

Six Projects for the Countryside

PROLOG +1

The search for collective forms of living and working is today a common quest among architects and planners. Unbridled, chaotic urbanisation, along with its consequences, growing social inequalities caused by the avalanche of privatisation of the commons and the climate crisis — these are global problems, affecting all citizens. Rural areas are the focus of the crisis that affects our future (e.g. privatisation of seeds, access to drinking water, policy on forest areas or the effects of liberal planning or lack thereof) and at the same time provide many examples of grassroots activities — cooperation, solidarity resistance

and collective action — which is why it is in the countryside that we see the potential for discussion on the future of producing what is communal and therefore going beyond the logic of the private and public dichotomy.

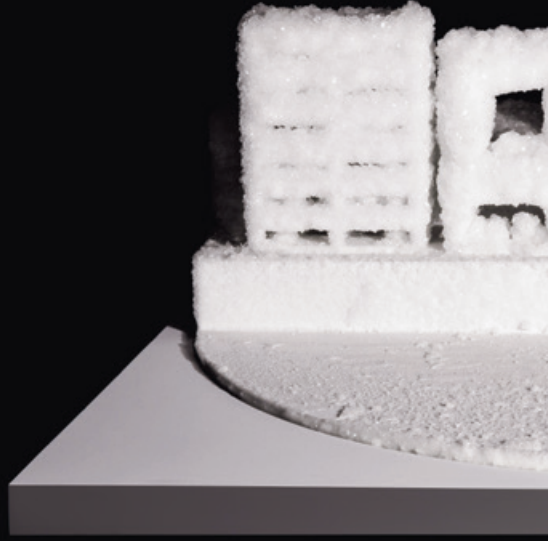
We can find hope in many signs of change, small impulses, which as a result can lead to disruption and changes in the current order. To outline a vision of an alternative future for rural areas, answering the question of *how will we live together?*, we have invited six design teams from different parts of Europe, who try to push the limits of architectural practice in their work. Their task was to present speculative scenarios, based on the curatorial concept of analysing three spatialities — territory, settlement, and dwelling — understood from the perspective of the commons. These projects form a diverse statement on local and global ways of defining what is rural.

Each team started from one of these areas. The interdisciplinary Hungarian project group GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter and the Belgian collective Traumnovelle took up the search for a new definition of rural territory. The German Atelier Fanelsa, which deals with rural issues on a daily basis, and the Russian group KOSMOS, collaborating virtually, began with the exploration of what is communal for a rural settlement. The British Rural Office for Architecture, interested in regionalism, and the team of the Polish architectural quarterly RZUT, which considers drawing, cross-section, text and building to be equivalent tools of architecture, studied the consequences of changes in the domesticated space in the countryside.

From the curator's point of view, the countryside is the result of mutual connections and direct interactions between the three mentioned areas, which we call horizontality. The objective of these projects was to create a complete picture by extrapolating conclusions from research in one given area to the others. In other words, to see how changes in one of the spatialities affect the others.

The Sacred Species

GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter, Hungary





Two days have passed since the old Ash fell on the road and cut us off from the outside world. It will take sixty years for the Ash to fully decompose, sixty years for us to gain back that transportation line through the valley.

People gathered around the fallen Tree and prayers for the dead soul started right away. It wasn't a particularly sunny day, so I could see that even the families from the Old-Growth came — many on foot, but some used their cars (not that cars have so much use anymore around here).

It all happened before, I saw everything. After the mourning, the community (to be more precise: the few who decide to stay) will first break up the remaining asphalt, as far as the fallen Ash lies, to start the planting of vegetables, squash, berries and maybe walnut. You may have wheat, tomato or other plants where you live, but here in the Woodland, we don't have much choice. The Trees occupy everything. So when they enclose the village in the end, after the third or fourth summer, everyone leaves — nothing left to do here, all community owned goods will fall back under state jurisdiction.

But I'm not moving this time, too old for that.

You see that golden Sycamore over there? That's where the Old-Growth starts. Deep in the middle, she aged without much disturbance, and is now home for a great number of animals, fungi and plants. A few people live there as well, but not everyone can adapt to the dark and dense fabric of the Forest; I believe they are like isolated deep sea creatures — they live a much slower, spiritual life, almost as if they became one with the soil.

It was my grandmother who built our house, as I recall; she loved the sunshine, couldn't live in the dark down there. We are five metres above the crowns, and it takes one hundred and twelve steps to climb every day — a good workout it is! Living

up here seems dangerous, it definitely does, but the Woods protect us. After father died, it was just the two of us up here for a long time.

Then Paweł was one of the first ones who left when we started losing the roads at the valley. He moved somewhere around Kielce. Twelve hundred people live over there, I heard, and although they pray to the Trees, they don't fear them as much as we do here in the South. They are also losing spaces of production and backyards as we have been, but they have built the village centre more concentrated and more vertically sophisticated to keep the forces outside the settlement at bay. Trees grow through houses or fall on roofs once in a while, but that's fine, Paweł says — it's inspiring how those people adapt to such new situations.

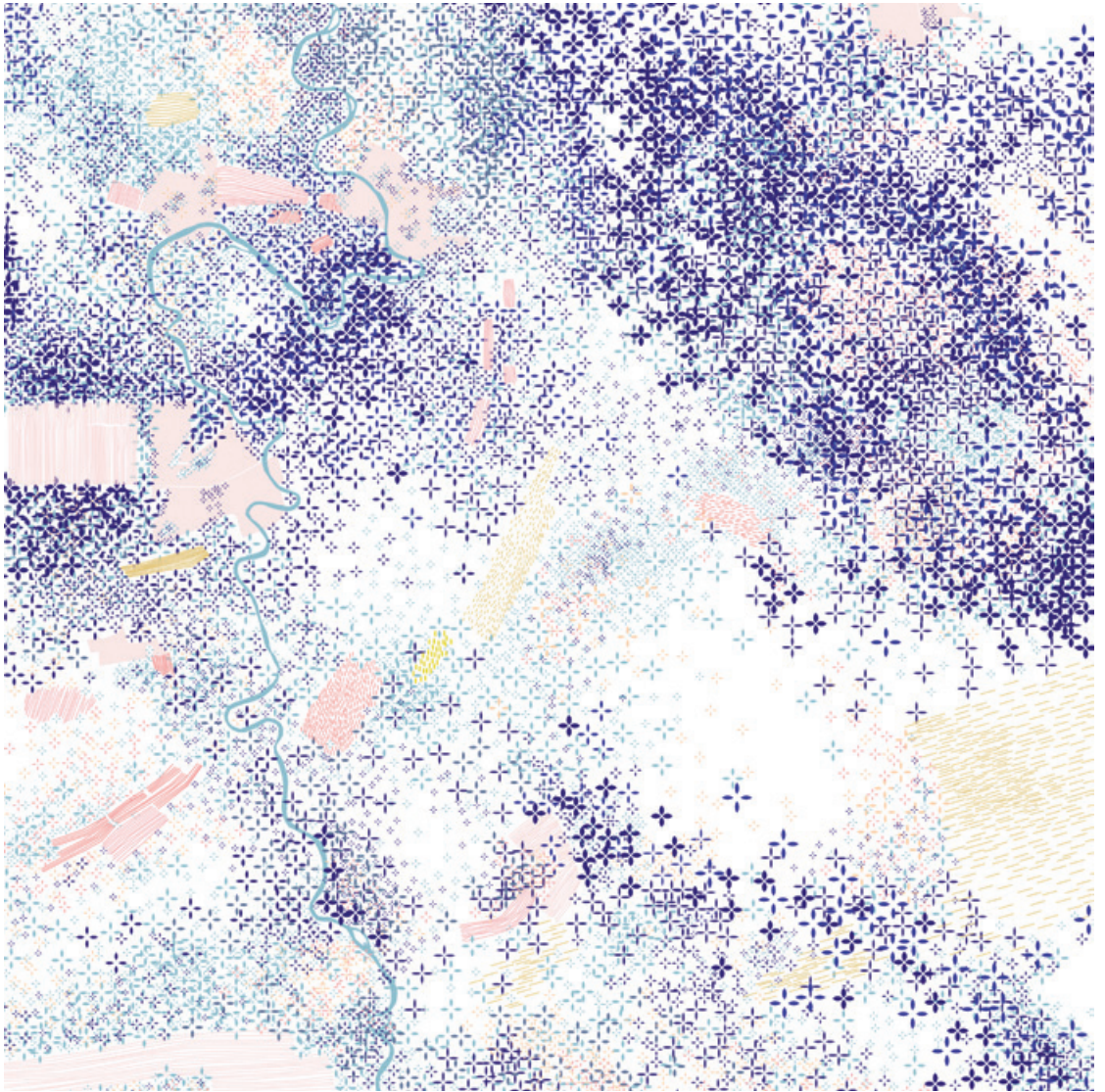
I sometimes feel our life is driven by this constant threat of losing spaces. The Trees take away our roads, our urban spaces, backyards, cemeteries, and crops. Exploitation, I heard the other day. There's no stop here, the Sacred Forest of Silesia moves so aggressively. God help me, but it all seems to me like an uncontrolled chemical reaction that metabolises all formerly existing structures.

Sándor Guba, Péter Hámori (GUBAHÁMORI); Panni Bodonyi, Tamás Kovács Budha (Filip); László Demeter

GUBAHÁMORI is an architecture and urban design studio focusing on the correlation between the natural and the built environment. They are discovering architecture beyond ocularcentrism.

Filip is a collective of visual artists based at a ship repair yard on the island of Népsziget, which is a culturally uprising brownfield of Budapest. The eclectic milieu of the still functional industrial site inspires them to look at everyday situations as platforms of art.

László Demeter is a forest and ethnoecology scientific expert at the Centre for Ecological Research. He specialises in using different knowledge systems (e.g. traditional knowledge and western science) for innovative conservation management.



