

RESEARCH PLAN:

BORDERS WITHIN THE BRUSSELS FOOTBALL SPHERE



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AR3A010: Research Plan
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Cover: Molendijk, B. (April 5, 1986). *Supporters are escorted to the stadium by the ME.*

Jara Massimo Meindertsma, 4849825

1. THEMES

By now, landed in the Friche, I encountered the site as a free space, with blurry boundaries, rough but still preserved in its intrinsic qualities. A place where you are together, at the same time not heard or seen by many. Rich with an existing infrastructural layer that not solely forms a point of connection, as well of separation. Whilst the train cuts through the landscape, splitting the passing hours in three, the landscape, for seconds, gets overlooked. It speaks volumes about the tense character of the site.

These states of tension interwoven in the landscape can be used to its advantage when we deal with groups that require thoughtful infrastructure and space configurations. Groups that require undeniable necessities of relief, who perform at their best whilst maneuvering together through the tense landscape. People who envision these borders not so much as a line but as a region that merges and connects everything around it. A spatial configuration that regulates their flow, slows them down or moves them faster and interchanges either peace or hatred. It forms a conversation between one and the other. Instead of fighting it, we shall use it to our advantage and suggest a program that fits seamlessly. We don't want to overcome these barriers, they are part of the formation of these groups.

Communities of football fans are encountering difficulties to place themselves in the city. We are dealing with large groups expressing their group identity with lots of energy. This is valuable and necessary. They need a place in the city but require certain borders. Together with the social and anthropological theories, I am going to see how these supporter groups behave within the borders that serve the football structure.

1.1 My curiosities

From the age of six onward, I have harboured a great passion to watch, play, and engage in the discourse pertaining to the sport of football. As an Ajax supporter, I have an insider perspective on the sport and as a TU Delft student an expertise as an architect. Letting both worlds collide whilst composing this thesis can be special. I foster a deep interest in exploring unexplored realms, encapsulating novel concepts and unique architectural typologies. By centring my inquiry on my own obsessions, personal interests, and preoccupations, I will operate within a domain that is often marginalized and seemingly detached from regular architectural practices. In my thesis, I will try to persuade the reader that the contrary holds true.

1.2 Relevance

Football is rivalry. It represents places, from villages, towns, and cities to whole nations. Within these places, communities are formed and conflicts arise. Social debacles regarding issues of violence, intertwined with notions of connectivity, identification and tradition are relevant. Raising peculiar awareness of profound user perceptions and activity in space creates opportunity to re-evaluate the existing and intervene with more precision as designers in the present and coming days.

Whilst arriving in Brussels it becomes clear that the city breathes the football atmosphere, and simultaneously deals with issues of tension. It's seen throughout history with The Heysel Stadium disaster from 1985 in Brussels, where 40 people lost their lives, as well as in contemporary news. Think about the ban of away supporters in the Belgium competition after fierce riots between supporter groups (NU.nl, 2021). Think about Morocco's World Cup win in 2022 against Belgium, triggering riots, and leaving a fierce field of destruction behind (Mngqosini CNN, November 2022). All local examples that form this socially relevant debacle to tackle these problems around the practice of violent activities by football supporters.

1.3 Research questions

This fascination about the sport and its energy generated by these large groups supporting it, makes me wonder how we can contain it in the city. It will be important to understand which borders are present in Brussels football spheres. To understand systems of behavior and understanding how large groups interact with these borders. In order to explore the previous statements, the following research question will be the central focus of this narrative: *How do large supporter groups interact with the concept of the border within Brussels' football networks?*

To formulate an answer, this question is deconstructed into the following subquestions:

- *How do borders and edges, as well physical and metaphorical, engage in states of emotions?*
- *In what ways do rival supporter groups mix inside one city?*
- *What are the hidden networks that service the football structure and culture of Brussels?*
- *How does the concept of the border unfold itself in these networks?*

1.4 Theoretical framework

To position, contextualise and further understand the widespread character of the topic, I attached several theories to the questions posed in paragraph 1.3. With this theoretical framework, the social and anthropological relation behind the borders and edges will become evident. Therefore the following theories will contain a well-reduced weight in my research. I plan to work with topics of supporter's perception, community feeling, the social production of space and the idea of public activation. Furthermore, I would like to delve into more psychological theories around individuals and bigger group behavior. This will be covered by Prentice-Dunn's Classic Deindividuation Theory and Koelsch's Tension Model.

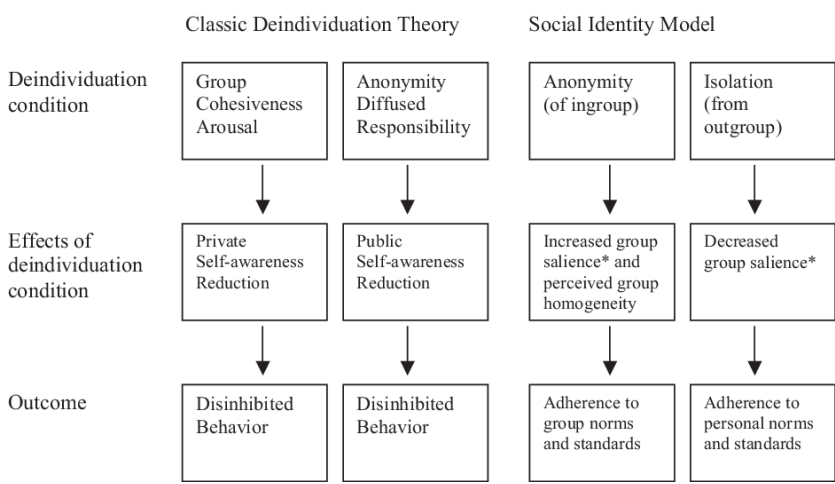


Image: Prentice-Dunn, S., & Rogers, R. W. (1982).

