Why should one care about such a shack and its final five years?

An interdisciplinary project at the intersection of education, research, design and practice – The University of Neighbourhoods [UdN]

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[1] http://www.iba-hamburg.de/service/pressebereich/pressemitteilung-detailansicht/presseartikel/iba-hamburg-wagt-grossen-sprung-ins-jahr-2013.html -> 23.08.2013.

Hamburg Wilhelmsburg is located on the Elbe Islands, which is the second largest inhabited river island after Manhattan.[1] It houses approximately 55.000 people. Embraced by the river Elbe, the district is not well connected to the centre of Hamburg despite its proximity, and has instead become associated with harbour facilities, working class, immigrants and disused industrial sites. In 2007 the Municipality of Hamburg established the International Building Exhibition Hamburg 2013 (IBA Hamburg) in order to regenerate the area. The neighbourhood therefore is undergoing a dramatic change, which provokes an ambivalent situation and a point of departure for discussing and re-considering contemporary practices of planning and urban design as well as the role of education.

2   The partners of UdN were the
    International Building Exhibition
    Hamburg 2013 (IBA Hamburg 2013),
    a city-development tool in Germany
    that combines political and private
    interests, with federal, communal
    and private money, and Kampnagel
    Internationale Kulturfabrik – Hamburg,
    a performing arts and theatre centre.

3   According to Serres, a Randonneé is a
    procedure of odyssey, which initially
    does not seek the connection between
    two points, nor the confirmation of
    an argument nor to solve a problem,
    but rather a situational embarking on
    a journey of discovery, which walks
    through the field of examination
    physically, as well as through texts
    and theories (cf. Serres 2008).

4   A "take" is a term used in music recording
    or film production. We understand
    "takes" as variations of the approach,
    experimental set-ups and research
    questions, each one with a shift in
    the parameters of the tools, methods,
    circumstances or questions regarding a
    common subject, leading to a catalogue of
    patterns of options and possibilities, and
    the discovery of blind-spots in the field.

5   "Messy" and "Multi-Voiced" refer to a
    form of ethnographic text that,supports
    a process of open-end dialogical
    ethnographic work. Messy texts seek
    to engage reader and writer mutually.
    As Denzin writes with reference to
    Marcus, 'Messy texts are many sited,
    intertextual, always open ended, and
    resistant to theoretical holisms, […]
    they are always multivoiced, and no
    given interpretation is previleged.'
    Norman K. Denzin, Interpretive
    Ethnography, (Sage, 1997) p. xvii, 224.

Introduction

The "University of Neighbourhoods" (UdN) was established in this context as an experimental set up by the Urban Design faculty of the HafenCity University (HCU) Hamburg, in cooperation with the IBA Hamburg and Kampnagel[2] to develop and test contemporary forms of pedagogy at the intersection of culture, knowledge and urban development.
The project put topics and questions from the fields of education, urban research and design into practice. It investigated urban design as a series of processes of transformation that are concerned with the architectural, social, cultural and economic fabric of the contemporary European city. Bringing back to life and appropriating a disused building, the project used the 1:1 scale to test an architectural low-budget transformation through the means of programme, usage and relation to the neighbourhood.

A Randonneé[3] in 27 of n Takes[4]

This text discusses some of the issues raised through and in the UdN with a particular focus on the role of pedagogy in spatial disciplines. It brings up, in a series of takes and interludes, a variety of projects that have been conducted within the UdN together with students, teaching staff, artists, professionals and interested neighbours: the "Intercultural kitchen" (since 2009), the "Wilhelmsburg Orchestra" (since 2009), organizing a local soccer tournament (2010), the "Ghettoakademie" (Theatre and Performance since 2010), urban gardening in an adjacent public park (2011-2013), the "MADE IN Workshop" (2011), The Cairo

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Urban Transformation Neighbourhood Workshop (2012) and the "UdN Summercamps" (2011-2013), the International Summerschools (2009-2011), and, finally, the "Hotel?Wilhelmsburg" Project composed of 11 International Building Workshops (2012-2013).

Rather than aiming for conclusions, however, this text is meant to open up the field for interpretation and conversation. To reflect this approach, we have therefore decided to use the form of a "messy" and "multi-voiced"[5] text. These multifaceted perspectives and polyphonic voices derive from several loops and iterations of our research in practice over the past five years.[6]

6   "Like crystals, Eisenstein's montage, the jazz solo, or the pieces in a quilt." (Denzin/Lincoln 2005), p. 6. This text samples a bricolage of approaches.

Take #0.0: Context

Elbinsel Wilhelmsburg, beyond the official Hamburg map. South of Hamburg harbour. Reiherstieg district. Here, where in February 1962 the flood broke the dikes. A bricolage of Gründerzeit perimeter developments

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sintered-bricks of the thirties and bare frugality of German federal post-war architecture. Styrofoam-wrapped and repainted, interspersed with World War II bunkers, single family homes, small business- and workshop-buildings, overgrown industrial areas, storage containers, trucks, dikes and canals. Politically neglected during the 1970s. Today, the district of arrival, a place to live and work for people from 158 different nations. Expensive cars, deep poverty, colourful, noisy, vivid 24/7. Hopes, imaginations, satellite dishes. Only twenty minutes to the main railway station, but far away from the "Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg".

Amidst this assemblage, hidden in dense wild greenery, an ordinary one-story building from the 1950s built and used as a residential home for unwed women. Then, for a long time, it was the district's health department. Still as such in the awareness of the neighbourhood, although it was withdrawn from formal use more than 15 years ago. A shack without any function, in a state of complete neglect caused by vandalism over the years: broken windows, garbage, no electricity, water or heating. The owner has given it an expiry date. At the end of 2013 the site will be cleared of all structural remains.

