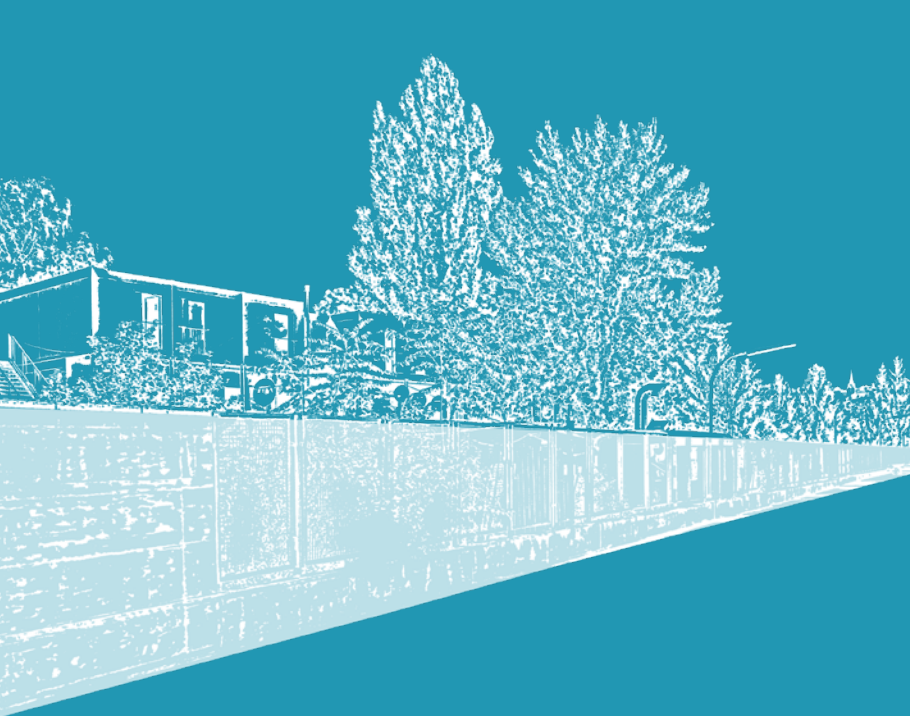


dpu summerLab 2012 series

zurich *liminal contours*

places | works | reflections



dpu summerLab 2012 series

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zurich *liminal c*

6 - 11 August

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forewords DPUsummerLab finally landed in Zurich, which saw the exploration of renewed ways of ‘mapping’ and ‘interpreting’ as a gesture of complex lines of movement, a series of spatial storytelling along the edges of the spaces that contains it, creating, like in a musical plot, a sequence of distinct intervals of silence, emptiness and thresholds. The act of navigating the city through explorations in contour, marked material and immaterial investigations of a composite of fragments of landscape, an alternative topography of impressions, manifestations and ideas. What follows is a brief experience of the DPUsummerLab in Zurich understanding the Langstrasse Quarter and the Altstetten site across a package of thematic notions: visibility, thresholds, juxtaposition, inheritance, temporary, and public as potentially reconfiguring elements for mapping the phenomenological characteristics of these areas that lead to the interpretation of potential tactics and interventions of a spatial design thinking.

Contained

Sarah Nichols

Urbanity takes many forms, but a minimal assumption is permanence, if not in form then as lingering impact. The container park is the zero degree of urbanism. The only requirement to build is flat ground and a truck; to remove is even simpler. The cleared, pre-leveled, erasable plane – literally, the *tabula rasa* – becomes, in effect, the prerequisite for occupation. And so, standardization is taken to an extreme where not just construction components but spatial dimensions

and the ground condition on which the project rests become standard, measurable in TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) and maximum grades. Inside, however, an increasingly non-standard inhabitation is reduced to their existence as bio-power, an amoral form of welfare in a post-welfare state.