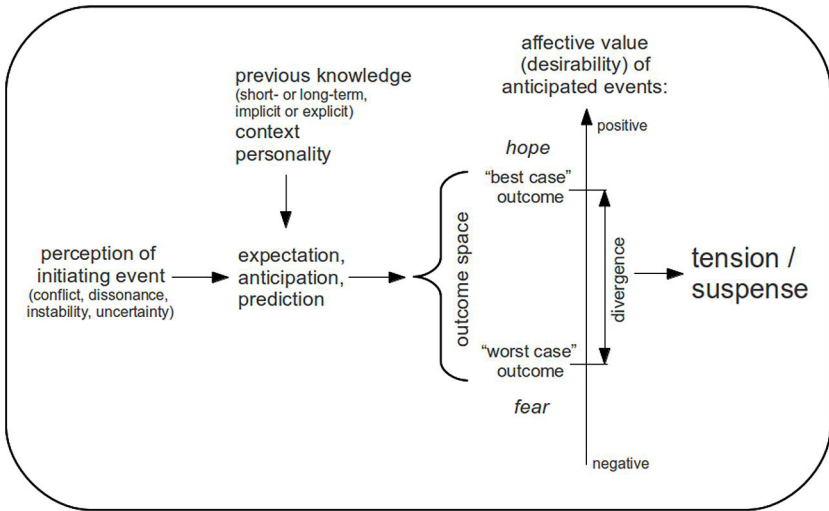


Image: Koelsch. (2015).

2. METHODS & APPROACH

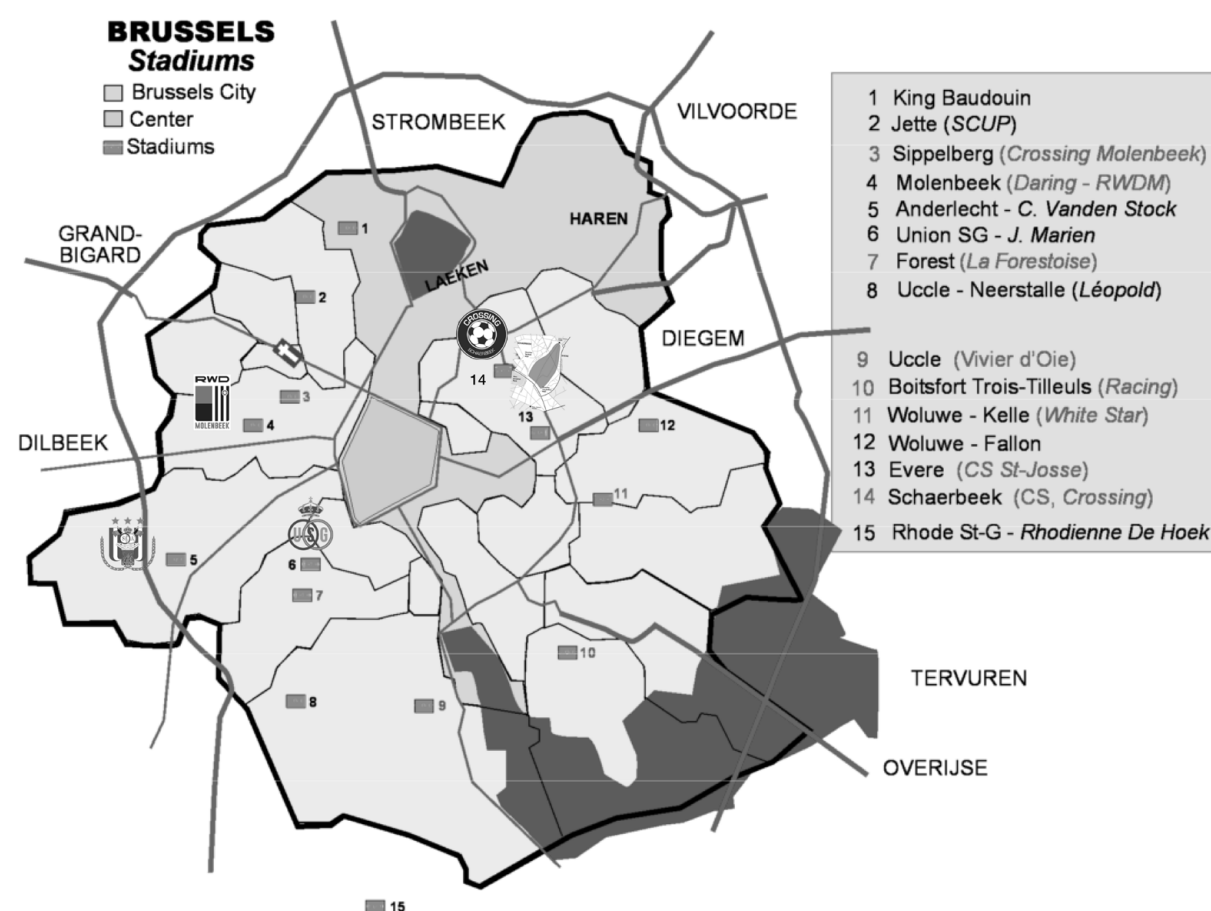
In order to answer the main research question, and to give an impression on how to move further afterwards, the adopted methodology will consist of a three-layered approach that will comprise the following: Firstly, I will introduce the theories of the theoretical framework, as seen in paragraph 1.4, to elaborate on my first two subquestions. I will briefly outlay the violent history of the sport and the general manifestations of rival supporter groups coming together in the city. Herefore I will base myself mainly on literature studies, listed in paragraph 4.2.