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Take #0.1: The Joint Venture

In 2007 a student competition was launched by the IBA, entitled "Experiment on the Island".[7] The brief asked for a design for the "temporary use of the empty premises of the former health authority building as an IBA Exhibition Pavilion".[8] But it wasn't quite clear what for. Most submissions to the competition proposed tabula rasa: the demolition of the building and the building of a new structure. Not the winning one, which proposed a strategy of architectural transformation of the

7   http://www.iba-hamburg.de/service/
     pressebereich/pressemitteilung-
     detailansicht/presseartikel/
     experiment-auf-der-insel-
     studentenwettbewerb-entschieden.html
8   Ibid. (all quotes from the
     competition brief)

9   The winning team of the competition:
     Kate Bitz (Stadtplanung),
     Carsten Dittus (Stadtplanung),
     Maximilian Müller (Stadtplanung),
     Nicole Raddatz (Stadtplanung),
     Anton Reinig (Architektur)

10   The Universität der Nachbarschaften
     (UdN) was initiated by professors
     Christopher Dell, Bernd Kniess and
     Michael Koch, directed by Bernd Kniess
     and managed by Ben Becker (project
     development, construction, coordination
     and teaching) and Stefanie Gernert
     (project coordination and translation
     between various stakeholders, institutions
     and participants). Innumerable
     everyday life experts, academics,
     neighbours, students, guests and
     visitors were involved as participants,
     critics, contributors, and users.
         Simultaneously we (Bernd
     Kniess and colleagues) developed and
     implemented the new interdisciplinary
     Master of Science program in Urban
     Design at the HCU, which is aimed
     not only at architects, planners,
     landscape architects and -planners,
     but also at geographers, sociologists,
     social- and cultural scientists, designers
     and others interested in researching
     and (re-)designing the city. See
     also: http://ud.hcu-hamburg.de

11   Christopher Dell, Bernd Kniess and
     Michael Koch, directed by Bernd Kniess
     and managed by Ben Becker (project
     development, construction, coordination
     and teaching) and Stefanie Gernert
     (project coordination and translation
     between various stakeholders, institutions
     and participants). Innumerable everyday
     life experts, academics, neighbours,
     students, guests and visitors were involved
     as participants, critics, contributors, users.

12   Author: Benjamin Becker from the
     UdN-construction diary 26.05.2010,
     Scribe: H. Verse; Temperature: 20 ° C
     / Weather: rainy; Construction team:
     Kristina, Hannah, Romano, Nico;
     Machines used: Bosch impact drill,
     demolition hammer, crowbar; Work
     accomplished: chiselling walls in the
     hallway to the apartment (Quantity:
     2, Completed: 18.00), remove rubble,
     further chiselling with Mr. B.; Materials:
     -; Remarks: The berserker guys are free.
     Mrs. Lorenzen has twisted her ankles.

existing building and to work with local actors.[9] Even this proposal had its weakness in spending the whole budget with a professional architectural transformation at the beginning and still having no ideas of the uses, actors and a program for the given timeframe of five years.

The question arose, what is the program and use? Who are the actors and how do we find them? Which are their specific areas of interest?

Take #1: University as a Statement in the Neighbourhood

Besides the political will to establish a link between the IBA2013 and the newly founded HafenCity Universität, there was no specific aim nor an idea for a program to be implemented: rather the institutional cooperation was driven by a will for representation and a small amount of money for doing this. It was clear, however, that we would have the site for a period of five years.

Taking this up as an opportunity, we used the window between the building's final demolition, the island's accelerated urban transformation processes through the IBA and the different representational interests of the involved players (IBA, Kampnagel & HafenCity Universität) to initiate the project of a "Neighbourhoods University": a praxis-based laboratory for urban research and design.[10]

We, the group of initiators,[11] including teaching staff and students of a first seminar, started with some basic questions: What could university mean if it is situated in a neighbourhood? What is neighbourhood about? And what is the practice of being a neighbour? Not less and not more.

Take #1.1: Transforming

The project was launched claiming it would be a student project: designed, planned, built and used by students themselves. DIY, Hands on! Easy to say. But, how does one organize the work on a construction site, when there is limited scope for activities like this within the curricula of dense bachelor- and masters-programs? And, how to build for five years with an extremely limited budget and a wave of new students every term? How and where will we find support?

Take #1.1.1: CONSTRUCTION LOG1 [12]

"Actually, we want to chisel", Hannah and Kristina answer the question of which construction team they want to join. No problem. There is still

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a sufficient number of walls that need to be demolished. In the small-scale spatial structure of the former health department, holes, corridors, openings have to be broken. [...] the idea is now to get more transparency and openness exposing the spatial potentials for the diverse uses only by means of dismantling. With that, the contractually arranged demolition of the building is constantly anticipated, the »construction« at the Neighbourhoods University in that sense actually means the permanent partial demolition of the actual stock while qualifying its space. [...] Later, at the place where all routes intersect, where cooking and discussions already take place, a soft light will fall through a translucent roof, on which the shadows of the trees will be drawn.

At this moment a lot of imagination is required to conceive this. The Hamburg rain falls incessantly through the open ceiling into the building and collects in muddy puddles on the concrete floor. From the southwest wing of the building the deafening hammering of a drill roars. Hannah and Kristina have long since joined the team of Nicolas, and the berserk guys, working without ceasing on taking down the wall of the long stretched hallway, which should give way to a workshop and exhibition area. They call this free workout.

Take #1.1.2: Transforming

With the first spatial interventions, a process of "programmed shrinkage" and "revaluation" was developed, and the building was slowly transformed with a minimal amount of money, a high amount of volunteer work and the up-cycling of used materials from other construction sites, into a usable working and living space for students.

The construction and installation of the "Intercultural Kitchen" was one of the first programmatic settings in the UdN. It was the Dutch urbanist and artist Ton Matton[13] leading a workshop to support the arrangements for

[13]   See also: http://www.mattonoffice.org

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the opening, who asked the students for the sources of the required kitchen utensils such as cutlery, crockery and pots, when the principle of the swap was being tested for the first time. The items needed were not acquired by purchase, but exchanged in the neighbourhood for tomato plants. This barter was not only successful in terms of getting the entire range of kitchen equipment needed, but also in terms of inviting the neighbours for the opening party. They were curious to see who needed their items where and what for.

Take #1.2: Get in Touch!

We, the initiators, started the project claiming it would be an open process. We thought it should come into being by itself – by its actors, their interests, the activities, which would come out of this. It was the UdN's challenge and research task to establish how this openness could be shaped constructively and what kind of relational planning could be derived from it.

It all started in July 2009 with the opening to the public and the consolidation of four projects: the repossession of the building as a "site office" and the first usage of the whole building with three performance-based formats: the "Intercultural Kitchen" and "MusiCooperation" were the first projects initiated and arranged by the students, and the performance project "Shivers" by "God's Entertainment" as an initial cooperation with our partner "Kampnagel Internationale Kulturfabrik".