Forty years after world ports agreed to the ISO standards establishing the TEU shipping container as the base unit of cargo, Zurich is undergoing its own container revolution as the same dimensions are deployed as a unit of urbanization. While found alongside the cones, cranes, fences, concrete tumblers and other armatures that are reshaping the city's outer districts,¹ more notable is the deployment on 'vague' territory of containers as *'Raummodule'* not only for provisional

facilities but as buildings with cultural and even institutional responsibility: school annexes, offices, and asylum housing *et al.*

The distribution of these projects can be found primarily in the stretch roughly definable as *old-periphery* and *new-periphery*. In the old-periphery, containers are deployed in the interstices between the long-established transformation projects that have shifted the area from decaying² industrial zone to the epicenter of speculative real estate now under construction. The new-periphery is a series of former villages long since incorporated into Zurich. In one – Altstetten – on a single plot of industrial land, start-up office space, housing for asylum-seekers, and soon street prostitution cabins can all be found; planned to operate independently, but immediately adjacent to one another.

1. And, sometimes inner; most notably as site offices obscuring the main façade of Zurich's central train station.

2. The nickname for District 4, one of the outer, former industrial districts is 'Kreis Cheib', for its former function as an animal dumping ground.

3. cf: "Heute Montag beginnen die Bauarbeiten für das Basislager in Altstetten. Sie haben nichts zu tun mit dem geplanten Strichplatz, auch wenn das Areal von den Arbeiten für das Basislager betroffen ist." http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/content/hbd/de/index/ueber_das_departement/medien/medienmitteilungen/2012/juni/120618a.html

4. The new prostitution policy of the city of Zurich locates legalized zones only in areas less than 20% residential, this being one of them.

All three have been developed by or with the support of the city of Zurich, whose press releases have stressed the autonomy of the programs.³ However, they are part of the same political project, wherein management of the population and its condition of labor is used as a form of or even replacement for spatial urban planning. The population is an assemblage of the temporarily/voluntarily marginal and the by-definition marginal. Creatives knowledge-work by day, while those employed in service industries work or live here by night, away from any other residential fabric.⁴ Their superimposition on a single site is, in essence, a statistical error: only their common status as non-contract, temporary labor links them, and this usefulness to the economy (and, when not, threat to civil society) makes them recipients of state care.

The design is studied, but technocratic. Both the asylum housing and the Basislager (the start-up space) are assembled from containers conforming to the ISO structural dimensions of shipping containers, but fabricated for habitation. While modernism has had a long history of emulating the aesthetics of industrial standardization,⁵ the intention of a building as cargo is different: rather than convey a process, it replicates a logistical unit, forcing the space of habitation to conform to the space of global commerce. A perimeter fence bounds each program, delineating one from the next and denying both the actuality of an ensemble and the possibility of representation.

If this project represents the logical, though absurd, end of two traditions of modernism- standardization

and the statistical definition of the individual as an object of state concern- it also shows how such determination can create a rupture in the normal order. What has been created is a state of exception in miniature, within which transience is given, whose buildings in fact migrate in advance of their inhabitants and through which normally disguised associations are made in striking and rare clarity visible, and perhaps, productive; a fleeting site whose location may change, but which has evolved beyond site: an urbanism in reverse, the other side of zero.

5. Its actual application is shakier: when the Mies van der Rohe-designed buildings in Lafayette Park, Detroit were renovated, building components were found to be in fact custom constructions, each built traditionally: on-site, by hand, to slightly off-standard dimensions.

Moral city

Zurich and spaces of prostitution

Charlotte Malterre-Barthes

*What space signifies is dos and dont's — and this brings us back to power. Space lays down the law because it implies a certain order — and hence also a certain disorder. Space commands bodies. This is its *raison d'être*.*

Henri Lefebvre (1991) *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell. p 121

*Finding out the secrets words won't tell/
Whatever it is it can't be named*

Phoenix - If I ever feel better- United (2000)

Surrendering of one's body to another for money. What Michel Foucault refers to as part of *illegitimate sexualities*,¹ occurs in several settings, from recognized and extremely visible in the urban realm to hidden and remotely located. If the physical reality of prostitution informs space as a



socially-produced phenomena,² legal factors are crucial to understanding interactions between urban space and paid sex.³ **Prostitution magnifies the ongoing battle for urban space:** control exerted by authorities over the social sphere through prostitution takes the form of a moral and legal order.