In second, to answer the two last subquestions, I will conduct interviews with club supporters, barkeepers, caterers, merchandisers and neighbours. I am aiming to get a more insider idea about Brussels' hidden networks that support the football structure and how this in its totality forms the Brussels football culture. Through photography and film, I can show this infrastructure as a series. I envision using Sandrine Marc's collection of images in *Les Devantures* as a reference method.

By visiting Brussels' stadiums and infrastructures on game days, I am going into the crowd. This offers the opportunity to precisely draw and describe which borders are created and document how people behave around them. The technique by Deutinger in his work *Handbook of Tyranny*, listed in paragraph 4.3, forms my main inspiration. This will be enforced by creating little soundscapes obtained during the matchdays.

Since we are dealing with places of mass densities, mapping as a method can be of relevance. Through these techniques I can sort the spaces on several actions by different actors; who stands where, how do they move, what to avoid, where to stop, where to stay and how to walk around. This should be studied and in later stages practised on the Friche.

I plan to visit the match between, the two Brussels-based clubs, Anderlecht (on the map beneath, number 5) versus RWD Molenbeek (number 4), on the 26th of November. Ideally visiting as well the two matches on the 3rd of December when RWD Molenbeek takes on Charleroi and Union SG (number 6) hosts Cercle.



In third, since the research is a continuous act, I would like to give a glimpse on possible next steps in a more design-oriented approach. After analysing how large supporter groups interact with the concept of the border within Brussels' football networks, I envision projecting these findings on the Friche. Hypothetically speaking, the study would celebrate this neglected area by initiating a play within the terrain, introducing architectural expressions that mirror the various stages of tension, created around the examined borders, within the football culture. For example, creation, disruption, reaction, fight, and despair. Each architectural intervention meticulously captures the essence of its associated stage, transforming it into a tangible form that resonates with the site's intrinsic qualities.

For now, I imagine the following questions to be relevant towards the P2:

- *How is tension present in the site?*
- *How can infrastructural space act as a physical border?*
- *What is the infrastructure of tension?*
- *How can collective acts of sports communities engage in states of tension?*
- *What are the spatial outcomes of the different stages of tension?*
- *Who are the performers, audience and stages in the Friche imagined as a space provider for the more expressive sentiments?*
- *How can we create space that triggers these sentiments?*
- *In what way can light, smoke and sound form an extra dimension in the creation of atmosphere in the Friche?*

By perceiving the site as a stage, I will delve deeper into the acts of play, following up on earlier work with group 2 Station to Station. The station became a living testament to the dynamic interplay between architecture and the human experience and played with the role of the Audience, the Stage and the Performers and the dynamics between them. To continue the method of storytelling, seen in our live performance at P1, I might use the diagram set up by Tayler, *The Twelve Stages of High-Tension Storytelling*, as listed in paragraph 4.3, to generate a still undefined amount of Acts. I imagine combining this coming together of drama and architecture with the work of Rem Koolhaas in *Exodus, or the voluntary prisoners of architecture*. His writings, which accompanied his collections of collages, watercolors and drawings, are not descriptive about architecture but they are architecture in themselves.

In the realm of football, not only do we find criminal hooligans exhibiting misconduct, but we also witness a curious transformation among many "ordinary" fans. These ostensibly model citizens shed their everyday values and norms upon entering the stadium, adopting a more aggressive and, for many, less admirable persona. I encountered a metaphorical link through the voluntary "imprisonment" of fans in the football sphere. They hang their moral jackets at the stadium gates racks and enter, embracing a role not solely as the spectator but as well as the performer in a theater of football.

3. SOURCES & INSPIRATIONS

I plan to provide a diversified range of references in literature, podcasts, poems, writings, drawings and photographs. This overview serves to find answer to my main question, as well to give an insight on more site-related theories and design strategies that will evolve in later stages.

3.1 Case study references

Brussels based clubs:

- Brussels is nowadays represented by three big clubs that define the top table of the Belgium Pro League: Anderlecht, Union SG and RWD Molenbeek. In the vicinity of the Friche, we have third division club Crossing Schaerbeek.

Amsterdamsche Football Club Ajax:

- As an experienced fan and visitor, AFC Ajax can be examined as a network that I am familiar with. I can gather information crucial to deal with site-specific areas in Brussels. In previous research, the following question formed my central focus of the narrative: *How did AFC Ajax's hidden networks that service the football structure affect the perception of its supporters?* In conclusion, this thesis highlighted the profound influence of AFC Ajax's hidden networks on the city's perception, shaped by supporters' emotional ties to the football club's authenticity. A rapidly changing society and the club's shift toward profit-oriented globalization have led to conflicting perceptions of existing architectural structures. The concepts of appropriation and authenticity in architecture, rooted in exclusivity, localization, human scale, and creating sites of memory, forge strong emotional bonds that transcend architectural aesthetics.

3.2 Literature references

Barron, P., & Mariani, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Terrain vague: interstices at the edge of the pale*. Routledge.

- Presents innovative ways of looking at marginal urban space. It is to our own peril, and the peril of public space, that we overlook the overlooked, neglect the neglected. Furthermore, I've been sharing this interest with the Wildcard group 7. Which can provide me with more profound knowledge on this topic.

