According to our view, it is possible to dismantle Plato's myth and try to see if there is another way of conceiving the role of the planner/sage that does not correspond to the function of one who returns to the world to give an awareness, or to bring truth, facts, inside a place where confusion and opacity reign. However, to be convincing, to be believed and legitimized, architects often enact this Platonic wisdom of theirs.

Bruno Latour explains this pattern by saying that facts and values are opposed in the cave. With respect to this scheme we could imagine another functioning in which it is no longer the distinction between facts and values that constructs the meaning of an exchange, but rather the principle of complication and unification, as Latour calls them. So actually facts, and therefore values, can be both unifying and complicating. If facts and values, and complications and unifications, are placed within a Cartesian scheme, it is possible to map the modes of transaction; different things happen in these 4 quadrants, fairly faithfully reproducing that circularity of exchange and spool play. The upper arc corresponds to opening symbols, to complication, while the lower arc corresponds to closing the process.

T4

SDG

EDUCATION CENTER

fixed function

GARBAGE RECLAMATION CENTER

4

rent

COWORKING AREA

fixed function

PARTY HEADQUARTER

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

3

rent

CONFERENCE ROOM

+ services (doctor, medical center..)

2

CANTEEN

VANKE SALES HOUSE

fixed function

EXHIBITION CENTER

rent

+cinema

rent

+living room

fixed function

fixed function

fixed function

COMMUNITY LIBRARY

ELDERLY CARE

BOILER ROOM

COFFEE AND SMALL FOOD HUB

+community kitchen

rent

+open gym

rent

PUBLIC TOILET

COFFEE AND SMALL FOOD HUB

COMMERCIAL HUB AND SHOPS

rent

+ social coffee and coworking

5

PARKING

GYM TERRACES

open

OFFICES

rent

+roofplayground

rent

T_4

April 2022

"LAST DANCE"

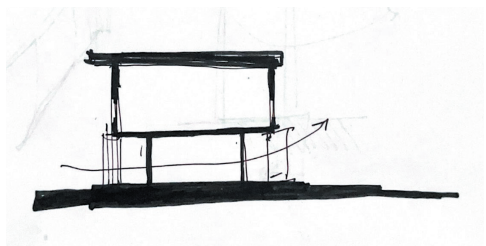
It is April.
We are facing yet another change in design strategy. The comments from the community are quite fact-specific. The proposal we advanced does not reflect the wishes of the community and seems to be the most direct expression of our client's economic values.

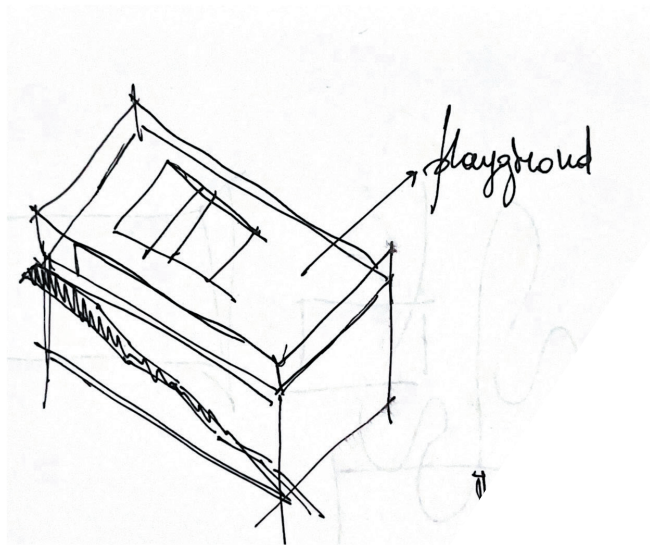
In doing so, we would risk retracing the same construct that we wanted to criticize instead; that is, supporting a fake participatory process. However, acting interstitially and incrementally, allows us to evaluate on a case-by-case basis, always following that hic et nunc.

And so, what previously seemed to be static and highly programmatic functions are gradually transformed into real social condensers, capable of generating a situated and specific spatial response, in continuous relationship between inhabitants and rulers.

Changing, then, is not only our physical space, but also the space we have created, our project workshop, collective, and documentary cloud. In the next few pages, as a conclusion, we will show, like x-ray lenses, the intricate whole that has constituted, as a retrospective reflection, our history.

What must be noted is the particularity of the knowledge process that this thesis brings forth, perhaps also in line with a.deterministic and critical view of the craft, which does not see the project as a line, but rather as an intricate organism (Latour, Yaneva, 2008), the so-called fuzzy object.