At diverse levels of prominence, prostitution signals the presence of sex in the city. While socio-spatial practices encourage people to adopt heterosexual identities, only confronted to ‘abnormal’ different manifestations of sexuality (prostitution, homosexuality, hard core pornography, etc...) do they come to question their own sexual evidence. Hence prostitutes represent a significant element of sexual identity about the limits of ‘heterosexuality’.⁴ As human sexual relations tend to organize in a Manichean way and perpetuate distinctions between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sexual identities,⁵

1. Foucault, Michel (1978) The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction. (Pantheon Books, New York, NY). pp 1-13.

2. Lefebvre, Henri (1991) The Production of Space, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

3. Hubbard, Phil and Sanders, Tilla (2003) Making Space for Sex Work: Female Street Prostitution and the Production of Urban Space. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research. Volume 27.1 (-), 75-89.

4. Nast, Heidi, Pile, Steve (1998) Places through the body, London; Routledge.

5. Hubbard, Phil (1999) Sex and the city : Geographies of prostitution in the urban West, Aldershot; Ashgate Publisher.

prostitutes are representative of sexyfying heterosexuality, thus being banned from clean realms of heterosexual citizenships. To enforce this ordering in urban space, law is the predominant tool **towards spatial containment of prostitution activities**. Expressing a moral condemnation of those, as well as supposedly offering some degree of ‘protection’ to the population engaged in it, cities and governments (and to a certain extent, civil society) have an impact on where and how prostitution should be practiced,⁶ if legal or not, if tolerated or not, if taxed or not, if visible or not.

With around 15% of the country’s male population between 20 and 65 years old a client,⁷ and a rate of 11 prostitutes per 1,000 people, similar to Amsterdam’s,⁸ Zurich is a paradigm of moral control and spatial ordering.



6. See Zürich strichplan 1991, map of the tolerated street-prostitution area.

7. Fondation Scelles (07-06-2006) La prostitution en Europe, une activité en constante mutation. Available:http://www.fondationscelles.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=60&Itemid=2. Last accessed 21 June 2008.

8. Allen, Matthew (June 14, 2007) Police crack down on east European prostitutes. Available:http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/specials/euro2008/euro2008_rss_detail/Police_crack_down_on_east_European_prostitutes.html?siteSect=22204&sid=7926641&cKey=1181888567000&ty=st. Last accessed 21 June 2008.

The movements of prostitution in the city are drawn by various means. Swinging prostitution laws of the past 150 years have been enacted according to shifting levels of social tolerance, decency, and more recently, to the real-estate market. Primarily regulating the legality of prostitution, laws have become clearly territorial in 1991, when Zurich's city authorities issued a 'Strichplan' that identifies 14 street portions dedicated to streetwalkers from 7 PM to 5 AM. But prostitution is a resilient activity that adapts according to particular criteria. Previously, poles of activities such as theatres or caserns were crucial, whereas communication nodes and axis became more and more attractive for prostitution business when mobility increased. Yet, the inertia of persistent entertainment areas is high, as with the case of the Niederdorf, being identified with the sex-trade since more than 100

years. Currently, two opposite tendencies can be observed in this phenomena of migration of prostitution within Zurich urban area: on one hand, the increase of communication and mobility, together with authorities beautification programs caused a peripheralization of prostitution,⁹ out of municipal jurisdiction. While, officials are concerned that the sex-clubs at the periphery may be dangerously isolated for women involved in prostitution, the seclusion of the sex-trade out of cities and out of citizen's view is doubtlessly satisfying for the municipality. On the other hand, authorities still seem to favour centralized, defined and tolerated 'sacrificed' areas such as Langstrasse in order to operate control and maintain an offer of sex-outlets in the city. Therefore, credits allocated to help programs are voluntary limited,¹⁰ and beautification strategies might be criti-

9. Especially towards the north-western areas of the city, the airport area and the Glattbrugg neighbourhood.

10. Switzerland possesses a precise urbanism code; with each city defining what type of business is allowed to open where. However, fighting against sex-establishments is a difficult task for authorities. Businesses open since longer than 10 or 15 years are nearly impossible to chase away. As for new ones, when a business solicits an opening permit, it is often not clearly stated what it will be (cabarets are typically not supposed to be sex-establishments)- Interview with Rolf Vieli, in charge of the 'Langstrasse PLUS' project at the Zurich City Police, 10-05-2008.

