

Waalwijk(NL)

NOTES ON THE PROJECT

We find ourselves in a moment when already a lot has been produced. In front of a big collection of objects, ideas and lifestyles, the cultural products are starting to develop intensively rather than extensively as before, curatorial with the existent rather than creating from scratch. How do you build without adding more, but to frame the existent? How to create hyphens rather than new words?

Regarding these observations, we propose **four main points**:

- to free the ground for a more seamless movement, connectivity and experience

-to choose, or “curate”, prefabricated elements in the production of the buildings

-to create a blend between the character of the infrastructure, the built spaces and the nature

-to project with respect to the environmental needs

All these points were thought to generate architecture, but behind that, there is the spontaneous life of the inhabitants that is giving meaning to these hollow structures.

The project area was divided for a better clarity into four tangent circles, showing the zoning and the connectivity between the zones.

CIRCLE 01

The series of unoccupied plots in the proximity of the highway poses the strong quality of being liminal. No longer empty spaces but not yet totally intentional - this in-between state is giving them a character we saw as valuable for this area, the reason why we sought to keep it green. **Assuming this open character and its imperfection, the potential of the free, vegetal, spaces can be seen in their very realism, starting from that point forward.**

By articulating spaces and passages with bridges, small pavilions scattered around and natural elements such as stone boulders or wood logs structures, the green space is slowly becoming a park.

The proposal is envisioning the growing in diversity and in density of the local species of plants and trees and by this growth to highlight the vision of a heritage and history other than built - a vegetal one.

The places to eat, take a pause and play or walk are infusing the logistic working area with its unhidden spatial potential and are connecting the northern part of the highway with the southern one. A bridge that acts like a planted garden is doubling the viaduct and is taking the proposed “logistics park” over the A59 motorway.

CIRCLE 02

The garden-bridge is extending the pedestrian path of the viaduct, completing the place to walk and drive by a place to stay - an infra-

structural place of rest between the plants, with a perspective over the A59 motorway, towards the sunset. **The bridge was seen as an infrastructural contingency that could be revitalized and upgraded by this extension.** We chose the left side of the viaduct for this extension for minimizing the uneasy crossing over the car lanes - the crossing is made under the viaduct, from a gangway that opens up and ends directly over the “Taxandriaweg”. At the end of the gangway, a prefabricated structure is proposed as a temporary parking which will be phased out by disassembling the stories one by one in the course of ten years. The position of the parking was chosen to have a minimal distance accessed by the cars inside the site. Both parts of the “Heulstraat” are proposed to be closed for the car access and to be replaced by pedestrian paths and green areas.

Thinking about the need of limiting the noise coming from the motorway and in the same time keeping a visual connection with the other side of the road, we propose the addition of a hill between “Taxandriaweg” and the A59 motorway, made by the excavated soil from the foundation of the proposed buildings.

CIRCLE 03

A demineralization process is following two requirements - the high accessibility of the site and the enhancement of the diversity and the density of the flora. The answer we propose is a porous, partially stabilized sand, which allows the free

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transit of people, attaining naturally made routes known as “desire paths”. In the same time, the porous material lets the water to drain naturally into the soil and allows the plants to grow. For this phase, we propose a dry landscape that is citing the sand-hills landscape found in the proximity of the area.



This seamless soil is accessing the entire site, flowing under the apartment building risen above the ground on pillars. Like a public portico facing the sandy square with a community-used structure, the building is covering common places to play, rest and other common facilities.

A first connection with the rest of the city center is highlighting the already-used path made on the “Poststraat” by proposing a bridge over the “Winterdijk”. A second connection is proposed by using the empty plot at the “Winterdijk” street and dismantling the existing store at the “Grotestraat”. By this act, a larger connection with pedestrian paths and green areas is giving back to the city center its last part.

CIRCLE 04

The well-known european morphology of the cities is facilitating the enjoyment of the public squares and plazas to the pedestrians. In most of the cities, the heritage urban spaces are kept at distance from the infrastructural elements of transport or production, which are pushed to the edge.

With regard to a more seamless vision of the blend between infrastructure and the existing morphology, between the historical types of spaces and the sharp infrastructural needs, we propose a “bus square”.



The transition from asphalt to a smoother surface and the enclosing of the space by the buildings porticos, is envisioned to be “the hand-shake” of the city center for the new-comers and for the inhabitants.

The bus station is assumed as taking place into the project site, being connected to the city center by a direct path. Here, the community spaces and the community planting gardens are placed in the proximity of the administration building.

A third connection of the site with the rest of the city center is taking into account the earlier proposal of dismantling the existing small buildings and creating a wider pedestrian-and-greenery space, completed by a housing project.

ARCHITECTURE, FRAME, INFRASTRUCTURE

We saw an opportunity to research the typology of the apartment and to search a possible enhancement of it. The housing modules are accessed from a suspended walkway, working as a “street”. We chose to research this typology as a blend between the regular apartments and the houses that can be found in the area of Waalwijk.