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14   The prelude was designed by the
     Vienna Performance Gang God's
     Entertainment. The parasitic journey
     into the interior environment. See:
     http://www.gods-entertainment.
     org/index.php/archiv/archiv-2009/
     hamburg-shivers-kampnagel-
     hamburg; accessed: 10.08.2013

Take #1.2.1: SHIVERS [14]

True to the motto "art as a pathogen" [God's Entertainment] are up to mischief in the building. From motives of the film "Shivers" by David Cronenberg, the entertainers develop a contagious performance-journey into their own inner and other unknown worlds. In the run-up odours and rumours are spread, that reflect symbolically the legitimate fears of the residents about gentrification in Wilhelmsburg. God's Entertainment is unleashed on Wilhelmsburg: contacts are made, complicities are forged and a post for vaccination against Antiismus is instituted. Youth projects, nursing homes, and the direct neighbourhood, as well as other artists can and should be "infected". Infected with the idea to revive the empty building again. This strategy is helpful as a kick-off for a series of performances in the building, since it breaks down boundaries in the mind. Without shield, with lots of charm and possibly a melon.

Take #1.3: Programming

We started the project by claiming the UdN as a construct, a superimposition of education, research and praxis. Together with the construction works, we started to create situations of (re)presentation, performance and mutual learning, to enable spaces of possibilities.

Figuring out the demands, learning about the potentials, and the challenges of the new location, we had to develop a special curriculum[15] to precisely address students from different bachelor and master programs according to their requirements.

15   Addressing the specific demands of
     bachelor and master studies and different
     disciplines with tailored seminars and
     examination requirements, internship
     opportunities and schedules.

The UdN became host to international workshops, seminars and research activities. Students and young professionals used the space for living

and working, focusing on urban and architectural topics related to Wilhelmsburg such as education, low-budget architecture, local embedded economy, re- and up-cycling of materials and social engagement in the neighbourhood.

With the conceptual term of "Ermöglichungsarchitektur" (enabling architecture), we attempted to reflect on these active processes, circumstances and their potentials.

## Take #2: Performance, Breaking-Up the Boundaries

A core aspect within the project was interculturality. Interculturality as "doing culture", as a culture of the intermediate (cf. Terkessidis 2010), as a negotiation, a "being-with" (Nancy 2000), as "a verb" (Street 1993), rather than a noun. But, this also raised the question of what participation means? And how to understand intervention?

Slowly, the boundaries and borders between 'us' and 'Wilhelmsburg' were perforated. Perforated through our own practices of being a neighbour: by going out, hanging out, and performing research and practices of the everyday. We practiced not only a design-approach, which was radically based on the existing, we also worked on hybrid and embedded methods of research and design.

Rather than a way of researching about something, or design for someone, but working within the field and with the actors.
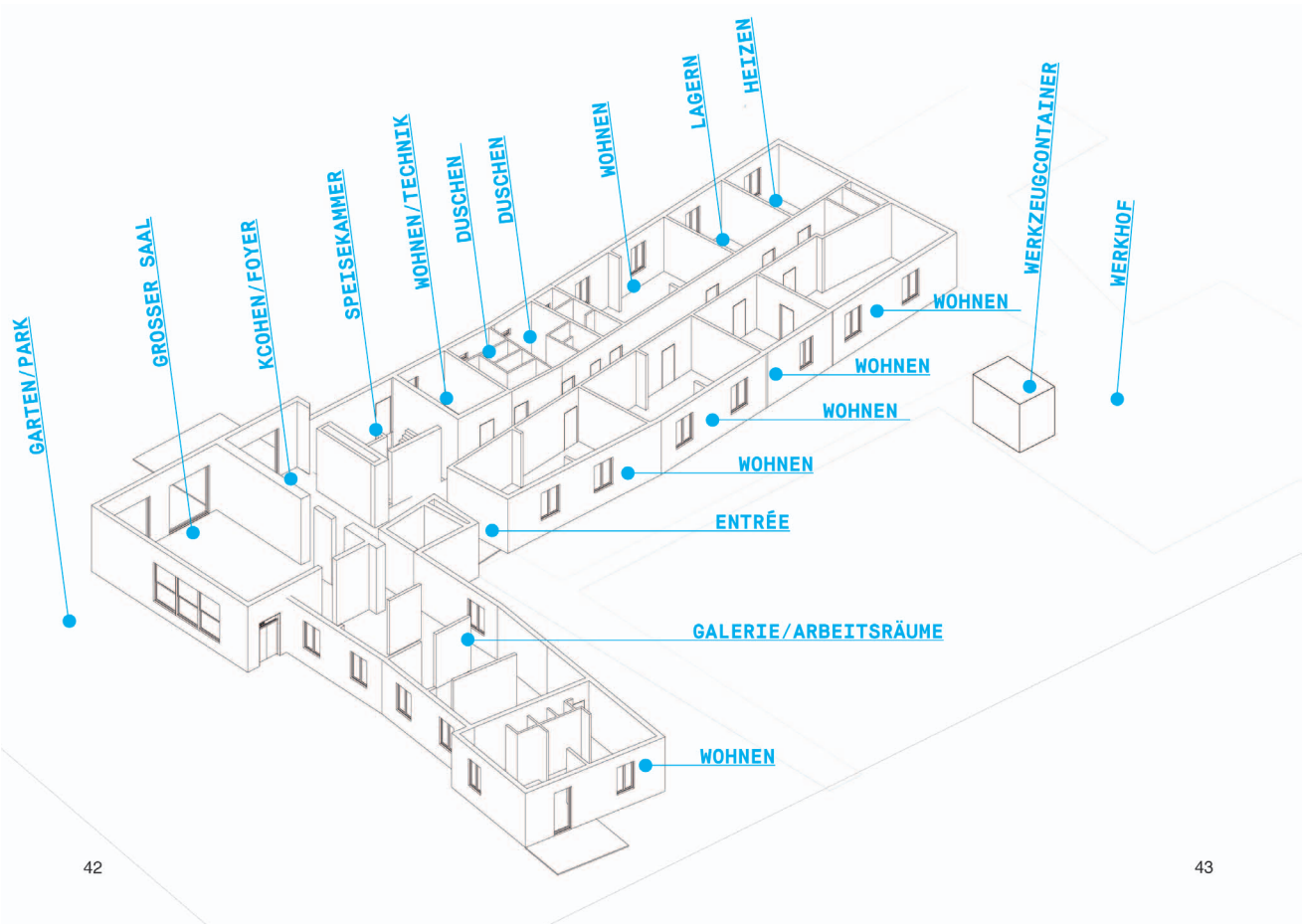
Due to their dynamic character, such processes do not proceed in a linear manner. But how, then, are we able to work with iterative and circular processes? How can we deal with the conflicting and diverging goals and interests? And, how is participation and intervention in these processes practiced?