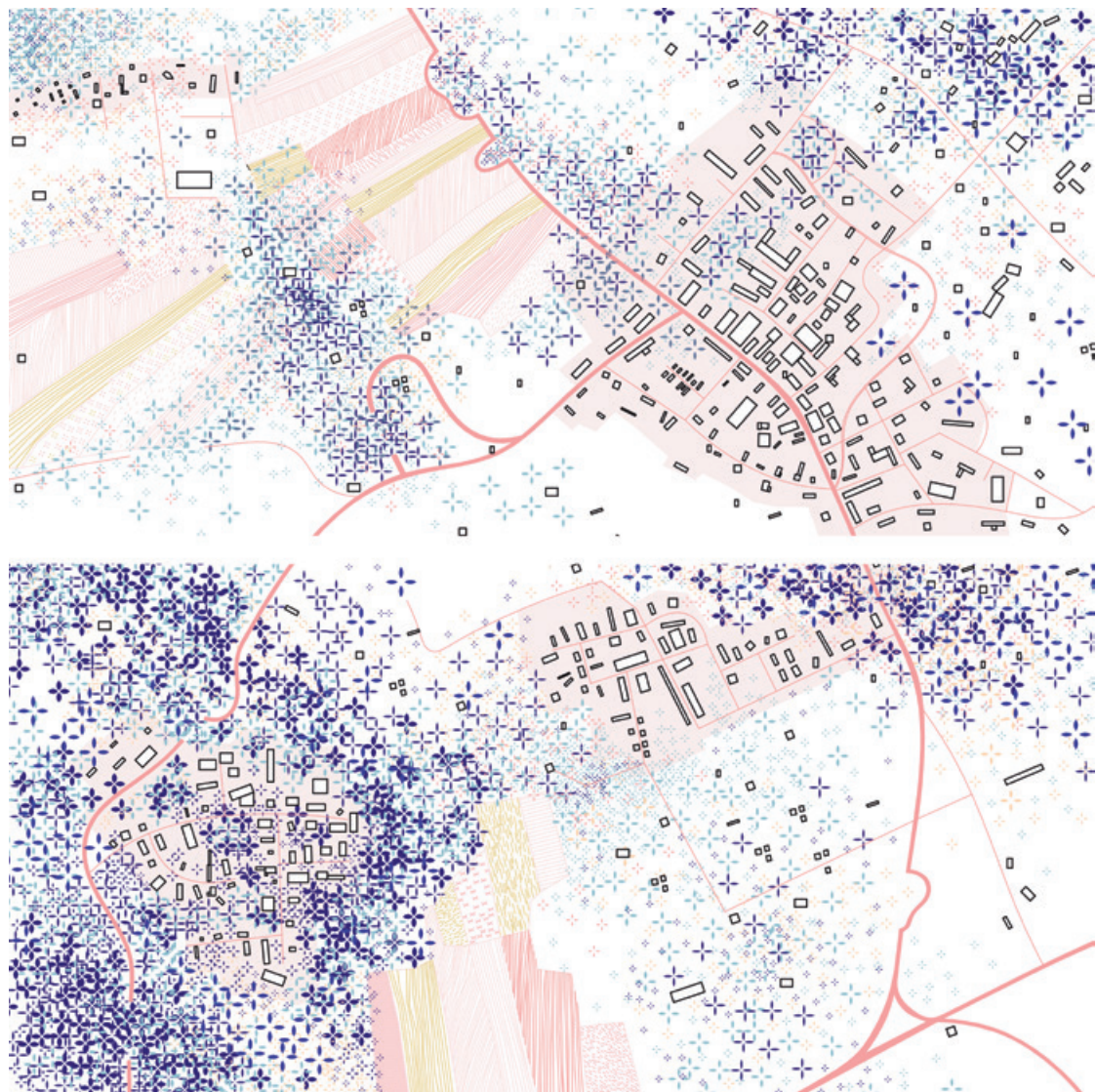
Territory

The spatial distribution of settlements, agricultural lands and forests is now undoubtedly reshaped at the landscape scale. Trees are slowly encroaching on every piece of territory that is left without proper human management.



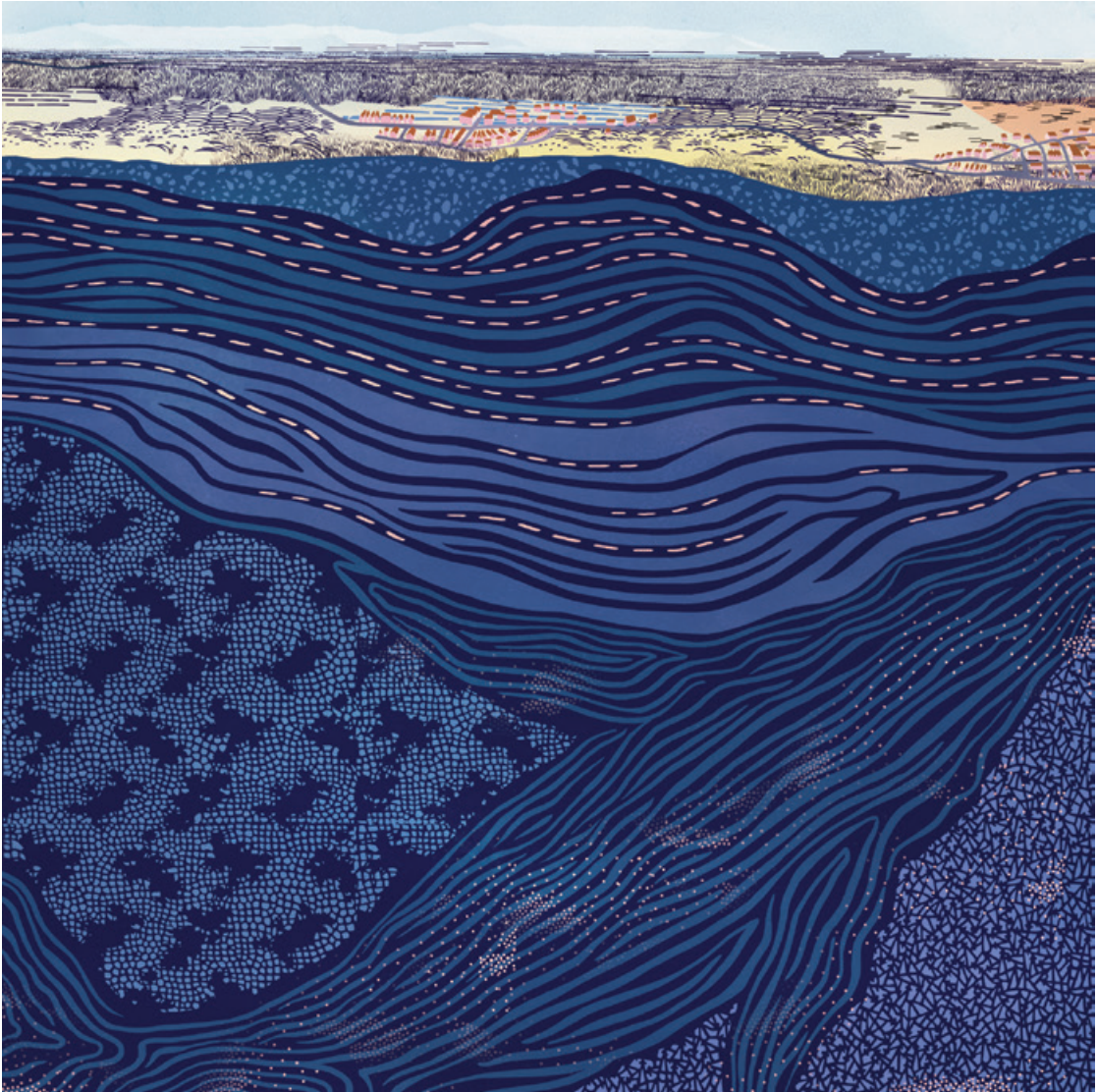
The space of production

As wooded areas are taking over engineered lands, the production space expands under the tree canopies as well. Location and size control is under governmental jurisdiction, but the utilisation of each piece of land is community-based. This system allows for controlling the use of common resources according to their scale.



Settlement

The density of human-dominated built environment decreases along a gradient from settlement centres to the edges. Borders become blurred and diffuse as forests penetrate into human-dominated territory. The invasion of forests can even engulf whole settlement, leaving them without any connection to the rest of the world.



The scale of time

Perception of ecological time is not comprehensible for humans, a species that territorialises the land as an individual actor. Processes and patterns of contemporary landscape depend on the legacy of past events and changes. The timescale of most changes is far beyond individual perceptions of time. What is considered long-timescale for humans is actually very short on the scale of ecological time.



Dwelling

As the available space for human habitats shrinks, existing buildings are transformed into co-housing and shared spaces — most of the built infrastructure becomes a new common resource. Shapes and spaces of new dwellings are forced to be adapted to the circumstances provided by the forest.



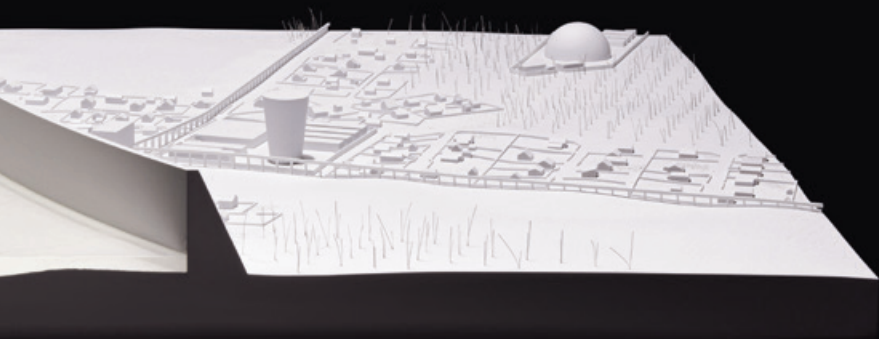
Adaptations

Trees territorialised most of the landscape and have become the predominant species. As the territory expands, other species must constantly adapt their habitats for survival. One of the driving forces is the demand for light in the dark and dense parts of the forest. Humans developed several construction methods to escape from the dark reigning below.

EURECA: EU Climate Resistance Agency

Traumnouvelle, Belgium





Victoria Nowakowa
1st Prime Minister of the European Union
Inaugural speech
Official broadcast

Dear European Citizens,

Thank you for your trust. I am honoured that you saw in me the first Prime Minister of the European Union. I solemnly swear that I will be up to the task and I will do justice to every vote.

My thoughts tonight go to all the victims of recent years. The thousands of deaths due to COVID-19 and following epidemics which give us no respite. The drought of 2021 and the Afsluitdijk dam leak, which left us struggling to feed ourselves for over a year. The Kozloduy nuclear catastrophe which rendered much of Bulgaria, Serbia and Poland uninhabitable. The earthquakes of Southern Italy and the terrible floods of Transylvania. My thoughts go out to those who died of starvation or dehydration in the aftermath. Those who lost their jobs, their homes, their loved ones.

