

Explore Lab 33

Tim Stoop

The Intimacy of Intensive Places

eight villages in lower Engadine

04 | 11 | 2021

Research Plan

Tutors:

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“If we deal with them, we understand them, appreciate them - they become part of our lives. Today however, we often see them as no more than objects that we have at our command. [...] I remember when the relationship between people and nature was instant and direct. But even if we can't return to the old times we need to rediscover something of this interdependency between nature and people.”¹

Gion A. Caminada

The Vrin Project, 1998, 48min

P. 2-3 »Walk
to Grüensee,
Gmeinboda«
10/2020
Tim Stoop

»Walk from the
Duranapass with
Blakter Fürggli in
the back«
10/2020
Tim Stoop

1. Scheidegger &
Spiess. (2014).

Preface

At around eight o'clock I get up. A-B. is already in the kitchen; preparing breakfast. The old house in Bever in the middle of Engadine is not that large, just right. The only window in the kitchen is open. A light breeze of morning wind enters the room. The sun was already up, long before I even was awake. It shines inside. The churches are calling its actors, the bells ring loudly throughout the whole valley and into the kitchen. It is a magnificent spectacle. I put my hands around the steel bar at the bottom of the window and hang my body partially outside. There, it dawns: today the sky is clear and a magnificent mountain landscape stands before me. Left and right, cliffs lead to peaks. They seem so close, graspable and yet unreal, as if all were only an illusion; a stageplay's background. Between the mountains lie fields of countless larches. Their tips sway in the wind; it is a dense, dark green carpet. "That changes in autumn. Then all of them are yellow, more of a blanket" says A-B. For now the dark green, the greys and whites are all covered in a nice blueish light. A colour that I have seen before on different mountains. It was my second time in Engadine. Previously when everything was covered in a thick pack of snow. Now, it was different. Spring grass and plants were blossoming out of the ground. The red train going alongside it. Flocks of birds in the slightly warm air. This landscape is a presence that may always be here and acts as a stage. Welcoming its inhabitants and visitors over and over.

Tim Stoop

Sunday the 15th of August 2021

» 14pm Cha
d'Mez, « Bever.
'Chasa Wickli
on the right side,
view taken from
the garden.«
15/08/2020.
Tim Stoop



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Fascination

That day in August I set out to visit two villages in the lower Engadine -Susch and Ardez-. The one hour trip brings you from the more open part of higher Engadine to the enclosed region of lower Engadine. The mountains are pulling you in with their compressing stature. The light makes the air visible, the skies are already southern but the air is fresh. After exiting the train, the walk is up. The new smooth asphalt road changes abruptly into a gravel path. The sound of the small pebbles underneath my feet are comforting me. It's a romantic sound, a sound I love. Buildings arise on each side of the street. Big farmhouses with adjoining barn-stables under the same roof. Engadine houses impressively built into the slopes, facing small squares and lanes, their façades decorated with Sgraffito and paintings of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thick plastered stone walls accompanied by wooden walls indicating the stables. The gravel path diverges into a stone path. Made from different stones. Different sizes, different colours and patterns. I am sitting down on a bench with my back against the church wall. A smooth, white surface, warmed up by the sun. The bench equally smooth, made of a beautiful grey granite. My feet on the cobblestone pavement. The wall on the opposite side lies in the shadow. The Sgraffito decorations show their intrinsic beauty. The landscape slopes up towards the front door. A colourful wooden door with equally colourful window shutters. Some closed, some open. The bright sun is shining on my face. Its warm is pleasant. One hears wonderful sounds close by: footsteps, kids playing in the area, neighbours murmuring with each other in the background. Again the church bells!

At that particular moment of the day, at that particular square in that particular village in lower Engadine I was struck by the intensity of the place. At the square I felt big, but with the mountains. Those mountains! They make you feel tiny.

You start to notice how magnificent everything is out here. You experience the place. Simply sublime! It was a truly experiential space. You feel everything around you. Not for just a brief moment, but for a while – a feeling of timeless intensity. Through the atmosphere of this place I became impressed by the desire and ability of the peasant dwellers of old to embellish their homes, to allow public spaces to emerge, to lend their village form and identity through material, craft and time. Walking up, to the village edge and beyond, the landscape comes into the picture. The village appears as a compact structure; one body in space. New joins the existing, creates form in the language of building: harmony, beauty, tension, dissonance, kinship, near, far, distance and realness.