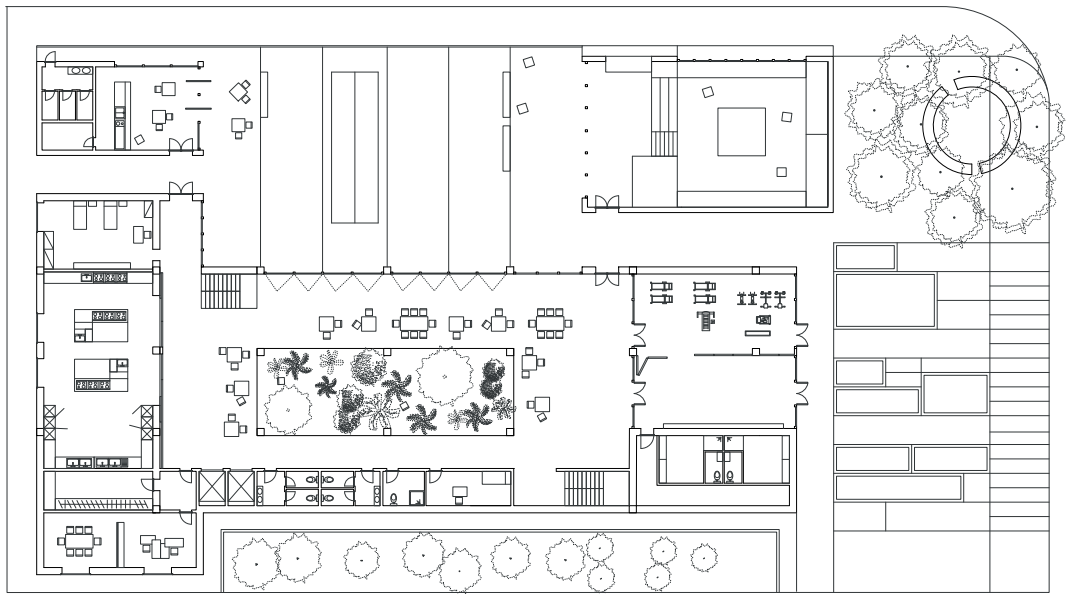


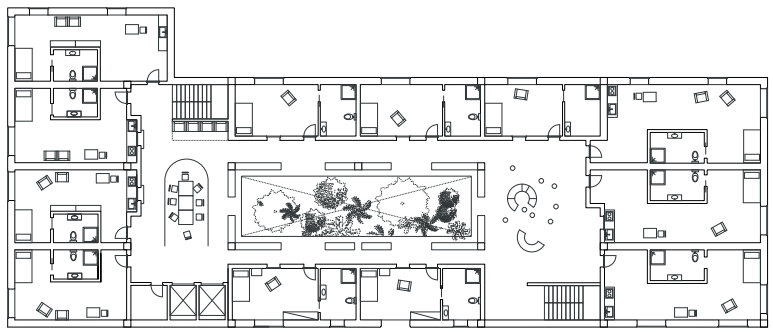


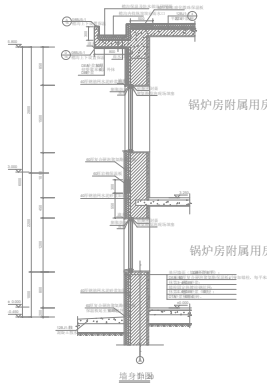
T_4

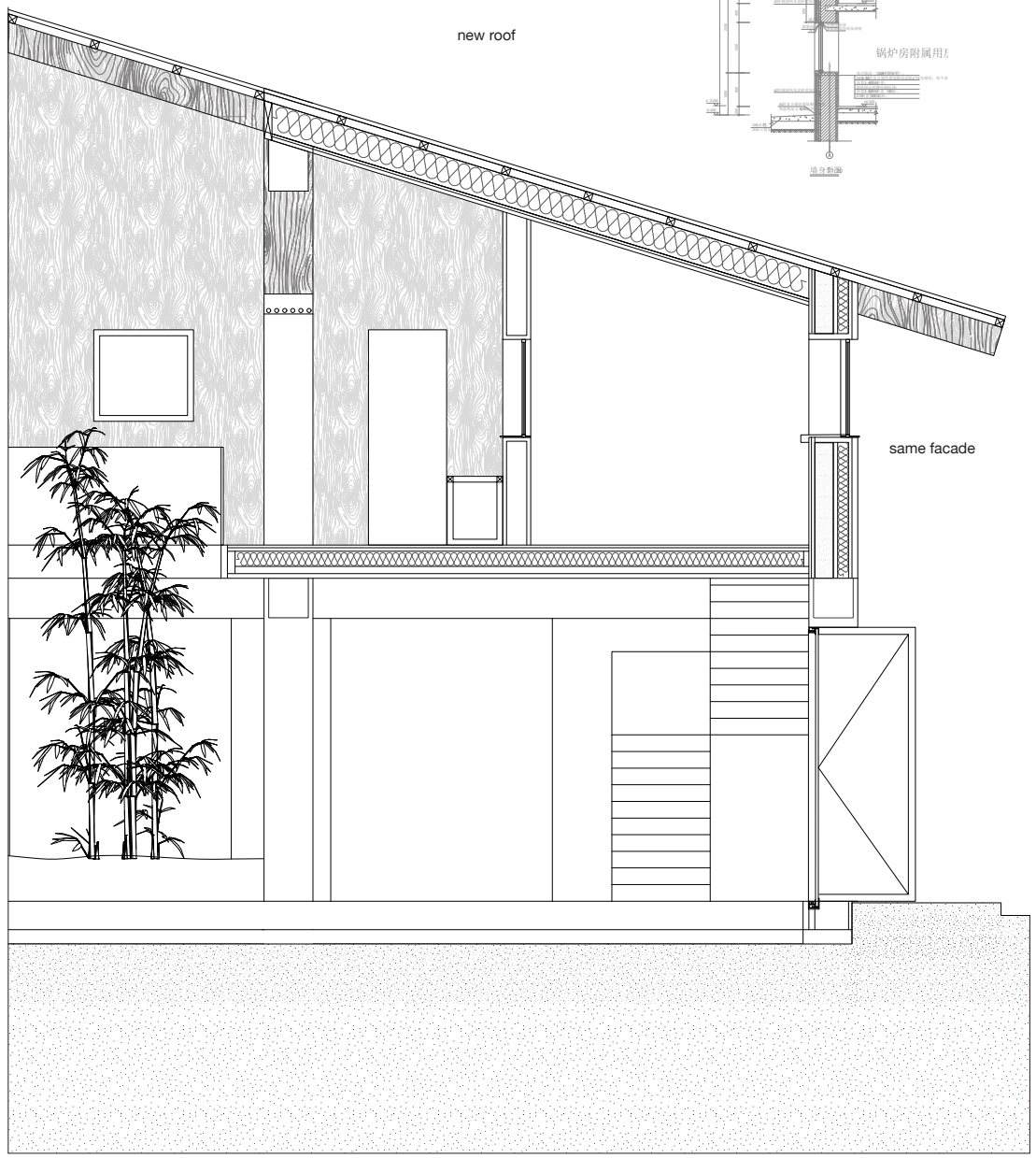
“ELDERLY CARE +”

May 2022









T_{4+E}

May 2022

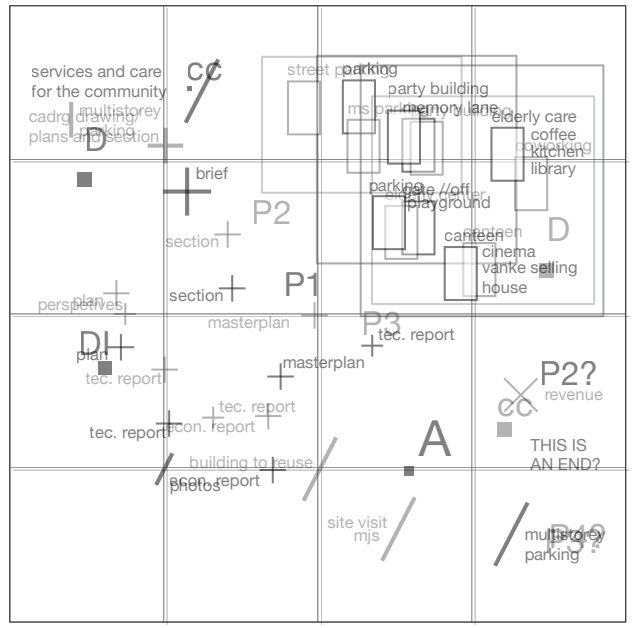
“LAST DANCE”

As the months progress and our exploration is coming to an end, the project action is no longer open to endless possibilities but rather begins to contract only a few nodes and relationships. The map of the collective, which has been disaggregated and re-aggregated along the cycles of exchange faced, gradually becomes more stable.

Studying and comparing it with the ongoing process makes it clear that the strength of a document-project is not in the configuration it proposes, but in the process it has followed, which has loaded it with a series of functions that refer to other constraints, obligations, deadlines.

Our diary, in a nutshell, reflects on a generative reticular system, composed of many immersed elements, and a few emergent ones. The submersed elements are all the discarded hypotheses; the emergent elements, on the contrary, are those documents that earn the right become socialized and be exchanged with external social reality and become contracts that obligate the action of the actors involved. The deviations of our project then becomes a concatenation of variations among many possibilities, which will settle by excluding alternatives that are discarded or no longer plausible by gradually converging to a point, which will correspond to the final project-document produced.

Reflecting on the work elaborated so far, it can be observed that by extending the design of all the configurations developed along the line of time, initially they all turn out to be possible; as the decisions are defined, the divergence is reduced by successive exclusions. The third narrative then proposes the development of a strategy by successive steps, going from time to time to renegotiate disputed territories and non-contracted agreements.

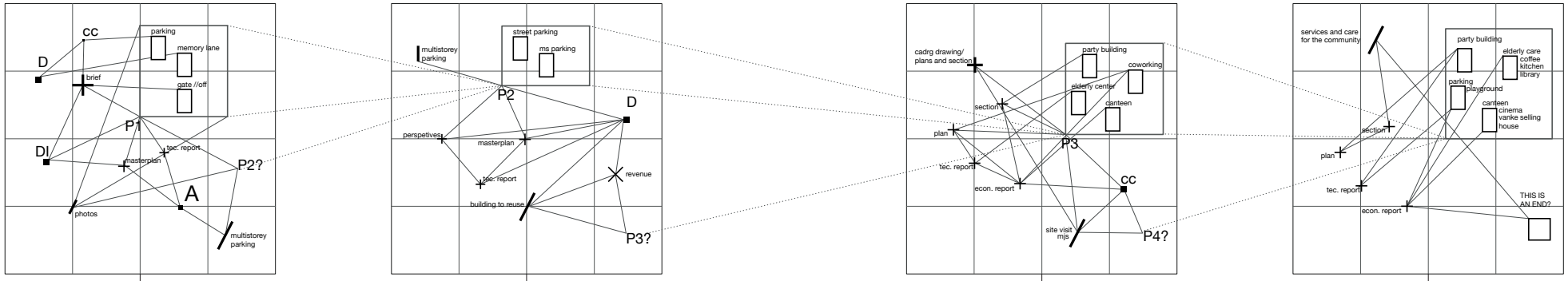


[6]

The diagram on the left and on the next pages are extremely linked. The first one represents a synchronic frame of the project framework, a depositiation of the document cloud that originated through out this 4 times, and constructed scenarios. The document cloud (in the Next page) (Ferraris, 20120) is the image of this complex of documents expanding and connecting to many things, to the point of having the power to make something happen in the world, that is, to trigger the movement of a transformation of space,
comes from the definition of “technical object” that was developed in Science and Technology Studies (STS). The formation of a system of documents that “function” as an open machine of contracts and narratives (continuously adjustment) is the sociotechnical process that transitions early draft productions to written mandatory conditions to the conclusion. (

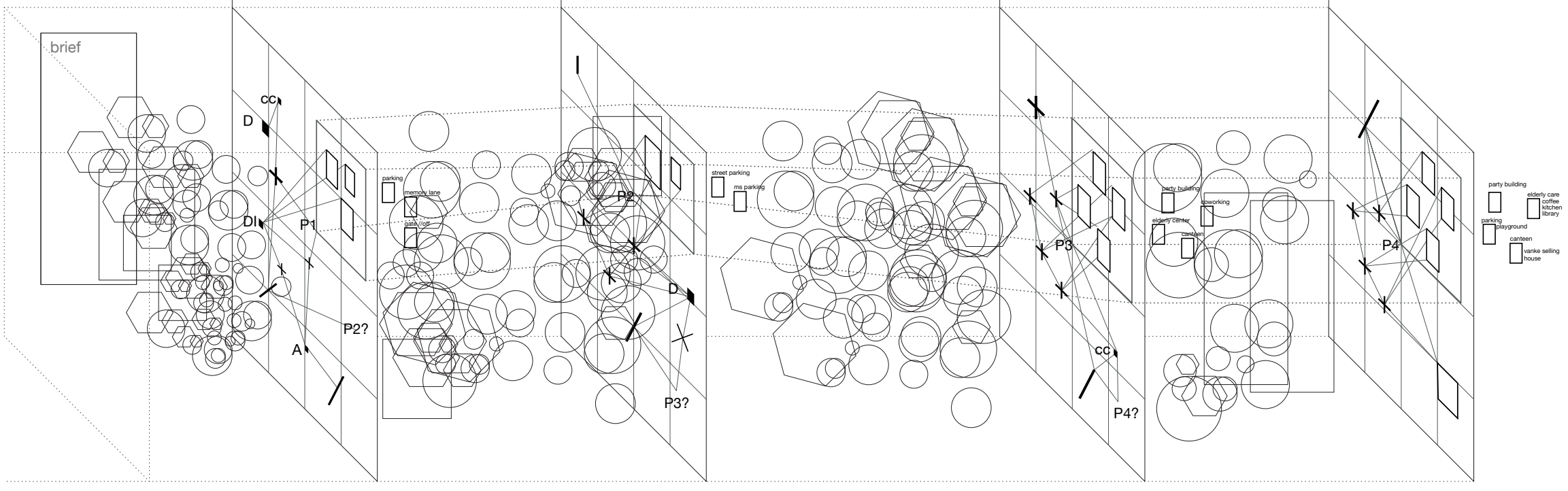
$T_0 \longrightarrow T_4$

DOCUMENTS CLOUD



descriptive document

prescriptive document



PURGATORIO

To run o'er better waters hoists its sail
The little vessel of my genius now,
That leaves behind itself a sea so cruel;

And of that second kingdom will I sing
Wherein the human spirit doth purge itself,
And to ascend to heaven becometh worthy.