Giulianotti, R. (2002). Supporters, followers, fans, and flâneurs: A taxonomy of spectator identities in football. *Journal of sport and social issues*, 26(1), 25-46.

- The article delineates four idealized types of sports spectator identities: supporters, followers, fans, and flâneurs. Supporters display fervent loyalty to local clubs. Followers show moderate engagement influenced by external factors. Fans demonstrate genuine interest and investment. Flâneurs reflect a detached, consumer-oriented approach to sports. A prevailing trend suggests a shift from the passionate, traditional supporter model towards the more detached, consumer-focused flâneur identity in contemporary sports culture. This can be interesting since it can help define the actors in this planned spectacle in the Friche Josaphat.

Costa, M. (2020). Visual tension. *Perception*, 49(11), 1213-1234.

- The geometrical features that were manipulated were angle amplitude, rotation of a square, position within a rectangular frame, symmetry, regularity in spacing, angularity, verticality, and size. This may be relevant to understand how we can spatialize these earlier-mentioned stages of sentiments.

Lehne, M., & Koelsch, S. (2015). Toward a general psychological model of tension and suspense. *Frontiers in psychology*, 6, 79.

- The Tension Model is initiated by conflict, dissonance, or uncertainty, which triggers future-oriented processes influenced by prior knowledge and context, generating a range of emotional outcomes. Disparities in emotional significance result in subjective tension, with positive outcomes connected to hope and negative outcomes to fear.

Prentice-Dunn, S., & Rogers, R. W. (1982). Effects of public and private self-awareness on deindividuation and aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43(3), 503-513.

- The Classic Deindividuation Theory stresses that individuals who become part of a large group or crowd may experience a loss of self-awareness and a reduction in their sense of personal responsibility. This resolves into a decrease in inhibitions and increase in impulsive and deviant behavior.

Strang, L., Baker, G., Pollard, J., & Hofman, J. (2018). Violent and antisocial behaviours at football events and factors associated with these behaviours. *Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation RR-2580-QAT As of*.

3.3 Method references

Calvino, I. (1978). *Invisible cities*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

- To understand how one can use metaphors intertwined with the urban environment. In Calvino his work metaphors for memory, desire, language, and identity.

Deutinger, T., & McGetrick, B. (2018). *Handbook of Tyranny*. Lars Müller Publishers.

- The Handbook of Tyranny by Deutinger can be used as a method of representation. In a collection of drawings, I will outlay the widespread character of the border in the football spheres.

Koolhaas, R., Zenghelis, E., Vriesendorp, M., & Zenghelis, Z. (1972). Exodus, or the voluntary prisoners of architecture. 2001), *Perfect Acts of Architecture*, 15-33.

- Koolhaas his dense pictographic storyboard, consisting of several drawings, collages and watercolours, portrays factual and fictional scenarios in urban life and can be examined to understand special methods of storytelling. Koolhaas imagined several architectural interventions within 'the wall', that host somehow surreal and absurd activities and atmospheres. For example, 'The Park of The Four Elements' describes how moods of exhilaration, depression, serenity, and receptivity can be evoked, how pyrotechnic spectacles are visualised, and how environmental protection can be maintained. 'The Park of Aggression', speaks about staged battles, mirroring tensions, platforms for spectators and collective celebrations in gigantic arena's. I want to use writing as a tool to continue the narrative of the group research and to further explore architecture as a technical and intellectual discipline.

Marc, S. (2018). *A City in Retreat: Les Devantures*. Retrieved from, <https://socks-studio.com/2022/11/07/devantures-sandrine-marc/>