I am fascinated in the history that is stored and accumulated in landscapes, places, and things. How these elements can produce a strong presence of materiality and craftsmanship is something that touches me deeply. For me place, a landscape or a building can have a beautiful silence. Concepts like calmness, endurance, presence, serenity and integrity come to mind. These places of presence are not representing anything else. They are just being themselves. Within Explore Lab I would like to investigate the architectural language that belongs to these villages of the lower Engadine and find out how they resonate with their time and their surroundings. In other words find out what makes these places breath.

Focus and relevance

Although being a small country with relatively very little suitable building area, Switzerland is full of different styles, areas and traditions. I experienced the most intensive moments and feelings in the Alpine regions. Within the villages located in between the mountains one is struck by a special feeling. The presence of the mountain allows for a certain slowness of life that is being detained by the surrounding landscape. Of course, modern technology has also caught up to these villages, but they still contain a great respect for the local and traditionality. How goods are produced is still extremely local and bound to its direct context.² This beauty of the 'contemporary local' can be of great value for creatives interested in making places from within; buildings that are grounded in its surroundings which reflect an understanding of context, craftsmanship and material presence. A quality of building culture we appear to be slowly losing.

The image of mountains has always been strongly associated with the identity of Switzerland. More than 60% of the territory is formed by the Alps,³ but by no means are all Alpine villages over-flooded with tradition, craftsmanship and the sense of materiality as described previously. On the contrary. More and more places are losing their sense of beauty and are starting to look alike. Many old settlements were demolished and replaced with new housing units and with it much of the traditional building culture. A trend seen all over Switzerland. Whilst travelling from Basel to Chur over Zurich the similarity in bland building types and houses is staggering. The major study of Switzerland carried out by the ETH Studio Basel ten years ago described a large portion of the Swiss Alpine region as 'Fallow lands'. These are zones of decline and gradual recession largely due to emigration.⁴ The small Alpine villages in the lower Engadine also fall under this categorisation. On the one hand they are known

2. Caminada, G. A., & Aicher, F. (2018).

3. Eda.admin.ch. (2021).

4. Diener, R., & Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zürich. (2006). p. 930

for their sense of timelessness, traditions and locally produced products. On the other hand they are undergoing change: “extensive alpine farming, empty houses and barns, fewer and fewer people able to make a living in the village. [...] Tourism that swallows up and changes the old farming structures. It is now the will of the community to protect their architecturally intact village while also promoting sensible developments to enhance the life and work of the people.”⁵

During my stay in Ardez in October 2021 I was invited to a local bar. Inside there was a round table with 5 people sitting and speaking Romansch, the local language. After introducing myself they figured out that I wasn't from the city: “Du bist keine Zürcher oder? [...] gut, weil die mag ich nicht so gerne”. I was speaking with Lüzzi Koch, a local retired farmer. He explained how also Ardez is struggling with its identity and traditions. All lot of peasant dwellers want to renovate their houses but lack the money. Therefore they are forced to sell their houses, often to people from the city, often rich people from Zürich who transform the old stables to modern holiday homes. Consequently the local inhabitants, like Lüzzi himself, build new houses on the edge of the village. These new houses are in accordance with new building regulations and often lack a strong relationship with the existing village. This tendency characterises not only Ardez, but many villages in lower Engadine. When I ask Lüzzi what he thinks the village will look like in 10 years he finds it difficult to answer. “Hopefully it still has some life in it and will it still look like it does now” he says. Just preserving the life within these villages is not a matter of course. Another example is the village of Tschlin which is heavily reliant on its production of local specialities and partially on tourism. There's only one hotel owned by a local Tschliner. My host in Tschlin, Conrad Horber, mentioned how the locals are not welcome in this hotel. “The owner doesn't want us in there. Not for a

5. Zumthor, P.
(2002). p.48

meal, nor for a drink. It's not strange that his business is not that successful he says with a laugh". Where the bar in Ardez felt very local to me, this story of the hotel in Tschlin is a good example on how the village is slowly losing its sense of locality.