This is the European Union that our forefathers have handed us!

Your conduct when facing these catastrophes has been heroic.

The world thanks you for your deep involvement. You have dealt with these crises with honour and solidarity. You have fought back, rebuilding what was destroyed and sharing what had to be shared with those hit by hardship. You acted with dignity when you held climate strikes, the values of which you have taken all the way into your private lives with strength.

Citizens of Europe, I hear your voice loud and clear and on the day of my election, I make a solemn promise to you. I swear that I will protect you, that I will protect your families, that I will protect your businesses and homes from the threat of climate change. I will do this at any cost.

We are at war. Throughout this campaign, Europe has ceaselessly been struck by ecological catastrophes and it is our duty to fight back.

To protect our land and to protect our people, collectively. To construct a brighter, more secure future for ourselves, for our children.

For these reasons, my first action as Prime Minister of the European Union is the creation of EURECA: the EU Climate Resistance Agency. I have named our most valued scientists and engineers to lead it. EURECA will be working hard in the next weeks, months and years, in full collaboration with the regional and national governments of Europe.

EURECA will set up a plan of climate-resistant infrastructure on a continental scale. It will address specific threats such as the rise of sea levels, drought and wildfires, as well as anticipate and counter future hazards by expanding forest coverage and CO₂ absorption.

EURECA will increase civilian resilience by empowering localities. EURECA will deploy actions akin to those of a benevolent father on behalf of his children.

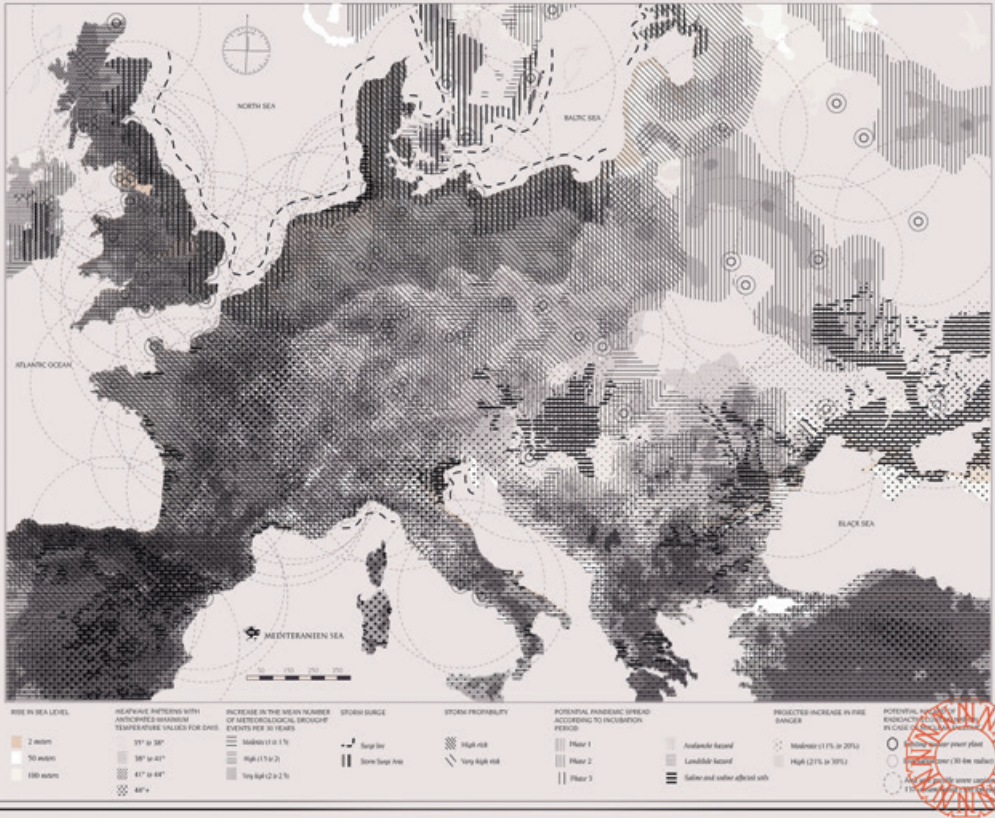
The Polish region has been selected for the implementation of a pilot project due to its widespread population and medium density, its strong community-building involvement and its historical economic ties with the EU, making it homogeneously developed. It is also afflicted with low-intensity occurrences of the climate catastrophes which burden the entire territory, making it ideal for measurement and trial-testing. For all of these reasons, Poland will serve as a prototype for the infrastructural defence system of the EU.

Dear citizens, we are at war, but we have hope. We have each other. We have EURECA. We will prevail!

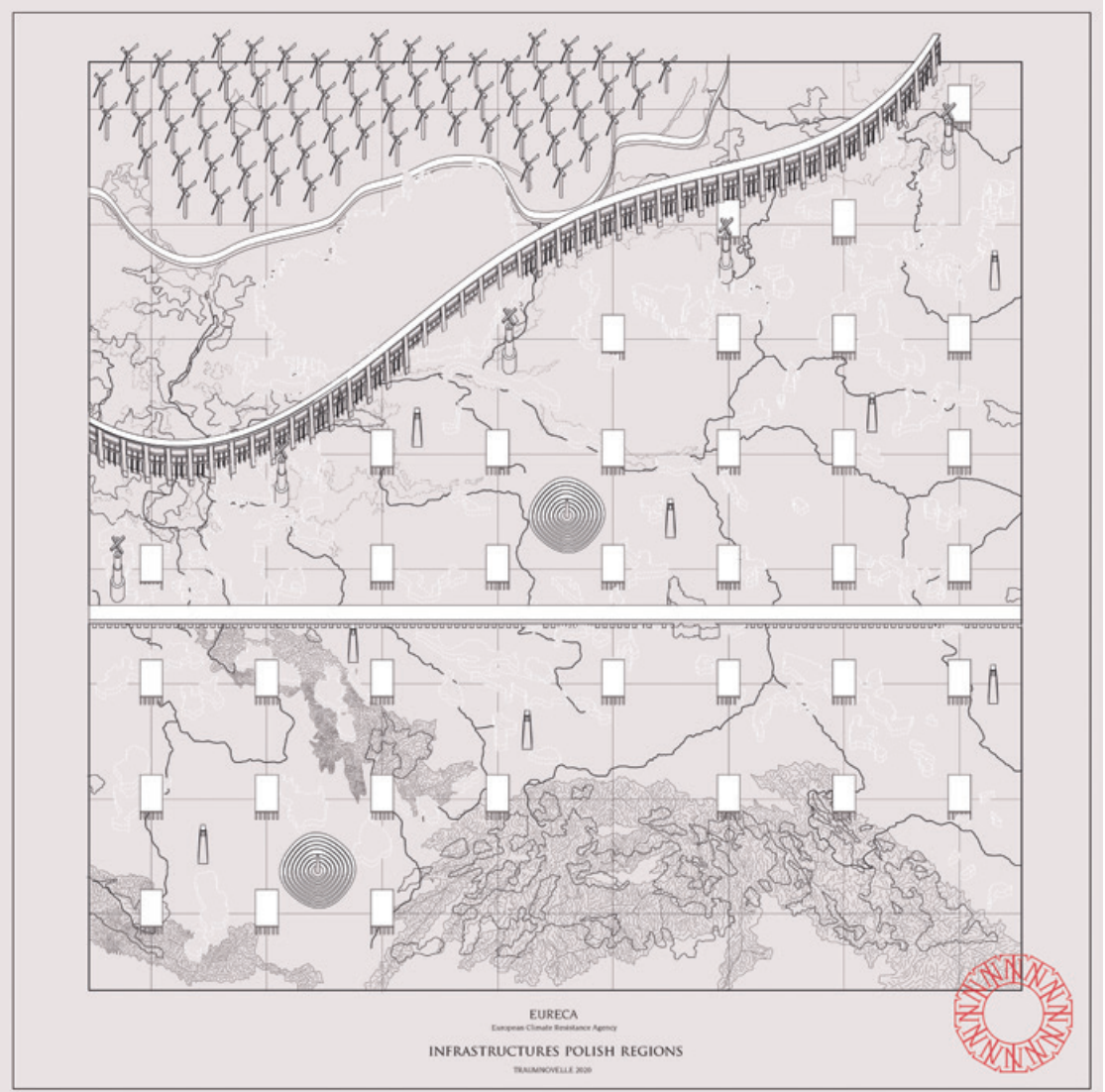
Traumnovelle is a militant faction founded by three Belgian architects: Léone Drapeaud, Manuel León Fanjul and Johnny Leya. Traumnovelle uses architecture and fiction as analytical, critical and subversive tools to emphasise contemporary issues and dissect their resolutions. Their work champions a multi-disciplinary approach with architecture at the crossroads and has been published internationally.

Traumnovelle curated the Belgian Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2018. Their Eurotopie project pursues the construction of Europe as a political ideal. They consider Europe to be the last utopia, the only social structure able to counter nationalism and address global issues such as political, climatic and economic collapse. Traumnovelle questions the relationships between architecture and politics.

EURECA
European Climate Resilience Agency
CLIMATE RELATED NATURAL DISASTERS
TRAUMNOVELLE 2026





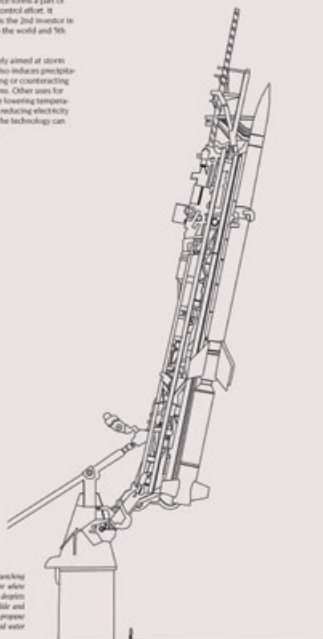




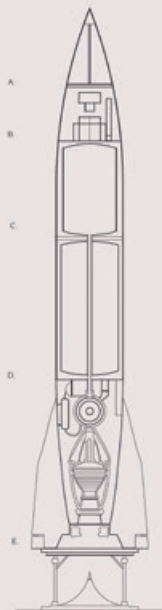
CLOUD SEEDING PROCESS

The EU Weather Modification Office is a unit of the EURECA Meteorological Bureau tasked with weather control in EU land and water masses. The EU Weather Modification Office forms a part of the continent-wide weather control effort. It employs 17,000 people, and is the 2nd investor in research and development in the world and 5th patent holder.