16 "Made in... local practices of urban production" 2011 Workshop in cooperation with the Civic City program (ZHDK, Imke Plinta) and the Department of Urban Design at the HafenCity University Hamburg (HCU, Tabea Michaelis, Ben Pohl).
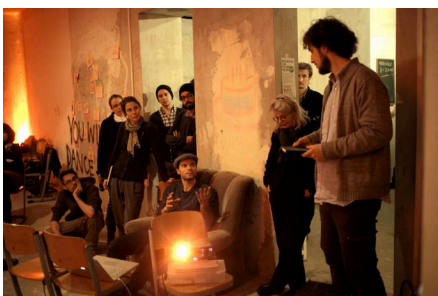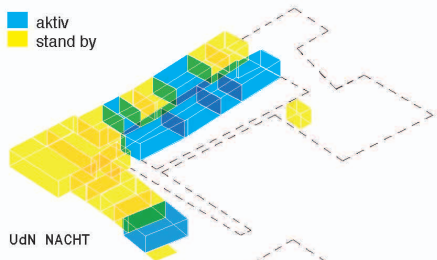

Take #2.1: Made in ... Elbinsel-Dérive [16]

We devised a workshop to test a transdisciplinary setting beyond the "creative city" on new economic, spatial and socio-cultural ideas to include the existing practical knowledge and the network of local "experts of everyday life" in the production processes of the present city. A broad range of methods, spanning from artistic research and intervention practices to ethnographic research tools where used and discussed. The laboratory's open "kitchen-salon" became a place of controversy, discussions, work, joy and revelling between strangers and neighbours.
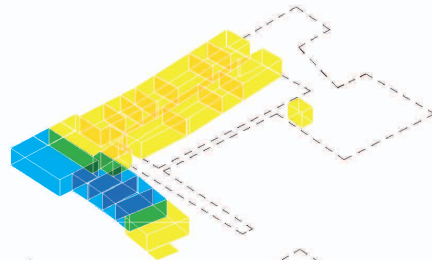
GARTEN/PARK

GROSSER SAAL

KCOHEN/FOYER

SPEISEKAMMER

WOHNEN/TECHNIK

DUSCHEN

DUSCHEN

WOHNEN

LAGERN

HEIZEN

WERKZEUGCONTAINER

WERKHOF

WOHNEN

WOHNEN

WOHNEN

WOHNEN

ENTRÉE

GALERIE/ARBEITSRÄUME

WOHNEN

42

43
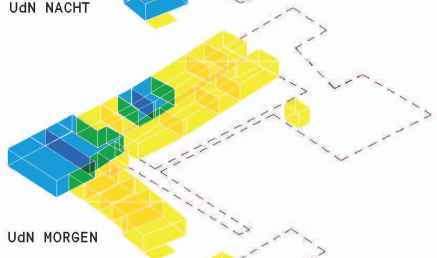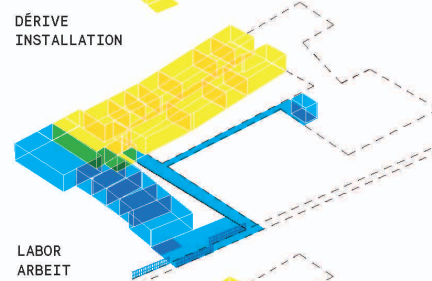
aktiv
stand by

UdN NACHT

DÉRIVE
INSTALLATION

UdN MORGEN

LABOR
ARBEIT
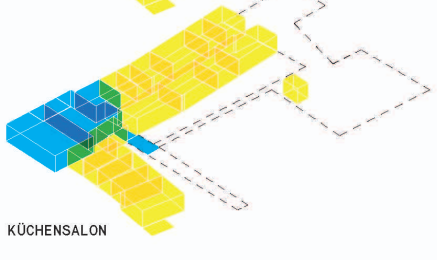
KÜCHENSALON

VERNISSAGE

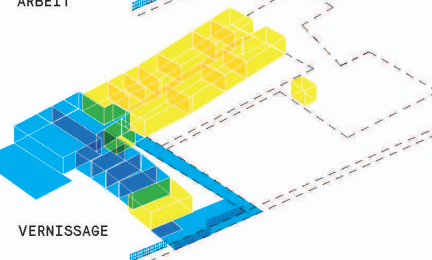Why should one care about such a shack and its final five years? Bernd Kniess & Ben Pohl

Take #2.1.1: Altes Land

We make connections with people through apples: we exchange apples for stories. Stories […] served with home-distilled apple schnapps. Sweet. Spicy. Now we know their whole life story. It burns. […] Hitchhiking back to UdN - by car? […] We play tourist. […] "Where does it go to Wilhelmsburg?" Silence. "From the Reeperbahn through the old Elbtunnel." Aha. So get down to the port area. It is loud. Hammering. Machine booming —the port. Hamburg's motor hums. Nobody's on the other side. We remain standing. Waiting, waiting for nothing. Blind alleys —many dead ends. Roads lead to nowhere. We're stuck. Apparently this belongs to the game. Method in the process. Deadlock. We need new rules of the game - if no one comes over here. We have lost ourselves - lost in the urban space. We are lost, are we? We hear the city, but there is none. Hello is anyone there?[17]

[17] Author: Tabea Michaelis based on comments and notes of the "Made in …" workshop participants 2011 at UdN.

[18] A Seminar in cooperation with the artist Jan Holtmann and the Art&SportsClub Wilhelmsburg. 2010.

[19] Author: Meghan McAllister. This is an extract of the Reflection Paper written by Meghan McAllister. She studied Growth & Structure of Cities at the Haverford College nearby Philadelphia. Meghan McAllister took part at various projects at the curriculum of the UdN as an exchange student during the summer of 2010.

Take #2.2: The Game with Rules and Regulators – Parameter-Shift[18]

During the World Cup 2010 in South Africa, the questions our students were facing concerned the basic principles and rules of soccer. What are the components of a game? If one component changes completely, what else has to be changed so that it will still be a good soccer match?