11. Landolt Christoph (21-04-2011) Prostituierten-Rekord auf dem Sihlquai. Tages Anzeiger.

12. Wolfenden Report (1957) Homosexual offences and prostitutes, London: HMSO.

cized as demagogic tools to quieten down public opinion.¹¹

Exemplary to Zurich being a 'moral city' are the sex-boxes, located on a dedicated area at the fringe of the city, monitored and controlled, offering legal access to paid-sex away from citizen's ire but in a reachable distance to the city centre. Namely, through spatial constraints, law regulates activities that offend public order and decency and expose the citizen to what's allegedly offensive and injurious.¹²

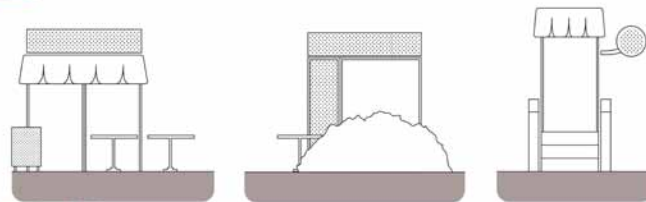
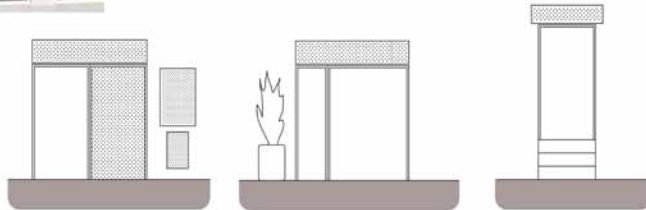
One must concede that jurisdiction concentrates on the 'good' citizen and does not only map out populations involved in prostitution, but also excludes entire areas of the 'proper' urban realm, generating a spatially identifiable moral order.

PLACES & WORKS





Langstrasse Shifting from signage-laden commercial facades to residential edifices - from “street” to “lane” reveals a deepened juxtaposition of building use – a domesticated backside to the bustling mix of Langstrasse. Stripping these oppositions down to lines, the investigation questioned certain harmonious capacity.



The **Roland Kino** with its vertical neon marquee hovering prominently over the street is an infamous landmark fixture of the Langstrasse Quarter. Home to the area's remaining premier sex cinema, the Roland represents both history and present, presenting us with an all access display of hedonistic liminality. This is a contrast, but only in content, to the plethora of commercial activity that characterizes the main street as seen in the opposite page photo depicting a nightclub restaurant atop a news agent. Again it is the overt signage that served as entry point to observe and document the character of the neighbourhood.





Elise
TAKE AWAY
BAR

Elise
RESTAURANT-BAR
Dining

 Lemon Spiced Kebab	 Pineapple Kebab	 Pork Kebab	 Pork Kebab
 Minted Spiced Kebab	 Adana Spiced Kebab	 Pork Kebab	 Pork Kebab

Infiltration This map and corresponding list represents a combining of the Langstrasse Quarter's heart, revealing a dynamic mix of virtually all service shops and novelty vices, from markets, cafes and offices to book shops, fashion boutiques, bars and sex shops. Larger dots indicate higher concentrations of these entities along the main drag, but as one can see, there is an infiltration into the wider neighbourhood occurring, illustrated in earlier photo studies of shifting facades.