If we are not careful, these last traditional Alpine villages will be going down in time. They could possibly meet a similar faith as all the other villages in which traditional building culture has been torn down. Once removed it will be very difficult to bring something back. As a foreigner I fell in love with this feeling of slowness. A feeling that is lost in so many places in Europe but is still present in lower Engadine. However, preserving these villages like museums is also not the solution. If we let that happen, all culture will be deprived of any chances for development.⁶ That is, the villages have always been heavily influenced by change, re-development and conversions. During a lecture at the Fundaziun Nairs on the 21st of October 2021 Gion Caminada explained how there was a pre-aesthetic time in these villages. "In that time, nobody cared what it looked like in the way we architects do today. Then came the aesthetic time. That destroyed a lot. I think we now have to take a leap forward to a post-aesthetic time and dock on to this pre-aesthetic time, which was about the basic phenomena of tradition of 'Baukultur'".

This research tries to address the described phenomenon of losing identity by looking at the villages of lower Engadine in particular. Although being strong places now they also are under pressure.

6. Scheidegger
& Spiess. (2014).
The Vrin Project,
1998.

Research questions

Understanding this village-world in the direct grandeur of the mountain-world is a complex task. One has to concentrate and get highly involved. The aim of this project is to research and understand these places from the perspective of craft and the development of the act of building in close connection with the landscape and its history. The main goal is to identify which values are embedded in rural alpine villages and how they are formed. In view of the foregoing, the following research questions are formulated:

How does craftsmanship and the sense of materiality influence the embedded architectural qualities of eight Alpine villages in lower Engadine to create a strong presence of place?

In what way is the physical history stored in the villages and its natural surroundings?

How are the villages organised? What are the defining archetypes and how do they work?

What are the local construction methods and how did they originate?

What materials are being used in the built process, what are their characters and how are they applied?





Framework

In ‘on the path to building’ Gion A. Caminada describes his youth in relation to place and spirit. He describes how, at that time, the life of his native village of Vrin was organised and functioned as a holistic entity in space and time. How the farmers interacted with nature, the landscape, the place, animals and minerals could be seen as one continuity.⁷

Nowadays this direct experience with nature is still present, but less tangible and more abstract in the form of mechanization and globalisation. The increasing heterogeneity of our society described by Valerio Olgiati adds to this image of a world in which “increasingly fewer guidelines and rules exist that are common to most of us. Today, institutions no longer exist that possess the strength to put together or even just hold together our society - as the church or state did in the past.”⁸ This non-ideological world in which people, place and things are disenchanted from each other and “where current life can be seen as an epoch of all-encompassing disenchantment, in which the only enchantment is, perhaps, the common disenchantment”⁸, is a striking contradiction when compared to the youthful image delineated by Caminada in his conversation with Florian Aicher. The latter argues that our life in the here and now isn’t intense enough and lacks a certain presence. “Either we romanticize the past or we are enthralled by visions of the future.”⁹ He pleads for an intense present. One in which the past doesn’t solidify or is preserved like a museum, where the future isn’t just a huge technological promise, and where the present doesn’t just coast by. Rather, it can be a world in which the proven, the tradition, is used anew in the present. In the words of Bruno Latour: “the tradition finds itself effectively revived, twisted askew to get it to bring forth the present once more.”¹⁰ The local, architectural tradition in particular, can become contemporary if used with great care. It’s not about turning the local against globalization, rather it’s about reinforcing the existing, or as Gustav Mahler says: “Tradition is not the worship of ashes,

7. Caminada, G. A., & Aicher, F. (2018). p. 60

8. Olgiati, V., Breitschmid, M. (2018). p. 20

9. Caminada, G. A., & Aicher, F. (2018). p. 60

10. Latour, B. (2013). p. 77

but the preservation of fire.” Caminada argues that in places with a strong presence, human bodies resonate with their environment. Through physical and sensory experiences in space, one can become aware of the presence no matter how mute, hidden or mysterious they might appear at first glance.¹¹ Places whose presence is self-evident.