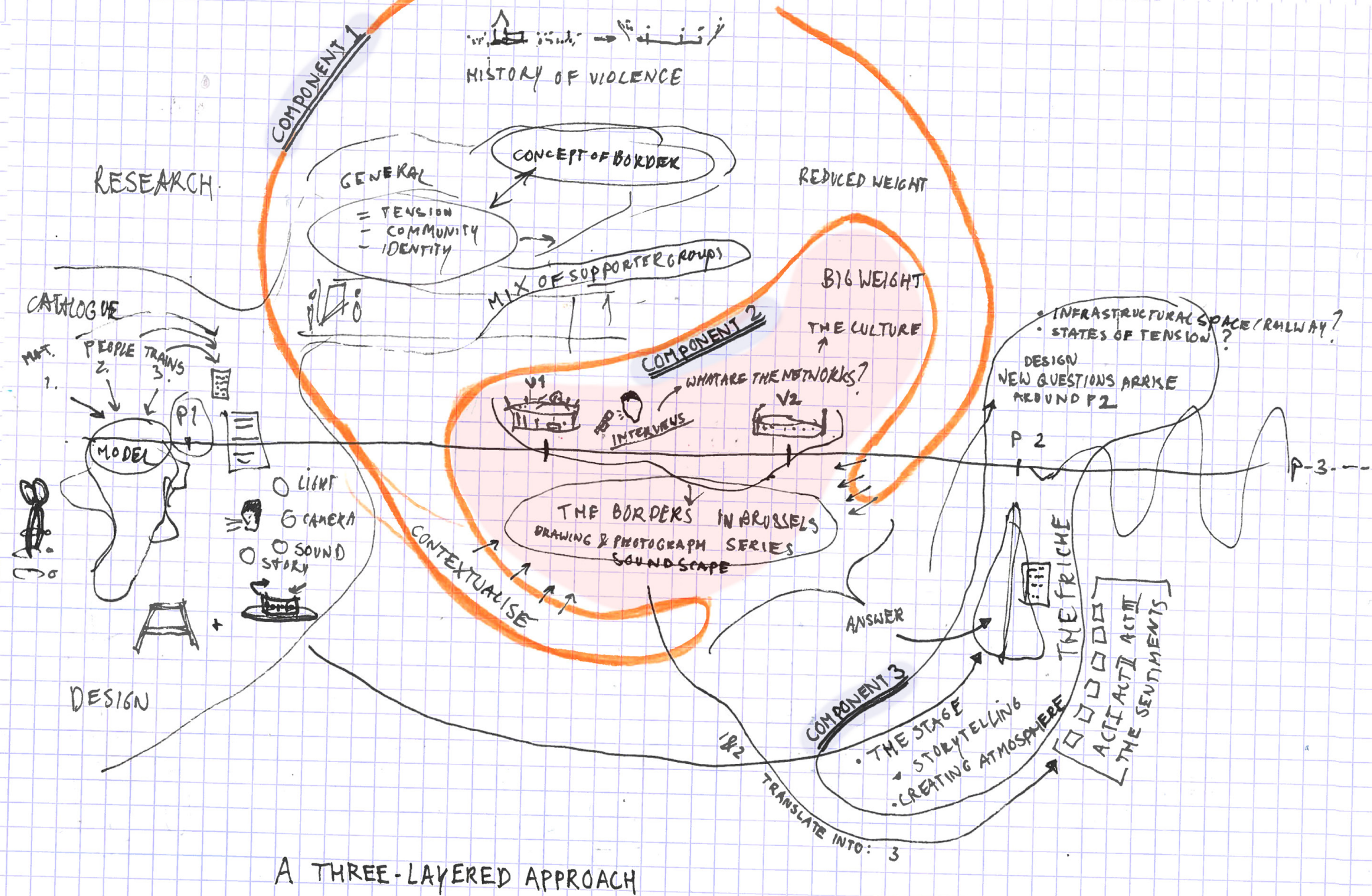
- Sandrine Marc investigates the urban and suburban territories through slow, long walks, immersing herself in mutating environments. Her work is about how you can use photography as a way to show your observations. By presenting photographs that show the football infrastructure as a series, I can show things that might not otherwise be noticed.

Mezzadra, S., & Neilson, B. (2013). *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Duke University Press.

- They understand method to emerge precisely from the material circumstances at hand, which, in the case of borders, are ones of tension and conflict, barricading and traversing, partition and connection. Border as method therefore necessitates not only an epistemic viewpoint from which a whole series of strategic concepts as well as their relations can be recast. It demands a research process that constitutes the border both as an institution and a set of social relationships.

Taylor, J.A. (March 3, 2020). *The Twelve Stages of High-Tension Storytelling*. Retrieved from, <https://writing-cooperative.com/the-twelve-stages-of-high-tension-storytelling-60dc51fb33cf>

- A method by J.A. Taylor for heightening conflict to keep readers and listeners engaged until the end.



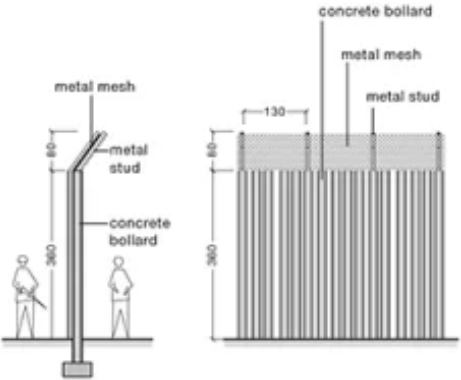
Walls

Walls are the longest-lasting and most expensive border barriers, as well as the most symbolic, physically and rhetorically. Walls don't just appear; they generally replace preexisting fences to reinforce a political conflict. It is highly doubtful that walls are more effective than fences at keeping people out. They do, however, signal to outsiders that they are excluded not only from entering but also from seeing the walled territory. In densely populated areas, walls have been preferred to fences since they are more effective at preventing targeted shooting.

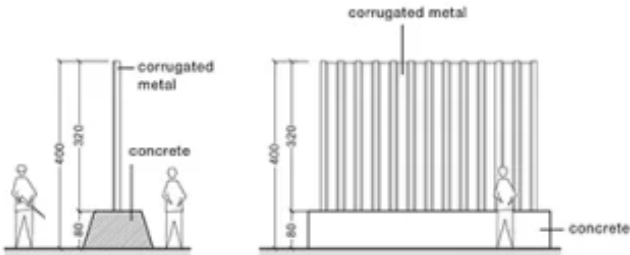
Contemporary walls are made of reinforced concrete or steel, as in the case of the Israel–Gaza Strip wall. Most of the reinforced concrete walls are prefabricated T- or L-shaped elements that are linked by a step joint and topped with barbed wire. The most famous prefab concrete wall, the Berlin Wall, known as “UL 12.11,” was L-shaped, 3.6 m in height, with a 1.2 m wide base. To link the 2,750 kg elements and to make climbing more difficult, the elements were connected by a 4-meter-long asbestos pipe at the top.

Israel upgraded its anti-tunnel barrier to Gaza in 2021. The core of the multilayered barrier is a concrete slurry wall of undisclosed depth (according to sources, it is up to 40 meters deep) to block Palestinians from digging their way into the country to smuggle and carry out attacks. The 65 km long barrier includes sensors that detect tunnel construction, fences, a naval barrier, radar systems, and a command-and-control room.¹ Linking this system to the “Blue Wolf”² facial recognition technology used by the Israeli army, which strives to identify all Palestinian people, the Palestinian Territories are turned into an electronic panopticon. The barrier serves as concrete reminder of the state of imprisonment.