Take #2.2.1: The football tournament

The soccer tournament was essentially a series of diagrams that provoked the participating neighbours and students to think about soccer in a different way, while also sparking them to come together through the universal language of the game. The diagrams allowed the fields to become new interstitial spaces that were neutral, yet very much physically part of the Wilhelmsburg landscape. Many may think that the tournament could not be considered design because it did not have a concrete and tangible product. However, the soccer tournament's minimal physical product allowed for the diagram and social purpose of the design not to lose any meaning along the way, as often happens when incorporated into large physical infrastructure. The minimally constructed product facilitated the users to interact directly with the essence of the design solution: the participants consciously played out the diagrams within their urban landscape. Lastly, the lack of a constructed product allowed the solution to be local and perpetual. These new fields and rules were comical, fun and visually striking in order to attract attention and bring together the widespread and diverse Wilhelmsburg community with something that was loved and understood by all: Football.[19]

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[20] The "Treehouse" projects, which ran between 2010 and 2013, asked how children can participate directly in the planning and design processes in their neighbourhood through interventions. The "Treehouse-Seminar" was part of a series named "intercultural practice", which aims to encourage students to focus on those areas and situations in which culture introduces "symbolic equilibriums, compensatory contracts and more or less permanent compromises" (de Certeau). Seminar-concept: Bernd Kniess, Benjamin Becker, Philipp Löper

Take #2.3: Hang On![20]

As a free leisure opportunity for kids during their summer holidays, the "UdN summer camp" addresses children from the neighbourhood. For a period of two weeks it means rolling up your sleeves, getting ideas, sawing, hammering, drilling, crafting, knitting, winding, climbing, cooking and having fun. In a playful way children and students together learn to deal with different materials while they are testing them hands-on.

The building process is similar to a 'real' construction site. In a first step, children have to collect information about the imagined clients, their characters, circumstances of life and special likes as inputs for their design. It is in this playful way that shape is derived from an experimental working process incorporating the children´s motion sequences as well as knowledge from tests with recycled and contextually foreign materials.

Take #2.3.1:

"From plastic foil one makes bags, not houses", the eleven-year old Aisha had objected with a shake of her head at the first day of the summer camp. In search of suitable building materials they had just found a big

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pile of tarpaulins in the attic. Cut into long strips, it seems like the perfect material for knitting a resilient tissue. But: How to knit a tree house with children? With a Knitting Jenny. However, no ordinary one for wool stockings, but an XXL-version of it, with a diameter of six feet. Once one of those had been built, a gigantic, endless mesh tube of plastic could be produced with a flick of a wrist. It is so simple, even a child can master it quickly.

On the final day of the summer camp Alberta Rachnea, the spider woman, wearing a black morphsuit and pink strainer eyes, arrives at the UdN to move into her silkmoth treehouse. By then, Aisha's legitimate discontent is long forgotten. Every day now children hang out in the tress, playing in their tree houses – if asked who were the designers that built them, almost all of them will tell you the names of the kids involved.[21]

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[21]   Author: Benjamin Becker,
        2013 "Hang On!"

[22]   Author: Tabea Michaelis Team: Sarah Assel, Tabea Michaelis, Vanessa Weber Seminar Urban Territories II: Katja Heineke, Katrin Klitzke Seminar Topic: Intervention and Participation

Take #2.4: I am waiting for... [22]

During our first joint Dérive on the Elbe Island, it did not take long for us to observe that many actors or "actants" (Latour) were waiting, and this was being expressed in very different ways. The entire island was apparently in a permanent waiting queue. "But what are they waiting for ...?" A starting point to begin the research. An obvious setting for our project seemed a place of the everyday waiting - the bus stop. "I am waiting for ..." we translated the sentence into the local languages spoken and written on coloured post-its. We experienced different reactions and moments immediately upon hanging up the post-its at the bus stop. Also later we observed the reactions when we softly mingled as "participating observers" amongst those waiting. The four parameters post-it, the sentence, "I am waiting for ..." finally in almost 20 languages, and the pen, we consider as supportive "tools", that brought our actions in variable sequences. There was no script in advance. Rather the actions and reactions of the various actors are the "raw material" with which we work in a situational way. There were many options to participate in the game and to direct the intervention in an unexpected direction. The bus timetable became a basic rhythm for our performance. Within a few seconds, the bus stop emptied, only to fill up again. As a result, we got into contact with people – the length of this contact depending on when the next bus arrived. People of different ages or origins spoke to us spontaneously and curiously. In some situations, the language formed an insurmountable barrier, but in others we listened to personal stories and voices. In the course of our artistic intervention, this easily ludic and direct interaction appeared very significant to us. The answers to our question (Nintendo, my mother, Hope, Love, my bed, etc.) reflected the local sentiments. [...] The post-its then eventually disappeared slowly, silently and without a trace of their ephemeral nature.

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[23] The Wilhelmsburg orchestra was founded in 2010 by the jazz musician, composer and improvisation theorist Christopher Dell – conceived as a research orchestra within the curriculum of the UdN. The goal is to practice improvisation – not to perform a preconceived plan. Improvisation does not mean working with incapability but rather the constructive approach to disorderliness as a collaborative transgression of a plan (cf. Dell 2011). Seminar: Bernd Kniess, Sebastian Bührig

[24] Author: Sebastian Bührig WIO 2012

[25] The Seminar "Working Worlds – Exploring Wilhelmsburg" was part of a series of seminars named "intercultural practice", which aimed to encourage students to focus on those areas and situations in which culture introduces "symbolic equilibriums, compensatory contracts and more or less permanent compromises" (de Certeau). Seminar-concept: Bernd Kniess, Ben Pohl with support from Katja Heinecke who was running the first "Explore Wilhelmsburg" workshop in 2009 together with Ellen Fiedelmeier. In this particular one-week videographic workshop, a team of nine students from a range of disciplines explored the "Working Worlds" of Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg. The explorations resulted in a multifaceted insight into the local working worlds, provoking reflexive expressions on the notion of "work and labour" and making the worlds of work visible and audible to an audience of neighbours and municipal officials.