This sensory experiences of space, place and becoming aware of the presence of a place is continued upon by Juhani Pallasmaa. He states that when we enter a space, the space enters us. This experience is essentially an exchange and fusion of the object and the subject.¹² Experiences like this are also described, and arguably created, by Peter Zumthor and Caminada. Spaces one would enter and where one begins to feel one could stay for a while, not just passing through.¹³ In these thoughts lie deep feelings of great intensity of experiencing a space, place or a landscape. The experience of such places is often heavily influenced by a similar strong presence of materiality. “The dominant atmospheric feature of a place may well be an acoustical character, a smell, or even especially pleasant or unpleasant weather.”¹⁴ In his works Zumthor tries to let the place speak. By introducing a bodily and human sense, that has to do with proximity and distance, he makes a relationship between man and place. “Good architecture should receive the human visitor, should enable him to experience it and live in it, but it should not constantly talk at him.”¹⁵ In a way, Caminada describes the same sense of intimacy as Zumthor whilst looking at the village. “Spaces and distances are defined by activities. [...] Transitions between private, semi-public, and public are completely informal. There is a constant transition between density and distance.”¹⁶

11. Caminada, G. A., & Aicher, F. (2018).

12. Böhme, G., et al. (2014).

13. Zumthor, P. (2006).

14. Pallasmaa, J. (2018). p. 35

15. Zumthor, P. (2010). p. 33

16. Caminada, G. A., & Aicher, F. (2018). p.70-71

Methodology

Repetition can sometimes have a negative connotation; words like dullness, non-variety and dreariness can be associated. While for some situations the negative connotation of this word might be deserved, it can also hold a positive denotation. The Austrian writer Peter Handke once said “*Durch die Wiederholung das Gleiche lernt man am meisten*”¹⁷ which translates roughly to ‘Through the repetition of the alike, one learns the most’. This is a highly architectural thought! Notions of Japanese carpenters perfecting their craft by repeating the same task, for example chiseling and planing the top surface of a piece of wood every day come to mind. Repetition can generate a wealth of spiritual experience and knowledge. “*Doing something repeatedly can become agonizing yet this is essential to learning a trade. Repetition shines brightest and allows to see what’s changing.*”¹⁸ When aware of this phenomenon, and when one is able to withstand the possible agony of repetition, the differences between objects on a very subtle scale can become visible. The close reading of the place is an act of reading the embedded history of the place and is an act of repetitional observation. By repeating very precise observations for each village one can start to understand its essence. The small differences of each village can subsequently be compared to learn what the type is and how the type functions.

In order to get to the essence of these villages, a two-fold observational research method is used. Firstly, there is the experiential field analysis of the villages and the associated elaborations. This section can be seen as the largest portion of the overall research and contains the foundations for further studies. It holds various site related experiments regarding the experience of place, built objects as well as interviews with local craftsmen. These methods will be elaborated upon in the next section. Secondly, there’s the historical and theoretical background studies that elaborate on the themes

17. Lassalle-Haus. (2021).

18. Caminada, G. A., & Aicher, F. (2018). p. 77

which accompany the field-analysis. This contains archival research, literature studies and other consulting of online sources. Rather than the general approach of researching a site prior of going to it, the field analysis will be conducted first. Therefore a hypothesis of four pillars is made that characterises the village's presence of place. The assumption is that these pillars together form an overall respect towards the nature, the tradition, the history and the locality of these places. These aspects will be put to the test with an open mind and are allowed to change given the possibility for unforeseen discoveries and surprises.

Materials; locally sourced that acquire a natural patina.

Techniques; of local construction passed on through generations.

Landscape; and its direct connection to the village and its inhabitants.

'Dorfkörper'; of the rural layout of the village and its archetypes.

Further criteria for specific villages are as follows. The village:

- is located in the Engiadina Bassa region, Switzerland.
- is positioned in the main valley or parallel to the river Inn.
- has less than a thousand inhabitants.
- has a church or chapel

Important note:

The following methods were constructed prior to the visit. During the field analysis certain elements changed or were adapted depending on the necessities or availabilities on the site. The chalk pages with headers 'reflection' show the scraped items with a strikethrough, additions in blue text and highlights in blue show the items on which the greatest emphasis has been placed. Afterwards, a brief notion will be made on the discrepancies between pre- and post visit.

Methods

Due to the physical qualities of the place of research the research outcomes should speak a similar physical language. The form of an exposition that incorporates recorded sounds, scale models of the landscape, images and drawings has been taken as a guide to work towards. With this physical vision in mind the following experiments have been devised.

Type

An extensive set of photographs where typological fragments are portrayed next to one another in order to capture the essence and differences in each individual typology.