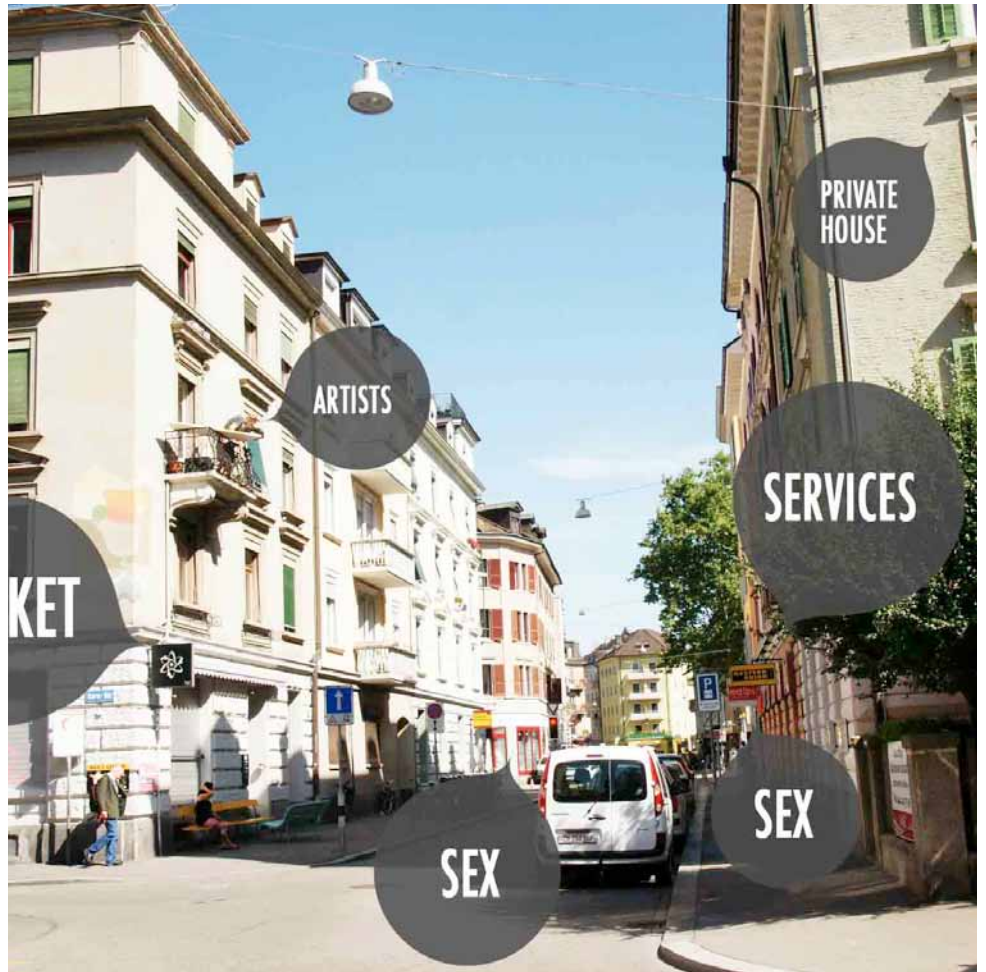
- .NIGHT CLUB
- .ARCHITECT S OFFICES
- .BARS
- .LOUNGES
- .CAFES
- .FASTFOODS
- .SEX SHOPS
- .BACKERIES
- .MEDICAL SHOPS
- .PHARMACY
- .LIBRARIES
- .ALTERNATIVE FASHION SHOPS
- .GALLERIES
- .SUPER MARKET - COOP
- .HOSTELS
- .BOOK SHOPS
- .HOBBY SHOPS
- .TOY SHOPS
- .CONVENIENCE SHOPS
- .OFFICES
- .GAME HALL
- .APPAREL STORES
- .RED CINEMAS
- .BROTHEL
- .CABARETS
- .INTERNET CAFES
- .FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS
- .BANKS
- .LANGUAGE TRAININGS
-



Flexible containers Speculating on Zurich's apparent infatuation with the shipping container, playful experiments were proposed on how these containers could begin to occupy barren streetscapes and infill plots. It was thought that these containers could be flexible throughout different intervals of the day.