Superblock2.0 is thus a story, where not only the final scene is told, but the succession of frames of which the narrative is composed. Consecutive steps of which the cosmogram is exploded, intermediate scenes that make it possible to observe, almost like x-rays, the evolutions of the collective, what has been defined, contracted or constructed, and the conditions of relationship that are established at each phase, through which it will depend what is possible to do next (albeit aware of the presence of an unpredictable range of issues that one does not grasp). One will then be able to analyze the potential of a space-in relation to a moment in space and time-for which it makes sense to make that given bet. The risk of determinism and linearity is circumvented by trying to hold together the dimension of hypothesized spatial changes with reasoning inherent in feasibility based on the documents and the actual state of the work, trying to bring the space of transformation into the punctuated space of a succession, which is not, however, a line but rather a series of thresholds, of gates, at which I, as the designer, am willing to change my ways. A line, on the way to the final goal, that shifts and changes, eventually becoming the composition of the tangle of detours that have presented themselves at all the thresholds.

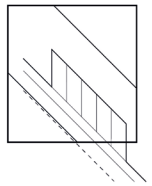
The hypothesis that this specific community may be a potential opening line, as well as model, for further similar cases, leads to clarifying the intrigues and scope of action from the uncertainties that constitute the particular node.
The proposal thus aims to transform the social capital of the community, promising to introduce different spatial-functional combinations over time, which act as social condensers. Starting from pre-existences and playing with the material and immaterial conditions of situated place and time, the project acts as a flexible platform to changing use, combining residents and workers in a multi-changing ecosystem.
By attempting to articulate a nonlinear design research, and its dialogic and transpolar character, mapping operations, side by side with design proposals, constitute bijective and progressive operations in order to arrive at "negotiable" scenarios.
The project/platform is legitimized through drawings, stories told, conditions placed. It becomes a scenario of possibilities capable not only of prefiguring the form of space but also of hypothesizing the implications associated with it.

5.1 Taxonomy

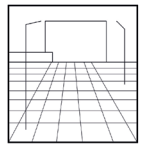
actions

A
<<public space>>

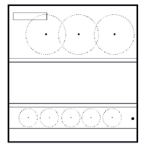
- **A01**
  <<public space>>
  <<street parking>>
  documents: + technical report + feasability + section + plan + management plan
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



- **A02**
  <<public space>>
  <<square>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)

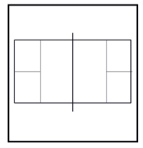


- **A03**
  <<public space>>
  <<pedestrian street>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



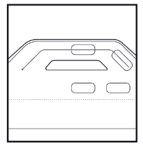
- **A04**
  <<public space>>
  <<playground>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)

- **A05**
  <<public space>>
  <<sport-field>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)

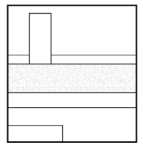


- **A06**
  <<public space>>
  <<children street-scape>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)

- **A07**
  <<public space>>
  <<kiss and go-loop>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)

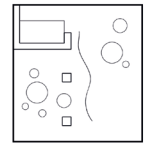


- **A08**
  <<public space>>
  <<private garden>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)

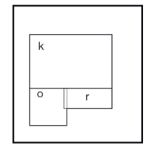


B
<<architecture>>

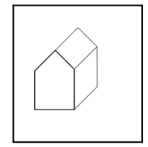
- **B01**
  <<buildings>>
  <<interior >>
  documents: + technical report + feasability + section + plan + management plan
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



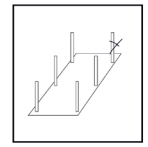
- **B02**
  <<buildings>>
  <<program>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



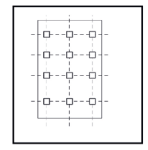
- **B03.1**
  <<buildings>>
  <<architecture>>
  <<ex-novo>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



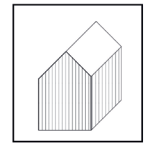
- **B03.2**
  <<buildings>>
  <<architecture>>
  <<demolition>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



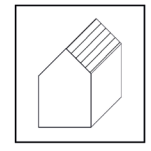
- **B03.3**
  <<buildings>>
  <<architecture>>
  <<structure>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



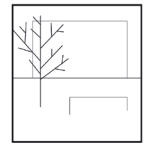
- **B03.4**
  <<buildings>>
  <<architecture>>
  <<facade>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



- **B03.5**
  <<buildings>>
  <<architecture>>
  <<roof>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



- **B04**
  <<buildings>>
  <<open space>>
  documents: + section + plan + technical report + feasability + budget
  actors: DI (design institute), D (developer), CC (community committee)



PHASE 1

t_1 ⟶ t_2

1. Black Wisdom

2. Waste Disposal Center

3. Gingko Avenue Memory Lane

4. Garden Inn Pension

5. League Hui Commercial Center

6. Food Court

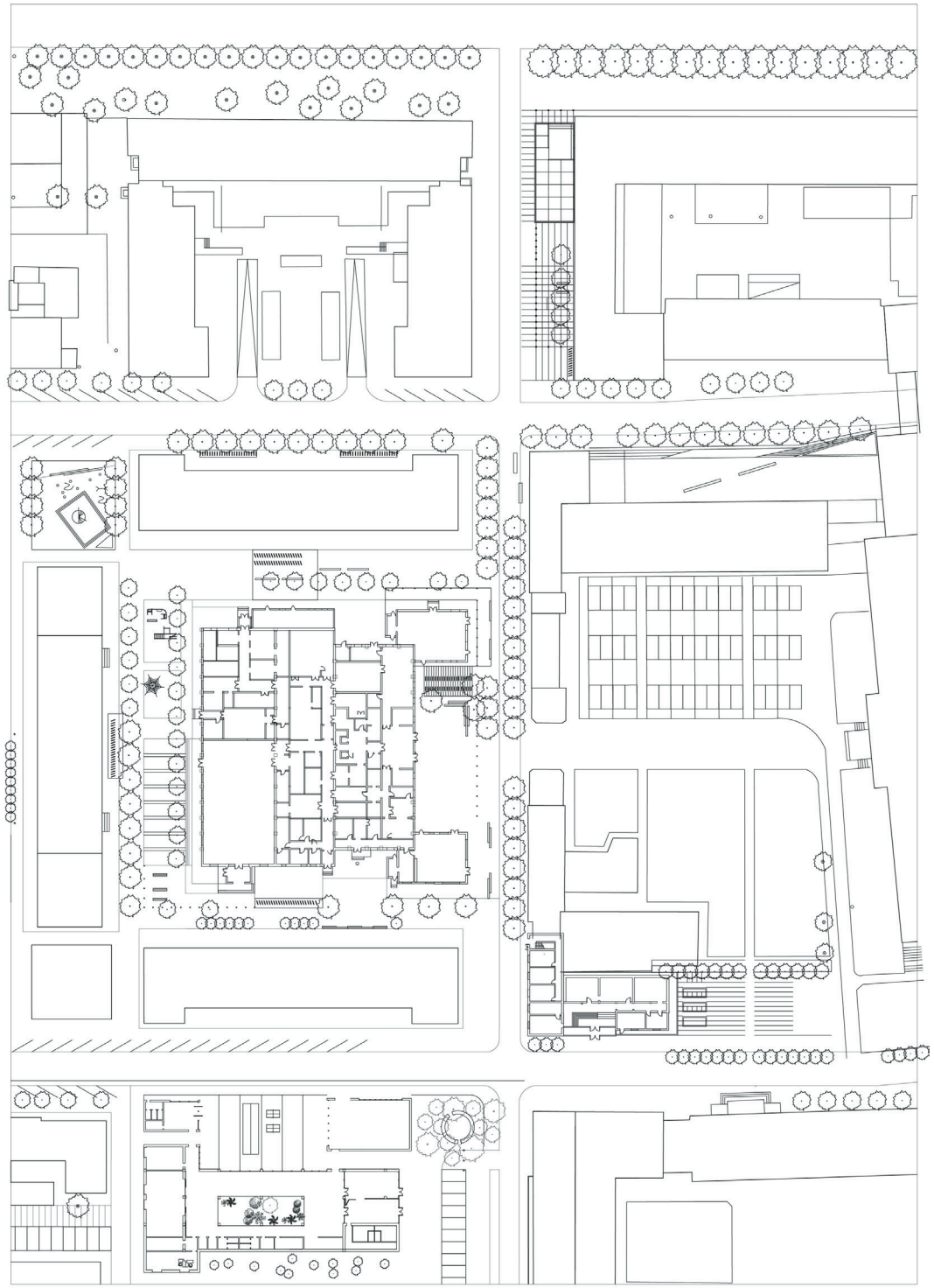
3. Gingko Avenue Memory Lane
- A01 <<public space>> <<street parking>>
- A03 <<public space>> <<pedestrian street>>
- A04 <<public space>> <<playground>>
- B03.2 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<demolition>> — gates demolition
- A08 <<public space>> <<private garden>>