Textures

Textural qualities in applied materials, building methods and colours taken directly from the materials themselves by means of photography and on-site ‘texture-mapping’.

Landscape and churches

A large physical model that researches the landscape’s flow. Additional physical models of archetypical elements with a direct landscape oriented connection will be made.

Pavement

Analyses of old street patterns by means of redrawing and therefore discovering possible motifs and figures. The drawings show how landscape and life are connected.

Craftsmen

Interviews with local craftsmen and creatives. The relation to the surroundings, the mountain life and the notion of craft itself will be researched.

Sounds

A study of similarities and of minimal differences between sounds produced by the same element under different conditions in different places: stones, water, wind, church bells and life.



Type

[Photographic essay on the village's essences, 2021]

What do these villages look like?

When I try to imagine, memories come to mind. On my trip through Ardez three days before New year the snow had taken control over the Alpine settlement. Thick snow. Dense and sticky. Covering every small element and generalising each detail. Only the houses could cope with the surrounding whiteness. The plaster looked even more yellow than it normally does on a bright cloudless day. One could vaguely make up contours of benches; they were having their winter sleep. One starts to wonder how the village can cope under a long time with the snow. Time seems to slow down, life logically following.

The images that make up these characteristics are in multiplicity. Each one of them has its own beauty. Its own story and history. Sometimes left alone and untouched since the start. Other times influenced by man, both peasant and city-dweller, or nature. Each element is unique and adds with their uniqueness to the story of the whole. In these photo's, I would like to capture these loose elements, material fragments or frontal stories, and reassemble them within the frame. These, sometimes enigmatic, fragments work associatively, allowing us to create the image of the village for ourselves. The history, the stories and the unknown. What happened here? What happened there? Remarkable observations or accidental discoveries. They stay with us so that we can conjure our own, unique views and imaginations.

Images Hypothesis

Engadiner Hauses, Reformed church, Water fountains, Telephone booths, Entrance doors, Sgraffito decorations, Patterns in wood, Bay window (Erker), Benches , Stucco colours, Snow protection roof beams, Fire hydrants, Water slots in the street, Dry wood storage, Stucco/wall texture, Cut-off facade corners, Stone drywall, Spacing between houses, Basement windows, Wood colours, Postboxes, Anomalies in the village

»Stable door of
Chasa Sartea»
Bröl 61, Ardez
28/12/2020.
Tim Stoop



Type

[Photographic essay on the village's essences, 2021]

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Used for
Architectural
elements

Used for
stone
patterns

Images Hypothesis

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Textures

[Digital images and charcoal on chalk paper, 2021]

I look at how they are.

Walls, floors, roofs, rain pipes, Sgraffito, wood, steps. I look at them. How their colour changes depending on the light of the day. How the subtle highlights in the material show themselves. How shadows glance over the surfaces. How the contours of stones in the plastered walls are still barely visible. How the wood has four different colours and grains depending on the orientation. How the stones in the floor are rounded off. How the plaster is falling off the walls and showing the holes behind it. How the stones are stacked in the drywalls that solve the different height levels. How the steps at the front door are rounded off. How rain pipes are oxidizing.

Different elements from the village are being photographed and 'textured' with the uses of chalk paper and charcoal. This is done for each and every village. The digital image will afterwards be enhanced and edited to be in black and white. The coloured image, the black and white image and the texture drawing will be put up next to one another.

Landscape and churches

[Physical models in various scales, 2021]

To understand the prominent presence of the landscape, a large physical model will be made that researches the flow of the landscape as well as providing a concrete base to perform the research from. Additional physical models of archetypal elements such as churches and houses that have a direct connection to this landscape will be made in order to understand their type. By taking each village's church and modelling it separately, the subtle differences can again be observed.

Pavement

[Drawings on paper, 2021]

The sloping landscape enters deep into the village's core. The Engadiner houses buried into the slope, streets curving in between them and following the curves of the earth. The pavement used by dwellers, tourist, cars, horses and in the past carts form an important infrastructure for the village. When traversing on these paths their beauty comes forward. Different types of stones in different pattern are used to form a magnificent play. They indicate a certain hierarchy of use. The craftsmanship in which they are laid are something special when closely observed.