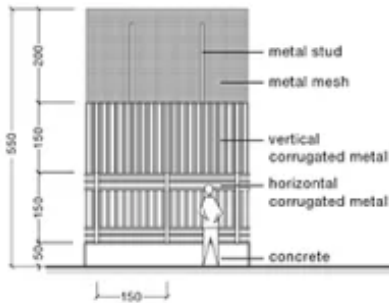
1 <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/israel-completes-upgraded-barrier-with-the-gaza-strip-688089>
2 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-whats-blue-wolf-app-soldiers-use-photograph-palestinians>



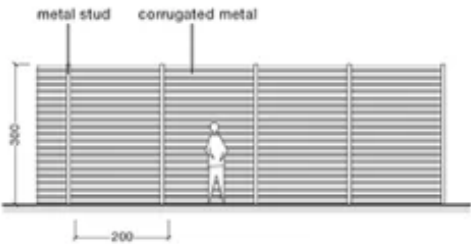
73a USA-Mexico. Concrete bollards with metal mesh on top. Anti-smuggling and anti-illegal immigration barrier.



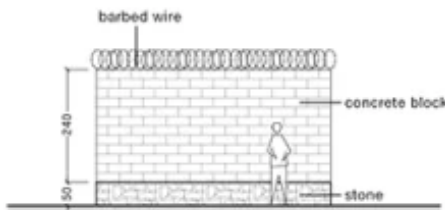
73b USA-Mexico. Concrete base with corrugated metal barrier. Anti-smuggling and anti-illegal immigration barrier.



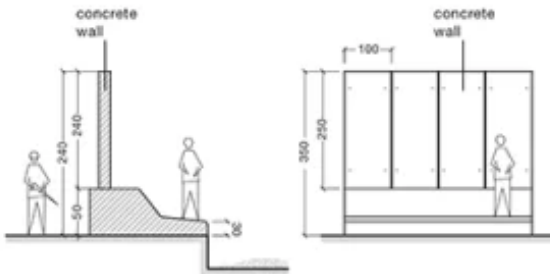
73c USA-Mexico. Wall barrier constructed using multiple corrugated metal sheets in both vertical and horizontal alignment. Features a metal mesh fence on top. Anti-smuggling and anti-illegal immigration barrier.



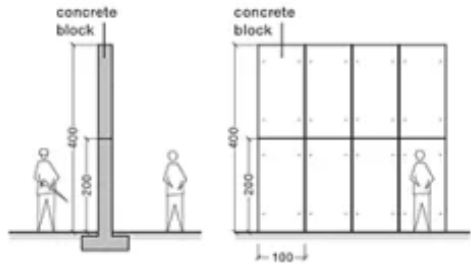
73d USA-Mexico. Horizontally aligned corrugated metal sheet wall. Anti-smuggling and anti-illegal immigration barrier.