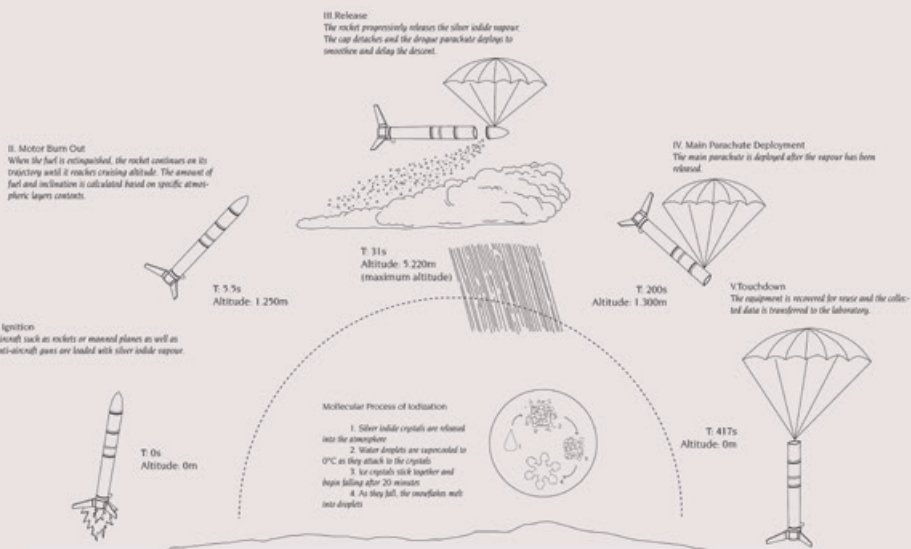
The work of the Office is largely aimed at storm and drought prevention. It also induces precipitation for purposes of firefighting or counteracting the effect of severe dust storms. Other uses for induced precipitation include lowering temperatures in summer in hopes of reducing electricity consumption. Occasionally, the technology can also be used to create snow.



Cloud seeding is achieved by launching rockets or flares into the atmosphere where they release ice nuclei to which water droplets attach. Inhaled silver, potassium iodide and solid carbon dioxide as well as liquid propane act as nucleating points for condensed water contained in clouds.



A. Head
B. Control and Measurement Section
C. Fuel Tank
D. Lapped for rocket motor and grip system
E. Tail section



EURECA
European Climate Resistance Agency

WEATHER MODIFICATION OFFICE EQUIPMENT AND PROCEDURES

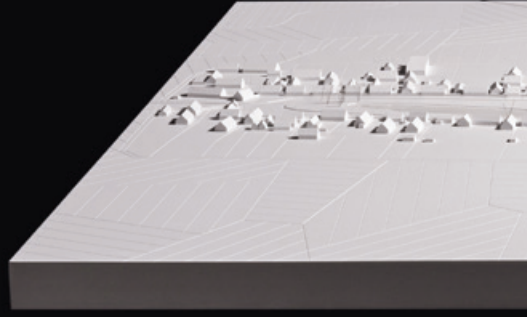
TRAUMNOVELLE 2020





Village Commons

Atelier Fanelisa, Germany





This speculative project proposes a new settlement typology for the Polish countryside based on the careful observation on the current condition of migration in the German-Polish border region. An existing village is transformed and becomes a prototype for an ecological, sufficient and holistic lifestyle based around the idea of commoning.

The EU policy making and further funding opportunities encourage a non-urban landscape stretching across borders. On a territorial scale of the Stettin metropolitan area, the result is an on-going migration of young families, the elderly and professionals looking for affordable land. This migration allows the existing villages to organically transition into a contemporary state. Currently this phenomenon, similar to the Stettin context, can be observed in other regions of Poland and Europe.

The settlement with a community of approximately 300 inhabitants features three distinct areas: the central common village green, the individual parcels and the outer fields and pastures. The village green with a meadow and pond is used for annual festivities and markets. This core also has common facilities like a community centre, a guest house and co-op kiosk. The shared energy production is situated in a tall tower. An elegant pergola structure surrounds the buildings and outdoor spaces forming one spatial entity.

Mixed-use buildings group around the core with dwelling typologies combining living and small-scale production under one large roof. Most of the main facades face the centre, materialising a shared facade. The outdoor space is characterised by fruit trees and vegetable gardens for a self-sufficient lifestyle. On the edge of the village, more

productive uses are positioned in close connection to the agricultural land. Next to cooperatively worked fields, the productive landscape is characterised by common energy production facilities, forests and open meadows.

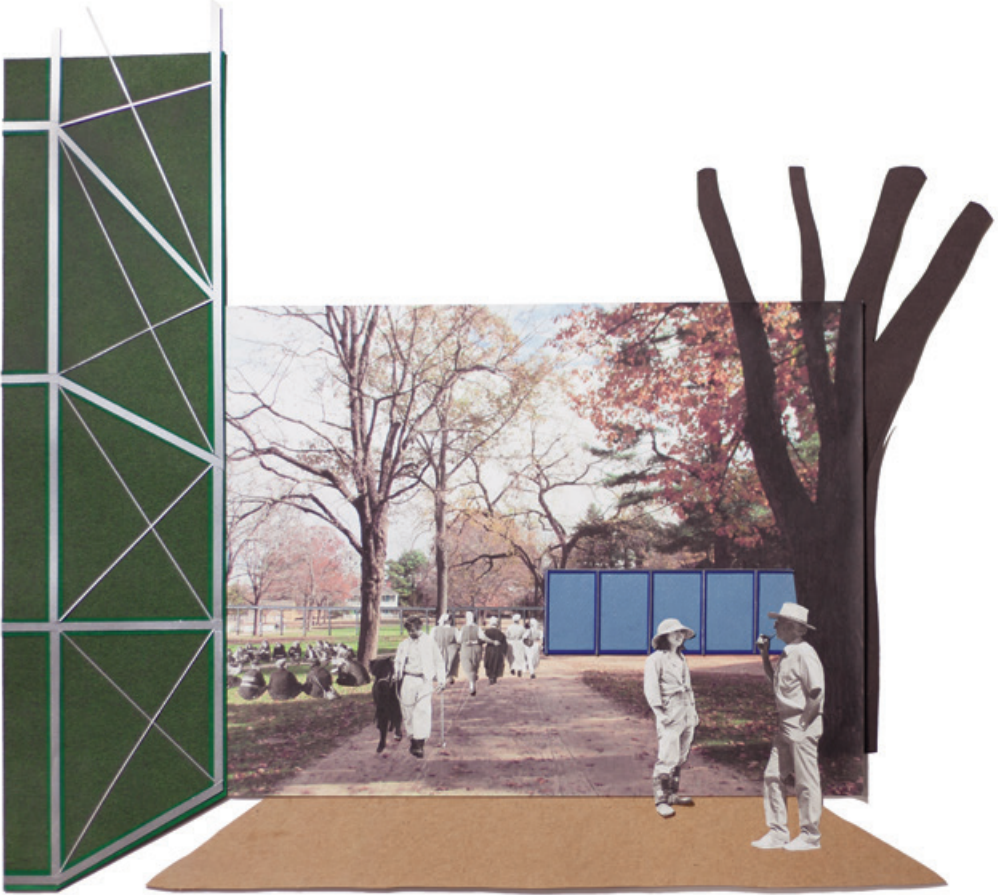
Atelier Fanel is an international team of architects based in Berlin and Gerswalde (Brandenburg). The studio investigates contemporary forms of working, living and commoning in the countryside, the periphery,

and the city. We realise private projects, public buildings, exhibitions, and workshops. Within these formats, we develop innovative and qualitative answers to questions regarding the conditions of today's society.



Settlement

The new settlement typology with central common village green, individual parcels and outer fields



Settlement

The community organises annual festive activities and markets in the village green