The aim is to analyse these old patterns by means of redrawing and therefore discovering possible motifs and figures. An important element to incorporate of course is the fact that the pavement is following the landscape and is therefore not just a flat surface. It acts differently. It has a direct connection with its natural surroundings.

Craftsmen

[Digital recordings, 2021]

Who are these people and what do they do?

The villages of lower Engadine are well known for their local traditions and excellent handwork and specialities. If possible, a number of interviews will be conducted with local craftsmen -ranging from carpenters, wood- and metalworkers and plasterers- and producers of local specialities like mountain cheese, pastry, meat and the likes. Within these interviews the relation to the surroundings and the mountain life will be a big topic. Also the craft itself that is performed will be further looked into.

Textures

[Digital images and charcoal on chalk paper, 2021]

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Walls, floors, roofs, rain pipes, Sgraffito, wood, steps. I look at them. How their colour changes depending on the light of the day. How the subtle highlights in the material show themselves. How shadows glance over the surfaces. How the contours of stones in the plastered walls are still barely visible. How the wood has four different colours and grains depending on the orientation. How the stones in the floor are rounded off. How the plaster is falling off the walls and showing the holes behind it. How the stones are stacked in the drywalls that solve the different height levels. How the steps at the front door are rounded off. How rain pipes are oxidizing.

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The option to model an Engadiner house typology is still open but was not looked into further during the field research. Could also be explored through drawings and literature

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During the visit certain places of interest (main square, around the church, around a water fountain) were dimensioned roughly. The drawing itself will occur afterwards.

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[Digital recordings, 2021]

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Sounds

[Digital recordings, 2021]

Natural elements are perceived at a given moment and recorded in terms of sound. The present research is a study of similarities and of minimal differences between sounds produced by the same element(s) under different conditions in different places. Sounds are played through a speaker at the exposition and are optionally accompanied by visual sound images/waves and necessary objects.

Pavement

Set of eight gradually heavier stones dropped from a given height on different kinds of pavements in eight villages. The resulting sounds are of 64 variations produced by the same eight stones. The set of stones can either be a random selection from a certain, for example the first, village or they can be stones from different places in Switzerland and Europe which have been collected over the last few years.

- Constant: Set of eight gradually heavier stones dropped from a given height.
- Variable: The kind of pavement on which the stone are being dropped.
After the whole set of stones has been dropped, the cycle begins again for a new village.
- Expo: Sounds accompanied by nine images [eight stones and eight different pavements]
-

Ambient

Collection of soundscapes of each village during a normal day capturing the traversing of people, cars and additional actions.

- Constant: Me sitting at the village's square at 13pm
- Variable: The village
- Expo: Sounds and images of the junctions

Church bells

Set of eight different church bells ringing at 12:00 accompanied by the reverberation from its and other bells within the valley.

Constant: The sound produced by the bell of a church at 12pm

Variable: Different types and sizes of church bells made from an unknown material in eight different bodies of space within eight different churches at different locations.

Expo: Sounds

Wind on grass

Recording how the wind influences the grass on the outskirts of the village.

Constant: Recording microphone lying in the grass.

Variable: The height and types of grasses and plants on the outskirts of the villages.
The weather

Expo: Sounds

Water fountains

Water coming out of the mountain being guided through a system of pipes into a public water fountain. The sounds of water coming out of the pipe and hitting the body of water being collected in the basin below.

Constant: The sound produced by water falling on water.

Variable: Eight water fountains from different villages.
Water falling from different heights on different bodies of water.

Expo: Sounds accompanied by eight images [different water fountains]

Sounds

[Digital recordings, 2021]

Natural elements are perceived at a given moment and recorded in terms of sound. The present research is a study of similarities and of minimal differences between sounds produced by the same element under different conditions in different places. Sounds are played through a speaker at the exposition and are optionally accompanied by visual sound images/waves and necessary objects.

Pavement

Set of eight gradually heavier stones dropped from a given height on different kinds of pavements in eight villages. The resulting sounds are of 64 variations produced by the same eight stones. The set of stones can either be a random selection from a certain, for example the first, village or they can be stones from different places in Switzerland and Europe which have been collected over the last few years.

Constant: Set of eight gradually heavier stones dropped from a given height.

Variable: The kind of pavement on which the stone are being dropped. After the whole set of stones has been dropped, the cycle begins again for a new village.