Take #2.5: Wilhelmsburg Orchestra (WIO)[23]

Just before Christmas the Wilhelmsburg Orchestra sat comfortably together in a pub in the Reiherstieg district, passing in review the last concerts. Also Egon from Kirchdorf, our long-time companion, was there. That he was already longer part of the orchestra than all other members present there, aroused the curiosity of a student: "Hey Egon, how did you get to actually play along in the WIO? And what is it like for you, that we as researching musicians or musical researchers also do research on someone like you?" Egon smiled and said: "Very simple. I like to make music, I like to make music with people who are relaxed because I think it should be fun and I have a lot of fun to play with the WIO. In addition, I am very interested how it sounds when people as you improvise regularly with each other. Because I'm a trained musician and music therapist - so I'd rather say, I am researching you!"[24]

Take #2.6: Working Worlds – Exploring Wilhelmsburg. A performative videographic approach[25]

Unnoticed by Western politics favouring the "knowledge economy", the less attention-grabbing changes in the working world seem to have fallen out of focus. Yet these unperceived, unattractive or migrant worlds of work are highly embedded in the urban (cf. Sassen).. But if the dynamics are mostly unpredictable, and communities are short of money, complex qualitative research methods are very unlikely to be applied in daily design practice. This raises the demand for new methods of dealing with communication, participation, research and design in practical terms. Does videography have a specific potential to fulfil aspects of this demand? Can videography be seen as a performative method of intercultural practice, mutual participation and production of shared meaning?

28 Research on the kiosk-culture of
    Wilhelmsburg. Team: Ben Pohl, Hans
    Vollmer et. al. "Das kommende Fest
    – vom Kiosk zur offenen Wasserstelle"
    Seminar Urban Territories II: Katja
    Heinecke, Katrin Klitzke Seminar
    Topic: Participation and Intervention.

Take #2.7: From the Kiosk to the Open Water-Hole[28]

Drifting around the northern part of Wilhelmsburg, crossing again and
again the Reiherstieg district. We are getting thirsty and with it, curious.
An end-of-work-beer, or two at the kiosk. [...] At the kiosk, we pause.
Something we like about it arouses our curiosity. We overhear a dispute
about the place and what to call it. Is it kiosk or refreshment stand? What
is the difference? We write emails, make an appointment, meet an expert.
The dispute interests us less than the everyday of - and the phenomenon
- kiosk. Kiosk, a name for what? We research, read and explore the story.
Tents of nomads, garden living room, water-cottage and drinking halls. An
evolution of practices, power and typologies. Curiosity was driving us and
we even pay for it. We hang around with those who hang out there, ask
questions and get asked, observe and are observed mutually. Before we are
aware, we are part of the kiosk life, as "participant observers". We write,
conduct interviews, buy water and beer and begin to arrange the photos,
interviews and observation notes.

Take #3: The Practice of Living

Modernity once has been inscribed into urban life to organise the city.
Although its aim and approach has undergone many changes, some of the
main paradigms still remain. But does this manner in which the process
of design and planning is organised still fit the challenges we are facing in
the 21st century? And, if not, how do we define the relation of functions
and practices anew? How to deal with new demographic constellations,
mobility and changes in labour and the working worlds?

If it is claimed, that the city is collectively produced by its inhabitants,
and if the urban is formulated through a broad variety of practices of the

everyday, wouldn't it then – in order to professionalize – be essential for all disciplines concerned with the urban to research these processes and rehearse its practices? Even exploring the dimension that spans between the public, the common and the private anew?
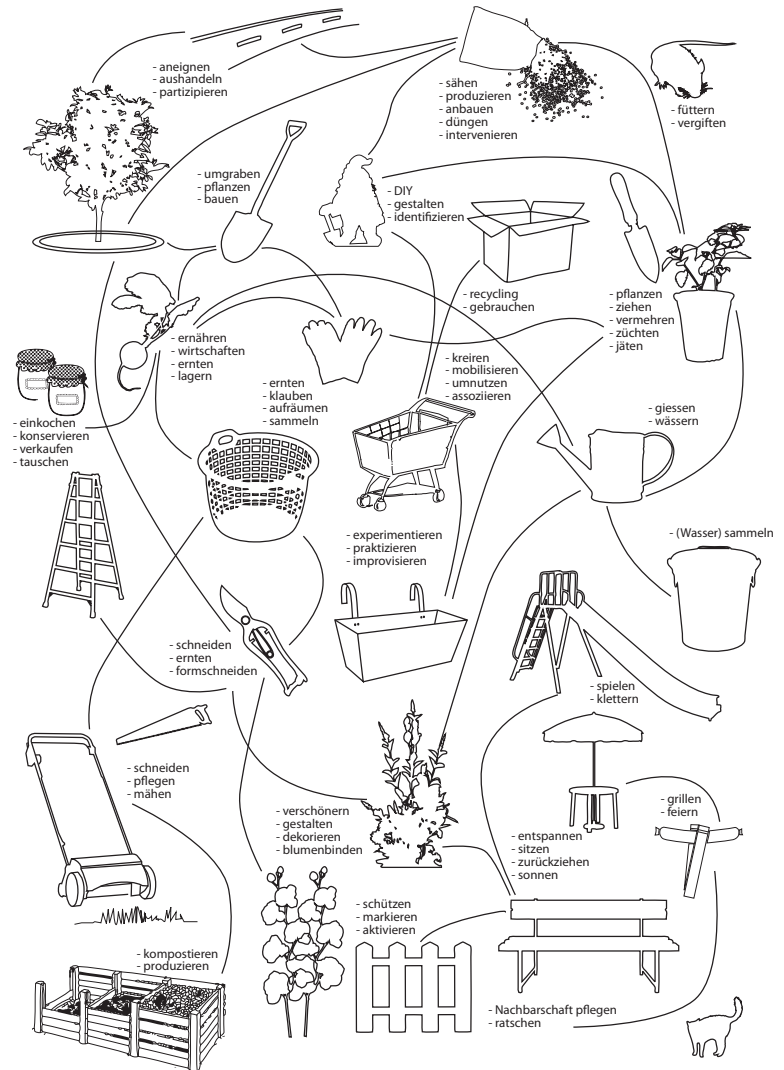
21

27   Author: Tabea Michaelis
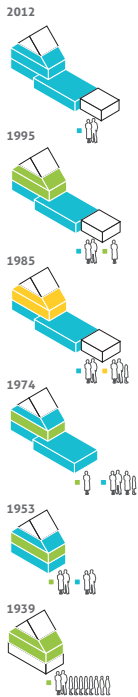

Take #3.1: A Paradise-Garden on Axis[27]