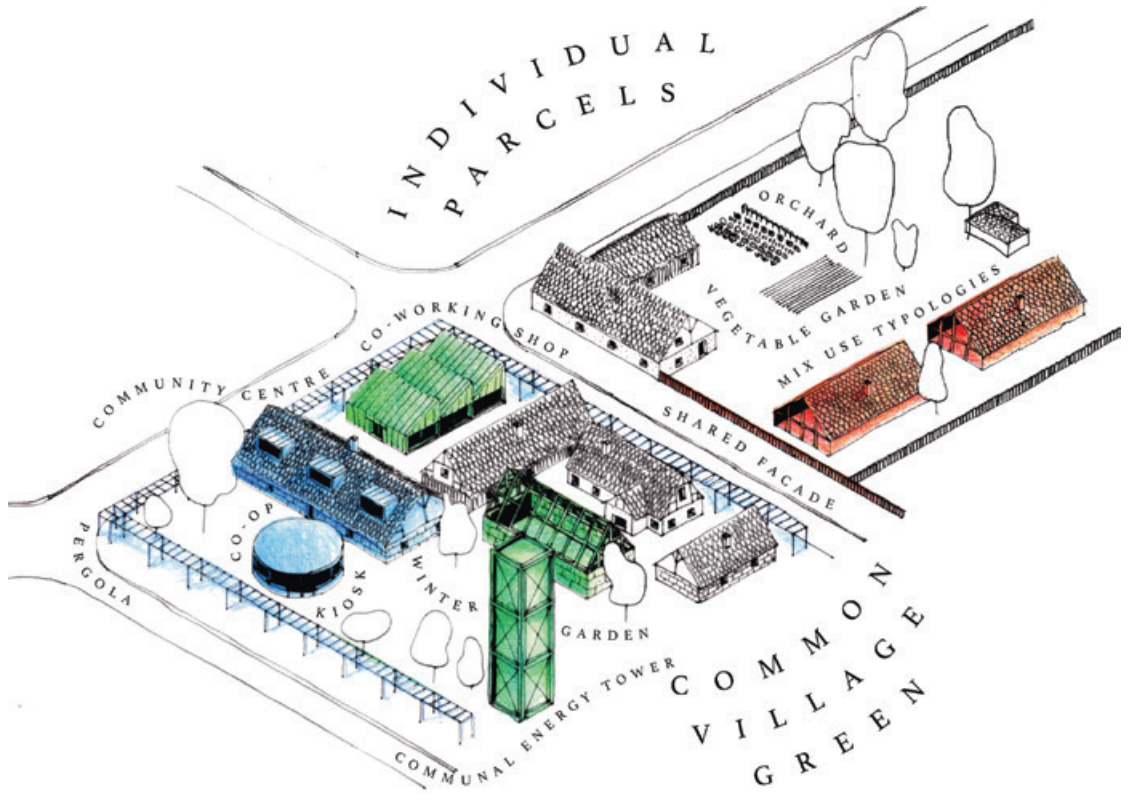
Territory

Transforming villages in the German-Polish border region of Stettin



Territory

New settlers looking for opportunities



Dwelling

New building typologies form the spatial relationship of the prototype

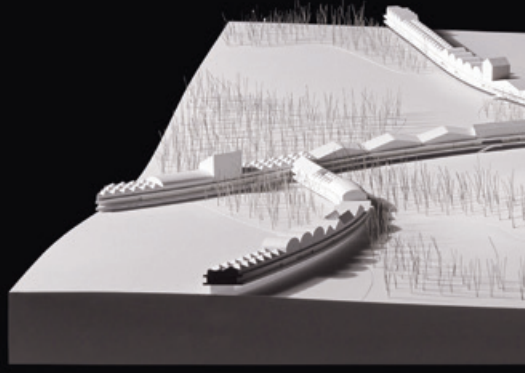


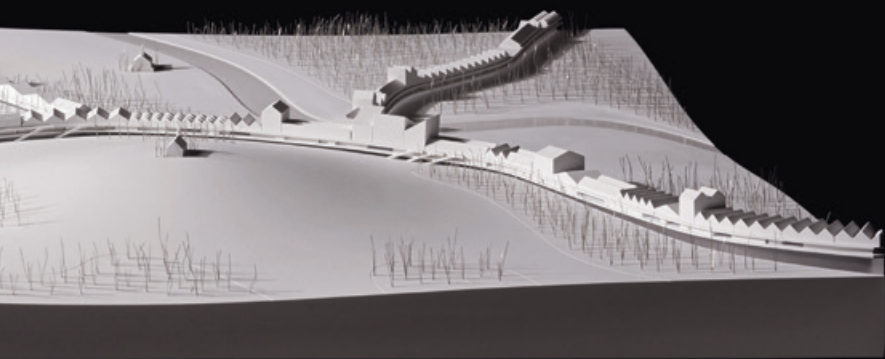
Dwelling

A self-sufficient
lifestyle emerges

Countryspine

KOSMOS Architects, Russia, Switzerland, Austria





How to develop the countryside and still preserve green land?

How to create a common active social space and provide enough privacy?

Can people simultaneously be involved in agriculture production and intellectual work?

What should be the difference between the countryside and the city in the near future?

Even though we are used to imagining the countryside as the opposite of the city, in fact it is not 'pristine untouched' nature, but a continuous landscape of man-made infrastructure: greenhouses for plants, warehouses for big agricultural machines, sheds for animals, factories for production, etc., constitute a big part of it. Highways and roads are fully built areas without any volume. They connect cities, villages and settlements, facilitating all the processes in the countryside, but they remain underused most of the time. We imagine that volume which they hold in reserve could be a resource for densification while keeping the existing footprint.

We propose a project of a linear development that will take place on top of the existing roads. The roads are already built, and even if in the future, the modes of transportation progress into self-driving cars, or other ways of transport, the roads will still remain a method of connection between the cities. We propose that the new development happens above the existing roads to keep the project dense, not to use the 'wild' nature, to keep it as a 'reserve' for future

We propose to construct three-level structures on top of the roads. The first level will feature the road itself, where the cars, trucks and any other transport of the future can freely circulate from city to city, from settlement to settlement. Above it is the residential layer, hosting housing for people. It will be built as a simple shell and core structure, allowing occupation of it

step-by-step, and free customised housing units. Above it is the third level: greenhouses, occupied by agriculture and human public activity, the main space for common functions. Here traditional functions of the agricultural greenhouse, such as growing vegetables, crops, fruits, are combined with shared public facilities like common kitchens, playgrounds, sport facilities, and units of private business like stores and services of all kinds, as well as offices and places for leisure and relaxation. As part of the MEP system, we integrate computer servers which facilitate all the digital process of the settlements and the produced heat used to create the required indoor climate.

The project is a self-sustainable system based on circular economy and local production where people live, produce and grow the food in the direct proximity, while having opportunity of immediate transportation and direct access to the real, untouched nature. Using the existing roads gives a very compact footprint and keeps free land, whereas cross-programming of the greenhouses and different regimes of use create a very active countryside settlement model. This type of settlement can be an alternative spatial, economical, ecological social model to the traditional city or suburban models.

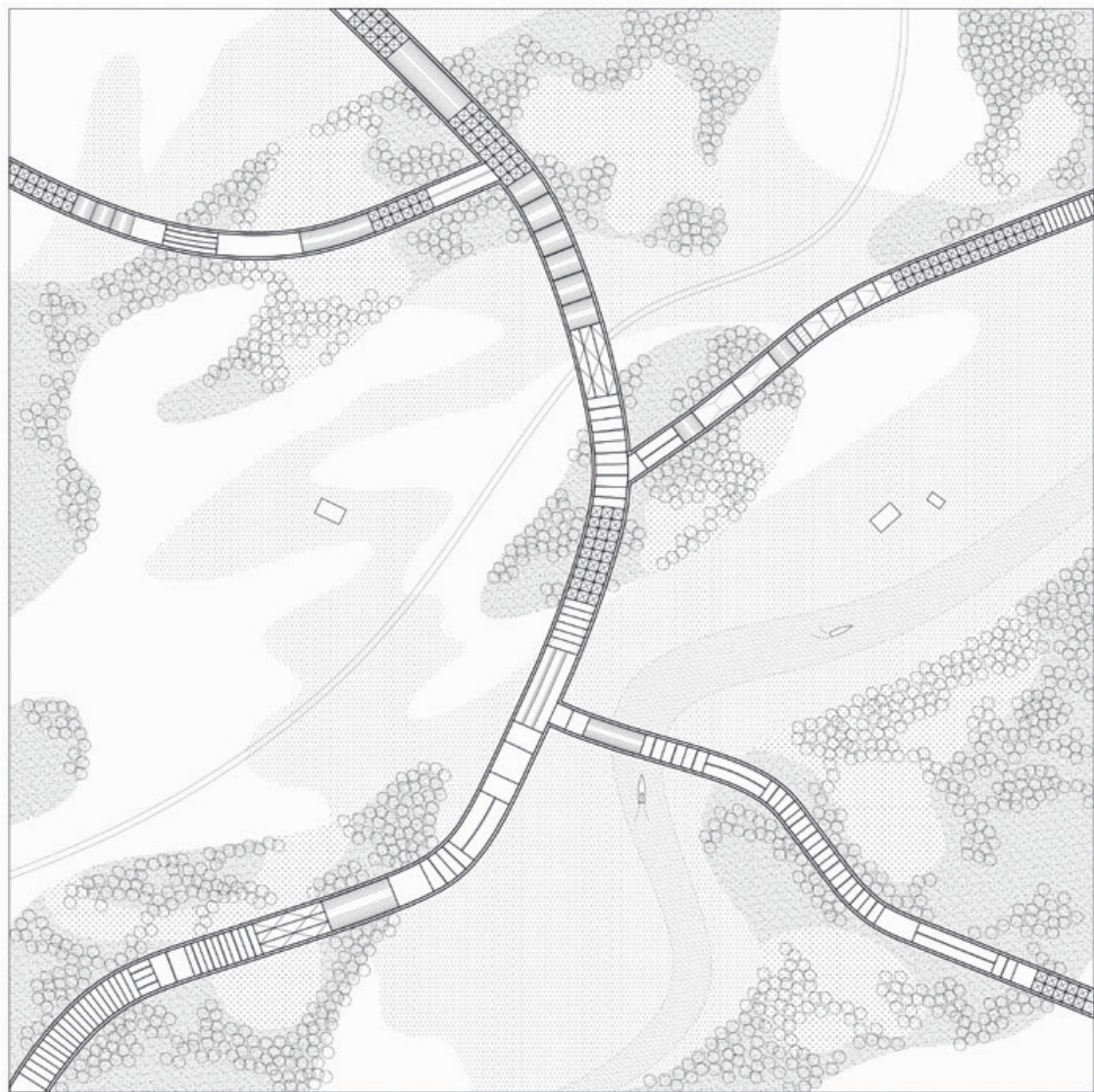
KOSMOS Architects is an office collaborating virtually, bringing together partners based in Geneva, Moscow, Graz and New York. KOSMOS designs projects and environments of all types and scales: from a door

handle to a city, from hardcore architecture to pop-up art installations. The office combines art and technology, global experience with respect to local context, academic research and practical architecture.