Expo: Sounds accompanied by nine images [eight stones and eight different pavements]

Ambient

Collection of soundscapes of each village during a normal day capturing the traversing of people, cars and additional actions. + cows, trains and wind

Constant: Me sitting at the village's square at 13pm

Variable: The village

Expo: Sounds and images of the junctions

Videos

Rather than this experiment focussing only on the stone in the street, I decided while being in the first village to record the different types of pavement and soils I was walking over: round stones, squared stones with gravel in between, split stones, grass, leaves, dirt, asphalt, concrete, sand.

Church bells

Set of eight different church bells ringing at 12:00

~~accompanied by the reverberation from its and other bells within the valley.~~

On of them at 11:00 due to an interview at 12:00

Unable to hear to phenomenon throughout my stay.
Maybe this is stronger in the Ticino valley.

Constant: The sound produced by the bell of a church at 12pm

Variable: Different types and sizes of church bells made from an unknown material in eight different bodies of space within eight different churches at different locations.

Expo: Sounds

~~Wind on grass~~

Already implemented in 'Ambient'.

~~Recording how the wind influences the grass on the outskirts of the village.~~

~~Constant: Recording microphone lying in the grass.~~

~~Variable: The height and types of grasses and plants on the outskirts of the villages.~~

~~The weather~~

~~Expo: Sounds~~

Water fountains

Water coming out of the mountain being guided through a system of pipes into a public water fountain.

The sounds of water coming out of the pipe and hitting the body of water being collected in the basin below.

For every village all the water fountains were observed, recorded and documented.

Constant: The sound produced by water falling on water.

Variable: ~~Eight water fountains~~ from different villages.
Water falling from different heights on different bodies of water.

Expo: Sounds accompanied by ~~eight~~ images [different water fountains] + videos

Timespan visit

On Monday the 4th of October, three days before the first pitch, it was decided that the site visit would take place from the next week on. This meant that to be able to conduct a thorough research a timespan had to be constructed. Below is the final planning of my time spent in Switzerland. Only a few minor changes were implemented during the journey (location and nights spent).

Su 10.	Arnhem — Chur by train
Mo 11.	Chur — Susch by train reflecting on journey
Tu 12.	Susch experimenting, interview 1
We 13.	Susch — Lavin by foot reflecting on journey
Th 14.	Lavin experimenting, interview 2
Fr 15.	Lavin — Guarda by foot reflecting on journey
Sa 16.	Guarda experimenting, interview 3
Su 17.	Guarda — Ardez by foot reflecting on journey

Mo 18.	Ardez experimenting, interview 4
Tu 19.	Ardez — Ftan by foot reflecting on journey
We 20.	Ftan — Tarasp by foot and bus experimenting, reflecting
Th 21.	Tarasp experimenting lecture 1
Fr 22.	Tarasp experimenting lecture 2
Sa 23.	Tarasp — Vnà by foot and bus reflecting on journey Vnà — Tschlin by foot reflecting on journey
Su 24.	Tschlin experimenting
Mo 25.	Tschlin — Chur by bus and train reflecting on journey, archive
Tu 26.	Tschlin — Breda by train reflecting on journey

Reflection on methodology

The choice to do the field analysis directly after the pitch and not wait until after the P1 was due to the prospect of possible snow in November in the valley. The precisely defined methods were therefore a necessity to be able to go to Switzerland on Sunday the 10th of October. For this trip a list with villages and corresponding sleeping places was organized to give support and structure for the upcoming 2,5 weeks.

The methodology of an intensive observation where one stays 2 nights in the same village and afterwards continues to the next by foot worked out well. The first arrival was more or less always the same in which a first impression of thought of the overall 'Dorfkörper' was formed. Afterwards the predetermined experiments were conducted, many of which were successful. The experiment in which different stones were dropped on different types of pavement was scrapped however, since it would have been too artificial and abstract to use in the further research. Moreover, it was logistically impractical to carry a set of stones from village to village. A different, more suitable way of capturing the pavements sounds was found quickly. Documenting thoughts via writing and recording voice was also implemented on the spot, as well as tracing walking routes together with the positions of water fountains after each day. The repetition of actions became more and more easy as time went by. However, the repetition became also more tedious and physically and mentally painful at times as described by Gion Caminada (p. 18). In the end it was about finding a balance of things. Getting a structure in conducting the methods that also allowed for divergences at times made the process go smoother and most importantly more pleasant. There will probably always be a discrepancy between thought-out methods and the actual methods when in the field. A liberating thought, since it allows for more freedom and less assumptions or dogma's.