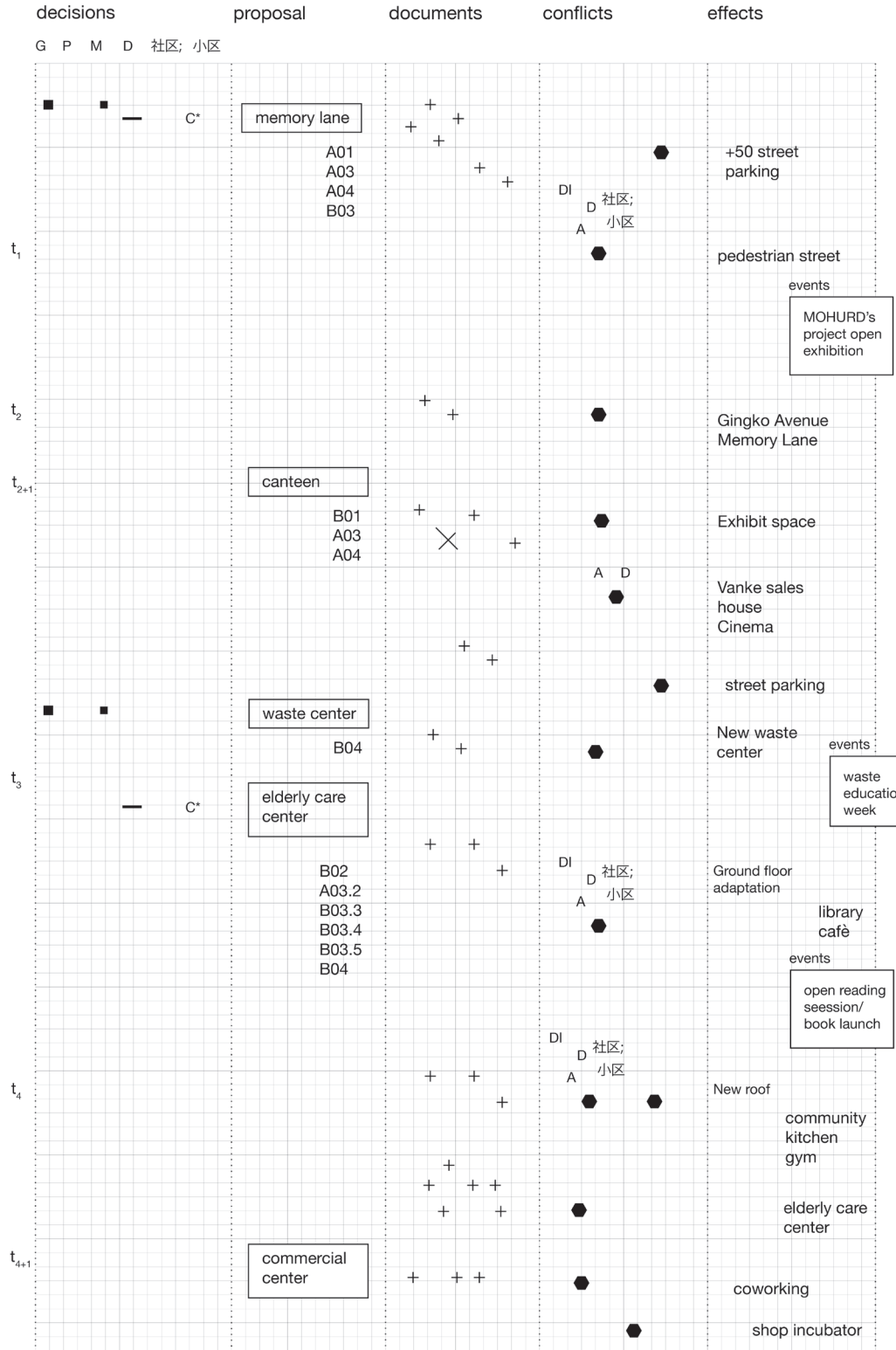
6. Canteen
- B01 <<buildings>>
- A02 <<public space>> <<interior >> <<square>> — cinema, exhibit, vanke selling house

7. Elderly care center
- B02 <<buildings>> <<program>>
- B03.2 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<demolition>>
- B03.3 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<structure>>
- B03.4 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<facade>>
- B03.5 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<roof>>
- B04 <<buildings>> <<open space>> — library, cafe, shared kitchen, elderly care

5. Commercial center
- B01 <<buildings>> <<interior >>

2. Waste center
- B03.1 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<ex-novo>>




decisions
proposal
documents
conflicts
effects
G P M D 社区; 小区
C*
memory lane
A01
A03
A04
B03
DI
D 社区; 小区
A
+50 street parking
pedestrian street
events
MOHURD's project open exhibition
t1
t2
Gingko Avenue Memory Lane
t2+1
canteen
B01
A03
A04
Exhibit space
A D
Vanke sales house Cinema
street parking
waste center
B04
New waste center
events
waste education week
t3
C*
elderly care center
B02
A03.2
B03.3
B03.4
B03.5
B04
DI
D 社区; 小区
A
Ground floor adaptation
library cafè
events
open reading seession/ book launch
DI
D 社区; 小区
A
t4
New roof
community kitchen gym
elderly care center
t4+1
commercial center
coworking
shop incubator

PHASE 2

$t_2 \longrightarrow t_3$

7. Vitality Park

8. Party Activity Center

9. Sunshine Garden

7. Vitality Park

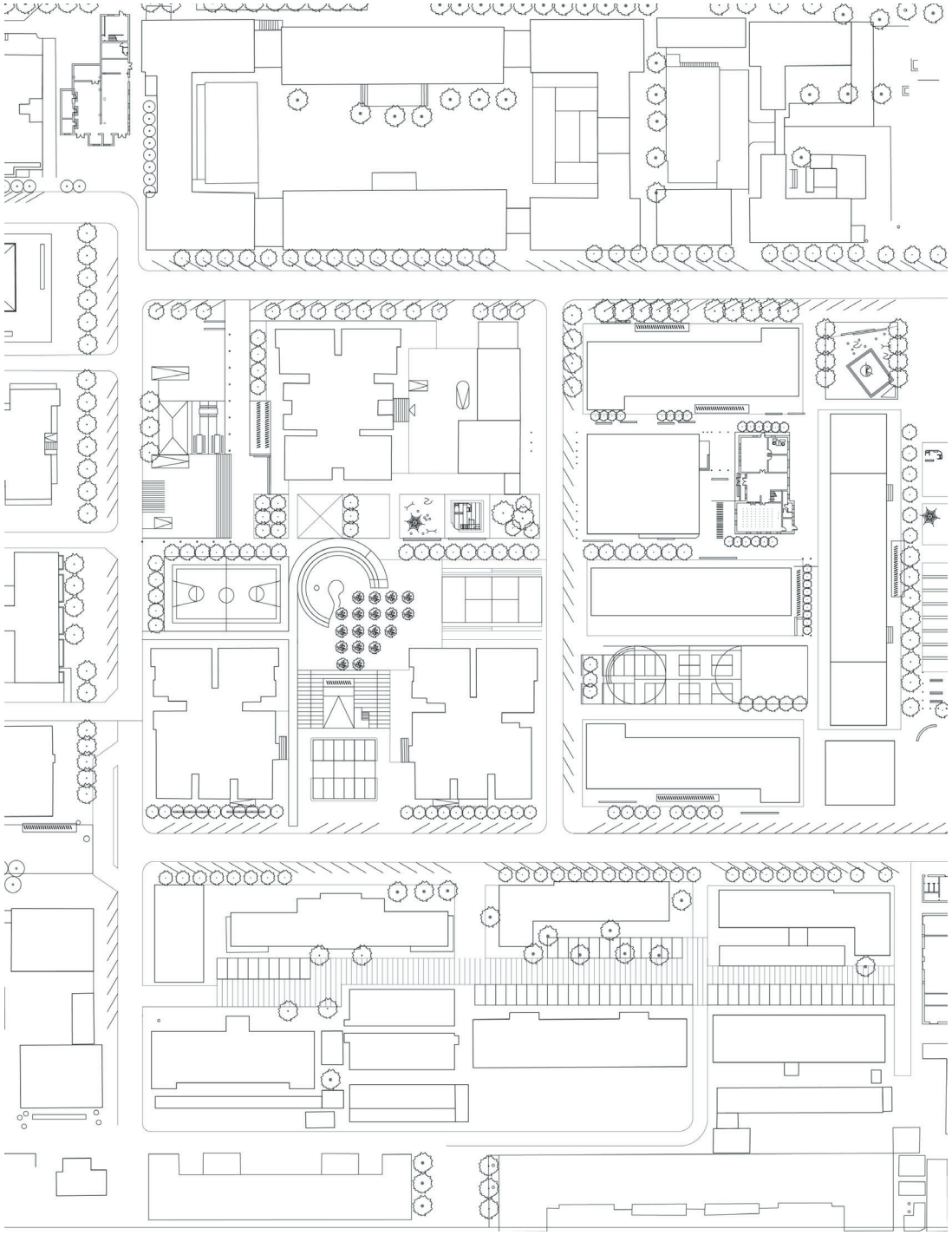
- A01 <<public space>> <<street parking>>
- A03 <<public space>> <<pedestrian street>>
- A04 <<public space>> <<playground>> — playground
- B03.2 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<demolition>> — gates demolition
- A08 <<public space>> <<private garden>>