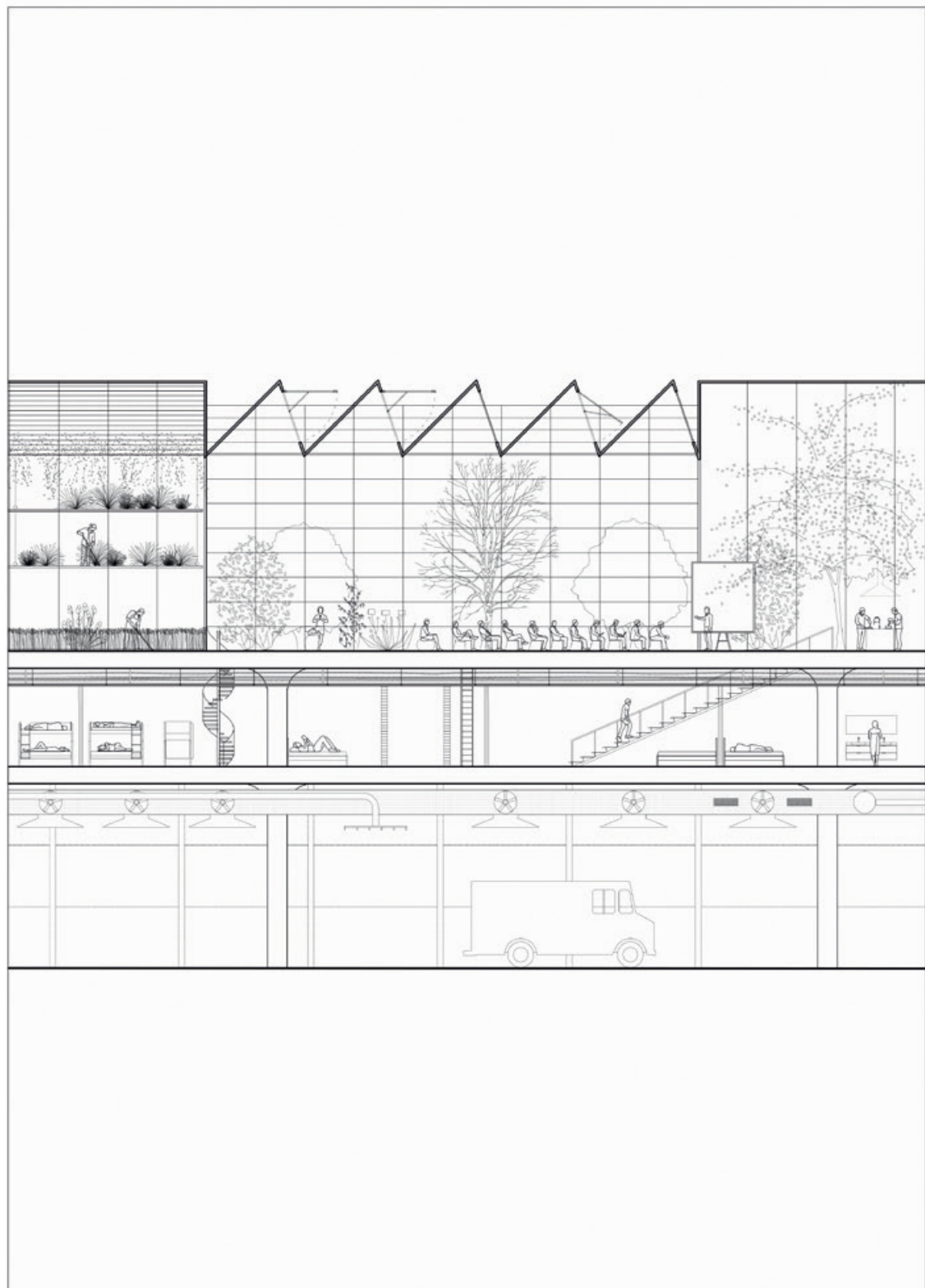


Elevation









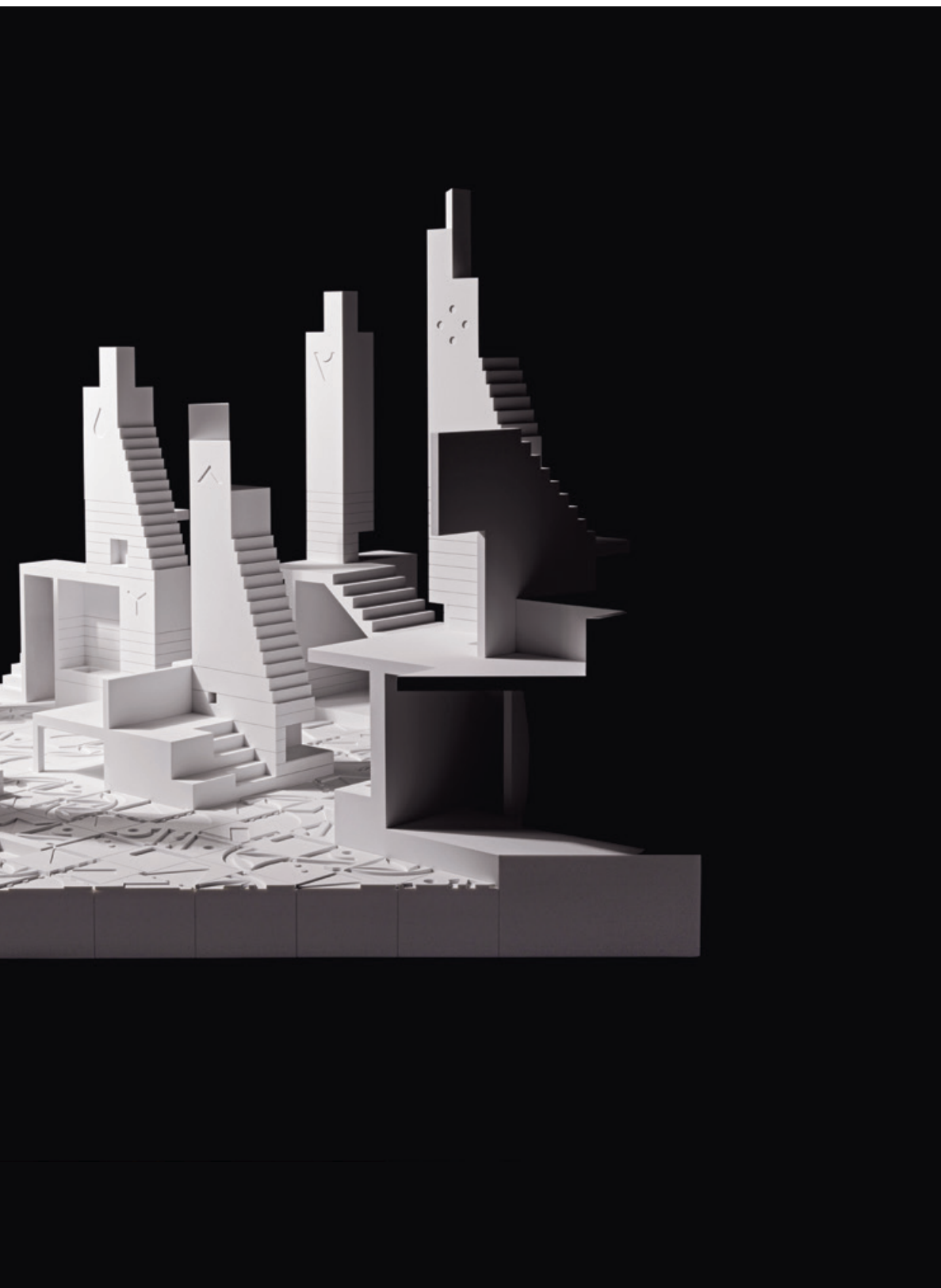
Section



Spotem

Rural Office for Architecture, United Kingdom





We believe in the notion of togetherness; the spirit of working and living together, collaborating and sharing. Drawing on Poland's rich history of collective society we examine how we can live together in this current rural context. This project draws on two key references, Oskar Hansen's *Open Form*, published in 1959, and Władysław Matlakowski's survey of the vernacular condition in Zakopane, published in 1892.

Hansen states, 'Open Form is about variable compositions — the processes of life highlighted by backgrounds;'¹ an architecture conceived as a framework to support everyday life.

Matlakowski described the layout of the Góral [Highlander] hut² as split between a winter room and an unprogrammed summer room. The winter room, blackened by smoke from its stove, is defined as the black space: the fundamental spaces necessary for survival. The summer room, clean from soot, was the white space: open in plan and programmed to accommodate new furniture, new residents, and the detritus of everyday life.

These two references hold close semblance and this is how the project is conceived, with Hansen and Matlakowski combined: a black space core provisioning a hearth, kitchen and bathroom that literally and figuratively supports the white space for everyday life. The black space hosts the perfunctory; the white space accommodates living, experiment and expansion.

Hansen also established a framework for how this was to be realised. In his application of the Open Form he discussed three scales of intervention: the state, the housing association and the individual. In this context, the state build the infrastructure, the housing association build the black space, and the individuals build the white space. The housing association produce the pattern books for the individual to choose their hearth, their kitchen, their bathroom. The individual then builds their own home through the private market.

¹ Quoted after: Agata Pyzik, 'Oskar Hansen (1922–2005)', *Architectural Review*, 8 October 2015.

² The Góral hut is the native architecture of the Podhale region and a source of national identity during the 19th century while the country was entirely partitioned.

³ *Działkowanie* is the art of cultivating and relaxing on a small piece of land — an allotment. An assemblage of individual parts, an opportunity for multi-generational use, a collective force.

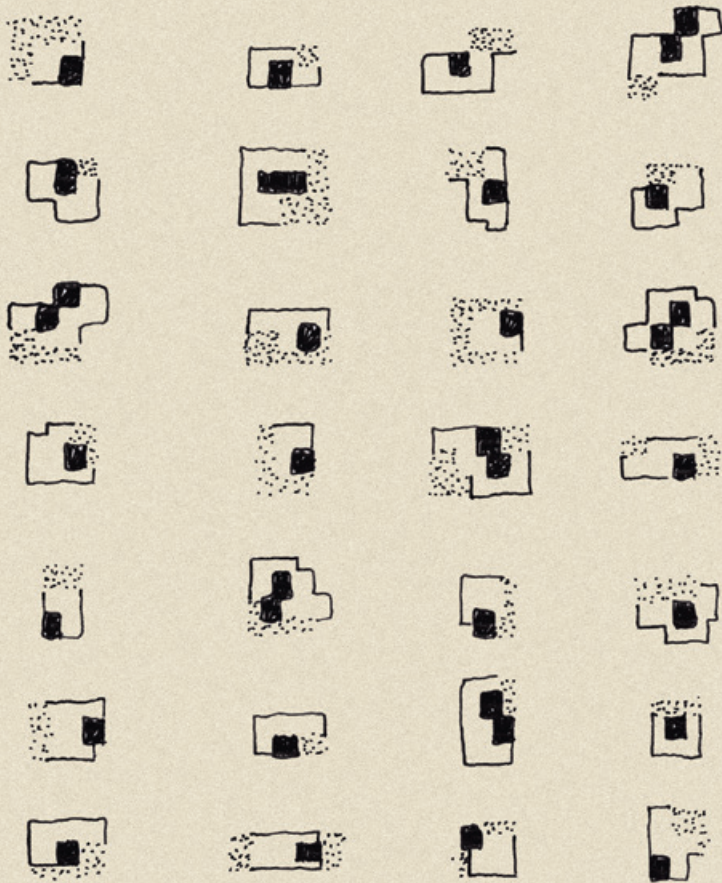
Whilst Poland has a long, rich history of co-operatives, housing pattern books and collective society, one cannot be naïve about the realities of self-determinism and individual agency in Poland's post-Soviet state. This system endeavours to accommodate both.

The project therefore seeks a balance between these individual black and white desires and the importance of the common, in-between, grey spaces. The clustering of dwellings creates liminal unclaimed territory: small pieces of land left to be wild or to be cultivated. This sharing and enjoying of common land is integral to Polish cultural identity: the spirit of *działkowanie*³ is thus integral to the project. The in-between addresses the balance of individualism and collectivism: the necessity for an individual piece of world and the value of the void.

The perceived failure of rural Polish housing today is to refuse the existence of communal amenity and to isolate the individual within their own dwelling. Our proposal seeks a balance between these polar opposite issues — this black and white dichotomy — through the creation of the black, white and grey.