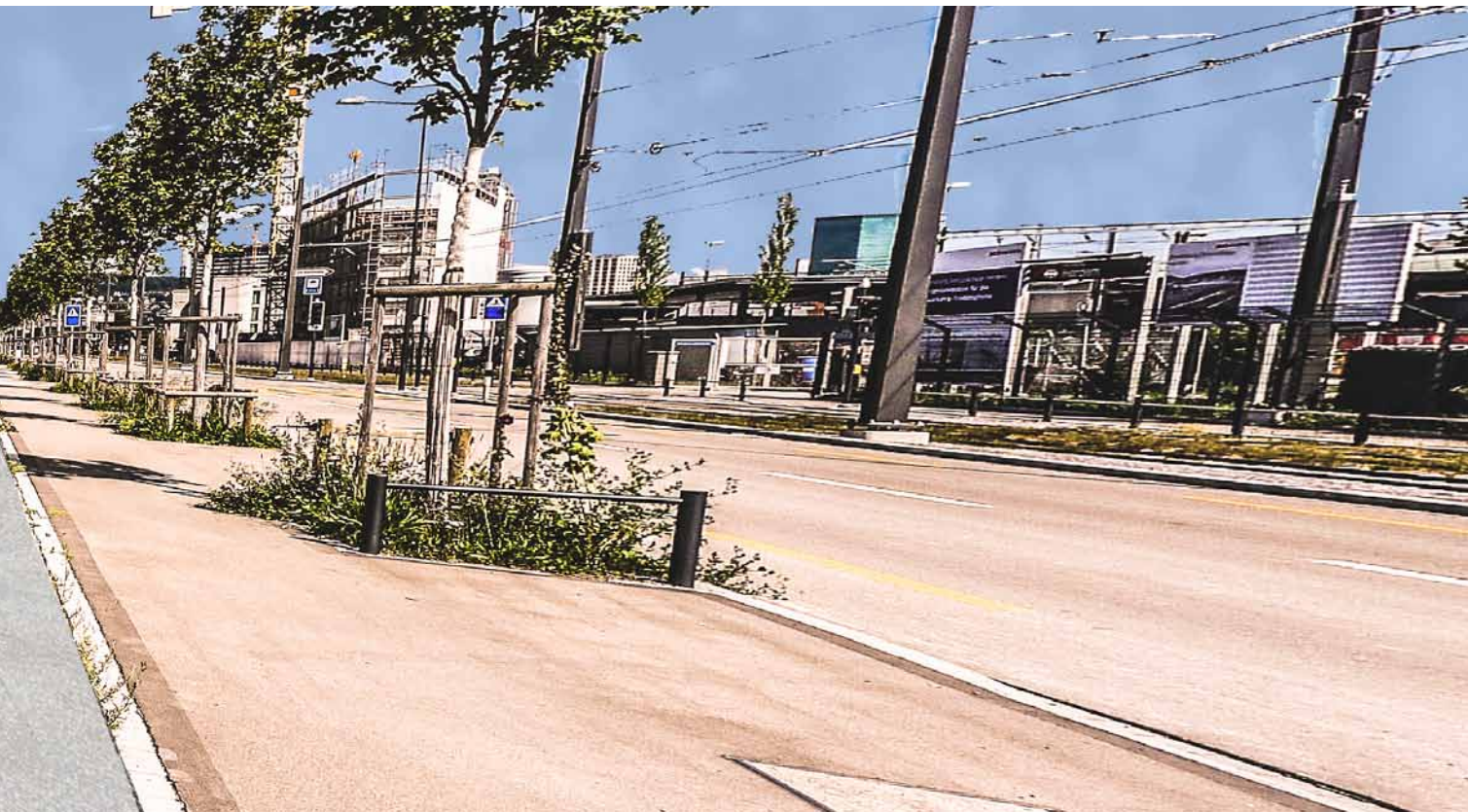


Juxtaposition This image applies the mix of interior building use into a sort active voice bubble of sights and sounds one catches when passing through even the more residential domains on the immediate periphery of the main street. Even here a healthy overlap exists and seemingly thrives in juxtaposition, at least during the daytime hours.