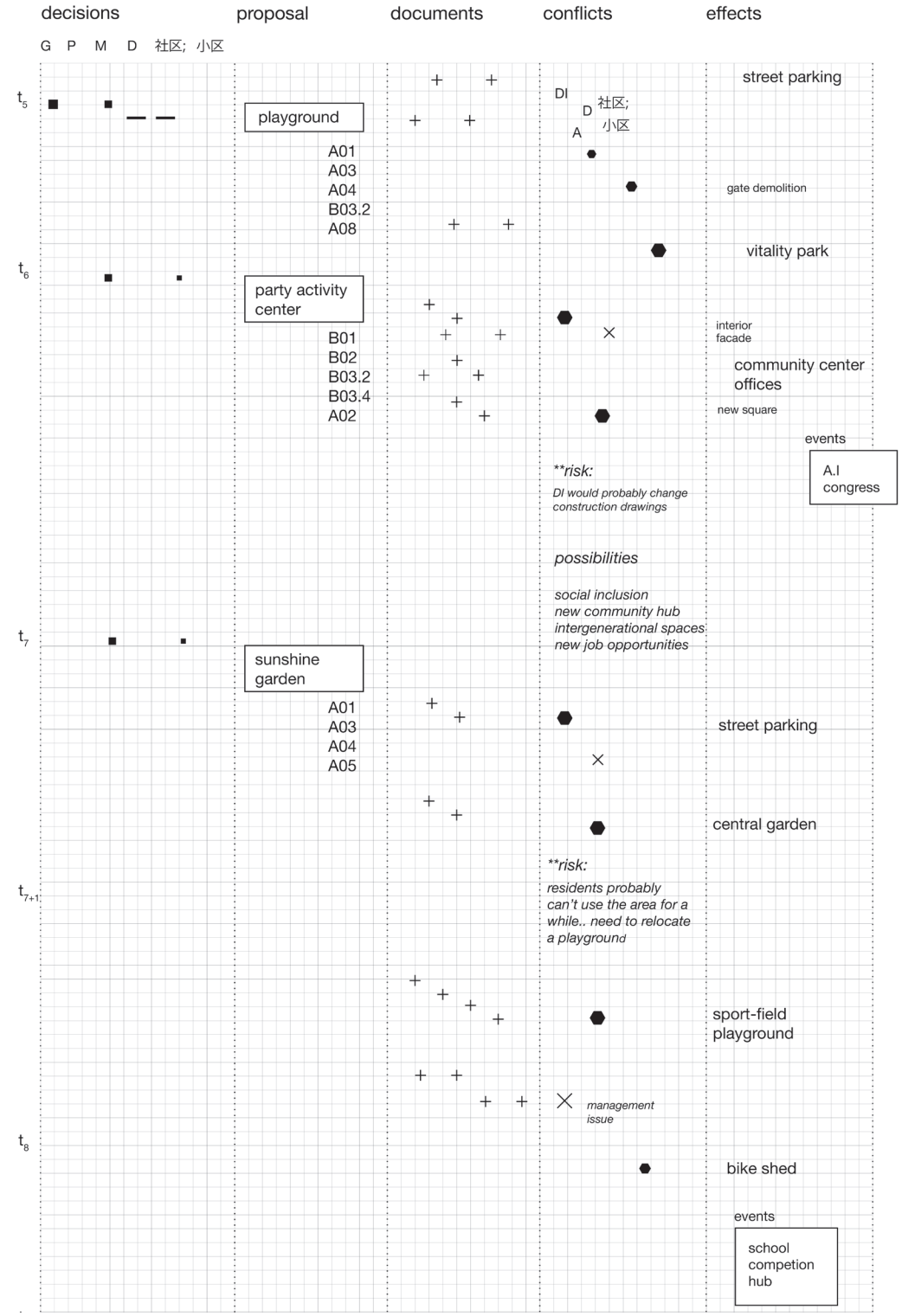
8. Party Activity Center

- B01 <<buildings>> <<interior >>
- B02 <<buildings>> <<program>>
- B03.2 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<demolition>> — community center offices
- B03.4 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<facade>>
- A02 <<public space>> <<square>>

9. Sunshine Garden

- A01 <<public space>> <<street parking>>
- A03 <<public space>> <<pedestrian street>>
- A04 <<public space>> <<playground>>
- A05 <<public space>> <<sport-field>> — central garden, sport field, garden, playground




decisions
proposal
documents
conflicts
effects
G P M D 社区; 小区
t5
playground
A01
A03
A04
B03.2
A08
party activity center
B01
B02
B03.2
B03.4
A02
DI
D 社区; 小区
A
street parking
gate demolition
vitality park
interior facade
community center offices
new square
events
A.I congress
**risk:
DI would probably change construction drawings
possibilities
social inclusion
new community hub
intergenerational spaces
new job opportunities
t7
sunshine garden
A01
A03
A04
A05
street parking
central garden
**risk:
residents probably can't use the area for a while.. need to relocate a playground
t7+1
sport-field playground
management issue
t8
bike shed
events
school competion hub

PHASE 3

t_3 ⟶ t_4

10. Black Wisdom
11. Commercial Center
12. Children-scape
13. Bookshop
14. Parking House

12. Children-scape

- A01 <<public space>> <<street parking>>
- A03 <<public space>> <<pedestrian street>>
- A06 <<public space>> <<children street-scape>>
- A07 <<public space>> <<kiss and go-loop>>

school-entrance

13. Bookshop

- B01 <<buildings>> <<interior >>
- B02 <<buildings>> <<program>>
- B03.4 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<facade>>
- A02 <<public space>> <<square>>

