

This research proposal relates to the three main provocations I encountered during this first quarter, in defining the typology of the Archive.

1. Drawing Matter

The eight archive case studies' capacities to allow the production of new architecture seem to revolve around the degree of intimacy between the artifacts and the viewer: formal or informal. The Drawing Matter Archive particularly, reaches a level of intimacy that surpasses traditional archives: by reducing the architecture of the archive to a bare minimum, the obstacles between the viewer and the collection are suppressed. As an institution, the DW further amplifies these gestures by maintaining a strong accessibility policy both physically and digitally. Although this archive caters to practitioners and students, it reaches a level of public involvement, unlike any other institution, using only wooden chests of drawers as a basis for the spread of architectural ideas.

2. The VAI's brief pleads for spaces to be more adequate for architectural archiving and to have more visibility.

- "Archives are not to be repositories of truths but places of research. They are incubators of new ideas, breeding grounds for speculation about the future" ¹ VAI, 2024. - According to Mbembe, the archive is "a sepulcher where remains of past lives lay to rest"², if so, how can the architectural archive catalyze the production of the *alive* built environment, as desired by the VAI?

After reviewing the VAI Policy Plan and listening to the employees, a holistic intent emerges: Irina Davidovici mentions that when it comes to the contemporary picture of architecture in Belgium, the VAI tries to record and involve many practices in exhibitions and publications, quaking a close connection between the local professional community.

I argue that the new Architecture for the VAI should not only respond to the institute's spatial requirements but also allow for a reactivation of *the remains of past lives* to be part of an architecture discourse today. It should therefore

redefine the relationship between artifact and viewer that it nurtures, and simultaneously maintains the VAI's current archival culture.

3. Belgian ordinary

Architectural agency in Belgium is strongly integrated into society but quite autonomous with regard to legislation, unlike in the Netherlands³. The effect of these cultural conditions is an organically grown and heterogeneous cityscapes that mirror the society it serve. Architectural eclecticism and anomalies become ordinary, part of a quotidian sight for locals, rendering architecture banal. In the 2021 Architecture Biennale for Belgium, Composite Presence celebrates this *Belgian Tendenza*⁴ by reflecting on the reality of Flemish Architecture. As argued by Maarten Van Driessche these models prove that coherence can emerge from subtle architectural interventions in the unguided urban fabric of Flanders and Brussels, creating a composite city.

I am somewhat fascinated by this *tendenza*, which I also find in the VAI's archiving culture: with its holistic collection culture it celebrates the banal to the level of treasure. Flemish Architecture in its simplicity represents the region and sets it apart from its neighbors, beyond the realm of Architecture. I thus strongly intend to engage with this particularity and allow in my design for this approach of *the mundane* to prevail with the ultimate goal of providing the Architectural Archive the societal relevance it deserves.

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¹ De Caigny et al., "VAi Collectie Cultureel archief voor architectuur Beleidsplan 2024-2028."

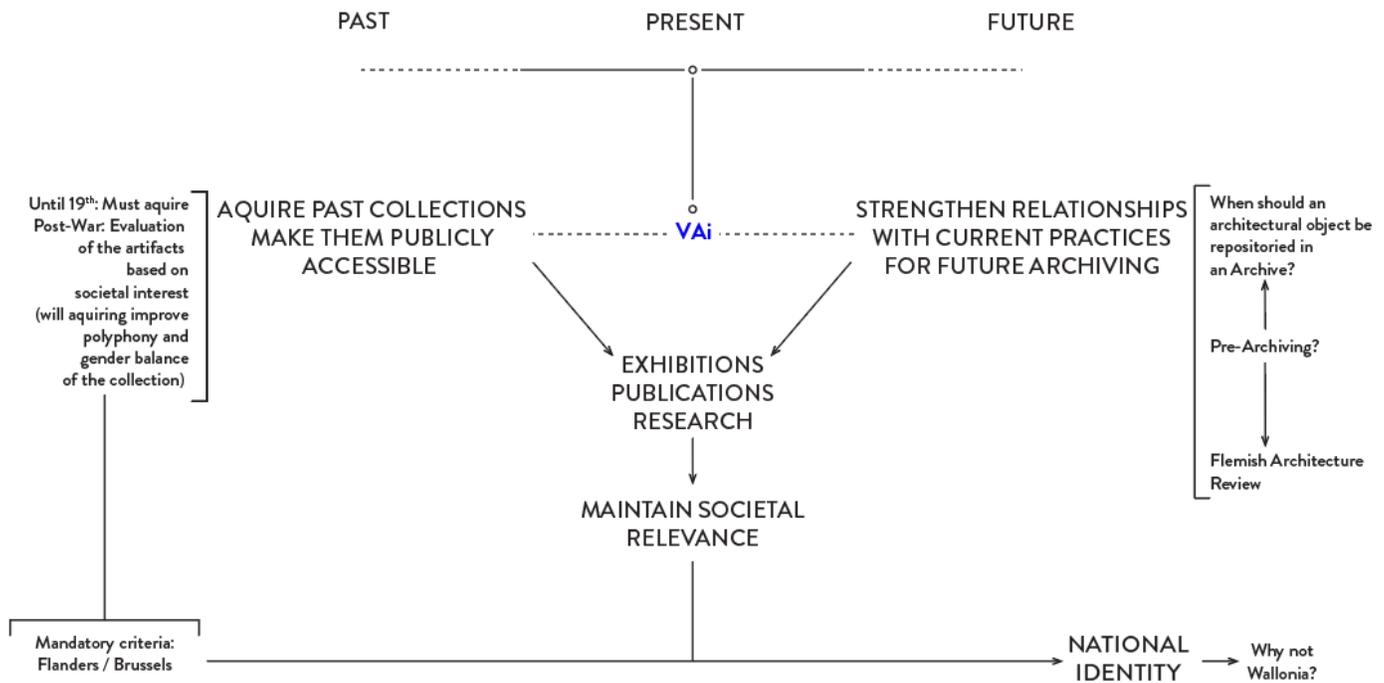
² Mbembe, *Refiguring the Archive*.

³ De Caigny et al., *Autonomous Architecture in Flanders*.

⁴ De Caigny et al., *Composite Presence*.

This diagram displays my interpretation of the VAI Archiving policy, based on the 2024 policy plan.

THE VAI'S HOLISTIC COLLECTION POLICY - ARCHIVING CULTURE OF THE VAI



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