Rural Office for Architecture is based in a remote rural part of South Wales, UK. Established in 2008 by Niall Maxwell, the practice often works within rural settings, responding to its context and surroundings by reinterpreting the familiar architectural language of the past. They work across the UK on historic and new architectural projects and are currently developing a new dwelling in rural Japan, their first overseas commission.

Spotem was a collaboration between four members of the Rural Office for Architecture team: Morgan Davies, Will Judge, Niall Maxwell and Jonathan Mortlock. They were assisted with their research by Praktyka Project.



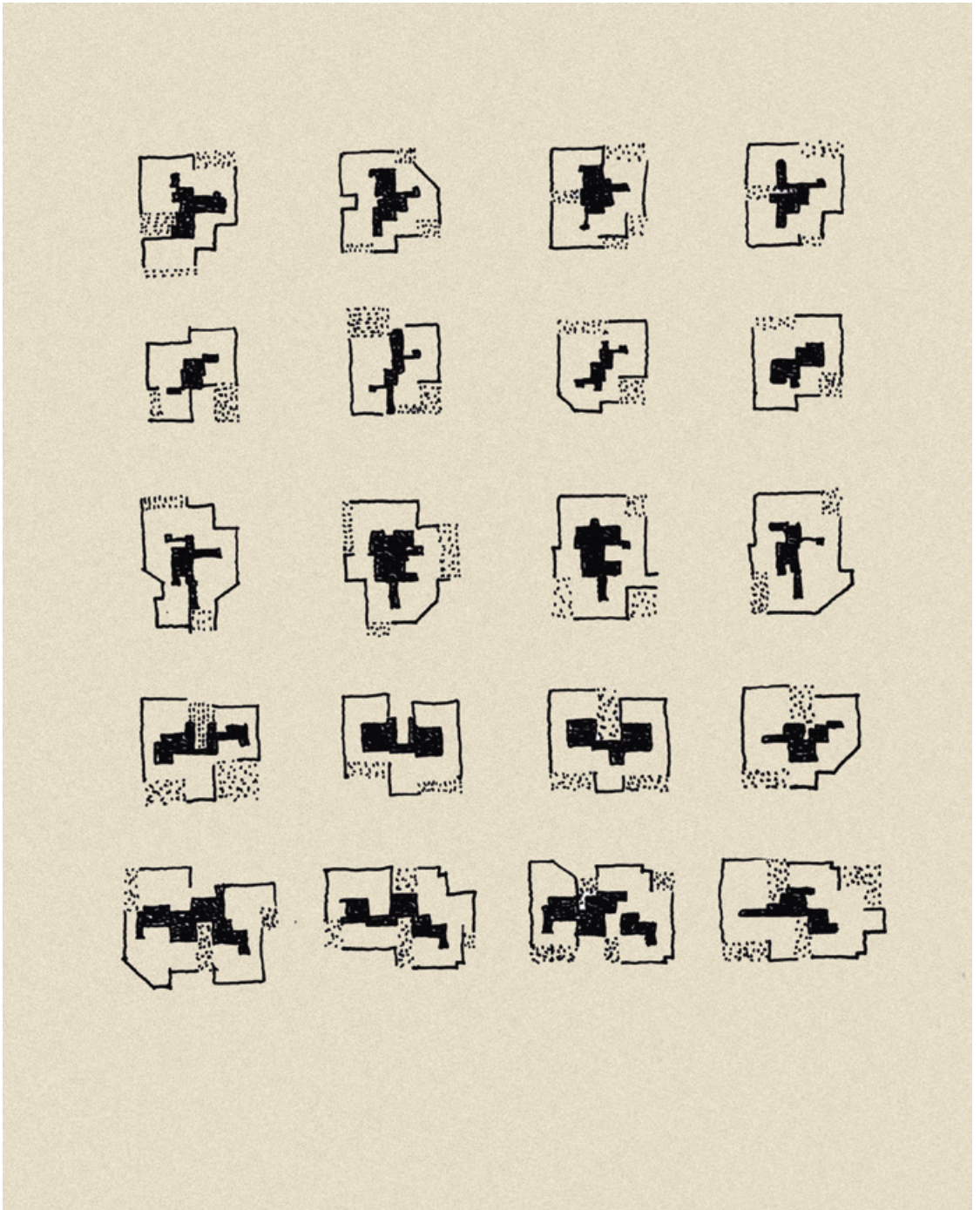
Taxonomy of dwellings

A diagram indicating the different scales of dwelling units and user groups, based on Polish demographics and traditional space standards. An indication of the black and white spaces indicating the importance of the core and hearth within the plan form.



Dwelling

A domestic scene centred around the hearth to demonstrate the potential growth and personalising of space that may evolve through a free market model. We make a specific reference to Enzo Mari and the assembly of an interior.



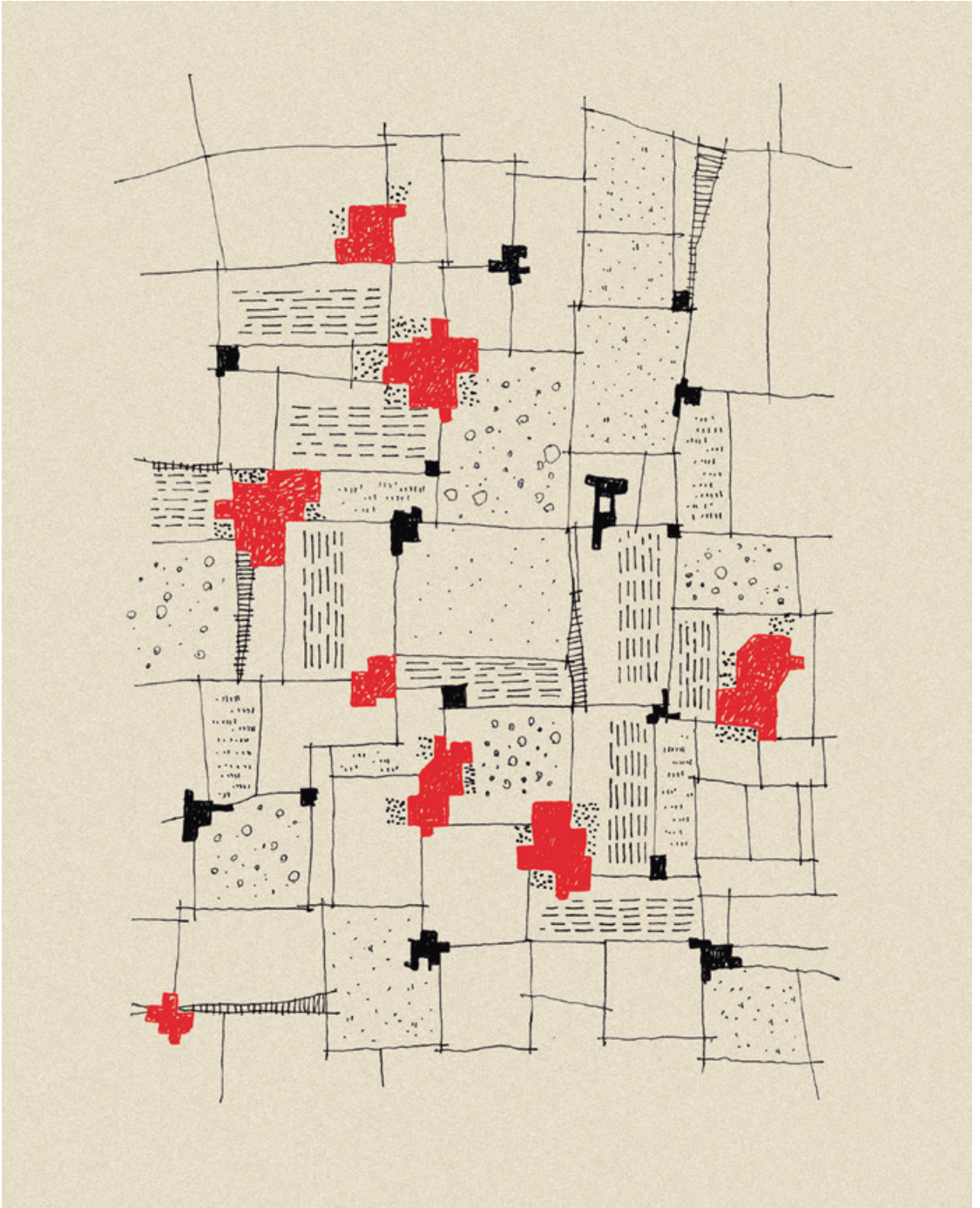
Settlement

A set of diagram plans to explain the grouping of dwellings to form mini settlements, where the black spaces are fragmented to address the adjacencies between different dwellings and the introduction of vertical circulation.



Settlement

A scene depicting the shared territory or common between dwellings within the settlement, set within a rural landscape of growing and 'making do'. The interior view relates back to the image on page 223, the long view to the image on page 227.



Territory

A landscape plan of group settlements set within an abstracted fictional landscape, indicating the spatial importance of the *działkowanie*. The relationship of black, white and grey extends beyond the settlement into the territory. The red represents completed settlements, the black structures that are ready for development.



Territory

A scene depicting the settlement with a long view suggesting context of landscape and mountain views. A reference to Polish cultural practice in foreground, with a range of structures in varying stages of development and at different scales and uses.

Social Infrastructure

RZUT, Poland





Rural areas can be a large, green power plant.

Minister of Agriculture Jan Krzysztof Ardanowski, 2020

One day, the countryside was transformed into a power plant. The old structures of post-socialist agricultural conglomerates, tired of the capitalist reality, were linked by a ribbon of infrastructure producing green energy.

The residents quickly realised that this new element in the familiar landscape not only brought them profits, but also promoted directness of relations. This was the birth of the energy cooperative, which soon replaced the morally outdated model of extra-city production.

People quickly discovered how to take advantage of the surplus energy. Those who wanted to earn more began to drastically reduce consumption in their own homes. The rooms that required a power supply were moved to the ground floor, which became a collective tool for minimising consumption and shared generation of heat. The upper floors were turned into luxurious enclaves of privacy, and the top floors were stripped of their roofs, so the residents could once again enjoy all times of day and the changing seasons. Nothing else was needed — the countryside finally allowed people to live and die in the same place. Infrastructure became a tool of transformation, a new shelter for civilisation.