bookshop
reading
room

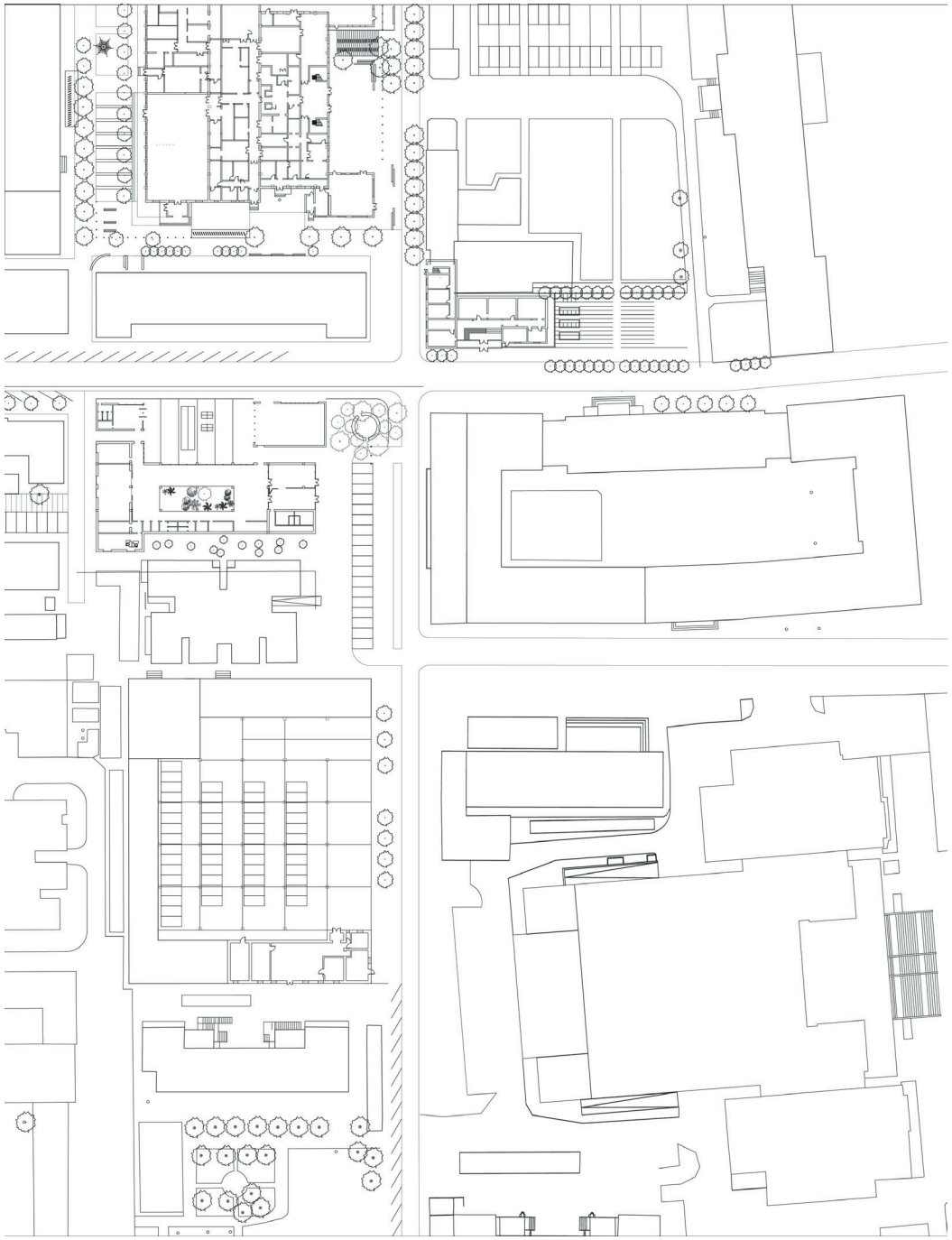
14. Parking House

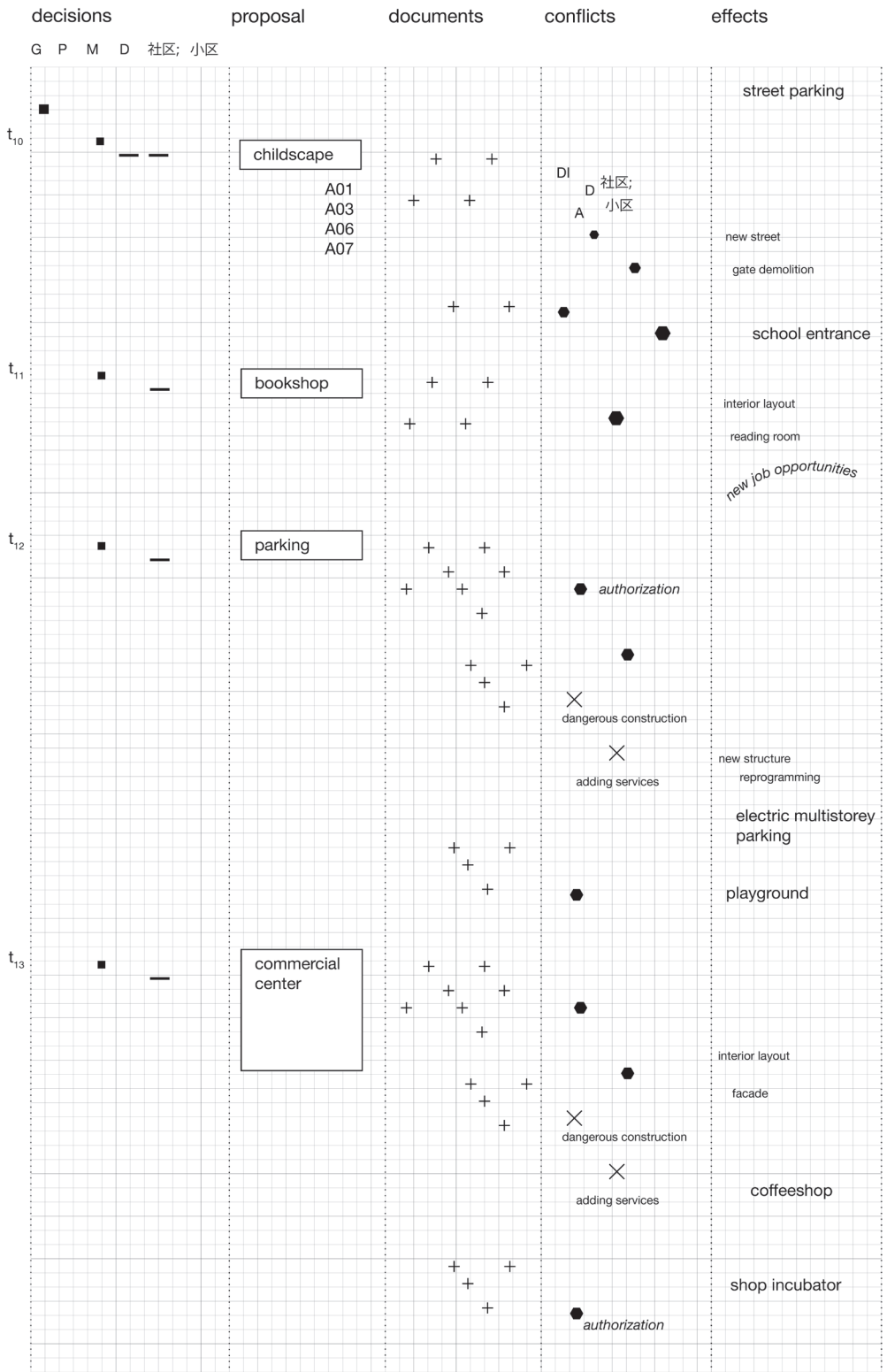
- B02 <<buildings>> <<program>>
- B03.2 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<demolition>>
- B03.3 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<structure>>
- B03.4 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<facade>>
- B03.5 <<buildings>> <<architecture>> <<roof>>
- B04 <<buildings>> <<open space>>

electric
parking
multistorey
playground
shared
terrace
offices

11. Commercial center

- B01 <<buildings>> <<interior >>
- B02 <<buildings>> <<program>>




decisions
proposal
documents
conflicts
effects
G P M D 社区; 小区
t10
t11
t12
t13
childscape
A01
A03
A06
A07
bookshop
parking
commercial center
DI
D 社区;
A 小区
authorization
dangerous construction
adding services
dangerous construction
adding services
authorization
street parking
new street
gate demolition
school entrance
interior layout
reading room
new job opportunities
new structure
reprogramming
electric multistorey parking
playground
interior layout
facade
coffeeshop
shop incubator

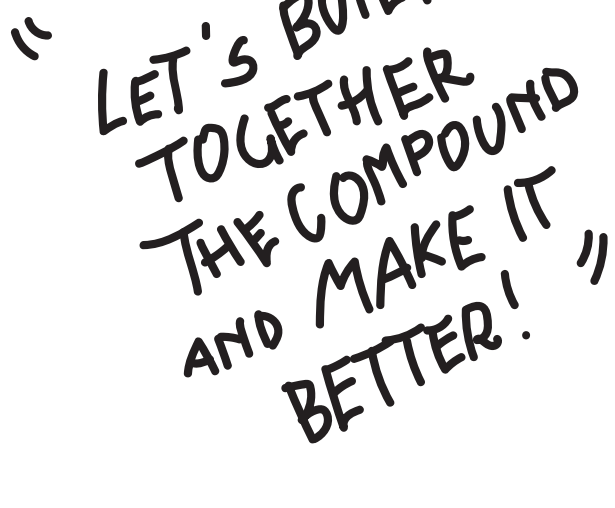
PARADISO

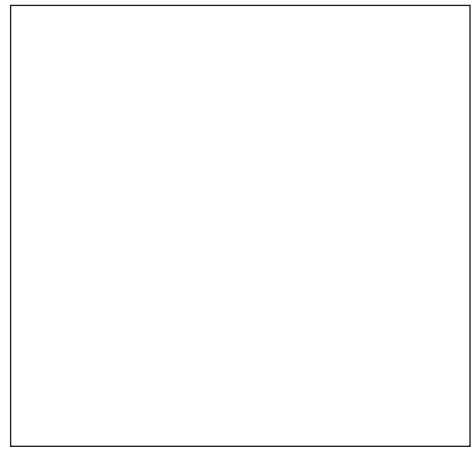
The glory of Him who moveth everything
Doth penetrate the universe, and shine
In one part more and in another less.

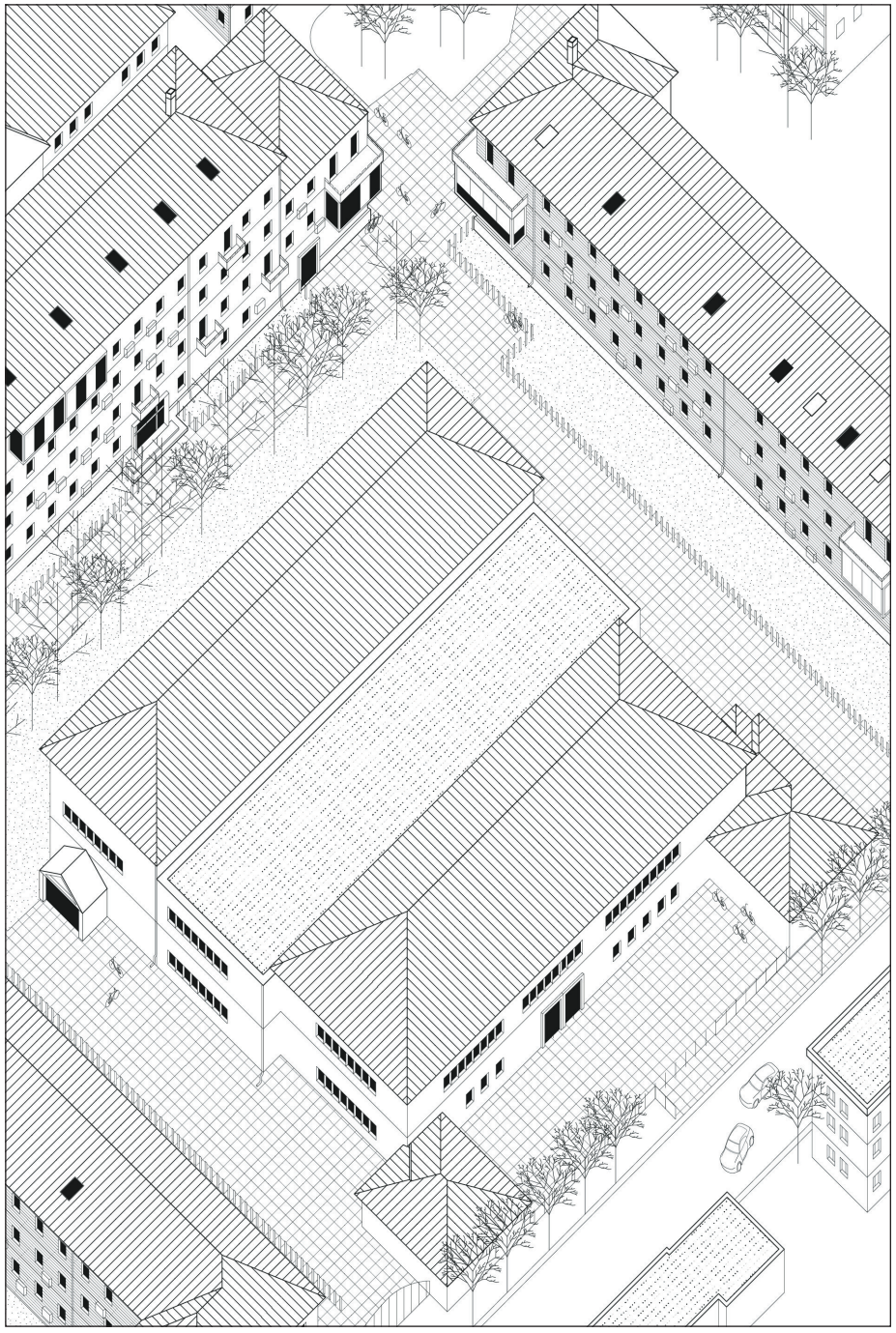
Within that heaven which most his light receives
Was I, and things beheld which to repeat
Nor knows, nor can, who from above descends;