The conclusion got the shape of a house module separated on two floors, which can be used as a whole with two levels or as a single-unit apartment on each floor. We sought a connection between the seriality of this type of living and the culture of the place, by subdividing the living modules and offering the possibility to share a house. An extension of the building is

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holding common spaces that can be used by the inhabitants or by the workers in the logistics area, together.

If we envision a future which has seamless spaces, connections, informations or blended qualities, a possible built answer could be an architecture that acts like a “frame”.

Rather than adding another “world”, a “frame” would enhance the existing specificities of the site by facilitating the movement, connectivity and transforming spontaneous encounters into events, as a second life of the same place. An architecture seen as an infrastructural device of connection.

By this, the scale of proximity, made impossible by the traffic lanes and the infrastructural ruptures, can be renewed.

The building we propose is rather ordering movements than coming with a newness. In a space seen as being liminal, not completely infrastructural and not completely natural, the proposed building is seen as a hyphen which is taming the opposites.



On a free ground, the natural-

ized and demineralized space is seen as a common ground for the human and the non-human, bringing together the potential of the peoples movement with the potential of the vegetal growth through time. And the building stands still above it.

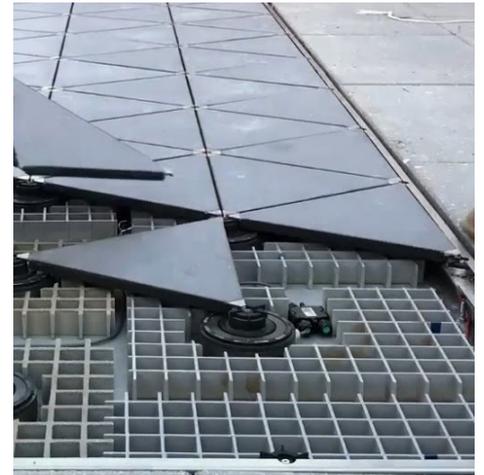
MOVEMENT

The main reason of the free space and the decisions taken in the design were made to facilitate the movement. The bike lanes and the pedestrian paths are brought together with the public transport, acting as a space free of constrains but ordered by the proposal.



TOWARDS AN ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS

We saw the movement as a first way of making a building as an energy-production device. The suspended walkways are covered by a system of energy producing floor. By the pression of the people walking, the floor is generating electricity which is provided to the entire building.



We saw the technical elements as parts of the architecture, and by mounting on the top of each pillar axis a blade-less windmill, we sought to highlight this. The electricity produced by the walkway floor and by the windmills is stored in batteries in the technical space under a sand dune, in the ground. A planting garden for the community is proposed on the ground floor. By a stair, it is connected with a wider garden on the terrace of the building. All the technical parts are on the laterals of the building.



By this, we sought a way to involve the inhabitants of Waalwijk and to emerge their activities into

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the new proposal, involving them into the ecological transition of the area.

CONSTRUCTION PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The project was thought divided into **three phases**: the preparation of the site, the building process and the phasing of the usage.

An initial phase of demineralization of the site is propose to be the starting point of the project. In this phase will be chosen existing parts of the context that would be enhanced by the project and also the parts that will be removed or relocated. This phase is forseen to take one month.

The second phase is taking into account the new interventions on the site. At first, the foundation ditch for the buildings will be created. The excavated soil is proposed to be used for creating a hill between the “Taxandriaweg” and the motorway, functioning as a noise barrier for the site.

The construction of the two proposed buildings are made of prefabricated concrete elements, making the construction faster. By mounting ready-made elements directly on site, the air pollution made by the dust and the handling of the concrete powder is limited. The prefabricated foundations are mounted together with the pillars and the columns, supporting prefabricated slabs for each apartment. The proposal is taking into account the resistance through time of the concrete but also the environmental impact. The concrete use is limit-

ed to this structure. This phase is forseen to take between 4 and 6 months to be realized.

The apartment building has two types of vertical enclosings. On one side, rammed earth walls are dividing each apartment. This environmentally friendly material is thought as being suitable for the project regarding the clay and sand resources that can be find in



These two elements are mixed with gravel and silt in order to produce prefabricated elements mounted in the concrete structure. The production of the rammed earth walls is forseen to take two months and the curing of each wall, 28 days. A total of two months are forseen for this phase.

The building is proposed to work as a device of sheltering and in the same time of producing energy. For the mounting and integrating of these systems are forseen two months.

A total of 8 months of construction is forseen in order to get the building ready.

The third phase is spanning over 10 years the usage of a parking build-

ing. In the first year, a structure is sheltering 350 parking places. In a period of 3 to 5 years, the height of the building will be lowered to shelter 260 and in 5 to 10 years to keep 80.



After ten years, the parking building would reach only one level, making it suitable to be translated into a common space or removed completely.



Because the structure is made by the same prefabricated elements as the apartment building, the dismantle would be facilitated with ease.

We thought of an architecture as infrastructure, as a frame for the human life that is taking place in the nature.