74 Dominican Republic-Haiti. Wall of concrete blocks with stone base and barbed wire on top. Demilitarized zone barrier.

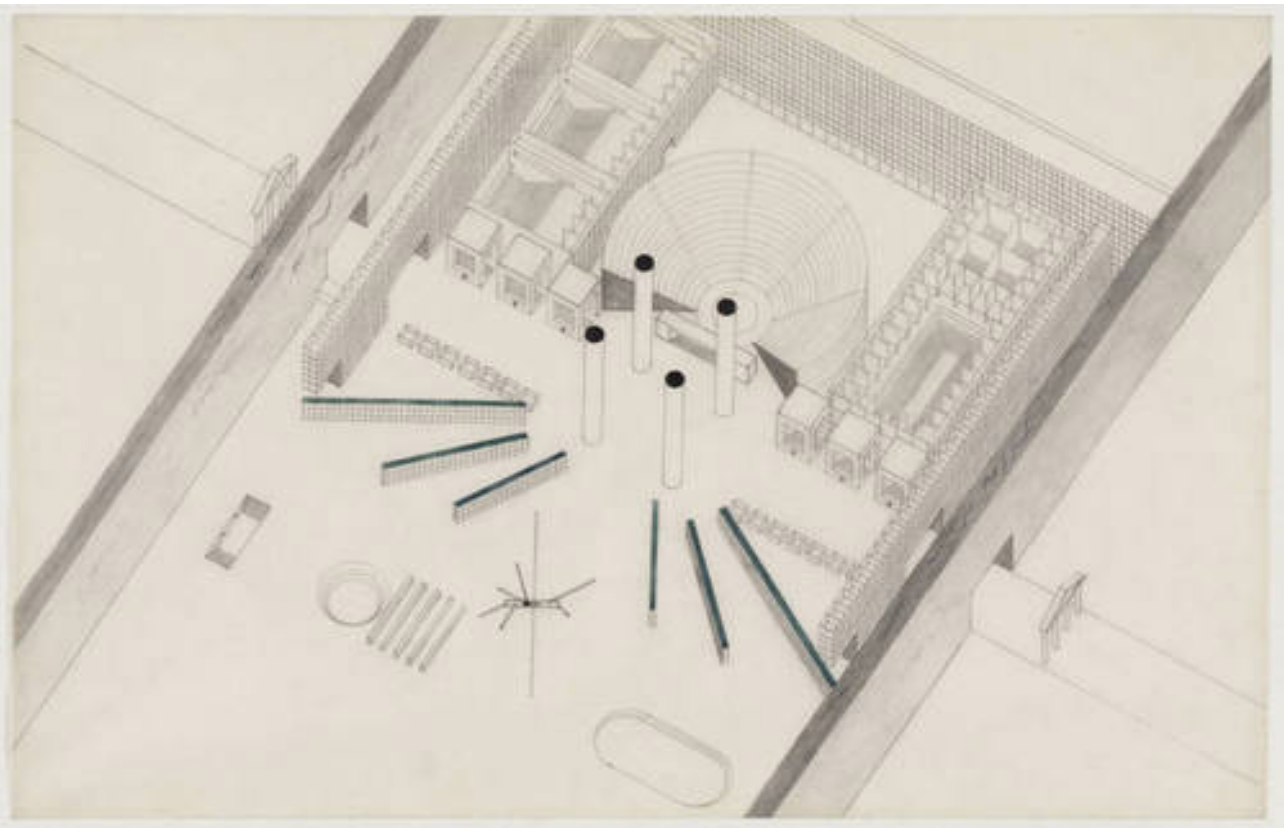
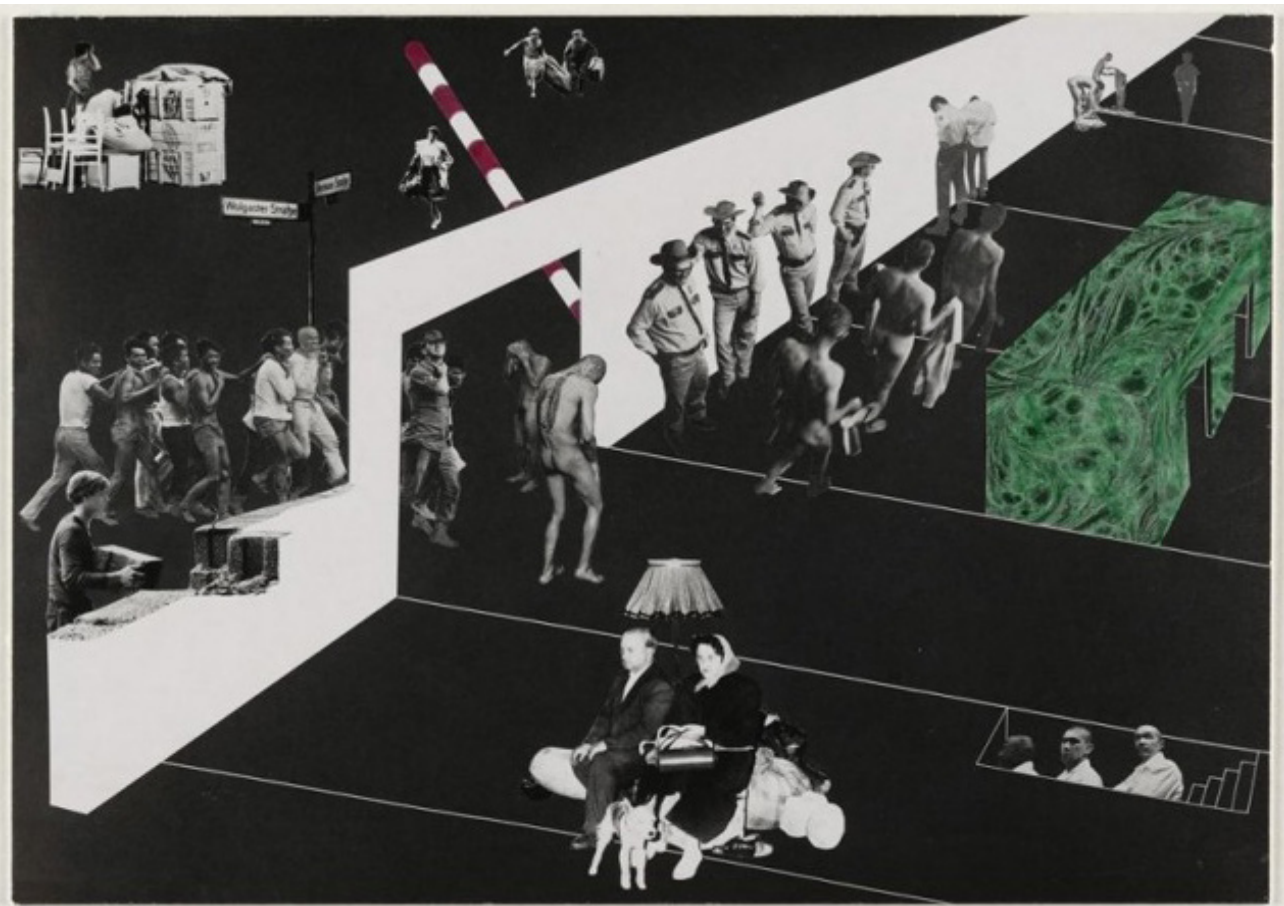


75 Ecuador-Peru. Concrete wall. Allegedly for flood prevention. Construction suspended after protests by Peru.



76 Argentina-Paraguay. Concrete block wall. Anti-illegal immigration and anti-smuggling wall.

ACT	#	SECTION	DESCRIPTION	ELEMENTS	STORY EMOTION	READER EMOTION
I	1	Creation	The world is good, but not perfect.	Theme Stated	NORMAL	Reader <u>cares</u> about the protagonist.
	2	Disruption	Something is out of place, but maybe it can be ignored.	Hook		
	3	Destruction	The world is changed and it cannot be ignored.	First Plot Point	ABNORMAL	Reader <u>fears</u> the villain / problem, or fears for the protagonist.
	4	Evil	The problem / villain is clarified.	Pinch Point 1		
II	5	Reaction	Maybe this can be fixed by running away.	Mid Point	EVASIVE	Reader <u>wrestles</u> with the solutions or characters.
	6	Action	Maybe this can be fixed by trying harder.			
	7	Failure	This can't be fixed.		DETERMINED	Reader <u>hopes</u> for the new plan.
	8	Rally	Help comes together to form a plan.			
III	9	Fight	The new plan is executed.	Plot Point 2	DESPAIRING	Reader <u>despairs</u> when the plan fails.
	10	Despair	The plan doesn't work and all is lost.	Pinch Point 2		
	11	Deliverance	Unexpected deliverance through inner courage or intervention.	Climax	VICTORIOUS	Reader <u>rejoices</u> .
	12	Victory	All is restored and set right.	Resolution		



Marc, S. (2018). *A City in Retreat: Les Devantures*.