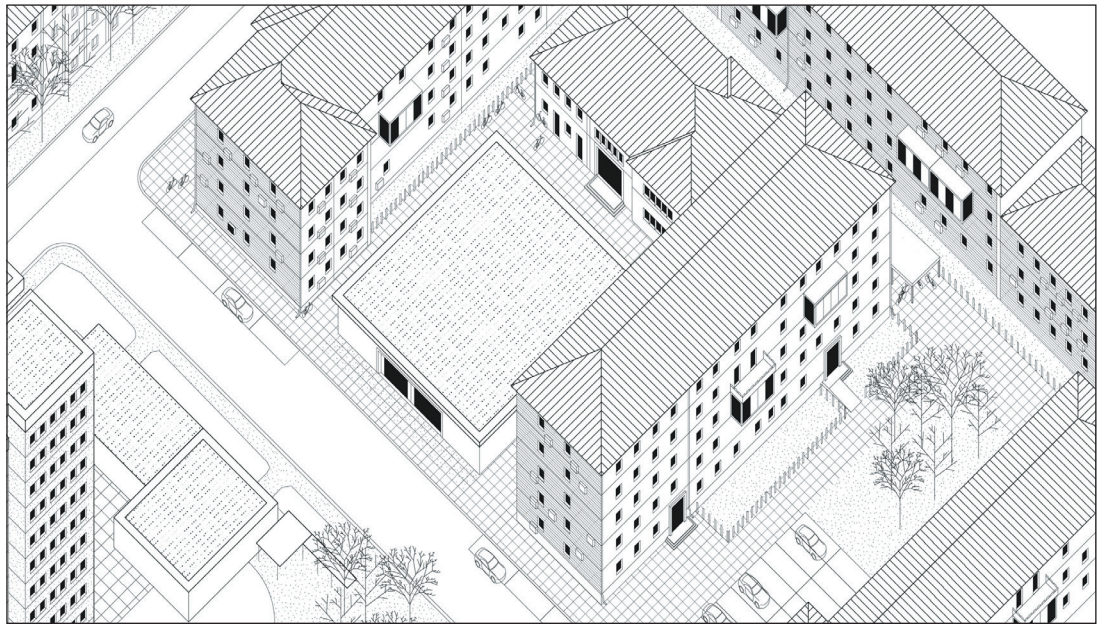
Because in drawing near to its desire
Our intellect ingulphs itself so far,
That after it the memory cannot go.

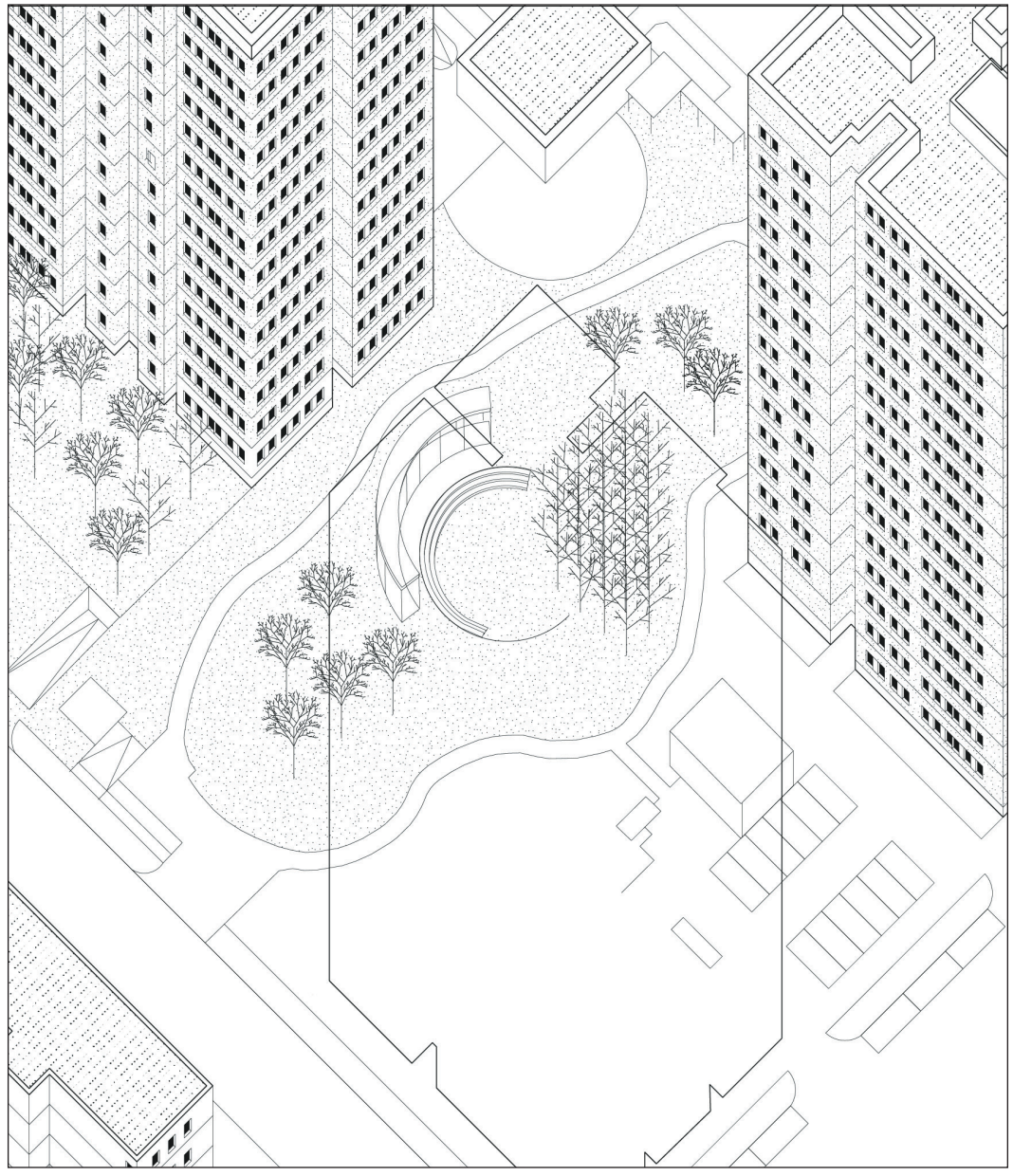
superblock 2.0











6. A model

Building a model is one of the often recurring themes within Project Briefs, especially when it comes to Chinese contexts. At the end of our exploration, we are faced with this dilemma. But what constitutes the model? And can we really define a dimension of replicability? What does it mean to be rooted in this kind of context?

If we look at developer projects, we could say that there is a seriality of reproduction, or, precisely, modeling, which then makes perhaps the result an object of serial and industrial production (this was the dilemma of the modernist matrix).

Here, the problematic node is strongly rooted in a context, a time, and a story and it uses contingent and context-specific tools and funding opportunities.

The proposed reactivation project is strongly rooted in the historical time in which it is formulated, as it uses contingent and context-specific tools and funding opportunities. The project starts from a specific request moved by a client, the Developer, Vanke, which exploits a broader situation, an expression of interest moved by the Ministry.

Through the continuous relationship between spatial distribution and procedural development, it indeed aims to measure its degree of feasibility, of becoming the form of real space. This takes on, in the hypothesis of a comparison with a real process, an almost paradoxical meaning to be able to observe the points of most difficult articulation, and possible collapse, of the project itself. It is, therefore, possible to deduce, not a prototype, nor a real programmatic plan, but rather to hypothesize that in similar communities, in size but also in management, the same kind of scalarization can be applied.

Modeling consequently constitutes a sensitive issue, however, it is worth clarifying once again that within this research work, such an operation is not related to hypotheses of spatial transformation, but rather to process hypotheses that public administrations can activate. This involves numerous variables at play, such as the design concerning a normative framework, the involvement of a network of actors also concerning the possibility of accessing a network of funding. These criteria then become constraints, real and true stakes that delimit a path that is never linear, but which marks that can be taken as an instrument.

7. CONCLUSION?

This research work constitutes an experimental investigation, through different levels and methodologies, of a way of “doing architecture” in a specific context, which was not so clear and visible.

The initial question leads to suspending the narrative in another dimension. The assumptions from which we move see architecture in China as something else, sometimes even with a judgmental look, as an alternative approach. From a complex and intricate phenomenon, analyzed only through a few lenses and rarely through its folds.

There is an aspect that passes under the lines of this work; that is, the peculiarity of a project that does not want to find a cure at all costs but wants to measure itself against a reality, compete and innovate. Indeed, the outcome here is to measure the project’s ability to measure itself against a complex and unexplored operation, capable of challenging the inner figure of architects (and its future).

The simulation game (within the same simulation of a dissertation) constitutes a tool to try to define possible futures for the case study or others, but at the same time it attempts to propose an approach to professional practice, which is not limited to providing spatial solutions, or at least not exclusively, but to confronting objects that are not static and unambiguously defined, but rather continually traversed by an interweaving of socio-institutional, as well as spatial and technical, relationships. Inevitable is the reference to design methodology, which is the subject of reflection here. Ultimately, the entire research work and the articulation of the project proposal constitute a kind of game of continually questioning what strategy to employ, how to carry out the project and how to do it.