Altstetten The proposals for periphery Altstetten combined a mixture of container clusters with transitional public spaces including playgrounds and recreation - this in resistance to the neighbouring barren industrial landscape. It begs the question of what could be, hinting at potential interventions for the area.







ROMTELECOM
galaxi
HD

Temporary identities? An initial visit to the peripheral Alstetten site allowed for an analysis of current phenomena and thematic questioning. Certainly in its present state, the area is in developmental and identity flux, yearning for definition. The biggest questions emerging here was if in fact what seemed like a temporary planning scheme had a capacity to evolve into a more permanent indicator for development or if its inherent temporary nature would ensure a quick demise and thus little chance for a convicted planning future. As seen in this image, parallel to questions of temporary existence were obvious contentions between legality and illegality as well as points of juxtaposed inclusion and exclusion. The image on the left shows an older complex of shipping containers adjacent to the site which currently houses families of refugees and asylum seekers under a government protection directive, which in itself added an additional layer to the site's narrative.



Drivers from the outside The images below represent various studies of common thematic elements emerging between Langstrasse and Altstetten. It was thought that these traits could be transposed to maintain a dynamic transition and promote outsider entities (legalised prostitution and shipping containers for creatives) to drive development.





ET / URBAN VOID

urant

g

Shop

gallerie
housing



Making visible Visual analysis highlights the eventual forced juxtaposition between formalised sex enterprise and formalized commercial zones. Illustrating the generally taboo “sex” element in colour and the generally aesthetic creative cluster in muted black-and-white draws attention to act of rendering something invisible, visible.









DPU summerLab as a way of defending architecture

Camillo Boano

This text appears in both DPU summerLab 2012series pamphlets, and it draws on the experience of both Zurich *Liminal Contours* and Rome *Occupation City* workshops. Rome's pamphlet is available at: www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/programmes/summerlab

A few years ago when we began to develop the initial idea of what would become later the DPUsummerLab series, we definitely arrived at a series of challenges. The first challenge was the task acritically engaging with the materiality of urban environments that could (re)interrogate design practice and design education. We thus viewed each 'lab' as an itinerant and flexible learning platform where all participants would broaden their viewpoint to question urban space in relation to

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William Hunter is an architect and Teaching Fellow at the DPU. He has held diverse professional affiliations in New York, Zurich, and London spanning high-profile residential, mixed-use commercial and cultural projects for Studio Daniel Libeskind, Foster + Partners, and Heatherwick Studio. His research and interests revolve around the complex processes of contested urbanism, Critical Regionalism methodology, and an overall championing of a critical design practice.

Anna Schulenburg is a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the DPU and an architect (RIBA) with several years of international experience as project architect and independent consultant in Burkina Faso, South Africa, UK, US, Germany and Hun-

social and political issues. The intellectual and methodological dimensions of the ‘labs’ were to be seen as an expansion of the processes developed and experienced in the DPU studio modules where learning is a continuous path of discovering the dialectical nature of the material and the immaterial.

The second challenge was to get away from a certain narrow vision of architectural and urban design, characterised by the mere provision of solutions. The labs then sought to adopt a more nuanced and critical approach of ‘within and between’, grounded in the historical attitude of progressive action-research and practice-led ethos of the DPU. The labs would become an open immersion into both object and social constructs in order to avoid any disciplinary construction of territorial fortresses while suggesting a ‘tactical’ hybrid process of design, both mutable and contextual in nature and undefinable by any particular scale.

Conducting workshops in Rome *Occupation City* and Zurich *Liminal Contours* have allowed us and the participants to test and elaborate on the fertile lines between mapping and interpreting sites through stories that are narrated in the becoming of spaces in their political allure, their potentials. This idea of the ‘tactical’ and the word ‘tactic’, introduced by Gramsci, was of great significance for the development of DPUsummerLab because it denotes ‘resistance’ within a given urban context allowing the participants to, unlike with the radical tools of modernist urbanism, depict and investigate resistance as an outcome of urban action. This not only dictates an overall transformation but also favors bits-and-pieces, incremental change in relation to the context within which it operates and so used for both ‘critical assessments’ and ‘the processes of spatial production’. The labs are thus productive platforms where participants quickly dive into complex matters, extract-

gary. Her work has focused on participatory design and building solutions with communities and users; social sustainability; education and heritage projects.