Expected outcome

With the site visit already behind, new understandings and views of lower Engadine are now present. I see the valley with different eyes. Not just the beautiful piece of history from my fascination, but also the place between the Alps that struggles with its identity and traditions. However, there's a big potential. When these initial results are organized and combined with the theoretical and historical research of the places, an even more thorough understanding of the valley on the points of landscape, history, typologies, construction methods and materials can be constructed. The similarities and differences between the villages, materials, building types, etc. will be put up next to one another in the form of images, models and drawings. At the exposition, the essence of these Alpine villages will be on display in which the material can be experienced directly.

The four pillars didn't initially change after the visit. On the contrary, they became even more prominent and true. However, in the upcoming weeks when working with them they will be put to the test again. Are these indeed the four aspects that define the presence of place in these villages? Or maybe one or two more? Or less? The other questions will be answered in a concrete and usable manner. The studies in material and building construction will moreover prove of valuable knowledge. The research and individual studies will furthermore provide handles for the design in which the gained knowledge can directly be implemented. The rough landscape will slowly start to open up itself to reveal its essence. And with this essence comes a location for the design project.

Initial design strategy

Through research, learning by doing and eventually answering the previously composed research questions a thorough understanding view of the lower Engadine is formed: one has a relationship with the object, with its history, with the villages. A connection with this true beauty that lies within its intricate patterns, typologies and ways of doing. Throughout this process of research, special attention is given to the following design question:

How can an Alpine theatre and/or hotel contribute to the sense of place that retains the traditional cultural qualities?

The initial idea is to create one or two buildings -hotel and/ or theatre- that includes traces of the past, woven deeply into the building. Meandering through every room, deep within the core. Integrating, overlaying, absorbing and connecting things from before in a new manner. One that makes the visitor become aware of the characteristics and conditions of the place and where there's a dialogue between old and new, simultaneously traditional and contemporary. A place where local products or services are celebrated and enjoyed. In other words, where you become aware of the presence and beauty of said place.

The design of these buildings will come forth from the landscape model constructed in week 1.1. This model will prove itself essential in the first design steps. From this, a more concrete site will be chosen. By simultaneously using large scale models and hand drawings the design will take shape; testing and slowly shaping the design to a concrete form by the use of the hand. Designing from within, perceiving the design from eye-height and basing decisions upon the viewpoint of the user are important factors to create pleasant and intimate spaces.

Planning

When		What	Content	How
week 39	0.5		Pitch preparation	
week 40	0.6	Pitch	Round-off	Digital pr
week 41	0.7		Site	Field Anal
week 42	0.8		Site	Field Anal
week 43	0.9		P1 preparation	
week 44	1.0	P1	Progress review	Digital pr
week 45	1.1		Processing	Landscape
week 46	1.2		Processing	Landscape
week 47	1.3		Processing	Church m
week 48	1.4		Processing	Photograp
week 49	1.5		Categorising	Booklet
week 50	1.6		Categorising/design	Set out Pr
week 51	1.7		Categorising/design	Improve p
week 52	1.8		Categorising/design	Improve p
week 01	1.9		Categorising/design	Improve p
week 02	1.10		Expo preparation	t.b.d.
week 03	1.11		P2 preparation	Finalize pa
week 04	2.0	P2	Formal assessment	Expositio

	Where
	faculty/home
presentation & booklet	Faculty room
ysis	Switzerland
ysis	Switzerland
	faculty/home
presentation & booklets	Faculty room
e model	faculty
e model & pavement drawings	faculty
odels & movies & soundscapes	faculty
h selection & textures-mapping	home
	faculty/home
ogramme & start design	faculty/home
aper & continue design	faculty/home
aper & continue design	home
aper & continue design	faculty/home
	atelier
aper & booklet	faculty/home
n, digital presentation & booklets	Atelier & faculty room

Reference list

The following is a list of resources used for this research plan as well as resources to be looked into in the upcoming semester.

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