References

1. Latour B., (2005) Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory, Oxford
2. University Press, Oxford -New York
3. Yaneva A. (2012), Mapping Controversies in Architecture, Routledge
4. Armando A., Durbiano G., (2017) Teoria del progetto architettonico. Dai disegni
5. agli effetti, Carrocci Editore, Roma
6. Schon., D.A. The reflective practitioner. How professional think in action, Ashgate, 1983
7. Cristopher, A. (1979) The timeless way of building. Oxford New York, University Press
8. Khun, T. (1970) The Structure of scientific revolutions, Chicago University Press
9. Rittel, H.W.J. (1980) Thinking Design, Transdisciplinary concept for planet and earth
10. Frichot, H., (2018), Creative Ecologies, Theorising the Practice of Architecture, Bloomsbury
11. Till.J, (2007) Architecture Depends, Cambridge, MIT press
12. Callon M. (1984), Some elements of a sociology of translation
13. Cuff, D., (1991) The story of a practice, MIT Press
14. Gabetti R. (1997) Imparare l'architettura. Scritti scelti sul sapere architettonico, Allemandi
15. Deamer, P. (2005). Branding the Architectural Author. Perspecta, 37, 42–49.
16. Deamer, P. (2011). Practicing Practice. Perspecta, 44, 160–203.
17. Santi, E. (2022). "Redesigning the Rural. System Thinking and China's Agrarian Modernization." in PLATFORM
18. Guanghui Ding. (2014). "Experimental Architecture" in China. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 73(1), 28–3
19. Ding, Guanghui. "Reformulating a Critical Process: Architectural Exhibitions in the Journal
20. Time + Architecture." Time Architecture 1 (2019): 178-181
21. Santi, E (2017), Uncertainty and design practice in China. The apparatus of Shanghai Experimental
22. Architecture, Journal of Architecture and Urbanism, 120-128
    Santi, E. (2016), Il 'dispositivo"dell' architettura sperimentale cinese. Identita e soft power nell'era del sogno cinese", in Territorio, 131-140
23. Dijia C., On the (Mis)Use of Critical Discourse in Architecture: "Experimental Criticism" and its Entanglement with Postreform Art Movement in China Fung, Stanislaus. "Orientation: Notes on Architectural Criticism and Contemporary China." Journal of Architectural Education 62, no. 3 (2009): 16-96
24. Zhu, Tao. "The 'Criticality' Debate in the West and the Architectural Situation in China: Thoughts on the Essay 'Criticality in between China and the West'". Time + Architecture 91, no.5 (2006): 71-78
25. Zhu, Tao. "Rethinking on 'Toward a Civil Architecture.'" Domus China 51, no.3 (2011), 172–173.
26. Zhu J., (2009), Architecture of Modern China A Historical Critique, Routledge
27. Xue, C. Q., Wang, Z., & Mitchenere, B. (2010). In search of identity: the development process of the National Grand Theatre in Beijing, China. The Journal of Architecture, 15(4), 517–5.
28. Xue, C. Q., Guanghui D., The history of Design Institutes in China: From Mao to Market
29. Li, X. (2000.) 'The Celebration of Superficiality: Chinese Architecture since 1979'. The Journal of Architecture 5 (4): 391–409.
30. Li. X. (2002). 'The Aesthetic of the Absent The Chinese Conception of Space'. The Journal of Architecture 7 (1): 87–101.
31. Boyd A (1 962) Chinese architecture and town planning: 1500 B. C. -A.D. 1911. Chicago, IL: Chicago Press
32. Fu X, Steinhardt NS (2002) Chinese architecture. London
33. Lai D (1993c) Some facts on the history of modern China architectural education (Chinese). Jianzhushi 55:86
34. Tianji, X, N.J.Smith, D.A.Bower, A.S.Chew (2004) Development Strategies for Chinese Design Institutes, Article in Journal of Management in Engineering
35. Ren, X. (2008). Architecture and China's urban revolution. City 12, 217–225.
36. Shiqiao, L. (2008). Mediated Architecture in China. Architectural Theory Review, 13(2), 240–253.
37. Abramson, D. B. (2008). Haussmann and Le Corbusier in China: Land Control and the Design of Streets in Urban Redevelopment. Journal of Urban Design,13(2), 231–256.
38. Ah, S. (2010). Study on property management innovation in China of harmonious society. In The 2nd International Conference on Information Science and Engineering (p. 3145–3148).

39. Armando, A. & Carota, F. (2019). High Rise Apartments. In Bonino, M., Governa, F., Repellino, M. P., & Sampieri, A. (eds.). The City After Chinese New Towns. Basel: Birkhauser.

40. Charmes, E. (2012). Gated Communities. Social Sustainability in Contemporary and Historical Gated Development. Journal of Urban Design 17, 455–457.

41. Chen, A. (1998). China's urban housing market development: Problems and prospects. Journal of Contemporary China, 7(17), 43–60.

42. Chen, F. (2011). Traditional architectural forms in market oriented Chinese cities: Place for localities or symbol of culture? Habitat International 35, 410–418.

43. Chen, J., & Han, X. (2014). The Evolution of the Housing Market and Its Socioeconomic Impacts in the Post-Reform People's Republic of China: A Survey of the Literature. Journal of Economic Surveys, 28(4), 652–670.

44. Davis, D. (2000). Introduction: A Revolution in Consumption. In Davis, D. (ed) (2000). The Consumer Revolution in Urban China. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press.

45. Duthie, L. (2005). White Collars with Chinese Characteristics: Global Capitalism and the Formation of a Social Identity. Anthropology of Work Review, 26(3), 1–12.

46. Economist Intelligence Unit. (2005). Domestic companies in China: Taking on the competition. London (UK): Author

47. Goodman, D. S. G. (2014). Middle Class China: Dreams and Aspirations. Journal of Chinese Political Science, 19(1), 49–67.

48. He, S., & Qian, J. (2017). From an emerging market to a multifaceted urban society: Urban China studies. Urban Studies, 54(4), 827–846

49. He, S., & Wu, F. (2009). China's emerging neoliberal urbanism: Perspectives from urban redevelopment. Antipode, 41(2), 282–304

50. Huque, A. S. (2005). Shifting emphasis in the role of the state: Urban housing reform in China. Asian Journal of Political Science, 13(2), 53–74.

51. Jenkins, P., & McLachlan, F. (2010). Is there a rôle for architects in mainstream private sector house building? The Journal of Architecture, 15(2), 153–180.

10th July, 2021

I'll be eternally grateful

To my super-supervisors,

To Martijn,
For his proactive view which he leads to transmit me,
for challenging me with always new tasks,
for never stop exploring,
for pushing me to act confidently

To Alessandro,
For having followed my academic path by my side, until the end and its future development, for feeding me continuously with languages, methods and knowledges and leave me the freedom to make errors.

To Camilla,
A friend, a mate, a colleague,
for protecting my positivity and preserving my curiosity with all the means she has,
for the moments we shared and we constructed, imagining a place we've never visited

To Tommaso,
For his inner and spontaneous philosophical method,
for questioning, demolishing and reconstructed thoughts and opinions with the same ability of the architect who shapes building.

To Valeria,
for teaching me how to descern

To Luis,
for the cat and the life we shared

To Lavinia, Giorgia, Flavia and Mariateresa,
for our daily routine, made of tasty coffee, for giving colors to my life and helping me find the way when I get in the darkness of our corridor

To Chiara and Martina,

To Flavia,
to remind me when to say enough

To Rita and Stefano,
for being alive togehter, even if with a brain damage
To Mariza and Irida,
for their friendship made of project

To Lucia,
for listening me everywhere and anytime

To Enrica,
for her determination

To Camilla,
for motivating me

To Imma and Annagloria,
for admiring me and for being a safe place

To Marco,
and everything we live

To Virginia, Valentina, Caterina, Erica and Francesca,
for being the closest definition to Home

To Francesco,
for being the constant variable to my life equation

To Tommaso, or I would rather say Luigi,
and to all the experimental artists

To my family,
my Dad,
from which I inherited a stakanovist attitude

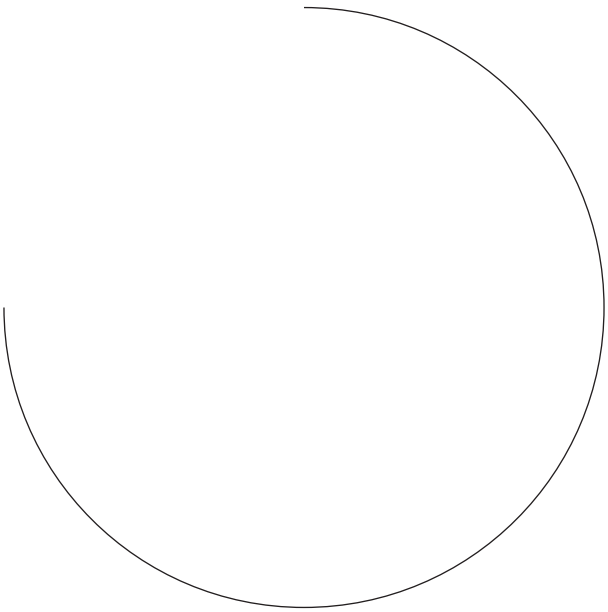
my Mum,
the creative side of my brain

my Grandma,
the one and only who knows how to face me.

my Grandad,
to which I dedicate my work,
for basically everything.

To the Great Game and its team,
for teaching me how to stay in a game made of trouble

To Terra Viva,
for constructing an alternative practice, giving voices to those who haven't

To the Why Mag,
To make me believe in the future

To all the project I made
and I will always imagine to do.