The UdN as a research station became the temporary home and thus also a place of washing, sleeping, cooking. The kitchen and stove form the centre of UdN. But what is a kitchen without a garden? A piece of cultivated area, a 'Hortus Conclusus' between the unruly thickets of brambles, rocks, pears, field maple, wild daffodils, elderberry bushes and borders of stinging nettles. Where can I find a glade here ever! Impossible. According to Michel Foucault, the garden is the oldest example of a "heterotopia of contradictory locations". With and through the garden we enter our other (un) familiar places and move through other times round. We reflect

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ourselves in the garden. In this we see ourselves both in the real and unreal in one place. We walk between the times, between the cultures. It seems fantastic, weightless - infinite. We sail. The garden is this "smallest parcel of the world and at the same time it is the whole world. (...) The garden is a carpet onto which the whole world appears in symbolic perfection, and the carpet is to some extent the in space versatile garden."[28] We fly. The garden travels with us. A paradise-garden on axis. The garden as a companion. The garden, which immediately moves into the house where it waits patiently next to the cooking pot on its mission. A house-garden – a garden-house.

## Take #3.2: Next living – House and life cycles in Alt-Kirchdorf[29]

The Meier family lived in cramped conditions with their eight children in the 50m2 house built in the late 1930s. After the destruction of the house in WWII, the family lived in a temporary home built by Mary's father in the garden for five years. In 1950 the destroyed house is rebuilt in almost the same design. In 1953 Helmut and Maria Meier marry, one year later their first daughter Martina is born. At this time, they live on the top floor of the rebuilt house, while their mother lives on the ground floor. When Helmut and Maria Meier think about moving out, some time after the Great Flood in 1962, Maria's mother persuades them to stay, and the house is overwritten to the daughter Mary.

Then, a large-scale conversion takes place in 1974. The rough work is made by professional builders, but all interior work is carried out by Helmut Meier himself. After her mother's death, the entire original house is being renovated and another kitchen is built. Now there are two completely independent units in the same house – one downstairs, one upstairs – only the entrance is shared. First, their 2nd daughter Simone lives on the upper floors with her husband. After she moves out, the Meier's granddaughter Simona moves in for a short time. Today, the Helmut and Maria live alone in the house for the first time. But if there is a need, the grandchildren can stay on the upper floors, and, at family gatherings, the upper rooms become the playroom for the great-grandchildren.

Take #3.3: We´ll see[30]

It is midday Friday and we are constructing a Gecekondu with EURO pallets. Two men with long black beards and even longer robes are coming along the street, carrying a plastic box. They stop at the fence, wondering what kind of a building this is. It is the UdN they are wondering about as our pallet house is not yet identifiable as a building at this moment. [...]. "May we have a look?" asks one of the two.

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[28] Michel Foucault, Des espaces autres. Empan, no054(2) 2004, pp.12–19.

[29] Third semester urban research and design project UDP3 about building transformation practices in the single family home neighbourhood of Alt-Kirchdorf. Authors: Aron Bohmann, Charlotte Herbst, Katrin Hovy Seminar: Bernd Kniess, Anke Hagemann et. al.

[30] Author: Hans Vollmer, Long-time inhabitant of the UdN

2012

1995

1985

1974

1953

1939

[…] One of them is very surprised, when we tell them that we live here. "Looks better than I thought," says the other. "It still needs to be painted, no?" asks one of the two as we stand in the kitchen, and adds: "You could make it really nice here!"
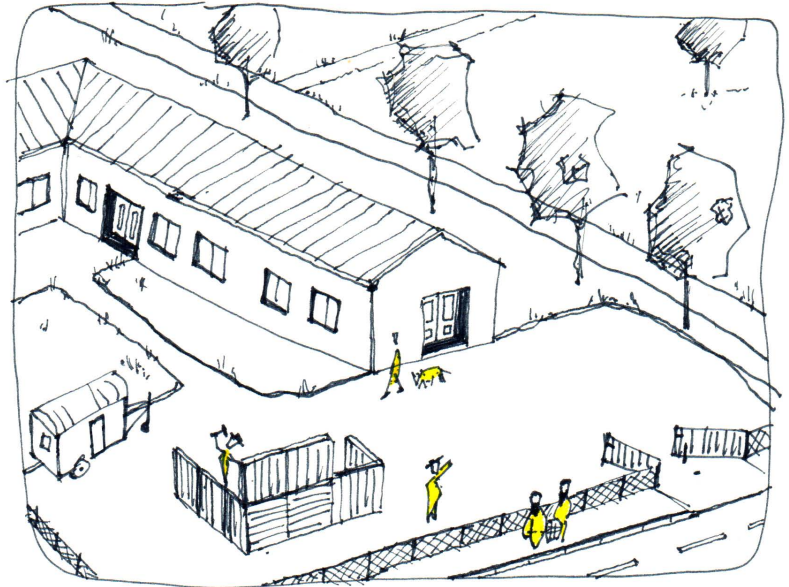
Retake #3.4: An Orchid Place[31]

I have been told that this place used to be something else. It used to have a function, a structure, a social background. Once you were in there, a certain norm of behaviour had to be respected. […] It used to impose order, maintain silence and demand light. That place used to mark the street; it used to be a destination, a point of meeting, or a point of departure. That place used to be part of a human's life; a dark spot in someone´s personal history; or an inevitable station in someone's journey.

And then this place stopped "to be" and started "to become". The place lost its function, its structure was disrupted, the background vanished. There was no one to adjust its behaviour to this place; no one there for switching lights on or off, no one for pulling down the window blinds. Even the silence sounded differently. It was no one´s destination, neither point for meeting nor for departure.

As a place with an outdated function and rundown structure, it became only an endless possibility. It allowed for an "in-between" spatial use. Suddenly without a meaning, it opened a door for reinterpretation, reuse, re-adaptation and social replay. It became UdN—the way I got to know it. The first questions I asked when I entered this liminal and "soon-to-be place" were: "What is this place? A dormitory? A squat? A club? A

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cantina?" After some time I understood that it is nothing of this and, at the same time, all of this together. It is a non-place and an über-place; physically vacant and spiritually replete with meaning. It is extremely uncomfortable, as it is cold and modestly arranged, but surprisingly pleasant to spend your time in. You can eat, think, talk, sleep here. You can come inside, or stay outside—whatever, no borders to cross over. This place needs no improvement or cleaning. It only needs to be nurtured.