The countryside is no longer a paradise. If we are to believe the stories, over the course of 6,000 years, we have gone from stealing the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil to raising fur animals and corn monocultures, which will soon drown us with glucose-fructose syrup. The abundance characteristic of the paradise myth has turned into wastefulness today, but it does not have to be. That is why a new model of living in the countryside was created, using a resource that is still in abundance here — land.

It is not about fertile fields, which according to EU law can only be cultivated today, but about the areas of former State Agricultural

Farms (PGR) — relics of agricultural nationalisation. We have transformed them into a real community infrastructure.

The farmers of the future use them to 'grow' green energy, which feeds their small businesses, based on remote working and local services. Excess energy is sold to cities. Profit from the sales frees the residents from the heartless logic of speculation.

The production lanes are interspersed with the post-PGR house blocks of flats, the spaces between them teeming with life powered by green energy. New farms use it in the community ground floors of terraced houses converted from blocks. The private space on the first floor and the open terraces above it separate the public from the individual, but also the warm, heated and year-round, from the cold and seasonal.

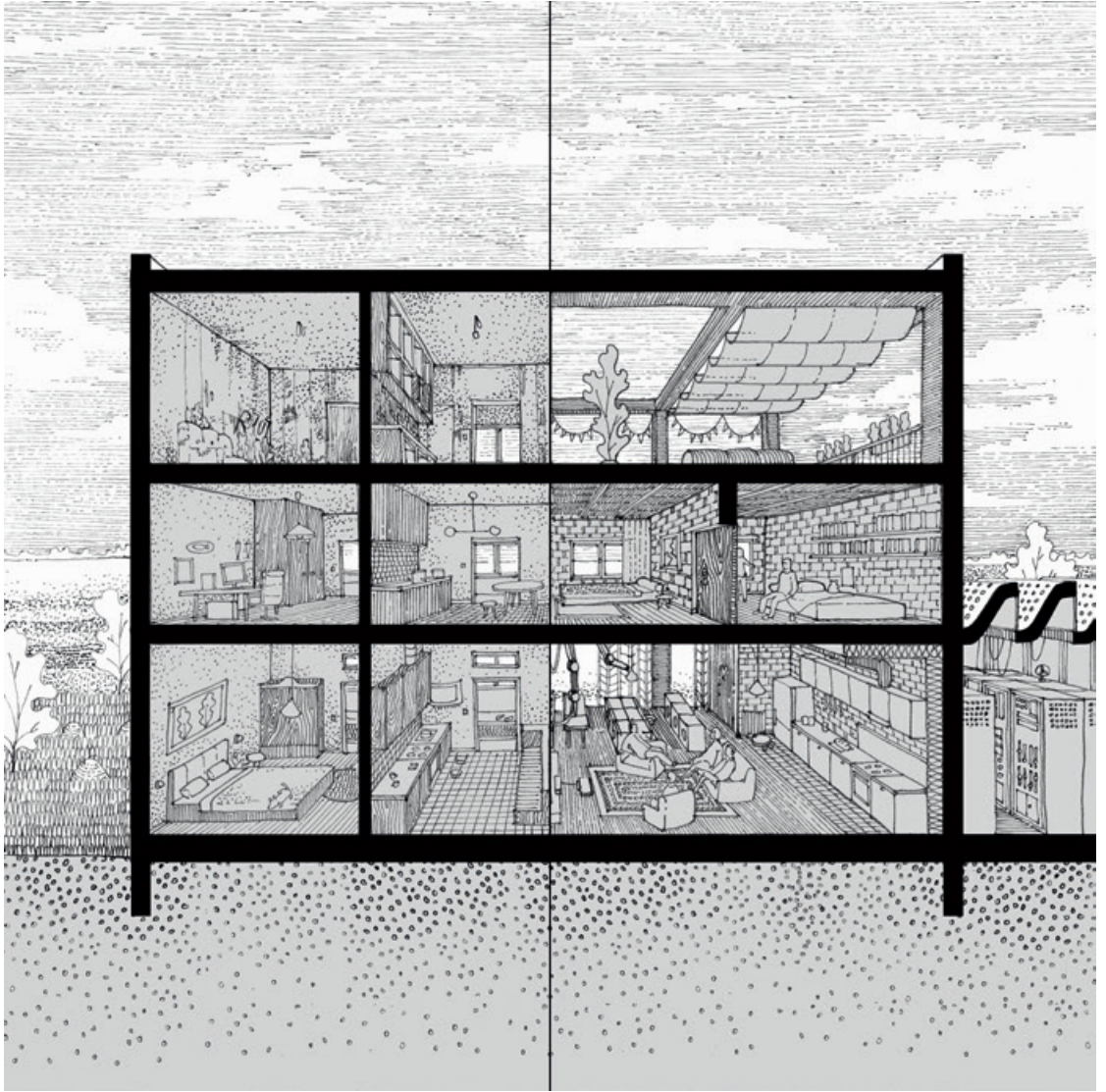
Homesteads between the houses and the green power plant are built of a network of small modules — rural volumes, complementary, as in the past, individual parts of a traditional farm: a vegetable garden, a cattle shed, a barn. Experimental farms, places for working and resting, kindergartens, galleries? Who knows what other functions this new structure will acquire? The multiplicity of possibilities makes the space between infrastructure and housing a space of conversation, negotiation and dispute — toilsome community building.

Commons means shared ownership, shared social practice, and finally, knowledge developed together. *Common sense* is a trait of the settlers, which will be the foundation for wise management (the first virtue of rural life). The infrastructural balks (branches that move away from the trunk of the energy belt) will connect individual dwellings into a settlement in its physical and social dimension. Within this framework, practice based on individual dreams, aspirations and goals will become the basis for building a true community.

RZUT

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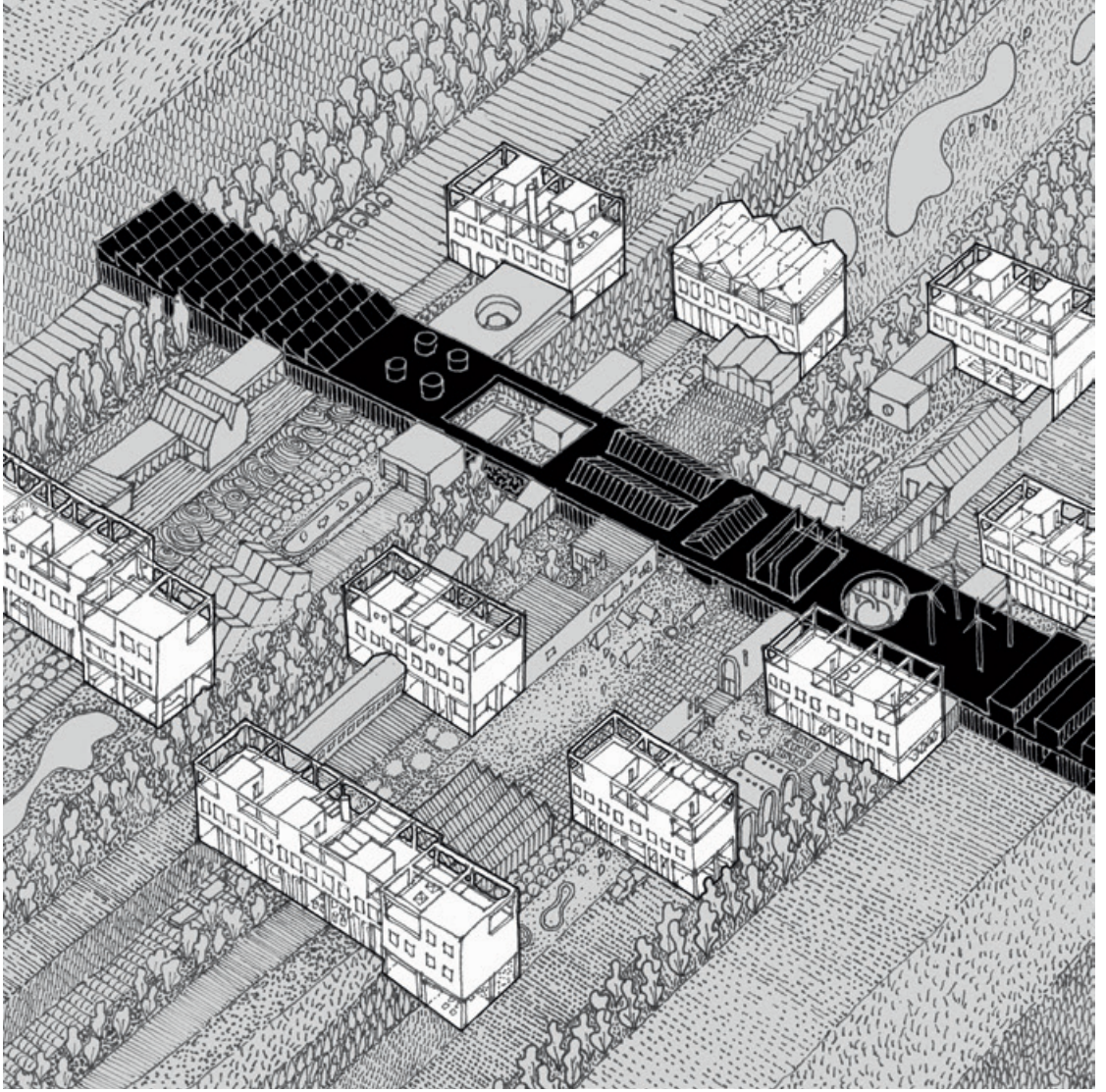
We are a group of people who write, tell stories and offer critique. We summarise the stories we observe in a quarterly published since 2013. We are not a design studio, and our goal is not to build. Nevertheless, we feel like architects and use our experience to deepen our reflection on the subject of space. Text, drawing and building are for us equal elements of a world where there is no division between theory and practice.



Dwelling

Residents of the cooperative want to make money from saving the world, so they save energy to be able to sell it. Only the common ground floor is connected to the infrastructure; the vacant spaces enable wasteful use of the space — terraces appear in houses, whole storeys begin to function according to the rhythm of the changing seasons.





Settlement

The space between homes and the new infrastructure fills up with new functions over time; the wealthy residents realise their private and collective fantasies in it. The power plant becomes an axis that marks a new parcellation of land within the estate.





Territory

The power plant is a linear structure linking various forms of settlement into infrastructural strips, the beginning and end of which are marked by the boundaries of a specific territory. Its long range allows the transmission of surplus energy and creates a communication backbone for future rural development.