Giorgio Talocci is an architect, Teaching Fellow and PhD candidate at the DPU. His research questions the current boundaries of Urban Design, highlighting the possible relevance of Agamben's thought in a re-thinking of the discipline. He is co-founder, along with Francesco Careri and others, of Laboratorio Arti Civiche, interdisciplinary research group which interacts creatively with communities through action research and projects.

Benjamin Leclair-Paquet is a researcher at the ETH Future Cities Laboratory (FCL) in Singapore and doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Architecture of ETH Zurich. He studied and tutored at The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU) in London before completing a residency with Decolonizing Architecture in the West Bank. His current research addresses the production of dysfunctional spaces in inner-cities and the potential of post-conventional homes in counteracting these negative pressures, developing his work around the case study of Baltimore and HBO's *The Wire*.

ing suggestive information and always negotiating the delicate balance between ignorance and expertise. Guided by 'curiosity, refusal and innovation' urban territories are explored as a gesture and complex line of movements, a series of spatial storytelling along the edges of the spaces that contains it.

Inevitably, when we started the DPUsummerLab series we were deeply intrigued by the great experiment of rethinking design, both urban and architectural, as trans-disciplinary forms of encounter. For instance, witnessing the Corviale development in Rome, the clash of Modernist utopia and its monumental re-signification through the informal occupation paved the ways to renegotiate the multiple contradictions, discrepancies and hybridized way of thinking brought by the rich encounter of participant's variegated knowledge and the space. Or take the juxtaposition of the

commercial shipping containers and prostitution zones of peripheral Zurich as a result of the more organic evolution and acceptance of the Langstrasse quarter. Such encounters with urban extremes and the productive forces at stake force us to constantly rethink the role of architects, designers, and practitioners while displacing the centrality of design action into the margins, becoming more aware of the fundamental need of design-research processes that strategically inform tactical alternatives and options. The ferocity and poetic possibilities of places like the Corviale and Porto Fluviale in Rome or Altstetten and Langstrasse in Zurich and their antithetic use of urban idioms suggested the need to develop a trans-design-research that, despite its inherent forward-looking nature, does not fixate on elements, images and forms, but on their processes, their potentialities. This is the very lesson that Henry Lefebvre once taught us:

Sarah Nichols is an architect currently teaching the Urban Mutations on the Edge seminar and Master/Bachelor studio under the direction of Prof. Dr. Marc Angéll at the ETH. She holds an Advanced Master of Architecture from the postgraduate program of the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam, where she was awarded the Berlage Institute Scholarship for her second year of study. She has worked for various architectural practices in New York and Beijing, including Steven Holl Architects. Since 2011, she has had her own Zurich-based architectural practice, Specter.

Charlotte Malterre-Barthes is a practicing architect and urban designer. She is involved in research and was in charge of the seminar Urban Mutations on the Edge at the chair of Prof. Dr. Marc Angéll at the ETH. She is currently working towards a doctoral degree on Food and Territories. She collaborated with several offices, such as Rudy Ricciotti, Dipol Landscape Architects and OOS and in India with Balkrishna Doshi at Sangath. Charlotte is also a co-founder of OMNI-BUS, an urban research laboratory focused on trans-disciplinary metropolitan explorations.

space is no longer the container, the frame or the context of social processes but a social process in itself.

Taking more deliberately, architecture conceived as a specific kind of activity but also a ‘particular frame of mind need to be protected from a critical violence and its derive to over-pragmatic trend’: “architecture must be defended” according to Hays, as “enabling condition and a restraint on thought and actions.” Therefore it is not a thing, not just a form, but also a more complex, contingent condition. It must be defended by creating a new critical project centred on architecture as social practice, on its political possibility. In this light, the DPUsummerLab is becoming the condition of possibility in which excess rudely intrudes into otherwise ontologically and politically stable orders, allowing what was previously invisible or unheeded to suddenly emerge within a societal and political realm.



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