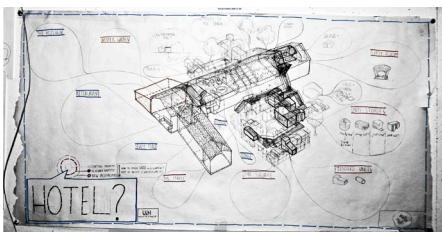## Take #3.5: "Terrain des hôtes" – hosts and guests at the same place

> L'hôte, host and guest in one word, gives and receives, offers and agrees, is host and stranger.[32]

Also we at the UdN are guest, host and stranger at the same time and place. A place we do not dominate permanently, since we do not "own" it. Also we, in the role of "l'hôte" have to negotiate the rules of what is allowed and what has to be excluded in always new contracts. With our roommates, with guests who are with us, with the neighbours or the children of the neighbourhood that ensnare the house.

In our own daily routine even in the UdN we often fail. If already the refrigerator becomes a contested territory of ownership and appropriation conflicts, it turns out, that we still slip quickly into the depths of existing hegemonic structures and that we miss alternative cultural patterns of action to deal with the common oeuvre. This simple order of "my and your" territory, of "established and outsiders"[33] we want to oppose the oscillating figure of the "l'hôte" as Michel Serres describes him. But this needs plenty of rehearsal loops, takes and iterations to bring such a "Terrain des hôtes" of hosts and guests at the same place to life.[34]

Take #4: Maximum Superimposition: UdN&Hotel

Not only in Wilhelmsburg, questions of dwelling and living, of affordable housing, work and labour in our cities become a central topic. Composed of 158 different nationalities, and a high fluctuation of "working tourists" from all over the world, parts of the island can be seen as a growing "horizontal quasi hotel".

With the "Hotel" project, we, the teachers, ask the question of functions and living again. What is the minimum amount of private space that one needs? Which functions of living and being active can commonly be shared? How to reach a maximum quality of luxury with a minimum amount of resources spent?

[32] Michel Serres, Der Parasit. 1. (edition. Suhrkamp 1987) p.15. Our translation.

[33] Elias, Norbert, Michael Schröder, and John L Scotson, Etablierte und Außenseiter. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2002). The quote refers to the title and general topic of the book.

[34] Author: Ben Pohl, Personal reflections of being inhabitant

All of these questions are taken as methodical questions and metaphors for the superimposition of functions and to overcome their separation. It is about exploring even what it means to self-build a hotel out of the demands and practices of living and being active.

At the same time, the project also sought to identify sustainable options for the future of the property, which we had to leave by the end of 2013. "Hotel?Wilhelmsburg" therefore acted as a vehicle for an applied research and redesign approach, with which we tried to maximize the overlapping hybrid networks of university, community, local economies and guests to open the UdN as a discursive space, for the negotiation of current, site-specific and global issues of urban development and transformation processes.

A series of workshops[35] spanning from March until July 2013 left a situationist "Exquisite corpse" in the yard of the UdN, reminding of Yona Friedman's "Ville Spatiale" remixed with Constant Nieuwenhuy's "New Babylon" and Cedric Price's educational model in his "Potteries Thinkbelt" project. Our approach was to foster not only the educational practice, but also address place making and hospitality aspects. Students, academics and local stakeholders were working within cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural constellations on three key issues: firstly on the development of operating systems, secondly on a communication model with regard to aspects of participation and sharing, and, finally, the architectural translation into a 1:1 model.

Keeping in mind the experimental arrangement and interest in "the praxis of living" we sought to learn from these kind of processes for future models of urban living.

[35] Over the course of all together eight weeks, each week the workshop was attended and supervised by a guest. These included architects and artists Ton Matton (Wendorf), Florian Tampe (Hamburg), Alexander Römer (Paris) and Martin Kaltwasser (Berlin), Peter Fatinger (Wien), Benjamin Förster-Baldenius (Berlin), Andrea Hofmann (Berlin).

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Open-End Iterations

Even without going into details of the changes that most European cities have to contend with, it is becoming clear that the task is no any longer to design but rather to actively redesign our global and local interdependencies. Changing economic conditions affect our practices of work as well as the relations between work and dwelling which we have to deal with professionally as urban designers. This means that we have to seek new modes and models of economy, inter-culturality, participation, learning and dwelling based on the existing. But this shift of focus also raises questions about how to enable young researchers and designers to develop their skills and methods.

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For a period of five years, the UdN became part of the academic curricula of the HCU. It allowed students of architecture, urban design and planning to participate actively on the construction-site, in the refurbishment of the building, and to work on the programming of its use. The teaching formats, which included lectures, project work, workshops, seminars, conferences summer schools and many more, encouraged interdisciplinary work and active engagement with members and groups of the surrounding neighbourhood. It was the UdN's main aim to engage with current questions of urban research, the contemporary and future needs of an urban society and to link these to its teaching activities.

From the outset, we believed (and still believe) that these global questions of interdependencies will have to be raised on the level of the neighbourhood with an eye-level perspective, identifying, designing and broadening possibilities for a conscious and active co-design of the circumstances we are living in. It was therefore integral to all of UdN's activities to improve social integration and to activate autonomous behaviour within our field of operation. Seminars taught in the context of the UdN made students reflect on the terms of participation and intervention and asked them to develop small-scale projects (scale 1:1) and to establish interactive platforms for communication and exchange.

As educators, we were trying to build what Denzin is calling "a safe space where students are willing to take risks, to move back and forth between the personal and the political, the biographical and the historical. They perform painful personal experiences. [...] Under this framework students teach one another. [...] This is performance-centered pedagogy, the use of performance as a method of investigation, as a way of doing ethnography, and as a method of understanding."[36]

[36] Norman K. Denzin, The Qualitative Manifesto: A Call To Arms (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2010)

Since sustainable urban re-developments are highly complex and require the involvement of a range of different disciplines and stakeholders, one of the most urgent issues is communication, trust, mutual respect and recognition. Hence a common language and shared meanings, between the "experts of the everyday", the inhabitants, as well as the various disciplines related to urban planning, design and architecture is needed.

It is a long way to come up with this common trans- and interdisciplinary language, and a performative and experimental aspect is required to create and translate shared meaning between different languages through common practice. This attempt remains – as we see it – an open-end procedure of perpetually new iterations, loops and takes, becoming essential for all intercultural, trans- and interdisciplinary attempts in order to overcome the existing disciplinary blind-spots.

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