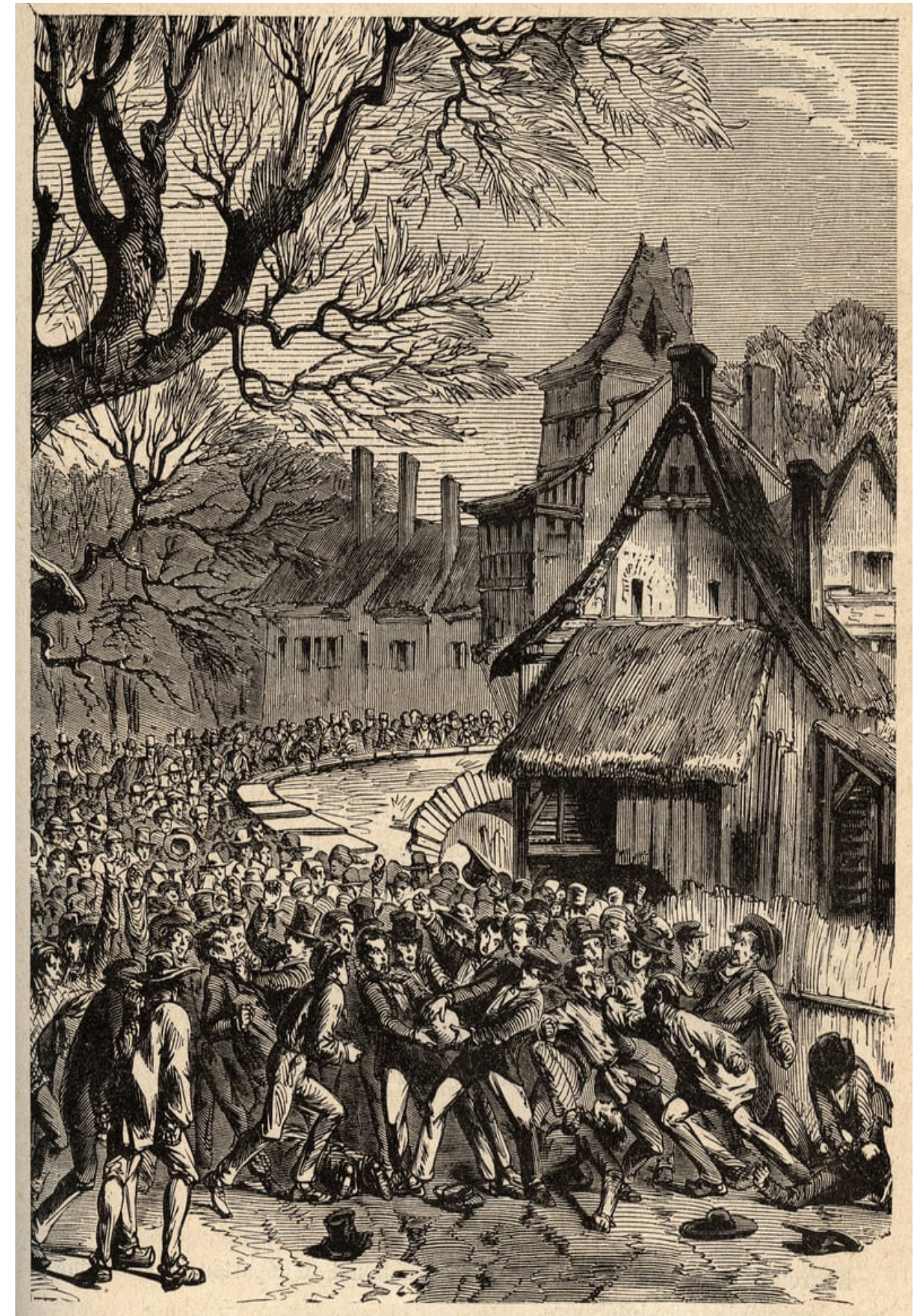
Koolhaas, R. (1972). *The Reception Area and The Central Area*.



Lordprice Collection. (14th-century). *A reconstruction of 14th-century medieval soccer as played out through the streets of England.*



The Keasbury-Gordon Photograph Archive. (December 31, 1909). *Ashbourne Royal Shrovetide Football early 1900s, Up'ards vs. Down'ards fight for the ball in the river that divides the two sides.*



Wikimedia Commons. (February 28, 1852). *La Soule being played in Normandy, France.*





Stadion De Meer. (1987). *Following Ajax means empty buses and packed roofs.*



Stadion De Meer. (n.d.). *Ajax Expres packed with supporters.*



Siekerman, M. (1990). *Stadion De Meer with the latest fortifications made of barbed wire and trenches.*



Anonymous. (June 1, 1972). Ajax honoured at Leidseplein after winning the European Cup I-Final.

